

# Six Principles for Better Development

## 1. Conserve Natural and Scenic Assets

The first principle of developing the Valley should be identifying where not to develop. The region's natural and scenic assets can be enjoyed by all—or destroyed by the careless decisions of a few. Successful communities identify the most important natural and scenic resources and develop policies to protect these features. The linchpin of protecting natural areas is to retain the working landscapes, the farms and forests that automatically enhance scenic views, protect natural systems, and contribute to the economic vitality of our communities.

## 2. Conserve As You Grow

As a community develops, it can conserve the lands necessary to maintain the integrity of its rural landscape, natural systems, and special places. Natural resources are certainly priceless, but the benefits they provide also have significant monetary value. "Growing in, not out" can help keep our communities sustainable both environmentally and fiscally. In fact, investing in "green infrastructure" is just as important as planning for other kinds of infrastructure. Within growth areas, much can be done to design in ways that mitigate environmental impact and protect water quality, farmland, historic sites, and other features.

## 3. Build Livable Communities

Villages, towns, and cities can absorb most of the growth in the Valley. Creating attractive and livable communities is the essential counterpoint to protecting the rural areas of the Valley. Building livable communities means rejuvenating and extending the traditional cores that are the heart and soul of Valley communities. Opportunities abound to build from within and all local policies can encourage this

focus. Economic realities, health experts, demographic trends, and rising energy costs all point to the advantages of a more efficient style of development: compact, connected, multi-use neighborhoods. Good design can make these places convenient and vibrant, where people of all ages and income can live, work, and play.

## 4. Preserve Historic Resources

The Valley's rich history is still evident in a wealth of historic and archaeological sites in rural areas as well as in the communities. Using and protecting these settings connects us to our past. Historic preservation also generates jobs and attracts tourists.

## 5. Respect Local Character in New Construction

The bulk of recent building in America is just plain junk. New buildings can either complement the character of Shenandoah Valley communities or they can turn the Valley into "Anyplace USA." Communities can do more to ensure that new construction respects local character. The Valley's natural setting, historical development pattern, and architectural traditions make this a distinctive place. Localities can develop standards that make sure new designs fit this character.

## 6. Reduce the Impact of the Car

Reducing the impact of the car means providing more choices. Greater connections and facilities for walking, biking, and transit make it easy to get around without a car, supporting healthy lifestyles and increasing the independence of young and old alike. Transportation facilities, from roads to bridges, can be designed to be sensitive to their context as well as functional.