Comprehensive Plan Update
WISE COUNTY

APRIL 10, 2017
REVIEW DRAFT

PLANNING WORKS

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Part 1: Designing a Plan

This is an action-oriented update of Wise County's Comprehensive Plan. This Plan Update is a statement of the community's vision for its own future and a guide to achieve that vision through the year 2035. The future expressed in the Plan is shaped by local values, ideals and aspirations about the best management and use of Wise County's resources. The Plan Update is based on the County and its communities working cooperatively to define future growth areas and establish land use and infrastructure policies. This updated Plan is a *guide to action*, that:

The future of Wise County should not be a matter of chance; the future of Wise County must be a matter of choice.

- Provides a clear, understandable and widely supported vision for land use in Wise County;
- Operates as a development guide to ensure that the County's vision is considered during the public policy and development review decision-making processes;
- Guides growth and change to achieve economic benefits while protecting agricultural uses, environmental quality and local cultural values; and
- Encourages intergovernmental cooperation between the unincorporated and incorporated areas of the County.

Wise County is an important part of scenic rural Virginia with a rich history and many future opportunities. This comprehensive plan incorporates the history and current needs of the county and its residents in order to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public as well as the natural environment. The Plan provides policies and guidelines to the officials, departments, boards, and commissions to affect current and future land use and resource management in the best interest of unincorporated Wise County.

Through the comprehensive planning process, two challenges emerged that guided development of the Plan. In particular, the need to provide diversified economic opportunities for young people, to help maintain the current population and stem out-migration. Additionally, the need to provide necessary services to support quality of life, especially including medical and mental health care, transportation, and other services, including retail and recreational services.

The Plan addresses these needs with policies that help maintain the quality of life in Wise County by leveraging recent positive infrastructure investment, including improvements to education, transportation, and water services, while protecting the environment and encouraging sustainable economic development.

1.1 Why Plan?

Successful communities do not just happen; they must be continually shaped and guided. A community must actively manage its growth and respond to changing circumstances if it is to continue to meet the needs of its residents and maintain the quality of life that initially attracted those residents to the community.

This Comprehensive Plan replaces the Plan that was adopted in 1998. Much change has occurred since that time. In 1998:

- Google is founded;
- Windows 98 is released by Microsoft, amid an antitrust investigation;
- President Bill Clinton Impeached for perjury and obstruction of justice;
- Titanic breaks numerous records at the box office;
- US Announces first budget surplus in 30 years;
- Personal Property Tax Relief Act is passed in Virginia;
- Frank Sinatra and Gene Autry pass away; and
- John Glenn returns to space.

1.1.1 Timing Matters

This planning process started as one presidential administration came to a close and concluded as the next administration began. The residential election of 2016 will go down in history for a variety of reasons, most beyond the scope of this Plan, but suffice to say the election showed a changing reflection of the national culture, mood and priorities, and the most positive of that is that essentially American optimism has not disappeared. The election provided a new direction for the country and new opportunities for the County. An administration poised to change the playing field for coal, natural resources, the environment, the role for regulations and how land is used is an untapped (and somewhat unexpected) resource poised to provide positive outcomes for Southwest Virginia.

Coal mining has been the lifeblood of Wise County. The industry created thousands of jobs, transcending generations, surviving economic downturns, providing the power to heat homes, cook food and give light. Coal has had its challenges, politically, environmentally and economically, but coal is and will always be a critical component of this nation's energy and economic strategy. Compared to the CW (the *conventional wisdom*) as Plan development began, that coal was dead, there now exists the opportunity to leverage a renewed emphasis on coal and coal communities to begin constructing the framework for a 21st century economy.

As the nation moves forward, Wise County is well-positioned, blessed with vast coalfields and complemented by respected educational, research and development. Implementation of this Plan assumes a commitment to community, a theme manifested in virtually every discussion among stakeholders, in public and private settings. As established throughout this Plan, implementation will require greater efforts to coordinate and cooperate within Wise County and a heightened focus on partnerships outside of the region. Implementation will also be well-served, as identified in this Plan, by leveraging past relationships and building new partnerships in the region, in Richmond and in

Washington. This is an exciting time for the County, with potential that wasn't thought likely at the start of the planning process.

1.1.2 Planning Process and Participation

The Comprehensive Plan is both a document and a process. The planning process includes building consensus for a unified community vision, developing goals and policies to support the vision, and prioritizing strategies to achieve the vision. ***Part 2, Planning Context*** provides a brief overview of the outcomes of the participation activities that form the core of the Plan's vision statement and policy framework.

The Planning process included research, analysis, identification of needs, public participation, and the subsequent development of goals, policies and strategies. Background data was gathered from the U.S. Census; local, regional and State Plans; local land use inventories; and public input was gathered from surveys, community leader meetings, workshops, and comments offered at public meetings. The background data was reviewed and discussed by the planning team.

Defining Planning

- ***Planning is an organized way of determining community needs and setting goals and objectives to address those needs***
- ***Planning is the art and science of anticipatory problem solving***
- ***Planning is a forward thinking process***
- ***Planning bridges the gap from where we are to where we want to go***
- ***Planning is a process that can help move a community from today's reality to tomorrow's possibilities***
- ***Planning is defending the common interest against the onslaught of parochial interest***

The Wise County Planning Commission held community work sessions and public hearings to explain the Plan and land use policies and to receive additional public input prior to recommending the Plan to the Wise County Board of Supervisors.

Understanding the many purposes of the Comprehensive Plan update helps explain the process and its desired outcomes.

- **Establish a Future Vision for Wise County**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will define a vision and provide guidance for the County to achieve its preferred future. As a County-wide Plan, there is a huge opportunity to consider the "big picture" for the County that is inclusive of all its communities, recognizing the interrelated aspects of community health and development and focusing on cooperation rather than competition.
- **Protect the Environment and Related Economic Development**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will help ensure that benefits present generations enjoy do not diminish the needs and aspirations of future generations. While the ecological benefits of environmental protection are obviously important, it becomes even more critical given the broad support for environmentally-based economic development opportunities in Wise County. Environmental protection is crucial to promoting continued tourism-focused development based on trails, kayaking and outdoor recreation. Access to outdoor recreation activities rooted

in a healthy environment is also important to increasing the quality of life for existing and future residents, as well as supporting youth retention and health of the workforce.

- **Promote Economic Development and Employment Opportunities**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will promote new economic development and employment opportunities through a unified strategy that recognizes the need to diversify the County's economic base, especially due to the impacts of declining employment in the coal industry. The economic development strategy will recognize the intertwined aspects of promoting and recruiting new businesses. It will address needs ranging from workforce development (including education and mental health support), to quality of life (services and amenities for working families, including access to child care and health care). Supporting increased and more diverse employment opportunities is one important aspect of stemming youth out-migration.

- **Guide Property Owner and Developer Decisions**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will provide a level of certainty to those investing in the County's future. It establishes a blueprint so that residents and developers have reasonable assurance of plans for land use and service provision. Those assurances, along with the County's planned commitment to service provision, investment, and maintenance, encourages private decision-makers to also invest in and maintain their properties.

- **Objectively Anticipate Future Needs**
  The Comprehensive Plan update establishes a factual basis for coordinated decisions affecting Wise County's future. The Plan will be a foundation for data-driven decision-making, based on an objective analysis of County needs and aspirations.

- **Guide the Wise Use of Land and Resources**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will establish sound planning principles and recommendations to guide the wise use of the County's land and natural resources in both newly developing areas and established communities.

- **Effectively Coordinate the Location of Public Facilities and Service Provision**
  The Comprehensive Plan update can help ensure that funding and location decisions for public facilities are based on sound planning and financing principles. It can also support and strengthen new and existing partnerships and plans for coordinated services provision, helping to eliminate inefficiencies and promote increased levels of services across the County.

- **Promote Cost-Effective Use of Tax Dollars and Community Investment**
  An up-to-date Comprehensive Plan will allow the County to identify critical future needs, prioritize them, and establish a cost effective means to achieve them. Participants in the process have identified numerous positive changes in the County, many of which are related to community investments, including energy, education, recreation and transportation enhancements. Identifying, prioritizing and coordinating future projects such as these will help the County continue to enhance the local quality of life.

- **Encourage Citizen Participation and Support for Wise County's Future**
  The Comprehensive Plan update will not only include citizens and stakeholders in the creation of the Plan, but will also encourage continuing support and participation through the on-going implementation of the Plan.

- **Meet Commonwealth Law Requirements**
  Finally, Wise County is required to, and will, update its Comprehensive Plan to comply with State laws concerning Comprehensive Plans, land use, transportation matters and related issues. This update process will ensure that the County continues to comply with State law.

1.1.3 How Should the Plan Be Used?

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide. While it discusses and describes land uses, the Plan itself does not regulate actual land use. Other tools, such as development regulations, site plans and performance standards are the primary means by which a locality implements, or *brings to life*, the goals, policies and strategies noted in the comprehensive plan. Thus it is important that the comprehensive plan feature an implementation schedule that will enable the community to achieve its goals.

The Comprehensive Plan also functions as a platform for the articulation of development standards that will help implement the provisions and actions noted in the plan. Once the plan is adopted, considerable effort will be needed to make sure the county's subdivision and building codes are in general conformance with the plan. The Plan also should guide the preparation of detailed facility master plans and capital improvement programs for the County's facilities and services.

The Plan should be a dynamic document, subject to periodic amendment when conditions within the County change significantly. Periodic updates of the Plan will be needed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of County businesses and residents.

1.1.4 Authority to Plan

Authority for local government planning in Virginia is contained in Section 15.2-2223 through 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia. This plan was prepared in accordance with these provisions.

By law, the Wise County Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility of preparing and recommending a comprehensive plan to the Wise County Board of Supervisors for adoption. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the Commission is required to conduct surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of county citizens. The Board has the legal responsibility to adopt a plan that covers all territory within the unincorporated areas of the County.

A comprehensive plan, by law, shall be general in nature. It shall designate the approximate location, character, and extent of each feature shown and may indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use.

A plan, with accompanying maps, charts, and descriptive matter, may include, but need not be limited to:

- The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, business, industrial, agricultural, mineral resources, conservation, recreation, public service, flood plain and drainage, and other areas;
- The designation of a system of transportation facilities such as streets, roads, highways, parkways, railways, bridges, viaducts, waterways, airports, ports, terminals, and other like facilities;
- The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;
- The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;
- The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable surface water and ground water protection measures;
- An official map, a capital improvement program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forest district maps, where applicable;
- The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;
- The designation of areas for the implementation of measures to promote the construction and maintenance of affordable housing, sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated; and
- The designation of Urban Development Areas (UDAs) which are sufficient to accommodate projected residential and commercial growth in a locality for a period of at least ten (10) years but not more than twenty (20) years. Such an area shall incorporate Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), that may encourage and foster: (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.

1.1.5 Planning Horizon

Typical planning horizons for comprehensive plans range from approximately 20 to 50 years with 20 years being the most common. This plan contemplates growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. Projections for population contemplate growth up to 2035. By law, this comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the Wise County Planning Commission at least once every five years. Each review will serve as the basis to evaluate the continued appropriateness of the plans' goals, objectives, and policies.

1.1.6 Working Together as a Region

Increasingly, we have come to the realization that many vital issues are regional in nature – watersheds, air quality and other ecosystems, economic conditions, land use, service delivery, commuter patterns, housing, employment centers and other growth impacts 'spill over' municipal or County boundaries and impact the region as a whole. Our communities are not islands. The problems a community faces do not begin and end at its borders, so why should its solutions? The health of Wise County's incorporated municipalities, the rural areas of the County and the welfare of the region are interconnected.

In many areas across the nation as well as Virginia, the lack of intergovernmental coordination has resulted in the loss of population and economic development. Such losses undermine economic stability and reduce public facility and service efficiencies, thereby making it costlier for local residents. The lack of inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination make an area less attractive for major economic development. Competing with one another rather than working together can be a deal breaker in the new economy.

1.1.7 Relationship to Other Planning Efforts

Wise County recognizes that there many people and entities deeply interested in the well-being of stakeholders – residents, employers, businesses, institutions and agencies. By definition, a Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document that details the long-range recommendations for the general development of the community. The Plan is intended to serve as a guide for decision-makers regarding land use, public facilities and services, governance, budgeting and capital improvement planning. These local, regional, statewide and national planning efforts have the potential to impact Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and strategies. The policies set forth in these planning documents are an integral component of the revised Comprehensive Plan and thereby reinforce the goals and objectives presented herein.

The following non-exclusive list represents documents and planning efforts that have been reviewed during the planning process. These, their superseding replacement documents and similar planning efforts relate to special areas or issues and have the potential to substantially impact Wise County. Though not incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by reference, they should be considered by local officials during decision-making processes.

- Appalachian Prosperity Project Annual Reports (2014, 2015, 2016)
- Appalachian Regional Commission - Entrepreneurial Appalachia: Case Studies in Evolving Economic Sectors (2013)

- Appalachian Sustainable Development Annual Reports (2014, 2015)
- City of Norton Comprehensive Plan (2003)
- Lenowisco Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2014, 2015)
- Master Plan for the Lonesome Pine Regional Business & Technology Park (1998)
- The Crooked Road EIA (2008)
- Town of Big Stone Gap - Economic Restructuring & Physical Improvement Plan (2009)
- Town of Coeburn Comprehensive Plan (2003)
- Town of Pound Comprehensive Plan (1993)
- Town of St. Paul Comprehensive Plan (1998, 2010)
- Town of Wise Comprehensive Plan
- University of Virginia & Southwest Virginia Economic Development Partnership - A Collaborative Model for Advancing Education, Health and Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia (2011)
- Virginia Coalfield Coalition and the Appalachian Prosperity Project - Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia (2012)
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation - Virginia Greenways and Trails Toolbox (2011)
- Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development - Realigning Virginia's Coal Industry Workforce (2014)
- Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development - Southwest Virginia WIA One: Workforce Skills Analysis
- Wise County GIS Strategic Plan (2005)
- Wise County Growth Readiness Report (2007)
- Wise County PSA CIP (2009)
- Wise County School Board Annual Report (2015)
- Wise County Strategic Plan (2004)
- Wise County Water & Sewer Study (1997)

1.2 Coordinated Growth Strategies

The Plan sets forth a coordinated strategy for managing growth and future development. Such a strategy is needed to promote the efficient use of valuable infrastructure that is already in place, to minimize the cost of new infrastructure and facilities, and to prevent the unnecessary loss of open space and agricultural land. The Plan will lay the foundation for building more effective regional partnerships in the County.

1.2.1 Development Opportunities and Responsibilities

Wise County's scenic beauty, when combined with the County's mix of locational assets, makes it a potentially attractive community for business and industry, in addition to extraction and agricultural/forestry activities. Accordingly, the County will need a deliberate strategy to ensure that it is able to efficiently provide facilities and services, to provide economic opportunity, and to capitalize on its opportunities and assets.

Wise County must actively manage and direct growth to increase the community's quality of life.

To promote high quality development that contributes to the long-term quality of life and provides economic opportunity for

residents, developers must believe that their investment will be protected. Development and building standards must ensure that land uses are compatible.

The Plan supports development of regulations that provide developers with flexibility, both in terms of the types and locations of projects, while establishing standards to prevent the worst forms of development. Inflexible plans and ordinances stifle creativity, preclude innovations in design and reduce all development to the same lowest common denominator. Conversely, an overly flexible plan can be unclear and therefore arbitrarily administered. Existing and new residents and businesses should be provided with the certainty they need regarding the planning and development process to continue to make informed investment decisions regarding their property.

The balance between flexibility and certainty is a key aspect of this Plan. Developers, neighbors, County staff and decision-makers can all perform their roles more effectively when they are certain of the Plan policies and development review process. The knowledge that the process will always occur in a predictable manner helps all participants remain focused on creating quality development rather than navigating a confusing and unpredictable process, while flexibility allows them to create the best-possible development without the burden of excessive regulation that stifles the ability to create a high-quality product.

1.2.2 Diversifying Economic Opportunities

Maintaining and improving the quality of life and the environment provides Wise County the opportunity to take advantage of existing infrastructure to diversify the local economy, providing economic growth, in the midst of the trend of an aging and declining population. An economy based on a proven, trained and experienced (and re-trained) workforce, expanding into educational services, technology, light manufacturing and tourism, while preserving an evolving and historic economy based on natural resources and agriculture will encourage the increasingly educated younger generations of Wise County from emigrating thinning the future tax burden on remaining residents as more of the population ages and leaves the labor force.

It is important to note that protection of development investment and agricultural / eco-tourism investment are flip sides of the same coin. While separate standards apply to rural areas and more intense development, the standards work together to ensure that unregulated rural uses will not impact planned development, and that planned development will not encroach on agricultural or eco-tourism areas. By establishing policies to prevent incompatible land use patterns, the Plan protects both types of investment.

1.2.3 Balancing Fiscal Responsibility and Infrastructure Provision

The quality of life in Wise County is contingent on the County's continued ability to provide quality services at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. If development projects go forward without a plan for recouping increased service provider expenses, existing tax payers subsidize those expenses. To achieve equity and fairness in the funding and provision of public facilities and services, the Plan will recommend strategies to:

- Enhance the local property and sales tax bases to balance fiscal obligations for capital facilities, operations and maintenance;
- Ensure that new development funds the costs of capital facilities and services required to serve that new development; and
- Ensure that facilities and services are planned in a way that allows ongoing operations without significant increases in the costs to residents and businesses.

The quality of life in Wise County is contingent on the County's continued ability to provide quality services at a reasonable cost to taxpayers.

Fiscal stability is a cornerstone of a sustainable community. Existing residents should not suffer a decline in the quality of their services or be unduly burdened by costs of new growth. New residents and business should pay their fair share of the costs associated with extending infrastructure and urban services to new growth areas.

There are a wide variety of methods local governments use to ensure the adequate provision of facilities and services required by new development. For instance, the County chooses when and where to extend facilities such as water and sewer, which influences the suitability of an area for development.

The Plan will direct growth into compact and sustainable development patterns within areas already served with infrastructure, or in areas where infrastructure provision is planned and included in a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It will set forth policies to guide infrastructure provision and funding to ensure the County's fiscal sustainability.

As the Comprehensive Plan is implemented, it will strengthen the partnership between the public and private sectors. This partnership can achieve infinitely more when both parties work together rather than alone. An important byproduct of an effective comprehensive plan is that it creates a "win/win" situation for the public and private sectors, for existing and new neighborhoods, for economic development and open space land conservation, and for fiscal integrity and enhanced quality of life.

1.2.4 Plan Implementation

The existence of a sound development Plan is not enough to guide future development within Wise County. In order for this Plan to serve as a practical guide for directing physical growth and change in the county, all decisions relating to land use must be in conformance with the policies established in this Plan as adopted by the Board of Supervisors. In addition, implementation of the Plan will require the consistent use of such land management tools as zoning and subdivision regulations, periodic review and updating of the Plan and coordination with all incorporated communities in the county.

The policies and strategies of the Plan must be implemented in a timely manner in order to ensure that the vision of the Comprehensive Plan becomes a reality. Who should be charged with the implementation of the goals, policies and strategies? It should be a joint effort of the County Board of Supervisors, the County Planning Commission, the county staff, and county citizens. The implementation program featured in the plan identifies and prioritizes strategies to ensure that the plan's vision

becomes a reality. The schedule establishes priorities which should guide private actions as well as public actions. See **Part 3** for the Plan Implementation program, including goals, policies, and strategies.

Part 2: Plan Context

2.2 Historic Overview

2.2.1 Historic Overview

2.2.1.1 *Location*

Wise County is located in the southwestern portion of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Irregular in outline, it is bounded on the southwest by Lee County, on the south by Scott County, on the east by Russell County and on the northeast by Dickenson County. Pine Mountain to the north and Black Mountain to the northwest form a natural boundary between Wise County and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

2.2.1.2 *Historical Perspective*

The first documented settlement of what is now Wise County occurred in 1782 near present-day St. Paul by a man named John English. The delay in settlement stemmed from Indian raids, the lack of fertile soil suitable for agriculture, and poor access caused by the mountainous terrain. At the time Wise County was formed in 1856, the town of Wise, then called Gladeville, was the county's principal locality with a population of 250. In 1860, the county's total population was 4,308 persons, and the county continued to be sparsely populated until the turn of the century.

2.2.1.3 *Agriculture*

Most of the people living in what became Wise County in 1856 engaged in subsistence farming, like almost all of the population of the United States at that time. These farmers found Wise County's steep topography and thin soils to be limiting factors for agriculture, although some of the steep hillsides were plowed and cultivated with horses and mules. Many of the steepest hillsides were cleared and cultivated for only a few decades, however, before soil erosion and declining productivity resulted in their reforestation.

Between 1850 and 1860, tobacco production in southwestern Virginia increased by more than 2000 percent, but Wise County's tobacco production in 1860 was only 2,300 pounds. Tobacco never became as important a crop in the county as it did in neighboring Lee and Scott Counties. While small scale tobacco production eventually benefitted from a government-imposed quota system established in the 1930s, such systems were not established for any other locally grown crops. Corn was a much more important crop and was widely grown in the county, with 115,925 bushels produced in 1860.

The county's population expanded most rapidly after coal mining became a significant source of employment. Many areas of the county were more densely populated than they are today, with a much greater proportion of the food for this industrial workforce locally grown than is true today. It was a typical pattern for subsistence farmers to work as miners during the winter months. According to the

1940 Soil Survey of Wise County, about two-thirds of the farmers of Wise County also worked in the mines. The Survey also noted that the increase in population associated with the growth of mining caused some general farms to be converted to dairying and growing of fruits and vegetables for the local market.

Characterized by cool summers, no distinct dry season and rainfall usually well distributed throughout the growing season, Wise County's temperate climate favored cultivation of these fruits and vegetables. The county became well known as a producer of fine quality apples, and a number of commercial orchards were established. From the 1940s through the 1960s, apples were an important local crop, with about 230,000 bushels harvested in 1949, 117,000 bushels in 1954 and 92,500 bushels in 1964. In 1965, a map prepared by the Wise County Fruit Growers Association showed 45 commercial orchards near the town of Wise. Most of these locally produced apples were sold in Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia, although one local grower exported apples to Europe. By 1974, however, apple production had further declined to 35,400 bushels. The 1992 *Census of Agriculture* revealed five commercial orchards remaining in the county, with about 60 acres of producing trees.

2.2.1.4 *Coal*

The economic and population growth that took place in Wise County at the turn of the twentieth century set the tone for conditions existing in the county today. This growth resulted from the construction of railroads into the county, providing access to the abundant coal and iron deposits. Coal has been the lifeblood of the county since that time.

The first interest in Wise County iron ore and coal emerged in 1879. By 1882 two large tracts of land totaling 67,000 acres had been acquired by coal operators for development, leading to the purchase of nearly all the county's coal lands by developers. At this time, the county's population was approximately 7,775.

Lumbering operations began in Wise County about 1887. Other lumbering operations followed in 1895, after the construction of railroads into the county, but by 1915 practically all of the accessible marketable timber had been cut.

The pending arrival of railroads in the county gave rise to a "boom" in 1890. English and northern investors began pouring money into companies formed to develop the area's iron and coal resources. Prices soared as speculators bought and sold land; lot prices in the "new towns" rose from an average of $30 to as much as $1,000. The "boom" faded when the flow of English capital stopped.

Two railroads were completed into Wise County in 1890, another in 1891 and two others soon after. With the railroads came prosperity, as lumber, coal and iron could be shipped to eastern and southern markets. Development occurred rapidly, with mines opened, coke ovens and mining towns built, and schools and churches erected. The county's population grew from 9,345 persons in 1890 to 19,653 in 1900 and to 34,162 in 1910, a 266 percent increase in 20 years.

The first coal was shipped by railroad from Wise County in 1892. Because of high transportation costs, the market for coal was limited. But southern iron furnaces needed coke, and by 1910 there were 4,400

coke ovens in the county. Two iron furnaces were constructed in the county. One at Big Stone Gap went into production in 1892, but economic conditions caused its closing in 1916, signaling the end of iron ore mining in the county. [1]

Coal production in Wise County reached a peak in 1926, with 6.5 million tons being mined and more than 6,500 men employed in the mines. By that time, the importance of lumbering had declined and the importance of iron ore had ceased, leaving coal as the basis of the county's economy.

Meanwhile, Wise County had become one of the state's wealthiest and most populous counties. In 1925 the county ranked seventh in the state in income tax, twelfth in assessed value of all real estate and eighteenth in assessed value of all taxable property. The county's 1920 population of 46,500 made it the eighth most populous county in Virginia and seventh in density of population per square mile.

During this period, Wise County schools were among the best in the state. In the mid-'20s, the county led the state in average teachers' salaries. Moreover, only the counties of Arlington, Henrico, Norfolk, Pittsylvania and Roanoke surpassed Wise County in total disbursements for county schools and total value of school property. The county also had one of the highest tax rates in the state.[2]

By 1933, however, the county's fortunes were beginning to turn. Coal production had dropped to 2.8 million tons, marking the first of a series of "booms and busts" within the county's economy. In 1937, nearly one third of the county's coal production was used as railroad fuel, but this market was eliminated when the nation's railroads were dieselized following World War II. The home heating market also disappeared when coal was replaced by cheaper and more convenient fuels such as oil and electricity. Cheap imported oil cut into the industrial and electrical utilities market.

A United Mine Workers mechanization agreement was reached with the major coal operators in 1950. Prior to the agreement, in 1949, about 3.5 million tons of coal were mined in Wise County. By 1955 production had increased to six million tons, but this increase in production was accompanied by a decrease in jobs, with mining employment falling from 4,700 persons in 1949 to 3,200 in 1955.

Strip mining, first practiced in Wise County in the mid-1940s, became a major facet of the county's economy in the mid-'60s. Productivity-per-worker increased while mining employment fell. Production of coal by all mining methods had increased to 9.3 million tons in 1969, with only 1,823 production workers employed that year.

The productivity increases of the 1950s and '60s allowed Wise County's coal industry to survive, but the local economy suffered. Unemployment increased, money needed for public services was not available and people left the county to seek employment elsewhere.

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[1] Norman H. Scott, *Iron Mining in Wise County*, 1993.

[2] Ralph Emerson Kennedy, An Economic and Social Survey of Wise County, 1928.

In the 1960s national attention was focused on the plight of the Appalachian region. Efforts were begun to diversify the economy, provide jobs, improve the entire spectrum of public services, improve the quality and quantity of housing and reverse the flow of people leaving the region. A temporary end of the economic and population decline for Wise County and the surrounding region accompanied the energy crisis and the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s. During the mid-'70s, another boom period occurred, with significant concurrent activity in the service industries. Fast food chains and discount merchandise outlets moved into the area to take advantage of the renewed vigor of the coal industry.

The euphoria of the 1970s dwindled during the decade of the 1980s. While various factors have been cited regarding that downturn in the region's coal-based economy, the 1980s saw a "second generation" of mechanization in the coal industry, resulting in higher productivity but decreased employment. Although it was not possible to use longwall miners in all mining applications, the use of these machines allowed production to remain on the increase, while manpower needs were reduced.

The number of mining employees decreased by nearly 1,300 persons from 1980 to 1990, and the county's population declined by more than 5,000 persons. In 1985, unemployment in the county rose to 15 percent, while coal production reached an all-time high. While coal employment continues to decline, coal production appears to have stabilized, at least temporarily. Production is expected to begin a steady decline in the near future, however, as the more accessible reserves are depleted.

2.3 Natural Resources

2.3.1 Topographic Features

Roughly 95 percent of Wise County is included in the Cumberland Mountain section of the Appalachian Plateau physiographic province. This portion of the county lies to the north and northwest of Stone Mountain but also includes Powell Mountain. Over thousands of years, streams have cut so deeply into the underlying rock formations that the plateau-like character has disappeared and the surface consists now of hills and irregular ridges rising to a fairly common height. In such places as Black Mountain and Pine Mountain, mountains originally stood on the surface of the plateau, but over time were also reduced and dissected by streams. These mountains, still standing above the hilltop remnants of the old plateau, have historically been and remain obstacles to transportation. The Appalachian Plateau portion of the county can be described by its degree of dissection: (1) steep, deeply dissected plateau, (2) steep, less deeply dissected plateau, and (3) hilly and rolling ridge land.

The steep, deeply dissected plateau has very steep V-shaped valleys and sharp ridge tops. Slopes in these areas generally range from 50 to 100 percent, with the difference in relief ranging from 500 to 1200 feet. Such terrain is poorly suited for agricultural and urban purposes, but when it is underlain by coal beds, as it is in much of Wise County, its steep, dissected character can be beneficial in allowing coal outcrops to be mined using surface methods. While such dissection allows ease of access to coal, it causes the construction of roads and railroads to be somewhat difficult and expensive. For this reason, transportation networks are confined almost entirely to the narrow valleys along the streams.

The steep, less deeply dissected plateau is characterized by somewhat linear ridges and rounded knobs, with total difference in relief ranging from 200 to 600 feet. Under some circumstances, portions of these areas may be suitable for development.

The hilly and rolling ridge land plateau has been dissected to only a small extent by streams, with the plateau-like surface relatively unchanged. Total relief difference ranges from 100 to 350 feet and slopes range from two to 20 percent. Portions of this area may be suitable for farming and urban type developments.

The Ridge and Valley physiographic province comprises about five percent of Wise County. The area includes Powell Valley and a small area underlain by limestone southwest and northeast of St. Paul. The Ridge and Valley province is a lowland interrupted by long, narrow, even topped mountain ridges tending to run in a northeast-southwest direction. The valley floors are trenched by streams.

Powell Valley is a broad basin-like depression rimmed on three sides by high, steep slopes. The valley floor is rolling with rounded knobs and low linear ridges. Two tributaries to the South Fork of the Powell River have cut shallow channels into the valley. These streams are separated by a limestone ridge with small knobs, not more than 50 to 100 feet high, and sinkholes. Wallens Ridge, extending from the central part of the valley southwestwardly to beyond the Lee-Wise line, has gentle slopes on the southeastern side but steep slopes on the northwestern side.

Table 1: Elevations at Selected Points within Wise County

Location	Feet Above Sea Level	Location	Feet Above Sea Level
High Knob	4,162	Wise	2,450
Grindstone Ridge	3,400-3,500	Norton	2,135
Morris Mountain	3,250	Coeburn	1,950
Flatwoods	2,050-2,730	Appalachia	1,169
Black Mountain	2,860-4,150	Pound	1,546
Pine Mountain	2,366-4,150	St. Paul	1,600
Little Stone Mountain	2,600-3,250	Big Stone Gap	1,488
Sandy Ridge	2,825		

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, et al., Soil Survey, Wise County, Virginia, Series 1940, No. 12, Issued May 1954.

2.3.2 Geological Features

The general surface configuration of Wise County serves to reflect the underlying geological structure. Rock types exposed in the area are of sedimentary origin and consist of sandstone, shale, coal, dolomite and limestone. These rocks range in geologic age from 600 million to Pennsylvania 280 million years old.

The Appalachian Plateau portion of the county is characterized by generally flat- lying, relatively undisturbed, alternating beds of sandstone, shale and coal. The Ridge and Valley portion of the county is underlain by limestone, presenting potential development problems. Sinkholes often found in limestone areas indicate the presence of underground drainage and caverns.

2.3.3 Climate and Weather

Wise County has mild winters and warm summers, with average monthly temperatures ranging from 32° to 40° Fahrenheit during the winter and from 67° to 71° during the summer. Record temperatures have been -23° at Wise and 105° at St. Paul. Such extremes are quite rare, although freezing spells do occur during the winter months, while the summers may have periods when daily high temperatures are in the 90's. The frost-free season normally lasts from early May to late September. Temperatures may be five to ten degrees lower in the mountains than in the valley portions of the county.

With total annual precipitation between 45 and 50 inches, Wise County is part of one of the wettest regions of the United States. Due to the mountainous terrain, a wide variation in rainfall can occur within short distances. Precipitation is reasonably well distributed throughout the year but is noticeably less in late summer and early fall. The driest month is usually October, with July generally the wettest. During the summer, hard showers or thunderstorms appear from the west and northwest. Slow, steady rains and light snows occur in the winter, with snow and sleet sometimes falling at higher elevations while rain is falling in the valleys. Snowfall is generally not a significant part of total precipitation, with annual depths in the vicinity of Wise at about 30 inches. Although severe storms have produced snowfall totaling from 41 to 68 inches in depth, there is rarely more than six inches of snow on the ground at one time.

Although roughly 51 percent of the annual rainfall occurs during the growing season, its poor distribution during critical periods may cause drought damage. About 10 drought days, or 50 percent of the total drought days, occur in June, July and August. Drought in April and May is of negligible consequence.

Flooding occurs in most streams on an average of almost once a year. For streams with drainage areas greater than 20 or 30 square miles, about 75 percent of the floods occur from December through March, 15 percent in April and May and 10 percent in June, July and August. Very few floods are experienced in the dry fall months of September, October, and November. For very small drainage basins, locally intense thunderstorms cause floods throughout the year and the frequency of spring and summer floods approaches that of the winter season.

2.3.4 Hydrologic Features

A potable water supply is necessary to sustain human life. A safe, dependable water supply is required for many commercial, industrial, agricultural and recreational purposes as well. Water availability and quality is thus an important consideration in assessing the county's development potential.

Water resources exist as ground water and as surface water. Ground water occurs beneath the earth's surface, stored in open spaces in rocks, while surface water occupies the earth's surface in such forms as streams, rivers and lakes.

Both ground and surface water depend upon precipitation for replenishment. Surface water is replenished directly through runoff of rain and snow melt and indirectly by surface flows of ground water such as springs, and ground water either by direct infiltration of rain and snow melt or by seepage from surface water.

In addition to the intensity, frequency, duration and distribution of precipitation, a complex set of factors influence the water resources of the county. Such factors as topography, geologic structure, temperature, soils, vegetation and land use activities contribute to both the quantity and quality of water available.

2.3.4.1 *Surface Water*

The streams and rivers of Wise County are headwaters of two major rivers, the Tennessee and the Big Sandy. The Powell and Guest Rivers and their tributaries lie within the Tennessee River Basin, while the Pound River and its tributaries are a part of the Big Sandy River Basin.

As headwater streams, these rivers and streams have relatively small watersheds and are particularly subject to the wide variation in rainfall that can occur within the county due to the mountainous terrain. The terrain also contributes to rapid runoff during periods of heavy rain. These factors cause stream flows to change dramatically, often in a matter of hours, creating flash flooding situations.

The small size of the watersheds and the fluctuation of stream flows mean that these streams can provide only moderate supplies of surface water unless impoundments are used, allowing water stored during periods of high stream flow to be used during periods of low stream flow. Several impoundments have been constructed in the county, serving as raw water sources for public water systems.

The Clinch River, which skirts the eastern end of the county, is one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the mid-Atlantic or northeastern United States. As noted in Chapter VIII, the Wise County Public Service Authority uses the Clinch River to supply its water treatment plant at Carfax.

A 1993 Department of Conservation and Recreation report assessed water quality and biologic monitoring of point and nonpoint pollution in the county's various watersheds.

Water quality data reveal that the Pound River subbasin, located in the northeastern sector of the county, is found to have bacteria problems, most likely the result of failing septic systems and raw

sewage discharges from communities in the area. Also noted are phosphorous level violations, likely due to a municipal point source.

The Clinch River subbasin, including the Guest River, generally includes the central and southeastern portions of the county. Data for this subbasin reveal high levels of bacteria and phosphorous, due in part to municipal point sources.

The Powell River subbasin, which incorporates the western portion of the county, draws moderately impaired biologic readings, likely the result of runoff from active or abandoned mining activities.

2.3.4.2 *Ground Water*

Wise County is divided into three hydrogeological sections. The northern section, which includes nearly three-fourths of the county, is located north of the Powell and Guest Rivers. The southeastern section lies south of the Guest River and extends to the west on the northern and southern sides of Powell Valley, while the southwestern section is Powell Valley.

The northern section of the county is underlain by nearly horizontal shales, sandstones and coal seams. Wells drilled in this area average 150 feet in depth and yield an average of 10 gallons per minute. More than 70 gallons per minute have been reported from deeper wells, most located in stream valleys. Because the shallow ground water in this area has an undesirable iron and sulfur content, most wells are cased at 90-100 feet. Water from depths between 100 and 200 feet is often moderately hard and sometimes slightly acidic. Although additional stores of ground water are present at greater depths, seepage through coal seams causes much of this deeper ground water to be very acidic with iron deposits.

The southeastern section is underlain by moderately and steeply dipping shales and sandstones. Wells drilled into these rocks average 100 feet in depth and yield an average of 20 gallons per minute. A few deeper wells near the Guest and Powell Rivers are reported to yield more than 100 gallons per minute. Ground water is developed at depths between 70 and 150 feet in most wells. Water quality in this area is similar to that of ground water in the northern section of the county.

The Powell Valley floor portion in the county's southwestern section has static water levels generally within 10 feet of the surface. In the southern foothills, natural flows of 70 gallons per minute have been reported. Most wells in this section are shallow, but some wells deeper than 200 feet yield more than 200 gallons per minute. Ground water from the shale strata of this area often has iron deposits, and water from the limestone formations is moderately hard to hard. On the upper slopes of Powell and Little Stone Mountains adjacent to Powell Valley, wells average 80 feet for small users. Nearly all these wells are cased at least 50 feet because of iron-laden and turbid ground water at shallow depths.

It is difficult to estimate the overall ground water potential in the county due to a lack of sufficient well data. Additionally, extensive mining activity in the northern section of the county has adversely affected the water table. It is unlikely that ground water will furnish any appreciable amount of future water demand.

2.3.5 Mineral Resources

Mineral resources have dominated the history and development of Wise County. While coal has been the most abundant and important of these resources, others such as iron ore, natural gas, shale, limestone, sandstone, manganese and clay are also present in varying quantities and qualities. The geographical extent of the more important mineral resources is shown on Plate 3. The importance of these resources to the nation's economy has changed in the past and will continue to change in the future, with the economy of Wise County in turn greatly affected.

2.3.5.1 *Coal*

Although the presence of coal in Southwest Virginia was known prior to the Revolutionary War, it was not mined for shipment from Wise County until 1892. Since that time, bituminous (soft) coal has grown to be the county's single most important natural resource.

Rapidly changing economic and technological conditions make it difficult to offer a definitive statement on the amount of minable coal, as opposed to total remaining reserves, existing in Wise County. At the start of 1993, the county's total coal reserves stood at 1,958 million tons. During the five prior years, an average of 11.9 million tons per year were mined. At this rate of production and assuming 100 percent recovery (an impossibility), these reserves would last 165 years.

In actuality, restrictions imposed on mining -- e.g., government regulatory policies, liability potential, limitations of mining technology, safety concerns and economic considerations -- significantly reduce reserve figures. Researchers now predict that minable reserves state-wide will be used up by 2030, if coal mining continues at current levels.

A further discussion of the history of coal mining in the County is included in the Historic Overview section of the Conditions Analysis.

2.3.5.2 *Natural Gas*

Natural gas exploration in Wise County began in the 1890s. By 1989, there were 188 wells producing 5,972,375 mcf (million cubic feet) of the fuel, with an estimated 70,397,008 mcf of remaining reserves.

ANR Production Company's Roaring Fork project is the dominant natural gas production operation in the county. Begun in 1984, ANR operated 165 wells at the end of 1988. Additional wells are planned for future years, although recent downward trends in natural gas prices have slightly reduced the rate of drilling.

Natural gas produced in Wise County in 1988 included 4,969,846 Mcf from ANR's 165 wells and 511,257 Mcf from 18 wells drilled by EREX (Philadelphia Oil). More than 95 percent (4,755,986 Mcf) of ANR's gas production was sold to Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation via a line across Pine Mountain to High Hat, Kentucky. The balance was used in field operations. The majority of EREX's production was delivered via a transmission line originating in Dickenson County and heading south to East Tennessee Natural Gas' lines in the Tri-Cities area.

While there has been some interest in developing a local retail natural gas network in Wise County, most feasibility studies completed to date do not justify the need for such services, since there is not a sufficient local market for gas. Natural gas distribution is as much a utility as a water or sewerage system, and such systems must be economically viable from a cost of installation and maintenance standpoint. Interest, however, remains high for natural gas to be distributed locally, and it should be stressed that such a development would be highly desirable. Wise County should encourage the development of such systems, tempered with the knowledge that they will not be economically feasible in every section of the county.

2.3.5.3 *Iron Ore*

From the 1890s to 1920, low-grade iron ore from the Clinton formation was mined southeast of Short Hollow, on Wallen Ridge at Irondale and at Oreton. Local mining and smelting of iron ore became uneconomical with the development of extensive iron deposits in the Lake Superior region and the rise of large iron and steel centers in the East and Midwest. Iron ore is not considered to be of economic importance to the county in the foreseeable future due to its low grade, the low available tonnage and the distance to markets.

2.3.5.4 *Other Mineral Resources*

Limestone deposits are quarried and crushed for use as road stone, agricultural stone, concrete aggregate and in asphalt. Locally available supply easily meets local demand, and limestone has not been marketed in the past beyond the limits of Wise County due to its general availability.

An abundant supply of sandstone is available in the county. In past years, it has been quarried, crushed to sand and then marketed as mortar and concrete sand, traction sand and for coal production. Although high-grade glass sand is present, its being recovered profitably under present conditions is questionable. Further study of this mineral would also be helpful in evaluating its marketability.

Samples of clay materials occurring in the county have been tested and found potentially useful in the manufacture of brick, tile, quarry tile and lightweight aggregate. Some of the coal refuse accumulations also contain slate potentially suitable for making brick and lightweight aggregate.

While manganese nodules occur southwest of Little Stone Gap, no evidence exists that the deposits are extensive enough to warrant commercial mining.

2.3.5.5 *Forest Resources*

Forests are unique among the major raw materials in that they are renewable. They are grown, harvested and grown again. With good management practices, forests not only produce wood but also protect watersheds, provide habitat for a diversity of game and non-game wildlife species, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and, in general, enhance the environment.

Lumbering operations began in the county in the late 1800s with the harvesting of yellow poplar. It is estimated that by 1923, less than one percent of the 227.3 thousand forest acres remained virgin. The practice of taking the best trees and leaving low-quality stands may have reduced the genetic base for

today's forest. Burning logged areas, often more than once, resulted in erosion and site degradation. Some areas on the steeper slopes escaped, only to be logged later, when the need for wood increased during World War I. As farms were abandoned during the Great Depression, forests reclaimed the landscape naturally.

Fire, environmental conditions, people and pests have produced a relatively even-aged forest. The chestnut blight has eliminated the American chestnut from the area forest. As oak stands mature, stresses alter tree physiology, rendering them susceptible to root disease and insects. Susceptible trees decline and eventually die, a natural process compounded by past land use, loss of species such as the American chestnut, replacement with species less adapted to the site, and other forces and conditions. This problem, referred to as "oak decline," can be managed by enhancing stand vigor, increasing age and species diversity, or reducing the rotation age, according to USDA Forest Service field researchers.

In early 1985, Louisiana-Pacific Corporation opened a wafer board plant near the Scott County town of Dungannon, after neighboring Wise County was identified as one of the major suppliers of the soft textured hardwoods required as raw material for this plant. Of the total annual plant consumption of 65,000 cords, or 150,000 tons, 25 percent of this timber (37,500 tons) is expected to be harvested in Wise County. Presently an estimated 90 percent of this harvest is yellow poplar, a number expected to be reduced to 70 percent as other soft-textured hardwoods become more easily recognizable.

The abundance of hardwood species native to Wise County and the surrounding area was also a decisive factor in the recent location of the B. A. Mullican Lumber and Manufacturing Company's dry kiln operation and strip hardwood flooring plant in the county's Blackwood Industrial Park located between Appalachia and Norton.

It is evident that Wise County's forest resources have the potential to contribute significantly to the county's economy. The county's soils and climate are conducive to rapid tree growth. With proper management, the variety of native woods promises the production of quality raw materials for future markets.

2.4 Facilities and Services

Public services and accompanying facilities contribute toward a community's quality of life. Many such services are mandatory, as government’s role in protecting its constituents’ health, safety and welfare has resulted in the provision of police, sanitation and educational services. Other services such as recreation, libraries and public works are also now demanded by most residents.

2.4.1 Public Water Supply and Watersheds

One of the most valuable resources available to any area is its water supply. This is no less true in Wise County than anywhere else. With access to major rivers limited at best and groundwater difficult to access, lakes and reservoirs, whether natural or man-made impoundments, are vital to the continuing health and welfare of the county and its citizens.

2.4.1.1 *Watershed Preservation*

Water resources are among the most precious resources a locality has to protect and use. It is clear that Wise County residents responding to a 1995 community survey recognized the importance of this resource; 95 percent of those responding to the survey thought it very important for local government to protect water supplies, four percent deemed it somewhat important and one percent thought it not important.

Threats to watershed areas come primarily from land uses. Among those land uses that can negatively affect water supply and quality are improper harvesting of forest land, high-density residential development, mining, manufacturing, garages and underground storage tanks, fertilized vegetation and other uses with impacts on vegetation or hydrology.

There are six town reservoirs in the county, containing over seven billion gallons of capacity. At the present time, at least one of the county's reservoir watersheds is vulnerable to land uses with potential negative impacts on the water supply. Concern has been raised regarding the immediate protection of the Wise reservoir watershed from adverse effects of near-term development. Further, problems for other watersheds could arise if current land ownership patterns change (i.e., if the towns or the USDA Forest Service are forced to sell off properties), or private owners change their current land uses (e.g., a current open space lot owner decides to commence intensive farming within the watershed).

2.4.1.2 *Watershed Data*

Each of the county's towns and the City of Norton owns and operates a waterworks system. The Wise County Public Service Authority (PSA) also provides public water.

Most water providers in the county depend on a reservoir as a main (or only) source, although several do have backup sources. These reservoirs combine for a capacity of more than six billion gallons and serve more than 30,000 people, not all of them within county boundaries. Two exceptions wherein providers do not rely primarily upon reservoirs are the Town of St. Paul and the Wise County PSA, which both utilize the Clinch River as their source of water.

Table 2: Wise County Watershed Data

Locality	Water Source	Capacity (million gals)	Population Served	Watershed (acres)
Appalachia	Ben's Branch Reservoir	100.0	5,000	340
Big Stone Gap	Big Cherry Lake	580.0	9,000	2,800
Coeburn	Tom's Creek Reservoir	12.7	4,500	2,000
Norton City	Norton Reservoirs	120.0	6,000	560
Pound	North Fork Reservoir	5,037.2	2,000	10,300
St. Paul	Clinch River	--	2,000	--
Wise	Wise Reservoir	200.5	5,500	920
Wise Co PSA	Clinch River	--	2,500	--

Source: Municipal records

Town of Appalachia. A one million gallon per day (MGD) water treatment plant completed in 1983 produces water for Appalachia and users in Andover, Arno, Derby, Osaka, Roda, Stonega, Exeter and Lee County's Keokee. Additional tank and line upgrades have been made in the past few years.

The Town's only regularly used water source is the reservoir at Ben's Branch, approximately two miles east of town and one mile south of U.S. 23 Business. Ben's Branch is a 100-million-gallon man-made impoundment, a relatively small but deep mountain reservoir. Its relatively small watershed of approximately 340 acres yields an estimated average flow of 0.8 million gallons per day. Water from the reservoir flows by gravity to the filter plant located below the dam.

The reservoir is located within the boundaries of the Jefferson National Forest, making watershed preservation somewhat easier to accomplish. Further aiding the situation is the fact that the entire watershed is owned by the Town.

It should be noted that this reservoir, like most of the others, is susceptible to drought, and that lines and pumps have been set up to supply the Town with water from the Powell River if the need arises. This arrangement has been utilized only once, at the time of its creation in 1980.

Two six-inch water mains leave the plant. One is a low pressure supply line, meeting a pressure reducing tank further down the mountain before continuing to Appalachia. Excess water from this line goes to a 100,000 gallon covered steel standpipe located on a hill above the town. The other six-inch main is a high pressure line, extending from the filter plant through Andover and on to Arno, Derby, Osaka, Roda and Stonega. There are 13 storage tanks on the system with total storage of 1.856 million gallons.

Approximately 1,600 connections are served by the Appalachia system. A significant number of users, approximately 40 percent of all customers, are outside the corporate limits.

Town of Big Stone Gap. The Town's sole water source is the Big Cherry Lake, formed by an impoundment on the south fork of the Powell River. This lake is located less than a mile from the Wise

County/Scott County border, approximately six miles east of the Town. Big Cherry Dam, a masonry structure, was constructed in 1935. The 100-acre reservoir impounds approximately 580 million gallons of water and has a watershed of 2,800 acres. The watershed land lies within the Jefferson National Forest in Wise and Scott Counties. The watershed itself is primarily (90 percent) owned by the Town, with the remainder largely Forest Service property. There are a few privately-owned tracts at the northeastern end of the area, mostly quite remote from major corridors. As the largest of the county reservoirs, the lake is less susceptible to drought, but has shown itself vulnerable during severe drought conditions. The Town has no backup source of water.

From the reservoir, water flows through a natural channel to an intake just above the filter plant, then to a 4 MGD filter plant for treatment. The finished water flows into 11 storage tanks with a combined volume of 3.337 million gallons.

The Big Stone Gap system presently has approximately 3,060 connections, with average daily usage at 1.016 million gallons. Like Appalachia, a significant number of customers are outside the town's corporate limits, with the bulk of those being located in the Powell Valley area northeast of the town.

Town of Coeburn. Coeburn is served by a waterworks system that has also been recently upgraded. The supply is taken from a 12.7 million gallon, man-made impoundment on Tom's Creek, located just off State Route 652, approximately three miles east of State Route 72, 3.5 miles northeast of Coeburn. The watershed has a drainage area of approximately 2,000 acres, with a safe yield estimated at 0.3 million gallons per day.

The watershed is owned largely by the Town, although it is located fairly near some residential development along Route 652, including the community of Franco. The Town's administration, however, has not expressed great concern over future development in this region, and does not anticipate a need for any special protection. The Town is also fortunate in that its secondary water source is near the Tom's Creek reservoir. Water from an underground cavern, with a capacity of several million gallons, can be pumped directly into the impoundment on an as- needed basis.

The recently expanded filtration plant has a capacity of 1.15 MGD and the distribution system consists of eight, six and four inch mains. The system serves Toms Creek, Coeburn and the Flatwoods Job Corps Center. Four storage tanks provide 1.65 million gallons of water storage.

The system has approximately 1,300 connections, with average daily water usage of 500,000 gallons.

City of Norton. The Norton water plant was constructed in 1949 and much of the water distribution system is approximately 60 years old. The supply is obtained by gravity from a pair of impoundments on Benge's Branch, the Upper and Lower Norton Reservoirs. Like others in the county, these reservoirs are man-made, holding approximately 120 million gallons of water. They are located inside the City's corporate limits, about one mile south of the City Hall. The reservoirs' 560- acre watershed is located entirely within either the corporate limits, the Jefferson National Forest or both, an arrangement that gives a certain amount of protection to the water supply.

As a secondary source, the City may purchase water from the Wise County PSA or utilize an emergency

source, which it has been forced to do on several occasions. Pipe casings and pumps have been set up in abandoned mine shafts northwest of the City to add groundwater to the system when called upon, but with nearly three miles of primarily uphill terrain from the shafts to the reservoirs, such an operation is extremely expensive.

Before remodeling in 1973, the treatment plant had a capacity of 720,000 gallons per day (GPD), but now has a filtration capacity of 2.0 MGD. Total plant capacity, however, is limited to 1.44 MGD due to limited sedimentation capacity. Recent improvements have included pipeline extensions and an additional 288,650 gallons of finished raw water storage. Present finished water storage capacity is 2.338 million gallons.

The Norton system has about 2,200 connections, and average daily production is approximately 1.07 million gallons.

Town of Pound. The Pound waterworks system was constructed in the 1930s and initially operated by the Pound Sanitary District. After the town was incorporated, it assumed operation of the water system. Improvements were made to the distribution system in 1954, and additional improvements consisting of a 0.5 MGD treatment plant, a 150,000-gallon storage reservoir and new water mains were made in 1967-68.

Pound's principal water supply is the Army Corps of Engineers-operated North Fork Reservoir on the North Fork of the Pound River. This man-made impoundment, with its enormous five-billion-gallon capacity, is located along the North Fork, beginning above the confluence of the North Fork and Laurel Fork, less than a mile east of Pound and U.S. 23. It continues nearly two-thirds of the way to Flat Gap, a stretch of more than two miles. About half of the 10,300-acre watershed is located within National Forest land, and the Town has expressed little concern with possible development in that area. Serving the Town and surrounding areas of the county, the North Fork Reservoir has not been adversely affected by drought.

The combined finished water storage for the town is 300,000 gallons and the distribution mains consist of four- and six-inch cast iron pipe. This system serves approximately 575 connections, 115 of which are located outside the corporate limits. The present water production is estimated to be 0.3 MGD. At one time, Pound's system suffered from low accountability (water lost through leaks), but recent improvements have been made to lines, plant and storage facilities.

Town of St. Paul. St. Paul's raw water is drawn from the Clinch River by an intake located inside the corporate limits. A drainage area of approximately 615 square miles feeds the river above the intake. Questions of capacity and watershed preservation on a local scale are largely meaningless.

The 500,000 GPD filtration plant was constructed in 1965. The distribution system, consisting of eight-, six- and four-inch mains, was constructed in 1930. The system has four water tanks providing 530,000 gallons of storage.

Presently 450 connections are being served by this system. Daily water production averages 153,000 gallons.

Town of Wise. Initial construction of the Wise waterworks system was completed in 1966, and the plant was expanded in 1976. The supply is obtained from a 200-million-gallon impoundment on Bear Creek approximately three miles east of town. The average yield of this watershed has been estimated at 1.22 MGD.

The Town is in the most difficult position with respect to watershed protection. The Wise Reservoir is located in the heart of one of the major remaining areas of developable land in the county. While the Town does own the majority of the 920- acre watershed, there are some parcels off Pole Bridge Road still owned by private interests and which could be developed. In addition, there presently exists an industrially-zoned area north of the reservoir (near the Lonesome Pine Airport) which could be utilized in the future. The residential possibilities of the former issue are the driving concern, however, since those areas do lie within the watershed itself. This area is the most likely to need some type of protection to maintain the integrity of the drainage area. The Town has no major secondary source of water.

The filtration plant, which can treat 1.5 MGD, is located at the south end of the Bear Creek Dam. Storage is provided by seven tanks with a total capacity of 2.625 million gallons. The system has approximately 2,281 connections, with present average daily production at one million gallons.

Wise County Public Service Authority. The WCPSA's fairly new 2 MGD water treatment plant at Carfax serves the central portion of Wise County. The plant is tied into the existing system through a series of connections and interconnections with existing systems managed by other Wise County towns, as well as the City of Norton. The WCPSA service area is divided into six different sections that will be treated as a combined system for this report. The sections are (1) the Norton section, which serves the Dorchester, Needmore and Stephens area, (2) the Esserville section, which serves those customers between the City of Norton and the Town of Wise, (3) the Hurricane section, which serves the area northeast of the Town of Wise through the Hurricane section and the area around the Town's reservoir, (4) the Stephens section, west of the Town of Wise, (5) the Banner section, serving that area east of Coeburn, and (6) the Sandy Ridge section, serving that area north of Coeburn. The latter two sections are the newest and are served via a flow-through agreement with the Town of Coeburn. The other four sections are interconnected with the distribution system of either the Town of Wise, the City of Norton, or both.

There are a total of 1,500 connections on the Authority's system, which has a total finished water storage capacity of 1.1 million gallons.

The distribution system is relatively new, the Norton and Wise sections having been completed in 1973-74 and the Esserville and Hurricane sections in 1980-81. The Stephens, Banner and Sandy Ridge sections are later additions. With the numerous interconnections with the three central Wise County localities, the Carfax plant will provide a supplementary/emergency water supply as needed.

Should future demand warrant construction of an additional treatment plant at the Carfax site, oversized distribution lines already in place will be capable of carrying more than 4 MGD once pumps are replaced. The safe yield of the Clinch River at Carfax is greater than 28.3 MGD, so source capacity will not restrict the growth of the Authority's system.

The WCPSA currently plans two additional expansions to its overall system. The Tacoma to Parson Gap transmission line will run along U.S. 58A to Ramsey, then north through Parson Gap to a connection with the existing distribution system in Esserville. It will then continue along U.S. 23 to Glamorgan, where it will serve the Stephens System.

The last phase of the project will extend water service up Guest River toward Dixiana, then across the dividing ridge into the upper Powell River area.

Both of these phases are dependent on high levels of grant/loan funding from the Farmers Home Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission and/or other sources.

2.4.1.3 *Existing Public Sewerage Systems*

The areas of Wise County presently served by public sewerage systems are shown on Plate 9, with those areas generally limited to the county's incorporated areas. A brief description of each sewerage system follows:

Towns of Appalachia and Big Stone Gap. A regional treatment plant serving both localities went on line in 1994. This plant, located in Big Stone Gap, has a 1.6 MGD capacity. Presently, the Town of Appalachia has an average daily flow of 300,000 gallons, while Big Stone Gap generates 500,000 GPD.

Big Stone Gap's previous facility was designed to provide secondary treatment for 800,000 GPD, while Appalachia's present flow had fully utilized the design capacity of its 1967-vintage contact stabilization treatment plant.

C-N-W Regional Plant. In a cooperative venture, the Towns of Coeburn and Wise and the City of Norton utilize the Coeburn-Norton-Wise (C-N-W) regional wastewater treatment plant located near Coeburn. This 4 MGD facility, built in 1991, provides full secondary treatment to all three communities, with a present average usage of 3 MGD.

The C-N-W plant replaces systems in all three localities. Coeburn's previous system, constructed in 1964, consisted of a stabilization pond with a design capacity of 4,000 people or 400,000 GPD. Average daily flow registered around 460,000 gallons. The Town of Wise used a sewage treatment plant and collection system constructed in 1964 and upgraded in 1984. Its aerated lagoon system provided both primary and secondary treatment. Norton previously used two treatment plants providing primary treatment only.

Town of Pound. A 175,000 GPD extended aeration treatment plant became operational in late 1976. Until that time, Pound had no central sewerage system. Despite the fact that the system is relatively new, poor maintenance over the years has resulted in several problems that must be addressed.

Town of St. Paul. St. Paul is served by a central sewerage system constructed in 1973. This facility has a design capacity of 400,000 GPD and provides treatment with an aerated lagoon system. Average daily flow through the plant is approximately 200,000 gallons.

Other Sewage Disposal Methods. Smaller sewerage systems serve specialized areas of the county. A state correctional camp, the Flatwoods Job Corps, and the bathhouse and campsites of the High Knob

Recreation Area are each served by small treatment facilities. Sheffield Acres, a subdivision near the Flatwoods Job Corps, is served by a 40,000 GPD extended aeration plant. A small package plant also serves the Wise County Department of Social Services, Wise County Christian School and several private residences west of the Town of Wise.

No other existing central sewerage systems serve Wise County. Disposal of wastewater by residents not served by existing central sewer systems is accomplished through septic tank drain field systems, pit privies, home package treatment plants, sand filters and, in remote cases, direct discharges to area streams. As was pointed out under the heading "Land Use Suitability," the soils of Wise County are not well suited to wastewater disposal by means of septic tank drain fields. Pit privies and direct discharges are well-recognized health hazards.

2.4.2 Solid Waste

Although it might be properly termed a "service," solid waste collection and disposal is now a major responsibility for municipal governments. Due to the importance of this service and its fundamental role in each resident's daily life, solid waste can also be termed a "public utility."

"Garbage collection" has been a function of municipal governments for many years, purely out of the necessity to deal with the large quantities of waste a concentrated population generates. Until the early 1970s, this waste was collected in open trucks and deposited in open dumps, where it was burned to reduce the volume. Such operations are inconceivable by today's standards.

Until the early '70s, county residents outside incorporated areas were left to dispose of household waste as best they could. Unauthorized roadside dumps were common, and area streams were subjected to tons of waste each year. In 1972, a sanitary county landfill was established near Appalachia, and a "green box" collection program established for county residents. The "town dumps" were closed and reclaimed, and door-to-door collection systems were implemented in the towns and the City of Norton.

The county began operation of a new landfill at Blackwood in 1988. This site is expected to meet the county's solid waste needs for 30-40 years, although it will require a significant capital outlay each three to four years for expansion of the line, leachate collection system and other requirements.

The county has investigated ways to improve the efficiency of its collection system, such as door-to-door collection and increasing the number of convenience centers in unincorporated areas. Although the financial feasibility of door-to-door collection is questionable, plans are being considered to build more convenience centers. These issues are addressed in the county's Solid Waste Management Plan, adopted in 1991.

Long-term solid waste disposal plans for Wise County might include resource recovery or even incineration, although the capital outlay and operational costs for an incinerator large enough to handle Wise County's waste volume would be immense and not cost-effective considering the absence of opportunities for electrical cogeneration or steam sales to partially offset these costs. In addition, even the most efficient incinerators do not provide total waste load reduction, with the residual ash still winding up in an approved landfill.

Recycling, being more environmentally acceptable and less costly, is also being used as a partial alternative to landfilling waste. The county documented a 25 percent reduction of solid waste at its landfill in 1991, thereby meeting requirements set out in the Code of Virginia for all localities to achieve by 1995.

All of the aforementioned options are part of an integrated solid waste management system. No single approach will work. While Wise County already has landfilling, recycling and source reduction programs in place, the county must be constantly aware of the limitations of landfills and changes in the "state of the art" on solid waste disposal and collection. The county must also be cognizant of the growing costs for solid waste disposal. It will be incumbent on local officials to find the most cost-effective and most environmentally acceptable means of handling waste in future years. This is one of the greatest service challenges facing Wise County's local government.

Finally, due in large part to the development constraints (poor soil conditions for landfills and unstable geology due to mining), it is difficult to find a suitable site for a landfill, and therefore the county should continue to try to minimize the landfilling of solid waste. In any event, Wise County will do well to deal with, and control the management of, the volume of solid waste generated within its boundaries. Proposals to import solid waste from other areas should therefore be discouraged.

2.4.3 Community Facilities and Services

2.4.3.1 *Educational Facilities*

Wise County has a wide range of educational facilities providing services to its residents. These include elementary, middle and high schools, a vocational and technical school and two colleges. The value of a comprehensive high-performing educational system (public, private, post-secondary, vocational) cannot be overstated as a critical economic development indicator of a successful community.

Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The Wise County School Board operates the school system serving Wise County, with a separate school system consisting of an elementary school and high school operated by the City of Norton. Recent Wise County School District highlights include:

- The District was one of only two (!) Divisions in the state (2 out of 132 Divisions) that had every school meet all requirements for state accreditation.
- The District ranked 6th in the state overall, out-performing over 95% of the schools in Virginia (95.5% to be more exact).
- Wise County schools are in the top 5% of all Virginia schools.

The *2015-16 Virginia Department of Education Report Card* shows continued successes. For each of the past three school years, scores have continually improved for all factors tested - reading, math, history, writing and science - and all state and federal targets have been met. The School District should be hailed as a model based on solid academics supported by visionary administration. Though consolidation was a painful process, the School District has surpassed goals and students are thriving.

Vocational and Technical Schools. The Wise County Career and Technical Center, established in 1942, provides instruction to those county students who desire training in a craft or trade in addition to their regular high school education. Students attend the Vocational School for one-half day and their respective high schools the remaining half-day. Adult training courses are also offered at the facility.

The Wise Skills Center is a jobs training center that provides work force development. Operated by the Wise County School Board, the Center offers a variety of classes aimed at providing an employable work force for the area.

The Flatwoods Job Corps Center, located near Coeburn, provides education and vocational training. The center is operated jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Forest Service. The center often performs construction services for non-profit organizations within the community.

Colleges. Two colleges located in Wise County serve residents not only of the county but the region, state and scattered portions of the country as well.

Located in Wise, The University of Virginia's College at Wise is a public, four-year residential liberal arts college located in the lush mountains of Southwest Virginia. As a COPLAC member institution, UVa-Wise is nationally-accredited and has been nationally-ranked among top public liberal art colleges in the U.S. It has enrollment of 2,067 students and an outstanding student-faculty ratio of 13:1. Average class size is 17. UVa-Wise offers 30 majors, 32 minors, and 24 teaching licensures, an numerous degree programs, including Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN).

Mountain Empire Community College, near Big Stone Gap, is a two-year state- supported college offering both university-parallel and occupational-technical degree programs. MECC offers Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science degrees, as well as certificates in a number of programs. MECC also offers Continuing Education courses and services designed to promote economic development, serving persons of all ages throughout the region. College facilities and personnel are available to provide specialized services to meet the cultural and educational needs of the area through credit and non-credit courses, cultural events, workshops, conferences and special community projects. The college's Master Plan through the year 2040 includes the additional construction of a student center, the John Fox amphitheater, a rustic inn and conference center, and additional academic and administrative buildings.

Private Schools. There is one private Christian school in the county, with the main campus of the Wise County Christian School located just east of Wise.

2.4.4 Health Facilities

Wise County, including the City of Norton, is the location of a number of health facilities, including hospitals, clinics, mental health facilities, nursing and rest homes, a health department and a number of physician and dentist offices. The hospital and healthcare system in Wise County, as in many other communities across the country, currently is in the midst of consolidation discussions. Facilities include Mountain View Regional Medical Center, Norton Community Hospital, Wellmont Lonesome Pine

Hospital and the Southwest Virginia Regional Cancer Center. The County has a very active community-based Health Department that sponsors numerous events and targets a wide variety of at-risk groups.

2.4.5 Public Safety and Administration

Each of the county's towns and the City of Norton has a town or city hall for municipal administrative purposes. Each has a police department, fire department and volunteer rescue squad, with the exception being St. Paul, served by the Castlewood Rescue Squad. In addition, the Powell Valley and Sandy Ridge Volunteer Fire Departments serve their respective areas.

Cooperative efforts should be made on the part of the county, towns and the City of Norton to locate fire and rescue facilities to optimize the fire protection and medical services available to all county and city residents. Fire and rescue facilities may need to be expanded within the planning period, and service areas and cost allocations reviewed.

The building housing the Wise County jail was built in 1974, and remains in limited use. The County participates in the Southwest Virginia Regional Jail Authority, operating in Duffield. The county also needs a juvenile detention facility.

An Enhanced 911 emergency telephone system with central dispatching was implemented in 1993.

2.4.6 Public Transportation

Mountain Empire Transit provides general public transportation to county citizens of all ages. MET provides service to aging services, human service agencies and Medicaid recipients.

2.4.7 Recreational and Cultural Facilities

Numerous recreational facilities and programs are scattered throughout the county. These services are provided by the individual municipalities, educational institutions, federal and state agencies and private concerns.

Most of the county's towns have recreational facilities, as do UVA-Wise and Mountain Empire Community College.

More than 36,000 acres in the county lie within the Jefferson National Forest, and there are seven developed National Forest recreation sites in the county. Included in these sites are campgrounds, picnic and swimming areas, and High Knob, at 4,162 feet the region's highest peak. Development of the Guest River Gorge Trail near Coeburn further expands recreational opportunities, as do state parks in neighboring counties — Breaks Interstate Park in Dickenson County and Scott County's Natural Tunnel State Park.

The Wise County School Board offers its facilities for recreational purposes and community gatherings, allowing the facilities' full utilization. Efforts should be made to upgrade these facilities as recreational and community needs increase.

Private golf courses are located in Powell Valley (Lonesome Pine) and Coeburn (Dan Hall Mountain) and in nearby Jonesville (Cedar Hill) in Lee County.

The Lonesome Pine Regional Library System serves county residents through its headquarters at Wise and branch locations in Big Stone Gap, Coeburn and St. Paul. The library serves outlying areas of the county through a "Books by Mail" program at no cost to the users. Circulation for all four facilities was 549,290 volumes in 1993, with a total regional circulation of 976,118 volumes.

Lonesome Pine Regional Library has developed a network among all the high school, college and public libraries in its service area of Wise, Dickenson, Lee and Scott Counties and the City of Norton. Students at all 15 high schools and both colleges in the service area can, through equipment provided by Lonesome Pine Regional Library, access Lonesome Pine's database and have requested material either faxed or delivered by the library's van. Plans call for the same network access to library collections at University of Virginia at Wise and Mountain Empire Community College when these libraries are automated.

The county and its towns host a number of local festivals each year, centered around various topics — arts and crafts, music and the county's historic heritage. Big Stone Gap is home to "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine" (officially designated the state outdoor drama) and the Lonesome Pine Community Concert Association, while the Town of Wise hosts the Virginia-Kentucky District Fair and the Pro-Art Association. The Association, supported by commitments from local governments, the private sector and the Virginia Commission for the Arts, brings a year-round calendar of events in the visual and performing arts to the region.

Cultural facilities available to county residents include the Southwest Virginia Museum and Harry C. Meador Coal Museum, both in Big Stone Gap, and the Harris Gallery located inside the Wise County Public Library in Wise.

2.4.8 Historic and Archeological Sites

It is the policy of the Wise County Planning Commission and the Wise County Board of Supervisors to preserve and enhance all sites, buildings, structures and objects with significance to American history, architecture, archaeology and culture. Inherent within this policy is the goal of avoiding any adverse impacts on any property or district included or pending inclusion on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

County sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register are the June Tolliver House, John Fox, Jr. House, Southwest Virginia Museum, U.S. Post Office and Christ Episcopal Church in Big Stone Gap, the original structure of the Wise County Courthouse, the Inn at Wise and the Country Cabin in Josephine.

In 1994-95, the county, the City of Norton and all county towns participated in a cost-sharing program with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, wherein two consultants were hired to survey architectural resources and provide an assessment of archaeological resources in the towns, city and county.

In the architectural survey, selected historic resources over 50 years of age were surveyed and recorded. These resources were, in most cases, the least altered and best preserved examples of the historic themes dominant during the county's developmental years, or, in a few cases, the only known building of its type or form in the county. In some cases, the resource represented changes in the stylistic interpretations that occurred during the years of greatest change in the county, 1880 to 1940. A notable exception to the 50-year rule was the late-1940s enameled-metal Lustron homes in Norton and Big Stone Gap.

Using United State Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps, the consultant mapped, numbered, photographed and described nearly 500 properties containing 700 historic resources. These resources are the physical expressions of the residential, agricultural, government, education, religious, commercial, industrial, transportation, recreation, funerary and ethnic themes dominant in the county during its years of development. The survey data have been entered into a new Integrated Preservation Software (IPS) system. Through the use of this system, all Wise County Architectural Survey data will be permanently stored and can easily be retrieved. In addition, a set of nearly 500 "hard copy" files of all surveyed properties will be located at the Wise County Public Library in Wise and the Department of Historic Resources, with a written report of the survey in county, town and city offices.

As part of the survey, the consultant identified nine proposed historic districts and 47 individual properties and sites that may be eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. Before a property is nominated to the registers, a determination of eligibility must be made by a state review board. A completed Preliminary Information Form for each of the nine districts has been filed with VDHR in Richmond to determine whether an application can be made for these districts to be listed.

The nine districts are: Appalachia Historic District, an area encompassing three residential neighborhoods; Big Stone Gap Historic District, centered around the Poplar Hill neighborhood; Blackwood Historic District, in the community west of Norton; Coeburn Historic District, containing a collection of residential, commercial, religious and transportation resources; Derby Historic District, in the community northwest of Appalachia; Norton Historic District, with a wide variety of residential and other structures; St. Paul Historic District, with a collection of residential, commercial and religious resources; Stonega Historic District, in the community north of Appalachia; and Wise Historic District, centered around the Wise County Courthouse and the Inn.

Among individual properties identified as potential register listings are: Wycliffe Nash House, east of Wise; Bond/Lawson Log House, Bond Gap Ennis House, St. Paul; John K. Taggard House, Big Stone Gap; Ted Wentz House, Big Stone Gap; Dotson House, Wise; Hillman/ Banner House, Coeburn; George Esser House, Norton; Taylor House, East Stone Gap; Fraley House, Norton; Pelligrini Lustron House, Norton; Hamm House, Carfax; Blue Sulphur Hotel, St. Paul; Last company house, Toms Creek Appalachian Towers, Appalachia; Virginia City Church; Cherry Grove Church; Dry Fork Imboden Methodist Church; Roda Baptist Mission; Williams Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Big Stone Gap; Mt. Hermon Presbyterian Church, Big Stone Gap; Glencoe Cemetery, Big Stone Gap; Bondtown Cemetery, Coeburn; Railroad Tunnel, St. Paul Holbrook Tunnel, Dwina; Bee Rock Tunnel, Appalachia; Inman Street Bridge; Sugar Hill site, St. Paul; Church Ruins, Big Stone Gap

Threatened properties include: Bartley Hollyfield House, Bold Camp Richmond House, Big Stone Gap; Old Bull Run Church, Banner; Collins School, Roberson district; Baker School, Roberson district; Andover School; Stonega School; Osaka Store; Andover Store; Toms Creek Freight Station, Coeburn; Stonega Freight Depot; Westmoreland Coal Co. Warehouse, Appalachia.

2.4.8.1 *Archaeological Resources*

The assessment of Wise County's archaeological resources has documented a full range of sites, from 8,000-year-old Native American camp sites to historic iron mines abandoned in the early twentieth century. Although only 141 archaeological sites have been recorded so far, these sites reveal thousands of years of past land use. Of the 141 sites, 137 were already contained in Virginia Department of Historic Resources files, with four more identified during the assessment. Nearly 90 percent of the sites are from the prehistoric period, with rockshelter sites within Jefferson National Forest lands accounting for a majority of these. Documented historic period sites include log cabins in mountain hollows and the remains of a French nobleman's two-story house overlooking the Clinch River and St. Paul.

2.4.9 Transportation

Topographic constraints and resultant costs associated with the construction of transportation facilities have played major roles in the county's development.

Highways. Two major U.S. highways, seven primary highways and numerous state secondary highways serve the county, as shown in **Map 1**. U.S. 23, an Appalachian Corridor "B" Highway, is a major north-south artery connecting Columbus, Ohio with Asheville, North Carolina. U.S. Alternate 58 is an east-west highway that connects Norfolk, Virginia with Middlesboro, Kentucky. With the 1995 completion of the Norton bypass, U.S. 23 is completely four-lanes through Wise County. U.S. 58A is four-lane from St. Paul to Big Stone Gap.

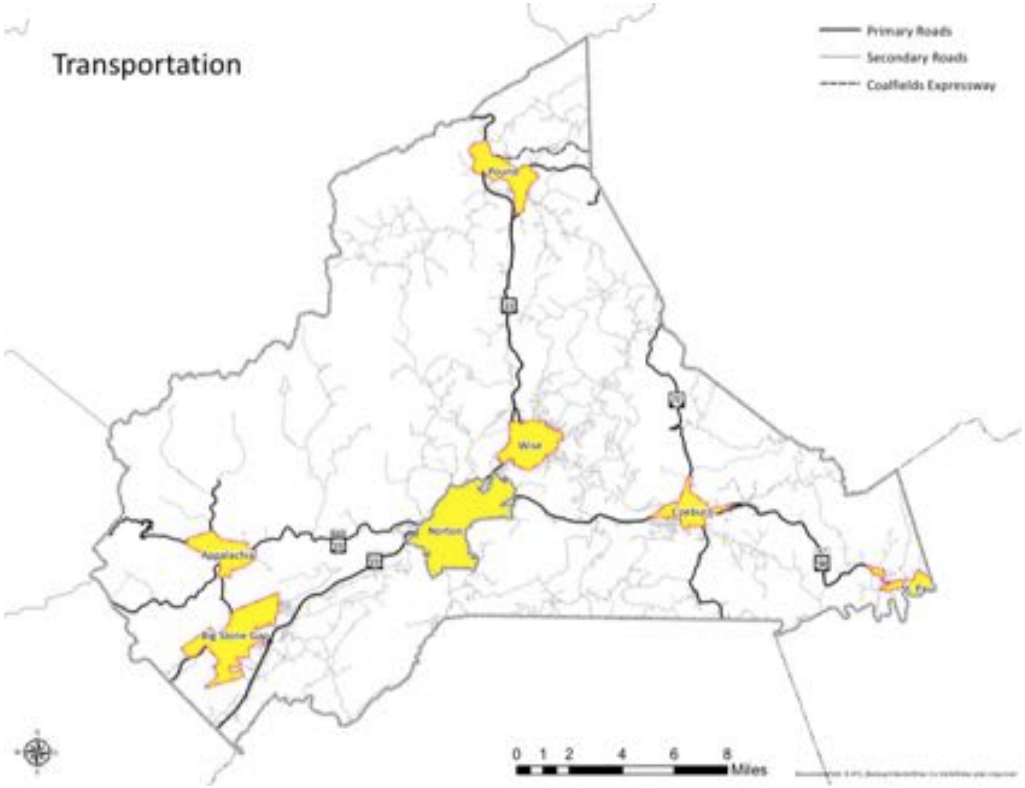
The County’s intention is to coordinate with VDOT to preserve existing roadway improvement needs and maintain levels of service. The current FY2017 Final Six-Year VDOT Improvement Plan includes:

- Bridge (Fed Id19255) Route 23 Over Route 610 / Powell River
- Bridge (Fed Id 19247) Route 23 Business Over Indian Creek
- Route 23 Median Shoulders
- 0072-097-1037 Superstructure Replacement (Fed Id 19324)
- Route 121 CFX - Pound Connector - VDOT Oversight
- Rte. 158 Over Toms Creek (Fed Id 19301)
- Alt 58 Shoulder Initiative Wise County
- Route 1101 - Install Concrete Crossing Surface
- Route 757 - Widen to a 3-Lane Urban Design
- Bridge Replacement - Bull Bun Rd Over Little Toms Creek (Fed Id 19308)

- Structural Rehabilitation of Asphalt Concrete - Various. Routes

[Review Note: This section is in progress, to include additional detail for the Transportation Map (scalable comprehensive road names, hierarchy based on VDOT and LENOWISCO definitions, transit routes, park-and-ride lots), and a description of opportunities for expanded multi-modal transportation.]

Map 1: Transportation Map



Rail. The construction of railroads into Wise County provided the initial stimulus at the turn of the twentieth century for development and growth. Originally devoted primarily to the transportation of coal, the railroads remain a necessary ingredient for the vitality of the county's economy. Two major railroad corporations, Norfolk Southern Corporation and CSX Transportation, serve the county.

Air. Lonesome Pine Regional Airport, located on a 417-acre site four miles east of Wise, is "home base" for many business and personal aircraft, serving the general aviation needs of the area's public and corporate community.

The facility has a 5,400-foot long, 100-foot wide asphalt runway; 35-foot wide taxiway; 10,875 square yard apron; six T-hangars, three corporate hangars and a conventional hangar; 12,000 gallon storage for both Avgas and Jet-A fuel; a 4,000 square foot germinal building; and 32 automobile parking spaces. Airport terminal Navaids include an airport beacon; AWOS III; CATF/UMICOM communications; VOR/DME; segmented circle and wind cone; SDF localizer; ODALS; REILS; VASI- 4; and MIRL lighting for the runway and MIRL lighting for the taxiway and exits.

Public Transportation. Mountain Empire Transit, the transportation department of Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc., is the only public transit system serving Wise County and the LENOWISCO district.

Utilizing a fleet of 35 vehicles (as of January 1995), MET provides ambulatory and wheelchair passengers both fixed-route and paratransit service, Medicaid and aging services, human service transportation and general public transit at nominal fares.

2.5 Planning and Participation Process

As part of the planning process, an Opportunities and Challenges Analysis was completed to provide an overview of the outcomes of the participation process. That Analysis forms the core of the Plan's vision statement and policy framework. Based on the real knowledge, perception, and experience of residents, businesses, service providers, and decision-makers, the opportunities and challenges identified in this analysis will guide development of the Plan update.

The Wise County Comprehensive Plan update defines a long-term vision for the future and guide public and private actions to help achieve that vision. The vision is shaped by local community values, ideals and hopes about the best management and use of the community's resources. To that end, Wise County has taken steps encouraging stakeholders provide real input into the planning process.

Identification of key challenges and opportunities is a critical first step in the planning process, and is the precursor to establishing an attainable vision. With an understanding of the County's strengths and weaknesses and an idea of stakeholder's preferences for the future, a unified community vision can be established. The next step in the planning process will be developing goals and policies to support the vision, and prioritizing strategies to achieve the vision.

2.5.1 Survey Summary

Members of the public, decision-makers and Advisory Committee members were asked to complete a survey asking them about current conditions, positive and concerning changes in the County. One of the most remarkable aspects of the survey responses is how similar all the responses are. It is especially remarkable given that the surveys were in an "open-ended" format where participants wrote in their answers, rather than a multiple-choice type format where participants are required to choose from a closed set of possible answers.

While there is some diversity in the answers, the overall impression is that the participants in the process are overwhelmingly "on the same page" in their perception of the County's greatest opportunities and challenges. It seems as though the critical challenge of the Plan update won't necessarily be to build consensus on what the County's priorities should be, rather, it might be to build support for a unified plan of how to achieve/implement those priorities.

It is important for the Planning Team to note that there is support for each major town (Pound, Big Stone Gap, Wise, St. Paul, Coeburn, Appalachia, and the City of Norton) in Wise County should be a part of contributing to the overall consolidated Update for Wise County. Opening constructive communications among various economic development groups and other interests will be critical to ensuring a successful process.

One participant made a statement that could perhaps be used to frame the process moving forward, which is that "Many of our citizens are feeling helpless and losing home. A beacon of hope is needed." The need for cooperation and economic development is an utmost priority in this planning process. It is also important that the Plan be used and implemented once it is developed.

2.5.1.1 *Three Most Important Positive Changes*

There was wide consensus on the most positive changes in Wise County.

Improvements to Education
Education-related improvements were one of the most frequently mentioned positive changes, encompassing several related items. The Wise County Public School system consolidation of six high schools into three, the construction of two new state of the art institutions and the renovation of a third building was a big improvement. Continuing infrastructure and training developments and the ability of high school students to dual enroll and receive credit at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) through the Virginia Community College system was also mentioned, as was the ongoing development of the University of Virginia College at Wise with the completion of the convocation center and expansion of the educational curricula.

Too Many Good News Secrets

- ***Last year, the School District was one of only two (!) Divisions in the state (2 out of 132 Divisions) that had every school meet all requirements for state accreditation.***
- ***The SD ranked 6th in the state overall, out-performing over 95% of the schools in Virginia (95.5% to be more exact).***
- ***Wise County schools are in the top 5% of all Virginia schools.***

Infrastructure Investments and Improvements
Infrastructure improvements were mentioned as important positive changes in nearly every survey submitted. Specifically, including:

- Expansion of the County water system (including the expansion of the Town of Big Stone Gap and Town of Wise water treatment and storage facilities);
- Development of the Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center (VCHEC);
- Bringing the Appalachia America Energy Research Center to Wise County;
- Road improvements, including the 460 connector, and US 23/58 (Powell Valley – Coeburn); and
- Expansion of 4G broadband service.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Improvements
Another positive change that was noted by many participants was the growth of tourism efforts, including outdoor recreational opportunities, especially the Spearhead trails in St. Paul and the Big Stone Gap Greenbelt trails. Other positive changes noted include:

- Growth of **Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC)**

- Litter control
- Convenience centers
- GIS – NASA grants
- Law enforcement central dispatch being combined
- Paperless offices
- Filming (BSG movie)

2.5.1.2 *Three Most Concerning Changes*

Lack of Economic Development and Employment Opportunities
Economic development concerns overwhelmingly topped the list of concerns for survey participants. In fact, almost every concerning change listed by responders is intimately connected to the lack of employment opportunities in the County. Stakeholders are very concerned about the decline in coal mining and the lack of diversification of the County's economic base. Economic development has been stagnant and many people mentioned the loss of the severance tax as a problem. The loss of small industry and businesses is a noted concern.

Change = Opportunity

- ***Technology presents new opportunities***
- ***Knowledge has replaced muscle and brawn***
- ***The vision, strengths and perseverance that brought Wise County to the 21st century are the foundation that takes Wise County through the 21st century***

Health of Workforce and Impacts of Drug/Alcohol Dependence
The health and quality of the local workforce is a huge concern in the County. Drug and substance abuse/dependence, mental health, and access to health care for workers are all oft-cited problems.

Loss of Youth and Population through Out Migration
Respondents mentioned the loss of population, in particular young people, as a big concern. One respondent mentioned the lack of businesses to support a college atmosphere, which, along with a lack of economic opportunities, may impact youth out migration.

Need for Adequate Services (Medical, Transportation, Retail)
The loss of medical services and the community hospital is a large concern, as is the need for other basic services for residents, including public transportation and retail. In particular, the need for medical care access and support for community health was most frequently cited.

Need for Cooperation and Coordination Among Communities
Also frequently noted throughout the survey responses was that the community is divided and polarized. There is a notion that each locality within the County is competing with another, when

instead there is a need to work together. The discord and lack of unity and cooperation with the City of Norton and Wise County was mentioned in particular.

Additional Concerning Changes:

- The school consolidation discussions since 1995 and its recent resolution with the three high schools – the County dropped the ball and misused funding for the greater good.
- The continued lack of drive to build bridges with MECC and UVA-Wise and incorporate both more into our County and respective towns.
- Over dependency on borrowings – insufficient cash resources and budget constraints.
- Lack of awareness amongst targeted business and industry.
- Internal and external problems/challenges within the county that affect performance productivity, efficiency, harmony and overall effectiveness.
- Lack of vision and leadership.

2.5.1.3 *Three Most Important Issues Facing Wise County*

Responses related to the three most important issues facing Wise County truly reflected the desire to build on the County's most positive changes while addressing the most concerning changes. The top responses reflected the following needs:

- Need to address substance abuse problems and mental health issues across the County.
- Need for diverse economic development that provides living wage employment opportunities, including for semi- and higher-skilled workers, and to move past the mindset of dependency on coal. Related to this, a need to stop the loss of talent/brain drain.
- Need to improve the attitudes and mindsets of people.
- Need for effective and accountable leadership in public positions, making decisions with buy-in ownership of common, long range planning and interests not driven by political correctness or self-serving interests.
- Need for more opportunities for youth, including recreation and after-school programs. Must educate children and young adults about the greater world outside Wise County and the opportunities available and within reach for Wise County.
- Need to increase revenues to address infrastructure needs, investments and finances.

Starting Point

- ***Virginia's coal industry has changed***
- ***In 1980, Virginia had over 800 licensed mines.***
- ***By 2001, the number of Virginia licensed mines had declined by more than 50% to 328 (only 204 of which produced marketable coal)***
- ***Over the past 10 years, the number of coal-mining jobs in Virginia has declined by more than 40%***

- Coordinated and cohesive approach to meet the challenges and opportunities the new economy presents.
- Local commitment to develop solutions that will work locally.
- Transform the economy to sustain innovation, small entrepreneurs, and information access that are not dependent on traditional methods; sustain growth in the workforce by encouraging the local colleges and educational systems to build networks that inspire the youth of the region to raise motivation levels.

2.5.2 Vision 2025/ 2035

A long-term vision, rooted in community values, will be the foundation of the Wise County planning process. The vision statement helps citizens and decision-makers remember the ends to which the Plan aspires. Responses from participants regarding their vision for the years 2025 and 2035 will help define the County's vision statement. The following summary reflects the prevailing ideas for Wise County's future.

Prosperous Families Enjoy a High Quality of Life
Young families and retirees alike find Wise County a good place to live. They are healthy, educated and employed, living in safe communities with access to services and amenities, including medical care, retail, outdoor recreations facilities and other necessary infrastructure. Communities are walkable/bikeable.

Center for Recreation and Tourism
Wise County is a recreational trails haven known as the "playground of the south." Development of High Knob and Jefferson National Forrest and recreation-based development, such as resorts/ cabins and other small businesses, support a thriving tourism industry.

Progressive Growth and Leadership
Progressive County leadership focuses on the "big picture," taking action to promote growth and diverse economic development. Towns throughout the County cooperate, achieving infrastructure improvements that support new businesses and job creation.

Center for Education
The Mountain Empire Community College and University of Virginia College at Wise continue to grow and expand, supported by a vibrant "college town" atmosphere provided by businesses, recreation, and future job opportunities. Young people choose to stay in Wise County due to these opportunities and high quality of life.

Unity and Progress
"The pulling together of all the different stakeholders and players in the new economy who are aware of the local challenges and opportunities, who can identify key objectives for achieving the mission, to instill a "pride in ownership" of Wise County, and formulate strategies that will achieve and maintain a competitive position which will lead to the continued diversification of the economy that will be locally led and market driven in the global economy. "

Thriving Community
"A thriving rural county in the mountains, a perfect place to raise your family and visit. A safe haven for children to grow up in, an excellent and diverse school system offering opportunities, a thriving economy driven by the health profession, secondary and higher education, strong and active local governments, and technology."

"A thriving rural community with diversified industries to include technology, research and development, and tourism."

A Place for Family and Employment
"Factories, business, and jobs for all skill levels so that when our children finish college they want to come back and raise their children here and those without college degrees can have a comfortable living here as well"

"A much more diversified economy that can provide steady employment at all skilled and education levels."

Coordinated and Improved
"I would like to see a county where much of the devastation of surface mining is reclaimed by DMLR with fees that have been set aside over the years. I would like to see a County with one municipal government where the six towns and the City of Norton bring together infrastructure assets of water and wastewater treatment and solid waste collection and management. An abundance of employment brought about by an all new economic base and cleaner County. UVA-Wise and MECC having a much larger enrollment. A strong hospital and banking network."

2.5.3 The Most Important Issues for Tomorrow's Leaders

Tomorrow's Leaders Survey – Youth and Young Adults
Having the opportunity to incorporate the views of the community's youth and young adults typically yields a confirmation of issues the 'adults' identify (there were far more issues in common than in contrast), but it also presents a unique perspective from the next generation of leaders, taxpayers, business and home owners and families (one can reasonably assume that the same comments today are many of the same from the prior generation of youth). The message the County delivers by reaching out to youth and young adults is one of inclusiveness – your views matter, our efforts are about and for you.

Themes
Some interesting themes were identified during the three all-day sessions with the high school government classes:

- ***Community Pride.*** These are a bright group of high school students, with an awareness of larger issues. From their comments, being aware of what other places offer and what is missing in their community should in no way be interpreted as an overall lack of pride or respect for their community. Other comments referenced a desire for a broader and more diverse community base (more people from other places, a diverse, balanced economy). Wanting to see improvement indicates the desire to make things better for themselves and those that follow them. Most indicated a desire to stay or return to Wise County. This is their home.

- ***The Role for Local Government.*** This is not an unusual dilemma for students or adults, uncertain of the grasp and reach of local control, which includes balancing action with the ability to pay and desire to tax. The questions that arise from this uncertainty show creativity and thinking outside the box (why can't we…). Some of the examples raised include: finding alternative uses for empty storefronts, encouraging home-based businesses and promoting local businesses.

- ***More vs Less Law Enforcement.*** The drug problem was the number one issue negatively impacting students (followed closely by lack of jobs). A significant number of students indicated they would like to see a gentler approach to criminal justice, with what could be described as being more community policing oriented. However, more students indicated, when this issue was identified, a desire for more effective policing that addresses some of the community's critical problems – primarily drugs.

- ***Coal vs No Coal.*** Most of the students commented on the lack of rewarding, good paying jobs. These high school seniors are aware of the economy they're entering. As among the adults, there were a significant number of comments by students on both sides of this issue. Some more oriented on environmental protection and the development of alternate energy sources, but most expressing support of the coal industry and the benefit that has been conveyed on the community from coal. Transitioning, but not abandoning, the coal based economy.

What the County Has Going for It

There were numerous positive attributes identified by the students – the scenery and environmental features, schools and college are highly valued, the culture of the community (people are friendly, hospitable, humble, honest). The County is a cherished 'home' of family and friends. A common point was dismay that there are problems interfering with their preference to stay. Law enforcement also was rated highly, generally, for their fairness and drug enforcement.

Most Critical Problems Facing the County

The most critical problems facing County youth are: drugs (impacts from drug abuse and drug-related crime), lack of good-paying jobs and poor economic conditions from the cumulative impact of coal industry losses and limited opportunities for recreation and entertainment for youth.

Most Critical Needs

The greatest needs youth identified include having a wide range of good-paying jobs (health care, technology, outdoor-oriented businesses, coal and post-coal economy jobs), providing a wide range of recreation (skating, pools, recreation center, shooting sports related, hiking and motorized trails), entertainment (arcade, theaters, restaurants, shopping) and dealing with the drug problem.

What the County Can Build On

There also were some important insights by the youth – about solving problems and having hometown pride. There was consensus that the community is good at resolving issues and solving problems (for example, unsolicited, students spoke of the positives of the school consolidation of the community working together). They're watching, listening and learning some valuable positive lessons. There also were suggestions to publicize County success stories (people that have succeeded) and stories of local history and culture to instill more community pride.

2.5.4 Potential Goals, Policies and Strategies

A list of actions and ideas was generated through stakeholder meetings and survey results from the initial public participation process. This compiled list was viewed as a starting point of "brainstormed" ideas. It was not considered as a complete list of possible implementation measures, nor was every idea necessarily included in this final Plan. However, many of these actions and ideas were explored and validated through additional work, and developed into goals, policies, and strategies to support and achieve the community's vision, as included in the Implementation section of this Plan.

2.6 Current Conditions Analysis

2.6.1 Overview

Changes in the total population and the characteristics of the population may have profound impacts on the economic, social and natural environment of the County. While Wise County as a whole is projected to lose population over the course of the planning period, projected demographic changes will increase demand for certain types of facilities and services. It is important to note that different age and income segments of the population have different needs, which shape demands for housing, services and infrastructure. For instance, an elderly population creates demand for communal housing types, medical services, passive recreational opportunities and public transportation. Families with young children, on the other hand, generate demands for different housing types, day care facilities, schools, athletic recreational opportunities and a mix of transportation options.

Changes in the total population and the characteristics of the population may have profound impacts on the economic, social and natural environment of the County. Different segments of the population have different needs, which shape demands for housing, services and infrastructure.

This report summarizes various demographic indicators relevant to the development of Wise County's Comprehensive Plan, including a projection of the community's likely population in 2030. This information in turn will allow the County to craft land development, economic, and housing policies that are responsive and reflective of the community's shifting demographics.

The current planning process for Wise County is driven by a number of concerns and challenges that can be seen through the demographic and economic trends that have played out in recent years. In fact, many of the current concerns of participants in the 2014 planning process are the same as concerns that were discussed and forecast in the 1998 Wise County Comprehensive Plan. For instance, the County's population continues to decline, while also becoming older. Youth out-migration exacerbates this trend, leaving the County with a smaller, older population that will require certain services, especially transportation and medical services, while not contributing as much in terms of economic growth.

Economically, concerns also remain the same, with the greatest challenge being the accelerating decline of employment in the coal industry. Jobs that have been lost in the mining sector are not being replaced

by jobs with comparable pay, leaving Wise County with a growing unemployment rate. While the Virginia and the United States as a whole have experienced some recovery in terms of a lower unemployment rate in the past few years, Wise County's rate has increased. Unemployment, in addition to impacting local tax revenues, simultaneously increases need for local social services. Job training, poverty assistance, mental health and substance abuse services, are just some of the services needed by families and individuals that are unemployed.

Economic development, as well as provision of adequate and attainable housing opportunities, are both dependent on the availability of suitable development locations, which means provision of adequate infrastructure, facilities and services. As was noted in the 1998 Plan, the County has limited developable land due to various constraints, including steep slopes, poor soil conditions, flood prone areas, mineral land under development, land subject to subsidence from surface and underground mining, national forest land and other public and private land unavailable for development. Future housing, commercial and industrial growth and development is largely dependent on the availability of public utilities.

Maintaining and expanding infrastructure to encourage economic development and attract younger residents will be a challenge for the County as it also balances the needs of an aging population and helps families transition from dependence on coal-related employment. It will be important to coordinate service provision and development efforts to be as efficient as possible, while relying on its strengths, such as the natural environment and educational institutions to drive positive growth.

2.6.2 Growth Highlights

- The Big Picture...
  - Projections are not set in stone, but reflect the desirability and feasibility of retaining and attracting residential and non-residential development.
  - The Plan is the County's (as a whole) best opportunity to effectuate an atmosphere that protects public and private investment decisions.
- Growth rates in the County have been elastic and variable, dependent in large part to the cycle of coal production and expanding role of the colleges.
- Projections show a long-term population decline in the County, through 2040, though the rate of decline will slow.
- Communities likely to experience continued population decreases include Appalachia, Pound and St. Paul.
- Communities likely to experience continued population increases include Big Stone Gap, Coeburn and Wise.
- Norton is expected to experience continued growth.
- One of the most interesting trends has been the transition, albeit slowly, from sprawl (rural) to a community-based (urbanized) development pattern. The potential for the Plan to build on this pattern is substantial.

  - In 2000, 34% of the population was in the towns and 66% was in the unincorporated areas.
  - By 2010, the pattern had shifted to a 35%-65% town-rural population ratio. Market and lifestyles were reflecting efficiencies and preferences.

- This pattern is projected to continue, with new development (and population) increasing more in the towns (.2% per year) and decreasing in the rural areas (.1% per year).
- There's a role for strong communities - those with available and adequate facilities and services, a mix of uses, a robust local economy, desirable amenities - that were good places to invest in homes and businesses.
  - By 2010, Big Stone Gap had over 38% of the population of the unincorporated area (an increasing share from 35% in 2000).
  - Coeburn saw a modest 1% increase in share of population.
- Though the other towns had reduced shares of population, Pound (9.9% decrease in share) and Appalachia (9.7% decrease in share) hint the losses may be due to larger issues, which the Plan can and should address.

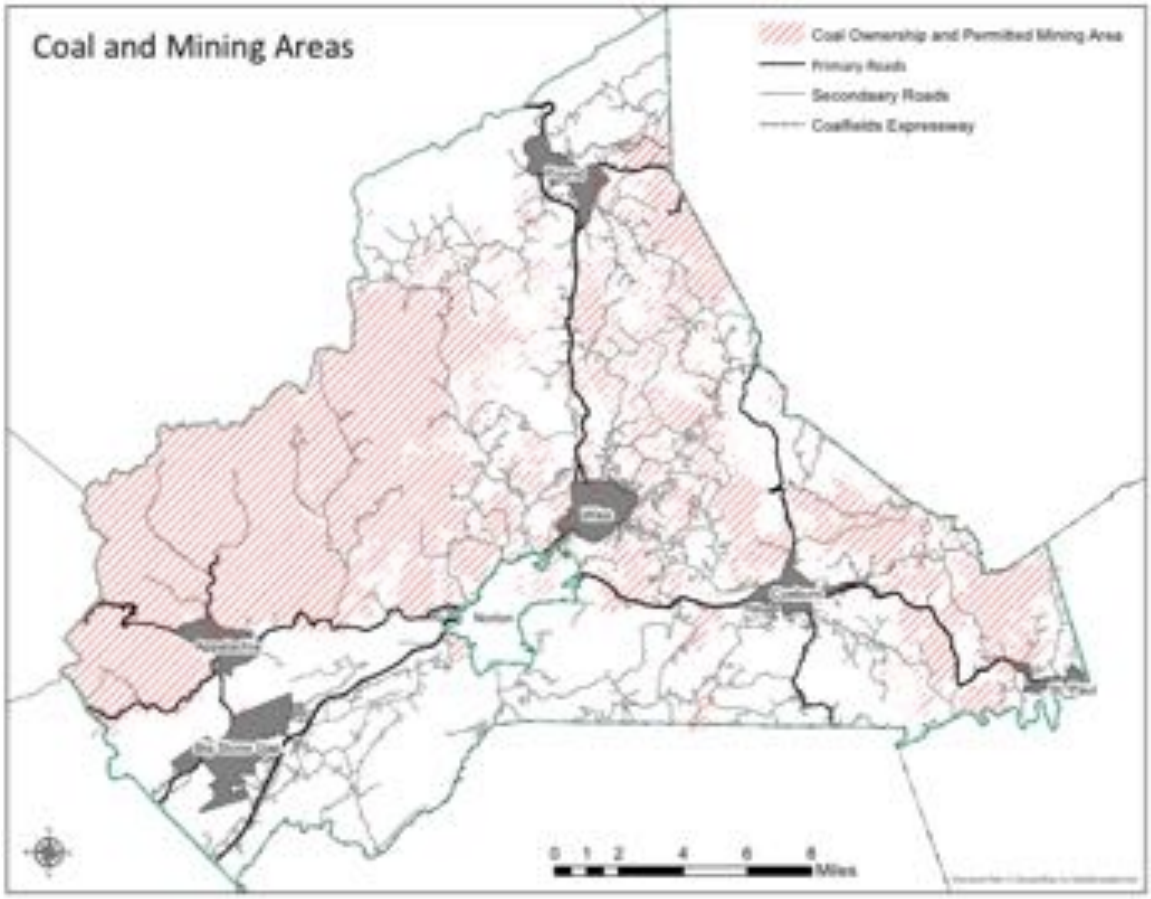
2.6.3 Recent Changes

Of utmost concern and great impact, hundreds of jobs in mining have been lost in Wise County over the past two years. This has caused great hardship for family throughout the County, who are struggling to get by after severance pay and insurance run out. Mines, such as the Cumberland River Coal's Pine Branch Number One in Wise County are being closed to a combination of stricter regulations for coal-fired plants, rising mining costs and cheaper alternative energy sources, including natural gas. In July 2013, Arch Coal, parent company of Cumberland River Coal Co., announced plans to idle its mine in Appalachia and lay off 213 workers, following a similar move by A&G Coal Co., once one of the region's biggest employers.

The loss of coal jobs has likely hastened out-migration population loss from the County. While the County enjoyed relatively low unemployment rates from 2003-2008, the unemployment rate spiked to an average of 8.8% in 2013. In August 2014 the rate was up to 9.1% in the County, as contrasted to 5.7% for Virginia and 6.3% nationwide. There is no rebound forecast for coal development in the region, but a continuing decline.

Complicating public and private long-range development and red-development plans are the large portions of Wise County that is constrained by coal ownership and mining activity, as shown in **Map 2**.

Map 2: Constrained Coal Land



Despite growing unemployment, some positive economic development has occurred in recent years. One of the most noted positive changes in Wise County was the development of the Dominion Virginia Power's Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center (VCHEC), which began commercial operation in July 2012. The power station, just west of St. Paul, uses waste coal, also called “gob,” which mining operations discarded in the early to mid-1900s. Prior to regulations on how to handle gob, the material simply piled up, often along streambeds, where it became a major source of water pollution.

The VCHEC also is designed to be able to burn up to 20 percent biomass, which is waste wood from timbering operations. The station began burning biomass in October of 2013 and is working toward burning up to 5 percent biomass by the summer of 2015. The station operates under one of the strictest air emissions permits in the nation for a plant of its kind, which requires that 10 percent of the electricity be generated by biomass by 2017 if it is economically viable to do so.[3]

Some other non-mining economic development activity also occurred in the County, including three new ventures that located in Wise County in 2012 – Lonesome Pine Components Inc., a manufacturer

[3] http://www.virginiabusiness.com/news/article/wise-county-power-plant-recycles-1.1-million-tons-of-waste-coal
http://www.timesnews.net/article/9076166/coal-waste-piles-across-sw-virginia-feeding-wise-power-plant

and distributor of thermo foil 3D laminated wood products, which located a manufacturing facility in the Wise County industrial building; NanoQuantics, Inc., a company with two technology focuses that located its operations in the Appalachia America Energy Research Center; and Carbonite Corporation of Virginia, which rehabilitated a former coal load-out facility in Wise County using a newly developed and patented clean coal technology.[4] Another positive example of recent economic development includes Micronic Technologies, a water treatment technologies company's headquarters and research and development operations, which announced plans to relocate from Sterling, VA to Wise County in May 2014, with intentions to form a partnership with the University of Virginia at Wise.[5]

Partnerships with local educational institutions have benefitted the County and its students throughout the past decade. For instance, in 2002, through the unique Wise Digital Earth Virtual Environment and Learning Outreach Project (DEVELOP) academic program, Wise County college and university students gathered data from various local, state, and federal sources; built tabular data; and created Wise County maps for the County's WebGIS system, benefiting the County's planning and development services while giving valuable experience to local students. [6]

Public school consolidation was a big issue over the past several years, and has been a big change in the County. With the beginning of the school year 2011-2012 the three small high schools (Pound, Appalachia, and St. Paul) were closed. The three larger high schools were renamed and now house all the high school students. These schools are Central High School (formerly JJ Kelly High School), Union High School (formerly Powell Valley High School), and Eastside High School (formerly Coeburn High School). Two new high schools were built for Union and Central and completed in 2014, and Eastside High School was renovated and expanded.[7]

The School District reports many achievements, but also cites limiting conditions that it faces as challenges that are directly related to the County's current planning process, including declining enrollment, high poverty rates and economically disadvantaged students, an increase in non-traditional families, and an awareness that students may not be receiving health care services on a regular basis.[8]

Continuing infrastructure and training developments and the ability of high school students to dual enroll and receive credit at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) through the Virginia Community College system was a recent development in the County, as was the ongoing development

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[4] http://www.tricities.com/news/article_6b321512-25a1-59af-a96a-4fd16ef8317c.html?mode=jqm

[5] http://www.timesnews.net/article/9077222/water-treatment-tech-company-announces-relocation-to-wise-county

[6] http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/spring02articles/wisecounty.html

[7] Wise County Public Schools Division Profile, December 2013. http://www.wise.k12.va.us/Instruction/Documents/WiseCountySchools-ProfileDecember2013.pdf

[8] Ibid.

of the University of Virginia College at Wise with the completion of the convocation center and expansion of the educational curricula.

The region is known for its scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, traditional American music and cultural heritage crafts. Tourism-based development has increased in the County over the past decade, with the development of the Spearhead Trails as a centerpiece of those efforts. Currently ATV trails are available and over 500 miles of ATV and Equestrian trails are planned by the end of 2016.[9]

2.6.4 Population Trends and Projections

Estimating population size into the future is an inexact science based on historic trends and various sets of available data. The aim of these projections is to establish a reasonable baseline that Wise County can use to inform its land use policies during the planning period. The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is tasked at the State level for projecting Virginia's and its Cities and Counties future population.

Factors affecting future population in a community include changing economic conditions, rate of natural increase, and the rate of in- and out-migration. Projections are based on information available at the moment; the estimates cannot account for unforeseen circumstances, such as additional industrial closings or changes in the national or international economy.

2.6.4.1 *Population*

As is shown in **Table 3**, the population of Wise County/Norton reached a high of 56,336 in 1950, declined by 14 percent to 48,592 in 1960, and dropped again, by 17 percent, to 40,119 in 1970, the county's lowest population level in nearly 60 years.

The 1970s saw the county's population increase to 48,620 persons. By 1990, however, this trend had reversed, with the population dropping to 43,820. The county's population combined with Norton city continued to remain steady over the next two decades, growing to a population of 45,410 in 2010.

[9] http://spearheadtrails.com/default.aspx

Table 3: Historic Population, Wise County and Norton City

	Wise County	Norton *	Combined
1890	9,345	-	9,345
1900	19,653	-	19,653
1910	34,162	-	34,162
1920	46,500	-	46,500
1930	51,167	-	51,167
1940	52,458	-	52,458
1950	56,336	-	56,336
1960	43,579	5,013	48,592
1970	35,947	4,172	40,119
1980	43,863	4,757	48,620
1990	39,573	4,247	43,820
2000	40,123	3,904	44,027
2010	41,452	3,958	45,410

*Norton City was not chartered until 1954; Source: U.S. Census

Table 4 consolidates recent historical population counts and population projections. Growth Highlights, above, summarizes this exhibit.

Appalachia, Pound, St. Paul and the unincorporated County all experienced population loss from 2000 to 2010, while Wise stayed steady. Big Stone Gap and Coeburn experienced moderate growth. The 2010 Census identifies a Riverview CDP, which is a new designation, adjacent to and included in the Coeburn numbers. Given its proximity to Coeburn, it is reasonable to expect that population growth in that area was similar. Norton also experienced slow growth. Overall, the County increased by a total of 3.3% over the decade, with Norton city increasing by 1.4%.

The US Census estimated population is for Wise County, Big Stone Gap and Norton city. Census estimates are only available for Counties and towns with greater than 5,000 residents. It is estimated that Big Stone Gap and the County as a whole lost population from 2000 to 2013, with the County losing 2.1%. Norton city gained 1.5%, which is approximately the same rate of growth as the prior decade.

Based on growth trends from 2000 to 2010, with estimates from 2010 to 2013, it appears that the smaller towns and more rural areas in the County are losing population, while the larger towns of Big Stone Gap, Coeburn and Norton city are making gains. St. Paul figures only include portion of town within Wise County. Total St. Paul town population was 1,000 in 2000, and 970 in 2010. Norton is not included in Wise County total.

Table 4: Population Estimates and Projections, 2000-2040

	2000			2010			2000-2010			2013		2020			2030			2040		
	Population	Percent of Total County	Percent of Unincorporated County	Population	Percent of Total County	Percent of Unincorporated County	Average Annual Pop Change	Urbanization Rate	Change Percent of Unincorporated County	Population	Average Annual Change	Population	Percent of Total County	Average Annual Change, 2010-2020	Population	Percent of Total County	Average Annual Change, 2020-2030	Population	Percent of Total County	Average Annual Change, 2030-2040
Incorporated County																				
Appalachia	1,839	4.6%	13.3%	1,754	4.2%	12.0%	-0.5%		-9.7%			1,727			1,700			1,673		
Big Stone Gap	4,856	12.1%	35.1%	5,614	13.5%	38.4%	1.5%		9.4%	5,548	-0.4%	5,903	14.5%	0.5%	6,191	15.3%	0.5%	6,480	16.2%	0.5%
Coeburn	1,996	5.0%	14.4%	2,139	5.2%	14.6%	0.7%		1.4%			2,189			2,240			2,293		
Pound	1,089	2.7%	7.9%	1,037	2.5%	7.1%	-0.5%		-9.9%			1,020			1,004			988		
St. Paul (partial)	784	2.0%	5.7%	772	1.9%	5.3%	-0.2%		-6.8%			768			764			760		
Wise	3,255	8.1%	23.6%	3,286	7.9%	22.5%	0.1%		-4.5%			3,296			3,307			3,317		
Total	13,819	34.4%		14,602	35.2%		0.6%	0.2%				14,715	36.0%	0.1%	14,872	36.8%	0.1%	15,067	37.7%	0.1%
Unincorporated County	26,304	65.6%		26,850	64.8%		0.2%	-0.1%				26,138	64.0%	-0.3%	25,519	63.2%	-0.2%	24,975	62.5%	-0.2%
County Total	40,123			41,452			0.3%			40,589	-0.7%	40,841		-0.1%	40,357		-0.1%	39,976		-0.1%
Decennial Change	1.4%			3.3%								-1.5%			-1.2%			-0.9%		
City of Norton	3,904			3,958			0.1%			4,017	0.5%	4,201		0.6%	4,468		0.6%	4,722		0.6%

Table 5 also displays estimated population for the County, Big Stone Gap and Norton city through 2040. Projections are only available for Counties and towns with greater than 5,000 residents. The projections for Big Stone Gap are based on a consistent annual rate of increase of .5%. Norton City is expected to experience a similar .6% annual rate of growth, while the County as a whole is expected to lose population at a rate of .1% per year through 2040. Note that the population projections were prepared in November 2012, which was prior to many of the mining-related layoffs of 2013-2014. It is important to note that the estimates for 2013 do not match the projected growth trend, and instead show a higher negative growth rate for Big Stone Gap and the County as a whole. While the population might recover as the County's economic condition stabilizes, the loss in recent years will likely have an impact on the County's total population for some time to come.

The projected population continues the trend of the more urbanized towns and city continuing to grow, while the smaller towns and rural areas continue to slowly lose population, mirroring the trend from 2000 to 2010. Based on Census projections, Wise County will lose 1,476 people from 2010-2040, and Big Stone Gap will gain 866. That is an essential net loss of 2,342 for other parts of the County. It is likely that slower growth will continue in Coeburn and the Riverview CDP, also mirroring trends from 2000 to 2010.

Table 5: Population, Estimates and Projections, 2010-2040

	Population		Estimate	Population Projections		
	2000	2010	2013	2020	2030	2040
Appalachia town	1,839	1,754				
Big Stone Gap town	4,856	5,614	5,548	5,903	6,191	6,480
Coeburn town	1,996	2,139				
Pound town	1,089	1,037				
Riverview CDP	-	782				
St. Paul town (part)*	784	772				
Wise town	3,255	3,286				
Unincorporated County	26,304	26,068				
Wise County Total	40,123	41,452	40,589	40,841	40,357	39,976
Norton city**	3,904	3,958	4,017	4,201	4,468	4,722

*St. Paul figures only include portion of town within Wise County. Total St. Paul town population was 1,000 in 2000, and 970 in 2010.
**Not included in Wise County Total
Source: Population from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010 Census.
Source: Population Projections Published on November 13, 2012 by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Demographics & Workforce Group, www.coopercenter.org/demographics/
Source: 2013 Estimates from U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts.

Over the next few decades, trends indicate that the retirement age population will continue to increase. This could potentially create a fiscal burden on local government by spreading available services to a greater population while losing a portion of tax revenues.

2.6.4.2 *Age Characteristics*

The age characteristics of a population can be used as a rough indicator of the levels and types of services desired and needed in an area. Each of the three age groups considered here — 19 and younger, 20-64 and 65 and over — has certain needs and desires that are quite different from those of the other age groups.

Table 6 shows the 2010 composition of Wise County's population by age group and gender, as well as its median age, while **Table 7** on the following page reveals the rate of change in each age group by decade from 1970-2010 in comparison with state and national figures.

It is significant to note, especially in comparison with state figures, the marked increase in the county's "65 and over" population, the continuing increase in the portion of the population in the "20-64" age group and the corresponding decline in the relative number of persons "19 and younger." These combined changes point to increased goods and services needs in both the "20-64" and "65 and over" groups. **Table 8** shows that between 2000 and 2010, the combined County and Norton city lost 5.1% of the youth population, while gaining 6.5% of the working-age population and 4.2% of the older adult population.

2.6.4.3 *Dependency*

Table 9 provides youth dependency and aged dependency ratios. These ratios reflect the number of people in the working age population for every young person and older person who are not in their prime wage earning years. In general terms, these ratios indicate whether there is a significant imbalance between the workforce and those dependent on the workforce for goods and services. This factor, when combined with other economic indicators, can provide insight regarding the vitality of the local economy. In terms of the youth dependency ratio, Wise County has 2.56 working aged person for each youth, somewhat higher than the State (2.37). The aged dependency ratio shows a wider variation. Consistent with its relatively high percentage of residents in older age cohorts, Wise County has 4.36 workers for each person of retirement age, lower than the ratios for Virginia (5.06). Over the next few decades, with more people reaching retirement age, Wise County will likely feel added pressure vis-à-vis

the aged dependency ratio. A decrease in either ratio will create addition burden on the local government fiscally by spreading available services to a greater population while losing the most economically active age group and related loss of tax revenues.

Table 6: Gender and Age, Wise County, 2010

	Male		Female		Total	
SEX AND AGE	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Total population	21,431	51.7%	20,021	48.3%	41,452	100.0%
Youth (19 years and younger)	5,186	12.5%	4,811	11.6%	9,997	24.1%
Worker Bees (Ages 20-65)	13,711	33.1%	11,879	28.7%	25,590	61.7%
Seniors (Ages 65 and older)	2534	6.1%	3331	8.0%	5865	14.1%
Median age (years)	37.1		41		39	

Source: U.S. Census

Table 7: Population by Age Comparison, Wise County, Norton and Virginia, 1970-2010

	Total Population	Percentage of Total Population		
		19 and Under	20-64	65 and Over
1970				
Virginia	4,764,000	38.0%	54.2%	7.9%
Wise County	35,947	39.5%	50.1%	10.4%
Norton City	4,172	36.0%	52.4%	11.6%
Wise Co./Norton	40,119	39.1%	50.3%	10.6%
1980				
Virginia	5,347,000	24.8%	65.8%	9.4%
Wise County	43,863	34.4%	55.2%	10.4%
Norton City	4,757	32.9%	54.4%	12.7%
Wise Co./Norton	48,620	34.3%	55.1%	10.6%
1990				
Virginia	6,187,000	27.6%	61.7%	10.7%
Wise County	39,573	30.1%	56.8%	13.1%
Norton City	4,247	29.5%	56.4%	14.1%
Wise Co./Norton	43,820	30.0%	56.8%	13.2%
2000				
Virginia	7,078,515	27.4%	61.4%	11.2%
Wise County	40,123	26.4%	59.6%	13.9%
Norton City	3,904	24.4%	60.4%	15.3%
Wise Co./Norton	44,027	26.3%	59.7%	14.0%
2010				
Virginia	8,001,024	26.0%	61.7%	12.2%
Wise County	41,452	24.1%	61.7%	14.1%
Norton City	3,958	24.9%	60.4%	14.7%
Wise Co./Norton	45,410	24.2%	61.6%	14.7%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 8: Change by Age Group, 2000-2010

	Change, 2000 to 2010
Wise County	
19 and Under	-5.8%
20-64	6.9%
65 and Over	5.0%
Total Population	3.3%
Norton City	
19 and Under	3.7%
20-64	1.5%
65 and Over	-2.7%
Total Population	1.4%
Wise Co. / Norton	
19 and Under	-5.0%
20-64	6.5%
65 and Over	4.2%
Total Population	3.1%

Source: Derived from U.S. Census

Table 9: Age Dependency, 2010

	Virginia		Wise County		Norton city		Wise Cty/Norton	
Age Group	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Youth (0 - 19)	2,083,685	26%	9,997	24%	986	25%	10,983	24%
Working (20 - 64)	4,940,402	62%	25,590	62%	2392	60%	27,982	62%
Aged (65+)	976,937	12%	5,865	14%	580	15%	6,445	14%
Total	8,001,024	100%	41,452	100%	3,958	100%	45,410	100%
Youth Dependency	2.37		2.56		2.43		2.55	
Aged Dependency	5.06		4.36		4.12		4.34	

Source: Derived from U.S. Census

Table 10 shows population projections by age and gender for the County through 2040. Keeping with current trends, it is projected that the total percent of younger and working aged residents will slowly decrease while the percent of retirement aged residents will increase to 20.9% by 2040, an increase of 6.8% over the 2010 level.

Table 10: Population Projections by Age and Gender, Wise County, 2010-2040

	Female	Male	Total	Percent of Total
2010				
19 and Under	4,811	5,186	9,997	24.1%
20-64	11,879	13,711	25,590	61.7%
65 and Over	3331	2534	5865	14.1%
2020				
19 and Under	4,546	4,903	9,449	23.1%
20-64	11,191	12,864	24,055	58.9%
65 and Over	4,116	3,221	7,337	18.0%
2030				
19 and Under	4,388	4,731	9,119	22.6%
20-64	10,737	12,306	23,043	57.1%
65 and Over	4,634	3,558	8,192	20.3%
2040				
19 and Under	4,240	4,575	8,815	22.0%
20-64	10,644	12,162	22,806	57.0%
65 and Over	4,775	3,582	8,357	20.9%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

2.6.4.4 *Families and Households*

Table 11 shows the general family and household characteristics for Wise County, for both 2000 and 2010. Other than a slight drop in families and households with children under the age of 18, and an increase in the number of householders living alone, the characteristics of families and households in Wise County remained fairly constant over the course of the decade. In 2010, there were 15,968 total households in Wise County. Family households comprised 68.2%, with 26.7% of those with children under 18 years. Non-family households comprised 31.8%, with 31.4% of those with children under 18 years.

Table 11: General Household Characteristics, Wise County, 2000 and 2010

HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE	2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total households	16,013	100	15,968	100
Family households (families) *	11,517	71.9	10,892	68.2
With own children under 18 years	4,963	31	4,260	26.7
Husband-wife family	8,992	56.2	8,036	50.3
With own children under 18 years	3,717	23.2	2,847	17.8
Male householder, no wife present			850	5.3
With own children under 18 years			390	2.4
Female householder, no husband present	1,918	12	2,006	12.6
With own children under 18 years	966	6	1,023	6.4
Nonfamily households*	4,496	28.1	5,076	31.8
Householder living alone	4,088	25.5	4,379	27.4
Male			1,917	12
65 years and over			523	3.3
Female			2,462	15.4
65 years and over			1,291	8.1
Total Householders living alone 65 years+	1,792	11.2	1,814	11.4
Households with individuals under 18 years	5,488	34.3	5,013	31.4
Households with individuals 65 years and over	4,160	26	4,369	27.4
Average household size	2.44		2.4	
Average family size*	2.91		2.9	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010

* "Family households" consist of a householder and one or more other people related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. They do not include same-sex married couples even if the marriage was performed in a state issuing marriage certificates for same-sex couples. Same-sex couple households are included in the family households category if there is at least one additional person

related to the householder by birth or adoption. Same-sex couple households with no relatives of the householder present are tabulated in nonfamily households. "Nonfamily households" consist of people living alone and households which do not have any members related to the householder.

2.6.4.5 *Race and Ethnicity*

Historically, the population of Wise County has been predominantly white. The results of the 2010 Census indicate that, while the county's population is still predominantly white (93%), the percentage of non-white population has increased slightly since 2000 (6.9%). **Table 12** lists selected race and ethnicity characteristics of Wise County for 2000 and 2010.

Table 12: Race & Ethnicity, Wise County, 2000 and 2010

	2000		2010	
RACE	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total population	40,123	100	41,452	100
One Race	39,878	99.4	41,067	99.1
White	38,870	96.9	38,561	93
Black or African American	713	1.8	2,137	5.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	64	0.2	53	0.1
Asian	121	0.3	141	0.3
Asian Indian	41	0.1	30	0.1
Chinese	9	0	30	0.1
Filipino	35	0.1	28	0.1
Japanese	5	0	6	0
Korean	14	0	9	0
Vietnamese	8	0	7	0
Other Asian [1]	9	0	31	0.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	4	0	2	0
Native Hawaiian	1	0	0	0
Guamanian or Chamorro	1	0	0	0
Samoan	2	0	0	0
Other Pacific Islander [2]	0	0	2	0
Some Other Race	106	0.3	173	0.4
Two or More Races	245	0.6	385	0.9
HISPANIC OR LATINO				
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	292	0.7	471	1.1

[1] Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.
[2] Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

2.6.5 Economic Conditions

2.6.5.1 *Industry Analysis & Major Employers*

As noted, Wise County's origins lay in coal and iron ore extraction and lumbering activities. Coal mining has continued to be the county's dominant basic economic activity. The 1998 Plan noted that such dependence on one basic industry makes an area's economy highly susceptible to changes in that industry, and that dependence has historically resulted in a series of coal related "booms and busts."

Emphasis is placed on the basic employment sector and the role that mining has played as the principal employer in that sector. "Basic employment" is defined as employment in those industries selling most of their goods and services outside of the area, depending upon national or regional demand rather than local demand. By contrast, "supporting employment" is defined as employment in industries that find their primary market in the local area. Local government, retail trade, utilities and banking services generally are supporting activities.

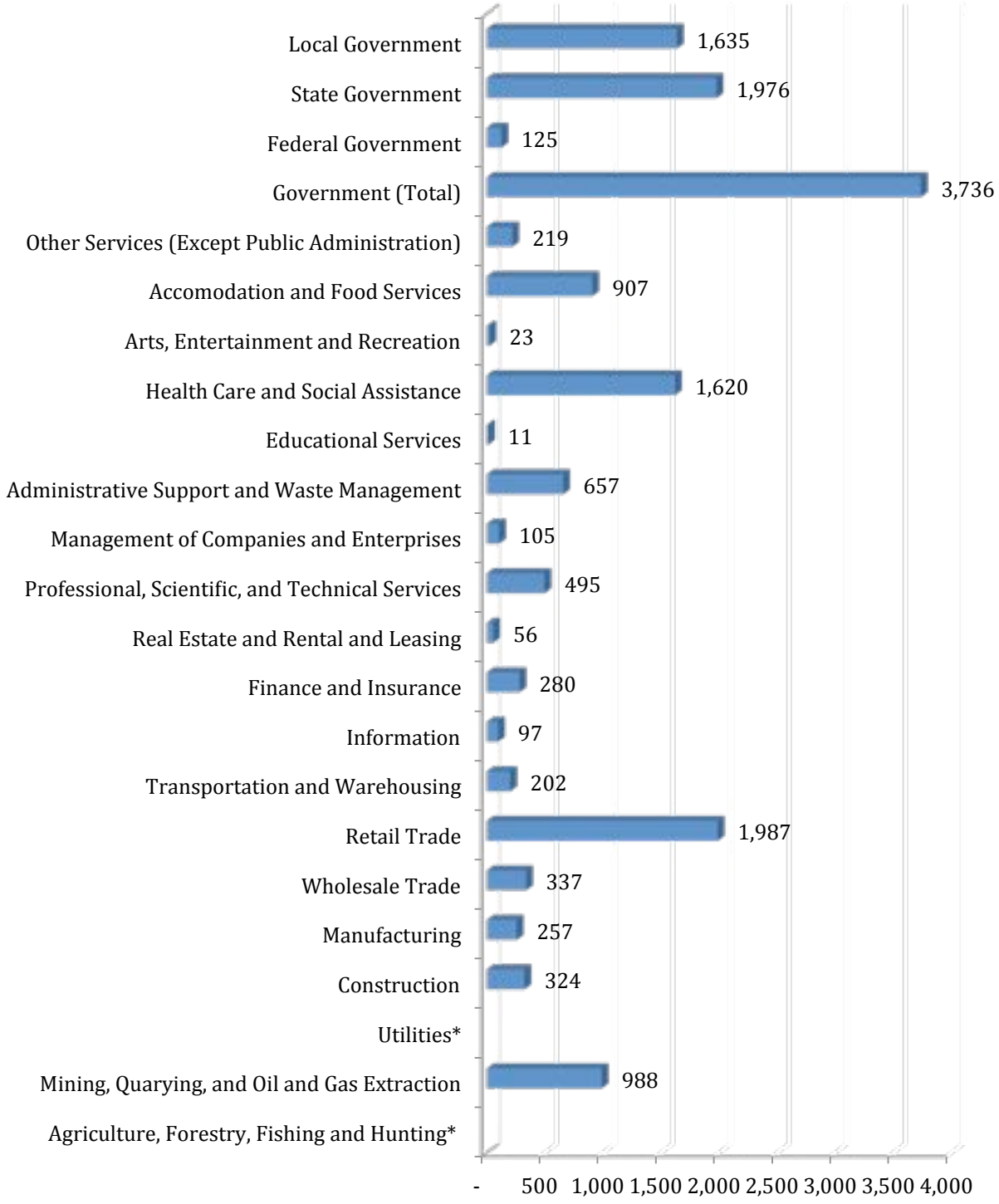
An economic base analysis considers these two sectors in looking at economic trends. The bellwether of a local economy, the basic sector "imports" purchasing power to the local area while "exporting" a product to outside markets. This purchasing power, in the form of wages and local taxes, provides the money necessary for the local supporting sector to produce the goods and services desired by the local population.

Figure 1 shows employment by industry in the first quarter of 2014 for Wise County. Government is the largest employer of any type, employing 3,736 people in the County. Health care and social assistance as well as retail are both larger industries in the County. Total employment in the County for the first quarter of 2014 was 12,458.

As is shown, only 988 people were employed in Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction in the County in the first quarter of 2014, which negatively impacts the County's base sector. In comparison, the U.S. Census reported that 1,987 people were employed in Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction as of March 2012, which indicates a loss of approximately 999 jobs in that sector over the course of 24 months in Wise County. Given that mines have continued to close throughout the second and third quarter of 2014, the number of Mining jobs lost is actually significantly higher than that. This is especially problematic because Mining Employment pays significantly more than other industries, with average weekly wages averaging $1,361, as opposed to the total average in all industries of $675, as shown in **Figure 2.**

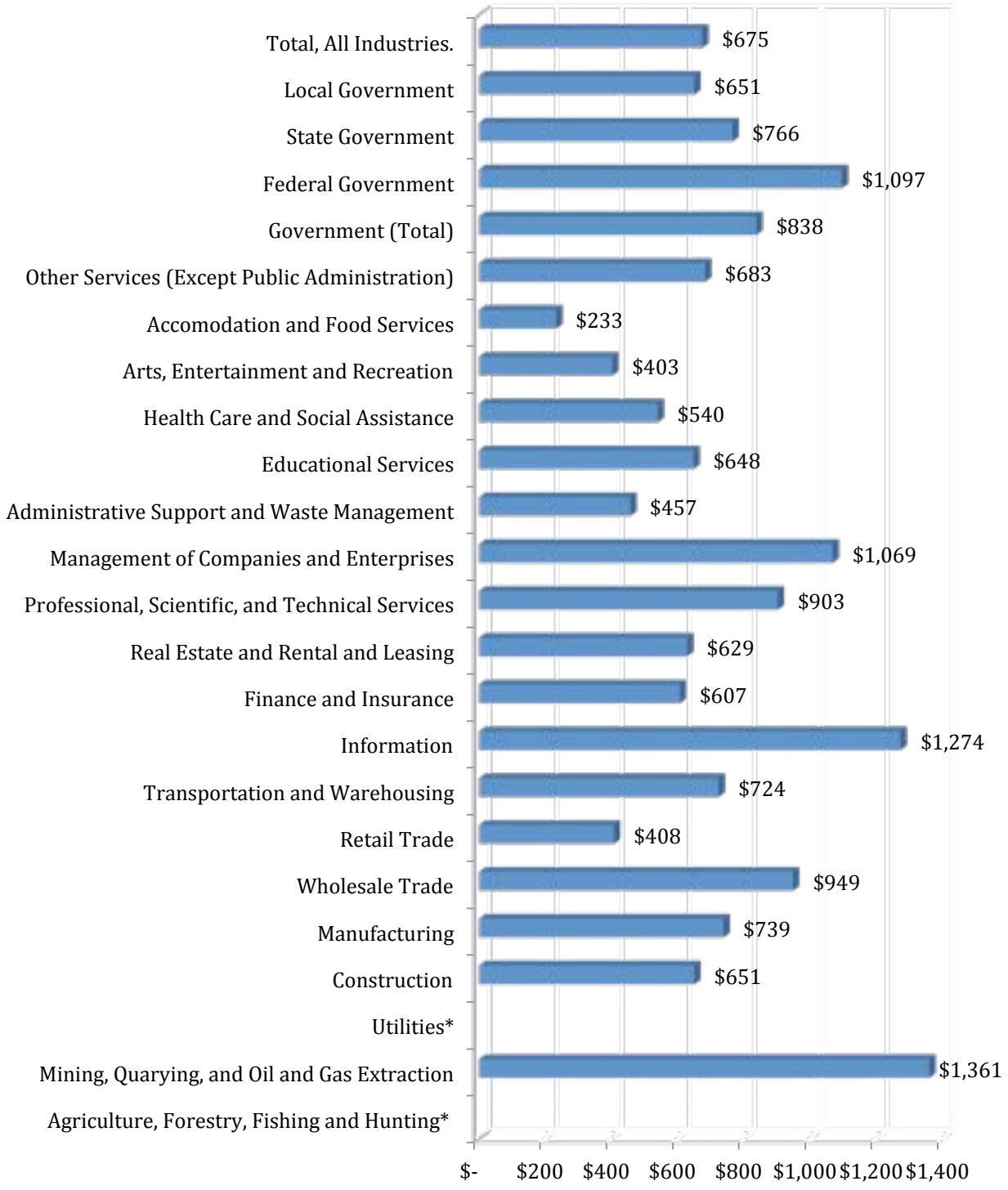
Figure 3 lists the fifty largest employers in Wise County.

Figure 1: Wise County Employment by Industry, 1st Quarter 2014



Note: Asterisk (*) indicates non-disclosable data.
Source: Virginia Employment Commission,
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2014.

Figure 2: Wise County Average Weekly Wages by Industry, 1st Quarter 2014



Note: Asterisk (*) indicates non-disclosable data.
Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2014.

Figure 3: Wise County 50 Largest Employers, 2014

1. Wise County School Board
2. Red Onion Correctional Center
3. Food City
4. Wallens Ridge Correctional Center
5. University of Virginia
6. Sykes Enterprises
7. Mountain Empire Community College
8. Heritage Hall
9. Bristol Regional Health System
10. County of Wise
11. Mullican Flooring
12. Mountain Empire Older Citizens
13. Shore Stop Store
14. Mill Branch Coal Corporation
15. Lowes' Home Centers, Inc.
16. A & A Enterprises Inc
17. Frontier Health
18. A & G Coal Corporation
19. Cumberland River Coal Company
20. Thompson and Litton, Inc.
21. In Home Care
22. Dominion Virginia Power
23. Virginia Department of Mines, Mineral & Energy
24. Humphrey's Enterprises
25. Nine Mile Mining Inc
26. Payless Supermarket
27. Telemed
28. Crutchfield Corporation
29. Wal Mart
30. Riggs Oil Company Black Diamond
31. Roth LLC
32. VDOT
33. Wise County Social Services
34. Red River Coal Company
35. Town of Big Stone Gap
36. Hardee's
37. Head Start
38. Bates Contracting & Const Inc
39. Huddle House
40. Miner's Exchange Bank
41. Maxxim Shared Service LLC
42. U.S. Department of Agriculture
43. Caring Touch Home Health Inc
44. Renos Roadhouse
45. Kmart
46. Maxxim Rebuild Co LLC
47. Rnse Enterprises Inc
48. Environmental Monitoring Inc
49. Paramont Coal Company Virginia
50. Town of Wise

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

2.6.5.2 *Commuting Patterns*

Table 13 reports commuting patterns for the County as of 2011, showing that 6,073 live and work in Wise County, while 12,366 people commute in to the County and 5,623 people commute out of the County. Norton city is the top destination for out-commuters, with 1,518 County residents working in Norton. Commuting patterns to neighboring coal-producing counties of Virginia and Kentucky represent a large portion of all commuting from the county, with just over 2,000 in-commuters travel to Wise County from both Lee and Dickenson County, Virginia.

From a historic perspective, in 1990, 77.4% of the county's resident workers worked within the county, down from 90.2% in 1980. This is a large contrast to conditions in 2011. Of the total 11,696 employed residents of Wise County, only 6,073, or 52% are employed within the County, with the remaining 48% commute out of the County. In-commuting to the county has also increased as of 2011, with the number of non-residents who chose Wise County as a place of employment rising from 3,725 in 1990 to 12,366 in 2011. The overall impact of increased in- and out-commuting points to an increased need for

transportation services and infrastructure, as well as higher fuel costs for commuters to travel to and from their job. This can mean less disposable income for those employees as well as less time for home and recreation activities.

Table 13: Wise County Commuting Patterns, 2011

People who live and work in the area	6,073
In-Commuters	12,366
Out-Commuters	5,623
Net In-Commuters (In-Commuters minus Out-Commuters)	6,743

Top 10 Places Residents are Commuting To	
Area	Workers
Norton city, VA	1,518
Washington County, VA	474
Dickenson County, VA	448
Lee County, VA	413
Russell County, VA	326
Scott County, VA	321
Tazewell County, VA	260
Bristol city, VA	174
Sullivan County, TN	173
Buchanan County, VA	150

Top 10 Places Workers are Commuting From	
Area	Workers
Lee County, VA	2,189
Dickenson County, VA	2,078
Russell County, VA	1,265
Scott County, VA	723
Washington County, VA	618
Sullivan County, VA	548
Norton city, VA	479
Tazewell County, VA	309
Letcher County, KY	249
Buchanan County, VA	227

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2011.

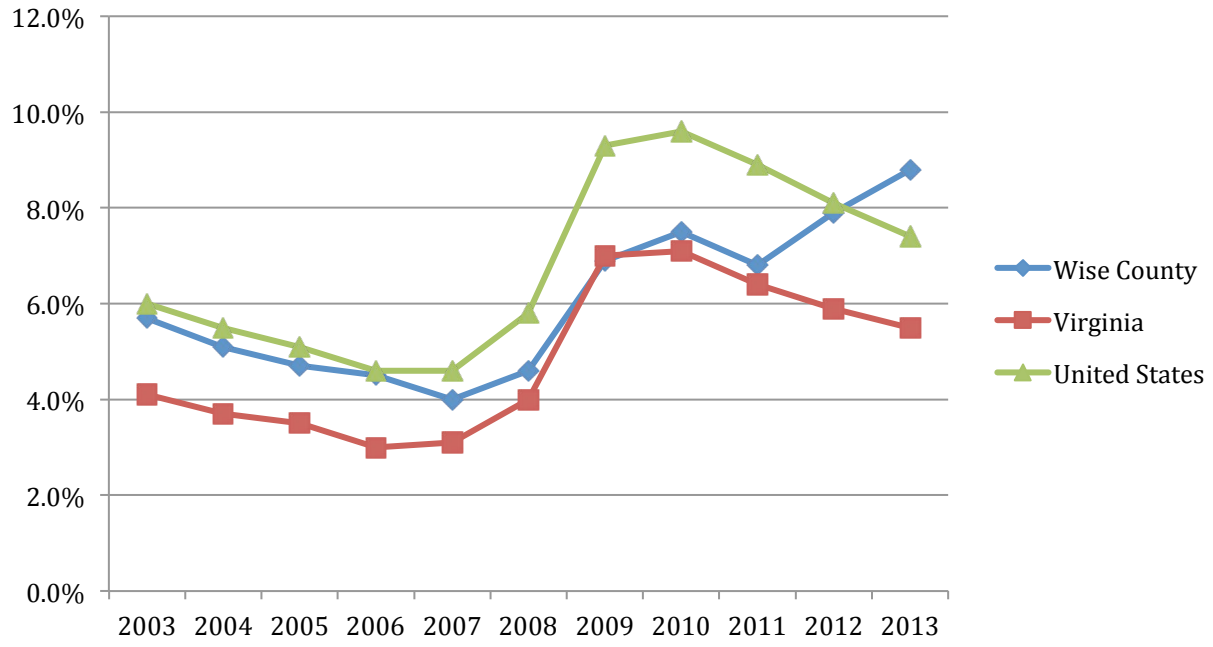
2.6.5.3 *Unemployment*

Table 14 and **Figure 4** show unemployment trends from 2003 to 2013 for Wise County, Virginia and the United States. While Virginia has enjoyed a lower than average unemployment rate for the past decade, Wise County had a higher rate, but was still relatively lower than the national rate across the time period. However, in mid 2011 the rate in Wise County began to spike due to discussed losses in the coal industry. In 2013 the unemployment rate in the County was 8.8%.

Table 14: Unemployment Trends, 2003-2013

	Wise County	Virginia	United States
2003	5.7%	4.1%	6.0%
2004	5.1%	3.7%	5.5%
2005	4.7%	3.5%	5.1%
2006	4.5%	3.0%	4.6%
2007	4.0%	3.1%	4.6%
2008	4.6%	4.0%	5.8%
2009	6.9%	7.0%	9.3%
2010	7.5%	7.1%	9.6%
2011	6.8%	6.4%	8.9%
2012	7.9%	5.9%	8.1%
2013	8.8%	5.5%	7.4%

Figure 4: Unemployment Trends Comparison, 2003-2013



Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

2.6.5.4 *Income and Poverty*

Table 15 includes general employment status data for the County in 2012, showing that 48.2% of the County's population is in the labor force. Note that the percent unemployed, 10.4% is higher than that shown in **Table 14,** for 2012, likely due to different sources, methods and margin of error.

As is shown in **Table 16,** median household income in 2012 was $35,120, and mean household income was $47,075. Per capita income was $18,693. Just over 20% of the County received Food Stamps/SNAP benefits during the year.

Tables 17 and **18** show the age, gender, educational attainment, and employment status of those below the poverty level in Wise County in 2012. It is estimated that nearly a quarter, 24.1%, of the County's population is below the poverty line, with 34.5 percent of children under 18 being in poverty, and 12.1% of those over 65. In addition to children being disproportionately affected by poverty, so are females, with 28.3% of females estimated to be living in poverty, compared to 19.9% of males. Those with less than a high school education are most likely to be in poverty, with a rate of 31.2%. It is estimated that 13.6% of those in the labor force are in poverty, with 10.5% of employed people being in poverty, and 41.5% being unemployed.

Table 15: Employment Status, Wise County, 2012

	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	33,875	
In labor force	16,319	48.20%
Civilian labor force	16,272	48.00%
Employed	14,580	43.00%
Unemployed	1,692	5.00%
Armed Forces	47	0.10%
Not in labor force	17,556	51.80%
Civilian labor force	16,272	16,272
Percent Unemployed	(X)	10.40%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Table 16: Household Income and Benefits, Wise County (2012 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)

	Number	Percent
Total households	15,673	
Less than $10,000	1,992	12.70%
$10,000 to $14,999	1,551	9.90%
$15,000 to $24,999	2,336	14.90%
$25,000 to $34,999	1,926	12.30%
$35,000 to $49,999	2,201	14.00%
$50,000 to $74,999	2,554	16.30%
$75,000 to $99,999	1,489	9.50%
$100,000 to $149,999	1,291	8.20%
$150,000 to $199,999	176	1.10%
$200,000 or more	157	1.00%
Median household income (dollars)	35,120	(X)
Mean household income (dollars)	47,075	(X)
With earnings	9,914	63.30%
Mean earnings (dollars)	51,849	(X)
With Social Security	7,022	44.80%
Mean Social Security income (dollars)	16,390	(X)
With retirement income	3,203	20.40%
Mean retirement income (dollars)	15,059	(X)
With Supplemental Security Income	1,734	11.10%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	6,942	(X)
With cash public assistance income	592	3.80%
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	2,149	(X)
With Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months	3,199	20.40%
Per capita income (dollars)	18,693	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Table 17: Estimated Poverty by Age and Gender, Wise County, 2012

	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Population for whom poverty status is determined	38,478	9,274	24.10%
AGE			
Under 18 years	8,312	2,869	34.50%
Related children under 18 years	8,231	2,788	33.90%
18 to 64 years	24,445	5,715	23.40%
65 years and over	5,721	690	12.10%
SEX			
Male	19,267	3,842	19.90%
Female	19,211	5,432	28.30%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Table 18: Estimated Poverty by Educational Attainment, Wise County 2012

	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Less than high school graduate	7,147	2,233	31.20%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	8,611	1,621	18.80%
Some college, associate's degree	7,392	1,384	18.70%
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,608	111	3.10%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Civilian labor force 16 years and over	16,025	2,178	13.60%
Employed	14,426	1,514	10.50%
Male	7,895	721	9.10%
Female	6,531	793	12.10%
Unemployed	1,599	664	41.50%
Male	1,047	407	38.90%
Female	552	257	46.60%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

2.6.5.5 *Retail Sales*

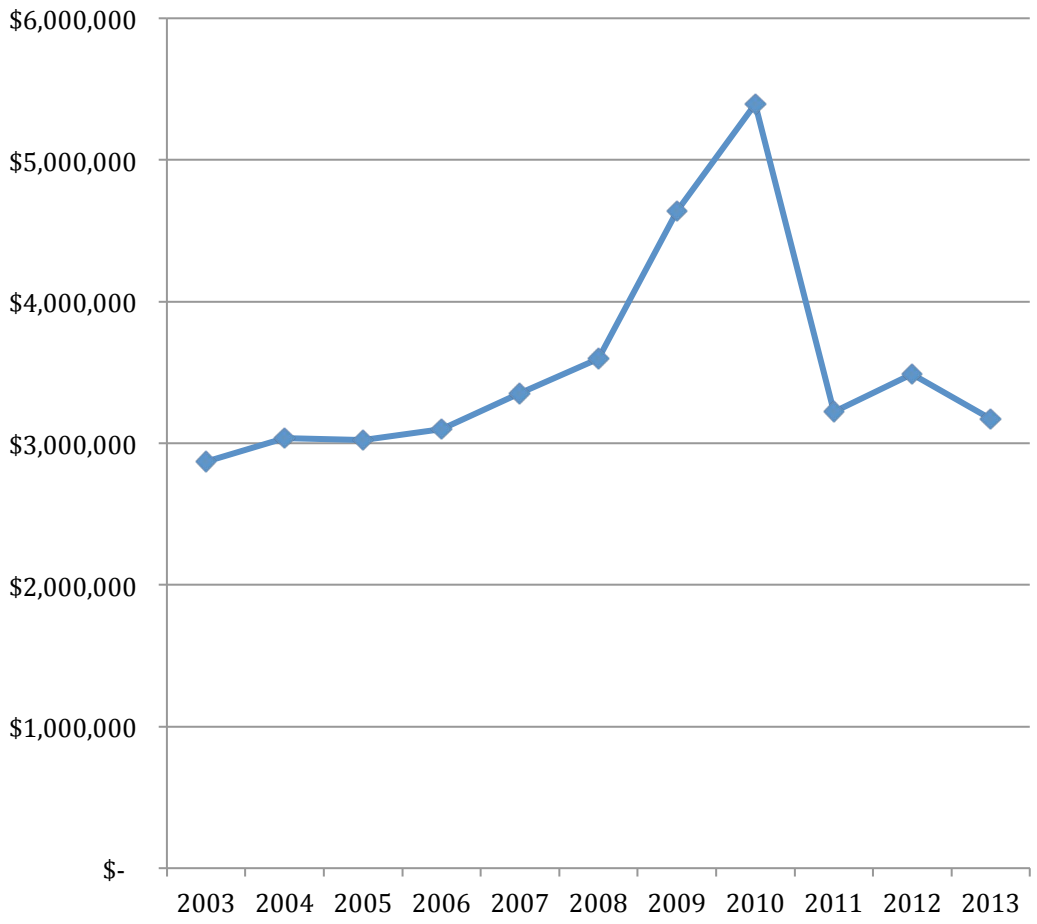
It was noted in the 1998 Plan that Wise County became more of a retail trade center during the 1990s, with retail sales in the county the highest in the region. **Table 19 and Figure 5** show trends in local option sales tax revenues from 2003-2013 in comparison with that of Virginia. The drop in revenues in 2011 coincides with the wave of mining layoffs.

Table 19: Local Option Sales Tax Trends, 2003-2013

	Wise County	Virginia
2003	$ 2,870,353	$ 838,275,059
2004	$ 3,036,660	$ 914,499,686
2005	$ 3,021,311	$ 976,923,577
2006	$ 3,100,940	$ 1,028,544,074
2007	$ 3,354,441	$ 1,056,766,678
2008	$ 3,594,616	$ 1,032,815,078
2009	$ 4,641,779	$ 979,594,664
2010	$ 5,397,208	$ 992,820,512
2011	$ 3,221,487	$ 1,035,981,229
2012	$ 3,486,847	$ 1,080,662,042
2013	$ 3,173,114	$ 1,093,292,668

Note: This data is based on Virginia sales tax revenues deposited, rather than the actual taxable sales figures as reported on a dealer's return.
Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, Revenue Forecasting

Figure 5: Local Option Sales Tax Trends, Wise County, 2003-2013



2.6.5.6 *Local Economic Development*

There are a variety of local economic development tools in Wise County. The county has an industrial development authority and a full time economic development officer on the county staff. The county has developed two industrial parks, located in Esserville and Blackwood. In 1994, the county constructed its first shell building in the Esserville park, and the facility was sold shortly thereafter.

The Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA), a state legislative initiative funded by coal and oil road tax funds, has been operational in the state's seven coalfield counties since 1988. VCEDA offers financial assistance related to basic employment within its service area. Authority funds have been utilized in several projects in Wise County, including the Fournier furniture manufacturing plant near St. Paul, the AT&T Dual Party Relay Center in Norton and the extension of utilities to the Blackwood industrial park. The Authority also successfully marketed the Esserville shell building.

Following national and statewide trends, an increased emphasis on tourism represents a growing focus of economic development efforts in Wise County and southwestern Virginia. The county is a member of a regional tourism development authority that is exploring ways to promote tourism in the area.

Several issues emerge from the preceding data concerning Wise County's economic activity.

The first is the decrease in mine employment in the face of relatively stable coal production during the recent past. High wage jobs in the coal industry are not being replaced by comparable paying basic sector jobs, nor is there currently an expectation that they will be. While new jobs are being created in manufacturing, these wages remain well below those of the coal industry. Moreover, although the county has seen a tremendous increase in retail sales employment, these jobs cannot provide an economic base for Wise County.

Recognizing that industrial recruitment alone is not a realistic long-term solution to economic development problems, Wise County can and should examine other known "legs" of economic development, such as expanding existing businesses and creating new small- and medium-sized "home grown" businesses.

The county's wealth of natural and human resources translates to a range of development opportunities. Forming development strategies to take advantage of these resources will bolster the county's long-term economic health. With proper implementation, alternative approaches to economic development such as cottage industries, cooperatives, back-office development and incubator facilities, can play a major role in the long-term diversification of the county's economy.

Tourism, as yet a nascent source of employment in the county, has promise for providing one more component of the economic diversity mix being sought by county officials. Tourism exerts a strong economic impact across the entire commonwealth. Its scenic, historic and recreational attractions make Virginia one of the most popular travel destinations in the United States. Resultant travel related expenditures, tax revenues and travel industry payroll make tourism a major player in the state's overall economy.

Wise County's historic heritage and scenic beauty lure a wide variety of visitors. Yet its lack of easy access serves to hamper tourism development, borne out by the fact that the LENOWISCO district is consistently the least visited place in Virginia, ranking last among the state's planning districts in travel expenditures, tax receipts and travel-generated jobs and payroll. Yet, oddly, similar studies have revealed that southwestern Virginia has the highest percentage of return visitors of any area of the Commonwealth.

The challenge for Wise County will be to develop a strategy to tap into the tourism market existing in other parts of Virginia and nearby states. Yet the county must remain cognizant of the fact that the relatively low wages associated with the tourism industry will not make tourism the sole savior of the county's economy.

Finally, Wise County's two post-secondary institutions, the University of Virginia at Wise and Mountain Empire Community College, are important assets for building a sound economic future for the county. These two schools already have an important direct economic impact. Both schools should also be viewed as key components of a long term economic development strategy for the county and the region. Any plans for Wise County's future development should include consideration of the impact that implementation of such plans will have on these two institutions. Enhancing the growth and prosperity of both schools can provide direct and indirect economic dividends to the county, as well as improving the overall quality of life.

2.6.5.7 *Housing Conditions*

Provision of adequate and attainable housing is a vital foundation for supporting sustainable community and economic development. Demographic factors such as an aging population and changing economic conditions play a role in the development of policies and actions related to housing needs and demand. Unique community characteristics and diverse development patterns in different parts of the County impact policy and implementation strategies.

Table 20 shows housing occupancy in the County. With a total of 17,940 units in 2010, the County had an 89% occupancy rate. The rental vacancy rate was 9.8%. Housing Tenure is shown in **Table 21**, which shows that 71.5% of housing units were owner-occupied in 2010, and 28.5% of units were renter-occupied. The average household size for owner-occupied units was 2.44 persons, just slightly higher than the average household size for renter-occupied units of 2.31.

As is shown in **Table 22**, two-thirds of the housing units in Wise County are single-unit detached, and a quarter of the housing units are mobile homes, with the remaining 8.3% as attached dwelling units.

The 1998 Plan noted a need for new housing in the County, as well as the trend towards an increasing number of mobile homes and manufactured housing to meet that need. Nearly 10% of the County's current housing was built from 2000 to 2010, with another 15% built during the 1990s. **Table 23** shows the year that housing was built in Wise County, with approximately a quarter of the County's housing stock being built since 1990.

As is discussed in the 1998 Plan, while mobile homes have fulfilled a critical need for new housing in the county, the longer term problem may be growing, since the estimated useful life of a mobile home is considerably less than that of a conventional home. Moreover, many of these mobile homes are placed in mobile home parks in the county. There is substantial support for the view that many people live in mobile home parks because they cannot find a plot of land to purchase. As such, however, these homes are taxed as personal property rather than real property, thus accounting for a smaller portion of local taxes than conventional housing. Yet, residents of these parks require the same public services as the rest of the county's residents.

There is a recognized need in the County for housing rehabilitation and maintenance assistance for low-income and elderly households. While there are several programs in the county directed at the rehabilitation of low income housing, there is a demand for more such services. Local housing authorities regularly apply for and administer Community Development Block Grants targeting specific communities with comprehensive housing rehabilitation. In addition, there are several non-profit organizations providing housing repairs on an individual basis to qualifying low-income residents.

Table 20: Housing Occupancy, Wise County, 2010

HOUSING OCCUPANCY	Number	Percent
Total housing units	17,940	100
Occupied housing units	15,968	89
Vacant housing units	1,972	11
For rent	497	2.8
Rented, not occupied	32	0.2
For sale only	208	1.2
Sold, not occupied	80	0.4
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	200	1.1
All other vacants	955	5.3
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent) [8]	1.8	
Rental vacancy rate (percent) [9]	9.8	

[8] The homeowner vacancy rate is the proportion of the homeowner inventory that is vacant "for sale." It is computed by dividing the total number of vacant units "for sale only" by the sum of owner-occupied units, vacant units that are "for sale only," and vacant units that have been sold but not yet occupied; and then multiplying by 100.
[9] The rental vacancy rate is the proportion of the rental inventory that is vacant "for rent." It is computed by dividing the total number of vacant units "for rent" by the sum of the renter-occupied units, vacant units that are "for rent," and vacant units that have been rented but not yet occupied; and then multiplying by 100.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

Table 21: Housing Tenure, Wise County, 2010

HOUSING TENURE	Number	Percent
Occupied housing units	15,968	100
Owner-occupied housing units	11,422	71.5
Population in owner-occupied housing units	27,816	
Average household size of owner-occupied units	2.44	
Renter-occupied housing units	4,546	28.5
Population in renter-occupied housing units	10,505	
Average household size of renter-occupied units	2.31	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

Table 22: Units in Structure, Wise County, 2012

UNITS IN STRUCTURE		
Total housing units	17,935	17,935
1-unit, detached	11,953	66.60%
1-unit, attached	178	1.00%
2 units	360	2.00%
3 or 4 units	282	1.60%
5 to 9 units	310	1.70%
10 to 19 units	125	0.70%
20 or more units	223	1.20%
Mobile home	4,501	25.10%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	3	0.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Table 23: Year Structure Built, Wise County, 2012

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT		
Total housing units	17,935	17,935
Built 2010 or later	104	0.60%
Built 2000 to 2009	1,733	9.70%
Built 1990 to 1999	2,726	15.20%
Built 1980 to 1989	2,418	13.50%
Built 1970 to 1979	4,153	23.20%
Built 1960 to 1969	1,536	8.60%
Built 1950 to 1959	1,792	10.00%
Built 1940 to 1949	1,408	7.90%
Built 1939 or earlier	2,065	11.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

2.6.6 Affordable Housing

The availability of workforce housing has real impacts on the regional economy. The persons and families that need affordable workforce housing are, for the most part, 'working people'. This is a particular hardship for those who work in entry level jobs that are vital to sustaining a good economy and a good quality of life for everyone, and also includes essential workers (police, fire, health care, utilities, teachers and child care workers) retail, industrial, office and service industry workers, entry- and mid-level professionals and public sector (government and non-profit community organizations) employees. The relationship between commercial enterprises and workforce housing is key to employment supply and demand factors, focusing location of residence, business location and transportation and accessibility.

While the lack of employment opportunities and low incomes play a role in the housing problems within the county, another is that many people who work in the county choose to, or are forced to, live outside the county. Part of the reason for this trend may be a lack of suitable housing. Housing policies should encourage a variety of suitable housing types for all income levels.

2.6.7 Public Housing

The Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority serves the citizens of Wise County by providing and promoting the development of affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities for low-to-moderate income households in a safe environment by revitalizing and maintaining neighborhoods, and continuing an active partnership with the County of Wise.

The following subsidized communities are owned or managed by Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, totally 442 units.

Appalachian Towers
505 West Main St., Appalachia, VA
36 units (1 BR units)

Clinchview Apts
3311 Third Ave., St. Paul, VA
60 units (1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 BR units)

Commonwealth Apts
603 Commonwealth Ave NE, Wise, VA
26 units (1 & 2 BR units)

Inman Village Apts
189 Don Whitehead Dr, Appalachia, VA
88 units (1, 2 & 3 BR units)

John Vandiver Manor
117 Vandiver Drive, Coeburn, VA
21 units (1 BR units)

Litchfield Manor
107 Litchfield St. NW, Coeburn, VA
57 units (1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 BR units)

Monte Vista Apts
101 Monte Vista Lane, Big Stone Gap, VA
20 units (1, 2, & 3 BR units)

Old Mill Village Apts
11430 Old Mill Village Rd, Pound, VA
34 units (1, 2 & 3 BR units)

Ridgeview Apts
301 Walnut St., Appalachia, VA
20 units (1, 2, 3 & 4 BR units)

Sheffield Acres Apts
12124 Retford Rd, Coeburn, VA
56 units (1, 2 & 3 BR units)

Stonebriar Apts
Fourth & Broad St., St. Paul, VA
24 units (1 & 2 BR units)

In addition to these housing units, housing is provided for low-income families and individuals in privately owned housing through Section 8 rental subsidies. Wise County, Big Stone Gap and Norton all have their own programs.

2.6.8 Senior Housing

Retired people often have smaller household sizes, reduced incomes, and can suffer impaired abilities and mobility as they age. Without housing choices, long-time residents may be forced to leave the community they have always lived in to find appropriate housing as they age. It is expected that senior housing will be a growing concern as baby boomers age.

Senior housing is generally based on market-rate rents, and provides a community for seniors to live in that provides for their increasing needs. Communities that are designed for those 55 years of age and older are increasingly committed to an “active lifestyle” for seniors and cater to the increased health and vitality of today’s seniors.

2.7 Land Use Overview

2.7.1 Land Use Constraints

2.7.1.1 *Physical Considerations to Land Usage*

There are a number of factors that severely limit the amount of developable land in Wise County. This section describes existing land use suitability, which is further described and mapped as part of the Land Suitability Analysis and Model, below. Primary constraints to development in the county include steep slopes, poor soil conditions, flood prone areas, mineral land under development, land subject to subsidence from underground mining, and National Forest lands and other public and private property not available for development.

2.7.1.2 *Slopes*

Areas with slopes in excess of 20 percent are generally considered unsuitable for urban type development. This by itself presents Wise County with severe development problems, since 92.4 percent of the county's 265,000-acre land area has slopes in excess of 20 percent. Another 2.3 percent has slopes between 10 and 20 percent, leaving 5.3 percent of the county with slopes of 10 percent or less.

2.7.1.3 *Soil Conditions*

The engineering suitability of soils, or the ability of a particular soil to support various land uses, is of primary consideration in evaluating the suitability of land for development. Soil properties such as percolation, compaction, density, slope, shrink-swell potential, depth to bedrock, underlying material, location, water table and composition are factors considered in determining the suitability and limitations a soil may possess for different land uses.

Based on an engineering evaluation of each soil type found in Wise County conducted by soil scientists from Virginia Tech, each soil type as identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's *Soil Survey of Wise County, Virginia* was rated with respect to its engineering suitability for homesites; large building foundations; basements; lagoons; roads, streets, and parking lots; and septic tank drainfields. Each soil type was given a rating of either good, fair, poor or unsuited for each usage category.

Public sewage collection systems do not generally provide service outside municipal corporate limits, although the C-N-W regional wastewater plant near Coeburn does serve a significant portion of the county. With the incorporated areas of the county having limited quantities of remaining land suitable for development, future residential development will be forced to occur in areas not now served by public sewage collection. The suitability of future residential areas for the construction and use of septic tank drainfields is of great importance to the health of Wise County residents. Existing developed areas may be experiencing health hazards if not served by sewage collection systems, and very little of the county is considered "good" or even "fair" for the use of septic tanks.

The areas rated "good" and "fair" are the areas most suitable for the development without the provision

of public sewage collection services prior to initial development. Very little, if any, development should occur in the areas rated "poor" prior to providing public sewage collection services and no development should occur in areas rated "unsuited" unless such services are provided prior to development. Dense development in areas rated "poor" and "unsuited" without public sewage collection and treatment facilities has the potential to create very severe health hazards.

2.7.1.4 *Floodplains*

As was painfully pointed out by the April, 1977 flood, many of the developed areas of the county are subject to flooding. Additionally, many of the areas otherwise "best" suited for septic tank drainfields and thus residential development are also subject to flooding. The future development of flood prone areas is regulated by the county's Flood Plain Management Ordinance, as required for the county's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. These regulations allow construction in flood plains if structures are elevated above the reach of the one percent chance flood (commonly called a 100-year flood). No development is allowed within the identified floodways.

The topographic and rainfall conditions typical to Wise County are conducive to high velocity flash floods that may inundate the entire valley floor of the narrow V- shaped mountain valleys. Such floods are particularly destructive to both life and property.

The simplest method of not risking costly and deadly destruction from the ravages of floods is by reserving areas known as "floodways" for the unobstructed flow of flood waters. In the adjacent flood plains, new structures should be elevated above the level of the one percent chance flood (that flood which has a one percent annual chance of occurring) and existing buildings should be floodproofed to at least the level of the one percent chance flood. Those people unable or unwilling to relocate out of flood prone areas should be encouraged to acquire flood insurance.

2.7.1.5 *Mineral Land Under Development*

As discussed in more detail in this Plan, Wise County is a heavily developed area for coal mining. The extent of this mining, both on the surface and underground, is an important factor influencing surface development.

According to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, in 1995 there were 26,213 acres of land under permit for mining in Wise County. This included land for which mining was planned, as well as that being actively mined and that having been reclaimed but not released from bond.

2.7.1.6 *Land Owned by Coal and Resource Companies and the U.S. Government*

Land ownership can be divided into surface ownership, mineral ownership and "fee simple" ownership. The vast majority of Wise County's mineral acreage is owned by various private coal and resource development companies and USDA Forest Service. Over 50% of the county's surface is, for all practical purposes, not available to private individuals and nonresource companies for purchase or development.

In addition, corporate ownership of most of the minerals beneath the surface create concerns about potential mining and possible subsidence[10].

2.7.1.7 *Land Subject to Potential Subsidence*

Only rough estimates are available for total surface acreage disturbed by surface mining in Wise County. Approximately 23,550 acres (8.9 percent) had been mined by August 3, 1977 (the enactment date of the Federal Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1977; P.L. 95-87), and 38,783 acres (14.6 percent of the county) were disturbed between 1975 and 1994. It is not clear, however, how many of these acres have been mined more than one time, thus the total acreage disturbed is not available from current data.

What is clear is that surface mined land is second only to forest land as the county's largest land use. The Virginia Division of Mined Land Reclamation notes that since the Commonwealth's permanent reclamation program was established in 1981, 80 percent of the permits have designated forestry as the post-mining land use, 12 percent were designated as hayland/pasture, and eight percent as commercial/residential/recreation. Although surface mined land has been used for a variety of urban type land uses, including residential development, mobile home parks, school sites, commercial development and industrial sites, the development of surface mined land should be approached with caution. Subsurface conditions are often unstable, and there have been many problems with subsidence and settling after these areas have been developed. Some of these mined areas can be used if the site is properly engineered and subsurface conditions are evaluated carefully. Because of the development costs involved, these areas are generally more suited for commercial rather than residential development.

Much of Wise County has been deep mined on at least one coal seam. Any time a void is created below the surface, the possibility of subsidence is present. This problem has grown in recent years with the use of high extraction mining methods, either "longwall" or "room and pillar." In conventional room and pillar mining, only 50 to 60 percent, or less, of the coal is actually removed, with the remainder left in place to provide surface support. In high extraction room and pillar mining, as much as 80 percent of the coal is removed and "controlled" or "uncontrolled" subsidence occurs. In longwall mining, the extraction rate is nearly 100 percent. As the longwall panel moves through the seam, the roof is allowed to cave in behind it. The extent of surface damage due to subsidence depends on many factors, including geology and seam depth. Deep mining is prohibited by zoning ordinances in all of the county's incorporated towns and the City of Norton, and surface mining is restricted. Deep mining is allowed in all unincorporated areas of the county by the county zoning ordinance, with surface mining restricted only in heavily developed areas.

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[10] *Center for Appalachian Studies, Boone, NC, Land Ownership Patterns and Their Impacts on Appalachian Communities, Volume 6: Virginia, 1981.*

2.7.2 Existing Land Use

2.7.2.1 *Current Development Patterns*

Wise County's present land use pattern was created by past decisions and actions, no doubt based on the "best" information available to decision makers at the time, who likely put individual parcels of land into those uses they felt would prove most beneficial. Many decision makers, individuals as well as representatives of corporate and public interests, have over time created the composite picture which is Wise County's existing land use.

Economic conditions, technology and social attitudes are continually changing. As these changes occur, they are reflected in an area's land use pattern. An existing land use map provides a "picture" of the land use pattern at a point in time, the composite of many decisions put into action over time.

Some land use patterns reflect dying trends, i.e. land uses that are ceasing to be functional. Other land use patterns reflect emerging trends, i.e. land uses that will continue to be functional long into the future. It is the purpose of an analysis of existing land use to discern these trends as a basis for future plans. Prevailing structural land use patterns outside incorporated areas are classified by function such as agricultural-rural residential, single-family or general residential, limited or general business, light or heavy industrial and recreation-conservation. Following is a more detailed explanation of each category:

Agricultural/Rural Residential - Predominantly rural uses such as agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, open space and residential use in a rural environment. Single-Family or General Residential - Low- or high-density concentrations of residential units of all types (single- and multi-family and manufactured homes), plus certain public and/or commercial uses in small concentrations.

Limited or General Business - A wide range of retail, wholesale, service and office uses, either catering to the needs of residents of nearby neighborhoods (limited) or the traveling public (general).

Light or Heavy Industrial - Light or heavy industrial and manufacturing uses, as well as related service, support and business uses.

Conservation-Recreation - Those areas uniquely suited for conservation or recreational uses due to their natural features, association with area history or potential to support development of recreational facilities serving the public welfare.

Urban and Built-Up Land. Urban and built-up areas (defined as a reasonably significant number of structures appearing to possess a community relationship and common focal area) are closely aligned with the transportation network that is itself closely aligned with the streams of the mountain valleys. It is only on the flattened mountain tops in the vicinity of Hurricane and Maple Gap and in portions of Powell Valley that the road network, and thus built-up development, does not follow the courses of the county's streams. While most urban and built-up land is associated with incorporated areas, a considerable amount of built-up type development has occurred outside these areas as well. Typically, and in the case of Wise County, such areas that are not a part of a town or city have fewer public

services available to residents and businesses than do their incorporated neighbors. The existence of urban and built-up development in areas of less than "good" suitability for septic drainfields is obvious, highlighting the potential for health problems that could be minimized through the availability of public sewage facilities.

Agricultural Land. Very little of Wise County being used for agricultural purposes, for cropland, pasture land or orchards, but not include woodlands on farms. The small percentage of the county's land area being used for agricultural purposes reflects the overall unsuitability of the topography for such pursuits. Unfortunately, the same land that has potential farming (flat, drained, etc) also has great value for future urban and built-up development.

Surface Mined Disturbed Land. This surface mining activity produced coal, created jobs, polluted streams, created high walls and many acres of relatively "flat" land. The potential uses of this newly created "flat" land are uncertain. Possible potential uses include practically everything from residential to industrial, agricultural to commercial. There is precedent for the establishment of cooperative arrangements between the mining industry and local government for dedicating some of the corporately owned lands for public use. Sites for the former and present Wise County landfills were provided by mining companies, as were sites for the county's industrial parks. A mining company donated a tract on the border of Wise and Dickenson Counties to the state for use as a state prison site. Such agreements help advance the goal of economic development and industrial diversification and should be encouraged by Wise County's elected officials whenever appropriate. Actual development of these areas will hinge primarily on economic considerations, i.e. development costs. Particular care should be exercised in the development of these surface mined areas since their "flatness" may hide potentially costly or dangerous subsurface features.

Forest Land. The bulk of Wise County's land area is in forest. The county's forests are a very valuable resource. More than 35,000 acres, of the county's forest land is presently managed by the USDA Forest Service as a part of the Jefferson National Forest. This land is managed on a "multiple use" basis, not only to produce commercial timber and other forest products, but to provide improved game habitat, protect and improve watersheds and biological diversity and to provide access and facilities for the public to enjoy a variety of outdoor recreational experiences such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, swimming and picnicking. Fully developed on a "multiple use" basis, Wise County's forests will be a valuable resource to both present and future generations, and such development should be encouraged.

2.7.3 Implications for Future Land Use

Wise County has many physical factors limiting the amount of land available for future residential, commercial and industrial development, including steep slopes, shallow depth to bedrock, sinkholes, poor soil percolation, flooding and potential mining- related subsidence. All these factors can create very high or prohibitive development costs. Moreover, additional burden may fall on the taxpayers when, after initial development is completed and as residential densities increase, problems arise which the public sector is called upon to solve.

Another factor limiting the amount of land for future development in Wise County is that sizeable areas of the county are not generally available for private commercial or residential development, instead held by resource development companies or the federal government. All this makes it extremely important to delineate those areas most suitable for various uses, to acknowledge limitations to development and, where possible, mitigate these limitations through sound planning and public investment decisions. Furthermore, recognition of the limited land suitable for development heightens the importance of developing policies that will maximize the potential of those areas already developed.

Moving Forward. Much of the county's urban-type development has occurred in the south central portion of the county, primarily along U.S. 58A, with a concentration of commercial development in the Wise/Norton and St. Paul areas, despite localities' having lost population, but having the most complete public utility infrastructure systems in the county. Some new development and redevelopment also has occurred in the Big Stone Gap, Coeburn, Appalachia and Pound areas, but the smaller communities are struggling.

However, there are many factors that support and encourage development, including available land inside current municipal boundaries, the effective management of water and sewage utilities (greater coordination is required, and consolidation encouraged), a functional transportation system and outstanding education programs and institutions.

Careful thought should be given to the determination of population densities that can be supported in a given area of the county without the provision of public utilities. Provision of public water generally spurs residential development, creating potential health hazards unless sewerage service is also provided or densities are encouraged to remain low through various land use policies.

One of the positive aspects of Wise County's previous development is that the population is relatively compact in certain areas of the county, and joint efforts among towns and the county have resulted in water and sewer service being made available to a larger area of the county, with the potential for future extension.

Careful, creative, long-range planning could alleviate some of the limitations that presently exist regarding land development in Wise County. Once areas have been developed, especially where public dollars have been spent to provide infrastructure, the county can use all its policies and ordinances to protect those areas from adverse impacts.

About Reversion. When this planning process began, there was much speculation and anecdotal commentary about which communities would survive and which were likely to begin the reversion process. Reversion is a voluntary surrendering of municipal independence. Virginia's Reversion Statutes permit an independent municipality to revert (or return) to an unincorporated status, potentially integrating the former community into the unincorporated county. Typically, this is considered when communities seem to have little choice: either continue to struggle fiscally and alone or give up independence. The state's Commission on Local Government annually compiles a "fiscal stress" index for each of the 133 local governments in Virginia — an indicator of how challenged a jurisdiction is to generate local revenue. The state's cities are consistently more stressed than its counties. In the most recent report that covered the 2013-14 fiscal year, 22 localities were rated as having "high" fiscal stress.

Reversion created a large shadow during the Plan development – Which community? When? What happens next to the community? To the County? What does it mean to residents and businesses? Fortunately, the Plan process included an opportunity for in-depth discussion with community leaders which ALL indicated NO intention to initiate or consider reversion and that there were opportunities for each community to move forward. This shouldn't be interpreted to mean that there are not significant challenges facing some of the communities, but as of the date of this Plan, none believed the challenges were insurmountable. The opportunity for a coordinated WIse County remains viable.

2.8 Alternative Development Scenarios

Alternatives Analysis is intended to help compare alternative future land use development patterns. As the community updates its comprehensive plan, there are choices about community character, development intensity and the location of new growth. The consideration of alternative development scenarios will help the County select a future development pattern that is consistent with community values and resources and identify policies and strategies that best achieve community's goals. Identifying and comparing alternative development scenarios begins with an understanding of current conditions, challenges and opportunities. Consideration of alternative scenarios allows the community to:

Purpose of Alternatives Analysis

- ***To reflect a clear understanding of the existing conditions in the community***
- ***To propose growth trends and development patterns which reflect realistic possibilities for communities and the County***
- ***To compare the relative impacts of different growth strategies***
- ***Used a predictive model (GIS data based) to blend data (not a black box)***

- Establish a clear understanding of the existing conditions in the community.
- Identify realistic alternatives that propose growth trends and development patterns which reflect realistic possibilities for communities and the County.
- Compare the relative impacts of different growth strategies that evaluate impacts of different scenarios.
- Select a preferred scenario is a consensus-building process.

2.8.1 Recent Development Activity

Development activity, as evidenced by building permit activity, is occurring, shown in **Table 24**. Though it is has been decreasing, as shown in **Figure 6**, the decline appears to have flattened.

Table 24: All Building Permit Activity

Year	New Residential	New Modular	DWMH	SWMH	Remodel / Addition Residential	Remodel / Addition Commercial	New Commercial	Non-Taxable	Total
2003	60	11	102	147	56	14	19	9	418
2004	56	7	100	151	47	10	12	13	396
2005	58	10	102	144	54	14	12	18	412
2006	57	9	88	90	39	14	5	20	322
2007	46	6	91	119	49	15	10	14	350
2008	49	3	80	81	39	10	21	10	293
2009	31	4	74	106	31	8	15	6	275
2010	18	2	56	82	31	7	11	17	224
2011	22	1	47	71	25	13	17	10	206
2012	14	2	43	76	39	8	9	13	204

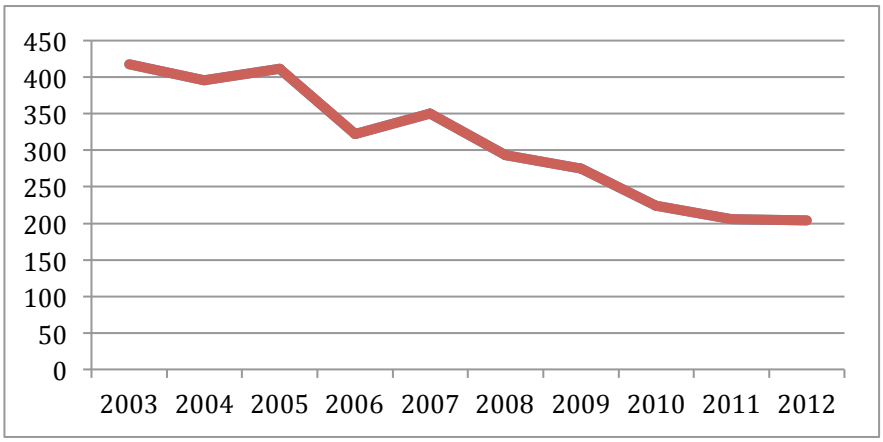
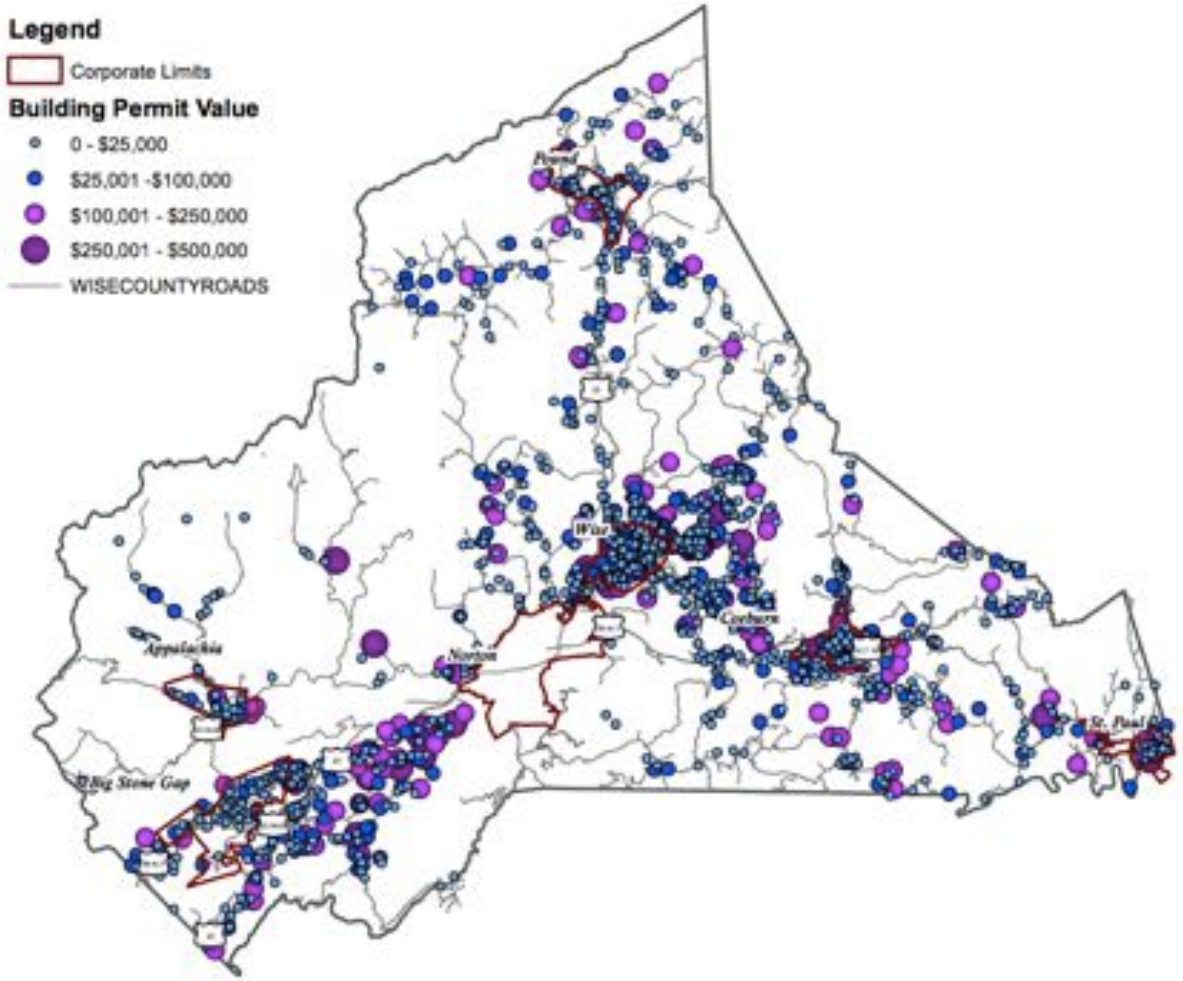


Figure 6: Building Permit Activity, 2003-2012

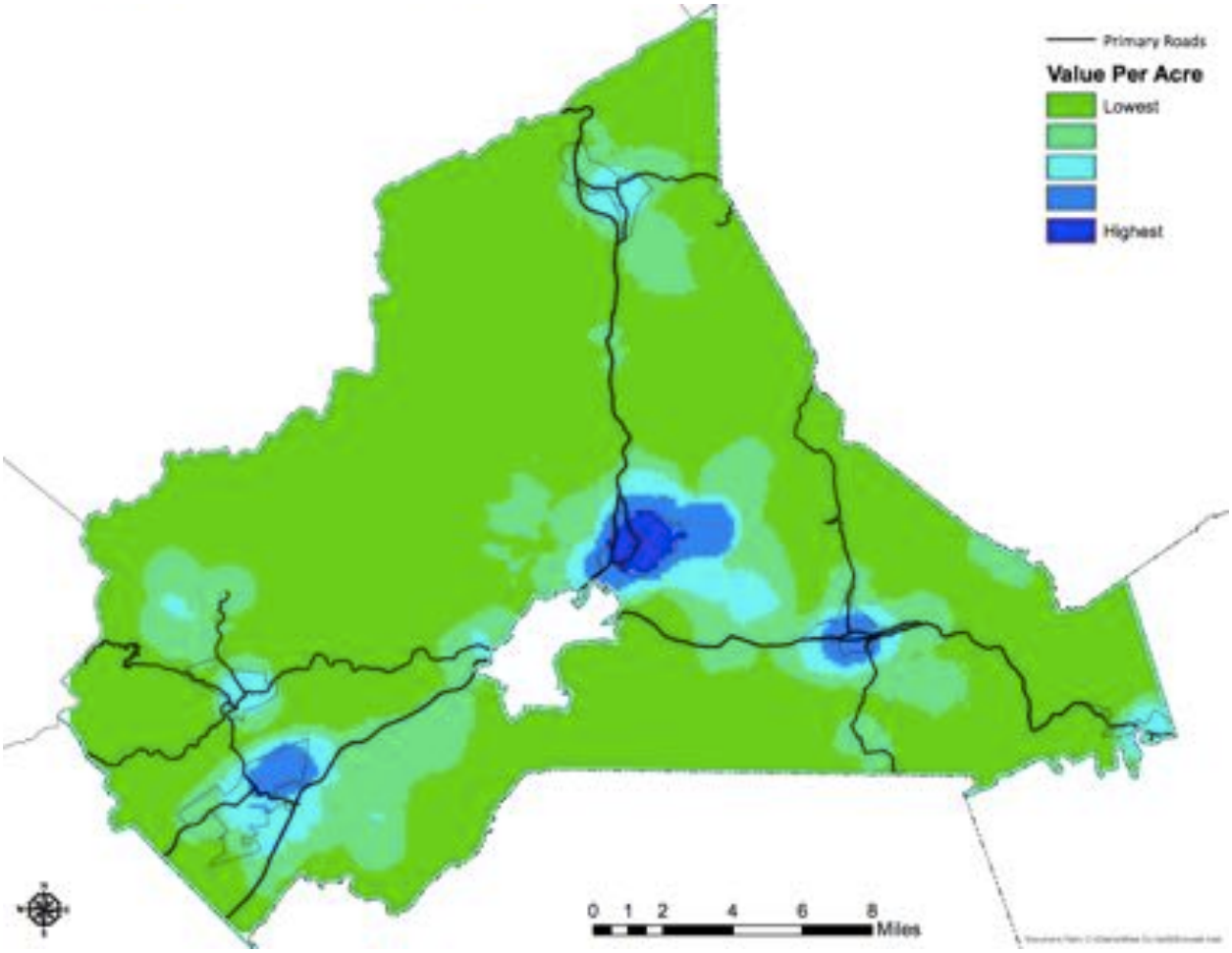
The geographic distribution of building permit activity is shown in **Map 3**.

Map 3: Building Permit Activity



Property Valuation. The total assessed value per acre, for land and improvements (buildings, structures, etc) shows the cumulative and relative investment intensity, historically, in the County, as shown in **Map 4.** This provides a market-based approach of where investment is occurring, and where investment value is being maintained.

Map 4: Total Assessed Value per Acre



2.8.2 In-Town Development Potential

Preliminary discussions with County stakeholders indicated a desire to encourage more development to be located in and near incorporated communities. **Table 25** identifies the amount of land within municipal boundaries (including the City of Norton). GIS data was analyzed to identify the built and unbuilt environment.

Table 25: Undeveloped Acreage, Incorporated Areas

Community	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Undeveloped Acres
Appalachia	1,425.9	332.0	1,093.9
Big Stone Gap	3,196.3	853.0	2,343.3
Coeburn	1,250.7	464.4	786.4
Norton	4,810.7	2,442.6	2,368.1
Pound	1,661.1	510.9	1,150.3
St. Paul*	910.1	158.6	751.5
Wise	1,944.3	955.5	988.9

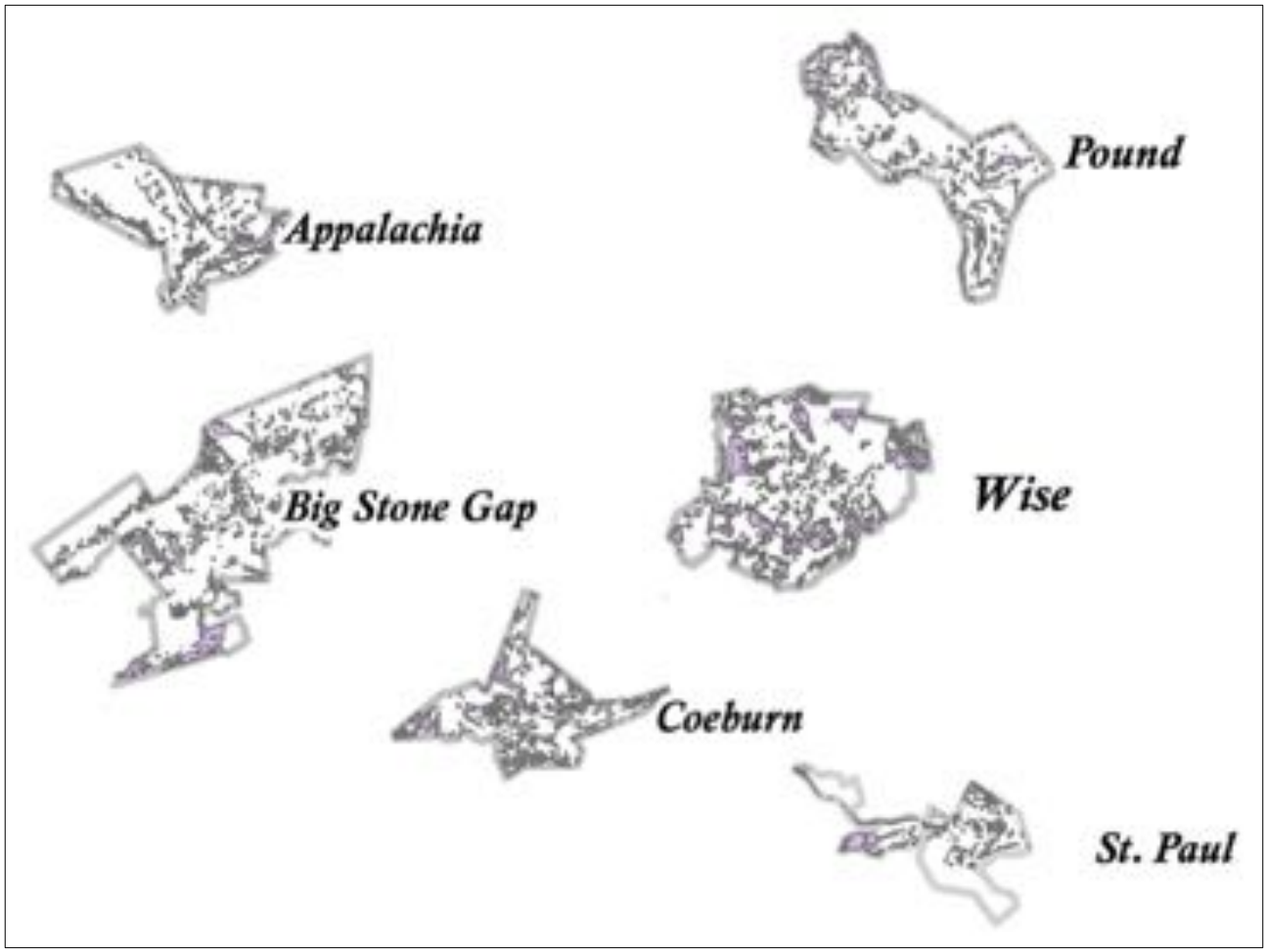
* Part of this undeveloped area is really developed but in Russell county.

However, as we remove from the category of undeveloped acreage those features which prohibit or eliminate development, due to right-of-way and roads, rivers and streams, railroads, floodway, parks and steep slope (slope in excess of 30%), **Table 26** identifies a more reasonable amount of development potential. Based on the demographic projections, there is available adequate land among the County's communities to accommodate new growth and redevelopment opportunities. There is no *need* to promote or accommodate sprawl or leapfrog development patterns. The geography (location) of the potentially buildable undeveloped incorporated areas is shown in **Map 5**.

Table 26: Potentially Buildable Undeveloped Acreage, Incorporated Areas

Community	Buildable Acres
Appalachia	165.2
Coeburn	227.5
Big Stone Gap	374.0
Pound	219.7
St. Paul	124.1
Wise	423.1
TOTAL	1,533.6

Map 5: Potentially Buildable Undeveloped Incorporated Areas



2.8.3 Local Impacts from the Economy

The national economy, and national energy policies, have taken their toll on Wise County. **Table 27**, **Figure 7,** and **Map 6** paint a picture of a County struggling with larger issues. However, the Comprehensive Plan provides the County with the best-coordinated tool to address the issues raised using land use and fiscal policies to control what the local community can control.

> **In Perspective.** According to Fannie Mae, the Single-Family Serious Delinquency rate declined slightly in August to 1.99% from 2.00% in July. It is part of a downward trend, down from 2.61% in August 2013; and well below the peak in February 2010 at 5.59%. This is the lowest level since October 2008. [11]

[11] http://www.fanniemae.com/portal/about-us/investor-relations/monthly-summary.html

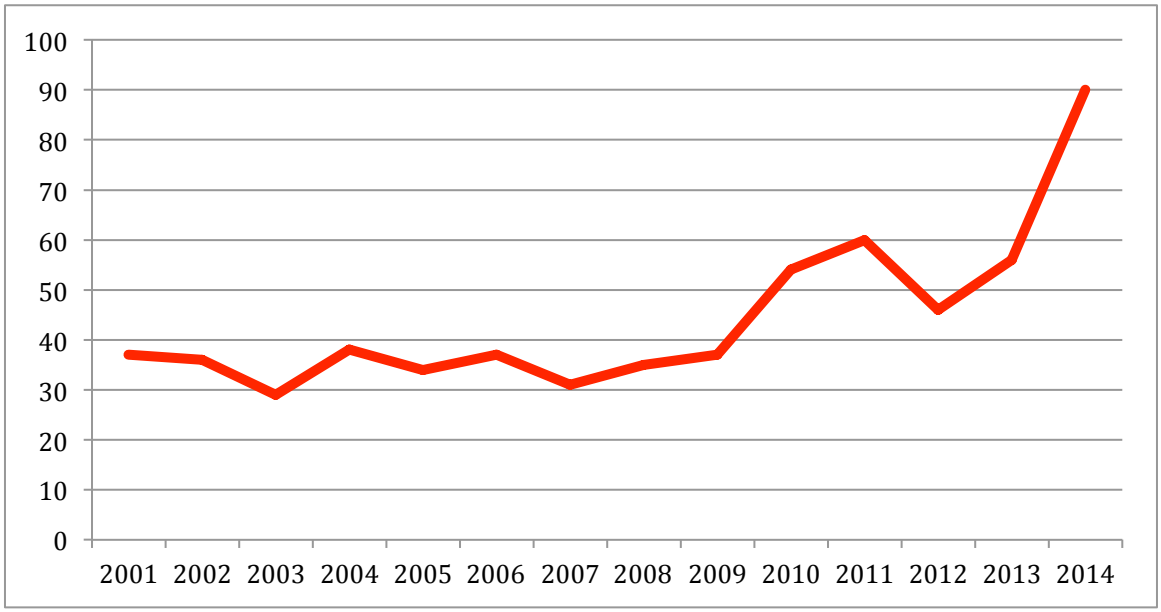
Table 27: Delinquencies and Foreclosures, Incorporated Areas

	Foreclosures*	Total Structures**	
Appalachia	38	1,101	3.45%
Big Stone Gap	120	3,984	3.01%
Coeburn	54	2,448	2.21%
Pound	20	1,228	1.63%
St Paul	10	833	1.20%
Wise	47	3,883	1.21%
Total	289	13,477	2.14%

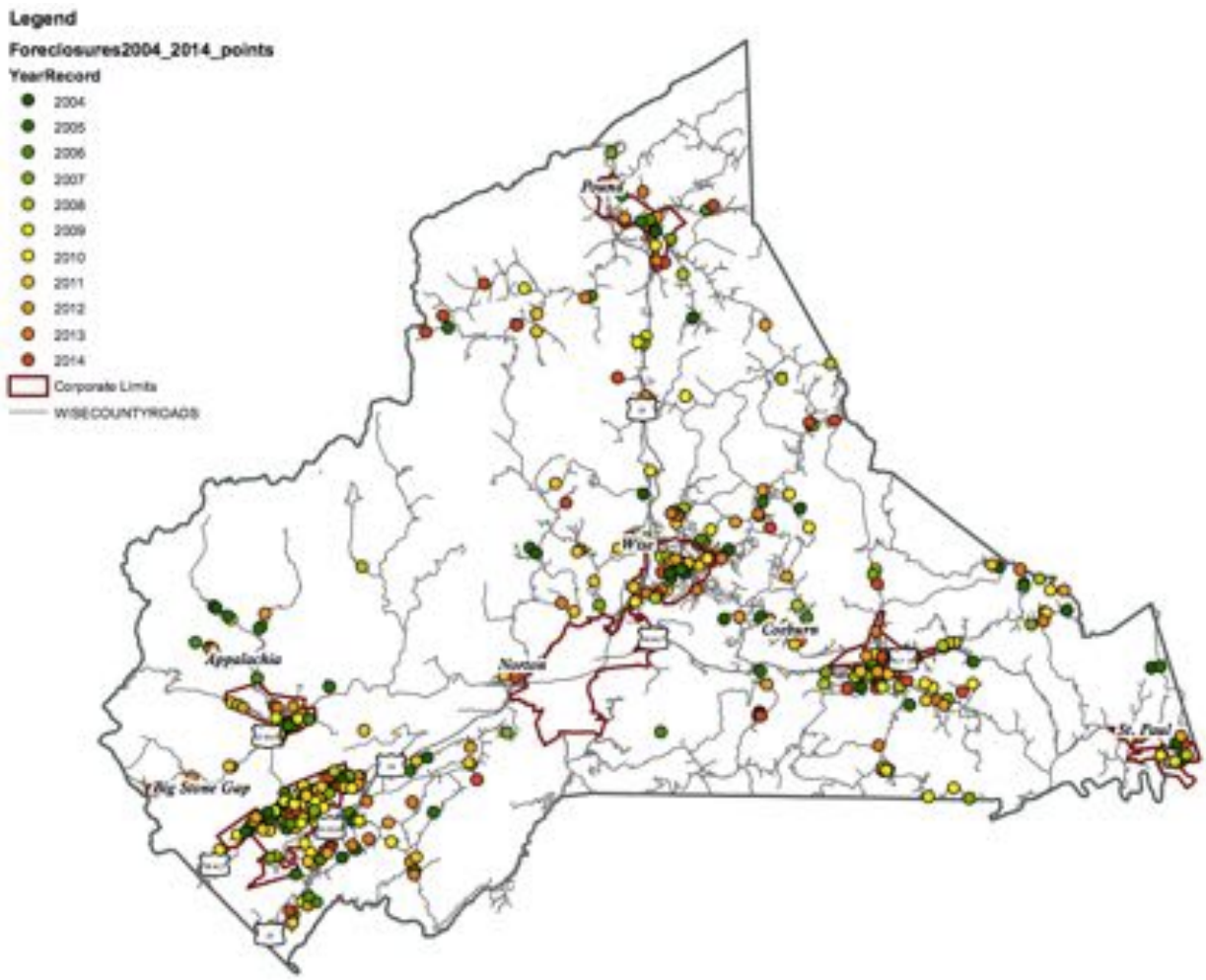
* Delinquencies and foreclosures within 1-mile of community.

** Includes all apartments, businesses, etc.

Figure 7: Delinquency and Foreclosure Activity, 2001-2014



Map 6: Foreclosure Activity, 2004-2014



2.8.4 Broad Brush Perspective

Public facilities and services are essential to the orderly and rational development of undeveloped areas, especially at the 'fringe' of community boundaries. As development moves farther away from the center of the town or city, or as new development "leapfrogs" to less expensive, outlying rural land, the cost of providing public facilities and services increases. The Comprehensive Plan designates areas that are appropriate for development due to the availability of urban-type services (*i.e.*, public water, sewer and off-site wastewater treatment and paved roads). Development will be encouraged in areas where facilities exist and

"The problems we face today will not be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we first created them."

-Albert Einstein

accommodated in areas where facilities can be provided in a cost-effective manner. Development in rural areas is minimized to reduce demands for road improvements and other public facilities and services. The framework for a rational growth strategy for the planning area is characterized by recognizing three types of development areas:

- **Rural Areas.** The Rural Area is the unincorporated County area and is planned to remain in long term agriculture, resource extraction or large lot residential development.

- **Developing Areas.** The Developing Area is the area within which adequate public facilities *should be available* within the life of the Plan and located adjacent to city and town municipal boundaries within the unincorporated area.

- **Developed Areas.** The Developed Area is the area within municipal boundaries (though some adjacent areas may be included) where resources and services *are* available and maximized. It is mostly developed but has significant opportunities for infill development and redevelopment. Infill and redevelopment should efficiently use, maintain and expand existing infrastructure.

Within these areas, three alternative development scenarios were created by conceptualizing a range of development patterns and testing those with geo-coded data. Geographic Information System (GIS) computer software was used to develop models, helping us understand the relationship between the built and natural environments.

2.9 Building the Plan

The Wise County Comprehensive Plan has been built around a methodology designed to serve as a development guide for decision-makers and stakeholders. To accomplish this task, past and current land use development patterns were examined and future patterns were projected based data and local preferences. The process can be summarized as follows:

- Identify and analyze existing land uses and development patterns;

- Use GIS (geographic information system) data to conduct a data-based land evaluation and suitability analysis, apply zonal statistics aggregate the raw data into parcel-based data and maps;

- Identify and apply existing and planned water and sewer service areas, using centroid analysis to establish parcel-based service areas;

- Use composite data output from the land use model as raw data and smoothed maps, incorporating all geo-coded factors, and the data in the model was used to help identify features and trends

- Identify and analyze the data to consider alternative development scenarios, including Current Trends, Smart Growth / Target Growth and Strong Communities development alternatives;

- Continue to refine the resulting data into broad Development Tiers, that consider timing and ability to provide and fund facilities and services, including a Rural / Natural Resources Tier, a Primary Development Tier and a Secondary Development Tier; and

- Establish a preferred Development Plan for Wise County.

2.9.1 Land Suitability Model and Analysis

A land development suitability model was developed to provide decision makers and interested parties with a quantitative tool for assessing the environmental and infrastructural opportunities and limitations within the County. The model incorporates a weighting procedure that allows the user to increase or decrease the relative importance of a variety of economic and natural resource factors. Factors are based on geographic information system (GIS) datasets assembled from multiple sources including local, state, federal and other non-governmental sources. A development suitability map is only one of many tools that are used in the preparation of a land use plan. A final land use plan cannot be simply generated directly from a suitability map; although it is possible to generate a conceptual-level map showing where development should occur from a suitability map. Three broad factor categories were used:

suit·a·bil·i·ty
A measure of the relative usefulness of a land unit for a given purpose

- Identify land suitable for agricultural protection;
- Identify environmentally sensitive land;
- Identify lands proximal to infrastructure and investment.

Purpose. The purpose of a land use suitability analysis is to provide a rational, systematic guide for identifying areas which are more suitable for development, and identifying areas which should be maintained for rural or agricultural uses, or protected as conservation areas.

Suitability Model
A repeatable computer simulation that allocates suitability to land units relative to each other based on given criteria

The suitability analysis is created using GIS data, which is data that is registered to a geographic coordinate system. The fact that the data sets are registered to a coordinate system makes it possible to add up the values of the input data sets, to create an overall score that indicates the degree of development suitability at every point on the map within the Wise County.

Various factors were weighted, as shown in the following table, by applying multipliers that reflect judgments regarding the relative importance of each factor. The source and content of these input data sets, and their relevance to land development suitability, is described in the following sections. Maps for each of the factors are shown following the table. After each factor is presented, alternative scenario composite maps were created to show the output based on the 19 factors shown in **Table 28**, indicating development suitability based on the following presumptions:

- L**ow Suitability for Development (High Agricultural/Environmental Sensitivity).** In these areas, there is a presumption that land is not suitable for development. This does not preclude development, but requires a showing by the applicant that sufficient conditions exist that,

should development occur, on- and off-site mitigation attributable to the proposed development is required and addressed.

- **Moderate Suitability for Development (Moderate Agricultural/Environmental Sensitivity).** In these areas, there is no presumption regarding suitability (that land is suitable or not suitable for development).
- **High Suitability for Development (Low Agricultural/Environmental Sensitivity).** In these areas, there is a presumption that land is suitable for development. This does not guarantee that a proposed development is appropriate for any specific location.

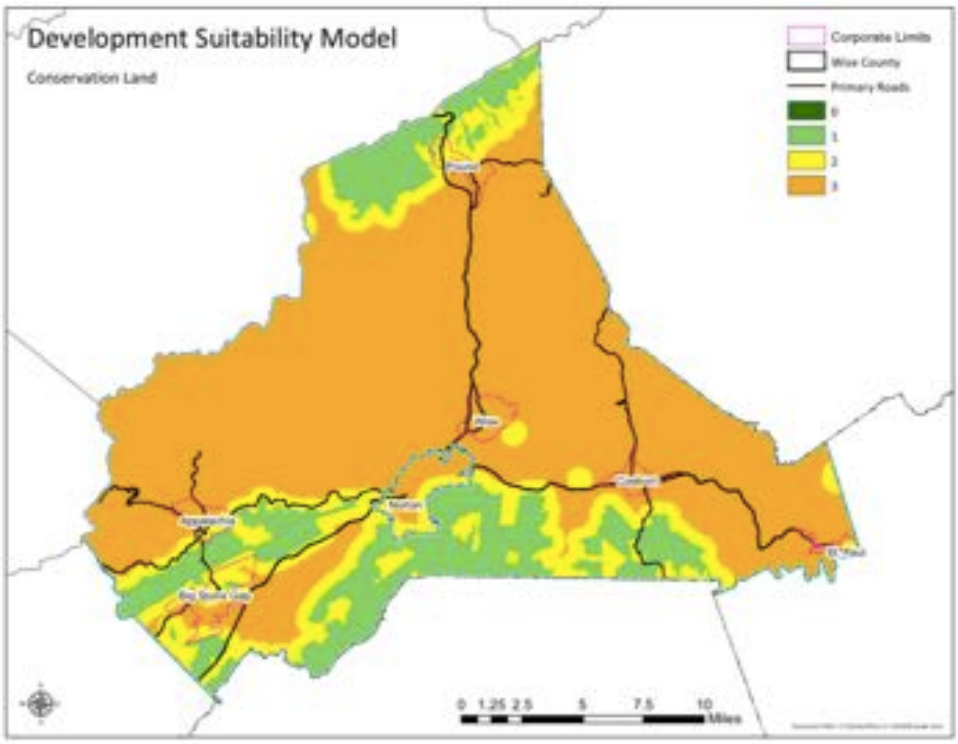
Table 28: Land Suitability Model Factors

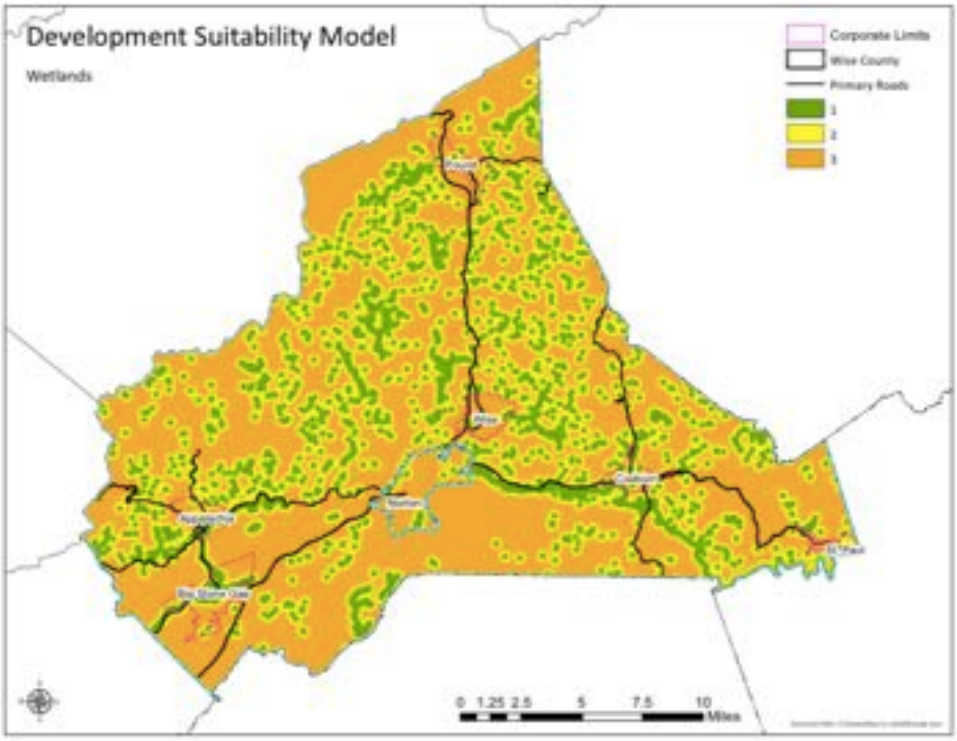
Land Evaluation and Suitability Analysis Factors			Presumption of Non-Ag Development Suitability		
			Low Suitability	Moderate Suitability	High Suitability
Factor	**1**	**Conservation Lands and Easements**	Within 1/4 mile of boundary	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Outside 1/2 mile
Factor	**2**	**Wetlands**	Within 1/8 mile of boundary	Between 1/8 and 1/4 mile	Outside 1/4 mile
Factor	**3**	**Distance to local road**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile
Factor	**4**	**Distance to Primary Highway**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile
Factor	**5**	**Existing availability of a public water**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile
Factor	**6**	**Existing availability of community / public sewer (if required)**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile
Factor	**7**	**Distance to municipal boundary**	Outside 1/2 mile	Within 1/2 mile	Within Boundary
Factor	**8**	**Distance to Schools**	Greater than 2 miles	between 1 and 2 miles	less than 1 mile
Factor	**9**	**Distance to Fire Station**	Greater than 2-miles	1-mile to 2-miles	Less than 1 mile
Factor	**10**	**Distance to Floodplains**	within floodplain	within 500ft of floodplain	outside 500ft of floodplain
Factor	**11**	**Distance to Scenic Rivers**	within 1/4 mile of river	between .25 and .5 miles	outside .5 miles
Factor	**12**	**Slope**	Over 30% Slope	Between 15% and 30%	Below 15%
Factor	**13**	**Mining**	Within 1/4 mile of boundary	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Outside 1/2 mile
Factor	**14**	**Trails**	Within 1/8 mile of boundary	Between 1/8 and 1/4 mile	Outside 1/4 mile
Factor	**15**	**Natural Gas**	Within 1/4 mile of boundary	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Outside 1/2 mile
Factor	**16**	**3-Phase Electrical Service**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile
Factor	**17**	**Ecological Cores Model**	Outstanding	Very High, High	Moderate, General
Factor	**18**	**Composite Urban Vulnerability Model**	1, 2, 3	4, 5	6, 7, 8
Factor	**19**	**Potential Charter Change**	Unincorporated		Incorporated w/o Pound, Appalachia
Factor	**20**	**Economic Development Hubs**	Outside 1/2 mile	Between 1/4 and 1/2 mile	Within 1/4 mile

2.9.2 Model Factors

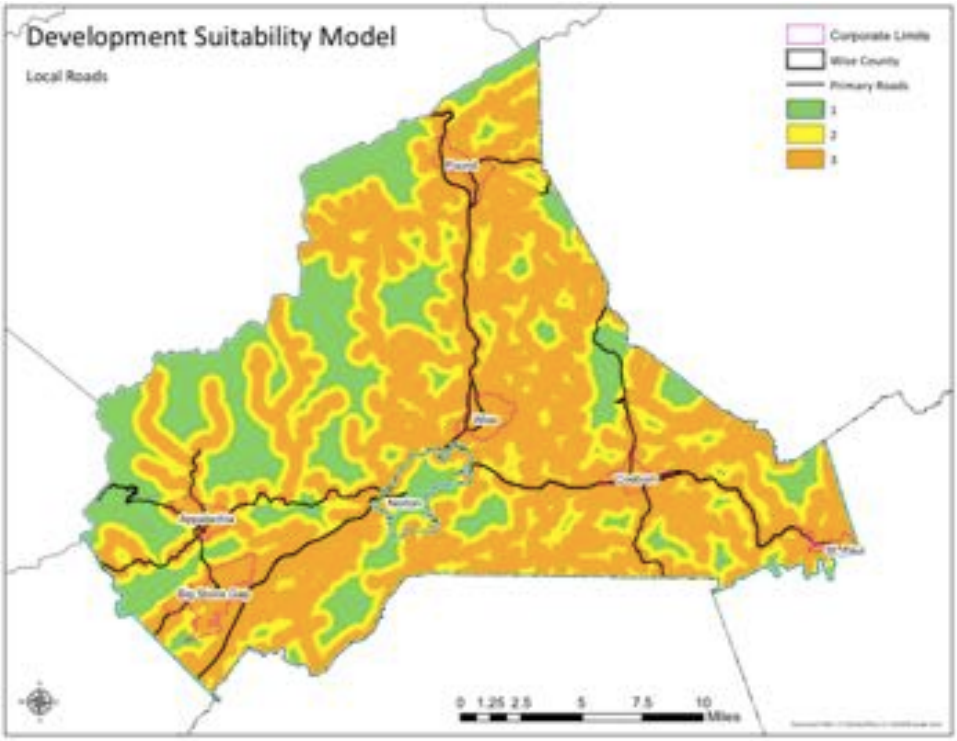
Conservation Lands and Easements. This dataset contains the boundaries for lands of conservation and recreational interest in Virginia. Conservation easements provided by the same agency is included as well.

Wetlands. "Wetlands" is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas found in generally flat vegetated areas, in depressions in the landscape, and between dry land and water along the edges of streams, rivers, lakes, and coastlines. This data set represents the extent, approximate location and type of wetlands habitats within Wise County.

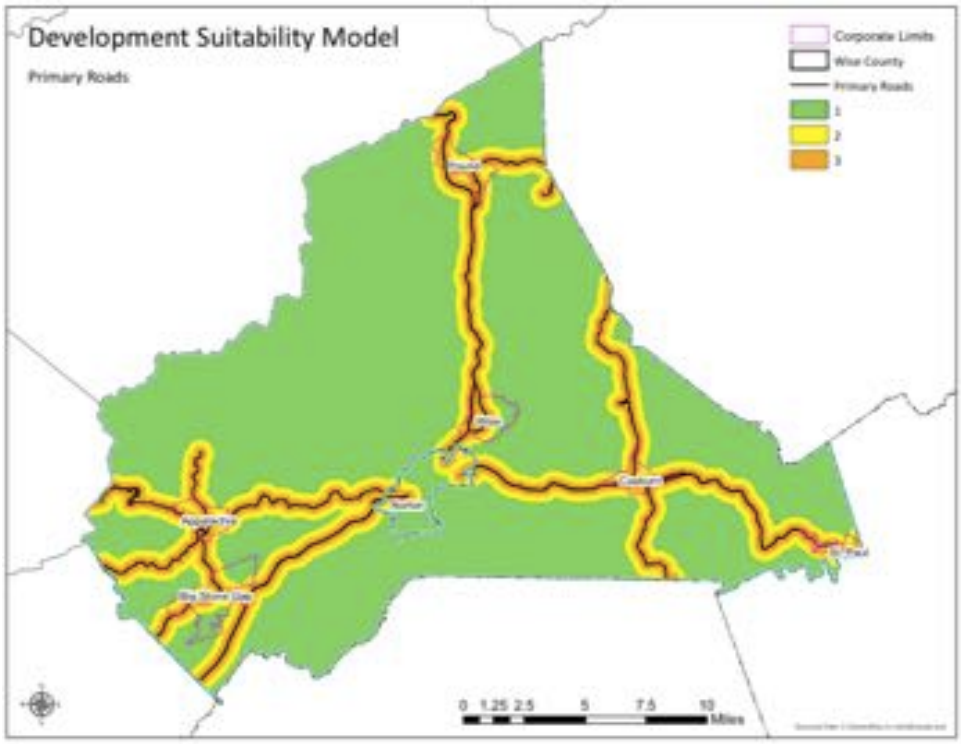




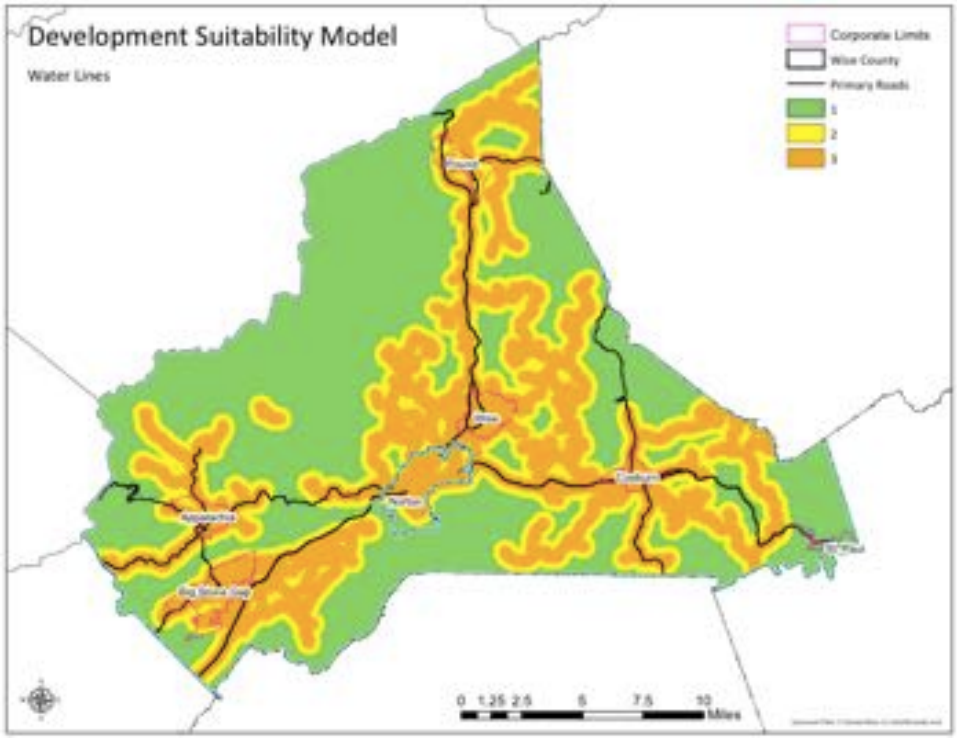
Local Roads. Local roads as classified by VDOT.



Primary Roads. Primary roads and highways as classified by VDOT.

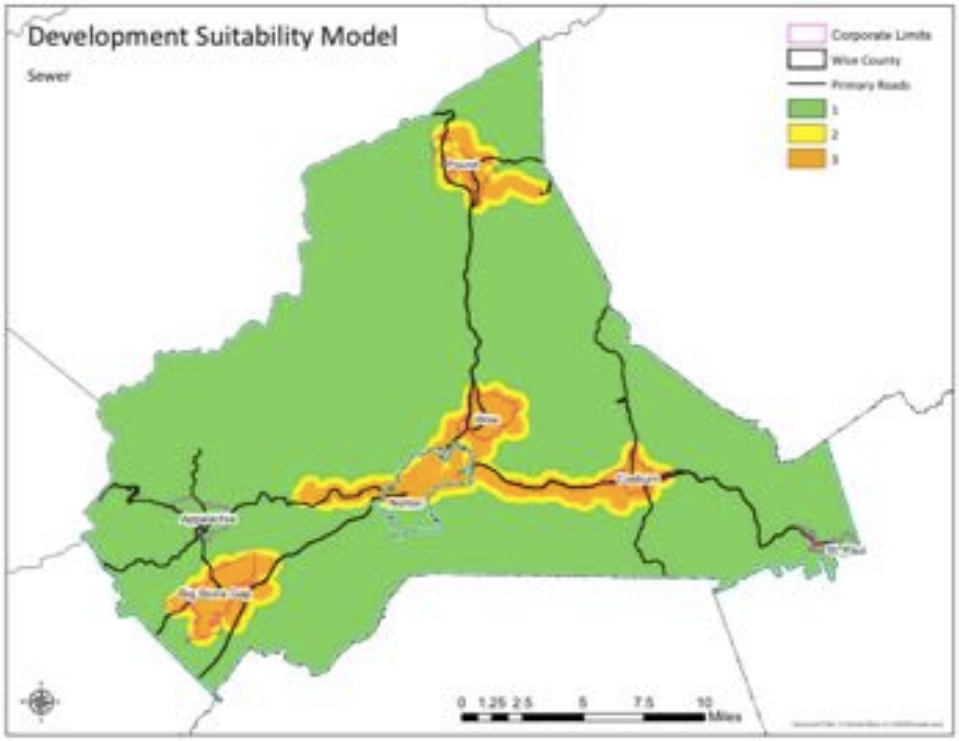


Water Lines. Water lines are provided by the County.

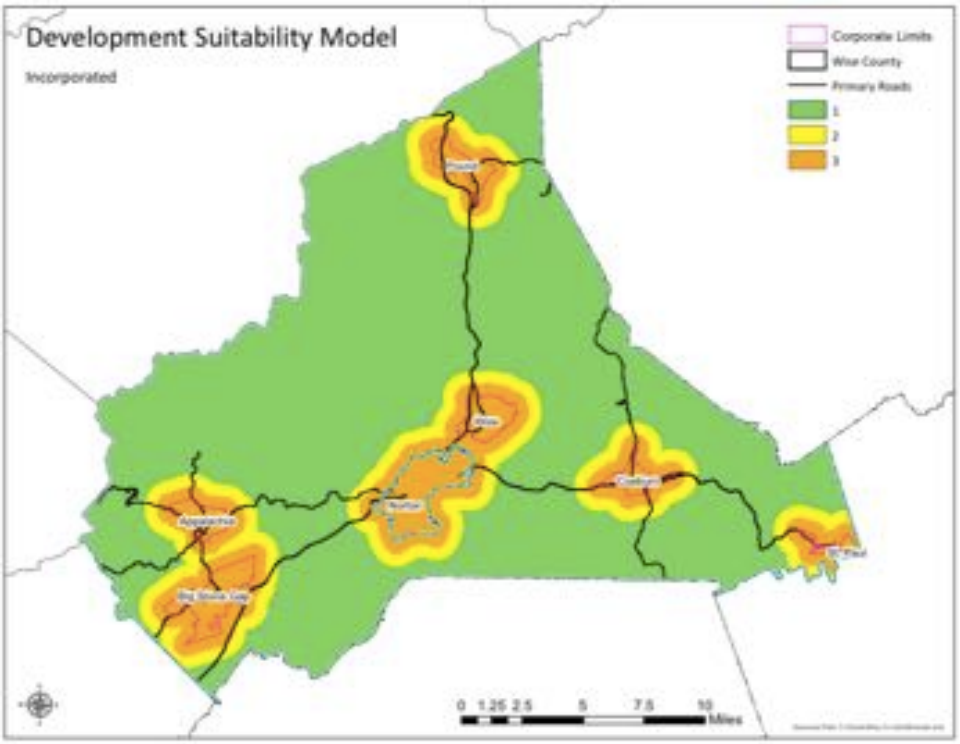


Sewer Lines. Sewer lines are provided by the County. Proximity to sewer lines is associated with the feasibility of providing sewer to new development, which impacts service efficiency and cost.

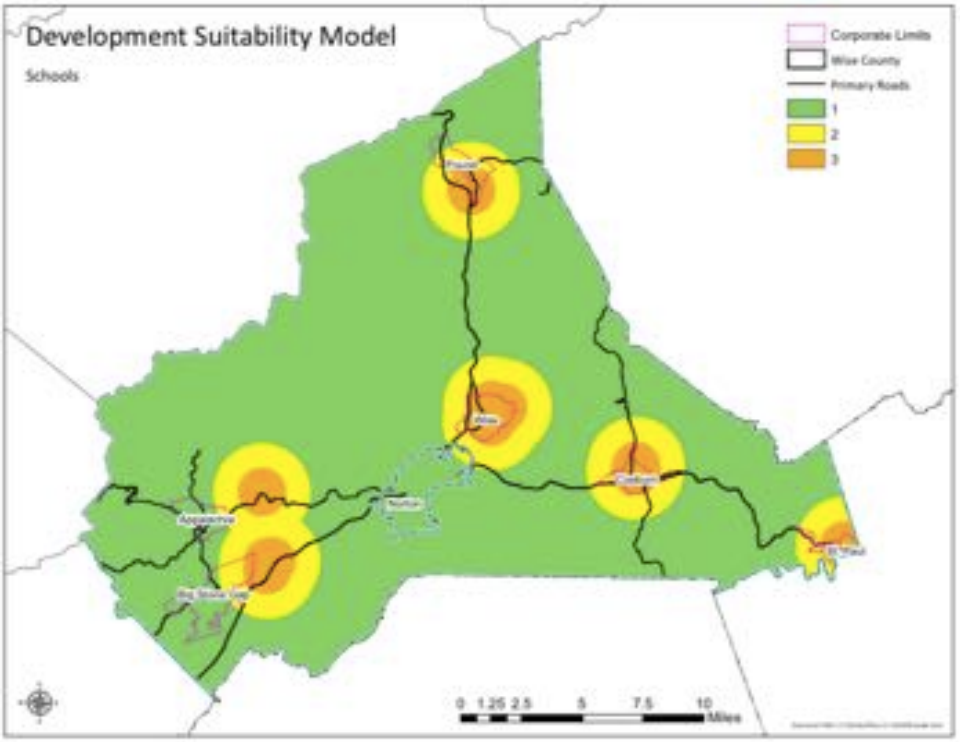
Availability of sewer allows for clustered development and higher densities without adversely impacting groundwater quality.



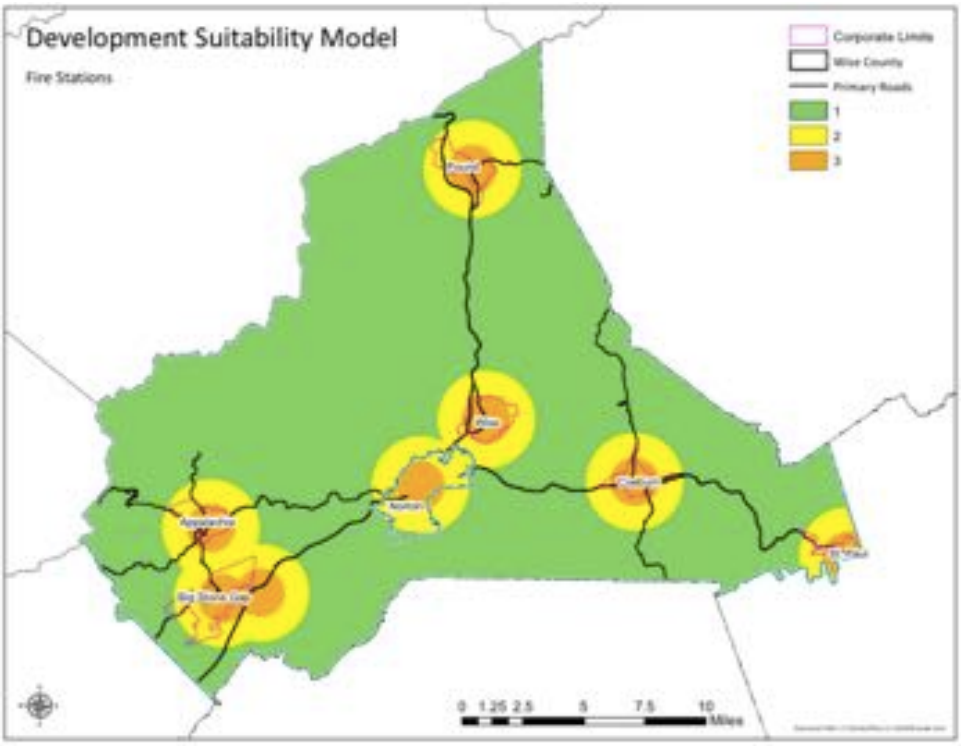
Incorporated Areas. Incorporation boundaries are provided by the County. Proximity to existing municipalities associated with the availability and efficiency of public facilities and services, and proximity to employment and retail centers which are more commonly found within municipalities, as opposed to outlying areas. Encouraging development within areas close to existing municipalities promotes a compact and efficient pattern of development, which decreases the cost of public facilities, services and transportation.



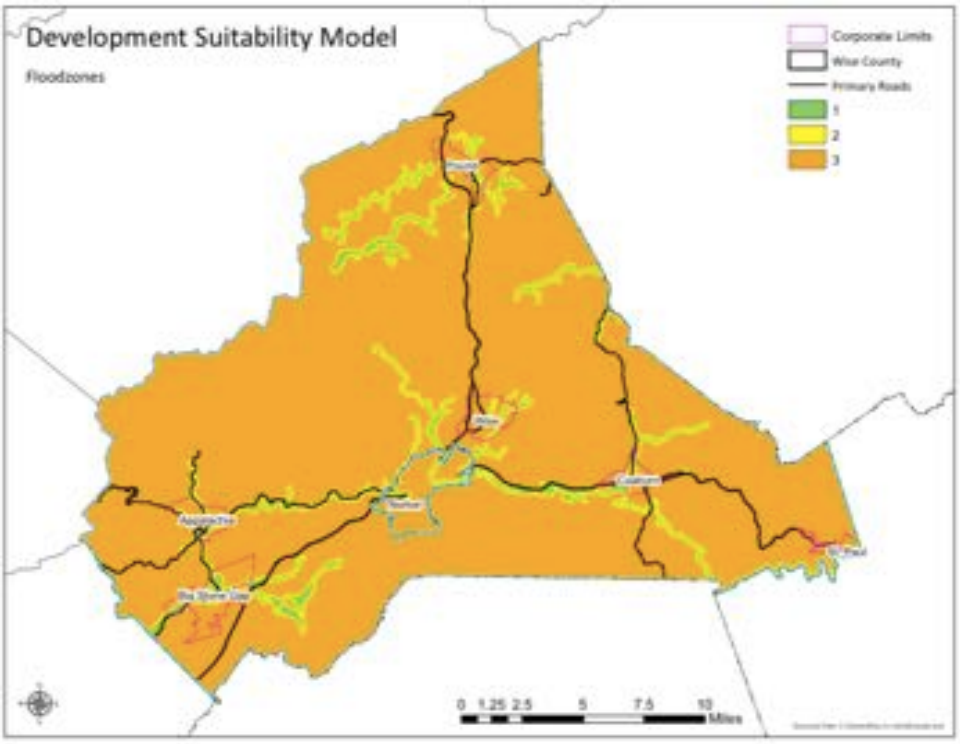
Distance to Schools. Schools downloaded from Virginia Department of Education shapefile, removed correctional facilities. Proximity to schools is associated with the desirability of land for residential development (parents generally prefer to be close to schools), and is associated with the costs to the public of transporting children to and from schools.



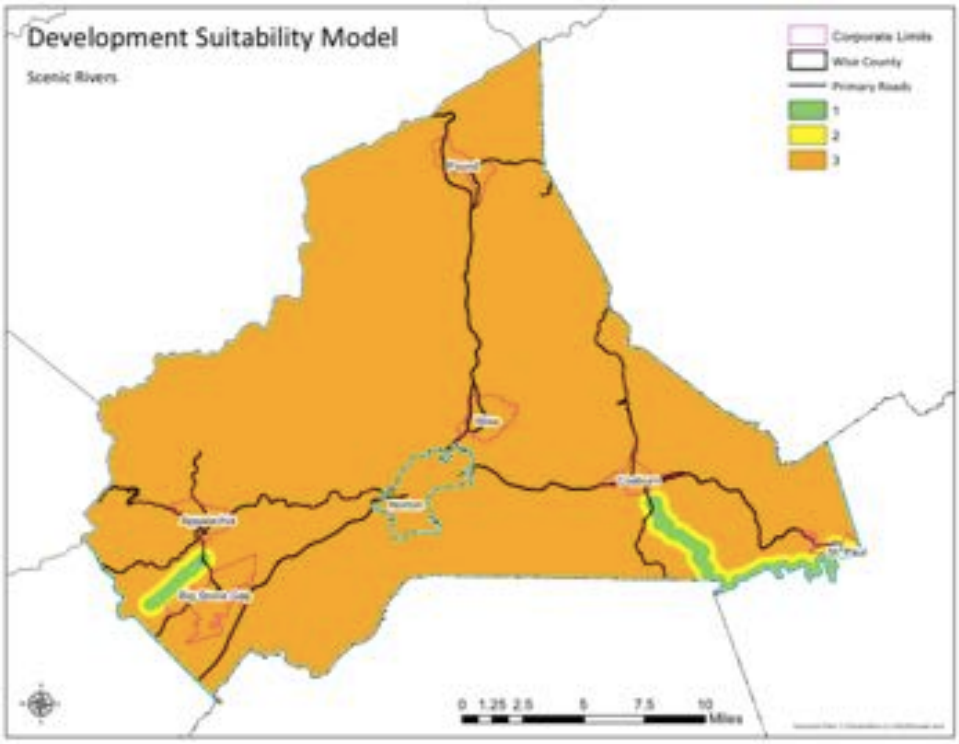
Fire Stations. This list was geocoded in excel, downloaded from the Virginia firefighters' website. Proximity to fire stations is associated with adequate emergency response times, and is associated with the cost to the public of maintaining adequate levels of fire protection. Response coverage also affects insurance rates for homes and businesses, and can impact economic development efforts.



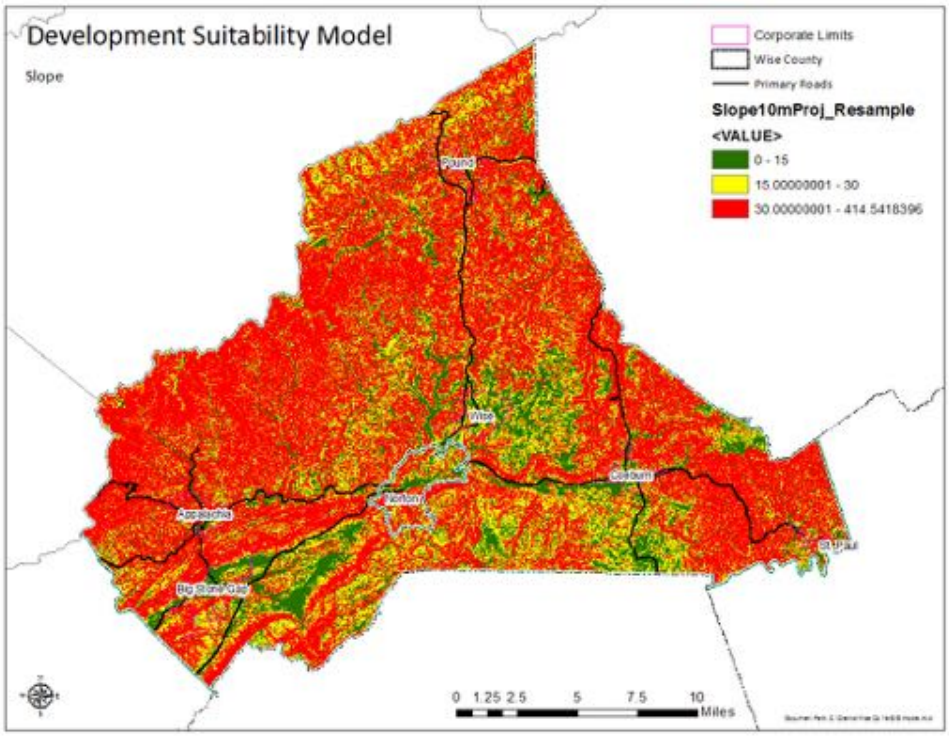
Floodzones. Data was provided by County GIS. Flood zones A and AE are within the County and carry a 1% annual likelihood of flooding and generally require flood insurance on buildings. Lands in the floodzones are least suitable for development while lands outside 500 feet of a floodzone are highest suited for development.



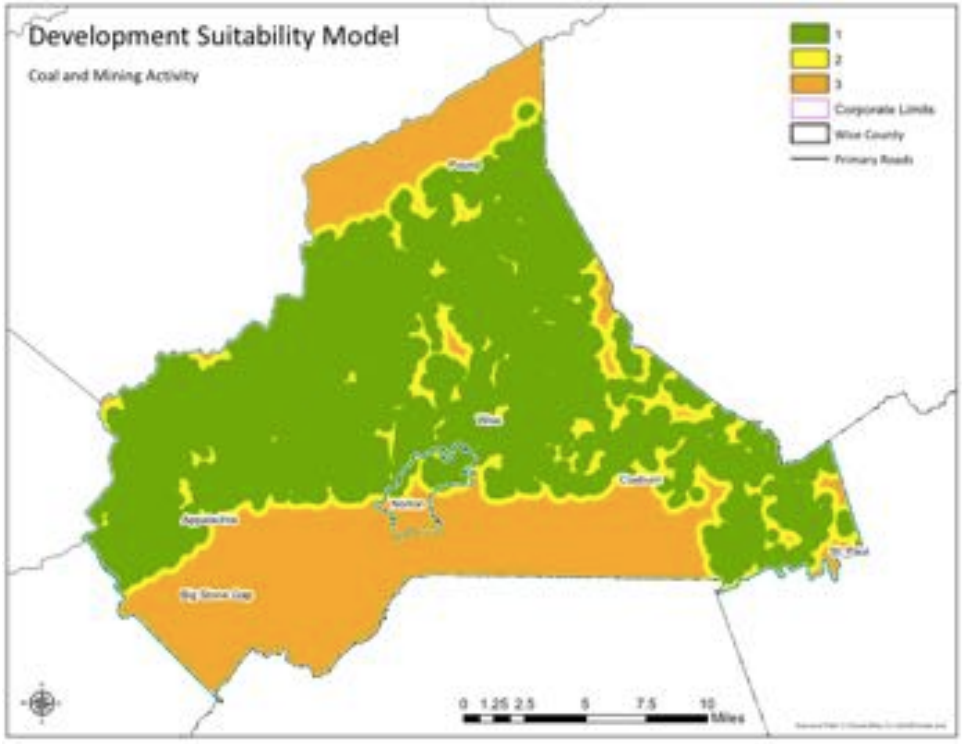
Scenic Rivers. The intent of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program is to identify, recognize and provide a level of protection to rivers with significant scenic, historic, recreational and natural values.



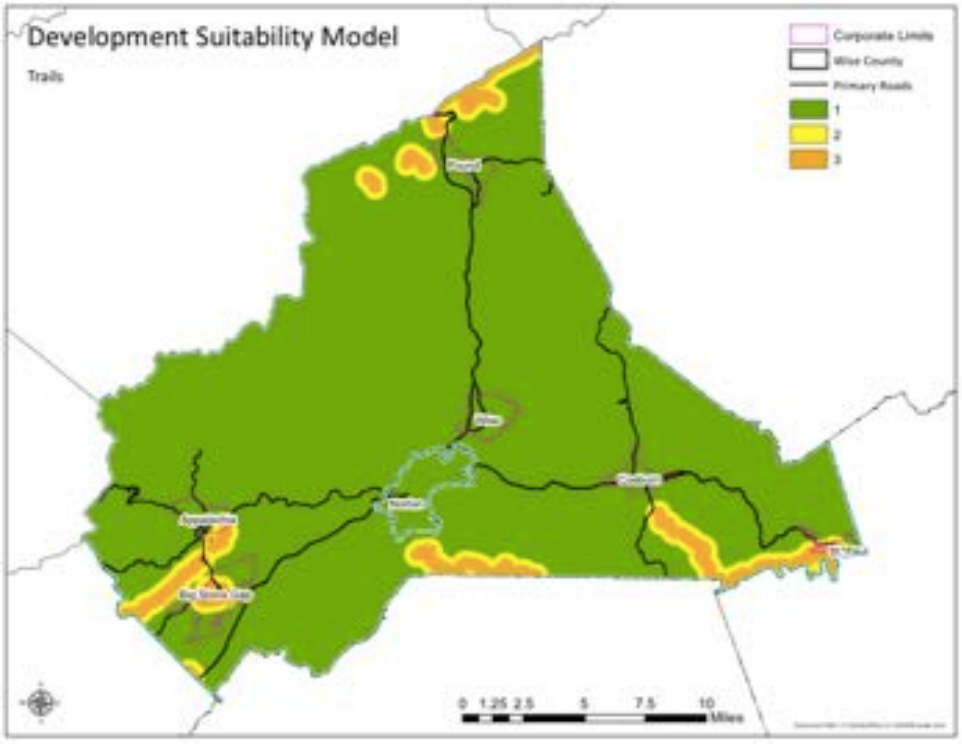
Steep Slope. 10-meter USDA data was used to determine percent rise in slope and then was resampled to the appropriate cell size. Steep slope areas are more prone to erosion, subsidence, and landslide hazards, as well as high wildfire hazards (wildfire spread rapidly up steep slopes). Erosion on steep slopes contributes to siltation and other water quality problems in water bodies that are fed by runoff from these slopes. In addition, most of the scenic landscape features in the County (valleys, escarpments, prominent peaks and ridges) are characterized by steep slope areas. Development is costlier due to grading and engineering.



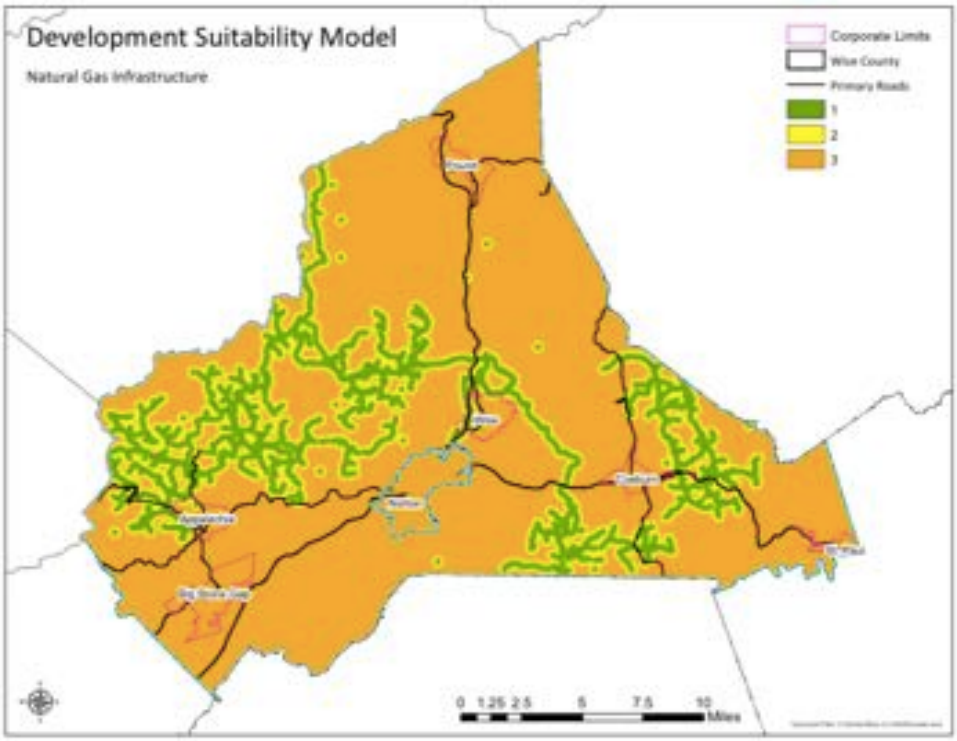
Coal and Mining. This data was provided by the County, based on property GIS data and property records. Areas used for mining activities are often treated as 'no [non-mining] development' areas that restrict other uses, including for closed or abandoned mining sites (the cessation of activity may be temporary or permanent, and may depend on outside market forces).



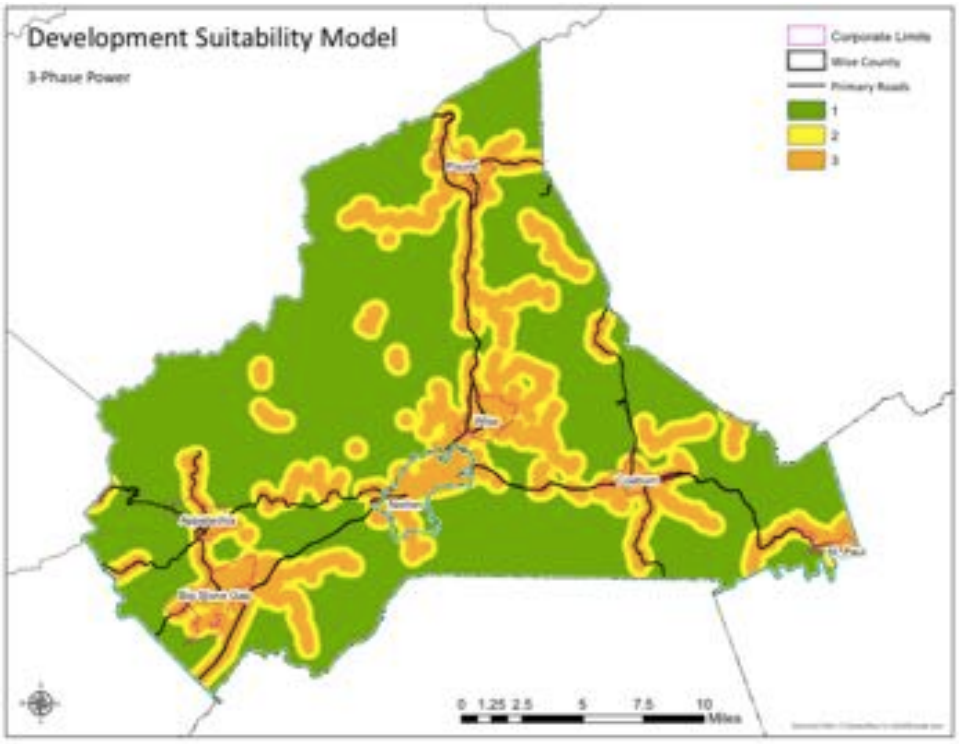
Trails. These have been provided by the County.



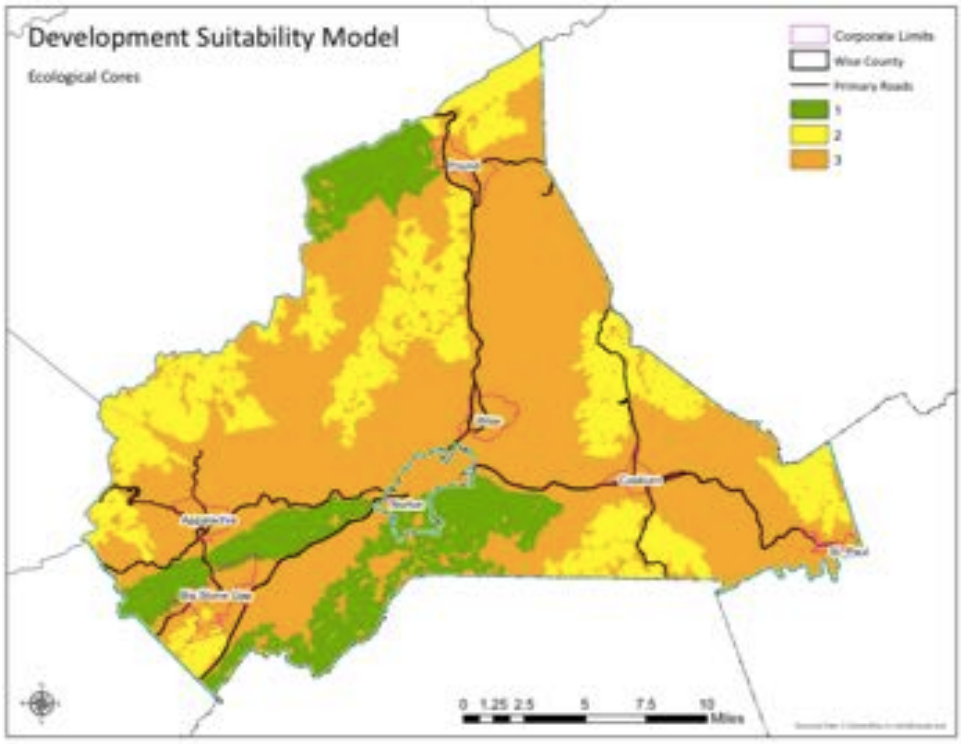
Natural Gas Lines. These have been provided by the County.



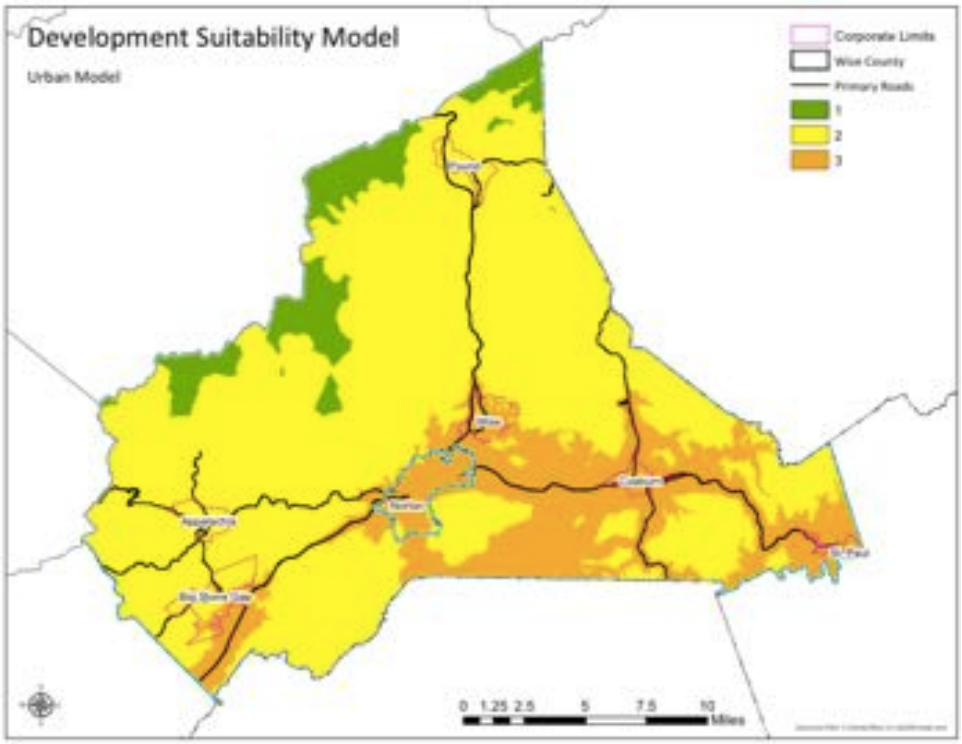
3-Phase Electric Power. These have been provided by the County. 3-phase electrical power is used to power large motors and other heavy loads needed by industrial and heavy commercial uses. A three-phase system is usually more economical than an equivalent single-phase or two-phase system for business users, and is an economic development asset.



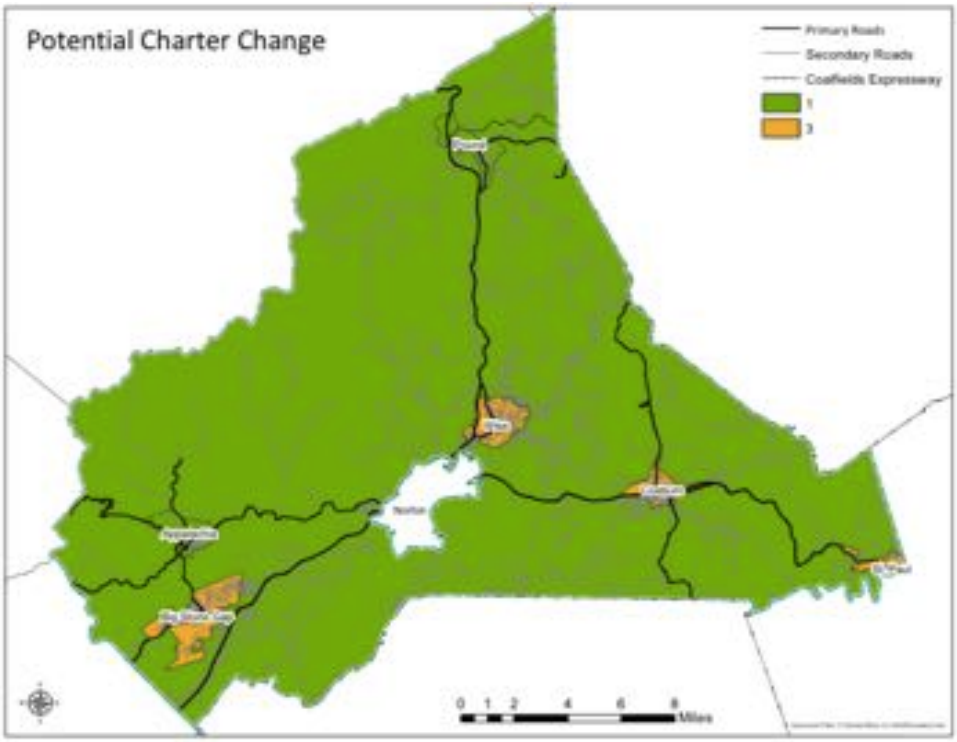
Ecological Cores Model. Provided by the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment Virginia Vulnerability Model, conducted by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. This model identifies ecological areas that are most at risk due to growth and development pressures.



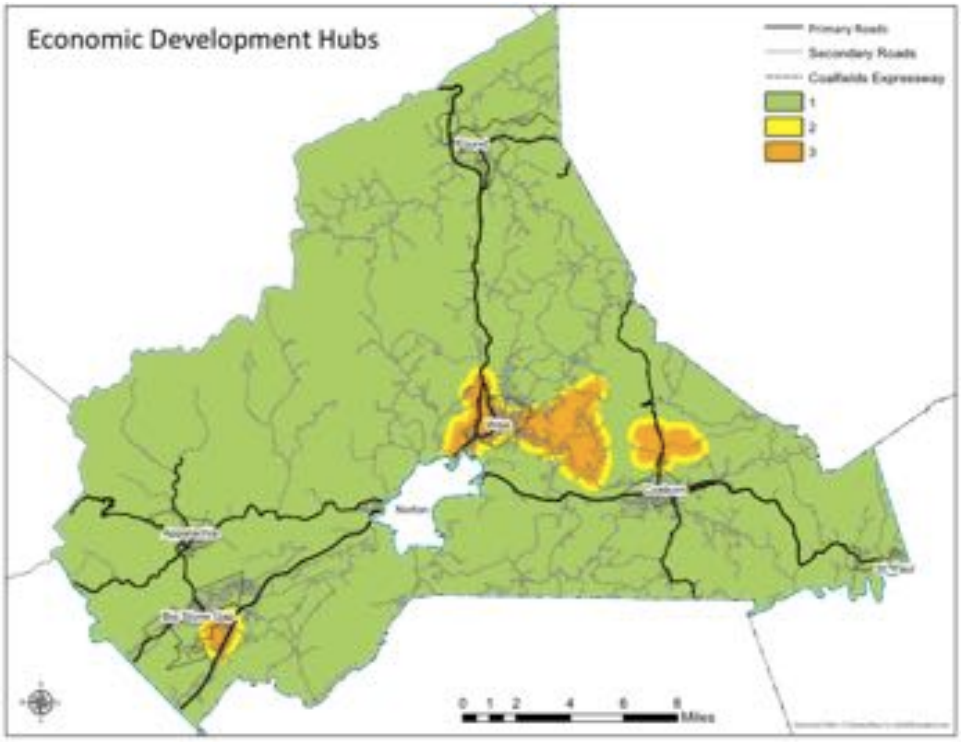
Composite Urban Vulnerability Model. Provided by the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment Virginia Vulnerability Model, conducted by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. This model shows predicted urban growth areas.



Potential Charter Change. This information provided by the County, and recognizes that there are ongoing discussions among communities concerning continued incorporation. The process whereby incorporation is reversed is called reversion.



Economic Development Hubs. These areas were provided by the county, and comprise areas designated as economic hubs based on a variety of factors including infrastructure availability and adequate transportation, and are strategic policy areas designated for future growth.



2.9.3 Alternative Development Scenarios

Purpose. The purpose of conducting Alternatives Analysis is to reflect a clear understanding of the existing conditions in the community, propose growth trends and development patterns which reflect realistic possibilities for communities and the County, and to compare the relative impacts of different growth strategies.

Essential to a comparison of alternative scenarios is that they must be realistic and reflect probable and potential outcomes. The factors that comprise the analysis are broad, and include growth goals, fiscal impact, land use, community character and integrity and economic development. The selection of a preferred scenario is a consensus-building process.

2.9.3.1 *Defining Alternatives*

Alternatives analysis enables the community to evaluate several possible growth scenarios from various perspectives -- fiscal, environmental, quality of life, economic and legal -- by exploring advantages and disadvantages, by focusing on and comparing distinctions and by identifying implementation strategies and policy implications. These scenarios are not intended to advocate a preferred scenario, but are intended to reflect distinct possible growth patterns each with different views of the future Wise County. The analysis identifies three growth alternatives:

- Trends Alternative
- Smart/Targeted Growth Alternative
- Strong Communities Alternative

2.9.4 Common Assumptions

Each of the alternatives is described, below, but there are some common assumptions among the alternatives:

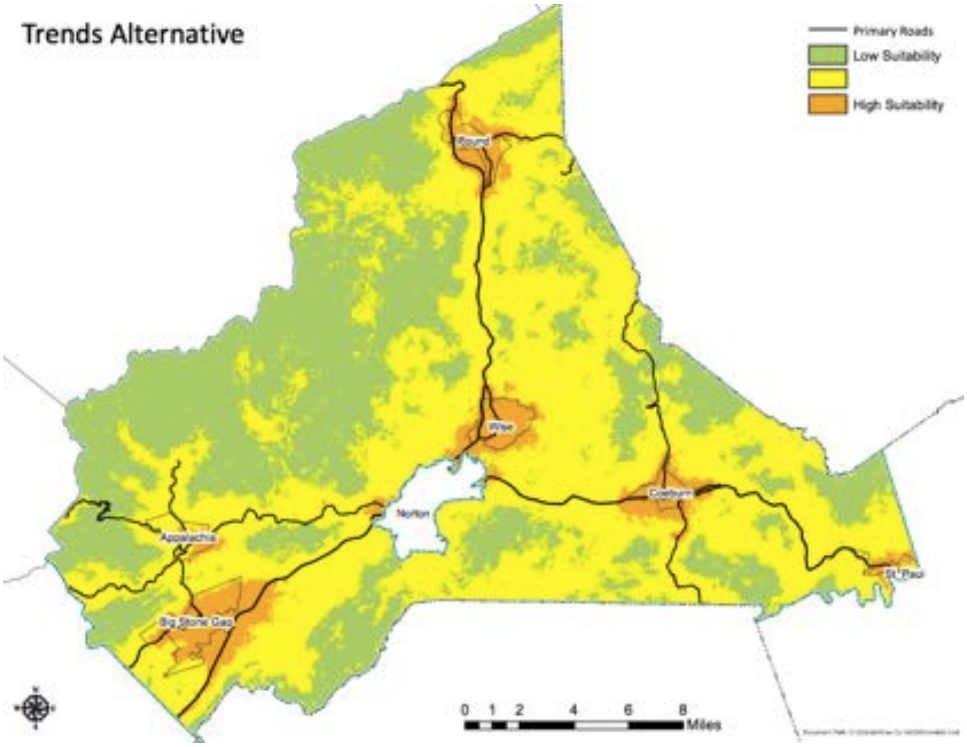
- The overall rate of growth is the same for each alternative to facilitate comparisons. Population remains constant among three alternatives, though there may be locational differences in population, density and intensity based on community (County and municipal) preferences.
- Due to declining population levels, there is available land to accommodate new development.
- Infrastructure is generally in place, with Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) infrastructure investment primarily being used to maintain and upgrade inventory.
- One of the focal considerations should be character areas – the types of uses, patterns, development standards and design guidelines appropriate for each community. Competition within the County to be minimized, and coordination (land use, economic development) encouraged.
- Existing development will remain in place. However, some exceptions may be made to permit redevelopment of specific areas.

- Future land uses will be defined and refined based on community character areas.
- Community Comprehensive Plans matter.
- Conservation Areas that preclude development are identified and retained.

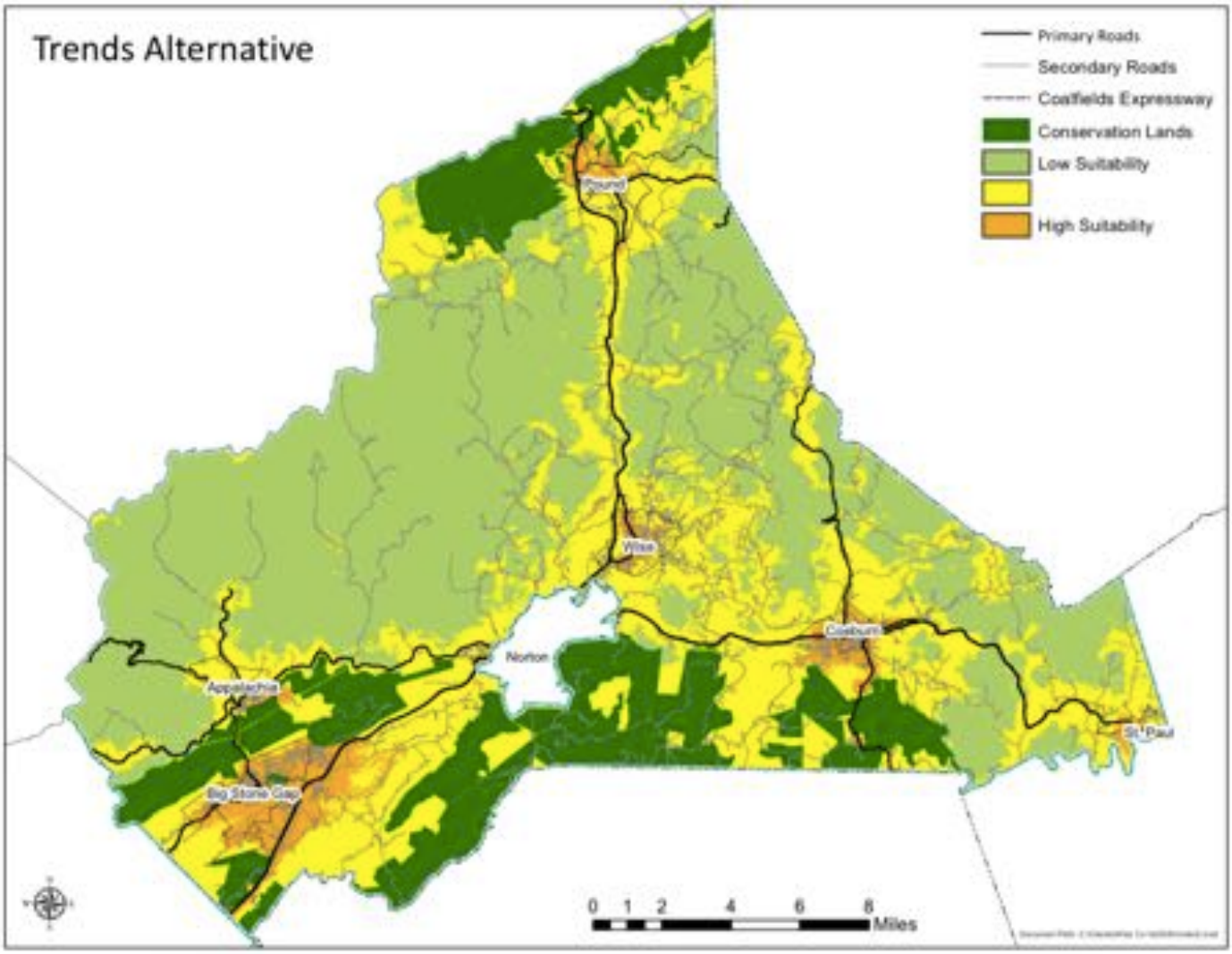
2.9.5 The Current Trends Alternative

- ✓ Assumes that recent development patterns continue
- ✓ County and providers take a passive role, market-driven approach (response) to development
- ✓ No significant limitations on development in rural areas
- ✓ Development requirements based only on health, safety and the ability to serve
- ✓ Costs negotiable, on a case-by-case basis

Map 7: Trends Alternative Model Output Map



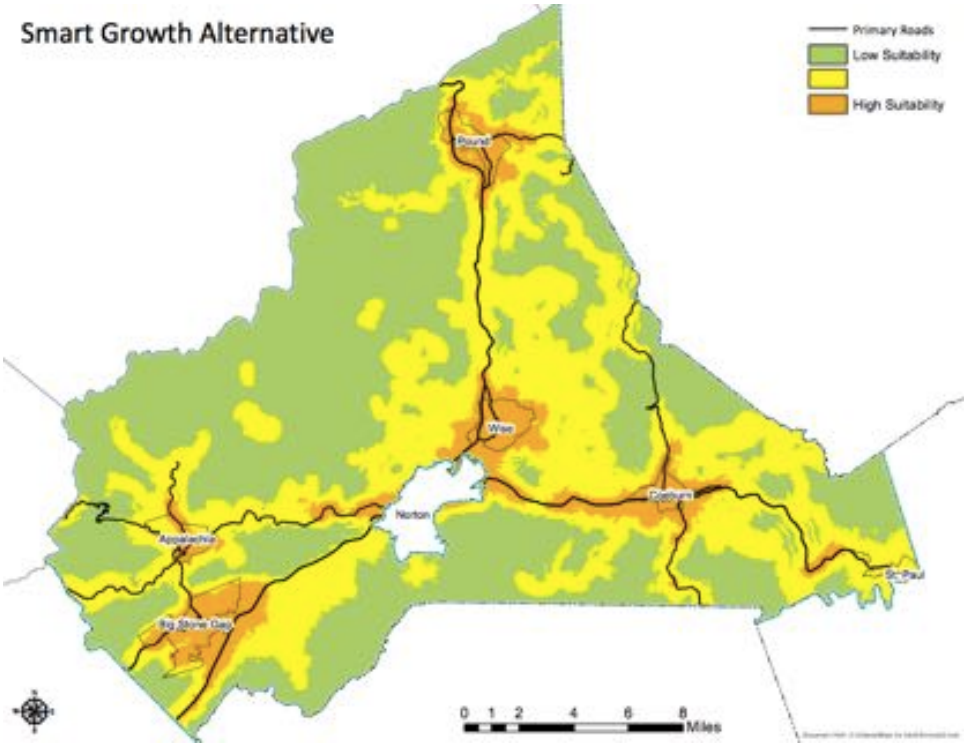
Map 8: Trends Alternative Concept Map



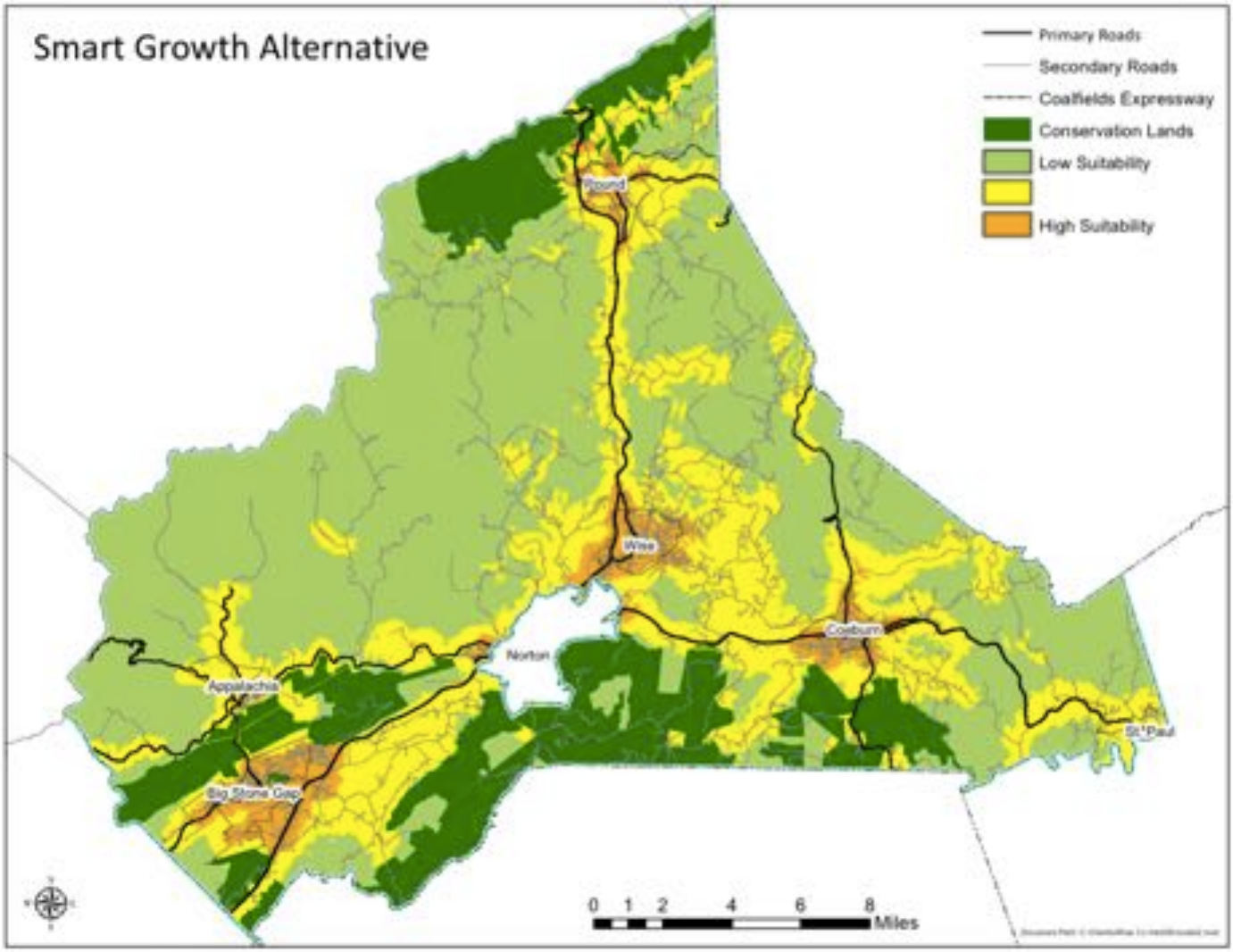
2.9.6 The Smart Growth / Targeted Growth Alternative

- ✓ Development is directed to City, towns and corridors
- ✓ Corridors play a larger role for commercial and industrial development
- ✓ Small lot and multi-family residential development directed to communities
- ✓ Corridors are important activity centers, but not as strip development
- ✓ County as key service provider in corridors, requiring provider coordination
- ✓ Gateways important to designate a sense of place, design matters
- ✓ Coordination with towns for development at fringes

Map 9: Smart Growth/Targeted Growth Alternative Model Output Map



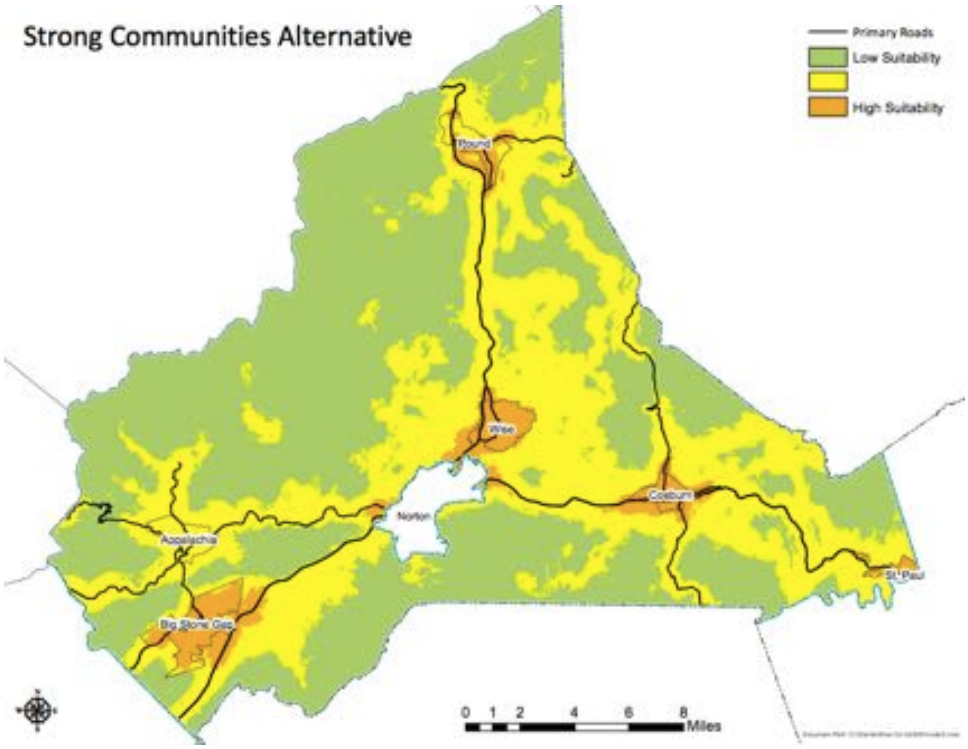
Map 10: Smart Growth/Targeted Growth Alternative Concept Map



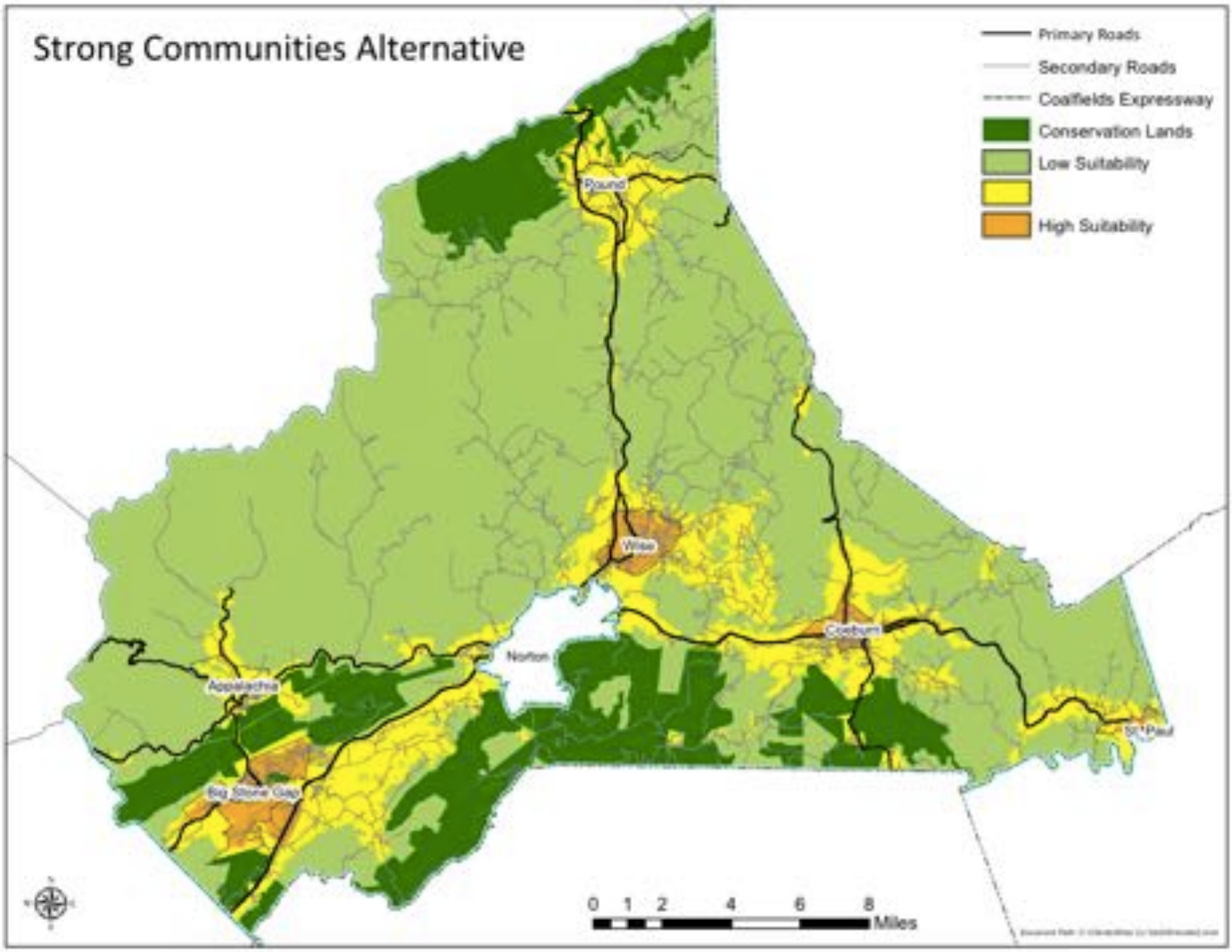
2.9.7 The Strong Communities Alternative

- ✓ Development is directed to City and towns with ability to provide facilities, services and amenities
- ✓ Prioritizes provider investment among communities - recognizes a ROI for public investment and CIP investment to be leveraged
- ✓ Communities not competing, but creating distinct 'personalities' to attract economic development and distinct future land use types
- ✓ Recognizes that not all communities may remain incorporated, but all communities will retain individual character

Map 11: Strong Communities Alternative Model Output Map



Map 12: Strong Communities Alternative Concept Map



2.9.8 Preliminary Findings and Considerations

- **Trends** preserves the status quo. What you see now is what you get more of.
- **Trends** is *Let's Make a Deal* policy. It is based on a continuation of case-by-case negotiation, which typically favors the developer over the community (developers have considerable experience negotiating because nearly every deal is *a deal*, communities less so).
- **Trends** has the strongest property rights perspective. This is not intended to convey a loss of property rights for the other two alternatives, but that Trends places the higher emphasis on individual choice and less emphasis on community and provider cost and impact.
- **Smart/Targeted Growth** directs non-residential development, primarily, to corridors adjacent to and connecting communities, which has the potential to increase County service provider responsibilities. In contrast, **Strong Communities** directs most non-residential development to communities.
- **Smart/Targeted Growth** and **Strong Communities** require the greatest level of coordination and formal partnership between the County, municipalities and providers.
- **Strong Communities** inherently recognizes that not all municipalities may exist in 2040, should reversion be further considered and petitioned. However, **Strong Communities** protects and recognizes community character areas regardless of incorporation. Two findings related to this issue:
  - Pound and areas around the Town have benefitted from building permit activity and higher total value per acre than Appalachia.
  - Appalachia has the highest percentage of all structures in delinquency or foreclosure.

Alternatives, Summarized

- ***Current Trends – Assumes that recent development patterns continue. County and providers take a passive role, market-driven.***
- ***Smart / Targeted Growth – Development is directed to towns and corridors.***
- ***Strong Communities – Development is directed to towns with ability to provide facilities, services and amenities. Prioritizes provider investment among towns.***

2.10 Development Tiers

The Development Tiers system is the first step in moving the County to a more reliable and functional land use scheme with a future land use that will provide confidence to residents and businesses about future development expectations. Each Tier includes a broad mix of land uses that describe and identify preferred future development patterns. Tiers are used to establish a framework for determining which growth management goals, policies and strategies should be used in different areas of the County, recognizing the uniqueness of each area and community, and to direct the location, timing and phasing of growth in order to achieve rational growth patterns, efficiently provide facilities and services and protect rural, agricultural, environmentally sensitive or other important open spaces from inappropriate development.

The Development Tiers Map for Wise County is not a zoning map. The Map is conceptual and functions as a guide on which future land use decisions can be made. Future land uses should be based on the goals and policies set forth in the Plan. Tools such as development regulations, transportation plans and capital improvement plans all are used to implement the Plan. Consideration should be given to the following:

- **Tiers are not zoning designations** -- they are intended to guide local decisions on when and where growth should occur.
- **Tiers reflect a future condition** -- uses designated on the map may be appropriate in 10 to 20 years, but currently may not be appropriate due to reasons of compatibility, availability of adequate public facilities, or proximity to services.
- **The Tiers Map is dynamic** -- as justified by changing conditions in the community, the Tiers should change. While map amendments should not be made frequently, periodic adjustments to better achieve community goals will help the community achieve its planning goals.
- **The Tiers Map and text of the Plan are to be used together** -- the text and maps of the Plan will guide interpretation and implementation of the overall growth management strategy.

A Tiers system recognizes that more intensive uses will require public facilities and services, and that different areas of the County face different needs and solutions related to growth and development. The ability to establish planned service areas efficiently targets and leverages public and private funding and investment, identifying areas in which new growth and development is appropriate dependent on the availability of facilities and services. Service areas also serve as an incentive for compact development.

Wise County has been divided into three tiers, described below. The tiers allow similar policies and programs to be used in similar areas while distinguishing different areas and using special policies to address their growth.

The **Primary Development Tier** is suitable for most types of residential and non-residential development. This tier encompasses the areas adjacent to incorporated areas. The highest density and intensity development will be located in areas closest to the respective communities, where service facilities are available; lower density and intensity development will

be located at the edges of the more intense service areas. This Tier is an existing service area where urban and suburban development is likely and reasonable to occur within the next 10 years. Infrastructure is either planned, budgeted or reasonably available. New infrastructure may be installed provided that there is required participation by new development to fund. Service providers should plan and construct facilities in these areas to meet the needs of development. Capital Improvement Projects should be utilized for these areas first, before investment in other Tiers.

The **Secondary Development Tier** accommodates residential growth. It is characterized by suburban and rural residential development intermingled with small agricultural uses. As continued development occurs, there will be a significant increased demand for roads, water, emergency services, schools and other public services and infrastructure, as well as some non-residential development. The amount and timing of development will be subject to the availability of adequate public facilities. This Tier shows where development is likely and reasonable to occur in these areas over the next 10 to 20 years. Infrastructure may not be currently available, but may be extended, provided there is funding participation by new development. Infrastructure may be reasonably available (it may be close, in time or location) and funding alternatives may be identified, but participation by new development would be required. These secondary growth areas are not expected to develop at urban intensities until public facilities, primarily water, sewer and improved roads, are installed, which is not intended to occur until years 10 to 20 of the planning term. Clustering will be required, but some large lot development may be permitted provided that significant open space is provided and total development capacity occurs at the maximum density identified on the future land use map.

The **Rural / Natural Resources Tier** is intended to support ongoing agricultural operations and preserve valuable natural resources and open space. Policies within this tier allow sparse residential development to minimize negative impacts on agricultural and resource extraction operations and to minimize the demand for public services and infrastructure. Commercial uses are limited to agricultural related services and limited retail. The County also recognizes the importance of agricultural and rural lifestyles and the importance of retaining this character rather than support encroachments of urban or suburban development in these very rural areas. Some agriculture-related or service commercial uses to meet the needs of local residents may be appropriate, including home occupations and home industry. This Tier also offers the opportunity to preserve rural and open space while still allowing some development through the use of conservation subdivisions and conservation easements. In this Tier, there are no plans to provide additional public facilities and services. Infrastructure is not available or budgeted and any use that requires infrastructure to be provided solely at expense of new development. Urban and suburban development is not likely and reasonable to occur in more than 20 years, if at all. As this area contains agriculture, resource extraction, hillsides and areas identified as environmentally sensitive, lands will not be sewered nor receive other capital infrastructure.

2.10.1 A Preferred Development Plan

After reviewing the impacts of the suitability model, alternatives and tiers, the County distilled these factors into a preferred alternative which served as the basis for the Development Plan. The preferred alternative primarily is built on the **Strong Communities** alternative, but also incorporates some of the "smart growth" aspects of the **Smart Growth / Targeted Growth** alternative and some of the "traditional" development practices of the **Current Trends** alternative.

This Strong Communities-based Development Plan provides the County with an effective strategy to establish planning policies and manage spending to optimize investments in services and infrastructure, protect the natural environment, reduce potential loss of life and property from natural hazards, provide a clear direction to achieve an efficient development pattern and support and coordinate with its communities.

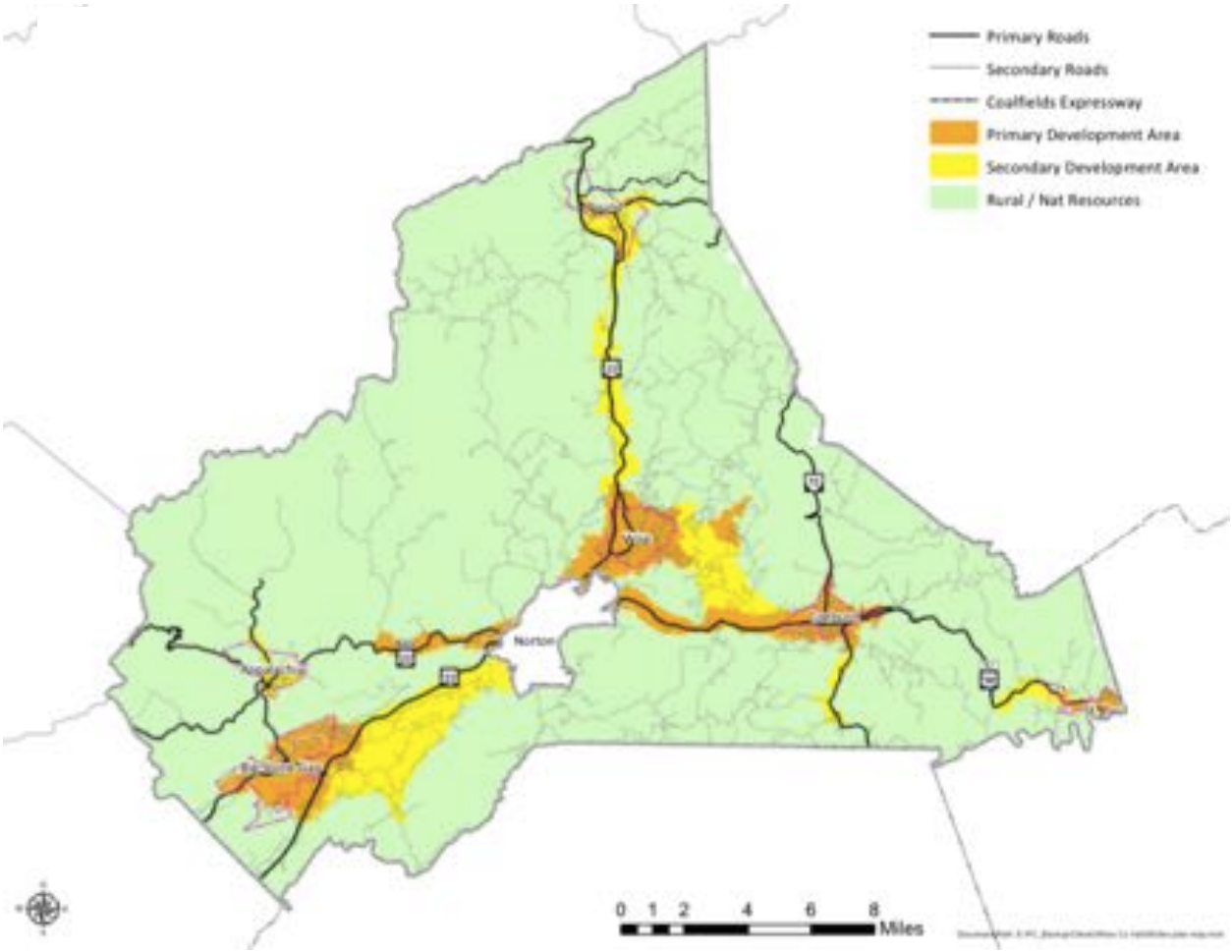
Public facilities and services are essential to the orderly and rational development of undeveloped areas in the urban fringe. As development moves farther away from communities and corridors, or as new development "leapfrogs" to less expensive, outlying rural land, the cost of providing public facilities and services increases.

The Smart Growth Strategy designates areas that are appropriate for development due to the availability of urban-type services (i.e., public water, sewer and off-site wastewater treatment and paved roads). Development will be encouraged in areas where facilities exist and accommodated in areas where facilities can be provided in a cost-effective manner. Development in rural areas is minimized to reduce demands for road improvements and other public facilities and services.

The **Strong Communities Development Plan** is characterized by and identifies the following three types of development areas, and shown on **Map 12:**

- **The Primary Development Area.** The Developed Area is the area where resources and services are maximized. It is mostly developed but has significant opportunities for infill development and redevelopment. Infill and redevelopment should efficiently use, maintain and expand existing infrastructure. The Central Area and hospital environs are key portions of the developed area requiring significant attention during the life of the plan to enhance community vitality and neighborhood stability.
- **The Secondary Development Area.** The Developing Area is the area within which adequate public facilities should be available within the life of the Plan, by the year 2020. This is the area between the County limits and one and one-half miles from the County limits within the unincorporated area.
- **The Rural / Natural Resources Area.** The Rural Area is the unincorporated area located outside the area the County identified as being efficiently developed within the 20-year planning horizon and is planned to remain in long term agriculture or large lot residential development. It includes the future growth area north of the County that will serve residential growth projections beyond the year 2020.

Map 13: Wise County Development Tiers Map



2.10.2 Future Land Use

This Plan authorizes compact development served by adequate facilities and services that minimizes impacts on farms and the environment and supports land, resource and energy conservation. While the County has tradition of rural uses, many newer uses are resource-intensive, inordinately expensive to serve and overly consumptive of land creating excessive vehicle miles traveled, which results in unnecessary air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. While rural, large lot development is a popular lifestyle option, the public and private costs of such development are excessive and do not position the County or its residents to attain fiscal sustainability or protect farms. To allow continuation of large lot development that damages natural and cultural resources and lacks a desirable sense of place will also erode the County's appeal as a tourist destination, further impacting the quality of life and economic opportunity. The Comprehensive Plan also assures that future large lot rural residential development will contribute to the environmental, traffic, fiscal integrity, adequate public facility, and sustainable design and improvement standards of the County.

Future land uses are identified to show the range of uses permitted, planned development patterns and relationship to growth tiers, and, together with the goals and policies contained in the Plan, establishes the County's policy direction and acts as a guide for decisions affecting future development. But, future land uses area not zoning. Future land uses operate as a guide to future land use patterns and infrastructure planning. The Future Land Use Map is shown as **Map 13**. It is a parcel-based map that respects existing developing uses patterns, and presents a preferred future development scenario based on the development tiers.

The list of broad future land uses is shown in **Table 29**, and depicts only general expectations rather than formal regulations and requirements. This exhibit depicts where different types of development should occur based on the growth tiers framework. It is intended to guide the decision-making process for development and subdivision proposals and help staff and elected and appointed officials make recommendations.

This Plan identifies two parts to identifying appropriate future development once the Tier is identified where development is proposed to occur. First, using **Table 29**, one would identify appropriate future land uses in each tier, including the average lot size for each land use type. Then, once the proposed future land use is identified, one would use **Table 30** to identify the necessary infrastructure and improvement standards to serve the development.

Infrastructure and improvement requirements shall be consistent with applicable tier policies and future land use types. Public service providers should use the plan to guide infrastructure improvements to accommodate future growth. The location and capacity of public service improvements may be determined by comparing existing land use and service demands with the proposed land use pattern. **Table 30** indicates the general level of public service, infrastructure and on-site improvements required prior to or concurrently with development within each tier. Density and intensity bonuses also may be offered for projects that surpass open space requirements and provide additional sustainability and 'green design' features.

Map 14: Future Land Use Map

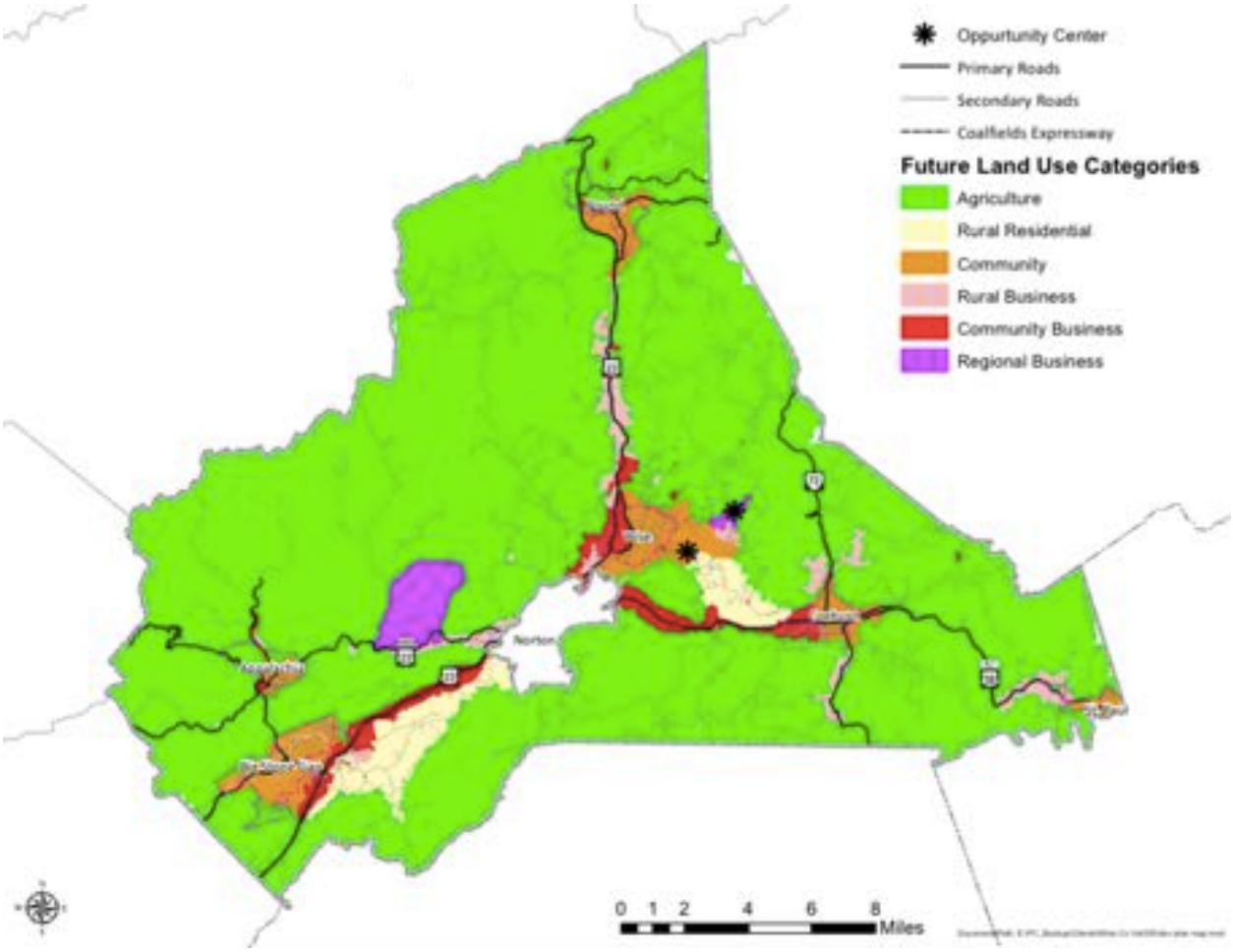


Table 29: Future Land Use

Land Use	Uses	Rural / Natural Resources Tier	Secondary Development Tier	Primary Development Tier
Agriculture	Farm and timber lands to be protected from encroachment of non-farm development and conversion to urban uses. Includes conservation areas. Non-farm development is strongly discouraged. Rural homes on large lots, sometimes as part of rural subdivisions (a subdivision of only a few lots and very low densities).	P		
Rural Residential	Farms and ag uses permitted. Large lot single-family residences with access to adequate water and road improvements. Centralized water and sewer service and access to chip-sealed or paved roads are required for subdivisions in this category. Clustering, conservation and nuisance easements are encouraged and may be required as a condition of subdivision approval.	P		
Community	This category plans for a form-based, mixed use development orientation. It is limited to developed areas with access to paved roads, centralized water and wastewater systems. Residential and commercial development is traditional small town design; uses are designed and compatible with adjacent uses and historical development patterns and styles.		C	P
Rural Business	Limited commercial uses serving the needs of rural residents. Uses include small retail or services, agricultural support operations, rural services and natural resource based uses. Planned multi-family residential uses may be appropriate along highways.	P	C	C

Land Use	Uses	Rural / Natural Resources Tier	Secondary Development Tier	Primary Development Tier
Community Business	Neighborhood or community scale retail centers and personal and professional services conveniently located near residential areas. Intended to be designed and integrated with adjacent uses and development patterns, typically as part of a mixed use or planned development. Mixed use encouraged.		C	P
Regional Business	Larger, regional-scale retail and employment centers. Because of intensity, must be designed and integrated with adjacent uses and development patterns as mixed use or planned development. Mixed use encouraged. Includes light industrial uses.		C	P
Opportunity Center	Unique, site- or purpose-specific uses, not likely to be replicated in other locations, benefiting from locational attributes. Non-residential uses may include education, energy, eco-tourism, or supporting other economic development activities. May also include natural resources, viewsheds or recreational/environmental amenities, as well as light industrial and heavy industrial uses. Examples include UVA-Wise, Lonesome Pine Airport and Lonesome Pine Business Park (opportunities within municipal boundaries may be established pursuant to an IGA).	C	C	C

P = Permitted; C = Conditionally Permitted

Table 30: Infrastructure and Improvement Requirements

Improvement	Agriculture	Rural Residential	Community Residential	Rural Business	Community Business	Regional Business	Opportunity Center
WATER							
Centralized		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Individual Well	✓	✓					
Site and Use Dependent				✓			✓
WASTEWATER							
Centralized		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Onsite	✓	✓			✓		
Site and Use Dependent				✓			✓
TRANSPORTATION							
Legal Access	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grants of Right-of-Way and Easements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arterial			✓		✓	✓	

Improvement	Agriculture	Rural Residential	Community Residential	Rural Business	Community Business	Regional Business	Opportunity Center
Paved Road			✓		✓		
Within 1/4-mile of a Paved Road			✓	✓			
Within 1/2-mile of a Paved Road		✓					
Dust Control Required		✓					
Site and Use Dependent							✓
PUBLIC SAFETY							
Sheriff - Average Response Time of Less Than 8 Minutes			✓		✓	✓	✓
Sheriff - Average Response Time of 8 Minutes or More	✓	✓		✓			
Fire - Average Response Time of Less Than 8 Minutes			✓		✓	✓	✓
Fire - Average Response Time of 8 Minutes or More	✓	✓		✓			
Adequate Fire Flow			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN							
Curbs, Gutters, Sidewalks			✓		✓	✓	✓

Improvement	Agriculture	Rural Residential	Community Residential	Rural Business	Community Business	Regional Business	Opportunity Center
Paved Parking					✓	✓	✓
Shared Parking					✓	✓	✓
Drainage Detention/Retention Facility			✓		✓	✓	✓
Landscaping, Buffering			✓		✓	✓	✓
Open Space		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Cluster, Conservation Subdivision		✓			✓	✓	
Planned Development			✓		✓	✓	✓
Density Bonus for Additional Open Space		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Density Bonus for Sustainability		✓	✓		✓	✓	

2.10.3 Land Use Management Tools

There are four primary tools communities can use to implement local plans - the Official Map, Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Regulations and the CIP. Two additional tools (service areas and regionalism) promote a coordinated approach to encouraging and protecting investment. Wise County is committed to developing a Comprehensive Plan that remembers our history, preserves our lifestyle, protect fiscal resources and protects agricultural areas for future generations.

2.10.3.1 *Official Map*

The Wise County Official Map is the series of maps found in the Comprehensive Plan. Identifying all of the necessary components on a single map, such as public facilities, streets, growth areas and future land uses, would produce an image only decipherable in an electronic format. Using a series of specific purpose [official] maps is a more manageable and usable approach. By showing the area on the Official Map, the County furthers the implementation of the Plan by establishing the location of existing and proposed streets, open space, parks, other public lands and facilities, waterways and floodplain, informing property owners and developers of planned public improvements and land and easement acquisitions.

The Official Map identifies private and public lands for which the public may have a current or future need, identifies and protects future improvements and extensions of the municipal road network and provides notification of the location of potential public improvements and acquisitions, thus preventing construction within future rights-of-way and other future public areas and conservation easements. This provides for the coordination of public and private goals as property owners are informed early in the capital improvements planning process of long-range County goals for public facilities and services which allows development plans to be adjusted before detailed and costly plans are prepared.

The Official Map is not a zoning map and it does not imply County responsibility for maintaining or improving mapped roads or facilities. The inclusion of proposed right-of-way, easement or other public facility does not constitute the opening or establishment of the street, the taking or acceptance of land or obligate the County to improve or maintain such streets or land until the time of dedication or purchase. The Official Map is not a taking of land; it does not prevent use of all land rights on mapped parcels. Inclusion of a parcel within the Official Map indicates the need for additional review to ensure that the proposed use or development is compatible with existing or planned County facilities, and that development will not preclude efficient building or operation of such facilities.

2.10.3.2 *Subdivision Regulations*

"Subdivision" means the division of any parcel of land into a number of lots, blocks or sites as specified in a local ordinance, law, rule or regulation, with or without streets or highways, for the purpose of sale, transfer of ownership, or development. The term "subdivision" may include any alteration of lot lines or dimensions of any lots or sites shown on a plat previously approved and filed in the office of the county clerk or register of the county in which such plat is located. Subdivisions may be defined and delineated by local regulation, as either "major" or "minor", with the review procedures and criteria for each set forth in such local regulations.

Subdivision regulations set standards for streets, drainage ways, sewage disposal, water systems, and other aspects of public welfare. They are needed to protect communities and ensure building lots provide a wholesome living environment for future residents. These regulations ensure adequate lot size, public access and the availability of public services to each lot created. They also help to conserve natural, scenic, historic and recreational areas. Subdivision regulations also eliminate the need for excessive public expenditures by making the developer responsible for the installation of basic public facilities before the recording and sale of lots.

2.10.3.3 *Zoning Regulations*

Zoning divides a locality into specific districts and establishes regulations concerning the use, placement, spacing and size of land and buildings within the respective districts. Zoning is intended to avoid disruptive land use patterns by preventing activities on one property from generating external effects that are detrimental to other properties. Zoning ordinances, if drafted by the planning commission and adopted by the governing body, must feature text describing each district and the district regulations, as well as a map detailing the location and extent of each district throughout the community.

Development regulations are the quintessential tool of plan implementation and must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

To be effective, zoning ordinances need to reflect the views of how land within a jurisdiction can, or should, be used at the present time, as well as in the future. These views should be reflected in the community's comprehensive plan. Thus, when a property owner petitions a locality for a rezoning (zoning map amendment), the planning staff, planning commission and the local governing body must refer to the comprehensive plan to determine if the rezoning request comports with the plan's goals, objectives, policies and vision. Indeed, the planning commission and the governing body must each hold public hearings before acting on any rezoning proposal. In addition to hearing the public's perspective regarding the proposed rezoning, the commission and governing body alike must identify and share the facts and findings each body used in deciding to support or reject the proposed rezoning.

Zoning regulations, in both theory and practice, must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan - this is a mandate in more than half of the states nationwide. This does not necessarily mean that a community should zone to the plan, which means to rezone property to conform to the planned future land use map. Rather, it means that the development standards pertaining to various districts and land uses should reflect the goals and policies set forth in the comprehensive plan.

2.10.3.4 *Capital Improvement Program*

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is an important tool that ensures the County has the capacity to provide and maintain necessary public facilities and services and that the facilities and services are cost-effectively planned and equitably financed. A short-range CIP (and budget) should identify and estimate costs of capital improvements and annual obligations (for staffing, training, etc.) required to serve development for a 5- to 10-year period, whereas a long-range CIP (and budget) should identify and estimate costs of improvements and annual obligations needed to serve development for a 10- to 20-

year period. As part of the planning process, and updated with each annual CIP and budgetary process, the County will use the new CIP to guide the development of facilities and services in a sustainable, planned manner. Projects within the CIP would be prioritized to identify which are most important and critical, such as by the following factors:

- Removes/prevents imminent threat to public health or safety;
- Improves the quality / corrects deficiency of existing services;
- Provides incentive for economic development;
- Reduces long-term operating costs;
- Improves efficiency; and
- Furthers the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.10.3.5 *Service Districts / Service Areas*

Working in conjunction with a CIP, a community service district or area is a defined area within which the County would plan for, coordinate and provide and maintain public facilities and services, such as water and sewer. Service Districts (sometimes called Special Service Districts) are legally defined geographic portions of a jurisdiction established by the local governing body. They are created to provide additional, more complete, or more timely services of government than are desired in the locality as a whole. Property owners within the special service district may pay a higher tax rate in exchange for these enhanced services. The service district allows the County to develop and manage facilities and services more efficiently and cost effectively. A district of this type also could be used to stimulate infill development or economic development within its boundaries and provide a more efficient use of land in harmony with its natural characteristics; preserve more usable open space, agricultural land, tree cover, recreation areas or scenic vistas and expand the opportunity for the development of affordable housing. Service districts are easy to create and have a long history of use in counties across the Nation for the purposes listed above.

A community services boundary promotes more efficient, orderly, and compact development. Growth is supported and encouraged inside the boundary with utilities and development-friendly policies, and discouraged outside the boundary. Growth boundaries promote compact and contiguous development patterns that can be effectively served by public services and preserve open space, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas that are not currently suitable for urban development. Growth boundaries also support communities by pushing desired development to their neighborhoods, centers and corridors. The Comprehensive Plan designates areas which are planned for immediate or long-term utility service, coordinating development approvals and utility extensions to achieve an orderly and compact development pattern adjacent to existing developed area.

2.10.3.6 *Regionalism*

Regionalism means more than neighborliness. Regionalism recognizes that the future quality of life and competitiveness of a region is a shared responsibility, of all communities. It requires the coordination, cooperation and consensus of communities working strategically to effectuate change. The region faces years of slow growth and uncertainty following our worst recession in 50 years. Despite the considerable funds local government and providers spend every year on facilities and services; the uncomfortable truth is that communities have been living off the legacy of investments of previous generations. The region faces potential challenges from sprawling development into rural and sensitive environmental areas. A regional perspective is the proper scale and context for analyzing and addressing many of these difficult and challenging issues.

Our region shares a common destiny. Regionalism recognizes that our communities are intertwined, transcending arbitrary political divisions. Regionalism lays the foundation for building more effective regional partnerships in the metropolitan area. Intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which two or more jurisdictions can communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, budgets and capital improvement programs to address and resolve regional issues of mutual interest. Many issues in today's interdependent complex society cross jurisdictional boundaries, affecting more than one community with the actions of one governmental unit impacting others.

The health of Wise County and the welfare of our region are interconnected. Issues cross jurisdictional boundaries. The activities of one level of government have extraordinary impacts beyond its jurisdictional boundary. Coordinated planning efforts will result in benefits to citizens of all communities in the region, such as:

- **Coordinated strategies** - to address regional issues by communicating and coordinating actions to address and resolve issues which are regional in nature.
- **Cost savings** - by increasing efficiency, avoiding unnecessary duplication and using area-wide cooperation and economies of scale to provide services that would otherwise be too costly, as well as to stabilize taxes by improving the performance and delivery of programs and services. To reduce the cost of providing facilities and services by local government and other providers (water districts, fire districts, school districts, *etc*) and improve the level of service and delivery of facilities and services. Man-made (roads, transit, stadiums and jails) and natural features (water basins, air shed) affect the region.
- **Economic development** - by enhancing economic growth by planning, funding and providing the infrastructure and services needed for sustainable community and regional growth including requiring developments whose impacts or services and facilities cross the approving jurisdiction's boundaries, to pay their fair share of the costs needed to mitigate the impacts generated by their growth and demand.
- **Sustainability** - to achieve sustainable development practices. Development is pushing against capacity. As we balance growth with environmental preservation and social equity, part of the solution requires acting regionally.

- **Early identification of issues** - to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before public and private entities have established rigid positions, before the political stakes have been raised and before issues have become conflicts or crises.
- **Reduced litigation** - by resolving issues before parties engage in litigation, resulting in diverting funds that could have been used to provide facilities and services, unwanted outcomes, and reducing tensions to improve the working relationships of local government, service providers and community organizations in the region.
- **Consistency and predictability** - of plans, development regulations, policies, implementation actions and development approvals between service providers and among neighboring jurisdictions, for residents, businesses and developers that establishes a framework of reasonable expectations and decision-making in the development process.

Part 3: Goals, Policies and Strategies

3.1 Using and Implementing the Plan

Wise County's Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document -- one that responds to changing needs and conditions. To assess the Plan's effectiveness in responding to changing conditions, the County will need to monitor actions affecting the Plan and amend the Plan periodically. Decision-makers should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether or not it is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies. The cumulative effect of small, incremental changes may result in a shift in overall policy direction. For this reason, Comprehensive Plan amendments must be evaluated in terms of their significance to overall County policy.

Goals, policies and strategies describe how Wise County will meet the challenge of managing future growth and community development. In this light, the terms are defined as follows:

> **Goal:** Description of a desired state of affairs for the community in the future. Goals are the broad, public purposes toward which policies and programs are directed. Goals are phrased to express the desired results of the Comprehensive Plan.
>
> **Policy:** Statements of intent against which individual actions and decisions are evaluated. Policies supply the focus and needed direction underpinning County efforts.
>
> **Strategy:** Individual regulations and actions which, taken together, will enable the County to achieve its Policies and move in the direction of satisfying its Goals. Strategies are the specific courses of action which are designed to bring the Wise County Comprehensive Plan to life.

The existence of a sound development Plan is not enough to guide future development within Wise County. In order for this Plan to serve as a practical guide for directing physical growth and change in the county, all decisions relating to land use should be in conformance with the policies featured in this Plan as adopted by the Board of Supervisors. In addition, implementation of the Plan will require the consistent use of such land management tools as zoning and subdivision regulations, periodic review and updating of the Plan and coordination with the incorporated localities in the county.

3.2 Values, Goals and Policies

3.2.1 Core Values

This Plan is based on statements of principle or Core Values. These values broadly define what the County believes and they serve as the foundation for the Plan's goals, policies and strategies.

Core Value: Use land wisely.

Core Value: Encourage development.

Core Value: Protect the environment.

Core Value: Foster economic diversity.

Core Value: Provide cost effective services.

Core Value: Respect communities.

Core Value: Remember who we are.

Core Value: Coordinate, communicate and listen.

3.2.2 Land Use – Agriculture and Natural Resources

Goal 1: Ensure the long-term viability of agriculture through preservation of farmland.

Policy 1.1 Recognize and preserve agricultural land and natural resources as valuable County assets.

Policy 1.2 Use the land use model to frame development decisions for agricultural lands.

Policy 1.3 Maintain agriculture as an integral part of the County's economy, landscape and land natural resource base.

Policy 1.4 Encourage and promote the development and retention of agriculturally related businesses as a valued element of the Wise County economy.

Policy 1.5 Support sustainable farming and value-added agricultural initiatives.

Policy 1.6 Ensure the viability of farming in the County and protect land best suited for agricultural use.

Policy 1.7 Support agribusiness services and facilities.

Policy 1.8 Allow non-agricultural uses by conditional use permit to be located in areas where the site is suitable for the intended use and is compatible with adjacent uses.

Policy 1.9 Promote local agricultural production by supporting locally grown food and local food security initiatives.

Policy 1.10 Support agriculture as a way of life by keeping agriculture in the school curriculum and supporting FFA and 4-H, and encourage the use of the school system agriculture farm for teaching.

Policy 1.11 Support agri-tourism.

Policy 1.12 Support development of food processing plants, cold storage, and warehousing and distribution infrastructure for value-added and processed foods, and encourage new crop processing development.

Goal 2: Minimize negative impacts on agriculture operations from non-agricultural uses.

Policy 2.1 Discourage development on productive agricultural soils and encourage soil conservation practices.

Policy 2.2 Discourage the use of public funds for projects that will have a detrimental impact on the agricultural lands.

Policy 2.3 Protect productive agricultural lands from encroachment by incompatible residential, commercial or other intensive development.

Policy 2.4 Minimize conflicts and incompatibilities between agriculture and other land uses.

Policy 2.5 Adopt local right-to-farm measures including an "Agriculture Use Notice" to be administered when a building permit is sought, and an "Agriculture Management Easement" which must accompany a final plat to indemnify agriculture operations from incidental nuisances generated by generally accepted agricultural practices.

Policy 2.6 Protect the most agriculturally productive soils from conversion to non-agriculture pursuits.

Policy 2.7 Allow rural residential patterns that are compatible with Agriculture.

Policy 2.8 Support site plan flexibility to allow for ag use security and emergency preparedness training and planning by farms, ag operations in the county.

Goal 3: Protect and conserve the County's environmental resources.

Policy 3.1 Support and enforce development standards that minimize the impact of human activity on the natural environment.

Policy 3.2 Protect open space, viewsheds and environmental features that contribute to the visual beauty and natural aesthetic of Wise County.

Policy 3.3 Limit development activities on environmentally sensitive lands, including areas with high slopes and poor soil suitability. Depending upon the fragility of the resource, restrictions should limit or prohibit construction, grading, and vegetative clearing. Constrained land should be subtracted from land acreage on which development density is calculated.

Policy 3.4 Encourage the preservation of scenic and historic areas.

Policy 3.5 Encourage the retention of specimen trees during site preparation for construction and other development activities.

Policy 3.6 Prevent the degradation of environmentally sensitive natural resources, including floodplains, heavily forested areas, steep slopes and wildlife habitat areas.

Policy 3.7 Support recycling, composting and other solid waste reduction activities.

Policy 3.8 Prevent light pollution.

Policy 3.9 Protect access to mineral resources and ensure their availability to future generations.

Policy 3.10 Encourage the utilization of mineral resources in Wise County, to provide economic stabilization and diversification, in particular for coal and gypsum.

Policy 3.11 Protect the County's timber resources. Encourage improved management practices and investigate the development of timber as an economic resource.

Policy 3.12 Support long-term conservation of land resources, and encourage the placement of conservation easements, deed restrictions and other mechanisms that preserve land resources in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan.

Policy 3.13 Conserve and protect fragile and critical natural resource areas, which include flood plain areas, unique geological formations, historic areas, wetlands, existing natural prairies, and sensitive areas, which support wildlife, enhance water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, hold storm water, and provide views and recreational opportunities.

Policy 3.14 Subdivisions that include environmentally sensitive areas should preserve those critical areas.

Policy 3.15 Encourage more open and green space in new development projects.

Policy 3.16 Encourage the use of non-traditional energy resources in new and existing developments.

Policy 3.17 Support and encourage updates to the the County's GIS dataset for natural resources.

Goal 4: Protect surface and ground water quality and quantity.

Policy 4.1 Encourage soil conservation practices which will protect land and improve water quality.

Policy 4.2 Protect land adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands.

Policy 4.3 Encourage vegetative buffers, terracing and other natural stormwater filtration systems for all non-agricultural development adjacent to water and major drainage ways.

Policy 4.4 Discourage development away from stream valleys, floodways, sensitive waterways and other areas that are at high risk of water pollution.

Policy 4.5 Proposals for future development in known flood hazard areas should demonstrate the need for the development to occur in that area, ensure that the development will be protected from flood damage, and ensure the development activity will not substantially raise the base flood elevation.

Policy 4.6 Discourage construction within 100-year floodplains to necessary infrastructure development.

Policy 4.7 Encourage floodproofing, flood forecasting, and watershed treatment in conjunction with appropriate and environmentally acceptable structural measures.

Policy 4.8 Through watershed planning, education, best management practices and development regulation, protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and surface water supplies for current and future generations.

3.2.3 Land Use – Development and Development Patterns

Goal 5: Promote coordinated and efficient development patterns.

Policy 5.1 All levels of County decision-making shall consider, support and comply with the goals, policies and strategies of this Plan to ensure that the County's assets and resources are available to sustain future generations.

Policy 5.2 Use the Comprehensive Plan to guide land use and development decisions. Require findings that any amendments to the Plan:

- Will be consistent with Plan priorities;
- Will be compatible with existing and planned uses;
- Will support the efficient provision of public facilities and services; and
- Will enhance the overall quality of life in the County.

Policy 5.3 Encourage the majority of future growth to occur within existing municipal boundaries where adequate public services are located and/or can be provided in the most cost effective manner.

Policy 5.4 New development should be responsible for buffering from adjacent less intensive land uses in order to eliminate nuisance.

Policy 5.5 Encourage the use of conservation subdivision design and cluster development as an alternative to conventional suburban and rural sprawl.

Policy 5.6 Promote the conservation of energy resources, access to solar energy and provides for adequate light and air.

Policy 5.7 Recognize that the Plan and Regulations provide flexibility to accommodate Opportunity Centers (unique and/or exceptional uses – business, industry, residential or recreational), which may be permitted but provided that the development is responsible for the cost of extending/expanding necessary facilities and services and mitigates negative spillover on adjacent existing uses.

Goal 6: Protect private property rights.

Policy 6.1 Provide incentives rather than mandates, when possible, to achieve the land use goals, and use mandates only when necessary.

Policy 6.2 Through the development review process, ensure that the imposition of development regulations is in proportion to the need or impact they are to address.

Goal 7: Establish a Development Tiers framework to guide development and provision of public facilities and services while protecting agricultural, rural and natural resource uses.

Policy 7.1 Promote a Development Tiers program that maintains a balanced, sustainable land use pattern based on the availability, timing, adequacy and equitable funding of necessary infrastructure and services.

Policy 7.2 Direct new development to areas where infrastructure and service levels are adequate to minimize development costs and to curtail haphazard and scattershot development patterns.

Policy 7.3 New development should be limited to areas where public and/or private facilities are present or planned, including: streets, water, sanitary sewer, schools, and recreation facilities/parks.

Policy 7.4 New infrastructure may be installed in a development area tier provided that there is required participation by new development to fund.

Goal 8: Establish a Primary Development Area Tier to distinguish existing developed areas that are served by facilities and services and currently are able to accommodate new development without significant additional capital investment.

Policy 8.1 Full urban services will be required for any development in growth areas tiers, including approved public water and wastewater systems, urban road improvements, and urban service levels for public safety, fire and emergency medical assistance. Coordination with service providers to plan and construct facilities in these areas to meet the needs of development at these urban intensities.

Policy 8.2 County and service provider Capital Improvement Projects should be utilized for Primary Development Areas first, before investment in Secondary Development Areas.

Policy 8.3 Necessary community facilities and services (water, sewer, public safety, paved roads, *etc*) is either planned, budgeted or reasonably available. New infrastructure may be installed provided that there is required participation by new development to fund.

Policy 8.4 Primarily encompasses areas adjacent to incorporated communities. Development in these areas should be consistent with their growth and development Plans.

Policy 8.5 The highest density and intensity development will be located where service facilities are available; lower density development will be located at the edges of the more intense service areas.

Goal 9: Establish a Secondary Development Area Tier to identify areas where development and infrastructure investment may occur in the long-term future.

Policy 9.1 In Secondary Development Area Tiers, urban and suburban development is likely and reasonable to occur in these areas over the next 10 to 20 years. Infrastructure may not be currently available, but it is planned and identified in short- or long-range Capital Improvements Plans. Infrastructure may be reasonably available (it may be close, in time or location) and funding alternatives may be identified, but participation by new development is required.

Policy 9.2 Secondary Development Area Tiers are not expected to develop at urban intensities until public facilities, primarily water, sewer and improved roads, are installed, which is not intended to occur until years 10 to 20. Clustering will be required, but some large lot development may be permitted provided that significant open space is provided and total development capacity occurs at the maximum density identified on the Future Land Use map.

Policy 9.3 Necessary community services may not be available, but can be expanded or extended with development participation.

Policy 9.4 Intended to accommodate future growth - where development is likely and reasonable to occur in these areas over the next 10 to 20 years. Infrastructure may not be currently available, but may be extended, provided there is funding participation by new development.

Policy 9.5 As continued development occurs, there will be a significant increased demand for roads, water, emergency services, schools and other public services and infrastructure, as well as some non-residential development.

Policy 9.6 The amount and timing of development will be subject to the availability of adequate public facilities.

Goal 10: Establish a Rural and Natural Resources Tier to protect farms and agricultural uses from incompatible non-ag development.

Policy 10.1 Limit extension of utilities in the Rural and Natural Resources Tier and require development to fund the expense of extending infrastructure.

Policy 10.2 Encourage growth in unincorporated Wise County to occur in previously platted subdivisions, on marginal land for agriculture and in stable environmental areas.

Policy 10.3 Discourage non-ag development from locating on prime agricultural soils and other agricultural areas.

Policy 10.4 Non-ag development should not be permitted where it is incompatible with existing agricultural activities.

Policy 10.5 Discourage land use incompatibility to promote and protect farming, timber and mining.

Policy 10.6 Non-ag development should be adjacent to adequately paved roads and in clusters to promote efficient urban development patterns and to lessen congestion on streets and highways.

Policy 10.7 Ag uses and rural lifestyle are protected. Ag businesses permitted.

Policy 10.8 Non-ag uses generally not permitted. Non-ag businesses generally not permitted

Policy 10.9 Policies within this tier would allow sparse residential development to minimize negative impacts on agricultural operations and to minimize the demand for public services and infrastructure.

Policy 10.10 Policies are designed to retain this agricultural character rather than support encroachments of urban or suburban development in these very rural areas.

Policy 10.11 Some agriculture-related or service commercial uses to meet the needs of local residents may be appropriate, including limited retail.

Policy 10.12 The Agriculture Tier may allow some development through the use of conservation subdivisions, conservation easements and ag use easements.

Goal 11: Coordinate development and investment decisions in and around Norton and each town to ensure new development is consistent with the rational growth of each community.

Policy 11.1 Require land uses and the intensity of development around communities to be consistent with the land use Plan mutually adopted by the County and each respective municipality.

Policy 11.2 Development in areas around incorporated communities should be consistent with the local land use plan and should be consistent with local development regulations.

Policy 11.3 Efficient, compact development patterns should be encouraged to maximize public facility and infrastructure investment.

Policy 11.4 Require urban and suburban development around communities to conform to improvement standards mutually agreed to by the locality and the County.

Policy 11.5 Provide the opportunity for the county's incorporated communities to comment during the development review process on development proposals located adjacent to their boundaries.

Goal 12: Maintain and promote a high quality built environment throughout the County.

Policy 12.1 Promote private investment through a combination of public investment in infrastructure and active efforts to enforce County codes.

Policy 12.2 Promote good site design and layout, architectural design and building materials.

Policy 12.3 Improve the value and quality of new and existing development through establishment of zoning, subdivision and design standards.

Policy 12.4 Support a clean and attractive environment.

Policy 12.5 Improve visual appeal by encouraging and requiring property maintenance.

Goal 13: Ensure that new development is compatible with existing and planned uses of surrounding properties.

Policy 13.1 Use the Tiers Map to guide land use, development and infrastructure investment decisions.

Policy 13.2 While the map may indicate that a particular land use type is appropriate, the County shall consider the adequacy of infrastructure and the character of the area before approving zoning or other development proposals. Zoning decisions shall be consistent with the adopted Tiers Map and the other policies of this Plan.

Policy 13.3 Maintain the Tiers Map and Zoning Map as adopted Plan amendments as they occur.

Goal 14: Ensure that new development is compatible with ag uses.

Policy 14.1 Require residential development adjacent to agriculture uses to provide vegetative buffers, windbreaks and other means of mitigating potential incompatibilities to avoid interference with existing agricultural operations.

Policy 14.2 Limit commercial activity in the Agricultural Protection Tier to home occupations, direct marketing of agricultural products and commercial services at intersections of 2 paved roads.

3.2.4 Land Use - Housing

Goal 15: Promote quality housing.

Policy 15.1 Promote the construction of a broad range of housing types to accommodate the varied needs and incomes of the County's residents.

Policy 15.2 Provide opportunities for workforce affordable housing, especially for seniors, low-to-moderate income households and students.

Policy 15.3 Enforce regulations that require property maintenance.

Policy 15.4 Encourage residential development in or adjacent to communities with available and adequate facilities and services. Residential development should be encouraged to locate on existing lots within incorporated cities or in existing platted subdivisions. However, residential development may be allowed to locate on existing platted lots and small parcels of land in the rural areas of the County.

Policy 15.5 Multi-family residential development will be directed towards existing incorporated cities having the utility capacity to accommodate such development.

Policy 15.6 Support multi-family developments that are compatible with surrounding land uses and located in areas with available or planned public facilities and services, including water, sewer and transportation.

Policy 15.7 Direct "clustering" of residential development to provide community services efficiently and economically.

3.2.5 Land Use - Commercial and Industrial Development

Goal 16: Promote quality commercial development.

Policy 16.1 Commercial development in rural areas should be restricted to those businesses that provide agricultural business needs.

Policy 16.2 Rural commercial development should be located adjacent to major road intersections and in such a manner as not to impede traffic flow.

Policy 16.3 Commercial development serving regional commercial needs should be directed toward communities and areas having areas zoned for such development.

Policy 16.4 Ensure that proposed commercial developments are consistent with growth areas as designated on the Tiers Map.

Policy 16.5 Encourage general commercial development to be contiguous with the boundaries of a city, town, or other commercial development.

Policy 16.6 Commercial activity must be located within one-quarter of mile of an intersection and/or interchange of a hard surface road and a State or Federal highway to maximize accessibility.

Policy 16.7 Minimize the visual impact of commercial and office operations through design and performance standards, to enhance and protect the aesthetic quality of gateways and high visibility corridors.

Goal 17: Promote quality industrial development.

Policy 17.1 Support existing industrial uses, that they may be maintained, expanded, and/or redeveloped.

Policy 17.2 Agricultural service related industries, may be permitted in the rural area if a need for such development is demonstrated.

Policy 17.3 Prevent scattered, non-agricultural industrial or warehousing-related development in the unincorporated rural areas.

Policy 17.4 Locate all new industrial or warehousing activity within one-quarter of a mile of a major street intersection and/or interchange to maximize accessibility.

Policy 17.5 Minimize the negative visual impact of industrial, and warehousing operations by using design and performance standards to enhance and protect the aesthetic quality of gateways and high visibility corridors.

Policy 17.6 Industrial, research and warehousing developments shall be designed to preserve and enhance natural features such as vegetation, wildlife, waterways, wetlands, and topography, and minimize the degradation of water quality by limiting areas of impervious surfaces and utilizing best management practices.

Policy 17.7 Promote industrial development to provide employment opportunities.

Policy 17.8 Direct industrial development to locations where it will not have an adverse impact on residential development, agricultural lands and natural resources.

Policy 17.9 Protect existing and potential industrial sites from encroachment by non-industrial activities.

Policy 17.10 Direct industrial development to established or planned industrial parks to more efficiently provide necessary facilities and services.

Policy 17.11 Establish performance, site, dimensional, design and access standards to ensure high quality, compatible industrial development.

Policy 17.12 Encourage expanded local workforce development.

3.2.6 Economic Development

Goal 18: Promote a sustainable local economy that provides employment opportunities for residents and supports a high quality of life.

Policy 18.1 Encourage entrepreneurship and economic diversity.

Policy 18.2 Encourage and incentivize opportunities for new business.

Policy 18.3 Promote and position Wise County as a “technology community”.

Policy 18.4 Foster good relationships with the business community.

Policy 18.5 Encourage and provide guidance to new businesses.

Policy 18.6 Support workforce training opportunities.

Policy 18.7 Encourage small business development.

Policy 18.8 Support the use of economic development incentives to create employment opportunities, establish public-private partnerships, and encourage development that provides public benefits and amenities.

Policy 18.9 Encourage job creation.

Policy 18.10 Encourage diversified industrial development that contributes to economic development and a strong tax base.

Policy 18.11 Encourage development of manufacturing and distribution centers.

Policy 18.12 Promote a cost-effective operating environment is one in which the government provides infrastructure and services of real value for the tax money it receives for such purposes, to to foster economic development in designated target areas.

Goal 19: Promote, encourage and support a coordinated approach to economic development.

Policy 19.1 Encourage and assist local Chambers of Commerce to promote, retain, and expand their current employment base.

Policy 19.2 Support agricultural-based economic development and maintain the viability of the agricultural sector of the County's economy through developing and supporting new, local and enhanced markets for locally grown food and local products.

Policy 19.3 Promote a diversified regional economy with more high-tech industry.

Policy 19.4 Encourage employment opportunities within cities to provide stability and a decent living wage through targeted performance-based incentives.

Policy 19.5 Coordinate with the county school system and local colleges to encourage businesses and governmental entities to extend internship and apprentice opportunities to local students.

Policy 19.6 Coordinate with the incorporated localities and economic development interests to explore opportunities for joint development of a business and industrial park.

Goal 20: Create a local economy that provides varied employment and trade opportunities built upon efficient and equitable use of Wise County's cultural, natural, built and human resources.

Policy 20.1 Retain agriculture's viability within the County by preserving and promoting agriculture as a vital component to the local economy.

Policy 20.2 Minimize encroachment of non-agriculture uses into predominantly rural agriculture areas and mitigate the impacts of encroachment where it occurs.

Policy 20.3 Limit infrastructure improvements within rural agricultural areas to those projects necessary to serve agricultural needs and to resolve compelling threats to the public health and safety.

Policy 20.4 Support economic development initiatives that expand the diversity of agriculture products, production methods and marketing efforts.

Policy 20.5 Encourage development of non-farm employment within incorporated communities to support their roles as energetic centers of diverse commercial and industrial activity.

Policy 20.6 Support labor force enhancement efforts that focus on education and training to attract investment and job creation within our communities.

Policy 20.7 Limit commercial zoning in unincorporated areas to facilities that serve the needs of rural residents to regional businesses at highway interchanges.

Policy 20.8 Increase the diversity of employment opportunities that meet the needs and capabilities of local residents.

Policy 20.9 Identify and target recruitment efforts to businesses that are complementary to the existing industrial base.

Policy 20.10 Support community-based economic development initiatives consistent with this Plan and community plans.

Policy 20.11 Expand economic development activities while protecting quality of life

Goal 21: Support tourism and agri-tourism.

Policy 21.1 Support efforts that encourage people to visit Wise County.

Policy 21.2 Support development of cultural and recreational attractions.

Policy 21.3 Support development of eco-tourism and agri-tourism, and protect the natural resources that contribute to the viability of ecotourism and outdoor recreation.

Policy 21.4 Promote and protect the county's scenic beauty.

Policy 21.5 Support facilities and services that contribute to quality of life to attract new businesses.

3.2.7 Community Character

Goal 22: Protect the character of Wise County.

Policy 22.1 Protect and maintain the historic and cultural resources that contribute to the rural character and attractiveness and provide a sense of identity for Wise County.

Policy 22.2 Preserve agricultural land, forested land and open space for its local economic benefit, scenic beauty, and place in Wise County's heritage.

Policy 22.3 Preserve and promote the heritage of County life for succeeding generations.

Policy 22.4 Protect and conserve the natural, human and economic resources that are the basis of the agricultural economy and rural lifestyle of the county.

Goal 23: Preserve cultural, historic and archaeological sites that contribute to the heritage of Wise County.

Policy 23.1 Support identification of cultural, historic and archeological sites and development of a plan for their preservation.

Policy 23.2 Protect cultural and historical landmarks against encroachment from incompatible land uses.

Policy 23.3 Encourage the active use and adaptive reuse of historic sites so that they may become or remain an integral function of County life.

Policy 23.4 Support preservation of historic sites and buildings.

Goal 24: Preserve, promote and enhance historic sites, structures and other community assets that define Wise County's heritage.

Policy 24.1 Review development proposal impacts on the historic assets of Wise County as part of the decision-making process.

Policy 24.2 Coordinate with local and state historic preservation interests to conduct and disseminate an inventory of local historic assets and advise property owners of historic preservation incentives.

3.2.8 Public Facilities and Utilities

Goal 25: Require that adequate public facilities and services be available at an acceptable level of service concurrent with development.

Policy 25.1 Determine the availability and adequacy of public facilities and services at the time development occurs.

Policy 25.2 Support adequate public facilities to be available or funded prior to approval of new development. The implementation of this policy will be coordinated with the adoption of a Capital Improvements Plan that addresses existing deficiencies and future capacity needs.

Policy 25.3 Review development applications for conformance with the facilities and improvement standards consistent with development need for the Tier in which the proposed development is located.

Policy 25.4 Minimum levels of services should be provided at the time development occurs, as a condition of development application approval.

Policy 25.5 Allow for alternative on-site sewage treatment facilities and water systems that will be compatible with planned expansions of public systems, provided that such systems do not result in premature development or create potential liabilities for the County.

Policy 25.6 Provide for disaster preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, and long- term reconstruction from all types of disasters, which may befall the County.

Policy 25.7 Address drainage/stormwater management as a regional issue and foster inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

Policy 25.8 Require facilities to be extended through new developments to provide for future growth. Facilities may be required to be over-sized to serve future development with provisions for reimbursement for facilities that benefit other properties.

Goal 26: Ensure that adequate public facilities and services are equitably funded, using the full range of financing tools.

Policy 26.1 Plan and prepare for public facilities and services and assure that the provision of County services is efficient and does not shift the costs of facilities to serve new residents and businesses to existing residents and businesses.

Policy 26.2 Ensure the fiscal sustainability of the County through the efficient phasing of public facilities and services, the use of fiscal impact assessments, and the use of the full range of revenue-generating tools.

Policy 26.3 Coordinate with other service providers to exchange information about capital improvements projects and to coordinate the timing and capacity of improvements to efficiently provide for demands from planned development.

Policy 26.4 Coordinate the provision of new infrastructure and facilities with existing infrastructure and facilities to maximize use of existing capacity.

Policy 26.5 Annually update and prioritize the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to ensure that projects are consistent with goals of the Plan and targeted to Primary Growth Areas.

Policy 26.6 New development shall fund its proportional share of costs for capital facilities for on- and off-site capital improvements required to serve new development.

Policy 26.7 Provide developers with a menu of acceptable options to equitably provide adequate public facilities. Finance options may include

- Development Agreements;
- Improvement Districts;
- Other legal and appropriate exactions.

Policy 26.8 Require developers to provide financial assurances that on-site improvements are constructed and maintained.

Goal 27: Encourage and support coordination and consolidation of public facilities and services to provide maximum efficiencies that protect the investment of existing residents and businesses and promote economic development.

Policy 27.1 Support coordination with multiple, independent water and sewer authorities.

Policy 27.2 Support high quality law enforcement protection in a cost efficient, coordinated, cooperative and effective manner.

Policy 27.3 Support high quality fire protection and ambulance service in a cost-efficient, coordinated, cooperative and effective manner.

Policy 27.4 Support efforts to consolidate public safety and emergency services providers.

Policy 27.5 Notify public service providers of pending development applications and County infrastructure projects and invite comment to coordinate service provider activities.

Policy 27.6 Notify public service providers of development application decisions.

Policy 27.7 Coordinate with public service providers to develop complementary CIPs that are consistent with Plan, projected growth and development decisions.

Policy 27.8 Forward major development applications to school district to enable schools to Plan for needed capacity.

Goal 28: Provide and maintain a transportation system that emphasizes safety, cost effectiveness and promotes economic development.

Policy 28.1 Encourage safe, attractive and functional highway-oriented commercial uses that capitalize on regional transportation access without detracting from the economic vitality of communities.

Policy 28.2 Recognize the relationship between land use and transportation in planning for the County's future development needs.

Policy 28.3 Encourage a future land use pattern that utilizes the capacity of the existing transportation system and minimizes further transportation improvements.

Policy 28.4 Maintain a systematic program of County highway improvements based on traffic demand and changes in land use and traffic patterns.

Policy 28.5 Participate in a coordinated, regional approach to transportation planning and seek adequate funding to support all transportation modes.

Policy 28.6 Secure rights-of-way required to serve planned development before development occurs.

Policy 28.7 Promote appropriate interconnectivity between adjacent land uses, including connections between non-residential development and adjacent neighborhoods. Lot patterns should be designed to provide safe and direct connections between residential and non-residential uses for pedestrians as well as automobiles.

Policy 28.8 Address transportation safety, capacity and adequacy in the development decision-making process.

Policy 28.9 Encourage the use of traffic impact studies as part of the development review process for projects that will significantly impact street system safety and capacity or negatively impact traffic or pedestrian safety.

Policy 28.10 Internal subdivision roads may be privately owned and maintained by a Home Owners Association or another entity approved by the County, provided that public services may use the right-of-way.

Policy 28.11 Due to the limited number of adequately paved roads in the county combined with the costs of paving and maintaining improved roads; commercial, industrial and residential subdivisions should be encouraged to locate adjacent to existing paved roads.

Goal 29: Promote development and protection of parks and outdoor recreational areas.

Policy 29.1 Park and open space areas may be utilized to:

- Separate incompatible land uses
- Restrict infringement into floodways and floodplains
- Restrict development in fragile areas
- Provide recreational opportunities

Policy 29.2 Develop a functional system of open spaces, including community and regional parks.

Policy 29.3 Provide sufficient land for park and open space areas to ensure adequate recreational opportunities.

Policy 29.4 Provide appropriate access to parks, open space and recreational areas. Access should be provided in a manner, which will protect the unique character and quality of such areas.

Policy 29.5 Encourage open space corridors that provide a buffer between highways and adjacent land uses.

Policy 29.6 Encourage greater preservation of open space in new development projects.

Goal 30: Trails and recreational areas should be used establish the County as a destination for outdoor recreation.

Policy 30.1 Protect viewsheds.

Policy 30.2 Enhance and expand County parks and recreation areas.

Policy 30.3 Provide trails for hiking, biking, walking and equestrian, including trails along the river.

Policy 30.4 Support reservation of parks, recreation areas, trails and sidewalks by reserving right-of-way and establishing mechanisms for acquisition.

Policy 30.5 Encourage additional safe opportunities for pedestrian access, including bikeways, trails and sidewalks as appropriate.

Policy 30.6 Provide more opportunities for adult and youth recreation.

Policy 30.7 Support development of additional recreation facilities or community centers (with amenities such as swimming pool, walking track, senior citizens activities, playgrounds, hiking trails, *etc*).

Policy 30.8 Maintain and bring recreational facilities up to standards to support provision of adequate recreational activities.

Policy 30.9 Promote and protect public and private hunting areas.

3.2.9 Governance and Fiscal Responsibility

Goal 31: Provide for efficient and responsive governance.

Policy 31.1 Encourage County and local community plans to be consistent, coordinated and sustainable.

Policy 31.2 Promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination among the County and its incorporated communities to address regional planning issues.

Policy 31.3 Be consistent in enforcement of land regulations.

Policy 31.4 Support regulatory requirements that are fair, predictable and protect the interest of public and private property owners and the community as a whole.

Policy 31.5 Support a detailed, County-wide GIS database to promote effective decision-making.

Policy 31.6 Improve government transparency, including land use laws and regulations.

Policy 31.7 Improve public relations with citizens.

Policy 31.8 Engage community residents and property owners in the development and implementation of Plans and development standards for residential and commercial development throughout the County.

Policy 31.9 To minimize taxes, prioritize public spending and establish performance measures to improve the quality delivered for each dollar extracted from the private sector.

Policy 31.10 Support government accountability for the use of taxpayer resources, by tracking employment, income growth, population change, productivity (the volume and value of output per worker), capital investment and gross business starts and expansions.

Policy 31.11 Rotate committee assignments.

Policy 31.12 Spend within limits.

Policy 31.13 Increase interaction among boards and committees.

Policy 31.14 Support term limits to encourage new leadership.

Policy 31.15 Rely less on coal severance tax to fund budget.

Goal 32: Promote and support regional and intergovernmental cooperation.

Policy 32.1 Coordinate activities with other governments, resource organizations and service providers to implement adopted community plan goals, policies, programs and actions and ensure better equity/distribution of resources, facilities and services.

Policy 32.2 Review and coordinate the County budget, CIP with the capital improvement Plans of communities and service providers, including opportunities for shared expeditures and revenue sharing.

Policy 32.3 Support coordinated meetings among Town/County managers, as well as those for Planning Commissions and elected leadership, including joint County and community legislative body meetings.

Policy 32.4 Identify and support opportunities for regular and continuing intergovernmental communication, including but not limited to economic development, education, agricultural protection, tourism, parks and recreational facilities, transportation, water and sewer facilities, solid waste, and stormwater management.

Policy 32.5 Develop and maintain a coordinated intergovernmental Planning and development review process to foster efficient County growth patterns.

Policy 32.6 Encourage school district participation during development planning and review.

Policy 32.7 Increase coordination between and with communities and service providers.

Policy 32.8 Work with Towns to prepare edges for development.

Policy 32.9 Promote the use of formalized letters of agreement and contracts with communities formalizing service provision and funding agreements.

3.3 Implementation Strategies

Successful implementation of the Plan results from many individual actions by the County, other jurisdictions and service providers, and private decision-makers over the course of many years. Implementation is not an inflexible or static process. Wise County's Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document -- one that responds to changing needs and conditions. To assess the Plan's effectiveness in responding to changing conditions, the County will need to monitor actions affecting the Plan and amend the Plan periodically. Decision-makers should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether or not it is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies. The cumulative effect of small, incremental changes may result in a shift in overall policy direction. For this reason,

Comprehensive Plan amendments must be evaluated in terms of their significance to overall County policy.

This chapter describes the processes to implement the Comprehensive Plan, and is structured to identify: Key Implementation Issues, Implementation Tools, a detailed Action Plan.

3.4 Key Implementation Issues

3.4.1 Put All the Cards on the Table

All known financial challenges facing the County and its communities must be identified and addressed with transparency and coordination between and among public representatives, service providers and citizen stakeholders. History has taught that delaying or deferring these types of discussions, of uncomfortable truths, results in increased costs and fewer options. Key examples include:

- The vacant high school in Pound, beset by numerous repair needs, extensive renovation and asbestos removal (demolition estimates range from $250,000 to $500,000).
- The impact on school debt due to reductions and loss of coal earnings (decreased annual revenues, from $14 million per year to 3 million, now).
- Coordination of territorial and financial issues for countywide EMS, especially between community providers and unincorporated service areas (as recommended by the Fire Services Study).
- Unifying overlapping services and functions between the County, communities and service providers, such as EMS invoicing, administrative services, solid waste, vehicle repair, street sweeping and capital facility maintenance.
- Refinement of County structure that incorporates a traditional organizational structure with a single Administrator and Executive Committee of department heads and the addition of an elected at-large Board of Supervisors representative.

3.4.2 Community Voices

This planning process included extensive meetings and interviews with all but one of the communities in Wise County. One-on-one and small group discussions with community leaders provided an honest and open dialogue with the consultant team. Though each of the communities has a unique history and perspective, there were common themes and numerous opportunities to improve relationships:

- **Jobs, jobs, jobs.** There are too few jobs and not enough economic development wins. A coordinated economic development strategy for the County and communities, rather than the current independent approaches.
- **Think as a region.** There is too much focus on self-interest, too much distrust. The perspective that “everyone has to approve but anyone can derail” has to change. Put the past behind us. Focus on the future. Work as a team.

- **Power sharing, with communities as partners to the County**. Each community proposed and indicated they would support an intergovernmental committee that establishes meaningful day-to-day and long-term partnerships with the County (share information and resources, leverage budgets and CIPs, implement common vision and goals). Some of the examples offered included: create a formal role for communities to comment in the County's development review process, establishing community service areas, (extraterritorial areas of mutual interest for both the County and each community), adjust community boundaries when it makes sense to do so, on a case-by-case basis, such as for economic development incentives and partnering, utility extension or upgrade or service area boundary adjustment (which could mean that boundaries could be reduced or expanded). Key to working as a region, rather than the current disjointed and insular approach, is establishing regular and meaningful meetings and dialogue between County and community managers and administrators.
- **Work together.** Coordinate and support the efforts of other community groups. Spirit of the Pound and St. Paul Main Street are examples of successful small community efforts, with ideas that can be shared and leveraged. Respect other community investments in staff and businesses (refrain from poaching another community's staff, limit incentivizing business moves to companies outside of Wise County). Budget and CIP coordination that leverages investment by local and County projects. This includes community input and recommendation for County budgets and CIPs, with projects and funding based on prioritized need and return on investment, and not equal slices of a pie based on geography.
- **Protect the structures we have.** Work with the County to identify, and fund, critical sites for condemnation and demolition. Implement a countywide Building Code that addresses blight.
- **Celebrate the wins of communities in Wise County.** Change the mindset and message. Sharing victories means a model for success could be duplicated with another community. Investors don't want to hear "the area is devastated by coal" but that Wise County "has a vision for a successful future".

It also was obvious that community representatives were ready and willing to engage in a new relationship with the County. Communities used this opportunity to identify specific needs and opportunities to coordinate with Wise County and service providers and establish priorities for each community that avoid intra-county competition. There are an abundance of opportunities for new dialogue, collaboration and shared successes of the County and communities work together:

- Appalachia
  - Emphasis on improving infrastructure and looking for opportunities to collaborate with County and other communities, including unifying facilities and services to improve efficiency.
  - Focus on trails, trail access and parks to help define the future of the community.
- Coeburn
  - Need infrastructure to be ready to accommodate development.

  - Incentives should incorporate at least minimal cost-benefit analysis (to encourage hiring locals first, to provide sewer or land acquisition assistance, to structure a loan for utility cost).
  - Begin dialogue with the County to defer or avoid property tax as economic development incentive.
  - Participate in discussion to unify water services, with pragmatic consideration of a trial program, short- and long-term operating efficiencies and addressing deferred maintenance.

- Norton
  - Work with the County to create equitable EMS funding and service provision (some equipment is at the end of its useful life, service agreements should be comprehensive and incorporate manpower and equipment).
  - Look for opportunities to share human capital resources with other communities, reducing costs for all (administration, building officials).
  - Spearhead interconnected trail system that connects communities, with support from VCEDA, such as for an Appalachia-Norton trail corridor.
  - Minimize competition between the industrial park and downtown businesses.
- Pound
  - Expand to 8” water mains.
  - Focus economic development on natural resources (lumber and pulp)
  - Use the old reclaimed strip mine for a use, such as a prison, that would benefit from natural buffers from other uses.
  - Revitalize the railhead, with a plan for adjacent land.
  - Rebuild and renovate the old campsite park and North Fork Reservoir.
- St. Paul
  - Support efforts in coordination with the Clinch River Initiative to build a proposed State Park.
  - Expand the ATV trails and trailheads, to allow more in-town riding and multi-day passes.
  - Find a user for the 286,000 SF building in downtown.
  - Maintain the positive trajectory made possible by community spirit and volunteers.
- Wise

  - Look for partnership and input opportunities with the County, for economic development, tax sharing (Walmart), prioritizing investment based on need and not districts.
  - Leverage tax incentives for retail plaza redevelopment.

3.4.3 Education and Training

The input from educational institutions is integral to the planning process and the future of a competitive community, as knowledge has replaced muscle and brawn. The vision, strengths and perseverance that brought Wise County to the 21st century are the foundation that takes Wise County through the 21st century. Though contentious and a painful episode in the County's history, school consolidation is yielding very positive results - Wise County schools are in the top 5% of all Virginia schools, UVA-Wise is becoming a major regional asset and Mountain Empire Community College is expanding technical training opportunities!

- School District
  - Work with the County to improve financial planning for the District, such as by carrying over unused budget across fiscal years, allocating budgets based on District-defined need not just attendance zone boundaries.
  - Negotiate with the County to establish a right of taxation (currently it is the second lowest in the State).
  - Given the School District success, formally participate with economic development marketing to prospective investors.
  - Look for opportunities to share resources with County and communities (payroll, purchasing, etc).
  - Create a team to review and recommend use or disposition of old school facilities.
- UVA-Wise
  - Work with the County and communities to improve relationships and organizational efficiency and establish best practices (make award and investment choices outcome-oriented, empower staff with decision-making authority, shift resources from *pro rata* district allocations to need-based.
  - Continue to look for opportunities to become more entrenched in the Wise County community (hosting meetings, internships, resource for advice, training and improved decision-making, support local business).
  - Formally participate with economic development marketing to prospective investors.
- Mountain Empire Community College
  - Prepare pathway for the highest demand careers in the County, with local input focus groups to establish need.

- Continue outreach to employers for MECC as a resource, to create custom training program.
- Continue to coordinate with the School District to prepare students for post-secondary education and training.
- Formally participate with economic development marketing to prospective investors.
- Coordinate intern programs with the County and communities.

3.5 Key Implementation Tools

The Plan implementation program identifies a number of tools available to the County that may be employed to bring the goals, policies and strategies of the Plan to fruition. These implementation tools are interrelated and work together providing continuity and breadth to the implementation program.

3.5.1 Annual Review

Department Directors complete an annual review of Comprehensive Plan related activities prior to the initiation of the budget process each year. The annual review is intended to:

- Measure the County's success in achieving plan goals through the recommended strategies;
- Propose strategies to be pursued under the coming year's budget;
- Identify unlisted strategies that will achieve Plan goals;
- Document growth trends and compare those trends to plan projections;
- List development actions which affect the Plan's provisions; and
- Explain difficulties in implementing the Plan.

This annual review should include statements identifying that respective departments' progress in achieving the goals of the Plan, the impact of the Plan on service provision, and proposed programs to help achieve the Plan's goals. The annual review should be used as a tool to help set budgetary priorities.

3.5.2 Land Use Amendments

The Development Plan Map is intended to serve as a guide for public and private development and land use decisions. The County should adopt a formal amendment process in the development regulations. Land use amendments are anticipated as growth occurs and market conditions change. While land use amendments may occur more frequently than policy changes, they should not occur more than once per year. By limiting opportunities to amend the future land use plan, the County will reduce the potential for incremental land use changes to result in unintended policy shifts.

3.5.3 Policy Review and Amendment

To ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains an effective guide for decision-makers, Wise County should conduct periodic major evaluations of the plan policies and strategies. These evaluations should be conducted every four to six years, depending on the rate of change in the community, and should consider the following:

- Progress in implementing the Plan;
- Changes in community needs and other conditions that form the basis of the Plan;
- Fiscal conditions and the ability to finance public investments recommended by the Plan;
- Community support for the Plan's goals and policies; and
- Changes in county, state or federal laws that affect the County's tools for Plan implementation.

The major review process should encourage input from businesses, neighborhood groups, developers and other community interests through the creation of a Citizen Review Committee. Plan amendments that appear appropriate as a result of this review would be processed according to the adopted Plan amendment process.

3.5.4 Development Regulations

On a day-to-day basis, the development regulations (zoning and subdivision regulations) are the most important tools for Plan implementation. The Development Plan Map and the growth-related goals are achieved through a myriad of incremental decisions about specific development projects. Because the Plan does not carry the force of law, the County must effectuate Plan policies through a variety of actions, including amendments to the County development regulations. Updates to these development regulations should be consistent with the Plan to ensure that incremental actions on development requests support the Plan's goals, policies and recommendations.

3.5.5 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)

Short- and long-range CIPs are important planning tools to ensure that the County has planned the most cost effective facilities and to determine whether the County will have the capability to fund needed public facilities. The short-range CIP should identify and estimate costs of improvements needed to serve anticipated growth for the next 5 to 10 years; the long-range CIP should identify and estimate costs of improvements needed to serve anticipated growth for the next 10 to 20 years. This Plan is not an engineering document, but should provide enough specificity to determine which costs are required to remedy existing deficiencies and which costs provide new capacity that will be demanded by new development. The short-range CIP should establish the basis for the County's development fees and be updated annually. The long-range CIP should be updated at least once every five years or when significant changes to the base systems modify the County's long-term capital investment strategies (*e.g.*, changes in service areas, significant changes in the Future Land Use Plan, changes in service demand or delivery patterns). The CIPs should list short-term projects needed to maintain existing levels of service, with each project being assigned a budget and a time frame for completion. The CIP

also should delineate the proportion of project costs that is designed to provide new capacity and the proportion that is required to fund existing deficiencies. This delineation will enable the County to quantify the capital costs associated with new development and to monitor the expenditure of development fees.

3.5.6 Intergovernmental Agreements

Intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) are essentially treaties between two or more units of government for the mutual benefit of all parties, and form the foundation for an Intergovernmental Committee (IGC). Within the context of this Plan, an agreement between the County, its communities and other providers could address growth within designated growth areas. Such an agreement could establish each party's rights, responsibilities and recourse within a cooperative growth management process designed to implement the Plan. Items typically addressed in local government IGAs include: development review authority, annexation processes, infrastructure projects, building and related codes, public safety mutual aid agreements and IGA administrative procedures.

3.5.7 Comprehensive Plan

Completion of the Comprehensive Plan is not the end of planning for the future. Other planning projects will build upon the foundation of this plan, whether they are neighborhood plans that provide detailed examinations of needs and conditions or area plans developed in partnership with a developer. As the County continues to plan for the future, these planning efforts should be based on the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan and be consistent with the policies established by this document.

3.5.8 Coordination with Congressional Delegation and State Representatives

The Trump administration is promoting regulatory review and reassessment that improve jobs and local business investment, on issues including energy, environment, taxation, healthcare and education. Having a receptive audience in Washington, and potentially Richmond vis-à-vis executive agency compliance, will require Wise County stakeholders (and similarly-affected communities - a regional cooperation opportunity) be ready to identify substantive recommendations that will help local residents and businesses. Timing may be fast-paced, so leveraging existing relationships and lines of communication should be a priority, as should reinvigorating relationships between the County and communities.

3.6 The Action Plan: An Implementation Strategies Matrix

Successful implementation of the Plan results from many individual actions by the County, other jurisdictions and service providers, and private decision-makers over the course of many years. The goals and policies describe what the community wants to become and how decision-makers should respond to varied circumstances. To accomplish the plan’s goals and the Community Vision, the County will need to accomplish many tasks throughout the life of the plan. Key strategies will be used to accomplish the Plan's goals in the initial years of plan implementation. While most of the items on the

list will be carried out by the County, some items may require coordination with neighboring communities, other service providers, or economic development entities. The work program:

- Correlates implementation measures with specific Comprehensive Plan goals and policies;
- Sets a general time frame to carry out each strategy;
- Identifies action tools (*i.e.*, existing and proposed codes, ordinances, regulations, standards, requirements and policies) to implement action items; and
- Assigns responsibility for implementing the action items and lists other entities that should be involved in the process.

The work program is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all strategies that will implement the Plan. The County may pursue different strategies and adjust priorities, depending on changing opportunities and resources. The County should update this work program on an annual basis, adjusting the Short-Term Work Plan and tasks that are included in each year's budgeted work programs.

The Strategies Matrix, which serves as the long-term work plan, is intended to be the most dynamic component of the Plan. Through annual updates, the County can ensure that the Plan continues to serve the community effectively.

The **Implementation Strategies Matrix,** shown in **Tables 31 and 32,** schedules actions and recommends the initial Short Term Work Program (Phase 1 Implementation). The Short Term Work Program is split into two parts:

> **Table 31, Core Implementation Strategies**, forms the most critical, central work program for the County. These strategies have been identified for decision makers and responsible parties to focus on at the outset of Plan implementation.
>
> **Table 32, Supporting Implementation Strategies,** are also important to the implementation to the Plan, but they are strategies that should be revised and prioritized by local experts (committees, volunteers, agencies, etc) based on their expertise and familiarity with the issue.

Both parts of the Short Term Work Program should be updated annually to reflect community accomplishments, new approaches to community issues, changing conditions, shifting priorities and new demands. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or all-inclusive -- the County and other public and private entities will take numerous actions throughout the life of this plan to achieve the community goals.

This list is intended to identify the highest priority tasks to be pursued over the next several years. The table identifies the goals related to each task, the timeframe for task completion, and the entities responsible for carrying out the tasks. Tasks that are not funded in the recommended years should be evaluated for removal from the list or to be shifted back for later implementation. Programs that are completed should be removed from the list.

The list of implementation strategies provides the following information in each column:

- **Item Number** – Merely a reference number to quickly find and identify a strategy.
- **Plan Element** – The topical section of the Plan which supports the strategy.
- **Strategy** - identifies the task and describes the project, action or document necessary to carry-out the strategy.
- **Timing** – the fiscal year(s) the strategy is to be completed. It is a ranking of importance based on its priority relative to other similarly-classed strategies. The timing was based on Advisory Committee and Board of Supervisor survey responses in the following manner:

  Now: This is a critical task and should be undertaken as soon as possible, in the first two years of the planning period. This is the Immediate Implementation phase.

  Soon: Necessary to implement the Plan. To occur during the next five years of the planning period. This is the Short-Term Implementation phase.

  Later: This task will help implement the Plan. To occur during the final years of the planning period, through 2030. This is the Long-Term Implementation phase.
- **Priority** - Within the fiscal year timeframe, each strategy action item was prioritized.
- **Tool** – this is the activity or document that is necessary for undertaking the strategy.
- **Responsible Entity** - the person, department or agency that is primarily responsible for initiating, advocating and/or performing the strategy.
- **Coordinating Entity** - the person, department or agency that is tasked with supporting the entity with primary responsibility for initiating, advocating and/or performing the strategy.
- **Fiscal Impact** - indicates the relative fiscal impact of the specific strategy on the County's Budget and CIP. The ranking abbreviations are labeled in the following manner:

  Low: Little or no fiscal impact on the County's budget.

  Moderate: Some fiscal impact, but likely to be funded within one to two fiscal periods.

  High: May be significant fiscal impact, depending on the nature of the capital investment, but may provide opportunities for the use of alternative revenue sources.

3.7 Short-Term Work Program: Strategic Planning

The Short Term Work Program is developed and reviewed on an annual basis to identify the previous year's accomplishments and to modify the work program tasks establishing a reasonable timeline for key plan implementation tasks. This first Short-Term Work Program (Phase 1: Immediate Implementation) includes all of the highest priority strategies and other actions as determined by the Advisory Committee and Board of Supervisors to kick-off the first year of Plan implementation.

The Short Term Work Program should be considered the beginning of a Strategic Plan for the County. A strategic plan delineates the goals of the County and establishes the actions that are necessary to achieve those goals. It encompasses all critical elements developed in the planning stage to strengthen the operations and ensure a directed endeavor among all stakeholders. In 2003 the County adopted a resolution endorsing strategic planning and directing annual strategic plans. The County identified that the purpose of strategic planning is to establish long-range goals, annual objectives and detailed strategies to address issues related to performance, productivity and generally improving the well-being of the community and work force.

The focus of strategic plans is to identify critical issues affecting the community and seek the most effective and efficient means to address them. The County identified benefits of strategic planning, including:

- accelerating an agency's ability to solve identified issues and challenges
- encouraging creativity and innovation
- ensuring a more efficient use of resources
- developing greater co-operation and collaboration
- reducing confusion about roles, responsibilities and accountability
- serving as a basis for performance evaluation
- tying funding allocations to performance.

The core and supporting strategies of the Short Term Work Program, below, can serve as a starting point for development of an annual County strategic plan.

Table 31: Core Implementation Strategies

Item #	Plan Element	Core Implementation Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
Phase 1: 2016-2017							
CS 1	Ag	Establish an **Agricultural Economy Committee** and develop and implement a strategic **Agricultural Economic Development Plan** and work program.	Plan	Planning	Farm Bureau	Moderate	Low
CS 2	Economic Development	Establish a **Workforce Development Committee** to coordinate among local economic development agencies, employers and educational institutions.	Committee	Admin	Schools, Colleges, Chamber, Industry, Employers	Moderate	Low
CS 3	Governance	Develop a **5-Year Strategic Plan**, with fiscal estimates, and provide an **Annual Report** detailing how tax money is spent in each voting district. Also include municipal budgeting.	Budget	Admin	Treasurer, PSA, Planning Commission	Low	Low
CS 4	Governance	Develop, fund and maintain a five-year **Capital Improvements Plan** (CIP), and coordinate long-term capital improvement plans with service providers to efficiently provide and equitably fund infrastructure and services in a manner consistent with the needs of targeted industries and existing residents.	CIP	Admin	Treasurer, PSA, Planning Commission, Communities	Low	Low
CS 5	Governance	Establish a **Wise County Intergovernmental Committee** with representation from each participating community, to improve County-to-community and community-to-community relationships.	Committee	Admin, Planning	Communities	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Core Implementation Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
CS 6	Healthcare and Public Safety	Establish a **Public Health Committee** to recommend programs to foster collaboration between local health officials and County and community staff and elected officials, develop a list of best practices related to promoting healthy communities, and track community health information systematically and in ways appropriate for use in decisions about the built environment.	Committee	Admin	Health Department, Hospitals, Clinics	Low	Low
CS 7	Tourism	Establish an **Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee** and develop and implement a strategic **Arts, Culture and Tourism Plan** and work program to coordinate local efforts and schedule with regional events and encourage and support local participation in regional events.	Committee	EcoDevo	Admin	Low	Low
Phase 2: 2018-2020							
CS 8	Economic Development	Develop an **Economic Development Plan** to identify strategies to recruit new business and industry and support local business and industry.	Plan	EcoDevo	Communities, Chamber	Low	Low
CS 9	Governance	Update and maintain the Wise County **website**, consistent with the efforts of organizations in the region (such as Spearhead Trails and Heart of Appalachia) to provide a content rich source of information and present an image of a tech-savvy community.	Website	IT	Admin	Mod	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Core Implementation Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
CS 10	Governance	Create and maintain a Wise County **social media** presence, such as a Facebook or Instagram, to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to post comments and pictures of Wise County assets, viewsheds, etc. Similar tasks also include notifying regional and state business, tourism and economic development news sources (such as Virginia Business) of local events and news.	Outreach	Admin	EcoDevo, IT	Low	Low
CS 11	Healthcare and Public Safety	Develop a **Substance Abuse Prevention Plan**, for drugs, alcohol and tobacco abuse, to support multi-sector collaboration and citizen involvement, and improve the assessment and implementation of prevention activities, including workforce development and industry representatives.	Plan	Admin	Health Department, Hospitals, Clinics	Low	Low
CS 12	Housing	Establish a **Workforce and Families Housing Committee** to make recommendations to coordinate and prioritize County, state and federal housing programs, incentives, loans and grants available for the production of workforce housing.	Committee	Planning	Admin	Low	Low
CS 13	Infrastructure	Establish an **Infrastructure Committee** to assess the consolidation of multiple water and sewer systems into a unified system. Absent consolidation, define a template for the coordination among water and sewer districts. A key function of this committee will be to establish a thorough and complete understanding of each utility district's needs and capabilities (technical and financial).	Committee	Admin	PSA, Communities, Treasurer, Planning	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Core Implementation Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
CS 14	Parks / Rec	Establish a **Parks and Trails Committee** and develop a **Parks, Recreation and Trails Plan** to identify existing and planned park, recreation area and trail locations and need, a countywide plan for trails and bike routes, including right-of-way needs, and develop a series of trail maps.	Committee	Planning	Planning Commission, Communities	Low	Low
Phase 3: 2010-2030							
CS 15	Education	Establish an **Education Committee**, comprised in part of representatives from the School District and Colleges, to inform and build stakeholder and community support for a broad educational framework.	Committee	Admin	EcoDevo	Low	Low
CS 16	Healthcare and Public Safety	Develop a **Community Health Plan** that creates a coordination and referral network among health care providers, criminal justice providers, employers and education facilities.	Plan	Planning	Health Department, Hospitals, Communities	Mod	Low
CS 17	Infrastructure	Prepare a **Technology Infrastructure Plan** to invest in technology infrastructure (Wi-Fi, cell reception, GPS, etc) and prepare a plan for the construction of a fiber-optic network to business and industry and a wireless system for the remainder of the County.	Plan	Planning, Admin	Planning Commission	Moderate	Low

Table 32: Supporting Implementation Strategies

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
Phase 1: 2016-2017							
SS 1	Ag	Coordinate with local communities to promote the development of agricultural products and markets, including the development of farmers' markets, buy-local campaigns, and a local products website to market and distribute fresh goods.	Outreach	Planning	Communities	Low	Low
SS 2	Ag	Coordinate with State and Federal agencies and other funding partners to promote agriculture economic development, including U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and Virginia Cooperative Extension (such as for the Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative).	Coordination	Planning	Farm Bureau	Low	Low
SS 3	Ag	Coordinate with the Farm Bureau to provide a support network for traditional ag, roots ag, ag/green tourism and specialized ag (such as raising fish, vineyards, growing organic vegetables or using hydroponic, aquaculture and aquaponic technology, exotic and other boutique farming), develop an ag education and mentoring program so that farms can be transferred and new farmers recruited and mentored and develop programs to promote gardening, food systems, and other sustainability seminars.	Coordination	Admin	Farm Bureau	Low	Low
SS 4	Economic Development	Develop a Plan to coordinate land use and economic development strategies with the Chamber, City of Wise and UVA-Wise to create a vibrant, but compatible, entertainment district that supports the college.	Plan	Planning	Wise, UVA-Wise, Chamber	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 5	Economic Development	Coordinate with State and Federal agencies and other funding partners to expand infrastructure and economic development.	Coordination	EcoDevo, Planning	State/Fed agencies	Low	Low
SS 6	Economic Development	Establish standards and incentives to attract green energy development.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 7	Economic Development	Develop a major emphasis on technology education and training through UVA-Wise and Empire State College.	Coordination	EcoDevo	Admin	Low	Low
SS 8	Economic Development	Collaborate with adjacent counties to develop a regional economic development plan.	Coordination	EcoDevo	Admin	Low	Low
SS 9	Economic Development	Establish a **Technology Committee** to encourage and support local technology businesses and conduct technology-oriented events, including tech industry recruitment, mentoring and support and tech-related educational and entertainment activities (for example, drone training, alternative uses and races), which also appeals to the millennials.	Committee	Admin	EcoDevo	Low	Low
SS 10	Economic Development	Initiate a **Business Retention and Expansion Program** that works with existing businesses to grow and cultivate a supportive business ecosystem.	Program	EcoDevo	Chamber	Low	Low
SS 11	Governance	Develop a countywide Solid Waste Management Plan to include assessment of transfer stations and public service provision.	Plan	Admin	Planning, GIS	Low	Low
SS 12	Infrastructure	Undertake an assessment of current infrastructure and amenities and identify priorities based on a countywide perspective and fiscal impact analysis.	CIP	Planning, PSA	Admin	High	High

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 13	Infrastructure	Require development to pay for the costs of services beyond established service areas.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 14	Infrastructure	Coordinate with gas providers to expand service areas and ensure that economic development is adequately served.	Coordination	Planning	GIS, PSA	Low	Low
SS 15	Land Use	Coordinate with DMME and coal land owners to identify coal lands that may be appropriate for post-coal uses, and prepare a report that identifies coal land use, coal type and short- and long-term viability of coal industry based on available resources.	Coordination	Planning	GIS	Low	Low
SS 16	Land Use	Establish standards and outreach programs to protect watersheds from inappropriate development.	Development Regulations	Planning	GIS, Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 17	Land Use	Establish standards to direct development away from stream valleys, floodways, sensitive waterways and other areas that are at high risk of water pollution or flooding.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 18	Parks / Rec	Recommend opportunities to develop and promote hunting and fishing experiences and supporting amenities and markets.	Plan	Planning, GIS	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 19	Parks / Rec	Develop and enhance outdoor experiences at parks, forests, recreation areas, nature areas, and preserves, develop and enhance accommodations related to outdoor experiences, and enhance and develop themed trails.	CIP	Planning, GIS	Planning Commission	Moderate	Moderate

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 20	Parks / Rec	Coordinate with communities to improve local parks, such as Pound Lake and Norton Lake, consistent with a hierarchal countywide parks strategy.	CIP	Planning	Admin, Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 21	Parks / Rec	Seek and maintain designations for National Scenic Byways and the Virginia Scenic Byways and Scenic Drives.	Application	Planning, GIS	Planning Commission	Moderate	Moderate
SS 22	Tourism	Expand infrastructure to support tourism.	CIP	Planning, PSA	Admin	High	High
SS 23	Tourism	Identify and increase awareness of recreation needs for the community, and the feasibility to create facilities (private versus public venture) to enhance tourism, establish a pro-tourism public relations effort (local, state and national outreach) and seek to position Wise County as the preferred destination in Southwest Virginia.	Plan	EcoDevo, Planning	Admin, Parks	Moderate	Low
SS 24	Tourism	Use the Tourism Committee to encourage and support local participation in regional events. Other committee tasks may include community beautification efforts, outdoor murals, public art in public spaces and coordinating with and responding to entertainment or cultural opportunities in the region (films, music, fine arts, sporting events, etc).	Committee	EcoDevo	Admin	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 25	Tourism	Strengthen tourism-related partnerships, encouraging and strengthening positive regional affiliations and enhance communications through various media (i.e. websites, newsletters.) and maintain an online calendar of local events. Tasks include attending and actively participating or co-sponsoring regional tourism or economic development conferences.	Outreach	Admin	EcoDevo, IT	Low	Low
Phase 2: 2018-2020							
SS 26	Ag	Create an inventory of agricultural lands and conduct a land suitability analysis to identify agricultural potential.	Inventory	Planning	GIS	Low	Low
SS 27	Ag	Develop support for a Farmer's Market, which may include a coordinated framework of community-specific farmer's markets, and for a Cannery, for residents to market local ag products. The Committee also would conduct outreach with ag-oriented organizations (such as Appalachian Sustainable Development).	Committee	Admin	Farm Bureau	Low	Moderate
SS 28	Economic Development	Develop strategies to recruit companies that use local labor and those that provide a living wage, develop a targeted recruitment campaign for specific types of employers and businesses, coordinating between not competing among, Wise County communities, coordinate with communities to prepare and implement a plan for the development of their adjacent corridors and gateways, and recruit place-neutral businesses, such as consulting, to capitalize on affordability and high quality of life place in Wise County.	Plan	EcoDevo	Communities, Chamber	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 29	Economic Development	Create a one-stop **Economic Development Center** to assist the business community in starting, locating and expanding in Wise County, including detailed information on business financing and incentive programs and make this information available to business prospects.	Outreach	EcoDevo	Chamber	Low	Low
SS 30	Economic Development	Create a network of business owners and local innovators that conduct topical seminars describing successful practices and case studies, allow participants to learn from real-world situations and business decision-making and peer-to-peer small business mentoring.	Coordination	EcoDevo	Chamber	Low	Low
SS 31	Economic Development	Engage coal industry employers and community colleges to explore formal recognition or expanded credit towards credential completion for job-related experience and training, including a Regional Skills Academy geared towards supplying trained workers for technical and manufacturing occupations, expand the use of apprenticeships, on-the-job models, and accelerated boot camps and incorporate 'soft-skills' for non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) training opportunities, and with business and industry input, identify skills shortages that could be met through shorter training and credentialing programs and developing and implementing specific fast-tracked training programs needed by targeted industries.	Committee	Admin	Schools, Colleges, Chamber, Industry, Employers	Moderate	Low
SS 32	Economic Development	Conduct an employer survey to reveal workplace needs and assist with identifying targeted industries.	Survey	EcoDevo	Planning	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 33	Economic Development	Develop and implement a **Branding and Marketing Plan** for the County and communities, including brand establishment and niche market identification, with the Wise County 'brand' as the umbrella marketing campaign for local events, with limited (in-kind, staff support, website marketing, etc) sponsorship opportunities provided by the County, to raise awareness of the County's business potential and workforce.	Plan	EcoDevo, Admin	Communities	Moderate	Low
SS 34	Economic Development	Identify industrial sites and parks with adequate infrastructure and services.	Inventory	Planning	GIS, EcoDevo	Low	Low
SS 35	Economic Development	Establish a **Local Innovators Award** and a **Student Entrepreneurs Award** that recognizes and broadcasts local success stories. Explore all other awards, such as **Local Business of the Year** or Woman or Minority Business, for a range of business types (tech, farm, innovative, Spirit of Appalachia, small, large, new start-up, etc) to inform and reinforce the importance of the Wise County market. and certifications that can be used to promote the County and communities, such as the Certified Work Ready Community (CWRC) program.	Outreach	Admin	Communities	Low	Low
SS 36	Economic Development	Establish and distribute a directory of all State and regional economic development and related educational and advocacy programs, entities and agencies.	Report	EcoDevo		Low	Low
SS 37	Education	Undertake efforts to support education affordability, job training, internships and apprenticeships, School District right of taxation, supporting economic development, post-use school facilities, and school revenue and debt projections.	Committee	Admin	EcoDevo	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 38	Governance	Review and adjust County fees and rates on an annual basis, including fees for development review, solid waste and water/sewer connections.	Fees	Planning	Admin	Low	Low
SS 39	Governance	Showcase the region's history and heritage through events and festivals as well as personifying the culture of the region through arts, music, and culinary experiences.	Outreach	Admin	EcoDevo	Low	Low
SS 40	Governance	Link funding consistent with County goals and strategies, explore all opportunities to consolidate services (parks, solid waste, public safety, administration, water/sewer) and leverage funding, and coordinate County and community CIP and budget investment. Empower the Intergovernmental Committee to prioritize strategies, set a timeline, establish metrics and evaluation criteria and issue a call to action. Committee to be conduit for communities to share success stories and practices and cooperate not compete. Board of Supervisors to authorize formal presentations to Committee of County activities. Committee to make formal recommendations to Board of Supervisors regarding County CIP, budget and strategic plans. Committee role equally critical to County-to-community and community-to-community relationships.	Committee	Admin, Planning	Communities	Low	Low
SS 41	Governance	Conduct quarterly countywide meetings between functionally equivalent staff and departments (i.e., public safety, planning) and entities (i.e., Planning Commission, Legislative Body) to address and discuss issues of common concern.	Coordination	Admin	Communities	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 42	Governance	Coordinate with and support the Chamber's **Forward Wise County** program to support and expand the program to incorporate hands-on County and community governmental experiences, to include more opportunities for young adults to become vested in the County, and to include more opportunities for seniors to share their experiences, knowledge and recommendations. Focus on coordination efficiencies of a successful program - expansion rather than duplication, inclusion rather than competition - but also consider a rejuvenated Committee of 100.	Program	Admin	Chamber	Low	Low
SS 43	Governance	Establish a **Local Governance Committee** to consider alternative citizen representation and public administration models, including expanding the Board of Supervisors to include one (1) at-large member, reconfiguring County Administration hierarchy to incorporate one (1) County Administrator and a formal Executive Committee of County Department Directors that makes recommendations to the Administrator, and CIP and budgeting allocations that are based on priority and need rather than electoral district.	Committee	Admin	Legal	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 44	Governance	Conduct a series of topical retreats for County officials and staff to better understand roles of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, County department core functions, processes and timelines, find opportunities to share and cross-train staff, and become a more efficient organization with decreasing resources. Topics: economic development and tourism, infrastructure planning (water, sewer, transportation, parks and trails), development and redevelopment, available local resources.	Coordination	Admin	Department Directors	Low	Low
SS 45	Healthcare and Public Safety	Coordinate with the school district to develop educational program events to reduce youth exposure to an interest in alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.	Coordination	Admin	Health Department, Schools, Colleges	Low	Low
SS 46	Healthcare and Public Safety	Promote government and school purchase of locally produced and/or organic food.	Outreach	Admin	Schools, Colleges	Low	Low
SS 47	Healthcare and Public Safety	Maintain adequate public safety vehicles and equipment (sheriff, fire) and replace as necessary.	CIP	Fire Chief, Sheriff	Planning, Admin, Communities	Moderate	High
SS 48	Healthcare and Public Safety	Maintain updates to the **Assessment Plan for Emergency Services** and **Emergency Plan**, evaluate and prioritize options to mitigate inadequate emergency access and safety hazards to emergency response equipment or personnel, and identify funding and resources to provide training for career and volunteer personnel to meet or exceed local, state, and federal requirements.	Plan	Admin	Fire Department	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 49	Healthcare and Public Safety	Empower the Public Health Committee to prioritize strategies, set a timeline, establish metrics and evaluation criteria and issue a call to action. For the provision of *whole community healthcare*, including eldercare facilities, childcare for young and older children, and programs to combat teen and adult drug abuse, fighting obesity, pre-/post-natal care, smoking and vending machine restrictions, making it easier to make good choices.	Plan	Planning	Health Department, Hospitals, Communities	Mod	Low
SS 50	Housing	Adopt incentives in the development regulations to encourage affordable, workforce housing.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 51	Infrastructure	Coordinate with communities to determine when it is fiscally appropriate, or required, to expand or extend service.	Coordination	Planning	Planning Commission, Communities	Low	Low
SS 52	Infrastructure	Prepare a **Transportation Plan** for the improvement of secondary roads in the county with special emphasis on designation as a scenic by-way, with construction of a bike lane on each shoulder, to establish a planned right-of-way map and to recommend and prioritize road improvement plans and projects.	Plan	Planning	Planning Commission	Moderate	Low
SS 53	Infrastructure	Establish regulations to limit most development, including dense, small lot and commercial development to areas with adequate and available water and sewer service.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 54	Infrastructure	Establish regulations to prohibit development of subdivisions or small lots that lack necessary infrastructure.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 55	Land Use	Develop a **Litter Control Program** that includes sponsoring community cleanup days, increasing trash and recycling collection services and enforcing litter laws.	Program	Planning	Planning Commission, Communities	Low	Low
SS 56	Land Use	Track and maintain data regarding well location and production to monitor water quantity and quality.	Coordination	Planning	GIS	Low	Low
SS 57	Land Use	Establish opportunities and standards for County and community planning commissions to provide formal input into development review proposals that have the potential to impact a community.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 58	Land Use	Adopt sustainable development standards for new residential and non-residential development, and develop resource materials for developers and builders to promote green development practices.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Moderate	Low
SS 59	Land Use	Establish standards to require erosion and sedimentation control best management practices.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 60	Land Use	Adopt revisions to the development regulations to protect commercial and industrial land from encroachment and incompatible uses.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 61	Land Use	Establish standards for outdoor lighting to minimize light pollution.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 62	Land Use	Adopt development and design standards, to be included with new non-residential development and redevelopment and public investment.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Moderate	Low
SS 63	Parks / Rec	Encourage, develop, promote and protect hiking trails and supporting amenities in strategic locations.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 64	Parks / Rec	Leverage nature and recreation opportunities prevalent in the area and coordinate with regional organizations (such as Southwest Virginia Climbing Coalition), communities, including outfitter locations in the downtown area where activity/equipment is visible to visitors, availability of shuttle service from town to outdoor areas for one-way biking, hiking, paddling trips, and connecting outdoor trails to town locations.	Coordination	Planning	Planning Commission, Communities	Low	Low
SS 65	Tourism	Support and enhance the Crooked Road and Round the Mountain Trails experience, including clustering new development, ensuring necessary public facilities and services are available and adequate to support shopping, dining, and accommodations and showcase Appalachian heritage, and continue to participate in the Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail.	Coordination	EcoDevo	Local and regional groups	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 66	Tourism	Establish a **Visitor Information Program** than ensures that destination directions are visible and discoverable and that information about local activities are available at multiple locations throughout the County.	Program	EcoDevo	Chamber	Moderate	Low
Phase 3: 2021-2030							
SS 67	Economic Development	Conduct an annual **Economic Summit**, that celebrates the year's hits, recognizes achievement, builds community and workforce confidence, establishes funding and programmatic strategies for the coming year, and is the kickoff for hands-on quarterly economic development opportunity summits.	Outreach	EcoDevo	Admin, Chamber	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 68	Economic Development	Coordinate and sponsor periodic, topic-specific **Breakfast Roundtables**, **Lunchtime Brownbags** and **Afterwork Networking Seminars** with other economic development and education programs, entities and agencies (including Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Economic Developers Association, Virginia Coalfield Coalition, Appalachian Prosperity Project, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Manufacturing Technology Center, the UVA & Southwest Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and others) to regularly sponsor and present training and other opportunities for local businesses, on a variety of topics identified by local businesses, including Using Community to Build Your Business Using the Internet (or Facebook, or social media) to Grow Your Business, Growing and Supporting Entrepreneurs, Healthy Business Practices, Building Local Partnerships, Sharing Resources and Lowering Costs, How to Succeed in Business After Retiring.	Outreach	EcoDevo	Chamber, Farm Bureau, Schools, Colleges	Mod	Low
SS 69	Economic Development	Establish scholarships, with local industry, school and college participation, that provides intern and apprentice opportunities to local businesses, shadowing opportunities and work-based experiences for local students.	Outreach	EcoDevo	Schools, Colleges	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 70	Economic Development	Establish and coordinate partnerships to identify, increase awareness, and promote current assets and homegrown experiences (a simpler way of life, front porch experience).	Coordination	EcoDevo, Admin	Virginia Cooperative Extension, Communities, Chamber	Low	Low
SS 71	Economic Development	Establish standards to encourage development of hotels, motels and bed and breakfast inns.	Development Regulations	Planning	Legal	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 72	Economic Development	Conduct quarterly **Opportunity and Workforce Summits** to introduce possible new ventures and entrepreneurial talent, develop a set of ideas about ways to create a stronger local economy, closing the skills gap to meet the needs of employers and cultivating [young and experienced] local talent and also targets unemployed and underemployed workers about in-demand careers in targeted industries. These community forums can be used to facilitate the exchange of ideas and build networks including regional networking events with an educational component, young professional get-togethers, industry cluster discussions, Chief Executive Office (CXO) roundtables, peer-to-peer networking, and meet the experts (Got a burning question? Get it answered by local business experts). Also include a Regional Job Fair event as a way to highlight and publicize program and attract former and transitioning mine industry workers and their spouses.	Outreach	EcoDevo	Chamber, Farm Bureau, Schools, Colleges	Low	Low
SS 73	Education	Participate, with the School District and colleges, in long-range planning and funding for educational facilities and programs.	Coordination	Admin	Schools, Colleges	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 74	Education	Sponsor a fall and spring **Student Leadership Conference**, with local businesses to lead workshops, serve on panels and participate in mentoring sessions, topics may include College and Career Readiness, Best Foot Forward, Managing Student Debt, and, with business and industry input, targets high school students and their parents about careers that provide sustainable, long-term employment and opportunities in the region.	Outreach	Admin	Schools, Colleges, Chamber	Low	Low
SS 75	Education	Coordinate with the school district and the SW Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation to offer and enhance cultural opportunities for local students.	Coordination	Admin	Schools, Colleges	Low	Low
SS 76	Education	Sponsor outreach workshops, roundtables, presentations and networking opportunities for local students, residents and business owners on a variety of topics, including Education Pathways to Success, Business Start-Up Basics, Preparing Students for the Workforce, and more.	Outreach	Admin	Schools, Colleges	Low	Low
SS 77	Governance	Conduct regular and recurring administrative meetings between Administration and Department Directors, and share information with officials and stakeholders. Each type of meeting is purpose-driven: weekly (current activities), monthly (progress on long-term department tasks), quarterly (assessing progress and performance based on annual projections and work program), annual (current year assessment, goal and strategy setting for the next year).	Coordination	Admin	Department Directors	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 78	Governance	Coordinate with the communities on the development of artisan studios and additional places for the display of art, such as public art, sculpture exhibitions, open air markets and community arts venues.	Coordination	Planning	Communities	Low	Low
SS 79	Governance	Develop **Intergovernmental Agreements** (IGAs) with each community, to address community-specific needs and issues. Each IGA is unique to the community, preserves and recognizes independence of community and County, and is fair to both. Issues may include: revisiting community boundaries, unifying municipal and County functions, using local taxes and revenue streams to incentivize development and improve infrastructure.	IGAs	Admin	Legal	Low	Low
SS 80	Governance	Establish standards to award incentives that are outcome-oriented and consider leverage, return on investment and community payback and benefit.	County Code	Admin	Legal, Treasurer	Low	Low
SS 81	Governance	Establish a **Communication and Outreach Plan** to effectively communicate with the public, create a central collection point for all news and other stories of interest, to be distributed to relevant stakeholders, and establish a Communication Director responsible for sharing and coordinating information with and among shareholders, including maintaining a reference directory of individuals and organizations participating in Plan implementation and support.	Plan	Admin	Planning	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 82	Governance	Create more opportunities for staff level decision-making, within parameters established by the Development Regulations and County Code, to streamline process and interaction between the County and stakeholders (residents and businesses).	Staffing	Admin	Legal	Low	Low
SS 83	Healthcare and Public Safety	Collaborate with regional healthcare providers to ensure resource/outreach materials are available for residents.	Outreach	Admin	Planning	Low	Low
SS 84	Healthcare and Public Safety	Develop a **Community Garden Program to i**dentify and inventory potential community garden and urban farm sites on existing parks, public easements, right-of-ways, and schoolyards, and establish community gardens in appropriate locations.	Program	Planning	GIS	Low	Low
SS 85	Healthcare and Public Safety	Host, sponsor, and/or organize **Health Fairs**, including annual countrywide health fairs, senior fairs, youth fitness programs, speakers, competitions, lectures, and/or workshops. Make it easier for non-profits and private/public institutions to host or participate in such events by reducing barriers such as administrative event paperwork and/or costs.	Outreach	Admin	Health Department	Moderate	Low
SS 86	Healthcare and Public Safety	Recruit more EMS volunteers in combination with paid Fire Response personnel.	Staffing	Admin	Fire Department	Moderate	Low
SS 87	Housing	Seek funding for a program for grant and loan assistance for first time homebuyers.	Funding	Planning	Admin	Moderate	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 88	Housing	Conduct a review of existing regulations and policies to identify barriers to the development of accessory dwelling units, co-housing, and other non-traditional housing types.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 89	Housing	Coordinate the housing program with other social and economic development programs and provide regular training classes in the areas of budgeting and financial management, homeownership, parenting, health, and life skills to all affordable housing owners, tenants and participants.	Program	Planning	Admin	Low	Low
SS 90	Infrastructure	Coordinate the Infrastructure Committee and Intergovernmental Committee to propose fair and equitable levels of service and funding frameworks.	Coordination	Admin	Planning, PSA, GIS, Treasurer, Communities	Low	Low
SS 91	Land Use	Establish a prioritized **Code Enforcement Plan** that identifies when and to what extent to enforce compliance with development and health regulations.	Plan	Planning	Planning Commission, Legal	Low	Low
SS 92	Land Use	Incorporate standards into the development regulations that reflect the history of the area and incentivize for historic accommodations, such as rustic lodges and mountain B&Bs.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 93	Land Use	Establish commercial signage standards.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low

Item #	Plan Element	Supporting Strategy	Tool	Responsible Entity (Primary)	Coordinating Entity (Supporting)	Fiscal Impact, Budget	Fiscal Impact, CIP
SS 94	Parks / Rec	Coordinate the Parks Committee and the Intergovernmental Committee to propose parks, recreation facilities and trails capital improvements, fair and equitable levels of service and leverage funding and budgeting.	Coordination	Planning	Communities	Low	Low
SS 95	Parks / Rec	Use the Parks Plan process to develop a Parks CIP, for the development of additional ATV trails, which have the potential to link scenic destinations and commercial centers, usable and interconnected sidewalks and paths (pedestrian and bicycle), greenbelt trails, parks and trails with exercise stations, lighted walking paths.	CIP	Planning, GIS	Communities, Planning Commission	Moderate	Moderate
SS 96	Parks / Rec	Establish standards for walking paths and sidewalks in subdivision and improvement standards.	Development Regulations	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Low
SS 97	Parks / Rec	Develop a County Park with a variety of tourism-related facilities and activities (such as nature center, planetarium or historical and archeological resources).	CIP	Planning	Planning Commission	Low	Moderate
SS 98	Tourism	Engage, support and coordinate with regional art, culture and tourism assets, such as the Crooked Road, the Heartwood Center, Spearhead Trails, 'Round the Mountain and the Clinch River Valley Initiative.	Committee	EcoDevo	Local and regional groups	Low	Low