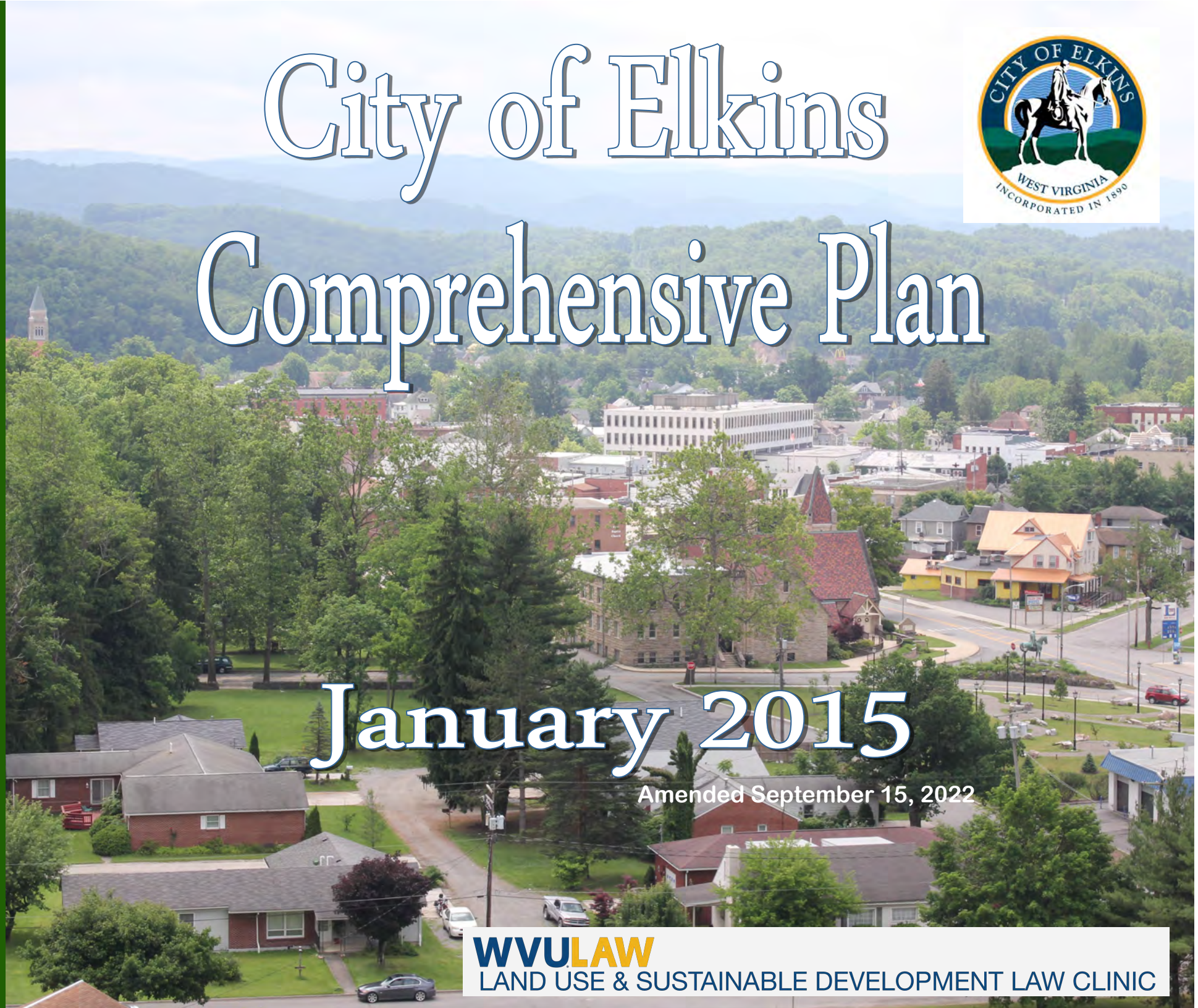
City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



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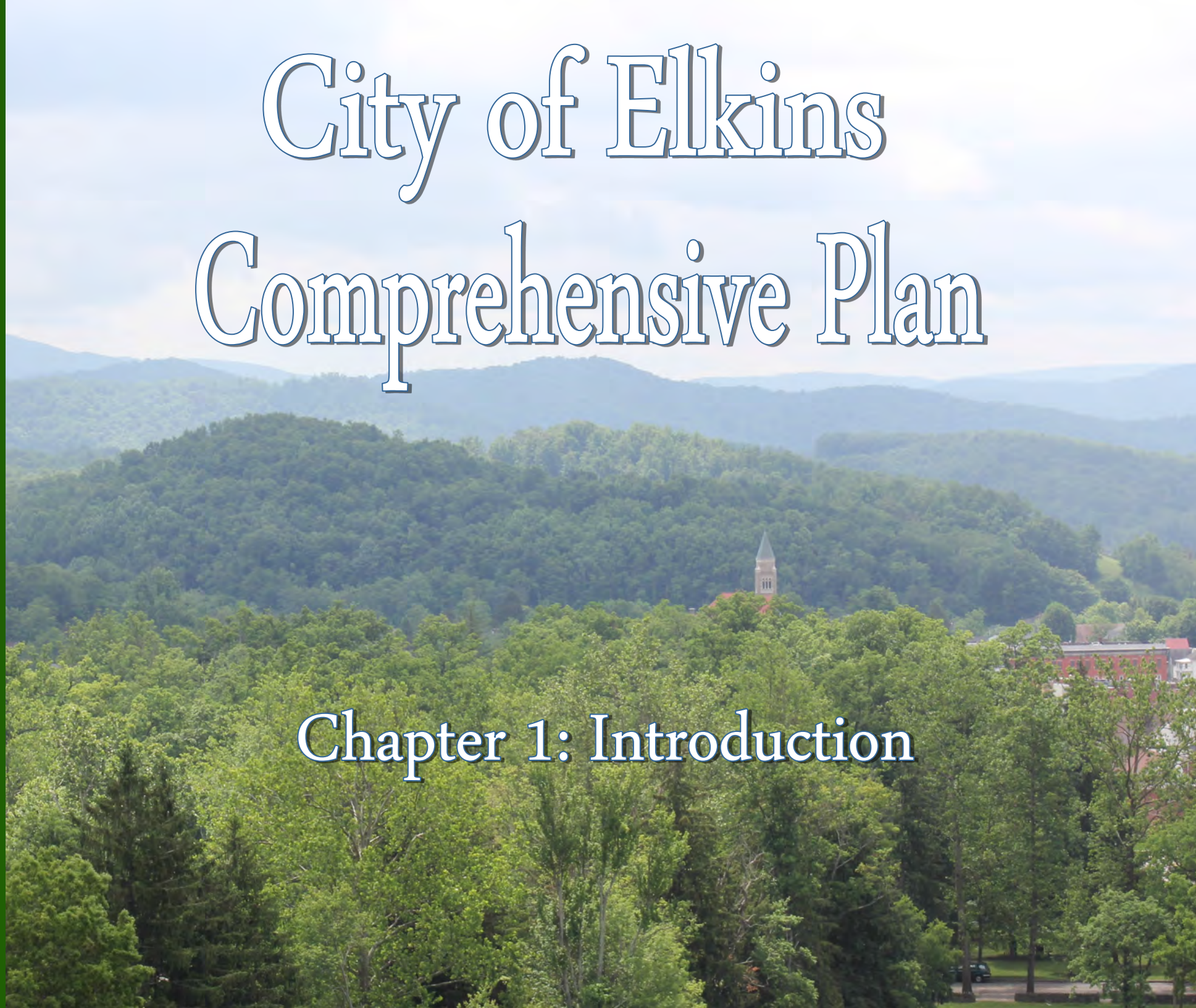
City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 1: Introduction

Who is in charge of preparing the Comprehensive Plan?

The West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A: Land Use Planning sets the rules and regulations that local governments must follow when participating in land use planning efforts. Chapter 8A gives local governments the authority to create a planning commission and board of zoning appeals, develop a comprehensive plan, subdivision and land development ordinance, zoning ordinance, and enact a voluntary farmland protection program, as well as to set procedures for methods of securities, appeals, and enforcement of ordinances.

The Planning Commission is ultimately in charge of planning for the future in a community, therefore the commission is tasked with preparing a Comprehensive Plan. The City of Elkins Planning Commission consists of nine (9) members that represent a wide range of interests within the City. The Planning Commission meets on the last Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Elkins City Hall.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Just like people plan for everyday life and their future (vacations, large purchases, retirement), local governments should plan as well. Local governments are tasked with providing services to their residents, which is often not an easy task. Many local government services (recreation, transportation, community facilities) require planning, especially those that require money. In order to correctly plan for the future, a local government should have a plan in place. This type of plan is called a comprehensive plan. The term comprehensive is used because the plan looks at all facets of a community; land use, transportation, housing, economic development, recreation, and community services. Communities need to have a plan in place in order to make informed land use decisions. The plan should be used to enhance the quality of life of residents and to guide investments to the right places.

When will the plan be used by local elected officials?

There are many opportunities for the use of the comprehensive plan by local elected officials. The plan should be referenced any time officials make a decision about a development proposal, capital improvement project, or a policy change. Official actions should be consistent with the vision and goals detailed in the comprehensive plan. Local elected officials and the planning commission should review the plan annually and make any updates that are needed.

The action plan and corresponding implementation matrix should be used by the City of Elkins Council to begin implementation of high priority projects. The comprehensive plan should not merely sit on a shelf, but should be used

as a catalyst for change within the City. Therefore, the recommendations that were deemed as high priority should be completed by Council as soon as possible.

The next priority of city council should be the update of land use ordinances. Any land use ordinance that the City has enacted should be consistent with this comprehensive plan. A detailed review of the current zoning ordinance was included as part of this comprehensive plan effort.

The comprehensive plan should also be considered when reviewing development plans. City council, planning commission, and the board of zoning appeals should review the plan to ensure that any new development or proposed zoning change are consistent with the comprehensive plan. Questions that officials should ask when reviewing new development include:

- Is the new development/zoning change consistent with the Future Land Use Map?
- How will the development impact the transportation network?
- Will the development lead to an increase in school children that could potentially impact the County school district?
- Will additional housing be needed?

Where does the content of the plan originate from?

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to establish a vision for the future of Elkins and recommend specific projects that the city should invest in. Because the Elkins Planning Commission wants this plan to be guided and shaped by the priorities of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders, public input was vital to the process. Therefore, the City went above and beyond the requirements of the West Virginia Code in order to receive as much public input as possible. All public participation efforts were advertised on the City's announcements blog and Facebook page, and email listserv. Press releases were also sent to local print, television, and radio news media.

State Public Participation Requirements

The West Virginia Code requires that the Planning Commission give notice and hold a public hearing before recommending a comprehensive plan to the governing body. After the public hearing and approval, the planning commission must submit the recommended plan to City Council. City Council is then required to hold a public hearing prior to adoption of the plan. The Planning Commission is also required to adopt procedures for public participation. The procedures adopted by the Elkins Planning Commission can be found in Appendix 1.

Additional Public Input

Open Houses

The City held two additional open house public meetings to solicit input. The first meeting was held in September of 2013. Meeting attendees were asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the city. They were also asked to identify any land use issues within the City.

A final open house was held to present the recommendations to the public. The public was then asked to help prioritize the recommendations. The results of the prioritization were then presented to the Elkins Planning Commission for review and to assist the commission in drafting the final implementation matrix.

Results from the two open houses can be found in Appendix 2.

Public Survey

Other opportunities for public input included surveys that were posted online. Copies of the initial survey were also available at City Hall. It was the hope of the Planning Commission that more people would complete surveys as many people do not like to attend public meetings. The initial survey was very successful with 175 responses. The second survey had 54 responses. A summary of the results of each survey can be found in Appendix 3.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews are yet another method to collect public input from a variety of people in a community. Stakeholders are key people, organizations, or business owners in Elkins that will be impacted by land use decisions in the future. Stakeholders can also help with implementation of priority projects detailed in the plan. The Planning Commission identified several key stakeholders in the community. The list of stakeholders can be found in Appendix 4. The stakeholders were then contacted and asked about any issues or concerns they have within the City.

Youth Focus Group

A youth focus group was held in December of 2013 at Elkins High School. Input was solicited from a twelfth grade civics class. Students were asked to participate in several different exercises. Students were asked to identify areas on a map that need to be improved or where they would like to see new development. Students were then asked to prioritize the top three projects. Lastly, the students participated in a postcard exercise where they were asked to write a postcard to a friend who had not visited Elkins in ten years and had to describe what it looked like. The goal of the exercise was for students to describe their ideal Elkins, using the priorities identified during the mapping exercise. Results from the youth focus group can be found in Appendix 5.

Why should the City of Elkins complete a plan?

Why is the city engaged in a planning process? The City of Elkins has many strengths and advantages, but it also faces issues common to other West Virginia communities: vacant and neglected homes and businesses, a downtown that offers opportunities for continued improvement, and limited government resources for addressing these matters while continuing to provide essential services. When communities do not plan, they fail to take advantage of their opportunities. A comprehensive plan is often a reality check on issues within a community. In order to better address issues and concerns of residents, a comprehensive plan will detail a set of strategies that should be undertaken to make changes to improve the quality of life in Elkins.

Critical Issues and Plan Organization

The City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan revolves around the critical issues that were identified during the planning process. Each chapter of the plan details a critical issue. This will help the City with implementation as many comprehensive plans contain numerous recommendations that never get implemented. The following issues were identified and are located in these chapters:

Chapter 2: Public Safety
Chapter 3: Transportation
Chapter 4: Economic Development
Chapter 5: Land Use
Chapter 6: Implementation

Vision and Goals

At the heart of a comprehensive plan is a vision statement that is instrumental in future planning for communities. The vision statement reflects how the community would like to develop in the next 10 years. The vision statement for the City of Elkins was developed using input from the Planning Commission, as well as the public. Many of the qualities that the public loves about Elkins were incorporated into the vision statement.

Youth Focus Group at Elkins High School

Vision Statement

To help the City achieve its long-term vision, goals were then developed. The critical issues identified during the planning process were used as the starting basis for goal development. Goals are meant to be general statements that reflect the long term desires of a community.

Goals

Compliance with Chapter 8A: Land Use Planning

Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code: Land Use Planning requires several mandatory elements in a Comprehensive Plan. The tables below display the mandatory elements and where they can be found in the City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan.

Elkins will continue to lead in the arts, education, and healthcare, while actively cultivating opportunities in tourism, recreation, and economic development.

Further strengthen public safety services to meet the needs of existing and future residents and businesses

Improve traffic and pedestrian circulation to provide a safer and more accessible transportation network for residents

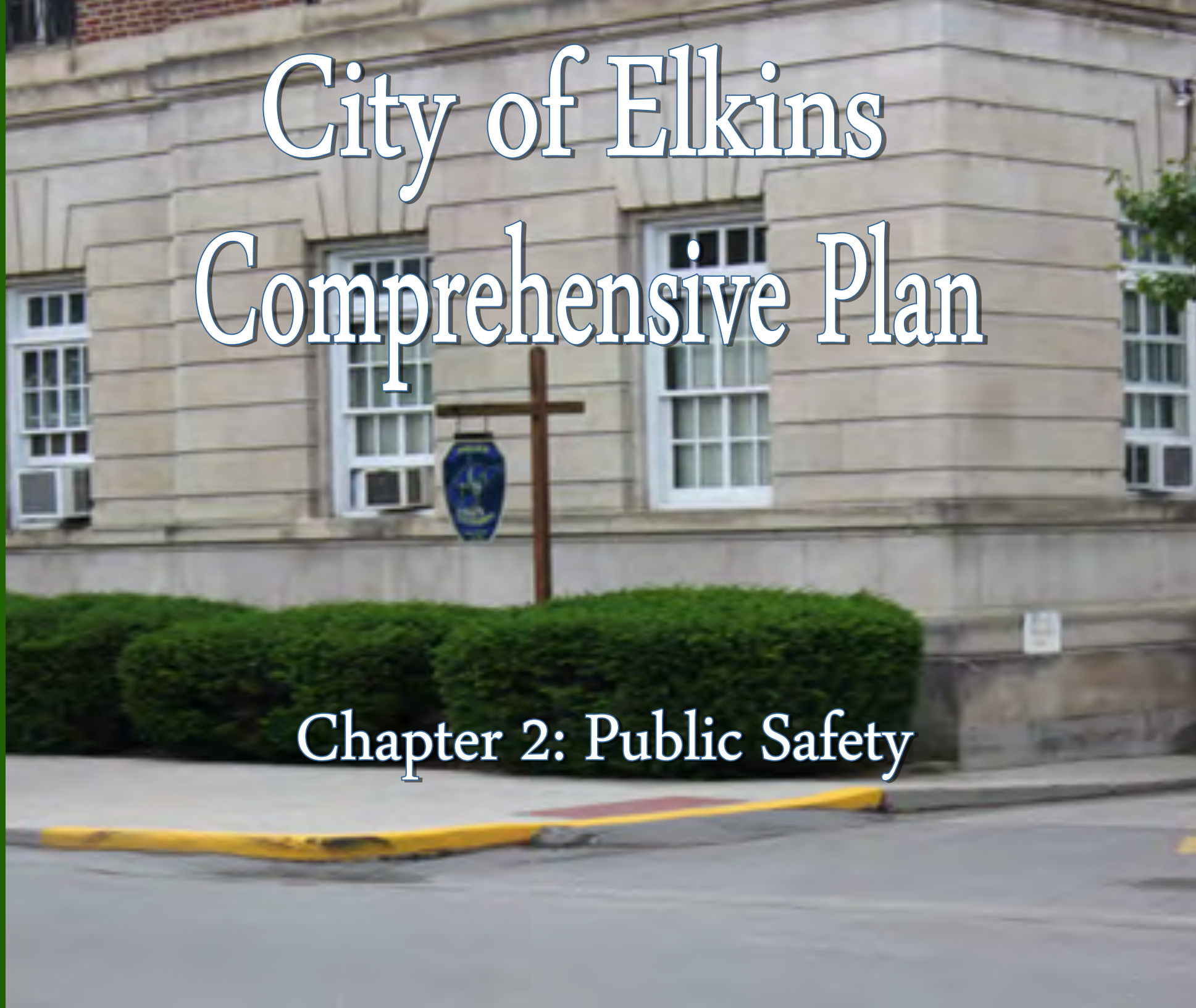
Provide opportunities for increased economic development

Enhance and protect the character of the City through land use planning

Required Objectives for a Comprehensive Plan	
W. VA. Code §8A-3-4	
Code Provision	**Chapter**
Statement of goals and objectives	Chapters 1-6
Timeline on how to meet short and long-term goals and objectives	Chapter 6
Action plan with implementation strategies	Chapters 2-5
Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding	Chapters 4 and 6
Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies	Chapter 5
A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation	Chapter 6
Maps, plats, and/or charts that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	Chapters 2-5

Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan	
W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(c)	
Code Provision	**Page #**
Land Use	
Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, conservation)	5-2, 5-3
Population density and building intensity standards	4-2, 4-3, 5-19
Growth or decline management	4-16, 5-14, 5-16, 5-18, 5-19
Projected population growth or decline	4-2, 4-3
Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas)	5-4
Housing	
Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities)	5-13, 5-14, 5-15, 5-17
Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed	5-15
Address substandard housing	5-14, 5-15, 5-20, 5-21, 5-22
Rehabilitate and improve existing housing	5-6, 5-8, 5-9, 5-13 5-14, 5-15, 5-21, 5-22
Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing	5-9, 5-15
Transportation	
Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river, and any other mode	3-2, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-10, 3-11
Movement of traffic and parking	3-2, 3-3, 3-7, 3-8, 3-9, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15
Pedestrian and bicycle systems	3-4, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15
Intermodal transportation	3-7 to 3-15
Economic development	
Analyze opportunities, strengths and weaknesses	4-12, 4-13 to 4-17
Identify and designate economic development sites and/or sectors	4-6, 4-13, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16, 4-18, 4-19
Identify types of economic development sought	4-12 to 4-16, 4-19, 4-20
Miscellaneous Components	
Infrastructure	4-12, 4-13
Public Services	2-2 to 2-12, 4-12, 4-13
Rural	5-19
Recreation	5-2, 5-12, 5-20
Community Design	4-13 to 4-15, 4-22, 5-11, 5-16, 5-20
Preferred development areas	5-14
Renewal and/or redevelopment	5-14
Financing	4-14 to 4-17, Chapter 6
Historic preservation	5-10, 5-11, 5-15, 5-16, 5-17

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 2: Public Safety

Background Information

Public safety refers to the protection of the public. Government is usually charged with the responsibility of keeping its residents safe. Public safety usually consists of police protection, fire protection, emergency medical services, and emergency management. This chapter also examines the medical needs of residents within and near the City.

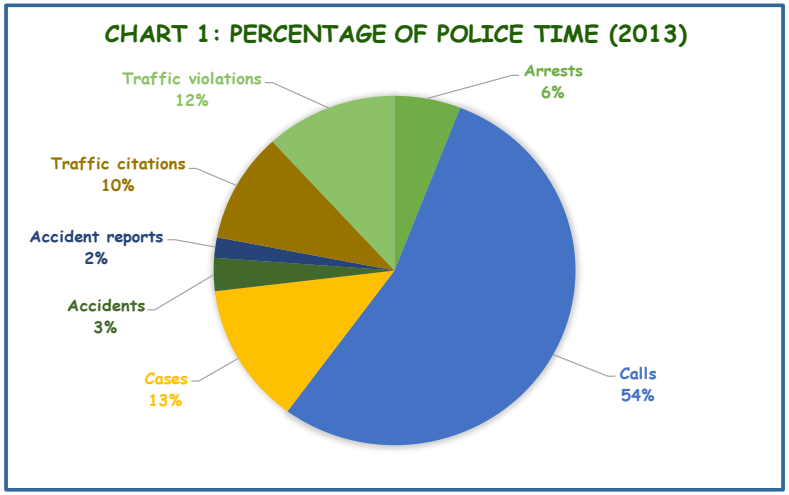
During the public participation process, public safety was routinely mentioned as a major concern to residents. This chapter will explore the public safety departments and their needs and concerns, as well as the general public's.

Police Department

The City of Elkins Police Department consists of 11 police officers and 2 support staff with a yearly budget of 1.2 million dollars. The department also has two K-9 units. The police department patrols approximately 25 square miles. There is a mandatory training requirement for police officers. All applicants to the police department undergo background investigations and drug, psychological, medical, polygraph, and physical fitness tests.

Elkins Police Department

As shown on *Chart 1: Percentage of Police Time (2013)* over half of the police department's time is spent responding to calls. In 2013, the department received over 4,500 calls. Cases and traffic violations also take up a good portion of police duties. The department responded to 285 traffic accidents, with 144 of those being reportable and 141 only a minor exchange of information necessary.

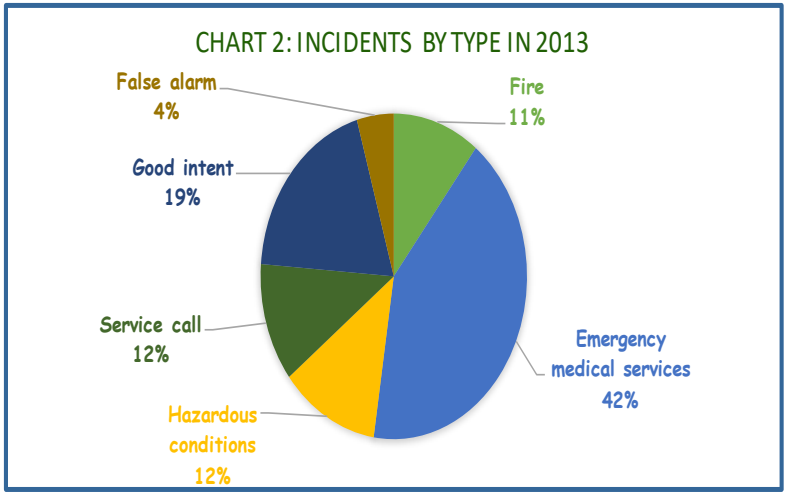


Fire Department

The City of Elkins Fire Department was established in 1898. The department has a paid fire chief and 3 paid officers, and 27 active volunteers. The fire chief works 40 hours a week and the officers work 24-hour shifts, on duty for 24 hours, off 48 hours. Funding sources include the City Fire Service fee, Randolph County Commission, State Insurance Excise Tax, fundraisers, and donations.

Chart 2: Incidents by Type in 2013 displays the types of incidents that the fire department responds to on a daily basis. The fire department responds to more emergency medical service calls than any other type of call. Emergency medical service calls include medical assists, vehicular accidents, search for people on land, and swift water rescue. The next highest incidents that the department responded to were good intent calls, which include alarms, smoke scares, and authorized controlled burning.

Formerly, Elkins charged fire-services fees only on property inside city limits. In summer 2014, Elkins adopted a new fire-fee ordinance which extends the fire-service-fee outside the city boundary, across the entirety of the Elkins Fire Department's First-Due Area. Starting July 1, 2015, the new fee both inside and outside the city will be $100 per year for single-family homes and duplexes. Commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings with three or more units will pay five cents per square foot.



Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical services in the City of Elkins are provided by the Randolph County Ambulance Authority.

Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the planning, coordination, and implementation of all emergency management and Homeland Security related activities for Randolph County. The mission of the office is to lessen the loss of life and reduce injuries and property damage during natural and technological man-made incidents through mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (Randolph County Office of Emergency Management, 2014). The goals and objectives of Randolph County Emergency Management are as follows:

- Provide training for disaster staffing
- Update and maintain an effective Emergency Operations Plan
- Enhance mitigation activities in Randolph County
- Provide easy access of preparedness, planning, and emergency information to the citizens of Randolph County
- Enhance communications with the citizens, local media, community associations and businesses
- Maintain an integrated countywide emergency communications system
- Maintain a fully equipped Emergency Operations Center
- Ensure compliance with NIMS (National Incident Management System) and other Federal and State mandates

The Randolph County Office of Emergency Management is currently updating the countywide Emergency Operations Plan, which will include municipal plans within the county, and will also continue to update the THIRA (**T**hreat & **H**azard Identification **A**nd **R**isk **A**ssessment).

Medical Facilities

Davis Medical Center

The Davis Medical Center is located within the City of Elkins between Harrison Avenue and Gorman Avenue. The center employs 525 full-time and 125 part-time employees. The center offers the following services:

- Outpatient center
- Full service emergency department
- Inpatient services
- Full service diagnostic center
- Cancer care services.
- Home health
- Pharmacy

The center also offers several community outreach programs throughout the year.

Needs Assessment

In terms of public safety, many residents are unhappy with the level of crime and drug use that is occurring in the City. To further examine this issue, the police department was asked to complete a stakeholder interview to provide insight on the workings of the department and any issues within the Department itself. Other public safety departments were also interviewed to determine any issues or concerns that they may have.

Davis Medical Center

Police Department

Crime was one of the biggest concerns of residents that was mentioned during the planning process. Residents are concerned with increased drug activity and what they feel as a lack of police protection. Residents feel that more police patrols and manpower, drug task force, drug abuse education programs, enforcement of laws, bicycle cops, and a neighborhood watch program would help solve the crime issues within the City.

In a stakeholder interview with the police department, the police chief felt that one of the greatest challenges facing the police department is a lack of manpower. Currently the department has 11 funded positions. A drug task force, bike patrol, and drug education program would be difficult to develop with the limited amount of officers on staff. In addition, equipment, such as body armor and ammo, needs to be updated or replaced. Once the City hires an officer it is also difficult to retain them as the pay is lower, which is why once officers receive training they leave for municipalities that offer more money.

A comparison of communities that are close to Elkins, as well as those that have similar population size, was developed to better understand the composition of other police departments. *Table 1: Comparison of Police Departments in West Virginia Communities* shows that Elkins has about the same number of officers as other communities (City of Dunbar) with a similar population size. The comparison illustrates that the total budget available to a community impacts the amount of money that is then available for the police force. The City of Elkins has a lower budget and therefore is not able to provide as much money to the police force to pay for additional police officers and to increase the starting salary.

Community policing may help the City fight crime and improve the image of the police department. Community policing focuses on the police department building ties and working with members of a community. Community policing also gives police officers more eyes and ears on the ground to report problems.

Fire Department

No real concerns were stated by the public concerning fire protection. However, the public is concerned about the many vacant and dilapidated structures in the City, which could eventually lead to a fire safety issue.

The fire department was interviewed and stated that an engine truck and rescue truck are in need of replacement. They also would like to make minor improvements to the fire station and construct a substation. The biggest concern of the department is the need for additional paid staff members. The department would like a minimum of 3 paid officers on duty at a time to improve response times. Currently, there is only 1 officer on duty at a time. Lastly, there are several areas outside of the City that also lack adequate hydrant protection.

Recently the City enacted new fire fees that will help the department send more trucks to battle fires. The new fire fee will also support hiring additional professional firefighters, which will enable higher staffing levels on each shift.

Emergency Management

A concern of local elected officials in Elkins is the lack of a disaster/emergency shelter in the City. It has been discussed that the City building could be used as a shelter, however there may not be enough room. Another possible location is the old Armory building. The City also does not have a generator, however the fire department does. During Hurricane Sandy and the derechos it was apparent that there were no specific plans in place in case of an emergency. An improved communications system needs to be established between all the agencies involved in providing emergency services. A plan also needs to be developed on ways to better communicate information during an emergency to the public.

It is also a concern that the city is not yet included in the Randolph County E911 Center's computer-assisted dispatching system, although a project is currently underway to correct that.

Medical Needs

A concern of the Planning Commission is the lack of a drug abuse treatment center to help with the drug problem in Elkins. The commission feels that an outpatient facility would not only benefit Elkins but the surrounding region as well.

Table 1: Comparison of Police Departments in West Virginia Communities					
Name	Population	Total Budget	Police Budget	Number of Police Officers	Starting Salary
City of Buckhannon	5,639	$3,862,309	$965,560	9	$32,261 (certified base pay) $39,708 (with overtime)
City of Hurricane	6,284	$4,162,193	$1,434,026	16	N/A
City of Elkins	7,094	$4,386,690	$1,130,873	11	$27,040 (first year-without over-time) $31,200 (non-probationary patrolman without overtime)
City of Nitro	7,178	$6,231,543	1,294,195	15	N/A
City of Dunbar	7,907	$5,817,454	$838,400	12	$37,000 (built-in overtime)
City of Bridgeport	8,149	$16,558,996	$2,856,931	30	$43,644 (average)
City of Moundsville	9,318	$6,404,141	$1,510,118	18	N/A
City of St. Albans	11,044	$10,946,682	$1,945,926	26	N/A

Action Plan

The following action plan was developed utilizing the public input that was received throughout the planning process. The action plan is meant to address the various needs in relation to public safety that are detailed on page 2-6. All of the action steps detailed are recommended to help achieve the following goal:

Objective 1: Ensure residents are served with a high quality police and fire department

Action Step 1: Budget for new equipment and additional staffing for the police and fire departments

Both the police and fire department would like to hire additional officers. There is also a need for new equipment that could put a significant strain on the City budget. Therefore, the City needs to prepare a long-term budget plan for new equipment and hiring needs. The fire department would like to replace a 1990 engine and a 1995 rescue truck. The police department is in need of body armor and ammunition.

Action Step 2: Develop community oriented policing to address the concerns of residents in Elkins pertaining to crime

The majority of respondents that completed an online survey for the comprehensive plan feel that one of the biggest issues facing Elkins in the future is crime. The police department participated in a stakeholder survey for the planning process and responded that money and increased personnel are needed to adequately address the needs of the public. Since the City of Elkins has a limited budget, the police department should develop community oriented policies to help improve the image of the department and fight crime. Community oriented policing brings police and the community together by working together to address and identify crime. There are simple and inexpensive methods to get the public involved:

- Facebook page
- Email system
- Community crime watch meetings
- Text messaging system
- Additional press releases
- Youth policing academy
- Citizens Police Academy
- Conduct classes at local high school

Objective 2: Establish policies to help protect the public from disasters and make the community more resilient

Action Step 1: Partner with the County to update the countywide emergency operations plan and determine a location for an emergency shelter in Elkins

Randolph County is in the process of updating the county emergency operations plan. The City of Elkins should fully participate in this effort. As the plan designates who is in charge during an emergency, it is also important that all city public safety personnel are involved as well.

As part of the process, a location for an emergency shelter in Elkins should be designated. This is very important since Elkins is the county seat and the largest population center in the County. Not only would residents of Elkins use the shelter but many throughout the County as well. When choosing a site for use as an emergency shelter the following should be considered:

- Capacity
- Bathroom and showers
- ADA accessibility
- Floor plans
- Space for parking

- Cooking facilities
- Safety features
- Heating and cooling capacity
- Emergency generator on site

A possible location for an emergency shelter would be the National Guard Armory in Elkins. Elkins City Council should determine if the armory would meet the criteria mentioned for use as an emergency shelter.

Goal 1: Further strengthen public safety services to meet the needs of existing and future residents and businesses

If the armory is not appropriate for an emergency shelter, another location should be identified by City Council, Fire Department, Police Department, and Randolph County Office of Emergency Management.

Objective 3: Provide residents and students with information regarding the effects of drug use

Action Step 1: Seek evidence based education for young children on drug abuse prevention

Increased drug use is a major concern by many residents in Elkins. The Planning Commission would like to explore the options available to educate young children on the affects of drug use. A committee should be formed between Planning Commission, Council, and the Board of Education to explore these options. Partners include the Randolph County Family Resources Network. Randolph County Partners in Prevention, and the Randolph County Drug Task Force.

Action Step 2: Explore the possibility of the development of a drug abuse treatment center in Elkins

Currently there are no drug abuse treatment centers in Elkins or in nearby communities. The City of Elkins should work with the Randolph County Family Resources Network, Randolph County Partners in Prevention, and interested developers to determine if there is a suitable location for a center in Elkins.

Case Studies

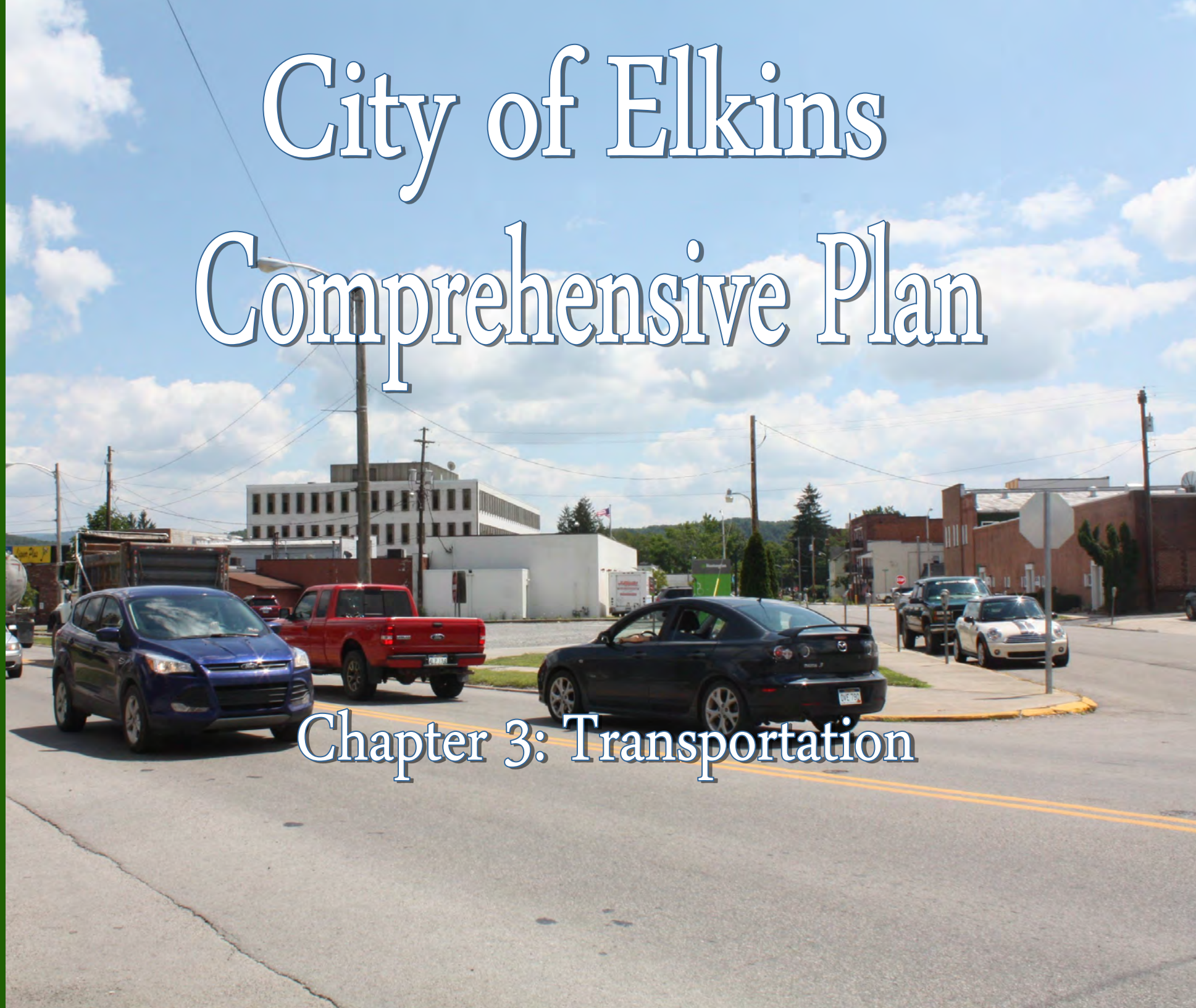
Nitro Police Department Community Initiatives
In 2012, the Nitro Police Department began implementing community-oriented measures. Measures include crime watch meetings, Facebook page, email system so citizens can contact police, and text messaging system that alerts residents of accidents, emergencies, and crimes.

Dunbar Police Department Facebook Page
The City of Dunbar's Police Department Facebook Page is very popular with over 1,000 likes. The department posts updates concerning criminal activity, accidents, and community events.

Fayetteville Youth Police Academy
The Fayetteville Youth Police Academy is free to children ages 10-15. The academy provides an opportunity for children to see the inside workings of a police department. Topics include use of force, SWAT, patrolling, fire and gun safety, K-9, drug awareness, forensics, crime scene investigation, and traffic concepts.

National Guard Armory

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 3: Transportation

Background Information

During the planning process transportation was brought up several times as an issue affecting the quality of life for those that live and work in Elkins. Transportation issues can negatively impact the way a person perceives a community. Issues with transportation in Elkins include congestion, pedestrian safety, and vehicular safety. This chapter will explore the transportation network, the challenges and threats that were discovered during the comprehensive plan process, and detail what steps the City must make to address the issues.

Transportation Network

Roadways

Intersection of Sycamore Street & US 219

The City of Elkins is the county seat of Randolph County and as such receives a large amount of traffic. Three major routes travel directly through the heart of Elkins; US Route 219, US Route 33 and State Route 92.

US Route 33 connects the City of Elkins with the City of Buckhannon to the west and the Monongahela National Forest to the east. US Route 33 is part of Corridor H. Corridor H is part of the Appalachian Development Highway System, that once finished, will run from I-79 in Weston to I-81 in Strasburg, Virginia. Corridor H travels through two national forests and mountainous terrain in West Virginia, which has led to many environmental concerns about the construction of the roadway. Currently, approximately 75 percent of Corridor H is completed (www.corridorh2020.com).

US 219 connects Elkins to the Town of Parsons in the North and the Town of Beverly and Snowshoe Mountain Resort in the South. State Route 92 connects Elkins to the City of Belington in the North and then intersects with US 219 south of the City.

In 2009, West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) conducted traffic counts in order to better determine the level of traffic in Elkins. The traffic counts were then used to calculate average daily traffic (ADT) of roadways in Elkins. Average daily traffic refers to the number of vehicles traveling through a point on streets in a 24-hour period.

The following are the results from the counts:

- US 219 / US 33 entering the City from the North– 11,800 ADT
- US 219 / US 33 at the intersection of Harrison Avenue– 17,400 ADT
- US 219 / US 33 (Randolph Avenue) at the intersection of Locust– 17,700 ADT
- US 33 leaving the City of Elkins in the East– 4,900 ADT
- US 219 leaving the City from the South– 20,800 ADT
- SR 92 near the State Police headquarters– 1,001 ADT

- South Davis Avenue at the Tygart River– 6,900 ADT

Parking

There are various parking lots and spaces for the public to park located throughout the City of Elkins. Most are located in the downtown business district. Parking lots are located at:

- Railroad Avenue (200 block)- 22 metered and 12 permit only spaces besides SWECO Furniture
- Railroad Avenue (400 block)- approximately 100 free spaces in the gravel lot behind City Hall
- Kerens Avenue (200 block)- 24 metered spaces, 16 permit-only spaces, and 35 2-hour spaces in the Seneca Mall lot

Table 1: Parking spaces in the City of Elkins displays the total amount of parking that is available within Elkins. There are a total of 554 spaces available within the City, most of them located within the downtown business district.

Free parking lot behind City Hall (Source: ON TRAC)

Pedestrian Network

The City of Elkins has a network of sidewalks throughout its municipal limits to aid those wishing to travel by foot. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the sidewalks. Property owners are also responsible for cleaning ice and snow off their sidewalks.

Allegheny Highlands Trail

The Allegheny Highlands Trail will eventually connect the City of Elkins with the Town of Davis. The trail follows the former Western Maryland Railway for 25 miles from Elkins to Hendricks.

Table 1: Parking spaces in the City of Elkins

Number	*Type*	*Location*
164	Free, no time limit	City Hall, Depot Street, Tablet Square, and on-street
199	Metered spaces	Throughout downtown
170	Time sensitive spaces	Throughout downtown
18	Handicap	Throughout downtown
3	Reserved for specific businesses	Throughout downtown
554	***Total spaces available***	

The Highlands Trail Foundation is spearheading the construction of the trail. The trail currently starts in the Highland Park area of Elkins. The ultimate goal is to extend the trail into the heart of the City of Elkins at the railyard depot. In 2013, the Randolph County Development Authority entered into an agreement with the West Virginia Division of Highways to administer the design and construction of the AHT into Elkins.

Public Transit

Country Roads Transit provides public transportation to residents in Randolph and Upshur Counties. Country Roads Transit provides services to the City of Elkins via a North and South loop. The Elkins North Loop provides service to the following areas:

- Gateway Apartments
- Maplewood– Highland Park
- DMV-DHHR
- Randolph Village Apartments
- Tygart Valley Apartments
- Elkins Manor
- Crystal Springs
- Davis Medical Center
- Senior Center (Transfer)

The Elkins South Loop provides service to the following areas:

- Senior Center (Transfer)
- Davis & Elkins College
- Downtown-Banks
- Kroger
- Save-A-Lot– Big Lots
- Valley Village Apartments
- Valley Point Mall
- Wal-Mart

Allegheny Highlands Trail

The cost to ride the bus is $2.50 for adults, $30 for a monthly pass, and children under the age of 6 are free.

Railroad

The City of Elkins is known throughout the state for its railroad history. The WV Central and Pittsburgh Railway was developed in the late 1890s in Elkins, which led to the City experiencing new levels of growth. The railroad left Elkins in four different directions; north to Cumberland, MD; west to Belington, WV; south to Huttonsville, WV; and east to Durbin, WV. The railroad continued to expand and in the 1930s began to offer passenger service. At one point, 18 passenger trains were leaving Elkins a day. By the 1980s all railroad service had ended and the railyard sat vacant for

many years. CSX now uses portions of the lines for freight operations. The West Virginia State Rail Authority purchased other portions of the original railroad and contracts to the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad for a tourist railroad train. The train runs from Elkins to Belington and Durbin.

Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad

The Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVRR) operates out of the train station in Elkins. The DGVR offers five different tourist trains for visitors to experience.

- Mountain Explorer Dinner Train– 4 hour, round-trip dinner train ride through the forests of West Virginia
- Tygart Flyer– 4 hour trip that travels through a 1,500 feet tunnel through Cheat Mountain and to the "High Falls of the Cheat" waterfall
- Cheat Mountain Salamander– 9, 6.5, and 3 hour rides through the forests of Cheat Mountain
- Durbin Rocket– steam locomotive that leaves the Durbin station and travels through the Monongahela National Forest along the Greenbrier River
- Castaway Caboose– overnight package that includes a train ride on the Durbin Rocket with an overnight stay in an refurbished caboose car

The DGVR also offers many special excursions throughout the year, such as the Polar Express, Cottontail Express, Wine Train, Ramps and Rails, Riverside Blues Train, Night with the Stars, Wild West, and Forest Festival Special.

The Elkins Depot Welcome Center

The Elkins Depot Welcome Center is located in the rail yard and serves as not only a welcome center but the home of the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad and future trailhead of the Allegheny Highlands Trail. The center was built by the Western Maryland Railroad Company in 1908.

In 2013, approximately 42,000 people stopped at the Elkin Depot Welcome Center.

Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport

The Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport is located two miles south of Elkins on Airport Road. The airport provides service for private flights as well as hangar space, fuel, vehicle rentals, and dining. Approximately 500 flights use the airport yearly.

River Transportation

Even though the Tygart River is located in Elkins, it is not navigable for commercial traffic. There are no ports in close proximity to Elkins.

Needs Assessment

Durbin and Greenbrier Valley

The needs assessment takes into account the public participation received during the planning process. This information includes Planning Commission input, open house results, public meeting responses, and stakeholder interviews. Information from studies concerning the transportation network in Elkins has been included as well. Identified transportation issues are shown on ***Map 3-1: Transportation Concerns***.

Road Network

The City experiences a high level of traffic due to its location at the intersection of major routes, and its position as the County seat, and the largest incorporated area in Randolph County. When asked about transportation issues in Elkins, most respondents felt traffic was the number one transportation issue. Most residents are concerned with the amount of traffic on Randolph Avenue. The average daily traffic counts for Randolph Avenue suggest a high level of traffic with almost 18,000 cars traveling through this part of the City a day. Many would like to see a bypass or the conversion of the roadway into a three (3) lane roadway with a center turning lane. Other suggestions include installing more crosswalk lights, and left-turn lights, and re-routing traffic through different routes in town, especially truck traffic. Other transportation network issues include the left-turn at McDonalds, the paving of local roads, and snow maintenance of local roads.

Elkins Depot

Parking

The availability of parking is very important to the health and vitality of the City of Elkins' Central Business District. The City's ON TRAC Program recognized that parking is very important and therefore completed a parking study in 2013. Parking standards call for at least 75 spaces per 1,000 people in a central business district. There are a total of 554 spaces as discussed on page 3-3. Based on that standard, the Elkins CBD exceeds the minimum number of parking spaces, however only 105 of those spaces are within the core of the CBD (Davis Avenue and Third).

The main issue with parking in downtown Elkins is enforcement of parking regulations. Fluctuations in police department staffing levels often make it difficult to field parking enforcement officers, with the result that business owners often report that vehicles are parked in the same 2-hour spaces all day without being ticketed. These vehicles typically belong to employees at other businesses or downtown residents. Business owners would like to see residents and employees use City parking lots.

Other issues related to parking include unreadable or faded parking signs, inconsistent parking meters, and lack of directional signage. The City Parking Lot behind City Hall is also a concern as it is not paved nor does it have lighting.

Pedestrian Network

Pedestrian safety is one of the main concerns of residents in Elkins. Issues with pedestrian safety include poor sidewalk conditions, lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, and no bicycle network. There are also many obstacles for persons with limited mobility. Pedestrian safety is a concern by many on Randolph Avenue, near the Train Depot, and the Central Business District. Some residents would like a sidewalk constructed on the 5-lane (US 219) for those wishing to walk to the shopping plazas from downtown. Solutions to pedestrian safety concerns include more crosswalks with lights and buttons, especially in the downtown.

In 2013, the Planning Commission conducted a walkability tour with a representative from the West Virginia University's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. The following issues were discovered during the walkability tour:

- Intersection of 4th Street and Davis Avenue

  This intersection poses problems for drivers as the double wide sidewalks and crossbar reduce visibility at this intersection.

- Intersection of 4th Street and Railroad

  The main problem at this intersection derives from the trees and bushes that hinder the sight distance of motorists.

- Railroad Avenue

There are many pedestrian issues along Railroad Avenue. First, many motorists far exceed the posted speed limit of 15 MPH. Portions of Railroad Avenue are also exceptionally wide, making it difficult to cross the street. There are no crossbars or signs to aid pedestrians crossing. Tour buses park in this area as well, blocking the views of drivers leaving the Railroad Restaurant.

- Third Street

There are low-hanging branches on trees, which reduces driver visibility. There is also a lack of lighting in the alley behind the Seneca Mall.

- Intersection of Third Street and Kerens

Trash receptacles near the crosswalk pose a concern as they can block the presence of small children.

- Intersection of Randolph Avenue, Fifth Street, Kerens Avenue, and Sycamore Street

  Many residents use 5th Street or Kerens Avenue to walk to the City park. In order to cross Randolph Avenue to get to the park, a pedestrian must first cross Kerens Avenue. However, no crosswalk exists on Kerens Avenue. The sidewalk also ends before the curb so pedestrians must walk across the grass area. Handicap accessibility also proves troublesome at this intersection.

- Randolph Avenue

Randolph Avenue is one of the biggest pedestrian obstacles due to its location at the confluence of four major roadways. The area between Kerens Avenue and Davis Avenue is of the greatest concern because many residents travel this route to visit the City Park, as well as college students and staff walking to and from the downtown area. The large entrances to businesses in this area further compound the issue because it forces pedestrians to cross great distances without a sidewalk.

- College Street

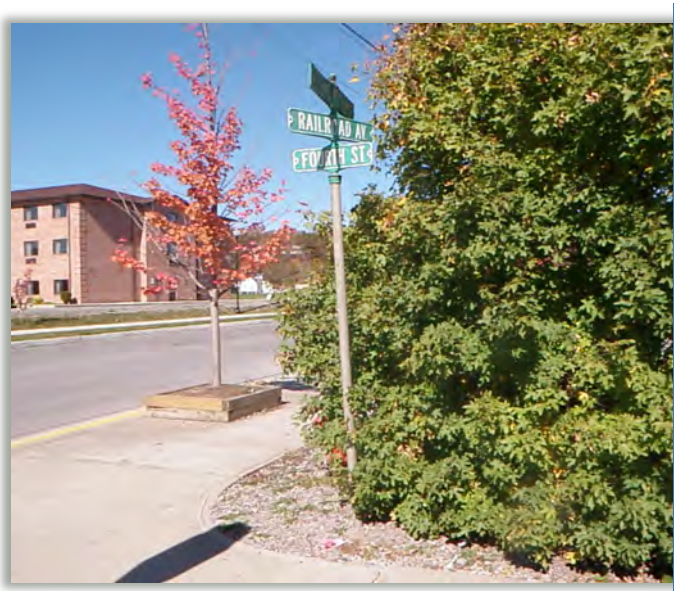
The sidewalk on College Street does not continue all the way to Davis & Elkins College, therefore pedestrians are forced to walk in the street. There is no crosswalk or crossing light at the intersection of Randolph and College.

Public Transit

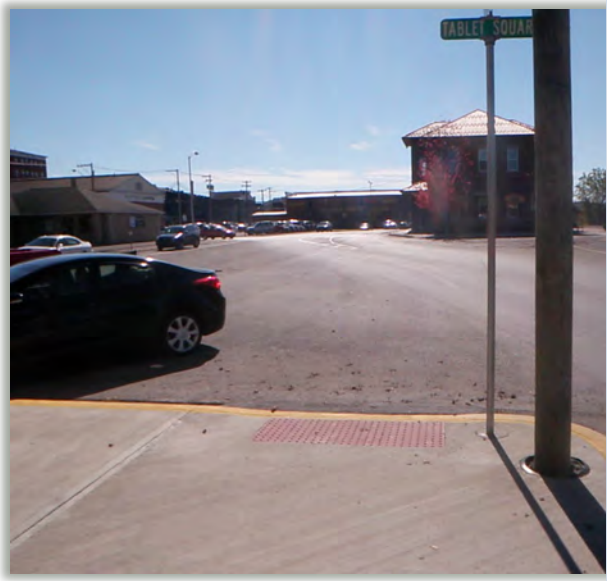
Many residents would like to see improvements made to the public transit system in Elkins. Country Roads Transit (CRT) provides fixed routes in the City of Elkins, however many residents are under the assumption that the bus is only for senior citizens. Residents feel that CRT should market its service better, as well as advertise the routes available. Residents also stated that more bus shelters are needed along the designated routes.

The Randolph County Housing Authority and CRT completed a transit study in 2012 to determine how to better connect residents with their community via public transportation.

During the survey, passengers of CRT were interviewed to determine public transportation issues and needs. The following are a list of needs that pertain to transit in the City of Elkins:



Intersection of 4th Street and Railroad Avenue



Railroad Avenue at the Depot

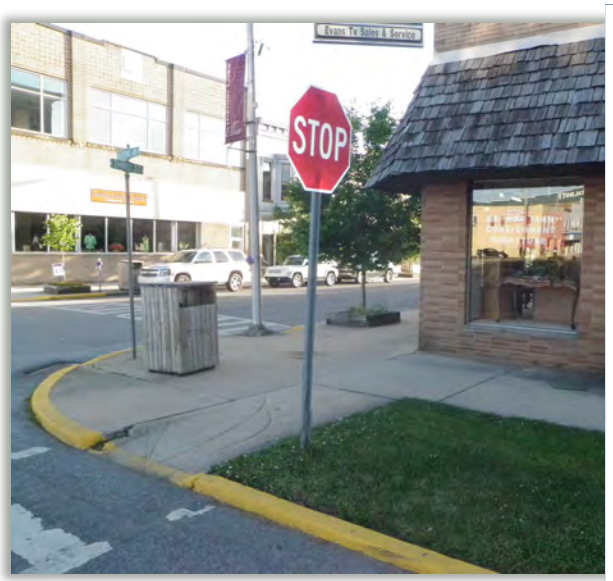
- Better pedestrian connections to transit services
- Bus stops with roofs
- Bus stop at the Post Office
- Advertise the CRT and let people know it's not just for seniors
- Bus stops at Kroger and Boundary Avenue
- Weekend service
- Shorter routes
- Longer hours
- Reliability
- More signage

Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport

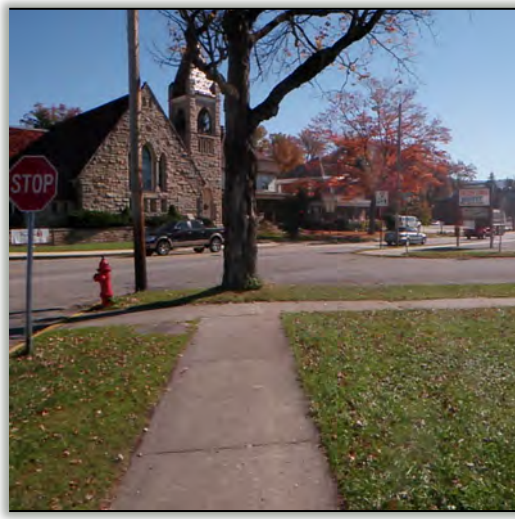
Although the Randolph County airport is small it is very important to Elkins and the regional area. It not only serves the local aviation community but in light of the fact that airports are few and far between in the mountains it is very important for other small planes flying over the mountains in case they have mechanical problems, encounter severe storms or run low on fuel. It also serves as a central location for the many hunters, hikers and other recreational users that become lost in the mountains and require air searches to find. Many have been found and lives saved by helicopter and small plane searches.

It has also proved itself to be critical in the event of severe storm disasters such as the recent derechos and during the 1985 flood that devastated the area. The WV National Guard used it as a base for the helicopters they used for searches and to bring supplies and equipment to families and motorists that were stranded because of the many roads and bridges that were wiped out.

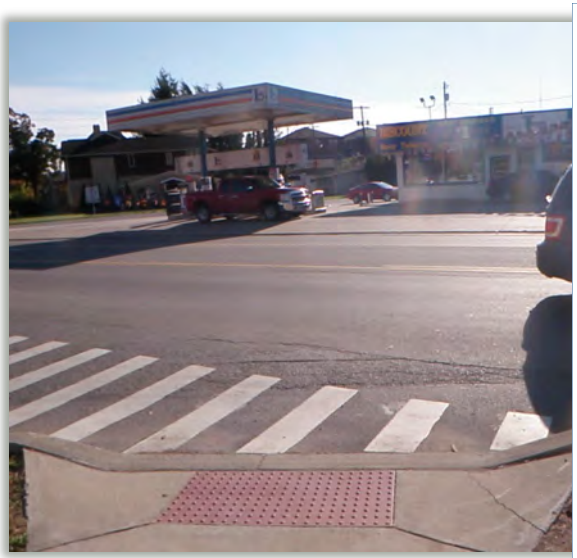
In the last few years Congress has reduced budgets to small airports making it more difficult to provide the essential services they provide. Care should be taken to ensure these services are properly funded.



Intersection of Third Street and Kerens



Randolph Avenue



Intersection of Randolph Avenue, Fifth Street, Kerens Avenue, and Sycamore

Action Plan

The transportation action plan takes into account the numerous needs identified by the Planning Commission and public throughout the planning process. As illustrated on page 3-7, there are numerous concerns regarding the

transportation network in the City of Elkins. The following action steps were developed to help guide the City in addressing these issues. The action steps were also developed to help achieve the following goal:

Objective 1: Improve the walkability of the City

Action Step 1: Improve pedestrian safety on Railroad Avenue

There are many pedestrian improvements needed in the downtown that were detailed in the Needs Assessment beginning on page 8. Of all the pedestrian issues listed, Railroad Avenue is the highest priority due to the number of people that utilize the roadway on a daily basis. Traffic calming and narrowing the roadway should be considered to improve the walkability of the street. A pedestrian study should be initiated to determine the best solutions.

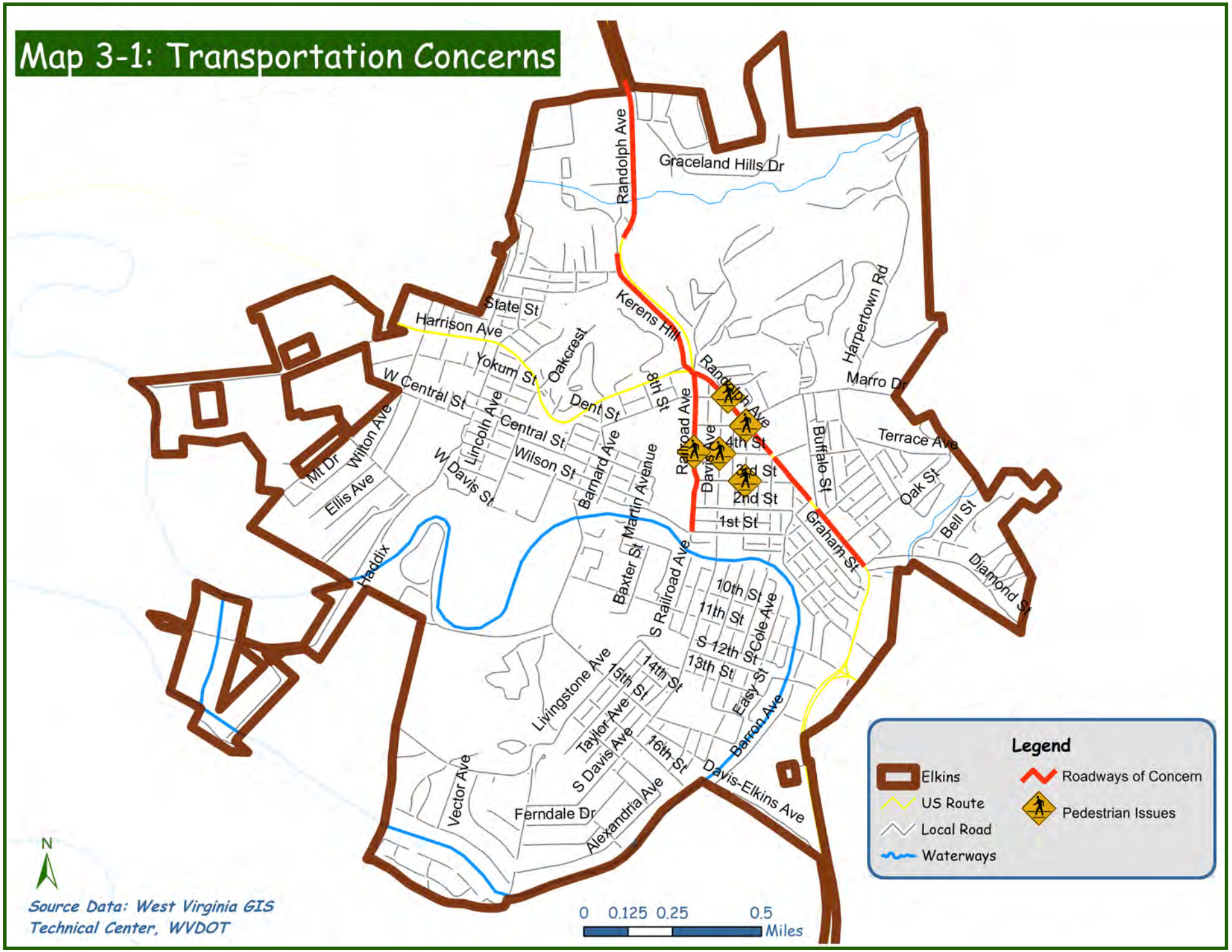
Action Step 2: Develop a sidewalk program to prioritize sidewalk improvements

The City of Elkins has many sidewalks that are in need of repair. The City should develop a sidewalk program to prioritize the most needed repairs, as well as construction of new sidewalks. The sidewalk program would utilize a point system to establish which sidewalks should be repaired or constructed first. The point system would take into account the following factors:

¨ Sidewalks proximity to parks, local government facilities, schools, businesses, etc.
¨ Connectivity with other sidewalks
¨ Average daily foot traffic
¨ Topography of street
¨ Conflicts with other utilities
¨ Available right-of-way

Many residents are unaware that property owners are responsible for repairs to the sidewalk in front of their property. The City needs to better educate property owners on their responsibility. The City should also consider using the public works department to repair sidewalks, which would significantly decrease the cost to the property owner. The property owner would then only be responsible for the cost of the materials. The sidewalk program should also include the construction of ADA accessible sidewalks.

Action Step 3: Install signage and bike amenities once the bike trail is completed


Map 3-1: Transportation Concerns
Randolph Ave
Graceland Hills Dr
Harpertown Rd
Marro Dr
Kerens Hill
State St
Harrison Ave
Yokum St
Oakcrest
W Central St
Dent St
8th St
Randolph Ave
Central St
Wilson St
Lincoln Ave
Wilton Ave
Mt Dr
Ellis Ave
W Davis St
Barnard Ave
Martin Avenue
Railroad Ave
Davis Ave
4th St
3rd St
2nd St
1st St
Buffalo St
Terrace Ave
Oak St
Bell St
Diamond St
Graham St
Haddix
Baxter St
S Railroad Ave
10th St
11th St
S 12th St
13th St
Cole Ave
Easy St
Barron Ave
Livingstone Ave
15th St
14th St
Taylor Ave
S Davis Ave
16th St
Davis-Elkins Ave
Vector Ave
Ferndale Dr
Alexandria Ave
N
Source Data: West Virginia GIS Technical Center, WVDOT
0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles
Legend
Elkins
US Route
Local Road
Waterways
Roadways of Concern
Pedestrian Issues

Improve traffic and pedestrian circulation to provide a safer and more accessible transportation network for residents

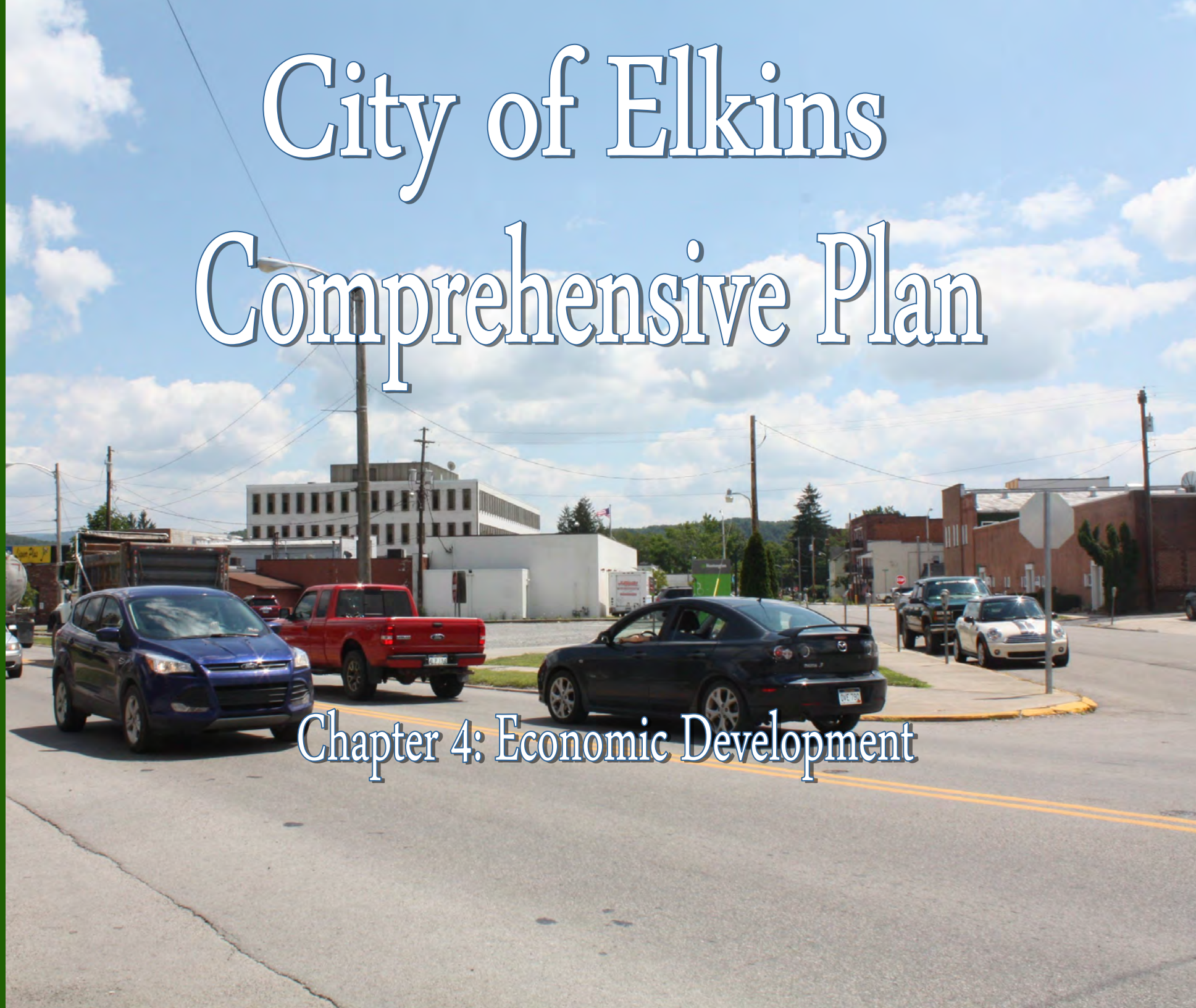
Case Studies

Orrville, OH
Orrville City Council requires installation of sidewalks along streets that score enough points to warrant sidewalks. Points are awarded as follows:

- Need to connect areas with existing sidewalks in order to provide safe walkways for pedestrian traffic
- Street's proximity to schools, business districts, apartment complexes, or senior citizen housing
- Topography of the street
- Citizens in the area have petitioned for sidewalks
- Street is an arterial or collector street
- To eliminate the necessity of busing school children

The City pays 50 percent of the installation cost if senior citizen or handicap households meet the income guidelines for low-moderate income. There is also a cap on the maximum cost per lineal foot to be borne by each property owner.
Source: City of Orrville (www.orrville.com)

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 4: Economic Development

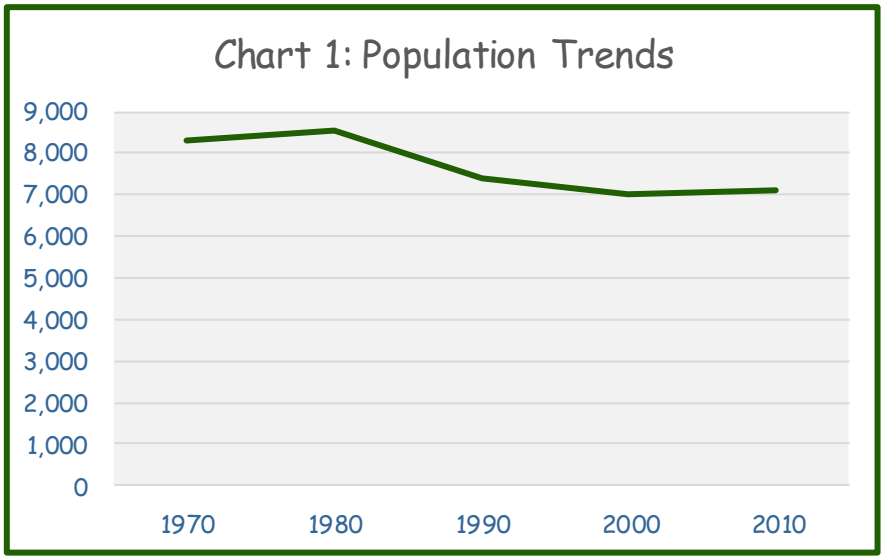
Background Information

Economic development was determined to be a priority for the City of Elkins during the planning process. Economic development contributes to the quality of life of those that live and work in Elkins. Therefore, it is important to examine what factors are hindering economic growth. This chapter will examine the economic structure of the City, as well as the revitalization of the downtown and the effect of tourism on the local economy in Elkins. The action plan then serves to address any issues that are discovered during the planning process.

Demographics

Population Characteristics

To better understand economic conditions in Elkins, population trends in the City were examined utilizing US Census data. As shown on ***Chart 1: Population Trends***, the City of Elkins has experienced population decline since 1980. While this is a concern, the change from 2000 and 2010 was not as significant, with only a loss of 62 people.



Looking to the future, population decline will probably continue but most likely at a slow rate. Determining actual population projections are difficult as there are many circumstances that are not taken into account when developing the models. Also, West Virginia has not yet developed projections for incorporated areas. In 2011 the WVU-College of Business and Economics completed population projections for all of the counties. The projections for Randolph County show a loss of 3.5 percent in population from 2010-2030. The County projections and past population counts were taken into account to develop Elkin's population projections.

- 1970-1980: 3% loss
- 1980-1990: 13% loss
- 1990-2000: 5% loss
- 2000-2010: 0.8% loss

The US Census is projecting a slight decrease (1%) in population for 2011 (7,189) and 2012 (7,180). Therefore, a conservative estimate of population change would be that the City of Elkins will either maintain its current population or decrease slightly by 2030.

The median age in the City of Elkins in 2010 was 39.6. This is slightly younger than the median age of Randolph County

of 43.4. Age cohorts are very important for communities to understand during the planning process. Different age groups affect the economic vitality of a community. For instance, the older retired age group may experience declining health and require full-time health care. This requires a greater amount of financial support from either family members or government resources. The younger retired age group may not have as many health issues as those in the older retired age cohort, but they may require health services and many rely on Social Security as a supplement to their retirement income. Therefore, both the younger retired and older retired tend to spend less money in a community than the younger age cohorts. The younger age cohorts, especially those in the childbearing and childrearing age cohorts, usually comprise the work force of a community and tend to spend more money than other age cohorts.

Age Cohorts
Preschool– Under the age of 5
Primary school– 5-9 age group
Middle school– 10-14 age group
High school– 15-19 age group
Post Secondary– 20-24 age group
Childbearing– 25-35 age group
Childrearing– 35-54 age group
Pre-retirement– 55-64 age group
Younger retired– 65-74 age group
Older retired– 75-up age group

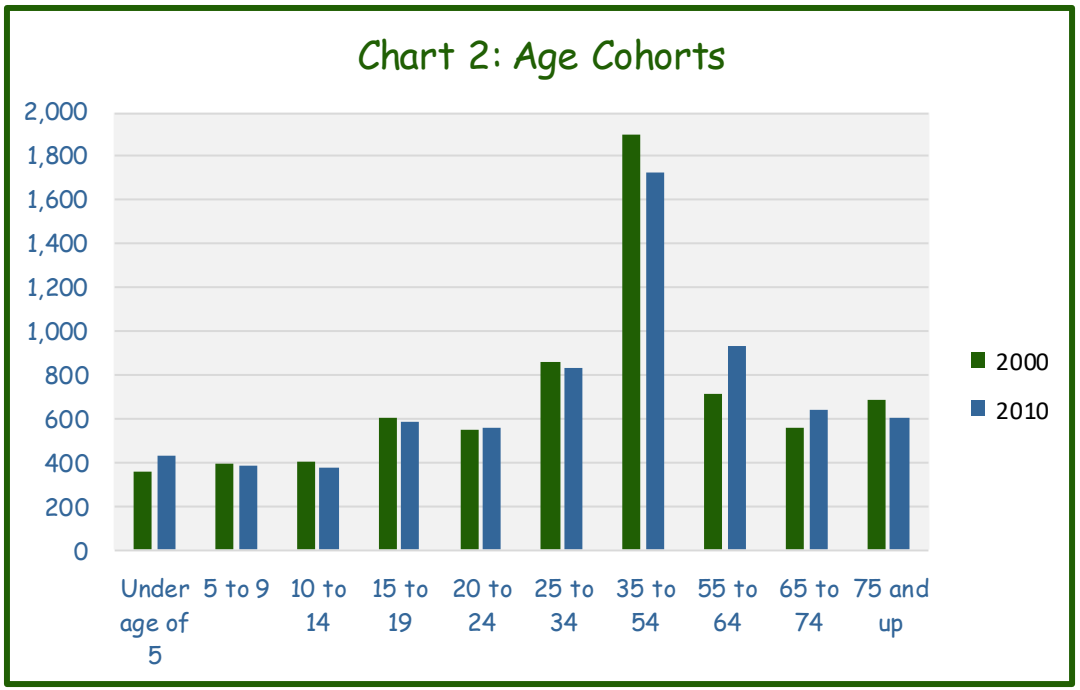
Elkins has more residents in the Childrearing (35–54 years) age cohort than any other cohort, as shown on ***Chart 2: Age Cohorts***. The City lost residents from this cohort between 2000 and 2010 and gained residents in the pre-retirement and younger retired cohorts. Therefore, the City should be prepared to deal with an aging population in the future, which can affect the available workforce for the community. The number of younger cohorts decreased slightly between 2000 and 2010. The City gained residents under the age of 5 and in the post-secondary cohort but lost residents in the childbearing cohort. This could be a concern as residents in this age cohort may be leaving the City due to lack of economic opportunities.

Economic Characteristics

Unemployment rates are important to review as they are an indicator of economic growth in a region. According to the 2010 US Census, the unemployment rate in Elkins at the time was 11 percent. The unemployment rate in Randolph County in November of 2013 was approximately 5.7 percent, which is slightly higher than the state rate of 5.3 percent. In November of 2012 the rate in the county was 8.1 percent. The significant decrease from 2012 to 2013 could mean that the local economy is improving or people are simply dropping out of the job search due to lack of jobs in the region.

According to the Randolph County Development Authority the following businesses are major employers within the County:

- Randolph County Board of Education



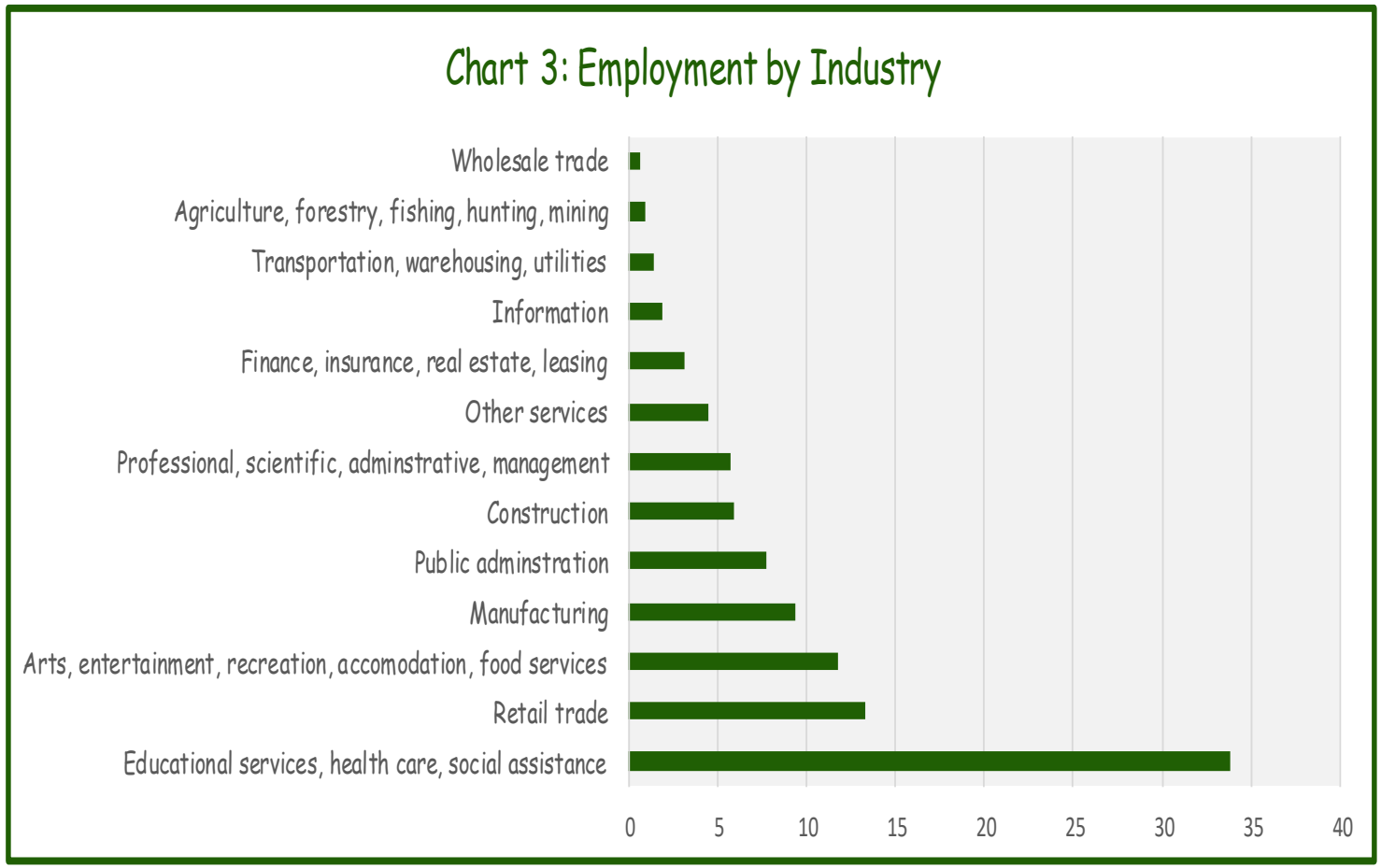
- Davis Health System
- Armstrong World Industries, Inc.
- TRG Customer Solutions
- Huttonsville Correctional Center
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
- Davis & Elkins College
- West Virginia Department of Highways
- West Virginia's Choice, Inc.
- Elkins Rehabilitation and Care Center

The mean travel time for residents for work is approximately 14 minutes. While residents are not traveling very far for employment opportunities, they are most likely leaving the City for neighboring areas to work. Residents within Elkins work in many different industries, which are shown on ***Chart 3: Employment by Industry***. As the top employers in the County are the Board of Education, Davis Health System, West Virginia's Choice, Inc., Elkins Rehab and Care Center the majority of residents work in educational services, health care, and social assistance. Retail trade and entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services are the highest industries for workers in the City. Since tourism plays such a role in the regional economy it is of no surprise that many people work in these industries.

Davis & Elkins College

The median household income for residents in the City of Elkins is $32,632, which is considerably lower than Randolph County's median household income of $37,350. A lower median household income is a concern as residents may not have the disposable income to spend money in the community, which in turns affects the economic growth of that community. In addition, there is less income to invest in and maintain personal property.

The lower median income could correlate to the educational attainment of the community. According to the US Census, only 23 percent of the population of Elkins 25 years and older have a bachelor's degree. Approximately 54 percent of the population between ages 18- 24 percent have a bachelor's degree. However, according to the age cohort data, many of the residents in this age cohort are leaving the City, most likely to find jobs elsewhere.



Downtown Elkins

The center of the City of Elkins is the downtown business district which includes

approximately 90 businesses.

Revitalization efforts are currently underway in the downtown. This effort is being led by the Elkins ON-TRAC Team and under the direction of a full-time paid director. The ON-TRAC program comprises four volunteer committees; Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. Elkins ON TRAC will be applying for designation and accreditation in the national Main Street program in the Fall of 2014. This will enable the program to continue to grow and provide for more opportunities for funding and technical assistance.

Design Committee

The design committee focuses on projects that will improve the appearance of the downtown business district. These activities include beautification projects such as planting flowers, holiday lighting and decorations, and benches. The committee is also working with business owners to improve the appearance of their businesses. One of the committee's long term endeavors is to complete a streetscape plan. Recently, the committee was able to secure help from the West Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to design gateways leading to downtown Elkins.

Downtown Business District

Organization Committee

The organization committee leads fundraising, education and outreach activities. This group brings in donations and volunteers to help run the program.

Promotion Committee

The promotion committee works to increase business activity in the downtown business district by hosting events and activities. Events and activities that the committee has sponsored include the Spring Clean Sweep, Town Hall Annual Meeting, Downtown Yard Sale, Holiday Open House, Christmas Tree Auction, Mountains Beckon Bicycle Parade and Street Fair, Santa's Workshop, Artists Gather Street Fair, and First Fridays.

ON TRAC Mission Statement

ON TRAC is cultivating success in downtown Elkins with economic development and revitalization through historic preservation and heritage development.

Economic Restructuring Committee

The economic restructuring committee is tasked with supporting and retaining existing businesses and attracting new business to the downtown. This includes a partnership with the Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce to host Building Blocks for Business, a seminar offering training on business topics. The committee is also working on Business

Jump Start, a business incubator program which will provide a rent-free location for up to six months for a new business and a program to encourage residential development in the upper stories in downtown businesses.

Industrial Parks

There is one industrial park in Elkins, the Elkins Industrial Park, located on Industrial Park Road. The park was developed by the Randolph County Development Authority. Major businesses include Elkins Builders Supply, Wood Technology Center, Elkins Iron and Metal, Wilson Lumber, Hamer Lumber, Hamer Pellet and Fuels, Kelly Foundry, Elkins Truck Service, and Woodford Oil. Only a few lots remain for development.

Elkins Railyard

The Elkins Railyard is owned by the Randolph County Development Authority. The railyard was developed for $1.5 million with federal and state funding. The railyard is approximately 20 acres with 9 lots left to be developed. Any new development in the railyard must conform to design guidelines and standards for new construction. Current businesses in the railyard include medical offices, animal hospital, business offices, American Mountain Theatre, hotel, and a restaurant. The railyard is also home to the tourism train: the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad. The railyard is currently the hub for tourism in Elkins with over 40,000 people riding the train yearly.

Downtown Business District

In 2012 a streetscape project was initiated along Railroad Avenue, that included the installation of curbs, sidewalks, street lights and tree plantings to provide a welcoming entrance to Elkins. The city has also recently received a grant for 16 additional crosswalks in the downtown, including several along Railroad Avenue adjacent to the railyard.

Economic Development Organizations

Randolph County Development Authority

The Randolph County Development Authority (RCDA) assists with business development, community development, and workforce development.

- Business development– helps businesses locate or expand in the County by helping with land, facilities, training, or financial assistance
- Community development– facilitates community enhancement projects
- Workforce development– provides training for businesses

Railroad Avenue at the Depot

The West Virginia Wood Technology Center is a non-profit subsidiary of the RCDA. The center offers training and support services for the hardwood industry. The center is located in a 30,000 square foot building that includes classrooms, video conference/long distance learning center, and industrial wood working shop. Classes offered include wood production, safety, CNC routers, moulder operation, and kiln drying of wood.

Railroad Avenue at the Depot

The video conference/long distance learning center allows residents in Randolph County and beyond to get their master's in business administration from West Virginia University. Classes meet two evenings a week for five semesters (Hardwood Alliance Zone, 2014).

Randolph County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Randolph County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is the official visitor center for Randolph County. The CVB provides information on attractions, lodging and dining in the County. The CVB 's main mission is to promote and market tourism to bring in new dollars to the County. The CVB is funded by city and county lodging tax proceeds.

Currently the CVB is working with area attractions and businesses to bring a greater presence in tourism opportunities, such as providing new brochures and ad campaigns.

Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce is to support the development of business opportunities, represent the interests of business, and preserve the quality of life for business, employees, and citizens (Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce, 2014). The chamber provides seminars to new and existing businesses that provide information as well as workforce development.

Tax Structure

The City of Elkins has a municipal business and occupation (B&O) tax in place. The tax is determined as a percentage of gross receipts and allows no deductions for losses to the business. Different rates may be imposed for different types of business activities. ***Table 1: B&O Tax Structure in the City of Elkins*** displays the different B&O rates in the city.

The City also requires businesses to apply for a business license yearly. The fee depends on the type of business.

Property taxes are collected by the county and remitted to the City. The calculation is mainly based on assessed value, along with the year of construction and additions to the property.

A fire fee for both city residents and the first response area has also been established to help fund the Elkins Fire Department.

West Virginia Wood Technology Center

Needs Assessment

Some communities struggle to make progress on economic development because of failing or inadequate infrastructure, poor availability of medical care, lack of educational facilities, and insufficient cultural and arts attractions. In these categories, however, Elkins is either already strong or is in the process of taking concrete steps toward improvements. The presence of Davis Medical Center, the Randolph County Community Arts Center, Augusta Heritage Center, and the Old Brick Playhouse are just a few of the many reasons people live in Elkins. Education is also important in Elkins with the presence of the Davis & Elkins College, Randolph County Board of Education, Randolph County Wood Technology Center, and the Kump Education Center, which all provide top rated educational opportunities for all different ages.

Elkins operates its own sewer and water utilities. Infrastructure assets that the city is responsible for include a water-treatment plant and its associated tanks and distribution lines, and a wastewater-treatment plant and its associated collection lines.

The city's water-treatment plant was put into service in 1921 and has served the city very well over its nearly 100-year lifespan. However, because of the plant's advanced age, certain repairs can require custom-machined parts that can be time-consuming to obtain. Also, because the plant's electrical systems differ from the standard systems in use today, the only way to power the plant during an electrical outage would be with prohibitively expensive custom generators. As a result, in the event of a multi-day power outage, the city could hypothetically run out of water. To address these and related problems, the city will in 2015 commence a long-planned $31,000,000 project to replace the water-treatment

plant.

The city's wastewater plant newer and will need replacing some time. However, one wastewater-related problem facing the city that the city's wastewater- to receive both sewage and rain (i.e., catch basins and some buildings downspouts are wastewater- heavy rainfall volume of wastewater can capacity, causing Tygart Valley overflow or 2011, the city decree with the Protection Virginia Environmental the city to take these overflow problems. and second must be 2015 and respectively. The

Table 1: B&O Tax Structure in the City of Elkins

Business Classification	*Tax (Percentage of gross receipts)*
Coal production	0.69%
Sand, gravel, or other mineral product not quarried or mined	1.94%
Oil, blast furnace slag	1.94%
Natural gas in excess of $250 quarterly	3.88%
Limestone or sandstone quarried or mined	1.0%
Timber	1.0%
Other natural resource products	1.38%
Manufactured, compounded or prepared for sale products	0.19%
Selling tangible property (retailers, restaurants, etc.)	0.25%
Wholesalers and jobbers	0.13%
Water companies	2%
Electric light and power companies	2.75%
Natural gas companies	1.88%
All other public service or utility business	1.31%
Contracting	1%
Amusement	0.31%
Service or calling and all other business	0.50%
Rentals, royalties, fees and otherwise	0.50%
Banking and other financial business	0.61%

is not for

has to do with the fact original system of collection pipes was built wastewater (i.e., both household gray water) and collected both through drains in streets and from whose rain-gutter still connected to the collection system). During events, the resulting combined rain water and overwhelm system discharges into the River through various "outfall" openings. In entered into a consent U.S. Environmental Agency and the West Department of Protection that requires certain steps to reduce events and other related Construction on the first phases of these steps concluded by October 31, December 31, 2021, budget for the phase one

project is $3,100,000. The improvement of water and wastewater systems in Elkins will only strengthen the local economy in the future.

Several different sectors comprise the local economy in Elkins. As Elkins is the County seat of Randolph County it enjoys many economic benefits that other similar cities do not. The physical location of the County Courthouse and County administrative buildings brings people into downtown Elkins that may have not visited otherwise. Elkins is also home to the United States District Court-Northern District of West Virginia, Davis & Elkins College, United States National Forest Office, Davis Medical Center and numerous tourism attractions. All of these businesses bring people into the City. These people shop in the downtown, eat at restaurants, and stay at hotels.

While Elkins has many economic assets, continued economic development was identified as a concern of many. For purposes of this needs assessment, the concerns are centered among three different sectors; tourism and downtown revitalization, taxes, and annexation.

Tourism and Downtown Revitalization

The Randolph County Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) promotes the City of Elkins as the heart of Randolph County and a good base camp to enjoy everything in the area. Tourism is a key economic driver in Randolph County and contributes greatly to the regional economy. A study was completed in October of 2013 for the West Virginia Division of Tourism. As part of the study, estimates of the direct impacts associated with traveler spending in West Virginia were produced using a Regional Travel Impact Model that was developed by Dean Runyan Associates. ***Table 2: Economic Impact of Travel on Randolph County*** details estimates that were completed for Randolph County. The estimates illustrate that tourism plays a major role in the economy in the County and therefore the City of Elkins. The City of Elkins is truly the center of tourism in Randolph County. Attractions in Elkins include the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVR), Allegheny Highlands Trail, American Mountain Theater (AMT), Augusta Heritage Center, and the Mountain State Forest Festival. The City of Elkins is also a certified arts community, and was named one of the top 100 best art towns in America. According to the Randolph County Development Authority the DGVR brings approximately 40,000 people a year into Elkins. The number keeps climbing every year. For instance, in 2011 the DGVR began to offer a Polar Express excursion train during the Christmas holiday season to boost sales during the train's off season. In 2011, DGVR offered 4,600 seats. In 2013, the DGVR sold 14,000 seats (2013, November 4 Inter -Mountain). The American Mountain Theater brings in approximately 35,000 to 40,000 people a year and continues to grow.

With both the railroad and theater located in the railyard many visitors are staying the night. Many of the attractions are also offering package deals, which includes AMT shows, train rides, overnight lodging, and meals. While the Elkins Railyard includes several tourism based businesses, it also includes several medical based businesses. Additional opportunities exist in the railyard for commercial development as lots are still available at this time.

In order to attract new business into downtown Elkins, the City and other organizations have offered several incentives. During the years 2012 and 2013, the City of Elkins waived B&O taxes for two years for any new business to locate in Elkins. Elkins On-Trac is also working on a Business Jump Start program which will provide a rent-free

location for up to six months for a new business. The program will also offer support and counseling for start-ups. However, many residents perceive that there are no incentives for businesses to locate in the downtown. Perhaps the incentives that are being offered are not being promoted enough to area residents and business owners.

While the City has much to offer in the way of tourism attractions, there is a general consensus that Elkins needs to increase its promotion of its assets and reinvent the image of the City. Suggestions include promoting the City as an outdoor town, Gateway to the Monongahela National Forest, or a ski and/or bike town. Right now the City of Elkins is lacking a "brand". Part of branding the City of Elkins would include the development of a slogan and logo.

Many throughout the planning process feel that more should be done to attract visitors into downtown Elkins. Railroad Avenue around the Railyard Depot is not inviting and lacks simple pedestrian amenities that would encourage people to walk into the downtown. There is also a lack of signage downtown identifying where shops, dining, and retail are located. Of those who completed the online survey, many stated that the businesses in downtown Elkins do not stay open late enough for residents, as well as visitors.

One of the biggest issues with the downtown is the number of vacancies. A focus should be to find tenants for the buildings. A branding and marketing strategy may help the City better understand what target or niche market should be explored to help fill empty buildings.

Many different organizations are working to increase tourism and economic development in Randolph County. However, local businesses may not be utilizing or communicating with these organizations to help with promotion of their business.

In addition, tourism planning is not integrated into everyday planning at the City government level. Members of the public are concerned that the City is simply not prepared for increased visitors and the impacts they may have on the City.

Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad

Taxes

The B&O taxes that the City has established were brought up by many during the public meetings as a hindrance to growth. Many new businesses simply locate right outside of the City of Elkins municipal limits in Randolph County so they do not have to pay the tax. Simply lowering or getting rid of the B&O tax in Elkins is not an easy solution as in 2013-2014 the tax brought in approximately $1,302,900 for the City, which is approximately 30 percent of the City's general fund revenue. B&O taxes help pay for City services such as streets, fire, police, and certain city administrative staff. When comparing Elkins B&O taxes with other nearby municipalities, Elkins rates are comparable to other municipalities, and in some

Table 2: Economic Impact of Travel on Randolph County							
	2004	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Direct Spending (millions)	$30.7	$36.2	$44.5	$41.0	$45.4	$48.7	$48.3
Earnings (millions)	$8.5	$9.2	$10.9	$12.2	$13.2	$12.8	$12.5
Employment (jobs)	560	590	620	670	670	660	650
Local Government Revenue	$117,000	$130,000	$411,000	$452,000	$525,000	$606,000	$612,000
State Government Revenue	$2,167,000	$2,331,000	$2,791,000	$2,857,000	$3,028,000	$3,016,000	$2,977,000

cases lower. ***Table 3: Comparison of B&O Tax in nearby communities of Elkins*** displays the comparison of rates. Not all of the B&O tax rates for the City of Buckhannon were available and therefore are not listed on the table. One big difference in the rates between Buckhannon and Elkins is that the Buckhannon retail rate has an annual exemption of one million dollars before any retail business pays B&O taxes.

Elkins Railyard

Annexation

The City of Elkins is mostly built-out and therefore has little room for new development. Any new development would most likely occur in any vacant lots or in lots where buildings are demolished. The lack of new development limits Elkins ability to receive more tax dollars from businesses. Many new businesses have been built right outside the City limits and the City receives no revenue from them. Annexation of these growth areas may help the City's finances as well as provide for orderly planning of future growth in the region. Those that participated in the planning process support annexation. However, there are many residents and businesses that do not support annexation. Further, it is difficult, time-consuming, and very unpopular to annex property against property owners' will. The simplest path to annexation is when property owners request it themselves, but this requires businesses to voluntarily decide their own taxes. A public relations campaign on the benefits of annexation

may service to help the City of Elkins in any future annexation efforts.

City Charter

The city's antiquated charter and eccentric administrative structure present significant obstacles not only to the achievement of this plan's recommendations but to the viability of the city itself. As currently chartered, Elkins has what political scientists describe as a "weak-mayor/council" form of government (sometimes referred to as the "weak-mayor/strong council" or simply "mayor/council" forms). In Elkins, this means that the Common Council holds the local corporate and administrative authority over the city government. Although Elkins mayors sit as chairs of council meetings, they have no vote (except to break ties) and do not control the council agenda, veto council actions, hire or fire personnel, develop or propose budgets, or—with a few exceptions allowed by council via ordinance—exercise any direct authority over staff.

The book *State and Local Government Administration* describes the weak-mayor/council form of government as originating "in the early and mid-nineteenth century, when cities and other municipalities were primarily small, rural and suspicious of strong executive control." The authors point out that "weak-mayor/council systems exist today primarily in smaller cities and villages." (http://www.amazon.com/State-Government-Administration-Public-Policy/dp/0824773551; p. 20) Indeed, the Elkins charter has gone essentially unchanged since its adoption in 1901, a time when the city had a much smaller population, provided fewer services, and was required to operate within a significantly simpler framework of state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Although the Elkins charter worked well during the city's early years, more recently it has seemed to act as more of a hindrance than a help. A casual review of the charter will find many passages that no longer seem to be a good fit for a city of 7,000 people in the twenty-first century, not to mention provisions that are simply no longer enforceable, due to Supreme Court decisions and similar developments.

West Virginia Code §8-3-2 contemplates five possible structures for municipal governments. These are the "mayor-council plan" (the plan currently in effect in Elkins); the "strong-mayor plan"; the "commission government"; the "manager plan"; and the "manager-mayor plan." There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these, and it is not yet possible to say with certainty which would be the best fit for Elkins. Council should review the options available and make a decision regarding the best organizational structure for the city.

Action Plan

The economic development action plan was developed to address the concerns of residents about the lack of job opportunities and need for downtown revitalization. The action steps detailed will help the City achieve the following goal:

Objective 1: Identify areas for re-development and new development to increase the tax base

Action Step 1: Annex surrounding lands to increase tax base and potential development areas

The City of Elkins has limited opportunity for new development. The City is in need of new development to increase their tax base to be able to continue to provide high quality services to residents. Areas that the City would like to consider in the future for annexation are shown on **Map 4: Future Land Use** in **Chapter 5: Land Use.**

Table 3: Comparison of B&O Tax in nearby communities of Elkins

Business Classification	*Elkins*	*Bridgeport*	*Weston*	*Clarksburg*	*Philippi*
Manufactured, compounded or prepared for sale products	0.19%	0.18%	0.05%	0.30%	0.22%
Selling tangible property (retailers, restaurants, etc.)	0.25%	0.4125%	0.20%	0.50%	0.13%
Wholesalers and jobbers	0.13%	0.1238%	0.15%	0.15%	0.0675%
Contracting	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Service or calling and all other business	0.50%	0.825%	0.60%	1.0%	0.5%
Banking and other financial business	0.61%	0.825%	0.75%	1.0%	0.5%

Action Step 2: Develop a campaign of public relations on the benefits of annexation

Because the simplest path to annexation is when property owners petition to join the city, it would be beneficial for the City to develop a public relations campaign on promoting the benefits of annexation to non-residents and businesses outside the city. Such a campaign could include mailings, editorials, or a promotional web site highlighting the benefits of joining the city. Success stories on annexation in West Virginia should also be included.

Action Step 3: Publicize vacant properties to developers

There are many vacant buildings located in the City that should be publicized on the City's website. This information could potentially help interested parties wanting to locate in Elkins determine if any buildings meet their needs. The listing on the website should include a photo and property information, as well as contact information.

Objective 2: Capitalize on visitors to the American Mountain Theater and Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad

Action Step 1: Develop a marketing and branding campaign to raise awareness of all that Elkins has to offer

Elkins has much to offer to businesses and visitors. However, many businesses, industry, and visitors are simply not

aware of all that the City has to offer. Therefore, the City should develop a marketing and branding campaign to raise awareness. The campaign should include the development of a brochure highlighting all the great assets in Elkins, as well as a slogan. The brochure about Elkins should be distributed at all local hotels and various events/festivals throughout Randolph County. The City's unofficial slogan is "A great place to call home." The City also has an official seal. The City's ON TRAC program has a different slogan "Mountains Beckon, Artists Gather, and History Lives." The slogan also includes a logo. The two different slogans and logos can create confusion when marketing Elkins.

Other methods to market the City include:

- *Implement a Passport Program that rewards people for purchasing products or services in Elkins*

A Passport Program would allow people to take the passport to businesses in the City to obtain stamps when they purchase a product or service. After all the stamps were obtained, then the person would be entered into a drawing for prizes. Local businesses could be solicited to donate items for the prizes.

- *Encourage local businesses to participate in discount programs*

A great way for local businesses to get exposure is for them to participate in programs like Groupon and Living Social. Groupon and Living Social send daily e-mails to thousands of subscribers featuring a discount for local business. Local businesses can visit www.groupon.com and www.livingsocial.com to learn how to participate in either of these programs.

- *Start a Cash Mob*

The purpose of a cash mob is to support local business and the overall community by getting a large number of people to patronize a store on a certain day. It is a great way to get people into Elkin's downtown. People are asked to show up on a specific day at specific store and spend at least $20. To advertise cash mobs, emails are sent and the event could be posted on social media sites, such as Facebook.

- *Promote Small Business Saturday*

Small business Saturday is held the Saturday after Thanksgiving. It was created by American Express to encourage shoppers to patronize small, local businesses. More information can be found on the website http://www.smallbusinesssaturday.com

- *Promote downtown businesses/attractions at festivals/events in the region*

A great way for the City to gain additional exposure is by promoting the downtown at festivals and events in the County.

Action Step 2: Develop a signage plan identifying where shops, dining, and retail are located

During the planning process the lack of consistent signage consistently presented itself as an issue. There simply is no system directing people to various locations in Elkins. Elkins is in need of comprehensive wayfinding signage that would include directional signage, parking signs, and interpretive kiosks.

Provide opportunities for increased economic development

- Vehicular directional signage- This type of signage would be installed on poles and intersections that point to various destinations throughout the town
- Parking directional signage- This type of signage would be installed on traffic lights or poles with arrows pointing to public parking lots or spaces
- Interpretive kiosks- This type of signage is already installed at the Railyard Depot. Another kiosk should be installed somewhere in the downtown
- Pedestrian kiosks- This type of signage would also include a map that would be placed in the downtown to direct people on foot

Action Step 3: Develop a gateway to promote Elkins to travelers along major corridors

The City of Elkins is in need of gateways at the entrance of the city from US Route 33 (Corridor H). When traveling into Elkins from US Route 33 on US Route 219, the entrance to the City is confusing as there is a very busy intersection with numerous road signs and commercial clutter. There is no visible gateway announcing to travelers that they are in Elkins. A potential opportunity for a gateway exists in this location when the construction of the Allegheny Highlands Trail into Elkins begins. The trail will cross the intersection of US Route 219 and Randolph Avenue. The construction of the trail should include a gateway into the City for not only trail users but vehicles as well. Other locations for gateways are shown on ***Map 4-1: Potential Gateways***.

Objective 1: Improve functions of city government

Action Step 1: Determine whether the City Charter and administrative structure can be improved to support the continued success of the city and the implementation of the comprehensive plan

As mentioned in the Needs Assessment, there are many issues with the city's current charter. Given the many out-of-date sections of the city charter and the drawbacks of the city's current administrative structure, the city council should place the highest priority on taking the following steps:

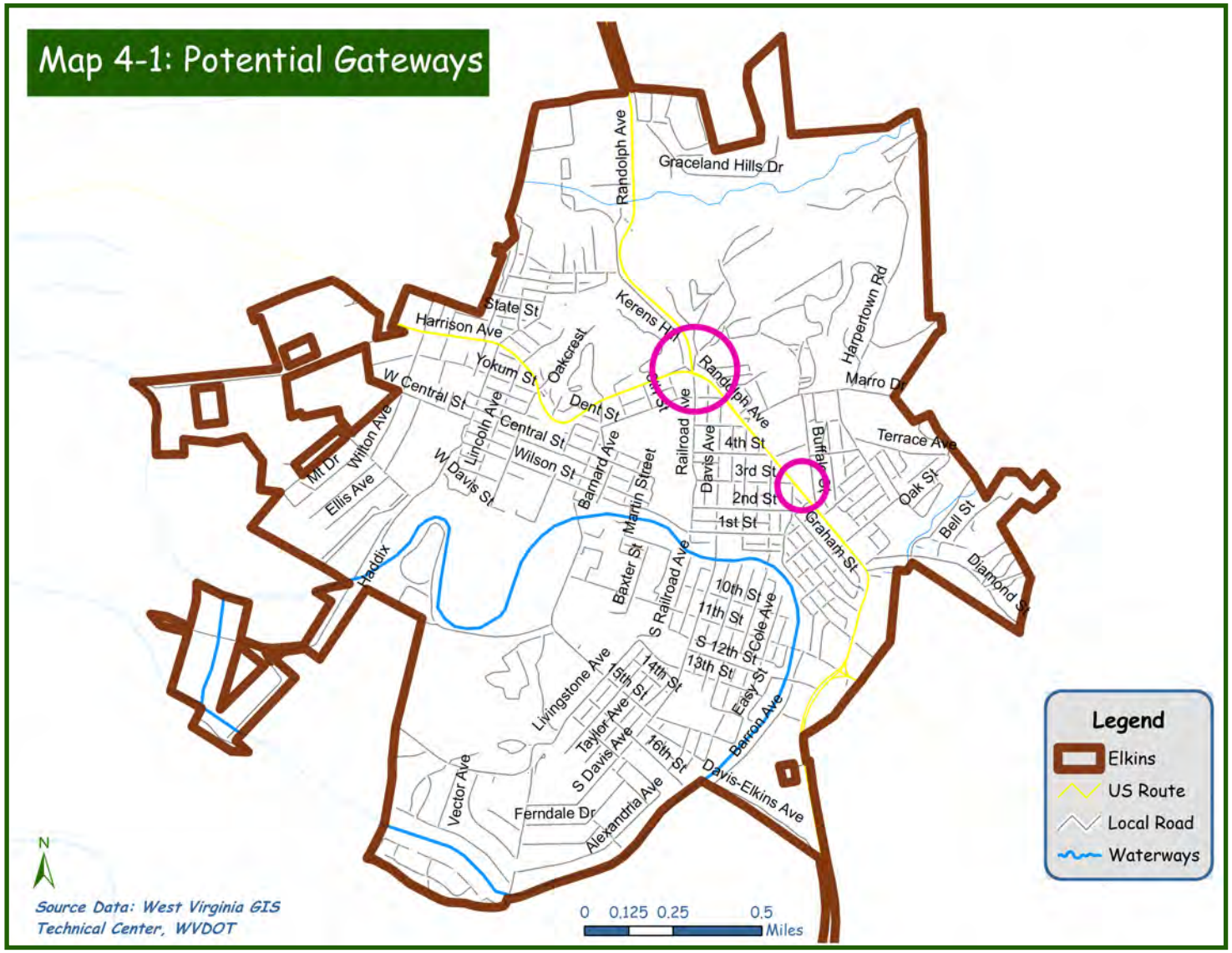
- Evaluate the city's existing organizational structure and make immediate modifications
- Form a charter review committee and develop recommendations to present to council

Case Studies

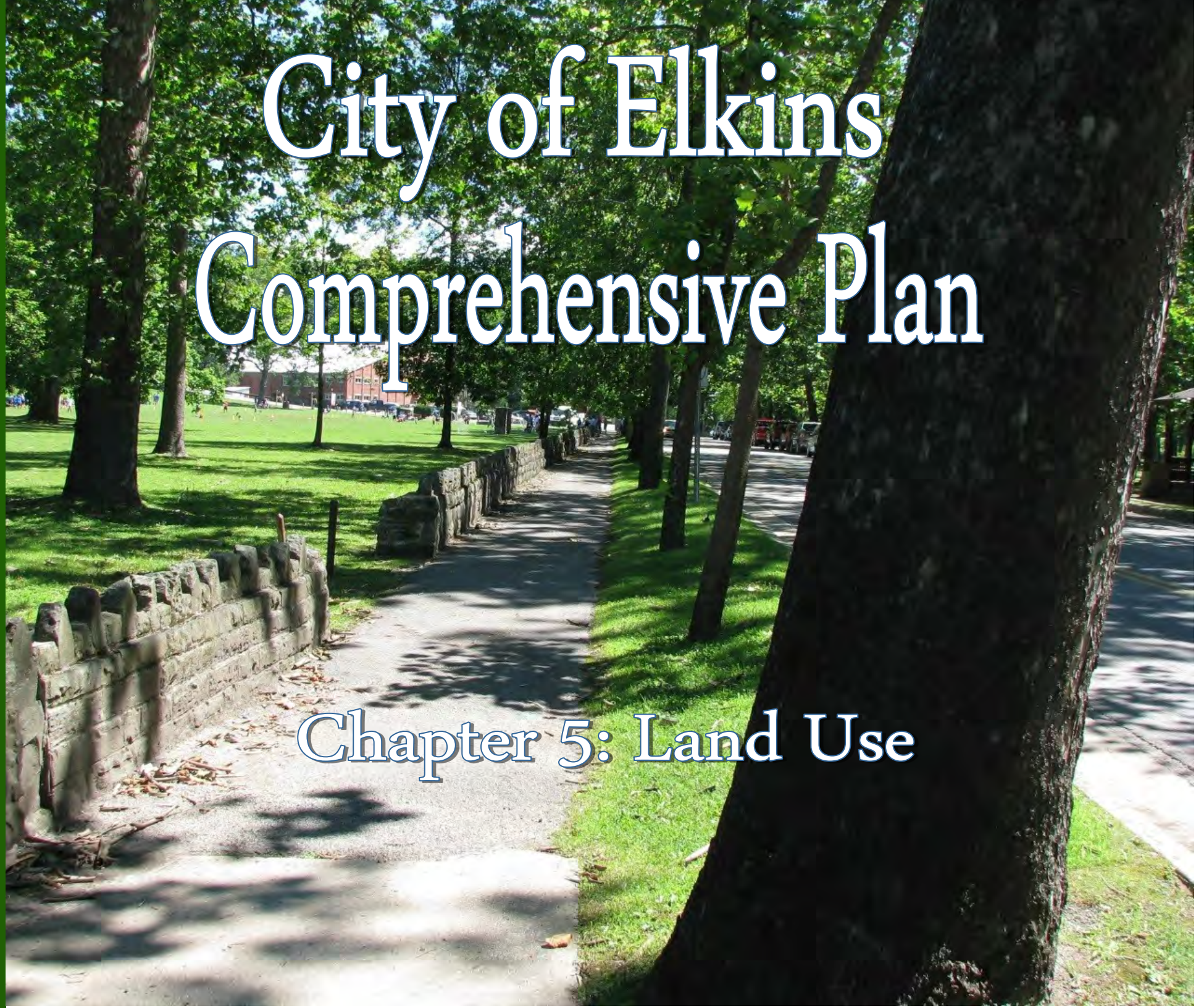
City of Charleston, WV

The City of Charleston, West Virginia has created a wayfinding commission to help create a uniform signage program. The members are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by Council. The Commission helped create design guidelines for the wayfinding system. For more information visit http://wayfindingcharleston.org/

Other cities throughout the United States have also developed a wayfinding system. The pictures shown are signs in Alexandria, Virginia and Winchester, Virginia.


Map 4-1: Potential Gateways
Legend
Elkins
US Route
Local Road
Waterways
Source Data: West Virginia GIS Technical Center, WVDOT
0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles
N
Randolph Ave
Graceland Hills Dr
Harpertown Rd
Marro Dr
Terrace Ave
Oak St
Bell St
Diamond St
Graham St
Buffalo St
Kerens Hill
State St
Harrison Ave
Yokum St
Oakcrest
W Central St
Dent St
Central St
Wilson St
Lincoln Ave
W Davis St
Wilton Ave
Mt Dr
Ellis Ave
Haddix
Barnard Ave
Martin Street
Railroad Ave
Davis Ave
4th St
3rd St
2nd St
1st St
Baxter St
S Railroad Ave
10th St
11th St
S 12th St
13th St
Cole Ave
Easy St
Barron Ave
Livingstone Ave
15th St
14th St
Taylor Ave
S Davis Ave
16th St
Davis-Elkins Ave
Vector Ave
Ferndale Dr
Alexandria Ave

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan



Chapter 5: Land Use

Background Information

This chapter will examine land use characteristics in the City of Elkins. The chapter will include an analysis of existing land use patterns and land use ordinances, housing characteristics, historical resources, and beautification efforts.

Land Use

Existing Land Use

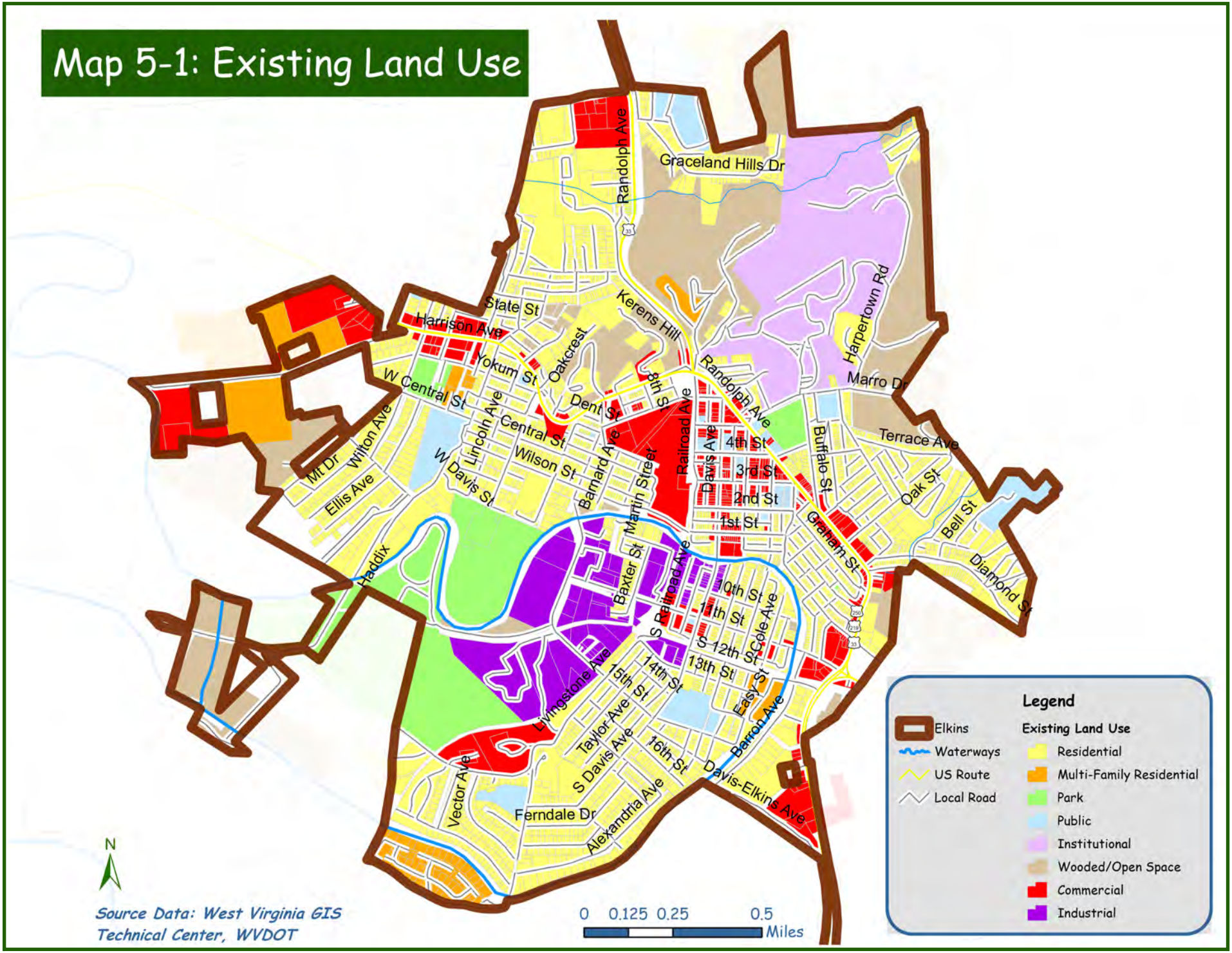
Residential neighborhood in Elkins

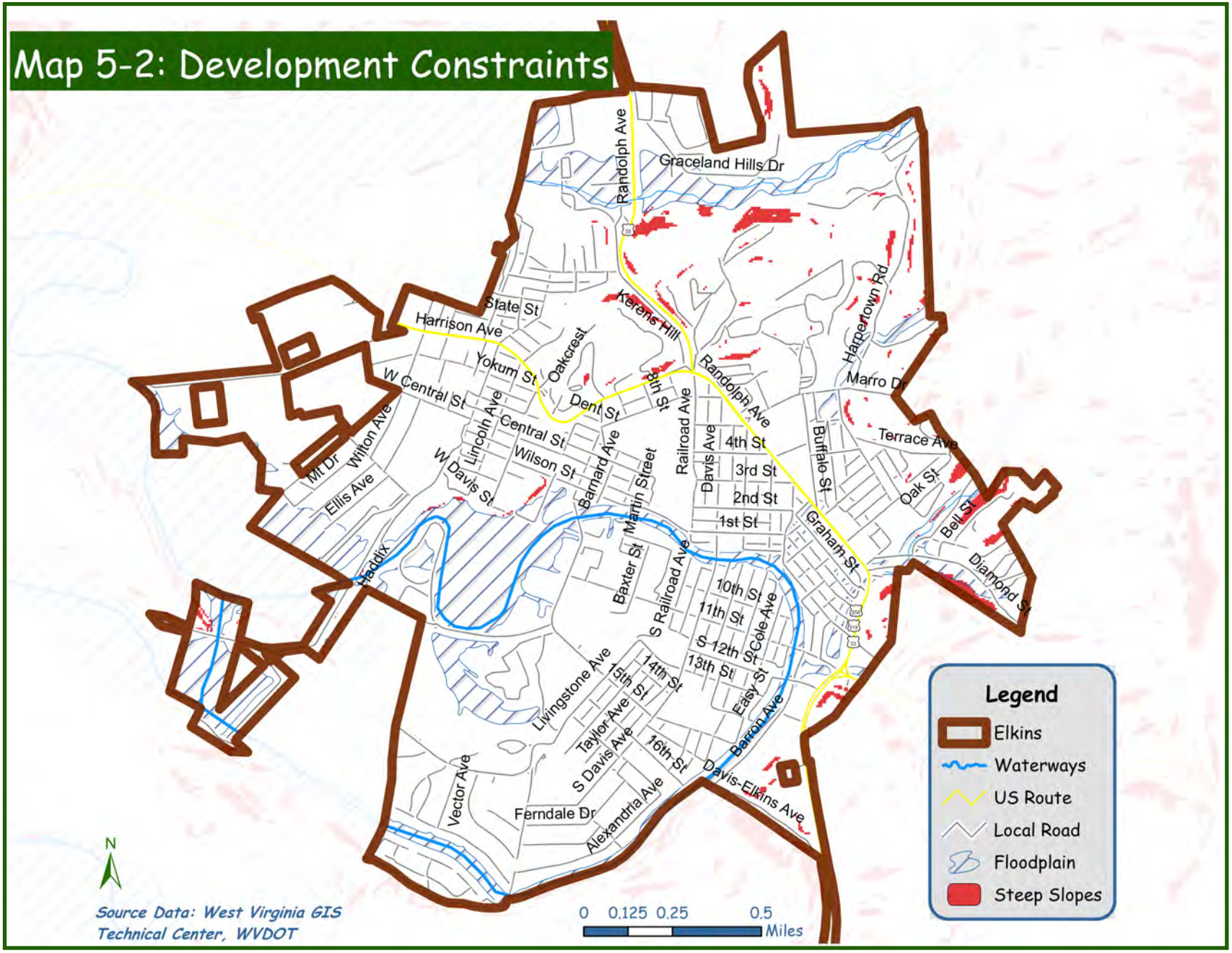
The City of Elkins is mainly a residential community made up of various neighborhoods as illustrated on *Map 5-1: Existing Land Use,* which shows the current actual uses of parcels of land throughout the city, and which should not be confused with a zoning map. Residential uses are primarily single-family, with small pockets of multi-family uses. Commercial uses are located in the downtown business district, Randolph Avenue, Rail Yard, and US 250. As Elkins is the County seat, there are also many public uses located in the downtown business district (Court House, County Office Buildings, etc.). Industrial uses are primarily located in the Elkins Industrial Park. Institutional uses include Davis & Elkins College.

Recreation uses include Bluegrass Park, Davis Street Park, Elkins City Park, Glendale Park, and Riverbend Park.

- Bluegrass Park-baseball field, small pavilion, playground area, and basketball courts
- Davis Street Park– small playground, playground, basketball court
- Elkins City Park– three pavilions, nine picnic sites, basketball court, eight horseshoe pits, large playground area
- Glendale Park– walking trail, skateboard area, football practice field, soccer fields, four picnic sites, small pavilion, and large, flat open space for practices
- Riverbend Park– walking trail, lighted soccer field, three small soccer fields, three lighted Little League baseball fields, playground area, two volleyball courts, two pavilions, three picnic sites

Elkins City Park


Map 5-1: Existing Land Use
Graceland Hills Dr
Randolph Ave
Harpertown Rd
Marro Dr
Terrace Ave
Oak St
Bell St
Diamond St
Buffalo St
Graham St
Kerens Hill
State St
Harrison Ave
Yokum St
Oakcrest
W Central St
Dent St
8th St
Railroad Ave
Davis Ave
4th St
3rd St
2nd St
1st St
Central St
Lincoln Ave
Wilson St
Barnard Ave
Martin Street
W Davis St
Wilton Ave
Mt Dr
Ellis Ave
Haddix
Baxter St
S Railroad Ave
10th St
11th St
S 12th St
13th St
Cole Ave
Easy St
14th St
15th St
Livingstone Ave
Taylor Ave
S Davis Ave
16th St
Barron Ave
Davis-Elkins Ave
Vector Ave
Ferndale Dr
Alexandria Ave
N
Source Data: West Virginia GIS Technical Center, WVDOT
0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles
Legend
Elkins
Waterways
US Route
Local Road
Existing Land Use
Residential
Multi-Family Residential
Park
Public
Institutional
Wooded/Open Space
Commercial
Industrial


Map 5-2: Development Constraints
Graceland Hills Dr
Randolph Ave
Harrison Ave
State St
Kerens Hill
Harpertown Rd
Yokum St
Oakcrest
Marro Dr
W Central St
Dent St
8th St
Randolph Ave
Lincoln Ave
Central St
Wilson St
Railroad Ave
Davis Ave
4th St
3rd St
2nd St
1st St
Buffalo St
Terrace Ave
Oak St
Wilton Ave
Mt Dr
Ellis Ave
W Davis St
Barnard Ave
Martin Street
Graham St
Bell St
Diamond St
Haddix
Baxter St
S Railroad Ave
10th St
11th St
S 12th St
13th St
S Cole Ave
Easy St
Barron Ave
Livingstone Ave
15th St
14th St
Taylor Ave
S Davis Ave
16th St
Davis-Elkins Ave
Vector Ave
Ferndale Dr
Alexandria Ave
Legend
Elkins
Waterways
US Route
Local Road
Floodplain
Steep Slopes
N
Source Data: West Virginia GIS
Technical Center, WVDOT
0 0.125 0.25 0.5
Miles

Regulations

The City of Elkins has enacted several land use regulations to protect the character of the City. Land use regulations include zoning, building code, floodplain ordinance, rental registration program, and vacant structure ordinance.

Zoning

City of Elkins has enacted a zoning ordinance to regulate the use of land within municipal limits. The zoning ordinance consists of four zoning districts:

- Residential, restricted
- Residential, unrestricted
- Commercial
- Industrial

The ordinance also establishes regulations for non-conforming uses, setbacks, height of buildings and parking.

Building Code

The City also requires building permits when erecting, constructing, installing, repairing, altering, or enlarging any building or structure or any electrical wiring, gas system, or plumbing system.

Floodplain Ordinance

The City has enacted a floodplain ordinance. The ordinance establishes a floodplain district, which includes all land within the 100 year floodplain. The ordinance establishes regulations regarding development in the floodplain, as well as design and construction standards.

In the floodway no development shall be permitted which would result in any increase in the base flood elevation during the occurrence of the base flood discharge.

Rental Registration Program

In 2013, the City enacted a rental registration program. The purpose of the program is to promote health and safety standards for rental housing. Rentals are inspected by the City in regards to condition and maintenance. Inspections include the following:

- Exterior Structure
- Interior Structure
- Light, ventilation, and occupancy limitations
- Plumbing facilities

- Mechanical requirements
- Electrical requirements
- Alarm requirements
- Fire safety requirements

Vacant Structure Ordinance

The City also requires that vacant buildings be registered by the owner. A fee is assessed each year the building stands vacant. It is the hope of the City that the ordinance will encourage land owners to either rent their building or sell it instead of letting it sit vacant and possibly become dilapidated.

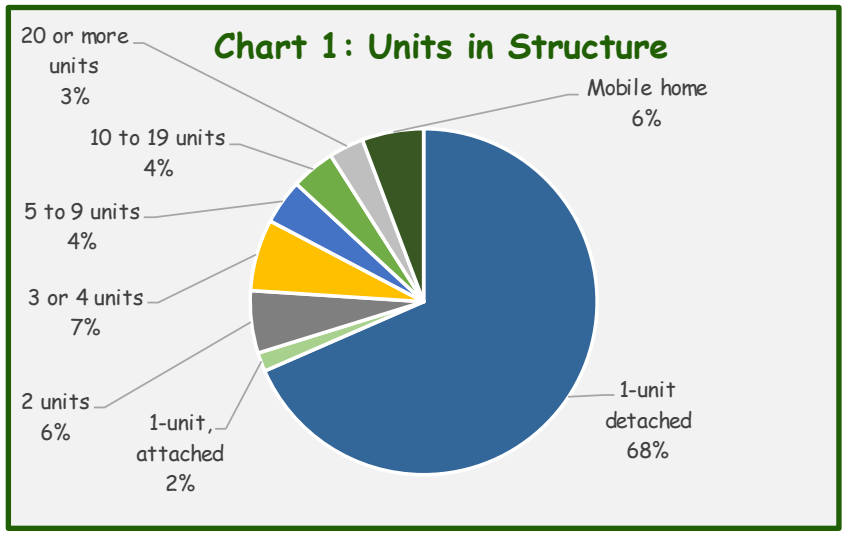
Vacant Building Fee Schedule
1 year = $200
2 years = $400
3 years = $600
4 years = $800
5 years = $1,600
> 5 years = $1,600 + $300 per year over

Housing Characteristics

Demographics

As mentioned earlier, Elkins is comprised mainly of single family homes. Data from the 2010 US Census reveals that approximately 68 percent of the homes in Elkins are classified as single family units, as shown on ***Chart 1: Units in Structure.*** Of the occupied housing units in Elkins, approximately 59 percent are owner occupied and 41 percent are renter occupied. The percentage of renter-occupied units in the City exceeds the percentage in the County (27 percent). Home-owners tend to take better care of their home whereas renters may not stay in the community as long, or have a stake in the appearance and quality of the home.

Of the total housing units in Elkins, approximately 12 percent are classified as vacant. This is considered a high vacancy rate, however it is not as high as Randolph County's vacancy rate of approximately 18 percent. Vacancies can negatively affect residential neighborhoods. The high vacancy rate indicates that economic circumstances and housing type and condition are such that many people choose not to live within the municipal boundaries or move elsewhere.



Rentals comprise the highest level of vacancies. Many factors contribute to vacant rental properties. Too many rental units may exist, the cost of rentals may be too high, or the poor condition of rental units may cause a high vacancy rate.

The second highest level of vacancies are classified as "other vacant" by the US Census. This means that the units are held vacant for personal reasons by the owner. Common reasons

include:

- No one lives in the unit and the owner is making repairs
- Owner does not want to rent or sell
- Owner is using the home for storage
- Owner is elderly and living in nursing home or elsewhere

Elkins' housing stock is also considerably older, with over 30 percent built in 1939 or earlier. Very few homes have been built in the last ten years, as shown on ***Chart 2: Age of Housing***. This is a concern as older homes tend to have issues and continuously need to be maintained.

Housing values were also examined in Elkins to provide further insight on the housing market and vacancy rates. The median housing value in Elkins is $97,500. This value is slightly higher than the $96,500 value for West Virginia and the $94,300 value for Randolph County. ***Chart 3: Housing Value*** illustrates that the majority of homes are valued between $50,000-$99,999. The age of the homes in Elkins could contribute to the lower housing value.

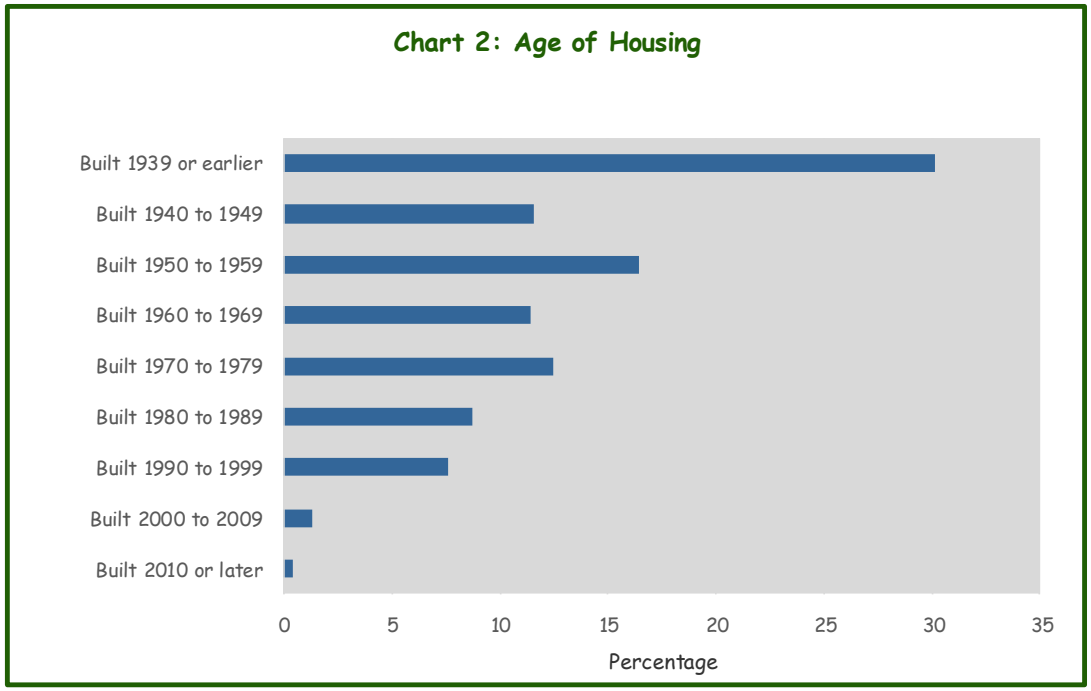
Housing Agencies

Randolph County Housing Authority

The Randolph County Housing Authority works to secure safe, decent, and afford housing for residents in Randolph, Tucker, Upshur, Lewis, Barbour, and Pendleton counties. The RCHA mission includes:

- Making good rental housing affordable
- Promoting home ownership
- Constructing well built, affordable homes
- Developing the leadership and job skills of youth
- Participate in community development efforts

The RCHA offers homes for sale, as well as low-income rentals through Section 8 programs. The RCHA also recently developed the First Ward Apartments for low-income seniors. The First Ward School Apartments are located in the converted First Ward School. The Authority also

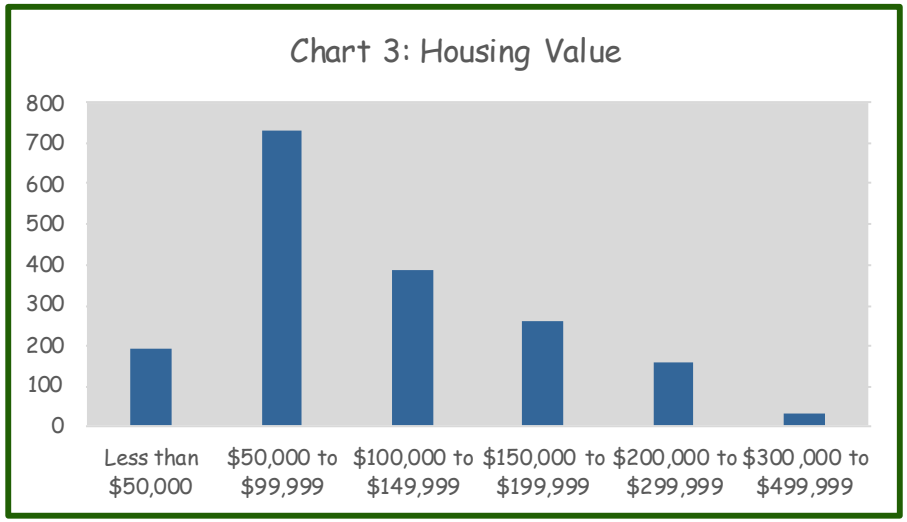


assists homeowners with making improvements to their homes. The authority has a total of 39 rental units within the City of Elkins.

Highland Community Builder's Inc

Highland Community Builder's (HCB) primary mission is to "develop, construct, manage and finance any and all types of real estate properties and to provide education, social service, and community development services to low and moderate income persons." HCB also serves to support the mission of Randolph County Housing Authority.

HCB is the owner/developer of Highland Meadows, a 40+ lot mixed-income subdivision that was annexed into the City in 2006. HCB is also the General Partner/Owner of the First Ward School Apartments.



Woodlands Development Group

The Woodlands Development Group (WDG) is a non-profit and certified Community Housing Development Organization. The group builds homes for low and moderate income families, develops rental housing, and assists communities with redevelopment. The group also started a new organization, Woodlands Community Lenders, to provide financing to small businesses.

WDG has partnered with Highland Community Builders to build housing in the City of Elkins. WDG has a total of 20 rental units within the City of Elkins. The Woodland Development Group developed the Porter Apartments, located across from the railyard. The apartments were designed to fit in with the neighborhood and the railyard area. The building was also a platinum LEED certified building, the first multi-family building with such a certification in West Virginia.

First Ward School

Elkins Housing Authority

The Elkins Housing Authority (EHA) serves the housing needs of low-income, very low-income and extremely low-income families in Elkins through the operation of 78 public housing units in a complex called Gateway Apartments.

Historical Resources

The City of Elkins is rich in history. The town was developed by Senators Henry Davis and Stephen Elkins. The senators established the WV Central and Pittsburgh Railway through Elkins to haul timber and coal. Both men built homes in Elkins, known as Halliehurst and Graceland, which are now part of Davis & Elkins College. Due to the presence of the railroad, the City boomed and numerous people made their home in Elkins.

As such, there are many historical resources to be found throughout the City limits. The Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission is charged with providing planning and technical assistances for the preservation of Elkins' historic sites. The Commission consists of five volunteer members. The EHLC has helped list several properties on the National Register of Historic Places, developed the Wees Historic District Neighborhood Plan, and helped with the placement of historical plaques on several buildings.

Highland Meadows

National Register Properties

The National Register of Historic Places is a national program that aims to protect historic resources throughout the United States. Listing in the Register is a voluntary process. To be listed in the Register an applicant must submit a nomination to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which, along with the state's National Register Review Board, reviews the nomination. Several incentives are offered to properties listed in the Register, such as federal preservation grants, federal investment tax credits, preservation easements for nonprofits, International Building Code fire and life safety code alternatives, state tax benefits and state grant opportunities. Listing also entitles the district to assistance from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation when a federal project may affect the district. Use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property is not affected by listing.

The City of Elkins is home to four historic districts. Downtown Elkins is classified as a historic district and includes 64 contributing structures. The Wees Historic District includes 286 contributing structures and the Davis and Elkins Historic District includes six contributing structures. Scott Hill is also classified as a historic district and includes eight structures on the property.

Individual properties listed on the National Register are:

- Graceland Mansion
- Halliehurst Mansion
- Liberal Arts Hall
- Albert Hall
- Davis Memorial Presbyterian Church
- The Warfield-Dye House

- Randolph County Courthouse
- Pinecrest
- Governor H.G. Kump House
- Baldwin-Chandlee Supply Company
- Riverside School
- Dr. John C. Irons House
- Taylor-Condrey House
- West Virginia Children's Home
- Elkins Milling Company
- First Ward School

Halliehurst Mansion

Beautification Efforts

The City of Elkins ON TRAC Program is currently working on several projects to beautify the downtown. As discussed in ***Chapter 4: Economic Development,*** the Design Committee is working on beautification projects, such as planting flowers, holiday lighting and decorations, and placement of benches. The Committee is also working on gateway design at three intersections leading into the downtown.

Needs Assessment

Several land issues were brought to light during the planning process. Issues include recreation, correcting historical lack of enforcement of land use regulations, dilapidated housing, lack of preservation of historical resources, and beautification of the downtown.

Recreation

The city operates and maintains several beautiful parks, which are true assets to the community. The city is also home to a YMCA that provides recreational facilities and programs. There is a need to continue to expand Glendale Park with additional playground equipment. The feasibility of developing a splash pad and ice-skating rink should also be explored.

Elkins is lucky to have about 3.5 miles of the Tygart Valley River inside its borders, but the city cannot be said to have taken full advantage of its potential as a "river town." Grant funding has been secured to replace the old "Wilson Street swinging bridge" with a modern pedestrian and bike bridge, and the option of securing the adjacent riverfront

for a public greenspace and picnic area is being explored. The city should look for other opportunities to further increase the benefits that the river offers to both residents and visitors, as a location for recreation, tourism, and related activities.

Land Use Regulations

The City's zoning ordinance is in need of a complete overhaul as it has not been updated in several decades. Of the residents that completed the survey, many stated the natural setting and scenery of Elkins and the surrounding area are why they live in Elkins. However, without proper land use regulations in place, the character of the City is in jeopardy. The zoning ordinance lacks landscaping and buffer requirements. Regulations regarding signage are also a concern, as well as setbacks and fence requirements. There is also a potential need for additional commercial districts and overlays to protect historical resources. The Planning Commission would also like to partner with the Elkins Historic Landmark Commission to explore design guidelines for the historic districts.

Lack of enforcement of existing regulations also is a concern. While there are ordinances in place to protect citizens, there has not always been consistent enforcement of those ordinances. Many residents have complained about the lack of enforcement, especially with parking, illegal dumping, and property maintenance.

Dilapidated and Abandoned Buildings

One of the biggest concerns of residents is the rundown and dilapidated homes located throughout the City. Many of the dilapidated housing issues are rental units in the downtown business district. Another concern is the conversion of single-family homes into low-quality multi-family units, which bring down the value of entire neighborhoods and discourage investment in the downtown business district. If the city wants to attract people to relocate to Elkins and encourage current residents and business property owners to invest, the city must enforce ordinances already in place. The City has recently enacted an ordinance requiring all rental properties to be inspected. However, there is just one inspector who also oversees building permits and enforcement of all state building codes.

The West Virginia Code Chapter 8A requires that a comprehensive plan designate preferred development areas and renewal and/or redevelopment areas. Areas are shown on ***Map 5-3: Development Areas***.

Preferred development areas include:

- Randolph Avenue
- Railyard
- Wees Historic District (in accordance with the Wees Historic District Plan)
- Highlands Meadows neighborhood
- N. Randolph Avenue (Hanley Street north to the DHHR/DMV property)

Renewal and/or redevelopment areas include:

- Central St. neighborhood, from Martin St. to Robert E. Lee;
- Graham District, including Delaware St., Center St. and Davis St
- Baxter St./Chestnut St. neighborhood
- 2nd Street/River Street neighborhoods, from Kerens Ave. to John Sr.
- Downtown district along Davis Avenue, from Randolph Avenue to 10th Street

Glendale Park

Tygart Valley River

In July of 2012 the Randolph County Housing Authority completed a housing and transportation study. The study revealed several issues in regards to housing in the City of Elkins:

- High vacancy rate compared to the rest of the County, especially for rental units
- Elkins is the primary center for rental housing in the County
- Large number of renters that are 65 years of age or older
- Majority of multi-family units in the County are found in Elkins
- Almost 90 percent of homes are more than 30 years old
- Population in Elkins moves more frequently than the rest of the County
- Many residents lack a car in Elkins

Based on the key findings the study recommends that the Housing Authority focus on Elkins for more affordable housing, specifically for

an aging population. The Planning Commission agrees that the lack of housing for seniors is a major concern, as well as the lack of family rental housing. There is a shortage of affordable 1 bedroom rental units as well. It is difficult to project the number of homes that would be needed in the future, especially as Elkins is mainly built-out. In order to meet additional housing demands in the future, the City would have to annex or development would have to occur as infill development.

Other housing issues that were revealed during the planning process include vacant upstairs residential space in the downtown, as well as the inspection of rental units.

There are no opportunities for conversion of old business into housing as Elkins does not have any large industrial or commercial buildings that would be appropriate.

Historical Resources

In 2008, with professional assistance from the Randolph County Development Authority, a neighborhood plan was developed by the residents of the Wees Historic District. The resulting Wees National Historic District Plan included several recommendations:

- Develop a lighting plan concept to incorporate pedestrian-scale fixtures and low impact lamps to add safety, aesthetics, and character to the area
- Elkins City Council and Wees Historic District should explore development of a tailored approach to zoning such as overlay areas
- City Building Inspector and the Zoning Board of Appeals should develop a process for coordination with the Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission and the Wees Leadership Group on issues of enforcement, permit review, new construction or variance requests
- Coordinate signs for commercial uses along Randolph Avenue in a supplemental ordinance to retain the look and character of already current examples such as Broughtons, Arts Center, Johnson Realty, while also ensuring that oversized and inappropriate signs do not impact the area

A direct outgrowth of the plan is the current transportation enhancement grant streetscape project. The project is funded through a $160,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant, $20,000 Community Partnership grant, a City match of $8,000, County match of $5,000, and private contributions from residents and businesses.

Beautification Efforts

The downtown business district has changed dramatically over the past few years due to several ongoing beautification efforts. However, no comprehensive streetscape plan has been completed. This type of plan would help the City make comprehensive improvements. The plan should address outdated infrastructure, façade improvements, and pedestrian concerns, as well as a funding strategy. The Planning Commission feels that a simple step to beautification of the downtown could begin with a consistent planting plan. Currently there are planters around trees in the downtown and many of them are not maintained. The City should continue to budget for plantings and watering for the summer season, as planting would greatly improve the appearance of the downtown.

Annexation

As identified in ***Chapter 4: Economic Development***, annexation is vital to the City's financial future. Most of Elkins is currently built-out and any new development will most likely be re-development. Therefore, the City needs to extend their boundaries to include other areas into the County. Priority annexation areas are shown on ***Map 4: Future Land Use***

Action Plan

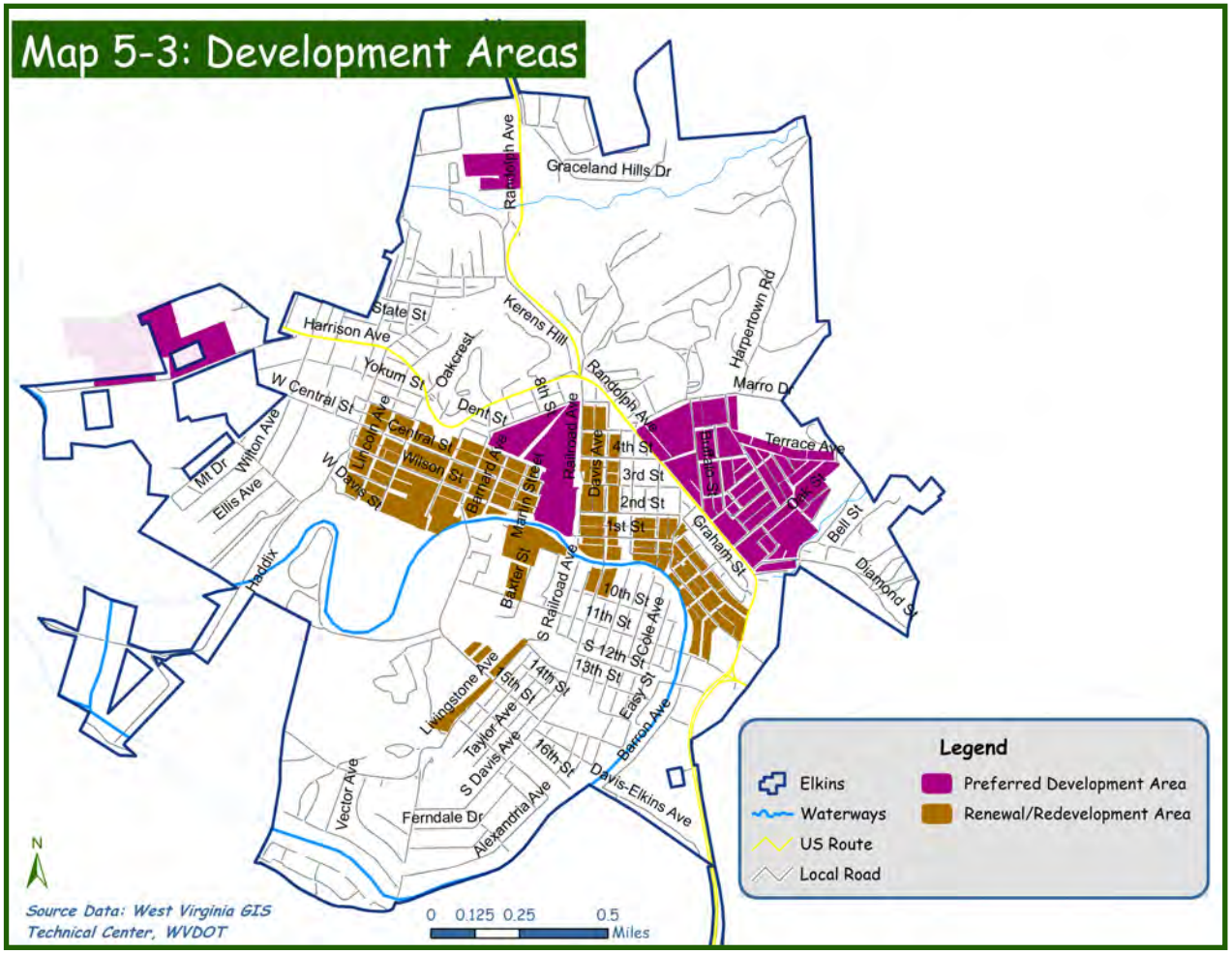
The land use action plan is a vital component of the comprehensive plan. The land use action plan will help the town guide growth and development, as well as preserve the character of the City for years to come. The plan includes action steps to achieve the land use goal stated below, as well as the future land use map. The future land use map is very important as it is a reflection of how the city wants to develop in the future. The map will guide the city in the future on where and when zoning changes should be made.

Objective 1: Protect the natural and historic character of the City through zoning

Action Step 1: Revise the zoning ordinance to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and to help encourage new growth and preserve the historic character of the City

Preferred development areas. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl.

Renewal and/or redevelopment. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment.



The zoning ordinance should be updated to be consistent with the comprehensive plan and to comply with Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code. The current ordinance was reviewed and the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

- Update and/or consolidate definitions
- Include a comprehensive list of uses for each district
- Residential districts should be revised to include more land zoned as single-family residential in order to protect the character of existing neighborhoods. Currently most of the land in Elkins is zoned as Unrestricted Residential which allows multi-family and some limited commercial uses in traditional neighborhoods. However, the ordinance should also include regulations to allow for affordable housing and housing for persons with disabilities.
- All identified historic districts should include additional regulations that protect the character of the historical neighborhoods.
- Consider the development of two different types of commercial districts; one for the downtown that allows for smaller businesses and the other that allows for larger scale businesses along major roadways
- Sign regulations should be incorporated into the zoning ordinance to minimize visual clutter on major thoroughfares in Elkins.
- Landscaping and buffer yards regulations should be added to protect surrounding land uses
- Traffic is a major concern in Elkins, therefore access management provisions should be considered
- Include provisions in the ordinance to limit the conversion of single-family homes in traditional neighborhoods to multi-family units
- The development of telecommunication facilities is important to improve the quality of life, support economic development opportunities, and provide emergency services. However, the need for telecommunication facilities must be balanced with scenic viewsheds and residential development in the city. Careful consideration must take place when siting new facilities; such as collocation, concealment, and landscaping. Most of the city is built-out with compact residential and commercial development. Topography and existing facilities should be considered when determining locations for new telecommunication facilities. Placement of telecommunication facilities in or adjacent to residential areas and downtown should be avoided. If facilities are placed downtown, the facilities should be in industrial zoned areas.

Map 5-4: Future Land Use depicts future land use classifications in the City of Elkins. This map should be used to help guide any updates to the zoning ordinance. The map also details future annexation areas. A zoomed in future land use map (*Map 5-4a: Future Land Use*) is included at the end of this chapter to better illustrate future land use classifications in the core of the city. *Map 5-3: Development Areas* illustrates areas that are recommended for development, redevelopment, and/or revitalization in accordance with the West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A: Land Use Planning.

As the City is urban in nature and does not have any lands that are classified as agriculture or conservation, rural lands were not identified on the future land use map. The City plans to continue to grow with possible annexation areas and therefore will continue a more urban, built-out land use pattern.

Future Land Use Classifications

Recreational– areas intended for parks and recreation uses. The proposed Allegheny Highlands Trails is also shown on the map. The current route has not yet been finalized therefore the route is only the approximate location.

Single family residential- intended to provide for low density residential uses.

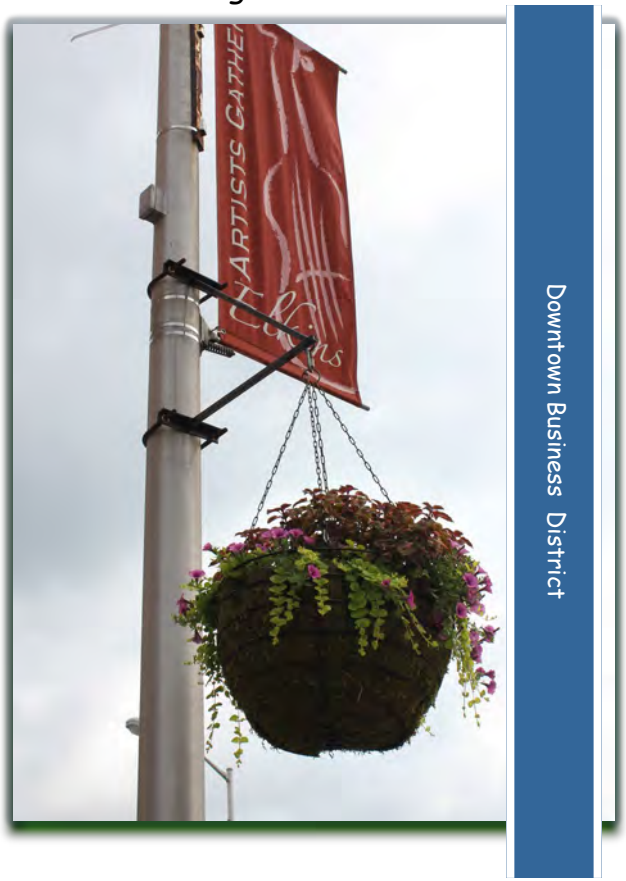
City Residential- intended to provide for single-family and multi-family residential uses

Institutional-areas owned by Davis & Elkins College

Central Business District- intended to provide for small-scale business uses to serve surrounding neighborhoods. Residential uses would allow for a mix of single family and multifamily uses, especially in the second story of commercial buildings.

Commercial- intended to provide for businesses that require larger buildings and would have more of an impact of surrounding uses

Industrial- intent of this classification is to accommodate industrial uses



Downtown Business District

Objective 1: Encourage the beautification of the City to entice visitors

Action Step 1: Complete a streetscape project to improve the aesthetics of the downtown business district

There has never been a comprehensive streetscape plan competed for the downtown business district. The City of Elkins and ON TRAC should partner together to complete a plan so that improvements can be made to the downtown. The plan will establish a vision and include recommendations that will be the basis for phased streetscape improvements. The plan should include recommendations concerning pedestrian facilities, parking, trail facilities, utilities, signage, site furnishings, landscaping, and cost estimates. The development of a streetscape plan should also help the City apply for grants to complete the specified projects in the plan.

Action Step 2: Provide art throughout the downtown

One simple beautification effort that can be made to the downtown is the installation of art. Public art can express the significance of a community and can be destinations onto themselves. This includes murals and community symbols.

A community symbol is an object that represents the community that is then placed in highly visible locations throughout a community.

One possible location for a mural is the telephone building past Walgreens on Randolph Avenue.

Action Step 3: Perform a feasibility study concerning possible improvements and better use of the river and riverfront

A riverfront feasibility study would help the City determine action items that could be taken to capitalize on the Tygart Valley River. Possible topics of investigation include how the city might be able to take advantage of its flood control works to maintain water levels better suited for boating and other water recreation activities, the viability of constructing a riverfront path, and the benefits of river-related activities for tourism-related development in the railyard. Comparison to other cities that have developed riverfronts of similar size would especially be beneficial.

Enhance and protect the character of the City through land use planning

Objective 2: Establish policies to protect neighborhoods throughout Elkins

Action Step 1: Increase enforcement of building codes and property maintenance ordinances to improve appearance of the City

Code enforcement officials should canvas the City regularly to search for code violations. The City should also ask residents to report code violations via a public relations campaign. The police department, mayor, and code enforcement officer should meet at least monthly to discuss various complaints. Police officers spend a great deal of time canvassing neighborhoods and may have a better understanding of where specific problems are occurring. All city employees should be on the look-out for overgrown grass, junk, graffiti, and junk vehicles as they are early warning signs that a property owner cannot keep up with property maintenance, which could then lead to a vacant and dilapidated property.

Many residents are unaware of code violations or how to fix them. Therefore, the City should develop a guide for citizens on how they can remedy the violation. The guide should contain listings for lawn and tree companies, towing services, junk removal services. The guide should list all the specific property maintenance codes for the City. The guide should also detail the legal process of what happens when a property owner violates codes. Another option the City could explore is adopting a policy that publicizes the most notorious property violators and repeat offenders. The hope is that it will force the property owner to clean the property up.

Action Step 2: Hire an additional code enforcement officer to help enforce the rental registration and vacant structure ordinances

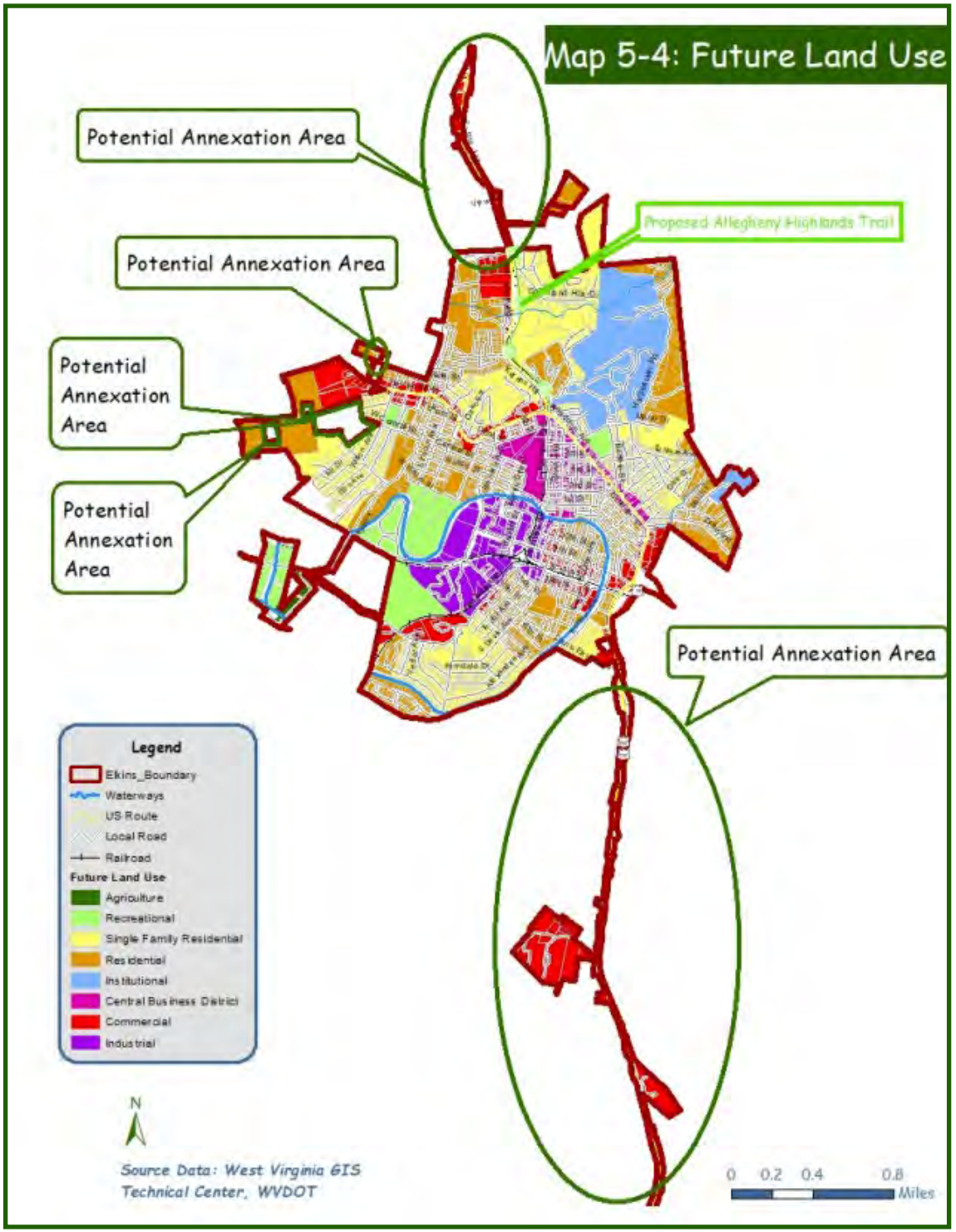
One of the main issues with enforcement is that there is only one code enforcement officer to enforce all the ordinances in Elkins. This is a very time-consuming task for only one person to handle. Therefore, it is recommended that the City hire an additional officer.

Action Step 3: Require an inspection fee for building permit inspections

Currently the City of Elkins does not require an inspection fee for building permits. The City should require a fee for inspections and then could use that money to hire an additional code enforcement officer. Fees can be based on the total value of construction or a flat fee. For instance the fee could be one percent (1%) of the cost of construction.

Action Step 4: Investigate the feasibility of developing a land bank

Municipalities in West Virginia were recently given the authority to develop land banks. A municipality can establish a land bank which would then allow them to accept title to properties to help revitalize vacant and underutilized properties. Elkins should review the legislation and have a discussion with key stakeholders (Housing Authority, Economic Development Authority, etc) in the community to determine if it makes sense for the City to establish a land bank.

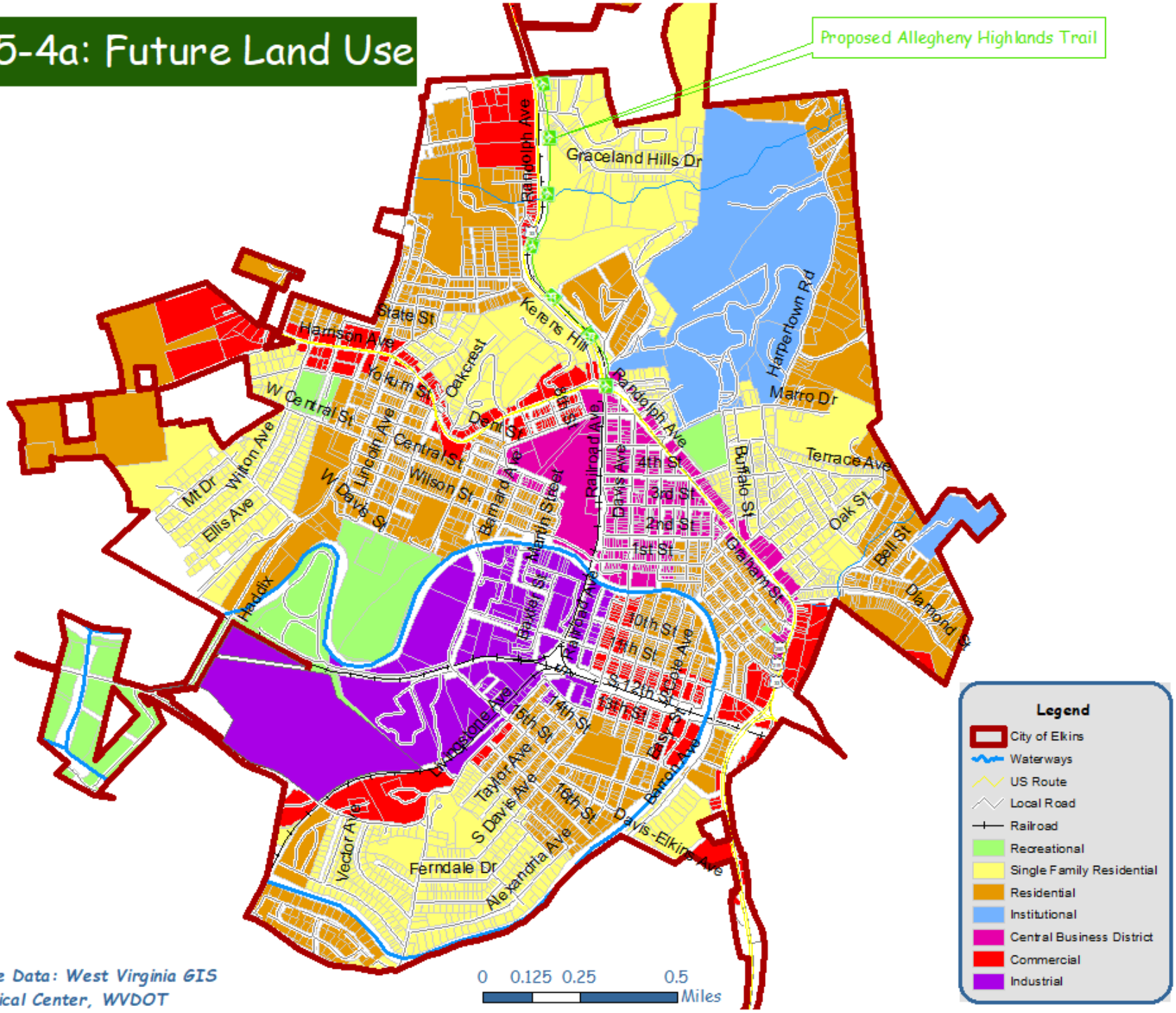


Case Studies

Huntington, WV Urban Renewal Authority (Huntington Land Bank)

The City of Huntington's land bank purchases tax liens at annual tax sales. The city then uses the interest from the liens for clean-up costs. If the original property owner does not redeem property after 18 months the City turns the property over to the land bank. In 2012 the City demolished, with the help of the Department of Highways and National Guard, 54 structures in one month. Demolition fees were paid with land bank proceeds.

Map 5-4a: Future Land Use



Source Data: West Virginia GIS Technical Center, WVDOT

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 6: Implementation

Background Information

Implementation

Implementation of a comprehensive plan is often difficult, time-consuming, and can be costly to a community. However, it is very important that the plan be used in everyday government functions so that it doesn't simply sit on the shelf and collect dust. The City should use the plan when preparing budgets and planning for future projects. The City should also work with potential partners on the implementation of projects detailed in the plan. Grant sources are available to help for funding and the comprehensive plan should be used to help justify requests for grant funding.

Regional Planning

Intergovernmental cooperation is essential in land use planning. Land use issues do not simply stop at municipal boundaries. The City currently works with the Randolph County Development Authority (Elkins mayors are typically de facto ex oficio members of the board of directors) and the Randolph County Housing Authority on issues of mutual interest. City and county staff also exchange information related to mapping and addressing, emergency response, floodplain management, source water protection, and related issues. However, both the city and county would benefit from a further strengthened relationship and should explore additional opportunities to work together to implement projects and realize solutions that would benefit everyone in the region.

Financial Implications

Many of the projects detailed in the Action Plan will be costly for the City of Elkins to implement. However, there are many other funding sources the city should consider when budgeting for implementation. Below is a list of funding opportunities that should be considered when implementing the plan.

Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) provides federal grant funds for the support of economic and community development in West Virginia. The goal of ARC is to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.

Projects approved for ARC assistance must support one of the four general goals:

- Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy.
- Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation.
- Develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive.
- Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation.

Activities generally eligible for funding include, but are not limited to, projects that:

- Improve infrastructure for community and economic development.
- Improve educational opportunities and workforce skills.
- Increase civic and leadership capacity.
- Increase entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Improve health care resources.

The mission of the Benedum Foundation is to encourage human development in West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania through strategically placed charitable resources. The foundation gives two types of grants; education and economic development.

Governors Community Participation Grant Program

The Governor's Community Partnership Grant program provides state grant funds for community and economic development projects throughout West Virginia. The program enables communities to expand, build and improve a variety of public facilities and services.
Eligible activities include but are not limited to permanent public improvements related to the following:

- City hall and courthouse facilities
- Community centers
- Construction and renovation of public facilities
- Demolition
- Economic development
- Flood and storm drainage
- Business and industrial parks
- Land and property acquisition
- Libraries
- Parks and recreation
- Parking facilities
- Preservation and beautification
- Street and sidewalk repair
- Technology
- Water and wastewater facilities and services

KaBOOM

KaBoom is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to creating play spaces for children throughout the United States. KaBoom often administers grant programs by matching communities with funding partners. Their most popular program

is the Community Partner Program. This program matches either non-profits or municipal governments with funding partners to provide funding for building playgrounds.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund program (LWCF) provides supplemental federal funding for the acquisition and/or development of high-quality, public outdoor recreational areas throughout West Virginia. Proposed projects must be consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Park renovations, expansions to promote active lifestyles, innovation in community cores, attracting or retain visitors to an area, development of trailheads or preservation of other natural areas to impact community health objectives and brownfields renewal efforts will receive funding priority.

Eligible activities include but are not limited to the development of outdoor recreation resources related to the following:

- Land acquisition for parklands
- Development or renovation of the following types of outdoor recreational facilities:
- Campgrounds
- Picnic areas
- Sports and playfields
- Golf courses
- Swimming facilities
- Boating facilities
- Fishing facilities
- Hunting areas
- Trails
- Winter sport facilities
- Support facilities (walks, utilities, bathrooms, etc.)
- Amphitheaters
- Lake impoundments
- Visitor information centers
- Interpretive centers

Neighborhood Investment Program

The Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) increases charitable giving to local nonprofit organizations. The program allows 501(c)3 designated charitable organizations to apply for tax credit vouchers. These organizations distribute the vouchers to contributing businesses and individuals. By donating to approved NIP organizations, contributors can support their communities and earn credits to reduce certain West Virginia taxes.

The West Virginia Legislature sets aside $2.5 million annually in state tax credits for the NIP. To participate, a 501(c)3

charitable organization must apply to the West Virginia Development Office. Upon meeting program requirements and obtaining approval from the NIP Advisory Board, organizations are awarded tax credit vouchers. Businesses and individuals that contribute to NIP-approved organizations are eligible to receive up to 50 percent of the contributed amount in the form of state tax credits. Donors may use the credits to reduce liability for the Corporate Net Income Tax, the Business Franchise tax or the Personal Income Tax.

Projects generally eligible for program participation include but are not limited to the following:

- Health clinics
- Homeless shelters
- Educational programs
- Housing programs
- Preservation/revitalization activities
- Domestic violence shelters
- Children's shelters
- Meal delivery programs
- Senior citizens' centers
- Community foundations
- Scholarship programs
- Hospice care
- Transportation programs
- Day care centers
- Counseling services
- Services for the disabled

Small Cities Block Grant Fund

The Small Cities Block Grant program (SCBG) provides federal funds for community and economic development projects throughout West Virginia. The program supports job creation and retention efforts, local government efforts to provide affordable infrastructure systems and community efforts to improve the quality of life for low- to moderate-income citizens. Eligible units of local government may receive SCBG funds if they are documented to fulfill one of three national objectives:

- Activities benefiting low- and moderate-income people.
- Activities that aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight.
- Activities designed to meet community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community and where other financial resources are not

available to meet such needs.

Activities generally eligible for funding include but are not limited to permanent public improvements related to the following:

- Community centers/senior citizen centers
- Construction and renovation of public facilities
- Demolition
- Economic development
- Flood and storm drainage
- Acquisition
- Parks and recreation
- Preservation and beautification
- Technology
- Water and wastewater facilities and services
- Community facilities renovation/construction

Smart Growth Implementation Assistance

The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) program provides assistance from national experts to help communities explore barriers to smart growth implementation and pilot innovative ideas that create more sustainable communities. EPA will provide technical assistance to successful applicants.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

The TAP program now funds projects that would have previously been considered under the Transportation Enhancement and Safe Routes to Schools Programs.

Implementation Matrix

An implementation matrix is included at the end of this chapter and details the priority of each action step,

recommended partners, estimate of probable costs, and potential funding sources.

Due to the financial status of the City it is very important to establish priorities. While many of the action steps are important to implement only a few can be implemented at one time due to funding and staff capacity. Action Steps are identified as either high, medium, or low. High priorities are those that were identified by the public and town as the most important to be implemented.

Recommended partners are important to the implementation of the plan. The Planning Commission should hold a meeting with all the community groups, as well as Council, to kick-start the implementation of the plan and get everyone on the same page. The implementation matrix also details probable costs as well as funding sources. This is not an exhaustive list of funding sources, but a list of grants that are more common for communities to consider. Probable costs are only estimates and are not accurate reflections of the total cost of a project.

The Planning Commission should use this implementation matrix to help begin implementation of the plan immediately after the plan is adopted by City Council. The purpose of the implementation matrix is to help guide the Planning Commission in implementation so the plan does not sit on the shelf. The Planning Commission should also review the plan annually to determine the status of each project and any obstacles to implementation of projects.