

**Perceptions of Land Development and Conservation  
in Hampshire County, West Virginia: Implications for the Future**

**By  
Emily L. Warner  
Department of Environmental Science  
Allegheny College  
Meadville, Pennsylvania**

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**Name: Emily Warner**

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**Major: Environmental Studies**

**Thesis Committee: Dr. Terrence Bensel, Dr. Eric Pallant**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sprawling development has diminished farmland and natural areas throughout the United States' landscape. Hampshire County, West Virginia is particularly vulnerable, due to its proximity to Washington, D.C. Through forty surveys and eight interviews with key informants, this project aimed to assess land development's impacts on the county and what goals community stakeholders have for the county's future. The overarching objective was to determine strategies for future planning and mechanisms for compromise among different parties.

Respondents reported a high quality of life in Hampshire County and placed most value on the rural environment and community atmosphere. Growth and development were top community concerns, followed by insufficient employment and the county school system. Development was seen to positively affect the economy but to threaten the overall quality of life. Loss of farms and forests was of high concern, and respondents supported funding, regulation, and economic incentive schemes to protect these lands. They also cited development's benefits and inevitability and stressed that planning should aim to *control* rather than to stop development. Respondents suggested vision-driven county planning, augmented by stakeholder inclusion and willingness to compromise, as the key mechanism for managing development.

## Introduction

Brought about by urban and exurban sprawl, much farmland and natural habitat has been converted to developments throughout the United States' landscape. Hampshire County, West Virginia, in the state's eastern panhandle, is particularly vulnerable, due to its proximity to Washington, D.C. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, development pressure has increased in the area, resulting in loss of farms and "open space," as well as increased land prices. Development in this region has become significant, is expected to continue, and has stirred some local resident concern. Conservation and development planning efforts have begun and have met with mixed sentiment.

This project aims to assess how recent land development has impacted the county and what goals residents, business owners, county officials, developers, and other community stakeholders have for the county's future. Through surveys and interviews, this study was designed to determine these persons' concerns, goals, and strategies for minimizing those concerns and achieving those goals. The overarching objective is to determine mechanisms for compromise among the interests of different parties.

"Key informants" from a variety of interest groups were selected and either interviewed or asked to complete questionnaires regarding development's effects on individuals and small communities within the county. Informants included local government officials, land developers, real estate agents, a historian, members of the Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust, farmers, non-resident property owners, and long-term county residents. Long-term residents can provide valuable insight into the changes brought about by development, while new property owners and residents from outside the county can supply perspectives on the community from an outsider's viewpoint.

Chapter One discusses national trends of land development. It defines "sprawl," provides a historical context for and outlines contributing factors to this development trend, and highlights those regions experiencing the greatest development. It also presents potential social, environmental, and financial hazards to sprawl, as well as counter-arguments that show some benefits to "sprawl" development.

Chapter Two narrows to Hampshire County, West Virginia and examines, in the context of land development, trends in population, employment, commuting, land use, land ownership,

infrastructure, social needs, and businesses. This chapter also refers to the growing practice of social research studies to place this study within a research context. Chapter Three presents the results of the questionnaire study and commentary from interviewees. It also compares questionnaire results with those from an Eastern Shore, Maryland and a Shenandoah Valley, Virginia study. Chapter Four briefly summarizes the study's findings, suggests their significance, and provides recommendations for future planning in Hampshire County, West Virginia.

# Chapter One

## Sprawl Across the Nation

### Sprawl: Definition, Origins, & Migration

The United States' landscape is changing as development pressure extends out from urban areas. Commonly called urban, suburban, or exurban "sprawl," these changing land uses are representative of a migration of people to suburban and rural areas from urban centers (Figure 1.1). The development of the rural/suburban "fringe marks America's third major population shift in the twentieth century," following the Industrial Revolution move from farms to cities in the late 1800s and early 1900s and the primarily post- WWII switch from cities to suburbs (Daniels 1999).

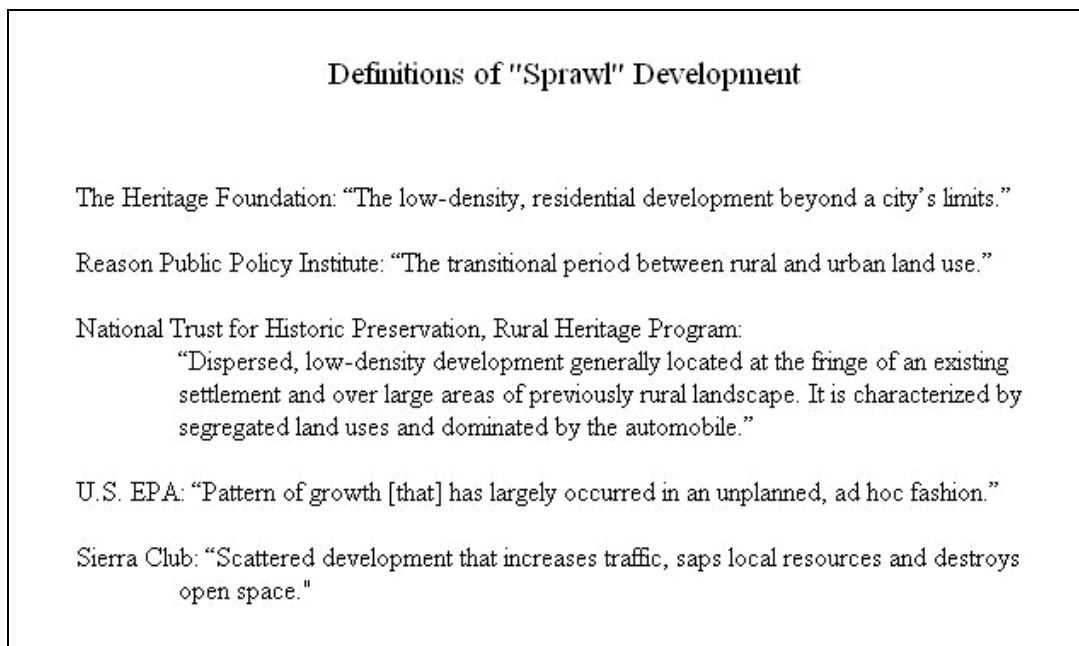


Figure 1.1: Definitions of Sprawl Development (Adapted from Daniels 1999).

### Spurring of Sprawl

Sprawling development is the result of insufficient planning and circumstantial conditions, including disagreeable urban living conditions, socio-economic circumstances, technological advances, and government policies. During the Industrial Revolution, high populations in polluted industrial cities looked for cleaner, more pleasant neighborhoods outside. Such a

movement was first made possible through the railroad and was exercised most by the wealthy (Gillham 2002). Late 1800s and early 1900s improvements in cheap housing construction and trolley transportation systems birthed the “streetcar suburbs,” characterized by “spokes” of transit lines, connected by “ribbons” of residential streets (Gillham 2002). Their great popularity was soon met with complaint from early residents that the suburbs were losing their rural charm, an objection heard now in some modern subdivisions (Gillham 2002).

Automobiles drastically changed the suburban model, as “walking distance” from public transportation was no longer necessary. Lots grew and houses were spaced farther apart (Gillham 2002). The advance of automobiles and the U.S. highway system fueled sprawl more than any other factor (Savage & Lapping 2003): “only the automobile can support the dispersed pattern of development that characterizes sprawl” (Gillham 2002). Parkways, initially built to allow recreational travel to distant parks, became commuter roads, encouraging people to live in suburbs surrounding the cities (Gillham 2002). The federal roadway system, begun in the 1920s, became the largest public works project in the world, costing an estimated \$4.5 trillion and forming “the principal circulatory system of suburbanization” (Gillham 2002).

The Federal Housing Administration, created after the Great Depression to stimulate the economy, made suburban life more possible for the middle class and encouraged sprawling development with minimum lot and house size requirements and setback restrictions (Gillham 2002; Savage & Lapping 2003). The post- World War II “G.I. Bill” and the onset of mass-produced housing spread developments widely around cities to accommodate returned veterans and others of the middle class (Gillham 2002). Shopping centers, manufacturers, and office corporations soon followed their consumers and employees to the suburbs, leaving only 28% of national employment in cities by 1990 (Gillham 2002).

Finally, lower land values and tax rates in rural areas have encouraged migration from more expensive cities and suburbs. “Whenever a large metropolitan area in a high-tax state is near the border of a low-tax state, many workers invariably settle in the low-tax state despite the inconvenience of driving long distances” (Herbers 1978).

### **Expansion to Rural Areas**

The movement away from core cities is continuing beyond traditional suburbs to surrounding rural areas (Daniels 1999). During the 1970s, rural areas grew faster than urban areas (Stokes

1989), and the trend continues. Although urban areas grew more rapidly throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, non-metropolitan areas grew faster between 1992 and 1997 than did metropolitan areas, 6.9% and 6.1%, respectively (Johnson 2003). Between 1990 and 2000, 74% of non-metropolitan U.S. counties gained population, growing, as a whole, by 10.3% (Johnson 2003).

The west coast, northern New England, and parts of the South and the upper Great Lakes regions experienced the greatest growth rates through the 1980s (Stokes 1989), likely because of the concentration of large cities in these areas. Another source cites the Ozarks, Appalachia, and the Arizona desert as rural places where development is making an impact but goes unseen by much of society (Herbers 1986). Between 1970 and 1999, 11 of the nation's 30 largest cities gained population, while many, such as Boston and Baltimore, lost population from their cores while their metro areas grew (Daniels 1999). New York City's metropolitan area, for example, grew from 40 miles in 1961 to 100 miles in 1996 (Yaro & Hiss 1996). Atlanta, Georgia grew to a 110-mile span in 1998 from a 65-mile diameter in 1990 (Leinberger 1998). Daniels cites the greater Washington, D.C. area as a "prime example of metro fringe growth" (Daniels 1999). The result is that people are spread out over greater areas of land, reducing the amount of "open" space.

## Advantages of Sprawl

"Sprawl" development has positively impacted some features of American life. In terms of suburbs, it has allowed U.S. metropolitan areas to grow rapidly in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as urban populations increased (Gillham 2002). Furthermore, the suburbs have created a middle ground place to live and work, which many U.S. citizens prefer. Now, one can choose to live in a city, suburb, or rural area, so suburbs offer greater freedom of choice to the homebuyer and worker (Gillham 2002; Tolson 2006). While single-family homes on larger lots near cities were once available only to the wealthy, the lifestyle is now possible for most (Gillham 2002; Tolson 2006). In commenting on his book *Sprawl: A Compact History*, author Robert Bruegmann, a professor of art history, architecture, and urban planning at the University of Illinois-Chicago, says, "it [sprawl] has given to ... millions of people the kind of privacy, mobility, and choice that was once the privilege of a very small number of people" (Tolson 2006). He also argues that energy-efficient telecommuting will replace traditional commuting as distance from home to

work increases (Tolson 2006). Yet, suburbanization has also met with environmental, social, and fiscal opposition.

## Drawbacks of Sprawl

Sprawling development is accompanied by numerous environmental, fiscal, and social costs to the natural and human environment, causing some municipalities nationwide to reconsider development patterns.

Low-density, expansive development consumes large acreages and requires high-energy demands (Daniels 1999; Urban Land Institute 1991). Greater distances to commute and provide for with infrastructure and services increase energy use and cost and may reduce quality of services. Relatively low-density settlements require infrastructure extension to communities outside core population centers. Both initial construction and maintenance of this expansive infrastructure can increase costs of basic services (Herbers 1978). “Infrastructure in the form of roads, schools, sewer and water, fire, and police facilities must be built [and maintained], at an enormous cost to taxpayers” (Daniels 1999). Local governments may have difficulty managing these costs (Stokes 1989). Additionally, fire and police response times are reportedly longer in low-density developments, compromising the quality of those services (Esseks et. al. 1999).

While low-density development seemingly has a lesser impact on the environment than an urban area, the sprawling nature of such growth has its own environmental problems. For example, such development is often associated with numerous, disconnected wells and on-site septic systems, which are frequently ill-maintained (Daniels 1999). Many independent systems spread over a wide area inhibit enforcement of environmental and health regulations and can lead to water and soil contamination. More obvious environmental impacts are the loss of wildlife habitat (Daniels 1999), risks to sound forest management, and threats to environmentally sensitive areas, such as riparian zones (Johnson 2003). A more detailed description of farm and forest losses and their consequences will be found on subsequent pages.

## Commuting Costs

Just as infrastructure must cross greater distances in expansive communities, so must the residents themselves. Recent “exurban sprawl” developments depend on vehicles and are increasingly associated with long commutes (Daniels 1999). Longer commutes translate to

greater gasoline consumption and pollutant emissions (Daniels 1999). They also stress road surfaces, requiring more frequent maintenance (with its associated costs), increase the likelihood of traffic accidents, and reduce residents' available time to spend with families or participate in community activities (Daniels 1999; Gillham 2002).

### **Altered Tax Base**

Conversion to residential areas may also prove expensive for municipalities, despite the increased tax base. While "agricultural and forested lands generally provide significant property tax revenues to local governments and demand few services," residential areas often require more services than they pay for in taxes (Jackson-Smith 2003; Savage & Lapping 2003). A study of low-density residential development in Chicago suburbs found generated taxes insufficient even to cover road maintenance (Esseks et al 1999). Residential areas are expected to cost more than they produce, but in an economically balanced town, revenue from commercial areas and non-developed land offsets residential costs. In the case of increasingly rural housing developments, higher infrastructure costs are not so easily countered.

### **Rising Land Values**

As an area grows in popularity, land values rise, often out of reach of long-term rural residents of usually lesser financial means than newcomers (Stokes 1989). Development increases the price of land, inhibiting young farmers from starting out (Johnson 2003), and raising property and estate taxes which prevent older owners of large farm or woodland acreages from passing the land to younger generations (Savage & Lapping 2003). A farmer's income rarely keeps pace with these rising land values and taxes, and concern about one's ability to remain in business can lead to the "impermanence syndrome," in which farmers invest less in maintenance for fear of eventual loss, resulting in a heightened likelihood of closure as farm productivity declines (Savage & Lapping 2003).

Elevated land prices due to development pressure offer farmers high gains for the sale of their properties, a clearly positive benefit. However, high prices may also lessen farmers' ability to compete with development-minded speculators (Daniels 1999; Jackson-Smith 2003). The result is often the sale of farmland, against farmers' personal wishes, to developers who can

afford to buy it (Savage & Lapping 2003). Although increased land values can be a positive fiscal consequence of rural development, the accompanying social costs may be less palatable.

### **Alteration of Rural Community Structure**

Sprawl is often viewed as occurring on uninhabited landscapes outside cities, when very much socially developed rural communities are already in place (Savage & Lapping 2003). According to Salamon (1997), “Traditional rural activities serve as a source of rural cultural identity and social networks” (In Jackson-Smith 2003). Town councils and school boards are common political structures of rural communities, consisting of local people and usually meeting after standard work hours, allowing community members to attend and provide input (Savage & Lapping 2003). The subsequent sense of community enhances community members’ ability to address issues (either internal or external) that affect the community (Flora & Flora 2003). Rural residents characteristically have strong community bonds due to ties to family, land, and a local “way of life” (Savage & Lapping 2003). The “social capital, interactions, and networks... in rural communities often are greater than those in urban areas, as people are less mobile...and weave themselves more deeply into the social fabric” (Savage & Lapping 2003).

Changes to rural communities’ structure and way of life are subtler than infrastructure costs and other visible fiscal or physical alterations. Nevertheless, loss of community identity and productive social capital can be serious consequences of rural development. Higher land values, as explained above, can exclude rural residents from buying land in favor of wealthier individuals from higher income-generating areas (i.e. cities or suburbs). The changing land uses and demographics of landowners may increase social tensions and diminish rural character (Stokes 1989).

### **Cultural Conflict**

Newcomers bring their own expectations and values to pre-existing communities, and the two cultures don’t always mix well (Savage & Lapping 2003). Infrastructure and emergency response extensions, better roads, and bigger schools are common desires of newcomers to rural areas, but their property taxes rarely pay for these requests (Savage & Lapping 2003). The fastest growing rural areas experience most serious financial drains (Savage & Lapping 2003).

Newcomers are more frequently commuters, and they tend to shop outside of the traditional

commercial cores, yet again reducing potential profits to towns (Savage & Lapping). This trend is especially likely when town center businesses give way to outlying “big box” style stores along arterial highways, a change characteristic to sprawl (Savage & Lapping 2003).

Consequences include increased commuting and losses of local commerce, government revenue, community –organized leadership, and vibrant downtowns (Savage & Lapping 2003).

Clashes of opinion between newcomers and long-term residents appear in property rights, farming, and conservation debates, among others. New residents often see zoning as a means to keep their property values high, while older residents see it as an infringement on their property rights (Savage & Lapping 2003). Newcomers (frequently of higher education) are frequently active in community interest groups, such as historic preservation boards, but are less likely to participate in demanding volunteer work, such as volunteer fire departments (Savage & Lapping 2003). While differing interests and opinions can enrich a community, they can also stress existing ways of life to the point of lost social capital.

As towns experience sudden, rapid growth, they commonly require hired planners to implement the wishes of the traditional community planning commissions (Savage & Lapping 2003). As this new “managerial class” operates during the day, community involvement often declines, precluding participation in management decisions (Savage & Lapping 2003).

The loss of social capital and community identity, through demographic change and differing values, may reduce a community’s ability to make collective decisions that affect all members. Thus, it is important to consider the social impacts of altering rural communities.

### **Division and Conversion of Farms & Natural Areas**

The conversion of open-space land has perhaps the most obvious consequences: loss of wildlife habitat, aesthetic scenery, productive agricultural land, and associated natural resource industries. Up from 1.4 million acres annually in the 1982 to 1992 era, an average 2.2 million acres per year were developed nationally between 1992 and 2001, consuming agricultural and open lands (NRI 2001). Although this number might still seem small, given the 1.9 billion acres contained in the contiguous 48 states (NRI Land Use 2002), about 34 million acres- an area the size of Illinois- were developed between 1982 and 2001 (NRI 2001). Developed land grew from 72.8 million acres in 1982 to 107.3 million acres in 2002, totaling 5.6 % of total land area (NRI 2002).

Development is taking place primarily on forest, crop, pasture, and rangelands, and the rate of specifically forest conversion is on the rise (NRI 2001) (Figure 1.2).

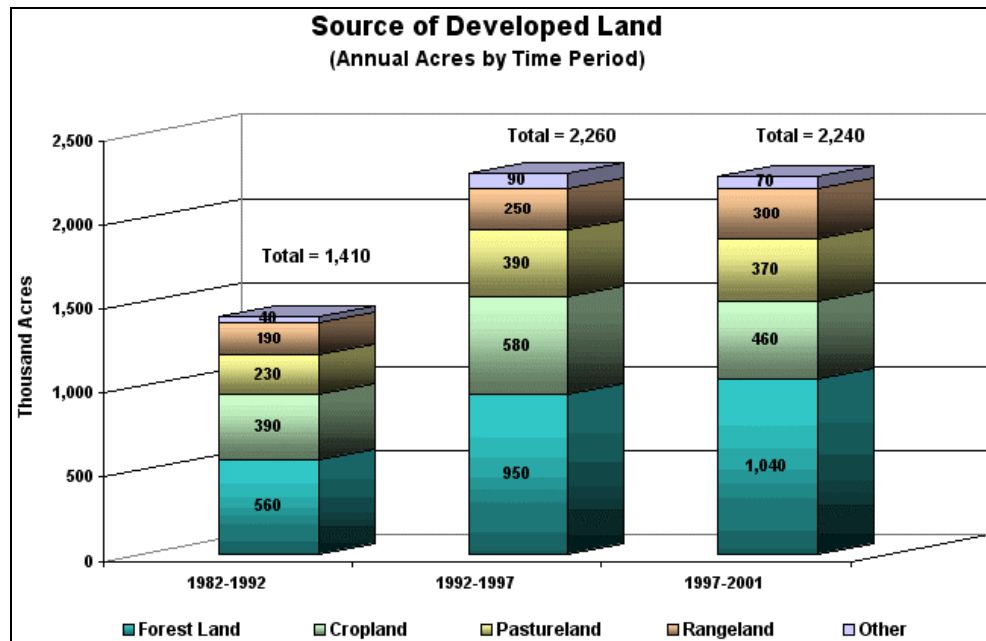


Figure 1.2: Sources of Newly Developed Land, 1982-2001 (Natural Resources Inventory 2001)

Some view this development rate as insignificant relative to the United States’ immense land area, and the opinion holds some validity. At the USDA’s given rate of 2 million acres developed per year, we have approximately 500 years until the entire nation would be built up. The Heritage Foundation argues development is occurring at only 1.3 million acres annually, giving us about 800 years (Gillham 2002). Although particular areas of the nation *are* developing rapidly and some areas will be un-developable, running out of land, in terms of total quantity, is not a great danger (Gillham 2002). However, 75% of the U.S. population lives in the approximately 5% of U.S. land area that is already heavily developed (Gillham 2002). Although the open land surrounding these urban areas may be deemed slight, compared to total land area, it is the land most visible and accessible for the majority of the population. “It is the privately owned land right next door to where three-quarters of the nation lives that is the issue at hand—be it forest, farmland, or just an open field” (Gillham 2002). Following our sprawling trends, this same land is where future development will most likely occur.

In addition to the concern of newly- developed land’s *location* is the *quality* of converted land. Twenty-nine percent of newly developed land between 1982 and 1992 and 28 percent

between 1992 and 2001 was considered *prime* farmland (NRI 2001). Sorenson of The American Farmland Trust reported a thirty-two percent loss of the United States' prime and unique farmland by 1997 (Benfield et al 1999). It could be argued again that we have plenty left, even of the best land, but expected increases in U.S. population, the proximity of specialty food production to growing areas, and development's tendency to go first for flat, well-drained farmland suggest development may present a problem to farms and food production (Gillham 2002). Furthermore, these same problems very well may be more acute for some communities than the nation as a whole (Gillham 2002). The type and location of developed farmland is of greater concern than total acreage. The amount of land developed is not as dramatic as the productivity loss of our most agriculturally useful lands.

An indirect result of farmland loss is the subsequent loss of farming communities, an intangible but important effect of development. Just as a changing populace can alter community identity and dynamics, division of farmland can dismantle farming communities. Farms separated from one another by large, developed tracts lose their ability to function as a community, often diminishing the regional farm economy (Benfield et al. 1999; Jackson-Smith 2003; Johnson 2003; Nelson & Duncan as cited in Benfield et al. 1999). With fewer agriculturists in business, support services like equipment repair shops drop off, leaving remaining farms with inadequate means to sustain themselves (Benfield et al. 1999; Jackson-Smith 2003; Savage & Lapping 2003). The loss of physical and financial support systems for farmers may be compounded by the social costs of a changed community identity, as explained above.

Like farms, forestlands are declining due to sprawl development. The 2002 USDA census recorded a loss of 1 million forestland acres nationwide since 1997 (USDA 2005). As with farming communities, smaller and fragmented forest habitats can stifle plant and animal populations (or even spark local extinctions) with reduced access to food and shelter and increased exposure to edge effects, the influences from adjoining areas of a different land cover (Feinsinger 2001). Habitat changes can also disturb migration routes and breeding schedules (Benfield et al. 1999). Changing habitats can alter natural competition mechanisms and thus species composition (Soulé 1991; Feinsinger 2001). "Parcelization" is also common and means even contiguous forest is owned by multiple, small- parcel owners, each with different

management strategies (Savage & Lapping 2003). Consequently, the forest composition is altered here and there in all its pieces, diminishing its cohesive ecosystem function. In the southern United States, with the highest number of endangered ecosystems, forest economists say, "Urbanization is the most immediate threat" to forests (Seelye 2001).

Forest product communities also lose out with forest fragmentation, just like their farming counterparts. Fragmented forests create higher timber extraction and sustainable forest management costs, lessening income from these activities and threatening the survival of these rural industries (Savage & Lapping 2003).

### Critiques to Sprawl Regulation

There is discussion that anti-sprawl proponents are merely annoyed with the aesthetics of sprawl or don't want others to spoil the pleasant suburban lifestyle they've already snagged for themselves (Gillham 2002). Bruegmann critiques even the aesthetic argument with, "every generation's sprawl is the next generation's historic landmarks" (Tolson 2006). Anti-development regulation groups believe the suburban environment is a result of free market mechanisms, indicating the desires of the people. Thus, government regulation of development is disputed. Others are concerned regulations may increase land prices and exclude lower income citizens from quality housing (Gillham 2002). After all, the financial accessibility of suburban living for the middle class is considered an advantage of sprawl (Gillham 2002, Tolson 2006).

Anti-sprawl sympathizers point out that many development supporters, such as the National Association of Realtors, National Association of Homebuilders, and the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, have a financial interest in the issue, placing them in as precarious a negotiating position as the aesthetic self-interested mentioned above (Gillham 2002).

### Sprawl in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

While loss of farmland and forestland to urban development is prevalent throughout the nation, Washington D.C.'s metropolitan area is particularly vulnerable. In the 1980's, the region lost 211,000 acres of open land, and is expected to see an additional 309,000 acres developed by 2020, amounting to twenty-one football fields per day (Frankel & Fehr 1997). Fairfax County, Virginia, adjacent to the capital, lost forty percent of its forestland between 1987 and 1997

(MacDonald 1997). Fairfax and Prince William Counties may be entirely absent of tree cover by 2020 (Frankel & Fehr 1997). Loudoun County, within the second most endangered farming region of the United States, is expected to lose four football-field size tracts of land per day through 2020 (Benfield et al. 1999; Frankel & Pae 1997). Clearly, land use conversion has become significant in this region and is expected to continue.

The 1990s urban to rural migration plus economic stress in rural areas has sown “conflict between those who seek to preserve the rural character of these areas and those who want to take advantage of the economic opportunities that new types of rural growth provide” (Jackson-Smith 2003). The debate is especially strong in agricultural areas, where opposing views are held. Some view agriculture as the basis of the United States economy while others perceive it as “backwards” and economically non-productive (Jackson-Smith 2003). These views have equally opposing policy implications, centered (or not) on agricultural preservation.

The Washington D.C. metropolitan area surrounds the nation’s capital, a high population center of great political importance, surrounded by rings of suburbs, prime agricultural land, and productive forests. As development pressure pushes farther into rural Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, policy conflicts intensify as land uses and lifestyles clash.

## Project Goal & Outline

This project seeks to recognize conflicts of interest in Hampshire County, West Virginia through the assessment of multiple stakeholders’ perceptions of land development. The goal is to determine these persons’ visions for the county’s future and to identify mechanisms that may find a balance between the positive and negative impacts of development. Chapter Two discusses recent development trends in Hampshire County and explains the logic behind this study. Chapter Three displays the opinions of the people through survey results, interview conversations, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and political cartoons. Chapter Four provides recommendations for bringing together the concerns and interests of Hampshire County’s stakeholders that a collective vision may be formed and put into action.

## Chapter Two

### Development Trends in Hampshire County, West Virginia

#### Geographical and Historical Setting

Hampshire County, West Virginia is located in the state’s Eastern “panhandle” (Figure 2.1). Its 642 square miles (410,880 acres) are found in the “ridge and valley” province of the Potomac Highlands where the Appalachian Mountains fade into Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. The county is rural and contains two incorporated towns, Romney in the mid-western part and Capon Bridge towards the East. The region is known for its scenery, recreational opportunities, and historical significance. The “trough” of the South Branch of the Potomac River is home to several American bald eagles and is a popular attraction for campers, canoeists, and passengers of the “Potomac Eagle” excursion train. Four state and one federal wildlife management areas are located in the county, and “hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, and bird watching” are common activities for residents and non-residents (Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan<sup>1</sup> 2003).

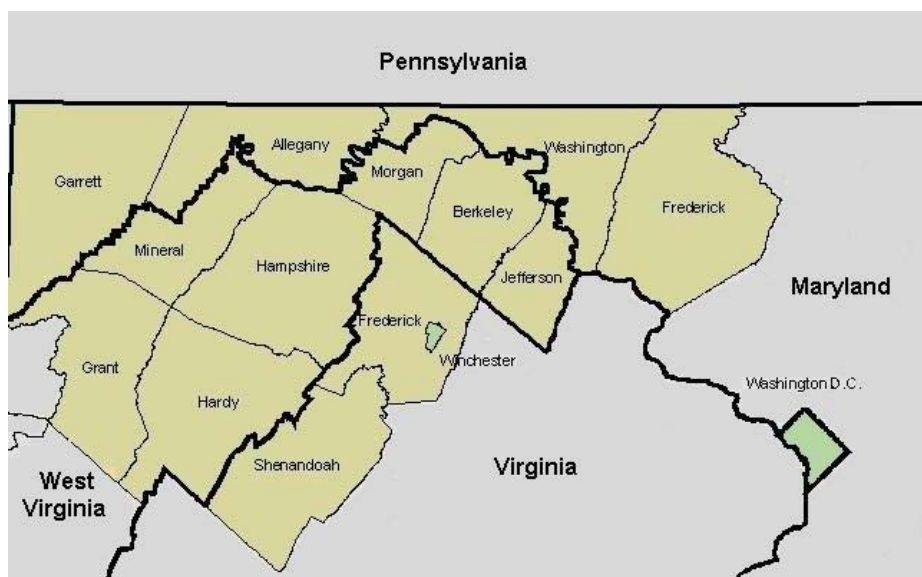


Figure 2.1: Eastern Panhandle, WV and Surrounding Area

Hampshire County also holds historical significance. Native American groups were active in the area, and the county played a prominent role in early United States history. Romney, the county seat, was incorporated in 1762, and the county joined West Virginia in 1863

<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of this paper, the Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan will be abbreviated as “CP”

with the formation of the new state. Relics from the French and Indian and Civil Wars remain in the county, including trenches, monuments, and Confederate “Stonewall” Jackson’s area headquarters. A historical sign by the County Courthouse (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) advertises the fact that Romney changed sides fifty-six times during the course of the Civil War. Residents take pride in the county’s history and celebrate with an annual Hampshire Heritage Days festival, which attracts tourists from surrounding areas.

As recent rapid changes may potentially threaten the county’s natural and historical features, the Hampshire County Planning Commission cites concern about development pressure from the Washington D.C. area (CP 2003). The County Comprehensive Plan notes, “Hampshire County, like many other growth communities in the United States, is experiencing stresses from development of all forms, affecting its natural resources, and placing strains upon its ability to provide community services and public facilities” (CP 2003). This chapter will serve to point out trends in population, school enrollment and challenges, employment, commuting, land use and ownership, land prices and trading, infrastructure and social services, and businesses. It will also reveal differing expectations of new and long-term residents and describe the project’s objective.

Bordering the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, Hampshire County has recently experienced significant land conversion. According to a local land trust board member, one developer has contracted 22,000 acres for development within the region in the last two years (Warner personal communication November 3, 2004). Between the 1997 and 2002 censuses, total acreages farmed and the average size of farms in Hampshire County both decreased, while farm woodlands decreased by 8,003 acres (USDA 2002). During the same period, land values increased. Estimated market values for farms and their buildings per acre increased from \$1329 to \$1624 in 2002 (USDA 2002). Due to development expansion and occupation and shopping trends, the Comprehensive Plan suggests Hampshire County is more comparable to Allegany County, Maryland and Frederick County, Virginia than it is to neighboring West Virginia counties (CP 2003). To illustrate that point, the federal Office of Management and Budget has just included Hampshire County in Winchester, Virginia’s (located in Frederick County, Virginia to the East) “metropolitan statistical area” (Ross 2003b). A metropolitan statistical area includes an urban core of at least 50,000 people and the surrounding communities with which the core has “a high degree of economic and social integration” (Ross 2003b).

## Population

Between 1950 and 2000, Hampshire County grew by 60.6% from 12,577 to 20,203 persons (U.S. Census 2000a; U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1980) (Table 2.1). The increase is especially significant, given a *decrease* in population from 1950 to 1970 by about 7% (U.S. Census 2000a, U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1980). Since 1970, the population has grown steadily. In the 1980s when the state's total population declined, Hampshire County increased from 14,867 in 1980 to 16,498 in 1990 (U.S. Census 2000b). Between 1990 and 2000, Hampshire grew by 22.5% (U.S. Census 2000a; Gaquin & DeBrandt 2002). Hampshire and its neighboring panhandle counties grew considerably more than the state's other counties, several of which continued to lose population. Of the top seven fastest-growing West Virginia counties between 1990 and 2000, five, including Hampshire, are located in the Eastern panhandle, the portion closest to Washington D.C. (Gaquin & DeBrandt 2002). This statistic suggests both the role of Washington D.C.'s proximity and the magnitude of development pressure on this area.

Table 2.1: Hampshire County Population 1950-2000 (Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan 2003)

Date	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	12,577	11,705	11,710	14,867	16,498	20,203
Percent Change		-6.93%	0.04%	26.96%	10.97%	22.46%

## School Enrollment and Related Challenges

The condition of Hampshire County schools is of ongoing concern for many residents. The student enrollment is increasing, and several schools hold classes in exterior portable facilities to accommodate their students (CP 2003). Administrative offices and the bus fleet have also outgrown their buildings (CP 2003). To accommodate growth and reach current standards, upgrades and additions to current schools, administrative and maintenance offices, and the bus garage will require an estimated \$27,126,600 (CP 2003). Finding teachers and staff for the growing number of students is an additional challenge. According to Jill Parker, assistant superintendent at the time, the 2005-2006 school year began with a deficit in teachers, custodians, aides, and secretaries (Kesner 2005b). In a quote appearing on the front page of the county newspaper, Parker revealed, "we have days when we are short six to eight teaching positions across the county" (Kesner 2005b).

Furthermore, many of Hampshire County's school children may be disadvantaged, due to low income and single parent families. Between 53% and 61% of the county's school children

were from low- income families within the 2000-2004 school years (Paula O'Brien personal communication February 2006). According to the West Virginia Kids Count Data Book, 21.4% of Hampshire County children lived in poverty, 25.1% resided in single parent homes, and 52.1% were approved for free or reduced price school meals (Pancake, A. 2006). The school population is growing, but the high percentage of children in low-income families suggests these children are not associated with wealthier newcomers to the county. They are either born to low-income native residents or represent a low-income newcomer population.

### Employment and Commuting Trends

The average commute time to work for Hampshire County residents in 2000 was nearly 40 minutes, compared to the state's average of 26 minutes (CP 2003). Long commutes, attributed by the County Commission to insufficient local job opportunities, trigger traffic congestion, more frequent vehicular accidents, and decreased participation in family and community activities (CP 2003). Insufficient local job opportunities seem culpable, with over 45% of the county workforce employed outside the state in 2000 (CP 2003). According to a *Herald-Dispatch* journalist, 8,056 West Virginian workers traveled daily to Frederick County, Virginia in 2003, while 6,500 went to Washington County, Maryland (Ross 2003a). Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C. attracted West Virginia workers between 1990 and 2000 at increases of 337.6%, 405.0% and 4254.8%, respectively (Ross 2003a) (Table 2.2).

Although these figures include West Virginia workers in general, the aforementioned connections between Eastern Panhandle counties and the Washington D.C. metropolitan area suggest Eastern Panhandle counties are likely to have higher percentages of their residents working outside of the state. It is important to note that persons also commute *in* to the county, so a more accurate indicator of commuting trends is *net commutation*, the number of out-of-county residents working in the county minus county residents working outside the county. In 2000, Hampshire County had a net commutation of -3,792, delineating the lack of county jobs (Workforce 2006a). The county assessor explains, "we have waves of out- migration for work; people here go to Winchester, and Winchester goes to Loudoun County or Washington D.C,

although some of our people go all the way to the city [Washington D.C.]” (Whitacre personal communication November 1, 2005<sup>2</sup>).

Table 2.2: Out-Of-State Employment by West Virginia Residents, 1990-2000 (Ross 2003,1).

State	1990	2000	Increase	% Increase
Virginia	5,602	24,516	18,914	337.6
Maryland	3,776	19,070	15,294	405.0
D.C.	31	1,350	1,319	4254.8

While native West Virginia residents are commuting out of the state for work, a simultaneous phenomenon is the relocation of residences from out-of-state to within West Virginia. Some of the increases in the chart above probably originate from former Maryland or Virginia residents who now live in West Virginia but have retained their jobs elsewhere. Michael J. Hicks, research director at the Center for Business and Economic Research at Marshall University, cites lower housing costs in West Virginia as a big pull for Washington D.C. area workers to the Eastern panhandle (Ross 2003a). Tammi Collins, a Winchester, Virginia resident agreed, "Wages are higher here [in Virginia], and housing is cheaper there [in West Virginia]," (Ross 2003a). In his letter to the editor, a Virginia resident and new owner of a Hunter Wilson subdivision lot in Hampshire County writes, "I am seeking a place to build a nice home at a reasonable price," citing \$600,000 townhouses as evidence of the "greed-driven housing market of northern Virginia" he wishes to avoid (Wojtowicz 2006). Long-term resident David Parker, who used to drive buses to Winchester, pointed out that many former Virginia residents now live in Hampshire County but have kept their Virginia jobs (Personal communication January 12, 2006). Describing his count of 525 cars one morning between the Winchester Stock Sale and Capon Bridge in a 30 min period, he remarked, "Between 4:30 and 8am, there's a mass exodus from Hampshire County to the job market." The West Virginia *Herald-Dispatch* newspaper reported 6,700 relocations from Maryland and Virginia to the Eastern Panhandle counties in the late 1990s (Ross 2003a).

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<sup>2</sup> In future citations, Whitacre personal communication November 1, 2005 will be referred to as (Whitacre 2005).

## Developments

As the population has increased, so has the number of residential developments. Jake VanBeem of the Hampshire County Assessor's office reports 450 named developments in the county, including those associated with towns and those in rural areas (Personal communication November 1, 2005). The rate of subdivision is estimated at 500 acres per year (Whitacre 2005). Mr. Whitacre also noted how the merging of properties skews the visible rate of subdivision. Grouping of adjacent properties under a common owner into a single tract occurs simultaneously with parcelization (separation) of other tracts, masking the county's subdivision rate (Whitacre 2005).

In the past, subdivisions fell into two basic categories: the division of a tract into pieces for children or other family members and small two to five-acre lot residential developments, generally close to towns (Whitacre 2005). The county planner reported a 2-acre average lot size for these second category subdivisions (Baker personal communication January 2006<sup>3</sup>). In the last ten to fifteen years, multiple- tract subdivisions of lots 20 acres and larger have appeared (Whitacre 2005, VanBeem personal communication 2005). Whitacre (2005) cites a 1990 county policy as somewhat responsible for enlarged lot sizes, "In the recent past, this [lot size] has increased due to the 20- acre lot size being exempt from regulation by the subdivision ordinance." Although Health Department and Department of Highways approval is required for these properties, they are exempt from Subdivision Ordinance requirements (Subdivision Ordinance 2005). On February 1, 1990, an ordinance was passed to place basic infrastructure requirements on residential properties under 20 acres, the assumption being that larger properties would have sufficient soil and vegetative mass to absorb any wastes not properly collected in private septic systems (Baker 2006). The County Planner Charles Baker says these large lots are found most often in mountainous "billygoat country" areas, where they "eat up undesirable land." One disadvantage to ridge-top subdivisions, though, is the lack of water. Nevertheless, subdivision into 20 - acre lots, just large enough to escape regulations, has become more common.

A potentially positive side to these subdivisions is that some become second-home properties and are taxed at a higher rate than owner-occupied primary residences, bringing in revenue for the county (CP 2003). However, there are also negative environmental and visual impacts. The

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<sup>3</sup> In future citations, Baker personal communication January 2006 will be referred to as (Baker 2006).

assessor noted, “This [20 acre subdivision] has caused the loss of most of our large wilderness tracts.” He backed his statement with an explanation that Westvaco paper company properties, some of the largest remaining forested tracts in the county, were sold to and subdivided by a single developer. One of these was a 3,200- acre tract that has now been subdivided into 20+ acre lots (Whitacre 2005). The assessor commented, “Of course, the developer made several million dollars, but is it worth it for our county?” (Whitacre 2005).

Evidence of new development is clear through observation (Figure 2.2) and perusal of weekly issues of the *Hampshire Review*.



Figure 2.2: New Subdivision in Hampshire County. Photo by David Warner.

On October 19, 2005, a front page headline read, “Capon Bridge seeks townhouse annex advice: Another developer eyeing 40-50 units.” On November 2, “White Horse Auction ups ante: 1,700 acres--\$5.2 million” alerted attention to rising land prices and bidding wars. On November 23, 2005, three of the five front- page headlines concerned development. Their titles read, “Zoning on the table...,” “Yellow Spring up in arms over development,” and “125 new homes eyed in Sunrise Summit.” In the rural Yellow Spring community, two new subdivisions are on the rise, one of 16 lots on 17 acres and the other with six lots on 15.5 acres. Both will be accessed by state route 259, a “relatively busy connector with... everything from long-haul trucks to local farmers moving their equipment” (O’Brien 2005g). With the new developments, current residents are concerned about road safety, septic failures, and forced alterations to their rural way of life. One resident, who says his family has held his property for 200 years, is

concerned he'll no longer be permitted to hunt on his land if houses are built on an adjacent property (O'Brien 2005g). In Sunrise Summit, an area outside of Romney, the planning of "Harvest Hills" subdivision of 125 homes on 350 acres is underway (O'Brien 2005i). Logistical difficulties with sewer capacities are the only significant roadblocks (O'Brien 2005i).

The county currently holds 10,000 homes (Whitacre 2005), and almost 75% of the housing units are single-family detached structures (CP 2003). Mobile homes make up the second largest classification with 22% (CP 2003). Home construction has grown to over 200 homes per year, which Whitacre refers to as "*big growth*." However, the rate of 200 new housing units constructed annually exceeds the expected demand of the population growth rate (CP 2003), presumably due to the number of second homes to be discussed in a following section.

Given this presentation of development trends, zoning is also worthy of discussion. Hampshire County currently has no zoning laws. To subdivide a property and construct a housing development, developers must meet access requirements from the Department of Highways and County Health Department requirements to assure suitability of septic system functioning. Recently, the county commission has discussed zoning restrictions, and the topic has appeared in the county newspaper. In mid November 2005, the County Commission asked the planning commission to begin research on a potential zoning ordinance (O'Brien 2005h). County Commission president Les Shoemaker said, "It is time to get the process moving," and mentioned the plan to investigate nearby counties' zoning strategies (O'Brien 2005h). Shoemaker also met with the local Farm Bureau to discuss their concerns. Although some members were worried about property right infringements from zoning, others told of recent complaints from residential neighbors about farm operations, like manure application. Unplanned development increases the potential for conflict between residential areas and the economically and culturally important activities of farming and hunting. Shoemaker reportedly remarked, "We've come to recognize that property rights have two sides" and that "things are changing in Hampshire County" (O'Brien 2005h).

Both the population and rate of development are expected to increase more dramatically with the completion of highway Corridor H to the south of the county (CP 2003; Whitacre 2005). Corridor H will connect routes I-66 and I-81 near Strasburg, Virginia and also tie into U.S. 33 and I-79 near Buckhannon, West Virginia, ultimately linking the area more directly to Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh.

## **Second Homes: Attraction and Impacts**

It is important to note that the number of properties purchased in subdivisions is much greater than the population increase implies it might be. Between 2000 and 2002, approximately 200 new housing units were built annually (CP 2003). Based on the 2.49 rate of persons-per-household, 498 persons would be expected to annually join the county residency with this growth rate (CP 2003). However, the 370 additional persons per year average between 1990 and 2000 indicate housing growth is exceeding residency growth (CP 2003). A possible explanation lies in the higher number of second homes and vacation cabins present in Hampshire County. In recent years, West Virginia has been second only to Hawaii for the highest increase in seasonal housing (CP 2003). Eighty percent of Hampshire County's housing units are seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, trailing only Tucker and Pocahontas counties for the highest percentage (CP 2003). These two West Virginia counties, each with 81% seasonal housing, contain substantial park and/or resort areas, which may account for their high percentages. Hampshire does not share this characteristic.

Rather, the region's proximity to the highly populated Washington, D.C. area likely explains this phenomenon, in conjunction with rural mountain scenery and comparatively low taxes and land prices (CP 2003). Assessor Whitacre, Planner Baker, and David Warner of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust all suspect the increased national concern with terrorism has increased Hampshire County development. Washington D.C. residents are concerned with their nearness to political targets, and "People want a safe place to go—a get-away" (Baker 2006). The former Development Authority Director Dave Pancake recalls, "with the DC sniper and Columbine, the real estate people were, and still are, getting calls constantly" (Pancake personal communication November 1, 2006). Baker explained the Federal Bureau of Investigation has included Hampshire County in a "safe range" around the capital, and he suggested people were buying land without immediate intentions of building anything (Baker 2006). On the other hand, David Parker, a long-term resident and member of the Farm Bureau, has observed faster growth of permanent residences than of second homes since the September 2001 terrorist attack (Parker personal communication January 12, 2006).

Second home subdivisions bring both positive and negative outcomes. On a positive note, vacationers purchase food, gasoline, supplies, and recreation activities when in the area, and vacation home- owners also pay property taxes (CP 2003). In these ways, second- home owners

bring in money, perhaps sufficiently paying for their costs to the county. However, considering the low number of locally- owned retail businesses in the county, the expenditures of vacationers may be less than they first appear. Additionally, “almost without exception, these subdivisions are not located in close proximity to electric, water and sewer service” (CP 2003). Although well -drilling and installment of private septic systems are the landowner’s responsibility, social and environmental costs of development, such as erosion control and reduction of available hunting land, are shared by the entire community. As the Comprehensive Plan plainly states, “care must be taken to protect the very elements which attracted the seasonal homebuyers...in the first place: wide open spaces, thousands of acres of forestland providing privacy, rugged terrain, miles of beautiful waterways, and beautiful scenic areas.”

### Land Prices & Trading

“Land values have gone completely wild,” says the county assessor. With the increased popularity of Hampshire County land, prices and trading have jumped substantially. The assessor reports 300 land transfers per month and says the “land values nearly doubled in the last 2 years” (Whitacre 2005). The eastern portion of the county has generally higher values due to better quality land and a greater number of large homes, many of which are attributed to wealthier commuter residents with ties to the Washington D.C. job market (Whitacre 2005). However, high value properties are spreading out now, as “McMansion-style homes are popping up” elsewhere (Whitacre 2005).

The assessor explains, “We’re seeing bidding wars, which are completely unheard of here.” Indeed, sales are rising. A land auction, the “largest in recent history,” appeared on the *Hampshire Review*’s front page in November 2005 noting the sale of a 1749- acre tract on White Horse Mountain for \$5.2 million (O’Brien 2005e). The original tract had been purchased from Westvaco paper company in 2003 and subdivided into over seventy 20 plus- acre lots by a Florida company (O’Brien 2005e). The two buyers, both out-of-county land developers, were required to deposit \$250,000 on the sale day, and their purchases cost between \$2,200 and \$3,248 per acre (O’Brien 2005e).

As land prices increase, “our local people can no longer afford to buy land” (Whitacre 2005). A native resident commented, “It used to be that you had to inherit a farm- couldn’t afford to buy one. You can’t even inherit a farm anymore, unless you inherit a bank account, too.”

Resident Dick Watson, in a complaint about increased taxes, said, “People who grew up in Hampshire County can’t afford to live here. At this rate, I’ll be forced to sell it [property] off just to pay the taxes” (Kesner 2006a). Indeed, this has occurred. Although county commission president Les Shoemaker suggests recent tax increases have exceeded the rise of market values, others attribute the hike directly to market value increases (Kesner 2006a). A county farmer explained land is often sold for retirement money, commenting, “The people selling to developers are often older. They don’t see any other viable option” (Parker personal communication January 12, 2006).

Though locals might be out of the land-buying game, developers are not. Referring again to the Westvaco property sale, the assessor remarked, “One person bought almost all of the Westvaco land and developed it” (Whitacre 2006). Planner Baker commented, “If any large tract is up for sale, a developer gets it” (Baker 2006). As development corporations’ have increased, the county is now seeing land disputes between developers. In October 2005, a dispute arose between two of the largest land development companies active in the county, Melbourne Properties Inc. and the Hunter Company. The two are engaged in a civil lawsuit concerning a right of way through Melbourne’s property to access Hunter Wilson’s “The Woodlands” subdivision project (O’Brien 2005b). Also worthy of mention is that “The Woodlands” is composed of 20-acre tracts, exempt from the subdivision ordinance, that were originally part of a single 10,000-acre tract owned by the Westvaco paper company (O’Brien 2005b). This story highlights the increased land values in Hampshire County, as well as the conversion of large forest tracts to 20-acre lots exempt from the Subdivision Ordinance.

## State of Infrastructure & Social Services

Examination of water and sewer services, roads, a new cellular telephone tower, and law enforcement capacity reveals infrastructure and social service trends.

Scattered residential areas make “extension of water and sewer lines costly and difficult to accomplish...due to the rugged terrain and soil composition” (CP 2003). Two public water systems exist in the county, and both were undergoing upgrades in 2003 (CP 2003). Extensions of water lines are being planned, and a filtration system to combat increased surface water run-off is needed at the Greenspring/Springfield facility (CP 2003). These changes are “driven by increasing residential and commercial densities” (CP 2003). A \$2.2 million Springfield “water

system upgrade” has been approved, and apparently in good time. In October 2005, residents of this small, unincorporated community experienced two water failures within a week, requiring a visit from a 5,000- gallon water tanker to provide drinking water (Kesner 2005a). Of that \$2.2 million, almost 76% is grant money and the rest is borrowed; county commissioner Les Shoemaker associates this debt with increased taxation in Green Spring and Springfield (Kesner 2005a). With higher water bills and continued problems, residents are growing impatient says another *Hampshire Review* article. Here a former Romney resident says, “I just had a new home built three months ago and moved to Springfield. I’m ready to sell already...” (Kesner 2005a).

Even in Romney, the county seat, an “emergency water rate increase” is a near possibility (O’Brien 2006b). The Public Service District wishes not to increase customer rates, but the Sunrise Summit area outside Romney faces a \$3 million estimate for its newly proposed sewer line to connect the area with Romney’s sewer plant (O’Brien 2006b). Meanwhile, the “Harvest Hills” private development, mentioned previously, plans to begin construction of its own “package” sewer treatment plant (O’Brien 2006b).

Capon Bridge, the county’s second-largest town, is contemplating extension of its service area boundaries to accommodate a technical park (CP 2003). In September 2005, C&L Development LLC of Leesburg, Virginia offered Capon Bridge \$500,000 to assist renovation of the town’s sewage treatment plant, assuming the town expands its infrastructure to the company’s planned 62-acre, 130 home subdivision (O’Brien 2005a). In October, a second developer requested service by the town’s water system for a “40 to 50- unit single family development on 40 acres” (O’Brien 2005a). Although C&L Development withdrew its annexation payment offer in November, “due to time restraints” (O’Brien 2005d), the pressure to expand infrastructure for future development is apparent.

Further water and sewer extensions are anticipated as concern grows about the possibility of leakage from the Romney Landfill and unsuitable on-site septic systems in multiple county subdivisions (CP 2003). Planning commission president Joe Frye’s concern about well water contamination by nearby septic systems appeared in a *Hampshire Review* article about potential revisions to the subdivision ordinance’s minimum lot sizes (O’Brien 2006c). The county assessor notes, “Water’s going to be a problem. We just draw it out, and the water keeps getting lower every year” (Whitacre 2005). Regarding septic systems, he says, “we’re just playing catch- up.”

Concerning roads, Whitacre (2005) says new roads “have been built by the developers of the subdivisions...4 or 5 miles per year in the near past and more now with the larger subdivisions of large lots.” The assessor, a surveyor by training, also points out, “one mile of road is about 5 acres of disturbance.” His observations point out that subdivisions and their associated roads take up much space. While new roads are required, existing roads also must be maintained. A recent study by the West Virginia Division of Highways concluded that 8 out of 10 monitored U.S. Route 50 roadway segments in Hampshire and Mineral counties were operating at an unacceptable “level of service” (CP 2003). Hampshire County was handed 95% of the improvement suggestions, and it was noted that the roads closest to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area “are at a high risk for overcrowding, higher accident rates and inadequate levels of service if the seasonal home-buying trends continue unabated” (CP 2003). It is clear the county is beginning to recognize the impacts of development and is moving towards addressing these issues. A cartoon printed in the *Hampshire Review* in November 2005 reveals the intensifying traffic on Main Street (U.S. Route 50) in Romney (Figure 2.2).

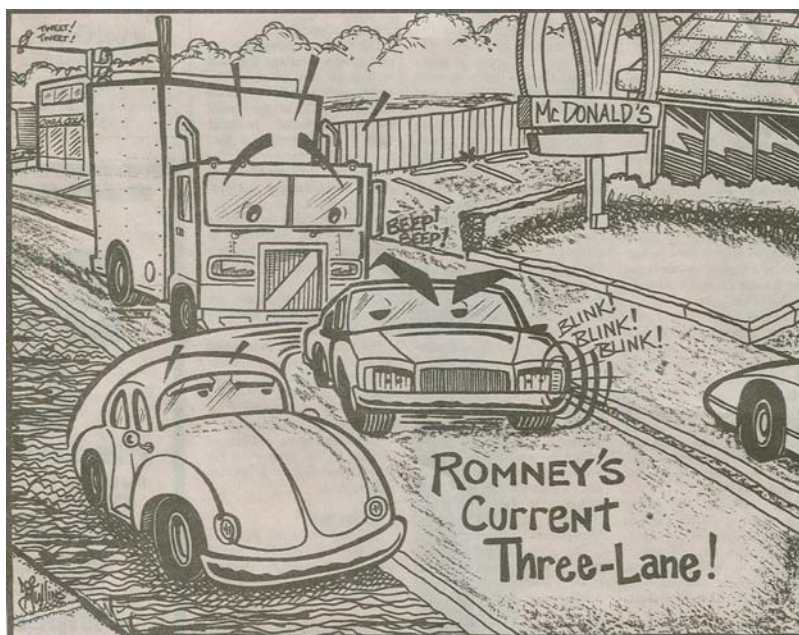


Figure 2.3: Cartoon by Joe Mullins, *Hampshire Review*, November 23, 2005.

A new cellular telephone tower is further indication of a growing and modernizing population, as well as the need to expand emergency services. Although opposition from the State Historical Preservation office slowed progress, construction of the 350- foot tower will

begin in 2006 in the Romney area (O'Brien 2005f). The tower is expected to improve cellular phone service for residents and, most importantly, to enhance the county's fledgling 911 emergency communication system (O'Brien 2005f). Additionally, one associated with a local phone corporation commented that the company cannot keep pace with increasing demands, especially as new customers request DSL internet connections and multiple lines per residence (Smith, personal communication March 30, 2006).

A look at the county's law enforcement capacity suggests social services are currently strained. Including six state police officers and the county's own eight deputies, 0.69 law enforcement personnel currently staff every 1,000 permanent county residents (CP 2003). For comparison, the national average is 3.62 full-time state and local personnel for 1,000 residents, and West Virginia, with the lowest ratio in the nation, has a 2.29 average per 1,000 residents (Reaves & Hickman 2002). Hampshire County's ratio drops significantly during peak vacation travel times, when many of the county's second homes are occupied (CP 2003). As population continues to rise, local law enforcement capacity is spread more thinly. During his request for a new office in Capon Bridge, County Sheriff Nathan Sions is reported to have said, "I believe, with such rapid growth on the east end of the county, that the sheriff's department could much better serve the citizens in this area if we had office space..." (O'Brien 2005c). To keep up with the population, more buildings and a larger staff, consuming more of the local budget, may soon be necessary.

## Hampshire County Businesses

Changes to the county business structure potentially reveal some development impacts, and the current business base suggests a boost in the local economy may be beneficial. "Chain stores," construction businesses, real estate agencies will be discussed here, as well as business variety and ownership.

"We probably have about 30 chain stores in the county," seemingly "dominated by the dollar store, the fast food, and the convenience market" says the county assessor (Whitacre 2005). The increased presence of these stores may suggest a loss in local businesses, although that's debatable. More evidently, they indicate the county's economic base and the low wage jobs available in the county.

“There are more construction (well-drilling, etc) businesses,” reports Whitacre. While some are older, previously existing businesses that outgrew their owners’ homes, others are new (Whitacre 2005, Ansel 2006). According to the Hampshire County Development Authority, construction and excavation businesses are most prominent and are most common in Romney, Capon Bridge, and along Route 50 between the two towns (Ansel 2006). The number of persons working in construction jobs increased from 133 in 1995 to an average 305 in 2005 (Workforce 2006b). Construction and infrastructure businesses suggest a demand for construction services, which can likely be attributed to home building and improvement projects and/or entrepreneurs’ expectations of more of these projects in the future. The Development Authority director writes, “I feel the reason for this [more construction & home improvement businesses] is the amount of people relocating to this area... and the ease [of] going into business for themselves” (Ansel 2006).

The Development Authority also suggests, “Real estate business have increased by probably as much as 500%,” and explains, “For years there were only two realtors in the Romney Area. Now... there are six or seven” (Ansel 2006). Between 1995 and 2005, financial, insurance, and real estate firms gathered steam from 154 workers to over 200 (Workforce 2006b).

A final notable analysis is that of business ownership. The Development Authority reported that Romney’s County Pride grocery store and Domino’s Pizza have local franchise owners, but the McDonald’s and Burger King restaurants, three Dollar General stores, three Family Dollar stores, and the Food Lion grocery are not locally owned (Ansel 2006). Multiple key businesses are not owned locally and thus export money from the community. Additionally, the variety of options has diminished. Whitacre notes, “The one car [sales] lot replacing, over a long period of time, the four or five smaller car lots that existed in the county many years ago seems to be a trend” (Whitacre 2005). Again, Hampshire County is showing attributes of the standard suburban sprawl pattern. However, local residents own most of the county’s “sit-down” restaurants, construction businesses, and service stations (Ansel 2006).

## Community Response

With in-migration and development growth, and adjustments to the structures of business, employment, and land ownership, community dynamics may also change. Already apparent are the disparate concerns of new residents, second homeowners, and long-term residents. For example, Margie Smith, owner of a local hair and beauty salon, has detected discontent with the county among her new-resident customers. Through her work, Smith has observed disgruntled women complaining, “My husband moved me here because the land and taxes are cheaper.” Common sources of their dissatisfaction are a lack of shops, restaurants, and entertainment. Smith says she regularly hears, “There’s nowhere good to eat” and “The kids are bored.” In addition to a lower cost of living, Smith also reported ease of disability and welfare eligibility as central reasons given for relocation from Virginia to West Virginia. She points out the contrasting expectations of new and long-term residents with, “Being here, we’ve never had malls and all these other things, so we don’t miss them.”

The editorials of *The Hampshire Review* regularly allude to these contrasting expectations and sometimes act them out on the newspaper’s very pages, with county residents tuning in each week for the next retorts.

Although perhaps extreme, letters to the county’s *Hampshire Review* editor reveal conflicts between out-of-state landowners and local residents. Donald Groves of Silver Spring, Maryland writes, “Out-of-state landowner asks all to boycott West Virginia,” and outlines his displeasure with road conditions and tax laws (Groves 2005). In the same issue appeared a resident’s retort, “Boycott the state. The out- of- staters have been raping our state since 1863 [state’s founding date]. People buy land...for a weekend retreat and want to take over. Sorry, but it doesn’t work like that. People with land... who don’t want to pay the out-of-state tax should just sell their land and try to find Almost Heaven [West Virginia’s unofficial motto] in another state” (Fleece 2005).

On November 2, a particularly livid local replied,

How about going one step further and staying out of West Virginia altogether? How about selling back your land... *I would love to buy some property at a fair price—you know--when it was affordable before all the out of state people came in and could afford to pay the inflated prices that land is selling for now.* If only more out-of-staters would go this route, boycotting West Virginia, maybe our crime rate would go back down.

Maybe our taxes would go back down.... I will be happy to contribute to your idea of ads to keep out of staters in Maryland, Virginia, or wherever.... Things were so much better...when... the people who lived here were the ones [who] truly loved and appreciated the uniqueness, the beauty, the quiet of the state...If you don't like the taxes, Sell. Stay in Maryland! (Blackburn 2005).

On December 7, a moderator entered the debate, saying:

With the infusion of new blood into old blood, we have bad blood. A clash of cultures. Blaming 'out-of-staters' for the woes of this county tastes of sour grapes from those who were myopic in their vision of the future and now choose to look retrospectively at our county through rose colored glasses (Dodgins 2005).

He declares county officials and residents are "stuck in the past" and "spinning their wheels" (Dodgins 2005). He continues:

While corporate land speculators slice and dice our county, selling out to the highest bidders, we're left with ravished landscapes...overshadowed by sky high taxes and plateauing services. With tree huggers on the left and land grabbers on the right, those in the middle are squeezed. An industrious people with minimal industry, frustrated, they rail out against 'out of staters.' (Dodgins 2005).

Later, "In reality, our problems arise from the 'good ol' boy' network" (Dodgins 2005).

The assessor summed his convictions about Hampshire County development with, "Our county is changing. Maybe not as fast as others, but it is definitely happening. I believe we are close to the balance point at which time our county will change in many ways not readily understandable to the local citizenry" (Whitacre 2005).

## Social Study Objective

Given the increasing development in Hampshire County, this project attempts to determine the impacts of the changes taking place so as to provide a more informed picture from which interested county stakeholders may operate. While most studies on land use change focus on spatial patterns, some researchers are leaning towards a social study approach. Authors of a *BioScience* article on land use and cover- change modeling call for inclusion of "sociocultural factors, such as community norms and environmental attitudes and perceptions" in land use

studies (Riebsame et al 1994). They later add, “The knowledge needed to adjust objective models... can come only from interviews with or participant observation of farmers and ranchers, with the obvious prescription that future field studies include inquiry into custom and culture as well as resources and finances” (Riebsame et al 1994). In their study of Thai agricultural societies, Rigg and Nattapoolwatt promote studies that “attempt to reflect on more general issues... debated through the lens of the local” (Rigg & Nattapoolwatt 2001). In *Conserving Natural Value*, Rolston writes, “certainly nature and culture are currently in tandem, with, from here onward, culture increasingly determining what natural history shall continue” (Rolston 1994).

With these views in mind, I developed a survey to assess local perceptions of land development’s impacts in rural Hampshire County, as well as what county stakeholders envision as a good future for the region. Although findings may not represent all viewpoints, considering the concerns and suggestions of the included groups may improve future planning efforts.

## Conclusion

Hampshire County, West Virginia has experienced significant changes in recent years. Development and its impacts are evident through changes in business composition; land uses, transactions, values, and subdivision; population; housing statistics; and geographic location of growth. In addition to the statistics, the local county officials and residents have identified similar changes through observation. Consideration of the community’s impact perceptions and visions for the future allows a fuller understanding of development in Hampshire County and may provide useful information for future planning.

Chapter 3 will provide my findings on multiple stakeholders’ views of development, their desired vision for Hampshire County’s future, and their proposed mechanisms for creating that vision.

## Chapter Three

### Questionnaire Results and Interview Commentary

#### Methodology

I began my research by interviewing the county assessor, a native resident who had helped to draft a preliminary county comprehensive plan, a widowed farm wife who has lived all her 70+ years in the same community, and a member of the local land trust's board of directors. These interviews tested out preliminary questions for clarity and the variety of possible responses. This information aided in developing final survey questions and the multiple-choice answer sections. Furthermore, the interviews opened my attention to broader, or more specific, aspects of Hampshire County development, and new questions arose from these discussions. Finally, the 2004 *Attitudes and Perceptions about Land Use on the Eastern Shore* public opinion poll by Susquehanna Polling and Research and the 1999 *Greater Shenandoah Valley Region Issue Poll* modeled further questions and structures, some of which were adopted.

The questionnaire study was conducted December 15, 2005- February 15, 2006, primarily through mailed questionnaires but also through personal meetings. Participants were chosen to represent key stakeholder groups in the county. The following list specifies these and the number of respondents in each<sup>1</sup>: land developers (2), real estate agents (3), historians (1), businesses (undetermined<sup>2</sup>), farmers (7), long-term, not- otherwise- specified residents (10), out-of-county residents (12), out-of-county residents with Hampshire County property (10), county planner (1), environmental groups (7), and landowners with conservation easements (3).

The three county commissioners and a planning commission member were also contacted, but none returned surveys. One commissioner provided related, auxiliary information through a telephone conversation.

To reach these stakeholder groups, specific organizations were targeted, such as the Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, Hampshire County Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the Farm Bureau, as

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<sup>1</sup> Some respondents fit multiple categories and were included in each. One respondent's question justifies this action: "Should I answer these as an elected official or a boy who grew up on a Hampshire County farm? Also, five surveys were returned anonymously, so their authors were not included in any category.

<sup>2</sup> Number of business participants is unknown. The Chamber of Commerce emailed surveys to 100 businesses. None responded openly, but the anonymous surveys may be from business owners.

well as persons who expressed strong opinions regarding development impacts in “letters to the editor” in the *Hampshire Review* newspaper.

Forty questionnaires were completed, in addition to eight interviews. Although the sample population was *not* random, participants were solicited to represent various stakeholder groups. These persons were assumed to have more experience with and/or to be more influential in future planning of Hampshire County development and conservation than a random sample of residents. Though respondents may feel more strongly about these issues than the general populace, it is likely these individuals who will be involved in future planning. In most demographic respects, participants are proportionally represented, although women are not as well represented as men.

### Respondent Key Demographics

Tables 3.1 through 3.5 reveal key demographics of respondents. In most cases, respondents were balanced across these demographics.

Table 3.1: Political Party

	Frequency	Percentage
Republican	18	45.0%
Democrat	18	45.0%
Independent	1	2.5%
Not Registered	1	2.5%
Prefer not to say	2	5.0%

Table 3.2: Age

	Frequency	Percentage
<30	0	0.0%
30-39	5	12.5%
40-49	6	15.0%
50-59	12	30.0%
60-69	8	20.0%
70+	9	22.5%

Table 3.3: Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	30	75.0%
Female	10	25.0%

Table 3.4: County Residency

	Frequency	Percentage
Resident	28	70.0%
Non-Resident	12	30.0%

Table 3.5: County Property Ownership

	Frequency	Percentage
HC Property Owner	37	94.9%
Non-owner	2	5.1%

## Results

### Overview

The majority of respondents reported a high quality of life in Hampshire County, which, in general, they felt had not substantially changed in the last ten years. Being in a rural environment with access to outdoor recreation and a high quality of life were primary attractions to the county, and most felt these attractions remain.

Growth and development were of top concern for most respondents, followed by job opportunities and the quality of the school system. A large percentage of respondents felt continued development in the current manner would decrease the quality of life. Development was said to have negatively impacted traffic, taxes, the visual landscape, and crime rates in the county, while positively affecting businesses and the economy.

Respondents indicated concern about the loss of farm and forestland to development, and most imply support for public funding to increase conservation. Although to varying degrees, and with reservations, most participants supported additional regulation to control development, as well as the creation of economic incentives to encourage landowner conservation. Further conservation efforts were expected to make either little or positive impacts on the local economy. Most respondents felt the needs of housing, commerce, and conservation could all be met with careful planning. Waterways, farms, forests, and historic sites were cited most often as conservation priorities, while the county commissioners were considered the most important group to be involved in county planning.

Questionnaire results are organized below by subject grouping: quality of life, development and conservation, support for management policies, land features of prime protection importance, and recommendations for land protection. Questions did not necessarily appear in this order on the surveys, but they are listed by their survey numbers, and question texts are provided where practical. Each is presented with a table or chart and a brief explanation. Results to key questions are compared with those from related studies in Maryland and Virginia.

### Quality of Life

These questions focus on quality of life, benefits and challenges of living in the county, and recent changes to “quality of life” aspects, as well as the causes of those changes.

Q3: “Generally speaking, how do you rate the quality of life for Hampshire County residents?”

Table 3.6: Hampshire County quality of life

	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	3	7.7%
Good	20	51.3%
Satisfactory	14	35.9%
Fair	2	5.1%
Poor	1	2.6%

Most respondents (59%) indicated a good or excellent quality of life, with 94.9% calling it at least satisfactory.

I9: “What attracted you to own property/reside in Hampshire County?<sup>3</sup>”

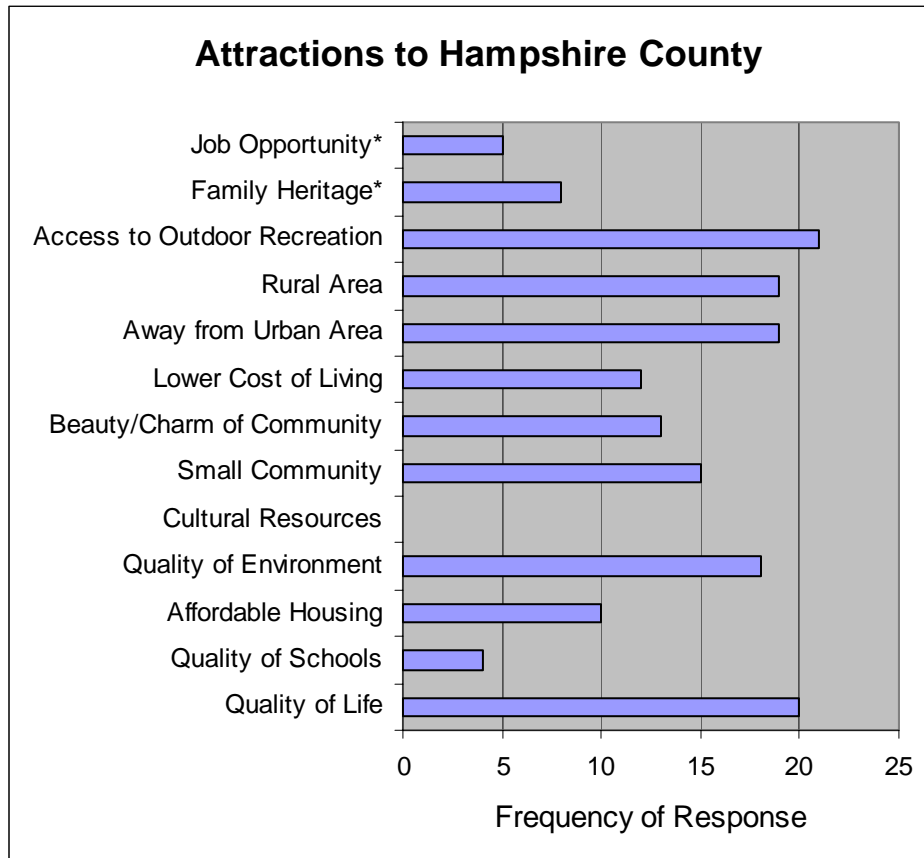


Figure 3.1: Attractions to Hampshire County

(\*Job Opportunity and Family Heritage appeared as significant “other” attractions to the county).

<sup>3</sup> Participants were permitted to select more than one option and to initiate their own responses.

Outdoor recreation, quality of life, rural area, away from urban area, and quality of the environment were marked as attractions to Hampshire County by at least 46.2% of respondents. The next most common responses regarded the size and character of the community, followed by the lower cost of living. The two asterisked attractions, “family heritage” and “job opportunity” were the most common “write-in” responses.

Q1: For you, is the statement, “The reasons for my attraction to the area remain unchanged,”...?

Table 3.7: Degree to which attractions to Hampshire County remain unchanged

	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	24	61.5%
Somewhat True	7	17.9%
Moderately True	4	10.3%
Not Very True	2	5.1%
Not At All True	2	5.1%

A majority (79.4%) of respondents indicated their reasons for attraction remained “somewhat” or “very” much unchanged.

Q4: “Do you believe the quality of life for HC residents has improved, declined, or remained about the same during the past 10 years?”

Table 3.8: Changes to the quality of life in last decade

	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	11	29.7%
Remained the Same	17	45.9%
Declined	9	24.3%

Most of the 37 respondents to this question indicated their quality of life had remained consistent; the next largest group reported improved quality, followed closely by those who felt a decline.

Q5: “What would you say is the most important problem facing Hampshire County today?”

Table 3.9: Important problems facing Hampshire County (frequency of response)

	Frequency	Percentage
Taxes	3	7.7%
Drugs/Crime	1	2.6%
Economy/Jobs/Employment	11	28.2%
Road/Infrastructure Conditions	5	12.8%
Development & Conservation Related Issues	25	64.1%
Education/Schools	8	20.5%
Government Leadership	3	7.7%
High Land Values	1	2.6%

This was an open-ended question, for which no choices were given. Responses were later post- coded into the categories above. Growth and development issues were mentioned by 64.1% of respondents; these responses included concerns about loss of open spaces. Economy and employment responses were next most common with 28.2%, followed by education system concerns (20.5%). Infrastructure interests came next with attention from 12.8% of respondents. “High land values” may fit under the “growth & development” category, as development increases land values, or it could be considered a tax or government complaint. Due to this confusion, the single vote for “high land values” was given its own category.

### Development and Conservation

These questions pertain to development and conservation trends, community impacts, and policies

Q2: “In terms of land development, do you think Hampshire County is going in the right direction, or have things gotten on the wrong track?”

Table 3.10: Land Development Trends

	Frequency	Percentage
Right Track	8	22.2%
Wrong Track	27	75.0%
Not Sure	1	2.8%

A substantial 75% of respondents felt the county is doing poorly in terms of land development. One respondent added, “I don’t think we’ve ever been on the right track.”

Q8: “If no additional efforts are taken to conserve farmland and natural areas in Hampshire County, the quality of life for residents will...”

Table 3.11: Impact of reduced open-space protection on quality of life

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Improve	0	0.0%
Somewhat Improve	2	5.3%
Stay the Same	2	5.3%
Somewhat Decline	12	31.6%
Strongly Decline	22	57.9%

89.5% of respondents implied that Hampshire County quality of life would decrease if no additional efforts were taken to conserve farmland and natural areas. None suggested strong improvements would occur.

Q9: “Generally speaking, do you consider the current pace of growth and development in Hampshire County...?”

Table 3.12: Perceptions of pace of growth and development

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Positive	2	5.3%
Somewhat Positive	9	23.7%
Moderate	9	23.7%
Somewhat Negative	7	18.4%
Very Negative	11	28.9%

Opinions about the pace of growth were mixed. The highest category was that of a “very negative” pace, yet “moderate” and “somewhat positive” received the next highest number of votes, with “somewhat negative” about equally below these as “very negative” was above. This question may be flawed, in that it does not indicate the *rate* of development. For example, an answer for “very negative” could imply either that the pace is much too slow or much too fast. This inconsistency could explain the mixed responses found here.

Q7: Perceived Development Trends

Numerous perceptions of development trends were given to this open-ended question (see Appendix B for complete listing). Primary observations included subdivision of large tracts, a tendency towards 20+ acre lots exempt from the subdivision ordinance, residential and second-

home development, increasing land values, developer exploitation, farm sales, out-of-state buyers, and a general lack of preparedness.

During an interview, a long-term resident and former member of the comprehensive planning committee (working to draft a comprehensive plan) reported increased development rates after WWII, gradual growth until about 1980 when “it skyrocketed,” and later “moderating as though [at] the beginning of a bell curve.” More recently, “It seems like we coasted a bit in the 1990s and then skyrocketed again.” As evidence he cited growing numbers of land transfers and subdivisions.

Another community member said during her interview, “I’ve seen a lot of development; the roads are more congested, we have more people, and they are coming from the Washington D.C. area. Washington D.C. was just Washington, and then it became Leesburg, and then Winchester, and now it’s moving here.” When I asked for an explanation to this movement, she replied, “It’s congested there, and the quality of life is better here.”

Q10: “Has development impacted the following things positively, negatively, or not at all?”

Table 3.13: Perceptions of Development Impacts (n=36-38, in percent)

	Traffic	Taxes	Cultural Opportunities	Visual Landscape	Business & Economy	Sense of Community	Crime
Positive	2.8%	13.9%	34.2%	6.9%	48.6%	5.6%	0.0%
Negative	86.1%	63.9%	13.2%	76.4%	15.3%	44.4%	73.0%
Unchanged	11.1%	22.2%	52.6%	16.7%	36.1%	50.0%	27.0%

The most negative reactions to development impacts concerned traffic, taxes, the visual landscape, and crime. Most considered the sense of community and cultural opportunities unchanged by development. However, for sense of community, “negative” votes closely followed “unchanged.” On the other hand, “positive” impacts took up the second slot behind “unchanged” for cultural opportunities. Although “unchanged” captured a high percentage of votes, development was generally believed to positively impact the Business & Economy category.

Through an interview, an informant summed up the general feeling of development impacts well with, “changes are happening, some for the good, and some for the bad.” In support of more businesses she says, “We need more jobs here so people don’t have to commute so far,

so young people stay in the community.” And yet she says roads are “congested,” taxes are “going up,” and of the culture, “life is faster, now.”

Several study participants, in surveys or interviews, mentioned impacts on the human community. Positive impacts included beneficial new ideas and ways of thinking, while negatives comprised conflicting expectations of newcomers and the existing populace. One wrote vigorously on the topic:

On the positive side, it [development] has brought people... who care very much about various aspects of our community and are willing to work to protect those aspects.... Also the non-natives often have talents for accomplishing tasks that locals have little experience with. On the negative side, newcomers often arrive with expectations that are at odds with local expectations.... They state their expectations before having become enough a part of the community to see its good and bad points. They often expect to have the same services and amenities as they had somewhere else....

Further, this respondent said, “Many people arrive here and do nothing to become a part of the community; they do not join a local community organization or church, do not get the local newspaper.... This has a negative impact.”

Q11: “The county’s development goals should be to...?”

Table 3.14: Preferred Development Goals

	Frequency	Percentage
Increase development	0	0.0%
Continue development at current rate	2	5.3%
Decrease development	14	35.5%
Continue at current rate, but in a different manner	20	51.3%
Increase development, but in a different manner	3	7.9%

Of 39 respondents, 51.3% favored continuation of development at the current rate but by a different manner, while 35.5% preferred to decrease the development rate. Of the five respondents who favored either an increase in development with modifications or continuation of the current rate without any changes, two are in the development and/or real estate industry. Although “in a different manner” is vague, the description serves to reveal participants’ desire for a different approach to development.

Q6: “What are the most important issues county commissioners should address today?”

Table 3.15: Primary issues commissioners should address

	Frequency	Percentage
"Hold the line" on Taxes	8	22.2%
Fight Crime	1	2.8%
Create New Jobs/Economic Opportunities	7	19.4%
Address Road/Traffic needs	2	5.6%
Better Manage Growth, Development, and Sprawl	26	72.2%
Preserve Farmland/Natural Areas	10	27.8%
Improve Education/Schools	4	11.1%
Improve Leadership	2	5.6%
Other Infrastructure	4	11.1%

Better management of growth and development were highlighted by 72.2% of the 36 respondents. Although concern about losses of farmland and natural areas were included in the previously mentioned growth and development management category, 27.8% of respondents named land conservation specifically as an issue of primary importance. Taxes held the next highest concern with 22.2%, followed by economic opportunities and jobs at 19.4%. Road and other infrastructure needs were mentioned by 16.7% of participants. Schools were of fairly high concern with 11.1%. One participant, particularly concerned with infrastructure, added the commentary, “it [development] has happened so fast that we can't keep up with the water, sewage, roads, and a lot more. The planning commission should look at land development carefully.”

C1: “How concerned are you about the loss of Hampshire County farmland & forestland today?”

Tables 3.16 and 3.17: Level of concern about farmland and forestland loss

3.16 Farmland	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	27	67.5%
Somewhat Concerned	7	17.5%
Indifferent	3	7.5%
Moderately Concerned	2	5.0%
Not at all Concerned	1	2.5%

3.17 Forestland	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	26	68.4%
Somewhat Concerned	11	28.9%
Indifferent	0	0.0%
Moderately Concerned	0	0.0%
Not at all Concerned	1	2.6%

Respondents revealed high concern about the loss of farm and forestlands. The single respondent who indicated no concern is a developer, and one of the two who marked only “moderate concern” about farmland loss is a real estate agent.

C2: “Do you believe county commissioners should increase, decrease, or remain the same in their efforts to preserve farmland? Forestland?”

Tables 3.18 and 3.19: Preferred commissioner action towards farm and forestland preservation

3.18 Farmland	Frequency	Percentage
Increase	27	73.0%
Decrease	0	0.0%
Remain the Same	10	27.0%

3.19 Forestland	Frequency	Percentage
Increase	30	81.1%
Decrease	1	2.7%
Remain the Same	6	16.2%

Forestland was supported more so than farmland for increased protection efforts by the county commission, 81.1% to 73.0%, although forestland also received one vote for decreased protection, while farmland had none. Protection of the county’s open spaces appears important.

### Support for Development and Conservation Management Policies

The following questions assess how strongly respondents support development restriction and farm and forest protection efforts by examining support for funding and policies that may infringe upon property-rights. Some potentially negative impacts or conflicts with these policies were also assessed.

C7: “Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the statement: ‘Developers have the same private property rights as homeowners to develop the land they own, so government doesn’t have the right to manage growth & development in the county.’”

Table 3.20: Level of agreement that government should not control developers’ actions

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	5.3%
Somewhat Agree	4	10.5%
Indifferent	1	2.6%
Somewhat Disagree	8	21.1%
Strongly Disagree	23	60.5%

As Hampshire County residents have expressed some resistance to both development *and* development restriction, generally due to fear of private property rights infringement, this question sought to determine views about restrictions for land development businesses. Interestingly, 81.6% of respondents suggested some (21.1%) or strong (60.5%) disagreement that developers should have the same land use rights as homeowners, and should thus be free from

further local government control. One added in the margin of his questionnaire, “In the absence of well stated regulations to the contrary, they [developers] are apparently free to do whatever they choose and incur very little impact fees under current laws/regulations.” Another writes, “[they are] not concerned with any issue but personal gain. They ‘get theirs and get out’ as one developer once remarked at a Morgan County meeting.” Another respondent, a developer, wrote, “Hampshire County is being systematically subdivided by money-grubbing developers concerned more by extraordinary personal profits than by creating communities of lasting value and beauty.” The county planner Charles Baker suggested developers have a right to develop but must be controlled by ordinance laws to prevent problems such as inadequate septic systems or encroachment on historical sites (Baker 2006).

Of the 15.8% who agreed with the survey statement, twice as many appeared in the “somewhat agree” than the “strongly agree” categories. One of the two respondents who indicated strong agreement is a real estate agent, but no other known real estate agents or developers were present in the “support” or “indifferent” groups. Thus, at least of the known industry respondents, the majority expressed sentiment that developers *should* be subject to greater government scrutiny and regulation than the average homeowner.

C8: “How important is concentrating new growth and development in/around existing towns?”

Table 3.21: Importance of concentrating new development in and around existing towns

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	18	46.2%
Somewhat Important	17	43.6%
Indifferent	2	5.1%
Not Very Important	2	5.1%
Not At All Important	0	0.0%

Concentration of development in and around existing towns was considered important by 89.7% of respondents. One of the two who considered development concentration “not very important” is a developer.

C3: “Do you believe public funds should be used to protect farms & forestland?”

Table 3.22 and 3.23: Use of public funds to protect farms and forestland

3.22 Farmland	Frequency	Percentage	3.23 Forestland	Frequency	Percentage
Use Public Funds	28	71.8%	Use Public Funds	31	79.5%
Do Not Use Public Funds	11	28.2%	Do Not Use Public Funds	8	20.5%

Public funding was highly supported for both farm and forest lands. Yet, one respondent implied discomfort with these dichotomous categories, writing “Yes [i.e. I support], but that’s not an open ended vote to allow substantial new spending.” Support for public funding of land preservation is present but perhaps more cautious than these numbers suggest.

C4: “Generally speaking, would you support or oppose the creation of a new source of public funding (generated by tax dollars) dedicated to farmland and/or forestland protection?”

Table 3.24: Level of support for new source of public funding to protect farms and forestland

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	15	38.2%
Somewhat Support	18	46.1%
Indifferent	1	2.6%
Somewhat Oppose	3	7.9%
Strongly Oppose	2	5.3%

Although similar to the previous question, this one aimed to make the funding more personal by specifying tax dollar usage. Again, 84.2% revealed some or strong support for a *new* conservation fund. Yet, two respondents expressed concern about the origin of the proposed fund. Says one participant, who chose not to answer the question, “I would have to hear where the tax dollars would be coming from before responding to your question.”

C5: “Which of the following four statements best represents your viewpoint on zoning?”

This question regarded generalities of zoning regulations “to limit development in rural areas.” The county currently has no zoning regulation, and participants were asked to choose the answer that best represented their viewpoints.

Table 3.25: Zoning Regulation Viewpoints

	Frequency	Percentage
Pass, if impact on private property rights are minimal	12	32.4%
Pass, if “private property rights are balanced with the public good”	17	45.9%
Pass, in all instances	5	13.5%
Do not pass zoning regulation	3	8.1%

Most (45.9%) supported a balance between private property rights and the needs of the public, while 32.4% indicated their approval as long as private property right encroachments were minimal. Although the phrasing of this question is vague and the “balance” of private and public needs or “minimal” private infringement are highly subjective, many respondents indicated a willingness to forgo some private rights in order to control development. Furthermore, 13.5% supported zoning no matter the cost to personal property rights.

Additional respondent comments addressed greater planning. One wrote, “A well stated vision for a county or region coupled with zoning regulations can actually serve to encourage development, but have it occur consistent with positive attributes of healthy, well planned land use.” Another suggested, “Zoning should be passed with TDR's [transferable development rights] to allow owners of rural land to receive payment for underdevelopment.”

C6: “How important to you is providing landowners with economic incentives (such as conservation easements) to encourage protection of working forests & farms?”

Table 3.26 and 3.27: Importance of providing economic incentives to encourage protection of farms and forests.

3.26 Farmland	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	28	70.0%
Somewhat Important	9	22.5%
Indifferent	3	7.5%
Not Very Important	0	0.0%
Not At All Important	0	0.0%

3.27 Forestland	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	25	64.1%
Somewhat Important	13	33.3%
Indifferent	1	2.6%
Not Very Important	0	0.0%
Not At All Important	0	0.0%

Respondents reacted positively to the notion of using economic incentives to encourage open space conservation. For farmland, 92.5% felt the practice was somewhat or very important, and 97.4% answered as such for forestland. Here and in the numbers of “indifferent” responses, there appears greater support for forestland protection than for farmland.

C11: “How do you believe county land conservation will impact the local economy?”

Table 3.28: Perceived impacts of land conservation on local economy

	Frequency	Percentage
Very much Negatively	1	2.7%
Somewhat Negatively	2	5.4%
Won't make much Difference	12	32.4%
Somewhat Positively	12	32.4%
Very Positively	10	27.0%

A common criticism of conservation attempts is that control of *land* development stagnates *economic* development. Yet, 59.4% believed conservation would “somewhat positively” or “very positively” impact the economy, and another 32.4% said it would have little impact. Of the three individuals who suggested a “somewhat” or “very” negative impact, one is a developer. A comment from one participant adds some complexity to the question, “It depends how progressively the conservation laws/regulations/vision are drafted.”

C12: “How possible is it to simultaneously meet the needs of conservation, economic/business growth, and housing in Hampshire County’s future?”

Table 3.29: Possibility of meeting conservation, economic, and housing needs in future

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Possible	15	38.5%
Somewhat Possible	11	28.2%
Moderately Possible	12	30.8%
Somewhat Impossible	1	2.6%
Very Impossible	0	0.0%

This question aimed to assess perceptions of the possibility of addressing traditionally conflicting community needs and goals. Opinions were generally optimistic, with 66.7% believing a compromising plan is “somewhat” or “very possible” and another 30.8% admitting “moderate” possibility. Yet, when later asked *how* the needs of conservationists, businesses, and housing could all be met, one respondent replied, “I’m not sure it can happen.” Another

answered, “with wisdom, perseverance, charity, and the grace of God!” These comments reveal some frustration and skepticism with current planning. A third respondent added to his answer about achieving these multiple goals, “It’s ESSENTIAL.” Including multiple needs in a county plan appears important to respondents.

### What to Protect & How

These questions focus on important conservation areas.

C9: “What types of places are most important to protect?” (Please rank: 1-high, 3-low).

Table 3.30: Types of protection areas (by category)

	Natural/Scenic Areas	Farms	Historical/Cultural
Total Points	80	70	65

Responses were weighted to reveal relative importance of the three categories.<sup>4</sup> Natural and scenic areas were given the highest priority for protection, followed by farms and historical or cultural sites.

C10: “What specific places would you like to see protected?”

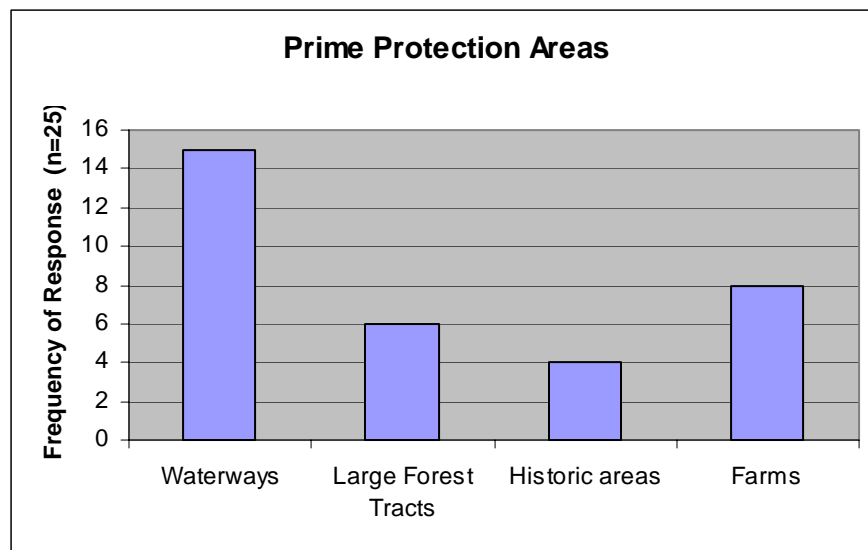


Figure 3.2: Specific places respondents would like to see protected

<sup>4</sup> Rankings of “1” were given 3 points, “2” two points, and “3” 1 point. Unranked marks were assigned 2 points. Sums for each category are listed here as “Total Points.”

Waterways, farms, large forested tracts, and historic areas were cited most often as areas to protect. Other mentioned places included scenic areas, ridge-tops, wildlife areas, battlefields, and places that maintain “general rural character.” Specifics included the Yellow Spring Mill, Mill Creek Valley, Cacapon River Valley, “Caudy’s Castle Rock”, the “Iron Furnace,” and the “poor houses” (for a complete listing see Appendix B).

C13: How important are these groups’ involvement in county development and conservation?

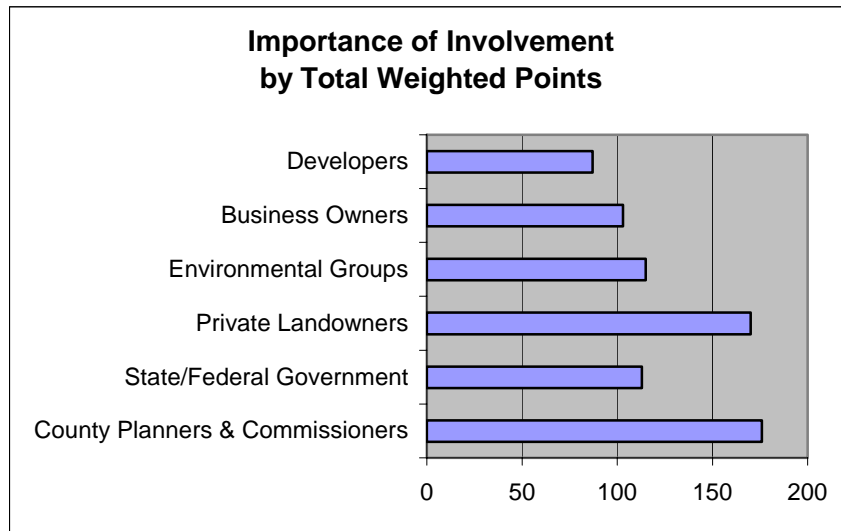


Figure 3.3: Importance of stakeholder involvement in county development and conservation

Respondents were asked to rank these groups by the importance of their involvement in county planning, and their answers were weighted to determine relative importance of each group<sup>5</sup>. County planners and commissioners were viewed as most important, tracked closely by private landowners. Environmental groups and higher government came next, followed by businesses and developers. One respondent wrote in that developers should “not at all” be involved, while three suggested all groups are equally important, and several indicated even importance across multiple groups. Through a follow-up email correspondence, one respondent explained his answer:

Citizens are the ones who are going to bear the brunt of development's problems, so they are the front line of action. If we cannot convince them of the need for action, not much will get done. Next are interested population segments: environmental groups, business owners, and developers. These folks have an economic interest and we should appeal to it

<sup>5</sup> Rankings of “1” (the most important) received 6 points, “2” 5 points, “3” 4 points, etc. Non-specified marks were assigned 3 points.

- either positively or negatively. County government is the segment of government over which we have some power, so they come before state government...

Concerning stakeholder collaboration, most respondents indicated key collaboration factors included a “willingness to compromise” and to “work *together*” to create a “common vision” and “long-term plan” for the county (see Appendix B, Q17 & Q18 for complete listing). Said one woman, “We need a representation of government, landowners, business owners, and just regular old people, whether they may be farmers or townspeople.” Most seemed positive about the possibility of collaboration, while a few were clearly not. When asked what could foster collaboration, one respondent replied, “Pray for intervention by the Almighty,” and went on to describe a “fragmented and parochial” county, who’s only hope was to get action through widespread public discontent. Even then, “whether they do it in a unified or cooperative way is any one's guess.” He apologized for his pessimism, but explained, “I have been struggling for many years to get people to work together and have not had much success.”

Another participant critiqued both sides of the spectrum saying first, “strict conservationists should ... check to see if ... their work [has] the goal of returning Hampshire County to the ‘way it was.’ Would that be with a population of 2,000 or 200 or 20 or 0?” To the other side he writes, “Developers that can’t espouse their current project ... with a grander plan would do well to pause and seek out a grander plan.” These commentaries point to the significance of a willingness to compromise among members of a planning committee.

Other suggestions for county planning included revising and supplementing the Comprehensive Plan, intensifying development regulations, increasing conservation incentives, addressing infrastructure capabilities, and promoting leaders committed to envisioning, creating, and following-through with county planning (see Appendix B, Q17 & Q18 for complete listing).

## Study Comparison

This section will compare responses to my questionnaire with those of the 1999 *Greater Shenandoah Valley Region Issue Poll* and the 2004 *Attitudes and Perceptions about Land Use on the Eastern Shore Public Opinion Poll*. Together, the two encompass much of the land surrounding Washington D.C. and may portray development impacts from the growing city. Furthermore, comparison of Hampshire County with nearby regions places its concerns and

needs within a greater context. Doing so will hopefully foster a greater sense of connection with other communities and facilitate the transfer of management ideas from one area to another.

The Shenandoah Valley Poll may be particularly relevant due to its study location. The Valley is a 200-mile long region stretching from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to Roanoke/Salem, Virginia (SVTA 2005). It includes multiple Virginia counties as well as Berkeley and Jefferson counties of West Virginia’s eastern panhandle (SVTA 2005). Since the region is located between the Washington D.C. metropolitan area and Hampshire County, its residents’ perceptions of land development in 1999 may reveal important trends for Hampshire County.

### **Quality of Life, County Challenges, and Development Perceptions**

This section compares questions of quality of life, key county challenges, and development. Although all three areas showed similar results, in most cases Hampshire County appears less well off. The most notable difference among the study areas is Hampshire County’s emphasis on development and conservation concerns.

#### *Quality of Life<sup>6</sup>:*

Table 3.31: Comparative display of perceived quality of life

	Eastern Shore, MD	Shenandoah Valley	Hampshire County, WV
Excellent	29%	31%	7.7%
Good	58%	56%	51.3%
Satisfactory-Average	Option Not Offered	Option Not Offered	35.9%
Fair	11%	13%	5.1%
Poor	1%	--	2.6%

Where 59% of Hampshire County residents considered their quality of life “good” or “excellent,” 87% of respondents in the Shenandoah Valley and Eastern Shore studies answered as such (Mason-Dixon 1999, SPR 2004). However, it is important to note that neither of these studies offered a “satisfactory/average” option, so some of the 56% and 58%, respectively, found in their “good” categories may have fallen within a “satisfactory category.” Still, it appears these respondents felt a higher quality of life than did those of Hampshire County.

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<sup>6</sup> See question Q3 in Hampshire County study.

*Changes in Quality of Life:*

Table 3.32: Comparative display of changes to quality of life

	Eastern Shore	Shenandoah Valley	Hampshire County
Improved	24%	39%	29.7%
Remained the Same	48%	47%	45.9%
Declined	25%	13%	24.3%

Hampshire County<sup>7</sup> appeared in the middle between the other two study areas in terms of changes to the quality of life. A possible problem with making a direct inference here is that the Hampshire County question specified “within the last 10 years,” while the Shenandoah study said “five years,” and the Eastern Shore study asked about “the last several years.” Direct comparisons are perhaps not appropriate.

*Key County Problems:*

Table 3.33: Comparative display of key county problems (percent of responses)<sup>8</sup>

	Eastern Shore, MD	Shenandoah Valley	Hampshire County, WV
Taxes	6%	6%	7.7%
Drugs/Crime/Violence	2%	8%	2.6%
Economy/Jobs/Employment	13%	6%	28.2%
Road/Infrastructure Conditions	6%	8%	12.8%
Development & Conservation Related Issues	43%	27%	64.1%
Education/Schools	9%	27%	20.5%
Government Leadership	5%	NA	7.7%
High Land Values	NA	NA	2.6%

Hampshire County respondents appear to have greater concern with development and conservation issues than those of the other study areas. Employment and the school system were also of greater interest in Hampshire County. Note that only one response was permitted in Eastern Shore and Shenandoah Valley studies, so percentages may not be directly comparable.

<sup>7</sup> See question Q4 in Hampshire County study.

<sup>8</sup> Responses generated from open-ended questions. Hampshire County study (Question C5) allowed multiple responses, while the other studies did not.

### *Perceptions of Development*

Question styles differed enough under this category that tabular percentage comparisons are impractical. Whereas 75% of Hampshire County respondents indicated the county was on the “wrong track” in terms of development, 35% answered this way in the Eastern Shore study. In the Shenandoah Valley study, 69% of participants felt their rate of residential development was “much too fast” (38%) or “a little too fast” (31%). The Shenandoah Valley and Hampshire County show greater discontent with development patterns.

### *Impact of Development & Loss of Open-Spaces on Quality of Life*

The majority of respondents in all three study areas indicated open-spaces were important to their quality of life. In Hampshire County, 89.5% suggested their quality of life would “somewhat” or “strongly” decline if no additional efforts were taken to conserve open spaces, while 78% answered this way in the Eastern Shore study. In the Shenandoah Valley, 80% suggested the existence of “natural, scenic, cultural, and historic resources significantly enhanced” quality of life, while 50% believed residential growth was threatening those resources, and 60% felt that “development threatens the quality of life.”

## **Conservation & Development Policies**

### *Public Funding:*

Table 3.34: Comparative display of support for public funding

	Eastern Shore	Shenandoah Valley	Hampshire County <sup>9</sup>
Favor Public Funds	61%	63%	76%
Oppose Public Funds	24%	24%	24%

Hampshire County<sup>10</sup> respondents showed greater support for public funding than either of the other study areas, but all were equal in opposition to funding. As for a new source of public funding dedicated to conservation, 84.2% in Hampshire County showed “somewhat” or “strong” support, while 59% did so in the Eastern Shore. Similarly, in the Shenandoah Valley, 40% indicated willingness to pay higher taxes to fund conservation.

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<sup>9</sup> Hampshire County percentages are forest and farmland averages.

<sup>10</sup> See questions C3 and C4 in Hampshire County Study for public funding.

### *Zoning:*

Hampshire County<sup>11</sup> and the Eastern Shore showed comparable responses to zoning. Zoning with minimal impact on private property rights received 32.4% and 30% of votes, respectively. Zoning that “balances” private property rights with the public good saw 45.9% and 43%, respectively, and zoning in all instances was supported by 13.5% in Hampshire County and 20% in the Eastern Shore. The Shenandoah Valley study indicated 67% of respondents favored stricter zoning, while 20% opposed it. In Hampshire County, 8.1% indicated total opposition. In general, all three areas show support for zoning, but opposition is greater in the Shenandoah Valley and in Hampshire County.

### *Economic Incentives:*

In Hampshire County and the Eastern Shore, provision of economic incentives for conservation was considered “very” (67% and 65% respectively) or “somewhat” (28% and 24%) important by a large majority. In the Shenandoah Valley<sup>12</sup>, 64% favored economic conservation incentives, while 25% showed opposition, and 11% were undecided. Economic incentives for conservation show high approval in all three areas.

In summary, Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, and West Virginia’s Hampshire County appear similarly concerned that a high rate of development is threatening to farms, forests, and other open spaces considered important for a high quality of life. Hampshire County respondents show the most anxiety about open space losses and development. Public funding, increased zoning regulation, and enhanced economic conservation incentives were supported by all, although zoning and greater government control were less well received in Hampshire County and the Shenandoah Valley.

This comparison reveals that Hampshire County is currently experiencing many of the same conflicts between development and open space preservation, as well as maintenance of employment opportunities, as are its eastern neighbors. Also, it indicates accepted land management policies in nearby regions. While this Hampshire County study involved just over forty key informants, the Eastern Shore and Shenandoah Valley studies randomly sampled 1,202 and 1,114 residents, respectively. Since their results, with many more participants, show strong

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<sup>11</sup> See question C5 in Hampshire County Study for zoning.

<sup>12</sup> No intermediate options were given, possibly explaining higher votes for extreme responses.

support for public funding, zoning, and economic incentives, these policies may also be acceptable in Hampshire County.

## Discussion

The majority of Hampshire County study respondents, representing key stakeholder groups, expressed satisfaction with their quality of life but a growing apprehension of the negative impacts of increasing, unplanned development in the county. Highlighted impacts included the loss of farms, forests, scenic areas, and historical sites, as well as the losses of a general “rural character” and a “slower way of life.” Specific comments included, “I hate to see farms breakup for housing developments,” “development is diminishing out the green zone,” “I see the rape of our land by developers taking advantage of our unpreparedness,” and “People are losing what they’ve come here for.” Many respondents also indicated strong ties to the county, be they due to family heritage, the natural environment, or the rural culture. The majority saw recent development trends as a threat to the landscape and their way of life.

However, most respondents exhibited a pragmatic outlook to planning questions. They recognized benefits, particularly economic benefits, of development and were sympathetic to needs for further housing and job opportunities in the county. One participant noted, “Commerce is moving out of the local community...,” while another said, “We are getting more housing, while these people commute to Winchester or D.C. since we don’t have jobs.” In addition, most conveyed the attitude that development cannot be, or need not be, stopped, but they clearly asserted their desire for improved county planning. As one respondent wrote, “Economic development and growth that protects and enhances these values [county qualities] will be more productive in the long run than development that ‘kills the goose that laid the golden egg.’” Others declared, “We need to work on preparing for or guiding development, not on slowing it down or speeding it up” and “We can only regulate quality growth.” The words “vision” and “plan” appeared repeatedly in suggestions for change, as did “work together” and “compromise.”

The questionnaires and interviews of this study suggest a need to bring stakeholder groups together in *facilitated* meetings, where each participant can express his or her interests and ideas but is not permitted to dominate discussion. One interviewee commented, “We need a forum to bring people together... Information and understanding are the keys to this.” A willingness to work together and to compromise will play a key role. Many survey respondents

indicated these as key factors to collaboration, and some suggested collaboration would be impossible without them.

Once in meetings, the planning group should create a common vision for the county, first in broad, theoretical terms and later in progressively more detailed descriptions. Inclusion of expert opinion will aid in mapping key conservation areas, as one respondent suggested, as well as preferred growth areas, expected high development pressure areas, places that present geological or logistical conflict to development (floodplains, septic-inappropriate soils, etc), and areas of prime scenic importance. According to current county commissioner Steve Slonaker, the former County Commission removed a map depicting key conservation and growth areas from the preliminary comprehensive plan draft, presented by a separate planning committee, before the current Comprehensive Plan was printed. As he put it, the former commission preferred a “‘let the chips fall where they may’ strategy” (Slonaker personal communication January 27, 2006).

Following construction of a clear and agreed-upon vision, a long-term plan should be created with policies to implement the committee’s development and conservation goals. As some respondents stressed,<sup>13</sup> enforcement of regulations and general follow-through of policies is critical. As one respondent explained in his survey:

The main problem is the lack of any true commitment by the county commissioners to “make a difference” while there is still time to do so. They are behind by 10-15 years, are set in their ways, have political agendas that are not in line with long term planning, and only give lip service to environmental protection. They even went as far as to disband a planning committee about 3 years ago because it had too many “environmentalists” on board.

Another wrote,

“Common sense is expected but politics always rules. Lip service involves no pain. Real conservation in Hampshire County will only come from electing like- minded people....”

Although the criticisms of a few individuals cannot immediately be assumed the norm, the Comprehensive Plan’s history does imply minimal commissioner planning action. According to a current commissioner, the existing plan was passed primarily to achieve qualification for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood insurance. He says it “barely qualified” and is the “bare bones” of the plan proposed in 2001 by a separate planning committee. As a former researcher for the preliminary comprehensive plan said, “We may not have missed the

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<sup>13</sup> See questions C14-18 for open-ended responses regarding future county planning.

boat, but we've missed a good chunk of the boat." Despite all these discouraging statements, county commissioner Steve Slonaker expressed a positive view also, stating, "getting a plan through at all was a major accomplishment" and "this commission [current] has made more changes than any" (Slonaker personal communication January 27, 2006).

More detail of the significance of these results, as well as recommendations for future planning, can be found in the following final chapter.

## Chapter Four

### Hampshire County's Future Coming Soon: Forward or Backward?

This chapter will summarize Hampshire County development trends and commonly perceived development impacts. It will also present the actions of the County and Planning Commissions regarding land use and development planning, compare these actions to those desired by the study's respondents, and present recommendations for future county planning. Finally, as in this *Hampshire Review* cartoon, it will ask, "Coming Soon! Hampshire County's Future! (Forward, or Backward?)"

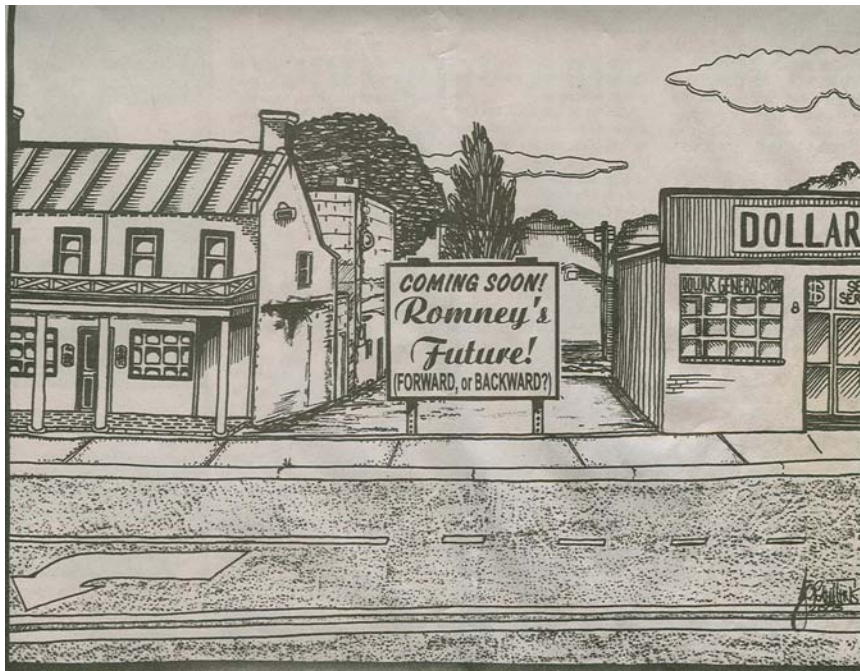


Figure 4.1: Cartoon by Joe Mullins, *Hampshire Review*, October 19, 2005

#### What's Here and What's Coming?

The results of this study, reported in Chapter Three, as well as the presentation of development trends in Chapter Two, indicate that Hampshire County is experiencing characteristics of "sprawl" development. Although "sprawl" is usually considered a suburban occurrence, the evidence in Chapter One suggests residential sprawl development is moving to rural areas. A look at Frederick County, Virginia shows increasing populations in rural regions far outside

Washington D.C. Frederick County grew by 105% between 1970 and 2000 with significant jumps each decade after 1980 (Comprehensive Plan 2003).

Table 4.1: Population Growth Frederick County, Virginia 1950-2000<sup>1</sup>

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	17,537	21,941	28,893	34,150	45,723	59,209
Percent Growth		25.1%	31.7%	18.2%	33.9%	29.5%

As most study participants and interviewees have mentioned, development growth continues to progress towards Hampshire County. With this movement, the environment and existing socio-political community are inevitably affected. Yet, the Hampshire County community is not without means to ease the transition, taking advantage of development’s benefits and minimizing its detriments.

### How Do Stakeholders Feel About It?

Participants of this study, including Hampshire County residents and non –residents, are generally apprehensive about incoming development. Their responses indicate concern with the loss of farms and forests, degradation of streams and ground water, demand on county infrastructure and finances, and alterations to rural life. A few of these sentiments are evident in the following respondent statement: “It is not simply a question of having our beautiful viewscapes destroyed or historic homes demolished; it is a question of being burdened with service requirements that we are very unprepared to handle...” *Hampshire Review* letters to the editor also reveal tension between long-term residents and newcomers as conflicting expectations and attitudes clash.

Many respondents welcome some aspects of development but are also concerned that continuation of current development trends will diminish their quality of life. This respondent’s comment reveals just such a feeling, “The housing boom... has been great... in the short term. In the long term, it will create a burden on infrastructure that will lower the quality of life... and destroy many of the natural areas that people come to see.”

Although some stakeholders, like those presented in Chapter Two’s letters to the editor, have actively expressed their views, others have not. A member of the local land trust reported, “the trend of local people throwing up their hands and saying, ‘It’s coming, and we can’t do a

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<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, as cited in Comprehensive Plan 2003.

thing about it.’’ Although unsure of this attitude’s origins, she cites resident passivity as a substantial county problem.

## County Government Action & Viewpoint

### **Goals of the Comprehensive Plan**

The Hampshire County Commission and Planning Commission created a Comprehensive Plan in 2003 to guide land use planning. Although some consider it the “bare bones” of the originally proposed 2002 plan, the current plan is certainly a beginning. It includes a “vision” to be a “guiding concept of what Hampshire County should become in twenty years.” Following it come goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving said objectives. The “vision” implies balancing development with preservation of open spaces and a rural atmosphere:

Hampshire County is a community where the rural countryside is preserved by encouraging future growth and development to existing communities served by adequate infrastructure systems, which can support a diversified regional economy for a thriving population, which enjoys a high quality of life within a sustainable environment for current and future residents. -- Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan 2003.

The Comprehensive Plan includes strategies to structure future growth in and around current “Village Centers,” along major roadways, and in areas expected to develop after the completion of the Corridor H highway (CP 2003). Village centers include Romney, Augusta, Capon Bridge, Rio, Purgitsville, Yellow Spring and similar developed areas. Additionally, the Plan proposes to “discourage development in areas not suitable for on-site sewage disposal and which cannot be feasibly sewered” and to encourage open space maintenance in creek valleys, open areas, and on steep slopes (CP 2003). These goals are consistent with those of most study respondents, who supported restriction of development to previously developed areas, considered septic system and other infrastructure needs priority concerns, approved increased farm and forest preservation efforts, and viewed waterways, watersheds, farms, and large forest tracts as priority conservation areas. Thus, the goals of the Comprehensive Plan appear in line with the desires of study participants.

Economically, the Plan seeks to recognize and serve a variety of housing needs, attract new desirable businesses, and keep development “consistent with the natural resources, service

constraints, and existing character of the county” (CP 2003). To address employment and commuting issues, the Plan cites a need for commercial development both to generate taxes and to create more accessible jobs (CP 2003). The county is hoping to attract “smaller, higher-skill employers” to the area and to create a greater tourism market (CP 2003). Here, too, the Plan addresses an issue important to study participants; 28.2% listed employment as a top county problem. The challenge will be to encourage *local* commercial development without diminishing other important community qualities.

### **County Government Views on 20-Acre Lot Size**

Former assessor candidate David Parker and county planner Charles Baker implied that the county government is comfortable with the 20-acre lot subdivision ordinance exemption, so despised by a number of study respondents. In the officials’ view, a large lot with a centrally - located house provides protection against groundwater contamination and neighbor irritation, because the surrounding land is expected to absorb septic leakage and/or erosion effects. This view suggests environmental impacts are considered but possibly not well understood. Ecosystem fragmentation and multiple, small pollution sources can be as damaging as a large, visible polluter, so 20-acre lots are not necessarily safer for the environment than smaller-lot developments. Developers have presented plans for higher -density developments with centralized sewage plants, which may, in fact, be feasible, environmentally- conscious options. Investigating the environmental impacts of various development styles would be a good first move for county planners. Furthermore, the resulting forest fragmentation diminishes habitats and available hunting lands.

Although the Comprehensive Plan includes in its goals some of the same issues presented by study participants, there is a significant sense from respondents and interviewees that county planning has thus far been insufficient. “*Unplanned* development” and “poor planning” surfaced repeatedly. Respondents were unconvinced that satisfactory steps are being taken to reach the Plan’s broad goals. This snippet of conversation from a November 1, 2005 meeting in the Hampshire County Courthouse reflects public sentiment towards county planning leadership:

Assessor Frank Whitacre: “Can government plan for better land use?”

Community Member: “Sure; the question is, is there a will to do so?”

## Is That Enough?

The Comprehensive Plan itself contains inconsistencies that undermine its rigor. Maps depicting county subdivisions, future land use, and water and sewer service areas are referred to in the text but are not present within the document. For example, the table of contents indicates a Future Land Use map can be found “following page 19,” and on page 19, under the “Future Land Use Plan” heading, is the sentence, “A map...is included on the following page.” Yet, no map appears on the next page or any other. I remind reader’s here that Steve Slonaker, a current county commissioner and former member of the Planning Commission<sup>2</sup>, explained that a map showing areas of the county in which to plan development and to save as green spaces was excluded in revision of the Comprehensive Plan. He says the former County Commission resisted changing policies, preferring to “let the chips fall where they may.”

Furthermore, the missing land use map’s description indicates low-density subdivisions will be color-coded as “forest” (CP 2003, page 19). Although the statement may make logistical sense for mapping ease, it is misleading. As explained in Chapter One, fragmentation can markedly alter a forest’s environmental services, so classifying low-density subdivisions as “forest” may misinform management strategies. To appropriately address issues of future land use, current land usage must be accurately portrayed.

The Comprehensive Plan’s vision for a rural but economically and socially vibrant Hampshire County generally meshes with study respondents’ opinions. Their wishes included: farm and open-space protection, healthy local businesses that provide good jobs, careful management of development, and strong, planning-focused leadership guided by a clear vision for the county’s future. Most respondents also saw population growth, in-migration, and increased development demand as inevitable forces. Yet, action can be taken to bridle those forces into a form acceptable to Hampshire County.

The next step is to translate respondents’ concerns and desires into a more precise comprehensive plan. As a nonresident, non- landowner suggested, “The county and its residents need to think carefully about what makes Hampshire County ‘special’ and about what people really value... and want to see protected.” So, how do we make that happen?

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<sup>2</sup> The 2001-2002 Planning Commission drafted the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan.

## How to Make It Happen

### **Involve Everyone**

Survey results strongly suggested all stakeholder groups should be involved in county planning. From county officials through citizens and developers to non-resident vacationers, all viewpoints are valuable to determine the needs and concerns that will require attention in a truly *comprehensive* plan. Says one respondent, “We all have a responsibility in solving this problem. We also have different perspectives and needs. We cannot wait for “the other person” to take the major responsibility.” Facilitation by an independent party can aid planning groups and community meetings in making efficient use of time, acknowledging and recording each participant’s opinions, and finding compromises.

### **Watch the Neighbors**

An out-of-state resident described his home in Clarendon, Arlington County, Virginia as “an outstanding example of a community that has developed very well and managed to attract business, growth, and housing. It’s not easy, but it can be done.” Although he admits translating one community’s challenges and solutions to another is not always easy or effective, “the key themes of community involvement and master planning are transferable.”

Chapter Three’s comparisons of Hampshire County’s development impacts and potential management strategies with those of Maryland’s Eastern Shore and Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley suggest these communities may indeed have similar problems. Although any policy proposal should be carefully thought out, with considerable consideration of the local environs, looking to our neighbors for ideas may expand Hampshire’s current frame of thinking about development and land use. A case study of Clarendon, Virginia and other communities may provide some helpful insight, as might a review of zoning plans in neighboring Jefferson and Hardy counties of West Virginia.

### **Get Help from Outside Professionals**

One respondent suggested planners “ask environmental groups which areas are highest priority to conserve.” The recommendations of ecologists and geologists may also be helpful in determining prime areas for protection and development. Flood plains, scenic views, priority conservation areas, high traffic zones, existing developed areas, and other key features can then

be mapped and overlapped on a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program to determine efficient land usage. Once the Comprehensive Plan is revised, and strategies developed, review by independent peers can strengthen Hampshire County planners' efforts.

### **Consider Policies' Indirect Effects**

When considering specific policies to achieve management objectives, planners should ponder potential indirect effects of those strategies. Hampshire County's 20-acre lot "de facto" ordinance, as one respondent called it, is an indirect result of a reasonable subdivision ordinance. Small lot, low-income, and supposed "unappealing" subdivisions were becoming common, and according to Dave Pancake, former Development Authority director, "The only way to slow down this 2-acre lot mayhem was to ease the 5-acre restrictions, but then the 20-acre thing started." He continued, "In lieu of a real solution, the 20-acre lots started up. It was never intended to be a permanent strategy." This narrative hints at the indirect effects of policy decisions. An effort to curb 2-acre "mayhem" created an opposite spectrum result of 20-acre lot subdivisions. As one respondent, who is also a developer, said, "20-acre exemption... is a joke, and developers are laughing all the way to the bank..." Indirect policy results should be carefully considered.

### **Use Economic Incentives**

Given limited resources and a growing demand for existing services, development planning will also require economic planning. Respondents and interviewees suggested that economic incentives and disincentives could encourage preferred activities. For example, lower taxes on farms and properties with conservation easements may encourage conservation. In addition to taxes, environmental and infrastructure impact fees can encourage well-planned developments. Impact fees are charges to developers, generally from municipalities, for costs incurred from the new development (Templeton 2002). Revenue from these fees, or from higher development taxation, could fund infrastructure and conservation projects.

### **Use Zoning**

According to recent articles in the *Hampshire Review*, zoning is gaining attention. The county planner commented in a zoning discussion, "the commission wants to proceed with eyes open to

handle the growth at our doorstep” (Baker 2006). He asserts development can’t be stopped, but the county “can promote growth in a more orderly fashion” (Baker 2006). Zoning may be a key tool in that ordering process, and it can also allow the county to gather impact fees from developments. As Pancake insists, “Good designs must include zoning.”

Some residents may resist zoning, feeling it undermines property rights. Yet, in the words of one respondent, “A homeowner’s right to ... expand [his] home has little impact on the county,” while “A developer’s ability to bring in ten...or a hundred new families has severe impacts...” Although zoning may impinge upon some property rights, it seems an appropriate action to achieve Hampshire County’s goal of balancing development with land protection. A grandfathering clause that permits continuation of current uses for some time can ease the transition to zoning.

### **Use Infrastructure to Position Development**

Expansion and upgrading of current infrastructure to accommodate new subdivisions and commercial districts would minimize complaints of infrastructure failures and encourage commercial development. Yet, the county currently lacks sufficient funding to make those changes, especially when developments are built in difficult to access places.

Given the barrier of insufficient infrastructure and funds, another option is, “to *not* offer water and sewer facilities” (Whitacre 2005). Cut-off boundaries beyond which infrastructure will not be extended can limit sprawling growth and encourage town redevelopment where present infrastructure is available (Benfield et al 1999). However, since much of today’s development is taking place far outside available infrastructure, this strategy may have only minimal impacts.

A final proposal to the infrastructure-development puzzle is to combine the two previous strategies; place new infrastructure in preferred growth areas and refuse expansion to other areas. Whitacre and Pancake supposed placement of water, sewer, and electrical lines along Route 50, the county’s principle highway, “would concentrate development along Route 50.” In this combination plan, planners can influence the positioning of developments.

### **Redevelop Areas within Towns**

Where possible, redevelopment of existing town residential areas can make town living more attractive and decrease demand for conversion of natural areas. This strategy has been used

throughout the nation in large cities and is a growing practice in small towns as well (CNU 2006). Remodeling or new construction of homes with appealing landscaping and easy access to both town conveniences and parks or other open spaces can prove inviting (Benfield et al 1999). Redeveloping towns may reduce pressure on open-spaces and ease infrastructure challenges.

### **Adopt “Low Impact Development” Ordinances<sup>3</sup>**

Where new developments are built, low-impact ordinances can minimize environmental damages. A respondent from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) provided the following example of an ordinance prohibiting forest disturbance within 100 feet of streams. Despite development, water quality degradation would be minimized. In this example, the environmentally restrictive ordinance may also benefit developers by allowing them to advertise properties with access to permanently protected woodland.

### **Create Conservation & Cluster Developments**

Developments can be designed so homes are clustered in one region of a property while natural or community green space occupies the rest. Therefore, these designs can provide the overall same density as traditional developments on less land, while still offering homeowners a rural setting (Figure 4.2). Central or individual infrastructure systems may be used, depending on housing layouts. Use of conservation easements<sup>4</sup> on open-spaces can permanently protect those areas, maintaining both environmental integrity and high property values. “People pay more for park-like setting,” writes land-use planner and site designer Randall Arendt in his book on conservation planning (Arendt 1999). He explains, “there is little or no correlation between lot size and price” in conservation developments, where “a small lot with a great view is frequently worth as much or more as...a larger lot that is boxed in.” Yet, he assures developers can build “for the market,” either to attract high or moderate- income buyers (Arendt 1999).

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<sup>3</sup> The WV Potomac Tributary Strategy & Implementation Plan provides examples; see Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on conservation easements, see Appendix C.

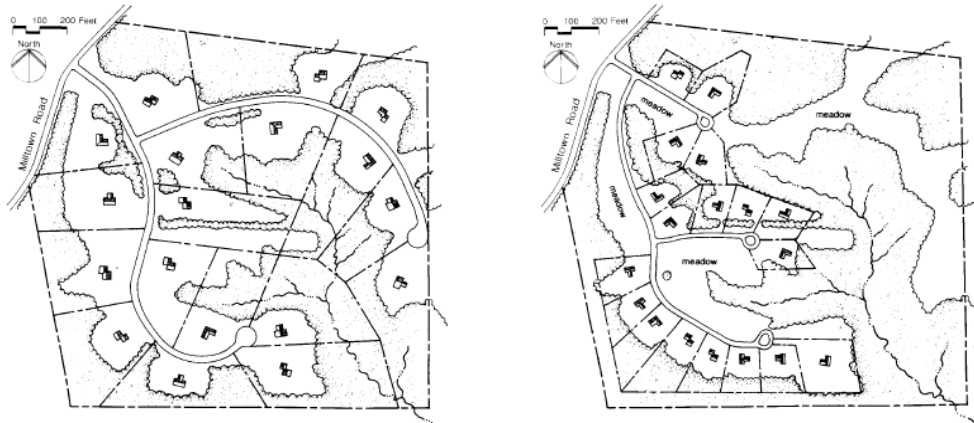


Figure 4.2: Traditional large-lot development (left) versus conservation development (right).  
(Growing Greener 2001).

Conservation and cluster developments can provide the same overall density as traditional developments, while permanently protecting open spaces. Arendt (1999) asserts, “They create more attractive and pleasing living environments that sell more easily and appreciate faster than conventional ‘house lot and street’ developments.” Conservation developments typically designate 50-70% of their land area as permanent open-space, which appeases environmental concerns (Arendt 1999). Thus, these developments may attend to the desires of several community stakeholders simultaneously.

Ownership and control of open-space land falls most commonly to homeowner associations, although individual owners, land trusts, and municipalities are also possibilities (Arendt 1999). While purchases, donations, and transfers of development rights can be important conservation management tools,<sup>5</sup> the “Growing Greener approach,” as Arendt calls conservation development planning, is more easily used because it

- Does not require public expenditure
- Does not depend on landowner charity
- Does not require transfers of development rights from one parcel to another
- Does not depend on landowner cooperation (adapted from Arendt 1999).

Although such planning may seem challenging for Hampshire County, examples abound in comparable areas.<sup>6</sup> Several study participants also supported its practice, including the county assessor, a former Development Authority director, members of the preliminary comprehensive

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix C for information sources.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C for links to case studies.

plan research committee, a county developer, and a Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust board member. Given this study's indication that natural areas constitute some of Hampshire County's primary attractions, a market for conservation developments very well might exist. Dave Pancake suggested this in his remark about incentives for cluster development design, "I'm a great believer in market driven planning." As buyers prefer homes near natural areas and other open-spaces (Arendt 1999), guaranteed open-space adjacent to house lots may prove a valuable marketing strategy for developers.

## Final Messages

Hampshire County, a place beloved to its inhabitants and visitors, is experiencing rapid changes for which its residents and leadership are ill-prepared. Development at the current rate and pattern is threatening those characteristics for which long-term residents have remained and newcomers are attracted. As this reality is understood, small steps are being taken towards a better future, but they have been tripped up with internal disputes. Hampshire County still has time to gather itself together, but it must do so soon if it is to effectively harness approaching development into appropriate areas and to maintain the open-spaces and rural character for which the county is so appreciated.

The county government is of primary importance in this effort. It will need to act as the unifying agent among multiple stakeholders and work with these interest groups to form a specific vision of what is desired in Hampshire County's future. Again with the assistance of other groups, it must then expand the Comprehensive Plan beyond generic objectives into a long-term plan with sound strategies to achieve its goals.

Residents are also crucial to an effective planning process, as it is they who must live with the decisions made. They must become active, attending public meetings and making their interests and ideas known. Land developers, real estate agents, and others who profit from development should be involved in planning, as their financial interests are at stake. These groups are also valuable for their knowledge of housing markets and the feasibility of development designs. Conservation groups, such as the Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust, can suggest priority conservation areas and share their land protection expertise with conservation easements and related strategies. New residents, out-of-county property owners, and visitors can bring fresh perspectives to the discussion by sharing their outsider's view of the county's

condition and their observations of other places' development management strategies. Each group can enhance the quality of county planning.

## **Suggested Actions for Stakeholder Groups**

### *County Commissioners and Planners*

- Act as unifying agents among stakeholders
- Clarify the county's "vision," using stakeholder viewpoints
- Study other regions' plans
- Seek professional advice
- Expand the Comprehensive Plan
- Implement policies to reflect The Plan (zoning, low-impact ordinances, etc)
- Seek peer review of planning strategies
- Ask "Self-Diagnostic Questions" (adapted from Arendt 1999)
  1. *Community Resource Inventory*: Have we adequately inventoried our resources, and do our residents and officials understand and appreciate them?
  2. *Community Audit*: Are we assessing our likely future under its current growth management practices, and are we taking steps to change what we do not like?
  3. *Policies for Conservation and Development*: Have we established appropriate and realistic policies for land conservation and development?
  4. *Regulatory Framework*: Do our zoning and subdivision regulations encourage our Comprehensive Plan policies for land conservation and development?
  5. *Designing Conservation Subdivisions*: Do we know how to work cooperatively and effectively with subdivision developers?
  6. *Working Relationships with Landowners*: Do we have a good understanding of working relationships with our major landowners?
  7. *Stewardship of Conservation Lands*: Have we made strategies to successfully own, manage, and use lands set aside for conservation purposes?
  8. *Ongoing Education and Communications*: How are we officials maintaining our knowledge...in managing growth to conserve land?

### *Residents*

- Be active
- Attend meetings
- Make interests and ideas known
- Hold officials accountable
- Vote for officials with long-term plans

*Land Developers & Real Estate Agents*

- Keep in mind characteristics of the existing community
- Encourage “redevelopment” in towns
- Seek infrastructure solutions from projects’ start
- Build/Encourage conservation developments
- Offer knowledge of alternative development designs
- Work with environmental groups to find “common ground”

*Conservation Groups & Farmers*

- Share selected “key conservation areas”
- Present conservation/farm preservation strategies to planners
- Be willing to compromise
- Work with developers to find “common ground”

*New Residents, Out-of-county Landowners, & Visitors*

- Learn about the community
- Participate in community activities
- Share impressions of the county
- Offer insights from out-of-county experiences

How feasible is a successful new plan for Hampshire County? That’s hard to answer, but as one respondent of a group meeting said, “This is where it starts- with five people of probably very different views- but as rational people we can talk about this and come to solutions.”

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## Appendix A

### Hampshire County Conservation & Development Perception Survey

#### Hampshire County Residence/Property Ownership:

1. Are you a Hampshire County resident?      Yes    No
2. If so, how long have you lived in H.C.? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where do you live/ did you live previously (region)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Was (is) your former (current) residence in a city, town, suburb, or rural area? (Circle 1).
5. Do you own property in HC?              Yes    No
6. How many acres do you own in Hampshire County? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you owned Hampshire County property? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have a second/vacation home on the property? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What attracted you to own property/reside in Hampshire County? (Mark all that apply.)
  - Quality of life
  - Quality of schools
  - Affordable housing
  - Quality of environment
  - Cultural resources/activities
  - Small community
  - Beauty/charm of community
  - Lower cost of living
  - Away from urban, city life
  - Rural area
  - Access to outdoor recreation
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic Information:** Please answer, if you feel comfortable doing so.

These questions are to ensure I am hearing the opinions of a variety of Hampshire County residents, not just those of a particular age, gender, or political leaning.

1. Please circle your age range.      <30    30-39    40-49    50-59    60-69    70+
2. Gender?    Male    Female
3. Are you registered to vote as a...? Not Registered? No Political Leanings?
  - Republican
  - Democrat
  - Independent
  - Other
  - Not Registered/No political leanings
  - Prefer not to say

#### Quality of Life and County Issues:

For the following questions, please circle the options that best match your opinion.

1. For you, is the statement, “The reasons for my attraction to the area remain unchanged”...
  - Very True
  - Somewhat True
  - Moderately True
  - Not Very True
  - Not At All True.

2. In terms of land development, do you think Hampshire County is going in the right direction, or have things gotten on the wrong track?
  - Right direction
  - Wrong Track
  
3. Generally speaking, how do you rate the quality of life for Hampshire County residents?
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Satisfactory-Average
  - Fair
  - Poor
  
4. Do you believe the quality of life for HC residents has improved, declined, or remained about the same during the past 10 years?
  - Improved
  - Remained the Same
  - Declined
  
5. What would you say is the most important problem facing Hampshire County today?
  
6. What are the most important issues county commissioners should address today?
  
7. Are you aware of any development trends in Hampshire County? What are they?
  
8. If no additional efforts are taken to conserve farmland and natural areas in Hampshire County, the quality of life for residents will:
  - Strongly Improve
  - Somewhat Improve
  - Stay the Same
  - Somewhat Decline
  - Strongly Decline.
  
9. Generally speaking, do you consider the current pace of growth and development in Hampshire County...?
  - Very Positive
  - Somewhat Positive
  - Moderate
  - Somewhat Negative
  - Very Negative
  
10. Has development impacted the following things positively, negatively, or not at all?

	Traffic	Taxes	Cultural Opportunities	Visual Landscape	Business & Economy	Sense of Community	Crime
Positive							
Negative							
Unchanged							

11. The county's development goals should be to...?
- Increase development
  - Continue development at current rate.
  - Decrease development
  - Continue at current rate, but in a different manner.
  - Increase development, but in a different manner.

**Conservation Views:**

1. How concerned are you about the loss of Hampshire County farmland & forestland today?

Farmland

- Very Concerned
- Somewhat Concerned
- Indifferent
- Moderately Concerned
- Not at all Concerned

Forestland

- Very Concerned
- Somewhat Concerned
- Indifferent
- Moderately Concerned
- Not at all Concerned

2. Do you believe county commissioners should increase, decrease, or remain the same in their efforts to preserve farmland? Forestland?

Farmland

- Increase
- Decrease
- Remain the Same

Forestland

- Increase
- Decrease
- Remain the Same

3. Do you believe public funds should be used to protect farms & forestland?

Farmland

- Use Public Funds
- Do Not Use Public Funds

Forestland

- Use Public Funds
- Do Not Use Public Funds

4. Generally speaking, would you support or oppose the creation of a new source of public funding (generated by tax dollars) dedicated to farmland and/or forestland protection?

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Indifferent
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

5. Which of the following four statements best represents your viewpoint on the issue of growth and development?
- Zoning regulations should be passed to limit development in rural areas, *as long as there is little impact on private property rights.*
  - Zoning regulations should be passed to limit development in rural areas, *as long as private property rights are balanced with the public good.*
  - Zoning regulations should be passed to limit development in rural areas *in all instances.*
  - Zoning regulations *should not be* passed.

6. How important to you is providing landowners with economic incentives (such as conservation easements) to encourage protection of working forests & farms?

- | <u>Farmland</u>                            | <u>Forestland</u>                          |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Very Important       | <input type="radio"/> Very Important       |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Important   | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> Indifferent          | <input type="radio"/> Indifferent          |
| <input type="radio"/> Not Very Important   | <input type="radio"/> Not Very Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> Not At All Important | <input type="radio"/> Not At All Important |

7. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the statement: Developers have the same private property rights as homeowners to develop the land they own, so government doesn't have the right to manage growth & development in the county.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Indifferent
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. How important is concentrating new growth and development in and around existing towns?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Indifferent
- Not Very Important
- Not At All Important

9. What types of places are most important to protect? (Please rank.)

- Natural/Scenic Areas \_\_\_\_\_
- Farms \_\_\_\_\_
- Historical/Cultural \_\_\_\_\_

10. What place (s), specifically, would you like to see protected in Hampshire Co.?

11. How do you believe H.C. land conservation will impact the local economy?

- Very much negatively
- Somewhat negatively
- Won't make much difference
- Somewhat Positively
- Very Positively

12. How possible is it to simultaneously meet the needs of conservation, economic/business growth, and housing in Hampshire County's future?

- Very Possible
- Somewhat Possible
- Moderately Possible
- Somewhat Impossible
- Very Impossible

13. Who should be involved? (Please rank. 1 = most important.)

- State/Federal Government \_\_\_\_\_
- Private landowners \_\_\_\_\_
- Environmental Groups \_\_\_\_\_
- County planners, commissioners \_\_\_\_\_
- Business owners \_\_\_\_\_
- Developers \_\_\_\_\_

14. What groups are *most likely* to work together towards a conservation consensus? (Please draw arrows between listed groups or write in your responses.)

- Private landowners
- Environmental Groups
- County planners, commissioners
- Business owners
- Developers

15. Which specific groups or people come to mind?

16. Are there partnerships already in place?

17. How should they collaborate?

18. How can the needs of conservationists, economic/business growth, and housing all be met?

19. Finally, What else should I know? Who else should I talk to?

## Appendix B: Narrative Responses to Open-Ended Questions

### Q5: What is the most important problem facing Hampshire County today?

- High Taxes
- Drugs & Crime
- Unemployment & Poor Jobs
- Poor Roads & Infrastructure
- Growth & Development
- Population Growth
- High Land Values
- Conservation & Environment
- Absence of Land Regulations
- Absence of Zoning
- Lack of Regulation Enforcement
- Community Passivity/Inaction
- Community Resistance to Zoning
- Loss of Rural Lifestyle
- Education/Schools
- Poor Government Leadership
- Mismanagement of Resources
- Lack of Government Vision
- Lack of Community Vision
- High Land Values
- Lack of Shopping Centers and Grocery Stores

### Q6: What are the most important issues county commissioners should address today?

- "Hold the line" on Taxes
  - Promote property tax equalization
- Create New Jobs/Economic Opportunities
  - Encourage low (environmental) impact jobs
  - Provide workforce education
  - Encourage businesses providing long-term employment
- Better Manage Growth, Development, and Sprawl
  - Curb "20-acre lot" subdivisions
  - Make zoning laws & building codes
  - Increase development fees
  - Require developers to pay for their infrastructure
- Preserve Farmland/Natural Areas
  - Develop incentives for land preservation
  - Lower taxes for conservation easement properties
- Improve Leadership
  - Obtain knowledge about issues
  - Better represent County's eastern side
  - Better manage County's budget
- Improve Infrastructure
  - Roads
  - Sidewalks
  - Sewer & Water
- Preserve Rural Lifestyle
- Create more Offices for County Employees
- Fight Crime
- Improve Education/Schools

**Q7: Are you aware of any development trends in Hampshire County? What are they?**

- Many new subdivisions
- 20+ acre tracts
- 2-acre tracts
- Residential developments
- More 2nd homes
- High land values
- Developers taking advantage
- Farmers selling to developers
- Land purchased by wealthier non-residents
- Lighted billboards
- Minimal building standards
- Infrastructure deterioration
- Farm & Forest loss

**C10: What specific places would you like to see protected?"**

- Waterways
- Large forested tracts
- Historic Areas
- Farms
- Critical Wildlife Areas
- Scenic Areas
- Ridgetops
- Rural Character
- Battlefields
- Historic Structures
- Ground water sources
- "Contiguous forest"
- Grasslands
- Yellow Spring Mill
- Cacapon River Valley
- Mill Creek Valley

**C15: "Which specific groups or people come to mind [for planning collaboration]?"**

- Landowners
- County Commission
- Planning Commission
- Developers
- Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust
- Other Land Trusts (Farmland Trust)
- Second-home buyers
- Realtors' Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local attorneys
- Historical/Cultural groups
- Agricultural & forestry concerns
- Farm Bureau
- Farmers
- Wildlife groups (Wild Turkey Federation, Quail, Ducks Unlimited)
- Nature Conservancy and other national non-governmental organizations
- Those who have long term connections to Hampshire County

### **C17: Key Factors to Collaboration**

- Working together
- Public meetings, with facilitation
- Creating a common vision for the county's future
- Flexibility/willingness to change/compromise
- Task force to advise commissioners
- Commissioners committed to planning
- Offering aid to offset costs for businesses, developers, and taxpayers

### **Q17 & 18: Planning Suggestions to meet Conservation, Economic, and Housing Needs.**

- Revise Comprehensive Plan
- Make a *long-term* plan
- Determine how much development the current infrastructure can support
- Improve current infrastructure before allowing more developments
- Tax developers
- Make zoning regulations
- Make tax breaks for conservation easements
- Elect committed leaders without personal agendas
  - “Have people with integrity make decisions that will not receive economic gain.”  
– Eileen
- Enforce subdivision and environmental regulations
- Encourage new housing within town limits
- Encourage new businesses within town limits
- Asking environmental groups about priority conservation areas
- “Map the priority areas for each type of preservation or use, and then use a computer program to limit the number of conflicts- show us how land can be zoned to maximize satisfaction for all.” –Hartman
- Involve local residents
  - “LOCAL is important- having people in these groups that understand the area and its conditions”- Eileen

## Appendix C: Sources of Additional Information

### New Urbanism

Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU): <http://www.cnu.org>.

Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company: [www.dpz.com](http://www.dpz.com). The company has designed over 250 communities, seeking to combat sprawl and revitalize towns. The website explains New Urbanism and describes the company's services, projects, and research. It also contains pdf documents outlining design principles and links to other planning companies.

### Smart Growth

The Natural Resources Defense Council: <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/smartGrowth/>. This website contains links to books, articles, and organizations dealing with sprawl development.

Smart Growth Online provides resources and networks to aid in implementing “smart growth.” [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org).

*Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances*. R. Arendt, 1999. Washington D.C.: Island Press. *Growing Greener* provides ample information about conservation developments and county land use planning. Appendices contain sample language for subdivision and zoning ordinances.

*Solving Sprawl: Models of Smart Growth in Communities Across America*. F. Kaid Benfield, Jutka Terris, and Nancy Vorsanger. For a description and ordering details, visit <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/smartGrowth/solve/solveinx.asp>

*Growing Greener: Conservation by Design*. 2001. This booklet was created by a coalition of Pennsylvania government agencies, land trusts, universities, non-profits, and the private sector. It suggests planning strategies. [http://www.natlands.org/uploads/document\\_33200515638.pdf](http://www.natlands.org/uploads/document_33200515638.pdf).

### Land Trusts & Protection Strategies

Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust. This local land trust has protected 6,230 acres in Hampshire County and is knowledgeable about conservation easements and other land protection methods. For more information, contact the Executive President at [nailes@mountain.net](mailto:nailes@mountain.net) or visit [www.cacapon.org](http://www.cacapon.org).

Land Trust Alliance. This national organization of land trusts contains further information about conservation and land protection strategies. [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org).

The Potomac Conservancy. This organization has worked on with the Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust on Hampshire County projects and can provide further land trust information.  
<http://www.potomac.org>.

West Virginia Potomac Tributary Strategy Implementation Plan.  
[http://www.wvnet.org/downloads/Implementation%20Plan%2012\\_15\\_05.pdf](http://www.wvnet.org/downloads/Implementation%20Plan%2012_15_05.pdf).

This plan was created to aid in improving water quality in West Virginia's tributaries to the Potomac River. The effort is part of a multi-state agreement to improve the quality of water entering the Chesapeake Bay. Objectives target both point- source and non- point- source pollution origins, including urban and developed areas.

## **Appendix D**

### **Frequently Asked Questions About Conservation Subdivision Design**

Reprinted from *Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances*,  
Appendix 1 by Randall Arendt (1999).

## Frequently Asked Questions About Conservation Subdivision Design

This appendix provides readers with a quick overview of the main concerns typically expressed about conservation subdivision design by local residents and officials. The points on the following several pages have been gleaned from the text of this book and assembled in a format that is easy to photocopy (with the publisher's permission) for distribution at public meetings where this approach is being discussed.

### *1. Does this conservation-based approach involve a "taking"?*

No. People who do not fully understand this conservation-based approach to subdivision design may mistakenly believe that it constitutes "a taking of land without compensation." This misunderstanding may stem from the fact that conservation subdivisions, as described in this book, involve either large percentages of undivided open space or lower overall building densities. There are two reasons why this approach does not constitute a "taking."

First, *no density is taken away*. Conservation zoning is fundamentally fair because it allows landowners and developers to achieve full density under the municipality's current zoning—and even to increase that density significantly—through several different "as-of-right" options. Of the five options permitted under conservation zoning, three provide for either full or enhanced densities. The other two options offer the developer the choice to

lower densities and increase lot sizes. Although conservation zoning precludes full-density layouts that do not conserve open space, this is legal because there is no constitutional “right to sprawl.”

Second, *no land is taken for public use*. None of the land that is required to be designated for conservation purposes becomes public (or even publicly accessible) unless the landowner or developer wants it to be. In the vast majority of situations, municipalities themselves have no desire to own and manage such conservation land, which they generally feel should be a neighborhood responsibility. For cases in which local officials wish to provide township recreational facilities (such as ball fields or trails) within conservation subdivisions, the municipality must negotiate with the developer for the purchase of that land on a “willing seller/willing buyer” basis. To facilitate such negotiations, conservation zoning ordinances can be written to include density incentives to encourage developers to designate specific parts of their conservation land for public ownership or for public access and use.

## 2. How can a community ensure permanent protection for conservation lands?

The most effective way to ensure that conservation land in a new subdivision will remain undeveloped forever is to place a permanent conservation easement on it. Such easements run with the chain of title, in perpetuity, and specify the various conservation uses that may occur on the property. These restrictions are separate from zoning ordinances and continue in force even if legal densities rise in future years. Easements are typically held by land trusts and units of government. Since political leadership can change over time, land trusts are the most reliable holder of easements, as their mission never varies. Deed restrictions and covenants are, by comparison, not as effective as easements and are not recommended for this purpose. Easements can be modified only within the spirit of the original agreement and only if the coholders agree. In practice, while a proposal to erect another house or a country club building on the open space would typically be denied, permission to create a small ball field or a single tennis court in a corner of a large conservation meadow or former field might well be granted.

## 3. What are the ownership, maintenance, tax, and liability issues?

Among the most commonly expressed concerns about subdivisions that conserve open space are questions about who will own and maintain the conservation land and who will be responsible for the potential liability and payment of property taxes. The short answer is that the owner of the conservation land is responsible for all of the above. But who owns this land?

### OWNERSHIP CHOICES

There are basically four ownership options, which may be combined within the same subdivision where that makes the most sense.

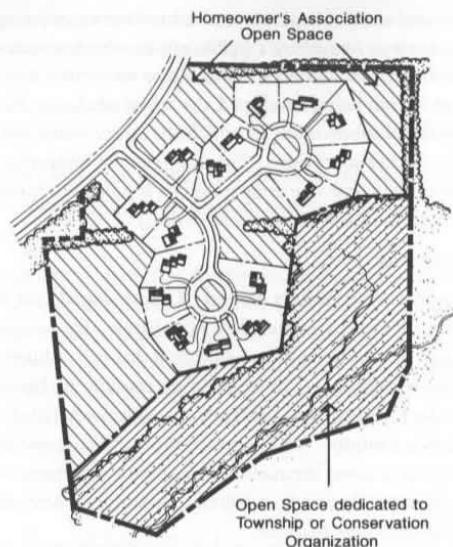
- *Individual landowner*: At its simplest level, the original landowner (a farmer, for example) can retain ownership of as much as 80 percent of the conservation land to keep it in the family. (At least 20 percent of the open space should be reserved for common neighborhood use by subdivision residents.) That landowner can also pass this property on to sons or daughters or sell it to other individual landowners, with permanent conservation easements running with the land and protecting it from development under future owners. The open space should not, however, be divided among all of the individual subdivision lots because land management and access difficulties are likely to arise.
- *Homeowner associations*: Most conservation land within subdivisions is owned and managed by homeowner associations (HOAs). A few basic ground rules encourage a good performance record. First, membership must be automatic, a precondition of property purchase in the development. Second, zoning should require that bylaws give such associations the legal right to place liens on properties of members who fail to pay their dues. Third, facilities should be minimal (ball fields and trails rather than clubhouses and swimming pools) to keep annual dues low. And fourth, detailed maintenance plans for conservation areas should be required by the municipality as a condition of approval. The municipality has enforcement rights and may place a lien on the property should the HOA fail to perform their obligations to maintain the conservation land.
- *Land trusts*: Although homeowner associations are generally the most log-

ical recipients of conservation land within subdivisions, occasionally situations arise in which such ownership most appropriately resides with a land trust (such as when a particularly rare or significant natural area is involved). Land trusts are private, charitable groups whose principal purpose is to protect land under its stewardship from inappropriate change. Their most common role is to hold easements or fee simple title on conservation lands within new developments, and elsewhere in the community, to ensure that all restrictions are observed. To cover the costs of either maintaining the land that they own or monitoring the land on which they hold easements, land trusts typically require some endowment funding. When conservation zoning offers a density bonus, developers can donate the proceeds from the additional "endowment lots" to such trusts for maintenance or monitoring.

- *Municipality or other public agency:* In special situations, a local government might desire to own part of the conservation land within a new subdivision, such as when that land has been identified in a municipal open space plan as a good location for a neighborhood park or for a link in a community trail network. Developers can be encouraged to sell or donate certain acreage to municipalities through additional density incentives, although the final decision would remain the developer's.
- *Combinations of the above:* As illustrated in Figure A1-1, the conservation land within new subdivisions could involve multiple ownerships, including (1) "noncommon" open space, such as cropland retained by the original farmer; (2) common open space, such as ball fields owned by an HOA; and (3) a trail corridor owned by either a land trust or the municipality.

#### MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Local officials should require conservation area management plans to be submitted and approved prior to granting final subdivision approval. In Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, the community's "model" management plan is typically adopted by reference by each subdivision applicant. That document identifies a dozen different kinds of conservation areas (from woodlands and pastures to ball fields and abandoned farmland that is reforesting) and describes recommended manage-



**Figure A1-1.** Open space ownership options. Various private and public entities can own different parts of the open space within conservation subdivisions.

ment practices for each one. Farmland is typically leased by HOAs and land trusts to local farmers, who often agree to modify some of their agricultural practices to minimize impacts on nearby residents. Although ball fields and village greens require weekly mowing, conservation meadows typically need only annual mowing. Woodlands generally require the least maintenance: trimming bushes along walking trails and removing invasive vines around the outer edges where greater sunlight penetration favors their growth.

#### TAX CONCERNS

Property tax assessments on conservation subdivisions should not differ, in total, from those on conventional developments. This is because the same

number of houses and acres of land are involved in both cases (except when part of the open space is owned by a public entity, which is uncommon). Although the open space in conservation subdivisions is taxed low because easements prevent it from being developed, the rate is similar to that applied to land in conventional subdivisions in which the larger house lots are not big enough to be further subdivided. (For example, the undeveloped back half of a one-acre lot in a one-acre zoning district is subject to minimal taxation because it has no further development value.)

#### LIABILITY QUESTIONS

Statutes in all but two states protect owners of undeveloped land from liability for negligence if the landowner does not charge a fee to recreational users. A tree root or rock outcropping along a trail that trips a hiker will not constitute landowner negligence. To be sued successfully in Pennsylvania, landowners must be found to have "willfully or maliciously failed to guard against a dangerous condition." This is a much more difficult case for plaintiffs to make. Even so, to cover themselves against such situations, owners of conservation lands routinely purchase liability insurance policies similar to those that most homeowners maintain.

#### 4. How can on-site sewage disposal work with conservation subdivisions?

The conventional view is that the smaller lots in conservation subdivisions make them more difficult to develop in areas without sewers. However, the reverse is true. The flexibility inherent in the design of conservation subdivisions makes them superior to conventional layouts in their ability to provide for adequate sewage disposal. Two examples are discussed in the following sections.

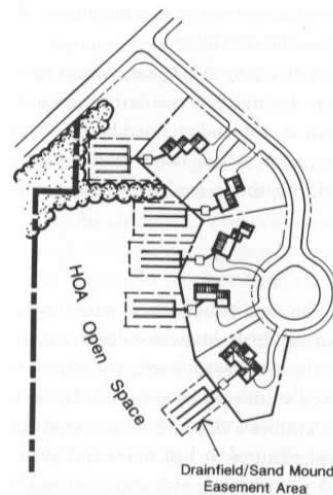
#### UTILIZING THE BEST SOILS

Conservation design requires the most suitable soils on the property to be identified at the outset, enabling house lots to be arranged to take the best advantage of them. If one end of a property has deeper, better-drained soils, it makes more sense to site the homes in that part of the property rather than to spread them out such that some lots are located entirely on

mediocre soils that barely manage to meet minimal standards for septic approval.

#### LOCATING INDIVIDUAL SYSTEMS WITHIN THE OPEN SPACE

Conventional wisdom also holds that when lots become smaller, central water or sewage disposal is required. That view overlooks the practical alternative of locating individual wells and/or individual septic systems within the permanent open space adjacent to the more compact lots typically of conservation subdivisions, as shown in Figure A1-2. There is no engineering reason to require that septic filter beds must be located within each house lot. However, it is essential that the final approved subdivision plan clearly indicates which parts of the undivided open space are designated for septic disposal, with each lot's disposal area graphically indicated by dotted lines extending out into the conservation land. These filter beds can be located under playing fields or conservation meadows in the same way they typically occupy positions under suburban lawns. (If mound sys-



**Figure A1-2.** Off-lot wells and septics. A practical alternative to central water or sewage disposal facilities consists of individually owned wells and/or septic systems located outside the house lots and within the prescribed conservation areas, in places specifically designated for them on the Final Plan.

tems are required because of marginal soil conditions, they are best located in passive use areas such as conservation meadows where the grass is cut only once a year. Such mounds should also be required to be contoured with gently sloping sides to blend into the surrounding landscape wherever possible.)

Although maintenance and repair of these septic systems remains the responsibility of individual lot owners, it is recommended that HOAs be authorized to pump individual septic tanks on a regular basis (every three or four years) to ensure that the accumulated sludge never rises to a level from which it could flow into and clog the filter beds. This inexpensive, preventive maintenance greatly extends the life of filter beds.

### ***5. How does this conservation approach differ from “clustering”?***

The Growing Greener conservation approach described here differs dramatically from the kind of “clustering” that has occurred in many communities over the past several decades. The principal points of difference are as follows.

#### **THE CONSERVATION APPROACH HAS A HIGHER PERCENTAGE AND HIGHER QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE.**

In contrast to typical cluster codes, conservation zoning establishes higher standards for both the quantity and the quality of open space that is to be preserved. Under conservation zoning, 50 to 70 percent of the unconstrained land is permanently set aside. This compares with cluster provisions that frequently require only 25 to 30 percent of the gross land area be conserved. That minimal open space often includes all of the most unusable land as open space, and it sometimes also includes undesirable, leftover areas such as stormwater management facilities and land under high-tension power lines.

#### **OPEN SPACE IS PREDETERMINED TO FORM A COMMUNITY-WIDE CONSERVATION NETWORK.**

Although clustering has at best typically produced a few small “green islands” here and there in any municipality, conservation zoning can protect

blocks and corridors of permanent open space. These areas can be pre-identified on a comprehensive plan Map of Potential Conservation Lands so that each new development will add to rather than subtract from the community’s open space acreage.

#### **THE CONSERVATION APPROACH ELIMINATES THE STANDARD PRACTICE OF AWARDED FULL-DENSITY FOR DEVELOPMENTS WITH NO OPEN SPACE.**

Under this new system, full density is achievable for layouts in which 50 percent or more of the unconstrained land is conserved as permanent, undivided open space. By contrast, cluster zoning provisions are typically only optional alternatives within ordinances that permit full density, by right, for standard “cookie-cutter” designs with no open space.

Simply put, the differences between clustering and conservation zoning are like the differences between a Model T and a Taurus.

### ***6. How do residential values in conservation subdivisions compare to those in conventional subdivisions?***

Another concern of many people is that homes in conservation subdivisions will differ in value from those in the rest of the community. Some believe that because so much land is set aside as open space, the homes in a conservation subdivision will be prohibitively priced and the municipality will become a series of elitist enclaves. Other people take the opposite view, fearing that these homes will be smaller and less expensive than their own because of the more compact lot sizes offered in conservation subdivisions.

Both concerns are understandable, but they miss the mark. Developers will build what the market is seeking at any given time, and they often base their decision about selling price on the character of surrounding neighborhoods and the amount they must pay for the land.

In conservation subdivisions with substantial open space, there is little or no correlation between lot size and price. These developments have sometimes been described as “golf course communities without the golf course,”

underscoring the idea that a house on a small lot with a great view is frequently worth as much or more than the same house on a larger lot that is boxed in on all sides by other houses.

It is a well-established fact of real estate that people pay more for park-like settings, which offsets their tendency to pay less for smaller lots. Successful developers know how to market homes in conservation subdivisions by emphasizing the open space. Rather than describing a house on a half-acre lot as such, the product is described as a house with twenty and one-half acres, the larger figure reflecting the area of conservation land that has been protected in the development. When that conservation area abuts other similar land, as in the township-wide open space network, a further marketing advantage exists.

### ***7. How does the Growing Greener approach relate to other planning techniques?***

Successful communities employ a wide array of conservation planning techniques simultaneously over an extended period of time. Complementary tools that a community should consider adding to its “toolbox” of techniques include the purchase of development rights, donations or sales to conservancies, the transfer of development rights, and “landowner compacts” involving density shifts among contiguous parcels. These other techniques can be effective, but their potential for influencing the “big picture”

is limited. The Growing Greener approach offers the greatest potential because it

- does not require public expenditure,
- does not depend on landowner charity,
- does not involve complicated regulations for shifting rights to other parcels, and
- does not depend on the cooperation of two or more adjoining landowners to make it work.

Of course, municipalities should continue their efforts to preserve special properties in their entirety whenever possible, such as by working with landowners interested in donating easements or fee title to a local conservation group; purchasing development rights or fee title with county, state, or federal grant money; and transferring development rights to certain “receiving areas” with increased density. However, until such time as more public money becomes available to help with such purchases, and until the transfer of development rights mechanism becomes more operational at the municipal level, most parcels of land in any given community will probably eventually be developed. In that situation, coupling the conservation subdivision design approach with multi-optioned conservation zoning offers communities the most practical and feasible way of protecting large areas of land in a methodical and coordinated manner.