



visionHagerstown 2035

**City Comprehensive Plan
Hagerstown, Maryland**

Adopted by Mayor and City Council

April 3, 2018



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Acknowledgments

The Comprehensive Plan, *visionHagerstown 2035*, was prepared by the Hagerstown Planning Commission with the assistance of the staff of the Hagerstown Planning & Code Administration Department. Planning staff were assisted with input from the professional staff of the City's Departments of Community & Economic Development, Fire, Parks & Engineering, Police, Public Works, and Utilities, the County's Planning & Zoning Department, and the Washington County Public Schools.

visionHagerstown 2035 builds from a base provided by the 2008 *Comprehensive Plan*, which was developed with the assistance of Environmental Resources Management of Annapolis, Maryland.

The City of Hagerstown is grateful for the time and expertise of our volunteer board members on the Planning Commission and grateful for the public input provided during the plan development via stakeholder meetings, an on-line survey which was marketed to the community as a whole, the 60-day State clearinghouse review which preceded the Planning Commission's public review meeting on the draft plan, and the public meetings held by the Planning Commission and the Mayor and City Council.

The City received over 1,300 responses from the public to five surveys on plan topics which were posted on SurveyMonkey® in early 2017. The results of that survey were presented to the Planning Commission and are summarized in the Appendix. The input received indicated the draft plan was on the right track.

The City also received input during the State clearinghouse review from the Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Department of the Environment, and State Highway Administration. The Planning Commission took the State's comments under advisement and made revisions to the draft document to incorporate this input as deemed appropriate.

Executive Summary

visionHagerstown 2035 is the Comprehensive Plan and the City of Hagerstown’s official statement of policies directing the physical, social, and economic development of Hagerstown for the next 20 years, as well as policies for managing the City’s water and wastewater utilities over that time period. This Plan satisfies the requirements of the Land Use Article of State of Maryland. The Plan shall be an update to the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and will carry forward its major themes, including the 20-year Medium-Range Growth Area, future land use designations, transportation improvements, and downtown and urban core revitalization.

Historically, economic development investment was occurring outside the city, a trend that included the relocation of expanding enterprises outside of the city’s corporate boundaries. Between 1950 and 2000, the city’s population grew by only 1.1 percent, while the population of the surrounding suburban area nearly quadrupled. However, the development of an Annexation Policy and the economic and real estate boom of the mid 2000s allowed the city to capture more of the growth occurring in Washington County. Between 2000 and 2010, the city’s population increased by 7.5 percent. The adoption of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan coincided with the end of that housing boom, which subsequently led to a crash in housing values, a major decline of the financial sector of the economy, and a nation-wide recession and its after effects that lasted well into the early 2010s. Since that time new commercial and residential development has been minimal, while developed portions of the city, including downtown and the urban core, experience the challenges with vacancies, minimal investment, and declining property values. While the challenges of rapid growth and development faced by the 2008 Comprehensive Plan have diminished, *visionHagerstown 2035* has a unique opportunity to use long-range planning in a more proactive way.

In order to ensure that the City of Hagerstown grows in a fiscally and environmentally sound manner, *visionHagerstown 2035* outlines strategies to address the relationship between planned growth and the infrastructure needed to accommodate it. This Plan is intended to meet the requirements of the Municipal Growth Element and the Water Resources Element (pursuant to House Bill 1141, passed by the General Assembly in 2006), elements of Maryland’s long-range plan for sustainable growth, or “PlanMaryland”, and the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. The Plan places emphasis on the relationship between projected growth and available water and wastewater resources to serve growth. It defines a growth boundary and identifies water and wastewater service boundaries, within which the City’s utilities would serve projected future demand, while ensuring that vacant and underutilized lands within the existing corporate boundaries will have adequate infrastructure for future development. *VisionHagerstown 2035* also provides the land use and growth management policy framework for Hagerstown’s efforts to regain and strengthen its role as the primary provider of urban services in the Hagerstown region. Major themes of the Plan include:

- **Growth Management and Land Use:** *VisionHagerstown 2035* analyzes land capacity within the city and the Hagerstown Urban Growth Area and identifies a Medium-Range Growth Area (MRGA) to guide the City’s annexation plans and water and wastewater service for the next 20

years. Changes to the Future Land Use Plan are recommended to guide the location of higher-wage employers and high-quality new residential developments in the city, enhance the City's fiscal foundation, and broaden the city's economic base. The Plan also recommends re-alignment of the MRGA to capture areas and development that the city utilities are obliged to serve through past water agreements, to capture areas that are more likely to develop within the Plan's lifespan of 20 years (i.e. areas along Sharpsburg Pike south of I-70), to capture areas that contain properties with pre-annexation agreements, and to remove areas not likely to develop within the next 20 years (i.e. agricultural tracts along Broadfording Road).

The Plan analyzes the adequacy of existing land use categories in the city to serve modern commercial and industrial development needs while protecting the quality of life in the city's residential neighborhoods. The Plan recommends adjustments to the Future Land Use Plan, rezonings, and planning initiatives to provide the necessary flexibility and guidance to attract economic development and investment in the city's aging buildings and scattered infill properties, while removing land use conflicts for existing neighborhoods. The Plan recommends strategies to improve existing employment centers and develop new centers to aid the City's business recruitment and retention efforts and to revitalize older retail centers.

- **Revitalization of Downtown:** The Plan recognizes that revitalization and investment in Hagerstown's downtown is important to the overall vitality of the city. The Plan will recommend pursuing feasible and reality-based revitalization projects that have the potential of spurring redevelopment, such as the ones identified in the Community's City Center Plan. Particular emphasis is placed on revitalization of downtown through the attraction of market rate housing, office development and recruitment, heritage tourism, increased arts and entertainment activity, and student housing support for University System of Maryland – Hagerstown (USMH).
- **Water Resources:** The Plan recognizes the City's need to obtain additional water supply as well as to closely monitor the City's and County's wastewater treatment capacity, and establishes policies to guide the future extension of these services. These policies are closely linked with the Plan's growth management analysis and recommendations.

The Water Resources element also discusses the issues with non-point sources (NPS) of nutrient pollution, including stormwater runoff from roads and lawns, erosion and sediment from construction, agricultural runoff, atmospheric deposition, and any other source other than an outfall pipe. These sources are called nonpoint because they involve widely dispersed activities, and hence are difficult to measure. All non-point sources of pollution eventually reach the waters of the Chesapeake Bay unless filtered or retained by some structural system or non-structural techniques. The 2007 Maryland Stormwater Management Act, passed by the General Assembly, mandated substantial revision of the Stormwater Design Manual. The most notable provision of the 2007 Act is the requirement that new development use Environmental Site Design (ESD) techniques, which are intended to "maintain pre-development runoff characteristics" on the site. Although the City intends to comply with the 2007 Act, there are substantial concerns that the 2007 Stormwater Act and subsequent guidance published by MDE may inhibit redevelopment in Hagerstown. While the City appreciates and supports the state's overall intention of reducing nonpoint source pollution of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, it is the City's contention that

some reduction of nutrients and other pollutants (as would be achieved with less stringent stormwater requirements) is preferable to no improvement at all (as would be the case if ESD requirements push land developers to greenfield sites in the MRGA rather than redevelopment within the existing fabric of the city.)

- **Transportation:** *VisionHagerstown 2035* includes the recommendations of the Hagerstown-Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) Long Range Transportation Plan. It also lists other locally-recommended transportation improvements that are needed to serve the community and support land use policies, but that do not appear in the HEPMPPO Plan. A transportation plan map showing recommended street network improvements for the Hagerstown Medium- and Long-Range Growth Area is included. In addition to these recommendations, the Plan will emphasize creating a cohesive alternative transportation network to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.
- **Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization:** While the Plan plans for future growth in undeveloped areas around the city, it also recognizes the need to have quality, existing neighborhoods and stable home values. The Great Recession has adversely affected the city's neighborhoods and housing stock through declining home values, an aging housing stock, and an increase in foreclosures and vacant units. The City has established a vision and commitment to housing and neighborhoods that includes making them safe, clean, and welcoming, creating a sense of community identity, and making sure that they have amenities and are walkable.
- **Enhancement of Parks and Recreation Opportunities:** The Plan recommends strategies to gain additional open space for parks in underserved neighborhoods, as well as natural buffers and strategies to improve public access to and enjoyment of Antietam Creek and Marsh Run.
- **Environmental Resources:** The Plan recognizes the importance of becoming a more sustainable community and protecting water and air quality. Goals of the Plan will include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving local water resources, and encouraging green and sustainable infrastructure.

The Plan sets forth new City policies that will be implemented through a number of separate decisions, ordinances, and laws. Hagerstown's Zoning map will be updated and amended to be consistent with the Plan's recommendations. The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be updated to include specific projects described in the Plan. The Plan also serves as the basis for future amendments to the County Water and Sewer Plan.

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