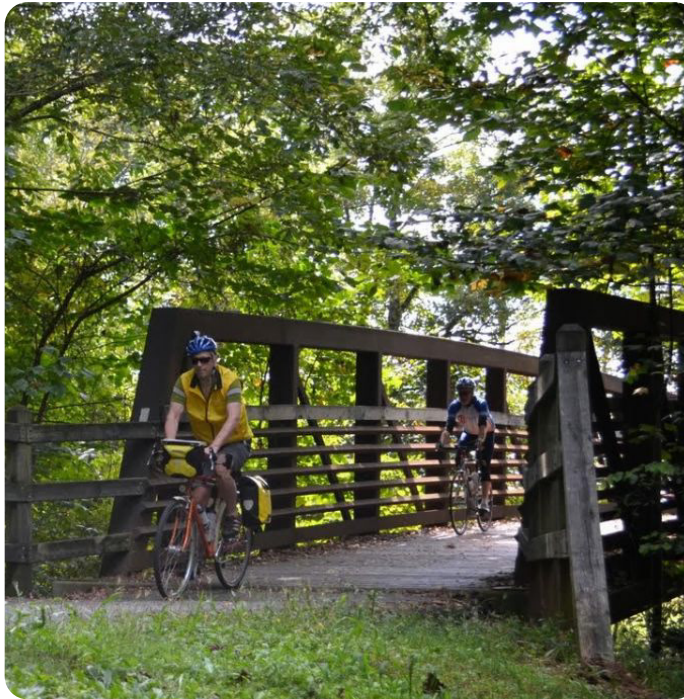
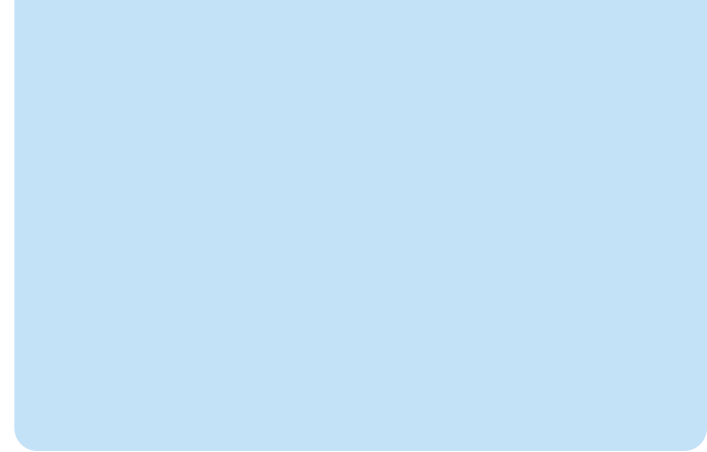


# IMAGINE

MORGANTON 2040  
*Dream. Plan. ACT.*



## Comprehensive Plan Report

August 2024 | Draft 4 | **Morganton, NC**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** was adopted by City Council on [date to be inserted following adoption]. Thank you to the residents and stakeholders who participated offered their time, enthusiasm, and perspectives. The input received was fundamental to the creation of the Plan and greatly appreciated.

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*Additional thanks to all of the City staff who gave graciously of their time and knowledge.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 INTRODUCTION .....	2
Section 2 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS .....	14
Section 3 VISION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES .....	30
Section 4 LAND USE STRATEGY .....	34
Section 5 POLICY FRAMEWORK .....	54
Section 6 CALL TO ACTION.....	72

# Section 1 INTRODUCTION

**IMAGINE**MORGANTON 2040



## IMAGINE Morganton 2040

is an update to the City's previous comprehensive plan, Mission 2030. Our updated comprehensive plan will not only provide a clear vision for the future of the community but also outline the necessary steps to turn that vision into a reality. The plan will place a strong emphasis on implementation to guide the City's near- and long-term decision-making and investment.

## IMAGINE Morganton 2040

will be used as the framework over the next 15+ years to guide development.

# IMAGINE Morganton 2040 as an Advisory Document

IMAGINE Morganton 2040 provides structure for decisions made by City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, the City's other boards and commissions, and City staff. The Plan also expresses what the people of Morganton value, which should be of particular interest for potential business owners and new residents. As the Plan is read and interpreted, it is important to understand what IMAGINE Morganton 2040 does and does not involve:

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The Plan expresses a vision for the future of Morganton through the year 2040 and beyond. It provides a guide for future land uses and the desired characteristics for growth and development.

The Plan does not change the City's adopted zoning ordinance and map, but it does provide guidance for future rezoning and further regulation through the zoning code and development regulations.

---

The Plan includes guidance for areas just beyond the City limits, referred to as its extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

The Plan does not guarantee that a voluntary annexation would be accepted if it is not in the best interests of the community.

---

The Plan provides policy guidance for capital investments that are necessary for the City's parks, transportation network, and utility systems.

The Plan does not commit the City to funding specific capital improvements.

---

The Plan provides overarching goals for housing and economic development in Morganton.

The Plan does not establish formal housing and economic development tools such as density bonuses and tax incentives.

IMAGINE Morganton 2040 is organized into six sections

1. **INTRODUCTION:** Describes the planning process and how the Morganton community was engaged.
2. **COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS:** Summarizes the local conditions that informed the creation of the Plan.
3. **VISION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES:** Introduces the statements that guide the development of the City.
4. **LAND USE STRATEGY:** Outlines the City's approach to land use and development through a new future land use map.
5. **POLICY FRAMEWORK:** Organizes strategies and actions around the Plan's eight planning principles.
6. **CALL TO ACTION:** Lays out an implementation strategy for key pieces of IMAGINE Morganton 2040.

# PLANNING PROCESS

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** emerged from a planning process that blends data, analysis, and community input. The result is a collaborative initiative driven by the community, aimed at establishing realistic expectations for the future of Morganton. This effort will be carried out through a series of incremental steps that will actively work towards fulfilling these expectations.

## The Process

The planning process began in February 2023 with an introductory presentation to City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission and concluded in September 2024 with adoption by City Council. The three phases—DREAM, PLAN, ACT—tied into the branding **IMAGINE Morganton 2040**.

## Guiding Voices

A project management team of City staff and the Consultant was supported by an Advisory Committee representing a range of organizations, agencies, and interests to shape major milestones to ensure the plan is technically sound and grounded in community values.

## City Leadership

The Planning and Zoning Commission joined City Council for joint work sessions during the process. These touch points, coupled with the participation of City administration on the project management team, provided a direct line of communication with City leadership.

## Community Engagement

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** takes root in the perspectives offered by community members at touchpoints throughout the planning process. Stakeholders and the public participated in outreach methods that collected meaningful input at key milestones.

	KEY TASKS	KEY DELIVERABLES
<b>Phase 1   DREAM</b> February 2023 – September 2023	Project Initiation Baseline Conditions Vision and Planning Principles	Community Characteristics Report Vision Planning Principles
<b>Phase 2   PLAN</b> October 2023 – March 2024	Future Land Use Strategy Policy Framework Implementation Strategy	Conceptual Growth Strategy Future Land Use Strategy Policy Framework
<b>Phase 3   ACT</b> April 2024 – September 2024	Reporting Adoption	Comprehensive Plan Report Summary Brochure Technical Data and Digital Files

# PLANNING OUTCOMES

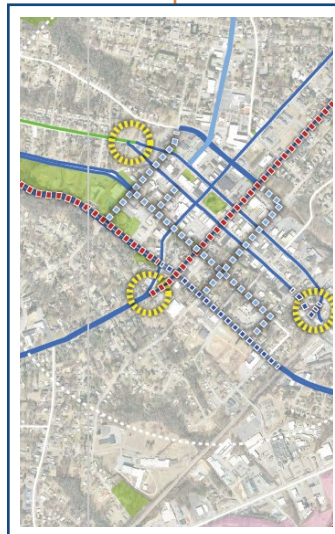
A comprehensive plan is an advisory document that guides a City through anticipated changes in the years to come. **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is a blueprint for creating a more desirable and sustainable place to live, work, and visit. It establishes strategies and actions to advance stated priorities related to land use, development, parks and open space, multimodal transportation, and sustainable infrastructure. As an umbrella document, **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** sets the stage for a wholesale review of the City's development regulations. Additionally, it serves as an initial step toward more detailed planning through the implementation of small area plans, master plans, and capital improvement plans.



The plans, programs, policies, and projects identified in **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** should guide how the City prioritizes what is important to the community.

## Plans

Adopting **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is key to achieving the community vision established during the public planning process. Detailed plans help refine the vision and recommendations for specific areas or functions of the City.



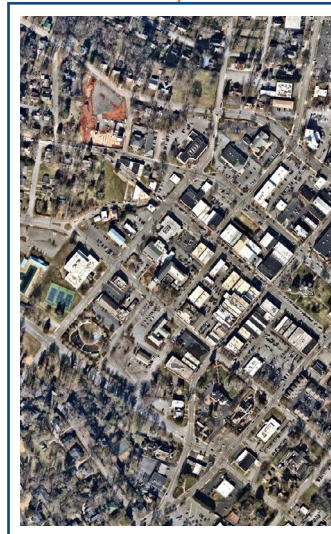
## Programs

The success of **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** will depend in part on the commitment of elected officials, staff, residents, and stakeholders. Recommended programs will support the City in realizing the vision and goals identified in the Plan.



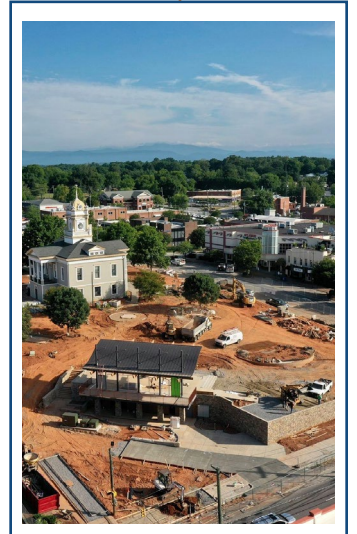
## Policies

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** includes policy recommendations for regulations to guide the decision-making process and the actions made by the City. Local policies will need to be regularly revisited to address shifts in trends related to growth and development.



## Projects

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** begins to identify future projects to shape the physical framework of the City. A more detailed list of projects with cost estimates and funding sources is necessary. An adaptable approach to investment is essential to fully leverage these improvements.

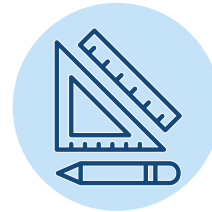




## WHAT IS OUR STUDY AREA?

As part of IMAGINE Morganton 2040, we not only studied the City of Morganton, but also an area outside the city limits called the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction, or ETJ. The ETJ is an area outside of Morganton's official boundary over which the City has jurisdiction for land use, zoning, and subdivision.

### City of Morganton Fast Facts (2022)



**19.15**  
Square Miles  
(area)



**17,431**  
Population



**378**  
Acres of Parks








**\$48,247**  
Median  
Household  
Income

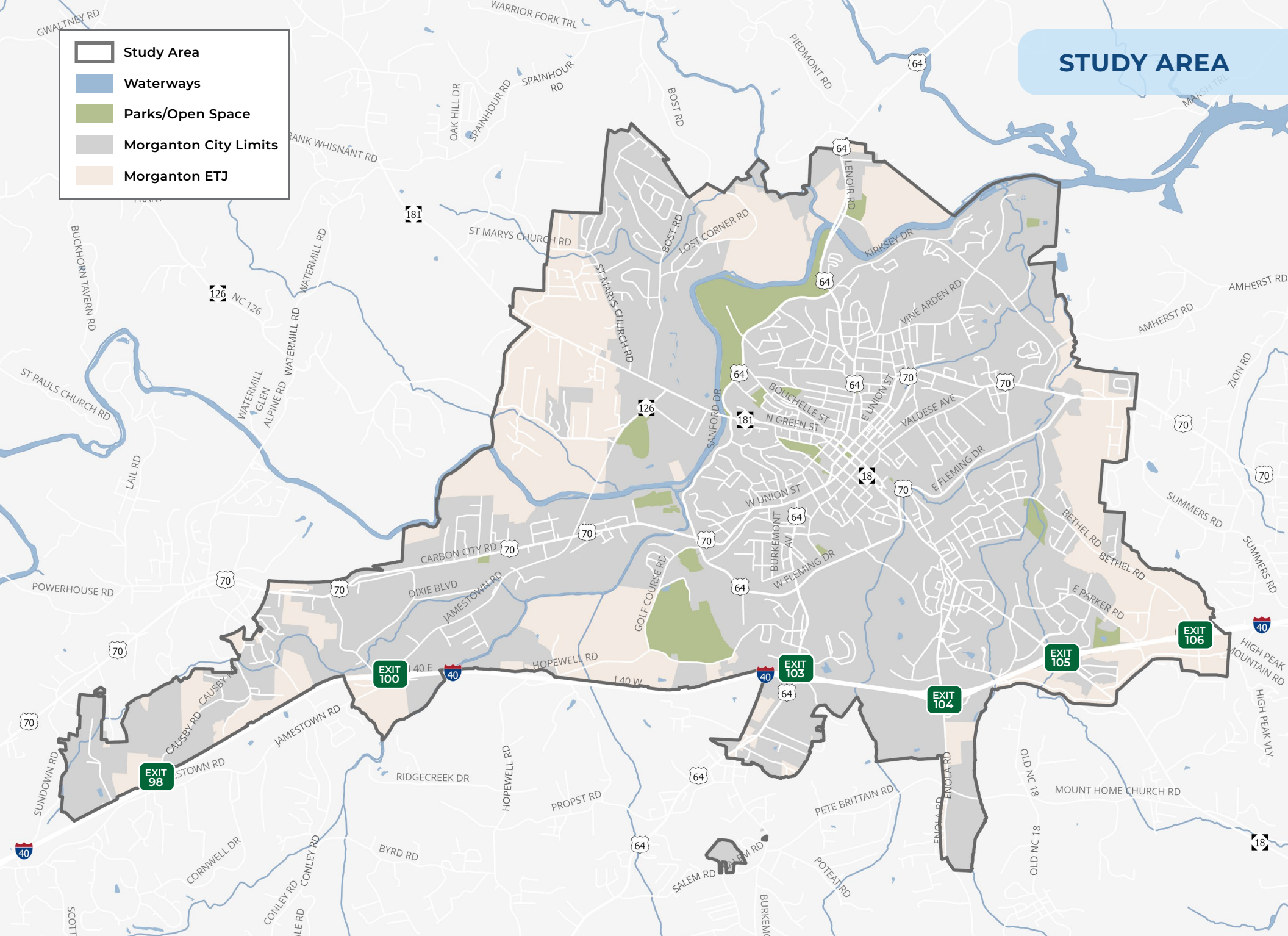


**\$158,400**  
Median  
Housing  
Value

Source: City of Morganton; American Community Survey Data, 2022

# STUDY AREA

-  Study Area
-  Waterways
-  Parks/Open Space
-  Morganton City Limits
-  Morganton ETJ



# ENGAGING THE MORGANTON COMMUNITY

Effective plans start with meaningful collaboration. Bringing together different ideas from diverse backgrounds was important to creating an authentic, community-driven plan for Morganton. The engagement strategy was designed for the community to be a partner in the planning process. This participation—combined with technical data—helps ensure the outcome of IMAGINE Morganton 2040 aligns not only with documented needs but also with community aspirations and values.

## Phase 1 | DREAM

## Phase 2 | PLAN

## Phase 3 | ACT

### ENGAGEMENT FOCUS

Build awareness of the process  
 Educate on the plan's purpose  
 Collect input on vision and needs

Confirm what we learned so far  
 Collect input on the land use strategy and supportive policies

Present key elements of the comprehensive plan  
 Collect final input before adoption

### ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission Presentation  
 Advisory Committee Meetings (2)  
 Stakeholder Meetings  
 Community Workshop  
 Online Engagement  
 Pop-up Events (3)

City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission Work Session  
 Advisory Committee Meetings (2)  
 Stakeholder Meetings  
 Community Workshops (2)  
 Online Engagement

City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission Work Session  
 Advisory Committee Meeting  
 Community Workshops (2)  
 Online Engagement  
 Adoption Hearings

## By the Numbers

### Meetings, Workshops and Surveys



**750+** touch points

Anyone who attended a meeting, participated in a workshop, or completed a survey



**22,100+** individual data points



**3,200+** written comments



**1,100+** hours invested

### Project Website



**8,000+** visits



**1,900+** unique users



## ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

The Engagement Spotlights throughout the report feature key outcomes from the online surveys and community conversations held during the planning process.



## Engagement Activities | Phase 1

- City Council Workshop | February 24, 2023
- Advisory Committee Meeting #1 | May 18, 2023
- Project Website | launched May 22, 2023
- Online Survey | May 22, 2023 to September 19, 2023
- Stakeholder Interviews, Round 1 | June 7 & 8, 2023
- Summit on the Future Public Workshop | June 7, 2023
- Juneteenth Pop-Up Event | June 19, 2023
- Historic Morganton Festival Pop-Up Event | September 8 & 9, 2023
- Guate Fest Pop-Up Event | September 16, 2023

## What We Heard | Phase 1

**Morganton does a lot of things well.**

**Community pride is abundant.**

- HOUSING | It's a challenge (availability, cost, aging stock, etc.)
- PARKS & REC | They're an asset.
- INFRASTRUCTURE | Faces some challenges.
- TRANSPORTATION | Need more options.
- YOUTH | Need things to do.
- RESTAURANTS | Need more and better variety.
- LAND USE | Make better use of vacant buildings (and space).
- DOWNTOWN | Means different things to different people.
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | Can't lose focus.

### Summit on the Future

During the public workshop, participants were given the opportunity to provide their input on how various themes are addressed in Morganton. Additionally, they discussed the importance of each theme for the future of the city.

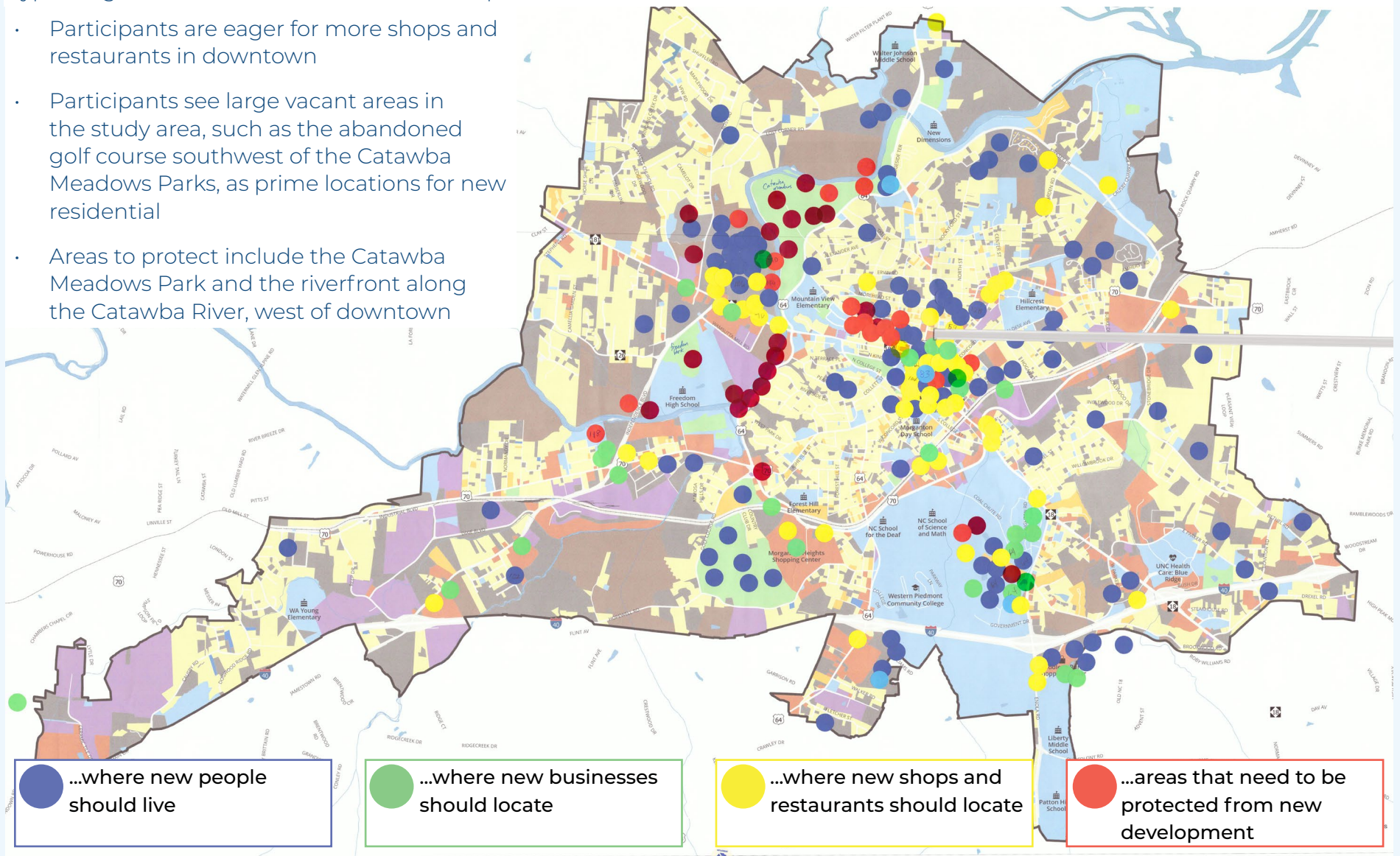
### How well is the theme addressed today? How important is the theme for the future?



## Summit on the Future

At the workshop, participants will use colored dots to identify locations in Morganton that they think are appropriate for different types of growth and which areas need to be protected.

- Participants are eager for more shops and restaurants in downtown
- Participants see large vacant areas in the study area, such as the abandoned golf course southwest of the Catawba Meadows Parks, as prime locations for new residential
- Areas to protect include the Catawba Meadows Park and the riverfront along the Catawba River, west of downtown



## Online Survey

Participants were asked to share their thoughts on what they love about Morganton using one word, as well as one word to describe what they would change about the city.

## Pop-Up Events

The project team met with the community at several events throughout the summer and early fall of 2023. These activities included booths at the at the Historic Morganton Festival and Guate Fest and distributing surveys at the Juneteeth festival.



## What people love...

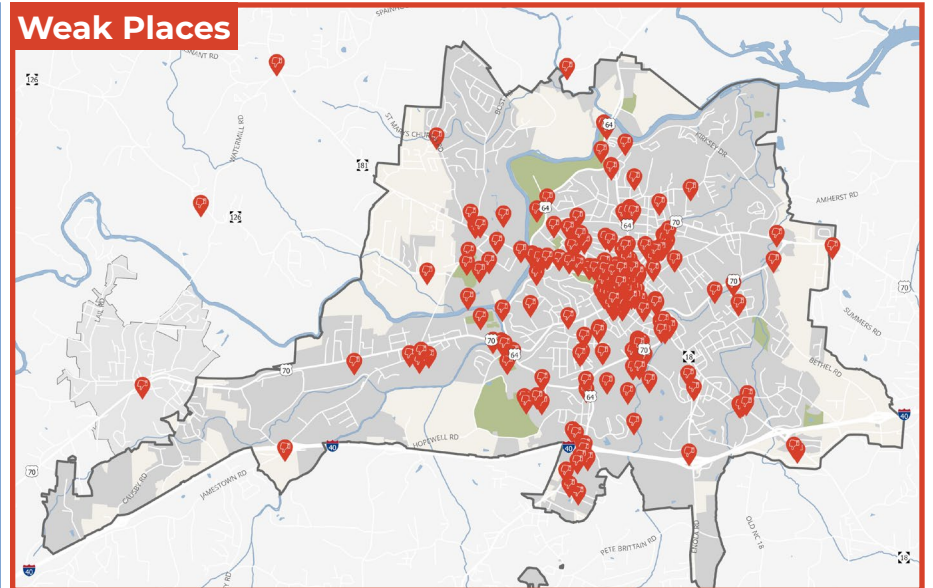
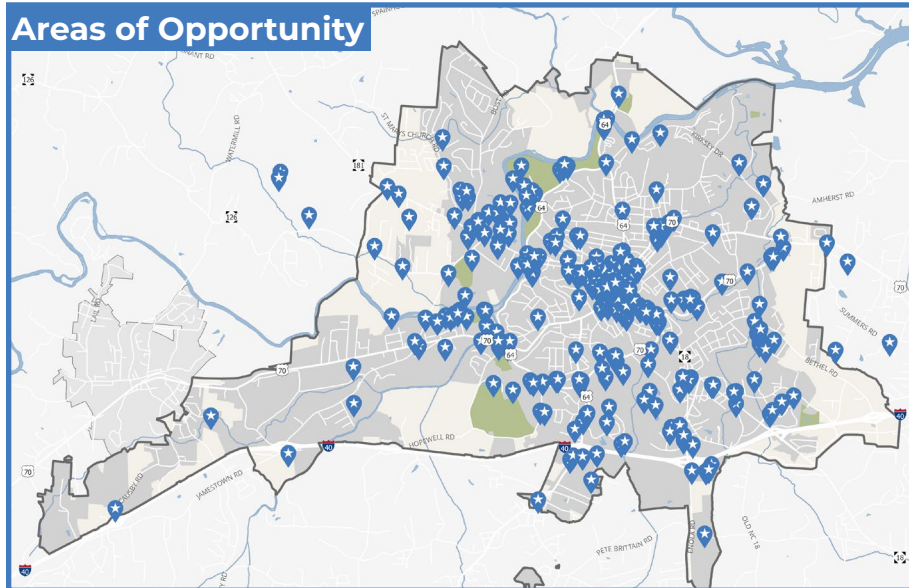
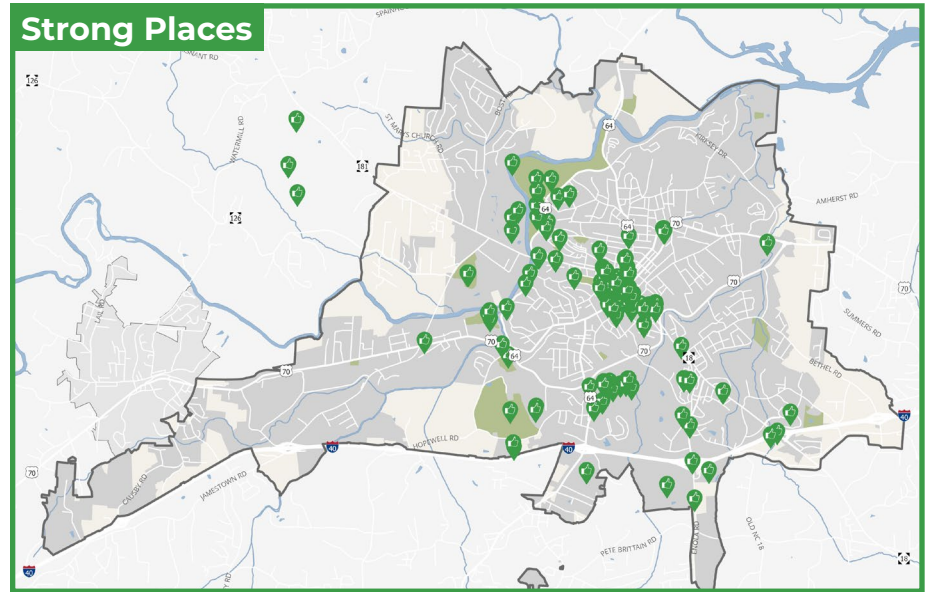
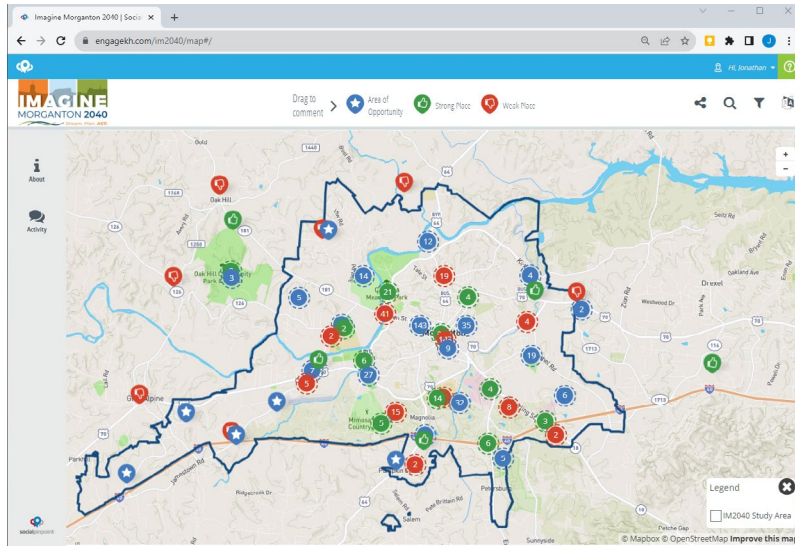


## What people would change...



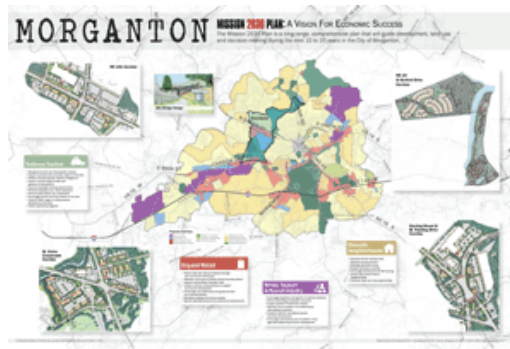
## Online Survey

The community used an interactive online map to identify strong places, weak places, and areas of opportunity.



# FOUNDATIONAL PLANS

The recommendations and strategies identified in previous planning efforts can be used as the initial building blocks to create a holistic land use strategy for the City. The following section provides an overview of the relevant previous planning documents.

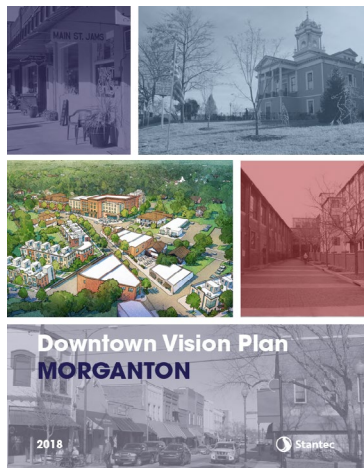


## Mission 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan (2009)

Adopted by City Council in 2009, Mission 2030 crafted a vision for the future of Morganton. Mission 2030 provides guidance on growth, land use, and development through a forecast year of 2030, specifically addressing policies to guide investment and development decisions.

### Key Takeaways

- Strategic investment in existing and new industries
- Focus on attracting and retaining employers
- Improve educational attainment for workforce development
- Proactively market Morganton as a desirable place to live, work, and play
- Redevelop underutilized sites
- Protect established neighborhoods while encouraging diverse housing options
- Expand Downtown's role as the City's business, financial, and entertainment center

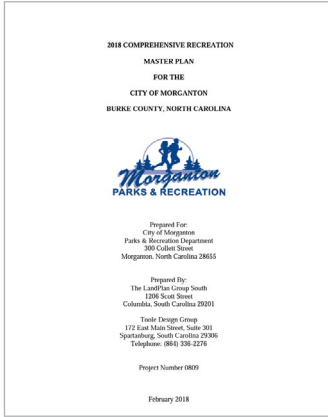


## Downtown Vision Plan (2018)

Drawing on a key goal of Mission 2030, the Downtown Vision Plan focused on a variety of key goals and projects to help develop Morganton's Downtown into the City's business, financial, and entertainment center.

### Key Takeaways

- Increase retail and restaurant tenants (including attracting a hotel Downtown)
- Maximize courthouse square as public space
- Focus on activity in the Downtown core
- Diversify and expand housing options
- Connect to the community
- Prioritize public art through partnerships with local artists
- Adopt a ground floor active use overlay district
- Restore two-way operations on downtown streets



## Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan (2018)

The Recreation Master Plan provides recommendations to guide the implementation of improvements to Morganton's recreational facilities, including parks, recreation centers, swimming pools, soccer complex, and more. Recommendations are based on priority, phasing, and funding.

### Key Takeaways

- Develop a marketing plan to communicate recreational benefits to residents and to attract local and regional visitors
- Maintain affordability and accessibility of parks as a contributor to quality of life
- Continue providing robust programming to cater to a diversity of users, such as youth and seniors

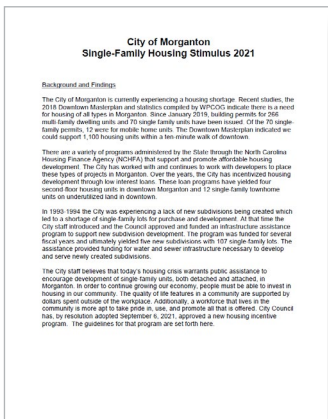


## Community Appearance Advisory Commission Vision Masterplan (2001)

The Vision Masterplan helps define a creative vision for Morganton to encourage unique development patterns to prevent “out of the box” and generic development in the City. The plan identifies various issues related to design and aesthetics as well as recommended solutions.

### Key Takeaways

- Create attractive entries into and through the City with street trees, artwork, and mini parks
- Encourage developers to prioritize physical appearance through landscaping, art, etc.
- Maintain historic sites and architecture through signs, monuments, design, and art



## Single-Family Housing Stimulus (2021)

Due to the City's current housing shortage and various planning efforts indicating a need for housing of all types, the Stimulus provides funding opportunities for water/sewer, street construction, etc. as well as vibrancy grants and loans.

### Key Takeaways

- Program represents the City's belief that public assistance is warranted to encourage development of single-family detached and attached units
- Program is designed to foster a high quality of life for residents and support the City's economic development goals

# Section 2

**IMAGINE**MORGANTON 2040

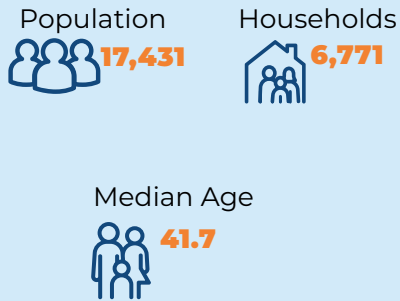
# COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS



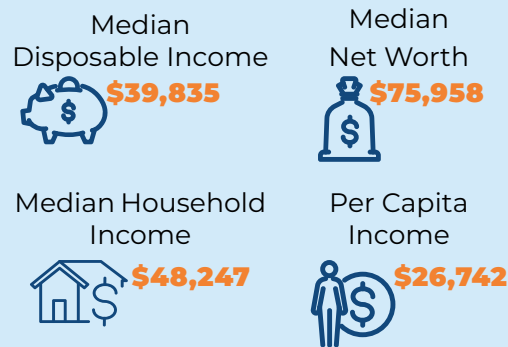
With its proximity to the Catawba River, Lake James State Park, South Mountains State Park, Pisgah National Forest, Table Rock Mountain, and the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, Fonta Flora State Trail, and the Catawba River Greenway, Morganton truly is “Nature’s Playground.” The City of Morganton offers its residents and visitors access to these stunning natural resources, plus a wide range of amenities, including healthcare, education, employment, and a vibrant downtown. An assessment of community characteristics was the first step in creating **IMAGINE Morganton 2040**. These characteristics are organized around population, land use, housing, economy, transportation, built environment, and natural environment.

## City of Morganton, NC

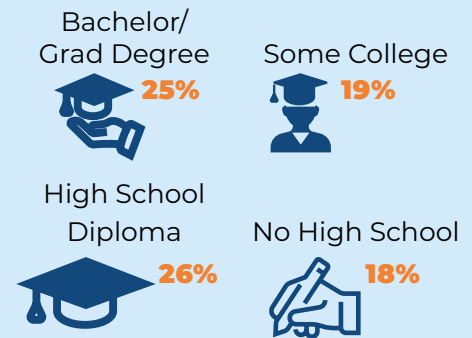
### Population



### Income



### Education



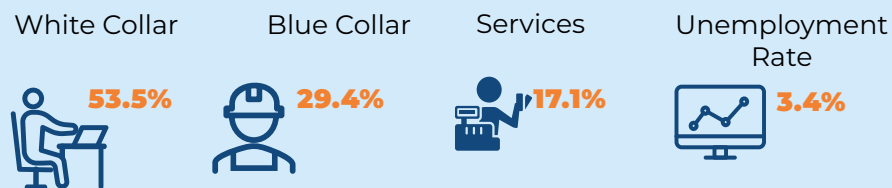
### Business



### Commute



### Employment



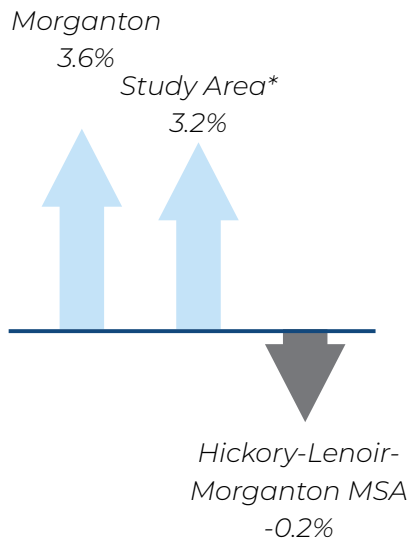
# POPULATION

Demographic trends show the makeup of the current Morganton population and serve as an indicator for future growth projections. IMAGINE Morganton 2040 must be responsive to future growth in the land use strategy to support the community's vision for Morganton. This section analyzes existing demographic conditions in the study area, estimates future ones, and compares the City of Morganton to the study area and the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA includes the counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba.

## Population Trends

Morganton has seen moderate growth in the past decade, while the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA is experiencing a slight population decline.

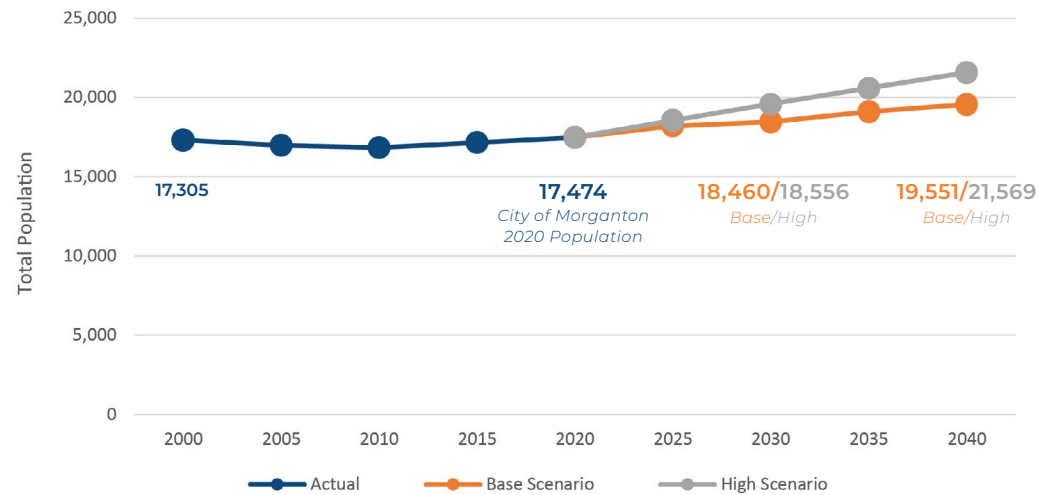
### Population Growth (2010–2022)



\*Our study area includes the City of Morganton and the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

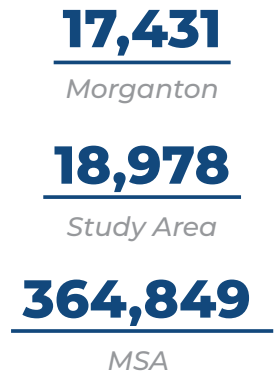
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn

### Projected Population Growth, 2020–2040



Source: OSBM, US Census, Woods and Poole, Kimley-Horn

### Total Population (2022)



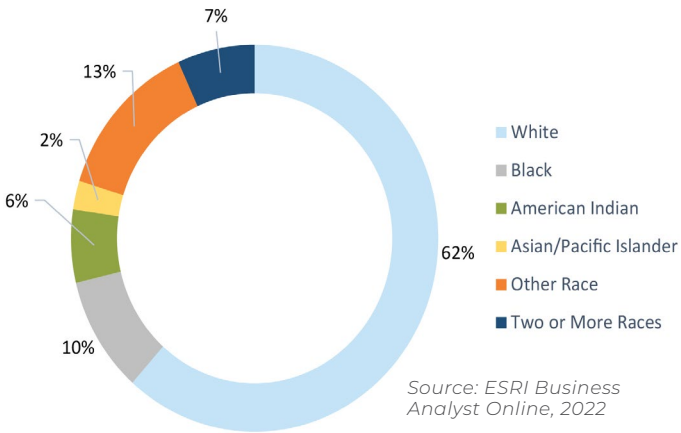
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn

Knowing our projected growth patterns helps us consider our appetite for growth: should we grow a lot or a little? What should that growth look like?

The population is expected to only grow 0.7% by 2027.

## Race

Morganton is home to a diverse community. In the study area, 38% of the population consists of individuals from racial minority groups, which is significantly higher than the 21.5% representation in the overall MSA population. Morganton's diversity is also reflected in the population's ethnicity. 23.9% of the population identifies as Hispanic, which is 175% higher than the MSA (8.3%).



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

**38.0%**

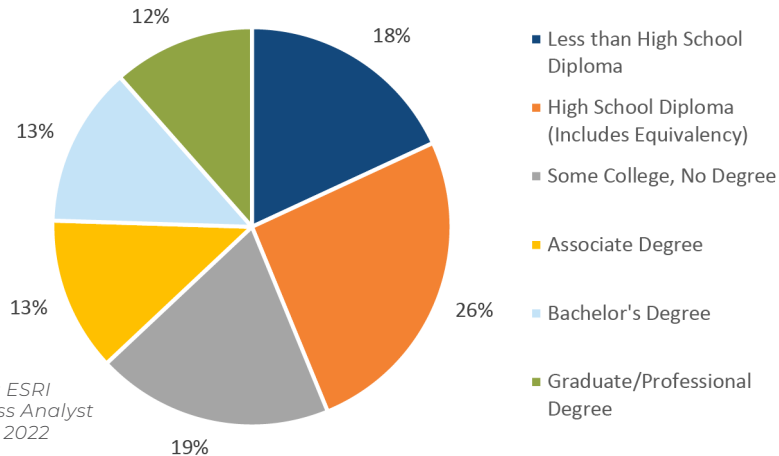
Of Population Part of a Racial Minority Group

**23.9%**

Of Population Identifies as Hispanic

## Education

More than a third (37%) of Morganton's population has an Associate Degree or higher. A variety of job types in Morganton are needed to support the range of education levels and skill sets held by the local population. Throughout the City, there's been a renewed focus on workforce training with an emphasis on manufacturing skill sets.

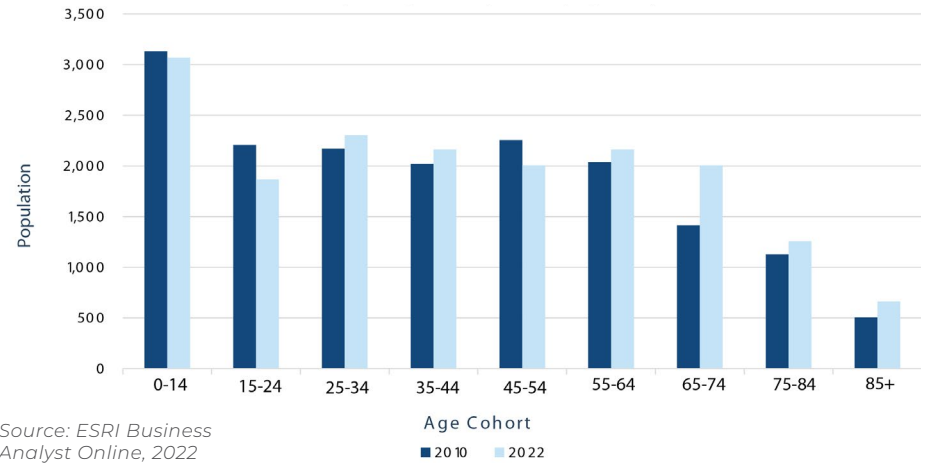


Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

## Age

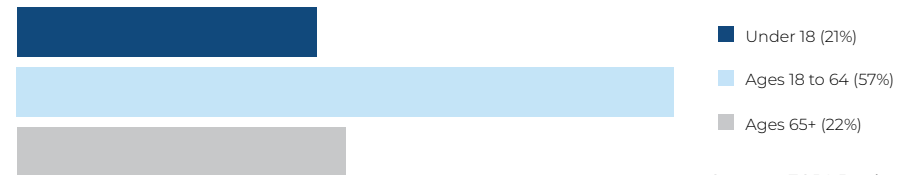
Over the last decade, Morganton's population has been getting older, even as more young families move to the City.

### Population Growth/Decline by Age Cohort



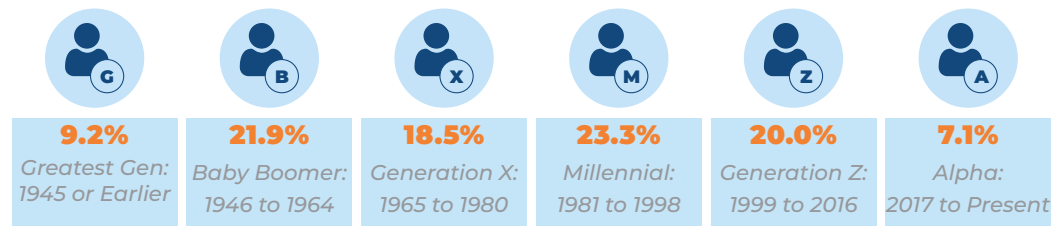
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

### Population by Age



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

### Population by Generation



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

# LAND USE

## Existing Land Use Classifications

Existing land use paints a picture of the ways different areas in Morganton are used today. To better evaluate how current land use aligns with the City's goals and identify areas for improvement, it is essential to understand how land is currently being used. This understanding provides us with the opportunity to assess if these uses support the City's objectives and identify any gaps or trends that may need to be addressed through a revised land use vision and supportive policies.

### COMMERCIAL

**4.75% | 815 acres**

Land used for retail or wholesale uses, personal services, hotels, restaurants, offices, and other uses.

### GOVERNMENTAL/RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

**15.20% | 2,611 acres**

Includes government buildings, hospitals, utilities, schools (public/private), places of worship, and cemeteries. State-owned properties are also included.

### INDUSTRIAL

**5.70% | 979 acres**

Land used for manufacturing, warehousing, or transportation and logistics.

### MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

**6.67% | 1,145 acres**

Includes apartments, condominiums, townhomes, and duplexes but does not include manufactured housing.

### SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING

**26.29% | 4,515 acres**

Land occupied by single-residence homes located one per lot.

### MANUFACTURED HOUSING

**0.13% | 24 acres**

Areas occupied by mobile homes, modular homes, or other types of manufactured housing.

### AGRICULTURE

**13.24% | 2,274 acres**

Includes all areas used for agricultural purposes, including working farms, grazing land, and forestry.

### VACANT/RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW)

**24.42% | 4,194 acres**

Vacant areas with minimal development, and the rights-of-way for roads, railroads, utility easements, and other land occupied by public/private utilities.

### OPEN SPACE/RECREATION

**3.60% | 617.5 acres**

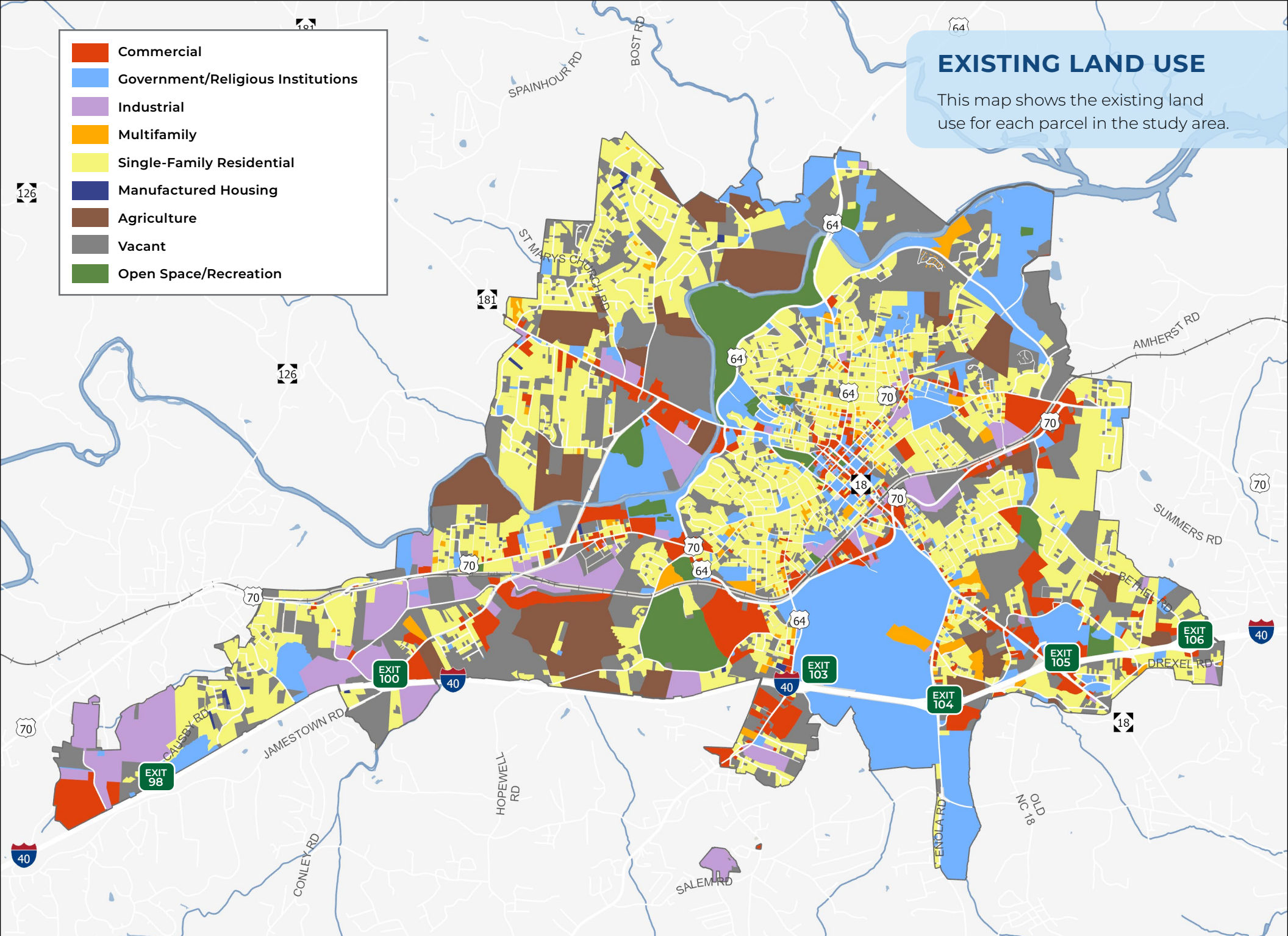
Comprised of natural, semi-natural, or planted areas used for recreation and/or for the protection of natural habitat.

*NOTE: Percentages rounded to the nearest hundredth; acreage rounded to the nearest whole number.*

- Commercial
- Government/Religious Institutions
- Industrial
- Multifamily
- Single-Family Residential
- Manufactured Housing
- Agriculture
- Vacant
- Open Space/Recreation

## EXISTING LAND USE

This map shows the existing land use for each parcel in the study area.



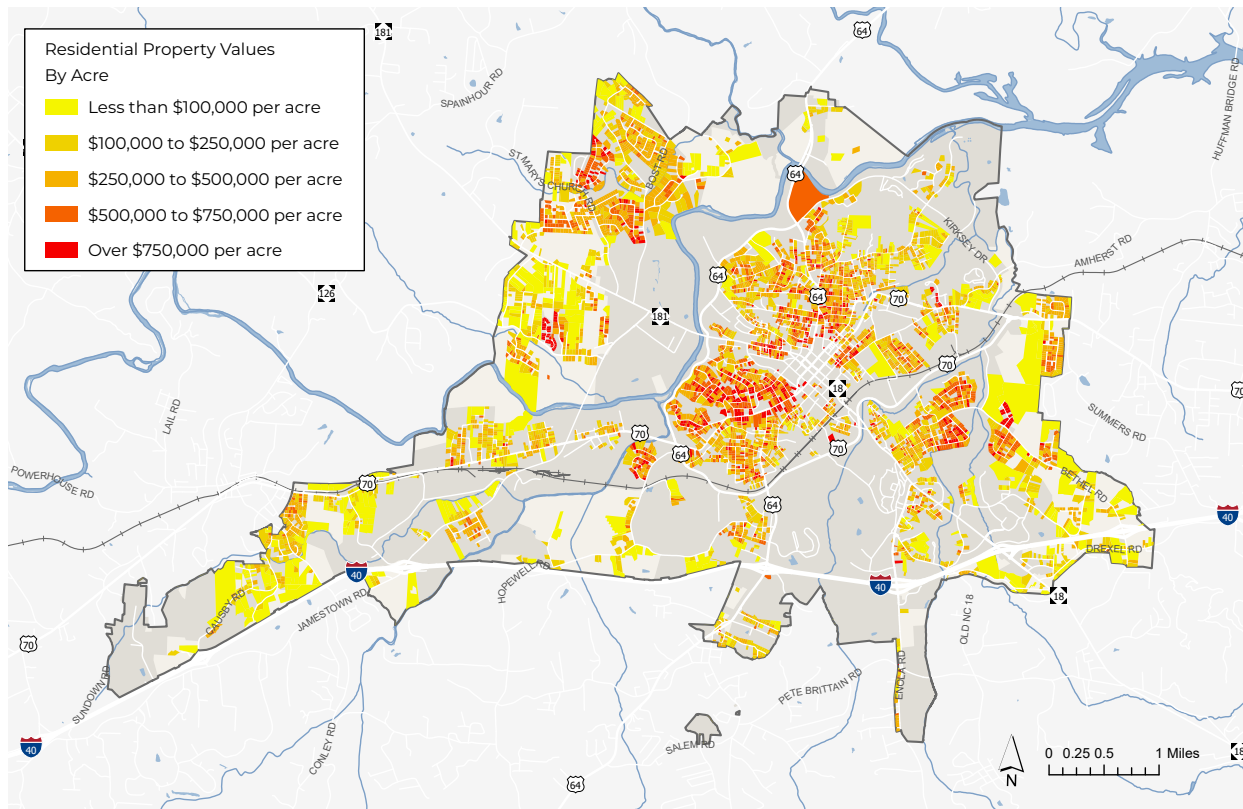
Source: Burke County GIS, June 2023

# HOUSING

An analysis of the housing supply and market in Morganton uncovers the conditions and trends that affect current and prospective residents. This information can help guide policy and future land use decisions in a manner that aligns with the City's desires for housing in the future. The following pages reflect key statistics and characteristics of existing housing in Morganton.

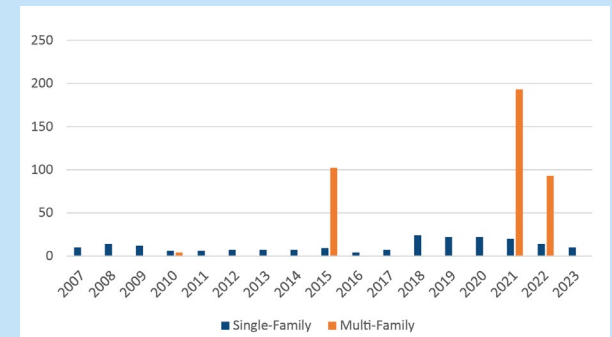
## Residential Property Value

This map showcases property values of acreage in the study area zoned as a low-intensity district. Housing in the study area tends to be less expensive farther from Morganton's downtown and in areas outside of the city limits.



## MORE HOUSING OF ALL TYPES

As evidenced by the chart below, which shows building permit applications per year, single-family building has remained fairly stagnant in Morganton since the mid-2000s, while multi-family has seen pulses of activity several times since 2015. This highlights Morganton's need for housing—of all types.



## Households

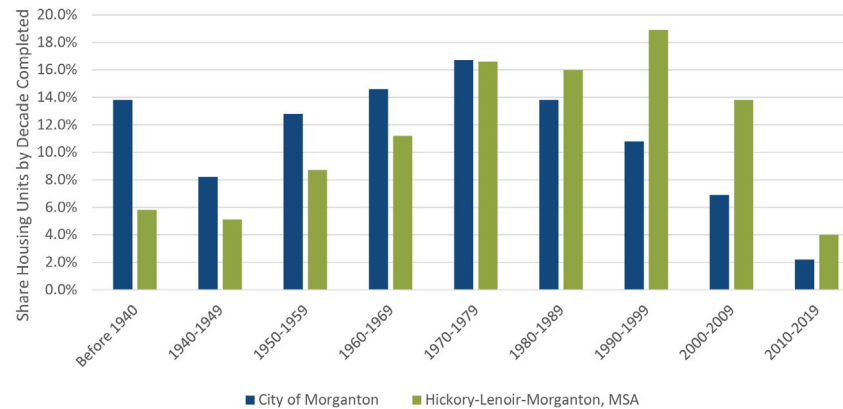
### Household Size



**65%**  
Of People Live  
in 1- or 2-Person  
Households



### Housing Age



Morganton's housing stock is older compared to the region. The average build year of houses in Morganton is 1970 compared to 1982 in the MSA.

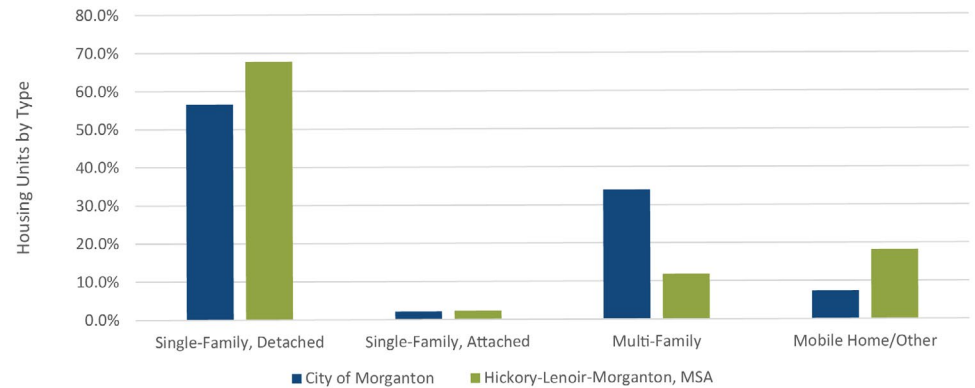
### Occupancy Status

A higher percentage of people rent in Morganton (36%) compared to the larger region (23%).

	2010	2022
Owner-Occupied	48.1%	54.6%
Renter-Occupied	39.2%	36.1%
Vacant	12.7%	9.3%

### Housing Type

Morganton has a bigger mix of housing types compared to the larger region, with 34% of housing units being multi-family.



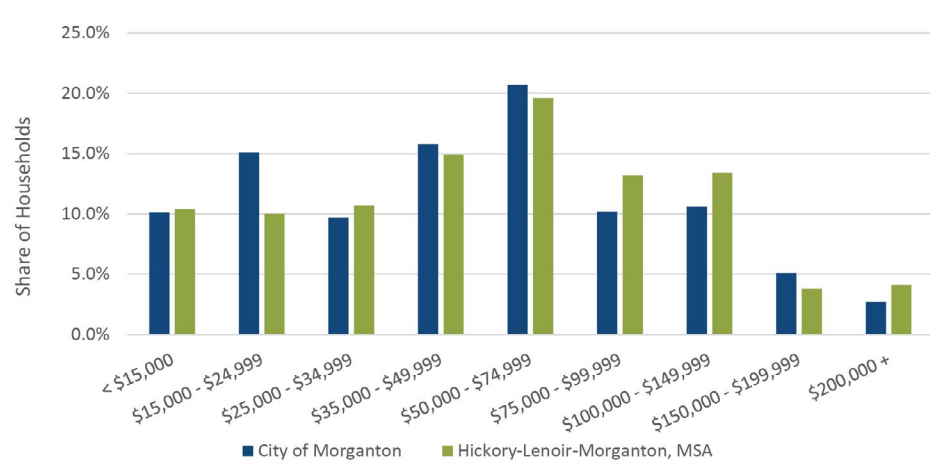


# ECONOMY

Morganton is a thriving city with economic vitality fueled by a mix of healthcare, education, retail, manufacturing, and tourism. Understanding existing economic practices and employment trends helps us track and plan investments to accommodate and encourage growth in the area.

## Median Household Income

The City of Morganton has a higher share of lower income households compared to the larger region.



**51%**  
Of Households Make Under \$50,000

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

## Projected Income Growth

Household income in Morganton is expected to grow 10.6% by 2027, which is slower than the larger region (16.8%). According to the American Community Survey data distributed by the United States Census Bureau, Morganton has a poverty rate of 27%, which is higher than Burke County (14%) and North Carolina (13%). The poverty rate describes persons with an income that is less than half the median household income of the total population.

**City of Morganton**  
**\$48,247** — +10.6% —> **\$53,382**  
 2022 2027

**Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA**  
**\$53,657** — +16.8% —> **\$62,658**  
 2022 2027

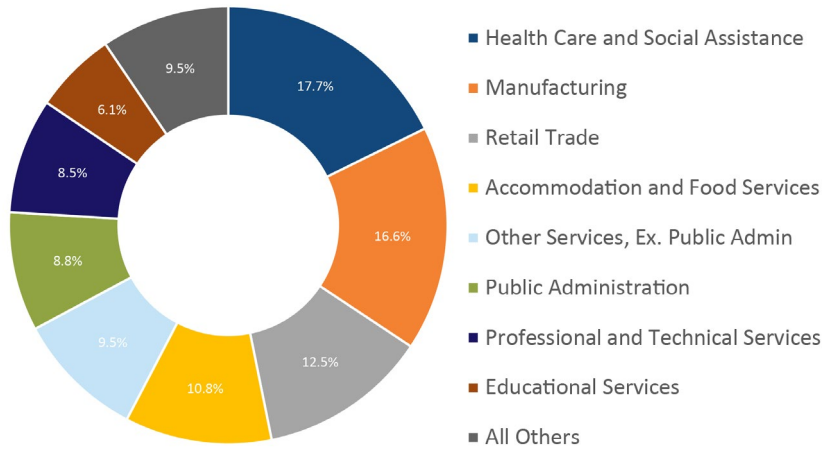
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn  
 At Left: Unix Packaging, Morganton, NC (Photo Credit [Wilkie Construction Company](#))

## Employment

A strong and resilient local economy is the foundation for a healthy and self-sustaining community.

### Employment Industries

A little more than 40% of employment in Morganton is in healthcare, manufacturing, and education.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2022

### Employee Profiles

Morganton is home to a mix of employee types:

- **Retail and services providers**, including restaurant employees
- **Industrial workers**, like those employed at one of Morganton's manufacturing centers
- **Professionals**, like tech and office workers



**17.1%**  
Services  
Provider



**29.4%**  
Industrial  
Worker



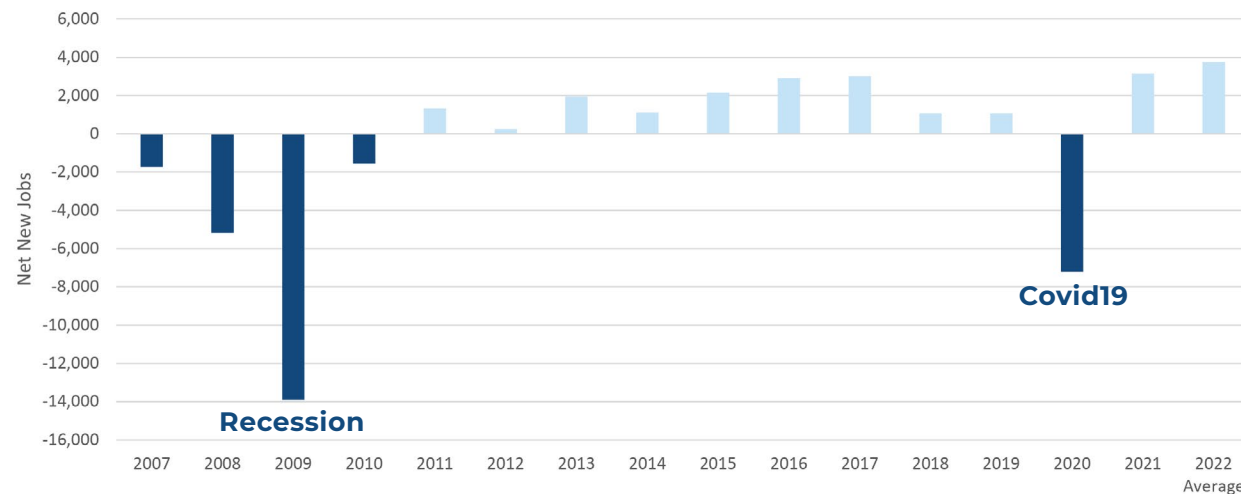
**53.5%**  
Professional

Source: ESRI, 2022

### MSA Annualized Job Growth

The region rebounded from the recession (2009) with a decade of positive job growth until the Covid-19 pandemic (2020).

The region emerged from the pandemic with strong annual job growth.



Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce

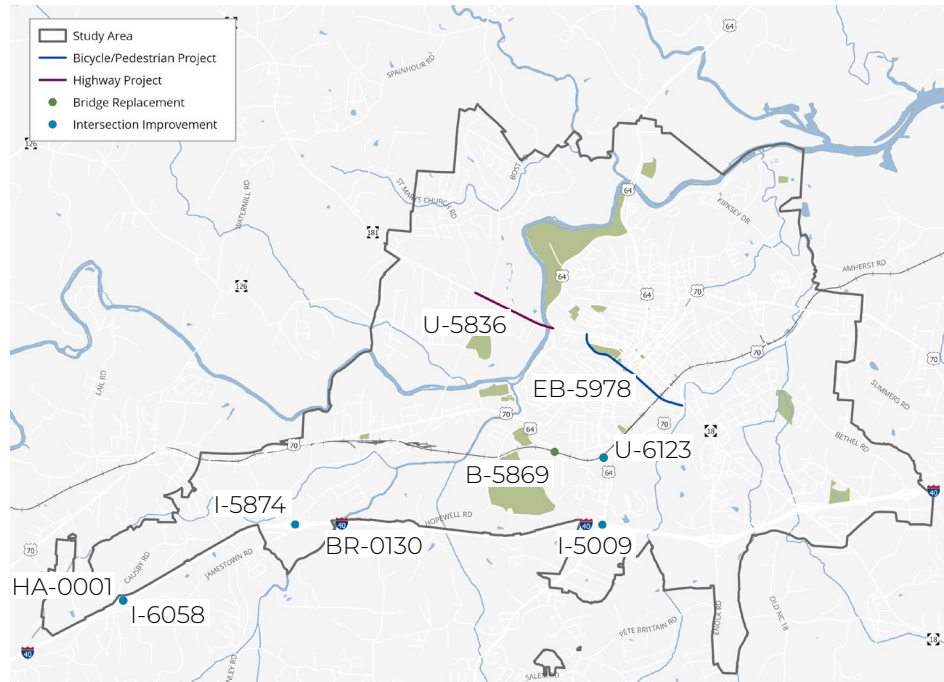
# TRANSPORTATION

The transportation network is made up of roads, railroads, and multimodal facilities that connect through and within Morganton. Major highways in the network include I-40, US 64, and US 70.

**Morganton maintains more than 87 miles of streets in the study area.**

## Funded Roadway Projects (The STIP 2024–2033)

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) 2024–2033 identifies state-funded projects throughout North Carolina. Burke County has several funded projects that affect the study area, including roadway improvements, intersection improvements, bicycle/pedestrian projects, and bridge repairs. The STIP is updated every two years. The STIP program identifies priorities and assigns funding for the first five years of the defined time period. **The projects are labeled in the map below and described in the tables to the right of the map.**



Source: NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program, 2024–2033

### Bicycle/Pedestrian and Highway Projects

STIP #	Type	Road	Cost	Construction Year
EB-5978	Multi-Use Path	College St	\$3,000,000	2025
U-5836	Widen Roadway	NC 181	\$10,799,000	2029
HA-0001	Access Road	New Route	\$1,700,000	2024

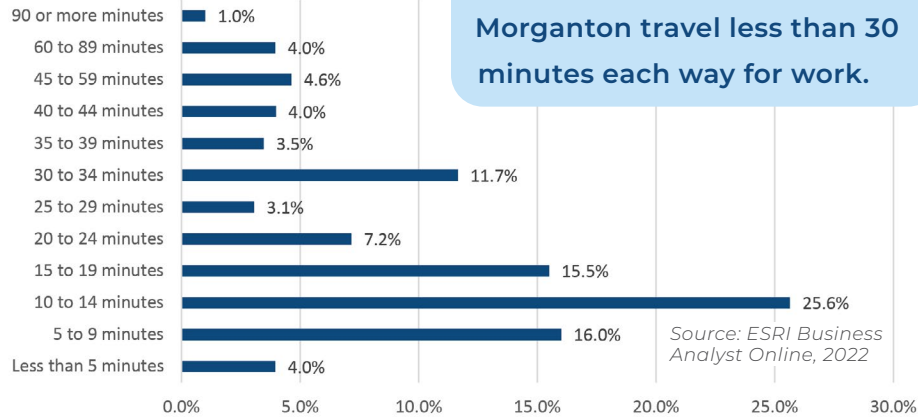
### Bridge and Intersection Projects

STIP #	Type	Road	Cost	Construction Year
B-5869	Bridge Replacement	W Fleming Dr/ Morganton Heights	\$29,331,000	2023
I-5009	Intersection Improvement	I-40 Exit 103	\$48,700,000	TBD
I-5874	Intersection Improvement	I-40 Exit 100	\$19,400,000	TBD
BR-0130	Bridge Replacement	Hopewell Rd Bridge	\$11,800,000	TBD
I-6058	Intersection Improvement	I-40 Exit 98	\$5,700,000	TBD
U-6123	Intersection Improvement	US 64 at W Fleming Dr	\$2,500,000	TBD

## Commute Patterns

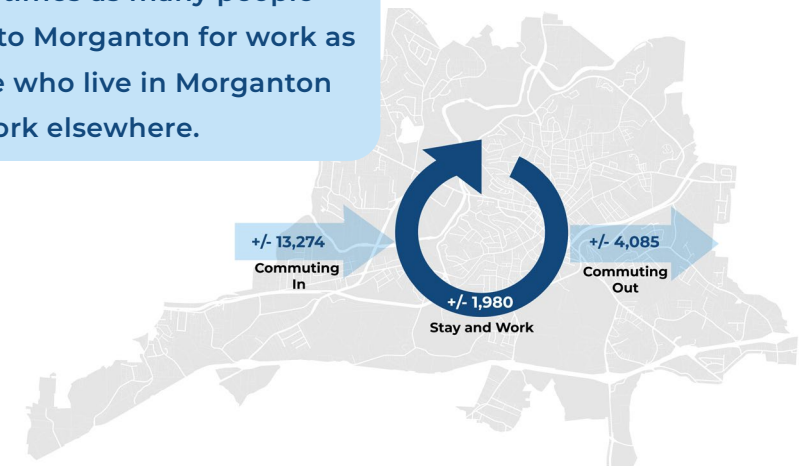
The significant number of employees commuting into the study area for work is a clear indication of Morganton's role as an employment hub in the region.

### Commute Time



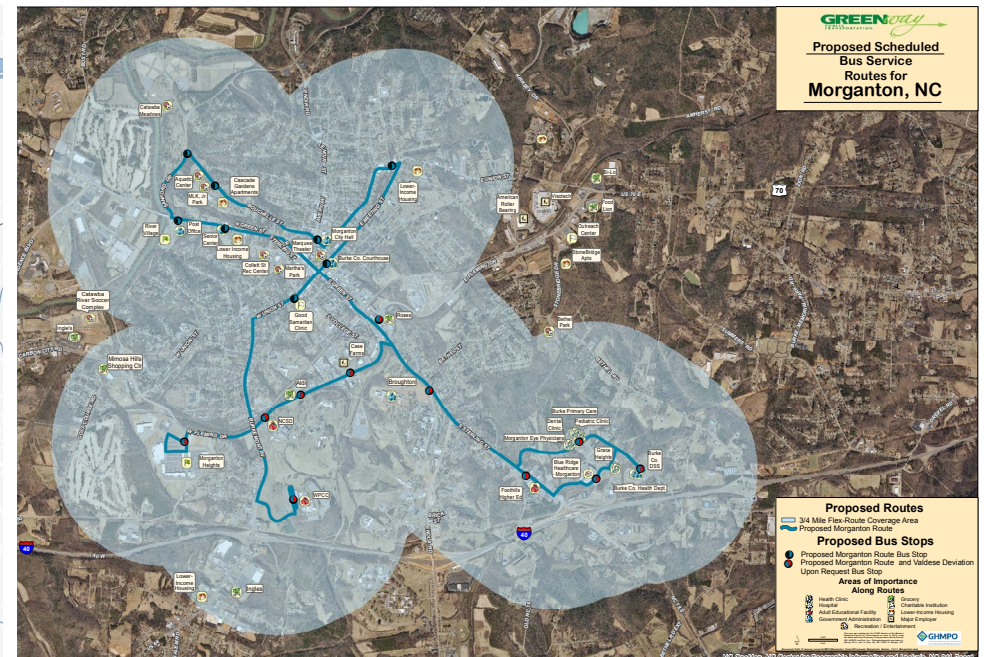
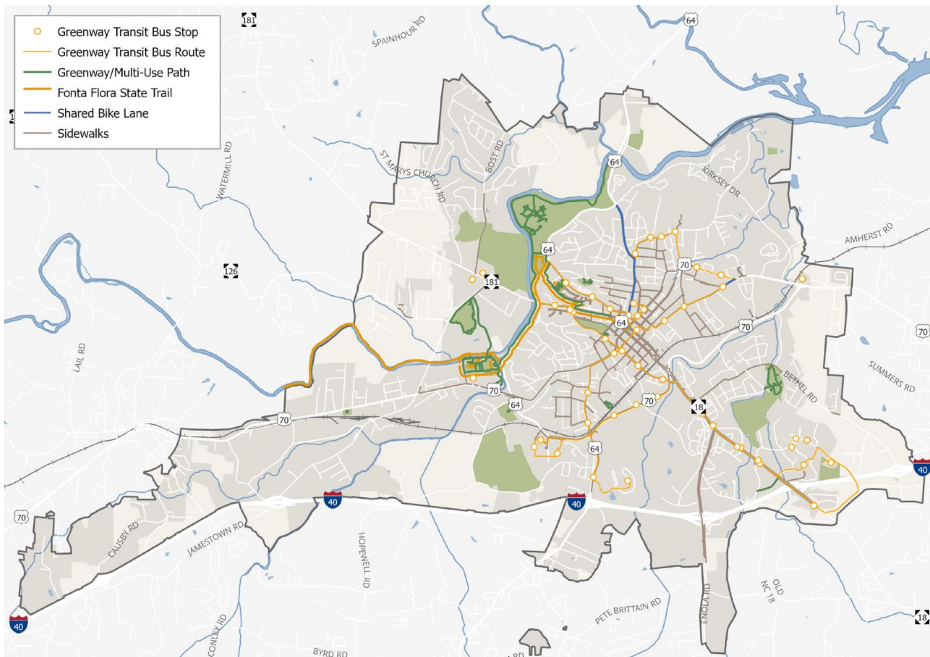
More than 70% of workers in Morganton travel less than 30 minutes each way for work.

Three times as many people travel to Morganton for work as people who live in Morganton but work elsewhere.



## Active Transportation and Transit

The map on left below shows the existing active transportation and transit routes in the study area. The map on right below, produced by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) and Greenway Transit, shows the proposed routes and stops in Morganton.



Source (both maps): Western Piedmont Council of Governments and Greenway Transit

# BUILT ENVIRONMENT

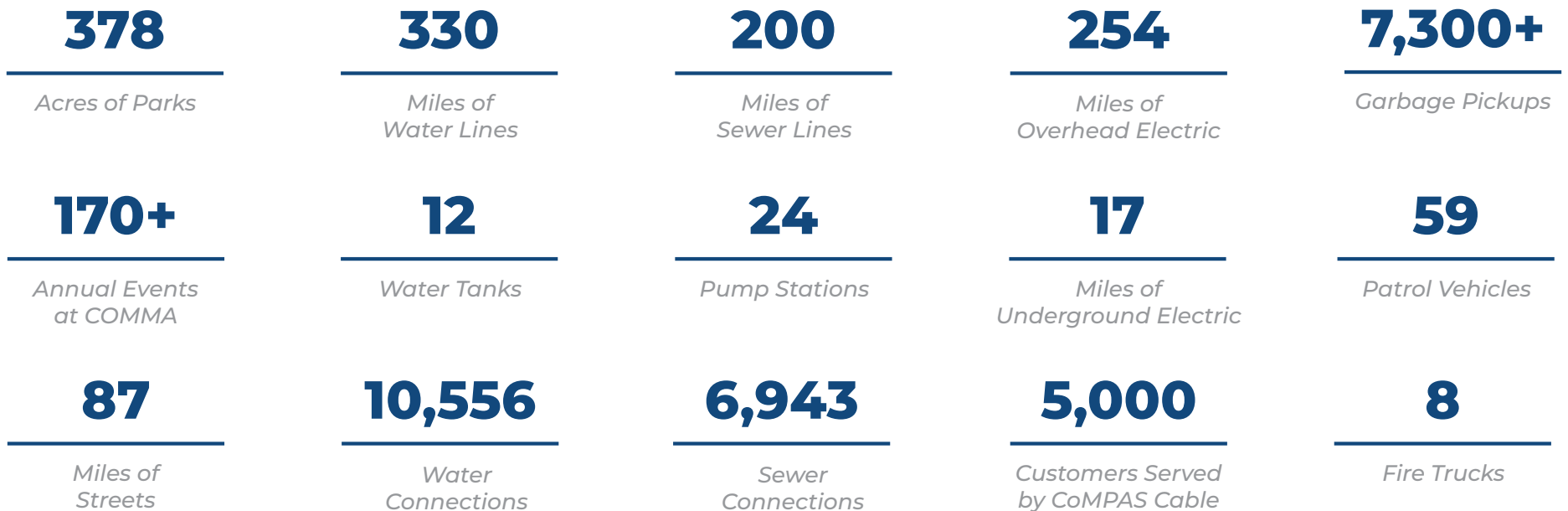
## Points of Interest

The map to the right showcases various features of the Morganton community. Several of these features, like CoMMA, the Downtown, Broughton Hospital, and the North Carolina School for the Deaf, are facets of Morganton's community and culture.

Morganton is home to topnotch municipal parks, such as Catawba Meadows Park, the Catawba River Soccer Complex, and the Morganton Greenway System. Combined, these amenities cover more than 375 acres of the city.

## Infrastructure and Services












Morganton is well-known for above average services and amenities, given the city's relatively modest population. These services and the related assets should be maintained to continue to provide the community with a high quality of life.

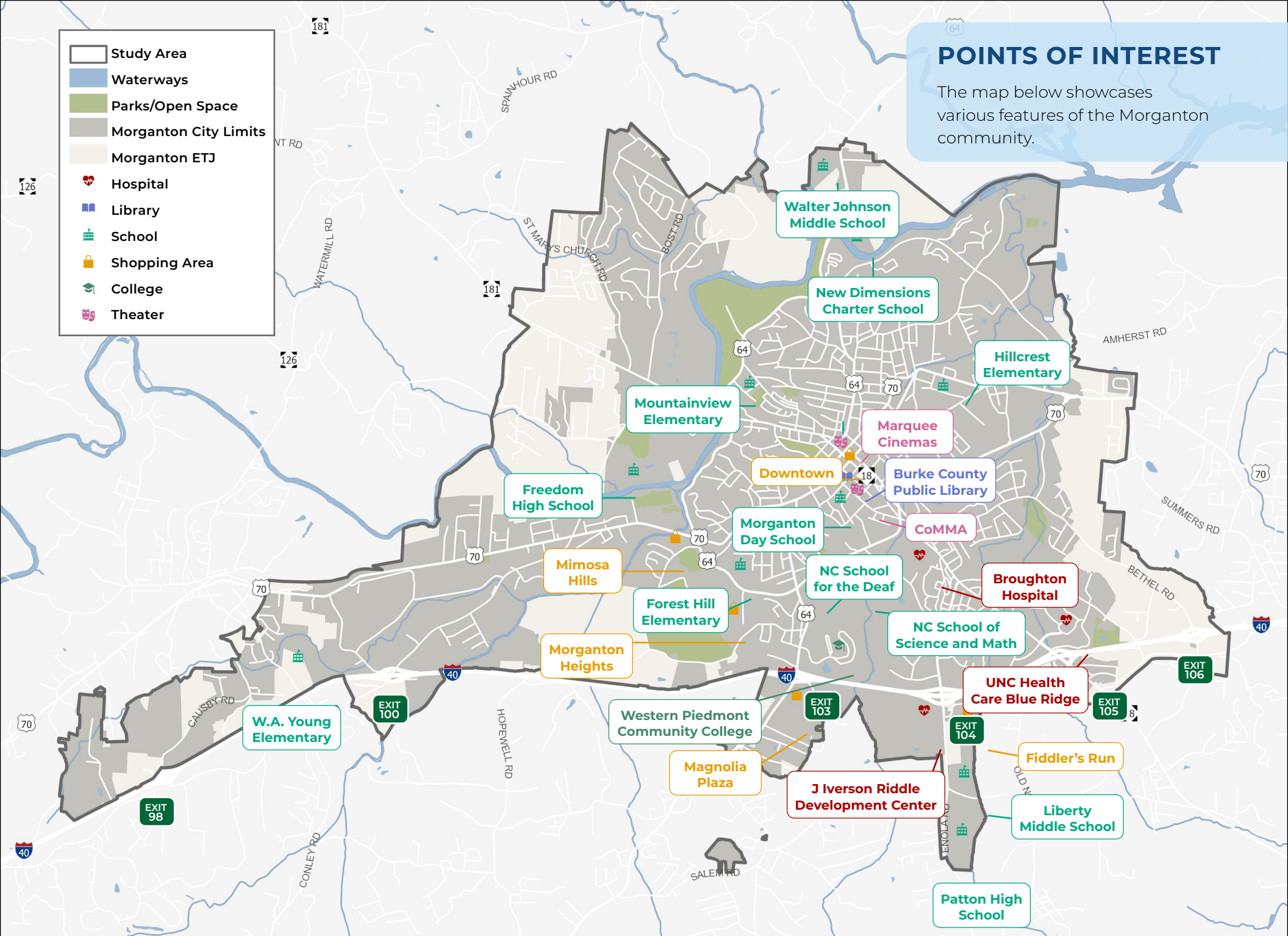


Source: City of Morganton, 2023

## POINTS OF INTEREST

The map below showcases various features of the Morganton community.

-  Study Area
-  Waterways
-  Parks/Open Space
-  Morganton City Limits
-  Morganton ETJ
-  Hospital
-  Library
-  School
-  Shopping Area
-  College
-  Theater

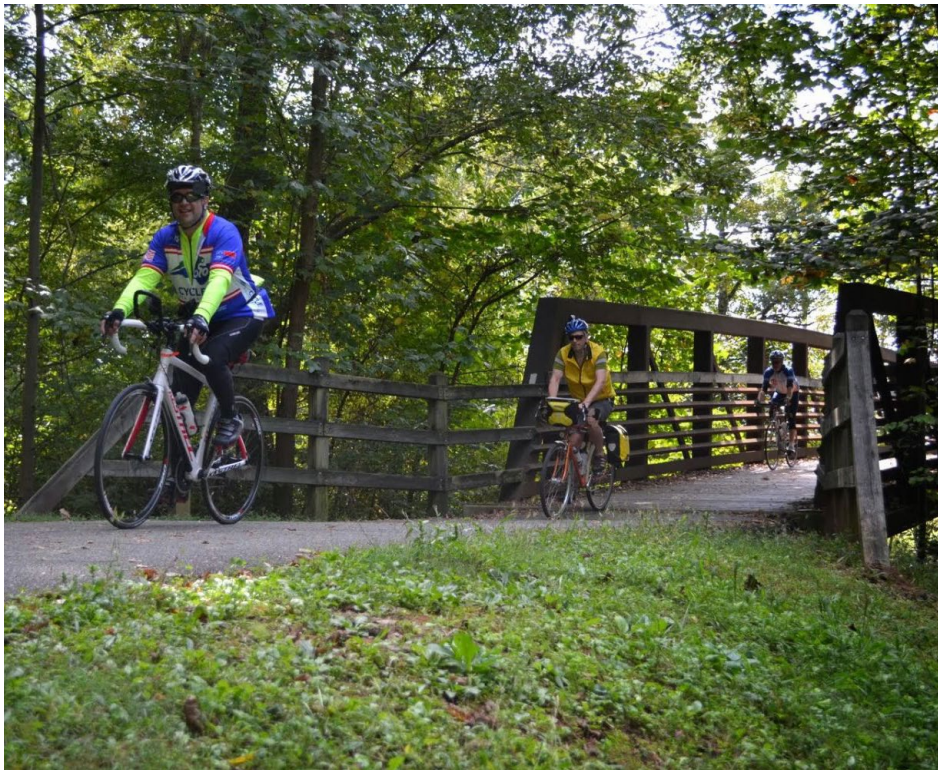


# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The city's residents and visitors benefit from being surrounded by natural beauty and abundant, high quality recreational opportunities.

The natural environment includes hydrology (water features) and topography (the physical form of a place). Burke County is home to numerous water bodies, including Lake James, the Catawba River, and many streams throughout. Warrior Fork, Silver Creek, and Hunting Creek are particularly important within the city limits of Morganton.







**The Catawba River, which feeds Lake James, runs through the study area.**



64

# NATURAL FEATURES

This map shows the wetlands, floodplains, and elevations that make up Morganton's terrain.

-  Study Area
-  Wetlands
-  100-Year Floodplain
-  Water
-  Higher Elevation
-  Lower Elevation

126

181

181

126

Downtown

64

70

70

70

70

64

64

70

70

70

EXIT 100

40

EXIT 103

40

EXIT 104

EXIT 105

EXIT 106

40

EXIT 98

70

40

18

# Section 3

**IMAGINE**MORGANTON 2040

# VISION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES



IMAGINE Morganton 2040 includes a vision and supporting planning principles to guide the planning process, inform the future land use strategy, and support the action plan.

## VISION

The vision reflects community values in Morganton and offers a way to describe our approach to growth, development, and investment in the years to come. The vision sets up the planning principles to guide Morganton through 2040 and beyond.

In 2040, we imagine Morganton to be a community of choice that blends a strong local economy, active downtown, first-class recreation opportunities, and strong neighborhoods. We are a welcoming place that acknowledges its history, embraces its cultural diversity, and works collaboratively and purposefully to make Morganton an unmatched place to live, work, play, and invest.

## ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

Creating the vision began by asking participants at the first workshop to respond to a simple prompt: "In 2040, I imagine Morganton to be..." Themes included:



Participants at the second round of workshops reacted to the draft vision.

*"Vision = perfect. Great Mixture! Mixture of old/new, downtown/outdoor activities, aging/young, diverse communities."*

*"Take care of the environment, foster belonging for all, diversity, access to housing, food, and healthcare."*

# PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The eight planning principles reflect input received during the initial phase of engagement for **IMAGINE Morganton 2040**. These principles reflect the unique circumstances facing Morganton and offer an organizing structure for how the City can work toward achieving its vision.

## GROW

**IMAGINE** a proactive approach toward future growth.

## THRIVE

**IMAGINE** a resilient local economy.

## ACTIVATE

**IMAGINE** a vibrant and active downtown.

## EMBRACE

**IMAGINE** a distinctive and welcoming city.

## LIVE

**IMAGINE** a range of housing choices.

## MOVE

**IMAGINE** a safe and balanced transportation network.

## PRESERVE

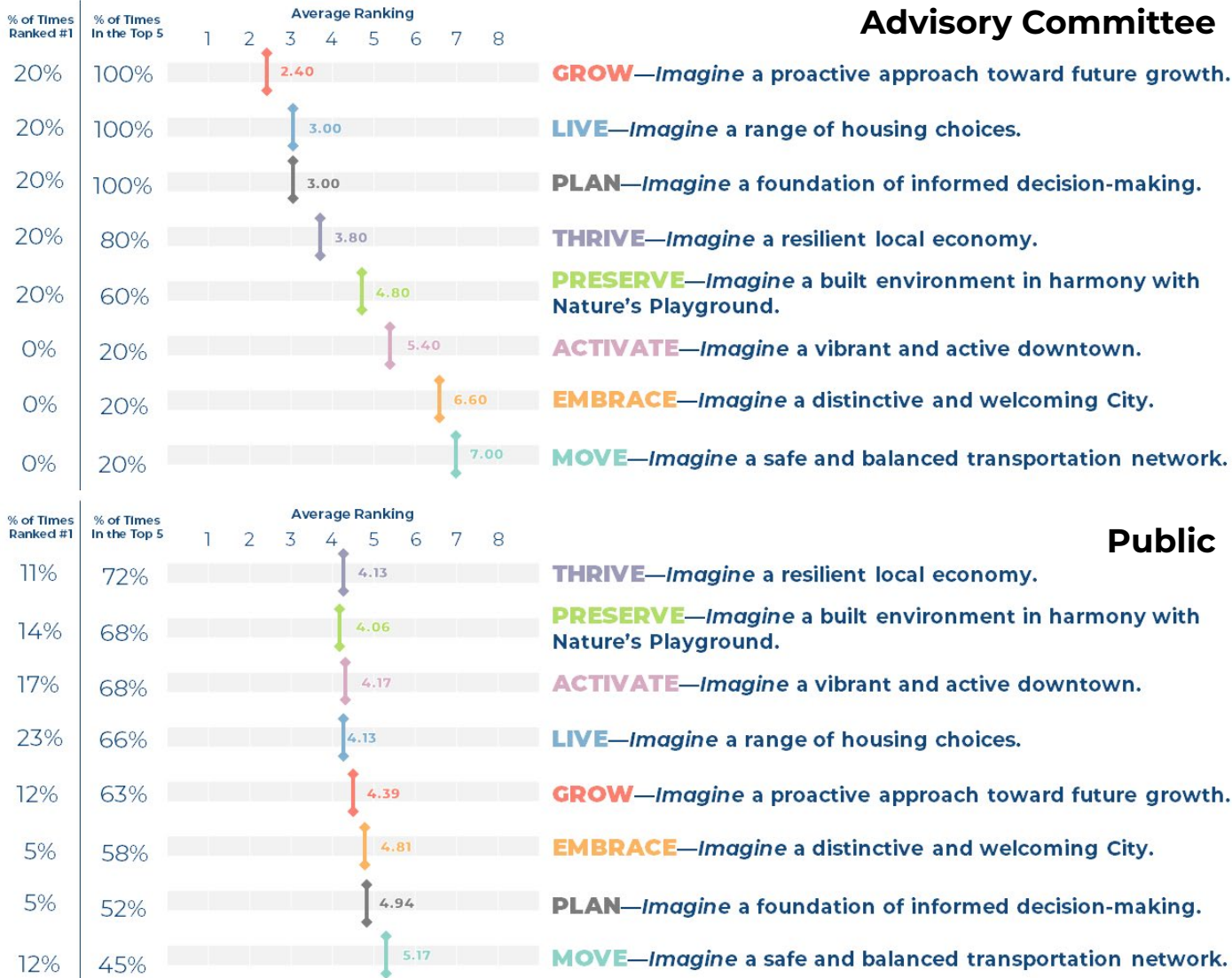
**IMAGINE** a built environment in harmony with Nature's Playground.

## PLAN

**IMAGINE** a foundation of informed decision-making.

# ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

The Advisory Committee (in small groups at their meeting) and community members (at the workshop as individuals) ranked the eight planning principles based on priority. While these have been ranked, none should happen without the consideration of all.



## Advisory Committee

**GROW**—Imagine a proactive approach toward future growth.

**LIVE**—Imagine a range of housing choices.

**PLAN**—Imagine a foundation of informed decision-making.

**THRIVE**—Imagine a resilient local economy.

**PRESERVE**—Imagine a built environment in harmony with Nature’s Playground.

**ACTIVATE**—Imagine a vibrant and active downtown.

**EMBRACE**—Imagine a distinctive and welcoming City.

**MOVE**—Imagine a safe and balanced transportation network.

## Public

**THRIVE**—Imagine a resilient local economy.

**PRESERVE**—Imagine a built environment in harmony with Nature’s Playground.

**ACTIVATE**—Imagine a vibrant and active downtown.

**LIVE**—Imagine a range of housing choices.

**GROW**—Imagine a proactive approach toward future growth.

**EMBRACE**—Imagine a distinctive and welcoming City.

**PLAN**—Imagine a foundation of informed decision-making.

**MOVE**—Imagine a safe and balanced transportation network.



# Section 4 LAND USE STRATEGY

**IMAGINE**MORGANTON 2040

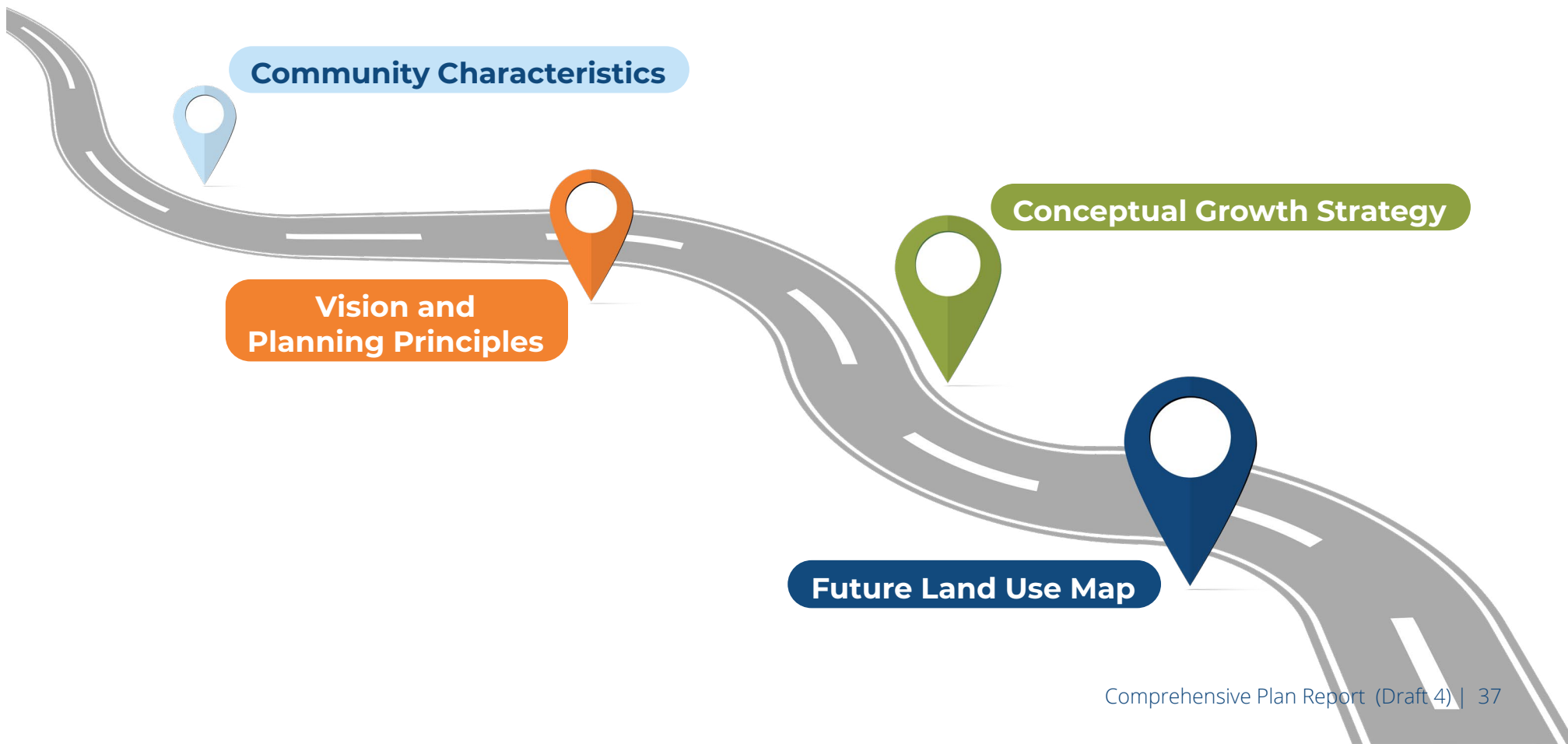


The future land use strategy is a foundation for local decision-making and a guide for property owners, developers, and other community stakeholders focused on the future of Morganton. The strategy answers **three** important questions:

*How should we grow?*  
*Where should we grow?*  
*In what form?*

## PATH TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Morganton's land use strategy positions the City to direct future growth in a way that supports the vision and planning principles. The path to the future land use map began with an understanding of community characteristics based on data analysis and community input. This information is reflected into the vision and planning principles and was visualized in the conceptual growth strategy. The future land use map adds the final layer of detail to serve as a foundation for local decision-making and a guide for property owners, developers, and other community stakeholders.



# CONCEPTUAL GROWTH STRATEGY

The conceptual growth strategy features a map that reflects current trends and influences on future development, as well as feedback received from the community, stakeholders, City staff, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council. The Conceptual growth strategy serves as the first glimpse of how Morganton's approach toward land use can fulfill the intent of the vision and planning principles.

The Conceptual Growth Strategy is organized around three categories. **These strategies are further defined on pages that follow.**

## Centers

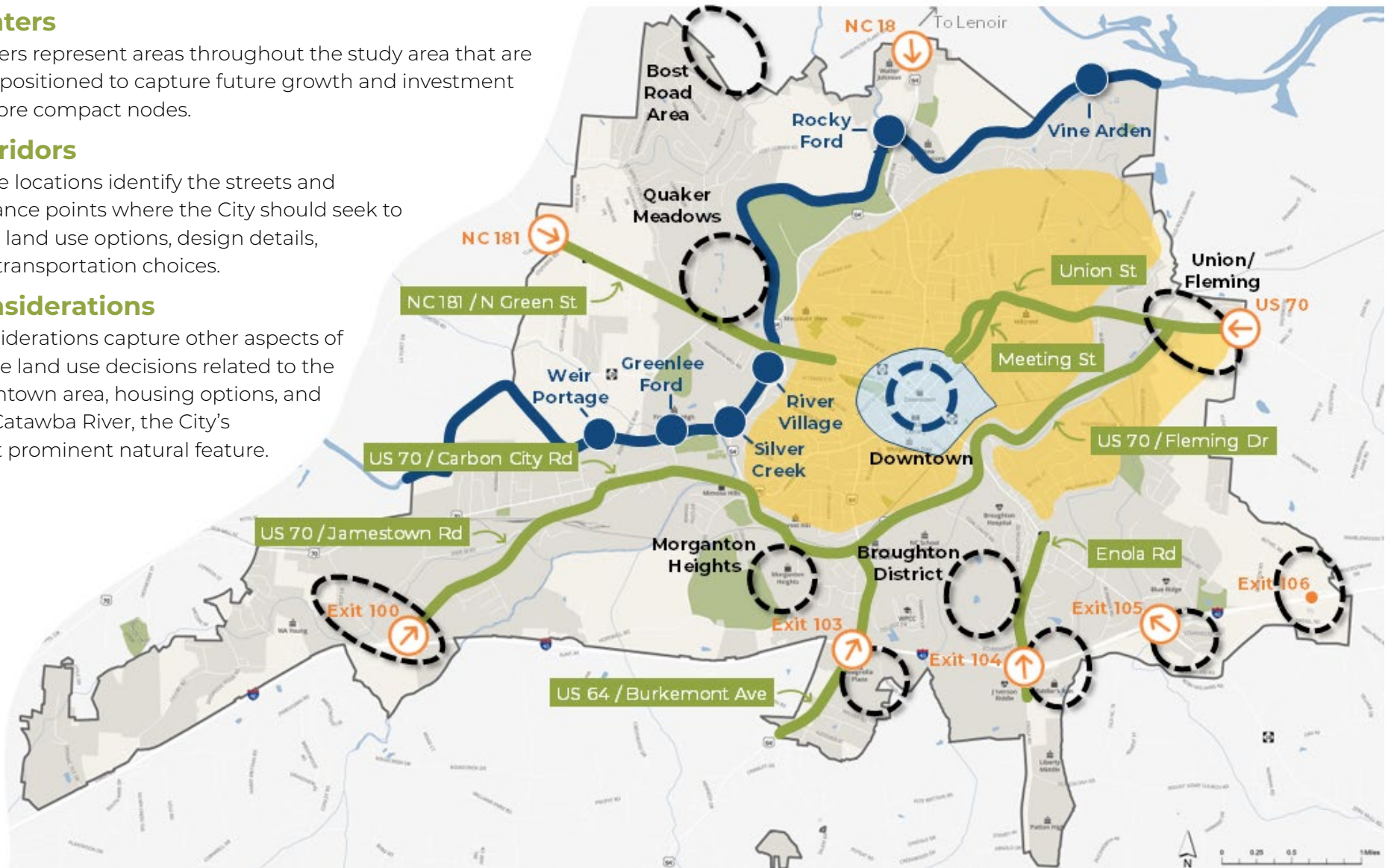
Centers represent areas throughout the study area that are best positioned to capture future growth and investment in more compact nodes.

## Corridors

These locations identify the streets and entrance points where the City should seek to align land use options, design details, and transportation choices.


## Considerations

Considerations capture other aspects of future land use decisions related to the downtown area, housing options, and the Catawba River, the City's most prominent natural feature.



## Centers

### Downtown Core

 The conceptual growth strategy represents Downtown Morganton as the economic, historic, and cultural heart of the community. It pulsates with life, energy, and activity, offering abundant opportunities that nurture the vitality of Morganton as a whole. Future decisions surrounding land use, economic investment, transportation facilities, and infrastructure improvements in Downtown should maintain and enhance this local and regional asset.

### Opportunity Areas

These locations throughout the study area provide notable opportunities for growth and development. Based on an understanding of existing and projected conditions, and vetted with community input, these areas are best positioned to receive targeted growth. This approach will help alleviate development pressures on surrounding residential and sensitive areas.

#### **New Development Opportunity Area**

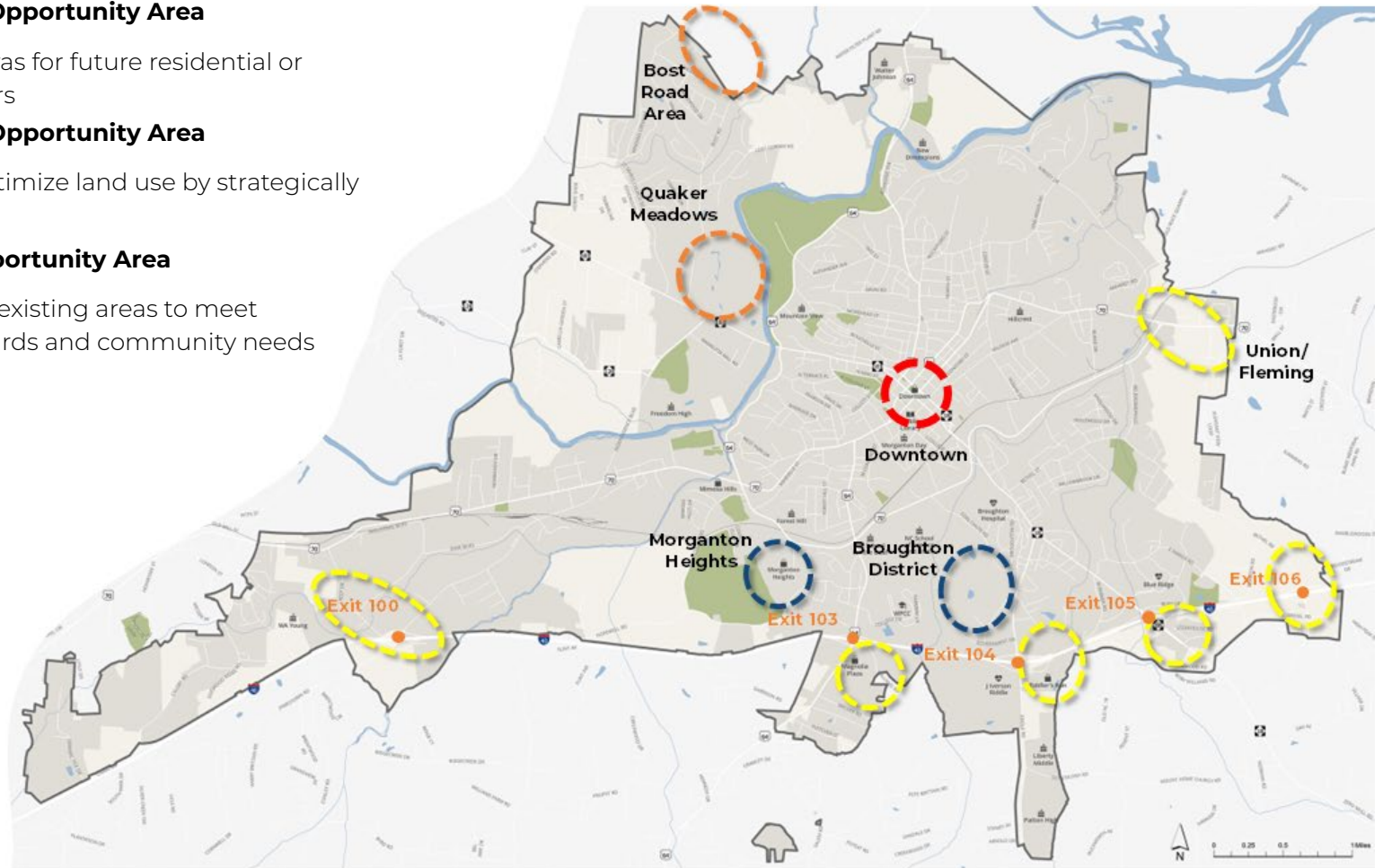
Provides a blank canvas for future residential or commercial endeavors

#### **Infill Development Opportunity Area**

Offers a chance to optimize land use by strategically filling gaps

#### **Redevelopment Opportunity Area**

Envisions revitalizing existing areas to meet contemporary standards and community needs



It is helpful to consider the unique characteristics of the Downtown Core and Opportunity Areas. Here, these locations are categorized based on existing development conditions and the opportunities that come through new development, infill development, and redevelopment.

## Corridors

### → Gateway

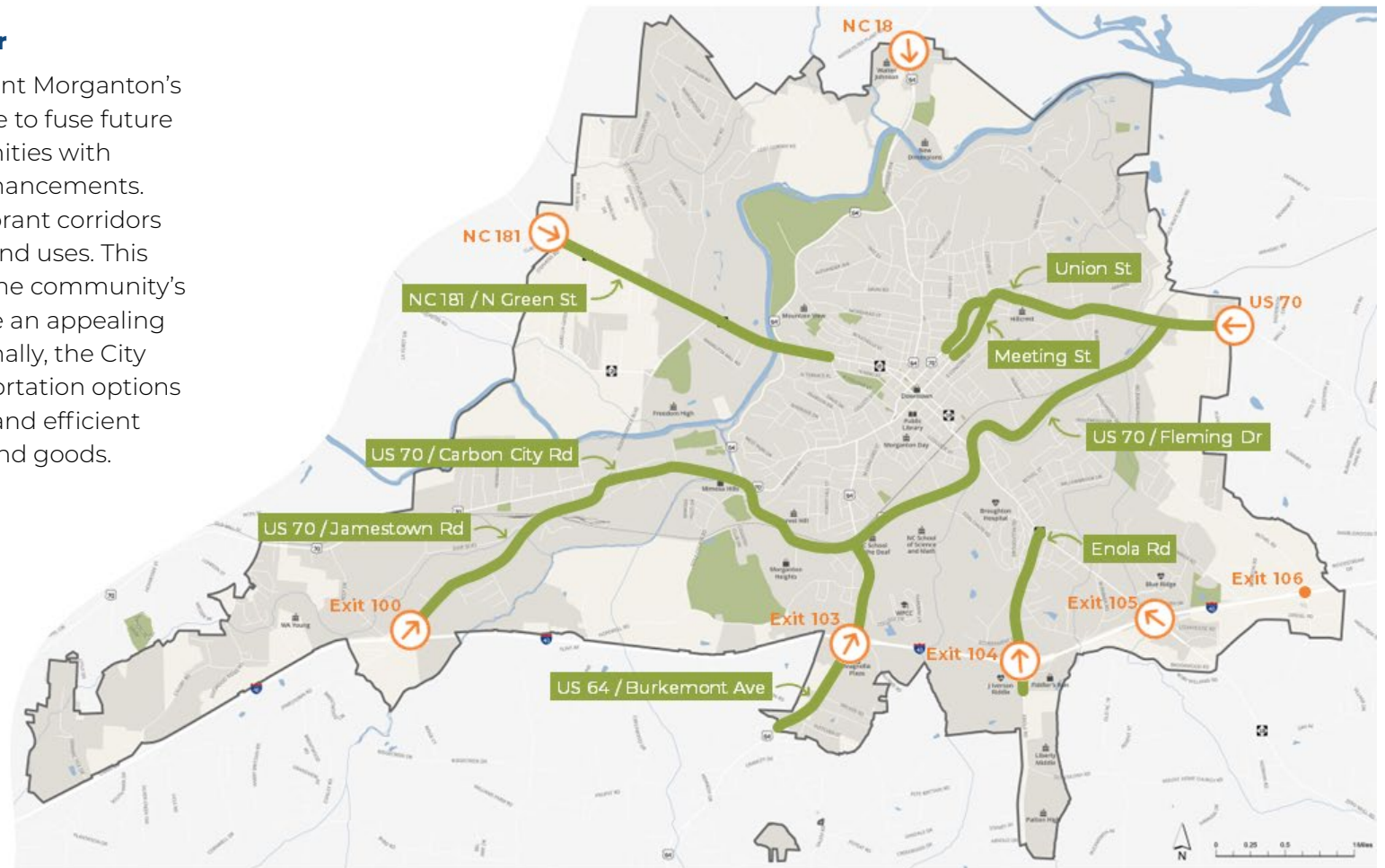
The entrance points shown near the edge of the study area and at key interchanges along I-40 would benefit from enhanced design cues within and adjacent to the right-of-way as well as well-placed wayfinding signage to welcome and orient residents, employees, and visitors to Morganton.

### Opportunity Corridor

These corridors represent Morganton's best locations over time to fuse future development opportunities with multimodal design enhancements. The goal is to create vibrant corridors with a healthy mix of land uses. This will not only enhance the community's tax base but also create an appealing sense of place. Additionally, the City aims to provide transportation options that prioritize the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

## ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

The conceptual growth strategy was refined based on input received from meetings in December 2023 with the Advisory Committee, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council.



## Considerations

### Downtown Edge

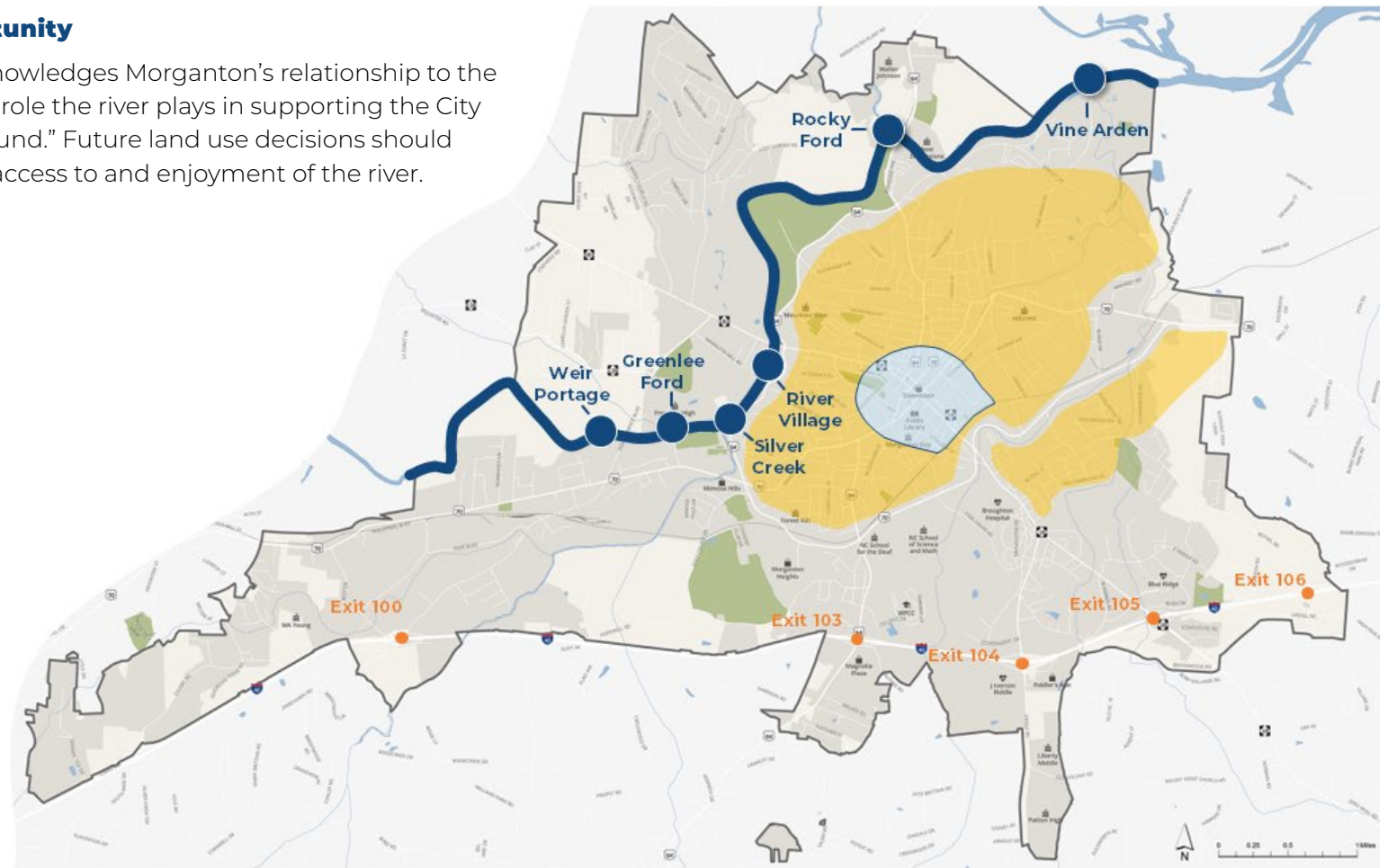
This consideration reflects the need for special attention for the area adjacent to Morganton's historic downtown core. The intent is to create land development policies and expectations that better encourage future investment in support of a vibrant downtown. The Downtown Edge should also serve as a transitional area between the Downtown Core and nearby residential uses.

### River Access Opportunity

This consideration acknowledges Morganton's relationship to the Catawba River and the role the river plays in supporting the City to be "Nature's Playground." Future land use decisions should seek ways to enhance access to and enjoyment of the river.

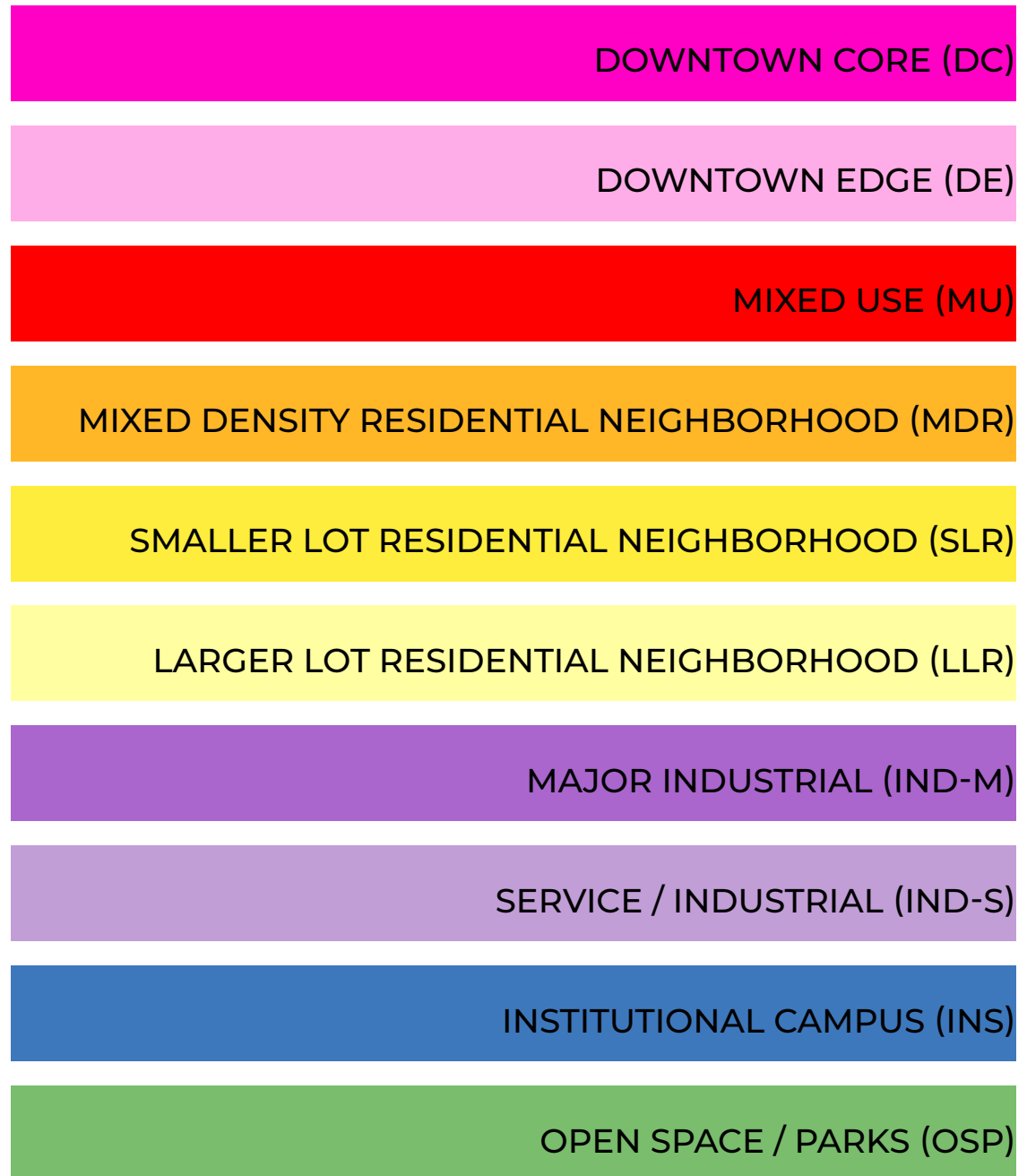
### Residential Density

Shown conceptually here, residential density acknowledges the need for appropriate increases in and design of density within existing neighborhoods in Morganton. The intent is to better respond to the ongoing housing challenge facing Morganton while recognizing the limited availability of large-scale development opportunities within the study area.













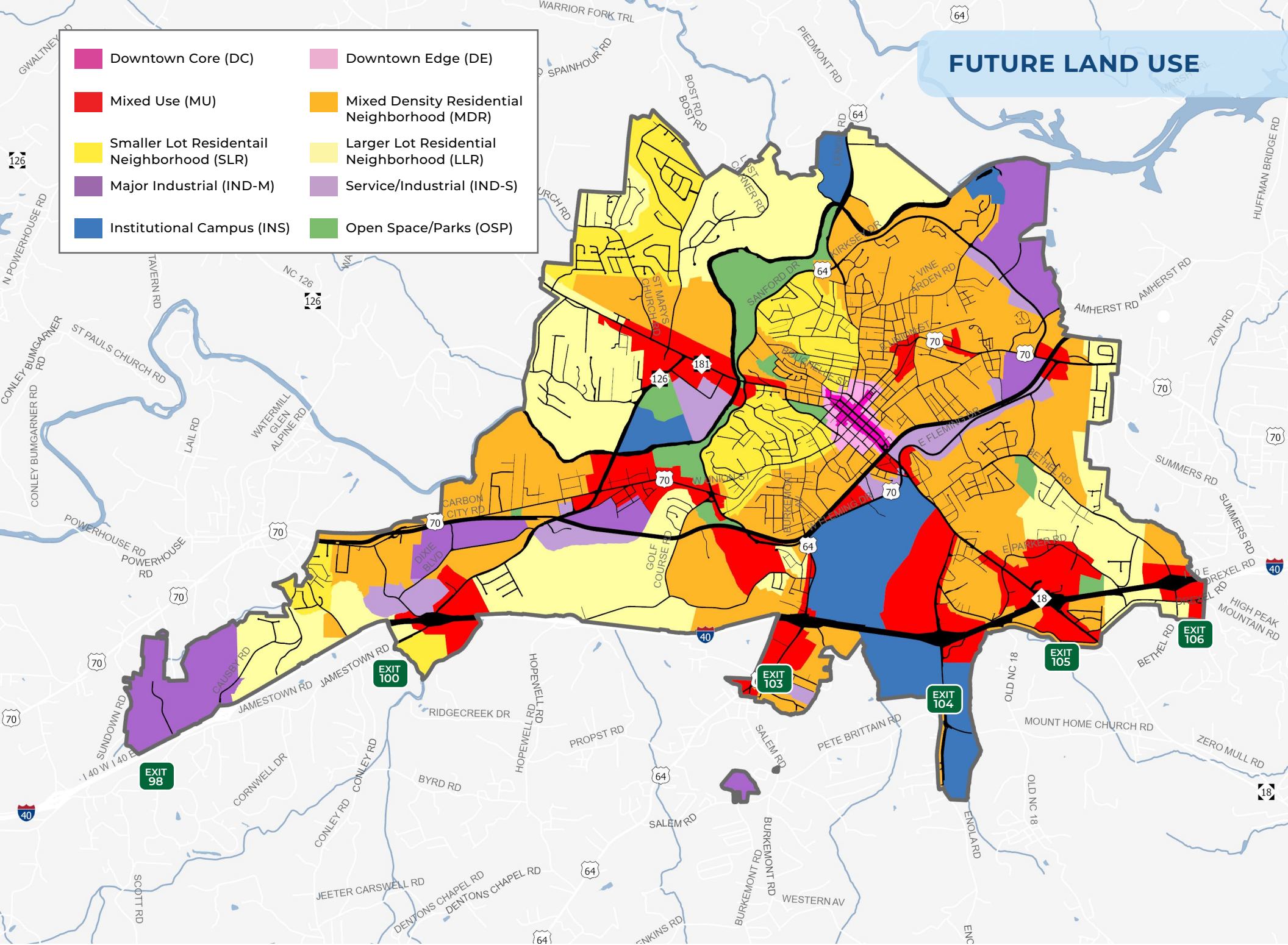
# FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

The future land use strategy adds a critical layer of detail to describe Morganton's preferred mix of land uses. The future land use strategy is communicated in a map created using a set of future land use classifications. This map serves as a guide for staff and elected officials in making growth and development decisions. Additionally, the map is applied using the City's zoning ordinance, which regulates land uses by applying zoning districts to specific parcels and describing detailed rules for the development of individual parcels. The future land use map does not change a parcel's current zoning designation. The successful implementation of the future land use map will require the City to update its zoning ordinance and map.



# FUTURE LAND USE

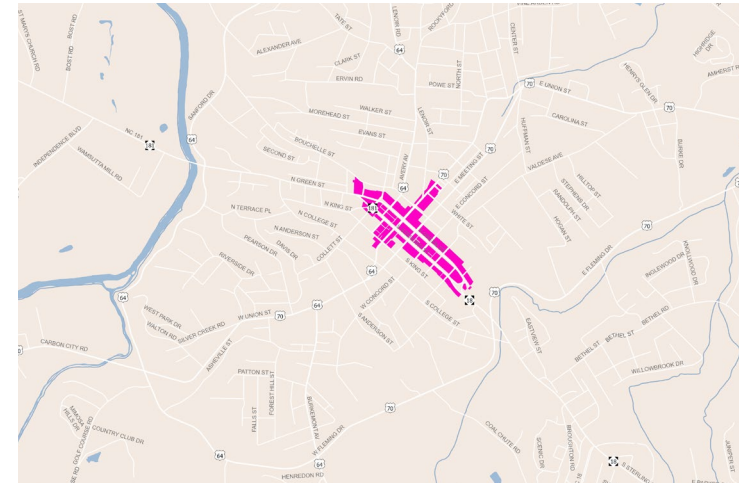
 Downtown Core (DC)	 Downtown Edge (DE)
 Mixed Use (MU)	 Mixed Density Residential Neighborhood (MDR)
 Smaller Lot Residential Neighborhood (SLR)	 Larger Lot Residential Neighborhood (LLR)
 Major Industrial (IND-M)	 Service/Industrial (IND-S)
 Institutional Campus (INS)	 Open Space/Parks (OSP)



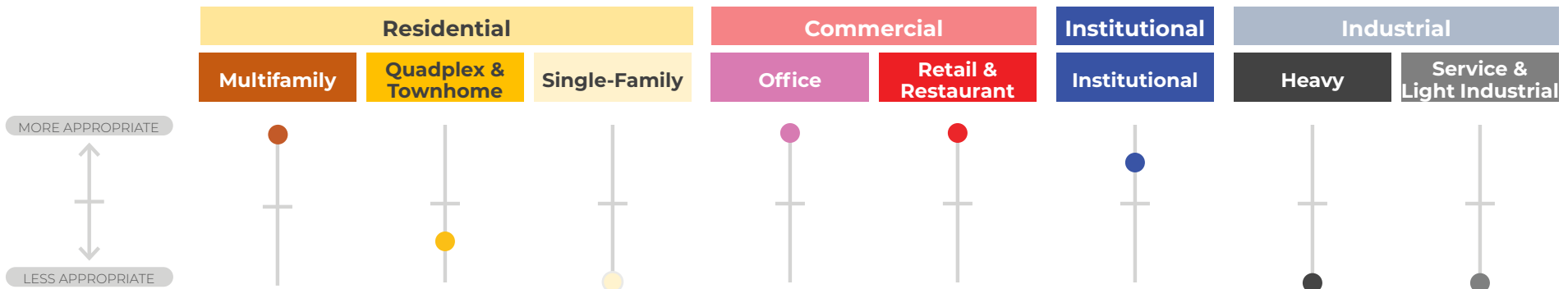
# DOWNTOWN CORE (DC)

## Intent

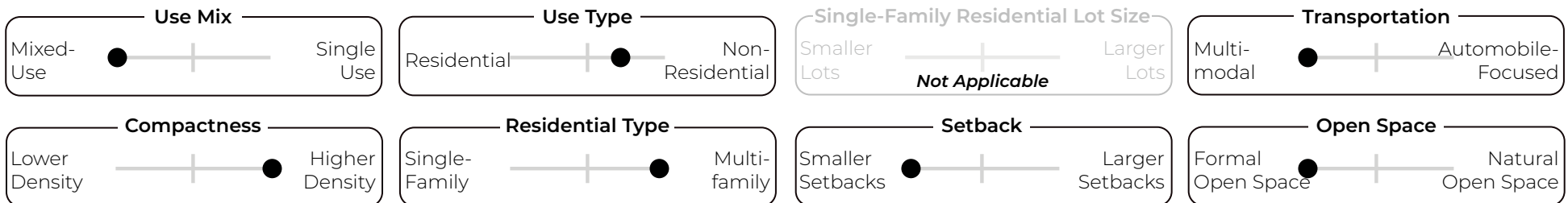
- Protect and promote Downtown as the economic, historic, and cultural heart of Morganton and the surrounding area.
- Encourage the use of vacant buildings and promote infill development on vacant lots.
- Enhance the character of Downtown through adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- Continue to activate street frontages and promote best practices for urban design.
- Create a safe and efficient urban transportation network that encourages walking and biking.
- Create a more active downtown with shops and restaurants that are open longer hours.



## Appropriate Land Uses



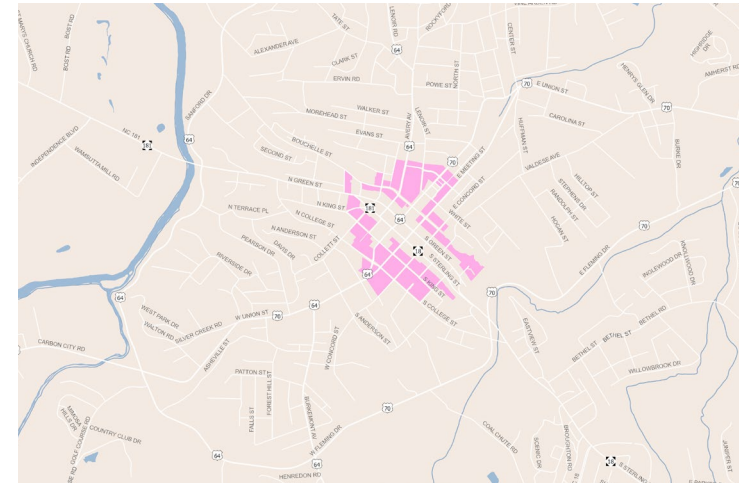
## Desired Characteristics



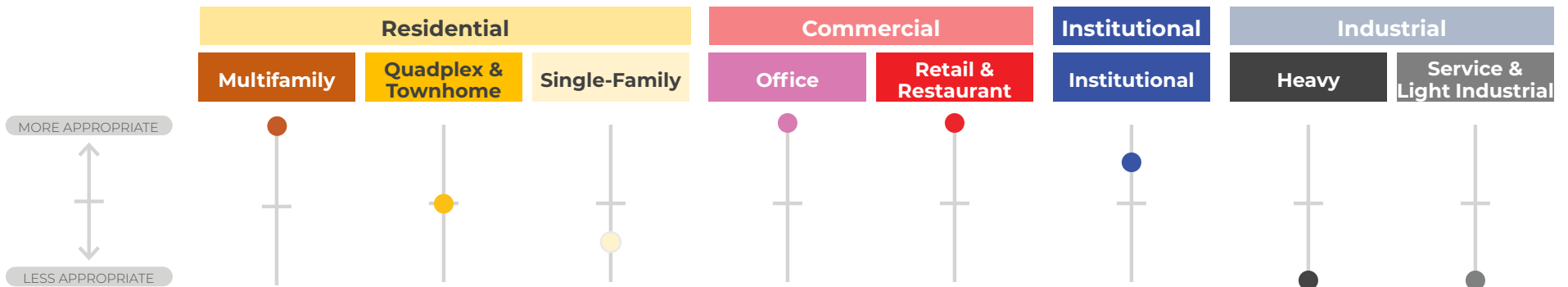
# DOWNTOWN EDGE (DE)

## Intent

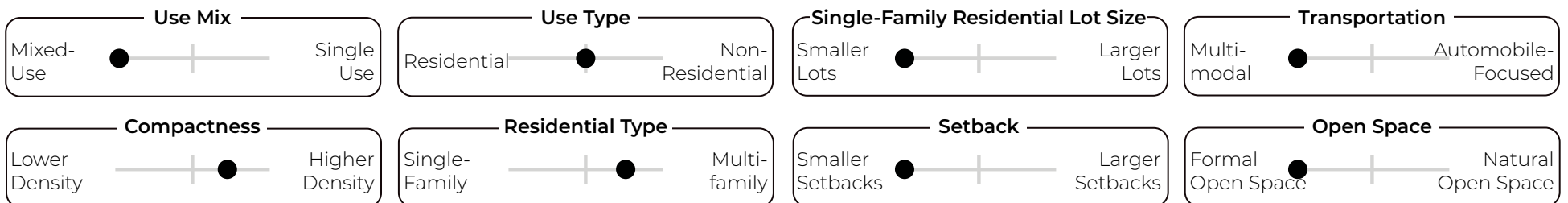
- Provide more transitional uses and design cues between the Downtown Core and nearby residences.
- Provide transitional development types and design standards (e.g., larger setbacks, less emphasis on active street frontage) between the Downtown Core and adjacent residential areas.
- Improve connectivity between the Downtown Core and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Promote pedestrian-oriented development while also accommodating vehicles.



## Appropriate Land Uses



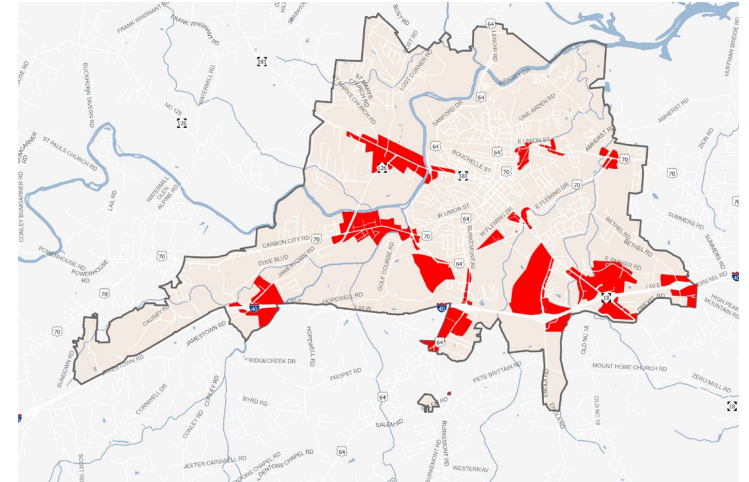
## Desired Characteristics



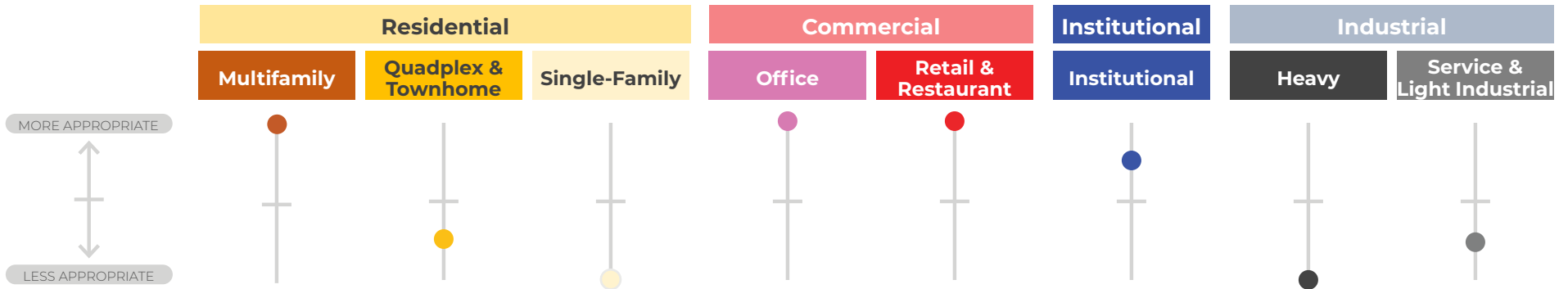
# MIXED USE (MU)

## Intent

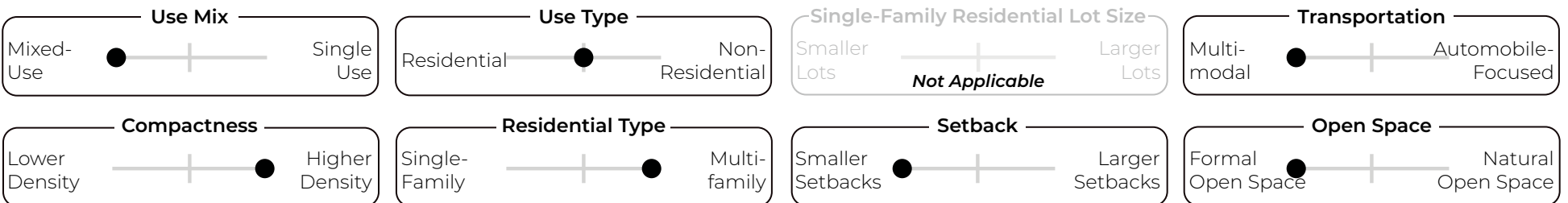
- Focus on locations well-positioned for growth and redevelopment with a focus on a mix of commercial, office, and retail use with multifamily development.
- Promote coordinated, master planned development of large sites to encourage a mix of uses in a horizontal or vertical format.
- Enhance the look and functionality of commercial corridors and existing shopping centers to support broader economic, entertainment, and cultural activities for the region.
- Create a design and scale that encourages active living with a connected network of walkable streets and paths.



## Appropriate Land Uses



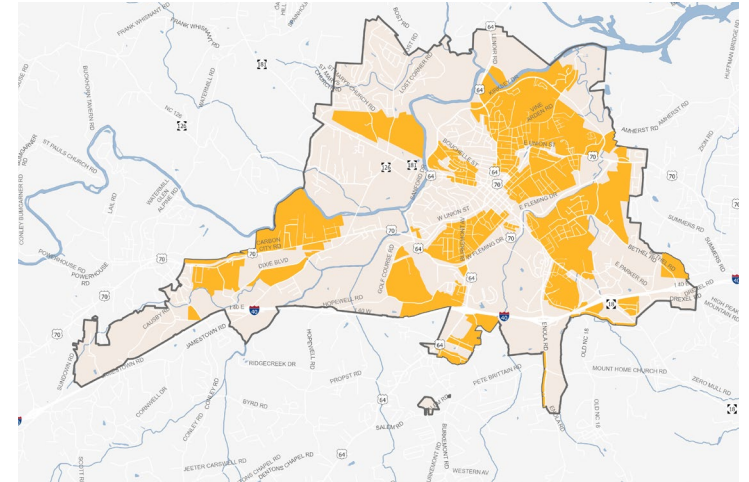
## Desired Characteristics



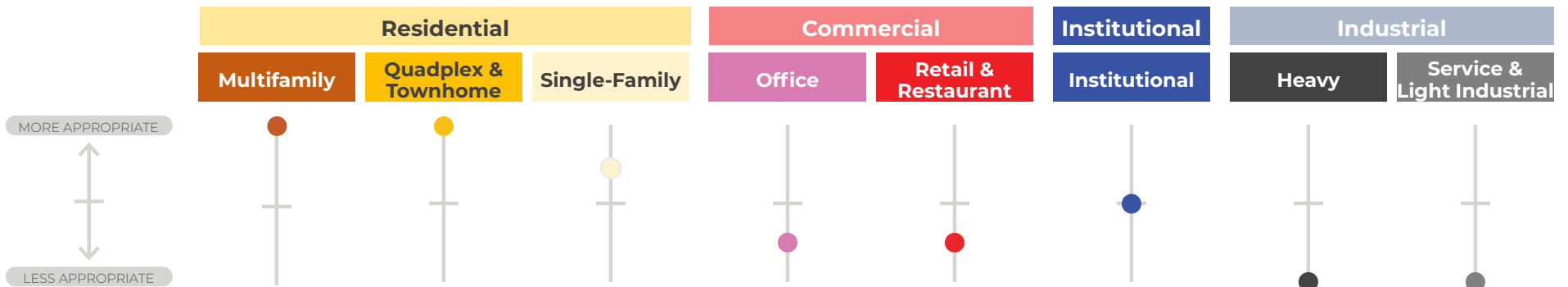
# MIXED DENSITY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD (MDR)

## Intent

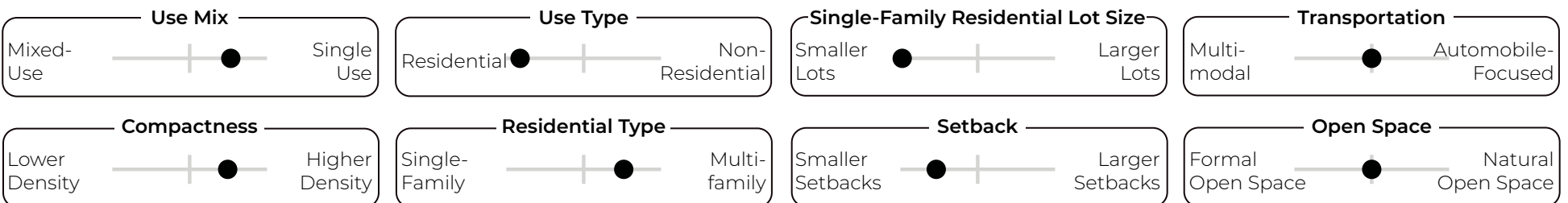
- Support a variety of housing of all types, particularly multifamily and smaller lot single-family.
- Encourage increases in density within existing neighborhoods.
- Consider land development code changes to reduce lot sizes and setbacks, especially for single-family residential uses.
- Allow neighborhood scale commercial uses that may serve the wider community.



## Appropriate Land Uses



## Desired Characteristics



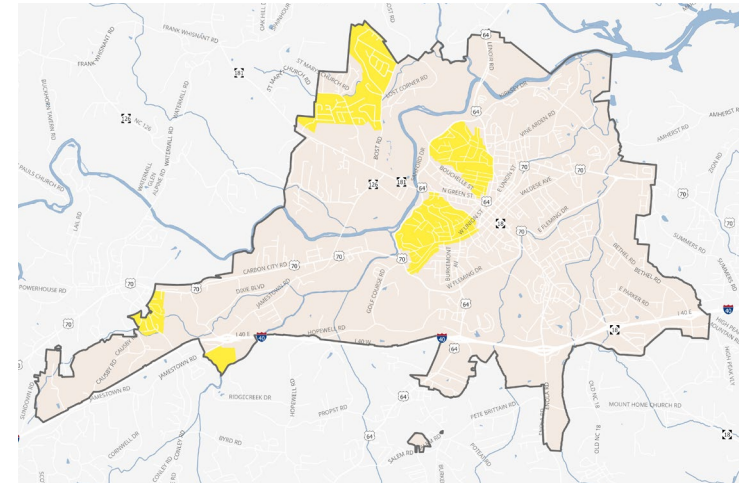
# SMALLER LOT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD (SLR)

## Intent

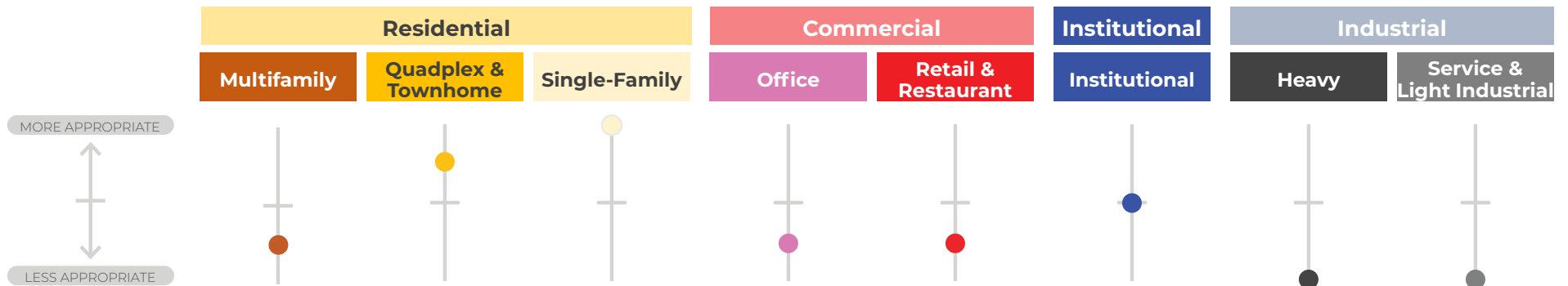
- Maintain the character of established neighborhoods while supporting new housing opportunities.
- Encourage smaller lot single family uses— especially through new development— that compliment existing neighborhoods.
- Seek increases in density without an influx of multifamily units.
- Consider land development code changes to reduce lot sizes and setbacks.
- Allow neighborhood scale commercial uses that serve nearby residences.

## Note

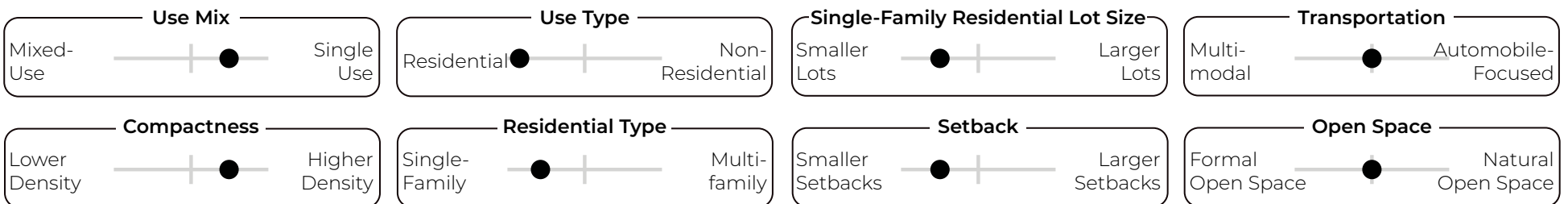
- Typically have an average lot size of less than 0.5 acre within a neighborhood.



## Appropriate Land Uses



## Desired Characteristics



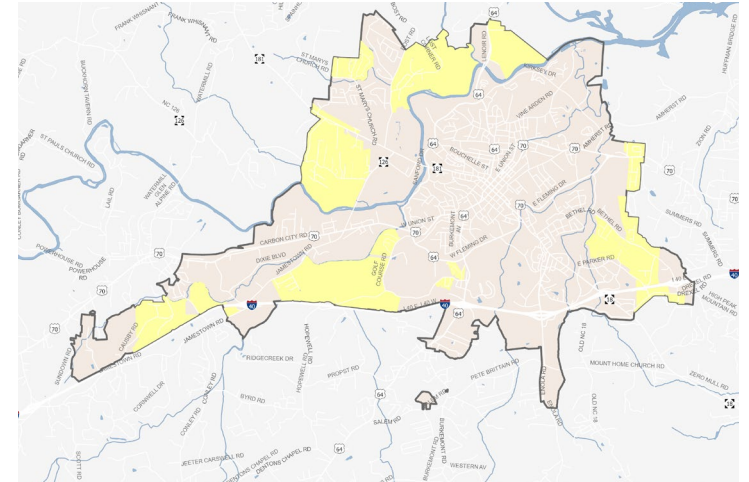
# LARGER LOT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD (LLR)

## Intent

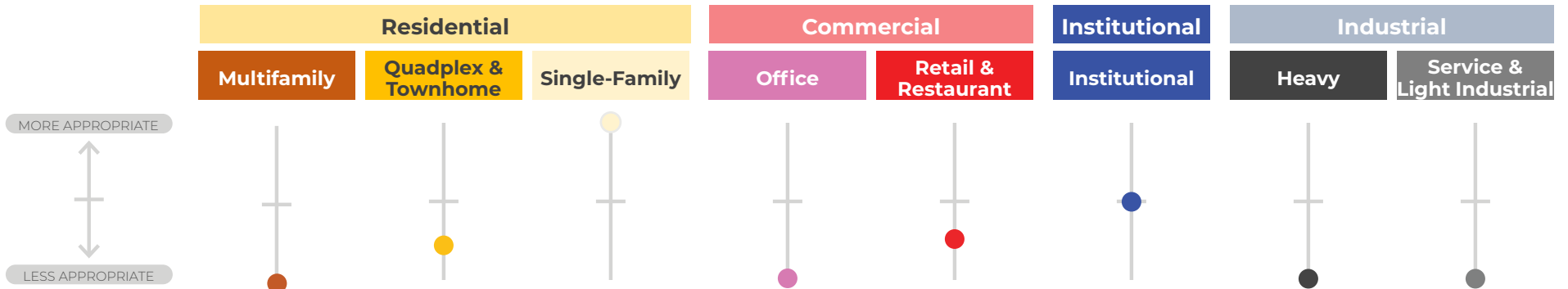
- Maintain the integrity of existing larger lot residential neighborhoods.
- Enhance existing lower-density residential areas with better connectivity to nearby community amenities.
- Encourage innovative neighborhood design that creates cohesive and connected neighborhoods while preserving natural features.

## Note

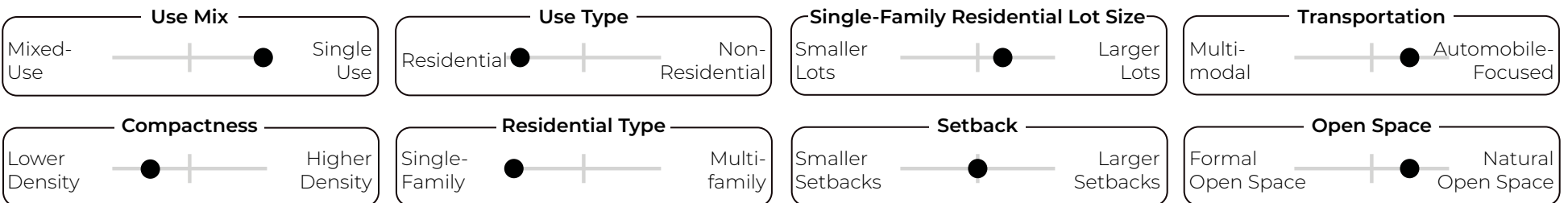
- Typically have an average lot size of greater than 0.5 acre within a neighborhood.



## Appropriate Land Uses



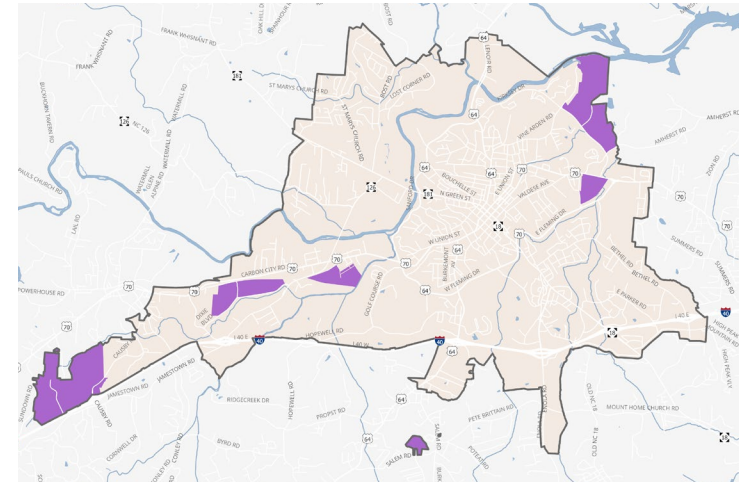
## Desired Characteristics



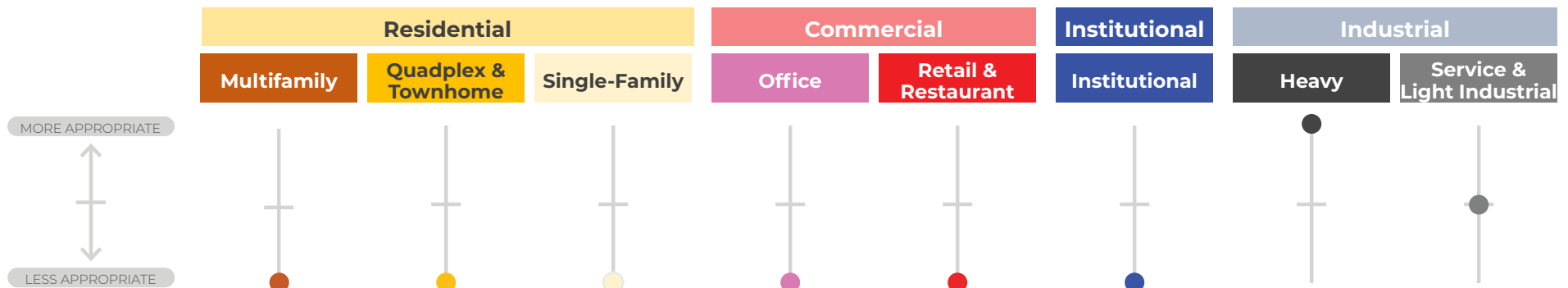
# MAJOR INDUSTRIAL (IND-M)

## Intent

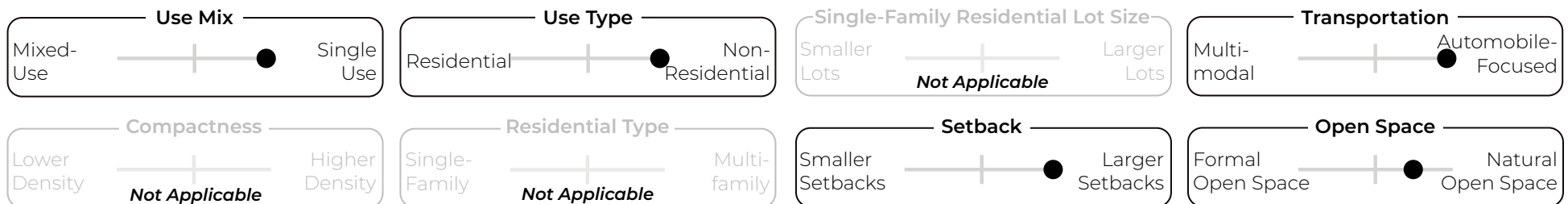
- Identify specific locations in the study area that have the appropriate infrastructure and buffers for large-scale industrial activity.
- Locate and/or buffer heavy industry uses to minimize offsite impacts to non-industrial uses to the extent possible.
- Accommodate the ingress and egress of heavy vehicles that support on-site industrial operations.
- Continue to preserve and enhance the industrial base in Morganton as employment and economic hubs of activity.



## Appropriate Land Uses



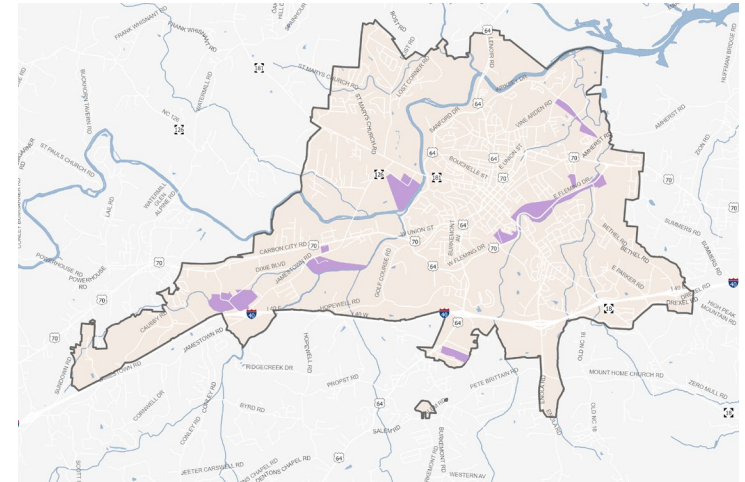
## Desired Characteristics



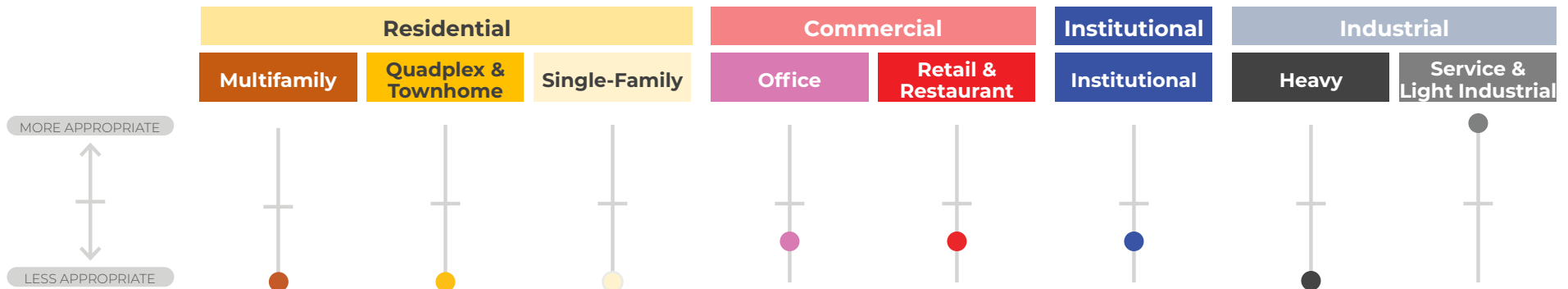
# SERVICE / INDUSTRIAL (IND-S)

## Intent

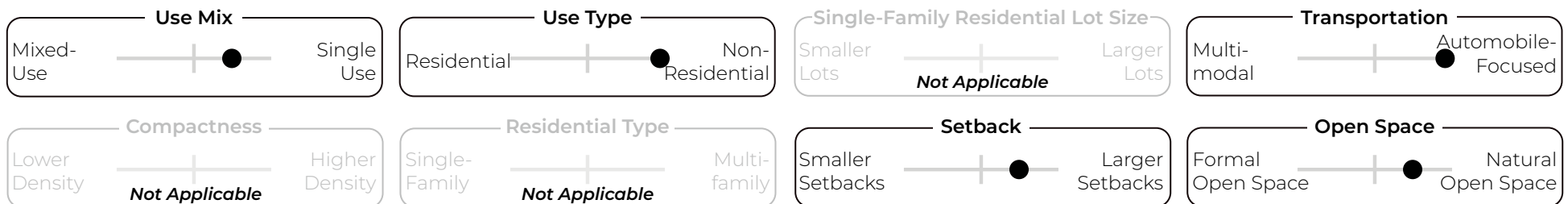
- Maintain existing light industrial activities and ensure these uses do not conflict with nearby non-industrial sites (particularly residential uses).
- Recognize the utility of existing light industrial uses that have no offsite impacts and limited heavy vehicle activity.
- Encourage location of automobile-oriented service uses and/or a limited mix of non-retail commercial and office uses (e.g., self storage, professional services/contracting).
- Provide a distinction in the design of light industrial uses with and without extensive exterior activity.



## Appropriate Land Uses



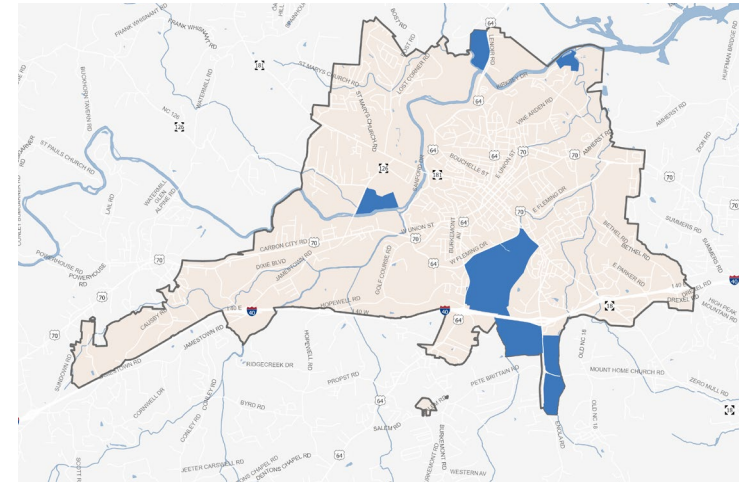
## Desired Characteristics



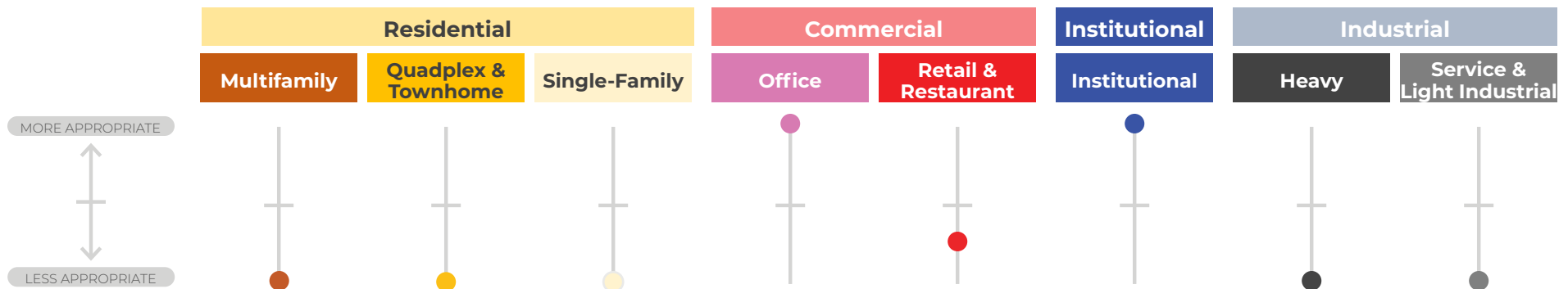
# INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS (INS)

## Intent

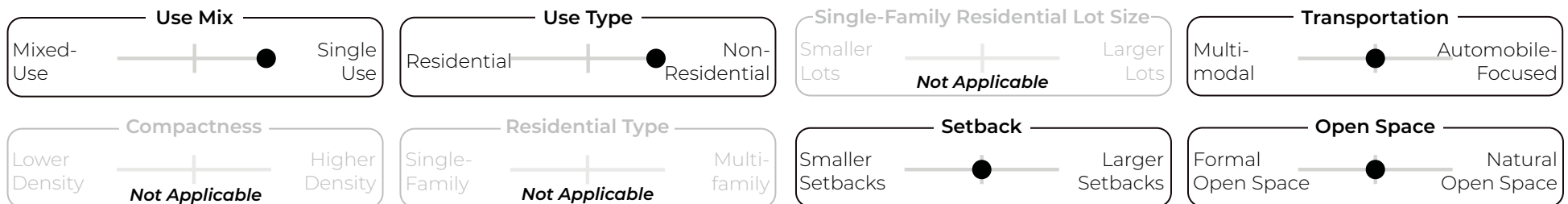
- Continue to leverage large-scale civic and institutional uses as areas well-positioned to create new job growth.
- Integrate large-scale civic and institutional uses into campus-like settings.
- Leverage educational institutions and health care partners to promote research opportunities.
- Make traveling safer and more enjoyable within and to the campuses for those on foot and on bicycle.
- Encourage partnership opportunities for state-owned properties for which the City lacks building code oversight.



## Appropriate Land Uses



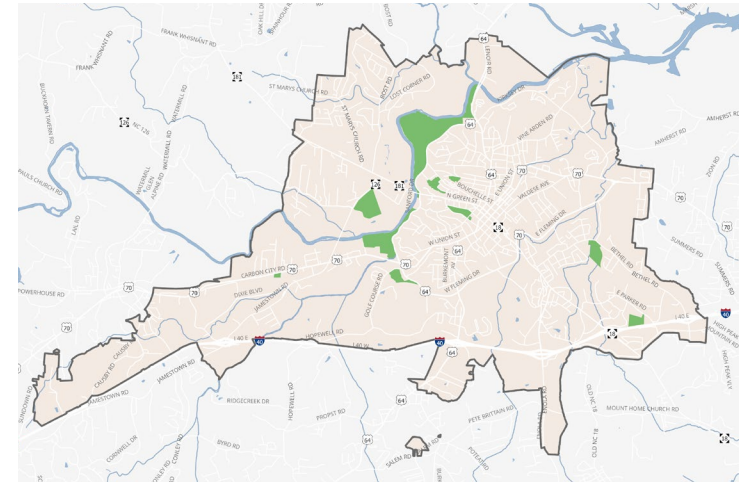
## Desired Characteristics



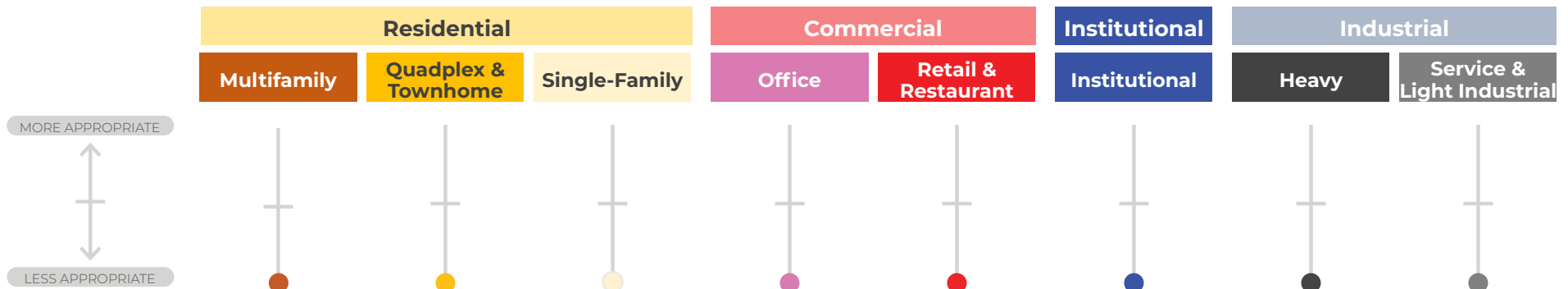
# OPEN SPACE / PARKS (OSP)

## Intent

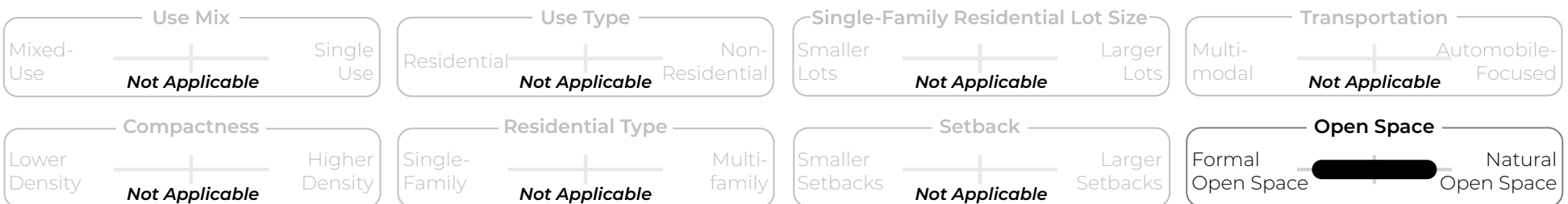
- Highlight areas set aside as publicly accessible places for active and passive recreational uses.
- Lean into the City's reputation as "Nature's Playground" by continuing to invest in the City's parks and recreation amenities.
- Promote access to, and the active use of, the river.
- Encourage the passive use of the City's natural features as one way to connect people to the City's natural environment.



## Appropriate Land Uses



## Desired Characteristics



## Future Land Use Classifications Summary Table

Each parcel within the study area is assigned a future land use classification as a general guide for future development and redevelopment decisions. In some locations, the future land use map reinforces existing land use and development patterns. In other areas, the map encourages changes to what exists today. The future land use classifications are described in detail on the pages that follow. Each classification includes a description and intent, as well as slider bars that indicate the relative appropriateness of different land uses and a variety of characteristics. The land use types are intended to be representative and not conclusive. These details are summarized in the table here.

Future Land Use Classifications		Area	
		Acres (approximate)	Percent (excludes ROW)
Downtown Core	DC	40	0.3%
Downtown Edge	DE	73	0.5%
Mixed Use	MU	1,443	10.8%
Mixed Density Residential Neighborhood	MDR	4,593	34.3%
Smaller Lot Residential Neighborhood	SLR	1,349	10.1%
Larger Lot Residential Neighborhood	LLR	3,450	25.8%
Major Industrial	IND-M	893	6.7%
Service / Industrial	IND-S	476	3.6%
Institutional Campus	INS	705	5.3%
Open Space / Parks	OSP	377	2.8%

	Characteristics							
	Use Mix	Compactness	Use Type	Residential Type	Single-Family Res. Lot Size	Setbacks	Transportation	Open Space
DC	Mixed Use	Most Dense	Leans Non-Residential	Multifamily		Smaller	Multimodal	Formal
DE	Mixed Use	Leans to More Dense	Neutral	Leans Multifamily	Smaller	Smaller	Multimodal	Formal
MU	Mixed Use	Most Dense	Neutral	Multifamily		Smaller	Multimodal	Formal
MDR	Leans to Single Use	Leans to More Dense	Leans Residential	Leans Multifamily	Smaller	Leans to Smaller	Neutral	Neutral
SLR	Leans to Single Use	Leans to More Dense	Residential	Leans Single-Family	Leans to Smaller	Leans to Smaller	Neutral	Neutral
LLR	Single Use	Leans to Less Dense	Residential	Single-Family	Leans to Larger	Neutral	Leans to Auto-Focused	Leans to Natural
IND-M	Single Use		Non-Residential			Larger	Auto-Focused	Leans to Natural
IND-S	Leans to Single Use		Non-Residential			Leans to Larger	Leans to Auto-Focused	Leans to Natural
INS	Single Use		Non-Residential			Varies	Neutral	Neutral
OSP								All

## Accommodating Future Growth

The future land use map is the City's most important tool to accommodate new growth. Through 2040, the City could attract 3,700 to 7,100 new jobs. Sufficient land is needed to support the expansion of existing companies and attract new businesses from a variety of employment sectors such as services, professional, and manufacturing. Locally, healthcare, retail and dining, and manufacturing jobs are projected to show the strongest growth through 2040, driving demand for new and reimagined space to accommodate these users in the community.

- **Commercial Space.** Morganton could add 2,000 to 4,000 new retail and office jobs through 2040. The future land use map can accommodate these uses with a mix of intensities, heights, and character. More than 400 acres of undeveloped land is available across the Downtown Core, Downtown Edge, Mixed-Use, and Institutional Campus classifications, which, based on typical building patterns and employee space needs, is more than sufficient to accommodate a wide range of commercial growth through the horizon of the plan.
- **Industrial Space.** Morganton could add 500 to 1,000 new jobs that require industrial spaces. Based on typical space needs and development patterns, this could result in up to 185 acres of land to accommodate new industrial growth. The future land use map has more 400 acres of undeveloped land classified as Major Industrial or Service/Industrial, more than twice the planning horizon need. The excess acreage affords the City flexibility, allows it to account for environmental and development constraints, and gives it the ability to attract large-scale economic anchors.

More detail on the implications of housing and economic development can be found in Section 5 (Policy Framework).

## ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

### Advisory Committee Meeting #4

At their fourth meeting on April 10, 2024, Advisory Committee members reviewed the draft future land use map and classifications to offer feedback on how the map was designed and communicated. Feedback received helped reshape the residential classifications and refine how the land use strategy was communicated.



## Options for the Future Workshops and Online Survey

The draft future land use map and classifications were presented at two public workshops in April 2024 and made available online for public comment. Edits were made to the map and classifications based on input received.

*How well does the future land use map support the vision and planning principles?*

**1** Not Well

**8.18**

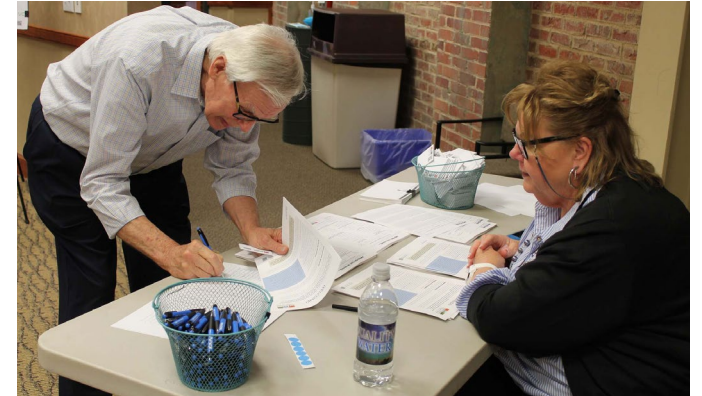
Very Well **10**

### *What do you like?*

- Provides more opportunities for housing and spreads housing throughout the study area
- Clarifies future land uses and defines areas of opportunity
- Maintains the integrity of our natural resources
- Creates opportunity for transportation hubs and supports other modes of transportation
- Balances history and character while encouraging growth
- Allows flexibility based on need, resources, and community preferences

### *What would you change?*

- Consider more ways to preserve historic homes and buildings
- Give more thought to how uses transition near downtown
- Preserve creeks as open space and community amenities
- Emphasize the future need for open spaces and parks
- Simplify how the map is communicated
- Show the future market potential for commercial uses



# Section 5 POLICY FRAMEWORK

**IMAGINE MORGANTON 2040**



IMAGINE Morganton 2040 describes the City's approach to growth, development, and investment through the year 2040 and beyond. From the start of the process, it was the City's intention to create a guide that coordinates the efforts of city staff, city leadership, community members, and stakeholders that share in the responsibility of fostering positive change. Outlining strategies and supportive actions is an important final step in the IMAGINE Morganton 2040 process. This effort begins with a policy framework organized around the eight planning principles.

<b>GROW</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a proactive approach toward future growth.
<b>THRIVE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a resilient local economy.
<b>LIVE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a range of housing choices.
<b>ACTIVATE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a vibrant and active downtown.
<b>EMBRACE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a distinctive and welcoming city.
<b>MOVE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a safe and balanced transportation network.
<b>PRESERVE</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a built environment in harmony with Nature's Playground.
<b>PLAN</b>	<b>IMAGINE</b> a foundation of informed decision-making.

The actions presented in each framework element carry forward to the implementation matrix in Section 6.

## GROW

**IMAGINE** a proactive approach toward future growth.

*This framework element takes a thoughtful approach to the organization of land use. It describes where and how the City wants to GROW through the year 2040 and beyond. This framework plan relies on the future land use map, which is the most tangible outcome of **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** in support of the stated vision. As described in the future land use strategy, the future land use map expresses the suggested land use and desired character through 11 future land use classifications.*

### Strategies and Actions

**Strategy GROW 1. Maintain and reference IMAGINE Morganton 2040 as a guide for land use decisions.**

**GROW 1.1** – Use the future land use strategies, policy framework, and other adopted planning documents when making zoning and permit approval decisions and creating future City plans.

**GROW 1.2** – Review the Plan every 3 to 5 years to consider incremental changes that align with City's goals and ensure the Plan remains reasonably maintained.

**GROW 1.3** – Continue to engage the community regarding the Plan and retain comments received as input for future updates.

**Strategy GROW 2. Align the City's land development regulations with the vision of IMAGINE Morganton 2040.**

**GROW 2.1** – Update, modernize, and consolidate the City's zoning and subdivision ordinance to codify the future land use map.

# THRIVE

**IMAGINE** a resilient local economy.

*This framework element identifies priority economic development opportunities in Morganton so the City can better support existing businesses and employees, incubate entrepreneurial initiatives, and leverage its institutional anchors to be a world-class leader in innovation.*

## THRIVE Vision Map

The THRIVE vision map calls attention to Morganton's economic opportunity areas—both existing and those that could emerge in the future—based on the conceptual growth strategy and future land use map.

### Downtown Reinvestment

Better position Downtown Morganton as a destination and economic engine for the City and region with a mixture of uses and higher density residential development.

### Mixed Use Opportunity

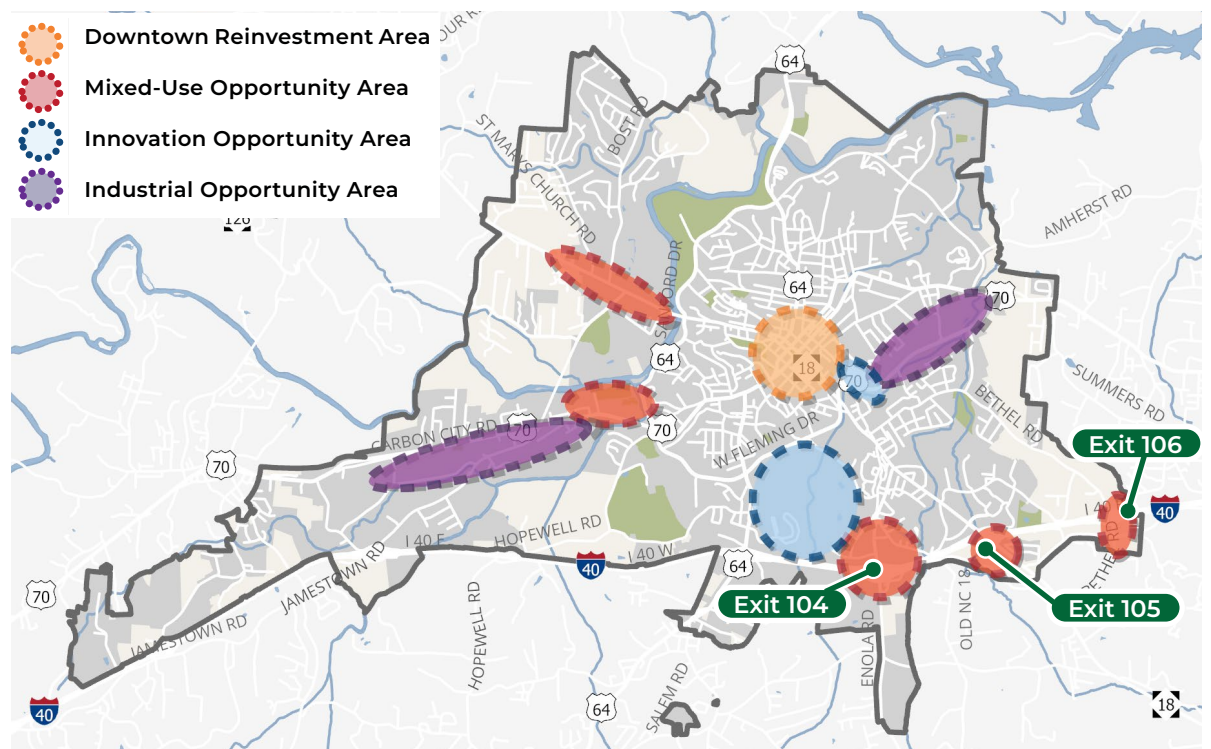
Create new areas to live, work, and play through reimagining aging commercial centers, primarily at the gateways, and findings smaller scale opportunities for integrating land uses.

### Innovation Opportunity

Foster innovation and creativity to diversify the local and regional economy by leveraging the City's institutional anchors and creating a dynamic live-work-play environment.

### Industrial/Flex Opportunity

Support existing businesses and encourage incubation for future employers to support a diverse job base while providing flexibility to pivot as the market changes and industrial needs evolve over time.



## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy THRIVE 1. Be intentional about promoting existing economic assets and investing in new assets.

**THRIVE 1.1** – Create a citywide economic development strategic plan to refine the City's economic development focus and prioritize opportunities for internal and external alignment.

**THRIVE 1.2** – Align the City's new economic development strategic plan with other City plans (current and future) and update regularly.

**THRIVE 1.3** – Create print and digital material packages for interested potential investors that provide localized market data, communicate a clear economic development vision, and showcase opportunity sites and unique community anchors.

### Strategy THRIVE 2. Update zoning ordinance to allow for flexibility as the market changes.

**THRIVE 2.1** – Consistently review the zoning ordinance to ensure flexibility in allowable uses in the industrial and service classifications, as well as the mixed-use nodes. *As the market evolves, older industrial/ service areas may begin to transition as companies seek modern buildings or different floorplans. The goal is to preserve areas that are supporting current and future economic development users, while allowing areas that are underperforming to transition to meet other community goals.*

**THRIVE 2.2** – Track the viability of the Burke County Megasite at I-40/ Dysartsville Road and refine the land use strategy as needs (e.g., housing, services, and sites for supporting industries and commercial uses) are identified.



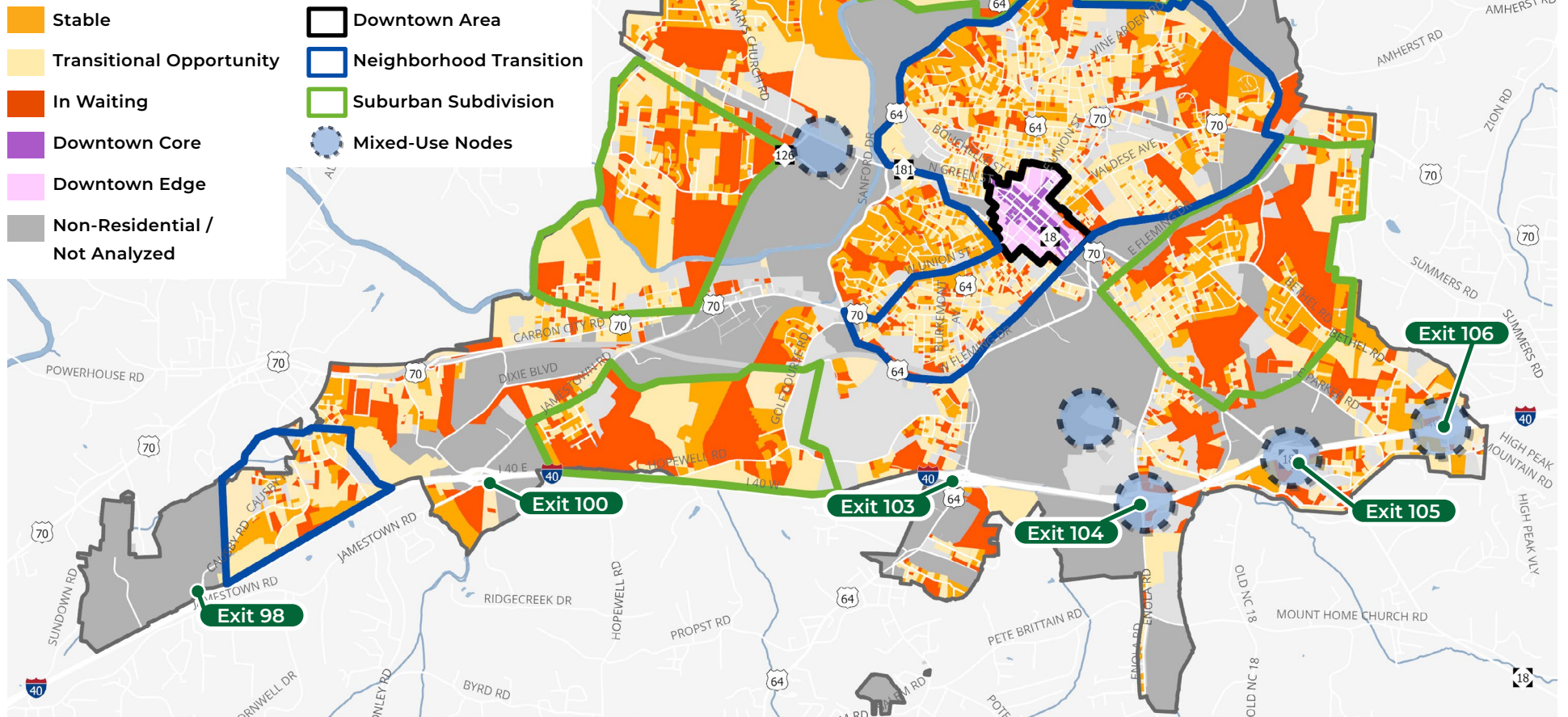
**LIVE**

**IMAGINE** a range of housing choices.

*This framework element supports the creation of a range of housing types that appeal to various income levels and ages while providing safe and connected neighborhoods with unique identities. It is the intent of the City to preserve existing stable neighborhoods, stabilize and enhance neighborhoods in transition, and restore neighborhoods in decline.*

### LIVE Vision Map

The LIVE vision map demonstrates the likelihood of existing residential neighborhoods to accommodate new growth and shows areas that could help increase and diversify the housing supply in Morganton.



The LIVE vision map takes a data-driven approach to place residential areas into three categories: stable, transition opportunity, and in waiting. With few large tracts of developable land, Morganton will have to focus on redevelopment and infill opportunities to increase housing supply. Strategies will have to look beyond properties identified as “in waiting” and include neighborhoods with concentrations of properties that are “transitional.”

Characteristics	Stable	Transitional Opportunity	In Waiting
Housing Age	Built 1990 or after	Built before 1990	n/a
Housing Value	Greater than \$200,000	Less than \$200,000	n/a
Development Status	Developed	Underdeveloped	Undeveloped

The LIVE vision map also communicates areas that have similar attributes to support an increase in housing supply. While opportunities will occur outside the identified areas, the identified areas represent initial locations of focus to increase supply.

**Urban Infill**

Focusing primarily on higher-density multifamily developments that include adaptive reuse of existing buildings and infill opportunities on properties that are undeveloped or underdeveloped. Urban infill areas focus on the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge as shown on the future land use map.

**Neighborhood Transition**

Encouraging the addition of new housing supply through smaller, incremental developments with new units coming through redevelopment of obsolete or dilapidated housing stock or infill projects on underutilized or undeveloped lots. The inclusion of accessory dwelling units in these areas should also be explored.

**Mixed-Use Nodes**

Creating higher-density housing within mixed-use developments as a way to maximize land capacity and support economic development initiatives. Developments could be vertically integrated, with housing above commercial uses, or represent a mixture of uses within proximity to each other.

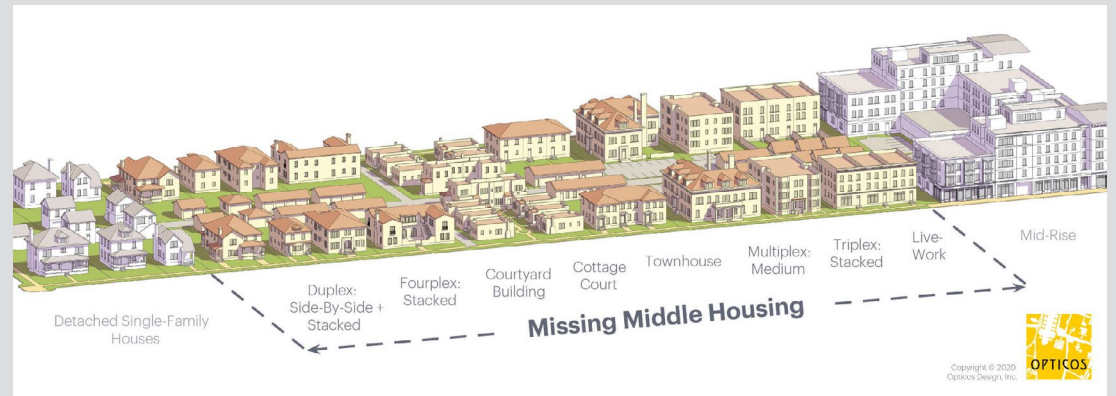
**Suburban Subdivision**

Supporting new single-family detached homes in areas that have higher concentrations of larger, vacant parcels by developing a mix of smaller lot and larger lot residential projects. Note that some of these areas will require the expansion of utilities or other public services to make the development of these parcels viable.

## The “Missing Middle”

**Missing Middle Housing**, a term coined by Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design, refers to multifamily housing types that fall between single-family homes and large apartment buildings and are compatible with single-family homes. While typically part of historic neighborhood development, Missing Middle Housing is far less common today, despite increasing demand from younger and older age groups. Most of the housing stock—both locally and in the United States—is a conventional neighborhood of single-family homes. This concentration of one product type contributes to a worsening shortage of other types of units across the nation. The density and location of neighborhoods near Downtown Morganton can play an important role in creating new housing supply and meeting the needs of residents wanting to live in a walkable neighborhood with a range of price points.

As described in the examples here, Missing Middle Housing can take different forms and complement existing neighborhood character rather than detract from it. These forms may include townhouses, duplexes, quadplexes, or small-scale multifamily projects. These product types, which can more easily be part of an infill strategy, enable residents who want to live in a walkable community to do so at a budget that best meets their needs. Nationally, more consumers are opting for smaller homes in a walkable environment over larger units that require longer commutes and more personal vehicle trips. Morganton has taken a progressive approach to addressing Missing Middle by allowing accessory dwelling units in all residential areas, which the City should continue to promote.



## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy LIVE 1. Maintain an adequate supply of housing that varies in age and style.

**LIVE 1.1** – Analyze development standards for single-family, multifamily, and mixed-use zoning districts to ensure the standards are not prohibitive to new development and redevelopment.

**LIVE 1.2** – Examine required lot sizes, setbacks, and height restrictions. *Flexibility in such requirements may allow a greater number of dwelling units and/or increase in types of housing stock provided (including multifamily developments) and may help decrease the number of undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels.*

**LIVE 1.3** – Continue to allow accessory dwelling units in all residential zones and review size requirements and other standards.

### Strategy LIVE 2. Promote a range of housing options.

**LIVE 2.1** – Consider policies that promote neighborhood stabilization while increasing the overall supply, including advocating for Missing Middle Housing options as infill into existing neighborhoods and encouraging accessory dwelling units. *A range of housing options in Morganton would help ensure current and future residents have options that reflect different preferences and economic circumstances throughout the City, now and in the future.*

**LIVE 2.2** – Evaluate changes to the density table to encourage more housing (e.g., townhomes, duplexes, and quadplexes) within single-family residential zoning districts. *Special considerations also may be given to such developments through innovative development regulations and additional compatibility requirements.*

**LIVE 2.3** – Consider a range of creative tools that can help address affordability (e.g., density bonuses, land banking, rehabilitation grants, etc.).

### Strategy LIVE 3. Support, stabilize, and protect existing neighborhoods.

**LIVE 3.1** – Identify opportunities for new infill development.

**LIVE 3.2** – Support code enforcement to act on nuisance cases that could impact the overall health of a neighborhood.



## ACTIVATE **IMAGINE** a vibrant and active downtown.

*This framework element reinforces the long-stated goal of continuing to make downtown Morganton a welcoming place to live and invest. The City recognizes the need to mix businesses, residences, open spaces, entertainment areas, and a family-friendly atmosphere that makes Downtown a destination of choice throughout the week and into the evening.*

### Strategies and Actions

#### **Strategy ACTIVATE 1. Continue to facilitate Downtown growth and development.**

**ACTIVATE 1.1** – Reprioritize the implementation matrix from the Downtown Vision Plan to advance the area toward the community-identified goals.

**ACTIVATE 1.2** – Review the zoning ordinance to ensure that both residential and non-residential uses are appropriate for the Downtown fabric and are financially viable to attract private investment.

**ACTIVATE 1.3** – Develop a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. *The Streetscape Master Plan should identify specific streetscape and right-of-way improvements and focus on urban tree canopy and walkable streets to encourage longer visits. It also should include renderings of proposed improvements to better visualize the outcomes, cost estimates for identified improvements, elements that promote active street frontage, and an action plan that prioritizes the timing of improvements.*

**ACTIVATE 1.4** – Conduct a full update to the Downtown Vision Plan.

**ACTIVATE 1.5** – Create and communicate a clear market position for Downtown that describes Downtown as an activity center for Morganton residents, a destination for visitors, and a place for new investment and business.

#### **Strategy ACTIVATE 2. Encourage context appropriate development that increases the viability of Downtown.**

**ACTIVATE 2.1** – Continue to promote a diverse portfolio of housing in the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge areas designated on the Future Land Use Map, particularly housing that appeals to young professionals and retirees. *The continued growth of Downtown activity and investment will depend in part on the accessibility of housing within and adjacent to the Downtown area.*

**ACTIVATE 2.2** – Refine and communicate available development incentives (local, regional, and state) that may be employed to attract new investment.

**ACTIVATE 2.3** – Use supportive policies to make a distinction between the design expectations for the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge as described in the future land use strategy.

**ACTIVATE 2.4** – Encourage more and more-varied uses of renovated historic Courthouse Square.

**ACTIVATE 2.5** – Review the zoning ordinance to protect the existing fabric in the Downtown Core while allowing housing to be added. *This effort should describe when and how uses are integrated into one project, protect the historic core, and preserve nearby single-family neighborhoods.*

**ACTIVATE 2.6** – Consider a local historic district designation with appropriate regulatory protections for the National Downtown Historic District area.

# EMBRACE **IMAGINE** a distinctive and welcoming city.

This framework element encourages the City to be intentional about the design of its streets, buildings, and open spaces. The intent is to find ways to capture a spirit that is uniquely Morganton through urban design and community events while leaning into the City's history, heritage, and cultural diversity.

## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy EMBRACE 1. Improve the appearance of public and private property throughout Morganton with a focus on gateways.

**EMBRACE 1.1** – Focus public investment on beautifying new streetscapes, signs, and wayfinding from identified gateways into the heart of Morganton and upkeep and protection of the same existing features.

**EMBRACE 1.2** – Review the City's zoning ordinance to ensure that future gateway development projects fit into the community aesthetics and play a meaningful role in their gateway location.

**EMBRACE 1.3** – Increase the use of public art to improve the aesthetics of the City, including murals, sculptures, and interactive art.

**EMBRACE 1.4** – Set an example by upgrading the City's facilities and parking lots to meet or exceed current ordinance regulations.

### Strategy EMBRACE 2. Preserve and promote Morganton's historic resources and community character.

**EMBRACE 2.1** – Leverage local arts and cultural resources to connect Morganton's longtime residents and newcomers. *The City should continue to program, host, and grow festivals and events in Downtown and throughout Morganton. This effort could include partnerships with private and non-profit entities to explore new locations for events, including events for specific cultures, countries of origin, or ethnic groups.*

**EMBRACE 2.2** – Evaluate options for zoning changes that protect and enhance historic sites and places of cultural significance.

**EMBRACE 2.3** – Explore new ways to use and promote statewide historic preservation resources such as the North Carolina Main Street Program, Preservation North Carolina, and Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies.

**EMBRACE 2.4** – Seek ways to preserve and celebrate the Jonesboro Historic District and Morganton's minority neighborhoods.



# MOVE

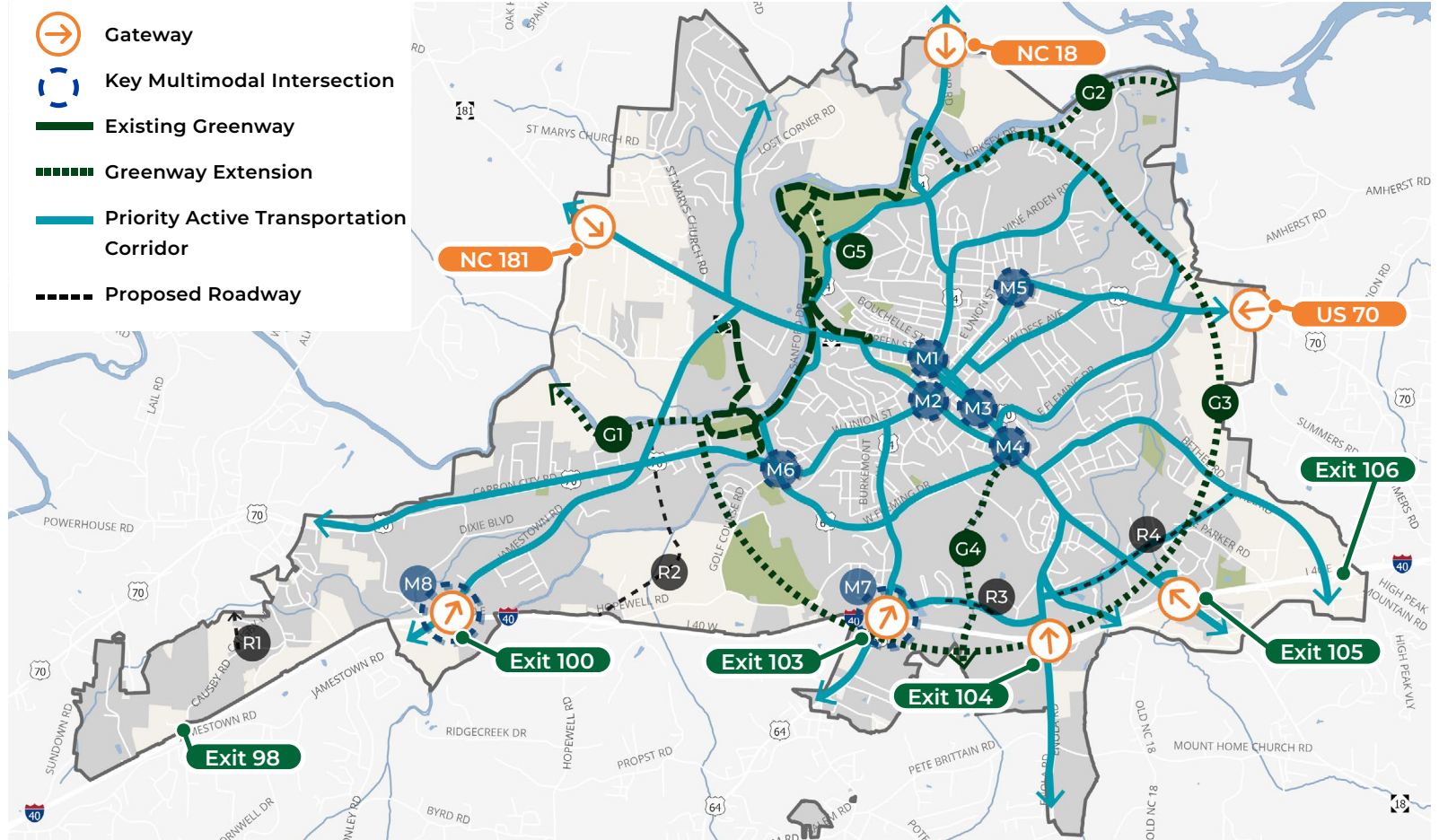
**IMAGINE** a safe and balanced transportation network.

This framework element offers design guidance and policy options to promote a more connected transportation system with safer and more enjoyable ways for people to travel on foot, on bicycle, by transit, or by personal vehicle. The MOVE framework features a vision map that highlights ways to create a safe and balanced transportation network in Morganton.

## MOVE Vision Map

The MOVE vision map shows Morganton's future transportation network by featuring gateways into Morganton, visionary projects, active transportation corridors, key intersections with identified improvements, and planned/proposed new roadways.

The map is informed closely by previous plans such as the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Transportation Plan/ Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the Downtown Vision Plan, as well as the opportunity corridors, gateways, and future land use classifications identified in the **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** process.



### Greenway Extensions

- G1 Catawba River Greenway Ext
- G2 Catawba River Greenway Ext
- G3 Emerald Necklace Greenway
- G4 Hunting Creek Greenway
- G5 Sanford-Catawba Meadows Connection

### Key Multimodal Intersections

- M1 Green St/Sterling St (North)
- M2 Meeting St/Union St (West)
- M3 Green St/Sterling St (South)
- M4 Fleming Dr/Sterling St/College St

- M5 Meeting St/Union St (East)
- M6 Union St/Fleming Dr
- M7 I-40 Exit 103
- M8 I-40 Exit 100

### Proposed Roadways

- R1 Causby-Main Connector
- R2 Western Connector
- R3 Southern Connector
- R4 Eastern Connector

## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy MOVE 1. Align policy with the vision for transportation in Morganton.

**MOVE 1.1** – Update the City’s corridor overlay to be consistent with MOVE vision map. *Changes to the corridor overlay should incorporate the identification of active transportation corridors, gateways, and key intersections identified for improvement. Furthermore, the City’s zoning ordinance should consider additional provisions for mobility, particularly around mixed-use and higher-density areas.*

**MOVE 1.2** – Use the street design priority matrix (as shown on the pages that follow) to inform the design and redesign of street segments. *Objectives should be to: 1) Promote increased safety, walkability, and bikeability with narrower lanes, wider sidewalks, and connected bike facilities; 2) Create safer access to parks and schools; 3) Preserve the character of and avoid overbuilding roads; and 4) Make best use of street rights-of-way; and 5) Ensure industrial areas have the roadway infrastructure they need to accommodate freight traffic.*

**MOVE 1.3** – Promote greenways as commuter corridors, not just for recreation. *Morganton is well known as “Nature’s Playground”. As such, the City has the opportunity to promote premier existing and planned greenway facilities as transportation corridors to use for daily travel and recreation. These greenway corridors are an asset to the City, and taking advantage of this asset more frequently creates a safer, healthier, and more economically vibrant Morganton.*

### Strategy MOVE 2. Conduct advanced planning for the multimodal needs of Morganton.

**MOVE 2.1** – Develop a strategic mobility plan (SMP) to advance the shared vision for how people and goods should move around Morganton. *The SMP would be a central repository for all individual modal plans, including roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways/trails. Identifying all of these future networks under the scope of one plan creates a singular vision for the City. A dedicated mobility plan for the City should focus on the identification of four critical elements: 1) Current mobility conditions and needs; 2) Projects that make up the desired future transportation network; 3) Policies and programs that support the mobility vision; and 4) Prioritization to guide decision making about what to do first.*

**MOVE 2.2** – Apply for grant funding (e.g., the Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Program administered by NCDOT) to create a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. *As part of this more detailed planning process, the MOVE Vision Map presented here and multimodal recommendations from other local and regional plans should be reevaluated.*

**MOVE 2.3** – Apply for funding through Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) or other grant programs to develop a High-Injury Network and Safety Action Plan. *Transportation safety was consistently cited as an important consideration, especially when protecting vulnerable road users. A safety action plan would identify roads and intersections of high safety concern, recommend projects to address those concerns, and prioritize the implementation of those projects.*

**MOVE 2.4** – Support countywide and regional transportation plans and initiatives. *Alignment with larger regional plans will better position Morganton to make progress toward its local transportation vision. This coordination would make the City more competitive for grant and funding opportunities and ensure that Morganton’s vision for transportation is consistent with partner municipalities and agencies around the region.*

## Street Design Priority Matrix

Street designs include a series of tradeoffs. The street design priority matrix helps establish priorities for tradeoffs that come with a limited right-of-way. Based on the land use context and classification of a street, the City can use the matrix to identify ideal design elements and key priorities for a variety of characteristics, from lane widths and speeds to multimodal accommodations and access management. These charts guide the planning and design of new roadways as well as improvements to existing roads. Items identified as high priority should be emphasized and prioritized throughout the design process.

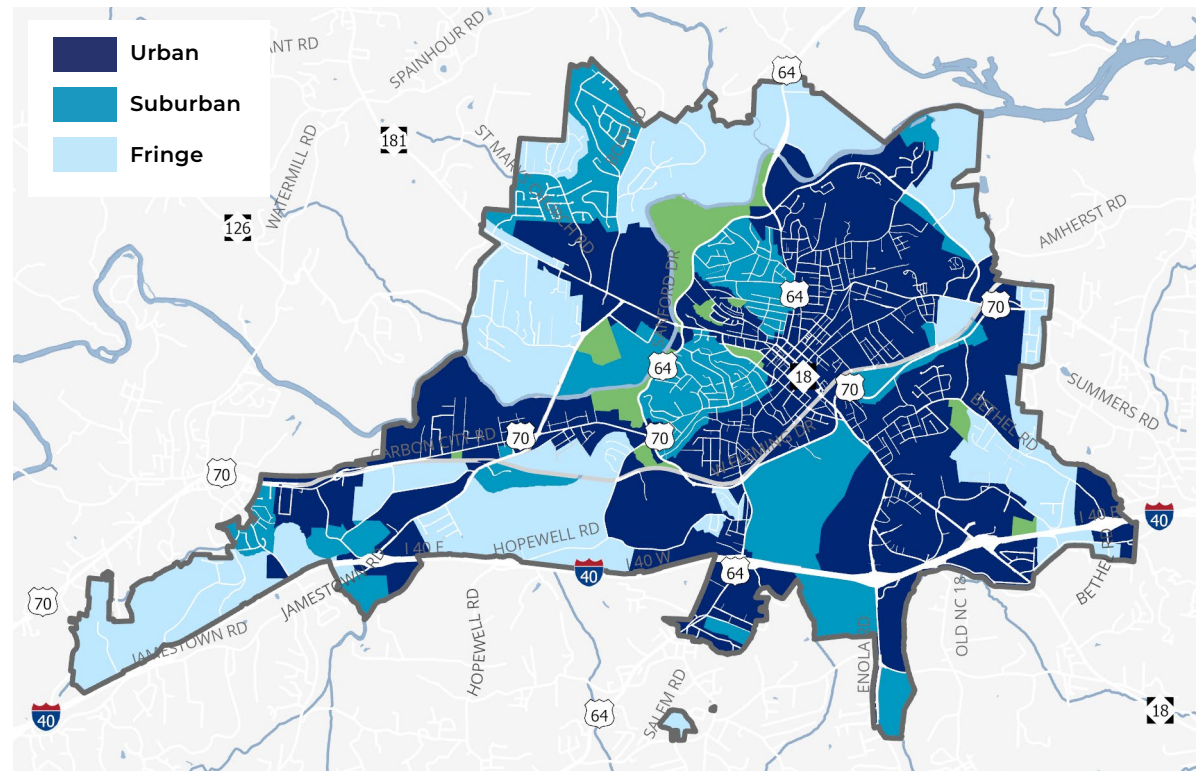
### Land Use Categories

To create the street design priority matrix, the future land use classifications were rolled up into three broader categories of Urban, Suburban, and Edge. Each of these three categories comes with different expectations, needs, and preferred conditions for their street and roadway designs.

Urban	Suburban	Fringe
Downtown Core	Smaller Lot Residential Neighborhood	Larger Lot Residential Neighborhood
Downtown Edge	Institutional Campus	Major Industrial
Mixed Use	Service / Industrial	
Mixed Density Residential Neighborhood		

### Functional Classification

The functional classification system is used to designate characteristics of the roadways into general hierarchies that describe the relationship between mobility and accessibility. Understanding the various roles that roadways play is crucial when considering transportation recommendations as the recommendations should enhance land use designations and mobility throughout the study area.



## Street Design Priority Matrix

	Boulevard			Major Thoroughfare			Minor Thoroughfare			Local		
	Urban	Suburban	Fringe	Urban	Suburban	Fringe	Urban	Suburban	Fringe	Urban	Suburban	Fringe
<b>Travel Way</b>												
Number of Through Lanes (total)	4 lanes	4 lanes or more	4 lanes or more	2 to 4 Lanes	2 to 4 Lanes	2 to 4 Lanes	2 Lanes	2 to 4 Lanes	2 Lanes	2 Lanes	2 Lanes	2 Lanes
Width of Travel Lanes (ft)	11' to 12'	11' to 12'	12'	10' to 12'	11' to 12'	11' to 12'	10' to 12'	10' to 12'	10' to 12'	9' to 11'	9' to 11'	9' to 11'
Speed Limit (mph)	35 mph	35-45 mph	35-45 mph	25-35 mph	25-35 mph	25-35 mph	25-35 mph	25-35 mph	25-35 mph	20 mph or less	25 mph or less	25 mph or less
Design for Larger Vehicles	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Multimodal Intersection Design	High	High	Low	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Vehicle Throughput at Intersections	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
On-Street Parking	None	None	None	Low	Low	None	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium
<b>Pedestrian Zone</b>												
Landscaping/Street Trees	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Buffer Zone	High	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Street Furniture/Bike Racks <sup>1</sup>	Low	Low	None	High	Medium	None	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low
Standard Sidewalks	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High
Wide Sidewalks	High	High	Low	High	High	Low	High	High	Low	High	High	Low
Public Art	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	None	None
<b>Other</b>												
Access Management	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Medians	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Bicycle Accommodation	Medium	Low	Low	High	Medium <sup>2</sup>	Medium	High	High	Medium	Low <sup>3</sup>	Low	Low
Transit Accommodation	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low

1. In Suburban and Fringe areas, street furniture and bike racks are less likely to be within the street right-of-way and are often on properties these features would serve. A rating of low priority does not mean that off-street/on-site bike racks would not be encouraged.
2. Major suburban thoroughfares can be less comfortable corridors unless dedicated buffered or protected infrastructure is provided. Bicycle accommodations along major thoroughfares are high priority when alternative routes along calmer minor thoroughfares cannot be reasonably provided.
3. Bikes can share local roads if those roads are designed for low enough speeds and have sufficient traffic calming features.

# **PRESERVE** **IMAGINE** a built environment in harmony with Nature's Playground.

*This framework element takes an active approach toward more resilient and sustainable growth. It also emphasizes ways to preserve Morganton's natural systems while enhancing access to leveraging the economic interests of what makes the City "Nature's Playground".*

## Strategies and Actions

### **Strategy PRESERVE 1. Conserve and Protect Morganton's natural resources and scenic places.**

**PRESERVE 1.1** – Encourage the use of low-impact development (LID) and green building practices in public and private projects and include interpretive signs to increase community awareness. *Low-impact development minimizes the negative environmental consequences of growth. The term refers to stormwater management systems that mimic natural processes to preserve water quality and benefit habitats. This approach to development or redevelopment limits runoff and the spread of pollutants by managing stormwater as close to its source as possible. Specific methods include bioretention facilities, rain gardens, green/vegetated rooftops, rain barrels, and permeable pavement.*

**PRESERVE 1.2** – Update the zoning and subdivision ordinances to conserve, protect, and promote the natural environment through requirements for landscaping and recreation spaces.

**PRESERVE 1.3** – Encourage preservation of healthy trees in appropriate locations, especially in steep slopes, floodplains, buffers, and streetscapes.

**PRESERVE 1.4** – Require the use of native plants, non-invasive species, and xeriscaping (irrigation-free methods) for landscaping, where possible.

**PRESERVE 1.5** – Protect existing trees and promote the planting of new trees Downtown and throughout the City through development regulations and community programs, and consider engaging an arborist as needed to maintain the urban forest. *The North Carolina Forest Service defines urban forestry as the management of the planting, maintenance, and protection of tree populations in urban settings to enhance the ecosystem and economic services trees provide to the community. The City should embrace, preserve, and enhance its urban forest as a contributing foundation of Nature's Playground.*

**PRESERVE 1.6** – Partner with NCDOT to fund green street design that minimizes the demand on stormwater infrastructure.

**PRESERVE 1.7** – Encourage households to reduce energy and water use, through actions such as recycling, composting, planting home gardens, and/or rain gardens.

## Resiliency and Sustainability

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** considers both resiliency and sustainability while recognizing the important role each ideal plays in the unique quality of life for residents and the health of the City's economy. Growth can and should support the health and healing of the City's natural resources while improving the livelihood of the people that call Morganton home. In the context of the Comprehensive Plan:

**Resiliency** refers to the ability of the City's complex systems to prepare for unforeseen environmental, economic, or cultural changes.

**Sustainability** refers to how the needs of the current Morganton residents can be met without compromising that ability for future generations.

**Strategy PRESERVE 2. Continue to emphasize recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.**

**PRESERVE 2.1** – Continue to review and revise the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**PRESERVE 2.2** – Seek additional ways to provide for the recreation needs of Morganton’s younger population (including young children, teenagers, and young adults) and senior citizens.

**PRESERVE 2.3** – Support the active use of the Catawba River, especially at the locations identified on the Conceptual Growth Strategy. *The activation of the river was mentioned throughout the development of the comprehensive plan as a foundational way to embrace the City’s identification as Nature’s Playground. This action seeks ways for people to actively use the river.*



**Strategy PRESERVE 3. Leverage the City's image as Nature's Playground with recreation-based economic drivers.**

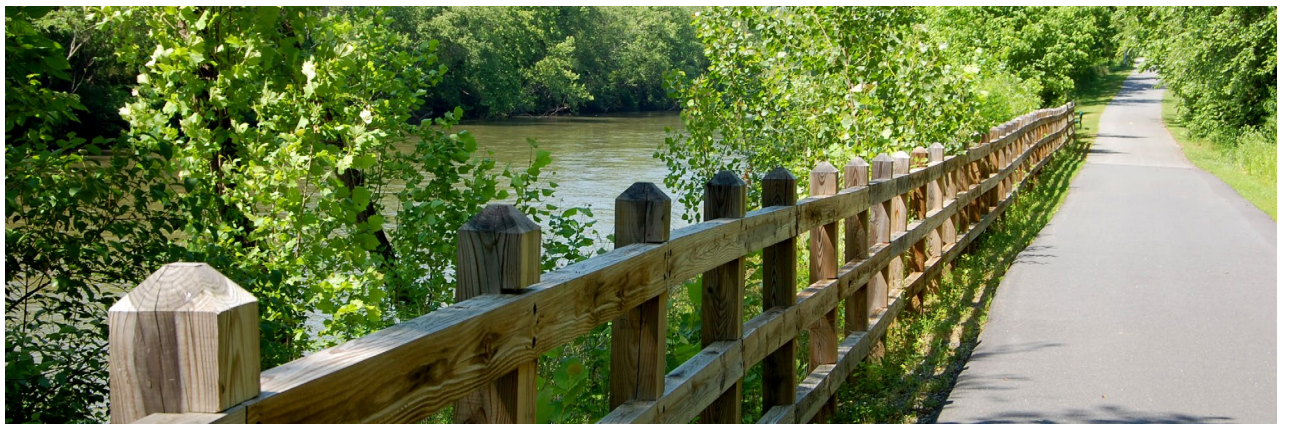
**PRESERVE 3.1** – Promote land use and development activities that balance economic development goals and housing needs to minimize sprawl and preserve Morganton's natural resources, including water quality and wildlife habitat.

**PRESERVE 3.2** – Create a network of trails, sidewalks, and bikeways to promote active living, environmental stewardship, and economic activity in accordance with the actions outlined in the MOVE framework element.

**PRESERVE 3.3** – Support and recruit indoor and outdoor recreation activities and businesses through zoning and other programs.

**PRESERVE 3.4** – Create smaller parks closer to all residents and connected by a greenway loop around the City.

**PRESERVE 3.5** – Explore opportunities for grants and other means to resuse existing buidlidngs to supplement improvements to building design, parking, and landscaping.



# PLAN

# IMAGINE a foundation of informed decision-making.

*This framework element seeks ways to help the City make wise development decisions, particularly by ensuring that the long-term financial impact of growth is a factor in the incremental choices made by the City. This effort comes with the acknowledgment that the safety and well-being of Morganton residents is an important consideration in maintaining a strong financial position for the City.*

## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy PLAN 1. Make the provision of adequate public facilities a factor when making decisions about development and redevelopment.

**PLAN 1.1** – Consider adequate infrastructure, public services, and community facilities when making decisions about development and redevelopment. *The City should prioritize infrastructure investments that promote development patterns as described in the future land use map. This includes actions such as directing multifamily residential and non-residential uses to locations with adequate water and sewer services and a sufficient street system or locations where developers can reasonably pay for extensions to or improvements of such infrastructure.*

**PLAN 1.2** – Create a blend of funding mechanisms (e.g., local, state, non-profit, private development) to construct infrastructure that supports existing and preferred development.

**PLAN 1.3** – Continue to leverage the City’s availability of high-speed internet as a market distinction when in comparison to competing cities.

**PLAN 1.4** – Identify a threshold upon which City departments would review and quantify the impact of new development or redevelopment on the services each provides.

**PLAN 1.5** – Develop asset inventories and asset management plans for all city utilities and street features.

**PLAN 1.6** – Utilize the asset management plans to develop project summaries and cost estimates for key projects that are ready when grant opportunities arise.

## Infrastructure Service Tiers

The PLAN framework element features infrastructure service tiers to emphasize the need to make growth decisions more predictable and fiscally responsible. IMAGINE Morganton 2040 asserts the need to account for how the timing and phasing of infrastructure investments, coupled with potential expansion of community services, should have a bearing on where, how, and when Morganton grows. While water, sewer, and electric services are largely available throughout the study area, capacity for each utility to service new development may require upgrades dependent upon the proposed new development type.

### TIER 1 PRIMARY SERVICE AREA

These areas include areas that have full access to water and sewer infrastructure. Any additions to current infrastructure in this tier likely would be maintenance, modernization, and/or infill.

### TIER 2 SECONDARY SERVICE AREA

These areas include locations beyond the current Tier 1 service area and are not shaded yellow on the map. Tier 2 areas would require additional investments in infrastructure should development occur, which likely will require financial or in-kind participation by private developers.

# Section 6 CALL TO ACTION

**IMAGINEMORGANTON 2040**



With **IMAGINE Morganton 2040**, the City and its partners have created a living document that should be referred to often as a guide for community decision-making. To be responsive to ongoing change, the Plan's vision, planning principles, strategies, and actions should be revisited regularly to help ensure the Plan continues to provide clear and dependable direction for the issues the City will face—from attainable housing to a strong local economy to a transportation network that provides choice and convenience. The call to action is more than a list of implementation steps—this section acknowledges that fulfilling the vision of the Plan requires the City and its partners to maintain a commitment toward positive change, to be nimble as circumstances change, and to hold one another accountable.

## HOW TO USE THE PLAN

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is advisory in nature. City Council and other boards in Morganton are encouraged to follow the guidance provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

### IMAGINE the City Using the Plan

As a guide for the City in the decades to come, **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is designed to inform future land use decisions, policy decisions, and investment choices. The Plan should be referenced by those making decisions on behalf of the City.

**CITY COUNCIL** should refer to the Plan as a guide for growth and development decisions while being nimble to respond to evolving economic conditions and shifts in community preferences.

**BOARDS AND COMMITTEES** should refer to the Plan in their specific roles as they work collectively to promote the community's vision and ensure consistency in decision-making.

**CITY STAFF** should refer to the Plan in ways that align local policies, inform budget decisions, and provide incremental choices in the context of the community's vision.

### IMAGINE Others Using the Plan

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is designed to be used by individuals and groups with diverse interests in the City. In the years to come, the Plan should be used in the following ways by various groups:

**BUSINESS OWNERS** should refer to the Plan to identify new opportunities and to understand the City's strategy for growth and investment and its approach to managing the unique characteristics of Morganton.

**RESIDENTS** should refer to the Plan to understand the future vision of growth, development, and resiliency, as well as how supportive policies can enhance quality of life.

**COMMUNITY LEADERS** should refer to the Plan as they continue to work toward a common community vision for Morganton.

**REGIONAL PARTNERS** should refer to the Plan as cross-jurisdictional issues are discussed, evaluated, and addressed.

### Why a call to action?

- To achieve the important added step of translating a planning framework into concrete actions
- To add a short-range strategic approach to what ultimately is a long-term initiative through the year 2040 and beyond
- To outline priority actions for the City and its partners to focus on in the years following plan adoption
- To emphasize the need to keep the Plan relevant through regular review and occasional updates
- To create a baseline for continual community conversations as Morganton steps confidently into the future

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The successful implementation of the actions identified in **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** will be contingent upon various factors. Some factors are within the control of the City, such as the availability of resources, including staff time and funding. Other factors are outside of the City’s control, including market conditions. Implementation also requires a combination of efforts between the City, other public entities, and private interests, highlighting the importance of collaboration between the two parties.

## Implementation Matrix

The implementation matrix offers a way to track progress of individual actions and the Plan as a whole, within a flexible framework that can pivot as circumstances change. The implementation matrix positions the City to achieve its future vision and goals by giving structure to the strategies and actions introduced in the policy framework. The matrix clarifies the following:

### Type of Action

Places the actions into one of four categories:

- Program/Initiative
- Policy/Regulation
- Project/Investment
- Plan/Study

### Timeframe

Describes when effort on the action should begin (Initiation) and whether the action is stand alone or ongoing (Duration)

#### Initiation



Short-Term  
(0-3 years)



Mid-Term  
(4-6 years)

#### Duration



Standalone



Recurring

### City Responsibilities

Identifies who needs to lead or support each action

- **AD** - Administration
- **DD** - Development & Design
- **DT** - Main Street / Downtown Development Association
- **PS** - Public Safety
- **PW** - Public Works
- **RE** - Recreation
- **UT** - Utilities

### Resources

Provides a general sense of the time and funding resources necessary for each action by indicating low, medium, or high

#### Time



Low



Medium



High

#### Cost



### Community Priorities













Highlights the actions that received the most votes at the community workshops in April 2024




































Community Priority








































	Type of Action	Timeframe		City Responsibilities		Resources		Community Priority	
		Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost		
<b>GROW   IMAGINE</b> a proactive approach toward future growth.									
<b>Strategy GROW 1: Maintain and reference IMAGINE Morganton 2040 as a guide for land use decisions.</b>									
<b>GROW 1.1</b>	Use the Future Land Use Strategies, Policy Framework, and other adopted planning documents when making zoning and permit approval decisions and creating future City plans.	Policy / Regulation	SHORT TERM	RECYCLE	DD	AD	M	\$	
<b>GROW 1.2</b>	Review the Plan every 3 to 5 years to consider incremental changes that align with City's goals and ensures the Plan remains reasonably maintained.	Program / Initiative	MID TERM	RECYCLE	DD	AD	M	\$	TARGET
<b>GROW 1.3</b>	Continue to engage the community regarding the Plan and retain comments received as input for future updates.	Program / Initiative	SHORT TERM	RECYCLE	DD		H	\$	TARGET
<b>Strategy GROW 2: Align the City's land development regulations with the vision of IMAGINE Morganton 2040.</b>									
<b>GROW 2.1</b>	Update, modernize, and consolidate the City's zoning ordinance to codify the Future Land Use Map.	Policy / Regulation	SHORT TERM	SOLID	DD	AD	H	\$	



	Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority	
		Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost		
<b>THRIVE   IMAGINE</b> a resilient local economy.									
<b>Strategy THRIVE 1: Be intentional about promoting existing economic assets and investing in new assets.</b>									
<b>THRIVE 1.1</b>	Create a citywide economic development strategic plan to refine the City's economic development focus and prioritize opportunities for internal and external alignment.	Plan / Study	MID TERM	Continuous	AD	DD PS RE	DT PW UT	 	
<b>THRIVE 1.2</b>	Align the City's new economic development strategic plan with other City plans (current and future) and update regularly.	Policy / Regulation	MID TERM	Continuous	AD			 	
<b>THRIVE 1.3</b>	Create print and digital material packages for interested potential investors that provide localized market data, communicate a clear economic development vision, and showcase opportunity sites and unique community anchors.	Program / Initiative	SHORT TERM	One-time	AD	DD		 	
<b>Strategy THRIVE 2: Update zoning ordinance to allow for flexibility as the market changes.</b>									
<b>THRIVE 2.1</b>	Consistently review the zoning ordinance to ensure flexibility in allowable uses in the industrial and service classifications, as well as the mixed-use nodes.	Program / Initiative	MID TERM	Continuous	DD	AD		  	
<b>THRIVE 2.2</b>	Track the viability of the Burke County Megasite at I-40/ Dysartsville Road and refine the land use strategy as needs (e.g., housing, services, and sites for supporting industries and commercial uses) are identified.	Program / Initiative	SHORT TERM	Continuous	AD	DD		  	



		Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority
			Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost	
<b>LIVE   IMAGINE</b> a range of housing choices.									
<b>Strategy LIVE 1: Maintain an adequate supply of housing that varies in age and style.</b>									
<b>LIVE</b> 1.1	Analyze development standards for single-family, multifamily, and mixed-use zoning districts to ensure the standards are not prohibitive to new development and redevelopment.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>LIVE</b> 1.2	Examine required lot sizes, setbacks, and height restrictions.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>LIVE</b> 1.3	Continue to allow accessory dwelling units in all residential zones and review size requirements and other standards.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>Strategy LIVE 2: Promote a range of housing options.</b>									
<b>LIVE</b> 2.1	Consider policies that promote neighborhood stabilization while increasing the overall supply, including advocating for Missing Middle Housing options as infill into existing neighborhoods and encouraging accessory dwelling units.	Policy / Regulation			DD	AD			
<b>LIVE</b> 2.2	Evaluate changes to the density table to encourage more housing (e.g., townhomes and duplexes) within single-family residential zoning districts. Special considerations also may be given to such developments through special use permits and additional compatibility requirements.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>LIVE</b> 2.3	Evaluate changes to the density table to encourage more housing (e.g., townhomes, duplexes, and quadplexes) within single-family residential zoning districts.	Policy / Regulation			DD	AD			
<b>Strategy LIVE 3: Support, stabilize, and protect existing neighborhoods.</b>									
<b>LIVE</b> 3.1	Identify opportunities for new infill development.	Program / Initiative			DD	AD			
<b>LIVE</b> 3.2	Support code enforcement to act on nuisance cases that could impact the overall health of a neighborhood.	Program / Initiative			DD	AD			

	Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority	
		Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost		
<b>ACTIVATE   IMAGINE</b> a vibrant and active downtown.									
<b>Strategy ACTIVATE 1: Continue to facilitate Downtown growth and development.</b>									
<b>ACTIVATE 1.1</b>	Reprioritize the Implementation Matrix from the Downtown Vision Plan to advance the area toward the community-identified goals.	Plan / Study		●	DT	DD AD PW			
<b>ACTIVATE 1.2</b>	Review the zoning ordinance to ensure that both residential and non-residential uses are appropriate for the Downtown fabric and are financially viable to attract private investment.	Policy / Regulation		●	DD	DT			
<b>ACTIVATE 1.3</b>	Develop a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan.	Plan / Study		●	DT DD	PW UT			
<b>ACTIVATE 1.4</b>	Conduct a full update to the Downtown Vision Plan.	Plan / Study		●	DT	DD DT PS PW RE UT			
<b>ACTIVATE 1.5</b>	Create and communicate a clear market position for Downtown that describes Downtown as an activity center for Morganton residents, a destination for visitors, and a place for new investment and business.	Program / Initiative			DT	AD			
<b>Strategy ACTIVATE 2: Encourage context appropriate development that increases the viability of Downtown.</b>									
<b>ACTIVATE 2.1</b>	Continue to promote a diverse portfolio of housing in the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge areas designated on the Future Land Use Map, particularly housing that appeals to young professionals and retirees.	Program / Initiative			DD	DT			
<b>ACTIVATE 2.2</b>	Refine and communicate available development incentives (local, regional, and state) that may be employed to attract new investment.	Program / Initiative			AD	DD			
<b>ACTIVATE 2.3</b>	Use supportive policies to make a distinction between the design expectations for the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge as described in the future land use strategy.	Program / Initiative			DD				
<b>ACTIVATE 2.4</b>	Encourage more and more-varied uses of renovated historic Courthouse Square.	Program / Initiative			DT	DD			
<b>ACTIVATE 2.5</b>	Review the zoning ordinance to protect the existing fabric in the Downtown Core while allowing housing to be added.	Policy / Regulation		●	DD				
<b>ACTIVATE 2.6</b>	Consider a local historic district designation with appropriate regulatory protections for the National Downtown Historic District area.	Policy / Regulation		●	DD	DT			

Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority
	Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost	

**EMBRACE | IMAGINE** a distinctive and welcoming city.

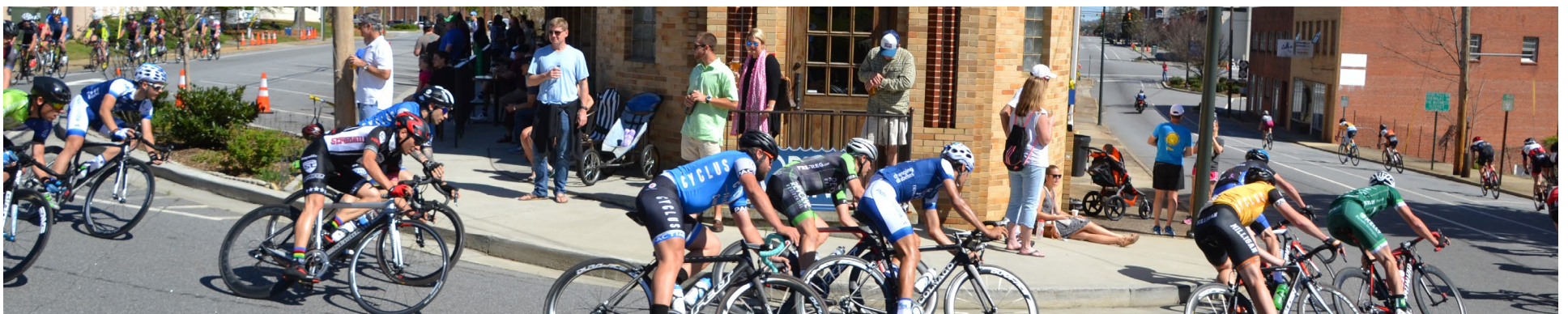
**Strategy EMBRACE 1: Improve the appearance of public and private property throughout Morganton with a focus on gateways.**










































<b>EMBRACE 1.1</b>	Focus public investment on beautifying new streetscapes, signs, and wayfinding from identified gateways into the heart of Morganton and upkeep and protection of the same existing features.	Project / Investment	MID TERM		DD	PW			
<b>EMBRACE 1.2</b>	Review the City's zoning ordinance to ensure that future gateway development projects fit into the community aesthetics and play a meaningful role in their gateway location.	Policy / Regulation	SHORT TERM		DD				
<b>EMBRACE 1.3</b>	Increase the use of public art to improve the aesthetics of the City, including murals, sculptures, and interactive art.	Project / Investment	SHORT TERM		DD DT	AD PW			
<b>EMBRACE 1.4</b>	Set an example by upgrading the City's facilities and parking lots to meet or exceed current ordinance regulations.	Project / Investment	MID TERM		DT	DD PW			




















**Strategy EMBRACE 2: Preserve and promote Morganton's historic resources and community character.**






















<b>EMBRACE 2.1</b>	Leverage local arts and cultural resources to connect Morganton's longtime residents and newcomers.	Program / Initiative	SHORT TERM		AD	DT RE			
<b>EMBRACE 2.2</b>	Evaluate options for zoning changes that protect and enhance historic sites and places of cultural significance.	Policy / Regulation	SHORT TERM		DD				
<b>EMBRACE 2.3</b>	Explore new ways to use and promote statewide historic preservation resources such as the North Carolina Main Street Program, Preservation North Carolina, and Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies.	Program / Initiative	MID TERM		AD	DD DT			
<b>EMBRACE 2.4</b>	Seek ways to preserve and celebrate the Jonesboro Historic District and Morganton's minority neighborhoods.	Policy / Regulation	MID TERM		AD				

		Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority
			Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost	
<b>MOVE   IMAGINE</b> a safe and balanced transportation network.									
<b>Strategy MOVE 1: Align policy with the vision for transportation in Morganton.</b>									
<b>MOVE 1.1</b>	Update the City's corridor overlay to be consistent with MOVE vision map.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>MOVE 1.2</b>	Use the Street Design Priority Matrix to inform the design and redesign of street segments.	Policy / Regulation			DD	PW			
<b>MOVE 1.3</b>	Promote greenways as commuter corridors, not just for recreation. Morganton is well known as "Nature's Playground".	Program / Initiative			RE	DD			
<b>Strategy MOVE 2: Conduct advanced planning for the multimodal needs of Morganton.</b>									
<b>MOVE 2.1</b>	Develop a strategic mobility plan (SMP) to advance the shared vision for how people and goods should move around Morganton.	Plan / Study			DD	PW			
<b>MOVE 2.2</b>	Apply for grant funding (e.g., the Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Program administered by NCDOT) to create a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.	Plan / Study			AD	DD			
<b>MOVE 2.3</b>	Apply for funding through Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) or other grant programs to develop a High-Injury Network and Safety Action Plan.	Plan / Study			AD	PW DD PS			
<b>MOVE 2.4</b>	Support countywide and regional transportation plans and initiatives. Alignment with larger regional plans will better position Morganton to make progress toward its local transportation vision.	Program / Initiative			DD	AD			



		Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority
			Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost	
<b>PRESERVE   IMAGINE</b> a built environment in harmony with Nature's Playground.									
<b>Strategy PRESERVE 1: Conserve and Protect Morganton's natural resources and scenic places.</b>									
<b>PRESERVE 1.1</b>	Encourage the use of low-impact development (LID) and green building practices in public and private projects and include interpretive signs to increase community awareness.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>PRESERVE 1.2</b>	Update the zoning and subdivision ordinances to conserve, protect, and promote the natural environment through requirements for landscaping and recreation spaces.	Policy / Regulation			DD	RE			
<b>PRESERVE 1.3</b>	Encourage preservation of healthy trees in appropriate locations, especially in steep slopes, floodplains, buffers, and streetscapes.	Policy / Regulation			DD	UT			
<b>PRESERVE 1.4</b>	Require the use of native plants, non-invasive species, and xeriscaping (irrigation-free methods) for landscaping, where possible.	Policy / Regulation			DD				
<b>PRESERVE 1.5</b>	Protect existing trees and promote the planting of new trees Downtown and throughout the City through development regulations and community programs, and consider engaging an arborist as needed to maintain the urban forest.	Policy / Regulation			DD	PW			
<b>PRESERVE 1.6</b>	Partner with NCDOT to fund green street design that minimizes the demand on stormwater infrastructure.	Program / Initiative			DD	PW			
<b>PRESERVE 1.7</b>	Encourage households to reduce energy and water use, through actions such as recycling, composting, planting home gardens, and/or rain gardens.	Program / Initiative			PW	DD			
<b>Strategy PRESERVE 2: Continue to emphasize recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.</b>									
<b>PRESERVE 2.1</b>	Continue to review and revise the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.	Plan / Study			RE				
<b>PRESERVE 2.2</b>	Seek additional ways to provide for the recreation needs of Morganton's younger population (including young children, teenagers, and young adults) and senior citizens.	Program / Initiative			RE	AD			
<b>PRESERVE 2.3</b>	Support the active use of the Catawba River, especially at the locations identified on the Conceptual Growth Strategy.	Program / Initiative			RE	AD			

		Type of Action	Timeframe		Responsible Entities		Resources		Community Priority
			Initiation	Duration	Lead	Support	Time	Cost	
<b>PRESERVE   IMAGINE</b> a built environment in harmony with Nature's Playground. (CONTINUED)									
<b>Strategy PRESERVE 3: Leverage the City's image as Nature's Playground with recreation-based economic drivers.</b>									
<b>PRESERVE 3.1</b>	Promote land use and development activities that balance economic development goals and housing needs to minimize sprawl and preserve Morganton's natural resources, including water quality and wildlife habitat.	Policy / Regulation			DD	RE			
<b>PRESERVE 3.2</b>	Create a network of trails, sidewalks, and bikeways to promote active living, environmental stewardship, and economic activity in accordance with the actions outlined in the MOVE framework element	Project / Investment			DD RE	PW			
<b>PRESERVE 3.3</b>	Support and recruit indoor and outdoor recreation activities and businesses through zoning and other programs.	Program / Initiative			DD	RE			
<b>PRESERVE 3.4</b>	Create smaller parks closer to all residents and connected by a greenway loop around the City.	Program / Initiative			RE DD	AD			
<b>PRESERVE 3.5</b>	Explore opportunities for grant programs for owners to reuse existing buildings to support improvements to building design, parking, and landscaping.	Program / Initiative			AD	DD			

<b>PLAN   IMAGINE</b> a foundation of informed decision-making.									
<b>Strategy PLAN 1: Make the provision of adequate public facilities a factor when making decisions about development and redevelopment.</b>									
<b>PLAN 1.1</b>	Consider adequate infrastructure, public services, and community facilities when making decisions about development and redevelopment.	Policy / Regulation			DD	UT			
<b>PLAN 1.2</b>	Create a blend of funding mechanisms (e.g., local, state, non-profit, private development) to construct infrastructure that supports existing and preferred development.	Program / Initiative			AD	UT			
<b>PLAN 1.3</b>	Continue to leverage the City's availability of high-speed internet as a market distinction when in comparison to competing cities.	Program / Initiative			UT	AD			
<b>PLAN 1.4</b>	Develop asset inventories and asset management plans for all city utilities and street features.	Program / Initiative			PW UT	AD			
<b>PLAN 1.5</b>	Utilize the asset management plans to develop project summaries and cost estimates for key projects that are ready when grant opportunities arise.	Plan / Study			PW UT	AD			

# PATHWAY TO IMPLEMENTATION

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is a community-driven plan that sets forth a vision for a strong economy, envious downtown, and welcoming neighborhoods. It also describes 17 strategies and 63 actions to achieve that vision. While circumstances outside the City's control will factor into how—and how quickly—change will occur, the City can influence the pace of change with thoughtful allocation of investments in staff time and local funds. As the City shifts from dreaming to planning to acting, the following pathways to implementation should be explored.

**Celebrate IMAGINE Morganton 2040 as the community's plan.** The City should find ways to commemorate the difficult task of bringing the community together to create a shared vision and plan for action.

**Continue to bring attention to IMAGINE Morganton 2040.** The City should make the Plan readily available to those with an interest in the future of the City, whether within or beyond the walls of City Hall.

**Reference IMAGINE Morganton 2040 as a guide for the future.** The City should promote the Plan as a way to understand the City's vision, its approach toward growth, and the necessary actions to move the needle.

**Allocate resources for action following IMAGINE Morganton 2040.** The City—and its partners—should prioritize the time and funding necessary to make progress on the Plan's strategies and actions.

**Be nimble as circumstances change.** The City should review the Plan regularly and, to the best of its ability, respond to community priority shifts, external partnerships, and funding availability.

**The community leaders who spearheaded the planning process—and new leaders who will emerge in the years to come—must be champions for the Plan.** They must maintain a commitment to action even as they find new ways to understand an ever-evolving City and update the Plan's goals, strategies, and actions accordingly.

## How will the Plan be Implemented?

Adopting **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** is the first step toward shaping the City's future. The implementation matrix serves as a guide for the strategies and actions, many of which are slated to begin in the next couple of years. Several of the short-term actions are linked to a full update of the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances and zoning map. This effort will bring alignment between the land use vision from **IMAGINE Morganton 2040** and the City's main policy tools for growth and development.

## When will the Plan be Updated?

**IMAGINE Morganton 2040** takes a long-range view for desirable growth and development in and around the City. Given the many factors outside the City's control, the Plan needs to be a living document that is revisited and updated over time to recognize emerging conditions and changing circumstances. Chapter 160D of the North Carolina General Statutes sets a legislative mandate that the Plan be reasonably maintained. The City should review the Plan every 3-5 years and prepare a major update every 7-10 years.



# CONCLUSION

**Dream. Plan. ACT! IMAGINE Morganton 2040** beckoned the community to **DREAM** as they envisioned the City's future. It implored them to come together in unity to **PLAN** for growth, development, and the preservation of the distinctive qualities that make Morganton special. Moreover, it called upon the community to rise as one, to **ACT** in the years that lie ahead, forging a path toward a proactive and vibrant future in the region and beyond.



