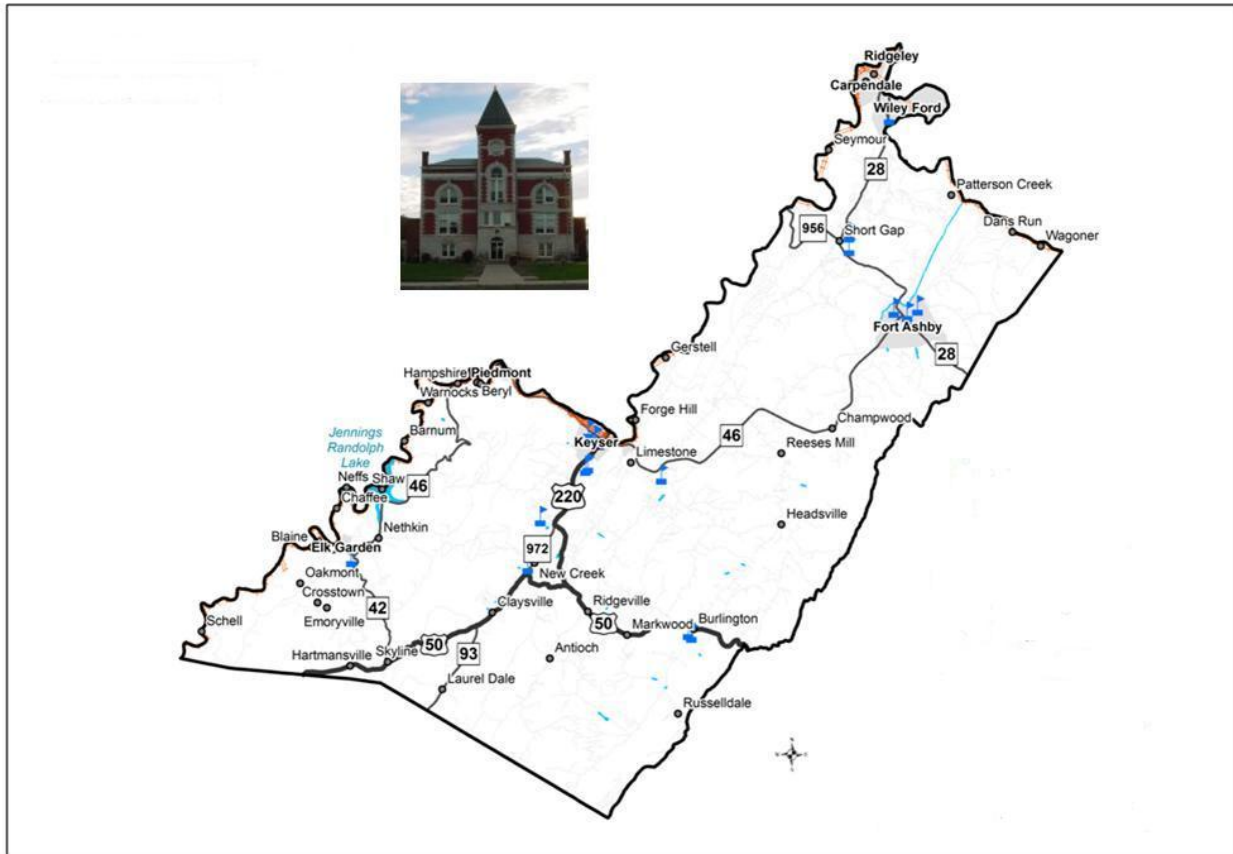


# 2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan



**Developed by the Mineral County Planning Commission**

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# 2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan

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# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 1: Introduction**

### *Plan Rationale*

Planning is a key factor in the development of any community. In designing a plan, Mineral County recognizes the importance of using past history, experiences of other communities, professional expertise, and the desires of its residents in developing goals for the future.

A plan should always be a dynamic instrument that is supplemented and complemented with information that supports the direction and focus of all community efforts. It should map out future directions for the community. However, a plan is merely the beginning of a call to action. The actions called for in the plan require multiple and varied strategies. Some actions are clear and immediate steps are more defined. Some areas however, require further study to understand the distinct directions that should be pursued. This is the only way that the plan becomes a useful guide for leaders of today and tomorrow.

Thus, examining the future of the community can be seen in a more positive light than that in which it is often cast. Still, there are concerns as to why a community should plan. The answers have to do with the “interconnectedness” and “complexity” of society today (Levy 2009). The size of the population and the scope of technology make the gains to be achieved from planning (and conversely the losses from the lack of planning) too large to ignore.

It is also important to note some other characteristics of a comprehensive plan. The plan serves as a foundation for the action for the entire community. However, it requires the other entities take action to make things happen. The Planning Commission is an advisory body with limited enforcement powers and no law-making authority. Furthermore, if the plan was overly specific, it would limit the options and ability of these entities to take the appropriate action based upon the situation and resources. In addition, the plan must be able to handle changes in circumstances which could be seen through major events or data shifts. Thus, the plan is a general document and its recommendations must be broad and have flexibility because they relate to the entire process of planning and governance.

Overall, there is nothing unusual or special about the preparation of plans to guide future action. All the comprehensive plan does is expand the scale of the activity. After all, everyone indulges in a certain amount of planning in their daily life in order to equate short and long-term desires with available resources. Without some planning, chaos would prevail.

The requirements of government are similar to those of the individual in that scarce resources have to be carefully allocated to provide the highest level of return in the form of carefully allocated services and benefits to the people. Government, being an instrument of the people, has the additional responsibility of determining and creating the kind of community atmosphere that meets the needs of its citizens, and therefore, is involved in matters pertaining to the development of its jurisdiction. With respect to Mineral County, this means taking care to be balanced in the promotion and protection of private interests and public needs.

### *Plan Background*

Mineral County is one of 55 counties in West Virginia and one of about 25 counties that have an active planning commission (according to a 2003 survey by the West Virginia Planning Association). The County Commission is authorized by the *West Virginia Code* to create by ordinance a Planning Commission to promote the orderly development of the county (§8A-2-1(a)). The state code defines the structure of the planning commission (§8A-2-5) as well as outlining its powers and duties (§8A-2-11).

Among the duties of the planning commission are making recommendations to the county commission regarding planning (§8A-2-11(8)) and preparing reports, ordinances, and related materials on authorized activities (§8A-2-11(10)).

The development of a comprehensive plan accomplishes both of these duties. Furthermore, state law states that planning commissions “shall prepare” such a plan (§8A-3-3(a)). The comprehensive planning process works to establish the best and most appropriate future development of an area (§8A-3-1(b)). It should promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of residents (§8A-3-1(c)). The plan should set goals and objectives for land development, be internally consistent, help to coordinate activities among governmental entities, create favorable conditions, reduce waste of resources, protect

valuable sites, promote sense of community and community identity, work toward efficient use of natural resources, rural resources, and agricultural resources, focus development in places already developed or appropriate for development, and promote cost-effective development of community facilities and services (§8A-3-1(d)).

To do this, the plan must include a statement on present and future land use and development patterns (§8A-3-4(a)). It must have a statement of goals and objectives as well as associated timelines, action plans, and financing strategies. It must encourage regional planning. It must include appropriate maps, charts, and descriptive materials (§8A-3-4(b)). It must include discussions on land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, public services, rural areas, recreation, economic development, community design, preferred development area(s), renewal or redevelopment, project financing, and historic preservation (§8A-3-4(c)). It can include discussions on history, environmental issues, tourism, conservation, safety, and natural resources use (§8A-3-5).

Finally, the comprehensive plan is to cover all of the area within the territorial jurisdiction of the planning commission (§8A-3-1(a); §8A-3-3(a)). For a county, this means the unincorporated areas of the county – the places outside of the towns and cities. However, the municipalities may be considered when their inclusion is related to the planning of the unincorporated territory of the county as a whole (§8A-3-3(b)).

Once adopted, the plan must be kept up to date. It legally has to be reviewed and updated at least every 10 years (§8A-3-11(a)). Amendments can be made directly by the Planning Commission (§8A-3-11(b)) or suggested by the County Commission (§8A-3-11(c)).

This set of requirements may appear daunting. In reality, they are in place to ensure that the plan developed is truly comprehensive. While land use is a major unifying element of the plan, it is only a necessary element of the comprehensive plan; it is not sufficient to be the entire plan.

For Mineral County, this has several implications. The plan has been developed around several large topical themes. The first of these is Land Use (Section 3), which serves as the foundation for the other planning topics. It includes not only the general land use discussion, but housing



issues, agricultural and rural issues, and environmental, conservation, and natural resources use issues as well.

The next two topical sections relate to the appropriate aesthetics of property and the facilities and services needed by properties. Community Design (Section 4) looks at general aesthetics, development patterns, and historic preservation. Infrastructure (Section 5) examines water and wastewater, solid waste, transportation, and general facilities.

The last two topical sections revolve around governmental operations and improvement. Community and Economic Development (Section 6) covers economic development, renewal and redevelopment, and preferred development areas. Public Services (Section 7) includes general government, education and culture, recreation and tourism, and safety and security.

The plan also includes opening and closing sections. The plan begins with an Introduction (Section 1) which describes the plan background and planning process. Next is a review of the Current Situation (Section 2) which consists of general and historical information, a statistical and data profile, and a discussion of the public input received on topics related to the plan. The plan ends with a Summary (Section 8) which reviews key points made throughout, discusses the significance of the plan document, and ends by propounding a vision of the future for the county.

The focus of the Mineral County Comprehensive Plan is on the unincorporated areas of the county as detailed in the *West Virginia Code*. The county planning commission may prepare a plan for all or part of a county (§8A-3-3(d)). However, it only can include consideration of municipalities to the extent to which those matters are related to the unincorporated areas of the county (§8A-3-3(b)) and it is not to plan for that place without the consent of the planning commission and/or governing body of the municipality (§8A-3-3(b)).

In the case of Mineral County, 317.41 square miles of the county – almost 97 percent of the total 327.73 square miles of land – are under the jurisdiction of the planning commission. However, because many people live in the five municipalities, only 18,758 of the county residents – just 70.2 percent of the total 26,722 residents – live in areas impacted directly by this plan (based on 2007 Census Bureau population estimates).

### *Planning Process*

The development of the Mineral County comprehensive plan began in 2006. The county wanted to have a new plan done soon because its existing plan was a decade old. To that end, the Planning Commission established an ad hoc strategic planning committee which began to look at options for the future of the county.

The process really began to take shape in July of that year. About 50 stakeholders gathered on a Saturday afternoon to discuss the future direction of the county. The event was held by the County Commission, the Planning Commission, and the ad hoc strategic planning group of the Planning Commission. Faculty from the West Virginia University (WVU) Extension Service's Community, Economic, and Workforce Development program unit facilitated the session.

Soon afterwards, the Planning Commission sought proposals to update the 1996 *Mineral County Comprehensive Plan* developed by Urban Planning and Redevelopment Corporation of Bethlehem, Pa. The WVU Extension Service was awarded a contract for plan development late in 2006. A two-year timetable was established that included several opportunities for public input and involvement. This timetable was extended to allow for the inclusion of better data for analysis and the consideration of heretofore unseen development-related issues.

The first year of the project involved a considerable amount of information gathering, from both formal and informal sources. Two sets of input meetings took place during that time. In May 2007, a series of five topical area meetings were held over a two-day period. The topics covered were Land Use, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Public Safety, and Economic Development. A standard set of five questions was used to guide discussion over a 90-minute time period. About 30 unique individuals participated in at least one meeting with a combined attendance of over 50 for the five sessions.

Then in November and December of 2007, general public meetings took place in communities around the county. The first and last meetings were held in Keyser. Other meeting locations were Elk Garden, Wiley Ford, Burlington, and Fort Ashby. A set of eight questions were used to keep discussion flowing and focused during the two-hour sessions. Attendance at the meetings ranged from 18 to 45 with all but one meeting having at least 20 participants.

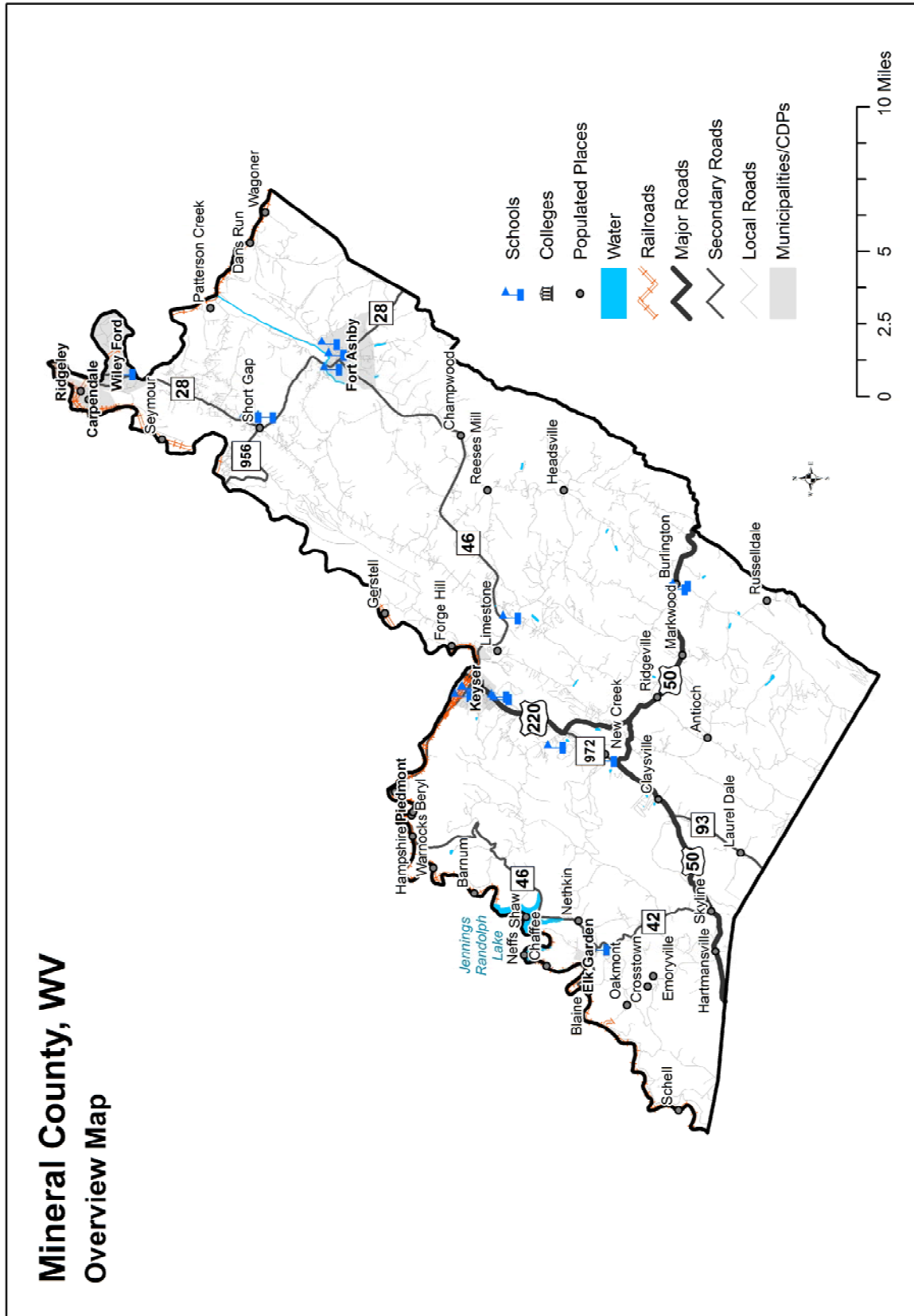
The second year of the project focused on plan development. This included research into the current situation and trends in the county, the assets and opportunities facing the county, and the ideas and desires of county residents. In addition, the plan and the ideas put forth have been vetted against the state planning enabling legislation (Chapter 8A of the *West Virginia Code*) to ensure they conform to the requirements of state law. They have also been reviewed to ensure their feasibility and practicality.

The Planning Commission also took action so that it would be better able to utilize the plan. The members received specialized training in the summer and fall of 2008. This training focused on the planning in West Virginia, commission operations, relationships between different types of planning, and connections between the Planning Commission and other entities.

Development of the plan occurred from the fall of 2008 through the first half of 2009. Some of the initial drafting of plan sections was done by students in a Comprehensive Planning II course in West Virginia University's Division of Resource Management – Mark Middleton, David C. Roddy, Jr., and Ryan Vaughn. Public input on the plan continued on an informal basis during this time as well. Sustentative chapters were made available for review and shared with appropriate public officials and stakeholders. The initial plan draft was finished in June 2009 and reviewed by the commission over the following two months. The second plan draft was finished in September 2009 and reviewed in detail by the commission through a series of work sessions over the following three months. The third draft was finished in January 2010 and another work session was held by the commission to review that draft. The resultant final draft was presented to the Planning Commission in April 2010.

The public also had opportunities to comment on the plan during the legally-required public hearings. That process started when the Planning Commission held a public hearing in June 2010. It then reviewed the comments made at the hearing and made modifications in the plan in July 2010. Following discussions among public officials, the Planning Commission held another public hearing in November 2010, after which it forwarded the plan to the County Commission with a recommendation for approval. The plan was formally presented to the County Commission in December 2010. Then the County Commission held a public hearing *in (Month) 2011*. It then approved the plan *in (Month) 2011* to conclude the process. *[To be updated.]*

Map 1.1: Mineral County Overview



# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 2: Current Situation**

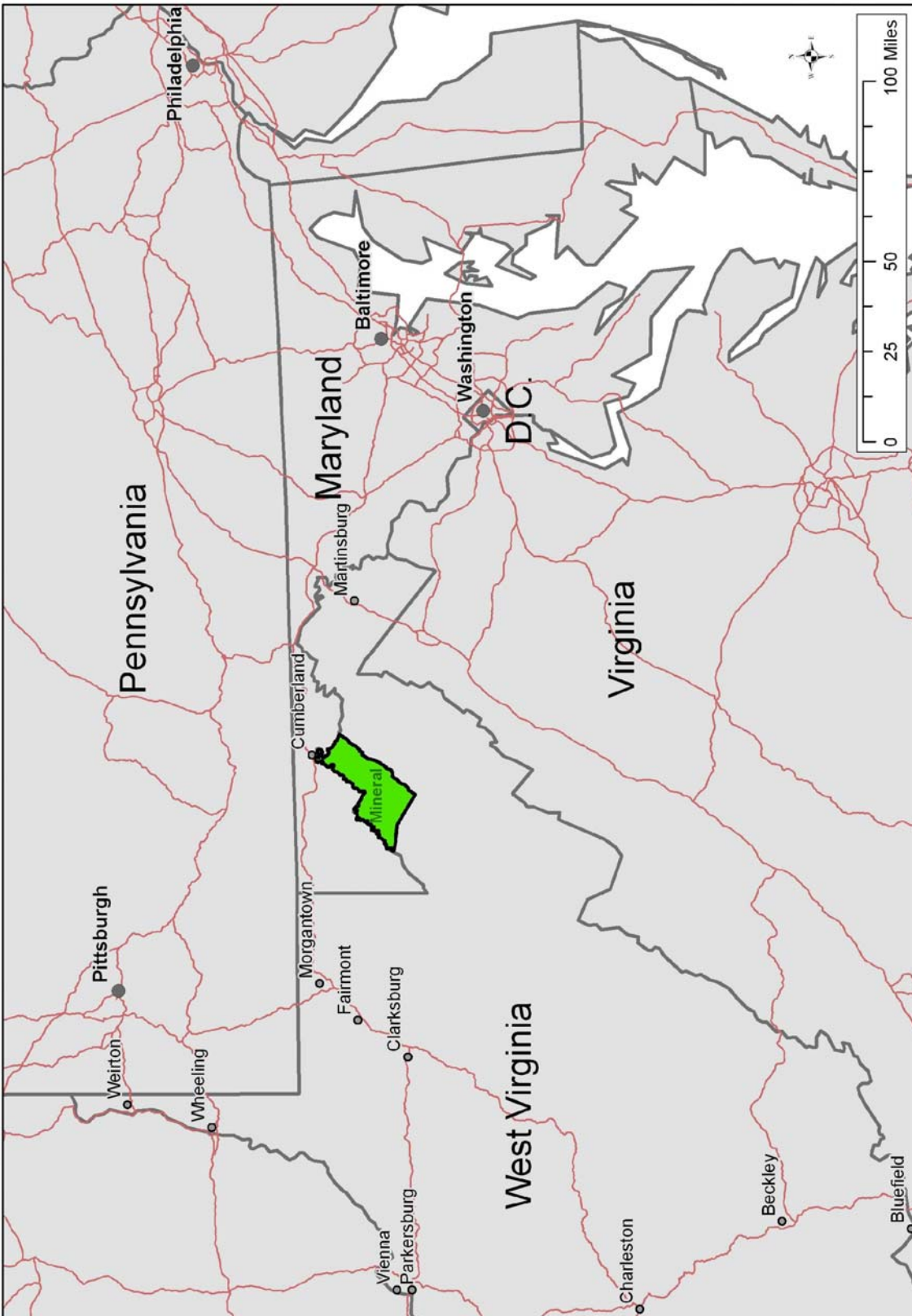
### *Location and History*

Mineral County is the northern most county in West Virginia's Potomac Highlands. The county is bordered by Hampshire County on the east, Hardy County at a corner to the southeast, and Grant County to the southwest. To the northwest is Garrett County, Maryland, and to the north Allegany County, Maryland. Allegany County along with Mineral County forms the Cumberland Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The interdependent relationship that exists between Mineral County and Allegany County has led to the designation of the metropolitan area for the two-county area by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

The land area of the county is 327.73 square miles with an additional 1.4 square miles of water area for a total of 329.13 square miles. The county is part of the ridge and valley network of the Appalachian mountain chain, with long mountain ridges and deep stream valleys comprising most of the county. The western part of the county lies on the Allegheny Front with the highest point in the county being Black Rock on the Fore Knobs of the Allegheny Mountains in the southwest part of the county. Other prominent mountains, including Knobley Mountain and Patterson Creek Mountain, run diagonally from southwest to northeast. New Creek and Patterson Creek run between the mountain ridges. Coal is mined in the southwest section of the county. Natural gas deposits can be found in the central and eastern parts of the county. The north branch of the Potomac River separates the county from neighboring Maryland. A dam on the Potomac River in the western edge of the county forms Jennings Randolph Lake.

The county is nearly equidistant between Baltimore, Md. (158 miles), Washington D.C. (143 miles), and Pittsburgh, Pa. (137 miles). The county is also within 400 miles (a one-day drive) of numerous other major markets that include Richmond, Va. (210 miles); Charleston, W.Va. (220 miles); Philadelphia, Pa. (255 miles); Cleveland, Ohio (263 miles); Columbus, Ohio (296 miles); Norfolk, Va. (298 miles); New York, N.Y. (326 miles); Winston-Salem, N.C. (346 miles); Raleigh, N.C. (385 miles); Lexington, Ky. (393 miles); and Cincinnati, Ohio (395 miles).

Map 2.1: Location of Mineral County



During the early settlement of the United States the first western outpost for the Ohio Company was located in the Ridgeley area. Other later built forts also located in the county played an important role in the protection of settlers during the French and Indian War. A surviving structure built in 1755 still exists in Fort Ashby; it is the only surviving structure of these early outposts in the state of West Virginia and one of the few remaining in the United States. During the Civil War, Keyser (then known as New Creek) was a key rail road and supply point changing hands more than a dozen times during the war. Mineral County is named for the abundance of mineral resources that can be found in the county. It was one of the few counties created after the formation of the state of West Virginia, having been formed out of Hampshire County in 1866.

### *Population and Population Change*

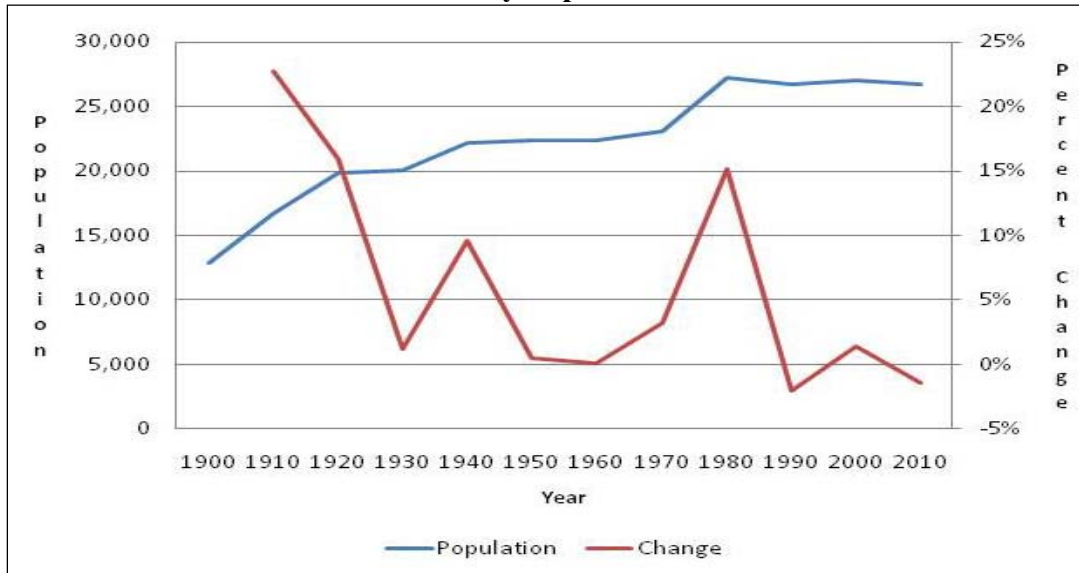
The population of Mineral County more than doubled during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Table 2.1 and Chart 2.1). The Census of population in 2000 counted 27,078 residents, compared to just 12,883 in 1900. Much of the growth came before World War II with industrialization of the area when the county experienced an almost 73 percent increase in residents. The population increase was almost 23 percent between 1900 and 1910, 16 percent between 1910 and 1920, and nearly 10 percent between 1930 and 1940. A population surge between 1970 and 1980 saw the county's population jump 15 percent to its peak level of 27,234 residents. In the nearly three decades since, the county's population has been fairly steady with small decreases and increases each decade.

**Table 2.1: 1900-2007 Mineral County Population**

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
<b>County</b>	12,883	16,674	19,849	20,084	22,215	22,333
<b>Pct. Change</b>		22.74%	16.00%	1.17%	9.59%	0.53%
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007
<b>County</b>	22,354	23,109	27,234	26,697	27,078	26,761
<b>Pct. Change</b>	0.09%	3.27%	15.15%	-2.01%	1.41%	-1.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Chart 2.1: 1900-2007 Mineral County Population**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The recent population change in Mineral County is similar to what the state has seen over the same time period (Table 2.2). The county’s population grew by 1.4 percent from 1990 to 2000 and fell between 2000 and 2007 for a net loss of almost 1.2 percent. During this same period of time the neighboring West Virginia counties showed an increase in population growth. The Cumberland MSA, of which Mineral County is a part, however lost 2.6 percent of its population with Allegany County losing 3.1 percent. Meanwhile the state of West Virginia experienced just 0.8 percent population growth from 1990 to 2000 and virtually no growth between 2000 and 2007. Nationally the population grew at a much quicker rate for both time periods.

If migration patterns have held from the 2000 census, the most dynamic population movement for Mineral County is within the Cumberland MSA (Table 2.3). Population migration within the Cumberland MSA has helped to offset Mineral County’s population losses. Mineral County had 21.4 percent more moving into the county from Allegany County than Mineral County residents moving to Allegany County. Most of those moving into Mineral County are from the neighboring counties in West Virginia and Maryland. The second highest migration exchange is between Hampshire County and Mineral County with the county gaining 158 or 42.9 percent more residents moving from Hampshire to Mineral than vice versa. The most likely potential explanation for this phenomenon appears to be the somewhat lower cost of housing in Mineral County. Other factors offer limited explanatory power.



Meanwhile, Grant County had the third largest exchange of population. Most of the other migration into the county was from the Baltimore-Washington Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) which traditionally has been an area where Mineral County residents have migrated when they move out of the immediate area.

**Table 2.2: 1990-2007 Comparative Population**

Population	Mineral County	Allegany County, Md.	Cumberland MSA	West Virginia	United States
1990	26,697	74,946	101,643	1,793,477	248,709,873
2000	27,078	74,930	102,008	1,808,344	281,421,906
2007	26,761	72,661	99,422	1,808,787	298,757,310
Pct. Change					
1990-2000	1.41%	-0.02%	0.36%	0.82%	11.62%
2000-2007	-1.18%	-3.12%	-2.60%	0.02%	5.80%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 2.3: 1995-2000 Top 10 Counties for Migration to Mineral County (In-Migration)**

		In	Out	Net Change	% Change
1	Allegany County, Maryland	1,064	836	228	21.43%
2	Hampshire County, West Virginia	368	210	158	42.93%
3	Grant County, West Virginia	122	127	-5	-3.94%
4	Frederick County, Virginia	81	64	17	20.99%
5	Baltimore city, Maryland	71	0	71	100.00%
6	Garrett County, Maryland	65	81	-16	-19.75%
7	Baltimore County, Maryland	59	9	50	84.75%
8	Monongalia County, West Virginia	56	293	-237	-80.89%
9	Washington County, Maryland	52	69	-17	-24.64%
10	Fairfax County, Virginia	49	17	32	65.31%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, WVU RRI.

Migration out of the county shows a similar pattern as migration into the county (Table 2.4). The major difference is migration to Monongalia County. Since Monongalia County is the home to West Virginia University, it can be surmised that much of this migration is from students attending the university. The -80.8 percent return migration coupled with the fact that those attending the university generally complete their program of study in four to five years leads to the conclusion that the majority of those attending WVU typically do not return to the county after completing their education. The migration to Marion County maybe similar to Monongalia County since that county is the home to Fairmont State University. The other top destination

points when moving from Mineral County are neighboring counties or small urban areas within close proximity to the county.

**Table 2.4: 1995-2000 Top 10 Counties for Migration from Mineral County (Out-Migration)**

		In	Out	Net Change	% Change
1	Allegany County, Maryland	1,064	836	228	21.43%
2	Monongalia County, West Virginia	56	293	-237	-80.89%
3	Hampshire County, West Virginia	368	210	158	42.93%
4	Berkeley County, West Virginia	36	176	-140	-79.55%
5	Grant County, West Virginia	122	127	-5	-3.94%
6	Allegheny County, Pennsylvania	17	94	-77	-81.91%
7	Garrett County, Maryland	65	81	-16	-19.75%
8	Marion County, West Virginia	0	71	-71	-100.00%
9	Washington County, Maryland	52	69	-17	-24.64%
10	Frederick County, Virginia	81	64	17	26.56%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, WVU RRI.

In the future, Mineral County is expected to experience slow-but-steady population growth, based upon the state population projections from the West Virginia University Regional Research Institute (RRI) (Table 2.5). The RRI uses in migration and out migration data to develop two forecasting models – a “long term” model which uses data from the 1985-2000 period and a “short term” model which uses data from only the 1995-2000 period. In other words, these forecasts are based upon on-going trends and as such do not – and cannot – take into account any changes in existing migration patterns that may result from the actions of this plan or any unforeseen events. For example, these forecasts may not fully account for the expansion of exurban spillover from the Baltimore-Washington CMSA that is being seen in other counties in the Potomac Highlands region.

The short-term model predicts population growth in each five-year period through 2050. Meanwhile, the long-term model predicts a slight population drop for each five-year period until 2015 at which time the trend would reverse. What has occurred since the 2000 Census is between the two forecasts as there has been a population decrease but one less than what was predicted by the long-term model. It is also important to note that the predicted rate of population change is small as it only reaches 2 percent in the 2045-2050 time period.

**Table 2.5: 2000-2050 Population Projections for Mineral County**

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
<b>Short Term</b>	27,078	27,286	27,515	27,767	28,138	28,606	29,045	29,457	29,898	30,452	31,136
<b>% Change</b>		0.77%	0.84%	0.92%	1.34%	1.66%	1.53%	1.42%	1.50%	1.85%	2.25%
<b>Long Term</b>	27,078	26,786	26,557	26,446	26,478	26,664	26,883	27,114	27,399	27,802	28,345
<b>% Change</b>		-1.08%	-0.85%	-0.42%	0.12%	0.70%	0.82%	0.86%	1.05%	1.47%	1.95%

Source: WVU RRI.

Most Mineral County residents live in rural areas, based upon the definitions of the U.S. Census Bureau (Table 2.6). In 2000, rural residents made up more than three-fifths of the county's population. This appears to be a decrease from 1990 when rural residents made up about two-thirds of the county population. A classification change, not increased urbanization, caused the change. In fact, when comparing the rural-urban population using the new definition put in place for the 2000 Census, both the number of rural residents and the share of county residents who were considered rural actually increased.

**Table 2.6: 1990-2000 Urban /Rural Population of Mineral County**

<b>At Time of Census</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Urban Cluster Population</b>	8,877	10,335
<b>% Change</b>		16.4%
<b>% of County</b>	33.3%	38.2%
<b>Rural Population</b>	17,820	16,743
<b>% Change</b>		-6.0%
<b>% of County</b>	66.7%	61.8%
<b>2000 Definition</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Urban Cluster Population</b>	11,488	10,335
<b>% Change</b>		10.0%
<b>% of County</b>	43.0%	38.2%
<b>Rural Population</b>	15,209	16,743
<b>% Change</b>		10.1%
<b>% of County</b>	57.0%	61.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Additionally, only three-in-ten county residents live in one of the five incorporated municipalities that lay along the Potomac River. The county seat of Keyser was designated a Class III city located along the North Branch of the Potomac River in the relative center of the county and has an estimated population of 5,254 in 2007. The other four municipalities are Class IV towns. Piedmont is located along the North Branch in the northwest corner of the county and

has an estimated population of 921. Piedmont and the Maryland municipalities of Westernport and Luke form what is called the “Tri-Towns Area.” Because of proximity to one another these three communities are interconnected, with nearby Keyser being the economic and service center for the region. Carpendale is located in the northern corner of the county along the North Branch (adjacent to Ridgeley) and has an estimated population of 897. Ridgeley is located in the northern corner of the county along the North Branch (adjacent to Carpendale) and has an estimated population of 686. Both Carpendale and Ridgeley are located directly across the river from Cumberland, Md., the MSA’s major urban center. These two communities are closer to the downtown area than many areas of the city. Elk Garden is located in the southwestern part of the county and has an estimated population of 206.

The proportion of the county residents living in the municipalities has declined steadily since the 1970s as all five municipalities have experienced population loss over the period (Table 2.7). This trend of moving to new places from existing communities has been seen throughout much of West Virginia (as well as nationally) and can lead to sprawl and other development-related issues. The total municipal population declined between 1970 and 2007 by 2,962 people. During the same period, the county population increased by 3,613 people. Much of these population shifts away from cities and towns appear to be the result of macro-demographic trends. In general, the five municipalities have smaller households, an older population, and an older housing stock than what is found in the county as a whole. However, other factors which might be thought to explain these shifts – such as housing costs, housing vacancy rates, and housing unit size – the trends are either roughly the same for all places or more favorable for the municipalities as compared to the county as a whole.

Even when the two Census Designated Places (CDPs) are added to the municipalities, still less than two-fifths of the county residents lived in “built-up places” in 2000 (current population estimates are not available for CDPs). Excluding Keyser, the county’s two Census Designated Places (Fort Ashby CDP and Wiley Ford CDP) each have more residents than the other four incorporated communities. Fort Ashby, located along Patterson’s Creek in the northeast part of the county, had a population of 1,354 people in 2000. Wiley Ford, which is located directly across the river from Cumberland, Maryland, but several miles away from Carpendale and Ridgeley in the northern part of the county, had a population of 1,095 people in 2000.

**Table 2.7: 1970-2007 Municipal and CDP Population of Mineral County**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007
<b>Keyser</b>	6,585	6,569	5,870	5,303	5,254
% Change		-0.2%	-11.9%	-10.7%	-0.9%
% of County	28.5%	24.1%	22.0%	19.6%	19.7%
<b>Carpendale</b>	1,175	1,164	1,110	954	897
% Change		-0.9%	-4.9%	-16.4%	-6.4%
% of County	5.1%	4.3%	4.2%	3.5%	3.4%
<b>Elk Garden</b>	291	291	261	217	206
% Change		0.0%	-11.5%	-20.3%	-5.3%
% of County	1.3%	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%
<b>Piedmont</b>	1,763	1,491	1,094	1,014	921
% Change		-18.2%	-36.3%	-7.9%	-10.1%
% of County	7.6%	5.5%	4.1%	3.7%	3.4%
<b>Ridgeley</b>	1,112	994	779	762	686
% Change		-11.9%	-27.6%	-2.2%	-11.1%
% of County	4.8%	3.6%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%
<b>All Municipalities</b>	10,926	10,509	9,114	8,250	7,964
% Change		-4.0%	-15.3%	-10.5%	-3.6%
% of County	47.3%	38.6%	34.1%	30.5%	29.8%
<b>Fort Ashby CDP</b>		1,205	1,288	1,354	
% Change			6.4%	4.9%	
% of County		4.4%	4.8%	5.0%	
<b>Wiley Ford CDP</b>				1,095	
% Change					
% of County				4.0%	
<b>All Places</b>	10,926	11,714	10,402	10,699	7,964
% Change		6.7%	-12.6%	2.8%	-34.3%
% of County	47.3%	43.0%	39.0%	39.5%	29.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

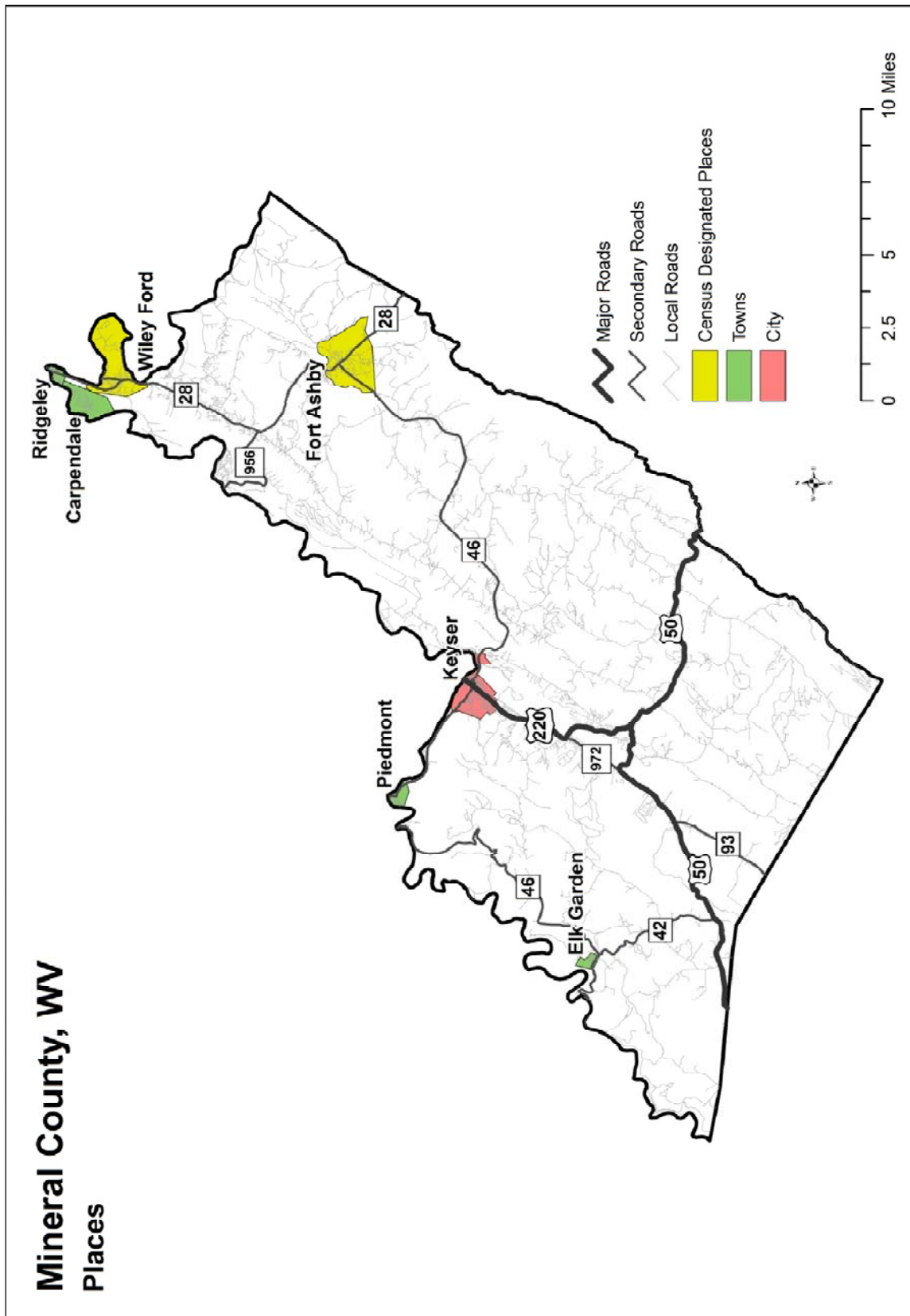
Mineral County has a relatively high population density (Table 2.8). The county's population density has been about 82 persons per square mile since 1990. It is slightly higher than the West Virginia's population density and now slightly lower than the national population density.

**Table 2.8: 1990-2007 Population Density**

	1990	2000	2007
<b>Mineral County</b>	81.4 P/sq. mi	82.6 P/sq. mi	81.5 P/sq. mi
<b>West Virginia</b>	74.5 P/sq. mi	75.1 P/sq. mi	75.3 P/sq. mi
<b>United States</b>	70.3 P/sq. mi	79.6 P/sq. mi	85.3 P/sq. mi

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Map 2.2: Cities, Towns and CDPs



### *General Demographics*

Mineral County has a population that is older and less diverse than the nation as a whole (Table 2.9). Likewise, the county's populace is less diverse and at least as old as that of the state and the metropolitan area. Current trends show that this situation is continuing.

The county has seen a small change in the components of its population since the 2000 census. However, still less than one person out of 20 was a member of a racial or ethnic minority group in 2007. This compared to roughly one out of every 15 persons in the state, one out of every 12 persons in the MSA, and one out of every three persons in the nation as a whole being classified as a racial or ethnic minority.

Mineral County has also gotten older since the last census with the median age exceeding 40 in 2007. During that time, the median age has become greater than that for the metropolitan area as a whole. Along with this, there has been an expected decrease in the proportion of the population age 18 and younger and somewhat surprising drop in the proportion of the population in the county age 65 or older. This would indicate the county is becoming older through an increase in those in the "middle aged" cohorts.

**Table 2.9: Key Demographic Trends**

	<b>Mineral County</b>	<b>Cumberland MSA</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>2000 White Non-Hispanic</b>	95.7%	93.4%	94.6%	69.1%
<b>2007 White Non-Hispanic</b>	95.1%	92.3%	93.7%	66.3%
<b>2000 Under Age 5</b>	5.5%	5.2%	5.6%	6.8%
<b>2007 Under Age 5</b>	5.5%	5.0%	5.8%	6.9%
<b>2000 Under Age 18</b>	23.4%	21.3%	22.3%	25.7%
<b>2007 Under Age 18</b>	21.4%	19.7%	21.5%	24.7%
<b>2000 Over Age 65</b>	15.1%	17.2%	15.3%	12.4%
<b>2007 Over Age 65</b>	14.5%	17.0%	15.4%	12.5%
<b>2000 Median Age</b>	39.1 years	39.1 years	38.9 years	35.3 years
<b>2007 Median Age</b>	40.3 years	39.9 years	40.3 years	36.4 years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and American Community Survey.

A more in-depth look at the demographic details helps to explain these current trends. Overall, Mineral County's racial and ethnic makeup is homogeneous with minorities accounting for only about 4 percent of the county population, according to the 2000 Census (the most recent detailed data available) (Table 2.10). This pattern is similar to the patterns found in the Cumberland MSA

and the state of West Virginia which are significantly different from patterns found at the national level. African-Americans are the largest minority population representing almost 3 percent of the population with no other group making up even one-half of one percent.

**Table 2.10: 2000 Race and Ethnicity Comparison**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Total Population</b>	27,078		102,008		1,808,344		281,421,906	
<b>White</b>	25,972	95.92%	95,622	93.74%	1,717,482	94.98%	211,353,725	75.10%
<b>Black or African American</b>	805	2.97%	4,811	4.72%	55,999	3.10%	34,361,740	12.21%
<b>Am. Indian &amp; Alaska Native</b>	1	0.00%	117	0.11%	3,770	0.21%	2,447,989	0.87%
<b>Asian</b>	87	0.32%	541	0.53%	9,445	0.52%	10,171,820	3.61%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	405	0.02%	378,782	0.13%
<b>Some other race</b>	68	0.25%	166	0.16%	3,139	0.17%	15,436,924	5.49%
<b>Two or more races</b>	145	0.54%	751	0.74%	18,104	1.00%	7,270,926	2.58%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (any race)</b>	158	0.58%	729	0.71%	12,279	0.68%	35,305,818	12.55%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Meanwhile, several of the population age cohorts have increased as a percentage of the population of Mineral County since the 2000 Census (Table 2.11). There was a major increase in age cohort between 55 and 64 years of age – the “pre-retirement” cohort – of 20.7 percent. Likewise, there was a large increase in the age cohort between 65 and 74 years of age – the “early retirement years” – of 15.4 percent. The only other age cohorts to increase in population were between the ages of 15 and 24 (“secondary and post-secondary education) with a 7.6 percent increase and between the ages of 45 and 54 (“middle age workers”) with a 4.1 percent increase.

All other age cohorts showed a decrease in the percentage of the county population. The largest decrease was 16.7 percent in the 5-to-14 age cohort – the cohort of elementary to middle school



age children. This was followed by an 11.3 percent decrease in the 25-to-34 age cohort (“early working career”) and a 7.6 percent decrease in the 75-to-84 age cohort (“later retirement years”).

**Table 2.11: 2000-2007 County Age Cohorts**

	Under 5	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 Over
<b>2000</b>	1,499	3,723	3,427	3,414	3,916	3,970	3,047	2,190	1,437	455
<b>2007</b>	1,484	3,100	3,688	3,028	3,778	4,134	3,677	2,527	1,328	449
<b>% Change</b>	-1.0%	-16.7%	7.6%	-11.3%	-3.5%	4.1%	20.7%	15.4%	-7.6%	-1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and American Community Survey.

Overall, the population of Mineral County tended to be older than the state of West Virginia and the United States population (Table 2.12). The older age cohorts, beginning with the 45 to 49 grouping, is each proportionately larger than the same cohort on a national level. A similar pattern can be found for the Cumberland MSA and West Virginia which also tend to have older populations. Not surprisingly, the age cohorts for those below 15 years of age in the county – from birth to junior high – make up a lower proportion of the county population than they do nationally.

**Table 2.12: 2007 Age Cohorts Comparison**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Under 5 years</b>	1,484	5.46%	4,972	4.97%	105,185	5.79%	20,480,587	6.82%
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	1,759	6.47%	5,189	5.19%	100,582	5.53%	19,683,354	6.55%
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	1,341	4.93%	5,471	5.47%	112,154	6.17%	20,609,318	6.86%
<b>15 to 19 years</b>	2,361	8.68%	8,027	8.03%	118,523	6.52%	21,469,780	7.15%
<b>20 to 24 years</b>	1,327	4.88%	7,572	7.58%	115,112	6.33%	20,867,888	6.95%
<b>25 to 29 years</b>	1,448	5.32%	6,098	6.10%	118,000	6.49%	20,318,908	6.76%
<b>30 to 34 years</b>	1,580	5.81%	5,786	5.79%	110,799	6.09%	19,645,992	6.54%
<b>35 to 39 years</b>	1,930	7.10%	6,702	6.71%	116,550	6.41%	21,083,626	7.02%
<b>40 to 44 years</b>	1,848	6.80%	7,030	7.03%	128,479	7.07%	22,538,708	7.50%
<b>45 to 49 years</b>	2,179	8.01%	7,217	7.22%	138,912	7.64%	22,725,270	7.57%
<b>50 to 54 years</b>	1,955	7.19%	6,723	6.73%	138,081	7.60%	20,508,164	6.83%
<b>55 to 59 years</b>	1,973	7.26%	6,502	6.50%	129,747	7.14%	17,808,846	5.93%
<b>60 to 64 years</b>	1,704	6.27%	5,242	5.24%	98,133	5.40%	13,751,759	4.58%
<b>65 to 69 years</b>	1,446	5.32%	4,868	4.87%	87,400	4.81%	12,035,959	4.01%
<b>70 to 74 years</b>	1,081	3.98%	3,844	3.85%	65,522	3.60%	8,570,422	2.85%
<b>75 to 79 years</b>	848	3.12%	3,522	3.52%	56,833	3.13%	7,533,085	2.51%
<b>80 to 84 years</b>	480	1.77%	2,936	2.94%	42,201	2.32%	5,767,227	1.92%
<b>85 years &amp; over</b>	449	1.65%	2,253	2.25%	35,827	1.97%	4,975,788	1.66%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Meanwhile, the proportion of the population in the late youth cohort of ages 15 to 19 is above the national level, which may be a function of the county having a (primarily) two-year college. This is plausible because the population for the age cohort between 20 to 24 drops below the national average. The county also has a lower proportion of its population in age cohorts between 25 and 35 compared to the nation which may help to explain the county's lower proportion of young children.

Educational attainment is a mixed situation in the county (Table 2.13). The nearly 87 percent of the population over 25 years of age in Mineral County with a high school degree or better is higher than both the national and state percentages of high school degree attainment, yet the county's population lags behind the state and nation for post high school education. The population in the county with some college education is similar to the state but 3 percentage points less than the national level. Those with an associate degree are around 2 percentage points above the state level and slightly above the national level. The population with bachelor's degrees is 3 percentage points below the state level and 10 percentage points below the national level. Those with graduate degrees are 4½ percentage points below the national rate for graduate and professional degrees.

**Table 2.13: 2007 Educational Attainment**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Less than 9th grade</b>	890	4.81%	3,105	4.55%	90,315	7.18%	12,691,550	6.49%
<b>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</b>	1,545	8.36%	7,110	10.43%	148,410	11.80%	18,556,909	9.48%
<b>High school graduate</b>	9,228	49.91%	30,447	44.65%	526,472	41.88%	58,762,191	30.03%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	3,127	16.91%	12,289	18.02%	208,006	16.54%	38,383,119	19.62%
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	1,426	7.71%	5,458	8.00%	72,063	5.73%	14,392,617	7.36%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	1,323	7.16%	5,363	7.86%	128,628	10.23%	33,475,448	17.11%
<b>Grad./professional degree</b>	950	5.14%	4,419	6.48%	83,337	6.63%	19,384,549	9.91%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

The percentage of those attending college or graduate school in Mineral County is higher than both the state and national levels (Table 2.14). While only about 40 percent of the state's and 40 percent of the nation's 18 to 24 years of age population is enrolled in a post high school education program, over 49 percent of Mineral County's population is enrolled in such

programs. Nearly 51 percent of the Cumberland MSA populations are in the traditional age group for attending college and are enrolled in an education program. Potomac State College of West Virginia University, which is located in the county, could account for the high numbers in college enrollment; however, this institution has a student population of around 1,600.

Approximately 500 of these students are Mineral County residents. The college has residential housing space for 600 students on campus. It was also noted earlier in this document that Monongalia and Marion Counties in West Virginia were two of the top 10 areas where Mineral County residents migrate. Both of these counties have a university level state educational institution. Studies in neighboring Allegany County show that county to have one of the highest rates of post high school education in the State of Maryland. When the migration data and the information on post high school information from Allegany County are considered with the Census, county college enrollment information appears to indicate that youth in Mineral County tend to continue their education after high school.

**Table 2.14: 2000 Educational Status**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Population by age (15+)</b>	22,177		83,790		1,490,866		237,984,051	
<b>15 to 17 years</b>	1,138		3,942		70,399		12,902,336	
<b>18 to 24 years</b>	2,550		11,657		163,236		29,435,332	
<b>25 to 34 years</b>	3,028		11,884		228,799		39,964,900	
<b>35 years and over</b>	15,461		56,307		1,028,432		155,681,483	
<b>Enrolled in college:</b>	1,962	8.85%	8,350	9.97%	106,182	7.12%	20,628,409	8.67%
<b>15 to 17 years</b>	0	0.00%	80	2.03%	567	0.81%	121,854	0.94%
<b>18 to 24 years</b>	1,269	49.76%	5,939	50.95%	65,429	40.08%	11,849,810	40.26%
<b>25 to 34 years</b>	260	8.59%	923	7.77%	22,559	9.86%	4,627,194	11.58%
<b>35 years and over</b>	433	2.80%	1,408	2.50%	17,627	1.71%	4,029,551	2.59%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The college enrollment information is in contrast to the low rate of residents in the county that have a bachelor's degree or better. Studies of college migration show that those who migrate to a community usually stay near the area where they attended college if there are employment opportunities. Mineral County has a large investment in the community's human capital through the college education of its youth. An estimated 61 percent of 2008 Mineral County high school graduates went on to higher education that autumn, according to the West Virginia Higher

Education Policy Commission. That was above the overall state college going rate of 58.8 percent and placed the county in the second quartile statewide and was exceeded by only two counties in the Eastern Panhandle-Potomac Highlands region (Jefferson County and Pendleton County). However, the county has been unable to convert this asset to economic capital for the county as it appears that those who complete a college degree either do not return to the county or they migrate out of the county after receiving the degree.

Similar research conducted by the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland has shown identical patterns exists for educational attainment in Allegany County. A large portion of the county's high school graduates are going on for post high school education, but the county has one of the lowest rates of residents in Maryland that have a bachelor's degree or better and the county has a decreasing population between the ages of 18 and 35 even with a four-year university located in the county.

Mineral County's median household income in 2005 was \$36,551 (Table 2.15). That was \$764 above the Cumberland MSA and \$463 above the state of West Virginia. The household incomes in all these areas fell substantially below the national median household income of \$55,007, however. Meanwhile, Mineral County ranks below the Cumberland MSA, West Virginia and the United States with a per capita income of \$19,186 in 2005. This was \$256 less than the MSA, \$925 less than the state, and \$9,992 less than the nation. The county's per capita income when viewed in connection to the median household income indicates that a large number of the households in the county probably have more than one wage earner in the household.

**Table 2.15: 1999-2005 Income and Poverty**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$31,149	\$36,551	\$30,961	\$35,787	\$29,696	\$36,088	\$41,994	\$55,007
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$15,384	\$19,186	\$16,409	\$19,442	\$16,477	\$20,111	\$21,587	\$29,178
<b>Individual Poverty Rate</b>	14.7%	17.9%	14.8%	15.5%	17.9%	17.7%	12.4%	13.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder and American Community Survey.

Mineral County continues to have issues related to high poverty rates. The county has had an increase in its population living below the poverty level between 1999 and 2005 of over 3 percentage points. It has gone from having a poverty rate slightly lower than the MSA and much lower than West Virginia to having a poverty rate higher than the region or the state during the period.

Finally, it should be noted that both the income and poverty increased in Mineral County compared to the entire MSA. This may indicate that the county is attracting more affluent individuals and households that are either moving into the area or within the area (from Allegany County, Md.). But at the same time there appears to be a lack of jobs for some long-time residents, leaving few options to elevate their incomes.

### *Housing*

West Virginia is one of the leading states in owner occupied housing units (Table 2.16). Mineral County has a high rate of owner occupied housing units with more persons in Mineral County living in owner occupied housing units than the Cumberland MSA, West Virginia or the United States. Owner occupied housing units tend to be kept to a higher standard than non owner occupied housing because of the personal investment in the housing units. This can be seen in the lower than national averages of homes without complete kitchens, and lack of complete plumbing which are indicators of the quality of housing nationally.

Meanwhile, Mineral County's median age of housing stock is newer than both the Cumberland MSA and that of West Virginia. The median age of the Cumberland MSA's housing stock is 1959; this is 14 years older than the median age in Mineral County. This means that the rate of development of new housing in the county has been higher than the rate of development in the MSA.

**Table 2.16: 2007 Housing Occupancy**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Total Occupied Units</b>	11,065		40,370		738,943		111,609,629	
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	8,293	74.95%	28,785	71.30%	553,122	74.85%	75,072,666	67.26%
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	2,772	25.05%	11,585	28.70%	185,821	25.15%	36,53,6963	32.74%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

**Table 2.17: 2007 Housing Stock Characteristics**

	Mineral County	Cumberland MSA	West Virginia	United States
Median Number of Rooms	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.4
Median Year Owner Occupied Unit Built	1973	1959	1971	1975
Median Year Renter Occupied Unit Built	1962	1958	1970	1972
Lacking Complete Kitchen (Occupied Housing)	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%
Lacking Complete Plumbing (Occupied Housing)	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

As energy use issues become a national issue, it is important to note that a high percentage of the population is dependent on oil products for home heating (Table 2.18). Of additional interest is that over 14 percent of county residents in Mineral county heat with wood. This is nearly 7 percentage points higher than the Cumberland MSA, 9 percentage points higher than West Virginia and approximately 12 percentage points higher than the national rate.

**Table 2.18: 2007 Housing Heating Fuel**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA	West Virginia	United States
<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	11,065				
Utility gas	3,115	28.15%	46.82%	45.56%	50.43%
Bottled, tank, LP gas	691	6.24%	3.21%	5.60%	5.75%
Electricity	3,241	29.29%	23.37%	35.86%	32.92%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	2,129	19.24%	15.64%	5.48%	7.71%
Coal or coke	259	2.34%	2.67%	0.93%	0.12%
Wood	1,570	14.19%	7.66%	5.78%	1.77%
Solar energy	0	0.00%	0.03%	0.03%	0.03%
Other fuel	23	0.21%	0.42%	0.56%	0.42%
No fuel used	37	0.33%	0.18%	0.20%	0.85%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

In 2007, Mineral County's vacant rate for housing units was is over 14 percent (Table 2.19). This is higher than the Cumberland MSA and the nation, but lower than West Virginia. Of these around 57 percent of these units are for seasonal, recreational or occasional use (Table 2.20). Only 21 percent of the vacant housing units are for rent or sale compared to 26 percent in the MSA. The Cumberland MSA does have a lower level of second homes than Mineral County, meaning that Mineral County has a higher rate for vacation homes than the whole of the

metropolitan area. Interestingly, Mineral County has a somewhat lower proportion of owner-occupied homes without mortgages than the state or MSA – though a much higher proportion than the nation as a whole (Table 2.21). This would support the proposition put forth above that there has been an in-migration of affluent households into the county in recent years.

**Table 2.19: 2007 Housing Vacancy Rate Comparison**

	Mineral County	Cumberland MSA	West Virginia	United States
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	12,913	46,058	877,302	126,237,884
<b>Occupied Units</b>	11,065	40,370	738,943	111,609,629
<b>Vacant Units</b>	1,848	5,688	138,359	14,628,255
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	14.31%	12.35%	15.77%	11.59%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

**Table 2.20: 2007 Vacant Housing Units**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	1,848		5,688		138,359		14,628,255	
<b>Available for rent</b>	226	12.23%	682	11.99%	15,471	11.18%	3,164,896	21.64%
<b>Rented but not occupied</b>	8	0.43%	173	3.04%	4,794	3.46%	615,717	4.21%
<b>Available for sale only</b>	163	8.82%	716	12.59%	11,865	8.58%	1,667,764	11.40%
<b>Sold but not occupied</b>	15	0.81%	802	14.10%	6,755	4.88%	728,672	4.98%
<b>For seasonal or occasional use</b>	1,058	57.25%	1,506	26.48%	1,058	0.76%	4,208,454	28.77%
<b>For migrant workers</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	101	0.07%	34,270	0.23%
<b>Other vacant housing units</b>	378	20.45%	1,809	31.80%	59,136	42.74%	4,208,382	28.77%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

**Table 2.21: 2007 Owner-Occupied Housing Units Mortgage Status**

	Mineral County		Cumberland MSA		West Virginia		United States	
<b>Owner-Occupied Units</b>	8,293		28,785		553,122		75,072,666	
<b>Mortgage</b>	4,927	59.41%	15,330	53.26%	277,929	50.25%	51,164,197	68.15%
<b>Monthly costs</b>		\$848		\$904		\$870		\$1,427
<b>No Mortgage</b>	3,366	40.59%	13,455	46.74%	275,193	49.75%	23,908,469	31.85%
<b>Monthly costs</b>		\$276		\$308		\$253		\$402

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Note: The Cumberland MSA average monthly cost is a weighted average of Mineral County and Alleghany County Md.

### *Economic Situation*

Mineral County's population was relatively stable between 2000 and 2007, experiencing a 1 percent decrease. At the same time, the civilian workforce had a 3 percent increase (Table 2.22). The percentage of those unemployed has decreased by 12 percent during the mentioned time period. Between 2000 and 2007 the unemployment rate in the county dropped by just under 1 percentage point and during this period in all of the years the Mineral County unemployment rate was lower than the Cumberland MSA (Table 2.23). This means that Mineral County residents have consistently had a lower unemployment rate than neighboring Allegany County, Md., with which the county has a symbiotic economic relationship. In addition, the Mineral County unemployment rate since 2003 has been only tenths of a percentage points higher than the national unemployment rate. This represents a vast improvement over the unemployment rate that existed during the 1980s and 1990s when the difference was measured in full percentage points.

**Table 2.22: 2000-2007 County Labor Statistics**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Civilian Labor Force</b>	12,980	12,875	12,866	13,154	13,250	13,436	13,437	13,411
<b>Total Employment</b>	12,278	12,159	12,018	12,318	12,484	12,737	12,788	12,789
<b>Unemployment</b>	702	716	848	836	766	699	649	622
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	5.4%	5.6%	6.6%	6.4%	5.8%	5.2%	4.8%	4.6%

Source: Workforce West Virginia.

**Table 2.23: 2000-2007 Unemployment Rate Comparison**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Mineral County</b>	5.4%	5.6%	6.6%	6.4%	5.8%	5.2%	4.8%	4.6%
<b>Cumberland MSA</b>	5.8%	6.2%	6.3%	6.1%	6.0%	5.8%	5.3%	5.1%
<b>West Virginia</b>	5.5%	5.2%	5.9%	6.0%	5.3%	4.9%	4.6%	4.3%
<b>United States</b>	4.0%	4.7%	5.8%	6.0%	5.5%	5.1%	4.6%	4.3%

Source: Workforce West Virginia, Maryland Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor.

It appears that Mineral County workers have longer travel times to work than other workers in West Virginia and the nation. The average commuting time for county workers in 2007 was 28½ minutes (Table 2.24). This was more than three minutes longer than the statewide and national averages travel times. It did represent a drop of almost a full minute of travel between 2000 and



2007. However, this slight decrease did little to offset the substantial increase in commuting time of almost eight minutes that county workers experienced between 1990 and 2000.

**Table 2.24: 1990-2007 Mean Travel Time to Work Comparison**

	Mineral County	West Virginia	United States
<b>1990</b>	21.4 min.	21.0 min.	22.3 min.
<b>2000</b>	29.2 min.	26.2 min.	25.5 min.
<b>2007</b>	28.5 min.	25.3 min.	25.1 min.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder and American Community Survey.

One reason travel time for workers increased so sharply between 1990 and 2000 was that the number of persons leaving the county for employment increased. The county “exported” 743 more workers in 2000 than in 1990 (Table 2.25). In fact, even though the total number of persons employed in the county increased during the period, the number of residents working in the county fell. The general workforce patterns for journey to work did not change, however, during this period

**Table 2.25: 2000 Worker Flows**

Work Place of Residence	Outflow Number	Percent	Inflow Number	Percent
Mineral County	5,061	44.6%	5,061	73.2%
Grant Co WV	323	2.8%	152	2.2%
Hampshire Co WV	381	3.3%	133	1.9%
Hardy Co WV	348	3.0%	47	0.7%
Other WV	106	0.9%	105	1.5%
Allegheny Co MD	4,247	36.6%	1,164	16.8%
Garrett Co MD	149	1.3%	155	2.2%
Other MD (incl. Washington DC)	303	2.6%	27	0.4%
Bedford Co PA	28	0.2%	50	0.7%
Other PA	71	0.6%	13	0.2%
Frederick Co/Winchester VA	390	3.4%	0	0.0%
Other VA	119	1.0%	0	0.0%
Elsewhere	69	0.6%	9	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,595</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6,916</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Flow</b>	<b>6,534</b>	<b>56.4%</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>16.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The commuter patterns also show the symbiotic relationship between Mineral County and Allegany County Md. The highest number of residents leaving the county traveled to Allegany County for employment. At the same time 1,164 residents of Allegany County traveled to Mineral County for employment. Commuter patterns for Allegany County show that Mineral County is the major destination for journey to work for those from that county for employment. Employment within the county and employment in Allegany County account for 80.2 percent of the county's employment. More striking is that 90 percent of all workers in Mineral County live in the Cumberland MSA with 73.2 percent living in Mineral County and 16.8 percent from Allegany County.

The only places outside of the metropolitan area which drew a large number of Mineral County workers were Frederick County/Winchester, Va., Hampshire County, Hardy County, and Grant County. These are counties that traditionally have had high concentrations of jobs in wood products, food processing, or both, according to the "Potomac Highlands Region Outlook: Forecast 2007-2011" developed by the West Virginia University Bureau of Business and Economic Research. In 2004, the three West Virginia counties all had a location quotient greater than 5 for wood products jobs (NAICS 113, 321, and 337). At the same time, Hardy County and Fredrick County, Va. had a location quotient greater than 5 for food processing jobs (NAICS 311).

Mineral County's workforce is concentrated in two sectors in the private sector economy; these are manufacturing, and retail trade (Table 2.26). There is also a large sector of the labor market employed by local government. Teachers involved in education account for this high number of public employees. Manufacturing is the most important sector of wages in the local economy at nearly \$88 million. The next highest sector, education, accounts for nearly \$42 million less in local wages than manufacturing. Individual wages in the manufacturing sector are also the highest sector being nearly \$10,000 per person higher than the next highest sector, the federal government. In the private sector wages, manufacturing is over \$20,000 higher than wages in other sectors.

**Table 2.26: 2006-2007 Annual Average Wages in County by Sector**

	2007			2006		
	Emp.	Total Wages	Annual Avg. Wage	Emp.	Total Wages	Annual Avg. Wage
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	7,354	\$229,131,287	\$31,157	7,251	\$214,360,879	\$29,563
<b>Total Private Sector</b>	5,857	\$182,547,915	\$31,167	5,764	\$169,364,027	\$29,383
<b>Natural Resources &amp; Mining</b>	39	\$1,187,150	\$30,440	48	\$1,308,697	\$27,265
<b>Construction</b>	405	\$12,262,133	\$30,277	331	\$9,134,205	\$27,596
<b>Manufacturing</b>	1,701	\$87,970,540	\$51,717	1,586	\$78,332,781	\$49,390
<b>Trade, Transportation &amp; Utilities</b>	1,315	\$30,123,527	\$22,908	1,313	\$29,260,612	\$22,285
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	156	\$5,146,783	\$32,992	170	\$5,795,577	\$34,092
<b>Retail Trade</b>	1,011	\$20,208,652	\$19,989	1,004	\$18,923,400	\$18,848
<b>Information</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	282	\$9,653,847	\$33,061
<b>Financial Activities</b>	171	\$4,498,371	\$26,306	164	\$4,164,516	\$25,393
<b>Professional &amp; Business Services</b>	254	\$6,744,688	\$26,554	326	\$8,020,281	\$24,602
<b>Education &amp; Health Services</b>	998	\$22,273,277	\$22,318	1,001	\$22,338,724	\$22,316
<b>Leisure &amp; Hospitality</b>	555	\$5,036,012	\$9,074	551	\$4,872,879	\$8,844
<b>Government</b>	1,497	\$46,583,372	\$31,118	1,487	\$44,996,852	\$30,260
<b>Federal Government</b>	69	\$2,914,025	\$42,232	71	\$2,866,386	\$44,372
<b>State Government</b>	465	\$14,296,093	\$30,744	465	\$13,890,951	\$29,873
<b>Local Government</b>	963	\$29,373,254	\$30,502	951	\$28,239,515	\$29,695

Source: Workforce West Virginia.

Considering this, it is not too surprising that three of the ten largest employers in Mineral County are manufacturing firms (Table 2.27). In 2007, this includes an employer who is producing a highly technical product (ATK), an employer marketing a traditional product (Lumber and Things) and a very modern processes oriented employer (Automated Packaging Systems). Other entities in the top 10 include a super retail store (Wal-Mart), two health care facilities (Potomac Valley Hospital and Heartland), as well as an information processor (Information Manufacturing). The other three large employers in Mineral County are governmental units, two in education (Mineral County School Board and West Virginia University, Potomac State) and in construction and maintenance (WV Department of Highways). Overall, almost four jobs out of five in Mineral County are in the private sector (79.3 percent). This is a lower proportion than the state or the nation as a whole. The second largest employer in the county is the school system while the fifth and seventh largest employers are units of state government.

**Table 2.27: 2007 County Largest Employers**

Rank	Employer	NAICS Category (Code)
1	ATK Tactical Services Company LLC	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (336)
2	Mineral County Board of Education	Educational Services (611)
3	Wal-Mart Stores Inc.	General Merchandise Discount Stores (452)
4	Potomac Valley Hospital of WV	Hospitals (622)
5	West Virginia University	Educational Services (611)
6	Information Manufacturing Corporation	Other Information Services (519)
7	West Virginia Department of Highways	Heavy & Civil Engineer Construction (237)
8	Lumber and Things, Inc.	Wood Products Manufacturing (321)
9	Heartland Employment Services, Inc.	Nursing and Residential Care Facility (623)
10	Automated Packaging System, Inc.	Machinery Manufacturing (333)

Source: Workforce West Virginia.

The corresponding employment data for the list of largest employers is not available (the data cannot be released because of the requirements of the cooperative agreement between Workforce West Virginia and the Department of Labor). However, data collected at the same time available in the *County Business Patterns* reveals the size of private sector establishments in the county.

In 2007, the county had nine firms (out of 492 total establishments) that employed at least 100 persons (Table 2.28). This included one manufacturing firm with over 1,000 employees – meaning that roughly one out of every six persons employed in the private sector in Mineral County worked at this firm. The next largest employer was a retail establishment with between 250 and 499 employees. Overall, manufacturing and health care and social assistance each had three firms with at least 100 employees. Also, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and information each had a single large firm. As a result, these nine firms accounted for approximately one out of every three private sector jobs in the county.

**Table 2.28: 2007 Largest Private Sector Establishments in County**

Industrial Sector (NAICS Code)	100-249 Jobs	250-499 Jobs	500-999 Jobs	1000+ Jobs
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	1	0	1
<b>Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33)</b>	2	0	0	1
<b>Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)</b>	0	1	0	0
<b>Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48)</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Information (NAICS 51)</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance (NAICS 62)</b>	3	0	0	0

Source: *County Business Patterns*.

### *County Intangibles*

Of course, the numbers do not fully tell the story. While they serve to document the current conditions in the county they do not reflect the entirety of the situation facing Mineral County. There are many issues – both positive and negative – that cannot be completely captured by statistics alone. In other words, there are strengths in the county related to development as well as opportunities. Conversely, there are challenges related to development as well as areas requiring improvement.

The location aspect of Mineral County provides it with unique assets. It is close to most of the major markets on the east coast. It has a wide range of physical characteristics, ranging from high mountains to the river valley. There are some growth points in the county. Combined, they led to the county having a stable to improving real estate market prior to the recent economic recession.

Actions taken related to land use have also helped the county. The housing market was not saturated by over-building. There are countywide subdivision regulations. There are other land use regulations in various places, including rules promulgated by home owners' associations and there is a growing commitment to smart growth policies. It is conceivable that in the future some areas of the county will require zoning regulation in order to maintain the quality of life in the county.

The county also has key pieces of its infrastructure in place. Parts of the county are close to and have easy access to the Interstate Highway System (I-68) and CSX Railroad has a strong presence and operation through the county. The Greater Cumberland Regional Airport is located in the county. Infrastructure at this facility will need to be continually improved to ensure that it will be able to meet the demands of the economic community. There is also a need for continued improvements to the water and sewer systems in the county to meet growing demands.

There is a complete educational system in the county. Primary education, secondary education, and higher education are all available. Workforce training is available at the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI). New four-year programs at Potomac State will further enhance educational options for county residents and improve the overall educational attainment.

The quality of life in the county is considered outstanding. Health care is widely available. The county has a vibrant health department and a new hospital. A new regional medical facility has been constructed in Allegany County, Md. The county has a low crime rate. Arts and culture are important as seen in programs ranging from the Highland Arts Festival to the funding and maintenance of branch libraries located throughout the county. Jennings Randolph Lake provides opportunities for tourism enhancement, and several abandoned rail road rights of ways provide the opportunity for development of rails-to-trails activities. White water rafting and fishing opportunities are available on the North Branch of the Potomac River.

The population and economic indicators show that Mineral County is stabilized and growing in some areas. Many of the indicators show that progress in the county is better than the state and Cumberland MSA. The major impediment to population and economic growth in the area is employment of the region's college students. Loss of this sector of the population is helping other areas grow while contributing to stagnation in the county. Mineral County must find a way to capitalize on this educated population for future economic and population growth.

### *Public Issues*

Information on the county and the issues facing it were collected at two different times during the planning process, through targeted and general sessions.

Directed stakeholder meetings were held in Keyser in May 2007 on five broad topics – land use, infrastructure, quality of life, public safety, and economic development. These meetings drew a total of 51 participants, along with four comment sheets from those who were invited but could not participate.

A related set of questions were used during the stakeholder meetings. Participants were first asked their general impression of the county. These replies ranged widely but most participants had favorable to mildly favorable impressions of the county. Meanwhile, the most often cited problem facing the county was the lack of quality employment opportunities (“good jobs”). (A detailed discussion of responses from these meetings appears in an appendix).

- The land use meeting identified needs such as questions and concerns regarding property rights, the need to protect the rural environment, and the benefits of a proactive and holistic approach to development.
- The infrastructure meeting focused on water/sewer, transportation, and telecommunications issues.
- The quality of life meeting determined that the county needed the mechanisms and facilities to get more people involved and to serve residents.
- The safety meeting identified the increased demand for services and the decline in volunteerism as issues that must be addressed.
- The economic development meeting examined the local economy and reflected many of the issues discussed in the Mineral County Development Authority strategic plan.

Mineral County residents were invited to participate in the County Comprehensive Planning process by providing feedback and input about their county and input as to what they would like in the future in November and December 2007. For this phase of the comprehensive planning process, six meetings were held in the communities of Keyser (twice), Elk Garden, Wiley Ford, Burlington, and Fort Ashby. A total of 162 community members attended these meetings. Discussion focused on understanding local views of the assets and challenges that existed in the county, with an emphasis on land use, infrastructure, quality of life factors, public safety and economic development. A total of 674 public comments were gathered during these forums.

Analysis of the comments collected during these sessions divided commentary into three distinct categories: “Community Assets,” “Challenges to Overcome,” and “Future Vision” (Table 2.29). As should be expected, the majority of input was provided within the areas of “Challenges to Overcome” and “Future Vision.” However, public input identified a number of important Community Assets, which should be protected and leveraged wherever possible, through long-range comprehensive planning and action. Within each category, distinct themes arose, which are demonstrated in the summary chart and listing. (A detailed discussion of responses from these meetings appears in an appendix).

**Table 2.29: Mineral County Public Input – Key Data Categories & Themes**

Community Assets	Challenges to Overcome	Future Vision
Social / Cultural Capital	Infrastructure Deficiencies	Livable Communities
Access / Proximity	Quality of Life Barriers	Planned Growth
Basic Services	Sustainability Threats	Adequate & Sustainable Emergency Services
Leverageable Infrastructure	Economic Vulnerability	Proactive Leadership
	Change / Unknowns	Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals

- Within the category of “Community Assets,” four distinct areas, or themes, arose from public commentary during the input sessions. These themes included *Social/Cultural Capital*, *Access/Proximity*, *Basic Services*, and *Leverageable Infrastructure*.
- A number of challenges were identified during the public input process as well. They fell into the thematic areas of: “*Infrastructure Deficiencies*,” “*Quality of Life Barriers*,” “*Sustainability Threats*,” “*Economic Vulnerability*,” and “*Change/Unknowns*.”
- The final category of public input involved commentary that focused on visions of the future for Mineral County. Key themes in this area included “*Livable Communities*,” “*Planned Growth*,” “*Adequate & Sustainable Emergency Services*,” “*Proactive Leadership*,” and “*Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals*.”



# 2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan

## Section 3: Land Use

### *Introduction*

Many different land uses are located within Mineral County, ranging from urban farms to highly developed industrial parks. Often, land uses are directly associated with the available natural resources. Within Mineral County, timber, coal, limestone, natural gas, waterways, rich soils, high ridges, and steep valleys all contribute to the diverse landscape. Land uses also help identify the areas that are suitable for development and the areas that conservation practices need to be employed.

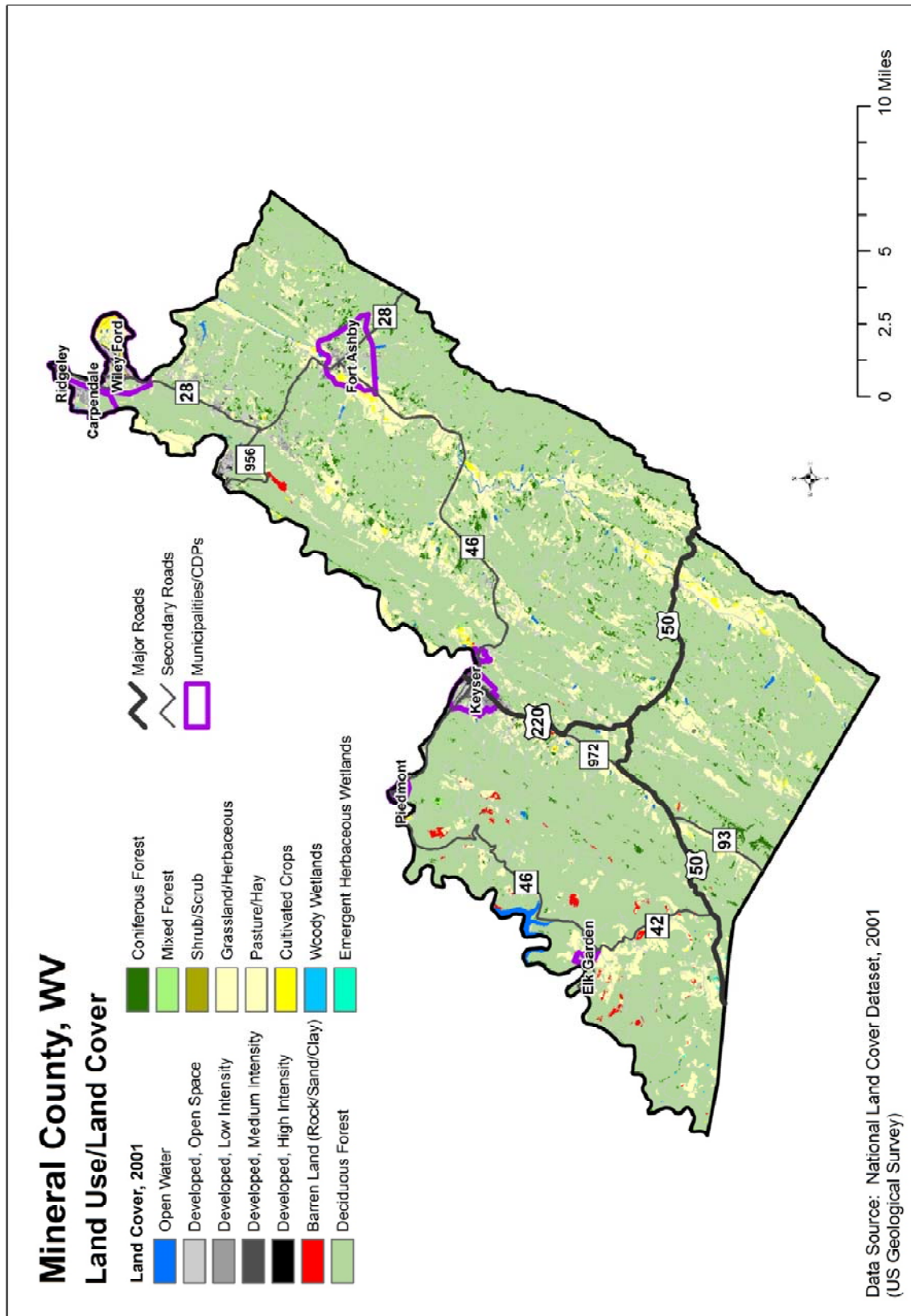
The National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) was produced in 2001 by the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium composed of nine federal agencies (USGS, EPA, USFS, NOAA, NASA, BLM, NRCS, and USFS) (Table 3.1 and Map 3.1). The agencies collaborated to create a Land Cover Database to address the needs of the several agencies and to provide data to the public. This database was subsequently used to assess land use in Mineral County.

**Table 3.1: Land Cover Data**

Land Cover Type	Acres	Percent
Open water	1,808	0.86%
Developed, Open Space	13,013	6.17%
Developed, Low intensity	2,201	1.04%
Developed, Medium intensity	630	0.30%
Developed, High intensity	118	0.06%
Barren land	722	0.34%
Deciduous forest	153,709	72.94%
Evergreen Forest	4,568	2.17%
Mixed Forest	4,611	2.19%
Hay/Pasture	27,966	13.27%
Cultivated crops	1,324	0.63%
Woody Wetlands	52	0.02%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	15	0.01%
Totals	210,735	100.00%

Source: National Land Cover Dataset, 2001.

Map 3.1: Land Cover



Mineral County has 13 different land cover types that cover 210,735 acres. Deciduous forest makes up the largest percentage of the land cover types, and the combined forestland (deciduous, evergreen, and mixed) account for 77.3 percent of the land cover types. Forestland covers 162,888 acres of land area. Only 7.6 percent of the county is considered to be developed, most of which is developed open-space (roads). It is noteworthy that there is almost twice as much hay land and pasture land (13.27%) than there is developed land. This information can be used to identify the areas suitable for development as well as the areas that should utilize conservation.

This correlates with the Census data discussed in Section 2 which shows that most county residents live in rural areas. Likewise, less than 2 percent of all county land (roughly 6½ of 330 square miles) is urban (in Census-defined Urban Areas or Urban Clusters).

### *Agriculture and Forestry*

With over three-fourths of the total land area of the county forested (Map 3.2), it is not surprising that timber sales contribute greatly to the county's economy. According to the United States Forest Service Timber Product Output (TPO) database, timber harvest operations in Mineral County produced 22,543 million board feet (3,079 million cubic feet) of saw logs and 584 cords (or 47 million cubic feet) of fuel wood in 2006. These numbers reflect the extent of Mineral County's valuable and renewable natural resource, timber.

Other rural areas of the county produce agricultural products. Mineral County had 493 farms covering 77,957 acres (121.80 square miles or 36.91% of the county land area) in 2007 according to the Census of Agriculture (Table 3.2). The county ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for the total value of all agricultural products sold. It was seventh in the value of livestock, poultry and related products and 15<sup>th</sup> in the value of crops, including nursery and greenhouse (Table 3.3).

The county was an agricultural leader in West Virginia in other several categories as well. It had the most acres for harvested vegetables, third most acres for cut Christmas trees, and 10<sup>th</sup> most acres for corn grown as grain in the state. It had the fourth highest inventory of broilers/meat chickens and fifth highest inventory of layers and pullets for flock replacement in the state. It had the fifth highest value of cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops produced, the sixth

highest value of poultry and eggs, the seventh highest value of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, the eighth highest value of other crops and hay, and the 10<sup>th</sup> highest of value of grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas in the state. Nationally, the county is in the top quartile in the value of its broilers/meat chickens and its layers (chickens) as well as in the acreage for cut Christmas trees.

**Table 3.2: Status of Agriculture**

	2007	2002	% change
Number of Farms	493	465	+ 6%
Land in Farms	77,957 acres	80,986 acres	- 4%
Average Size of Farm	158 acres	174 acres	- 9%
Market Value of Production	\$15,470,000	\$14,195,000	+ 9%
Average Per Farm	\$31,379	\$30,528	+ 3%

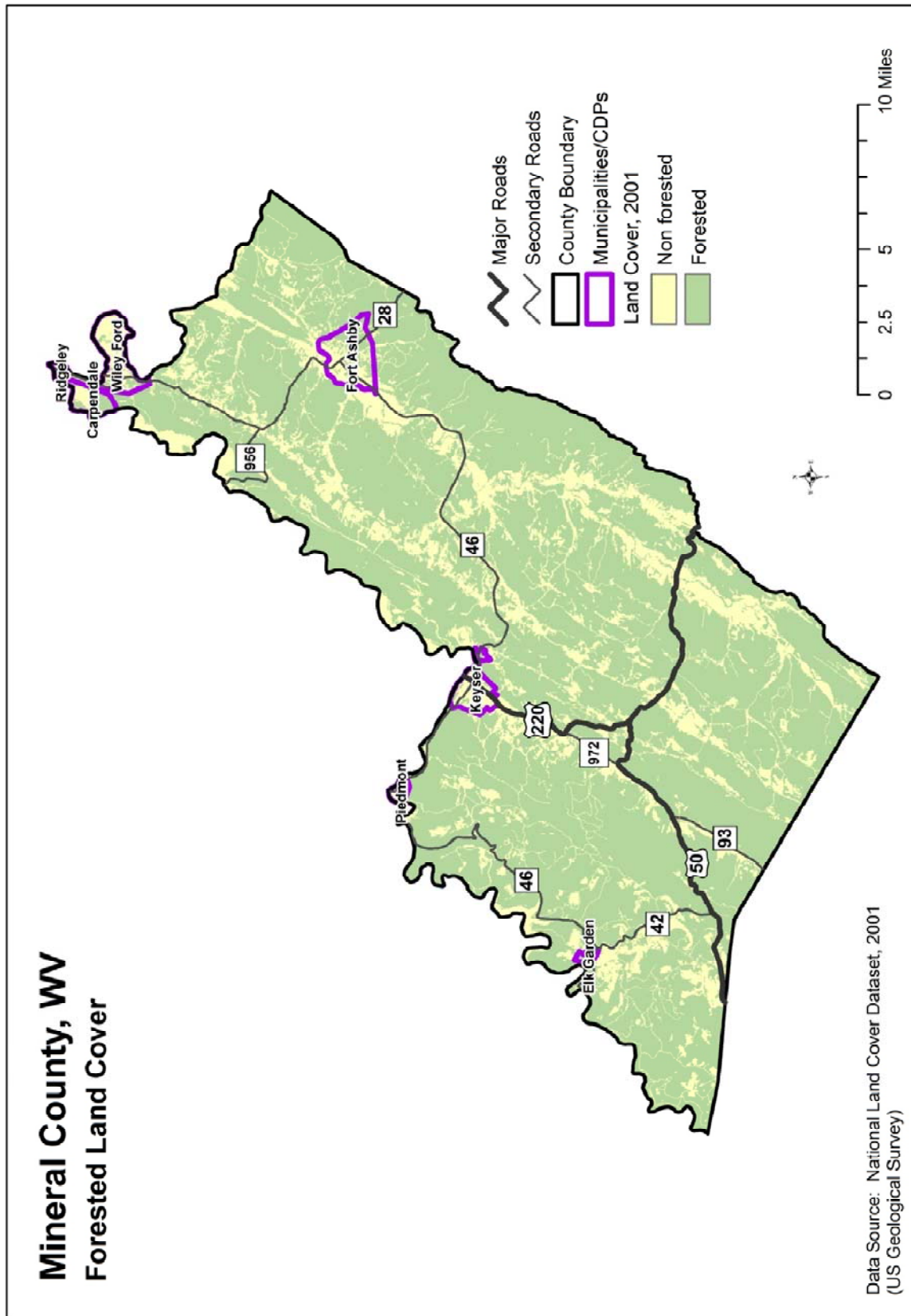
Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture, USDA.

**Table 3.3: Agricultural Products**

Item	Quantity	State Rank	National Rank
<i>Market value of agricultural products sold (\$1,000s)</i>			
Total value of agricultural products sold	15,470	10 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	2,400 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,076
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	1,262	15 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	2,739 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,072
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	14,208	7 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	1,799 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,069
<i>Value of sales by commodity group (\$1,000s)</i>			
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	103	10 <sup>th</sup> out of 48	2,469 <sup>th</sup> out of 2,933
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, & sweet potatoes	227	7 <sup>th</sup> out of 51	1,449 <sup>th</sup> out of 2,796
Cut Christmas trees & short rotation woody crops	51	5 <sup>th</sup> out of 41	595 <sup>th</sup> out of 1,710
Other crops and hay	713	8 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	1,856 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,054
Poultry and eggs	12,061	6 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	2,370 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,054
<i>Top livestock Inventory items (number)</i>			
Broilers and other meat-type chickens	953,776	4 <sup>th</sup> out of 35	311 <sup>th</sup> out of 2,476
Layers	81,187	5 <sup>th</sup> out of 55	416 <sup>th</sup> out of 3,024
Pullets for laying flock replacement	NA	5 <sup>th</sup> out of 47	NA
<i>Top crop items (acres)</i>			
Corn for grain	422	10 <sup>th</sup> out of 46	2,087 <sup>th</sup> out of 2,634
Vegetables harvested, all	216	1 <sup>st</sup> out of 51	1,010 <sup>th</sup> out of 2,794
Cut Christmas trees	174	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 46	343 <sup>rd</sup> out of 1,756

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture, USDA.

Map 3.2: Forested vs. Non-Forested Land



Thus the agricultural sector contributes a great deal to the Mineral County economy, despite the limited area in which it is a viable activity (Map 3.3). Work is currently underway to expand this economic impact both locally and on a larger scale. There are also other benefits associated with the presence of agriculture. Farm lands also produce cultural and aesthetic assets such as the preservation of the farming lifestyle and the beautiful vistas of the open land. Also, locally raised agricultural products tend to be safer in terms of pathogens and biological diseases than products that are shipped from long distances or imported from other countries. Thus, it is important for the county to continue to be supportive of agricultural sector activities.

To accomplish the goals for agriculture and forestry, the following recommendations are made.

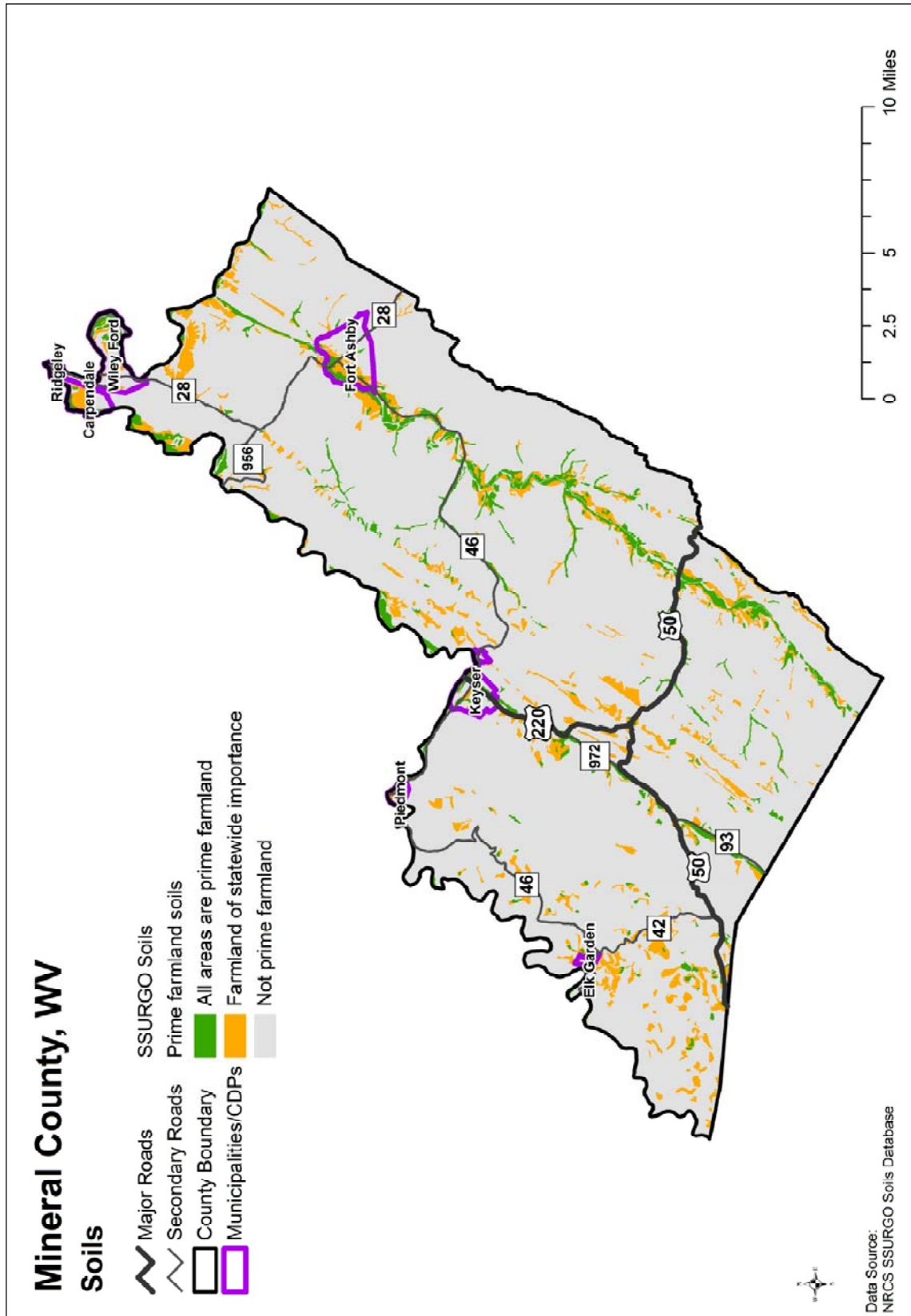
- *Support agricultural activities.*

Agriculture remains an important part of the local landscape and economy in Mineral County. Thus, the county should promote and protect this important activity. One way to do this is through the county's Farmland Protection Board. The board is operational and has at its disposal revenues from a real estate transfer tax to purchase development rights. Efforts should be made to ensure that the highest quality agricultural land is being preserved. Also, alternative funding sources should be explored if the transfer tax revenues are insufficient to purchase all appropriate and available properties.

Another step in this area would be for the county to consider adoption of a "right to farm" ordinance (or to proclaim the right to farm through a resolution). While not directly mentioned in the Voluntary Farmland Protection Act (*West Virginia Code §8A-12*), such an action fits the spirit of the law which calls agriculture a "unique 'life support' industry" (§8A-12-1(a)). It should be noted that any such ordinance or resolution would need to balance the needs of agriculture and the needs of county residents.

Finally, any land use classification system or regulation should take into account the special issues and needs of agriculture. Failing to be cognizant of such would serve to undermine other efforts made in support of agriculture. One option would be to adapt a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment) (LESA) system for farming and forest resources.

Map 3.3: Farm Land Soils



- *Work to ensure the harvesting of wood and wood products be done prudently.*

It is important for loggers to follow the best management practices in order to protect the county's natural resources. Only the appropriate amount of wood should be taken in any harvest. In addition, silt fences, water-bars, sumps, culverts, and other sediment control structures need to be constructed properly in order to maintain drainage control. Care should also be taken on minimizing the impact from removing the wood and wood products from the forest. With timbering methods such as these in place, sustainable timber harvests can continue for many years to come. For assistance, additional information, and enforcement of appropriate state laws, the county should consult with officials from the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

#### *Natural Resource, Conservation, and Environmental, and Issues*

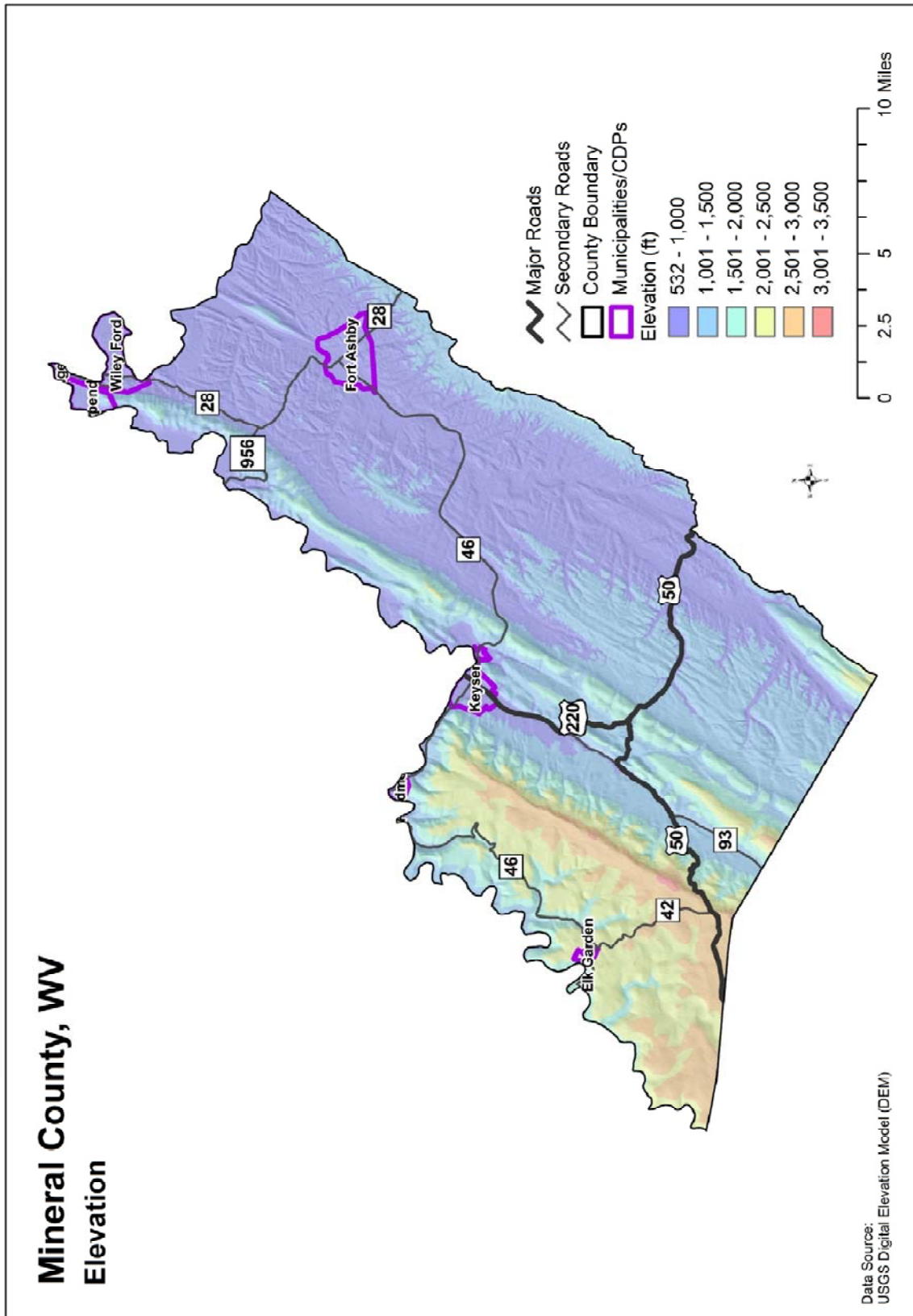
It is not surprising given the rural characteristics of Mineral County that issues related to natural resource utilization, conservation, and preservation are prominent land use concerns. These concerns include wind power, gas drilling, coal mining, and water source protection.

Mineral Country has high elevations (Map 3.4), ranging from 548 feet to 3,150 feet above sea level. As a result of this topography and westward prevailing winds, the county possesses potential for some industrial wind energy production on certain high ridgelines (Map 3.5).

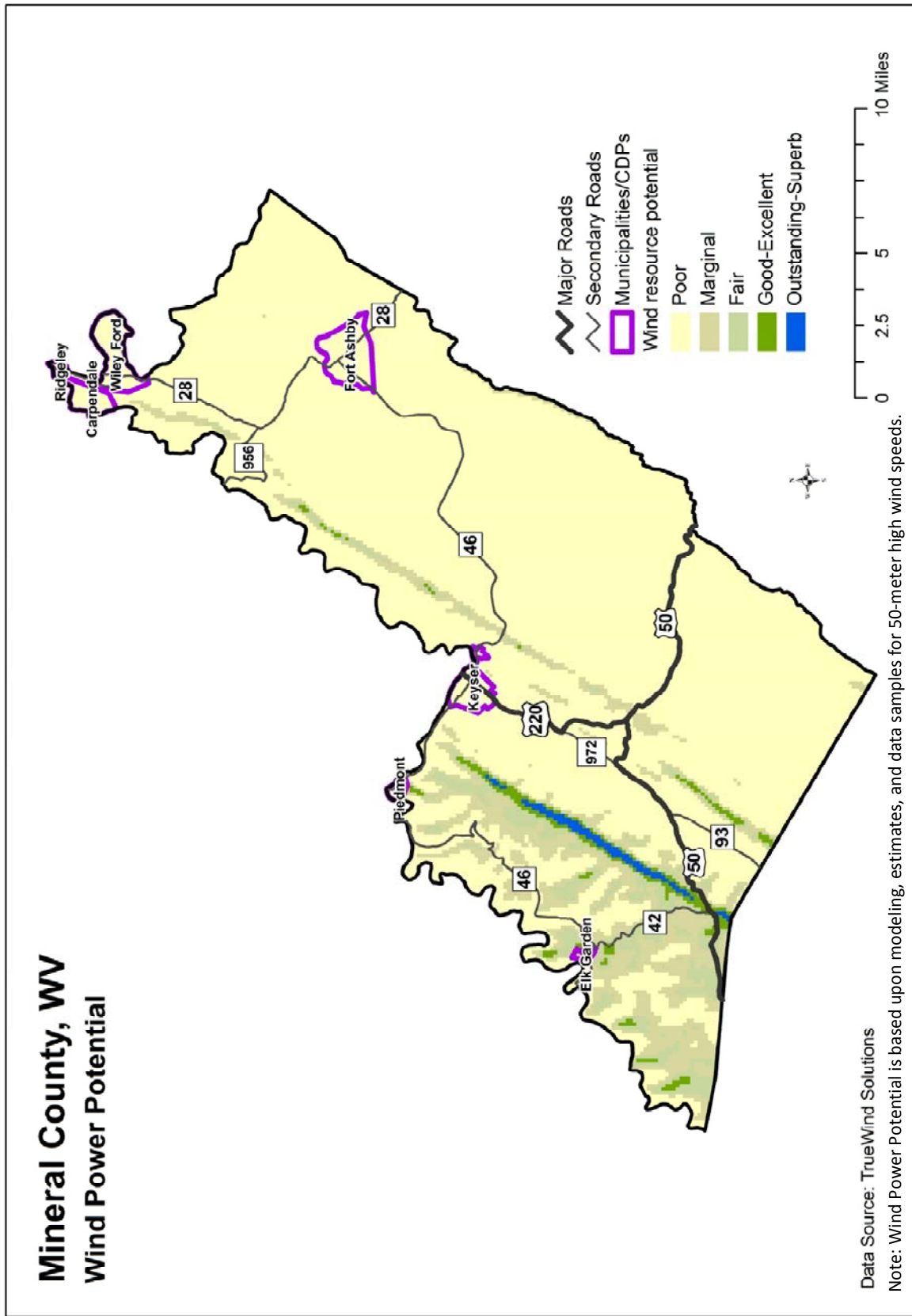
Wind energy is considered to be a relatively clean alternative energy source. It is not without known and potential environmental issues, including but not limited to viewshed degradation, noise pollution, and reduction of animal habitat. Furthermore, reliability issues related to amount and availability of power production mean that it will serve only as a supplement to other electricity production methods. The wind turbines provide some benefits through temporary construction jobs and a few permanent maintenance positions as well as revenue to the county through taxes.



Map 3.4: Elevation



Map 3.5: Wind Energy Resource Potential

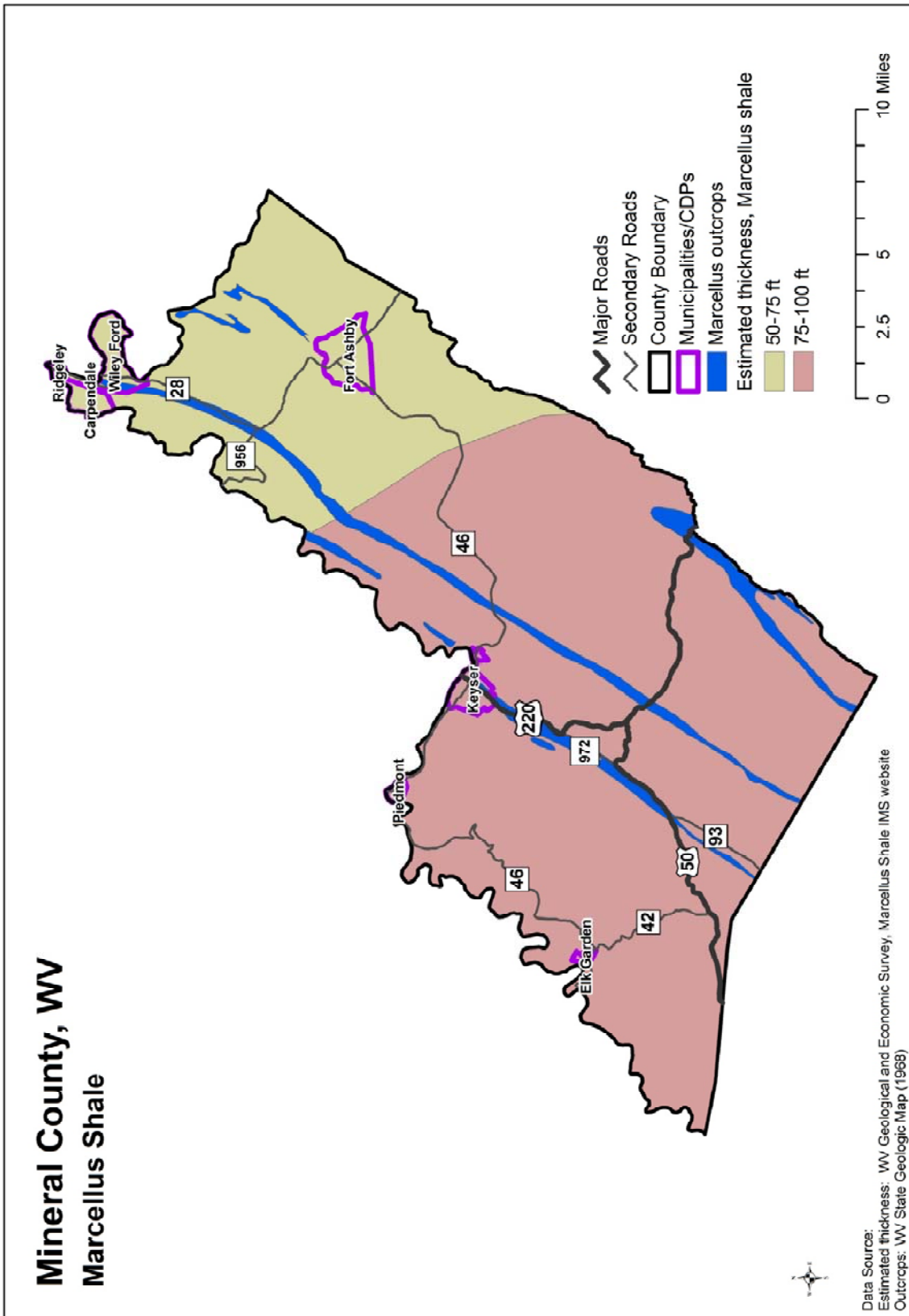


Industry estimates by TrueWind Solutions (now AWS TrueWind) show the Alleghany Front ridge in the southern and southwestern parts of Mineral County has the greatest potential for generating wind power. A large section of this ridgeline is located in state-owned land and comprises the eastern section of the Alleghany Wildlife Management Area. This makes it currently off limits to development.

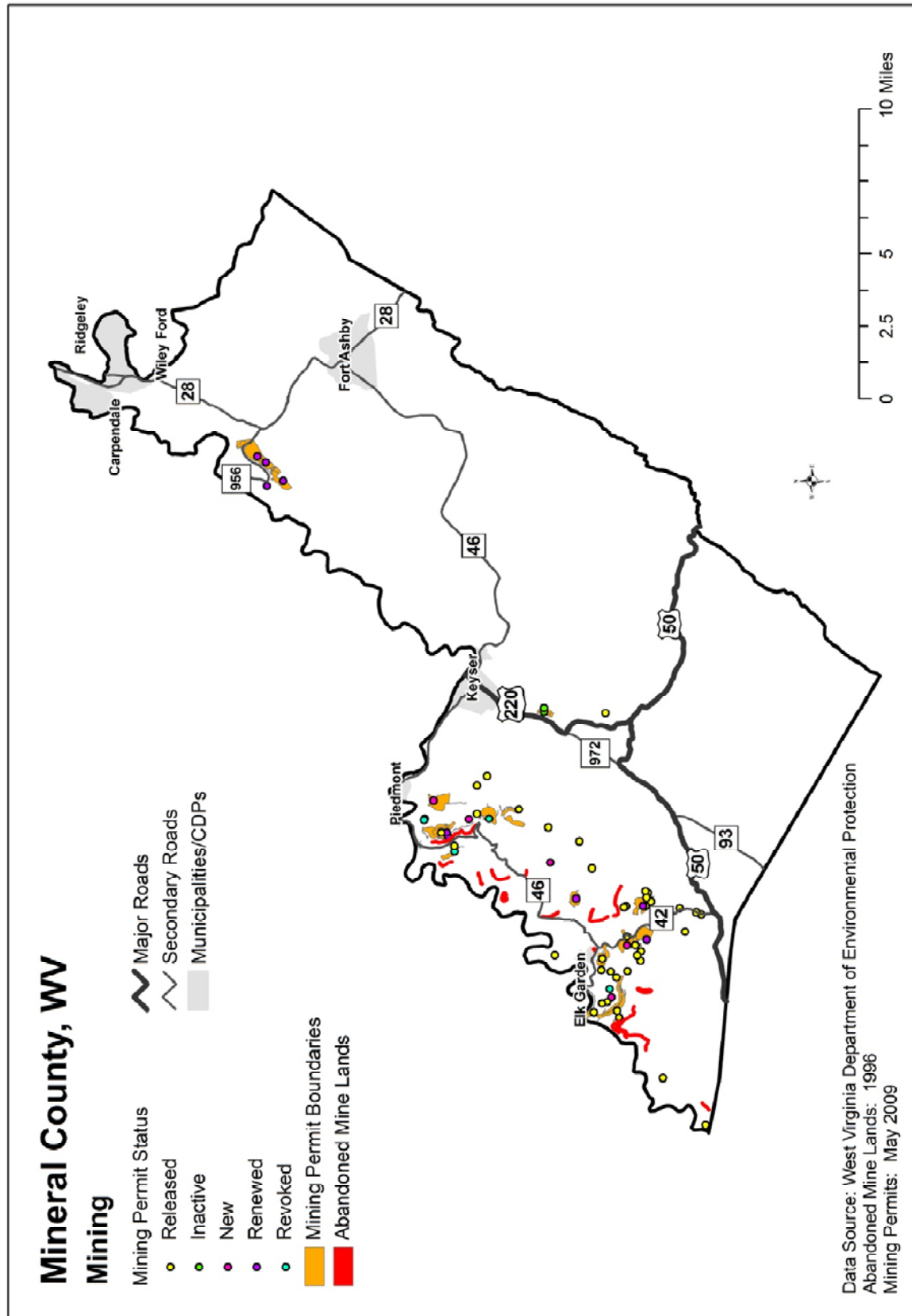
A 23-turbine wind farm has been proposed for Green Mountain. The West Virginia Public Service Corporation regulates these facilities, from planning and construction through decommission and removal. The Public Service Commission has issued a “Siting Certificate” for the 55-megawatt facility, which is scheduled to be completed in 2011. This is the first wind farm project in Mineral County. Given the potential for power generation in the county and throughout the region, it is likely that other proposals will follow. As in any new endeavor, unforeseen obstacles will be confronted and all parties must exercise sound judgment based upon the best information available as this process proceeds.

Another new energy-related activity is natural gas production. Marcellus Shale underlies parts of Mineral County as well as much of West Virginia and other Appalachian states (Map 3.6). Devonian-aged shale formations, such as the Marcellus, are believed to hold trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. In the past, the exploration of shale was not economically feasible but new advancements in drilling technologies through hydraulic fracturing (or “fracking”) and the increased price of natural gas have sparked new interest in exploration. There are some environmental issues with this type of drilling such as the huge volumes of water required for drilling operations, the resulting wastewater needing treatment, and the limited information on the chemical composition of the fracking material. Related to this, there are potential effects on quality and quantity of well water and other infrastructure impacts as well as some human health concerns because of the nature of the materials being handled. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is in the process of developing guidance documents related to these issues. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is also undertaking a new, broader study of the process.

Map 3.6: Marcellus Shale



Map 3.7: Mining Activities



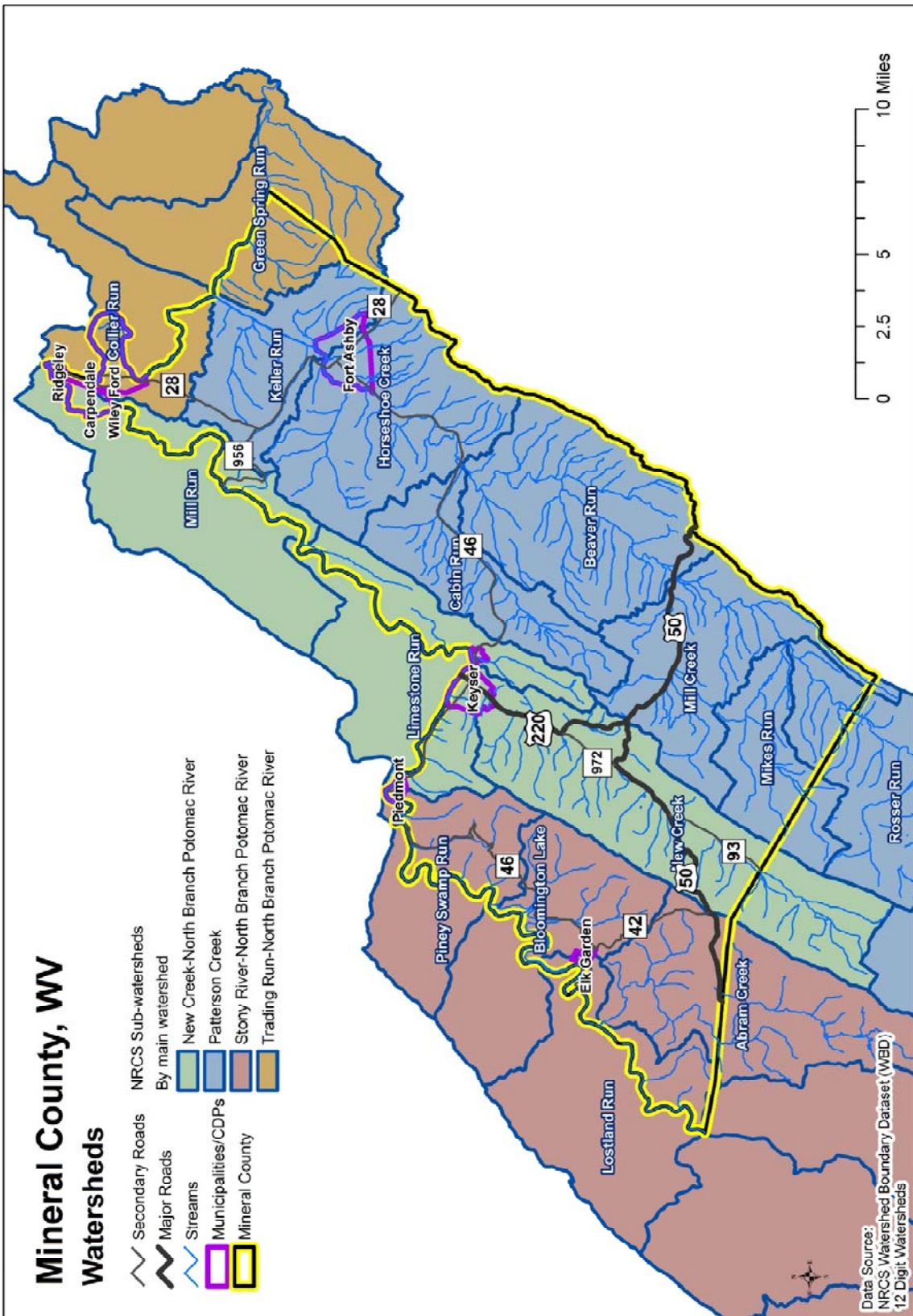
The western end of Mineral County, which has the highest concentrations of Marcellus shale, has a single well that was drilled in 2007. There are also exposed portions in the valleys and ridges that run through the middle of the county. As more wells are drilled, precautionary measures must be taken to protect the county's water resources.

Meanwhile, energy production from mining has slowed (Map 3.7). There are only a few active coal mines remaining in Mineral County. Several other mines are no longer in production but are still treating water. Two active quarries are also present. Although there is little currently active mining, there are coal reserves that have the potential for future exploitation. To protect the county's water and land resources from coal mining activities, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has the regulatory authority to enforce the state's mining and reclamation laws. Mining and related sites are also required by state law to have Land Use Master Plans for post-operations remediation or development.

Mineral County has many unique and diverse watersheds which make up its most valuable natural resource (Map 3.8). A clean uncontaminated water supply is essential for life, making the protection of the county's streams, lakes, and groundwater crucial. To do this, the impact of any surface disturbance on the corresponding watershed must be examined. A site-specific analysis should be done for all types of development to determine the negative impacts and what measures can be taken to protect against them.

Along these lines, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has funded a restoration project to improve the water quality in the devastated Abrams Creek Watershed. The creek was once the most significant contributor of acidic water to the North Branch of the Potomac River. These impacts will be mitigated with the construction of limestone doublers which release limestone fines into the water, neutralizing the acid, and creating a more neutral environment. After the water quality is improved, aquatic life can reestablish itself in the stream, including the native brook trout. This restoration project will provide many environmental benefits and is expected to have a positive impact on the economy as well.

Map 3.8: Watersheds



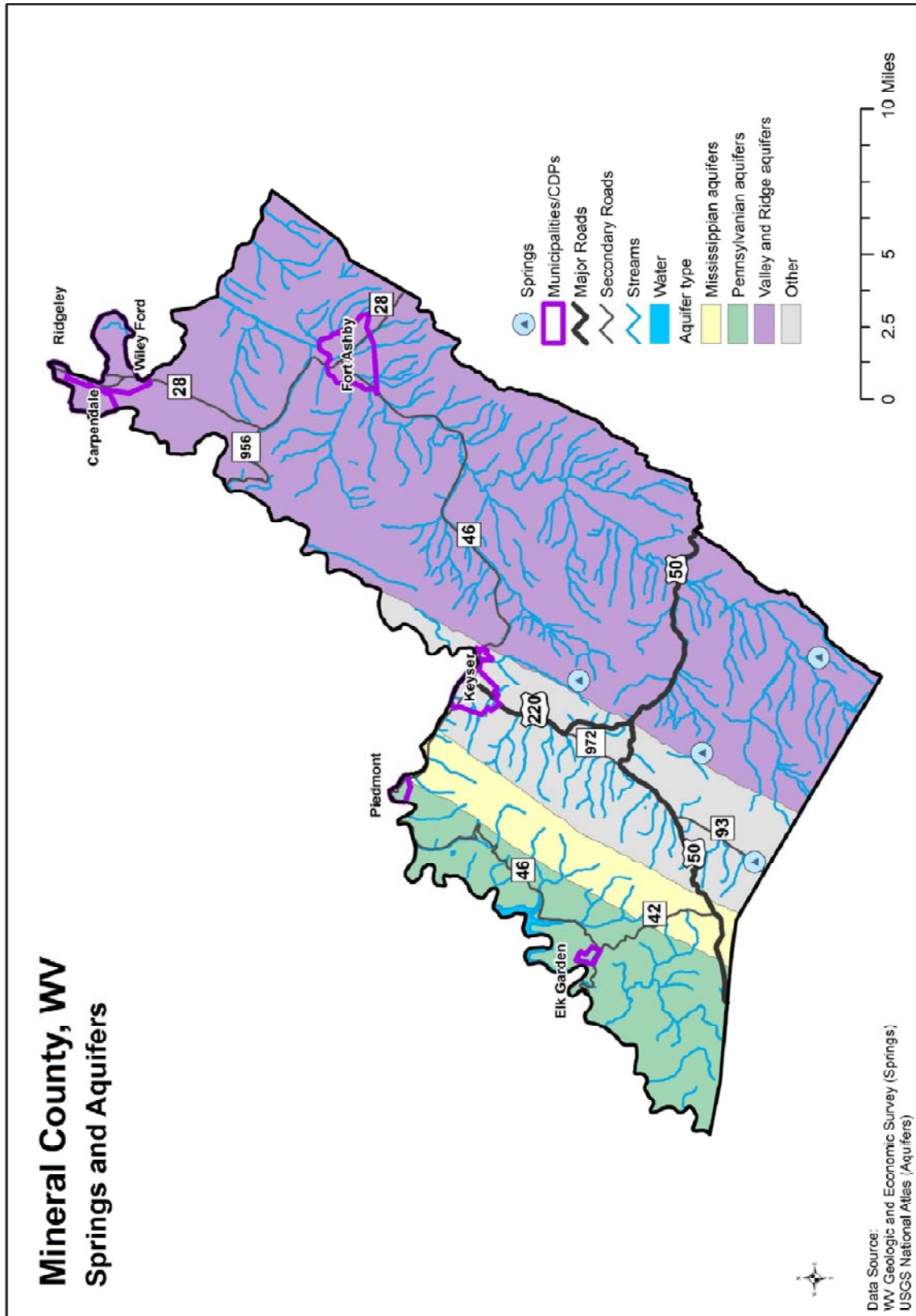
Such an effort underscores the need to take watershed considerations into account in planning, even though such attention is not required in the plan. The entire county drains into the Atlantic Ocean via the Chesapeake Bay. The county is part of four main watershed areas (10-digit hydrological code watershed areas), all of which are part of the North Branch (of the Potomac River) Sub-Basin, the largest of which is the Patterson Creek Watershed. It covers almost the entire eastern half of the county, and includes parts of seven sub-watersheds (12-digit hydrological code watersheds): Keller Run, Horseshoe Creek, Cabin Run, Beaver Run, Mill Creek, Mikes Run, and Rosser Run.

The other three watersheds are all associated with the North Branch of the Potomac River. The Trading Run-North Branch watershed is in the extreme northeast corner of the county and has parts of the Coller Run and Green Spring Run sub-watersheds. The New Creek-North Branch watershed runs from the northwest corner into the southern part of the county and includes the Mill Run, Limestone Run, and New Creek sub-watersheds. The Stony River-North Branch watershed is in the southwestern corner of the county and includes parts of the Piney Swamp Run, Bloomington Lake, Lostland Run, and Abram Creek sub-watersheds.

The watersheds are also important because the quality of the waterways directly impacts the quality of water that recharges the aquifers which run underneath the county (Map 3.9). Mineral County is fortunate as it is mostly underlain with sandstone and carbonate-rock aquifers. The presence of carbonate rocks generally allows for more water to be drawn than would be found in a sandstone aquifer. The county realizes the significance of these aquatic structures and has begun a formal study of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the aquifers at Knobley Mountain. More generally though, the county benefits from the presence of several aquifers. The Valley and Ridge aquifers take up the eastern half of the county, generally underneath the Patterson Creek and Trading Run-North Branch watersheds. There are also the Mississippi aquifers which are underneath the western part of the New Creek-North Branch watershed. The only sandstone aquifer is found in the western part of the county where the Pennsylvanian aquifers are underneath the Stony Creek-North Branch watershed.



Map 3.9: Aquifers



To accomplish goals related to natural resources, the following recommendations are made.

- *Seek local control over natural resource activities.*

The *West Virginia Code* does not give counties (or any local governments) much authority with respect to natural resource extraction or utilization activities. It reserves virtually all decision-making powers for the state itself. Nevertheless, Mineral County should use all the tools available to it in an effort to have an increased and appropriate amount of influence on these specialized development activities taking place within the county's borders.

First of all, the county should analyze each major project from its own perspective. A case-by-case assessment should be done on such a proposal to determine and weigh the positive outcomes and negative impacts. By doing this, the county will know whether or not the natural resources activities will be beneficial or detrimental to the county. It will also provide the county with a factual basis on which to make any other decisions and recommendations with respect to the proposal.

Related to this, the county should enforce all existing regulations that are in place when a project begins. While such rules may be superseded by the state in many cases, they provide the county with its best option for requiring development to be done in a quality way, even if it has no say in the nature of that development. In other words, efforts should be made to enforce subdivision and related land development requirements on these natural resource projects of all types – ranging from large-scale commercial operations to point-of-service projects.

It is also crucial for the county and concerned citizens to voice their opinions during the public comment periods held by the state agencies overseeing the permit applications. Being an active participant in that part of the process may be the only time the county and its citizens are able to have their issues considered and exert influence on state-level decision-makers.

Finally, the county should work to gain more control over natural resource activities at the local level. This will require county officials, particularly the County Commission, to work with others throughout the region to lobby state legislators and officials. As noted above, the state reserves almost all of those powers for itself. So it will take an organized and concerted effort to bring about changes in this area.

- *Use conservation easements to protect sensitive areas.*

The Conservations and Preservations Easements Act (*West Virginia Code §20-12*) is a more generalized preservation law (it served as the basis of the later Farmland Preservation Act). The rationale behind it is the “importance and significant public benefit of conservation and preservation easements in its ongoing efforts to protect the natural, historic, agricultural, open-space and scenic resources of this state” (§20-12-2).

Such an easement represents a possible tool for Mineral County (or non-profit groups operating in the county) to restrict certain types of development and related activities in sensitive locations and special places.

- *Consider watershed impacts when making land use decisions.*

The impact of any surface disturbance on the corresponding watershed must be examined by the county. A site specific analysis should be done for all types of development to determine the negative impacts and what measures can be taken to protect against them. It would benefit the county to complete its on-going inventory of its water resources to know the status and conditions of its watersheds and aquifers.

Such considerations are important because of federal environmental regulations, particularly those pertaining to total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). All of the watersheds in the county eventually drain into the Chesapeake Bay (Atlantic Ocean), making the county a party to the efforts to improve conditions in the bay. Similarly, much of the Potomac River is or is expected soon to be under strict regulation – and roughly half the county is located in watersheds that are directly associated with the North Branch of the Potomac (the entire county is in the drainage basin of the North Branch). In addition, neighboring Maryland requires watershed planning and this would help bring Mineral County closer to that standard. There are times when such studies may be required by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, which has the regulatory authority to implement such plans. It is also the lead state agency for technical assistance on such efforts.

*Housing and Other Development*

Planning is not intended to halt growth, but instead to steer development toward areas that are more suitable and away from other places that are not. This is done by encouraging new development to certain locations and by setting specific requirements for subdivisions and development of properties. To this end, it may be necessary to modify existing and enact new land use regulations for the county.

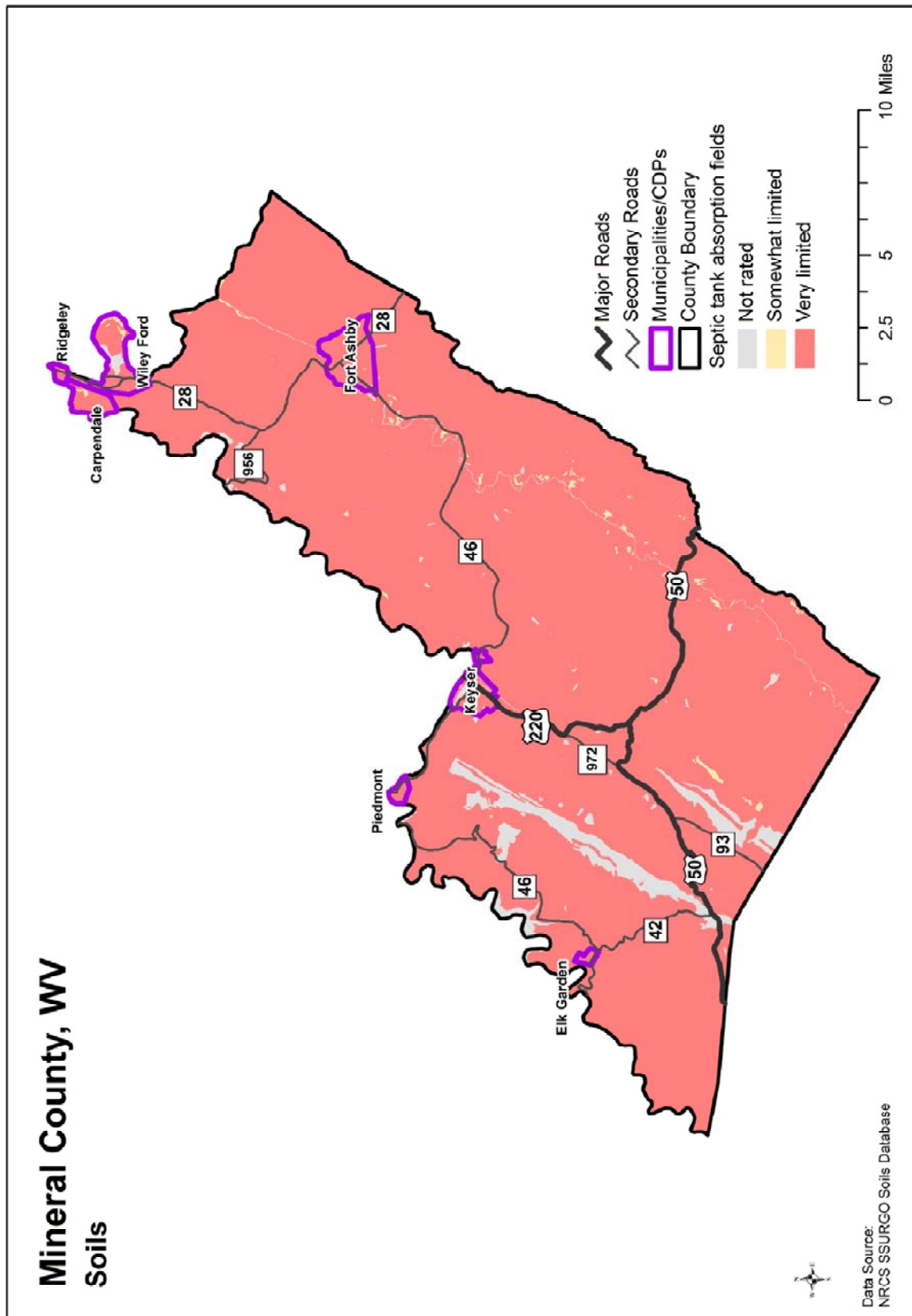
The vast majority of development in the unincorporated areas of Mineral County occurs on moderately sloped land, adjacent to existing roads. The locations of new homes have been partially limited in recent years by the need for sites to be either suitable for on-site septic systems or able to connect to the central sewage service.

While large concentrations of older development primarily exist within the existing built-up areas (the five municipalities and two Census-defined places), newer subdivisions and other forms of growth are occurring. This development is taking place between Keyser and New Creek along U.S. Route 220; along WV Route 28 south of Wiley Ford; along County Route 9 north of WV Route 46; and along WV Route 46 in the vicinity of Keyser.

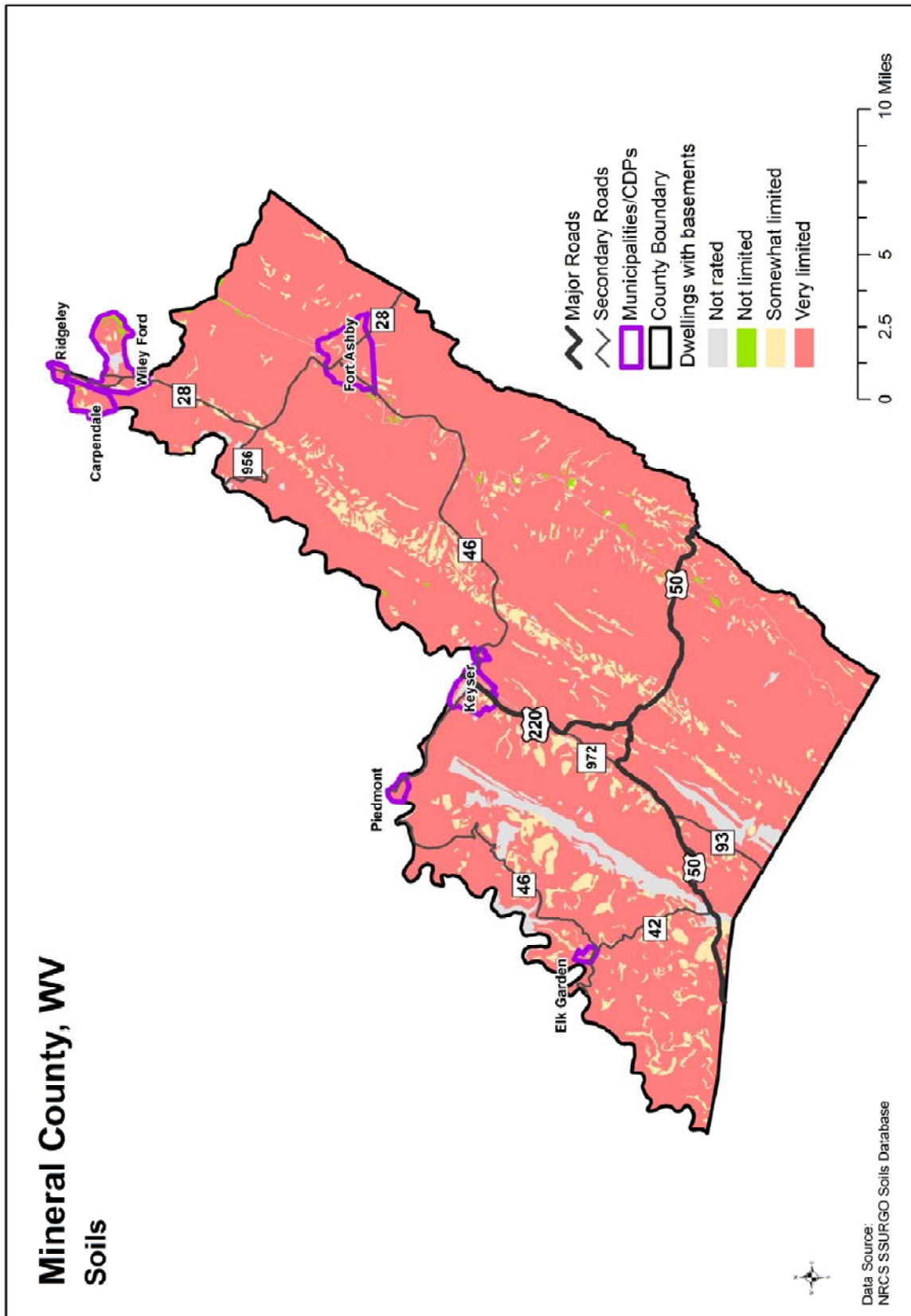
Scattered development patterns in Mineral County have led to many problems. It makes for costly water line and sewage extensions, compounds safety hazards along roads, and causes the county to appear much more developed than it really is. Unfortunately, with limited land use controls within the county, this trend is likely to continue.

This is particularly important given the nature of land itself in the county. There are places where soils limit what can be built or how those structures that are built can be serviced (Maps 3.10, 3.11, 3.12). Thus, residential development in areas that have poor soils or do not perk (unless served by sanitary sewers) should be limited to the carrying capacity of the land.

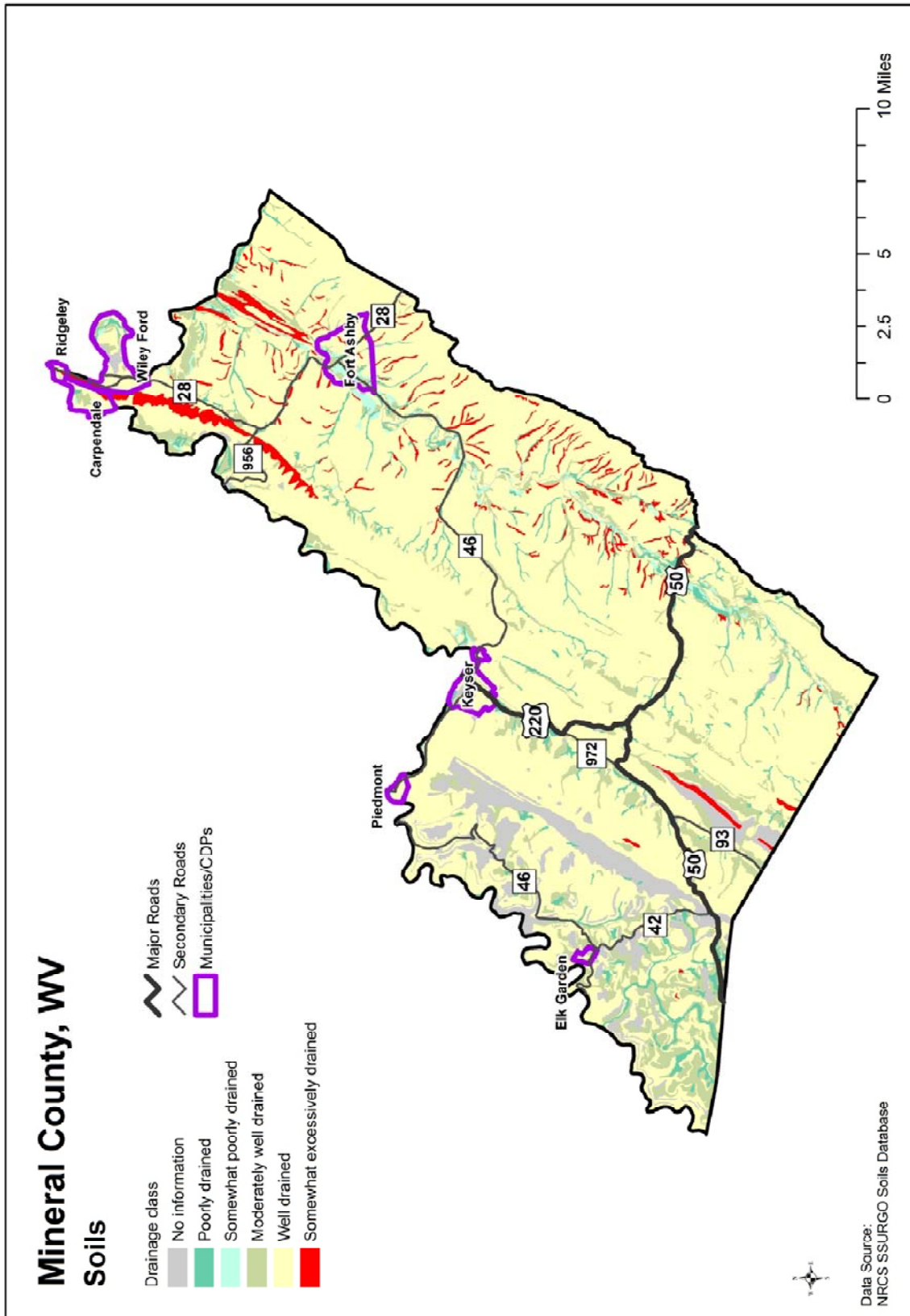
Maps 3.10: Soils – Septic Tank Absorption



Maps 3.11: Soils – Basement Limitations



Maps 3.12: Soils – Drainage Fields



To accomplish these goals related to housing and other developments, the following recommendations are made.

- *Encourage the development of clustered housing developments.*

Clustering involves placing homes on the most suitable portions of a tract, while preserving a substantial area of land in common ownership. It is done in areas where development is occurring to allow for greater preservation of important natural features and/or the establishment of recreational land without any land acquisition cost to the county. For example, the very steeply sloped land and areas along creek valleys could be permanently preserved and maintained by a homeowners association. Clustering can also preserve the scenic character of an area, as opposed to dividing an entire tract into like-sized “cookie-cutter” lots. The homes are allowed to have slightly smaller individual lots than would be required with a conventional development without open space.

Within clustered developments, builders are encouraged to provide a variety of different housing types in appropriate locations to meet the needs of different types of households with various levels of income. Housing types include single family detached houses, twin houses, townhouses, low-rise apartments, individual mobile/manufactured homes and mobile home parks.

Townhouses and apartments minimize the impacts on public services because, on average, they generate fewer residents, fewer school children, and less traffic per dwelling than a single family detached house. Also, properly controlled townhouses and apartments may allow a larger percentage of a tract to be preserved in common open space than if the land were used for single family detached houses. In addition, townhouses and apartments serve the needs of retirees and young families. Housing types such as townhouses and low rise apartments are also desirable to persons of all ages who do not wish to maintain a large yard or who do not have the physical abilities, such as the elderly and handicapped, required to maintain a yard. High density housing reduces the lengths of roads and utility lines, resulting in lower construction and maintenance costs. This is intended to be an option in most areas of the County but it is essential that clustering provides meaningful incentives in order to be attractive to developers.



This could be done through modifications of subdivision regulations and/or the adoption of new land use regulations. For example, a careful set of standards could ensure that townhouses, apartments, and other developments are compatible with the character of adjacent areas. These characteristics include good site design requirements and moderate maximum densities.

- *Encourage “infill” development.*

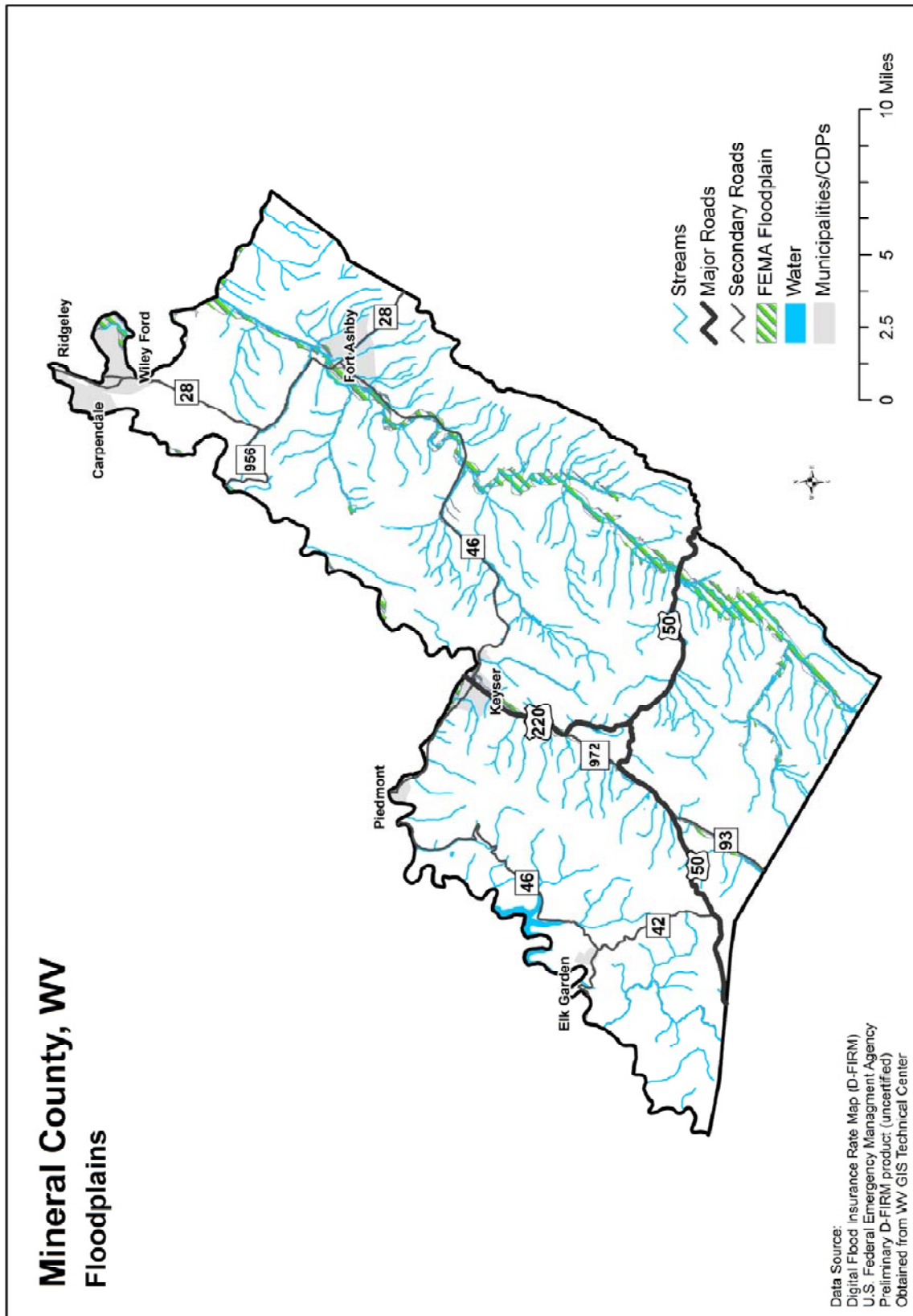
Ideally, new residential development should locate adjacent to or nearby existing neighborhoods for several reasons. This type of infill construction protects homes from incompatible development and makes the provision of public services much easier. Building in previously established areas maximizes the potential for public water and for sewage extensions and increases the efficiency of providing other services such as recreation, school busing, and emergency services. Infill development reduces the total amount of land used and directs it away from rural areas. This reduces urban sprawl thus protecting outlying farmlands, woods, mountains and creeks from being despoiled. This could also be done through modifications of subdivision regulations or other regulations similar to what was discussed above or by creating an incentive system for developers.

### *Proposed Land Uses*

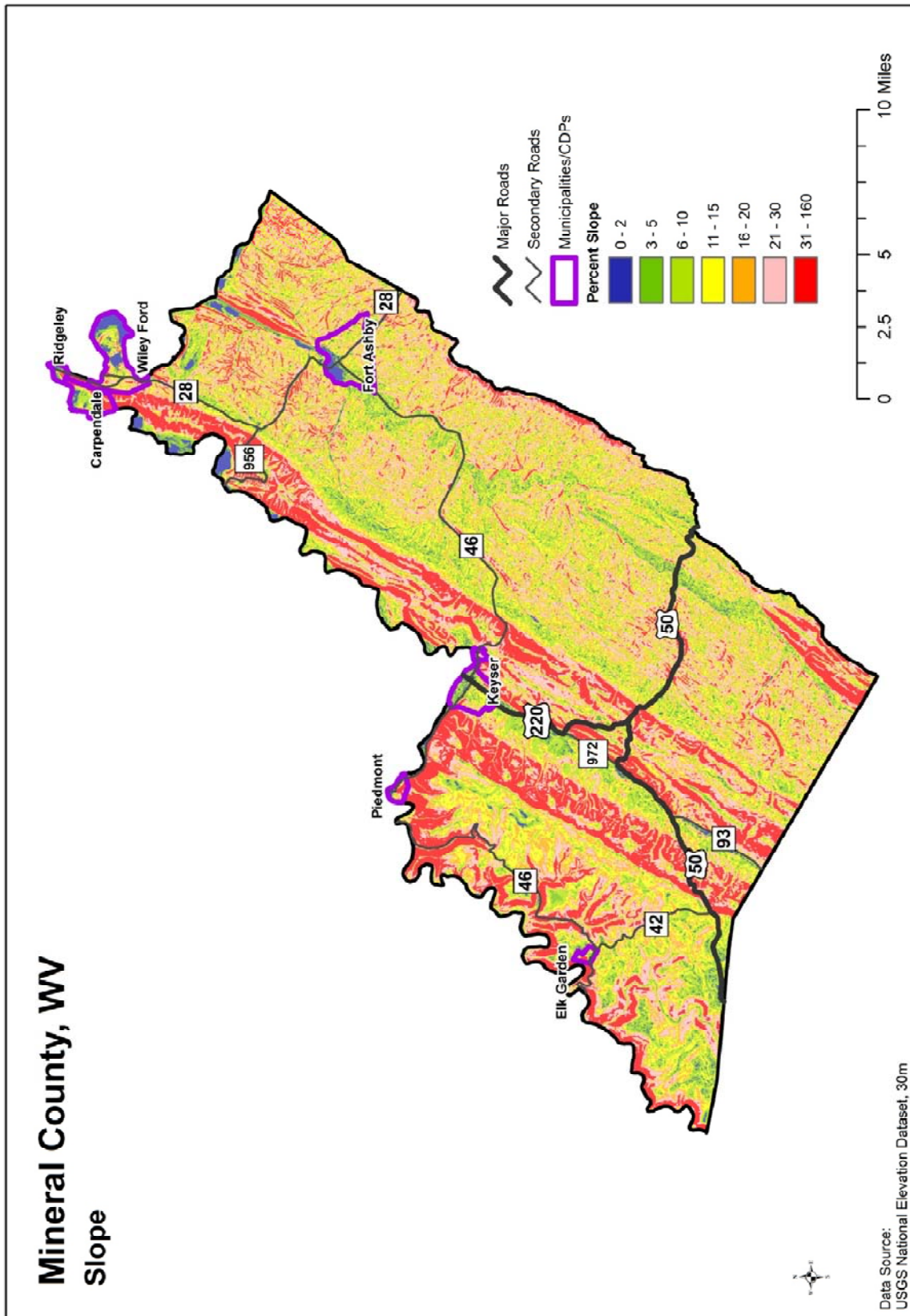
Different land uses and topographical features influence where development can proceed. For example, floodplain areas (Map 3.13) and areas with steep slopes (Map 3.14) are not suitable for construction. Future development plans should center on already developed areas making it easier to maintain the infrastructure and preserve farmlands.

Similarly, there are places where development should be directed. These places are accessible or can be easily connected to infrastructure.

Map 3.13: Floodplains



Map 3.14: Slopes



With the direction of these guidelines, the county will be able to grow in a reasonable manner. Thus, to accomplish these goals, the following system is proposed.

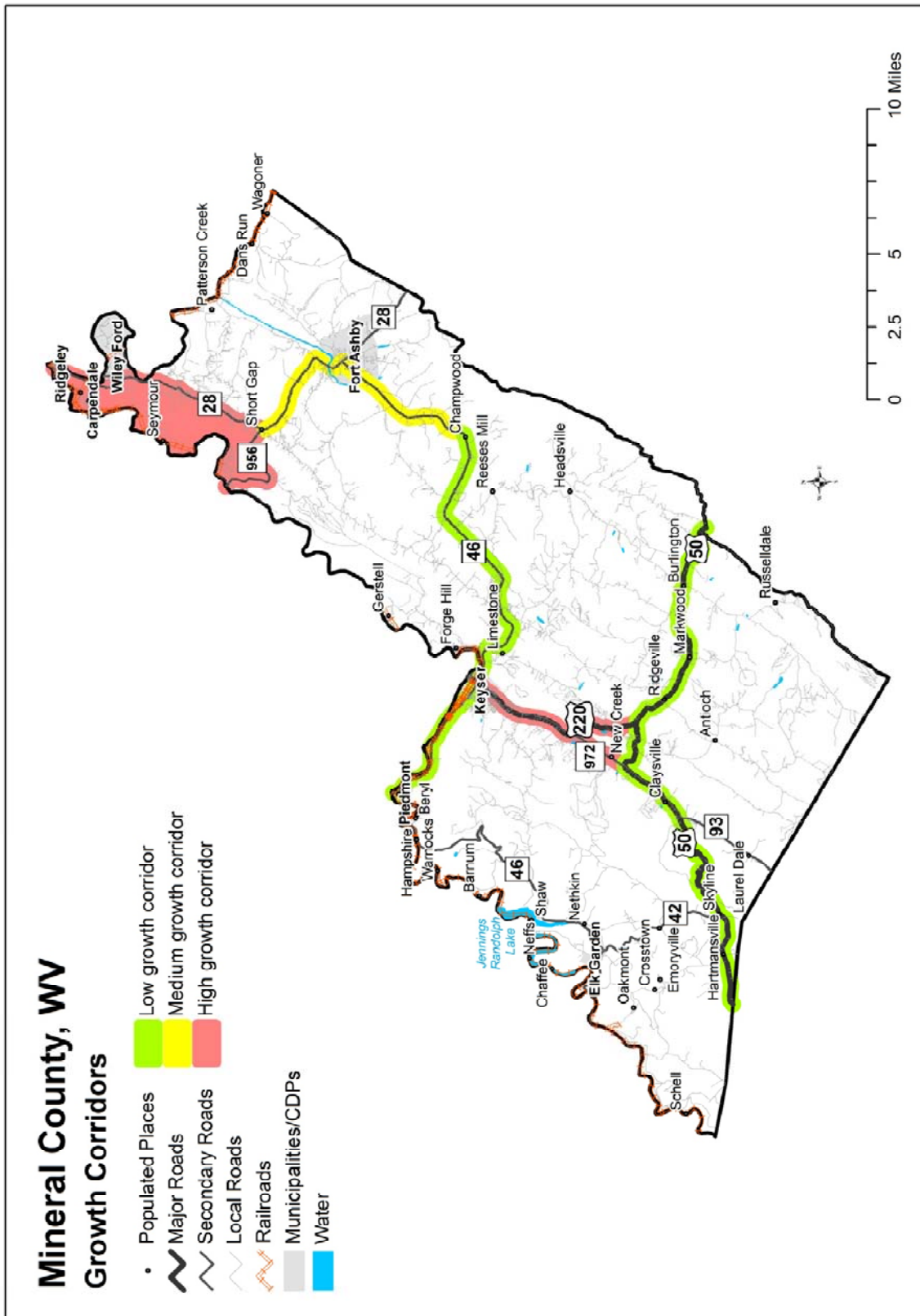
- *Focus new development around built-up areas and growth corridors.*

Mineral County has one city, four towns, and two Census-designated places. There are also several highways that traverse the county, connecting these places as well as other communities outside the county. It is in and around these places that new development in the county should occur.

The county does not have any official say in development matters within the boundaries of the five municipalities. But it should work closely with those officials to ensure that what development occurs outside the corporate limits and adjacent to these places is of the appropriate type and scale.

Meanwhile, for the unincorporated areas of the county, three levels of growth corridors are proposed (Map 3.15). The highest level is most appropriate for industrial, larger commercial and higher density residential development. This is found in the area between Keyser and New Creek on U.S. Route 220 (and WV Route 972) as well as in the northeast tip of the county near Carpendale-Ridgeley-Wiley Ford. The medium level is most appropriate for general development, including light industry, small scale commercial, and various levels of residential development. This is found between Short Gap and Fort Ashby on WV Route 28 and between Fort Ashby and Champwood on WV Route 46. The lower level is most appropriate for small to medium scale residential development as well as appropriate commercial and other enterprises which support residents. This is found along the entire length of U.S. Route 50 in the southern part of the county, along WV Route 46 between Piedmont and Champwood in the central part of the county, and along WV Route 28 from Fort Ashby to the county line in the northern part of the county. In all cases, connections will need to be made between the growth corridors and rural areas as well as considerations for promoting access management within and between developments to reduce traffic on the main traffic arteries. Again, this could be done either through modifications of subdivision regulations or by creating an incentive system for developers or by a mixture of the two approaches.

Map 3.15: Proposed County Growth Corridors



# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 4: Community Design**

### *Introduction*

It is important to look at how a community appears, how it presents itself, and how it conveys a sense of place. This is typically done through an examination of its development patterns, general aesthetics, and preservation activities. Together, these disparate notions combine to form the concept of community design.

The importance of community design can be found in the impressions of first-time visitors. If the community appears to be clean, orderly, and caring, the reaction will be positive. If it has an unsatisfactory appearance, is laid out poorly, and does not appear to care, it will elicit a negative reaction. This is particularly important for Mineral County as it sits at the top of the Potomac Highlands and often serves as a gateway for both that region of the state and the Mountain State itself.

### *Development Patterns*

Mineral County is one of just five counties formed after West Virginia became a state. It was created out of part of Hampshire County in 1866 and named for its abundant mineral resources.

Much of the county's population growth came prior to World War II. Since then, the only significant population change occurred between 1970 and 1980 as the county reached its peak population of 27,234 (with a gain of 4,125 people or 17.9%). In the nearly three decades since then, the county's population has been fairly steady with decreases and increases of less than 2 percent.

Mineral County is part of the Cumberland, Md., Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). It is one of only 17 counties in West Virginia to be part of a metropolitan area. The MSA was defined for the 1980 census. Nevertheless, most county residents live in non-incorporated, non-built-up or rural areas.

The county has five municipalities. Keyser is the largest with over 5,000 people. There are four towns – Carpendale, Elk Garden, Piedmont, and Ridgeley – each of which has less than 1,000 residents according to the most recent estimates. Combined, the population of the municipalities totaled 8,250 at the 2000 Census and an estimated 7,964 in 2007. That was just 30.5 percent and 29.5 percent of all county residents respectively. (Complete population and related tables are found in Section 2: Demographics.)

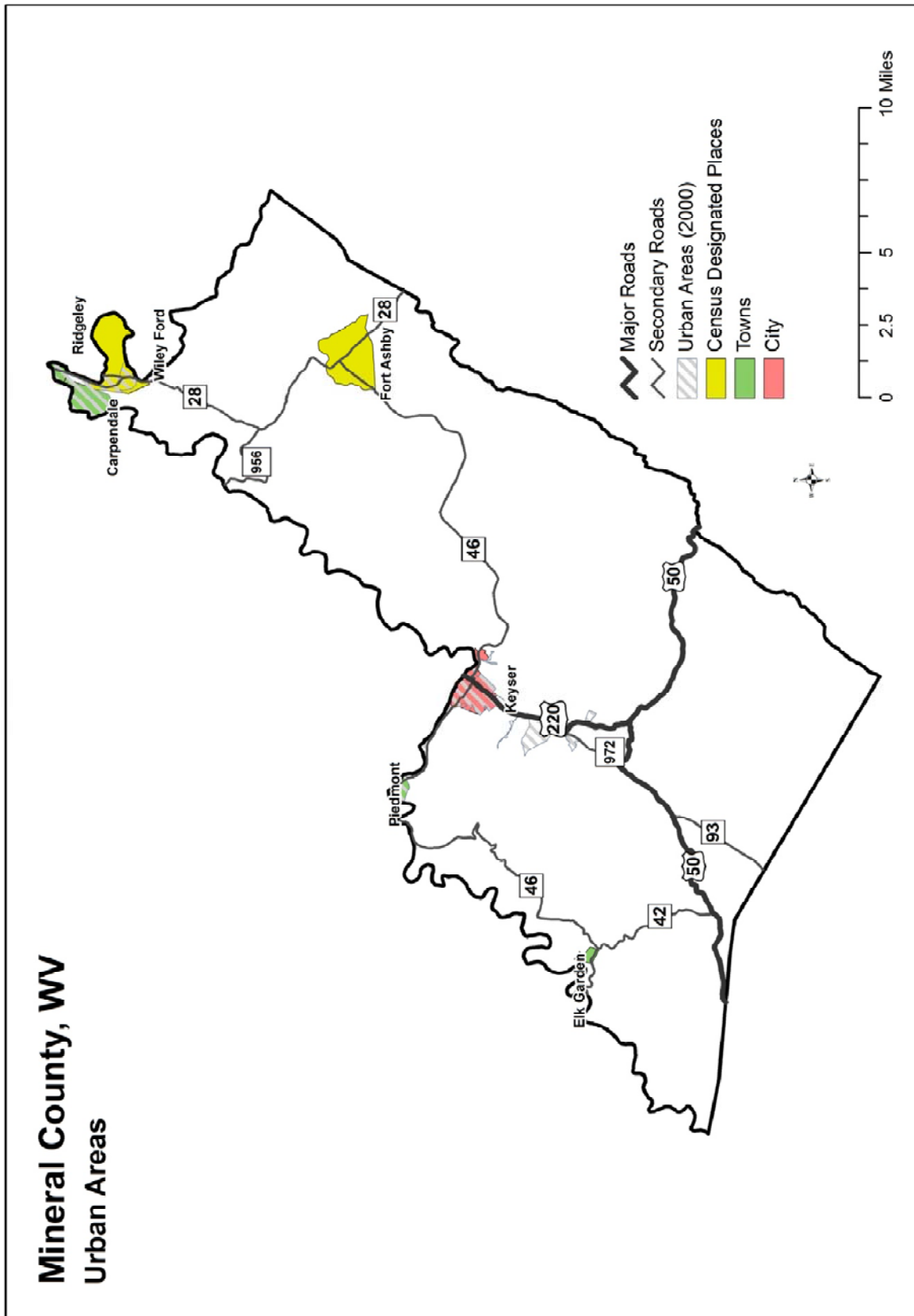
There are two unincorporated built-up areas with more than 1,000 people. These Census-Defined Places are the Fort Ashby CDP and the Wiley Ford CDP. Added to the municipalities, the total population for these built-up areas was 10,699 in 2000 (no estimate data is available for CDPs), or 39.5 percent of the county’s population.

Likewise, just 10,335 county residents lived in “urban” areas in 2000 – 38.2 percent of county residents. This included 7,707 in the West Virginia portion of the Keyser Urban Cluster (out of a total of 10,796) and 2,628 in the West Virginia portion of the Cumberland Urban Area (out of a total of 52,115) (Map 4.1).

However, an examination of population density shows that some areas have been much more developed than other places in the county. Each decade, the county is divided into three roughly-population equal magisterial districts for the purpose of selecting County Commissioners and other officials. These are then the county subdivisions used for the subsequent census.

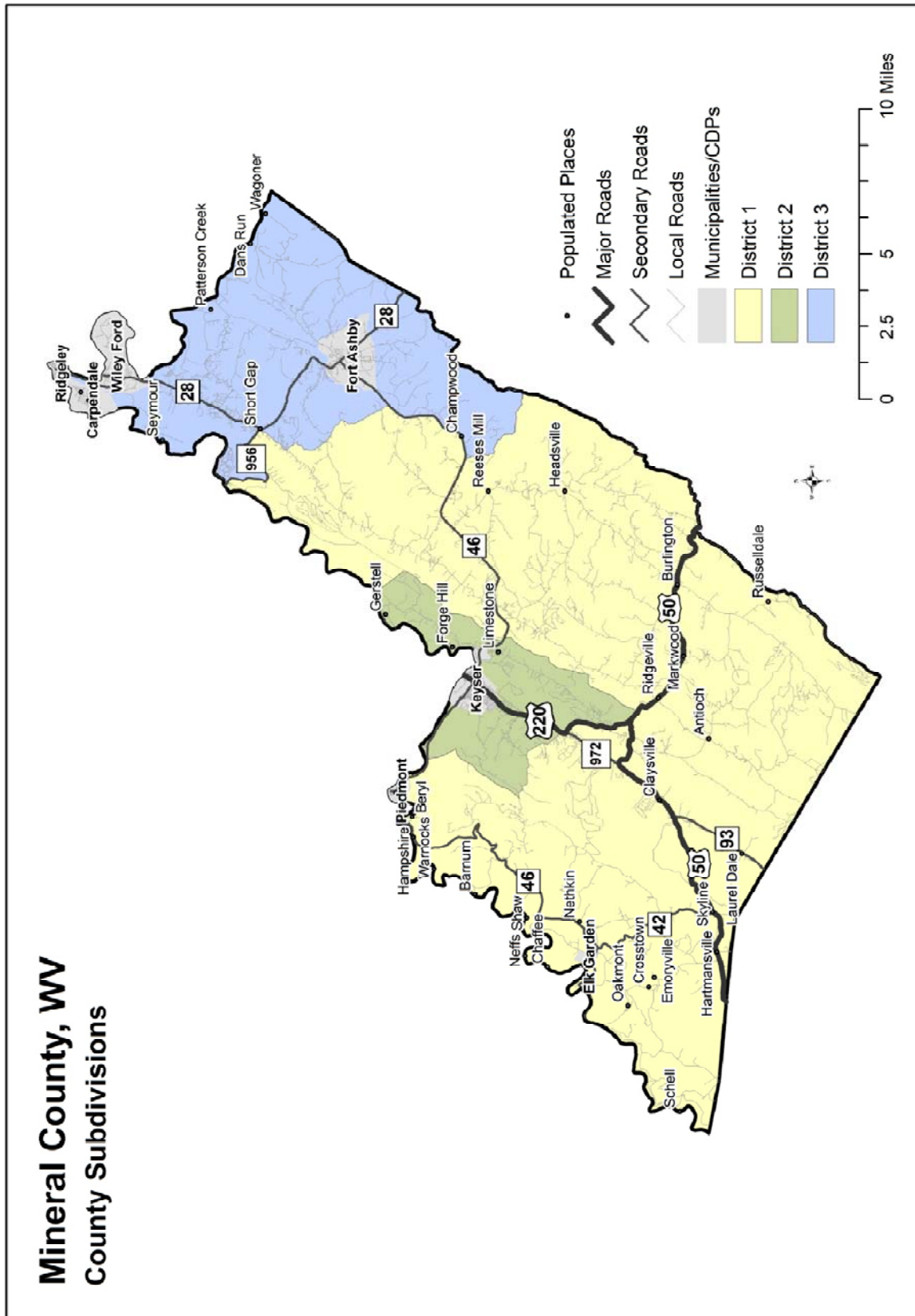
Using the subdivisions in place at the time of the 2000 census (Map 4.2, based on 1990 census data), District 2, the “V-shaped” central part of the county around Keyser, had 8,011 residents and a population density of 329 persons per square mile. District 3, the northern and northeastern corner of the county – the area running from Carpendale and Ridgeley through Wiley Ford and down to Fort Ashby, had 9,442 residents and a population density of 136 persons per square mile. District 1, the remainder of the county, had 9,625 residents and a population density of 41 persons per square mile. For comparison, the population density of the county as a whole was just over 82½ persons per square mile. Population shifts in the county between 1990 and 2000 resulted in some adjustments in the magisterial districts. The current subdivisions (Map 4.3, based on 2000 census data) has a larger, more “rectangular-shaped” District 2. Also, some areas in the county’s northeast corner were switched between District 1 and District 3.

Map 4.1: Urban Areas

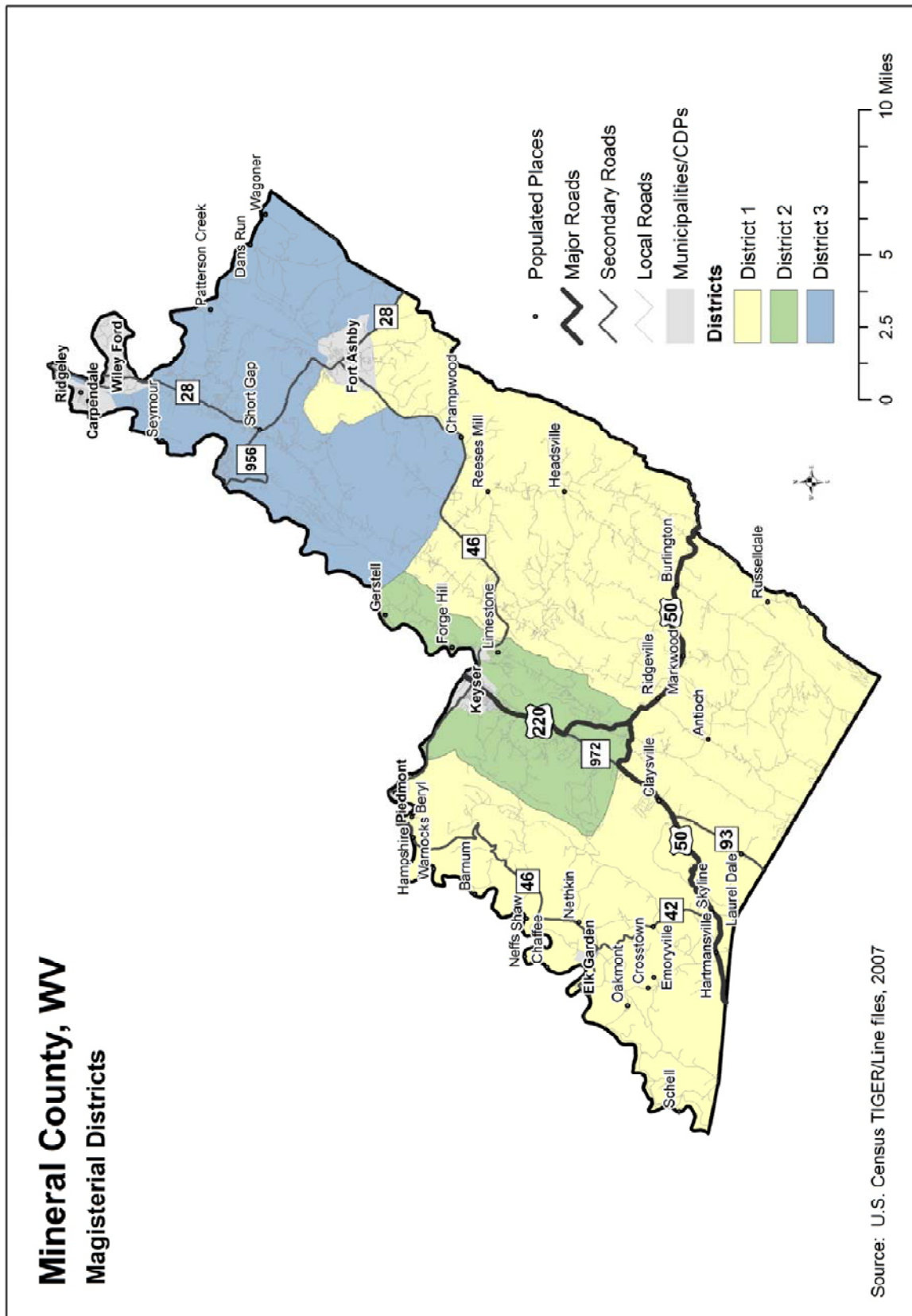




Map 4.2: 2000 County Subdivisions



Map 4.3: Current Magisterial Districts



The density differences become even more dramatic as the areas examined become smaller. The Census tracts in-and-around Keyser (Keyser and South Keyser) and around the northern tip of the county (Carpendale-Ridgeley-Wiley Ford) each had a population density of just over 600 persons per square mile in 2000. The population density did not exceed 90 persons per square mile in any other area of the county.

Furthermore, the population density of the West Virginia portion of the Cumberland Urban Area was 992.6 persons per square mile. The population of the West Virginia portion of the Keyser Urban Cluster was 1,974.1 persons per square mile. And most impressively, the population density of Keyser itself was 2,791.7 persons per square mile – meaning that with less than 0.58 percent of the land area in Mineral County, the county seat was home to 19.6 percent of its residents.

From this review, it is apparent that some areas of the county have experienced more development than have other places. Because of this, some areas of the county are going to be better equipped than others place to receive additional development. Thus, the existing patterns need to be confirmed as being appropriate and then used to help shape the county's future.

To accomplish goals related to development patterns, the following recommendations are made.

- *Work to ensure existing development is supported and accommodated.*

Development generally happens in a certain way for specific reasons. In other words, a variety of natural and man-made forces have helped to shape the county. These patterns cannot be altered without considerable time and effort. Thus, the county should use all means at its disposal to ensure the current system works as effectively, efficiently, and economically as possible. Potential actions include, but are not limited to, seeking infrastructure improvements for built-up areas of the county and employing land use regulation and related rules (that currently exist or may be put into place) to make sure that these places have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

- *Guide future development into areas of existing development.*

What exists now will substantially influence what happens in the future. The county should look at ways to encourage and enhance development in those areas where development has already occurred rather than in areas with little to no existing development. Some of these strategies are noted in the Section 3: Land Use. These include supporting infill development and new growth in-and-around existing development, where appropriate. Other strategies revolve around limiting the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure, transportation networks, and related facilities in less densely developed parts of the county.

### *General Aesthetics*

The county features a great variety of beauty. This is largely the result of its rural and natural characteristics, marked by a beautiful natural landscape of high mountains and river valleys. The county is just to the east of the nearby Eastern Continental Divide, which separates the Atlantic Ocean and Mississippi River Basins. The Allegheny Front has its northern terminus in the county at Green Mountain. The front is part of the geological transition zone (escarpment) that separates the higher and lower Allegheny Mountains. As a result, a portion of the Appalachian Plateau (locally known as the Allegheny Plateau) is located in the southwestern part of the county near and around Elk Garden. Also, Knobley Mountain stretches from Ridgeley to the Grant County border.

Waterways also play an important part in the composition of Mineral County. The North Branch of the Potomac River marks the county's northern boundary (and the West Virginia state border with Maryland). Jennings Randolph Lake is an impoundment reservoir built as authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1962. Designed to serve as an emergency water supply for Washington, D.C., the lake provides excellent recreational opportunities. Two creeks that are tributaries of the North Branch also help define the county. New Creek runs from a mountain in Grant County to the Potomac River at Keyser. Patterson Creek runs from its headwaters in Grant County to the Potomac River at Cumberland, Md. It has a major tributary in Mill Creek and creates a rolling valley in the eastern and central part of the county.

The county is also home to five municipalities as well as roughly three dozen unincorporated places (including the two Census-defined places discussed within this plan) as well as smaller settlements spread throughout the 330 square miles. These communities have various types of residences, commercial establishments, service providers, and industrial firms in many different places.

The result has been that the built environment works well with the natural environment in many locations. These places look nice, fit together well, and strive to protect people and property for posterity. However, there are locations where the built environment clashes with itself, the natural environment, or both. These places are scattered throughout the county and could use some improvement in their appearances well as some careful attention to ensure that they fit their surroundings and function in an orderly manner.

To accomplish goals related to general aesthetics, the following recommendations are made.

- *Sponsor a general clean-up and beautification effort.*

This involves county officials working with their counterparts in the municipalities as well as civic organizations to provide opportunities to remove waste found throughout the county. Likewise, it entails promoting efforts and sponsoring activities that would make localized areas of unsightliness more aesthetically pleasing. Such efforts would range from cleaning-up illegal dumpsites, to picking up litter, planting flowers and trees, and reinvigorating the banks of streams. The Mineral County Litter and Recycling Control Task Force should be involved in this effort.

- *Assist with the rehabilitation or removal of run-down properties.*

Counties have the authority to oversee the renovation or removing through demolition abandoned or dilapidated properties through powers granted under the “Urban Renewal Authority Law” (*West Virginia Code* §16-18). The Mineral County Building Safety Commission has been created for this purpose. The county should use this mechanism to the fullest extent possible and fund it at sufficient levels through the use of tax revenues and fees as permitted by state code in order to allow it to fulfill its mission. In addition, the county should assist the municipalities in this regard, where assistance is desired and permissible.

- *Encourage that buildings be built or renovated appropriately.*

Any new construction or major building renovation should be done using accepted best practices and industry standards. The county should take steps to encourage this. To that end, it may wish to consider directly requiring it through the adoption and enforcement of appropriate building codes and fire codes. Such a step would be beneficial because buildings constructed to set standards are less likely to have issues that cause them to fall into disrepair in an usually short period of time. Furthermore, since one instance of good appearance and design can result in a movement to improvement of the overall aesthetics in the entire community, such an effort could have a greater impact than on the single property or building where the initial construction or renovation occurred.

- *Create gateways into the county.*

People need to know when they are entering the county. Presently, there is little to tell them they are in the county – or in the case of Keyser the county seat. These entry points are neither well-defined nor well-decorated. To that end, the county should develop a standard sign to be used on all major entrances to provide standardization, identification, and beautification to these points, such as those along U.S. Route 50 as well as various state routes. These efforts will also require the county to work with several of the municipalities as well since there are entrances to the county are at Keyser, Wiley Ford, Ridgeley, and Piedmont.

- *Work with municipalities to promote consistency and improvement.*

The county does not have direct authority on much of the planning and related activity that occurs in municipalities; intergovernmental communication and coordination are required by state law (§8A-3-13). To that end, the county should continue and expand its efforts with the municipal governments to be sure that planning done by the county is not done counterproductive to the planning done by the municipalities – and vice versa. The objectives here are to prevent vastly different ideas on how areas in-and-around municipalities should develop and to avoid abrupt land use changes at municipal borders.

- *Take appropriate steps to preserve its natural beauty.*

One of the defining characteristics of Mineral County is its natural beauty. Its open spaces, broad vistas, and expanding valleys shape how the county looks. However, development pressures of all types (i.e., residential, retail, resource development, etc.) could have a detrimental impact on the county's appearance. To that end, the county should use all resources and regulations at its disposal – and seek additional authority if desired – to ensure pristine places it wishes to preserve remain so. Such authority can be found throughout the *West Virginia Code*, such as the articles on the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (§8A-4) and Voluntary Farmland Protection Programs (§8A-12) in the chapter on land use planning (Chapter 8A), the Urban Renewal Authority Act (§16-18), and the Conservation and Preservation Easement Act (§20-12).

### *Historic Preservation*

While the county is relatively young, exploration of the area started over 300 years ago. European settlers came to the area around the present town of Ridgeley as far back as the early 1700s. Thus, Mineral County is home to many historic buildings and sites that are symbols of its rich heritage. This section of the plan encourages the owners of these buildings to preserve and restore them in a sensitive manner. Although there are several other historical buildings of importance, a brief summary of the most important resources is provided.

In 1746, an expedition mapping the region reached the head fountain of the North Branch of the Potomac, the furthest point in Fairfax's land claims. The "Fairfax Stone" was planted there to mark the spot. Also, the French and Indian War had a profound effect on the area, as it forced many settlers to flee or seek protection within or near the forts in the region. Some of these forts would eventually become towns in the county. One such fort built in Frankfort Village became known as Fort Ashby. At present, it is the only remaining fort in the chain of forts established by George Washington to defend Virginia's western frontier. It is owned by the Fort Ashby Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and serves as a museum.

Stewart's Tavern is a log structure built in 1790, which has served as a tavern and an inn in the northern end of the county. Two additions have been made to the building using several different architectural styles. The Frankfort District Historical Society purchased the structure in 1988 and

successfully relocated it to the intersection of WV Route 956 and WV Route 28 between Fort Ashby and Short Gap and restored it.

Fort Fuller, a defensive fort in the New Creek Valley, was an important military base during the Civil War because its fort, located on the site where Potomac State College of WVU now stands, commanded roads leading to the South Branch and Shenandoah Valleys.

Other historic points include Saddle Mountain and a pair of orchards. The Saddle is a scenic low point in a mountain range that resembles a saddle. Nancy Hanks, Abraham Lincoln’s mother, was born there on the east side of the saddle on Mike’s Run. The Chert Mountain Orchards and Twin Mountain Orchards were fruit orchards. Their presence led to the building of the Twin Mountain and Potomac (TM&P) Railroad from Keyser to the orchards to transport fruit out to markets.

Additionally, there are several other historical sites (Table 4.1, Table 4.2, Table 4.3, and Map 4.4). These include the Carskadon House at Locust Grove located on Beaver Run Road near Headsville; Faireview House on Russelldale Road near Burlington; Fort Hill Farm located on Patterson Creek Road south of Burlington; Travelers Rest located on U.S. Route 50 between Ridgeville and Burlington; Vandiver-Hull-Trout-Clause House located at the intersection of U.S. Route 50 and Knobley Road; and the Thomas R. Carskadon Mansion on Radical Hill in Keyser.

**Table 4.1: Properties on the National Register of Historic Places**

<b>Historic Properties</b>
Thomas R. Carskadon Mansion on Radical Hill in Keyser (1870)
Fort Ashby on South Street in Forth Ashby (1755)
Vandiver-Hull-Trout-Clause House in Ridgeville (1770)
Burlington Historic District in Burlington (1830s)
Carskadon House at Locust Grove on Beaver Run Road (1827)
Fort Hill Farm on Patterson Creek Road south of Burlington (1853)
Fairview (Pierce House) on Russelldale Road south of Burlington (1867)
Stewart’s Tavern in Short Gap (1790)
Mineral County Courthouse in Keyser (1868)
Travelers Rest on US Route 50 east of Ridgeville (1827, 1927)

Source: Mineral County Historic Society.

Meanwhile, the Burlington Historic District, the only district in the county on the National Register of Historic Places, is an excellent example of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture. The most prominent structures include the former TM&P Railroad station (currently home of the public library) and the Burlington Union Church. Many historic homes also remain



intact today. Downtown Keyser and Piedmont both contain many examples of architecture from the same time period. While none of these communities are listed on the National Register, there is potential for such designation. Many buildings are still intact, particularly in Piedmont which has a rich railroad history. The homes along Hampshire Street are also worthy of preservation. Likewise, Headsville has the potential for a historic district in its downtown area and has work has recently been completed which will save the historic Pratt Truss bridge that was built in 1895.

**Table 4.2: Properties Designated as Historic Landmarks by the Landmarks Commission**

<b>Historic Properties</b>
Claysville Church and Cemetery at Claysville (1850)
Claysville Log House and Barn at Claysville (1792)
Davis-Sheetz-Kuykendall-Johnson-Whipp House on Patterson Creek Road near Headsville (1846)
Headsville School in Headsville (1866)
Headsville Bridge in Headsville (1915)
“Skip” Miller House on Beaver Run Road (1820)
Henry Gassoway Davis House in Piedmont (1871)
Wagoner House in New Creek
Headsville Methodist Church and Cemetery in Headsville (1856)
Eucebia Presbyterian Church and Cemetery 4½ miles west of Fort Ashby (1819)

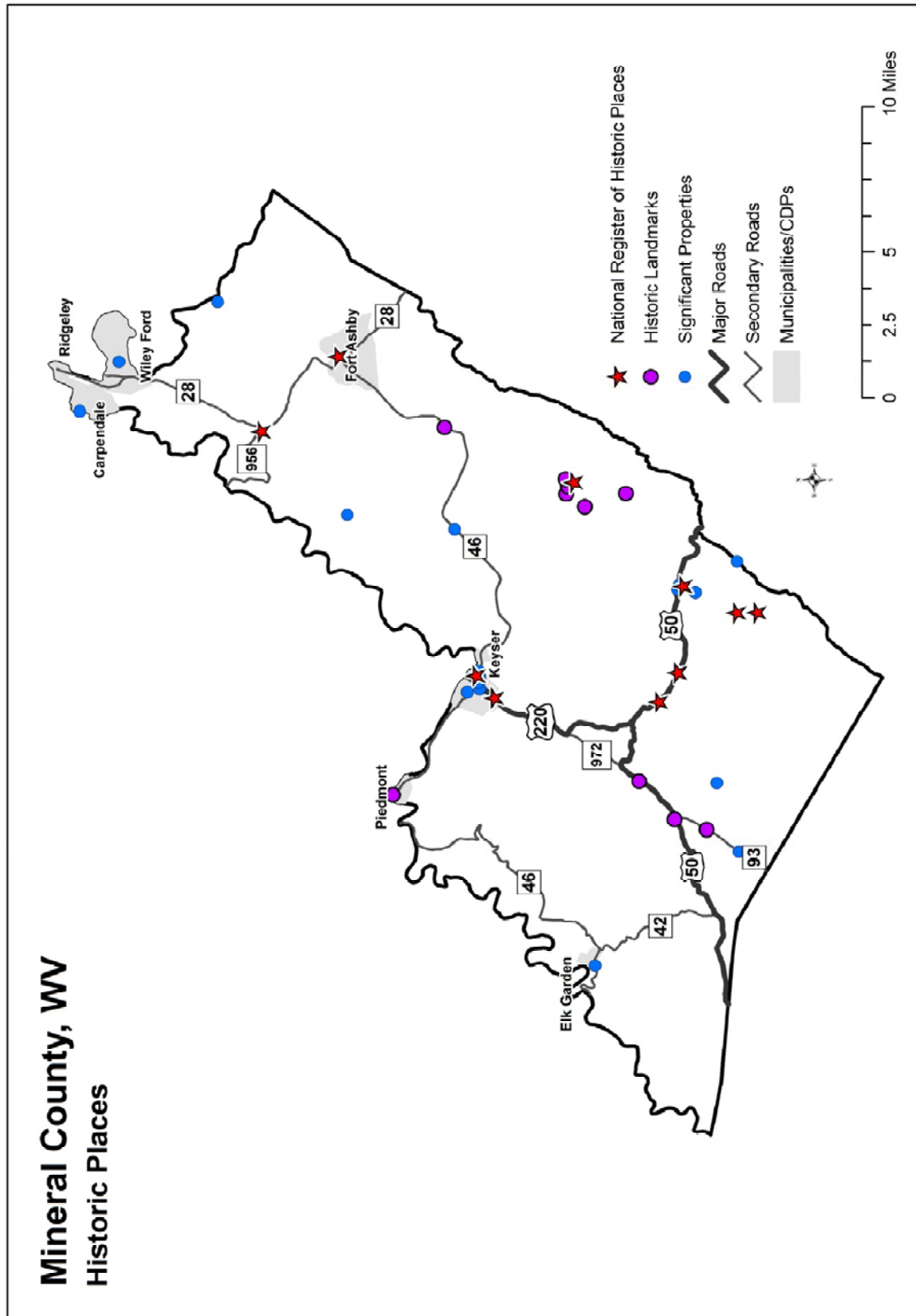
Source: Mineral County Historic Society.

**Table 4.3: Significant Non-Registered Properties**

<b>Historic Properties</b>
Chert Mountain Orchard and Twin Mountain Orchards south of Burlington (TM&P Railroad destination)
Nancy Hanks Cabin in the Nancy Hanks subdivision near Antioch
Windle Miller and Patrick McCarty burial marker off Patterson Creek Road near Headsville
Homestead in Burlington
Burlington Library (former TM&P Railroad Station)
Potomac State College (former site of Fort Fuller) in Keyser
Baltimore & Ohio passenger station in Keyser
Old Keyser High School
Old Iron Furnace in Wiley Ford
Silas Arnold House off Patterson Creek Road south of Burlington
Susan Fleek House off WV Route 46 east of Keyser
Betty Sutton-Spiggle Homeplace on Knobley Road between Short Gap and Fountain
Unger House in Patterson Creek
Grist Mill in Laureldale
Seaman House at 37 North Water Street in Keyser
Arnold Stone House on Armstrong Street in Keyser
Sulphur United Methodist Church near Elk Garden
Old Tunnel from Carpendale to Cumberland in Carpendale

Source: Mineral County Historic Society.

Map 4.4: Historic Places



Finally, U.S. Route 50 in the county follows the basic route of the Northwestern Turnpike. The historic road was built by the Virginia Board of Public Works in the 1830s to connect Winchester and Parkersburg. Important sites and places along the present roadway include Saddle Mountain and its overlook; Claysville Church in Claysville near the intersection with WV Route 93; Travelers Rest; Patterson Creek Manor near Burlington; and Weaver's Antique Service Station in Burlington near the intersection with Patterson Creek Road.

Thus, the county has a rich history that should be preserved and protected. It is up to the county to act as chief guardian to ensure that this occurs.

To accomplish goals related to historic preservation, the following recommendations are made.

- *Act to protect existing historic places and sites.*

First and foremost, the county's land use regulations – existing and any to be enacted – should encourage preservation of historical places. This may mean amending current rules and creating new ones. Related to that, the county should investigate general policies that reward the retention and restoration of historic places and limit the ability to subdivide such properties in such a way that it would negate their significance. Related to this, the county should consider creating additional historic districts. Finally, the county should seek to identify historical sites and places prior to development. The latter two activities would require cooperation with municipalities.

- *Promote the county's history and historic resources.*

The history and historical significance of the county is sometimes hidden, but there are ways to remedy this situation. To begin with, the county should promote the establishment of historical markers at appropriate sites. It could utilize tour brochures to encourage persons to appreciate older buildings and history in cities and in outlying areas of the county. Such brochures could be made available at travel information locations throughout and near the county as well as the Mineral County Chamber of Commerce, the Mineral County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the various county entities interested in history. The county should encourage additional research and investigation concerning historic buildings and sites in the county as well as encourage property owners to improve historic buildings, beginning with the facades. Finally, as noted above, it should investigate the potential for further historical places to be on National

Register. Throughout this process, the county should work with all interested and appropriate organizations that would be able to provide expertise and energy to such an undertaking. These organizations include the Mineral County Historical Society, the Mineral County Historical Foundation, the Mineral County Landmarks Commission, the Frankfort District Historical Society, the Mineral County Genealogy Society, and the Fort Ashby Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

- *Inform owners of options and benefits related to historic properties.*

The owners of historic properties – or properties near historic sites – have more options that they should know about. There are opportunities to gain tax benefits in return for rehabilitating historical buildings or by donating a preservation easement. There are recommended guidelines based upon standards of the National Park Service that owners should be encouraged to follow when doing maintenance, renovation, or rehabilitation to historic buildings. Related to this, those who wish to build new structures next to or near historic places should be encouraged to design such structures to be compatible in scale and types of materials with the historic buildings. In addition, these historic sites and buildings could be incorporated into appropriate county tours and publicity efforts. The county will need to work with the municipalities as well as community organizations to accomplish this task.

# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 5: Infrastructure**

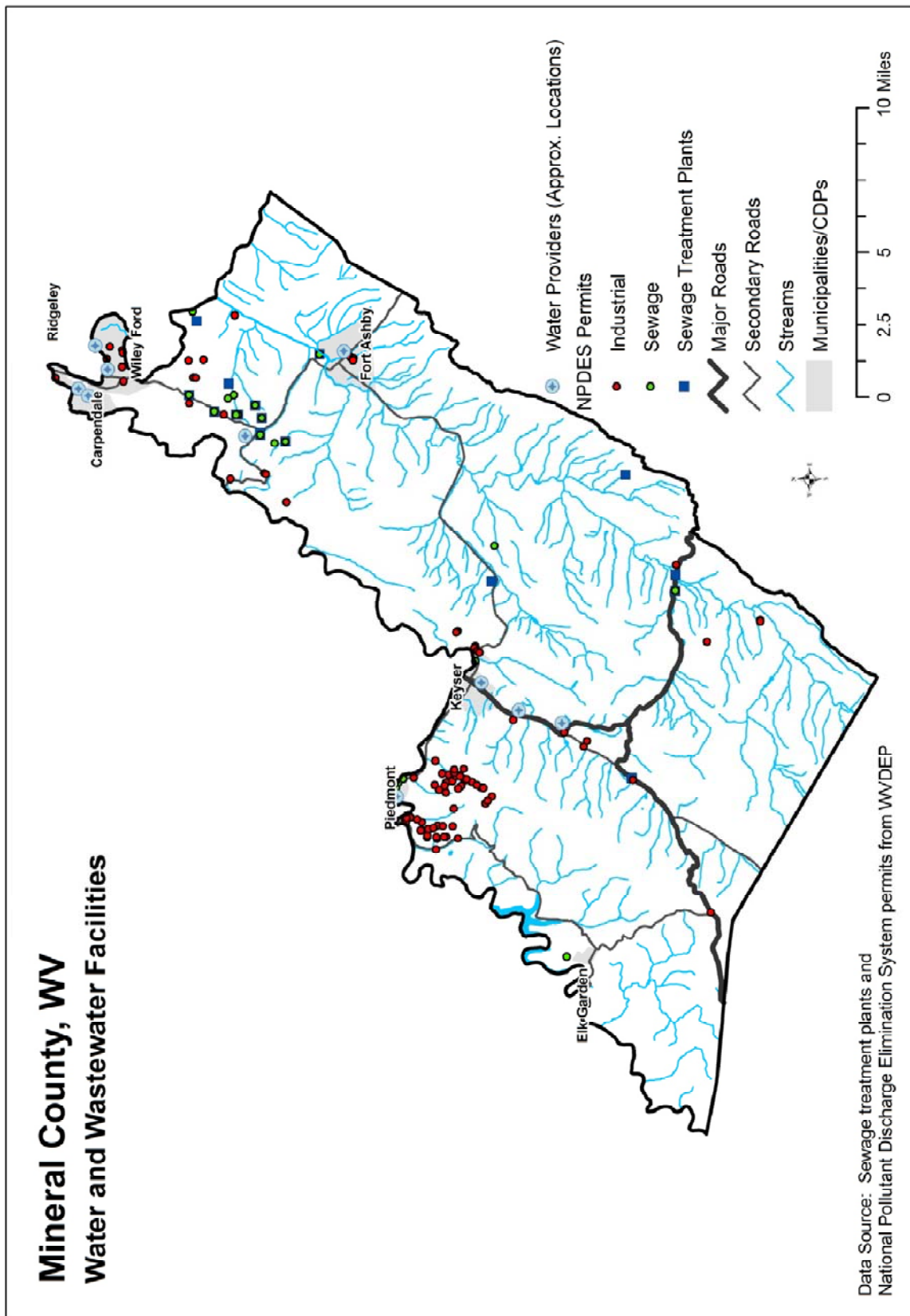
### *Introduction*

Although Mineral County has a well-established infrastructure, there is a pressing need to update the water and waste water handling systems, the roadways, and other public facilities. Some of this work is already on-going. Entities in the county continue to expand the waterlines and sewage treatment capacity. Planning for improvements and replacement of U.S. Route 220 is underway. With the proper resources, the county will be able to modernize its infrastructure to meet the needs of future generations.

### *Water, Wastewater, and Solid Waste*

Water supply and sewage disposal are critical issues facing Mineral County and will greatly affect both existing and future development. Most incorporated and commercial or industrial areas are served by both central water and sewage service. The majority of larger developments are served by central private sewage systems (Map 5.1). Overall, there are 10 water and 10 sewer systems serving the county – after the completion of the Frankfort PSD’s acquisition of the Fort Ashby PSD (water in 2005, sewer in 2008) and the Wiley Ford Water Company (2008). These include municipal systems, public service districts, and private providers. Interconnections exist between many of these systems. Among the water systems, Ridgeley and the New Creek Water Association purchase their water directly from other systems while Carpendale and Frankfort PSD have the ability to purchase water from Cumberland, Md., when needed. Meanwhile, several sewer systems – Carpendale, Piedmont, Ridgeley, and Frankfort PSD – discharge their waste into other systems. Finally, wells and onsite sewage systems may serve single family homes, other dwellings, and businesses where water or sewer systems are not available

Map 5.1: Water and Wastewater Facilities



**Table 5.1: Water Systems**

<b>Municipal</b>	<b>Customers</b>	<b>Daily Use</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Source</b>
• City of Keyser Water Department	2,844	1,100,000 gal.	3,000,000 gal.	River
• Town of Carpendale	390	15,000 gal.	55,000 gal.	Well
• Town of Piedmont Municipal Water Dept.	389	144,000 gal.	360,000 gal.	River
• Town of Ridgeley	330	NA	NA	Other
<b>Public Service Districts</b>				
• Fort Ashby PSD	--	500,000 gal.	800,000 gal.	River
• Fountain PSD	334	33,000 gal.	86,400 gal.	Well
• Frankfort PSD	1,435	350,000 gal.	420,000 gal.	River
• Mountain Top PSD (Grant Co.)	854	185,000 gal.	300,000 gal.	Spring
<b>Private/Other</b>				
• Mountain View Water System LLC (Md.)	49	NA	NA	NA
• Mountaineer Village	NA	NA	NA	NA
• New Creek Water Association, Inc.	1,281	200,000 gal.	NA	Other
• Wiley Ford Water Company, Inc.	386	NA	NA	NA

Notes: Frankfort PSD acquired Fort Ashby PSD September 2005.

Frankfort PSD acquired Wiley Ford Water Co., Inc. April 2008.

Mountain Top PSD size includes operations in Grant County.

Mountain View Water System LLC of Maryland listing includes only West Virginia operations.

“Other” refers to purchases from Other Systems under source

Sources: Public Service Commission of WV (list, customers), Region 8 PDC (use, capacity, source).

**Table 5.2: Sewer Systems**

<b>Municipal</b>	<b>Customers</b>	<b>Daily Use</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Discharge</b>
• City of Keyser Water Department	2,757	1,100,000 gal.	8,000,000 gal.	N. Branch
• Town of Carpendale	390	46,750 gal.	63,750 gal.	Other system
• Town of Piedmont	380	144,000 gal.	Unlimited	Other system
• Town of Ridgeley	324	NA	NA	Other system
<b>Public Service Districts</b>				
• Fort Ashby PSD	--	460,000 gal.	460,000 gal.	Patterson Ck
• Frankfort PSD	423	30,000 gal.	100,000 gal.	Other system
• Mountain Top PSD (Grant County)	323	44,500 gal.	110,000 gal.	N. Branch
• New Creek PSD	1,053	184,999 gal.	NA	Potomac R*
<b>Private/Other</b>				
• Fountainhead Homeowners Assn. Inc.	82	NA	NA	NA
• Knobley Estates Sanitary Corp	125	NA	NA	NA
• Mountaineer Village.	64	NA	NA	NA

Notes: Frankfort PSD acquired Fort Ashby PSD October 2008.

Mountain Top PSD size includes operations in Grant County.

New Creek PSD discharge to the Potomac River is via the Keyser Water Department system.

Sources: Public Service Commission of WV (list, customers), Region 8 PDC (use, capacity, discharge).

In recent years, major improvements have been made to these services under the leadership of the county government. These improvements include \$11 million in major water system improvements by Keyser; a major new water plant at Fort Ashby; water line extensions in the Frankfort area; a new sewage plant being developed by Elk Garden using a Small Cities Block Grant; a new system by Carpendale; and a study of a new sewage system for Wiley Ford.

Even with all of this work being done, there is still much more needed. According to the Region 8 Planning and Development Council *Regional Development Plan (Fiscal Year 2009-2014)*, Keyser is in need of upgrades to its water plant and more storage, the Frankford PSD needs an upgraded water plant, the area served by the former Fort Ashby PSD needs another water source and additional sewage treatment capacity, and Carpendale has constant issues with pump maintenance and odor at its wastewater treatment facility. The Region 8 FY2010 Priority Project list includes an additional \$9 million upgrade to Keyser's water system, as well as sewer upgrades to the New Creek PSD (\$2 million) and Frankford PSD (\$25 million). These three projects have rating scores of 50, 44, and 43 on the 50-point scale used by the regional planning council. Three other water projects – Piedmont system improvements (cost undetermined), Frankford PSD water extensions (\$2 million), and Fountain PSD water extensions (\$2.5 million) – have rating scores of 38. Other important projects listed are improvements to sewers in Piedmont (cost undetermined, score 33), Carpendale water storage tanks (\$500,000, score 32), and New Creek Water Association tank replacement (cost undetermined, score 32).

In addition, there are concentrations of failing septic systems that need to be addressed, especially within watersheds of public water systems. The problems are especially prevalent where there is insufficient area to install a new septic system and where the system was constructed before state regulations were in effect. Unfortunately, some septic failures are not apparent because they are occurring completely below the surface. Also, many older buildings are still served by cesspools or outdated septic systems. As a result, these failing or obsolete septic systems in some areas are threatening pollution of groundwater and surface water as well as associated health hazards.

To protect the quality of creeks and streams, the county should continue to work with the state to ensure that private and central sewage systems are properly designed and operated. Mineral County has a large number of private sewage treatment plants and many are the responsibility of homeowner associations. Ensuring proper operation of multiple private sewage systems is much more difficult than ensuring proper operation of a few public systems. Therefore, whenever possible, existing sewage systems should be expanded and extended instead of developing new private systems. In the long-run it may be appropriate to turn some private systems over to a public service district to operate and to increase the public oversight of operations.



There are also 29 Natural Resources Conservation Service flood control dams on waterways throughout the county. According to data from the West Virginia Conservation Agency, 22 of these are in the Patterson Creek watershed and 7 are in the New Creek watershed. There are an additional 11 dams – 9 in the Patterson Creek watershed and 2 in the New Creek watershed – that protect the county. These are both assets for the protection they offer as well as potential liabilities because of the damage that could ensue as a result of a failure of one (or more) of these structures.

Solid waste disposal is decentralized and semi-privatized in the county. Mineral County is a member of the Region VIII Solid Waste Authority, which serves five counties in the Potomac Highlands. Garbage is taken by licensed common carrier or municipal hauler. It is taken to the transfer station in Romney and transported to a landfill in the region (as of 2010, the selected facility is in Tucker County). Alternatively, the garbage may be taken directly to any landfill facility by a public or private hauler. Furthermore, the regional authority has a *Comprehensive Litter and Solid Waste Control Plan* outlining the operations for the next two decades. Finally, it should be noted that while the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and Region VIII Solid Waste Authority do not show any landfill operations, operating or closed, in Mineral County, there is a privately-operated municipal sludge landfill in the Elk District of the county.

Meanwhile, the Mineral County Litter Control and Recycling Task Force is working on recycling issues in the county. A school-based model is being proposed for materials such as paper, plastic, and glass. The Region VIII Solid Waste Authority is also working on this issue and has developed the *Recycling Plan for Region VIII*. Many businesses also have their own recycling plans in place.

To accomplish goals related to water, waste water, and solid waste, the following recommendations are made.

- *Have up-to-date information for decision-making*

The county must continue and expand its efforts to develop up-to-date water studies. The current work being done with respect to a water resources plan is a good start. Meanwhile, records do not show any update having been done to the *Comprehensive Sewage and Water Plan* that was prepared in 1989 by the Public Service Commission. Revising and updating that document (or any updated version that might exist) should be a high priority for county officials. The ongoing aquifer study represents a good start to this process because it will provide insights and information on long-term water availability. Also, such a plan would allow the county to be better able to prioritize water and sewerage system improvements, extensions, and interconnections to ensure sufficient supply to existing and expected developments.

- *Extend water and sewage services using appropriate means.*

The county should use different means, depending upon circumstances, to expand services. One such idea is to extend sewage and water service within a drainage basin using the natural flow of gravity. Pumping stations can be used to pump sewage over ridgelines and up-hill, but they are usually very expensive to build, maintain, operate, and eventually replace. To that end, developments should be done in such a way as to maximize use of gravity flow and minimize the need for water and sewage pumping stations. On the other hand, in some situations, new technologies and ideas need to be implemented to solve the county's sewage and water problems. This could range from new methods of sewage treatment to using recovered waste water to recharge aquifers for water supply. Related to this, cost-effective solutions such as cluster systems will have to be considered to address concentrations of failing septic systems.

- *Maximize the use of public water and sewer systems.*

The county should make efforts to incorporate the private central water systems into one of the public water systems. Related to this, the county should work toward reducing the number of public water and sewer system through mergers and consolidations of systems where appropriate. This has occurred over the past several years with the Frankfort PSD acquiring the

water (September 2005) and sewer (October 2008) operations of the former Fort Ashby PSD as well as the Wiley Ford Water Company (April 2008).

Over the long-term, public water service is a much more reliable system to guarantee sufficient amounts of high quality water. Also, public water service should be extended instead of developing new central water systems, whenever feasible and cost-effective. This will help to reduce the potential public health threats that can be posed by well water contamination and by failing septic systems. Additionally, public water service is more likely to provide sufficient capacity and pressure for firefighting than small private water systems.

- *Approve private systems prudently.*

When the county approves any new private water or sewage system, extreme care must be taken to ensure that the system will be long-lasting and will receive required professional maintenance and operation. For example, a private septic system usually has about a 30-year maximum life span, but only if a regular three-to-five-year maintenance cycle has been followed. Various methods can be used to ensure that private systems meet the needs of their customers and the county. This can be accomplished through various methods. One is a long-term contract with a professional firm where the credentials of that firm would need to be checked and user fees paid directly to that firm. Another would be through expanded operations of the appropriate county agencies with a fee system used to provide the required resources. Regardless of the method chosen, any new private systems that are approved should be designed, where appropriate, for efficient connection to the public system when that connection becomes economically feasible. Also, where individuals seek approval for on-premises systems (water and waste water), the county should continue to ensure that state requirements and appropriate best practices are being followed.

- *Work to ensure the structural integrity of the flood control dams.*

The flood control structures throughout Mineral County are not the county's responsibility. Nevertheless, the county needs to actively work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (and any other appropriate agency) to ensure that the dams are inspected and maintained on a regular basis because of the potential damage caused by a catastrophic failure of a dam. The

purpose of these routine tasks is to prevent structural failure of the dams and to avoid major problems by having minor repairs done on a timely basis.

- *Work to expand waste disposal options.*

The county must make sure the solid waste disposal needs of the county are met by other public and private entities. Since the county is served (primarily) by a landfill facility in the region. As the facility is controlled by an external entity and such facilities can sometimes experience financial and administrative problems, it behooves the county to exercise strong oversight with respect to solid waste disposal. It can do that by playing a strong role in the Region VIII Solid Waste Authority. Also, the county should try to find alternative ways to dispose of some materials, using techniques such as recycling and composting. Such actions would help increase the current facility and potentially lower disposal costs. The county may wish to consider creating a solid waste management board to supplement the litter control task force to work on such efforts.

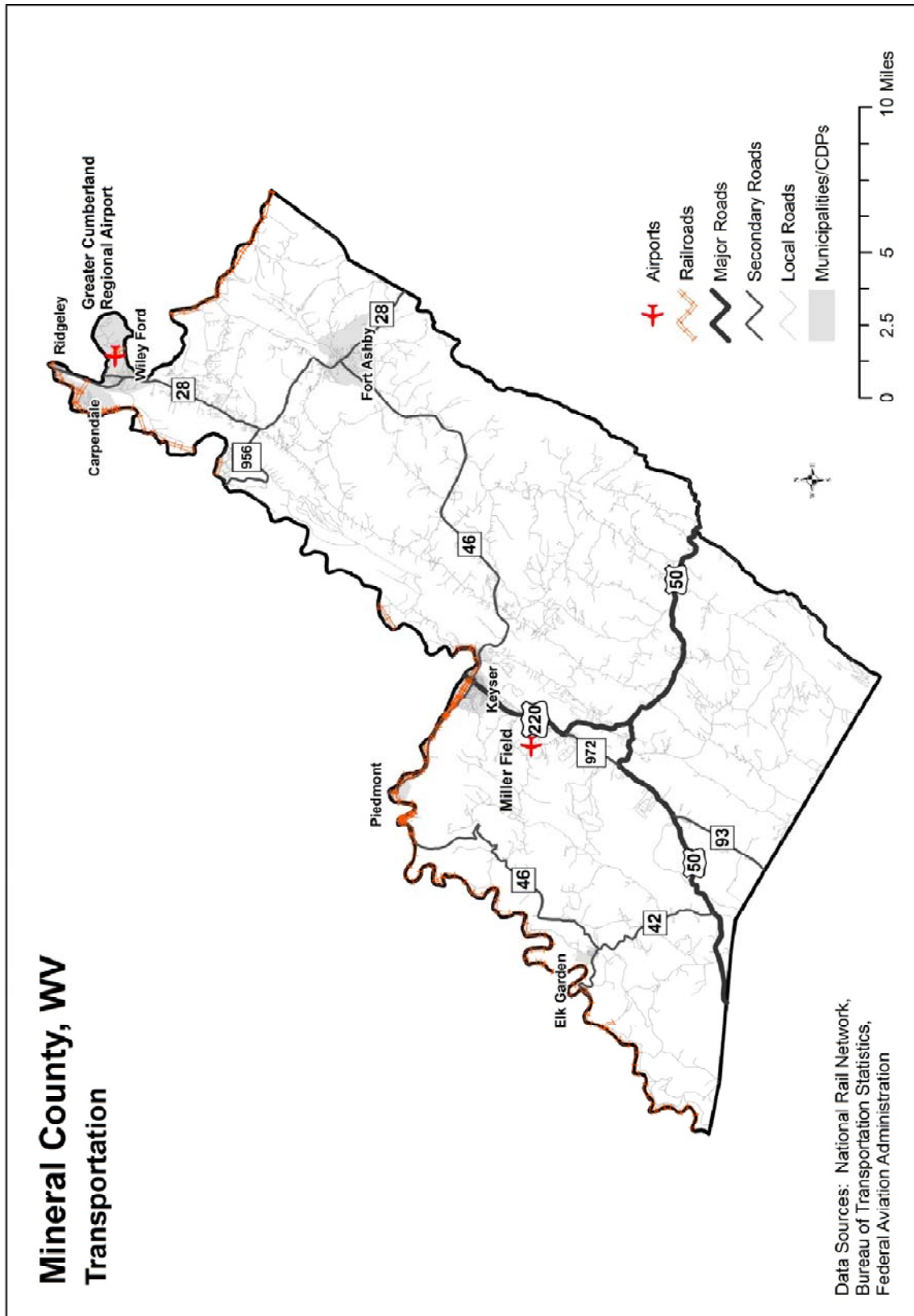
### *Transportation*

This section of the plan seeks to provide a transportation system that is efficient while maintaining a high level of safety. In addition, residential areas need protection from large amounts of higher speed traffic along major roads and from conflicts with the desires of adjacent property-owners for extensive access by commercial businesses.

There are currently two major highways in Mineral County (Map 5.2). U.S. Route 50 and U.S. Route 220 are multiplexed as they enter the county from Hampshire County from Junction east of Burlington. The routes continue as one until the mountain west of Ridgeville. At that point, U.S. Route 220 heads northward to Keyser where it leaves the county (and the state). U.S. Route 50 continues southwestward until it enters Grant County and Mount Storm. Both highways are two-lane undivided roadways with occasional truck lanes.

Although it is located just to the north and outside the county (and state) limits near Ridgeley, Interstate 68 is the main connection to other regions. The remainder of the county road network features additional two-lane rural roads. These include six state primary highways – WV Route 28, WV Route 42, WV Route 46, WV Route 93, WV Route 956, and WV Route 972.

Map 5.2: Transportation Network



The most heavily traveled highway segment in the county is U.S. Route 220 just south of Keyser with average daily traffic count 23,500 in 2008, according to the WV Department of Transportation (Map 5.3). This volume drops quickly but is still 11,600 at the split of U.S. Route 220 and WV Route 972. In the segment between WV Route 972 and U.S. 50, U.S. Route 220 has 5,300 at the north end and 5,050 at the south end. And WV Route 972 has 4,850 vehicles on its segment between U.S. Route 220 and U.S. Route 50.

Meanwhile, U.S. Route 50 is lightly traveled other than near where U.S. Route 220 splits to go to Keyser (with 5,050 vehicles). It averages 2,800 vehicles at the eastern end of the county (where it is multiplexed with U.S. Route 220), 3,400 vehicles near WV Route 93, and 1,400 vehicles at the western end of the county.

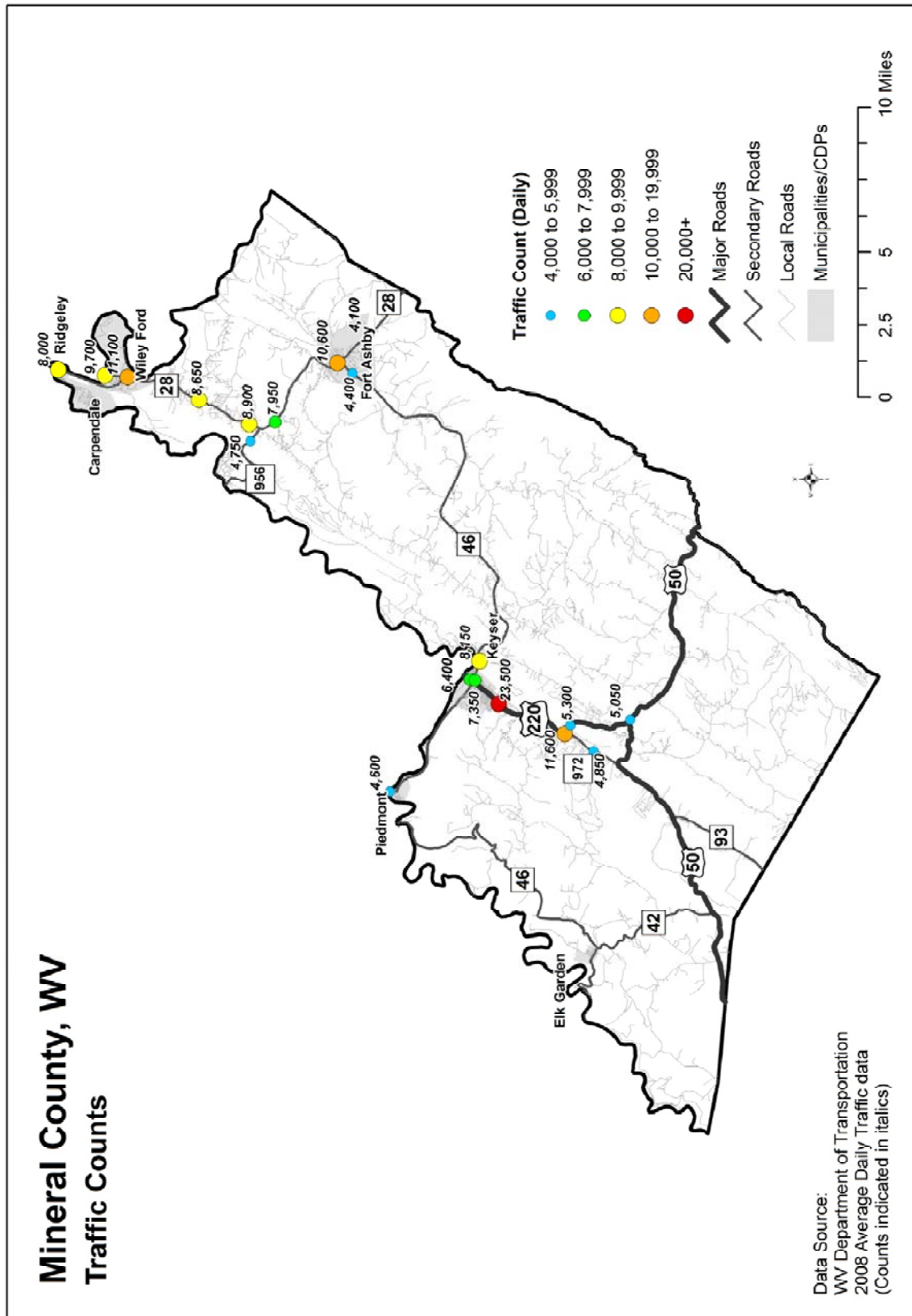
Among state primary routes, WV Route 28 is the busiest. It averages at least 7,500 vehicles daily from the Maryland state line to Fort Ashby. Its traffic peaks at 11,100 just south of Cumberland and 10,600 at Fort Ashby. The only other route with high traffic is WV Route 46. It handles 8,100 vehicles each day east of Keyser, 7,300 near its intersection with U.S. Route 220, and 4,600 at Piedmont.

Furthermore, traffic volumes are being increased by pressure from new developments, such as south of Keyser and near Fort Ashby., This the result of several factors, including non-connected developments forcing short-hop traffic back on to main routes, the lack of alternative routes for traffic to bypass congested areas, and the absence of roads to permit development away from the arterial routes.

Finally, a roadway has been proposed to connect Interstate 68 with Appalachian Development Highway System Corridor H. The Environmental Impact Statement is being done for this project, which essentially will be a bypass for the existing U.S. Route 220. It is proposed to be part of the National Highway System. It is also the top transportation priority for The Greater Cumberland Committee (TGCC), a regional entity that includes the Mineral County Development Authority and the Mineral County Chamber of Commerce.

There are other transportation modes in the county as well. The Potomac Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides public bus services to Mineral County and its neighboring counties.

Map 5.3: Traffic Counts



The PVTA operates six bus lines within the County and offers a flexible route service which provides pick up or drop off a disabled person within three-fourths of a mile of the regular route. It also provides non-emergency medical travel throughout its five county operating area (Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral and Pendleton), as well as various facilities in Morgantown, Elkins, Maryland, and Virginia.

The Greater Cumberland Regional Airport is considered a Maryland airport by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), even though it is located in Wiley Ford, just south of Cumberland, Md. across the North Branch of the Potomac River. It is managed by the Potomac Highlands Airport Authority which includes representation by Mineral County. The airport has two 150-foot wide paved runways: the 5,048-foot Runway 05/23 and the 2,442-foot Runway 11/29. There are currently proposals to extend the main runway and make other improvements to the facility. It is currently a general aviation airport with corporate jet operations, fueling facilities, facilities for private aircraft and flight instruction. According to FAA operations data, the airport handled an estimated 14,300 passengers for the 12-month period ending August 5, 2009. This included 14,000 general aviation passengers (11,500 local and 2,500 itinerant) and 300 military passengers. There has not been regular commercial service at the facility since 2001.

There are also several private use airstrips in the county. Miller Field is located three miles southwest of Keyser and has a 1,700-foot long and 130-foot wide runway is the only active private facility listed in the Federal Aviation Administration database. Another airport listed in the database, the Gerstell Farms Airport east of Keyser, is no longer operational. There are four other airfields in the county not listed by the FAA. They are Lloyd Green southeast of Keyser, Thrush west of Burlington, Woodworth in Burlington, and Kevin Houser near Fort Ashby. Also, the new Potomac Valley Hospital south of Keyser has the only operating heliport in the county. The former Allegheny Mining facility between Keyser and New Creek Mountain has closed.

CSX provides freight service via one of its main east/west lines, with a spur serving the Keyser Industrial Park. CSX enters the county near Ridgeley, then runs on the Maryland side of the North Branch of the Potomac River to Keyser where it re-enters Mineral County to transport coal and timber. Amtrak offers daily passenger rail service via the Capitol Limited from Cumberland



to Washington, D.C. eastward and westward to Pittsburgh, Pa., Cleveland, Ohio, and Chicago, Ill. Connections can be made to other Amtrak routes as well.

To accomplish goals related to transportation, the following recommendations are made.

- *Take the present into consideration while planning the future.*

Plans for future transportation systems in the county must be carefully coordinated with the existing road system. Traffic generated by new development can create congestion and worsen existing safety hazards. At the same time, the road system in Mineral County helps to encourage certain types of development in different locations and works to discourage development of other areas because of limited road access. Related to this, the potential effects of highway development on other parts of the infrastructure (such as water and sewer systems) must be evaluated. Part of this could involve becoming more active in the Cumberland Metropolitan Planning Organization, an MSA-wide planning entity devoted to transportation issues, and other regional planning bodies.

- *Support new highways in the region, especially the new U.S. Route 220.*

The new U.S. Route 220 (also known as the U.S. Route 220 bypass) will open the county up to additional residential development and economic expansion. This north-south highway is a top county priority. It will make it easier to get from Mineral County to other places. It will have the potential to make the county a main service hub for east-west traffic transferring between Interstate 68 and Corridor H. Thus, the county should work with state and federal officials to expedite all necessary studies and funding to build this highway (as well as other important highways in the regional network that it would serve). The county work in this area will need to build upon the efforts already underway by The Greater Cumberland Committee.

- *Request repairs and upgrades to current roadways.*

The county has many two-lane roads with bridges, curves, and rises. The West Virginia Division of Highways develops construction plans to improve the transportation system around the state. Mineral County should develop a priority list of roads that need improvement and forward that to the WV Division of Highways so it can align its plans with the needs and desires of the county.

This would involve continuing and expanding upon existing efforts such as the Route 50 Association and the Mineral County Days at the Legislature. The key will be to have a consistent priority list for these requested improvements.

- *Seek to create an access management plan for its highways and roads.*

Development has occurred along many of the more highly travelled routes in Mineral County. Much of this development though has occurred in a somewhat haphazard manner however, resulting in less-than-ideal access situations. The county should work with the West Virginia Division of Highways and private developers to come up with ways to increase inter-development connections and limit traffic having to re-enter highways to make trips to adjacent facilities. Such an access management plan would require negotiation to permit cross-property access as well as limitations in providing access points to roadways. Frontage and connector roads at developed locations as well as well as bypasses and alternate routes around such development may also need to be built. Putting such a system in place would increase the likelihood that new developments were built in such a manner while providing a guide for the modification and remediation of existing developments. Likewise, better coordinated access management practices could be used to help manage future development impacts in these corridors.

- *Work toward expanding intercity transportation options.*

The county is fortunate to have a regional transit service to move people around the Potomac Highlands. It also is privileged to have (or have access to) freight and passenger rail. But the only way to get to the state capitol of Charleston is by driving. Also, to fly via commercial airlines, a drive to an airport is more than 2½ hours away. To alleviate this situation, the county should investigate having PVRTA start periodic bus runs to Charleston for state events and to airports in Pittsburgh, Pa., Washington, D.C., and/or Baltimore, Md., for air travelers. It should also support any planned improvements and efforts to return regular air service to the Cumberland airport. Also, on a more local basis, the PVRTA should explore improving transit connections between the county and Cumberland, Md. This may have the desired effect of expanding options for travelers.

*Facilities and Services*

There are a myriad of public and semi-public facilities in Mineral County. First and foremost are the county government locations. These include not only the Mineral County Courthouse in downtown Keyser, but also the other county offices around the courthouse, the Health Department and Extension Service offices in Keyser, and the Emergency Operations Center just south of Keyser. Additionally, there are 13 public school facilities spread throughout the county.

State offices in the county include the Division of Highways, the Division of Forestry, the Division of Health and Human Resources, the State Police, and Potomac State College. There are federal government offices and post offices in the county as well.

There are various county and state parks and recreation facilities including Jennings Randolph Lake. The volunteer fire departments have stations all around the county. There are three public libraries in different areas. The five municipalities each have property and facilities under their control. There are the county fairgrounds and the Cumberland Regional Airport. Also, there are privately-owned recreational places, historic sites, and commercial businesses open to the public.

Mineral County is also served by various utilities. Allegheny Power offers electrical service. Mountaineer Gas provides natural gas to many parts of the county.

The county is in the Hagerstown, Md., regional calling area (or LATA). Frontier Communications (formerly Citizens Communications) is the dominant land-line telephone company operating in the county. Frontier has always served exchanges in Fort Ashby and Burlington. It added Verizon's former operations in the county which included exchanges in Keyser, Ridgeley, Piedmont, and Elk Garden in mid-2010 as part of a larger acquisition deal. Fibernet also has an exchange in the Keyser area and IDT Corp. has an exchange in the Fort Ashby area. Also, several other smaller telephone companies also offer services in the county. AT&T (formerly Cellular One) and U.S. Cellular have cell phone coverage in various parts of the county through exchanges assigned to Keyser. Most areas of the county along major routes have at least some coverage while coverage for areas south of U.S. Route 50 is limited.

Cable television services are provided by Comcast, Atlantic Broadband, and Suddenlink. Comcast operates out of Keyser. It serves the central part of the county, including Keyser and

Piedmont. Atlantic Broadband operates out of Cumberland, Md. It serves the northern and northeastern parts of the county, including Carpendale, Ridgeley, Fort Ashby, and Wiley Ford. Suddenlink Communications operates out of Oakland, Md. It serves a small area in the western end of the county around Elk Garden. These systems feature over-the-air television stations from West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Also, there are a variety of broadband Internet providers, including the cable television provider and telephone companies. However, such services are not available everywhere in the county. For example, cable TV service is not available in the extreme southern and southeastern parts of the county, such as the areas around Burlington.

There are also two radio stations and one over-the-air television station with transmission facilities licensed to Mineral County. WKLP (AM, 1390 kHz.) and WQZK-FM (94.1 MHz.) are currently owned by West Virginia Radio Corporation and their studios are in Cumberland, Md. W41DK-D (DTV 41) is a television digital translator for West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

To accomplish goals related to facilities and services, the following recommendations are made.

- *Work to have a true community center (or county recreation center).*

The county has a number of public facilities and many places for people to get together. But what the county lacks is a true community center or county recreation center. Thus, the county should support the creation such a facility. This may entail the building of a new facility or designate an existing facility to serve as a center for the county. One possibility for this center is the proposed facility for the health department and senior services.

- *Work for improved technology access and services.*

Wireless communications and high-speed Internet access are considered technological necessities today. Many locations in Mineral County have multiple options for these services, particularly the areas near Keyser and adjacent to Cumberland, Md. However, some more rural and less densely populated parts of the county are still lacking in these services. The county needs to work with providers to expand coverage areas for cellular phones and universal access broadband Internet. The Community Infrastructure Committee of the Mineral County

Development Authority is currently charged with this activity and will need to continue to work in this area.

- *Work to ensure a smooth landline telephone provider transition.*

The landline telephone provider situation in the county changed in mid-2010 with Frontier taking over all of Verizon's former assets. The county needs to monitor the situation and be ready to act on behalf of residents or businesses (or for the county itself) in cases where the transition (which also could affect some broadband Internet users) does not go as smoothly as planned over the long-term. This is particularly important for the county since the former Verizon systems in some areas was essentially interconnected with systems in Maryland which are not being switched. Possible activities could involve keeping regulators informed of problems during the transition to seeking legal remedies if any major communications outages occur as a result of such a transition.

# 2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan

## Section 6: Community and Economic Development

### *Introduction*

Activities related to development at the county level are generally associated with the Development Authority, which is authorized under state law (*West Virginia Code §7-12-1*). They have a multitude of purposes, chief among them improving the local economy:

*The purposes for which the authority is created are to promote, develop and advance the business prosperity and economic welfare of the municipality or county for which it is created, its citizens and its industrial complex; to encourage and assist through loans, investments or other business transactions in the locating of new business and industry within the municipality or county and to rehabilitate and assist existing businesses and industries therein; to stimulate and promote the expansion of all kinds of business and industrial activity which will tend to advance business and industrial development and maintain the economic stability of the municipality or county, provide maximum opportunities for employment, encourage thrift, and improve the standard of living of the citizens of the county; to cooperate and act in conjunction with other organizations, federal, state or local, in the promotion and advancement of industrial, commercial, agricultural, and recreational developments within the municipality or county; and to furnish money and credit, land and industrial sites, technical assistance and such other aid as may be deemed requisite to approved and deserving applicants for the promotion, development and conduct of all kinds of business activity within the municipality or county. (West Virginia Code §7-12-2).*

The Mineral County Development Authority (MCDA) is the entity charged with overseeing development efforts in the county. In 2007, the authority undertook and completed a strategic planning process of its own and produced the *Mineral County Development Authority 2007 Strategic Plan*.

As part of that process, the development authority confirmed its long-time mission statement:

*The MCDA seeks to develop Mineral County by promoting growth through responsible development and creating a welcoming climate for existing and new business and clients.*

The plan also listed five goals for the development authority's work. Four of the goals deal with matters related to improving the development climate in the county while the fifth goal deals

with internal matters. Each goal had a variety of tasks associated with it. Those tasks listed the time frame for action and those who were expected to be part of such an effort. The goals were:

- 1. Increased awareness and image enhancement*
- 2. Developing new opportunities and options for business*
- 3. Enhance the setting for development*
- 4. Coordinating development-related activities*
- 5. Expanded administrative capacity*

To enable these goals to be achieved, the county must be in a position to accommodate development-related activities. This has long been recognized.

The *1996 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan* contained a section on economic development. It built on the county's 1993 "Economic Adjustment Strategy" report starting with a goal statement and outlining 10 areas of emphasis, some of which included multiple parts. The stated economic development goal was:

*Encourage new business development and expansion in appropriate areas to provide tax revenue and expanded opportunities.*

The importance of this topic has not diminished over time. Development issues and ideas were discussed during both rounds of public input held during the planning process.

At the stakeholders' session in May 2007, participants felt the county ranked between the middle and the bottom of all counties in the state with respect to economic development activities. They thought the local economy was fairly diverse. At the same time though, they pointed to the need for "good jobs" and the tenuous predicament facing many of the industrial employers in the county and the region. Suggestions for improving the situation included capitalizing on existing strengths, maintaining and expanding the existing diversity, and improving the foundation for business (e.g., infrastructure and services).

During the public meetings around the county, themes related to development emerged as challenges to overcome as well as in the future vision for the county. The challenge theme of "Economic Vulnerability" centered on matters such as an inability to attract and retain businesses in the county, lack of infrastructure and resources needed for economic development

and mounting pressures in the face of globalization and increased regional competition for shrinking resources.

Likewise, the future vision theme of “*Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals*” called for proactive economic development that would deliver good jobs that paid living wages, new factories, and options that would cause youth to return to the community to live after college. Participants felt that some of the characteristics of an effective strategy in this area would include incentives, empowerment, land-use regulations, incubation, infrastructure, and a focus on emerging technologies. Education was closely tied to this theme with a call for adult training and education options, including workforce training and retraining, and alignment of educational resources with growth patterns and demands. Finally, participants stressed the importance of attracting and retaining businesses and younger workers in the area, including professionals, health care providers, and entrepreneurs.

The current state planning laws (enacted in 2004) also recognize the importance of development, making its discussion a legally-mandated part of the plan. According to state law, three topics dealing with development are required components of a comprehensive plan – economic development, renewal and redevelopment, and preferred development areas (§8A-3-4(c) (8), (11), and (10)).

### *Economic Development*

The *West Virginia Code* states that the economic development section of a comprehensive plan should “[e]stablish goals, policies, objectives, provisions and guidelines for economic growth and vitality for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction” This includes “(a) Opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and workforce; (b) Identifying and designating economic development sites and/or sectors for the area; and (c) Type of economic development sought, correlated to the present and projected employment needs and utilization of residents in the area. (*West Virginia Code* §8A-3-4(c)(8)).

Given this context and given the information gathered – both through public input and from other sources – economic development efforts in Mineral County should have two guiding principles. The first is that economic development efforts should work to expand employment



opportunities in the county. The second is that such activities should build upon existing assets already present in the county.

The first principle of jobs is important because additional employment opportunities are needed for county residents. Mineral County has historically had more workers than jobs. The most recent workflow data from the 2000 Census showed that most working residents left the county for their jobs. Also, the net number of workers leaving the county increased between 1990 and 2000.

Since 2000, there appears to have been some improvement in the situation. The county's population has remained nearly constant – it is down less than 1 percent to 26,795 in 2008. Meanwhile, the civilian labor force has grown during the period by more than 3 percent to 13,420. Non-farm employment has grown even faster, increasing more than 14 percent to 8,180. Much of that increase came in the last four years and as a result, job growth outpaced worker growth. However, the current economic downturn could reverse this trend.

Meanwhile, the second principle is what some might consider a tautology (or truism). To others it is just plain common sense. It basically means that you use what you have to generate desired development.

More specifically, the economic base of a community is its foundation for further development. This base is formed by those economic sectors where the goods and services produced locally are considered to be consumed elsewhere. A common way to determine this is to examine the ratio of employment in a sector to total employment for a community and compare that to the similar ratio for the national economy (or state economy). Where the local ratio exceeds the national ratio (or state ratio), those sectors are considered to be part of the economic base. In addition, such sectors generally are thought to help spur additional economic activity in a place through what is called “the multiplier effect.” Basically, the result is that other sectors grow to serve the economic base.

In Mineral County, three sectors appear to be part of the economic base, using both the national economy and state economy for comparison. Those sectors are manufacturing (NAICS 31-33), retail trade (NAICS 44-45), and information (NAICS 51). Two other sectors are part of the

county economic base when only the national economy is considered: mining (NAICS 21) and health care and social assistance (NAICS 62). Of these, the manufacturing, information, and health care and social assistance sectors offer the best opportunities for the county.

Given all of these considerations, the following economic development strategies appear to be most appropriate and most likely to succeed for Mineral County.

- *Work to protect, expand, and diversify its manufacturing base.*

Most places no longer have one-quarter of its private sector workforce in manufacturing. But Mineral County does. So while the transition to the “new (information) economy” continues, the county will be one of those places that is still able to have success based upon the older paradigm.

While the county should work to remain a manufacturing hub, the type of manufacturing emphasized may need to be changed. Among the top 10 employers are firms that produce weapons systems (which is dependent upon federal purchases and policy), lumber products, and industrial packaging machinery. The last two of these can be negatively impacted by economic downturns and involve products whose production could be moved overseas to be closer to other manufacturing markets.

Thus, efforts should be made to ensure that the existing manufacturers have what they need to remain competitive at the Mineral County locations rather than move or transfer the work elsewhere.

Meanwhile, when efforts are made to develop or recruit additional manufacturing, the emphasis should be placed in two areas. The first is the processes and products that cannot easily be done elsewhere and on items that have counter-cyclical properties. For example, resource or technology limits may make the county a convenient location or prevent location of a plant overseas. Also, plants that make spare parts for large products and machines tend to do fairly well at all times and even better during recessions as people often tend to repair rather than replace larger items. The second should be on support industries, businesses, and services for existing firms. This creates synergistic relationships that are beneficial for all while taking advantage of what already exists in the county.

- *Move to the “new economy” by building upon the information sector.*

While the county has a strong traditional economy, it also has strengths that place it in the “information age” as well. As noted above, information is part of the county’s economic base. Information industries include publishing industries – except Internet (NAICS 511), motion picture and sound recording industries (NAICS 512), broadcasting – except Internet (NAICS 515), telecommunications (NAICS 517), data processing, hosting, and related services (NAICS 518), and other information services (NAICS 519). Admittedly, some of the industries in this sector are more traditional and are declining (e.g., newspaper publishing). But much of it is growing. Thus, it makes great sense for the county to target fields such as telecommunications and data processing for future development activities.

- *Utilize its position as an agricultural producer.*

The county is home to a various types of agricultural activities. They range from poultry to vegetables to Christmas trees. Combined, these products account for more than \$15 million in sales annually. This means that agriculture makes a much more meaningful contribution to the county’s economy than would be apparent when just examining employment and wages paid (NAICS 11). To that end, the county should work to ensure the survival of farms in the county. Possible activities include helping find additional markets for current products to creating opportunities for the production of “value-added” products in the county using locally-produced agricultural products.

- *Utilize the potential for economic growth from the new hospital.*

Health care and social assistance is already part of the county’s economic base when compared to the national economy. The new Potomac Valley Hospital now serving Mineral County (and surrounding counties) will provide additional opportunities for health care as both the capacity and the services the hospital can provide will expand. This will not only enhance the county economically but will improve the quality of life for county residents. For this to occur, the county will have to work with the hospital and other entities to determine what new offerings will be at the new facility. It can then work to help met those new needs through recruitment and workforce training.

- *Take advantage of its location and beauty for tourism marketing.*

The county has a lot to offer with its physical beauty and its outdoor recreational activities. Also, the county is quite close to the major markets of the northeastern United States (and relatively easy to access). Thus, it seems quite natural that the county could easily become an attractive location for outdoor, rustic, and eco-tourism pursuits.

To make this happen, the county would have to preserve and protect at least some areas so tourists would have a reason to visit. It would have to work to ensure that the needed amenities – lodging, accommodations, sellers of specific supplies, etc. – are available in the county. The county already operates some facilities of this type at Jennings Randolph Lake and may have to increase its activities in this area. Examples of this would include a lodge, cabins, boat launch facilities, and convenience/food stores. Also, it would have to promote itself as a tourist destination, which would involve showcasing individual locations as well as placing them in a broader county and regional context. Likewise, the overlook on U.S. Route 50 that provides a view of Saddle Mountain – a unique geological and topographical formation on the Allegheny Front – can be further developed as a tourism attraction and facility.

- *Take advantage of having a higher education institution in the county.*

Potomac State College (of West Virginia University) is located in Keyser, the county seat. It provides Mineral County residents and others with the opportunity for higher education with certificate programs, associate degree programs, and some bachelor degree programs. More germane in this context, it could become an expanded economic driver for the county.

The county should continue to work with faculty and recent graduates who wish to use the knowledge they have brought to or learned at Potomac State. They could use their knowledge to start small businesses that fill underserved niches in the local economy. Eventually, it is probable that many of these new businesses will grow, hire employees, and begin purchasing from other local businesses, further stimulating the county's economy. They also could use their knowledge to advise and assist existing businesses to operate more efficiently, effectively, economically, and environmentally.

- *Maintain a climate that is “open to business.”*

As things move forward and progress, sometimes it is necessary to enact new rules and regulations. Sometimes limits must be placed on what people can do. And sometimes new taxes and fees must be collected.

All of these actions can be warranted at different times. But they can also have negative effects on the business climate. If such actions are done when they are not needed or overdone when they are needed, the results can easily undo previous work undertaken to enhance the economic conditions in the county.

Thus, Mineral County officials should take special care when deliberating on such matters. Prudence and discretion should be exercised. Change for the sake of change should not be done. But appropriate change at the appropriate level at the appropriate time can lead to improved general conditions and economic conditions in the long-run. Related to this, the county should work to encourage others to help business or make business operations less onerous. This would entail working with groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce) that could provide business operation education as well as lobbying for appropriate changes in state and federal laws.

- *Work regionally on development issues when appropriate.*

Mineral County is part of the Cumberland, Md., Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). It has a symbiotic relationship with Allegany County, Md. The two counties have a common employment base. Also, they benefit from services which are provided on regional basis. For future development to be successful, it is important for the two counties to work together to coordinate key actions that will affect the entire area. To that end, the county must continue and expand its efforts with regional partners (such as the Region 8 Planning and Development Council and The Greater Cumberland Committee) with respect to development activities.

- *Promote infrastructure necessary for desired development to occur.*

For Mineral County to reach its development goals, the county must make sure that it has sufficient infrastructure in place. This involves seeking improvements to current transportation and utility systems so they meet future needs. It also means working to support major projects

which will allow the county to be better positioned for future growth. These include the new U.S. Route 220 highway, county-wide broadband telecommunications, and water and sewer upgrades and expansions.

### *Renewal and Redevelopment*

The *West Virginia Code* states that the renewal and redevelopment section of a comprehensive plan should, “[c]onsistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment” (§8A-3-4(c)(11)).

By its very nature, the concept of revitalization is associated with more developed and more urban areas. Because county comprehensive plans generally deal with the unincorporated areas of the county ((§8A-3-4(c)(11)), there is not much in the way of “slums and blighted areas” in need of standard renewal or redevelopment projects. But there still is work that can be done around the county to improve less than desirable places.

To accomplish renewal and redevelopment goals, the following recommendations are made.

- *Encourage and work with municipalities to clean up areas.*

The county cannot lead efforts for renewal, revitalization, and redevelopment within the city of Keyser and the towns of Elk Garden, Carpendale, Ridgeley, and Piedmont. But Mineral County can take steps that will lead to the municipalities taking the task on themselves.

At the very least, the county should continue to encourage the municipalities to clean up their less desirable areas. Going beyond that, that county could work cooperatively with the municipalities – sharing costs and functions on similar projects to jointly seeking grants.

- *Work to clean-up less than desirable areas.*

There are places in the county that resemble municipalities but are in fact unincorporated territory. These include the Census-defined places (CDPs) of Fort Ashby and Wiley Ford as well as the area commonly referred to by the geographic moniker of South Keyser. There is also other development that has occurred just outside of the five municipalities in the county. Each of these

“places” potentially has the same potential problems – and same needs for renewal and redevelopment – as the five cities and towns.

As part of this, the county will need to continue on-going efforts in this area. It will also need to work to identify undesirable areas within the territory under its jurisdiction and control. This could lead to increased county-municipal cooperation, particularly when the county is working areas in close proximity to the cities and towns.

- *Work to find problem places and bad buildings within its boundaries.*

While they might not be “slums” or “blighted areas,” there are places throughout the county that are less than desirable. There are houses and other buildings that are unusable, unstable, and possibly even unsafe. These must be identified and action taken to eliminate these problem structures.

To achieve this, the county must keep an updated structure inventory, a duty assigned to the County Commission under state law (*West Virginia Code* §7-1-5). It could then advise the state fire marshal of the situation (*West Virginia Code* §29-3-14) or continue to use its own process through its Building Safety Committee.

- *Work to ensure that environmentally-sensitive places are protected.*

Mineral County is the home to beautiful scenery. It has Jennings Randolph Lake on its southwestern corner and parts of the Springfield Wildlife Management Area in its northwestern corner as well as many pristine places in between, ranging from river valleys to ridge tops. So it must take care to preserve and protect those special places that give Mineral County much of its rustic character.

This can be done by taking a three-step approach. Mineral County should make sure that all current local, state, and federal regulations that exist are being met. It should seek new rules and regulations where needed and appropriate. It should conduct or sponsor periodic clean-ups of environmentally-sensitive places.

### *Preferred Development Areas*

The *West Virginia Code* states that the preferred development areas section of a comprehensive plan should, “[c]onsistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl” (*WV Code* §8A-3-4(C)(10)).

The county is mostly undeveloped. According to the 2001 National Land Covered Dataset, more than 90 percent of the 329.4 square miles of land area in Mineral County is either forested (253.0 square miles, 76.8 percent of the land area) or agricultural (45.5 square miles, 13.8 percent of the land area). Conversely, less than 7½ percent is “built environment.” This includes area outside of municipalities that is either developed or part of the transportation system (22.9 square miles, 6.9 percent of the land area) – with much of it being the roads that connect the communities spread throughout the county. It also includes the municipalities themselves (4.1 square miles, 1.3 percent of land area). With so much open and available land, it is tempting to allow development to occur wherever and whenever desired. However, that would not be promoting the “highest and best” use of the land. Some of these places should be developed, but others should be allowed to remain forests, farms, and fair open ground. In addition, some land may not be available for development as a result of farmland preservation efforts or through limits placed on the properties such as conservation easements and restrictive covenants. That is why preferred development areas are defined.

To accomplish goals related to preferred development areas, the following recommendations are made.

- *Stress the need to grow the existing municipalities.*

The places in the county most ready for development are those that have already seen some development. First and foremost, this applies to the five municipalities in Mineral County. These places already have physical infrastructure in place. They have the governmental systems to help make the necessary decisions related to development. They should have some excess capacity as all five cities and towns have seen population decreases since 1970. Thus, it would seem that logical places for the county to encourage development to occur are Keyser, Elk Garden, Carpendale, Ridgeley, and Piedmont.



- *Promote growth in appropriate locations throughout the county.*

Of course, not all development can occur – or would be desirable to occur – solely within the confines of the municipalities. There are already a number of built-up places in Mineral County. These places are also appropriate places for additional development. The first of these places are the two Census-defined places (CDPs) and the area south of Keyser. The Fort Ashby CDP area is the home of Frankfort High School and has many residential areas nearby. Also, one of the one county’s two industrial parks is located in the area. The Wiley Ford CDP is close to two towns – Carpendale and Ridgeley. The Greater Cumberland Airport is also nearby, bringing with it a host of development opportunities. South Keyser is a sprawling retail area just south of the county seat. But it also is home to Keyser High School and the new Potomac Valley Hospital as well as a variety of residential options. All three of these places have grown and can accommodate more growth.

Three other locations that could potentially be right for growth are the areas around Rocket Center, Burlington, and New Creek. Rocket Center is the home of the county’s largest employer – Alliant Techsystems, Inc. (better known as ATK, Inc.). The facility has been expanding in recent years, so the community around it may be right for additional development. Burlington is a crossroads in the southern part of the county. There could be some opportunities for additional businesses to provide goods and services for that part of the county. Finally, New Creek has the potential to become a residential community and commercial center serving greater Keyser.

- *Promote infill development between existing built-up areas.*

There is often a great distance between the various built-up areas and municipalities in the county. This makes for inefficient – and potentially more costly – settlement patterns. One common method used to overcome this problem is “infill development.” It is exactly what would be expected from such a term – development occurs on the empty (undeveloped) properties between existing places. Such efforts would be able to utilize existing infrastructure while also expanding transportation and utility systems to permit additional development.

There are three excellent places where potential infill development would work in the county. The first is the Keyser-South Keyser area. The development occurring, particularly south of the city in the unincorporated areas, often seems to skip an area before the next project. This leaves

spaces that can be filled – the new Potomac Valley Hospital is an example of how this can be done. This filling could eventually reach New Creek, if that community develops. The second is the Carpendale-Ridgeley-Wiley Ford area. These two towns and the CDP really need to be thought of and act as a single unit as far as development is concerned as they are immediately adjacent to Cumberland, Md. The third is the Fort Ashby area. Many parts of the CDP have a low building density. Likewise, the area between the industrial park and the center of the community also could be developed stressing an infill process.

- *Work to fill the industrial parks and other key industrial sites.*

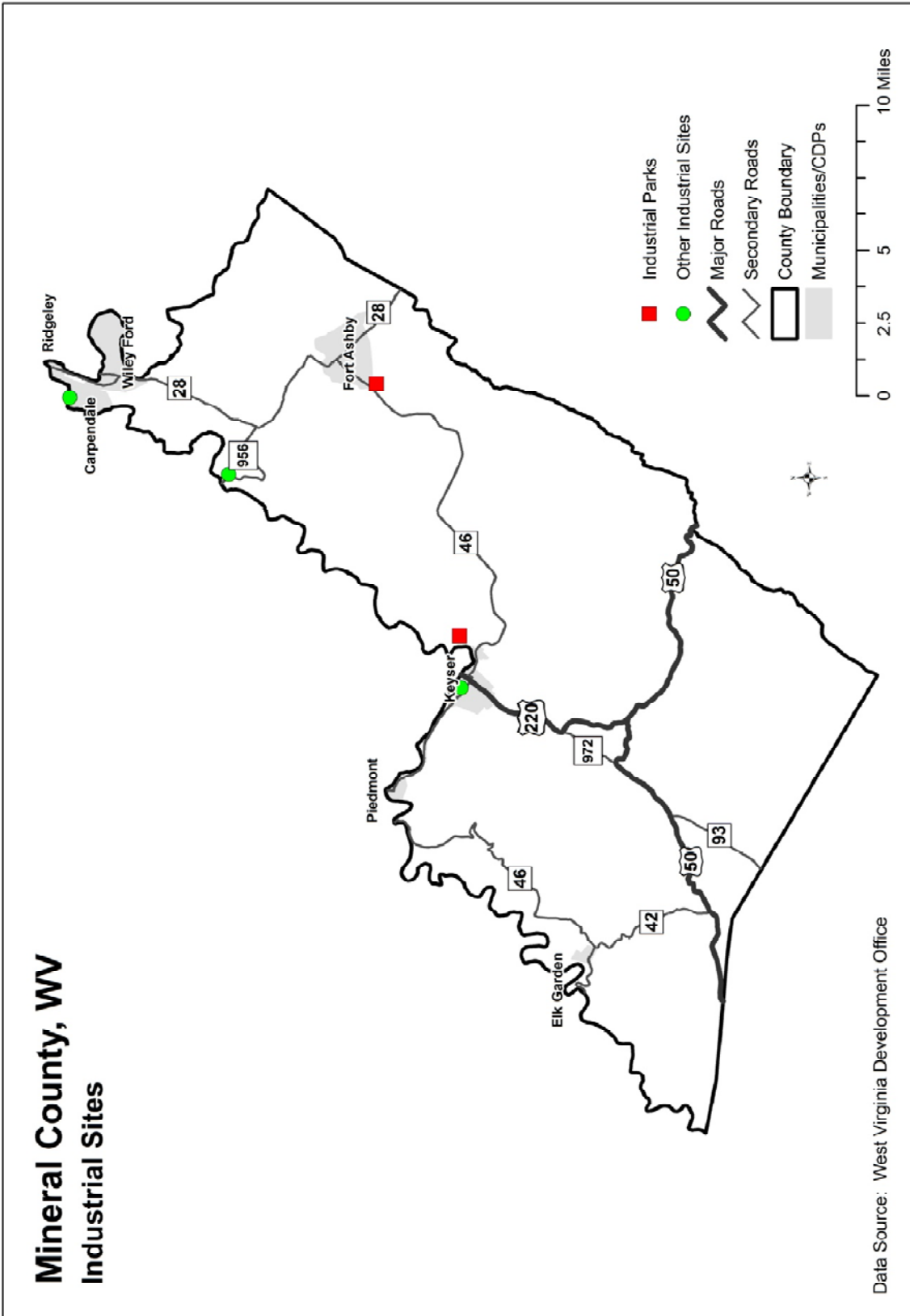
The county has two designated places ready for development (Map 6.1). One is the privately-owned Keyser Industrial Park, a 211-acre park located just outside the county seat. The other is the publically-owned Fort Ashby Business and Technology Park, a 70-acre facility just south of the community of the same name which features a shell building available for one or multiple tenants. These are the two facilities the county has listed with the West Virginia Development Office. They are places for Mineral County to locate new, expanding, and relocating businesses and industry.

Attracting and retaining tenants in these parks is and should remain a priority for the county. The Keyser Industrial Park is mostly full but has some vacant lots that could be developed.

Conversely, it has been extremely difficult to find tenants for the Fort Ashby Industrial Park. Nevertheless, Mineral County should continue its efforts to promote these parks as they were established to be a preferred development area.

There are other business centers and industrial sites in the county as well. According to the West Virginia Development Office, commercial and office space can be found at the Grand Central Business Park in Keyser as well as office space at the Keyser Industrial Park. Other available industrial sites include the Keyser CSX Yard, the Maryland CSX Yard Site in Ridgeley, the Kingsford Products Company's charcoal plant in Beryl, and the Robert C. Byrd Hilltop Complex at Rocket Center (where the Robert C. Byrd Institute is located). There is also the proposed Cumberland Regional Airport Future Business Park at Wiley Ford. All of these locations should receive consideration and attention when companies are seeking to locate in the county or expand operations, as appropriate.

Map 6.1: Industrial Sites



# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 7: Public Services**

### *Introduction*

Development needs to be supported by a variety of community services and facilities. The Mineral County government and other public and private organizations provide these essential community facilities and services such as schools, libraries, parks and recreation facilities, police and fire protection, and water and sewerage facilities. Churches, civic organizations, clubs, and nonprofit entities provide other community facilities and services as well.

Educational opportunities abound in the county. There are 13 public schools and two other facilities offering classes from Head Start to high school and beyond. They are located in seven different communities. Higher education and continuing education are available from Potomac State College in Keyser, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, and the Mineral County Schools. Likewise, arts and culture are seen as important. Three public libraries serve the county. Additionally, multiple groups and organizations sponsor and/or hold music and drama performances throughout the year.

There is plenty to do and plenty to see in the county. There are youth and adult sports leagues. There are parks, and other outdoor facilities. There are sites of historical significance, places of natural beauty, and special events held annually in Mineral County that are not only meaningful to local residents but serve to attract people from elsewhere as well.

Residents and visitors to the county are also protected by a variety of agencies. The Mineral County Sheriff's Department, West Virginia State Police, and three municipal police departments work to prevent and solve crimes. As a result, Mineral County has a low crime rate, relative to other nearby areas. Meanwhile, health care is widely available from physicians and other medical practitioners and the county health department provides a variety of services. Also, Potomac Valley Hospital in Keyser opened a new critical care facility in 2009. In addition, a variety of governmental agencies and community organizations cooperate on disaster preparedness and response.

As a result of the opportunities, amenities, and activities described above, the quality of life in Mineral County is outstanding. However, care must be exercised to ensure that this situation does not change. In addition, some of these services and facilities will need to be expanded to meet the rising needs and challenges of the future.

### *Education and Culture*

Mineral County provides a complete educational system from primary and secondary education to higher education. The Mineral County Board of Education oversees 13 public schools and facilities with a reputation for excellence. Almost every class is taught by a highly qualified teacher, the pupil-teacher ratio is on par with the state average, and the dropout rate is less than 1 percent (Table 7.1). Meanwhile, standardized tests results show county students achieving a level of mastery of basic subjects at or near the state average and matching the statewide averages on college entrance tests (Table 7.2).

**Table 7.1: 2007-2008 School System Statistics**

	Mineral County	West Virginia
Highly Qualified Teachers	99.4%	91.0%
Pupil : Teacher Ratio	14.2:1	14.2:1
Dropout Rate	0.9%	3.0%

Source: West Virginia Department of Education. "West Virginia Report Cards."

**Table 7.2: 2007-2008 Standardized Test Results**

Grade 3-10 Proficiency	Mineral County	West Virginia
Reading	78%	80%
Math	75%	75%
Science	85%	86%
Social Studies	73%	75%
College Entrance Tests		
ACT (36 max score)	20.5	20.6
SAT (2400 max score)	1501	1501

Notes: The ACT composite score is an average of English, math, reading, and science tests. Each test can range from 1 to 36 (making the average range from 1 to 36). The SAT score is the sum of math, critical reading, and writing tests. Each can range from 0 to 800 (making the sum range from 0 to 2400). Source: West Virginia Department of Education. "West Virginia Report Cards."

The schools are spread throughout the county (Table 7.3 and Map 7.1). Elementary grades are taught (at least in part) in Burlington, Elk Garden, Fort Ashby, Keyser, New Creek, Short Gap, and Wiley Ford. Secondary grades are taught in Keyser and Short Gap. Alternative and technical education is available in Keyser.

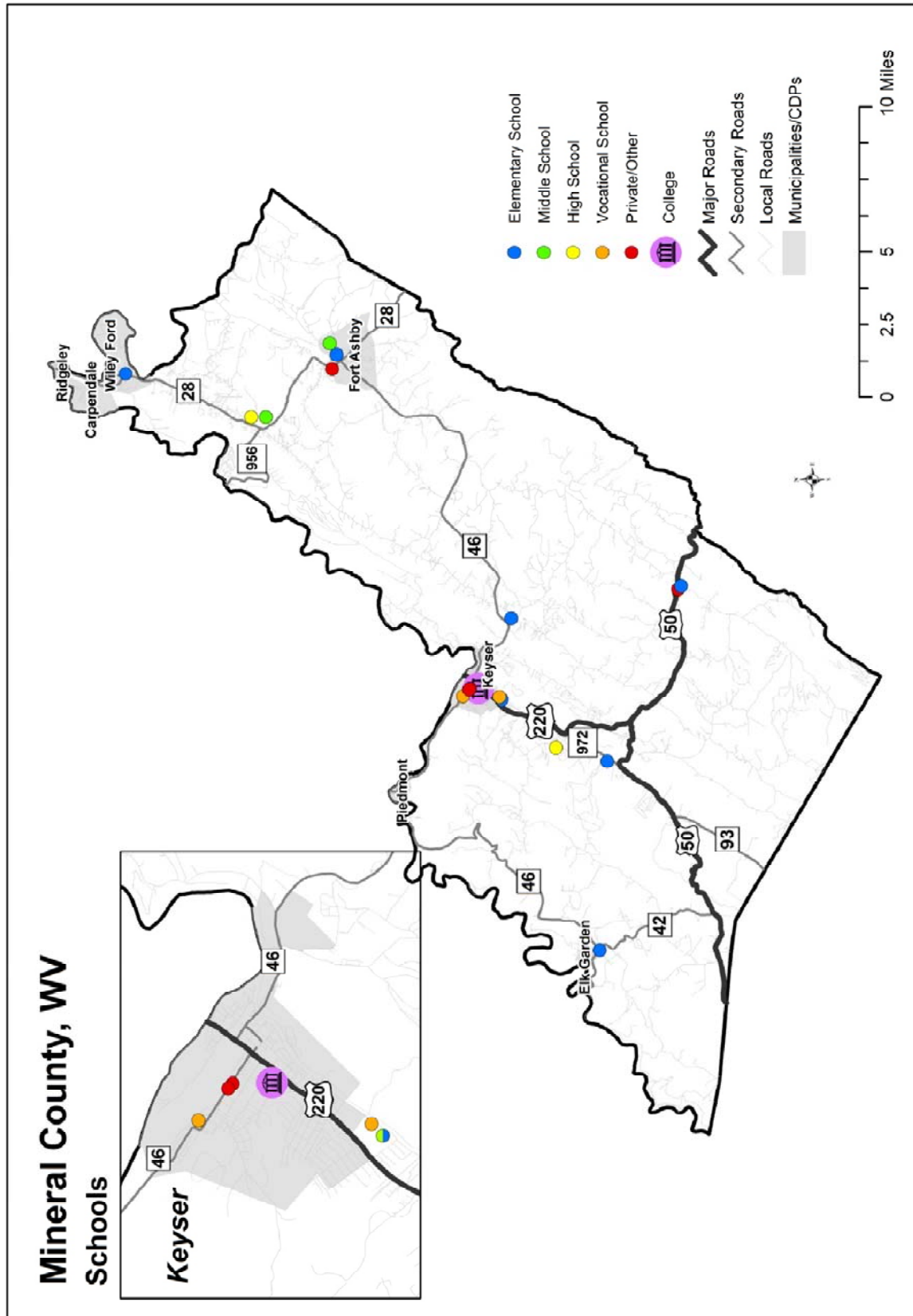
**Table 7.3: Public School Locations**

<b>Primary/Intermediate/Middle Schools</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Location</b>
• Fort Ashby Primary	Head Start, Grades K-2	Fort Ashby
• Wiley Ford Primary	Head Start, Grades K-2	Wiley Ford
• Fountain Primary	Grades K-4	Keyser
• Elk Garden Primary	Head Start, Grades K-5	Elk Garden
• Burlington Primary	Grades K-5	Burlington
• New Creek Primary	Grades K-5	New Creek
• Keyser Primary/Middle	Grades K-8	Keyser
• Frankfort Intermediate	Grades 3-4	Fort Ashby
• Frankfort Middle	Grades 5-8	Short Gap
<b>High Schools</b>		
	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Location</b>
• Frankfort High	Grades 9-12	Short Gap
• Keyser High	Grades 9-12	Keyser
<b>Other Facilities and Schools</b>		
	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Location</b>
• Mineral County Alternative School	Includes Developmental Center and Workshop	Keyser
• Mineral County Technical Center	Includes Instructional Media Center	Keyser

Source: Mineral County Schools.

Mineral County schools experienced a 21 percent decrease in enrollment from 1976-77 to 1993-94. This substantial decrease allowed the school board to close several outdated buildings and consolidate school facilities. More recently though, West Virginia Department of Education head counts for state aid funding show the school system with a relatively stable enrollment. Over the last eight school years, the system has had between 4,541 pupils (in 2002-03) and 4,609 pupils (2003-04 and 2005-06). In recent years, the enrollment numbers have been declining slightly. In 2008-09, the county schools had 4,551 students and fewer students are expected in 2009-10. Nevertheless, available space is limited at some primary schools in the county.

Map 7.1: Schools



The county provides high quality educational and vocational programs. Keyser High School, Frankfort High School, and the Mineral County Technical Center all participate in “Project Lead the Way,” a national program that prepares students to excel in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The high schools offer programs of study in natural resources; business marketing and finance; fine arts; health services; science and engineering; and public and human services. The technical center also provides practical training in specific types of occupations to supplement traditional high school education. The major subjects include: agriculture; business and office administration; industrial and technical education; career and prevocational exploration; health occupations; industrial engineering; consumer homemaking; and economics. It conducts evening classes in 25 different subjects that are open to the public. Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College (located in Moorefield) also holds classes at the county technical center.

Workforce training is also available at the Robert C. Byrd Institute in Rocket Center which has a state of the art Engineering Prototype Center available to assist industry as well as a business incubator. Meanwhile, the School Board’s School to Work Educational Exchange Program (SWEEP) has the ability to link the schools with existing businesses, providing an important connection between education and economic development. It is patterned after the Americans for Competitive Enterprise System.

Potomac State College of West Virginia University is a fully-integrated two-year division of WVU. It offers 50 associate degrees that transfer to the main WVU campus or most other four-year colleges. It has eight two-year, fast-track career and technical programs that prepare students for competitive jobs in areas including hospitality and tourism; criminal justice; and equine production and management. Recently, it started offering four-year degrees in two fields: business management and criminal justice. It is hoped that in the long term, this will help to reverse the decline in young college graduates and improve the overall educational attainment of county residents.

Other nearby institutions of higher education include Frostburg State University in Frostburg, Md., Allegany College of Maryland in Cumberland, Md., Garrett Community College in Oakland, Md., and Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College in Moorefield.



The Clary Street Learning Center provides classroom instruction and sheltered workshop services for handicapped residents of all ages.

The Mineral County Library Association has three facilities throughout the county. It has about 50,000 books and periodicals, almost 1,000 audio and video items, and Internet terminals. It is served by two librarians and other staff. The main library is the Keyser-Mineral County Public Library. It is in a former bank building in the downtown area and has limited space to offer additional services or to expand its collections. There are also two branch libraries. The Fort Ashby Public Library is in a shopping plaza in Fort Ashby. The Burlington Public Library is in its own building on Patterson Creek Road.

There are also two other libraries serving the county. The Piedmont Public Library is operated by the town. Its collection is almost 20,000 items. The Elk Garden Community Library is operated by volunteers. It is located in the former high school in the town.

Cultural and recreational interests are served by several groups and organizations. Highland Arts Unlimited is a non-profit volunteer group dedicated to bringing quality music, drama, dance, and visual arts programs to the community of Keyser. There are two community theater groups. The Apple Alley Players are based in Keyser and also perform at the Larenim Park Amphitheatre near Burlington. Potomac State College produces and sponsors a broad spectrum of performing arts and special events throughout the year as well. These programs are funded through a variety of means, including membership contributions, grants from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts from the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, and the National Endowment for the Arts as well as financial assistance from Potomac State College the Mineral County Board of Education, and other entities.

To accomplish goals related to education and culture, the following recommendations are made.

- *Support strongly the activities of the Board of Education.*

An important aim of this plan must be to support the Board of Education's efforts to provide high quality, practical education that will help retain and attract employers and future students to the area. The public school system is important not only for the obvious education reasons, but because the quality of public schools affects the demand for new homes in a community. It is

essential to coordinate future growth with the plans of the public school system to accommodate the resulting increases in employment and economic vitality in the community.

- *Work with the Board of Education regarding school placement needs.*

The County Planning Commission should regularly inform the Board of Education of the locations of residential growth so it can properly plan for future educational needs.

- *Use the presence of higher education advantageously.*

The county needs to take full advantage of the available higher educational opportunities. The cultural offerings help lift the quality of life in the county. Meanwhile, the course offerings can help lift the educational attainment in the county. Together these can help improve the economic climate in the county. Not every place has such an advantage.

- *Maximize the use of its facilities for educational and other purposes.*

The educational facilities are an asset for the entire community. However, in some cases these facilities may not be used as intensively and extensively as they could be. Along this line, schools can be used for recreational activities and community purposes as well as serving in their main capacity as educational centers.

- *Seek to improve its main library facility.*

The county should support efforts to expand and modernize county library facilities in order to further the educational and cultural opportunities of present and potential county residents. This is particularly important for the main library in Keyser, which has outgrown its storefront space in the downtown area. This could be done through a variety of means, including fund-raising, seeking grants, and finding sponsoring partners for a new facility.

- *Work to maintain and enhance cultural offerings available to residents.*

County residents have many opportunities for cultural enrichment. This is because of the presence of Potomac State College and the work of community groups. Care must be taken to support these offerings and the organizations that put them forward. It is especially important to

make sure that these activities are fiscally solvent. That may require contributions from local governments, additional fund-raising efforts, and seeking corporate sponsorship.

### *Recreation and Tourism*

Recreational opportunities abound within Mineral County (Map 7.2). The combined efforts of federal agencies, state government, municipalities, civic organizations, community clubs, and businesses have resulted in the offering of a variety of opportunities for active and passive recreation. Residents and tourists alike enjoy the many outdoor pursuits available including fishing, hunting, whitewater rafting, skiing, hiking, and rock-climbing. There are seasonal sports leagues for youth and adults as well as local festivals, including the county fair, providing opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages.

Among the more popular public parks and recreational facilities are Jennings Randolph Lake, Larenim Park, Barnum Whitewater Area, Minco Park, Van Myra Campground, and Dam Site #21. There are also plenty of opportunities for golf and fishing.

- Jennings Randolph Lake is a 952-acre recreation area, located near Elk Garden. It offers extensive recreational opportunity along its more than 13 miles of shoreline. Howell Run Picnic Area overlooks the lake and contains 40 picnic sites, 2 pavilions, a playground and vault toilets. The adjacent Howell Run Boat Launch consists of a two lane concrete ramp. The Robert W. Craig Campground is situated on a high ridge overlooking the dam site and features 87 campsites, potable water, hot showers, vault toilets, and a playground. A 0.75-mile long interpretive trail has been developed in the area for hikers. The West Virginia Overlook area contains a two tier visitor center and looks down on Waffle Rock, a unique natural rock formation.

- Larenim Park is owned by the Mineral County Commission and operated by Parks and Recreation. The 365-acre park includes two pavilions with 10 tables, an amphitheatre with seating capacity of 600, a youth baseball field and a softball field. Two flood control reservoirs stocked by West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (5 acres and 2.5 acres in size) provide fishing opportunities. The entire park is open to public hunting by permit. Approximately five miles of trails draws hikers to the park. An arboretum is under construction and will include the

Shale Barrens Conservancy. Larenim Park also features an outdoor amphitheater which is used for performances.

- The Barnum Whitewater Area is becoming a popular recreational spot along the North Branch of the Potomac River. This river frontage, about one mile along the old CSX railway, is one of the best trout streams in West Virginia and home to seven miles of whitewater rafting. The eight cabins available through the Parks Office allow visitors to relax in comfort during their stay. An accompanying park is leased by the Mineral County Commission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and operated by County Department of Parks and Recreation. The approximately 40-acre area includes four miles of rail trail for pedestrians and cyclists. Along the river are access points for fishing on Jennings Randolph Lake and whitewater rafting and canoeing. Public hunting is permitted on the surrounding 1,200 acres of state-owned lands.
- Minco Park is owned the by Mineral County Board of Education and leased to Mineral County Camp Association (a non-profit organization responsible for the park's care.). The 13.5-acre park includes two pavilions with 50 picnic tables, nine cabins, a dining hall with a capacity of 300, one softball field, a chapel, meeting room, and bath/shower facilities.
- The Springfield Wildlife Management Area has been created from two tracts of land purchased by the state in the western part of the county.
- The Allegheny Wildlife Management Area is a 6,000-acre state hunting preserve located between Elk Garden and New Creek.
- The Van Myra Campground is a 10-acre campground owned by the State of West Virginia and leased by Mineral County. Three picnic tables, four mini-pavilions, and picnic area make up the facility. The Ruritans are responsible for the care of this facility.
- Dam Site #21 is a 178-acre site owned by Mineral County Commission and has no facilities. Ten acres of fishing are available at the flood control dam.

- Mineral County has two public golf courses. Polish Pines is a nine-hole course located on U.S. Route 220 just south of Keyser. The Mill Creek Country Club is a nine-hole course, located on U.S. Route 50 to the east of Knobley Mountain, near Burlington.

- Fishing is excellent in Mineral County. There are many streams and ponds stocked regularly. Also, the North Branch of the Potomac River near Barnum is becoming nationally known as one of the best trout fishing streams in the country.

Likewise, a series of special events dot the calendar from April until the end of the year. They range from rafting expeditions, fairs and festivals, one-time events, and to weekly markets.

- Running the North Branch has become a popular event with its 6.5 miles of riffles, ledges, and rapids along the North Branch of the Potomac River. Rafters and canoeists come from all over to experience the thrill of the ride and to take in the tranquil natural beauty of the mountains. This event is held in April and May.

- The Mineral County Strawberry Festival is held in downtown Keyser and features a variety of special activities and vendors. The festival is a joint effort of City of Keyser and the Chamber of Commerce and is held in early June.

- The Mineral County Fair is held annually in late July or early August at the fairgrounds in Fort Ashby. It features livestock judging, entertainment, and displays by the Extension Service, 4-H Clubs, the Community Education Outreach Service, the Future Farmers of America, and other civic organizations.

- Burlington's Old Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival features a parade down U.S. Route 50, arts and crafts, apple butter, cider making, and an antique car show. With wholesome family entertainment, this festival aims to leave a warm comfortable feeling in everyone. Held the first week of October, the Apple Harvest Festival attracts more visitors each year.

- The Mineral County Chamber traditionally kicks off the Holiday Season in early December with a Winter Gala Yuletide Ball.

- The Mineral County Farmer’s Market in Keyser offers residents and visitors the fresh fruits and vegetables the season has to offer and a chance to browse through arts and crafts. It is held on Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings from July to October.

There are also a variety of points of special interest around the county. These include a unique geological formation and places of noteworthy historic interest.

- Saddle Mountain, a gap formed in New Creek Mountain, is a unique mountain formation that can be viewed from the U.S. Route 50 overlook.

- Fort Ashby is the only remaining fort of 69 established by General George Washington to protect the Virginia frontier from Indian attacks. It was completed in November 1775 and is currently owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Every December volunteers at the fort demonstrate the preparations for a Colonial era Christmas.

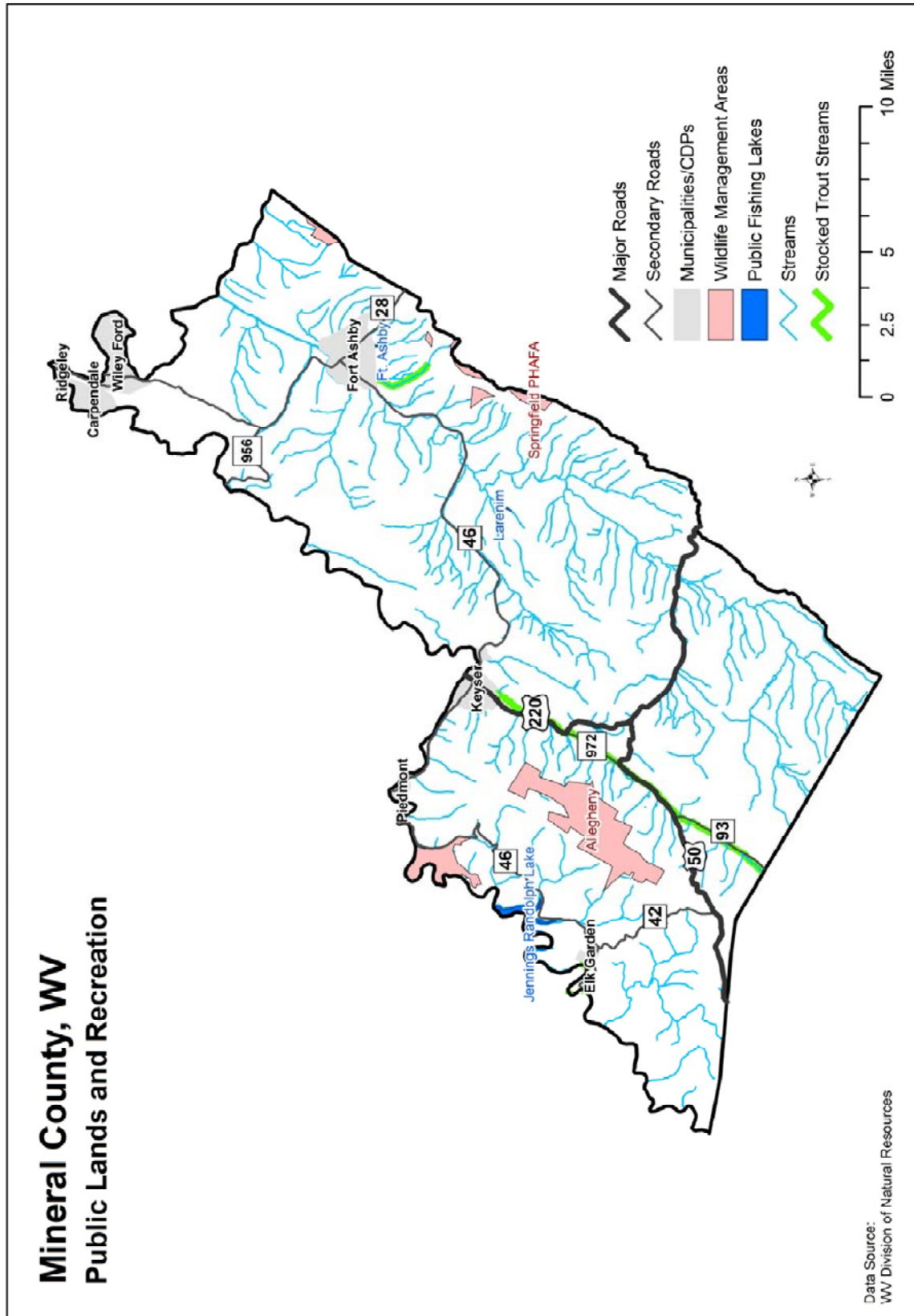
- The Log House is nestled along the gently flowing waters of a small stream and was once a way station where stagecoaches changed horses. The original barn where the horses would rest still stands in Laureldale. It is now an antique shop and features special yearly events.

- Nancy Hanks, the mother of President Abraham Lincoln, was born in 1782 on Joseph and Lucy Hanks’ 106-acre farm on Mike’s Run. A memorial marker was erected to commemorate the site, which is located five miles south of Antioch, east of Saddle Mountain.

- Many of the area’s churches date back to the early days when these mountains were first settled. The Claysville Church congregation formed in 1848 but the church was not built until 1850. During the Civil War it was used for church services by both the Union and Confederate armies. Eucebia Presbyterian Church, Patterson Creek was the first structure specifically built for worship.

- Three farms in the county have been designed Bicentennial Farms by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Sunnyside and Rebel's Retreat in Reese’s Mill and the Wagoner farm in Dan's Run. The designation recognizes these farms that have been operating for at least 200 years.

Map 7.2: Recreation



To accomplish goals related to recreation and tourism, the following recommendations are made.

- *Utilize more fully the potential of Jennings Randolph Lake.*

The land adjacent to Jennings Randolph Lake has great potential for both private recreational and conference uses. A first step to this would be to work with the federal and state governments to improve road access to the lake. Related to this, Jennings Randolph Lake could be used to enhance tourism options in the county. It could be packaged with “rails-to-trails” activities and the fishing, white water rafting, and boat landing opportunities provided by the North Branch of the Potomac River. Mineral County Parks and Recreation has already begun working on some of these issues and should continue to do so.

- *Expand outdoor recreation and tourism options.*

To serve county residents and promote tourism, additional outdoor recreation opportunities should be developed by taking advantage of the county’s scenic character. The management of these properties would probably require the joint efforts of the county and the municipalities, depending upon the size and location of the facilities. Under such a system, Mineral County would be the most likely coordinating body and could serve as the central fiscal agent, potentially lowering property acquisition administrative costs. Another option would be to undertake a regional approach involving Cumberland and Allegany County, Md. This could increase access to places such as the C&O Trail and the Gap Trail.

- *Package different activities and attractions for tourism marketing.*

The county has a lot of different offerings which might be of interest to visitors. Taken individually though, these activities, events, and places might not be enough to make someone decide to visit Mineral County. Thus, it is necessary to “combine” these offerings into specific packages to pique the interest of potential visitors. This could be done by coordinating with the Mineral County Chamber of Commerce, the Mineral County Convention and Visitors’ Bureau, and other related organizations.



- *Have better recreation options coordination.*

Various sports leagues and recreation departments serve the county. However, it is a challenging task to find out about these activities because of all of the different providers. This situation needs to be corrected. The easiest way to do that would be to increase coordination and communication between the different organizations so that each had the schedules and contact information of the others. This could be done on a decentralized basis or by appointing one entity (most likely the county recreation department) as the centralized communications contact coordinator. Mineral County Parks and Recreation would be the most likely lead entity for providing such coordination.

### *Safety and Security*

There is a lot in Mineral County to make people feel safe and secure. West Virginia ranks lowest in the nation in serious crime and Mineral County is no exception. Its rural nature and close-knit community helps to protect it from serious incidences of urban violence. Residents have access to police units, fire departments, and emergency medical response simply by dialing 911. A new critical care hospital has opened to serve immediate medical care needs as well as county agencies that provide health care and undertake emergency planning.

The police protection in Mineral County comes through a combination of State Police, Mineral County Sheriff's Deputies, and city and town police departments (Map 7.3). The West Virginia State Police has five officers stationed in Keyser, part of the Troop 2 Command based in Charles Town. The Mineral County Sheriff's Department has five full-time deputies serving the entire county. In addition, the city of Keyser and the towns of Ridgeley and Piedmont have their own police departments which patrol inside the municipalities. Potomac State College has a police force for its campus as well. There are mutual aid agreements and open communications between the various police departments.

There are 11 volunteer fire departments as well as a state Division of Forestry fire unit in the county (Table 7.4). Mutual aid agreements exist between the departments and activities are coordinated when needed. There are also seven ambulance/emergency rescue crews for situations to protect property and personal safety. The units have mutual aid agreements among

themselves and with nearby EMS units. Also, several private ambulance companies provide emergency and medical transport services.

**Table 7.4: Fire, EMS, and Police Locations**

Fire Departments		Emergency Medical Services	
• Burlington	ISO Rating 6/9	• Burlington	
• Elk District	ISO Rating 9/10	• Elk District	
• Fort Ashby	ISO Rating 5/9	• Fort Ashby	
• Fountain	ISO Rating 5/9	• Keyser	
• Keyser Station #1	ISO Rating 6 town; 6/9	• New Creek	
• Keyser Station #2	ISO Rating 6 town; 6/9	• Ridgeley	
• New Creek	ISO Rating 5/9	• Short Gap	
• Patterson Creek	ISO Rating 5/9	Police Departments	
• Piedmont	ISO Rating 5 town; 5/9	• State Police (Keyser)	
• Ridgeley	ISO Rating 5 town; 5	• County Sheriff (Keyser)	
• Short Gap	ISO Rating 5/9	• City of Keyser	
• Wiley Ford	ISO Rating 5/9	• Town of Piedmont	
• WV Division of Forestry		• Town of Ridgeley	
		• Potomac State College	

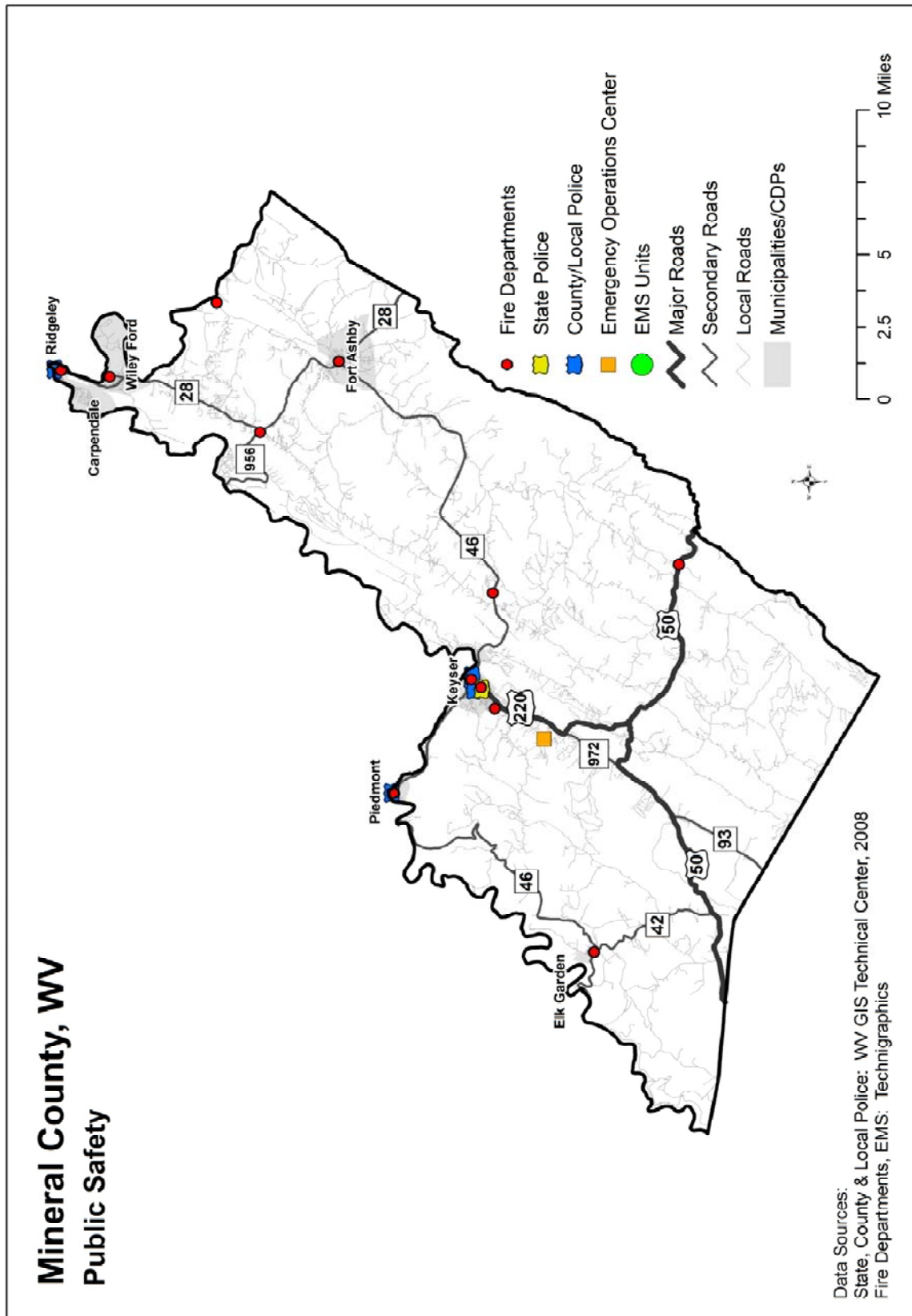
Notes: Elk District VFD and EMS also known as Elk Garden. Piedmont VFD also known as Tri-Towns. Sources: Fire Departments, EMS Units, State, County, and Local Law Enforcement.

The county is also served by a new hospital that opened in early 2009. Potomac Valley Hospital is a 25-bed critical access hospital located just outside Keyser (Map 7.4). It replaced a 42-bed short-term hospital built near downtown Keyser in 1931 and expanded in 1966 and 1976.

The hospital’s mission is to provide high quality patient focused care to meet the needs of each individual in its community. Services include a 24-hour emergency room, in-patient medical and surgical care, respite care, an intensive care unit, a hospice unit, and a skilled-swing care unit. It offers cardiology services, laboratory services, radiological services, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, diabetic education, and pharmacy services.

The nearest larger hospital is the Regional Medical Center facility in Cumberland, Md. The A new 275-bed facility opened in Fall 2009 and unified what had been a two-campus hospital system into a single location. Other hospitals directly serving parts of the county include Hampshire Memorial in Romney (critical access), Grant Memorial in Petersburg (regional), and Garrett County Memorial in Oakland, Md. (acute care). The nearest verified Level I American College of Surgeons Trauma Center is WVU Hospital in Morgantown.

Map 7.3: Public Safety



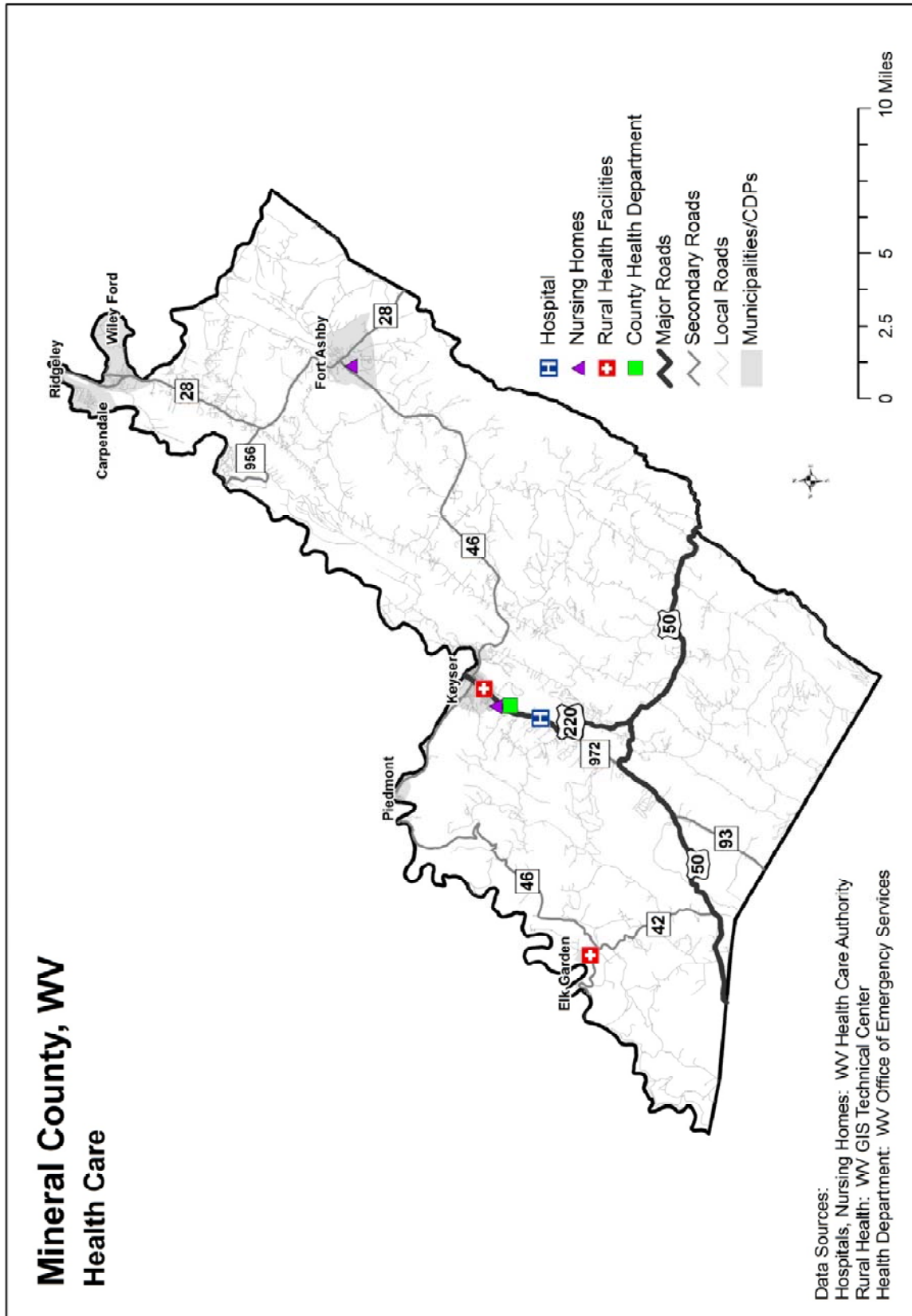
There are also nursing home facilities in the county, including places in Keyser (the 122-bed Heartland of Keyser) and Fort Ashby (the 66-bed Dawn View Manor) as well as others in Cumberland, Md., and Westernport, Md. serving the county.

Private medical providers are located throughout the county and throughout the region. There are rural health clinics in Piedmont and in Elk Garden. The Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild has operations in Keyser (and is based in Moorefield). County residents are also served by federally qualified community health centers in Mt. Storm and in Cumberland, Md.

In addition, the Mineral County Health Department located in Keyser has as its mission “to provide basic public health services which assess, promote and protect the health status of Mineral County citizens in a safe environment.” It provides clinical services, prevention services and education, environmental services, and disaster preparedness. It shares the last task with multiple agencies, including the Office of Emergency Management (which coordinates the effort), the Local Emergency Planning Committee, and local law enforcement agencies. Related to this, the county sits in the evacuation zone of Washington, D.C. in case of disaster, making it potentially vulnerable if unprepared when the unforeseen occurs.

This is not to say Mineral County does not have issues. Like virtually every community, there are problems related to drug use, which should not be surprising given the county is in a metropolitan area and in close proximity to Interstate 68. Similarly, there are other undesirable activities, forms of “adult entertainment” ranging from gambling to nude dancing that the county desires to limit and control.

Map 7.4: Health Care Facilities



To accomplish goals related to safety and security, the following recommendations are made.

- *Ensure the police departments coordinate and are sufficiently staffed.*

The county must make sure that police services are fully coordinated between state police, county sheriff's deputies, and local police departments to maintain the current level of protection. Related to that, the county needs to ensure that the staffing and equipment levels of police forces are evaluated periodically to be sure they reflect changes in population, property development, and traffic volume.

- *Work to have adequate water available for fire suppression.*

Another important aspect of fire protection is having sufficient water supplies. The county should work with municipalities and public service districts to have fire hydrants installed as part of water system expansions, enabling fire departments to tap into this supply when needed. Also, the county should investigate creating a system of well-based hydrants, which could tap available ground water in a similar manner in emergencies. Related to this would be using the existing cost-sharing program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other entities to help fund the construction of hydrants connected to small ponds that supply gravity-fed water. These actions would decrease the need for tanker truck use and increase the ability of the fire departments to extinguish fires.

- *Seek to expand and improve residential options for seniors.*

Like many places in West Virginia, the population of Mineral County is getting older. But unlike many places, there are limited living options for county residents who no longer can live in their home without help or want to live on their own but still wish to remain close to home during their senior years. To help improve this situation, awareness would need to be raised regarding the need and demand of senior housing options – ranging from in-home care to assisted living to step-up units to full service care homes. Health care providers and agencies would need to be engaged. Finally, firms and individuals interested in operating these various types of facilities in the county would need to be contacted and encouraged to invest in Mineral County.

- *Strive to maintain a high level of disaster readiness.*

Given the different possible things that could happen – winter “white-out” weather, floods, forest fires, violent storms – and its proximity to major metropolitan areas, Mineral County must expect the unexpected. Thus, the county Office of Emergency Management and other entities (such as the Health Department and the Local Emergency Planning Committee) need to continue their ongoing high-quality efforts to be sure that virtually every contingency is thought about, that procedures are developed, and that necessary supplies and materials are procured (or at least available) for the most likely events (especially when it appears that they are going to happen).

- *Use all means at its disposal to limit undesirable legal activities.*

Just because an activity is allowed under state law does not mean it is desired by the community. Many types of “adult entertainment” fall into this category, such as gambling and nude dancing. In fact, the regulation of these types of businesses can prevent undesirable primary and secondary effects on surrounding areas and serve to protect the character of the county. However, since they may be legal, Mineral County has to take great care in its actions to keep such unwanted activities under control. To that end, it should utilize the powers found in the *West Virginia Code* – including those newly-granted by recent acts of the Legislature – to limit to the extent as legally permissible any undesired legal activities. Such actions may include location restrictions, increased minimum distance between such establishments, and other regulations related to limited video lottery or nude entertainment. Related to this, in situations where county officials feel the powers granted by the state are insufficient, they should actively advocate for more authority to take local actions to solve local problems.

# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Section 8: Vision of the Future**

### *Introduction*

At first glance, the future vision of Mineral County looks very much like the present vision of Mineral County. However, when things come into focus, it becomes apparent that the desired state of the county is much more refined than the current state. The county's natural areas are still open and beautiful. Natural resource extraction and utilization is occurring, but it is currently being done as sensitively and as unobtrusively as feasible. Development has occurred and in some places expanded. But it has happened in places where it made the most sense, resulting in both an environmentally-friendly and economically-sound approach to development.

As a result, the county will remain a place where people want to live, work, and play. That is the intent of the comprehensive plan. It should be noted that this document paints with very broad strokes; this is intentional since the comprehensive plan is a foundation document. What else may come to pass should be referenced in some way, shape, or form in the comprehensive plan. In other words, to quote the axiom of an old planner, "it is better to be approximately right than precisely wrong."

This should not be construed to mean that details are not important. In fact, the contrary is true as detailed descriptions of work to be done are essential to transform the recommendations found within this comprehensive plan. For the comprehensive plan, such details will be found in the subdivision ordinance and related land use regulations put into place for the county. They will be found in the other ordinances enacted on matters ranging from beautification to "adult entertainment." And they will be found in the topical plans developed by other agencies and entities that serve Mineral County.

There are five major subject areas in the comprehensive plan: Land Use, Community Design, Infrastructure, Community and Economic Development, and Public Safety. Of course, these divisions and the different activities within them are not mutually exclusive by any means. For example, land use patterns impact infrastructure demands. Community design decisions can



influence public service needs. And development plays a role in almost everything else the county will plan to do.

These interconnections are not just hypothetical. There are several instances where very similar points are made in more than one section in the plan. Topics related to beautification are addressed in the plan under both Community Design and Development Activities. Targeted growth patterns are discussed in both the Land Use and Development sections. Tourism is brought up under Development Activities and again under Public Services. Historic preservation is discussed in the Community Design and the Public Service sections. The cross-listing of such subjects underscores their importance to the county as it plans for the future and as it works to make its vision a reality.

### *Summary of Recommended Actions*

The plan has five main subject areas, each with its own section. Under each section, there are generally three or four broad subtopics where recommendations are made. Then for each subtopic, there are one to several recommendations. In total, the plan has 65 recommended actions to help the county achieve its vision. Some of these require very little time and incur almost no cost; others represent long-term projects with substantial resource investments. The scope of the recommendations for each subtopic is discussed below. A matrix listing each goal individually, along with information related to time frame, responsible entity, and potential funding sources appears at the end of this section.

### Land Use (8 Goals)

- The two goals related to agriculture and forestry involve recognition of current activities, education and outreach, and the possible use of regulation. Such activities have little-to-no cost, although some operational activities may incur some incidental expenses. They can be done in a relatively short period of time (months) to a medium time frame (1-2 years) as well as be an on-going concern.
- The three goals related to natural resources involve recognition of current activities, the possible use of regulation, research, communication, and potentially lobbying decision-makers. Such activities generally have little-to-no cost, although lobbying efforts and some operational

activities may incur some incidental expenses. They can be done in a relatively short period of time (months) to a medium time frame (1-2 years) as well as be an on-going concern.

- The two goals related to housing and other developments involve recognition of current activities, research, and the possible use of regulation. Such activities have little-to-no cost. They can be done over medium time frame (1-2 years) but will be an on-going concern.
- The one goal related to proposed land uses involves recognition of current activities, regional cooperation, and the possible use of regulation. Such activities have little-to-no cost. They can be started in a relatively short period of time (months), though it may take a medium time-frame (1-2 years) to complete and will be an on-going concern as well.

#### Community Design (11 Goals)

- The two goals related to development patterns involve recognition of current activities, the possible use of regulation, and capital investment. Such activities have little-to-no cost while infrastructure work will require large investment, with grants, bonds, and intergovernmental transfers being the main sources of funding. Some activities can be done in a relatively short period of time (months) and will be an on-going concern while infrastructure investment will take several years (3-5 years).
- The five goals related to general aesthetics involve recognition of the current situation and actions, organizing activities, developing projects, regional cooperation, and lobbying. Such activities have varied costs. The projects will need some operational funding from county sources. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. They can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will easily continue for a medium time frame (1-2 years).
- The three goals related to historic preservation involve recognition of current activities, the possible use of regulation, regional cooperation, promotion, and education and outreach. Such activities have little-to-no cost, though educational efforts may incur some incidental expenses. They can be done in a relatively short period of time (months) but will be an on-going concern.

### Infrastructure (14 Goals)

- The six goals related to water, waste water, and solid waste involve recognition of current activities, research, regional cooperation, the possible use of regulation, oversight and inspection, and capital improvement. These activities have varied costs. Oversight activities and research studies will require some modest funding from county operations. Capital improvement will require large investment, with grants, bonds, and intergovernmental transfers being the main sources of funding. The activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will require at least a medium time frame (1-2 years) and most projects will be long-term (several years).
- The five goals related to transportation involve recognition of current activities, lobbying, the possible use of regulation, regional cooperation, and capital improvement. These activities have varied costs. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. Capital improvement will require large investment, with grants, bonds, and intergovernmental transfers being the main sources of funding. The activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will require at least a medium time frame (1-2 years) and most projects will be long-term (several years).
- The three goals related to facilities and services involve recognition of current activities, lobbying, research, and capital improvement. These activities have varied costs. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. Capital improvement will require large investment, with grants, bonds, and intergovernmental transfers being the main sources of funding. The activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will require at least a medium time frame (1-2 years) and most projects will be long-term (several years).

### Community and Economic Development (17 Goals)

- The nine goals related to economic development strategies involve recognition of current activities, research, education and outreach, encouragement, promotion and lobbying, regional cooperation, possible use of regulation, and capital investment. Most of these activities have low costs. Education and outreach as well as promotion and lobbying efforts may incur some incidental to small expenses that will have to be funded out of county operations. Meanwhile,

capital improvement will require large investment, with grants, bonds, and intergovernmental transfers being the main sources of funding. The activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will require at least a medium time frame (1-2 years) and most projects will be long-term (several years).

- The four goals related to renewal and redevelopment involve recognition of the current situation and actions, organizing activities, developing projects, regional cooperation, and lobbying. Such activities have varied costs. The projects will need some operational funding from county sources. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. They can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will easily continue for a medium time frame (1-2 years).
- The four goals related to preferred development areas involve recognition of current activities, the possible use of regulation, regional cooperation, and lobbying and promotion. Such activities have little-to-no cost, though lobbying and promotional efforts may incur some incidental to minor expenses to be funded from county operations. They can be done in a relatively short period of time (months) but will be an on-going concern.

#### Public Services (15 Goals)

- The six goals related to education and culture involve recognition of the current situation, research, organizing activities, developing projects, communication, lobbying and promotion, and eventually capital improvements. Such activities have varied costs. The projects will need some operational funding from county sources. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. Capital expenditures would need funds from bonds, grants, or intergovernmental transfers. These activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will continue for a medium time frame (1-2 years).
- The four goals related to recreation and tourism involve recognition of the current situation, research, organizing activities, developing projects, lobbying and promotion, regional cooperation, and eventually capital improvements. Such activities have varied costs. The projects will need some operational funding from county sources. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. Capital expenditures would need funds from bonds, grants, or

intergovernmental transfers. These activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will continue for a medium time frame (1-2 years) to the long-term (several years).

- The five goals related to safety and security involve recognition of the current situation, organizing activities, developing projects, communication, lobbying and promotion, regional cooperation, the possible use of regulation, and potentially capital expenditures. Such activities have varied costs. The projects will need some operational funding from county sources. Lobbying efforts may incur some incidental expenses. Capital expenditures would need funds from bonds, grants, or intergovernmental transfers. These activities can be started in a relatively short period of time (months) but will continue for a medium time frame (1-2 years) to the long-term (several years).

### *Concluding Comments*

This plan allows Mineral County to have met the state-mandated 10-year plan update requirement. It provides information and guidance to other levels of government and to potential funders as to the direction the county desires to move.

However, for the comprehensive plan to have utility beyond these perfunctory activities, it must be a “living, breathing document” rather than a “shelf document.” It must serve its function as the guiding document for the county. It must be kept up-to-date as the characteristics of the county and the circumstances surrounding it change. It must become a consideration in the decision-making process of county officials. If this does not occur, much of the potential benefit (and the rationale) for the effort put forth by the Mineral County Planning Commission over the last three years will have been lost.

# Recommendations Matrix

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Land Use – Agriculture and Forestry: Support agricultural activities (Page 3-6)</b>				
Make use of Mineral County Farmland Protection Board	FLP Board, County Officials,	Purchase easements	Present and continuing	Real estate transfer tax
Consider enactment of county “Right to Farm” ordinance	County Commission	Research & Consider ordinance	6-12 months	NA
Investigate and consider land use classification system options	Planner, Planning Commission	Research & Consider ordinance	12-24 months	NA
<b>Land Use – Agriculture and Forestry: Work to ensure harvesting of wood and wood products done prudently (Page 3-8)</b>				
Ensure loggers using best management practices	County Officials, WV Div. of Forestry	Education & Enforcement	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Land Use – Natural Resources: Seek local control over natural resource activities (Page 3-18)</b>				
Analyze each project to weigh impact and outcomes	Planner, Planning Commission	Research	Present and when needed	NA
Utilize existing regulations to provide project oversight	Planner, County Officials	Enforcement	Present and when needed	NA
Participate in the public comment process on permit applications	County Officials, Citizens	Research, Communication & Testimony	Present and when needed	NA
Seek greater local control over natural resource activities	County Commission, Officials	Lobbying, Communication & Cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Land Use – Natural Resources: Use conservation easements to protect sensitive areas (Page 3-19)</b>				
Investigate use of easements to restrict development activities	County, Farmland Protection, NPOs	Purchase easements	12-24 months	Private contributions
<b>Land Use – Natural Resources: Consider watershed impacts when making land use decisions (Page 3-19)</b>				
Perform site specific analysis to determine, ameliorate impacts	Planner, County Officials	Research & Enforcement	6-12 months	NA
Complete inventory of water resources	Planner, County Officials	Research	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources
<b>Land Use – Housing: Encourage clustered housing developments (Page 3-24)</b>				
Consider regulations and standards to allow clustering	Planner, Planning Commission	Research & Consider ordinance	12-24 months	NA

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Land Use – Housing: Encourage “infill” development (Page 3-25)</b>				
Consider regulations and standards to promote “infills”	Planner, Planning Commission	Research & Consider ordinance	12-24 months	NA
Create incentives system to promote “infills”	Planning, County Commissions	Research & Create incentives	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Land Use – Proposed Land Uses: Focus development around built-up areas and growth corridors (Page 3-28)</b>				
Work with municipalities to ensure compatible development plans	Planner, Planning Commission	Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	NA
Consider regulations or standards to focus development locations	Planner, Planning Commission	Research & Adopt ordinance	12-24 months	NA
Create incentives system to focus development locations	Planning, County Commissions	Research & Create incentives	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Community Design – Development Patterns: Work to ensure existing development supported and accommodated (Page 4-6)</b>				
Use all means to ensure current development system works	Planner, County Officials	Improvement (infrastructure) & Adopt regulations	Present and when needed	Infrastructure funding (bonds, user fees, grants)
<b>Community Design – Development Patterns: Guide future development into areas of existing development (Page 4-7)</b>				
Support new development where already has occurred	Planner, County Officials	Encouragement ( “infills”) & Set limits (infrastructure)	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Sponsor a general clean-up and beautification effort (Page 4-8)</b>				
Promote and sponsor county and local area clean-ups efforts	County Officials, NPOs	Promotion & Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Assist with rehabilitation or removal of run-down buildings (Page 4-8)</b>				
Use “Urban Renewal Authority Law” mechanism fully	Building Safety Commission	Enforcement & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	Cost recovery tax sales
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Encourage buildings be built or renovated appropriately (Page 4-9)</b>				
Encourage construction or renovation be done to standards	Planner, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, & Consider ordinance	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Create gateways into county (Page 4-9)</b>				
Create standard signage for county entrances	County Officials, Citizens	Promotion, Design & Regional cooperation	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Work with municipalities to promote consistency and improvement (Page 4-9)</b>				
Work to ensure municipal plans not counterproductive	Planner, County Officials	Research & Regional cooperation	6-12 months	NA

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Community Design – General Aesthetics: Take appropriate steps to preserve county’s natural beauty (Page 4-10)</b>				
Use existing authority (and seek new) to preserve beauty	Planner, County Officials	Research, Enforcement & Consider ordinances	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Community Design – Historic Preservation: Act to protect existing historic places and sites (Page 4-14)</b>				
Work for protection of places and sites	Planner, County Officials	Encouragement, Enforcement, Incentives & Ordinances	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources
Consider creation of new historic districts	Planner, Other County Officials	Research & Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	Reallocation of resources
Identify historic locations prior to development	Planner, Officials, Organizations	Research & Encouragement	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Community Design – Historic Preservation: Promote the county’s history and historic resources (Page 4-14)</b>				
Promote county history with markers and brochures	County Officials, Organizations	Promotion & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources; Private contributions
Expand awareness related to history and historic sites	Planner, County Officials	Research, Education & Encouragement	Present and continuing	NA
Consider creation of new historic districts	Planner, Officials, Organizations	Research & Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	Reallocation of resources
<b>Community Design – Historic Preservation: Inform owners of options and benefits related to historic properties (Page 4-15)</b>				
Educate owners regarding tax benefits and display options	Planner, County Officials	Education & Encouragement	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Have up-to-date information for decision-making (Page 5-6)</b>				
Revise county’s <i>Comprehensive Sewage and Water Plan</i>	County Officials, PSDs	Research	6-12 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Extend water and sewage services using appropriate means (Page 5-6)</b>				
Expand services within a drainage basin for new development	Planner, County Officials, PSDs	Research, Construction, & Technology utilization	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (bonds, user fees, grants)
Investigate use of gravity flow, pump stations, cluster systems	Health Dept., Officials, PSDs	Research	12-24 months	NA
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Maximize use of public water and sewer systems (Page 5-6)</b>				
Incorporate private systems into public systems	County Officials, PSDs, Systems	Encouragement, Incentives & Regional Cooperation	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (bonds, user fees, grants)
Extend existing systems (rather than create new systems)	County Officials, PSDs, Systems	Encouragement, Incentives & Regional Cooperation	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (bonds, user fees, grants)



Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Approve private systems prudently (Page 5-7)</b>				
Ensure new private systems maintained and long-lasting	County Officials, PSDs, Systems	Research, Incentives & Regional Cooperation	Present and when needed	NA
Ensure requirements and BMPs met with on-premises systems	County Officials, PSDs, Systems	Research, Enforcement & Regional Cooperation	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Work to ensure the structural integrity of the flood control dams (Page 5-7)</b>				
Ensure dams are inspected and maintained regularly	County Officials, NRCS	Encouragement & Regional Cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Infrastructure – Water, Wastewater, &amp; Solid Waste: Work to expand waste disposal options (Page 5-8)</b>				
Prepare for future through Region VIII Solid Waste Authority	County Officials, Region VIII SWA	Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
Find alternative ways of disposal (recycling, composting, etc.)	County Officials, Region VIII SWA	Research, Encouragement, Incentives & Board creation	Present and when needed	Infrastructure funding (user fees, grants)
<b>Infrastructure – Transportation: Take the present into consideration while planning for the future (Page 5-13)</b>				
Coordinate future transportation systems with existing roads	Planner, Officials, WV DOT, MPO	Research, Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
Consider impacts of new highways on other infrastructure	Planner, Officials, PSDs, Systems	Research, Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Infrastructure – Transportation: Support new highways in the region, especially the new US Route 220 (Page 5-13)</b>				
Work to expedite studies and funding for highway	County Officials, WV DOT, GCC	Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	Highway funding (State and federal)
<b>Infrastructure – Transportation: Request repairs and upgrades to current roadways (Page 5-13)</b>				
Develop and forward priority repair list for county roads	County Officials, WV DOT	Research, Lobbying & Regional cooperation	6-12 months	NA (Directly) (State highway sources)
<b>Infrastructure – Transportation: Seek to create an access management plan for highways and roads (Page 5-14)</b>				
Come up with ways to increase property inter-connections	County Officials, WV DOT, Developers	Research, Encouragement, & Incentives	30-60 months	Highway funding; Infrastructure funding
<b>Infrastructure – Transportation: Work toward expanding intercity transportation options (Page 5-14)</b>				
Investigate periodic bus service to Charleston and/or airports	County Officials, PVTA	Research & Encouragement	Present and continuing	NA (Directly) (Federal transit sources)
Support airport improvements, return of commercial service	County Officials, Airport Authority	Research, Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and when needed	NA

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Infrastructure – Facilities &amp; Services: Work to have a true community center (or recreation center) (Page 5-16)</b>				
Build or designate a facility to be county community center	County Officials, NPOs, Private sector	Research & Construction/Renovation	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (bonds, grants)
<b>Infrastructure – Facilities &amp; Services: Work for improved technology access and services (Page 5-16)</b>				
Work with service providers to expand telecom services	County Officials, MCDA, Providers	Research, Encouragement, & Create incentives	Present and continuing	Infrastructure funding (user fees)
<b>Infrastructure – Facilities &amp; Services: Work for ensure smooth landline transition (Page 5-17)</b>				
Monitor and act if necessary with regard to telephone transition	County Officials, MCDA	Research, Encouragement, & Litigation preparation	Present to 12 months	NA (Directly) (Litigation cost recovery)
<b>Development – Economic Development: Work to protect, expand, and diversity its manufacturing base (Page 6-5)</b>				
Ensure existing manufacturers can remain competitive	MCDA, County Officials	Encouragement & BRE Program Implementation	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources
Develop and recruit countercyclical firms	MCDA, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment, & Support	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
Develop and recruit support industries	MCDA, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment, & Support	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Development – Economic Development: Move to the “new economy” by building upon the information sector (Page 6-6)</b>				
Focus industrial efforts on information sector (NAICS 51)	MCDA, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment, & Support	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Development – Economic Development: Utilize position as agricultural producing county (Page 6-6)</b>				
Help maintain current products and create value-added items	MCDA, FLP Board, Officials, WVU-ES	Utilize easement & Provide support	6-12 months	NA
<b>Development – Economic Development: Utilize the potential for growth from the new hospital (Page 6-6)</b>				
Focus efforts on health care and social assistance (NAICS 62)	MCDA, PVH, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment, & Support	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources
<b>Development – Economic Development: Take advantage of its location and beauty for tourism marketing (Page 6-7)</b>				
Preserve and protect places of natural beauty and importance	County Officials, WV DNR, WV DEP	Research, Encouragement, & Regulation	12-24 months	NA
Focus on creation of business efforts to support tourism	MCDA, CVB, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment, & Support	12-24 months	NA
<b>Development – Economic Development: Take advantage of having a higher education institution in the county (Page 6-7)</b>				
Work with faculty and graduates to fill niches in local economy	MCDA, WVU-PSC, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Recruitment & Support	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Development – Economic Development: Maintain a climate that is “open to business” (Page 6-8)</b>				
Take special care when enacting new rules or revenue changes	MCDA, County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Support & Incentives	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources
<b>Development – Economic Development: Work regionally on development issues when appropriate (Page 6-8)</b>				
Work with regional entities on development issues	MCDA, Officials Region 8, GCC	Research, Lobbying & Regional cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Development – Economic Development: Promote infrastructure necessary for desired development to occur (Page 6-8)</b>				
Improve infrastructure to enable development goals achieved	County Officials, Infrastructure Entities	Research, Encouragement, Incentives & Construction	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (bonds, user fees, grants)
Help maintain current products and create value-added items	MCDA, FLP Board, Officials, WVU-ES	Utilize easement & Provide support	30-60 months	NA
<b>Development – Renewal &amp; Redevelopment: Encourage and work with municipalities to clean up areas (Page 6-9)</b>				
Take steps that lead, assist redevelopment in municipalities	County Officials, Municipalities	Encouragement & Regional cooperation	12-24 months	Grants
<b>Development – Renewal &amp; Redevelopment: Work to clean-up less than desirable areas (Page 6-9)</b>				
Work to undertake redevelopment in built-up unincorporated areas	County Officials	Research, Encouragement, Incentives & Construction	12-24 months	Grants
<b>Development – Renewal &amp; Redevelopment: Work to find problem places and bad buildings (Page 6-10)</b>				
Identify unsuitable buildings through structure inventory	Planner, County Officials	Research & Reporting	6-12 months	NA
<b>Development – Renewal &amp; Redevelopment: Work to ensure that environmentally-sensitive places are preserved (Page 6-10)</b>				
Use regulations and periodic clean-ups to protect places	County Officials, WV DNR, WV DEP	Direct clean-up, Enforcement & Consider ordinances	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Development – Preferred Development Areas: Stress the need to grow the existing municipalities (Page 6-11)</b>				
Direct development into the existing city and towns	Planner, Officials, Municipalities	Encouragement & Regional cooperation	6-12 months	NA
<b>Development – Preferred Development Areas: Promote growth in appropriate locations throughout the county (Page 6-12)</b>				
Direct development into the existing built-up areas	Planner, Officials, MCDA, Inf. Entities	Encouragement & Consider ordinances	6-12 months	NA
<b>Development – Preferred Development Areas: Promote infill development between existing built-up areas (Page 6-12)</b>				
Direct development to “infill” places near built-up areas	Planner, MCDA, Officials, Inf. Entities	Encouragement & Consider ordinances	6-12 months	NA

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Development – Preferred Development Areas: Work to fill the industrial parks and other key industrial sites (Page 6-13)</b>				
Attract and retain tenants in industrial parks and sites	Planner, MCDA, County Officials	Encouragement & Incentives	Present and continuing	Reallocation of resources
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: Support strongly activities of the Board of Education (Page 7-6)</b>				
Coordinate future growth with school and related plans	Plan. Commission, Board of Ed., MCDA	Communication & Coordination	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: Work with Board of Education regarding school placement needs (Page 7-7)</b>				
Provide information on residential growth to aid in school planning	Plan. Commission, Board of Ed.	Communication	Present and when needed	NA
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: Use the presence of higher education advantageously (Page 7-7)</b>				
Use college to spur development through education, culture	Planner, Officials, MCDA, WVU-PSC	Encouragement, Communication & Coordination	12-24 months	NA
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: Maximize use of facilities for educational and other purposes (Page 7-7)</b>				
Use schools for recreation, communities, and education	Officials, NPOs, Board of Ed.	Encouragement, Communication & Coordination	12-24 months	NA
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: See to improve its main library facility (Page 7-7)</b>				
Seek support and sponsorship to improve/update main library	Co. Commission, Board of Ed., Library	Research, Planning, Fund-Raising & Construction	6-12 months	Construction costs (contributions, bonds)
<b>Public Services – Education &amp; Culture: Work to maintain and enhance cultural offerings available to residents (Page 7-7)</b>				
Support efforts to bring cultural activities and make them solvent	Officials, WVU-PSC, Board of Ed., NPOs	Encouragement, Communication & Coordination	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources; Contributions
<b>Public Services – Recreation &amp; Tourism: Utilize more fully the potential of Jennings Randolph Lake (Page 7-13)</b>				
Work to improve road access to JRL to enhance area use	Officials, ACE	Encouragement & Regional cooperation	12-24 months	Highway funding (State and federal)
Package activities available at JRL and North Bend	Officials, Recreation, ACE, NPOs	Encouragement, Communication & Cooperation	30-60 months	NA
<b>Public Services – Recreation &amp; Tourism: Expand outdoor recreation and tourism options (Page 7-13)</b>				
Take advantage of scenic character to create opportunities	Officials, Recreation, NPOs, Municipalities	Regional cooperation, Coordination & Fiscal agent	12-24 months	External grants
<b>Public Services – Recreation &amp; Tourism: Package different activities and attractions for tourism marketing (Page 7-13)</b>				
Package activities available throughout county	Officials, Recreation, CVB, C/C, NPOs	Encouragement, Communication & Cooperation	12-24 months	NA

Activity	Responsibility	Action	Timeframe	Financing
<b>Public Services – Recreation &amp; Tourism: Have better recreation options coordination (Page 7-14)</b>				
Improve coordination among different providers, entities	Officials, Recreation, CVB, C/C, NPOs	Encouragement, Communication & Cooperation	6-12 months	NA
<b>Public Services – Safety &amp; Security: Ensure police departments coordinate and are sufficiently staffed (Page 7-19)</b>				
Ensure law enforcement agencies' activities coordinated	Co. Commission, Sheriff, Municipalities	Encouragement & Regional cooperation	12-24 months	NA
Ensure proper staffing levels for law enforcement activities	Co. Commission, Sheriff, Municipalities	Encouragement, Communication & Cooperation	12-24 months	Reallocation of resources; Public safety fees
<b>Public Services – Safety &amp; Security: Work to have adequate water available for fire suppression (Page 7-19)</b>				
Install fire hydrants as part of water system expansion	Co. Commission, PSDs, VFDs	Encouragement & Regional cooperation	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (system expansion)
Develop well-based hydrant system	Co. Commission, PSDs, VFDs, SCS	Encouragement, Communication & Cooperation	30-60 months	Infrastructure funding (hydrant installation)
<b>Public Services – Safety &amp; Security: Seek to expand residential options for seniors (Page 7-19)</b>				
Determine senior housing needs and wants	Region III AAA, Health Dept, PVH,	Research & Encouragement	24-48 months	NA
Find entities to open and operate senior housing	Health Dept, PVH, DHHR, NPOs, Firms	Encouragement & Seeking investment/firms	30-60 months	Grants; Investment funding
<b>Public Services – Safety &amp; Security: Strive to maintain a high level of disaster readiness (Page 7-20)</b>				
Continue preparations, procedures for contingencies	Co. Commission, OEM, Health, LEPC	Planning, Preparation, Communication & Cooperation	Present and continuing	NA
<b>Public Services – Safety &amp; Security: Use all means at its disposal to limit undesirable legal activities (Page 7-20)</b>				
Use powers granted to limit undesirable activities	County Commission, Officials, Sheriff	Communication & Enforcement	Present and when needed	NA
Seek additional powers to limit undesirable activities	County Commission, Officials	Lobbying, Communication & Cooperation	6-12 months	NA

# **2010 Mineral County Comprehensive Plan**

## **Public Input Appendix**

### *Introduction*

Public input for the Mineral County Plan has taken many forms over the time that the plan has been under development. From mid-2006 to the end of 2007, there were three major activities which provided opportunities for comment and critique about the county and its future. These were a strategic planning stakeholder meeting in June 2006, the topical stakeholder briefings in May 2007, and the public input sessions in November and December 2007. The results of those activities are summarized below.

### *Strategic Planning Meeting*

The public input process for the Mineral County Plan began even before what eventually became the comprehensive planning process was initiated. It began with a stakeholder meeting attended by about 50 people on June 17, 2006 in Keyser. The meeting focused on what was then a strategic planning process. The West Virginia University Extension Service was asked to assist at the meetings and six faculty members served as facilitators:

- Steve Bonanno, Program Leader, Community, Economic, & Workforce Development
- Michael Dougherty, Extension Specialist, Community, Economic, & Workforce Development
- Carl Marcum, Extension Agent, Wayne County
- Rick Moorefield, Extension Agent, Summers County
- Norm Schwertfeger, Extension Agent, Brooke County
- Sarah Stevenson, Extension Specialist, Institute for Labor Studies and Research

The attendees were divided into four groups and asked to list the strengths and weaknesses of the county as well as the opportunities and threats facing the county. The full listing from each group was reported out to all attendees. It was later compiled by WVU Extension Agent Rick Moorefield.

A total of 160 strengths were listed by stakeholders. Common themes included the county's location, facilities (of all types), organizations, and people. Meanwhile, 127 were listed during the session. Many of these focused on economic or job opportunities, transportation (roads), and

infrastructure (water and sewer). Interestingly, many of the positives and negatives were the same situation examined from different perspectives.

Meanwhile, there were 89 opportunities and 65 threats were identified by the group. These two future-oriented topics received additional attention as well. The responses were combined (where two groups said the same things) and grouped (where two groups said very similar things) to create a master list for each. Then participants prioritized the topics using a weighted voting methodology. WVU Extension Specialist Sarah Stevenson tallied the scores and reported them to the County Commission.

The top five opportunities were (1) land use planning/zoning; (2) improve infrastructure; (3) tourism; (4) communications infrastructure; and (5) business/industry recruitment (Table A.1).

**Table A.1: Opportunities Tallies from June 2006 Stakeholder Retreat**

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Pts.</b>	<b>Topical area</b>
Land use planning/Zoning	63	Infrastructure
Improve infrastructure	51	Infrastructure
Tourism	35	Increased funding
Communication infrastructure	24	Infrastructure
Business/industry recruitment	20	Business growth
Optimism	16	Attitudes
Expand educational institutions	15	Education & training
Keyser bypass/corridor	15	Infrastructure
Protect quality of life	14	Attitudes
Business incentives/tax parity	13	Business growth
Expand existing industry	13	Business growth
Alternate energy production	12	Energy
Assisted living	8	Health
New hospital	7	Health
Regional decision making	7	Government
Airport	6	Infrastructure
Congressional delegation	5	Government
Workforce training	5	Education & training
Homeland Security funding	4	Increased funding
Healthy community	2	Health
Casino gambling	1	Increased funding
Capitalize on diverse community	0	No votes
Entertainment	0	No votes
Establish landfill	0	No votes
Industrial park	0	No votes
Main Street	0	No votes

Meanwhile, the top five threats were (1) unplanned growth; (2) lack of money, local resources; (3) inadequate water management; (4) lack of road improvements/maintenance; and (5) lack of strategic plan with teeth (Table A.2). These topics point to the need to examine the county infrastructure, to improve the economic base to improve the (financial) resource base; and to plan for the future. They were the only topics to score more than 20 points in the voting. There were a total of 336 points assigned to opportunities and 310 points assigned to threats (not everyone cast all their votes).

**Table A.2: Threats Tallies from June 2006 Stakeholder Retreat**

Threats	Pts.	Topical area
Unplanned growth	82	Planning
Lack of money, local resources	41	Infrastructure
Inadequate water management	31	Infrastructure
Lack of road improvements/ maintenance	24	Infrastructure
Lack of strategic plan with teeth!	22	Economic development
Inability to compete in economic development	17	Economic development
Zoning	16	Planning
Lack of affordable housing	14	Infrastructure
Apathy/behavior/attitudes/ newcomer expectations	11	Economic development
Outside pressure on infrastructure, services, natural resources	11	Economic development
Geopolitical conditions	10	Economic development
Absentee landowners	7	Economic development
Outmigration of youth	6	Economic development
Insufficient communication infrastructure	5	Infrastructure
Increased crime	4	Miscellaneous
Landfill	4	Planning
Growth of low-wage jobs	2	Economic development
Casinos	1	Miscellaneous
Health care costs	1	Miscellaneous
NIMBYism	1	Planning
Inconsistent ordinances, regulations	0	No votes
Limited emergency communication	0	No votes
State government bureaucracy	0	No votes
Threats to paper industry	0	No votes
TIF districts	0	No votes
Trucking regulation/highway restrictions	0	No votes

### *Topical Meetings*

A series of topical meetings took place on May 9-10, 2007 in Keyser to begin the formal input process for the comprehensive plan. These meetings involved invited stakeholders in five subject areas – land use, infrastructure, safety, economic development, and quality of life.



To prepare for these meetings, the Planning Commission made an initial list of 147 groups, agencies, organizations, and individuals to provide input on the plan, using the required and optional plan elements listed in the *West Virginia Code* (§8A-3-4(c) and §8A-3-5) as a guide. It then reviewed, revised, and grouped the list with the updated list of 146 entities divided into five categories for the meeting plus a sixth category for local governments – and initiations with comment sheets were mailed to each. There were 19 invitees in land use, 15 invitees in infrastructure, 23 invitees in safety, 20 invitees in economic development, and 58 invitees in quality of life. There were also 11 local governmental invitees.

A total of 51 unique participants attended the meetings and four additional comment sheets were received. There were 10 persons and the land use meeting (and one sheet received); 9 people at the infrastructure meeting (and one sheet received); 12 people at the quality of life meeting (and one external comment received); 8 people at the safety meeting (and one comment sheet received); and 12 people at the economic development meeting (and no comment sheets received). WVU Extension Specialist Michael Dougherty facilitated the meetings.

The meetings featured general questions common to all sessions that focused on the county as a whole as well as topic specific questions based upon the theme of the meeting. The common questions asked attendees to rank the county as well as to detail the positives of the county and pressing problems facing it. The topical questions asked attendees to discuss the current situation with regard to that topic and how it could be improved or bettered.

Attendees generally ranked the county highly. It was described as “upper third” and “very well” and “favorably.” The lowest rankings of the county put it “in the middle.” Problems commonly cited included the lack of economic opportunity, the expansion of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area into (or near to) the Potomac Highlands, and the potential for increasing crime in the county. Positives described included quality of life, educational offerings, environment and setting, and the people and organizations.

The land use meeting identified questions and concerns over property rights, the need to protect the rural environment, and the benefits of a proactive and holistic approach. The need for senior-related development and the importance of water availability to any development were also discussed. Ideas suggested ranged from watershed planning and water resources studies to

increased fees (including impact fees) to additional regulation in the form of zoning, building codes, and environmental rules, to greater involvement by citizens and the state.

The infrastructure meeting focused on water/sewer, transportation, and telecommunications issues. A major obstacle in achieving improvements in these areas is that a myriad of different organizations, governmental entities, and service providers operating in the county and the region. The most pressing needs identified included additional water sources, expansion of water/sewer services, small bridges, road quality, cellular coverage, and high speed internet access.

The quality of life meeting determined that the county needed the mechanisms and facilities to get more people involved and to serve residents. These ranged from a better library, to a recreation center, to a senior/assisted living facility. Improving the quality of life could be done by building on existing assets, reinvigorating programs that have faltered, promoting local uniqueness, and seeking cooperative agreements with other localities.

The safety meeting identified the increased demand for services and the decline in volunteerism as issues that must be addressed. These are offset by the strength of law enforcement, emergency response, and state regulators that serve the county. Sufficient resources, increased public involvement, and trying to address the cause of criminal activity (i.e., through increased drug treatment) were all suggested as potential solutions.

The economic development meeting examined the local economy. At the time, the Mineral County Development Authority was finalizing its own strategic plan. The county has in recent years experienced difficulty because of the decline of traditional industries. Also, some current industries are seen as overly mobile or overly dependent upon federal funding. Ideas to improve the situation ranged from diversification and targeted recruitment, to utilization of existing assets such as wood and (chicken) waste, to improving infrastructure to make the county a better business location.

### *Public Input Meetings*

During November and December 2007, Mineral County residents were invited to comment about they would like the county to be like in the future.

For this third phase of the comprehensive planning process, six meetings were held, in the communities of Keyser, Elk Garden, Wiley Ford, Burlington, Fort Ashby, and Keyser (again). WVU Extension Specialists Michael Dougherty and Trace Gale facilitated the meetings. Dougherty also designed the process while Gale analyzed and summarized the results.

A total of 162 community members attended these meetings. Attendance at these meetings ranged from 18 to 45 attendees with four of the sessions drawing at least 24 people. Discussion focused on understanding local views of the assets and challenges that existed in the county, with an emphasis on land use, infrastructure, quality of life factors, public safety and economic development. A total of 674 public comments were gathered during these forums. These ranged from 64 to 140 comments per session with four sessions generating at least 100 comments.

The analysis of the comments collected during these sessions divided commentary into three distinct categories: *Community Assets*, *Challenges to Overcome*, and *Future Vision*. As should be expected, the majority of input was provided within the areas of “Challenges to Overcome” and “Future Vision.” However, public input identified a number of important Community Assets, which should be protected and leveraged wherever possible, through long-range comprehensive planning and action. Within each category, several distinct themes arose (Table A.3).

**Table A.3: Mineral County Public Input – Key Data Categories & Themes**

<b>Community Assets</b>	<b>Challenges to Overcome</b>	<b>Future Vision</b>
Social / Cultural Capital	Infrastructure Deficiencies	Liveable Communities
Access / Proximity	Quality of Life Barriers	Planned Growth
Basic Services	Sustainability Threats	Adequate & Sustainable Emergency Services
Leverageable Infrastructure	Economic Vulnerability	Proactive Leadership
	Change / Unknowns	Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals

*Community Assets* divided into four distinct areas or themes as a result from the public comments during the input sessions. They were “Social/Cultural Capital,” “Access/Proximity,” “Basic Services,” and “Leverageable Infrastructure.”

“Social/Cultural Capital,” referred to the concept of community capitals, developed by Cornelia Flora at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Seven distinct forms of capital critical for the development of healthy, sustainable communities have been identified: financial, built, political, social, human, cultural, and natural. Social and cultural capital dominated the discussions of community assets. Social capital involves the leadership, groups, bridging and bonding networks, trust, and reciprocity that exist in a community. Cultural capital involves the language, rituals, traditions, and common practices of a group, or community. Residents frequently spoke of the social organizations in the county, such as 4-H, the volunteer fire department, Girls Scouts and Boys Scouts, organized sport teams, theatre groups, and churches. When identifying what made their county special, they commonly referred to the nature, traditions, and common practices of the people with descriptors including: friendly, volunteerism, helping hands, family values, trust, respect, involvement, belonging, faith, and being relationship-centered. Additionally, they described the strengths of the leadership in their county and the political voice these leaders carried out into the state and region, on their behalf. They spoke of the tendency of people and organizations in their county to collaborate with each other.

“Access/Proximity” centered on the importance and strength of the county’s geographic positioning in the region. This includes the many important resources, identified by residents that exist in or near to the county. Examples of these resources included access to shopping retailers such as Wal-Mart, transportation providers such as the local airport and nearby train station, historical sites and buildings, recreational and athletic resources, cultural resources in nearby towns and colleges, higher education resources, and nearby urban centers.

“Basic Services” related to the presence and strengths related to services in the county that residents expressed as crucial for their quality of life. These included the quality of schools in the county and innovative programs offered by these schools, the number of higher education options available, associated cultural resources and programs, the quality and volunteer nature of fire and EMS services, the relative safety and low crime of the area, and the access to quality healthcare. County residents expressed pride in these basic services and the belief that their quality represented important assets for Mineral County.

“Leverageable Infrastructure” revolved around forms of infrastructure that were felt to be relevant to future growth in the county, particularly in the area of economic development. Assets identified included the presence of a major employer who is growing, lower property taxes, low levels of unemployment, access to inexpensive land, the presence of an industrial park, access to and quality of public utilities (especially water), and road quality and convenience.

*Challenges to Overcome* were identified during the public input process. These challenges fell into the thematic areas of: “Infrastructure Deficiencies,” “Quality of Life Barriers,” “Sustainability Threats,” “Economic Vulnerability,” and “Change/Unknowns.”

“Infrastructure Deficiencies,” centered largely on basic infrastructure such as water, sewer, roads, transportation, and county services such as trash pick-up and solid waste. Specific challenges mentioned in this area included lack of infrastructure in the more rural areas of the county, safety, enforcement, condition of infrastructure, missing services such as recycling programs, and reliance on service providers outside the county.

“Quality of Life Barriers” included commentary that identified challenges which, while not basic to life in the county, affected the willingness of residents to stay in the county long-term, or to ability to attract newcomers. These types of “quality of life” amenities or services were felt to be important to the potential for keeping young people engaged and present in the county and toward slowing the tendency for out-migration. Specifics included walkability, bikeable communities, a lack of retail and service variety, lack of rural access to technology such as cellular signals, cable, and WIFI, lack of local healthcare such as dentists or a trauma center, closing of the local high-school, and a general lack of activities and amenities to engage and interest youth and young adults in the county.

“Sustainability Threats” involved critical assets or features of the county which were felt to be at risk in future years, if not addressed. For example, while the strength of the volunteer-based fire and EMS services were repeatedly identified as a core asset of the county, the sustainability of this asset was identified as a critical challenge for the future. Residents felt that changes in liability and risk tolerance, coupled with lower levels of volunteerism amongst younger generations meant that reliance on a purely volunteer model of fire and EMS service might not

remain as a viable solution and that planning must address this core issue. Other examples of this theme included threats to the continued quality of water resources; under-resourced law enforcement; drug problems, pollution, and rapid commercial and residential expansion that did not adequately consider the strains placed on critical infrastructure and resources.

“Economic Vulnerability” referred to challenges identified in the area of economic viability. Specific comments centered on an inability to attract and retain businesses in the county, lack of infrastructure and resources needed for economic development and mounting pressures in the face of globalization and increased regional competition for shrinking resources. This theme also included the expression that achieving effective local government voice in state and regional policy formation around economic outcomes was an ongoing challenge.

“Changes/Unknowns” described those comments that related to macro trends or large-scale projects that were beyond the scope of local control but represented critical planning challenges. Some of the specific areas mentioned included: the concept that Mineral County was a key target for urban evacuation in the event of a terrorist attack, the idea that important security resources existed in the area that could be targeted by terrorists, and the threat of pandemic flu outbreaks. Other examples included MRSA, the impacts of future road construction projects such as Corridor H and a north-south access route, and the changing demographics of the community arising from new prisons in the area and in-migration. All of these macro-level changes represented important unknowns that county residents felt should be included in long-range planning.

*Future Vision* was the final category of public input and involved commentary that focused on visions of the future for Mineral County. Key themes in this area included “Liveable Communities,” “Planned Growth,” “Adequate & Sustainable Emergency Services,” “Proactive Leadership,” and “Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals.”

“Liveable Communities” involved ideas and visions that addressed many of the challenges expressed around the theme of “quality of life.” Community vision expressed through this theme included walkable, bikeable communities with amenities such as wellness centers, modern, accessible libraries with internet access. Residents sought increased recreation programming and

options, improved county-wide communication and web-tools, technology access county-wide. Other expressions of this theme included public transportation access, beautification, the desire to have policies and practices that are more eco-friendly or “green,” downtown revitalization, more retail options, a community center with meeting space and cultural exhibits or features, and life-long learning options.

“Planned Growth” referred to residents expression of the importance of protection and planning around water resources, an interest in zoning, and needed waste management infrastructure and service improvements, such as land-fills and recycling. They also expressed the desire for reuse, revitalization, and redevelopment of existing resources and urban centers. Residents called for road improvements and widening, prior to development. They sought better sewer infrastructure county-wide and the overwhelming desire to balance growth with preservation. Most often, this theme of planned growth was directly connected to the desire to protect rural values and aesthetics, seen as core to the identity of the communities and residents of the county.

“Adequate & Sustainable Emergency Services” focused on the area of fire, emergency medical service (EMS), and police coverage. It also involved the planning for such services as well as the need to find creative and effective solutions for attraction and retention of service providers and adequate coverage throughout the county. Of particular interest to residents was ensuring the viability of the volunteer model for fire and EMS services. Also, there was interest in the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the growing drug problem in the county and region; both through adequate enforcement resources, and through education, prevention, and treatment services.

“Proactive Leadership” expressed in the desire to have improved county-wide communications between public officials and residents that would encourage greater public participation. It was also expressed in the call for increased advocacy capacity and voice. A number of comments focused on the need for a collaborative approach to regional problems and opportunities. Other comments within this theme centered on the need for a visionary outlook on economic and community development, and the “greening” of policies and infrastructure.

“Effective Economic Development that Leverages Community Capitals” was the final theme of this category and was overwhelmingly the most frequently expressed by participants. This theme called for proactive economic development that would deliver good jobs that paid living wages, new factories, and options that would incite youth to return to the community to live, after college. Participants felt that some of the characteristics of an effective strategy in this area would include incentives, empowerment, land-use regulations, incubation, infrastructure, and a focus on emerging technologies. Education was closely tied to this theme with a call for adult training and education options, including workforce training and retraining, and alignment of educational resources with growth patterns and demands. Finally, participants stressed the importance of attracting and retaining businesses and young professionals in the areas, including professionals, health care providers, and entrepreneurs.



**Table A.4 Public Meeting Data Breakdown**

Meeting	Keyser VFD	Elk Garden	Wiley Ford	Burlington	Fort Ashby	County Courthouse	Totals	Mean	Median	Per Capita
Date	11/7/09	11/14/09	11/15/09	11/26/09	11/29/09	12/11/09				
Facilitator	Both	Dougherty	Gale	Gale	Gale	Dougherty				
Attendance	24	18	45	20	<b>30</b>	25	162	27.0	24.5	n/a
Positives	<b>29</b>	9	21	24	17	18	118	19.7	19.5	0.7
Problems	<b>35</b>	14	23	25	15	24	136	22.7	23.5	0.8
Land Use	<b>15</b>	6	10	12	5	13	61	10.2	11.0	0.4
Infrastructure	11	<i>11</i>	<b>27</b>	12	8	16	85	14.2	11.5	0.5
Quality of Life	15	10	12	<i>19</i>	<i>18</i>	<b>23</b>	97	16.2	16.5	0.6
Public Safety	17	8	16	<b>18</b>	12	14	85	14.2	15.0	0.5
Economic Development	<i>18</i>	6	15	<b>19</b>	15	19	92	15.3	16.5	0.6
Total Positives & Problems	<b>64</b>	23	44	49	32	42	254	42.3	43.0	1.6
Total # of Items	76	41	80	80	58	<b>85</b>	420	70.0	78.0	2.6
Grand Total	<b>140</b>	64	124	129	90	127	674	112.3	125.5	4.2
Average Pos. & Probs.	32.0	11.5	22.0	24.5	16.0	21.0				
Average # of Items	15.2	8.2	16.0	16.0	11.6	17.0				
Overall Average	20.0	9.1	17.7	18.4	12.9	18.1				
Per Person Pos. & Probs.	2.7	1.3	1.0	2.5	1.1	1.7				
Per Person # Items	3.2	2.3	1.8	4.0	1.9	3.4				
Total Per Person	5.8	3.6	2.8	6.5	3.0	5.1				

Notes: **Boldfaced** numbers indicate the highest for that particular grouping at all meetings.  
*Italicized* numbers indicate the topic area which generated the most discussion at a particular meeting.