

Town of Toms Brook Comprehensive Plan

Prepared for: Town of Toms Brook

Prepared By: Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission

2013-2033

Toms Brook Comprehensive Plan

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Mayor of Toms Brook

Philip K. Fauber

Toms Brook Town Council

Johanna O'Toole

Keith Johnson

Dawn Rinker

Heather Sager

Leda Stickler

Walter Stepp

Thelma Stickler, Secretary and Treasurer

Toms Brook Planning Commission

Scott Currie, Chairman

Becky Fisher

Billy Minton

Walter Stepp

Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission

M. Tyler Klein, Community Development Planner

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Executive Summary

The Town of Toms Brook undertook an update to their 2007 Comprehensive Plan to address current and future growth in the Town. Recent changes in the housing stock including the recent completion of a townhome development, foreclosures on vacant property and the completion of the Toms Brook School Apartments project encouraged the Town Council and Planning Commission to explore potential growth and development scenarios. New residents, changes in demographics, and community needs will place added importance for increased open/public spaces and commercial options to serve this growing community. Relatively few changes in the area immediately surrounding the Town are expected, as these areas are likely to remain agricultural and low density residential. The Town Council decided to move forward starting with a new Comprehensive Plan in the fall of 2012 to preserve the Town's character and history and explore growth management scenarios.

Since August 2012, the Town of Toms Brook and the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) have partnered to provide planning assistance to the Town through a Town Planner position beginning with the development of this new Comprehensive Plan. Staff support from the NSVRC is provided through a contractual agreement which is reviewed on an annual basis. Input to the plan was derived primarily through the Town Council and Planning Commission meetings through a series of facilitated planning charrettes, and collaboration with appropriate Shenandoah County, NSVRC and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) planning staff persons.

The Town of Toms Brook encompasses approximately 0.2 square miles and is located along US Highway 11 (Old Valley Pike) in Shenandoah County VA. The majority of the town is zoned residential, with business (commercial) uses located at the north and south end of Town. Toms Brook also has two (2) miles of roadway, one (1) mile of paved sidewalks, three (3) churches, a fire hall and a post office. The Town of Toms Brook is served by the Toms Brook-Mauertown Sanitary District, providing water and waste water service.

As of the 2010 Census, Toms Brook had a population of 258 residents, and has seen only minimal increases in the population since the year 2000. The median age was 37 years old. The median income for a household in the town was \$38,214, and the median income for a family was \$44,688. The residents that are employed work elsewhere in Shenandoah County and the larger Northern Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia areas. Toms Brook is primarily a bedroom community, with many of the residents having deep ties to the Town and Shenandoah County.

Through the comprehensive planning process, the Town sought to better understand existing conditions and project future demand for housing, commercial uses, open space and transportation. These conditions are summarized in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

This Comprehensive Plan also identifies strategies to facilitate orderly future growth in a manner compatible with the Town's vision. The Town understands that future growth will extend beyond the current town boundary, and this Plan seeks to address what types of growth and where growth could be directed.

Toms Brook: Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Toms Brook has identified four (4) “pillars” to meet the vision for the future. These four pillars will serve as the foundation for the goals and strategies. The four pillars for Toms Brook are as follows:

1. *Cultural Heritage*
2. *Neighborhood & Community*
3. *Natural Setting*
4. *Growth Management*

As a result of these four pillars, the following goals have been identified to meet the community’s vision for the future of Toms Brook:

- Protect and promote the cultural and historic resources of Toms Brook.
- Promote a small “neighborhood” of residences.
- Preserve and enhance a strong sense of “place.”
- Preserve and enhance the natural environment in and around the Town.
- Guide and direct compatible growth into and around the Town.
- Provide a safe and efficient transportation system through Town.
- Preserve and enhance the sustainability of the Town.

Section 1: Plan Purpose

Enabling Legislation for Comprehensive Planning

All states have enabling legislation addressing comprehensive plans, but in Virginia, state law actually requires comprehensive plans with prescribed content. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that every local planning commission shall prepare a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction (*Code of Virginia, 2012*). The Planning Commission shall review the plan at least once every five years to determine if amendments are advisable.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

In accordance with State of Virginia Code, the comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Town which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, and the general welfare of the Town residents (*Community Planning, Kelly, 2009*). The plan will be general in nature and designate the general location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be (*VDOT, 2012*). As part of the comprehensive plan, the locality will develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that may include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The plan should recognize and differentiate among a hierarchy of roads such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), upon request, provides localities with technical assistance in preparing such transportation plan elements (*VDOT, 2012*).

The Comprehensive Plan provides a long-term perspective of community change, typically spanning a 20 year period. For the purposes of this Plan the horizon will be 2013 to 2033 (20 years). It is one of the most essential documents produced by the Planning Commission. Implementation of the plan occurs through town ordinances, including zoning ordinances, which contain regulations for the use and development of both public and private property within the town.

Section 2: The Planning Process

The Toms Brook Comprehensive Plan

In the fall of 2012, community stakeholders, Town Officials and the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) worked to gather and analyze trends and data, and draft general planning concepts for the future growth of Toms Brook. This new Comprehensive Plan seeks to expand the Town’s first Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2007) and provide additional recommendations and key strategies on future development in and around the Town.

The Planning Commission

The Toms Brook Planning Commission consists of five (5) members appointed by the Town Council, all of whom shall be residents of the Town qualified by knowledge and experience to make decisions on community growth and development. One of those members is also a member of the Council and serves as its liaison. At time of writing, the Planning Commission also had one (1) vacancy.

Comprehensive planning should be a continuum of activity that does not end after the plan is drafted. The comprehensive planning process begins with preparation of the physical document and adoption of the plan by the Town Council. The next step is the implementation of the plan’s elements, and finally annual review of and amendments to the plan to ensure it remains a current, “living,” document. Preparation of this plan involved the collection and analysis of current data about the Town. These existing conditions were utilized to identify a vision for the Town in the future. The plan includes goals and strategies for implementation that are designed to help the Town achieve its collective vision for its future. Once the comprehensive plan is adopted, the plan will serve as the framework for decision-making to ensure the plan is implemented. The comprehensive plan is implemented through the daily decisions of the Town Council and Planning Commission, including the adoption and enforcement of regulations (*Community Planning, Kelly, 2009*).

The final part of the comprehensive planning process is the periodic review and updating of the plan. This should be an ongoing activity that periodically (at least annually) evaluates the data in the plan, identifies current items that need to be addressed, and examines the plan’s objectives and implementation strategies to determine if they are adequately addressing Town issues. Accurate and ongoing plan review is critical to ensure that the plan continues to provide appropriate guidance in Town decision making.

Summary of Previous Plans

The first Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix A) was adopted by the Town of Toms Brook in 2007. This plan only briefly addresses land use, public utilities, and transportation. The plan does not include any specific goals or objectives to guide future growth but was a necessary document for the establishment of the Town’s Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) that guide development review.

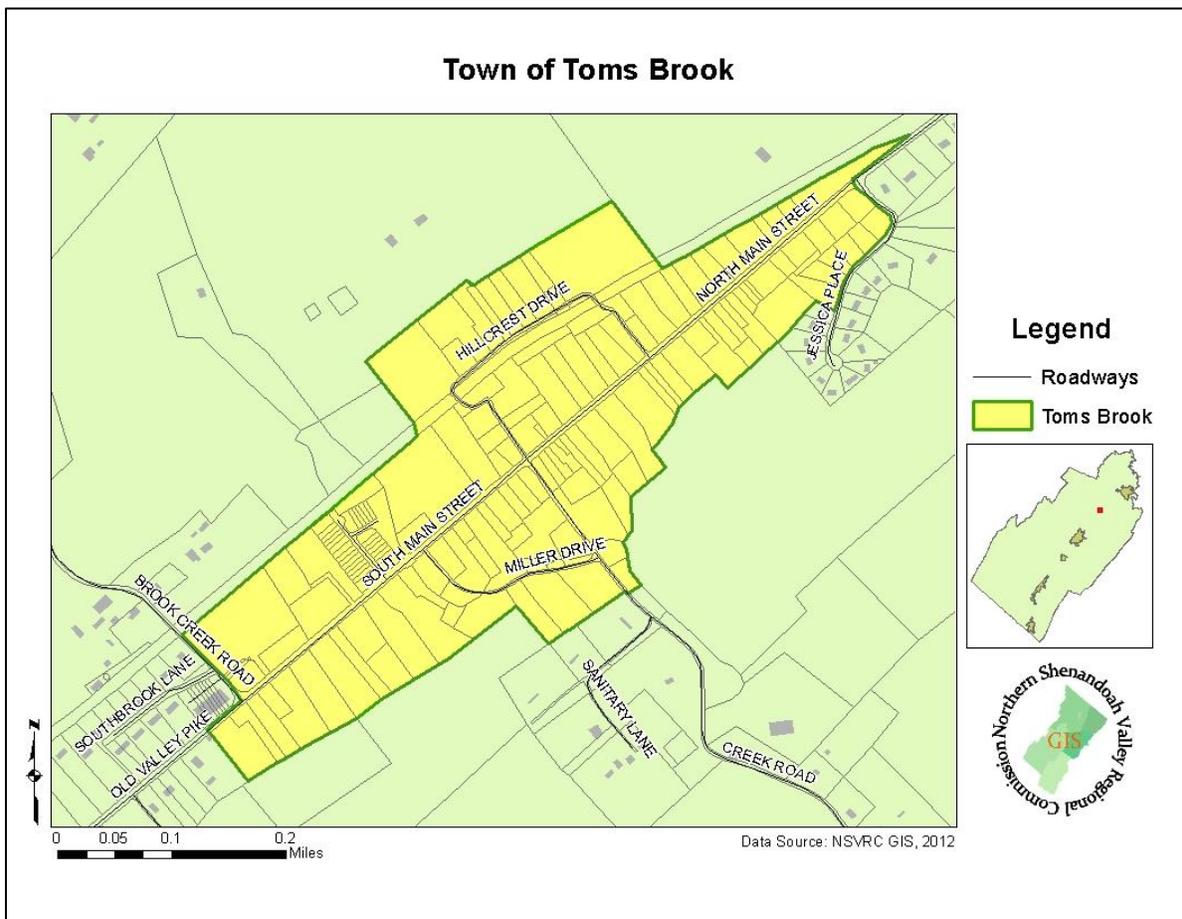
Toms Brook: Comprehensive Plan

This Comprehensive Plan and subsequent revisions will align closely with planning recommendations outlined in the Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan (2005), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) VTRANS 2035 Plan (2012) and Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) program area plans.

Section 3: Summary of Existing Conditions

Location & History

The Town of Toms Brook encompasses roughly 0.2 square miles or 93 acres (see map below) and is located in the northern portion of Shenandoah County, in northwest Virginia. The Town limits are nestled between the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and the western slope of the Massanutten range to the east and the Ridge and Valley Mountains to the west. To the north of town on US Highway 11 (US Route 11/Old Valley Pike) is the Town of Strasburg and to the south of Toms Brook are Mauertown and the Town of Woodstock.



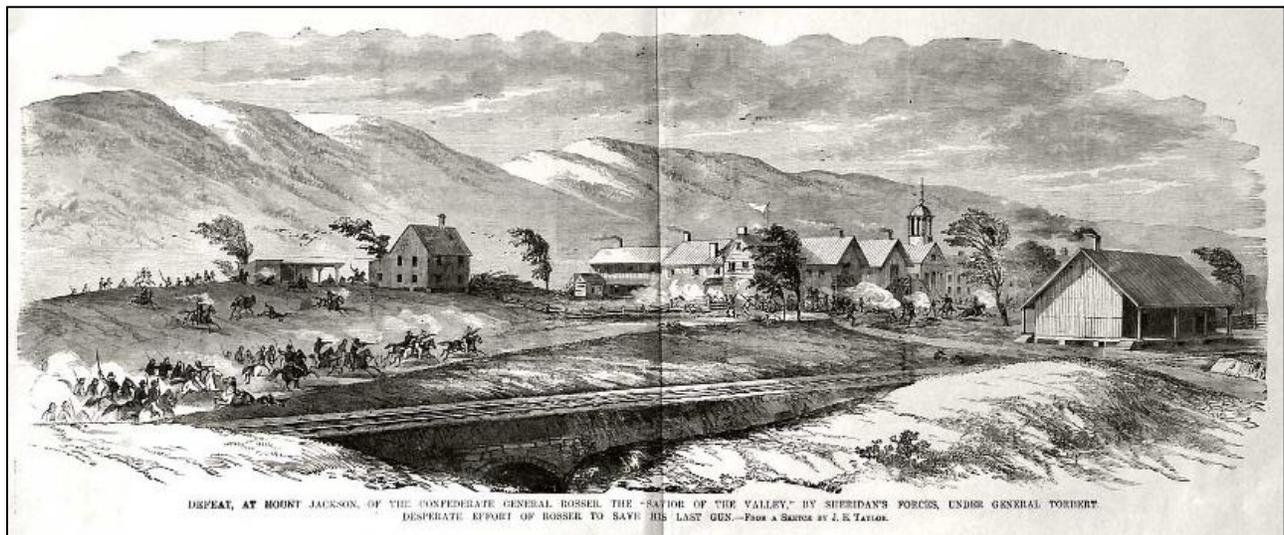
Map Disclaimer: For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan (and maps therein) the Town Boundary is defined by Shenandoah County GIS and Tax Assessors records. This boundary is an approximation of the Town limits and is not legally binding. The official Town boundary is defined by the recorded 1922 metes and bounds description and 2006 Walsh Land Survey that can be found in the Appendix section of this Plan (Appendices B & C).

The Town of Toms Brook was founded in 1852 by Harrison Miller and at the time had only four houses, one of which was a stage coach tavern. The name “Toms Brook” is said to be from a freeman named Tom who claimed the brook that intersects the Town as his own (*Gloria Stickley*). In 1857, the

Toms Brook: Comprehensive Plan

Manassas Gap Railroad (today Charleston Southern) laid track to the west of town and a depot was created that became one of the busiest in Shenandoah County. During the Civil War, the Town of Toms Brook was the site of a minor battle known as the “Woodstock Races” and the larger area was part of the Cedar Creek battle. The Battle of Tom's Brook was fought on October 9, 1864, in Shenandoah County, Virginia, during Union General Philip Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign. It resulted in a significant Union victory, one that was mockingly dubbed The Woodstock Races for the speed of the Confederate withdrawal (*National Park Service, 2012*). Today the battlefield and surrounding area are of much interest to Civil War historians, enthusiasts and tourist. Future plans for the site preservation and marketing could have an impact on Toms Brook.

Image 1: The Battle of Toms Brook/Woodstock Races (depicted). Photo Credit: Shenandoah at War, 2012.



Prior to 1900, Toms Brook had a thriving commercial district that included a jewelry store, cigar factories, stave factory and mill, a barrel making business, lime kiln, copper shop and a physician. Toms Brook was formally incorporated as a town in Shenandoah County in 1922. The Toms Brook School was founded in 1874. The modern building as it stands today was constructed in 1935 and closed its doors in 1991.

The regional setting in which Toms Brook is located has greatly influenced its historic past and will play a key role in projected future growth. The first factor was the Town's location along the Great Wagon Road. This early route, with a major branch known as the Wilderness Road, was the most important frontier highway in Colonial America. The road opened Western Virginia to settlement and also provided a market as well as a means to market for area produce and products. The road known as Valley Pike is today identified as U.S. Highway 11. The second regional setting factor affecting Toms Brook has been its location near large urban areas and regional employment centers. The proximity of the Town to the Virginia Inland Port (Front Royal) and to such cities as Winchester, Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Richmond makes the Town accessible to regional employment centers. Local workers need not commute great distances for jobs. Of particular current and future importance to Toms Brook is

its proximity to the Interstate 81 and Interstate 66 corridors. The location near these regional corridors hubs places Toms Brook in a unique position for future growth and expanded development.

Population & Demographics

Like most rural small towns Toms Brook has seen only moderate population growth since the year 2000, and in general the population of the town remains stable. Minimal future growth beyond 2010 is expected.

	2000 Population	2010 Population	% Change 2000-2010
Toms Brook	246	258	4.7%
Shenandoah County	35,075	41,993	16.5%
Virginia	7,686,192	8,001,024	3.9%

Data Source: US Census 2000 & 2010

As of the 2010 Census, Toms Brook had a population of 258 residents. Demographics by age bracket from the 2010 Census are as follows: 22.4% under the age of 18, 9.4% from 18 to 24, 32.5% from 25 to 44, 26.3% from 45 to 64, and 9.4% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 37 years old and the average household size was 2.33 persons.

The median income for a household in the Town was \$38,214, and the median income for a family was \$44,688 (*US Census, 2010*). About 2.5% of families and 5.9% of the total Town population were recorded as living below the poverty line (*US Census, 2010*). The residents that are employed work elsewhere in Shenandoah County and the larger Northern Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia areas primarily in healthcare, education and local government. Toms Brook is primarily a bedroom community, with many of the residents having deep ties to the Town and Shenandoah County.

Land Use & Zoning

The Town of Toms Brook adopted Shenandoah County’s zoning ordinance in 2007. The Town’s zoning ordinance establishes zoning classifications and properties within the Town have been assigned to zoning district classifications. These classifications were derived from the County of Shenandoah’s Code Chapter 165, Zoning and Code of Shenandoah Town Code Chapter 165 Zoning Article 11 (1997). The establishment of zoning districts serves the purpose of promoting public health, safety, morals, convenience, and the general welfare of the community (*Toms Brook Zoning, 2007*). In 2010, the Town of Toms Brook updated the zoning classifications to reflect the current zoning of the Town parcels. The full zoning ordinance can be found in the appendix of this plan and a zoning map is also depicted below.

The Town of Toms Brook currently has six (6) zoning classifications as follows:

Toms Brook R-SFD 10 (Medium Density Residential)

This district is intended to be used for medium density single-family residential development with accessory uses necessary or compatible with residential surroundings. The additional permitted uses, by

review of the Planning Commission and Town Council, include facilities sometimes required to provide basic elements of basic and attractive residential areas. With the exception of business districts (B-1 and B-2), the remaining parcels in Toms Brook are zoned R-SFD 10.

Toms Brook R-SFD 15 (Low Density Residential)

This district is intended to be used for low density residential development for single family, two, three, or four family dwellings and town house units, as well as other compatible uses.

Toms Brook R-SFA (Single & Multi-Family Residential)

This district is intended to be used for medium to high density development, residential and commercial use with necessary or compatible accessory uses including duplexes and townhomes.

Toms Brook R-APT (Multi-Family Residential)

This district is intended to be used for moderate to high density multi-family residential and institutional development, to include but not limited to what are commonly known as apartment units.

B-1 Local Business

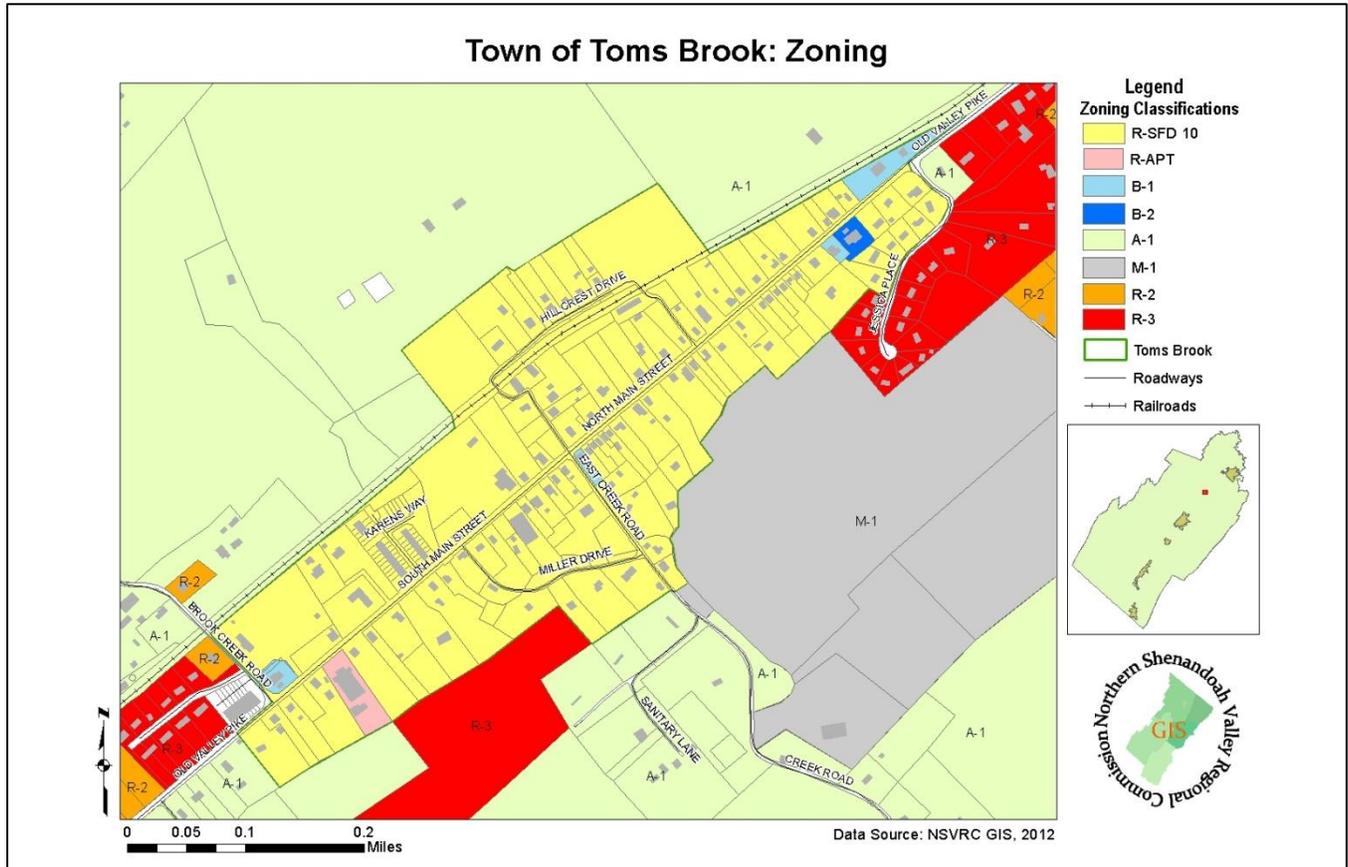
This district is intended to be used for limited and general commercial use to serve daily convenience shopping and service needs of residents.

B-2 General Business

This district is intended to be used for general business to which the public requires direct and frequent access.

M-1 General Industrial

This district is intended primarily for manufacturing, processing, storage, wholesaling, and distribution activities.



Any other use not specified in the ordinance, upon review by the Planning Commission and Town Council, may be permitted if the use is compatible and of the same general character as those permitted by-right in their respective zoning districts and not detrimental to other uses within the district or to adjoining land uses through “special use permits.” The Toms Brook Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) governs disputes and requests as it pertains to zoning and land use within the town boundary. To date no such requests have come before the Town BZA.

The Town is primarily surrounded by agricultural (A-1) zoning, and other compatible uses as designated by Shenandoah County. As identified in the Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan, these designations are likely to remain unchanged.

Economy, Community Facilities & Other Services

Local Economy

There are few businesses within the Toms Brook corporate limits. They include service stations, gas stations, a transport center, and a US Post Office. Immediately adjacent to the Town but not within the Town limit is a winery (North Mountain Winery), a hunting/fishing outfitter and a garden center.

Community Facilities & Services

The Town of Toms Brook is served by a volunteer fire station located at 3342 South Main Street that provides immediate assistance to the Town and surrounding area north to the Town of Strasburg and south towards the Town of Woodstock, including Mauertown. The fire station also houses the Town Office and a fire hall which is utilized by the community for various meetings and social functions. There are no other municipal facilities within the Town boundary.

The Town of Toms Brook also has three (3) churches servicing the Town and County residents. They include St. Peter's Lutheran Church (3343 South Main Street), Toms Brook United Methodist Church (3263 South Main Street) and the Christian Newcomer United Methodist Church (3520 North Main Street).

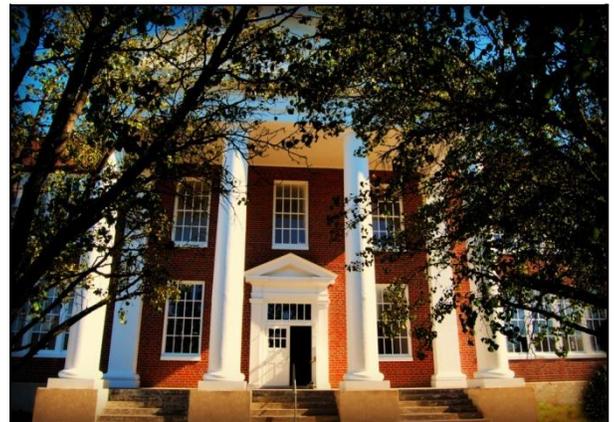
Housing

Housing is of primary concern for the Town of Toms Brook and will be critical to understanding future development scenarios as the community remains almost exclusively residential in nature. The 2010 US Census identified 111 total housing units within the Town, 95 of which were owner-occupied (85.6%) and 16 of which were vacant (14.4%). Thirty (30) rental units were also identified by the Census, two (2) of which were listed as vacant. For both owner-occupied homes and rental units, more than 80% were occupied by two or more persons (*US Census, 2010*). This correlates to the average household size of 2.55 persons as indicated by the Census and indicates the relative stability of housing in Toms Brook as owned by family units.

Toms Brook has a diverse housing stock of historic single family homes and newer townhomes. The majority of the homes were constructed during the early 20th century and are a mix of Georgian and colonial styles. Prior to zoning, in 2006 Brook Village Townhomes were completed, creating 17 multifamily units off South Main Street. Completed in late-2012, the Toms Brook School Apartments became the Town's second multifamily housing unit. The project rehabilitated the old school facility into 14 affordable rental units.

As indicated in the Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan (2005), affordable housing is a major challenge facing the communities in the County; which requires offering cost comparative housing relative to other communities in the regional housing market. As demand for housing increases in these communities due to migration or economic development opportunities, future housing development should address the realities of the housing market relative to income, employment and rate of population growth.

Image 2: Toms Brook School Apartments. Photo Credit: NSVRC, 2012



Natural Resources

The “Brook”

The Town of Toms Brook is located in the scenic and pastoral Shenandoah Valley. The terrain is gently rolling and is underlain by karst geology and well-draining soils. Additional natural features include the Toms Brook creek or the Toms Brook stream, which passes through the south end of Town along Brook Creek Road and under South Main Street at the Town Bridge. The “Brook” as it is affectionately known by residents, is a fresh water source with a variety of small aquatic life. In periods of high rain or snow melt (stormwater) runoff, the creek is prone to flooding, stream bank erosion and heavy sediment deposits which can impede flow. The Town also lies within the Shenandoah-Potomac watershed. The seven bends of the Shenandoah River flow just to the east of Town and the Toms Brook creek drains into one of the seven bend oxbows of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. Conservation of the stream as a natural resource and protection from future development that may impede or diminish stream flow continues to be a priority of the Town. Flood prevention and minimization of stormwater runoff are also goals of the Town. These goals remain consistent with, and are endorsed in the *2012 Regional Northern Shenandoah Valley Watershed Implementation Plan* and *Regional Northern Shenandoah Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

Water Independence

Existing water sources in Shenandoah County include public community water systems owned and operated by the Sanitary District. The Town of Toms Brook has two municipal groundwater wells served by the Toms Brook-Mauertown Sanitary District (TBMSD) with a combined maximum design capacity of 298,080 gallons per day (GPD). There are no private community water systems within Toms Brook. The Sanitary District has a permitted capacity of 0.298 million gallons per day (MGD). Anticipated future water use for the Town of Toms Brook will be met throughout the planning horizon of 2040 with a surplus of water from the existing municipal source. This was, as stated in the *Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Water Supply Plan (WSP)*, was adopted by the Town and Shenandoah County in 2011. Outcomes of this plan pertinent to comprehensive planning in Toms Brook include:

- Provide adequate, reliable, and safe water to citizens balancing the need for environmental protection and future growth.
- Establish a comprehensive and continuous planning process for the wise use of our water resources.

Future development within or beyond the Town boundary will require further evaluation of the public community water system in the Sanitary District and alignment with the infrastructure listed in the *Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Water Supply Plan*.

Finally, the rock quarry just east of Toms Brook (outside of the Town limits) off Creek Road should be re-evaluated by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) to determine its future impact on water quality, natural resources, and safety for the Town prior to any development around the site, or redevelopment of the site. The site is currently an abandoned limestone quarry and was used for crushed stone in highway construction, primarily for the development of US Highway 11 and Interstate 81. For future determination of any commercial or other use would require further detailed analysis beyond the scope of this Comprehensive Plan.

Hazard Mitigation

Toms Brook formally endorses strategies identified in the *2012 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan* update as it pertains to natural or manmade hazards and their impact on the Town.

Transportation Networks

Roadways

The Town of Toms Brook has approximately two (2) miles of paved roadway within the corporate boundaries (*Comprehensive Plan, 2007*). VDOT, through the National Highway Functional Classification system, defines US Highway 11 or Main Street in Toms Brook as a “major collector.” The Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan defines major collectors as providing service to towns not directly linked to an arterial or interstate highway, to other traffic generators, and serves the important intra-county travel corridors. All other roadways in Toms Brook are classified as “local streets” or those roadways that primarily provide access to land/parcels with little or no through movement (*FHA, 2012*). VDOT provides design standards which must be met when developing any public roadway, depending upon the proposed road's classification and use (*VDOT, 2012*).

The Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan (2005) indicates that traffic volume along US Highway 11/ Main Street in Toms Brook has seen a steady increase in passenger and truck traffic since 2000, as this continues to be a major byway throughout the County. Future increases in traffic volumes can be expected, but further study is required when evaluating development proposals within the Town for impacts on traffic and safety.

The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission *2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan* (RLRTP), adopted in 2011 by the Town of Toms Brook and Shenandoah County, identifies two (2) project priorities that will affect future development in the Town (see map in Appendix D). These projects are listed as follows:

- ❖ Interstate 81 Northbound off-ramps at (exit 291) VA 651/Mount Olive Road (RLRTP Priority # 3): Short-term recommendation to modify the northwest corner of the intersection to accommodate turning truck traffic. Mid-term recommendation to signalize intersection for safety. Long-term recommendation to reconstruct the interchange. The long-term project is currently listed as in the environmental review stage by VDOT. This will allow for increased passenger vehicle and truck traffic and addressing safety deficiencies.

VDOT estimates the cost of this study to determine mid and long-term recommendations to be \$150,000.

- ❖ US 11 (old Valley Pike/Main Street) from VA 635 South to NCL of Toms Brook (RLRTP Priority # 95): Long-term recommendation to upgrade two-lane rural roadway to urban three-lane roadway (curb and gutter, paved shoulder, turn lanes). This will allow for increased vehicle traffic that could pass through Toms Brook and operational improvements.

VDOT estimates the cost of this upgrade to be \$6,000,000.

Also pending which could affect future development along and around US Route 11/Old Valley Pike is the Corridor Overlay District as proposed by Shenandoah County in their 2005 Comprehensive Plan. However, to date no district or design guidelines have been formally adopted by the County. The Town of Toms Brook should monitor development as it pertains to these recommendations in the future.

Railroads

Toms Brook is passed directly to the west by a spur of the Norfolk Southern Railway System (NSX) and the Charleston Southern Railroad Corporation (CSX) which connects north to other lines at Strasburg and terminates at Edinburg south of Town. At one time, the Town of Toms Brook was an important railroad depot for goods and passengers from Shenandoah County. Today this railroad line is designated for freight-only, although there has been no recent rail traffic and the railway operators have classified this stretch of track in Shenandoah County as “low volume” or “inactive.” It is unknown at this time whether the railway will be classified as “abandoned,” and available for alternative uses (“rails to trails”). Future plans by the Commonwealth through the Department of Rails and Public Transportation (DRPT), should be monitored to ensure developments are consistent with the Towns Comprehensive Plan goals.

Pedestrian, Bicycle, Transit and Parking Networks

Toms Brook is served by one (1) mile of paved sidewalk and curb maintained by VDOT on the eastern side of Main Street. Toms Brook is responsible for sidewalk and wall maintenance and improvements, and this is contracted to a local company. On-street parking is also on the eastern side of Main Street and is unregulated. VDOT maintains the roadways, striping, and curb/gutter through town.

There are no State or County designated bike lanes or bike routes through Toms Brook, nor is there public transportation access (or any in Shenandoah County). However, regional cyclists regularly ride through Town on scenic US Route 11. The Tuscarora Trail (over 252 miles long) passes just to the south of Toms Brook, along the southern boundary of the Fischer Hill Battlefield. The *2004 Regional Walking and Wheeling Plan* calls for development of a Route 11 non-motorized corridor from Winchester to New Market. Future recreational and regional connectivity opportunities could result from implementation of this Plan.

On November 2, 2012, VDOT Staff met with the Mayor, Shenandoah County and NSVRC staff to discuss these transportation conditions as they pertained to Toms Brook. It should be noted that while Toms Brook can recommend changes, VDOT has the final word on any improvements as well as the responsibility for maintenance and should be included in any discussion that affects transportation networks as outlined in Chapter 729 or Local/State Plan & Program Consistency (2012).

Section 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning tool to evaluate current and future factors, both real and perceived, that will shape the development of Toms Brook (*Community Planning, Kelly, 2009*). This SWOT analysis was developed by the Toms Brook Planning Commission on October 25, 2012 and the Toms Brook Town Council on November 8, 2012. The SWOT analysis will inform the vision, goals and strategies in subsequent sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

Strengths

Strengths are characteristics of Toms Brook that gives it an advantage over like communities.

- Proximity to major transportation corridors including Interstate 81 and US Highway 11.
- Railroad trestle as a Town landmark/identifier.
- Small Town charm, walkable (0.8 miles).
- The brook (creek) gives the Town identity, natural beauty.
- Central location to major cities, universities, and other amenities.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses are characteristics that place Toms Brook at a disadvantage relative to other like communities.

- Toms Brook lacks control of its own water and waste water system, which could inhibit future growth.
- Abandoned rail line is an “eye sore” to the community; prevalence of debris on the tracks.
- The brook presents a “real” flood threat to the Town.
- The quarry is a visual, environmental, and health hazard to the Town and its residents.
- Traffic is common along US Highway 11.
- Lack of enforceable property maintenance code has led some homes/properties to go into disrepair.

Opportunities

Opportunities are external factors to improve character and viability of Toms Brook.

- Proximity to rich cultural and agricultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley including but not limited to the Artisan Trail, Fields of Gold, and local wineries.
- Development of surrounding vacant parcels around the Town and expanding the Town boundary.
- Interchange improvements at Interstate 81 and Mount Olive Road (exit 291) bringing additional vehicles and businesses to the Town.
- The railroad line as a viable “rails to trails” conversion, connecting Toms Brook to the surrounding communities, County Park and battlefields.
- The redevelopment of the Toms Brook School not only approving the appearance but bringing in new residents and revenue for the Town.

Threats

Threats are external factors in the environment that could affect the character and viability of Toms Brook.

- Outward movement of residents to suburbs/other communities with more amenities
- Development along Interstate 81/Route 11 and traffic hazards and accidents along these corridors.
- Development pressure for expanded residential and commercial uses at each end of Town.
- Long term liability of the quarry on safety, economics and natural resources.
- Not having a US Post Office located in Town.

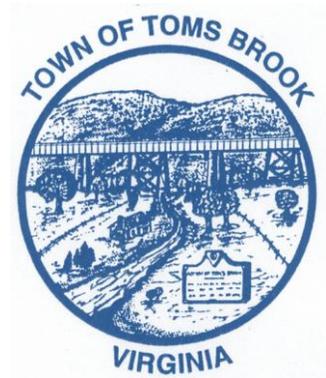
Section 5: A Vision for the Future

The first step for any locality when developing planning goals and strategies is to establish collective “vision,” or overarching theme that will guide the process (*Kelly, Community Planning, 2009*). The Town of Toms Brook has articulated the following vision for its future:

Toms Brook is a town where history, hospitality and natural beauty come together to form a community that is proud of its past and excited about its future. Toms Brook is a distinctive place with mixed uses and mixed incomes. Toms Brook has a vibrant history not unlike others in the Shenandoah Valley and Virginia, and the past should guide its future. Toms Brook will preserve its small town character as a residential community while not limiting its potential for future growth and economic viability.

The Mayor, Planning Commission and Town Council recognize that Toms Brook’s future prosperity depends on protecting its assets through encouraging residents and welcoming visitors to become integral participants in Toms Brook’s unique community.

The future of Toms Brook is one that is affordable for all residents, environmentally sustainable, preserves and celebrates historic resources and is viable for future growth. This is the Toms Brook people call home.



The goals and strategies to achieve this vision are outlined in subsequent sections of the plan.

Section 6: Goals & Strategies

One of the most important parts of the Comprehensive Plan is the preparation of policy statements called “goals and strategies.” Goals state the general manner and direction in which the community would like to see the Town develop. Strategies are more detailed statements showing how to help achieve the proposed goals.

The Town of Toms Brook has identified four (4) “pillars” to meet the vision statement outlined in Section 5. These four pillars will serve as the foundation for the subsequent goals and strategies. The four pillars for Toms Brook are as follows, see graphic below. Where applicable, potential resources, partnerships or recommendations for required future analysis are denoted. Decisions regarding goals and strategies should be further evaluated at time of implementation.



1. Cultural Heritage

Goal: Protect and promote the cultural and historic resources of Toms Brook.

Strategy A: Toms Brook will work closely with Shenandoah County and the NSVRC to design and implement a countywide bicycle and pedestrian system that will ensure Town connectivity to the County Park and local battlefields. This may include the conversion of the railroad line west of Town into a “Rails to Trails” project and participation in the County’s “Fields of Gold” program.

Strategy B: Toms Brook will work with Battlefields Foundation and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to identify, document and erect signage of historic and pre-historic landmarks/sites within the Town proper. This may include a battlefield and train depot marker(s).

Strategy C: The Town may provide resource information to assist private citizens and developers in the following preservation activities, including but not limited to:

- Identification of historic buildings and features
- Nomination of properties for inclusion in historic registers
- Application for tax credits for historic restoration and tax deductions for donated easements.
- Identification of funding opportunities and application for grants associated with historic preservation.

2. Neighborhood & Community

Goal: Promote a small “neighborhood” of residences.

Strategy A: Toms Brook should manage its vacant and for-sale parcels and encourage development compatible with the residential nature of the Town. Non-residential uses should be compatible with the residential nature of the community. This should be limited to complementary, non-intensive use businesses (such as churches, service stations and storage units). Development should be consistent with growth patterns outlined in the Shenandoah County Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy B: Toms Brook will continue to support the development and redevelopment of safe, decent and affordable housing units with equal opportunity for all. Housing types should be diverse and compatible with local incomes and styles. Energy efficiency should also be encouraged. Expedited development review processes through the Planning Commission should be encouraged for affordable housing proposals.

Goal: Preserve and enhance a strong sense of “place.”

Strategy A: Toms Brook will hold annual Town events to build a sense of community and encourage fellowship among residents. This may include (but is not limited to): a “Brook” clean-up or property clean-up day(s), development of a community garden program at St. Peters Lutheran Church (currently under development), and hold a community dinner/social event at the newly renovated Toms Brook School or Fire Hall.

Strategy B: Toms Brook should create gateway signage at the north and south entrances into Town that identifies and welcomes visitors to the “Brook.” Banners along utility poles through Town may also be considered. A community design contest for the welcome signage and/or banners could be held to solicit ideas.

3. Natural Setting

Goal: Preserve and enhance the natural environment in and around the Town.

Strategy A: Toms Brook will develop and adopt specific measures to protect the Toms Brook creek as a viable natural feature and water resource. Development or redevelopment within the Town should not adversely affect the creek’s carrying capacity for water and stormwater. Special planning studies should be conducted as requests warrant.

Strategy B: Protect the natural environment from damage due to development activities. Development and design should not diminish the natural features or view shed which is a signature element of Toms Brook. Consultation with State and local environmental mandates especially regulations pertaining to stormwater are important when evaluating any development proposals.

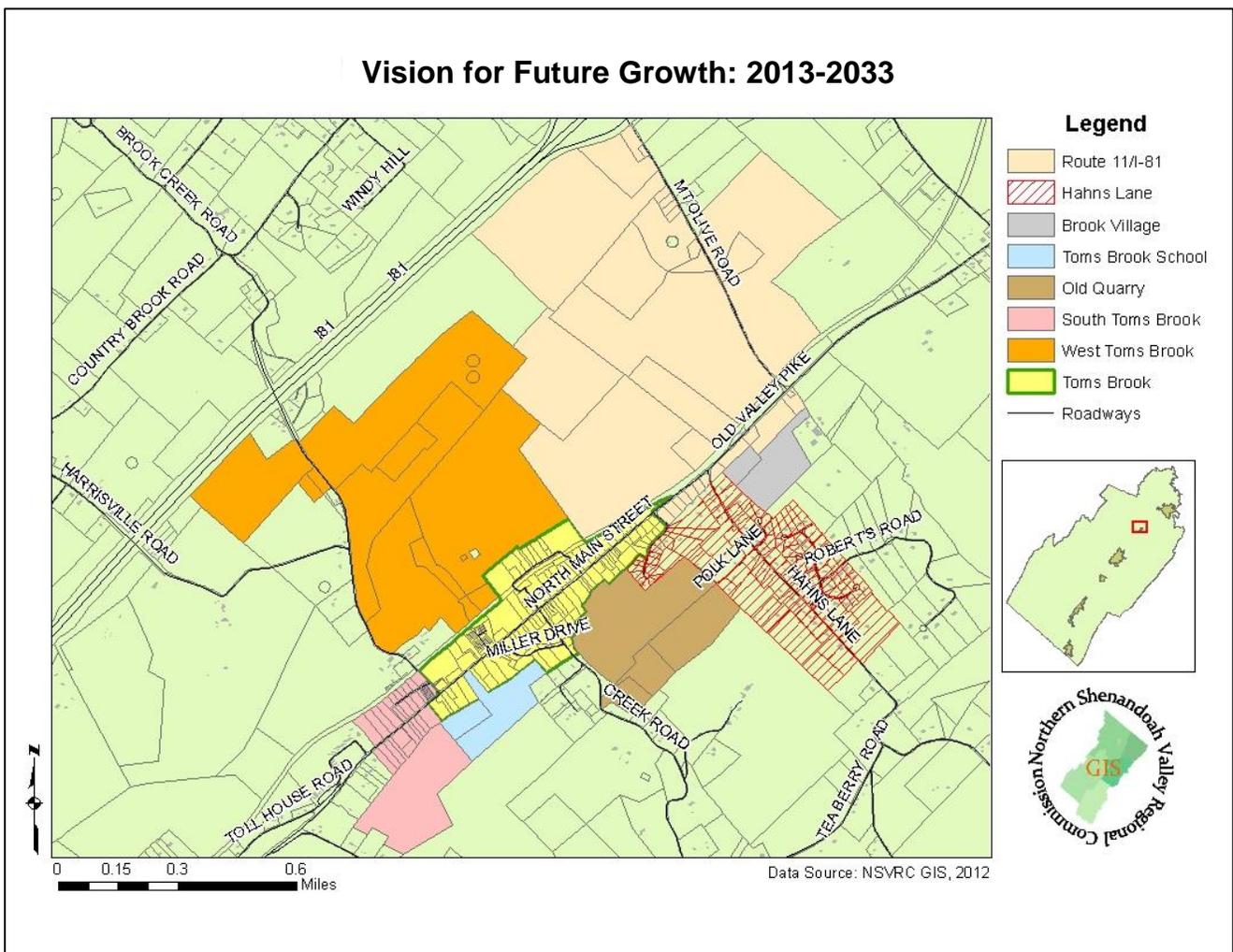
4. Growth Management

Goal: Guide and direct compatible growth into and around the Town.

Strategy A: Future development should support mixed-uses and mixed-incomes. A mixed-use/mixed-income study (or small area plan) should be performed to explore and identify potential growth scenarios into and around Toms Brook. Planning grant funds are available through the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) annually on a rolling basis. This small area planning should be consistent with methodology and planning efforts as identified by Shenandoah County or keeping growth located within or immediately adjacent to the Towns. This study will explore future expansion opportunities north and northwest of the current Town boundary, with emphasis placed on commercial growth north towards the Interstate 81 Toms Brook interchange (Exit 291).

The map below depicts initial visioning or a “generalization” of future growth areas as proposed by the Planning Commission.

Please note: This map is subject to revisions as more information becomes available.



Goal: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system through Town.

Strategy A: Coordinate land use planning and decision-making with transportation planning activities. This should include requiring adequate access to roadways before new developments are approved, requiring transportation impact analyses on future growth scenarios, and coordinating planning efforts with Shenandoah County, VDOT and the NSVRC.

Goal: Preserve and enhance the sustainability of the Town.

Strategy A: Future development should only be considered when it is financially feasible to the Town based on analysis of costs associated with infrastructure expansion and maintenance as well as revenue generated through a diversified tax base. This financial stability should be explored thoroughly in any future growth planning effort.

Strategy B: Toms Brook should further explore the Town's ability to provide for adequate service facilities and improve service delivery. This includes the Town's control of the delivery of public services (water) and capabilities and response of fire and rescue.

Strategy C: Maintain and manage the systematic evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan process and prepare updates as necessary to manage development and growth. Regular review should also be conducted in accordance with changes to the County Comprehensive Plan to ensure continuity of planning efforts.

Section 7: Conclusion

The Town of Toms Brook is a distinct and historic bedroom community that is poised for future growth and development. New challenges and opportunities for cultural and economic development will continue to shape this community in the near future; and this development should be evaluated with the utmost care given to the goals and objectives identified in the previous section. As stated in the vision statement: *Toms Brook is a town where history, hospitality and natural beauty come together to form a community that is proud of its past and excited about its future.* The community that is Toms Brook is one that is reflective to its past, livable and prosperous in the present and sustainable in the future.

This Comprehensive Plan should serve as a guide for development and measurement for progress over a twenty (20) year planning horizon. Annual evaluation and updating to this document is vital.

Section 8: Appendix

Appendix A: 2007 Toms Brook Comprehensive Plan



THE TOWN OF
TOMS BROOK
Shenandoah County, Virginia

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
2007

Introduction. The purpose of this comprehensive plan is to put forth a long-term plan for the future growth of the Town. This plan shall propose objectives for the future land use and transportation needs to accommodate anticipated growth within the boundaries of the Town. The creation of a comprehensive plan is designed to help the Town and its residents examine the current state of services provided by the Town and set goals for future years that will help guide the Town as our community continues to grow.

The Town of Toms Brook is located in northern Shenandoah County, Virginia. The current population of the Town is 258 residents, based on a population estimate calculated by the U.S. Census. The population of the Town rose from 225 residents in 1990 to 255 residents in 2000, based on U.S. Census data. Shenandoah County has experienced considerable growth in recent years, both in number of residents and in new businesses. This growth will continue to be felt within the Town and place a greater strain on local government services, utilities, and roads.

Land Use. The Town's zoning ordinance establishes zoning classifications and properties within the Town have been assigned to zoning district designations. These zoning districts have been established to manage Town growth, provide adequate and safe residential districts, and promote business development within the Town. As the Town continues to grow, the Town Council will continuously review and amend, as necessary, the zoning ordinance to accommodate future growth in residential and business districts. Upgrades and additions to existing public utilities will be performed as needed to accommodate new homes and businesses within the Town. Residential districts shall facilitate the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing sufficient to meet the current and future needs of the Town.

Public Utilities. Toms Brook is served by the Toms Brook-Mauertown Sanitary District (TBMSD) for water and sewer service. In the coming years, the TBMSD, along with other sanitary districts in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, will be required to implement significant upgrades to comply with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality restrictions to reduce contaminants that contribute to pollution of the Chesapeake Bay. These new restriction on water treatment facilities will require extensive upgrades to existing services. As improvements are made, the Town will need to work closely with the TBMSD to ensure that future upgrades will meet the long-term growth projections for the Town.

Transportation. There are approximately two (2) miles of roads within the corporate boundaries of the Town. As the population of the Town and surrounding communities continues to grow, the Town will seek improvements to accommodate future growth. The Town, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Transportation, may maintain and install sidewalks and crosswalks as needed to ensure public safety.

Appendix B: Toms Brook Town Boundary (1922 Metes & Bounds Description)

TOMS BROOK, TOWN OF
County of Shenandoah.

Incorporated by order of the Circuit Court of Shenandoah County, January 9, 1922.
Validating order of court incorporating, 1932, c. 144.

Note: a copy of the Court Order was sent to the Division of Legislative Services by the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Shenandoah County, 4/25/97. This handwritten Court Order was reproduced almost verbatim in the validating order of the General Assembly in 1932, therefore, this is the "charter" that is in this document. A photocopy of the court order is available in the Legislative Reference Center at the Division of Legislative Services.

Chapter 144

An ACT to validate, ratify and confirm an order of the circuit court of Shenandoah county, incorporating the town of Toms Brook, in the said county; to validate the boundaries of said town as set out in said order; to validate an election held in pursuance of said order; all the ordinances of the council of said town and all official acts of the mayor of said town, and its council; to provide that said town shall have certain officers chosen by the council, and that the elective officers shall be elected for a term of four years, instead of two years, as now provided by general law.

Whereas, the circuit court of Shenandoah county, did upon the petition of S. B. Miley, and more than twenty other qualified voters of the unincorporated town of Toms Brook, after legal notice thereof had been published in the Shenandoah Herald, a newspaper published in the town of Woodstock, Shenandoah county, Virginia, once a week for four successive weeks, and posted at the front door of the court house of Shenandoah county, for four successive weeks, enter an order on the ninth day of January, nineteen hundred and twenty-two, incorporating said town of Toms Brook, in pursuance of section twenty-eight hundred and eighty-one of the Code of Virginia, and did declare the boundaries of said town to be as follows: Beginning at a post on the southeast side of the county road, leading from Toms Brook towards the Shenandoah river and a corner to the lot of James M. Walten, and extending thence with the back lines of the lots of said Walten, Daniel Kibler, Lillian Keller, south fifty-nine west four hundred and fourteen feet to a cedar post near Keller's corner; thence with another of her lines north thirty-one west two hundred and thirty-eight feet to a post, corner to the lot of J. D. Hupp, his east corner; thence with the back line of the various lots fronting on the Valley turnpike, south fifty-one and one-half west three hundred and forty-five feet to a post; thence continuing with the back line of other of said lots south sixty-three west eleven hundred and seventy-nine feet to a stake at Angus Bauserman's fence, thence with a fence crossing his land north twenty-eight west two hundred and thirty-eight feet to a stake on the west side of the said Valley turnpike; thence with the west edge of the pike north fifty-five east two hundred and thirty-six feet to a station on the west edge of the pike, and on the northeast side of the new State road at its junction with the pike; thence along the northeast side of said road north thirty-nine and one-half west four hundred and sixty-seven feet to the west edge of the railroad limits; thence with the west edge of the

said limits north forty-eight east fourteen hundred and sixty-five feet crossing Toms Brook stream, to a post at the south corner of the cemetery north forty-four west three hundred and thirty-one and one-half feet to the west corner of the same; thence with the northwest line thereof, and a continued corner, with a middle fence north fifty-five east five hundred and eighty-eight feet to a post on the west edge of Caroline street; thence with the west edge of the said street south thirty-one east twenty-nine feet to a stake; thence with the back line of various residence lots and crossing said street north sixty-three and one-half east seven hundred and eighty-two feet to a stake, in a line dividing the lands of H. S. and D. M. Crabill, in the hollow; thence with the said line south thirty-one and one-half east three hundred and forty-nine feet to a stake on the west edge of the railroad limits; thence with the northwest line of said railroad north sixty-five and three-fourths east one thousand and sixty-nine feet to a stake in the said limits at the fence; thence crossing the railroad and the Valley turnpike south thirty-eight east three hundred and seventy-two feet to a stake in a gateway back of the barn of D. M. Crabill; thence with a middle fence south forty-eight and one-half west thirteen hundred and thirty-six feet to a large white oak tree, a corner to the residence lots of J. C. Paxton; thence along with the lines of the said lots and including the same south forty-one east three hundred and twenty-two feet to a post; thence south forty-five west nine hundred feet recrossing the creek of Toms Brook to the place of beginning, containing ninety-three acres, one rod, and thirty-five square poles, more or less, including the lands embraced in the Valley pike, the railroad and the county roads.

Whereas, in pursuance of the said order, an election was held in the said town for the election of a mayor and six councilmen, on the twenty-sixth day of March, 1922; and

Whereas, the said persons so elected duly qualified by taking and subscribing the oaths of office and at once entered upon the discharge of the duties of their respective offices, and their successors in office are still performing said duties; now, therefore,

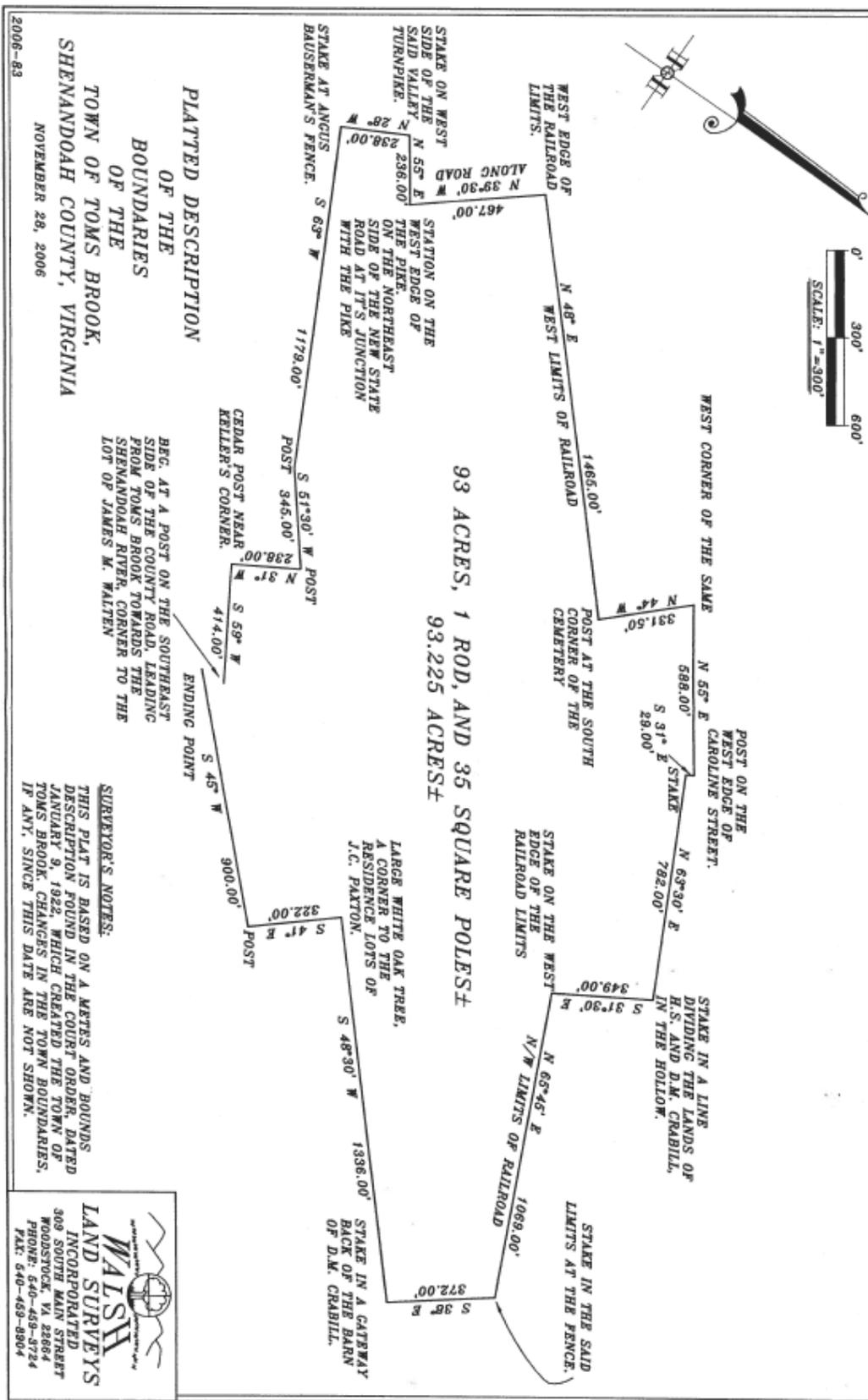
1. Be it enacted by the general assembly of Virginia, That the said order of the circuit court of Shenandoah county, be, and the same is hereby validated, ratified and confirmed, and that the boundaries of the said town shall be in all respects as set out in the said order of the said court.

2. The election aforesaid, and all ordinances passed by the council of the said town and all official acts of the mayor of the said town and its council, not in conflict with the general laws of this Commonwealth, or its Constitution, or the Constitution of the United States, are hereby validated.

3. The present elected officers of the said town shall continue to hold office during the term for which they were elected as now provided by law; and at an election to be held on the second Tuesday in June, 1932, and every four years thereafter, a mayor and six councilmen shall be elected, whose term of office shall begin on the first day of September, following their election and continue for a period of four years thereafter.

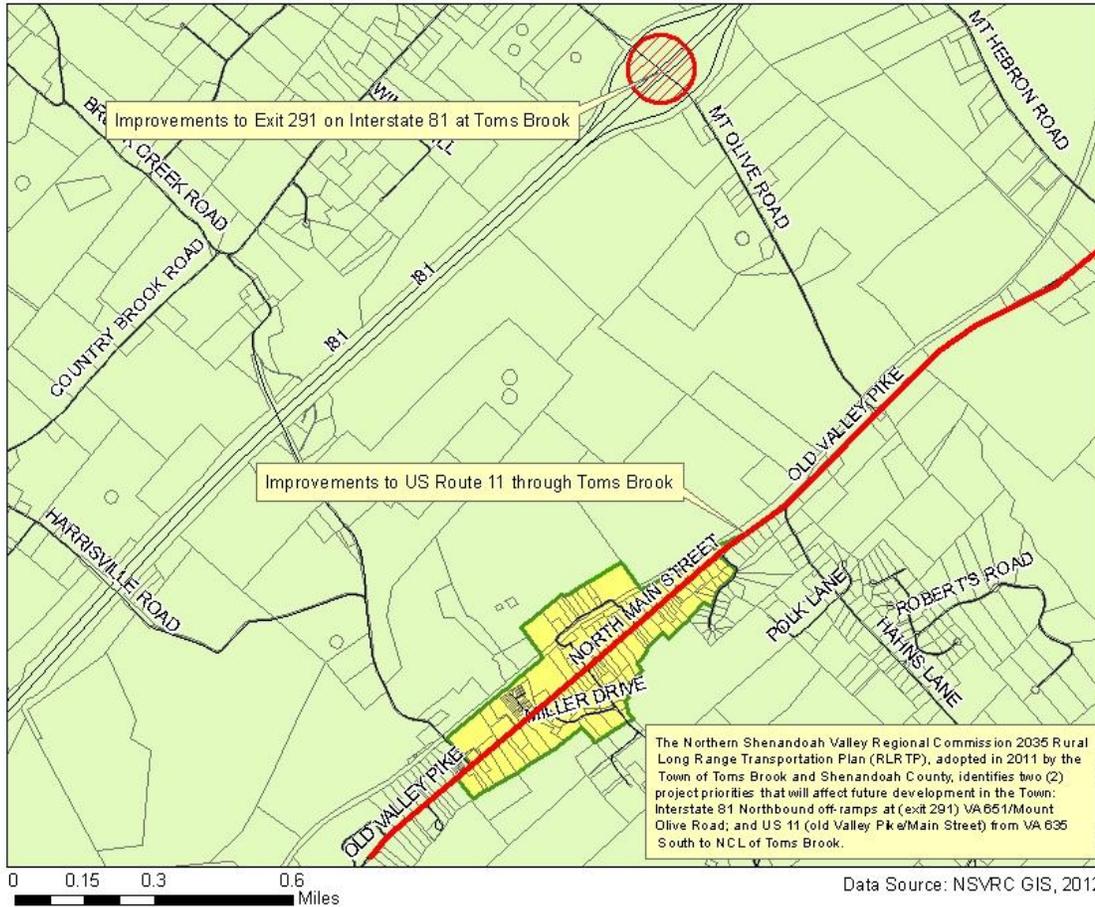
4. The said town shall have a sergeant, clerk, and treasurer and such officers as the council may deem necessary, or proper, all of whom shall be chosen by the council for a term of four years. The council shall prescribe the duties of such officers in addition to the duties required of them by law. It shall also fix their compensation, prescribe the penalties for the neglect of their duties and determine which of such officers shall give bond and shall fix the penalties thereof.

Appendix C: 2006 Toms Brook Town Boundary (Survey)



Appendix D: Transportation Improvement Projects 2013-2033

Transportation Improvement Projects: 2013-2033



Section 9: References

References:

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