CITY OF BLUEFIELD 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



City of Bluefield
WEST VIRGINIA

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INTRODUCTION

Bluefield, West Virginia is known as “Nature’s Air-Conditioned City” due to its pleasant summer climate. During the rare times temperatures exceed 90 degrees, the Chamber of Commerce traditionally provides free lemonade to the public. The city boasts miles of trails, spacious grounds, a city park, and beautiful mountain ranges. Bluefield, named for its meadows of blue grasses and bluish chicory plants, lies in southeastern West Virginia. Bluefield serves as both a “Southern Gateway” into the Mountain State and a regional hub for commerce and transportation. Interstate 77 runs near the city. Situated at the foot of East River Mountain, it is one of the highest cities (elevation 2,612 feet) in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains.

The Bluefield Comprehensive Plan Process

A comprehensive plan serves as a framework for long-term growth and development. Bluefield conducted its first comprehensive planning in the early 1960s. Additional comprehensive plans were completed in 1974 and 1996. The 1962 Master Plan identified the basic economy of Bluefield as “coal mining, railroading, manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, and services.” In recent years, Bluefield has focused on using the arts as a catalyst for community and economic development.



Bluefield is the regional hub for employment, education, entertainment, and cultural enrichment for the two Virginias. An economically and ethnically diverse community, Bluefield offers its residents safe, decent, and attainable housing at all income levels. Bluefield is seen as the first choice for people of all ages to live and work. The city's neighborhoods are built on sound infrastructure, served by quality public schools, and protected by responsive public services.

- The vision statement above was created to help guide plan development.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The cornerstone of the comprehensive plan process is gathering public input through citizen involvement. All planning commission meetings are open to the public. From high school and college students/faculty/staff, to business owners, the public provided input at various points in the comprehensive plan process. At the beginning of the comprehensive plan process, the planning commission developed and approved procedures for public input pursuant to W. Va. Code § 8A-3-6. The planning commission adhered to these procedures throughout the comprehensive plan process. All public hearings were held in accordance with Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code.

One of the first activities related to the comprehensive plan was to complete a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise. As the name implies, the planning commission identified aspects of the community that fell into each category. The SWOT exercise was helpful to identify issues that should be included in a comprehensive plan initially.

The columns below summarize strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities provided during the exercise. Appendix A contains the original feedback from the SWOT exercise.

Strengths

- Diverse population
- Caring community
- Focus on education
  - Two growing universities
  - 13 schools of higher education within 50 miles of Bluefield
- Talented & responsive city government
- Effective economic development office
- Transportation
  - Good proximity to interstate and railroad
  - Bluefield Area Transit (BAT)
- Relatively low cost of housing
- Overall low cost of living
- Great climate & geography
- Tourism opportunities

Weaknesses

- Downtown lacks vibrancy
- Perception that Bluefield is unsafe
- Few activities for youth
- Workforce participation rate is low
- Aging housing stock
- Lack of ADA accessibility
- High poverty rate
- Lack of cultural amenities
- Difference between “haves” and “have-nots”
- Lack of indoor activities between October and April
- Lack of a city center
- Substance abuse
- Unhealthy competition between Princeton and Bluefield
- Parks not connected with neighborhoods

Opportunities

- Expand downtown development and opportunities
- Take advantage of proximity to interstate access
- Build upon historical and cultural resources
- Amplify energy from the arts community
- Promote beautiful viewsheds
- Develop new spaces from underutilized parking spaces downtown
- Opportunities for economic development could include Tax Increment Financing and New Market Tax Credits
- Continue partnerships with universities and university graduates
- Capitalize on the new Carbon Corridor



Following the SWOT exercise, the planning commission identified community stakeholders and developed an online survey that focused on the issues and concerns of the Bluefield higher education community. Representatives of the planning commission distributed the survey to the Bluefield University and Bluefield State University communities, visited each campus, and met with focus groups to ensure the campus communities were given multiple opportunities to provide input.



115

A total of 115 people participated in the online survey.

The planning commission, along with the Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at the West Virginia University College of Law (Land Use Clinic), reviewed existing plans, news articles, reports, interviewed stakeholders, and analyzed data, including Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics information. Analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data provided the planning commission with a clear picture of the issues and how to address those issues through sound goals, objectives, and action steps.

FOCUS AREAS

While the comprehensive plan includes all required components, the plan focuses on the most critical issues facing the City of Bluefield. Stakeholders narrowed in on five focus areas to achieve Bluefield's vision. Separate chapters address each of these focus areas:

1. **Infrastructure**
2. **Recreation & Youth Programming**
3. **Downtown Revitalization**
4. **Neighborhoods**
5. **Land Use Ordinances**

Goals and objectives for each focus area were developed along with action items describing specific steps that are needed to reach the goals. The comprehensive plan details each goal by examining the issues, deciding how to address the issue, and developing implementable action items. At the end of the comprehensive plan, there will be an implementation matrix. that can be utilized as a standalone document. The implementation matrix provides useful information for staff, elected officials, the planning commission, and the public to help implement the plan.

The following information is provided as part of the implementation matrix:

1) **Priority-** The matrix breaks down priorities into high, moderate, or low categories. Prioritizing only works if the recommendations are divided between the different priority classifications. The priority distinction guides future elected officials and decision-makers on which recommendations were most important to the community when the plan was created.

2) T**imeline-** Action steps are categorized into short, moderate, and long-term. Sometimes, a recommendation will be listed as ongoing. The timeline column describes when the recommendation should be completed. Typically, 0-3 years is a short-term, 4-7 years is a moderate-term, and 8+ years is a long-term recommendation.

3) **Responsible Party-** This section outlines what group or entity is responsible for addressing the recommendation. Often, multiple entities bear responsibility for addressing a recommendation. Often partners who can provide support to the responsible party will be listed.

4) **Assess/Evaluate Completion of Recommendation-** This column explains how city staff should evaluate the completeness of each recommendation. Some recommendations may be easy to evaluate completeness (e.g., finish paving on 4th Street), while others may be more difficult to evaluate completeness.

5) **Related Costs and Financing-** This column identifies the costs of completing each recommendation. Some recommendations may be quantifiable, while other recommendations may have little, if any, monetary costs but may take time to complete.

6) **Funding Sources-** If grant funds are associated with achieving a particular recommendation, those funds are listed in this column. Also, loan programs, donations, in-kind work, external sources, or the general fund might be needed to complete the recommendation.



Partnerships

Potential partners are important to implementation of the comprehensive plan. Many of the projects listed in the implementation matrix likely require collaboration with nearby communities to increase the likelihood of success and to improve efficiency.

The city already works closely with Bluefield, Virginia, including sharing a park and a sports stadium. In February of 2025, the Bluefield, Virginia Town Council and the City Board of Bluefield, West Virginia held a joint meeting to discuss opportunities to work together. The two Bluefields should continue to work together on projects to benefit each community.



The city should also continue to work with Mercer County, Princeton, Athens, Bramwell, and Oakvale on regional projects to benefit citizens of the county. Regionally, the city should continue to work with Region I planning and the constituent counties of McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers and Wyoming on regional projects.

Chapter 8A of the West Virginia State Code outlines elements that must be included in every comprehensive plan. This requirement ensures some level of uniformity between comprehensive plans across the state as they are implemented or updated. The tables below elaborate on those mandatory elements and where they can be found in The City of Bluefield's Comprehensive Plan.

Required Objectives for a Comprehensive Plan	
Code Provision	**Page #**
Statement of goals and objectives	
Timeline on how to meet short and long-term goals and objectives	44, Appendix A
Action plan with implementation strategies	44, Appendix A
Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding	35, Appendix A
Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies	40-43
A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation	10, 18
Maps, plats, and/or charts- that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	39, 41

Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan	
Code Provision	**Page #**
Land Use	
Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, conservation)	36, 37
Population density and building intensity standards	37
Growth or decline management	38-43
Projected population growth or decline	38
Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas)	40
Housing	
Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities)	38
Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed	38
Address substandard housing	30-32, 34-35, 38
Rehabilitate and improve existing housing	30-33, 34-35, 38
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Transportation	
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Movement of traffic and parking	14-16
Pedestrian and bicycle systems	16-18, 26, 29
Intermodal transportation	15
Economic development	
Analyze opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses	5-7
Identify and designate economic development sites and/or sectors	28, 42-43
Identify types of economic development sought	28, 42-43

Miscellaneous Components	
Infrastructure	12-18
Public Services	13
Rural	37
Recreation	13, 17, 19-24, 34, 42
Community Design	27-29, 34, 36-43
Preferred development areas	42-43
Renewal and/or redevelopment	42-43
Historic preservation	33, 35

FOCUS AREA 1

MAINTAIN & ENHANCE INFRASTRUCTURE

Effective communities have high-quality infrastructure available to residents and businesses. This section discusses the state of infrastructure in Bluefield along with recommendations specific to stormwater, transportation, and improving accessibility and connectivity.







OBJECTIVES

1. **Address Current Stormwater Issues**
2. **Maintain and Enhance Transportation Systems**
3. **Improve Accessibility**
4. **Improve Connectivity**

Water Infrastructure

Wastewater treatment, water treatment, and stormwater are important infrastructure systems. Bluefield is fortunate that both the water and wastewater treatment systems are in good condition and will not need significant upgrades over the next 10-15 years. All properties in Bluefield have public water and public sewer or permitted well and septic systems. The Bluefield Sanitary Board collects and treats all wastewater generated from Bluefield, West Virginia, Bluefield, Virginia, and Brushfork, West Virginia. The Board manages two treatment plants, one located in Bluefield, West Virginia, and one located in Bluefield, Virginia. The Ada Treatment Plant, located on the West Virginia side, is designed to treat 1.2 million gallons of sewage a day, while the Westside Plant in Virginia treats about 8.3 million gallons of sewage per day. Approximately 350 miles of sanitary sewer lines exist in the cities of Bluefield, Brushfork, and Bluefield, Virginia combined.

Stormwater was the top infrastructure concern identified during the public input process and will be discussed more thoroughly in the action plan below. Stormwater concerns exist throughout town, primarily in the form of standing water, which makes driving conditions dangerous. Stormwater can also be dangerous during a significant rain event and contributes significantly to flooding. Even though few places in Bluefield are designated “special flood hazard areas,” flooding can still occur. Over 25% of all flood damage in the United States occurs outside of the designated floodplain.

Bluefield offers many services to its citizens, including but not limited to transportation, economic development, engineering, stormwater, public works, fire, police, code enforcement, and parks and recreation. Bluefield has 132 full-time and 48 part-time employees, including the city administration and Board of Directors. The Bluefield Public Works Department has over thirty-five employees who maintain public parks, provide sanitation collection, perform street maintenance, and collect yard waste and loose leaves. Moving forward, the city will work with American Water. The city is well served with essential utilities like electricity, gas, traffic lights, and hydrants. Water and sewer services are available and have excess capacity for expansion. Public safety is a high priority for the city police department and fire department. The city rescue squad provides emergency medical services and emergency medical transportation. An emergency plan is in place, providing emergency shelters and generators for backup power for essential facilities. A new emergency medical services campus is in the planning stage. This campus would house new facilities for police, fire, and rescue services.

Transportation, Connectivity & Accessibility

Transportation systems connect various parts of the city and connect Bluefield to surrounding areas. Bluefield has long been a transportation hub for motor vehicles and trains. With proximity to Route 460 and Interstates 81, 64, and 77, the city serves as the southern gateway into the Mountain State. Interstate 77 is a north-south highway that traverses five states, starting in Cleveland, Ohio, and going south all the way to Columbia, South Carolina. While I-77 passes near Bluefield, one of the impediments to revitalizing Bluefield is that the city center is not directly off the Interstate, which limits traffic and potential economic opportunities.

Bluefield Area Transit (BAT) Authority provides public transportation. BAT has several fixed routes traversing Bluefield and various towns in both Mercer and McDowell Counties. Primary city routes include 1) Princeton to Bluefield, 2) Bluefield to Welch, 3) Cumberland Road, and 4) South Bluefield routes. In 2022, the transit authority had a ridership of over 163,000, which was up from 62,000 in 1997. There are 18 buses, three transit vans, two sedans, and seven minivans.

In June 2022, Bluefield hosted the grand opening of the new Larlyn Patrick McKinney Bluefield Area Transit Regional Transfer Station. The $3.2 million facility will serve as the hub of the BAT bus system. The transfer station was built using more than $527,000 in grant funding from the West Virginia Department of Transportation, local funds, and United States Federal Transit Administration funds.

82%

82% of workers employed in Bluefield commute from outside city limits, with an average commute time of less than 20 minutes.



Air

The Mercer County Airport (ICAO: KBLF) is a general aviation airport three miles northeast of Bluefield. The airport opened in 1954 and provided scheduled airline service until 2007. The City is also working with the Federal Aviation Administration to consider possible expansion of the runway to account for larger aircraft. There are no airports within Bluefield city limits.

Ports

The closest port is the Port of Huntington Tri-State on the Ohio River, 108 miles northwest of Bluefield. The second closest port is the Port of West Virginia on the Ohio River, 214 miles north of Bluefield. One opportunity could be an inland port built in partnership with the railroad. There are no ports within Bluefield city limits.

Railroad

The closest passenger rail service is in Hinton WV, 70 miles east of Bluefield. The line is a passenger rail service operating 3 times a week on Amtrak's Cardinal line. Amtrak previously served Bluefield with its Hilltopper route, running from Catlettsburg, Kentucky to Boston until 1979. Bluefield is not currently served directly by any passenger rail systems.

River

The closest navigable river access point is the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River, at the navigable terminus in Welch, West Virginia, around 23 miles northwest of Bluefield. Bluefield does not contain any navigable rivers.

Intermodal

An intermodal facility is in the planning stages, but has not yet been funded. The Midway Tunnel off Bluefield Avenue will be removed and replaced by an overpass thanks to a $13.4 million grant through the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program in 2023. After completion, the new overpass and road improvements will be the approach to a planned intermodal facility, which transfers freight from the Norfolk Southern Railroad line that is located in Bluefield.

Action Step: Inventory and prioritize stormwater issues.

With stormwater identified as the top priority during public meetings, stormwater needs should be inventoried and prioritized. Significant focus has been dedicated to drainage on College Avenue, Oakhurst Avenue, and Parkway Areas, but the city's gutters, gullies, and culverts still need frequent attention. Given limited resources, the City should inventory stormwater issues and develop a system to prioritize addressing stormwater infrastructure.



Action Step: Purchase an updated camera system to inspect municipal conveyance and collection lines.

The City's infrastructure is aging. The diversity of construction materials used from different eras adds to the complexity of managing an aging stormwater system. Continued inspection of conveyance and collection lines can support identification and prioritization by the public works department.

Action Step: Separate combined wastewater and stormwater drains.

The City successfully separated multiple wastewater and stormwater drains. There are at least two stormwater drains that remain combined. In accordance with the City's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permitting requirements, the City should separate these remaining systems.

Action Step: Plan and implement the National Transportation Infrastructure Pilot Program.

In February 2023, West Virginia Senators Manchin and Capito announced a $1,008,000 grant for the West Virginia Department of Transportation to support the planning and development of a transportation project in Bluefield. These funds will allow Bluefield to begin improving its infrastructure, roadways, and sidewalks and access between different areas of Bluefield. This grant stems from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and will be used for a planning study, a preliminary engineering analysis, and more. Bluefield is one of only three cities in the country to have been selected for this national pilot program.

Action Step: Update inaccessible sidewalks.

Sidewalks need updating, part of which includes creating curb cuts. Whenever other projects abut inaccessible sidewalks, the city should consider updating and retrofitting the sidewalks.

Accessibility "is the practice of making information, activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible." Because of the age of the structures and the city's hilly topography, there are accessibility concerns in Bluefield. City officials are committed to addressing these concerns so that all citizens and visitors can enjoy Bluefield.



Action Step: Retrofit city hall and the public works building for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

Another priority project involves making City Hall fully accessible. The primary issue centers on moving between the floors; no elevator exists. People in wheelchairs lack access to the city hall without having someone help them into the building and between floors. Likewise, the public works building needs updates needs updates.

Action Step: Better connect existing parks with residential neighborhoods through the utilization of additional multi-use trails and paths.

Providing safe routes from the university to student residences and routes between residential and recreational areas were identified as priorities. There also needs to be a concerted effort to promote multiple transportation modes in and around Bluefield. Walkability and bike-ability are desired by the university population, although projects related to biking or walking infrastructure should be for the entire community, not just the university population.

Action Step: Develop the Safe Streets and Roads for All action plan.

In 2022, the city received $497,550 under the USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All program. The city must develop an action plan, identify projects, and conduct regional stakeholder interviews. The city will use the action plan to collect data on crashes and causation to inform a data-driven approach to re-tooling Bluefield's transportation network from one focused on moving coal and manufactured goods through and to market to one that provides safe accommodation for Bluefield's emerging diversified economy. City officials will engage with the downtown business community, Bluefield State University, the Mercer County Commission, emergency service providers, and the Town of Bluefield, Virginia, to identify each group's transportation needs and to coordinate planning activities with the major stakeholders. Examples of steps in the action plan may include lighting conditions, improved signage, improved traffic circulation by the elementary school, and traffic flow by the new emergency facility. A review of contributing factors to the four fatalities in the City between 2016 and 2020 identified lighting conditions as a factor. Traffic circulation near the elementary school is a well-known challenge for all households with children. Proven countermeasures such as improved signage, sidewalks, marked crosswalks, and bike lanes are identified as needs.

The city received $497,550 under the USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All program.



Action Step: Continue support for evolving transportation models.

Although Bluefield's current transportation system is sufficient, the city is looking at incorporating new services that complement the existing modes of transportation. The goal is not to replace current transportation infrastructure but rather to supplement what is already available, such as providing a free green taxi service. Companies like FreeBee are on the City's radar, and city officials are also working with Siemens to install several EV charging stations.

FOCUS AREA 2

RECREATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING







As a college town, Bluefield is young at heart, with many opportunities for fun and recreation. Stakeholders would like to see even more activities. Increasing access to non-sports youth programming was a top concern identified during the public input process. Students interviewed during the process identified the lack of activities as a barrier to staying in Bluefield after high school. Increasing the variety of activities in Bluefield will attract and retain residents and promote community health. This chapter highlights opportunities to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities, including non-sports-related programming for youth.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Increase Non-Sports Events and Activities**
2. **Enhance Youth Programming**
3. **Maintain and Improve Parks and Recreation**









Existing Amenities/Attractions

Before detailing opportunities for additional amenities and activities, this section will discuss existing opportunities for residents of Bluefield. While the City of Bluefield is located approximately 100 miles from West Virginia's capital city, Charleston, Bluefield lies within a 500-mile radius of 50% of the U.S. population. Bluefield has many of the advantages that come with being located in a more densely populated area. Yet, at the same time, Bluefield offers many outdoor, rural, and recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, mountain biking, hiking, skiing, and ATV riding. Bluefield is also close to two West Virginia state parks, Camp Creek and Pinnacle Rock.

Bluefield is home to historical amenities, including the Granada Theater, Gary Bolling's House of Arts, Bluefield Arts Center, Bluefield City Park, the Ridge Runner Train, Mitchell Stadium, Holiday of Lights, and a historic district walking tour. Mercer County is also home to a Vietnam Memorial and War Museum, cottages and campgrounds, and several locally owned dining and retail establishments. Two local museums include the One Thin Dime Museum and the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

The Bluefield region is known for a long-standing, unique, and closely held tradition known as Beaver-Graham Week. This week of events includes many festivities and reunions pertaining to the century-old rivalry between Bluefield High School in Bluefield, West Virginia, and Graham High School in Bluefield, Virginia. The rivalry dates back to 1911, and Beaver-Graham Week is celebrated by residents as a gem of the region. Typically, a football game between the two rival schools kicks off on a Friday night in late August and is followed by the Lemonade Festival on Saturday. Though the events vary by year, the celebratory week has featured a 5K race, carnival, parade, golf tournament, pep rally, film showing, and tailgating.

Bluefield residents can also enjoy visiting a wide range of regional recreational and entertainment facilities including:

- City, state, and national parks
- Museums
- Art galleries
- Performing arts centers
- Movie theaters
- Golf courses
- Bowling centers
- Fitness facilities
- Tennis and pickleball courts
- Fields, stadiums, and gymnasiums for football, soccer, baseball, and basketball



One cherished tradition hosted by the city is the Holiday of Lights. This event is a festive Christmas display of more than a million lights and wonderful scenes open from Thanksgiving through the first week of January. After taking a tour, visitors can also enjoy their time by visiting a nearby ice skating rink or viewing the 22-foot smart Christmas tree, which links to music and displays its own light show in the evening hours.



Action Step: Inventory existing non-sports activities and assess youth interest in additional opportunities.

High school students desire to stay in Bluefield or come back after college, but hope for a greater diversity of amenities. While sports are a very important part of Bluefield's identity, a concerted effort is required to ensure that activities, programs, and amenities are available for youth who either do not want to participate in sports or do not wish to participate in sports year-round. Various groups and amenities could be the catalysts for non-sports-related programming. Before developing additional programming, the City should first assess youth interest. One method to understand interest is to establish a standing committee of local youth and college students that provides recommendations on enhancing youth and college student experiences in Bluefield, reports quarterly to the Board of Directors, and meets at least bi-monthly. The Millennial Ambassador Program may be a good model for this type of committee.

Action Step: Build on existing programs to create learning opportunities.

Local arts and culture organizations already offer programming for learning and personal growth. Using the inventory and assessment mentioned above, the House of Art, Granada Theater, the Bluefield Arts Revitalization Corporation, and local schools could expand youth classes, competitions, and productions. Potential classes could include film, painting, sculpting, and music. Competitions are another opportunity; for example, an annual youth artist contest could highlight assets that best exemplify the community with different categories such as photography, short films, graphic design, or mural design. Other artistic productions could be possible with assistance from volunteers, such as the production of an annual community play or concert.

The Bluefield Arts & Revitalization Corporation (BARC) and named the 2024 Governor's Arts Organization of the Year by the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History. BARC's mission is to use the arts to create opportunities for education, employment, and entertainment in downtown Bluefield, West Virginia.

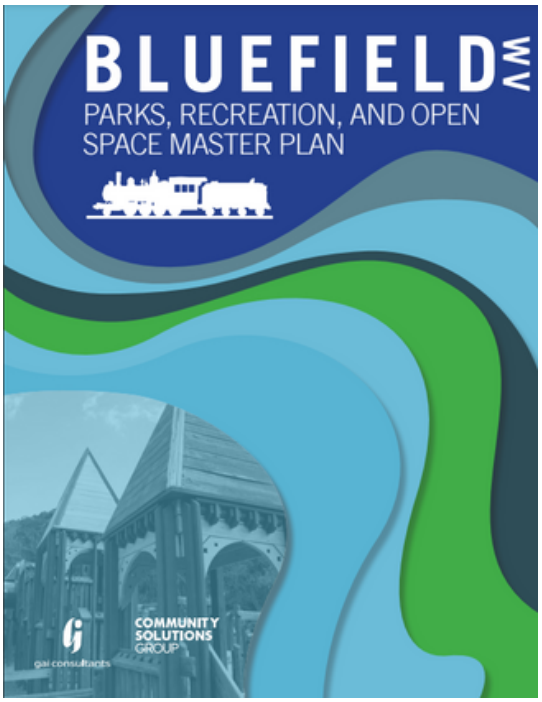


Action Step: Advertise events and activities.

The City should develop a multi-medium platform to better inform the public of events and activities and update the platform weekly. The City can also amplify the marketing efforts of local arts and culture groups such as BARC.

Action Step: Prioritize, update, and implement recommendations from the "Bluefield: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan."

In 2019, the City of Bluefield completed a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan which is intended to guide the City in policy development, capital programming, and future planning and growth. The plan contains a chapter on implementation, including recommendations for strategic actions. The City should continue to implement actions identified in this plan.





Action Step: Increase the number of special community outdoor exercise events throughout the year.

The city should partner with local businesses and organizations and supplement existing events with healthy living activities, including 5K runs/walks, sprint triathlons, National Night Out, and more.

The City of Bluefield, WV, and Bluefield, VA, are partnering on an athletic facilities study to enhance recreational opportunities and boost tourism.



FOCUS AREA 3

REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN

A city's downtown often serves as the "heart and soul" of the community. Historically, downtowns formed the center for trade, commerce, and entertainment. As vehicular travel became more commonplace and with the creation of the Interstate Highway System, many downtowns suffered as businesses moved to areas with more available land to expand or to areas in immediate proximity to interstate and highway access. However, the last few decades witnessed an emphasis on downtown revitalization throughout the United States.

OBJECTIVES

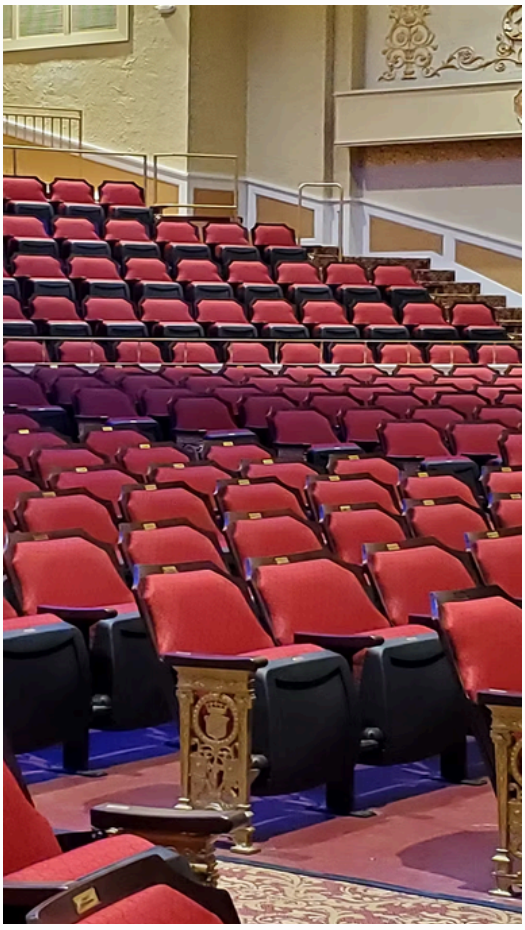
1. **Ensure a mix of commercial, residential, and recreation in the downtown area**
2. **Create a physical area and presence downtown to serve as a focal point and community meeting area**



Downtown Amenities

The downtown area serves as a center for the arts in Bluefield. The Bluefield Arts Center, located on Bland Street, includes a gallery, a neoclassic auditorium, a restaurant, and an art and antiques retailer. The Center also houses several offices for small businesses in the community. The Paine Gallery of Fine Arts is located on the first floor of the Center and offers exhibits by national artists, as well as regional and historic exhibits. Gary Bowling's House of Art is in the historic Ramsey School building. This 501(c)(3) organization promotes and assists Appalachian artists by hosting a public gallery, themed art studios, and apartments. The Bluefield Arts & Revitalization Corporation redeveloped a former tire and auto center that had been vacant for decades. The space is located on the lower level of the Granada Theatre on Raleigh Street. The renovation, which took place in May 2023, includes two new theaters available for community events, film festivals, and hosts New River Community and Technical College teaching labs. A Certified Nursing Assistant program began at the site in January 2025. This renovation project creates new opportunities for entertainment, employment, and education in the downtown area.

The City of Bluefield's historically significant downtown serves not just the city but the entire region. As one of the most important communities in the Southern Coalfields, many prominent businesses and industries call Bluefield's downtown home. However, the downtown has lost many businesses over the last several decades. The downtown now includes several vacant storefronts, along with structures that either need to be demolished or significantly renovated. Although a concerted effort in Bluefield has revitalized the downtown area, several issues still need to be addressed.



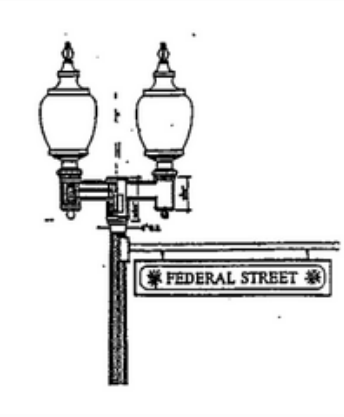
Walkability, Signage, & Parking

As downtown is redeveloped, more people will travel to shop, dine, and enjoy the downtown area. To handle the increased foot and vehicular traffic, the City needs to address several issues, including sidewalk maintenance, adequate signage to direct individuals to various points of interest, limited parking availability, and a lack of accessible parking options.

Many of the sidewalks throughout downtown need upgrades and maintenance. as they have developed significant cracks, holes, or have sunk as a result of limited upkeep. Additionally, some sidewalks are difficult for people with limited mobility, presenting accessibility challenges. Along with upgrading sidewalks, emphasis needs to be placed on softening greenscapes to prevent future issues, such as overgrowth and root systems damaging walkway foundations.

The downtown area also has limited signage to direct individuals to shops, restaurants, and parking areas downtown. Hill Studio in Roanoke, Virginia, conducted a Signage and Wayfaring Study on behalf of the City in 2018. The City purchased equipment to manufacture its own signage, allowing for the creation of new street signs, kiosks, and maps to help direct foot and vehicular traffic to targeted areas of downtown.

The downtown area also needs to upgrade existing parking options, as well as develop new parking options for people visiting the downtown area. The City identified and mapped downtown parking spaces in 2020. While various city-owned lots offer parking, some lots lack adequate maintenance, are insufficiently signed and marked, or present accessibility challenges due to their location on a grade and their distance from the core downtown area.







Action Step: Use zoning and other tools to prioritize and incentivize mixed-use infill development and redevelopment downtown, particularly residential units above commercial businesses.

A review and update of the zoning ordinance could provide additional tools to incentivize the development of vacant or underdeveloped parcels. In particular, the City should explore the possibility of using a floating zone and mixed-use zoning to incentivize redevelopment in the downtown area. These tools can be tailored to ensure the congruence of development patterns downtown. A major project in the downtown area focuses on the 400 block of Bland Street. Several buildings have been demolished, including the former Montgomery Ward building and the old J.C. Penney building. The demolition was intended to create space for a new downtown park and other amenities. Envisioned as the new City Center, the redevelopment will provide a mixture of greenspaces, a Christmas tree area, seating, landscaping, walkways, new lighting, and possibly parking. Other lots throughout the downtown area provide redevelopment opportunities. Generally, redevelopment in the downtown area should be mixed use, with office, retail, and residential to allow residents to live where they work. Specific ideas include a farmers market and a library.

Action Step: Assign law enforcement officers on foot/bicycles to patrol the downtown area.

To make the downtown area vibrant for day and evening events, citizens must feel secure. The City should assign law enforcement officers to patrol downtown to reinforce the safety of enjoying downtown amenities at all hours of the day and night.

Action Step: Develop a free annual concert series or movie night downtown, appealing to both the college population and families.

A free annual concert series or movie night downtown could use music and movies with broad appeal to attract both college students and families to the downtown area to enjoy the amenities together.



A number of different groups use the downtown area, but some events only appeal to limited age groups or family types.

Action Step: Develop a food truck ordinance allowing food trucks at downtown events.

Food trucks provide a unique amenity that can enhance the downtown atmosphere during special events. However, brick and mortar eating establishments often object to food trucks as unfair competition. The city should develop an ordinance to balance needs of existing restaurants and additional services needed for special events.

The Bluefield Economic Development Authority is developing a regional Food Truck Incubator Program. Grant applications and collaboration with Region I and counties in the region will help facilitate the presence of food trucks in the city.



Action Step: Analyze whether parking minimums should be relaxed in the downtown area.

The zoning ordinance presently requires a minimum number of parking spaces for development or redevelopment. These minimums may both overestimate the amount of parking needed and discourage redevelopment in the downtown area. The city should analyze whether parking minimums should be relaxed in the downtown area. Present the analysis to the City Council to determine whether parking regulations should be changed in the downtown area.

Action Step: Improve Signage.

The Signage and Wayfinding Study from 2018 resulted in a set of guidelines to establish a coordinated signage system to help visitors navigate the City. Goals include the establishment of a consistent visual identity through signage. The City should review this study, update the findings if necessary, and implement the findings. The study envisioned several major sign types, including primary gateway entrance signs, downtown entrance signs, directional signs, and pedestrian kiosks.

Action Step: Place public trash receptacles throughout the downtown area.

When enjoying downtown amenities, people often pick up food and beverages and eat, drink, and walk while enjoying the area. While downtown, people experience the inconvenience associated with a lack of public trash receptacles, increasing littering and discouraging use of the downtown. The City should place trash receptacles throughout the downtown area.



Action Step: Prioritize green spaces that require minimal maintenance and few or no additional parking spaces.

The downtown lacks sufficient greenspace. The City can soften the downtown streetscape by continuing to "green" the downtown area by adding pocket parks, planters, and landscaped buffers that require a minimal amount of maintenance and few or no additional parking spaces.

Action Step: Consider updating and expanding the Master Design Plan for Bluefield.

The Master Design Plan was created in 1990 to provide ideas for the design of both public amenities like lampposts and trashcans, and private property, like façade improvements to conform with the design characteristics of the city. The Bluefield Economic Development Authority acquired a $600,000 from the U.S. Congress to improve facades. The facade program reimburses the property owner for 50% of the cost of improvements to the exterior of the building, up to $15,000. The funds are available to owners of commercial or industrial buildings currently being used for business or planned to be used for business within the next year. The city has changed since the development of the Master Design Plan. With new funding available, an update and expansion would ensure that the city and private property owners have sufficient guidance to maintain a well-designed city.

Action Step: Replace and repair sidewalks.

Many of the sidewalks in the downtown area need upgrades or repairs. The upgrades and repairs will help attract people to the downtown area by allowing easier access and mobility. The City should prioritize the northeast end of the downtown area, particularly the sidewalks circling the 400 block of Federal Street, using general funds. Grants and other funding should be sought to repair and replace other sidewalks in the area.



FOCUS AREA 4

IMPROVE & MAINTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS

Like most of West Virginia, Mercer County and the City of Bluefield have experienced significant population loss over the last 50 years. Because of this trend, there is a large supply of housing in West Virginia and Bluefield. High vacancy rates often lead to the deterioration of structures, which is an ever-present issue in Mercer County. Currently, there are several dilapidated structures in the city, many of which need to be demolished, but there is also a shortage of habitable housing in a certain price range.

Understanding that housing is a huge concern in Bluefield, City officials sought to have a detailed housing study completed. In 2023, researchers from Virginia Tech completed a housing study for the City of Bluefield. This chapter is intended to build upon the research completed by Virginia Tech. This plan should be read in conjunction with the Virginia Tech Housing Plan, which covers an in-depth analysis of housing conditions, including vacancy, affordable housing, and recommendations for implementation.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Encourage the Development of Diverse Housing Options**
2. **Prioritize and Address Vacant and Dilapidated Structures**

Highlights from the 2023 City of Bluefield Housing Study

Projected Housing Needs

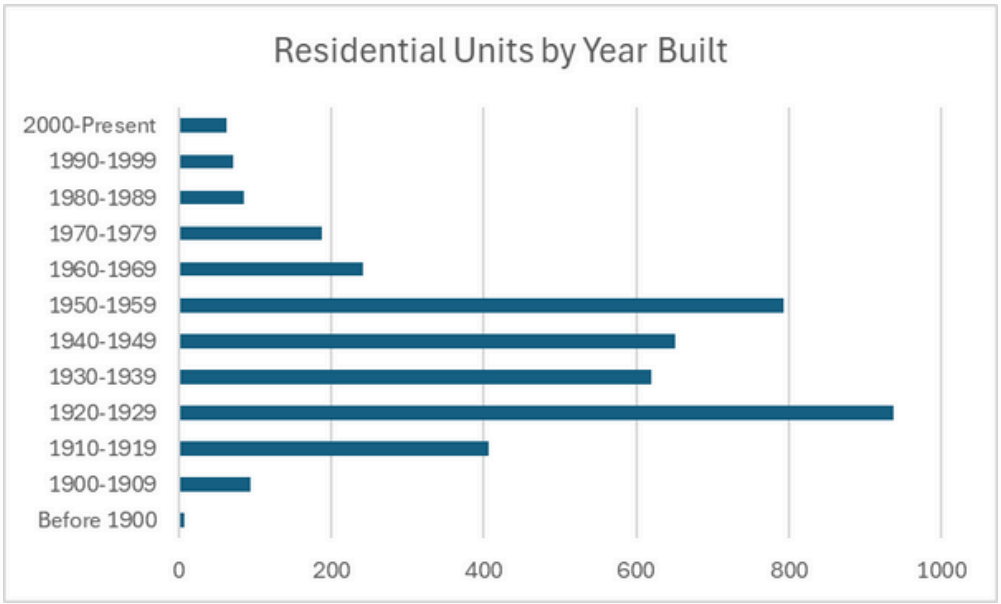
- Property Managers revealed a nearly 100% occupancy rate with significant waiting lists for available rental units.
- Householders aged 15-44, 45-64, and 65 and older make up roughly 1/3 of households each, suggesting a need for housing that supports residents throughout their lives and careers.
- Increasing rents and observations from stakeholders suggest that the market can absorb additional rental units and that additional rental units would be desirable to promote investment in existing rental units.
- The Bluefield market will likely experience "gridlock," with potential sellers unable to list their homes because they are unable to find another unit that meets their needs. For-sale Market Vacancy Rate is less than 1.5%.

Types of Housing

- 70% of households are one- or two-person.
- The majority of housing was built prior to 1950, with three or more bedrooms, and many units are in poor condition.
- The absence of efficiency and one-bedroom units is a gap for the population that is nearly 70% one- or two-person households.

Affordable Housing

- 27% of households may need more affordable housing to cover all necessary household expenses.
- Of that 27%, "at least 400 of them may be at risk for homelessness".
- Affordable housing options for seniors are a critical need for the community.
- Without adequate levels of high-quality affordable housing, the most vulnerable households often accept substandard conditions in order to obtain housing at all.



Market Vacancy Rate 0-6%

This chapter will focus on areas identified during public meetings during the comprehensive plan process, not already addressed in depth in the Housing Plan, and includes a focus on land use and dilapidated properties.

Dilapidated Structures

Issues in Bluefield related to dilapidation range from minor cosmetic blemishes to uninhabitability, posing significant health risks to the public. Dilapidated structures can depress surrounding land values and are at a higher risk for fire damage, harboring vermin, and can lead to full or partial collapse into the neighboring properties. An increase in the number of housing units in Bluefield could come from renovating dilapidated houses. For severely dilapidated housing units, structures should be demolished, and new infill housing built.

In 2022, the City of Bluefield was awarded $1.5 million to address dilapidated structures through a West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) program. Prior to the award, the City was able to demolish, on average, twenty-five homes per year. With the DEP funds, the City was scheduled to demolish thirty homes every two months. As of 2022, 276 homes and 30 businesses were targets for demolition in Bluefield.





Average Cost Per Structure
$11,353

Total Demolished Structures
100

Total Spent
$1,135,300

Accessible Housing for Persons with Disabilities

- Interviewees suggested an expressed desire for accessible, single-level, ranch-style homes or smaller units within walking distance of amenities.
- Small one-to-two-bedroom units downtown could also support aging residents who prefer to move to a more accessible residence.

Code Enforcement

The City of Bluefield Code Enforcement / Inspection Department assures compliance with International Building Codes and the City's Code of Ordinances. The City has one full-time code official, and two code enforcement/animal control officers, who enforce all West Virginia Building Code provisions within the city limits. Some of their duties include:

- Reviewing and issue building permit applications prior to construction.
- Conducting plan reviews for building code compliance
- Answering citizen questions.
- Investigating complaints about improperly maintained properties, rental inspections, abandoned vehicles, and other nuisances.
- Conducting all required inspections throughout the construction and renovation process.
- Overseeing the city's demolition program to rid neighborhoods of dilapidated, dangerous structures.

The City typically issues about 418 building permits per year.

Historic Preservation

Bluefield has a rich history with historic buildings worthy of preservation, enhancing Bluefield's neighborhoods and downtown. When making development decisions, several developments may make a viable and affordable contribution. Bluefield has six historic districts and four individual historic buildings designated by the National Register of Historic Places, including the Bluefield Downtown Commercial Historic District and the newest addition, the Bluefield Green Book Historic District.



Workforce Housing

Stakeholders indicated the county has yet to match the housing needs of local industry. According to the Housing Study, "Workforce housing supports successful economic development, as businesses may have trouble attracting or retaining workers without nearby affordable housing options and/or convenient and affordable transportation." The southern coalfield economy has transitioned into a service-based economy. One challenge according to local stakeholders is the increase in the number of cash offers going above the asking price for nice housing units in Bluefield. This phenomenon puts many locals, who work in the service sector, at a clear disadvantage, as they cannot afford to pay more than the asking price or pay with cash.

Action Step: Review 2023 Housing Plan no less than quarterly to inform city policies and regulations related to housing.

The 2023 Bluefield Housing Plan was developed during the comprehensive plan process. The plan identifies actions to strengthen recreation options and community health, to protect natural and cultural resources, and foster an emerging outdoor recreational economy and lasting economic opportunity. As part of the 2023 Plan, an open house was held in June of 2022, and an online survey was conducted. Public input received at the open house and online surveys was incorporated into the comprehensive plan. The city should review the plan quarterly.

Action Step: Update the inventory of vacant and dilapidated properties.

City officials should continue to update the dilapidated properties registry to ensure there is an up-to-date list of all properties identified as "vacant" or "dilapidated." The inventory will be useful for city and land bank officials to better understand the number and type of structures exhibiting signs of dilapidation or vacancy. Understanding the breadth of the issue will inform local policymakers as to the best solutions. City officials have already indicated that it is essential to focus attention on vacant structures. Information should also be gathered on ownership, present condition including whether vacant or inhabited, code violations, fire and police calls, presence within a preferred development area, opportunities for reuse, and tax status. An inventory will enable the city to prioritize which structures need to be demolished and concentrate efforts in specific locations.

Action Step: Allow for adaptive reuse of existing structures into residential units to increase overall housing stock, where appropriate.

Stakeholders indicated that students and young professionals are seeking new or renovated rental units with modern amenities. Adaptive reuse may create such opportunities. Adaptive reuse is the renovation or reuse of pre-existing structures for new purposes. An example of this is utilizing a vacant commercial building or warehouse for new residential studio apartments. The 2023 Housing Plan identifies existing and needed housing units. The community also needs to retain structures that are currently in commercial/industrial use. City officials should strike a balance between the need for more housing units and the need to maintain areas of Bluefield dedicated to commercial growth and development. The primary tool for city officials to balance commercial and residential growth is zoning. A zoning ordinance can allow for commercial development in desired areas of the city, while restricting development to residential in other areas.

Action Step: Continue human-centered code enforcement.

While Bluefield focuses on demolishing dilapidated structures, officials do not want to displace residents unless necessary for safety reasons. Bluefield officials want to ensure people have a roof over their heads and the services necessary to live a dignified life. City-funded demolition projects that require displacement of inhabitants should ensure displaced individuals have housing available for at least 90 days or until more permanent housing can be secured. In addition, information regarding homeowner resources for maintenance can continue to support the maintenance of the property. The City can also disseminate educational information annually regarding resources for rehabilitation, façade improvement, or demolition by property owners.

Action Step: Continue pursuit of partnerships and financial resources to support neighborhood revitalization.

The City can continue to understand financial resources such as Tax Increment Financing, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, community development financial institutions, and BEDA's New Market Tax Credit program. The City of Bluefield should continue the partnership with the West Virginia DEP Reclamation of Abandoned and Dilapidated Properties Program described above.

Action Step: Enforce vacant property registry.

Owners of vacant structure(s) must register their structure(s) with the city and pay an annual fee. Under Bluefield's City Code, Sec. 6-102, an annual registration fee of $100.00 is charged to the owner for the registration and inspection of vacant residential structures and vacant un-leased business structures. Additionally, a fee of $1.00 per square foot of the vacant structure is assigned. All fees obtained under this program are used to: (1)improve public safety efforts, (2)monitor and administer the program, and (3) repair and demolish vacant structures. Continued administration of this program will support goals of this plan. The city should continue enforcement of the registry.

Action Step: Continue the on-site citation program.

One method for cleaning up the city is through the full enforcement of on-site citations for external property violations such as rubbish, high weeds, and debris accumulation. On-site citations, similar to a traffic ticket, are a cost-effective way for the city to alert landowners of non-compliance with city ordinances. Issuing on-site citations does not address the structural integrity of a structure but does address health and safety concerns and would not involve costly demolition activities.

FOCUS AREA 5

DEVELOP SOUND LAND USE ORDINANCES

Bluefield's zoning ordinance was adopted in 1978, with some minor amendments adopted since that date. Various regulations within the ordinance protect residents' public health, safety, and welfare. The ordinance divides the municipality into nine different zoning districts: 3 different single-family residence districts, a multi-family residence district, a central business district, a neighborhood commercial district, a highway-related commercial district, a light industry district, and a heavy industry district. The existing subdivision ordinance was adopted in 1974 to promote the orderly development of land. The ordinance focuses on preliminary and final plat requirements.

OBJECTIVES

1 **Update Land Use Ordinances**

2 **Direct Development to Preferred Development Areas**

Existing Land Use

Bluefield consists primarily of single-family residential homes within established neighborhoods as shown on the Existing Land Use Map. The population density is 1,070 people per square mile. Building intensity is primarily medium to small-sized lots with a few large lot homes dispersed throughout the city. Smaller residential lots are concentrated in South Bluefield along Oakhurst Avenue, College Avenue, and Shenandoah Street. Most non-residential uses are located along Cumberland Drive, Route 460, and in the downtown area. Industrial uses are primarily located along Bluefield Avenue and Princeton Avenue. Although there are some nodes of concentrated commercial and industrial uses, several areas have existing industrial uses interspersed within residential areas. The Bluefield Hospital is on Cherry Street and Bluefield Regional Medical Street. An older "master plan" for Bluefield from 1960 shows, that in general, Bluefield developed along the railroad and then in South Bluefield. Today, the commercial areas lie in downtown Bluefield, Cumberland Road, College Avenue, and Leatherwood Lane (in Bluefield, VA). No rural land lies within the city.





Table 1

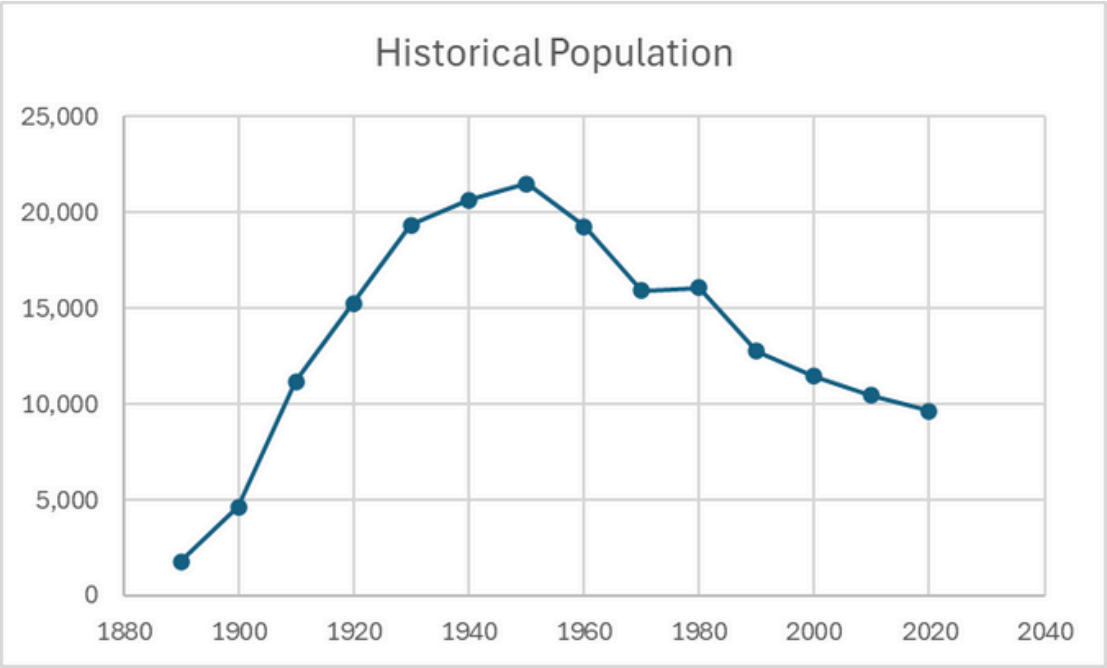
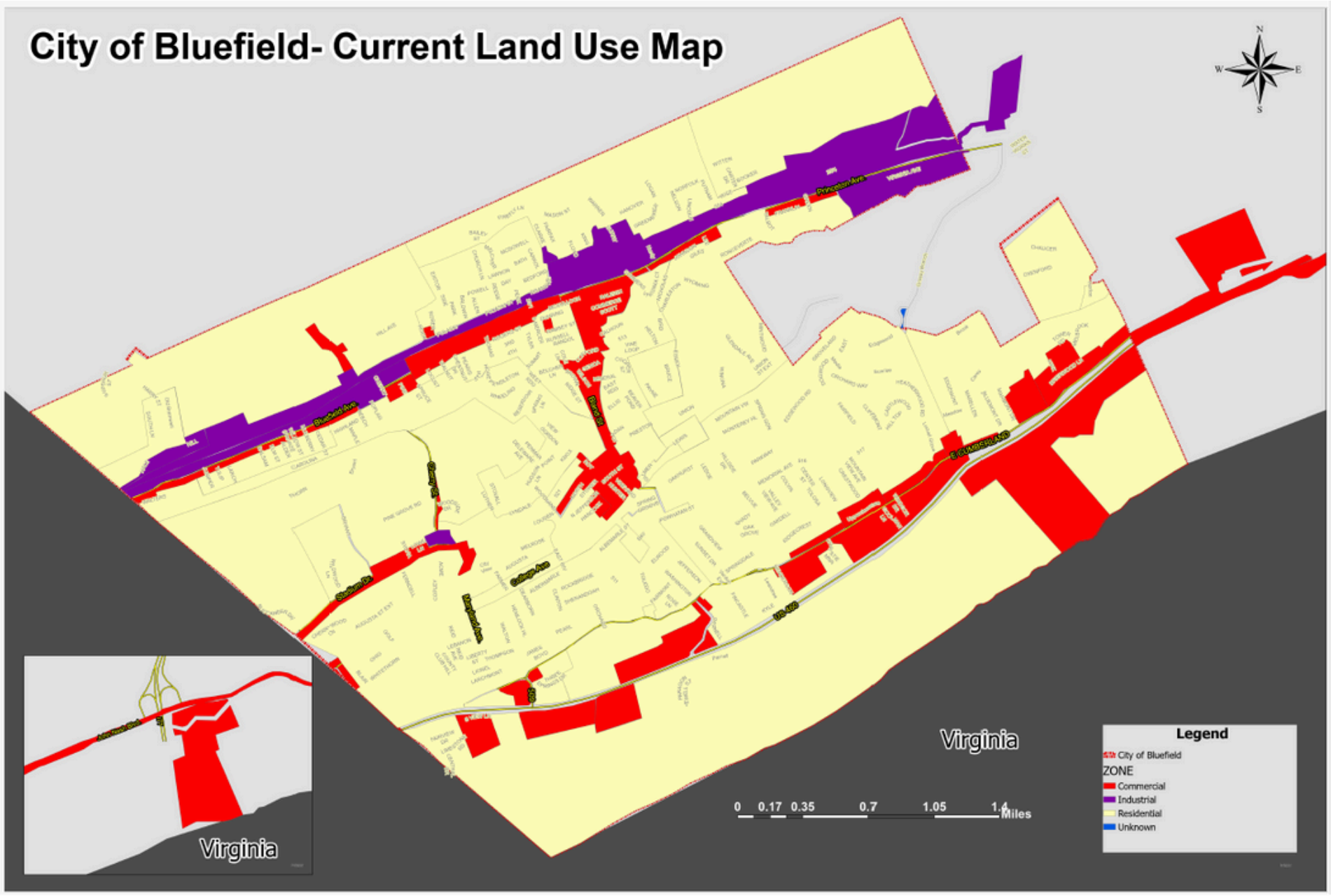


Table 1 shows the historical population trends for Bluefield. There was significant growth between 1890 and 1910 that coincided with the extraction of coal. The population continued to rise until peaking in 1950 with over 21,000 residents. Since the 1960s, the city has seen a marked decline in population, particularly between 1960 and 1970 when there was a 17% decrease in population. The city has maintained around 10,000 people since the 1990s. One of the goals of this comprehensive plan is to curb the outmigration of residents and for the city to exhibit a sustainable increase in population. Population is expected to remain stable or only decline slightly in the next 10 years.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Bluefield has been decreasing since 1980. Most recently, the population decreased 7.6% from 2010 (10,447) to 2020 (9,658). The estimate population in 2025 according to the United States Census Bureau is 9,048. Those trends indicate that the population is likely to continue to decline. If the decrease continues at that same rate, the population would be 8,150 in 2025. The City's economic development and housing plans seek to stem that rate of decline and start a population increase.

Although population trends indicate no need for additional housing units, the housing study discussed in Focus Area 4 shows that much of the housing stock is in poor condition. In addition, enrollment at Bluefield State University is increasing, which increases demand for rental housing in good condition, which is lacking. The city estimates that 15 new housing units per year are needed to replace older housing stock and to supply rental units for college students.

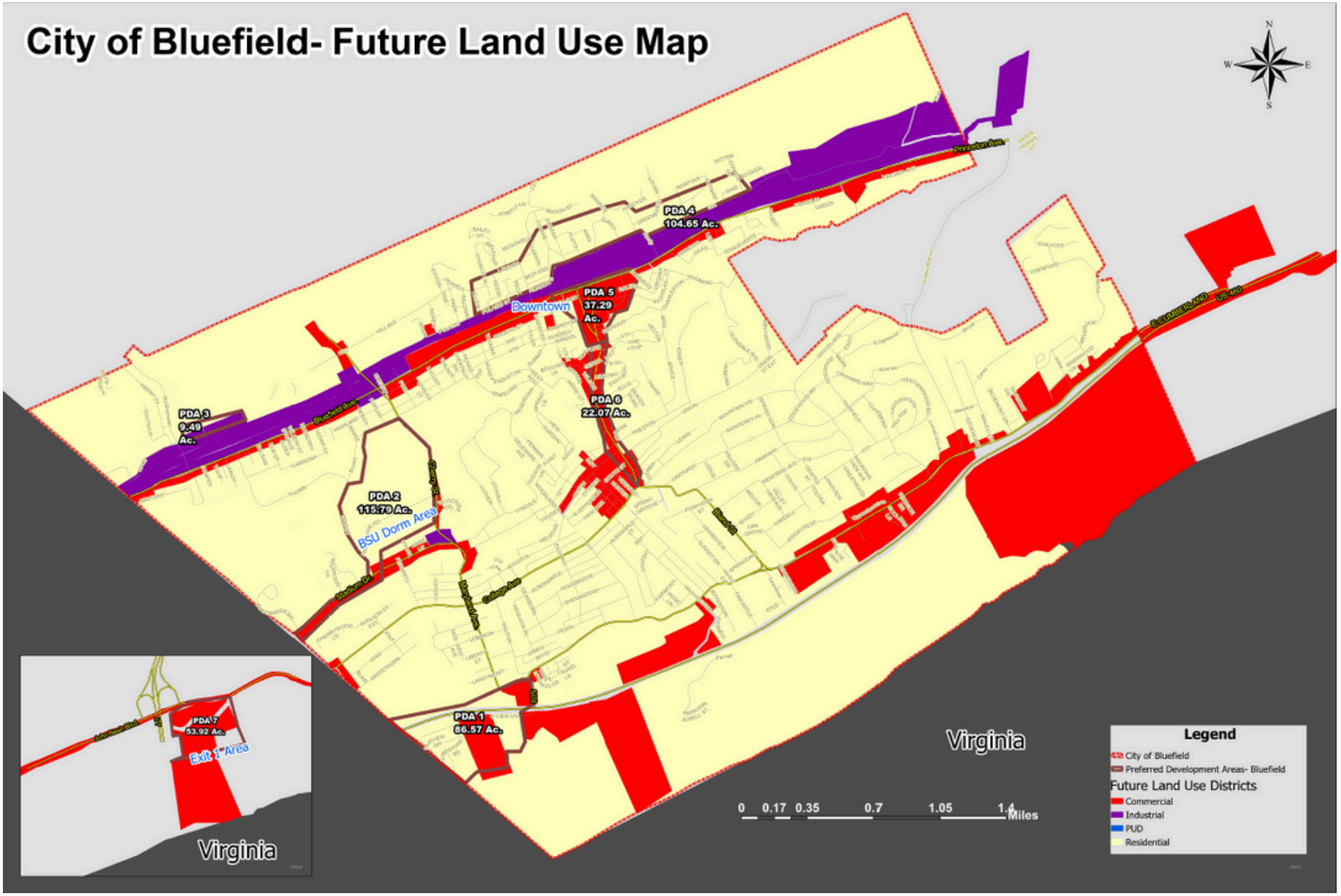

City of Bluefield- Current Land Use Map
N
W
E
S
Princeton Ave
Bluefield Ave
Virginia
0 0.17 0.35 0.7 1.05 1.4 Miles
Legend
City of Bluefield
ZONE
Commercial
Industrial
Residential
Unknown
Virginia

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map is based upon the city's desire to encourage responsible and sustainable growth that is sensitive to the natural environment, creates a sense of place, maintains the small-town character of the city, and meets the needs of future residents. The Future Land Use Map identifies general locations for various land uses envisioned by the Planning Commission. The Future Land Use Map, along with the entire Comprehensive Plan document, is a guide for local decisions regarding land use. The boundaries reflected on the map are not intended to indicate precise size, shape, or dimension. In addition, the Future Land Use Map does not necessarily imply that rezoning is imminent; rather, the recommendations set a long-range planning goal.

The following are descriptions of the future land use categories illustrated on the map:

- PUBLIC. Areas designated for public uses include public schools, City Hall, Bluefield Fire Department, Bluefield County Parks and Recreation, and the US Post Office.
- AIRPORT. The area designated as Airport encompasses the land owned by the Mercer Regional Airport. This use is designed to accommodate the airport's expansion and ancillary services.
- RESIDENTIAL. This land use comprises the bulk of the community and is intended to accommodate single-family residential homes.
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL. The area planned for high-density residential is intended to accommodate a variety of attached and detached residential uses.
- COMMERCIAL. The areas planned for commercial are intended to accommodate small and large scale commercial oriented uses such as financial institutions, hotels, and auto-oriented uses such as gas stations, grocery stores, and restaurants. Located primarily at or near major intersections, these areas are distinct from light industrial to accommodate land mass sufficient in size to attract businesses serving the local community.
- INDUSTRIAL. The area designated for light industrial/warehousing is concentrated along and encompasses existing industrial park developments.
- HIGH-RISK ADVISORY ZONES. These areas are non-regulatory 1% annual chance flood zones that are listed in the WV Flood Tool. These non-regulatory zones will most likely become effective when new Flood Insurance Rate Maps are published. Therefore, development in these zones should be regulated to the same standards as effective high-risk flood zones. Subsidence issues are not widespread; however, in 2014, a portion of Bluefield Road collapsed due to mine subsidence.


City of Bluefield- Future Land Use Map
N
W
E
S
PDA 1
86.57 Ac.
PDA 2
115.79 Ac.
BSU Dorm Area
PDA 3
9.49
Ac.
PDA 4
104.65 Ac.
PDA 5
37.29
Ac.
PDA 6
22.07 Ac.
PDA 7
53.92 Ac.
Exit 1 Area
Downtown
Virginia
Virginia
0 0.17 0.35 0.7 1.05 1.4 Miles
Legend
City of Bluefield
Preferred Development Areas- Bluefield
Future Land Use Districts
Commercial
Industrial
PUD
Residential

Action Step: Update the zoning ordinance.

The zoning ordinance hasn't been updated in several decades. The zoning ordinance should be updated to reflect changes in the community. The City first had zoning in 1938. The zoning ordinance must be consistent with the updated comprehensive plan. The zoning ordinance should provide of-right uses for the desired development types in the preferred development areas listed below.

Action Step: Eliminate split lot zoning throughout the city.

Split lot zoning occurs when a single lot lies within two or more zoning categories. Several lots currently lie within two or more zoning districts. The differing requirements cause confusion and uncertainty. The planning commission should review the zoning map and determine where the split lot zoning occurs. The planning commission should then recommend amendments to the zoning map to eliminate split lot zoning.

Action Step: Updating the subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO).

The SALDO has not been updated since the 1970s; however, enabling regulations for SALDOs were adopted in 2004. The comprehensive plan has also changed significantly since the 1970s. The SALDO should be updated to be consistent with these new regulations.

Action Step: Update maps for consistency with identified "preferred development areas".

The city aims to foster economic development through additional commercial growth, driving expansion in existing industries. Recreational services, restaurants, and other service industry development are needed. Much of this economic development will occur as redevelopment.

The City of Bluefield has identified six Preferred Development Areas for future development. These preferred development areas also represent the renewal and redevelopment areas for the City, since most of the development will consist of redevelopment. While renewal and redevelopment are desired in all six Preferred Development areas, renewal and redevelopment are particularly important in the downtown area (Preferred Development Area 5).

Preferred Development Areas for future development:

- Preferred Development Area 1 consists of 86.57 acres and includes the new hospital. Expansion of medical services is desired in this area.
- Preferred Development Area 2, referred to as the Hospital Area, consists of 115.79 acres and includes Pine Grove Road. PDA 2 also extends along Stadium Drive. The hospital is no longer located in this area. This area will serve as the Bluefield State Secondary Campus and the location of Bluefield State dormitories.
- Preferred Development Area 3 consists of a small 9.49-acre area on Hill Avenue near Old Bramwell Road in the Midway neighborhood. That area is designated mostly for industrial uses, with some residential.
- Preferred Development Area 4 lies across the rails from downtown in the Northside and East End neighborhoods and consists of 104.65 acres. Residential development is preferred.
- Preferred Development Area 5 consists of the downtown area and includes 37.29 acres. Commercial development is desired in this area.
- Preferred Development Area 6 extends southward from the downtown area along Bland Street. Consisting of 22.07 acres, this area is also designated for commercial development.

IMPLEMENTATION & ACTION PLAN

This plan includes an implementation matrix to guide local elected officials in once the plan is adopted. The matrix should also be consulted when preparing city budgets and developing grant applications.

The implementation matrix details each action item's priority level, completion timeframe, potential financial or technical assistance partners, estimated costs, and potential funding sources. It should be used immediately to start the plan's implementation and should be updated regularly with the status of each action item and any obstacles encountered. Each action item is listed as a high, medium, or low priority.

The planning commission also identified a timeframe for each project, as some projects may take longer to implement even though they are a high priority. Priority categories are as follows:

- High: most important to implement
- Medium: a vital project but not as urgent as high-priority projects
- Low: a project that can be implemented as time and funding permit, but only after high and medium-priority projects are implemented

List of Appendix

Appendix A: Action Plan
Appendix B: Public Input Procedures
Appendix C: Survey Results
Appendix D: Adoption Materials (to be added after plan is adopted)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2024 City of Bluefield Comprehensive Plan was made possible through a collaborative effort of several groups, organizations, and individuals.

The Board of Directors
Mr. Ron Martin, Mayor
Mr. Treyvon Simmons, Director
Mr. Daniel Wells, Director
Mr. Matt Knowles, Director
Mr. Peter Taylor, Director

Planning Commission Members
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Mr. Todd Browning
Mr. Josh Cline
Mr. Cecil Marson, City Manager
Mr. Keith Olson
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Mr. John Velke
Ms. Laura Ward

Key Staff Members
Mr. Cecil Marson, City Manager
Mr. Robert Luther, City Clerk
Mr. Curtis French, City Engineer
Mr. Anthony Heltzel, City Attorney

The West Virginia University College of Law Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic assisted the planning commission with the development of the comprehensive plan. Virginia Tech, led by housing expert Mel Jones, conducted an in-depth housing study that informed the city as to its housing needs and provided detailed information used to develop goals and objectives in the city's comprehensive plan.

The planning commission developed online surveys, distributed individualized stakeholder surveys, met with Bluefield High School students, conducted in-person meetings with faculty/staff/students at both Bluefield University and Bluefield State University, and invited subject-matter experts to weigh in on issues facing the city. Helping the planning commission during the comprehensive plan process was City staff who have been instrumental in providing information, photos, and administrative support. From setting up the meetings to gathering information, staff serve an important function in the development of the comprehensive plan.

Thank you to all of those who attended meetings, completed surveys, or provided in-person comments related to the comprehensive plan.