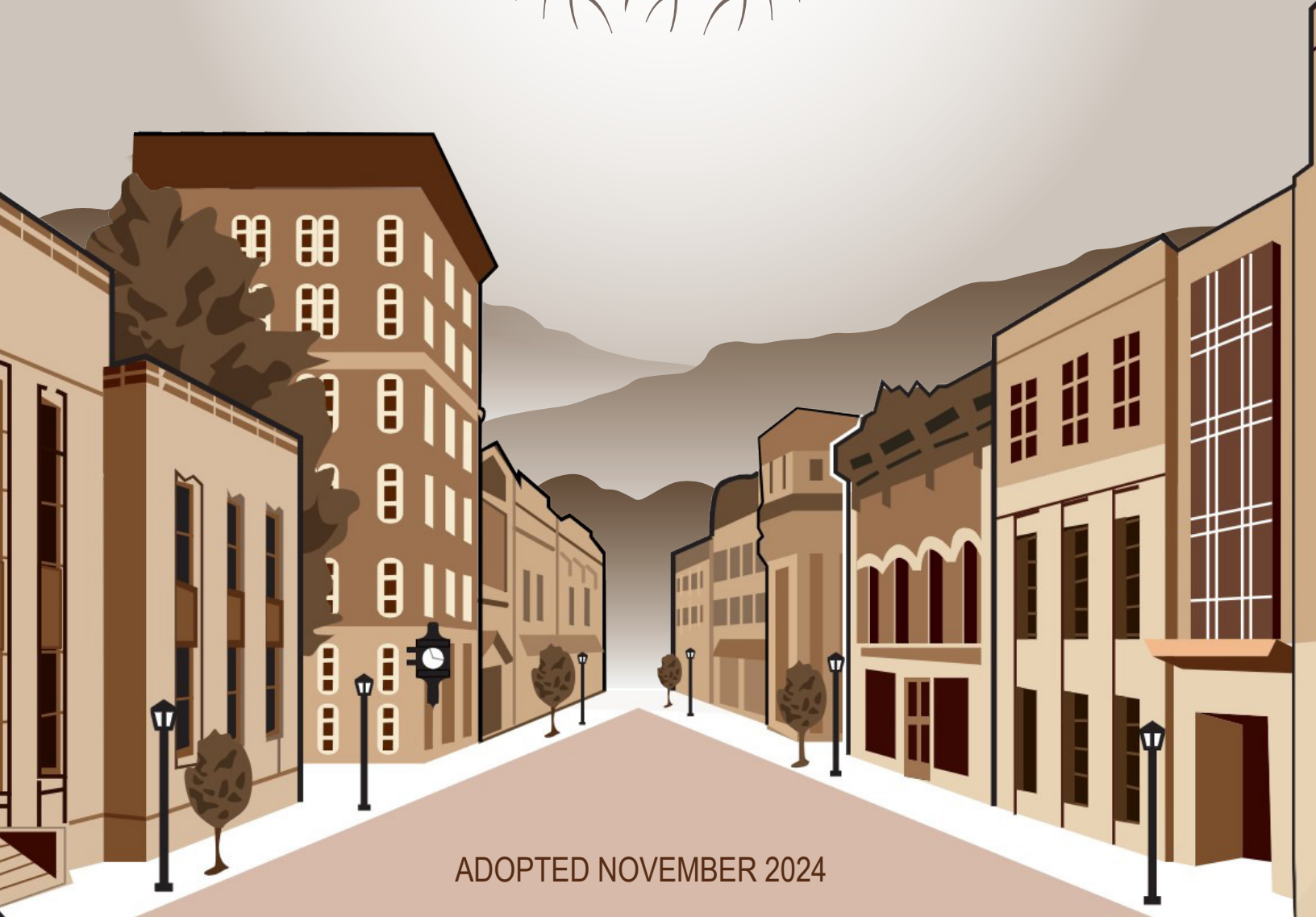


COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

# BECKLEY 2045



ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Special acknowledgment to the residents, participants, and stakeholders who offered valuable input during the plan's development. Understanding the vision, aspirations, and potential impacts of land use would not be possible without the dedication and support exhibited by its community and organizations.*

*In addition, the team thanks the Beckley Raleigh County Convention Center for hosting public meetings at their facility.*

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<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
What is a Comprehensive Plan?.....	10
What Does a Comprehensive Plan Do? .....	10
How to Use a Comprehensive Plan .....	10
West Virginia State Code Compliance .....	11
Community Engagement .....	13
<b>City Overview.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Building the Future on Our Roots .....	16
Understanding the Trends Shaping Our Future.....	19
<b>Vision &amp; Roots .....</b>	<b>21</b>
The Vision .....	21
The Roots .....	22
Land Use .....	25
Implementation .....	25
<b>Root 1: Recreation &amp; Tourism .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Related Trends.....	26
What the Community Voiced .....	26
Insights .....	27
Opportunities .....	32
<b>Root 2: Revitalization.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Related Trends.....	35
What the Community Voiced .....	35
Insights .....	36
Opportunities .....	39
<b>Root 3: Connectivity.....</b>	<b>44</b>
Related Trends.....	44
What the Community Voiced .....	44
Insights .....	45

<b>Root 4: Prosperity .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Related Trends .....	53
What the Community Voiced .....	53
Insights .....	54
Opportunities .....	59
<b>Root 5: Cooperation .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Related Trends .....	63
What the Community Voiced .....	63
Insights .....	65
Opportunities .....	67
<b>Root 6: Inclusivity .....</b>	<b>70</b>
Related Trends .....	70
What the Community Voiced .....	70
Insights .....	71
Opportunities .....	74
<b>Land Use .....</b>	<b>76</b>
Insights .....	76
Opportunities .....	83
<b>Implementation .....</b>	<b>89</b>
Goals & Action Items .....	89
Root 1: Recreation & Tourism .....	89
Root 2: Revitalization .....	91
Root 3: Connectivity .....	94
Root 4: Prosperity .....	96
Root 5: Cooperation .....	98
Root 6: Inclusivity .....	100
Summary .....	101

# Executive Summary

**The Beckley 2024 Plan is an update to the City’s existing Beckley Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2014. Over the nine-month update process, city officials, residents, and stakeholders provided invaluable information to lead and guide the framework for Beckley’s future.**

Beckley, West Virginia, the county seat of Raleigh County, has a rich history and culture spanning over 180 years, reflecting resiliency, adaptability, and historical significance. It has become a regional transportation, medical, and government center and West Virginia’s eighth-largest city.

**Figure 1: City Overview**



*Photo: Beckley gateway sign*

Beckley has had a relatively stable population in recent decades and is anticipated to have a stable yet slowly declining population in the coming decades. Beckley is at a crossroads of opportunities where growth in its population and the attraction of new businesses can be achieved. As the population is expected to remain stable, the land use priority should not be on increasing the amount of land dedicated to residential uses, but focusing on development and redevelopment to targeted areas and diversifying residential use types.

Beckley’s Future Land Use (FLU) Plan illustrates desired land use patterns given the goals and objectives expressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Dedication to the vision and implementation of its goals are critical to planning for positive change.

*Beckley has the infrastructure of major highways and interstates. Beckley has a strategic location to several major urban areas. Beckley has natural beauty. Beckley has great people. We are a driven and welcoming community.*

## Vision & Roots

Beckley 2045 reorganizes and consolidates the planning elements of the 2014 plan into six major themes or “roots”. These firmly establish a foundation for the plan’s goals and objectives to inform updates and refinements to the Future Land Use map, and development regulations, and guide the plan’s implementation.

Figure 2: The Vision & Roots

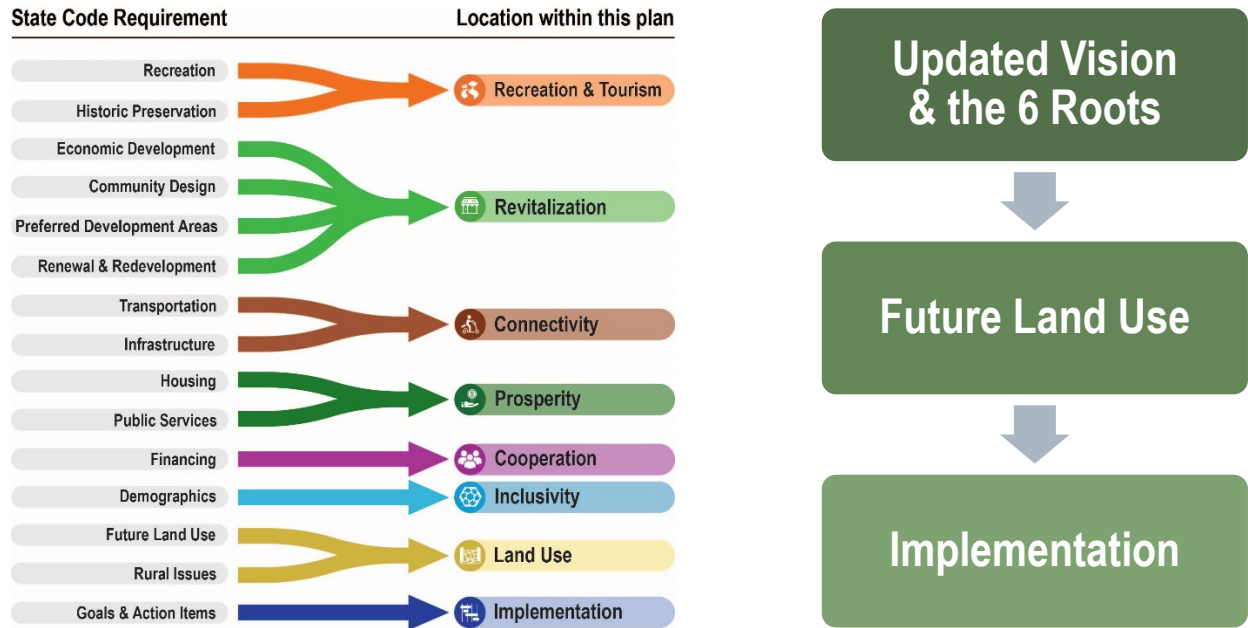
# COMMUNITY VISION

*Beckley will cultivate vibrant community environments that reflect its unique heritage and culture by growing connectivity, prosperity, cooperation, and inclusion among all people and places.*

*Beckley will build recreational and tourism opportunities that are rooted in a celebration of its identity and history which will establish the City as a premier destination.*







### ROOT 1: RECREATION & TOURISM

***“Establish the City of Beckley as a premier recreation destination that celebrates southern West Virginia's Appalachian heritage. Promote artistic and cultural assets for residents and visitors to take advantage of while elevating Beckley’s rich history and vibrant artistic community.”***

This root is representative of the unique convergence between Beckley’s ample outdoor recreation resources and eco-tourism opportunities of the region, especially with the New River Gorge being designated a national park in 2020. Combining recreation and historic preservation into a single root allows Beckley to leverage its unique mining history and historic preservation efforts to leverage tourism-driven economic development.

Beckley is a prime and growing tourist destination. The city is southern West Virginia’s largest population center, easily accessible off I-77 and I-64 and surrounded by many unique attractions, including the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine, featuring city and state parks, a new national park, and hosting other adventure opportunities.

### ROOT 2: REVITALIZATION

***“Develop a vibrant community where residents, students, and visitors gather to enjoy arts, entertainment, and culture, and promote Beckley's historical and cultural assets to revitalize and stimulate economic activity and development.”***

This root encompasses economic development, community design, and preferred development areas. The renewal and redevelopment component focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods, downtown, and areas around the college, rejuvenating and activating public spaces, incorporating public art, facilitating redevelopment, and growing new industries and job opportunities. Combining the different elements into a single root allows the Comprehensive Plan to build off the synergies between community design, redevelopment, and economic growth.

Renewal and redevelopment of corridors and the downtown area are of high importance for our future in attracting and growing quality jobs and businesses.

Community design often considers historic roots and incorporates unique “placemaking” elements to make Beckley unique and distinctive. It also explores how Beckley can promote an identity that is unique and authentic to its roots.

There are five preferred development areas (PDAs), including two corridors and three gateways. These priorities focus on investment, and incentives and encourage development, infill, or redevelopment to promote well-designed and coordinated communities.

#### Priority Development Areas

- Downtown Beckley
- East Beckley Bypass
- New River Drive
- Harper Road Gateway and Corridor
- Neville Street Corridor

Several economic sectors have emerged as targets for economic development in Beckley. Examples are retail trade, manufacturing, arts and entertainment, outdoor recreation, and healthcare.

### **ROOT 3: CONNECTIVITY**

***“Invest in infrastructure that increases access and connectivity between natural resources, commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, historic assets, and people.”***

Combining transportation and infrastructure into one root highlights the interrelationships between the two and how they work together to form complete and walkable communities connected through a comprehensive mobility network. It also highlights how both elements have an outside influence on how people access goods, services, and recreational opportunities within their neighborhood, and how they build personal relationships with other members of the community.

An ever-changing economic climate combined with aging infrastructure is creating real challenges. Beckley looks to understand the future impacts and identify resources to build sustainability, resiliency, and adaptability.

The City of Beckley is just north of the junction of Interstates I-64 and I-77 (West Virginia Turnpike). Most people from outside of the metropolitan area access the city through these major arterials.

The East Beckley Bypass is a major route that opens access to the eastern part of Beckley. It connects with an interchange at I-64 through to Stanaford Road then ties back into Robert C. Bryd Drive (County 16) and N Eisenhower Drive (US 19) in north Beckley.

The Beckley Z-Way, an extension of the East Beckley Bypass, is a 5.5-mile-long stretch of new highway that will run from Shady Spring to Beaver and into Beckley.

Beckley is considered a leading green infrastructure community in West Virginia. There are more than 18 installations of green infrastructure throughout Beckley.

#### **ROOT 4: PROSPERITY**

***“Create an environment where the social, physical, emotional, and mental health issues are at the forefront of concern. This can be achieved by enhancing sustainable support services for all people and places while utilizing Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize neighborhoods.”***

This root encompasses housing, public services, community health, homelessness, access to childcare, and safety. By incorporating housing and public services into one element, the plan can focus on a more holistic quality of life as opposed to focusing on each in their own silo.

#### **ROOT 5: COOPERATION**

***“Enhance collaboration and communication within internal agencies and between external entities that respect the uniqueness of Beckley while envisioning future mutual prosperity.”***

This root encompasses financing and focuses on intergovernmental coordination, fostering public-private partnerships, collaboration with regional planning organizations, improving communications, leveraging synergies, and improving efficiency.

Regional planning is shifting toward an integrated systems approach considering changing demographics, new tools and technologies, expanded partnerships, and community engagement.

This chapter recommends short- and long-term financing plans to meet the Comprehensive Plan’s goals, objectives, and components, per WV Code 8A-3-4(c)(12). It considers future capital expenditures, selected operational expenditures, and potential grants from state, federal, and local governments and private foundations.

Because these projects and initiatives are generally large, costly, and long-term propositions, the challenge becomes identifying the appropriate funding sources. This Chapter identifies potential funding sources as they pertain to capital improvements and the funding of various initiatives.

#### **ROOT 6: INCLUSIVITY**

***“Leverage our individual strengths to enhance economic opportunity, encourage strong civic engagement, and foster community spirit.”***

This root is based on new elements not found in the 2014 plan and focuses on public engagement, equity, empowering vulnerable residents, and community diversity. It was determined that this element should be a standalone root because inclusivity is crucial for fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and promoting sustainable development. Without inclusive planning initiatives, the city may become divided and exclusionary, with limited access to services and opportunities for certain groups of people.

As demographics change and communities evolve, social infrastructure remains a topic of discussion across regions. Enabling people to come together for various purposes and providing those opportunities is becoming increasingly important to maintaining a resident’s quality of life.

As Beckley’s demographics evolve over time, taking into consideration the needs of all requires a holistic approach and analysis of how government policies, zoning, and building codes can be improved to ensure generational equality and access. While the portions of the population that identify as black and white has dropped somewhat, the biggest demographic increase has occurred with people who identify as two or more races. This is followed by an increase in the Hispanic/Latino population. An increasingly aging population, not unlike the national trend, demonstrates a need for Beckley to develop more diverse housing that allows residents to age in place.



*Photo: WVU Tech Beckley Campus (Source: City of Beckley)*

The presence of WVU Tech in Beckley brings an additional student population of nearly 1,500 students (Fall 2023 enrollment) and numerous faculty and staff to the area. WVU Tech has adopted a “Communiversities” mission, meaning the University is the community, and the community is the University. As WVU Tech moves forward, its goal is a united community where Beckley and its surrounding areas are united in the mission to support learning and discovery.

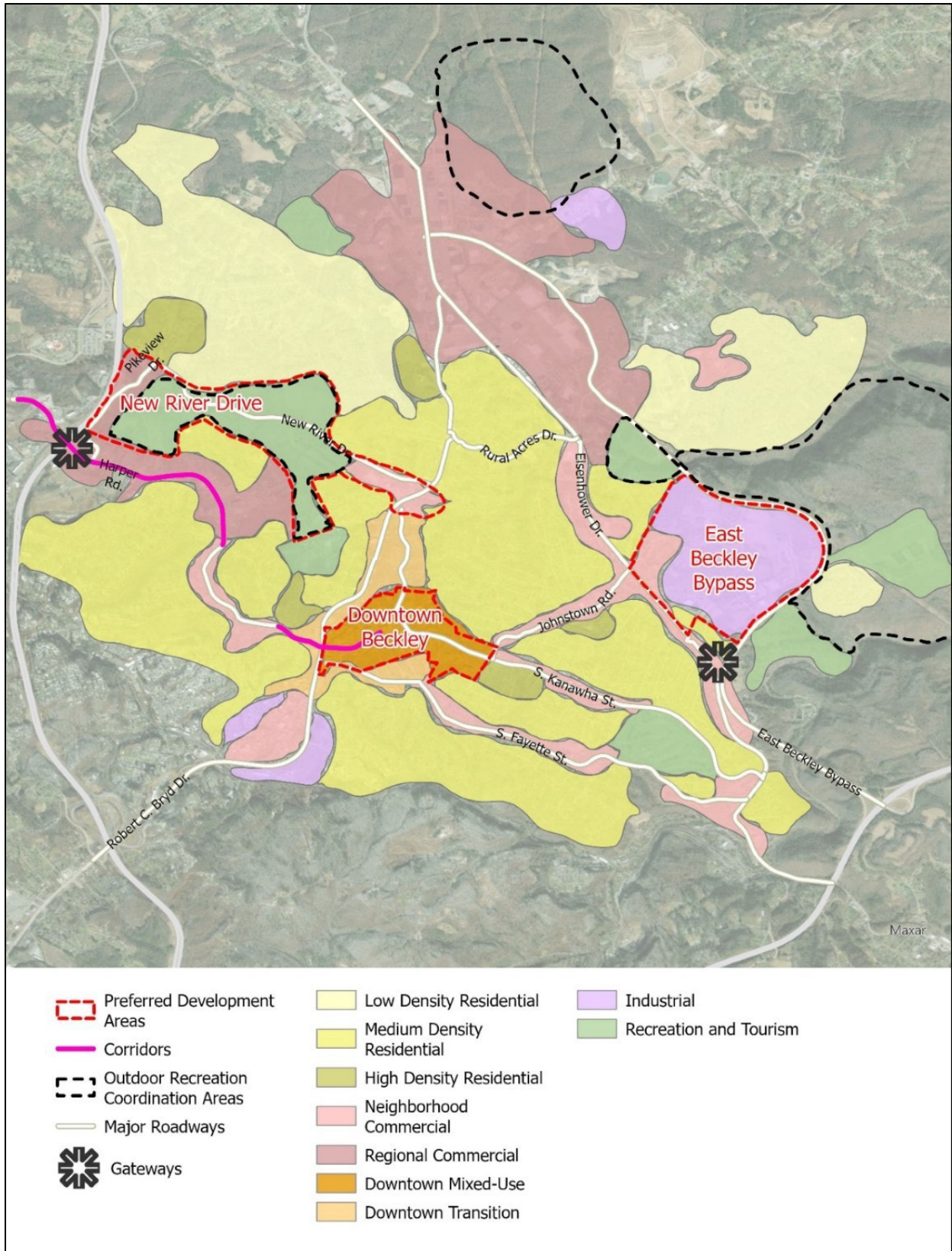
Promoting safe public spaces for all by providing intentionally welcoming public spaces that promote inclusive activities and programming. Activities and programs should focus on being inclusive and satisfying the needs of a diverse community.

## Land Use

The six roots of the plan firmly established the foundation for the development of a future-oriented land use growth pattern. Beckley’s Future Land Use (FLU) Plan illustrates desired land use patterns given the goals and objectives expressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Generalized land use categories are used to identify the desired primary use for existing and future areas for development.

Refer to the Land Use chapter beginning on page 77 for further information on the City of Beckley’s land use trends and projections.

Figure 3: Future Land Use Map



## Implementation

Beckley's 2024 Comprehensive Plan includes a performance matrix that identifies action items for Beckley to take in the implementation of the individual goals leading to the accomplishment of the endorsed vision and aspirations.

Each of the six roots is supported by three to six goals that work to fulfill each root's aspiration. Each goal has a number of action items that, when completed, will fulfill that goal. These action items are specific actions that may be in the form of policy changes, physical projects, planning studies, or changes in existing planning documents. The matrices identify a timeframe for when each one should be undertaken by designating them as one of the following:

- Quick Wins 0 – 1 Years
- Short-Term 1 – 5 Years
- Mid-Term 6 – 15 Years
- Long-Term 16 – 25 Years

Refer to the Implementation chapter beginning on page 89 for further information on the steps and strategies for the short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

### PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

The following three action items should be prioritized to effectively guide the implementation of the plan.

1. **Conduct a City of Beckley organizational analysis** to determine appropriate staffing needs and the inclusion of a Planning Department.
2. **Utilize a task force** to ensure implementation of the plan, guiding the next steps and tracking the progress of the priorities.
3. **Update the land development and subdivision regulatory standards** to align with the plan's goals and aspirations.

# Introduction

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan provides a vision for a community's future along with the steps required to realize it. This document, which is updated every 10 years, provides a blueprint for the community's future growth by providing guidance and recommendations to the municipal government planning department and other government agencies. This overarching document provides a consistent and coordinated approach to the community's development. Cities in West Virginia are required to adopt and periodically update their Comprehensive Plans under Section 8A-3-4 of the State Code.

Comprehensive Plans are:

- **Broad in Scope:** They cover a range of topics including land use, housing, recreation, economic development, infrastructure, transportation, and more.
- **Generalized:** Their recommendations provide high-level guidance to allow for flexibility over time
- **Long-Range:** These plans take a long-term look into the community's future (typically a 20-year outlook, updated every 10 years).

## What Does a Comprehensive Plan Do?

As shown in the graphic below, all land use and development regulations, infrastructure investments, special studies, public policies, and programs should relate to the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan. Comprehensive Plans are the catalyst for any plans, projects, and programs related to all future planning efforts, as shown in the graphic below. Strategies and programs for economic development, housing, transportation, infrastructure, recreation, and city beautification should follow the goals and action items outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and work towards fulfilling the plan's vision and goals.

**Figure 4: Impact of a Comprehensive Plan**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN				
Land Use & Development Regulations	Capital Improvement Projects	Infrastructure and Utility Investments	Specialized Planning Studies	Public Policies, Programs, and Ordinances

## How to Use a Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan provides guidance on how the municipality should operate, grow, and evolve over the next 20 years. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan must remain current and front and center in decision-making by updating it every 10 years. The City of Beckley should establish procedures for integrating the Comprehensive Plan into daily decision-making to maintain accountability in its implementation. By applying the Comprehensive Plan to city decision making,

it puts Beckley on the path to achieving the goals and action items stated in the plan. Beckley can use the following procedures to help incorporate the plan into its daily operations.

- **Basis for Decision Making:** Beckley should use the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and action items as part of the decision-making process for rezonings or development related processes. Beckley can also require that all agenda items on a city board or commission’s agenda be resolved in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Progress Reports:** Beckley can create annual reports to review what projects, policies, and action items in the Comprehensive Plan have been completed and if any outstanding ones should be adjusted for the upcoming year. These annual reports help reinforce the importance of the Comprehensive Plan and give elected officials and community residents an idea of how implementation is progressing.
- **Implementation Manager:** Beckley can identify a staff member, usually the City Manager or Planning Director, to be the Comprehensive Plan implementation manager. This ensures someone on city staff is responsible for managing the plan’s implementation and helps elected officials, board members, and commissioners with decision making regarding the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Implementation Matrix:** Beckley’s 2024 Comprehensive Plan includes an implementation matrix that identifies action items that Beckley should take to implement the individual goals. These are organized based on suggested implementation deadlines. Urgent/quick win items should be realized within the first year after plan approval, short-term goals should be implemented between 1-5 years after plan approval, mid-term goals between 6-15 years, and long-term goals between 16-25 years. This part of the Comprehensive Plan should be referenced during municipal budget planning and preparation of the 5-year capital improvement plan to ensure Beckley remains on target for plan implementation.

## West Virginia State Code Compliance

West Virginia Section 8A-3-4 of the State Code contains specific objectives for Comprehensive Plans. These objectives are provided in the following table to help frame the general intent and purpose of various parts of this planning document.

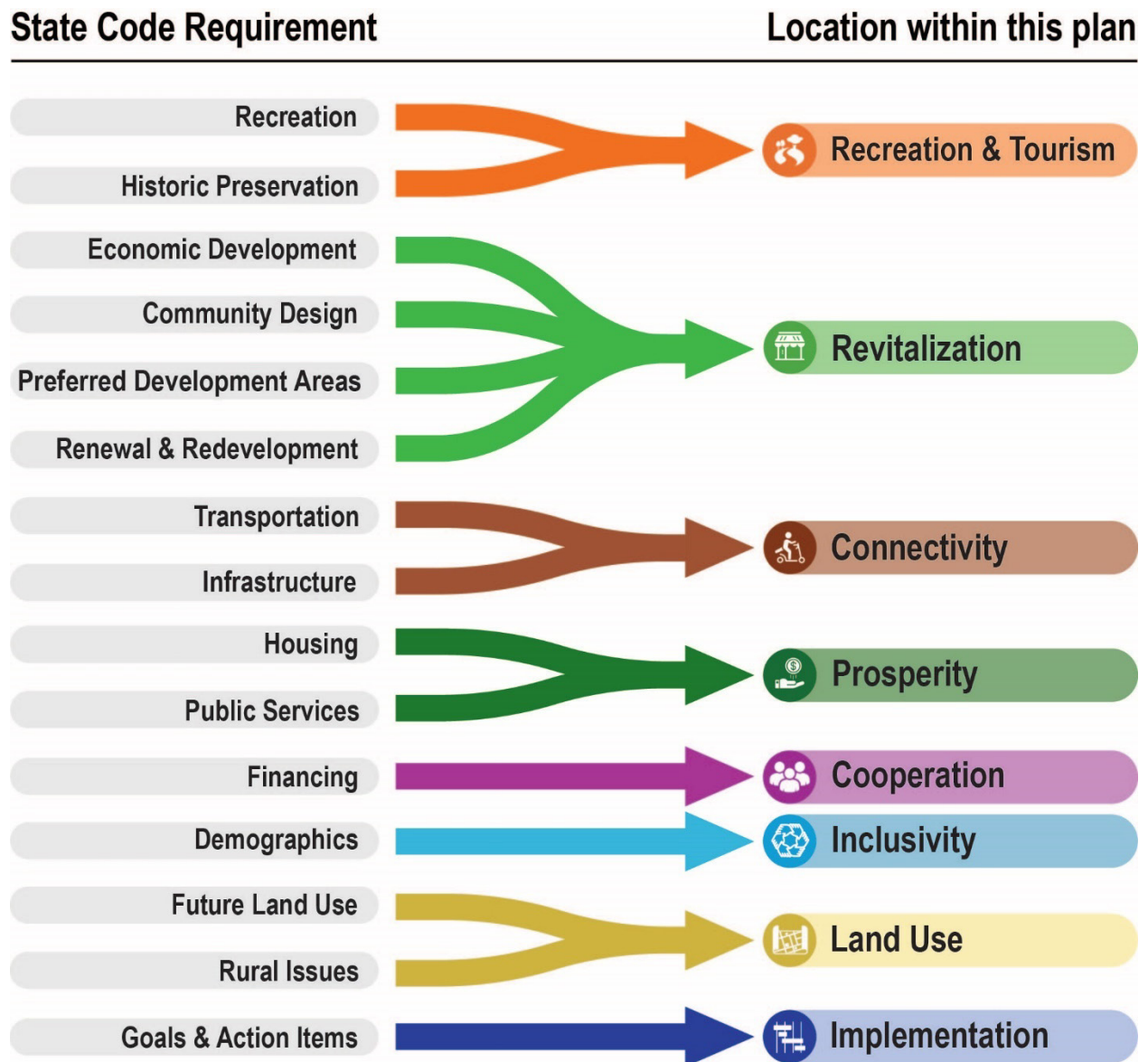
**Figure 5: State Code Objectives**

#	Objective	Response
1	A statement of goals and objectives for a governing body, concerning its present and future land development.	The Implementation chapter defines Beckley’s goals and objectives and the steps necessary to achieve them. These goals and objectives are also tied to the long-term vision and aspirations for the City of Beckley that were developed as part of this plan. This long-term vision speaks in more abstract terms about the type of community Beckley hopes to become in the future. The aspirations are statements centered around the key themes, or roots, that were developed during this plan.



2	A timeline on how to meet short- and long-range goals and objectives.	The Implementation chapter divides goals and objectives into time frames. No community can afford to pursue all implementation steps simultaneously, and some implementation measures relate to private sector development activities that are driven by market forces. Placing goals and objectives in the context of time frames underscores the fact that some community-building steps are very long-term propositions, while others can be very short-term.
3	An action plan setting forth implementation strategies.	Implementation strategies are defined and discussed in detail in the Implementation chapter. Some implementation strategies are regulatory in nature, while others relate to planned investments in infrastructure or programs. A short-term action plan is also provided to highlight more immediate and near-term steps that must be taken to move forward toward achieving community goals.
4	A financial program for goals and objectives that need public financing.	Root 5. Cooperation and Implementation chapters provide a financing component related to capital improvement-related implementation measures. Large-scale capital improvements can involve long-term municipal debt, bonds, grants, and intergovernmental actions and coordination.
5	A statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies that are consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.	Proposed land use and development policies are articulated throughout this Comprehensive Plan as they relate to many dimensions of Beckley's physical form. The Future Land Use and Implementation chapters highlight these recommendations related to specific goals and objectives.
6	A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation with other governing bodies, units of government, and planning commissions.	Encouraging cooperation and coordination with other governing bodies is considered to be an overarching and essential element of the Comprehensive Plan implementation. Root 5. Cooperation details specifics on cooperation and coordination. The Implementation chapter provides specific goals or objectives where cooperation and coordination are highly needed.
7	Maps, plats, charts, and/or descriptive material presenting basic information on the land included in the Comprehensive Plan, including present and future uses.	Maps and charts depicting information are provided throughout this Comprehensive Plan to draw attention to physical and spatial relationships.

Figure 6: State Code Requirements



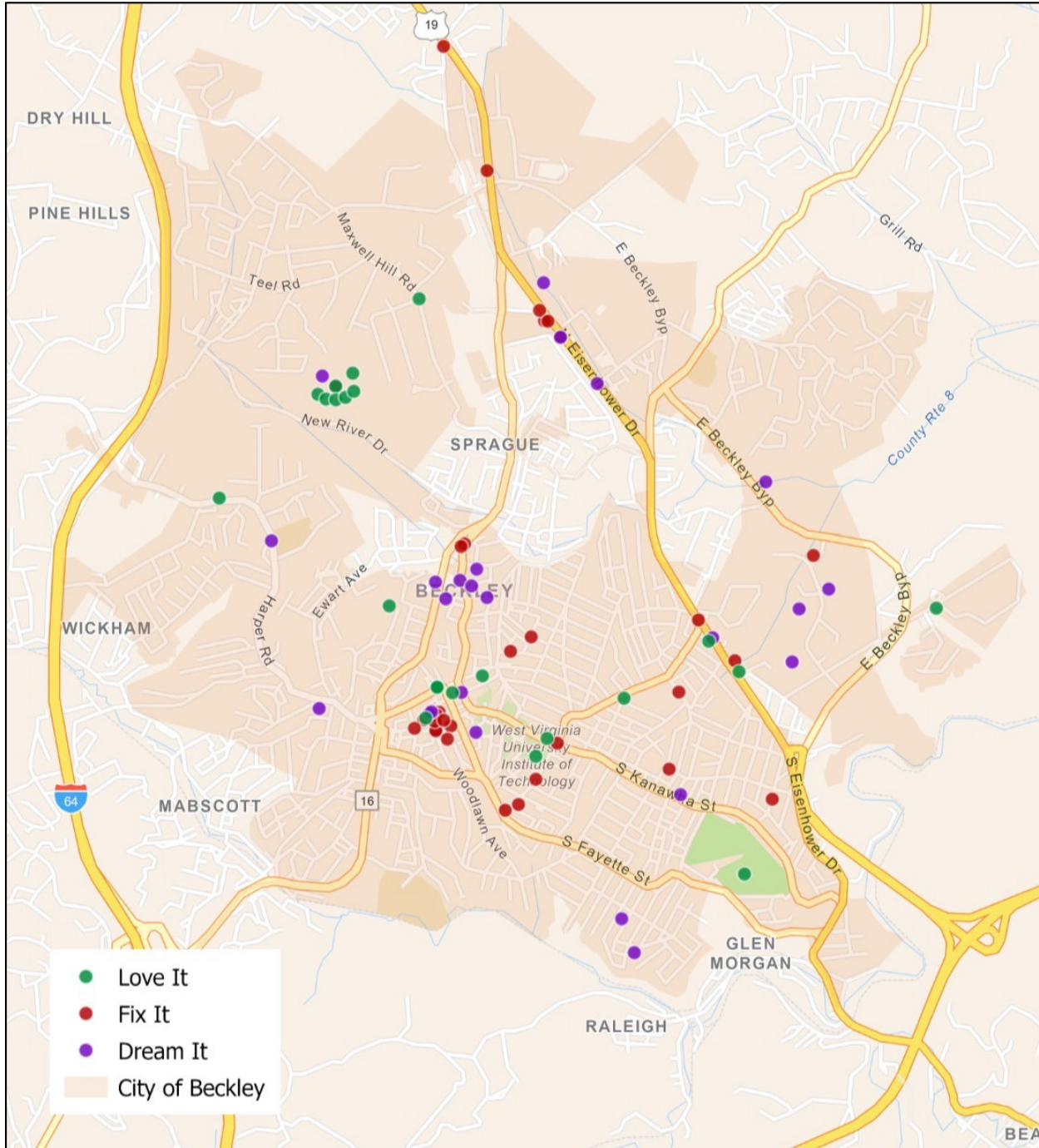
## Community Engagement

Public engagement is a fundamental element in the Comprehensive Planning process as it provides opportunities for residents, business owners, and city leaders to give their input on the long-term vision for Beckley.

The first phase of the public input process was to inform the community about the update to the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, understand changes in conditions and accomplishments made since the last plan, collect feedback on current conditions, identify future priorities, and generate a community vision. This phase included a workshop with community stakeholders, a public open house, and interactive engagement tools such as a feedback map and student survey.

An online feedback map allowed users to identify places that they love (#LoveIt), those that need to be fixed (#FixIt), and those that they would like to see in the future (#DreamIt). We received 77 responses on the online feedback map and the locations are shown below.

**Figure 7: Love It, Fix It, Dream It Map**



The second phase of the public input process was to refine the community vision, define the community's aspirations, and collect feedback on the strategies and actions that can be taken to realize that vision for Beckley's future growth. This phase included focus group meetings centered around defined priorities, a stakeholder workshop, and a public open house.

A total of 271 in-person and online participants and 740 responses were received throughout the community engagement process.



*Photos: The public attending the Open Houses*

# City Overview

This Chapter provides the context for the Comprehensive Plan and is a general introduction to the City of Beckley, offering foundational insights to foster a broad understanding. It paints a picture of where we have been and highlights current trends that affect our future. Specific assets, opportunities, and recommendations are detailed further throughout the plan.

Beckley, the county seat of Raleigh County, West Virginia, is a city rich in history and culture. Founded on April 4, 1838, Beckley has long been known for its ties to the coal mining industry. Today, it serves as a hub for government, transportation, healthcare, education, banking, trade, and tourism in Southern West Virginia.

## Building the Future on Our Roots

Beckley, West Virginia, has a rich history spanning over 180 years, reflecting resiliency, adaptability, and historical significance. It has become a regional transportation, medical, and government center and West Virginia's ninth-largest city.

### THE EARLY YEARS

Beckley played a crucial role in the national coal industry, providing high-quality smokeless coal. As the mechanization of coal mining displaced thousands of workers in the 1980s, many people migrated from outlying towns to Beckley, making it the largest of the four surrounding county seats and a central location for many private, public, and government activities. The National Coal Heritage Area recognizes Beckley's contribution to industrialization as evidence of the coal boom remaining in structures like miners' homes, company stores, and railroad yards.

### THE PAST DECADE

Our community has made strides toward accomplishing many of the recommendations within the 2014 Comprehensive Plan. Below are several highlights of these efforts.

#### **Recreation & Tourism**

- Acquired Black Knight Country Club and re-opened it to the public as the Black Knight Municipal Park, a 9-hole golf course, dining, and meeting spaces.
- Began pickleball instruction that has led to the refurbishment of tennis courts at New River Park into pickleball courts in an effort to provide more physical activities in the city.
- Achieved a partnership with the West Virginia Land Trust to incorporate several hundred acres of wildland for recreation into the city.
- Supported the efforts to bring the Spartan Games to the Summit.
- Supported efforts to bring drift racing cars to the area.
- Upgraded several parks to ADA compatibility with much of the work being done by Public Works.
- Received new playground equipment for most parks with two scheduled for installation in 2024.
- Upgraded electrical service to the New River Park campground, making it more desirable to campers.

- Refurbished the water slide at New River Park.
- New River Gorge was designated a National Park by the Federal Government in 2023.

**Revitalization**

- Completed the Downtown Plaza project with the Rising Cardinals sculpture.
- Upgraded city electrical service downtown to support fairs and festivals.
- Removed a dangerous and unsightly downtown building to allow for additional merchant and student parking.
- Successful application to the state to become a Home Rule City, which gives flexibility in developing incentives for business development.
- Implemented the West Virginia State Purchasing Card program that provides rebates for qualified purchases.
- Partnered with West Virginia State University on a downtown redevelopment specialist.
- Implemented a program to board up vacant and dangerous structures.
- Razed over 53 dilapidated and abandoned structures in the City.
- Partnered with the state on a \$470,000 plus grant to raze dilapidated structures.
- Partnered with WVU Tech to acquire the old Federal Courthouse for classrooms in its forensics program.
- Supported community garden and mural projects in the City.
- Acquired the 200-plus acre Pinecrest Industrial Park, made improvements to the existing building, and worked on plans to improve infrastructure in the park that will attract new development.
- Contracted with M. Miller Development Services and Arnett Muldrow & Associates to provide a downtown assessment and development strategies team visit to identify community economic development strategies and a vision for downtown.
- Adopted the Beckley Outdoors, Outdoor Economic Action Plan in 2024.

The following are accomplishments by community partners.

- The WV Hive program was initiated by the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority which supports entrepreneurial activity and helps bring small businesses into Beckley. Their partner was Beckley Presbyterian Church.
- West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVU Tech) purchased a 170-acre Campus in Downtown Beckley and relocated to the City in 2017.

**Connectivity**

- Release of a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) - formerly called the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) - and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) by the Fayette-Raleigh MPO (FRMPO) focusing on long-term transportation goals for the region.
- Continued progress on the Coalfields Expressway Project. Portions of the expressway were open to traffic in November 2023. Other portions are waiting for funding or expected to open between 2025 and 2027.
- Completed the East Beckley Bypass in April 2019, greatly increasing north-south traffic flow.
- Partnered with WVU Tech to eliminate sidewalk trip hazards.
- Hired a trail specialist to develop hiking and biking trails in the city.
- Worked with Active Southern WV to make Beckley more friendly to walkers and bikers.
- Funded the Naff project to repurpose the building as an Information Center and bike-share facility that provides free access to bicycles.
- Began milling and paving city streets instead of paving to only increase street longevity.
- Received an honorable mention as a bicycle-friendly city.
- Administered Highway Safety grants for municipalities and counties in Southern WV.
- Improved and expanded the New River Transit Building at the bottom of the Beckley Intermodal Gateway (BIG) project to accommodate the growth of their program.
- Obtained an environmental permit to operate its municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4).
- Began evaluating the future need for a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling center at the Exit 44 Interchange.

The following are the accomplishments of the Beckley Sanitary Board.

- Beckley Sanitary Board's Red Brush Phase III project replaced 22,000 linear feet of sanitary sewer to reduce infiltration and inflow into the sanitary sewer system.
- Beckley Sanitary Board management has embraced Water Environment Federations' concept of Utility of the Future.
- Beckley Sanitary Board has an inventory of capital improvement projects and green infrastructure projects. Some of these can potentially be added to this root.

**Prosperity**

- 13 million dollar sewer plant upgrade that will be paid for by tipping fees for high-strength waste
- Constructed a new state-of-the-art police headquarters.
- Constructed a new fire station that houses the new Code Enforcement Office as well as a fire training facility.
- Purchased a new \$1M fire apparatus with grant and levy funds.
- Adopted the Locution dispatch system by the Fire Department to streamline dispatch to emergencies and enhance response times.
- Provided supplemental funding for the Police and Fire pension systems.

- Partnered with EOC to implement the Spillman system, a new dispatch and record-keeping system for emergency responders.
- Supported the establishment of a community achievement center on Antonio Avenue.
- Acquired, through grant funding, a new recycling packer truck for more efficient collection of recyclables.
- Implemented the DROP, a program to recruit and retain experienced Fire and Police personnel.
- Used Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to fund community policing programs.
- Implemented a Community Pride crew to identify and clean up areas of litter in the city.
- Partnered with the County Commission to add an additional Animal Control Officer.
- Partnered with NRGRDA to have the old city dump remediated for hazardous materials.
- Acquired an incinerator that allows the Police Department to destroy unwanted drugs.
- Acquired a building at Jackie Withrow Hospital and leased it to Community Action for \$1 to provide a homeless shelter.
- Completed first Consolidated Plan as a requirement to receive CDBG funds.

## Understanding the Trends Shaping Our Future

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY?

Figure 8: City Overview



### WHAT TRENDS ARE OCCURRING IN OUR COMMUNITY?

- Regional migration rates are stable, and Beckley residents are not moving outside of the city at a disproportional rate.
- Our growth patterns reflect periods of expansion and stability driven by economic opportunities from the mid-to late-90s that attracted residents and necessitated new housing construction but were followed by a sharp decline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Our housing stock is old with less than 2% of it built after 2010.
- The north side of Beckley has become the city’s epicenter of commercial development due to the locations of I-64 and U.S. Highway 19, driven by nationally franchised restaurants, strip centers, “big box” retail uses, and department stores that serve the traveling public – a retail hub for southern West Virginia.
- Uptown Beckley experiences commercial and residential occupancy challenges.
- The median value and cost to purchase and maintain a single-family home in Beckley that is decent, safe, and sound is \$135,100, which limits the choice of housing for lower income households.



- Growth in the City’s median household income is not keeping pace with the County and the State, or with rises in housing costs.
- A large majority of employees working in Beckley live outside the city limits (90%), but average commute times are far shorter than the U.S. average.
- Our labor force rate is comparable with regional and national employment trends.
- Our economy is shifting from mining to the new economy focusing on digital transformation, renewable energy, and biotech, and is driven by startups and small businesses.
- Work patterns continue to shift nationwide with Beckley looking to capture remote employees.
- Community education, intervention, and support programs are continual efforts to support Beckley as a healthcare hub for West Virginia.
- Our community is part of the economic development epicenter of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.



Photo: Bike Share (Source: City of Beckley)

# Vision & Roots

The Beckley 2045 Plan is an update to the City’s existing Beckley Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2014. The plan includes a refreshed vision statement that better reflects the desires of the community a decade after the original plan was adopted. The new update reorganizes and consolidates the planning elements of the 2014 plan into six major themes or “roots” that firmly establish a foundation for the plan’s goals and objectives. The new roots inform updates and refinements to the Future Land Use map and associated development regulations. Finally, the updated FLU will guide the Plan’s implementation.

**Figure 9: Comprehensive Plan Update Process**



## The Vision

The 2045 plan includes an updated community vision statement.

*“Beckley will cultivate vibrant community environments that reflect its unique heritage and culture by growing connectivity, prosperity, cooperation, and inclusion among all people and places. Beckley will build recreational and tourism opportunities that are rooted in a celebration of its identity and history which will establish the City as a premier destination.”*

The update reorganizes and consolidates the existing plan elements into six new elements called “roots” that better represent the goals and objectives of present-day Beckley.

**Figure 10: Elements to Roots**

2014 Plan Element	2024 Plan Root
Recreation	Root 1: Recreation & Tourism
Historic Preservation	
Economic Development	Root 2: Revitalization
Community Design	
Preferred Development Areas	
Renewal and Redevelopment	Root 3: Connectivity
Transportation	
Infrastructure	Root 4: Prosperity
Housing	
Public Services	Root 5: Cooperation
Financing	
Demographics	Root 6: Inclusivity

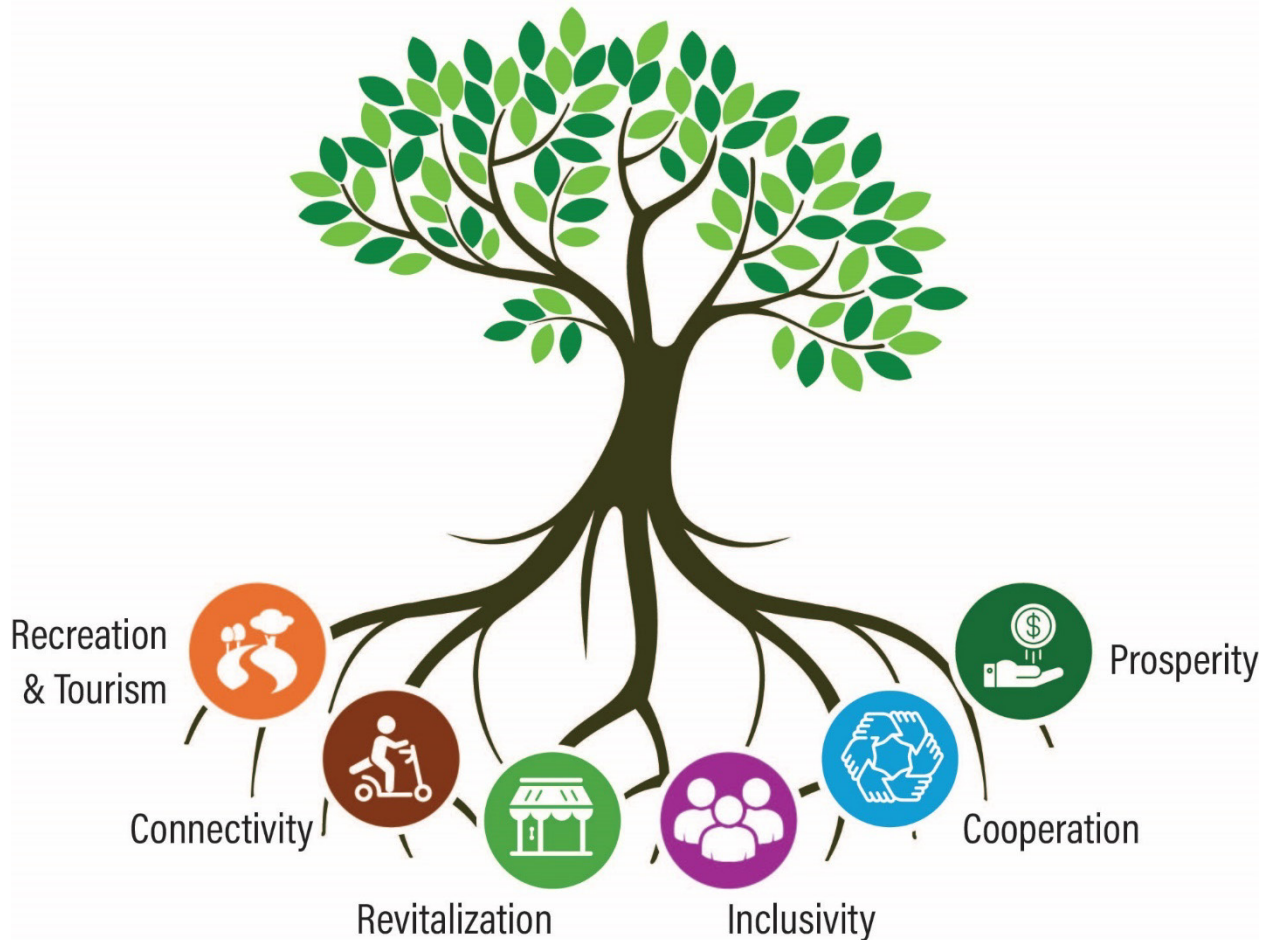
## The Roots

The roots are the main themes of the plan update and establish the foundation which all goals and objectives are built upon. The roots work together to implement the vision. As shown in the graphic, the plan is comprised of six roots. Each root is analyzed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

Figure 11: The Vision & Roots

# COMMUNITY VISION

*The Beckley 2024 Plan is an update to the City's existing Beckley Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2014. Over the nine-month update process, city officials, residents, and stakeholders provided invaluable information to lead and guide the framework for Beckley's future.*



## RECREATION & TOURISM

The concept for the Recreation & Tourism Root is to *“Establish the City of Beckley as a premier recreation destination that celebrates southern West Virginia’s Appalachian heritage. Promote artistic and cultural assets for residents and visitors to take advantage of while elevating Beckley’s rich history and vibrant artistic community.”*

This root encompasses elements found in the recreation and historic preservation chapters of the 2014 plan and focuses on encouraging the growth and promotion of tourism, creating a welcoming place for both residents and visitors, establishing Beckley as a gateway and basecamp for people visiting the region, promoting and preserving the community’s unique historic character, and growing outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

This root is representative of the unique convergence between Beckley’s ample outdoor recreation resources and eco-tourism opportunities of the region, especially with the designation of New River Gorge being designated a national park in 2020. Also, combining recreation and historic preservation into a single root allows Beckley to leverage its unique mining history and historic preservation efforts to leverage tourism-driven economic development.

## REVITALIZATION

The concept for the Revitalization Root is to *“Develop a vibrant community where residents, students, and visitors gather to enjoy arts, entertainment, and culture, and promote Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize and stimulate economic activity and development.”*

This root encompasses elements found in the economic development, community design, preferred development areas, and renewal and redevelopment chapters of the 2014 plan and focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods, downtown, and areas around the college, rejuvenating and activating public spaces, incorporating public art, facilitating redevelopment, and growing new industries and job opportunities. Combining the different elements into a single root allows the Comprehensive Plan to build off the synergies between community design, redevelopment, and economic growth.

## CONNECTIVITY

The concept for the Connectivity Root is to *“Invest in infrastructure that increases access and connectivity among natural resources, commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, historic assets, and people.”*

This root encompasses elements found in the transportation and infrastructure chapters of the 2014 plan and focuses on public transit, sidewalks, encouraging mixed-use development and complete communities, expanding access to broadband, and fostering connections between people of the community.

Combining transportation and infrastructure into one root highlights the interrelationships between the two and how they work together to form complete and walkable communities connected through a comprehensive mobility network. It also highlights how both elements have an outside influence on how people access goods, services, and recreation opportunities within their neighborhood and how they build personal relationships with other members of the community.

### **PROSPERITY**

The concept for the Prosperity Root is to *“Create an environment where the social, physical, emotional, and mental health are at the forefront of concern by enhancing sustainable support services for all people and places.”*

This root encompasses elements found in the housing and public services chapters of the 2014 plan and focuses on community health, housing, homelessness, access to childcare, and safety. By incorporating housing and public services into one element, the plan can focus on a more holistic quality of life aspect as opposed to focusing on each in their own silos.

### **COOPERATION**

The concept for the Cooperation Root is to *“Enhance collaboration and communication between entities that respect the uniqueness of Beckley while envisioning future mutual prosperity.”*

This root encompasses elements found in the financing chapter of the 2014 plan and focuses on intergovernmental coordination, fostering public-private partnerships, collaboration with regional planning organizations, improving communications, leveraging synergies, and improving efficiency.

### **INCLUSIVITY**

The concept for the Inclusivity Root is to *“Leverage our individual strengths to enhance economic opportunity, encourage strong civic engagement, and foster a community spirit.”*

This root is based on new elements not found in the 2014 plan and focuses on public engagement, equity, empowering vulnerable residents, and community diversity. It was determined that this element should be a stand-alone root because inclusivity is crucial for fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and promoting sustainable development. Without inclusive planning initiatives, cities may become divided and exclusionary, with limited access to services and opportunities for certain groups of people.

## Land Use

How land is used is a foundational element of a Comprehensive Plan. The plan defines the proposes of, and geographic boundaries of, different land uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreation, conservation, and institutional. This update analyzes the land use established in the 2014 plan and updates it based on the vision, goals, and objectives of the six roots. Due to its direct influence on land use, the Rural Issues element is consolidated within the land use update. Land use and its subsequent updates are discussed in further detail in Chapter 10.

## Implementation

The Beckley 2045 Comprehensive Plan update includes an implementation matrix in Chapter 11. This matrix breaks down each root into manageable and more specific goals that will work together to make the root’s vision a reality. Each goal is further broken down into specific, implementable action items such as policy changes, rezonings, projects, or additional studies. Each project also includes a designation of short-, mid-, and long-term to identify when it should be implemented.

**Figure 12: Implementation Matrix Organization**

ROOT 1					
GOAL 1.1		GOAL 1.2		GOAL 1.3	
Action Item	Short-Term	Action Item	Short-Term	Action Item	Short-Term
Action Item	Mid-Term	Action Item	Mid-Term	Action Item	Mid-Term
Action Item	Long-Term	Action Item	Long-Term	Action Item	Long-Term



*Photo: Meadows Bypass Historical Marker (Source: City of Beckley)*

# Root 1: Recreation & Tourism

***“Establish the City of Beckley as a premier recreation destination that celebrates southern West Virginia's Appalachian heritage. Promote artistic and cultural assets for residents and visitors to take advantage of while elevating Beckley's rich history and vibrant artistic community.”***

The Recreation & Tourism Root covers two Comprehensive Plan elements required by the State of West Virginia. These include Recreation and Historic Preservation.



RECREATION



HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION

## Related Trends

- As the eighth largest city in West Virginia, Beckley boasts a robust tourism infrastructure with hotels, short-term lodging, dining options, and shopping. This makes the city well-equipped to accommodate many visitors and future residents interested in exploring or living close to outdoor recreational opportunities.
- The designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in December 2020 has contributed to an increase in tourism and outdoor recreation for the entire New River Gorge region. With Beckley's proximity to the national park and existing tourism infrastructure, the city is well-positioned to become a premier gateway community to the national park.

## What the Community Voiced

- Improving access to high-quality public parks and associated facilities is a priority for the community and tourists.
- Ensure Beckley becomes an inviting basecamp for visitors interested in exploring local and nearby National Parks, like the New River Gorge Park.
- Historic buildings and areas within the city should be protected and revitalized to maintain and promote a unique character and identity that is important to our roots.

## Insights

### RECREATION

#### Local Park and Trail Facilities

The Beckley Parks and Recreation Department maintains many parks and facilities, and the City's Beautification Commission is responsible for the implementation of beautification programs. The following table provides the park facilities maintained by the Parks Department.

**Figure 13: Park Facilities & Amenities**

Facility Name	Address	Size (acres)	Picnic Facility	Grill	Playground	Splash Park	Pool	Baseball/Softball Field	Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Pickleball Court	Pavilion	Restroom	Campground
Barber Avenue Park	339 Barber Avenue	0.32	X	X	X				X					
East Park	301 Broadway Avenue	1.20	X		X				X					
Scott Avenue Park	1110 Scott Avenue	1.19	X		X				X					
Freedom Park	206 N Eisenhower	8.93	X	X	X			X	X			X	X	
Glenn Avenue Park	233 Glenn Avenue	0.36	X		X				X					
Maxwell Hill Park	714 Maxwell Hill Road	7.58	X		X				X			X	X	
New River Park	100 Adair Street	28.00	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ridge Avenue Park	311 Ridge Avenue	0.23			X				X					
Simpkins Street Park	112 Simpkins Street	0.26	X	X	X				X					
Temple Street Park	201 Temple Street	0.48			X				X					
Thornhill Courts	301 Second Street	0.39			X				X					
Word Park	425 Neville Street	0.23										X	X	



**McManus Trail:** The Lewis McManus Memorial Honor Trail, also known as the Beckley Rail Trail, travels from Mabscott, through the heart of Beckley, north to the Beckley Crossing Shopping Mall. It follows the route of the former Piney River and Paint Creek Railroad, which began construction in 1905. It was later taken over by the C&O Railroad (now CSX) and hauled coal, freight, and passengers. The paved rail-trail offers a mix of busy urban areas and quiet neighborhoods. A spur via a restored trestle over Robert C. Bryd Drive takes trail users to popular New River Park. A series of interpretive signs sharing area history and an Art Park with community murals complete the experience along the trail.

**Wildwood Trailhead and Waterfall Hollow Trail:** The Wildwood Trailhead located in the Piney Creek Preserve opened in 2023 and hosts the Waterfall Hollow Trail which leads to two waterfalls – Cranberry Creek Cascades and Little White Stick Falls.



*Photo: Recently completed Wildwood Trailhead*

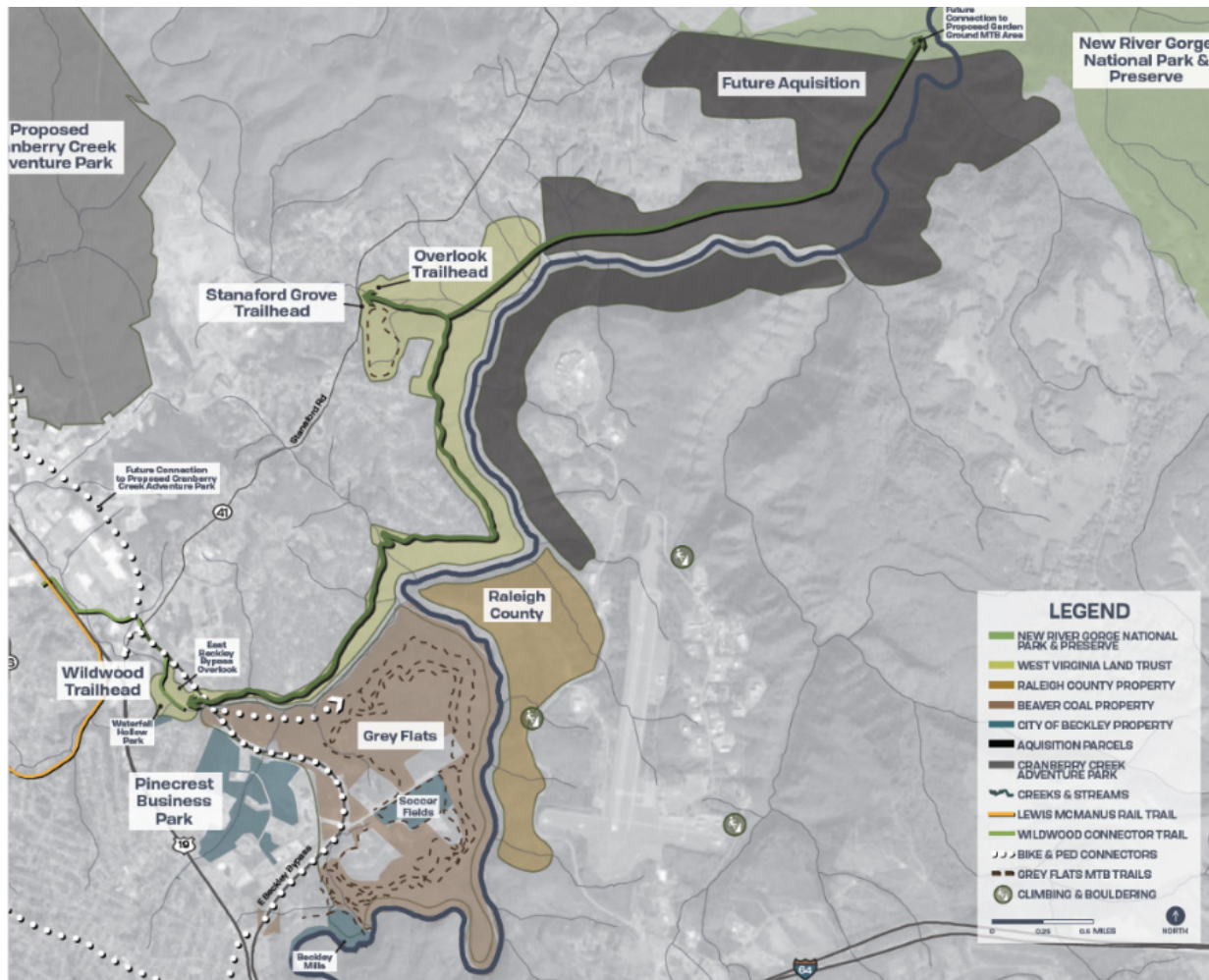
**New River Park Trail:** The New River Park Trail, a scenic mile-long path, starts and ends at the Mountain Homestead behind the Youth Museum. It winds through both sun-dappled and wooded areas, offering a variety of terrain for hikers of all levels. Locals often enjoy quick lunchtime walks and it is a popular spot for both visiting and local dog walkers.

*According to Raleigh County property assessment data, 4% of the total land area in Beckley is dedicated to recreational use.*

### **Regional Park and Trail Facilities**

Focus areas identified in the 2024 Beckley Outdoor Plan for future capital projects are identified as Outdoor Recreation Coordination Areas in the Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Specific action items and steps necessary to implement the proposed capital projects are identified in the 2024 Beckley Outdoor Plan.

Figure 14: Regional Park and Trail Facilities



***New River Gorge National Park and Preserve:*** The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve covers the New River Gorge and more than 72,000 acres of the valley of the New River in southern West Virginia. The park extends from near Ansted and Fayetteville to relatively remote sections of the valley of the New River southward near Beckley and Hinton. More than 50 miles of recreational trail in the park accommodate hiking, biking, and horseback riding, though sightseeing, rock climbing, whitewater rafting are among its primary draws. The New River in its gorge is one of the most popular whitewater rafting runs in the U.S., and the cliffs that line the rim of the New River Gorge are among the most popular climbing destinations in the eastern U.S. Thousands of visitors tour park landmarks annually, including its overlooks, ghost towns, and the New River Gorge Bridge.

***Piney Creek Park and Preserve:*** Piney Creek Preserve, acquired by the West Virginia Land Trust in 2019, encompasses a 4.5-mile stretch of Piney Creek and much of the 600-foot-high northern wall of the gorge containing it. The 613-acre Piney Creek Preserve is owned and managed by the West Virginia Land Trust (WVLT) and is cared for in partnership with the City of Beckley. The land that makes up the preserve was heavily mined from the early 1900s to the 1970s. The Preserve is a cornerstone of the larger Beckley Outdoors Economic Action Plan. Future plans for this preserve

include nearly 20 miles of recreation trails for hiking and biking nestled along coal seams on historic mine benches with multiple waterfalls along the way.

*Grey Flats Trail System:* The Grey Flats Trail System at Piney Creek boasts more than a dozen trails and can be accessed from the Beckley YMCA Soccer complex parking lot or from the end of Jersey Avenue. Fifteen bridges and more than a dozen benches, picnic tables, and directional signs have been installed across the network at Grey Flats, an area of level tableland that borders the gorge of Piney Creek to the west. Trails run to waterfalls, through tunnels of rhododendron, and to the ruins of the Beckley Mill. The trails are used for hiking, biking, and running, though the grades that descend from the flats into the gorge can be moderately steep. Eventually a Piney Creek Gorge Trail will extend from the Grey Flats area to the airport and will follow the east flank of the gorge to the mouth of the creek on New River where plans call for it to join the National Park Service's trail system.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The City of Beckley has a rich history including historic and archaeologically significant resources. The Paleo-Indians lived in parts of West Virginia over 11,000 years ago, and several tribes of Native Americans passed through the area. However, there are no known settlements within the Beckley area, although the Paint Creek Trail (roughly along the route of I-77) was an old Shawnee warpath.

More modern historical aspects of Beckley are traced back to 1836 when General Alfred Beckley inherited land and built a settlement near what is now Main Street and North and South Kanawha Streets. A “paper town” was laid out by Beckley in 1838, and he donated two acres for the Courthouse Square. The first courthouse was built in 1852, and the town grew around it. Unfortunately, a fire in 1912 destroyed many of the buildings around the courthouse. Reconstruction by local craftsmen and builders utilized native sandstone and brick, much of which is still seen today. Some noteworthy buildings and structures include the following.

- Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building on South Kanawha Street
- Raleigh County Courthouse
- Federal Courthouse, designed by WV architect Alex B. Mahood
- Beckley Federal Savings Bank, designed by WV architect Richard M. Bates
- Law Building
- Old Raleigh Register Building
- Foster Hardware Building
- United Bank Building (Raleigh County National Bank)
- Wooten, Wooten & Fragile Building
- First Christian Church

As shown below, where historic images of buildings are placed next to recent images, the City of Beckley has been successful in retaining some historic buildings. In other cases, historic buildings have been replaced and some unique character has been lost.



*Photo: The Historic Courthouse (left), historic buildings along Main Street (right), Wildwood House (bottom)*

The Beckley Courthouse Square National Historic District includes an eight-block area of civic, commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical structures in Beckley, West Virginia, in Raleigh County.

The district was dedicated chiefly as a result of the integrity of its early 20th-century architecture, though many buildings have since been altered or destroyed, leading state officials to warn that federal status is threatened.

Development in the district is managed by the Beckley Historical Landmarks Commission, an architectural review board and certified local government that must provide a certificate of appropriateness, determined by guidelines, to property owners before they are permitted to alter the exterior of properties.

Consultants have informed city officials and property owners that the destruction of the district through demolition and inappropriate development will negatively affect values and commercial viability.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Beckley’s cultural resources provide residents and visitors with diverse opportunities to engage with the arts, history, and community activities.

- **Beckley Arts Center:** A vibrant hub for hosting art exhibitions, visual art classes for all ages, youth and community theatre, and private music lessons, and it includes the Dan & Cynthia Bickey Art Gallery, a gift shop, classrooms, and spaces for private music lessons.
- **Exhibition Coal Mine and Youth Museum:** A 14,000 square foot building including a mine museum, “mountain homestead” recreated settlement, early settlement log structure collection, reconstructed historical buildings, gallery, planetarium, and amphitheater.
- **Tamarack Marketplace:** A showcase of the best of West Virginia’s arts and crafts, including handmade items, local cuisine, and live performances.
- **Raleigh Playhouse and Theatre:** A venue offering a variety of performances, including plays, musicals, and film screenings, contributing to the vibrant cultural scene in Beckley.
- **Beckley’s Historic Black Night:** A facility with a nine-hole golf course, dining, and meeting spaces.
- **YMCA Soccer Complex:** A private recreational facility near a trailhead.
- **Wildwood House Museum:** A historic home of General Alfred Beckley, the city’s founder, offers a glimpse into the area’s history and heritage.
- **Beckley Mill:** A National Register of Historic Places archaeological site established in 1835. Plans are being made for the site to be repurposed to include a Visitor Center and theater adjacent to Piney Creek Park and Preserve. A new visitor's center and theater are earmarked for future development.

## Opportunities

### TOURISM

Beckley is a prime and growing tourist destination. The city is southern West Virginia’s largest population center, easily accessible off I-77 and I-64 and surrounded by many unique attractions, including the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine, city, state and national parks, and a plethora of adventure opportunities.

*The Exhibition Coal Mine and Youth Museum is the largest and most popular coal heritage destination in the region, attracting around 50,000 visitors annually. The museum provides a unique tourist draw where visitors can ride on a coal car thru an old, once worked coal mine.*

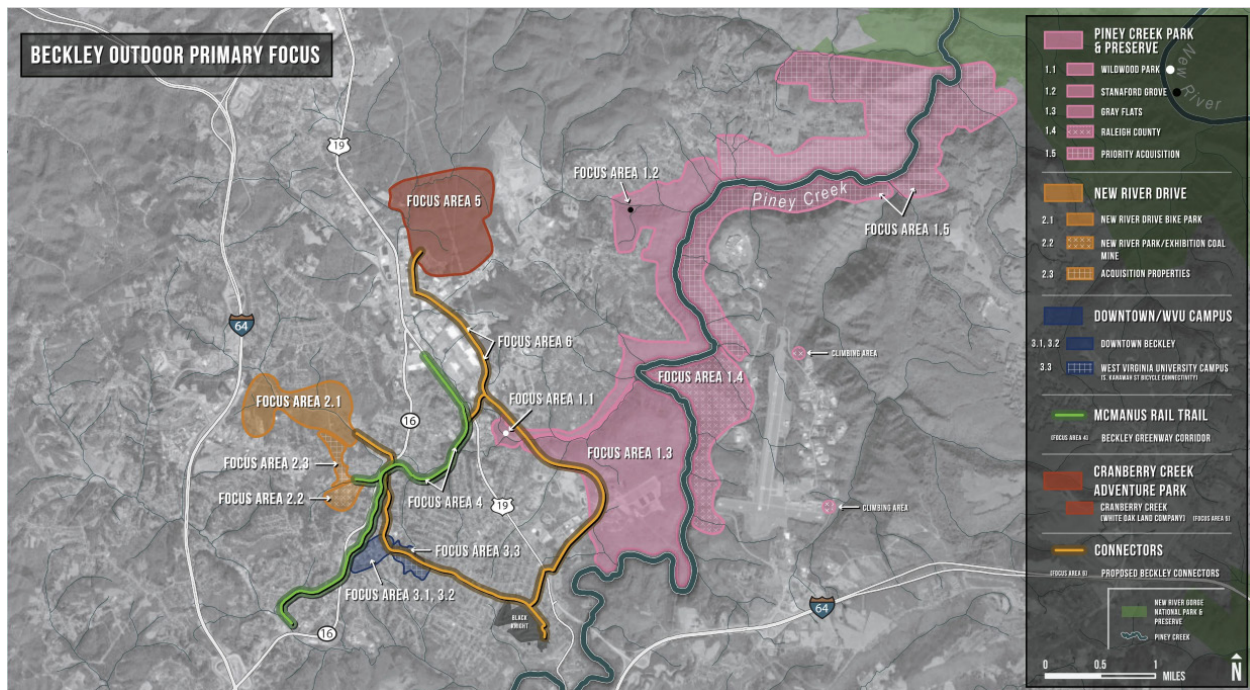
### Outdoor Economy Action Plan



The 2024 Beckley Outdoors Plan is an initiative designed to position Beckley as a premier destination for outdoor recreation. The action plan was developed through collaboration with community members, local businesses, and stakeholders, and guidance from national resources such as the Outdoor Recreation

Roundtable’s Rural Economies Toolkit and the Destination By Design firm. The plan guides the city regarding future investments in outdoor recreation-related development. The plan names six focus areas to target for capital infrastructure improvement to drive growth in the outdoor economy.

**Figure 15: Beckley Outdoors Plan Focus Areas**



In addition to infrastructure development, the Beckley Outdoors initiative has three other objectives.

- **Community Engagement:** Fostering a culture of outdoor activity through local events, programs, and partnerships.
- **Economic Growth:** Stimulating local businesses and attracting new enterprises related to outdoor recreation.
- **Sustainability:** Promoting sustainable practices that protect and preserve the natural environment.

*Beckley City Council unanimously approved the adoption of the Beckley Outdoors Economic Action Plan and Basecamp Beckley Branding Strategy in June 2024*

### **Outdoor Beckley Branding**

Beckley's unique position is the ideal location to book lodging and provide a starting point for exploring the nearby New River Gorge National Park and Preserve and other attractions in southern West Virginia. A branding strategy is discussed below.

The branding strategy aims to accomplish the following objectives.

- Promote Beckley as a leading outdoor and cultural hub in West Virginia.
- Connect Beckley's evolving identity to the New River Gorge.
- Preserve Beckley's history & heritage by relating it to a new vision for the city's future.
- Create a unifying focal point in the community to foster economic development.

*Major events are held throughout the year in Beckley. These events help define Beckley as a place and provide strong emotional connections for residents and visitors alike. Under the City of Beckley Parks and Recreation Department, the Beckley Events committee organizes special events and festivals such as the Rhododendron Festival, Fridays in the Park, Kids Classic Festival, Chili Night, car shows, and parades.*

*Beckley was named one of the 20 Best Small Towns in America by Smithsonian Magazine in 2012.*

## Root 2: Revitalization

***“Develop a vibrant community where residents, students, and visitors gather to enjoy arts, entertainment, and culture, and promote Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize and stimulate economic activity and development.”***

The Revitalization Root covers four Comprehensive Plan elements required by the State of West Virginia. These include economic development, community design, preferred development areas, and renewal & redevelopment.



**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



**COMMUNITY  
DESIGN**



**PREFERRED  
DEVELOPMENT  
AREAS**



**RENEWAL &  
REDEVELOPMENT**

### Related Trends

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact where people live and work. It showed that technological advancements have reached a point where many jobs can be done from most places. The long-term impacts are still being realized, but it does open an opportunity for Beckley to diversify its workforce.

The Beckley MSA (defined as the core-based statistical area of Raleigh County and Fayette County) is largely rural with the City of Beckley sitting as an urban area at the intersection of Interstates 77 and 64 and Route 19, making it a medical and retail hub of southern West Virginia.

### What the Community Voiced

- Renewal and redevelopment of corridors and the downtown area are of high importance for our future in attracting and growing quality jobs and businesses.
- Goals, plans, and programs need to promote the community’s character and identity consistent with our vision and aspirations.
- Community imaging and design should consider historic character and incorporate different placemaking elements to promote an identity that is unique and authentic to our roots.
- Retaining the individual character and strengthening the long-term viability of Downtown Beckley as the focal point of the community are core elements of our economic strategy.
- Education and guidance are needed on revitalization and reuse efforts for development entitlement processes.



- The cultivation of a vibrant downtown, housing options, and employment opportunities need to be inclusive of WVU Tech students’ needs.

## Insights

### COMMUNITY DESIGN AND PUBLIC SPACES

Community design often considers historic roots and incorporates special “placemaking” elements to make Beckley exclusive and distinctive. It also considers how Beckley can promote an identity that is unique and authentic to its roots. Defining and celebrating this identity will help create a “sense of place” and help support larger efforts to draw people to Beckley.

Although Beckley does not have citywide community design guidelines, the Beckley Historic Landmark Commission creates and enforces design standards in areas of Downtown Beckley.

Historic landmark commissions give residents and officials the authority to act on the community’s preservation concerns. The commissions understand the singular factors threatening the town’s character and potential with unplanned development or neglect. This can create a positive impression on visitors and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Some have voiced concern about the Historic Landmark Commission rules and how they relate to development in Downtown Beckley.

### PUBLIC SPACES AND ART

Downtown Beckley has many historical markers, statutes, and memorials that help tell the story of residents and the city’s history. The City of Beckley has installed a Rising Cardinals Sculpture and will be installing a statue of Raleigh County native and musical legend Bill Withers downtown. Community murals can be found along the McManus Trail Art Park and on East Main Street.



Photo (Left): Rising Cardinals Sculpture and (Right) Bill Withers statue.

## WAYFINDING

Wayfinding plays a critical role in how visitors and residents navigate and experience a community. It provides opportunities to reinforce the City's brandings, character, and culture while providing information and guidance to people looking to experience the area's multitude of cultural and recreational offerings. The City currently has an established brand and sign design welcoming people into the Historic Downtown District. Points of interest outside of the Historic District use their own signage standards, resulting in an eclectic patchwork of styles.

The nature of wayfinding and how people navigate has changed drastically since the original Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2014. The rise of smartphones and mapping applications like Google Maps, Apple Maps, and Waze have given people access to maps within their own pockets. Wayfinding design has also embraced digital and interactive elements. As technology and navigation trends evolve, the City's wayfinding system needs to evolve as well.

In 2023, the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) hired a firm to develop a wayfinding assessment and to create a consistent and comprehensive wayfinding system across the gateway communities to direct tourists to recreational assets, cultural resources, local businesses, and other amenities.

The changes in wayfinding trends, new technology, and regional branding efforts offer a prime opportunity for the City of Beckley to reassess its current wayfinding, identify opportunities to incorporate new technology, and work with NRGRDA to align any signage redesigns to complement the new regional wayfinding.

## DOWNTOWN BECKLEY

Downtown Beckley is regarded as the heart and soul of the city. It continues to receive considerable attention, as it did during the 2014 and 2001 planning processes. It represents the nexus where students, tourists, and residents come together and serve as a reminder of the city's rich history.

Downtown has experienced significant changes since the 1980s, facing challenges common to many American downtowns, with the advent of malls leading to the decline of locally owned stores. Downtown Beckley is currently in a state of transition, and efforts to revitalize the area are gaining momentum.

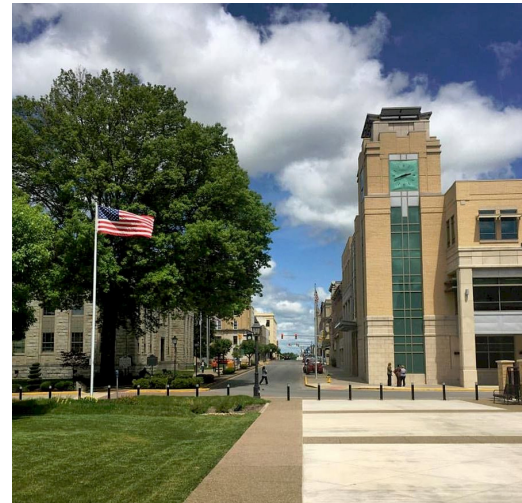
As a vital part of the city's economic, cultural, social, and historic fabric, the downtown area was consistently cited by residents during the Comprehensive Plan development process as being the most important part of the community fabric. Of particular concern for its future are its viability as a retail hub in the community, its aesthetic appearance, and its ability to attract tourists by offering a unique experience that cannot be found elsewhere.

An assessment report of Downtown Beckley was completed in 2019 and identified community economic development strategies and a vision for downtown. It identifies the community's strengths, opportunities, challenges, market information and demographics, market segmentation, retail leakage, survey results, recommendations, vision, development strategies, business opportunities, and action steps.

Two development strategies emerged based on the report’s findings: a college town and a tourist town. Both provide opportunities for similar businesses, property uses, and a more dynamic downtown. Downtown Beckley would become a place where you can be active, be entertained, and enjoy positive experiences. Downtown is the bridge where students, tourists, and residents come together. All sectors converge in an active, entertaining downtown area looking for the same opportunities and services.

*“A vibrant, safe college town where active residents, students, and visitors gather to enjoy arts, entertainment, and unique businesses.” – Community Stakeholder*

Efforts to transform the Neville and Main Streetscapes as well as Shoemaker Square can aid in the revitalization of Downtown Beckley. Neville Street and Main Street serve as the primary corridor through the heart of Downtown Beckley. As such, the design and associated accessibility along these streets are critical to the success of downtown. With strategic public investments that improve the streetscape and public spaces, a more activated downtown will result in private investment and new small businesses.



*Photo: Neville Street (left) and the Raleigh County Courthouse on Shoemaker Square (right).*

The enhancement of Neville Street was included in the 2014 Comprehensive Plan but has not been implemented as of 2024. Continued efforts to make incremental improvements in the alley behind Neville Street will lead to a more inviting space for pedestrians while providing a connection to the federal courthouse building. This would create a more inviting connection between Neville Street and a more private and human-scale space between the backs of buildings and the federal courthouse.

## WVU TECH

WVU Tech is a satellite campus of West Virginia University (WVU). Since its strategic move to Beckley in 2017, the university has seen an increase in enrollment and has been consistently recognized for providing the best return on investment in the state.

With the introduction of the university downtown, there are mutually beneficial opportunities for Beckley and WVU Tech. Students and faculty supporting businesses and property developments in Beckley facilitate economic growth and vibrancy. The revitalization of Downtown Beckley becomes more attractive to students and faculty, assisting in student and faculty recruitment. The increased pedestrian traffic from the university contributes to an active, entertaining downtown



Photos: WVU Beckley Campus

## LOCAL ECONOMY

The New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) coordinates economic development services for the city as well as the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers. The NRGRDA spearheads business attraction, retention, training, and financing and their priorities drive the direction of Beckley's economic strategy. This Comprehensive Plan supports these efforts.

Beckley is often considered the medical and retail hub of southern West Virginia. The three industries with the largest share of employment in Beckley are Health Care and Social Assistance; Accommodation and Food Services; and Retail Trade. Some of the top employers are national retailers, medical and health care providers, and non-manufacturing professional companies.

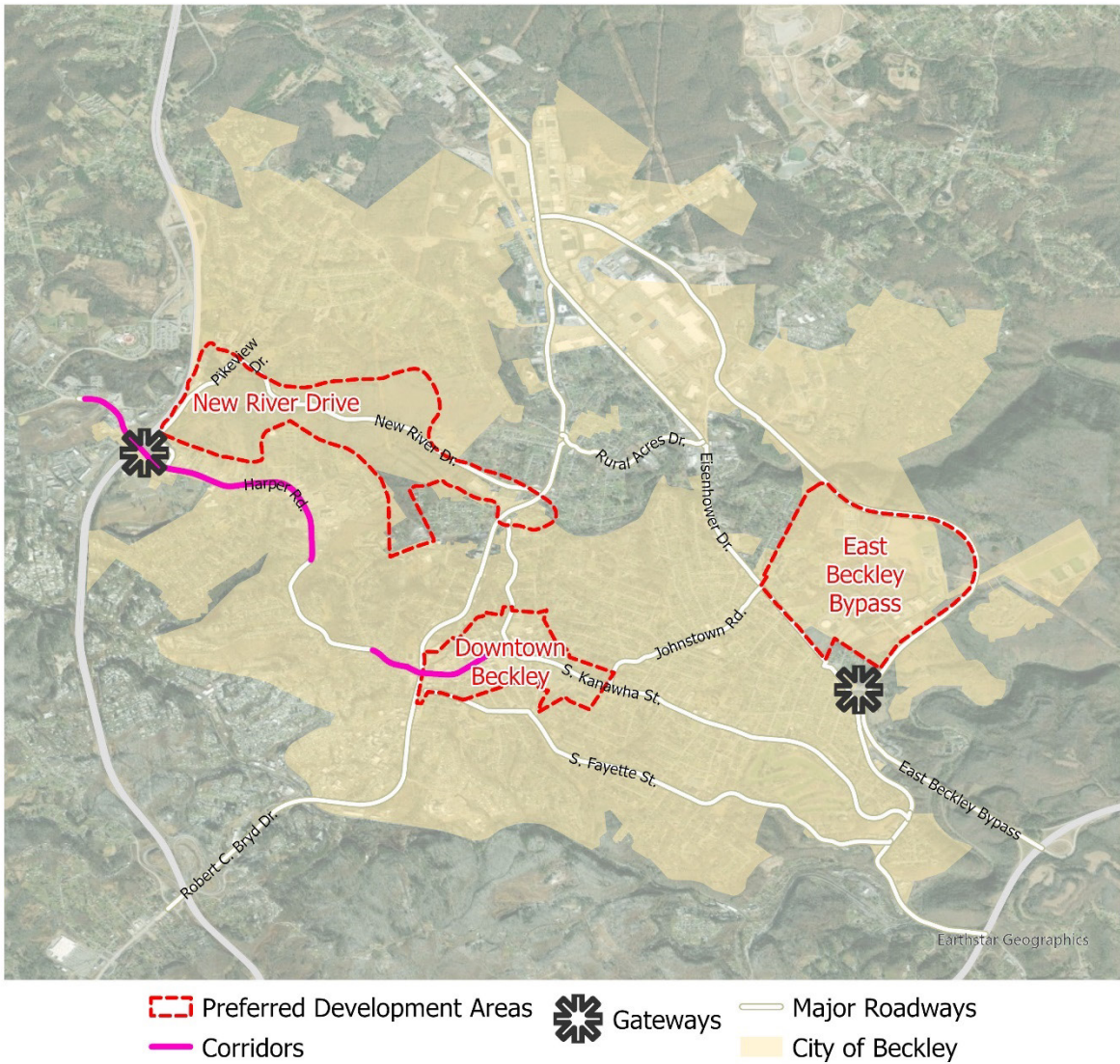
The Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector is a significant and emerging area of employment. Outdoor recreation, music, and theater are increasingly prevalent and important to the city's economy.

## Opportunities

### PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AREA PROFILES

Five preferred development areas (PDAs), including two corridors and three gateways, are priorities to focus investment and incentives and encourage development, infill, or redevelopment to promote well-designed and coordinated communities.

Figure 16: Preferred Development Areas



***Downtown Beckley***

A vibrant and active downtown is essential to the City's long-term vision, and development and redevelopment are vital to achieve that goal. Downtown includes many existing structures and considerable building mass yet is a place with substantial development opportunities in terms of both new construction, building expansion, and reuse of existing vacant space. Development in this PDA should focus on adding density and a variety of structures and public spaces with a mix of residential, commercial, and office uses. The variety of services and amenities should cater to students, residents, and visitors.

***East Beckley Bypass and the Pinecrest Business and Technology Park***

The area surrounding the southern portion of the East Beckley Bypass is the primary target for new development in Beckley. The completed bypass provides access to expansive and valuable land that is well-connected to other areas of the city and surrounding communities. The City of Beckley recently became the landowner of the Pinecrest Business and Technology Park, which takes up a large portion of this area.

***New River Drive***

This area is foreseen as tourism and recreation-focused and can be promoted as a place offering new visitor destinations. A primary portion of the New River Drive PDA is envisioned by the Beckley Outdoor Economic Plan to be the New River Drive Bike Park and Exhibition Coal Mine Riders Village. This area is intended to remain predominantly undeveloped but should be targeted for recreation and tourism-focused support services such as equipment rental, agritourism, cultural exhibits, eco-lodging, and breweries. These and the recreation opportunities themselves can ideally be operated through public-private partnerships. It is necessary to establish specific use and design regulations, and an overlay zone should be explored for use in this area.

The Pikeview Drive area to the west and the area surrounding the intersection of New River Drive and Robert C. Bryd Road to the east is intended to have more intense hospitality and service-focused uses that support recreational opportunities. The Pikeview Drive vicinity can support traffic generated by the interchange-related businesses clustered near I-64 and provide additional lodging for Basecamp Beckley.

***Harper Road Gateway and Corridor***

The Harper Road corridor is a primary gateway into the City of Beckley at its exit off I-77/I-64. The development here is predominantly traveler-oriented with a variety of lodgings and restaurants and serves as an entry point and base for visitors. Harper Road also leads directly into Downtown Beckley, but this corridor lacks cohesiveness and connection. Development and redevelopment in this corridor should be pedestrian and visitor friendly with a variety of services focused on supporting recreational visitors and travelers. This PDA corridor is an opportunity to showcase the unique heritage of Beckley to visitors and connect them to the downtown area.

### ***Neville Road Corridor***

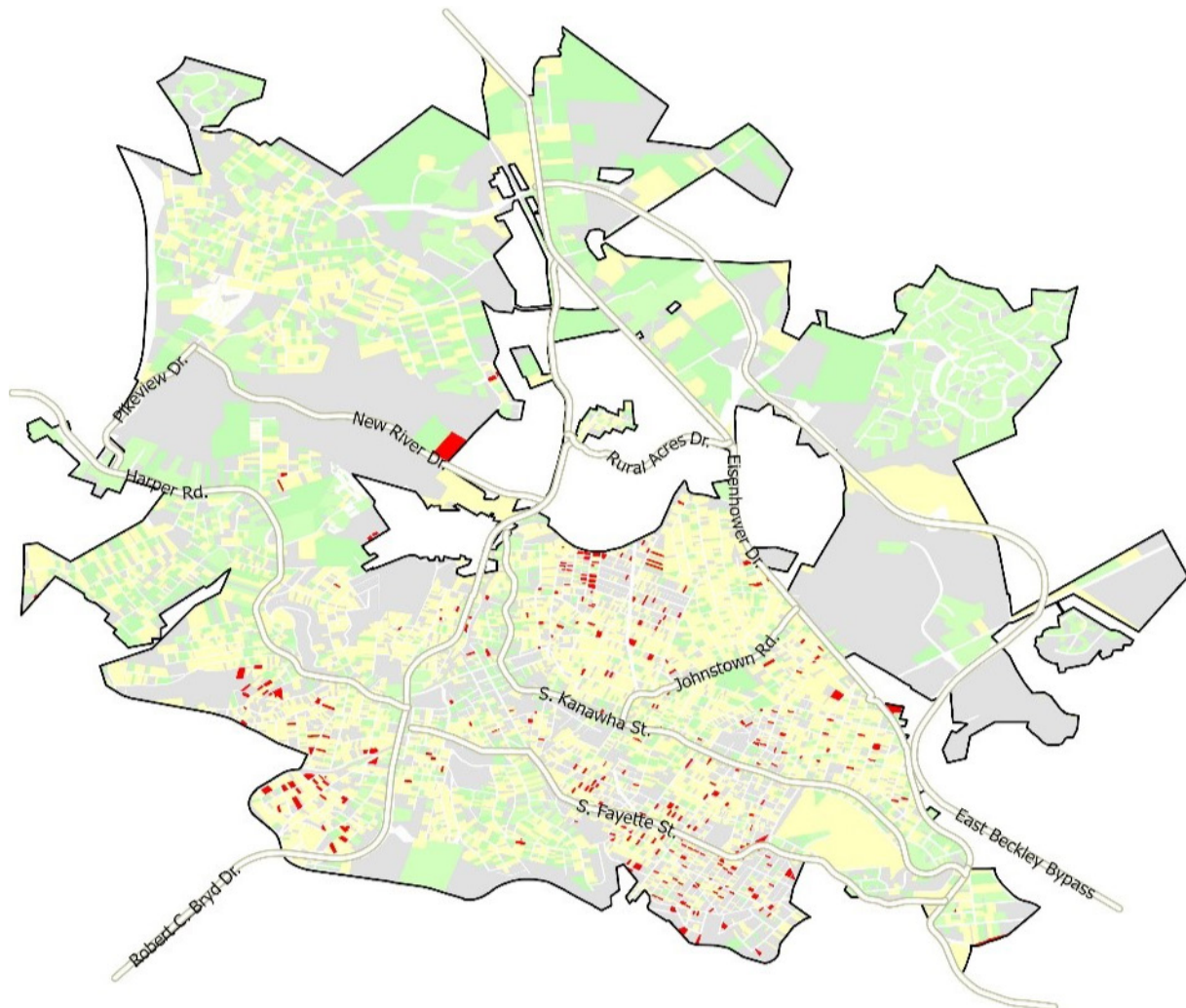
Neville Street serves as the primary corridor from the Harper Road Gateway through the heart of Downtown Beckley. With strategic public investments that improve the streetscape and public spaces, a more activated downtown will result in private investment and new small businesses. The Beckley Outdoors Plan outlines a conceptual plan for Neville Street as a pedestrian-oriented gateway street into Downtown Beckley.

### **RENEWAL AND REDEVELOPMENT**

Neighborhood blight and the presence of vacant and abandoned properties have profound negative impacts on afflicted communities. Blighted properties decrease surrounding property values, erode the health of local housing markets, pose safety hazards, and reduce local tax revenue. Some areas are suffering from years of disinvestment or deterioration.

The following map identifies parcels in the city by their structural grade as identified by state property assessments. This map can be used to identify priority areas and target programs for renewal/redevelopment.

**Figure 17: Vacant and Abandoned Properties Map**



Properties are graded A through E, with A being the highest and E being the lowest quality. Properties with structures rated E are highlighted in red.

- 5% of residential properties in the city are rated E (red)
- 85% of residential properties in the city are rated C or D (yellow)
- Less than 10% of residential properties in the city are rated A or B (green)

Neighborhoods to prioritize revitalization efforts include:

- Southeast of Downtown Beckley, particularly around the eastern end of S. Fayette Street
- North of Downtown Beckley, between Nebraska Avenue and Sheridan Avenue near the Sprague community.
- Southwest Beckley near the Mabscott community

### ***Target Sectors for Economic Development***

A few economic sectors have emerged as targets for economic development in Beckley. The following priorities have been highlighted by the NRGRDA and previous city plans and studies including the 2013 Market Study, the 2019 Downtown Assessment, and the 2024 Outdoor Economy Action Plan.

- Retail Trade
  - Specialty shops, specialty food and drink, and clothing stores are among those identified. Stores and restaurants that serve visitors and students.
- Manufacturing
  - Goods that serve adventure sports and the outdoor industry, particularly leveraging WVU Tech students, skilled workforce, industry heritage, and natural and cultural resources to advance the textile manufacturing sector.
- Arts and Entertainment
- Outdoor Recreation
- Healthcare



*Photo: Caperton Center (Source: City of Beckley)*



## Root 3: Connectivity

***“Invest in infrastructure that increases access and connectivity among natural resources, commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, historic assets, and people.”***

The Connectivity Root covers two Comprehensive Plan elements required by the State of West Virginia. These include Transportation and Infrastructure.



TRANSPORTATION



INFRASTRUCTURE

### Related Trends

- Jurisdictions are looking for new processes to evaluate, test, and deploy options that best connect the entire community digitally, socially, and physically. For nearly 20 years, the Complete Streets movement has grown from a mission to support active transportation to an established design and engineering discipline to improve mobility, safety, economic, social, and environmental performance.
- An ever-changing climate combined with aging infrastructure is creating real challenges for both coastal and inland communities. Neighborhoods are looking to understand the future impacts and identify resources to build sustainability, resiliency, and adaptability.

### What the Community Voiced

- Enhance the safety and enjoyment of walking and biking throughout the city, creating a more secure and inviting environment for all pedestrians and cyclists.
- Ensuring the maintenance of a robust and efficient road network.
- Increasing the connectivity of existing areas by adding additional bike rail trails between parks and recreational areas.
- Maintaining reliable utilities infrastructure such as water, sewer, stormwater, and electric.

# Insights

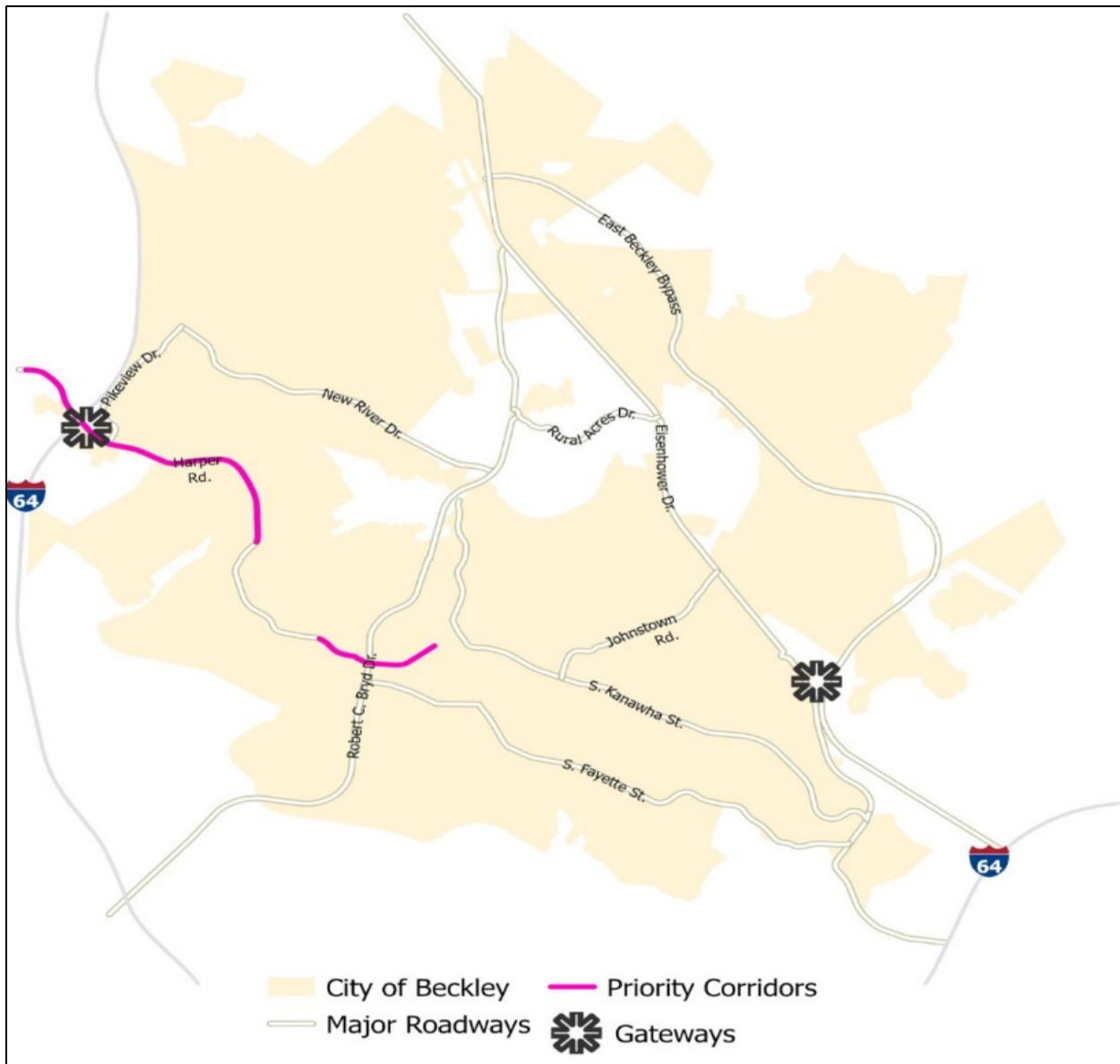
## TRANSPORTATION

This section analyzes the existing conditions of the city’s transportation network.

### ***Vehicular Transportation***

The City of Beckley is just north of the junction of Interstates I-64 and I-77 (West Virginia Turnpike). Most people from outside of the metropolitan area access the city through these major arterials. The Harper Road Exit (Exit 44) along the Turnpike is the primary interchange used for people traveling to Beckley from the Interstate. The City of Beckley Board of Public Works is tasked with maintaining the 517 streets in the city, including paving, drainage, street signage, and snow removal.

**Figure 18: Priority Corridors**



US 19 is a major north/south route on the east side of Beckley. In Beckley, US 19 is Eisenhower Drive. North of Beckley, US 19 leads to Oak Hill, Fayetteville, and ultimately, I-79. To the south, US 19 connects with I-77 and I-64.

WV Route 16 is known as Robert C. Bryd Drive in Beckley. It follows a north-south route through the center of Beckley, joining US 19 in the northern portion of the city. This route through the city is mostly a four or five-lane road except for a short portion north of WV Route 3 and near intersections.

WV Route 3 is known as Harper Road in Beckley and it is one of the few east-west routes through Beckley. East of I-77, WV Route 3 is known as Harper Road near I-77, and then it changes to Neville Street near Downtown, Fayette Street in the southeast portion of the city, and Ritter Drive (Route 19) in the County. East of downtown, WV Route 3 is known as Fayette Street.

WV Route 41 travels through the City between S. Fayette St. and Eisenhower Drive, where it is called Johnstown Road and Beaver Ave. WV Route 41 is known locally as Stanaford Road and it leads northeast out-of-town toward Piney View and Prince.

WV Route 210 is known as Kanawha Street in Beckley. It is a short route through the city connecting WV Route 16 northeast of the downtown area with US 19 via Eisenhower Drive.

New River Drive/Pikeview Drive: New River Drive serves as an east-west connector along with Pikeview Drive. Pikeview Drive connects to Harper Road near the I-77 Interchange. It leads north, and then connects to New River Drive and ultimately Robert C. Bryd Drive. This route provides an alternative to the Harper Road Corridor, which can be congested at peak times.

The East Beckley Bypass is a major route that opens access to the eastern part of Beckley and relieves traffic on Eisenhower Drive. It connects with an interchange at I-64 through to Stanaford Road then ties back into Robert C. Bryd Drive (County 16) and N Eisenhower Drive (US 19) in north Beckley. The East Beckley Bypass has five lanes (two through lanes and a center turn lane) and bike lanes and sidewalks on both shoulders.



*Photo: Arthritis Walk (Source: City of Beckley)*

The Beckley Z-Way, an extension of the East Beckley Bypass, is a 5.5-mile-long stretch of new highway that runs from Shady Spring to Beaver and into Beckley. Section one of the phased project connects the intersection of US 19 and WV 3 at Shady Spring. Section two of the project connects WV 3 at Shady Spring to I-64/South Eisenhower Drive in Beckley. Construction began in Spring 2024 with both sections being constructed simultaneously. The project is expected to be completed in 48 months.

## COMPLETE STREETS

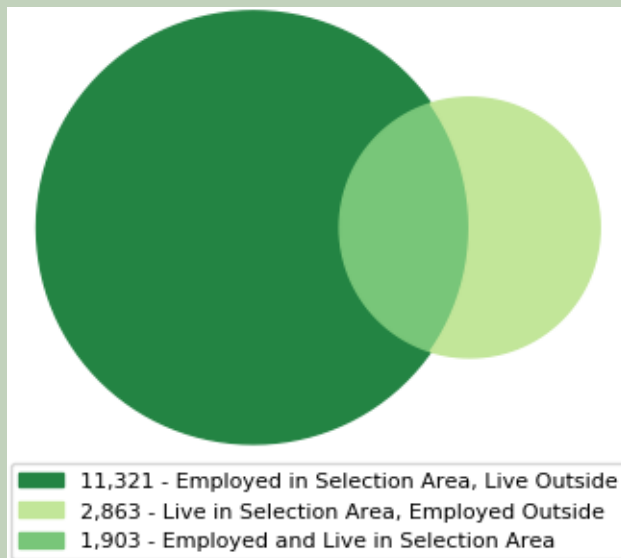
For the last century in the United States, roadways have typically been designed with the intention of maximizing vehicular efficiency. This approach has resulted in street designs that prioritize cars over the safety and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. This imbalance led to the creation of the complete streets movement in 2003. This new concept of transportation planning sought to ensure that streets were planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

Complete streets rebalance the needs of different transportation modes through a variety of design strategies, infrastructure, and programming. Popular elements of complete streets include traffic calming measures like bump outs, raised crosswalks, and narrowed travel lanes; widening sidewalks to allow for more pedestrian activity; installing bike facilities such as bike lanes; and upgrading transit stops.

## WHAT IS A COMPLETE STREET?



Photo: Elements of a Complete Street (City of Santa Fe)

**Figure 19: Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2021****Commuter Trends**

Using averages, employees in Beckley, WV have a shorter commute time (19.4 minutes) than the normal U.S. worker (26.7 minutes). In 2020, 82% of workers in Beckley, WV drove alone to work, followed by those who carpooled to work (11.9%) and those who walked to work (2.69%).

Figure 19 shows the proportion of workers who live within city boundaries and the proportion of those who work in nearby communities. Of the 11,321 people who work in the city, approximately 25% of those people also live within city boundaries.

**Transit**

The Raleigh County Community Action Association (RCCA) operates a designated transit system, known as the New River Transit Authority, consisting of two city and two county shuttle routes to provide transportation to the residents of Beckley and Raleigh County and coordinates with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). All shuttle buses are ADA approved. RCCA also offers a public curb-to-curb transportation service to doctor's offices, hospitals, shopping, and other points of daily needs. Transportation is provided by appointment only.

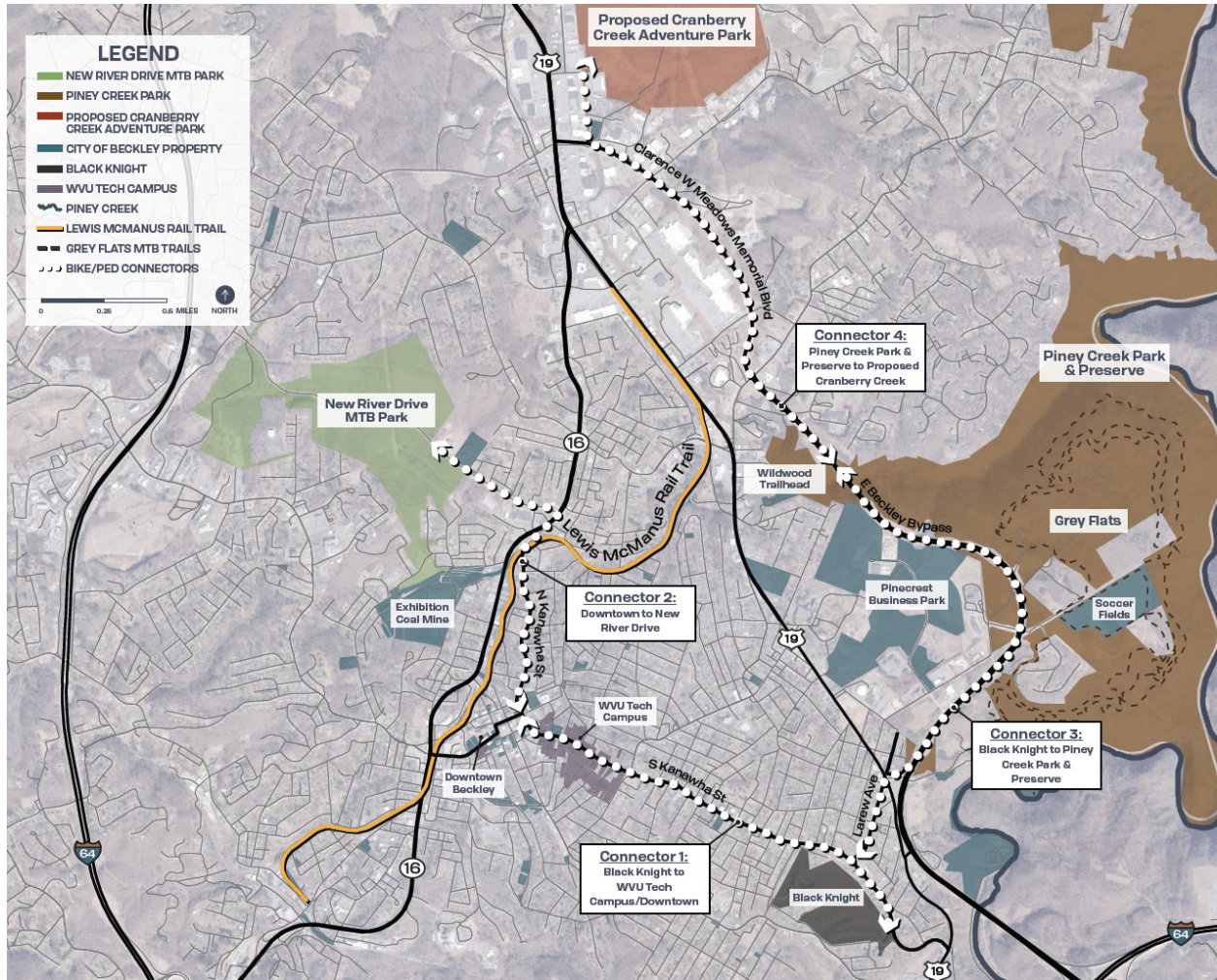
**Sidewalks**

There is a lack of sidewalk connectivity in Beckley and many existing sidewalks are in poor condition. This is particularly evident within numerous neighborhoods and along the Harper Road Corridor, near the I-77 overpass. The bike lanes and sidewalks along the Beckley Bypass are good examples of "complete streets" and what is needed throughout the city.

**Trails**

The Recreation and Tourism Root contains an overview of all existing trails in Beckley. The Beckley Outdoors Economic Action Plan outlines proposed trail and bike/pedestrian connections as seen in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Proposed Trail Network**



## INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Water**

The Beckley Water Company provides water service for the city. The water system includes two water sources: the Glade Creek surface water reservoirs near Pluto and the Beckley mine pool groundwater source at Sweeneysburg. Two water treatment plants at Pluto and Sweeneysburg provide finished water into the system. Potable water is distributed via a pipeline network of over 500 miles. Beckley Water Company serves about 70,000 people either directly or indirectly through wholesale arrangements with other providers. The Beckley Water Company distributes 3.8 billion gallons per year throughout Raleigh County. The critical protection zone for the Glade Creek Reservoir is not in the City of Beckley but in a high-growth area of Raleigh County. The groundwater source is the Beckley mine pool, which is mapped to underlay a significant portion of the city as well as some areas of Raleigh County. A wellhead protection zone for this groundwater source has been identified. The safety and sustainability of both water sources are susceptible to pollution. The City, through its municipal separate storm sewer system MS4 NPDES permit, has a regulatory mandate to evaluate new development/redevelopment impacts on any source water protection area.

### **Wastewater**

The city is served by three publicly owned wastewater treatment systems, the city-owned system operated by the Beckley Sanitary Board, and systems owned and operated by the North Beckley Public Service District and Crab Orchard-MacArthur Public Service District. The Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) is a sanitary sewer and stormwater utility serving the greater Beckley area. The BSB has approximately 180 miles of gravity and force main collection systems serving 7600 customers. BSB's service area is primarily the southern portion of the city as well as areas outside the city. As part of its system, BSB maintains 23 lift stations.

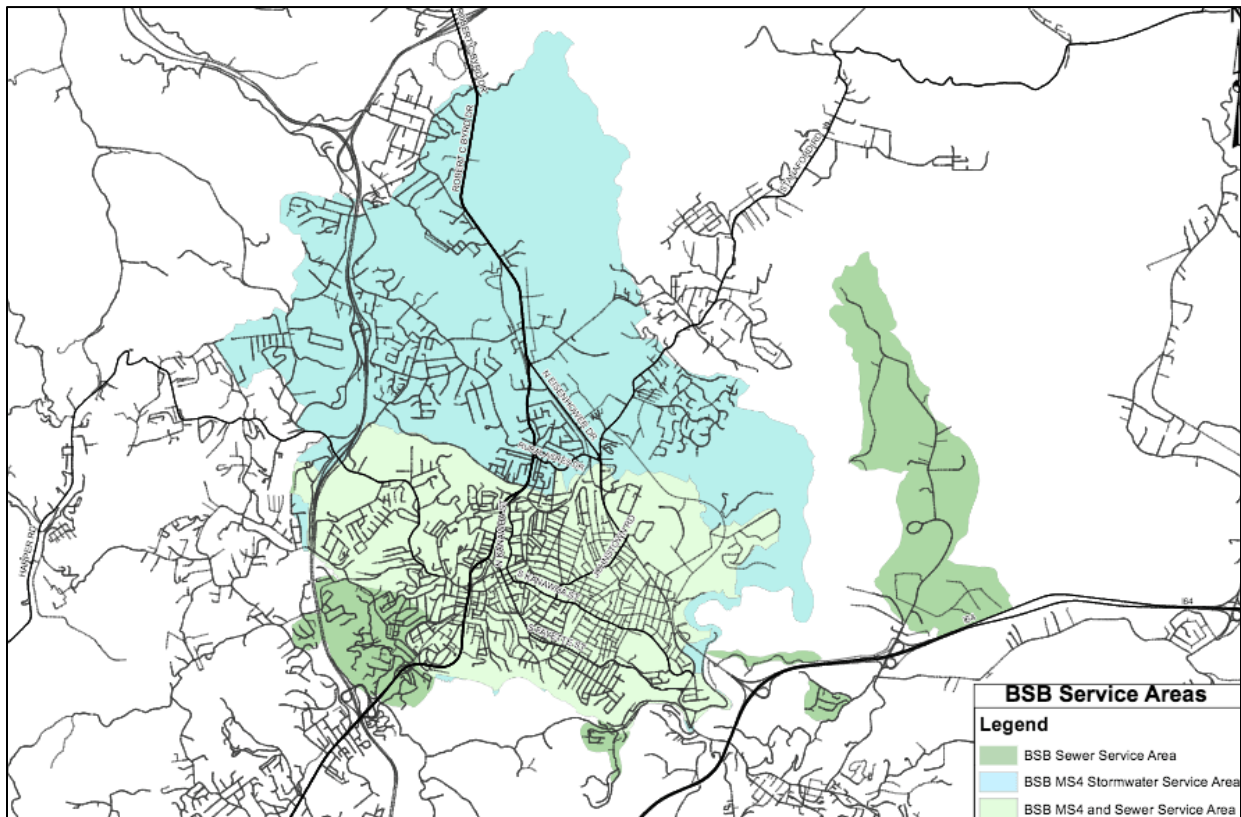


*Photo: Little Whitestick Falls (Source: City of Beckley)*

### **Stormwater**

Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) has been designated as the entity to implement the stormwater utility and associated programs. BSB keeps an inventory of such projects and plans, designs, and constructs them as funding allows. The City of Beckley is required to institute programs to manage stormwater runoff from development. Key provisions of this program include two categories of improvements: watershed protection elements and neighborhood/site design elements. Watershed protection elements are requirements of the City of Beckley MS4 NPDES permit. The city must develop quantifiable objectives and a time frame for achieving them. Progress is to be reported annually. Beckley is considered a leading green infrastructure community in West Virginia. There are more than 18 installations of green infrastructure throughout Beckley.

**Figure 21: Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) Service Area**



### **Natural Gas**

A natural gas distribution line is managed by Mountaineer Gas and provides service throughout the city. Natural gas transmission lines also exist locally.

### **Electric**

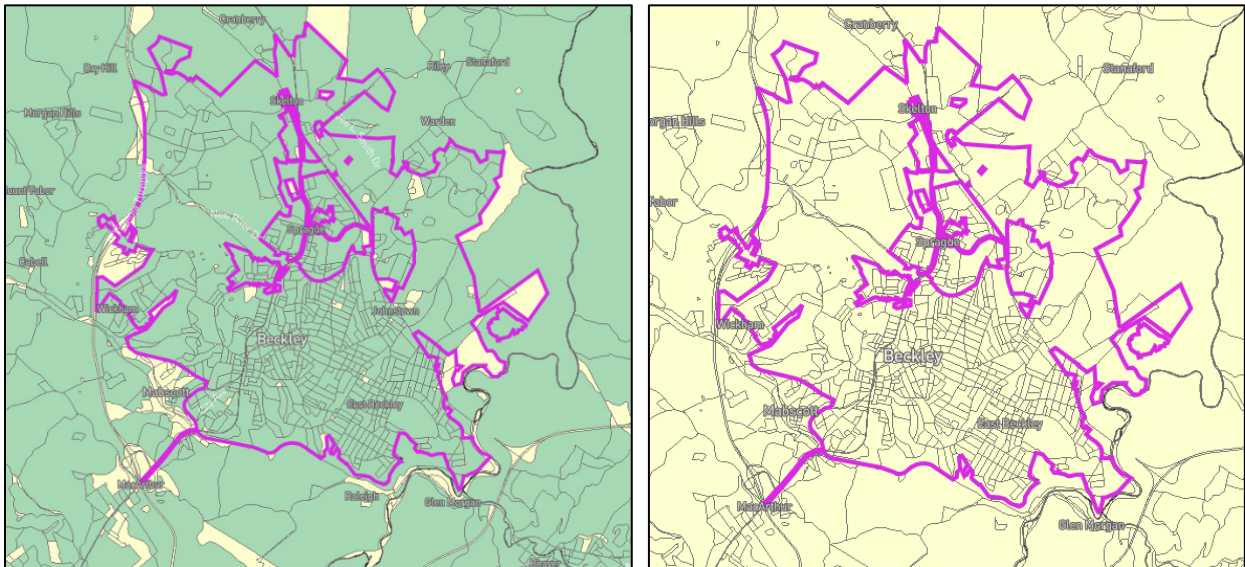
The residents of Beckley rely on power from outside the city since there are no power generation plants in the city limits. The largest electricity supplier in the city based on megawatt hours sold is Appalachian Power Company. Black Diamond Power Company provides a small portion of power to Beckley business and residents as well.



### **Telecommunications, Broadband, and Wireless Infrastructure**

Reliable high-speed broadband is essential to life in the U.S. today, as important as other utilities such as water or electricity. Broadband, or reliable high-speed internet, allows people more affordable and efficient access to basic amenities such as education, health care, public safety and government services. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sets the standard for determining when internet services are fast enough to qualify as broadband services. These standards as of 2024 are 100 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream traffic for the general public and 1000 Mbps downstream for services provided to schools. The long-term goal for the general standard is 1000 Mbps downstream. Nearly all of Beckley is covered by one wired broadband provider and one satellite provider at the 100 Mbps level. No areas in the City of Beckley or Raleigh County are covered at the 1000 Mbps level.

**Figure 22: Wired broadband coverage shown in green at the 100 Mbps level (left) and 1000 Mbps level (right)**



According to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) data, the city is entirely within the 4G LTE mobile coverage areas of three of the nation's four largest mobile wireless carriers: AT&T Mobility, UScellular, and Verizon. This includes where customers should expect to make and receive mobile voice calls and send and receive texts over the 4G LTE network. In addition, customers can expect to receive 4G LTE broadband service at a minimum user download speed of 5 Mbps and a user upload speed of one 1 Mbps.

## Root 4: Prosperity

***“Create an environment where the social, physical, emotional, and mental health are at the forefront of concern by enhancing sustainable support services for all people and places while utilizing Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize neighborhoods.”***

The Prosperity Root covers two Comprehensive Plan elements required by the State of West Virginia. These include Housing and Public Services.



HOUSING



PUBLIC SERVICES

### Related Trends

- There is a U.S. trend of increasing living costs, placing an emphasis on competing demands for affordable and workforce housing options. Beckley has maintained a low cost of living relative to the nation and the state.
- Challenges ranging from extreme weather to natural and man-made disasters are common occurrences among U.S. communities. Communities are grappling with applicable actions to address resiliency by meeting today’s needs without draining the next generation’s resources.

### What the Community Voiced

- Maintaining reliable emergency and community services is a priority for a majority of Beckley residents.
- Quality of life for the future depends upon meeting housing needs, providing accessible services, and preparing for resiliency.
- The presence of abandoned or deteriorating buildings in the city attracts unwanted activity.
- Lack of entry-level housing for new and current residents

# Insights

## PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services support community development in Beckley by ensuring public safety, meeting the medical, cultural, historical, social, educational and disaster needs of current and future residents, and addressing public safety programs to educate and protect the public from disasters, both natural and manmade.

### **Medical**

Beckley has long been a health care hub in West Virginia. LifePoint Hospitals, Inc. operates Raleigh General Hospital and Raleigh Medical Complex in Beckley. Raleigh General Hospital has been in operation under different names in Beckley since 1922. Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH) operates a hospital and medical mall in Beckley, which originally began as Miners Memorial Hospital Association in 1956. Several medical clinics are available. Although there are various avenues for medical care for Beckley residents and the surrounding communities, Beckley has been hit hard by the opioid crisis in West Virginia. Knowing this brings home the need for local educational programs that reach residents with information on quality medical and mental health care.

### **Community**

Beckley is a mosaic comprised of unique and dynamic neighborhoods.

- **Maxwell Hill:** Located in the northwest section of the city, Maxwell Hill is bounded by the city limits to the north and I-77 to the west.
- **Woodcrest:** This neighborhood is one of the newest in the city and is located in the northeast area of the city, with the northern corporate limits and the eastern corporate limits forming its borders on two sides. The East Beckley Bypass meets Stanaford Road just west of this area.
- **East Park:** North and east of the downtown is the East Park neighborhood, the boundaries of which are not well defined.
- **East Beckley:** This neighborhood is located to the southeast of downtown.
- **Woodlawn:** On the southwestern edge of the city, the Woodlawn neighborhood is close to the downtown and is accessible to most key sites and facilities within the city.
- **Harper Hill:** The area along Harper Road, north of Mabscott, continues to thrive as a major commercial corridor along Harper Road, while residential neighborhoods continue to confront huge volumes of traffic passing through their neighborhood.
- **Bowling Addition:** Located west of US 19 between East Park and East Beckley is the Bowling Addition. SR 41 runs northeast- southwest through the neighborhood, which consist primarily of homes on small lots. Historically, low- and moderate-income households, female-headed households and the elderly comprised a considerable portion of the residents in the northern part of the Bowling Addition.
- **Upper and Lower Raleigh Heights:** Located in the very southeast corner of the city, Raleigh Heights is a small, secluded neighborhood bounded on the north, east and south by I-64, Piney Creek and the railroad, and on the west by SR3.
- **Redbrush:** Located on the southern city limits, south of East Beckley and east of Woodlawn. Historically, this neighborhood has had the highest percentage of households

receiving public assistance within the city, one of the highest percentages of low- and moderate-income persons, and highest numbers of female-headed households of all block groups within the city.

- **McLean Addition:** This area is situated south of and between the Harper Hill and New River Park neighborhoods, west of downtown and northeast of Mabscott.

## **Social**

### Homeless and Transient Population

Homelessness is both a housing affordability and social service issue. Raleigh County Community Action Association (RCCAA) is the primary provider of housing and supportive services for the City of Beckley's homeless and at risk of being homeless population and is a participating member of the West Virginia Balance of State Consortium of Care. There is a need for permanent supportive housing for the homeless in the City of Beckley. According to the Point in Time Count for Raleigh County conducted on January 24-25, 2024, there were 154 individuals identified as homeless, an increase from 51 counted in 2023.

The City of Beckley supports the Housing First method used by RCCAA, combined with supportive services, for helping the homeless populations in the city. The City encourages local landlords to work with RCCAA to house Veterans and their families and other homeless populations. The Housing First Model is distinct and separate from rapid re-housing. It is a relatively recent innovation in human service programs and social policy and is an alternative to a system of emergency shelter/transitional housing progressions. Rather than moving homeless individuals through different levels of housing, known as the Continuum of Care, whereby each level moves them closer to "independent housing" (from the streets to a public shelter, and from a public shelter to a transitional housing program, and from there to their own apartment in the community). Housing First moves the homeless individual or household immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartments.

Poverty

According to the 2019-2022 American Community Survey, approximately 22.4% of Beckley residents live in poverty, which is a significant increase from the 2020 rate of 18.9%.

- Nearly a third of the African American population lives below the poverty line.
- A quarter of females were living in poverty.
- 12 percent of persons over 60 were living in poverty
- A quarter of all children under 18 years of age were living in poverty.
- Nearly half of single mother families were living in poverty.

**Figure 23: Poverty Rates**

Percent of Persons in Poverty (2022)			
City of Beckley	Raleigh County	State of West Virginia	United States
22.4%	19.6%	17.9%	11.5%

Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey; Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2022

Income

- 42.28% of households have earnings received from Social Security income.
- 16.68% of households have earnings received from public assistance.
- 27.4% of households have earnings received retirement income.

The 2000 Census reported that the median household income for the City of Beckley was \$28,122, which is almost the same at \$28,181 for Raleigh County, and slightly less than \$29,696 for the state of West Virginia. The 2008-2012 American Community Survey reported that the per capita income for the city had risen from \$23,054 in 2012 to \$25,036 in 2017. In 2017, the median household income for Beckley was \$33,695, compared to \$42,386 for Raleigh County, and \$44,061 for the state of West Virginia. In 2022, the median household income for Beckley was \$41,277, compared to \$47,975 for Raleigh County, and \$55,217 for the state of West Virginia. This illustrates that the city’s median household income is not keeping pace with the county and the state.

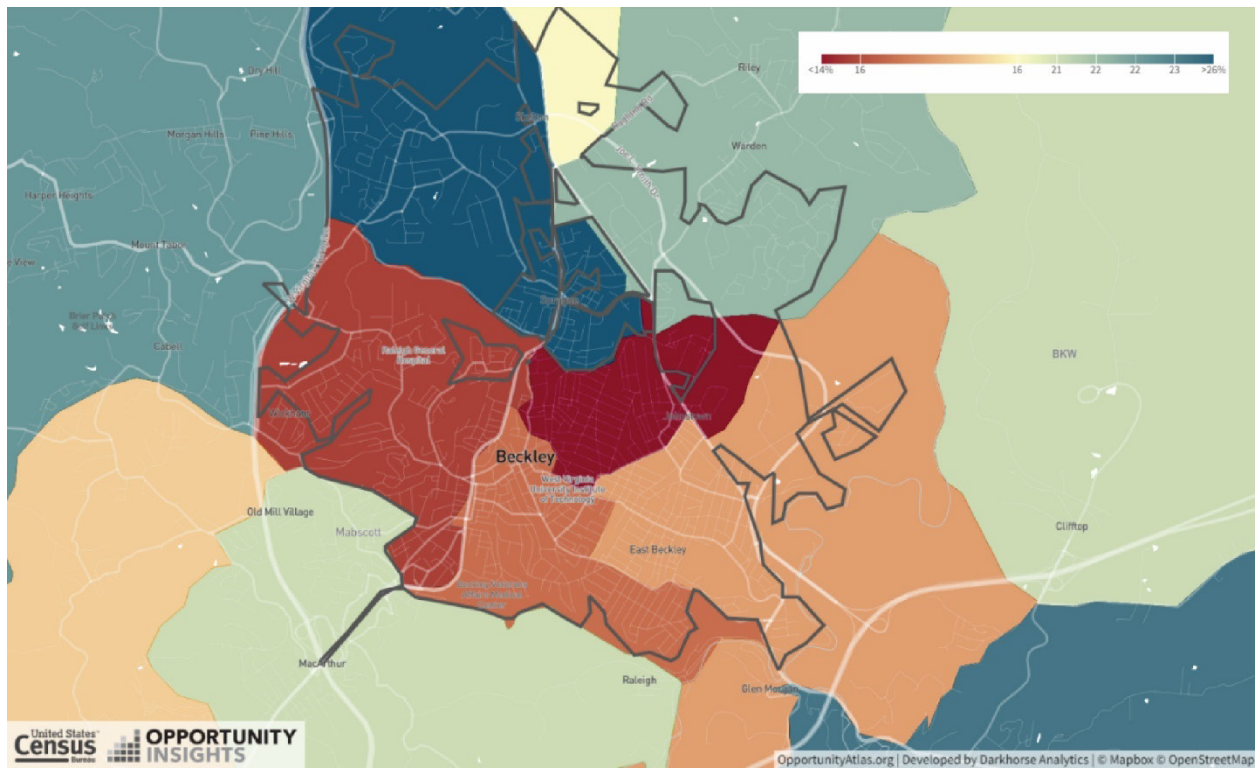
Opportunity Atlas

The Opportunity Atlas seeks to identify where children have the best chance of rising out of poverty by evaluating anonymous data gathered from millions of Americans from childhood to adulthood.

These estimates show the average outcomes in adulthood of people who grew up in each Census tract and were born between 1978 and 1983. Many children move to different areas in adulthood, but this data is organized by where children grew up, regardless of where they live as adults. These estimates are thus highly informative predictors of economic opportunity even for children today, although they should be combined with additional analyses and on-the-ground knowledge in areas that have changed substantially.

The following map shows the fraction of children who grew up in each census tract who were earning in the top 20% of household income in 2016.

**Figure 24: Fraction of Children Growing Up into 20% Income Homes**



Educational

The Beckley schools are part of the Raleigh County School District. Twenty-seven public schools serve the county, including 17 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 4 high schools, and 1 career-technical center. The county school district is the fourth largest in the state with a student population of 10,867 students; the district has an annual operating budget of \$208.3 million for FY 23-24 and a workforce of 1,556 including administrators, teachers, and service personnel, according to the Raleigh County School District and the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics. In addition to the public schools, seven private schools serve both city and county residents.

*Beckley residents have a higher educational attainment rate than the surrounding communities.*

**Figure 25: Education Rate Comparison**

Education Statistic	City of Beckley	Raleigh County	West Virginia	United States
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+	89%	85%	88%	89%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+	23%	21%	23%	34%

Source: 2010 Decennial Census; 2018-2022 American Community Survey.

*Emergency Preparedness*

Emergency preparedness is among the most essential services provided by governments. Hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, hazardous waste spills, and other natural or man-made disasters demand swift and deliberate action to prevent loss of life and property. Beckley is well served by a Department of Emergency Services that is engaged in many aspects of emergency preparedness. The dimensions of this involvement extend beyond public services and emergency responders and connect with both the faith-based community and the business community. Youth education is also a part of local emergency preparedness. The City of Beckley also assumes a leadership role in an organization known as the Southern WV Preparedness Partnership (SWVPP). SWVPP provides educational and training opportunities designed to enhance collective levels of readiness and resiliency. Past topics have included incident management, mass care, cyber security, and well as business continuity planning.

*Food Access*

According to USDA food insecurity data from 2020-2022, Beckley has a food insecurity rate of 15.4 percent, 3.4 percent higher than the national average. The child food insecurity rate is 23 percent, 6.9 percent higher than the national average. The USDA defines food insecurity as a household's limited or uncertain access to food due to a lack of resources or money.

The local social service agencies in Beckley (such as Calvary Assembly of God, The Dream Center/Fishes and Loaves Pantry, Food for Body and Soul, Food Pantry/Emergency Services (Whitesville), Helping Hands, and Salvation Army) provide food and clothing through food pantries, food kitchens, and thrift stores.

Raleigh County will start to offer free meals for all students beginning in the '24-'25 school year through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program. Overall, 93 percent of Raleigh County school students qualified for free and reduced lunch in the 2023-2024 school year, making the county eligible for CEP.

*Resiliency*

FEMA publishes a National Risk Index dataset that shows the amount of risk, expected annual loss, social vulnerability, the amount of risk from specific hazards, and community resilience for counties and census tracts. Raleigh County has a Risk Index of 57.33, which is considered "Relatively Low." This Risk Index is equal to the Risk Index of other U.S. counties. Among the 18 hazard types that are studied for prevalence or likelihood of risk in Raleigh County, 14 of the 18 hazards are identified as contributing to annual losses. The hazard type with the highest risk factor of 96.4 is a landslide, with an expected annual loss of \$340,000, and lightning being the second highest at 87.5.

Climate change will also have adverse effects on health by increasing the intensity and frequency of natural disasters that indirectly cause health problems, especially among low-income individuals who are already more likely to have chronic health conditions and greater exposure to harmful pollution.

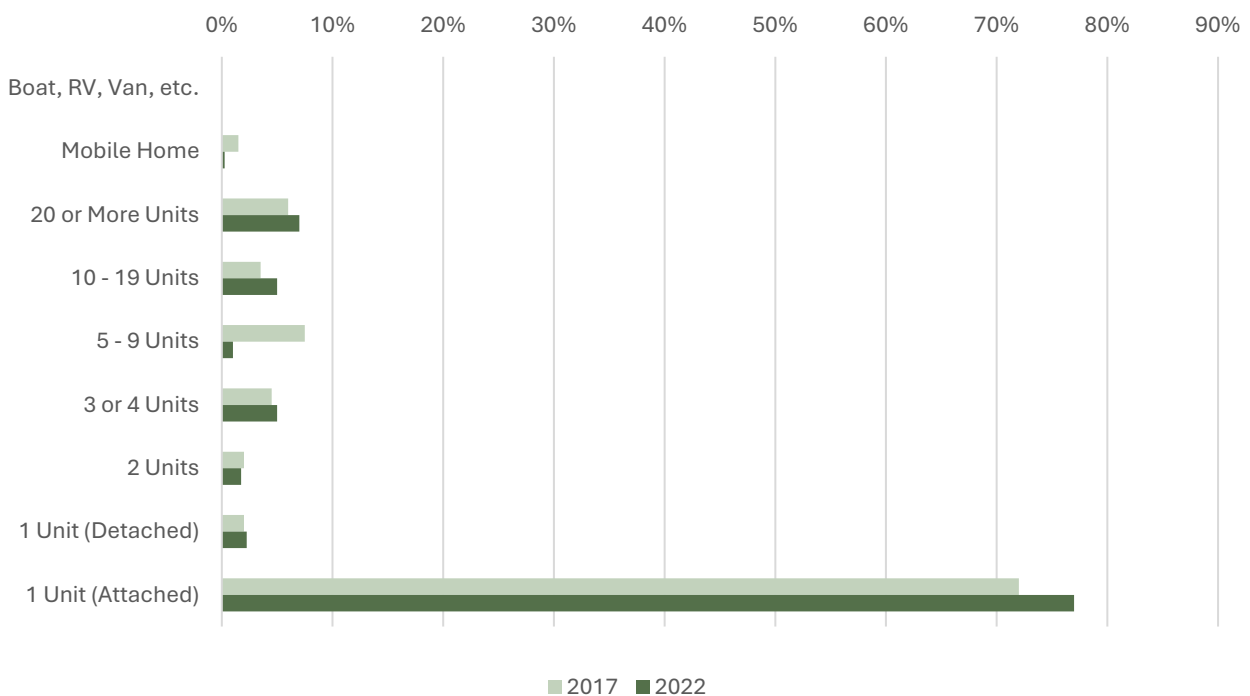
## Opportunities

### HOUSING NEEDS

There is a sufficient supply of housing units within the City of Beckley. There are 4,235 owner-occupied housing units, 2,975 renter-occupied housing units, and approximately 1,455 vacant units: for a total of 8,665 housing units in the city. The population over the past ten years has remained relatively constant and this is expected to continue over the next ten years based on population projections (see Land Use Chapter).

The identified housing need in Beckley is for greater diversity in housing types: fewer bedrooms, small to mid-size homes, smaller more naturally affordable ownership units, single-level retirement housing, and rental units. In 2022, the city's housing stock primarily consisted of single-family or 1-unit detached homes (72.3%) and single-family or 1-unit attached homes (typically townhomes) made up 2.4% of housing in Beckley. Multifamily units in the city are in buildings with 3 units (1.8%); 3 to 4 units (5.2%); 5 to 9 units (1.2%); 10 to 19 units (4.8%); and 20 or more (6.6%).

**Figure 26: Housing Analysis**



Missing middle housing is a term used to describe housing types that fall between single-family homes and mid-rise or high-rise apartment buildings. Examples of missing middle housing include duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and small apartments. Missing middle housing is more accessible and often more affordable than single-family housing.

One barrier to diverse housing is often in a city's land use policies. The City of Beckley's zoning and subdivision ordinance has not been recently revised, and an audit and rewrite of the City's zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance is warranted.



**Affordability**

Owner housing costs are relatively affordable when compared to the State and Nation. The median value of owner-occupied homes in the City of Beckley in 2022 was \$135,100, compared to \$132,300 for Raleigh County and \$145,800 for the State of West Virginia.

**Figure 27: Housing Costs Growth**

Column 1	2010	2022	% Change
Median Home Value	\$108,600	\$135,100	24%
Median Contract Rent	\$487	\$862	77%

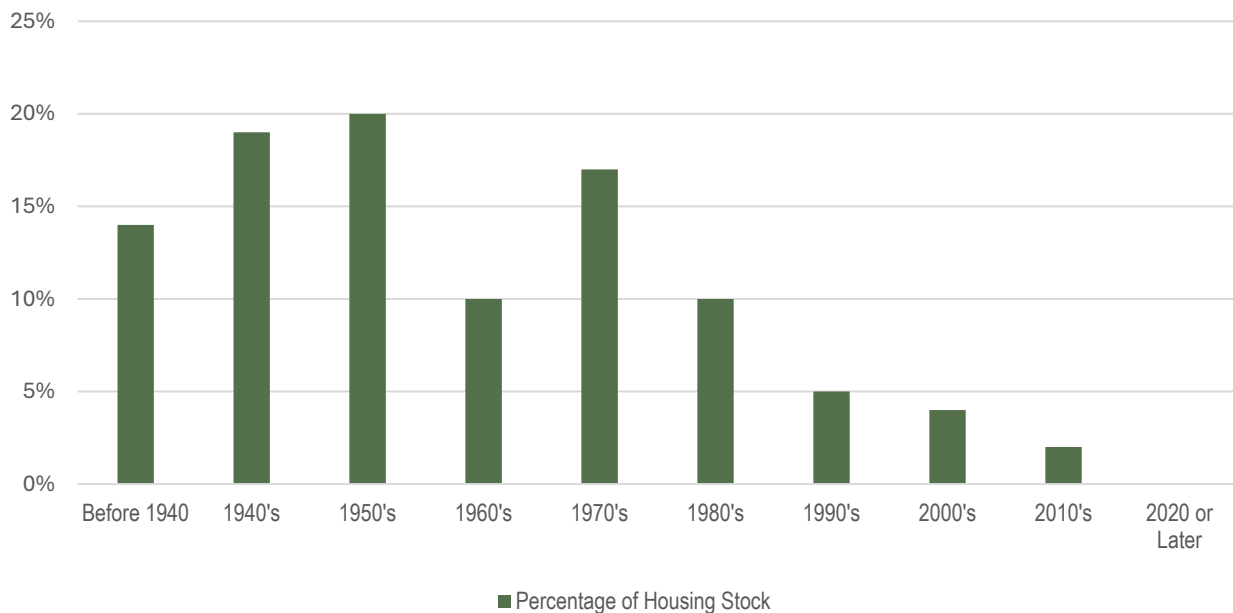
*Source: 2010 Decennial Census; 2018-2022 American Community Survey; City of Beckley 2024 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*

However, there is a disparity between affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary housing, particularly for rental housing. Median rent increased 77 percent from 2010 to \$862/month in 2022. Nearly half of renters in the City of Beckley spend between \$800-\$1,499 per month on rent. About 15% of homeowners and 42% of renters in the city are severely cost-burdened, paying more than 50% of their household income on housing costs. According to the City of Beckley Consolidated Plan, these statistics are supported by consultations, interviews, and surveys; that point to the lack of affordable, accessible, decent, and safe housing as the largest unmet housing need and a problem in the city.

**Substandard Housing**

While housing affordability is an issue in the City of Beckley, the supply of decent, safe, and sound housing is also a concern. Just over 36% of all owner-occupied housing units and 26% of renter-occupied housing units were built before 1950. There is a risk of lead-based paint hazards in 85% of all owner-occupied housing units and 81% of all renter-occupied housing units.

**Figure 28: Existing Housing Units by Age (2020)**



In 2023, the City of Beckley had 973 code enforcement cases. Of those 973 cases, 307 (31.55%) were related to garbage/rubbish, 327 (33.60%) overgrown lots, 124 (12.74%) inoperable vehicles, 67 (6.88%) dilapidated/abandoned structures, and 11 (1.13%) were animal cases. The Beckley Code Enforcement Department performed 4,116 property maintenance inspections for 2023.

### ***Accessible Housing***

As an older built-up urban environment, there is a lack of accessible housing units and developable sites in the City of Beckley. Almost 53.24% of the city's housing units were built over 50 years ago and do not have accessibility features, and 22.4% of the city's population was classified as disabled in 2020. Based on these estimates, it can be presumed that almost half of the single-family households in the City of Beckley have additional special needs above and beyond those of the general single person household population. Special consideration in terms of housing and services for seniors, the disabled, and low-income households should be considered while planning housing strategies for Beckley.

### ***Subsidized Housing***

The Beckley Housing Authority is the public housing agency that serves the City of Beckley. The mission of the Housing Authority of the City of Beckley is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to the residents receiving assistance through the Public Housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Programs efficiently and professionally. The Housing Authority owns and manages 209 units of public housing, of which 12 units are accessible. In addition, the Housing Authority administers 503 Housing Choice Vouchers. The Housing Authority had 831 families/individuals on its Housing Choice Voucher waiting list as of May 2024 and 165 applicants on the Public Housing waiting list.

### ***Rehabilitation***

There is a need for housing rehabilitation work in the City of Beckley despite the city's aggressive code enforcement policy and active enforcement of its codes. As an older urban environment with 33% of its housing units built over 60 years ago, many structures warrant rehabilitation and maintenance work, such as plumbing, electrical and heating, and general code updates. Deferred maintenance of older homes occupied by lower-income families with limited financial resources necessitates action. Lastly, maintaining the historical significance of older structures, mainly located in the central portion of the city, requires specialized rehabilitation work and the use of appropriate materials. Homeowners and landlords tend to forgo this type of work due to the lack of financial resources.

### ***Housing Conversions***

Taking large, expensive, and vacant homes and turning them into multiple units can utilize unused structures, make them more viable financially, and provide manageable housing units in need in Beckley. Rather than keeping vacant single-family houses empty and permitting them to become tax delinquent, conversions could benefit the city and its residents.

Downtown Beckley provides opportunities to meet identified housing demands, with housing units geared toward college students, young professionals, the elderly, the working poor, and small families. The conversion of existing buildings can open opportunities for more accessible housing units for these identified groups.

**ADUs**

An increasing number of communities around the U.S. are permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs).], also called in-law suites, granny flats, or secondary dwelling units, to increase the diversity of their housing stock. An ADU offers an additional self-contained living unit that typically has its own kitchen, bedroom(s), and bathroom space while maintaining independence and privacy from the primary home. These types of units can be beneficial to those wanting to age in place, needing an affordable place to live, or requiring functional support while seeking autonomy.

**Infill**

Infill housing generally refers to the practice of developing vacant lots in existing residential neighborhoods and is used as a strategy to increase the supply of quality, diverse, and affordable housing. Vacant lots are often the result of neighborhood demolitions that have taken place over time and can be associated with distressed neighborhoods. Reuse of vacant lots as new home sites can be challenging but is highly desirable to help reverse trends of neighborhood disinvestment and declines in property values.

*Much of this content in the housing section is from the 2024 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, 2024-2028 Five-Year Consolidated Plan, and FY 2024 Annual Action Plan.*

# Root 5: Cooperation

***“Enhance collaboration and communication within internal agencies and between external entities that respect the uniqueness of Beckley while envisioning future mutual prosperity.”***

The Cooperation Root covers the Financing Element of the Comprehensive Plan.



## FINANCING

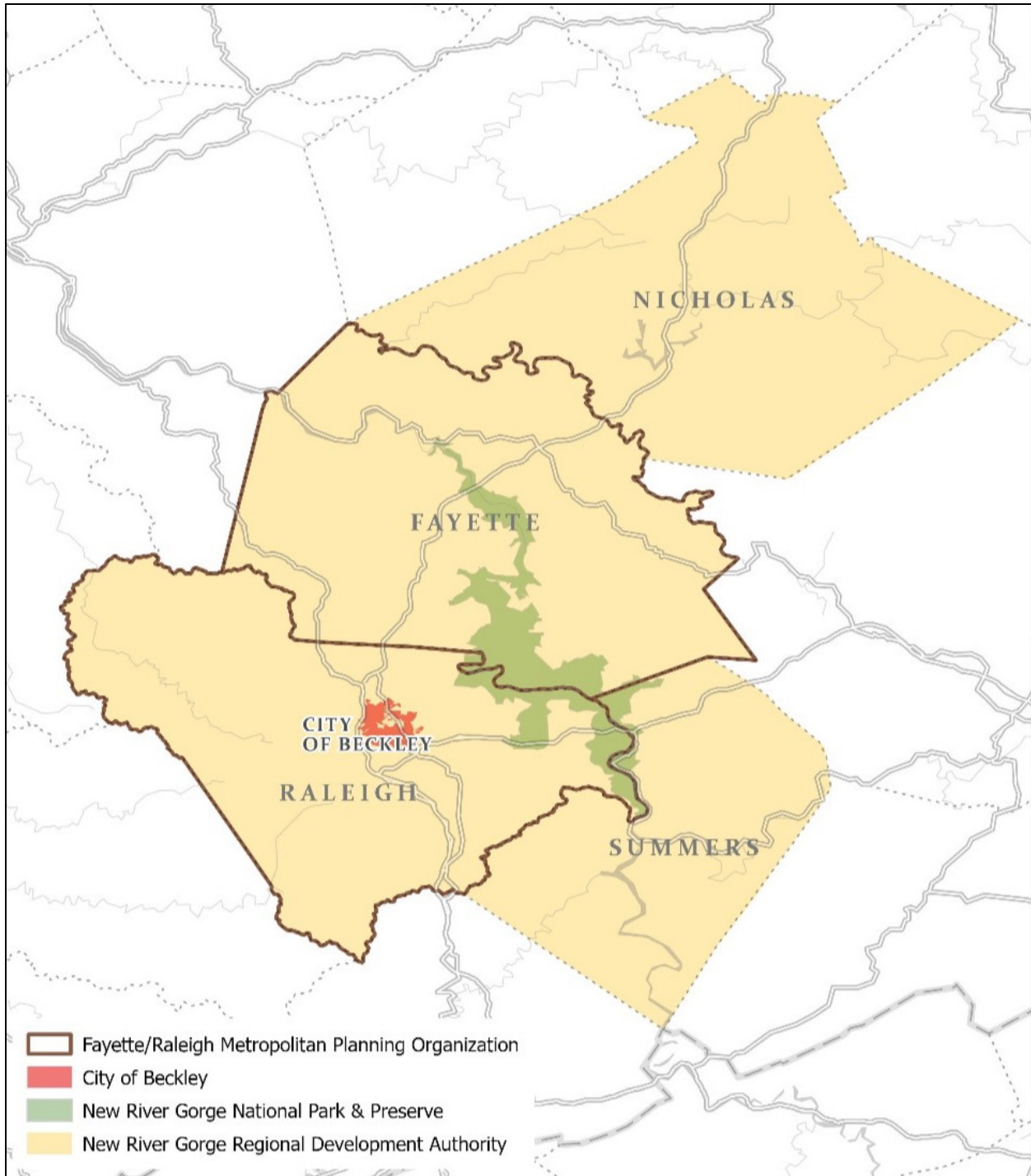
### Related Trends

- Regional planning is shifting towards an integrated systems approach considering changing demographics, new tools and technologies, expanded partnerships, and community engagement.
- The Beckley MSA has been declining in population since around 2012. However, the number of non-farm related employees in the MSA is nearly at a 10-year high. This reflects both changes in industry and changes in the demographics of the area. Economic development opportunities, such as increasing the regional outdoor economy and revitalization of the downtown area, represent opportunities for Beckley moving forward.

### What the Community Voiced

- Public transportation to the greater region, connecting the heart of Beckley with the rest of the county.
- Tap into the existing and historical cultural resources to fuel additional recreation, tourism, and commercial opportunities.
- Encourage cooperation with neighboring municipalities on regional issues such as transit, recreation, and utilities.
- Foster public-private cooperation that promotes investment in the workforce, infrastructure, and redevelopment/renewal.

Figure 29: New River Gorge Regional Development Authority Jurisdiction



## Insights

### REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

While the City of Beckley’s planning jurisdiction stops at the city limits, planning challenges are regional. Regionalism is the idea that the City should work with its neighbors as a unit that thrives from collective strengths. Many of the issues presented in this plan like tourism, affordable housing, transportation, and job availability extend beyond any jurisdiction line. Collaborative efforts to address these issues will be vital to the resiliency of the region and coordination of some public services and amenities may be helpful to all residents. Beckley continues to work with its neighboring localities and other regional entities on numerous fronts.

#### ***New River Gorge Regional Development Authority***

The New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) stimulates the regional economy through business expansion and retention efforts, including an extensive portfolio of financial services, the management of sites for new companies locating to our region, and serving as a point of access for local service providers which offer a variety of technical assistance for business owners. The mission of NRGRDA is to initiate, facilitate, and support the community and economic development efforts within the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers located in this region of West Virginia.

#### ***Fayette/Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization***

The Fayette/Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization is the multimodal planning agency for the Census-driven Urbanized Area stretching from Sophia in Raleigh County to Fayetteville in Fayette County including Mabscott, Mount Hope, Oak Hill, and Beckley. The Fayette/Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization (FRMPO) was organized in 2012, under federal requirements, upon the release of 2010 U.S. Census data designating parts of Fayette and Raleigh counties combined as an urbanized area. Its responsibility is to provide a coordinated, cooperative, and comprehensive approach to transportation planning for an area that encompasses all of Fayette and Raleigh counties.

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) funded by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, FRMPO is a promoter of development, collaboration, and cooperation on issues that have more than just a local impact. Providing and coordinating regional planning services is the main focus of the Fayette/Raleigh MPO; however, the organization also stands to provide information, facts, and quantitative research to help local officials make informed and efficient decisions.

#### ***Region I Planning & Development Council***

Established as a public agency, Region I is one of eleven Regional Planning & Development Councils (PDC) created by West Virginia Code, Chapter 8, Article 25, to provide Comprehensive Planning of all types for our service area, consisting of six counties (McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers & Wyoming) and twenty-seven municipalities located within these counties. The mayors, county commissioners, and up to 49% of private sector appointees comprise Region I’s Board of Directors. The PDC also works closely with local Economic Development Authorities,

Public Service Districts, the Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization, New River Transit Authority, and various other local state, and federal organizations throughout the region.

Region I PDC utilizes federal, state, and local funding to assist with projects concerning infrastructure development, including expansion and replacement of water and sewer facilities, employment, industry, housing, health, recreation, and environmental protection. By coordinating closely with our affiliates in the region, we promote stability, growth, and progress in southern West Virginia.

### **Visit Southern West Virginia**

Visit Southern West Virginia is a not-for-profit destination marketing organization with a mission to collectively promote Southern West Virginia as a visitor-friendly travel destination. The organization works independently under the auspices of a board of directors. Visit Southern West Virginia promotes nine counties in Southern West Virginia: Raleigh, Mercer, Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, McDowell, Nicholas, Wyoming, and Summers.

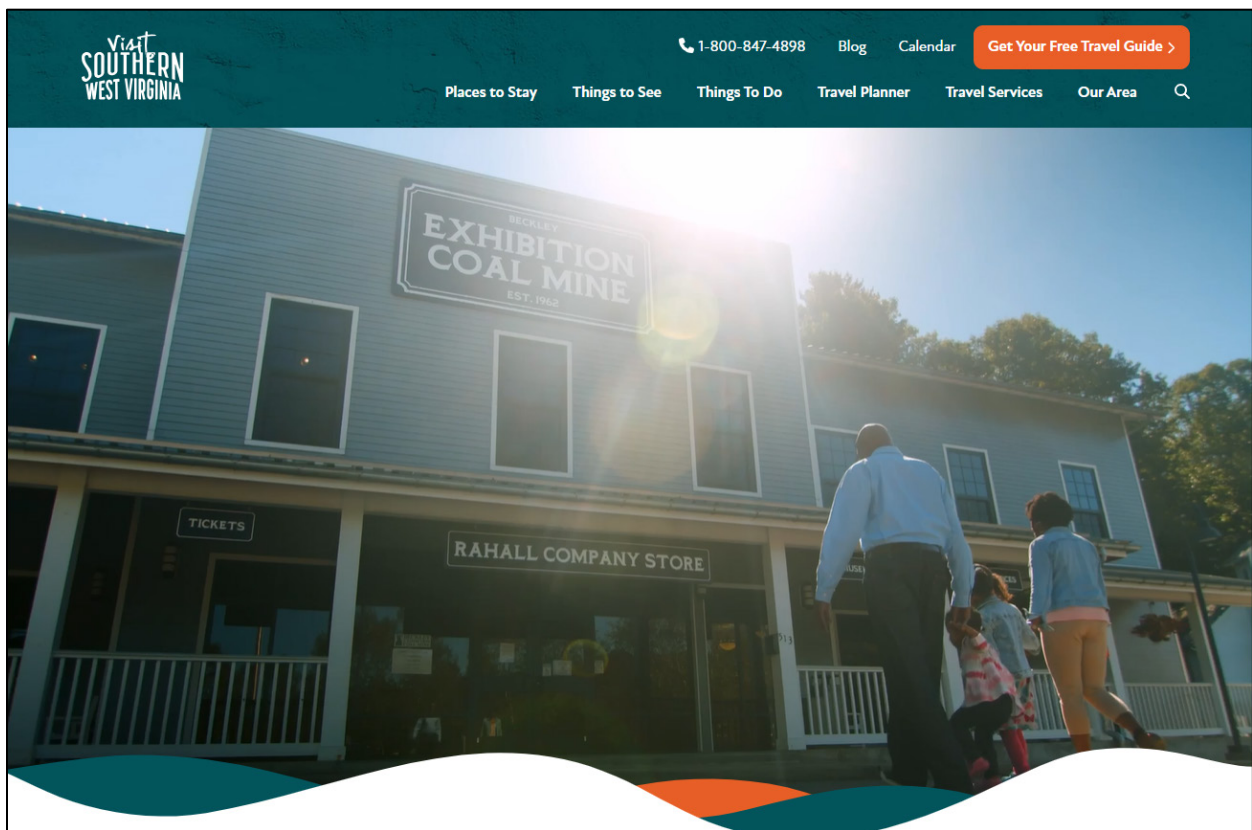


Photo: Visit Southern West Virginia website

### **Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce**

The Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of business and professional firms that have joined together to promote the civic, commercial and economic progress of the community. The mission of the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce is to collaborate with leaders to build a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community.

# Opportunities

## FINANCING

This chapter recommends short- and long-term financing plans to meet the Comprehensive Plans' goals, objectives, and components, per WV Code 8A-3-4(c)(12). It considers future capital expenditures, selected operational expenditures, and potential grants from state, federal, and local governments and private foundations.

Comprehensive Plans generally recommend a number of capital projects and specific initiatives that are necessary for implementation. Because these projects and initiatives are generally large, costly, and long-term propositions, the challenge becomes identifying the appropriate funding sources. This Chapter identifies potential funding sources as they pertain to capital improvements and the funding of various initiatives.

## GRANT PROGRAMS

### **Federal Grant Programs**

*CDBG Entitlement Funds:* The City of Beckley became a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Community in 2014, ensuring that the city receives an entitlement each year from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds can be used for public facilities and improvements, public services, privately owned utilities, housing rehabilitation and construction, special economic development activities, and capacity building.

*Health Resources and Services Administration:* The Health Resources and Services Administration offers grants related to medical and health programs.

### **Regional Grant Programs**

*Appalachian Regional Commission:* This Commission offers funding opportunities in community development, economic transformation and revitalization, and substance abuse recovery for workforce entry and re-entry.

### **State Grant Programs**

*West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection:* The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) offers grants for the demolition of dilapidated properties and a program for abandoned mine lands economic revitalization.

*West Virginia DHHR:* Three separate departments are housed within the Department of Health and Human Services: the Department of Health, the Department of Health Facilities, and the Department of Human Services. The website offers information on available funding opportunities related to social, medical, and mental health services.

*Grants@wv.gov:* This website hosts a variety of funding opportunities, funding sources, and resources regarding water, wastewater, community development, and building grants.

*Bureau for Behavioral Health:* This department offers funding for a variety of social services programs that include mental health needs and substance abuse disorders.



### **Other Funding Sources**

*MPO and Transportation Funding:* The newly created Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will provide a source of transportation funding from the West Virginia Department of Transportation for the city and MPO's key transportation projects, which will be prioritized in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The City and its partners in the MPO will have more direct access to funding than they have had in the past for eligible projects and programs.

*Beckley Area Foundation:* The Beckley Area Foundation exists to inspire and facilitate generous charitable giving that advances our community. Beckley Area Foundation was established in January 1985 by ten community-minded citizens. It began with a gift of \$1.1 million from the Dr. Thomas Walker Memorial Health Foundation as "seed" money for this Raleigh County project. BAF assets have grown to over \$70 million with over 500 different funds managed by our three trustee banks. Today, the Beckley Area Foundation is one of West Virginia's largest community foundations. Only the income from these funds is spent. The initial gift remains intact to serve the community forever. Since its inception, BAF has distributed over \$23 million to charities and other worthy projects in the fields of education, public recreation, health & human services, the arts, animal services, and beautification.

*Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce Foundation:* The BRCCC Foundation is a nonprofit organization that was established by the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce in 2016. The foundation exists to support leadership development, small business initiatives, and community beautification projects that enhance the Beckley-Raleigh County region to improve quality of life, attract new businesses, grow the workforce, and drive tourism traffic.

*Beckley Capital Improvement Program:* Establishing a Capital Improvement Program and a Capital Improvement Plan will be fundamental for Beckley to identify future capital needs in the city and begin a program to self-fund future projects.

In addition to the entitlement funds, the City of Beckley anticipates the following resources may be available to local non-profits and organizations to undertake the strategies identified in the Five-Year Consolidated Plan:

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Department of Homeland Security Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety
- Department of Homeland Security WV
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Justice
- WV Development Office Legislative Digest
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History
- Veterans Affairs
- West Virginia ESG funds for Emergency Shelters
- United Way - Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds
- Continuum of Care Funds from the WV Balance of State Program for transitional and permanent supportive housing programs
- West Virginia Housing Development Fund Home Purchase Programs

- West Virginia Neighborhood Investment Program
- West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program (AHP)

### **CITY BOUNDARY LIMITS**

Over time, the city limits of Beckley have evolved, resulting in an unusual shape with various pockets or enclaves being unincorporated. This can make it challenging to plan efficiently and implement city-wide initiatives. Addressing the inconsistencies of Beckley's boundary can be accomplished through short- and long-term strategic actions.

# Root 6: Inclusivity

***“Leverage our individual strengths to enhance economic opportunity, encourage strong civic engagement, and foster a community spirit.”***

The Inclusivity Root corresponds to the demographic analysis portion of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan. It is elevated into its own root in this plan to emphasize the importance of community, civic duty, and creating an accessible and inclusive Beckley.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Related Trends

- As demographics change and communities evolve, social infrastructure remains a topic of discussion across regions. Enabling people to come together for various purposes and providing those opportunities is becoming increasingly important to maintaining a resident’s quality of life.
- The United States has experienced its highest number of people counted and reported as experiencing homelessness on a single night since reporting began in 2007 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, opioid epidemic, and rising housing costs have exacerbated the upward trend in the unsheltered. The unhoused population has continued to grow in the Beckley region as Raleigh County experienced a 300% increase between 2023 and 2024.
- Development patterns are generally still car-centric and de-centralized, encouraging sprawl while also isolating less affluent residents from resources. The convergence of major highway systems further encourages lopsided development near the interchanges, increasing the disparity in regional resources.

### What the Community Voiced

- Inclusive to all.
- Accessible to a variety of people.
- Empower and support residents facing vulnerabilities.
- Beckley’s sense of community is a favorite aspect of living in the city.
- Offer opportunities and amenities for the younger and student populations.

## Insights

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Beckley, as measured by the U.S. Census, has changed demographically since 2000. While the portions of the population that identify as black and white has dropped somewhat, the biggest demographic increase has occurred in the people who identify as two or more races, followed by an increase in the Hispanic or Latino population. Those who identify as Asian has dropped only slightly.

**Figure 30: Demographics Comparison**

City of Beckley	2000	2010	2020
White alone	73.3%	71.7%	69.4%
Black or African American alone	22.9%	21.0%	19.6%
Asian Alone	2.6%	2.4%	2.4%
Two or more races	1.7%	2.9%	5.8%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	0.9%	1.5%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census

This information is crucial to understanding the cultural preferences of Beckley residents. Quality of life choices, such as where to live, shop, and eat, will be different for those from differing cultural backgrounds. Being mindful of this as a city moves forward to make positive changes will create a strong sense of place and a healthy, successful community. Ensuring widespread accessibility of public space and a welcoming culture is increasingly valued. Beckley has embraced inclusivity and understands the need for accessibility for all residents.

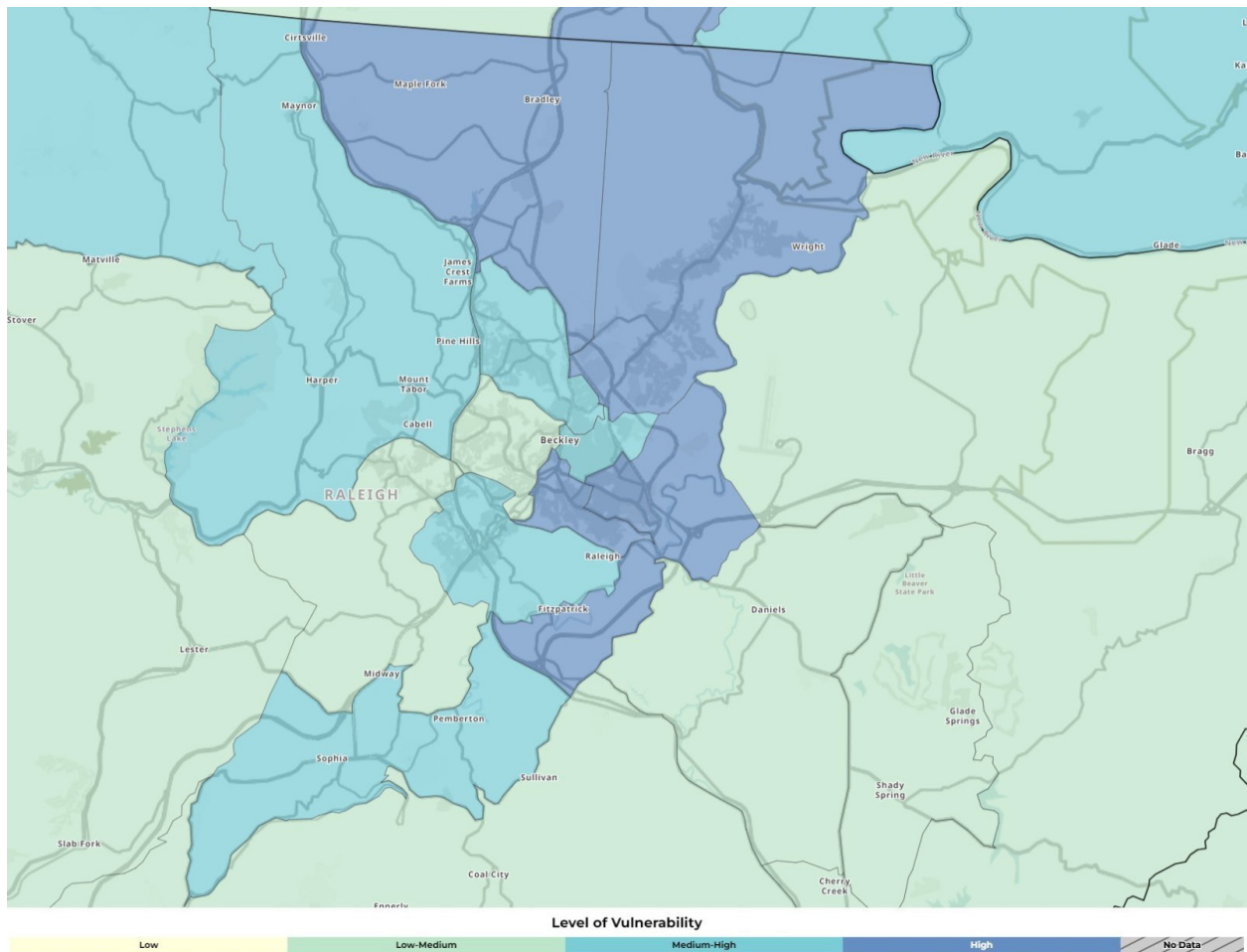
### DISADVANTAGED & VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

#### **Social Vulnerability**

Every community must prepare for and respond to hazardous events, whether a natural disaster like a tornado or a disease outbreak, or an anthropogenic event such as a harmful chemical spill. The degree to which a community exhibits certain social conditions, including high poverty, low percentage of vehicle access, or crowded households, among others, may affect that community's ability to prevent human suffering and financial loss in the event of a disaster. These factors describe a community's social vulnerability.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to help public health officials and emergency response planners identify and map the communities that will most likely need support before, during, and after a hazardous event. The SVI indicates the relative vulnerability of every U.S. census tract. Census tracts are subdivisions of counties for which the Census collects statistical data. SVI ranks the tracts on 16 social factors, such as unemployment, racial and ethnic minority status, and disability status.

**Figure 31: SVI Nationwide Comparison by Census Tract**



### AGING POPULATION

An increasingly aging population, not unlike the national trend, demonstrates a need for Beckley to develop more diverse housing that allows residents to age in place. Not having to leave the town residents have lived in for a lifetime is crucial to their sense of well-being and mental health. Requiring or incentivizing housing that includes universal design principles is important for this population of people as well as for those with disabilities.

**Figure 32: Senior Population**

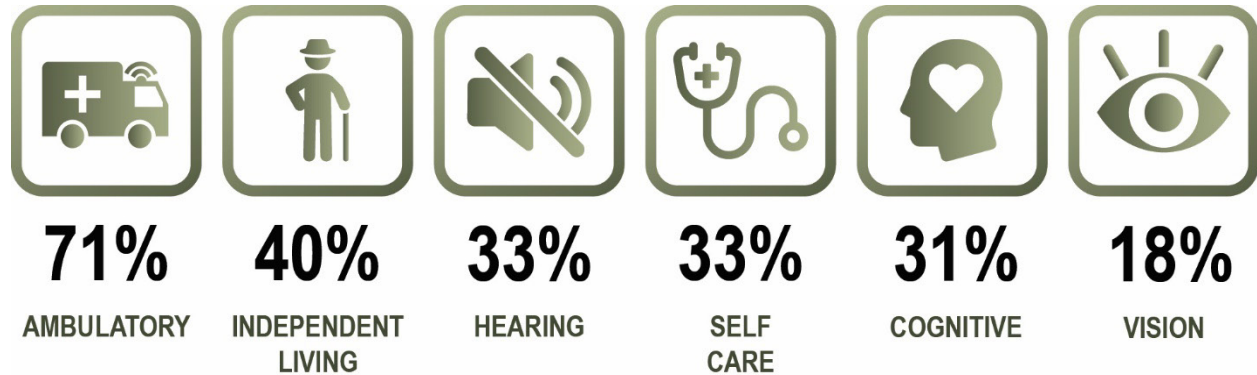
City of Beckley	2000	2010	2020
Residents aged 65 years and older	18.7%	20.2%	21.0%

Source: US Census

## DISABLED POPULATION

According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 13% of the U.S. population reported having a disability in 2021. Beckley's percentage of persons with disabilities in 2020 is almost twice that amount at 22.4% and the larger area of Raleigh County being at 23.5%. Although data on the type of disability is not available for the city, most persons with a disability are ambulatory within Raleigh County, meaning an impairment that prevents or impedes walking. With an aging population, this may account for a larger percentage of Beckley residents with disabilities.

Figure 33: Persons with Disability by Type, Raleigh County, WV, 2020



## LGBTQIA+

Historically, public spaces and streets have not been safe environments for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. As Beckley strives to be an inclusive community where all are welcome, it is important to make streets and public spaces safe for all. Ensuring that public events can be accessed at a low cost and are held in safe spaces encourages this community to be actively involved in Beckley, as this community is more likely to experience economic hardship and social discrimination. Understanding the intersectionality of Beckley residents will highlight the importance of embracing an inclusive culture that meets the needs of all residents.

Promoting safe public spaces for all also speaks to providing intentionally welcoming public spaces that promote inclusive activities and programming. Activities and programs should focus on being inclusive and satisfying the needs of a diverse community.

## PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

With Beckley's position as a medical hub, mental health providers can be brought into the picture to provide holistic health approaches that benefit city residents. Work-life balance is important to all people. This includes the need for physical activity, stress reduction, access to healthy foods, and improving community social connections. These will be important factors for encouraging people to relocate to Beckley and take advantage of remote work opportunities. Improved and updated designs for walking, cycling, and playing will play an important role in attracting new residents. Focusing on upgrading park and recreation designs that accommodate older residents and people with disabilities will demand updating standard recreational practices. Gender-neutral signage and services will be increasing in demand. Dog parks are also growing in popularity and have become destinations that contribute to the quality of life for future residents.

The percentage of residents without health insurance has dropped drastically. In 2013, 15% of city residents were uninsured. That rate dropped to 4.5% in 2020. Approximately 26.6% of insured Beckley residents use Medicaid benefits while an additional 12.6% use Medicare.

Populations in the vast majority of localities in the United States are growing increasingly diverse, as shown in census data over the last 100 years. Understanding this and Beckley's willingness to use inclusive strategies and tools to empower its citizens to move forward into a new century will prove beneficial for Beckley's future. Events and public education offered virtually, at varying hours, and in locations where people normally gather will create working partnerships among neighborhood residents, businesses, and community organizations. Ensuring that programs and activities are created to reach diverse populations will effectively produce partnerships that will build trust and guarantee that Beckley's historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities' voices will be heard on important city decisions.

All communities will be affected by climate change and any mitigation decisions that are made by those communities. Historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities are often the most affected by climate change and mitigation decisions. Beckley will need to consider social equity when facing these challenges and decisions. Building partnerships with these communities in advance of these challenges will be advantageous for all.

## Opportunities

### MULTIGENERATIONAL PLANNING

As the demographics of Beckley change over time, taking into consideration the needs of all requires a holistic approach and analysis of how government policies, zoning, and building codes can be improved to ensure generational equality and access.

#### Beckley Plans for Multigeneration

- Striving to make the city and neighborhoods accessible, safe, and inclusive
- Providing opportunities for people to age in place
- Garnering civic participation by all generations
- Addressing common concerns for each group

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal Design is a design philosophy that aims to create inclusive designs and accessible environments to as many as people as possible, regardless of their age, ability, or stage in life. Planning for design that is sustainable, flexible, durable, and economical moves towards a more inclusive and equitable approach.

## STUDENT POPULATION

The presence of WVU Tech in Beckley brings an additional student population of nearly 1,500 students (Fall 2023 enrollment) and numerous faculty and staff.

WVU Tech has adopted a “Communiversality” mission, meaning the University is the community, and the community is the University. As WVU Tech moves forward, its goal is to be a community in which Beckley and surrounding areas are united in our mission to support learning and discovery.

WVU Tech has made it its mission to prioritize the community, and the city of Beckley should continue to embrace and incorporate students into the fabric of the community. Including students is a mutually beneficial opportunity for Beckley and WVU Tech. Students and faculty supporting property development in Beckley facilitate economic growth and vibrancy. Increased pedestrian traffic from the University contributes to an active, entertaining downtown. Beckley can create environments where all individuals feel welcome and valued through inclusiveness at local events and considering students and faculty in land use and housing decisions.



*Photo: WVU Tech Students Hiking (Source: City of Beckley)*



# Land Use

The six roots of the plan firmly established the foundation for the development of this chapter, specifically the Future Land Use map. This chapter defines the story of Beckley's population and building trends and coordinates them with the vision, goals, and objectives to establish a future-oriented land use growth pattern.

## Insights

### POPULATION AND BUILDING TRENDS

The pressure to use land for various purposes is driven by changing human needs. As people are drawn to an area, the necessary urban space for housing, commerce, and industry naturally increases. Therefore, an analysis of past and possible future population and development growth helps inform the future land use map.

#### **Population**

Beckley has had a relatively stable population in recent decades, while Raleigh County has seen more fluctuations. Raleigh County's highest population in the past 70 years occurred in 1950 while the City of Beckley's occurred in 1980. Both Raleigh County and Beckley are smaller than they were in the 1950s, yet Beckley has retained more of its population since.

**Figure 34: Population Change (1950-2020)**

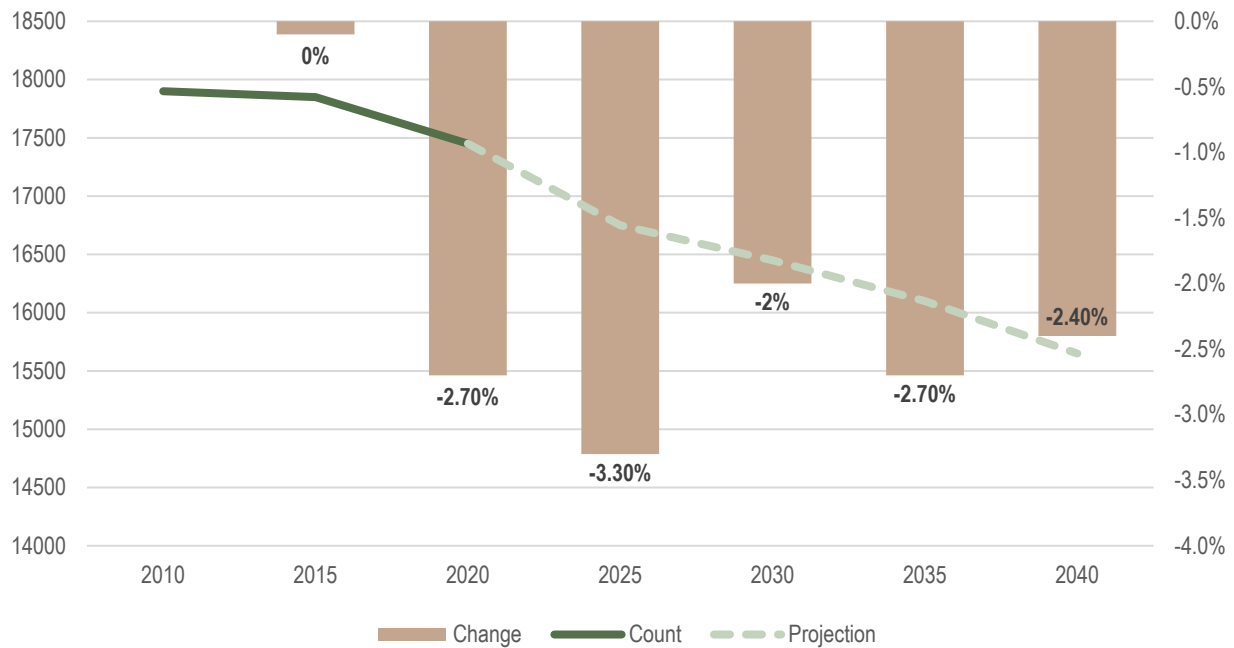
Year	City of Beckley	Raleigh County
1950	19,397	96,273
1960	18,642	77,826
1970	19,884	70,080
1980	20,492	86,821
1990	18,274	76,819
2000	17,254	79,220
2010	17,614	78,859
2020	17,286	74,591
<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>-22%</b>

Looking forward, a stable yet slowly declining population is anticipated for Beckley in the coming decades. This follows the trends of both the state of West Virginia and Raleigh County.

Population trends are generally slow to change without significant events that attract people or encourage people to leave an area. This population decline is primarily due to an aging population and associated increased mortality rate, while the projected birth rate and net migration

rate fail to make up the difference. Some unforeseen events and activities could change growth projections toward the upside. Increased economic activity from the new National Park, increases in hybrid work opportunities, and the growth of WVU Tech are potential opportunities that may offset some of the population decline.

**Figure 35: Population Projections (2040)**



Source: 2020 Decennial Census; WGI projections using data from Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University (2022)

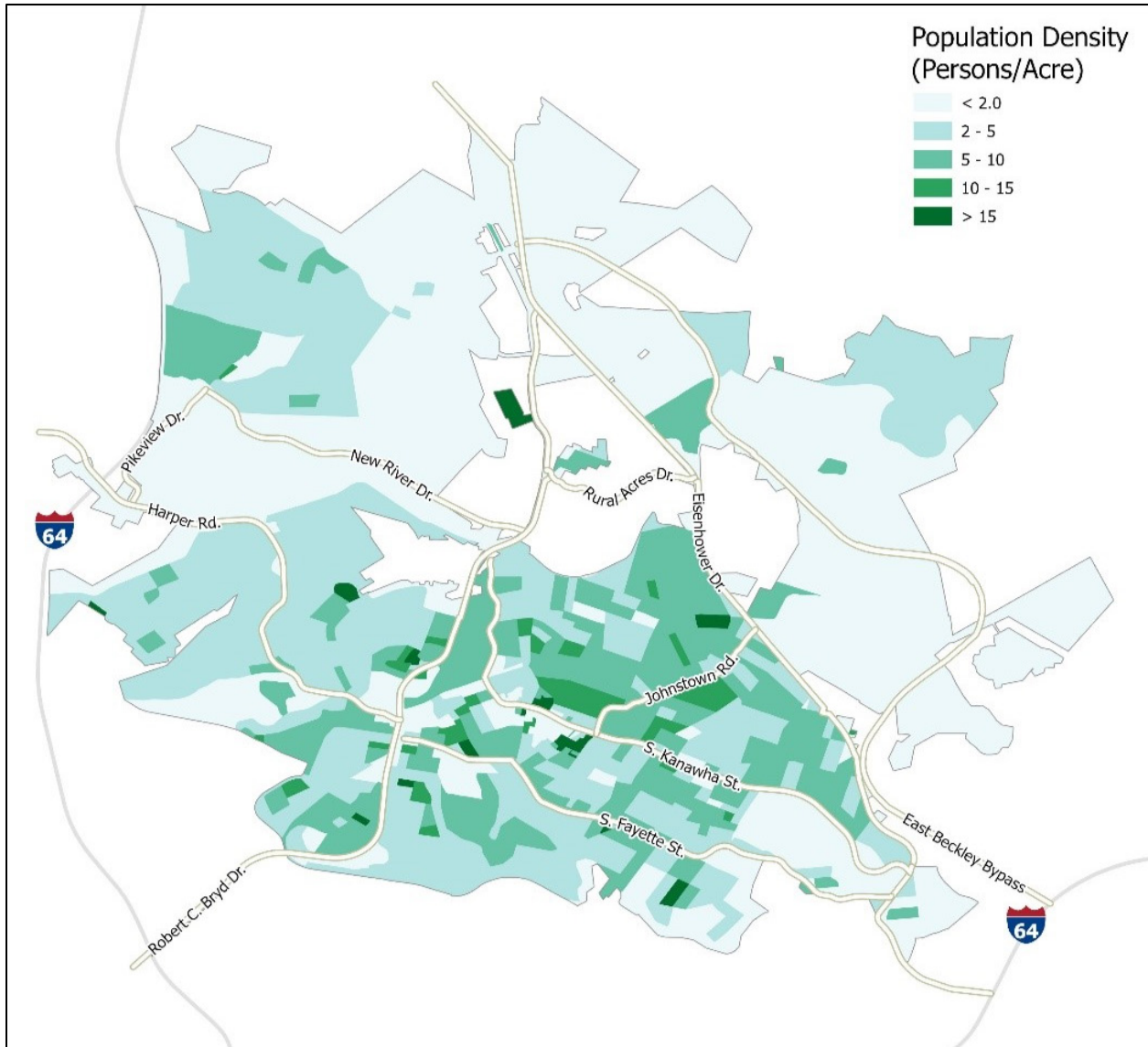
Political Unit	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
West Virginia	1,793,716*	1,768,247	1,747,217	1,723,594	1,705,509
Raleigh County	74,591*	72,539	71,081	69,156	67,524
City of Beckley	17,286*	16,810	16,473	16,026	15,648

\* Counts from the 2020 Decennial Census

1. Projections from the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University (2022).

2. Projections from WGI. using constant share methods

As the population is expected to remain stable, the land use priority should not be on increasing the amount of land dedicated to residential uses, but focusing on development and redevelopment to targeted areas and diversifying residential use types. Population density in Beckley is higher in the southern half of the city (Figure 35) corresponding with higher density residential land use. Maintaining or increasing development density in these areas, especially downtown and the surrounding area, will help revitalize the city core while preserving lower-density residential areas and providing a diverse range of housing types. Further, incentivizing mixed uses in more dense areas and corridors will also create more walkable environments and promote social interaction among residents. These priorities are reflected in the future land use map (Figure 42).

**Figure 36: Population Density Map**

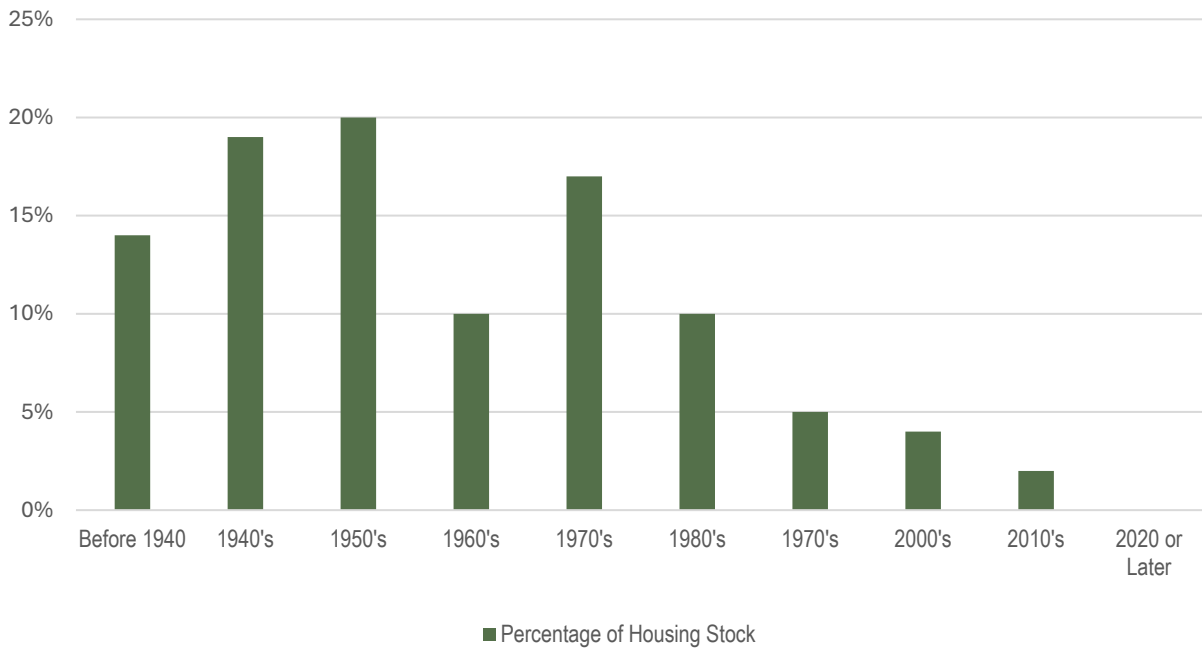
Source: US Decennial Census 2020

### **Building**

Development trends typically follow population growth, and this is generally the case in Beckley. Available housing data indicates that Beckley experienced several decades of substantial growth that ended in the late 1970's. From the 1980's onward the rate of housing construction fell sharply. Some of the oldest housing units are found near Uptown Beckley, while newer housing units are found to the north, and a lesser extent to the south.

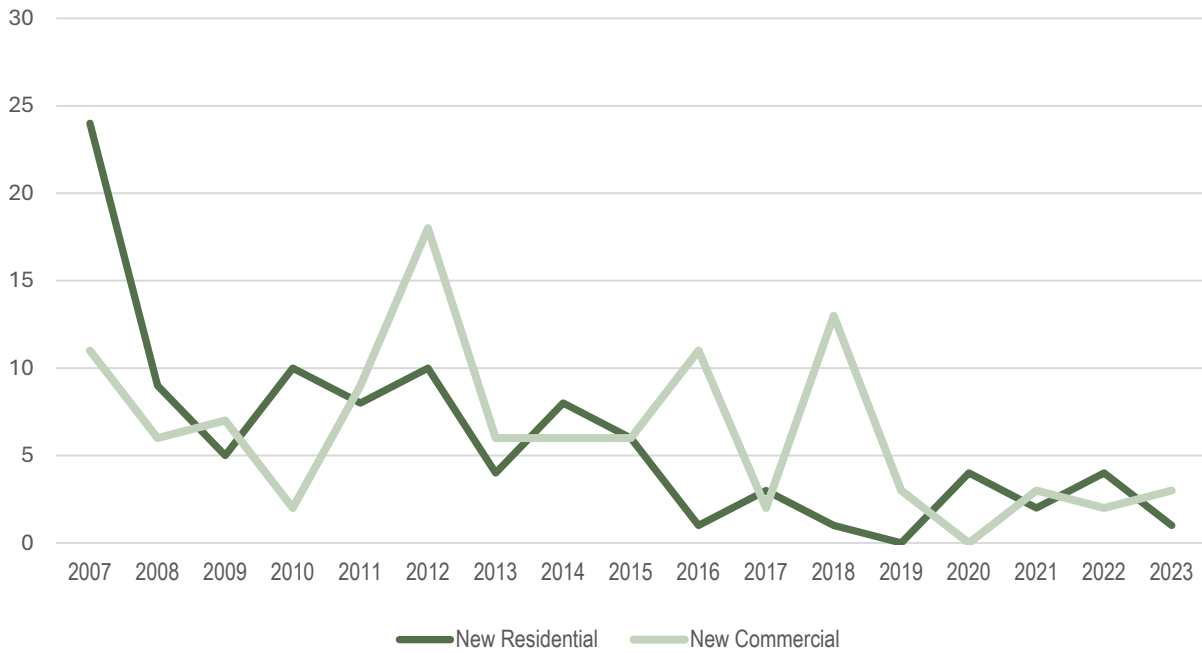
Even as housing production declined, commercial development saw several years of growth, particularly between 2012 and 2018 due to the growth of Beckley as a regional retail hub.

**Figure 37: Existing Housing Units by Age (2020)**



Source: 2020 US Census Bureau

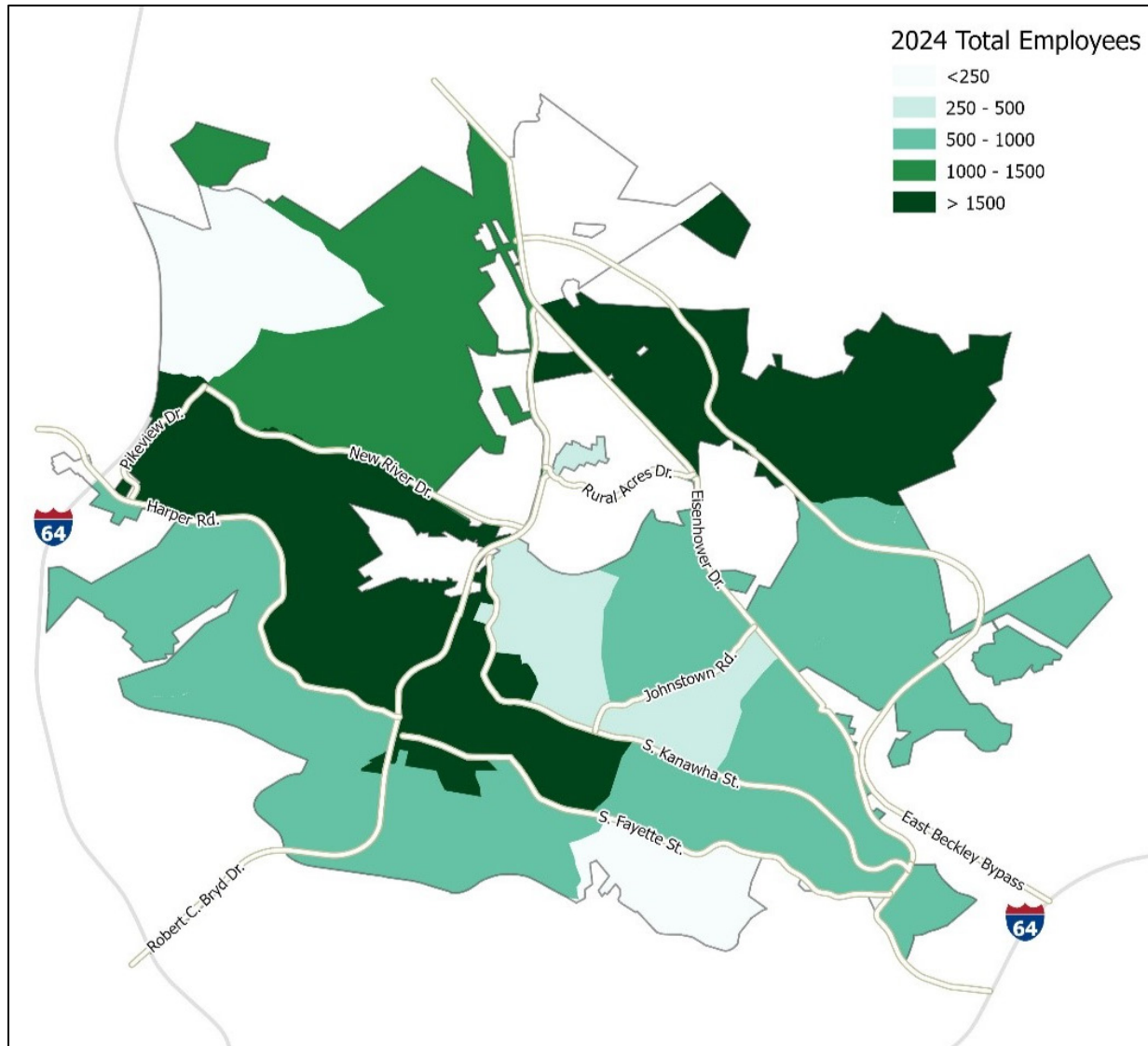
**Figure 38: Number of New Buildings Permits (2007-2023)**



Source: City of Beckley

Employment in Beckley is concentrated along the Beckley Bypass area, Harper Road, and Downtown (Figure 38). The concentration of employment is representative of the commercial activity and intensity in a given area. These are the areas in which Beckley should continue to promote commercial development, which is reflected in the future land use map.

**Figure 39: Employment Concentration**



Source: Esri 2024 estimate based on business listings provided by Data Axle

## EXISTING LAND USE

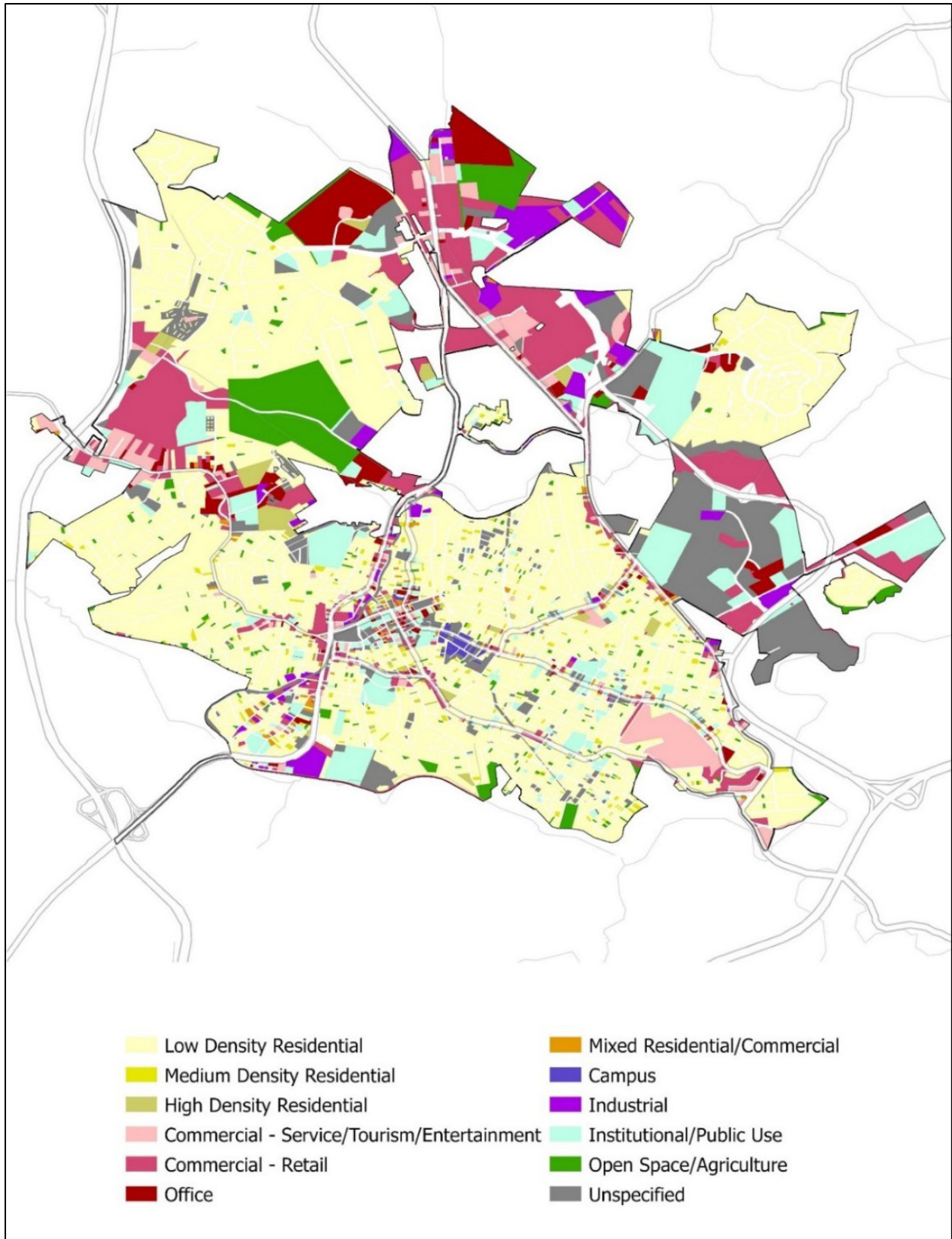
An existing land use map was prepared using the Geographic Information System (GIS) resources of the Beckley Sanitary Board based on information provided by the Raleigh County Assessor. Although attribute data for all parcels were not available, the existing land use map provides a general illustration of how land is used in the City of Beckley.

**Figure 40: Existing Land Use**

Land Use Category	Example Uses	Average Percentage
Low Density Residential	residential single-family	79.2%
Medium Density Residential	residential 2 to 4 families, mobile home park	1.8%
High Density Residential	garden apartments, rise apartments	0.3%
Mixed Residential/ Commercial	residential on top of retail, mixed commercial/residential	0.9%
Commercial - Service/ Tourism/ Entertainment	restaurant, hotel/motel, daycare center, bank, auto service garage, nursing home	1.7%
Commercial - Retail	shopping mall, department store, supermarket, convenience store	4.1%
Office	office building, medical office	1.4%
Industrial	warehouse, manufacturing	0.9%
Institutional/Public Use	government building, hospital, religious facility, parking facility, school, police or fire station	3.3%
Campus	college or university	0.4%
Open Space/Agriculture	farm, country club with golf course	1.8%
Unclassified*	exempt land	4.2%

*\*Unclassified acreage is attributable to discrepancies in available property appraiser data sets.*

Figure 41: Existing Zoning Map



## RURAL COMPONENT

### ***City of Beckley***

The City of Beckley is largely built-out and lacks significant areas considered “rural.” The one area that does offer rural characteristics is the New River Drive Corridor which travels east to west from Robert C. Bryd Drive toward I-77. Rural areas are primarily located outside the corporate limits of Beckley, and as such the city’s population is almost entirely located in urban areas and only 0.6% (less than one percent) live in rural areas.

The New River Drive Corridor is significant because it offers both development opportunities and a rural atmosphere that contrasts with the typical urban development patterns throughout most of the city. The corridor follows a natural valley along Little Whitestick Creek, flowing west to east toward Piney Creek.

Further details on how the New River Drive Corridor can balance its rural components with growth potential are defined under the Priority Development Areas (PDAs) of this plan.

### ***Regional***

The City of Beckley is surrounded by rural and rugged terrain. East of Beckley, there are very steep slopes associated with Piney Creek. These slopes are visible to those traveling over the William C. Brown Bridge just north of the I-64 interchange with the East Beckley Bypass. To some degree, these steep slopes help form a natural growth boundary for Beckley to the east.

Some regional rural and environmental issues are also highlighted in the Piney Creek Watershed Plan, prepared in 2012. The Piney Creek Watershed encompasses the City of Beckley, and the purpose of the plan is to help manage water quality issues. It seeks to reduce the concentrations of pollutants throughout the watershed to meet the applicable state water quality standards that help protect human health and the environment. It contains a list of recommended projects intended to reduce erosion, manage stormwater, and improve sanitary sewer systems.

## Opportunities

### **FUTURE LAND USE**

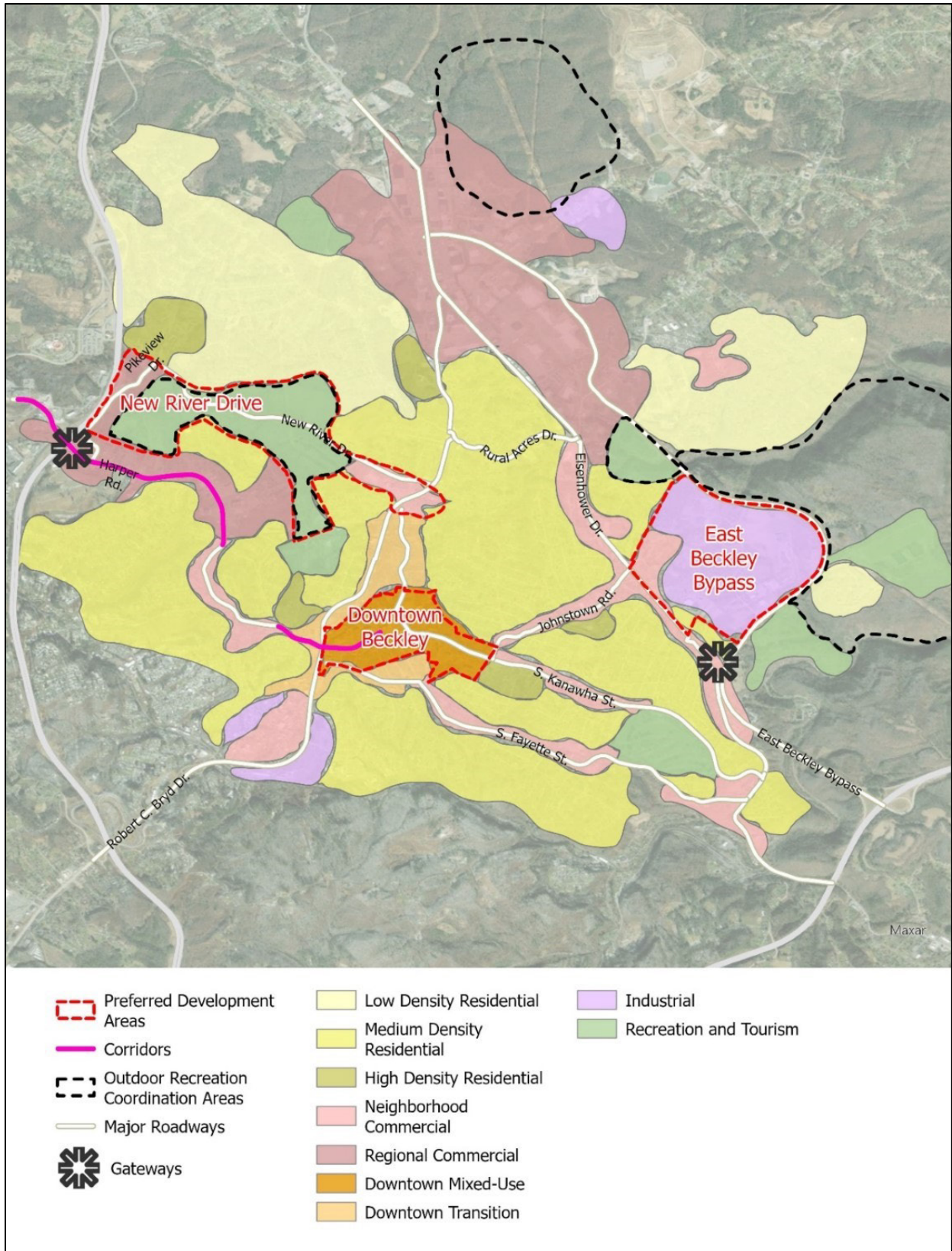
Beckley’s future land use (FLU) plan illustrates desired land use patterns given the goals and objectives expressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Generalized land use categories are used to identify the desired primary use for existing and future areas for development. Future land use designations are not official maps or zoning maps, and they do not specify what an owner can or cannot legally do with their property. However, they can be used as a guide for policy-making, and they can reflect previously adopted plans, current development trends, and established land uses and zoning patterns.



**Figure 42: Future Land Use Categories and Uses**

Land Use Category	Example Uses	Description
Low Density Residential	residential single-family	Neighborhoods with the development of single-family homes and suburban subdivisions.
Medium Density Residential	residential 2 to 4 families, mobile home park	Neighborhoods with a mix of single-family, townhomes, duplexes, and small apartments or multiplexes. Smaller setbacks and individual lots.
High Density Residential	garden apartments, mid to high-rise apartments	Residential developments consisting of garden and mid-rise apartments (4 to 7 stories in height).
Neighborhood Commercial	auto service, convenience stores, grocery stores, medical offices, daycare	Neighborhood and resident-serving commercial development that accommodates small-scale retail or offices, professional services, convenience retail, and storefront retail. Typically located along corridors that can function independently of adjoining development.
Regional Commercial	large-scale, "big box" retail, restaurants	Large commercial destination for retail, wholesale, tourist attractions, lodging, and service establishments with a coordinated design, including shared parking areas and points of access to public rights-of-way. Auto-oriented with direct access and/or visibility from or to the interstate highway.
Downtown Mixed-Use	Live/work opportunities, residential flats above storefronts, cultural amenities, theaters, small retail, municipal buildings	Serves as the city core (Downtown Beckley) and campus area for WVU Tech. On-street or rear parking. Pedestrian focused. A moderately dense mix of residential, commercial, and public uses.
Downtown Transition	Mixed commercial residential, live/work opportunities, retail	Provides a transitional buffer between the downtown core and nearby neighborhoods. Pedestrian and auto-friendly. Strong retail nodes at key intersections. Side and rear parking is preferred, some front parking is acceptable.
Industrial	Warehouse, manufacturing, business park	Areas devoted to manufacturing, storage, and distribution businesses/operations, assembly, and processing. This land use category can also be suitable for office or business parks.
Recreation and Tourism	parks, trails, golf courses, sports facilities, agritourism, complimentary visitor-oriented businesses (restaurants, breweries, lodging, equipment rentals)	As a major goal for the City of Beckley to become a destination for outdoor recreation, this land use type designates areas for recreational opportunities for both visitors and residents.

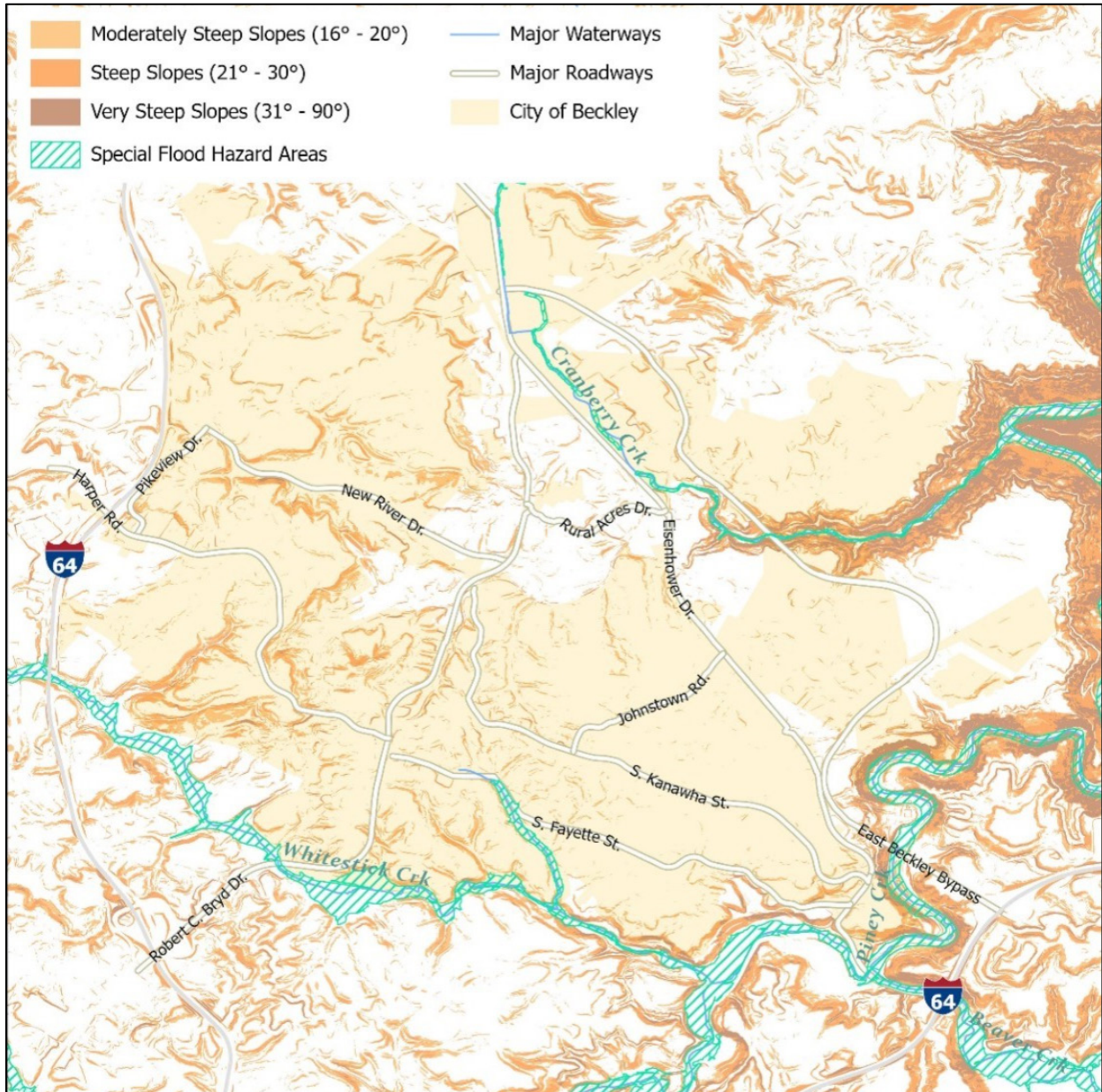
Figure 43: Future Land Use Map



**Slopes**

Land development is constrained by the physical characteristics of the landscape. In Beckley, the primary constraint is topography. Areas to the south and east of Beckley have extremely steep slopes that make urban development extremely difficult without extraordinary measures. Steep slopes are generally defined as hillsides having a 15-foot, or greater, vertical rise over 100 feet of horizontal run, or 15% slope. Development on slopes with a grade of 15% or greater should be avoided, if possible, to limit soil loss, erosion, excessive stormwater runoff, and the degradation of surface water.

**Figure 44: Topography and Natural Constraints**



## PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Preferred Development Areas (PDAs) consider special target areas in the city where development and new investment are of particular importance. Typically, these are places where development incentives may be used to encourage development, infill, or redevelopment, or areas where special land use regulations might be warranted.

**Figure 45: Preferred Development Areas**

Coordination Area	Example Uses
Downtown Beckley	Development in this PDA should focus on adding density and a variety of structures and public spaces with a mix of residential, commercial, and office uses. The variety of services and amenities should cater to students, residents, and visitors.
East Beckley Bypass and Pinecrest Business and Technology Park	The area surrounding the southern portion of the East Beckley Bypass is the primary target for new development in Beckley.
New River Drive	This area is envisioned as tourism and recreation-focused and can be promoted as a place offering new visitor destinations. This area is intended to remain predominantly undeveloped but should be targeted for recreation and tourism-focused support services such as equipment rental, agritourism, cultural exhibits, eco-lodging, and breweries.
Harper Road Gateway and Corridor	The development here is predominantly traveler-oriented with a variety of lodging and restaurants and serves as an entry point and base for visitors. Development and redevelopment in this corridor should be pedestrian and visitor friendly with a variety of services focused on supporting recreational visitors and travelers.
Neville Road Corridor	With strategic public investments that improve the streetscape and public spaces, a more activated downtown will result in private investment and new small businesses. The Beckley Outdoors Plan outlines a conceptual plan for Neville Street as a pedestrian-oriented gateway street into Downtown Beckley.

### ***Flood-Prone Areas***

Flooding is another constraint for development. Flood-prone areas are identified on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map and are identified as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). An SFHA is the area where the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP's) floodplain management regulations must be enforced and the area where the mandatory purchase of flood insurance applies. SFHAs are defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. This is also known as the 100-year flood plain.

- The primary SFHAs that affect Beckley run along Cranberry Creek, Whitestick Creek, and Piney Creek. The following areas are of particular note.
- The SFHA surrounding Cranberry Creek near the Wildwood Trailhead and Piney Creek Preserve encompasses the area immediately adjacent to the creek, but structures built close to the creek may be at risk of flooding in the future.

- Several industrial businesses in southern Beckley between Robert C. Bryd Drive and Whitestick Creek are in the SFHA. While they have been located there for many years, Petroleum Products is most at risk due to its elevation being only slightly higher than Whitestick Creek.
- The area where S Fayette Street, Clark Street, Thomas Street, and Beaver Avenue meet is in the SFHA as well as that portion of S Fayette Street north to Grove Avenue.

### OUTDOOR RECREATION COORDINATION AREAS

These are focus areas identified in the Beckley Outdoor Economy Action Plan for future capital projects. The successful realization of these areas will require long-term coordination between the City, Raleigh County, landowners, and funding sources. Specific information about these focus areas, action items, and steps necessary to implement the proposed capital projects are identified in the Beckley Outdoor Economy Action Plan.



*Photo: Piney Creek (top left), Little Whitestick Falls (top right), Piney Creek Gorge (bottom)*

# Implementation

This section showcases the implementation strategies used to fulfill the Plan’s vision.

## Goals & Action Items

Each of the six roots is supported by three to six goals that work to realize each root’s aspiration. Each goal has a number of action items that when completed will fulfill the goal. These action items are specific items that may be in the form of policy changes, physical projects, planning studies, or changes in existing planning documents. The following matrices identify a timeframe for when each one should be undertaken by designating them as one of the following:

- Quick Wins      0 – 1 Years
- Short-Term      1 – 5 Years
- Mid-Term        6 – 15 Years
- Long-Term      16 – 25 Years

### PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

The following three action items should be prioritized to effectively guide the implementation of the plan.

1. **Conduct a City of Beckley organizational analysis** to determine appropriate staffing needs and the inclusion of a planning department.
2. **Utilize a task force** to ensure implementation of the plan, guiding the next steps and tracking the progress of the priorities.
3. **Update the land development and subdivision regulatory standards** to align with the plan's goals and aspirations.

## Root 1: Recreation & Tourism

### ASPIRATION

*“Establish the City of Beckley as a premier recreation destination that celebrates southern West Virginia’s Appalachian heritage. Promote artistic and cultural assets for residents and visitors to take advantage of while elevating Beckley’s rich history and vibrant artistic community.”*

### GOALS

The Recreation & Tourism Root is supported by four goals.

1. Develop a network of high-quality parks interconnected by trails and pathways.
2. Brand and market both the regional and City’s outdoor recreation amenities as destinations.
3. Establish Beckley as an attractive place for residents and visitors to gather for events.
4. Preserve, restore, and celebrate the historic fabric of Beckley.

**IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 1.1: Develop a network of high-quality parks interconnected by trails and pathways</b>				
Develop an annual maintenance budget for park and trail improvements.	X			
Further refine the New River Park Concept Plan.				
Install trail connections between Beckley Mill Park and the McManus Trail.		X		
Implement smaller, affordable projects outlined in the Beckley Outdoors Plan.		X		
Develop McManus Trail in uptown Beckley and connect to neighborhoods.			X	
Develop the Beckley Mill Park.			X	
Expand New River Park when opportunities arise.				X
<b>Goal 1.2: Brand and market both the regional and City's outdoor recreation amenities as destinations.</b>				
Rename Ewart Avenue as "Coal Mine Way."	X			
Brand and market the New River Park along Harper Road, New River Drive, and Robert C. Bryd Drive.		X		
Implement a Beckley branding strategy focused on outdoor recreation to encourage tourism.		X		
<b>Goal 1.3: Establish Beckley as an attractive place for residents and visitors to gather for events.</b>				
Market and advertise the city's historic and cultural assets to set Beckley apart from nearby communities.	X			
Create or improve free activities for youth and 55+ residents.		X		
<b>Goal 1.4: Preserve, restore, and celebrate the historic fabric of Beckley.</b>				
Establish and enact a Demolition by Neglect ordinance requiring building owners to maintain historic buildings.	X			
Conduct a historic resources survey to identify all structures within the Historic District eligible for the National and/or State Registry and identify and evaluate additional areas downtown that should be added to the Historic District.		X		
Establish an emergency structural repair program for historic or contributing properties.			X	
Establish a Historic District tax credit program.			X	

## Root 2: Revitalization

### ASPIRATION

*“Develop a vibrant community where residents, students, and visitors gather to enjoy arts, entertainment, and culture, and promote Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize and stimulate economic activity and development.”*

### GOALS

The Revitalization Root is supported by six goals.

1. Re-establish Downtown Beckley as the social and economic focal point of the community.
2. Revitalize primary commercial corridors.
3. Foster the incubation and growth of local businesses.
4. Ensure the design of redevelopment, renovations, and new construction is compatible with the authentic historic character of the city.
5. Curate a compendium of public art and placemaking installations that activate their surrounding neighborhoods and tell the story of Beckley.
6. Renew residential neighborhoods by reducing the number of abandoned and dilapidated sites in the city.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 2.1: Re-establish Downtown Beckley as the social and economic focal point of the community.</b>				
Hire a full-time Business Development Coordinator to market downtown and be the liaison for business and property owners.	X			
Review the suggestions for updating the City of Beckley’s zoning code and update regulations accordingly.	X			
Create an inventory of property owners, business owners, lease rates, vacant properties, and their associated square footage.	X			
Coordinate with WVU Tech to increase integration of the campus and downtown by establishing a city-university committee that keeps regular communication and coordinate programs and development opportunities.		X		
Conduct an update to the 2019 Downtown Plan with a market study targeting specific businesses and industries, identifying vacant properties and spaces, and finding solutions to address gaps and opportunities, ensuring that Downtown Beckley remains a retail hub for surrounding communities		X		
Explore the creation of a Main Street Program.			X	
Promote infill development and redevelopment of existing homes and commercial lots through a revised downtown zoning district or development of an overlay district.			X	
Collaborate closely with New River Gorge Regional Development Authority to obtain grants, loans, and other funds for streetscape improvements.			X	



Obtain surveys and develop preliminary engineering reports that explore a refined design and cost estimates for the streetscape study area and Shoemaker Park as defined in the Beckley Outdoor Plan.				X
<b>Goal 2.2: Revitalize primary commercial corridors.</b>				
Create an inventory of vacant or abandoned properties.	X			
Work with NRGRDA to encourage incorporating historic stone materials in sign bases as part of a regional wayfinding signage project.	X			
Ensure that the city's historical character is represented in design elements of the regional wayfinding signage project.	X			
Conduct a market study to identify potential industries or job creators.		X		
Establish branding and beautification efforts to brand each corridor.		X		
Establish a façade improvement program.			X	
<b>Goal 2.3: Foster the incubation and growth of local businesses.</b>				
Engage with locally owned businesses and evaluate their needs for growth.	X			
Partner with NRGRDA to develop an incentive program to incubate and grow small businesses that support the local economy.		X		
Work with regional coalitions to bring new climate sector and technology jobs to the region, help new businesses thrive.			X	
<b>Goal 2.4: Ensure the design of redevelopment, renovations, and new construction is compatible with the authentic historic character of the city.</b>				
Review and evaluate existing design standards and how they have been implemented in the past 10 years.	X			
Initiate a study to refine the standards of the Historic Landmark Commission and its review process to balance sustainable business development and preserving history and character.		X		
Develop incentives to discourage the removal of stone walls and encourage repair efforts as a matter of general municipal practice through the city's design standards.		X		
Identify opportunities to replicate the work of early Italian stone masons in new public buildings as appropriate and contextual.		X		
Encourage private development through incentives to incorporate relevant historic elements in new development and renovations.		X		
<b>Goal 2.5: Curate a compendium of public art and placemaking installations that activate their surrounding neighborhoods and tell the story of Beckley.</b>				
Identify placemaking grants and funding opportunities and their requirements for eligibility.	X			
Identify high-priority, high-impact areas to incorporate placemaking or public artwork. Public art installations near tourist locations should also be prioritized.	X			
Install a mural on the railroad overpass over Robert C. Bryd Drive.	X			
Install a mural to the side of the State Building	X			
Adopt a placemaking program.		X		
Develop a public art master plan in collaboration with local artists. The master plan should identify the types of public art encouraged, desired locations to incorporate public art, priority areas of the City and types of art to be the primary focus, and funding, grants, and resources for implementation.			X	

<b>Goal 2.6: Renew residential neighborhoods by reducing the number of abandoned and dilapidated sites in the city.</b>				
Increase enforcement of building codes and property maintenance ordinances to improve the appearance of the city.	X			
Empower neighborhood-based organizations to become leaders in the transformation of their neighborhoods.	X			
Identify and prioritize dilapidated residential structures for demolition.	X			
Start and maintain in partnership with the Beckley Board of Realtors a Landlord Association and provide incentives to landlords who participate in the program.		X		
Pursue community development block grants, FEMA grants, and funding from the Reclamation of Abandoned and Dilapidated Properties Program to fund the demolition of dangerous and abandoned buildings.		X		
Explore the development of a community land bank to acquire, hold, manage, and sometimes redevelop property in order to return these properties to productive use to meet community goals.			X	
Institute a city-wide housing program for vacant, dilapidated, and condemned structures.				X

## Root 3: Connectivity

### ASPIRATION

*“Invest in infrastructure that increases access and connectivity among natural resources, commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, historic assets, and people.”*

### GOALS

The Connectivity Root is supported by four goals.

1. Improve multimodal accessibility in and connection to Beckley.
2. Ensure that natural areas and green spaces are accessible to all residents.
3. Ensure access to reliable broadband for all residents and businesses in Beckley.
4. Improve essential utility service in Beckley.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 3.1: Improve multimodal accessibility in and connection to Beckley.</b>				
Explore low-cost / high-impact tactical urbanist strategies to activate the alley behind Neville Street.	X			
Create a Complete Streets policy.		X		
Develop the Harper Road Corridor and East Beckley Bypass as gateways to the city.		X		
Integrate outdoor recreation opportunities by establishing strong connectivity to the McManus Trail.		X		
Connect the McManus Trail to Piney Creek preserve		X		
Connect Piney Creek Preserve to the YMCA soccer trails		X		
Update the existing parking study		X		
Implement goals and objectives listed in the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that applies to Beckley.		X	X	X
Conduct a mobility study to identify tailored implementation measures in priority areas needing improved accessibility and connection, such as Harper Road and Robert C. Bryd Drive, New River Drive and Robert C. Bryd Drive, Eisenhower Drive and Robert C. Bryd Drive, and Pikeview Drive and Harper Road (along with the greater Exit 42 area).			X	
Conduct a study to determine the best locations for Complete Streets demonstration projects, quick-build projects, and long-term projects.			X	
Implement the citywide sidewalk system, such as repairing/replacing sidewalks and creating sidewalks where there are “gaps”.			X	
Invest in the Beckley Intermodal Gateway (BIG) as the regional transit hub and explore park and ride station locations.			X	
Redevelop downtown and corridor streetscapes allowing for improved accessibility and pedestrian movement.			X	
Add connector roads to New River Park.			X	

Create a trail connection from Beckley to the New River Gorge National Park through the Piney Creek preserve			X	
Provide streets that easily accommodate festivals, events, and bicycles in Downtown Beckley.				X
<b>Goal 3.2: Ensure that natural areas and green spaces are accessible to all residents.</b>				
Partner with local law enforcement to prioritize public safety for trails and outdoor spaces.	X			
Make Waterfall Hollow Trail ADA accessible.		X		
<b>Goal 3.3: Ensure access to reliable broadband for all residents and businesses in Beckley.</b>				
Evaluate where broadband access is limited and areas for enhancements.	X			
Adopt a “Dig Once” policy to accelerate the build-out of broadband cable network.		X		
Invest in and provide technology training and education for the community members.		X		
Research and identify state and federal grants, loans, and other financial resources that can be used to build out and upgrade the broadband network, such as the bipartisan infrastructure law – Internet For All Program.		X		
<b>Goal 3.4: Improve essential utility service in Beckley.</b>				
Explore public-private infrastructure funding options with the Region 1 Planning and Development Council.	X			
Partner with Raleigh County and Region 1 Planning and Development Council to ensure source water and watershed protection.	X			
Enact local ordinances to create wellhead and source water protection zones.	X			
Enact local policies ensuring the protection of the watershed, tree canopy, and native soils.	X			
Collaborate with applicable agencies to conduct a new Source Water Assessment and Protection Study.		X		
Collaborate with Beckley Water to Improve the water distribution system to lower average service needs and water loss.		X		
Explore replacing above-ground wiring systems with underground wiring.		X		
Conduct an infrastructure improvement plan.		X		

## Root 4: Prosperity

### ASPIRATION

*“Create an environment where the social, physical, emotional, and mental health are at the forefront of concern by enhancing sustainable support services for all people and places while utilizing Beckley’s historical and cultural assets to revitalize neighborhoods.”*

### GOALS

The Prosperity Root is supported by three goals.

1. Boost the development and affordability of housing in Beckley.
2. Increase Beckley’s workforce by providing development, self-sufficiency, educational training, and empowerment to residents.
3. Establish Beckley as a premier community for residents to age in place.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 4.1: Boost the development and affordability of housing in Beckley.</b>				
Coordinate with the New River Gorge Development Authority on the 2024 Housing Needs Assessment and identify key housing types suitable for the City of Beckley.	X			
Promote mixed-use development downtown.	X			
Conduct a code audit to identify barriers to inclusionary housing, diverse housing types, and housing production.	X			
Streamline the approval process of affordable housing projects.	X			
Re-evaluate parking requirements for infill housing downtown and along transit-rich corridors.	X			
Develop and preserve housing opportunities for unhoused persons and persons or families at risk of becoming unhoused.		X		
Create a weatherization program to help residents access state and federal funds to improve home energy efficiency.		X		
Incentivize the development of workforce and affordable housing options to developers.		X		
Facilitate the construction of diverse housing types, particularly housing units over retail and missing middle housing options such as duplexes and triplexes.		X		
Develop a program to assist low income residents with housing maintenance.				
Update the zoning code to allow for a diversity of housing types, including accessible housing, services, and facilities for persons with special needs.		X		
Implement feasibly all initiatives in the Consolidated Plan.			X	

**Goal 4.2: Increase Beckley’s workforce by providing development, self-sufficiency, educational training, and empowerment to residents.**

Explore the creation of a regional workforce development council.	X			
Partner with WVU Tech to develop continuing education programs for residents and post-graduate placement opportunities to encourage student employment in the Beckley region.		X		
Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to develop, encourage, and support workshops, individual training, and mentorships among area businesses.		X		
Capture remote employees by promoting Beckley as an area offering the ‘remote lifestyle’ and incentives such as the Ascend West Virginia program.		X		

**Goal 4.3: Establish Beckley as a premier community for residents to age in place.**

Conduct a senior and ADA-focused walk audit of downtown, major corridors, and parks to identify mobility barriers for older or disabled citizens.	X			
Partner with local medical and/or education institutions to establish a local CAPABLE Program		X		
Incentivize affordable and age-restricted housing options for developers.		X		
Improve community facilities, infrastructure, public services, and the quality of life for residents living in the City of Beckley by conducting an accessibility audit ensuring ADA compliance and adopting Universal Design standards in public facilities.		X		

## Root 5: Cooperation

### ASPIRATION

*“Enhance collaboration and communication within internal agencies and between external entities that respect the uniqueness of Beckley while envisioning future mutual prosperity.”*

### GOALS

The Cooperation Root is supported by five goals.

1. Strengthen long-range planning efforts for the City of Beckley.
2. Increase the efficiency of inter-jurisdictional services.
3. Develop a coordinated economic development strategy.
4. Plan for more resilient infrastructure systems.
5. Create a Special Improvement District or Business Improvement District.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 5.1: Strengthen long-range planning efforts for the City of Beckley.</b>				
Establish a Planning Department within the City of Beckley organization.	X			
Hold meetings with members of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to help city staff understand how current planning and zoning processes and procedures affect these neighborhoods, businesses, and quality of life.	X			
Create or use an existing task force to ensure the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan by tracking the progress of action items and coordinating action steps.	X			
Develop engagement tools and strategies that ensure opportunities for members of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to review and offer input regarding planning issues that impact their communities.		X		
Design and offer events or classes to help historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities understand and participate in the planning process.		X		
Develop a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan coordinated with the annual Capital Improvement Program.		X		
Develop innovative programs and initiatives to help the City develop or acquire more permanent funding streams for Plan objectives.		X		
Coordinate writing the Annual Action Plan and 5-Year Consolidated Plan needed for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.		X		
Coordinate CDBG funds received annually to implement the objectives identified in the 5-Year Plan and Annual Action Plan, and for eligible programs and projects.		X		
Conduct an annexation study to analyze the cost-benefit of annexing enclaves within the city limits.		X		

Prepare a study to consider the feasibility and desirability of constructing a new public safety training facility.			X	
<b>Goal 5.2: Increase the efficiency of inter-jurisdictional services.</b>				
Coordinate with local planning departments to confirm jurisdictional responsibilities	X			
Create a Memorandum of Understanding with adjacent jurisdictions to eliminate confusion regarding response times and delivery of services.	X			
<b>Goal 5.3: Develop a coordinated economic development strategy.</b>				
Develop or use an existing task force with regional organization representation to develop an Economic Development strategy.		X		
Incentivize infill development to replace demolished buildings over greenfield development to be more cost-effective for infrastructure.		X		
Seek federal, state, and private funding to support economic development in the region.		X		
Regularly pursue grants and low-interest loans provided by state and federal government agencies.		X		
Explore the development of a regional workforce study.			X	
<b>Goal 5.4: Plan for more resilient infrastructure systems.</b>				
Create a resilience plan to consider critical systems, assess vulnerable infrastructure, and identify priorities.		X		
Create a continuing planning and development process that shifts how infrastructure services are designed and implemented.			X	
<b>Goal 5.5: Create a Special Improvement District or Business Improvement District.</b>				
Work with the State Municipal League to create legislation allowing the creation of these districts.		X		
Use funds from these districts for marketing, management, and public improvements.		X		



## Root 6: Inclusivity

### ASPIRATION

*“Leverage our individual strengths to enhance economic opportunity, encourage strong civic engagement, and foster a community spirit.”*

### GOALS

The Inclusivity Root is supported by four goals.

1. Create a Resource Coordinator position in the newly established Planning Department within the City of Beckley organization.
2. Strengthen social support for the unhoused in Beckley and those in low-income housing.
3. Explore a Build West Virginia designation.
4. Establish a new division or department focused on cultural competency and inclusion.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action Item	Quick Win (0-1 Years)	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-15 Years)	Long-Term (16-25 Years)
<b>Goal 6.1: Create a Resource Coordinator position in the newly established Planning Department within the City of Beckley organization.</b>				
Ensure equitable access to information on housing, social programs, small business development and employment.	X			
Collaborate with partner agencies to develop communication materials for public distribution.	X			
Create a citizenry resource guide including contact information for relevant city departments and assistance programs available throughout the city.	X			
Identify and fill gaps in existing programs that support the unhoused, families, persons with special needs, and older adults.		X		
Develop strong partnerships to build a network of community support surrounding housing and social issues.		X		
Invest in common technologies to share information on vulnerable residents between agencies including law enforcement.			X	
<b>Goal 6.2: Strengthen social support for the unhoused in Beckley and those in low-income housing.</b>				
Involve social workers, law enforcement, health care, employers, local church leaders, and others necessary to develop a task force to ensure the creation of workforce and seasonal housing.	X			
Explore establishing a Housing First program.		X		
Establish a continuum of care program for Beckley through public-private partnerships.			X	

<b>Goal 6.3: Explore a Build West Virginia designation.</b>				
Create or use an existing task force to investigate the requirements for certification.	X			
Determine who will manage and monitor the program.		X		
Inform builders of the housing development tax credits after certification.			X	
<b>Goal 6.4: Establish a new division or department focused on cultural competency and inclusion.</b>				
Promote inclusive activities and programming that are designed to reach diverse audiences.	X			
Establish a program showing residents how to embrace equity and inclusivity principles.		X		
Consider social equity in all environmental resiliency decisions.		X		
Work collaboratively with WVU Tech to create a diversity-oriented internship program.		X		
Collect data and stories to leverage additional resource support.		X		
Explore establishing affinity groups that will provide input for decision making.			X	

## Summary

Beckley is at a crossroads of opportunities where growth in its population and the attraction of new businesses can be achieved. As the population is expected to remain stable, the land use priority should not be on increasing the amount of land dedicated to residential uses, but focusing on development and redevelopment to targeted areas and diversifying residential use types.

The six roots of the plan firmly established the foundation for the development of a future-oriented land use growth pattern. Each of the six roots is supported by three to six goals that work to realize each root's aspiration.

An embracing of the Plan's vision and goals and a commitment to seeing through its implementation will pave the way for the Beckley community. Actional steps taken within the first few years of the Plan's adoption are critical to the success of incremental changes.

# APPENDIX

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

*2013 Beckley Market Study*

*2014 City of Beckley Comprehensive Plan*

*2019 Beckley Downtown Assessment*

*2023 Beckley Outdoor Economic Action Plan*

*2027 Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*

*2027 Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)*

*City of Beckley Consolidated Plan*

*City of Beckley 2024 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*

*City of Beckley FY 2024-2028 Five-Year Consolidated Plan*

*West Virginia State Code Section 8A-3-4*

## DATA SOURCES

*Decennial Census 2010 & 2020, U.S Census Bureau*

*2018-2022 American Community Survey, U.S Census Bureau*

*Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S Census Bureau*

*Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University*

*Data Axle business listings*

*City of Beckley Building Permits*

*Raleigh County Property Assessment*

*Beckley Sanitary Board*

*FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map*

*USGS Topographic Maps*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)*

*US Federal Communications Commission (FCC)*

