



LAND USE

6



LAND USE

How land is used in Beckley is a foundational element within this comprehensive plan.

decisions related to how a community uses physical spaces typically impact generations

of residents and dramatically influence community character and appearance.

“We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”

—Native American proverb

6.1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the Land Use Component of Beckley's Comprehensive Plan. It defines a proposed general distribution of land use types. These include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational, public, historic, conservation,

transportation and infrastructure. It also considers population density, projected population change, and building intensity standards, along with constraints to development presented by flood-prone areas, and other limitations to development activity.



Image Source: Bing Maps - North Kanawha Street, North of Downtown Beckley

6.2

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The pressures to use land for various purposes is driven by changing human needs. As people are drawn to an area, necessary urban space for housing, commerce and industry naturally increases. As witnessed in Beckley, the community grew from a secluded rural outpost to a large regional hub for southern West Virginia during the last 150 years or so. Looking forward, projecting changing land use demand is difficult and challenging. National and global economic trends, along with sometimes unpredictable societal changes, can greatly influence regions, states and even multi-state regions. West Virginia is a prime example, as the boom and bust of coal industry employment has had profound impacts on local economies and population levels in the Appalachian region of the United States. Such forces are far beyond local control.

As mentioned previously, prior planning efforts in Beckley anticipated higher amounts of population growth than actually occurred. Overstated population projections are not unusual, and the consequences of modestly optimistic projections are often not significant. However, looking forward, more realistic and modest population growth is projected for Beckley. This is rational and sensible given the fact that both the State of West Virginia and Raleigh County are both projected to have remarkably stable populations in the coming decades. Population trends are generally slow to change significantly without significant events that attract people or encourage people to leave an area. Interestingly, both the State of West Virginia and Raleigh County are projected to begin to decline in population around 2030. This is due to the fact that mortality rates for baby-boomers will increase as they move into their 70's and 80's, while the projected

birth rate and net migration rate fail to make up the difference. Demographic trends such as these are not necessarily difficult to understand - as they simply involve existing residents getting older and reaching ages associated with high mortality rates.

It should be noted, however, that Beckley's population can change as a result of municipal annexation of land and larger regional economic forces. Annexation activity could change the total number of residents in Beckley, but such an action would have little to do with real population growth in the area. Annexation activity is also a political/economic decision and very difficult to predict. Further, and as discussed later in Chapter 17, annexation is an important local issue that should become a priority for the long-term economic health of the City.

There are also other unforeseen events and activity that could change growth projections toward the upside. There may be some long-term growth impact attributable to the new Bechtel Family National Scouting Reserve to the north as it becomes an even more significant national destination in the future. Similarly, increases in energy production led by development of oil and gas resources associated with Marcellus Shale oil and gas extraction in West Virginia may drive some local growth as it has elsewhere in the US.

Aside from unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances, the population of Beckley is expected to remain stable. As noted, these projections do not account for population change that would result from future annexation activity (this topic is addressed more fully in subsequent chapters of this plan).

After growing at an annual rate of 0.24 percent in 2000's, West Virginia population is expected to grow at another 0.24 percent rate per year through 2015. Growth is expected to decelerate over time because as the State population continues to age, the number of deaths will rise and at the same time the gain from births and net in-migration will gradually decline. Indeed, between 2015 and 2025, growth is expected to slow to 0.13 percent per year, and only to slow further to a zero percent growth through 2030. This means, the State population is expected to stay at around 1.9 million.

Projections for Raleigh County show virtually no growth. The 2010 population of Raleigh County was 78,859 and the projected 2030 population is 78,989.

Source: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University, Christiadi, Ph.D., August 2011. <http://www.be.wvu.edu/demographics/populationprojection.htm>

Comprehensive Plan Population Projections

Political Unit	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
West Virginia (1)	1,852,994	1,875,634	1,893,182	1,900,835	1,900,535
Raleigh County (1)	78,859	79,693	79,969	79,856	78,989
Beckley (2)	17,614	17,820	17,930	17,950	17,850

(1) Projections from Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University.

(2) Projections from Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc. using constant share methods

POPULATION DENSITY

Beckley's population density is generally comparable to other West Virginia cities. Given the 2010 population of 17,614 and land area of 9.49 square miles, the number of residents per square mile is 1856.06. This is more than the cities of Weirton (1093.96), Charleston (1630.71) and Clarksburg (1700.31), but far less than cities such as Parkersburg (2664.3), Morgantown (2916.42) and Huntington (3029.47). These latter cities have larger educational institutions with student housing boosting the number of residents per square mile. Beckley may have a higher functional level of population density than indicated, however, since it serves as a regional hub for non-residential land uses. Hundreds of acres on the north side of Beckley along Robert C. Byrd Drive and Eisenhower Drive are used for regional commercial purposes that serve a large region of southern West Virginia. Similarly, land along the East Beckley Bypass includes a large amount of land devoted to non-residential uses.

6.3

EXISTING LAND USE

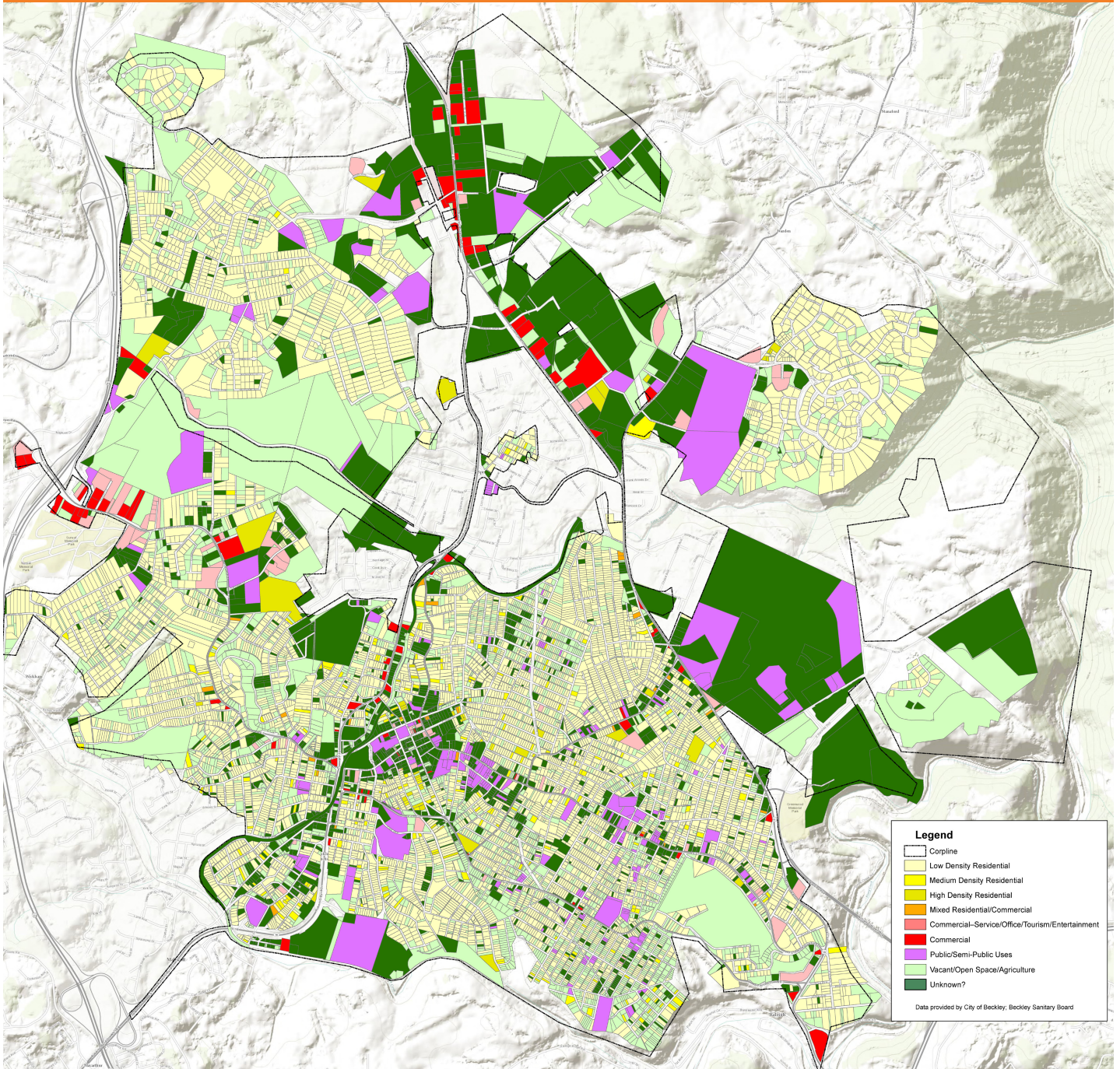
An existing land use map was prepared using the Geographic Information System (GIS) resources of the Beckley Sanitary Board based on information provided by the Raleigh County Assessor. Although all attribute data for all parcels were not available, the following map provides a very general illustration of how land is used in Beckley. Apart from this graphic illustration of existing land use in Beckley, land area associated with various land use categories was generated by the Beckley Sanitary Board GIS department. These calculations are provided below:

Existing Land Use Categories

Category	Description	Acres	Map Color
Low Density Residential	Residential 1 Family	1,857 acres	Light Yellow
Medium Density Residential	Mobile Home, Residential 2 Family, Residential 3 Family, Residential 4 Family	1,908 acres	Medium Yellow
High Density Residential	Apartment (high rise), Apartment-Garden (1-2 stories), Condominium (common element), Boarding and Rooming House	61.5 acres	Dark Yellow
Mixed Residential / Commercial	Mixed Residential/ Commercial, Residential Structure on Commercial land	6.3 acres	Medium Orange
Commercial–Service/ Office/Tourism/ Entertainment	Nursing Home, Medical Office, Bank, Day Care Center, Health Spa, Hotel/ Motel-High Rise, Hotel/ Motel-Low Rise, Bowling Alley, Funeral Home	78.5 acres	Light Red
Commercial – Retail	Supermarkets, Service Station with Bays Auto Dealer-Full Service Auto Service Garage Franchise Food Restaurant Service Station without Bays Bar/Lounge	85.3 acres	Dark Red
Public / Semi-Public Uses	Hospital, School, Religious, Cemetery, Federal/State Building, Police or Fire Station. College/University	356.5 acres	Purple
Vacant / Open Space / Agriculture	Interactive Farm, Residential Vacant, Vacant Exempt land, Active Farm, Country Club with Golf Course, Vacant Commercial Land	1,424.8 acres	Light Green
Unknown*		1,271.8 acres	Dark Green

*The large amount of unclassified acreage is attributable to the fact that the local Geographic Information System (GIS) is still under development and there are unresolved matters with available data sets.

Map 6-1 Existing Land Use



Map 6-1 Existing Land Use. Source: Beckley Sanitary Board and Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc.

6.4

LAND USE REGULATIONS

For the most part, the land use patterns evident in Beckley are the product of zoning regulations adopted and enforced by the City. The zoning code is a local law that defines how buildings can be constructed on a lot and how land can be used. The zoning code was updated in 2002 to a limited degree. It divides the City into ten zoning districts. Each zoning district contains permitted

and conditional land uses, along with associated development standards. These development standards establish minimum lot sizes, maximum lot coverage, parking requirements, minimum yard setbacks and related requirements.

According to information provided by the GIS department at the Beckley Sanitary Board, the respective acreage related to each zoning district is as follows:

Existing Zoning Categories		
Category	Name	Acres
R-1	One Family District	3,019
R-2	General Residential District	45
R-3	Multiple Family District	185.8
R-5	Multiple Family High Rise	NA
R-6	Elderly High Rise	4.3
O-R	Office/Residential/Transitional District	24.1
B-1	Neighborhood District	384.2
B-2	General Commerical- Business District	706.8
B-3	Courthouse Square District	65.8
M-1	Manufacturing District	679.5

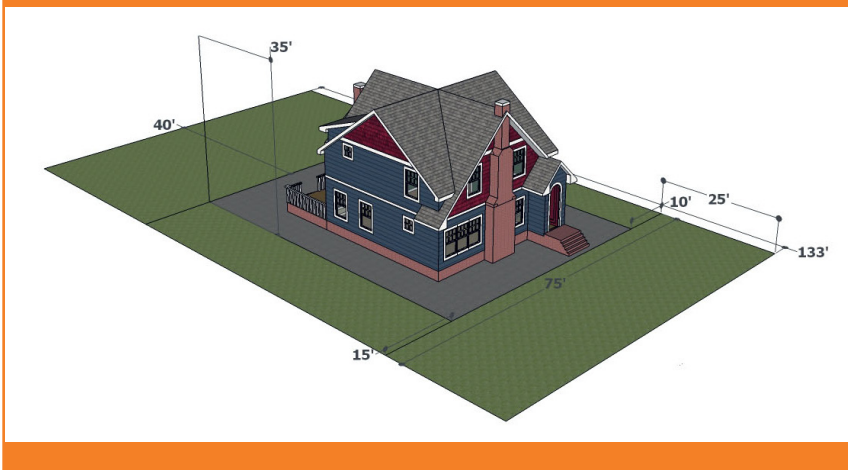
Significant Zoning Requirements

Zoning District	Primary Uses Allowed	Min. Front Yard	Min. Side Yard	Min. Rear Yard.	Min Lot Width	Min. Lot Size	Max Lot Coverage	Max Building Height	Density/ Land Use Intensity
R-1	Single Fam.	25	10/(25 sum)	40	75	10,000	35%	3 stories /35 ft.	4.3 units per acre
R-2	Two to four fam. dwellings	25	8 (20 sum)	35	60	3,750 per unit.	35%	3 stories /35 ft.	11.6 units per acre
R-3	Multiple family dwellings	20	5 (15 sum)	25	80	1,500 per unit	35%	4 stories / 45 ft.	29 units per acre.
R-5	Multiple family dwellings (high rise)	25	10 (more if over 45 ft tall)	20 (more if over 45 ft tall)	120	1,500 per unit	40%	10 stories / 120 ft.	29 units per acre.
R-6	Multiple family dwellings (high rise)	25	10	20	120	600 per unit	45%	10 stories / 120 ft.	72 units per acre.
OR	Office & Residential	25	10 (25 sum)	25	75	10,000	50%	3 stories /35 ft.	NA
B-1	Neighborhood Businesses	20	10	20	NA	NA	NA	3 stories /35 ft.	Buildings may be no larger than 20,000 square feet.
B-2	Gen. Business	TBD	10	20	NA	NA	NA	4 stories / 45 ft.	NA
B-3	Downtown	0	0	15	NA	NA	NA	4 stories / 45 ft.	NA
M	Manufacturing	50	15	30	NA	NA	60%	4 stories / 55 ft.	NA

General Zoning Needs

The Beckley Zoning Ordinance has not undergone significant revisions for many years. As part of this Comprehensive Planning process, some effort was made to review the structure of existing zoning language. Other zoning recommendations are made elsewhere in this Plan, and are specific to key issues. In terms of general needs however, the following issues have surfaced as needing attention and further consideration in subsequent efforts to update the zoning code:

Minimum R-1 Zoning Requirements



Graphic Illustration of minimum R-1 Zoning Requirements

NEEDED ZONING CODE UPDATES

1. Consider adding a new low-density residential zoning district(s). About half of the City of Beckley is zoned R-1. For the most part, R-1 is aligned with development patterns evident in Maxwell Hill and Woodcrest in northern areas of the City. These suburban residential areas generally have lots that meet or exceed the 10,000 square foot minimum, and often buildings are setback significant distances from lot lines. However, the R-1 District also extends throughout older sections of Beckley where lot sizes and setbacks are much smaller. Lots in neighborhoods such as East Park and Bowling Addition near downtown are also zoned R-1, and most are considerably smaller than 10,000 square feet. Such smaller lots are considered non-conforming, but more importantly, it is likely that R-1 setbacks would create difficulty for even modest building additions. Seeking a variance is always an option for property owners, but the larger question of the appropriateness of the zoning standards remains. It is therefore proposed that a new medium density residential district be created with minimum lot sizes and setback requirements that more closely match existing development patterns in older sections of Beckley. It may also be that closer examination of existing residential lot sizes may indicate the need for more than one new residential zoning district so that permitted uses and lot requirements better align with existing development patterns.

2. Re-evaluate the need for an R-5 Zoning District. The maps of zoning districts in the City indicate that the R-5 zoning district is not applied to any property. Moreover, the development standards associated with R-5 are very close to R-6. While there may be good reasons to keep an R-5 district in place, it may also be that it can be eliminated and merged with R-6. This step can help simplify the zoning code and help eliminate redundancy.

3. Update site plan review procedures and requirements. As described in Chapter 14, urban design criteria can be added to site plan review requirements to help articulate desirable design elements.

4. Add a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning District. The existing list of zoning districts in Beckley does not include a PUD district. PUD's are common zoning districts in municipal zoning codes. They provide flexibility in terms of permitted uses and development standards that allow for more creative design. Often they include mixed uses and/or clustering of residential density to allow opportunities to create open space systems and shared recreational amenities. It is possible that a PUD zoning classification could be applied to areas along New River Drive to allow for more creative site design.

5. Consider a second manufacturing zoning district. The existing "M" zoning district applies to many varied areas in Beckley. It applies to the Ragland Road area, the new industrial area just west of the bypass and in select areas on the southern edge of town near Robert C. Byrd Drive. Distinguishing between heavy industrial uses and "lighter" industrial uses is a common element of municipal zoning codes and should be considered in Beckley. Often, "light" industrial zoning districts exclude industrial uses that generate heavy semi-truck traffic and involve outside storage of raw materials or finished goods. They also often have lists of permitted uses that include supportive business such as print/copy shops and offices, and development standards that require landscaping that contributes to more of a campus-like atmosphere.

6.5

NATURAL CONSTRAINTS TO DEVELOPMENT

Land development is constrained by physical characteristics of the landscape. In Beckley, the primary constraint is topography. Areas to the south and east of Beckley have extremely steep slopes that make urban development extremely difficult without extraordinary measures.

Flooding is another constraint for development. Surface waterways generally flow from west to east through the Beckley area and collect in Piney Creek east of town. Piney Creek ultimately empties into the New River. Flood plains are areas next to streams and rivers that periodically flood when heavy rain and soil conditions deliver more water to a watercourse than it can hold within its banks. The 100-year flood plain is the common benchmark for flood plain definition and it relates to areas next to waterways that are predicted to flood once every 100 years.

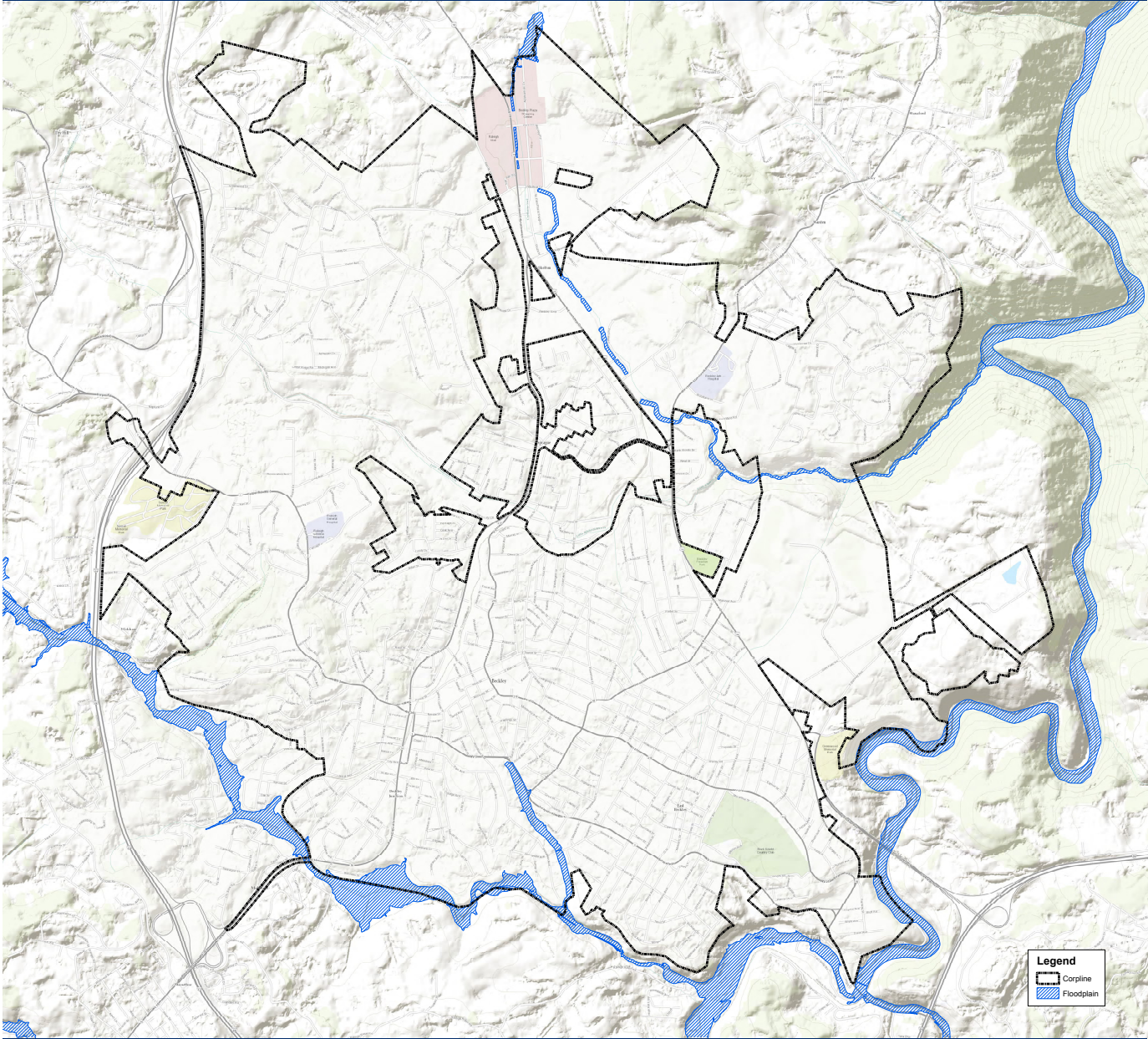
Put another way, the 100-year flood plain is an area that has a 1% chance of flooding each year.

The two flood plains that impact Beckley include the area on the east side of Eisenhower Drive near the large concentration of commercial development. A channelized waterway exists along the east side of Eisenhower Drive that is subject to flooding. Undoubtedly, the large expanses of hard surfaces created by the intensive level of commercial development contribute to large volumes of water collecting in this waterway. Secondly, a small tributary to Piney Creek that flows along the southern edge of the City has an associated flood plain. Flatter ground in this area allows the flood plain boundary to expand out greater distances from the stream bank. In regulatory flood plains, urban development is regulated and new structures must be elevated (or otherwise flood proofed) to prevent future damages from flood events.



Topography in the Beckley area can be dramatic and it shapes development patterns in significant ways.

Map 6-2 Physical Constraints to Development



Map 6-2 Physical Constraints to Development - Source: Beckley Sanitary Board and Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc.

6.6

PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Considering only areas within the municipal limits, there is limited developable land in Beckley. The two areas that stand out as offering space for “greenfield” development are along New River Drive and near the East Beckley Bypass. Greenfields are generally considered to be parcels of land that have not been previously developed – except perhaps for associated efforts to build new streets or other infrastructure.

The New River Drive Corridor extends between Pikeview Drive on the west and Robert C. Byrd Drive on the east. This corridor is largely undeveloped and is currently zoned B-2, B-1 and R-1. A majority of the corridor is wooded and many areas include steep slopes that present limitations for development. The Little Whitestick Creek generally flows parallel to New River Drive and ultimately connects to Piney Creek east of Beckley. Flooding associated with Little Whitestick Creek in this area is not a major obstacle for development.

The East Beckley Bypass was designed to help provide access to developable land on the east side of Beckley and to help relieve traffic congestion on north-south arterials such as Eisenhower Drive. Land along the East Beckley Bypass, generally north and west of Piney Creek, is largely flat and developable. In recent years,

new light industrial uses and institutional facilities have been constructed in this area, but much more land is available for development. New local roads are under construction providing fully serviced lots that are development-ready.

Downtown Beckley is also considered to be a preferred development area. This may seem counter-intuitive since downtown includes many structures and considerable building mass. However, in many respects, downtown Beckley is a place with substantial development opportunity in terms of both new construction, building expansion, and reuse of existing vacant space. It is also a place that benefits the most from high ratios of building floor area to land area, greater density of population and a rich variety of activities that draw people. Considerably more development potential exists in Downtown Beckley and, since a vibrant and active downtown is essential to the City’s long term goals, it is considered to be a “preferred development area.”

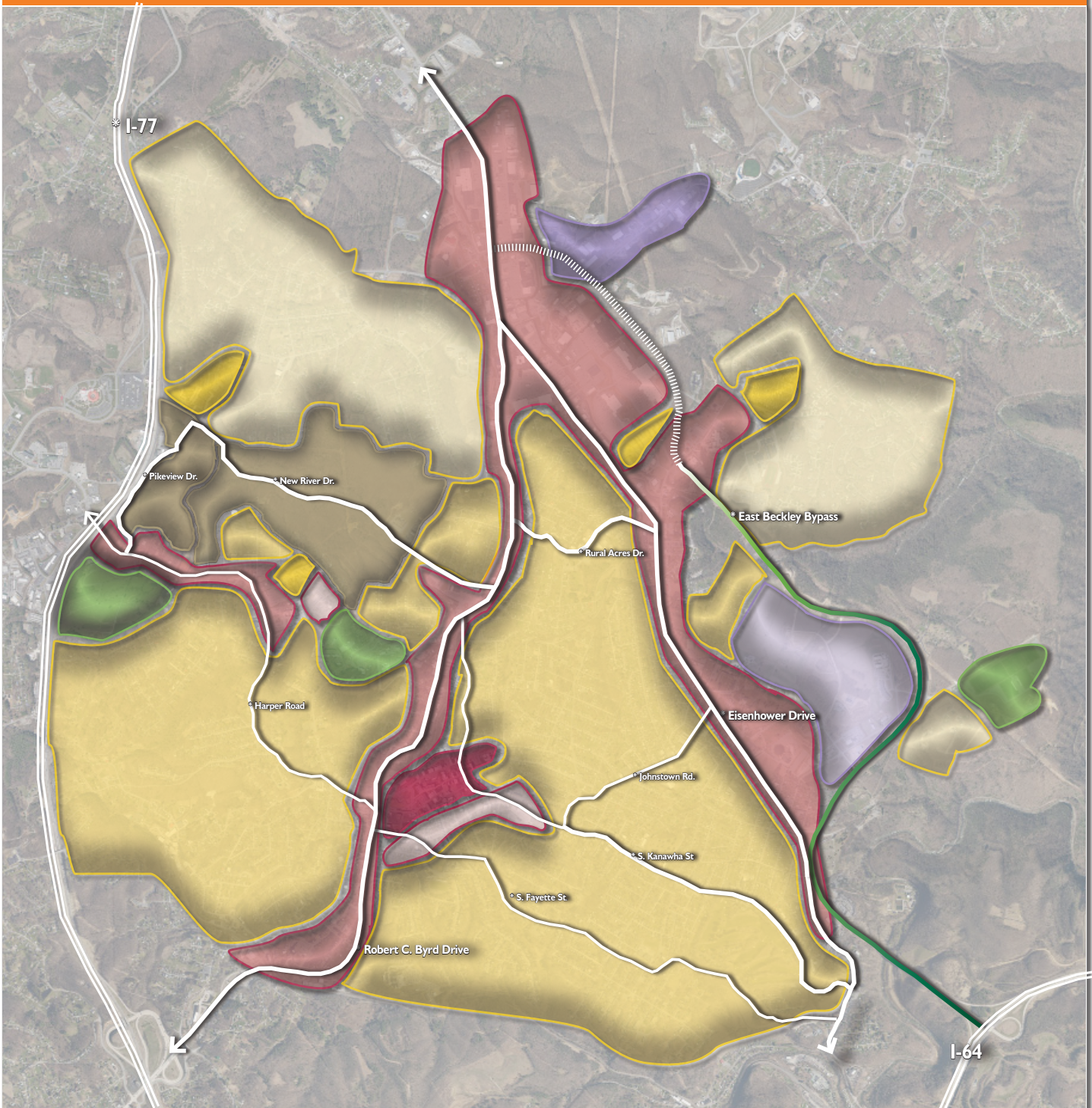
These three preferred development areas are described in more detail in Chapter 15. Further, there are several areas in Beckley that stand out as significant renewal and redevelopment areas. These areas typically include residential neighborhoods that are experiencing challenges associated with vacant housing units and housing rehabilitation needs. These areas are discussed in Chapter 16.

6.7

GENERAL LAND USE PLAN

Beckley’s general land use plan shown below illustrates desired land use patterns given the goals and objectives expressed throughout this planning document, and specifically defined in Chapter 19.

Insert Map 6-3 Generalized Future Land Use Map



14

LEGEND

	Low Density Residential		Neighborhood Commercial		Light Industrial		Special Planning Area
	Medium Density Residential		General Commercial		General Industrial		
	High Density Residential		Downtown Commercial		Open Space and Parks		