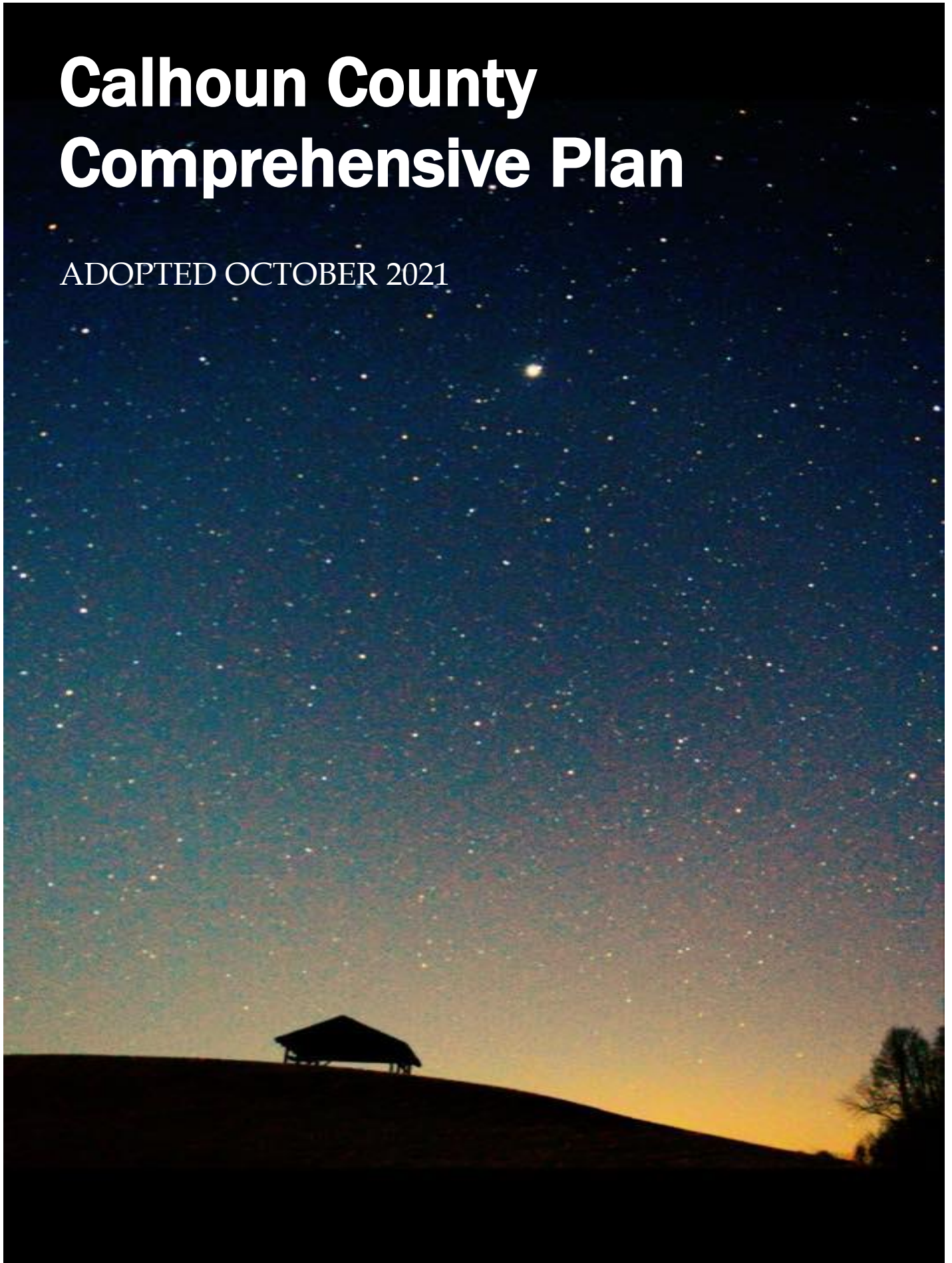


# Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan

ADOPTED OCTOBER 2021



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# Acknowledgements

Both Calhoun County and the Town of Grantsville have participated in the comprehensive plan process. Additionally, particular individuals and groups have played an instrumental role in the creation of the Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan.

The Calhoun County Planning Commission, which was formed in 2017 by the County Commission, has been tasked with preparing a comprehensive plan for the county, including the Town of Grantsville. By participating in the comprehensive plan process, the town can consent to the county comprehensive plan.

The Planning Commission is made up of volunteers from throughout the county who have a desire to move the county forward. The Planning Commission has met many times over the last couple of years in order to prepare the comprehensive plan. The County Commission has provided space for meetings and is ultimately responsible for adopting the comprehensive plan. The County Commission is also responsible for ensuring that the comprehensive plan is implemented after its adoption.

The Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council was instrumental in helping kickstart the Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan process. The Regional Council helped secure funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Flex-E-Grant Program to help defray costs of developing the comprehensive plan. The Regional Council has also supported the comprehensive plan process by attending and participating in meetings and by providing mapping services.

The Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, WVU College of Law was retained by the county and the town to assist in the development of the comprehensive plan. The law clinic has assisted several communities throughout the state develop uniquely tailored comprehensive plans.

Without the input and participation of the citizens and business owners, the comprehensive plan would not fully represent the desires of individuals throughout the county. Citizens were welcome to attend each Planning Commission meeting, and many participated in the comprehensive plan open house. High school students were asked to share their opinions on the community. Additionally, parents participated in an open house at each school during a parent-teacher evening in early 2020. To obtain information from the various stakeholders – including business owners, school officials, county officials, civic groups, the library, and agencies – the Planning Commission distributed several individualized stakeholder surveys throughout the county. From

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those surveys, the Planning Commission was better able to articulate the needs of and develop recommendations for Calhoun County.

## County and Town Officials

### *Calhoun County Commission*

- Mr. Scottie V. Westfall II
- Mr. Kevin Helmick
- Mr. Michael Hicks

### *Calhoun County Planning Commissioners*

- Mr. Kevin Helmick, President
- Mr. Ronald Blankenship, Vice President
- Ms. Debra Dawson
- Ms. Martha Haymaker
- Dr. Ariel Mooney-Wood
- Mr. Donnie Pitts
- Ms. Julie Sears
- Ms. Kelli Whytsell

### *Town of Grantsville, Town Council*

- Ron Blankenship, Mayor
- Elizabeth Stirling, Recorder
- Cheryl Cheesbrew
- Linda Jarvis
- Dorothy McCauley
- Judy Powell
- Derek Villers





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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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Calhoun County is centrally located in West Virginia. The Town of Grantsville is the county seat of Calhoun County and the only incorporated community in the county. The county is largely rural in nature, a characteristic that it shares with its neighboring counties.

Even though the county is rural, it is within close proximity to a few populated areas, including the state capital, Charleston, and Parkersburg, which are two of West Virginia's largest cities. Like many places in West Virginia, Calhoun County and the Town of Grantsville have seen a decline in industry and population over the last couple of decades. One of the primary reasons to create a comprehensive plan is to identify community needs and to create a plan to address those needs so that population and industry can rebound in the county.

The first chapter of the comprehensive plan explains the who, what, when, where, and why of the Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan.

## **What is a comprehensive plan?**

A comprehensive plan is often referred to as a community's "blueprint" for the future. The West Virginia Code defines a comprehensive plan as "a plan for physical development, including land use, adopted by the governing body, setting forth guidelines, goals and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body's jurisdiction." W. Va. Code §8A-1-2(c). The comprehensive plan must also "promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, as well as the efficiency and economy in the process of development." W. Va. Code §8A-3-1(c).

While there is no specific "shelf life" for a comprehensive plan, it is commonly accepted that the comprehensive plan should provide recommendations for the next 10 to 15 years. In West Virginia, a community must review and update a comprehensive plan every 10 years if the community wishes to enforce any land use controls. Ideally, a comprehensive plan will be reviewed and updated more regularly and will be a useful guide for local officials on a daily basis.

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## What is the purpose of creating a comprehensive plan?

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a framework for the community to realize its goals and objectives. Prioritizing goals and objectives allow the community to address the most important issues first. A comprehensive plan, with well-articulated goals and objectives, can give grant funders a clear idea of the community's vision, possibly giving the community an advantage in receiving grants.

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## 5 Keys for an Implementable Plan

*(Source: Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development)*

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1. *Focus the plan on relevant, real community issues*
  2. *Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think*
  3. *Devise practical and workable recommendations*
  4. *Recruit partners and create capacity to implement the plan*
  5. *Get local ownership of the plan and commitment to implement it*
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## The Comprehensive Plan Process

The comprehensive plan process is unique to each community. While there are statutory requirements that each community must follow, every community develops its own comprehensive plan process.

Calhoun County started working on obtaining a “dark skies” designation at the county park. As part of the dark skies designation, a dark skies lighting ordinance is required. In



order to enact a lighting ordinance, a comprehensive plan is required. Therefore, the Calhoun County Commission created a Planning Commission, made up of volunteers from throughout the county, to prepare a comprehensive plan. County officials, with the assistance of the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council, retained the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic to assist with the development of the comprehensive plan. Shortly thereafter, the Town of Grantsville officially joined in the county to create a countywide comprehensive plan.

One of the first activities of the comprehensive plan process was the completion of a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats (SWOT) Exercise. Completing a SWOT Exercise can help identify issues, concerns, goals, and objectives of the community. From the SWOT Exercise, a vision statement was developed to guide the community through the comprehensive plan process.

Public participation is an integral part of the comprehensive plan process. There are both required and practical reasons to solicit public input *early, often, and throughout* the process. The Planning Commission is required, under West Virginia Code 8A-3-6(c), to approve procedures seeking public input. The public input procedures are used to guide the Planning Commission during the development of the comprehensive plan.

Public hearings are held at the end of the comprehensive plan process. Although required, public hearings are typically an ineffective way of involving the public, as they are often not well attended. Instead, informal methods of public input have been more effectual in obtaining public input: the Calhoun County Planning Commission conducted activities, such as stakeholder surveys, open houses, social media posts,



visiting high school students, and attending special events, in order to solicit public input.

## Plan Organization

The Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction, outlines the statutory requirements of the comprehensive plan, including the framework and the purpose of the plan. Chapter 2: Community Overview is the community profile. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide relevant information related to housing, population, economic development, business, governance, and transportation in Calhoun County and Grantsville. Chapter 3: Needs Assessment analyzes the issues that have been identified by the community during the comprehensive planning process. One of the best ways to identify a community's needs is through a SWOT Exercise completed early in the comprehensive plan process.

Chapter 4: Action Plan outlines goals, objectives, and action steps that address the issues identified in the previous chapter. Goals are broad, overarching directives that address the major needs identified. Objectives are more discrete than goals. Each goal may consist of several objectives. Each objective is made up of action steps, which are specific and provide detailed guidance to achieve the objective and the overall goal.

The recommendations developed in Chapter 4 are consistent with the County's vision statement, which was developed to guide the comprehensive plan process. Diagram 1 illustrates the importance of the vision statement as the foundation of the comprehensive plan process. Action steps are specific directives built upon the community's vision, goals, and objectives.

**Action Plan Layout Example**

**Goal 1**

Objective 1.1

Action Step 1.1.1.

Action Step 1.1.2.

Action Step 1.1.3.

Objective 1.2

Action Step 1.2.1.

Action Step 1.2.2.

Objection 1.3

Action Step 1.3.1.

Action Step 1.3.2.

Action Step 1.3.3.



Diagram 1: Comprehensive Plan Organizational Hierarchy

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## Vision Statement

One of the first steps of the comprehensive plan process is to develop a vision statement. The community's vision is the foundation of the comprehensive plan. The vision statement is aspirational and should highlight the core values and characteristics of the county. The analysis and recommendations that emanate from the comprehensive plan should be consistent with the community's vision for the future.

The Calhoun County vision statement is as follows:

*"Calhoun County is a welcoming, caring, small-town community. Our citizens proudly embrace the opportunities of a rural lifestyle. Broadband is available in many parts of the county, allowing small businesses to thrive. The Dark Skies Park is a national attraction."*

## Legal Framework of the Comprehensive Plan

Pursuant to West Virginia Code §8A-1-1(a)(5), "a comprehensive plan is a guide to a community's goals and objectives and a way to meet those goals and objectives." According to the West Virginia Code, the comprehensive plan should also "be the basis for land development and use and be reviewed and updated on a regular basis." W. Va. Code §8A-1-1(b)(3). The Code codifies "regular basis" as every 10 years. §8A-3-11(a).

All cities, towns, and counties, as well as regions, in West Virginia are enabled to develop a comprehensive plan. To create a comprehensive plan, a local Planning Commission must be formed. The Planning Commission is responsible for preparing a comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission is also responsible for creating and adopting procedures for public input to use throughout the comprehensive plan process.



While no two comprehensive plans are the same, the West Virginia Code does require that certain components and objectives are addressed in every comprehensive plan. Each community must analyze housing, transportation, land use, economic development, public services, historic preservation, infrastructure, and several other required components.

Before the county commission and the town council can adopt the comprehensive plan, there are a series of steps that need to be taken. First, the county planning commission must hold a public hearing. A legal advertisement must be published in a generally circulating newspaper, and a notice and comment period of at least 30 days must be given before the planning commission holds the public hearing on the draft comprehensive plan (W Va Code § 8A-3-7).

After the public hearing, the planning commission can recommend and submit the draft plan to the county commission and present the draft plan at the county commission’s next regularly scheduled meeting (W Va Code § 8A-3-7). The county commission must also hold a public hearing, and another legal advertisement must be published. After the hearing the county commission can decide whether to adopt the comprehensive plan. Once the comprehensive plan is adopted by the county commission, the Town of Grantsville may, by resolution, vote to make the county’s comprehensive plan its own, as well.

Pursuant to Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code, a comprehensive plan must meet certain objectives and contain certain components in order to be valid. Care has been taken to ensure that all required objectives and components have been sufficiently addressed in Calhoun County’s comprehensive plan.

The following tables outline where each required objective and required component can be found within the Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan.

**REQUIRED OBJECTIVES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

W. Va. Code §8A-3-4(b)(1) to (7)

Code Provision	Chapter
Statement of goals and objectives	Chapters 3 and 4
Timeline on how to meet short- and long-term goals and objectives	Implementation Matrix
Action plan with implementation strategies	Chapter 4 and Implementation Matrix
Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding	Implementation Matrix
Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies	Chapters 3 and 4
A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation	Chapters 3 and 4
Maps, plats, or charts that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	All Chapters

## REQUIRED COMPONENTS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

W. Va. Code §8A-3-4(c)(l) to (13)

Code Provision	Page #
<b><i>Land Use</i></b>	
Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, etc.)	27-29
Population density and building intensity standards	15-18
Growth or decline management	17
Projected population growth or decline	17
Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas)	30
Maps, plats, or charts that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	27-29
<b><i>Housing</i></b>	
Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities)	48-50
Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed	48-50
Address substandard housing	50-53
Rehabilitate and improve existing housing	48-53
Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing	50-53, 55
<b><i>Transportation</i></b>	
Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river and any other mode	47-48
Movement of traffic and parking	39, 41, 49
Pedestrian and bicycle systems	25, 26
Intermodal transportation	46
<b><i>Economic Development</i></b>	
Analyze opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses	54-56
Identify and designate economic development sites or sectors	56-58
Identify types of economic development sought	59-60
<b>Miscellaneous Components</b>	
Infrastructure	44-48
Public Services	44-46
Rural	6, 13, 23, 26, 33, 46, 50, 54, 59
Recreation	15, 31, 38-42, 62-64
Community Design	14, 31, 56
Preferred Development Areas	56-58
Renewal or redevelopment	30, 39, 56-58
Financing	37, 45-46
Historic preservation	31, 40, 66





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## Chapter 2: Community Overview

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Calhoun County, named after South Carolina Politician, John C. Calhoun, is a small, rural county located in central West Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Prior to European settlements, central West Virginia, including present-day Calhoun County, was used by the Mingo, a Native American people who lived in the Tygart Valley and along the Ohio River and used the area as hunting grounds.<sup>2</sup>

The first recorded permanent European settler in the county, Phillip Starcher, arrived in 1810 and built a cabin near present day Arnoldsburg.<sup>3</sup> More families trickled in during the early 1800s, including several Revolutionary War veterans. Early settlers typically reached Calhoun County by way of the Upper Kanawha River and Little Kanawha

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.littlekanawha.com/calhistory.htm#:~:text=Calhoun%20County%20was%20named%20in,t o%20the%20bar%20in%201807>.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

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River. Calhoun County was created by an act of the Virginia General Assembly on March 5, 1856, from parts of Gilmer County.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1800s, timbering became an important economic activity in Calhoun County, as timbered logs were floated down the Little Kanawha towards Parkersburg. Calhoun County also became an oil and gas producer, further increasing population and the number of jobs in the county.

In the absence of railroads and well-built roads, the river was used to ship merchandise and supplies in and out of the county. “At the turn of the 20th century, an important development in river transportation was made by Calhoun resident, Captain Norman Williams.”<sup>5</sup> The Captain operated sternwheelers which were uniquely shallow drafted allowing navigation into the upper reaches of the Little Kanawha River.<sup>6</sup>



Today, the river goes right through the county seat, Grantsville, which functions as the economic hub of Calhoun County. Grantsville was not always the county seat. Arnoldsburg, Pine Bottom, and Yellow Creek (current site of Brooksville) were all, at some point, the county seat of Calhoun County. In 1862, the state legislature moved the county seat to Grantsville. After the Civil War, the county seat moved between

Arnoldsburg and Grantsville. The long and disputed past of the courthouse came to an end when the county seat was finally determined to be Grantsville.



The current courthouse is the fourth courthouse to stand at the present-day site. The first courthouse was built in 1869 and was burned. The second, which

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<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/809>

<sup>6</sup> Id.

was a frame building, was torn down to make way for the third courthouse built of red brick. "The current courthouse was designed by a Parkersburg architect . . . The mass of the current courthouse, which features quarry-faced sandstone laid in alternating broad and narrow courses, is an uncompromising composition of planes and angles."<sup>7</sup>

The county's economy in the late 20th century was largely based on livestock grazing, light manufacturing, oil and gas, and pipeline construction. Reforestation has led to a resurgence of timbering and has made the county ideal for outdoor recreation activities. The Town of Grantsville was named after General, turned President, Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>8</sup> The community was originally developed in 1866, shortly after the Civil War, but was not officially incorporated until 1896, 30 years later.<sup>9</sup> Like the county, the town was impacted by the timber and oil and gas industry in the late 1800s. The town has historically been subject to flooding that has destroyed many of the original buildings in town. Grantsville is home to the annual Calhoun County Wood Festival, which celebrated its 57th year in 2019.



<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/WV-01-CN1>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2149#:~:text=La>  
o%20occupy%20the%20site.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

## Geography

The general terrain of the county is sloped and hilly, with a significant portion of land in the floodplain. The Little Kanawha River and the West Fork of the Little Kanawha River are the primary watersheds in Calhoun County. The county is home to natural springs, including Big Springs.

Many towns and hollows throughout Calhoun County are named after natural geographic landmarks, founding families, notable merchants, benefactors, and politicians.

Calhoun County is bordered by:

- Ritchie County (north)
- Gilmer County (east)
- Braxton County (southeast)
- Clay County (south)
- Roane County (west)
- Wirt County (northwest)

Grantsville is the only incorporated community in the county. The county is approximately 280 square miles in size, making it one of the smaller counties in West Virginia. Interestingly, Calhoun County has never been a coal-producing county.

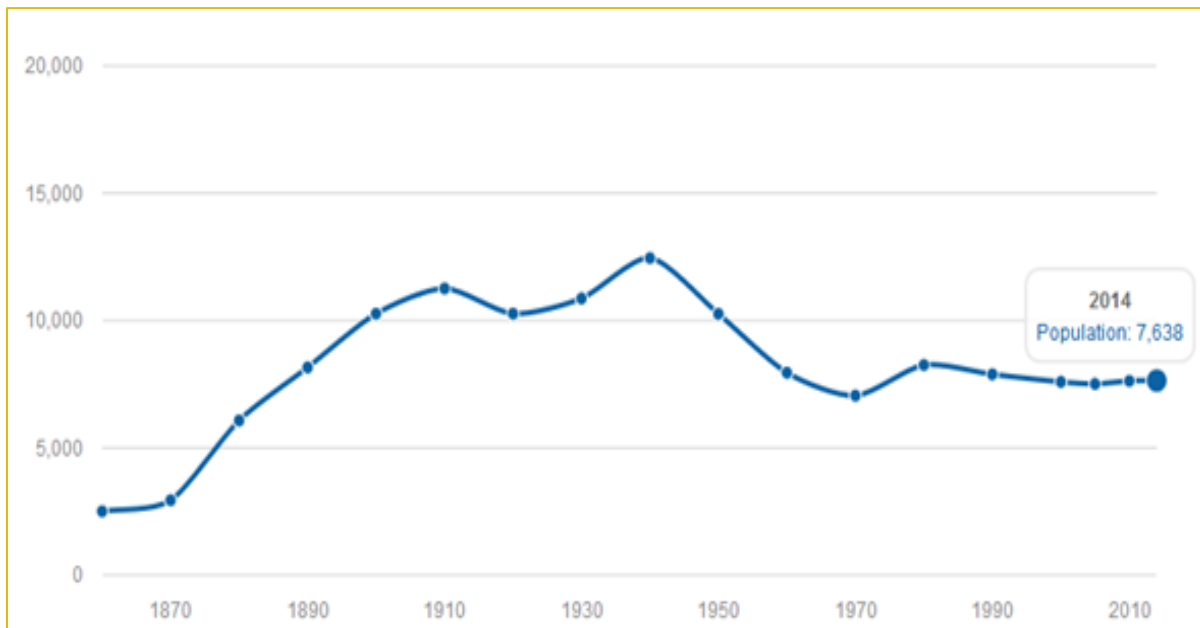
## Population

In addition to Grantsville, other notable population centers (unincorporated) in Calhoun County include Annamoriah, Arnoldsburg, Big Springs, Chloe, Five Forks, Millstone, Mount Zion, Nicut, Orma, Sand Ridge, and Stumptown.

When the county was first formed, there were approximately 2,500 residents within its 280 square miles of land. According to the United State Census Bureau, Calhoun County is currently home to approximately 7,500 residents, with a population density of approximately 27 residents per square mile. The U.S. Census estimates that the population of Calhoun County declined by 3.8% between 2010 and 2015.

*Figure 1* shows Calhoun County historic population trends. The county experienced a significant population decline between 1940 and 1970, with partial recovery in the 1980s.

*Figure 1. Calhoun County Historical Population Trends (Source: United States Census Bureau)*



However, Calhoun's population growth has stagnated. The slight decrease in the last 20 years is due, in part, to a higher death-to-birth rate. The county's population decline can also be attributed to a lack of jobs and subsequent out-migration of the county.

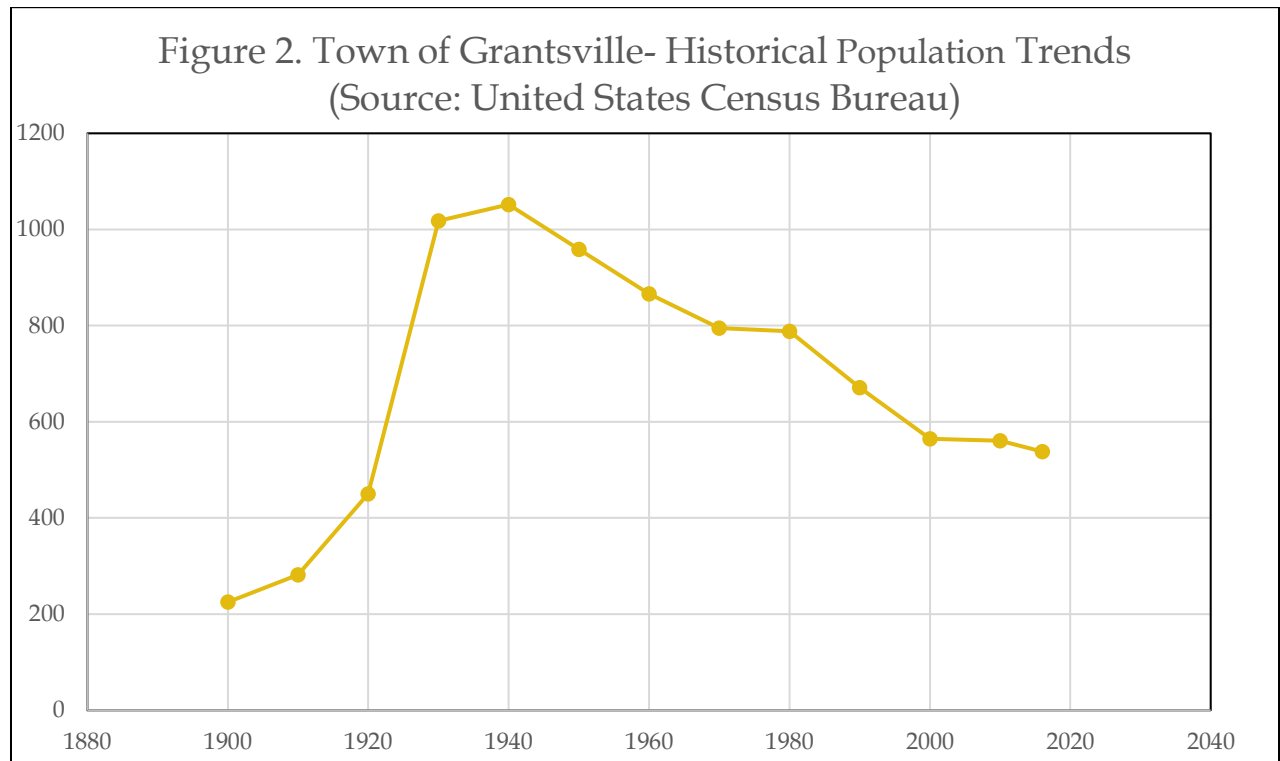


The West Virginia College of Business and Economics, Bureau of Business and Economic Research has produced "Population Trends in West Virginia through 2030," which provides population projections for each county in the state. According to the study, Calhoun County was projected to have a very small, but steady



decline in population between 2000 and 2030. The net loss is projected to be about 350 residents over a 30-year period. These numbers are only projections and do not reflect unknown variables that could increase the population or exacerbate the population loss. The Town of Grantsville will likely mirror the county in terms of population growth or decline.

*Figure 2* shows the historical population trends of the Town of Grantsville. The population of Grantsville follows a similar trend as the county. In both the county and the town, the highest population was during the 1940s.



Both the county and the town have seen a gradual decline in population, with a notable difference between 1970 and 1980, when the population of the county increased, while the population in Grantsville declined.

Census data show the percentage of Calhoun County residents over 65 years old is 23.5%,<sup>10</sup> while 26.3%<sup>11</sup> of Grantsville residents and 20.5%<sup>12</sup> of West Virginia residents are 65 years and older. The county and the town show little ethnic diversity, as white residents represent 99%<sup>13</sup> of the county's population and 95%<sup>14</sup> of Grantsville's population. The median age is 36.1 years old<sup>15</sup> in the Town of Grantsville, 48.1 years old in Calhoun County<sup>16</sup>, and 42.9 years old<sup>17</sup> in West Virginia. The county exhibits a much higher median age than either the town or the state. Understanding the relative age of a community is important when identifying recommendations for the comprehensive plan. A younger demographic might need or want different services or have different priorities than a relatively older population.



Calhoun County residents also serve in the military in very high numbers. With 640 veteran residents, approximately 5.5% of Calhoun's population has served in the U.S. military.<sup>18</sup> By comparison, approximately 7% of the U.S. population has served. Of the 323 veteran residents, approximately 51% of residents served during the Vietnam War era.<sup>19</sup>

## Governance

Calhoun County's governing body consists of a three-member elected county commission. Calhoun County's government includes the following entities: County

<sup>10</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0500000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>

<sup>11</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Grantsville%20town,%20West%20Virginia&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05>

<sup>12</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=west%20virginia&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05>

<sup>13</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US54013>

<sup>14</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Grantsville%20town,%20West%20Virginia&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05>

<sup>15</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Grantsville%20town,%20West%20Virginia&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05>

<sup>16</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US54013>

<sup>17</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=west%20virginia&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05>

<sup>18</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0500000US54013&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2101&hidePreview=true>

<sup>19</sup> Id.

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Clerk, County Assessor, County Sheriff, County Magistrates, County Circuit Court, and the County Prosecuting Attorney. Wayne Underwood Park is found within Grantsville but is maintained by the county. The park has a walking trail, two (2) ball fields, and playground equipment.

The Town of Grantsville is governed by a Mayor and Council. The town has a strong-mayor form of government and five employees, one in the city office, three in the water department, and one maintenance and sewer operator. The town currently has one police officer but is hopeful to hire two more part-time officers. The town operates a water treatment system and a wastewater treatment system for its citizens as well as many property owners outside the corporate town limits.

### **Infrastructure**

Lack of infrastructure and substandard infrastructure are concerns throughout the state. Calhoun County and the Town of Grantsville are no exceptions. Infrastructure includes water and wastewater treatment facilities, roads, stormwater management, broadband, and telecommunication facilities.

### **Wastewater Treatment**

Much of the county is unserved by any wastewater utility. Several properties in Calhoun County use on-site septic, and, in some areas, straight piping occurs. There are only two (2) wastewater utilities in Calhoun County. Mt. Zion Public Service District services the areas around Mt. Zion. According to the state's Public Service Commission webpage, in 2020, the Mt. Zion PSD had a rate of \$33.10 per 3,400 gallons treated, which made it the 89th cheapest wastewater utility out of 321 utilities in the state.

The Town of Grantsville also provides wastewater treatment services to its residents, some non-residents, and Calhoun County Schools. The town's sewer lines extend a few miles west, along Route 5, outside of Grantsville, and approximately one mile east of Grantsville, along Route 5. The town's wastewater rate as of 2020, was \$45.57 per 3,400 gallons treated, which made the town the 223rd cheapest out of 321 total wastewater utilities in the state.

In November 2017, the town of Grantsville and Calhoun County Schools submitted a Proposed Needs Project Application to the School Building Authority (SBA) of West Virginia. The project application sought \$895,118 in funding to replace the existing wastewater treatment plant and perform restroom upgrades in Calhoun County schools. The Town of Grantsville wastewater treatment plant was built in 1998 but is currently in poor condition. In 2016, the SBA awarded funding to the town to replace the plant's sand filtration system, but the plant remains in disrepair.

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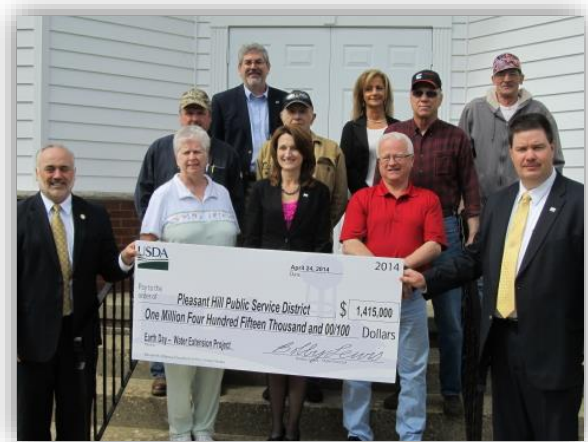
## Water Treatment

Four water treatment utilities service the county. The water utilities service much more of the county than the wastewater treatment utilities. Almost all the water distribution lines follow Routes 5 and 16 in and around Grantsville. Calhoun County property owners that are not serviced by the water utilities typically have onsite wells to provide potable water for domestic use.

Grantsville Municipal Water Department services the residents of Grantsville and several properties outside town limits. The department's water lines extend along Route 5, West of Grantsville, just short of the county line. To the east of Grantsville, the water lines follow Route 5 approximately one mile to the industrial park. The Grantsville Municipal Water Department's rate is \$36.98 per 3,400 gallons treated, ranking the water department 178th out of 369 utilities statewide in costs.

The Pleasant Hill Public Service District (PSD), located north of Grantsville, has treated water distribution lines along Route 16 North. The rate per 3,400 gallons used is \$54.54, making it one of the more expensive water utilities in the state (331st out of 367 utilities in West Virginia, according to the State's Public Service Commission Website in 2020).

Mt. Zion PSD services areas south of Grantsville along Route 16 North. The utility rate is \$65.82, one of the most expensive water treatment utilities in the state.<sup>20</sup>



*Pleasant Hill PSD USDA Grant Award  
(Source: Hur Herald News)*

The Gilmer County PSD provides water to the Career Center in eastern Calhoun County, but is otherwise not operating within the county.

## Broadband

The Calhoun County Commission received a 2020 Appalachian Regional Commission Grant to fund a county-wide infrastructure study. The purpose was to hire an engineer, accountant, and bond attorney to perform an assessment of the operations, finances, and asset life of the utilities of the Town of Grantsville, Pleasant Hill PSD, and Mt. Zion PSD. The resulting report will show the effect on user rates caused by debt refinancing or operational changes, suggestions for water and sewer expansion, and potential recommendations for consolidations or cooperative arrangements between

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/Utilities/rptWaterRankings3400.cfm>



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organizations with a goal of improving the sustainability and financial standing of water and sewer utilities in Calhoun County.

Through Calhoun County's participation in the Clay Calhoun Roane Broadband Committee, and suggestions in the Broadband Study funded in 2017 by the CDBG program, the county is in line to see expanded fiberoptic installation through USDA ReConnect funding. Roane County Economic Development Authority is acting as lead applicant for a funding package that is still under consideration. If approved, CityNet would be the internet service provider for a fiber ring that would bring broadband speed internet through southern Calhoun County toward Grantsville and east toward Gilmer County. A funding announcement is expected in 2021.

The Federal Communication Commission announced the results of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) reverse auction in late 2020. Service Providers competed to be awarded unserved census tracts and funding to bring fiber or wireless internet to those areas. Tracts in Calhoun County were awarded to CityNet, SpaceX, and Frontier. <https://arcg.is/1Wv9rn0>

## Emergency Services

Emergency services are coordinated through the Calhoun E911 Center in Mt. Zion. However, most law enforcement and emergency responders are stationed in Grantsville. Grantsville is home to the county's three law enforcement agencies: the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, the Town of Grantsville Police Department, and the West Virginia State Police Troop 4, Grantsville Detachment.

Additionally, Calhoun County has three volunteer fire departments. The Arnoldsburg Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1984 and, as of 2019, has 8 active and 12 total volunteers. The department's funding comes from the state, the county levy, and from local fundraising. The other two fire departments in Calhoun County are Grantsville Volunteer Fire Department and the Upper West Fork Volunteer Fire Department.



*Source: Arnoldsburg Volunteer Fire Department Facebook Page*

For many years, Calhoun County had its own Emergency Medical Service (EMS). After a period of financial instability and closure of ambulance services, Minnie Hamilton Health Services became an interim provider of EMS services. In 2017, the Calhoun County Commission voted to form its own EMS Inc.

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## Economics and Employment

In 2019, Calhoun County exhibited one of the highest unemployment rates (14.0%) of any county in West Virginia.<sup>21</sup> For comparison, the state's unemployment rate in 2019 was only 5%.<sup>22</sup>

In 2015, Calhoun County collected \$2 million in taxes, making the county fifty-fourth of fifty-five counties in West Virginia in amount of taxes collected. According to the 2018 US Census estimates, the median household income in Calhoun County was \$37,610, the Town of Grantsville was \$30,972, and West Virginia was \$48,850.

In 2018, United State Census Estimates indicated that the median earnings for a full-time male worker in Calhoun County was \$39,669, while female full-time workers earn \$28,631. By comparison, the state's median earnings for a male full-time, year-round worker is \$46,696 while the median female full-time, year-round worker earns \$35,748.

Beginning in the 1800s, natural resource production, particularly natural gas and timber, were important economic development sectors in Calhoun County, the effects of which are still present today. Farming, oil and gas, and timber operations still contribute to the economy of Calhoun County. According to recent U.S. Census estimates, the dominant economic sectors in Calhoun are educational services, health care, and social assistance.

Currently, Calhoun County is lacking small business growth and retention. Calhoun County's widespread floodplain and hilly landscape impose challenges for future development. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has designated Calhoun County as "distressed," a designation that considers the average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate.

The Little Kanawha Area Development Corporation (LKADC) provides service to both Calhoun and Wirt Counties. The Corporation has one full-time employee and a 12-member volunteer board. The mission of the LKADC is "to enhance the welfare of the citizens of Calhoun and Wirt Counties by promoting and assisting the recruitment, startup, growth, and prosperity of responsible business and industry and to leverage all resources to further economic

**According to the US Census, only 40.6% of the 6,294 Calhoun County residents over the age of 16 years are in the labor force. While 53.8% of West Virginia residents, over the age of 16 years, were part of the labor force.**

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<sup>21</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=05000000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03&hidePreview=true>

<sup>22</sup> <https://governor.wv.gov/News/press-releases/2019/Pages/West-Virginia-sees-lowest-unemployment-in-over-a-decade.aspx#:~:text=Jim%20Justice%20announced%20today%20that,the%20state%20since%20October%202008.>

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growth within these counties.”<sup>23</sup> The LKADC is an organization that can lead in the growth and development of industry and small businesses in Calhoun County.

## Education

### *Schools*

Calhoun County Schools employ approximately 170 people, making it the largest employer in the county.<sup>24</sup> As of October 2018, there were 971 students, a decrease of approximately 100 students since 2015.<sup>25</sup>

Calhoun County Middle/High School is the only middle or high school in the county. The school provides several extracurricular activities throughout the year, including sports, the performing arts, the Future Farmers of America (FFA), student council, and other activities. There are approximately 550 students enrolled at the middle and high school complex.

School officials are actively trying to create a positive image and lasting relationships with parents and the community through activities such as the “Back to School Bash.” Another example of school-community relations is the Career Center receiving a \$50,000 grant to build a cabin at the Calhoun County Park. Students built the cabin learning trade skills, all while providing an invaluable service to the community.



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<sup>23</sup> Source: LKADC Stakeholder Survey Completed October 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Calhoun County Schools Stakeholder Survey Completed 2020

<sup>25</sup> Id.

## Top Employers in Calhoun County include:

[list originally developed by Workforce WV 2013]

- Minnie Hamilton Healthcare Center, Inc.
- Calhoun County Board of Education
- Calhoun County Committee on Aging, Inc.
- Calhoun County Bank, Inc.
- Waco Foods, Inc.
- Dominion Energy
- Transcanada (TC) Energy

Calhoun County falls behind the state in several measurements of educational attainment. According to 2019 Census Estimates, 80.5% of Calhoun County residents 25 years and over attained a high school diploma. Approximately 12% of county residents reported attaining a bachelor's degree or higher. Comparatively, the state of West Virginia reports 87% high school diploma attainment with 21% of residents attaining a bachelor's degree or higher. Nationally, the average high school diploma attainment rate is 89%.<sup>26</sup>

### *Library*

The Calhoun County Library is located in Grantsville. The library is part of the Parkersburg/Wood County Library system. The library has 2 full-time and 1 part-time workers. The library is funded by state funds, county levy funds, donations, and fee for services (copies, faxes, etc.). The Calhoun County Library provides several services and programs that are available to residents of the county. These services include free Internet/Wi-Fi, meeting rooms, free notary, crafting programs, a genealogy room, eBook access, interlibrary loan, lamination, copy/fax, books, periodicals, DVDs, music CDs, and several thousand books to check out.



*Source: Calhoun County Library Facebook Page*

<sup>26</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0100000US&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP02&hidePreview=true>



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## Housing

Calhoun County is a rural county largely occupied by single-family detached residential units. According to 2019 U.S. Census estimates, there are 2,826 occupied housing units and 1,183 vacant units in Calhoun County.<sup>27</sup> One-unit detached homes comprise 70% of housing units, while mobile homes account for 28% of housing units in the county.<sup>28</sup> Only 21% of dwellings in Calhoun County are renter-occupied, with the remainder owner-occupied (79%).<sup>29</sup>

According to the 2017 U.S. Census Estimates, the median home value in Calhoun County was \$71,100 and, in Grantsville, was \$69,600, while the state median house value was \$112,771. Based on these figures, the median Calhoun County house value is 63% of the West Virginia median, while the town's median home value is 62% of the state's median.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (GRAPI) measures what proportion of a household's income is going to rent. Ideally, the percentage should be less than 30%, however many households allocate much more of their income towards housing. In Calhoun County, 33.4%<sup>30</sup> of renting households pay 30% or more of their income in rent, whereas 52.1% of renters in Grantsville pay 30% or more of their household income in rent.<sup>31</sup> Compared to the state, 47.3%<sup>32</sup> of West Virginia households pay 30% or more of their income in rent. The county and the state exhibit similar percentages and are lower than national numbers, as 49.6%<sup>33</sup> of renters in the United States pay more than 30% of their income in rent.

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<sup>27</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=05000000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

<sup>28</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=05000000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

<sup>29</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=05000000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

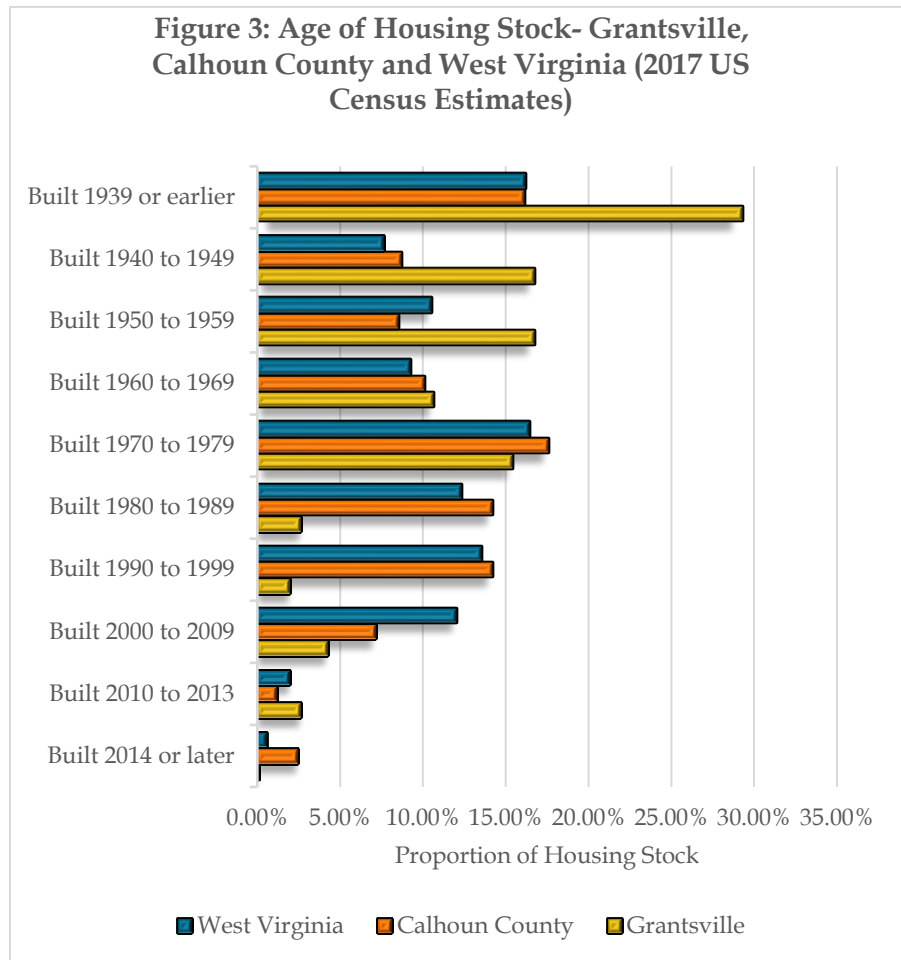
<sup>30</sup>*Id.*

<sup>31</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=grantsville,%20west%20virginia%20housing&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04>

<sup>32</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=west%20virginia%20housing&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04>

<sup>33</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=united%20states%20housing&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04>

Much of Calhoun’s housing stock (29.5%) was built between 1970 and 1990.<sup>34</sup> The state exhibited similar trends in housing construction with 28.4% of West Virginia’s housing stock built in the same time frame.<sup>35</sup> In Calhoun County, 15.3%<sup>36</sup> of homes were built prior to 1939, similar to the state, with 15.9% of housing stock built prior to 1939.<sup>37</sup> *Figure 3* shows the age of the housing stock in Grantsville, Calhoun County, and West Virginia. Grantsville has a significantly higher proportion of housing built before 1939 than either the county or the state. Age of housing can be an indicator of dilapidation but is not necessarily tied to dilapidated or derelict structures. The only significant deviation between the county and the state is the proportion of the housing stock built between 2000 and 2009, where West Virginia, as a whole, experienced a significantly higher proportion of building during this time.



## Transportation

The primary transportation routes in Calhoun County are U.S. Route 33 and State Routes 5 and 16. Like most other places in West Virginia, personal vehicles are the most commonly used mode of transportation in Calhoun County.

<sup>34</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=united%20states%20housing&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04>  
<sup>35</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=west%20virginia%20housing&g=0500000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>  
<sup>36</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=calhoun%20county%20west%20virginia%20housing&g=0500000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>  
<sup>37</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=%20west%20virginia%20housing&g=0500000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

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The average commute time in Calhoun County, according to 2019 Census Estimates, is 35.6 minutes, while the average commute time in West Virginia is 26.4 minutes. On average, a Grantsville resident spends significantly less time commuting, with an average commute time of 21.2 minutes.

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*Over 95% of Calhoun County residents commute to work in a car, truck, or van, 82% of which travel to and from work alone.*

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The nearest airport is the Mid-Ohio Valley Airport in Parkersburg, located 53 miles from Grantsville. The airport provides daily service to Beckley, West Virginia, and as of October 2020 provides limited service to Charlotte, North Carolina. Yeager Airport, located in Charleston, 73 miles from Grantsville, provides service throughout the region.<sup>38</sup> The nearest international airports are John Glenn Columbus International Airport and Pittsburgh International Airport, both are approximately 3 hours' drive from Calhoun County.

The only public transportation option in Calhoun County is the Little Kanawha Bus Company (LKBC). The Little Kanawha Bus Company operates in Jackson, Roane, Gilmer, and Calhoun Counties. LKBC currently has a fleet of 13 buses and employs 13 full-time and 2 part-time employees.<sup>39</sup> The bus service provides trips to both Parkersburg and Charleston. The LKBC primarily provides transportation on an "as needed" basis; however, there are some route schedules, depending on the day of the week, to various parts of the county.



Source: <https://www.littlekanawhabus.com/>

According to the U.S. Census Estimates, zero percent of county residents reported using a bicycle to commute to and from work, and only 1% reported being able to walk to work.

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.flymov.com/>

<sup>39</sup> Source: Completed Stakeholder Survey, 2020.

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## Public Health

Factoring in general health, mortality, and low birth rates, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission ranked Calhoun County's health outcomes thirty-eighth (38th) out of fifty-five (55) counties in the state. Under the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute Rankings for overall health factors, Calhoun County ranked forty-sixth (46th) in West Virginia. Factors in the Wisconsin rankings included health behaviors, clinical care, social/economic factors, and environment.

### Health Care

Calhoun County residents rely on the Minnie Hamilton Healthcare System (MHHS), a "vertically integrated health care delivery system comprised of a critical access hospital, equipped to address various medical, dental, and behavioral issues [with] a community health center, school-based health center sites, a nursing home unit, a swing bed unit, oral health care, rural health clinic, cardiac rehab, physical therapy and 340B pharmacy services."<sup>40</sup> In addition, MHHS sponsors several needed community-based services, such as education, outreach events, and threat preparedness services. MHHS employs over 250 individuals, making it one of the largest employers in the county. Meanwhile, ambulance services are provided by the Calhoun EMS Inc.



Minnie Hamilton Healthcare Center, Inc  
Source: [www.freedental.org](http://www.freedental.org)

There is a low rate of health insurance coverage in Calhoun County. Approximately 94.3% of Calhoun residents have health insurance, while nearly 5.7% of residents have no health care coverage.<sup>41</sup>

The Calhoun County Committee on Aging provides several health care-related programs and services to senior citizens in the county. The agency provides nutrition, transportation, in-home services, fitness, well-being programs, educational and counseling programs, socialization, and advocacy services. The Committee on Aging's nutrition program provides nearly 20,000 meals to senior citizens and veterans of Calhoun County each year. The in-home service program allows seniors to live in their homes when the alternative is a nursing home or assisted living facility.

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<sup>40</sup> Source: MHHS website. <https://www.mhhs.healthcare/about-us.html>

<sup>41</sup><https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0500000US54013&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03&hidePreview=true>



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A combination of health care challenges, along with the current opioid epidemic, have contributed to Calhoun County's higher-than-average rate of premature death. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has placed Calhoun County on a list of counties nationally "at risk" for an outbreak of HIV and hepatitis C.

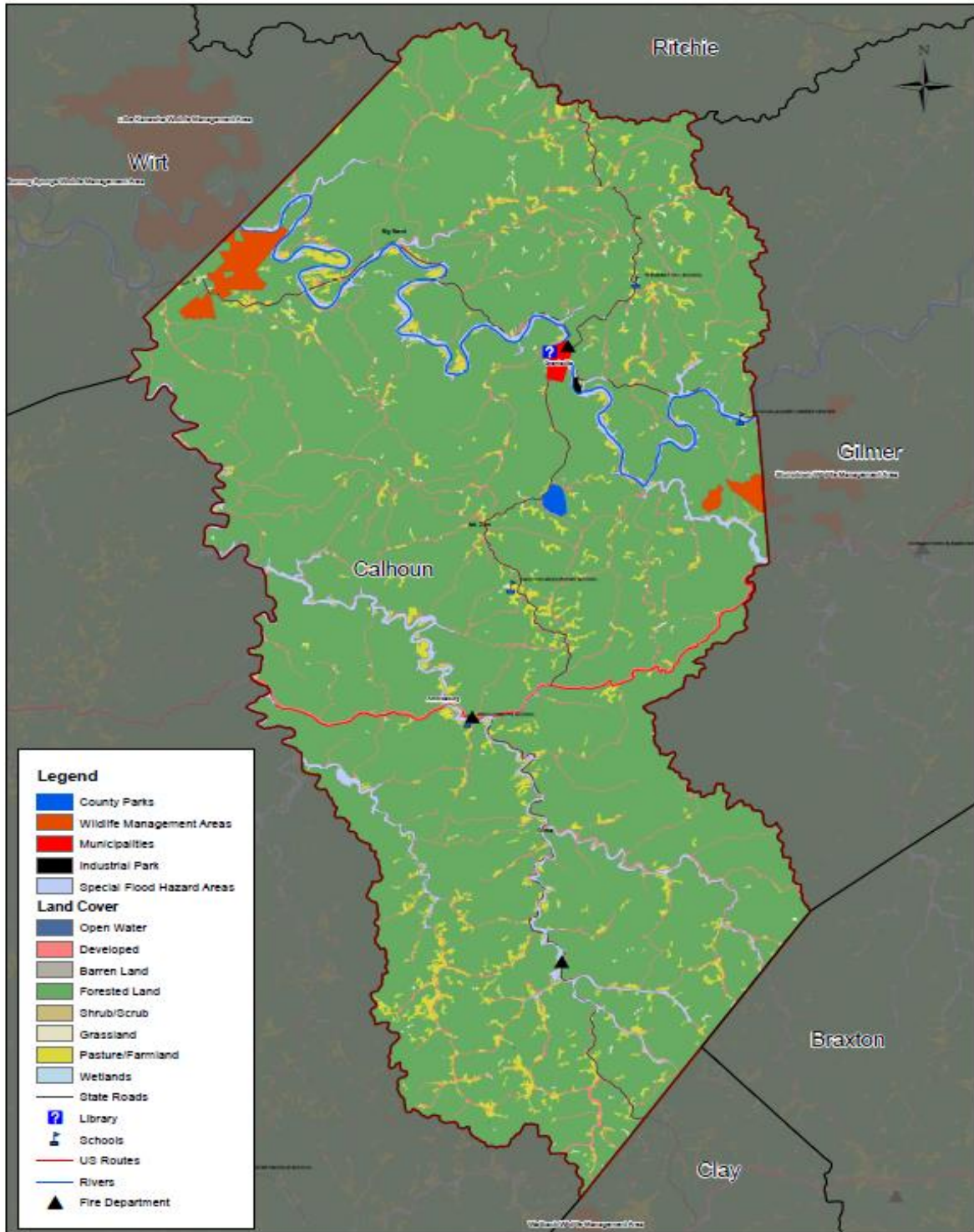
## **Land Use**

Much of the county's topography consists of hills and valleys. There is relatively little agricultural land available, but plenty of forested land. The county is sparsely populated with the primary population centers of Grantsville and Arnoldsburg.

The Existing Land Use Map (ELU) is one of the required maps included in the comprehensive plan. The existing land uses shows how the land is being utilized currently. The ELU shows land use/land cover, incorporated communities, boundaries, roads, and streams. The purpose of the ELU is to highlight current development patterns so the Planning Commission, citizens, and County Commission, along with the Town of Grantsville, can make informed decisions as to recommendations in the comprehensive plan.

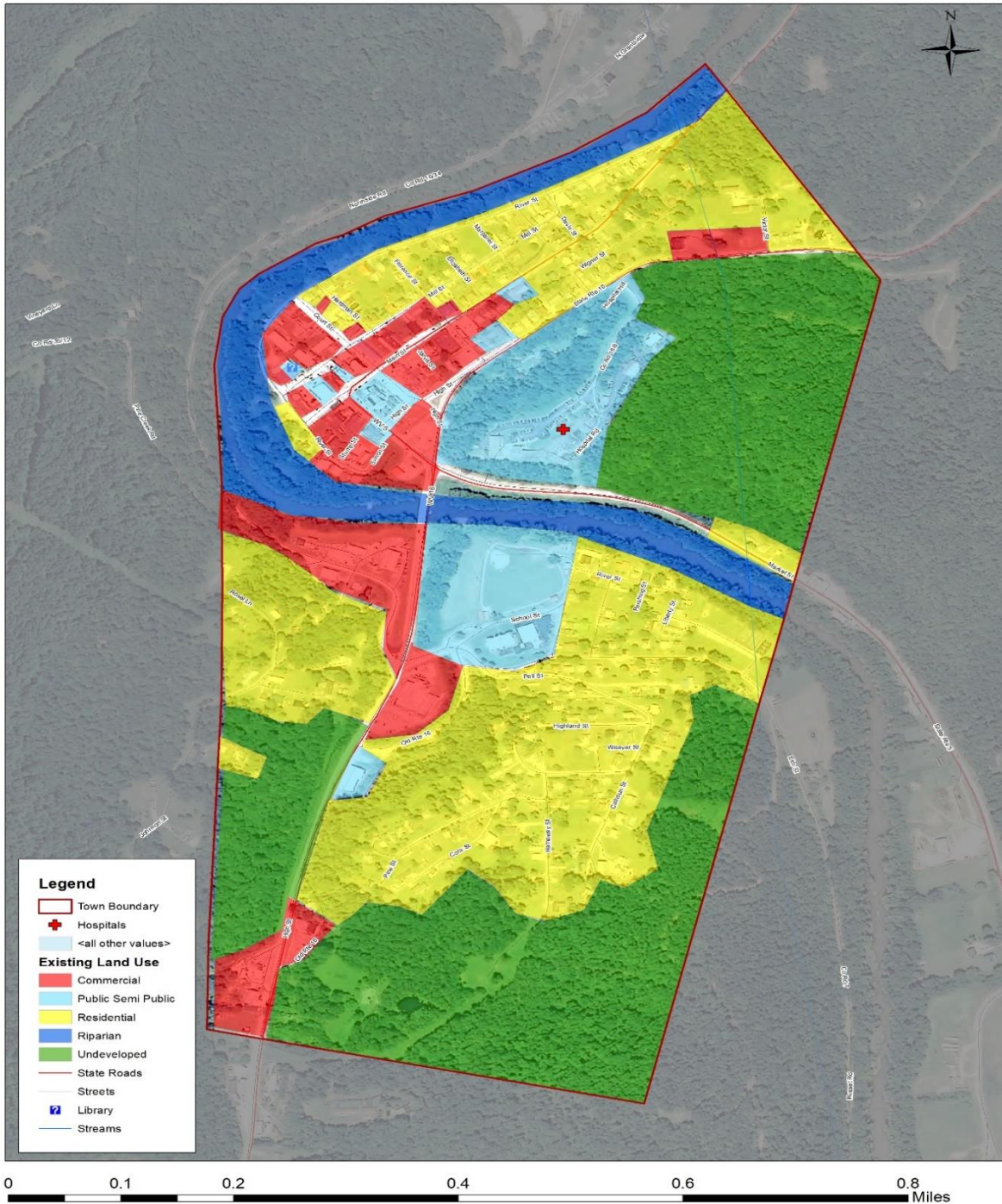
The Calhoun County ELU map shows that much of the county is forested or pastureland and has very little developed land. There are two small Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in Calhoun County. The county is surrounded by six other West Virginia counties Braxton, Gilmer, Roane, Wirt, Ritchie, and Clay.

# Calhoun County - Existing Land Use Map





# Town of Grantsville- Existing Land Use Map



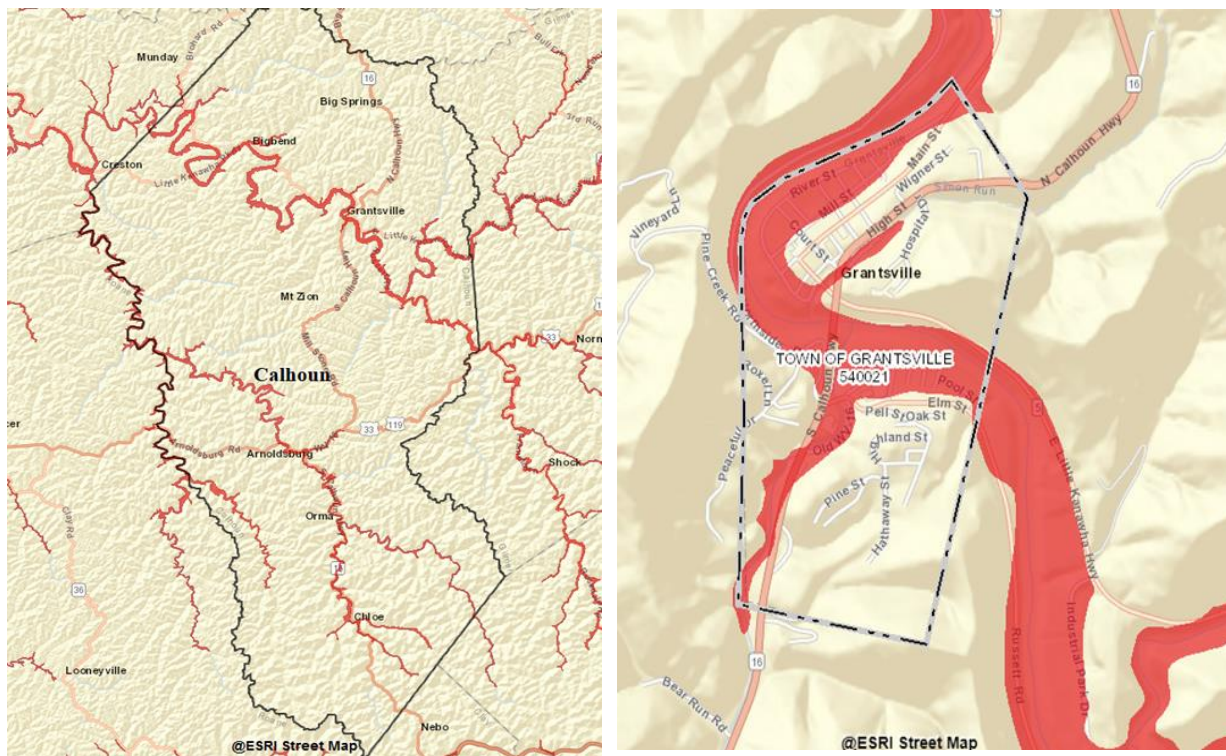
The existing land use map for the Town of Grantsville shows a diverse mixture of commercial and residential uses, along with several public or semipublic properties, and a significant amount of undeveloped land.

## Constraints on Development

There are no karstic features present in Calhoun County. Most of the karst in West Virginia is located in the northern and eastern panhandles. There are, however, steep slopes in Calhoun County that are susceptible to subsidence. If there are concerns, further analysis on possible areas of subsidence should be conducted by the county officials or contracted experts.

Preferred development areas are areas where a community incentivizes future growth and development. A preferred development can be a neighborhood, transportation corridor, or a downtown area. In Calhoun County, Grantsville and Arnoldsburg were both identified as the preferred development areas as they have the existing infrastructure needed for redevelopment and new growth.

*Figure 5* shows the special flood hazard areas (in red) of Calhoun County. Nearly every settlement in Calhoun County is situated along a stream or river, and, with some exceptions, most settlements and populated areas are affected by occasional flooding.



*Figure 5: Floodplains Calhoun County and the Town of Grantsville (Source: WV Flood Tool)*

Development near or next to a waterbody is very common in West Virginia. Historically, locating near water made sense as settlers needed to be close to a water source for everyday activities. Additionally, the land adjacent to the water body is often the only flat area in a community. Unfortunately, while developing in this area makes sense for water access and convenience of building, this area is also often prone to flooding.



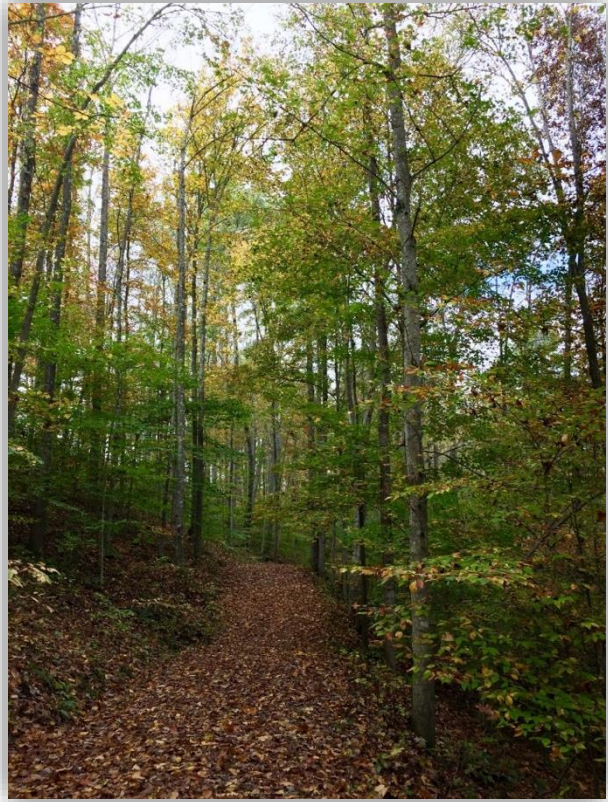
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## Calhoun County Culture and Recreation

Calhoun County officials are working to create a unique tourism opportunity at the county park. Because there is minimal light pollution, the park is considered one of the darkest places in the eastern United States. In fact, the park is one of the few places in West Virginia where it is possible to view the Northern Lights. The park is also home to a Heritage Village, which has many historical structures from around the county. In addition to stargazing and the Heritage Village, the county park also has facilities for hiking, biking, fishing, baseball and softball, camping, weddings, and wedding receptions.

Several other parks are located in the county, including West Fork Park with a six-member association that maintains the park and hosts the annual Molasses Festival. The park can host ball games, festivals, reunions, and meetings. Mount Zion Park also has an association with eight (8) members. The park hosts the annual Mt. Zion Ox Roast and has facilities for family reunions, picnics, youth softball, and playground equipment.

Calhoun County is home to the Alberts Chapel, a National Historic Landmark and an example of Late Victorian architecture designed by Charles Poling. Located near Sand Ridge, this unusual octagonal Methodist church was built in such a way that “the devil couldn't corner you in it.”



Source: [www.calhouncountyparkwv.com](http://www.calhouncountyparkwv.com)



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## Chapter 3: Needs Assessment

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**Chapter 3: Needs Assessment** identifies the issues and needs of Calhoun County. The Calhoun County Planning Commission has worked diligently – with help from stakeholders, elected officials, high school students, and citizens – to identify the needs and issues facing the county. The Planning Commission began by completing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Exercise. In doing so, members of the Planning Commission identified six primary concerns in the county: lack of broadband access, continued development of the county park, infrastructure improvement and expansion, addressing housing needs and deficiencies, improvement of economic development opportunities, and improvement of overall quality of life.

After developing the initial list of issues, the Planning Commission held an open house, inviting the public to attend and provide feedback. The Planning Commission later met with high school students to continue to clarify the most pressing issues facing the County.

The follow highlights the top issues identified by the Planning Commission and interested citizens:





## Issue #1: Broadband and Telecommunication Access

Broadband represents a level of service rather than a type of technology. For example, wireless transmitters, satellites, and fiber optic cables may all be considered broadband if each technology provides for download speeds of 25 megabits per second (mbps) and upload speeds of 3 mbps. If speed thresholds are met, even dial-up Internet can be considered broadband.

Many rural areas lack adequate and dependable broadband service, yet the need to be connected is becoming more fundamental and necessary. Reliable broadband and telecommunications access are important for quality of life, governance, emergency services, tourism, health care, and economic development.

Studies focused on broadband access for rural residents in the United States find that access often means a higher likelihood of increased business development. High levels of broadband infrastructure were associated with higher median household incomes and lower unemployment levels.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project has found that rural “residents are much less likely to subscribe to broadband than their urban counterparts.” A Connected

Nations study found that 19% of rural residents do not have broadband because the service is not available to them and another 22% of rural residents surveyed say they do not have broadband because service is too expensive. Fewer broadband providers operate in rural areas, meaning consumers often have very limited options for high-speed Internet service.

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*“It’s vital that low-income Americans have access to communications services, including broadband Internet...”-Ajit Pai, Commissioner of the Federal Communication Commission (FCC)*

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According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, “rural broadband is essential to modern agriculture, the farmers and ranchers who grow our food and the quality of life for rural Americans.”<sup>42</sup> The Bureau supports using a combination of tax incentives, grants, and regulation to increase the use of broadband access in rural areas. For farmers, it is estimated that broadband would enhance productivity and profitability by making it easier to communicate with suppliers and market outlets, access to extension and other farming information, access to weather information that could impact decisions, and general farm management practices. While farming is limited in Calhoun

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.fb.org/issues/infrastructure/broadband/>

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County, the existing farmers might benefit from broadband and training on technologies that require broadband to make operations more efficient.

Unreliability of existing Internet service was identified as a concern in Calhoun County. The perception of unreliability increases the difficulty of recruiting new customer subscriptions. Some residents may have financial difficulty affording broadband service, regardless of reliability. Some places within Calhoun County lack broadband access other than through satellite connection, which can be expensive.

Broadband should be viewed as a utility, as broadband can attract commercial and manufacturing development much the same as having adequate water and wastewater available. With broadband, as with other utilities, many rural communities are lagging behind. An idea discussed during the open house events was to create free Wi-Fi spots around the county, such as in Arnoldsburg and Grantsville. Many participants also indicated that reliable broadband is essential for future growth and development in Calhoun County Schools.

Reliable broadband might also attract people interested in the dark skies park initiative, especially if telecommuting is an option. Currently, the county park lacks broadband, something that inhibits large-scale investment in the dark sky park.

Other benefits of improved broadband include expansion of educational opportunities, such as homeschooling curriculum and advanced degree programs. Greater access to healthcare through telemedicine provides another reason to promote expanded broadband development in Calhoun County. Telemedicine



consists of the remote diagnosis and treatment of patients by means of telecommunication technology. While telemedicine will not replace localized, in-person healthcare, it provides an option for routine checkups and consultations for minor ailments, all while reducing travel time and costs for patients.

### *Broadband Cooperative Associations*

Recently, the West Virginia Legislature enacted Chapter 31G of the West Virginia Code to allow for broadband “cooperative associations.” The 2017 legislation authorizes the creation of a pilot project to form non-profit cooperative associations for Internet



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service. The Broadband Enhancement Council, established at the state level, sets guidelines and approves cooperative associations.

Cooperative associations pool resources from members to be utilized as a mechanism for those who would otherwise not have Internet access. At least 20 users, either businesses or individuals, are needed to form a cooperative association. Cooperative associations may be eligible for federal grants and could result in broadband access for areas that would not otherwise be served.

### *Existing Studies and Plans for Broadband*

In 2014, the West Virginia Broadband Development Council and other partners commissioned the “Broadband Strategic Plan.” According to the Broadband Strategic Plan, the most common challenges for broadband in West Virginia include geography, population density, and willingness of providers to make initial capital expenditures. Nearly 75% of people surveyed, as part of the State’s Strategic Plan, expressed dissatisfaction with the cost of Internet services. Meanwhile, 60% of participants were dissatisfied with service reliability, and 58% were dissatisfied with Internet speed.

Regionally, broadband has been identified as a top priority. The Region III Intergovernmental Council, which provides its member counties with technical assistance, project development, and project administration, developed a Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for broadband. The Region III (member counties include Boone, Clay, Kanawha, and Putnam counties) CEDS included Calhoun County, even though the county is in Region V. The Region III CEDS stated that “economic challenges include [the region’s] relative inaccessibility, absences of developable land, and a lack of broadband internet service.”

Additionally, Clay, Calhoun, and Roane Counties received a \$125,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to develop a broadband feasibility and business plan. The project, Broadband for Clay, Calhoun, and Roane Counties: Improving Broadband Access, calls for a regional approach and provides a roadmap for broadband throughout the three counties. The feasibility and business plan analyze surveys conducted in each of the counties and outlines a phased plan for the three counties individually, and as a region. The plan focuses on improved broadband infrastructure and includes a projected timeline for various activities, complete with descriptions and specific tasks. The plan documents should be reviewed, analyzed, and discussed by county officials and citizens to ensure the recommendations are reasonable and the plan provides a clear roadmap for making reliable and affordable broadband throughout Calhoun County a reality.

### *Broadband Consortium*

Calhoun County partnered with Clay and Roane Counties to form a broadband consortium. The Clay, Calhoun, Roane Broadband Development Committee

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("CCRBDC") has been meeting with community members, a consultant, and county officials to develop a feasibility study.

The CCRBDC identified a \$10 million broadband implementation project to develop "an open access network that would provide broadband access to all businesses, schools, medical facilities, and residences" in Clay, Calhoun, and Roane Counties.<sup>43</sup>

In 2019, the CCRBDC met to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of joining ongoing efforts of 11 counties within Regions I and IV (Regional Planning and Development Councils). The CCRBDC should decide whether joining these efforts furthers implementation of the feasibility and business plan.

### *Why is improved broadband important for Calhoun County?*

Greater availability of broadband in Calhoun County would improve quality of life, including increased telecommuting opportunities, and enhance telemedicine, education, and employment recruitment. Currently, very limited broadband service exists in the county. An existing fiber optic line provides service to the hospital, the school, and the EMS complex, largely following state Route 16.

Conversating with the public on the importance and widespread application of broadband was identified as a high priority by stakeholders throughout the comprehensive plan process. An open house hosted by county officials can be an effective yet informal method of promoting broadband. Officials can invite citizens to learn about current broadband proposals and voice concerns.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.wvregion3.org/RIC/media/Home/Documents/Economic%20Dev/CCR-Broadband-Improving-Broadband-Access-FINAL.pdf>

## Several broadband funding sources may be available to fund broadband projects in Calhoun County. The following is a non-exhaustive list:

### APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

- Regional economic development agency that represents a partnership between federal, state, and local governments. State and local governments can apply for grants to develop infrastructure like high-speed Internet.

### FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

- Deals with international and interstate communications. May have some initiatives catering to providers/companies, for example, "Universal Service."

### USDA RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE

- Farm Bill Broadband Loans & Loan Guarantees – Provide funds for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide service at the broadband lending speed in eligible rural areas.
- Communities must be completely contained within a rural area or composed of multiple rural areas defined in 7 CFR 1738. Additional requirements:
  - At least 15% of the households in the proposed funded service area are unserved.
  - No part of the proposed funded service area has three or more "incumbent service providers."
  - No part of the proposed funded service area overlaps with the service area of current RUS borrowers or the service areas of grantees that were funded by RUS.

### USDA COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANTS

- Helps fund broadband deployment in rural communities where it is not yet economically viable for private sector providers to deliver service.
- Eligible area: rural areas that lack existing broadband speed of at least 4 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream.

### USDA TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE LOAN PROGRAM

- Provides financing for the construction, maintenance, improvement, and expansion of telephone service and broadband in rural areas.
- Eligible areas: Rural areas and towns with a population of 5,000 or less. Areas without telecommunications facilities or areas where the applicant is the recognized telecommunications provider.

### USDA DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANTS

- The Distance Learning and Telemedicine program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density.

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## *Recent Developments in West Virginia Broadband*

A California-based company, Viasat, was awarded \$5.43 million from the FCC to complete broadband work in West Virginia.<sup>44</sup> The company, which utilizes satellite broadband technology, has been assigned 7,057 locations in West Virginia, covering several counties throughout the state. Calhoun and Clay counties, however, have more assigned locations than any other counties.<sup>45</sup>

Most federal broadband policy has focused on building infrastructure. Recently, however, several federal programs have focused on encouraging the public to use broadband technology. The Lifeline program, through the FCC, provides a monthly subsidy to low-income internet consumers to help offset the cost of broadband connection. Programs that help lower broadband costs to Calhoun County consumers should be encouraged and better utilized.



## **Issue #2: Develop and Enhance Outdoor Recreation and Tourism**

Not all recreation is meant to attract tourists, and not all tourism is related to recreation. In Calhoun County Park, however, recreation and tourism are connected and at the forefront of the existing and proposed initiatives in the park.

### *Calhoun County Park*

During the comprehensive plan process, one of the most commonly cited assets in the county was the County Park. Citizens have a great deal of pride for the 240-acre park, created in the 1980s from a former golf course located a few miles outside of Grantsville. A volunteer board of directors maintains the park, with members of the board appointed by the Calhoun County Commission.



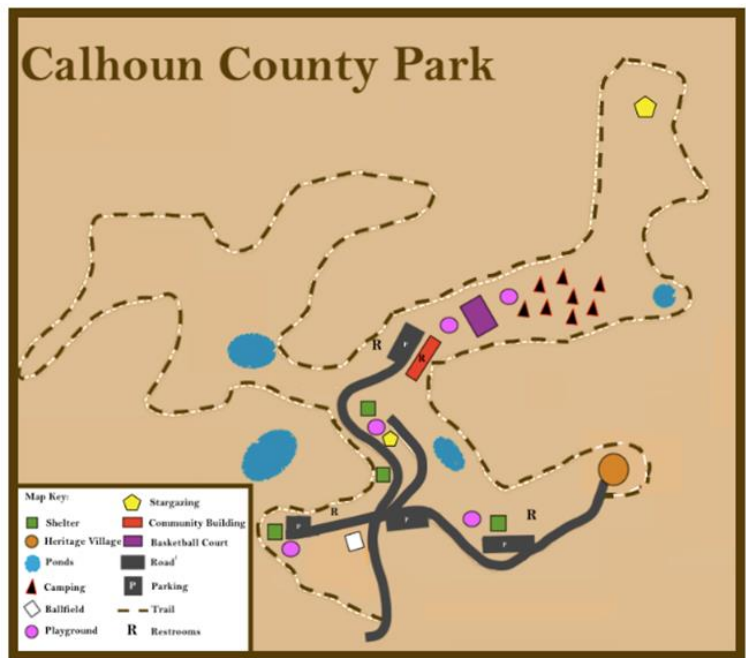
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<sup>44</sup> (Charleston Post-Gazette, August 28, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Id



The county park has several onsite amenities. The Roger Jarvis Ball Field is used for ball games and is open to the general public when not in use by local youth teams. A 3.2-mile long forested trail system in the park is used for bicycling, hiking, bird watching, and geocaching. The park hosts a 4th of July event and several other community events throughout the year. For overnight accommodations, camping sites are equipped with parking and electricity. The community building, which was originally used as a barn, has been renovated to include bathrooms and showers. The building also includes a furnished kitchen, making it a popular space for indoor events such as weddings, parties, reunions, and meetings.



While camping sites are available at the county park, considerable discussion has focused on installing cabins that can be rented. As few overnight accommodations exist in Calhoun County, building cabins at the park ranks as a high priority. Creating lodging options, such as cabins or additional campsites, is necessary if the county wants to increase both tourism and outdoor recreation. Bringing more people into the county will increase the need for overnight accommodations and dining options. As of 2020, cabins are being constructed at the county park.

The cabins along a new bathhouse are being constructed by students at the Calhoun-Gilmer Career Center at the park. Partnering with the Career Center provides an option for the County to offset some costs. Besides providing overnight accommodations and other amenities at the park, constructing cabins and a bathhouse provides an ideal project for workforce training, especially for the building construction program at the Career Center. Workforce training provides the skills most needed to rebuild and redevelop Calhoun County. The projects that can be integrated into the Career Center curriculum can provide essential services to the community all while being under the guidance of experienced instructors and affording educational opportunities.

Community members have also discussed creating an outdoor amphitheater at the park to host plays and concerts. The community could have a summer concert series, giving local talent a venue to perform. A family has expressed interest in offering horseback riding at the park. While some details would need to be considered, such as liability, horseback riding would be a unique activity with regional appeal.

One of the more unique features found in the county park is Heritage Village, which is maintained by the Calhoun County Historical Society. The village contains several historical structures that



have been moved and rebuilt from locations throughout Calhoun County. Heritage Village could benefit from increased marketing to potentially expand tourism.

The Calhoun County Commission applied for a 2020 Community Development Block Grant under the category of recreation to improve bathroom facilities and add ADA accessible showers in a new bathhouse for campers and visitors. Plans are underway to seek funding for playground equipment, the board built a new amphitheater stage with donations and fundraising, and the first park stargazers cabin will be opening this fall.

While there are several smaller community parks in Calhoun County, those parks are maintained by individual community associations. The parks are important to the county and need continued support.

### *Recreational Water Trail*

The Little Kanawha River meanders through Calhoun County on its way to Parkersburg, where it joins the Ohio River. The Little Kanawha River watershed includes all of Calhoun, Gilmer, and Ritchie Counties and portions of Wirt, Wood, Braxton, Roane, Lewis, Doddridge, Upshur, Webster, and Clay Counties. The Little Kanawha River is navigable for small watercraft such as kayaks and canoes.



*Photo Courtesy of Bonnie Sands*

The river is an asset that can be used to improve tourism and recreation in the county. The Little Kanawha has been used for water-based transportation for many decades. In

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the 20th century, modified gas-powered boats transported people and goods from Parkersburg to Grantsville.

More recently, there has been increased interest in developing the Little Kanawha as a recreational water trail. The development of the river as a water trail would address several concerns. The establishment of an easily accessible water trail would provide a healthy recreational activity for both residents and visitors.

Many opportunities for fishing along the water trail exist. The Little Kanawha is one of the few fisheries in the state that boasts both trout and musky. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources lists the Little Kanawha as both a premier musky and smallmouth bass fishery.

Coordination with appropriate agencies and neighboring jurisdictions in establishing marked public access to the river is an important initial step. The creation of a designated water trail provides opportunities for low cost, volunteer projects, such as a small craft launch sites, parking, picnic areas, and interpretive signage. Groups such as the Girl Scouts, churches, and fraternal organizations might be willing to provide funds, supplies, and manpower to complete small-scale projects in Calhoun County related to a designated water trail.



*Photo Courtesy of Bonnie Sands*

The development of a water trail can increase tourism and job creation in Calhoun County. For example, a canoe or kayak livery could complement the water trail. A livery would provide rentals and guided tours, including fishing tours.

Groups can participate in an “Adopt-a Stream” program to ensure continual upkeep of the river. A water trail project would need to be regionally coordinated to ensure a continuous trail system. Mapping the water trail and marketing of the trail should also be coordinated regionally.

### *ATV Trails*

The creation of a multi-jurisdictional, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail system in central West Virginia could provide much needed economic stimulation in Calhoun County. In 2015, a feasibility study was conducted for seven counties, including Calhoun, by



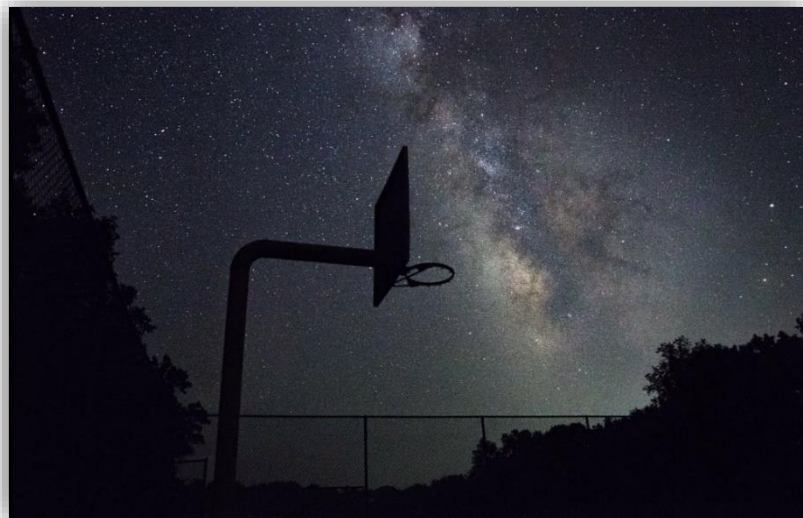
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Marshall University's Rahall Appalachian Transportation Institute. The study indicated a trail system would have a significant impact in central West Virginia. The study indicated the trail system would need between 5,000 and 10,000 acres of privately held land, utilizing lease agreements with private property owners.<sup>46</sup> The ATV study concluded that a trail system in central West Virginia was a worthwhile initiative to pursue. As of 2020, no trail system has been created.

Calhoun County officials should revive discussions related to a central West Virginia ATV trail system. Such a project can be an economic driver to encourage the development of secondary and tertiary industries, including ATV sales, rentals, and repairs, overnight accommodations, and dining. On a much smaller scale, the County Park could develop a small network of ATV trails in the wooded portion of the park.

### *Dark Skies Park*

The development of a certified dark sky park is the primary tourism and economic development initiative for Calhoun County. Out-of-state astronomers have already expressed interest in building a permanent telescope and a small observatory at the County Park.



*Source: [www.calhouncountyparkwv.com](http://www.calhouncountyparkwv.com)*

Local officials should ensure that the public understands the purpose of a lighting ordinance, to keep the lighting levels at current levels, not to make the county any darker or require people to stop using lights that are currently in use. The lighting ordinance does not have to cover the entire county; instead, the ordinance can apply to only certain areas of the county.

Lighting ordinances, also known as dark skies ordinances, typically address proper light shielding, intensity of lighting, timing of light usage, and whether the lighting is on a motion sensor. County officials will need to determine the appropriate geographic scope of the ordinance provisions within the county. The Town of Grantsville will likely need to develop its own lighting ordinance due to its proximity to the county park.

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<sup>46</sup> New ATV trail system eyed for central West Virginia, The Hur Herald, December 8, 2015. Found at <http://www.hurherald.com/obits.php?id=62150>.



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## The minimum requirements for inclusion into an International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) Dark Sky Park Program include:

- Creation of a lighting management plan
- Ensure typical nighttime conditions characterizing the site much have the following characteristics:
  - The Milky Way is readily visible to the unaided eye
  - No nearby artificial light sources yielding significant glare, and
  - Any light domes present are dim and close to the horizon
- Describe current and future threats to dark skies over the park
- Provide evidence that the park has set an example in leadership in the restoration of dark skies
- Show a commitment to public education
- Provide dedicated programming at least four times per year
- Maintain appropriate public signage indicating International Dark Sky Park Designation
- Submit an annual report to IDA detailing activities and progress towards fulfilling goals

The parameters of the lighting ordinance need to be clearly articulated, and local officials must be open and transparent regarding information about the light ordinance. Officials should plan to hold multiple open meetings to provide information and receive comments. Citizens should understand what is expected of them and have an opportunity to express any concerns prior to adoption.

Prior to enacting a lighting ordinance, enforcement procedures should be determined. At least one individual should be responsible for making determinations as to ordinance violations. The Town of Grantsville should also consider creating a dark skies ordinance in line with the county ordinance. The town's ordinance is likely a prerequisite for dark skies park certification because of the proximity of the town to the county park.

### *Marketing and Branding for Tourism*

Calhoun County needs improved marketing and branding. Ideally, marketing and branding is performed by the chamber of commerce or development authority, with input from elected officials and possibly an outside consultant. Branding can provide the county and the town with a unique identity; marketing the brand can encourage tourism, business development, and other investment in the county.

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*In a nutshell, branding is who you are, and marketing is how you build awareness. Branding is your strategy, while marketing encompasses your tactical goals.*

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## 2016 Regional Development Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council (MOVRC)

In order to compete in the global economy, the Mid-Ohio Valley must continue to develop and improve infrastructure necessary for economic development, particularly broadband and telecommunications; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway system; and basic infrastructure, such as water and wastewater systems. MOVRC will also support investments in multi-modal [intermodal] transportation systems that strengthen connections to regional, national, and global markets. MOVRC will assist local communities in completing infrastructure projects that will address community needs as well as strategic, innovative approaches to economic development.



### Issue #3: Creation and Maintenance of Infrastructure within the County

Infrastructure has traditionally consisted of water and wastewater treatment, solid waste collection and disposal, roads, railways, and utility services. Broadband is increasingly considered a utility, but for the purposes of this plan, broadband has been addressed separately.

#### *Water and Wastewater Infrastructure*

The general condition of water and wastewater treatment facilities is a concern throughout the county. There is low water pressure in certain areas of the county with public water. Certain parts of the county have been under a continual boil water advisory. Additionally, many county residents are not connected to public water or sewer services and use well water and septic systems. Still others may be straight-piping waste into waterways.

The water lines in the Town of Grantsville suffer from old age and significant leaking. Utilizing water distribution lines that are leaking means the town is treating water that never gets to the end user, thus wasting resources.



Specifically, the town needs to replace the two-inch (2") lines on Jarvis Street, River Street, and Mill Street. There are also several valves throughout the distribution system that need to be replaced very soon.

The water utilities in Calhoun County should consider hiring a third-party company to inspect water distribution lines and test efficiency of the lines to determine the loss ratio. Water utilities commonly lose in excess of 30% to 40% of all treated water through leakages before the water reaches the customers, creating significant cost inefficiency.

The local public service districts (PSDs) need to analyze and prioritize where expansion of water and wastewater services is most needed in Calhoun County. Currently, water and wastewater lines follow Routes 16 and 5, in and around Grantsville. The PSDs need to understand funding options for expansion, including any possible rate increases.

Given the needs for improved water and wastewater treatment in Calhoun County, local officials should develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). A CIP "is a dynamic community planning and fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period."<sup>47</sup> A focus on water and wastewater treatment through the development of a CIP can help local officials strategically plan and prioritize projects, including how each project will be funded and when each project will be completed.

### *Infrastructure Mapping*

Digitally mapping water and sewer lines, including appurtenances, provides important information for record keeping and future planning of projects. While some PSDs have mylar maps of their facilities, many PSDs have no mapping available. PSDs in the county could benefit from the creation of digital mapping for all water and wastewater facilities through a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping software. GIS

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<sup>47</sup> Source: <http://www.acogok.org/capital-improvement-program/>. CIPs usually follow a 5- or 10-year planning cycle.

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would allow the PSDs to input attribute data, such as line diameter and material, construction date, and maintenance updates. Once a database has been developed, maintaining the electronic mapping files is much less intensive than original map creation.

### *Alternative Systems*

In many locations, it is cost prohibitive to extend water and sewer service much distance from main collection or distribution lines. Opportunities may exist for decentralized or package plants in certain parts of Calhoun County. Decentralized systems are smaller, less expensive, and may be more appropriate for small pockets of development than traditional water or wastewater facilities.

Several resources are available to address inadequate water and wastewater treatment through alternative systems, including West Virginia Rural Water Association, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and state agencies like the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

As the county's population continues to decline, Calhoun County officials should work with elected officials in other communities to formalize a regional approach to funding and grant applications, especially with regard to infrastructure. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has indicated that regional cooperation detailed in grant applications gave applicants the greatest chance of receiving an award. Similarly, the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation with local PSDs, counties, and municipalities in consolidating water and wastewater systems. Regionalization of public service systems is an important strategy for long-term viability of many water and wastewater utilities. With consolidation of services, economies of scale and lowered overhead and administrative expenses can be achieved.

According to the United States Conference of Mayors, local governments provide 98% of financing for water and wastewater projects.<sup>48</sup> The West Virginia Water Development Authority indicates that fewer grants now exist for localities, further reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation.

### *Telecommunications*

Citizens indicated that telecommunications service is poor in places throughout Calhoun County. County officials should advocate for countywide cell service coverage from at least one provider. Local officials should work with providers to lease space where new telecommunication facilities can be placed.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/2018/01/10/local-government-investment-in-water-and-sewer-2000-2015/>



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## Three-phase Power

Three-phase electric power is a method of alternating current electric power generation, transmission, and distribution. Commercial and industrial electricity is normally three-phase and can power much larger equipment, while residential areas are typically served by single-phase electricity.

Unlike single-phase transmission lines, three-phase power does not require heavy gauge copper wires and, as a result, is less expensive to distribute. Three-phase power also offers flexibility at the service connection of the standard 120-volt service and the higher 208-volt service.

County officials should work with Mon Power to analyze whether three-phase power is an option for the county. Having three-phase power is attractive to businesses considering relocating to the county, especially those with higher electrical demands, such as manufacturing.

## Roads/Transportation

According to Census estimates, personal vehicles are the primary form of transportation in Calhoun County. The main transportation corridors are Route 5, which runs east-west, and Route 16, which runs north-south. Both corridors eventually connect to Interstate 79. While Route 5 connects to Interstate 77 in Wood County, no direct access to either interstate exists in Calhoun County.



Several individuals participating in the comprehensive plan process indicated a need to upgrade the roads, especially Routes 5 and 16. Road slippage in some areas has required some narrowing to one lane sections. In addition, many of the bridges on Route 5 have weight limits that prevent full-size buses and trucks from utilizing the route. County officials must work with state transportation officials to ensure that county roads are maintained and upgraded. Within the Town of Grantsville, the following roads are in the greatest need of repair; (1) Hathaway Street, (2) Johnson Street, and (3) Mill Street.

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The Little Kanawha Bus serves Calhoun, Gilmer, Jackson, and Roane Counties and provides regular trips to Charleston and Parkersburg. However, many citizens in Calhoun County are not aware of or do not utilize the bus services. Increasing awareness of this service would benefit county residents. Calhoun County officials should work with the bus officials to analyze the current bus schedule and develop additional routes and services.



#### Issue #4: Identify housing needs and deficiencies

The community desires an affordable, well-maintained housing stock. Besides cost and quality, type of housing is also important. For example, an aging community needs more single-level structures and assisted care facilities. On the other hand, young families desire smaller dwelling units, including tiny homes and multi-family units that are more affordable. Ideally, a community should contain a diversity of housing options that appeal to different segments of the population.

There is a difference between “Affordable Housing” and “affordable housing.” Affordable Housing is subsidized housing, typically through the United States Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and similar state programs. The most common program is the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, “which subsidizes housing for families that meet certain income thresholds by providing vouchers that can be used for private housing where landlords accept vouchers as payment and tenants pay the remainder, if any.”<sup>49</sup> The term “affordable housing,” on the other hand, is an informal term used for housing that costs less than 30% of household income. Both rental properties and owner-occupied housing can be “affordable housing.” Calhoun County needs more “affordable housing” options, especially for young families.

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<sup>49</sup> [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact\\_sheet](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet)



Housing affordability could become a significant issue if the oil and gas industry expand in the county. Many communities in West Virginia experience supply issues when there is a sudden influx of temporary workers.

There are several structures in Calhoun County that are located the floodplain. Dwelling units in the floodplain require flood insurance if there is a mortgage on

the structure because they are more susceptible to inundation. Encouraging new housing development outside the floodplain has been recommended during the comprehensive plan process.

Calhoun County has a shortage of qualified contractors that can construct or renovate housing. If housing demand increases, the likelihood that licensed and insured contractors will relocate to or work in Calhoun County increases, something that is seen as a positive.

### *Man Camps*

Creating “man camps” or “RV parks” are one way that communities in West Virginia have attempted to address a sudden influx of out-of-state workers.

These workers are typically tied to the extractive industry. Workers often bring their own RVs to use as temporary housing. Camps typically include water and electricity connections for each RV

and an area for solid waste disposal. Primary concerns regarding RV parks include limited access, especially for emergency services; increased traffic and noise; and inadequate infrastructure. Some communities have sought to limit RVs in residential areas, out of concern that backyards will be utilized as makeshift man camps. Addressing this concern would be achieved through a zoning ordinance.



### *Diversity and Affordability of Housing*

Participants in the comprehensive plan process noted very few rental options in Calhoun County, especially for young professionals and working families. The Planning Commission identified a shortage of new housing, developable lots for housing, and starter houses. Many property owners with developable land are not

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willing to sell their ancestral land, which is needed for new housing to be developed. Additionally, Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage guidelines require public water and wastewater “whenever feasible and available at a reasonable cost,” limiting mortgage options in rural West Virginia.<sup>50</sup>

Housing for seniors and persons with disabilities is needed in Calhoun County. County officials should work with building contractors and prospective homebuyers to encourage the development and retrofitting of accessible housing, which normally includes at-grade entrances, single floor design, and other features that enable seniors and persons with disabilities greater freedom and accessibility in their home.

To encourage housing affordability and protect life and property, county officials should work with property owners and developers to identify areas for future growth and development that are located outside of the floodplain.

### *Abandoned and Dilapidated Structures*

Abandoned and dilapidated structures are a concern in many West Virginia communities. While citizens identified abandoned and dilapidated buildings as a concern during the comprehensive plan process, most citizens were unsure how widespread the issue is in Calhoun County. An inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures would allow county officials to identify the scale of the issue. Many dilapidated buildings are a public safety hazard and are prone to partial or complete collapse. Dilapidated buildings also bring down adjacent property values and can stymie economic investment or reinvestment in the community. The county should engage with the West Virginia University BAD Buildings program to conduct an inventory of the dilapidated buildings in the county.



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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.militaryfamilyrealtly.com/blog/beware-of-the-public-water-connection-fha-rule.html>



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## *Building Code*

One of the most effective tools to address dilapidated structures is the building code. West Virginia has adopted a uniform statewide building code, which is comprised of a set of several distinct codes. In adopting the building code, local government officials have a few choices in which of the distinct codes to enact.

One part of the West Virginia State Building Code is the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC). The IPMC is the primary code used to address abandoned and dilapidated structures. The IPMC uses time-tested technical standards that ensure reliability and uniformity throughout the community.

The IPMC requires a certified inspector for enforcement. The additional costs of hiring a certified inspector, along with the required continuing education costs, make enforcing the IPMC impractical for many individual jurisdictions. However, one potential solution is sharing a code enforcement officer with other communities. For example, multiple counties can share an inspector, or several municipalities and a county can share one. Such an arrangement should involve a formal agreement between all parties, including the inspector.

## *Unsafe Structures Ordinances*

Counties in West Virginia may enact an unsafe and unsanitary structures ordinance, pursuant to West Virginia Code Section § 7-1-3ff. Through this enabling statute, a county can address unsafe structures and refuse and debris accumulation, and toxic seepage may be addressed and remediated. Counties that enact an unsafe and unsanitary structures ordinance must create an enforcement agency consisting of the county engineer, county health officer, and two at-large members. The county sheriff must serve as an ex-officio member of the enforcement agency and is responsible for enforcing the ordinance.

The West Virginia State Code (§8-12-16C) defines “vacant building” and “vacant property” as follows:

"Vacant building" means a building or other structure that is unoccupied, or unsecured and occupied by one or more unauthorized persons for an amount of time as determined by the ordinance. A new building under construction or a building that by definition is exempted by ordinance of the municipality, is not deemed a vacant building. The governing body of a municipality, on a case-by-case basis, upon request by the property owner, shall exempt a vacant building from registration upon a finding for good cause shown that the person will be unable to occupy the building for a determinant period of time.

"Vacant property" means a property on which no building is erected, and no routine activity occurs.

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The adoption of an unsafe and unsanitary structures ordinance likely does not require the county to hire additional personnel. The statute also provides some latitude to adopt unique county-specific standards for regulating unsafe and unsanitary structures.



Source: Hur Herald News

Unlike the West Virginia Statewide Building Code, there is no certification or training required to enforce the unsafe and unsanitary ordinance. However, the local enforcement agency may not have the expertise to make well-informed decisions about the structural integrity of a building.

### *Other Tools to Address Abandoned and Dilapidated Structures*

Local officials can place a statutory lien on a property to collect costs incurred for debris removal following a fire. If the property owner is unwilling or unable to clean up debris, the county can clean up a property that has been declared a total loss from a structure fire by utilizing West Virginia Code Section 38-10E-1. The county can place a lien on the property and require the insurance provider to set aside a portion of the homeowners' insurance.<sup>51</sup> If the county cleans up the property, it is entitled to a certain amount of the insurance funds, once released.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, a significant number of structures in West Virginia lack proper hazard insurance, nullifying the utilization of this tool.

County officials should determine how to shorten the time needed for asbestos removal of dilapidated structures by investigating whether a third-party asbestos removal company could conduct several remediation projects at once in Calhoun County. A significant amount of logistical and preparatory work would likely need to be completed beforehand. A prioritized inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures needing asbestos remediation would inform this effort.



Vacant properties become dilapidated without proper maintenance and upkeep. Municipalities, including the Town of Grantsville, can enact an

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.wvlegislature.gov/wvcode/code.cfm?chap=38&art=10E#01>

<sup>52</sup> Id.

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ordinance allowing the town to create a vacant property registry and assess an annual fee on properties meeting the statutory definition of “vacant property or structure.” The fee is generally assessed annually and increases each year the structure or property is on the registry. If property owners do not want to pay the fee, they must ensure the property no longer meets the ordinance’s criteria of being vacant. A provision in the vacant property registry ordinance should provide an exemption for a property owner who is, in good faith, trying to sell or rent the property. Counties are currently not enabled to create vacant property registries.

### *Housing Programs*

Housing authorities in West Virginia engage in slum clearance projects and low- and moderate-cost housing development. Additionally, the housing authorities provide youth and senior programming, education, and social services associated with public housing and rental assistance.

Housing authorities typically offer two types of housing assistance: 1) public housing and 2) rental assistance, which includes the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Rental assistance participants pay 30% of their monthly-adjusted income and the housing authority pays all basic utilities. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is tenant-based assistance, which means the assistance stays with a family.

Each city or county in West Virginia may create a housing authority; however, a need must be demonstrated. No housing authority currently exists in Calhoun County. Local officials should determine whether there is a need for a local housing authority in Calhoun County or the region. Only a handful of public housing developments, including Calhoun Homes and Grantsville Manor, currently exist in the county.

No homeless or emergency shelters currently exist in Calhoun County. While homelessness may not be a significant issue in the county, temporary lodging should be available, especially after a disaster or traumatic event, such as a flood or a house fire. Civic or religious organizations are often the most appropriate and willing organizations to establish temporary or emergency shelter.



## Issue #5: Barriers to Economic Development

Improving the local economy is often a primary concern, especially for rural communities such as Calhoun County. Identifying and removing barriers to business growth and retention have been identified as a priority for county officials.

Anecdotally, one participant of the comprehensive plan process indicated that “outside of Minnie Hamilton and the school system, there are not many jobs in the county.” Another participant mentioned that the timber industry in Calhoun County offers little pay and is seasonal in nature.

Many businesses currently operating in Calhoun County are small retail stores owned by aging business owners. Some of these businesses have no one in succession to operate the business once the current owners can no longer do so. These businesses may not survive loss of the current owner-operator, reducing further the number of businesses in Calhoun.

A lack of jobs available for youth was identified as an issue for high school students who participated in the comprehensive plan process. Providing jobs for teenagers and young adults in Calhoun County is important for developing employable skills for later in life.

### *Broadband as an Economic Development Tool*

Broadband is a high priority in Calhoun County due to the potential to improve the economic development outlook for the county. Reliable broadband can expand the potential for telecommuting and information-based technology job development.

Broadband expansion in Calhoun County could also accommodate more home-based businesses. Several artisans and craftspeople live in the area. However, the lack of a

### Economic Development Sites in Calhoun County

- Calhoun County Industrial Park
- Former BF Goodrich building
- Former high school site in Grantsville
  - Located in the floodplain
- Upper West Fork Park
  - Park Association wants to buy a new building
  - Old building could be used for a skate park
  - Applied for grant to build new building
- Former armory
  - Serviced by a package septic system
- Former Calhoun County Bank
  - Bank donated building to Town of Grantsville, good example of adaptive reuse
  - Town offices and the West Virginia Police are utilizing part of the bank.
  - Example of adaptive reuse



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wide-reaching market and physical storefronts in Calhoun County inhibits sales. Reliable, high speed internet would enable small business owners to showcase products with high-quality graphics and videos. Broadband access evens the playing field for local entrepreneurs to offer goods and services globally.

The county currently lacks a website, making announcements on county business or upcoming events, festivals, or fairs difficult. Creating and maintaining a website would be advantageous as a tool for economic development.

### *Economic Development Sites*

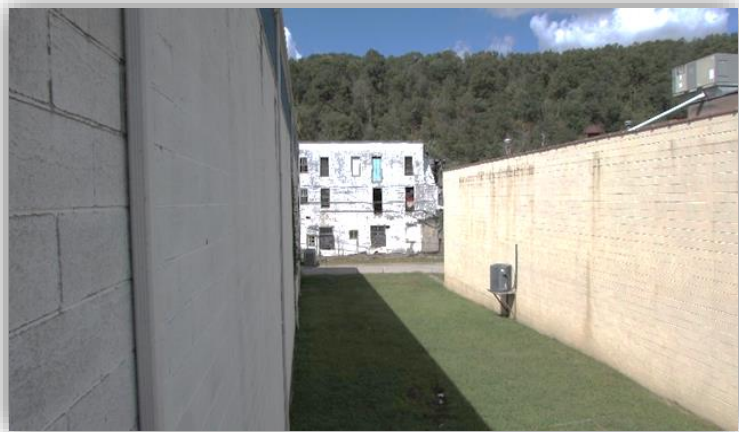
A lack of developable, flat land located outside of the floodplain makes it difficult to attract investors to locate businesses in Calhoun County. Lots are available at the Calhoun County Industrial Park; however, much of the property lies within the floodplain. The industrial park includes broadband access, utilities, and site-ready space. While development is permitted in the floodplain, added costs, and increased risk of flooding are deterrents to development.

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*A compressor station operated by energy company TransCanada, was recently built in Calhoun County. The station provides tax funds and employment for the county. There is three-phase power to the compressor.*

Infill development and adaptive reuse are strategies for creating more economic development sites by utilizing vacant or underused lots in areas already developed. In doing so, infill development increases density while utilizing existing infrastructure. This form of development has potential to provide additional economic development sites in areas such as Grantsville and Arnoldsburg.

Adaptive reuse involves utilizing a structure for a purpose different than its original purpose: for example, converting a former commercial storefront into residential units or keeping the ground level of a storefront commercial but renovating the upper levels of multi-floor structures for residential purposes.



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## *Preferred Development Areas*

A preferred development area is defined as “a geographically defined area where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities.”

While preferred development areas may coincide with listed economic development sites, no such requirement exists. In fact, some preferred development areas anticipate residential development. For Calhoun County, the preferred areas for development are the industrial park and the area immediately surrounding the county park. The Development Corporation has certified sites in the industrial park ready for development. However, light pollution from any development near the county park must be minimized due to the dark skies park initiative. The area surrounding the park is conducive to residential development as well as small-scale commercial development.

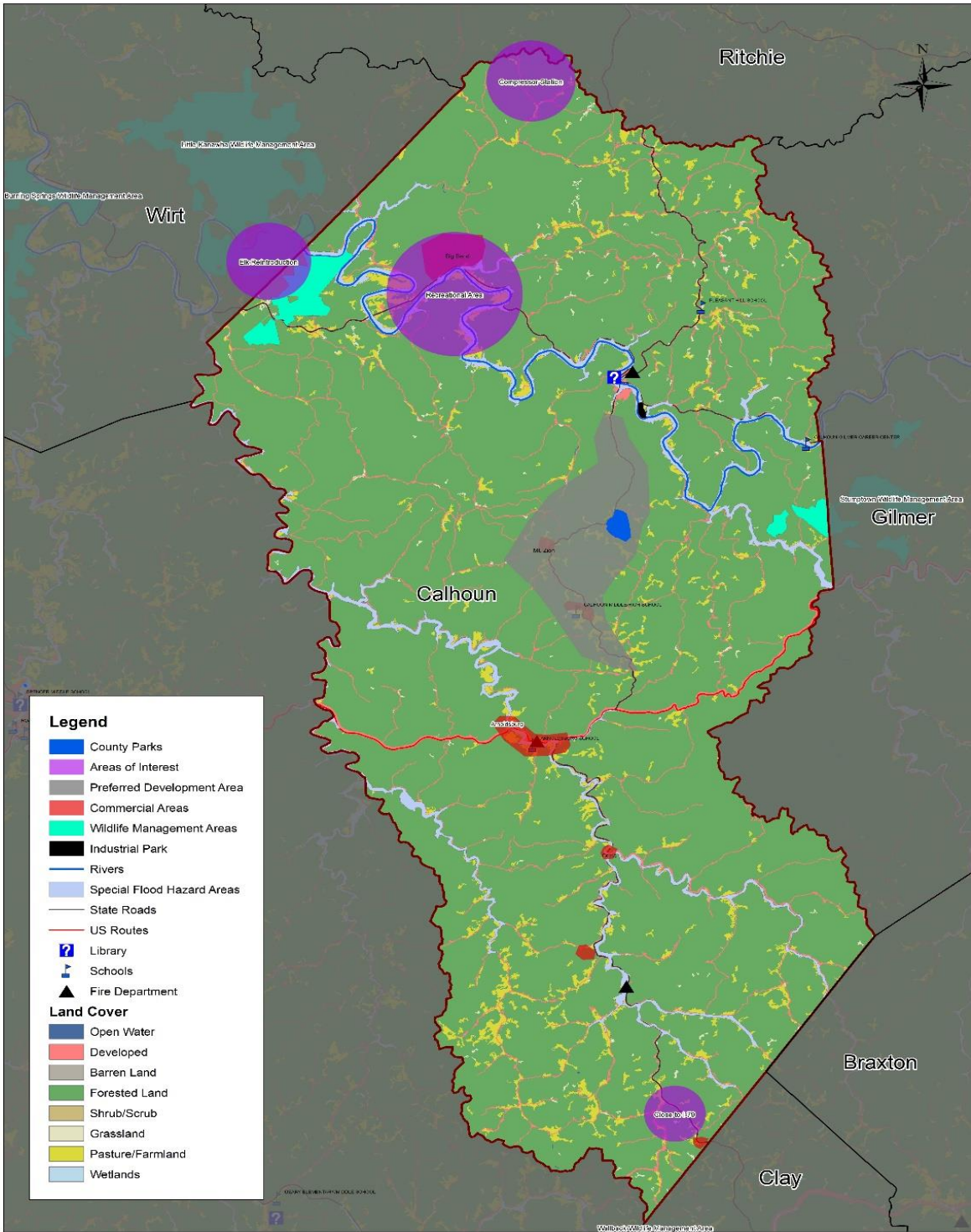


*Arnoldsburg area.*

Residential and commercial development is generally preferred in areas with existing infrastructure, like Grantsville and Arnoldsburg. County officials would like to develop a map or pamphlet designating preferred development areas to distribute or provide on a website.

The preferred development areas (PDA) are included in the Future Land Use (FLU) map for Calhoun County. One PDA was identified for Calhoun County: the area between Grantsville and Arnoldsburg, an area that includes Calhoun County Park. Several areas were identified as areas of interest, where the county does not necessarily want development but may want to highlight to investors, citizens, and tourists.

# Calhoun County Future Land Use Map

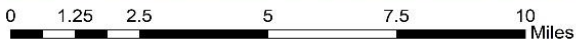


**Legend**

- County Parks
- Areas of Interest
- Preferred Development Area
- Commercial Areas
- Wildlife Management Areas
- Industrial Park
- Rivers
- Special Flood Hazard Areas
- State Roads
- US Routes
- ? Library
- ⚙ Schools
- ▲ Fire Department

**Land Cover**

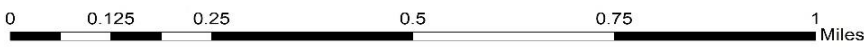
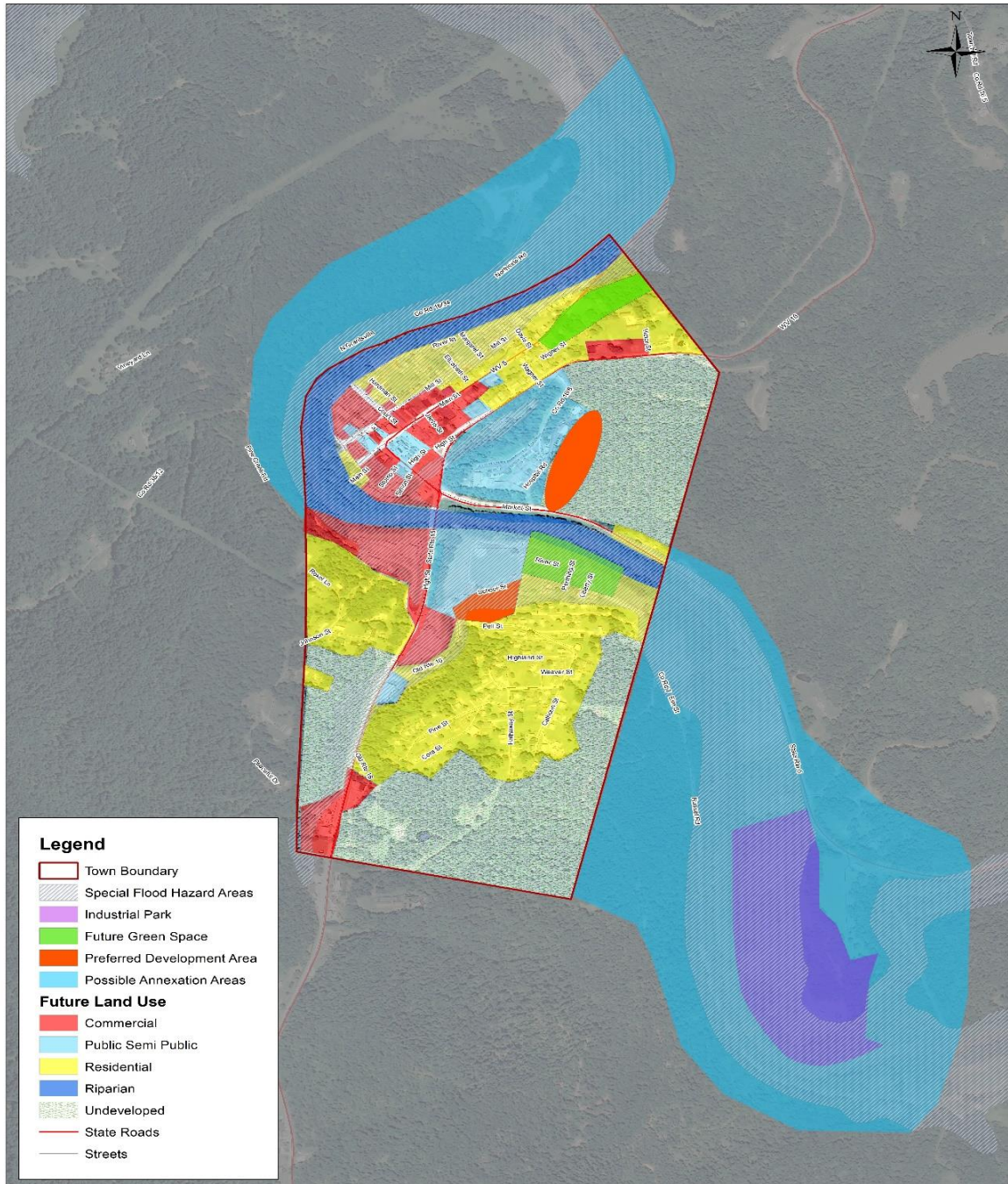
- Open Water
- Developed
- Barren Land
- Forested Land
- Shrub/Scrub
- Grassland
- Pasture/Farmland
- Wetlands





The Town of Grantsville’s Future Land Use Map shows two preferred development areas as well as possible annexation areas. It is important to note that these areas are only guidelines that neither require annexation of these particular areas nor limit the Town from annexing other areas.

## Town of Grantsville- Future Land Use Map





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## Business Incubator and Shared Working

New business development is important for the future of Calhoun County. New business development may be promoted through the creation of a business incubator, which is an organization that assists new businesses by helping them accelerate their growth and success. Incubators provide support in a variety of ways, including management training, office space, capital, mentorship, and networking connections. Successful incubators typically have an individual or organization that champions the incubator and provides support.

According to an InBIA article, *Incubating in Rural Areas*, “it is important for there to be a regional approach for business incubation in rural areas due to dispersed population, limited local markets, and a smaller base of expert advisors, service providers, and potential clients.” Providing shared business space with necessary equipment like fax machines, copiers, audio-visual equipment, and office furniture is part of a business incubator. Beyond the physical space and equipment, incubators often involve support staff for business development.

Sharing space makes sense for many types of professionals, including doctors, lawyers, psychotherapists, massage therapists, acupuncturists, chiropractors, and financial planners. Many of these professionals are able to complete administrative work from home and only

require office space for meetings and appointments. Office sharing works particularly well for professionals who see clients or patients because maintaining a physical office with a reception area and private meeting or treatment rooms can be costly.

Even simple shared space arrangements could be a solution for small local business startups in Calhoun County. Shared space is shared office workspace, typically offering a suite of office-like amenities such as desks, private meeting rooms, kitchens, coffee, and more, rented monthly. Local officials could work with students of nearby colleges and universities, such as Glenville State College or West Virginia University-Parkersburg, to develop business incubators, startups, or shared space, depending on an assessment of the needs of prospective new businesses. An inventory should be taken and maintained by local officials to identify possible sites for an incubator or shared space.



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### *Promote Technical and Trade Education*

Calhoun-Gilmer Career Center, located in Grantsville, provides services for students in both Calhoun and Gilmer Counties. The Center has developed articulation agreements, or contracts with local colleges and universities that allow students to earn advanced college credits or EDGE (Earn a Degree - Graduate Early) credits, a state program that connects public schools with higher education, while completing their Career Center training.

As more oil and gas jobs are created in the region, the Career Center should work with potential employers to ensure students develop desired skills. The Career Center already has welding and building construction programs, among others.

Career Center classes are already completing work at the county park by assisting with the completion of the cabins. These projects help promote the Career Center and raise awareness of the important role that technical and trade education can play in the community.

The Career Center should also develop adult education classes where people can learn marketable skills or seek career changes. The classes can be held in the evening or on the weekend and can be taught either by volunteers or on an individual basis, allowing for minimal costs to participants.

### *Tourism-based Economic Development*

During the comprehensive plan process, many participants indicated a desire to expand the tourism sector in the county. However, a lack of restaurants and lodging options makes tourism difficult to sustain. Support from the local population is necessary to sustain businesses during non-peak tourist periods. Bed-and-breakfasts or short-term rentals through companies such as VRBO or Airbnb may provide appropriate lodging in the county.

Another sector tied to the tourism industry is arts and cultural heritage. The county should highlight and support individuals trying to expand local arts and culture. Local artists and musicians can tell the story of Calhoun County in unique ways that tourists seek out when planning vacations. For example, Heartwood in the Hills, a school for arts and dance, provides services for both locals and tourists. Heartland in the Hills offers “after-school programs of classes in dance, visual arts, mask making and movement as well as public performances, workshops, theatre productions, private lessons, and consultations to individual students.”<sup>53</sup> The programs provide area students of all ages “with the opportunities and resources to develop cognitive and creative skills, self-confidence, and self-expression through the arts.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.heartwoodinthehills.org/about-us.html>

<sup>54</sup> Id.



## Issue #6: Seeking a Higher Quality of Life

Quality of life can be defined as “the standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group.” Groups might define quality of life somewhat differently, but the core values remain the same. Availability of jobs, access to healthcare, recreation, quality education, and shopping amenities can all influence quality of life in an area. Comprehensive plan participants identified several quality of life concerns to be addressed. For example, no childcare facilities exist in Calhoun County. The lack of childcare impacts children, parents, and other relatives. Having a dependable and safe daycare facility is important for attracting out-of-state families into the county.

### *Substance Abuse*

In 2017, the United States declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency. Across the country, particularly in West Virginia, many communities have been devastated by the effects of opioid addiction. In some counties, the overdose mortality rate is several times higher than the national average. Substance abuse and drug-related crimes are impactful issues in Calhoun County. To address the issue, the county should focus efforts on asset sharing, prevention and education, and expanding treatment.

In 2016, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties issued a report recommending four strategies for local governments responding to the opioid epidemic: (1) Leading in a Crisis, (2) Focusing on Prevention and Education, (3) Expanding Treatment, and (4) Reassessing Public Safety and Law Enforcement Approaches.<sup>55</sup> Calhoun County is using this framework to develop a strategy that work for the county.

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.nlc.org/resource/a-prescription-for-action/>

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## *Leading in a Crisis*

Municipal and county officials should be leaders in the local conversation on opioids. Often, a stigma is attached to addiction. Overcoming such stigma requires community leaders, particularly elected officials who hold positions of trust, to initiate candid, respectful, and compassionate discussions. Confronting the “elephant in the room” and recognizing that a problem exists is the first step toward finding solutions.



Efforts to increase recognition of the problem could include hosting town hall discussions and conducting public outreach through the county health department and sheriff's department.

Regional cooperation and asset sharing should be fostered by local officials and industry experts to bring positivity to the conversation and motivate the public to reach out to friends and family to offer support. A cross-jurisdictional approach allows help to reach more people in need. In addition, leaning on regional coalitions for support enables inclusive and diverse substance abuse reduction strategies.

## *Focusing on Prevention and Education*

Increasing public awareness and reaching children at an early age are essential to curbing the proliferation of opioid addiction. Many individuals unknowingly develop an addiction after being prescribed an opioid following an injury or surgery. Education should include information on the importance of managing opioid prescriptions, especially related to school sports. Reaching individuals before they receive prescription medication or obtain illegal opioids is important to mitigate opioid addiction.

The community should provide increased education and recreational opportunities to school-aged children to help prevent addiction. Participants in the comprehensive plan process suggested the possibility of a recreational center, such as a YMCA, for county youth. The County Commission and Board of Education could work together to develop and utilize a shared recreational space. For example, during school, children would utilize the area for physical education, music, art, etc., and the public could utilize the facility after school hours. Creating a health and fitness center, such as a YMCA or swimming pool, would be a valuable asset to the community that provides a place for year-round recreation and promotes healthy living.





As a deterrent, the sheriff's department and health professionals can host programs during school hours to educate young people on the dangers of addiction. Programs like the Herren Project, Project Purple Initiative, and Shatterproof provide resources for communities that want to address substance abuse.

Increasing the variety and frequency of recreational activities for young people further deters substance abuse in youth by offering something to look forward to and participate in with peers. One example, the high school provides an activity bus for after school activities; however, the bus only runs along main routes. Educational professionals who participated in the comprehensive plan process suggested creating a volunteer mentoring program before or after school to address the concern that some children lack quality mentoring at home.

### *Expanding Treatment*

Ensuring that healthcare providers and substance abuse counselors are available in Calhoun County has been identified as an essential need. The community should encourage home-based businesses for counselors and small outpatient centers. Addressing the opioid crisis candidly involves adequate access to needed resources through enabling qualified professionals to work throughout the county. Additionally, treatment can be facilitated by opening government-owned buildings to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups for use without charge. NA meetings are free, addict-led meetings that meet regularly to promote a culture of sobriety through sponsorship programs. Additionally, discussions for construction of a new facility at Minnie Hamilton in the next five to seven years could lead to treatment options for those with substance abuse issues.

### *Drug Court and Day Reporting Program*

Drug Court is a national program for criminal defendants with alcohol or substance dependency issues. Drug courts seek to rehabilitate defendants with dependency

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problems so they can return to society as contributing members. The program also aims to reduce the likelihood of an offender committing another offense.

Drug court participants attend weekly hearings for at least one year. However, most participants take 18 months to two years to complete the program, which also includes intensive outpatient treatment, community service requirements, employment requirements, and random drug testing. The drug court program should continue to operate within the county to reduce expenses and recidivism of drug offenders.

Day Report is an alternative to incarceration that works with individuals dealing with substance abuse issues, parenting concerns, anger management issues, or driving under the influence violations. Participants are required to report to the Day Report Center on time and in person to participate in programming based on a set schedule. The programming is tailored to the participant to develop new skills for long-term success. Day Report seeks to reduce the likelihood of participants committing other offenses and to promote public safety. Currently, Calhoun County has a combined effort with Roane County in Spencer to administer a Day Report program.

Drug Court and Day Report provide flexibility from the traditional prison system. In these programs, participants can get the recovery assistance they need instead of being incarcerated, which is not the ideal recovery environment for someone with dependency problems. Participants are taught skills necessary to become contributing members of society. Further, the state and county can reduce costs. The cost for someone to participate in alternative programs like Drug Court or Day Report is much lower than the cost of incarceration in West Virginia. Beyond the participating individuals, public safety for the general public is not negatively impacted because participants are held accountable through regular participation in supervised programming.

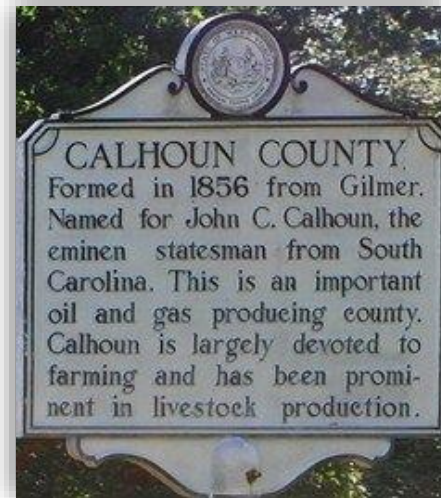
### *Additional Funding and Events*

A grant writer focused on bringing grant funds into the county to address various needs would benefit the county and town. Time could be split between the county and the Town of Grantsville. A skilled grant writer can generate grants that exceed the costs of their employment and address needs identified in the comprehensive plan. For example, funding could be sought to help area fire departments, such as Arnoldsburg Volunteer Fire Department, which cannot afford to replace its old tanker.

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The grant writer could write proposals for parks and recreation equipment at the county park, educational grants for schools, and economic development grants to encourage business development and retention. For example, the public school system hopes to construct school entrances that improve visibility at both Calhoun County Middle/High School and Pleasant Hill Elementary School. A grant would make the project more affordable.

County officials should promote more local activities and events, something that could benefit both county residents and tourists if well-marketed and advertised. For example, hosting a distance running race or bicycle race are low-cost events that promote healthy living. Minnie Hamilton Health System has shown interest in working with county park officials on improving community wellness through grants that promote healthy lifestyle initiatives, such as the development of walking or hiking trails.



“Parties at the park,” with live music, food trucks, and games, could raise funds for the park and be held at the Heritage Village. Parties at the park could involve the county high school band or chorus and offer a platform for local music talent to perform.

Currently, no online community calendars exist. The county should consider creating and maintaining a county website with a community calendar. Developing and maintaining a website and calendar would be a good project for Career Center students or an intern in graphic design from Glenville State College or West Virginia University. A successful website and community calendar will require regular updates and maintenance.

Farm-to-Table programs should be encouraged in Calhoun County. Local officials should continue to encourage the Calhoun County Farmers’ Market and the Grantsville Farmers’ Market to provide locally sourced products. One program already established is Berea Gardens, which aims to produce healthy, locally grown food and runs an agricultural training program. One of the important concepts emphasized by the program is encouraging and educating new farmers. Another program that would be beneficial is to focus on coordination with schools. These programs provide locally grown food to schoolchildren and educational opportunities for children to learn how the produce is grown.



*Source: Calhoun County Farmer's Market Facebook*



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## *Preserving Historical Resources*

The Calhoun County Historical Society was founded in 1974 with 72 original members. Beginning in 1996, the Historical Society created the Heritage Village at Calhoun County Park. The village consists of seven historic Calhoun County buildings, including a one-room school, country store, post office, blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, two-



story log cabin, and chapel. The Village was donated by the owners of the structures and moved to the park from various locations in the county. The buildings have been restored and furnished and can be seen by the public at the county park. No designated state or federal historic district currently exists in Calhoun County. The Historical Society, along with the County Commission, should analyze whether any areas meet the criteria to become a designated historic district.

## *Partner with Local Higher Education*

Calhoun County officials should strive to be more integrated with local institutes of higher education. Glenville State College is in close proximity to Calhoun County. The president of the college has already participated in the Calhoun County Comprehensive Plan process. County and municipal officials should work with the college administration and keep an open line of communication to identify projects that could be beneficial to both the college and the county. Internship and externship programs could be developed that benefit the student as well as the community. Offering courses periodically in Grantsville is could be beneficial, as could utilizing the expertise of local faculty for county projects, like a business incubator or integrated marketing, are examples of collaborations that should be discussed.

## **Conclusion**

The Chapter 3 Needs Assessment highlights many major issues identified throughout the comprehensive plan process. The next chapter establishes goals, objectives, and action steps that seek to address needs and issues identified in Chapter 3.

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## Chapter 4: Action Plan

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While Chapter 3: Needs Assessment identifies and details the county's needs, Chapter 4: Action Plan turns those needs into action. Through the process of creating an action plan, the county has identified goals, objectives, and action steps needed to achieve the county's vision for the future.

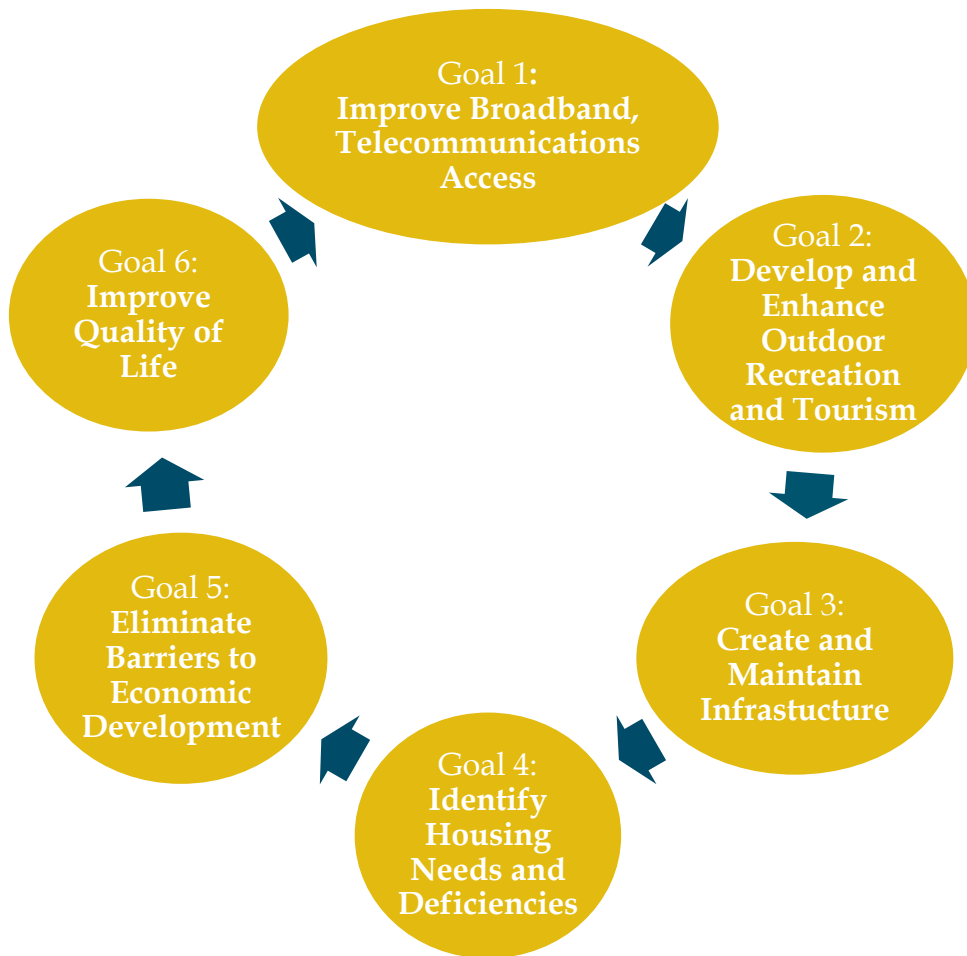
As part of Chapter 4: Action Plan, the community has developed an implementation matrix. While the implementation matrix is closely tied to the rest of the Chapter 4, the matrix is meant to be a separate document. The implementation matrix lists and prioritizes all action steps, provides a general timeline for completion of each action step, specifies what entity is responsible for completing the action step, identifies what partners can assist in the completion of the action step, and lists costs and possible funding sources.

The layout of Chapter 4: Action Plan is hierarchical and organized through goals, objectives, and action steps. The goals are general and address particular issues consistent with the county's vision statement. Each goal typically consists of several, more specific, objectives. Each objective includes two or more action steps, which are specific, discernable, and directed towards achieving the objective. A particular goal is achieved if all subsequent objectives are met through the completion of each subsequent and corresponding action step.

### Action Plan Layout

#### Goal 1

- Objective 1.1
  - Action Step 1.1.1
  - Action Step 1.1.2.
  - Action Step 1.1.3.
- Objective 1.2
  - Action Step 1.2.1
  - Action Step 1.2.2.



## Goal #1: Improve Broadband and Telecommunication Access

### Objective 1.1: Understand the role, if any, that broadband cooperative associations have in Calhoun County

Action Step 1.1.1: Review and understand the pros and cons of broadband cooperative associations.

Action Step 1.1.2: Work with citizens and businesses interested in learning more or considering creating a broadband association.

Action Step 1.1.3: Discuss resources available for broadband cooperative associations with officials from the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council, which sets guidelines and approves the cooperative associations.

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**Objective 1.2: Integrate findings of the “Broadband for Clay, Calhoun, and Roane Counties: Improving Broadband Access” Plan into action**

Action Step 1.2.1: Review, analyze, and discuss the broadband plan to ensure the document is clear and sets out a strategy for improving broadband access in Calhoun County.

Action Step 1.2.2: Ensure that the plan is being followed within the county and by regional partners.

Action Step 1.2.3: Periodically review the plan, reprioritize recommendations, and suggest amendments.



**Objective 1.3: Support the Clay, Calhoun, Roane Broadband Development Committee (CCRBDC)**

Action Step 1.3.1: Support obtaining grant funding for a regional broadband approach.

Action Step 1.3.2: Ensure Calhoun County has a continued voice within the committee by having a member of the committee be from Calhoun County.

**Objective 1.4: Provide educational learning opportunities for citizens regarding the importance of having broadband**

Action Step 1.4.1: Increase public awareness of existing initiatives, plans, and ideas for improving broadband in the county. Host open houses and create informational mailings that explain the benefits of broadband. Include such information in water bills, the newspaper, and through social media platforms.

Action Step 1.4.2: Promote the benefits of improved broadband access, including telecommuting and telehealth options and potential increased business development.

Action Step 1.4.3: Work with the agricultural community to identify ways in which enhanced broadband access could improve efficiencies of their operations.



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### Objective 1.5: Keep broadband costs down

Action Step 1.5.1: Identify various initiatives to ensure the price of high-speed Internet in underserved rural communities is affordable.

Action Step 1.5.2: Provide free Wi-Fi in various public places throughout Calhoun County, including Grantsville and Arnoldsburg.

Action Step 1.5.3: Promote the Lifeline program through the FCC that provides a monthly subsidy to low-income Internet consumers.

Action Step 1.5.4: Consult with Internet service providers (ISPs) on investing in the region to provide better service at lower cost, mutually benefitting consumers and the ISPs.



## Goal #2: Develop and Enhance Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

### Objective 2.1: Continue to encourage expansion and development of the county park

Action Step 2.1.1: Construct cabins in the county park, especially since there is no overnight lodging in the county. Continue to work with the Calhoun-Gilmer Career Center to build the cabins to encourage workforce development and decreases costs.



Action Step 2.1.2: Construct a bathroom facility for overnight campers and stargazers.

Action Step 2.1.3: Continue to maintain and to enhance Heritage Village by adding new structures as they become available.

### Objective 2.2: Encourage growth in the tourism industry

Action Step 2.2.1: Develop a marketing and branding strategy for the county.

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Action Step 2.2.2: Consider creating a county or regional Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to focus on increasing tourism.

### **Objective 2.3: Develop recreational trails**

Action Step 2.3.1: Determine if the rail bed that was dedicated but never used could be developed into a recreational rail-trail.

Action Step 2.3.2: Ascertain the feasibility of creating a blue water trail along the Little Kanawha River. The trail would likely need multi-jurisdictional cooperation and support.

Action Step 2.3.3: Form a steering committee to develop blue water trail infrastructure, including input and take-out points, signage, and marketing.

Action Step 2.3.4: Restart discussions regarding a multi-jurisdictional ATV trail system in central West Virginia that includes Calhoun County.

### **Objective 2.4: Continue to develop and promote the dark skies initiative at the county park**

Action Step 2.4.1: Enact a dark skies ordinance that will limit increased light pollution in and around the county park.

Action Step 2.4.2: Locate and apply for grant funding to develop the park as a year-round destination for astronomy and recreational stargazing.

Action Step 2.4.3: Develop programmatic and educational materials for children and amateur stargazers.

Action Step 2.4.4: Support the International Dark Skies Association (IDA) Certification through collaboration with the Calhoun County Park Board.

Action Step 2.4.5: Purchase telescopes for public use.



## Goal #3: Creation, Expansion, and Maintenance of Infrastructure

### Objective 3.1: Improve and expand water and wastewater facilities

Action Step 3.1.1: Address the most urgent issues with existing facilities, including boil water advisories and lack of water pressure in some distribution lines.

Action Step 3.1.2: Develop a detailed capital improvement plan for the Town of Grantsville to replace aging and leaking water lines.

Action Step 3.1.3: Inspect water distribution lines throughout the county and test to determine loss ratio.

Action Step 3.1.4: Consider expansion of water and wastewater service to unserved areas, especially if there are plant upgrades.

Action Step 3.1.5: Discuss and identify funding options for water or wastewater expansion projects.

### Objective 3.2: Digitally map water and wastewater Infrastructure

Action Step 3.2.1: Digitally map water and wastewater lines and any appurtenances.

Action Step 3.2.2: Ensure funding and procedures are in place to update and maintain infrastructure mapping.

### Objective 3.3: Integrate alternative wastewater systems

Action Step 3.3.1: Understand what types of and where alternative wastewater systems would be most appropriate.

Action Step 3.3.2: Work with other jurisdictions to identify a regional process for funding of alternative wastewater systems.

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### **Objective 3.4: Expand and enhance telecommunications infrastructure to all parts of the county**

Action Step 3.4.1: Work with telecommunication providers to identify gaps in service.

Action Step 3.4.2: Identify government-owned property that could be leased to construct telecommunications facilities, including new towers.

### **Objective 3.5: Improve electrical utilities**

Action Step 3.5.1: Analyze the feasibility of providing three-phase power in the county to encourage manufacturing.

Action Step 3.5.2: Ensure that commercial or industrial preferred development areas receive prioritized consideration for three-phase power.

### **Objective 3.6: Address local road and transportation concerns**

Action Step 3.6.1: Develop a detailed inventory of roads that need improvements.

Action Step 3.6.2: Present prioritized inventory of roads improvements to state transportation officials.

Action Step 3.6.3: Work with Little Kanawha Bus service to identify locations in the county where additional bus routes and stops are needed.





## Goal #4: Identify housing needs and deficiencies

**Objective 4.1: Work with developers, real estate agents, and local businesses to encourage growth of the housing stock, including identifying the type of housing needed**

Action Step 4.1.1: Encourage development of accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Action Step 4.1.2: Create a dialogue with property owners and encourage the rental of additional habitable dwelling units and the redevelopment of property to accommodate rental housing needs.

Action Step 4.1.3: Ensure citizens understand the costs of developing in the floodplain. Encourage development, especially dwelling units, to be located outside of the floodplain.

**Objective 4.2: Understand the impacts of “man camps”**

Action Step 4.2.1: Determine if “man camps” are an appropriate type of residential development in the county and in what specific locations. If man camps are determined to be inappropriate in some parts of the county, then county officials should understand how land use controls can limit man camps.

Action Step 4.2.2: Ensure that adequate utilities are provided to man camps, including electric, water, wastewater, and public services such as police, fire, and EMS protection are adequate. Ensure that man camp developments are paying their fair share for services and utilities.

Action Step 4.2.3: Discuss with property owners different options to utilize their land when demand for man camps decreases.



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### **Objective 4.3: Establish a code enforcement program to address abandoned and dilapidated structures, especially residential dwelling units**

Action Step 4.3.1: Create an inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures to help local officials understand the scope and determine what tools will best address the issue in the county and town.

Action Step 4.3.2: Understand advantages and disadvantages of adopting the West Virginia State Building Code, including the International Property Maintenance Code, which focuses on addressing abandoned and dilapidated structures.

Action Step 4.3.3: Understand advantages and disadvantages of enacting a W. Va. Code § 7-1-3ff unsafe structures ordinance. Town of Grantsville officials should understand the benefits of enacting a W. Va. Code § 8-12-16 ordinance. Both enabling statutes provide alternatives to the West Virginia State Building Code.



Action Step 4.3.4: Consider other tools to address abandoned and dilapidated structures, including vacant property registries, public shaming, and liens for debris removal after fire.

Action Step 4.3.5: Identify and encourage methods to shorten the time needed for asbestos removal.

### **Objective 4.4: Assess the need for additional housing programs in the county**

Action Step 4.4.1: Determine whether a need to create a housing authority exists in the county to manage housing programs.

Action Step 4.4.2: Understand the needs of the homeless and work with social workers and healthcare providers to establish a homeless or emergency shelter, if needed.



## Goal #5: Eliminate Barriers to Economic Development

### Objective 5.1: Develop broadband for business growth and development

Action Step 5.1.1: Promote and market improved broadband access as an economic development tool for the county.

Action Step 5.1.2: Understand the Internet and online commerce needs of small businesses in the county.

Action Step 5.1.3: Work with existing and potential Internet service providers to identify methods to improve access to reliable, high-speed Internet throughout the county.

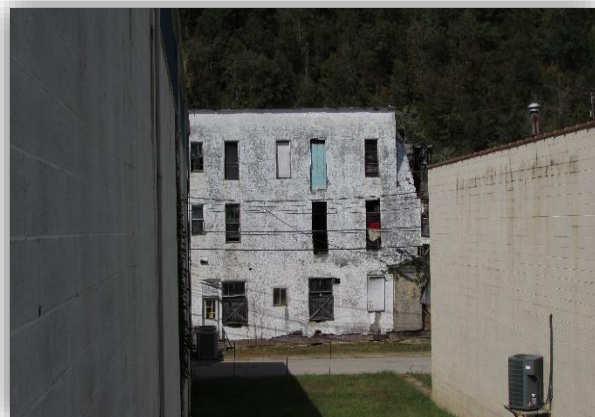
Action Step 5.1.4: Support the Clay, Calhoun, Roane Broadband Committee's efforts to develop broadband regionally, especially related to economic development in the county.

### Objective 5.2: Identify and prioritize future economic development sites and preferred development areas

Action Step 5.2.1: Collaborate with partner organizations, including the Little Kanawha Area Development Corporation, to identify and develop sites for commercial and industrial purposes.

Action Step 5.2.2: Create an objective prioritization process for development sites that considers current ownership status, proximity to the floodplain, possible costs for redevelopment and remediation, and other relevant considerations.

Action Step 5.2.3: Work with existing business owners seeking to expand their



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businesses and assist in identifying available storefronts or land that can be used for commercial purposes.

Action Step 5.2.4: Encourage infill development and adaptive reuse of properties where infrastructure already exists.

Action Step 5.2.5: Develop a map or pamphlet highlighting preferred development areas.

Action Step 5.2.6: Encourage development of a dependable and safe daycare facility in the county.

**Objective 5.3: Assess the feasibility of a business incubator or shared working facility**

Action Step 5.3.1: Understand how business incubators work to determine if an incubator is feasible or needed in the county.

Action Step 5.3.2: Identify and work with an entity that will lead in the development and creation of a business incubator.

Action Step 5.3.3: Identify where shared workspace might be established.

**Objective 5.4: Ensure that the community supports all students, including those students training at the Calhoun-Gilmer Career Center**

Action Step 5.4.1: Work with Career Center instructors to identify projects that will benefit both students and the community.

Action Step 5.4.2: Consider developing adult education classes and programs.

**Objective 5.5: Encourage development of the tourism industry, including lodging and food**

Action Step 5.5.1: Prioritize development of food and lodging establishments in the county.

Action Step 5.5.2: Survey residents to identify the type of food establishments that would be most appropriate in the county.





## Goal #6: Improve Quality of Life

### Objective 6.1: Address substance abuse directly

Action Step 6.1.1: Lead in the discussion of how to deal with substance abuse in the community.

Action Step 6.1.2: Encourage regional cooperation and asset sharing in order to share in expertise, resources, and costs.

Action Step 6.1.3: Expand public awareness of substance abuse, including education on managing opioid prescriptions following an injury or surgery and how to address substance abuse when a friend or family member is suspected of abuse.

Action Step 6.1.4: Increase the type and frequency of recreation and extracurricular programming for school-aged children, including programs such as Girls on the Run and other after-school enrichment programs.

Action Step 6.1.5: Consider adding routes for after-school activity buses to encourage more participation in after-school activities.

Action Step 6.1.6: Create an after-school mentoring program for at-risk youth.

Action Step 6.1.7: Develop a health and fitness center, such as a YMCA or a swimming pool.

Action Step 6.1.8: Ensure that healthcare providers and substance abuse counselors are welcome in Calhoun County.

Action Step 6.1.9: Allow groups like Narcotics Anonymous (NA) to hold meetings in public buildings, free of charge.

Action Step 6.1.10: Continue to support the Drug Court and combined Roane-Calhoun Day Report programs.

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## **Objective 6.2: Locate and apply for grant funding for additional community events**

Action Step 6.2.1: Discuss hiring a part- or full-time grant writer to apply for and administer grant funding throughout the county.

Action Step 6.2.2: Promote local activities and events that are low-cost yet provide a service or entertainment for county residents.

Action Step 6.2.3: Promote “Parties at the Park” with live music, food trucks, and games for all ages. Organizers could involve public school bands and choirs, as well as local musicians.

Action Step 6.2.4: Encourage farm to table programs throughout the county to provide healthy food options.

## **Objective 6.3: Preserve historical resources**

Action Step 6.3.1: Analyze whether areas in the county could be designated as a historical district.

Action Step 6.3.2: Request information from the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office regarding what it means for a property to be included in a historic district.

## **Objective 6.4: Collaborate with local institutions of higher education**

Action Step 6.4.1: Host student internships in municipal and county offices that can include website design, parks and recreation, and marketing.

Action Step 6.4.2: Encourage academic leadership to consider holding courses remotely in Grantsville or Arnoldsburg, especially at Glenville State College.