



# Tucker County Comprehensive Plan

Approved by the Tucker County Commission on

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FINAL DRAFT

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# INTRODUCTION

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following is a Comprehensive Plan for Tucker County. The purpose of Tucker County's Comprehensive Plan is to outline the long-term plan and to include a set of goals, objectives, and strategies for Tucker County.

### Goals

The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to achieve a balance between bringing prosperity and business development to Tucker County while continuing to safeguard the natural beauty and the resources that are available within the area.

Goals are concerned with the long term, and often describe ideal situations that would result if all plan purposes were fully realized. Since goals are value-based, their attainment is difficult to measure.

### Objectives

Objectives are specific statements that carry out a plan in the short term. Objectives are measurable benchmarks that can be used to assess incremental progress in achieving the broader purposes expressed in the goals. The objectives will be individually set forth in each section of the Comprehensive Plan.

## PURPOSE

The Comprehensive Plan is authorized by the *West Virginia Code* Chapter 8A, Article 3. The purpose of preparing a Comprehensive Plan is to:

- (1) Promote the coordinated development of land and improvements to meet the future needs of the county;
- (2) Achieve sound planning to assist the governing body in preserving quality of life and enhancing that quality of life to adapt to the future needs of the county relating to economic, physical, or social changes;
- (3) Promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of county residents; and,
- (4) Promote efficiency and economy during the development process.

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide for the Tucker County Planning Commission and the Tucker County Commission as they assess the location, the character, and the extent of future development for the county. The plan contains proposed policies and other recommendations to be implemented over time through a variety of decision-making actions including subdivision of land, and the location and construction of public infrastructure improvements, among other things. The Tucker County Comprehensive Plan was developed so that decisions affecting the county's lands should be made in a coordinated and responsible manner to capitalize on the county's geographic location and its desirable physical features.

The Comprehensive Plan shall set forth goals and objectives to allow an informed decision making process, ensure consistency in government, and coordinate the various arms of the local government. It will create conditions positive for vital resources, reduce resource waste relating to haphazard development and sprawl, preserve historic landmarks and other resources, and promote a sense of community character and identity. It will promote the most efficient utilization of available resources, coordinate development into well-planned communities, and advocate cost-effective development of facilities and services.

## **O**RGANIZATION

The comprehensive plan organization follows the requirements of *West Virginia Code* §8A-3-4(c). Each section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses a requirement set forth in the West Virginia State Code. To ensure that the comprehensive plan meets all the statutory requirements, the sections of the Comprehensive Plan systematically follow the requirements established within the State Code.

The only required component listed in the State Code that does not have a separate section within the comprehensive plan is Financing (§8A-3-4(c)12). Instead of writing a separate section that describes how the county intends to achieve financing for each of the other sections, the Comprehensive Plan contains a discussion concerning how the county hopes to achieve the financing within each section listed below.

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## **P**ROCESS

The comprehensive planning process for Tucker County initially began in 1992 with the preparation of the original Comprehensive Plan. In 1995, the County worked with the Canaan Valley Institute (CVI) to redraft the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission continued the planning process by conducting a survey to gain information from the residents in 2008. In 2014, the Planning Commission revised the Comprehensive Plan, updating several sections.

With the construction of WV 48 (Corridor H), Tucker County may have the opportunity to experience growth and development that may affect its natural resources, and place a strain upon its ability to provide both community services and public facilities. While the new highway will provide economic benefits to the county, the road will also place increasing demands for utilities, transportation, infrastructure, and services that must be considered.

Faced with the prospect of development, the Tucker County Commission began the process of developing a Comprehensive Plan to help guide county growth for the next twenty years. Members of the Tucker County Planning Commission updated the current Comprehensive Plan.

## **P**LAN OBJECTIVES

Although many of the objectives of the comprehensive plan will be individually set forth in each of the following sections of the Comprehensive Plan, six main objectives exist. The primary objectives are discussed in the pertinent sections of the comprehensive plan and consist of the following:

1. Preparation for the completion of WV 48 (Corridor H)

As described in the Transportation section, Tucker County will soon benefit from a multi-billion dollar highway system commonly known as Corridor H or officially designated WV 48. The highway is now open from Wardensville to Davis, WV. The section from Elkins to Parsons is currently under construction and is anticipated to be completed in 2025.

The final section in Tucker County between Davis and Parsons has been controversial. The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, and Federal Highways Administration have yet to choose which proposed routes will be built - the ROPA corridor (R-ROPA) or the Blackwater Avoidance Corridor Alignment. The alternatives for each of the proposed routes are being developed to compare the pros and cons of each

route, and then the final route will be selected. The design stage with construction is anticipated to begin in 2025.

As the Corridor H project nears completion, its impact on Tucker County is set to be significant. The new highway promises to bring a wave of positive changes, and the county and the West Virginia State Highway Department are working together to ensure that these benefits are maximized for the community.

## 2. Expansion of High Speed Internet

Any business that wishes to be competitive or remain competitive will need access to broadband communications. For Tucker County, this means a potential influx of businesses and economic growth. By providing the necessary infrastructure, the county can pave the way for businesses to establish a presence on the Information Superhighway, fostering a more competitive and vibrant business environment.

While Tucker County lacks a fiber backbone, several incorporated communities have access to cable and fixed wireless internet services. Most outlying rural areas in the county need more access to stable and reliable internet resources.

The Tucker County Commission and the Tucker County Development Authority are actively working to expand the broadband network and enhance the strength and reliability of local connections. With the state of West Virginia securing monies from the Federal Government to develop broadband throughout the state, we are hopeful that additional funds will be made available for Tucker County to make broadband communications, including high-speed internet, available to more of its residents.

## 3. Increase Tourism and Recreation

Tourism and recreation have become increasingly vital to Tucker County's economy, especially in recent years. A major boost came when Perfect North Slopes purchased the Timberline Four Seasons Resort in a bankruptcy auction. Since its grand reopening in 2020, the company has invested over \$15 million in improvements, transforming the resort into a key driver of local tourism.

The timing of these investments aligned with the COVID-19 pandemic, during which travelers sought outdoor destinations they could drive to rather than fly. This surge in interest helped propel Tucker County to the forefront of regional tourism, leading to a sharp increase in property values.

Tourism is now one of the county's primary industries, creating jobs and generating revenue for local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and outdoor recreation services. Visitors spend on accommodations, dining, and activities such as skiing, hiking, and fishing, which boosts the hospitality sector and supports local artisans and service providers.

This growth in tourism has diversified Tucker County's economy, which was previously reliant on timber and coal mining. As those industries declined, tourism emerged as a sustainable alternative, supporting hundreds of jobs and contributing millions of dollars to the local economy annually.

#### 4. Development of Community Infrastructure

With the anticipated growth of Tucker County from the completion of WV 48 and the migration of people from the surrounding states to Tucker County, the importance of community infrastructure rises to the top. Community infrastructure is a complex system of facilities, structures, and the neighborhood environment that contributes to a community's quality of life and overall safety, health, and economic development.

Road system care and maintenance in Tucker County are critical as they transport goods and services to businesses and make it easier for people to access outdoor recreation, tourism, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. The Tucker County roads are in exceptionally good condition and are mainly under the control of the West Virginia Division of Highways. Not all roadways within the district belong to the West Virginia Division of Highways, with some being maintained by the governing municipalities.

The current level of public utility service for water and wastewater is a significant limiting factor for land development in Tucker County. Many wastewater systems in the County are over capacity, and in some areas, adequate wastewater treatment utilities are simply not available. This highlights the need for expanded services, a goal that the Tucker County Commission is actively working towards in collaboration with the West Virginia Development Authority.

#### 5. Dependable Emergency Services

Emergency services are a challenge for most counties in West Virginia, including Tucker County. This problem is even more acute in a county positioned for abundant growth if the community infrastructure and housing issues can be resolved.

Currently, ambulances are stationed at two locations in Tucker County: Parsons and Davis. These two strategic locations allow an ambulance to respond to incidents in 14 minutes or less for most of Tucker County.



However, due to the vast area covered in Tucker County, response times can be as long as 45 minutes. Financial forecasts for 2025-26 fiscal year predict this may change unless additional funds are secured.

The Tucker County Ambulance Authority, in close collaboration with the Tucker County Commission, plays a pivotal role in ensuring round-the-clock emergency services from both stations. Their dedication and commitment to providing crucial training to staff and ensuring the availability of lifesaving equipment demonstrates a shared commitment to the community's safety, giving you confidence in our emergency services.

## 6. Expansion of Workforce Housing

There is a pressing need for more workforce housing in Tucker County. The average listing prices and property values have skyrocketed in the past three years, leading to the conversion of long-term rental units into vacation rentals. The ability of local businesses to thrive and expand is directly tied to the development of affordable and safe workforce housing units for working families and individuals.

Employers have indicated to public officials that the lack of affordable, safe, and available housing is the primary obstacle to their business and economic development. This challenge has been cited by significant employers (e.g., state parks, state juvenile detention centers, Board of Education, Cortland Acres, etc.) and small business owners (many in the service and tourism industry, but not exclusively).

Gov. Jim Justice and West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Harold Ward have taken a significant step by allocating funds from the AML Economic Revitalization Program to kickstart the housing projects. This program, designed for economic development at abandoned mine land sites across West Virginia, provides federal grant funds to support initiatives that promote economic growth and community development.

As part of the Preston County - Build West Virginia District, Tucker County has a crucial role in advocating for and attracting much-needed workforce housing development projects. This act enables developers of qualifying housing projects to receive State Sales and Use Tax exemptions for building materials and a 10-year property value adjustment refundable tax credit to offset building costs, encouraging the construction of more workforce housing in our area.

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## **T**UCKER COUNTY LEVY ESTIMATE

Nothing within the Tucker County Comprehensive Plan is intended to conflict with the Tucker County Levy Estimate. The Levy Estimate serves as the Official Budget Document and remains the primary annual policy and planning document for the county. The Levy Estimate is approved by the Tucker County Commission and prepared by the county Clerk in March of each year before being submitted to the West Virginia State Auditor's Office for approval. The Levy Estimate contains a description of all estimates of all revenues coming into the county for the coming fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). The Levy Estimate also allocates how county revenues will be expended through the coming fiscal year. The Levy Estimate is reviewed by the county commission and updated by the County Clerk each December. It is then modified as necessary to track any changes in expenditures that occur throughout the year.

The Tucker County Comprehensive Plan is intended to supplement the Levy Estimate and serve as a multi-year narrative description for the expenditures contained within the Levy Estimate. Should the Levy Estimate begin to diverge from the Comprehensive Plan, the County Commission shall take steps in order to bring both documents into agreement.

## **A**MMENDING THE TUCKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Tucker County Comprehensive Plan is intended to remain a living document capable of adapting to changing circumstances within the county. As a result, the following procedures are in place to amend the Comprehensive Plan should changes be needed to make the plan either more current or more effective.

The procedures for amending the Tucker County Comprehensive Plan shall be in compliance with the West Virginia Code (§8A-3-11). Amendments to the Tucker County Comprehensive Plan shall be drafted by the Tucker County Planning Commission. The proposed amendment shall contain the proposed wording change and shall provide reasoning for the proposed change. Subsequent to drafting the proposed amendment, the Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing. After the public meeting, the planning commission will forward the amended plan to the County Commission for approval. The County Commission would then consider the approval of the amended plan in accordance with the state code.

If approved, a copy of the amended Comprehensive Plan shall be posted on the county website, in the county courthouse, and in the county public libraries. It would replace the previous copy of the plan document available at those locations.

# CURRENT SITUATION

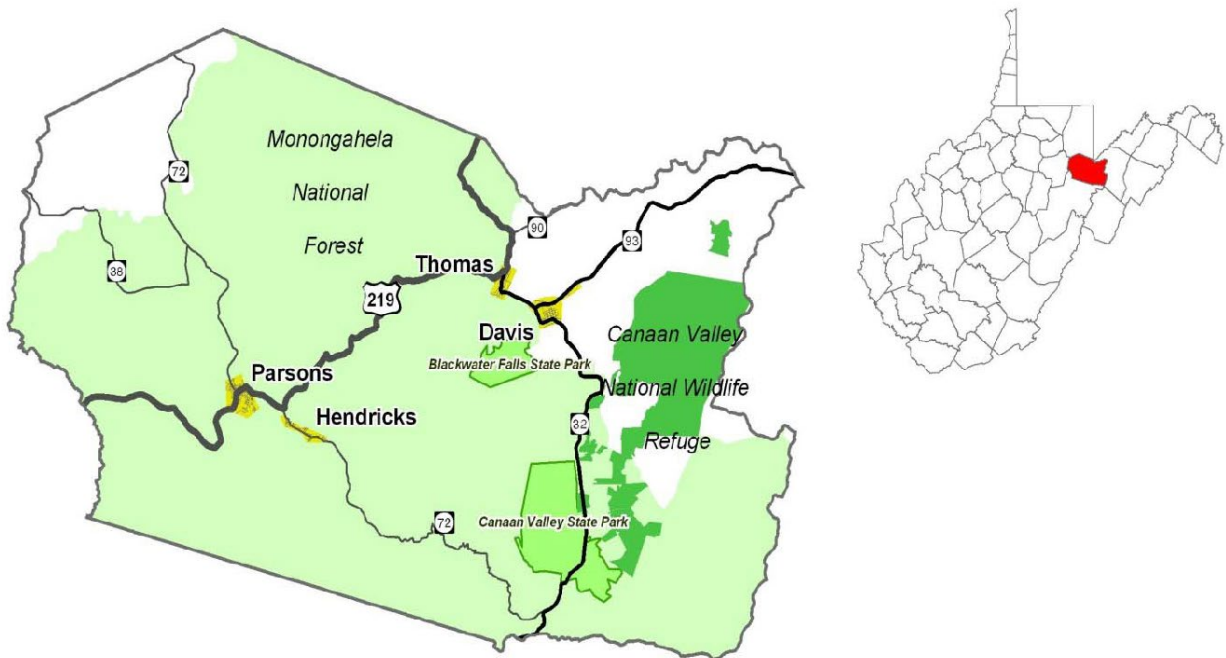
## REGIONAL SETTING

Tucker County is located in the Potomac Highlands region of West Virginia just west of the Allegheny Front. Tucker County borders six counties – five in West Virginia and one in Maryland. The bordering counties are Randolph County to the south, Barbour County to the west, Preston County to the north, Garrett County, Md., to the northeast, Grant County to the east, and Pendleton County to the southeast.

Tucker County is approximately 419 square miles (including over 2 square miles of water area). The elevation of the county ranges from 4,420 feet at the top of Weiss Knob to 1,450 feet where the Cheat River crosses the Tucker/Preston County line.

The Tucker County seat is in Parsons. Other municipalities in Tucker County include Davis, Thomas, Hendricks, and Hambleton.

**Map 1: Overview of Tucker County**



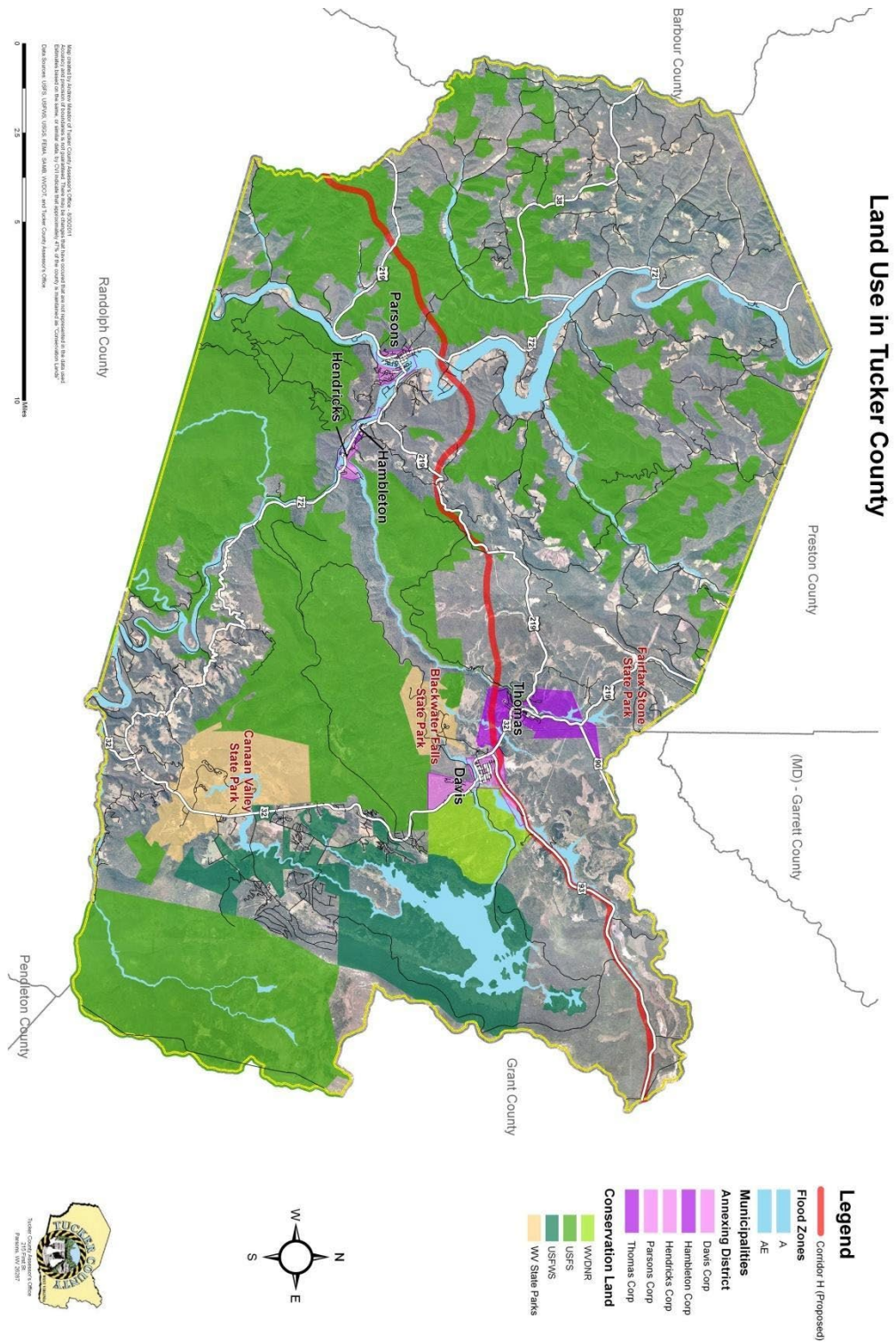
## **P**HYSICAL LAND CONDITIONS

Tucker County is sparsely populated. The population of the county in the 2020 Census was 6,672 making the population density just under 15.9 persons per square mile. Only two counties in West Virginia have a lower population density. Those counties are Pocahontas County with a population density of 8.4, Pendleton County with a population density of 8.8, and Webster County with a population density of 15.1.

These U.S. Census figures are the most recent available and were measured during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Existing Land Use**

The Existing Land Use Map (Map 1) provided by the Tucker County Tax Assessor's Office illustrates the county's land development patterns. The map indicates how large sections of the county consist of forested land that is owned either by the State or by the Federal Government. The county has not updated the map since the last Tucker County Comprehensive Plan in 2014.



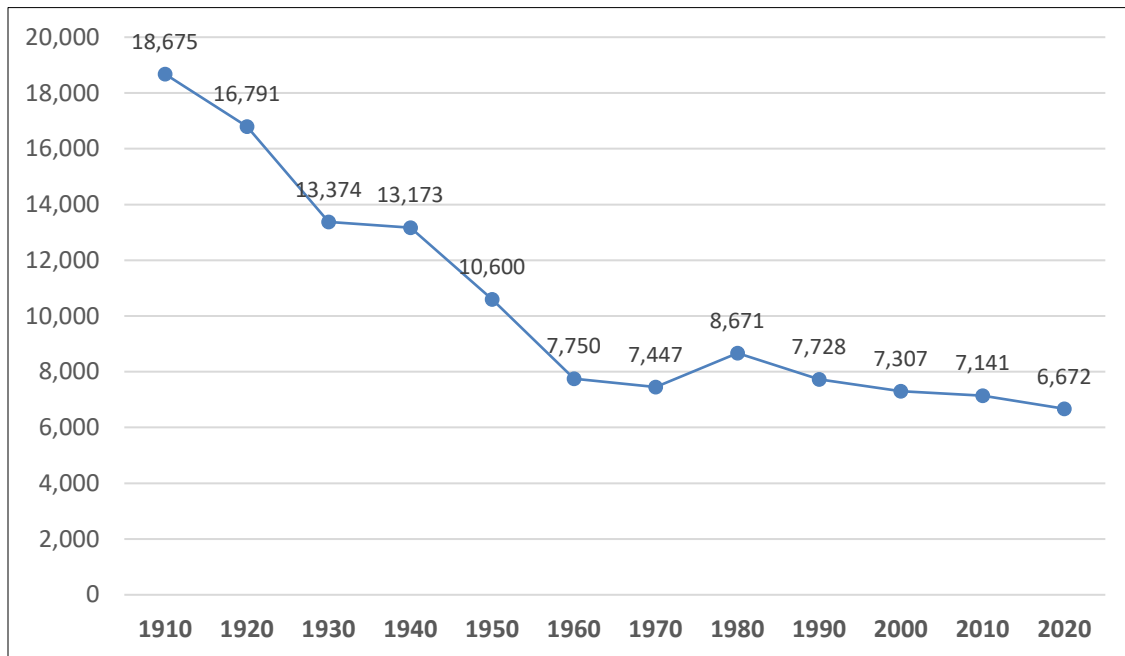
Map 2: Land Use Map

# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

## Population & Households

The 2020 U.S. Census found the population of Tucker County to be 6,672 residents. The county population reflects a steady decline for the past 110 years. The county population peaked in 1910 at 18,675. It fell between 1910 and 1920 and between 1920 and 1930. The population declined again after World War II until the county saw a population reversal with a population increase between 1970 and 1980. Since 1980, the county has experienced a steady decline in population. Since 1980, the Tucker County population has declined by 23 percentage points.

**Chart 1: Population Change in Tucker County**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The county’s rate of population decline is not expected to change in the next five years. Instead, based upon population projections by U.S. Census (Table 1) and the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research (Table 2), the ongoing decline in the Tucker County population is projected to continue through the next two decades.

**Table 1: Comparative Population Change**

	<b>Tucker County</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>1990 to 2000</b>	-5.4%	+0.8%	+13.8%
<b>2000 to 2010</b>	-2.3%	+0.24%	+10.2%
<b>2010 to 2020</b>	-6.6%	-3.4%	+8.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 2: Population Projections for Tucker County**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2040</b>
<b>Population</b>	6,762	6,504	6,337	6,115	5,929
<b>Percent Change</b>		-3.8%	-2.6%	-3.5%	-3.0%

Source: WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research

### Age Structure

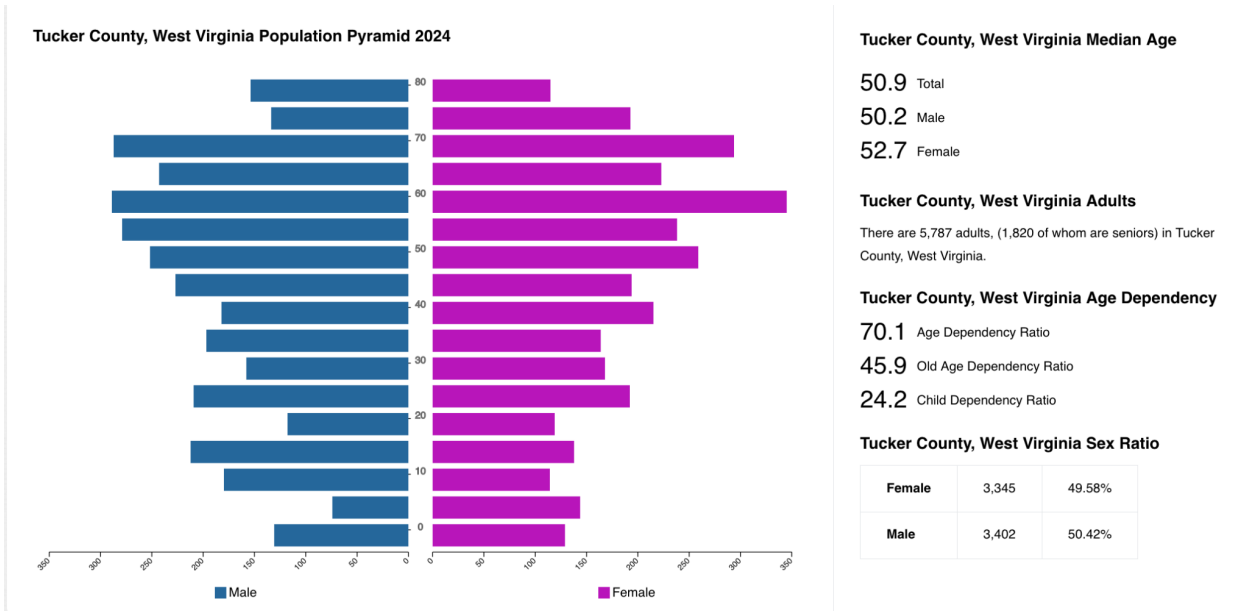
In addition to an overall population decline, the age of the average Tucker County resident is significantly higher than the national average. More than 28% of the Tucker County residents are over 65 years in age. The under age 18 group declined from 19% in 2010 to 13% in 2020. In comparison, 21% of West Virginia residents are over 65 years in age compared to 17% of the U.S. residents are over 65 years in age.

The age distribution in a region is important for many planning applications. Education, social services, recreational facilities, and a host of other services and facilities must be considered for the various age groups. In addition, commercial and industrial establishments tend to locate to areas where the demographic makeup includes a youthful and skilled labor force.

**Table 3: Age Distribution in Tucker County**

	<b>Tucker County</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Persons under 5 years old, percent, 2020</b>	3.3%	5%	5.6%
<b>Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2020</b>	13.4%	19.8%	21.7%
<b>Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2020</b>	27.9%	21.2%	17.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/wv/tucker-county-population>)

## Education

Education plays a critical role in the economic viability of a community. For example, when searching for new locations or for plant expansions, businesses tend to scrutinize the percentage of high school and college graduates, the quality of the local schools, and the availability of worker-readiness programs.

The proportion of adults in Tucker County that are high school graduates and college graduates is about the same average as the West Virginia and the national average.

**Table 4: Education Statistics for Tucker County**

	Tucker County	West Virginia	USA
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2017-2021	87.7%	88.1%	88.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2017-2021	20.6%	21.8%	33.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



## Income

According to the Census Bureau, average income levels in Tucker County remain below the West Virginia average and the national average. The census indicates that the median annual family income for Tucker County was \$49,808 in the 2017-2021 period. At the same time, the number of persons below the poverty level is much lower in Tucker County as compared to the state.

**Table 5: Income Statistics for Tucker County**

	<b>Tucker County</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Persons per household, 2017-2021</b>	<b>2.39</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>2.60</b>
<b>Per capita income in past 12 months (2021 dollars) 2017-2021</b>	<b>\$27,914</b>	<b>\$28,761</b>	<b>\$37,638</b>
<b>Median household income, 2017-2021</b>	<b>\$49,808</b>	<b>\$50,884</b>	<b>\$69,021</b>
<b>Persons below poverty level, percent, 2017-2021</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Conclusions

Although the Tucker County demographic profile indicates a county in decline, there are major forces for change that could reverse that trend.

1. The final section for completion of a multi-billion dollar transportation highway (WV 48) is anticipated to be finished in the next 5 to 10 years. The road carries the potential of providing a transportation route that will increase development opportunities, facilitate the transportation of goods and services, and increase affluence within the county.
2. The county continues to develop its outdoor recreation activities which includes a mountain bike and trail system connecting trails within the county and more ski trails. This will facilitate an increase in tourism year around.
3. The county is working toward the installation of a fiber-optic cable system for improved high-speed internet access and broadband communications in the underserved areas. The installation of a fiber backbone will provide these county residents access to the information superhighway and will facilitate business development.
4. The county is seeing an influx of a young artisan community that can contribute to a revitalization of the local municipalities and communities.

# LAND USE

## OVERVIEW

This section develops the overall land use profile plan for Tucker County.

The overall land use profile for Tucker County shows that the County’s primary land use category comprises a combination of forest land, agriculture land, or undeveloped land (269,973 acres). Of the three, forest land occupies the largest amount. Agricultural land is relatively limited in Tucker County because of the prevailing rugged terrain. Much of the land base has remained underdeveloped because it is a steep slope area and as such is not developable.

Park land occupies a total of 8,372 acres with the two state parks (Canaan Valley Resort and Blackwater Falls) accounting for most of this acreage. The remaining acreage is Camp Kidd, the YMCA Camp Horseshoe, and municipal parkland.

Residential development and housing occupy some 2,105 acres or less that one percent of the County’s total land area. More than half this acreage is to be found in Canaan Valley where recreation-related and resort development continued to grow during the past 25 years. The remaining residential development is largely concentrated in the county seat, the four towns, a series of settlement clusters, and some limited “strip” development along certain hollows and certain upland valleys.

Commercial and industrial developments occupy a total of 151 and 66 acres respectively. Public land uses occupy a total of 50 acres. Each of these last three land use categories is to be found at scattered locations throughout the County. Thomas and Davis have limited amounts of commercial development. However, recreation-related commercial development is to be found along WV 32 and at certain resort complexes within Canaan Valley. The overall land use profile has not changed significantly in recent years, except for the influx of recreation residential development that has taken place on large lots (one-, two-, and five-acre lots).

There are four major landowners in Tucker County:

Federal Government -- Monongahela National Forest	101,756 acres
Western Pocahontas Properties, Ltd.	38,000 acres
Federal Government -- Canaan Fish and Wildlife Refuge	16,987 acres
Canaan Valley and Blackwater Falls State Parks	8,372 acres

In total, over 54 percent of the county lands are federally owned and are non-taxable. Another 26 percent of the county lands fall under a subsidy and are subject to reduced taxation. As a result, less than 20 percent of the land within the county serves to make up the tax base used to support county activities. Table 6 below serves to summarize the amount of land available to provide tax revenues to serve the county.

**Table 6: Tucker County Land Use**

<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent Acres Owned</b>
National Forest	101,756	37.69%
Wildlife Refuge	16,987	6.29%
State Parks	8,372	3.10%
Nature Conservancy	2,243	0.83%
Other Non-Taxable	14,290	5.29%
West Virginia DNR	3,223	1.19%
<b>Total Non-Taxable</b>	<b>146,871</b>	<b>54.4%</b>
Managed Timber	44,249	16.39%
Farm Land	26,183	9.70%
<b>Total Reduced</b>	<b>70,432</b>	<b>26.1%</b>
<b>Total Normal Tax Base</b>	<b>52,670</b>	<b>19.5%</b>

Source: Tucker County Tax Assessor's Office, 2023 Tax Year

### Land Use in Urban Areas

Urban areas in Tucker County are confined to the municipalities of Parsons Davis, Thomas, Hendricks, and Hambleton. This land use category includes residential, commercial, and industrial areas that support intensive human activity. Residential land use includes both single-family and multi-family development, and the commercial land use in the identified urban areas includes both the retail and the limited industrial activities that take place in the towns within Tucker County.

Land use recommendations for the five municipalities are not included in the countywide plan in accordance with state code. The Town of Davis approved an ordinance enacting a Comprehensive Plan on Jan. 11, 2023 while the City of Thomas finalize its Comprehensive Plan ordinance earlier this year, in 2024. The municipal plans are the official guide for land use, housing, transportation, economic development, infrastructure, public services and community character within city limits. It provides a foundation for decision-making that is based on

community consensus and an understanding of existing conditions and anticipated opportunities and issues.

Parsons: The City of Parsons is the county seat. The city is located in the southwest quadrant of the County along the Dry Fork/Black Fork tributary of the Cheat River. It has a population of 1,284 in 2022.

Davis: The Town of Davis is located in the northeast quadrant of the County at the confluence of Beaver Creek and the Blackwater River. At 3,101 feet in elevation, Davis is the highest municipality in the State of West Virginia and has the coldest temperature recorded in the State. It has a population of 579 in 2022.

Thomas: The City of Thomas has developed along the drainage of the north fork of the Blackwater River, just below its confluence with Glade Run. Situated in a deep, narrow river valley, Thomas is tightly-packed against the surrounding mountains. It has a population of 603 in 2022.

Hendricks and Hambleton: These two towns are located in the southwest quadrant of the County along the Dry Fork/Black Fork tributary of the Cheat River. Hendricks is located at the confluence of the Blackwater River with the Dry Fork, which forms the Black Fork River, and approximately 12 to 15 miles downstream from Davis. Hambleton is downstream of Hendricks on the Black Fork River just upstream from where Roaring Run joins the Black Fork River. In 2022, Hendricks had a population of 219 and Hambleton had a population of 210.

The primary urbanized areas in the county can be found along the major thoroughfares such as US 219, WV 32, and WV 48 and at their intersection. Small commercial centers can be found along these roadways, consisting of one or more retail or service establishments to serve the local population. The distribution and location of growth in recent years have not always assured the efficient delivery of public services as the development pattern has been widely dispersed.

### **Land Use in Canaan Valley**

Land use in Canaan Valley has varied. In the early 1900s, the area was extensively logged for its large stands of cherry wood, and after being cleared, the valley bottom and gentle foothills were developed for farming. Later, the majority of the Valley was purchased by the Monongahela Power Company in anticipation of the construction of an electrical generating dam at the exit of the Blackwater River from the west valley wall (between Brown Mountain to the north and the Canaan Mountain ridge to the south). Later legislation concerning the preservation of natural wetland resources, combined with the presence of rare floral and faunal species (possibly threatened or endangered), supported the

transfer of a majority of Canaan Valley (and its watershed) to a national wildlife refuge.

The majority of new housing development has been in the seasonal home market. This influx of seasonal residents is directly related to the climate of the area, the development of the ski areas and golf course in Canaan Valley Resort State Park, and the vacation home construction adjacent to and in the Canaan Valley and Timberline areas. Residents of these developments are generally from outside Tucker County and do not have either family or long-standing ties to the existing communities. Associated commercial development is of a convenient nature and is designed to support the lifestyle of the transient residents. Seasonal home construction generates a certain level of construction jobs in the short run and results in predominantly service-oriented, seasonal jobs in the long run.

Presently, construction is concentrated in the southeast quadrant of the County, at the south end of Canaan Valley, and along WV 32 at the east side of Canaan Valley Resort State Park. Numerous small developments of single-family homes and condominiums continue to be built, providing tourist/vacationer housing adjacent both Canaan Valley Resort State Park and the Timberline Ski Area.

### **Publicly-Owned and Tax Exempt Land**

The major constraint to development in Tucker County is the extent of land that is publicly and corporately owned. As stated above, the amount of land in national forests and state parks, combined with the two large blocks of land that are owned by Western Pocahontas Properties (approximately 38,000 acres) limit's the areas of the county that can be considered for development.

In addition to the lack of "available" land, development has imposed restrictions on construction. These restrictions include constraints imposed by soils, topography, and wetlands.

With respect to much of the federally owned land, the government provides the county with Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). These federal payments help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable Federal lands within the county boundaries. PILT is provided from the Federal Government to the county in compensation for services such as those related to public safety, environment, housing, social services, and transportation. Payment is made directly to the eligible local government. Payments are made based on the number of acres of "entitlement lands." The majority of payments come from lands administered by the National Forest System; the National Park System; BLM; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and some military installations. Payments are currently made at a rate of 0.75 percent of the market value of the land, 25 percent of the net receipts derived from the land, or \$0.75 per acre (whichever is greater).

## **1. Monongahela National Forest**

The Monongahela National Forest is the largest landowner in Tucker County. The Monongahela National Forest owns over 101,756 acres or 38 percent of the total acreage within the county. The Monongahela National Forest came into existence around 1915 when the Federal Government began the process of purchasing the slash, cut, and burned slopes that have been left denuded by the aggressive logging methods of the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Because the Forest Service acquired land via “willing-seller” to “willing-buyer” transactions, the boundaries to the national forest are very irregular with a large number of “in holdings” (private land largely surrounded by national forest).

Since the Monongahela National Forest is a federal entity that exists within the Department of Agriculture, it participates in the PILT program described above.

## **2. Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

The Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge is the second largest Federal landowner in Tucker County. The wildlife refuge owns 16,987 acres within Tucker County. Because the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge is completely contained within Tucker County, the wildlife refuge has a closer relationship to the County than it does with the national forest. The refuge manager makes it a point to have meetings with the county commission periodically in order to keep the county up to date with all activities within the refuge.

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established when the Freeland Tract was purchased on September 11, 1994. Through various purchases between 1994 and 2001, the refuge slowly grew to just over 3,000 acres in size. In February 2002, the refuge acquired just under 12,000 acres from Allegheny Power Systems, including much of the wetlands in the central part of the valley. This purchase brought the acreage of the refuge to 15,245 acres.

In 2024, the Nature Conservancy purchased approximately 2,000 acres of additional property from Western Pocahontas Properties. The Nature Conservancy purchased the property with the intent to transfer the land to the Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge.

The refuge would like to continue to acquire acreage to the extent that the acreage contributes to the mission of the refuge and to the extent that the land acquisition serves to benefit the local community.

Because the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a Federal entity in the same respect as the Monongahela National Forest, the wildlife refuge provides the

county with payments in lieu of taxes via the same regulation as does the national forest. Although the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge falls under a different Federal Agency than the Monongahela National Forest, the regulation that governs payments in lieu of taxes remains the same. Although the payments made to the county from the wildlife refuge are as described above, the Department of the Interior (the Agency that oversees the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) may appraise property differently than the Department of Agriculture (the Agency that oversees the Forest Service). In addition, payments to the county will depend on the Agency budget appropriation. These appropriations may vary from Agency to Agency.

### **3. Canaan Valley Resort and Blackwater Falls State Park**

A third major governmental landowner within the county is the State of West Virginia. The State of West Virginia owns two major state parks within Tucker County, Canaan Valley Resort State Park and Blackwater Falls State Park. These two state parks combine to comprise 8,372 acres within the county.

As a state entity, the state parks make no payments in lieu of property taxes to Tucker County. However, any concessionaires that operate within the state parks are required to pay personal property taxes on the property owned by that individual concessionaire. In addition, the concessionaires pay the hotel tax on the hotel rooms, cabins, and campsites within the parks.

### **4. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources**

In 2012, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources accepted control of 3,070 acres of land that formerly was under control of the Canaan Valley Institute (CVI). Under the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WV-DNR), the property remains tax-exempt and has been designated as the Little Canaan Wildlife Management Area.

The WV-DNR entity that accepted the CVI holdings is separate from the WV State Park System. However, WV-DNR will operate much like the state parks in that it will make no payments in lieu of property taxes to Tucker County.

### **Privately-Owned Forest Land**

The major owner of private forestland within Tucker County is the Western Pocahontas Properties, Ltd. The timber management group owns approximately 38,000 acres within Tucker County. Although the Western Pocahontas Properties does pay property taxes on its land holdings, the property taxes for Western Pocahontas at the greatly reduced rate for managed timberland.

Western Pocahontas Properties plans to continue to log its property in a manner consistent with its forestry plan. Although Western Pocahontas Properties owns the mineral rights for its landholdings, the corporation does not own the oil and gas rights for its land. Therefore, they do not look forward to gas production from the oil shale.

Western Pocahontas Properties has undertaken a comprehensive master planning effort for its holdings along WV 32, between the town of Davis and the city of Thomas. It has defined the master planned area as Corbin Valley. Included in the Corbin Valley planning effort is a resource analysis to identify critical environmental elements (streams, wetlands, and steep slopes) to preserve and maintain. Existing road and trail infrastructure will be utilized to promote connectivity between the Davis and Thomas communities as well as the expansion of new trails that will further promote connection.

Corbin Valley will showcase and preserve the natural environment while creating sustainable, responsible, and environmentally sensitive residential and economic development focused on cultural growth and connectivity. The core values inherent to the existing area will be maintained in collaboration with the local community, respecting and fulfilling the needs of Davis and Thomas communities, Tucker County, and the greater region.

As part of the master planning process, an overall master utility plan has been created as a guide for future land use and development. The absence of sufficient infrastructure (wastewater, water, electric, natural gas, broadband) is currently a limiting factor for commercial and residential development efforts in the region. Western Pocahontas Properties will leverage existing infrastructure whenever possible and work with the new Blackwater Public Service District, regional economic development authorities, state and federal agencies to upgrade systems as the needs arise.

The company has also received a total of \$39 million of grants the past two years (2022 and 2023) to develop its managed timberland.

- In 2023 the Abandoned Mine Economic Revitalization Program awarded \$25 million to Western Pocahontas Properties, Ltd. These monies will be used for repurposing and revitalizing the existing structures (near Blackwater Falls State Park) in the Davis area for local residents and visitors to include multi-family dwellings, community arts center, community shops, outdoor amphitheater, office spaces, bike park and trailhead connectivity to existing trail system, wellness center, and a STEM educational facility.
- In 2022 the state of West Virginia awarded \$25 million to Western Pocahontas Properties, Ltd over a two-year time period and two phases of the project. These monies will be used to develop worker and residential housing in Grant and Tucker counties. The project referred to as the



Timber Tech Housing Development includes a two phased construction project of a 507 acre master planned community. It involves the construction of a variety of residential housing units and water and wastewater facilities which will be instrumental in helping meet the substantial housing challenges facing the current and future residents in these two counties.

Recently, Western Pocahontas sold approximately 2,000 to the Nature Conservancy. In 2019 the company publicly endorsed Cortland Acres' Vision 2030 plan allowing for the development of 100 acres or more.

### **Architectural Constraints to Development within Canaan Valley**

The Tucker County Commission has found it advantageous to implement Architectural Constraints in the form of a Zoning Ordinance for buildings and structures within the Canaan Valley Region. The purpose of the architectural constraints is to segregate uses that are thought to be incompatible. The zoning is used to prevent new development from interfering with existing residents or businesses and to preserve the "character" of a community.

A summary of the Canaan Valley Zoning Ordinance is included as an appendix to this comprehensive plan. A copy of the Zoning Ordinance is on file at the County Courthouse.

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goals Statement

Retain the rural character of the county by preserving natural, scenic, and open space resources; enhancing the tax base through development in appropriate locations; and assuring the continued desirability of the county as a place to live, work and play.

## Objectives

- Identify growth areas, which are logical extensions of existing concentrations and ensure that they have appropriate access and can be efficiently served by infrastructure systems.
- Encourage new development in the county in existing communities and growth areas.
- Discourage development in areas not suitable for on-site sewage disposal and which cannot feasibly be served by publicly-owned waste management.
- Encourage proper utilization of creek valleys, open areas, and steep slopes as open space.
- Encourage compact business development patterns along existing and new highways including WV 48 (Corridor H).
- Encourage suitable, attractive, and compatible commercial and office uses at appropriate locations, consistent with existing land use patterns, support services, and the transportation systems.
- Work to retain existing and attract new desirable businesses in the county, and foster the viability of commercial areas in the county through revitalization efforts and streetscape improvements.
- Increase the availability of affordable workforce housing within the county.

## Strategies

- Develop and adopt a countywide policy in collaboration with the public service districts, which describes and enforces the boundaries of water and sewer service extensions in these areas.

- Develop and adopt a countywide growth management policy that identifies growth areas where the county will direct new development. New infrastructure systems should be emphasized in the growth areas so as to avoid rural sprawl development patterns.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission develops, incorporates and implements any Architectural Constraints developed by the County.
- The Tucker County “Board of Zoning Appeals” established by the Tucker County Commission provides and administers the zoning regulations for the lands, water, and wetlands that comprise Canaan Valley and its surrounding watersheds that drain towards Canaan Valley.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the Tucker County Commission.
- Seek additional county general revenues.
- Seek infrastructure grants wherever available
- Charge appropriate service/permit/application fees for new and existing activities.
- Seek financial contributions/assistance from external entities participating in work within the county.

# HOUSING

## OVERVIEW

In Tucker County, there are 4,650 total housing units, according to the 2020 US Census, a slight decrease from 2010. Most, or 79.6%, of the residences are occupied by primary owners, with the renter-occupied units comprising the remaining 20.4%.

Of the housing units classified as “occupied,” 80% (2,276 units) are considered owner-occupied. Significantly fewer units are classified as renter-occupied at 20% (560 units). This remains unchanged from 2010.

Tucker County household sizes have continued to decrease. In 1970, Tucker County’s average household size was 3.25 persons; that number has fallen from 2.77 in the 2010 U.S. Census to 2.13 in the 2020 US Census.

**Table 7: Housing Occupancy – Owner-Occupied vs. Rental-Occupied**

	2020	2010
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>3,176</b>	<b>3,057</b>
<b>Average household size</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>2.77</b>
<b>Housing Occupancy</b>		
<b>Total housing units</b>	<b>4,650</b>	<b>5,346</b>
Occupied housing units	2,993	3,057
Married householder	1,282	2,289
Single householder	189	123
Vacant housing units	1,657	2,289
<b>Housing Tenure</b>		
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	<b>2,836</b>	<b>3,057</b>
<b>Owner-occupied housing units</b>	<b>2,276</b>	<b>2,458</b>
<b>Average household size of owner-occupied units</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>2.32</b>
<b>Renter-occupied housing units</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>599</b>
<b>Average household size of renter-occupied units</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>2.16</b>

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau*

A summary of housing statistics is provided above. Of the statistics, the most noticeable is the significantly high vacancy rate (1,657 or 36%). While this is significantly lower than 2010 (2,289 or 43%), it still remains high.

There are a couple of explanations for the high vacancy rate. First, the high vacancy rate may be explained by the large number of second houses that exist throughout the county.

The age of the housing stock is another indicator of housing condition and value. The median year in which these properties were built in Tucker County is 1976, with 32% being built before 1960. The advanced age of these structures makes many of them unlivable or difficult and cost prohibitive to renovate, which may explain part of why the higher vacancy rate. Those units that were not properly maintained became increasingly dilapidated over time, making the units uninhabitable or unsafe for occupation (whether occupied or not). It would be cost-prohibitive to address accessibility issues in many of these homes.

**Table 8: Year House Built**

	Tucker County	West Virginia
<b>Built 2020 or later</b>	-	-
<b>Built 2010 to 2019</b>	5%	6%
<b>Built 2000 to 2009</b>	10%	11%
<b>Built 1990 to 1999</b>	17%	13%
<b>Built 1980 to 1989</b>	25%	12%
<b>Built 1970 to 1979</b>	11%	16%
<b>Built 1960 or earlier</b>	32%	42%

*Source: 2022 American Community Survey, DP04*

Below are some additional housing characteristics for Tucker County regarding owner-occupied and renter occupied housing.

**Table 9: Age of Householder**

	Owner-Occupied	Renter Occupied
<b>Age 15 - 34</b>	9%	20%
<b>Age 35 – 64</b>	48%	49%
<b>Age 65 plus</b>	43%	31%

*Source: 2022 American Community Survey*

On average, the monthly rental rates for housing in Tucker County are lower than the average rental rates in West Virginia, \$783 versus \$850.

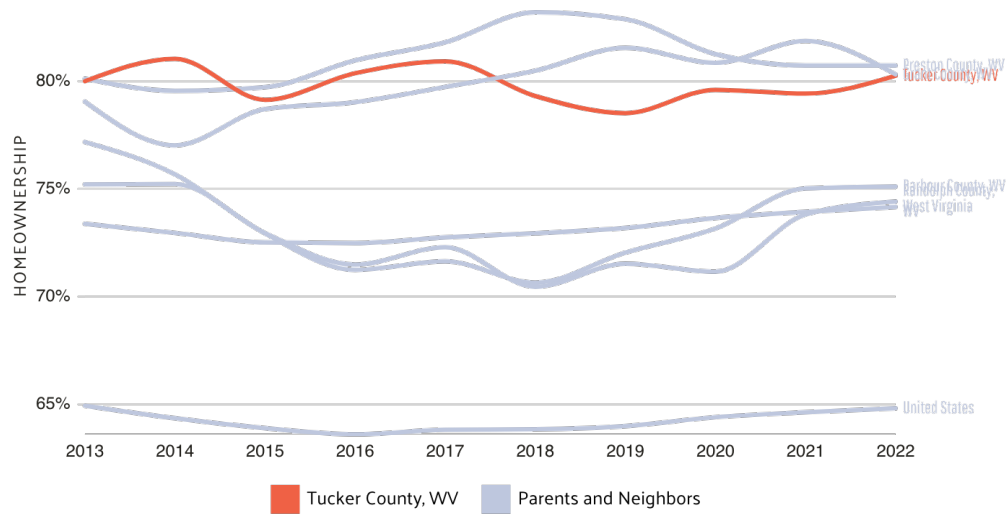
**Table 10: Occupied Units Paying Rent**

	Tucker County	West Virginia
Less than \$500	22%	16%
\$500 to \$999	58%	54%
\$1,000 or more	20%	30%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Homeownership rate in Tucker County is higher than the state of West Virginia and some surrounding counties. According to the 2022 American Community Survey (5-year estimate), 80% of the homes are owned in Tucker County as compared to the state, 74%.

**Chart 2: Homeownership in Tucker County**



### Income and Housing Cost

Generally speaking, the price of housing in West Virginia can be considered low, however, it depends on other factors in order to determine if it is considered affordable. Incomes must be high enough for residents to purchase or rent housing, while other household expenses must not be too high. For housing to be

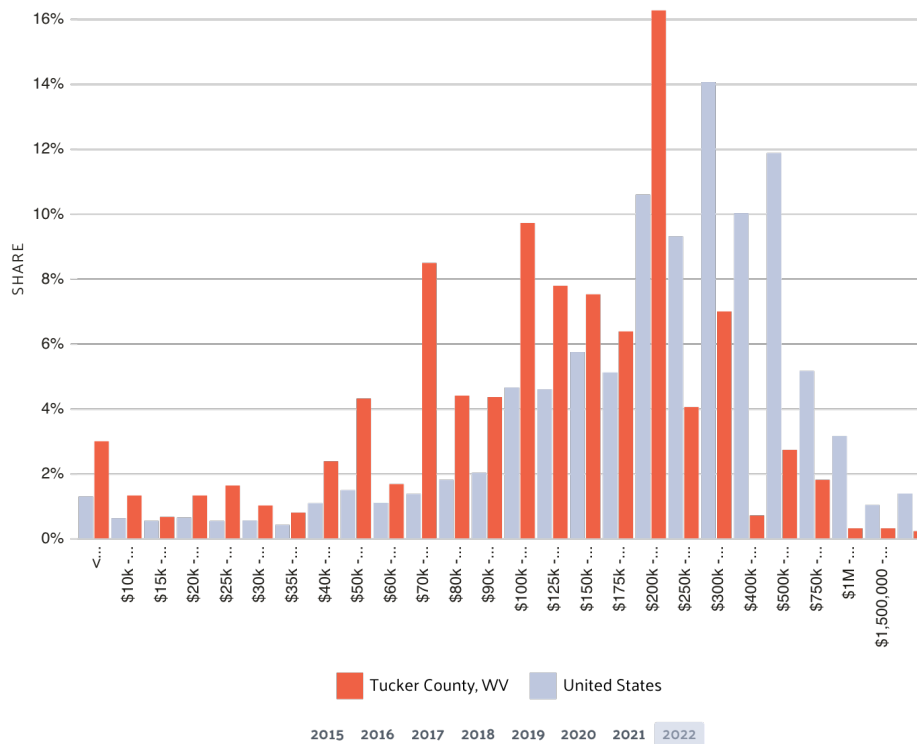
affordable, as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a household cannot spend more than 30% of gross income on housing expenses. Households exceeding this limit are cost-burdened.

**Table 11: Income, Employment, and Various Housing Costs**

	Tucker County	West Virginia
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$54,053	\$55,948
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	3.70%	4.2%
<b>Median Transportation Cost as a Percent of Income (2017)</b>	35%	-
<b>Median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income</b>	14%	15%
<b>Median Monthly Ownership Costs as a Percent of Household Income</b>	12.5%	13.7%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey, DP04

**Chart 3: Housing Value – Owner Occupied**



The median property value in Tucker County was \$141,100 in 2022, which is 0.501 times smaller than the national average of \$281,900. Between 2021 and 2022 the median property value increased from \$137,300 to \$141,100, a 2.77% increase. The homeownership rate in Tucker County is 79.6%, which is approximately the same as the national average of 64.8%.

Examining housing units with a mortgage, 65.6% of the housing units in Tucker County were occupied by their homeowners with a mortgage. This percentage is a slight decline from the previous year's rate of 65.8%.

**Table 12: Housing Value – Owner Occupied**

	Tucker County	West Virginia
<b>Less than \$50,000</b>	12%	14%
<b>\$50,000 to \$99,999</b>	23%	20%
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	18%	17%
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	14%	15%
<b>\$200,000 to \$299,999</b>	20%	19%
<b>\$300,000 to \$499,999</b>	8%	11%
<b>\$500,000 or more</b>	5%	4%

*Source: 2022 American Community Survey, DP04*



## Cost Burden

The following tables provide cost burden data by income tier, tenure and elderly status. Cost burden is determined using 2011-2015 CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordable Strategy) data, the most recent year for which data was available at the time of analysis. CHAS uses the HUD definition of elderly which is 62 years of age or older.

**Table 13: Cost Burdened Household By Income Tier, Tenure, and Household Type**

AMI Tier	Total	Number	Percentage
Elderly Owner			
0-30%	20	10	50%
31-50%	50	8	16%
51-80%	85	4	4.7%
81% or greater	355	40	11.3%
Elderly Renters			
0-30%	-	-	-
31-50%	-	-	-
51-80%	4	-	-
81% or greater	20	-	-
General Occupancy Owners			
0-30%	170	80	47%
31-50%	315	150	47.6%
51-80%	400	70	17.5%
81% or greater	1,495	109	7.3%
General Occupancy Renters			
0-30%	155	85	54.8%
31-50%	145	65	44.8%
51-80%	70	35	50%
81% or greater	255	-	0%

Source: CHAS 2015 (Comprehensive Housing Affordable Strategy)

## Unmet Needs

### Current Units of Unmet Need

The following section is comprised of two parts – unmet need for households with incomes up to 80% (Area Median Income) and households with incomes above 80% AMI. Unmet Need is defined as the proportion of households in an income tier, tenure and elderly status without available and affordable housing. Units of Unmet Need is an estimate of the number of units needed to provide affordable housing to those households with Unmet Need.

### Households with Incomes Up to 80% AMI (Area Median Income)

For low- and moderate-income households up to 80% AMI (Area Median Income), (Public Use Microdata Sample) data was utilized to determine the Unmet Need which was paired with HISTA data to determine the Units of Unmet Need. HISTA is a custom cross-tabulation of household data used by housing market analysts to analyze housing markets. Because there is no PUMS data available using 2019 data, it was assumed that the proportion of households without available and affordable housing has remained constant. In this analysis, elderly means age 55 and above.

**Table 14: Unmet Needs and Units of Unmet Needs by Type and Tenure**

AMI Tier	Number of HH	Unmet Needs	Units of Unmet Needs
Owners General Occupancy			
0-30%	153	78%	119
0-60%	330	62.2%	205
0-80%	454	44.9%	204
Owners Elderly			
0-30%	274	787%	214
0-60%	643	62.2%	400
0-80%	848	44.9%	381
Renters General Occupancy			
0-30%	77	60.9%	47
0-60%	178	5.1%	9
0-80%	227	-6.6%	(15)
Renters Elderly			
0-30%	131	60.9%	80
0-60%	164	5.1%	8
0-80%	184	-6.6%	(12)

*Source: 2017 PUMS, HISTA data set from Ribbon Demographics, calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc.*

### Households with Incomes Above 80% AMI

For households with incomes above 80% AMI (Area Median Income), CHAS cost burden data was utilized to determine the percentage of households without affordable housing. This percentage was paired with HISTA data to determine the current Units of Unmet Need. It was assumed that the proportion of cost burdened households has remained constant. Within CHAS data, elderly is defined as age 62 and above. CHAS data allows for the calculation of cost burden broken down by the income tiers 81-100% AMI and above 100% AMI.

**Table 15: Unmet Needs and Units of Unmet Needs by Type and Tenure, Household Income Greater than 80% AMI**

Income Tier	Number of HH	Unmet Needs	Units of Unmet Needs
Owners General Occupancy			
81-100%	126	22.2%	28
101%	458	4%	18
Owners Elderly			
81-100%	154	37.5%	58
101%	380	3.6%	14
Renters General Occupancy			
81-100%	65	0%	0
101%	72	0%	0
Renters Elderly			
81-100%	9	0%	0
101%	32	0%	0

Source: 2015 CHAS, HISTA data set from Ribbon Demographics, calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc.

### Future Unmet Need

#### Five-Year Projections of Number of Households by Income Tier, Tenure and Elderly Status

The following section includes projection data using HISTA tables produced by Ribbon Demographics, LLC for five-year projections to estimate the potential number of households by income tier, tenure and elderly status. To estimate AMI in 2024, an annual inflation rate of 2% was assumed and applied to the current HUD-provided AMI for each county for a family of four persons. The following table indicates the projected county AMI by income tier and are not programmatic income limits, which are released by HUD.

**Table 16: Unmet Needs and Units of Unmet Needs by Type and Tenure, Household Income Greater than 80% AMI**

Income Tier	2017	2024
30% AMI	\$15,870	\$18,230
60% AMI	\$31,740	\$36,459
80% AMI	\$42,320	\$48,612
100% AMI	\$52,900	\$60,765

Source: 2017 HUD; 2024 calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc.

**Table 17: Number of Households by Income Tier, Tenure and Elderly Status**

	2015		2019		2024	
AMI Tier	#	%	#	%	#	%
Renters General Occupancy						
0-30%	65	11.1%	77	13.1%	77	13.1%
0-60%	133	22.6%	178	30.1%	178	30.1%
0-80%	215	36.5%	227	38.5%	227	38.5%
81-100%	33	5.5%	65	11.1%	65	11.1%
100%+	117	19.8%	72	12.2%	72	12.2%
Renters Elderly						
0-30%	108	18.4%	131	22.2%	131	22.2%
0-60%	163	27.7%	164	27.8%	164	27.8%
0-80%	170	28.8%	184	31.2%	184	31.2%
81-100%	18	3.1%	9	1.5%	9	1.5%
100%+	37	6.2%	32	5.5%	32	5.5%
Owners General Occupancy						
0-30%	136	5.6%	153	6.3%	153	6.3%
0-60%	277	11.5%	330	13.7%	330	13.7%
0-80%	393	16.2%	454	18.8%	454	18.8%
81-100%	106	4.4%	126	5.2%	126	5.2%
100%+	540	22.3%	458	18.9%	458	18.9%
Owners Elderly						
0-30%	215	8.9%	274	11.3%	274	11.3%
0-60%	579	23.9%	643	26.6%	643	26.6%
0-80%	733	30.3%	848	35.1%	848	35.1%
81-100%	177	7.3%	154	6.4%	154	6.4%
100%+	473	19.5%	380	15.7%	380	15.7%

Note: The percentages by tenure and elderly status do not add to 100% because some income tiers are cumulative. That is, the percentage of households from 0-60% includes households from 0-30%. The percentages shown are the percentages of the total population.

Source: HISTA data projections by Ribbon Demographics; calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc

Additional information about the housing sector in Tucker County can be found in the Appendix.

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goals Statement

Retain the rural character of the county by preserving natural, scenic, and open space resources; enhancing the tax base in appropriate locations; and assuring the continued desirability of the county as a place to live, work and play.

## Objectives

- Identify growth areas, which are logical extensions of existing concentrations of development.
- Encourage new development in the county in existing communities and growth areas.
- Discourage development in areas not suitable for on-site sewage disposal and which cannot feasibly be served by publicly owned waste management.
- Encourage proper utilization of creek valleys, open areas, and steep slopes as open space.
- Encourage compact business development patterns along WV 48 (Corridor H).
- Recognize the variety of housing needs of county residents.

## Strategies

- Develop and adopt a countywide policy in collaboration with the public service districts, which describes and enforces the boundaries of water and sewer service extensions in these areas.

## Partners and Potential Partners

- The Tucker County Commission develops, incorporates and implements any constraints developed by the County.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the County Commission.
- Seek additional county general revenues.
- Charge appropriate service/permit/application fees for new and existing activities.
- Seek financial contributions/assistance from external entities with whom work is jointly done.

# TRANSPORTATION

## OVERVIEW

Although automotive transportation is emphasized in this chapter, alternative means of transportation are also considered. The primary transportation consideration for Tucker County focuses around the construction of WV 48 (Corridor H).

Tucker County is located in north-central West Virginia. The county is centrally located within one day's drive of half the population of the county. Driving distances to some of the nearest major metropolitan areas from Parsons consist of the following (mileage according to Google):

Pittsburgh, PA 135 miles,  
 Charleston, WV, 156 miles,  
 Washington, DC 192 miles,  
 Baltimore, MD, 230 miles,  
 Richmond, VA, 234 miles,  
 Columbus, OH, 263 miles,  
 Cleveland, OH, 263 miles,  
 Philadelphia, PA, 326 miles,  
 Virginia Beach, VA, 338 miles,  
 Cincinnati, OH, 345 miles,  
 Raleigh, NC 347 miles,  
 Charlotte, NC, 376 miles  
 New York, NY, 395 miles.

Although the completion of WV 48 (Corridor H) will not appreciably alter the travel distances, the new road will shorten some of the driving times by 45 minutes.

In addition to the completion WV 48, Tucker County is currently served by the following federal and state highways:

1. US 33 traverses an east-west corridor 5 to 10 miles south of the Tucker County line. This route links the county to Elkins and Buckhannon to the Interstate 79 corridor to the west and to Petersburg and then by WV 55 to the Interstate 81 and Interstate 66 corridors to the east.
2. US 50 traverses an east-west corridor 5 to 10 miles north of the Tucker County line.

3. US 250 traverses a north-south corridor 8 to 18 miles west of the Tucker County line.
4. US 219, which follows a north-south alignment from Pocahontas through Elkins into Tucker County and then a southwest-northeast alignment through the County; this route continues northward to reach both the I-68 corridor and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

The construction and maintenance of public roadways in West Virginia have been a function of the West Virginia Division of Highways since 1933.

### **Scenic By-Ways**

The State of West Virginia designated the route that runs from US 219 from Parsons up to WV 32 and back along WV 72 as the Monongahela Scenic By-Way. The route may receive a possible future designation as a Federal Scenic By-Way.

### **Major Highway Improvements**

Tucker County is located in heavily mountainous terrain that, in the past, has been relatively inaccessible. Before the construction of WV 48 (Corridor H), Tucker County existed far from interstate highway corridors. Transportation routes to and from the county have been along narrow and winding mountain highways.

The general accessibility problem has now been cured with the extension of WV 48 to Tucker County. The expansion of the highway into Tucker County filled the need for improvement of Tucker County's general accessibility. With the improvement in highway access, the tourism industry has improved, and the county is becoming more accessible for other industrial and employment opportunities.

Corridor H (which has been officially designated WV 48) improved the general accessibility of Tucker County. The corridor is a part of the Appalachian Regional Commission's Appalachian Development Highway System and provides a four-lane highway between Interstate 81 in Front Royal, Virginia, and Interstate 79 to the west.

The completion of the corridor will link the state capital, Charleston, with the Washington-Baltimore area (via Interstate 66) and will benefit Tucker County in several ways. The highway will enlarge the number of potential industrial sites and enhance their development potential. The highway has already significantly shortened the commuting time for Tucker County residents to outside places of employment and employment centers. The Corridor makes Canaan Valley much more accessible to out-of-state tourists from the East Coast, the mid-south, and



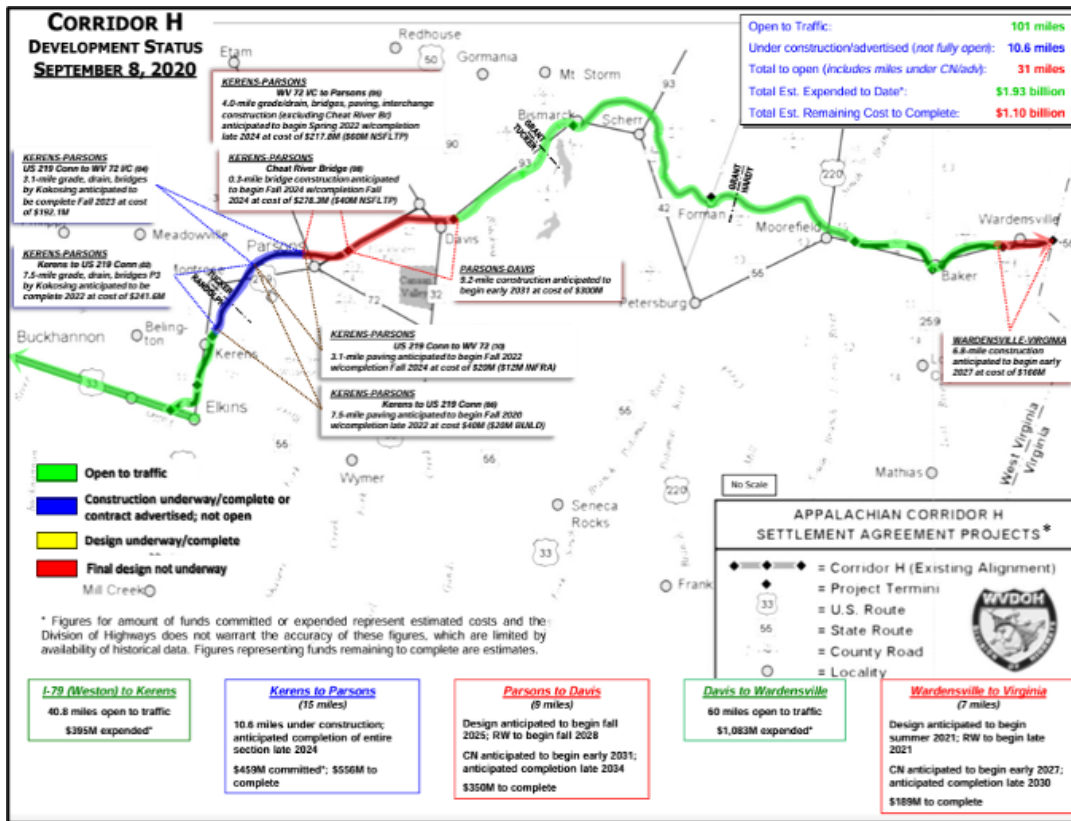
the Midwest. Finally, the new road makes upland sections in the middle of the County more accessible for development.

The completion of this highway project is a high-priority item for the State of West Virginia and will have a direct impact on Tucker County. Although the final route selection from Parsons to Davis has not yet been finalized, design completion is for December 2024 with construction scheduled to begin in March 2025. If the proposed schedule can be met, the road is scheduled to be open to traffic in 2030.

**Map 3: Proposed Corridor H Routes (WV 48) in Tucker County (West Virginia Division of Highways)**



Map 4. Corridor H Construction Timeline in Tucker County



## INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION

With the term Intermodal Transportation, this chapter refers to transportation alternatives that are not automotive. Intermodal transportation refers to alternatives such as air transportation, train transportation, shipboard transportation, public transportation, bicycle transportation, and footpaths or walking transportation.

### Airports

Tucker County has relatively easy access to major airport hubs. The two major airports consist of the Washington and Pittsburgh international airports. The Washington DC airport hub (Washington Dulles, Ronald Reagan International, and Baltimore/Washington International) allows domestic and international transportation within relatively easy access to Tucker County.

Minor airports that exist near Tucker County include Morgantown, Clarksburg, Elkins, and Martinsburg. However, these minor airports do little to impact either passenger or freight transportation from Tucker County.

### **Trains**

In the days of wood and mineral extraction, the railway system served as a major artery for moving goods from and equipment to Tucker County. With the diminution of coal mining as a major industry in West Virginia, the rail system has also declined.

Currently, CSX runs freight lines into Grant, Preston, and Barbour counties. However, active passenger and freight systems to and from Tucker County no longer exist and are not planned for the future.

### **Marine Transportation**

Although West Virginia is landlocked, marine transportation has an economic influence. Since the beginning of transportation, man discovered that shipboard transportation is the most efficient way to move goods from one place to another. On a ton-per-mile basis, the costs of shipboard transportation equate to less than ten percent of the cost of any other transportation means. Although Tucker County has no direct access to marine transportation, the county does occupy the land bridge between the two premiere marine transportation networks within the United States.

The United States has the good fortune to hoist the most comprehensive marine waterway system anywhere on Earth. Between the Mississippi – Missouri River system and the Intercoastal Waterway that leads to Chesapeake Bay, the U.S. possesses the world’s most viable sheltered marine waterway transportation systems.

Intercoastal Waterway is a 3,000-mile waterway along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the U.S. The waterway is a body of sheltered water that boats can navigate with a controlling depth of over nine feet throughout the system. The ICW consists of natural inlets, saltwater rivers, bays, and man-made canals that run from Florida to the Chesapeake Bay.



The Chesapeake Bay serves as an extension of the Intercoastal Waterway, and is the largest estuary in the United States. The Bay is approximately 200 miles from its northern port in Baltimore to its outlet in the Atlantic Ocean. Its total shoreline including tributaries is 11,684 miles with an Average depth of 21 feet (6.4 m), reaching a maximum of 174 feet.



The Mississippi-Missouri River system (including the Ohio River) is the fourth largest river system in the world and serves the transportation industry as the most important navigable commercial inland waterway in the world. (Navigable for this definition means a controlling depth of 9 ft for 11 months out of the year). The river system collects water from 41 percent of the contiguous United States reaching 31 U.S. states. The navigable river systems combine to a total length of 3,979 miles.



### Public Transportation

Like most rural communities, Tucker County has very little in the way of public transportation for its residents. Of the options that exist, Tucker County does provide some limited transportation for its citizens at the Senior Center. Cortland Acres also provides limited transportation for its residents. Finally, the Canaan Valley Resort State Park provides limited bus transportation from the Lodge to the Ski Hill.

- The Tucker County Senior Center provides daily van transportation to transport seniors to nutrition sites and non-emergency medical transportation. The transportation service is provided under the Medicaid Program.

- Cortland Acres provides transportation for its residents to physician appointments.
- Canaan Valley Resort State Park provides limited shuttle bus transportation from the lodge to the ski hill. Once the ski season ends, the shuttle service also terminates.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation**

Tucker County continues to work with the West Virginia Division of Highways to establish a multimodal (bicycle and pedestrian) trail from Thomas to Davis. Currently, plans are to include such a trail as part of the WV 48 construction project.

The West Virginia Division of Highways has already established a multimodal trail from Parsons to Elkins. The trail has been temporarily interrupted while it serves as part of a staging area for the ongoing Corridor H construction. However, once construction is complete, the trail will be reestablished.

Recreational bicycle and hiking trails have been established throughout Tucker County. However, these trails have been established more for recreational than transportation purposes and are covered within the Recreation and Tourism part of this report.

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goals Statement

The county must plan for an orderly transition to the increased interstate transportation effectiveness that will be available when WV 48 (Corridor H) enters into Tucker County. In addition, the county should plan a circulation system of road, transit, and pedestrian facilities, which will allow safe and efficient vehicular and pedestrian travel throughout Tucker County.

## Objectives

- Work with West Virginia Department of Transportation on the orderly design and construction of exits and access routes to facilitate the highest and best use of the new section of WV 48 (Corridor H).
- Coordinate land use and road improvement policies.
- Preserve and improve the capacity of the existing roads within the area as future development occurs through cooperative efforts with developers and West Virginia Department of Transportation.
- Assure adequate access management exists along major road corridors.
- Facilitate pedestrian circulation within the community business areas through such means as benches, landscaping, and other pedestrian amenities.
- Preserve the natural scenic quality of Tucker County while providing sufficient transportation systems consistent with the county's present and long-term needs.
- Encourage the development of trails linking residential areas to open spaces, and recreation resources located within or adjoining such developments.

## Strategies

- Work with the County Commission to advocate for the implementation of the road and safety improvements recommended in the WV Division of Highways plans on WV 48 within the next five years.

- Conduct a corridor management study of Corridor H northern route to determine the highest and best use of land and to evaluate the need for development standards such as access management.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission develops, provides county funding and works with the West Virginia Department of Transportation with respect to the coordination of transportation issues.
- The West Virginia Department of Transportation provides the design, funding, and seeks matching Federal Funds for transportation routes within the county.
- The Federal Highways Administration provides matching funds for road construction and establishes design constraints for all transportation routes that are part of the National Highway System.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Seek local funding to enhance West Virginia Division of Highways road improvement projects.
- Explore impact/development fees to augment existing revenue streams.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## OVERVIEW

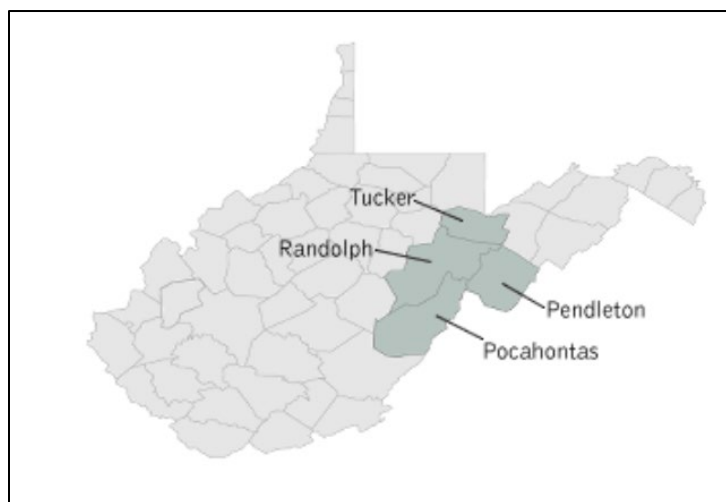
The Tucker County infrastructure is provided by or administered by various external government and private entities. The county infrastructure consists of the following:

- Roads
- Electrical Power
- Telecommunications Services
- Public Water
- Public Sewage
- Solid Wastewater
- Municipal Buildings

### Roads

The majority of roadways in Tucker County mainly fall under the control of the West Virginia Division of Highways. The highway department is broken into multiple districts. The Tucker County highway system falls within District Eight (see below).

#### Map 5: West Virginia Division of Highways District Eight



Source: <https://transportation.wv.gov/highways/districts/district-eight>

Not all roadways within the district belong to the West Virginia Division of Highways. In West Virginia, small municipal roads are maintained by the governing municipalities. In some subdivisions, subdivision roads are maintained by the respective subdivisions. On Federal or State Land, some roads are owned and maintained by the forest service, the park service, or the individual state parks. However, most roads in Tucker County are owned, operated, maintained, and serviced by the West Virginia Division of Highways.

As part of District Eight, the Parsons Office (currently headed by Ken Hebb), takes responsibility for Tucker County. Tucker County roadway maintenance includes drainage, defoliation, road repairs, rights-of-way, signage, and snow removal operations.

Road system care and maintenance in Tucker County is exceptionally good. As a testimony to the local road system, the county is rewarded with frequent visits from sports car clubs and motorcycle clubs. The main purpose of these club visits is for members to enjoy riding the county roads and viewing the scenery.

Many of the backroads in the county are the type of roads that are of the type featured in car commercials. The Tucker County roads are scenic, well-maintained, a pleasure to drive and serve as an incentive for sports car enthusiasts and motorcycle riders to come and visit.

## **Electrical Power**

FirstEnergy, Inc. is a regulated monopoly utility that provides electrical power to residents throughout the region through Monongahela Power (the service area provider).

First Energy (NYSE: FE) is an energy company headquartered in Akron, Ohio. First Energy includes one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems with a total capacity of more than 20,000 megawatts. In February 2011, FirstEnergy purchased Monongahela Power from Allegheny Energy. As a subsidiary of FirstEnergy, Monongahela Power is a regulated monopoly that is chartered through the Public Service Commission of West Virginia to provide safe and reliable electric power to the residents of Tucker County and the surrounding areas.

While the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania have deregulated the purchase of electric power and allow electric customers to choose the company that generates or supplies their electricity, no such option exists within West Virginia.

After the extensive power outages caused by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, First Energy has taken steps to improve power reliability to its customer base in West Virginia. Monongahela Power has set up a division to monitor and upgrade power

availability. Monongahela Power has also embarked on a concerted program to clear the existing power lines from foliage and to periodically maintain this foliage clearance. Although confirming statistics are not available, electric power availability in Tucker County appears to have improved.

First Energy is also taking energy conservation actions in conjunction with the recent Build Back Better Act. First Energy is looking to construct a solar plant adjacent to WV 48, near Davis. First Energy is also looking to follow through with other incentives established in the Act to reduce greenhouse gases.

### **Telephone Service**

Frontier Telephone is a regulated utility that provides telephone service for county residents. Frontier provides landline telephone coverage through a copper wire distribution system. Frontier states that they have no plans to upgrade to fiber optic cables in the immediate future.

Unfortunately, the ability to receive reliable landline telephone service from Frontier Communications continues to decline. Frontier Communications continues to exist as a regulated monopoly. Frontier faces no competition for providing landline telephone service. Frontier's rates are guaranteed, and Frontier is obligated to provide a basic level of service.

The Frontier Communications landline system also provides the backbone for the 911 emergency services. Because cellular service does not exist in many locations in Tucker County, residents must use the Frontier telephone lines to contact emergency services if confronted with an emergency.

The copper wire landline telephone technology consists of antiquated technology where the provider continues to pay increasing costs for decreasing revenues. In many municipalities, customers have abandoned their landline telecommunications service and now make calls through either cellular service or digital voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP). As this trend continues, the customer base for landline telephones will continue to decline while the number of telephone lines the carrier must maintain continues to remain constant. The evolving change in technology will mean that maintaining the existing copper landline telephone service will become less and less affordable for the provider.

In rural West Virginia, many people continue to rely on landline telephones as an essential service. We should not allow Frontier to fail to maintain these landline telephones simply because the provider finds that servicing such infrastructure no longer generates sufficient revenue.

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## **Cellular and Internet Service**

Various cellular and internet telephone providers work to improve the spotty telephone and internet service available in Tucker County.

## **Broadband Service**

Tucker County currently has no fiber backbone. However, Zayo Communications is currently expanding its backbone network from Ashburn, Virginia to Columbus, Ohio with a new route through northern West Virginia. Once completed, the route will traverse Tucker County, following WV 48 in the eastern area of the county, and US 219 in the western area of the county. This expanded backbone has the potential to serve as a valuable resource for enhancing the strength and reliability of local connections within the county, particularly for middle and last-mile connections.

Tucker County currently has sparsely distributed middle-mile fiber resources, much of which is owned by and for the exclusive use of Frontier Communications for their telephone and digital subscriber line (DSL) services.

Cable Internet service is available from two providers: Breezeline (formerly Atlantic Broadband) and Shentel (formerly Canaan Valley Cable). Both providers have limited-service area footprints. Breezeline serves all five of the incorporated communities in the county, including Davis, Thomas, Parsons, Hendricks and Hambleton. Shentel serves the Canaan Valley area.

Fixed Wireless internet service is available from one provider: Micrologic based in Buckhannon but has an extremely limited-service area and uses line-of-sight from their tower locations.

Many of the households outside of the municipalities and Canaan Valley, where cable internet is unavailable are still utilizing Frontier Communications DSL, although many are now beginning to use satellite providers such as Starlink or Hughesnet to provide internet services.

## **Water and Wastewater**

The existing level of public utility service for water and wastewater is the major limiting factor that impacts the development of land within Tucker County. Many wastewater systems in Tucker County exceed capacity and several water plants need upgraded. In other areas, adequate wastewater treatment utilities simply do not exist. In Tucker County, three Public Service Districts are either operational or are coming online to provide water and wastewater treatment to the residents.

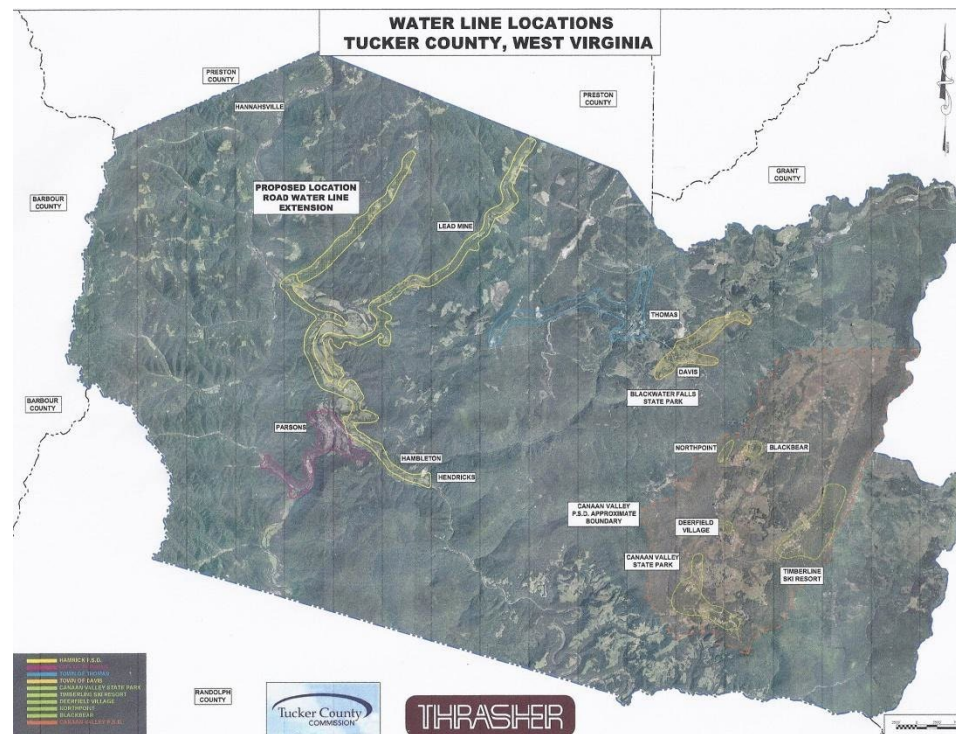
The three districts (in order by age) are the Parsons Public Service District, the Canaan Valley Public Service District, and the Blackwater Public Service District.

The various Public Service Districts and their functions are discussed below.

### Water Systems

Davis, Parsons, and Thomas provide municipal water services. Meanwhile, the Hamrick Public Service District (PSD) serves Hambleton, Hendricks, Bretz, Blackman Flats, Holly Meadows, St. George, Leadmine, and Shaffer.

**Map 6: Boundaries of the different municipal water supply and sewage treatment facilities within the county.**



Source: Water Line Locations in Tucker County Courtesy of Thrasher Engineering, August 2013

The water service in Thomas has 350 customers and needs to be upgraded. The 2024 drought highlighted the system’s shortfalls. The water reservoir contains high levels of iron and the current plant is without a sediment basin. The City of Thomas has secured partial funding for a new plant and hopes to secure the final piece in the next year.

The Hamrick PSD's water system is also in good condition and has excess capacity; it currently serves approximately 725 water customers and 450 sewer customers.

The water system at Davis is in poor condition with no excess capacity and suffers from leakage problems. This system supplies Davis households, the Blackwater Falls State Park, and the Honey Rubenstein Center. As an upgrade measure, the Town of Davis has been awarded a grant of \$500,000 by the West Virginia Governor's Office of Development to upgrade its water system.

Parsons' water system also needs upgrading as it is near capacity and unable to meet turbidity standards at either of its source locations. The Parsons system now serves 809 customers within the city limits and Kingsford Charcoal just outside the city limits.

Canaan Valley Resort State Park has a water plant for its own use, which draws water from the Blackwater River. It has a pump capacity of 200 gallons per minute (gpm) and is more than adequate for the current usage.

Also in Canaan Valley, a new water plant is scheduled to replace the Timberline Water treatment plant. The new plant will be located off Timberline Property but will fall under the control of the Canaan Valley PSD. The existing water treatment plant, although currently being operated by the Canaan Valley PSD board of directors, is not actually part of the PSD. Instead, the Canaan Valley PSD took control of the water treatment plant when the Timberline ski area fell into bankruptcy receivership. The acquisition funding will be used to construct a new water treatment plant that will serve the Timberline Four Seasons Resort. The funding will come from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and will be appropriated for the Canaan Valley Public Service District.

Water elsewhere in the County is obtained from wells. In Canaan Valley, private developers have installed small systems supplied by one or more wells to service individual developments.

## **Wastewater Treatment Systems**

Currently, the availability of adequate wastewater treatment systems stands as the largest single impediment to future development in Tucker County

Wastewater treatment and disposal capability varies depending on location within the county. In Parsons, Davis, and Thomas, sewage disposal is handled through the municipality. There are pockets of residential and commercial buildings within these locations that are not connected to the municipality's wastewater treatment system. Many of the county residents not living in these locations rely on a private septic system for sewage disposal.

Parsons has a reconstructed treatment plant built to replace facilities destroyed in the 1985 flood. This system has substantial excess capacity that might be used to address deficiencies in adjacent areas. In other areas, wastewater treatment problems in Tucker County are a major obstacle to future development. The Town of Davis has a 6.5-acre stabilization pond that is functioning at capacity but does not meet WV Department of Environmental Protection standards. The Hamrick PSD ties into the Parsons Treatment plant. The City of Thomas faces a similar problem. The wastewater responsibilities of the Hamrick PSD consist only of transporting wastewater to the Parsons plant for treatment.

In the development known as Blackman Flats near the Bretz area between Parsons and Hambleton, a septic system was installed by the original developer of the property. This system is not functioning properly.

In many areas of the county, centralized treatment facilities are not cost-effective due to the dispersed nature of development. It is essential, however, that if increased development is to occur within Tucker County, shortcomings in the area of public utilities need to be addressed.

## **1. Canaan Valley Public Service District**

In an effort to improve water and wastewater service in the resort areas in the Canaan Valley area, the Tucker County Commission authorized the creation of a separate Canaan Valley Public Service District in November 2006. The West Virginia Public Service Commission granted approval for the creation of the Canaan Valley Public Service District to provide water and sewage services within Canaan Valley in May 2007.

The goal of the Canaan Valley Public Service District was the consolidation of as many of the existing packaged wastewater treatment plants as possible into three decentralized treatment facilities. There were 17 small "Package Treatment Plants" serving the various small developments in Canaan Valley that were old, inefficient, and in disrepair. As water quality standards are becoming more stringent and sewage plant-treated discharge (effluent) is coming under increasing scrutiny by state and federal agencies, wastewater processing will need to improve.

The Canaan Valley PSD is in the process of assuming the administration of \$21 million worth of major water/wastewater projects. The three major projects being administered by the Canaan Valley PSD consist of the expansion of the D wastewater plant (cost \$3.5 million), the acquisition/conversions of a new Timberline Water Plant (\$8 million), and the acquisition of a new wastewater plant at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park (\$10 million).

The existing D wastewater plant at the North end of Canaan Valley is operating below full capacity and is scheduled to assume the treatment of wastewater in the locations that need assistance. These new locations include Cortland Road, the BFS gas station, Canaan Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Deerfield Village, the Canaan Hospitality Center, the St George Medical Facilities, the BFS gas station, North Point, Beaver Ridge, Black Bear, and the Windwood Fly-in Resort, and the homeowners along Cortland Road. D Plant currently serves Black Bear Woods, NorthPoint, Northlake, and the Beaver Ridge HOA's. The projected completion date for the D plant expansion will be May 2025.

A new wastewater project has been established to replace the existing plant at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park. The project is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council, and the West Virginia DEP. The new plant will replace the failed plant at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park. The new wastewater treatment plant will be constructed in the same location as the existing plant and will also pick up wastewater treatment including the Blackwater Center, and Land of Canaan.

## **2. Blackwater Public Service District**

The Blackwater PSD is in the process of formulating and will take over wastewater treatment in Thomas and Davis areas and the Tucker County Landfill

The Blackwater PSD is in the process of applying for grants and will need a physical address to complete a System for Award Management (SAM) registration. A SAM registration is required to bid on federal contracts and non-profit grants.

The PSD has plans to access one of the following two funding sources, Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Funding or the Community Development Block Grant funding.

- Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Funding: This funding does not have to go through the County and the Blackwater PSD can apply directly for this funding.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Currently, \$300,000 for planning has been approved. A portion of this can be used to fund the Preliminary Engineering Report.

The Blackwater PSD will also have to address administrative functions like retaining a public service district accountant, determining the layout of the future wastewater treatment and collection system, and listing existing assets before any design or construction works can proceed.



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The preliminary cost estimate for the construction of the Blackwater waste treatment facilities will be between \$50 and \$60 million.

## **Solid Waste Management Facilities**

Solid Waste Management in Tucker County is done through the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority. The Authority owns and operates the Tucker County landfill as allowed under state law (*West Virginia Code §22C-4-3*). The Tucker County Solid Waste Authority sets as its priority the continued development of the Tucker County landfill into a well-designed, properly managed, and financially stable facility in full regulatory compliance with the solid waste rules of the State of West Virginia and other pertinent laws and statutes. The Authority seeks to provide the citizens and businesses of Tucker County and the neighboring counties with viable solutions to their solid waste disposal problems.

### **1. Solid Waste Collection and Disposal Facilities**

Solid waste collection services exist for all of Tucker County. All households in the county are required to demonstrate that they have disposed of their solid waste in a legal manner. Residents can demonstrate legal waste disposal either by subscribing to a trash removal service or by showing landfill receipts.

The municipalities of Parsons, Hendricks, Hambleton, Thomas, and Davis provide curbside pick-up for their residents while Sunrise Sanitation Services provides private contract collection for rural residents and businesses.

### **2. Landfill Facilities**

The Tucker County Solid Waste Authority operates a landfill that is located east of Pendleton Creek and north of Davis on WV 32. The facility began operation in 1989. It is open on weekdays and accepts solid waste, construction debris, and certain sludges. The landfill does not accept hazardous wastes and has implemented a rigorous waste screening program to preclude any such materials from making their way, either intentionally or inadvertently, into the landfill.

The Tucker County landfill uses double composite lined cells with a phased approach to new cell construction such that a new five-to-six-acre cell is constructed about every five years or as needed. The existing operational permit covers the operation of six landfill cells, five of which are currently inactive. The permitted area covers 59.7 acres of which 30.4 acres is occupied by the six landfill cells with a 72-acre tract of land contiguous to the current landfill for future expansion. Cell construction is financed by tipping fee receipts and bank loans.

### 3. Landfill Operations

Although termed the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority, the landfill is not part of Tucker County Governance. Instead, the landfill has fallen into receivership and is currently being administered by the State of West Virginia Public Service Commission.

At the time of publication, Mark Holstine serves as the presiding chair for the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority. Mark Holstine is a Professional Engineer and previous director of the West Virginia Solid Waste Management Board. Mark assumed his position when the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority fell into receivership and was taken over by the State of West Virginia.

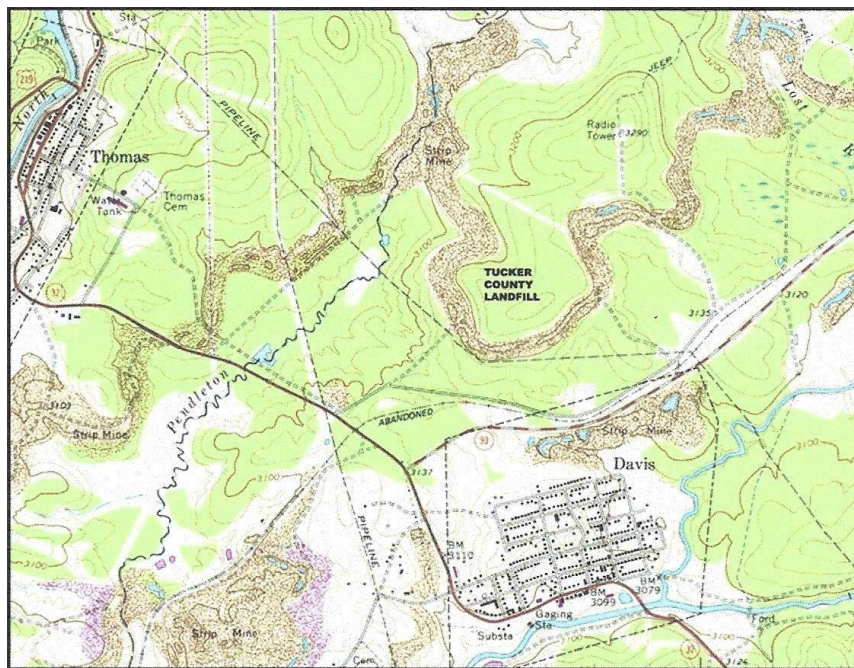
Subsequent to the takeover by the State, the financial position of the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority has improved. The authority has purchased more modern equipment and streamlined its operating procedures. However, the authority will continue to struggle financially until it finds an efficient means to dispose of the wastewater that leaches through the cells.

Until the individual landfill cells are capped by an impermeable barrier, surface water will leach through the cells and require proper disposition. In the past, the leachate was sent to the two nearest municipality's sewage treatment plants for disposal. Now that the plant in Davis is considered non-compliant with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection standards, the largest percentage of the leachate generated at the landfill is shipped to Westernport, with a small percentage going to Thomas.

Once adequate wastewater treatment facilities are constructed the leachate concerns will diminish. As an interim measure, the landfill uses Eco Mistlers to assist in the reduction of leachate volume. However, overspray from the Eco Mistlers can present a separate concern.

The existing landfill should remain operational for the foreseeable future. The landfill remains an asset to the county but will not be able to show a profit until the wastewater problems are resolved.

**Map 7: Tucker County landfill**



Source: Map provided by the Tucker County Solid Waste Authority

**Municipal Buildings**

In 2013, Tucker County completed the upgrade to the Tucker County Courthouse. The upgrade modernizes the courtrooms, makes them handicapped accessible, and makes the administrative offices more accessible to the public.

**P**LANNING CONTEXT

Infrastructure is important in County Planning in the aspect of situating the various types of land use throughout the county. Large densities of people should be centered on the more developed infrastructure networks and likewise, lack of infrastructure should reflect a more rural setting.

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goals Statement

Allow Tucker County access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, safe transportation, reliable electric power, high-speed telecommunications, and other infrastructure are needed in the county.

## Objectives

- Work jointly with state, federal, and private entities to promote and develop high-speed and wireless forms of data transmission and telecommunication through the county.
- Facilitate the county infrastructure committee to ensure its progress and vitality into the future.
- Pursue water and sewer projects to benefit currently un-served and under-served areas of the county, or areas that may need to be served due to health or quality issues.
- Provide adequate and timely Emergency Medical Services to county residents.

## Strategies

- Encourage continued and improved communication and coordination among the entities, agencies, and organizations involved in providing infrastructure and related services.
- Undertake an aggressive approach to the development of high-tech, high-speed, and wireless data transmission and telecommunications through government and private sector joint ventures thus creating economic development possibilities while providing low-cost service to the general public.
- Ensure water and sewer projects are actively pursued in development and funding to guarantee projects reach construction.
- Commingle projects for cost-benefit in funding opportunities and construction feasibility.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission provides funding and approves any authorities that operate within the county.
- Tucker County Solid Waste Authority owns and operates the Tucker County landfill.
- The Canaan Valley and the Hamrick Public Service Districts both serve to oversee public utility use within the various portions of Tucker County.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the Tucker County Commission.
- Seek additional county general revenues.
- Charge appropriate service/application/permit and related fees for new and existing activities.
- Grants, user fees, and charges for services provided.
- Seek financial contributions/assistance from external entities with whom work is jointly done.

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# PUBLIC SERVICES

## OVERVIEW

Tucker County public services are delivered by various entities and organizations. These public services consist of the following:

- Police Protection,
- Fire Protection,
- Education,
- Health Care,
- Emergency Medical Services, and
- Social Services.

### Police Protection

Police protection in Tucker County is provided by the county sheriff and his five deputies operating out of Parsons. The West Virginia State Police also maintains an office in Parsons with patrolmen. The City of Parsons also maintains a police force of a part-time chief and one patrolman. The combined staff of these three organizations has a formidable task patrolling for an area the size of Tucker County. At times, only one sheriff's deputy and one state patrol are on duty to cover the entire 419 square miles of Tucker County outside Parsons Corporation limits. The sheriff's department and West Virginia State Police also provide protection for Thomas, Davis Hendricks, and Hambleton, all outlying areas.

The sheriff's department has a total of eight patrol cars, two of which are spares. A new radio system has been installed in the patrol vehicles to eliminate "dead spots" in the County where deputies cannot be reached by radio. Additionally, each vehicle is equipped with laptops and portable Wi-Fi.

In terms of jail facilities, Tucker County prisoners must be transported to and from the Tygarts Valley Regional Jail for court appearances. The sheriff's department recently hired two part-time court security officers.

### Fire Protection

Fire protection in Tucker County is provided by four independent volunteer fire departments. These are located at Parsons, Thomas, Davis, and Canaan Valley.

All four fire departments are also equipped to provide rescue services and are highly rated by the West Virginia Fire Administrator.

The largest of these departments both in terms of equipment and in area of coverage is the Parsons Fire Department, which is responsible for fire protection throughout most of Tucker County's western half. The department's area of responsibility is defined by the county line on the south, west, and north areas of its district and by splitting the distance between Parsons and Thomas and Canaan Valley volunteer departments on the east side.

Fire departments and their services are rated on a scale of 1 to 10 with one being the best. through the Insurance Services Office of Commercial Risk Service, commonly referred to as ISO ratings. Categories considered in the ratings include manpower, training, equipment, water supply, and communications. In rural areas, dual ratings are given for areas with and without access to fire hydrants. Parsons and Davis Fire Departments each have an ISO rating of 4 in areas with hydrants and a 4 in those without. The Thomas and Canaan Valley Volunteer Fire Departments have an ISO rating of 5 in areas with hydrants and a 6 in areas without. It should be noted that 9 is the best rating obtainable for areas without hydrants unless a supplementary water supply is available.

The Tucker County 911 Communications Center provides dispatching services for all fire departments. The four departments have mutual aid agreements amongst themselves and also with neighboring areas.

Funding for fire protection services in Tucker County mostly comes from state taxes, hotel/motel taxes, and donations raised by the efforts of the individual fire departments. While these departments provide primary fire protection to the Monongahela National Forest areas within Tucker County, little direct contribution is made to their operating budgets either by the National Forest Service or by the County Commission from revenues obtained as Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT).

Tucker County experiences three problems in terms of fire protection, which are all typical of most rural areas. First, as a volunteer fire service, response times are slower than they might be if the firefighting staff was paid. Second, only a limited area of the County has fire hydrants. In those areas the capacity of the fire department to suppress fires is limited by the amount of water that can be carried on the trucks or can be obtained from nearby streams and ponds. Finally, there are a number of areas in the County that are beyond the maximum insurable distance of six miles from a firehouse. The northwestern sectors of the County in the Licking and St. George magisterial districts are the largest of these areas that are not adequately served.

As in the case with other services, West Virginia state policy is to encourage the consolidation of smaller service providers into a single, county-wide organization known as a County Fire Board.

## Education

The Tucker County Board of Education maintains the following educational facilities within the county:

- Davis Thomas Elementary Middle School is a pre-kindergarten to eighth grade school located in Thomas.
- Tucker Valley Elementary Middle School is a pre-kindergarten to eighth grade school located in Hambleton.
- Tucker County High School is located on Backbone Mountain.

Tucker County High School is a school that educates students from grades 9 through 12. In the Tucker County High School, Career and Technical programming curriculums are available as well as basic education classes. In addition, the Tucker County High School hosts a Virtual college campus provided by Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College and serves to provide some adult classes.

Over the past 40 years, enrollment in Tucker County High School declined. System enrollment in the 1973-1974 school year was 1,910 students. In 1989-1990, enrollment had declined to 1,428 students. In 2009-2010, enrollment was 1,096 students and dropped off in 2010-2011 to 1,054 students. By 2022-2023, enrollment was 960 students with a continued drop off in 2023-2024 to 942 students.

**Table 18: Tucker County Schools Enrollment**

	Davis-Thomas	Tucker Valley	TCHS	Total
2023-24	194	455	293	942
2022-23	205	462	293	960
2021-22	196	472	288	956
2020-21	179	446	303	928
2019-20	189	486	299	974
2018-19	211	477	321	1,009
2017-18	213	492	303	1,008
2016-17	200	476	302	978
2015-16	206	483	333	1,022
2014-15	212	487	324	1,023
2013-14	212	498	319	1,029
2012-13	202	521	308	1,031
2011-12	202	550	321	1,073

*Data provided by the Tucker County Board of Education*



## **The Kenneth “Honey” Rubenstein Juvenile Center**

Another educational facility within Tucker County is the Kenneth “Honey” Rubenstein Juvenile Center. The Rubenstein Center is the state’s minimum security correctional facility for juvenile males. The facility has a capacity for 84 males ages 15 to 20.

The program takes the positive concepts of military regimentation and leadership and combines them with a cognitive therapeutic approach assisting youth in decision making, behavior management and other initiatives to promote positive productive citizenship. The core aspect focus on role modeling, teamwork, communication, responsibility, accountability, and high expectation. The Center provides cadets with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead a law abiding, productive and responsible life.

The Rubenstein Center Legislature was first created in 1955 as the West Virginia Forestry Camp for Boys. The name was later changed to the Davis Center in 1975. The initial purpose of the center was to provide an inmate labor force to build Blackwater Falls State Park. Until 1978, residents of the Davis Center were sent from the courts for status offenses as well as for being adjudicated delinquent. After 1978, the facility only housed adjudicated residents and became the state’s only minimum security correctional facility for juvenile males, as it still stands today.

Currently the Rubenstein Center, offers educational and vocational classes. While there, residents may receive their High School Diploma or the GED, as well as state and national certifications in both welding and building construction.

## **Libraries**

Library services in Tucker County consist of two independently operated libraries, each with its own board of directors and staff. These libraries are: the Five Rivers Public Library in Parsons and the Mountaintop Public Library in Thomas. Both libraries depend heavily on state and local funding. Due to funding requirements, each of the library’s Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library and staff have various fundraisers throughout the year and apply for local, state, and private grants. Both libraries belong to a library consortium, West Virginia Library Network, which includes 37 counties and a total of 110 libraries including public, academic school and special libraries.

Technical support is offered by the West Virginia Office of Technology, which has highly increased the use of both libraries, especially Internet access. The West Virginia Library Commission provides library users access to many online databases, magazine articles, newspapers, encyclopedias, Tutor West Virginia, Tumble Math, Tumble Books, and Learning Express.

The Five Rivers Public Library serves the communities of Parsons, St. George, Hambleton, Hendricks, Dryfork, Licking, Moore, Limestone, Location, Porterwood, Pifer Mountain, Montrose, Auviltown, Bull Run, and surrounding areas beyond Tucker County. The library's service population is 3,854. The library has a collection of 41,284 volumes, including audio (23,972), videos (1,543), and print (15,758). Six public access computers are available for Internet and software programs. Wireless Internet is available at no cost to the public using their personal laptop.

Programming includes Toddler Time, Summer Reading, Monthly Movie Day, Adult Book Club discussion group, and craft workshops. Available on Microfilm is the local newspaper, *The Parsons Advocate*, and census records. Services available are copies, faxes, laminate, an AccuCut machine, scanning documents, notary services and printing from electronic devices.

The library building opened in 1974 with an expansion in 1985. The Board of Trustees built an expansion of 1,600 square feet in 2011, which includes a much needed meeting room.

The Mountaintop Public Library serves the communities of the Thomas, Davis, Canaan Valley, and the surrounding areas such as Benbush, Douglas, Coketon, Pierce, and William. The library's service population is 3,106. It has a collection of 31,955 volumes including, print, audio including e-audios (7,726), and videos (795). It has a small reference collection, children's and young adult collection. It also houses a moderate collection of West Virginia history. Services include a copy machine, printer, and a fax machine. Three public computers are available and free wireless for those patrons with laptops. Programming includes school story time and four book clubs for adults and young adults. For children, there is a summer reading program available in June and an autumn read in October.

## **Adult Education**

### **Tucker County Board of Education Offices**

The Tucker County Board of Education Offices provides free, individualized, backup education classes at the Board of Education office. Classes cover basic literacy skills, job readiness skills, test preparation assistance, life coping skills, and computer literacy. Instruction may be through books, videos, computer, individual activities and/or group activities. The purpose of the class is to help each student achieve their personal goal(s) through the best method available.

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## Health Care and Emergency Services

### 1. Emergency Medical Services

The Tucker County Emergency Ambulance Authority provides pre-hospital emergency care in Tucker County. The organization provides ambulance transport to the citizens and visitors of Tucker County. In addition, the ambulance authority has mutual aid agreements with neighboring counties to provide the ability for mutual assistance as needed. Annually, the ambulance authority responds to 1,250 to 1,500 calls for help including mutual aid with the local fire departments.

Funding for ambulance service is provided primarily by charging for a patient's insurance. The secondary line of funding is through the Tucker County Commission office as well as through hotel/motel tax revenue. The donations of local businesses and citizens provide the funding for continuing education and updating equipment as needed. The ambulance authority also seeks out contracts for events such as the local ski areas, races, and large-scale events in the area. The last line of funding sought by the organization is through various grants for equipment, ambulances, and training.

Ambulances are stationed at two locations in the County: Parsons and Davis. At location the ambulances are equipped with Advanced Life Support equipment.

These two strategic locations make it possible for an ambulance to respond to incidents in 14 minutes or fewer for the majority of Tucker County. However, due to the vast area covered in Tucker County response times may be more than 45 minutes, especially in the St. George Magisterial District, the County's Northern Area, and along the Dry Fork in the Southern portion of Tucker County.

There are two main medical centers where patients are transported, Davis Medical Center in Elkins, W.Va. and Garrett Regional Medical Center in Oakland, Md. For severe trauma cases and medical emergencies that require specialized medical care, Aeromedical Services are available through WVU Medical, Healthnet, Pittsburgh, and Cumberland. Most flights are 15 to 20 minutes to the receiving medical centers.

### 2. Medical Services

There are no hospital facilities in Tucker County. The nearest full-service hospital facilities are either the Davis Medical Center in Elkins, W.Va. or the Garrett Regional Medical Center in Oakland, Md.

Meanwhile, the only primary care in the area is through clinics such as Mountaintop Health Center in Thomas and through St. George Medical Center with clinics in St. George, Hambleton, and Canaan Valley. Both of these health

centers provide medical care for acute or chronic illness, preventive care, routine physicals, and laboratory testing.

Also, those eligible for assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can visit the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center. The center provides health care lab testing, immunizations and preventive health services for veterans in the Tucker County area.

### **Health Systems Services**

St. George Medical Pharmacy has two locations in Canaan Valley and Parsons. These locations offer prescriptions and over-the-counter medications as well as personal care items. St. George Medical Clinic is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQMC).

The St. George Medical Clinic is dedicated to the delivery of family-centered health care. The clinic provides child examinations, immunizations, adult care, chronic disease management, cancer screening, suturing, stitches, allergy shots, and home visits. It also provides transportation to appointments, case management, dental assistance to those who qualify, a social worker, and a 24-hour emergency on-call system.

Another pharmacy source in the community is Mountaintop Health Center in Thomas near Cortland Acres. The Mountaintop Health Center is part of the Preston-Taylor Community Health Centers headquartered in Grafton, W.Va. The clinic is open throughout the week and maintains one physician, two nurse practitioners, and a physician's assistant.

Cortland Acres is a 94-bed nursing and rehabilitation care facility near Thomas. The facility provides nursing, short-and long-term physical rehabilitation, post-hospital and post-surgical care, outpatient therapy services, memory impairment and dementia services, speech therapy services, therapeutic and specialized dietary services, and hospice services.

### **3. 911 Service**

Tucker County's 911 service is a modern Enhanced 911 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). The Tucker County service receives all 911 calls for the county and handles dispatching duties for the county sheriff, The Parsons Police Department, the West Virginia State Police, county emergency medical services, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, four fire departments, county animal control and all other related services.

Emergency 911 calls in the county are answered by specially trained Telecommunicators. The Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) software

displays the location of the caller immediately upon call arrival of the call. Calls made to non-911 telephone numbers, even though they may be listed as an emergency telephone number, does not allow the PSAP system to function correctly.

#### **4. Office of Emergency Management**

The Tucker County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is located in Parsons. It is funded by and operates under the Tucker County Commission and the West Virginia Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The Tucker County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has a part-time Director and Deputy Director.

The purpose of the office is to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from natural or man-made disasters that occur in Tucker County. It works closely with other emergency service agencies before, during, and after disasters to ensure the safety and needs of the responders and the citizens of Tucker County have been met.

The Office of Emergency Management plans for the possibility of sheltering and evacuation with the Tucker County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). The OEM has two response trailers, one supplied with sheltering equipment for its citizens and the other for pets. If an event occurs that is beyond the local capabilities of the county, then the OEM will obtain assistance from neighboring counties in the region before requesting assistance from the state.

#### **5. Social Services**

##### **Senior Citizens Services**

Senior citizens' services are provided in Tucker County in several different ways, but primarily by independent organizations. The Tucker County Commission holds the title to a new senior center completed in 1988 and located in Parsons. This building is leased for \$10 a year to Tucker County Senior Citizens, Inc., a nonprofit organization that operates the center and also administers a number of federal aid programs for senior citizens throughout the County.

The county offers daily meals at the Senior Center in Parsons and the Mountain Top Senior Center in Thomas. The centers also provide limited weekend meals and home delivered meals.

Home care services are provided to senior citizens through Aged and Disabled Waiver Program, the Medicaid Community Care Program, the VA In-Home Care Program and other programs.

The WV Bureau of Senior Services also runs a medical equipment loan closet, subsidizes Ensure for those who want it, serves as community outreach facilities, provides facilities that can be used in times of disaster, and runs a food bank.

### **Family Resource Network**

Tucker County supports a family resource network. The Tucker County Family Resource Network is a non-profit organization that provides family support services within the county. The Family Resource Network includes the following:

- A substance abuse prevention coalition.
- A child abuse and prevention program.
- A family support program to enhance parenting skills.
- An electronic tracking system for individuals who have cognitive disorders.
- And, such special events and activities as deemed necessary.

## **6. Other Resources Available Within Tucker County**

Some of the resources that encompass multiple counties and contribute services to Tucker County are the Tucker Community Foundation, Region VII, and The West Virginia University Extension Service.

### **Tucker Community Foundation**

Tucker Community Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Parsons. The Foundation has more than \$35 million in assets under management. The primary activities of the Foundation are its grant and scholarship programs that serve Tucker County and seven other counties including one county in Maryland. The Tucker Community Foundation is engaged in other community and economic development activities in its region. The Foundation manages the William Harman Trust which supports a variety of undertakings in and for the City of Parsons.

### **Region VII**

Region VII is one of eleven planning and development regions established by the West Virginia Legislature in 1971 through the West Virginia Planning and Development Act. Region VII works with the state and local governments in guiding the orderly growth and development of the state. The role of the Region VII planning and development region entails facilitating grants and solving problems with growth and development that go beyond the jurisdiction of municipalities and counties, and that regional intergovernmental cooperation is needed.

### **West Virginia University Extension Service**

The WVU Extension Office serves the citizens of Tucker County by bringing rings relevant, up-to-date information and research from West Virginia University

to the citizens of the county through educational seminars and workshops, newspaper articles, and newsletters mailings.

## **P**LANNING CONTEXT

Public Services are important in County Planning. Although the county is sparsely populated and it is difficult to bring services to where large densities of people are centered, services are available within the county for those who choose to find them.

## **G**OALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

### **Goals Statement**

Allow Tucker County access to police protection, education opportunities, emergency services, health care services, and other public services needs.

### **Objectives**

- Facilitate the county public services and ensure that necessary services are provided into the future.
- Work jointly with state, federal, and private entities to promote and develop police, emergency medical, education, and health services throughout the county.

### **Strategies**

- Encourage continued and improved communication and coordination among the entities, agencies, and organizations involved in providing necessary public services.
- Ensure vital services are actively pursued in development and funding to guarantee these services remain available to county residents.
- Commingle services for cost benefit in funding opportunities and feasibility.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission provides funding and approves any authorities that operate within the county.
- Tucker County Senior Citizens, Inc., a nonprofit organization that operates the center and also administers a number of federal aid programs for senior citizens throughout the County.
- Tucker County Emergency Ambulance Authority functions as a volunteer organization to provide Ambulance Services within the county.
- Tucker County's 911 service is a call forwarding arrangement that funnels all emergency calls to the central dispatching facility operated by the County's Office of Emergency Services.
- The Tucker County Board of Education maintains educational facilities within the county.
- The County Sheriff and his deputies provide police protection for the residents of the county.
- The State Police provide further police protection for county residents.
- The Office of Emergency Services provides emergency response capability and emergency planning.
- The Tucker Community Foundation is a full service organization that facilitates grant applications and distributions, scholarship applications and distribution, and financial services for the various entities within Tucker County.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the Tucker County Commission.
- Seek additional county general revenues.
- Charge appropriate service and related fees for new and existing activities.
- Seek financial contributions/assistance from external entities with whom work is jointly done.
- Explore impact/development fees to augment existing revenue streams.



# **RURAL LAND NOT INTENDED FOR URBAN GROWTH**

## **O**VERVIEW

The county does not intend to set aside additional rural land. As described above, much of the county is currently set aside as a State Park, a National Wildlife Refuge, or a National Forest.

## **V**ISION

The county does not intend to set aside additional land as designated land not intended for urban growth.

# RECREATION AND TOURISM

## OVERVIEW

The interaction between Economic Development and Recreation and Tourism in Tucker County is significant. Some of the major recreational features within the county include three ski resorts, fairs and festivals, the Heart of the Highlands trail system, the Allegheny Highlands Trail, the Cheat River Trail and many others rivers suitable for paddling, the Canaan Valley Wildlife Reserve, the Fernow Experimental Forest, and the Monongahela National Forest.

When faced with the decline in manufacturing and mining jobs, local leaders in many West Virginia counties have turned toward the service industry to sustain economic activity in their communities. For example, recreation and tourism facilities in Tucker County's Canaan Valley have expanded greatly. The Canaan Valley area has been rated one of the nation's top three vacation values and is also considered West Virginia's best-kept secret. Parsons has a rich cultural history that can be explored through its historical landmarks such as the Corrick's Ford Battlefield and features numerous fairs and festivals. According to the Tucker County Convention and Visitors Bureau, visitors to Canaan Valley and to Blackwater State Park constituted approximately 90 percent of total visitors to the area. These numbers translate into high revenue for industries related to recreation and tourism.

Tourism, second-home development, and recreation-related commercial activity in Canaan Valley have grown in the past decades. According to the *Economic Impact of Travel on West Virginia: 2000-2010 Detailed State and County Estimates* by Dean Runyan Associates, September 2011, the economic impact to tourist travel to Tucker County has been substantial. Survey estimates show Tucker County travel and tourism accounts for \$40.1 million in direct spending; \$13.0 million in earnings; 670 jobs; \$693,000 in local government revenue and \$2,622,000 in state government revenue.

Since Canaan Valley Resort State Park's \$36M renovation, the park has seen an increase in visitors. Recent campground expansion increased capacity for mobile home and tenting recreationists alike. Major snow making system renovations are planned for the future. Long-range plans for the resort include a new base lodge, additional cabins and campsites, and possibly a new golf course.

New ownership of Timberline Resort has invested \$15 million renovating the base lodge, overhauling the entire snowmaking system and installing the only six person high speed detachable chairlift in the state.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service invested \$7 million in efforts to increase the quality of public preserved lands contained within the county in order to help produce a nature-based tourism product relatively unequaled on the east coast. Hiking trails, river and ADA access were improved to key sites. Complete renovation of the visitor's center located in Canaan Valley offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience nature at its finest. Canaan National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Plan in Appendix.

### **Ski Resorts and State Parks**

Tucker County's three ski resorts and two state parks are located within the Canaan Valley area. The ski resorts are Timberline, Canaan Valley, and White Grass and the state parks are Canaan Valley and Blackwater Falls. These resorts provide a significant draw for tourism during both the summer and the winter months.

The Canaan Valley Resort serves as both a Ski Resort and as a state park. The resort has 160 new guest rooms. In addition, the park maintains 23 cabins, 59 campground sites, and a restaurant. Recreation facilities include a golf course, an outdoor and indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium, mountain bike trails, and a skate park. The ski resort has 850 feet of vertical drop with 39 slopes, and three ski lifts. The ski area has snow making capabilities and supports night skiing and snowboarding and a snow tubing facility. In addition to the downhill ski and snowboarding facility, Canaan Valley Resort supports cross-country skiing and snowshoeing with marked trails and a rental facility along with mountain biking. An ice rink doubles as a pavilion in summer. During the summer the resort offers scenic chair lift rides.

The Timberline Ski Resort is located just down from the Canaan Valley Ski Resort on the same mountain. The Timberline Ski Resort features 20 trails, two ski lifts and two surface lifts with 1000 feet of vertical drop. The Timberline Ski resort also has snowmaking and night skiing. Timberline also has restaurant facilities and supports festivals and scenic chair rides and hiking in the summer.

Nestled between the Canaan Valley and the Timberline downhill ski resorts is the White Grass Cross Country Ski Resort. The White Grass resort includes over 30 kilometers of groomed cross-country skiing trails that transit over 1200 feet of vertical drop. White Grass features a gourmet café and a rental shop. Although White Grass has no snow making facilities, they do have a snow farm that is capable of making the most out of the naturally accumulated snowfall.

Blackwater Falls State Park is another resort facility in the Canaan Valley area. Blackwater Falls State Park also recently underwent a major renovation to include 54 guest rooms, 13 cabins and 65 campsites. In addition, the park hosts a restaurant, swimming pool, recreational pond, trading post and the longest sled

run on the east coast. Blackwater Falls State Park is the most visited park in the State due to these amenities and its 57 foot waterfall and 20 miles of hiking trails that support cross-country skiing in the winter and mountain biking in the summer months.

### **Heart of the Highlands Trail System**

The Heart of the Highlands Trail System is a new concept in trail systems that will connect the non-motorized, multi-use trail systems of five land management agencies in Tucker County into a comprehensive, landscape oriented, environmentally sustainable, multi-use trail system that is accessible to the public. This trail system will combine recreational trails with alternative transportation routes within Tucker County and will further enhance the area's recreation and economic possibilities. Ultimately, the Heart of the Highlands will provide access to and from significant regional and national recreational trail systems.

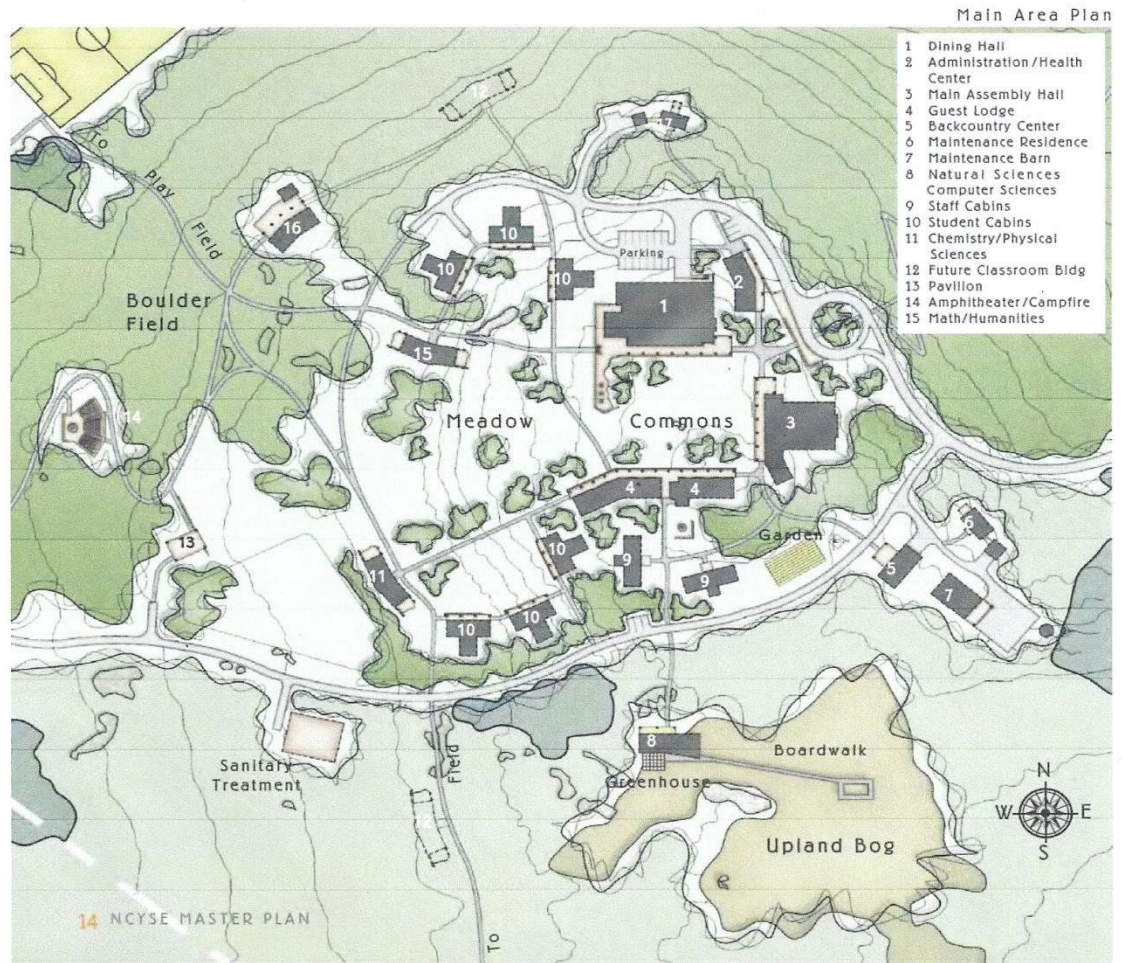
The first phase of the trail system is a 23-mile loop that will connect the five partner properties. Connecting trails will be established and existing trails improved to link the public lands in and around Canaan Valley to each other and to the Town of Davis. About half of this trail already exists. In 2010 funding was secured through the WV Division of Transportation Recreational Trails Program and Transportation Enhancement Program to build the connections from Davis through the National Youth Science Foundation and on to Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge to Cortland Road. The long-term goal of the trail system is to connect the Heart of the Highlands Trail System to the surrounding regional and national trail systems.

### **National Center for Youth Science Education**

The National Youth Science Foundation (NYSF) owns 111 acres adjacent to Canaan Valley and has a Silver LEED certified facility by the Green Building Council considered the Davis Campus, with conference facilities, a computer lab, and a Makerspace available for use by area schools and public. The Center will allow the NYSF to improve and expand its programs and become a focal point for an informal science education that encourages and inspires youth to pursue scientific careers.

Future plans for the center features a pedestrian oriented, sustainable learning community consisting of educational, housing, dining, recreational and support facilities. The Center's remote mountain setting assists in creating a place that is part scientific community and part scientific field station. The center plans to engage and inspire students in their scientific explorations and professional journeys.

**Map 8: National Youth Science Foundation Campus**



Source: Photo from National Youth Science Foundation Master Plan 2013

**Biking**

According to Chris Bologiano’s book *The Appalachian Forest*, the sport of mountain biking has become one of the most popular and one of the fastest growing outdoor activities throughout the Appalachian forest regions of the eastern U.S. The sport of mountain biking may soon overtake skiing as the major outdoor recreational activity in the region.

Tucker County has a wide variety of divergent mountain bike trails in Parsons, Hendricks, Hambleton, Davis, Canaan Valley, and Thomas to suit any desire or any skill level. The county has trails that range from beautiful and easy railroad grades to highly technical single-track trails.

Mountain bike trails are available at the Timberline Ski Resort, the Canaan Valley Resort State Park, the Blackwater Falls State Park, the Monongahela National Forest, Allegheny Highlands Trail, and at the West Virginia DNR property recently purchased from the Canaan Valley Institute. Of special note will be the

interconnected trail system being constructed as part of the Heart of the Highlands trail system. Evening trail rides along many of these trails are a sponsored event throughout the summer. Canaan Valley Resort State Park built the Promised Land Trail, a beginner rates trail by the International Mountain Biking Association.

The Allegheny Highlands Trail (AHT) follows the original route of the West Virginia Central and Pittsburg Railway, built by Henry Gassaway Davis in 1884. It is 26 contiguous miles from the Railroad Depot in Elkins to Hendricks, and an additional 5 miles in Tucker County near Davis. The scenic trail provides panoramic views of the West Virginia countryside, as it passes through a mountainous region with small towns and rural farmland.

### **River running and Canoe Sports**

According to Charlie Walbridge in his guide to *Canoeing & Kayaking in West Virginia* the number of paddlers in West Virginia's rivers has increased dramatically. West Virginia now serves as a mainstay for canoe and kayak enthusiasts from around the world. Although the majority of West Virginia's commercial river traffic travels down the New and Gauley Rivers, Tucker County lays claim to both placid and as well as exciting and technical rivers for paddling.

Tucker County contains a wide variety of rivers and creeks that are for paddling and rafting trips. The paddling opportunities within the county include the Blackwater, DryFork, and Cheat Rivers. Paddling and rafting conditions vary from quiet flat-water trips to world-renowned highly technical Class V stretches of river.

### **Cheat River Trail**

In addition to technical paddling, Tucker County contains a major portion of the newly organized Cheat River Trail.

The Cheat River Trail, opened in June 2013, focuses on the 40-mile recreational water trail between the towns of Hendricks and Rowlesburg, WV. This segment is Class I-II, a family-friendly river. Its beauty and other notable qualities make it very popular for people with all levels of experience and varied interests. It is a trail for boats. It is a network of access points, resting places and attractions for users of human powered craft on lakes and rivers.

The Cheat River Water Trail was designated a State Water Trail by the West Virginia Recreational Trails Advisory Board of the WV Division of Highways in December 2012.

The benefits provided by the development include fishing, canoeing or kayaking, and tubing. The trail serves to increase environmental awareness and knowledge of the river including stewardship and safety. Community benefits include additional local recreation opportunities, increased public awareness of safe river use, and promotion of the community's restaurants, gas stations, shops, B&B's, historic sites, and museums.

### **Motorcycle Riding**

Motorcycle riding is a pastime that came to West Virginia without encouragement. On their own, motorcyclists discovered that the twisting mountain roads with sweeping curved roads and beautiful scenery of the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia makes the region a favorite ride for motorcyclists.

Motorcycle outings like the Hog Wild gathering frequently take place throughout Tucker County. These outings serve to benefit both the motorcycle clubs and the local businesses.

### **Music Venues**

- Pickin' in Parsons
- Purple Fiddle
- Canaan Summer Music Series

### **Festivals**

- ArtSpring
- Fly Fishing
- Mountaineer Days
- Leaf Peepers
- Artoberfest
- Mt Bike Festival
- Fireman's Homecoming
- 4-H Fair

### **Races**

- Highland Sky
- Run for It
- Canaan Valley Half Marathon
- Moonlight on the Falls Marathon
- Canna Valley Trail Run
- Blackwater Canyon Half Marathon

## **Public Land Available for Recreation**

Because of the vast quantity of public land available within the county, considerable areas are available for recreation. In fact, much of the available lands are designated as recreation areas. Some of the public landholders that make recreational land available are the Monongahela National Forest, the Fernow Experimental Forest, Otter Creek, the Canaan Valley Resort State Parks, and the Canaan Valley Fish and Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge.

### **Monongahela National Forest**

The Monongahela National Forest is a national forest located that protects over 919,000 acres of federally-owned land within a 1,700,000 acres proclamation boundary that includes much of the Potomac Highlands Region and portions of 10 counties.

The Forest is noted for its rugged landscape with spectacular views, blueberry thickets, highland bogs and “sods”, and open areas with exposed rocks. In addition to the second-growth forest trees, the wide range of botanical species found includes rhododendron, laurel on the moist west side of the Allegheny Front.

The forest provides for camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, bicycle riding and other outdoor activities.

Considered gateway communities to the Mon Forest, the towns of Davis, Thomas and Parsons participate in the Mon Forest Towns Partnership. This partnership cultivates relations across lands and gateway communities to enhance the economy and quality of life for residents and visitors while sustaining the quality of the environment.

### **Fernow Experimental Forest**

Located in north central West Virginia, the 4,700-acre Fernow Experimental Forest was set aside in 1934 and named after Bernhard Fernow. The Fernow is renowned for long-term silvicultural research and long-term watershed research, both spanning more than 50 years. Current research topics include silviculture, hydrology, soil productivity, the use of fire for restoration purposes, managing for threatened and endangered wildlife species, and the effects of acidic deposition on forest ecosystems. The information gleaned from the Fernow has significantly improved management of these mixed-hardwood forests and still provides practical information to forest managers and landowners. Research in the Fernow is in demand by public and private landowners, policymakers at the State and Federal level, and scientists around the globe. The Fernow is part of several



national and international scientific networks, including the National Atmospheric Deposition Program, the National Trends Network, and the Long-Term Soil Productivity Studies.

### **West Virginia State Parks**

The West Virginia State Park system supports two parks in Tucker County. The two parks consist of the Canaan Valley Resort State Park and Blackwater Falls State Park. Both parks provide for camping, bike trails, nature hikes and other diverse outdoor activities.

### **The Canaan Valley and National Wildlife Refuge**

The Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge occupies the unique Canaan Valley wetlands. Although the refuge does not support camping, they do offer wildlife dependent recreation including hunting, fishing, photography, bicycle riding, environmental education, and interpretive programs.

### **Arts Communities**

Tucker County is home to a vibrant arts community that has grown substantially over the past two decades. Although the arts may initially be seen to be a luxury, they have been proven to be a valuable way to rejuvenate districts and boost communities that once relied on other income sources. Studies have shown that in a labor market that prizes well-educated workers, the best way to lure them is often by attracting creative people first.

In Tucker County, growth in the arts communities is evident by the numbers of resident artists, craftspeople, and musicians who pursue their art as livelihood. These craftspeople feed the galleries and performance venues that contribute to the County's economic viability. It is notable also that, for the most part, this growth has been self-motivated and independently developed, and that artists of all types are both long-time residents and people who have chosen more recently to settle here. These artists live throughout the County and their work can be seen and heard locally in multiple performance venues, six different galleries, and various other retail outlets.

The local arts community have emerged as a magnet for financial support for both the general public good and specifically for arts education in the County's public schools. Local businesses have provided sustaining support for this effort. The evidence of combined individual and corporate sponsorship for the arts can be seen in the long history of the Alpine Festival and more recently the STArt Project (the educational outreach program of the WV Highlands Artisans Group).

Cottrill's Opera House in Thomas has been raising funds to renovate and reopen to the public the 450 seat historic venue.

As a result of the focus on the arts within Tucker County, the West Virginia State legislature established a **Tucker County Cultural District Authority** in 2013. This Cultural District Authority exists as the only cultural district authority within the state.

The strong presence of the arts in Tucker County, in addition to benefiting the local population, increasingly takes its place alongside sports, recreation, and nature as a motivation for tourism in Tucker County.

## **P**LANNING CONTEXT

The recreation activities, the arts, and the park facilities are essential in the physical and mental health of a community. Leisure time is needed to rest and relax the human body from the everyday rigors of life. Therefore, providing these services is required for a prosperous and thriving county. In addition to recreation, tourism remains a major source of revenue for the county.

Planning is necessary in the endeavor for the proper location of the county recreation and tourism facilities to best suit the needs of county residents.

## **G**OALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

### **Goals Statement**

Provide leisure opportunities to the residents of Tucker County in an unobtrusive and cost effective manner.

Develop facilities to encourage tourist traffic and their associated revenues.

### **Objectives**

- Acquire land and construct parks and facilities in currently unserved or underserved areas.
- Expand the activities and programs currently offered.
- Facilitate the development of a Tucker County Visitors Information Center.

- Increase revenues to broaden and help develop Tucker County into a recreation and leisure destination.

### **Strategies**

- Establish and enact the Tucker County Cultural District Authority.
- Survey residents to investigate wanted leisure activities.
- Encourage continued and improved communication and coordination among the entities, agencies, and organizations involved in recreation and tourism activities.
- Work with the private sector to establish support businesses to embellish the tourist industry in Tucker County.
- Support efforts to protect and promote existing recreation and tourism-related activities.
- Undertake advertising campaign to attract tourists to Tucker County, concentrating on the D.C. Metropolitan and Pittsburgh areas.
- Work in conjunction with the planning of subdivisions through the Planning Commission to ensure recreational opportunities for new planned developments.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission authorizes funding and provides support for the various activities that operate within the county.
- The National Forest Service manages the Monongahela National Forest
- The Heart of the Highlands committee manages the development of the Heart of the Highlands Trail System.
- Tucker County Cultural District Authority promotes fine arts within the county.
- The WV Highlands Artisans Group promotes the development of arts in Tucker County.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Federal Lands contained within the Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge.

- The West Virginia State Park system manages the Canaan Valley and Blackwater Falls State Parks.
- The West Virginia Division of Tourism promotes ski resorts and other tourist activities throughout the state.
- The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources operates the West Virginia State Parks.
- Mon Forest Town Partnership promotes tourism in gateway towns.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use existing revenue streams.
- Explore impact/development fees to augment existing revenue streams.
- Support efforts of external entities to find appropriate financial resources (i.e., recreation facilities construction grants).
- Create traditional and innovative measures for increased money flow for facilities improvements, expansions, and program development (e.g., fundraisers, auctions, pavilion rentals, and special event fees).
- Pursue bestowments for park and facility property and additional assets.
- Work in conjunction with local, county, state, and national entities to develop revenue flow for the increased development (e.g., grants, gifts, and low interest loans).

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## OVERVIEW

This section of the Comprehensive Plan provides guidance on bolstering the economic vitality of the county. A robust and diversified economic foundation is essential for Tucker County to effectively implement numerous strategies outlined in the Plan, as well as to generate and retain employment opportunities while enriching overall quality of life.

The Tucker County Development Authority is responsible for leading economic development in the county. It operates in accordance with state code (§7-12) and has a full-time Executive Director governed by a volunteer board consisting of 12 to 21 members appointed by the Tucker County Commission. This board represents the county's five municipalities and diverse citizenry. Additionally, one member of the County Commission serves on the board.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

Tucker County is revered for its distinctive charm and outstanding quality of life, drawing both residents and visitors with its breathtaking natural scenery, vibrant communities, and rich cultural heritage. However, despite these appealing features, the county is facing economic headwinds that demand deliberate attention and proactive strategies to overcome.

Based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis titled “CAINC30 Economic Profile” (accessed on Tuesday, February 6, 2024), the total employment in the county was 3,692 in 2017. However, updated figures for 2022 reveal a rise in total employment to 4,025. This suggests that the county’s employment base is expanding and a departure from the past trend of people leaving the county for work opportunities.

However, the county is experiencing a contradiction: while job opportunities are increasing, the workforce is shrinking, partly due to an aging population and overall population decline. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s population estimates and projections show that Tucker County has been steadily declining in population over the past few decades. For example, the population was 7,141 in 2010 but decreased to an estimated 6,227 in 2020, indicating a loss of about 914 individuals over the previous decade.

Moreover, the county’s remote geographical location, coupled with a scarcity of affordable housing options, poses considerable hurdles for the local business

community in terms of attracting and retaining a workforce, particularly in lower-wage industries.

In terms of public sector employment, Tucker County holds a considerable number of governmental positions, totaling 720 across various levels. This includes a significant presence at both the state, with 200 positions, and local levels, comprising 470 positions.

In the private sector realm, as Tucker County establishes itself as an increasingly popular tourism destination, recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) highlights a significant location quotient (LQ) of 1.62 for its leisure and hospitality industry sector. A location quotient above 1 emphasizes a higher-than-average concentration of industry businesses compared to the national average.

Accordingly, a significant portion of the county's private sector workforce is employed in service-providing enterprises, spanning various sectors such as accommodations, food services, outdoor recreation, and other consumer-oriented services tailored to both tourists and residents.

Despite its tourism-centric reputation, Tucker County also boasts a noteworthy presence of goods-producing (1.67 LQ) and manufacturing industries (1.24 LQ). These sectors offer some of the highest average weekly wages among private industries in the county. The county's strategic location near abundant natural resources such as timber and coal, along with its skilled and dedicated workforce, are key factors contributing to the prosperity of its manufacturing enterprises.

Moreover, recent BLS data highlights significant job growth in additional private industry sectors within Tucker County from June 2022 to June 2023. Notable increases during this period were observed in professional and business services, other services, as well as education and health care industries, indicating a multifaceted expansion of the county's economic landscape.

**Table 19: Top 10 Employers in Tucker County**

Rank	Employer
1	Regency West Virginia Ventures, LLC (Canaan Valley Resort)
2	Mettiki Coal (WV), LLC
3	Tucker County Board of Education*
4	Timberline Mountain Operations, LLC
5	Cortland Acres Nursing Home
6	Kingsford Manufacturing Company
7	Tucker County Senior Citizens, Inc.
8	West Virginia Division of Natural Resources*
9	West Virginia Division of Juvenile Services*
10	Tucker County Commission*

Source: Workforce WV. Data set March 2021

Note: Governmental entities are marked by an asterisk (\*).

Canaan Valley is a State Park but its facilities are operated by a private concessionaire.

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goals Statement

Sustain and enhance the economic vitality of the county, while maintaining the rural character.

## Objectives

- Identify, attract, and locate industry and business enterprises that create jobs and advance the overall well-being of Tucker County.
- Retain or expand existing business and industry in Tucker County.
- Advance entrepreneurship throughout Tucker County to lead to business and job growth. Work to identify and support potential entrepreneurs and serve as a clearinghouse for information and support services, and to identify networking and training for local entrepreneurs.
- Improve the economic well-being of Tucker County through effective collaborative work that leverages resources, builds capacity and achieves common objectives.
- Maintain a close working relationship with state and federal partners in economic development.
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with other organizations in the county that can influence, and advance effective collaboration with other Tucker County organizations that directly link or can influence economic development within their mission.
- Communicate positive points regarding the value of Tucker County as a place to do business. Included in this objective will be the design of a web portal that will provide a positive image of the county.

## Strategies

- Actively participate in collaborative marketing efforts with the Tucker County Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the West Virginia Development Office.
- Actively promote ongoing and established festivals and encourage additional community festivals.



- Target employers who are interested in locating/expanding to a rural environment within easy commuting distance to a major metropolitan area and are interested in diversifying the employment opportunities needed for long-term economic vitality and stability. Identify businesses that are not detrimental to the natural resources of Tucker County.
- Develop a comprehensive infrastructure initiative for internet, cable, phone, cell phone, and wireless internet. The infrastructure will serve to support business development within the county.
- Encourage creation of a business base to support other business, such as food service, recreation facilities, outlet shops, rental properties, and other amenities.
- Support efforts to protect and promote existing tourism-related activities.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission authorizes funding and provides support for the various activities that operate within the county.
- The Tucker County Development Authority provides guidance and leadership for economic development within the county.
- The West Virginia Development of Commerce assists with and encourages economic development within the state.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the County Commission to attract business to Tucker County.
- Develop funding mechanisms (e.g., tax increment financing) to encourage desirable economic development.
- Utilize grants and low-interest loans.
- Support efforts to create a revolving loan fund to enhance development efforts and opportunities.
- Seek other appropriate funding sources for further economic opportunities from state, regional, and national sources.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## OVERVIEW

This element of the Comprehensive Plan provides guidance, consistent with the land use component, to set goals, plans and programs to promote a sense of community, character and identity.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

Tucker County is a special place that offers a high quality of life. Yet, the county also has its share of economic challenges that must be addressed if it is to increase its tax base, create job opportunities for its residents, provide services to all segments of the population, and support its schools, parks, infrastructure and cultural amenities.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

### Goals Statement

Enhance the community designs within the county. Increase the vitality of the communities while maintaining the rural character of the county.

### Objectives

- Enhance the quality of life in Tucker County through economic mobility.
- Encourage appropriate re-use of vacant and underutilized properties.
- Support programs and efforts to promote economic development in the county and to retain, replace, and increase jobs for county residents.
- Encourage additional, appropriate commercial and industrial development areas along the Corridor H areas of influence located in Tucker County.
- Facilitate pedestrian access to community businesses where appropriate.
- Foster county and business community cooperation in promoting economic development, community attractiveness, and activities and events.

## **Strategies**

- Actively participate in collaborative marketing efforts with the Tucker County Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the West Virginia Development Office.
- Target employers who are interested in locating/expanding to a rural environment within easy commuting distance to a major metropolitan area and are interested in diversifying the employment opportunities needed for long-term economic vitality and stability. Identify businesses that are not detrimental to the natural resources of Tucker County.

## **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission authorizes funding to provide support for the various activities that operate within the county.
- Tucker County Development Authority oversees development in Tucker County.
- West Virginia Development Office supports community design and development throughout West Virginia.
- Local chambers of commerce and business organizations help foster the vitality of the communities and participate in local community designs.

## **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the County Commission.
- Develop funding mechanisms (e.g., tax increment financing) to encourage desirable economic development.
- Utilize grants and low-interest loans
- Support efforts to create a revolving loan fund to enhance development efforts and opportunities.
- Seek other appropriate funding sources for further economic opportunities from state, regional, and national sources.

# PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT, AND REDEVELOPMENT

## OVERVIEW

This element of the Comprehensive Plan shall be consistent with the land use component of the plan. It shall identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

Tucker County is a special place that offers a high quality of life. Yet, the county also has its share of economic challenges that must be addressed if it is to increase its tax base, create job opportunities for its residents, provide services to all segments of the population, and support its schools, parks, infrastructure and cultural amenities.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

### Goals Statement

Seek the highest and best use for developable land within the county. Encourage such development while maintaining the basic rural character within the county.

### Objectives

- Enhance the quality of life in Tucker County through economic mobility.
- Encourage appropriate re-use of vacant and underutilized properties.
- Encourage development in designated areas.
- Encourage additional, appropriate commercial and industrial development areas along the newly developing WV 48 (Corridor H), along WV 32, and other areas where infrastructure supports development within Tucker County.

### **Strategies**

- Actively participate in collaborative marketing efforts with the Tucker County Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the West Virginia Development Office.
- Target employers who are interested in locating/expanding to a rural environment within easy commuting distance to a major metropolitan area and are interested in diversifying the employment opportunities needed for long-term economic vitality and stability. Promote their location into the preferred locations.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission authorizes funding to provide support for the various activities that operate within the county.
- Tucker County Development Authority oversees development in Tucker County.
- West Virginia Development Office supports community design and development throughout West Virginia.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Use funding streams appropriated by the Tucker County Commission.
- Develop funding mechanisms (e.g., tax increment financing) to encourage desirable economic development.
- Utilize grants and low-interest loans.
- Support efforts to create a revolving loan fund to enhance development efforts and opportunities.
- Seek other appropriate funding sources for further economic opportunities from state, regional, and national sources.

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION

## OVERVIEW

The Tucker County Historic Landmark Commission oversees Historic Preservation and Resource Conservation within the county. The commission plays a role in the review process for potential historic sites that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It operates as part of the Certified Local Government program which gives national recognition to local preservation commissions and empowers communities in their preservation efforts.

As of 2024, Tucker County has 11 properties listed on the National Register.

- Fairfax Stone, junction of Grant, Preston, and Tucker Counties (1972)
- Cottrill Opera House, Thomas (1979)
- Tucker County Courthouse and Sheriff's Residence/Jail, Parsons (1984)
- Western Maryland Depot, Parsons (1996)
- Thomas Commercial Historic District, Thomas (1998)
- St. George Academy, St. George (2001)
- Herman August Meyer House, Davis (2010)
- Tucker County Bank Building, Parsons (2010)
- Davis Coal and Coke Company Administrative Building, Thomas (2011)
- National Bank of Davis, Davis (2020)
- Buxton and Landstreet Company Store, Thomas (2022)

Additionally, the Thomas Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. The district includes 61 resources, 48 which are considered contributing buildings. In addition to these resources, Cottrill Opera House is centrally located in the district and was listed individually in 1979. The district is made up of two parallel streets -- Front Street (or East Avenue) and Spruce Street. A public access alleyway provides views of the backs of the properties and bisects the district. Sidewalk improvements and ample parking make the district walkable and easy to access by car. These resources are set in an exceptionally scenic area with abundant outdoor activities and other tourism activities.

The Tucker County Historic Landmark Commission proposes to expand on these assets by utilizing Thomas' historic properties to educate the public about their historical and cultural significance and to promote and encourage heritage tourism activities available in the area through walking tours, interpretive signage and website development.

In addition to the above-mentioned listings, there are many other properties that have been determined eligible for the National Register or are considered significant on a local level.

## **P**LANNING CONTEXT

The Tucker County Historic Landmark Commission will continue to review eligible properties for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. This review is important because the landmarks contribute to the character of the county and provide a sense of history.

## **G**OALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

### **Goals Statement**

Sustain and enhance historic landmarks while maintaining the rural character.

### **Objectives**

- Enhance the quality of life in Tucker County.
- Encourage appreciation of county, state and national history by acknowledgement of historic landmarks.

### **Strategies**

- Actively participate in historic appreciation efforts with the Tucker County.

### **Partners and Potential Partners**

- The Tucker County Commission authorizes funding to provide support for the various activities that operate within the county.
- The Tucker County Historic Landmark Commission oversees Historic Preservation and Resource Conservation within the county.

- The State Historic Preservation Office seeks to identify, recognize, preserve and protect West Virginia's prehistoric and historic structures, objects and sites.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

- Develop funding mechanisms (e.g., tax increment financing) to encourage historic appreciation.
- Seek other appropriate funding sources for further economic opportunities from state, regional, and national sources.
- Use funding streams appropriated by the Tucker County Commission.



# APPENDICES

1. CANAAN VALLEY ZONING ORDINANCE
2. WEST VIRGINIA HOUSING NEEDS STUDY - TUCKER COUNTY 2019
3. TOWN OF DAVIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2022
4. CITY OF THOMAS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2024