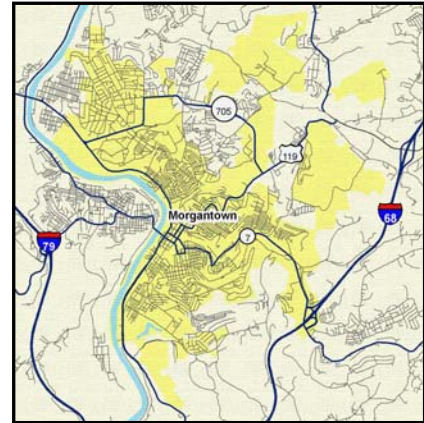


PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Morgantown Land Use Planning Milestones

1944.....City Council adopted first Zoning Ordinance
1959.....West Virginia Planning Enabling Act Adopted
1961.....City’s First Comprehensive Plan Adopted
1970.....Comprehensive Plan Updated
1979First City Planner Hired
1998.....Comprehensive Plan Updated
2006.....Zoning Ordinance Modernized



Introduction

The Vision is to organize a public Planning Department that puts customer service first; works, through motivated professionals shaping a high quality community for residents, business, and visitors; and serves as a model for management excellence.

The Mission is to enhance the quality of life and the design of the community, foster innovative planning, and promote sustainable community and economic development. This is accomplished by exercising commitment to public service and fairness, while maintaining respect for individual property rights.

The Purpose is to provide advice and technical expertise for elected officials, appointed citizen planners, City Departments and public agencies, and residents in pursuit of supporting well-informed and collaborative land use and land development decisions. Efforts are guided by an understanding and commitment to the principle that these decisions have a direct impact on the community’s quality of life today and for future generations.

Programs and Services

The activities of the Planning Department are categorized as long-range, special studies, community development, current-planning, and intergovernmental services.

Long-range planning involves the Comprehensive Plan process, which includes citizen reviews and public meetings leading to the adoption and update of the Plan. West Virginia State Code §8A-3-11, as revised in 2004, mandates that local comprehensive plans be reviewed and updated at least every ten (10) years. The next comprehensive plan update is programmed for 2008.

Special Studies include both scheduled and unscheduled requests for research and analysis of particular issues and projects. Additional requests arise internally from City Council and City

Boards and Commissions. These studies involve interaction with committees and interest groups and eventually foster policy and/or ordinance formulation, enactment, and implementation.

Community Development refers to a wide range of general and specific activities pertaining to community improvement and quality of life matters. Attendance at various meetings of neighborhood groups, community service organizations, and government agencies fall within this category. The Planning Department remains an active participant by attending an average of 5 to 10 community and economic development related activities a month.

Current Planning involves daily interactions with the general public regarding complaints, inquiries (walk-in, telephone, email, and “Request Partner”), and pre-application conferences. “Current Planning” also includes the routine review for Comprehensive Plan and Planning and Zoning Code compliance of:

- Minor and major subdivision petitions
- Site plan applications
- Variance petitions
- Conditional use petitions
- Zoning text amendment petitions
- Zoning map amendment petitions
- Home occupancy applications
- Administrative appeal petitions
- Building permits applications
- Grading permits applications
- Certificates of Occupancy
- Sign permit applications
- Business licenses

Intergovernmental Services refers to technical support and assistance to City Departments and allied county and regional agencies including demographic research and analysis, data collaboration and sharing, GIS analysis and mapping, transportation planning, public facilities planning, and infrastructure improvements. The Planning Department manages the caseload of the City’s Technical Review Committee, which is comprised of representatives of the Planning Department, Code Enforcement Division, Engineering Department, Fire Department, and Morgantown Utility Board (MUB). The Committee is charged with conducting preliminary plans review with developers of multi-family residential projects and all commercial and industrial projects. This Committee continues to foster Departmental coordination of plans review and provides an opportunity for developers to meet with Departments in one forum. The Planning Department also devotes limited services for the coordination of the City’s Wellness Program.

Staffing

The Department is currently staffed with a Director and a Deputy Director but is not currently supported by clerical staffing. The Department maintains a quality internship program with participants representing West Virginia University Departments of Geography, Political Science, and Landscape Architecture.

Christopher M. Fletcher, AICP joined the Planning Department as the Director in 2005. He is a certified professional planner with public and private sector experience in land use and land development planning, community and economic development, and federal and state block grant administration. Chris currently



serves as the President of the West Virginia Planning Association, is a member of the American Planning Association, and was a former Councilor with the City of Weirton, WV.

Lisa Mardis joined the Planning Department as Assistant to the Planner in 2000. She currently serves as the Deputy Director. She previously served in several local and state government roles with the City of Westover and the State of Maryland in Garrett County. Lisa is a member of the West Virginia Planning Association and the American Planning Association. She is currently working to fulfill the testing and certification requirements of the American Institute of Certified Planners.



Citizen Planners

The success of local planning policies, programming, and services depends largely on the commitment and integrity of residents appointed to serve on various planning-related committees. Morgantown is fortunate to enjoy a well-informed public that is willing to serve the role of “citizen planner.” The Planning Department provides staff support to the following committees:

Citizen Planner	Original Appointment	Current Term
Planning Commission		
Rick Hicks, Chair	01/18/00	01/06/04 – 12/31/07
Jennifer Selin, Vice-Chair	02/19/02	01/17/06 – 12/31/08
Julie Cryser	02/07/06	02/07/06 – 12/31/09
Peter DeMasters	03/21/06	03/21/06 – 12/31/09
Sam Loretta	06/20/06	06/20/06 – 12/31/09
Dr. Ken Martis	05/01/01	05/01/01 – Indef.
Teresa Miller	07/21/98	11/15/05 – 6/30/07
Fred Schaupp	01/17/06	01/17/06 – 12/31/08
Marti Shamberger	02/19/03	11/21/06 – 12/31/09
Board of Zoning Appeals		
Nick Iannone, Chair	01/06/98	01/04/05 – 12/31/08
Bernie Bossio, Vice-Chair	01/04/05	01/04/05 – 12/31/08
Mark Furfari	03/15/05	03/15/05 – 12/31/08
James Shaffer	02/07/06	02/07/06 – 12/31/09

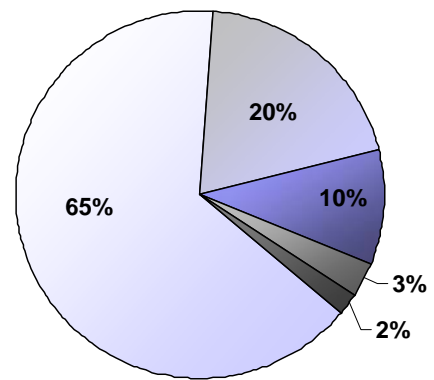
Jim Rockis	01/15/85	11/08/06 – 12/31/09
Downtown Design Review Committee		
Tom Anderson	Teresa Miller	
Bob Carubia	Steve McBride	
Michael Mills	Fred Schaupp	
Constance Mirandi	Terri Cutright, Ex-Officio	

The Planning Department prepares the agendas, recommendations, staff reports, records meeting attendance, prepares minutes, and follow-up communications for each of these committees.

2006 Activities

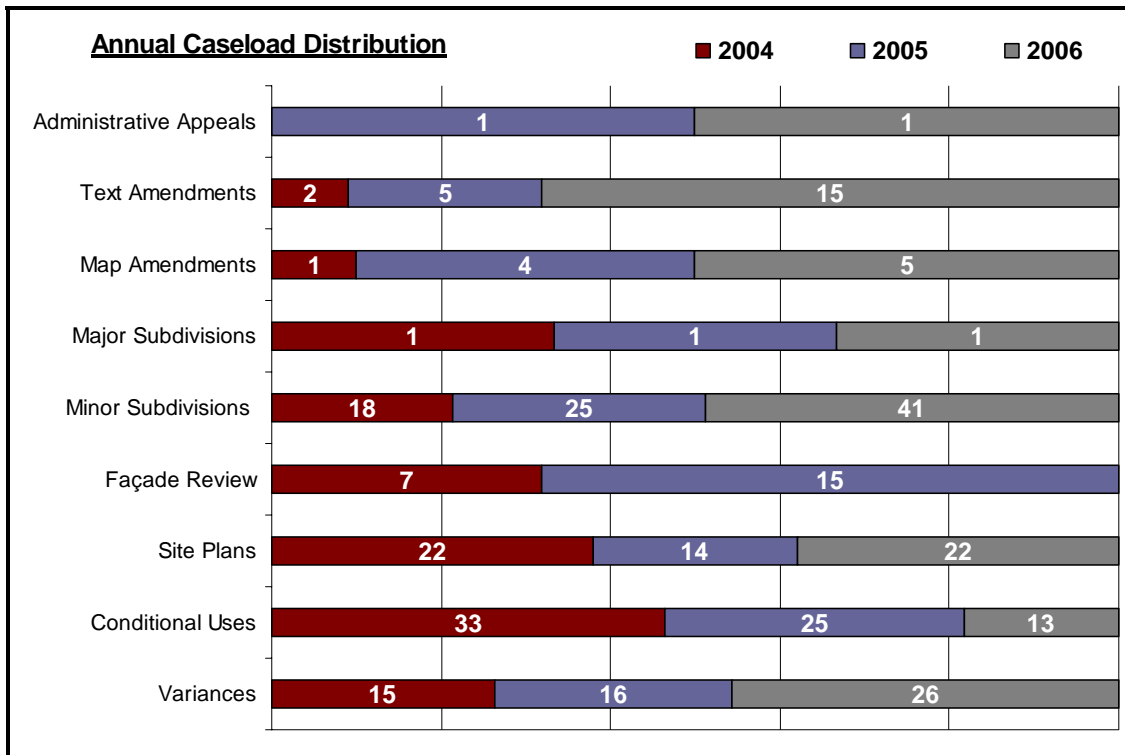
The distribution of activity across Planning Department programs and services for the reporting year was:

- Current Planning 65%
- Intergovernmental Services 20%
- Community Development 10%
- Special Studies 3%
- Long-range Planning 5%



The following table and graph illustrate the Planning Department's caseload for calendar years 2004, 2005, and 2006.

	Number of Applications			2006 Actions			
	2004	2005	2006	Pending	Approved	Denied	W/drawn
Variances	15	16	26	2	21	0	3
Conditional Uses	33	25	13	2	7	1	3
Site Plans	22	14	22	2	17	0	3
Façade Review	7	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minor Subdivisions	18	25	41	2	35	1	3
Major Subdivisions	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
Map Amendments	1	4	5	1	3	1	0
Text Amendments	2	5	15	1	14	0	0
Administrative Appeals	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	99	106	124	10	98	4	12



The following statistics represent activity in addition to the above table:

- Approximately 700 building permit reviews from November 2005 though October 2006 (estimated 40% of the 1,731 building permits issued during this period)

- Approximately 60 sign permits for the reporting year
- Approximately 1,900 general planning and zoning inquiries for the reporting year
- Approximately 310 pre-application conferences for the reporting year
- Approximately 100 hours was devoted to the Square at Falling Run PUD
- Approximately 25 hours was devoted to the SC Bodner PUD
- Approximately 60 hours was devoted to the City's Wellness Program for the reporting year

Observations

The following observations are submitted relating to the Department's 2006 activities:

- The number of Text Amendments rose significantly in 2006 (300% increase). This is directly attributed to several typographic, typeset, and technical oversight adjustments that are predicted following a major revision of a zoning ordinance. This trend is expected to continue through 2007 but should return to historical trends in 2008.
- The number of Variance Applications rose by 63%. Although variances provide relief for unique situations, too many may lead to circumvention or undermining of the zoning ordinance. More data is needed to assess specific cause(s) of the increase. Trend analysis will be developed and reported in 2007.
- Conditional Use Applications decreased by 48% from 2005 to 2006. This is directly attributed to the January 2006 major zoning ordinance revision. One fundamental objective of the revision was to increase opportunities of mixed-use development and occupancy and increase the number of by-right permitted uses in most zoning districts.
- Minor Subdivisions Applications rose by 57% from 2005 to 2006. More trend data is needed to assess specific cause. The January 2006 zoning ordinance revision reduced minimum lot sizes. However, a significant number of subdivisions resulted in the recombination of smaller parcels. This trend will be tracked closely and reported in 2007.
- Site Plan Review Applications in 2006 returned to 2004 levels.
- The issuance of only 60 sign permits in 2006 demonstrates a lack of resources devoted to the enforcement and administration of the City's sign regulations.
- The Department remains an active planning partner with the Square at Falling Run developers. The Phase I Development Plan for the "The Augusta" was submitted, reviewed, and conditionally approved in 2006. Construction is expected to be completed for fall 2007 leasing. The Department anticipates an increase in time devoted to the PUD in 2007 as a major Outline Plan Amendment is expected to be planned and submitted within the next 12 to 16 months.

Successes

- The Department reduced backlog in the face of significant changes in the City's land use policies, personnel transition, and increased caseloads.
- The Department's file management and tracking systems were modernized.
- The City's Planning and Zoning Code and Zoning Map are posted on the City's website for the first time in a user-friendly, easily searchable format.
- Agendas for the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals with links to Staff Reports are now routinely posted on the City website approximately one week preceding monthly meetings. This has significantly enhanced public awareness of City's planning activities by improving access and increasing transparency.
- The Department has integrated the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) into its day-to-day operations resulting in increased efficiencies and improved programming and services.
- The Department joined the Parking Authority and MainStreet Morgantown in visiting State College, Pennsylvania to meet with municipal officials concerning "Town-Gown" issues.
- Several GIS analysis and mapping projects were completed for City Departments:
 - Police Department – Police response zones were analyzed and revisions mapped.
 - Parking Authority – A database was developed of all public parking facilities (metered curb stalls, surface lots, and parking structures) and mapping delivered.
 - Fire Department – An incendiary structure fire database was developed and mapping delivered. Residency policy mapping was delivered. Fire station zones were analyzed and mapping delivered relating to the new fire station.
 - Engineering Department – Property maintenance violation trends were analyzed and a report and mapping delivered. An inventory of municipal properties was developed and remains an ongoing project.
 - The following Departments received various mapping products for use in assisting customers – Fire, Police, Engineering, Code Enforcement, Public Works, Finance, and City Manager

Challenges

- The issue of "adequate enforcement" of the City's Planning and Zoning Code remains a reoccurring criticism. The scale and scope of the Department's caseload relative to new construction has greatly diminished its ability to maintain an active and effective enforcement program. Enforcement challenges include illegal signs, field inspections of new development during construction, and monitoring compliance with condition use and variance approvals.

- The revision of the City’s Subdivision Regulations remains a high priority. However, the Department’s caseload has presented challenges to completing the task internally.
- The lack of an integrated, managed, and maintained comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) within the City and the County remains a significant barrier to increasing and enhancing existing planning programming and services. Primary barriers to the development and implementation of a comprehensive GIS include:
 - Cadastral Data – The County Assessor’s Office has not transitioned from paper tax mapping to digital GIS-based tax mapping
 - Addressing Data – The County Office of Emergency Management has been hampered by the State’s inability to complete the state-wide addressing project.
 - Interdepartmental Coordination – The lack of a GIS implementation strategy to connect databases and software across City Departments is a barrier to increasing operational efficiencies and enhancing services.

Future Initiatives

- The Planning Department will seek funding to outsource the task of revising the City's Subdivision Regulations.
- The Planning Department will continue to adapt standard operating procedures and initiate activities that serve to streamline review processes, increase operational efficiencies, expand services, and improve customer service.
- In response to several expressed concerns and complaints, the Planning Department will evaluate regulations governing signage and restaurant-private clubs and propose amendments where necessary.
- All planning applications and petitions will be posted on the City's website in a fillable Portable Document File (PDF) format. This will significantly enhance customer service by increasing access and reducing the number of customer trips to City Hall.
- The Planning Department will develop and implement an ongoing training program for citizen planners appointed to City Boards, Commissions, and Committees.
- The Planning Department will continue to seek methods of increasing the participation of neighborhood groups in the planning process.
- The Planning Department will continue to enhance GIS capabilities through software and hardware acquisitions, staff training, and spatial data collection and development.
- The Planning Department will conduct a comparative analysis of all fees associated with planning services and seek adjustments where necessary.
- The Planning Department will seek initial funding for the Comprehensive Plan Update currently programmed for 2008.
- The Planning Department will assist and support MainStreet Morgantown's pursuit of updating its Downtown Revitalization Plan (1994), including the development of architectural design standards as recommended in the original planning document.