

# McGaheysville Area Plan

An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of  
Rockingham County, Virginia



Prepared by  
Herd Planning & Design • Kellerco • Sympoetica  
in association with Draper Aden Associates

and in conjunction and collaboration with  
the citizens of the McGaheysville area,  
the Citizen Advisory Committee,  
and the Rockingham County Staff

*Approved by Board of Supervisors  
April 11, 2007*



## *McGaheysville Area Plan*

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Cover Photo: View of Massanutten Peak from McGaheysville Elementary School, Herd Planning & Design, Ltd.

## McGaheysville Area Plan

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# **The Purpose and Process of the Plan**

## **Purpose of the Plan**

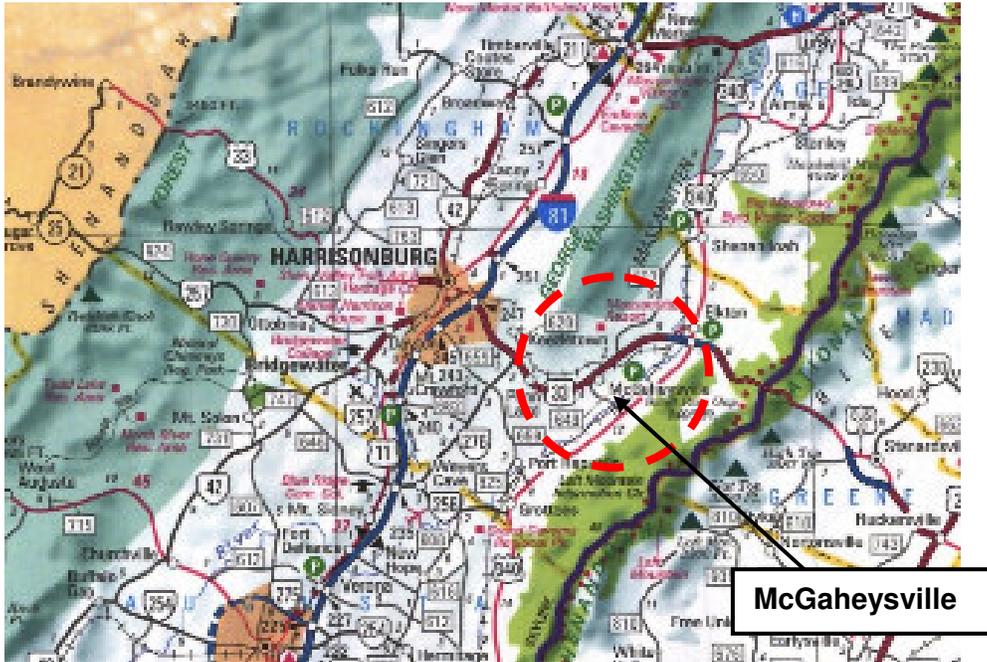
The McGaheysville Area Plan is the first area-specific plan initiated by the County following preparation of Rockingham County's new Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in early 2004. The Comprehensive Plan is the key document that guides decision-making for the County's future. It is not an ordinance, but it controls the location and extent of public facilities and provides the basis for land development and public facilities regulations, as well as decisions on rezoning applications. The State Code requires that the County's Comprehensive Plan be reviewed at least every five years; the County also intends to review the McGaheysville Area Plan at least every five years.

The McGaheysville Area Plan is an element of the County's overall Comprehensive Plan. Other area-specific plans may follow in the future. McGaheysville is a historic rural village situated between the City of Harrisonburg and the Town of Elkton, at the foot of Massanutten Mountain and the Shenandoah National Park.

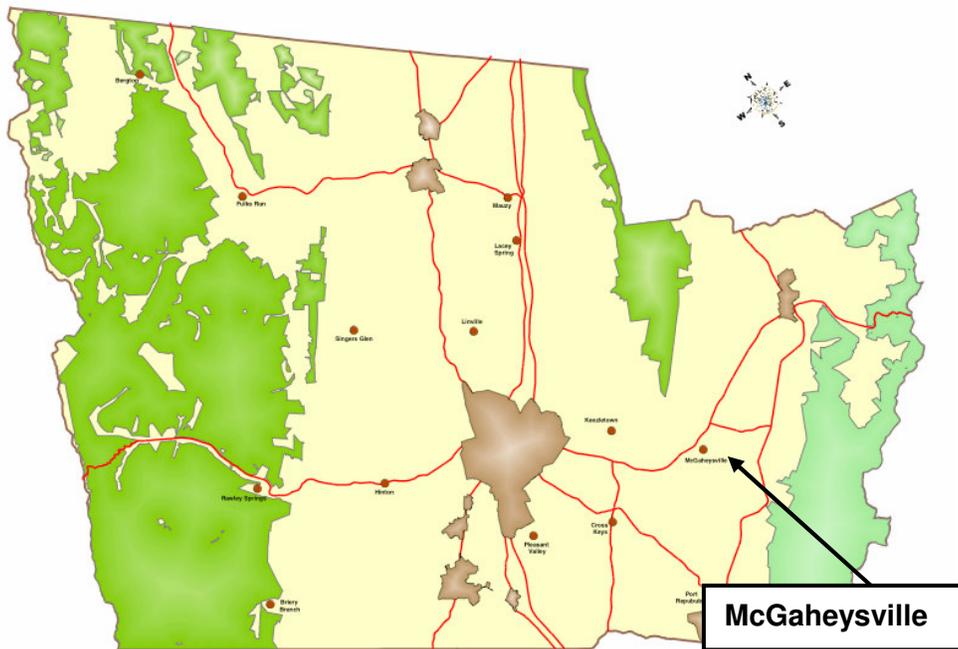
The McGaheysville Area was selected for the County's first Area Plan, mainly due to several key attributes (not listed in any priority). The area:

- is designated as a growth area in the County's Comprehensive Plan, aimed at absorbing a component of future population and job growth as a way of helping to relieve development pressure from the local agricultural land base
- has been the subject of substantial recent development activity and development pressure
- has public water and wastewater service via the County's systems
- has a significant component of public facilities and services, including three schools, a fire station and a post office
- is situated on Spotswood Trail (Route 33), the major east-west road corridor in the County
- has the Massanutten Resort development at its northern edge
- has important natural and agricultural resources, including surrounding farmland, the Massanutten mountains and the nearby South Fork of the Shenandoah River
- is located in proximity to the Coors and Merck industrial facilities

The regional location of the village is shown on the map at the top of the following page.



Regional Location (VDOT State Transportation Map)



Regional Location (Rockingham County GIS Location Map)



*Historic Lambert Hall*



*Near the center of the village*



*Farm at edge of the village*



*South Fork of Shenandoah River*



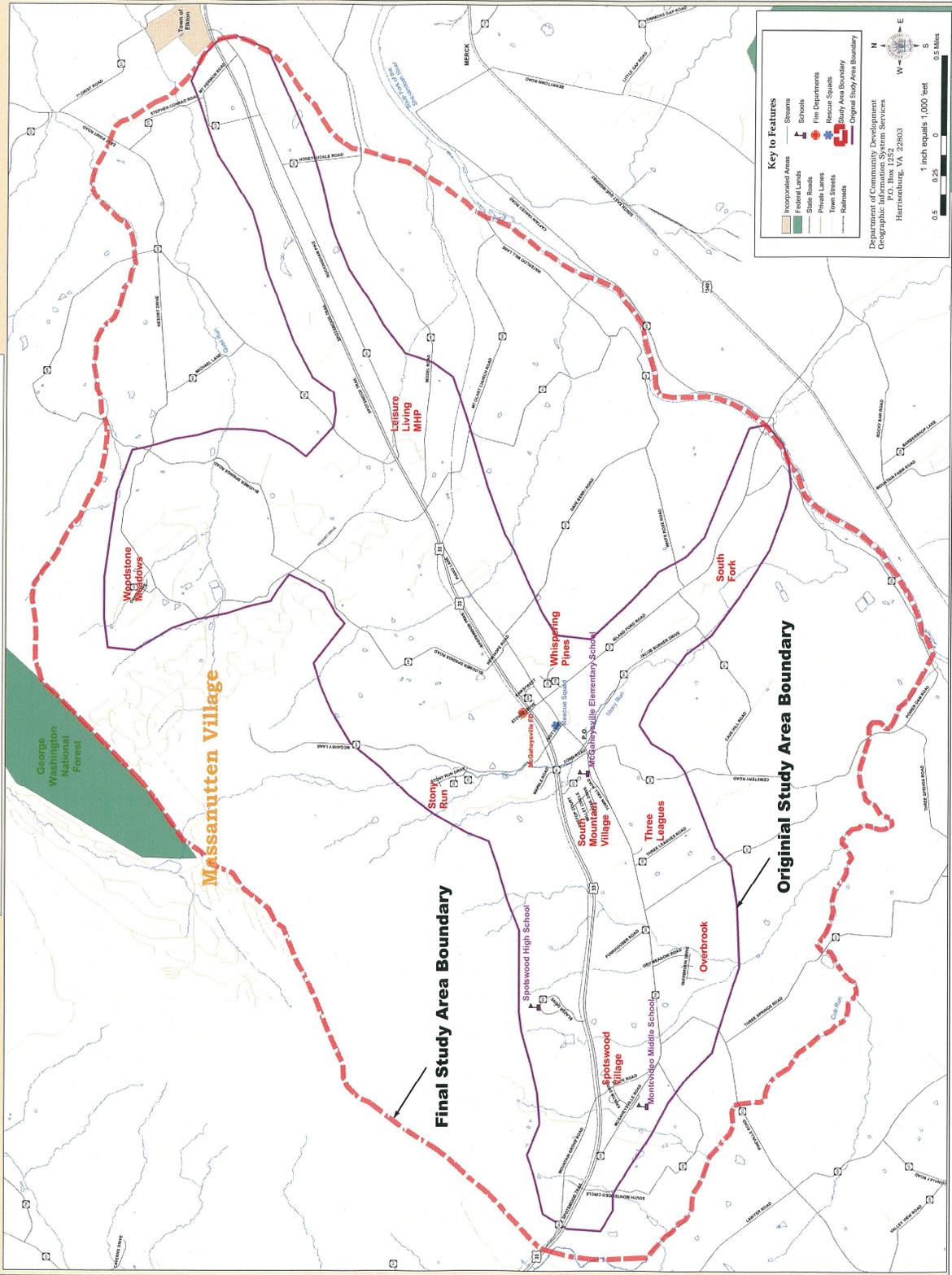
*New houses at south edge of village core*



*U. S. Post Office in center of village*

The following map shows the boundary of the study area for this planning effort. As the plan was developed, it became clear that much of what happens within the study area is highly influenced by activities beyond the immediate borders. Although the guiding principles of this plan directly pertain only to the land within these boundaries, the “area of influence” of the plan extends beyond the defined borders, which should be considered “soft” rather than “hard” edges. Thus, the study area boundaries show a somewhat larger area than was originally suggested when the project began. These two boundary lines are both shown on the map.

McGaheysville Study Area





*Historic Stumps Store*



*Railroad Crossing at Route 33*



*Street between Elementary School and "Town Hall"*



*"Town Hall"*



*Brick House - typical of this style in the village*



*Newer house - typical of the emerging trend*

## **Process of Preparing the Plan**

The process used for preparing the McGaheysville Area Plan was collaborative in nature, centered on a series of meetings of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), a group of 15 prominent local citizens appointed by the Board of Supervisors to represent a range of viewpoints within the community.

In addition to regular CAC meetings, three public workshop sessions were conducted in order to give citizens at large an opportunity to engage the committee members, the consulting team and each other in discussions aimed at creating a vision for the future of the area and a set of actions to achieve that vision. All of the meetings were held in the McGaheysville Elementary School, except for the final CAC meetings in November and December 2004.

The key points in the process are summarized below. Detailed results of each meeting are contained in the Appendix to this plan.

### **Kick-Off Meeting, December 11, 2003**

An open public meeting to initiate the process was held in December, 2003. This meeting attracted many interested citizens and was used not only to obtain initial ideas and concerns for the future of the area, but also to stimulate interest in the project among the public, including service on the CAC. At this meeting, citizens were given an introduction to the purposes of comprehensive plans and a review of the various planning tools available to counties in Virginia for managing growth. On January 28, 2004, the Board of Supervisors appointed 15 members to the Citizen Advisory Committee.

### **Committee Meeting #1, February 24, 2004**

At the first Citizen Advisory Committee meeting, participants were introduced, including committee members, County staff and consultants. Members reviewed the purpose of Comprehensive Plans, reviewed some emerging planning tools and reviewed the proposed scope, process and schedule for completing the McGaheysville Plan. The CAC then identified and discussed key issues and ideas that are important to the future of the area.

### **Committee Bus Tour, April 3, 2004**

The CAC met on a Saturday morning to tour the planning area, driving the major roadways and visiting the key sites and neighborhoods.

### **Public Workshop #1: Tools for Planning, April 17, 2004**

At the first public workshop, citizens at large, including the CAC, reviewed technical information about potential planning tools for the area and interactively explored issues and opportunities for the future of the area.

## Public Workshop #2: Creating a Vision for the Future

The second workshop was divided into two separate sessions.

*The first session was held May 27, 2004. Citizens at large reviewed the Issues and Opportunities they created at the first workshop, reviewed a draft visions statement that was based upon their work at that workshop and, working in groups, generated a variety of Ideas for Future Land Use and Infrastructure in the area.*

*The second session was held June 3, 2004. Citizens at large reviewed and affirmed a revised vision statement and evaluated refinements of ideas for Future Land Use and Infrastructure, based upon their work at the first session.*



*Plenary Review of Work Group Results*



*Plenary Review of Work Group Results*

## Committee Meeting #2, June 24, 2004

After the second public workshop, the consulting team prepared a conceptual sketch plan of future land use and infrastructure for the area and reviewed this with the CAC at its second formal meeting.

## Committee Meeting #3, July 22, 2004

At the third CAC meeting, the Committee reviewed alternative growth rates and land consumption scenarios and compared these to the Conceptual Plan Framework that was discussed on June 24. The Committee selected the most likely expectation for a rate of future growth. It then reviewed, evaluated and ranked a variety of choices of potential land use patterns, design elements and densities in terms of their suitability for key portions of the study area.



*Committee Meeting at the Fire Hall*



*Committee Meeting at the Fire Hall*

#### **Committee Meeting #4, August 26, 2004**

At its fourth formal meeting, the CAC reviewed and evaluated a draft guiding principles framework prepared by the consulting team after the third CAC meeting.

#### **Public Workshop #3: Evaluating the Framework Plan, September 23, 2004**

The public was invited to review and discuss the guiding principles framework that had been developed during the spring and summer and give comment to the CAC and the consulting team as to further refinement.

#### **Committee Meeting #5, November 4, 2004**

Having reaching broad consensus on most major policy issues, the CAC used its fifth formal meeting to focus on the remaining issues, particularly residential density and form. The Committee reached a hard-won consensus on the major guidelines for future development.

#### **Committee Meeting #6, December 16, 2004**

The CAC used its sixth meeting to continue its discussion of the remaining issues.

#### **Committee Meeting #7, March 2, 2005**

Some members still had concerns about densities, transportation improvements and other related issues, so the CAC held a final meeting in March to complete its discussion and reach a final, broad consensus on those remaining issues.

# Summary of Issues and Resources

## Major Issues

The major issues that were identified initially by the CAC, the staff and the consulting team included:

### Future Development Issues

- Land capacity in the study area is huge – the McGaheysville area is expansive, having developed as a linear village along old Route 33. With sewer and water lines serving a vast area, the study area itself is very large (several thousand acres). This presents great challenges in defining the extent and form of future development, and to protecting the surrounding natural and agricultural landscape.
- Existing zoning capacity is less expansive than the land area, but still significant, and pressures for rezoning are increasing.
- Utility capacity and allocation – sewer and water lines exist through much of the area, although wastewater treatment capacity is currently constrained.
- Market demand – residential growth pressures are increasing due to job growth in the region and in-migration of population from other areas.
- Role and impact of Massanutten Resort – the resort has significant further growth potential, as well as some large related uses such as a planned water park.

### Transportation Issues

- Rt. 33 volumes and access – traffic on Route 33 is an increasing problem; safety concerns, particularly at the McGaheysville Fire Station and Spotswood High School, are paramount.
- Railroad crossings at key road intersections create safety concerns and long-term constraints on development north of the rail line.
- Mix of industrial and residential traffic through the village – Island Ford Road connects I-81 and Spotswood Trail (Route 33) to the Coors and Merck facilities as well as other smaller businesses, thus causing significant truck traffic through the heart of the village.
- Plan for regional uses and facilities – McGaheysville will continue to function as a community focal point for a much wider population; additional regional uses, in addition to the high school are likely to locate here, creating additional traffic and access issues.

- Don't "strip" the corridor – some amount of "strip" development has already occurred along Spotswood Trail. (Strip development is that which has closely spaced, individual driveway access with parking lots bordering the roadway). If allowed to continue, this pattern will have devastating negative affects on the safety and capacity of Route 33.
- Protect the crossovers – the railroad crossings need to be protected from intensive development and further close-in motor vehicle access points in order to prevent safety conditions from worsening further.

### Community Design Issues

- Where is the "village core" now and in the future? The historic village core is very linear; should there be multiple core areas?
- What is the edge of the core area? What should the boundaries, if any, be for the core area? Should development policies be different for the core area than for other parts of the study area?
- Should there be a series of defined "places" along the corridor?
- Does the community want more sidewalks? If yes, where?
- Connectivity of streets - how and how much?
- Protection of scenic views from the village
- Protection of significant historic buildings and sites

Specific comments by individual CAC members early in the process called attention to some of the major challenges and conflicts that the plan must address. These comments included significant contrasting sentiments, such as:

- "Freedom to construct whatever one wants isn't good" vs. "People have a right to construct what they wish"
- "We need a plan for implementing community desires" vs. "Too many restrictions aren't good – we need housing where water and sewer are located"
- "Decisions outside the study area may have an impact inside it"

These comments provided guidance to the CAC and the consulting team as to points of contention that would inform the discussions throughout the entire planning process.

Early in its deliberations, the CAC brainstormed major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the area. These ideas supplemented the initial issue identification effort and are summarized as follows:

**STRENGTHS / OPPORTUNITIES of the McGaheysville Area**

1. Three excellent schools within three miles of each other
2. Public water and sewer in place
3. Low traffic volume, overall
4. Streets in excellent condition
5. Spotswood Trail (Route 33) is a commuter road, which is both good and bad
6. Elkton Volunteer Emergency Squad (McGaheysville satellite)
7. Excellent McGaheysville Voluntary Fire Company
8. Supportive County Board member
9. Proximity to Harrisonburg
10. Historic and natural resources
11. Scenic beauty – rural character, trees, quality of life (low cost of living, rural atmosphere, and proximity to City)
12. Train whistle, dark skies, quiet
13. Restoration of historic places (Old Stumps Grocery was converted to Stumps Antiques & Collectibles and the old Town Hall is being refurbished by McGaheysville Ruritan Club.)
14. New homes blend with old
15. Massanutten Resort, Merck, and Coors are three top tax sources
16. McGaheysville Road (Route 996 [old Route 33]) is a service road for the community
17. McGaheysville Area is being studied now, rather than later
18. Colleges and universities nearby
19. Massanutten – huge economic opportunity

**WEAKNESSES / THREATS facing the McGaheysville Area**

1. Schools are near capacity
2. Need park, recreation areas
3. High traffic volumes on some roads, such as Spotswood Trail (Route 33) and Bloomer Springs Road (Route 646)
4. Location of rescue squad is bad
5. Light pollution from Spotswood High School parking lot; light spilling onto other property
6. Conflicts between farming and residences - poultry house odors, cows, dust, etc.
7. Spotswood Trail splits the Study Area
8. Spotswood Trail is unsafe between Spotswood High School and Elkton
9. Spotswood Trail is a commuter road (good and bad)
10. Biking and walking is unsafe

*(Weaknesses/Threats, cont'd)*

11. Development is moving this way (as indicated by recent rezonings)
12. Crossroads Farm, a residential & commercial community, sewer goes to McGaheysville
13. City dwellers moving to McGaheysville
14. Cannot compromise the view of Massanutten Mountain
15. Karst geology means area does not have an infinite supply of water
16. During future Interstate 81 improvements, Interstate 64 to Route 340 may be designated as an alternate route
17. Agriculture is under intense threats (market, regulations, etc.)
18. New regulations on poultry will decrease profit and change markets - Virginia will not continue to allow poultry litter to be spread within Chesapeake Bay watershed
19. A lot of through-traffic on McGaheysville Road (Route 996)
20. Cell towers increase when the population increases – area has some good tower placements and some bad
21. Decisions made outside the Study Area may have significant impact inside it

## **Summary of Existing Major Resources**

### **Environmental Resources**

The McGaheysville study area lies at the foot of Massanutten Mountain and Massanutten Peak (elevation 2,600 feet) to the north, and runs roughly parallel to the South Fork of the Shenandoah River to the south. These two major natural resources frame the area and provide the basis for much of its character. Several streams flow through the study area, running northwest to southeast, draining to the South Fork. The most prominent of these are Stony Run, which flows through the heart of the village, and Quail Run, which flows parallel to Route 33 and drains much of Massanutten Village and Resort. Cub Run runs along the western edge of the study area and also feeds the South Fork. The mountain frames the limestone/dolomite valley rock formations of the South Fork. The relatively gentle slopes and fertile soils of the valley have been the focus of both farming and development. The karst (limestone) geology is generally an abundant source of groundwater, but also subject to contamination from surface pollutants. A map showing the floodplains of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, Stony Run, and Quail Run is on the following page.



## **Historic Resources**

McGaheysville was originally settled shortly after Governor Spotswood's expedition west of the Blue Ridge Mountain in 1716, when settlers of German, Dutch and Scotch descent came to the area. In 1801, Tobias McGahey settled in the area and established a post office in 1802, which he called McGaheysville. He built flour mills, accumulated real estate and built a large brewery on his farm "Bonny Brook". During the Civil War, McGaheysville was a community of about 300 citizens, and had a blacksmith shop, tannery, grist mill, woolen mill, several shops and several general stores. (*source: article by Mrs. Hunter Gibbons - see Appendix 5*)

Many historic sites and buildings remain in the study area. The County has a file of historic surveys and maps of the most significant sites, prepared by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). These maps are included in Appendix 5. Historic structures include many Colonial Revival houses from the late 1800s and early 1900s, bungalows from the 1920s and 1930s, and brick houses from the 1940s. On the following summary map are some of the key sites identified in the VDHR surveys and by the CAC in its meetings.



## **Transportation**

The main mode of travel in the study area is motor vehicle, although pedestrian and bicycle travel is also common, as well as freight traffic along the railroad that parallels Spotswood Trail mostly along the north side of the highway. The road system has evolved during recent decades with several major upgrades that have allowed it to carry substantial amounts of truck and auto traffic. In earlier years, McGaheysville Road (Rt. 996, which is old Route 33) was the main road through the area, and thus the historic village core area is located along that road, as well as the McGaheysville Elementary School and Montevideo Middle School. When new Route 33 was constructed as a four lane highway, it was sited on a new corridor to the north of the old road. Spotswood Trail (Route 33) has become a major regional arterial road, carrying commuter traffic to and from Harrisonburg, tourist traffic to areas such as Massanutten Resort and the Shenandoah National Park, and industrial traffic from the Merck and Coors plants south of the village, via Island Ford Road. The railroad creates a significant barrier to motor vehicle movements within the study area, particularly to the fire station and Spotswood High School, which are both located on the north side of the tracks, via at-grade crossings. As vehicle volumes increase, this is a growing issue.



**Community Facilities and Utilities**

**Water**

The County’s Three Springs Water Treatment Plant (WTP) serves the McGaheysville area. It is a Diatomaceous Earth Filtration Process, and has significant excess capacity. The plant can treat 4.5 million gallons per day (mgd), but is only permitted for 3.39 mgd. Currently, approximately 1.5 mgd, on average, is treated. Water supply is provided from two groundwater wells.

Within the Village Service Area, water service lines extend from the treatment plant north to the village, running east to near the end of Piano Lane, and west to the edge of the study area and beyond, as shown on the map of utility lines. However, customers are located in the Mt. Crawford area, Massanetta Springs area, as well as in the McGaheysville area. See the table below.

**Summary of Water System Data**

Permitted Capacity <sup>1</sup>	3.39 mgd <sup>2</sup>
Actual Treatment Plant Capacity <sup>3</sup>	4.50 mgd
Average Daily Production (ADP)	1.4 mgd <sup>4</sup>
Expected ADP (due to potential new major customer)	1.5 to 2.2 mgd
Current permitted capacity available	2.19 mgd [3.39 – 1.2]
Current production capacity available	3.3 mgd [4.5 – 1.2]
Expected production capacity available	2.3 mgd [4.5 – 2.2]
Number of Customers on System (See text above.)	2,350

<sup>1</sup> Supplied from Three Springs Wells (2); testing may be planned for drawdown to determine if a permit for 4.5 mgd is possible

<sup>2</sup> mgd = million gallons per day

<sup>3</sup> Three Springs WTP

<sup>4</sup> approximate

Note: Number of customers includes McGaheysville area, Mt. Crawford area, and Massanetta Springs area.

With permitted capacity of 3.39 mgd, the County will have to begin planning for additional water source capacity by the time average flow reaches around 2.71 mgd (80% of permitted flow). Normally, with a dedicated average flow of about 1.5 mgd now or in the near future, the average flow of 2.71 mgd would be a considerable time down the road.

Typically, a community with such a situation would not be concerned about addressing added water source needs for a decade or two. However, the County expects McGaheysville and surrounding area water demands to continue to increase steadily (given the factors cited previously) as well as future industrial/commercial growth. It is possible, therefore, that the Three Springs Well could reach that threshold within five years. The prospects for water supply should be qualified with a statement that plenty of capacity exists now, but a lot of competition

for its availability is expected in the future; therefore, future prospects for long term availability are not absolutely certain.

The County is working toward implementing different production procedures to increase its permitted capacity. In the event the plant permit can be increased to 4.5 mgd, to match plant capacity, the County could wait until the average production is in the range of 3.6 mgd or 33% higher than under the current permit. With potential industrial and commercial growth in the service area, current treatment capacity may need to be expanded within several years. Planning for such expansion should begin when capacity use is at 80% of the permitted amount, which is currently 2.71 mgd.

For planning purposes, if it is assumed that the potential new major customer uses the maximum expected amount and that, ultimately the County is able to obtain a permit equal to the capacity of its treatment plant, then the current equivalent capacity is 2.3 mgd. At 300 gpd per dwelling unit, this would allow for more than 7,000 dwellings, less the amount of capacity allocated to non-residential uses.

Thus, notwithstanding the caveats cited above, water supply is not likely a long-term constraint on overall, long-term growth in the area.

**Wastewater**

The wastewater treatment system is a far greater constraint to development than the water system. Current flows already approach the existing wastewater treatment plant's (WWTP) permitted limits (0.187 mgd). Since the plant discharges into the Chesapeake Bay watershed, nitrogen and phosphorus control will likely be added by state regulations with the next permit renewal. Capacity upgrade at that time is also likely. The existing plant is an aerated lagoon system, which is not the most effective method for treatment as flow levels increase, so a significant modification of the WWTP may be needed in the next five years.

**Summary of Wastewater Treatment System Data**

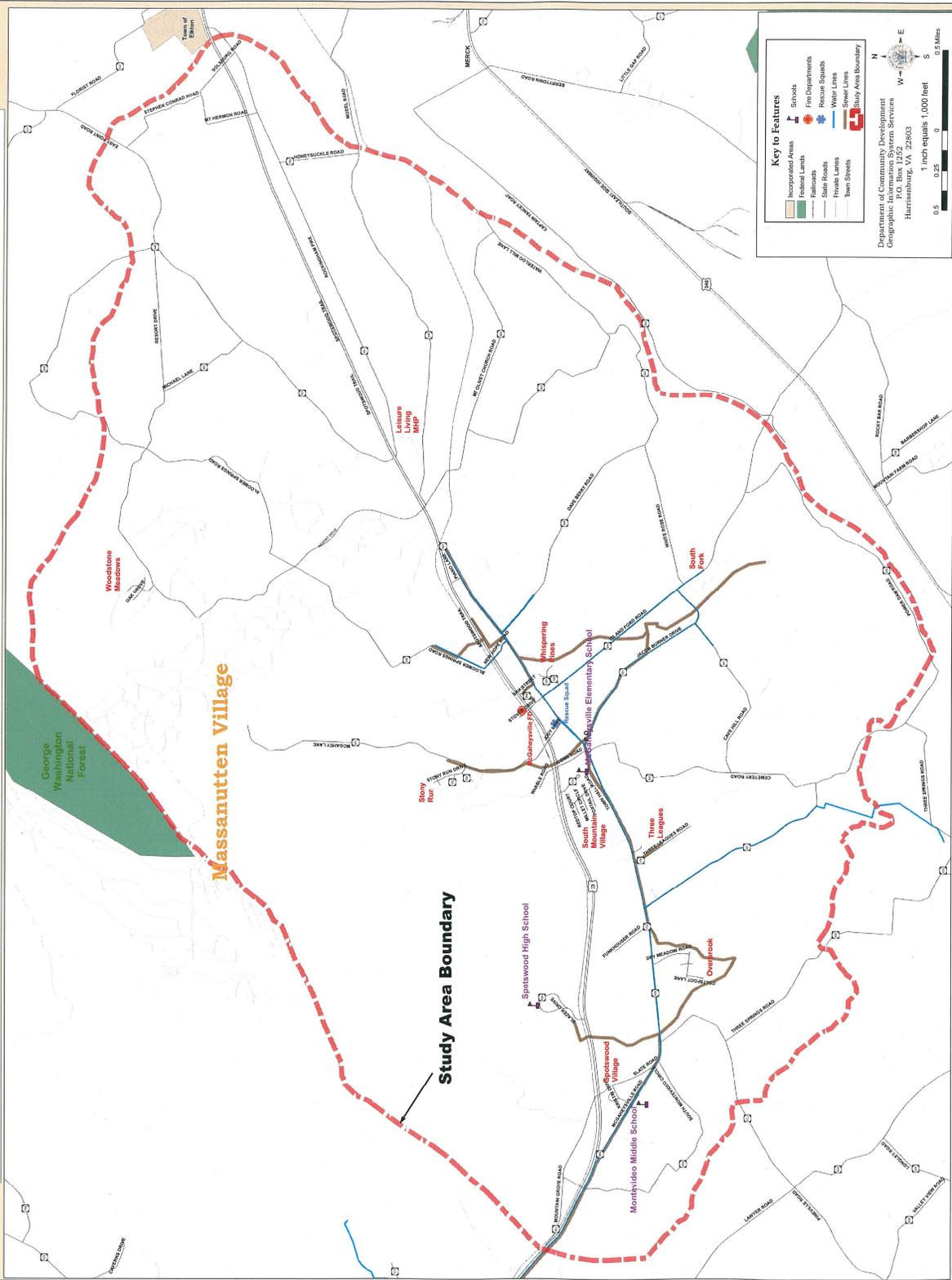
Permitted Capacity	0.187 mgd*
Actual Treatment Plant Capacity	0.187 mgd
Average Daily Flows	0.17 mgd
Maximum Daily Flows (representative)	0.28 mgd
Current permitted capacity available	Effectively none
Expected capacity available	n/a

\* mgd = million gallons per day

The average flows to the plant are nearly equal to the permitted capacity, and the maximum day flow goes above capacity. It is likely that, in order to provide for future land use demand, the treatment plant will need to be expanded and upgraded. Fortunately, the general location of the plant is good, since it is downhill from the village and most of the study area. Combined with the slopes in the area, this reduces the likelihood of any serious capacity restrictions in the sewage collection system.

Given these data, wastewater treatment capacity is currently a serious constraint on growth in the area, and potentially a long-term constraint as well, unless substantial investments in plant upgrades are made.

McGaheysville Study Area With Water & Sewer Lines



**Public Schools**

The McGaheysville area is fortunate to have three schools: McGaheysville Elementary, Montevideo Middle School and Spotswood High School. The table below is an excerpt from the County’s Comprehensive Plan showing the physical design characteristics of the three McGaheysville schools, noted in italics, in the context of the other schools in the County.

**Rockingham County Public School Structures  
2000-2001**

School	Year Constructed	Acres of Site <sup>1</sup>	Size of Building	Number of Classrooms	Design Capacity	Mobile Units	Gym Capacity	Auditorium Capacity
<u>High Schools</u>								
Broadway	1997	55	184,314	59 (6)	1,110		1,800	648
<i>Spotswood</i>	<i>1979, 97</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>194,740</i>	<i>63 (8)</i>	<i>1,220</i>		<i>3,200</i>	<i>605</i>
Turner Ashby	1989	54	176,945	53 (5)	1,032	8	1,800	640
<b>Average HS</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>185,333</b>	<b>58 (6)</b>	<b>1,121</b>			
<u>Middle Schools</u>								
Elkton	1957, 65	22	68,584	23 (1)	465		350	320
J. F. Hillyard	1952, 59, 88	28	141,275	45 (4)	940		1,800	600
<i>Montevideo</i>	<i>1950, 65</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>114,068</i>	<i>37 (5)</i>	<i>783</i>		<i>650</i>	<i>550</i>
W. S. Pence	'56, 59, 62, 00	20	144,470	61 (6)	1,189		750	650
<b>Average MS</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>117,100</b>	<b>42 (4)</b>	<b>844</b>			
<u>Elementary Schools</u>								
Elkton	1939, 72, 95	5	86,800	35 (9)	633		n/a	n/a
Fulks Run	1961, 76	9	21,139	9 (2)	162	8	n/a	n/a
John C. Meyers	1963, 76, 98	20	81,703	32 (2)	663		n/a	n/a
J. Wayland	1966, 69, 85	25	72,004	34 (3)	591		n/a	n/a
Keezletown	1917, 34, 60	7	22,320	12 (3)	217	3 (1)	n/a	n/a
Lacy Spring	1989	20	54,235	22 (6)	400		n/a	n/a
Linville-Edom	1939, 93	6	24,663	13 (2)	230	2	n/a	n/a
<i>McGaheysville</i>	<i>1934, 69, 95</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>62,363</i>	<i>25 (4)</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>3 (2)</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Mountain Valley	2000	20	82,841	35 (6)	625		n/a	n/a
Ottobine	1958, 67, 78	7	20,781	11 (2)	196	6	n/a	n/a
Plains	1972	20	71,905	37 (3)	642		n/a	n/a
Pleasant Valley	1963, 67	17	54,559	27 (2)	468	5	n/a	n/a
South River	1994	19	61,775	26 (3)	455	4 (1)	n/a	n/a
Peak View	2001	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Average ES</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>55,161</b>	<b>24 (4)</b>	<b>440</b>			

The table below is also excerpted from the County’s Comprehensive Plan and shows the capacity and enrollment data for the local schools, noted in italics, in the context of the other County schools. The enrollment levels for the McGaheysville schools have been updated.

**Capacities of Rockingham County Public Schools  
2000-2001**

<b>School</b>	<b>Design Capacity</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Available Capacity</b>	<b>Student/teacher ratio</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Available Capacity</b>
Broadway	1,110	972	138	17.5	55.5	250
<i>Spotswood</i>	<i>1,220</i>	<i>1129</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>65.3</i>	<i>307</i>
		(1,117)*				
Turner Ashby	1,032	1085	-53	16	67.6	406
<b>Average HS</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>1,062</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>315</b>
Elkton	465	316	149	16.1	19.7	77
J. F. Hillyard	940	795	145	17.7	44.9	103
<i>Montevideo</i>	<i>783</i>	<i>597</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>15.8</i>	<i>37.9</i>	<i>159</i>
		(613)*				
W. S. Pence	1,189	809	380	15.2	53.1	255
<b>Average MS</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>156</b>
Elkton	633	615	18	20.5	30	-15
Fulks Run	162	192	-30	16	12	48
John C. Meyers	663	451	212	18.8	24	29
J. Wayland	591	580	11	20.7	28	-20
Keezletown	217	248	-31	20.7	12	-8
Lacy Spring	400	305	95	17.9	17	36
Linville-Edom	230	232	-2	19.3	12	8
<i>McGaheysville</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>477</i>	<i>-35</i>	<i>19.9</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>2</i>
		(441)*				
Mountain Valley	625	491	134	21.3	23	-30
Ottobine	196	200	-4	16.7	12	40
Plains	642	457	185	19	24	24
Pleasant Valley	468	303	165	17.8	17	37
South River	455	449	6	18.7	24	31
Peak View	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Average ES</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

\* current enrollments

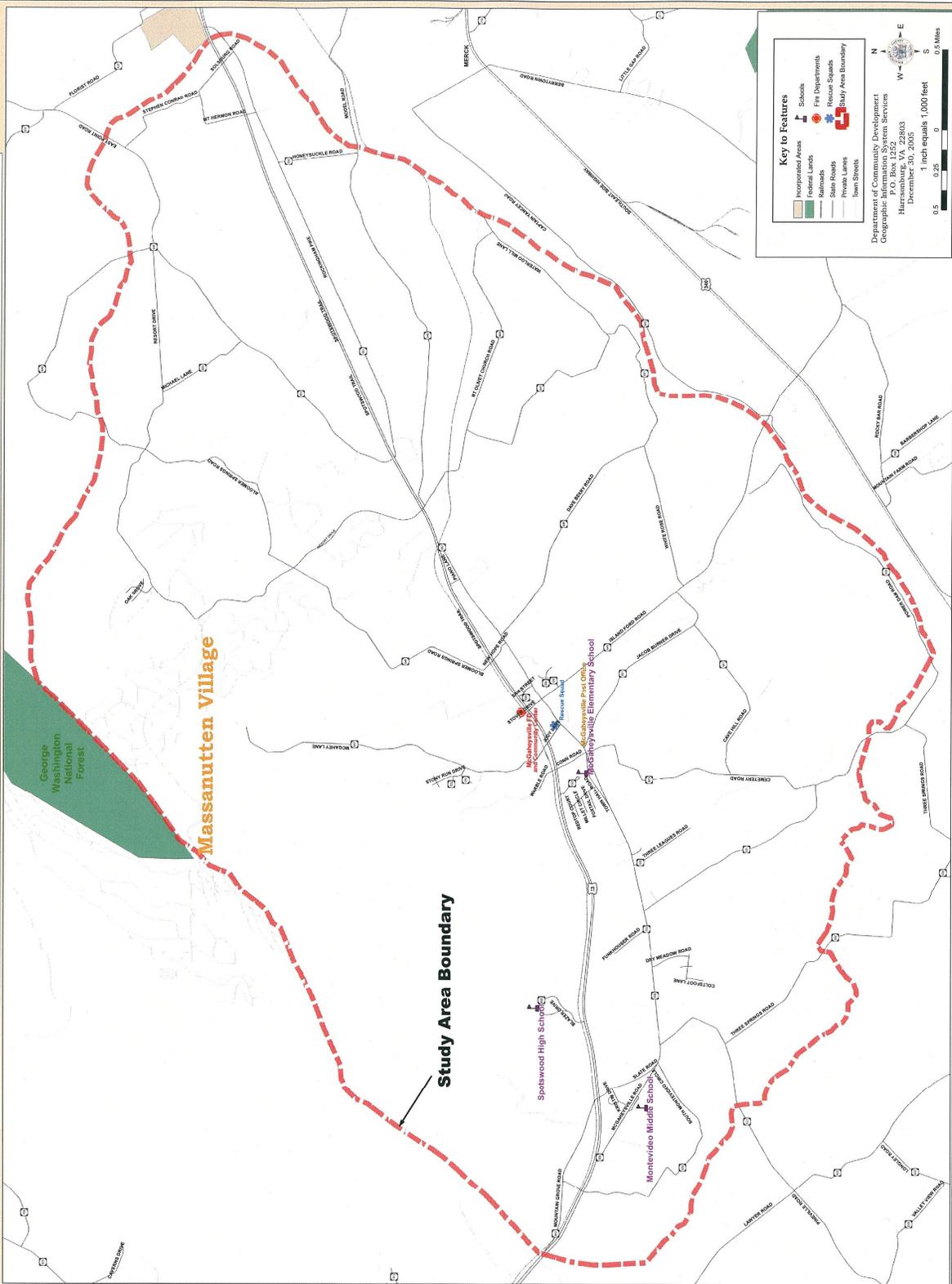
**Fire and Rescue Service**

The McGaheysville area is served by the McGaheysville Volunteer Fire Company, located on the north side of the railroad, near the center of the village across from the intersection of Spotswood Trail and Island Ford Road, and by the Elkton Rescue Squad, which has a satellite facility in McGaheysville on Judy Lane.

**Post Office**

The McGaheysville Post Office is located in an older building at the historic center of the village, at the intersection of McGaheysville Road and Jacob Burner Drive. During the plan preparation process, some citizens expressed concern about the capacity of the post office and the constraints on expanding the facility.

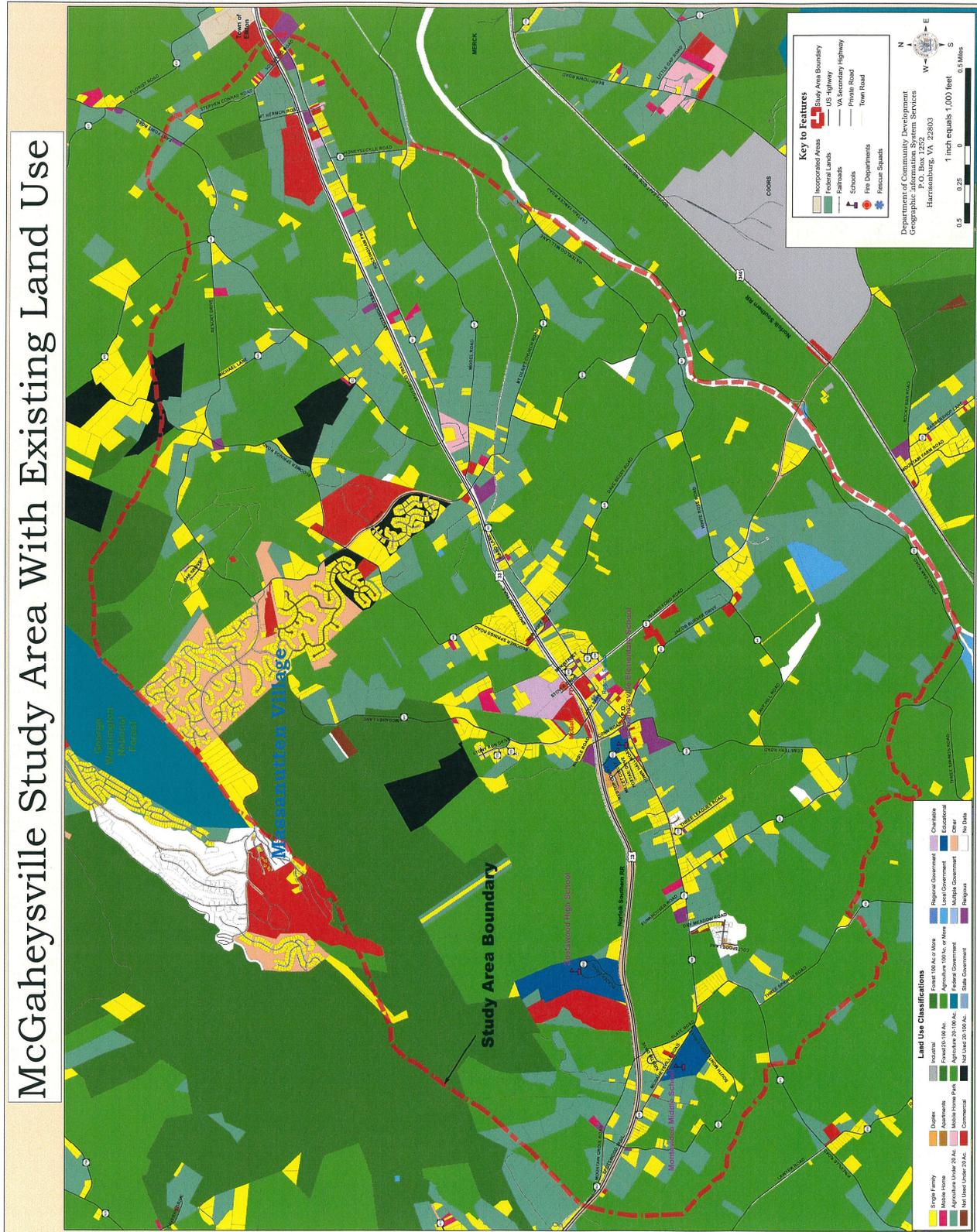
McGaheysville Study Area With Public Facilities



## **Existing Land Use and Zoning**

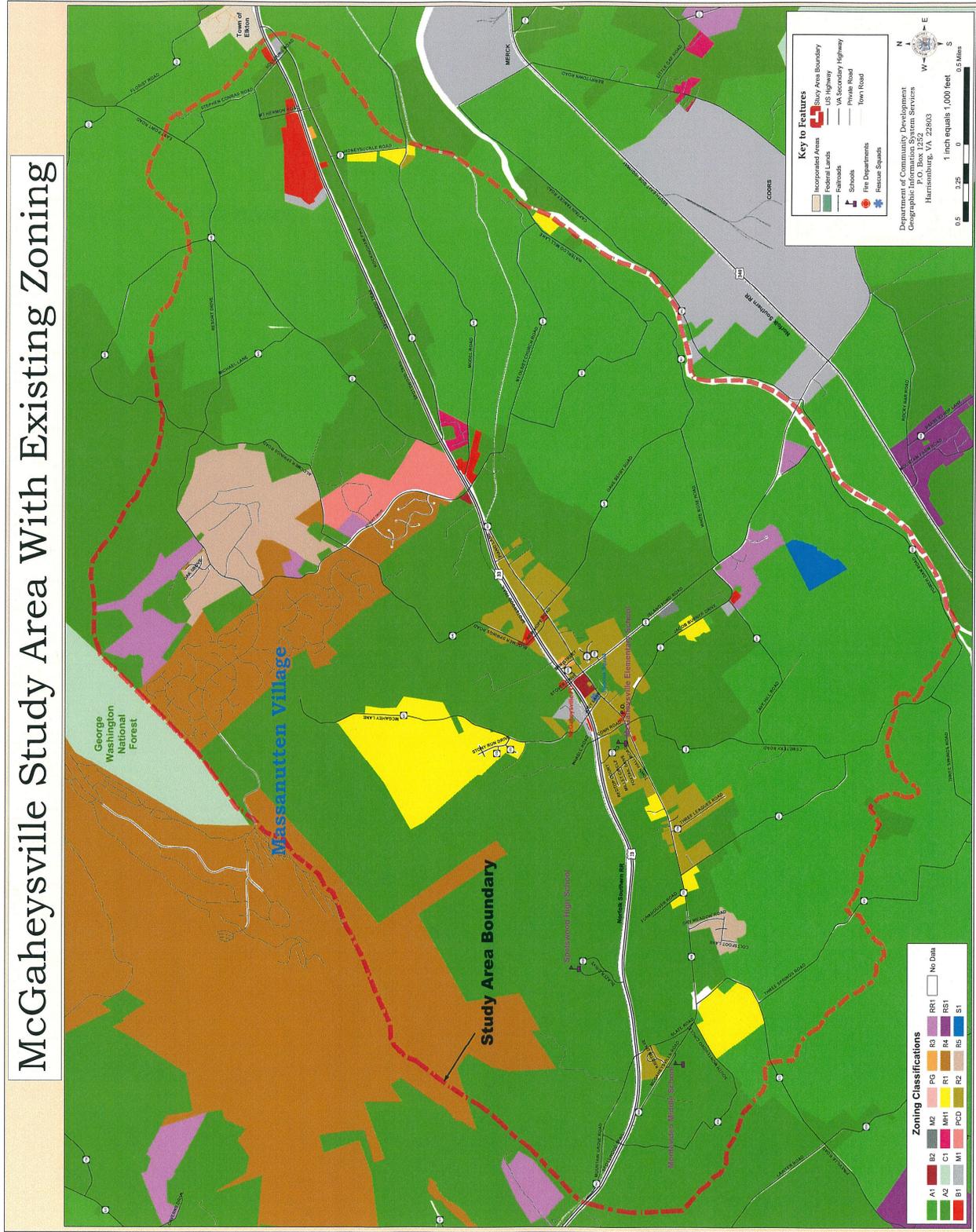
The map on the following page shows existing land use in the study area and vicinity, according to land assessment data. Most of the land in the area remains in agricultural uses, and the non-agricultural uses have strong relationship to the linear village and the Spotswood Trail corridor. With the exception of the shopping west of Elkton and the Massanutten Village, most of the commercial uses are within the village proper. The land use pattern is, however, more fragmented than the zoning (see the zoning map on a following page), and this fragmentation will likely continue, undermining the identity and function of the village, unless land use policies are modified. The land use map clearly shows the contrast between the historic, linear, rural village of McGaheysville that meanders along McGaheysville Road, with the large-scale development of Massanutten Resort.

McGaheysville Study Area With Existing Land Use



The map on the following page shows the current zoning pattern in the study area and vicinity. The vast majority of land remains zoned for agriculture, either A-1 or A-2. Fortunately, the County has not over-zoned the corridor with commercial zoning, and the residential zoning actually understates the residential uses, since many dwellings are on large lots within an agricultural zone. The zoning is still relatively intact as a planning tool.

McGaheysville Study Area With Existing Zoning



**Alternative Scenarios for Population Growth and Land Consumption**

One of the critical issues that the CAC worked on involved these interrelated questions:

- How much development is expected to occur in McGaheysville?
- How much is desirable?
- How much land should such growth consume, i.e. convert from natural and agricultural uses?

To analyze some of the variables and choices involved in these questions, the Committee reviewed a range of possible growth rates, along with a range of residential densities that might happen with any given growth rate. (Residential growth was the focus of this analysis because it is expected to require the greatest amount of total land as development continues.)

Several alternative scenarios were explored, and these are shown in the following table. The Committee discussed these at length and reached a consensus on what a reasonable expectation of future growth would be, based upon recent trends and likely future circumstances in the village, the County at large and the surrounding region.

Several key factors were critical to the Committee’s understanding of the growth pressures that are likely to continue affecting McGaheysville, including:

- The existence within the village of many key community facilities and services, including:
  - public water and sewer service
  - three public schools
  - fire station and rescue squad, and
  - post office.
- The historic identity of the village as a long-standing community focal point.
- The location between Elkton and Harrisonburg and the proximity to Harrisonburg.
- Proximity to amenities such as the National Park, the National Forest and Massanutten Village/Resort.
- The growth pressures in the surrounding region, including throughout the Valley.
- The County’s designation in its Comprehensive Plan of McGaheysville as a growth area to absorb some of the County’s population increase that might otherwise locate deeper into agricultural areas and cause greater pressures for farmland conversion.

- Continuing advancements in telecommunications technology that allow many workers to telecommute for all or part of their work.
- Aging and retirement of the “baby boom” generation - some may seek refuge from the denser, urban areas of northern Virginia and elsewhere.

**A key dilemma** the Committee faced in its analysis of future growth scenarios is that the higher the residential density, the less “rural” character new development will have. Yet, the lower the density, the greater is the amount of land that will be converted per dwelling unit. The Committee tried to strike a balance between these two conflicting factors.

The table of Alternative Growth Scenarios is shown on the following page, and the consensus scenario is shown on the page following that.

**Alternative Population and Land Consumption Scenarios**

<b>Alternative Growth Rates &amp; Densities</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>TOTAL ADDED</b>
<b>At 1.0% Average Annual Growth</b>					
Total Dwellings	700	750	830	915	
Total Population at 1.0% annual growth	1,750	1,875	2,075	2,290	
Additional Dwellings**		50	80	85	215 units
Additional Acres Needed at:					
0.5 dwellings per acre (2.0 acres per dwelling)		87	157	173	417 acres
1.0 dwellings per acre		43	79	87	209 acres
2.0 dwellings per acre		21	40	43	104 acres
3.0 dwellings per acre		15	26	28	69 acres
<b>At 1.5% Average Annual Growth</b>					
Total Dwellings	700	777	900	1,050	
Total Population at 1.5% annual growth	1,750	1,940	2,250	2,600	
Additional Dwellings**		77	125	148	350 units
Additional Acres Needed at:					
0.5 dwellings per acre (2.0 acres per dwelling)		133	249	290	672 acres
1.0 dwellings per acre		66	125	144	335 acres
2.0 dwellings per acre		33	63	72	168 acres
3.0 dwellings per acre		22	42	47	111 acres
<b>At 3.0% Average Annual Growth</b>					
Total Dwellings	700	860	1,160	1,555	
Total Population at 3.0% annual growth	1,750	2,150	2,890	3,890	
Additional Dwellings**		160	300	395	855 units
Additional Acres Needed at:					
0.5 dwellings per acre (2.0 acres per dwelling)		280	592	796	1,668 acres
1.0 dwellings per acre		140	296	398	834 acres
2.0 dwellings per acre		69	148	199	416 acres
3.0 dwellings per acre		46	98	131	275 acres
<b>At 5.0% Average Annual Growth</b>					
Total Dwellings	700	985	1,600	2,600	
Total Population at 3.0% annual growth	1,750	2,460	4,000	6,535	
Additional Dwellings**					1,900 d.u.
Additional Acres Needed at:		430	1,240	3,220	
0.5 dwellings per acre (2.0 acres per dwelling)		500	1,239	2,018	3,757 acres
1.0 dwellings per acre		250	619	1,009	1,878 acres
2.0 dwellings per acre		124	310	505	939 acres
3.0 dwellings per acre		82	204	333	619 acres
<b>At 10.0% Average Annual Growth</b>					
Total Dwellings	700	1,365	3,540	9,180	
Total Population at 3.0% annual growth	1,750	3,400	8,850	22,940	
Additional Dwellings**		665	2,175	5,640	8,480 d.u.
Additional Acres Needed at:					.
0.5 dwellings per acre (2.0 acres per dwelling)		1,188	4,348	11,278	16,814 acres
1.0 dwellings per acre		594	2,174	5,639	8,407 acres
2.0 dwellings per acre		297	1,087	2,819	4,203
3.0 dwellings per acre		196	718	1,860	2,774

\* not including timeshares

\*\* assumes 2.5 people per dwelling unit

Notes: some figures rounded; average annual growth rates are "compounded" on an annual basis

For planning purposes, the Committee determined that a 3% average annual population growth was a reasonable expectation for the study area, with an average overall land conversion rate of approximately one-half acre per new dwelling. This was chosen merely as a *possible level of growth pressure* that needed to be prepared for, in case the pressures occur at that level. It was *not chosen as a guiding principle* or a desirable growth target. Rather it is an estimate as to what the pressure for growth in the area would be, based in part on the County’s designation of the area as a growth center, but mostly on forces beyond the immediate control of village citizens or officials. Most Committee members seemed to feel that it would be preferable to have a lower rate of growth than 3%.

In contrast to the growth *rate*, the *density* of residential development is more of a guiding principle. The density recommendations were refined during the course of the Committee’s work, as reflected in the plan’s guiding principles in the next chapter – but the overall growth rate expectations remain. Since these are not forecasts *per se*, the County will want to monitor the pace of development in the area and adjust expectations in the future, as needed.

Note also that guiding principles regarding density should not be separate from guiding principles related to land use and design, which are also set forth in the next chapter of this plan.

**Consensus Scenario:  
Expected Population and Land Consumption Rates**  
(preliminary estimate by the CAC for planning purposes)

<b>At 3.0% Average Annual Growth</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>TOTAL ADDED</b>
Total Dwellings	700	860	1,160	1,555	
Total Population at 3.0% annual growth	1,750	2150	2,890	3,890	
Additional Dwellings**		160	300	395	855 units
Additional Acres Needed at:					
2.0 acres per dwelling (0.5 dwellings per ac.)		280	592	796	1,668 acres
1.0 dwellings per gross acre		140	296	398	834 acres
<b>2.0 dwellings per gross acre</b>		<b>69</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>416 acres</b>
3.0 dwellings per gross acre		46	98	131	275 acres

\* not including timeshares

\*\* assumes 2.5 people per dwelling unit

Note: some figures rounded; average annual growth rate is “compounded” on an annual basis

## **The Plan: A Vision of the Future and The Guiding Principles to Achieve It**

The heart of this plan is the vision the desired future for the area and the guiding principles that provide specific recommendations as to how to achieve that future. The vision is a description of the preferred future of the area, blending idealistic hopes with realistic and practical expectations.

As noted above, the following Vision Statement was created and affirmed during the public workshop sessions in the spring of 2004. The participants who crafted this vision represented a full range of views about growth within the McGaheysville community. They debated the specific language in the vision and refined it until a consensus emerged.

Following the Vision Statement are the key guiding principles created by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to achieve the vision. These, too, underwent close scrutiny and refinement before consensus among the CAC members was reached. The guiding principles represent the CAC's effort to achieve a practical and realistic blend of idealistic aspirations for minimal disruptive change, with the knowledge that change is inevitable and the community needs to be prepared with the tools to mitigate the impacts to the greatest possible extent. When new growth occurs in McGaheysville, it should contribute to the vitality and well-being of the community as a whole – as expressed in the vision – rather than undermine it.

## Vision Statement for McGaheysville *Affirmed at the Public Workshop on June 3, 2004*

### *In the Year 2030:*

**McGaheysville Remains a Small, Historic, Rural Village**, surrounded by farms and forests. The plan has been successfully implemented and continues to be updated and refined. While accommodating a substantial number of new residents and businesses, McGaheysville retains its “small-town” identity, human-scale and sense of place. The people have preserved and restored important historic buildings and integrated new development into the historic fabric.

The scenic beauty and rural character of the natural resources – farms, forests, streams, dark skies, natural views of Massanutten Mountain, wildlife and quiet – have been substantially maintained as a healthy, integrated natural system. The overall quality of life (low cost of living, rural atmosphere, and proximity to Harrisonburg) remains high, even as growth has continued at a slow to moderate pace.

**McGaheysville Has Good Community Facilities and Services.** McGaheysville has maintained and improved its high quality public services including local schools, fire company and rescue squad service. It has created a full range of parks and recreation areas, from “pocket parks” within neighborhoods, to larger rural parks and multi-use trails around the village. These parks are connected to each other and to residential areas by safe streets, and bikeways, with sidewalks in the core of the village.

**The McGaheysville Area Remains a Strong, Vibrant Rural Community with a Balanced Local Economy** that provides good jobs in agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and support services. The community maintains a healthy balance among tourism, industrial, agricultural and commercial employment.

**McGaheysville Is Harmonious, Beautiful and Safe.** Land use and development patterns have become integrated with streets and highways to achieve a safe transportation system for school buses, commuters, tourists, shoppers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Commercial development is clustered in distinct, well-defined “nodes” and not in “strip” developments along the highways. Design standards have enhanced the visual harmony of the community by ensuring that new commercial development reflects the rural character and historic

identity of McGaheysville and not just the brands of national chain franchises. There is a balance between the needs of motor vehicles and pedestrians.

Massanutten Resort is a dynamic, well-planned community. It contributes economic and civic vitality to the area but does not overwhelm the McGaheysville community, or the mountainside itself. Planning for the McGaheysville area is coordinated with planning for the Massanutten area.

Within the core of the village, residential uses are closely integrated with other uses, all of which are pedestrian-oriented and small in scale. Outside of the core, residential uses are well protected from more intensive uses by spatial and landscape buffers. Traditional uses, including churches and the post office remain as civic focal points.

A range of housing types, styles and costs is available for residents and local workers. Residential neighborhoods have easy and safe access to schools, shopping, employment and recreation.

Public water and sewer service is provided for a defined, area around the village, thereby providing adequate capacity to accommodate a reasonable amount of future growth, but preventing a scattered, dispersed pattern that would worsen traffic and undermine the rural character of the community.

The Spotswood Trail (Route 33) corridor remains a major commuter and tourist highway, but it has become a safer road through the cooperative efforts of the County, VDOT, local citizens and landowners to achieve effective management of land use and access points along the road and an interconnected network of streets adjacent to Spotswood Trail. Public transit has become a larger proportion of the traffic along Spotswood Trail in relation to single vehicle occupancy. McGaheysville Road (Route 996) serves as a service road for the community. A sidewalk system connects major roads within the core of the village. Effective traffic-calming measures have tamed traffic through the village core, improving safety for all citizens.

**McGaheysville Is a Collaborative Community.** In conjunction with the County, the community has worked together in a collaborative manner to achieve a balance between the freedom to construct what one wishes and the prevention of negative impacts on neighbors. This balance is maintained through on-going community planning processes involving the citizens at large, including those in and around the village, as well as those in Massanutten. The plan is stable, not ad hoc, with an open, honest and orderly process.

## Guiding Principle Framework

### Overarching Objective:

**“Grow Gracefully” by retaining the essential existing qualities and character of the village and surrounding area, while gradually adding population and services.**

### Guiding Principles for the Surrounding Farmland and Mountain

**Guiding Principle 1** recommends the County implement various farmland preservation tools available to it and to local landowners, including:

- Agricultural and Forestal Districts, including right-to-farm provisions;
- Rural Cluster Development and/or Conservation Subdivision Design;
- Conservation Easement donation;
- Selected Purchase of Development Rights;
- Limited Development strategies (which combine Conservation Easement Donation with Rural Cluster/Conservation Development);
- Agri-tourism promotion;
- Agricultural development through assistance and promotion of specialty products and services, Community Supported Agriculture enterprises (CSA), direct marketing, low-input products, etc.; and
- Non-agricultural, rural businesses (home businesses, tourist lodging, etc.).

**Guiding Principle 2** recommends the County implement measures to protect the function, appearance and economic value of Massanutten Mountain through various tools available to it and to local landowners, including:

- Development of steep slopes and mountainsides in accordance with the countywide Comprehensive Plan and
- Managing the growth rate of Massanutten Resort in accordance with a County-approved Master Plan and in synergy with the development of McGaheysville.

### **Guiding Principles for the Village Service Area**

Key features shown on the following Community Concept Plan map and reflected in the guiding principles that follow are:

- Village Study Area, outlined in red and noted.
- Village Service Area boundary, for utility service, outlined in green.
- Village Core Area, shown in orange
- Village Expansion Areas, outlined in solid yellow (near-term) and hatched yellow (long-term, after most of the core and near-term areas have been substantially developed)
- Community Industrial Areas, shown in lavender, south of the Village Core
- Massanutten Resort within the study area, shown in solid brown, with potential expansion area shown in hatched brown
- Institutional sites, shown in dark blue
- Key intersections planned for upgrades, shown as red circles, and gateways, with green circle added

The Village Service Area is shown on the following Community Concept Plan map. The following guiding principles are reflected on this map as well as the Illustrative Concept Plan sketches for the Village Expansion Areas and the Village Core.