

Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan

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Woody Hanna

County Planning Commission

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Denny Canterbury, Member-at-Large

Hanno Kirk, Member-at-Large

Courtney Jesser, Member-at-Large

County Staff

Ellie Weikle, Planning and Permits Office Administrator &

Assistant to the Planning Commission

Robert Ford, Building Inspector

Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan

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This Comprehensive Plan was developed according to West Virginia State Code Chapter 8A.

Introduction

One function of a Comprehensive Plan is to determine what the residents want the community to look like in the future and then to develop a methodology that will allow the community to promote and maintain that vision. During the development of this Comprehensive Plan, a future vision for Greenbrier County was developed by residents. With the proper implementation of this plan, over the next twenty years, it is envisioned that the following statement would be true in 2034:

In 2034, Greenbrier County values the past while looking towards the future. Greenbrier County has a long history of valuing both the natural and built environments: from clear streams, unobstructed mountain ridges, and an incomparable cave network, to farms, homes, and communities that tell the history of the development. Greenbrier County is known for its pristine environment in both the Greenbrier River and Meadow River watersheds, its vibrant arts and cultural community, its thriving economy, its high quality of life, and for the strength and diversity of its communities.

Economic development in Greenbrier County is as vibrant as the arts and cultural activities and as diverse as the communities. In the past 20 years, Greenbrier County has exemplified the melding of tradition and innovation. A center for high tech and internet-based companies, Greenbrier County is also known for its agricultural industry; for its wide range of small industries creating value-added products from local mineral and timber resources; and for its craftsmen, artisans, and artists.

The County's diverse tourism industry continues to attract new visitors and old friends alike. In addition to the State Fair, held in Fairlea, visitors come to Greenbrier County to hike the county-wide trail network, float the blue trails on the Greenbrier and Meadow Rivers, explore the caves, enjoy the festivals and fairs that celebrate local and regional culture and heritage, tour the historic sites, and enjoy the revitalized downtowns in Lewisburg, White Sulphur Springs, Alderson, Ronceverte, Rainelle, and Rupert. Agricultural tourism has encouraged visitors to explore not only the towns, the rivers, and the mountains, but also to visit the farms, where they can buy local produce, visit "pick-your-own" sites, and learn about the County's agricultural heritage.

Greenbrier County is known for green approaches to development and industry. By encouraging low impact development techniques, green building techniques, and the development of alternative energy resources, Greenbrier County continues to set the standard for environmental quality and innovation in West Virginia, and has led to Greenbrier County's designation as one of the best places in West Virginia. Innovative approaches to development in Greenbrier County have helped to insure the long term health of the natural environment. By protecting source water, both in the streams and rivers in Greenbrier County and in the karst areas of the Greenbrier River Watershed and the wetlands of the Meadow River watershed, Greenbrier County has sustained the environmental qualities that attract new business and maintain the exceptionally high quality of life.

I. Planning Assumptions

a) Despite the downturn in new construction in 2008 and 2009, building permits for new construction will have an estimated annual growth rate between 6% and 8%, over the next 20 years. Some residential developments, especially in the Lewisburg Area, can be attributed to former residents returning to Greenbrier County to retire. The construction number could increase above 8% if Greenbrier County is successful in marketing itself as a retirement destination.

b) Retirees will represent a minimum of 30% of the overall population by 2025. As the "Baby Boom" generation reaches retirement, especially those who have lived and worked in primarily larger urban areas, an increasing number will move back to Greenbrier County because of a lower cost of living in combination with quality of life, geographic convenience, and medical care. Currently, residents 65 and older account for slightly more than 17% of the overall population. The Baby Boom generation accounts for 30% of the overall population and 47% of the workforce.

c) The cost of living ratio between Greenbrier County and the national average will remain relatively constant over the next 20 years, depressed in part by costs in the western end of Greenbrier County. The cost of living ratio between Lewisburg and the national average will narrow. Given the lower cost of living and the higher level of amenities, Greenbrier County will continue to attract retirees, but the majority of new development will be created outside of the Lewisburg city limits. Retiree preferences for "green" or "open space" views, proximity to recreational facilities, and convenient access to amenities and health care facilities means that most, if not all of the retiree-based growth will occur north of Lewisburg in the Central-North Designated Growth Area and the Residential Transition Areas, or to the east and west of 219 in the Lewisburg-Fairlea Residential Transition Areas. In either these areas, farmland is likely to continue to disappear under housing developments.

d) Depending on the economic development choices made by Greenbrier County over the next 10 to 20 years, population growth is likely to increase to 1.2 to 1.4% per annum. At a minimum, to fill existing gaps, Greenbrier County can expect to grow a minimum of 17% (population of 42,089) between 2010 and 2030, with the majority of growth occurring between 2020 and 2030. While Greenbrier County does not currently have a 1% growth rate per annum, it would be wise to plan for the higher growth rate that is likely to occur within the next decade. Currently, starting per job wages/ per hourly wages are relatively low in Greenbrier County and are the primary contributing factor to the loss of younger workers and higher skilled workers. The majority of private sector jobs (70.83%) in Greenbrier County are in the service industry and have an average weekly wage of \$542 (approximately \$28,184 annually). Economic redevelopment in Greenbrier County, with a greater emphasis on industries not prone to boom and bust cycles and higher pay scales may encourage a greater number of younger workers to either stay, return, or relocate to

Cost of Living and Quality of Life Index: Comparison to US Rates (US=1.00)						
Cost of Living Indicator	WV	Greenbrier County	Lewisburg	Rainelle	Ronceverte	White Sulphur Springs
Overall cost of living	.78	.81	.87	.75	.85	.74
Cost of food	.98	.95	.95	.95	.96	.96
Cost of utilities	.97	.73	.73	.74	.73	.73
Cost of housing	.68	.93	1.19	.69	1.09	.64
Property tax rate	.45	.38	.38	.38	.38	.38
Miscellaneous (goods and services)	.98	.94	.94	.94	.94	.94

Source: Sperling's Best Places, 2007

Notes:

1) A number above 1.00 means that the cost is higher than the median or average cost for the United States. While most of the cost of living rates are well below national average, housing costs in Ronceverte and Lewisburg are well above national rates. With the exception of housing costs, Greenbrier County and environs have significantly lower costs of living than either the United States or the State of West Virginia as a whole. Although not included in the cost of living indicators, home appreciation in Greenbrier County is well above the home appreciation rate for West Virginia (.27%), but well below the national average (9.8%).

2) Overall cost of living calculation is based on "the total of all cost of living categories weighted subjectively as follows: housing (30%), food and groceries (15%), transportation (10%), utilities (6%), health care (7%), and miscellaneous expenses such as clothing, services, and entertainment (32%). (Sperling, 2007)

the County. Growth in the population of Greenbrier County based on changes in the patterns of economic growth remains to be seen, but an additional 6,000 workers, with varying degrees of experience, above those created through natural increase, will be needed over the next 20 years to fill the gap created by retiring Baby Boomers. A portion of the employment gap will be filled by in-commuters from surrounding jurisdictions. Service sector jobs, especially those which cater specifically to the retirement population (medical, social service, retiree services) will need to increase to fill future needs.

e) Because of the presence of the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, in Lewisburg, and the Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, in Fairlea, the majority of retiree population is likely to locate in the 219 corridor, including the Greenbrier Central Designated Growth Areas and the Residential Transition Areas east, west, and north of Lewisburg. Retiree housing, both in terms of rental units, retiree communities, and long-term care facilities will need to be developed over the next 10 years to address anticipated needs. Typically, retiree residential facilities are located within a five minute response time radius of medical facilities, which would suggest

adding additional development lands to the west side of 219 between 219 and Houfnagle Road to provide ample development space. Based on current development patterns, Greenbrier will need an additional 2,900 acres of residential land, county-wide, to accommodate growth over the next 20 years (assuming an average lot size of 1 acre), assuming that no residential development or redevelopment occurs within the existing urban areas. An emphasis on urban redevelopment and on high density development in urban transition areas, designated growth areas, and existing urban areas could decrease land requirements by as much as 60%, although a continuing desire for large lot subdivisions will persist and may continue to encroach on existing agricultural lands.

f) Source water concerns, especially in terms of the carrying capacity and water quality of karst-based and surface source water systems and the impact of storm water, necessitates spreading development into areas other than the Greenbrier River Valley. In order to maintain overall quality and quantity, given increasing residential impacts in central Greenbrier County, industrial and commercial development should be focused in the Meadow River watershed, which does not have the same constraints. A shift in the location of industrial and commercial development will also shift at least a portion of the residential development to the western end of Greenbrier County and relieve some of the pressure on the 219 Corridor. Effective storm water management, through the use of Low Impact Development techniques, are essential for the long-term maintenance of Greenbrier County's source water resources, especially in light of heightened levels of pollution in the Greenbrier River, necessitating a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) plan, and state and federal regulations and requirements.

g) Without shifts in economic development, Greenbrier County's economy will remain prone to "bust and boom" cycles, especially in the tourism/service sector and natural resource sectors, although retiree related industries, including medical, are likely to grow as needs expand.

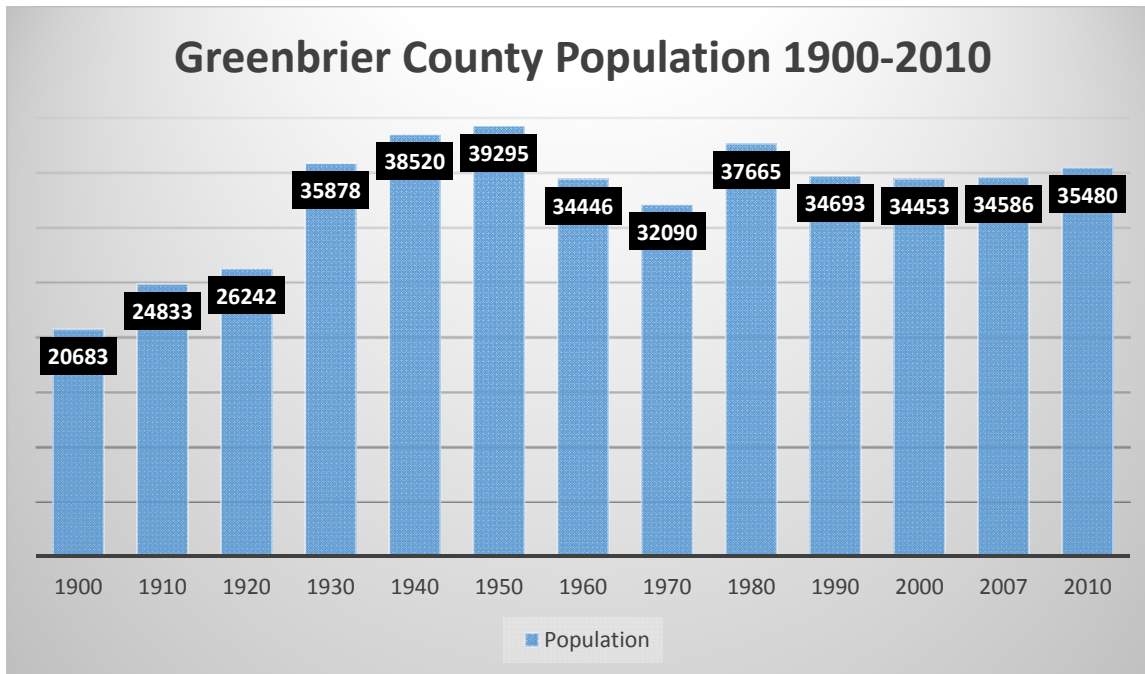
2. Greenbrier County: A Brief Overview

Greenbrier County, located in southeastern West Virginia, was created by an act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1777 from lands that were originally part of Botetourt and Montgomery Counties (Virginia). Until the early 1800s, most of the development in the Greenbrier River Valley followed organic crossroad settlement patterns, organized around an economic or transportation-related focal point: a trading post, a crossroads, or a mill, a river or a rail yard. The original road network in the four towns, two cities, and in the unincorporated portions of Greenbrier County evidences this pattern of development. As the population grew, and more structures were added, a loose road grid developed in each of the communities and became more pronounced in the communities with higher populations and more diversified economies. The rural road network developed to connect the growing number of farms with the central population points and the transportation hubs, which provided access to markets outside of Greenbrier County.

Until the coming of the railroad, the economy of Greenbrier County relied on a combination of necessary and supporting trades and industries (commercial enterprises, construction trades, blacksmiths, etc.), government and legal professions, agriculture, and tourism (most notably connected to the "springs"). While the construction of the railroad and the establishment of the system of depots in the early 1900s broadened the economic landscape in Greenbrier County, it

also heralded a significant east/west split in the economic landscape. While the eastern and central portions of Greenbrier County maintained a balance between the public and private sectors, with a continuing emphasis on agriculture commerce, and tourism all of which were relatively stable economic sectors, the western portion of the County focused on timber and coal, both of which were prone to boom and bust cycles. The disparity between the two regions continues into the present and is most evident in the housing stability, quality, and occupancy rates; out-migration patterns; and census data.

3. Population Trends: 1960 to 2010



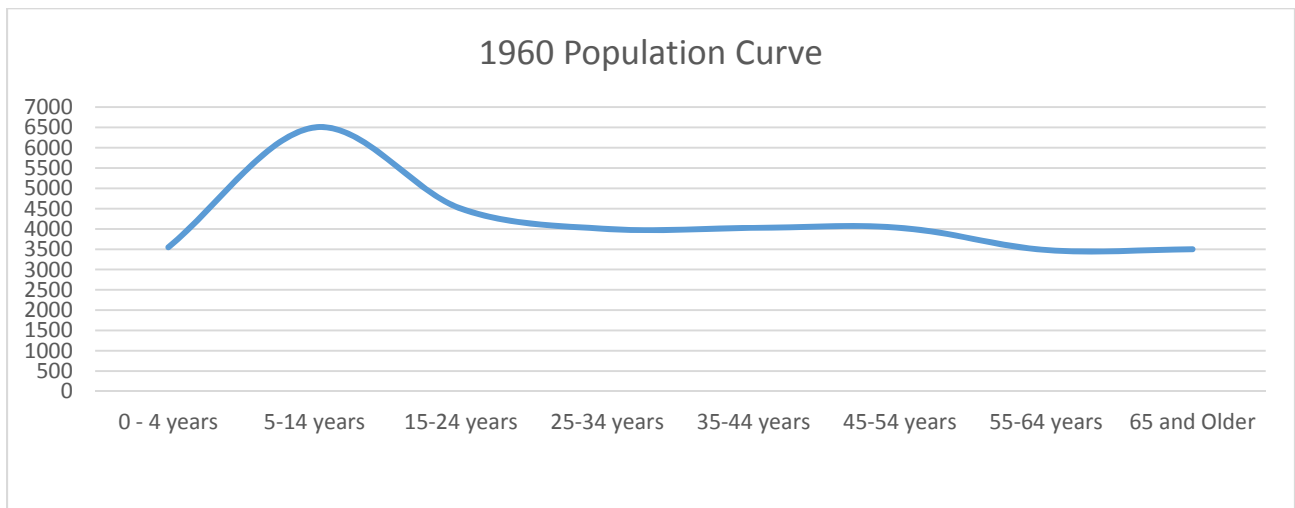
In 1960, the population in Greenbrier County was 34, 446, only seven fewer than lived in Greenbrier County in 2000. Greenbrier County has a long history of boom and bust cycles. The number of mining and tourism related jobs fluctuated, mirroring national trends. Between 1900 and 1950, as the coal industry grew, the population of Greenbrier also grew, topping out at 39,295. Following the war, and the shift away from coal as a primary source of power, coal jobs disappeared and the County's population dropped off, bottoming out in 1970 at 32,090. A second, smaller boom occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as reflected in an additional 5000 in population in 1980, before the downturn in coal employment in the mid-1980s. The population growth and loss are clearly connected to economic circumstances, especially since 1960, rather than patterns of growth based on natural increase. The population of Greenbrier County has remained relatively flat since 1986, despite some dramatic shifts within the population's makeup over the past fifty years. Since 1960, the retirement aged population has grown both in size and in percentage of overall population at same time the birth rate and the number of children 14 and younger has dropped.

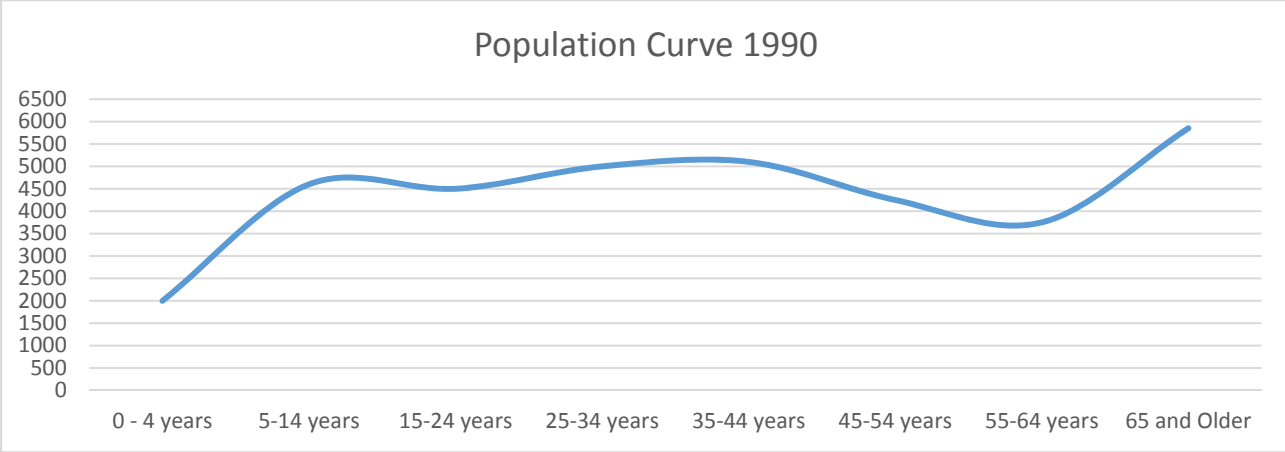
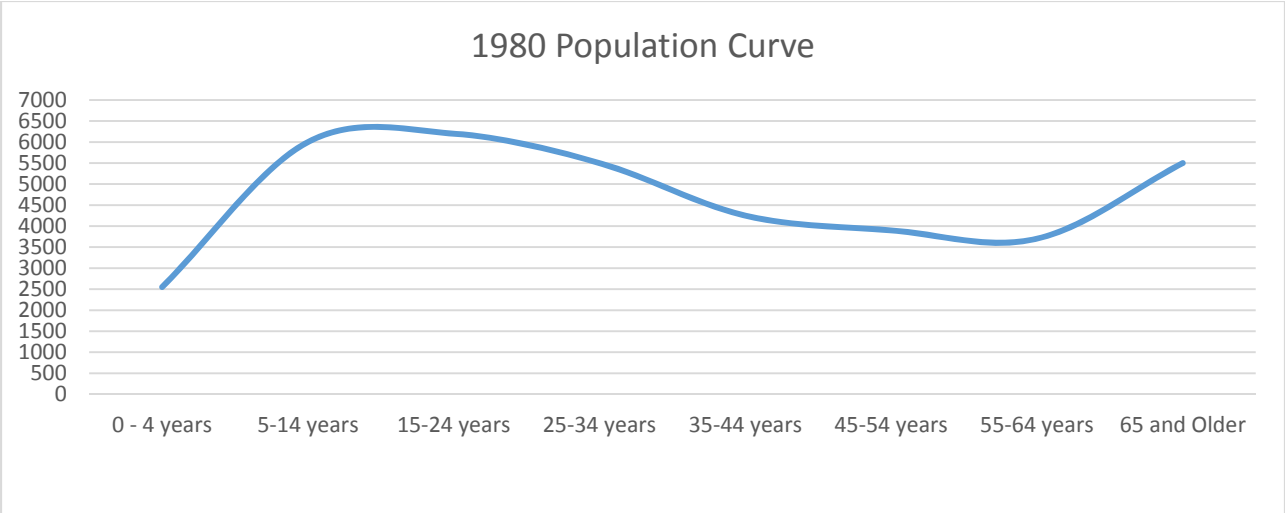
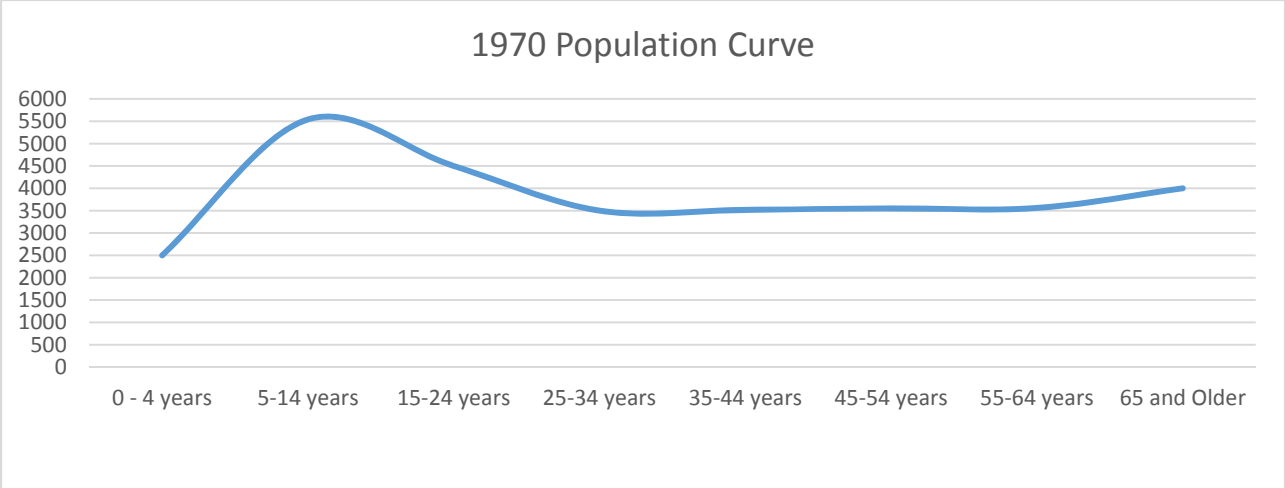
In 1960, retirees and children under the age of five accounted, each, for approximately 10% of the overall population in Greenbrier County. The median age in the County was 29.0 years overall all, 28.3 years for males and 29.6 years for females. On the whole, the two generations

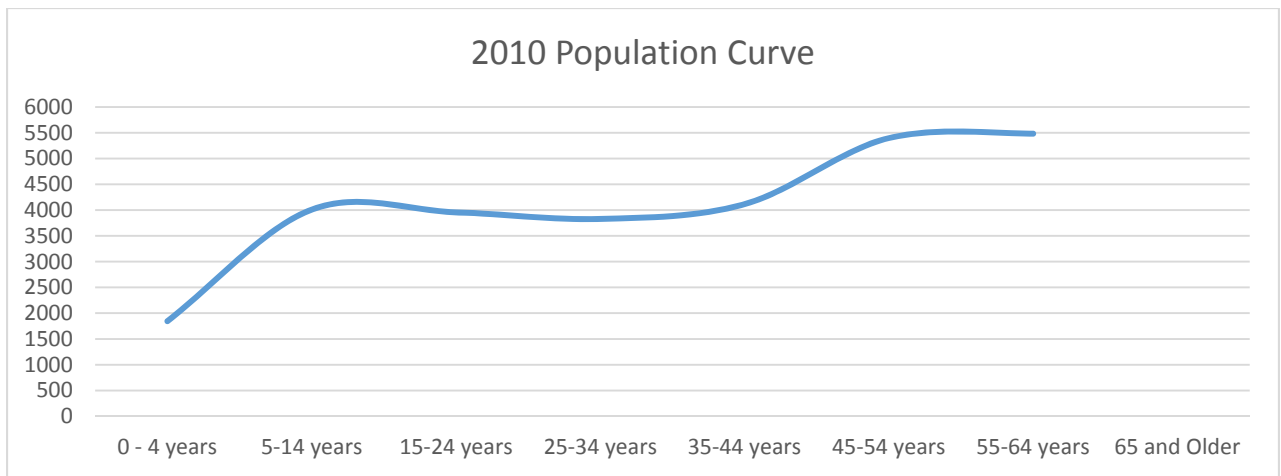
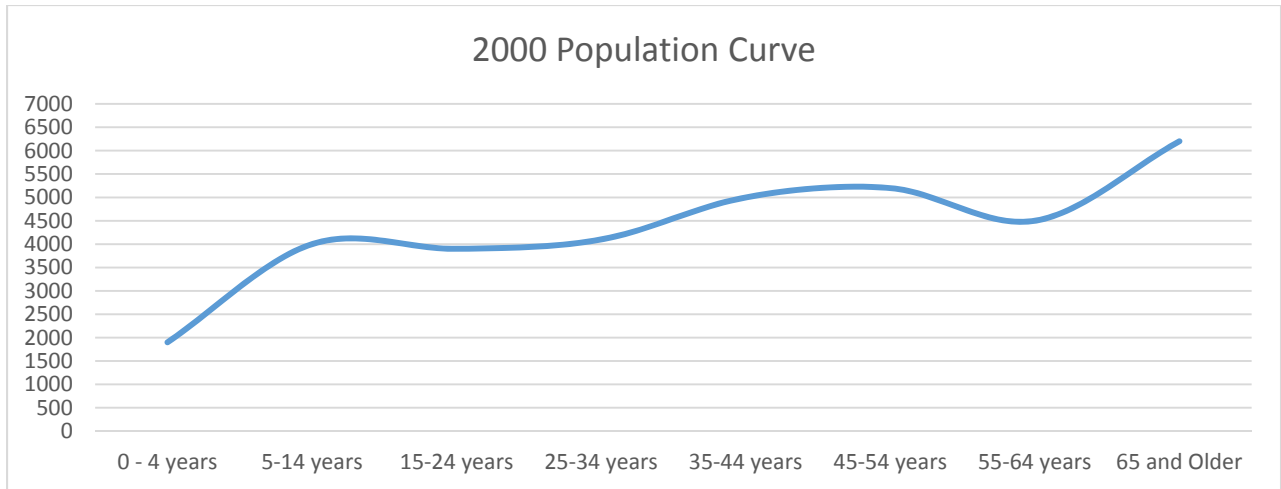
born before the Great Depression, representing the portion of the population between ages 35 and 64 in 1960 accounted for approximately 33% of the population; the generation born just prior and during the Great Depression and during World War II (ages 15 to 34) represented 24.5% of the population, and what has since become known as the Baby Boom Generation (those under the age of 15) represented 32.4%. By the end of the Baby Boom in 1964, the generation represented 34.6% of the population in Greenbrier County.

In 1960, school aged children (ages 5 to 14) represented 21.9% of the overall population, young adults (ages 15 to 24) represented 13.4% of the population, those within the "workforce" age group (25 to 64) represented 44.1% of the population. The younger workforce, those between 15 and 34 years of age, represented 24.6% of the population, while those with more experience (ages 35 to 54) represented 24% of the population. Those either retired or likely to retire within the 10 year span of the census represented 18.9% of the population. The population within the workforce suggested a fairly even distribution of experience and the ability of the population to maintain skill levels.

By 2000, the retirement aged population (those born during or before World War II) had grown both in percentage of overall population (17.7%) and in overall numbers (6101), although there was only a seven person difference in the actual population of the County between 1960 (34,446) and 2000 (34,453). On the other hand, children younger than five years old dropped both in percentage (5.5%) and in total (1,904), the result of a declining birthrate in Greenbrier County. The population of school aged children declined both in percentage (from 21.9% in 1960 to 12.2% in 2000) and actual numbers (from 7,538 in 1960 to 4,195 in 2000). Unlike 1960, when the retirement population (10% of the population) was balanced by the population of those under the age of five (10.5%), in 2000, the percentage of the retiree population (17.7%) was the balanced by the population 14 years and younger. By 2000, the median age of the population had risen to 41.6 years.







Employment Population

The makeup of the workforce in 2000 also showed some significant shifts, with fewer younger workers (22.8%) and a greater percentage of both experienced workers (30.2%) and workers who were either retired or near retirement (29.2%). In short, there is not the population at the younger end of the scale to fill in for those at the higher end of the scale, creating, in essence, a non-sustainable workforce.

Part of the shift in the population is due to the loss of employment opportunities locally and slow wage growth, both of which are discussed in greater detail in the discussion of economic development trends and conditions. One could argue that economic issues were and are the primary driving force in the population shifts in Greenbrier County and in West Virginia as a whole. Between 1960 and 1970, the workforce changed as the mines closed and Greenbrier County experienced an economic downturn. The population in the county dropped from 34,446 in 1960 to 32,090 in 1970, a 7% decrease. At the same time, specific age groups showed a greater decrease. Workers in both the younger age range (15 to 34) and the experienced age range (35 to 54) decreased 3% and 11% respectively. Only the pre-retirement group (55 to 64) showed any growth, with an increase of 21%.

For a brief time between 1975 and 1986, the mines returned to, if not full employment, at least higher rates of employment, with a 7.5% increase in the experienced workforce, 44.8% increase in the younger workforce; and a 22% increase in the overall workforce. According to the US Census Bureau decennial data, 1980 was the peak year for workforce size in Greenbrier County. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, actual salary and wage employment peaked in 1982 with 11,463 jobs. Despite the drop in overall population since 1982 the number of jobs has continually increased since 1986, even as the population decreased and then flattened. It should be noted that the data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis does not distinguish between full-time and part-time employment. Again, for a fuller discussion of economics, please see the section on economic development trends and conditions.

Since 1980, the workforce has declined, although the overall numbers are higher than in 1960. The makeup of the workforce is not, however, the only contributing factor in the population distribution of Greenbrier County. In fact, the numbers clearly mirror the impact, both historically and currently, of the "Baby Boom" generation. In 1980, the County saw a peak in younger workers primarily because of a generational peak. By 1980, the majority of the "Baby Boom" generation had entered the workforce. According to the Census Bureau, the peak year of the "Baby Boom" was 1957, and the workers born in 1957 would have been 23 in 1980. Workers born in 1945, the first year of the "baby boom," would have been 35 years old and would just be entering experienced workforce. By 1990, well over half of the "Baby Boomers" (those born between 1945 and 1955) would have been in the experience workforce, while the other half would still be in the younger workforce. By 2000, the entire "baby boom" generation had entered the experienced workforce, with those born in 1945 in the pre-retirement workforce. It is expected that at least half of those in the experienced workforce, (roughly 5,000 workers) will shift to pre-retirement by 2010 and nearly three quarters will be at or past retirement (approximately 7,000 workers) by 2020.

As the "Baby Boom" generation has aged through the stages of employment, the generations behind the Baby Boom have declined in overall population. The younger workforce, those age 15 to 34, has declined in overall numbers by 34% since 1980. Given the decline of the birthrate in Greenbrier County, discussed below, which mirrors the rest of West Virginia, this trend is likely to continue. In addition, because of a shrinking younger workforce, the overall number entering the experienced workforce between 2000 and 2020 is also likely to decline, resulting in employment and experience gaps.

The Graying of Greenbrier: Retirement Trends

In a statistical brief released by the West Virginia Health Statistics Center, researchers from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources observed that:

West Virginia's birth rate is shrinking rapidly. The state averaged over 46,000 births per year in the 1950s, compared with only 17,000 deaths. As time went by, resident deaths increased slightly. Births, on the other hand, have dropped substantially, from an annual average of almost 33,600 in the sixties, to 29,000 in the seventies, under 25,000 in the eighties, and just 21,400 in the nineties. West Virginia has, in fact, actually experienced more resident deaths than births every year since 1997, the first state to have a natural decrease.

The researchers concluded that "Much of the state's out-migration has been younger people who have been forced to move away to find work in other regions because of fewer economic opportunities in the Mountain State. They marry and raise their families elsewhere. Then, after they retire, many West Virginians come back home to enjoy life in the Mountain State. The "Graying of America" has already started in West Virginia." (HCS Statistical Brief, No. 8, 2002)The "graying" of Greenbrier County matches the trend in West Virginia, and is evidenced by the gradual increase in median age in Greenbrier County since 1960. In 1960, the median age in Greenbrier County was 28.3 years for males and 29.6 years for females. While there was some increase in the median age for both males (30.4 years) and females (34 years) between 1960 and 1980, the increase was not nearly as significant as the increase between 1980 and 2000. By 2000, the median age had risen to 40.1 years for males and for females to 43 years. To put these numbers in perspective, the median age of males in the United States is 35.4 years and the median age for females is 38 years.

According to a study commissioned by the National Association of Home Builders in 2006, "52% of Baby Boomers between the ages of 45 and 54 and 57% of Boomers between the ages of 55 and 64 expected to purchase some form of retirement, investment or second home." While the study provided a five year time frame for purchases, the development of second homes and retirement properties has probably been slowed by the current credit crisis. The study, conducted by ProMatura LLC, also found that:

Other questions about location showed that over 25 percent of those who said they were likely to move, reported they were interested in "fresh water" and "green space." They either want to buy real estate directly on, or with a view of, fresh water such as a lake, river or pond. Nearly 12 percent want to buy real estate surrounded by "green space" -- parklands, fields or trees -- and 27.1 percent want to see green space out their windows...Boomers reported that a key factor in their decision about where to move will be the presence of high-amenity facilities for physical activity, workouts, sports and fitness. One out of every four boomers 45 years and older wants to be able to walk -- not drive -- to a fitness center. Twenty-seven percent want to be able to walk to either bicycling or hiking areas. (ProMatura, 2006)

4. Population Projections: 2010 to 2030

Natural Growth and Net Migration

One method of judging changes in population and projecting future population is to look at natural increase or decrease (births minus deaths), and net migration patterns relative to the beginning and end populations for a set period of time, typically a decade. A positive net migration number indicates more people moved to the County than moved away; a negative net migration number indicates precisely the opposite. In the traditional framework of population projections, projected increases are based on existing trends population trends in terms of births, deaths, and net migration, where:

Growth rate = crude birth rate - crude death rate + net migration rate.

Based on the traditional model, Greenbrier County's rate of growth, per decade, is likely to remain at or less than 3%, which would translate to a population of 37,792 by 2030.

As noted above, Greenbrier County's population in 2000 is only slightly higher (seven people) than 1960. On its face, it would seem Greenbrier has changed, in terms of population, very little in the past 47 years. In fact, Greenbrier has changed a great deal. Since 1960, there have been a total of 22,331 births and 19,940 deaths, or a natural increase of 2,391 residents. If there had been no in- and out- migration, during the period of time, the Greenbrier County population would be 36,837. This is clearly not the case. The number of births, by decade total, has declined by 58% since

1960. In the same period of time, the number of deaths, per decade, has decreased by 2%, reflecting local improvements in the healthcare system. Until the 1990s, Greenbrier County had a positive net natural increase in population, although the rate of natural increase had been steadily declining since the 1960s. After 1990, the mortality rate surpassed the birth rate, resulting in a natural decrease, a trend that has strengthened after 2000.

According to the data, the net migration between 2000 and 2006 was 1068, approximately a .21% increase per annum in the net migration rate, which means that Greenbrier County picked up 1068 more residents than were lost to out-migration. Based on the population estimate, the county is gaining 22 residents per year; however, based on net migration numbers, the County is gaining closer to 170 new residents per year. Net migration has been steadily rising since 1990, and in the past six years has increased 230% above the rate established in the 1990s.

Building permit data certainly supports the conclusion that Greenbrier County is, in fact, growing despite a relatively flat population number. Since 2000, the County has issued a total of 941 building permits for single family, stick-built housing. According to the Permits Office, many of those permits were for second-home construction, which would indicate that the net migration trends are likely to continue to grow at a higher rate over the next 20 years, especially given "Baby Boomer" retirement trends.

Projected Rates of Growth, 2010 to 2030

	Low Estimate Assuming a traditional population growth model (GR=B-D+NM): Maintains Growth Rate of .03	Medium Estimate Assuming no increase in retirees and no increase in economic development, but replacement of existing Baby Boom population in workforce (Growth Rate .08)	High Estimate Assuming increase in retirees, increase in senior services and industries, assumes .21 annual increase in net migration between 2010 and 2020 (Growth Rate .18 beyond 2010.)
2010	35,480		
2020	36,692	38,972	43,912
2030	37,792	42,089	51,812

Given the focus on Greenbrier County, and especially Lewisburg, in the national press over the past decade and the relatively low cost of living, the County is likely to remain one of the

primary retirement destinations in West Virginia. Depending on current marketing efforts to attract new retirees to Greenbrier County and the future mobility of the "baby boom" retirement population, Greenbrier County's growth rate could range between 3% (current growth rate) upwards to 18% (assuming a constant .21 increase, per annum, in net migration over the next 20 years, no substantial increase in the birth rate, and a relatively constant death rate). Worker replacement for retiring Baby Boomers could add as many as 6,000 new workers, to fill existing positions. The increase in demand for workers in senior-focused industries could drive an additional increase in the population between 25 and 55 as could the expansion or development of new non-senior related industries and businesses. While there is little indication that birthrates are likely to increase beyond the current .56 rate, the population under the age of 15 is likely to increase because of the increase in the child-bearing population.

5. Organization of the Plan

The design of the Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan was based on one key assumption: the plan needed to be universally accessible at a reasonable cost. While plans are historically print documents, because of the prohibitive cost of printing and limited public accessibility, the traditional approach to the development of the plan was set aside in favor a hybrid approach which combined print and electronic media. The "official" plan, the version, which will be submitted to the State of West Virginia, has a print document, which includes the introduction, the core plan, the future land use map, and a cd of the online version, which includes the electronic version of the print plan, as well as the public input materials, supporting materials, maps, references and resources, glossary, and other documents.

The electronic version of the plan (the portion included on the accompanying CD-ROM) is designed so that it can be easily uploaded to the County's website in order to provide universal access, at minimal cost, to current and future residents, the development community, future employers and entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders. Where possible, hyperlinks have been provided to the original data, state code, federal regulations, and other background materials. Where goals, objectives, or strategies in one subject have connections to another subject, a link between the applicable pages has been included. The online version of the plan is designed to provide citizens with greater access not only to the plan but to the relevant background materials, planning information, and other resources. The Online Plan is designed, primarily, as a reference and educational tool for the citizens of Greenbrier County. The core plan is identical to the print version, in text, but provides citizens with far greater access to the broad range of information and data that provides the basis for the plan.

6. Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan- Planning Process and Methodology

The Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan planning process has been conducted in four stages: 1) the community survey and community meetings; 2) the community workshops; 3) the drafting process for the core plan; and 4) development of the online planning website and information CD-ROM.

Phase I: Greenbrier County Comprehensive Plan Community Survey and Community Meetings.

A survey process was conducted between August and December 2008. By the time the survey process closed, 479 citizens had completed the survey. A print version of the survey was distributed through the six public libraries in Greenbrier County.

Community Meetings.

Six community meetings were held between September and October 2008. Additional community meetings were held in May 2014.

Phase II: Community Workshops.

Six community workshops were held between the middle of October 2008 and the middle of March 2009. A total of sixty-two residents attended the six community workshops, four of which were held between the middle of October and early November 2008. While the workshop participants covered all of the topics required by the State of West Virginia, their work, generally, focused on four primary areas: land use, the environment, economic development, and public water and sewer.

Phases III & IV: Core Plan

A core plan was developed following the community workshops and public input.

7. Legal Framework and Current Planning Conditions in Greenbrier County

In §8A-1-1, the State of West Virginia established the legal framework and the intent of planning, based on the legislative findings, for West Virginia Counties and Municipalities. According to the Chapter 8A, Article 1, the West Virginia Legislature identified nine key findings:

- (1) That planning land development and land use is vitally important to a community;
- (2) A planning commission is helpful to a community to plan for land development, land use and the future;
- (3) A plan and a vision for the future is important when deciding uses for and development of land;
- (4) That sprawl is not advantageous to a community;
- (5) A comprehensive plan is a guide to a community's goals and objectives and a way to meet those goals and objectives;
- (6) That the needs of agriculture, residential areas, industry and business be recognized in future growth;
- (7) That the growth of the community is commensurate with and promotive of the efficient and economical use of public funds;
- (8) Promoting growth that is economically sound, environmentally friendly and supportive of community livability to enhance quality of life is a good objective for a governing body; and
- (9) Governing bodies of municipalities and counties need flexibility when authorizing land development and use.

Based on the findings, the Legislature recommended and encouraged Counties and Municipalities to:

- (1) The goal of a governing body should be to have a plan and a vision for the future, and an agency to oversee it;
- (2) A governing body should have a planning commission, to serve in an advisory capacity to the governing body, and promote the orderly development of its community;
- (3) A comprehensive plan should be the basis for land development and use, and be reviewed and updated on a regular basis;
- (4) A goal of a governing body should be to reduce sprawl;
- (5) That planning commissions prepare a comprehensive plan and governing bodies adopt the comprehensive plans;
- (6) Governing bodies, units of government and planning commissions work together to provide for a better community;
- (7) Governing bodies may have certain regulatory powers over developments affecting the public welfare; and
- (8) Based upon a comprehensive plan, governing bodies may:
 - (A) Enact a subdivision and land development ordinance;
 - (B) Require plans and plats for land development;
 - (C) Issue improvement location permits for construction; and
 - (D) Enact a zoning ordinance.

Current Conditions.

Greenbrier County has a geographically-limited zoning ordinance, a cell tower ordinance, a county-wide subdivision ordinance, an adopted county-wide building code, an existing Comprehensive Plan, an established Planning and Building Department, and a Farmland Protection Board. In short, the basic planning framework is present; however, there are significant limitations in Greenbrier County's current approach.

As evidenced above, the State of West Virginia has placed an increased emphasis on best practices in planning to address significant land use issues, including sprawl, the cost of services, agricultural protection, and quality of community. The emphasis on good planning practice, articulated in §8A-1-1(b)(1), underscores the need for an effective, professional approach to planning issues. At this time, Greenbrier County lacks the professional framework, through the established agency, to oversee the implementation of the plan through the development of appropriate ordinances and programs and to provide professional level advice to the existing advisory and legislative bodies

8. Implementation and Financing Options and Recommendations

Planning Training and Professionalism. It is recommended that the County do the following:

1. Provide Planning Commission training to all Planning Commissioners. There are a variety of training programs available, most notably through the American Planning Association;
2. Provide appropriate planning training and access to professional networks to all planning staff and administration

While the State of West Virginia sanctions many of the more innovative approaches to planning, many of the approaches, including impact fees, are not available to Greenbrier County. The State requires an average 1% per annum population growth (average over a five year span) and a county-wide zoning ordinance. While building permit data indicates significant growth in the County in the homeownership and "second home" population (35 and older), the population growth has not been strong enough to much more than offset the loss of residents between 18 and 34, who generally do not build new homes.

§8A-3-8. Adoption of comprehensive plan by governing body.

(a) Within the latter of ninety days or three scheduled meetings after the submission of the recommended comprehensive plan to the governing body, the governing body must act by either adopting, rejecting or amending the comprehensive plan.

(b) If the comprehensive plan is adopted by the governing body, then the governing body may adopt the comprehensive plan as an ordinance or designate what other effect the comprehensive plan may have.

(c) If the comprehensive plan is adopted by the governing body and an ordinance is published, the comprehensive plan may be incorporated by reference in the ordinance and the full text of the comprehensive plan does not have to be published. (State Code of West Virginia)

The Planning Commission recommends that this Comprehensive Plan not be adopted as an ordinance in its entirety.

Capital Improvements Program. The capital improvements program (CIP) provides jurisdictions with a method for planning for future "facilities" expenditures. Although typically tied to population increase and the introduction of impact fees, capital improvement programs (CIPs) are authorized by the State of West Virginia in the Local Powers Act (§7-20-1 et al.).

Implementation Steps, Timeframe, Cost Estimate, and Responsibility. While the state law provisions require implementation steps, time frame, a list of responsible parties, and cost estimates, it is not practical in Greenbrier County due to a limited budget and lack of staffing

Annual Comprehensive Plan Work Program, Quarterly Reports, and Annual Report. Starting in 2016, during the January meeting of each year, the comprehensive plan will be reviewed in a systematic manner by the Planning Commission.

Revision and Update Policy. Greenbrier County should review the full plan every five years and adjust or amend provisions as needed. The plan should be fully revised every 10 years.

This plan is not meant to preclude the update or adoption of other related plans, ordinances, or maps, from Federal, State, or Local agencies which shall be made consistent with this plan to the extent possible.