



WIRT COUNTY

DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
DECEMBER 2023

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DRAFT

Acknowledgements

There are many people and organizations that participate in the comprehensive plan process. Wirt County's comprehensive plan is no different. First and foremost is the Wirt County Planning Commission that was tasked with drafting a comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission, a volunteer body, has met regularly despite pandemics, weather, and loss of members to discuss the various components that form the Wirt County Comprehensive Plan. Citizens provided input through stakeholder surveys and attendance at open house meetings, leading to invaluable discussions with Planning Commissioners and elected officials.

County Commission Members (as of [insert date of adoption])

- Niki Lowe Garrett, President
- John Griffin
- Robert L. Gunnoe, Jr.

Current County Planning Commission (as of [insert date of adoption])

- Niki Garrett, President
- Catherine Shoemaker, Vice President
- Kathy Mason
- Judy Matheny

Former Wirt County Planning Commission Members

- Greg Thorn
- Diane Ludwig
- Paul Russell
- Robert Lowe
- Bobbi Jo Moore
- Diane Bellis Martin

Town of Elizabeth, Council

- Bobbie Moore, Mayor
- Judith Matheny, Councilperson
- Paul Russell, Councilperson
- Curtis Moore, Councilperson
- Elise Sheppard, Councilperson
- Douglas Hill, Councilperson
- Jeremy Smith, Councilperson

Dedication & In Memoriam

While many have contributed to the Wirt County Comprehensive Plan, there are two individuals who were undeniably important to the development of the County's first comprehensive plan. Both individuals passed away prior to the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

Robert Lowe, former President of the Wirt County Commission, initiated the process of developing a comprehensive plan for Wirt County. Robert, born and raised in Wirt County, was respected by Wirt Countians as well as elected officials throughout West Virginia.

Also, long time Wirt County resident Diane Ludwig, in her role as former Executive Director of the Little Kanawha Area Development Corporation served on the planning commission and provided a deep understanding of the history of the challenges facing the county as well as insight into the opportunities to improve the quality of life for all Wirt Countians.

It is in their memory and their desire to complete a comprehensive plan for Wirt County that the County will endeavor to fully implement this Comprehensive Plan.





Chapter 1

Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a community's plan for future growth and development. Considered a "blueprint" or "roadmap," the comprehensive plan can provide Wirt County (the County) decision-makers with a thoughtful and informed path forward.

Under West Virginia law, the comprehensive plan must be reviewed and updated every ten years. However, the Wirt County Planning Commission (the Planning Commission) considers this plan a living document, to be reviewed and amended periodically and as needed. While the West Virginia State Code requires that land use, economic development, historic preservation, infrastructure, and public services be addressed in all comprehensive plans, the recommendations found in this plan are unique to Wirt County. This plan provides guidance to the County's current and future elected officials. The Wirt County Comprehensive Plan (the Comprehensive Plan) focuses on the community's vision along with goals, objectives, and action steps to bring that vision to light. As part of the public involvement during the comprehensive plan process, Wirt County citizens have helped prioritize the issues and action steps.

How was the comprehensive plan process initiated in Wirt County?

The Wirt County comprehensive planning process began in Fall 2018. The County, with support from the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Commission (MOVRC), requested the assistance of the Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at West Virginia University College of Law to develop a comprehensive plan. After adopting procedures for conducting meetings and public engagement, the Planning Commission members identified the challenges facing Wirt County as well as our many assets. (See Appendix A.)

As part of this initial process, the Planning Commission developed a vision statement to guide the comprehensive planning process. The vision statement is an overarching, forward-thinking statement upon which the goals, objectives, and action steps of the comprehensive plan are developed. All goals and objectives in the comprehensive plan are consistent with the community's overall vision statement.

Who is responsible for the development of a comprehensive plan?

The primary prerequisite for creating a comprehensive plan is the establishment of a planning commission. The Wirt County Planning Commission, appointed by the Wirt County Commission (the County Commission), has met regularly since fall 2018 to develop a comprehensive plan for the County. Provisions in the West Virginia Code outline term limits, composition, size, and powers and duties of the planning commission. The planning commission is the body tasked with preparing the comprehensive plan for the community, and the county commission is responsible for adopting the comprehensive plan. Both bodies are responsible for implementation of the plan once it is adopted.

All meetings conducted during the course of the comprehensive plan process were open to the public as required by the West Virginia Open Governmental Meetings Act. After adoption by the County Commission, the Comprehensive Plan will be forwarded to the Elizabeth Town Council (the Town Council) for consideration and possible adoption.

VISION STATEMENT

WIRT COUNTY IS SHAPED BY FAMILY, KINSHIP, AND A SENSE OF BELONGING. WE TAKE PRIDE IN ENSURING THAT ALL RESIDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND RESOURCES TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN LIFE PATH WITH DIGNITY. WE ARE A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT RETAINS ITS TRANQUILITY AND SENSE OF HISTORY WHILE INFRASTRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY, AND QUALITY EDUCATION CONNECT US WITH THE WORLD. RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ENJOY THE REGION'S NATURAL BEAUTY AND ARE STEWARDS OF ITS RESOURCES.

After developing the vision statement, specific issues were identified and discussed in detail by the planning commission, including:

- Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Education
- Sense of Community
- Other Issues

What are the substantive legal requirements of comprehensive plans?

Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code establishes the scope and purpose of all comprehensive plans in West Virginia. Each comprehensive plan and subsequent update must follow these requirements. As stated in West Virginia Code Section 8A-1-1(a)(5), “a comprehensive plan is a guide to a community’s goals and objectives and a way to meet those goals and objectives.” According to the West Virginia Code, the comprehensive plan should also “be the basis for land development and use and be reviewed and updated on a regular basis,” W. Va. Code §8A-1-1(b)(3), something the code later defines as every 10 years, W. Va. Code §8A-3-11(a). While the 10-year review and update are a minimum requirement if enforcing certain land use tools, a more frequent review and update may be more appropriate. The plan itself must meet certain objectives and contain certain components to be valid. Care has been taken to ensure that all required objectives and components have been sufficiently addressed in the Wirt County Comprehensive Plan.

Why should a community adopt a comprehensive plan?

Beyond planning for the future of a community in a coordinated fashion, a comprehensive plan is often a prerequisite for many grant funding opportunities. A comprehensive plan can be a great supplement to a grant application, even if it is not a prerequisite, because it shows the community’s vision and can show how particular grant awards will help a community to achieve an identified and prioritized goal.

Why is public input important during the comprehensive plan process?

The West Virginia Code requires the planning commission to establish and adopt procedures for public input during the comprehensive plan process. W. Va. Code §8A-3-6. To meet this requirement, the Wirt County Planning Commission adopted public input procedures at the beginning of the comprehensive plan process.

The public input procedures outline the minimum amount of public input that the Planning Commission will solicit. Public participation was solicited throughout the comprehensive plan process to ensure that the Planning Commission's vision and goals are shared with the broader community and that different perspectives and ideas articulated by the community are incorporated into the plan.

How is the plan organized?

The Wirt County Comprehensive Plan is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and lays out the framework with which the rest of the document is to be reviewed. Chapter 2 offers the Community Overview, which gives the reader a historical snapshot of Wirt County and the Town of Elizabeth, as well as a current overview of land use, housing, education, economic development, transportation, and public facilities. Chapter 3 sets out the Needs Assessment, which identifies the issues that should be addressed in order for the county and the town to achieve their vision. Chapter 4 articulates the Action Plan by listing goals, objectives, and specific action steps. The action steps are recommendations that if completed will address the issues and needs identified in Chapter 3.

At the end of Chapter 4, an implementation matrix lists all the action steps, their relative priority, an approximate timeline for completion of each action step, potential partners for implementing action steps, costs, and possible funding sources. While the "implementation matrix" is an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan, it can also be used as a standalone document that guides the community during implementation.





Chapter 2

Community Overview

While the purpose of a comprehensive plan is to envision and develop a plan for the future, it must be based on the County and Town's history as well as current conditions and resources. The community will better understand the needs and thus provide reasonable and meaningful goals and objectives by properly analyzing the information found in this chapter.

Community History

In the late 1700s, shortly after the American Revolution, settlers, mostly from eastern Virginia, arrived in Wirt County. In 1796, the first European settler in what is now the Town of Elizabeth was William Beauchamp, who claimed 1,400 acres of land at Tuckers Riffle on the Little Kanawha River. Wirt County was later created from parts of Jackson and Wood counties on January 19, 1848, by the Virginia General Assembly. The County was named after presidential candidate and former U.S. Attorney General William Wirt.



The national publicity given to the first producing oil well in the country in 1860 in Burning Springs, led to the immigration of over 6,000 residents into Wirt County. In 1863, during the Civil War, the Confederate Army burned oil storage in Burning Springs. Despite this, crude oil continued to be produced in Wirt County. The four lower locks and dams on the Little Kanawha River were built to aid in the export of oil. During that time, there was boat manufacturing in Creston and the Town of Elizabeth supported a glass plant and the Badger Lumber Sawmill. Following the Civil War, the oil industry in Wirt County declined gradually up through the 1890s.

In approximately 1875, landowners in Wirt County began selling their standing timber. In three decades, the entire Little Kanawha basin was completely

denuded of its forest. Some individuals who had worked in the oil industry turned to work in the lumber mills. The Little Kanawha River was used to transport logs to Parkersburg utilizing five locks and dams, all privately constructed by the Little Kanawha Navigation Company except Lock 5 which was built by the Federal government.

After the locks and dams were completed in 1874, boats paid tolls to travel from Parkersburg to Glenville in Gilmer County. The river could handle boats that carried people, mail, and raw products such as coal, oil, and timber. Competing with the river boats, in 1898, the Little Kanawha Railroad Company completed its thirty-mile run from Parkersburg to Owensport, one-half mile upriver from Palestine.

In the 1930s, after the decline of the oil industry in the area, Wirt County experienced significant economic decline. Most economic activity since then has been related to farming, sawmilling, retail, and logging. Today, many residents commute to work in nearby areas—primarily Wood and Jackson Counties. The county seat is the Town of Elizabeth, thirty minutes away from Parkersburg, a regional hub for trade and commerce. There is also a significant amount of land in Wirt County being utilized for agriculture. According to the 2017 Agricultural Census, 41,437 acres in Wirt County were being utilized for agriculture, which is approximately 28% of the total land area of Wirt County. There were over 4,200 cattle and 1,137 chickens in Wirt County in 2017. While these numbers are not overwhelming, they are significant given the small population of Wirt County.

Constraints on Development

According to the County Flood Mitigation Recovery Plan, most roads in Wirt County parallel rivers and streams. Bridges are often inundated during heavy rainfall events and, as a result, access to certain communities is often blocked. The Little Kanawha River and parts of the Hughes, West Fork, and Spring Creek have a history of flooding. The most notable floods happened in the 20th century before the construction of Burnsville Dam in 1976 and the Hughes River impoundment. Local water sources continue to pose a reasonable risk particularly in the face of a changing climate. Because Wirt County rivers are relatively small, flooding can be affected by the backwaters of the Ohio River and from heavy rain, upriver. For this reason, most flood damage in Wirt County happens in flash flood situations, while flooding in most communities along the Ohio River is usually a more gradual event. Flood events can cause bank erosion that threatens the stability of homes and buildings.

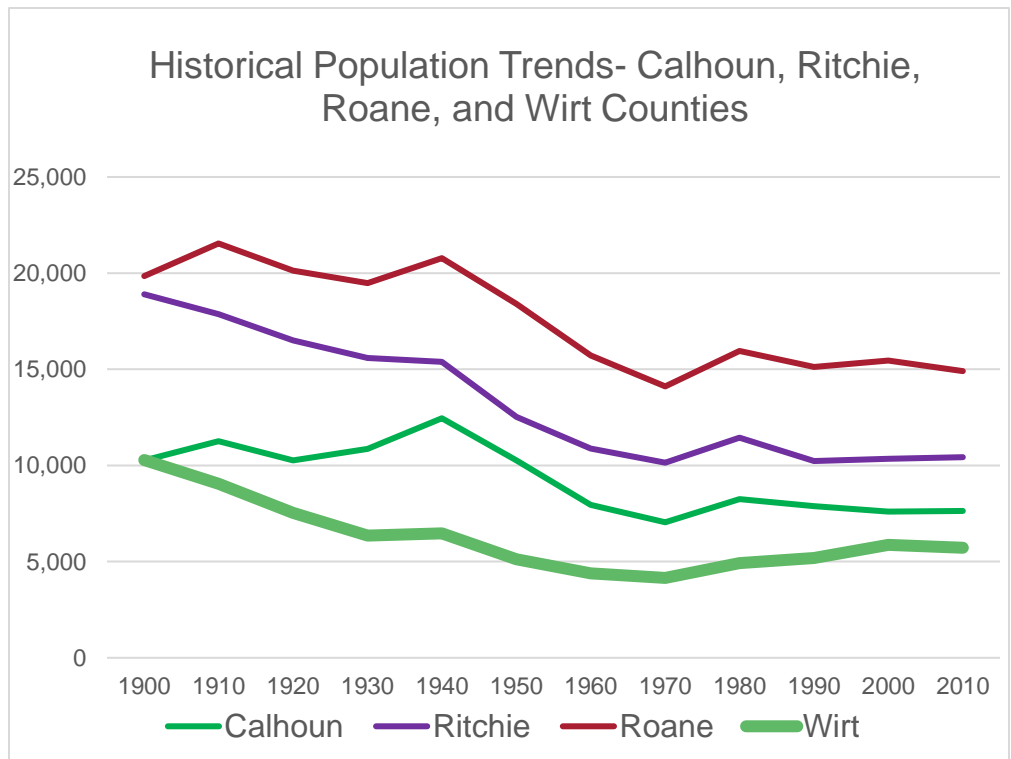
Both Wirt County and the Town of Elizabeth participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Participation in NFIP, a voluntary program, allows citizens who own property in the floodplain and have a federally backed mortgage to purchase flood insurance. As part of NFIP, communities are required to enforce (1) regulations related to development in the floodplain and (2) mitigation measures to decrease the likelihood of property damage or personal injury. However, many policyholders have experienced significant increases in their flood insurance premiums due to a change in federal policy in 2015.

Community Characteristics

Population

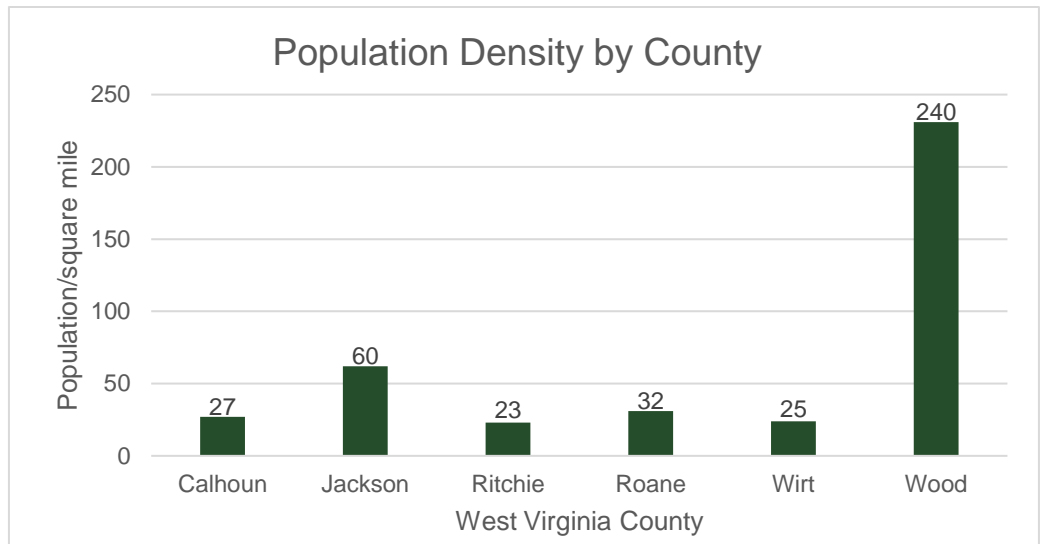
According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of Wirt County is 5,194, which is the lowest population in the state. The Town of Elizabeth has a population of 719 people, approximately 12% of the County's population. Most county residents live in the unincorporated communities of Creston, Palestine, and Newark on family farms or in secluded homes nestled up in one of the many hollows.

The population of Wirt County and the adjoining counties, including Calhoun, Ritchie, and Roane, all declined between the 1940s and the 1970s, followed by relatively stagnate population numbers between 1970 and 2010. Unlike most of West Virginia, however, the population of Wirt County has increased slightly since the 1970s except for a period of slight decrease between 2000 and 2010. The increase in the population between 1970 and 2000 has been attributed, in part, to the



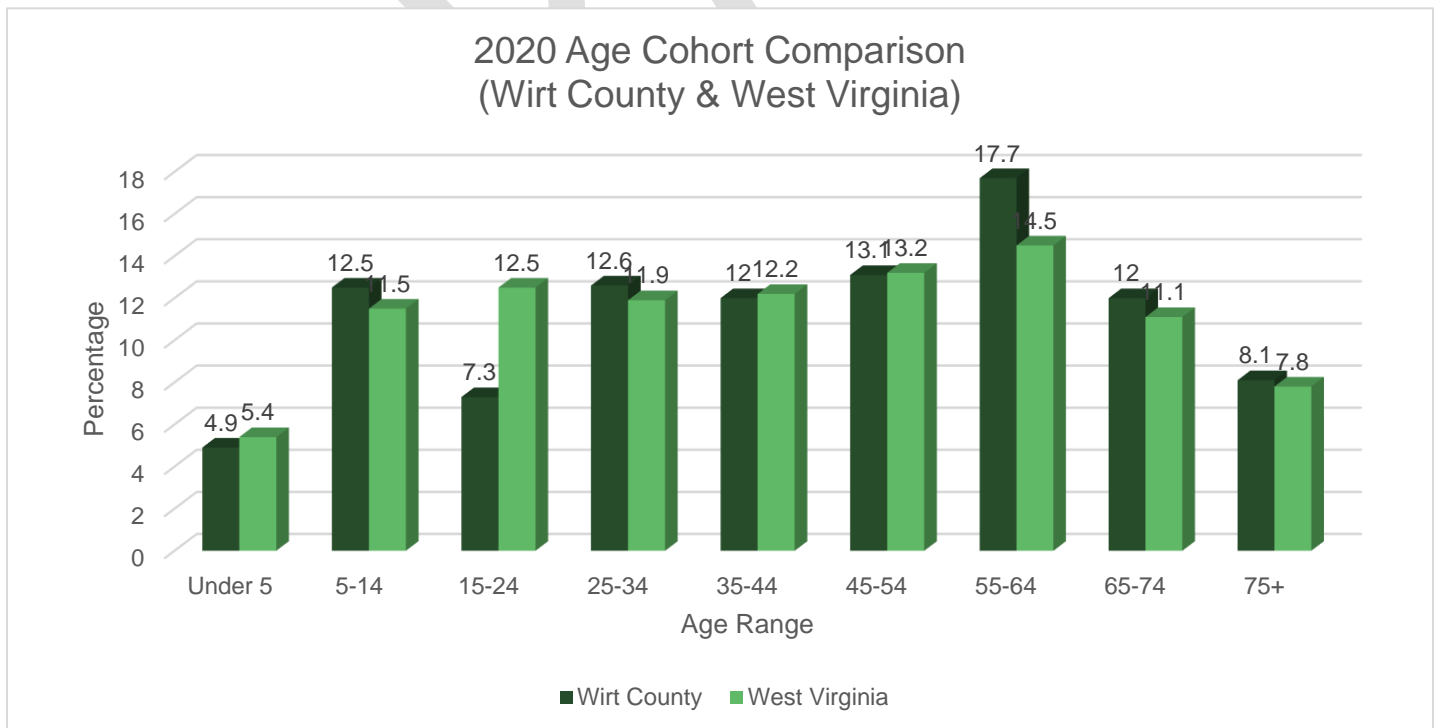
construction of apartment complexes and in-migration from neighboring Wood County. Particularly in the 1970s, there was an immigration of “baby boomers” seeking affordable land and a rural lifestyle. That trend has continued as this generation retired.

Population density varies considerably in the Mid-Ohio Valley. Wood County has by far the highest population density (240 people per square mile) in the region, followed by Jackson County (60 people per/square mile). Wirt, Calhoun, Ritchie, and Roane have between 23 and 25 people per square mile. These counties not only have low population densities but also low overall population.



Median Age and Age Cohorts

The 2020 U.S. Census indicates the median age in Wirt County is 46.1, about 3.5 years older than the state’s median age. Most Wirt County age cohorts are largely mirrored by the State’s cohort distribution; however, Wirt County has a significantly higher percentage of residents in the 55 to 64 age range and conversely the state has a much higher proportion of 15 to 24-year-old residents compared to Wirt County.



Ethnicity

In 2020, in Wirt County, 96.5% of residents identify as white, 0.4% identify as Latino, and 6 Wirt County residents identify as Black or African American. Ethnic diversity is lower compared to the rest of the state, where 89.8% of the population identify as white-only and 3.7% identify as Black or African American only and 1.9% identify as Hispanic or Latino.

Economic Characteristics

One of the largest employers in the County is the Board of Education, employing approximately 140 teachers and staff members. Other top employers include Wirt County Committee on Aging & Family Services, Inc.; Wirt County Health Services Association; West Virginia Department of Highways; and AJC Ventures, LLC (Elizabeth Piggly Wiggly). Another way of looking at these numbers, according to the 2020 Census, 19% of the county's workforce are employed in local, state, and federal government; 69.1% are employees of private companies; 6.1% are self-employed; and 5.8% work for private not-for-profit organizations. Almost 30% of the land in Wirt County is utilized for agriculture. In 2017, when the last Agricultural Census was taken, there were 256 farming operations that had a total of \$3.05 million in agricultural operating expenses and \$2.3 million in agricultural commodity sales.

Many Wirt County residents commute to Wood County for work. Wood County is part of the Parkersburg-Vienna Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that includes Pleasants, Wirt, and Wood counties in West Virginia, along with Washington County in Ohio. The 2020 Census indicates that about 80% of Wirt Countians drive alone to work and have about a 37-minute commute.

Income and Unemployment

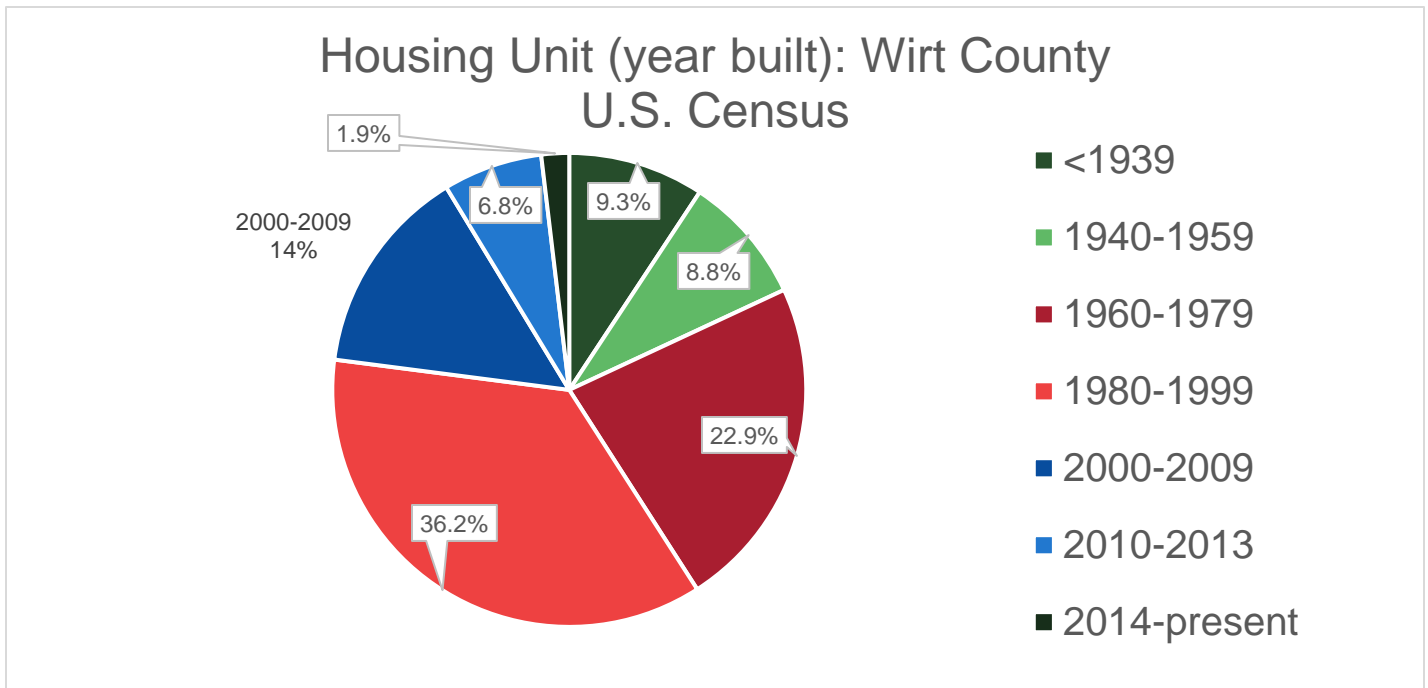
According to 2020 U.S. Census data, the median household income for Wirt County residents was \$45,315, while the median income in the State was \$51,248. In 2020, the unemployment rate in Wirt County was 10.6% according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED). This was over double the state's unemployment rate of 5.1%. Furthermore, according to 2020 U.S. Census statistics, 22.2% of families in Wirt County live below the poverty line, significantly higher than the state's poverty rate of 16.8%.

Housing

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, there were 2,702 total housing units in Wirt County. Of these housing units, 2,211 (~82%) are occupied. Approximately 82% of inhabited homes in Wirt County are owner occupied, leaving 18% of inhabited residential structures as rental units.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (GRAPI) is a tool to indicate housing affordability. GRAPI calculates how much of an individual's annual income goes toward annual rent, with 30% or less being the proportion where housing is considered affordable. The GRAPI in Wirt County is 16%, suggesting that housing is affordable and is lower than West Virginia's GRAPI, which is 18.5%.

There are two public housing developments in the Town of Elizabeth that accept rental assistance: a Section 202 low-income elderly development with twenty-four units and a Section 8 project-based development with eight units. Section 515 rural rental housing loans have also been utilized throughout Wirt County.



The chart shows the years in which Wirt County’s residential structures were built. Of the residential structures currently in Wirt County, 36.2% of the structures were built between the 1960s and 1970s. Census data shows that 23% of residential structures in Wirt County were built after 2000.

Health

“The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps” program is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin’s Population Health Institute. The Health Rankings program provides county-wide health summaries throughout the United States. According to the health ranking program, in 2022, Wirt County ranked 38th out of the 55 counties in West Virginia in terms of health outcomes.¹ Many aspects of a community influence health, including water and air quality, healthcare access, and the built environment.

According to the rankings, approximately 28% of Wirt County residents are in “fair” to “poor” health. Approximately 42% of residents are obese, slightly higher than the West Virginia state average of 40%. The 2020 U.S. Census indicated that about 27% of the Wirt County populace is disabled relative to 19% in the State as a whole. Approximately 4.1% of Wirt County residents are uninsured, lower than the State average (6.2%).

Under the health ranking program, the food environmental index measures access to healthy foods in a given jurisdiction: “This measure includes access to healthy foods by considering the distance an individual lives from a grocery store or supermarket, locations for health food purchases in most communities, and the inability

¹ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Wirt, West Virginia, *available at* <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/west-virginia/2022/rankings/wirt/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot> (last accessed Nov. 20, 2023).

to access healthy food because of cost barriers.”² Wirt County has a score of 8.3 out of 10 on the food environmental index, significantly higher than the state average of 6.9.

Although there are no hospitals in Wirt County, Coplin Health Systems Wirt County Family Care provides primary care, behavioral health, addiction services, women’s health, occupational health, chronic disease management, acute care, newborn, adolescent, and geriatric care, as well as pharmacy, x-ray, and laboratory services. As an additional medical resource, Wirt County Veterans may take advantage of the VA Hospital in Clarksburg, WV.

According to the County Health Rankings, Wirt County has an exceedingly high patient-to-doctor ratio (5,810:1) compared to the State (1,270:1) as well as a high patient-to-dentist ratio (5,790:1) compared to the State (1,860:1), with approximately one doctor and dentist serving the entire county.

According to the Bureau of Health, despite falling within the Parkersburg-Vienna Metropolitan Statistical Area, Wirt County is still considered a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) and thus is eligible for telemedicine services. There are currently two telehealth providers in Wirt County: the Wirt County Health Services Association (the primary-care division of the local DHHR) and the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department. Statewide, the number of doctors providing telehealth has increased since the pandemic.

The opioid crisis is a concern throughout West Virginia. However, the drug overdose rate is significantly lower in Wirt County. Between 2014 and 2016, Wirt County had the lowest rate of all drug overdose deaths per 100,000 in West Virginia as well as the lowest rate of Opioid overdose deaths per 100,000.³

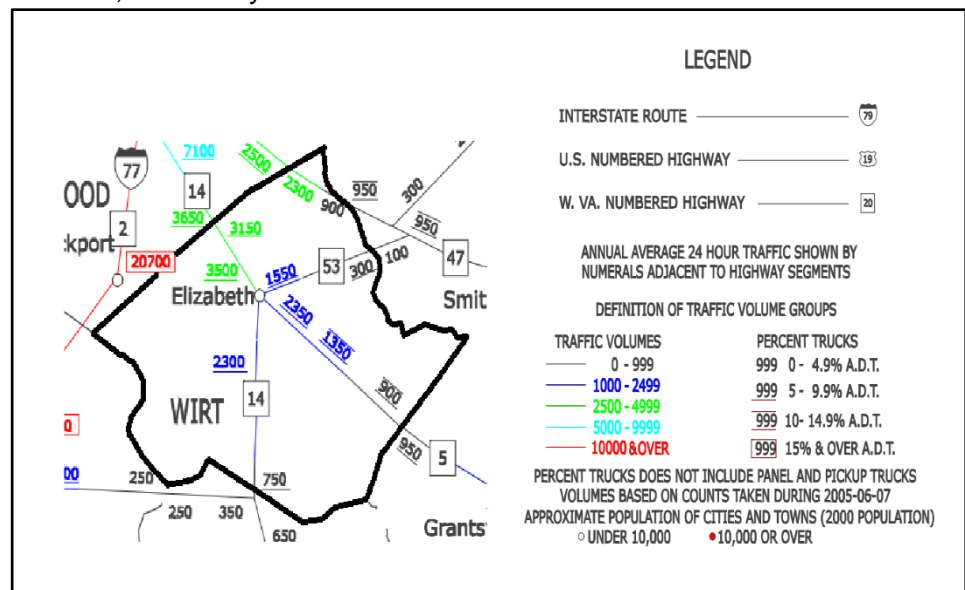
Transportation

The primary roads located in Wirt County are Route 14 and Route 5. Route 14, northwest of Elizabeth, is the only road in Wirt County that has a daily traffic count of more than 3,500 average daily trips (ADT) according to recent DOH traffic counts.

The ADT rate on Route 14 increases closer to Parkersburg and the interchange with Interstate 77. According to traffic counts, most of the traffic in Wirt County is going to and from Wood County and Parkersburg.

There are approximately 400 miles of road in Wirt County

Figure 2.1: Annual Average Traffic Volume in Wirt County



² *Id.*
³ West Virginia Board of Pharmacy, Prescription Opioid Problematic Prescribing Indicators County Report, Wirt County (Oct. 2017), available at https://helpandhopewv.org/docs/PFS_County_Reports/Wirt_PfS%20County%20Reports_Final.pdf.

that are maintained by WVDOT. This is about 0.08 mi/capita, which is significantly higher than the State average at 0.02 mi/capita.

In terms of air travel, the closest airport is the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Airport, just north of Parkersburg. This small airport has daily service with Contour Airlines to Beckley and Charlotte, along with seasonal service to Tampa, Florida. The airport is part of a federally subsidized Essential Air Service program. The nearest airport with international connections is Yeager Airport (69.9 mi), located in Charleston, West Virginia. Other nearby airports include Clarksburg Airport (95 mi), John Glenn Columbus International Airport (139 mi), and Pittsburgh International Airport (170 mi). Hales Landing Airport is the only airport in the County. This local airport is privately owned, with a 3,100 x 75-foot turf runway.

There are no intermodal transportation systems in Wirt County. Intermodal transportation is defined as transport that involves more than one mode of transportation. For example, if coal was transported by truck, then transferred onto a train, and then continued by barge, this would be considered intermodal transportation.

Education

Three schools are maintained by Wirt County Schools: Wirt County Primary Center, Wirt County Middle School, and Wirt County High School. The Primary Center serves students Pre-K through 5th grade, the Middle School serves 6th through 8th grade, and the High School serves from 9th through 12th grade. Total enrollment has steadily declined since (at least) 2015 and was at 923 students in 2022. Fifty-four percent of the students are considered low socio-economic status (Low SES).

All students in Wirt County have the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch for free through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program. Wirt County currently has two Title I schools: the Wirt County Primary Center and the Wirt County Middle School. These schools are eligible to use “Title I funds to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.”⁴ Title I funds are typically used for noninstructional costs if the costs can be shown to improve student learning and achievement.

Keeping in mind the challenges facing all schools during and post-pandemic, the West Virginia Department of Education indicates that the “meet or exceed” proficiency rates for all Wirt County schools are 36% in mathematics, 24% in science, and 39% in reading. These proficiency rates are higher than the State’s proficiency rates in mathematics (28%) and science (37.0%). The science and reading proficiency rates are lower in Wirt County compared to the State’s average proficiency.

According to U.S. News and World Report, Wirt County High School ranks 97th out of 110 West Virginia high schools. For the past 7 years, the 4-year graduation rate has remained steady as has attendance rate. In 2021, the graduation rate was 90.8%. Neither the attendance rate nor the graduation rate was significantly different than that of the State as a whole. The 2020 U.S. Census Estimates indicate that 10.6% of Wirt County residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. This percentage is lower than the state of West Virginia, with 21.3% of the population having at least some college or advanced level education.

The Dora B. Woodyard Memorial Library provides services to the citizens of Wirt County. Services include a Pre-K story hour every Monday, Middle School STEAM on Wednesdays, adult book club once a month, and a summer reading program during the month of July. There are two full-time and three part-time employees of

⁴ West Virginia Department of Education, Title I, *available at* <https://wvde.us/esea-programs/esea-title-programs/title-i/> (last accessed Nov. 20, 2023).

the library. The library also has a sewing machine, heat press, Cricut machine, and a 3D printer. Other resources found at the library include magazines, local newspapers, seven public computer stations, a meeting room, a Genealogy/WV History section, access to Ancestry.com, and access to ABC Mouse.

Infrastructure

Electricity and gas

Wirt County residents have access to electrical service through Monongahela Power Company and natural gas service through Mountaineer Gas Company. Water and sewer are either provided by one of the utilities or by a privately owned well or septic tank.

Sewer and Water

Four wastewater treatment providers serve Wirt County, although some areas within the county are not serviced by any wastewater treatment utility. The cost of wastewater treatment service varies throughout the County. The following costs come from the State's Public Service Commission Website as of September 2022:

- Little Kanawha Service Company charges \$32.06 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with a minimum cost of \$18.86 for residents. The company is ranked 68 out of 316 for lowest sewer costs in West Virginia.
- The Newark Acres Homeowners Association, Inc., is ranked 110 and charges \$36.55 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with a minimum cost of \$21.50.
- The Spring Valley Homeowners Association is ranked 218 and charges \$48.68 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with no minimum cost.
- The Elizabeth Municipal Sewer Department is ranked 228 and charges \$50.29 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with a minimum cost of \$44.37 for residents.

Three water utilities serve customers in Wirt County. The Claywood Park Public Service District (PSD) is ranked 89 out of 365 for lowest water treatment cost in West Virginia. Claywood charges \$31.69 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with a minimum cost of \$28.86.

The other two water utilities are Mineral Wells PSD and the Town of Elizabeth. Mineral Wells PSD ranks 184 and charges \$40.65 for every 3,400 gallons, with a minimum cost of \$36.15. Elizabeth Municipal Water Department ranks 315 and charges \$55.20 for every 3,400 gallons treated, with a minimum cost of \$33.50. About 850 customers are part of Elizabeth's water system. Of those, about half have both water and sewer. For Wirt County residents without water service from a PSD, water must be drawn from a private well or hauled to residences.

Telecommunications and Broadband

While not a public utility in West Virginia, broadband is an important part of everyday life. Many people in rural areas of the state depend on their smart phone for data so part of the broadband discussion includes the availability of cellular communications. Frontier provides DSL via phone lines in limited areas of Wirt County and Starlink is available throughout the County. Still, many areas in Wirt County do not have cell phone service.

Recreation and Tourism

Hunting, trapping, and fishing are a significant part of Wirt County history and culture and have long been the major recreational activities. The Little Kanawha (LK) is known for trophy sized musky and catfish. Kayaking on the LK has been increasing. Wirt County also exhibits a diversity of flora and fauna that indicates a relatively healthy biosystem.

Wirt County is also rich in historical sites. Burning Springs Park, approximately eight miles east of Elizabeth, has the nation's first oil and gas field and the world's oldest producing oil well. The park attracts sightseers interested in learning about the oil and gas field along with the area's role in the Civil War and West Virginia's statehood. The Beauchamp Newman Museum in Elizabeth is a historical museum featuring the home of Alfred Beauchamp, the Town's first European settler. The museum was the site of the first courthouse in the County and is a repository for historical information and artifacts related to Wirt County.



Wirt County amusements include vineyards, archery, golf, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. Wirt County has a public shooting and archery range maintained by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. The 180-acre Mingo Bottom Golf Club in Elizabeth is an 18-hole golf course with a driving range, practice green, pro shop, and club house.

Public Safety

Wirt County provides numerous public safety services to its residents. Wirt County uses the same 911 network as Wood County. The network now utilizes a reverse 911 emergency alert system for flood and disaster alerts. One thing that was mentioned several times when speaking with the public is that there is significant need for the County to build a 911 Center.

The Wirt County Sheriff's Department consists of four officers and three office workers. There is also the Elizabeth-Wirt Fire Department and an Office of Emergency Services that handles EMS calls.



The Elizabeth-Wirt Volunteer Fire Department has 32 members and 3 engines, 1 tanker, 1 rescue vehicle, 2 brush trucks, and 2 boats. The department responds to over 100 calls per year. Most calls are related to structural, vehicular, or brush fires. The Fire Department also takes calls regarding car accidents, water rescue, hazardous materials, medical first-response, storm cleanup, utility pole issues, and rockslides.

Existing Land Use

Wirt County is comprised of over 160,000 acres of land. The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated that the County had approximately 40,000 acres of farmland, roughly 28% of all land within the County. For comparison, the entire Mid-Ohio Valley has around 554,594 acres of farmland, making up about 36% of land in the region. In West Virginia, 3,622,178 acres or 24% of the land in the State was used for agricultural purposes.

In 2017, Wirt County had 256 farms with an average of 162 acres each, amounting to approximately one farm per 23 people. In comparison, the Mid-Ohio Valley had a total of 3,700 farms, or around 43 people for each farm. Meanwhile, the State of West Virginia had a total of 23,622 farms in 2017, or 76 people for every farm in the state.

In 2017, the total market value of all agricultural products sold in Wirt County was approximately \$2.3 million dollars. This represented around 4.3% of the total County GDP, with 73% of the agricultural product coming

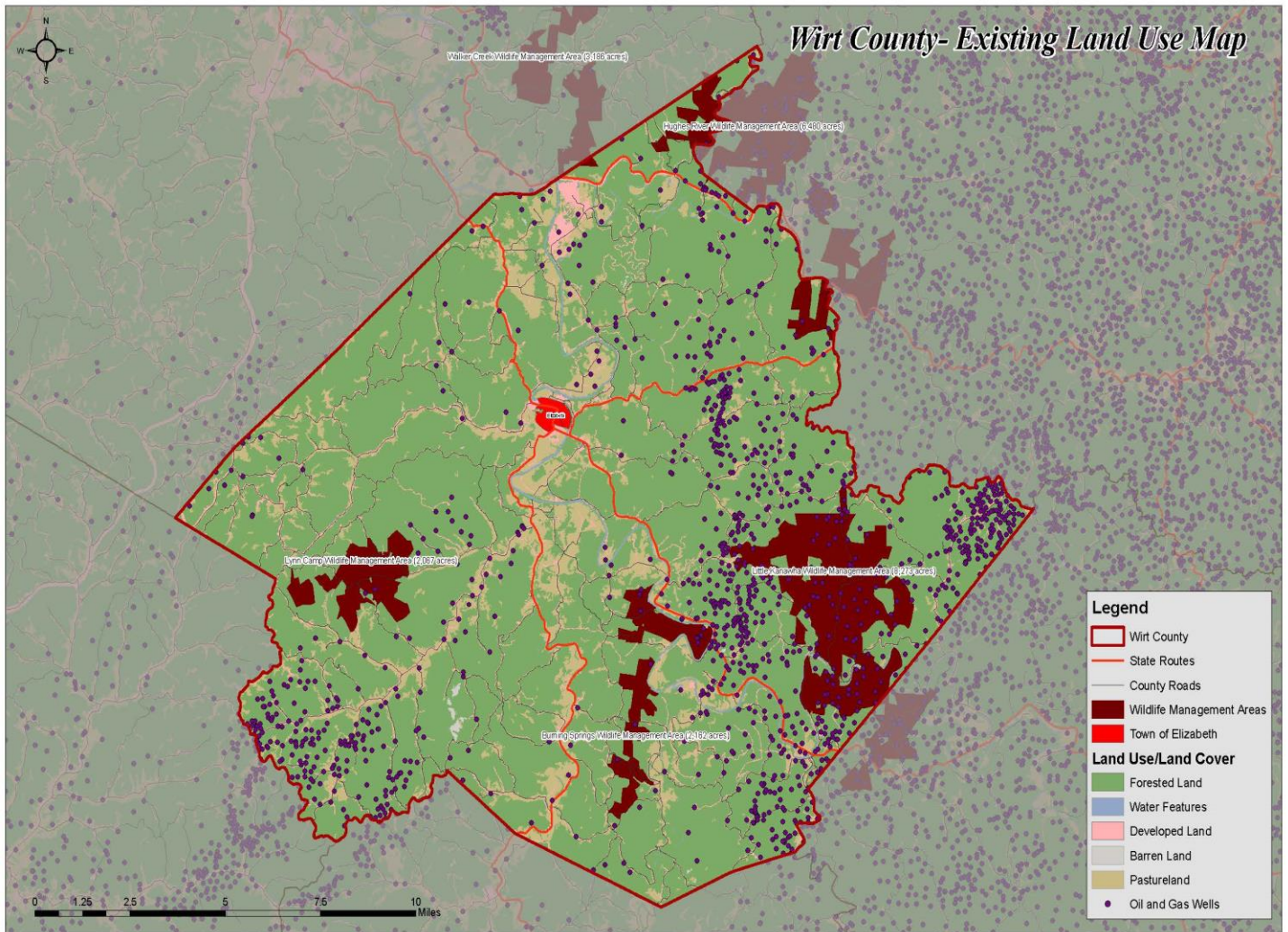


from livestock. The Mid-Ohio Valley had a total agricultural product market value of \$35 million, which represented 5.9% of total regional GDP. West Virginia's agricultural products in 2017 had a market value of around \$754.3 million, only 1.1% of total state GDP.

The most common livestock in Wirt County is cattle, followed by layers (chickens for eggs) and sheep, which is consistent for the region. Ninety-seven percent, or 6,420 acres, of harvested cropland in Wirt County was used for forage land (hay, grass silage, greenchop), followed by 83 acres harvested of corn for grain, 58 acres harvested of corn for silage or greenchop, and 41 acres harvested for all other vegetables. The rest of the Mid-Ohio Valley displayed a similar predominance of forage land.

In the 1950s, Westvaco Corporation began purchasing family farms and woodlots in western West Virginia, including in Wirt County. The company raised timber for pulp until about 2008. At one point, Westvaco owned 40% of the land in Wirt County. In December 2018, the remainder of the property then owned by the Heartland Forestland Group (TFG) was conveyed to the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources (WVDNR). TFG owned 42,430 acres in the County – 28% of the County.

The existing land use map is created to show how the land in Wirt County is generally being utilized currently. Most of the County is either forest land or pastureland with a sizable portion of the county being utilized as wildlife management areas through the state's Division of Natural Resources. Wirt County also has many oil and gas wells, particularly in the eastern and northeastern portion of the county.



Named in honor of pioneer Jesse Hughes, the Hughes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is over 10,000 acres of land in Wirt and Richie Counties. The land is privately owned but leased by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources (WVDNR). The Hughes WMA spans the riverfront and mountainside, providing many opportunities for fishing and hunting. Several participants of the comprehensive plan process indicated a desire to expand the number of activities permitted in the WMA. The property is leased by the WV DNR, and regulations limit the type of activities permitted within the WMA. Desired activities include birding, photography, artist retreats, introductory archery, and heritage hunting events. Community members want to better utilize the WMAs in Wirt County and desire a conversation between local outdoor recreation advocates and WMA representatives regarding future utilization of the Hughes WMA.



To promote hunting and fishing in western West Virginia and contribute to the state local economies, WVDNR purchased over 12,000 acres in Jackson, Pleasants, Richie, and Wirt counties from the Heartwood Forestland Group (TFG). The purchase included almost 2,000 acres

that later became the Burning Springs and Little Kanawha River Wildlife Management Areas, both largely within Wirt County. The WVDNR does not pay property taxes on that property and so does not contribute to local schools or local law enforcement.

Historic Resources

Within Wirt County, the National Register of Historic Places includes six (6) properties: the Beauchamp-Newman House, Buffalo Church, the Burning Springs Complex, Kanawha Hotel, Ruble Church, and the Wirt County Courthouse. Wirt County has a local Historic Landmarks Commission as well.



The Beauchamp-Newman House is a historic home that was built in the 1830s by the grandson of the first settler in the community. The building currently houses a museum run by the Elizabeth Beauchamp Chapter Daughters of American Pioneers. Buffalo Church is a historic Methodist church that was built in the 1880s, and Ruble Church is a historic structure dating back to the 1850s with a cemetery dating to the same timeframe. The church was demolished and is being reconstructed with the same materials. The Kanawha Hotel was built around 1800 and served as a hotel for over 100 years before becoming a private residence—this building is potentially the oldest in the County. Lastly, the beautiful Wirt County Courthouse has been serving the community since 1910.

Governance

The County Commission is made up of three (3) elected positions. The Town of Elizabeth, which is the only incorporated community in Wirt County is made up of a Town Council that consists of a mayor and six (6) elected council members. The County employs approximately twenty-five (25) people and the Town employs six (6) people.



Chapter 3

Needs Assessment

The purpose of Chapter 3: Needs Assessment is to identify the needs of Wirt County residents. One of the primary reasons to identify needs is for the community to then develop recommendations to address those needs. This focuses on the main identified issues: infrastructure, economic development, education, sense of community, and other critical issues.

Issue: Improving Infrastructure

A wide range of infrastructure needs are present in Wirt County. Although historically not considered infrastructure or a public utility, society has increasingly accepted broadband and access to the internet as essential to everyday life. In addition, more traditional forms of infrastructure need attention within the County as well. In terms of transportation, several roads throughout the County need attention and opportunities to connect with nearby public transit should be considered. Other everyday essentials—water and wastewater services—are lacking or needing repair.

Broadband Access

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the need for communities, especially rural communities, to be connected with high-speed internet. Although wireless telecommunications technology has rapidly advanced in the last two decades, in rural America, especially mountainous areas, cell phone service is scarce.

Telework and telemedicine, which require fast, reliable internet, are becoming more desirable and practicable. Telemedicine is aimed at improving healthcare, especially in rural areas, by enabling providers, including specialists, to consult and treat patients remotely. Telemedicine can enable remote access to healthcare services that might not otherwise be available. Telemedicine may also serve a critical role in addressing the opioid epidemic: research has suggested that the more rehabilitative sessions a person attended via telemedicine, the higher the likelihood that a person will stay in an opioid treatment program. However, telemedicine is a supplement to and not a replacement for all medical diagnosis and treatment. While some interactions between medical personnel and patients can be completed virtually, telehealth and telemedicine cannot fully replace the benefits of in-person medical care.

TELEWORK IS DEFINED AS “A WORK FLEXIBILITY ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH AN EMPLOYEE PERFORMS THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUCH EMPLOYEE’S POSITION, AND OTHER AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES, FROM AN APPROVED WORKSITE OTHER THAN THE LOCATION FROM WHICH THE EMPLOYEE WOULD OTHERWISE WORK.”



For many West Virginians, their cellular phone is the primary means to access the Internet. Cellular data is often unreliable, has slow speeds, and can be expensive to access. Therefore, broadband fiber is often seen as the reliable and effective internet technology available. However, in the immediate future Wirt County officials should continue to encourage the further proliferation of telecommunications towers and providers.

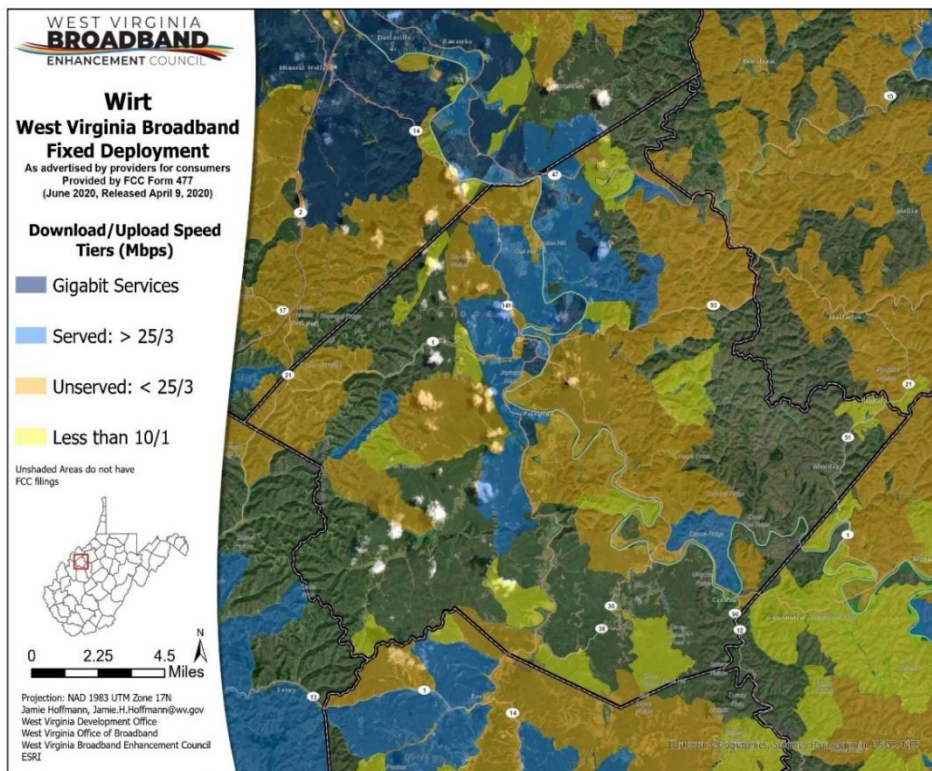
During the comprehensive plan process, participants suggested that cellular phone service is largely

lacking in the County. While there has been space on existing communication towers for additional telecommunication facilities, providers have indicated there is not enough demand in Wirt County to install more telecommunication facilities.



Beyond cellular, county officials, including the Planning Commission, should work with state elected officials to understand how different broadband technologies and initiatives can improve broadband in Wirt County. For example, the Zayo broadband fiber backbone going through the northern part of West Virginia could enhance broadband in Wirt County. Initiatives and technologies include 5G, Starlink, and the use of analog tv channels to broadcast the internet. Wirt County needs to develop a strategy to ensure that there is a plan to develop comprehensive broadband access throughout the county. This may include regional partnerships, coordination at that state level, public-private partnerships, and grant funding.

At the same time, many working professionals are placing a greater emphasis on a desire to locate and work from where they enjoy rather than where the office is located. Being able to market Wirt County as a community with reliable broadband for individuals to telework is one of the bigger opportunities for economic growth in Wirt County.



Not only is broadband something to market to teleworkers but also retirees. People are often looking to retire in areas with lower costs, low crime rate, and a slower pace of life. However, retirees are also looking for reliable internet to keep in touch with friends, family, and to maintain a connection with the outside world.

Having reliable high-speed broadband is also important for small producers, entrepreneurs, and crafts people who are looking to market their wares. Local artisans and folks working in agriculture can access a whole new purchasing demographic (e.g., Etsy, eBay, farm to table, etc.) through the Web. In addition

to local entrepreneurs selling their goods and services online, there is also going to be a continued need for Wirt County residents to purchase items online that are not locally available.

Broadband access for public school students has been particularly troubling. In 2020, Wirt County Schools conducted a broadband survey. The school system focused on student accessibility to broadband. Of the students surveyed, 7% had no internet access at home; 13% had access, but the service was not adequate; and 80% had access and indicated it was adequate. Only 36% of Wirt County students have a device with which to access the internet. During the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, Wirt County Schools worked with AT&T to establish hotspots for students to access the internet in various locations throughout the county. While the hotspots were helpful, they are a temporary fix and not a long-term solution.

Funding is a critical part of the rural broadband question. Wirt County and the Town of Elizabeth are eligible for Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) broadband funding. Wirt County is receiving the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) monies. The RDOF funds will allow Frontier and Citynet to bring additional broadband infrastructure into Wirt County. The Little Kanawha Area Development Corporation has been working with local providers to ensure transparency of their future broadband plans in Wirt County.

In January 2020, the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy changed Wirt County's designation from "urban" to "rural." The rural designation allows the county to pursue additional grant funds not previously available to the county.

Transportation

For many years, the Little Kanawha River provided a means of transporting goods and people into and out of Wirt County. Today, most transportation is by vehicle. Although there is no direct interstate access in Wirt County, many residents, especially in the western part of the County, can access Interstate-77 with relative ease.



Needed road improvements are an important concern in Wirt County. Sections of Route 47 are falling into the river. Portions of Route 14, near the Wood County line, are showing signs of road slippage. Creston Bridge exhibits significant safety concerns. Additionally, a guardrail is needed on Route 14 at Wolfpen Gap. Local officials should coordinate with the West Virginia Department of Transportation, District 3 to prioritize transportation projects in Wirt County.

Pedestrian transportation systems include hiking trails, walking loops, rail trails, or sidewalks. One of the concerns mentioned during the comprehensive plan process was to ensure there are adequate sidewalks in Elizabeth where there are population clusters. Part of the concern includes ADA compliance of sidewalks focusing on curb cuts, sufficient sidewalk width, and ensuring the sidewalks are free of obstacles.

Although neighboring counties have access to public transit, none serve Wirt County. The Little Kanawha Bus Service provides service to Jackson, Roane, Gilmer, and Calhoun Counties. In addition, the Easy Rider Bus, operated by the Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority, provides service in Wood County and the City of Parkersburg. Wirt County officials should collect quantitative and qualitative data on potential transit ridership

in the county. If the data collected indicates that a transit service would be sufficiently utilized, officials should coordinate with one of the regional transit services to establish a trial run.

The Well's Lock and Dam was built in 1891 and is owned by the WV Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The original purpose for constructing the dam was to keep water levels appropriate for boat traffic between Parkersburg and Glenville. Now a popular fishing and recreation spot, this historic structure is the last remaining of the original five dams built on Little Kanawha River. Some recent efforts are underway to help stabilize the aging dam. Local officials would like the dam to be kept as a recreational amenity and historical site, recognizing the importance the lock and dam had in the development of the community.

Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Infrastructure

The operation and maintenance of water and wastewater treatment facilities is an essential function of local government and public service districts throughout West Virginia. However, many communities in West Virginia need significant repairs to both water and wastewater facilities.

While most in Wirt County are serviced by water treatment facilities, significantly fewer portions of the County are serviced by wastewater treatment utilities. Lack of public sewer thwarts business development, especially outside of Elizabeth. Generally, essential infrastructure facilities rank very high on a community's priority list due to their importance to future growth and development.

As part of the 2020 CARES Act, Wirt County was allocated \$1.13 million, while the Town of Elizabeth was awarded \$350,000. Uncertainty remains as to how these funds will be used. Local officials hope that the federal funds can help address infrastructure concerns in the county.

Spring Valley was established in the early 1980s as a vacation and camping community. The development was served by a private utility system for water and wastewater. Over the years, as full-time residents settled, both the water and sewer systems deteriorated. In 2017, Claywood Park Public Service District (PSD) connected the Spring Valley community to the PSDs water system and built a new wastewater treatment plant in Spring Valley. The primary issue that remains is that the sewer lines in Spring Valley were privately installed and the Claywood Park PSD will not take ownership of those collection lines. These lines may not have been properly constructed and may leach out contaminants.

In 2021, Wirt County Commission was awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to assist the Claywood Park PSD in constructing a new wastewater collection system in Spring Valley. The Spring Valley project had already gone through study and design, including an archeological study, but was put on hold until the Wirt County Commission was awarded the \$1.5 million CDBG grant.

The Town of Elizabeth operates a water and wastewater treatment facility. A few of the current projects in town are a water line project on Route 14 to Munday Road and a water line extension at Tucker Creek.

Infrastructure mapping is a priority for all PSDs servicing Wirt County customers. There is little mapping of water distribution or sewage collection lines. Electronically mapping the infrastructure facilities can provide valuable information, including size, diameter, age, and materials



used. Having infrastructure mapped enables proper maintenance and upkeep of the water and wastewater systems.

Stormwater runoff is defined as “rain and melting snow that flows off building rooftops, driveways, lawns, streets, parking lots, construction sites, and industrial storage yards. Developed areas are covered by buildings and pavement, which do not allow water to soak into the ground.”⁵ Wirt County has areas where stormwater and standing water are issues. Reducing debris in the streets and ensuring that storm drains remain unclogged is an important action to reduce standing water and stormwater issues. Both Wirt County and the Town of Elizabeth should identify specific areas where standing water and stormwater problems should be prioritized and fixed.

Issue: Economic Development

As the least populous county in the state, Wirt County experiences challenges in sustaining businesses and encouraging new business growth. At the same time, certain characteristics of the County may promote growth in particular sectors. One of the primary characteristics of Wirt County is its rural nature and close proximity to urbanized population centers.

Agriculture & Nutritional Security

Agriculture is an economic development sector that can be expanded and encouraged in Wirt County. Promotion of locally grown food is also tied to nutritional security for Wirt County citizens. Nutritional security addresses the larger overall concern of whether people have access to food that will promote a balanced diet. Some grocers in Wirt County are already sourcing locally available produce. Grocery owners have mentioned that locally sourced produce has been profitable and see expansion of locally sourced food as viable.

“NUTRITIONAL SECURITY IS DEFINED AS ‘A SITUATION THAT EXISTS WHEN ALL PEOPLE, AT ALL TIMES, HAVE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT, SAFE, AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD THAT MEETS THEIR DIETARY NEEDS AND FOOD PREFERENCES FOR AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE.’”

Currently, Wirt County has a farmer’s market, but only a handful of producers are utilizing the market. Setting up a more permanent spring-to-fall farmer’s market would give the community better access to fresh food. Producers who want to be involved should be brought together to figure out the best way to proceed and to discuss the feasibility of expanding the season for a farmer’s market in Wirt County. The Development Authority is working to expand the farmer’s market in Wirt County as the county has some funds for a permanent structure.

Key questions to resolve regarding farmers markets in Wirt County include:

1. Does there need to be two or more locations on different days?
2. Who is responsible for advertising and raising awareness?
3. Could the farmer’s market be held in conjunction with a summer concert series?
4. How should opportunities for local producers to sell their products be expanded?

⁵ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Topic Stormwater, https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/learn_more/whatis.html#:~:text=Storm%20water%20runoff%20is%20rain,to%20soak%20into%20the%20ground.

Education and better communication regarding farmer’s markets, locally sourced food, and food pantries is needed, including how to donate locally grown food. While the schools and local markets already source some produce from local vendors, many people are not aware that there is already locally sourced wine, eggs, honey, and other produce available for purchase in the County. A leaflet or social media campaign could let folks know about farm-to-school and farm-to-table initiatives already in Wirt County.

Community supported agriculture (CSA) consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Cooperation between WVU Extension, the schools, and the Department of Agriculture would also be beneficial in developing and promoting a CSA. There may only be a limited market for a CSA in Wirt County; one would need to be carefully developed with interested individuals and farmers.

A TRADITIONAL CSA MODEL:

MEMBERS SHARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF FOOD PRODUCTION WITH THE FARMER

MEMBERS BUY A SHARE OF THE FARM'S PRODUCTION BEFORE EACH GROWING SEASON

IN RETURN, MEMBERS RECEIVE REGULAR DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE FARM'S BOUNTY THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

FARMERS RECEIVE ADVANCE WORKING CAPITAL, GAIN FINANCIAL SECURITY, EARN BETTER CROP PRICES, AND BENEFIT FROM THE DIRECT MARKETING PLAN

Local officials should highlight the food services and programs that are already available in Wirt County. For example, between 60 and 80 Spring Valley families are getting food delivered by WVU Extension Service. Meals on Wheels is available to Wirt County seniors. The distributor for the program travels over 60 miles delivering food throughout the County. The Senior Center also provides meals, with some food being locally sourced. There is also a mobile food pantry in Wirt County. Catholic Charities and the Family Resource Network are always in need of food to be given to those most in need. Schools are also a major contributor to nutritional security in the County. The summer reading bus, a program run through the schools, encourages reading and provides a snack to school-aged children.

Organizations such as 4H, FHA, and FFA have a strong presence in Wirt County. These organizations can help promote nutritional security and best practices related to agriculture. Within these organizations there are educational

opportunities for students to learn about contemporary agricultural practices.

Small market agriculture shows promise in Wirt County. Small market agriculture is typified by a limited market, smaller yield, and more narrowly focused production. Several small market agricultural practices were identified as having promise in Wirt County, keeping in mind that these are dependent on access to reliable internet for information on best productions practices as well marketing outlets, supplies, and communication.

High tunnel agriculture is already practiced throughout West Virginia, including Wirt County. The primary advantages of high tunnel agriculture are an extended growing season and the ability to better control pests. As people continue to seek locally sourced produce, the need to extend the growing season and increase annual yields becomes more important and high tunnel agriculture should be encouraged in the county.



Another agricultural opportunity is increased production of locally sourced meat, with careful attention paid to the many regulatory barriers for processing and selling meat. Mobile processing units have the potential to travel from farm to farm, but often provide services to regional producers at conveniently located “collection sites.” Capacity varies depending on the size of unit and species being slaughtered. The most prevalent form of agricultural operation in Wirt County is beef cattle farming, with cow-calf the most popular style of operation. Expanded contract grazing in Wirt County, where an absentee owner contracts a producer to background their cattle through the summer on a pound of gain basis, is possible.



IN 2017, THE HUTTONSVILLE STATE FARM PURCHASED WEST VIRGINIA'S FIRST MOBILE PROCESSING UNIT, WHICH WILL ALLOW GROWERS TO PROCESS THEIR OWN POULTRY, RABBITS, AND FISH AND POTENTIALLY BOOST THAT PORTION OF THE STATE'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. DURING THE SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL, THE UNIT WILL MAKE SCHEDULED STOPS THROUGHOUT WEST VIRGINIA, WHERE GROWERS CAN SIGN UP TO PROCESS THEIR POULTRY OR SMALL ANIMALS.

Apiculture or the “keeping of bees” is already being promoted by individuals in Wirt County. Citizens and advocacy groups should encourage the expanded propagation of pollinators. The primary concerns with apiculture are safety and an understanding that maintaining a hive in some areas may not be appropriate. Education related to the proper care and maintenance of beehives and marketing tactics are needed.

Hydroponics is the cultivation of plants in a nutrient solution rather than soil. In other words, growing plants is possible through the process of adding plant-specific nutrients to a recirculating water system. The practice of hydroponics is already being utilized in Wirt County, though not extensively. Lettuce and other leafy greens, herbs, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and strawberries are the most commonly grown hydroponic plants.⁶ Hydroponic operations can use up to 90 percent less water than traditional farming.

Aquaculture is another agricultural practice that could be further developed in Wirt County, even if on a small-scale. Aquaculture is the cultivation of animals, plants, or algae for a commercial purpose under controlled conditions. Examples of aquaculture include fish farming in holding tanks for sale to local restaurants or the

⁶ UMass Amherst, Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment, *available at* <https://ag.umass.edu/greenhouse-floriculture/fact-sheets/hydroponic-systems> (last accessed Nov. 20, 2011).

cultivation of aquatic plants for sale. Depending on the size of the operation and the type of aquaculture, the costs of the business vary considerably. County officials should work with Extension and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to provide training and educational materials to interested citizens.

Tied to aquaculture are fee-to-fish businesses. A fee-to-fish business might be more appropriate in the northwestern section of the County, near the population centers of Wood County. A fee-to-fish business could stock catfish, walleye, perch, pike, bass, or other warmwater sport fish. These businesses could include fishing tournaments and other amenities, such as a bait shop, camping, and refreshments. Specialists at the fish hatchery in Wirt County might be consulted.

Another economic sector that should be encouraged and promoted is timbering. Wirt County has a long history in the timber industry. The county currently includes large swaths of land with mature timber that can be sustainably harvested. In encouraging this activity, some key considerations include who owns the land and the timbering rights and understanding where the timber will be milled. If this sector develops, subsidiary businesses could also be developed, including the sale of remanent wood from the mills and mulch from remanent wood. While timbering is largely a function of market forces, the county can promote the timber industry and work with other agencies to market timbering in Wirt County.

Funding for Agriculture and Nutritional Security

WVU Extension Service has access to agricultural grants both at the local and state level. These grants can be used for feeding programs, school enrichment, and to assist local farmers or producers in need. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers grants to fund senior and youth feeding programs, which could include food banks. For Wirt County to be competitive for this funding, a countywide or regional funding initiative should be developed.

Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is often seen as an economic development tool but can focus on recreation for local individuals as well. West Virginia has long been a popular playground for people far and wide. Mountains, rivers, forests, and wildlife make the state an ideal outdoor recreation destination.

To capitalize on Wirt County's specific outdoor recreation assets, a plan of action has been developed to highlight Wirt's strengths and identify challenges. As part of this process, Wirt County officials must understand that many communities in West Virginia are focusing on outdoor recreation. An important question to answer is "What makes Wirt County unique?" In other words, if many communities in West Virginia are focusing efforts on outdoor recreation, how does Wirt County entice folks to visit Wirt specifically?

Wildlife

One of the more interesting and unique ideas for Wirt County is to become a birding destination. First, it is important to identify habitat that is conducive for birding. Nearby Wildlife Management Areas or along a blue water trail system are some of the best places for birding activities. While bird watching or "birding" can be done almost anywhere, specific activities and amenities might enhance the experience and bring more people into the county. Parking, picnic, and restrooms facilities are all important amenities. Nature education programs, observation decks, and interpretive display exhibits are also amenities that can help cultivate Wirt County as a regional birding destination. Local enthusiasts and elected officials should invite a birding specialist to Wirt County to evaluate the appropriateness of developing birding facilities. The expert can

discuss costs, feasibility, needed amenities, and marketing. A group of interested individuals should spearhead the effort, with assistance from elected officials.



A significant amount of land in Wirt County sits within Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). There should be transparency and communication between state agencies and local officials on how to best utilize the land within the WMAs in Wirt County. WMA land is normally used for hunting and fishing; however, there might be opportunities for other outdoor recreation activities, especially when hunting is not in season.

Water Recreation

Wirt County is home to a sizable portion of the Little Kanawha River. The 169-mile-long river is a tributary of the Ohio River. The headwaters of the Little Kanawha are in Upshur County. The river meanders through Lewis, Braxton, Gilmer, Calhoun, Wirt, and Wood Counties. The length of the river and the fact the river is relatively gentle with very little whitewater make it ideal for families in small watercraft.



Water recreation, particularly kayaking, is becoming a popular activity in the region. Opportunities exist for business ventures associated with water recreation, including small craft pick-up and drop-off, bag lunches, and rentals. Kayak businesses typically prefer access points every 3 to 4 miles. To develop a blue water trail, officials should identify landowners willing to allow access, as much of the adjoining riparian land along the Little Kanawha River is privately owned. Private businesses would likely have an interest in helping maintain the access points and making sure rules

and regulations are followed. However, maintenance and upkeep are concerns. Ensuring that access points are clean, safe, easily accessible, and in good working order will be of utmost importance for the success of water recreation in Wirt County.

One of the primary concerns with establishing a blue water trail is liability. Access points are one of the primary hurdles for water trail development in Wirt County. Currently, the county has only a few public access points. At a minimum, the existing public access points should have a launch site into the river with parking available. Access point amenities could also include trash receptacles, lighting, picnic tables, restrooms, and water fountains. WVDNR should be asked to consider camping sites on publicly held land along the Little Kanawha to expand interest in a kayak trail. Recreational Vehicle (RV) parks with full utility hook ups should be encouraged. A business that offers camping and RV sites, along with kayak rentals, food items, and small craft pick up and drop off would align with the goals and objectives of the county as it relates to outdoor recreation.

Ideally, an existing business would expand to provide additional goods and services related to water recreation.

Coordination with other jurisdictions or institutions, such as Glenville State University, is essential for completing a river trail project. Another possible partner is the “Little Kanawha River Trail” organization, which was formed in Braxton County to promote water recreation in Braxton County. From coordination of access points to marketing and signage, a regional effort will benefit all communities along the Little Kanawha River. Encouraging expansion of the river trail should lead to increased interest in bed and breakfast businesses and other service industry businesses.



Fishing is also a popular outdoor activity. The Little Kanawha River is a fantastic smallmouth fishery and considered one of best muskie fisheries in the state. Promoting fishing, while developing the blue water trail, would be appropriate and the community should consider creating fishing tournaments on the river.

ATV and Bicycle Trails

Development of ATV and bicycle/pedestrian trails has been discussed in the Mid-Ohio Valley for many years. However, no significant developments in ATV or bike trails have occurred in Wirt County other than the annual ATV poker run in Creston. There might be an opportunity to develop a county master trail plan, including updated trail maps that encompass ATV, walking, and bike riding. Ideally, a group of local individuals will champion the development of a recreational trail system in the region. The group could be a standing committee that reports to the County Commission and Town Council.

While developing ATV and bicycle trails there are several logistical considerations. Contiguous land that can either be bought or leased is necessary, and understanding liability and regulations for rail-trails and ATV trails is essential, particularly during initial discussions.

There is an opportunity to formalize gravel cycling in Wirt County. Gravel riding has evolved in the United States and now bridges the gap between road and mountain biking, where riding at the speeds and efficiency of road cycling meets the ability and freedom to ride on rough and loose terrain.

THE NORTH BEND RAIL TRAIL STRETCHES 72 MILES ACROSS NORTH-CENTRAL AND WESTERN WEST VIRGINIA. THIS WILDERNESS PATH TAKES TRAVELERS ACROSS 36 BRIDGES AND THROUGH 10 TUNNELS AND IS PART OF THE 5,500-MILE AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL THAT SPANS THE LENGTH OF THE UNITED STATES. THE TRAIL HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED RECREATIONAL TRAILS THROUGH THE APPALACHIANS AND IS KNOWN FOR ITS MOUNTAINOUS SCENERY AND VARIED VIEWS OF SHADED TREE CANOPIES, ROCK CUTS, AND FARMLAND. HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE A 2,297-FOOT TUNNEL AND THE “HAUNTED” SILVER RUN TUNNEL.

SOURCE: WWW.WVSTATEPARKS.COM/PARK/NORTH-BEND-RIAL-TRAIL/

Interested individuals and organizations should also investigate the feasibility of converting railroad rights-of-way and abandoned rail lines into a rail-trail system. For example, there is a rail line that ends in Palestine that could be converted into a recreational trail. In addition, as the popularity of gravel riding increases, County roads are ready-made: there are now significantly fewer property and liability issues. A map of the County's many existing gravel biking routes could be made available.



For bike trails, the County should analyze the possibility of a connection with the North Bend Trail into Wirt County. Connecting Wirt County to one of the longest recreational trails in West Virginia is a project that could open the county to a significant increase in bicycle traffic.

There is concern with being able to regulate ATVs, especially in Elizabeth. The Town wants to balance being friendly to ATV riders with commonsense regulations that keep intact the small town feel of the community. Town officials should work to fully understand state regulations regarding ATV riding within corporate limits.

Entrepreneurship

Encouraging more entrepreneurialism in Wirt County, especially with younger citizens, should be a priority. Budding entrepreneurs often leave Wirt County to start their businesses due to local hurdles. Input from



existing small businesses will be critical to retaining local talent. Additional advertising and marketing opportunities are needed for local businesses. Notably, not all local business owners are comfortable with social media or online business operations. An initiative that focuses on educating existing business owners about having a greater online presence should be a priority.

Another hurdle for small businesses in Wirt County is difficulty with delivery services into the county. In some cases, there is an extra charge for deliveries to Wirt County, in part due to narrow bridges and roads and the lack of an Interstate.

A community can promote new business development through the creation of a local business incubator or accelerator. A business incubator is an organization that assists startups and new businesses to accelerate growth and success. Incubators provide "support in a variety of areas, including management training, office space, capital, mentorship, and networking connections."⁷ In order for an incubator or accelerator to be successful, there must be someone or some organization that champions the enterprise.

Incubators might include a business center, conference space, desks, Wi-Fi, and computers. WV Hive, a regional incubator in West Virginia, helps with business plans, advises entrepreneurs, provides technical assistance funds that could help with marketing needs, financial guidance, legal counsel, and feasibility studies

⁷MassChallenge, Innovation Block (Jun. 20, 2021), *available at* <https://masschallenge.org/articles/accelerators-vs-incubators/>.

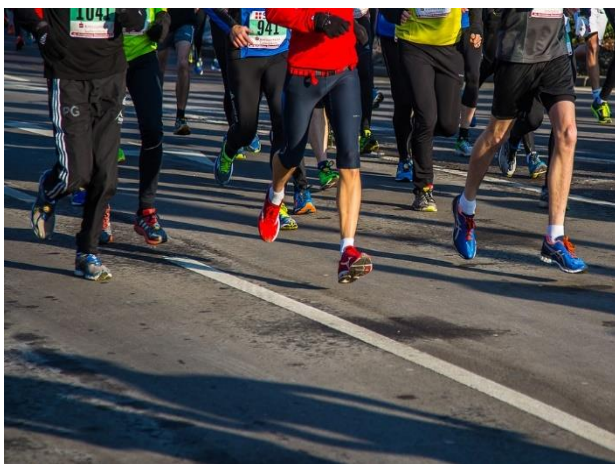
for complex markets. WV Hive might be a valuable resource for any entity or group that is interested in forming an incubator or accelerator in the Mid-Ohio Valley.

Entertainment and Tourism

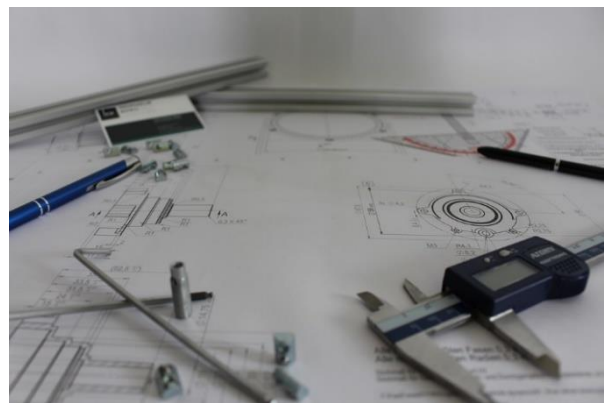
While outdoor recreation is an important economic development sector, there are other issues related to entertainment and tourism that deserve attention. Lodging and food services in Wirt County would be a necessary supplement to any tourism, recreation, and entertainment initiatives.

Currently there are no motels or bed and breakfasts in Wirt County, which limits outdoor recreation and other tourism-related potential. An alternative lodging option is short-term rentals (STR), which are homes rented on a nightly basis typically. There are currently a few STRs in Wirt County. However, more units will be needed if tourism increases. Additional camping sites may be needed as well, especially near the river and particularly around the water access points.

More local, low-cost, and low-involvement events should be pursued. Examples include 5K run/walks, chili cook-offs, talent contests, and open mic nights. These events could be combined with existing annual events to enhance participant experiences, such as music events already held in Palestine.



ACCORDING TO INBIA’S ARTICLE *INCUBATING IN RURAL AREAS*, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THERE TO BE A REGIONAL APPROACH FOR BUSINESS INCUBATION IN RURAL AREAS DUE TO “DISPERSED POPULATION, LIMITED LOCAL MARKETS, AND A SMALLER BASE OF EXPERT ADVISORS, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND POTENTIAL CLIENTS.”



The County should consider coordinating with other communities in the region to host a summer concert series. Working with other jurisdictions makes the task of hosting a concert series more manageable. The communities could rotate venues, with each community helping with logistics, event planning, and marketing in turn. A similar idea that was mentioned by a citizen is to host a dog show in the county. A dog show would be a terrific way to bring people into the community. The community would need to work with a kennel association or dog breed club to organize the event. The dog show could be held in conjunction with other events in Wirt County.

Another unique idea is to develop a quilt trail. According to the Kentucky Arts Council “Quilt trails are made up of a series of painted wooden quilt squares hung on barns and businesses, such as craft shops and restaurants, along a particular route. Traditionally, the painting and installation of the quilt squares is a joint effort of the community, often guided by the county extension office or local arts council.” There could be a contest in Wirt County. Entrants could show what the quilt squares would look like and provide an explanation about the name and history of the proposed quilt square.

Similar in nature to the quilt trail is a local art competition. There could be a competition for the area's youth and an open competition that would encourage artists from around the region to submit artwork. An art competition would ideally be held at the same time as and as part of an existing event.

Issue: Education

Schools are often the hub of the community. Especially in rural areas, there is a close connection between schools and the community. Parents typically are heavily invested in their children's wellbeing and learning. Wirt County residents have consistently been willing to fund the schools when improvements are needed, evidenced by every school bond referendum since 1963 passing. One concern shared across the state is that high school students are graduating without the requisite mastery of reading, writing, mathematics, and money management. A more robust skills-based curriculum is needed, focusing on practical skills like balancing a check book, managing an IRA account, and drafting a well-articulated paper.

Wirt County is a small county with only three public schools. The community is proud of the school's low truancy rates and high graduation rates. One of the most critical issues related to education is the need for better broadband. The lack of internet access is a detriment to contemporary teaching and learning. Internet access for educational purposes has only been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual learning is likely to continue in some capacity, post-COVID. Wirt County is already utilizing Schoology for online learning, yet access is still a significant concern. The school district was able to purchase mobile hot spots and locate them along Route 5 during the Pandemic. Mobile hot spots are meant to be a temporary stopgap measure during the pandemic, rather than a permanent solution for internet access.

Technical education should be encouraged in Wirt County. Science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) should be further integrated into student's daily curriculum, and the schools should nurture student interest in these disciplines. Wirt County Schools are already integrating STEAM utilizing tools such as "Raspberry Pi," a small, experimental computer, and Arduino circuit boards for code writing. The superintendent of schools also indicated a desire to have practical tools, such as a plasma cutting machine in the welding program, to expand exposure to other technologies.

All middle schools in West Virginia will eventually be required to offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes as part of their curriculum. Related to technical education is vocational education, which includes welding, construction, and electrical contracting. Students should be aware of these occupations that are both in demand and lucrative.

Because of its small size, Wirt County should consider working with another jurisdiction or entity to offer technical, vocational, and STEAM education. One potential partner is the Caperton Center for Applied Technology at WVU-Parkersburg (WVU-P). Working with WVU-P to provide college courses and credit to Wirt County High School students should be considered. Adult education courses that focus on technical or vocational disciplines should also be considered.

Skilled instructors are needed to teach the trades. Another concern is that by allocating resources to vocational or technical training, fewer resources will be available for other portions of the curriculum. Lastly, consideration is needed for how to transport students off campus and possibly out of the county for vocational and technical training. Community conversations held by school officials can ensure concerns are being heard and addressed before any final decisions are made.

WVU Extension is an educational resource for the county. The Wirt County extension agent can assist by carrying out research and evaluating existing educational programs. Extension is also involved in several school enrichments programs. Extension has a heavy emphasis on STEM, as these activities are both engaging and hands on.

Expanding curricular and extracurricular activities has been discussed during the comprehensive plan process, including entrepreneurship, a junior ROTC, band, and chorus. It was also suggested that cooking and nutrition classes should be expanded.

Wirt County is now part of PATCH 21's program that includes after school activities. PATCH 21 currently serves 2,000 students regionally and operates preschools in Roane and Jackson Counties. PATCH focuses on character education; tobacco, drug, and alcohol prevention; civic duty and service learning; watershed and clean water awareness; entrepreneurial job skills; and leadership.

Issue: Sense of Community

Developing a sense of community is consistent with Wirt County's vision statement and is important for community wellbeing. But what exactly is a "sense of community"? According to an article in the Journal of Community Psychology, a sense of community is "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together."

There are already specific examples of fostering a sense of community in Wirt County. One example is immediately after the derecho in 2012. Community members were supportive and helpful to one another. Supplies were delivered and people in need were taken care of by their neighbors. By nurturing a sense of community and inclusion, people will be more apt to participate in community events and contribute to the betterment of the county. Additional emphasis should be placed on welcoming transplants and encouraging them to participate in community activities.

An effective way for the County Commission and Town Council to lead the way in creating a sense of community is to encourage greater involvement in meetings. The local governments can make their meetings more accessible by real-time video of all meetings and putting taped meetings online, giving citizens easy access to public documents. However, there is a concern that the people that need to hear about community programs the most are the ones that are not on social media or otherwise connected. County and town officials will continue to devise ways to adequately disseminate information to all county citizens.



A sense of community is important for Wirt County's younger citizens as well. Local government officials should invite school-aged children to be more involved in decision-making. Civic engagement with the youth, especially when talking about future growth and development in the county, would help youth understand their community and potentially improve local citizen retention. When there are important decisions that need to be made, local decision-makers can actively solicit input from the youth. Periodic online surveys, a youth advisory committee, and incorporating local issues into school curriculum are all ways to invite greater input from

younger citizens. One idea is to increase the visibility of homecoming in the county by encouraging businesses and citizens “to turn the county orange and black,” showing school and community spirit.

Another way of increasing inclusion of the County’s youth in local government affairs is to allow the youth to periodically shadow the local government officials and staff. A similar idea is to allow select students to be Mayor or County Commission for the day. The students can provide recommendations related to outdoor recreation, broadband, public health, and infrastructure. While students may not be fully informed with the intricacies of a particular program or initiative, they provide a unique and critical perspective.

Hosting social events open to the public is one of the best ways to foster a sense of community. While many events remain, including the Fair and the 4th of July, many social events have disappeared, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEVERAL REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS ARE COMMITTED TO THE BETTERMENT OF WIRT COUNTY CITIZENS. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OFFERED REGIONALLY INCLUDE:

- FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
- RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
- SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
- WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM – MOVRC OFFERS JOB TRAINING, TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR RETRAINING OR SKILL BUILDING FOR ADULTS AND DISLOCATED WORKERS, AND A YOUTH PROGRAM BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL
- MEALS ON WHEELS

Successful events like music on the Courthouse lawn create a festive atmosphere. Other community events included trick-or-treat at the school and the Christmas parade. One idea in Calhoun County that might interest Wirt County citizens is to hold a regional summer music series. Participating communities take turns hosting a different week and a different act. For instance, week one could be hosted by Community A, Community B the next week, and Community C the following week. Another option is to book talent to perform in each community throughout the summer.

Many devoted organizations and individuals are already working within the County to encourage a sense of community. However, more can always be done. The community should determine what types of additional events are feasible to best accomplish this goal.

Part of developing a sense of community is to promote the idea of placemaking. “As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.”⁸ A great example of placemaking in Wirt County is the Ruble Church project. The historic Ruble Church, built in 1835 near Burning Springs, is among West Virginia’s oldest standing churches. During the mid-1800s the church also served as a school. There is an ongoing volunteer restoration effort of the church. A recent news article stated, “The volunteer response we have had has been overwhelming.” There have been as many as 20 to 30 volunteers contributing to the project, including folks who bring food



⁸ Medium, Spaces to Places: How Placemaking is Benefitting Alabama Communities (Apr. 26, 2021), *available at* <https://blog.altaplanning.com/spaces-to-places-how-placemaking-is-benefitting-alabama-communities-38011639d53>.

for the volunteers. Citizens coming together to preserve an important part of local history is a great way to promote placemaking and a sense of community.

Another way to instill placemaking is through beautification. Rubbish and debris cleanup are concerns throughout the County. Beautification, landscaping, and taking pride in private property can trigger countywide revitalization efforts. A handful of people tidying or cleaning individual properties, public spaces, or roadsides can entice others to follow suit. A countywide contest for best property restoration or neighborhood cleanup could boost morale and motivation. The County should also continue to work with the WV DEP to periodically schedule bulk trash and hazardous material pickups in the county.

Other Issues

The additional issues of housing, land use, and flooding were discussed during the Wirt County comprehensive plan process.

Housing

Typical housing concerns include the number and condition of a community's housing stock, number of housing units available, type of dwellings available, and owner-occupied housing versus renter-occupied housing. A specific housing need is habitable long-term rental housing in the county. It is also important that educational materials are readily available and distributed that clearly explains current landlord-tenant law in West Virginia as protection for both the landlords and tenants.

During the comprehensive plan process, the general sentiment of participants was that Wirt County has a relatively good and affordable housing stock. However, there is a shortage of housing that is available for sale or rent. Currently, rental housing in the County is largely geared towards low-income and subsidized rentals. There is a concern that several rentals in the County are not well maintained and present health and safety concerns to tenants.

Neglected properties are concentrated in Elizabeth but can be found throughout the County. Concerns raised related to neglected property include dilapidated property value effects on surrounding properties, pest harborage, increased likelihood of fire damage, and negative community aesthetics. Some individuals that own or inhabit dilapidated structures simply lack the necessary funds to make repairs; thus, flexibility when dealing with these properties is needed. Currently, neither the Town nor the County have enacted any ordinances that address abandoned and dilapidated structures.

To adequately address abandoned or dilapidated structures, a community must understand the scope of the issue. One of the most effective methods of identifying the scope of neglected properties in a community is by completing an inventory. The Town of Elizabeth has already completed an inventory. A decision on whether to inventory the unincorporated portions of Wirt County should be made. Inventories are often completed by conducting drive-by windshield surveys and focusing on exterior dilapidation apparent from a public right-of-way.

Once inventoried and before contemplating ordinances to address neglected properties, the community should consider hiring a code enforcement officer. The Town of Elizabeth does not have a code enforcement officer but is interested in sharing one with other communities in the region. Grant funding may be available at the state level to hire a regional code enforcement officer. Sharing a code enforcement officer is commonplace in areas that are smaller in size and more rural in nature. It is particularly attractive to jurisdictions that may not

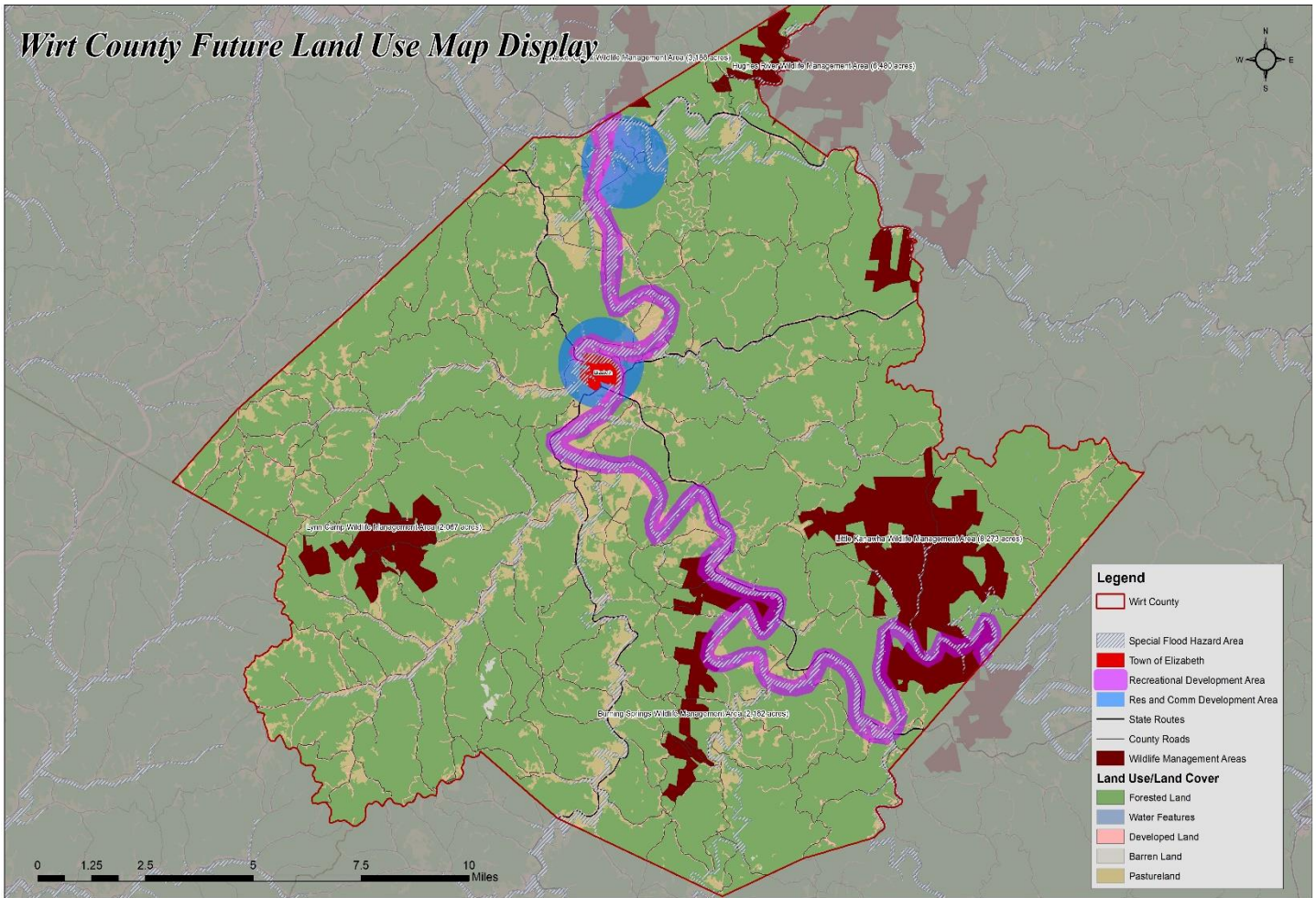
have the amount of work or the funds to hire their own code enforcement officer. Cost sharing would need to be worked out between the jurisdictions, which is typically done through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the entities. A well drafted MOU will clearly articulate the amount of time, the amount of money, benefit responsibilities, and any other cost or benefit that may be shared between two or more jurisdictions for the services of a code enforcement officer.

One potential for adaptive reuse in Wirt County is short-term rental housing. There may be an opportunity to encourage property owners to refurbish garages or large sheds into short term rentals or glamping sites, particularly along the river where a water trail may be established. Another possibility is to work with property owners and the WVDNR to agree to use undeveloped land and allow there to be primitive camping, especially along the Little Kanawha. There are a few buildings that may be appropriate for adaptive reuse including the “Old Red Barn” in Palestine or the old hotel in Burning Springs.

Land Use and Flooding

Developing recommendations regarding how land is utilized, developed, and protected is important in helping achieve the community’s vision. The goals and objectives for each community as they relate to land use are often predicated on other goals and objectives. In Wirt County, large swaths of land are owned by the state, with much of the state land in Wirt County designated as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The use of land within WMAs is limited.

Each community completing a comprehensive plan in West Virginia is required to identify preferred development areas. The West Virginia Code states that preferred development areas are “a geographically defined area where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities.”



Wirt County has bifurcated preferred development areas into two categories, recreational development areas and residential and commercial development areas. The preferred recreational development area is the contiguous riparian area along the entirety of the Little Kanawha River in Wirt County. The area along the river was identified as a communal, recreational, and economic asset. The development of small craft amenities along the river could be important for future growth and development. Ideally, there will be coordination between Wirt County officials and the surrounding counties to develop a complete a water trail system along the Little Kanawha River.

The preferred residential and commercial development areas consist of two sections of Wirt County. The first residential and commercial development area is in and around the Town of Elizabeth. As the County seat, Elizabeth has the infrastructure necessary for future growth and development, even beyond its current corporate boundaries.

The other preferred residential and commercial development area is in the northwest portion of the County near Newark and Greencastle. This area also has infrastructure necessary for additional development. Much of this area is flat, with three-phase power, and easy access to regional commercial centers. Many of the residents in this area do not visit Elizabeth, rather they typically travel west to Wood County for many of their everyday needs. A few disadvantages for future growth and development of this area include getting current landowners to sell or develop land for business rather than residences. There is also a one-lane bridge that

limits traffic in the area. Additionally, if there is substantial growth, the area might need a fire department substation.

Flooding is a concern throughout West Virginia due to steep topography and development historically occurring near waterbodies. As a result, West Virginia has one of the nation's highest proportion of properties that are at risk of flood damage. Wirt County is no exception, especially on lands adjacent to the Little Kanawha River. The importance of emergency preparedness is a high priority. When disaster strikes, people are stressed and tired; having a well-thought plan in place can expedite the recovery process. An updated emergency preparedness plan can ensure the process is followed during and immediately after a disaster.

While flooding is a concern, there is also a need for accurate information regarding where the floodplains are located, particularly for school facilities planning. The school district's 10-year comprehensive planning starts in 2021, and information on the location of the floodplain is important. County officials have talked with Congressional offices about encouraging FEMA to amend the floodplain maps for Wirt County to be more reflective of actual risk. Additional ideas related to the mitigation of flood damage include identifying and posting markers where hazards exist, such as riverine undertows, drop offs, sand hazards, and other potentially hidden water hazards. Community members can work with the Army Corps of Engineers to remove some of the submerged features, opening up the river and lessening the likelihood of flooding. County officials should ask for assistance from the WV DEP to clean the river of additional debris, trash, and other hazards, particularly those along the water's edge. Encouraging natural growth along the riparian areas of rivers and creeks will help stabilize the shoreline and lessen the number of pollutants entering local water bodies.

Public Services

One of the most crucial functions that a local government can provide are public services such as fire suppression, ambulance service, and law enforcement. Oftentimes seconds matter when dealing with emergency situations. Each community should endeavor to ensure that the technology and personnel exist to handle and address emergency calls as swiftly and efficiently as possible. One of the of the highest priorities for Wirt County is to receive a grant funding to build a new 911 Center. A place where calls can be taken quickly.



Chapter 4

Action Plan

The purpose of Chapter 4: Action Plan is to provide a detailed roadmap for Wirt County. By addressing the needs of the community that were outlined in Chapter 3: Needs Assessment, the community will be able to achieve the county's vision of the future.

The action plan has been developed to be hierarchical. Goals are broad and convey general, overarching directives. Under each goal, a number of objectives are identified to achieve the overarching goal. Each objective has a series of action steps that outline a specific recommendation that must be completed in order to achieve the objective and ultimately the goal.

Four primary goals have been identified during the comprehensive plan process. These goals include addressing infrastructure concerns, improving economic development opportunities, encouraging diverse educational opportunities, and enhancing sense of community. Other goals identified include promoting sound land use practices and a diverse housing stock.

Goal 1: Address Infrastructure Concerns

Objective 1.1 Expand broadband throughout the county

Action Step 1.1.1. Promote telemedicine capabilities

Action Step 1.1.2. Work with internet service providers to increase reliable broadband throughout the county, for example to promote telework and relocation of retirees

Action Step 1.1.3. Work with other jurisdictions to plan, apply for, and administer broadband, considering all options including Zayo, Starlink, and 5G

Action Step 1.1.4. Encourage Wirt County Commission, Town of Elizabeth, and the school board to make all meetings available online

Objective 1.2 Improve cellular telecommunications

Action Step 1.2.1. Contact regional telecommunications providers periodically to encourage adding service to the county

Action Step 1.2.2. Inventory towers or alternative support structures that could hold future telecommunications facilities; be able to provide information to telecommunications providers

HIERARCHY OF THE CHAPTER 4: ACTION PLAN GOAL 1

OBJECTIVE 1.1

ACTION STEP 1.1.1.

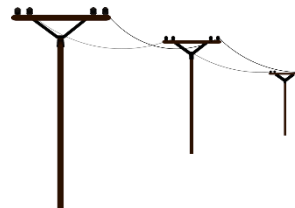
ACTION STEP 1.1.2.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

ACTION STEP 1.2.1

ACTION STEP 1.2.2

ACTION STEP 1.2.3



Objective 1.3 Address transportation issues

Action Step 1.3.1. Make available online a list of WVDOH priorities in Wirt County with map to improve transparency and opportunities for input from residents

Action Step 1.3.2. Create a prioritized list that is periodically maintained to highlight the most pressing needs regarding vehicular transportation

Action Step 1.3.3. Analyze logistics and feasibility of having a neighboring public transit organization service Wirt County in some capacity

Action Step 1.3.4. Ensure that any new sidewalks or sidewalk repair include ADA compliance measures

Objective 1.4 Support infrastructure expansion and improvements

Action Step 1.4.1. Encourage the development of the Spring Valley water and wastewater systems by the Claywood Park PSD

Action Step 1.4.2. Electronically map all water and wastewater infrastructure in the county

Action Step 1.4.3. Ensure the Well's Lock and Dam is maintained and preserved

Goal 2: Improve Economic Development Opportunities

Objective 2.1 Enhance agriculture and nutritional security

Action Step 2.1.1. Cultivate locally sourced produce throughout the county

Action Step 2.1.2. Study the feasibility of having a mobile farmer's market

Action Step 2.1.3. Promote educational opportunities related to agricultural best practices

Action Step 2.1.4. Encourage the development of small-scale niche agriculture, including high-tunnel, apiculture, aquaculture, and fee-to-fish



Objective 2.2 Improve recreation, generally

Action Step 2.2.1. Work with experts to develop the necessary amenities for birding tourism

Action Step 2.2.2. With the WV DNR, ensure the Wildlife Management Areas in Wirt County are being utilized in ways that support the needs and desires of county and area residents

Objective 2.3 Improve water recreational amenities

Action Step 2.3.1. Encourage the development of business ventures that provide small watercraft pick-up, drop-off, launches, and rentals

Action Step 2.3.2. Coordinate regional participation in a blue water trail system along the Little Kanawha River

Action Step 2.3.3. Ensure access every 3 to 4 miles along any blue water trail

Action Step 2.3.4. Develop adequate amenities near blue water trail access points, including restrooms, picnic facilities, potable water, and proper lighting

Action Step 2.3.5. Identify any impoundments in Wirt County where warm-water fishing is feasible

Objective 2.4 Encourage ATV and bicycle trail development

Action Step 2.4.1. Develop a master trail plan, including updated trail maps that encompass bikes, ATVs, walking facilities, and blue water trails

Action Step 2.4.2. Understand regulations for trail development, including landowner liability, leasing, and municipal ATV regulations

Action Step 2.4.3. Assess the feasibility of connecting the North Bend Trail to Wirt County

Objective 2.5 Encourage entrepreneurship throughout the county

Action Step 2.5.1. Focus on education and providing information to existing business owners who could benefit from a greater online presence

Action Step 2.5.2. Develop an incubator for business startups

Action Step 2.5.3. Ensure any long-term planning strategies for the county involves current business owners' input

Objective 2.6 Encourage growth in entertainment and tourism industries

Action Step 2.6.1. Encourage the development of short-term rentals (STR) including B&B, and camping sites Wirt County

Action Step 2.6.2. Work with neighboring jurisdictions to hold a regional summer music series

Action Step 2.6.3. Ensure Burning Springs and other historically significant sites in Wirt County and the Town of Elizabeth are preserved for future generations

Goal 3: Encourage Diverse Educational Opportunities

Objective 3.1 Improve connectivity to schools and for school children at home

Action Step 3.1.1. Include recently collected data regarding student's lack of connectivity with any grant application that might expand broadband in Wirt County

Action Step 3.1.2. Continue to promote the need for student connectivity not only at school but at home for homework, virtual learning, and snow days



Objective 3.2 Encourage STEM education and technical trades

Action Step 3.2.1. Promote technical trades and STEM disciplines

Action Step 3.2.2. Provide tools necessary for students to learn employable skills, for example how to use a plasma cutting machine for welding

Action Step 3.2.3. Consider working with another entity or jurisdiction to offer expanded STEM and technical curriculum

Action Step 3.2.4. Hold community conversations to address concerns about the allocation of limited school resources and busing students to different jurisdictions; ensure everyone has a chance to voice concerns before decisions are made

Action Step 3.2.5. Consider working with another entity or jurisdiction to offer expanded STEAM and technical curriculum

Objective 3.3 Cultivate extracurricular and after school activities

Action Step 3.3.1. Expand or create extracurricular programs, such as entrepreneurship (through Future Business Leaders of America), junior ROTC, band, and chorus

Action Step 3.3.2. Promote PATCH 21's program, which is now working in Wirt County and provides afterschool activities to children

Goal 4: Enhance the Local Sense of Community

Objective 4.1 Integrate placemaking into projects, programs, and events



Action Step 4.1.1. Encourage beautification through competitions such as “best property,” “best neighborhood,” or best “holiday lights”

Action Step 4.1.2. Coordinate free bulk trash and hazardous materials drop off events in Wirt County throughout the year

Action Step 4.1.3. Ensure historical sites, including the Ruble Church, are being preserved for future generations

Objective 4.2 Encourage youth to participate in civic functions

Action Step 4.2.1. Periodically poll the county’s youth to ensure their ideas are part of the decision-making processes

Action Step 4.2.2. Hold “Mayor or County Commissioner for a Day” when students can shadow local decision makers and staff

Action Step 4.2.3. Create a youth advisory board that meets with the County Commission and Elizabeth Town Council quarterly; the youth could be elected from the student body at large or appointed by the elected officials

Objective 4.3 Emphasize increased participation in year-round community events

Action Step 4.3.1 Consider collaborating with other jurisdictions to hold a regional concert series

Action Step 4.3.2 Continue to promote existing community programs to ensure their continuation

Action Step 4.3.3. Make County Commission (Town Council) meetings available online or through teleconference technology

Action Step 4.3.4. Organize low-cost activities, such as a 5K race or chili cookoff; these activities could be add-ons to existing events

Goal 5: Address Housing, Land Use, and Flooding Issues



Objective 5.1 Ensure a well-maintained and diverse housing stock

Action Step 5.1.1. Inventory the housing stock, paying particular attention to the number of abandoned and dilapidated housing units

Action Step 5.1.2. Work towards hiring a code enforcement officer that can work regionally with other jurisdictions

Action Step 5.1.3. Develop ordinances related to abandoned and dilapidated structures

Action Step 5.1.4. Encourage a diversity of well-maintained housing options for Wirt County citizens, including starter homes for young families

Objective 5.2 Ensure that land is utilized properly throughout the county

Action Step 5.2.1. Work with state officials to ensure that Wildlife Management Areas are utilized in a manner that encourages their use by county citizens for multiple recreational opportunities

Action Step 5.2.2. Consider incentives for growth in the preferred development areas

Action Step 5.2.3. Understand the differences between the two preferred development areas: the preferred recreational development area and the recreational and commercial development area

Objective 5.3 Actively mitigate and prepare for future flood events

Action Step 5.3.1 Work with FEMA and the WV State Office of the National Flood Insurance Program to ensure local flood maps reflect the actual risk of flooding in Wirt County

Action Step 5.3.2 Develop an emergency preparedness plan that will assist future decision-makers

Wirt County Comprehensive Plan - Implementation Matrix

Timeframe:

Short Term = 0 to 3 years

Moderate Term= 4 to 7 years

Long Term= 8 + years

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Goal 1 : Address Infrastructure Concerns							
Promote telemedicine capabilities	Low	Short-term		Local and Regional Healthcare providers; internet service providers; Coplin Clinic; Wirt County Recovery	Time and Effort	How many individuals in Wirt County have access to telemedicine after 5 years	Federal Funding for improved broadband
Work with internet service providers to increase reliable broadband throughout the county, for example to promote telework and relocation of retirees	High	Moderate		local internet service providers	Time and Effort for Promotion	How many individuals in Wirt County have access to high speed internet	Federal Funding for improved broadband; private investments
Work with other jurisdictions to plan, apply for, administer considering all options including Zayo, Star link, 5G	High	Short term but on going		Surrounding towns and counties; regional initiative	Costs depending on specific projects	How much of Wirt County are serviced by new broadband services.	Build Back Better, Federal infrastructure grants
Contact regional telecommunications providers periodically to encourage adding service to the county	Moderate	On going		County Commission, LKADC, Elected Officials	Time and Effort	Ensure communications	N/A

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Encourage Wirt County Commission, Town of Elizabeth, and the school board to make all meetings available online	Low	Moderate		Town Council; County Commission,	video conferencing equipment can cost several thousand, website can also cost hundreds if not thousands plus maintenance costs	videoconferencing amenities in courthouse and town hall. Also an updated website for the two local governments	general funds, grants
Inventory towers or alternative support structures that could hold future telecommunications facilities, be able to provide information to telecommunications providers	Moderate	Short term		Town Council; County Commission, <u>Potential Partners:</u> Telecommunications Providers	Time and Effort to inventory and produce inventory materials	complete a countywide inventory, produce a document that identifies areas/sites for future telecommunications facilities	General funds
Make available online a list of WVDOH priorities in Wirt County and map to improve transparency and opportunities for input from residents	High	Long term/on going		County Commission; WV DOH	N/A	place list of WV DOH priorities in a place easily accessible to public	N/A
Create a prioritized list that is periodically maintained to highlight the most pressing needs regarding vehicular transportation	Moderate	Moderate		County Commission, County Planning Commission, and Town Council	Time and Effort needed to analyze and develop list	the creation of the prioritized list. Review annually	General funds
Analyze logistics and feasibility of having a neighboring public transit organization service Wirt County in some capacity.	Low	Long-term		Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority (Easy Rider); Wirt County elected officials	Time and effort	a list of recommendations to consider public transit access to Wirt County residents.	N/A

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Ensure that any new sidewalks or sidewalk repair include ADA compliance measures	Moderate	Long-term		Town Council; standing committee of advocates and persons with disabilities	Costs depending on specific projects, but ADA ramps cost ~\$5,000 per ramp.	Set a goal to have a certain amount of projects completed within a certain number of years	Transportation grants, West Virginia DOT Recreational Trails and Transportation Alternatives Program
Encourage the development of the Spring Valley water and wastewater systems through the Claywood Park PSD	High	Short term		PSD, MOVRC, County Commission	Costs highly dependent on scope and size of projects, often in the millions.	Completed water and wastewater systems in Spring Valley	IJDC loans/grants, federal infrastructure grants
Electronically map all water and wastewater infrastructure in the county.	High	Short term		MORVC is doing some maps. Explore the possibility of working with HS or local colleges.	\$1,000-\$5,000 to map, depends on availability and accuracy of physical maps/plats, will need to be updated.	Completed GIS mapping of all water and wastewater infrastructure in the county	General funds, MOVRC funds
Ensure that the Well's Lock and Dam is maintained and preserved	Moderate	Long term		Cooperate with the DNR. Preservation groups	Costs dependent on scope of projects	Completion of preservation projects needed to ensure long term stability of lock and dam	historic preservation grants, SHPO, NPS, private donations

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Goal 2: Improve Economic Development Opportunities							
Cultivate locally sourced produce throughout the county	Moderate	Long term/ on going		Wild Wonderful Wirt County, Wirt County FRN, Growers, WVU Extension	costs for cultivation, cost for production	Create a baseline percentage of produce available to general public that is locally sourced	ag production grants, money from sale of produce
Study feasibility of having a mobile farmer's market	Moderate	Short-term		County Commission, Planning Commission, WVU Extension, LKADC, FRN, Wild Wonderful Wirt County	One study estimated the cost of starting a mobile farm market at around \$15,000	The creation of a sustainable mobile farm market	member funds, grant funding from USDA, Farmers Market Promotion Program
Promote educational opportunities related to proper agricultural practices	Moderate	Long-term		WVU Extension, Grow Appalachia provides lots of information. WV Dept. of Ag.	costs of research and study;	The development of printed materials that provide education for proper ag practices	
Encourage the development of small-scale niche agriculture, including high-tunnel, apiculture, aquaculture, or fee-to-fish	Moderate	Long-term		WVU Extension, LKADC	dependent project, high tunnel costs between \$2,000-\$10,000, apiary equipment costs between \$400-\$700	Establishment of one or more of these businesses in Wirt County.	private investment,

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Work with experts to develop the necessary amenities for birding tourism	Moderate	Long-term/going		LKADC, WV DNR, Audubon Society	Costs highly dependent on scope and size of projects	create at least one area designated for birding in Wirt County	Audubon Society funds, private donations, DNR funds
With the WV DNR, ensure the Wildlife Management Areas in Wirt County are being utilized in ways which support the needs and desires of county and area residents	High	Short-term/ongoing		County Commission, WV DNR	Time and Effort	A plan that has recommendations that benefit all Wirt County residents	N/A
Encourage the development of business ventures which provide small watercraft pick up, drop off, lunches, and rentals	Moderate	Short-term		LKADC, WV DNR, County Commission, County Planning Commission	Business development costs	Creation of businesses that provide services that promote development of the water trail	grant funding, seed money; low interest loan money
Ensure access every 3 to 4 miles along any blue water trail	High	Short term		WV DNR, LKADC	Time and Effort, may be costs associate with land acquisition	When there is access every 3 or 4 miles	recreational grants, general funds, ARC funds
Develop adequate amenities near blue water trail access points, including restrooms, picnic facilities, potable water, and proper lighting	Moderate	Moderate-term		WV DNR, LKADC	Costs can run into the thousands, for example a public restroom averages \$15,000-\$20,000	Develop a list of all the amenities needed at access points.	recreational grants, general funds, ARC funds
Coordinate regional participation in a bluewater trail system along the Little Kanawha River.	Moderate	Long-term		Possibly Gilmer, Calhoun, Wood Counties, including municipalities	Time and Effort for meetings and promotion	Establish a minimum number of jurisdictions needed for successful regional participation	General funds of participating jurisdictions

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Identify any impoundments in Wirt County where warm water fishing is feasible	High	Moderate-term		WV DNR, County Commission, LKADC	Identification of impoundments- time and effort. Stocking will cost up to \$500 per stocking.	List all feasible impoundments in Wirt County for warm water fishing whether private or public.	Private investment
Develop a master trail plan, including updated trail maps and which encompasses bikes, ATVs, walking facilities, and bluewater trails	High	Moderate-term		LKADC, County Commission, MOVRC Town Council	Cost of plan should not exceed \$10,000 for a professional draft	Completion of a county wide master trail plan	recreational grants, general funds, ARC funds
Understand regulations for trail development, including landowner liability, leasing, and municipal ATV regulations	Moderate	short-term		Town of Elizabeth, private property owners	May need legal research from attorneys	A thorough understanding of regulations by those involved	
Assess the feasibility of connecting the North Bend Trail to Wirt County	Moderate	long term		West Virginia DNR Parks and Recreation Section	Staff time and effort for assessment of making a connection of trails	complete a written assessment about feasibility of making connections between Wirt County and the North Bend Trail	Agency Funds

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Focus on education and providing information to existing business owners who could benefit from a greater online presence	High	Ongoing		LKADC, Community Resources, Inc. (CRI)	Time and Effort, some expenses for development of educational materials	Readily accessible educational and informational materials for business owners	LKADC funds, County and Town monetary assistance
Develop a business incubator for business startups	Moderate	Long-term		LKADC; WV HIVE; The Entrepreneur Center (Parkersburg); CRI	Initial start up costs can be several hundred thousand into the millions	Complete a feasibility study for there to be an incubator in Wirt County	Federal and State Grants
Ensure any long-term planning strategies for the county involves current business owners' input	Low	Moderate-Term		LKADC, local business owners, WVU Extension	Staff and Officials time and Effort	Invite business owners to focus group meetings once a year for their input	N/A
Encourage the development of short-term rentals (STR) including B&B, and camping sites Wirt County	High	Short-term		County Commission, Town Council, LKADC	Time and Effort	Being able to show growth of these types of development in Wirt County. Set goals such as 5 new places for short term lodging in next 5 years	General fund

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Work with other neighboring jurisdictions to hold a regional summer music series	Moderate	Moderate-term		Takes structure and organization (possibly pairing with Calhoun) LKADC	thousands of dollars but can be offset by volunteer labor. Will	Starting some form of concert series no matter the size or venue would be success	Sponsors, Volunteers, State Performing Arts Grants
Ensure Burning Springs and other historically significant places in Wirt County and Elizabeth sites are preserved for future generations	Moderate	Long term/on going		community volunteers are already doing the work. SHPO, County Commission	costs of materials for renovations, dependent on scope and needs	The successful preservation of significant places and structures in Wirt County	private donations, General Fund, historic renovation grants
Goal 3: Promote a Culture of Diverse Educational Opportunities							
Include recently collected data regarding student's lack of connectivity with any grant application that might expand broadband in Wirt County	Low	Ongoing		Wirt County Schools, WV Office of Broadband	Educational Staff Time and Effort	The inclusion of contemporary and relevant connectivity data for any broadband grant application	School System operating budget
Continue to promote the need for student connectivity not only at school but at home for homework, virtual learning, and snow days	High	on going		Wirt County Schools, WV Office of Broadband, County Commission, Town Council , Wirt County FRN, CRI	Educational Staff Time and Effort	Survey students and parents to see where and how much of a gap there is for complete connectivity county wide.	School System operating budget
Hold community conversations to address any concerns about allocation of limited resource or busing students to different jurisdictions. Ensure everyone has a chance to voice their concerns before any decisions are made	Moderate	Short-term		Parents, Teachers, Students, School Administration	Time and Effort needed to hold various meetings	After an agreed upon number of meetings, hold those meetings inviting public comment.	School System operating budget

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Provide tools necessary for students to learn employable skills, for example how to use a plasma cutting machine for welding	High	Short-term		Wirt County Schools, local tradespeople	Costs of providing equipment, educational materials	Develop list of needs,	School System operating budget
Consider working with another entity or jurisdiction to offer expanded STEAM and technical curriculum	Moderate	Moderate term		Superintendent, Surrounding JX school boards	Costs associated with transportation, instructor salaries/benefits,	Easily accessible STEAM and technical classes and courses for Wirt County residents	Various school systems' budget
Expand or create extracurricular programs such as entrepreneurship (through Future Business Leaders of America), junior ROTC, band, and chorus	High	Long term/on going		Wirt County Schools	Costs dependent on the programs that are part	The establishment of one or more of identified extracurricular programs in Wirt County	ideally in school budget, grants for JROTC, FBLA programs
Promote PATCH 21's program, which is now working in Wirt County and provides afterschool activities to children	Moderate	short term/on going		PATCH 21 staff, Wirt County Schools	Time and Effort for Promotion; County should provide support whenever it can.	Growth of PATCH 21 in Wirt County	program funding, General funds
Goal 4: Enhance a Sense of Community							
Encourage beautification through competitions such as "best property" or "best neighborhood," or best "Holiday Lights"	Moderate	On-going		CVB, Fire Department, VFW, interested citizens	Time and Effort, nominal costs for prizes	At least one beautification competition each year	Donations for prizes
Coordinate free bulk trash, including tires and hazardous materials drop offs in Wirt County throughout the year	High	Short term		County Commission, WV DEP, Health Department, Town (Spring/fall)	tipping fees, costs for disposal of hazardous waste	Coordinate at least one clean up in Wirt County each year. Ensure it is free or very low cost.	DEP grants

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Ensure historical sites including the Ruble Church are being preserved for future generations	High	Short-term/ongoing		Volunteers, church board members, interested groups	costs dependent on size and scope of work needed but could be several thousand	the completion of repairs needed to ensure long term stability of structures and sites	in kind, private donations, historic preservation grants
Periodically poll the county's youth to ensure their ideas are part of the decision-making processes	Low	On-going		Wild Wonderful Wirt County, Schools, Planning Commission, Local Officials	Time and effort	complete and analyze surveys/polls	General fund and operating budget
Hold "Mayor or County Commissioner for a Day" when students can shadow local decision makers and staff	Moderate	Short-term		County Commission, Civics Teachers, Town Council	Time and effort	Make this an annual program	N/A
Create a youth advisory board that meets with county commission and Elizabeth town council quarterly during the school year. The youth could be elected from the student body at large	Moderate	On-going		County Commission, Civics Teachers, Town Council	Time and effort	Establishment of a program creates a youth advisory board each year.	General fund and operating budget
Consider collaborating with other jurisdictions to hold a regional concert series	Moderate	Short term		Surrounding Counties, CVBs, Chamber of Commerce, interested citizens	Cost could be in the thousands, cost offset for nominal ticket price, or bringing food trucks	Creation of a group aimed at producing a summer concert series	small-town performing arts grants; local business sponsorship

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Continue to promote existing community programs to ensure their continuation	High	On going		Community based organizations, elected officials; student advisory board*	Costs dependent on scope of projects/programs		private donations, volunteerism
Make County Commission (town council) meetings available online or through teleconference technology	Moderate	Short		County Commission; Town Council	Depending on the technology it will likely cost between \$3,000 and \$10,000 for reliable teleconferencing equipment	Both the town and county governments purchase, setup, and routinely use teleconferencing equipment	General funds, maybe broadband grants that could utilized
Organize low-cost activities such as a 5K race, or chili cookoff. These activities could be in addition to existing events	Moderate	on going		Social organizations, Chamber of Commerce, LKADC, fire department	most of these activities will cost a few hundred dollars or less	Strive to hold at least one community activity quarterly, annually	fees, sponsors, private donations, volunteers
Goal 5: Address, Housing, Land Use, and Floodplain Issues							
Inventory housing stock, paying particular attention to the number of abandoned and dilapidated housing units	High	Short (on going)		Wirt County FRN, CRI, Planning Commission, MOVRC	Time and effort; this could be a fairly time intensive project	Completed inventory; ensure inventory is updated at least annually	General Funds; BAD Building Program

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Working towards engagement of code enforcement officer that can work regionally with other jurisdictions	High	Short term		Wild Wonderful Wirt County, Town and County Elected Officials; surrounding jurisdictions	can cost several thousand dollars for part time employment	having someone enforcing ordinances on books	General funds, state grant funding
Develop ordinances related to abandoned and dilapidated structures	High	Short Term		County Officials; WVU Land Use Law Clinic	time and effort to create ordinance; will be costs associated with enforcement of ordinances	Number of structures either demolished or renovated to a certain standard	WV DEP, General Funds, Brownfields funding
Encourage a diversity of well-maintained housing options for Wirt County citizens, including starter homes for young families	Moderate	On going		Wirt County FRN, CRI, Developers, Housing Subcommittee, Landowners, Banks	Starter homes can cost between \$150k and \$200K.	The identification and creation of housing that is affordable to those starting families in Wirt County	private investment
Work with state officials to ensure that Wildlife Management Areas are utilized in a manner that encourages their use by county citizens for multiple recreational opportunities	Moderate	Moderate		DNR Staff, Local Elected Officials, interested citizens	Time and Effort;	Develop a plan for the future expanded utilization of the WMAs in Wirt County	DNR funding
Consider incentives for growth in the preferred development areas	Low	Long term		Elected Officials, MOVRC, LKADC	Costs dependent on incentives used.	The completion of analysis and discussion of the types of incentives	General Funds
Understand the differences between the two different preferred development areas; the preferred recreational development area and the residential and commercial development areas	Low	Long term		LKR Trail Coalition, Elected Officials, MOVRC, LKADC	Time and Effort	Completion of detailed analysis and discussion of the purpose and intent of each PDA	General Funds

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended	Costs & Financing	How to Assess or Evaluate Recommendation	Funding Sources
Work with FEMA and the WV State Office of the National Flood Insurance Program to ensure local flood maps reflect the actual risk of flooding in Wirt County	Moderate	on-going		FEMA, State Office of the National Flood Insurance Program	Time and Effort	Determination from local officials that maps accurately reflect actual risk, confirmed by FEMA	N/A
Develop an emergency preparedness plan that will assist future decision makers	High	on-going		Wirt County Commission, Volunteer Fire Department, MOVRC, OES, Wild Wonderful Wirt County	Costs to complete plan will likely be between \$10,000 and \$20,000	The completion of a plan that adequately provides steps to mitigation loss of property and life due to disasters	WV Emergency Management Division, General funds