



MCDOWELL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED _

WVULAW

Land Use and Sustainable
Development Law Clinic

INTRODUCTION

Very few places in West Virginia have the history and mystique of McDowell County. The southernmost county in the Mountain State, McDowell County has left an indelible mark on the region. With a past that often seems bigger than life, the tales of this beautiful and rugged place are now tempered by the challenges of today. Once the bustling epicenter of coal country, McDowell County now faces complex and longstanding issues.

Issues include high levels of substance abuse, lack of infrastructure, a dwindling economy, lack of jobs, a large number of abandoned and dilapidated structures, and inadequate health care. While there are no easy ways to address these issues, the community can develop a plan that acknowledges the issues, identifies methods to address the issue, and prioritizes the methods so there is structure and guidance moving forward.

Some of the recommendations that have been identified during the comprehensive plan process include developing a countywide inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures and continuing to seek resources for water and wastewater service, upgrades, and expansion. Other comprehensive plan objectives include exploring the use of public/private partnerships as an option for responsible development growth, encouraging the growth of the tourism industry, and focusing on prevention and education related to substance abuse.

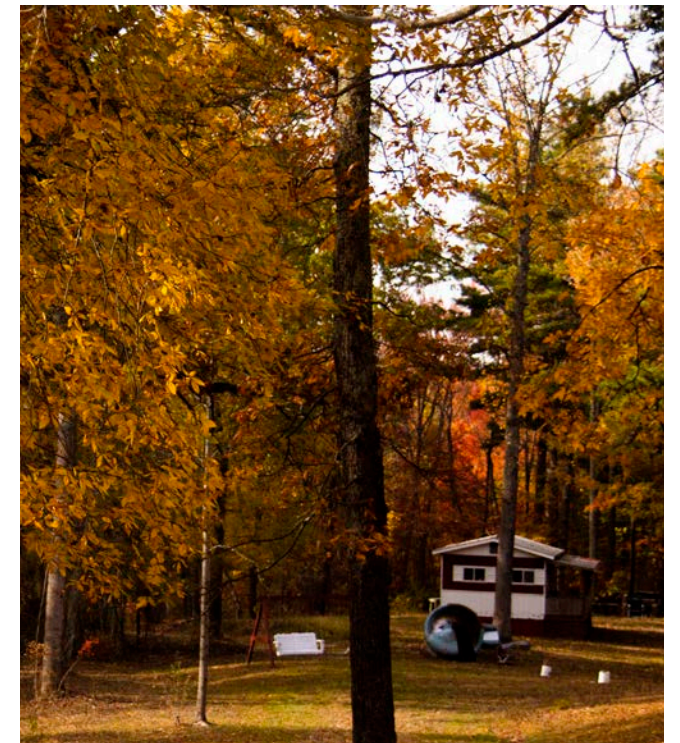
In order to have a roadmap for where the community wants to go, there needs to be a vision. As part of the comprehensive plan process, McDowell County Officials created the following vision statement:

“McDowell County, West Virginia, a community on the rise, is rich in history, outdoor recreation, and friendly, hardworking, and welcoming people. The county attracts visitors from all over the world to adventure, leading the way as the backbone of southern West Virginia’s tourism industry.”

—*McDowell County’s Vision Statement*

The vision statement serves as the foundation for future planning and decision-making in McDowell County. The vision statement is forward-thinking and can help ensure that future decisions align with the goals and objectives set forth in the plan. Furthermore, recommendations and actions steps in the comprehensive plan should be consistent with the vision statement. Developing a comprehensive plan would allow the community to determine how to address the most important issues facing McDowell County.

At the beginning of the comprehensive plan process in 2016, county officials reached out to all the municipalities and asked if the municipalities wanted to participate in the comprehensive plan process. All ten (10) communities agreed to participate in the comprehensive plan process with the idea that each municipality could adopt the county comprehensive plan as their own. As part of this process, the municipalities have discussed strengths and weaknesses, and mapping that will help inform the entire plan. This Chapter highlights the framework of the plan and explains why the county and the municipalities are completing a comprehensive plan.



Contents

| | |
|-----|--|
| 2 | Chapter One: Introduction |
| 12 | Chapter Two: County and Municipal Overview |
| 64 | Chapter Three: Critical Issues |
| 104 | Chapter Four: Action Plan |
| 136 | Appendices |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The comprehensive plan is not one person or one group’s plan, the plan speaks for and represents the entire county. In fact, McDowell County will become one of the first counties in the state to develop a truly countywide comprehensive plan, as all ten municipalities participated in the development of the county’s comprehensive plan.

While impossible to acknowledge all people, organizations, and groups that participated in the comprehensive plan process, the following list identifies those who have provided significant input into the plan’s development:

McDowell County Commission

McDowell County Planning Commission

Municipalities:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Town of Anawalt | City of Keystone |
| Town of Bradshaw | Town of Kimball |
| Town of Davy | Town of Northfork |
| City of Gary | City of War |
| Town of Iaeger | City of Welch |

Region I Planning and Development Council

McDowell County Citizens and Stakeholders

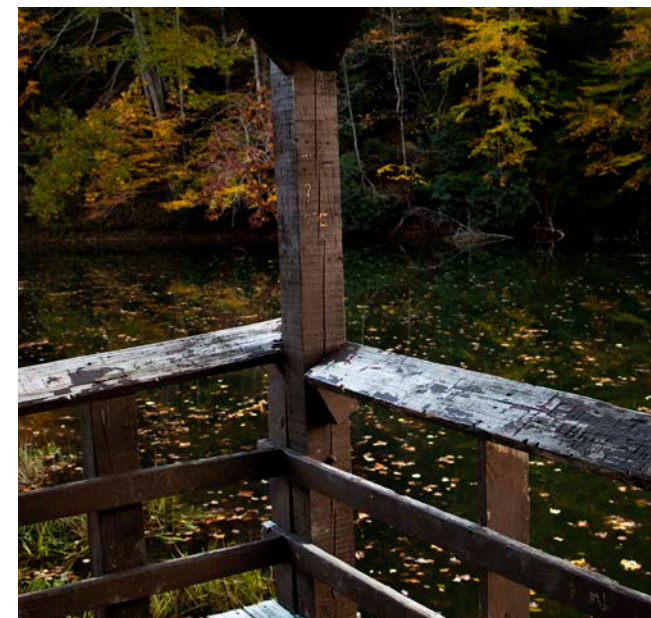
The Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, WVU College of Law

McDowell County Public Library

McDowell County Planning Commission

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mr. Cecil Patterson, President | Mr. Mack Davis |
| Mr. John Derek Tyson, Vice President | Ms. Emily Miller |
| Mr. Jay Chatman | Mr. Harold Patterson |
| | Mr. David Rudolph |

Berwind Lake



Advantages of creating a comprehensive plan

Prepares a community for the future

Promotes coordination between various levels of government

Helps establish short- and long-term priorities

Increases the chances for successful grant applications

WHY MCDOWELL COUNTY DEVELOPED A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan process provides an opportunity for residents, business owners, and local elected officials to examine the current conditions in their community and decide how to address identified issues. Over the last several decades, McDowell County has experienced a significant decline in population, high unemployment rates, and high levels of substance abuse. Due to these challenges, and with an eye to the future, the county decided to develop a comprehensive plan. Many studies and plans have already been generated for McDowell County. Therefore, the planning commission attempted to incorporate pertinent parts of those studies and plans without causing overlap or duplication.

During the comprehensive plan process, county and municipal officials analyzed components such as land use, transportation, housing, economic development, recreation, and community facilities. Preparing for the future via a comprehensive plan allows local governments to make informed decisions on issues that are relevant to its citizens. While numerous advantages exist for developing a comprehensive plan, one of the greatest advantages is the creation of a blueprint for how McDowell County should move forward in the next 10-15 years. Not only does the comprehensive plan provide guidance as to what to do, but the plan also recommends who will do the work, and how much the projects will cost to complete.

As McDowell County prepares to move forward in otherwise difficult economic times, residents, local officials, and business owners have an opportunity to be a force of positive change in their community. The information gathered throughout the planning process has been carefully integrated into the comprehensive plan so that future decision makers will understand the reasoning behind the recommendations of the plan.

WHO DEVELOPED THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code authorizes a planning commission to prepare a comprehensive plan for their community. The McDowell County Planning Commission was formed in 2016 and consists of seven members from within the county. The planning commission serves in an advisory capacity to the County Commission, which makes final decisions on the plan.

Since 2016, the McDowell County Planning Commission has met several times to discuss, identify, and analyze the main issues facing the county. Also, during that time, the planning commission synthesized information from open houses, stakeholder in-

terviews, and visioning exercises. The Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at West Virginia University College of Law (“Land Use Clinic”) has facilitated the comprehensive plan process and assisted in drafting the comprehensive plan.

Each municipality was involved throughout the planning process and provided input regarding their specific needs and goals. Upon adoption of the comprehensive plan by McDowell County, each of these municipalities’ governing bodies can decide whether to adopt the county comprehensive plan as their own.

Town of Anawalt
Town of Bradshaw
Town of Davy
City of Gary
Town of Iaeger
City of Keystone
Town of Kimball
Town of Northfork
City of War
City of Welch

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A: Land Use Planning, establishes the requirements that local governments must follow when developing a comprehensive plan. Chapter 8A, Article 3 details the required elements of a comprehensive plan. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 (pages 5-6) of Chapter 1 direct readers to where they can find the components and objectives required under Chapter 8A, Article 3 in the comprehensive plan.

Chapter 8, Article 3, of the West Virginia Code enables county comprehensive plans to include the planning of municipalities within the county. Municipalities can adopt a county-wide comprehensive plan as their own, but only with consent of the governing body of the municipality. Each municipality needs to participate in the comprehensive plan process, which includes meeting to analyze current conditions, discuss issues, mapping, and soliciting for public input. Each of the following ten municipalities in McDowell County will need to consent to adopting the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan as their own municipal comprehensive plan.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The West Virginia Code requires that the planning commission give notice and hold a public hearing. After the public hearing, the McDowell County Planning Commission must submit the recommended plan to the county commission and present the draft to the county commission. The McDowell County Commission is then required to hold another public hearing prior to adopting the comprehensive plan. Each of the municipalities must also hold a public hearing before consenting to the comprehensive plan.

WHAT INFORMATION DOES A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INCLUDE?

The Land Use Clinic ensured that the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan fully complied with the West Virginia Code. A comprehensive plan is required to address certain components; however, a community may choose to focus on specific issues in their plan. This comprehensive plan focuses on the issues most important to McDowell County, while complying with the general requirements of Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code. The tables below display the required objectives and components of a comprehensive plan, along with where the components and objectives can be found in the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan.

Table 1.1 — Required Objectives for a Comprehensive Plan (W. VA. Code §8A-3-4)

| Code Provision | Chapter |
|--|---------|
| Statement of goals and objectives | 4 |
| Timeline on how to meet short and long-term goals and objectives | 4 |
| Action plan with implementation strategies | 4 |
| Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding | 4 |
| Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies | 4 |
| A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation | 4 |
| Maps, plats, and/or charts that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses | 1–4 |



Table 1.2 — Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan (W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(c))

| Code Provision | Page # |
|---|-------------------------|
| <i>Land Use</i> | 29–31, 78–87, 110–111 |
| Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, conservation) | 29, 86 |
| Population density and building intensity standards | 16–18 |
| Growth or decline management | 74 |
| Projected population growth or decline | 74 |
| Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas) | 29–31, 82–85 |
| <i>Housing</i> | 23–26, 66–69, 110–111 |
| Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities) | 111 |
| Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed | 66 |
| Address substandard housing | 66–69, 105–107, 110–111 |
| Rehabilitate and improve existing housing | 67–69 |
| Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing | 68 |
| <i>Transportation</i> | 26–28, 70–73 |
| Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river, and any other mode | 27–28 |
| Movement of traffic and parking | 27, 72–73 |
| Pedestrian and bicycle systems | 73 |
| Intermodal transportation | 28 |
| <i>Economic Development</i> | 18–21, 111–112 |
| Analyze opportunities, strengths and weaknesses | 45–63, 87–94 |
| Identify and designate economic development sites and/or sectors | 91–94 |
| Identify types of economic development sought | 89–94 |

Table 1.2 — Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan (W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(c))

| Code Provision | Page # |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Miscellaneous Components</i> | |
| Infrastructure | 21–23, 32–38, 73–78, 94–100, 107–109 |
| Public services | 21–23, 32–38, 73–78, 94–100, 112–113 |
| Rural | 96 |
| Recreation | 38–41, 45, 86–87, 100–103 |
| Community Design | |
| Preferred development areas | 67, 79 |
| Renewal and/or redevelopment | 68 |
| Financing | 114–135 |
| Historic preservation | 13–15, 42 |

PUBLIC INPUT

The ideas and priorities of residents, business owners, and stakeholders guide and shape the comprehensive plan. Therefore, public input has been essential in developing the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan. Opportunities for public input consisted of stakeholder interviews, open houses, an online survey, meetings open to the public, and high school focus groups. The results from the public input process were incorporated into the development of the plan.

At the beginning of the comprehensive plan process, the planning commission adopted public input procedures, which can be found in the Appendix. Public input procedures outline how the planning commission would encourage public participation throughout the comprehensive plan process. The planning commission ensured they followed the public input procedures by creating multiple opportunities for the public to provide input and otherwise participate in the development of the comprehensive plan.

OPEN HOUSES

A series of ten initial open house events were held, one in each of the county's ten municipalities, between July 9 - 12, 2018 to gather public input from residents and other interested parties in the municipalities and the surrounding unincorporated areas. The open houses were publicized through the dissemination of flyers, posters, and public service announcements in the newspaper. The planning commission also advertised the open houses through social media platforms.

The goal of the open houses was to receive public input on a variety of topics, such as infrastructure, land use, and economic development. Participants were invited to stop by during the posted hours to offer ideas and voice their concerns on the issues most important to the county and its residents. The information gathered at the open houses helped inform the McDowell County Planning Commission in preparing the comprehensive plan draft. The open houses also provided an opportunity for officials to explain what the comprehensive plan is and the importance of creating a comprehensive plan.

During the open houses, attendees were asked to complete several different activities relating to the municipalities and the county in general. Over 130 people attended the ten open house events. Results of the open house included the following.

General Themes from the Open Houses

More youth and senior activities are needed

Infrastructure, abandoned and dilapidated buildings, and economic development are the top concerns

Highways are crucial

More recreational opportunities wanted by residents

Rivers and streams need to be cleaned up

Apathy is a major threat to growth

Population decline will fix itself with better infrastructure, housing, jobs, businesses, etc.

More medical facilities are needed to accommodate the aging population

The lack of modern communications systems holds the county back from attracting new businesses/people

The drug problem needs to be addressed

At each open house meetings several activities provided citizens with the opportunity to provide input. The following findings resulted from the activities.

ACTIVITY 1

Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Exercise (Top responses for each)

Strength — The People

Weakness — Infrastructure

Opportunity — Tourism

Threat — People Leaving

ACTIVITY 2

“Spend my tax dollars on... to improve the quality of life in the community” Activity Poster (fill in the bubble)

The number one response was “roads.”

ACTIVITY 3

Mapping

Each open house displayed a map of the municipality and the surrounding unincorporated areas. Participants were asked to mark assets and challenges, as well as future development areas. Individual open house results from each of the communities can be found in the Appendix.

SCHOOL VISITS

The planning process often overlooks the community’s youth. However, the McDowell County Planning Commission sought opinions from the youth because they valued the younger generation’s thoughts and ideas. The planning commission also understands that the youth of today will soon be deciding whether to stay or leave the county.

On May 2, 2018, Land Use Clinic personnel visited Mount View High School to gather input from students. Ten students participated in the exercises that included mapping and visioning. The Land Use Clinic also met with twenty students from River View High School on October 17, 2018. A similar set of activities were completed by the students. Both groups provided input on the county’s needs and identified future changes that should be made.

The student’s feedback also brought forth some new ideas that had not been discussed by the planning commission. Complete results from both high school focus groups can be found in the Appendix.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholders include key persons, groups, or organizations that have specific interest or knowledge regarding McDowell County. The planning commission helped identify the key stakeholders in the community, which consisted of county and municipal government officials, educational leaders, non-profit organizations, recreation groups, local businesses, public safety providers, and infrastructure providers.

Each stakeholder was asked to complete a brief survey regarding the function of their organization within the county and to express any issues, needs, or concerns. Approximately 30 stakeholders either completed a survey or were interviewed. A list of stakeholders can be found in Appendix _____. The stakeholder’s input was vital to help identify issues and develop recommendations.

ONLINE SURVEY

The McDowell County Planning Commission sought additional input from citizens through an online survey. The survey link was advertised in the newspaper and on social media platforms. A total of 144 people completed the survey. The results of the survey were presented to the planning commission to help further identify key issues and formulate recommendations in the plan. A summary of the online survey results can be found in the Appendix.

USING THE PLAN

This plan should be consulted by municipal and county officials, especially when there are decisions concerning development proposals, capital improvement projects, grant proposals, or policy changes. The comprehensive plan prioritizes the implementation of both short- and long-term goals by giving step-by-step instructions on how to fulfill each recommendation.

The Action Plan and corresponding implementation matrix contained in Chapter 4 should be used by the local officials to begin implementing high priority recommendations soon after plan adoption. The comprehensive plan should be reviewed periodically by county and municipal officials to ensure that the vision and goals identified in the plan are still relevant and applicable.

GOALS

During the comprehensive plan process, the McDowell County Planning Commission, along with stakeholders, residents, and business owners created several goals that would help achieve the vision statement that the planning commission created. The goals for the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan include:

Goal 1: Address abandoned and dilapidated structures.

Goal 2: Improve existing infrastructure and encourage the development of new infrastructure.

Goal 3: Promote sound land use practices in the municipalities and throughout the county.

Goal 4: Encourage a resilient and sustainable economy that will support current jobs and promote new business opportunities that benefit the residents of McDowell County.

Goal 5: Increase public safety efforts in the county and expand treatment options for those with addiction.

Anawalt Open House





COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 of the comprehensive plan focuses on providing an overview of the entire county, including the municipalities. Present conditions in education, housing, transportation, economic development, tourism and other areas of community life prove important to understand when developing a comprehensive plan. The planning commission utilizes data and information from Chapter 2 to identify the needs and provide recommendations for the county and the municipalities.

REGIONAL SETTING

McDowell County, located in the southern coalfields of West Virginia, totals 535 square miles in size, making it the 13th largest county in the state. The county borders Mercer, Mingo, and Wyoming counties in West Virginia, and Buchanan and Tazewell counties in Virginia. Located in the Cumberland Plateau region, the county's topography is characterized by rugged and steep mountain side slopes and ridgetops and narrow floodplains along streams. McDowell County is 87 percent forested and is situated in the most forested region of the state.

McDowell County lies almost entirely within the Tug Fork River watershed, with a few acres along the Mercer County line that lie within the Crane Creek Watershed (Bluestone River Tributary). The lowest elevation in the county is 875 feet above sea level at the confluence of the Tug Fork River and Fourpole Creek in the western part of the county. The highest elevation is on Flat Top Mountain (3,400 feet) in the eastern part of the county, near the McDowell borders of Mercer and Wyoming Counties.

McDowell County is represented in the West Virginia Legislature by two Senate districts, the 6th and 9th, and three Delegates districts, the 21st, 25nd, and 26th. All municipalities share the same Senate and Delegate (House) districts, except for the Town of Davy, which is located in the 9th Senate district and the 25nd House District. There are no McDowell municipalities located in the 21st House District.

HISTORY

A Dynamic and Diverse Beginning

McDowell County is located deep in the heart of Appalachia and has an unparalleled history in West Virginia. The county became known for some of the world's highest quality smokeless coal, which attracted a wide-range of migrant labor from all over the world. The rapid increase of the coal industry with a large in-migration of workers with diverse cultures contributed to the county eventually becoming the largest coal-producing county in the nation.

The state's southernmost county, McDowell was formed from Tazewell County, Virginia in 1858 and named after Governor James McDowell of Virginia. In the 1880s, the county started producing high quality coal, characteristic of the Flat Top-Pocahontas Coalfield, and Norfolk and Western Railroad (now Norfolk Southern) began building tracks to export the area's abundant natural resources. Out-of-state investors began buying large tracts of land in anticipation of railroad construction and coal mining.

One of the best preserved late-1800s mining towns in McDowell County is Elkhorn. Elkhorn was developed in 1892 by John J. Lincoln, who envisioned the town as a model community with better living conditions compared to neighboring mining towns. Lincoln lived among his employees and built his Victorian home in Elkhorn in 1899. The John J. Lincoln House still stands today and was once the location where Lincoln held several events, including annual performances of the Elkhorn orchestra on his lawn.

McDowell County's population grew from 7,300 people in 1890 to 68,000 people in 1920. A multitude of Southern black and European workers migrated to work in the mines. Subsequently, McDowell became one of West Virginia's most diverse counties.

Although coal companies kept their towns segregated, McDowell's black community developed significant social and political influence. The county's unofficial nickname, "The Free State of McDowell," was popularized by M.T. Whittico, a black newspaperman in Keystone, because of the area's forward-thinking atmosphere and its influential African American community. Today, McDowell's black population (by percentage) is the second highest in the state.

Little New York

McDowell's county seat of Welch was named after Captain Isaac A. Welch. Originally located in Perryville (now English, WV), a contentious vote moved the county seat in 1892 to Welch. Eventually, Welch became a regional entertainment and commerce hub. Immigrants, African-Americans, and native-born West Virginians from the coalfields packed the streets on Saturday nights. Over time people referred to Welch as "Little New York." Since 1919, Welch has hosted the world's longest running Veteran's Day Parade, including such high-profile guests as Presidents Harry S. Truman and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Labor History and Assassination of Sid Hatfield

The rapid expansion of the state's southern coalfields, and the construction of company towns produced constant tension between coal companies and miners. Conflicts between the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) labor union, coal companies, and the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency became legendary in Southern West Virginia.

Several significant labor conflicts occurred in McDowell County. In 1895, approximately 8,000 men gathered in what is known as the Flat Top-Pocahontas Coalfield Strike in Keystone and marched across to the Virginia border to force mine workers to strike. Alarmed, the Governor of Virginia ordered forces to protect the border, and eventually the strike ended as the coal companies imported workers to replace striking miners. In 1920, 100 miners met in Roderfield to form a labor union and posted sentries with high-powered rifles around the location. The Sheriff (also employed as Baldwin-Felts agents) arrived, a gun battle ensued, and four men died. The next day R.B. Page, a black miner from McDowell County, led an armed group of 75 men to defend the union miners in Roderfield; most of the 75 were arrested. The Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency was a private detective agency between the 1890s and 1930s and were central actors in the events that led to the Battle of Blair Mountain and other violent confrontations with labor union members.



The most well-known labor battle took place on the morning of August 1, 1921 in Welch. Matewan police chief Sid Hatfield, a descendant of the Hatfield family from the famous Hatfield and McCoy feud, and his deputy Ed Chambers were killed on the McDowell County Courthouse steps by Baldwin-Felts detectives in retaliation for other labor conflicts, such as the Ludlow Massacre and the Battle of Matewan. The assassination became part of McDowell County and West Virginia lore, and the resulting outrage would lead to a massive -- albeit unsuccessful -- armed union march to Blair Mountain to organize the southern coalfields.

For much of the early 1900s, most attempts at unionization in McDowell County were small scale, futile affairs. However, after Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed office, the United States Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933. The Act guaranteed the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively in West Virginia and McDowell County.

The Coal Industry Rise and Decline

McDowell County continued to grow in the first half of the 1900s. Some of the greatest entrepreneurs in U.S. history had interests in the county. Henry Ford owned mining operations in Twin Branch, and J.P. Morgan built the mining town of Gary and several other company towns to supply metallurgical coal for his steel mills. For many years McDowell County was the world's leading coal-producing county. During World War II, many men served their country by supplying coal to the war effort.

McDowell County reached a peak population of almost 100,000 people in 1950. However, due primarily to mine mechanization, the county's population fell to 71,359 only ten years later, a decline of 28 percent. That same year, in 1960, President John F. Kennedy toured the area hoping to address rising poverty, and a year later the first beneficiaries of the national food stamp program were a family from McDowell County.

In the 1980s, a nationwide decline in the steel industry impacted McDowell County -- whose metallurgical coal formed coke, essential to the production of steel -- resulting in more coal-industry layoffs. The City of Gary had a peak population of nearly 15,000 in the 1940s. When U.S. Steel's coal operations in Gary finally closed in 1986, the company demolished different buildings and sold off company-owned homes to the city residents. By 2017, The population of Gary had decreased to 827 people.

Flooding in the early 2000s would also have a devastating impact on the county. In 2001 and 2002, severe floods impacted many places in the county. Many areas that managed to escape heavy damage from the first flood in 2001 were not so lucky when a second disastrous flood occurred the next year (2002). Homes, businesses, and vital infrastructure were destroyed, which led more people to leave the county. McDowell County's population continued to decline from 27,127 in the year 2000, to 18,223 in 2018.

Today, the pioneering spirit that helped build McDowell County, and the continued importance and legacy of coal, remain an integral part of the county's identity. The fascinating history of communities throughout the county make the area truly unique.



The Hatfield Clan, 1897

POPULATION

Population Characteristics

McDowell County has endured significant population decline in the last several decades. In the 1950s, at the height of the coal industry, the total population was nearly 100,000 people, which made the McDowell County the third most populous county in West Virginia at the time. However, the mechanization of the coal industry and more efficient methods of extraction, such as surface mining replaced traditional coal mining jobs and led to a sharp decline in employment opportunities and eventually population loss. As of 2018, the population is estimated to be 18,233 people, which is the 32nd (of 55) most populous county in the state. The county ranks 35th in West Virginia in population density with 38 people per square mile, compared to the state average of 77 people per square mile. (Source: US Census, American Factfinder).

Figure 1 illustrates how the population has steadily declined in the past six decades. From 1970 to 1980, the population decline slowed to 1.5 percent due to a rebound in the coal industry.

After 1980, the population decline was nearly 20 percent each decade. Overall, from 1950 to 2018 the population decreased by more than 80 percent.

Figure 2 compares the population of surrounding counties in West Virginia and Virginia to McDowell County. McDowell County’s population is lower than adjacent counties.

Figure 1: McDowell County Population, 1950–2010

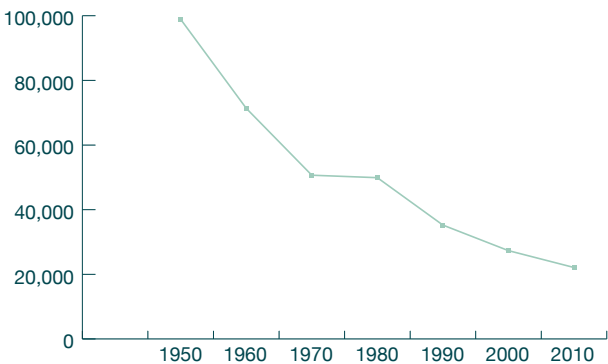


Figure 2: Population of McDowell County and Adjacent Counties, 2017 estimates

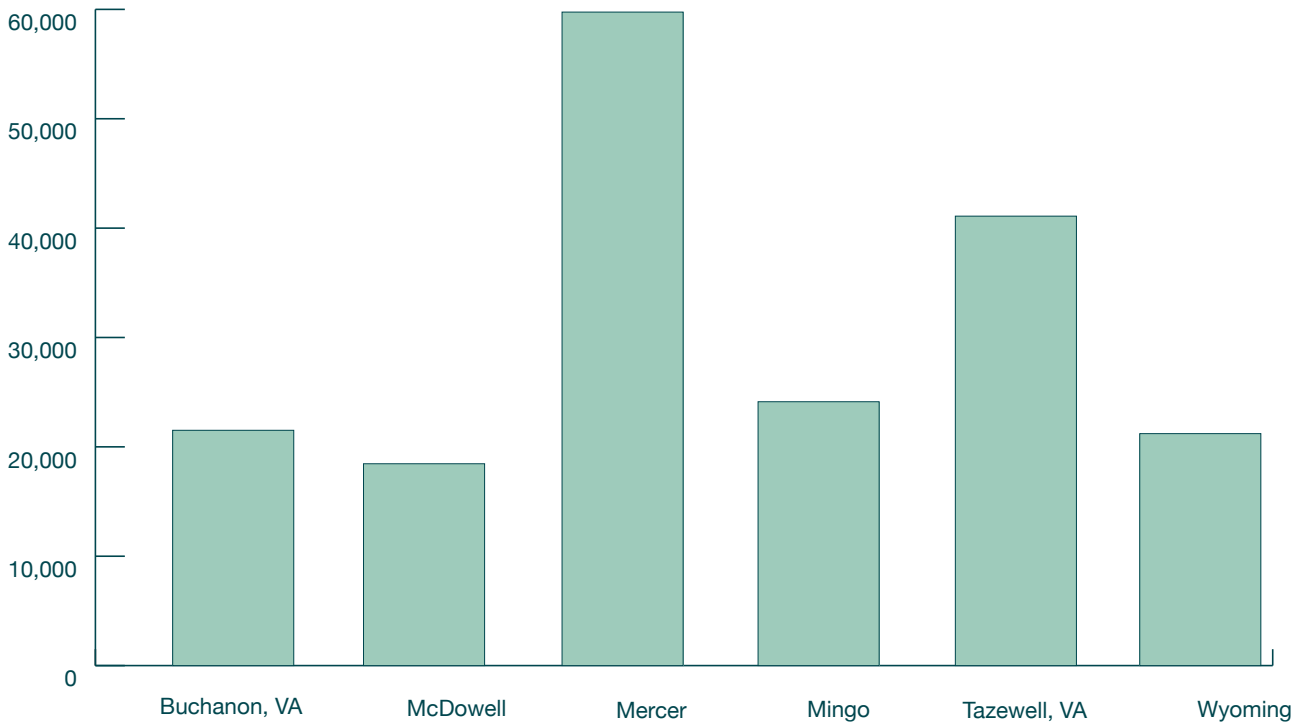
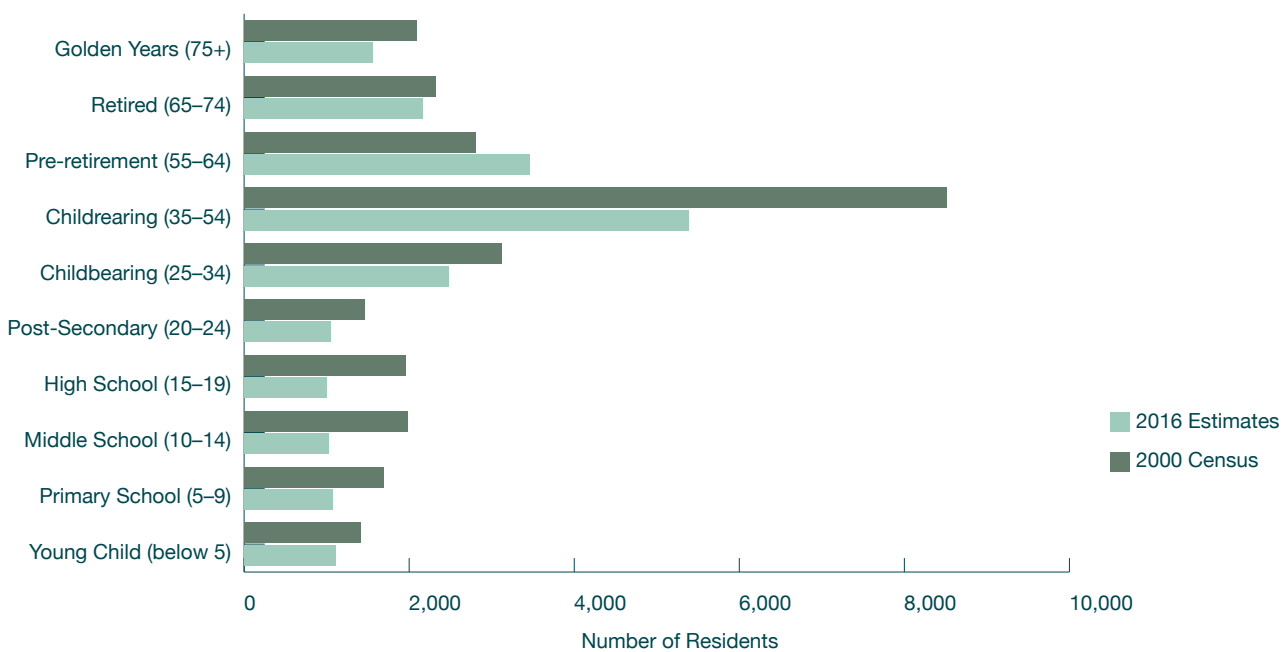


Figure 3: McDowell County Age Distribution by Cohort, 2000 and 2016 Comparison



McDowell County’s neighbor to the east, Mercer County has almost three times the population of McDowell.

In 2014, the WVU College of Business and Economics (CB&E) projected that McDowell County’s population will continue to decline by approximately ten percent and total 15,976 people by 2030. This projection is consistent with the current population decline in McDowell County. The continued loss in population affects many aspects of the community, including: tax revenue, new business development, grant funding, education, and the availability of various resources.

Race

McDowell County is one of the most racially diverse counties in West Virginia. 2015 U.S. Census Estimates indicate that 89.1 percent of the population in McDowell County is White and 9.4 percent is African-American or Black, which is the second-highest African-American population percentage in the state. This is likely due in part to the high influx of African Americans migrating to Southern West Virginia in the early 20th century to work in the coal industry. However, the African-American population has declined by nearly two percentage points since 2000. Less than two percent of the population identified as being more than one race.

Age

The median age in McDowell County is 44.3 years of age, which is older than the state’s median age of 41.9; the national median age is 37.7. An aging population has certain needs that may be different from a community with a younger population or a community with many families.

Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution in McDowell County. This information allows the county to anticipate future needs of the population. The Childrearing and Pre-retirement age groups (ages 35 – 64) combine to form the highest population percentage. The pre-retirement cohort generally represents the “baby boomer” generation.

Since 2000, all age groups in McDowell County have declined in population, with the exception of Pre-retirement (55-64), which has increased by 23 percent. This population increase is consistent with WVU CB&E’s state-wide population forecast, which estimates that persons aged 65 and over will comprise 23 percent of the population in 2030. McDowell County should specifically assess the future needs of older residents. Handicapped accessibility, transportation services, medical care, and appropriate housing options will need to be addressed to accommodate the childrearing and pre-retirement cohorts as they continue to age.

Health

McDowell County has a high-rate of individuals with health care coverage, and West Virginia is ranked fourth in the nation in the percentage of individuals with health care coverage. However, according to annual county health rankings by the University of Wisconsin – which evaluates a county’s health outcomes based on a range of health factors, from smoking to obesity – McDowell County has the lowest county health ranking in West Virginia.

McDowell County has one of the state’s highest opioid overdose rates, and has higher than average percentages of adults smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and teen births when compared to West Virginia and the U.S. Also, the county has lower than average access to healthy food options, exercise opportunities, and physical and mental health providers. While these statistics are of concern, McDowell County’s health indicators are similar to other counties in the state, which shows that many of these issues are state-wide concerns.

The Welch Community Hospital is the only acute care center located in McDowell County. The hospital provides 65-beds for acute care, 24/7-365 physician-staffed emergency room, a seven-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and a 59-bed Long-Term Care unit. The hospital also provides diverse obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN), family planning services, clinics (rural health and surgery), full service respiratory therapy cardiopulmonary service, laboratory, radiology, clinical inpatient pharmacy. The hospital operates a CPR/ACLS Training Center in addition to providing these services.

Though Welch Community Hospital is considered a county asset, the facility does not provide every ser-

vice and treatment necessary for potential patients. Residents often travel to facilities in other parts of the region. The nearest medical centers are in Beckley (Raleigh General, Beckley VA and Beckley ARH), Princeton (Princeton Community Hospital), Bluefield (Bluefield Regional Medical Center) and Logan (Logan Regional Medical Center). Patients also travel to facilities in Charleston or Huntington for specialized care. In addition to healthcare access, recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals, especially doctors qualified in specialty care, prove difficult. Bluefield Regional Medical Center has recently ceased providing many services.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

McDowell County’s economy has historically been based on the coal mining industry. Today, mining, education, and health care services are the county’s main employment sectors, although the need for economic diversification and increased job opportunities present persistent concerns. As of 2018, McDowell County’s unemployment rate was 8.6 percent, which is the county’s lowest unemployment rate since 1990. The low rate could be due to an increase in coal production or fewer people actively in the labor force. However, despite these improvements, the county remains last in the state in many other economic indicators.

The unemployment rate has consistently been higher than the state average. However, in the last few years the gap between the state and county unemployment rates has narrowed.

Employment

As of 2017, McDowell County had 5,363 jobs, which is a 28 percent decline from 2010. In 2017, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, 27 percent of the county workforce was employed in state and local government, 17 percent in mining, 10 percent in retail, and 9 percent in health care. Since 2001, each industry has declined in number of jobs, except for the mining sector, which has increased slightly since 2010. Together these four sectors comprise 53 percent of the jobs in the county.

As of 2017, according to Workforce West Virginia, the top employers in the county were the McDowell County Board of Education, McDowell County Corrections federal prison facility, coal mining operations, and Welch Emergency Hospital (see Figure 6). Wal-Mart was one of the top employers in the county from 2005 until its closure in 2016. The store employed 140 people and generated \$145,000 annually in taxes for the Town of Kimball. As shown in Figure 5, the county has lost nearly 300 retail jobs between 2001 and 2017.

Figure 5: Total Full-time and Part-time Employment by Industry and Number of Jobs In McDowell County

| Description | 2001 | 2010 | 2017 |
|--|------|------|------|
| <i>Employment by Place of Work</i> | | | |
| Total employment (number of jobs) | 6346 | 6859 | 5363 |
| <i>By Industry</i> | | | |
| Farm employment | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forestry, fishing, and related activities | 31 | (D) | 20 |
| Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction | 848 | (D) | 917 |
| Utilities | 48 | (D) | (D) |
| Construction | 197 | 233 | (D) |
| Manufacturing | 87 | 36 | (D) |
| Wholesale trade | 43 | (D) | (D) |
| Retail trade | 856 | 794 | 548 |
| Transportation and warehousing | 317 | 413 | 274 |
| Information | 69 | 83 | 62 |
| Finance and insurance | 188 | 138 | 123 |
| Real estate and rental and leasing | 98 | 51 | 44 |
| Professional, scientific, and technical services | 170 | 127 | (D) |

Figure 4: McDowell County Unemployment Rate by Percent, 1990–2018



| Description | 2001 | 2010 | 2017 |
|--|------|------|------|
| <i>By Industry (cont)</i> | | | |
| Administrative, waste management, remediation services | 84 | (D) | 190 |
| Educational services | 24 | 17 | 19 |
| Health care and social assistance | 614 | 521 | 481 |
| Other services | 360 | 304 | 308 |
| Federal civilian | 84 | 204 | 377 |
| Military | 141 | 112 | 87 |
| State government | 545 | 506 | 446 |
| Local government | 1307 | 1274 | 1024 |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

“(D)” indicates information not available

Workforce WV predicts that healthcare-related industries will have the most job growth state-wide through 2026. This is largely due to the expansion of West Virginia’s aging population. Mining industry employment is expected to decline 1.6 percent state-wide by 2026. In the last quarter of 2017, the McDowell County mining industry comprised of 25 operations, employed 925 individuals, and produced nearly \$16 million in wages. Since 2000, the most productive year for the mining sector was in 2011 when the industry had 50 operations and 2,021 jobs. Comparatively, mining-related employment is slightly higher in neighboring Mingo and Wyoming counties.

Labor Force

McDowell County has the lowest percentage of individuals in the labor force (age 16 – 65) in the state, and the lowest percentage of labor participation, with only 31 percent of the eligible working aged individuals employed. According to 2016 Census estimates, over 1,300 people traveled to McDowell County for work, with the most individuals traveling into the county from Tazewell County, Virginia. Conversely, most individuals traveling out of McDowell County for work traveled to Mercer County (see Figure 7).

Figure 6: Ten Largest Employers in McDowell County, March 2018

| |
|---|
| 1. McDowell Board of Education |
| 2. Federal Prison System |
| 3. Extra Energy, Inc. |
| 4. XMV, Inc. |
| 5. Welch Emergency Hospital |
| 6. Stevens Correctional Center |
| 7. Prime Processing, Inc. |
| 8. McDowell Nursing and Rehabilitation Cebter |
| 9. McDowell County Commission |
| 10. Raw Coal Mining Company, Inc. |

(Source: Workforce WV)

Figure 7: Number of Individuals Traveling to and from McDowell County for Employment

| | Buchanon County, VA | Mercer County | Mingo County | Raleigh County | Tazewell County, VA | Wyoming County |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Travel to McDowell | 67 | 398 | 9 | 85 | 431 | 372 |
| Travel out of McDowell | 261 | 290 | 58 | 17 | 136 | 144 |

Figure 8: Percentage of Residents who Utilize Income Support Programs

| | McDowell County | West Virginia |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Social Security | 50.7 percent | 39.8 percent |
| Supplemental Security Income | 18.3 percent | 7.9 percent |
| Cash Public Assistance Program | 1.9 percent | 2.3 percent |
| Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits | 30.8 percent | 16.4 percent |

Income and Public Assistance

In 2017, the per capita income in McDowell County was \$13,985, which is an eight percent increase from 2010. However, the median household income declined by nine percent to \$25,925 during the same time period. Figure 8 shows the differences between McDowell County and West Virginia’s overall income and benefits as of the 2016 Census Estimates. McDowell County residents receive higher rates of public assistance than state averages, except for the Cash Public Assistance Program.

The percentage of county residents on Food Stamps and SNAP benefits is almost double the state average.

According to 2016 Census estimates, approximately 37.6 percent of McDowell County’s population is living at or below the poverty line, which is an increase of ten percentage points since 2010. More than 30 percent of families in the county are at or below the poverty line. Both statistics are more than double that of the state average. As of 2015, 47 percent of children in McDowell County live below the poverty line.

EDUCATION

Over 3,000 students attend public schools in McDowell County. The county has seven primary schools and one middle school (however, Mount View High School accommodates grades 7-12). In addition to Mount View High School in Welch, River View is located in Bradshaw. The McDowell County Career and Technology Center is also located in Welch and offers a variety of skill-building programs for high school students in McDowell County (see Figure 9).

McDowell County does not have any higher education options for young graduates or adults. The closest secondary education institutions are Bluefield State College in Bluefield, Concord University in Athens, Bluefield College in Bluefield, VA, and WVU Tech in Beckley. The Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College located outside of Pineville in Wyoming County provides students with the opportunity to receive an associate degree or the first year of a bachelor’s degree.

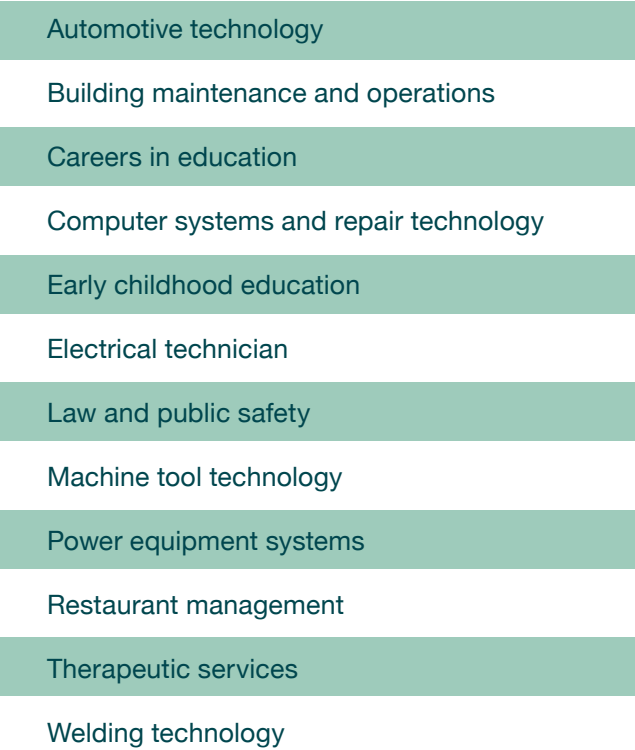
As shown on Figure 10: Educational Attainment, only three percent of McDowell County’s population over the age of 25 has obtained a bachelor’s degree, which is only a third of the state’s average. The high school graduation rate is slightly higher than the state average. Nationally, West Virginia is ranked 45th in educational attainment, which indicates that attainment is a state-wide issue.

According to McDowell County Schools, as of 2018, all children in McDowell County receive free or reduced-price school meals. Also, over 50 percent of children in the county do not live with their biological parents, which is the highest rate in the state.

Due to the declining population, many schools in McDowell County have consolidated. As a result, student travel times have increased significantly in some locations, with some bus rides being over an hour. In 2019, Anawalt Elementary School closed, further consolidating the schools in the county.

A key concern expressed by students and citizens is the lack of qualified teachers available in McDowell County. Teacher vacancies are either left unfilled or occupied by unqualified instructors. Current teachers believe there are not adequate housing options in the county and many commute from nearby Mercer and Wyoming Counties. Proposed teacher housing in Welch is aimed at encouraging teachers to live and work in McDowell County.

Figure 9: McDowell County Career and Technology Center Programs



Libraries

There are four public libraries in McDowell County, located in Bradshaw, Iaeger, Northfork, and Welch. The McDowell County Public Library in Welch is the main branch and has three full-time and two part-time employees. Residents often use the facility for public meetings and events. The library provides computers and internet service, a large collection of print materials, programs such as story hour and book club, workshops, and a notary service.

HOUSING

Housing is one the most important aspects of one’s life. Having adequate, affordable housing is important for the health and welfare of a community. Housing was identified, throughout the county, as a concern and an issue that needs to be addressed. The county has the highest percentage of homes built before 1940 and the lowest home values in the state. However, 85.2% of homeowners do not have a mortgage, compared with 52.4% statewide. Few new houses have been constructed and, according to the U.S. Census, between 2000 and 2010 the county’s housing stock declined by 2,260 units. In 2018, the “Clean-Up McDowell initiative,” a working group studying ways to address the county’s dilapidated housing issues, estimated that at least 5,000 structures in the county may need to be demolished.

McDowell County Housing Facts

- Average household size is 2.30, which is about the state average
- 85.2% of homeowners do not have a mortgage, compared with 52.4% statewide
- Median monthly rent is \$516; comparatively, Mingo is \$592, Wyoming is \$613, and West Virginia is \$658
- 12.6% of McDowell residents heat their homes with coal or coke compared to .6% statewide

Housing Types

Figure 11 illustrates that most homes within the county are single family residences, which is consistent with communities statewide. McDowell County’s mobile home housing rate of 27 percent is 12 percentage points higher than the statewide percentage. The average mobile home rate in McDowell municipalities is 13 percent, which indicates that the majority of mobile homes are located in the unincorporated portions of the county. The county’s multi-family percentage of multifamily dwelling is 3.4 percent, approximately 9 percentage points lower than the state average.

Figure 10: Educational Attainment in McDowell County

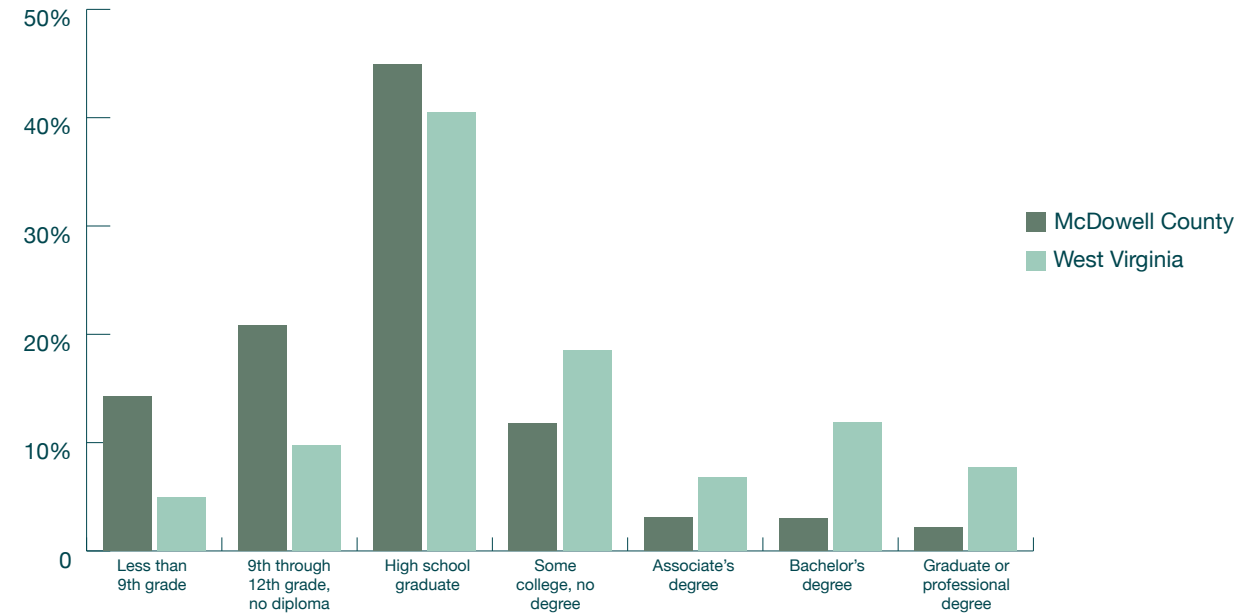
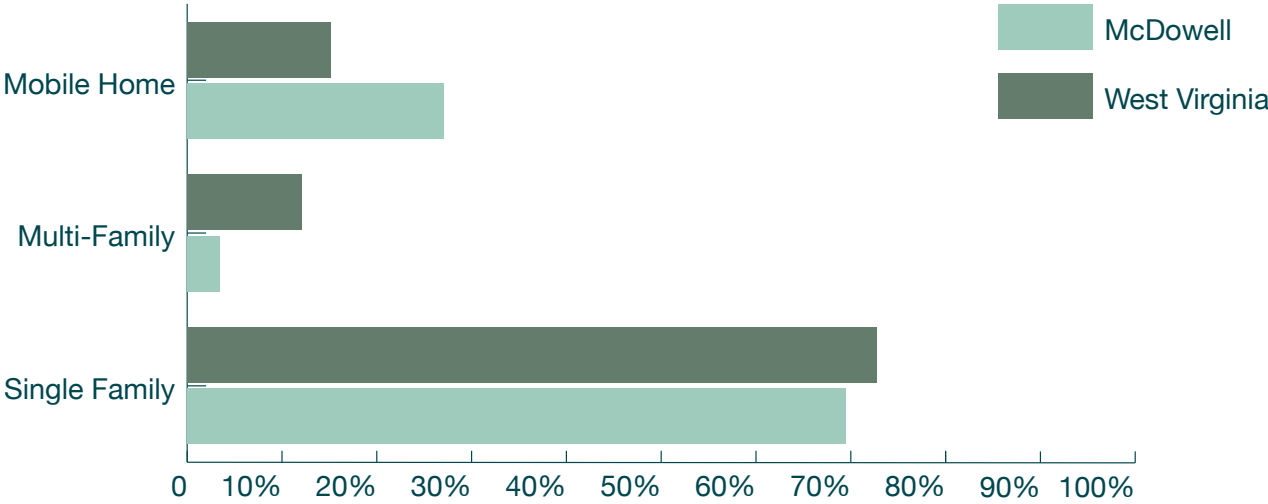


Figure 11: Housing Types in McDowell County and West Virginia





Dilapidated housing in McDowell

Figure 12: Age of Housing Stock (Year Built) in McDowell, Adjacent Counties, and West Virginia, 2016

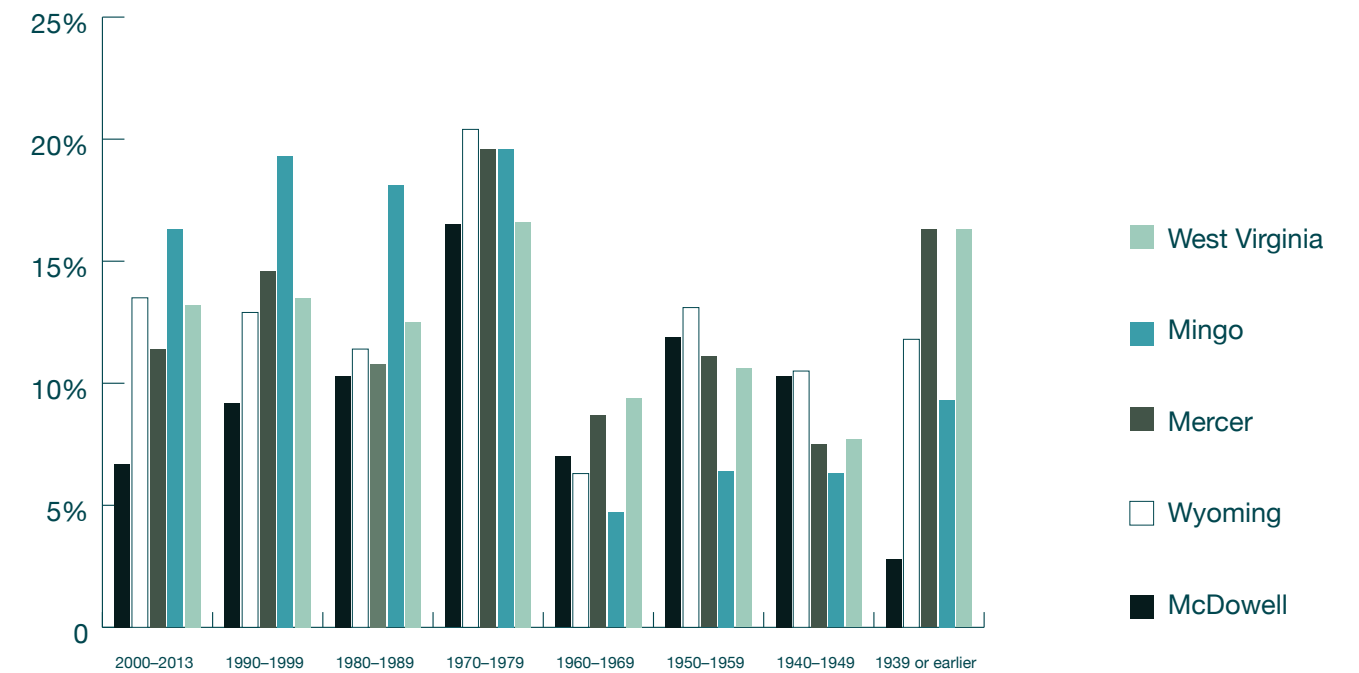
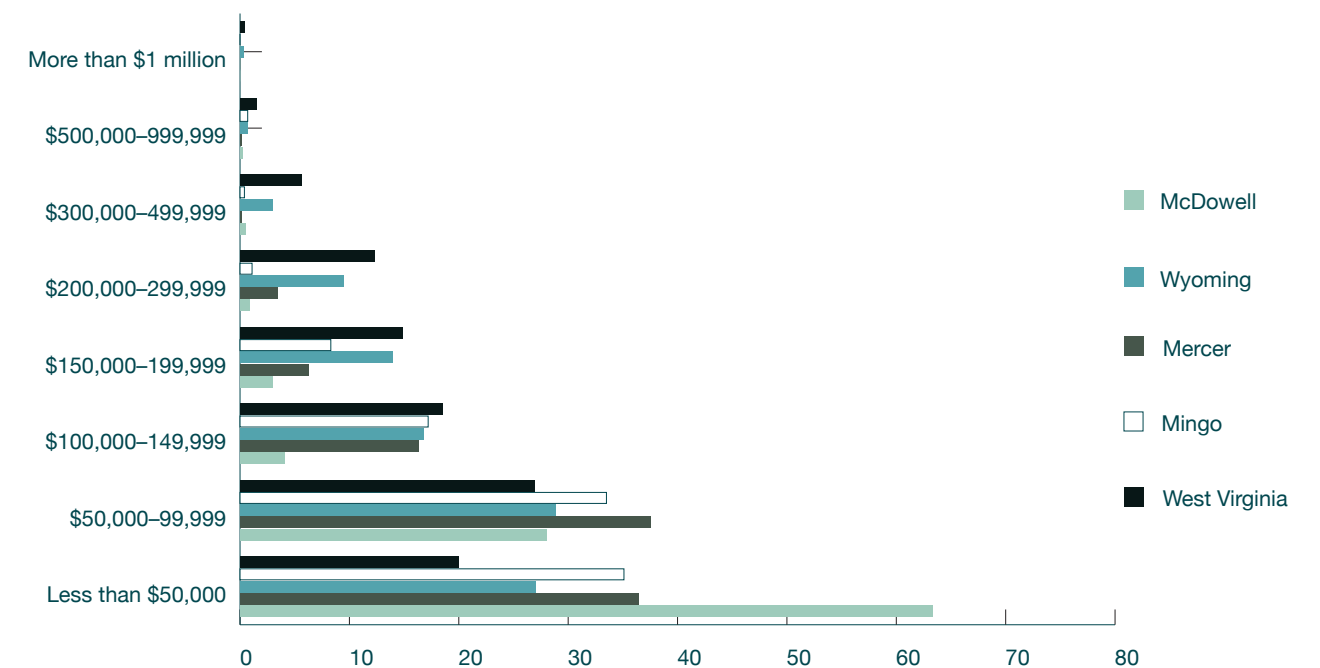


Figure 13: Housing Value Percentage in McDowell County, Adjacent Counties, and West Virginia, 2016



Several public housing options exist in the county. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has two facilities: Elkhorn Towers, a 100-unit Section 8 development in Welch, and The Oaks, a 16-unit complex in Gary used primarily for the elderly. Starland Heights is a 40-unit development in Kimball, and Drewry Apartments offers 15 units of primarily disabled housing in Eckman. Moreover, the Mingo County Housing Authority offers the Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8) in McDowell County. Stop Abusive Family Environments (S.A.F.E.) Housing and Economic Development is a non-profit organization that offers transitional housing to homeless women and their children, including domestic violence survivors in McDowell County, with outreach offices in Mercer and Wyoming Counties. The organization also operates a home ownership program for low-income families interested in becoming first-time homeowners.

Housing Vacancy

McDowell County has the highest housing vacancy rate in West Virginia. In 2016, 28.7 percent, or 3,200 of the county's 11,163 housing units, were vacant. Seasonal or recreational vacancy accounted for 3.5 percent of all vacancies. The statewide housing vacancy rate is 16 percent, while the national average is 12 percent. The City of Keystone has the highest vacancy rate in the county, with 65 percent of the housing units being categorized as vacant.

The remaining 71.3 percent of housing in McDowell County is occupied, which is 10 percentage points lower than the state average. Of the occupied housing, 78.2 percent is owner-occupied, which is similar to

state percentages. McDowell County's home ownership rate (77%) is 4 ½ percentage points higher than the state rate (72.5 %).

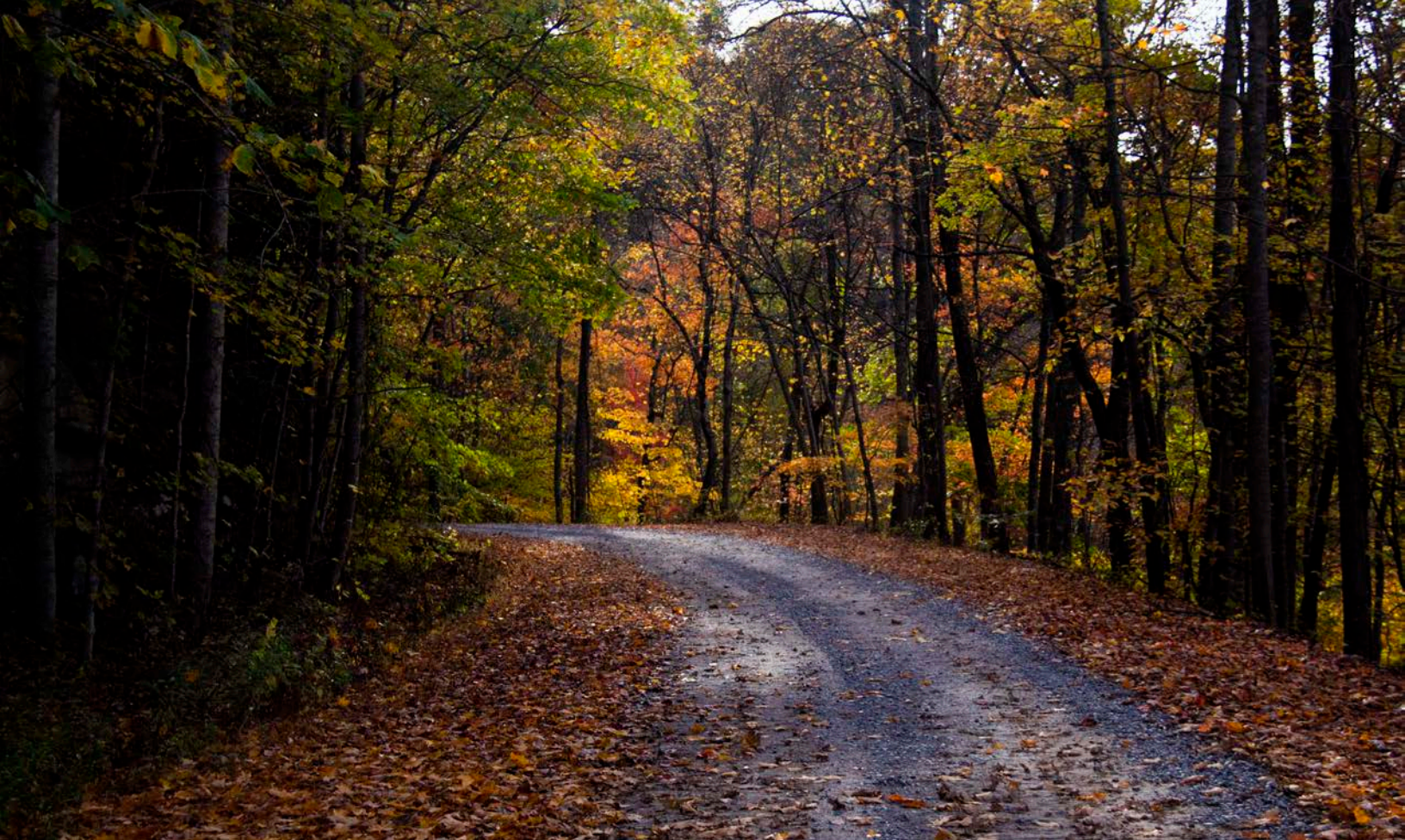
Housing Age

Twenty-eight percent of the housing in McDowell County was built prior to 1940, which is the highest percentage in the state (see Figure 12). Housing construction has been declining since the 1970s throughout the state. The county also has a lower percentage of housing constructed since 1970 than the state average, including only about seven percent of housing in the county being built after 2000.

Housing Value

The 2017, U.S. Census Estimates indicate the median value of a house in McDowell County is \$33,600, which is significantly lower than the \$107,400 median value for the state. Figure 13 shows that nearly 65 percent of homes in McDowell County are valued at less than \$50,000. Wyoming County has the second lowest percentage among adjacent counties with 37.5 percent of homes valued below \$50,000.

Compared to the neighboring counties in Virginia, Buchanan County has percentages similar to Wyoming and Mingo counties, while Tazewell County's percentages are similar to Mercer County.



Road to Miracle Mountain

Housing Affordability

Despite low home values, McDowell County residents pay a significantly higher proportion of their income in rent when compared to the rest of the state. One way the Census Bureau measures housing affordability is gross rent as a percentage of household income (GRAPI), which is the ratio of monthly gross rent to monthly household income. Housing expenditures exceeding 30 percent of household income have been viewed as an indicator of a housing affordability problem. Nearly 68 percent of renters in McDowell pay 30 percent or more of their monthly income to housing rent, which is about 20 percentage points more than the state average of 47 percent and 15 percentage points higher than the national average of 52 percent. Additionally, rent in McDowell County is much cheaper than the rest of the state, with 44 percent of residents paying \$500 or less for rent, compared to only 26 percent statewide. On the other hand, home ownership may be more affordable in the county. McDowell County residents have a higher home ownership rate, higher percentage of residents that do not pay a mortgage, and lower housing costs than state averages, which may offset some financial burdens associated with housing.

TRANSPORTATION

Steep topography and narrow, winding two-lane roads define travel in McDowell County. The primary mode of transportation is automobile. The county has limited public transportation options, and no passenger air, rail, or waterway service. Residents comment that travel across the county can be slow and unsafe due to rural roads and poor maintenance. West Virginia has the fourth highest rate of road deaths in the country, and McDowell County has the seventh-highest fatality rate in the state. Community officials and citizens hope that the completion of two long-anticipated four-lane highways, the Coalfields Expressway and King Coal Highway, will improve travel time, safety, and economic opportunities. Interestingly, according to 2017 Census Estimates, McDowell County has the shortest work commute time of any county in the southern coalfields region. Twenty-two percent of residents travel less than ten minutes to work, while 60 percent travel less than 30 minutes, both of which are significantly less commute times than in neighboring Mercer, Mingo, and Wyoming counties.

Figure 14: The busiest roads in McDowell County by Average Daily Traffic Counts, 2015

| |
|--|
| US 16 on Wyoming Street, Welch — 4,354 |
| US 52 through Northfork — 4,016 |
| US 52 east of Iaeger — 4,052 |
| US 52 east of Roderfield — 3,044 |
| US 83 north of Jolo — 2,492 |
| US 16 north of Welch — 2,442 |
| US 103 north of Gary — 2,030 |
| (Source: WVDOT) |

Roadways

The two primary routes in McDowell County are Route 52 and Route 16, which intersect at Welch. Route 52 runs east-west from Bluefield through Welch and west to Mingo County, while Route 16 runs north-south through the county and connects Welch to Beckley to the north and to destinations south in Virginia. In 1998, Route 52 from Bluefield to Welch and Route 16 from Welch to points north were designated as National Scenic Byways, the latter is managed by the Coal Heritage Highway Authority. The busiest transportation corridors in the county are US 16 in Welch, and on US 52 in Northfork and outside of Iaeger (see Figure 14).

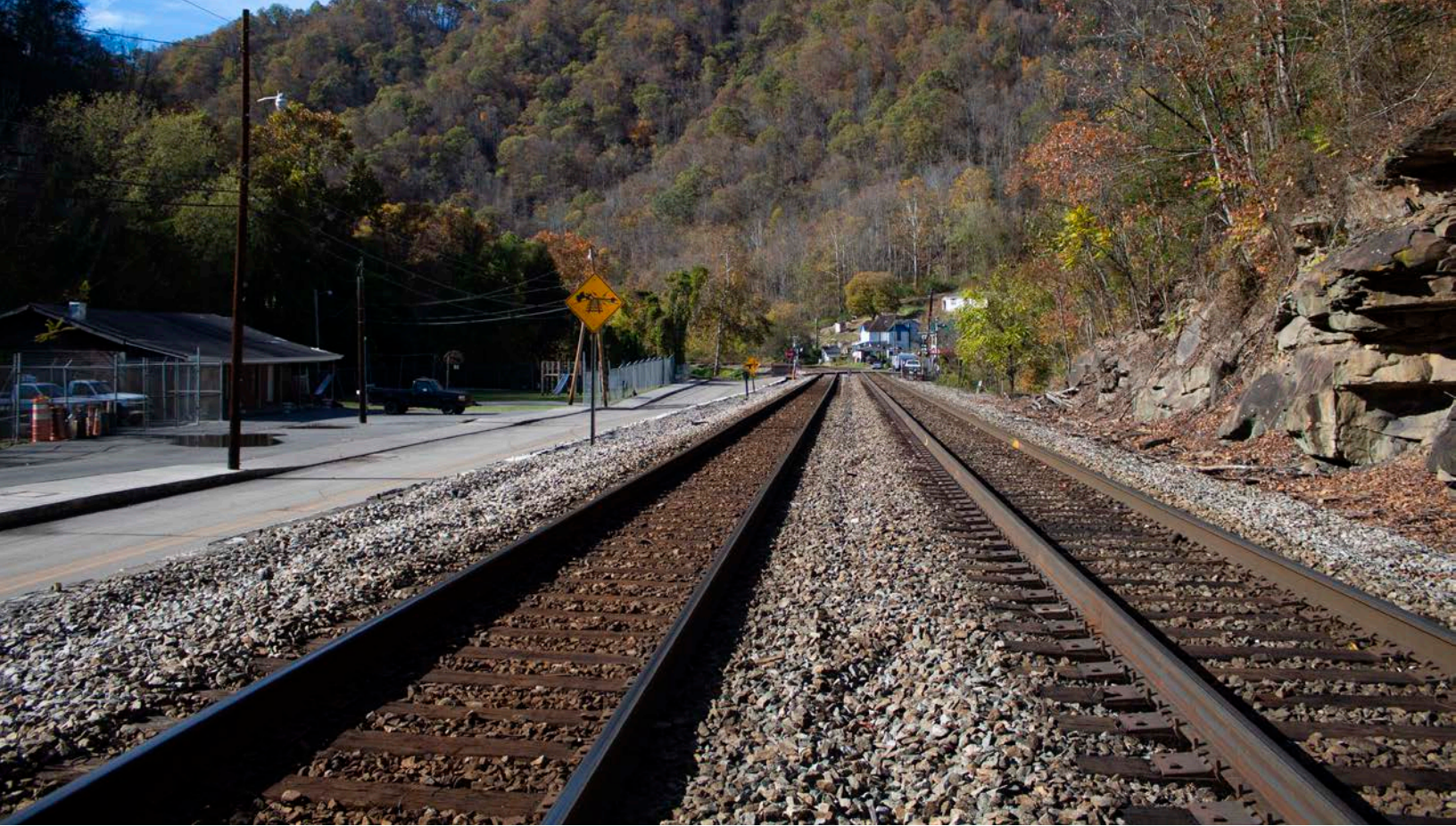
Two large highway projects could have a major impact on the future of McDowell County. The proposed King Coal Highway would connect Williamson to Bluefield and run east-west along the McDowell-Wyoming county border. The Coalfields Expressway, a four-lane highway from Beckley to Pound, Virginia, would connect Interstates 77 and 64 near Beckley to points south. Construction started in 2000 with a three-level diamond interchange near Welch, where Coalfields and King Coal would intersect. Grading work was completed in 2001, but the interchange remains incomplete. As of October 2018, new funding through the “Roads to Prosperity” bond was approved to continue construction of both highways. The second phase of the bond funding should allow for the completion of the Welch interchange to White Oak Branch in Wyoming County, although no date has been set for the Coalfields Expressway.

Public Transit

Limited public transit options exist in McDowell County. The Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) service, based in Mercer County, provides shuttle service in Welch and offers connections from Welch to Anawalt, Big Four, Gary, and Bluefield. BAT provides accessible transportation throughout the region on a fixed schedule, Monday through Friday. As of 2018, monthly passes are available, and most fares are between \$1.25 and \$2.25 for a one-way trip.

Overgrown truck





Railroad near Davy

McDowell County Commission on Aging’s (MCCOA) Assisted Transportation Program provides another public transit option. The MCCOA is a private, non-profit organization that receives federal and state funding. Transportation assistance is available for seniors who can no longer drive safely, who require short-term assistance due to illness or surgery, those who can no longer afford to maintain a vehicle, or who are otherwise unable to drive. MCCOA has 15 vehicles, two of which are wheelchair accessible, and operates Monday through Friday.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES

Air

The 65-acre Welch Municipal Airport, built in 1947, was the only airport in the county and has been closed since 2013. In 2009, the airport had two single-engine aircraft and averaged five flights per month. Currently, the site is occasionally used by a group of individuals that fly radio-controlled planes with special permission from the city.

The nearest active airport is the publicly-owned Kee Field, located two miles from Pineville. Regionally, the closest domestic flight service is found at Yeager Airport in Charleston and Roanoke Regional Airport.

Both are approximately two hours from Welch and provide flights to major eastern cities. The closest transcontinental and international flight service is available from Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro, North Carolina and Charlotte Douglas Airport, which are approximately three and four hours away, respectively.

Rail

The Norfolk Southern railroad has a double-track mainline traveling east-west through the county. The rail line closely follows Route 52 from Bluefield through Welch and west to Mingo County. The rail line is active, but only carries commercial goods, and there is currently no passenger rail service available in the county.

Intermodal

Intermodal transportation is defined as the transfer of products involving multiple transportation modes. Typically, in West Virginia this involves trucks and railroads. In McDowell County, coal is frequently transported via rail to the Kanawha Valley, near Charleston, and then shipped on barges south on the Ohio River to ports in Louisiana. Coal is also transported by rail to the Tidewater Region of Virginia and placed on ships for further transport.

LAND USE

Existing Land Use

Land ownership in the county is concentrated in large companies. Moreover, four companies own approximately 50 percent of the private land in McDowell County, with Norfolk Southern owning 22 percent. (Source: <https://wvpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/5/land-study-paper-final3.pdf>) Most commercial development is based in Welch. McDowell County has the smallest percentage of agricultural land per square mile in the state. As of 2017, there were only 14 farms located in McDowell County, totaling 163 acres.

Development Constraints

Development constraints include steep slopes, floodplains, and concentrated land ownership. As shown in Figure 15, county topography is defined by steep slopes and a lack of flat, developable land.

Flat land typically lies near streams and within the floodplain. Some of the main streets in incorporated areas are designated as “regulatory floodways” by FEMA, which severely limits future development.

Mining

There are hundreds of abandoned and active mines in McDowell County that restrain future development. McDowell County is one of four counties in West Virginia that has had over 600 mining permits issued since records began in 1961. Twenty-six mining facilities are known to be located in areas near mine subsidence. At the same time, surface mines offer potential for reclamation and redevelopment. In a 2012 WVDEP report, the agency describes the potential for abandoned underground mines to provide large quantities of stored groundwater for uses such as aquaculture and as a public water supply.

Natural Hazards

McDowell County is one of 16 counties in West Virginia that has experienced 15 or more declared disasters since 1969, which include flooding, landslides, and high winds. According to a 2013 report titled, “West Virginia Hazard ID, Risk Assessment, and Vulnerability Analysis,” flooding is the most dangerous hazard. McDowell County also has the highest annualized losses due to flooding in the state.

Flooding

The most recent major flooding events took place in 2001 and 2002. The floods, both categorized as 100-year floods, devastated the county. The 2001 flood affected 2,972 homes, resulting in \$13,000,000 in damages. The 2002 floods affected thousands of homes and caused several million dollars in damages in McDowell County. After the 2001 and 2002 floods, several residents lost their homes, and many were unwilling or unable to rebuild in McDowell County.

The Region I Planning and Development Council administers the area’s Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), which assesses risk to natural events. Region I serves McDowell County as part of a five-county regional planning area. The 2010 HMP identified every municipality in McDowell County as having a “high” probability for future risk of flooding, with the exception of Anawalt, which is classified as “medium-high.” FEMA’s Special Flood Hazard Area, or “100-year floodplain,” is found in every municipality and adjacent to streams along Routes 16, 52, 80, 103, and 161. In 2018, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began a \$20 million flood risk management project for McDowell County that includes improving floodwalls, levees, and nonstructural measures to reduce flood risk.

Fire

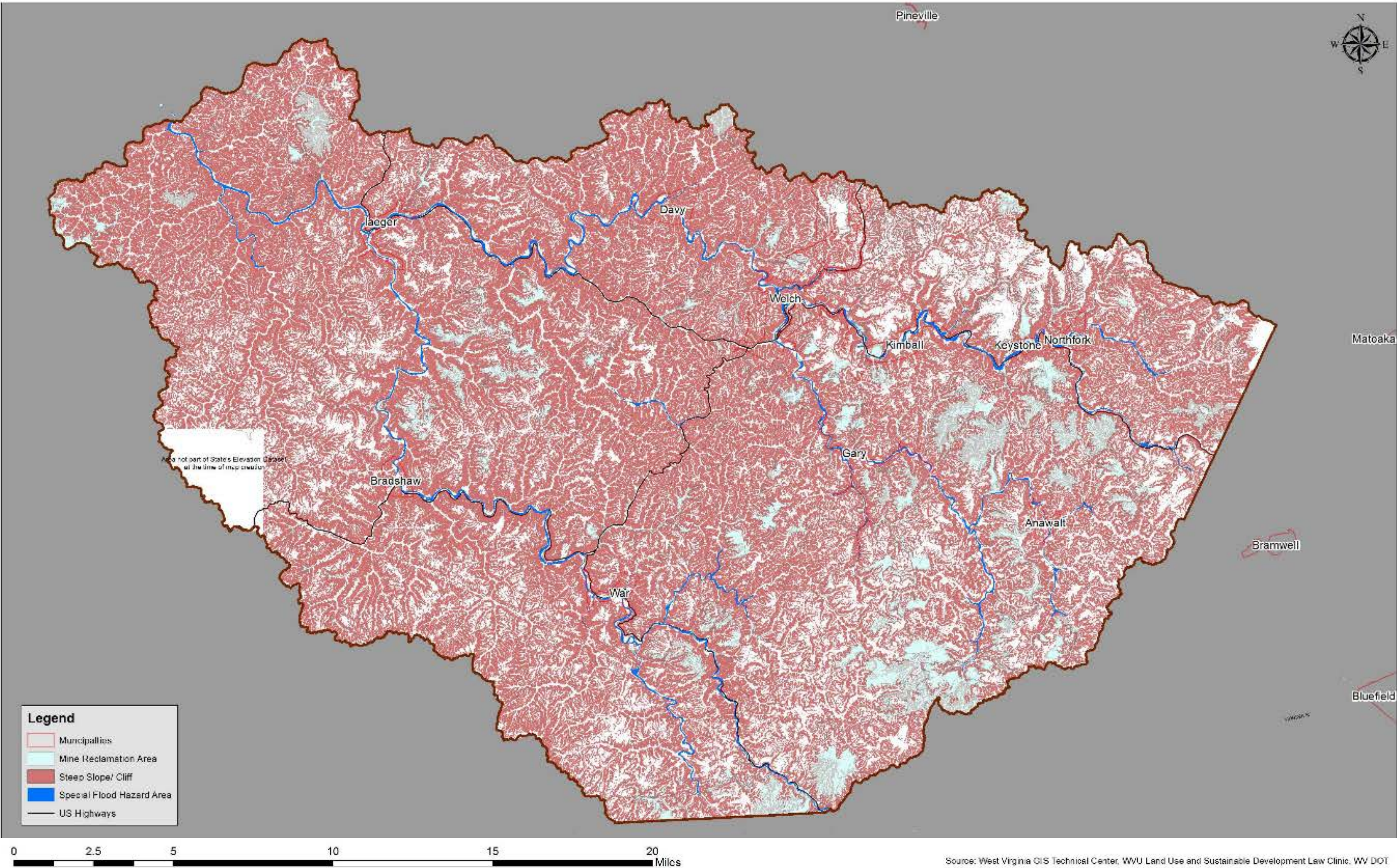
The West Virginia Department of Forestry also classifies McDowell County, along with the southern coalfields area, as “hot” counties, or the most susceptible to wildfire. Around 48 acres of land are subject to fire in McDowell County every year, and the county has had the sixth-highest number of wildfires in the state, 1,248 fires, between 1987 to 2012.

Subsidence

The county’s many mining sites could cause subsidence issues in the form of lateral or vertical movement of land. The McDowell Public Service District has indicated that underground mine subsidence is a concern throughout the county and could have a negative impact on public water quality.

The West Virginia Division of Mining and Reclamation under the DEP requires mining operations to have a subsidence control plan and underground abandonment plan for underground mines. The West Virginia Board of Risk and Insurance Management offers a “mine subsidence insurance fund” to provide insurance policies for subsidence caused by coal mining.

Figure 15: Development Constraints





PUBLIC SAFETY AND SERVICES

Law Enforcement

The West Virginia State Police Troop 6, District 4 detachment is located in Welch. The detachment is one of four in the Troop 6 District which covers nine counties in Southern West Virginia. The State Police detachment assists the McDowell County Sheriff's Office, which is located in Welch and services the entire 535 square mile area of the county. The most common incidents are substance abuse and theft. The Sheriff's office has several community-oriented programs, including purchasing sleeping bags for children. Minor traffic accidents are common and, as the Sheriff describes, the result of narrow and unsafe passing lanes.

In 2017, the Sheriff's Office moved into the "Frontier Building" in Welch, a significant upgrade over their previous facility. However, the office has been facing a \$240,000 budget shortage since 2016. At one point in 2017, the department had only 9 of 15 officer positions filled. The staff shortage resulted in only one deputy working evening shifts, no officers available on weekends, and the State Police detachment regularly covering shifts for the Sheriff's Office. In August 2018, the Sheriff's Office hired four new deputies due to coal severance money received by the county.

The Sheriff's Office now has 13 officers, two of which are also high school resource officers at Mount View and River View high schools. Each municipality has a police department except for the City of Keystone, which closed its department in August 2018 due to budget shortages. Most municipal departments have only one part-time police chief; calls are often forwarded to the County Sheriff's Office when municipal police officials are off-duty.

The McDowell County Day Report Center, located in Welch, is a community-based correction program for adult offenders who may not require institutional custody. The Day Report program is an alternative to incarceration where the offender can live outside of prison and report for supervised work. Adult and juvenile drug court programs are also offered within the county.

Stevens Correctional Facility is a county-owned medium-security correctional center that houses state inmates. Federal Correctional Institution, McDowell (FCI McDowell) is a medium-security federal prison for male offenders. Both correctional facilities are located within the City of Welch.

Two Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officers operate in the county, and the Hatfield & McCoy Trail system has DNR police patrolling at different times. These officers are responsible for enforcing laws related to littering, forestry, state parks, and environmental waste.

Emergency Services

McDowell County 911 and the Office of Emergency Services answer 911 calls and coordinate the county's Disaster Preparedness Plan. As shown on Figure 16, the center received 11,908 calls in 2017, most of which were directed to law enforcement. In 2017, the 911 Center received upgrades to the call systems, including having the ability to receive texts for 911 emergencies, which enable individuals with poor cell service or who are in compromising situations to contact emergency services.

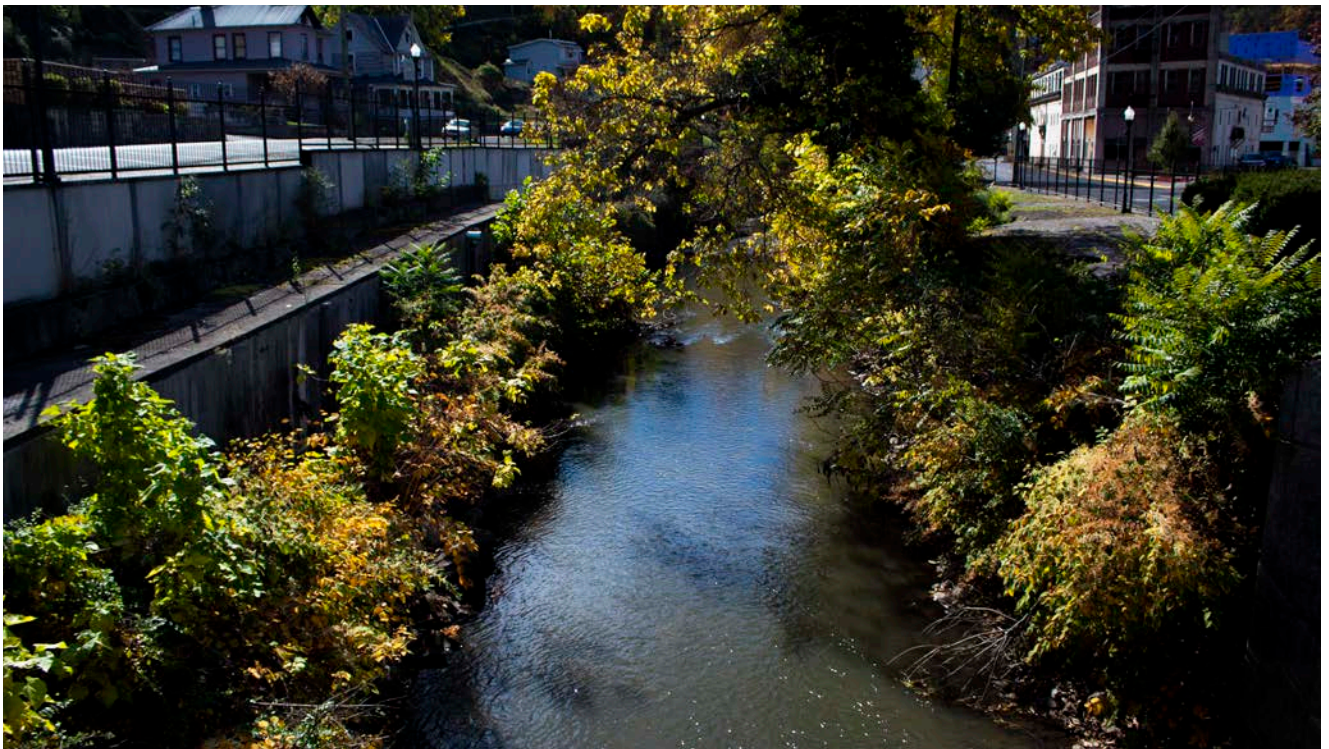
Two ambulances services operate in the county, both privately-owned: STAT EMS and Jan-Care. Both offer basic life support, critical care transport, and specialized multi-patient transport. A third private company, Widener's, offers limited service on Saturdays in some areas. As a result, McDowell County only has four ambulances available at any one time. Tazewell County, Virginia EMS has extended their service area to include portions of southern McDowell County in the Berwind area and officials are working to route calls in the area to their 911 call center. Mercer County 911 has also offered to assist with calls on the eastern side of McDowell County.

Fire Service

McDowell County has 14 volunteer fire departments (VFDs) that are well-regarded, with nearly 70 percent of online survey respondents indicating that service was at least "fair." Each municipality has a VFD, with four other departments located in the county, and each department has approximately 20 volunteers. Departments largely depend upon quarterly funds from the state Treasurer's Office and local fundraising. Fire departments are often one of the most visible and active organizations in the communities.

Most VFDs are well supplied with essential firefighting equipment such as uniforms and fire tanker vehicles. Key concerns include the difficulty of covering a large service area and the uneven frequency of service calls. Also, decreasing volunteer membership is becoming common due to state training requirements, which require 150 hours of training for volunteers.

Several VFDs indicated a increasing need exists to acquire all-terrain rescue vehicles to access remote properties and navigate rough terrain. Some of this increased need is due to the continued popularity of the Hatfield and McCoy Trail. A need also exists for more fire hydrants and improvements to the local water systems to handle the water pressure required for fire hydrants.



Elkhorn Creek in Welch

Public Services and Utilities

McDowell County’s rugged terrain and economic decline present numerous challenges to developing infrastructure and public services such as water, wastewater treatment, waste collection and disposal, and utility services such as electricity, telecommunications, and broadband. Existing water and wastewater systems, installed by coal companies decades ago, have undersized, aging lines and treatment facilities that require upgrades.

The McDowell County Public Service District (PSD) is the primary entity involved with water infrastructure development in the county. The PSD, a state corporation established in 1990 and original-

ly serving 522 customers, continues to manage and upgrade community water systems. As of 2018, the PSD had 3,213 customers and operated 15 different systems – no other PSD in the State of West Virginia is responsible for more systems. The PSD has 15 full-time employees and one part-time employee. Being a non-profit allows the McDowell PSD to provide service to areas that private companies would not. However, in numerous areas a declining customer base and decreased revenues complicate the ability to upgrade services. Securing grants, servicing debt, and having the workforce to administer frequent monitoring compliance required by the West Virginia Department of Health are the PSD’s top operational concerns.

Water

Seven of the ten municipalities in McDowell maintain their own water systems; the other three, Anawalt, Kimball, and Iaeger, are serviced through the McDowell County PSD. Eventually, the PSD will assume control of the municipal water systems in Keystone, Kimball, and Northfork as a part of its Elkhorn Creek Water Project.

Figure 17 lists all County PSD-maintained water systems. The systems range from serving almost 1,000 customers to servicing a couple dozen customers. Figure 18 highlights water utility rate difference in McDowell County as of June 2017.

The McDowell County PSD’s largest current project is the Elkhorn Creek Water Project along Elkhorn Creek and Route 52. The \$25 million project, which began in 2015, is now in phase two of four total project phases, is the PSD’s first ever “grant-only” funded

project and is replacing old water systems in Keystone, Maybeury, and Northfork. Over 250 new customers will be serviced after the project is completed. The PSD is also improving the Berwind water treatment plant and the fifth and final phase of extending water service in the Jolo area.

In 2017, the McDowell County PSD completed what was likely their biggest project, the eight-year, \$12.2 million Big Sandy-Roderfield Project that provided an upgrade to the PSD’s Coalwood Water Treatment Plant and extended water service from Coalwood to the communities of Roderfield, Big Sandy, and Hensley.

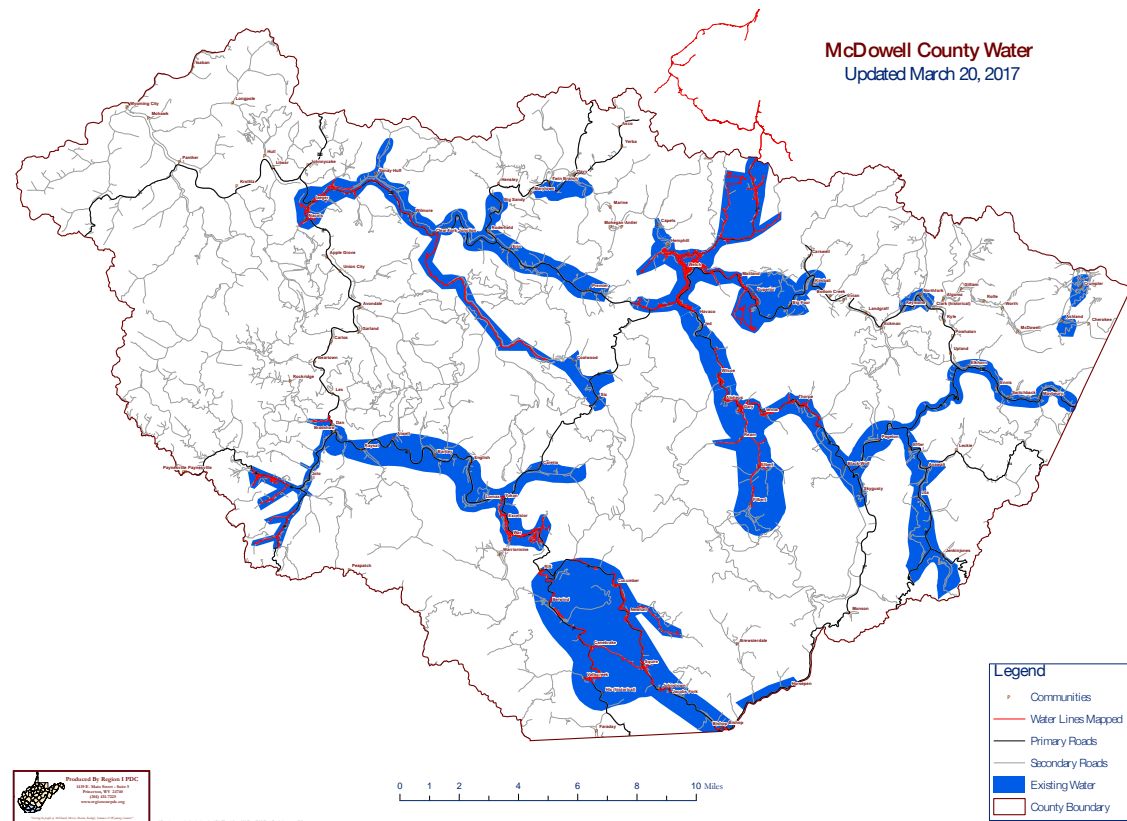
Figure 16: Water Systems Maintained by the McDowell County PSD, September 2018

| Facility | Areas Covered | Number of Customers |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Bartley Water Plant | Bartley, Buchanan, Caretta, English, Jolo, Raysal, Yukon | 984 |
| Coalwood Water Plant | Big Sandy, Coalwood, Iaeger, Roderfield | 599 |
| Maybeury Water Plant | Anawalt, Elkhorn, Jenkinjones, Maybeury, O'Toole, Pageton, Skygusty, Switchback | 401 |
| Berwind Water Plant | Berwind, Canebrake, Cucumber, Jacobs Fork, Newhall, Rift, Squire, Valls creek | 340 |
| City of Welch — Purchased Water Systems | Capels, Havaco, Hemphill, Premier, Wilcoe | 253 |
| Kimball Plant | Carswell, Kimball | 197 |
| Big Four Plant | Big Four, Belcher Mountain | 119 |
| Greenbrier/McDowell | Arlington, Gilliam, McDowell, Rolfe, Worth | 95 |
| Upland | Kyle, Powhatan, Upland | 79 |
| Vivian/Tidewater | Tidewater, Vivian | 51 |
| Eckman | Eckman, Landgraff | 37 |
| Ashland | Ashland | 24 |
| Tazewell County PSA | Bishop, Horsepen | Not listed |

Figure 17: Water Utility Cost Ranking (per/3,400 Gallons) as of May 29, 2020

| Utility | Type | Cost/per 3,400 gallons | State Ranking (out of 366 entities) |
|---|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Pageton Community Water Co. | Private | \$8.16 | 4th |
| Hampton Roads Water System | Association | \$12.00 | 9th |
| O'Toole Water Association | Association | \$15.00 | 11th |
| Town of Bradshaw | Municipal | \$16.05 | 13th |
| Keystone Municipal Water Works | Municipal | \$21.05 | 31th |
| Northfork Municipal Water | Municipal | \$29.10 | 80th |
| City of War Waterworks | Municipal | \$30.19 | 94th |
| City of Gary | Municipal | \$33.15 | 129th |
| City of Welch | Municipal | \$33.55 | 135th |
| Town of Davy | Municipal | \$40.80 | 230th |
| McDowell PSD (Anawalt, Kimball, Iaeger) | PSD | \$53.72 | 325th |
| Crumpler Community Water | PSD | \$54.00 | 327th |

Figure 18: Mapping of McDowell County's Current Water Infrastructure



Source: Region I Planning and Development Council

Wastewater

Wastewater treatment continues to be an important issue in McDowell County. A 2008 DEP report indicated that 67 percent of McDowell County residents straight pipe their sewage into open waterways. Bradshaw, Gary, War, and Welch are the only municipalities with sewer treatment facilities in the county; combined, they service approximately 25 percent of the county's households. The city of Gary has the lowest wastewater utility rates in the county and one of the lower rates in the state. Even the city of War, which has the highest rates in the county is cheaper than over 170 other wastewater utilities in the state.

Until the mid-1990s, only Gary operated a wastewater system. War and Bradshaw reportedly have high-functioning systems, while the systems in Gary and Welch need improvements.

Two community-based wastewater systems operate outside of Northfork in Crumpler and Ashland, both of which are home to popular ATV resorts. The Ashland system was the result of a 2005 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) effort called the

Wastewater Treatment Coalition of McDowell County Plan.

The McDowell County PSD is currently establishing a wastewater system in Coalwood, which will be the PSD's first public wastewater project. In 2018, the PSD secured funding for two new wastewater projects, the Iaeger Regional Sewer Project, which will provide service to 112 customers, and a wastewater project in the Ashland-Crumpler area that will service 115 homes. In the long-term, the McDowell PSD anticipates transitioning the bulk of its new infrastructure improvements from water to wastewater projects, with a specific focus on the Route 52 corridor from Northfork to Welch. A recent feasibility study estimated the replacement of wastewater systems along this area would cost \$50 - 60 million.

The Region I Planning and Development Council staff has worked on water and wastewater infrastructure projects, including the GIS mapping of water and wastewater facilities and distribution and collection lines in McDowell County. The location of current sewer systems is highlighted below in Figure 20.

Currently, the majority of the county lies outside of any sewer service area.

Electric and Natural Gas Utilities

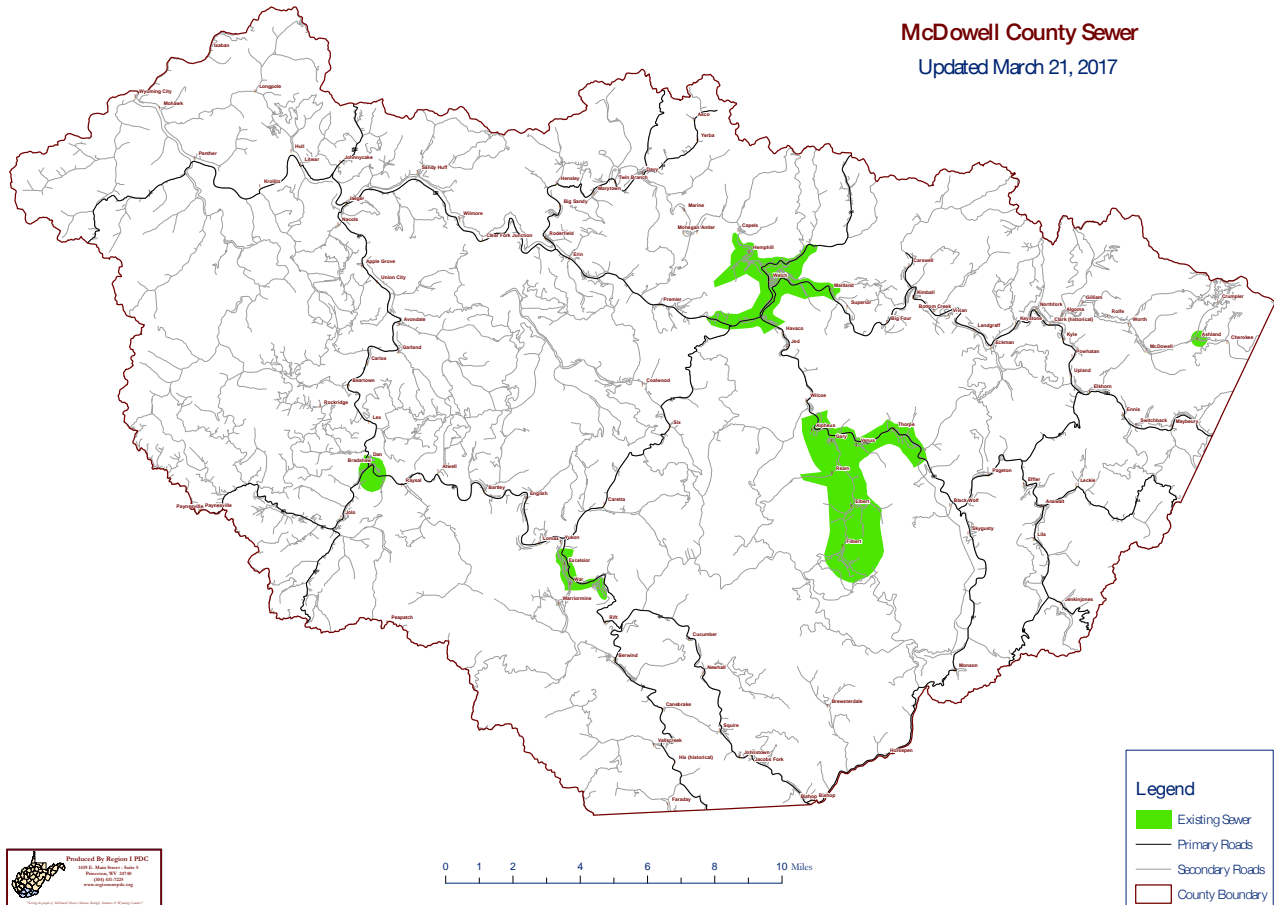
Electric service is provided by American Electric Power (Appalachian Power). Electric rates are consistently increasing in the county, with Appalachian Power citing population loss as the main reason. Welch Gas

Cooperative Association has been providing natural gas service since 1969 with over 50 miles of distribution facilities. As of 2018, the cooperative serves 710 customers and is the only gas company based in McDowell County; Mountaineer Gas Company services homes in the Iaeger area.

Figure 19: Wastewater Utility Rates in McDowell County (per/ 3,400 Gallons) as of June 2017

| Utility | Type | Cost/per 3,400 gallons | State Ranking (out of 367 entities) |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| City of Gary | Municipal | \$24.11 | 38 |
| City of Welch | Municipal | \$30.60 | 93 |
| Town of Bradshaw | Municipal | \$32.44 | 111 |
| City of War Sewer Department | Municipal | \$39.69 | 194 |

Figure 20: Mapping of McDowell County's Current Wastewater Infrastructure



Source: Region I Planning and Development Council

Cellular Service

McDowell County's mountainous terrain limits the operating range of cell coverage and service dead zones are common. As a result, cell tower setup can be more difficult and expensive than typical installations. AT&T is the main cell service provider in McDowell County, which covers over 90 percent of the area. A 2013 Region 1 PDC report stated that AT&T coverage was available along main roadways throughout the county, and that Verizon coverage was available along Route 52 and Route 16 south of War. Despite this, public input indicates that service is inconsistent throughout the county, even along the Route 52 corridor. Improving cell coverage is an important recommendation in the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan.

Broadband Service

The largest broadband provider in McDowell County is Shentel, which completed a fiber optic cable network in 2014. That project added enough access that now an estimated 90 percent of county residents have broadband internet access. In fact, one of Shentel's largest geographically continuous service areas is in McDowell County. Frontier also provides internet service in McDowell County. However, the service is limited to cable and wireless coverage is not available. The eastern side of the county, from Welch to the Mercer County border, has the best broadband service in the county. Some areas in the county have no broadband coverage, including west of Iaeger and Bradshaw, near Panther State Forest.

Waste Collection and Disposal

Each municipality offers their own garbage collection service, while the private company BeBe Enterprise, based in Welch, offers trash service to unincorporated areas. Copper Ridge, the county landfill, is a \$24 million facility that opened in 2008, north of Welch. The facility collects 50,000 tons of garbage per month, places collection stations across the county for large items, and offers one free garbage drop-off date per month.

PARKS AND RECREATION

McDowell County's rugged, remote location provides the potential to build a dynamic outdoor recreation-based economy. The county has many natural and recreational resources that include wildlife management areas (WMAs), wild trout fishing, and remote forested areas. The Hatfield-McCoy Trail System is a world-class ATV trail system and the foundation of the county's recreation economy.

All-Terrain Vehicle Lodging

In 2018, there were over ten ATV-oriented lodging establishments in the county (see Figure 22). The 1,600-acre privately-owned Ashland Resort, built in 2006 near Northfork on a reclaimed strip mine site, is the largest campground in the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System. One in every six permits for the trail system are purchased at Ashland Resort. Ashland Resort offers a selection of lodges, cottages and cabins, RV and tent sites, and a camp store; the resort has plans to expand in the future.

Anawalt Lake Wildlife Management Area

Anawalt Lake WMA is a 1,792-acre area located approximately 20 miles southeast of Welch near the Town of Anawalt. The area has foot trails and allows hunting. The 7-acre lake is stocked with trout from February through May.

Berwind Lake Wildlife Management Area

Berwind Lake WMA was built in 1959 near War. The 20-acre lake is the most southern public lake in West Virginia and is surrounded by 85 acres of forested land. The area once included 18,000 acres of heavily forested hunting lands leased by the WVDNR from a private company; however, the agreement ended in 2008, and in 2018 the property ownership of the 85 acres was transferred to the county, however there is still hunting permitted. Trout are stocked throughout the year and the lake allows motorized boats. The WMA has eight primitive campsites, three hiking trails, and several picnic shelters. In 2018, five cabins were placed near the lake for rent; more cabins are planned for the future.



Blackwolf Links Golf Course

Blackwolf Links is a privately-owned nine-hole golf course near Gary. The 31-par course opened in 1923. In 2011, the McDowell County Economic Development Authority (EDA) upgraded the property with a new clubhouse, kitchen, and bathroom facilities. The course is open from 8:00 a.m. until dark.

Community Parks

The most notable county park, Linkous Park, was built in the 1950s in Welch. The park features an outdoor swimming pool, picnic shelters, and an outdoor stage for community events such as live music. The pool is a popular social gathering area. The county also owns Old Pageton Elementary School Park, Anawalt City Park, and provides the landscaping at a community-owned park in Maybeury.

Elkhorn Creek

Elkhorn Creek is a 23.7-mile-long tributary of the Tug Fork that is situated along Route 52. The Elkhorn is one of the few streams in the state that has wild rainbow and brown trout. The creek has the potential

to become a regional trout-fishing destination. However, water quality of the Elkhorn Creek is a concern. Nonetheless, many anglers observe that the wild fish population is self-sustaining and thriving, with large wild trout caught regularly.

Hatfield and McCoy Trails

The Hatfield-McCoy Trail System is a 700 mile off-highway vehicle trail system located across six southern West Virginia counties. The trail system was established by the West Virginia Legislature in 2000 and is administered by the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority. The trail system is open every day to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), dirt bikes, and utility vehicles. It is the second largest off-highway vehicle trail in the world and the most continuous trail system east of the Mississippi. The trail could potentially extend over 2,000 miles and become the largest trail of its kind in the world. Each person riding, including passengers, must have a permit to ride the seven trails in the system. As of 2018, West Virginia residents pay \$26.50 for an annual permit, while out-of-state residents pay \$50 for a permit. In 2014, a study estimated the trail generated \$22 million to the regional economy.

Of the six trails in the Hatfield-McCoy system, four are located, at least in part, in McDowell County: Indian Ridge, Pocahontas, Pinnacle Creek, and Warrior. The Pocahontas Trail forms the largest portion of continuous trail in the entire Hatfield-McCoy system. The newest trail, the Warrior Trail, opened in 2018 and has a trailhead in War and connects to Gary and Welch. Eventually the Warrior Trail will link to the other three trails in McDowell County.

In 2017, the trail system had record growth -- 12 percent in one year -- and issued over 45,000 permits. Seventy percent of the growth is in McDowell and Mercer counties, with most visitors coming from North Carolina, Virginia, and Ohio. Public input and observations from the planning commission indicate that visitors are interested in purchasing property in the county in anticipation of the trail system's continued growth.

Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park

Miracle Mountain is a non-profit organization that restored the Sandlick Sportsman Club on #9 Mountain off Route 13 in Gary. The operation of the park and facilities are supported by donations, fundraisers, and fees. The park offers an event setting for reunions, picnics, weddings, dances, private parties, and camping.

Panther Wildlife Management Area

Panther WMA, also referred to as Panther State Forest, is a 7,820-acre area that is almost completely forested. The area has hiking trails, scenic overlooks, trout fishing, picnicking, a swimming pool, hunting, cabins, fireplaces, six free campground sites, and a large meeting lodge with a commercial kitchen that hosts the 4-H club.



Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park

Figure 21: ATV-Lodging in McDowell County, 2018 (Source: McDowell County CVB)

| Lodging | Location |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Brewster’s Lodge | Newshall |
| ATV Retreat | Gary |
| The Bears Den ATV Cottage | Belcher Mountain |
| Maybeury ATV Resort | Maybeury |
| Ashland Resort | Ashland |
| Wild Willy’s ATV Rezort | Northfork |
| K&D ATV House Rentals | Northfork |
| Hills and Thrills | Kimball |
| Historic Kimball ATV Hideaway | Kimball |
| Powerhouse ATV Mountain Resort | Anawalt |
| McDowell ATV Cabin Rental | Carswells and North Welch |
| Eva’s House Bed and Breakfast | Gary |
| Miracle Mountain Trailhouse | Gary |

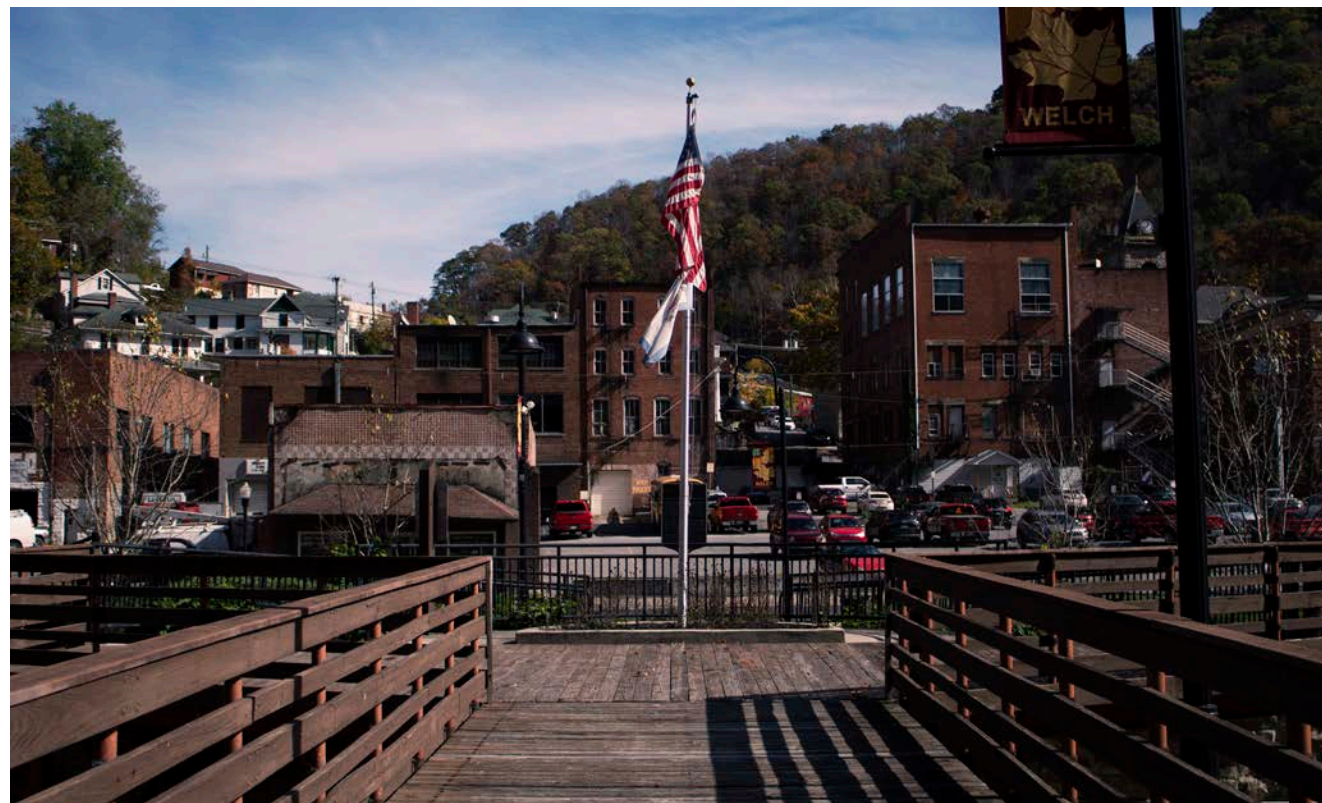
Tug Fork Wildlife Management Area

Tug Fork WMA is located 10 miles northwest of Welch and is accessed from U.S. Route 52 at Premier. Tug Fork WMA is located on 2,165 acres of heavily forested, steep terrain above the Tug Fork River. The area is planned to be an elk-reintroduction site by the WVDNR.

WVDNR Elk Reintroduction Program

In 2015, the WVDNR announced plans to reintroduce elk into West Virginia. The program will reintroduce elk in public areas throughout the state’s “elk management zone,” which includes all of Logan, Mingo, McDowell, and Wyoming counties as well as the southern parts of Boone, Lincoln and Wayne. The first reintroduction of elk began in 2016 in Logan County, with plans to expand into McDowell County in the future.

In McDowell County, 4,500 acres are being purchased by the WVDNR from mining companies to adjoin the existing Tug Fork WMA, which covers 2,266 acres. West Virginia’s elk reintroduction program differs from Kentucky’s and Virginia’s in that the WVDNR is acquiring large tracts of land for public use, where other states are using existing public land. Officials predict that elk will eventually roam across state lines between the three states, which would mean that McDowell County could have a substantial elk population. WVDNR has also mentioned working with the Hatfield and McCoy Trail System on developing elk viewing areas and photography tours along the trail.



Martha Moore Riverfront Park in Welch

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

McDowell County has the most designated historic structures within the southern coalfields region. The National Register of Historic Places lists 17 structures in McDowell County, 12 of which are historic coal company stores. One significant example is the Koppers Stores (formerly known as the Houston Coal Company Store) in Kimball, perhaps the best preserved of the more than 100 company stores that once operated in McDowell County. The 1923 company store is currently being restored by the McDowell County EDA to become a visitor's center along Route 52.

Other historical areas include the Welch Commercial Historic District, which is a designated national historic district. The historic district includes 56 contributing buildings and one contributing structure. Moreover, the municipal parking garage, built in 1941, is the oldest municipal-owned garage in the U.S. The McDowell County Historical Society preserves and promotes the county's heritage by collecting coal artifacts, including scrip, showcasing the county's history

at regional events, and through small-scale projects like establishing the Sid Hatfield historic marker in Welch.

In 1996, McDowell County became one of 12 Southern West Virginia counties included in the National Coal Heritage Area, which is one of just nine National Heritage Areas in the country. The area is based on the national historical significance of the development of the coal industry in the region. The program includes preserving historic structures and creating interpretive sites and signs. For example, the WW I building in Kimball received upgrades under this project. Interpretative sites are located in Ashland, Coalwood, War, and Kimball.

The McArts Amphitheater is a privately-owned venue located on Tom's Mountain near Mount View High School. The venue hosts an annual production of "Terror of the Tug," a drama written by local historian and playwright Jean Battlo and based on the historical events of the Sid Hatfield murder.

The Jack Caffrey Arts and Culture Center opened in Welch in 2019 as a museum and exhibit center, as well as a performance venue where locals can display their talents to the public. The former NAPA building was given to the City of Welch and is located within the Welch Commercial Historic District.

MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW

Until this comprehensive plan, none of the ten municipalities in McDowell County had adopted a comprehensive plan. None of the ten enforce land use regulations at this time. The McDowell County Planning Commission sought the participation of each of the county's ten incorporated communities during the county's comprehensive planning process. After meeting with each community, all ten of McDowell County's municipalities agreed to participate and to individually adopt this county comprehensive plan as their own.

Meetings were held with each municipality multiple times to determine issues, concerns, and opportunities. Additionally, open house events were held in July 2018 in all ten municipalities to gather public input.

The profiles provide an overview of the ten municipalities' background, economy, education, infrastructure, public services, and parks and recreation. Although each community has its own unique challenges and opportunities, each share many common concerns regarding the economy, housing, health, and the environment.

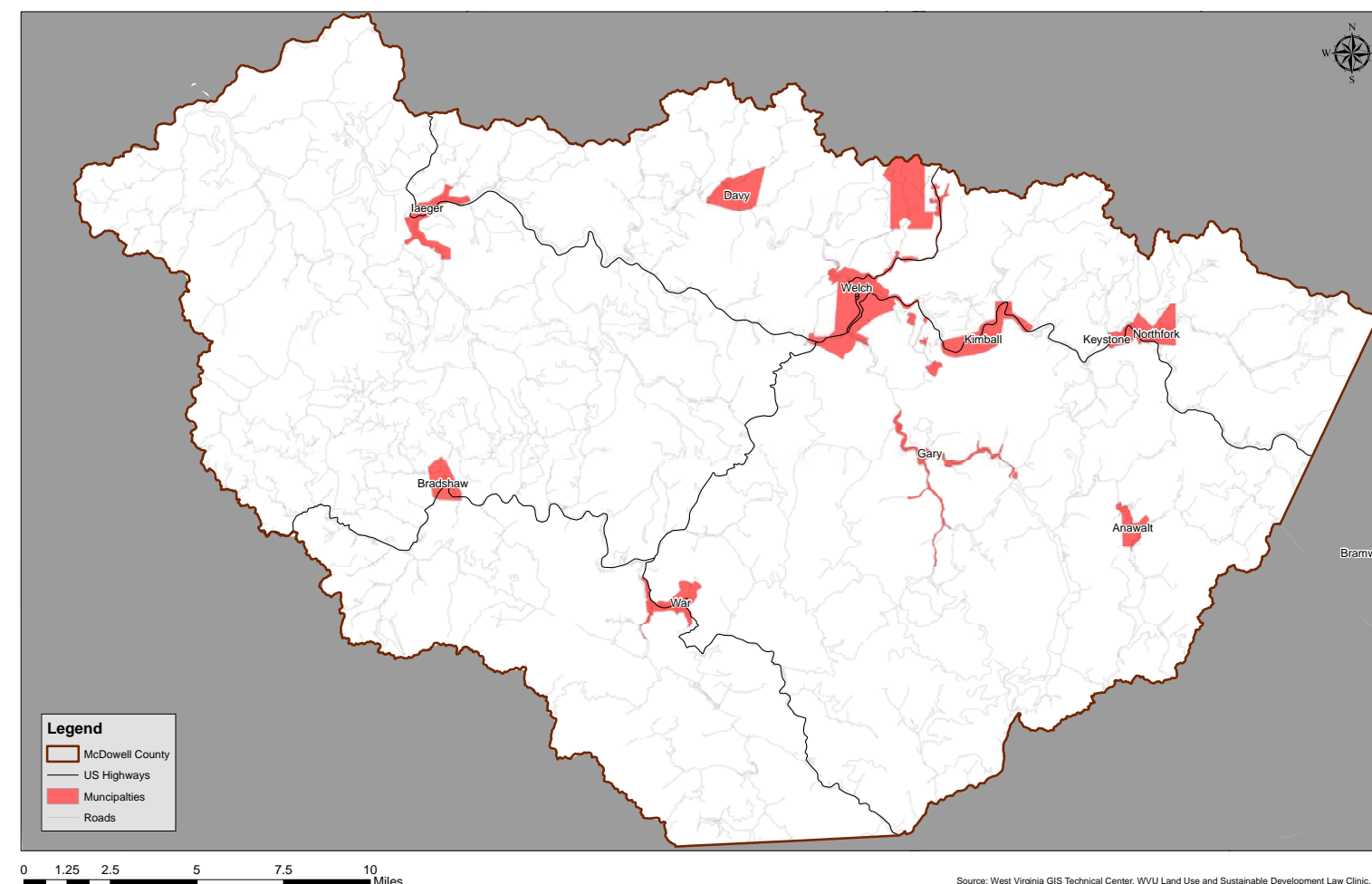
Why include each municipality in a county comprehensive plan?

Helps the Planning Commission better determine issues and concerns in specific locations of the county

Ensures that a variety of community interests and perspectives inform the plan and that the municipalities' voice is heard

Allows each municipality the opportunity to adopt the plan as their own

McDowell Municipalities





Playground in Anawalt

TOWN OF ANAWALT

Background

The Town of Anawalt, incorporated in 1949, is situated in southeastern McDowell County. The Dry Branch and Little Creek meet near the town’s center and form the Tug Fork, which then meanders through the southern portion of Anawalt. According to the 2010 Census, the town had approximately 226 residents. The 2017 American Community Survey estimates that the population is 189 people, a 37 person decrease since 2010.

Economy

The median household income is \$22,500 and 25 percent of the working-age population is in the labor force – both slightly below county averages. As of 2018, Anawalt does not have any large industries within town limits. A U.S. Post Office, a maintenance shop, and a small convenient store lie within town limits. One of the major drawbacks to the area is that

there are no nearby grocery options. Town Council wants to recruit a Dollar General or a gas station. This addition would also be beneficial to ATV trail riders who frequent Anawalt when coming on and off the Hatfield and McCoy trail system.

Education

Anawalt Elementary was the only school in Anawalt. The school enrolled around 100 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. In 2019 it was announced that the school would be closing in 2020 due to decreasing enrollment. Children would then be bussed to either Kimball or Welch.

Housing

2017 U.S. Census estimates that there are 96 total housing units in Anawalt. Of those, 47 units are considered vacant. Seventy-one percent of the units were built prior to 1960 and no housing units have been built since 2010.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The two main thoroughfares are Anawalt Ridge Road and Jenkinjones Road. Residents are concerned about the quality of the roads, which need repaving and repair work completed. Several damaged bridges are anticipated to be fixed soon. Flooding has been an issue along the two main roads, and there is concern that a fast-moving flood could prevent residents from leaving the area in a timely manner. New stormwater drain pipes have been installed to redirect water off the mountain to help mitigate flooding.

Anawalt employs one part-time police officer. The town employs two part-time garbage collectors and one substitute that also help with town maintenance. Garbage collection is once a week, and in 2018, Anawalt purchased a new garbage truck at the Division of Highways’ annual auction. The Anawalt VFD services the town and the surrounding areas. The VFD has around 20 volunteers.

Since 2010, the McDowell County PSD had provided water service to Anawalt, but the town is without wastewater treatment facilities.

Anawalt lacks cell phone service. At the July 2018 open house, citizens raised concerns about the lack of cell phone service in the area for safety reasons.

Parks and Recreation

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources owns Anawalt Lake Wildlife Management Area, which is located outside the town limits. Anawalt’s playground has been newly renovated. A walking path and fence outline the park. The park contains benches and a pavilion with a picnic table. The park provides a great space for families to gather while children can run and play. The Town of Anawalt continues to seek opportunities to improve and maintain the playground area.

Anawalt Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths

- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Post Office
- Volunteer Fire Department (VFD)
- Playground
- Holiday ‘Meals on Wheels’
- Churches
- Neighborhood Watch
- Make It Shine
- Foodbank

Weaknesses

- Water system
- Accountability
- Cell phone service
- Blighted properties

Opportunities

- Bed and Breakfast/rentals
- Gas station
- Grocery store

Threats

- Anawalt Elementary School closure
- Drugs
- Flooding
- Roads
- Aging population



Bradshaw Town Hall

TOWN OF BRADSHAW

Background

The Town of Bradshaw was incorporated in 1979 and is located along the Dry Branch of the Tug Fork on the western side of McDowell County. According to the 2010 Census, the town had 337 residents. The 2017 Census Estimates suggest that there are now 286 residents, which is 51 fewer people than in 2010.

Economy

The median household income is \$28,214, which is slightly above the county average. Several businesses make up Bradshaw’s economy. The businesses include several national retailers, a gas station, an auto parts store, medical clinic, and lumber yard. However, residents still must drive a considerable distance to bank or go grocery shopping. Bradshaw remains open to investment opportunities that will complement the Hatfield and McCoy Trails system.

Education

River View High School, one of two high schools in the county, has around 1,100 students from 9th to 12th grade and is located in Bradshaw. The school opened in 2010 and was consolidated from Big Creek High School in War and Iaeger High School.

Bradshaw Elementary enrolls students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students in the Bradshaw area generally attend Sandy River Middle School located between Iaeger and Bradshaw. A branch of the McDowell County Library is in Bradshaw. The library is located inside Town Hall and is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. Internet and computers are available to patrons. The library has two full-time employees, a branch manager, and clerk.

Housing

As of 2017, Bradshaw had 131 housing units, with 25.2 percent of the units vacant. The majority of homes in Bradshaw were built before 1970. Abandoned and dilapidated structures are one of the main concerns for residents. The town is currently developing demolition initiatives to address severely dilapidated structures. Another issue concerns development opportunities outside the floodplain. New homes for future residents and a nursing home or senior-friendly housing are needed, but the floodplain or steep slopes encompass many of the ideal development areas.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The town has one part-time police officer and general law enforcement equipment updates are needed. The VFD has approximately ten members and could benefit from updated equipment as well. Bradshaw maintains one of four municipal wastewater systems in the county. The system is in decent condition and will be upgraded via a 2019 economic development grant. The town does not currently have garbage collection and would like to offer this service in the future.

Parks and Recreation

The town does not own any parks. A partnership with a local church offers playground space in Bradshaw. Tennis courts will be constructed in the future. ATV trails pass through Bradshaw as a part of the Hatfield and McCoy trail system. Bradshaw is looking to provide overnight lodging and camping facilities for riders.

Bradshaw Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Determined and hardworking people
- Town Hall
- Tug River Clinic
- Rite Aid and small drugstore
- Churches
- Scenic beauty
- History
- NAPA Auto Parts
- Gas station

Weaknesses

- Floodplain
- Drugs
- Cell phone service
- Declining and aging population
- Lack of stores, businesses and restaurants

- No bank
- Bad roads
- State leadership
- Lack of communication
- Aging equipment

Opportunities

- Annexation
- Tear down dilapidated properties
- Bridge to coal camp
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Traffic through town
- Town park

Threats

- Drugs
- Infrastructure
- School closing
- Floodplain
- Senior citizen living opportunities
- Blighted properties
- Bad landlords



Town of Davy

TOWN OF DAVY

Background

The Town of Davy is a residential community incorporated in 1948 along Northfork & Southern’s main-line. The town is located along the Tug Fork River and Route 7. Davy’s population peaked in 1950 at 1,650 people shortly after its incorporation. In 2016, Census data estimates the population was 259 people. Henry Ford once owned a coal mine outside of Davy, which employed 1000 people. Mr. Ford would visit the area by private rail car.

Economy

The median household income is \$24,375, slightly higher than the county average of \$22,154. Thirty-three and two-tenths percent of Davy residents are below the poverty level, compared to 37.6 percent countywide. Currently, no commercial businesses exist in Davy. The last business, a convenience store, closed in 2014. Residents hope that the development of the King Coal Highway, which would place an interchange just a few miles north of town, will attract future business. The town seeks to concentrate any future development along Main Street near the roundabout, which has open, developable space.

Education

Davy Junior High School was destroyed by a fire in 1978 and was subsequently closed. The school’s gym remains and is located off Helena Street and Asco Road. Students in Davy attend school at Mount View High School in Welch.

Housing

As of 2017, a total of 134 housing units exist in Davy. The town has a housing vacancy rate of 18.7 percent, which is the lowest percentage in the county. All of the homes in Davy are valued less than \$100,000, with 83.3 percent of homes valued less than \$50,000. Only about 20 percent of the original Main Street buildings remain. The two most significant structures in town, for historical preservation purposes, are the Goodson’s Building and the Bailey Building, both on Main Street.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The town employs no police officer. In the event of an emergency, the County Sheriff’s Office responds. The Davy VFD has around 12 part-time volunteers. The VFD’s service area runs from Davy to Asco to Mohogan along the Tug Fork to Hensley Mountain. The Welch and Roderfield Fire Departments provide back-up assistance as needed. The Davy VFD has a pumper, tanker, and is in need of updated protective gear. The main problem involves accessing homes situated in rugged mountain hollows. A first responder ATV or small tanker would help in navigating narrow roads and passages.

The current town office building was purchased in 2014 and was the former site of a convenience store. The Town of Davy employs two full-time public works employees and one part-time employee. The Public Works Department maintains public landscaping and garbage collection. The department has two 1-ton dump trucks, one of which is used for garbage collection, two smaller pickup trucks, and a backhoe to maintain the water system.

While Davy has no wastewater service, the town provides water service through the Davy Water Works, which was established in 1950, and serves approximately 650 people. The system provides water to not only Davy, but the unincorporated areas of Asco, Marytown, and Twin Branch. In 2018, the rate was \$32.00 for 3,400 gallons of water, and \$10 per 1,000 extra gallons used per month. The water system was last overhauled in 1998 and is beginning to age.

Parks and Recreation

No Hatfield and McCoy trailheads currently lie within Davy. Nearly 100 miles of new trails are under construction which will link Davy to other trailheads. The Twin Branch Adventure Park and Dam, located 1.3 miles from Davy, was originally a coal camp and dam built by Henry Ford’s Fordson Coal Company. The property is now owned by the WV Citizens Conservation Corps and has significant recreational potential.

Two publicly-owned recreation spaces lie within the town. The Davy Community Garden is located on a redeveloped floodplain property that once had three houses that were demolished by the Army Corps of Engineers. The property is now owned by the town and the garden was built by AmeriCorps volunteers at nearby Twin Branch. The Davy Playground, beside the Town Hall, was built in the early 2000s with grant funding through the Council of the Southern Mountains. The park has suffered multiple incidents of vandalism and is in need of improvement.

Davy was once known as having the “world’s longest flower box,” which ran parallel to the rail line along Main Street. The box was maintained until the 1960s and was 1,383 feet long and had 6,000 flowers. In 2001, the town rebuilt a section of the flower box.

Davy’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- VFD
- Quiet
- Walkable
- Friendly people
- Like a family
- Water is locally serviced
- Location

Weaknesses

- Sewer
- Davy is in a different House District (District 25) than most of McDowell
- Housing
- Location
- Lack of developable land
- Land and houses in floodplain

Opportunities

- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- CCC Cabins around the Twin Branch Dam
- Henry Ford coal mine

Threats

- Drug abuse
- Theft of new development



Our Lady Victory in Gary

CITY OF GARY

Background

The City of Gary is situated in the eastern portion of the county, about 15 minutes south of Welch. Originally a coal camp, Gary was incorporated in 1971 and named after one of the founders of U.S. Steel, Elbert Gary. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Gary was 968 people and 827 in 2017. Both the Tug Fork and Sandlick Creek run through town.

Economy

The median household income in Gary is \$30,733, according to the 2016 estimates. Gary has several businesses and industries located within city limits, including a health clinic, nursing home, two bed and breakfasts, gas station, and grocer. The Hatfield and McCoy Trail System opened the Warrior Trailhead within town limits and riders will be looking for places to eat, stay, and gas up for their adventures. Gary seeks to attract more economic opportunities to accommodate residents and visitors in the future. Entrepreneurs are already asking city officials about development opportunities regarding the Warrior Trail, including lodging and other amenities.

Education

No schools lie within Gary. Most students living in Gary attend schools in Welch and Kimball.

Housing

As of 2017, a total of 484 housing units existed in Gary, with 43.8 percent vacant. Nearly 54 percent of the housing stock in Gary was built before 1939, which is the highest percentage of older housing of any municipality in the county.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The Gary VFD has over 20 volunteer firefighters. The VFD would like to obtain a four-wheeler with back boards for more accessibility on ATV trail rescues. Gary currently has one part-time law enforcement officer. The City owns three police cars, though each need repairs.

Roads and bridges are a big concern for citizens of Gary. Bridge #2 and the bridge in Thorpe need repaired and replaced. A new bridge along Elbert Road is slated to open in 2019 that crosses the Tug Fork.

Water, sewer, and garbage services are provided by the City. The sewer system needs to be updated. Old terra cotta water and sewer lines are leaking in many places. Blockages are also preventing the proper flow of waste and will need to be addressed. Likewise, the water system has issues with pumps breaking repeatedly, requiring costly replacement pumps. Cell phone service is marginal in the city and surrounding area. Some residents use microcells in their homes to increase cell phone reception. Internet is provided by Frontier and Shentel.

Parks and Recreation

Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park is a restoration project of the old Sandlick Sportsman Club on the #9 Mountain. Families and groups can host reunions, parties, and picnics at the park. Residents of Gary consider the park an asset to the community.

The City uses the #6 baseball fields frequently and the old football field that the City leases out. The field was used for the McDowell County Fair. The fair stopped in 2016 due to little interest in sponsoring the event, though many county residents would like to see it come back. Gary’s citizens believe it could be an exciting event filled with activities for all ages.

Gary’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Tourism
- Coal mining
- Health Clinic
- Nursing home
- True Line
- Eva’s House Bed and Breakfast
- Health Department
- Gary Bantam
- Famous graveyard
- Churches
- School of Life
- Post Office
- Oaks Apartments
- Miracle Mountain

Weaknesses

- Drugs
- No community center or activities
- Lack of stores
- Thieves
- No more county fair
- No youth activities

- Lack of police protection
- People speeding
- Coal trucks

Opportunities

- Tourism
- Land
- Hatfield-McCoy Trailheads
- Pool and basketball courts

Threats

- Drugs
- Abandoned and dilapidated houses
- Water system
- Youth leaving



Town of Iaeger

TOWN OF IAEGER

Background

The Town of Iaeger, was established at the confluence of the Dry and Tug Rivers along Route 52 in the northwest part of the county. The town was incorporated in 1917 and named for Colonel William G. W. Iaeger, an early settler that became one of the largest landowners in the state. The town was first known for timber, and later became a railhead for coal. Iaeger’s population peaked in 1950 at 1,271 people. In 2016, the US Census Bureau estimated the population was 267 people.

Economy

The median household income is \$25,000, which is three percent higher than the county average. Iaeger has a large downtown commercial core when compared to other communities in McDowell County; however, the district is separated from newer commercial development by the Tug Fork River. The local

bank and post office relocated across the river from downtown in the late 2000s. As of 2018, three businesses lie within the downtown and seven businesses total lie within Iaeger. The city has discussed trying to renovate the open space along the Tug Fork between City Hall and an old grocery building. The space would host public events and have a stage. When not shopping in Welch, many Iaeger residents go to Grundy, Virginia to shop.

Education

Iaeger High School, founded in 1918, closed in 2010 after it was consolidated with Big Creek High School in War to form River View High School in Bradshaw. Iaeger Elementary is the only school and has 270 students.

A branch of the McDowell County Library is in Iaeger. The library is open Monday through Friday from 10am to 5pm. Internet and computers are available to patrons. The library has one full-time employee, a branch manager.

Housing

According to 2017 Census Data, there were a total of 178 housing units in Iaeger. The town has a housing vacancy rate of 32 percent. Over 90 percent of homes are valued less than \$100,000, and 30 percent of the housing was built prior to 1940.

Public Services

The Iaeger Police Department has one officer staffed from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. that covers a seven square mile area. The department had four officers in 2015, three of which were part-time, but budget cuts reduced personnel. The department has two patrol cars and responds to between 10 to 20 calls per week, most of which are minor traffic-related issues. The biggest concern is an understaffed police presence throughout the county. The police department also addresses many breaking-and-entering calls outside of town that are drug-related. Substance abuse was cited as the biggest threat to safety.

The Iaeger VFD merged with the Panther VFD in 2017. The department now has between 20 to 25 volunteers that take an estimated 250 to 400 calls annually. The Iaeger detachment has four truck engines, one rescue truck, and two “jaws of life.” The Panther detachment has one of each. The biggest issue the VFD confronts is a lack of fire hydrants. The biggest equipment need is basic turnout gear for volunteers.

In 1999, the McDowell County PSD acquired City Water Inc. and replaced the distribution system through a USDA HUD block grant. Before then, Iaeger water was non-potable. The McDowell County PSD – Coalwood Water Plant water system serves 438 people in Iaeger, Roderfield, and Big Sandy. Iaeger does not have a wastewater system in place; however, in 2018 the McDowell PSD was awarded grant money to construct a wastewater treatment facility in Iaeger.

Parks & Recreation

The privately-funded and owned Janice Roberts Memorial Park opened in 2015 in downtown Iaeger along the Tug Fork. The park has a basketball court and picnic shelter that is open to the public. Panther WMA is less than ten miles from the town and is a favorite fishing spot for locals. A new river access point will be in town as a part of the Tug River Blue Water Trail. A dock with a kayak slide and river access will be completed in the near future.

Iaeger’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- History
- Dry and Tug Fork Rivers
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Artisans
- Centennial Celebration
- Farmers Market
- Basketball court/playground

Weaknesses

- Abandoned and dilapidated buildings
- Lack of cell phone service
- Roads
- Legal help needed
- Funding availability
- Need businesses

Opportunities

- Utilizing waste as fertilizer
- History book being written about Iaeger
- Pallet business
- Indoor fitness facility
- B&O Tax
- Cell towers
- Historical landmarks

Threats

- Sewer system
- Population decline
- Flooding
- Drug abuse
- Businesses don’t want to move here



City of Keystone

CITY OF KEYSTONE

Background

The City of Keystone, formerly known as Cassville, is situated along Elkhorn Creek and Route 52. In 1889, the Keystone Coal and Coke Company established an N&W train stop, and the city was later incorporated in 1909. In 2016, the total city population was estimated to be 129 people, down from 275 in 2010 and far below the peak population of 2,942 in 1940. Until recently Keystone had an African-American majority population; however, the 2016 census estimates that African-Americans comprised 47 percent of the population, down from 76 percent in 2010.

The city has a rich and influential African-American history in which black citizens obtained political, social, and economic status unlike other places in the state. Keystone was the commercial center of McDowell County through the early and mid-1900s and is infamous in the region for the once prominent Cinder Bottom red-light district.

Economy

In 2016, the median household income was \$32,500, which is \$10,000 more than the county average. The city currently has three businesses, including a large mine owned by current West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, and a primary care medical clinic. The last

bank left the city in 1999. Most residents shop in Bluefield or Welch. Limited turn-key commercial opportunities currently exist. A 1,500 square foot space on the second floor of City Hall could accommodate a business. The city has not received any interest in future commercial development in relation to the Hatfield and McCoy Trails, but they are interested in ATV development.

Education

No educational facilities are located in the city. Keystone Elementary School was built in 1913 and has since closed. Students attend Kimball Elementary School and Mount View High School. (6-12 grades)

Housing

In 2017, a total of 164 housing units existed in the city, with 71.3 percent being categorized as vacant. This rate represents the highest vacancy rate among municipalities in McDowell County. Nearly 90 percent of the homes in Keystone are valued at less than \$100,000. Thirty-seven percent of the homes were built in 1939 or earlier. A high concentration of dilapidated structures exists on Hermanson Ave. The Old City Hall building has been identified by the city as the most significant building to preserve for historical purposes.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The city is the only municipality in McDowell County that does not have a police department. The last officer worked part-time and left in August 2018. Police calls for the city are directed through the County's 911 office and handled by either the County Sheriff's Office or the nearby State Police Detachment. Keystone VFD has eight volunteers and operates under joint jurisdiction agreements with Kimball and Northfork. The Department has a pick-up truck, van, mini pump truck, and tanker; they also have two antique fire engines that are well maintained and could be sold. There is currently a dilapidated building next to the fire department that is scheduled to be torn down and replaced with a garage to store fire department equipment. The city charges a \$15 annual fee for fire services; however, most operating expenses come from federal funds.

Keystone Municipal Water serves 448 people and bills each customer \$20.20 per month. In January 2018, reports indicated that the water system had failed three different times in three years. City residents have been on a water boil advisory for several years. The system continues to have reoccurring problems with the water pump and motor. Many customers do not pay their water bills – with some bills being \$2,000- 3,000 and delinquent since the 1980s – due to the city lacking water meters and the ability to discontinue water service to individual customers. As a result, the McDowell PSD will be assuming control of the system within the next two to three years. The city does not provide wastewater treatment but does offer a garbage service through a joint agreement with Northfork to share Northfork's garbage compactor.

The Keystone Public Works Department has three part-time employees for water, garbage pick-up, and landscaping. They also employ two other part-time employees to do landscaping and cleaning via a work-share program called "55 and Up" through the Senior Community Services Employment Program, which enables individuals 55 and older to maintain federal and state benefits while working part-time. The city owns one truck to conduct work; they also own one backhoe and one trash compactor that are not operational.

Parks & Recreation

The city maintains two parks: Keystone Park and Susan Slaughter Park. The largest park, Keystone Park, is behind the City Hall and off Route 52, and has basketball courts and a picnic pavilion. A local beautification committee maintains the park, along with flowers and streetscaping throughout the community. The city also sponsors and coordinates two annual children-based events: A Christmas Celebration in December that provides clothing and food for children and a Kids' Day in August.

Keystone's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- VFD
- Two doctor offices
- One gas station

Weaknesses

- Floodplain
- Water system
- Sewer system
- Cell phone service
- Decline in population
- Limited capital
- Unemployment
- Infrastructure

Opportunities

- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Phase II Water

Threats

- Potential to go unincorporated
- Abandoned and dilapidated buildings
- Bad landlords
- Relationship with Northfork



Route 52 through Kimball

TOWN OF KIMBALL

Background

The Town of Kimball was incorporated in 1911 and was named for Frederick J. Kimball, former president of what became Norfolk Southern Railway. Kimball, located along Elkhorn Creek and Route 52, is home to the first war memorial building erected in memory of African-American veterans of World War I. The population of Kimball peaked in 1940 with 1,580 people, and as of 2016 there are 173 people. Kimball is 63 percent African American, which is the highest percentage for an incorporated community in the state.

Economy

The median household income in the town is \$46,875, which is significantly higher than the county average of \$22,154. Nineteen and one-tenth percent of residents are below the poverty level, compared to 37.6 percent countywide. Kimball was severely impacted by the 2001 and 2002 floods, which destroyed several buildings on Main Street and forced several businesses to permanently close.

The last grocery store in Kimball closed in 2014, and the last convenience store closed in 2017. Currently about 15 businesses lie within municipal limits, four of which are ATV lodging establishments. Wal-Mart operated in Kimball from 2005 until its closure in 2016. Most Kimball residents now shop in Welch or Mercer County.

Education

Kimball Elementary School is located off Route 52 and has 246 students. The school building used to be Kimball High School, which was an all-black school that was established in 1914 and closed in 1966.

Housing

According to 2017 Census Data, a total of 130 housing units exist in Kimball. The town has a housing vacancy rate of 68.5 percent, which is more than double the county average of 28.7 percent. Over 78 percent of homes are valued less than \$100,000. However, 17.9 percent of homes are valued between \$150,000 - \$200,000, which is much higher when compared to other municipalities in the county. Additionally, the town has a much higher percentage of homes built prior to 1940, compared to the country average of 28 percent. Starland Heights, an affordable multi-family housing development, has 40 units and is located off Route 52 in Kimball.

Dilapidated buildings are not concentrated in one area, but rather scattered throughout the town. Currently, two historic main street buildings need to be demolished: the Rock Building and the building next to Ya'Sou Deli. The historic Koppers Company Store, built in 1923 and currently owned by the Town, is being renovated with assistance from the McDowell County EDA; the exterior renovations are complete, with another \$1 million required to complete the interior.

Public Services

The Town of Kimball employs one part-time police chief who is on-call and is responsible for patrolling areas within the municipal boundary. If the police chief is unable to respond to a call, the matter is forwarded to the County Sheriff's Office. The department has one patrol car. The police chief fields around 100 calls annually.

Established in 1911, the Kimball VFD has approximately 20 volunteers that respond to approximately 100 calls per year. The service area covers Vivian Bottom, Belcher Mountain, Carswell, Burge, and Langraff, and includes about 1,000 households and 2,700 structures. The department has mutual aid agreements with Welch and Keystone.

Kimball VFD's existing equipment inventory includes three fire engines, one mini pumper, and one pick-up truck. The biggest needs are a new mini pumper, which will cost around \$250,000, and one rescue ATV to access remote locations. VFD staff also noted that there is a lack of fire hydrants in their service area, and when hydrants are used the entire town's water supply is temporarily drained.

The McDowell County PSD acquired the municipal-owned Kimball Light and Water in 2008, and as of 2018 the facility serves 197 people in both Kimball and Carswell. However, the current water facility is in need of renovations, and the Kimball area typically has several water boil advisories per year. The most common problems include low water pressure and above average levels of calcium, magnesium, and chlorine. The entire system will be upgraded during McDowell County PSD's Elkhorn Phase 3 project. The town currently provides no wastewater treatment.

The Town of Kimball employs two full-time public works employees that maintain public landscaping and garbage pick-up. The town has one pick-up truck that is used for garbage collection and is in need of a garbage compactor.

Parks & Recreation

One park lies within the town, on Main Street. The Coal Heritage Area Authority developed the park, which sits on a vacant lot and was created after the major floods in 2001 and 2002. The town wanted to install a walking trail on the plot, but a lack of community interest existed. The town limits currently include no access points to the Elkhorn Creek. The Hatfield and McCoy Trail has plans for a trail from Burke and Belcher Mountain to North Welch, which would connect Welch to Kimball and points east along the trail.

Kimball's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Friendly people
- Tenacity
- Aesthetics
- History
- VFD
- Police
- Trout fishing
- Influx of children
- Community awareness

Weaknesses

- Floodplain
- People
- Drugs
- Population decline
- Finances
- Lack of businesses
- Contaminated creeks
- Abandoned and dilapidated buildings
- Roads

Opportunities

- Tourism
- More businesses
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Survey of town land

Threats

- Lack of togetherness
- Drugs
- Crime
- Potential to go unincorporated
- Tax base
- Complacency



Northfork welcome sign

TOWN OF NORTHFORK

Background

The Town of Northfork was incorporated in 1901 and was named for its location along the north fork of Elkhorn Creek. Northfork is the first incorporated community on Route 52 west coming from Mercer County and serves as a “gateway” for the rest of the county. As of the 2010 Census there were 429 residents in Northfork. Based on the 2017 estimates, the population has decreased by over 70 people since 2010.

Economy

In 2016, the estimated median household income in Northfork was \$23,750. The town is close to two large ATV resorts, including Ashland Resort, the largest ATV resort in the Hatfield and McCoy trail system. The town also serves as the gateway to the Indian Ridge trailhead, which opened in 2006. As a result, the town wants to focus on developing tourist accommodations and streetscape projects that will leave a positive impression on visitors entering the county. As

of 2019, Northfork has three restaurants, one pharmacy, a service station, and a funeral home. Mining is still an integral part of the economy, though Northfork would like to encourage other trade jobs into the area.

Education

There are no schools in Northfork. Northfork High School closed in 1985 and was home to 13 state high school boys’ basketball championships in 25 years. Northfork children typically attend Kimball Elementary/Middle School and Mount View High School. Northfork has a branch of the McDowell County Public Library that employs one full-time branch manager.

Housing

As of 2017, a total of 205 homes lie within Northfork, with a 60 percent vacancy rate. Nearly 90 percent of homes are valued at less than \$100,000, with 47 percent built in 1939 or before. Currently, Northfork is comprised of single-family units and a few apartment complexes. Citizens identified a need for additional low-income housing.

Infrastructure and Public Services

Roads in Northfork are a concern to residents. Route 52 runs through town and should be repaved and widened in certain areas. The McDowell County PSD is assuming control of Northfork’s water system and is upgrading the system as part of the Elkhorn Creek Water Project. The town does not provide wastewater service. The McDowell County PSD plans to provide wastewater service along the Route 52 corridor, including Northfork.

Like many parts of McDowell County, flooding is a recurring issue in Northfork. Concerns exist about erosion along the north fork of Elkhorn Creek and excessive litter that is contributing adversely to the flooding. Also, despite being located along one of the busiest thoroughfares in the county, residents in Northfork continue to note that cell coverage is inconsistent. Residents would like to have improved internet and cell service in the area.

Emergency and law enforcement services are provided by one part-time police officer, the VFD, and a part-time ambulance service. Northfork has three part-time police officers. The VFD counts seven active members. The VFD was awarded a large grant for air bottles in 2018, but the VFD could also use new bunker gear and other updates to equipment. The VFD responds to nearby ATV crashes and the town wishes to explore purchasing more safety equipment related to trail usage and emergencies.

The Town of Northfork provides residents with water and garbage pick-up. Widener’s Ambulance Service is also located in Northfork, but mostly provides non-emergency transports. Electric is provided by American Electric Power, as it is in all the other municipalities. Bluefield Area Transit has a stop in Northfork and residents believe having a public transit option is an asset to the community.

Parks and Recreation

Northfork owns a public park that includes a playground and basketball court. The park has been in place since the 1970s and now has new fencing, refurbished and new equipment, and a large mural displayed on a retaining wall. Park improvements suggested by residents include: updating the mural, resurfacing the basketball court, constructing a barrier to protect the area from automobile traffic, updated lighting, a new restroom, and new landscaping.

Northfork’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Tourism
- VFD
- Tug River Clinic
- Scenic beauty
- Rich history
- Loyal citizens
- Neighborhood watch

Weaknesses

- Infrastructure
- Aging water system
- Sewage/wastewater treatment
- Cell phone service
- Declining population
- Roads
- Unemployment
- Construction restrictions
- Aging equipment
- Blighted properties
- Limited Capital

Opportunities

- Coal mining
- Tourism
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails

Threats

- Population decline
- Flooding
- Roads
- Drug abuse
- Lack of grant support
- Administration unrest
- Continued loss of business in McDowell



City of War Fire Department

CITY OF WAR

Background

The City of War, a name derived from a battle between Native Americans and settlers in the area, was incorporated in 1920 and is the state’s southernmost city. War was formerly known as Miner’s City. Homer Hickman attended Big Creek High School, and the city was featured as the setting in the movie *October Sky*. The city is situated 15 miles south from Welch at the confluence of War Creek and Tug Fork. WV Route 83 runs west to Bradshaw and WV Route 16 runs north to south through the city. Population for the city peaked in 1950, with nearly 4,000 residents; in 2016, the population was estimated to be 715 people.

Economy

The median household income is \$28,125, which is higher than the county average of \$22,154. The city has a grocery store and several locally-owned restaurants. In September 2018, a new Hatfield McCoy Trail-Pinnacle Ridge trailhead opened. As a result, a new ATV rental facility opened downtown, which provides ATV riders with trail licenses and information.

Education

Southside (K-8) is the only school in War. Big Creek High School closed in 2010 after consolidation with Iaeger High School to form River View High School in Bradshaw. In 2015, the Big Creek High School building caught fire and was destroyed. War Elementary School and War Junior High School closed in 2008. The old high school mascot, the “Owls,” continues to be a source of pride for residents. The mascot was named the Owls because the school was part of the the first high school football game in West Virginia to be played under stadium lights.

Housing

As of 2017, a total of 420 housing units, with 25.7 percent being classified as “vacant”, existed in War. War has the lowest percentage of homes built 1939 or before among municipalities, with 20.5 percent. Ninety-eight percent of homes are valued below \$100,000. The largest identified stretch of dilapidated buildings is located on High Street, which runs parallel to Main Street.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The Police Department has three officers, one police cruiser, and one vehicle reserved for back-up, and needs a new radar detector and a new police cruiser. The department takes, on average, two to three calls a week. The War VFD has approximately 20 volunteers, three tankers, one gator vehicle, and a rescue van equipped with hydraulic rescue tools, including the “jaws of life.” The department responds to approximately 100 calls per year.

The City of War’s wastewater system opened in 1998 and is one of four municipal systems in the county. The War Water Works water service serves 673 people.

Redemption House Sober Living Home is a non-profit drug-treatment facility on Main Street. The facility provides drug rehab classes and free meals for approximately 15 men, once a week. The City of War owns the building but does not charge rent and maintains the landscaping.

Parks & Recreation

The City of War is situated near several outdoor assets and recreational areas. The Tug Fork River runs parallel to Main Street and there is an unfinished recreational trail on the south side of the river. War Community Park was donated by the McDowell County Board of Education in the mid-2000s and is well-maintained. A small veteran’s memorial park is located along Route 16, south of town.

High Rocks Overlook lies outside the city and features ATV trails and a scenic overlook; however, at this time the area is not incorporated into a formal trail system and is difficult to access.

The Hatfield and McCoy Warrior Trail trailhead opened outside of War in 2018. A staffed office at the trailhead on Main Street provides riding permits, restrooms, and trail information to visitors. Officials hope that the new trailhead location will create ATV-related businesses such as lodging and restaurants. Berwind Lake is only four miles south of War and has an array of recreational opportunities, including cabins, trails, and fishing.

The city acquired the Big Creek High School gym in 2018 with assistance from the McDowell County EDA. In 2013, the community received a \$100,000 grant for exercise equipment which was purchased and placed in the gym. City officials are planning on using the gym as a free community center and hosting events, from basketball tournaments to bluegrass concerts. The city hosts an annual Fall Festival the first

weekend of September. The two-day event features live music, a parade, horseback rides, and a wrestling competition.

War’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

Tourism
High Rocks
Playground and park
Berwind Lake

Weaknesses

Infrastructure
Blighted properties
Empty storefronts

Opportunities

Coal mining
Tourism
Hatfield-McCoy Trails

Threats

Population decline
Flooding
Roads
Drug abuse



City of Welch courthouse

CITY OF WELCH

Background

The city of Welch is the county seat of McDowell County and was incorporated in 1893. Welch is over six square miles in size and is situated at the confluence of Elkhorn Creek and the Tug River. The 2010, census estimates reported that the population was 2,406; however, the 2017 Census estimated the population had declined to around 1,740 people.

Economy

Welch is the commercial hub of the county with several businesses operating within city limits. The Welch Community Hospital is located in city limits. The hospital constitutes one of the largest employers in the city and represents the only acute care hospital in the county. Two correctional facilities located in Welch provide over 150 jobs. The coal mining industry has been an integral part of Welch’s economy, as well, and mining jobs continue to be a driving force in the area.

Like many other communities in McDowell County, Welch is also expanding its tourism opportunities with the Hatfield and McCoy trail system. Lodging is available for groups coming using the ATV trails. The community is responding to the influx of new visitors to the area and working on projects that will promote increased tourism. The median household income for Welch is \$27,115 as of the 2016 estimates. Many people will travel from other areas of the county to grocery shop and conduct personal business in Welch.

Education

Welch is home to several educational facilities. Mount View High School is one of the only two high schools in the county. Students can also attend middle school at Mount View and Welch Elementary is within city limits. The county’s Career and Technology Center offers a wide variety of courses and provides skill building programs.

Housing

As of 2017, there were 1,216 housing units in Welch, with 30.7 percent characterized as “vacant.” Welch is considering different options and hoping to update the abandoned and dilapidated building ordinance. The population of Welch is aging and there is concern that there is not enough suitable housing for seniors.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The City of Welch provides water, sewer, electric, and a trash pick-up service. Police protection is provided by six officers and a detachment of the West Virginia State Police in Welch. The Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) has approximately 20 volunteers. Equipment upgrades would be beneficial to both the city police and VFD in the future. The Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) is the only bus service that comes into McDowell County and has multiple stops in Welch. Residents value the bus service and utilize it for appointments and shopping needs.

Welch upgraded its water plant in 2017 and no current projects aim to update specific water lines. The sewer system is up to date and will be extended to the North Welch area. The roads are in good condition and interest exists in updating the sidewalks in city limits. The Department of Highways is working on access to King Coal Highway from Bluefield and connecting the Coalfields Expressway to Welch in the near future. King Coal and Coalfields would be the first four-lane highways in the county and could greatly decrease the time spent driving in and out of the county. It has been reported that cell phone coverage is inconsistent in Welch and internet service is generally slow.

Parks and Recreation

World-class trout fishing is available in the area, though many fishermen do not utilize the area due to water contamination. Welch would like to continue clean-up efforts and help to restore the rivers and streams to promote fishing. The City would like to partner with Friends of the Tug Fork River and the McDowell County Sportsman’s Club to assess the possibility of a dock and kayak slide at Martha Moore Riverfront Park as part of the larger Blue Water River Trail.

Linkous Park, which is operated by the County and located in Welch, has baseball fields, a pool, tennis courts, a playground, and pavilions. The park is widely used by the public and continued upkeep is important to residents. Three other playgrounds are also within the city. Welch residents are also interested in having an indoor fitness facility and a walking path through the city to allow for safer pedestrian traffic.

Welch’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- People
- Banks
- VFD
- Library
- Movie theater
- Hospital and clinics

- Trout fishing
- Art and Culture Center
- Civic groups
- Veterans Day Parade
- Upgraded water system

Weaknesses

- Roads
- Drugs and prostitution
- Abandoned and dilapidated buildings
- Cell phone service
- Housing
- Lack of businesses
- Employment
- Population decline
- Land availability
- Diverse educational opportunities

Opportunities

- Grant writer
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- Tourism
- Revitalize downtown
- Teacher housing
- Employment

Threats

- Roads
- Flooding
- Drugs
- Aging population
- Housing options
- Infrastructure
- Crime
- State leadership
- Negative media coverage

CRITICAL ISSUES

Chapter 3 identifies and describes the most significant challenges facing McDowell County. The issues were initially identified by the McDowell County Planning Commission during a visioning and goal setting session. Community input from surveys, meetings, and open house events were critical to further inform the themes and issues. The most important issues identified during the comprehensive plan process were:

Abandoned and dilapidated buildings

Economic development

Infrastructure

Land use

Public safety

The next chapter, Chapter 4: Action Plan, includes a list of prioritized goals, objectives, and action steps that address each critical issue in this chapter.

ISSUE 1: ABANDONED AND DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS

Widespread blight from abandoned and dilapidated buildings affects all aspects of life in McDowell County. According to the United States Census, in 2017 McDowell County had one of the highest percentages of vacant properties in West Virginia at 31.4% compared to 17.0% in the state. Many residents indicate that blighted structures inhibit economic development, decrease property values, limit quality housing options, pose public health risks, and threaten the historic preservation of culturally significant buildings.

The county planning commission solicited input via an online survey regarding issues identified in the comprehensive plan. Eighty-one percent of online survey respondents described housing options in the county as “poor,” and 67 percent described McDowell County as having a “poor” visual appearance. Citizens also expressed that visual blight lessens the sense of pride in their communities. Most of the municipalities also indicated that abandoned and dilapidated structures were a significant problem. For instance, the Town of Northfork expressed a need to clean up the abandoned and dilapidated structures, in part, to improve opportunities for tourism.

Effective steps to address dilapidated buildings include:

Develop partnerships with experts and stakeholders

Inventory dilapidated properties

Adopt ordinances to address dilapidated buildings

Prioritize properties for strategic code enforcement and clean-up programs

Identify opportunities to repair, revitalize, or demolish as appropriate

Coordination with Partners

Organizations throughout the state specialize in assisting communities to address blight. These partners can provide the technical assistance required to start a comprehensive abandoned and dilapidated building strategy. The planning commission should take a lead role in organizing and facilitating communication

with organizations throughout the state.

The county is currently working with Clean Up McDowell, the WV Department of Environmental Protection, the Region 1 Planning and Development Council (PDC), the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic (Land Use Clinic), and the Property Rescue Initiative through the Housing Development Fund.

In addition to statewide resources, a regional or local approach to dealing with abandoned and dilapidated structures can make the process more cost-effective for all involved. For example, a local or regional entity can purchase a tub grinder that can grind up debris at the site making it easier to haul.

Coordination with Partners

The county is working with WVU, Region 1 Planning and Development Council, and a private third-party aerial photography company to create GIS maps for the county in order to better identify and prioritize abandoned and dilapidated structures in the county. Emergency services in the county and throughout the municipalities will also be able to utilize the aerial photography for informational purposes.

Another example of coordination is the “Clean Up McDowell” initiative, which seeks to create a vacant and dilapidated building inventory and implementation plan to address blighted properties in the county. The estimated cost of demolition is approximately \$5,000 per building. While there is currently no confirmed funding or uniform process in place to address these properties, the inventory is a positive initial step. The program is working with the National Guard to dispose of the debris. Local coal companies have provided trucks to haul debris, and the WV DEP is directing the debris to be hauled to the Copper Ridge landfill and paying the tipping fees.

Residents are another important partner. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WV DEP), county commission, and municipal leaders have been successful in holding clean up days in McDowell County, where residents bring in their household items for free and properly dispose of waste that has accumulated on their property. The free clean-up day program should continue and be held at different locations around the county, throughout the year.



Create an Inventory of Dilapidated and Vacant Properties

A systematic inventory of neglected properties can help identify the extent of the problem. At least one informal survey of abandoned and dilapidated structures has been started.

Inventory criteria at a minimum should include information about the location of the property, the condition of the property, whether the property is located in the floodplain, availability of utilities, accessibility, and other concerns.

Once a community has completed an inventory of its abandoned properties, the community may have to make tough decisions about which properties to address first. Factors to consider when prioritizing properties for redevelopment include:

Boundaries defined by a community’s Urban Renewal Authority or Land Reuse Agency

A preferred alternate use for a specific property because, for instance, a lot may be irregular, have a small layout, have insufficient street capacity, or have insufficient green space, parks, or recreational facilities Example: A dilapidated building in a busy business district may be demolished to create additional parking spaces for local businesses.

- Condition of title, particularly when multiple owners claim ownership interest or the community cannot locate or identify the owner
- Character of the neighborhood, including historic neighborhoods and blighted or slum areas
- Crime statistics in a specific neighborhood
- Traffic and accident analysis
- Declared disaster areas due to flooding, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and tornadoes
- Physical and geological factors, such as whether land is submerged, contains karst that causes periodic flooding, has unusual topography, or has features that would make development by private enterprise uneconomical
- Economic feasibility, considering the cost of demolition, market costs, or the cost to partially or completely fix a building

McDowell County Priorities

As part of the comprehensive plan process, Route 52 has been identified as a “gateway corridor” through the county. By identifying Route 52 as a gateway corridor, county officials are acknowledging the importance of the highway as the primary way of entrance into McDowell, as well as one of the primary corridors for traveling within the county. However, the corridor has a high concentration of dilapidated structures, and the municipalities along Route 52 have a high percentage of the vacant properties in the county. The planning commission, along with input from the community, has identified the Route 52 corridor as a priority area for addressing blight.

Additionally, each municipality identified individual areas for redevelopment within their boundaries, including those with economic development potential. For example, the new Warrior Trail, which opened in September 2018 between Gary and War, has approximately 18 blighted structures located along the trail.

Other ways to prioritize areas include identifying properties on the West Virginia State Auditor’s Office that are classified as “no bid.” These properties received no bids in prior delinquent property tax auction. As of 2018, 1,397 no bid properties existed in McDowell County, compared to 651 for Mercer County, 261 for Mingo County, and 188 for Wyoming County. Most no bid properties in the county lie within Welch, Northfork, Iaeger, Keystone, and the north central part of the county known as the Brown’s Creek area. While these properties are still technically owned by the landowner, and title work must be complete, these properties are likely abandoned.

The prioritization process for addressing abandoned and dilapidated properties is very important. Through this process local officials, both county and municipal, decide where to focus scarce resources for demolition and rehabilitation. This process should also encourage public participation and be collaborative in nature. An objective set of factors should guide the prioritization process. Part of prioritizing will be to ensure that resources to address abandoned and dilapidated structures are spread throughout the county and into the municipalities.

Each municipality that has completed a SWOT exercise either identified abandoned or dilapidated structures as a “weakness” or a “threat.”

As part of the surveying process, the county and municipalities should also note structures that should be rehabilitated rather than demolished or deconstructed. While many structures in McDowell County are past the point of being rehabilitated, some struc-

tures may be redeveloped at a reasonable cost. Local officials should understand that demolition is not the only solution. Some structures may have historical significance, while others may still have practical utility within the community. Funds may be available for rehabilitation of culturally or historically significant structures in McDowell. While rehabilitation may not be the answer all the time, rehabilitation should be considered an alternative to demolition in some circumstances.

Update Ordinances

Effective enforcement of ordinances to address property maintenance can help prevent properties from becoming dilapidated in the first place and provide remedies for repair and demolition if a property is not properly maintained. Municipalities struggle to find ways to address the issue of blight through ordinances. Many communities lack proper ordinances or the resources to enforce ordinances. Particularly with respect to enforcing the West Virginia State Building Code, a code enforcement officer must be hired. Consequently, 56 percent of the online survey respondents noted that code enforcement in the county is “poor.”

The West Virginia State Code authorizes a variety of options for local governments to address abandoned and dilapidated structures. All municipalities and the County should review and update ordinances relating to dilapidated buildings. For a comprehensive list of options, please see the Legal Toolkit “From Liability to Viability.” which describes code enforcement options for both county and municipal governments including advantages and disadvantages of:

- The International Residential Code
- The International Property Maintenance Code
- An Unsafe and Unsanitary Ordinance for Counties (WV Code 7-11-3ff)
- An Unsafe and Unsanitary Ordinance for Municipalities (WC Code 8-12-16)
- Nuisance Ordinances

Additional tools include:

Public Pressure

Partnerships with financial institutions

Negotiating with stakeholders

Liens for debris removal after fire

In addition, the county needs to have a certified code enforcement officer to enforce the West Virginia State Building Code. The officer needs periodic continuing education training to maintain certification.

While it may not be feasible or even necessary for the county or any of the municipalities to each have a full-time code enforcement officer, hiring one person to serve the entire county, including the municipalities, may be appropriate. Sharing a code enforcement officer with a neighboring county may also make code enforcement more cost-effective.

One option for municipalities is the adoption of a “vacant” property registration programs. This registration program enables municipalities to require a property owner who owns a vacant property to pay a fee for being on the registry. Many municipalities in the state have created registration programs, which establishes a tiered fee schedule that increases each year on the registry. One of the drawbacks to the registration program is trying to locate the property owner in order to send notice of inclusion onto the registry.

Similarly, the state enables municipalities to enact uninhabitable property registration programs. The main difference between the two registration programs is that a violation of the building code (or International Property Maintenance Code) must exist in order for a property to be placed on the uninhabitable property registry. In addition, a municipality may take the property by forfeiture if the property is on the uninhabitable property registry for a period of two years. Another drawback to the registration programs is that many property owners are on a limited income and subjecting them to additional fees fails to address the core issue of blight.

The county and municipalities can also become involved in programs such as the West Virginia Housing Development Fund’s Property Rescue Initiative Loan Program and Change, Inc.’s Weatherization Assistance program. These programs can assist the county and municipalities address vacant and uninhabitable structures in different ways.

Identify opportunities to repair, revitalize, or demolish as appropriate

When addressing neglected properties, local governments must balance the need for affordable housing, the availability of commercial property and the protection of historic resources. Census data indicates that McDowell County’s population is aging and that the average age in the community is likely to continue to increase. Many people want to continue to stay in their homes, even if they need assistance with daily functions. The county should continue to work with the Mingo Housing Authority and Region 1 PDC to determine future housing needs, especially for the elderly.

Historic preservation provides another consideration when addressing neglected properties. The coal company town era produced many structures of historic and cultural significance, specifically along municipal main streets. These buildings provide a sense of place, that is unique to the county, and preservation of these properties in appropriate circumstances should be considered.

Deconstruction and Rehabilitation

Another aspect of addressing abandoned and dilapidated structures is deconstruction. Deconstruction is the practice of taking apart a structure piece by piece so that certain parts of the structure can be recycled or reused. If value exists, the parts of the structure can be sold or they can be donated to a 501 (c)(3) and claimed by the property owner on their taxes as a donation at the fair market value of the parts. A market may exist for some older coal company structures that possess historical significance. Many structures in McDowell are older and thus may have architecture or materials that are highly sought after. “The primary customers are homeowners and builders. These groups hunt for building products with character, vintage style and perhaps hard-to-find features or dimensions. Artists buy materials to incorporate in their work. Furniture makers come in search of fine wood.” In the right situation, a McDowell-based deconstruction company could provide jobs to deconstruct and sell or donate salvageable materials.

Concerns with deconstruction include cost. Deconstruction likely costs significantly more than demolishing the structure. In addition, the method to sell or donate deconstructed materials from properties that have been abandoned must be determined. Legal liability issues of deconstruction must also be addressed. However, an untapped market may exist in McDowell for deconstructed materials.

While typically a last resort, some properties are beyond repair and require repair and demolition to ensure safety of future residents, pedestrians, first responders, and neighbors.

Where to put demolition debris

For any additional debris, the county needs to identify sites for Industrial and Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfills and develop mutual agreements with municipalities to use the landfills during the demolition and remediation process. Ideally, four C&D landfills would exist, one in each magisterial district in the county. Additionally, anyone working on demolition in the county must be properly certified and dispose of potentially toxic materials that cannot be buried, such as asbestos. All of these steps have the potential to increase the costs associated with addressing abandoned and dilapidated structures. However, the process must be done correctly.



Dilapidated building in McDowell

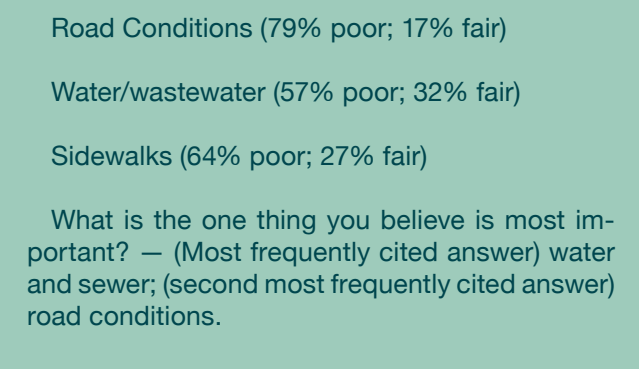
ISSUE 2:
INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure, which includes roads, water and wastewater services, telecommunications, and broadband, has been cited by local officials and residents as one of McDowell County’s biggest challenges. During the 2018 open house events, residents noted how important water/wastewater services and communication technologies such as cell service and broadband are to enhancing not only the quality of life of McDowell County residents, but improving economic development prospects, tourism, lodging for the Hatfield and McCoy Trails, and outdoor recreation. The McDowell County Planning Commission identified three primary infrastructure priorities:

- Focus on water and wastewater service upgrades and extension in coordination with the McDowell County Public Service District (PSD) and other PSDs in the county
- Enhance and extend cell phone service and broadband service throughout the county
- Establish a regional approach to consolidate services and resources, and establish public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects.

To further illustrate the importance of infrastructure development, 60 percent of online survey respondents’ classified infrastructure as “poor,” compared to only 30 percent of respondents in Wyoming County for a similar survey completed in 2016.

Figure 1: 2018 McDowell County Online Survey Results — Rate Infrastructure in McDowell County



Transportation

Transportation infrastructure was also identified as important in the county. Transportation priorities include the highway system, improved transportation access for economic development, improved public transit, sidewalks, and maintenance of existing roads and bridges.

Highways in McDowell County

One often articulated concern is the county’s geographic isolation from the rest of Southern West Virginia due to a lack of highways, particularly four-lane highways. However, there are two highway projects underway, the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway.

The King Coal Highway would be a new four lane highway connecting Bluefield to Williamson and running along the northern part of McDowell County. When fully complete, the highway will cut travel time between Williamson and Bluefield in half and cover 90 miles in the very southern portion of West Virginia. The King Coal Highway will also be part of a larger I-73/74 corridor, which will run from Detroit to Charleston, South Carolina. The West Virginia Division of Highways has already studied the region and chose a “preferred alternative.” According to the King Coal Highway website, “the King Coal project has real potential for opening up unused land for future development. Improved access may stimulate and accelerate development opportunities in areas that were once considered too remote for industrial, commercial, or residential development.”

In September 2018, the Governor approved WV DOT’s award of a contract to construct a four-mile long section of the King Coal Highway in Mercer County. The project will begin in 2019 and be completed by 2021. The funds for this project were part of the Roads to Prosperity program. While completing the four-mile section in Mercer County is a step in the right direction, local officials in McDowell County need to continue to work with state and federal officials to ensure that the road gets built along the McDowell/Wyoming border, as it has the potential to make the county more accessible to the region.

The Coalfields Expressway transportation project could also have a significant impact on McDowell County. The West Virginia Legislature originally proposed the project in 1989 to connect Beckley with Grundy, Virginia (65 miles in length). The need for the Coalfields Expressway may be attributed to deficiencies regarding three basic transportation issues: 1) existing roadway conditions; 2) safety; and 3) economic opportunities.

While originally intended to be a 2-lane highway, the current plans contemplate 4 lanes. As of 2013, more than \$140 million in federal funds have been appropriated by Congress for the Coalfields Expressway. An eight-mile stretch in Raleigh County has already been completed and is open for traffic. A one-mile section of the route was constructed to grade just north of Welch but has not been paved or opened for traffic.

Design was also started near the Federal Correctional Institution in northern McDowell County for the interchange between the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway.

The Indian Ridge Industrial Park is conveniently located near this projected interchange. Another project that is slated to benefit from the Roads to Prosperity program, funding has already been allocated for the portion of the expressway from the McDowell/Wyoming County line to Welch and past the federal prison. Additionally, fees collected at toll booths along the West Virginia Turnpike could finance construction of the Coalfields Expressway. Local officials need to work with state and federal officials to ensure that the other portions of the Coalfields Expressway are studied, designed, and constructed.

The proposed extension of the King Coal Highway and Coalfields Expressway could bring additional development into the county and may catalyze economic development. County officials should continue to lobby for funding to complete the highways through the Roads to Prosperity bond funding program and other funding mechanisms.

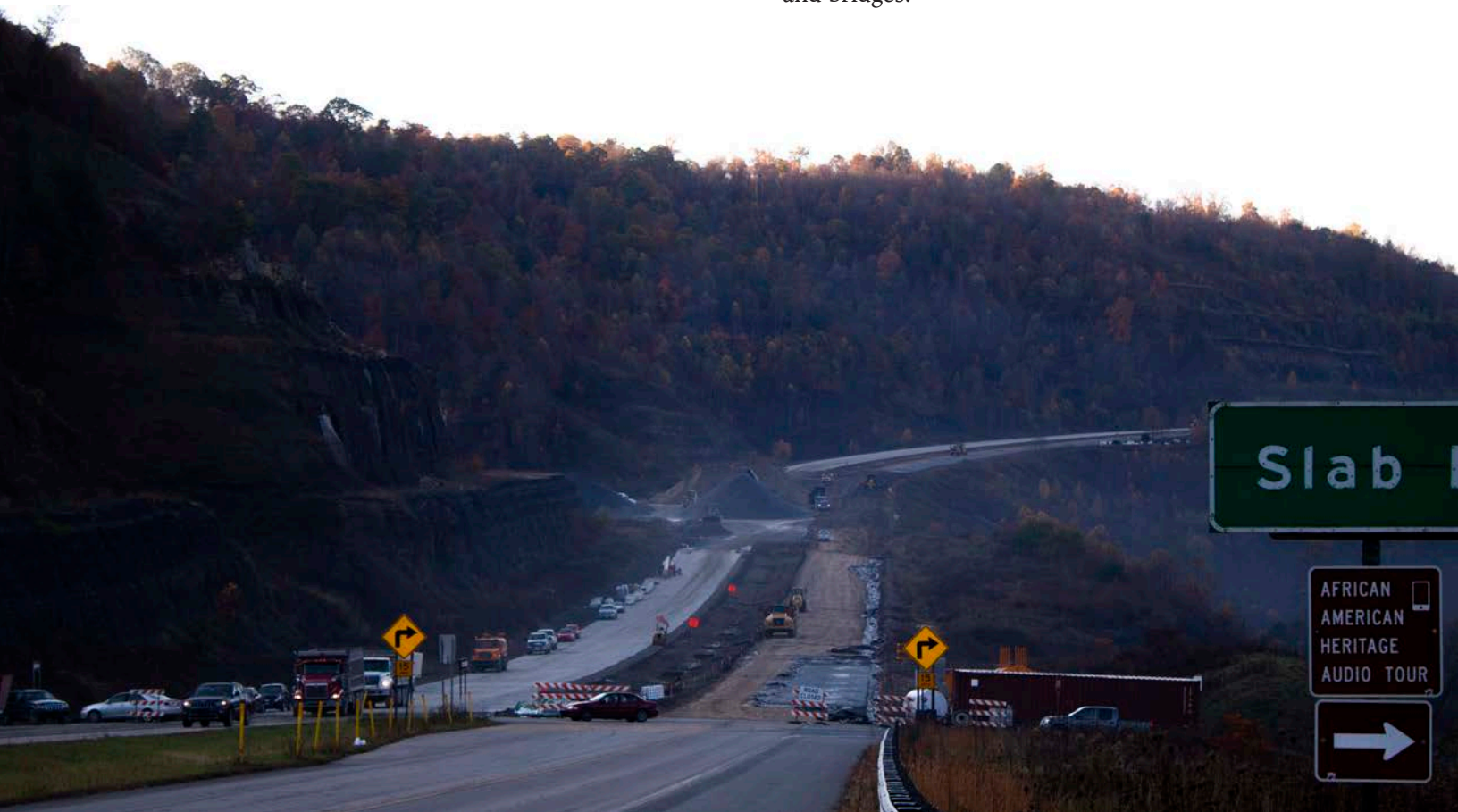
With an east-west corridor and north-south corridor being constructed, McDowell County will become more accessible than ever before. As such these transportation projects need to be at the forefront of advocacy with local officials.

Maintenance of Existing Transportation Infrastructure

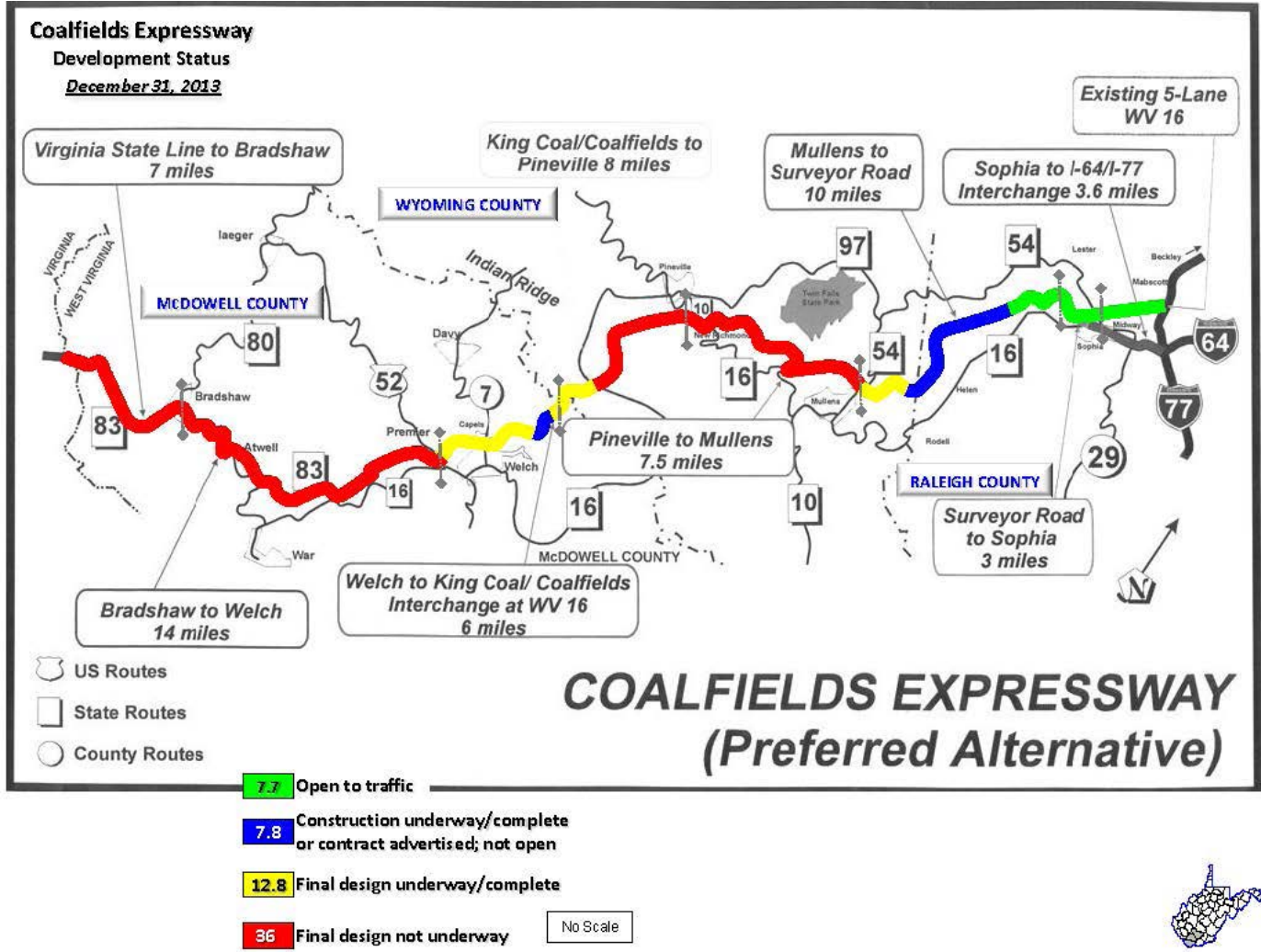
Another concern articulated throughout the county involves the condition of existing roads and bridges. For example, in Bradshaw a bridge to the Coal Camp area is something the community would like to invest in so residents have quicker access out of the camp in an emergency.

For state roads, the county needs to work with the WV Division of Highways to address road conditions. Much like abandoned and dilapidated structures, the best way to start is to understand the breadth and magnitude of the issue. Developing and maintaining an inventory of roads and road conditions in McDowell County is a necessary first step. If the county hopes to attract tourists into the community, having roads that are well marked and well maintained are important.

One area identified for transportation upgrades is Route 16 from the Yukon area to the Virginia line. Updating Route 16 in this area would be advantageous for tourism. Another area in need of routine upgrades is Route 52, which is the main East-West thoroughfare in the county.



King Coal Highway Construction, 2019



Transportation for Economic Development

Lack of access (transportation) into the county was identified as one of the primary reasons for lack of development. Transportation improvements are needed to improve economic development, including industrial parks and tourism.

McDowell County's transportation assets include existing railroad lines. These railroad lines are still being used to haul coal, but not for passenger service. Currently, the Cardinal Line of Amtrak services southern West Virginia in the communities of Hinton, Charleston, and White Sulphur Springs. Any sort of passenger service through McDowell County could be seen as a positive development for the county.

Regarding tourism, transportation can provide both access to amenities in the County and be a tourism destination in themselves. Interest may exist for an excursion train in McDowell County. An excursion train is a chartered train that runs for a special event or purpose. In McDowell, a train could ride through several historical coal camps. There could also be special trips for fall foliage viewing and winter holidays, such as a "Polar Express" Train. With a rich history, especially related to the coal industry as well the number of active rail lines in the county, excursion trains could present real opportunities. A feasibility study should be conducted. An excursion train may be a seasonal operation and would be another activity for Hatfield-McCoy trail riders and their families.

Access to industrial parks also need to be maintained and improved. In McDowell County, the Indian Ridge Industrial Park is an area that could develop due to increased transportation opportunities with the highway interchange. The industrial park already has sewer, electric, and gas utilities. The future Eckman Industrial Park needs a new road. The industrial park is still in the planning phase; however, a road might expedite the development of the industrial park. The road originally contemplated would be built between Keystone and Gary.

Improved Public Transit and Sidewalks

Some municipalities in the county, including Iaeger, identified the development of walkable communities as a need. Iaeger has already sought funding for sidewalks. Sidewalks not only keep pedestrian and vehicular traffic separated but can encourage walking and exercise.

Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) provides public transit in parts of McDowell County. BAT has several scheduled routes in McDowell, including Welch to Bluefield, Welch to Gary, and Welch to Big Four/Premier. In 2019, the BAT also extended service to Anawalt and Jenkinjones. The county, along with BAT officials, should periodically analyze the need to extend the current routes or to change the schedules to meet existing needs, particularly around existing municipalities. Ideally, more of the county would be served by BAT buses. In order to foster those discussions, a locality that is interested in BAT services should contact the transit officials to understand how transportation services may be extended into their community. Transit services can get people to and from work and to areas of commerce for shopping and retail needs.

Water and Wastewater

Providing adequate water and wastewater services to residents and businesses is a top priority for the county. In addition to public health concerns, businesses and residents are less likely to stay or move to areas of the county with inadequate water and wastewater treatment. This section will describe both existing and planned water and sewer infrastructure. Given the rural and remote nature of McDowell County, both centralized and on-site services exist in different parts of the county.

Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for Transportation

In 2014, the West Virginia Legislature gave the state government and the private sector the authority to work together on transportation projects like the King Coal Highway and Coalfields Expressway. PPPs are not new to transportation in the southern part of the state. In the early 2000s a portion of the King Coal Highway, near Red Jacket in Mingo County, was completed through a PPP with a local coal company, a local redevelopment authority, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the WV DOT. According to the FHWA, the coal company provided part of the right-of-way, road foundation construction, and rough grading. The coal company was able to mine coal along the route. The mining companies also provided input in determining the alignment of the highway to ensure that it provided good access to coal-rich areas. The original contracting estimate for the Red Jacket project in Mingo County was \$339 million. However through the PPP, the negotiated contract estimate was less than \$170 million, a 50% reduction in cost.

Because the state code allows for public private partnerships for transportation projects and there is a need for 2 major highways and other local roads to be built, local officials in McDowell County should initiate discussions with the private sector to see if there is any interest in a PPP for transportation. Coal companies or other large land holding companies could be partners. The main concern involves getting these companies to the table and providing an incentive for the companies to help with a transportation project that will defray overall costs and be mutually beneficial. A distinct possibility exists for utilizing a PPP framework for transportation projects in McDowell. Initial discussions of utilizing a PPP for the part of the Coalfields Expressway from the Industrial Park to Welch have already taken place.

Existing Centralized Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Existing water utilities include the Town of Bradshaw, the City of Gary, the McDowell County Public Service District (PSD), the Town of Northfork, City of Keystone, the City of Welch, and City of War.

Public service districts and municipalities in McDowell County face many of the same challenges as other public utilities in remote, mountainous parts of the United States, including:

Declining populations.

Rate increases may be recommended to upgrade or expand service, but increasing rates proves challenging when fewer customers exist to cover the expenses and the median family income in the County is \$32,007. In addition, many customers in the County are on a fixed income, given dependence on social security income. Not all customers are metered. Metering helps to identify leaks and reducing leaks improves reliability for all customers

Need for utility upgrades.

For some utilities, equipment is nearing or has exceeded its functional life. Addressing aging infrastructure with limited resources is a challenge. In addition to upgrades at the plants. However, opportunities exist to maintain and replace distribution equipment and pipes.

Utility operator recruitment, development and succession planning.

An additional outcome of declining population is the challenge of finding qualified certified water and wastewater operators. Opportunities for advancement may be limited. As employees are trained, they may find other employment opportunities.

Geography and Topography.

McDowell County is 535 square miles with many steep slopes, mountain ranges, and water bodies. Extending water and sewer service is more difficult than in areas with flat topography.

Major investments to existing infrastructure include the purchase of generators at several utilities. The City of Welch is investing in line replacements, wastewater collection upgrades serving over 900 customers, and a water treatment plant upgrade serving over 1,000 customers. The McDowell County PSD will consolidate five older separate water systems into two systems as part of Phase 4 of the Elkhorn Creek Project.

Expanding Centralized Water and Sewer Service

Efforts are being made to expand centralized water and sewer service in the county. Larger infrastructure projects expected in the next 10 years include:

The Town of Bradshaw hopes to upgrade the Town’s sanitary sewer and water system and has already completed a Sewer Capital Improvement Study. In 2019, the Town was awarded \$1.5 million for sewer plant upgrades and an additional collection line.

The City of Gary recently completed upgrades to their water treatment plant serving 473 customers. Gary recently completed a sewer system assessment and is deciding between water treatment options at different locations.

The Town of laeger plans a regional sewer project to serve an additional 130 customers. McDowell PSD will provide treatment for the laeger regional sewer system. The treatment process is undergoing an engineering revision and is expected to extend along Route 52 to pick up recently annexed sections of the Town. In April 2019, the town was awarded \$1.3 million for a sewer project that will serve over 100 homes, several businesses, and an elementary school.

The McDowell County PSD is expanding water service to several communities including:

- 200 homes in the communities of Elkhorn, Maybeury, and Switchback as part of the Phase 1 of the Elkhorn Creek project.
- 300 new customers in the communities of Keystone, Northfork, and Kimball in partnership with the Town of Northfork as part of Phase 2 of the Elkhorn Creek project.
- 119 new water customers in the Jolo area.

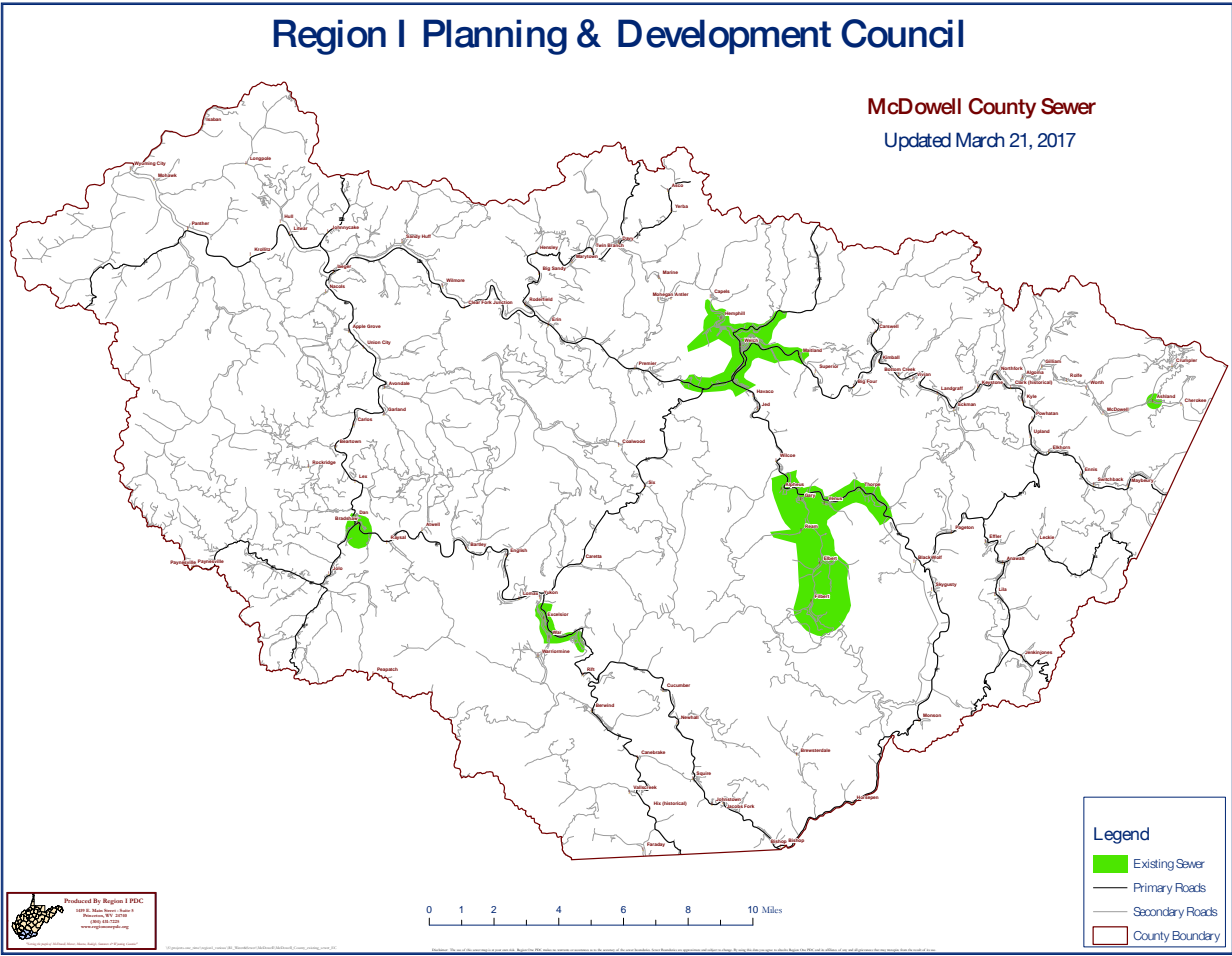


Figure 3 identifies areas of the county that are served by existing existing sewer service in McDowell County. Table 1 also identifies populations to be served by planned, funded, or proposed water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The infrastructure maps for McDowell County were developed by the Region 1 Planning and Development Council. Region 1 supports McDowell County’s infrastructure projects through planning and project management.

The McDowell County PSD will eventually take over the water systems in Ashland and O’Toole.

513 customers were recently provided water service in Big Sandy, Hensley, and Roderfield.

The McDowell County PSD has recently expanded its capacity to provide wastewater service including:

- Additional customers between Maybeury and Kimball.
- 60 new customers in Coalwood which will be the County PSD’s first sewer project. Bids for this project went out during the summer of 2019.

The Town of Northfork will provide water service to 408 new customers in Northfork, Keystone, Upland, Powhatan, and Kyle as part of Phase 3 of the Elkhorn Creek project, in addition to the Phase 2 extension mentioned above.

The City of Welch will provide service to 100 new customers as part of the North Welch Wastewater Collection Expansion project. The City is also upgrading water treatment service to North Welch.

While the utilities in the County have many systems either completed or scheduled for upgrades, any future water system upgrades will be costly, as many remaining populations are isolated in rugged terrain and upgrades would require small extensions off main lines. To address these challenges, communities may consider consolidation of services to increase opportunities for funding. As mentioned, the declining customer base and reduced revenue complicate the PSD's ability to upgrade services.

On-site [or Decentralized] Water and Wastewater Treatment

In addition to centralized water and wastewater infrastructure projects, many residents use decentralized systems, like private water wells and onsite septic systems for their water and wastewater needs. An exact accounting of residents served by decentralized water and wastewater is unknown. Up to two-thirds of homes in McDowell County have no wastewater treatment whatsoever, discharging raw sewage into a nearby stream or river. Many homes use PVC pipe to discharge wastewater from toilets and washing machines directly into streams. This process, called straight-piping, results in high fecal bacteria counts to water bodies in the county, leading to public health threats and is a deterrent to economic development.

Several resources are available to reduce inadequate wastewater treatment. These resources include but are not limited to West Virginia Rural Water, USDA Rural Development, and state agencies such as the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Health and Human Resources.

Decentralized systems are likely the most affordable and effective option for water supply and wastewater treatment in the unincorporated portions of McDowell County. The use of decentralized systems minimizes financial impact and operational expense to PSDs when out-migration negatively impacts a utility. For example, a recent report analyzing a sewer installation along the Elkhorn Creek determined that decentralized systems would be the most effective treatment solution.

Regional Approach to Public Service Funding

As the county's population continues to decline, it is important for the McDowell County Commission and the planning commission to emphasize a regional approach to funding and grant applications. At a 2018 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) meeting in

Welch, the ARC deputy director stated that regional cooperation initiatives detailed in grant applications gave applicants the greatest chance of receiving an award. Similarly, the West Virginia PSC emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation with local Public Service Districts (PSDs), counties, and municipalities in consolidating water and wastewater systems. Regionalization of public service systems, while more difficult in the short term due to the expense of fixing rather than replacing existing systems, is an important strategy for long-term viability. Costs eventually decrease because economies of scale (reporting and testing for one entity rather than several, bulk buying options for chemicals, and providing one staff rather than several).

According to the United States Conference of Mayors, local governments provide 98 percent of the financing for water and wastewater projects. The West Virginia State Water Development Authority states that there are fewer grants now available for localities, which further reinforces the importance of regional cooperation. The McDowell County PSD's first fully grant-funded project did not happen until the six million dollar Elkhorn Phase II project was completed in 2018. All other PSD projects have involved government loans and servicing long-term debt. This financing proves problematic as projects can take years to complete. During these years, no new customers can be added, and no additional revenue is available to for debt servicing.

Communication Services Infrastructure

The lack of cell phone and broadband service causes concern for residents, visitors, and businesses. Improved broadband will enhance quality of life, emergency communication, opportunities for economic development, and provide more advanced educational opportunities. Improved cell phone and broadband service can also improve the experience of tourists coming to McDowell County. Cell phone service can provide ATV riders and other tourists with the peace of mind that they can call for assistance during an emergency and talk to loved ones while on vacation. Broadband may allow tourists to stay longer as they might be able to telecommute for part of the vacation to extend the trip.

Broadband refers not to a particular technology, but rather a level of service. In the United States, in order to be considered broadband, a service must provide connection speeds of at least 25 mbps download speed and 3 mbps upload speed. The availability of broadband puts communities at an advantage over communities that lack broadband.

Cell phone data service can be a subset of broadband where cell service has a high connection speed. In McDowell County, most cell service is below 25 mbps, but still provides an important basic form of communication. Many people utilize their "smart" cell phones to access the internet, especially when limited internet access exists in an area. Depending on the service, cell phones are also used for more data intensive activities such as streaming videos and video conferencing.

Improved telecommunication facilities can also be beneficial in emergency situations. Having the ability to call 911 from anywhere in the county is important. The county recently upgraded the 911 technology to include dial back, 911 text, and overriding sim card for first responders.

Another significant benefit to having broadband in rural communities is telehealth/telemedicine. "Telemedicine involves the remote delivery of healthcare services, such as health assessments or consultations, over the telecommunications infrastructure. Telemedicine allows healthcare providers to evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients using technology such as video conferencing and smartphones."

Facilities in McDowell already participate in the West Virginia Telehealth Alliance, Inc., which is a statewide non-profit organization and serves as a coordinating body that involves a consortium of health care entities and organizations from across the state. (Source: West Virginia Telehealth Alliance, Inc. Pilot Program Participants Annual Data Report, For September 30, 2013). Improved broadband in McDowell can only enhance the quality and breadth of telehealth/telemedicine in the community.

Understanding and Expanding Broadband Coverage

To improve broadband, the County can inventory existing broadband and cell tower infrastructure and encourage expansion of coverage throughout the county.

Cell Coverage

Despite some coverage maps illustrating widespread cell phone service, residents claimed that cell phone reception is limited. In 2018, the FCC launched an investigation into the country's largest cell phone carriers and determined that their cellular coverage maps are inaccurate, misleading, and not adequately characterizing what is, in reality, a persistent digital divide between urban and rural areas.

McDowell County hired a consultant to assess the need and feasibility of telecommunication towers. While some cell phone service providers exist in the county, certain parts of the county have very limited or no cell phone coverage. Speculation by municipal officials indicates that more cell towers might be erected in the county, however the location of the new towers was largely unknown.

Broadband Coverage

A 2017 study by the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council indicated that all but one sample area in McDowell County had below average broadband coverage. Both Shentel and Frontier have made significant investments in broadband in McDowell County in the last 10 years. Frontier completed several broadband expansion/enhancement projects in McDowell County. Shentel made a \$9 million capital investment in McDowell County to replace copper infrastructure with fiber-optic lines. These upgrades enhanced the availability of higher speed internet to many portions of the county. However, unserved and underserved areas of the county remain. Issues exist with getting broadband to the "last mile." The last mile refers to the area between a major trunk line and the end user for broadband. In some cases, low take rates, rather than lack of broadband service, presents a problem. "Take rates" refer to the percentage of residents that actually sign up for internet that is available to them.

Leaders of the county and the municipalities should work with internet service providers to alert them to any issues with the overall level of service. The McDowell County CVB should also highlight areas with adequate broadband speeds conducive to economic development. County officials need to ensure that the areas where they are hoping for future development have both the necessary telecommunications and broadband infrastructure in place.

Using Old Analog TV Bandwidth to Enhance Broadband

Newer technology options may be appropriate in McDowell County, especially for the areas of the county that do not currently have broadband. Neighboring Mingo County was awarded a Microsoft Airband Initiative grant to provide broadband to thousands of people in Mingo County. The project utilizes a wireless system that will retrofit television white space bandwidth for high speed internet. This technology uses TV channels that are not being used after the switch from analog to digital. The advantage of this technology is that the service is wireless and utilizes TV technology that has been around for years.

Broadband Cooperatives

In 2017, the West Virginia Legislature provided another option by enacting Chapter 31G of the West Virginia Code to allow for Broadband “Co-operative Associations.” This 2017 legislation authorizes the creation of a pilot project to form non-profit cooperative associations for internet service. The Broadband Enhancement Council, established at the state level, sets guidelines and approves cooperative associations. The legislation contemplates that cooperative associations will pool resources and be utilized as a mechanism for potential customers that are not being served to work together to gain internet access. At least 20 users, either businesses or individuals, are needed to form a cooperative association. Cooperatives may be eligible for federal grants and may result in broadband access to areas that would not otherwise be served.

Expanding Broadband Coverage

Several funding sources may be available to fund broadband projects in McDowell County. For instance, in 2017 the Appalachian Regional Commission’s Telecommunications Initiative offered funding for advanced telecommunications and broadband services to support developments that increase student connectivity at public schools, Wi-Fi access in community centers, and e-commerce development. The program

is only available to McDowell County and four other counties in West Virginia. Other potential grant funding programs are available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service, the USDA Community Connect grants, and the USDA Infrastructure Loan program. In April 2019, Governor Justice announced that \$630,000 has been awarded to the McDowell County Commission to improve high-speed internet service. Approximately 20 miles of aerial fiber will be installed and will benefit several households and businesses from Bull Creek to Isaban.

ISSUE 3: LAND USE

McDowell County has some of the most rugged and scenic landscapes in West Virginia. The striking beauty of the land stretches for miles. For years, the land has provided the economic engine for the county, by way of coal. McDowell County is now focused on diversifying the local economy as well as its utilization of land. McDowell County’s vision for future land development is based on creating economic development opportunities and improving the visual appearance of county corridors. However, land development in the county has historically been constrained by steep topography, limited amounts of flat land, concentrated private landownership by large land holding and railroad companies, projected population decline, and the continued deterioration of existing building stock and infrastructure. As a result, the county and municipalities should focus on identifying the preferred areas for new development. Issue 3: Land Use focuses on how the county and municipalities can encourage the best utilization of land for sustainable growth and development and re-development.



Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park

Preferred Development Areas

Several preferred development areas were identified during the planning process. Preferred development areas are defined by the West Virginia Code as “a geographically defined area where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities.” (W. Va Code 8A-1-2(y)). Incentives may be used in these areas to encourage development, infill development, or redevelopment in order to promote economic development and quality of life. County development strategies that were discussed include:

- Focus on properties within municipalities, especially along the main streets;
- Develop areas that accommodate outdoor tourism;
- Focus large-scale development on post-mine properties;
- Anticipate and plan for future development associated with the King Coal and Coalfields highways; and
- Market existing commercial properties and abandoned properties.

Based off the development those strategy the following areas of the county were identified as preferred development areas:

- 1) Route 52 Corridor, from the Mercer County line to laeger
- 2) The Coalwood Area
- 3) Indian Ridge Industrial Park
- 4) Land Near Mount View High School
- 5) Elkhorn Creek/Tug Fork
- 6) Berwind Lake Wildlife Management Area
- 7) Land near Bishop that could be used for Agriculture

*See the Future Land Use Map on page 84 for locations of the preferred development areas.

The creation of preferred development areas is important for recreation, tourism, economic development, and industry. The areas represent opportunities to improve the quality of life of McDowell County residents if developed properly.

Structure and Land Reuse

Many structures and properties are being underutilized in McDowell County. Developing a strategy to put structures and land into productive reuse is an important objective of the comprehensive plan.

Discussions during planning commission meetings focused on repurposing the Armory in Welch, which as of 2019 was not being utilized. Initial thoughts center on turning the Armory into a community facility. A fitness area, walking track on the periphery of the property, a high tunnel for a community garden, and program development facilities could be included.

County officials should work with municipalities to compile a list of available structures that could be developed or redeveloped. Many people from out of state are interested in purchasing properties, but lack sufficient information that is accessible remotely.

In particular, post-mine property may offer the most development potential for large-scale projects due to the flat, developable land resulting from surface mining. Past mine reclamation projects include Mount View High School and the McDowell County Industrial Park. Currently, the largest and most significant property that the county owns is the Indian Ridge Industrial Park, also referred to as the McDowell County Industrial Park. The Industrial Park consists of a 5,900-acre post-mine property, includes 400 developable acres with utility access. The property is located at the proposed interchange of the King Coal and Coalfields Expressway outside of Welch (see Figure 1).

County officials have contacted several large landholding companies about post-mine land development in the future. While several of these companies are currently conducting mining operations, some land may be available for post mine development within five years, with others anticipated to become available in 10 – 15 years. These properties include:

Proposed Shawnee industrial park on Elkhorn Mountain, south of Kimball, still being mined but within the next decade could be utilized for economic development purposes.

13 acres of post-mine land near Wilmore Dam in Coalwood

Land near the Twin Branch area

Post-mine land near Newhall

Berwind Lake and additional land from the WV DNR

Indian Ridge Industrial Park, a former mining site, is the largest parcel of county-owned land. The property is home to the Federal Correctional Institution in McDowell County. The correctional institution was initially built to house between 1,200 and 1,500 inmates and employ 300 people.

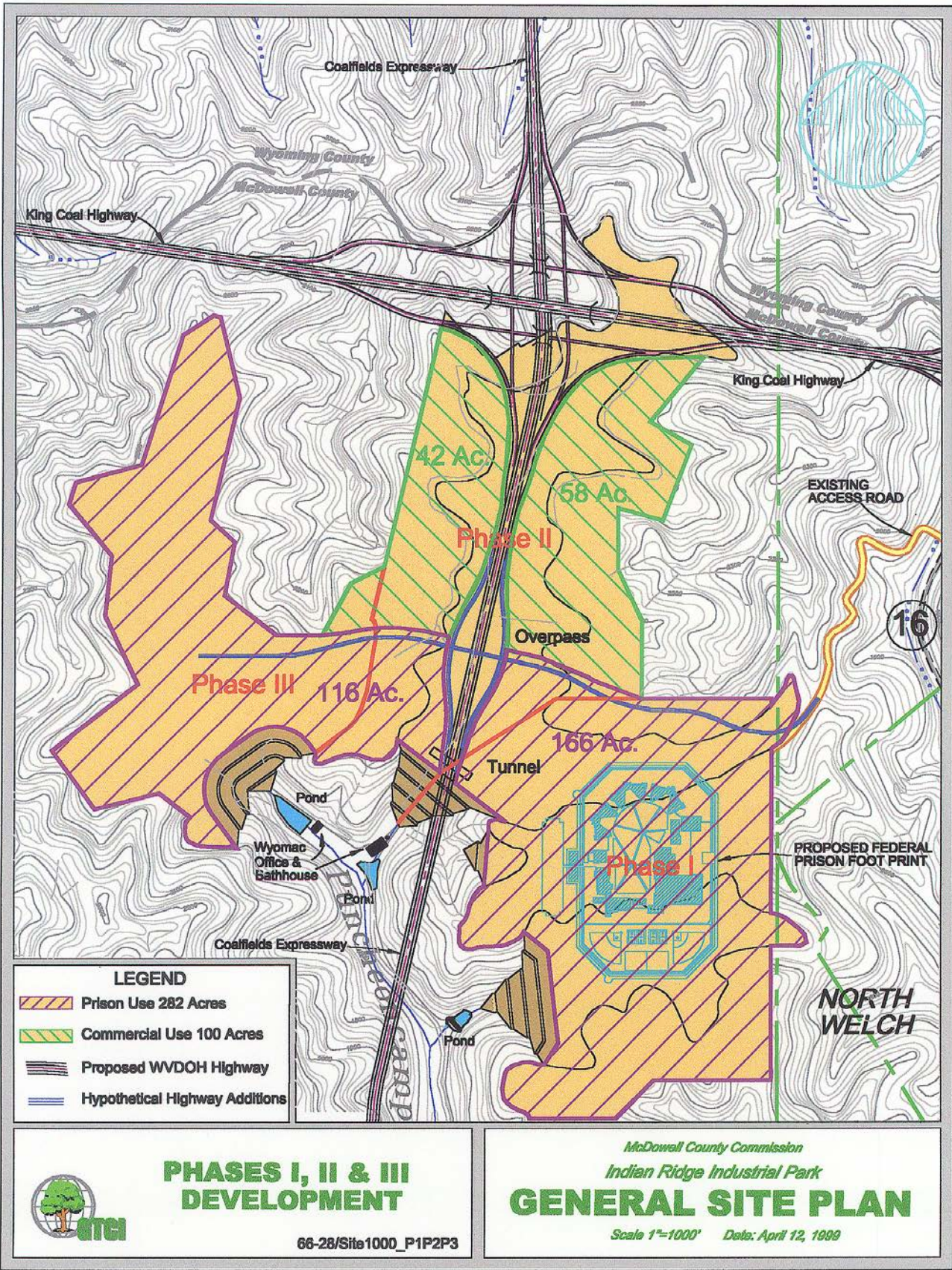
Land near Mount View High School is owned by Pocahontas Land Corporation and is currently being mined. In the future, this land could be utilized for post mine development. This area has water and sewer, as well as electricity. Some of the land near the high school has been converted into an agricultural operation that includes high tunnels and a blueberry farm. Ideally, post mine land will be used by property owners for commercial development, housing, manufacturing, and agriculture, as much of this land is situated outside the floodplain.

Land Use Master Plan

A Land Use Master Plan (LUMP) is used to evaluate the potential of post-mine sites for development. Surface mining alters the landscape and provides the opportunity for a variety of post-mining land uses including agriculture, wildlife habitat, forestry, building construction, and urban development. The West Virginia Legislature recognized the unique ability of the mining industry to address this issue by creating developable land as a post-mine land use. Therefore, the legislature established a land use planning process calling for Land Use Master Plans to be developed at the county level. A LUMP should plan for effective use of land based on the needs and opportunities of the area, while also reviewing energy and environmental issues in the county. An effective LUMP should be backed by enough research to effectively rank mine sites based on development opportunities. A LUMP will be an effective tool towards achieving McDowell County’s development goals.

The adoption of a McDowell County LUMP allows reclaimed mine lands to be held by the Office of Coalfield Community Development (OCCD) and eventually sold and developed. McDowell County should consider drafting a LUMP and researching viable development opportunities for reclaimed mine lands that can enhance economic development opportunities.

Figure 4



Many options exist for the utilization of reclaimed mine land. Research suggests development beyond residential, commercial or industrial uses, such as raising livestock, Christmas tree farms, pine timber production, and horticultural crops. No matter what condition the land is in, McDowell County officials can work with property owners to develop creative approaches to developing reclaimed mine lands through a LUMP.

One of the tools for developing a LUMP is the land use/land cover data and map.

The McDowell County Land Use/Land Cover map was derived from the WV GIS Tech Center data. The data layer was completed in 2012. The state divided the land coverages into various categories such as forested, grassland, barren/developed, wetlands, and mine lands. McDowell County, not unlike many other counties in West Virginia, is heavily forested. Very little developed land exists, with most developed land located in the municipalities. The land use/land cover map is useful in showing the extent of developed areas as opposed to forested and undeveloped areas.

Future Land Use

A Future Land Use Map was developed to illustrate desired future development in the county during the next ten to fifteen years. Comprehensive plan participants considered existing land use and how the transportation network may alter development patterns. The future land use map identifies potential economic development sites, preferred development areas, renewal and/or redevelopment areas, and rural lands.

The future land use map shows the preferred development areas, ATV trail areas, transportation corridors, land cover, all in relation to municipalities and major watersheds. The future land use map is helpful to identify where future growth and development might occur as well as where conservation might be encouraged.

Annexation

Some municipalities in McDowell County expressed interest in annexation. For example, the Town of Kimball has entertained annexing the Carswell area for some time. Also if the Berwind Lake area is going to expand, the City of War should consider annexing that area. The continued development of the Hatfield and McCoy Trail system, and subsequent economic impact along trailheads and routes near towns, could increase the likelihood of municipalities seeking annex-

ation. The two proposed highways could also influence future annexation considerations.

Municipalities in West Virginia may annex in accordance with the West Virginia Code either by:

- 1. Minor boundary adjustment,
- 2. Annexation by election, or
- 3. Annexation without election.

Communities interested in annexation should consider each option, and work with affected property owners and other local government officials to ensure that everyone has been heard and the advantages and disadvantages have been fully vetted and discussed.

Constraints on Development

Constraints on development consists of features or events that limit where development can or should occur. Some of the more common constraints on development in West Virginia include floodplains, steep slopes, and karst.

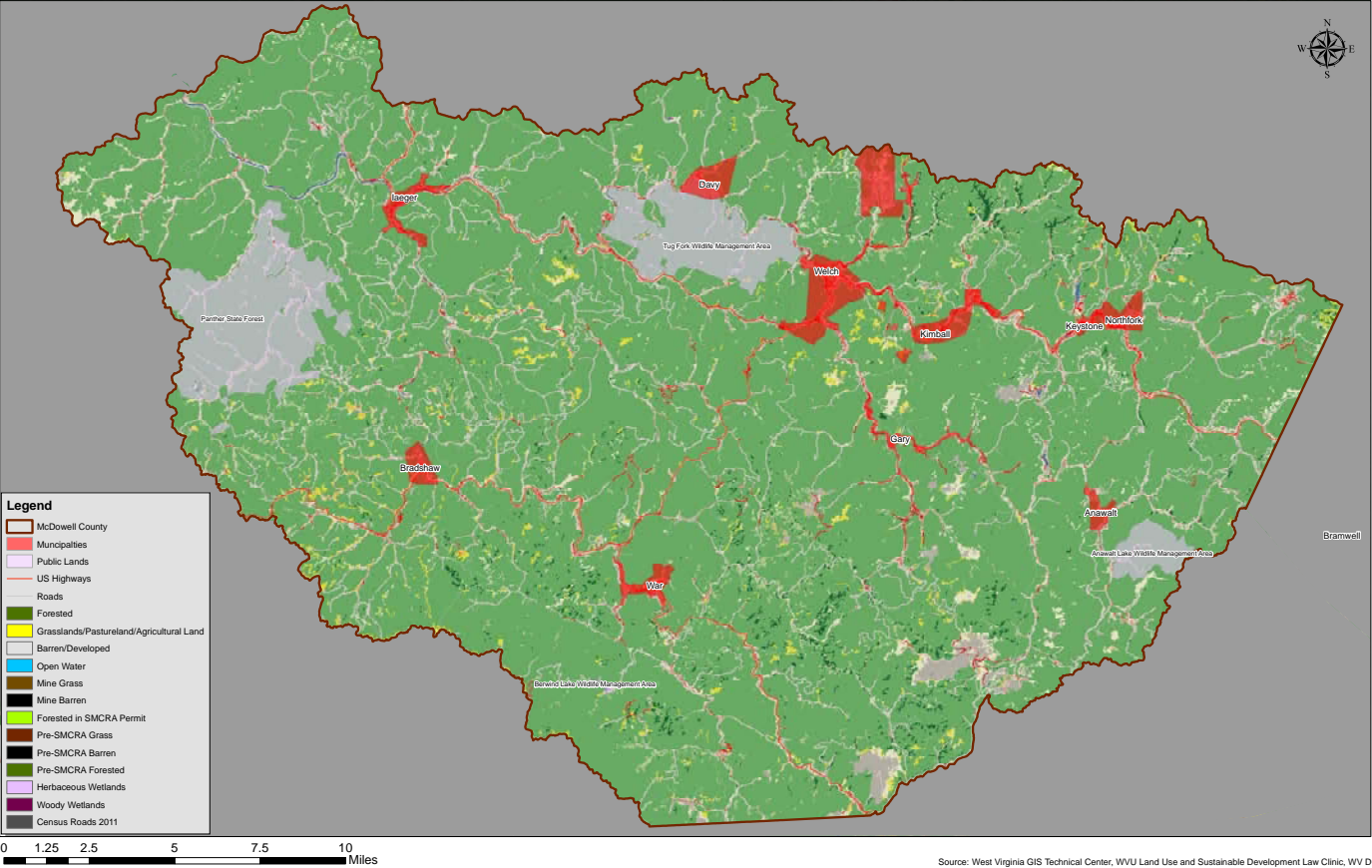
Several devastating flood events have occurred in McDowell County through the years. Most recently, the flooding in 2001 and 2002 left a lasting impact on the county. Almost 3,000 structures were impacted during the 2001 flood, and the following year an even more disastrous flood hit the county, affecting almost 5,000 homes, causing several million dollars in damage and loss of life. The flooding caused many people to move out of McDowell County and businesses to close. Roads, railroads, bridges, septic, and sidewalks were also destroyed in these floods.

Along with steep slopes, flood-prone areas may be the most significant development constraint in the county. No karstic features exist in McDowell County.

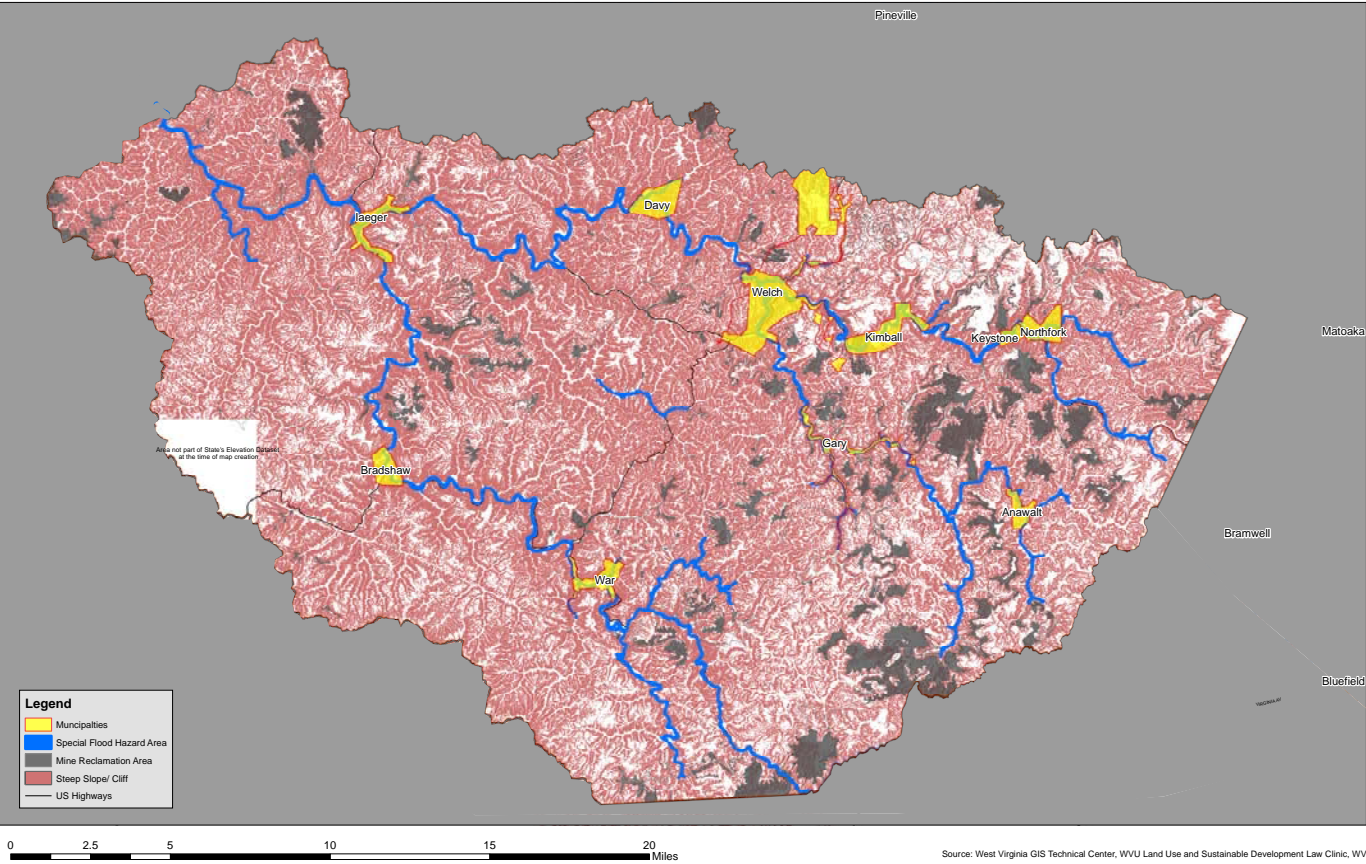
As a result of the high frequency of flooding, FEMA purchased several mitigation lots, particularly properties along main streets in municipalities, throughout the county. The lots were given to local governments, but with significant limitations placed on future development.

In 2018, the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic began assisting the NRCS in watershed planning in McDowell County. The program will address properties located in floodplains including ways to mitigate flood damage in the future, and voluntary buyouts of property in the floodplain. The county and municipalities should work with the NRCS program to plan for development alternatives in the floodplain.

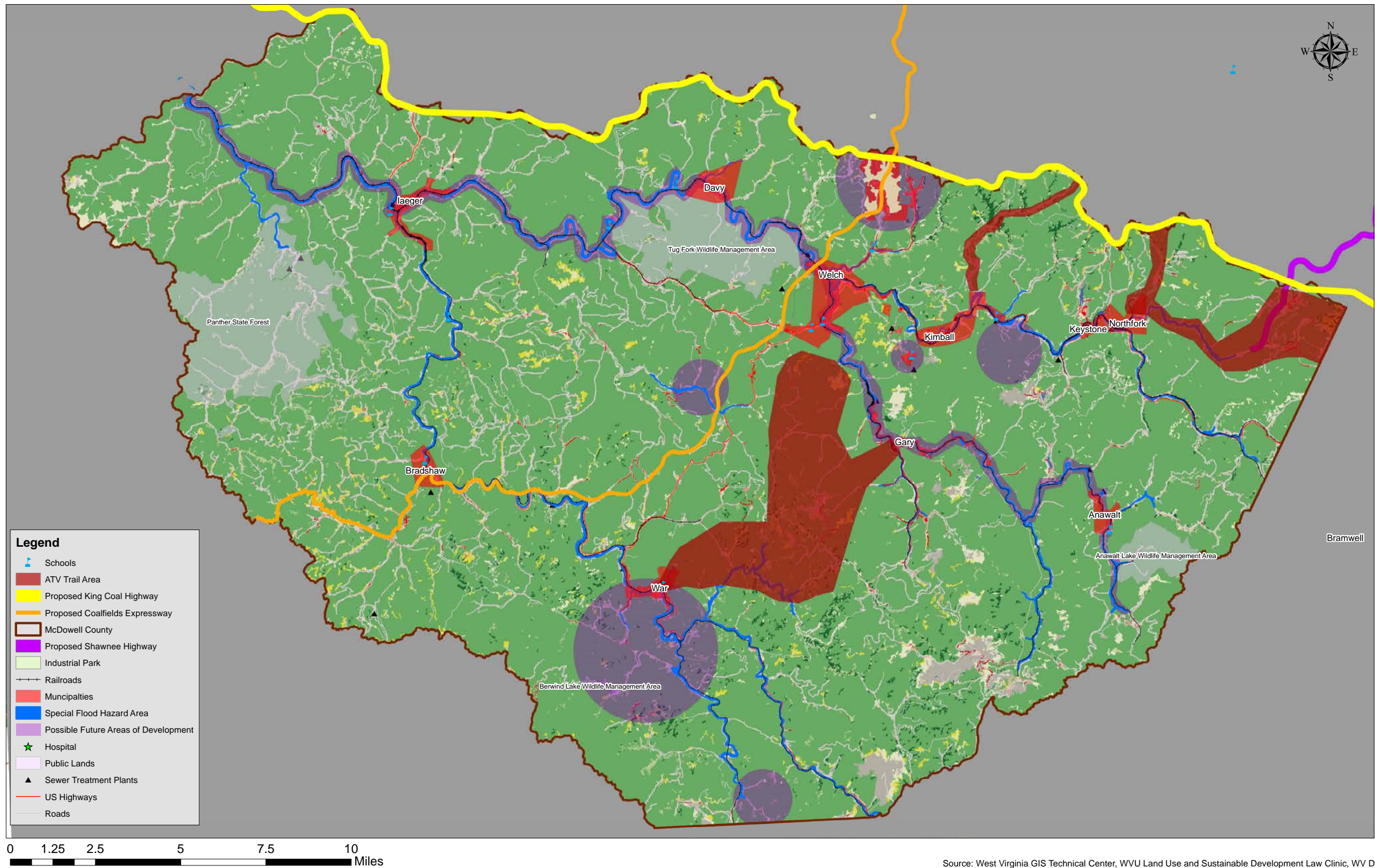
McDowell County- Land Use/Land Cover Map



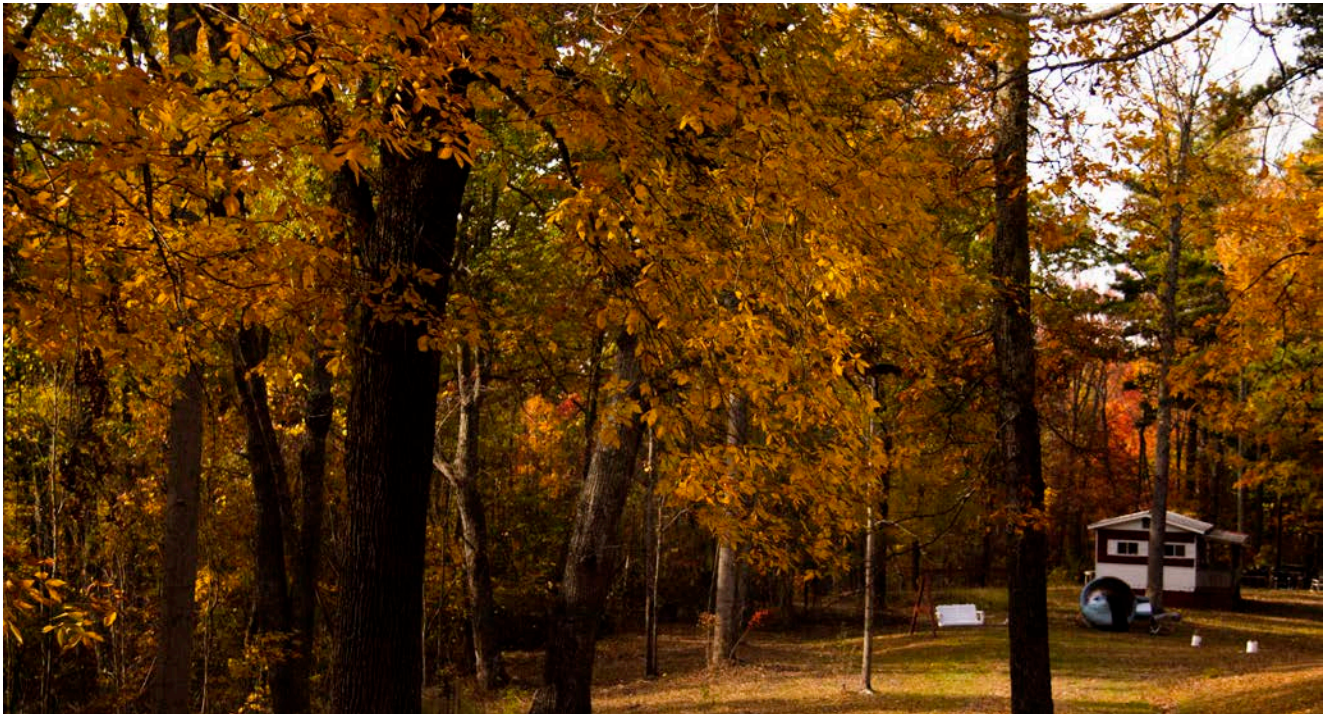
McDowell County- Constraints on Development



McDowell County- Future Land Use Map



Fall foliage at Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park



Parks and Beautification

The majority of communities in McDowell County have small parks for public use. Generally, no information exists regarding where these parks can be found within the county. A pamphlet or a map with a list of community parks throughout the county would benefit residents and visitors alike.

Throughout the comprehensive plan process, many stakeholders suggested that McDowell County use its natural beauty to its advantage by providing recreational activities and recreational areas for citizens to go to and enjoy.

Wildlife Management Areas

Currently, four Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) exist in McDowell County, including Anawalt Lake, Berwind Lake, Tug Fork, and Panther. WMAs are designed to conserve and manage high quality habitats for a variety of wildlife species. Therefore, WMAs should be areas that have conservation value, extensive wildlife, and opportunity for outdoor recreational use and access. Management activities in WMAs include planting of trees and shrubs for food and cover, the establishment of wildlife habitat, maintenance of food plots, and the development of wetlands. In addition to conserving and managing high quality wildlife habitat, WMAs improve public access and recreational opportunities.

West Virginia State Code §20-1-10(c) enables WMAs. However, certain WMA requirements limit their effectiveness. All areas of a WMA must be open year-round. Camping and campfires are permitted but only in limited designated areas. The use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorbikes, and snowmobiles is prohibited except where specifically permitted by posted signs on designated roads and trails.

Wildlife Management Areas provide local residents with quality recreational options for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other outdoor activities, while also preserving the land and wildlife of McDowell County. WMAs should be viewed differently than state parks as WMAs seek to benefit local, as opposed to state, residents. Man-made fixtures should be limited to those that are directly related to intended recreational activities. These limited fixtures might include trails, boat ramps, or limited and primitive campsites. Currently, Anawalt Lake has no man-made fixtures in the WMA area and camping is not permitted.

Berwind Lake has eight (8) primitive campsites, a playground, and swimming area at the lake. The Tug Fork WMA, like Berwind Lake, has no man-made fixtures. Panther WMA, has 6 tent/trailer campsites, a sixty-capacity group camp, and a swimming pool. Recommendations include developing limited man-made fixtures and trails at Anawalt Lake WMA and Tug Fork WMA help with access to the areas and ability to enjoy recreational activities.

Beautification

McDowell County has several entrances into the county along major routes. Residents of the county believe the entrances should have an inviting feel and a distinct positive aesthetic to alert visitor’s that they are entering the county. Signage and landscaping including antique coal trucks should be placed along the main corridors and gateways. Beautification groups could work together to promote upkeep of the gateways.

Illegal dumping sites also create concerns throughout the county. Regular trash clean ups should be implemented and signage to alert residents of littering and dumping fines should be placed throughout the county. Collection of refuse needs to be convenient and low cost (or free) to encourage people to drop off trash in designated areas, as opposed to illegal dumps.

ISSUE 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of new business and the retention of existing business is a primary goal of McDowell County and the municipalities. A way to chart a path forward for developing jobs and industry is to understand the community’s strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the local economy is required as part of the comprehensive plan process. This analysis will aid McDowell County, the municipalities, and citizens in determining its future economic development strategy.

Strengths

When asked to name one strength, participants of the online survey overwhelmingly responded that the people of McDowell County are its strength. People described other citizens as good hearted, friendly, and helpful in a time of need. Other strengths included the natural beauty and a strong sense of identity and history. However, some survey participants failed to see any strengths in McDowell County.

Coal mining has long been a major economic driver in McDowell County. Residents express great pride in the mining industry, and many have generations of miners in their families. The number of jobs in the coal industry has decreased dramatically in recent years. However, mining companies remain some of the top employers in McDowell.

Though the coal industry is rebounding somewhat, small businesses and other industries will also be important to the growth of the local economy. The Hatfield-McCoy ATV Trail system has created excitement around McDowell, prompting people to open restaurants and lodging accommodations. Four Hatfield-McCoy trail systems currently run through the county:

- Indian Ridge Trail
- Pinnacle Creek Trail
- Pocahontas Trail
- Warrior Trail

More connector trails and trailheads are set to open over the next few years. The county, including the municipalities, should continue to market and expand amenities available to visitors to extend the length of visits, provide opportunities for increased spending by visitors, and encourage return visits. Increasing the availability of family-friendly activities and lodging will allow for more people to find something to do while they are visiting. Some family members can ride ATVs, while family members engage in other activities.

Affordable land and building availability are also strengths of McDowell. The McDowell County Economic Development Authority (EDA) provides assistance to existing and new businesses by assisting them with business loans and new business ideas.

Weaknesses

In order to move the county forward, current weaknesses with regard to economic development must be identified. Understanding the weaknesses will allow participants to identify recommendations that address the identified weaknesses.

Lack of Job Opportunities

Over 85% of online survey respondents rated “job opportunities” as poor and identified job opportunities as a priority for improvement. Many people have left McDowell County over the years due to a decline in the coal industry. The McDowell County population in 2010 census was 22,099. By 2017, estimates place the county’s population closer to 18,500 people.

That decrease amounts to a population loss of more than 500 people each year. Many residents believe that the decline in population is due to a lack of incentives for youth to stay and a shortage of jobs.

The unemployment rate in the county remains high, and few available qualified workers exist. Anecdotally, residents have stated that substance abuse rates and the inability to pass a drug screening form the basis of the shortage of qualified workers. The belief that few employment opportunities exist for the youth of McDowell County proves concerning.

Lacking Infrastructure and Land Available for Economic Growth

County officials should encourage diversification of business opportunities and seek opportunities for growth in new industries. In order to look attractive to investors, basic infrastructure will need to be developed or updated. Roads, water and sewer systems, and broadband should be upgraded to modern standards. In today’s economy, more people look to locate their businesses in aesthetically pleasing locations with great recreation potential, where work can be conducted remotely.

The lack of available, flat land presents another challenge. Limited numbers of parcels are available, but often such land is within the floodplain. Several developable properties from ceased coal mining operations may be available for purchase within the next few years.

McDowell County is very rural and many residents believe that adequate retail and services is deficient. Many survey respondents felt that availability of retail (86%) and the availability of grocers (51%) are “poor.” The county’s largest employer at one time was Walmart, but the store closed in January of 2016, leaving behind an empty storefront and many people without a job. Some residents now travel to Virginia or to Princeton and Beckley for groceries and other needs. The county should continue to be open to opportunities and assist municipalities with the recruitment of local grocers and small businesses.

Lack of Media and Communication Presence

McDowell County has limited local media outlets. Lack of communication in the county has been a recurring issue brought up during the comprehensive plan process. Most residents refer to the Welch Daily News or Facebook groups for local news. McDowell County should explore different media options to update its citizens. In addition, the outside media often portrays McDowell County in a negative light. Often-

times a story will focus on McDowell County’s high poverty rates and many residents feel that this has created an image of the area that is not entirely accurate. Positive media coverage should be highlighted to show the good things happening in the county.

One of the first things tourists do when looking at a place to visit is research the destination online. McDowell County and the municipalities do not regularly update their websites, if a website exists. Municipalities and the County need to develop and regularly update websites and social media pages to attract visitors and keep citizens and visitors informed of upcoming events and local attractions. Workshops and information sessions could be held to inform local governments on how to stay of up-to-date on social media.

Lack Support for Small Business Ideas

General guidance and support of small businesses is lacking in McDowell County. Many residents have business ideas that relate to the growing tourism industry and beyond, but do not have the means to turn the idea into reality. Business incubators are programs that help new companies develop their business through management trainings, coaching, and providing office space in the early stages of their growth. An incubator in McDowell County would greatly benefit residents wishing to start their own business and contribute positively to the local economy.

Opportunities

Identifying and analyzing economic development opportunities is one of the most important exercises the county can undertake as part of the comprehensive plan process. Opportunities provide hope and direction for the county. The following list includes a few of the most important economic development opportunities that were identified during the comprehensive plan process in McDowell County:

- 1) ATV Tourism
- 2) Historical Tourism
- 3) Marketing, Branding, and Special Events
- 4) A Blue Water Trail
- 5) Education and Training Related to Tourism
- 6) Agriculture, Aquaculture, Hydroponics

- 7) Craft Brewery
- 8) General Economic Development Strategies

ATV Tourism

One of the greatest opportunities for economic development in McDowell County is tourism. With the Hatfield-McCoy trails, McDowell attracts thousands of visitors each year. Tourism also provides opportunities for local entrepreneurs by allowing them to open small businesses and lodging options. These assets are underutilized and should be marketed better around the state and surrounding region. Ninety-four (94%) percent of online survey respondents said there were not enough tourist attractions and a majority (68%) of respondents also thought there were more opportunities for tourism besides ATV trail riding. Almost all online survey respondents (94%) thought that current lodging options for tourists were inadequate in McDowell County. It was identified by participants that some people may not be aware of what is currently available in McDowell County regarding lodging.

The biggest issues facing the Hatfield-McCoy trail system in McDowell County is the continued need for lodging, retail, food service, and entertainment options for visitors. A 2012 tourism study ranked McDowell County 8 out of 9 counties within the trail system for visitor accommodations. However, more

options have opened up in McDowell County since 2012. Comments from municipal council members, and public comment in general, express how the lack of lodging options, especially for families, are a missed opportunity for business development. An analysis of trail visitation indicated that more than 80 percent of trail visitors plan for overnight stays, and roughly 70 percent of visitors surveyed preferred campgrounds and cabins over hotels, bed & breakfast, and lodges.

Emphasis should also be placed on supplemental businesses to the ATV industry, including ATV repair and ATV rentals. Some of these businesses already exist. The county needs to encourage other secondary businesses that complement existing businesses.

Historical Tourism

Many sites in McDowell County form part of the National Coal Heritage Area’s (NCHA) Southern Gateway. The National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA) is one of only 40 nationally designated heritage areas in the entire United States. The area represents a part of the growing effort by the National Park Service to develop resource protection initiatives for areas of national importance that rely on partnerships and private ownership rather than the traditional methods of Federally owned parklands.

Figure 8: 2018 Online Survey Results — Tourism Opportunities

| | YES | NO |
|--|-----|-----|
| There are enough tourist attractions | 6% | 94% |
| There are other tourism opporunities (besides ATV trail riding | 32% | 68% |
| There is adequate lodging for tourists | 6% | 94% |
| There are enough activities and attractions for families | 1% | 99% |
| More dining options are needed | 94% | 6% |
| More retail shops are needed | 96% | 4% |
| Better marketing of attractions is necessary | 98% | 2% |
| Tourism is only benefitting certain parts of the county | 88% | 12% |
| There is adequate signage for attractions | 14% | 86% |



Historical buildings and landmarks exist throughout the county. Many historic buildings are at risk of deteriorating beyond repair if action is not taken soon. The county should prioritize which structures to rehabilitate and work with property owners to complete the work. Opportunities may exist for more “historically-significant buildings” to be utilized as visitor centers, new shops, or restaurant venues.

Great interest exists in preserving the eclectic history of McDowell County. The McDowell County Historical Society travels to different events and promotes the history of the county. The Historical Society should advocate for particular projects to focus on and seek additional resources to initiate those projects.

Facilities like the Caffrey Arts and Cultural Center provide a physical space with historical significance to showcase the county’s robust and colorful history.

The “Rocket Boys” are icons of American history and the subject of previous efforts to establish a park to commemorate their unique story in McDowell County. Homer Hickam, Coalwood native and former NASA engineer, has advocated for a privately-funded astronomical observatory within the county to be utilized by academic institutions. Other recommendations include a National Park or National Monument established to commemorate the areas’ importance to the country.

Marketing, Branding and Special Events

The McDowell County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (CVB) solicits, aids, and advertises tourism opportunities. Annual event planning, coal and railroad history promotion, and Hatfield-McCoy trail amenities are a few of the many things the CVB does within the county. More advertisements of the county’s amenities should be broadcasted. Countywide support of the CVB should be prioritized to allow growth in the tourism economy. The online survey respondents overwhelmingly said better marketing of attractions is necessary (98%). More wayfinding, historical, and up-to-date signage is needed.

West Virginia is currently undergoing a tourism rebranding overhaul which has allowed many regions of the state to rebrand as well. McDowell County should also consider rebranding due to the increase in tourism from the Hatfield and McCoy trails. Defining a new marketing strategy will allow the County to attract more visitors from other areas, including more out-of-state tourists.

While the ten incorporated communities around the county are all connected, in some ways each has their own unique history. Each town should attempt to create their own identity through marketing and branding.

Without competing against one another, all ten communities could stand out and attract visitors and potential new residents to the area. Some of the municipalities could also collaborate to help defray costs.

McDowell has many annual events that residents and visitors look forward to each year. Expanding these events or creating additional events would encourage more visitors to travel to McDowell County. Many well-known musical talents that used to or still live in McDowell could play in a music festival. The film industry is also a sector that should be encouraged to work in municipalities and the county. The community has a large amount of period architecture and wilderness, which can make a great backdrop for movies, shows, and documentaries.

Appalachia has a rich food history and McDowell County especially, has a unique culinary past. With many inhabitants in the early days coming from other countries for mining work, the population has always been diverse. McDowell should encourage events that pay homage to its rich and diverse culinary past.

Blue Water Trail

The Blue Water Trails Series program is coordinated by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and creates safe zones for recreational use of designated waterways. Important safety information and float trip distances about the Blue Water Trails are mapped for public use. Visitors can utilize the maps to find public access points and plan for paddling and floating trips along streams throughout Kentucky.

The Tug Fork River flows through parts of Kentucky and West Virginia and the Kentucky portion of the river is classified as a Blue Water Trail. Friends of the Tug Fork River (FTFR) have been working with communities along the Tug Fork River to extend the water trail initiative into West Virginia. The West Virginia Water Trail designation is pending in Wayne, Mingo, and McDowell counties to continue the same recreational benefits as the Blue Water Trail portion in Kentucky. The designation would be acquired through the WV Department of Highways.

The Tug Fork River Access Map (see Figure 7) is a preliminary map that shows possible sections of the Tug Fork River that could be included in the Water Trail designation. The three sections shown on the map are currently undergoing a river access study conducted by Thrasher Engineering. An ARC POWER grant obtained by the National Coal Heritage Authority will pay for the study. The study will be included in the West Virginia Water Trail application.

The McDowell County Sportsman’s Club and FTFR

have already collaborated to create a small craft access point in Iaeger. Extending the West Virginia Water Trail designation through Iaeger, Davy, Welch, Gary, Anawalt, and unincorporated areas, would further benefit McDowell County.

Access points could provide recreational opportunities and draw visitors into the area. The access points can be constructed using grant funds and with assistance from local organizations for maintenance and upkeep costs.

Hospitality Collaboration and Training

With thousands of visitors coming to McDowell County every year, local business owners and operators would benefit from taking part in periodic hospitality training to ensure a well-rounded and positive experience for guests. The West Virginia University Extension Service offers hospitality training in several different forms through the “West Virginia Welcome” program. Designed by the West Virginia Hospitality Education and Training Program, the course offers an introductory overview of hospitality essentials, such as how to put customers at ease, being personable, and proactively solving problems. Lodging, ATV-related businesses, welcome centers, and local restaurants are a few of the types of businesses that should consider hospitality training for their employees.

Lodging facilities in McDowell County have an opportunity to work together to promote themselves. In addition, working collaboratively could lead to secondary benefits, including getting better exposure for all involved. For example, at Ashland Resort 90% of patrons come from out of state.

Lodging facilities could form an association that meets regularly, participates in community outreach, and has a detailed website that provides information on their lodging and activities in McDowell County. Such an association would effectively promote their businesses to the general public.



Lodging operators should also be working with the McDowell County Chamber of Commerce, the McDowell County CVB, and the Hatfield McCoy Regional Recreational Authority to promote themselves to the ATV community as well as other tourists. Additionally, the West Virginia Tourism Office is a source of information and assistance for public relations, economic development, advertising, filming, and photography. The West Virginia Tourism Office also has the Cooperative Advertising Program which provides participants with the opportunity to use state resources to brand and advertise. This program is open to destination lodging, including campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, vacation rentals, and resorts.

Agriculture, Aquaculture, Hydroponics

Agriculture, aquaculture, and hydroponics already exist in the southern coalfields of West Virginia, including McDowell County. However, the expansion of these industries in McDowell County should be seen as an opportunity.

Agriculture is nothing new to McDowell County, however the rough terrain limits growth in the industry. Many organizations such as McDowell County Farms and Roadside Farms in McDowell promote small scale agriculture in the county. While most of the agriculture in McDowell County will be on small

plots of land, due to topography and land ownership, a few places in the county may support larger scale operations in the future. For example, a 1,000-acre plot exists near Bishop in the southern part of the county could be utilized in agriculture. One of the keys to a successful agricultural industry is collaborating and showing farmers how to build a sustainable business.

WVU Extension provides programs related to horticulture, agriculture, and natural resources. The “Kids Koupons” program brings farmers markets and nutritionists to schools. The Natural Resources and Conservation Service, with the United States Department of Agriculture helps with the building of high tunnels and drip irrigation. The Farm Service Agency offsets some of the costs of getting organic certification. Organizations like McDowell County Farms, which has a Community Supported Agriculture program and accepts WIC, are integral in developing sustainable agriculture in McDowell County.

Crops that can be grown in mountainous areas include mushrooms, maple syrup, moss, and honey. Apiculture (bee keeping) should be considered a priority in McDowell County, as the hilly terrain does not affect bees. Hemp, ginseng, goldenseal, and yellowroot are already being naturally cultivated in the area. A handful of people have started to group together to promote the cultivation of ginseng and other crops.

Aquaculture is an industry that could be expanded in McDowell County as well. Aquaculture is the cultivation of animals, plants, or algae for a commercial purpose under controlled conditions. Examples of aquaculture include tilapia and salmon (fish) farming in large holding tanks for sale to restaurants, or the cultivation of aquatic plants to sell to people with aquariums or outdoor ponds. In fact, one of the highest rated salmon for human consumption is grown and raised in indoor warehouses near Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

One project discussed by some county planning commissioners was a “fee for catching” fish hatchery. This facility could supplement Berwind Lake, which lacks sufficient numbers of trout due to heavy fishing activity. The lake is only stocked once a month but should be stocked every week or every other week in the spring, including some stockings in the fall.

Hydroponics is the method of growing plants in a water-based, nutrient rich solution without the need for soil. Some of the benefits include the need for less space, plants can grow much more quickly, and fewer diseases and pests. Existing hydroponic operations in McDowell County have been successful, and the county should encourage hydroponics, especially for subsistence farming.

Aquaponics which is the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics is also something that should be developed in the county. The West Virginia National Guard established a pilot project through its “Patriot Gardens” initiative in Welch that includes hydro/aquaponics, educational workshops, cold storage units, specialty crop production, and technical assistance.

Craft Brewery

Establishing a craft brewery in McDowell County would create a hangout spot for locals, and for tourists experiencing other attractions in McDowell. Having a craft brewery established near a local attraction such as a popular kayaking spot or ATV trailhead will encourage people to take advantage of these activities and give them a place to relax and meet up.

Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College established a program that would help form a craft brewery in McDowell County. The College attempted to work in McDowell County previously, but there was an initial lack of interest, so the project fell through. The school is willing to try the program again in McDowell County, but needs to identify the right project.

The first steps would be to gauge interest in the community, understand the feasibility of completing

the project, and setting up a meeting between the college and interested parties to discuss a strategy for the project and what would be needed to complete the project.

Expanding Economic Development, Opportunities Generally

Communities and nonprofits cannot take full advantage of grant funding unless they know where to look, how to apply, and how to administer the funds. Trainings and workshops about grants are offered by Volunteer West Virginia on a rolling basis. County and municipal officials, along with other interested parties should work together with Volunteer West Virginia to set up a grant workshop in McDowell County.

The County also needs to be welcoming to new businesses that will add value to the community. Healthy competition helps businesses grow and allows the consumer to have options. Most online survey respondents indicated there needs to be more dining (94%) and retail shop (96%) options for visitors. When tourists are on vacation, they are looking for good food, entertainment, and places to buy unique gifts and souvenirs.

The new Arts and Cultural Center in McDowell County is an asset to the county. Art and cultural history are tied to tourism, economic development, and recreation. Many local artisans and entrepreneurs need assistance with webpage development and marketing so they can advertise their wares to a much larger customer base. Several artisans in the county could generate significant economic activity and tourism if given the right platform.

Another economic development need is to identify structures that could be utilized for new business development. The Wal-Mart building in Kimball is a prime example of a building that could be used for multiple purposes. The building could be used for aquaculture, partitioned off into housing, divided into several smaller businesses, converted into a call center, a place of manufacturing, a warehouse, a school, or recreation center. Other buildings include the former AEP building (county owned with underground parking), McBride’s Electrical, and the Armory in Welch. The Houston Coal Company Store which is another structure that can be utilized for adaptive reuse. The store’s deed says part of the building must be used as a museum. There have been plans to convert part of the company store into an artisan space or visitors center.

The completion of the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway represents another important economic development opportunity for McDowell County. These highways would provide greater access to the county and allow for faster travel which is currently a significant impediment to economic growth in McDowell County.

ISSUE 5: PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The issue of public safety was discussed throughout the comprehensive plan process. Many of the concerns were centered around a lack of emergency services, inadequate patrolling capacity, and a high prevalence of substance abuse.

Emergency Services

McDowell County is a geographically large county and can be difficult to quickly navigate for emergency service providers. Sixteen fire departments, nine police departments, and one full-time emergency medical service (EMS) provider serve the county. Many residents believe that the emergency services are understaffed and lack the necessary resources to provide the highest level of service throughout the county.

Some communities wish to enact a fire fee that would help pay for much needed equipment but are concerned that their residents would not be able to pay the fee. Some volunteer fire departments are not aware they can bill a client’s insurance company for some calls they respond to in the county.

The most common concerns of the county VFD’s were the lack of interest among the younger generation and retaining volunteers. Part of the issue is the state’s 150-hour training requirement that must be completed at a designated training center. County leadership has indicated a need for a local firefighter training facility to instruct volunteers on different fire scenarios, hazmat, and bail-out and ladder training. A training complex within McDowell County would allow easier access to the necessary training.

The McDowell County Firefighters Association includes all VFD’s in the county and can assist the individual VFDs in obtaining needed resources. Each VFD has their own needs. For example, the Kimball Fire Department is raising funds to purchase a side by side utility vehicle for trail calls.

Many areas in the county lack fire hydrants, which cause concern for VFDs. Fire hydrants provide water on emergency service calls and alleviate reliance

on water tanks. An inventory of fire hydrants should be completed and assessed to determine where more hydrants should be installed in the future. The local PSDs need to ensure that existing infrastructure can support any new hydrants. Additionally, when new waterlines are completed or existing lines replaced, the PSD or local water utility should install fire hydrants, where applicable.

Law enforcement personnel retention presents a concern throughout the county. New police officers may go through the rigorous training process, gain experience and then move to another jurisdiction where the pay is higher. Jurisdictions should provide incentives to stay, such as more paid time off, additional vacation time, or a contractual requirement that an officer must pay a certain amount for training if they decide to terminate their employment early. The County Sheriff also identified the need to hire more deputies and garner more resources to treat substance abuse.

Several law enforcement departments across the county lack full-time staff. Many municipal police departments employ officers part-time since they cannot afford to have someone patrolling 24/7. The County and municipalities should work together to make sure all areas of the county are adequately patrolled by police at any given time.

The McDowell County Ambulance Authority is no longer in operation. Jan Care and Wideners are private ambulance companies, which have limited hours and respond to emergency calls in the county. A maximum of 5 ambulances serve the county at any one time. Stat Ambulance Service, based out of Wyoming County, is now able to assist McDowell County, with units currently in Bradshaw and Iaeger. EMS in Tazewell County, Virginia can assist with some calls, when needed. However, there is a need for additional EMS support in McDowell County.

Emergency and Disaster Management

Major flooding occurred in 2001 and 2002. The 2002 flood was particularly costly causing upwards of \$54 million in damage in McDowell alone.

The county currently lacks a disaster preparedness plan, though the 911 Center is working on a plan as of early 2019. A new emergency services communications system was installed in 2018. Other improvements to disaster communications may be necessary to alert residents of what procedures are in place. Cross-county approaches may be necessary to provide 911 coverage throughout McDowell County.

A Hazard Mitigation Plan was prepared for McDowell County by the Region I Planning and Development Council in 2009 and was updated in 2016. This effort was a joint plan with the other five counties in Region I. The plan identified high-risk flooding areas in the county. Susceptibility to land subsidence was categorized as a medium hazard in McDowell County. Other considerations and contingencies should be put in place (see Figure 2) so that when there is an emergency decisionmakers can follow protocol and mitigate some of the damage caused by an emergency.

Figure 9: “Non-traditional” and non-natural disaster plans to consider

- Active shooter
- Train derailment/explosion
- Chemical spill (tanker truck wreck)
- Mining (company cooperation with the county)
- Search and rescue for ATV crashes

Drug/Substance Abuse

In 2018, the United States declared overdose deaths from opioids an epidemic. Across the country, particularly in West Virginia, many communities are devastated by the effects of opioid addiction. In some West Virginia counties, the overdose mortality rate is several times higher than the national average. Substance abuse and drug-related crime is one of the most recurring issues in McDowell County. When participants of the online survey were asked to select what they would like to see more of over the next 10-15 years, over 40% responded “lowered drug use.” In order to address the issue head on, McDowell County will need to focus its efforts on asset sharing, prevention and education, and expanding treatment.

Currently, many McDowell residents leave the county for addiction treatment and services. Local leadership is necessary to advocate for drug education and rehabilitation programs in McDowell County.

In 2016, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties issued a report recommending four strategies for local governments responding to the opioid epidemic:

- (1) Leading in a Crisis,
- (2) Focusing on Prevention and Education,
- (3) Expanding Treatment, and
- (4) Reassessing Public Safety and Law Enforcement Approaches.

Strategy 1: Leading in a Crisis

Municipal and county officials in McDowell should be leaders in the local conversation on opioids. Often-times a stigma is attached to addiction. Overcoming the stigma requires community leaders, particularly those who are elected and hold positions of trust, to initiate candid, respectful, and compassionate discussions. Confronting the “elephant in the room” and recognizing that a problem exists is the first step toward finding solutions. Efforts to increase recognition of the problem could include hosting town hall discussions and conducting public outreach through the Health Department and Sheriff’s Department.

Local partners are already working towards addressing the substance abuse issue. McDowell County H.O.P.E. Coalition’s (Health Opportunities for Positive Education) mission is “dedicated to strengthening the capacity of our partners to create and maintain safe, healthy, drug-free communities. The HOPE Coalition has had several successes, including training coaches on drug and tobacco free ballparks, assistance in the development of a 90-day residential drug treatment facility, and working with the McDowell County Sheriff to hold “drug take back days” in the county. “Recovery in McDowell” is a nonprofit that is helping build a recovery resource network for the county. The organization seeks to create a network of support for individuals suffering from substance abuse.

Regional cooperation and asset sharing should be fostered by local officials and industry experts, as these parties can bring positivity to the conversation and motivate the public to reach out to friends and family to offer support. A cross-jurisdictional approach allows greater help to reach more people in need. Leaning on regional coalitions for support offers inclusive and diverse substance abuse reduction strategies.

Strategy 2: Focusing on Prevention and Education

Increasing public awareness and reaching children at an early age are essential to curbing the proliferation of opioid addiction. Many individuals unknowingly develop an addiction after being prescribed an opioid following an injury or surgery. Education should include information on the importance of managing opioid prescriptions related to school sports. Educating individuals before they receive prescription medication or obtain illegal opioids is important in mitigating opioid addiction.

The community should provide increased education and recreation opportunities to school-aged children. The Sheriff's Department and health professionals can host programs during school hours to educate kids on the dangers of addiction. Programs like the Herren Project-Project Purple Initiative or Shatterproof can provide great resources for communities that want to address substance abuse. Both county high schools have active Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), chapters whose mission is "to empower young people to successfully confront the risks and pressures that challenge them throughout their daily lives."

Addressing Youth Substance Abuse in Rural Communities

Opioids are not the only substance being abused. There are also high levels of abuse of tobacco and alcohol by youth in rural areas of the United States.

Programs are needed to address substance abuse by adolescents. Programs should use evidence-based strategies within schools and churches that involve parents or guardians. Programs might include discouraging alcohol use by younger adults.

Counselors, healthcare professionals, teachers, parents, and law enforcement can work together to identify problems and develop prevention strategies to control substance abuse in rural communities by:

- Holding community or town hall meetings to raise awareness of the issues
- Training law enforcement regarding liquor license compliance, underage drinking, and detection of impaired drivers
- Inviting speakers to talk to school-aged chil-

- dren to help them understand the consequences
- Conducting routine screening in primary care visits to identify at-risk children and adults
- Collaborating with churches and service clubs to provide a strong support system for individuals in recovery, possibly with support groups or tobacco quit lines
- Training adults as volunteers to identify and refer individuals at risk
- Developing a formal substance abuse prevention or treatment program for the community
- Providing care coordination and patient navigation services for people with substance abuse disorders
- Providing specialized programs and counseling to discourage substance abuse by pregnant women
- Collaborating with health service providers and local service organizations to ensure families affected by substance abuse have adequate food, housing, and mental health services
- (Source: Rural Health Information Hub "Substance Abuse in Rural America")

Strategy 3: Expanding Treatment

Ensuring healthcare providers and substance abuse counselors are welcome in McDowell County proves essential. The McDowell community can encourage home-based businesses for counselors, outpatient centers, and inpatient centers. Addressing the crisis candidly and compassionately includes providing adequate access to needed resources and enabling qualified professionals to work throughout the county. Additionally, McDowell County and the municipalities can help facilitate treatment by opening government-owned buildings to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups for use without charge. NA meetings are free, addict-led meetings that meet weekly or nightly to promote sobriety and a culture of sobriety through sponsorship programs.

Telemedicine or telehealth seeks to improve healthcare, especially in rural areas, by enabling providers to consult and treat patients remotely.

Telemedicine allows people living in rural areas to access healthcare services that might not otherwise be available. In regard to the opioid epidemic, "one study...demonstrated that the more sessions patients attended via telemedicine, the more likely they were to stay in an opioid treatment program." However, telemedicine requires high speed internet service. Furthermore, the provider can only see or hear the patient, which may not be enough to conduct a comprehensive examination in all instances.

Strategy 4: Reassessing Public Safety and Law Enforcement Approaches

McDowell County can support compassionate practices in the administration of public safety and law enforcement. Deferring arrest is one strategy successfully employed by several local governments across the country. For example, the ANGEL program in Gloucester, Massachusetts, allows for street-level law enforcement officers to make decisions about drug-related arrests. Instead of sending a drug offender to jail, the offender may instead begin working with a case manager or social worker. After more than a year since the program's inception, overdoses rates in Gloucester have decreased and drug-related crimes have fallen by 27%.

Additionally, municipal and county officials should collaborate with local businesses to participate in "drug take back days." The National Prescription Drug Take Back Day aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while educating the public about the potential for abuse of medications.

Drug Court and Day Reporting Program

Drug Court is a national program for criminal defendants with alcohol or substance dependency problems. The drug court program includes intensive outpatient treatment, community service requirements, employment requirements, and random drug testing. McDowell County currently operates an adult and juvenile drug court.

Drug courts are intended to rehabilitate defendants with dependency problems so that people struggling with addiction can return to society and recidivism can be reduced. Drug court participants attend weekly meetings for at least one year. However, it takes most participants 18 months to 2 years to fully complete the drug court program.

Similar to Drug Court, McDowell County also operates a Day Report program. Day Report is a commu-

nity corrections program alternative to incarceration that provides programs to those who are dealing with substance abuse issues, parenting concerns, anger management issues, and DUIs. Participants are required to report to the Day Report Center on time and in person to participate in programming based on a set schedule. The programming is tailored to the participant so that he or she can learn about his or her behavior and learn new skills for long-term success. Day Report is intended to reduce the likelihood of participants committing other offenses and to promote public safety.

Drug Court and Day Report both provide flexibility and differ from the traditional corrections system. First, participants get the recovery help they need. Prison rarely provides the best recovery method for someone with dependency problems and many leave prisons still addicted. Participants are also taught the skills and tools necessary to return to society as contributing members. Further, the state and McDowell County have the opportunity to save money. The cost for someone to participate in alternative programs like Drug Court or Day Report is much lower than the per day cost of prison in West Virginia. Finally, public safety is not negatively impacted because participants are still held accountable by their regular participation in hearings or programming.

Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities

Two substance abuse treatment facilities currently exist in McDowell:

1. Welch Community Hospital
 - a. Onsite drug treatment facility
 - b. Addiction and mental health
2. Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center- McDowell County
 - a. Addiction, Crisis Stabilization Unit, Outpatient Services.

McDowell County officials should encourage the development of additional treatment centers. Many McDowell residents that need substance abuse treatment go to Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center in Princeton. In 2019, Volunteers of America Mid-State visited McDowell and were looking at the feasibility of creating a structured sober living home.

Volunteers of America Mid-States is one of the region’s oldest, largest, and most diverse not-for-profit businesses.

The programs Volunteers of American offer focus on housing for families, veterans, and low-income seniors; addiction recovery services for men and women; care and support for individuals with developmental disabilities; and HIV testing and education. However, the organization does not want to duplicate services that are already in place so they would be looking to fill in gaps in services.

Health and Wellness

Citizen wellbeing is important to the overall public health of McDowell County residents, given the health-related issues and concerns in the county.

Many residents believe there is a need to improve healthcare options in the county. Many residents must drive long distances to see a diabetic doctor or a cardiologist, when the need for both types of doctors in McDowell County is great. Recent developments at the Welch Community Hospital will expand health-care options available to the community.

McDowell County FACES (Families Agencies Children Enhancing Services Inc.) was created in 1997 as the Family Resource Network tasked with developing a strategic plan of action to eliminate gaps in services for children and families. According to the McDowell County FACES 2014 Impact Report:

There are no YMCA/YWCA, skating rinks, arcades, teen centers, and teen courts in McDowell County. Limited facilities or activities include swim teams, skate parks, tennis courts, Boy and Girl Scout troops, 4-H clubs, weekend supervised activity or gathering sites, recreation centers, youth clubs, faith-based activities, and organized sports outside school environment. Computer social networking, cell phones, and video games in homes and friends’ homes take precedence over outdoor activities. There are few employment opportunities for youth.

There is a need to identify and prioritize activities for youth in McDowell, as a lack of activities is seen as a huge barrier towards increased quality of life.

Shelters and Housing

Providing shelter, temporary or permanent, is one of the most important aspects of quality of life and personal well-being. Providing safe shelter is especial-

ly true for domestic violence victims and low-income families. Stop Abusive Family Environments (SAFE), a local nonprofit, started a transitional housing facility for domestic violence victims several years ago. SAFE was also concerned with reaching low income families interested in becoming first time homeowners. More recently, while completing homeownership and rental projects, SAFE formed a non-profit called Safe Housing and Economic Development (SHED).

SHED owns and manages property in McDowell and surrounding counties. SHED provides an important service especially to low income families that want to stay in the area and eventually own their own home.

Food Accessibility and Supplemental Food Programs

A food desert is an area that lacks access to affordable food that make up a healthy diet, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For rural areas like McDowell County, determining whether an area is a food desert often entails measuring the number of people living more than ten miles from a grocery store or supermarket. The geography of the county, infrastructure, and the number of residents without adequate transportation intensify the issue.

According to the USDA, in 2015, 251 McDowell residents had low access to large grocery stores or supermarkets, but some comprehensive plan participants feel that the number has increased, especially after the closing of Walmart and Magic Mart. The closing of these stores significantly impacted the availability of fresh food and produce in McDowell County. Walmart was the largest supermarket in the county and was a major source of fresh produce for McDowell County residents. The closing of the store also affected food banks in the county, as many of them received goods from Walmart.

As of 2019, McDowell County has three grocery stores: Goodson’s Supermarket and Save-A-Lot in Welch, and Grant’s Supermarket in War. However, many people buy food at smaller convenience stores, dollar stores, and pharmacies throughout the county. Food available at these smaller stores are primarily non-perishable and may lack essential vitamins and nutrients. Because it is so difficult to get fresh produce in the county, many McDowell County residents do their grocery shopping in nearby Mercer County, Raleigh County, and Grundy, Virginia.



Through “Change the Future WV,” 20 stores throughout McDowell County recently chose to make changes in their snack area. The program provides incentives to the convenience stores to carry fresh fruits and healthy options. The healthy checkout standards for foods and beverages under the Change the Future WV include:

- No more than 200 calories
- No more than 35% calories of total calories from fat, excluding nuts, seeds and cheese
- Less than 10% total calories from saturated fat
- No more than 0.5 grams of trans fat
- No more than 35% of calories from sugar, excluding yogurt and fruit
- No more than 200 milligrams of sodium
- Contain no artificial sweeteners

McDowell County residents have various alternative food sources. The Roadside Community Market, located at the Welch Municipal Parking Building, offers produce and other local goods on Saturdays, from May to October. Additionally, multiple food banks

throughout the county provide free food to those in need. Five Loaves and Two Fishes Food Bank in Kimball distributes food monthly and as available with proof of McDowell County residency.

Locally-grown produce is gaining popularity in McDowell County. The town of Davy and The Refuge Church in Raysal have community gardens, and Sandy River Middle School grows produce in their greenhouse. Roadside Farms is a hydroponic business in Kimball that grows various types of produce. Recently, Roadside Farms has teamed up with local elementary schools to educate students about gardening. McDowell County Farms also provides community outreach, including the importance of eating healthy and showing the basics of agriculture. McDowell County Farms is also a sponsor of American Youth Agripreneur Association (AYAA). AYAA is a non-profit organization developed with a mission to serve and encourage entrepreneurship among the youth surrounding the agribusiness sector.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest food and nutrition assistance program in the United States. Recipients of SNAP can use the benefits to buy foods for their household, including produce, breads and cereals, meats, and dairy products. SNAP cannot be used to purchase prepared hot foods or food that will be eaten in the store. As of 2015, approximately 8,800 McDowell County residents received SNAP benefits. Residents can apply for SNAP benefits online at <https://www.wvinroads.org/selfservice/>.



A friend from McDowell

Like SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides financial assistance for food purchases as well as nutrition and parenting advice. In addition, WIC provides breastfeeding support for pregnant women and support to mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, or legal guardians of children under 5. Unlike SNAP, the program limits what recipients can purchase with their benefits. Recipients can purchase milk, cheese, cereal, peanut butter, eggs, juice, beans, formula, fruits, and vegetables, whole grains, baby food, and yogurt. Residents can apply for WIC online at <https://www.wichousehold.wvdhhr.org/>.

Pedestrian Safety

Many of the communities throughout out McDowell County do not have adequate sidewalks. Pedestrian safety was considered “poor” among many of the survey respondents (41%). Oftentimes, pedestrians will utilize sidewalks for exercise, easy access around town, and as a safe way to get from a residential area to an activity hub. Pedestrians often use main roads like Routes 161, 52 or 80, for walking which can be dangerous due to the high volume of fast-moving traffic. Municipal and county officials should work with the state to create safe and efficient pedestrian systems. Flashing signs where there are high levels of pedestrian road crossings and raised crosswalks in communities can act as traffic calming devices.

ISSUE 6: QUALITY OF LIFE

Events, recreational spaces, and places to socialize are just a few of the amenities people want in order to increase the quality of life in McDowell County. Residents often feel that few outlets exist to relieve stress from day-to-day concerns. In particular, it was identified during the comprehensive plan process that youth and senior citizen populations lack sufficient programming and recreational opportunities.

Figure 3: Assets McDowell County High School Students want to improve their quality of life:

| |
|------------------------------|
| Bowling alley |
| Restaurants and coffee shops |
| Shopping locations |
| Gyms to workout |
| Public transportation |

Activities and Events

Expression through art is something many children and teens find relaxing. Providing a space for art, music, and theater classes would be beneficial to the youth in McDowell County. The Jack Caffrey Arts and Culture Center in Welch would like to offer fine arts classes and allow for performances, and art exhibits.

Similarly, music has been an indelible part of McDowell County culture and history and provides a way to bring people together. There are “Open Mic Nights” at the Sterling Drive-In each month. The event has steadily increased in popularity. Open Mic Night provides a forum for residents to relieve stress from a long work-week or school day. More events should be provided throughout the county to encourage creative expression and allow for gathering of community members.

Another simple way to allow for expression of art is for local businesses and restaurants to place photographs, and artwork crafted by local youth in their stores and eateries. This promotes local artists and provides a space for people to show off their talents.

Table 3 lists several common themes heard from the youth of McDowell County when asking what would improve quality of life. Generally, the youth expressed a need for places to convene and socialize with their friends outside of school. Students also overwhelmingly asked for places to work out and go to the gym to relieve stress. Public transportation seemed to be a need as well since the majority of teens do not drive or own a car and live too far away to walk in to town. It was also mentioned several times to have more places for teenagers to get part-time jobs while they are in high school.

Local events are usually successful when dedicated volunteers put in the time to make sure logistical issues are addressed. During the comprehensive plan process, a few events were discussed as possibilities. Some of the discussed events included food festivals, continued farm to table dinners, and a food education series. People travel from around the state and elsewhere to unique festivals and events. McDowell County needs to capitalize on their assets to bring visitors in to the area.

Youth Activities

Activities for youth were mentioned often during the comprehensive plan process and responses to the online survey almost universally identified “lack of youth activities” as deficient. While some activities for youth currently exist in the county, most residents believe there are not enough recreational opportunities for the youth in McDowell. Increasing those opportunities should be an important goal moving forward. McDowell County Schools offer CHOICES- Children’s Health Opportunities Involving Coordinated Efforts in School. CHOICES seek to develop, implement, and evaluate an integrated approach for childhood and adolescent health related to improved physical activity participation.

Table 10: Public Survey Results — Recreation

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|-----|
| There are enough recreational facilities for families | 5% | 95% |
| There are enough programs and facilities for teens and children | 4% | 96% |
| There are enough programs and facilities for senior citizens | 7% | 93% |
| The facilities are adequately maintained | 13% | 87% |
| More park space and facilities are needed | 88% | 12% |



Playground in Davy

With the right partners, there could also be:

Afterschool activities

Wellness and recreation centers

Mentoring programs

Community art projects for youth, such as mural painting

Recreation

Residents were asked on the online survey to rate their satisfaction regarding available recreation assets within McDowell County. Most respondents said there were not enough recreational facilities or programs for youth and seniors (Table 3). McDowell County WVU Extension offers a 4-H camp at Panther State Forest in the summer, but there are not many other youth recreational programs provided.

The McDowell County Sportsman’s Club hosts fishing tournaments, expos, and raffles to fundraise for future projects such as a “Wilderness Weekend” where members take kids camping and teach them about the outdoors. The Club would also like to host kids fishing events at Berwind Lake. The group’s goal is to eventually obtain property where they can hold events and youth programs throughout the year. Other recreational organizations should support the Sportsman’s Club’s efforts in hosting youth activities as it would be a great way for kids to stay active and learn about the outdoors. Many online survey respondents stated (see Table 3) that there is a need for more park space and facilities, a possibility exists for a recreational rail trail in the county. Northfork, Premier, Pageton to Anawalt all represent possibilities. The county needs to identify all the potential locations and where the most utilization would occur. Rail trails allow for multiple uses such as walking, running, and biking.

Additionally, the Armory in Welch will be given to either the City of Welch or McDowell County by the National Guard. The Armory represents a very nice opportunity for year-round recreation. A high tunnel exists on site and the hope is that the Armory will remain after it is turned over to a local government. An opportunity also exists for a running/walking path around the entire property. The Armory could host community exercise classes, house gym equipment, house healthy lifestyle programs and events for the whole county.

Public Programs and Education

Various concerns and needs for education exist in the county. For instance, the closing of Anawalt School now requires more children to be on the bus for very long periods each day. Teachers should also be incentivized to work and live in the county. Projects such as New Hope Village, a residential project that will house teachers in Welch tries to advance this goal. The McDowell County Public Library is in Welch and includes three branches in Northfork, Iaeger, and Bradshaw. Libraries are often the cornerstone of a community and can offer a space for gathering, learning, and creativity. McDowell’s libraries are no different and serve an important role in the county.

The Welch Library is in a shared complex with the Welch Municipal Building and parking is limited. Expanded parking would allow for more people to use the library. Funding for the McDowell Public Library system is usually limited to general expenses for operational costs and programming which leaves little room for facility upgrades. The main library in Welch needs new air units, carpet, and furniture. An updated facility would attract more visitors to the library and provide them with a more enjoyable experience. The large meeting room in the Welch facility is also heavily used for anything from small parties to high-profile meetings because of the central location and it being one of the only publicly-available meeting spaces in the county. Additional funding should be allocated to the library for needed upgrades. Expanding adult education in McDowell County would prevent residents from having to drive long distances to take classes. Financial management classes, for example, could be offered to youth, adults, or entrepreneurs to help prevent bad debt, bankruptcies, and business failures. Vocational classes and even hobby classes (photography, cooking, writing, etc.) could be offered. By working in conjunction with a nearby community college to offer evening classes in community spaces, more people would have access to greater educational opportunities.

Kimball Elementary School



ACTION PLAN

The Chapter 4 Action Plan establishes a prioritized set of goals, objectives, and action steps that address the critical issues facing McDowell County. The action plan includes an implementation matrix, which serves as a “to do” list for the county planning commission, county commission, municipal officials, and citizens.

The action plan also serves as a reference guide for local decision-makers when preparing budgets and planning for future projects. The comprehensive plan, especially Chapter 4, is a valuable tool to consult prior to completing grant applications.

The implementation matrix, which is included as part of Chapter 4, has been developed to be used as a standalone document. The matrix identifies potential partners and funding sources, estimates costs, and prioritizes the action steps. Each action step is rated as either a “high,” “moderate,” or “low” priority.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL PLANNING

Intergovernmental and regional cooperation prove essential for long-term planning in McDowell County and the region. All ten municipalities in the county participated in the comprehensive planning process, along with Region 1 Planning and Development Council, the McDowell County Public Service District (PSD), local organizations, and private entities. Additionally, McDowell County should consult with neighboring jurisdictions to implement goals and objectives, when in the best interest of all parties involved.

THE ROLE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

The elected officials and the county planning commission should refer to the implementation matrix to provide guidance in achieving the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. The planning commission should hold meetings with community groups and the ten municipalities to review the plan’s key points and to further implement the plan. While the West Virginia Code requires the plan be updated every ten years, the comprehensive plan should be reviewed at least annually to determine the status of the projects and make any necessary amendments.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION STEPS

The primary goals for McDowell County include:

Goal 1: Address abandoned and dilapidated structures

Goal 2: Improve existing infrastructure and encourage the development of new infrastructure

Goal 3: Promote sound land use and housing practices in the municipalities and throughout the county

Goal 4: Encourage a resilient and sustainable economy that will support current jobs and promote new business opportunities that benefit the residents of McDowell County

Goal 5: Increase public safety efforts throughout the county and expand treatment options to those with addiction.

GOAL 1:

Address abandoned and dilapidated structures

Objective 1: Create a comprehensive strategy to address abandoned and dilapidated structures.

Action Step 1: Identify and work with organizations throughout the state with the expertise necessary to help create a comprehensive strategy to address abandoned and dilapidated structures.

Local officials should continue to work with the Clean Up McDowell Initiative, WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Region 1 Planning and Development Council (PDC), the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, the West Virginia BAD buildings program, and other organizations. Local officials should consider the following strategies:

- Review and update ordinances pertaining to abandoned and dilapidated structures
- Complete an abandoned and dilapidated building inventory
- Understand the importance of deed and title opinions
- Develop a county-led demolition strategy
- Identify sites for C & D (Construction and Demolition) Landfills

Action Step 2: Review and update existing ordinances related to abandoned and dilapidated buildings. Specifically, county officials should update the county’s building code ordinance, which was originally adopted in 1992.

Action Step 3: Understand the advantages and disadvantages of enacting an unsafe and unsanitary structures ordinance under West Virginia Code Sections §§ 7-1-3ff (county) or 8-12-16 (municipality).

Action Step 4: Identify resources needed to enforce unsafe structures ordinances.

Unsafe structures ordinances require local government officials to create an enforcement agency. A county enforcement agency must include the county engineer, county health official (or designee), fire chief, county litter control officer, and two members elected by the county commission. The sheriff must also serve on the agency as an ex officio member.

A municipal enforcement agency must consist of the mayor, municipal engineer or building inspector, and one at-large member. The county health officer and a local fire chief must serve as ex officio members on a municipal enforcement agency.

Action Step 5: Understand the advantages and disadvantages of seeking injunctions to address abandoned and dilapidated structures through a nuisance ordinance. A nuisance ordinance would give local governments the ability to address blight without having to adopt the more resource-intensive West Virginia State Building Code.

Action Step 6: Understand the importance of conducting deed research and title opinions for abandoned and dilapidated properties.

The WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, which is already working with several communities throughout the state on deed research and title opinions, could provide the expertise.

Objective 2: Develop a countywide inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures

Action Step 1: Form an abandoned and dilapidated structures working group with state, county, and municipal officials. The working group should focus on developing an up-to-date countywide inventory of abandoned and dilapidated buildings for demolition and redevelopment. The inventory would also include buildings within any McDowell County municipalities that wanted to participate.

Action Step 2: Prioritize the countywide inventory based on objective criteria. Information should also be gathered on ownership, code violations, condition of the structure, fire and police calls, and tax status related to properties on the inventory. Prioritizing properties will give municipal and county officials a better understanding of the scope of abandonment and dilapidation in McDowell County and will help identify where limited resources are most needed.

Objective 3: Understand local government’s liability, if any, in building demolition, debris disposal, and preservation

Action Step 1: Evaluate the different options for proper demolition and debris disposal.

Action Step 2: Ensure qualified individuals are responsible for demolition.

Action Step 3: Identify possible sites for construction and demolition (C & D) landfills and determine how to properly dispose of potentially toxic materials that cannot be buried, such as asbestos.

Action Step 4: Consider purchasing a tub grinder, which is capable of “grinding” large quantities of wood and green waste on-site, making debris clean-up easier and more efficient.

Objective 4: Work with municipalities to adopt tools for addressing abandoned and dilapidated structures

Action Step 1: There are tools available to municipalities that may not be available to the county. Ensure municipal officials understand the different tools available to them. Many tools are found in the WVU Law Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic’s “From Liability to Viability: A Legal Toolkit to Address Neglected Properties in West Virginia.”

Action Step 2: Consider signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with neighboring jurisdictions to share a certified building code inspector to enforce the building code, if adopted.

Objective 5: Market abandoned property to investors, especially those interested in capitalizing on outdoor recreation tourism

Action Step 1: Create an updated inventory of properties that are available for purchase. This inventory can work in conjunction with the property inventory outlined in Goal 1, Objective 2 of this comprehensive plan. Prioritize properties in the county’s preferred development areas, especially along Route 52, the municipal main streets, and near outdoor recreation tourism areas.

Action Step 2: Market the property inventory to out-of-state investors from neighboring states that frequent the Hatfield and McCoy Trail system.

Action Step 3: Ensure property listings and the inventory are periodically updated.

GOAL 2:
Improve existing infrastructure and encourage the development of new infrastructure

Objective 1: Address water and wastewater issues through education and partnerships

Action Step 1: Educate water customers on strategies to reduce water usage and ways to lower their water bills.

Action Step 2: Work to reduce operational costs and reduce the number of leaks in existing systems.

Action Step 3: Educate residents, businesses, and decision makers on challenges, including the costs of utility upgrades. Encourage local decision makers to tour utilities to understand specific system components.

Action Step 4: Encourage collaboration between the utilities and economic development officials. Expand opportunities for business growth and to further coordinate infrastructure investments. Host round tables and bring in business owners and utility providers to help ensure everyone is on the same page.

Action Step 5: Work with local technical schools and community colleges to develop and expand utility operator training and education.

Action Step 6: Ensure all utility customers are properly metered (e.g. electric, sewer, and water services).

Action Step 7: Develop a partnership with West Virginia Rural Water Program’s new apprenticeship program to recruit and train employees.

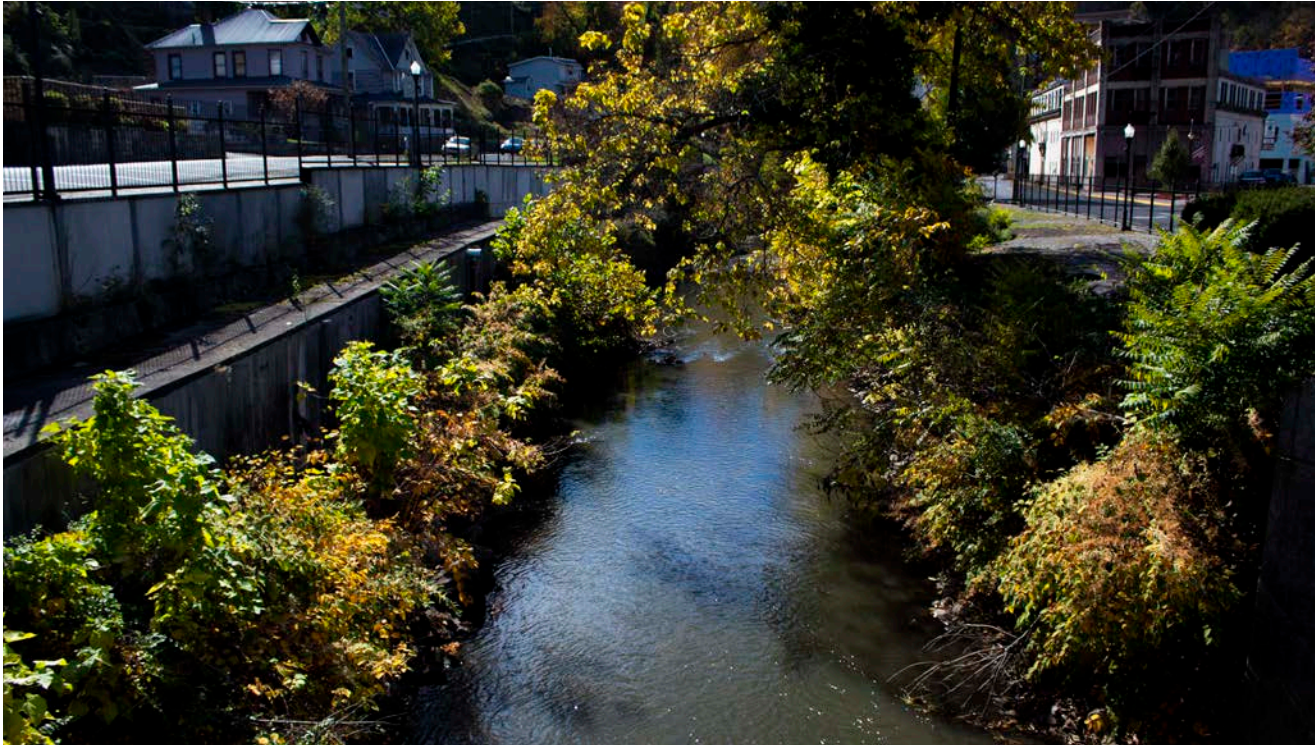
Action Step 8: Work with existing operators to cross-train and develop standard operating procedures that consider retirement and employee turnover.

Objective 2: Improve efficiencies of existing water and wastewater utilities.

Action Step 1: Implement GIS mapping technology into normal utilities operations, maintenance, and billing.

Dilapidated housing in McDowell





Creek in Welch

Action Step 3: Work with Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) officials to develop a more robust and comprehensive route system in McDowell County to ensure those who need access to public transit the most have it.

Objective 5: Work with service providers and continue to assess viable properties for new cell towers or facility locations

Action Step 1: Identify areas where cell towers could be constructed. County and municipal leaders should inventory government-owned property and develop favorable, yet fair, lease agreements to entice providers to place facilities in McDowell County.

Action Step 2: Work with telecommunications providers to identify specific areas that are lacking service and work to ensure service becomes available.

Objective 6: Ensure all parts of the county have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband.

Action Step 1: Understand the regulations governing broadband cooperative associations and consider the feasibility of creating local broadband associations to address poor internet access in remote locations.

Action Step 2: Work with Reconnecting McDowell to promote broadband in local schools.

Action Step 3: Emphasizing regional cooperation, identify and pursue grant funding opportunities for broadband expansion and development, particularly through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Action Step 4: Work with Region I Planning and Development Council (PDC) to implement the State of West Virginia Broadband Strategic Plan.

Action Step 5: Encourage the implementation of new and supplemental technologies that can deliver high speed internet and/or cell phone service to remote areas without large amounts of "in the ground" infrastructure.

Action Step 2: Work with technical assistance providers such as the Appalachian Community Technical Assistance and Training program at WVU to maximize efficiencies at different utility locations.

For example, as part of this program, the College of Business and Economics is currently working with the McDowell County PSD to develop a plan to improve coordination of different systems managed by the PSD.

Action Step 3: Continue to track the number of septic and onsite systems to better understand treatment needs in McDowell County.

Objective 3: Continue to seek resources for water and wastewater service, upgrades, and expansion.

Action Step 1: Continue to work with utilities to secure grants and service debt to maintain and extend service for water and sewer treatment.

For example, some PSDs indicated a need to purchase a backup generator for the continued operation of their plant when the power goes out. However, many PSDs would need funding to cover the expense of purchasing a backup generator.

Action Step 2: Consider reviving the McDowell County Wastewater Treatment Coalition. The Coalition can advocate for improved wastewater treatment in the County.

Action Step 3: Continue to encourage the development of decentralized wastewater systems when they are shown to be a cost-effective and efficient method to treat wastewater in McDowell County.

Action Step 4: Continue to share public works equipment and any other relevant resources between municipalities in the county to help offset costs.

Objective 4: Continue to advocate for the completion of local transportation projects

Action Step 1: Local officials should ensure that the Coalfields Expressway, from Welch to the Wyoming County line, is considered a high priority and included in the next contract award for highway construction.

Action Step 2: Lobby state and federal officials to secure funding to fully develop both the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway in McDowell.

City of Welch





Town of Kimball

GOAL 3:

Promote sound land use and housing practices in the municipalities and throughout the county.

Objective 1: Encourage development and re-development in the county’s preferred development areas

Action Step 1: In the preferred development areas, actively recruit businesses and developers with assistance from local partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, EDA, and CVB.

Action Step 2: Identify incentives that will help stimulate new growth or expand existing business enterprises in the preferred development areas.

Objective 2: Identify future development sites/properties and examine how these sites might be marketed and developed.

Action Step 1: Review West Virginia law regarding Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and work with the private sector and state officials to consider projects that could utilize a PPP structure.

Action Step 2: Identify potential post-mine properties to be included as part of a larger program that creates a prioritized database of large tracts of flat, developable land in McDowell County.

Action Step 3: Promote the list of developable property posted on the West Virginia Department of Commerce website in cooperation with the McDowell County EDA.

Action Step 4: Identify potential development sites that are near existing infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, broadband, or cell phone facilities.

Objective 3: Continue to advocate for the necessary funding to fully complete both the King Coal Highway and Coalfields Expressway

Action Step 1: Identify and work with appropriate officials as to how and what types of development will occur along the new corridors, especially at the interchange between the two highways, near Indian Ridge Industrial Park.

Objective 4: Conduct long-term floodplain management planning

Action Step 1: Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic on the Elkhorn Creek Watershed Project to address floodplain mitigation, water quality, and erosion and sediment control.

Action Step 2: Utilize FEMA mitigation lots throughout the county to establish floodplain-appropriate development such as raised-bed community gardens, parks, and passive recreation.

Action Step 3: Provide educational opportunities for citizens and local officials to better understand floodplain insurance, floodplain maps, and the floodplain ordinances that are in place.

Action Step 4: Ensure county and municipal officials are fully enforcing local floodplain ordinances.

Objective 5: Identify potential areas and determine public support for annexation

Action Step 1: The continued development of the Hatfield and McCoy Trail system, and the future construction of the King Coal and Coalfields Expressway, will likely increase the interest of municipalities annexing land. Municipalities need to determine potential annexation areas and assess the support from residents and county officials before moving forward with the annexation process.

Action Step 2: Ensure all affected parties have an opportunity to discuss potential annexation, including the identification of advantages and disadvantages of annexing particular areas.

Objective 6: Plan for a diversity of housing options to address demographic trends

Action Step 1: Work with the Mingo Housing Authority and Stop Abusive Family Environments (S.A.F.E.) to ensure that the entire county, including the municipalities, are being adequately served as to housing. Encourage a range of housing options, including single-family, apartments, townhomes, and duplexes.

Action Step 2: Assess the amount of housing needed to accommodate an aging population and encourage the development of new, accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Action Step 3: Encourage infill development, small lot construction, and adaptive reuse of commercial structures for residential uses.

Action Step 4: Facilitate the continued development of short-term rentals, especially near ATV trailheads.

GOAL 4:

Encourage a resilient, diverse, and sustainable economy that will support current jobs and promote new business opportunities that benefit the residents of McDowell County

Objective 1: Encourage continued growth in the tourism industry of McDowell County

Action Step 1: Continue to work with the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreational Authority to expand the trail system, including the addition of trail heads in municipalities and other areas throughout the county.

Action Step 2: Encourage residents to invest or continue to invest in lodging, small businesses, and other opportunities to keep tourism revenue in McDowell County.

Action Step 3: Improve access to small business startup funds and financial packages through the McDowell County Economic Development Authority, local banks, and other development organizations.

Action Step 4: Industry leaders should work together to strengthen marketing techniques to appeal to a wider range of potential visitors.

Action Step 5: Work with the state’s West Virginia Welcome program to provide hospitality training for individuals that work in the local tourism and lodging industry.

Action Step 6: Support ‘Friends of the Tug Fork River’ and the WV Department of Highways in their efforts to create river access points along the Tug Fork River as a part of a recreational water trail.

Objective 2: Understand and plan for coal industry trends

Action Step 1: Continue to support McDowell County coal mining, coal miners, and supplemental industries to coal.

Action Step 2: Work with local coal industry leaders to evaluate whether there are any public private partnership (PPP) projects to pursue for the betterment of McDowell County.

Objective 3: Improve and advocate for access to basic human services

Action Step 1: Urge stores to invest in McDowell County by providing customers with greater access to healthy foods.

Action Step 2: Encourage public transportation services to expand routes throughout the county.

Action Step 3: Hire a grant writer to help local governments in McDowell County apply for grants that improve access to basic services including healthy food, water and wastewater services, transportation, and healthcare.

Action Step 4: Work with the McDowell County Career and Technology Center and neighboring institutes of higher education to provide low cost adult education opportunities in trades and occupations that are needed.

Objective 4: Encourage diversification of the economy in McDowell County, while supporting existing businesses.

Action Step 1: Work with industry leaders to continue to develop tourism-related businesses such as lodging and restaurants, including the promotion of existing tourism-related businesses.

Action Step 2: Promote the unique and robust history of the county.

Action Step 3: Encourage special events throughout the year that will not conflict with existing businesses or events.

Action Step 4: Work with Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College to create a brewery/cidery in McDowell County.

GOAL 5:
Increase public safety efforts throughout the county and expand treatment options to those with substance abuse addiction

Objective 1: Support the different public safety organizations as they improve and expand their services across the county

Action Step 1: Support and advocate for local volunteer fire departments (VFDs), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and police departments to obtain updated and necessary equipment.

Action Step 2: Explore locations and funding options to develop a law enforcement and volunteer firefighters training complex in the county.

Action Step 3: Work with local VFDs and PSDs to determine areas in need of fire hydrants.

Action Step 4: Continue to coordinate with the county's 911 center to maintain an up-to-date county and municipality disaster plan.

Action Step 5: Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to provide comprehensive emergency services and ensure proper coverage of the county in all aspects of emergency services.

Action Step 6: Create a county CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. Hold a trial run to distribute emergency items for families in the county, while identifying gaps and in service for disaster management.

Objective 2: Highlight the importance of substance abuse prevention and treatment accessibility

Action Step 1: Disseminate substance abuse educational information and have materials available to communities and organizations throughout the county.

Action Step 2: Consider promoting substance abuse awareness through an inaugural ceremony and an annual weeklong event to recognize McDowell County's support for those involved in the recovery process.

Recovery awareness could be done during Nurses Week, Red Ribbon Week, or SAMHSA's Awareness Day.

Action Step 3: Ensure properly trained healthcare providers and substance abuse counselors are welcome and encouraged to provide services in McDowell County.

Objective 3: Focus on prevention and education related to substance abuse

Action Step 1: Encourage integration of substance abuse prevention techniques into school curriculum and invite speakers to schools and other youth activities.

Teachers can integrate opioid statistics into their curriculum. For example, students can write about the effects of substance abuse on the community as a writing exercise in their English class.

Action Step 2: Advocate for the creation and expansion of "after school" programs and recreational opportunities in environments where children can be engaged in productive and healthy activities, for example the "Girls on the Run" program.

Action Step 3: Continue to collaborate with local businesses and organizations to participate in "drug take back days."

Objective 4: Expand substance abuse treatment options and law enforcement alternatives

Action Step 1: Increase the availability of substance abuse treatment programs and providers in the county.

Action Step 2: Identify where treatment facilities are needed. Encourage the placement of facilities in those areas.

Action Step 3: Support alternatives to arrest, when in the best interest of the community and the individual.

Action Step 4: Continue to support adult and juvenile drug courts, as well as the county's day report program.

Action Step 5: Collaborate with health and human services and local nonprofit service organizations to ensure the families affected by substance abuse have adequate food, housing, and mental health services.

Objective 6: Encourage the development of safe and reliable pedestrian areas in McDowell County.

Action Step 1: Work with WV Division of Highways (DOH) to identify dangerous areas for pedestrians, especially along the main corridors.

Action Step 2: Coordinate with DOH and municipal officials to ensure adequate signage and traffic calming devices are placed in areas identified as dangerous for pedestrians.

City of Welch



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

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|--|
| Timeline (from adoption of comprehensive plan) |
| Short-term (0–3 years) |
| Moderate-term (4–7 years) |
| Long-term (8+ years) |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|--|----------|---------------|------|--|---|--|--|
| Goal 1: Address abandoned and dilapidated structures | | | | | | | |
| Identify and work with organizations throughout the state with the expertise necessary to help create a comprehensive strategy to address abandoned and dilapidated structures. | High | Short-term | 105 | Planning Commission, County Commission | Municipal Officials, State Officials, Redevelopment Authority | Staff/Volunteer Time | General Fund; Grant Funds |
| Review and update existing ordinances related to abandoned and dilapidated buildings. | Moderate | Short-term | 105 | County and Municipal Offices | WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff Time | N/A |
| Understand the advantages and disadvantages of enacting an unsafe and unsanitary structures ordinance under West Virginia Code Sections §§ 7-1-3ff (county) or 8-12-16 (municipality). | High | Short-term | 106 | County and Municipal Offices | WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff Time | General Fund |
| Identify resources needed to enforce unsafe structures ordinances. | Low | Long-term | 106 | Local Elected Officials | WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff Time | General Fund |
| Understand the advantages and disadvantages of seeking injunctions to address abandoned and dilapidated structures through a nuisance ordinance. | Low | Long-term | 106 | Local Government Attorneys | Elected Officials | Staff and Attorney Time, Court Costs | General Funds |
| Understand the importance of conducting deed research and title opinions for abandoned and dilapidated properties. | High | Short-term | 106 | Local Officials | WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Minimal costs for education | N/A |
| Form an abandoned and dilapidated structures working group with state, county, and municipal officials. | High | Long-term | 106 | County Officials | EDA, WV Bad Buildings Program, Clean Up McDowell, Region I P&DC | Officials time and meeting costs | General Fund, Grants |
| Prioritize the countywide inventory based on objective criteria. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 106 | County Officials | Municipal Officials, State Officials, Redevelopment Authority | Project could cost thousands of dollars to collect information to create an inventory. | Housing Development Fund; federal grants |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|---|---|--|---|
| Evaluate the different options for property demolition and debris disposal. | High | Short-term | 106 | County Officials, Working Group | Licensed contractors, demolition specialists | Cost variable, dependent on asbestos and other cost-shifting factors | State and federal funds |
| Identify possible sites for construction and demolition (C & D) landfills and determine how to properly dispose of potentially toxic materials that cannot be buried, such as asbestos. | High | Short-term | 106 | County Officials | Contractors, demolition specialists | Staff Time | N/A |
| Consider purchasing a tub grinder, which is capable of “grinding” large quantities of wood and green waste on-site, making debris clean-up easier and more efficient. | High | Short-term | 107 | Regional or County Officials | WV State Government | \$20,000- \$90,000 | State funds |
| Ensure municipal officials understand the different tools available to them. | High | Short-term | 107 | Municipal Officials | WV Municipal League, WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff Time | General Funds |
| Consider signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with neighboring jurisdictions to share a certified building code inspector to enforce the building code, if adopted. | High | Short-term | 107 | Local Government Officials | N/A | Costs of funding position | PRI Loans |
| Create an updated inventory of properties that are available for purchase. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 107 | McDowell County Officials | Redevelopment Authority, Convention and Visitors Bureau. WV Bad Buildings Program | Staff Time | General Fund |
| Assess the housing needed to accommodate an aging population and encourage the development of accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities. | High | Moderate-term | 107 | McDowell County Officials | Mingo County Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority and S.A.F.E. | Staff Time | Grants |
| Encourage the use of infill development, small lot construction, and adaptive reuse of commercial buildings for residential use. | High | Moderate-term | 107 | McDowell County Officials | Private Property Owners | Cost dependent on project | Property owner funds, rehabilitation tax credits. |
| Market the property inventory to investors from neighboring states that frequent the Hatfield and McCoy Trail system | Moderate | Short-term | 107 | Regional I Planning and Development Council | Local Realtors, McDowell County CVB, and McDowell County EDA | Costs of maintaining list, website and other marketing materials | CVB funds, state tourism funds |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|--|----------|------------|------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ensure property listings and the inventory are periodically updated. | High | Short-term | 107 | McDowell County EDA | Private Property Owners, realtors | Costs for routine maintenance | Operating funds |

Goal 2: Improve existing infrastructure and encourage the development of new infrastructure

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|---------------|-----|--|--|--|--|
| Educate water customers on strategies to reduce water usage and ways to lower their water bills. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 107 | McDowell County PSD, water utilities | County and municipal officials | Minimal costs for education; staff time | Water utilities operating expenses |
| Work to reduce operational costs and reduce the number of leaks in existing water systems. | Moderate | Long-term | 107 | PSD, water utilities | County and municipal officials | Very costly depending on scope of project | Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council |
| Educate residents, businesses, and decision makers on challenges, including the costs of utility upgrades. | High | Long-term | 107 | Utility providers | Local Elected Officials | Utility and local government time | General funds; utility funds |
| Encourage collaboration between the utilities and economic development officials. | Moderate | Short-term | 107 | Utility providers | McDowell County EDA | Staff time of all organizations involved | N/A |
| Work with local technical schools and community colleges to develop and expand utility operator training and education, including the West Virginia Rural Water Program's new apprenticeship program. | Moderate | Long-term | 107 | Vocational and technical college officials | Local government officials, WV Rural Water Association | Curriculum development | Tuition costs, private donations for development |
| Work with existing operators to cross-train and develop standard operating procedures to plan for retirements and employee turnover. | | | | | | | |
| Ensure all utility customers are properly metered (e.g. electric, sewer, and water services). | High | Long-term | 107 | Utility providers | McDowell County Redevelopment Authority | Significant costs to survey and then provide appropriate equipment | Grant funding |
| Integrate GIS mapping technology into normal operations, maintenance, and billing. | High | Long-term | 107 | Utility providers | Region I Planning and Development Council | Initial costs for geodatabase creation could cost several thousand dollars, maintenance will be perpetual, but cheap | Grant funding for infrastructure |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|--|----------|---------------|------|--|---|---|---|
| Work with technical assistance providers such as the Appalachian Community Technical Assistance and Training program at WVU to maximize efficiencies at different utility locations. | Moderate | Long-term | 108 | McDowell County PSD and Local Municipalities | Appalachian Community Technical Assistance and Training program | Staff time | N/A |
| Continue to track the number of septic and onsite systems to better understand treatment needs in McDowell County. | Low | Long-term | 108 | PSD, health department | N/A | Costs of monitoring systems; could be quite expensive over time | Operating costs |
| Continue to work with utilities to secure grants and service debt to maintain and extend service for water and sewer treatment. | Low | Moderate-term | 108 | PSD, municipal public works | Region I Planning and Development Council | Cost dependent on project | Grant funding or IJDC loans |
| Consider reviving the McDowell County Wastewater Treatment Coalition. The Coalition can advocate for improved wastewater treatment in the County. | Low | Long-term | 108 | Coalition Members | Local elected officials | Minimal costs | N/A |
| Continue to encourage the development of decentralized wastewater systems when they are shown to be a cost-effective and efficient method to treat wastewater in McDowell County. | Moderate | Long-term | 108 | PSD, municipal public works | Local elected officials | Staff time | General operating funds |
| Continue to share public works equipment and any other relevant resources between municipalities in the county to help offset costs. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 108 | Local government utilities | PSD | Splitting costs, thus lowered | N/A |
| Local officials should ensure that the Coalfields Expressway, from Welch to the Wyoming County line, is considered a high priority and included in the next contract award for highway construction. | High | Short-term | 108 | Elected officials | State and federal transportation officials | Very high cost to complete road, millions of dollars | State and federal transportation funds, funds from turnpike authority |
| Lobby state and federal officials to secure funding to fully develop both the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway in McDowell and throughout the state. | High | Short-term | 108 | Municipal and county officials | State elected officials | Officials time and meeting costs | Operating budget |
| Work with Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) officials to develop a more robust and comprehensive route system in McDowell County to ensure those who need access to public transit the most have it. | Low | Moderate-term | 109 | Bluefield Area Transit officials | Local Elected Officials | Staff time | N/A |
| | | | | | | | |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|---|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Identify areas where cell towers could be constructed. County and municipal leaders should inventory government-owned property and develop favorable, yet fair, lease agreements to entice providers to place facilities in McDowell County. | High | Short-term | 109 | Local Elected Officials | Telecommunications industry officials | Time identifying areas | N/A |
| Work with telecommunications providers to identify specific areas that are lacking service and work to ensure service becomes available. | High | Short-term | 109 | Local Elected Officials | Telecommunications industry officials | Time identifying areas | N/A |
| Understand the regulations governing broadband cooperative associations and consider the feasibility of creating local broadband associations to address poor internet access in remote locations. | Low | Long-term | 109 | Local Elected Officials | Region I Planning and Development Council; WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff time | N/A |
| Work with Reconnecting McDowell to promote broadband in local schools. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 109 | McDowell County Board of Education and Administrators | Reconnecting McDowell | Costs of equipment that can utilize broadband technologies | Reconnecting McDowell funding |
| Emphasizing regional cooperation, identify and pursue grant funding opportunities for broadband expansion and development, particularly through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). | Moderate | Moderate-term | 109 | County and Municipal Officials | Region I Planning and Development Council | Staff time to identify grant funding opportunities | Normal operating costs |
| Work with Region I Planning and Development Council (PDC) to implement the State of West Virginia Broadband Strategic Plan. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 109 | Local Government Officials | Region I Planning and Development Council | Costs dependent on project | State development funds |
| Encourage the implementation of new and supplemental technologies that can deliver high speed internet and/or cell phone service to remote areas without large amounts of “in the ground” infrastructure. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 109 | Industry providers | Local elected officials | Costs dependent on type of technology available | Private capital and investment |

Goal 3: Define and encourage development in preferred development areas

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|---------------|-----|----------------------------|---|------------|----------------------|
| In the preferred development areas, actively recruit businesses and developers with assistance from local partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, EDA, and CVB. | High | Moderate-term | 110 | Local government officials | McDowell County Redevelopment Authority, McDowell County EDA, McDowell County CVB | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Identify incentives that will help stimulate new growth or expand existing business enterprises in the preferred development areas. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 110 | Local government officials | McDowell County EDA, Chamber of Commerce | Staff Time | EDA funds |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|--|---|---|---|
| A list of developable property in McDowell County should be posted on the West Virginia Commerce website and promoted by the McDowell County EDA. | Low | Short-term | 110 | McDowell County EDA | WV Department of Commerce | Minimal costs to maintain list | EDA funds and Department of Commerce time |
| Review West Virginia law regarding Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and work with the private sector and state officials to consider projects that could utilize a PPP structure. | High | Short-term | 110 | State and local officials | Private Sector and West Virginia Development Office | Staff Time | N/A |
| Identify potential post-mine properties to be included as part of a larger program that creates a prioritized database of large tracts of flat, developable land in McDowell County. | Moderate | Short-term | 110 | WV Department of Commerce | Local officials | Staff time; more significant costs creating and maintain database | State funds |
| Identify potential development sites that are near existing infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, broadband, or cell phone facilities. | Low | Moderate-term | 110 | McDowell County EDA | Local Elected Officials | Staff and officials time | N/A |
| County commissioners, municipal leaders, state senators and delegates, and the county economic development authority should continue to lobby the state and federal government for additional funding for both highways. | High | Short-term | 110 | McDowell County | Local and State Officials | Funding for highways will cost several million | General Fund, State and Federal Grants |
| Identify and work with appropriate officials as to how and what types of development will occur along the new corridors, especially at the interchange between the two highways, near Indian Ridge Industrial Park. | High | Long-term | 110 | McDowell County EDA; County Commission | State transportation and development officials | Staff and officials time | General funds |
| Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic on the Elkhorn Creek Watershed Project to address floodplain mitigation, water quality, and erosion and sediment control. | Moderate | Long-term | 110 | Local Elected Officials | NRCS, WVU Land Use Law Clinic | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Utilize FEMA mitigation lots throughout the county to establish floodplain-appropriate development such as raised-bed community gardens, parks, and passive recreation. | Moderate | Long-term | 111 | Local Elected Officials | FEMA, neighbors of lots | Minimal expenses; each raised bed community garden should cost less than \$500 to construct | In kind donations, private monetary donations, grants |
| Provide educational opportunities for citizens and local officials to better understand floodplain insurance, floodplain maps, and the floodplain ordinances that are in place. | Low | Long-term | 111 | Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management | FEMA Region III | N/A | N/A |
| Ensure county and municipal officials are fully enforcing local floodplain ordinances. | High | Long-term | 111 | Local floodplain administrators | DHSEM, local elected officials | Minimal costs | Local government funds |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Municipalities need to determine potential annexation areas and assess the support from residents and county officials before moving forward with the annexation process. | High | Short-term | 111 | Municipal officials | ATV industry | Minimal costs | CVB funds |
| Ensure all affected parties have an opportunity to discuss potential annexation, including the identification of advantages and disadvantages of annexing particular areas. | Low | Long-term | 111 | Local governments | McDowell County, affected property owners | Staff Time | General Fund |
| Work with the Mingo Housing Authority and Stop Abusive Family Environments (S.A.F.E.) to ensure that the entire county, including the municipalities, are being adequately served as to housing. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 111 | Local elected officials | Mingo County Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority, and S.A.F.E. | N/A | N/A |
| Facilitate the continued development of short-term rentals, especially near ATV trailheads. | Low | Long-term | 111 | Local governments | Tourism business operators | Staff Time | General Fund |
| <i>Goal 4: Encourage resilient and sustainable economy that will support current jobs and promote new business opportunities that benefit the residents of McDowell County</i> | | | | | | | |
| Continue to work with the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreational Authority to expand the trail system, including the addition of trail heads in municipalities and other areas throughout the county. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 111 | McDowell County EDA | Hatfield-McCoy Trail Authority | Staff Time | General Fund |
| Encourage residents to invest or continue to invest in lodging, small businesses, and other opportunities to keep tourism revenue in McDowell County. | High | Moderate-term | 111 | McDowell County EDA | Local Entrepreneurs | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Improve access to small business startup funds and financial packages through the McDowell County Economic Development Authority, local banks, and other development organizations. | Moderate | Long-term | 111 | McDowell County EDA | Local Entrepreneurs | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Work with West Virginia Welcome Program to provide hospitality training for people that work in the local tourism and lodging industry. | Moderate | Short-term | 111 | McDowell County CVB | West Virginia Welcome | Staff and Volunteer Time | Grants |
| Support 'Friends of the Tug Fork River' and the WV Department of Highways in their efforts to create river access points along the Tug Fork River as a part of a recreational water trail. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 111 | McDowell County Officials and Local Municipalities located along the Tug Fork River | McDowell County Sportsman's Club, Friends of the Tug Fork River, WV Department of Highways | Staff and Volunteer Time | General Fund, Recreational Grants |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|--|----------|---------------|------|--|---|--|---|
| Industry leaders should work together to strengthen marketing techniques to appeal to a wider range of potential visitors. | Low | Moderate-term | 111 | CVB, local entrepreneurs | Local Elected Officials | Costs of marketing can depend on scale and type of marketing but can cost thousands of dollars | CVB funds; state grant funding |
| Continue to support McDowell County coal mining, coal miners, and supplemental industries to coal | Moderate | Moderate-term | 111 | Local Officials | Extractive Industry | Cost dependent on project | Grant funding |
| Work with local coal industry leaders to evaluate whether there are any public private partnership (PPP) projects to pursue for the betterment of McDowell County. | Moderate | Short-term | 111 | Local and State Officials, McDowell County EDA | Construction and Extractive Industry | Staff Time | N/A |
| Urge stores to invest in McDowell County by providing customers with greater access to healthy foods. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 112 | Local Officials | Local Growers and Entrepreneurs, and store owners | Costs associated with offering different food options | Overhead, increased revenue; grants |
| Encourage public transportation services to expand routes throughout the county. | Moderate | Long-term | 112 | Local Officials | BAT and Ride-sharing Companies (e.g. Uber, Lyft, etc.) | Gas and staffing costs for increased services | Expanded transportation funding with increased ridership |
| Hire a grant writer to help local governments in McDowell County apply for grants that improve access to basic services including healthy food, water and wastewater services, transportation, and healthcare. | High | Short-term | 112 | Municipal and County officials | Region I Planning and Development Council and Nonprofit Organizations | If done properly, hiring a grant writer will provide more financial benefit than cost | Grant writers can often pay for themselves in order to administer grants |
| Work with the McDowell County Career and Technology Center and neighboring institutes of higher education to provide low cost adult education opportunities in trades and occupations that are needed. | High | Moderate-term | 112 | Local elected officials | McDowell County Career and Technology Center, local colleges and universities | Minimal costs | Costs come from fees and tuition |
| Work with industry leaders to continue to develop tourism-related businesses such as lodging and restaurants, including the promotion of existing tourism-related businesses. | High | Moderate-term | 112 | McDowell County CVB | Lodging and restaurant operators; other tourism related business operators | CVB staff; operator time | N/A |
| Promote the unique and robust history of the county. | Low | Long-term | 112 | McDowell County Historical Society | State Historic Preservation Office | Costs for marketing and informational purposes | Historic preservation grants |
| Encourage special events throughout the year that will not conflict with existing businesses or events. | Moderate | Long-term | 112 | McDowell County CVB | Local Officials, McDowell County Chamber of Commerce | Costs dependent on events | Registration or entrance fees; in kind services; private monetary donations |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Work with Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College to create a brewery/cidery in McDowell County. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 112 | Southern WV Community and Technical College | McDowell County CVB and EDA | Thousands in start up costs | Investors and Community College Funding |
| <i>Goal 5: Increase public safety efforts in the county and expand treatment options to those with addiction</i> | | | | | | | |
| Support and advocate for local volunteer fire departments (VFDs), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and police departments to obtain updated and necessary equipment. | High | Moderate-term | 112 | Local elected officials | VFDs and law enforcement, EMS personnel | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Explore locations and funding options to develop a law enforcement and volunteer firefighters training complex in the county. | Moderate | Long-term | 112 | McDowell County and VFDs | McDowell County Redevelopment Authority | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Work with local VFDs and PSDs to determine areas in need of fire hydrants. | Moderate | Short-term | 113 | McDowell County and VFDs | McDowell County PSD | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Continue to coordinate with the county's 911 center to maintain an up-to-date county and municipal disaster plan. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 113 | McDowell County and 911 Center | VFDs, Police, EMS, and Other Regional Emergency Services | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to provide comprehensive emergency services and ensure proper coverage of the county in all aspects of emergency services. | Low | Long-term | 113 | McDowell County 911 Center | Neighboring jurisdictions emergency services | Staff Time | Grant funding |
| Create a county CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. | Moderate | Short-term | 113 | McDowell County 911 Center | Local Governments, VFDs, Police, and EMS | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| McDowell County and other neighboring jurisdictions should focus their efforts in addressing substance abuse on (1) leading in a crisis, (2) prevention and education, (3) expanding treatment, and (4) reassessing public safety and law enforcement approaches. | High | Short-term | 113 | McDowell County elected officials | Other local governments, health-care organization and advocates, Law Enforcement | Staff Time | General Fund; Federal, State, and Local Grants |
| Ensure properly trained healthcare providers and substance abuse counselors are welcome and encouraged to provide services in McDowell County. | Moderate | Short-term | 113 | Citizens, elected officials | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Encourage integration of substance abuse prevention techniques into school curriculum and invite speakers to schools and other youth activities. | Moderate | Short-term | 113 | McDowell County Board of Education | McDowell County School Administrators and Teachers, Substance Abuse Experts, and Healthcare providers | Staff and Volunteer Time | General Fund, Grants |

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIORITY | TIMEFRAME | PAGE | RESPONSIBLE ENTITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | ESTIMATED COST | FUNDING SOURCE |
|---|----------|---------------|------|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Advocate for the creation and expansion of “after school” programs and recreational opportunities in environments where children can be engaged in productive and healthy activities, for example “Girls on the Run.” | High | Short-term | 113 | McDowell County Board of Education | McDowell County School Administrators and Teachers | Staff Time | General Fund, Grants |
| Continue to collaborate with local businesses and organizations to participate in “drug take back days.” | Moderate | Long-term | 113 | Law enforcement | Local businesses and Nonprofit Organizations | Cost of coordination and takeback of drugs | General Fund, Volunteer Time |
| Identify where treatment facilities are needed. Encourage the placement of facilities in those areas. | High | Long-term | 113 | Substance Abuse Experts, Health-care providers | McDowell County, Local Governments | Staff Time | N/A |
| Support alternatives to arrest, when in the best interest of the community and the individual. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 113 | Local Courts, law enforcement agencies | McDowell County | Primary costs will be with courts and law enforcement: costs to county if Sheriff’s Department involved | General Fund, law enforcement grants |
| Continue to support adult and juvenile drug court, as well as the county’s day report program. | Moderate | Long-term | 118 | Local Courts, law enforcement agencies | Local Elected Officials | Staff time | N/A |
| Collaborate with health and human service and local nonprofit service organizations to ensure families affected by substance abuse have adequate food, housing, and access to social services. | Moderate | Long-term | 113 | Health Department | Local Nonprofits | Law enforcement, prison officials | General Fund, law enforcement grants |
| Work with WV Division of Highways (DOH) to identify dangerous areas for pedestrians, especially along the main corridors. | Moderate | Long-term | 113 | Local elected officials | Department of Highways | Staff Time | N/A |
| Coordinate with DOH and municipal officials to ensure adequate signage and traffic calming devices are placed in areas identified as dangerous for pedestrians. | Moderate | Moderate-term | 113 | WV Division of Highways | McDowell County and Local Governments | Cost of implementing signage and traffic control devices | General Fund, State Grants |

Hold for signed public input procedures.

APPENDIX

ORDINANCE
Creating McDowell County Planning Commission

1. **Purpose and Authority** – The purpose of this Ordinance is to create a McDowell County Planning Commission. Section 8A-2-1, W. Va. Code (as amended).
2. **Effective Date** – This Amendment shall take effect upon the conclusion of the last public reading and when approved by the County Commission.
3. **Members:**
 - a. **Number of Members** – The Planning Commission shall consist of seven (7) Members.
 - b. **Qualifications of Members:**
 - 1) Members shall be residents of the County.
 - 2) At least five (5) of the Members shall have been residents of the County for at least three (3) years prior to appointment.
 - 3) Members shall fairly represent the County, shall fairly represent different areas of interest, knowledge and expertise including business, industry, labor, farming, government, and other relevant disciplines.
 - 4) One Member shall be a County Commissioner.
 - c. **Members Terms of Appointment** – The County Commission shall appoint all Members. The County Commissioner Member shall be appointed for the same term of appointment as his term of office as a Commissioner. The Remaining Members first selected shall serve respectively for terms of one (1) year, two (2) years, and three (3) years evenly split between Remaining Members. Thereafter Remaining Members shall serve three (3) year terms. Vacancies shall be nominated by the Planning Commission and approved by the County Commission for the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointments.
 - d. **Compensation of Members and Funding:**
 - 1) Members shall serve without compensation.
 - 2) Members must obtain County Commission approval and ensure funds are available before incurring any expenses in the performance of their official duties.
 - 3) The Planning Commission may accept gifts, funds, and donations for deposit by the County Sheriff in a Special, Nonreverting Planning Commission Fund to be

available for Planning Commission expenses designated by the donor. The majority of Members must approve said expenses in advance at a Regular or Special Meeting.

- e. **Removal of Members** – The County Commission may remove Members for inactivity, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. Before the County Commission removes any Member, the County Commission shall provide to the Member to be removed a written statement of the reasons for removal and an opportunity to be heard.
4. **Meetings** – The Planning Commission shall meet at least quarterly and may meet more frequently at the request of the President or by two (2) or more Members. Notice for a Special Meeting must be in writing, include the date, time, and place of the meeting, and be sent to all Members at least two (2) days before the Special Meeting. Written notice of a Special Meeting is not required if the date, time, and place of the Special Meeting are set during a Regular Meeting. Planning Commission meetings shall be open to the public.
5. **Quorum** – A majority of the Members is a Quorum. The Planning Commission cannot act except by the majority of Members present at either a Regular Meeting or a Special Meeting.
6. **Officers** – The Planning Commission, at its first meeting, shall elect from its Members a President and a Vice President. The Vice President shall have the power of and act as the President in the President's absence. The Planning Commission may establish other officers in its discretion.
7. **Powers and Duties:**
 - a) The Planning Commission is an advisory board without regulatory powers to the County Commission.
 - b) The primary purpose of the Planning Commission is to develop with the West Virginia University College of Law Land Use Clinic a Comprehensive Plan for review and action by the County Commission.
 - c) The Planning Commission shall keep an accurate and complete record of all Planning Commission proceedings.
 - d) The Planning Commission shall keep, preserve, and maintain all Planning Commission documents, papers, and records of any kind.

- e) The Planning Commission shall provide quarterly and annual reports to the County Commission concerning their activities and the status of planning in the County.

Hold for legal advertisements

Signed upon passage the 27 day of January 2016.


Harold McBride
President
McDowell County Commission

Hold for approved resolutions

Hold for meeting minutes



March 15, 2016

Mayor
, WV 24808

Dear Mayor X,

Thanks for your community's willingness to participate in the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan. We have been very pleased with the response from communities around the county that are eager and willing to participate in creating a blueprint for the future of McDowell County and its Cities and Towns. The County Commission is working to appoint the county planning commission members therefore the comprehensive plan process will officially start in the very near future.

Our goal is to get the communities and the citizens of the county involved "early, often, and throughout" the comprehensive plan process. We are including, with this letter, a fact sheet on comprehensive planning as well as "homework" to get your community's creative juices flowing. The fact sheet on the comprehensive plan can be distributed to anyone interested in the comprehensive plan process including citizens, elected officials, and personnel. The "homework" should be a relatively simple exercise that can be completed individually or in a group setting such as a council meeting.

Our aim is to meet with each participating community in the next couple of months to introduce ourselves, to get to know you all better, and answer any question you might have about the comprehensive plan process.

We want to hear from you, we take very seriously the comments provided through face-to-face interactions, open houses, and surveys. We want you and your communities to be active participants in developing the county comprehensive plan...we simply cannot do it without your help and guidance. Our motto is "it's not our plan, it's your plan" so community participation is essential.

Once we have identified all participating communities we will send each community a retainer agreement, (remember no charge for services) which outlines our scope of work and which needs to be signed by your community's designated representative.

While we are not going to claim that the comprehensive plan will make all issues disappear, it can be an important exercise for your community and other communities in McDowell to think strategically about the future of your community as well as prioritize scarce resources and identify how each of the community's goals and objectives can be met.

We look forward to moving this process forward with your help in the upcoming months!



Please do not hesitate to contact us either via email: jared.anderson@mail.wvu.edu or by phone: (304) 293-1698.

Most Sincerely,

Jared B. Anderson, AICP
Land Use Attorney

MCDOWELL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SWOT ASSIGNMENT

Strengths

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| History |
| The people |
| Versatility (many skills) |
| Natural Resources |
| Natural Beauty |
| Hunting and Fishing |
| Critical Care Hospital |
| Indian Ridge Industrial Park |
| Low property taxes |
| Low home prices |
| Vocational school (Dennis Jarvis) |
| Local musicians |

Weaknesses

| |
|-------------------------------|
| Drug addiction |
| Poverty |
| Roads |
| Lack of |
| Condition |
| County Image |
| Aging Housing Stock |
| Vacant buildings |
| Dilapidated buildings (5,000) |

| |
|---|
| 85% of County owned by outside land companies |
| Lack of entrepreneurs |
| Lack of long range planning |
| Limited cell service |
| Lack of governmental knowledge |
| Lack of local media |
| Limited/no funds for infrastructure |
| Educational system |
| Intra County Communication |
| Governing agencies |
| Young people leaving |

Opportunities

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Hatfield McCoy Trail |
| Rentals |
| Restaurants |
| Local |
| Chains |
| Hotels |
| Additional things to do |
| Agriculture |
| Public-private partnerships (roads) |
| Livestock |
| Bishop, WV |
| Eckman Industrial Park |
| King Coal/Coalfields Highway |
| Lakes/Parks |

| |
|--------------------------------|
| Relationships with Foundations |
| Broadband internet coverage |
| Regional EDAs working together |
| Post-mine land use |
| Mount View |
| Mining |
| Create diverse skills courses |
| WVU Beckley |
| Virginia Tech |

Threats

| |
|--|
| King Coal/Coalfields (if not properly developed) |
| Reduction in Tax Base (revenue) |
| Weak economy (one industry) |
| Self-image (bad) |
| Young people leaving the area |
| Non-diverse skills courses |

COMPLETED
AND RETURNED
STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

| |
|---|
| Five Loaves Two Fishes |
| Hatfield and McCoy Trails |
| Reconnecting McDowell |
| Stop the Hurt |
| Evans House Bed and Breakfast |
| Coalfields Expressway Authority |
| Big Creek People in Action |
| McDowell County Historical Association |
| Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center |
| The Community Crossing |
| McDowell County Commission on Aging |
| McDowell County Economic Development Authority |
| McDowell County Health Department |
| Mustard Seeds and Mountains, Inc. |
| Region I Planning and Development Council |
| T & T Organics |
| Berwind Land Company |
| Warrior Creek Development |
| McDowell County Assessor |
| Citizens Pharmacy |
| McDowell County Sheriff |
| McDowell County Library |

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|--|
| McDowell County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) |
| McDowell County Sportsman’s Club |
| Mountaineer Challenge Academy |
| Tug Fork River Water Trail |

MOUNT VIEW HIGH
SCHOOL VISIT

On Wednesday May 2nd, 2018, the Land Use Clinic’s Jared Anderson, Carrie Tanner, and Zach Beard along with students Claire Swauger, Evan Ferguson, and Sean Xing met with 10 students from Mount View High School in McDowell County. Below are the results of the visit.

Commissioner for the Day

Students were asked to pretend they were “Commissioner for the Day” in McDowell County and make 3 resolutions. Some general themes are as follows:

| |
|---|
| Investing more in schools |
| Finding more opportunities for jobs |
| Tear down abandoned buildings and create new homes |
| Bring in more businesses (grocery stores, department stores, restaurants, etc.) |
| Raise security measures on prescription pills to make them harder to get |
| Citizens must do community service |
| Make children go to school unless ill or have a death in the family |
| Prevent drug use |
| More police officers and patrolling |
| Improve road conditions |
| Have more activities for people to participate in (community center, sports, parks, etc.) |
| Clean up old foundations that don’t have anything on them |

Mapping Activity

This exercise required the students to split up into groups of 3 or 4. Each group had a few minutes to look over a planning region of McDowell County. They were to map the assets and challenges of the map by using sticky tabs. The groups were to write down why they felt certain areas were assets or challenges.

Assets:

| |
|---|
| Clinics in Gary and Northfork |
| laeger added a basketball court |
| Panther has a State Park, attracts tourism |
| Kimball’s War memorial |
| Kimball has the opportunity to expand and build recreational places, like basketball courts |
| Havaco has a state road headquarters |
| Berwind because of the new cabins and the lake |
| Ashland ATV resort |
| Restaurants in Northfork |
| Anawalt Lake |
| Lizard Creek – races/business brings in money and tourism |
| River View High School |
| Hospital in Welch |
| Welch helping Davy improve fire department is an opportunity |
| Welch because they have the nicest infrastructure |
| A war spot in Kimball |
| The County Seat – Welch |
| Miracle Mountain in Gary |

Challenges:

| |
|---|
| Roads, bridge, and general infrastructure in Gary |
| Water problems in Keystone |
| Buildings in Anawalt |
| Roads in Welch have gotten worse even though they are working on them |
| Bradshaw and laeger have a lot of trash |
| “Poor” local economy and people in Davy |
| Hard for anywhere else to grow if Welch does not grow either – it is an asset that the area has money, but the wealthy people don’t help. |
| Anawalt has no stores |
| Walmart closing |
| Jolo |
| Bradshaw |

Postcard to a Friend in Ten Years

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|--|
| The students envisioned what their county would look like in ten years by writing a postcard to their neighbor. Some students used it as an opportunity to think of what they would want to see and others talked about things they expect to see. General themes are summed up below. |
| New buildings and places to live, though many people moved away. Only new development in one area, so people who live across the county still have to travel a far distance to get to work and the stores. |
| The county blossomed. New businesses, roads fixed, and people moved back to the area. Still some things could be fixed, but overall a much better improvement. |
| Most young people moved away. The new bridge in Gary was finally built. Tourism is big because of the ATV trails. Still no large businesses like Walmart. |

| |
|--|
| Walmart came back and all the little communities have parks and stores of their own. Mount View now has a football field at the school. |
| The drug epidemic is out of control. |
| More rehabilitation services and parks/activities for people to do instead of drugs. |
| The county will be gone, just a ghost town. |
| Net worth of the county has improved tremendously and it is booming. Crime and drug rates have lowered, though they are still here. Unemployment went down and population went up! |
| Two-way road going through town. Got the Walmart back. New YMCA. A target came in. Cit-go bought out Exxon. |
| The county now has businesses, though the population declined a lot. Very few children left in the county. |
| Top Focus Issues Comparison |
| The last few minutes with the students was spent trying to guess what the county planning commission decided as their top critical issues, which are: infrastructure, dilapidated and abandoned buildings, economic development, land use, public safety, and declining population. The students chose the following topics: |
| 1. Coal job reliance |
| 2. Infrastructure |
| 3. Jobs |
| 4. Education |
| 5. Drug epidemic |
| 6. Dilapidated structures and housing |
| 7. Enterprise and business |

RIVER VIEW HIGH SCHOOL VISIT

On Wednesday October 17, 2018, the Land Use Clinic’s Jared Anderson, Carrie Tanner, and Zach Beard along with Kaitlyn Powers, LUSD Clinic Student, met with 19 students from River View High School in McDowell County. Below are the results of the visit.

Commissioner for the Day

Students were asked to pretend they were “Commissioner for the Day” in McDowell County and make 3 resolutions. Some general themes are as follows:

| |
|--|
| Cell phone and internet service throughout the county |
| Improve roads and have highways |
| More businesses/jobs (local businesses, factories, etc.) |
| Have more qualified teachers and more college-based courses |
| Demolish dilapidated houses and provide nicer housing |
| Social gathering spaces and leisure activities (parks, bowling, skating, gyms, etc.) |
| Counter drug and alcohol usage |
| Have stores like Target, Walmart, Sams Club, etc. |
| Clean up the water |
| More recreational opportunities besides ATV riding (kayaking, fishing, hunting, camping, horseback riding, etc.) |

Mapping Activity

There were 18 students that were divided into five groups; the largest group was six students, while the smallest group had only two students. Each group had about 15 minutes to review a county-wide map of McDowell County. The students were instructed to identify assets and challenges on the maps. The results are below; colors indicate the most common responses and parenthesis indicate the number of groups.

Assets

| |
|--|
| All of the public schools (III) |
| Anawalt – poverty |
| Anawalt Lake (II) |
| Berwind Lake - camping |
| Berwind Lake - pool (IIIII) |
| Bradshaw - Clinic |
| Bradshaw – Sunaco Store |
| Coal mines – (III) |
| County wide – Drugs, poverty |
| Gary – Golf course |
| Gary – Nursing home (II) |
| laeger – Basketball court (III) |
| laeger – Railroad |
| laeger - Bank |
| Kimball – Railroad yard |
| Miracle Mountain Wilderness Park |
| Northfork – Trails |
| Panther State Forest – Leisure activities, pool, 4-h camp, not drug-stricken (IIIII) |
| River View High School |
| Roderfield Car dealership, gas station |
| Tug Fork WMA |
| War – park (III) |
| War – stores, Trails |
| Welch - courthouse (II) |
| Welch - movie theater (II) |
| Welch - pool and park (II) |

| |
|--|
| Welch - prison |
| Welch - hospital (IIII) |
| Wilmore Hollow Trail |
| <i>Challenges</i> |
| Anawalt – Vacant |
| Bad Roads (IIII) |
| Bradshaw – drugs and prostitution |
| Coonbranch – Poor internet service |
| Davy – Run-down housing (II) |
| Gary nursing home – in poor condition |
| laeger – Run-down buildings, no businesses |
| Keystone and Northfork – Unsafe neighborhoods, gangs, criminal activity (IIII) |
| Kimball – store closings |
| Panther State Forest – Bad roads, unsafe, no money |
| School consolidation and closings |
| Tug River and Elkhorn pollution (II) |
| Wal-Mart closing (II) |
| War – Drugs |
| War – River road is in poor condition |
| War – Vacant buildings (III) |
| Welch – drugs and crime (II) |
| Welch – Loss of hospital funding; businesses running down |
| Welch – store closings (II) |
| Welch hospital – unsafe, not enough workers, no OBGYN |

Postcard in 10-15 Years

The students envisioned what their county would look like in ten years by writing a postcard to their neighbor. Some students used it as an opportunity to think of what they would want to see and others talked about things they expect to see. General themes are summed up below.

Tourism is big in the county

More stores came in that sell clothes, groceries, health foods

Population is still declining

People with addictions are being helped

Economy is booming

Education has greatly improved

Public transit buses

High schools consolidated

Most people left for better opportunities

Top Focus Issues Comparison and Wrap-Up

The last few minutes with the students was spent trying to guess what the county planning commission decided as their top critical issues, which are: infrastructure, dilapidated and abandoned buildings, economic development, land use, public safety, and declining population. The students chose some of the following topics:

Drug abuse

Roads

Sewer/Water

Housing (abandoned and dilapidated)

Population

Jobs

Student Comment:

-Don't want there to be too much change to where the county is no longer "home."

PRESS RELEASE

Contact:
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Land Use and Sustainable
Development Law Clinic
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jared.anderson@mail.wvu.edu

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

MCDOWELL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TO COMPLETE SURVEY

The McDowell County Planning Commission is developing a comprehensive plan and is seeking public input. The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to identify issues and concerns of residents that are affecting the quality of life for those that live and work in McDowell County. The plan will include a detailed action plan outlining specific steps that the County government and other partners can take to address the identified issues. The plan will also be the foundation for future growth and development in McDowell County.

Citizen input is a vital part of the planning process. Therefore, a survey has been created to solicit input from the general public. The survey is designed to only take a few minutes to complete and will help the Planning Commission and local elected officials identify issues and concerns in McDowell County. This information is vital in helping define the future of McDowell County and what actions the county should take in order for it to prosper.

The survey can be found online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/McDowellCountyCompPlan>. Hard copies of the survey are available at the McDowell County Commission office and the McDowell Public Library in Welch.

For more information, please contact Jared Anderson, Supporting Land Use Attorney, at the West Virginia University Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at (304) 293-1698 or jared.anderson@mail.wvu.edu.

*****END*****

150

McDowell County Comprehensive Plan — 151

Copy of McDowell County County Comprehensive Plan

McDowell County and several municipalities in McDowell are developing a countywide comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan tries to identify the needs of the county and then provide recommendations that address those needs. Public input is a vital part of the comprehensive planning process and plays a central role in developing a comprehensive plan.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan Survey. Due to limited space, the answer sections are limited in size. Please only complete one survey per person. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate!

1. How do you feel about the overall quality of life in McDowell County?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

2. Please rate your level of satisfaction for each of the following:

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Availability of recreation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fire protection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Police protection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Public school system | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Library services | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Arts/culture | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pedestrian Safety | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Infrastructure (water/sewer) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Enforcement of ordinances | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Housing options | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sidewalks | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Road conditions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Visual appearance of McDowell County | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Getting information about County events and matters | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of retail | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of grocers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Agriculture/access to locally sourced products and foods | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic circulation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Public transportation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Emergency management | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Activities for senior citizens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stormwater management | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Promotion of the County | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Recycling | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Activities for youth | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Historic preservation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Local leadership | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. Of the things listed above, what is the one thing that you believe is MOST important for McDowell County to improve?

- ☐ Availability of recreation
- ☐ Fire protection
- ☐ Police protection
- ☐ Public school system
- ☐ Library services
- ☐ Job opportunities
- ☐ Arts/culture
- ☐ Pedestrian Safety
- ☐ Infrastructure (water/sewer)

- ☐ Enforcement of ordinances
- ☐ Housing options
- ☐ Sidewalks
- ☐ Road condition
- ☐ Visual appearance of McDowell County
- ☐ Getting information about County events and matters
- ☐ Availability of retail
- ☐ Availability of grocers
- ☐ Agriculture/access to locally sourced products and foods
- ☐ Traffic circulation
- ☐ Public transportation
- ☐ Emergency management
- ☐ Activities for senior citizens
- ☐ Stormwater management
- ☐ Promotion of the County
- ☐ Recycling
- ☐ Activities for youth
- ☐ Historic preservation
- ☐ Local leadership
- ☐ Overall effectiveness of county government

Other (please specify)

4. What type of new development would you like to see in McDowell County? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Single family residential
- ☐ Multi-family residential (includes townhouses, condos, and apartments)
- ☐ Commercial (retail, restaurants, offices, banks, etc.)
- ☐ Industrial (manufacturing, processing, warehouses, factories, etc.)
- ☐ No new development
- ☐ Focus on redevelopment of existing development

5. Where in the county should new development or redevelopment occur?

6. What would you like to see more of in McDowell County in the next 10-15 years? Please pick your top two choices.

- ☐ Open space and farmland
- ☐ Parks and recreational facilities
- ☐ A greater variety of housing options
- ☐ New retail shops
- ☐ Additional restaurants
- ☐ Grocery stores
- ☐ Farmer's markets
- ☐ Revitalization of downtowns
- ☐ Walkable/bikeable communities
- ☐ More transportation options/new highways
- ☐ Higher quality employment opportunities
- ☐ Lowered drug usage
- ☐ Updated infrastructure/new infrastructure
- ☐ Removal of blighted structures and rubbish
- ☐ Tourism opportunities
- ☐ Other (please specify)

7. What is your opinion about the recreation provided in McDowell County? Please answer yes or no.

| | Yes or No |
|---|-------------|
| There are enough recreational facilities for families | <div></div> |
| There are enough programs and facilities for teens and children | <div></div> |
| There are enough programs and facilities for senior citizens | <div></div> |
| The facilities are adequately maintained | <div></div> |
| More park space and facilities are needed | <div></div> |

8. What is your opinion about tourism opportunities in McDowell County? Please answer yes or no.

| | Yes or No |
|--|-------------|
| There are enough tourist attractions | <div></div> |
| There are other tourism opportunities (besides ATV trail riding) | <div></div> |
| There is adequate lodging for tourists | <div></div> |
| There are enough activities and attractions for families | <div></div> |
| More dining options are needed | <div></div> |
| More retail shops are needed | <div></div> |
| Better marketing of attractions is necessary | <div></div> |
| Tourism is only benefiting certain parts of the county | <div></div> |
| There is adequate signage for attractions | <div></div> |

9. Name one strength of McDowell County

10. Do you have any additional comments regarding McDowell County?

Copy of McDowell County County Comprehensive Plan

Optional Questions

11. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18 years
- ☐ 18-24 years
- ☐ 25-34 years
- ☐ 35-44 years
- ☐ 45-54 years
- ☐ 55-64 years
- ☐ 65 years and older

12. Do you live in McDowell County?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Where, if applicable, do you live in McDowell County?

- ☐ Anawalt
- ☐ Bradshaw
- ☐ Davy
- ☐ Gary
- ☐ laeger
- ☐ Keystone
- ☐ Kimball
- ☐ Northfork
- ☐ War
- ☐ Welch

Other (please specify)

14. How long have you been a resident of McDowell County?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11 or more years

15. Did you attend a Comprehensive Planning Open House the week of July 9th, 2018?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

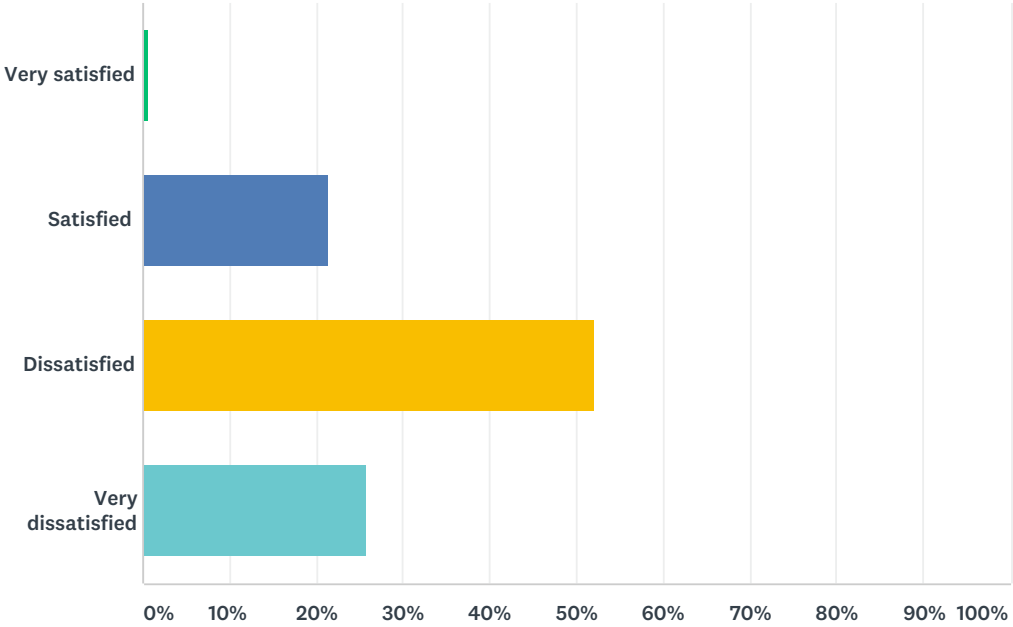
If no, why?

16. Please provide your email address if you wish to receive a monthly newsletter with updates on the comprehensive plan.

Thank you for participating in the survey. The information provided will help inform the McDowell County Planning Commission in preparing a comprehensive plan draft.

Q1 How do you feel about the overall quality of life in McDowell County?

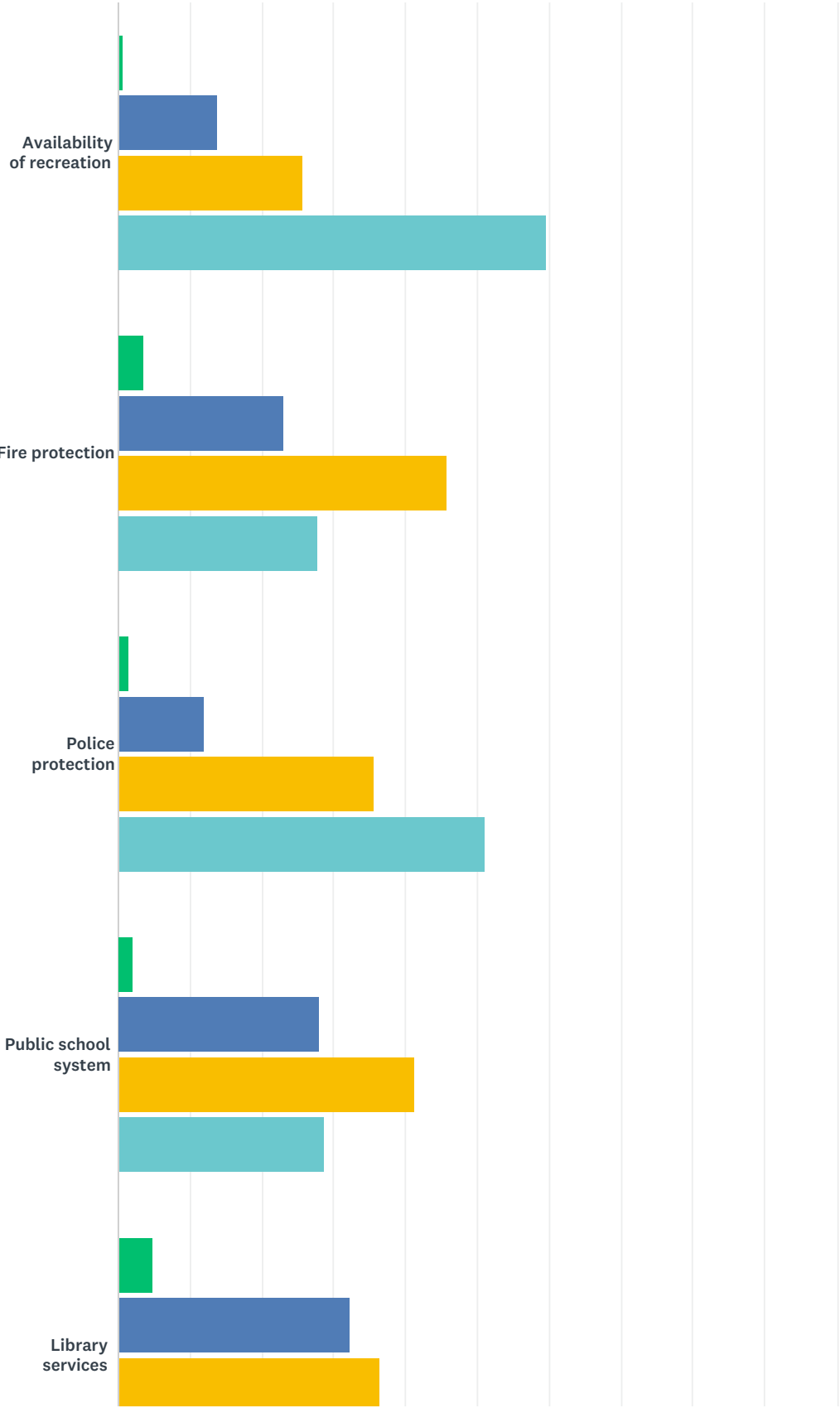
Answered: 140 Skipped: 4

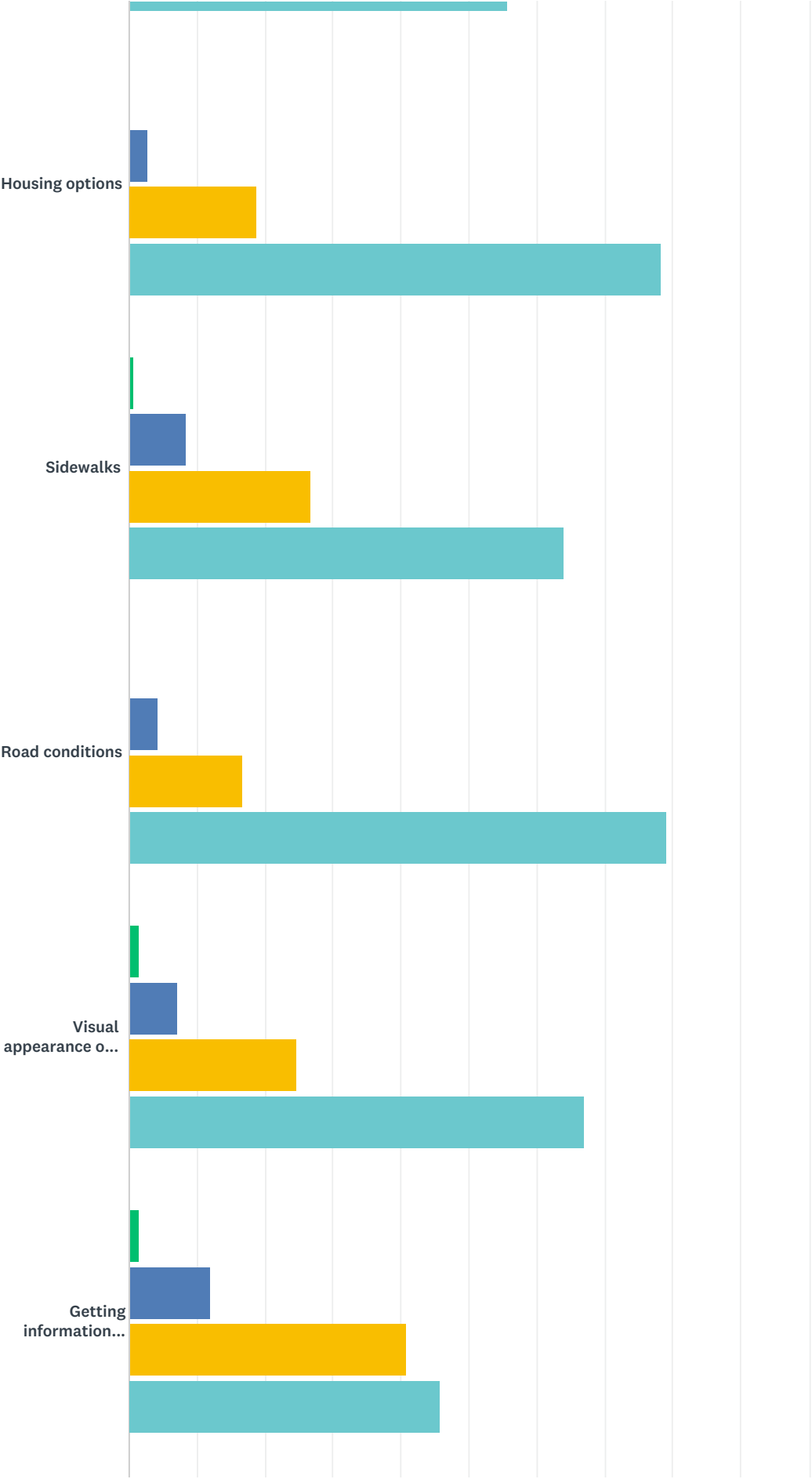
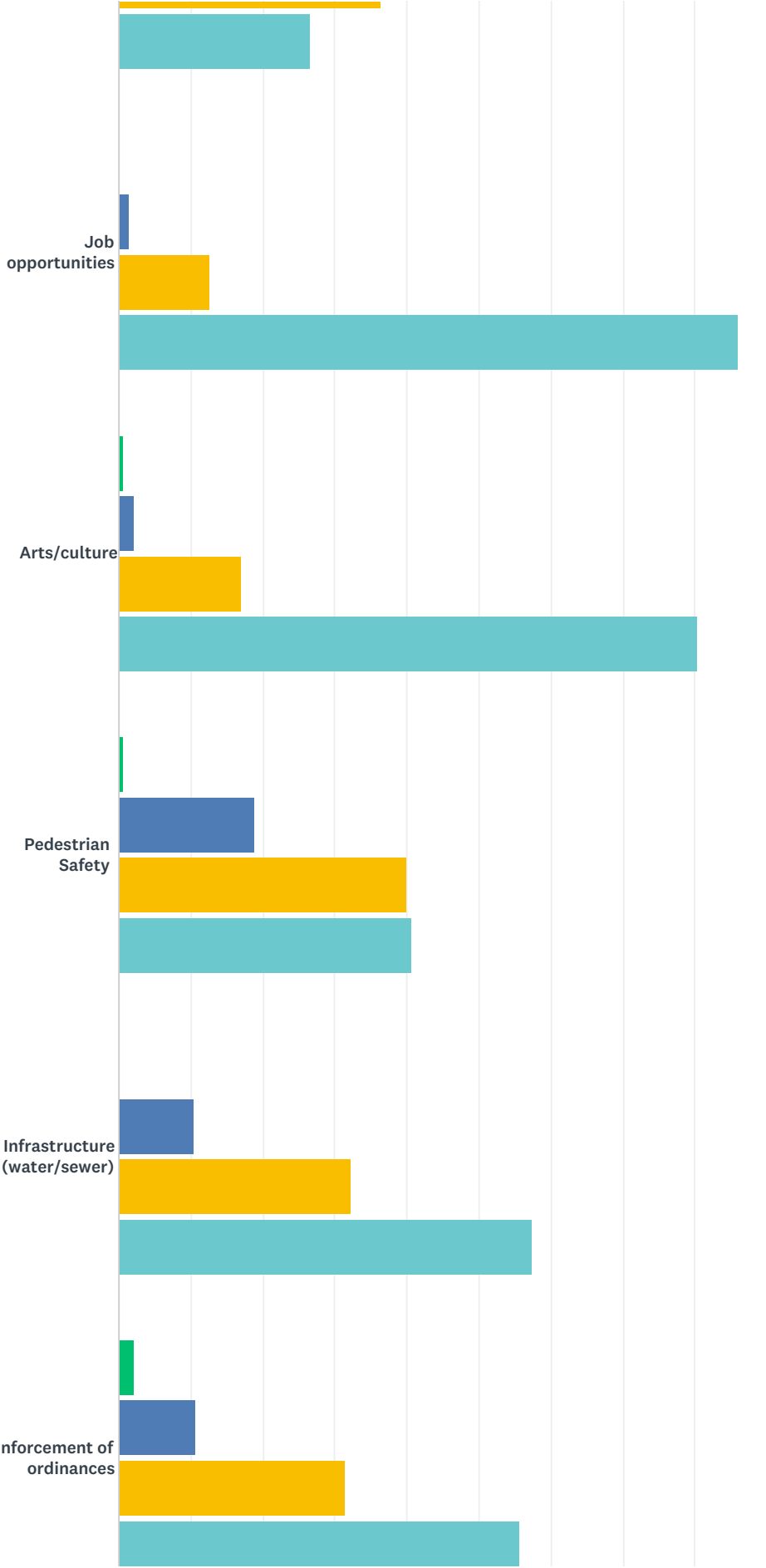


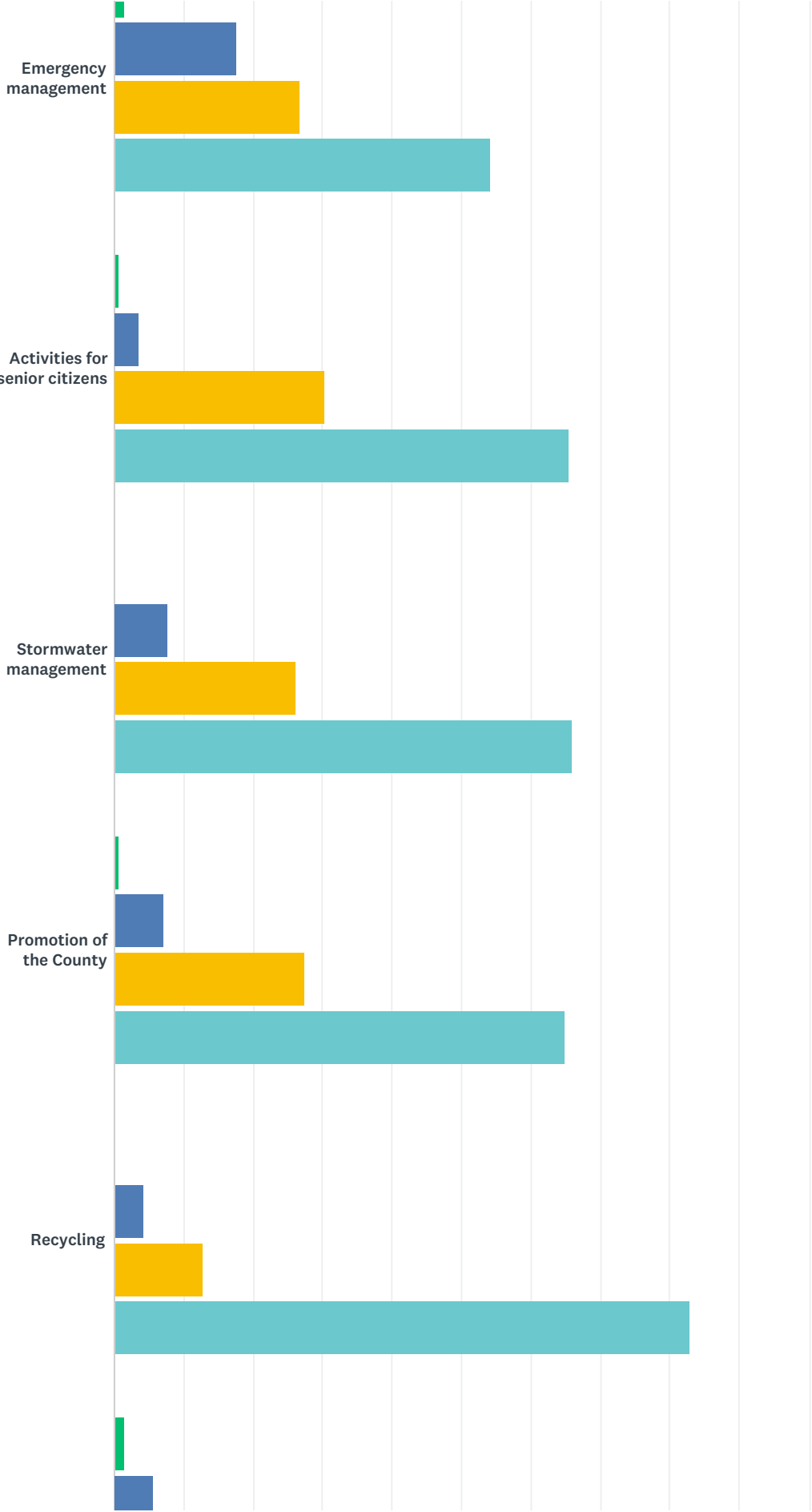
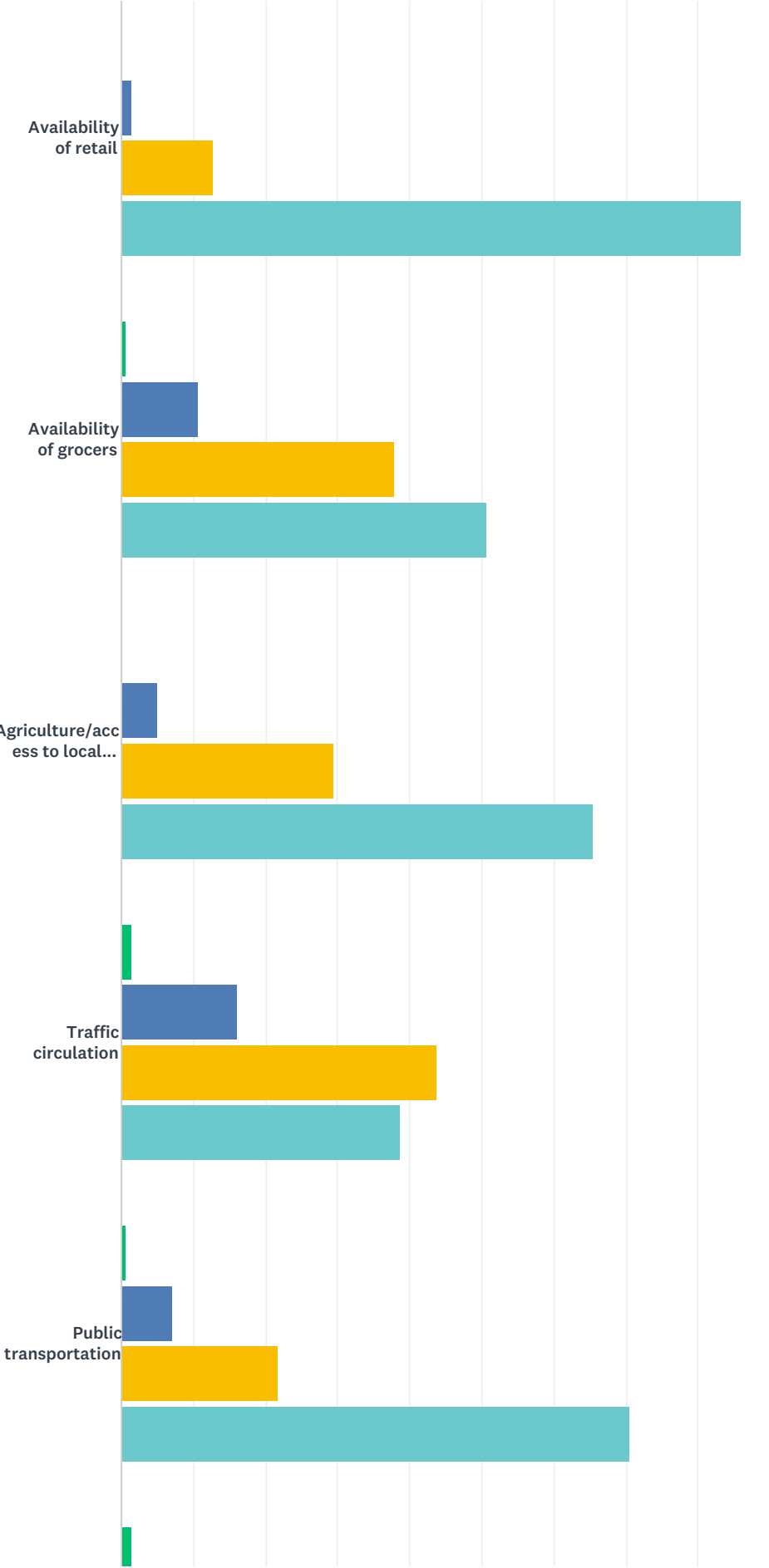
| ANSWER CHOICES | | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|-----|
| Very satisfied | | 0.71% | 1 |
| Satisfied | | 21.43% | 30 |
| Dissatisfied | | 52.14% | 73 |
| Very dissatisfied | | 25.71% | 36 |
| TOTAL | | | 140 |

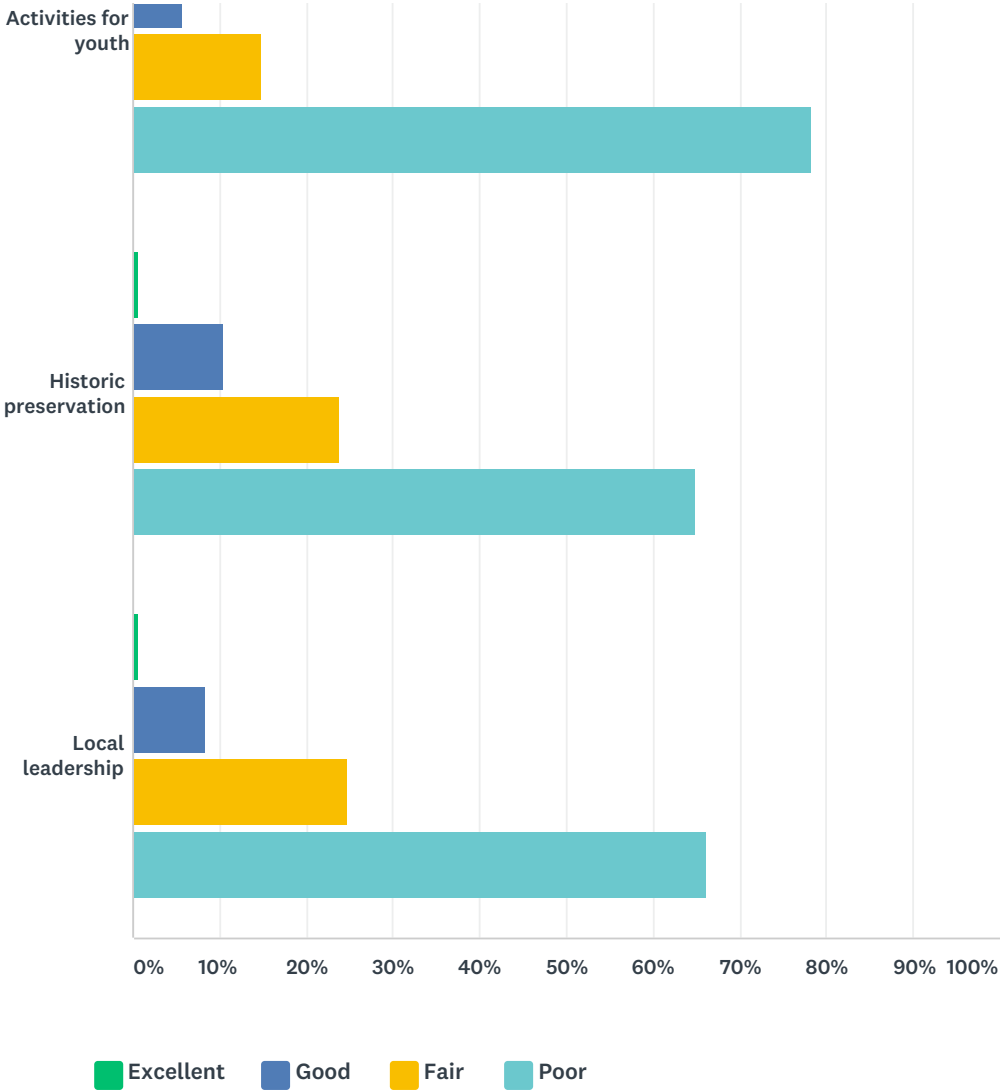
Q2 Please rate your level of satisfaction for each of the following:

Answered: 144 Skipped: 0







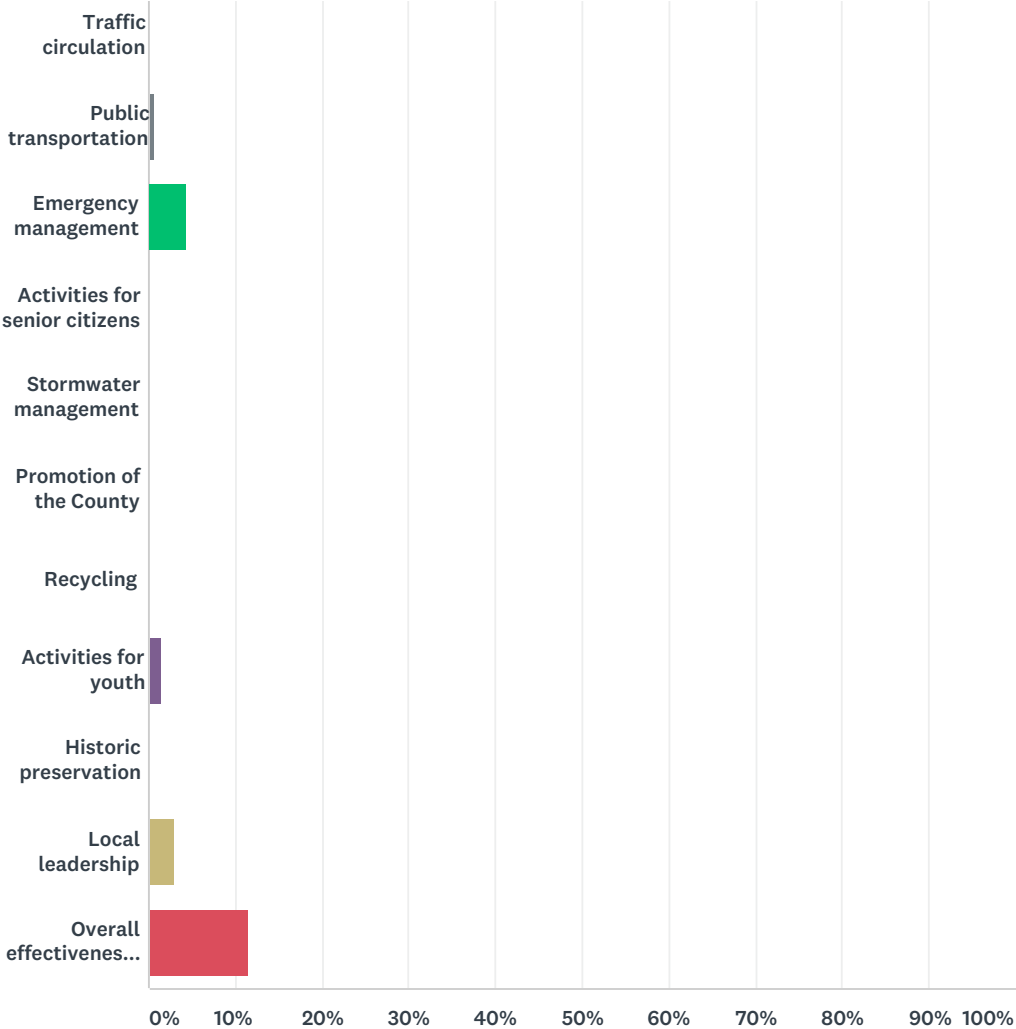


| | EXCELLENT | GOOD | FAIR | POOR | TOTAL |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| Availability of recreation | 0.69% 1 | 13.89% 20 | 25.69% 37 | 59.72% 86 | 144 |
| Fire protection | 3.47% 5 | 22.92% 33 | 45.83% 66 | 27.78% 40 | 144 |
| Police protection | 1.40% 2 | 11.89% 17 | 35.66% 51 | 51.05% 73 | 143 |
| Public school system | 2.10% 3 | 27.97% 40 | 41.26% 59 | 28.67% 41 | 143 |
| Library services | 4.90% 7 | 32.17% 46 | 36.36% 52 | 26.57% 38 | 143 |
| Job opportunities | 0.00% 0 | 1.40% 2 | 12.59% 18 | 86.01% 123 | 143 |
| Arts/culture | 0.70% 1 | 2.11% 3 | 16.90% 24 | 80.28% 114 | 142 |
| Pedestrian Safety | 0.70% 1 | 18.88% 27 | 39.86% 57 | 40.56% 58 | 143 |
| Infrastructure (water/sewer) | 0.00% 0 | 10.49% 15 | 32.17% 46 | 57.34% 82 | 143 |

| | | | | | |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-----|
| Enforcement of ordinances | 2.14% 3 | 10.71% 15 | 31.43% 44 | 55.71% 78 | 140 |
| Housing options | 0.00% 0 | 2.80% 4 | 18.88% 27 | 78.32% 112 | 143 |
| Sidewalks | 0.70% 1 | 8.45% 12 | 26.76% 38 | 64.08% 91 | 142 |
| Road conditions | 0.00% 0 | 4.20% 6 | 16.78% 24 | 79.02% 113 | 143 |
| Visual appearance of McDowell County | 1.41% 2 | 7.04% 10 | 24.65% 35 | 66.90% 95 | 142 |
| Getting information about County events and matters | 1.41% 2 | 11.97% 17 | 40.85% 58 | 45.77% 65 | 142 |
| Availability of retail | 0.00% 0 | 1.41% 2 | 12.68% 18 | 85.92% 122 | 142 |
| Availability of grocers | 0.71% 1 | 10.71% 15 | 37.86% 53 | 50.71% 71 | 140 |
| Agriculture/access to locally sourced products and foods | 0.00% 0 | 4.93% 7 | 29.58% 42 | 65.49% 93 | 142 |
| Traffic circulation | 1.41% 2 | 16.20% 23 | 43.66% 62 | 38.73% 55 | 142 |
| Public transportation | 0.70% 1 | 7.04% 10 | 21.83% 31 | 70.42% 100 | 142 |
| Emergency management | 1.41% 2 | 17.61% 25 | 26.76% 38 | 54.23% 77 | 142 |
| Activities for senior citizens | 0.70% 1 | 3.52% 5 | 30.28% 43 | 65.49% 93 | 142 |
| Stormwater management | 0.00% 0 | 7.80% 11 | 26.24% 37 | 65.96% 93 | 141 |
| Promotion of the County | 0.70% 1 | 7.04% 10 | 27.46% 39 | 64.79% 92 | 142 |
| Recycling | 0.00% 0 | 4.29% 6 | 12.86% 18 | 82.86% 116 | 140 |
| Activities for youth | 1.41% 2 | 5.63% 8 | 14.79% 21 | 78.17% 111 | 142 |
| Historic preservation | 0.70% 1 | 10.56% 15 | 23.94% 34 | 64.79% 92 | 142 |
| Local leadership | 0.70% 1 | 8.45% 12 | 24.65% 35 | 66.20% 94 | 142 |

Q3 Of the things listed above, what is the one thing that you believe is MOST important for McDowell County to improve?

Answered: 138 Skipped: 6

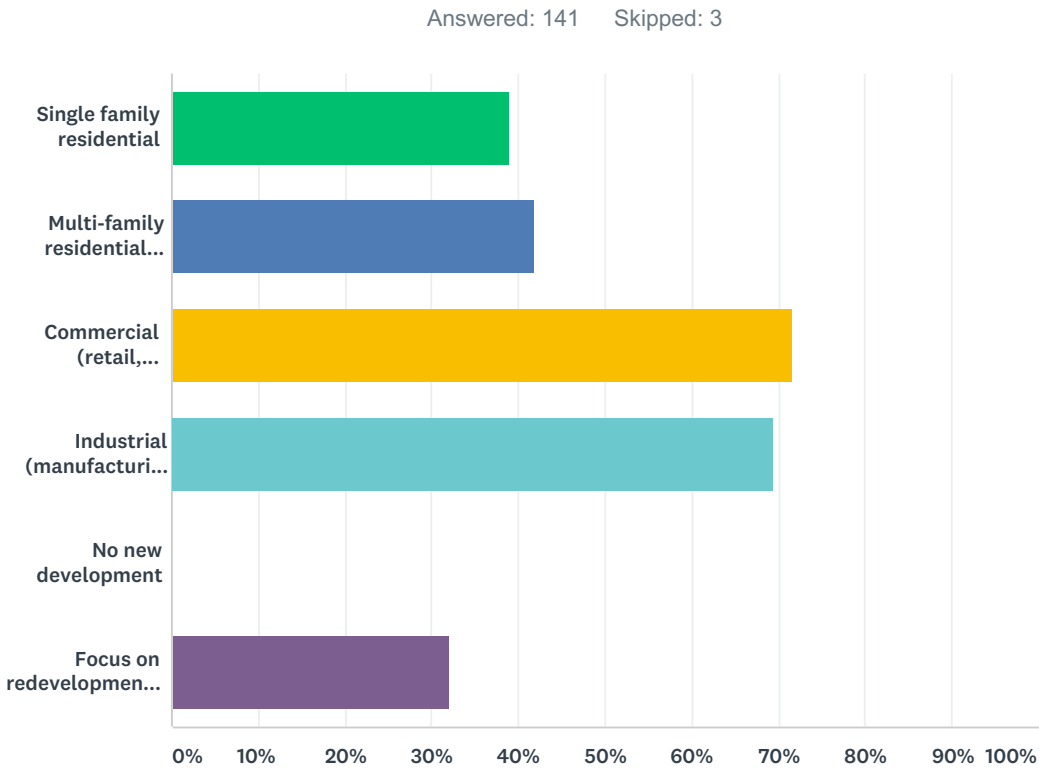


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|------------------------------|-----------|----|
| Availability of recreation | 1.45% | 2 |
| Fire protection | 0.72% | 1 |
| Police protection | 3.62% | 5 |
| Public school system | 5.80% | 8 |
| Library services | 0.72% | 1 |
| Job opportunities | 36.96% | 51 |
| Arts/culture | 0.00% | 0 |
| Pedestrian Safety | 0.00% | 0 |
| Infrastructure (water/sewer) | 6.52% | 9 |
| Enforcement of ordinances | 0.00% | 0 |
| Housing options | 4.35% | 6 |
| Sidewalks | 0.00% | 0 |
| Road condition | 10.14% | 14 |

| | | |
|--|--------|-----|
| Visual appearance of McDowell County | 0.72% | 1 |
| Getting information about County events and matters | 0.00% | 0 |
| Availability of retail | 7.25% | 10 |
| Availability of grocers | 0.72% | 1 |
| Agriculture/access to locally sourced products and foods | 0.00% | 0 |
| Traffic circulation | 0.00% | 0 |
| Public transportation | 0.72% | 1 |
| Emergency management | 4.35% | 6 |
| Activities for senior citizens | 0.00% | 0 |
| Stormwater management | 0.00% | 0 |
| Promotion of the County | 0.00% | 0 |
| Recycling | 0.00% | 0 |
| Activities for youth | 1.45% | 2 |
| Historic preservation | 0.00% | 0 |
| Local leadership | 2.90% | 4 |
| Overall effectiveness of county government | 11.59% | 16 |
| TOTAL | | 138 |

| # | OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) | DATE |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Too many to pick from, literally. | 10/8/2018 7:47 PM |
| 2 | jobs with good government management or tax revenue will lead to improvement of everything else | 10/8/2018 1:43 PM |
| 3 | An improvment of infastructure (roads, etc.) would present job opportunities within itself. | 10/8/2018 10:01 AM |
| 4 | Highway in and out of the county | 10/8/2018 10:00 AM |
| 5 | I think our County officials need to do for our county, and not themselves! | 9/16/2018 11:20 AM |
| 6 | I can't just name one thing. The whole county needs help. Esp., the government | 9/15/2018 11:22 PM |
| 7 | All of it | 9/15/2018 11:34 AM |
| 8 | Cell phone service in all of McDowell!!!! | 9/15/2018 11:22 AM |
| 9 | Should have more focus toward tourism and access to rivers and trail systems and build businesses in areas that are desolate of them like laeger, Bradshaw,Davy Roderfeild like sourcing the use of landmarks like Wilmer dam and making it as nice as Berwin | 9/15/2018 11:19 AM |
| 10 | Something needs to be done about the opioid crisis. Drug deals are literally going on in town in front yards and nobody even blinks! | 9/14/2018 6:59 AM |
| 11 | All of the above | 9/13/2018 7:42 PM |

Q4 What type of new development would you like to see in McDowell County? Please check all that apply.



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--|-----------|-----|
| Single family residential | 39.01% | 55 |
| Multi-family residential (includes townhouses, condos, and apartments) | 41.84% | 59 |
| Commercial (retail, restaurants, offices, banks, etc.) | 71.63% | 101 |
| Industrial (manufacturing, processing, warehouses, factories, etc.) | 69.50% | 98 |
| No new development | 0.00% | 0 |
| Focus on redevelopment of existing development | 31.91% | 45 |
| Total Respondents: 141 | | |

Q5 Where in the county should new development or redevelopment occur?

Answered: 108 Skipped: 36

| # | RESPONSES | DATE |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 1 | laeger, Bradshaw, War, Welch... Whatever is beneficial for the whole county | 10/22/2018 4:18 PM |
| 2 | The major towns throughout the county | 10/22/2018 4:14 PM |
| 3 | laeger | 10/22/2018 4:10 PM |
| 4 | Welch, Bradshaw, Panther | 10/22/2018 4:03 PM |
| 5 | Coal mines, lumber, parks | 10/22/2018 4:00 PM |
| 6 | All major towns and cities | 10/22/2018 2:36 PM |
| 7 | laeger, Welch, Panther | 10/22/2018 2:33 PM |
| 8 | Everywhere | 10/22/2018 2:29 PM |
| 9 | Everywhere | 10/22/2018 2:26 PM |
| 10 | Welch | 10/22/2018 2:12 PM |
| 11 | laeger/Panther | 10/22/2018 2:09 PM |
| 12 | Everywhere | 10/22/2018 2:06 PM |
| 13 | Everywhere | 10/22/2018 2:03 PM |
| 14 | English | 10/22/2018 1:59 PM |
| 15 | laeger | 10/22/2018 1:56 PM |
| 16 | laeger, Welch, War | 10/22/2018 1:53 PM |
| 17 | Everywhere. 1. Anawalt 2.Welch 3. Bradshaw | 10/22/2018 1:46 PM |
| 18 | Bradshaw | 10/22/2018 1:42 PM |
| 19 | In vacant spaces within town limits- | 10/13/2018 1:42 AM |
| 20 | Everywhere. Anywhere? | 10/8/2018 7:47 PM |
| 21 | multiple sites : Bradshaw and Welch first that way most people are within 30 min drive otherwise you leave 1/2 county an hour away from new development and continuing to be closer to things outside the county | 10/8/2018 1:43 PM |
| 22 | Bradshaw WV and Welch WV, where the two high schools are located | 10/8/2018 10:28 AM |
| 23 | War is developing currently. An emphasis should be placed on this area and use it as a vehicle to promote positivity and development. Also, Welch is moving forward. Bradshaw, with River View High School now in town, is light years behind what a town should provide for its citizens AND the school. It needs resources, housing, and jobs. | 10/8/2018 10:01 AM |
| 24 | New highway in and out of the county | 10/8/2018 10:00 AM |
| 25 | War, Bradshaw, Welch, etc | 10/8/2018 9:54 AM |
| 26 | Welch, War, Bradshaw, laeger | 10/8/2018 9:46 AM |
| 27 | Bradshaw WV | 9/23/2018 10:32 PM |
| 28 | Anywhere | 9/23/2018 2:03 PM |
| 29 | Any place in the County just need more of everything. This County is the poorest of any County in West Virginia. This County gets quiet a few grants but we never see a change done to nothing to make it a better place. | 9/23/2018 2:11 AM |

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 30 | All cities and towns need development in all areas of the county equally. | 9/22/2018 10:29 PM |
| 31 | All over! Not just in Welch! | 9/22/2018 5:19 PM |
| 32 | Living in the Bradshaw area all my life I witnessed the lower portion of the county always being neglected...according to WV Mine Safety website, McDowell produces more coal than any other WV county. So development should start with where did our severance tax dollars go. Being close to the Va state line could steer business here with better roads. ATV roads are not always desirable to some ...looking at the location of Bradshaw you see 3 roads coming in...from Welch, McDowell County seat rt 52 then rt 80, 23 miles...from the Va state line area it is 24 miles from Buchanan county seat Grundy Va, .. coming from Va stateline in another direction,Tazewell County seat, Tazewell, Va is a 37 mile trip to Bradshaw...32 miles from Richlands Va in another directions....EVERYONE here takes one of these roads daily to spend their money for EVERYTHING in those locations....if there were any attractions...restaurants, entertainment, activities or businesses be it food, adventures or manufacturing people would travel those roads here and venture on thru this county | 9/22/2018 12:53 PM |
| 33 | Welch, laeger, Bradshaw. | 9/22/2018 11:56 AM |
| 34 | New development should be primarily driven by tourism. | 9/20/2018 1:03 AM |
| 35 | Along U.S. Route 52 and near the future location of the King Coal Highway and Coalfields Expressway. | 9/19/2018 3:36 PM |
| 36 | At major highway areas for easier access | 9/19/2018 9:31 AM |
| 37 | in the Bradshaw area | 9/19/2018 6:37 AM |
| 38 | Not really sure about that part of it | 9/18/2018 9:25 PM |
| 39 | McDowell county | 9/18/2018 5:23 PM |
| 40 | Anywhere. All of our towns are struggling. | 9/18/2018 2:13 PM |
| 41 | Everwhere in count needs roads repaired, jobs ,cell phone tower | 9/17/2018 5:00 PM |
| 42 | small, unrecognized towns | 9/16/2018 8:34 PM |
| 43 | On art 80 | 9/16/2018 7:32 PM |
| 44 | Anywhere | 9/16/2018 7:04 PM |
| 45 | All over sharing the love | 9/16/2018 4:29 PM |
| 46 | Welch | 9/16/2018 2:58 PM |
| 47 | Any where in the county could be used for this. Abandoned properties, old homes can be torn down and the land hsed for stores. I also think the different county and town officials need to let more businesses come into the county rather than turning them away! | 9/16/2018 11:20 AM |
| 48 | Welch since it is the county seat and centrally located | 9/16/2018 12:54 AM |
| 49 | Bradshaw | 9/16/2018 12:23 AM |
| 50 | laeger needs a new place to call downtown. Welch downtown needs work too. P | 9/16/2018 12:20 AM |
| 51 | Within in the buildings that are already available. | 9/16/2018 12:06 AM |
| 52 | Jol, Bradshaw, laeger | 9/15/2018 11:50 PM |
| 53 | Welch | 9/15/2018 11:40 PM |
| 54 | Bradshaw, laeger, Raysal | 9/15/2018 11:22 PM |
| 55 | In all areas of the county, where relevant | 9/15/2018 9:29 PM |
| 56 | Throughout McDowell Co | 9/15/2018 9:26 PM |
| 57 | ELKHORN CREEK TO TUG. A WORLD CLASS TROUT STREAM IN THE HEART OF ATV TOURISM. DEVELOPE AND CLEAN, CLEAN CLEAN CLEAN DEVELOPE PROMOTE | 9/15/2018 2:08 PM |
| 58 | War Welch area | 9/15/2018 1:14 PM |
| 59 | In Bradshaw, laeger, And War. | 9/15/2018 11:22 AM |
| 60 | laeger, Bradshaw, Panther | 9/15/2018 11:19 AM |

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 61 | War or Welch | 9/15/2018 10:11 AM |
| 62 | Bradshaw | 9/15/2018 9:32 AM |
| 63 | All the county | 9/15/2018 9:26 AM |
| 64 | Where ever we just need jobs | 9/15/2018 9:18 AM |
| 65 | Most happens in Welch and surrounding area so any where but there. | 9/15/2018 9:10 AM |
| 66 | McDowell County not just Welch or in the upper state | 9/15/2018 9:07 AM |
| 67 | Bradshaw and surrounding areas | 9/15/2018 8:54 AM |
| 68 | Bradshaw | 9/15/2018 8:30 AM |
| 69 | Entire county | 9/15/2018 8:17 AM |
| 70 | The whole county. There is more to the County than Welch.. | 9/15/2018 7:40 AM |
| 71 | Get all areas of the county connected to the hatfield mccoey atv system. | 9/15/2018 7:26 AM |
| 72 | In every district | 9/15/2018 7:09 AM |

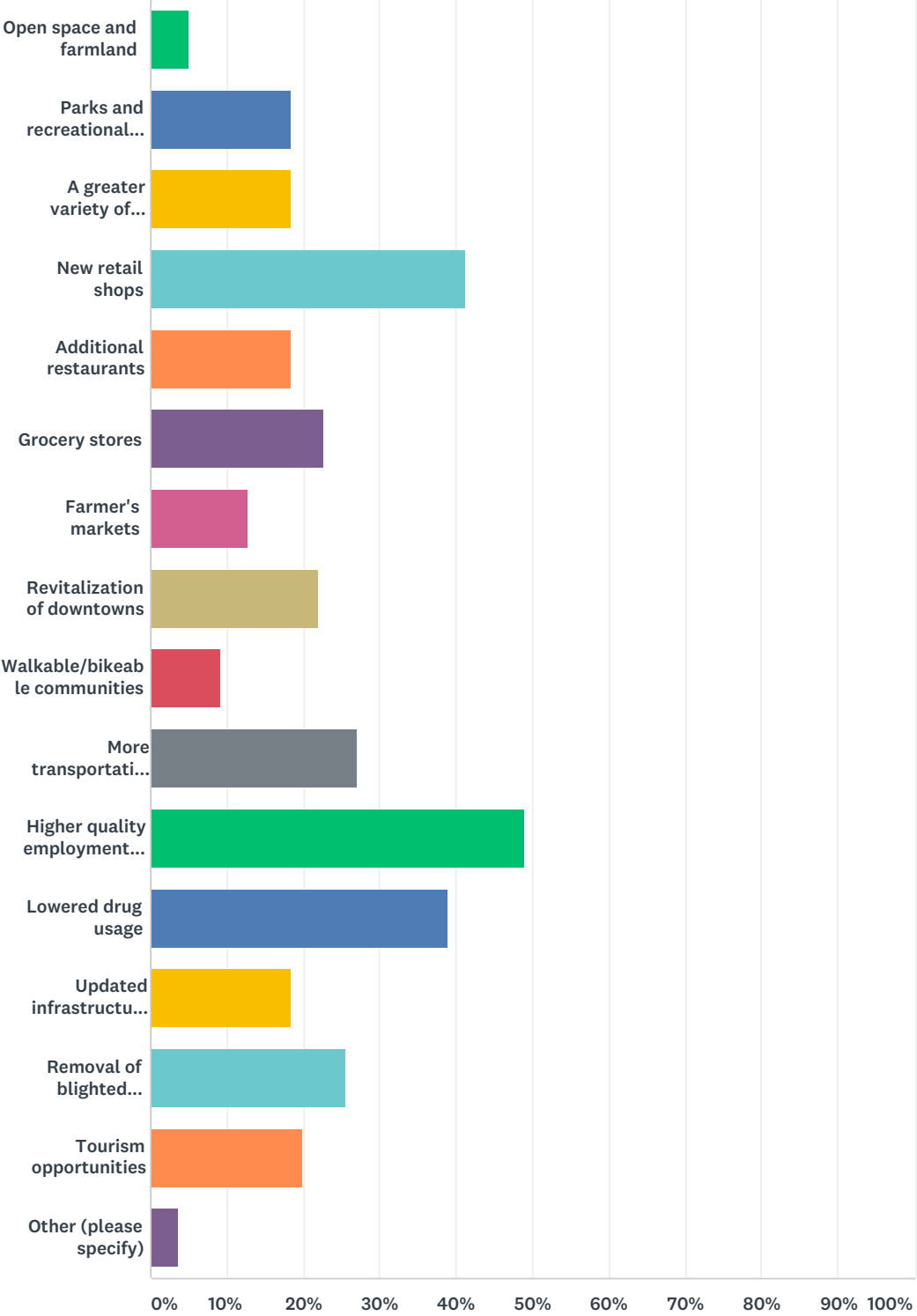
| | | |
|----|---|-------------------|
| 73 | <p>Northfork needs a grocery store. It is 30 minutes from Goodson's, about as close as Bluewell Kroger (where McDowell customers pay Mercer County sales tax). Goodson's recently bought Magic Mart building just to keep out competition. Prices have been going up since Walmart closed. We need Walmart back or a Dollar General Plus offering groceries and department store products. Or a Roses and portion of the building for a grocer. Northfork's recently closed "Trail's Inn" was originally built as a GM dealership. GM awards grants in the millions of dollars; health and community development are 2 of the 4 focus areas. I think it should be a fitness center and/or mixed-use community center. I made my team aware of this when the 2nd most powerful man in the state (Bill Cole) owned a GM dealership not 20 minutes away and I worked at WVU CPASS but no one cared (typical for anything WVU does in Southern WV). Gov. Jim Justice wants to restore the Northfork High School Blue Demons Gym, which is a stone's throw away from the Trails Inn building. He's said he wants to do something big for McDowell. All of downtown laeger needs help. My idea 3 years ago was a "WVU-Marshall-other-WV-Higher-Ed" (with welcomed partnership from the much closer Virginia Tech and other out-of-state universities) "Rural Innovation Center," which would include lots of international students throughout the year. McDowell County became a melting pot of hard-working immigrants 100 years ago. Downtown laeger is a 30-minute drive to Bradshaw, War, Welch, Gary, & Kimball, and a less than 15-minute drive to Wyoming and Mingo counties and with the Coalfields Expressway/Coal Heritage Highway complete, would be a 30-minute drive to Williamson, Logan, Pineville, Beckley, & Bluefield. Take a look at the available real estate in downtown laeger and one will find there is probably ample space for at least 500-1000 people, classroom, office, lab, etc space. I think the governor's office, NASA, Cambridge, Oxford & many other institutions would be very interested as well. Is anyone talking to the Tyson family to find out their SWOT about developing downtown Welch? That family owns the majority of the real estate in downtown Welch and it is all empty. John Derek Tyson works for The Welch News and I believe would be open to discussion. Hoppy who owns the Bantam Market/Subway in Welch and the Bantam Market in Gary has a long history of purchasing any available real estate for the sole purpose of keeping it closed to keep out competition. Tudor's wanted the old Hardee's building in Welch but Hoppy blocked it. I'm sure there are many other examples. When he dies, his daughter will continue this practice for the next 50+ years. If you see an empty, dilapidated commercial real estate building in McDowell County, he probably already owns it. Long John Silvers closes this winter and he will probably buy that too. We need a laundromat. I think there is an individual wanting to do this at the old Pizza Hut building in Welch but not sure. Panther Forest needs stores and lodging for visitors coming to see Elk. There are also wild horses there. We need a sign ordinance. All over the county there are signs still standing for businesses that have been gone for years. Sometimes there are multiple signs for more than one business and all have already left. I think this is very confusing for visitors and an eyesore for residents. The TCBY sign near Coney Island is still there and that business left over 25 years ago. There's a doctor's office in Welch that doesn't even have a sign. The Jack Caffrey Arts Center opening/operation is a (Donald Trump voice) "total disaster." None of the board members have any relevant art experience and some of them are racist and are giving the arts center a terribly bad name. I knew Jack Caffrey personally and he asked me to use my position at WVU to help the county. This is terrible. Some of the eastern and all of the western parts of the county need cell towers. Airport Road was recently renamed Belcher Mountain Road, erasing the fact that Welch ever had an airport. I think this is going in the wrong direction. An airport of any size would encourage more traffic from high net worth individuals who are willing to invest and take risks, like restoring the grand hotel in Welch (Ken Allman of Hinton is already restoring the one there). It's hard to guess how much money comes in on a day-to-day basis, but I can tell you that an individual bought a \$20,000 side-by-side ATV for the Northfork Fire Department the day he learned it didn't have one. I know a lady in War who knows people willing to pay \$1 million plus for homes along River Road. From the top ridges of McDowell's tallest mountain, Bradshaw Mountain, one can see East River Mountain (the WV/VA state border), some 70 miles away, and beyond. The mission groups that come all the time are killing jobs/small business by preventing more contractors, plumbers, roofers, etc. My father explained this to an accountant from Kanawha County: Imagine if there were 500 accountants in Kanawha County offering free work. McDowell County has some of the best environment/land conditions in the United States for growing maple trees to make maple syrup. We have the 2nd highest rated trout stream but no products/services for fishers.</p> | 9/15/2018 2:19 AM |
|----|---|-------------------|

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| 74 | Northfork and Keystone need a grocery store. Northfork’s now closed “Trail’s Inn,” originally built as a GM dealership, is an eyesore and needs a new life. The building is in solid condition and still owned and for sale, by a couple in Wyoming (state) who previously had a business there. GM awards individual grants in the millions of dollars and I made this aware to my team when I worked for WVU CPASS but no one cared as usual with anything WVU does in southern WV :(. It should be a fitness center and/or mixed use community facility. Gov. Justice wants to restore the Northfork (high school basketball capitol of the US) Blue Demon gym, a stone’s throw away from the building. We need Walmart/Dollar General Plus back in Kimball. Goodson’s owning the only grocery store (and buying Magic Mart) besides Grants in War is terrible and prices are way up. Hoppy who owns Bantam Market/Subway in Welch and Bantam Market in Gary often buys any available retail space for the sole purpose of keeping it closed/keeping out competition. When he dies his daughter will continue this tradition for the next 50+ years. Panther Forest area needs more stores for travelers who want to see Elk. The Tom Hatcher Center in War is underused. All of downtown laeger needs help. My idea 5 years ago was for a WVU-Marshall-WV-HigherEd-etc. (& welcome participation from the much closer Virginia Tech and other out of state schools) “Rural Innovation Center” and including lots of international students bringing diversity to the county & the two neighboring counties (Wyoming & Mingo) which are less than a 15-minute drive from downtown laeger. | 9/15/2018 12:51 AM |
| 75 | Welch | 9/14/2018 11:14 PM |
| 76 | War, Welch, laeger, Bradshaw | 9/14/2018 10:21 PM |
| 77 | Everywhere | 9/14/2018 10:13 PM |
| 78 | Bradshaw area | 9/14/2018 10:06 PM |
| 79 | Everywhere | 9/14/2018 10:01 PM |
| 80 | Everywhere, especially around existing infastructure. | 9/14/2018 9:00 PM |
| 81 | Every little town needs some updating. | 9/14/2018 8:04 PM |
| 82 | Make an industrial park on top of mountain.. maybe old mining location? | 9/14/2018 6:56 PM |
| 83 | Welch | 9/14/2018 6:53 PM |
| 84 | lager | 9/14/2018 5:51 PM |
| 85 | Entire county. No specific area. | 9/14/2018 4:27 PM |
| 86 | Welch, Gary, laeger, War, Coalwood | 9/14/2018 2:09 PM |
| 87 | In all our little towns. laeger Bradshaw war Welch | 9/14/2018 11:34 AM |
| 88 | The Big Creek District is growing, the Brown Creek District is in decline, and the Sandy River District is steadily on the decline. So take your pick. I think the Sandy River District could use a boost by linking with the H&M Trails. | 9/14/2018 8:32 AM |
| 89 | Anywhere | 9/14/2018 8:26 AM |
| 90 | laeger WV | 9/14/2018 8:20 AM |
| 91 | Welch. The old Wal-Mart and magic Matt buildings could be a start. | 9/14/2018 7:20 AM |
| 92 | laeger/Welch area | 9/14/2018 7:14 AM |
| 93 | Welch, Kimball, and surrounding areas. The town of laeger has plenty of room now with the demolition of several buildings. The other buildings are privately owned, HOWEVER, if someone were actually doing their job these buildings would be condemned, private or not. Vacant snake dens are all the purpose they are serving. Clear them out and restore laeger, Welch, Northfork..so many places could be great once again! | 9/14/2018 6:59 AM |
| 94 | Everywhere you look there are lots of places/land where something beneficial can exist. Jobs need to be created before housing. | 9/14/2018 6:00 AM |
| 95 | In our towns! The older buildings are empty and could house some potential for redevelopment and bring job opportunities! I think anywhere we can find to grow our community is a plus! | 9/14/2018 4:50 AM |
| 96 | County Wide | 9/13/2018 9:49 PM |
| 97 | All over the county. | 9/13/2018 9:42 PM |
| 98 | Everywhere..... | 9/13/2018 9:39 PM |

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| 99 | All over the County | 9/13/2018 9:36 PM |
| 100 | We need more grocery stores for the Seniors, especially for the seniors in Northfork Hollow | 9/13/2018 7:42 PM |
| 101 | Partner with Wyoming and Mingo counties to leverage resources. | 9/11/2018 12:51 PM |
| 102 | The county seat of McDowell County, Welch. | 9/7/2018 6:36 PM |
| 103 | Since Welch is the County seat of course there, but in multiple communities | 9/1/2018 8:35 AM |
| 104 | Something in each community or town, I think all development and redevelopment should be equal. | 8/31/2018 6:59 PM |
| 105 | mcdowell county newhall or cucumber area | 8/31/2018 6:03 PM |
| 106 | All over not just in Welch | 8/31/2018 4:07 PM |
| 107 | Welch . Bluefield. laeger,logon,Gilbert etc | 8/31/2018 3:48 PM |
| 108 | Anywhere! | 8/20/2018 8:25 AM |

Q6 What would you like to see more of in McDowell County in the next 10-15 years? Please pick your top two choices.

Answered: 141 Skipped: 3



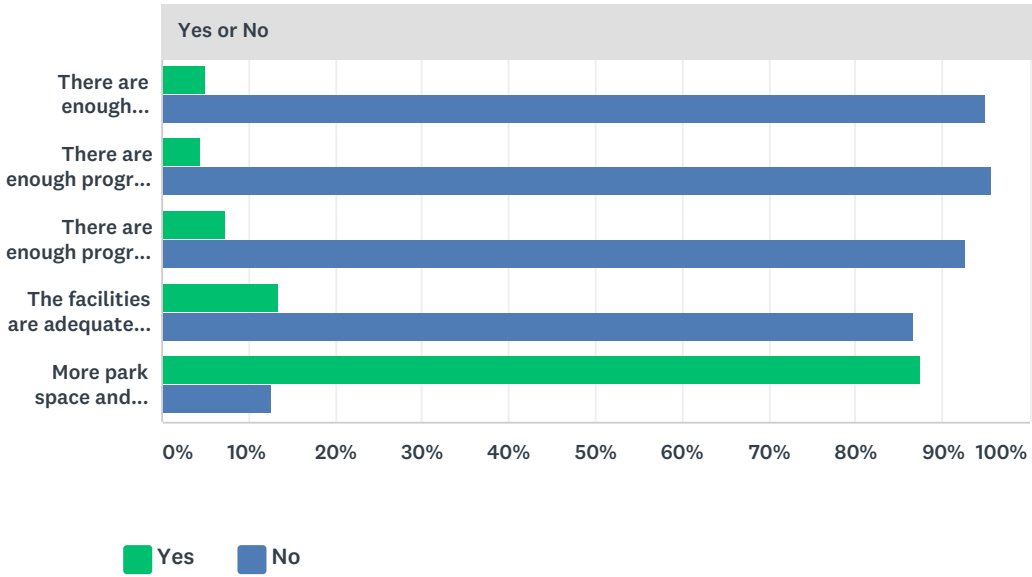
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|----------------|-----------|
|----------------|-----------|

| | | |
|--|--------|----|
| Open space and farmland | 4.96% | 7 |
| Parks and recreational facilities | 18.44% | 26 |
| A greater variety of housing options | 18.44% | 26 |
| New retail shops | 41.13% | 58 |
| Additional restaurants | 18.44% | 26 |
| Grocery stores | 22.70% | 32 |
| Farmer's markets | 12.77% | 18 |
| Revitalization of downtowns | 21.99% | 31 |
| Walkable/bikeable communities | 9.22% | 13 |
| More transportation options/new highways | 26.95% | 38 |
| Higher quality employment opportunities | 48.94% | 69 |
| Lowered drug usage | 39.01% | 55 |
| Updated infrastructure/new infrastructure | 18.44% | 26 |
| Removal of blighted structures and rubbish | 25.53% | 36 |
| Tourism opportunities | 19.86% | 28 |
| Other (please specify) | 3.55% | 5 |
| Total Respondents: 141 | | |

| # | OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) | DATE |
|---|--|--------------------|
| 1 | Place for people to put there trash. Rather than throw it along the highways. | 9/23/2018 2:11 AM |
| 2 | Wealth creation can drive all of the above. | 9/20/2018 1:03 AM |
| 3 | Everything needs updated and improved | 9/15/2018 11:34 AM |
| 4 | Bold new leadership like my father Tom Acosta, running against a 30 year incumbent and 2 other people with no ideas or leadership skills | 9/15/2018 12:51 AM |
| 5 | I'm for a lot of these because one thing alone does not fix our problem | 9/14/2018 4:50 AM |

Q7 What is your opinion about the recreation provided in McDowell County? Please answer yes or no.

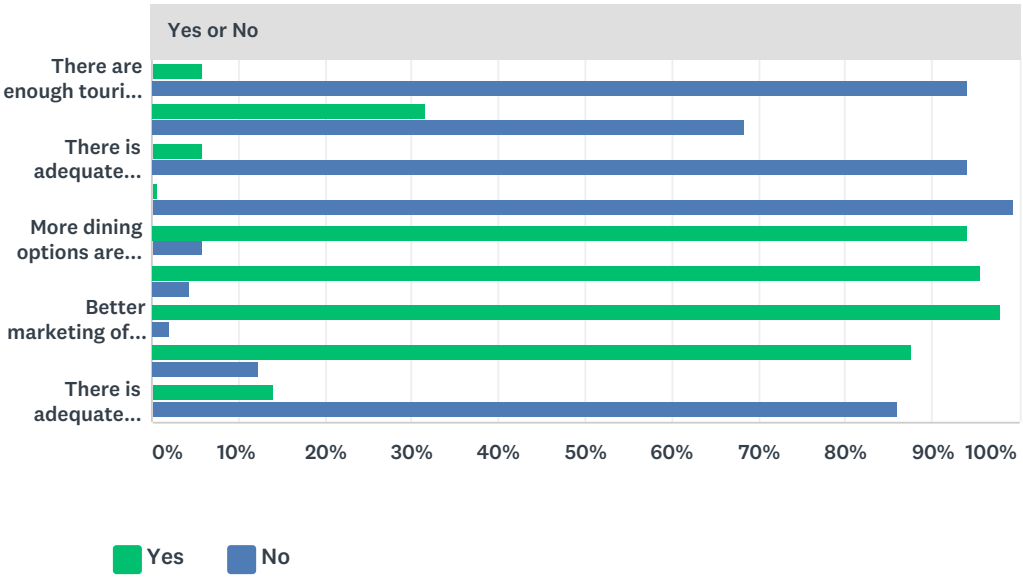
Answered: 139 Skipped: 5



| Yes or No | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|-------|
| | YES | NO | TOTAL |
| There are enough recreational facilities for families | 5.07% 7 | 94.93% 131 | 138 |
| There are enough programs and facilities for teens and children | 4.35% 6 | 95.65% 132 | 138 |
| There are enough programs and facilities for senior citizens | 7.30% 10 | 92.70% 127 | 137 |
| The facilities are adequately maintained | 13.43% 18 | 86.57% 116 | 134 |
| More park space and facilities are needed | 87.50% 119 | 12.50% 17 | 136 |

Q8 What is your opinion about tourism opportunities in McDowell County? Please answer yes or no.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 5



| Yes or No | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|-------|
| | YES | NO | TOTAL |
| There are enough tourist attractions | 5.76% 8 | 94.24% 131 | 139 |
| There are other tourism opportunities (besides ATV trail riding) | 31.65% 44 | 68.35% 95 | 139 |
| There is adequate lodging for tourists | 5.80% 8 | 94.20% 130 | 138 |
| There are enough activities and attractions for families | 0.72% 1 | 99.28% 138 | 139 |
| More dining options are needed | 94.12% 128 | 5.88% 8 | 136 |
| More retail shops are needed | 95.59% 130 | 4.41% 6 | 136 |
| Better marketing of attractions is necessary | 97.84% 136 | 2.16% 3 | 139 |
| Tourism is only benefiting certain parts of the county | 87.68% 121 | 12.32% 17 | 138 |
| There is adequate signage for attractions | 14.07% 19 | 85.93% 116 | 135 |

Q9 Name one strength of McDowell County

Answered: 121 Skipped: 23

| # | RESPONSES | DATE |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Coal mining | 10/22/2018 4:18 PM |
| 2 | Family oriented | 10/22/2018 4:14 PM |
| 3 | Close relations of people | 10/22/2018 4:10 PM |
| 4 | Family oriented | 10/22/2018 4:03 PM |
| 5 | Good hearted people | 10/22/2018 4:00 PM |
| 6 | We help one another in need | 10/22/2018 2:36 PM |
| 7 | Trails | 10/22/2018 2:33 PM |
| 8 | Good people | 10/22/2018 2:29 PM |
| 9 | Nice people | 10/22/2018 2:26 PM |
| 10 | Nice people | 10/22/2018 2:12 PM |
| 11 | Friendliness | 10/22/2018 2:09 PM |
| 12 | Nice people | 10/22/2018 2:06 PM |
| 13 | Everyone is family | 10/22/2018 2:03 PM |
| 14 | The beautiful scenery and bonding of people | 10/22/2018 1:59 PM |
| 15 | The atmosphere | 10/22/2018 1:56 PM |
| 16 | Close-knit community/ help one another | 10/22/2018 1:53 PM |
| 17 | Beautiful scenery | 10/22/2018 1:46 PM |
| 18 | Coal | 10/22/2018 1:42 PM |
| 19 | Amazingly strong sense of identity and history | 10/13/2018 1:42 AM |
| 20 | It's natural beauty. | 10/8/2018 7:47 PM |
| 21 | Friendly people | 10/8/2018 1:43 PM |
| 22 | The people are kind, considerate, and will support one another. | 10/8/2018 12:12 PM |
| 23 | The people | 10/8/2018 10:28 AM |
| 24 | Our people are resilient and not afraid to work to get what we need. This county relies on its people for survival. | 10/8/2018 10:01 AM |
| 25 | The People | 10/8/2018 10:00 AM |
| 26 | ATV Trails | 10/8/2018 9:54 AM |
| 27 | The few people who still work for a living here in McDowell County | 10/8/2018 9:51 AM |
| 28 | The people | 10/8/2018 9:46 AM |
| 29 | Nothing | 9/23/2018 10:32 PM |
| 30 | The people | 9/23/2018 2:03 PM |
| 31 | Lots of us are willing to help. | 9/23/2018 10:33 AM |
| 32 | Nothing | 9/23/2018 2:11 AM |
| 33 | Natural beauty | 9/22/2018 10:29 PM |
| 34 | The people | 9/22/2018 5:19 PM |

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 35 | The good people of this place, always work together; Especially during hardships. | 9/22/2018 1:09 PM |
| 36 | loyalty to the county | 9/22/2018 12:53 PM |
| 37 | The people of McDowell | 9/22/2018 11:56 AM |
| 38 | None | 9/22/2018 11:33 AM |
| 39 | The people | 9/22/2018 11:29 AM |
| 40 | Opportunity for tourism development. | 9/20/2018 1:03 AM |
| 41 | Tourism opportunities | 9/19/2018 3:36 PM |
| 42 | It's natural beauty | 9/19/2018 9:31 AM |
| 43 | We are not | 9/19/2018 6:37 AM |
| 44 | We have a good community of people that with the right minds, can and will get things done | 9/18/2018 9:25 PM |
| 45 | Togetherness | 9/18/2018 5:23 PM |
| 46 | Our history. | 9/18/2018 2:13 PM |
| 47 | Families | 9/17/2018 5:00 PM |
| 48 | The beauty of its mountains. | 9/16/2018 8:34 PM |
| 49 | None that I can think of | 9/16/2018 7:17 PM |
| 50 | The mountains and scenery | 9/16/2018 7:04 PM |
| 51 | The people | 9/16/2018 4:29 PM |
| 52 | It has a rich history | 9/16/2018 3:36 PM |
| 53 | The people | 9/16/2018 2:58 PM |
| 54 | It's people | 9/16/2018 2:30 PM |
| 55 | The people who reside here are the nicest peple! They would give you the shirts from their backs if needed. | 9/16/2018 11:20 AM |
| 56 | Nice people | 9/16/2018 9:32 AM |
| 57 | Quality of its people | 9/16/2018 12:54 AM |
| 58 | It's people | 9/16/2018 12:23 AM |
| 59 | It's people. | 9/16/2018 12:20 AM |
| 60 | It is community based and community driven | 9/16/2018 12:06 AM |
| 61 | None | 9/15/2018 11:51 PM |
| 62 | Community | 9/15/2018 11:50 PM |
| 63 | Small town love | 9/15/2018 11:40 PM |
| 64 | sorry, can't name any. our county needs lots of help | 9/15/2018 11:22 PM |
| 65 | People | 9/15/2018 9:29 PM |
| 66 | At this point there really isn't any. | 9/15/2018 9:26 PM |
| 67 | Citizens | 9/15/2018 2:08 PM |
| 68 | None | 9/15/2018 1:41 PM |
| 69 | The people | 9/15/2018 1:14 PM |
| 70 | The people | 9/15/2018 11:34 AM |
| 71 | Everybody knows everybody and everybody tries to help one another if help is needed. | 9/15/2018 11:22 AM |
| 72 | It's people | 9/15/2018 11:19 AM |
| 73 | Hard working citizens | 9/15/2018 10:11 AM |
| 74 | It's people | 9/15/2018 9:32 AM |

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|---|---|--------------------|
| 75 | The people | 9/15/2018 9:26 AM |
| 76 | The people | 9/15/2018 9:10 AM |
| 77 | Love | 9/15/2018 9:07 AM |
| 78 | The people that are still here | 9/15/2018 8:54 AM |
| 79 | The community sticks together | 9/15/2018 8:30 AM |
| 80 | People | 9/15/2018 8:17 AM |
| 81 | The residents of McDowell County are the best. | 9/15/2018 7:40 AM |
| 82 | Strength? If the top answer is "the people" don't count on them. Welfare made most everything/everyone weak. This place is done. JFK said Dont ask what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.... Most of the ppl here hate the govt but expect the govt to take care of them cradle to grave... | 9/15/2018 7:26 AM |
| 83 | Caring loving residents; natural beauty, ATV trails | 9/15/2018 7:09 AM |
| 84 | Tom Acosta for McDowell County Commission | 9/15/2018 2:19 AM |
| 85 | Nothing | 9/14/2018 11:45 PM |
| 86 | The people | 9/14/2018 10:21 PM |
| 87 | Land | 9/14/2018 10:06 PM |
| 88 | Friendly people | 9/14/2018 10:01 PM |
| 89 | People who have a natural capability for survival | 9/14/2018 9:00 PM |
| 90 | The people, and the churches. | 9/14/2018 8:04 PM |
| 91 | Our ability to welcome everyone with smiling faces | 9/14/2018 6:56 PM |
| 92 | Nothing | 9/14/2018 6:53 PM |
| 93 | We can worship Jesus | 9/14/2018 5:51 PM |
| 94 | Our strength is in our people! | 9/14/2018 4:27 PM |
| 95 | The people | 9/14/2018 4:15 PM |
| 96 | It's people. | 9/14/2018 3:11 PM |
| 97 | Its People | 9/14/2018 2:09 PM |
| 98 | The people | 9/14/2018 11:34 AM |
| 99 | Unity | 9/14/2018 8:32 AM |
| 100 | The people who Work. | 9/14/2018 8:20 AM |
| 101 | The ppl | 9/14/2018 7:20 AM |
| 102 | It's determination to rise back up after each fall. | 9/14/2018 7:14 AM |
| 103 | The people unite, even at the worst of times. That is literally all we have going for us. | 9/14/2018 6:59 AM |
| 104 | It's people | 9/14/2018 6:00 AM |
| 105 | Our people! | 9/14/2018 4:50 AM |
| 106 | Mtns | 9/13/2018 9:49 PM |
| 107 | Friendly People | 9/13/2018 9:39 PM |
| 108 | The people | 9/13/2018 9:36 PM |
| 109 | Beautiful mountains | 9/13/2018 7:42 PM |
| 110 | Sense of vommunity | 9/13/2018 7:35 PM |
| 111 | People | 9/11/2018 1:41 PM |
| 112 | Beautiful terrain. | 9/11/2018 12:51 PM |
| 113 | The people | 9/9/2018 1:17 PM |

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|---|---|--------------------|
| 114 | The resilience of our wonderful people. | 9/7/2018 6:36 PM |
| 115 | The people..... | 9/1/2018 8:35 AM |
| 116 | The natural beauty, and History | 8/31/2018 6:59 PM |
| 117 | it's people and the people who moved from that area are still connected | 8/31/2018 6:03 PM |
| 118 | People | 8/31/2018 4:07 PM |
| 119 | Good people | 8/31/2018 3:48 PM |
| 120 | Beauty of the mountains | 8/24/2018 12:34 AM |
| 121 | The people | 8/20/2018 8:25 AM |

Q10 Do you have any additional comments regarding McDowell County?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 51

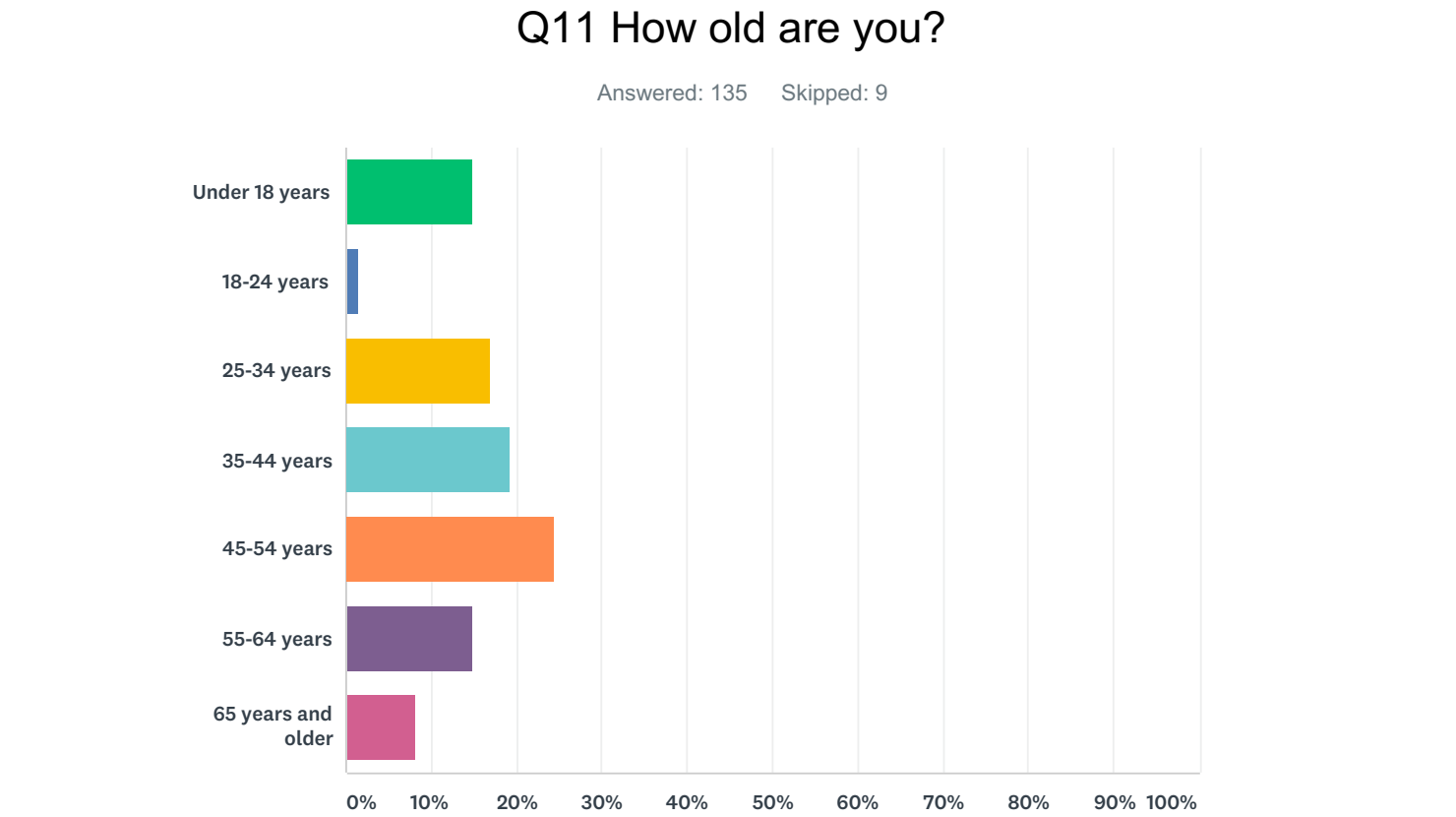
| # | RESPONSES | DATE |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 1 | Even with the struggles McDowell County possesses, it is still extremely underappreciated | 10/22/2018 4:18 PM |
| 2 | If politicians and educators actually cared about the entire county, the whole place would be better. | 10/22/2018 4:14 PM |
| 3 | Even though the county is degrading, the people still stay close to one another and help each other through tough situations. | 10/22/2018 4:03 PM |
| 4 | It needs a "whole lotta fixin" | 10/22/2018 4:00 PM |
| 5 | People need reasons to stay and right now we hardly have anything to offer | 10/22/2018 2:36 PM |
| 6 | I hope we can have more | 10/22/2018 2:33 PM |
| 7 | A group of people willing to fix the problems we have here. | 10/22/2018 2:29 PM |
| 8 | McDowell needs someone/or group that is dedicated and determined to help the community become a better place, because we need a lot of help. | 10/22/2018 2:26 PM |
| 9 | Fix the roads, take down falling buildings and add new ones or use that space for farmland. | 10/22/2018 2:12 PM |
| 10 | Need roads fixed and more stores | 10/22/2018 2:09 PM |
| 11 | McDowell needs a group of people determined to make the changes needed, like a task force | 10/22/2018 2:06 PM |
| 12 | No, ya'll covered everything | 10/22/2018 2:03 PM |
| 13 | No | 10/22/2018 1:59 PM |
| 14 | N/A | 10/22/2018 1:56 PM |
| 15 | The people are great, the place is beautiful, but we don't have the opportunity needed to thrive. | 10/22/2018 1:53 PM |
| 16 | People are leaving because there's nothing making them want to stay. | 10/22/2018 1:46 PM |
| 17 | We need to get more people to come see this great county | 10/22/2018 1:42 PM |
| 18 | Send help. | 10/8/2018 7:47 PM |
| 19 | It makes me sad to see the way that the county is portrayed inside and out of its borders. There is a great potential inside our county, but it is going unused. | 10/8/2018 12:12 PM |
| 20 | I love McDowell County, but we need HELP. | 10/8/2018 10:28 AM |
| 21 | Drugs are a horrendous issue here as they are everywhere else, but a better job market and a better infrastructure with roads, etc. would create more opportunities for success here. Tourism will help as we continue to move forward understanding that coal is not the powerhouse for the area that it once was, but we definitely need help and funds to get this place back on its feet again. | 10/8/2018 10:01 AM |
| 22 | Until the same "good ole boys" are eliminated from the county and local governments we will see NO change. We have had the same deadbeats in office for far too long who do nothing but pad their own pockets and have absolutely no regard for the citizens or the well being of this county. Also, until we have infrastructure in place such as a decent highway, sewage, water, etc we will not be able to diversify our economy and it will remain stagnant. WE must diversify our economy. I am a strong advocate of the coal industry and am in no means saying that we should do away with it. We need to continue to allow it to prosper (Thanks President Trump) as well as be able to have some other form of employment so our younger generations don't have to leave to find jobs. | 10/8/2018 9:51 AM |
| 23 | The strength is tourism but the county has to clean itself up, have adequate lodging and food | 10/8/2018 9:46 AM |
| 24 | Our town needs a bank we shouldn't have to drive a country mile to do our banking & our children need more programs to keep them busy. We also need to put the D.A.R.E Program back into our schools especially in the elementary & middle schools. | 9/23/2018 10:32 PM |

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 25 | This is a sess pool of a place to live at. Need to quot feeding the inmate and put there butts to work. Put them out cleaning trash off the highways especially bradshaw jolo area. If they were made to work then they wouldn't be to keen on going back in. Instead of feeding them 3 meals a day for free make them work for there food. | 9/23/2018 2:11 AM |
| 26 | Please do not trade our county's natural beauty and citizens' privacy for the sake of tourism. Tourism is great, but be considerate of the people of McDowell who live here. Let's also think of the preservation of our rich history, that is so important and should not be lost. | 9/22/2018 10:29 PM |
| 27 | It was once a wonderful place to raise a family but now there I just nothing here to keep people. They grow up and move away to find more opportunities. | 9/22/2018 5:19 PM |
| 28 | The lack of jobs is a disgrace. The fact that we don't have a community college for a higher education is so discouraging. A lot of money has came through this place and we never receive anything. laeger, Bradshaw, Panther need cell service. | 9/22/2018 1:09 PM |
| 29 | Pigeon Forge has nothing on McDowell except leadership with a goal. If the land companies would cooperate and sell some of the unused thousands of acreage, there could be tourism opportunities. With school consolidation and both parents that HAVE to work, communities do not have the closeness they once shared..children are on buses, some are on a bus over an hour one way...so a lot do not participate in school activities ... | 9/22/2018 12:53 PM |
| 30 | People are leaving this place because there is NOTHING left. You all need to give these people things to stay for otherwise McDowell will continue to decline | 9/22/2018 11:56 AM |
| 31 | lit a sad place to live | 9/22/2018 11:33 AM |
| 32 | McDowell County Leadership lacks the knowledge, skill and ability to break the cycle of poverty. | 9/20/2018 1:03 AM |
| 33 | Encourage new businesses and make it easier for them to come in. More grant writing seasons and teaching people how to become business owners. | 9/19/2018 9:31 AM |
| 34 | none | 9/19/2018 6:37 AM |
| 35 | I'd just like to see more jobs come this way and more of ur people that moves away will love to raise their kids there again. It's sad that our kids can't experience this as what we all once did, HOME☺ | 9/18/2018 9:25 PM |
| 36 | Just no opportunities for anybody and no restaurants, activities for younger people. Just not a good place to live. | 9/18/2018 5:23 PM |
| 37 | We need more preservation of our historical buildings. Especially our courthouse. We need some old company stores revitalized for historic or retail opportunities. We need better rental opportunities for small local businesses. | 9/18/2018 2:13 PM |
| 38 | No | 9/17/2018 5:00 PM |
| 39 | McDowell County WV elected County Commission politicians don't support what we put them in office for. | 9/16/2018 8:34 PM |
| 40 | X | 9/16/2018 7:17 PM |
| 41 | We have wonderful people and beautiful mountains but until all the trash and eyesores are cleaned up no one that does visit our county will want to come back | 9/16/2018 7:04 PM |
| 42 | I think we have a start but a lot needs done !! | 9/16/2018 4:29 PM |
| 43 | Instead of opening more Hatfield and McCoy trails, how about doing something for our youth | 9/16/2018 2:58 PM |
| 44 | very poor government leadership | 9/16/2018 2:30 PM |
| 45 | Nice people but good strong leadership is lacking. | 9/16/2018 9:32 AM |
| 46 | It's dieing | 9/16/2018 12:23 AM |
| 47 | The children are the future of our county. Our goals should be providing them the best education available and having the resources to do so. Giving them reasons to come back also once they go to college. Revitalizing downtown is a start but it take a unified community to do so. County officials and leaders MUST come together to do what is best for McDowell not themselves. Also, the roads must get fixed or it will drive tourism away not to us. | 9/16/2018 12:06 AM |
| 48 | Need more people off of welfare | 9/15/2018 11:51 PM |
| 49 | No | 9/15/2018 11:40 PM |

| Copy of McDowell County County Comprehensive Plan | | SurveyMonkey |
|---|--|--------------------|
| 50 | Residents have heard for years about new initiatives that have never happened. Its time money is spent on bettering the residents, not for promises that went in someones pocket. | 9/15/2018 9:29 PM |
| 51 | Bring it back to life!! | 9/15/2018 9:26 PM |
| 52 | CHANGE IS IMPORTANT BUT MUST BEGIN WITH A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP! OUT WITH THE OLD (they've sucked it dry). ELECT NEW, YOUNG, INNOVATIVE LEADERS | 9/15/2018 2:08 PM |
| 53 | No | 9/15/2018 1:41 PM |
| 54 | It could be beautiful if people would try. | 9/15/2018 1:14 PM |
| 55 | Need to get rid of the county commissioners that are killing the county | 9/15/2018 11:34 AM |
| 56 | We need more opportunities for our youth and to offer assistance for our parents so that the youth can participate in activities. We need better roads, we are horrible road conditions!! We need cell phone service in all of McDowell!! We need more and better housing facilities. We need more stores. | 9/15/2018 11:22 AM |
| 57 | We have just as much here to offer as the Smokey's if we just take advantage of it... | 9/15/2018 11:19 AM |
| 58 | Beautiful county where potential is not shown or met. | 9/15/2018 10:11 AM |
| 59 | Slow paced | 9/15/2018 9:10 AM |
| 60 | No | 9/15/2018 9:07 AM |
| 61 | This has always been my home. I never wanted to leave. I don't want my children to leave, but, as time progresses, I cannot find good reasons to encourage them to stay. | 9/15/2018 8:54 AM |
| 62 | Poor county! Needs more jobs in the area! | 9/15/2018 8:30 AM |
| 63 | Can't keep electing the same people and expect different results. | 9/15/2018 8:17 AM |
| 64 | Nope. | 9/15/2018 7:26 AM |
| 65 | The truck/trailer marker route to the Warrior Path Trailhead take you on river road from Yukon to War. Although some of the paved road is beautiful, going through many areas there are old houses, buildings, trailers falling down, over grown weeds. If the person's whom own this property cannot afford to clean it up, I feel it should be aquired by the local or state govt' and clean up by apply for grant money/money from somewhere to make it look better. It makes McDowell look like a horrible place. McDowell is not a horrible place. | 9/15/2018 7:09 AM |
| 66 | Of course I do! The towns of Gary and Kimball are geographically not very far apart, but encumbered by a very lengthy drive. Gary is also not far from Coalwood. How impossible would it be to build a tunnels connecting the towns, and possibly incorporating them with Welch? I think laeger and Roderfield are the same way. Grateful to have Bluefield Area Transit here but we need more. Gary and the entire western part of the county is not serviced. We need a bus loop that goes to every town every day. An actual bus station in Welch (or Coalwood, since it's the geographical center), and a bus line to Beckley would be great. The library systems that serve War and the rest of the county are completely separate and they do not partner together on anything. I think this is ridiculous. The situation arose because of a feud between two people that are no longer living. The Tom Hatcher Center in War is underused and probably underfunded. When I spoke to State Senate President Jeff Kessler and others at the SCORE (Southern Coalfields Organizing and Revitalizing the Economy) meeting in Beckley in 2014, there was a standing ovation from the crowd when I suggested building a train in McDowell for WVU & Marshall to use as a "university on wheels" to take their resources and best and brightest to anywhere in WV. This would be a win beyond words for West Virginians everywhere, and most people outside Mongolia, Cabell, and Kanawha counties, if you talk to them long enough, one will find they have a varying sense of abandonment from our universities and everyone agrees the railroads take advantage of their areas. I think counties throughout SWV would benefit from a train designed for lodging that can be moved from place to place. For two examples, several thousands of people come to Gilbert for Oktoberfest and several thousand come to Rainelle for "Ride For The Wall" in May but have no where to stay. Most of the Southern WV towns are too small for any corporate lodging company to ever decide to build, and every flood that comes wipes out already existing small business lodging. No one's going to tell you this at a meeting, but there is a very large population with dissidence toward Reconnect McDowell. In short, RM hasn't lived up to its promises, particularly in the areas of health, transportation, technology, housing, jobs, and economic development. Few people actually know what RM is doing. If you asked people on the streets of Welch if they've heard of McDowell, I bet half would say no and zero could tell you what RM has accomplished. And RM's decision to hold all its big, catered meetings in Charleston fans the flames. | 9/15/2018 2:19 AM |

| Copy of McDowell County County Comprehensive Plan | | SurveyMonkey |
|---|---|--------------------|
| 67 | Regarding public transportation, we need a bus system on a loop through each town everyday and having an actual bus station in Welch (or Coalwood, since it's the geographical center) would be great. A bus to Beckley would be nice. 50 years ago one could catch a bus to New York City from Anawalt and a train from Panther to San Francisco. Now most without a vehicle struggle to get to Bluefield. We don't need the more expensive full size busses. The minibuses The towns of Kimball and Gary are geographically not very far apart but are encumbered by a lengthy drive around mountains. How impossible would it be to build a tunnel connecting the two towns and/or consolidating into one city and/or including Welch? The library systems of War and the rest of the county are completely independent and I think this is ridiculous. This is because of a feud between two people who are dead now. The Jack Caffrey center's opening & operation is (Donald Trump voice) "a total disaster" and it has racist board members. | 9/15/2018 12:51 AM |
| 68 | Need more police protection,Its pitiful when someone has a accident and call 911 and them say there is only one state trooper on duty and he refuses to come out because he's only one on duty.County cops don't answer phone. | 9/14/2018 11:14 PM |
| 69 | McDowell has potential to be a prime ATV destination, in addition bike and hiking trails could be added along with better promotion of the Head of the Dragon. McDowell needs to be more diverse with employment opportunities. A major clean up is needed for all areas of the county. All of this is possible with the right leadership. | 9/14/2018 10:21 PM |
| 70 | McDowell County will never prosper with it's current leadership. Many opportunities have been provided and local leaders have squandered them. | 9/14/2018 10:13 PM |
| 71 | We must be willing to work together for the good of all in our County. Jobs or political offices must be held by people who care enough to fight for our county. It takes more than attending meetings to make something happen it takes action. | 9/14/2018 9:00 PM |
| 72 | I hope some good things will happen for McDowell, but so far things have been so bad, i think people have almost gave up of believing things will get any better here. | 9/14/2018 8:04 PM |
| 73 | Need better jobs and more places to shop! I work and do most of my shopping in mercer county. Would love to change that! McDowell will always be home. It would be so refreshing to work & shop closer to home! | 9/14/2018 6:56 PM |
| 74 | More people would love to stay here if there was something to stay for. Better jobs not just focusing on coal mining, lowering drug usage and prostitution. | 9/14/2018 6:53 PM |
| 75 | I think the county needs more jobs and a big grocery store a department store and you don't have to drive 45 minutes or an hour to next hospital we need these In iager | 9/14/2018 5:51 PM |
| 76 | Get us the highways and the rest will follow | 9/14/2018 4:15 PM |
| 77 | Instead of fighting each other and working separately, work together. Keep resources in the county. People won't stay if there are not jobs and housing. | 9/14/2018 3:11 PM |
| 78 | More time, effort and money put into the County for ALL types of development. | 9/14/2018 2:09 PM |
| 79 | I love my County and want to see it grow to be a place our children want to stay. | 9/14/2018 11:34 AM |
| 80 | No | 9/14/2018 8:32 AM |
| 81 | MCDowell sets on some of the best recreation/tourism just like Mingo and other counties! If it was properly developed. | 9/14/2018 7:14 AM |
| 82 | Yes. There needs to be better screening for government assistance. People are abusing the system and supporting their drug habits while their kids are doing without food., and nobody seems to care to do anything at all about it! | 9/14/2018 6:59 AM |
| 83 | Drain the swamp! If they've been in office for years they need out of there because there has not been any improvement at all if anything it's got worse every year and it shouldn't be like that at all. We have the funds for improvement but they're being stolen and misused! | 9/14/2018 6:00 AM |
| 84 | I would love to see this community booming like our old timers speak of before it's my time to go! Our children deserve opportunities to stay in there hometown! Our community needs businesses of different kinds so we are not relying on one source of revenue | 9/14/2018 4:50 AM |
| 85 | Local governments are run by people who wouldnt last 2 days in their respecrive fields in another county away from here | 9/13/2018 9:39 PM |
| 86 | Need co.commisioneers to do more like Mercer co. commission and develope more river upgrades and tourism and clean up river system | 9/11/2018 1:41 PM |

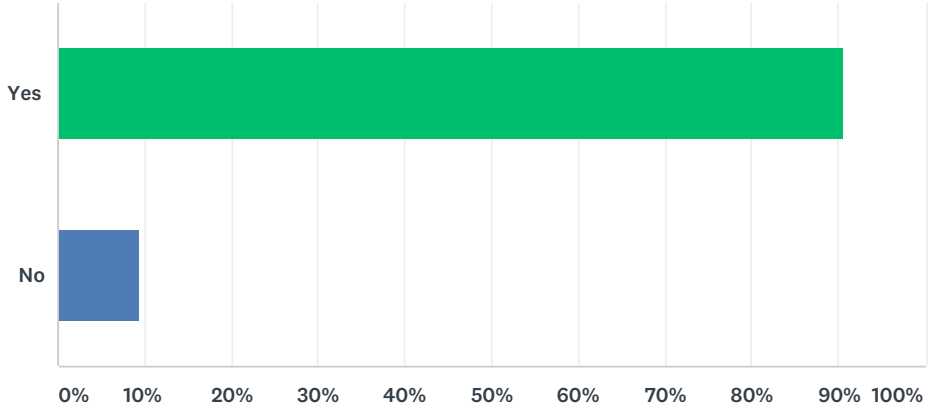
| | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| 87 | Become more aggressive in securing funding for our area. Congress hands out billions to cities, why can't we get some to rejuvenate our area? Call out our reps and senators. | 9/11/2018 12:51 PM |
| 88 | 584 Buckeye Hollow Charlie Kennedy Water in the county. 8 Families in Buckeye Hollow, in Jolo West Va do not have access to public water. 5 in Buckeye have public water. | 9/7/2018 7:31 PM |
| 89 | I love my home. There are no better people, than our residents. | 9/7/2018 6:36 PM |
| 90 | I think if McDowell county can get people involved, people to know it on the map, housing, hotels, shopping, places to eat. People will come here otherwise it will be hard to maintain growth or such | 8/31/2018 6:59 PM |
| 91 | it was a great place back in the 70's n 80's but needs to focus on bringing jobs in so the kids graduating can stay and build instead of having to move also need to get a handle on the drugs and people selling their pain meds | 8/31/2018 6:03 PM |
| 92 | Need people in. Political positions to represent all Mc:Dowell co. not just some places and not just try to fleese us and fill their pockets | 8/31/2018 4:07 PM |
| 93 | Beautiful mountains | 8/31/2018 3:48 PM |



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----|
| Under 18 years | 14.81% | 20 |
| 18-24 years | 1.48% | 2 |
| 25-34 years | 17.04% | 23 |
| 35-44 years | 19.26% | 26 |
| 45-54 years | 24.44% | 33 |
| 55-64 years | 14.81% | 20 |
| 65 years and older | 8.15% | 11 |
| TOTAL | | 135 |

Q12 Do you live in McDowell County?

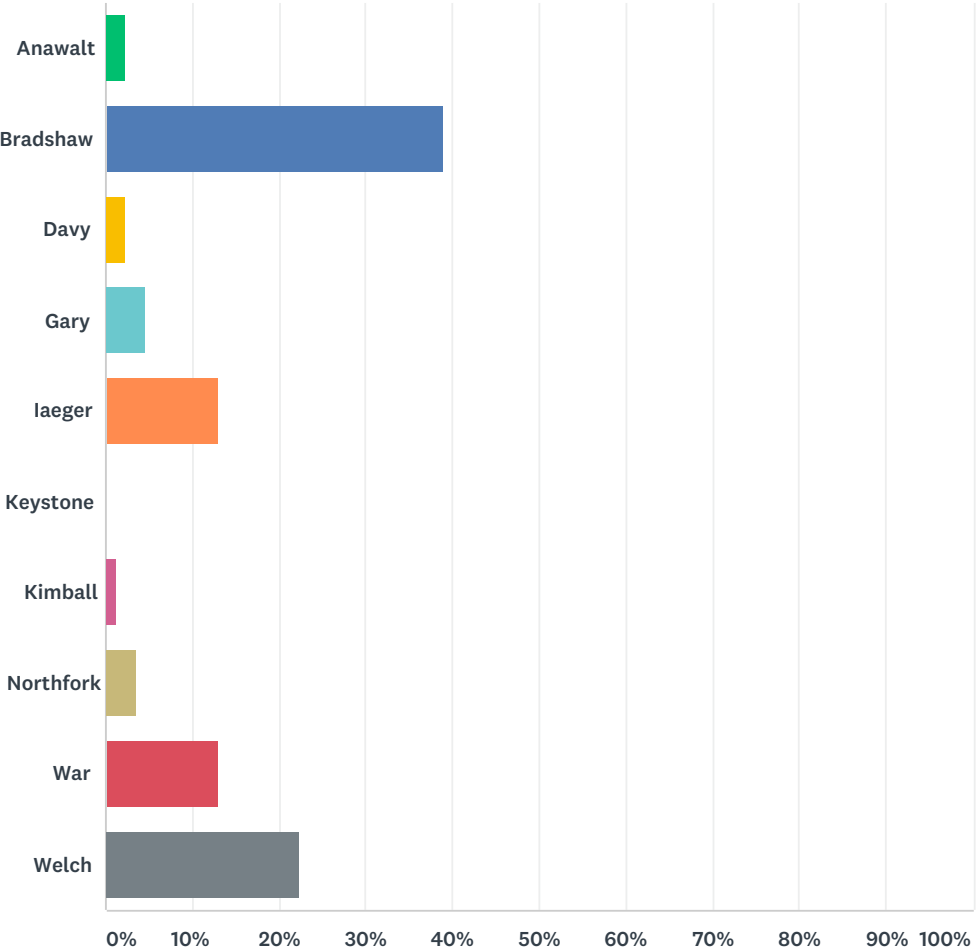
Answered: 138 Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 90.58% | 125 |
| No | 9.42% | 13 |
| TOTAL | | 138 |

Q13 Where, if applicable, do you live in McDowell County?

Answered: 85 Skipped: 59



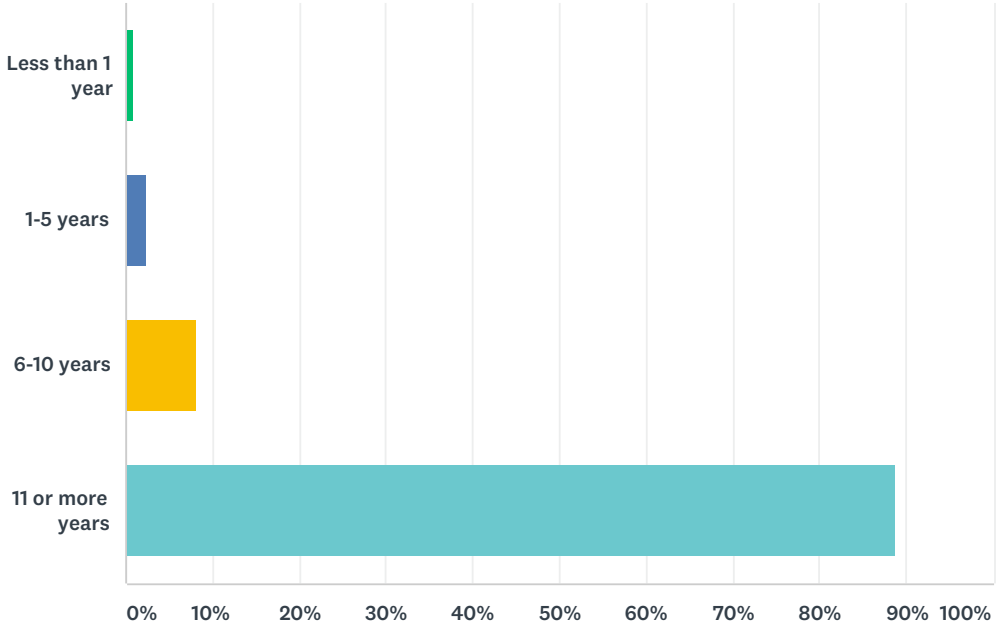
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|
| Anawalt | 2.35% | 2 |
| Bradshaw | 38.82% | 33 |
| Davy | 2.35% | 2 |
| Gary | 4.71% | 4 |
| laeger | 12.94% | 11 |
| Keystone | 0.00% | 0 |
| Kimball | 1.18% | 1 |
| Northfork | 3.53% | 3 |
| War | 12.94% | 11 |
| Welch | 22.35% | 19 |
| Total Respondents: 85 | | |

| # | OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) | DATE |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 1 | I live in Bull Creek 45 mins from my school! | 10/22/2018 4:14 PM |
| 2 | Panther | 10/22/2018 4:04 PM |
| 3 | I live in Panther | 10/22/2018 4:00 PM |
| 4 | Isaban in Mingo County | 10/22/2018 2:33 PM |
| 5 | Raysal, WV | 10/22/2018 2:29 PM |
| 6 | I live in Newhall | 10/22/2018 2:26 PM |
| 7 | Bull Creek | 10/22/2018 2:09 PM |
| 8 | Grapevine | 10/22/2018 2:06 PM |
| 9 | English | 10/22/2018 2:00 PM |
| 10 | English | 10/22/2018 1:56 PM |
| 11 | Panther | 10/22/2018 1:53 PM |
| 12 | Atwell | 10/22/2018 1:49 PM |
| 13 | Milebranch *between laeger and Bradshaw* | 10/8/2018 10:29 AM |
| 14 | Bartley | 10/8/2018 9:55 AM |
| 15 | Premier | 9/23/2018 2:03 PM |
| 16 | Jolo | 9/23/2018 2:13 AM |
| 17 | Page-ton | 9/18/2018 2:14 PM |
| 18 | JOLO | 9/18/2018 8:50 AM |
| 19 | Raysal | 9/16/2018 8:36 PM |
| 20 | Atwell | 9/16/2018 12:31 AM |
| 21 | Panther | 9/15/2018 11:53 PM |
| 22 | Jolo | 9/15/2018 11:50 PM |
| 23 | Panther | 9/15/2018 11:40 PM |
| 24 | Wyoming/McDowell County Road | 9/15/2018 2:09 PM |
| 25 | English | 9/15/2018 1:41 PM |
| 26 | I moved several years for better opportunities for my daughter. | 9/15/2018 1:15 PM |
| 27 | Berwind | 9/15/2018 11:35 AM |
| 28 | Jolo | 9/15/2018 11:24 AM |
| 29 | Have a business in laeger | 9/15/2018 11:21 AM |
| 30 | Newhall | 9/15/2018 10:12 AM |
| 31 | Paynesville | 9/15/2018 9:33 AM |
| 32 | Paynesville | 9/15/2018 9:18 AM |
| 33 | Paynesville | 9/15/2018 8:31 AM |
| 34 | Jolo | 9/15/2018 8:30 AM |
| 35 | Right outside of Bradshaw and hope to stay that way. Do not need Bradshaw to try to annex our community. | 9/15/2018 8:19 AM |
| 36 | Caretta | 9/15/2018 7:10 AM |
| 37 | Moved out of coalwood recently | 9/14/2018 10:02 PM |
| 38 | Mohawk/ bullcreek | 9/14/2018 8:06 PM |
| 39 | Avondale | 9/14/2018 5:52 PM |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 40 | Used to live in Twin Branch/Marytown. | 9/14/2018 2:10 PM |
| 41 | Paynesville | 9/14/2018 11:35 AM |
| 42 | Atwell | 9/14/2018 8:33 AM |
| 43 | Panther | 9/14/2018 7:15 AM |
| 44 | Panther | 9/14/2018 6:01 AM |
| 45 | Caretta | 9/13/2018 9:44 PM |
| 46 | Elkhorn | 9/13/2018 7:36 PM |
| 47 | Hemphill | 9/11/2018 12:52 PM |
| 48 | Jolo | 9/7/2018 7:32 PM |
| 49 | English | 9/4/2018 9:34 PM |
| 50 | Jolo | 9/1/2018 8:37 AM |
| 51 | lived in that area but moved to nc | 8/31/2018 6:04 PM |
| 52 | Paynesville | 8/31/2018 3:52 PM |

Q14 How long have you been a resident of McDowell County?

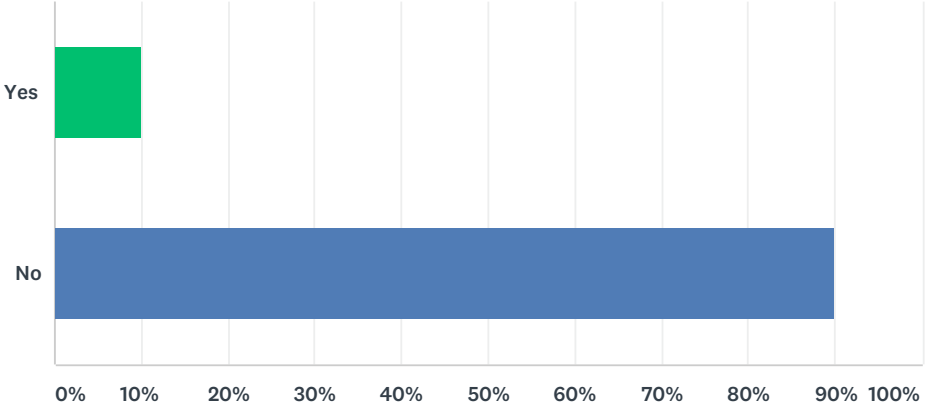
Answered: 134 Skipped: 10



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|------------------|-----------|-----|
| Less than 1 year | 0.75% | 1 |
| 1-5 years | 2.24% | 3 |
| 6-10 years | 8.21% | 11 |
| 11 or more years | 88.81% | 119 |
| TOTAL | | 134 |

Q15 Did you attend a Comprehensive Planning Open House the week of July 9th, 2018?

Answered: 138 Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 10.14% | 14 |
| No | 89.86% | 124 |
| TOTAL | | 138 |

| # | IF NO, WHY? | DATE |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 1 | I don't know what that is. | 10/8/2018 7:47 PM |
| 2 | I was not aware of this event. | 10/8/2018 12:13 PM |
| 3 | Didn't know of any | 10/8/2018 10:29 AM |
| 4 | Didn't know about it | 10/8/2018 10:01 AM |
| 5 | wasn't aware of it | 10/8/2018 9:55 AM |
| 6 | was not aware of it | 10/8/2018 9:52 AM |
| 7 | Didn't know about it | 10/8/2018 9:50 AM |
| 8 | Cause McDowell is always on the bottom when it comes to anything our politicians aren't worried about Bradshaw because it's a small town they only worry bout the bigger towns in McDowell so we are left out as always. | 9/23/2018 10:35 PM |
| 9 | Never heard of it | 9/23/2018 2:03 PM |
| 10 | Didn't know anything about it. | 9/23/2018 2:13 AM |
| 11 | Medical reasons | 9/22/2018 10:31 PM |
| 12 | Wasn't informed about one. | 9/22/2018 1:10 PM |
| 13 | Did not know until I saw a flyer taped up at Rite aid that evening. Did not see any other advertisement. | 9/22/2018 12:55 PM |
| 14 | Working | 9/22/2018 11:31 AM |
| 15 | Lack of mobility. | 9/20/2018 1:05 AM |
| 16 | I was not aware of this event. | 9/19/2018 3:37 PM |
| 17 | did not know about it | 9/19/2018 6:38 AM |
| 18 | I was out of town | 9/18/2018 9:26 PM |

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|---|---|--------------------|
| 19 | Didn't know about it | 9/18/2018 5:24 PM |
| 20 | Not sure when and where it was. | 9/18/2018 2:14 PM |
| 21 | Other things on agenda | 9/16/2018 7:17 PM |
| 22 | Work | 9/16/2018 7:05 PM |
| 23 | Out of town | 9/16/2018 3:37 PM |
| 24 | Did not know there was one | 9/16/2018 2:59 PM |
| 25 | Unaware | 9/16/2018 2:31 PM |
| 26 | I did not know it was happening. | 9/16/2018 11:21 AM |
| 27 | Schedule conflict | 9/16/2018 9:32 AM |
| 28 | Was not aware | 9/16/2018 12:55 AM |
| 29 | Because they won't do anything for Bradshaw no matter what's saus | 9/16/2018 12:25 AM |
| 30 | I did not know about it until after it was over. | 9/16/2018 12:07 AM |
| 31 | Didnt know about it | 9/15/2018 11:53 PM |
| 32 | Didn't know about it | 9/15/2018 11:50 PM |
| 33 | Didn't know about it | 9/15/2018 11:40 PM |
| 34 | didn't know there was any | 9/15/2018 11:23 PM |
| 35 | Been to these before, no movement only meetings | 9/15/2018 9:30 PM |
| 36 | Was unaware there was one. | 9/15/2018 9:27 PM |
| 37 | Didn't know about it | 9/15/2018 2:09 PM |
| 38 | Didn't know that there was one. Typical!!! | 9/15/2018 11:35 AM |
| 39 | I didn't know of any such thing being held!! | 9/15/2018 11:24 AM |
| 40 | Didn't know about it | 9/15/2018 11:21 AM |
| 41 | Did not know about meeting | 9/15/2018 10:12 AM |
| 42 | I work | 9/15/2018 9:54 AM |
| 43 | Didn't know about it | 9/15/2018 9:33 AM |
| 44 | Had to work | 9/15/2018 9:27 AM |
| 45 | Wasn't informed of it | 9/15/2018 9:18 AM |
| 46 | Unaware of meeting | 9/15/2018 9:11 AM |
| 47 | Work schedule | 9/15/2018 8:55 AM |
| 48 | Did not know! | 9/15/2018 8:31 AM |
| 49 | Wanted to very much. I had to work. | 9/15/2018 7:27 AM |
| 50 | Never heard of it | 9/15/2018 7:10 AM |
| 51 | I really don't believe this will benefit anyone not on the WVU payroll. | 9/15/2018 2:19 AM |
| 52 | Didn't know | 9/14/2018 11:45 PM |
| 53 | I was unaware of it. | 9/14/2018 10:23 PM |
| 54 | Was not aware of it. | 9/14/2018 10:14 PM |
| 55 | Didn't know about it | 9/14/2018 10:07 PM |
| 56 | Working | 9/14/2018 9:02 PM |
| 57 | Didn't know about it, and may have been out of town. | 9/14/2018 8:06 PM |
| 58 | Out of town plus didnt even know about it | 9/14/2018 6:57 PM |

| Copy of McDowell County County Comprehensive Plan | | SurveyMonkey |
|---|---|--------------------|
| 59 | Helping take care of husbands family | 9/14/2018 6:55 PM |
| 60 | Didn't know and didn't have transportation | 9/14/2018 5:52 PM |
| 61 | health problems & doctors | 9/14/2018 4:17 PM |
| 62 | Didn't know about it. | 9/14/2018 3:12 PM |
| 63 | Do not presently live in McDowell County. | 9/14/2018 2:10 PM |
| 64 | Working | 9/14/2018 11:35 AM |
| 65 | Didn't know about it | 9/14/2018 8:33 AM |
| 66 | Dident know about it | 9/14/2018 7:21 AM |
| 67 | Did not know about it | 9/14/2018 7:01 AM |
| 68 | Never heard about it | 9/14/2018 6:59 AM |
| 69 | Had no idea there was one | 9/14/2018 4:52 AM |
| 70 | Didn't know nothing about it | 9/13/2018 9:50 PM |
| 71 | Didn't know anything about it. | 9/13/2018 9:44 PM |
| 72 | Didnt know about it | 9/13/2018 9:40 PM |
| 73 | Other committments | 9/11/2018 12:52 PM |
| 74 | Was not aware of it | 9/9/2018 1:18 PM |
| 75 | Didn't know about it | 9/7/2018 7:32 PM |
| 76 | I didn't k ow about it, or I would have been there. | 9/7/2018 6:37 PM |
| 77 | Out of town | 9/1/2018 8:37 AM |
| 78 | out of state | 8/31/2018 6:04 PM |
| 79 | I now live in sc | 8/31/2018 3:52 PM |

Q16 Please provide your email address if you wish to receive a monthly newsletter with updates on the comprehensive plan.

Answered: 58 Skipped: 86

| # | RESPONSES | DATE |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | J.totten@wvhub.org | 10/13/2018 1:42 AM |
| 2 | mrs.lauraelizabethbrown@yahoo.com | 10/8/2018 12:13 PM |
| 3 | jmatney@k12.wv.us | 10/8/2018 10:29 AM |
| 4 | mary.e.johnson@k12.wv.us | 10/8/2018 9:55 AM |
| 5 | fmcguire@k12.wv.us | 10/8/2018 9:50 AM |
| 6 | courtney_jenna@yahoo.com | 9/23/2018 10:35 PM |
| 7 | katbird73@verizon.net | 9/22/2018 10:31 PM |
| 8 | c.brookshier68@gmail.com | 9/22/2018 5:20 PM |
| 9 | julie_transamerica@yahoo.com | 9/22/2018 1:10 PM |
| 10 | ackc1006@yahoo.com | 9/22/2018 12:55 PM |
| 11 | growruralwv@suddenlink.net | 9/20/2018 1:05 AM |
| 12 | caseythayes@gmail.com | 9/19/2018 3:37 PM |
| 13 | Renee.bolden@me.com | 9/18/2018 2:14 PM |
| 14 | Teresahaywoodwv@yahoo.com | 9/16/2018 7:05 PM |
| 15 | Terryoneal29@hotmail.com | 9/16/2018 5:47 PM |
| 16 | dana.lester316@gmail.com | 9/16/2018 4:30 PM |
| 17 | debbi_58@hotmail.com | 9/16/2018 3:37 PM |
| 18 | babyc_fm@yahoo.com | 9/16/2018 2:59 PM |
| 19 | Donald@mcdowellcoa.org | 9/16/2018 2:31 PM |
| 20 | kasondra1993@yahoo.com | 9/16/2018 11:21 AM |
| 21 | goodolwvgirl@yahoo.com | 9/16/2018 12:55 AM |
| 22 | elphinstoneus@yahoo.com | 9/16/2018 12:25 AM |
| 23 | Shannonpace@outlook.com | 9/16/2018 12:07 AM |
| 24 | guatemalagirl1@yahoo.com | 9/15/2018 11:23 PM |
| 25 | moosydryer@hotmail.com | 9/15/2018 2:09 PM |
| 26 | tiffanysuzanne@hotmail.com | 9/15/2018 1:15 PM |
| 27 | Aliendawn@hotmail.com | 9/15/2018 11:24 AM |
| 28 | Noah.nci@gmail.com | 9/15/2018 11:21 AM |
| 29 | mjmitchell_7@yahoo.com | 9/15/2018 10:12 AM |
| 30 | crabtree.timothy@gmail.com | 9/15/2018 9:18 AM |
| 31 | Sherry.l.calhoun@gmail.com | 9/15/2018 8:55 AM |
| 32 | larkinrippeth@yahoo.com | 9/15/2018 8:19 AM |
| 33 | brianjharrison@outlook.com | 9/15/2018 7:27 AM |
| 34 | laurenwkeith@gmail.com | 9/15/2018 7:10 AM |

| | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 35 | ntacosta@gmail.com | 9/15/2018 2:19 AM |
| 36 | heather24811@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 11:15 PM |
| 37 | crystlmatney23@yahoo.com | 9/14/2018 10:23 PM |
| 38 | onefish69@hotmail.com | 9/14/2018 10:14 PM |
| 39 | jenadkins7@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 10:07 PM |
| 40 | loveslife7936@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 9:02 PM |
| 41 | 57soulsister@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 8:06 PM |
| 42 | questz1@comcast.net | 9/14/2018 2:10 PM |
| 43 | Crabtree.estella@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 11:35 AM |
| 44 | sgtmepoore@yahoo.com | 9/14/2018 8:33 AM |
| 45 | arobertsbwo@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 8:20 AM |
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| 47 | j.c.t111417@gmail.com | 9/14/2018 6:01 AM |
| 48 | dawn.vernatter@yahoo.com | 9/14/2018 4:52 AM |
| 49 | Mark.wright@wvnetplus.com | 9/13/2018 9:40 PM |
| 50 | jwshelton2@earthlink.net | 9/11/2018 1:42 PM |
| 51 | aceemily@yahoo.com | 9/11/2018 12:52 PM |
| 52 | victorallen580@yahoo.com | 9/9/2018 1:18 PM |
| 53 | elliemay24801@yahoo.com | 9/7/2018 6:37 PM |
| 54 | gingerday35@yahoo.com | 9/1/2018 8:37 AM |
| 55 | mr_h_collins13@yahoo.com | 8/31/2018 7:00 PM |
| 56 | crystalwalls88@gmail.com | 8/31/2018 6:04 PM |
| 57 | jwsheltonon2@earthlink.net | 8/31/2018 4:08 PM |
| 58 | Mullinsdaniel208@gmail.com | 8/31/2018 3:52 PM |

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MCDOWELL COUNTY ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TO ATTEND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS IN JULY

McDowell County is hosting several community meetings July 9th-12th in order to gather citizen input on the county's comprehensive plan draft. The comprehensive plan will identify issues and concerns in the county and provide a prioritized set of recommendations to address those issues. All residents, business owners, and other interested persons in McDowell County are invited and encouraged to attend one or more of the meetings, which are being held at the following dates, times, and locations:

Monday, July 9th

- 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. - Town of Iaeger, Iaeger Town Hall, 58 Center St.
- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - City of Keystone, Keystone City Hall, 144 W Main St.
- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - City of Welch [Location TBA, contact City Hall]

Tuesday, July 10th

- 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. - City of Gary, Gary City Hall, Powerhouse Road
- 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. - Town of Kimball, Kimball Fire Department
- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - Town of Bradshaw, Bradshaw Town Hall, 10002 Marshall Highway

Wednesday, July 11th

- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - Town of Anawalt, Anawalt Town Hall, 1 Walnut Street
- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - City of War, City Hall Building, 14220 Rocket Boys Drive (Main Street War)

Thursday, July 12th

- 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. - Town of Northfork, Northfork Town Hall, 33834 Coal Heritage Road
- 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. - Town of Davy, Davy Volunteer Fire Department, 217 Main Street

The meetings are organized in an open house format to accommodate citizens' schedules. Interested persons can stop by the venues at any time on the scheduled evenings to offer ideas, voice concerns, and help formulate a vision for the future of McDowell County. We encourage McDowell County residents living outside of the cities and towns, to visit any of the locations based on convenience.

Representatives from McDowell County's Planning Commission and the Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at the WVU College of Law will be available to answer questions and take comments.

For more information, please contact Jared Anderson, Supporting Land Use Attorney, from the WVU Land Use Law Clinic at (304) 293-1698 or jared.anderson@mail.wvu.edu.

END

2018 McDowell County Open Houses

McDowell County would like to hear from you!

In preparation for the McDowell County Comprehensive Plan, each municipality will hold an open house to gather input from its residents and nearby community members. Come to an open house near you to offer suggestions on how McDowell County can better shape its future.

Anawalt: Wednesday July 11 from 5-7 PM at Anawalt Town Hall

Bradshaw: Tuesday July 10 from 5-7 PM at Bradshaw Town Hall

Davy: Thursday July 12 from 5-7 PM at the Fire Station in Davy

Gary: Tuesday July 10 from 4-6 PM in the Community Room at City Hall

Iaeger: Monday July 9 from 4-6 PM at Iaeger Town Hall

Keystone: Monday July 9 from 5-7 PM at Keystone City Hall

Kimball: Tuesday July 10 from 4-6 PM at Kimball Fire Department

Northfork: Thursday July 12 from 4-6 PM at Northfork Town Hall

War: Wednesday July 11 from 5-7 PM at Old City Hall

Welch: Monday July 9 from 5-7 PM at McDowell Public Library

Feel free to stop by any time during the open house. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided. We hope to see you there!

McDowell County Open Houses — July 9-12th, 2018

| Monday July 9 | Tuesday July 10 | Wednesday July 11 | Thursday July 12 |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| laeger 4–6 PM City Hall (council meeting, 6 PM) | Gary 4–6 PM in community room at city hall (council meeting, 6 PM) | Anawalt 5–7 PM Town Hall | Davy 5–7 PM Fire Department (council meeting, 7 PM) |
| Keystone 5–7 PM City Hall | Kimball 4–6 PM Fire Department (council meeting, 6 PM) | War 5–7 PM Old City Hall | Northfork 4–6 PM Town Hall (council meeting, 6 PM) |
| Welch 5–7 PM Arts and Culture Center or Library | Bradshaw 5–7 PM Town Hall (council meeting, 7 PM) | | |

McDowell County Comprehensive Plan

July 9-12, 2018 Open Houses Summary

The McDowell County Planning Commission held an open house in each of the ten incorporated communities during the week of July 9, 2018. The goal of the open houses was to receive public input on a variety of topics, such as infrastructure, land use, and economic development. The information gathered at the open houses will help inform the McDowell County Planning Commission in preparing a comprehensive plan draft. Over 130 people in total came to the ten events around the county. A summary of results and themes are as follows:

General Themes of the Results

- A need for more youth and senior activities
- Infrastructure, abandoned and dilapidated buildings, and economic development are the top concerns
- Highways are crucial
- More recreational opportunities are wanted by residents
- Clean up rivers and streams
- Apathy is a major threat to growth
- Population decline will fix itself with better infrastructure, housing, jobs, businesses, etc.
- More medical facilities are needed to accommodate the aging population
- The lack of modern communications systems holds the county back from attracting new businesses/people
- Need to address drug problem
- Conflict of interest among local leadership

Top Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT)

| <u>Strength</u> | <u>Weakness</u> | <u>Opportunity</u> | <u>Threat</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| The people | Infrastructure | Tourism | People leaving |

Number one Response to Tax Dollar Activity



Attendance Based on Sign-in Sheets

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Anawalt: 10 | Keystone: 15 |
| Bradshaw: 10 | Kimball: 6 |
| Davy: 10 | Northfork: 23 |
| Gary: 7 | War: 27 |
| laeger: 7 | Welch: 16 |

McDowell County Open House Results
Town of Anawalt
Anawalt Town Hall, July 11, 2018
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Background

The McDowell County Planning Commission hosted ten open house events over a four-day period during the week of July 9, 2018. One open house was held in each of McDowell County’s ten incorporated areas. The goal of the open houses was to receive public input on a variety of topics, such as infrastructure, land use, and economic development. The information received will help inform the McDowell County Planning Commission in preparing a comprehensive plan draft. A total of 10 community members participated in the Anawalt Open House. The results are below.

Exercise 1 - Looking to the Future

McDowell County Comprehensive Plan

Looking to the future!

What is your favorite thing about

What is your favorite thing about McDowell County?

What is something that needs to be improved in McDowell County within the next few years?

What is your favorite thing about Anawalt?

- Good/friendly people
- Natural beauty
- The lake

What is your favorite thing about McDowell?

- Same as Anawalt

What is something that needs to be improved in McDowell County within the next few years?

- Cell phone service/broadband

Exercise 2 - SWOTs

Station 2: Strengths and Opportunities

Strengths

Strengths are typically those elements that currently contribute to the quality of life of a community. They help create a distinct sense of place and can be used as a foundation on which to build positive economic growth. Strengths can also act as major attractions for visitors or potential new residents. Strengths are those qualities that you want to see maintained, protected and used as catalysts for future planning.

Opportunities

Opportunities are typically those elements that may, in the future, contribute to an increased quality of life of a community. They may eventually help create a distinct sense of place and could be used as a foundation on which to build positive economic growth. The community may need to take some active steps in order to realize an opportunity.

Station 3: Challenges and Threats

Challenges

Challenges negatively influence a resident or visitor's experience in a community. Challenges are those things that you want to see paid special attention to in the creation or updating of a comprehensive plan. Challenges may or may not have an obvious solution, but it is important to identify them regardless of their complexity. Challenges, like strengths, can be anything from a structure to a service.

Threats

Threats could cause problems for the county in the future. Threats are often external and beyond a community's control. It is important to identify threats as communities can prepare for the possible impact they may have in the future.

Strengths (Anawalt)

- Friendly people
- Beauty/nature

Strengths (County-wide)

Weaknesses (Anawalt)

- Abandoned/dilapidated buildings
- No grocer close by
- Cell service

Weaknesses (County-wide)

Opportunities (Anawalt)

Opportunities (County-wide)

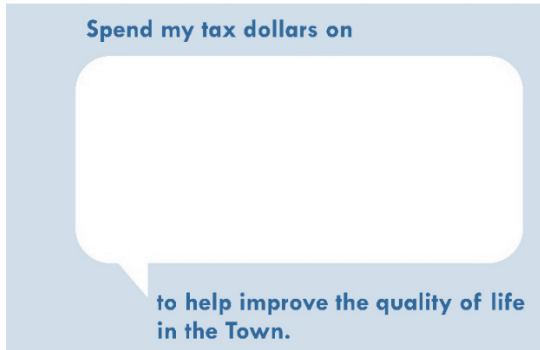
Threats (Anawalt)

- Low population to get proper representation by politicians
- Nothing for younger generation (no jobs, no housing)

Threats (County-wide)




- Apathy
- Younger generation leaving

Exercise 3 - Tax Dollars



- Cleaning up (demoing houses, trash, etc.)
- Form community action groups
- Preserve/protect/promote beauty
- Public transportation
- Use our positives - like the park and lake (for fishing, ATV)
- Senior citizen activities
- Law enforcement and combat substance abuse
 - Need substance abuse/rehab facilities. This could also support more jobs.

Exercise 4 - Critical Issues

| Part 1: What first comes to mind when you hear McDowell County and... | | |  |  |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Infrastructure | Abandoned and Dilapidated Housing | Economic Development | Land Use | Public Safety | Declining Population |
| | | | | | |

Instructions for Part 2: Place a **Blue Dot** next to the issue that you think is most important. 2) Place a **Red Dot** next to the second to the issue that you think is least important

Infrastructure

- Roads improved
- Need litter control

Abandoned and Dilapidated Buildings

- Need to tear down

Economic Development

- Annexation of unincorporated communities
- Cell towers/broadband coverage
- Needing stores/gas stations/groceries

Land Use

- Places for youth and seniors
- Lake doesn't benefit Anawalt
- Licenses don't help Anawalt

Public Safety

- Sheriff Department
- Patrol/presence

Declining Population ●

- Jobs
- Drug test failures

Exercise 5 - Mapping

Community-specific map

- Need cell tower!! (not pointing to a specific place on the map)
- Forestry camp that the EDA owns (north of town) is sitting there vacant, but could be utilized since it has sewer/water, etc.
- Anawalt Ridge Road needs cleaned up
- Lake is an asset
- Wind turbines in Anawalt to gather electricity for the town (not pointing to a specific place on the map)
- Need buildings demolished (not pointing to a specific place on the map)
- Tourism/lodging development (need to be marketed on guides as a place to visit, better ways to market Anawalt)
- Anawalt could connect to other Hatfield and McCoy trails
- Move 73-74 to Anawalt/lake area from Windmill Gap

County-wide map

- Nothing to report