



Mr. Luke Seigfried, County Planner
Office of Planning and Zoning
Jefferson County Department of Engineering, Planning, and Zoning
116 East Washington Street
Charles Town, West Virginia 25414

Re: Jefferson County Development Authority recommended changes and action items for the 2045 Comprehensive Plan

December 18, 2023

Mr. Seigfried:

On November 21, 2023, the Jefferson County Development Authority (JCDA) approved the attached recommended changes to the 2045 Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives and approved the attached action items.

While the recommendations are broad, the JCDA board wanted us to draw your attention to three themes that cut across many of the goals and objectives:

- Support for agritourism;
- Support for water and sewer deployment, planning, and modernization; and
- Redevelopment of existing structures.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding these recommendations.

Gino Sisco, president

Edwina Benites-LM, executive director

Jefferson County Development Authority Recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 1, Objective i.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Department of Engineering, Planning, and Zoning will educate the public (via educational materials and presentations) about the County's current zoning system and process for seeking amendments or other changes. The education will include information comparing key features of Jefferson County's current zoning system with that of neighboring counties, including Virginia and Maryland counties that are contiguous to Jefferson County.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 1, Objective iv.**

Reword Objective iv. to read: "Investigate additional commercial and institutional uses that may be appropriate by right in all zoning districts including medical facilities and agricultural sales and services."

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 2, Objective i.**

Reword Objective i. to read: "Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, previously used sites, dilapidated structures, and vacant buildings within Jefferson County, paying particular attention to brownfield and greyfield sites."

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 2, Objective i.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with municipalities, the County, the State, and other stakeholders to identify these sites and redevelop them.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government, municipalities, the Jefferson County Development Authority, and private entities will collaborate to recruit new and existing businesses and industries to use existing buildings and previously used parcels-- including brownfield and greyfield sites for new development including business parks and commercial sites. The Jefferson County Planning Department will produce, publish, and maintain a directory of previously used sites, including brownfield and greyfield sites, that are good candidates for redevelopment.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will work with the State to ensure the completion of the redevelopment of the Hill Top House Hotel site in Harpers Ferry.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 2, Objective ii.**

Recommendation: Define "expansions" and "continuation of village scale design."

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 2. Objective iii.**

Reword Objective iii to read: “Coordinate with utility providers operating in Jefferson County to identify appropriate locations to provide new service based on existing and proposed development and infrastructure while supporting the enhancement, repair, and modernization of existing infrastructure.”

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will coordinate with and provide financial support to the existing municipal water systems (Charles Town Utility Board, Harpers Ferry Water, and Shepherdstown Water) to ensure they are able to provide expanded service in locations designated for future development.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 2. Objective iv.**

Reword Objective iv to read: “Ensure coordination with infrastructure service providers in Preferred Growth Areas.”

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 3. Objective ii.**

Reword Objective ii to read: “Encourage economic opportunities on agricultural land and/ or by agriculture producers.”

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with the County and other stakeholders to review alcohol policies for the benefit of agricultural producers and the agritourism industry.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with stakeholders to attract a meat processor to Jefferson County.

Add the following action item: Support and encourage farmers markets.

Add the following action item: Support economic opportunities relating to the aggregation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 3. Objective iii.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with other stakeholders to provide educational opportunities to promote the business of farming from generation to generation.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 3, Objective iv.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with stakeholders to promote similar regulations at the State level.

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management), Goal 3, Objective v.**

Reword Objective v. to read: “Support agricultural processing businesses.”

- **Theme One (Quality Land Use and Growth Management) Goal 3**

Add Objective vi. “Promote Agritourism”

Add the following action item to the new Objective vi. Promote Agritourism: The Jefferson County Development Authority will collaborate with stakeholders such as the convention and visitors bureaus to promote agritourism.

Add the following action item to the new Objective vi. Promote Agritourism: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with state and federal grant programs to advocate for regulations to allow for agritourism as an approved use of agricultural grant and loan funds.

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 4.**

Reword Goal 4 to read: “Encourage the presentation of historical sites and support heritage and cultural tourism to foster local business and development.”

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 4. Objective i.**

Reword Objective i. to read: “Encourage the utilization of existing historic and agricultural areas for a variety of uses in ways that respect their historical value.”

Add the following action item: Allow access for commercial purposes- for example, commercial walking tours.

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 4. Objective ii.**

Reword Objective ii to read: “Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures.”

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with the Jefferson County Department of Engineering, Planning, and Zoning and the municipalities in the adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Add the following action item: The County will develop and maintain a public catalog of existing non-residential structures that are adaptable for reconfiguration as housing or other uses.

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 4.**

Add Objective iv.: “Encourage visitation to multiple locations in the County.”

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 5, Objective i.**

Add the following action item: Jefferson County will provide financial and other support to the Farmland Protection Board, the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission,

and entities such as the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association to support further development of farmland preservation easements and educate the public on the value of preserving historic sites.

- **Theme Two (Promoting Tourism and Conservation), Goal 6**

Create Objective iii: “Expand Opportunities for outdoor recreation.”

Add the following action item in the new objective iii: The Jefferson County Development Authority will prioritize expanding the tourism industry in the County, specifically by working to increase the number of tourism providers who manage outdoor recreation opportunities while preserving the County’s natural resources.

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 7, Objective ii.**

Add the following action item: The County will adopt, and encourage municipalities to adopt, a Complete Streets Policy as the default approach to development as the Federal Highway Administration suggests: <https://www.highways.dot.gov/complete-streets>

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 7, Objective iii**

Word objective iii to read: “Advocate for traffic calming measures and building safe roads for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.”

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 7, Objective iv.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will work with stakeholders to support train travel to and from the County.

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 9, Objective i.**

Add the following action item: The County will enact and enforce ordinances that require housing developers to meet sustainable building standards including model standards.

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 9, Objective iv.**

Add the following action item: Encourage the deployment of public water and sewer within growth boundaries in Jefferson County.

Add the following action item: Jefferson County will work with the State and state funders to support further studies of the negative impact of failing septic systems across the County.

Add the following action item: Jefferson County will use funding allocated by the State of West Virginia and other sources to support local water systems (especially: The Charles Town Utility Board, Harpers Ferry Water Works, and the Shepherdstown Water Department) in administering remediation efforts to minimize the amount of per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in finished water from those systems.

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 10, Objective iii.**

Add the following action item: Reevaluate school impact fees and then assess fees commensurate with the impact of development and increased population on school buildings.

- **Theme Three (Community Connections), Goal 11**

Reword goal to read: “Align expansion of County park facilities and programs with federal, state, municipal, and non-profit recreation providers to ensure that a wide variety of park and recreational opportunities are available throughout Jefferson County.”

- **Theme Four (Growing a Diverse Economy), Goal 12**

Reword goal to read: “Foster job development in Jefferson County by: promoting diversified industries; promoting employment opportunities; encouraging local business entrepreneurship; and encouraging professional jobs.”

- **Theme Four (Growing a Diverse Economy), Goal 12, Objective i.**

Reword objective i. to read: “The Jefferson County Development Authority will collaborate with stakeholders to build and expand existing businesses, support the start up of new businesses, and attract new businesses to Jefferson County.”

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will host small business development classes in collaboration with stakeholders.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will hold business retention and expansion visits.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County Development Authority will attract and/ or encourage local development within the following sectors, among others: government contracting, meat processing, agribusiness, tourism, community development, etc.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government and municipalities will collaborate with the Jefferson County Development Authority in providing support for small business development including such activities as free entrepreneurship classes, financial assistance, and assistance with locating small commercial businesses in downtown municipal areas.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government and relevant municipalities will collaborate with the Jefferson County Development Authority to provide awareness programs about the availability of financing, particularly for businesses that locate in existing Federal Opportunity Zone census tracts in Charles Town, Ranson, Kearneysville, and other localities and neighborhoods.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government and municipalities will collaborate with the Jefferson County Development Authority to develop strong partnerships with area financial institutions, including non-profit lenders that specialize in providing business financing to new and emerging businesses that are in the Federal Opportunity Zone census tracts and other eligible businesses.

- **Theme Four (Growing a Diverse Economy), Goal 13, Objective iii.**

Add the following action item: Encourage the deployment of infrastructure in all growth boundaries.

- **Theme Four (Growing a Diverse Economy), Goal 13, Objective iv.**

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will collaborate with the relevant municipalities to determine the capacity of existing roadways, water and sewer infrastructure, electrical infrastructure, and cable/ broadband infrastructure within growth areas. Where it is determined that the existing infrastructure is lacking, the Jefferson County government will give preference to existing municipal systems (e.g. water and sewer systems) in expanding service to the growth area.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will work with the State to fully address water quality issues related to failing water wells and septic tanks.

- **Theme Five (Creating Livability), Goal 14, Objective i.**

Reword Objective i. to read: “Collaborate with the Jefferson County Development Authority and local businesses to identify opportunities and programs to aid in retaining and attracting families, early-career adults, and seniors.”

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will provide financial support to the Jefferson County Development Authority to develop and administer additional services to assist emerging commercial businesses starting in Fiscal Year 2025. Under this initiative, the Jefferson County Development Authority will administer an aggressive program to develop information for feasibility and marketing studies for private entities that are exploring launching new commercial businesses or expanding existing commercial businesses from within or outside the County, particularly commercial businesses that provide entertainment and recreational opportunities for families and youth.

Add the following action item: The Jefferson County government will provide financial support to the Jefferson County Development Authority to expand its work with local lenders and others to identify financing for businesses that provide essential services, entertainment, and recreational opportunities.

- **Theme Five (Creating Livability), Goal 17.**

Add Objective iv.: Identify areas to zone for high-density residential structures. These areas should have a plan for water and sewer access, should be along high-traffic

migration routes, prioritize walkability, and should have zoning for first-floor amenities.