Wood County Comprehensive Plan

Approved by the County Commission on (DATE), 2024

Development overseen by Michael Dougherty, WVU Extension,
in conjunction with Wood County Planning Commission and others.

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Section 1: Why We Plan

Introduction

The *West Virginia Code*, Chapter 8A states that the purpose of a comprehensive plan is to "guide a governing body to accomplish a coordinated and compatible development of land and improvement within its territorial jurisdiction, in accordance with present and future needs and resources" (*WVC* §8A-3-1(a)).

State Code also identifies 10 specific purposes of the plan (*WVC* §8A-3-1(d)):

(1) Set goals and objectives for land development, uses and suitability for a governing body, so a governing body can make an informed decision;

(2) Ensure that the elements in the comprehensive plan are consistent;

(3) Coordinate all governing bodies, units of government and other planning commissions to ensure that all comprehensive plans and future development are compatible;

(4) Create conditions favorable to health, safety, mobility, transportation, prosperity, civic activities, recreational, educational, cultural opportunities and historic resources;

(5) Reduce the wastes of physical, financial, natural or human resources which result from haphazard development, congestion or scattering of population;

(6) Reduce the destruction or demolition of historic sites and other resources by reusing land and buildings and revitalizing areas;

(7) Promote a sense of community, character and identity;

(8) Promote the efficient utilization of natural resources, rural land, agricultural land and scenic areas;

(9) Focus development in existing developed areas and fill in vacant or underused land near existing developed areas to create well designed and coordinated communities; and

(10) Promote cost-effective development of community facilities and services.

The Comprehensive Plan evaluates the existing land use, transportation systems, housing, community facilities and services, and natural and cultural resources within the county. It projects future trends based on these analyses and proposes the best possible land use and implementation tools to accommodate change while protecting the county's natural, cultural, and community resources.

Comprehensive Plan Functions

- Focuses on current trends and issues within Wood County and addresses them with appropriate solutions.
- Provides the best possible projection on future conditions based on current patterns and identifies strategies to help create a more desirable and sustainable future.
- Directs future change through a vision of community potential.
- Establishes the framework for consistency between future land use policies and land use regulatory measures.
- Assists county officials in their decision-making processes.

Relationship with Other Plans

The Wood County Comprehensive Plan Update is a broad policy document that provides guidance for future decision making. It uses the 2007 Wood County Comprehensive Plan as a base document. The update adds statistical and situational updates to the plan as well as new ideas for promoting and improving the county. Current and recent municipal comprehensive plans, regional transportation plans, and school plans were also reviewed as part of the plan update process.

Recommended Plan Review Process

The Wood County Comprehensive Plan will only be useful if it is regularly used and updated. Therefore, it is recommended that the County Commissioners and the Planning Commission perform the following actions:

- Every other year evaluate the Comprehensive Plan and, if necessary, make modifications to ensure it provides adequate guidance regarding future growth in the county.
- Identify potential new strategies and funding opportunities to achieve stated goals.
- Prepare a written summary of the evaluation process. The report should also include a record of the major activities undertaken since the last review, as well as a list of the activities scheduled for the next two years.
- This is also an ideal opportunity to identify any new issues or concerns that may have an impact on the county.

Frequently Asked Questions

<u>What does the Plan represent?</u>

The Plan provides a snapshot of where the County is presently, describes a desired state to emerge from the current situation, and provides details on how to move toward that projected future.

How will the Plan be used?

The Plan will be used by county and local municipal officials, community volunteers, property owners, businesses, and builders to evaluate proposed activities and developments against the desired future outlined in the Plan.

How is in charge of making this Plan work?

The County Commissioners, Planning Commission, and municipal officials will work to implement the programs and projects described in this Plan, as appropriate. Public support for these recommendations will also be needed to implement and prioritize the proposals found within the Plan.

How was the plan developed?

The comprehensive planning process was somewhat longer and more disconnected than normal because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Work began in the latter half of 2019. Discussions with the County Administrator led to an agreement to undertake the plan update.   Preliminary work included demographic research and touring the county. The Planning Commission provided input during a work session in November 2019. The senior-level Land Use Planning class (RESM 455) at West Virginia University reviewed different sections of the 2007 Plan and provided input and suggested ideas. Their reports were completed in December 2019 and forwarded to the county in January 2020.

Those students were Niharika Alahari (Transportation), Jacob Beuth (Transportation), Cheyenne Currey (Land Use), Jonathan Doty (Housing), Trace Dutton (Natural Resources), Reagan Ernst (Land Use), Paul Gallo (Facilities), Alexander Hanna (Land Use), Annie (Anahita) Mahmoudi (Housing), Trent Mcintyre (Natural Resources), Meghan Neff (Facilities), Jordan Ryan (Facilities).

Meetings with county and municipal officials (which resulted in an expansion of the scope of the project to include Vienna and Williamston) as well as additional touring of the county (with special attention to the municipalities) took place in February 2020.

At that point, most work on the Plan stopped. Neither travel nor public meetings could occur and special assignments took precedence. What originally thought was going to be a few weeks became a months-upon-months of delay. Some progress did occur, however. A WVU Extension Summer Intern, Hannah McCoy, developed data profiles for the plan. Also, it became obvious to all involved determined that the planned forums would not be possible. Instead, a web-based survey was designed and distributed in Fall 2020 to gain information and insights from the residents of the county. County officials received those results in December 2020.

The planning process took another hiatus during the first half of 2021. The continued pandemic and its resultant special work made plan development a low priority. Finally, in mid- 2021, with the pandemic finally waning, work resumed on the Plan. To expedite plan development, a decision was made to use the framework from the previous 2007 Plan for the update, rather

than create a new template for the effort. Work began on updates of the introductory sections of the plan with initial drafts being shared with the county for review later than year.

To generate new planning ideas, the graduate-level Community Planning class (PUBA 750) examined the planning strategies found in the 2007 plan during the Spring 2022 semester. They explored them in terms of the economic, social, and environmental considerations – based on the community capitals model. Their suggestions contained ideas that cut across all subjects: housing, natural resources, economic development, cultural and history, land use, transportation, and community facilities and services. To augment this process, a focus and prioritization survey was distributed to county officials in early 2022.

Preliminary reports were shared with county officials in April 2022. The feedback was shared with the students, who amended their final reports. The students made their final presentations in May 2022 with that information sent to county officials for comment.

The graduate public administration students who provided input and ideas for this plan were Rachel Byrne (Environmental), Damilola Fasinu (Economic), Cailtin Fulp (Environmental), Tyler Holbert (Economic), Gina Licursi (Economic), Nicole Mitchell (Social), Henry Oliver (Economic), Camryn Pressley (Social), Sydney Putnam (Social), Mallory Sisler (Social), Philip Smith (Environmental), and Paige Wantlin (Environmental). Information from these different studies and reports have been combined into the plan.

Work continued on the plan over the next year. Tyler Holbert did additional work as part of an internship during the summer and fall of 2022.

The maps were done by Jacquelyn Strager, a Teaching Assistant Professor in the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design.

The final document was sent to the county in December 2023. The Wood County Planning Commission reviewed it, held a public hearing on (Date in 2024) and sent it for approval on (Date in 2024). The County Commission held a public hearing on (Date in 2024) and approved it on (Date in 2024) via a (resolution or ordinance), after which it was filed with the County Clerk.

[Dates and details highlighted will be replaced in the final document.]

[Copy of County Commission Resolution can be inserted after Table of Contents if desired.]

Section 2: Location and Regional Context

Introduction

Wood County is in the Mid-Ohio River Valley on the western edge of West Virginia (see Map 1). The county is bordered by Pleasants County to the northeast, Ritchie and Wirt Counties to the east, and Jackson County to the south. The Ohio River forms the western boundary of the county, with Washington, Athens, and Meigs Counties in Ohio across the river.

Most of the county's land area is undeveloped. An analysis of the 2021 land use and land cover data and tax parcel information show that nearly half of the county is agricultural parcels (45.7 percent). Additionally, about one-sixth of the county is vacant residential land.

Meanwhile, less than one-fifth of the county is classified as residential parcels (19.9 percent). And less than one-tenth are developed as commercial, industrial, recreation, community facilities, or infrastructure (transportation) (9.6 percent).

Most of the county's population lives in and around the county seat of Parkersburg, which is located along the county's western edge – the Ohio River -- about equidistant from the northern and southern ends of the county. At the time of the 2020 Census, about 52.5 percent of the 84,296 county residents in lived in the four municipalities in that area -- Parkersburg (29,738), Vienna (10,652), Williamstown (2,997), and North Hills (834). Additionally, over 7,000 people live in the four Census Designated places to the west (Blennerhassett (3,118), Lubeck (1,309), and Washington (1,151)) and south (Mineral Wells (1,805)) of the Parkersburg area. Several thousand more individuals live in other unincorporated and unrecognized areas in the immediate vicinity. The combined total is more 50,000 county residents near the bend in the Ohio River at Parkersburg (and close to another 10,000 people on the other side of the river in-around-around Belpre, Ohio).

Wood County is well situated for regional commerce. Columbus, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Pa., Cleveland, Ohio, and Cincinnati, Ohio are within 200 miles. Indianapolis, Ind., Washington, D.C.., Baltimore, Md., Greensboro/Winston-Salem, N.C., Charlotte, N.C., Buffalo, N.Y., Richmond, Va., and Raleigh, N.C. are within 400 miles. And Philadelphia, Pa., Nashville, Tenn., Toronto, Ont., Canada, Chicago, Ill., Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Va., New York, N.Y., Milwaukee, Wis., Charleston, S.C., and Atlanta, Ga. are within 600 miles.

The county also sits at the connection of several transportation networks (see Map 2). Interstate 77 (which runs Cleveland, Ohio through Charleston, W.Va. and Charlotte, N.C., to Columbia, S.C.) and Appalachian Highway Corridor D (which starts in Cincinnati, Ohio as Ohio Route 32, crosses over to U.S. Route 50 south of Albany, Ohio, and eventually ends in Clarksburg). CSX offers freight rail service. The Ohio River boasts boat and barge traffic. The Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Airport currently offers service to the Charlotte, N.C. as well as meeting general aviation needs.

Map 1: Location of Wood County in West Virginia

Map 2: General Map of Wood County
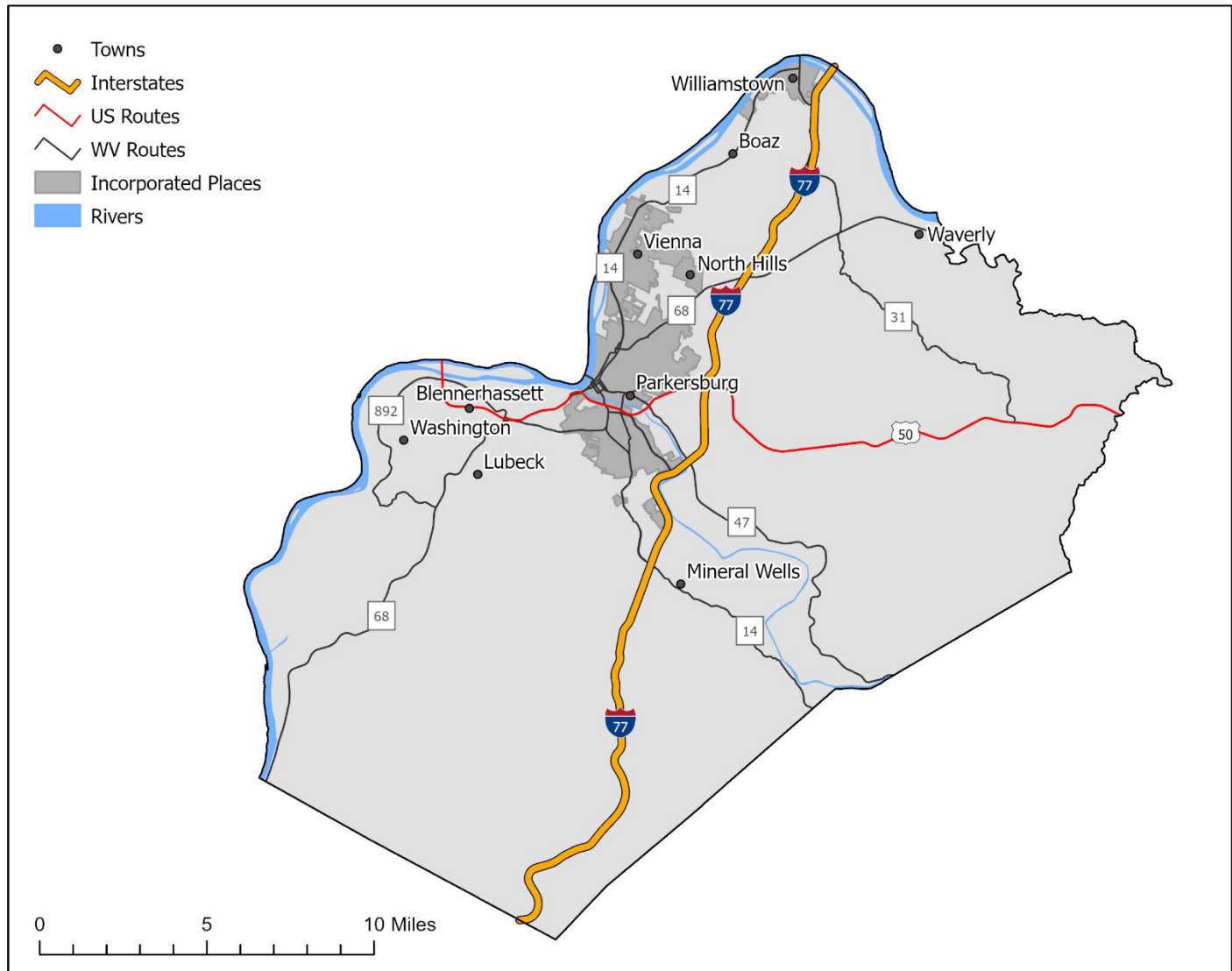
A Brief History of Wood County

The area that is now Wood County has a diverse history. Several Native American tribes, including the Iroquois, Cherokee, and Shawnee, used the area as a neutral hunting ground.

The first European explorers – the French – arrived in the Mid-Ohio Valley in the late 1600s. Throughout the first half of the 1700s, hunters and trappers regularly visited the region. During that time period, colonists began marking land claims in the area, including George Washington. Permanent settlement of the area did not begin until the 1760s, after the series of French and Indian Wars had ended. Between 1769 and 1785, many individuals laid claim to 400-acre tracts; this included Robert Thornton, who claimed the land that is now Parkersburg. John Briscoe, IV, claimed 5,600 acres along the Ohio River in 1773, which is now Vienna, while Joseph Tomlinson, Jr., claimed 400 acres and an adjoining 1,000 acres, which is now Williamstown.

In 1774, as small settlements began to spring up in the area, Virginia organized the lands in what was then the northwest corner of the state into the District of West August. Just two years later, in 1776, the district was divided into three counties, one of which was Monongalia. In 1784, the state formed Harrison County by dividing Monongalia County. Also, during this period, the final Indian War was fought, ending with the Treaty of Peace of Fort Greenville (Ohio) in 1789.

In 1798, the Virginia General Assembly created Wood County out of Harrison County. Originally 1,233 square miles, the county had 1,217 residents most of whom had settled in the bottomlands along the rivers and creeks. Parkersburg was named the county seat and was surveyed in 1810. Then in a 20-year period from 1831 to 1851, Wood County ceded land that went toward the creation of counties that surround it: Jackson County (1831), Ritchie County (1843), Wirt County (1848), and Pleasants County (1851), giving the county its present shape and size.

Much of the county's history is tied to the growth and development of Parkersburg. The city is situated at the confluence of the Little Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. At its founding it was known as Newport; it took on its current name in 1810 in honor of Alexander Parker, whose daughter, after his death, donated the land for the site of the courthouse and county building. The city was originally chartered in 1820; it was incorporated by acts of the Legislature in 1911.

During the first half of the 19th Century, the city became a center for trade and industry due to improvements in transportation. The first Ohio River steamboat refueled at the city in 1810. The Northwestern Turnpike, connecting Parkersburg to Winchester, Va., was finished in 1838 while the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike was finished in 1847. Then, in 1857, the southern branch of the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad was completed, making Parkersburg the transportation hub of the Mid-Ohio Valley.

Oil was discovered in areas of Wood County just north and east of Parkersburg in 1859, leading to an era of unprecedented growth and prosperity. During the Civil War, Parkersburg became a major troop transfer and supply center for the Union Army. A fort was constructed in 1863 on Mount Logan across the Little Kanawha River from Parkersburg, a perfect location to protect the city and its railroad connection. It was completed just as the new state of West Virginia and named Fort Boreman in honor of the state's first governor, Arthur I. Boreman, a prominent Parkersburg resident.

After the Civil War, Parkersburg and Wood County became a center of the oil refining and natural gas industries. Dozens of oil companies headquartered in the city during the latter half of the 19th century. However, by 1900, oil production in the county had subsided, although of natural gas use was increasing. Eventually, competition from western oil fields proved to be too much for many of the eastern producers and in 1937, the last oil refinery in Parkersburg closed. Natural gas was produced in the county until the 1970s.

By the 1930s, the economy had diversified and other industries continued to operate, including manufacturers of glass, rayon, silk thread, and drilling and rigging equipment. After the Great Depression and the World War II, Wood County became a center for the chemical, plastics, metal, and fiberglass industries; those industries remain in a prominent position in the economy today.

There are two other cities in Wood County – Vienna and Williamstown. Vienna is adjacent to Parkersburg while Williamstown is at the county's northern edge.

Vienna was founded and laid out in 1794 by Dr. Joseph Spencer on a 5.000-acre land grant he received for services as a physician during the Revolutionary War and named the place Vienna. There are reports that it drew its name from communities in New Jersey or elsewhere in Virginia, but neither of those places were known as Vienna until the middle of the 19th century. (It is possible it was named for the Austrian city itself – which is what both Vienna, N.J. and Vienna, Va., claim as the source of their respective names.)

After the community lost its bid for the county seat in 1800, Vienna reverted to a prosperous farming community. It remained a rural outpost until construction of the electric railway and roads were improved between Parkersburg and Marietta in the early 1900s made it a desirable residential area. It also became known for Vitrolite production, which continued into the 1940s. Eventually, Vienna incorporated as a city in 1935. Today, the city is a residential and commercial hub adjacent to Parkersburg.

Williamstown was founded by Isaac Williams, who originally settled on 400 acres owned by his wife Rebecca Tomlinson Martin. It has always had strong ties to the Marietta, Ohio, which is just across the Ohio River. The city is primarily residential with smaller businesses that serve the community. For over a century, it was the location of Fenton Art Glass, which closed in 2012.

Other communities of note in Wood County's include North Hills, Blennerhassett, Boaz, Lubeck, Mineral Wells, Washington, and Waverly.

North Hills is a town; it is residential community east of Vienna. It was incorporated in 1979. An affluent suburb of Parkersburg, North Bills calls itself "the most beautiful town in West Virginia."

The other areas listed are Census-designated places (CDP) but not incorporated. As noted previously, several are close to Parkersburg – Blennerhassett, Lubeck, and Washington west of the section of the city south of the Little Kanawha River while Mineral Wells is a few miles south of that area.

Blennerhassett is named after an island in the Ohio River, which was named for its owner, Harman Blennerhassett, who built a mansion on the island for his bride in 1797.

Lubeck dates back to 1856. It is named for the hometown in Germany of the community's first postmaster.

Washington was named for George Washington on bottom land he had surveyed in 1771 and acquired in 1772.

Mineral Wells is one of many communities named after its spring which was thought (at one time) to have medicinal waters, attracting vacationers and lodgers in the late 1880s.

Boaz is along the Ohio River between Williamstown and Vienna.   It was a post office location in 1878 when the name was selected from one of three suggestions. It is home to several unexcavated Indian mounds that local residents protect.

Waverly is at the northeast corner of the county along the Ohio River, next to Pleasants County. The recent closing of the Waverly Elementary School and the library in the community, and its small size, may led to the loss of its CDP status.

Historically, another prominent place in Wood County was Volcano. The community formed around oil fields discovered in the early 1860s and took its name from the gas flairs at night that made the skyline look like a volcano. At its height, records indicate Volcano had close to 10,000 residents, an opera house, stores, hotels, saloons, two newspapers, two schools, and a post office. It burned to the ground in 1879. The town was never rebuilt, although oil production resumed and continued until the 1970s. Since then, the area has returned to its natural state and is located in Mountwood Park. The park hosts "Volcano Days" festival to celebrate its past each September.

[Sources used for this section include *Wood County Reflections – a Pictorial History* by Philip Sturm (2005); "The Historic Guide to Wood County West Virginia", published by the Parkersburg/Wood County Convention and Visitors Bureau; the Wood County and municipal websites; the *West Virginia Blue Book*; *West Virginia Place names and their* Origins; the WV Explorer, and other Internet resources.]

Quick Facts

- Location: Along the Ohio River, between 60 and 90 miles north of Charleston.

- Municipalities: Parkersburg (County Seat, Class II City), Vienna (Class II City), Williamstown (Class III City), North Hills (Class IV Town).

- Establishment: December 21, 1798, as a county of Virginia. Formed out of Harrison County. Names in honor of James Wood, governor of Virginia (1796-1799) and a brigadier general during the Revolutionary War.

- Changes: Wood County ceded areas for the formation of Jackson County (1831), Ritchie County (1843), Wirt County (1848), and Pleasants County (1851).

- Size: 377 square miles total (366.5 square miles of land).

- Current Population: 83,340 (US Census 2022 Estimates). 2020 Census Population: 84,300. 2010 Census Population: 86,956.

- Density: 231 persons per square mile. 110 housing units per square mile. (ACS 2021 Five-year averages).

- Median Age: 43.7 years (ACS 2021 Five-year averages).

- Educational Attainment: 21.8% Bachelor's Degree or Higher (ACS 2021 Five-year averages).

- Primary Watersheds: Middle Ohio North (Northern Basin Group C), Little Kanawha (Western Basin, Group D), Middle Ohio South (Western Basin, Group C).

- Surface Waters: The Ohio River, The Little Kanawha River, Pond Creek, Tygart Creek, Lee Creek, Worthington Creek, Stillwell Creek, and Walkers Creek.

- Recreation Areas: Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Mountwood Park, Blennerhassett Island Historic State Park, McDonough Wildlife Refuge, Veterans Memorial Park, Fort Boreman Park.

- Highways: Interstate 77; US Route 50 (ARC Corridor Highway D); WV Primary Routes 2, 14, 31, 47, 68, 95, and 892.

Section 3: County Issues and Trends

Introduction

As part of the compressive planning process, it is necessary to understand the current situation in the county – where it is and where it is headed.   This was done in two ways: public input and data research.

Public Input

The planning process utilized three different mechanisms for public input. To that end, people were asked to reflect on the county, including its assets and areas for improvement. This took the form of a work session with the Planning Commission in November 2019, a web-based survey available to county residents in mid-2020, and a prioritization survey for county officials in early 2022. This approach was used because the COVID-19 pandemic made public meetings problematic at best since March 2020.

Planning Commission Stakeholder Work Session

A work session with the Wood County Planning Commission took place on November 6, 2019. Commission members were asked a series of questions related to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the county.   (The complete results of the session appear in the appendix.)

The first question asked respondents to list the most positive aspects of the county. Most responses related to the physical aspects of the county – its location, its proximity/accessibility (by river, railroad, highway, air), or its physical attributes (beauty). The other main category of responses related to positive quality of life factors found in the county, such as its history, culture, parks, and access to higher education.

Participants next were asked about changes in the county over the last decade. There was a split between negative and positive responses, though more of the former. Negative responses included societal problems (drugs, homelessness, loss of civility), responses to those issues (jail in a converted hotel in Parkerburg, strained resources for rehabilitation centers), and economic closures (lost manufacturing jobs, loss of Fenton Art Glass). Positive responses included infrastructure improvements (US Route 50 Bypass), economic issues (jobs created by oil and gas), and civic actions (passage of school levy and fire fee).

A follow-up question focused on challenges facing the county. Responses included societal issues (drugs, ambulance issues, health care), economics (sales tax rates, vacant businesses, loss of manufacturing jobs), and quality of life matters (topography, spotty cell phone coverage, local communication, environmental concerns, loss of law enforcement).

Then participants were asked a series of questions related to different topical planning areas. The key takeaway from this was the variety of responses. Housing issues identified included a

shortage of contractors, not enough demand, the need for housing for the homeless, and rent inflation. Potential natural resource protection efforts included focusing on the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, investigating Williamstown's Bee City USA Program, evaluating the potential for biomass, and the need to protect air quality and water quality. Development direction suggestions ranged from heavy industry (i.e., a cracker plant) to redevelopment (i.e., TIF Districts), to tourism (i.e., Rails-to-Trails alternative routing). Cultural resources utilization ideas including working to keep things open and emphasizing special places or time periods – and there was some questioning as to the importance of this activity.

The participants described a multitude of land use issues facing the county – topography, soils, flood plains, infrastructure, farmland preservation, redevelopment of former manufacturing sites and other places, and regulation at the county and community level. They also discussed transportation and facilities needs related this. Transportation discussion encompassed recreational trails, public transit, traffic congestion, highway safety, and air travel. Finally, sewers were the only specific service mentioned in the discussion, though participants also noted that other relevant items had already been discussed.

Taken together, these results showed that Wood County has the same problems faced by many places across West Virginia and by society as a whole. They also demonstrated the special circumstances of the county related to its location and its history. All of these had to be considered during the planning process.

General Issues Survey

A set of public forums had been planned to begin in early 2020 to engage residents in the planning process. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic made that impossible. After deferring the sessions for several months, they were cancelled. In its place, a web-based survey was used to get ideas and insights from county residents. The survey opened in late September and remained open for responses through the end of October. The survey was also used for concurrent planning efforts in Vienna and Williamstown. (The complete results of the survey appear in the appendix.)

Overall, 317 responses logged by the system, but this included incomplete responses and individuals who logged into the system and then declined completing the survey. Between 305 and 310 completed most questions. Only six respondents reported living outside of Wood County, and five of those non-residents indicated they either lived in a neighboring county (four) or worked in Wood County (one).

The initial questions looked at the general situation in Wood County. Respondents selected the schools (15.4% of all responses), location (14.9%), and people, (13.1%) as the county's three most positive aspects. [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 17 topics.] Meanwhile, respondents marked increased drug use (27.0%), the loss of manufacturing jobs (13.9%) and an increased prevalence of homelessness (10.6%) as the three most impactful changes in the last decade. [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 13 changes.]

Related to this, the biggest challenges facing the county identified by respondents generally corresponded with the impactful changes listed. They included drug use/overdoses (24.7%), loss of jobs (16.2%), and vacant buildings/businesses (16.2%). [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 14 challenges.]

Other survey questions focused on specific important topical areas. These included two looking at the housing situation in the county. Respondents ranked rent inflation/high rent costs (21.9%), age of housing units (20.0%), and structural condition of housing units (15.8%) as the top issues. [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 8 issues.] A follow-up question asked about the biggest housing needs. They were senior/assisted living units (20.9%), contractors to construct/repair (18.6%), and rent price controls/limits (18.4%). [Respondents selected any needs from the list of 7 that applied.]. These results aligned with the points from the discussion from the Planning Commission stakeholder meeting.

The question about protecting natural resources produced straightforward results. The top three areas that should be emphasized included water quality (22.2%), air quality (13.5%), and parks and recreation (13.3%). [Respondents could select up to three items from a list of 13 areas.]

A pair of questions examined development issues. The responses between the two questions displayed some consistency, though the top three selections showed great variation. Respondents selected manufacturing (20.1%), education and health services (20.0%), and leisure and hospitality (16.7%) as the top three areas of emphasis for development activities. [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 11 areas.] Not unexpectedly, when asked to select a single theme for development, the responses mirrored these results. Almost a third of respondents thought the county should be a manufacturing hub (31.7%) while about half that number thought it should be a tourism hub (16.0%) or educational hub (14.3%).

Two additional questions looked at additional aspects of development. One question asked how to enhance cultural and historic resources. Respondents selected working to preserve and keep open prominent places (34.6%) was selected most often. Next were building upon resources in-and-around Parkersburg (22.5%) and building upon resources in-and-around Marietta (22.5%). [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 6 concepts.]

Following this, the next question asked about the major land use issues for the county. Respondents said the biggest issue by far was infrastructure needs (26.1%). Commercial areas (15.0%) and industrial areas (12.7%) also figured prominently in the responses. [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 10 issues.]

Two questions examined transportation issues. Respondents identified quality and condition of the roads and highways (47.5%) when asked to identify the most prominent transportation matter. The only other problem receiving substantial support was the limited commercial flight schedule at the airport (17.7%). A follow-up question asked about needed transportation enhancements. Respondents top three selections included greater airport/airline options rated

highest (20.6%), followed by additional walking trails (18.3%) and safety improvements on highways (15.3%). [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 9 enhancements.] Interestingly, their responses showed strong congruence on airport/airline issues as between one-fifth and one-sixth of respondents selected the issue for each question. Meanwhile, there was some disagreement on highway issues as almost half selected quality and condition of the road system it as their main issue while less than one-sixth of respondents picked safety improvements on highways as a needed enhancement.

A final question asked about the key facilities and services needed. The top three needs identified by respondents included parks and recreation (20.5%), community centers (17.7%), and sewers/wastewater/stormwater systems (12.3%). [Respondents selected up to three items from a list of 11 facilities and services.]

Overall, these topical survey responses provided additional direction to address the problems outlined by the Planning Commission and in the survey itself.

<u>Focus and Prioritization Survey</u>

The Planning Focus and Prioritization Survey asked county officials to rate seven areas of importance for the plan (with the lower score indicating greatest importance). These areas corresponded to the strategies listed in the 2007 comprehensive plan. The survey also had respondents prioritize five proposed action items for each strategy area (with the lower scoring indicating greater priority).

In the survey, Economic Development stood far out from the other six areas of importance. It had an average score of 1.23 [on a 1-to-7 scale]. This made it a near universal choice for the most important strategy area to be considered.

There was no consensus on what the next most important strategy area was. None of other six areas had an average score below the midpoint of the scale; as five had similar scores between 4.2 and 4.7. Respondents generally agreed, however, that cultural and historic resources was less important than the other areas as it had the highest average score of 5.77.

Among the strategy areas, nine specific proposed actions stood out with a mean score of less than 2.5 and a median of 2 or less [on a five-point scale]. For economic development, the prominent action item was industrial/manufacturing redevelopment. For community facilities and services, the prominent action item was health care. For transportation, the prominent action item was road networks/routes.

Housing, land use, and cultural and historic resources each had two action items generate support. For housing, it was addressing abandoned and dilapidated structures and the condition of housing units. For land use, it was working on commercial areas and the redevelopment and reuse of places. For cultural/historic resources, it was focusing on higher education institutions and historic preservation. Finally, none of the proposed actions for natural resources met these criteria.

Key Indicators

Data for key indicators was also examined. This included reviewing relevant information on demographics, as well as land use, housing, natural resources, economics, historic and cultural resources, existing land use, transportation, and community facilities. The general demographic data is presented in this section. Meanwhile, key indicators relating to issues discussed in plan are presented in the applicable section of the document.

General Population

The 2021 population estimate for Wood County is 83,624. This is slightly lower than the county population from the 2020 Decennial Census of 84,296, which is its lowest official population since 1960. It also marked the second successive Census and third time in four counts that the county will have seen a population decrease.

Wood County showed a population increase every decade from 1800 until 1980. The peak official population of the county was 93,648. The county's population in the next three censuses ranged between 86,000 and 88,000 – essentially the same population level as the county had in 1970.

West Virginia's population change shows a similar trend. The state's population peaked in 1950 at 2,005,552. It then declined in two successive census counts before rebounded to its second-highest level ever. The state has had between 1.7 and 2.0 million residents since and was at 1,792,716 in the 2020 census; this is almost the same as of the 1990 state population (0.1% more) and less than 50,000 higher than the 1970 state population (2.8% more).

Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

According to the 2020 Census, the population of Wood County is 92.7 percent White alone (single race). The population is also 1.2 percent Black or African America alone (single race), 0.7 percent Asian alone (single race), and 0.2 percent is either American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander alone (single race). Also, 0.5 percent of the county's population is listed as some other race alone (single race) while 4.7 percent of identifies as multiracial (two or more races). two or more races as being with the remaining 0.5% being classified as "some other race." Also, only 0.5% of the population is of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, regardless of race.

Compared to the state, Wood County's population is slightly more homogenous; the 2020 census shows the state to be about 90 percent white alone (single race). 4.7% white. The state population also has higher proportion of its population that are African American alone (3.7%), and Asian alone (0.8%).

No information was available from the decennial census on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. The five-year American Community Survey data from 2016-2020 does shows a similar finding for this

indicator with a smaller proportion of Wood County's population (1.2%) being Hispanic of Latino, regardless of race as compared to the entire state (1.6%).

<u>Age</u>

Wood County has experienced the same trends as the nation and the state over the past few decades with respect to age (Figure 1). The population has gotten older. The estimated median age from the 2020 American Community Survey (a five-year average from 2016 to 2020) being 43.8 years. It was 42.2 years in the 2010 Census, 39.3 years in the 2000 Census, and 36.0 years in the 1990 Census.

The population of Wood County is slightly older than West Virginia as well. This can be seen in the current median age estimates (43.7 years for the county versus 42.9 years for the state) as well as in comparisons of key age cohorts.

Figure 1: Key Age Cohorts
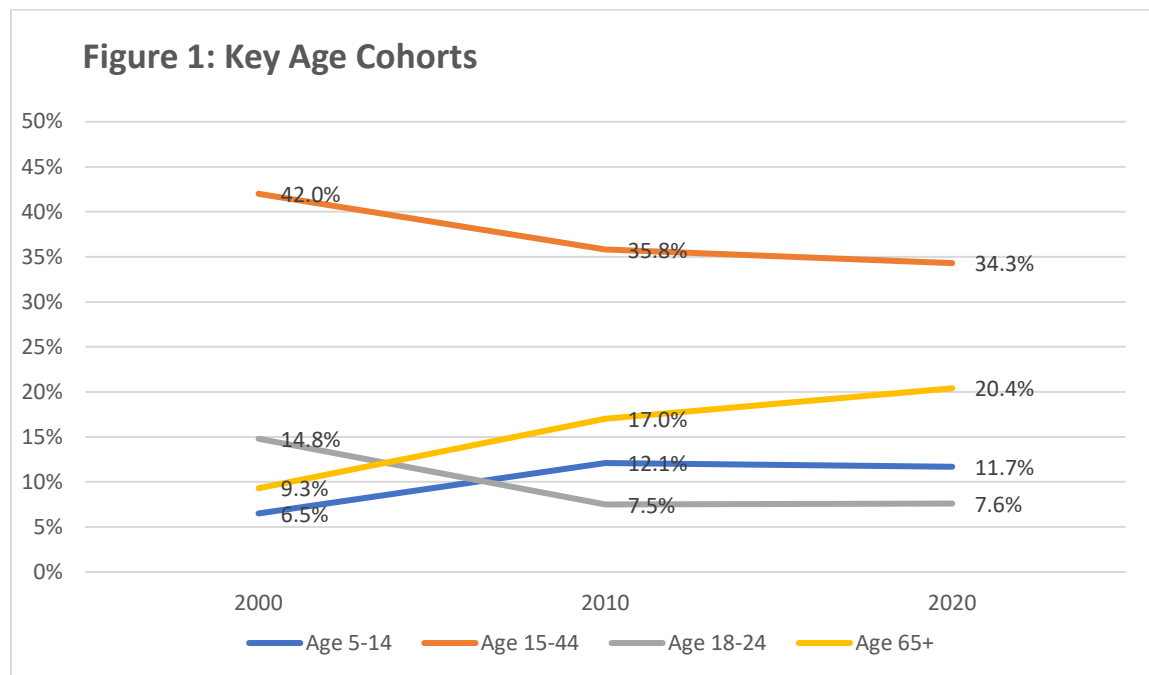
Percent of Wood County Population in Key Age Cohorts (5-15, 15-44, 18-24, 65-and-over). (*Source*: **U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2020 ACS).**

Changes in key age cohorts illustrate show how the population of Wood County has gotten older over the last two decades as well.

Those age 65-and-over make up 20.4 percent of the county's population, compared to 19.9 percent of the state's population. A smaller share of Would County residents are of prime labor force age (15-44) and college age (18-24) than West Virginia. For prime working and family building age group (15-44), it is 34.3 percent for the county versus 36.2 percent for the state;

for the college-going age group (18-24), it is 7.6 percent for the county versus 8.8 percent for the state.

Interestingly, the county has a larger proportion of its population in the primary school age range (5-15) at 11.7 percent compared to just 11.4 percent for the state.

<u>Households</u>

The average household size in Wood County is 2.37 persons, according to the most recent estimates (2020 American Community Survey). This number is essentially the same as the state (2.40 persons per household) and really has not changed much in two decades (2.43 in the 2010 American Community Survey, 2.39 in the 2000 Census).

However, the composition of the households has changed (Figure 2). In 2019, 63.2% were family households. This was slightly lower than the proportion found statewide (64.6%). It also represented a lower proportion of county households than in 2010 (64.7%) or 2000 (69.0%). Related to this, there was an increase in single-person households. In 2019, 32.5% of county householders lived alone. This was more than the state average (29.6%) as well as an increase compared to 2010 (31.7%) and 2000 (27.1%).
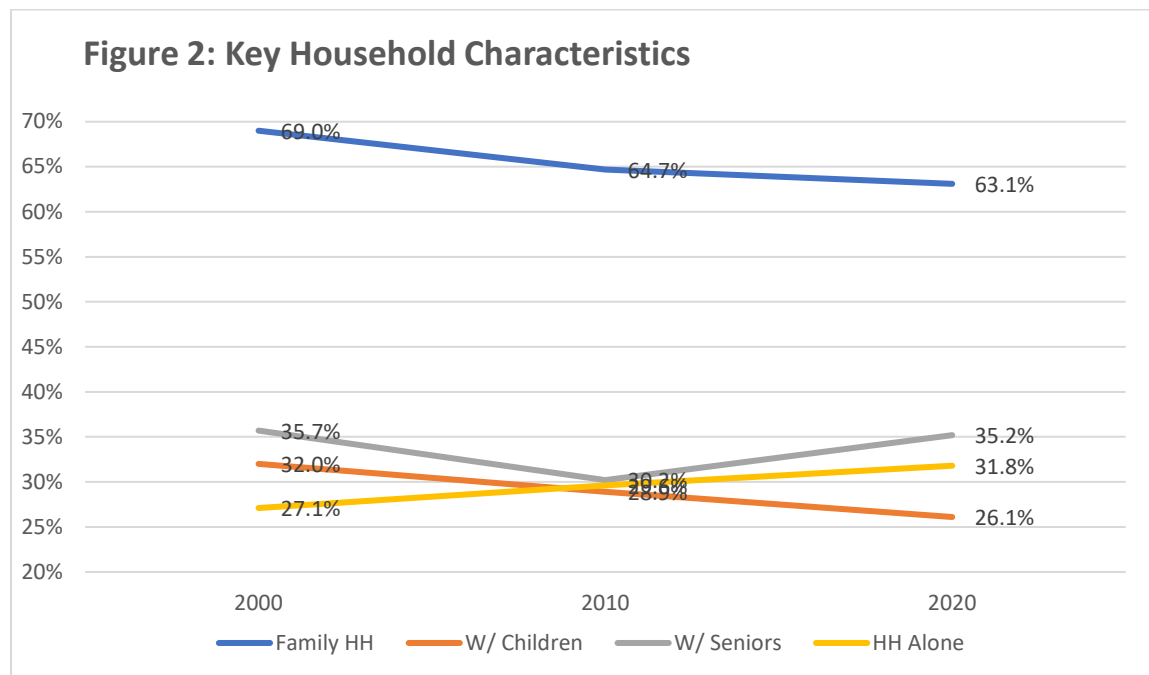
Percent of Wood County Households in Key Categories (Senior is 65-and-above).
(*Source*: **U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2010 ACS, 2020 ACS).**

Household composition also reflected that the population was getting older. More than one-third (35.2%) of Wood County households included someone age 65 or above in 2020. This was about the same as the statewide average (35.1%). It represented an increase from 2010 (30.2%) and was almost equal to the older population reported in 2000 (35.7%).

Expanding the range of population considered "older" just a few years expands this cohort substantially, however. Close to half of the Wood County households (46.6%) included at least one individual age 60 or above in 2020. This was slightly higher than the percentage of the state population (46.1%) and a marked increase from 2010 (38.8%). (No comparable data was available for 2000).

Conversely, barely more than one-fourth of the households (26.1%) had at least one individual age 18 or under in 2020. This was a lower proportion than what was found statewide (27.1%). It also represented a declining share of county households with youth compared to 2010 (28.9%) and 2000 (32.0%).
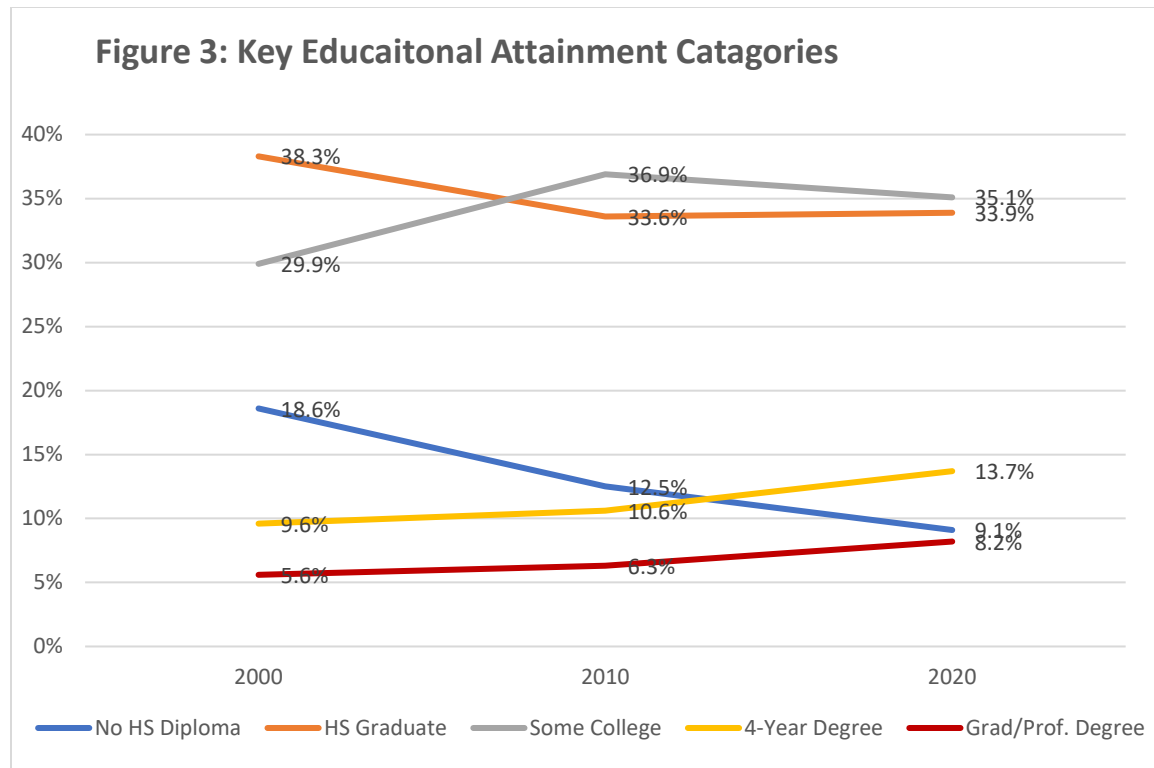
Educational Attainment

The educational attainment levels of Wood County adult residents (age 25-and-over) has improved, but still lags behind the state in advanced educational outcomes. In 2019, estimates showed that more than nine-tenths (90.9%) of county adults had graduated high school (or the equivalent), a higher share of the adult population than the state (87.6%). Likewise, about two-ninths of county adults had earned at least a four-year college degree (22.0%), which is also higher than the share of adults statewide (21.35%). These numbers show considerable improvement over 2010 (87.5% high school diplomas; 16.9% four-year college degrees) and 2000 (81.4% high school diplomas; 15.2% four-year college degrees).
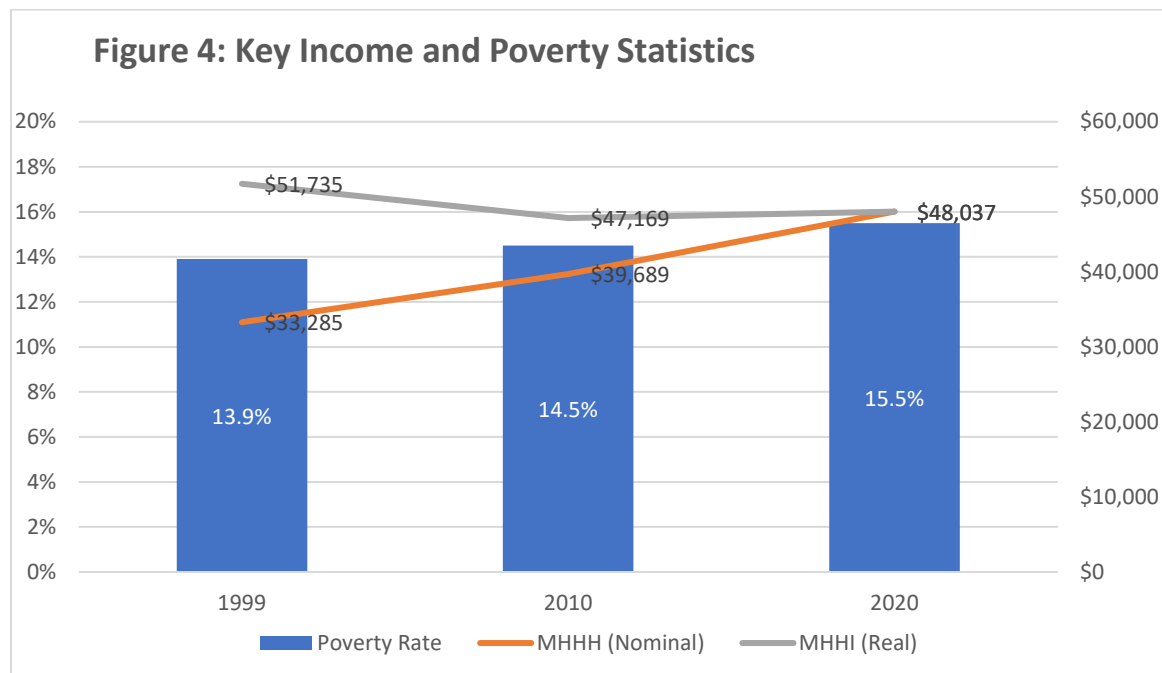
Income and Poverty

The income and poverty profile of Wood County residents is not all that different than what is found across the state. The most recent (2020) estimated median household income $48,037, about $700 lower than median household income for the sate ($48,711). This represented an increase from $39,689 in 2010 estimates and $33,285 in 1999 as reported in the 2000 Census. Adjusting for inflation, the current median household income increased over the last decade ($47,169 in 2020 dollars) but is somewhat lower than the income level reported 20 years ago ($51,735 in 2020 dollars).

Conversely, Wood County has a slightly lower poverty rate than the state. In the most recent estimates (2020), 15.5 percent of all county residents lived below the poverty line compared to 17.1 percent of state residents. Likewise, 74.2 percent of all county residents lived at or above 150 percent of the poverty line which compared favorable to the 72.6 percent of state residents at that level. Meanwhile, the poverty rate in Wood County is slightly higher than the 2010 poverty rate estimates (14.5%) and in 1999 poverty rate as reported in the 2000 Census (13.9%).

Figure 3: Key Educaitonal Attainment Catagories

Percent of Wood County Adults (Age 25-and-above) by Educational Attainment Categories.
(*Source*: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2010 ACS, 2020 ACS).

Figure 4: Key Income and Poverty Statistics

Median Household Income (Nominal and Real (2020)) and Poverty Rate.
(*Source*: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2010 ACS, 2020 ACS).

Summary

The population of Wood County is not that dissimilar what is found throughout the Mountain State. The population is stable, fairly homogeneous, slightly older, and earns a little bit less on average that what is found statewide. Conversely, the county has a higher proportion of adult high school graduates and four-year college graduates as well as a lower proportion of its population in poverty versus the state. As a result, concerns expressed about the state population also generally apply to Wood County.

The population of the nation continues to grow (a 7.35% increase between the 2010 and 2020 Census) while the population of Wood County has been relatively stable. The nation is much more diverse with just over three-fifths of population classified as White alone (one race) in 2020 (61.6%), compared to more than 9-out-of-10 for Wood County. The nation is much younger with a median age of 38.2 years in 2020 compared to 43.8 years for Wood County.

The national population is also more highly educated with nearly one-third having four-year college degrees (32.9%) according to the 2020 estimates, compared to about two-ninths of county adults (22.0%). (The nation had a slightly lower proportion of adults with high school diplomas at 88.5%, compared to 90.9% for the county.)

Finally, the nation as a whole has a substantially higher median household income ($64,994 vs. $48,037) and a lower poverty rate (12.8% vs. 15.5%) compared to the county, according to the most 2020 estimates.

Section 4: County Planning Goals

Introduction

For Wood County to meet its desired goals, it must simultaneously work in several different areas over the next decade. For this comprehensive plan, seven planning elements are being examined.

- Land Use
- Housing
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities and Services
- Natural Resources
- Cultural and Historical Resources

In this chapter, the situation in each of these areas will be discussed in detail. This includes relevant data as well as well as descriptions. Each planning element is also broken into subcategories where appropriate.

The proposed future direction for each planning element is also noted. This provides insights on how to move the county in the desired directions in each of these areas.

In the next chapter, specific action steps are proposed that correspond to the broad ideas for change put forth in the discussion. Along with the action, they include listings for the responsible parties and partners, priority and timeframe, and funding to support each activity.

Land Use

Introduction

Land use planning is an essential tool to guide the development of an area. It provides a framework to decide the future of the county. It can direct growth in places where it is appropriate or desired while at the same time it can protect sensitive natural, cultural and historical resources.

Land uses are categories that refer to the different activities occurring in an area, the human behavior patterns they create, and their effects on the natural and built environment. Land use plans will either encourage the continuation, expansion, or revitalization of those activities – or mitigate or change them in the name of protection and preservation.

The land use element is listed first in the plan for several reasons. It is listed first among the 13 required components in the state code (*WVC* §8A-3-4(c)) More importantly, land use defines or determines (depending upon the level of regulation) what is occurring and what should occur on any particular parcel. Since different land uses require different types of infrastructure and support services from government, how the land is used is important for all other aspects of the comprehensive plan.

Overall, the main objective of the planning process is to allocate land uses to meet the needs of county residents efficiently and effectively while also safeguarding future resources. In other words, the way land is utilized will determine the success or failure of endeavors in Wood County. Careful planning must be done to best utilize the lands available. Assessing what has been beneficial and harmful to Wood County communities can allow an opportunity to plan the proper way to use land in the years to come. It must also be coordinated with the land use plans for the municipalities in the county (the cities of Parkersburg, Vienna, and Williamstown and the town of North Hills) as well as be aware of what is happening in other counties. Such an understanding is essential to predict what may be attracted to the area and how it may affect the land. Thus, the planning strategies incorporated in the upcoming Wood County plan will set the stage for what the future of land use in the county will be.

Predicting Future Land Use

Predicting future land use needs – residential, commercial, industrial, and other uses – is an inexact science. It is made more difficult by the lack of recent population projections and the inherent inexactness of estimates from the American Community Survey. Nevertheless, there is not expected to be any great change in the demand for land over the coming decades – based on current trends.

The population information that exists – Census counts, estimates, and projections – show a continuous slow decline in the number of people living in Wood County.   The most recent (2021) population estimate of 83,624 is the lowest population for the county since the 1960 Census.

The highest recorded population for Wood County was 93,648 in the 1980 Census. That same year, the three smallest municipalities in the county recorded their highest population counts – Vienna (11,618), Williamstown (3,095), and North Hills (940). This was the first Census count for North Hills as the town had only incorporated one year before (1979).

The percentage of the county's population that lived in municipalities had peaked two decades earlier. In 1960, almost three quarters of Wood County residents lived in its three cities (56,810 of 78,331 or 72.3%). Parkersburg's population had its all-time population highest that same Census. The share of the county residents living municipalities has been falling since then, although the number of city-dwelling residents peaked in 1970 (58,500 of 86,818).

Today, just over half of Wood County residents live in municipalities (43,788 of 83,264 or 52.4% based on 2021 estimates). This is meaningful because the county's population loss over the last two decades roughly corresponds to the loss of population found in the cities. Between 2000 and 2021, the total population of the four municipalities decreased 4,048. This accounted for 92.8 percent of the total population decline experienced county-wide during the same period (4,362).

Looking at the future, the population of Wood County is expected to continue its decline over the next decade. The 2014 population projections made by the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research show the population declining to 83,496 in 2025, 81,554 in 2030, and 80,101 in 2035. (Interestingly, the county population projection for 2020 of 84,914 is slightly higher than the actual 2020 Census count).

Meanwhile, the overall population decline experienced in Wood County over the last two decades has been almost totally the result of population decline in the municipalities. The population of the unincorporated portions of Wood County has been relatively stable since 1980, ranging between 38,000 and 42,000 persons. During that same 40-year period, the population in the municipalities fell from just under 56,000 to around 44,000. residents. It is anticipated that this trend will continue in the near term, at least for the 15-year time period for which projections are available, unless some other unforeseen changes occur in the region.

Taken together, this means there is no expected surge in total population that would drastically change the land use needs of Wood County. Characteristics of the population and their changes – discussed in Section 3 – may have some small impact, however. For example, the gradual aging of the population, a phenomenon being experienced statewide and nationally, could lead to different types of residential needs and community facilities geared more toward seniors than toward students. But these differences would be in the details – not the general categories of land use examined within the plan.

Current Land Uses

Wood County has many different land uses within its 377 square miles (366.5 of land area) (See Map). The county has over 83,000 residents. Parkersburg is It is the third-largest city in the state with over 29,000 residents. More than 14,000 people reside in one of the other three municipalities in the county (Vienna, Williamstown, and North Hills). The remaining 39,000-plus people live in unincorporated areas and communities in the county.

The entire county has a population density of about 220 persons per square mile (Map 3). But the population density for the unincorporated areas of the county is just 111 persons per square mile – or roughly half of that total. With 95 percent of the county's land area outside of Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and North Hills, the county is generally less densely populated – and less developed – than would otherwise be expected from the basic density statistic.

The population concentrated primarily around Parkersburg and along the Ohio River. That developed area also features commercial and industrial properties because of the proximity to transportation from highways (Interstate 77, US Route 50, etc.) railroad (CSX) and river transportation (the Ohio River).

The county also has many places that have not been heavily developed. There are large areas of farmland and open space. There are 10 parks within the county including Mountwood Park, Fort Boreman Park, and Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park.

A 2021 analysis of current parcel data for all of Wood County (including the municipalities) based on data from the West Virginia GIS Technical Center confirms this assessment (Map 4, Table 1). Close to half (45.70%) of the county land was classified as agricultural while more than one-sixth (18.93%) was classified as vacant. Combined with areas classified as water, reception, and forested means that nearly two-thirds of the land in the county is non-developed (67.57%).

Meanwhile, about one-fifth of the land was classified as residential (19.86%). Overall, less than three-tenths of the land in the county was considered developed (29.24%).

This data is similar to what the Wood County Assessors Office compiled in 2006 from its database of property information and included in the previous county plan, although direct comparisons are not exact because of differences in methodology and categories. Comparative analysis of land use shows two large changes over have occurred over the last decade-and-a-half: an increase in land being used for residential purposes and a decrease in land being used for agricultural pursuits. It is difficult to know the actual size of these changes – or any changes – because the two land use inventories being compared were interpreted using different methodologies and used different categories (generally more categories in the 2021 report). But these two interrelated differences were so substantial that it is doubtful that they are entirely the result of measurement error.

Map 3: Population Density Map of West Virginia
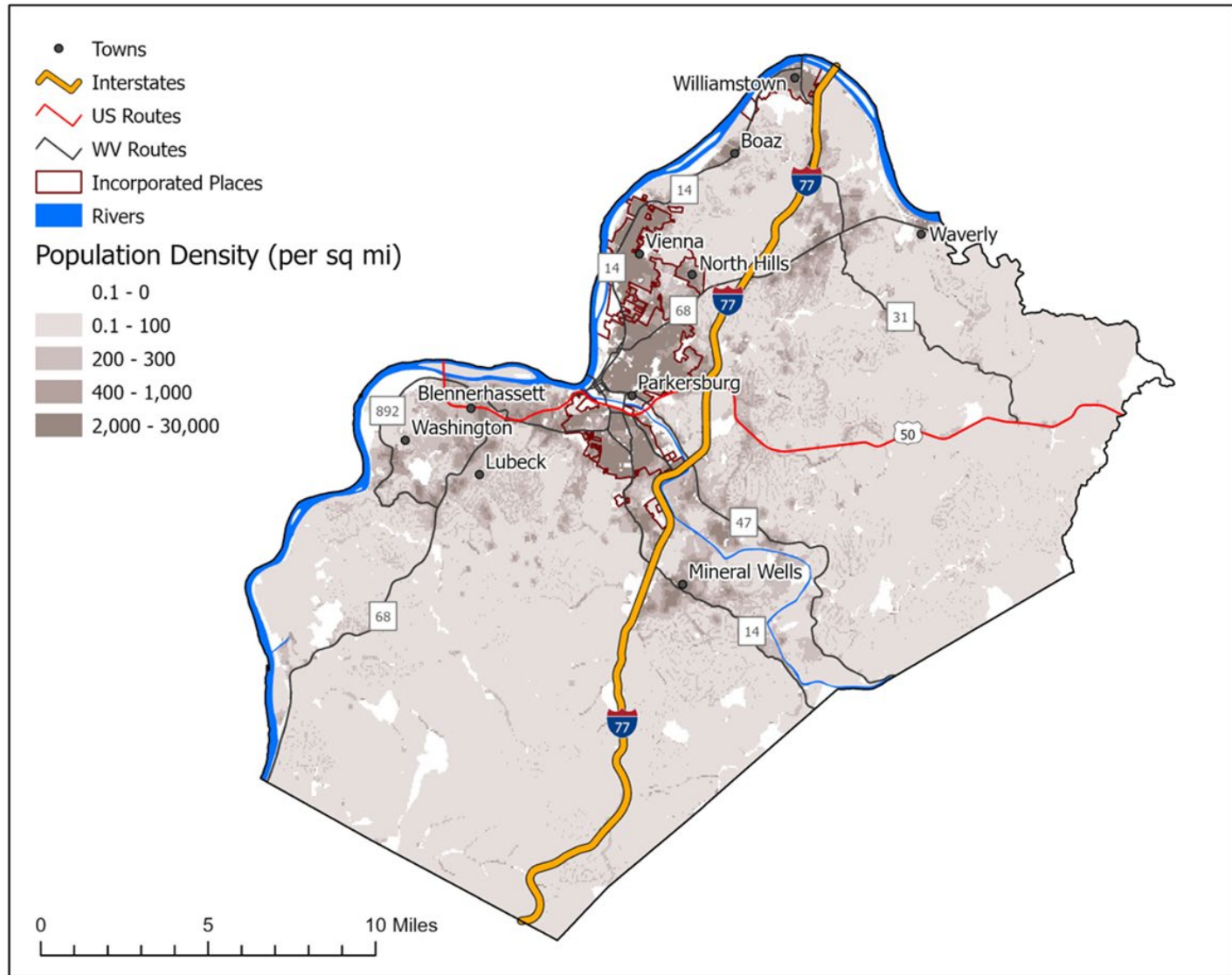
Map 4: Current Land Use/Land Cover Map of Wood County
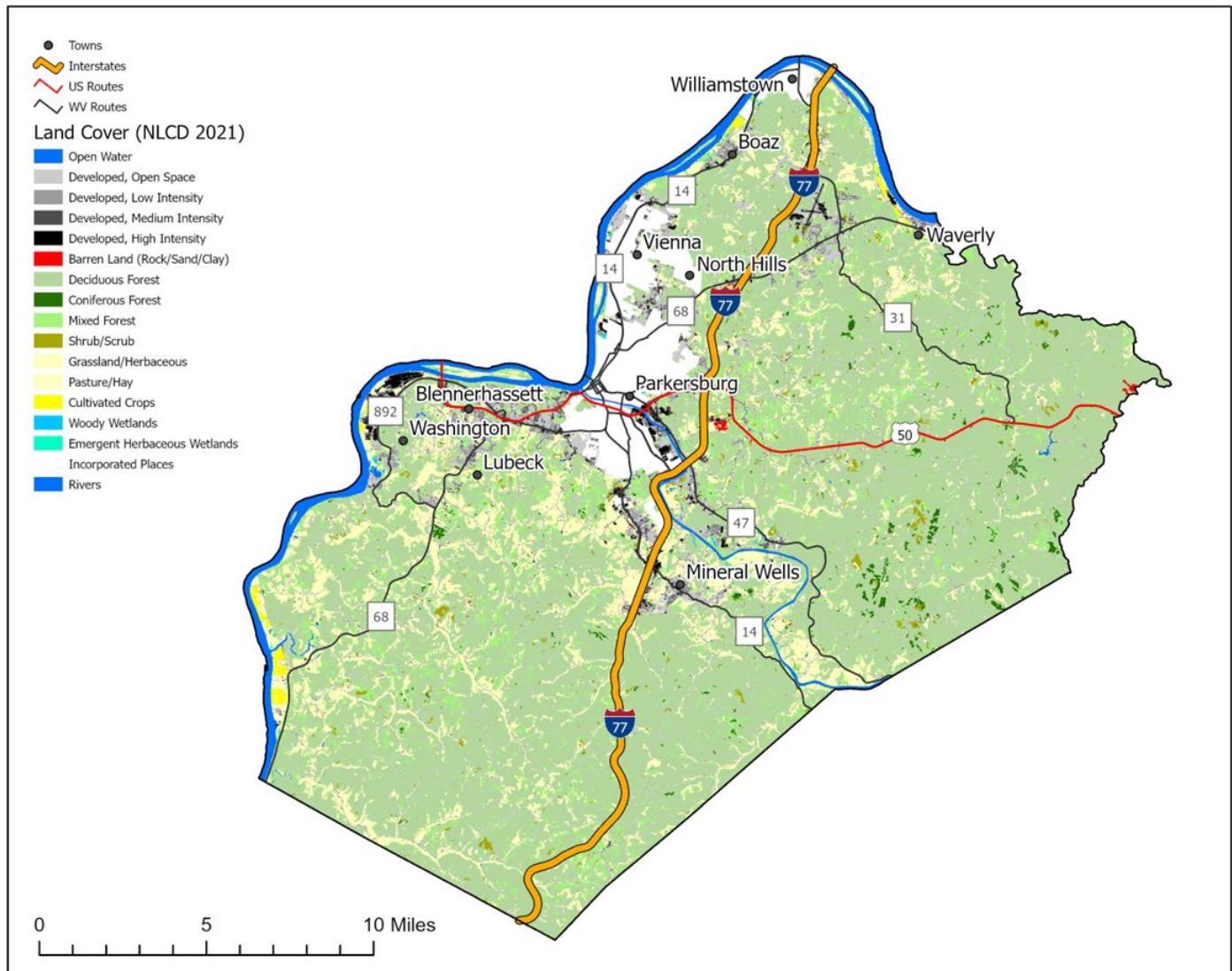
The area listed for residential development in 2021 – either existing or potential – is roughly double what was found in the 2006 review. While this includes over 40,000 acres listed as vacant residential, there is also an increase of almost 5,000 acres in existing residential development. This is surprising since the population of the county has declined since 2000 and there has been no discernable pattern in the average household size as it has remained around 2.4 persons per household while there has been a slight drop in the average household size nationally.

One possible explanation is larger lot development – houses being built on bigger tracts of land. But just over one-twelfth of the housing stock in Wood County was built in 2000 or later (3,509 of 40,827 units, 8.6%). So, it is unclear how much of an impact this phenomenon would have had.

Meanwhile, there appears to be a substantial loss of farmland. Unadjusted data shows a decrease of 60,000 acres of agricultural and forested lands. However, much of that appears to have been classified as vacant residential areas or vacant land – and neither category was listed in the 2006 analysis.

Overall, the 2006 report classified more than seven-tenths of the land as agriculture or woodland (71.55%). Combining parcels classified as agriculture and vacant residential and general vacant land (which was not listed in the 2005 report) results in a similar though somewhat smaller percentage of county land (64.70%). Thus, even after combining the total acreage of the three land use categories, there is still close 14,000 fewer acres of (potential) farmland.

Meanwhile, the portion of land classified as water, transportation and residential were each higher in the more recent analysis. Also, there Finally, there was a slight shift of land from industrial to commercial use (1,500 more acres commercial, 1,000 less acres industrial). Total of both still less than 10,000 acres – including active and vacant sites.

Table 1: 2021 Wood County Land Use

Land Use	Acres	Percent	Comments/Notes
Residential	47,865	19.86	Parcels classified as residential, including occupied 1,2,3, and 4 family residential units, mobile homes, condominiums, and apartment buildings.
Commercial	3,938	1.63	Mixed commercial/residential, restaurants, offices, retail, banks, supermarkets, service stations, parking.
Industrial	2,095	0.87	Warehouses, metal working, manufacturing, pipelines, utilities.
Agriculture	110,167	45.70	Includes parcels classified as active farm, inactive farm
Recreation	640	0.27	Country clubs/golf courses.
Community Facilities	6,760	2.80	Religious institutions, schools, post offices, fire departments, police, cemeteries, colleges/universities, cultural sites, misc. tax-exempt properties, public lands (recreational areas other than golf courses), parks, WMAs
Water	6,379	2.65	Area calculated from mapped surface water area polygons. Methods for calculation of water area are different from those used previously, so values will not be comparable.
Transportation	9,804	4.07	Rail/bus/air terminal and parcels labeled as "Truck Terminal" (319 acres) plus approximate area of right of ways along roads and highways throughout the county.
Forest	32	0.01	A few small parcels classified as forest in previous report were again classified as forest. Not directly comparable to 2006 forest acreage.
Institutional	19	0.01	Not included in original report – includes hospitals
Unknown	1,950	0.81	Mapped parcels with no information plus approximate area outside all mapped parcels but still within Wood County (parcels likely mapped in adjacent counties).
Vacant Commercial	3,533	1.47	Parcels classified as vacant commercial land by assessor in 2021 tax parcel database.
Vacant Industrial	367	0.15	Parcels classified as vacant industrial land by assessor in 2021 tax parcel database. Listed parcel owners include chemical manufacturers, utilities, railroads, PSDs
Vacant Exempt Land	1,690	0.70	Parcels classified as vacant exempt land by assessor in 2021 tax parcel database. Generally, includes church properties, Department of Highways, etc.
Vacant Land	5,766	2.39	Parcels classified as "large vacant tract – unknown potential" by assessor in 2021 tax parcel database
Vacant Residential	40,037	16.61	Parcels classified as vacant residential land by assessor in 2021 tax parcel database
Total	241,021		Total acres within Wood County according to 1:24,000 scale mapped county boundary (this differs from total county area reported in 2006 County document due to differing methods). The previous report relied largely on mapped parcels to summarize area; this total area figure is based on actual mapped land area of Wood County.

Notes on Methodology: Wood County parcel data for 2021 were downloaded from the WV GIS Technical Center website at http://wvgis.wvu.edu/data/dataset.php?ID=371. Parcel data included descriptive attributes (data) for owner, occupancy type, and land use. These attributes were used along with calculated parcel acreage to help tabulate county land use acreage and percentages. Some portions of the county are not included as mapped parcels, including larger water bodies (such as the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers), highway and road right-of-ways, and portions of parcels that are mapped in adjacent counties. The table below explains which parcels were included in each land use type. I tried to follow descriptions from the 2006 comprehensive plan where possible. Some land use areas/percentages may not be directly comparable to 2006 values due to different land use classification methods.

Projections for Future Land Uses

There are several options for future land use goals from people in the county (see Map 6). One large area to explore is to target manufacturing growth and development or redevelopment. Other allied activities also have potential. Additionally, the future land use in the unincorporated parts of the county needs to be sensitive to the plans of the cities of Parkersburg, Vienna, and Williamstown as well as the town of North Hills. Land use decisions should be coordinated to create consistency among the various localities' plans.

Growth Centers

Just over half of Wood County's residents live in its municipalities. However, all four municipalities in Wood County have experienced a decline in their respective populations over the last several decades. This decline explains virtually all the decrease in the total population of the county.

Nevertheless, more than half of all county residents continue to live in these municipalities. The areas along the Ohio River or adjacent to Interstate 77 are among the most developed places in Wood County. Thus, it makes sense to continue to focus on the expansion of the unincorporated areas near the municipalities. They have the advantage of location, access, and often infrastructure.

As a result, the county should focus on places adjacent to or near the municipalities, especially those areas south of Parkersburg, west of Parkersburg, and between Vienna and Williamstown (Table 2). These places are often identifiable as being a unique location, even though they are unincorporated communities. They are connected to the municipalities through the transportation system and other existing networks as well.

The first area is south of Parkersburg along Interstate 77. It includes Mineral Wells, Davisville, and the campus of WVU-Parkersburg (which is not in the city).   The large tracts and business parks make this a prime location of new industrial development as well as some commercial business.

The second area is west of Parkesburg to the Ohio River. It includes the communities of Blennerhassett, Washington, and Lubeck. There are some industrial sites in the area that could be redeveloped. However, as the general character of much of this area is residential, small-scale business and services and expanded housing would be the most appropriate types of development.

The third area is between Vienna and Williamstown. It includes Boaz and the area around the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Airport. Several types of development are appropriate here. Tourist retail outlets and services could be located around Interstate 77 Exit 185. Industrial firms and support businesses could be located near the airport. Retail and service establishments focused on providing the needs of residents, plus additional housing, could be located in-and-around Boaz.

Map 6: Future Land Use/Land Cover Map of Wood County
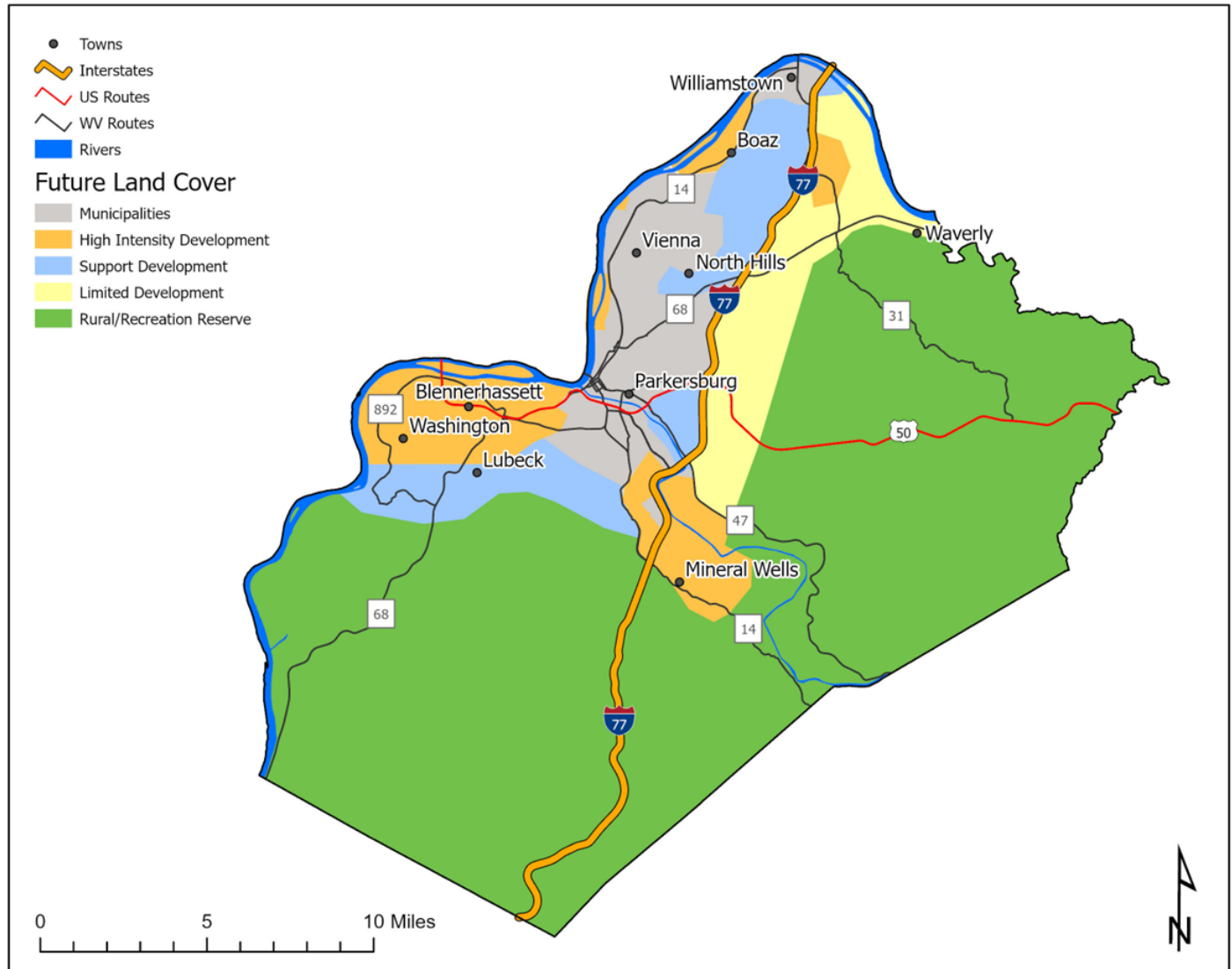
In all cases, the county should be ready to receive spillover development from the existing municipalities. Places just outside of the cities may be appropriate locations for complementary and supplementary development. Also, it is advisable that any such development near municipal boarders strives to benefit both the county and the city involved. Municipal boundaries are often unnoticed in interconnected communities – unless intergovernmental conflicts draw attention to those lines, potentially detracting from development.

Finally, topological (Map 7) and environmental (Map 8) factors may limit the ability to intensify the land use of an area that otherwise would be a prime location for development. Thus, the slope and the hydrology of a location must be taken into account when making decisions about its future status (See Maps). Such considerations are not reflected in the discussion of growth areas or the future land discussion.

Table 2: Potential Growth Areas

South of Parkersburg

- Mineral Wells
- Davisville
- WVU-Parkersburg area
- Sites include Polymer Technology Park, Bug Tygart Farms South, Sir Maxwell Development
- Buildings include PACTIV Building, 1239 S. Meadville Road, former Lemon & Barrett's

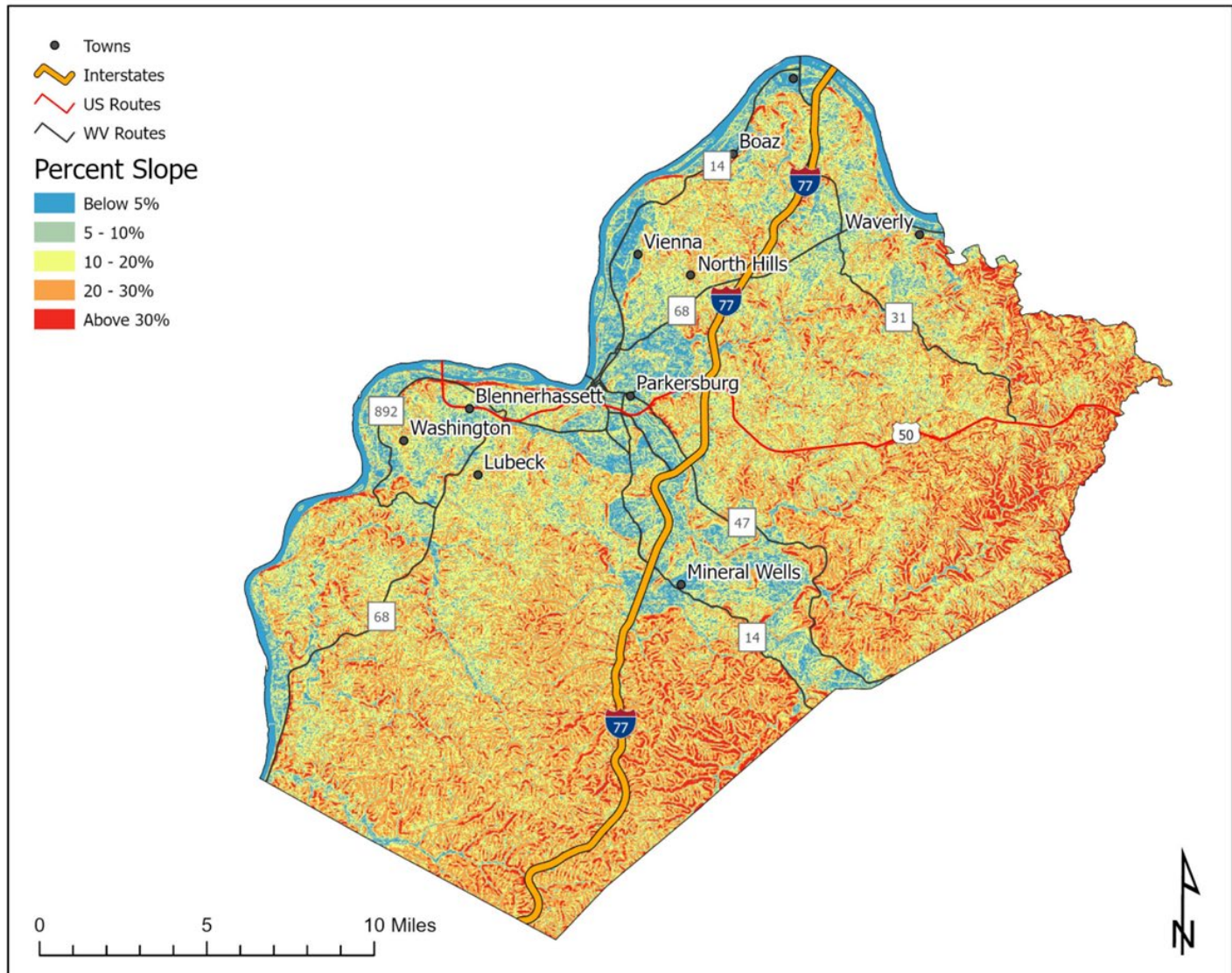West of Parkersburg

- Blennerhassett
- Washington
- Lubeck
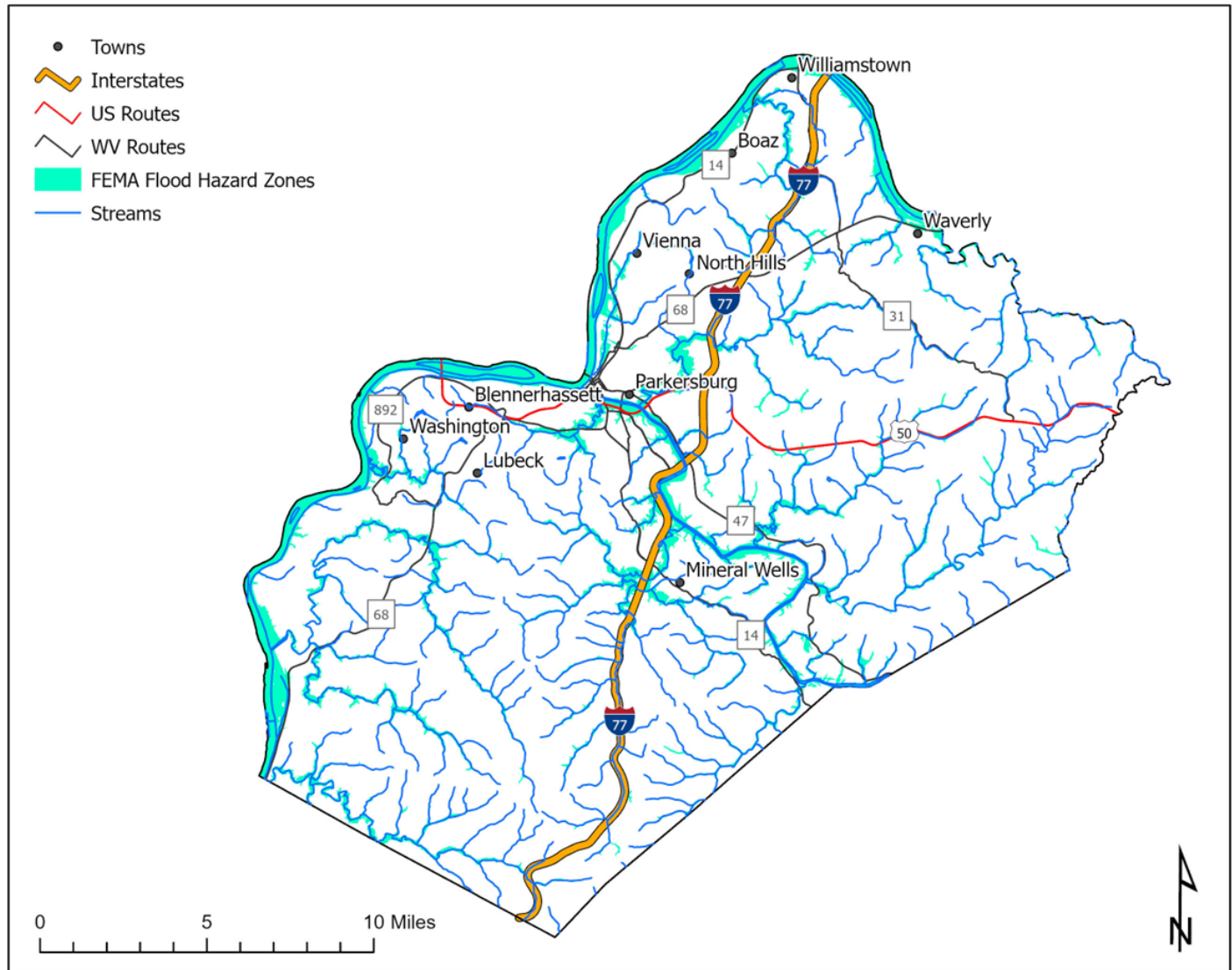- Sites include Chemours, Harris Way
- Buildings include 831 Marrtown Road

Between Vienna and Williamstown

- Boaz
- Mid-Ohio Valley Airport area
- Sites include Emerson Commons, Access Road Gateway
- Buildings include 1831 Williams Highway, 12905 Emerson Ave.

Map 7: Slope Map of Wood County

Map 8: Hydrology Map of Wood County

Industry

Wood County is a traditional manufacturing center in West Virginia. The sector is part of the county's economic base – at least for state level comparisons. Chemicals have traditionally been the dominant industry in the county – though there have been environmental issues associated with some processes. More recently, other types of manufacturing, such as automobile assembly, have been added to the county profile. And other developments could permit the county economy to expand in new directions.

Chemical manufacturing activity currently focuses on making resins, syntenic rubber, and other artificial fiber (NAICS 3252). Over 1,200 people were employed in five establishments in that subsector in 2020. Related to this, Dupont/Chemours was the only manufacturer among the county's ten largest employers in March 2021 (as it ranked fourth).

Hino Motors Manufacturing USA has been a top employer in the county as well. It employed upwards of 500 persons at a Mineral Wells facility that opened in 2019. However, the plant halted production in late 2020 because of issues related to engine certification testing for new trucks. Production resumed on a limited scale in fall 2021 but employment has not yet reached its previous levels.

Finally, the proximity of Wood County to the natural gas and oil drilling in the Marcellus and Utica shale provide it with a new potential manifesting focus. Since the county is very close to where large-scale extraction is occurring, Wood County could potentially be a prime location for firms that produce support equipment and items for the drilling industry as well as those that make products using natural gas or oil as a primary raw material.

Overall, future land use for manufacturing in Wood County should focus on these three activities. They have proven to be – or at least have the potential to be -- successful in the county. This is based on the economic history of the county and the knowledge, skills, and abilities present in the current workforce.

Commerce

The growth of commerce activities in Wood County has much potential. Traditionally, retail and service establishments have been located in the municipalities. It is anticipated that this will continue to be the case as the majority of the county's residents live in the incorporated areas and their population density provide them with a competitive advantage. In particular, the size and location of Parkersburg has made it and the areas around it – including Vienna – the prime commerce center for the county.

However, times have changed. Downtowns gave ways to malls and "big box stores" which in turn gave away to hypermarkets and on-line shopping. Likewise, population has moved away from the center of the cities to newer neighborhoods and developments located in the periphery of urban areas – and often in unincorporated places.

Nevertheless, residents regardless of where they might live still have daily needs for goods and services that cannot be met through on-line processes or two-day delivery. This means there is an opportunity for smaller and specialized goods and service providers, especially in the unexcoriated parts of the county where there are small pockets (concentrations) of population are present.

These businesses would supplement existing retail stores and service centers. They would need to be located near where people live and should along existing travel routes. Within existing and new residential developments, there need to be places set aside for these establishments. Their location would be on the edges of these areas to increase and enhance their accessibility.

Housing

Residential land uses are the largest category of developed land in Wood County. Nearly one-fifth of the county (19.86%) of the land in the county is identified as residential. Combined with vacant residential land, more than one-third of all land in the county (36.47%) is allocated for housing.

The number of occupied housing units (down 0.95%) decreased less than the county's population (down 3.06%) between 2010 and 2020. The combined average household size remained basically unchanged (2.38 persons in 2020 versus 2.37 persons in 2010).

Thus, any substantial increase in the county's population will necessitate an increase in the county's housing stock. The currently "vacant" residential land is a likely location for much of this potential development. Based on current trends, over 70 percent of the new housing will be owner-occupied, but both owner-occupied and renter-occupied structures will be needed to meet demand.

It should also be noted that since about half of the county residents live in the municipalities, there are more housing units there. Based on 2020 estimates, there are 35,189 households in the county with more than half (19,118) in Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, or North Hills. It is expected that any new housing would most likely be built in-or-around these places.

Rurality and Recreation

Most of the land in Wood County is not developed – as in built-upon. Agriculture is the largest land use in the county, plus, there are many categories of "vacant" land. As noted above, together these categories means that more than two-thirds of the land in the county is "undeveloped" (67.57%).

This is not surprising given the importance of agriculture and the prominence of recreation in the county. Both these provide land uses result in open space and rural settings which combined to provide Wood County its character.

Agriculture is the largest land use in Wood County, based on assessment of land use and land cover data. The 2017 Census of Agriculture (the most recent for which data is available)

reported 89,959 acres in farms in the county. This is slightly lower than the figure provided by the data analysis, which is most likely the result in reporting and classification differences.

The 881 farms ranged from the very small as 61 were 1 to 9 acres in size (6.9%) to the very large as 16 were 500 or more acres (1.8). Almost half the farms – 408 -- were between 50 and 179 acres (46.3%). The breakdown of the land in the farms included 39 percent in woodland, 28 percent in cropland, and 24 percent in pastureland. Almost three-quarters of the land in cropland was being used for forage, including hay and haylage (72.9%).

It is also anticipated that agricultural activities will continue to be an important part of the land use picture in Wood County for the foreseeable future. This is result of the potential for hemp cultivation that would fit well with the county's farming profile, to the opportunity to expand agritourism offerings in the area which would provide another income stream for farmland owners to the legal protections from zoning regulation recently added to state code for farms and agricultural activities (*WVC* §8A-7-10(e)).

Another course of open space for Wood County is its parks and recreational facilities. There are 10 parks within the county including Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park which serves as one of the attractions that draws thousands of tourists into the county each year. There are county and city parks –throughout Wood County. The largest park is Mountwood Park in the eastern part of the county. In the area in-and-around Parkersburg, there are numerous facilities. Among the Parkersburg city parks are Fort Boreman Park (history), Southwood Park (creation), and Johnson T. Janes Park (natural area). There are Eagle Park in Vienna and Tomlinson and Fenton Park in Williamstown. There is the North Bend Rail Trail's Happy Valley Trail Head just outside of Parkersburg. There are the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge along the river (with the headquarters in Williamstown). There are numerous private campgrounds, golf courses, specialty places, and other facilities as well.

Given the county's location along the Ohio River and its large areas of open (undeveloped) land, recreational and related land uses (parks are classified as "community facilities" in the land use inventory) should remain important. If the population of Wood County sees substantial increase, it may be necessary to set aside more lands for recreational pursuits and outdoor activities to meet the needs of a growing county. In particular, there may be the need for more general spaces and for places outside of the Interstate 77 corridor. Additionally, the rural areas of Wood County contribute substantially to the quality and will need to be protected and preserved. They offer an alternative experience to those places expected to experience growth in the coming years.

Housing

Housing is an important basic need, though not a legal fundamental legal right. Coupled with the imperfections of the housing market, it means that localities must be ready to take actions to ensure there is appropriate housing for its residents. This is particularly important when

there are substantial changes in the population or its composition, which can result in changes in the number or type of housing units needed.

On the surface, it appears the housing situation in Wood County has changed very little over the last decade. Based on county-wide data (which includes the four municipalities), the number of housing units is up slightly to 40,304 in 2020 while the number of occupied units is down 1 percent to 36,192 (Table 3). This is less than the 3 percent drop in the county's population over the same time period. Interestingly, the number of unoccupied units is up almost 13 percent to 4,112.

Table 3: Wood County Housing Units

	2010	2020	Change
Housing Units	40,215	40,304	0.22%
-- Occupied	36,571	36,192	-1.04%
-- Vacant	3,644	4,112	12.84%

Source: US Census, Decennial Census.

The average household size has been essentially unchanged at 2.37 person per household. In 2020 (Table 4). This includes an average household size of 2.47 for the owner-occupied units, which are 72.7 percent of the occupied housing stock (and about 63.0% of the total housing stock). The household size is lower than what is found in statewide or nationally.

Table 4: Average Household Size

	2010	2020	Change
Wood County	2.37	2.37	0.10%
West Virginia	2.43	2.40	-1.19%
United States	2.60	2.59	-0.69%

Note: Calculated from household size listed for owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units.
Source: US Census, American Community Survey.

Based on 2020 American Community Survey estimates, about three-quarters of all housing units in Wood County are one-unit detached (30,292 or 75.2%) – single-family homes. Conversely, less than one-twelfth of the housing units contain five or more units (2,965 or 7.4%).

The ACS show that more than half of the housing units in the county are at least 50 years old (20,539 or 51.0%), including nearly one-sixth that are more than 80 years old (6,384 or 15.8%). Conversely, only about one out of every 25 housing units in the county have been built since 2010 (1,610 or 4.0%). Likewise, the 2022 Housing Needs Assessment for Wood County found that almost one-third of the rental (30%) and owner-occupied (32%) housing units were built before 1970.

Despite the age of the housing stock, there are few livability issues. The ACS found only a very small fraction of the housing units in Wood County lack heating (38 or 0.1%), complete plumbing (111 or 0.3%), or complete kitchen facilities (190 or 0.5%). Similarly, the housing

study found one-in-40 rental units (2.5%) and almost no owner-occupied units (0.2%) had incomplete kitchen facilities or plumbing.

Meanwhile, the ACS reported the median size of all housing units is 5.9 rooms. All these characteristics compare favorably to the housing stock statewide. Not surprisingly, the housing study found very little crowding among rental properties (2%) or owner-occupied units (0.5%).

Based on the data, it appears Wood County has enough housing stock and it is of an acceptable quality. However, additional examination point to some substantial issues with respect to housing affordability and availability as well as specialty units need to be addressed.

The ACS show the median value of owner-occupied housing units is $126,300, which is higher than the state average. This could at least partially explain why the county has a lower proportion of owner-occupied housing (70.3%) that the state (72.5%), according to data from the housing study. The level of cost burdened households is roughly in-line with the state, with less than one-sixth (14.8%) classified as cost-burdened (spending at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs) and only about one-out-of-20 being (5.4%) classified as severely cost burdened (spending at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs).

Meanwhile, the ACS found the median rent is lower than the statewide average at $715 per month. This could help explain why the housing study found the rental stock in the county in virtually filled. And despite rental costs being low compared to the state, more than two-fifths of county rental households (42.8%) are considered cost-burdened, including about one-sixth (16.4%) that are severely cost-burdened.

These translates into some meaningful housing needs. The 2022 Housing Needs Assessment concluded there was a high need for very-low, low, and moderately-priced rental housing as well as the need for more houses for purchase at all price points (low, moderate, and high). The housing study also concluded that an increase in housing availability could help the county increase its population, reversing the trend of declines of the recent decades.

This roughly corresponds to the findings from the comprehensive plan survey. The three most important housing issues are rent inflation/high rent costs (21.9%), age of housing units (20.0%), and structural condition of housing units (15.8%).

Finally, it should be noted that numerous entities are working on housing-related issues. These include governmental entities such the Wood County Commission, the Parkersburg Housing Authority (which operates across the county), and Wood County Economic Development as well as property owners, real estate agents, landlords, and area residents.

Housing Availability

The housing data for Wood County includes the municipalities (as noted above). Given that slightly more than half of the county's population lived in the cities and town, it is not surprising that there is more housing stock in those places than in the unincorporated areas. However,

there is more housing in the municipalities than would be expected based on its population share. According to the American Community Survey data, a total of 54.3 percent of the county's occupied housing units are in Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and North Hills while those four places have only 52.4 percent of the county's population.

This difference is small but does indicate that there may need to be more housing units available outside of the municipalities. This would be needed even if the population of the county does not grow but only shifts from the cities and town to the other communities and open areas in Wood County. This potential area of need can be seen through the lower-than-expected proportion of the county's vacant housing stock (38.9%) being in unincorporated areas.

Both outside and inside the municipalities, the most common type of housing was the single-unit detached (the typical single-family home). Overall, three-quarters of the housing stock for the entire county is of this type (75.2%), with a slightly larger proportion of housing units in the municipalities fitting this description (76.9%) than in the unincorporated areas (73.2%). There are some substantial differences in the housing stock in the different parts of the county as well. The proportion of mobile homes in the unincorporated areas is much higher (14.7% of the housing stock vs. 1.6%). Meanwhile, the share of housing units in larger complexes (five of more units) is considerably lower (3.5% of the housing stock versus 10.6%).

These differences are not surprising. Mobile homes are commonly placed on rural land and used as residences before (or while) a home is built. Meanwhile, the lack of infrastructure can make it difficult to have high-density housing units in many unincorporated areas.

The relationship between housing and population is two-sided. A reduction of the population causes a reduction of demand for housing. In such a situation, it is probably wise to not to build many new homes and to look at more at converted uses/functions for property instead. In Wood County, population growth has stagnated and it has an aging population, less new housing structures need to be built.

There are some signs for the need for some increases in the housing stock – or at least changes in its composition. Anecdotal reports indicate there is an increased demand for housing – especially rental housing – for those working in the oil and gas industry. This has already led to increases in residential rents. Meeting such a need in the short-term could be accomplished through the conversion of empty or underutilized buildings – including vacant dwellings – into rental units. In some cases, this may mean transforming a single-family house into two or more residences (where permitted and where appropriate infrastructure is present). In the longer-term, if the demand persists, the construction of new housing units for renters (such as multifamily units) may be required. This would represent a sea change as areas in the county were classified as having the lowest opportunity or a lower opportunity for multifamily developments to be fiscally feasible, according to a 2017 report by the West Virginia Housing Development Fund.

There also may be the potential for expanded housing for various groups. The population of Wood County is getting older. The median age is 43.8 years with more than one-fifth of the population being age 65 and over (20.4%) and more than one-fourth of the population being age 60 and over (27.5%).

There are also individuals in the population classified as disabled and as such may have special housing needs. According to U.S. Census estimates, more than one-tenth of the county's population has an ambulatory difficulty (10.3%). More than one out of every 15 county residents have an independent living difficulty (7.6%) or a cognitive difficulty (7.2%) while more than out of every 40 residents has a self-care difficulty (2.9%). These disabilities characteristics are higher (and often considerably higher) for the population age 65 or over.

To address these needs, the county should work to identify future housing needs before they become acute. As part of this, locations for new, expanded, or redeveloped existing housing should be identified. It should then encourage developers to undertake projects that will meet those needs – and these should be profitable for the developers as there will be demand. This can be the task of the planning commission but may be better suited for a specialized group that focuses on the housing situation in the county, such as the broadening the scope of the Parkersburg Housing Authority or creating a new countywide body (e.g., a Housing Committee).

Likewise, for those who have special needs, there will need to be diverse specialized housing options. This could entail adding special units in new projects, particularly multi-family developments. It could mean the conversion of existing properties into specialty housing. It could mean the opening of new assisted living centers. To accomplish this, Wood County will need to work with a variety of partners, including agencies who help seniors and the disabled, to see that housing needs for these groups are met.

Housing Affordability

Housing costs have increased in Wood County over the last two decades. However, the impact of that increase varies, depending upon the type of housing.

The nominal cost for residences has increased for renters, mortgage holders, and home owners without mortgages over the last two decades. The median monthly rent in 2020 was $715, up 66.7 percent from 2000. The median monthly cost for mortgage holders was $982, up 33.6 percent. The median monthly cost for homeowners without mortgages was $332, up 49.5 percent. Related to this, the median value of an owner-occupied house increased by 63 percent over the same two-decade period to $126,300.

Upon closer examination, however, only the increase in costs to renters increased faster than inflation. The median monthly rental cost in the county increased 11.2 percent in real terms between 2000 and 2020. However, the median monthly cost for mortgage holders fell by over 10 percent while the median monthly cost for homeowners without mortgages was essentially

unchanged. Interestingly, while the median cost for homeowners stayed steady or declined, the median value of an owner-occupied house increased even when adjusted by inflation.

Despite these somewhat stable housing costs, almost one quarter (between 23.8% and 24.5%) of all households in Wood County were considered cost burdened in between 2016 to 2020, meaning they paid 30 percent or more of their household income on housing (such as rent or mortgage expenses), according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. During the same time period, about one-sixth of county residents lived below the poverty level (the poverty rate ranged between 15.5% and 17.4%), providing much of the explanation for housing affordability problems. Also, almost one household in ten (9%) experienced severe housing cost burdens during that time, meaning they paid at least half of their household income on housing, according to County Health Rankings reports.

The housing affordability situation appears to have worsened somewhat over time in Wood County. The proportion of households considered cost burdened in 2000 was about 18 percent. Likewise, the county poverty rate was just 13.4 percent in 1999.

Further exacerbating the situation has been the increased demand – especially for rental units – caused by the influx of new arrivals working in the oil and gas industry.

Currently, the Parkersburg Housing Authority is charged with assisting low-income families in an eight-county area which includes Wood County (as well as Wirt, Pleasants, Tyler, Ritchie, Wetzel, Marshall, and Doddridge Counties). It focuses on providing affordable, safe, and decent housing options for the region. It operates Homecrest Manor, a 146-unit public housing complex on south side of Parkersburg. The complex often has a waiting list for units (and in late 2021 closed the waiting list for the one-bedroom units). It does not have any plans to build any additional units.

The authority also operates a housing voucher program under the Section 8 Existing Housing Assistance Payment Program. The monthly rental costs for both programs are based on 30 percent of family income minus allowable deductions for personal situations.

The housing authority provides other services as well. It offers a path to homeownership for low-income families through P.R.I.D.E. (Program to Reinvest in Individual Development and Enterprise). It also provides job training, education, employment, and support services through the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

To ensure there are affordable housing options, the county will need to continue support for the work of the housing authority, including creating special districts (such as BUILD WV Districts) as appropriate. This will involve promoting locations for affordable housing, including designating places for new and renovated units. It will also need to ensure that the conversion of existing structures to new uses – such as denser housing in the built-up areas near the municipalities is permitted. It will need to support efforts to enhance and expand voucher and financial assistance programs that decrease the financial burden of housing. Actions of this

nature could help curtail the rent inflation currently being experienced in the county. Finally, the county should encourage developers to include various types of housing options as part of new projects.

Housing Quality

The county had an estimated 40,288 housing units in 2020 (from the American Community Survey). More than half of these units (51.0.9%) are at least 50 years old (built before 1970), including nearly one-sixth (15.8%) built before 1940. Conversely, only about one-eighth (12.6%) of the housing units were built in the 21st century (2000 and after), including only one out of 25 (4.0%) constructed in or after 2010.

It is noteworthy that the housing stock in the unincorporated areas of Wood County is relatively newer than what is found in the municipalities. Just over one-quarter of the county's oldest housing units (26.1%) are outside Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and North Hills. Likewise, almost five-sixths of the most recently built residences (82.3%) are outside the municipalities.

Despite their age, these housing units do not appear to be lacking in the basics. As noted previously, less than one percent of the units lack complete kitchen facilities (0.5%), lack complete plumbing (0.3%), or use no heating fuel (0.1%). Similarly, the West Virginia Housing Development Fund reported the housing stock in the county to be of higher quality or highest quality in 2017 – except for the areas in-and-around Parkersburg urban core.

Despite appearing to be in good structural condition, it is likely that many of housing may need upgrades -- repairs and renovations – to meet current codes (i.e., electrical, fire) or expectations (i.e., insultation, heating/cooling systems, technology) before being able to be marketable. This may be especially true for the older units which are structurally sound but were constructed in an era when housing units did not have as many standard amenities. This will require the presence of contractors and building trades specialists. The availably of such is limited at present. Efforts to increase and improve access to such services is important to maintaining and improving the county housing stock.

Likewise, there have been reports over the years of unoccupied housing units falling into disrepair, especially in the more urbanized parts of the county.   This is important since roughly one-eighth of the housing units countywide (12.7%) – and in the unincorporated parts of the Wood County (13.0%) were unoccupied in 2020. For this reason, it is important the county consider a vacant building program. Under such, all vacant buildings – including but not limited to housing units -- need to be identified, registered, and analyzed in terms of use/reuse (e.g., location, access, previous function, ownership, potential, etc.). This may entail the creation of a Building Commission or similar board. Such efforts can aid with the renovation and repair properties to ensure that units remain (or are made to be) habitable or useable.

Finally, another area of concern is the location of approximately 3,000 residential buildings in the 100-year flood zones, based on a review of maps from FEMA and the WV GIS Technical

Center. While many of these are near the Ohio River, there are also locations along the Little Kanawha River and the other streams and tributaries that flow in and through the county. These structures need to be maintained to the relevant standards, both for the safety of the residents and to enable the purchase of flood insurance for protection when a disaster occurs.

Transportation and Infrastructure

This section of the plan looks at two large parts of the built environment. These elements are generally provided by the government or by utilities and other entities that are overseen by government regulation.

Transportation are the systems that move people and goods into Wood County, out of the county, and around/through the county. The largest part of transportation is the highway system – the streets, roads, and throughways that connect and pass through communities, but it is much more. It includes the bicycle paths, trails, and sidewalks that handle non-vehicle traffic and pedestrians. Furthermore, it includes other modes of transportation – trains, ships, and airplanes.

In the comprehensive plan survey, the most pressing transportation issue was the quality and conditions of the roads and highway (47.5%). The only other issue listed by at least one-tenth of respondents was the limited commercial flight schedule at the airport (17.7%). Similarly, suggested transportation enhancements included greater airport/airline options (20.6%), additional walking trails (18.3%), and safety improvements on highways (15.3%).

Infrastructure involves a variety of systems that provide necessary services and functions for Wood County. This entails water and sewer; solid waste provision; telecommunications and broadband; and gas, power, and light.

In the comprehensive plan survey, general infrastructure needs (26.1%) was the most selected land use issue. Meanwhile, sewers/wastewater/stormwater systems (12.3%) and garbage and recycling (12.3%) were the third-ranked and fourth-ranked facility and service need.

Transportation

The transportation network serving Wood County includes walkways, bikeways, roadways, railways, waterways, and airways. These systems fall under different jurisdictional authorities, including local, regional, state, and national governments as well as various private entities.

These transportation networks allow for the circulation of people, goods, and services to, from, and within the county. They have a significant impact on growth and development. Land use decisions are influenced by the location and character of transportation systems. Effective circulation allows for these movement on these systems in a safe, convenient, and environmentally sensitive manners.

Highways

The main highway corridors in Wood County are Interstate 77 and U.S. Route 50. Interstate 77 runs north-south from Marietta, Ohio to the Jackson County line. There are seven interchanges along the approximately 30 miles of interstate highway in the county. The northernmost exit (Exit 185) is near where the highway enters the county and serves Williamstown. The southernmost exit (Exit 161) is near where the highway departs the county and serves the Rockport area. The other five interchanges (Exits 170, 173, 174, 176, and 179) are in a 10-mile stretch and provide access to Parkersburg and the surrounding area. This includes one interchange connecting the areas immediately north of the city including Vienna (Exit 179), three exits the provide access to the city and the downtown area (Exits 173, 174, and 176), and one interchange connecting to the Mineral Wells area south of the city (Exit 170).

Traffic counts on the interstate range between 10,000 and 25,000 vehicles per day, according to the West Virginia Department of Transportation. Counts are substantially higher north of U.S. Route 50 (Exit 176) and around Parkersburg. Traffic counts average between 20,000 and 25,000 in that area. Traffic counts fall to between 10,000 and 15,000 vehicles per day south of Parkersburg.

U.S. Route 50 crosses Wood County east-west. The current routing is part of Appalachian Development Highway System. As such, much of it is built to "corridor quality" – resulting in fewer at-grade crossings and wider rights-of-way. The highway enters from Ritchie County, passing through the primarily rural areas, has a junction with Interstate 77 near Parkersburg (at Exit 176), crosses the Little Kanawha River, passes through the southern part of Parkersburg, and then turns north, crosses the Ohio River via Blennerhassett Ohio, and finally passes into Ohio. It is also known as the Robert Byrd Highway (from the county line to Parkersburg) and the Northwest Turnpike (from Parkersburg to the state line). Traffic counts are highest near downtown Parkersburg at between 15,000 and 20,000 vehicles per day.   They are lower east of Interstate 77 (8,500 to 12,500 vehicles per day) and west of the downtown (10,000 to 17,500 vehicles per day).

Eight state primary routes also traverse the county. Traffic counts on these routes vary widely. Routes near Parkersburg average between 10,000 and 15,000 vehicles per day. Meanwhile, more rural roadways only see a few thousand vehicles daily.

WV Route 2 generally parallels the Ohio River from Huntington (Cabell County) to Chester (Hancock County). In Wood County, it is multiplexed with Interstate 77 until Exit 179 near Vienna and North Hills where it reemerges as a separate roadway. WV Route 14 runs from Williamstown to Spencer (Roane County). WV Route 31 runs from Williamstown to Harrisville (Ritchie County). WV Route 47 is a former routing of US Route 50. It runs from Parkersburg to Harrisville (Ritchie County). WV Route 68 begins in Ravenswood (Jackson County). It passes through Parkersburg and ends at Interstate 77 at Exit 179 near Vienna and North Hills. It is the former routing of WV Route 2. WV Route 95 is a short road between US Route 50 and

Interstate 77 in Parkersburg (south of the Little Kanawha River). WV Route 618 is the former US Route 50 in Parkersburg. It crosses the Ohio River, maintains the route number across state lines, and reconnects with reconnects with US Route 50 west of Belpre, Ohio. WV Route 892 is basically a loop connecting communities west of Parkersburg.

Also noteworthy is County Route 21. The road basically parallels (or travels near) Interstate 77. It is the former US Route 21 which was decommissioned in Ohio, West Virginia, and Virginia when the interstate highway was complete. The routing between the Parkersburg and Charleston areas still exists and is commonly signed as a county route (with the same number) for its entire length. Traffic counts are similar to what is found on rural primary routes – a few thousand vehicles per day.

Other Transportation

The Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority provides bus service. The system is focused on the urban area of Wood County, essentially those areas in and around Parkersburg and Vienna. There are seven primary routes on weekdays with three loops (north Parkersburg, south Parkersburg, and Vienna) running on evenings and Saturdays. The base adult fare is 75 cents. There is also a park-and-ride facility near the Interstate 77/U.S. Route 50 interchange, the easternmost point on the transit system.

CSX provides freight rail service in Wood County. The railroad has a mainline that runs along the Ohio River on the West Virginia side. This rail line railroad goes through all of Wood County. It connects with a similar rail line on the Ohio side of the river. There is also a spur line that runs from Parkersburg to the industrial area along the Little Kanawha River southeast of the city.

The Ohio River and Little Kanawha River are navigable. Firms and facilities providing the opportunity for moving freight via water can be found around and north of Vienna along the Ohio River shoreline.

The Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Airport is in the northern part of the Wood County, south of Williamstown, east of Vienna and northeast of Parkersburg. The Wood County Airport Authority operates the facility. In 2021, the airport handled 5,887 passengers (enplanements). It has two runways. The primary runway (3/21) is 7,240 feet long while the secondary runway (10/28) is 4,002 feet long. Both are 150 feet wide. Contour Airlines provides flights to Beckley and Charlotte. It also latter offers connections with American Airlines through a code sharing agreement. This represents an improvement since the comprehensive plan survey.

System Improvements

Overseeing transportation planning in Wood County is the Wood-Washington-Wirt Interstate Planning Commission – commonly-known as Triple-W. It is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Parkersburg-Marietta (Ohio) urbanized area. The focus of this organization is Wood County and Washington County, OH. Wirt County was dropped from the MPO when the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) was redefined after the 1980 census; it

has not been added back into it, even though it is included in the current definition of the Parkersburg MSA (after the 2010 census).

Triple-W adopted its 2045 Long Range Transportation plan in 2021 (Table 5). It identified multimodal transportation needs – related to vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians --and makes recommendations for the region. These included short-term, medium-term, long-term, and unfunded projects are described below.

Overall, there are several tasks for Wood County related to transportation. It will need to evaluate all transportation projects – especially highway projects – to ensure their consistency with the current and anticipated future land use plans. Related to this, the county will also need to review the proposed project list from the MPO to make sure they meet its vehicular and multimodal transportation needs.   These help to address concerns about roadway conditions and the need for additional walking trails.

The county should also explore the feasibility of expanding transit or ride sharing programs into other developed areas – including Williamstown, areas along the Ohio River (Washington), southwest (Lubeck) of Parkersburg, and south of Parkersburg (Mineral Wells) and to potential new developments east of Interstate 77.   Finally, the county must work with relevant private companies and federal agencies to guarantee the continued viability of rail, water, and air components of the transportation system.

Table 5: Triple-W Proposed Projects in Wood County

Short Term -- Phase I Projects (2021-2024)
- WV Route 2 improvements $37.2 million
- Rosemar Road $1 million
- Trail Improvements TBD

Medium-Term -- Phase II Projects (2025-2034)
- WV Route 14 improvements $37.5 million
- System improvements, upgrades, etc. $9.7 million
- Interchange improvements for I-77/U.S. 50 $7.4 million
- Trail and bicycle improvements $6.7 million

Long-term -- Phase III Projects (2035-2045)
- Fifth Street Bridge replacement, improvements to the U.S. 50/WV 14 interchange $94.6 million
- System improvements, upgrades, etc. $19.0 million
- Trail and bicycle $12.4 million

No set time frame -- Unfunded Projects
- WV 2 widening $122.4 million
- South Vienna Connector construction $102.2 million
- WV 68 improvements $66.8 million
- WV 14 improvements and connectors $13.5 million
- WV 618: improvements $3.4 million

Infrastructure

Water and Sewer

Public water and sewer services in Wood County are provided by five public service districts (Central Boaz, Claywood Park (which also operates Central Boaz), Lubeck, Mineral Wells, and Union Williams) as well as the cities of Parkersburg, Vienna, and Williamstown. Sewer service is also provided by The Town of North Hills, the Wood County Parks and Recreation Commission (in the vicinity of Mountwood Park), and the Butcher Bend Lagoon Maintenance Association (which serves a small development near Mineral Wells).

Overall, about 90 percent of Would County residents have access to public water service with the remaining 10 percent dependent upon on-site wells or other means for their drinking water. Public sewer services are similarly available across the county. Several of these services have excess capacity in their systems, which can meet current demands and provide necessary services for future demands. Upgrades and expansion of existing facilities are currently underway.

Expansion of these services into new areas should be done in concurrence with areas outlined for new or expanded development proposed in this plan. Such actions will ensure there is enough capacity to ensure demands and environmental standards can be met. This may impose practical limits in some areas of the county, given the lack of population density in many places.

Strategies for water service should seek to continue supplying quality drinking water in sufficient quantities needed for current and future development. This would include source water protection and coordination between the systems where feasible such as interconnecting the systems in case the source of water for a system becomes constrained or contaminated. Strategies for wastewater services include expanding sewer treatment capacity and improved management of the smaller systems. This would include evaluating ways to separate the sanitary sewers from storm drainage in built-up areas to minimize the discharge of affluent into the rivers and streams during heavy rains. There also needs to be a countywide service plan, as recommended by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

Solid Waste Management

Multiple entities are involved in handing solid waste in Wood County. Trash collection is handled by the city sanitation department in Parkersburg and through private companies in the rest of the county. The Wood County Solid Waste Authority maintains the list of licensed haulers in the county, promotes recycling to reduce waste, and works to ensure the proper disposal of hazardous materials. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection oversees the Northwestern Landfill (a Class A facility), located between U.S. Route 50 and Interstate 77 east of Parkersburg and is operated by Waste Management.

Over the last 15 years, there has been an expansion in recycling activities - both in scope and in scale. These have ranged from curbside collection programs to school-based efforts. This fulfilled one of the main recommendations of the previous comprehensive plan. The county should continue the work in this area to reduce the amount of waste eventually buried in landfills. To that end, Wood County should investigate the expansion of the existing materials recovery facility in Parkersburg (or the creation of a new, larger facility for the region). With increased awareness of the waste cycle, the result of an expanded (or new) facility could be expanded recycling efforts and potentially the creation of useable products from recycled materials are being sold within the county.

Additionally, the entire solid waste system – collection, hauling, recycling, and landfilling – needs to be monitored to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the county and can be expanded as demand increases with new development.

Broadband and Telecommunications

Wood County faces a similar situation as much of West Virginia. Connectivity is generally high in the densely populated areas and along the highway corridors. Conversely, access to broadband and other telecommunications services is more limited in the rural and more isolated areas.

The current state broadband maps show that central areas of the county around Parkersburg and along the Ohio River have multiple internet providers, many of which offer Gig speed (or near-Gig speed) access. Conversely, service is less consistent, less available, and at a slower speed in the large rural areas in the eastern part of the county, The Internet providers include stand-alone companies, cable television providers, satellite services, and telephone companies, both landline and cellular. Also, many of these firms offer multiple services, adding to the complexity of the situation.

The cable television providers include Optimum (formerly Suddenlink), a nationwide entity, and CAS Cable, a local company. However, some rural areas are unserved. Satellite television is available from major providers, such as Direct TV and Dish Network. Availability is dependent upon access to the clear view of the (southwest) sky.

The dominant land-line telephone company for almost all of Wood County is Frontier Communications. It has telephone exchanges in the Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and Mineral Wells local calling areas. Frontier upgraded much of its system to fiber in 2022. The Pennsylvania-based Armstrong Telephone operates in the southern part of the county in the Rockport local exchange area, adjacent to its Ritchie County operations. The cable television providers and other companies also offer local telephone service as part of their communications packages. Cellular telephone service is available in the county from the three national carriers – AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon. These companies also all offer – or have plans to offer -- in-home Internet service using their 5G networks.

The biggest need to be addressed in this area for Wood County is broadband. Access, choice, and quality (speed) access all can be improved, especially in the eastern part of the county. Some of this work is already occurring (such as the fiber installation by Frontier and the emergence of CAS Cable). But it needs to continue and expand. Additionally, efforts must be made to ensure providers continue to operate and support legacy systems until realistic alternatives are fully functional. Both will require working with providers to ensure the needs of Wood County residents are met during this technological transition time.

Energy Utilities (Power, Light, and Gas)

Wood County is well-served by electrical and natural gas utilities. Electricity is provided by Mon Power, one of 10 subsidiaries of Akron, Ohio-based FirstEnergy. The utility has 395,000 customers in in the northern, northwest, and central parts of West Virginia with administrative offices in Fairmont.

There are two natural gas providers in the county. Mountaineer Gas serves almost the entire state and is headquartered in Charleston. Hope Gas is a local distribution company that operates in the northwestern, north Central, southwestern, and central parts of the state. It was acquired by the Hearthstone Company from Dominion Energy WV in 2022. Its headquarters is in Morgantown and it has an operational hub in Jane Lew.

There are no substantial issues related to these energy-providing utilities in Wood County. Work will need to focus on ensuring that these systems continue to meet the needs of current residents and can be expanded to meet the needs of future development.

Economic Development

Introduction and Background

Wood County is the state's fifth most populous county. It has one of its largest cities in Parkersburg, which is the core of the Parkersburg-Marietta MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) The urban area is a hub of commercial and economic activity and has traditionally been the home of a large manufacturing industry. Meanwhile, the rural parts of the county provide opportunities for recreation and agriculture.

Wood County is listed as a Transitional County by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in 2022. However, since economic growth is uneven, some places in the county would be considered "distressed" based upon the ARC criteria.

Wood County is a very different place than it was several decades ago (Table 6). Manufacturing employment and activity have fallen over that time as the economy transitioned. For example, information from Workforce West Virginia shows that in March 2021, only one of the 10 largest employers in the county was in manufacturing, Dupont/Chemours. This was quite different than two decades prior when, in March 2001, five of the top employers were manufacturing

concerns, including the largest employer (E.I. DuPont De Nemours Company, which was later spun off the chemical company Chemours as a separate entity in 2015).

There have been growing pains during this transition. The large loss of manufacturing jobs resulted in worker displacement. So, even though the Wood County economy is relatively healthy compared to the state at-large, residents feel the loss keenly with about one-fifth of respondents in the 2020 public input survey saying the county should focus on developing manufacturing above all else – even though that course of action is unlikely to succeed because of changes in the national economy.

The challenge facing economic planners as they navigate the coming years is to find a balance between such desires and promoting effective development that is in line with the modern economy. The comprehensive plan survey results show how this will be a challenge as five choices for the emphasis of development activities received support from at least one-tenth of the respondents: manufacturing (20.1%), education and health services (20.0%), and leisure and hospitality (16.7%). Also topping the 10% of response threshold are and professional and business services (12.6%) as well as trade, transportation, and utilities (11.8%).

Sustainable and Efficient Economic Redevelopment

Wood County faces a difficult task in promoting economic development. The Great Recession combined with the continued decline of the American manufacturing sector has thwarted many previous plans as well as prospects for the large-scale reemergence of manufacturing activity in the county. In other words, the current economic reality in Wood County is vastly different than what it has been in the past. As a result, previous ideas may not be applicable and different approaches must be taken.

Table 6: 2021 Wood County Economy

	Number of Establishments	Total Employment	Total Wages	Average Weekly Wage
TOTAL, All Industries	2,115	32,935	1,508,408,399	880.76
TOTAL, Private Sector	2,003	26,461	1,127,742,081	819.60
Natural Resources & Mining	14	48	1,780,129	713.19
Construction	139	1,298	65,509,548	970.57
Manufacturing	57	2,599	191,693,669	1,418.40
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	486	6,992	247,058,476	679.51
Information	22	309	16,479,009	1,025.58
Financial Activities	187	1,494	78,147,837	1,005.92
Professional & Business Services	258	2,453	126,690,778	993.22
Education & Health Services	373	6,493	305,856,278	905.88
Leisure & Hospitality	269	3,833	65,016,592	326.20
Other Services	195	934	29,158,915	600.37
Government	112	6,474	380,666,318	1,130.75

Source: **Workforce West Virginia.**

The current economic realities of Wood County mean greater prominence for education, technology, medical, and government employers. They mean promoting redevelopment in former industrial locations and in the central part of the county. They mean revising expectations for tourism development by emphasizing what exists (open space and specialized parks) rather than what may never be (riverfront development).

To this end, Wood County needs to focus development efforts on these emerging industrial supersectors, it needs to promote sustainable redevelopment and revitalization for industrial areas, and it needs to better use existing assets to promote tourism development.

Workforce Training Programs to Meet Job Market Needs

Changes in the composition of the economy means changes in the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed from the workforce. As a result, programs focused on ensuring that community members are trained in the newly needed functional areas must be responsive to the needs of industry.

For Wood County, this means the transformation away from manufacturing to other industrial supersectors. Chemical manufacturing has traditionally been a major employer in the county, providing robust and consistent wages for the workforce. However, a decline in domestic manufacturing has led to plant closures and automation has reduced the staffing needs. Manufacturing is no longer a base industry (industrial sector) for Wood County when compared to the national economy. Similarly, the expansion of natural gas exploration and extraction has not led to the long-term expansion of employment opportunities in the county as had been anticipated. As a result of these and other factors, there are a group of potential workers who may be unemployed or underemployed because there is a mismatch between their training and employers' needs. Assisting with employment transition can help sustain and grow the economy, creating financial security and community connection that can prevent outmigration and encourage investment.

Beyond retraining those who have been affected by economic shifts, it is important to ensure that those entering the workforce for the first time can meet the needs of community employers. Working with secondary education programs for youth coming of age to provide training for technical and professional jobs can help sustain the local economy. Having educational opportunities nearby can support youth retention efforts and create a community connection. Understanding future workforce needs and working systemically with the educational entities at a secondary and post-secondary level ensures that future job needs in the community can be met. As a component of economic development, having a local workforce in Wood County will help keep income and spending focused in the county which will facilitate long-term investments such as home ownership or local entrepreneurship.

Steps that can be taken to help achieve this goal for Wood County include developing an initiative to provide a centralized resource for workforce transition and training programs; expanding existing vocational and technical training programs with a focus on future community career needs; and working with post-secondary education partners for degree programs and training aimed towards workforce development.

Expand Opportunities for Entrepreneurship and Growing Existing Business

Given the changing nature of the economy, it is appropriate to seek ways to grow the local economy from within rather than having to rely on external investment. Recent economic data indicates that most of the job growth nationally has come from the growth and development of small businesses with less than 50 employees. Furthermore, by supporting efforts to stimulate the economy that have local connections, there is less likelihood of these businesses leaving town or being closed because of decisions made elsewhere.

Enterprises that draw upon local assets, fulfill basic goods and service needs, and potentially lower the cost of living should also be identified and encouraged. To rebuild the economic base of small businesses in the neighborhood, entrepreneurial development programming, financing, and incubation are needed. A strong local economy benefits from businesses providing jobs and opportunities for wealth creation. They can become a draw, encouraging visitors from outside the community, as well as a way for community members to support each other by buying local. The desired end result is a thriving, locally-focused economy, with decisions being made locally and profits remaining in the community. This will help create sustainable jobs and foster lasting economic prosperity.

According to the annual reports of Wood County Economic Development, the local economy is grew mostly from internal actions in 2021. This compares favorably to the last two years as there were 23 new businesses and 72 business expansions, compared to 21 new businesses and 18 expansions in 2020 and 21 new businesses and 10 expansions in 2019.

The recent and planned expansions have resulted in employment gains and larger facilities, both of which are beneficial for the local economy. In South Parkersburg, Goodwill Industries opened a new state-of-the-art facility in South Parkersburg in 2022. Wincore Windows spent over $1 million to relocate their door plant to Pettyville Road, which resulted in the hiring of an additional 70 workers. Mister Bee Potato Chips expanded its operations with the addition of a 10,000 square foot warehouse. JAG Mobile Solutions launched a branch in Mineral Wells and hired 40 workers, with plans to hire more. Fed Ex Ground opened a 250,000-square foot distribution center near the airport.

Financing is important to these locally-driven efforts. Community Development Financial Institution Funds (CDFIs), community development credit unions, community development loan funds, microenterprise loan funds, and revolving loan funds can assist in providing access to credit and loans for individuals who are unable to access them through traditional financial institutions.

Steps that can be taken to help achieve this goal for Wood County include creating opportunities and empowerment programs for entrepreneurs and startups to promote business growth and retention, encourage entry into the entrepreneurship, and partnering with the economic development council and local financial institutions to facilitate CDFI development.

Stimulate Economic Development through Tourism Efforts

Wood County lies along the Ohio River. Marietta, Ohio is to the north, just across the river. Wayne National Forest in Ohio is to the east. There are numerous county parks and other facilities around the county. With open space, natural beauty, recreational opportunities and historic sites, the county can benefit economically from these resources through increased tourism activity.

It is important for local economies to have diverse components. This includes capitalizing on the various sites and amenities in and around Wood County. Tourism emphasizes recreational and cultural activities and stimulates the local economy by its use of natural and historical aspects of the community. The West Virginia Department of Tourism that can be utilized as a resource to improve tourism efforts, as well as assist in the promotion of tourism. Drawing in individuals from other areas to spend time in Wood County will boost revenue and create jobs.

The county already has a strong foundation with which to attract visitors. Mountwood Park in Waverly contains a campground and ATV trails as well as new mountain biking recreation opportunities. The Ohio River Water Trail which includes 3.49 miles of the Ohio River and 18.1 miles of the Little Kanawha River; there are 13 access points to the Ohio River Water Trail in the West Virginia and Ohio towns bordering the river for recreational water activities. The county also has multiple historic sites and districts, the most prominent being Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park.

Promoting tourism would enable Wood County to work in areas which received considerable support in the public survey conducted in 2020 to support the planning effort. The highest-rated development activities included "preserve and keep open prominent places" (mentioned by 34.6% of respondents), "promote connection to Marietta" (22.5%), and to "build off resources in and around Parkersburg," (22.5%). All of these are encompassed in these actions. As these resources and sites are expanded and better utilized, supporting and enhancing tourism will stimulate economic development.

Community Facilities and Services

This section of the plan focuses on providing the necessary public services that will meet the current and future needs of a built environment by integrating people, place, process, and technology. For Wood County, it addresses current issues and concerns that impact the quality of life of its residents.

These services may be provided by Wood County, the municipalities in the county, non-profit entities, private businesses, or some combination. They include, education, health care, public safety, water and sewer infrastructure, solid waste services, library facilities, and parks and recreation services. (Parks and recreation activities are discussed under the natural resources section.)

Having high quality community services and facilities is essential to retain current residents and to attract new residents. The following section of the comprehensive plan reviews the wide range of facilities and services and provides future planning of each area.

Primary and Secondary Education

Wood County Schools is the main provider of primary and secondary education. Enrollment in the public schools for the full 2021-2022 school year was 10,639 students, down from 11,175 in 2017-2018 (down 4.8%). The county has 24 public schools – 16 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 3 high schools (one of which is a combined middle and high school). The school system also operates Caperton Center for Applied Technology (with WVU Parkersburg), the Distance Learning Center, the Summit Success Academy, and the Wood County Technical Center.

The system's biggest issues are in the subject of mathematics, according to the state's Balanced Scorecard. The county did not meet the accepted standards for academic achievement in math at the middle or high school for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. years. This somewhat contradicts the system's website proclaiming the county ranks fourth in math (and third in reading) out of the state's 55 counties.

The 2022-2023 Wood County Schools strategic plan addresses several issues. Its goals include increasing student growth in mathematics, increasing student growth in language arts (English), increasing instructional leadership capacity through data use to support teaching and learning, and promoting a safe and healthy environment through support services.

Family engagement in the educational process has long been advocated to improve educational outcomes. This already occurs in different ways in Wood County Schools. There are parent-teacher groups at the elementary level (and occasionally at the middle school level) while the middle schools and high schools have boosters supporting academics, activities, and/or athletics. Also, by state law (WVC §18-5A-2), every school must have a Local School Improvement Council. However, linkages between these groups – both at the same school and between schools – are limited at best. This should be investigated to keep people involved and informed – and as a way to promote the broader engagement of students and their families to improve academic performance.

Having the right number of schools and keeping them up-to-date is important as the Wood County Schools deals with enrollment declines because of population decreases and demographic changes. It also manages a portfolio of properties that range from recently-built

elementary schools to the more than 100-year-old Parkersburg High School which is the centerpiece of the Washington Street Historic District in the city.

As a result, the Wood County school facilities continued to evolve through the replacement and consolidation of elementary schools and the upgrading of the facilities at the secondary schools. Three elementary schools have closed over the past five years A bond issue passed in May 2022 will lead to five existing elementary schools closing and with three new facilities opening – a replacement school in Parkersburg and new consolidated schools in Vienna and north of Parkersburg. The plans also call for the addition of new classrooms to another elementary school, access upgrades at two elementary schools, security vestibule construction at five elementary schools and auditorium and/or athletic improvements to the county's high schools.

Besides the public schools, there are several private options schools Wood County, offering options from pre-kindergarten through high school. All are religious-affiliated institutions: Parkersburg Catholic High, Parkersburg Catholic Elementary, Parkersburg Christian, and North Christian in the Parkersburg area and Wood County Christian in Williamstown. Additionally, new options may emerge in the coming years as charter schools are now permitted in West Virginia.

All schools, regardless of their operational administration, should have as their focus providing a quality education that prepare students for college, training, or the workforce.

Higher Education

Higher education is available in Wood County at West Virginia University Parkersburg (WVU-P). WVU-P is an independently-accredited community and technical college. It was founded as the Parkersburg Branch of West Virginia University in 1961, four years after interested community members began to advocate for a higher education institution in the city. In 1971, it became Parkersburg Community College as West Virginia worked to create a statewide system of community colleges. It established satellite centers in Ripley and Sistersville in 1975.

The institution became WVU Parkersburg in 1989 after legislation made it a regional campus of West Virginia University. Its status changed again in 2008 when legislation created a statewide network of community and technical colleges.

Presently, WVU Parkersburg is an independently-accredited community and technical college that maintains its affiliation with West Virginia University. Students may complete their initial one or two years at WVU Parkersburg before moving on to complete select four-year programs at WVU. The college's primary service area consists of seven counties: Jackson, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Tyler, Wirt and Wood. It has 52 programs and majors in a wide range of areas, offering certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees – the ability to offer the latter making it a rarity among West Virginia community colleges.

The institution had a student population of 2,371 in the Fall 2021 (with an Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 1,532). More than half the students were from Wood County. Enrollment has been on a downward trend for more than a decade. It was 2,812 students (1,880 FTE) in Fall 2015 and 4,453 students (3,242 FTE) in Fall 2010.

The facilities at WVU Parkersburg are of various ages. Some of the buildings date from the college's earliest years. A multipurpose facility with assembly hall, cafeteria, classrooms, meeting rooms, teleconference room opened in 1989. The Caperton Center, a unique partnership education, business, industry, labor for skill and workforce training, opened in 1999. More recently, the college radio station began operation in 2015 and the entrepreneurship center open in 2018.

The 2007 Wood County Comprehensive Plan recommended the expansion of WVU-Parkersburg campus resources. Proposed Improvements included a new 40,000 square foot library, additional homes and businesses on the West Side of campus, the acquisition of addition property on WV Route 47, and correcting structural and soil subsidence issues associated with the university's main campus building.

The most recent strategic plan for WVU-P was done in 2015. It focused on enrollment management, branding/marketing, quality education programs, community education/relations, and workplace culture. An update was delayed by the COVID pandemic.

The most pressing needs for WVU Parkersburg are stabilizing and growing its enrollment, expanding and strengthening its educational offerings, and matching its facilities to the student population and needs. Part of this may include examining its current and future role and status within higher education in West Virginia.

The county has other higher education offering as well. Mountain State College has operated in downtown Parkersburg since 1888. Its focus is offering education to meet the needs of the business community. It currently has Dependency Disorders Technology and Medical Assistant programs, offering associate degrees in each. The college is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges. It usually has between 20 and 25 students.

Ohio Valley University closed in December 2021. The college was founded in 1958 and opened in 1960. It was associated with the Church of Christ and located between Parkersburg and Vienna. Mergers and purchases led to the college having two campuses totally 267 acres.

The college offered four-year degrees in about 30 majors. Declining enrollment and financial difficulties forced the institution to scale back operations and led to it being placed on academic probation by the Higher Learning Commission (an accreditation organization) in 2020. The college's enrollment also fell by more than half in a short period, going from 560 in Fall 2017 to just 273 in Fall 2020. These difficulties led to the institution shutting down after the Fall 2021 semester and the property was listed for sale. WVU Parkersburg purchased the site in late 2023 with plans to use the former north campus and redevelop or sell the former south campus.

The biggest challenge in this area is to make higher education more accessible for county residents to pursue such degrees. This exact nature of such efforts – programmatic expansion at WVU Parkersburg, satellite campus offerings from other institutions, etc. – would be determined later. These efforts should be supported by the county to improve options – and quality of life – of its residents.

Health Care

Camden Clark Medical Center (CCMC) in Parkersburg is the hospital that serves Wood County. It is part of the WVU Medicine (officially the West Virginia University Health System). It is a 370-bed facility and has about 2,500 employees. It offers in-patient, out-patient, and emergency services. It offers full laboratory and diagnostic services. Specialties available include cardiology, gastroenterology, nephrology, neurology, obstetrics/gynecology, oncology, orthopedics/podiatry, otolaryngology, pediatrics, pulmonary, reconstructive surgery, rheumatology, stroke services, thoracic, vascular services, and wound care.

CCMC's history goes back over a century. The original Camden-Clark hospital was dedicated in 1920, replacing City Hospital (which opened in 1898)   CCMC was formed in 2011 when Camden-Clark merged with St. Joseph's Hospital. St. Joseph's had served the community since 1900 and had been in its location between 18th and 19th streets since 1931. CCMC operated two campuses until the former St. Joseph's was closed in 2015 and the property sold for development a year later. (The former hospital now houses the St. Joseph's Recovery Center).

Wood County is also served by the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, which covers a six-county region and is based in Parkersburg. The department provides clinical, environmental health, and community health services, oversees epidemiology for the region, and provides some oral health services.

Overall, Wood County has relatively more primary care physicians (1 per 1,160 residents) and dentists (1 per 1,560 residents) than found in West Virginia as a whole (1:1,270 and 1:1,740 respectively).

Health issues and problematic behaviors found in Wood County include adult obesity, physical inactivity, adult smoking, frequent physical distress, frequent mental distress, excessive drinking, and diabetes prevalence, according to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.

Meanwhile, the West Virginia Board of Pharmacy reported in 2020 that the rate of patients who had overlapping opiate prescriptions from multiple prescribers and multiple pharmacies in Wood County was higher than the West Virginia average. Prescription drug over-prescription can lead to abuse of opiates and other types of drugs. This is a problem because substance abuse has a negative health outcome for the addicted individual and the entire community.

As a result, 27 percent of respondents from the planning input survey identified increased drug use as the most impactful change in the area in the past decade. In that same survey, 24

percent of respondents considered drug overdoses the most significant challenge Wood County faces.

To address these health-related matters, health providers in Wood County will need to continually review their needs to expand to meet the acute care demands of a changing and aging population. Additionally, they will expand and enhance medical facilities access, particularly in areas expected to see growth. Finally, the county will need to wisely use its opioid settlement funds to minimize drug use and improve preventative resources.

Public Safety

A variety of agencies and organizations provide the essential service that ensure the safety and security of Wood County residents, businesses, and property. These include police, fire, emergency medical services, and disaster response.   These entities must communicate with one another, coordinate their activities, and strive to serve the county efficiently and effectively using a variety of paid and volunteer personnel.

Law Enforcement

A variety of agencies undertake law enforcement in Wood County. For the unincorporated areas, the Wood County Sheriff's Department is the main agency. The department also provides security and related services for the county courts and acts as process server. Augmenting the law enforcement work county wide is the West Virginia State Police as Troop 4, District 2 has a detachment located in Parkersburg.

The three cities – Parkersburg, Vienna, and Williamstown – each operate their own police departments. (North Hills has the option of doing so as well; however, the town currently has Wood County Sheriff's Department to fulfill that role). Combined, there are about 125 officers law enforcement officers serving the county.

To continue to protect people and property in Wood County, there needs to be the periodic review of law enforcement staffing, especially to reflect any shift or growth in population or development. Related to this, law enforcement response times need to be monitored to ensure they meet accepted standards.

Fire and Rescue (EMS)

Most of fire departments serving Wood County are volunteer units. There are 10 VFD (volunteer fire departments) throughout the county – Washington, Lubeck, Blennerhassett, Mineral Wells, Waverly, East Wood, Pond Creek, Deerwalk, Vienna, and Williamstown. Each VFD covers a part of the county from their respective stations. Combined, they provide the primary coverage for 365 square miles (out of 377) and over 50,000 county residents.

Parkersburg has a paid fire department with six stations. It provides primary coverage for 12 square miles and about 30,000 residents (and up to another 20,000 persons during the workweek).   The department has an ISO Rating of 3 for its coverage area.

All fire departments in the county – except for the Parkersburg Fire Department – benefit from the Wood County Fire Fee, which all property owners pay a fee based on the size and use (residential or non-residential) of their buildings.

The fire department's major issues are response times, adequate numbers of volunteers, and having equipment to provide essential services.   To that end, periodic review is needed to track response times, enhanced efforts to attract volunteers, and continued regular funding and capital investment (equipment).

Ambulance and emergency medical services in Wood County are available from two ambulance services. Camden Clark Ambulance is operated by CCMC. St. Joseph's Ambulance Services is an independent entity, though it was originally founded as part of the former St. Joseph's Hospital. Additionally, the fire departments companies act first responders in most emergency situations.

There have been recent issues related to the unavailability of ambulances. Furthermore, there are areas of the county (such as east of Parkersburg, the Mineral Wells/Elizabeth area, and the Lubeck area) that would benefit from having ambulance stations.

Efforts should be made to maintain and operate an optimum ambulance fleet in terms of size and location, to increase or enhance partnerships with fire departments to provide service, and to align funding to provide monies for operational and capital costs.

Related Services

Wood County has a central dispatch system for emergency calls. The 911 services is based in the Parkersburg area and handles calls from both Wood and neighboring Wirt counties. Operations are funded (in part) through telephone line surcharges. The system is overseen by the Wood County 9-1-1- Advisory Board which includes representatives from local governments, service providers, and other interested parties from throughout the county.

The center also operates a 2-1-1 system that provides non-emergency basic information ranging from personal needs to employment opportunities to support services to area events.

Disaster response is detailed in *The Wood County Emergency Operations Plan.* The Wood County Office of Emergency Management (OEM). and the Wood-Wirt Local Emergency Planning Committee developed the plan. The primary agencies for undertaking the plan are the county commission and county OEM. The most recent version of the plan available is from 2012. It should be updated soon.

Sufficient staffing and equipment as well as up-to-date plans and procedures are the most important to ensure these activities continue to meet the needs (or potential needs) of Wood County. Additionally, cross-training for first responders should be done to ensure they are prepared when the unexpected occurs.

Natural Resources

This section of the plan focuses on the natural environment of Wood County. This includes efforts to safeguard the open land and water resources against degradation. It entails wisely using spaces set aside for protection or preservation. It includes efforts to remediate places that have been damaged by pollution or contamination.

In the comprehensive plan survey, responses identified the three biggest areas of emphasis as water quality at 22.2 percent, air quality at 13.5 percent, and parks and recreation at 13.3 percent. Also, when asked to identify key areas of facility and service needs, 20.5 percent indicated a need for parks and recreation.

Land and Water Resources

It is important to protect and preserve natural resources for future generations. This is important for Wood County. About two-thirds of the county is classified as agricultural land (45.7%) or vacant land of various types (21.2%). Much of this land is used for crops, grazing, and foresting activities. It is also home to various species of wildlife that are crucial to maintaining a stable ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the western border of the county is the Ohio River while the Little Kanawha River bisects the county north-south and there are various streams throughout it. These waterways are sources for drinking water, provide opportunities for recreation, and are home to fish and aquatic species.

Strategies for this include the promotion of best management practices for agricultural activities, soil conservation, forest management, and stream protection among private landowners and developers. Such efforts should involve the Little Kanawha Conservation District which serves a five-county area including Wood County.   Also, the county should consider creating public policies and land management tools that will protect its land and water resources.

Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces are valuable assets as they can bring social, environmental, and economic benefits for the county. Parks provide space for community members to communicate with one another, improve their physical and mental wellbeing through exercise, and connect with their environment. Tourism efforts and park maintenance can significantly improve the growth and economic development of a community. The purpose of this section is to identify areas of improvement and create strategies for Wood County parks and recreation facilities that will meet community needs and expectations.

Wood County is home to many parks and recreational facilities. These parks offer residents the opportunity to interact with wildlife, engage in a multitude of outdoor activities, and explore historical landmarks. The Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge is dedicated to wildlife

conservation and its purpose is to offer recreational opportunities in a sustainable way. The activities at the refuge include wildlife watching, hunting, fishing, boating, and educational programs. Its headquarters are located near Williamstown. The Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park features a Palladian mansion and a museum of regional history. It is located on the Ohio River and accessed by riverboat from Parkersburg.

Mountwood Park offers recreational opportunities including an ATV park, a large trail system for walkers and mountain biking, an archery range, a disc golf course, and a campground. It is in the eastern part of the county along US Route 50. Adjacent to it is the Sand Hill Wildlife Monument Area. Fort Boreman Park in Parkersburg is a Civil War historical site. The fort had been built by union troops and is named after West Virginia's first governor, Arthur I. Boreman who was from Parkersburg.

There are also local facilities the Veteran's Memorial Park just outside of Williamstown and the McDonough Wildlife Center near Vienna and Parkersburg as well as smaller places operated by the county, the municipalities, and private entities. Also, the eastern two-thirds of the county is primarily open space and has potential for additional recreational use.

Wood County should focus efforts on the continued operation and improvement of the parks that serve the county. In some cases, these places are under the county's control; in most cases, however, another government or entity operates the protected area.

As part of this, a countywide parks and recreation plan should be developed. It would involve the county, the state, the federal government, the municipalities, the two recreation departments in the county (Wood County Recreation and the Vienna Recreational and Improvement Association), and private entities which operate relevant outdoor or recreational facilities.

Such a plan would need to look at ways to increase revenues for and from the parks, including increasing the type and number of facilities that can be rented. It would need to look at where new parks may be needed because of (or to counteract) new development. It would need to provide for the increased use and availability of greenways and trails. Additionally, it would need to include water-based recreational activities as part of the plan.

Finally, there should be a special attention given to Mountwood Park as part of any such planning process. The largest park in Wood County should have its own plan. Such a plan would discuss how to make better use of the facilities, how to create revenue opportunities, and how to upgrade the on-site wastewater treatment plant.

Remediation Needs

Wood County has been adversely affected by having several brownfield sites as well as other pollution hot spots that have impacted the soil and groundwater. For example, former manufacturing sites have been abandoned, becoming brownfields over time. Additionally,

while active, some industries produced pollution that was carried away and other wastes that stayed and become contaminants in the local environment.

Identifying and inventorying brownfield sites and polluted water locations throughout Wood County would greatly benefit the county. It is the first step to remediation, which can help restore the natural environment and make future redevelopment efforts possible. The county must prioritize these efforts based upon the seriousness of the contamination, the improvement of the quality of life such efforts would have, and the potential for reuse and redevelopment of the sites. The county will need to work with the West Virginia Northern Brownfields Assistance Center, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and landowners (private and public) to undertake these required clean-ups.

Cultural and Historic Resources

Wood County contains a variety of historic and cultural resources. While the majority are concentrated in and near Parkersburg, there are also they can also be found in and around Vienna and Williamstown as well as scattered around the remainder of the county. These resources contribute to the overall quality of life of county residents. They also create opportunities to expand the tourism industry, which is part of economic development activities. The resources include community history, fairs and festivals, and other cultural resources.

Community History

Community history provides places a sense of identity and meaning. People are drawn to our own culture, legacy, and place in society. History is essential for understanding how identity and culture emerge and how it has changed over time. Community history brings us closer together, beyond artificial boundaries. The connection between history and location is vital to how we experience places.

Wood County has about 50 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, including six different historic districts. Most of the listings, and three of the six districts, are in or around Parkersburg. Other locations include Blennerhassett Island, Washington, Waverly, and Williamstown. Unfortunately, several of the designated historic buildings and other structures have been demolished since their initial recognition – particularly in downtown Parkersburg.

The work related to these places is officially overseen by the Wood County Historic Landmark Commission, which participates in the Certified Local Government program created by the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act. The commission makes recommendations on what places should be listed on the National Register. There is also the non-profit Wood County Historical and Preservation Society, a volunteer group dedicated to preserving the history of the area.

The above organizations – and anyone interested in local history – need to work together to protect key places in Wood County. This means cataloging existing resources, creating tours of

these important places, preserving existing important structures, working to prevent irrevocable changes or demolition of any additional places on the National Register, and identifying places that should be preserved and protected. These efforts should also be informed by cultural heritage tourism efforts, potentially focused on the industrial history of the region.

Fairs and Festivals

Special events connect residents. These activities build community ties and pride. They also bring people – some of whom may be potential residents or investors in development – to the community. Given its location and its size, it is not surprising that Wood County offers multiple opportunities for people to gather and enjoy what the community has.

The Greater Parkersburg Convention and Visitors Bureau is the organization that oversees tourist activities for all of Wood County. This includes fairs and festivals, as well as arts and entertainment and history and heritage events. It also provides support for outdoor and shopping activities.

The CVB oversees the large fairs, holiday events, arts exhibitions, entertainment opportunities, and food celebrations in 2022 – Downtown Throwdown & Brewfest; Harvest Moon Festival; Blennerhassett Mansion by Moonlight; Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival; Parkersburg Paddlefest; 4-H Summer Showcase, Parkersburg Homecoming; Taste of Parkersburg; WV Interstate Fair & Exposition; Honey Festival; Winterfest; Julia-Ana Square Victorian Christmas Home Tours.   Each event is its own entity, with its own organizing committee and its own set of volunteers and workers.

Most of these fairs and festivals occur in Parkersburg, though there are also activities in Mineral Wells (WV Interstate Fair & Exposition) and on Blennerhassett Island (Mansion by Moonlight). There are also smaller events and seasonal fairs and festivals that happen at various times throughout the county.

Wood County will need to continue to work with the CVB and the groups responsible for the major events to provide resources they need from the county for their continued success. Related to this, efforts need to be made to coordinate with the different groups sponsoring events to prevent over-scheduling of events – such as too many major events in too short of a time period or too many events focused around a common (or related) theme. Additionally, a "clearinghouse" needs to be created that can develop a full calendar for all events – that includes the major events as well as smaller ones that are of special importance or local significance.

Cultural Facilities

There are a variety of performance centers, museums, and other facilities focused on enhancing the culture of Wood County. Most of these are in-and-around Parkersburg but serve a countywide (and regional) audience.

Prominent among these facilities is the Parkersburg Arts Center. The non-profit is supported through grants (state, national, and other) as well as memberships and contributions. It features gallery spaces and an event venue. It also offers classes in a variety of arts disciplines.

Plays and other events are also held at the Actors Guild Playhouse and the Smoot Theater in downtown Parkersburg. The county also benefits from its proximity to Marietta, Ohio which features several music venues, including the Peoples Bank Theatre and the Adelphia Music Hall. These venues host national, regional, and local acts.

There are several museums in Wood County. These include the Oil and Gas Museum, and the Veterans Museum-Mid Ohio Valley, the Blennerhassett Museum, and Henderson Hall. These museums contain collections of scientific, historical, cultural, or artistic artifacts, specimens, and objects. They are used for research and public education in the county.

Wood County also has two library systems. The Parkersburg and Wood County Public Library serves almost all the county with Emerson (Parkersburg), South Parkersburg, and Williamstown branches. The South Parkersburg location was expanded in 2016, a recommendation of the previous comprehensive plan. The system also has a bookmobile that serves locations countywide. The system has been overseen by a board of trustees since 1967. The board is appointed by the County Board of Education (two members), the County Commission (two members), and the City of Parkersburg (one member).

Vienna operates its own, separate public library as well as a book kiosk at the Grant Central Mall. The library has been governed by a board of trustees since 1972. It is appointed by the City of Vienna (three members), the County Board of Education (once member), and the County Commission (one member).

Both library systems offer books and other physical materials for check-out and reference and both are part of WV Reads for electronic book lending (eBooks) as well as other systems for accessing various resources. Both systems rely on grants and contributions as well as other funding.

Efforts in these areas should focus on adequacy and funding. Wood County will need to determine if the current facilities serving the area meet the needs of the its residents. While this applies to all types of facilities, attention needs to be paid to concert and performance venues since some are located outside the county (and the state). The county needs to oversee the compilation of a list of all the cultural amenities available to county residents. Some are listed on the CVB website, but others (especially those outside of the immediate Parkersburg area) are not. The various facilities and centers need to improve communication and public outreach so that residents know what is available to them. Finally, the county needs to determine how to best support the two separate library systems moving forward, including identifying what makes them distinctive and any areas where cooperation would be appropriate and beneficial.

Section 5: Implementation

Introduction

This is a listing of action steps for each of the seven planning elements discussed in the previous chapter.

Each proposed activity in based on statements made in describing the decided future for the county. They also include listings for the responsible party and partners, the priority level and timeframe, and the source of funding to support these efforts.

Land Use

Industry

Direct future industrial land use on general manufacturing, chemical industry, energy development.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission and Wood County Economic Development, working with private landowners, facility owners, and investors.
- High priority*.* Ongoing.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Commerce

Promote location of new commercial establishments near/adjacent to existing developments along travel corridors.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission and Wood County Economic Development, working with Chamber of Commerce, private landowners, facility owners, and investors.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Housing

Determine the appropriateness of building housing on current "vacant" residential land.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with the Wood County Commission and Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with developers, landowners, and other housing stakeholders.
- High priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Prepare areas near municipalities for residential development.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with the Wood County Commission and Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with developers, landowners, and other housing stakeholders.
- Medium priority. Ongoing.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Rurality and Recreation

Support agricultural/protect farmland.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission, WV Farmland Protection Board, USDA agencies, and local farm owners/operators.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Maintain open space/areas to facilitate outdoor recreation and tourism development activities.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission, the Greater Parkersburg CVB, Wood County Recreation, Vienna Recreation, and private service providers/facility owners.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for policy decisions, leveraged with special allocations, state monies, grant funding, and investments for site preparation, if applicable.

Housing

<u>Housing Availability</u>

<u>Identify locations for new, expanded, or redeveloped existing housing, including undeveloped areas, underdeveloped areas, and potential special housing districts.</u>

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- High priority. Short-term
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations.

<u>Encourage developers to undertake projects that will meet the housing needs of the community.</u>

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- High priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

<u>Support projects that would create increased options for those with special housing needs.</u>

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as agencies which work with seniors, those with disabilities, and other special needs.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

<u>Housing Affordability</u>

<u>Continue to support for the work of the housing authority, including creating special districts as appropriate.</u>

- Wood County Commission, working with the Parkersburg Housing Authority, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.

- High priority. Short-term
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Promote locations for affordable housing, including designating places for new and renovated units.

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- High priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Ensure that the conversion of existing structures to new uses – such as denser housing in the built-up areas near the municipalities is permitted.

- Wood County Planning Commission, working with the Parkersburg Housing Authority, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- Medium priority. Medium-term
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

Support efforts to enhance and expand voucher and financial assistance programs that decrease the financial burden of housing.

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership the WV Housing Development Fund and other financial institutions, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Encourage developers to include various types of housing options as part of new projects.

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.

- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Housing Quality

Encourage upgrades in housing units to meet current codes (i.e., electrical, fire) or expectations (i.e., insulation, heating/cooling systems, technology) to make housing units marketable.

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- High priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Work to increase and improve access to contractor and building trade specialist services.

- Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Development Board, working with the Parkersburg Housing Authority, in partnership with developer and land/property owners as well as workforce training providers.
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing allocations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for program improvements and expansion.

Consider the creation of a vacant building program.

- Wood County Commission, working with the Parkersburg Housing Authority and the Wood County Planning Commission, in partnership with the developers and land/property owners, as well as any new countywide agencies created to help in this arena.
- Medium priority. Long-term
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

Ensure housing units and other structures located in flood zones and other critical areas are resilient against disaster.

- Parkersburg Housing Authority, working with the Wood County Commission and Wood County Office of Emergency Management, in partnership with the developers, land/property owners, and the WV Housing Development Fund.
- Medium priority. Long-term.

- Funding from existing allocations for identifying locations. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding may be necessary to help fund some projects.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation

Ensure projects consistent with proposed land use and other planning objectives.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission and Triple-W in consultation with the WV Division of Highways.
- High priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

Encourage transit and/or ride sharing expansion into unserved parts of the county.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission and Triple-W, Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority, and WV Division of Highways
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations, supplemented by additional funding (new allocations, grants, contributions, etc.).

Support continued availability and viability of rail, water, and air (non-highway) transportation services in the county.

- Wood County Planning Commission, partnering with Wood County Commission and Triple-W in consultation with the WV Department of Transportation and private service providers/facility owners.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from special allocations, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, etc.).

Infrastructure

Water and Sewer

Promote source water protection to enable providers to supplying safe quality drinking water in sufficient quantities needed for current and future development.

- Wood County Commission, working with Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and the five water-providing PSDs, in partnership with WV Conservation Agency, WV Department of Environmental Protection, WV Public Service Corporation, and other agencies.
- High priority. On-going.

- Funding from existing allocations for initial planning. External funding (grants, investment, special assessments/charges) for protection activities.

Encourage increased coordination and interconnection (where feasible) between water systems to ensure continued potable water availability in adverse situations.

- Wood County Commission, working with Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, and the five water-providing PSDs, in partnership WV Public Service Corporation and other agencies.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for initial planning. External funding (grants, investment, special assessments/charges) for construction.

Improve and expand sewer treatment services throughout the county.

- Wood County Commission, working with Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, North Hills, the five sewer-providing PSDs, the Wood County Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Butcher Bend Lagoon Maintenance Association, in partnership WV Public Service Corporation and other agencies.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for initial planning. External funding (grants, investment, special assessments/charges) for construction.

Separate sanitary sewers from storm drainage in built-up areas (where feasible).

- Wood County Commission, working with Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, North Hills, the five sewer-providing PSDs, the Wood County Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Butcher Bend Lagoon Maintenance Association, in partnership WV Department of Environmental Protection, WV Public Service Corporation and other agencies.
- Low-to-medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for initial planning. External funding (grants, investment, special assessments/charges) for construction.

Develop a countywide water and sewer service plan.

- Wood County Commission, working with Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown, North Hills, the five PSDs, the Wood County Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Butcher Bend Lagoon Maintenance Association, in partnership WV Public Service Corporation, under the guidance of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources *(soon the WV Department of Health)*.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing sources.
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

Solid Waste Management

<u>Investigate the expansion/replacement of the materials recovery facility in Parkersburg to enable the expansion of recycling services.</u>

- Wood County Solid Waste Authority, with City of Parkersburg, in consultation with the WV Solid Waste Management Board (WV Department of Environmental Protection).
- Medium priority. Long term.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for facility and program improvements.

<u>Determine whether the system for dealing with solid waste meets the current needs of the county and can be expanded to accommodate new development.</u>

- Wood County Solid Waste Authority, in partnership with Northwestern Landfill (Waste Management), municipal governments, haulers licensed to operate in the county, and recycling entities in the county (including City of Parkersburg and its MRF facility).
- Medium priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for facility and program improvements.

<u>Broadband and Telecommunications</u>

<u>Work to expand broadband availability, access, and quality of service, especially in underserved areas (such as the eastern part of the county.)</u>

- Wood County Commission, in partnership with the various service providers (landline, cable TV, Internet, and cellular services), working with the WV Broadband Enhancement Council.
- High priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for facility and program improvements.

<u>Ensure legacy communications services remain operational and supported until realistic alternatives are fully functional.</u>

- Wood County Commission, in partnership with the traditional landline telephone companies (Frontier WV and Armstrong Telephone).
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation. Private investment to Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for facility and program improvements.

Energy Utilities

<u>Ensure continued services and expandability of the energy utility services offerings available to county residents.</u>

- Wood County Commission coordinating with various providers of electricity and natural gas serving the county.
- Medium priority. Continuing.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

Economic Development

<u>Sustainable and Efficient Focus</u>

<u>Focus development activities on growing industrial supersectors.</u>

- Wood County Economic Development with the assistance of the County Commission, partnering with the municipalities (where applicable) as well as appropriate private sector organizations and firms.
- High priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing allocations (which includes county appropriations and state funds), leveraged with other grant funding where practical.

<u>Promote redevelopment and revitalization of existing industrial areas.</u>

- Wood County Economic Development with the assistance of the County Commission, Planning Commission, and other county agencies, partnering with the municipalities (where applicable) as well as appropriate private sector organizations and firms.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Some use of existing funds. Reliant on grant funding and private investment.

<u>Utilize assets to enhance and increase tourism opportunities.</u>

- Greater Parkersburg CVB with the assistance of the County Commission, in partnership of the local parks, recreation departments, and West Virginia Tourism as well as private providers of services to tourists (including hospitality and activities).
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations, leveraged with state monies and grant funding where applicable.

<u>Workforce Training</u>

<u>Develop a centralized resource for workforce training and transition programs.</u>

- Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Development Board in partnership with providers (such as Wood County Schools and WVU Parkersburg) and employers.
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying programs. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for new programs.

<u>Focus vocational and technical training programs on predicted career needs.</u>

- Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Development Board in partnership with providers (such as Wood County Schools and WVU Parkersburg) and employers.
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing allocations.

<u>Work with education partners for related workforce degree programs and training.</u>

- Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Development Board in partnership with Wood County Schools and WVU Parkersburg, and in consultation with employers.
- Medium priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing allocations, leveraged with state monies and grant funding where applicable.

<u>Entrepreneurship</u>

<u>Create opportunities and programs to support entrepreneurs and startups.</u>

- Wood County Economic Development, working with the U.S. Small Business Administration, applicable programs at WVU Parkersburg, and other providers of business services.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Some use of existing funds. Reliant on grant funding and private investment to fund new programs and activities.

<u>Encourage expanded entrepreneurial activity.</u>

- Wood County Economic Development, working with the U.S. Small Business Administration, applicable programs at WVU Parkersburg, and other providers of business services.
- Low priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations, leveraged with state monies and grant funding where applicable.

Facilitate development of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI).

- County Commission and Wood County Economic Development in partnership with private industry and the financial sector.
- Low priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations.

Tourism

Build-off actions in other arenas to encourage and expand tourism efforts.

- Greater Parkersburg CVB and Wood County Economic Development, with the assistance of the County Commission, in partnership of the local parks, recreation departments, and West Virginia Tourism as well as private providers of services to tourists (including hospitality and activities).
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations, leveraged with state monies and grant funding where applicable.

Community Facilities and Services

Education (Primary, Secondary, and Post-Secondary/Higher Education)

Focus educational efforts on providing a quality education to prepare youth for future activities (college, training, or work)

- Wood County Public Schools, charter schools, private school, in cooperation with the WV Department of Education.
- High priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing sources, supplemented by special allocations and grants for program enhancements.

Support efforts to improve post-secondary education access for county residents.

- WVU Parkersburg, Mountain State College, nearby colleges and universities (in West Virginia and other states), working with the WV Higher Education Policy Commission and WV Independent Colleges and Universities.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying programs. Special allocations, leveraged by external monies to fund scholarships and grants.

Health Care

Review medical services needs of county residents.

- CCMC, medical providers (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, psychologists, therapists, etc.), working with the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department and WV Department of Health and Human Resources.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation.
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

Expand efforts to meet acute care needs of an ageing population.

- CCMC, medical providers (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, psychologists, therapists, etc.), with particular attention to those specializing in gerontology working with the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department and WV Department of Health and Human Resources.
- High priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for studying situation. Private investment to special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for facility and program improvements.

Work to minimize drug use, including improving preventative resources available.

- Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, working with prevention services and law enforcement, in cooperation with the WV Department of Health and Human Services.
- High priority. Long-term.
- Funding from special allocations, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, etc.).

Public Safety

Review of staffing and resource needs for law enforcement agencies in the county.

- Wood County Commission, and Wood County Sheriff's Office, working with municipal police departments (Parkersburg, Vienna, Williamstown), and WV State Police detachment for Parkersburg (Troop 4, District 2), cooperating with WV Department of Homeland Security (State Police).
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

<u>Review response times for fire and rescue services.</u>

- Wood County Commission and Wood County Office of Emergency Management, working with fire departments throughout the county, Wood County Fire/Wood County Fire Fighters Association, cooperating with WV Department of Homeland Security (State Fire Marshal).
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

<u>Encourage fire and rescue units to create partnerships and cooperative agreements to ensure coverage (daytime fire, EMS coverage).</u>

- Wood County Commission and Wood County Office of Emergency Management, working with fire departments throughout the county, Wood County Fire/Wood County Fire Fighters Association, cooperating with WV Department of Homeland Security (State Fire Marshal).
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

<u>Work to ensure maintenance of optimum ambulance fleet.</u>

- Mid-Ohio County Health Department, working with CCMC Ambulance and St. Joseph's Ambulance Service.
- High priority. Short-term
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying programs. Special allocations, leveraged by external monies to fund capital purchases.

<u>Promote proper staffing and cross training of among emergency services agencies, as appropriate.</u>

- Wood County Commission and Wood County Office of Emergency Management, working with municipal governments, various county and state agencies and service providers, cooperating with the WV Department of Homeland Security.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying programs. Special allocations, leveraged by external monies to fund training activities.

<u>Work to update the county Emergency Operations Plan.</u>

- Wood County Office of Emergency Management, working with Wood County Commission, municipal governments, the Wood-Wirt Local Emergency Planning Committee, various county and state agencies and service providers, cooperating with the WV Department of Homeland Security.
- High priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing sources to undertake planning.
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

Natural Resources

<u>Land and Water</u>

<u>Emphasize best management practices for activities that impact natural environment.</u>

- County Commission and administration, in partnership with the Little Kanawha Conservation District and the West Virginia Conservation Agency, in consultation subject-matter experts, including those from higher education, conversation agencies, and industry. Working with landowners as part of this process.
- High priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

<u>Create public policy and management tools to protect land and water resources.</u>

- County Commission and administration, in partnership with the Little Kanawha Conservation District and the West Virginia Conservation Agency, in consultation subject-matter experts, including those from higher education, conversation agencies, industry, and landowners.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

<u>Parks and Open Spaces</u>

<u>Continue operational improvements in park facilities in county.</u>

- Wood County Recreation and Vienna Recreation and Improvement Association, consulting with any other entity that operates a park facility.
- High Priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing sources (appropriations and user charges), supplemented by extramural funding for large projects/enhancements.

Develop a parks and recreation plan for the county.

- County Commission lead, in conjunction with Wood County Recreation and Vienna Recreational and Improvement Association. Others involved include the state, the federal government, the municipalities, and private entities which operate relevant outdoor or recreational facilities.
- High Priority. Short-term.
- Funding from existing sources.
- May lead to other actions being needed later.

Focus on possibilities offered by Mountwood Park

- Wood County Recreation along with park users and associated groups.
- Medium-to-high priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing sources (appropriations and user charges), supplemented by extramural funding for large projects/enhancements.

Remediation

Undertake efforts to identify and revitalize brownfield sites in the county.

- County Commission with assistance of Solid Waste Authority, partnering with state agencies such as WV Northern Brownfields Assistance Center and WV Department of Environmental Protection and consulting with landowners and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying sites. External funding (grants, investment) for clean-up/revitalization activities.

Cultural and Historic Resources

Community History

Catalog locally important historic places.

- Wood County Historic Landmarks Commission, in partnership with the Wood County Historical and Preservation Society.
- Medium priority. Short-term.
- Funding from special allocations, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, etc.).

Organize tours of prominent historic places/sites in the county.

- Wood County Historic Landmarks Commission, in partnership with the Wood County Commission, in consultation with Wood County Historical and Preservation Society, State Historic Preservation Office, and WV State Parks.

- Low priority. Long-term.
- Funding from special allocations to start. Become self-sustaining through external funding (grants, contributions, fees, etc.).

Seek protection for important places through use of various designations and other available mechanisms.

- Wood County Historic Landmarks Commission, in partnership with the Wood County Commission, in consultation with Wood County Historical and Preservation Society, State Historic Preservation Office, and WV State Parks.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing sources. (This effort should not require much, if any, additional resources).

Fairs and Festivals

Promote major events that occur (to internal and external audiences).

- Greater Parkersburg CVB, partnering with the Wood County Commission and various groups and organizations throughout the county.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from special allocations, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, fund-raising.).

Coordinate (create a calendar of) events through a central "clearinghouse" entity.

- Greater Parkersburg CVB, partnering with the Wood County Commission and various groups and organizations throughout the county.
- Medium priority. Long-term.
- Funding form special allocations and/or different allocation of existing funding, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, fund-raising.).

Cultural Facilities

Compile list of existing places (facilities) found in the county.

- Greater Parkersburg CVB, partnering with the Wood County Commission and various groups and organizations throughout the county.
- Medium priority. Medium-term.
- Funding from special allocations, supplemented by external funding (grants, contributions, etc.).

<u>Determine what (if any) unfulfilled needs exist in the cultural amenities and facilities available to county residents.</u>

- Greater Parkersburg CVB, partnering with the Wood County Commission and various groups and organizations throughout the county.
- Low priority. Long-term.
- Funding from existing allocations for identifying programs. Special allocations, leveraged by state monies and grant funding for new programs.

<u>Continue support of library systems serving county.</u>

- Wood County Commission, working with the Parkersburg and Wood County Public Library and the Vienna Public Library.
- Medium priority. On-going.
- Funding from existing allocations, supplemented by additional funding (new allocations, grants, contributions, etc.).

Appendix: Wood County 2020 Planning Survey

A web-based public survey was undertaken from August to November 2020 to inform the Wood County planning process.

The survey targeted county residents, though it was open to anyone who had a survey link. Press releases and social media posts announced the survey. Local government agencies also helped publicize it.

The survey included general questions about the conditions in the county – positives, changes, and challenges. It also featured inquiries on specific issues such as housing, natural resources, development, cultural and historic resources, land use, transportation, and facilities and services. Some questions called for a single response, some questions allowed up to three responses, and one question allowed an unlimited number of responses.

Qualtrics software was used to collect the data and provide the report on responses.
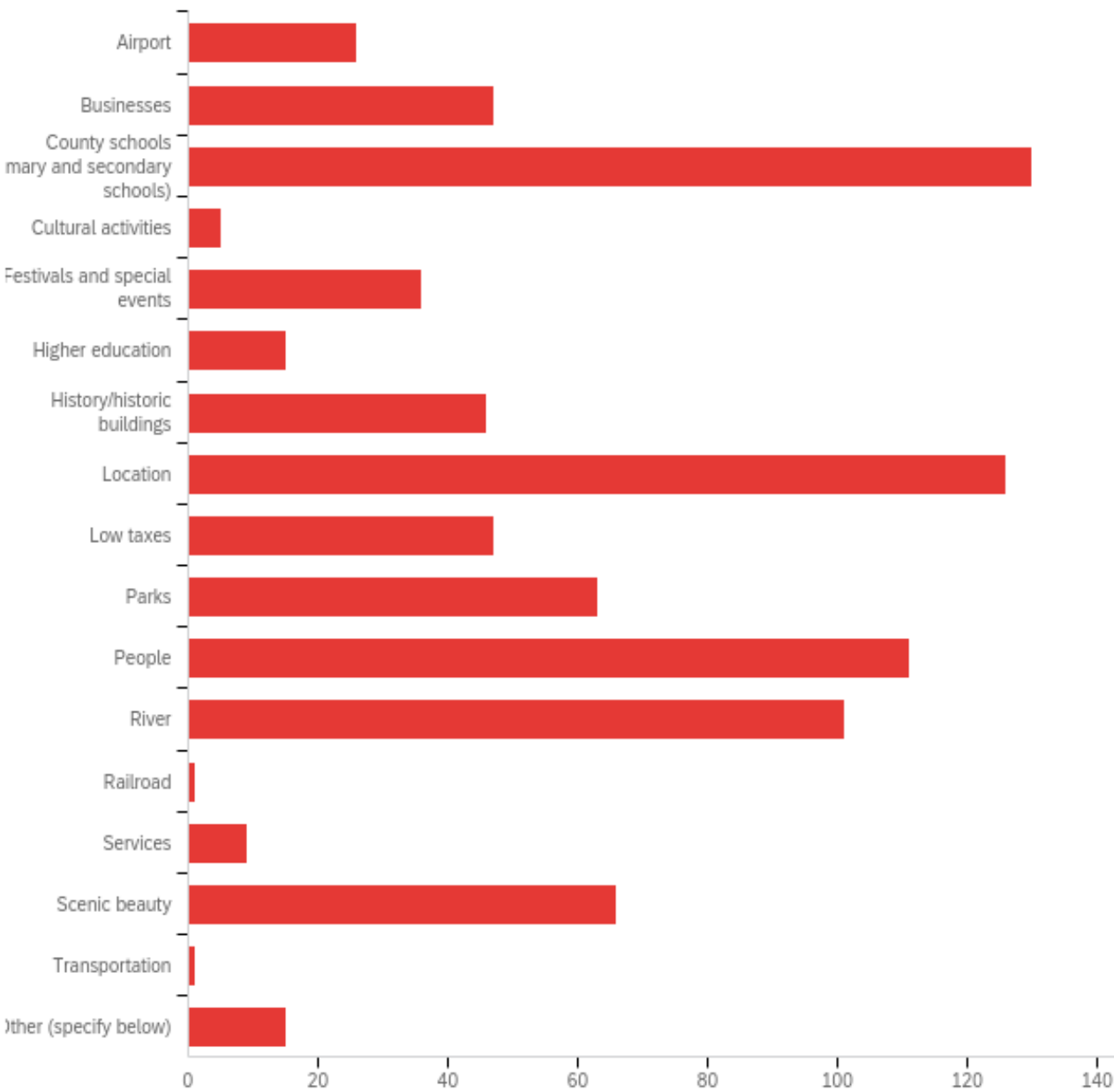
The responses are summarized below. The results for each question are presented with both a graph and a table.

Where do you live?
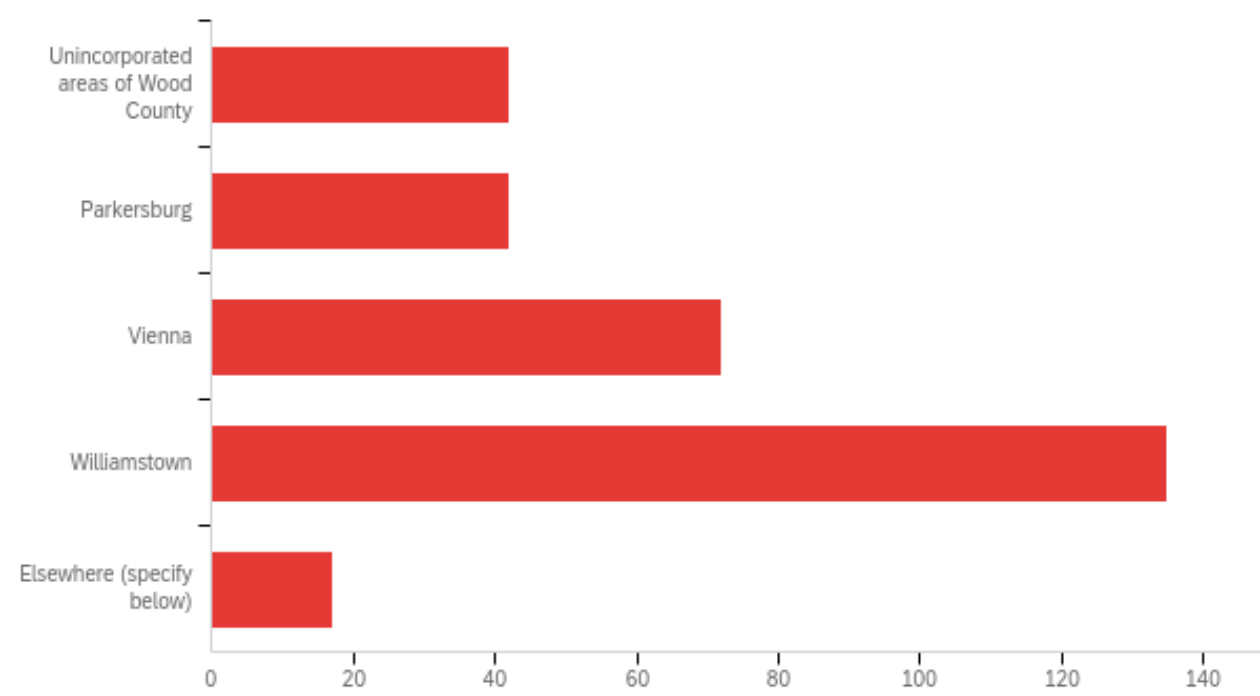
Response	Percent	Count
Unincorporated areas of Wood County	13.64%	42
Parkersburg	13.64%	42
Vienna	23.38%	72
Williamstown	43.83%	135
Elsewhere	5.52%	17
Total	**100.00%**	**308**

What are the most positive aspects of the area? *(Select up to three)*

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Response	Percent	Count
Airport	3.08%	26
Businesses	5.56%	47
County schools (primary and secondary schools)	15.38%	130
Cultural activities	0.59%	5
Festivals and special events	4.26%	36
Higher education	1.78%	15
History/historic buildings	5.44%	46
Location	14.91%	126
Low taxes	5.56%	47
Parks	7.46%	63
People	13.14%	111
River	11.95%	101
Railroad	0.12%	1
Services	1.07%	9
Scenic beauty	7.81%	66
Transportation	0.12%	1
Other	1.78%	15
Total	**100.00%**	**845**

What are the most impactful changes the area in the last decade? *(Select up to three)*
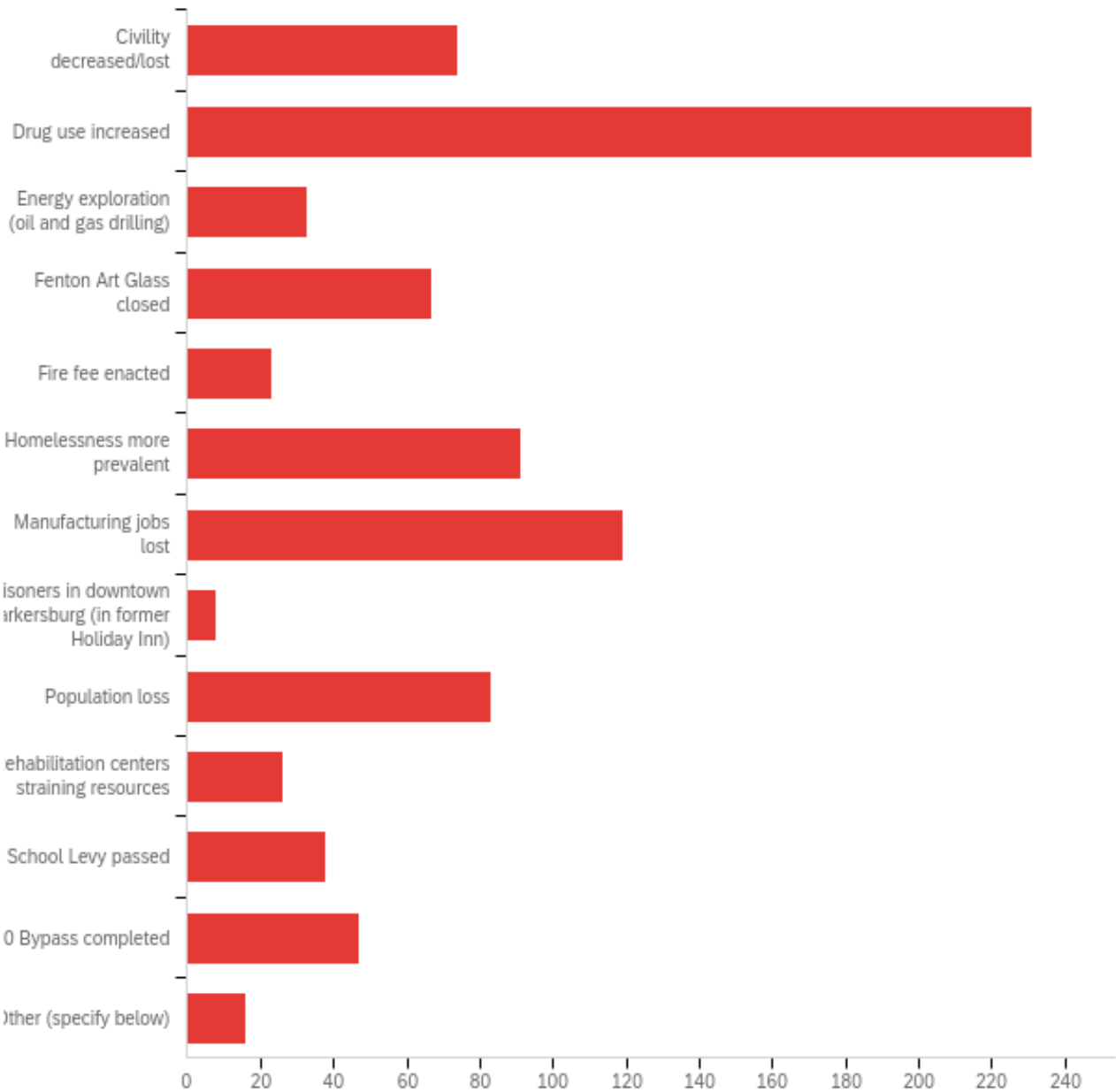
Response	Percent	Count
Civility decreased/lost	8.64%	74
Drug use increased	26.99%	231
Energy exploration (oil and gas drilling)	3.86%	33
Fenton Art Glass closed	7.83%	67
Fire fee enacted	2.69%	23
Homelessness more prevalent	10.63%	91
Manufacturing jobs lost	13.90%	119
Prisoners in downtown Parkersburg (in former Holiday Inn)	0.93%	8
Population loss	9.70%	83
Rehabilitation centers straining resources	3.04%	26
School Levy passed	4.44%	38
US 50 Bypass completed	5.49%	47
Other	1.87%	16
Total	**100.00%**	**856**

What challenges does the area face today? *(Select up to three)*
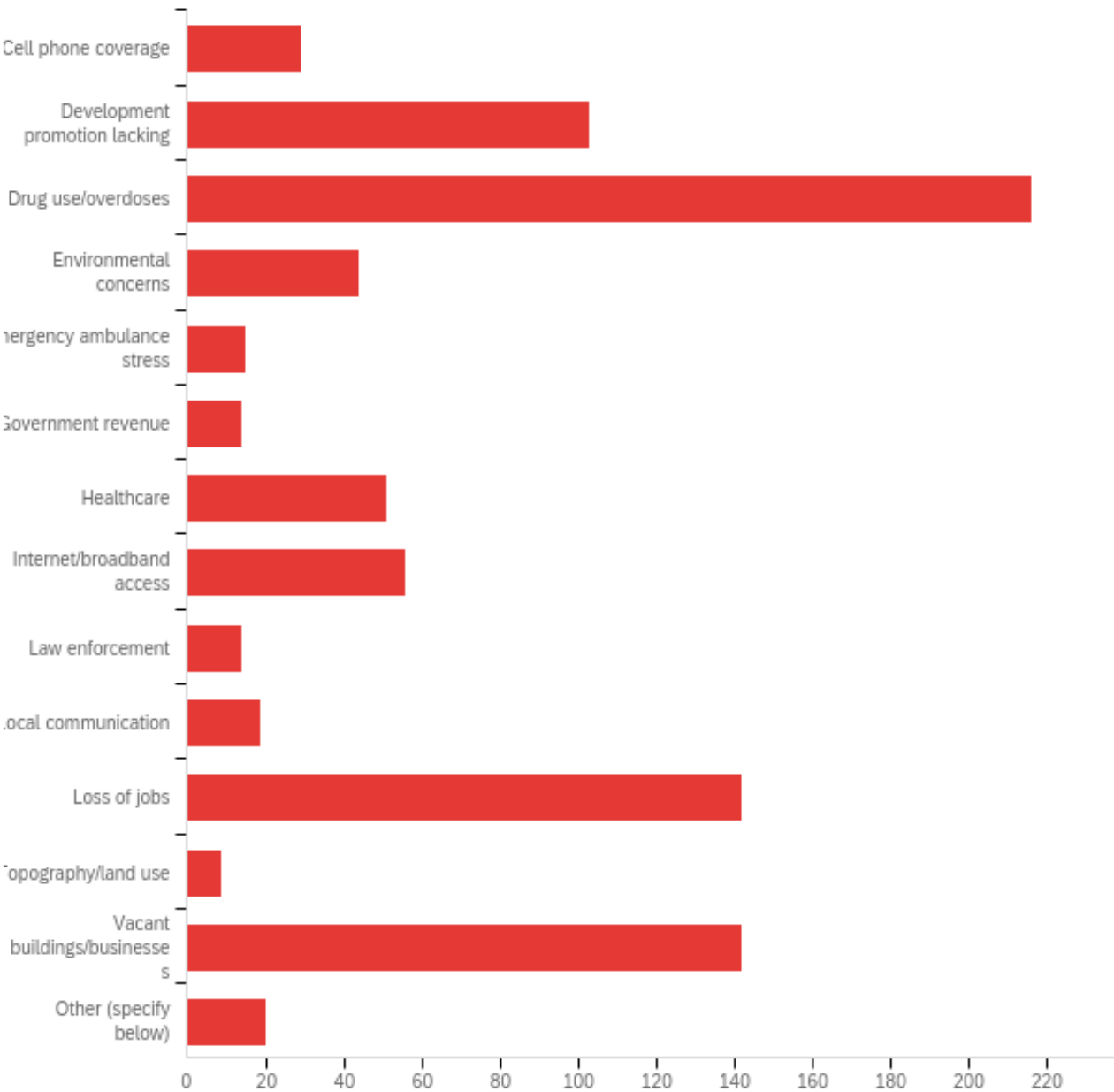
Response	Percent	Count
Cell phone coverage	3.32%	29
Development promotion lacking	11.78%	103
Drug use/overdoses	24.71%	216
Environmental concerns	5.03%	44
Emergency ambulance stress	1.72%	15
Government revenue	1.60%	14
Healthcare	5.84%	51
Internet/broadband access	6.41%	56
Law enforcement	1.60%	14
Local communication	2.17%	19
Loss of jobs	16.25%	142
Topography/land use	1.03%	9
Vacant buildings/businesses	16.25%	142
Other	2.29%	20
Total	**100.00%**	**874**

What are the most important issues related to housing in the area? *(Select up to three)*
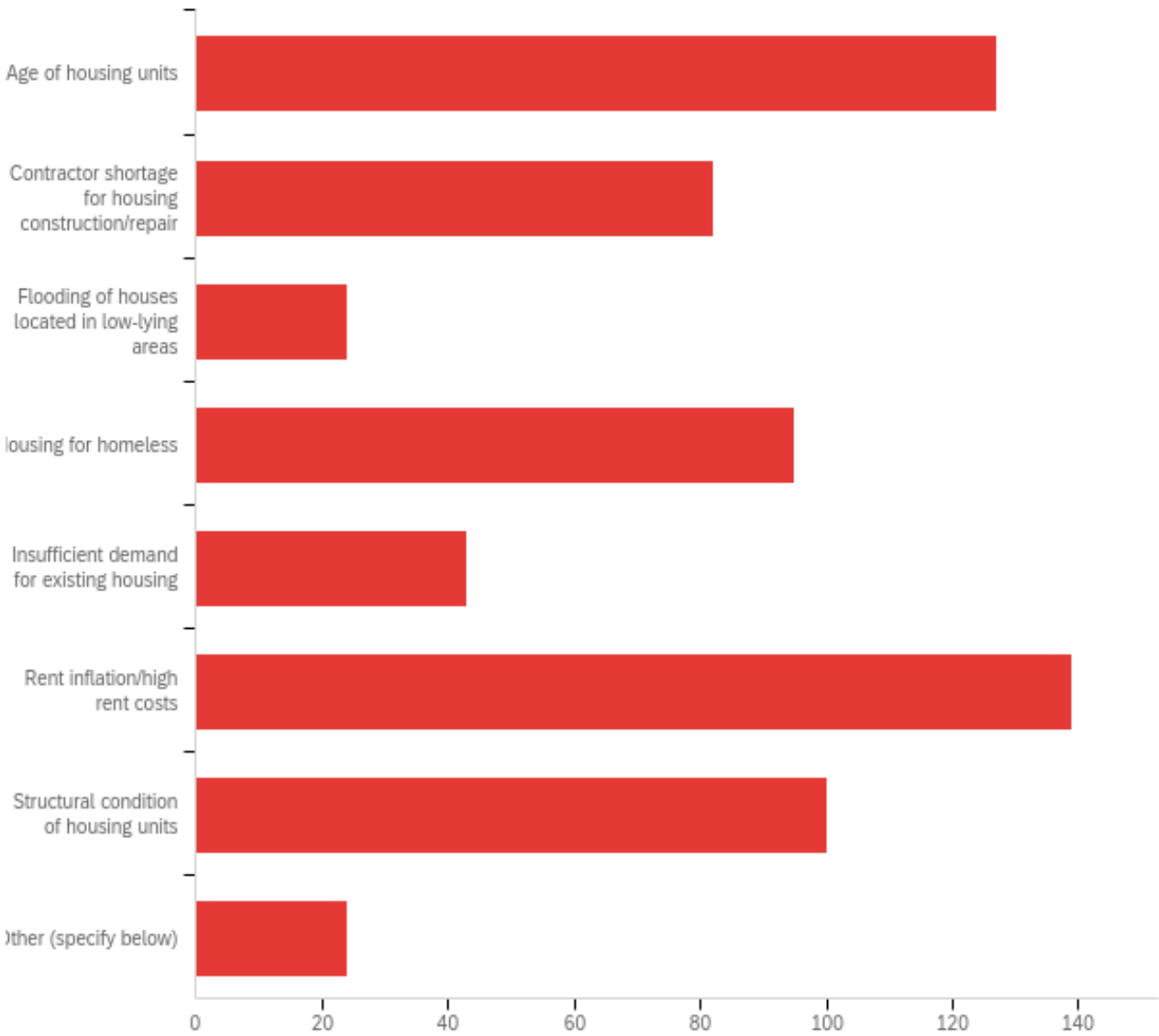
Response	Percent	Count
Age of housing units	20.03%	127
Contractor shortage for housing construction/repair	12.93%	82
Flooding of houses located in low-lying areas	3.79%	24
Housing for homeless	14.98%	95
Insufficient demand for existing housing	6.78%	43
Rent inflation/high rent costs	21.92%	139
Structural condition of housing units	15.77%	100
Other	3.79%	24
Total	**100.00%**	**634**

What are the current housing needs in the area? *(Select all that apply)*
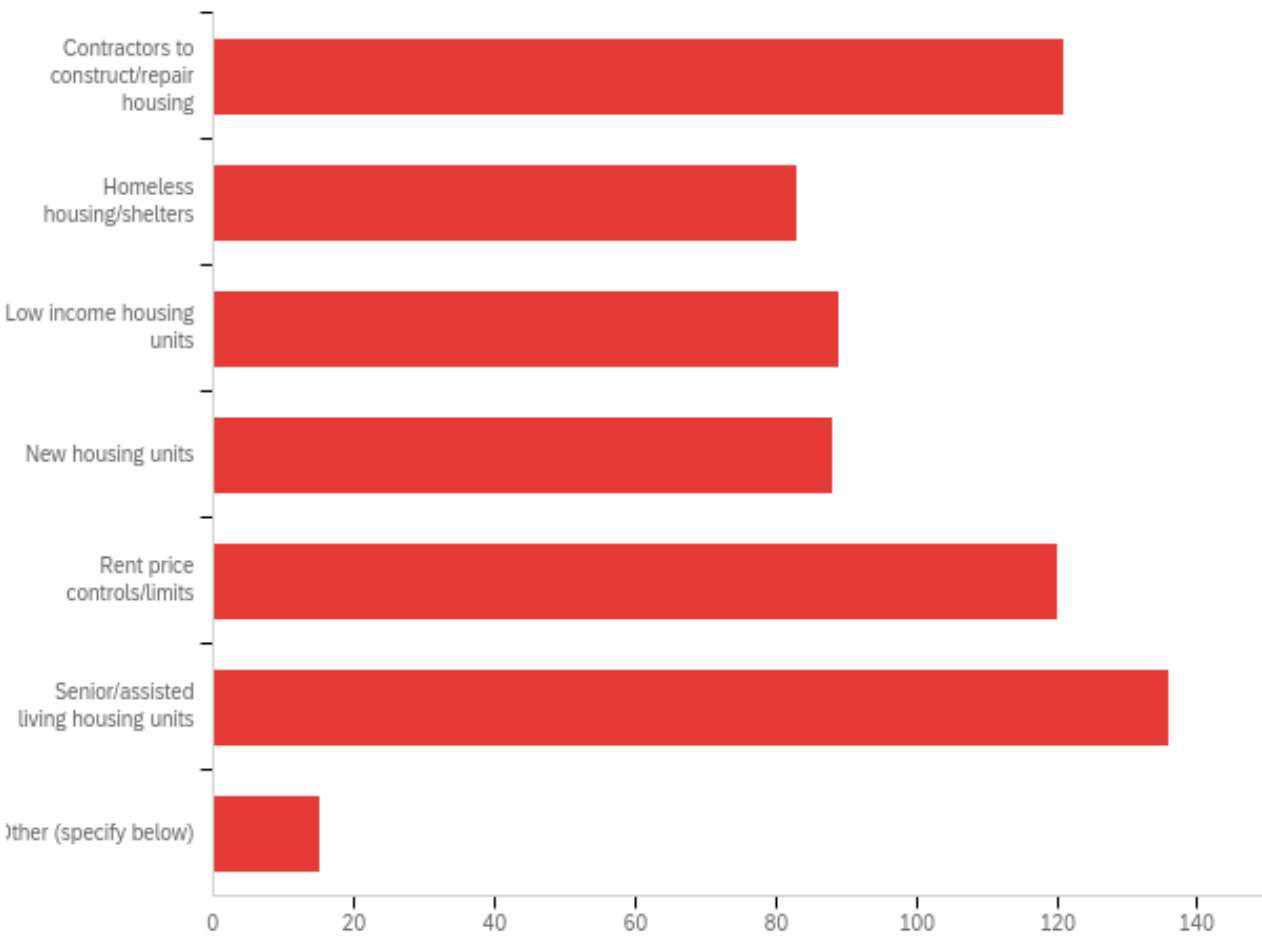
Response	Percent	Count
Contractors to construct/repair housing	18.56%	121
Homeless housing/shelters	12.73%	83
Low income housing units	13.65%	89
New housing units	13.50%	88
Rent price controls/limits	18.40%	120
Senior/assisted living housing units	20.86%	136
Other	2.30%	15
Total	**100.00%**	**652**

What should be the emphasis of work to protect and enhance natural resources in the area? *(Select up to three)*
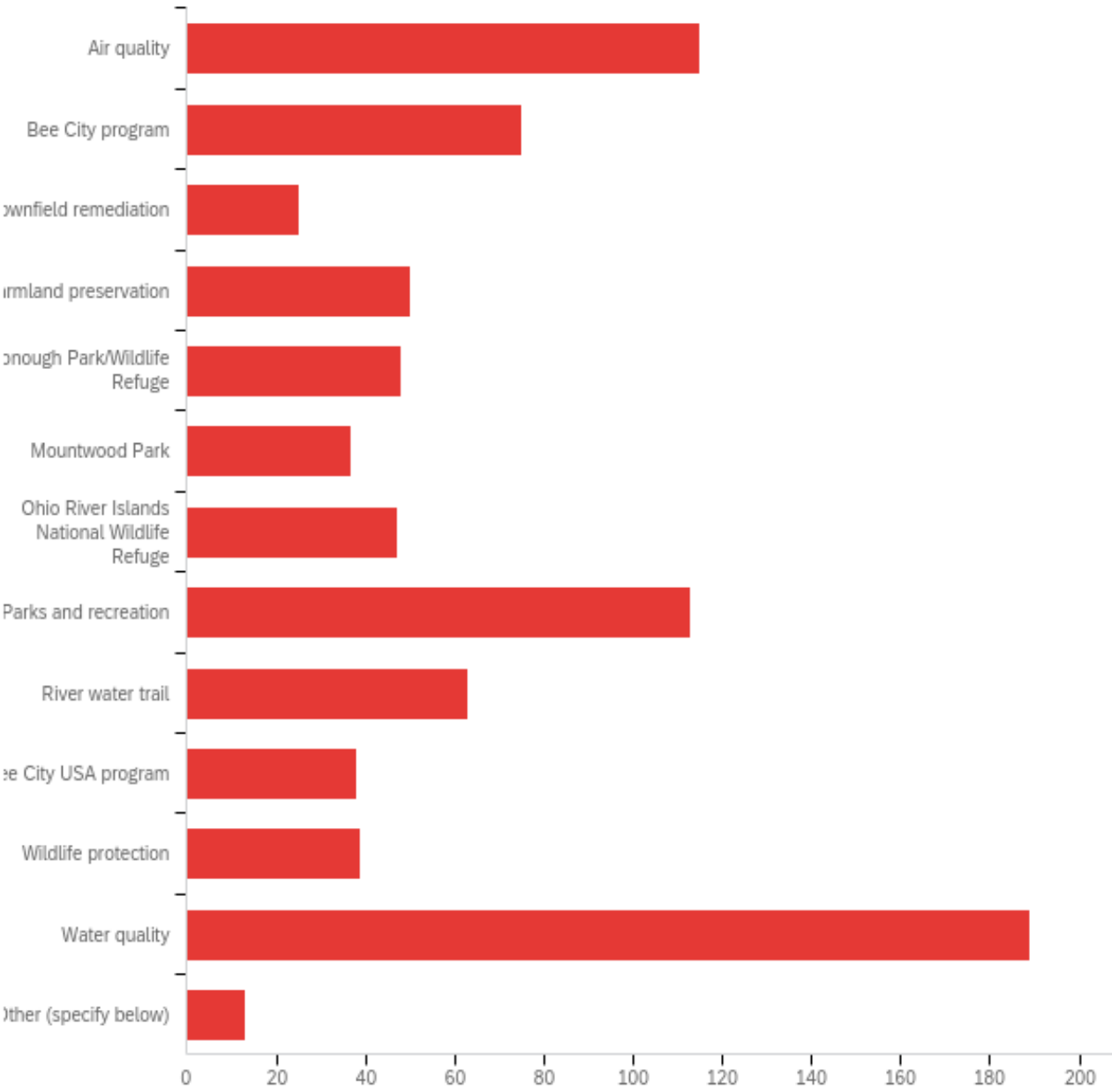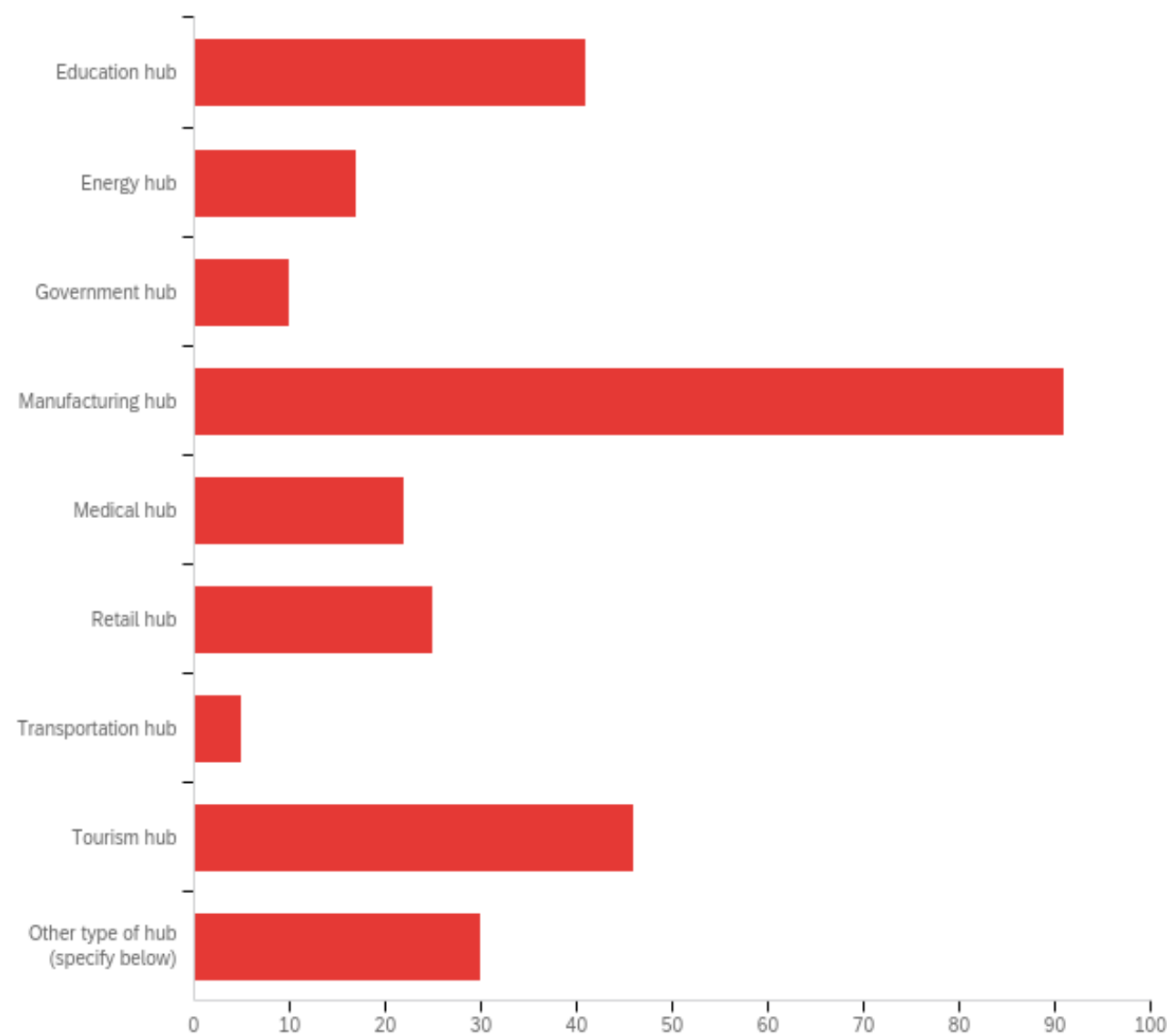
Response	Percent	Count
Air quality	13.50%	115
Bee City program	8.80%	75
Brownfield remediation	2.93%	25
Farmland preservation	5.87%	50
McDonough Park/Wildlife Refuge	5.63%	48
Mountwood Park	4.34%	37
Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge	5.52%	47
Parks and recreation	13.26%	113
River water trail	7.39%	63
Tree City USA program	4.46%	38
Wildlife protection	4.58%	39
Water quality	22.18%	189
Other	1.53%	13
Total	**100.00%**	**852**

What should be the emphasis of development activities in the area? *(Select up to three)*
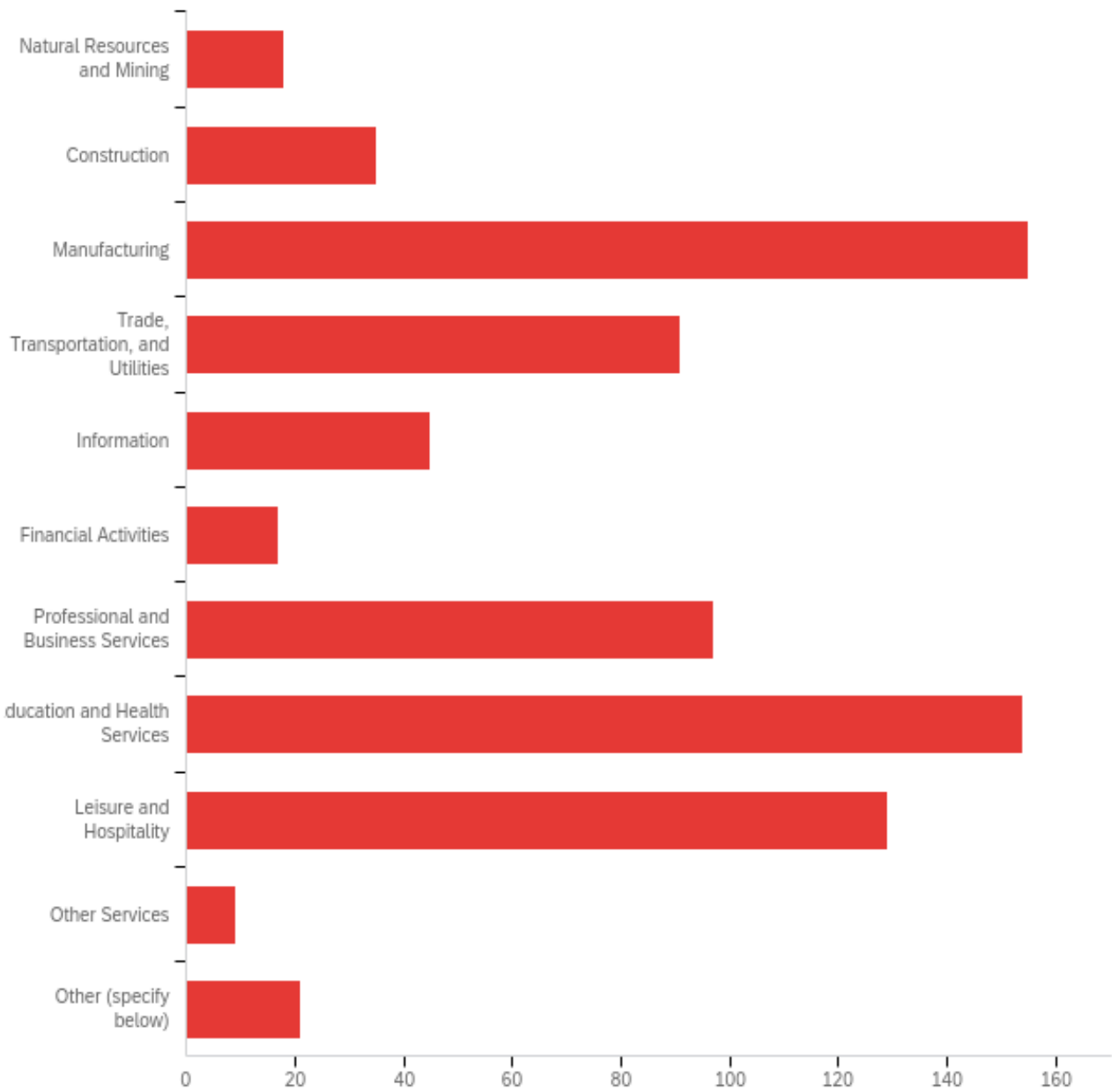
Response	Percent	Count
Natural Resources and Mining	2.33%	18
Construction	4.54%	35
Manufacturing	20.10%	155
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	11.80%	91
Information	5.84%	45
Financial Activities	2.20%	17
Professional and Business Services	12.58%	97
Education and Health Services	19.97%	154
Leisure and Hospitality	16.73%	129
Other Services	1.17%	9
Other	2.72%	21
Total	**100.00%**	**771**

What should be the theme for development efforts in the area?

Response	Percent	Count
Education hub	14.29%	41
Energy hub	5.92%	17
Government hub	3.48%	10
Manufacturing hub	31.71%	91
Medical hub	7.67%	22
Retail hub	8.71%	25
Transportation hub	1.74%	5
Tourism hub	16.03%	46
Other type of hub	10.45%	30
Total	**100.00%**	**287**

What is the best way to enhance cultural and historic resources?
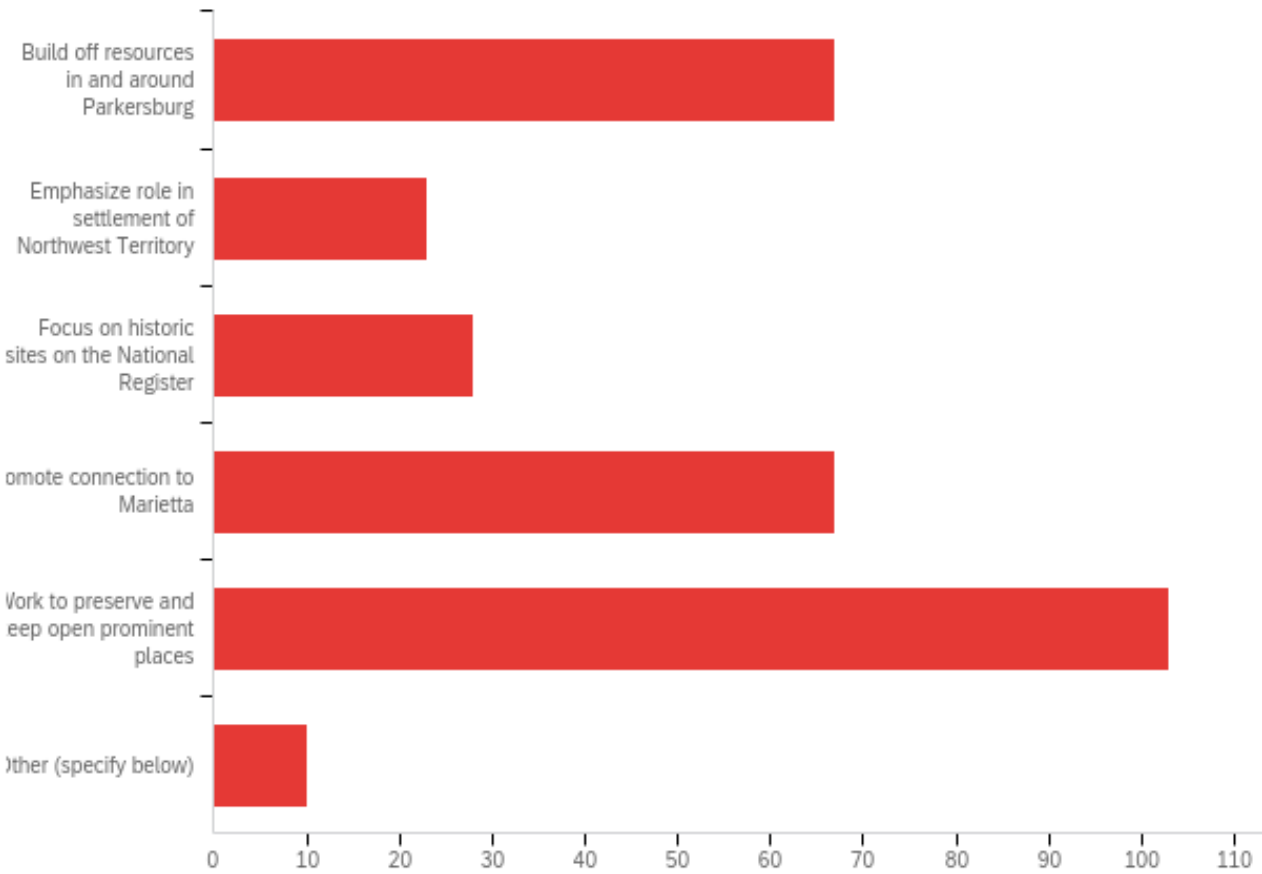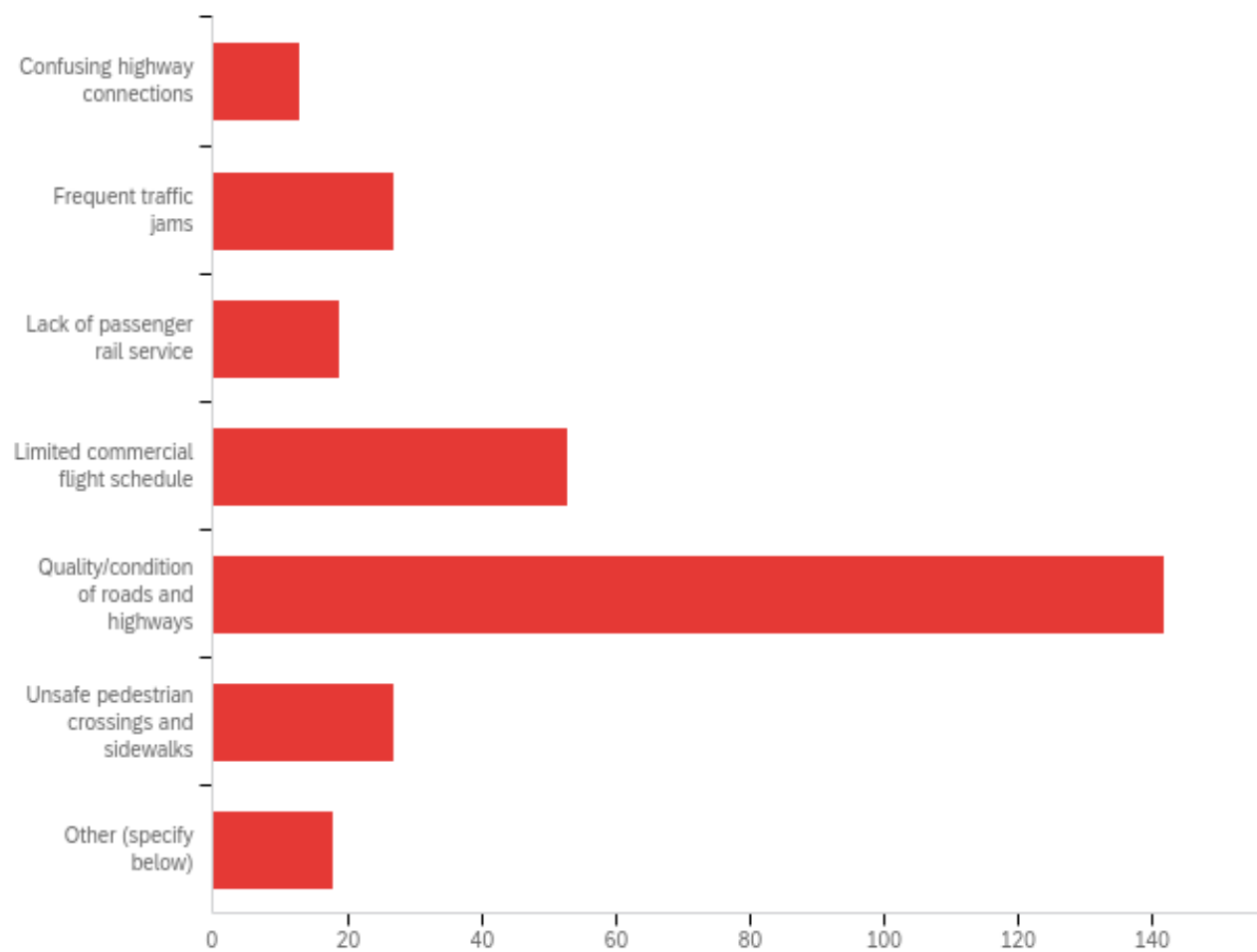
Response	Percent	Count
Build off resources in and around Parkersburg	22.48%	67
Emphasize role in settlement of Northwest Territory	7.72%	23
Focus on historic sites on the National Register	9.40%	28
Promote connection to Marietta	22.48%	67
Work to preserve and keep open prominent places	34.56%	103
Other	3.36%	10
Total	**100.00%**	**298**

What are the major land use issues for the area? *(Select up to three)*
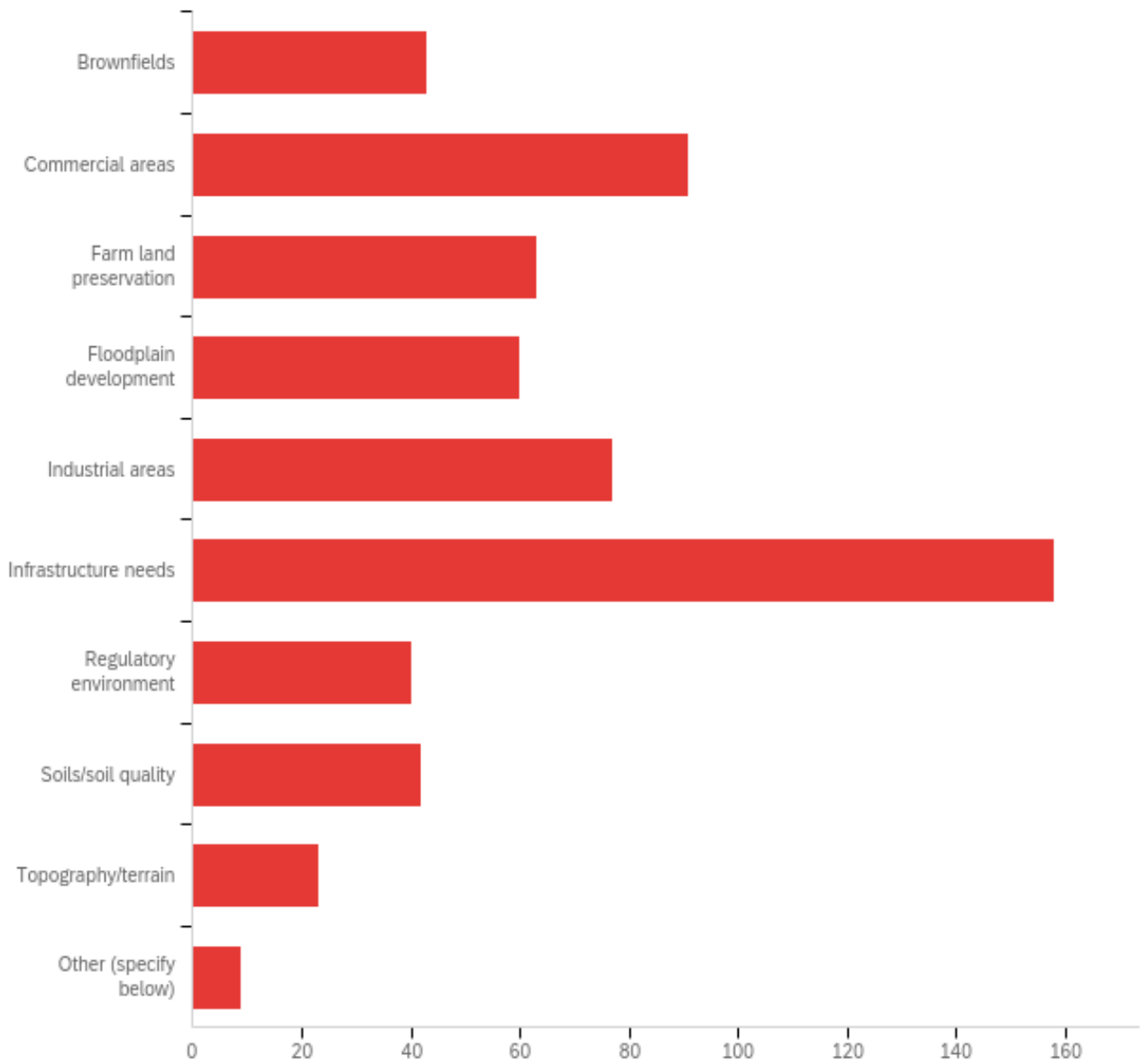
Response	Percent	Count
Brownfields	7.10%	43
Commercial areas	15.02%	91
Farm land preservation	10.40%	63
Floodplain development	9.90%	60
Industrial areas	12.71%	77
Infrastructure needs	26.07%	158
Regulatory environment	6.60%	40
Soils/soil quality	6.93%	42
Topography/terrain	3.80%	23
Other	1.49%	9
Total	**100.00%**	**606**

What is the most pressing transportation problem in the area today?

Response	Percent	Count
Confusing highway connections	4.35%	13
Frequent traffic jams	9.03%	27
Lack of passenger rail service	6.35%	19
Limited commercial flight schedule	17.73%	53
Quality/condition of roads and highways	47.49%	142
Unsafe pedestrian crossings and sidewalks	9.03%	27
Other	6.02%	18
Total	**100.00%**	**299**

What transportation enhancements are needed? *(Select up to three)*
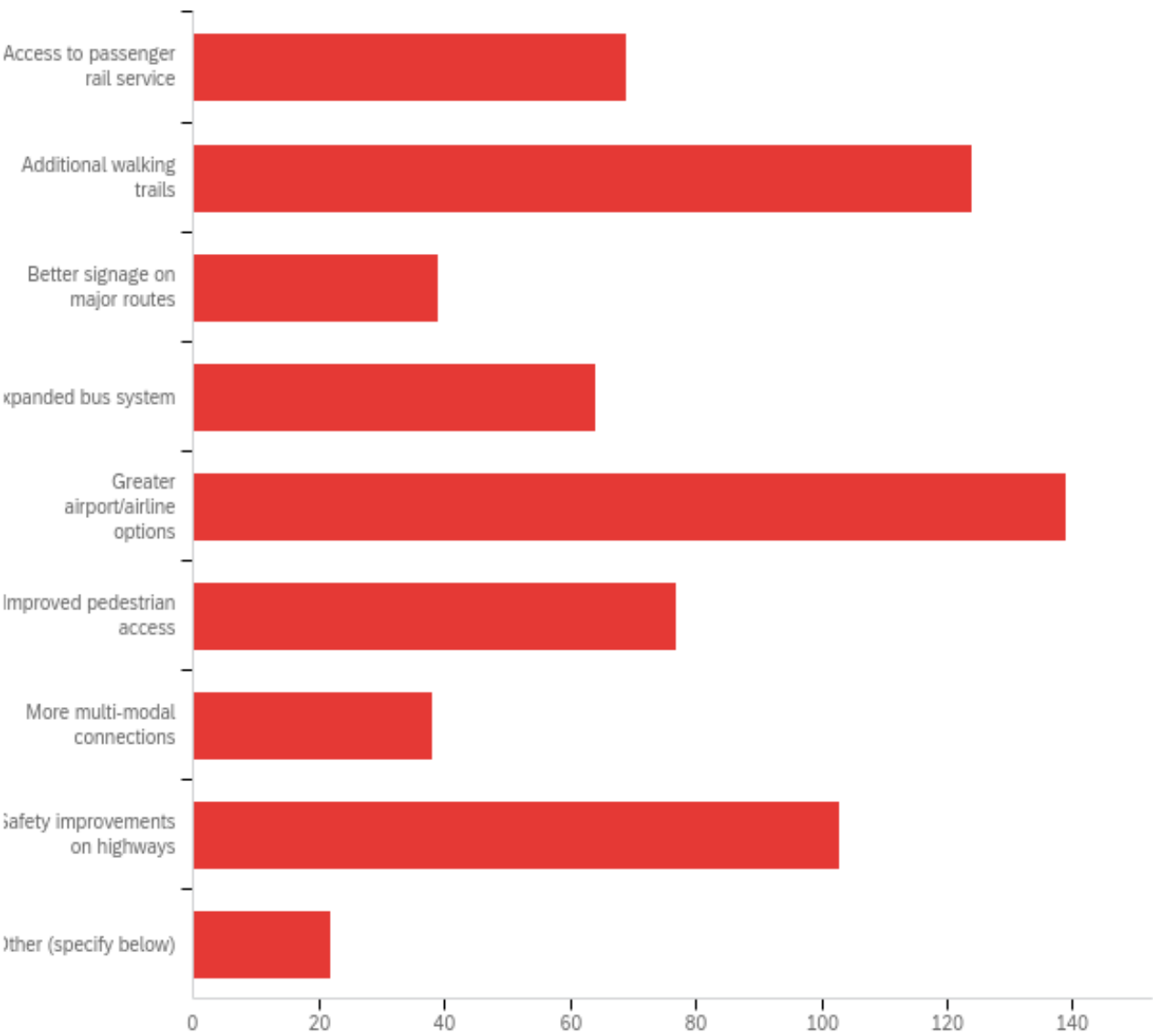
Response	Percent	Count
Access to passenger rail service	10.22%	69
Additional walking trails	18.37%	124
Better signage on major routes	5.78%	39
Expanded bus system	9.48%	64
Greater airport/airline options	20.59%	139
Improved pedestrian access	11.41%	77
More multi-modal connections	5.63%	38
Safety improvements on highways	15.26%	103
Other	3.26%	22
Total	**100.00%**	**675**

What are the key facilities and service needed in the area *(Select up to three)*
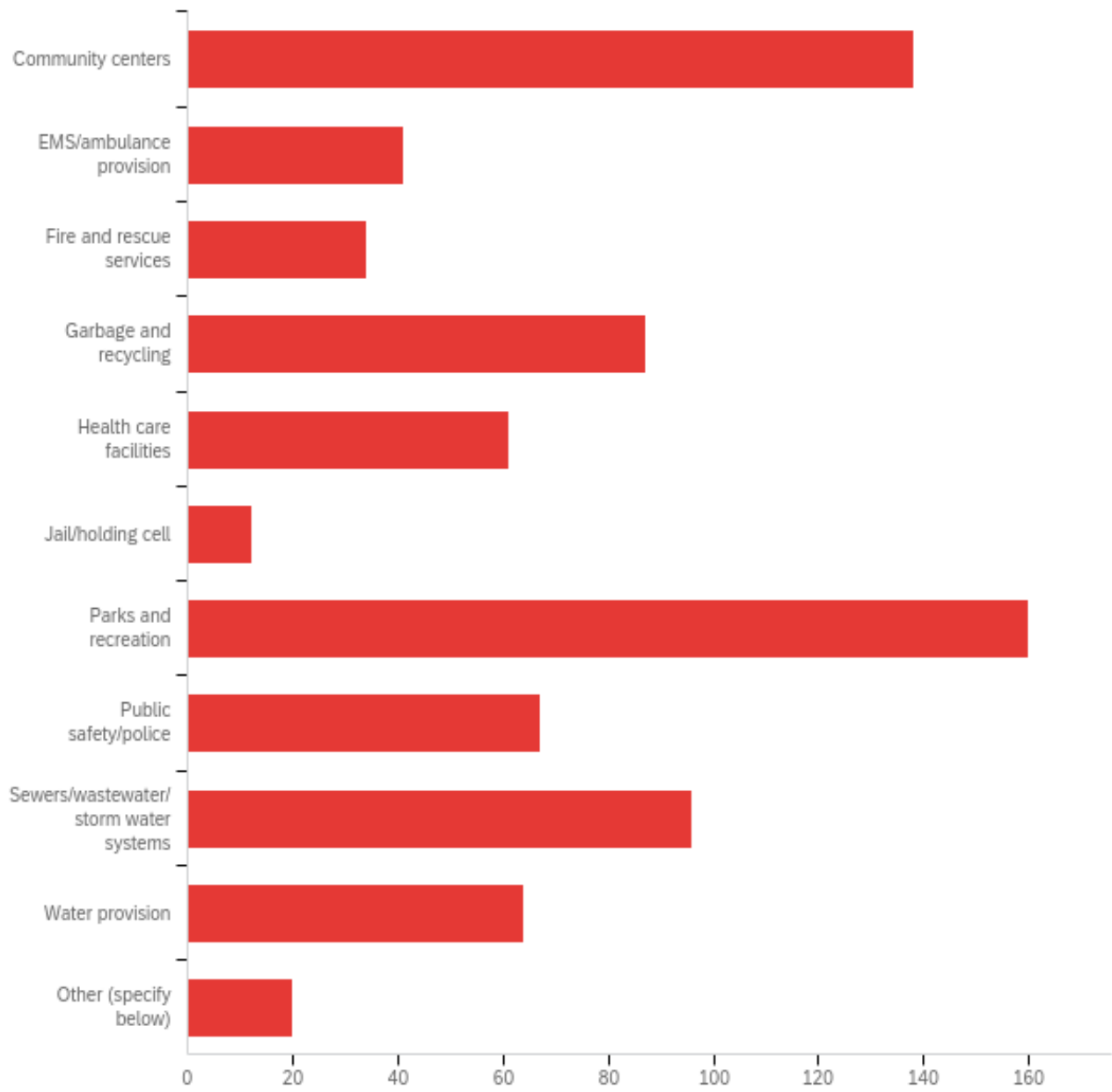
Response	Percent	Count
Community centers	17.69%	138
EMS/ambulance provision	5.26%	41
Fire and rescue services	4.36%	34
Garbage and recycling	11.15%	87
Health care facilities	7.82%	61
Jail/holding cell	1.54%	12
Parks and recreation	20.51%	160
Public safety/police	8.59%	67
Sewers/wastewater/storm water systems	12.31%	96
Water provision	8.21%	64
Other	2.56%	20
Total	**100.00%**	**780**