

# COVINGTON

## *COMPREHENSIVE PLAN*

MAY 2019





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## CITY COUNCIL

Thomas H. Sibold, Jr., Mayor  
David S. Crosier, Vice-Mayor  
Claiborne 'C.J.' Entsminger, Council Member  
Raymond C. Hunter, Council Member  
S. Allan Tucker, Council Member

## CITY STAFF

### ADMINISTRATION

Clay Goodman, Interim City Manager  
Mark C. Popovich, City Attorney  
Edith S. Wood, City Clerk

### DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Jennifer Cales, Permit Technician

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Richard Douglas  
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Brandon Parker, Vice Chairman  
Joshua Haynes  
Wayne Lamb  
Jerry Morgan  
Carolyn O'Conner  
Robert Patrick Scruggs

## PREPARED BY

Benchmark Planning

## DATE ADOPTED

May 14, 2019



## Resolution to Amend and Readopt the Covington Comprehensive Plan as Recommended by the Planning Commission

WHEREAS, Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended), states that the local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended), further states that every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character or extent of each feature shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use; and

WHEREAS, the plan may include but not be limited to, designation of residential, business, industrial, agricultural, mineral resources, conservation, recreation, public service, floodplain and drainage, highways, railways, waterways, and other like facilities; and

WHEREAS, the plan may include but not be limited to, designation of community facilities such as parks, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, community centers, historical areas, an official map, zoning and subdivision ordinances and maps; and

WHEREAS, the plan may include but not be limited to the determination of affordable housing needs, both current and future, and proposed urban development areas for concentrated growth; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission set out to update the City of Covington Comprehensive Plan in April, 2017 by carefully studying development trends, the use of land, preservation of agricultural and forestall lands, population data, transportation infrastructure, and public utilities expansion plans; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission and City Council sought out public input during a public hearing held on April 15, 2019; and

WHEREAS, at its regular meeting of April 15, 2019 the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the proposed plan update is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Council, good planning practices and would general promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community.

NOW, THEREFOR, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Covington, Virginia, on the May 14, 2019 does hereby approve and adopt the revised Covington Comprehensive Plan as recommended by the Covington Planning Commission; and

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Director of Development Services or his/her designee are tasked and authorized to maintain and revise as necessary this document over the next five (5) year period or until such time be ordered to come before this board.

RESOLVED THIS 14 DAY OF MAY, 2019



THOMAS H. SIBOLD, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:



EDITH S. WOOD, CITY CLERK

City of Covington City Council  
Adopted this 14 day of May 2019

**RESOLUTION  
COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**DATE:** MAY 14, 2019

**VOTE BY COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL:**

  5   **FOR;**      0   **AGAINST**

MAYOR THOMAS H. SIBOLD, JR.

FOR

VICE MAYOR DAVID S. CROSIER

FOR

COUNCILMAN C.J. ENTSMINGER

FOR

COUNCILMAN RAYMOND C. HUNTER

FOR

COUNCILMAN S. ALLAN TUCKER

FOR



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Welcome to  
**Covington**

Settled  
1746

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# SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION & VISION

*VISION: The City of Covington and Allegheny County are a model for cooperative planning and sustainable regional growth – working together to protect our environmental and cultural resources while promoting economic growth that supports the stability of the Allegheny Highlands. Together, we seek to achieve greater prosperity through collaborative relationships that connect the Allegheny Highlands economically, socially, and physically.*

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan sets forth the “blueprint” for the future of the City of Covington. It is the vision of what the community wants to become and the strategies to follow in order to realize that vision. The plan is comprised of goals and objectives that provide a framework for decision-making and the allocation of resources as they relate to the long-term development of the City. In addition to the Introduction, Goals & Objectives, and Community Profile, this Plan is comprised of nine (9) elements and an implementation scheme to form an integrated, unified plan. These elements include the:

- **Land Use & Community Character** - Planning for the most appropriate future use of land assuring a consistent character throughout the region.
- **Transportation** - Planning for the most appropriate general location, character, and extent of highways, rail, and other means of moving people and commodities.
- **Housing** - Planning for ways to ensure a decent residential environment for all residents.
- **Infrastructure** - Planning for the most appropriate future location and extent of public infrastructure.
- **Natural Environment** - Planning for the conservation of natural resources and sensitive areas.
- **Community Services** - Planning for the most appropriate future location, character, and extent of public lands, buildings, and facilities.
- **Historic & Cultural Resources** - Planning for the conservation of the City's historic and cultural resources.
- **Parks & Recreation** - Planning for the location, function, character, and extent of public park and recreation land, buildings, and facilities.
- **Economic Development** - Planning for the most appropriate way to sustain and grow the City's economic base.
- **Implementation** - Implementing strategies to achieve this plan's goals and the vision of the Allegheny Highlands.

The Comprehensive Plan of the City of Covington is characteristically broad and long-range in nature, providing policy recommendations and guidance for the next 10-20 years. This long-range planning document extends beyond the current issues and anticipates opportunities and constraints that will shape future growth and development patterns. While this plan covers the City of Covington in its entirety, it also extends to the broad Alleghany Highlands region, emphasized by the City's partnership with Alleghany County throughout the planning process. This plan includes goals, objectives, and implementation strategies that serve as a guide for the community to use as it moves forward toward realizing its vision.

## LEGAL BASIS FOR PLANNING IN VIRGINIA

The legal basis for planning in the City of Covington, and all jurisdictions in the Commonwealth of Virginia that exercise planning and zoning authority, is established by the Code of Virginia, Title 15.2, Chapter 22 Planning, Subdivision of Land and Zoning. This section details the elements that are required, as well as the optional elements for inclusion in a Comprehensive Plan, including the provision that transportation plans be reviewed by the Virginia Department of Transportation to ensure consistency with statewide plans and the inclusion of affordable housing designation and implementation measures.

## USE OF MAPS IN THIS PLAN

All maps provided as part of this Plan are general illustrations of City policies more specifically described in the text. While Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology was used to render these maps, the precise borders shown may not indicate the absolute true location for various boundaries.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation is a vital component of the local planning process. The City of Covington has partnered with Alleghany County to leverage broad community input through a joint planning process, having established a unified steering committee to help guide the planning process for both the City and County. Throughout this process, the project team has worked with the steering committee, interviewed department heads and key experts in various fields, administered a community survey, and used a project website and the City and County's social media sites to share and receive information.

Citizen participation is an important component of the local planning process. During this planning process, Alleghany County worked collaboratively with the City of Covington, establishing a joint steering committee to oversee the development of the comprehensive plan updates for each jurisdiction. The steering

committee provided a broad base of input into the process to help ensure overall concerns throughout the community were communicated.

In addition to the steering committee's input, the plan also included the input of a variety of stakeholders and focus groups with expertise in various fields and elements of the plan. Approximately 50 people were interviewed during the process in the areas of transportation, land use, economic development, public safety, emergency services, public services, public utilities, education, parks and recreation, natural and environmental resources, downtown development, real estate, community development and various community organizations.

A project website was also established to help inform the community about the process and provide an opportunity to provide input. The project website was linked with a separate Facebook page for the project to generate additional input. The website page generated over 1,798 unique views. As part of the online and social media outreach, a survey was developed that generated over 400 responses, helping to inform the development of the vision and the plan.

Finally the community was provided an opportunity to learn more about the plan at a public meeting held in May 2018 and public presentations and meetings with

the City Planning Commission and City Council.

## CITY OF COVINGTON HISTORY

The original plat for the Town of Covington was drawn by Mr. William Anderson in 1818. The town was agreed upon to commemorate General Leonard Covington, a hero from the War of 1812. Lots went for sale in the town a month after the original plat was drawn.

Covington grew slowly at first, as it was largely an agricultural community. However, after the industrial development of the 1890s, the population increased and the town started to provide services. Many industries thrived in the area, from the iron industry to flour mills to the paper mill, which began operations in 1900.

As with Alleghany County, the iron industry in the Great Lakes caused competition for the Highlands, ultimately causing the reduction in industrial operations. That coupled with the Great Depression severely affected the region. However, many industries moved into the area at the time, which kept the City thriving well into the latter part of the 1900s.

The Town of Covington incorporated as a city in 1952, after much growth from the many industries in the area. The City has a Council-Manager form of government and offers a wide array of municipal services to its residents.





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## SECTION 2. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Alleghany County and the City of Covington have come together to plan cooperatively for the future of the Alleghany Highlands. To further this effort, both entities participated in a joint planning process. Below you will find the mutually agreed upon goals and objectives. Implementation strategies may differ between the two plans.

This Comprehensive Plan sets forth guidance for Alleghany County and the City of Covington to achieve their vision. The joint steering committee crafted goals and objectives to direct this plan. Goals, for the purposes of this plan, are statements about what the County and City aim to achieve. These statements give decision-makers and citizens a clear idea about the intended direction of the City and County. Objectives provide a defined course of direction that will set a framework for specific actions, or implementation strategies. The objectives herein provide guidance for elected and appointed officials, community leaders, staff, and administration as each make decisions about development, programs, and capital investments. It is important to note that due to the joint nature of this project, goals and objectives are the same for both the City and County. Implementation strategies will differ by jurisdiction.

***Our goals  
can only be  
reached through  
a vehicle  
of a plan, in  
which we must  
fervently believe,  
and upon  
which we must  
vigorously act.  
There is no other  
route to success.***

***-Pablo Picasso***



## **GOAL 1** *The Alleghany Highlands will become known as the recreation & cultural hub of Western Virginia.*

### **OBJECTIVE A. Develop arts and cultural centers within the Alleghany Highlands into tourism destinations.**

The existing fabric of arts and cultural centers within the Alleghany Highlands should be highlighted, drawing attention to these places as destinations for trips, both local and tourist.

### **OBJECTIVE B. Promote the preservation of historic structures within the Alleghany Highlands.**

The Alleghany Highlands is rich in history, highlighting the importance for preserving existing structures. It is important to note that not every structure is historic, and not every historic structure has been kept in a condition suitable for restoration.

### **OBJECTIVE C. Improve the health and vitality of the regional ecosystem.**

In order to reduce potential negative effects on environmental areas, planning and zoning measures need to ensure sensitive or designated lands retain their ecological value.

### **OBJECTIVE D. Preserve the rustic mountain landscape and views that create the beautiful natural setting of the Alleghany Highlands.**

The mountain views add character and aid in the Eco-tourism and recreation economy for the Alleghany Highlands. While the US Forest Service owns a large portion of the mountain ridge lines, it is important to place protective measures to ensure these areas remain undisturbed in the future.

### **OBJECTIVE E. Improve connectivity and usage of the regional park system.**

The Jackson River Scenic Trail, associated parks, and open spaces are gems of the Alleghany Highlands. Continued connectivity will enhance these areas and improve usage of the facilities.

### **OBJECTIVE F. Develop outdoor recreation- and Eco-tourism-related business opportunities.**

With the natural amenities in the Alleghany Highlands, this region is prime for extending the Eco-tourism-related economic sector. Focused business plans will help guide economic growth.

### **OBJECTIVE G. Attract and Promote unique accommodations throughout the Alleghany Highlands.**

Although the Alleghany Highlands has many recreation and tourism destinations that attract people from outside of the region, there are limited lodging accommodations. The City, County and local Economic Development Corporation should seek to cultivate opportunities for new lodging, including the use of programs such as the Commonwealth of Virginia Tourism Development Financing Program.



***Our communities will develop the regional economy by supporting existing industry, embracing economic diversification, and fostering emerging business and industry sectors.***

**OBJECTIVE A. Ensure that an adequate supply of land is available to meet future economic development need.**

A study evaluating sites for industry and new business was recently completed; findings should be implemented by use of Joint Revenue Sharing Agreement between Alleghany County and City of Covington.

**OBJECTIVE B. Increase business and industry development within the Alleghany Highlands.**

The Highlands has strong roots in industry, be it iron, paper, or other materials. In order to keep a sustainable economy, the region will need to diversify its economy by increasing both business and industry.

**OBJECTIVE C. Support the growth and expansion of the region's base economic sectors.**

The region has an industrial and manufacturing based economy that relies upon a diverse array of support businesses. It is important to support these economic drivers throughout the Alleghany Highlands with a particular focus on expanding the presence of the tertiary/supply chain sectors that support major industries in the area.

**OBJECTIVE D. Develop emerging sectors of our economy.**

The foundation of the regional economy is industry, which allows the region to grow new and emerging sectors of the economy, such as unmanned aerial aircraft (drone) technology, Eco-tourism, as well as new economies as the opportunities arise.

**OBJECTIVE E. Cultivate asset-based economic development.**

One of the strongest ways to grow an economy is to leverage the area's assets. For the Alleghany Highlands, these assets are the natural environmental features of the region including ridge lines, dense forests, the Jackson and Cowpasture rivers, and a host of beautifully-maintained recreation facilities.



### **GOAL 3**

***Alleghany County and the City of Covington will improve and expand collaboration to provide effective and efficient services to citizens.***

**OBJECTIVE A. Continue collaboration and coordination between Alleghany County and the City of Covington on regional issues.**

Building on the existing long-range planning collaboration, the County and City should continue to work through regional issues, avoiding duplication and garnering cost sharing opportunities.

**OBJECTIVE B. Coordinate infrastructure improvements throughout the Alleghany Highlands.**

The County should look into areas with decreased water, sewer, natural gas, and/or broadband services to determine if it is cost effective to extend or upgrade infrastructure. In areas that are targeted for development, utility improvements would be a catalyst for private investment.

**OBJECTIVE C. Collaborate with the local education systems to improve career and technical-oriented education offerings in the region.**

Both Alleghany County and the City of Covington can leverage the education available at the K-12 schools, along with the Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, the Governor's School, and the Jackson River Technical Center, to modify or create programs relevant to the local employers and emerging sectors, while highlighting the education opportunities that already exist in the region.

**OBJECTIVE D. Link the Medical/Hospital, Emergency Medical Service and Fire Protection efforts throughout the Alleghany Highlands to boost efficiency and coverage.**

While collaboration currently exists amongst services, continued communication between the services in different jurisdictions and between the services themselves can improve efficiency throughout the Alleghany Highlands.





## ***Our communities will ensure the stability and vitality of our neighborhoods and commercial centers.***

### **OBJECTIVE A. Improve the quality of the housing stock in the Alleghany Highlands.**

Pockets of housing show disrepair and lack of maintenance, due to numerous factors. The City and County need to implement strategies aimed at helping to improve the baseline quality for housing and catalyze rehabilitation efforts.

### **OBJECTIVE B. Expand the variety of the housing stock in the Alleghany Highlands.**

While available housing does exist, there is a lack of variety in housing, particularly for young professionals and aging residents. Providing a variety of housing types will allow for an increase in residents that prefer those housing types, reducing out-migration and offering an opportunity for in-migration.

### **OBJECTIVE C. Upgrade the quality of commercial spaces in the City of Covington.**

The City has an established commercial fabric that has not been maintained consistently over the years. The City should work with property owners to refresh and update its commercial properties through building improvements, infrastructure upgrades, and landscaping projects.

### **OBJECTIVE D. Cultivate infill and/or redevelopment within the City of Covington.**

There are numerous places throughout the City with vacant or dilapidated buildings that would benefit from redevelopment or demolition and infill development. The City will need to create a market and procedures to encourage infill and redevelopment efforts.

### **OBJECTIVE E. Establish an urban trail network to connect residential and commercial areas with parks, schools, and the regional trail network.**

Develop a trail network for the City of Covington that can function as a recreation trail and transportation pathway. This trail can connect populated neighborhoods with City landmarks and schools, and connect to the County's trail system.

### **OBJECTIVE F. Launch a gateway development initiative to enhance key entrances into Alleghany County.**

While this region has a lot to offer, unless a visitor is headed to a specific location, there is little to entice a traveler off of Interstate 64. The region lacks a strong visual presence at many of the existing gateways. Key entrances need to be established that visually highlight their unique character and amenities.

**OBJECTIVE G. Improve land use compatibility in areas where incompatible development patterns and uses have been established that threaten the integrity of neighborhoods or quality of commercial areas.**

Throughout the City, there are adjacent incompatible uses in various locations. Care should be taken to implement regulations that will prevent this from happening in the future, while addressing the incompatibilities in the present.

**OBJECTIVE H. Improve the appearance in the City of Covington's downtown.**

Proactive regulation, maintenance projects, and beautification projects can help alleviate the blight in numerous residential and commercial areas within the City of Covington's downtown.

**OBJECTIVE I. Revitalize downtown Covington.**

Aside from appearance improvements for downtown Covington, the City should seek to market the core area for economic development, look for ways to increase foot traffic, add public art spaces, and so forth to encourage a vibrant and walkable downtown.

**OBJECTIVE J. Improve the Alleghany Highlands' road network.**

Road improvements are a never ending process; however, the City and County can communicate what is happening, what needs to happen, and how to move forward with prioritizing improvements that help catalyze economic development and residential revitalization.

**OBJECTIVE K. Decrease the amount of commercial vehicle traffic on residential streets.**

A consistent resident concern is the amount of commercial vehicle and truck traffic that travels along residential streets. To help alleviate stress on residential neighborhoods, commercial traffic can be routed off of traditionally residential streets to ensure safety and a continued flow of traffic.

**OBJECTIVE L. Maintain and upgrade bridge infrastructure.**

Many of the bridges in the Alleghany Highlands need maintenance repairs, expansion for sidewalks and/or bike lanes, and structural upgrades. While no bridge rates unsafe, care should be taken to upgrade and repair bridges on a prioritized schedule.

**GOAL 5**

***Our region will reverse the population decline of the past several decades.***

**OBJECTIVE A. Make the Alleghany Highlands a more attractive and appealing location for current and future residents.**

Improving the region's appearance will help reduce the amount of population loss and draw new residents to the area.

**OBJECTIVE B. Create a positive sense of place for the Alleghany Highlands to attract population growth.**

Creating places and destinations throughout the Alleghany Highlands will help improve the aesthetics creating a positive sense of place to attract new residents.

**OBJECTIVE C. Achieve a zero-net loss of population between 2020 and 2025.**

This Plan should be implemented to slow and stop the population decline in the short-term.

**OBJECTIVE D. Achieve a minimum five percent (5%) gain in population over year five-year (5) period between 2025 and 2040.**

Implementing the strategies listed in implementation section of this plan will help grow the region's population in the long-term.







# COMMUNITY PROFILE



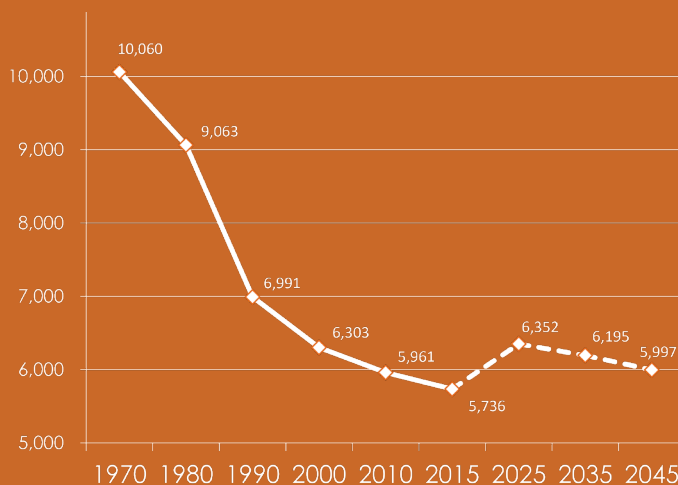
5,518  
POPULATION

The UVA Cooper Center **projection** for the City through the year 2045:

1%  
POSITIVE  
GROWTH



5,997  
PROJECTED  
POPULATION



For every person that lived in the City in 1970, there were 1.25 residents in the County. By 2016, the County had 2.85 residents for each City resident.



2.28  
PEOPLE PER  
HOUSEHOLD

\$34,703  
MEDIAN  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME



\$47,054  
MEAN  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME

1 IN 4 PERSONS LIVE  
BELOW POVERTY LEVEL



Covington has a larger share of residents living below the poverty level than Alleghany County.

City median age

44

County median age

47

1.5x GREATER THAN STATE OF VIRGINIA  
OLD AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO

Covington's old age dependency ratio is about 1.5 times that of Virginia's old age dependency ratio (33 compared to 21 respectively).



9%  
of the  
population have  
a Bachelor's  
degree or  
higher

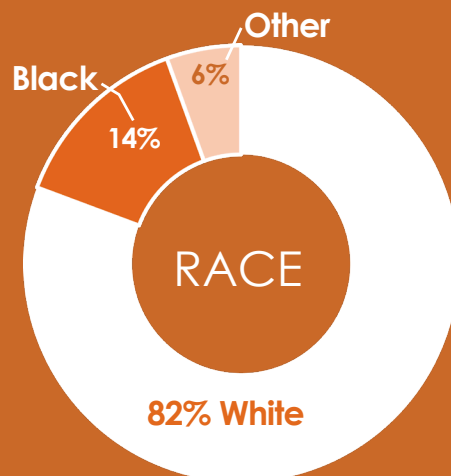


74%  
of the  
population have  
a High School  
degree, some  
college or an  
Associates degree



17%  
of the  
population  
have no High  
School diploma

The City population with a High School diploma or some college is 6% more than the County. However, the City has 1% more individuals with no High School diploma than the County.



## SECTION 3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

The value of understanding a community's demographic characteristics cannot be overstated. Population and housing are directly related - with demand for housing rising and falling in correlation to population trends. Having a population with young professionals requires a different mix of housing types than one predominantly comprised of families or retirees. In a similar fashion, the area's demographics determine the number of schools, type of transportation services, and community service needs. The educational attainment of the population affects the number and types of jobs created in the community. How the population grows and changes also impacts the environment. Therefore, knowing the existing population characteristics will help guide the strategies that will lead to achieving the City's goals.

### POPULATION

Similar to Alleghany County, the City of Covington's population has experienced a downward trend since 1970. In 1970, the City of Covington had about 1 person for every 1.25 residents living in the County, but by 2016 the County had 2.85 residents for each resident living in the City, indicating a faster decline than the County, although this is tempered by the relinquishment of the City of Clifton Forge's charter, which technically increased the County's population. Even though the projections provided by the University of Virginia's Cooper Center indicate a modest growth of one percent (1%) between 2015

and 2045, the City is projected to experience negative growth.

### AGE

The median age of residents in Covington is 44 years, which is younger than the County's median age of 47, but still older than the State's median age of 38. Covington has an old age dependency ratio of 33, which is higher than the State's ratio of 21. This indicates that Covington places more financial stress on their working population (18-64 years) as compared to the State, as the City has a smaller workforce and a larger post-workforce (65+ years) population. The City will need to review housing types and its economic standing to ensure that adequate housing and services are available for both of these age groups.

### HOUSEHOLDS

There are 3,035 housing units in Covington, of which 82 percent are occupied. There are 2.28 persons per household with a mean (or average) household income of \$47,054. The median household income is \$34,703, indicating that there are more households with income lower than the mean and fewer above, similar to the County. This low income level is further evident in the poverty rate found in the City, with 1 in 4 people living below the poverty line. This poverty rate is higher than the County's and the State's rates (1 in 6 and 1 in 9, respectively).

## EDUCATION

Seventy-four percent of Covington residents have high school diplomas or some college. This indicates a labor-based workforce, as expected of a historically industrial city. As of the 2010 Census, 17 percent of Covington residents of working age had not received a High School diploma. However, since 2010, this has decreased by 2 percentage points, indicating that more residents are obtaining high school diplomas or going on to a higher educational attainment.

will help, but investments in education and workforce training will first need to be made to open up greater opportunities.

## IMPLICATIONS

Over the past 40 years, Covington's population decreased by almost half. This, coupled with the city's aging population, poverty level, and low education attainment highlight the need for the City to stabilize population decline and invest in education and economic development. By focusing on community investments, public and private partnerships, economic development, and school programs, the City can begin to attract more residents, specifically more young families and professionals. By strengthening the population of workforce aged residents, the City will be in a better position to support the costs associated with its aging populations, such as a more robust healthcare system and social services. In order for its residents to age in place, housing needs will change.

Increasing the community's household income and reducing poverty will require a multi-faceted approach. Economic development measures to attract jobs with higher wages





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## SECTION 4. LAND USE

The City of Covington has scenic mountain views, a thriving paper products industry, and the building blocks for a lively downtown. Covington has the opportunity to support its industrial base, continue to grow economically, and maintain its historic development pattern that reinforces its unique character.

The City of Covington has changed a great deal over the last century, booming with business, and then experiencing population loss following industrial decline. Situated in a valley of the Appalachian Mountains, the terrain offers the benefits of scenic views, but with the hindrance of limited land availability. The architectural bones of the City highlight the area's booming decade, the 1940s, and bring charm and character to the downtown area. The city's core neighborhoods were developed primarily around a grid street pattern, with businesses and even small industries often located immediately adjacent to residential areas.

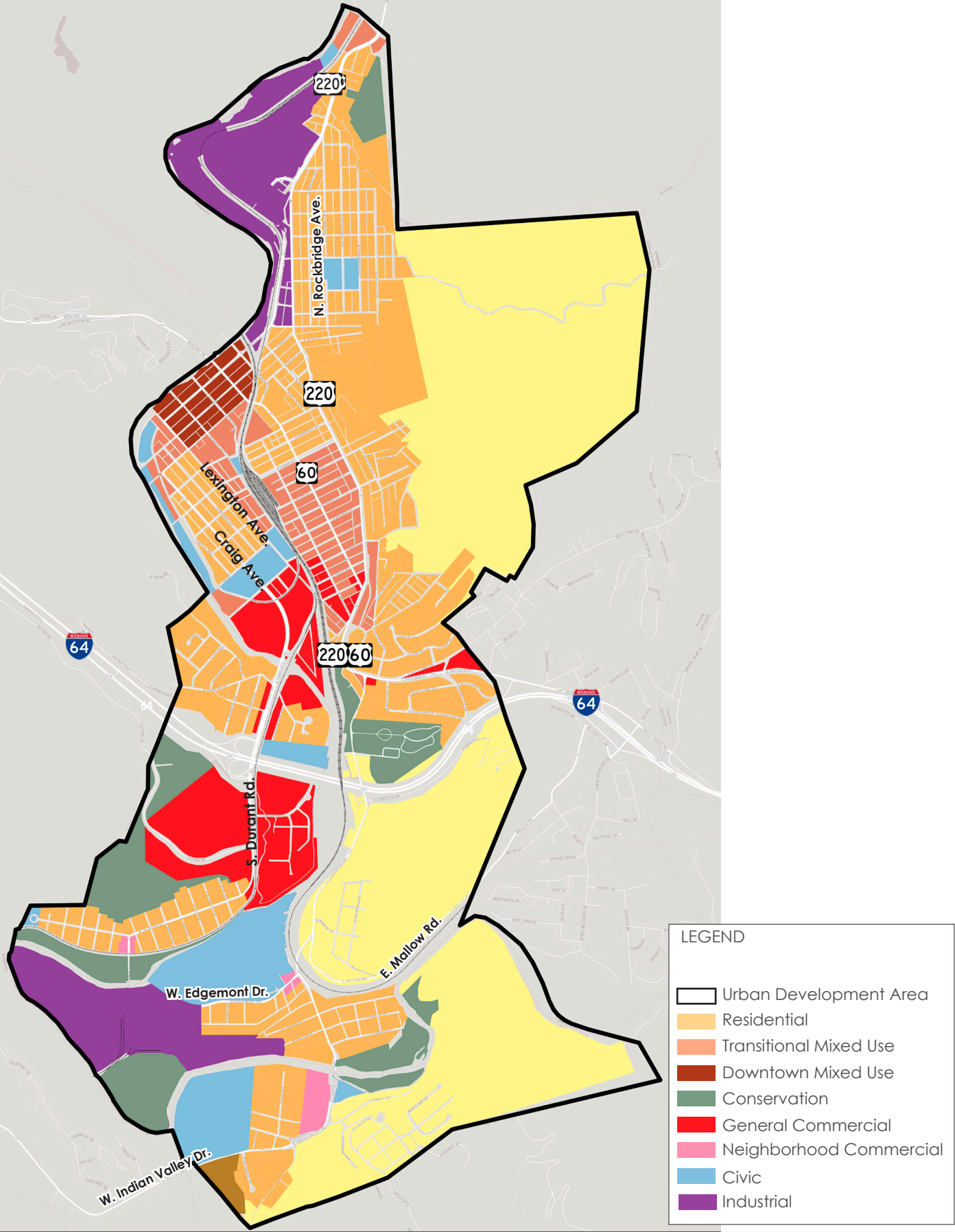
The City has the opportunity to create dynamic places and spaces for its residents, businesses, industry, and visitors by building on its strengths, including its dense, walkable, urban development pattern; the river flowing through the city; the surrounding mountain landscape; and its legacy as a hub of industry. These characteristics puts the city in a strong position to shape a future that will lead the city to a prosperous future.

Currently, the City has roughly 60 percent of its land area developed as residential

neighborhoods. An additional 13 percent of the land is industrial, with WestRock and Ingevity, two economic beacons of the Alleghany Highlands, occupying much of the industrial land in the city. Commercial development accounts for five percent (5%) of the land area, while open space accounts for around three percent (3%).

Reversing decades of population decline and reinvigorating its commercial and industrial base will pose land use challenges for the City. If successful, these challenges will be particularly evident in established neighborhoods, as the housing stock experiences pressure to realign to meet new demands. Managing compatibility at the edges of residential neighborhoods will also be a key feature of new growth. With limited land available for growth, commercial and industrial development and redevelopment will necessarily occur in close proximity to established neighborhoods. The potential for incompatible development patterns can be mitigated through sound land use regulations that are based on a future land use vision that builds on the city's key strengths and historic development pattern.

▼ MAP 1.1 CITY OF COVINGTON FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA






## CITY OF COVINGTON FUTURE LAND USE MAP 2018

This map shows future land use categories as presented by rough shapes that outline general land use areas. This map is purposely not parcel-specific as this allows discretion in the implementation of the plan. In addition the entire city is established as an Urban Development Area (UDA) to encourage new infill development and redevelopment. The city is able to apply for SMART SCALE funded transportation projects, which serve development in the UDA.

### RESIDENTIAL

There are three designations for residential areas; low density for those up to one dwelling unit per acre, medium density at 2-8 dwelling units per acre, and high density, which includes apartments and townhomes.

-  Low Density
-  Medium Density
-  High Density

### DOWNTOWN MIXED USE

Downtown has a history of a mix of land uses that work well within this walkable core. This designation includes shops, offices, and civic uses, mixed in with residential homes on small lots and/or apartments above storefronts. The intent of this designation is to encourage the preservation of an active and lively downtown that caters to residents and tourists.

### TRANSITIONAL MIXED USE

There are numerous areas that contain a mix of residential, commercial, and small industrial uses. This mix of uses creates a unique dynamic that warrants its own use classification. The intent of this designation is to identify those

areas that should be allowed to transition to higher intensity uses over time. Specifically, the City should seek to encourage residential uses to transition to compatible service, retail and low-intensity / low impact industrial uses.

### CONSERVATION

There are large areas of forested land or land set aside for open space purposes throughout the City. These areas have been highlighted for preservation in order to maintain these pockets of open space within this largely built-out City.

### GENERAL COMMERCIAL

General commercial areas offer shopping, office, and service uses that support the overall region. These areas typically house big box stores, strip malls, and other concentrated business development that require good transportation access.

### NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

These areas are intended to provide locations for small retail and service uses in close proximity to the customers and neighborhoods they serve.

### CIVIC

The civic designation captures the many public spaces throughout Covington, including government offices, parks, and various other public facilities.

### INDUSTRIAL

These areas are intended to provide land for Covington's industrial base and supporting uses in locations that are compatible with surrounding development and provide opportunities for growth.





5



# TRANSPORTATION PROFILE

## TRANSPORTATION

### ASSETS

**1.9 MILES**  
OF INTERSTATE



**4 LOCAL**  
**2 REGIONAL**  
AIRPORTS



**16.7 MILES**  
OF RAIL TRACK



Source: Virginia Geographic Information Network (VGIN), Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and other sources (2002)

**112**  
MILES OF  
HIGHLAND  
TRAILS

Source: Alleghany County

**21**  
MOUNTAIN  
EXPRESS STOPS

Source: RADAR Transit System,  
<http://radartransit.org> (2018)



*MOUNTAIN EXPRESS*

**20** STOPS IN  
CLIFTON FORGE  
/ IRON GATE



**TOTAL**  
**TRANSPORTATION**  
PROJECTS **23**

Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

RECONSTRUCTION	<b>2</b>
INTERSECTIONS	<b>6</b>
ROAD WIDENING	<b>7</b>
BRIDGES	<b>2</b>
SAFETY-RELATED	<b>2</b>
TURN LANES	<b>4</b>



**10,000** AADT [2017]

**10** INTERCHANGES

**108** ACCIDENTS [2017]



**14,000** AADT [2017]

**20** ACCIDENTS [2017]

Source: Virginia Department of Transportation, [http://www.virginiadot.org/info/2017\\_traffic\\_data.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/info/2017_traffic_data.asp) and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, [https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/#crash\\_data/index.asp](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/#crash_data/index.asp)

## SECTION 5. TRANSPORTATION

The City of Covington's transportation system plays an important role in achieving the vision for renewed economic vitality, as well as ensuring safety and a high quality of life for residents. Covington's transportation system is composed of a network of roadways, rail lines, public transit, trails, and sidewalks. Each of these elements perform an important role in the system that is vital to the success of the City.

### TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY

The primary transportation routes providing accessibility into the city are US Routes 60 and 220, State Route 18, Interstate I-64, and several State secondary routes. Both I-64 and US 220 have been designated as corridors of statewide significance due to their multi-modal connections and mobility for long distance travel.

Truck traffic through Covington typically occurs on US 60, I-64, and US 220, contributing to heavy traffic and wear on the roads. The CSX freight rail also passes through the City, providing access for industrial goods and materials.

Streets within the city are generally forty to fifty feet in width and are adequately maintained. There are some smaller streets ranging from 25 to 32 feet in width. For safety purposes, most speed limits on these smaller roads are set at 25 mph. Less than half the city streets have full curbs and gutters. The areas that do not have curb and gutter are generally newer streets

where cost constraints limited the installation of curb and gutter. Street improvements, such as resurfacing, have been identified as a priority by the local government. The City of Covington maintains its own street network with funds passed through from VDOT. In the downtown area, off street parking for vehicles is augmented by a number of public and private lots. On-street parking is allowed and common due to limited space for driveways on older residential lots.

Pedestrian movement is also most prevalent in the core of the city in the central business district and immediately surrounding neighborhoods where sidewalks are concentrated. However, the rural, mountainous character of the city as a whole sometimes makes alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and biking, difficult. Even with these challenges, the city is making efforts to expand and maintain trails, pedestrian and bicycle paths with hopes for more regional connections and more complete streets in the future.

Roanoke Area Dial and Ride (RADAR) and the Mountain Express provide transit services to certain locations within the City (See Map 5.2). These services connect the City to surrounding towns and counties and are an important resource for the elderly, disabled, and low-income residents who may not have access to their own vehicles.

The City of Covington has access to two regional commercial airports: Roanoke-

Blacksburg Regional Airport and Greenbrier Valley Airport in Lewisburg, WV; however, there are several smaller commercial and private airports nearby: Ingalls Field airport, Barrows Airport, Hop-Along Airport, and Lynchburg Regional Airport.

## FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF ROADWAYS

The Federal functional classification of roadways began with the passage of the Federal Aid Act of 1921. It established a federal aid primary system and, more importantly, the foundation for a system of national defense roads, later known as the national interstate system. The absence of uniformity among states hindered federal efforts to determine national needs. Subsequently, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 mandated the realignment of federal aid roads on the basis of a standardized functional classification system. This process remains in effect today.

Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Functional classification outlines how travel can be channelized within the network in a logical and efficient manner by defining the part that any particular road or street should play in serving the flow of trips through a highway network.

The bases of the functional usage of a roadway are mobility and accessibility. Travel can be logically related to the roadway's ability to access land and the mobility through an

area. Different roadway classifications offer different levels of mobility and accessibility. For example, local facilities emphasize the land-access function. Arterials emphasize a high level of mobility for through movement, while, collectors offer a compromise between access and mobility.

The roadway functional classifications found in the City of Covington include Interstates, Other Principal Arterials, and Major and Minor Collectors. Other roadways are part of the local roads, which provide connectivity between the primary roadways. The following provides a description of each roadway functional classification type found in the city's transportation network. Map 5.1 displays the functional classifications of the major roads in the city.

### Interstates

Interstates are the highest classification and designed with mobility and long-distance travel in mind. This classification is for highways designated as part of the Eisenhower Interstate System. Roadways classified as interstates are limited access, divided highways with the highest level of mobility. There is also no ambiguity in the functional classification, as only the Secretary of Transportation can designate a roadway as an interstate. Interstate 64 is the only roadway for this classification in the city.

### Other Principal Arterials

Other Principal Arterials in the city include US 220 and US 60. The classification of Other Principal Arterials differs based on whether the facility is located in an urban or rural area.

In rural areas, Other Principal Arterials serve corridor movements of substantial statewide or interstate travel and provides an integrated network without stub connections (dead ends). This network connects all or nearly all Urbanized Areas and a large majority of Urban Clusters with populations of 25,000 and over.

Other Principal Arterials in urban areas serve the major activity centers of a metropolitan area and the highest traffic volume corridors. These facilities carry a high proportion of total urban travel on the minimum amount of mileage and provide continuity for major rural corridors to accommodate trips entering and leaving an urban area. Lastly, Other Principal Arterials carry a significant amount of intra-area travel, and serve demand between the central business district and outlying residential areas of a metropolitan area.

### **Collectors (Major & Minor)**

The collector classification includes the Major Collector and Minor Collector categories. Major Collector routes are longer in length; have lower connecting driveway densities; have higher speed limits; are spaced at greater intervals; have higher annual average traffic volumes; and may have more travel lanes than minor collectors may. In rural areas, Major Collectors provide service to any county seat not on an arterial system, to larger towns not directly served by higher systems. Major Collectors also link these places to nearby larger towns and cities or with arterial routes and serve the most important intra-county travel corridor.

Major Collectors in Urban Areas provide land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas. These collectors distribute trips from the arterials through the aforementioned areas to their ultimate destination, collect traffic from local streets, and channel it to the arterial system.

Major Collectors in the city include North and South Monroe Avenue, East Riverside Drive, East Hickory Street, North and South Lexington Avenue, West Locust Street, Craig Avenue, South Durant Road, East and West Chestnut Street, West Jackson Street, South Rayon Drive, West Edgemont Drive, West Indian Valley Drive, South Carpenter Drive, and Carpenter Drive.

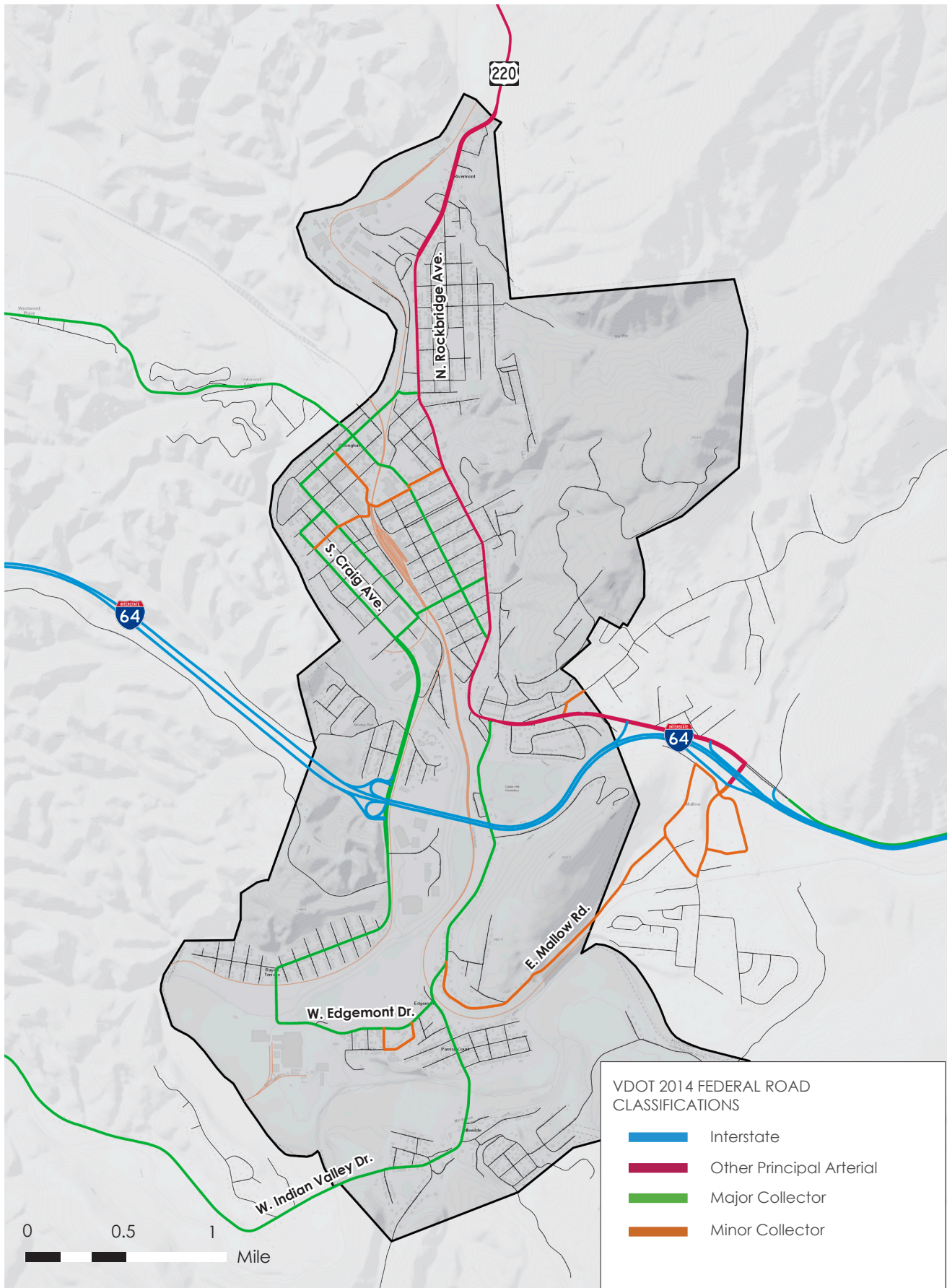
In rural areas, minor collectors are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density. Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road. Minor Collector facilities provide service to the remaining smaller communities and link local traffic generators with their rural hinterland.

In urban areas, Minor Collectors serve both land access and traffic circulation in lower density residential and commercial/industrial areas. Typical operating characteristics of Minor Collectors include lower speeds and fewer signalized intersections. Minor Collectors penetrate residential neighborhoods, but only for a short distance.

Minor Collector roads in the city include North Court Avenue, West Hawthorne Street,



▼ MAP 5.1 CITY OF COVINGTON FEDERAL ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS



segments of East Hawthorne Street, East Dolly Ann Drive, South Massie Avenue, Mallow Road, Horse Mountain View, Mall Road and West Park Street.

## AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) conducts a program where traffic count data are gathered from sensors in or along streets and highways and other sources. From these data, estimates of the average number of vehicles that traveled each segment of road are calculated. In Map 5.2, the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume range for the roadway segments monitored in the city are displayed. The AADT is the total annual traffic estimate divided by the number of days in the year. As expected the most highly trafficked roads are the principal arterials with much lower traffic volumes on the minor collectors and local roads.

## PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS & TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

The City of Covington is part of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC), which is a voluntary association of local governments in the region who come together to make regional planning decisions, most prominently regarding transportation. The city relies heavily on the collective resources and experience leveraged by its involvement in the RVARC to assess the needs of its transportation system.

The RVARC region encompasses southwest Virginia and serves the counties of Alleghany,

Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke as well as the cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem and the towns of Clifton Forge, Vinton, and Iron Gate. This regional approach to transportation planning helps to ensure that projects are evaluated on a wider scale than just local needs; reinforcing the viability and functionality of the transportation network that the city relies on for its economic livelihood and enhances its accessibility for tourism.

Specifically, the city relies on the goals and projects identified in the RVARC 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan, the RVARC Rural Bikeway Plan 2006; the FY 2018 Rural Transportation Planning Work Program, and the VDOT Six year improvement Plan.

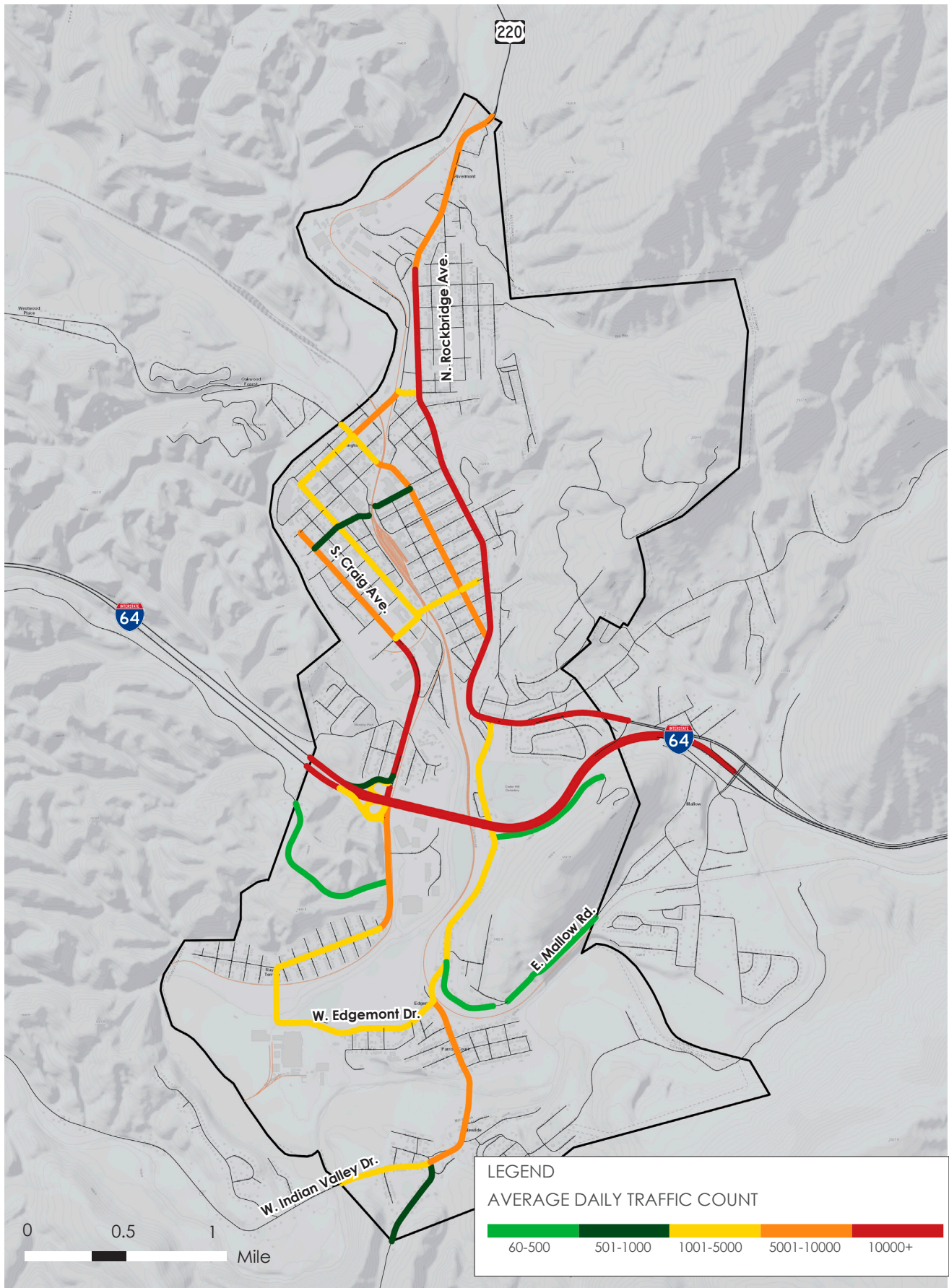
## VTRANS 2040

In addition to the regional focused plans, the city also relies on the statewide VTrans 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan. VTrans 2040 is Virginia's statewide long range, multimodal transportation plan. Led by the Commonwealth's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, VTrans 2040 is a policy document that focuses on the needs of the Commonwealth's Corridors of Statewide Significance, the multimodal regional networks that support travel within metropolitan regions, and improvements to promote Urban Development Areas (UDAS).

VTrans 2040 establishes goals in the areas of safety and security; system maintenance and preservation; mobility, connectivity, and accessibility; environmental stewardship;



▼ MAP 5.2 VDOT 2017 ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC - VOLUME RANGES



economic vitality; transportation and land use coordination, and program delivery. Through this document, the state has significantly shifted mobility priorities from being primarily single occupancy vehicle oriented to a multimodal model. State and federal transportation dollars are now allocated through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in part based on how well projects support the goals and objectives of VTrans 2040.

The City of Covington is located along Segment C1 of East-West Corridor (I-64) of the corridors of statewide significance. Segment C1 begins at the West Virginia border and progresses east to the junction of Interstates I-64 and I-81. This segment serves Alleghany and Rockbridge counties, as well as the Cities of Covington and Lexington. The segment does not travel through any area covered by an MPO. The segment includes portions of US 60 and runs concurrently with a portion of US 220. Segment C1 acts as a major corridor for through freight travel in Virginia, providing access to the mountains and areas west. Segment C1 also connects smaller urban areas, such as Clifton Forge and Covington, as well as multiple natural, historical, and cultural resources.

**Highway Facilities:** I-64 is primarily a rural highway with four lanes in Segment C1. When not running concurrently with I-64, US 60 (in Covington and Lexington) and US 60 Business (in Clifton Forge) run parallel to I-64 in the urbanized areas within the segment. Transit Services: Amtrak offers service at

Clifton Forge in Segment C1. As stated earlier, RADAR, a non-profit transit agency based in the Roanoke Valley, operates the Mountain Express, which provides a transit connection between Covington and Clifton Forge. There is one Park-and-Ride location within close proximity to I-64 northwest of Lexington.

**Rail Facilities:** CSX's Coal Corridor runs through Segment C1.

**Port Facilities:** Although there are no port facilities located directly adjacent to Segment C1, CSX's Coal Corridor does provide connections to multiple Port of Virginia facilities in the Hampton Roads Area.

**Airport Facilities:** There are no commercial airports in this segment.

**Major planned and future projects include:** There are no major planned projects to improve safety or increase capacity on Segment C1 at this time.

**Summary of Needs (VTrans 2040):** The plan analyzed travel demand, traffic conditions, redundancy and mode choice, safety metrics, congestion metrics, and reliability metrics. While the corridor as a whole plays an important role to the movement of freight and traffic, there were no major projects identified for Segment C1. The study did identify mode choice and safety improvements as the primary needs for the City of Covington. Although, in the VTrans 2040 the Needs Synthesis and Tier Assessment for the Staunton District, the identified safety improvements in Covington ranked last.



## URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA

As In 2015, the City of Covington amended the Comprehensive Plan which established the entire town boundary as an Urban Development Area (UDA). The Covington UDA meets the intent of the Code of Virginia, Section §15.2-2223.1.

Section 15.2-2223.1 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, provides for local establishment of UDAs, in which growth is permitted, incentivized, or otherwise directed. A locality may establish a UDA by amending their comprehensive plan to establish and graphically identify UDAs on their Future Land Use Map.

The UDA is an area that is appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public water and sewer system, or a developed area, to be used for redevelopment or infill development. A UDA contains land appropriate for development of residential densities of four or more single family dwelling units, six townhouses, 12 apartments or condominiums per acre and commercial floor area ratios of 0.4 or greater.

The UDA should meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for 10 to 20 years. Coinciding with the five-year review of a locality's comprehensive plan and according to the most recent population estimates and projections, each UDA shall be reexamined and revised (if deemed necessary).

UDAs, when established, must include principles of traditional neighborhood design, some of which include but are not limited to:

- Pedestrian-friendly road design;
- Interconnection of new local streets with existing street network;
- Connectivity of road and pedestrian networks;
- Preservation of open space and natural areas;
- Mixed-use neighborhoods, with a range of housing types, and affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth;
- Reduction of front and side yard setbacks; and
- Reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.

The comprehensive plan shall describe any financial and other incentives for development in the urban development areas.

## BICYCLE PLANS

The City of Covington utilizes the RVARC Bikeway Plan. The general recommendations from the RVARC Rural Bikeway Plan include:

- Apply, by default, the VDOT Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations to all corridors in the transportation network;
- Utilize cost-effective techniques, where applicable and practicable, to better accommodate bicyclists;
- Improve ancillary bicycle accommodations, signage, and support

facilities;

- Encourage bicycling through education, awareness, and advocacy; and
- Market the region's outdoor recreation and tourism resources.

In addition, the Rural Bikeway Plan presents a list of recommended corridors for bicycle accommodations by jurisdiction emphasizing accessibility and connectivity between town centers and outdoor recreation facilities. Some of the improvements recommended for these corridors are limited to: roadway and shoulder maintenance, striping on the right edge of lanes to provide a paved shoulder for bicyclists, and improved signage and roadway facilities.

The recommended corridors for bicycle improvements within the City of Covington are:

- Route 18 (Carpenter Drive)
- Route 18 (West Indian Valley Drive)
- Route 60 / 220 (Madison Street)
- Route 60 (Monroe Avenue)
- Route 154 (Craig Street) Route 220 (Alleghany Avenue)
- Locust Street
- Durant Road
- Jackson Street
- Rayon Drive
- Edgemont Drive

The suggested starting and ending points are contained in the Bikeway Plan.

## PEDESTRIAN PLANS

The urban core of Covington is well connected with sidewalks. The city will continue to maintain and improve sidewalk conditions and connectivity as needed. In addition, pedestrian safety improvements and needs will continue to be monitored throughout the city and at key intersections. Please see Map 5.3 for city-wide potential pedestrian routes. The city does not have an existing sidewalk map at this time.

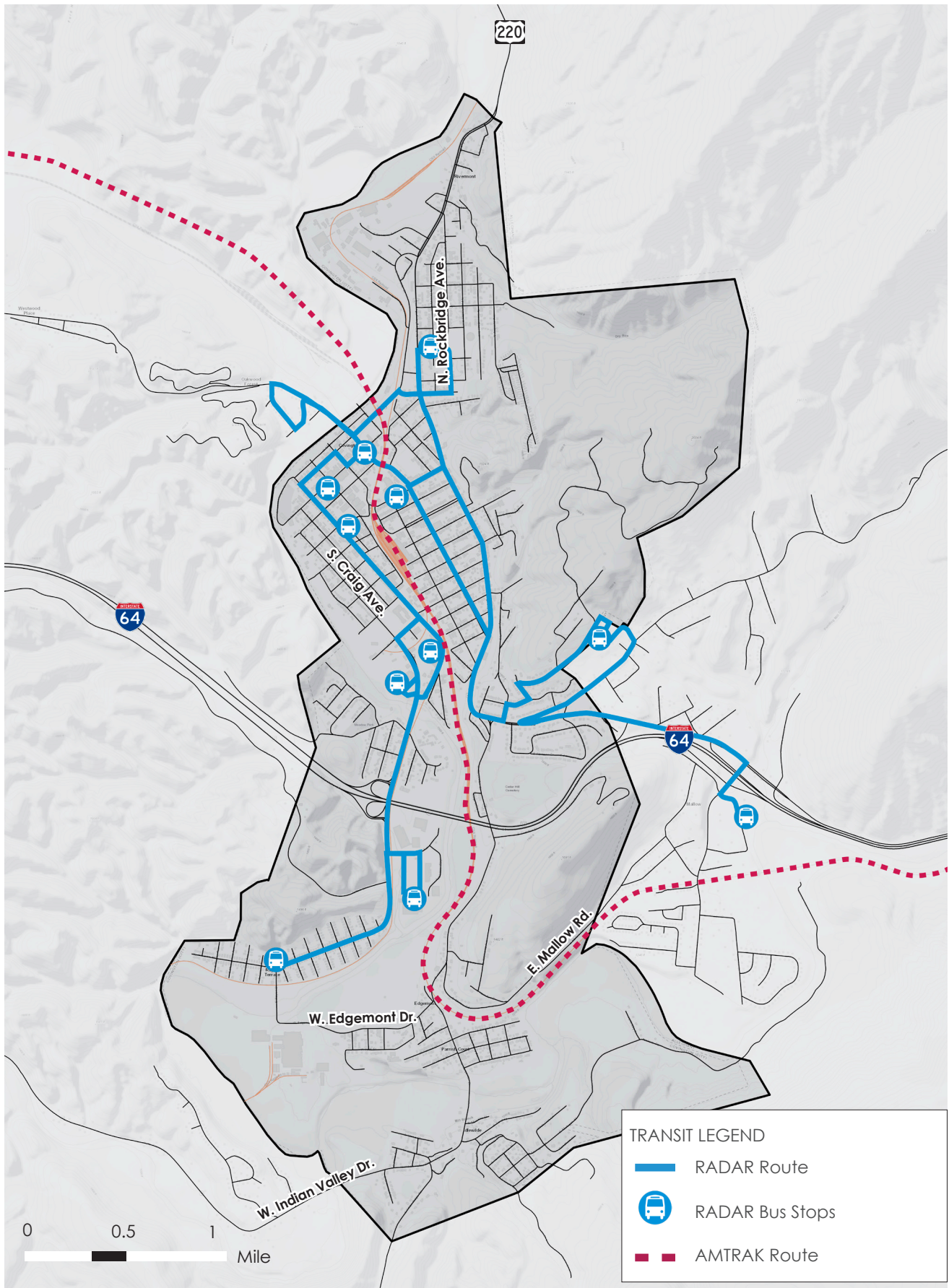
The City also continues to work with the County on the completion of the Jackson River Scenic Trail. One important link is the establishment of a pedestrian bridge crossing the scenic Jackson River. The bridge will connect the park to retail and restaurant establishments and other sidewalks and the trail.

## SUMMARY OF ASSUMPTIONS & NEEDS

As recognized in these regional and statewide plans, although the population of the city has significantly declined, the volume of traffic on the city's roadways has not significantly changed. The primary planning assumption is that the city is not experiencing rapid growth or other statewide projected changes that will require new roadways and major widening projects.

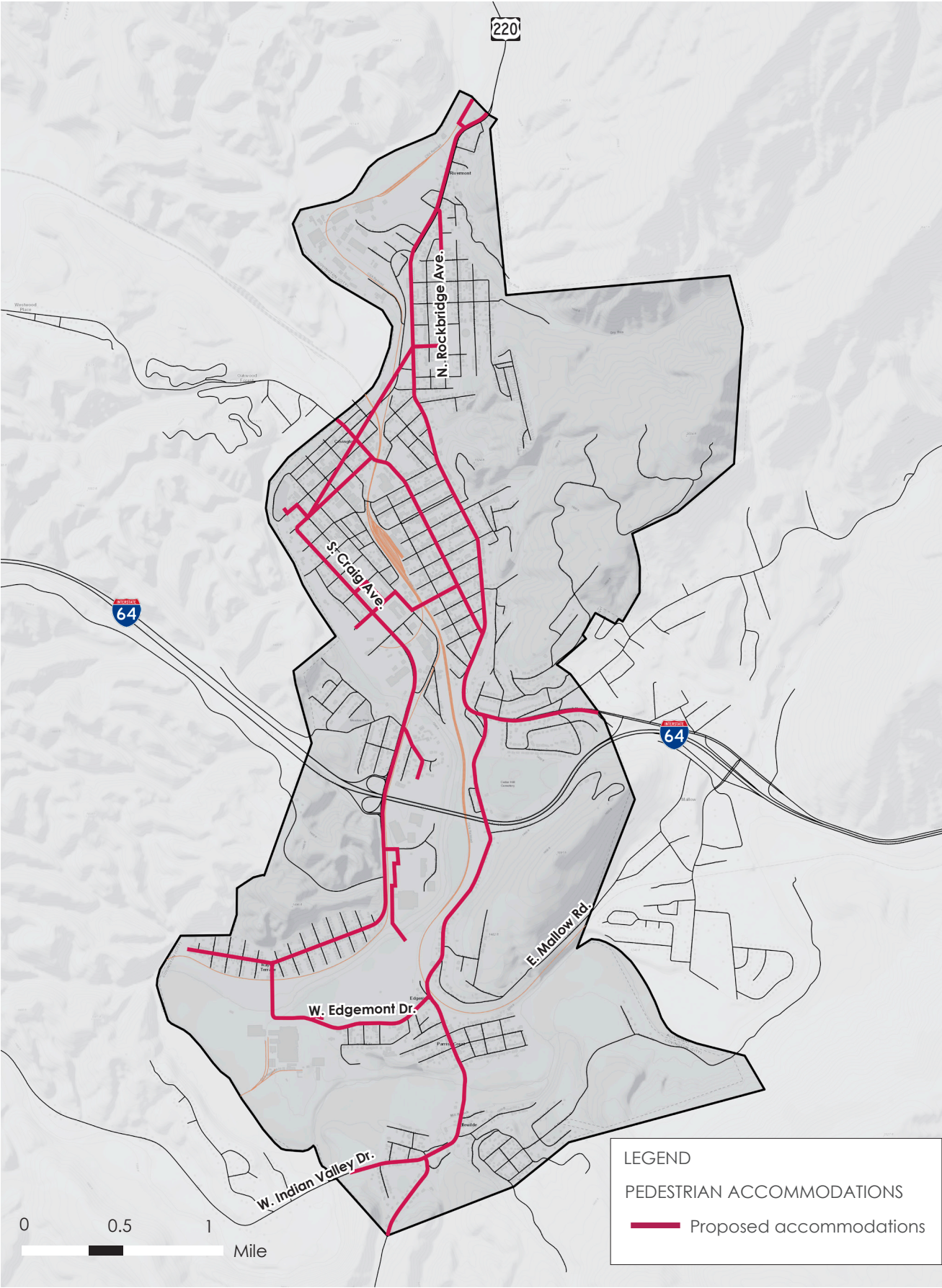
In general, the primary issues and needs related to city's transportation system are heavy truck use on many of the city's roads and bridges, a need for basic intersection and roadway safety upgrades and pedestrian facility, safety and access improvements.

▼ MAP 5.3 CITY OF COVINGTON TRANSIT





▼ MAP 5.4 POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN ROUTES





These type of maintenance, safety, and mobility improvements will help ensure the transportation system will meet the needs of the younger and older segments of its population for years to come, establishing a more efficient network to attract new development and steadily grow the population of the city.

In addition to the general improvements mentioned above, one of the city's primary goals is revitalization of the downtown. The city has identified a need to improve vehicular access to downtown as an economic development tool to help aid the city's efforts to improve its historic commercial core. It is envisioned by the city that a new Main Street connector to Craig Avenue, leading to Interstate 64 will help improve connectivity to downtown for potential visitors.

## TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

In response, the City has identified twenty-four transportation projects that are shown on Map 5.6 and listed in Table 5.4. In addition to the overall project list, the city has identified priority projects identified below under SMART SCALE Projects and the Six-Year Improvement Program.

### SMART SCALE PROJECTS

Virginia's SMART SCALE (§33.2-214.1) is about picking the right transportation projects for funding and ensuring the best use of limited tax dollars. Transportation projects are scored based on an objective, outcome-based process that is transparent to the public and allows decision-makers to be held

accountable to taxpayers. In addition, VTrans 2040 establishes statewide transportation needs that planned projects must address to be eligible for submission through SMART SCALE.

The city has submitted four projects for SMART SCALE consideration as follows:

- Jackson Street Improvements** - This project seeks to make bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic calming improvements on approximately .07 mi. of S. Rayon Dr., south of the intersection of W. Jackson St., and 0.47 mi. of W. Jackson St. from the intersection of S. Rayon Dr. to just east of S. Willis Ave. Construct approximately 2,850 LF of a 5' wide sidewalk on the south side of W. Jackson St. beginning from the west side of the driveway at 519 W. Jackson St. (along Jackson St.) and continuing onto the east side of S. Rayon Dr. approximately 380 feet over the rail crossing to connect to existing sidewalk. Curb and gutter will be installed, as well as appropriate drainage structures. The north side of W Jackson St. will be reconstructed to provide an approximately 2,025 LF, 8' wide shared use path from the intersection of S. Rayon Dr. to S. Byrd Ave (which will connect to funded Durant Rd. sidewalk project - UPC 68089). Crosswalk improvements would be made at the intersection of W. Jackson St. and S. Rayon Dr. A Typical project section would include: 11-foot-wide EB and WB travel lanes; 8-foot-wide WB shared use path; 7-foot-wide WB buffer/planting strip (separating roadway from shared use

path); an 8-footwide EB parking lane and 5-foot-wide EB sidewalk.

**Estimated Cost: \$10 M**

- **East Madison Street Sidewalk** - This project seeks to design and construct approximately 2,840 LF of a 5' wide sidewalk with curb on the south side of E. Madison Street, from the intersection of S. Midland Heights Place to the Covington Eastern Corporate Limit. On the east side of the project (as indicated on the project sketch), a midblock pedestrian crossing will be installed to the north side of E. Madison Street. ADA curb ramps and crosswalks will be installed as required.

**Estimated Cost: \$2.4 M**

- **Paper Trail Pedestrian Project** - This project includes the design and construction of a multi-use pedestrian bridge that would connect the commercial shopping district with the existing Jackson River Sports Complex. New sidewalk will extend from the proposed bridge along the western edge of the Walmart parking lot to connect to existing sidewalk at Thacker Avenue. The sports complex recently received a grant from DCR to construct the Paper Trail which will include an RV Park and River Access area.

**Estimated Cost: \$2.5 M**

- **Edgemont Drive Improvements** - This project seeks to widen approximately 2,680 LF of two-lane roadway from the entrance to the Jackson River Sports

Complex to intersection of Route 18 and Edgemont Drive. Travel lane widths would be increased from nine (9) to 12 feet and 2 feet-wide shoulders will be added on both sides. The shoulder widening will necessitate right-of-way acquisition from multiple property owners adjacent to Edgemont Drive. The proposed widening addresses a safety need as a portion of this project is identified as a Potential of Safety Improvement segment. This segment has three (3) total crashes with a PSI score for three of five years.

**Estimated Cost: \$3.7 M**

## SIX-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) is the Commonwealth Transportation Board's (CTB) program for allocating funding for rail, public transportation, commuter assistance, bicycle, pedestrian, interstate and primary highway transportation projects over the next six years. The program is updated annually. Typically, the CTB conducts hearings in the fall of each year to gather public and local government input on priorities for transportation funding. These meetings provide local governments with an opportunity to have input on priorities for the Interstate and Primary systems.

The CTB and VDOT make a concerted effort to assemble projects in the SYIP so they can move through the development process in an orderly fashion. As projects are being developed, many issues arise that must be addressed, such as citizen concerns, project development, or environmental issues. Projects must also be

fully funded to move to construction. Most projects require multiple years of funding. Projects are removed from the SYIP once they are completed. Projects are also taken out of the SYIP if there is not enough funding to finance them or if preliminary engineering determines that the project is not feasible. The city's projects for the FY 2019 SYIP program are listed in Table 5.2.

▼ TABLE 5.2 FY19 SYIP PROJECTS

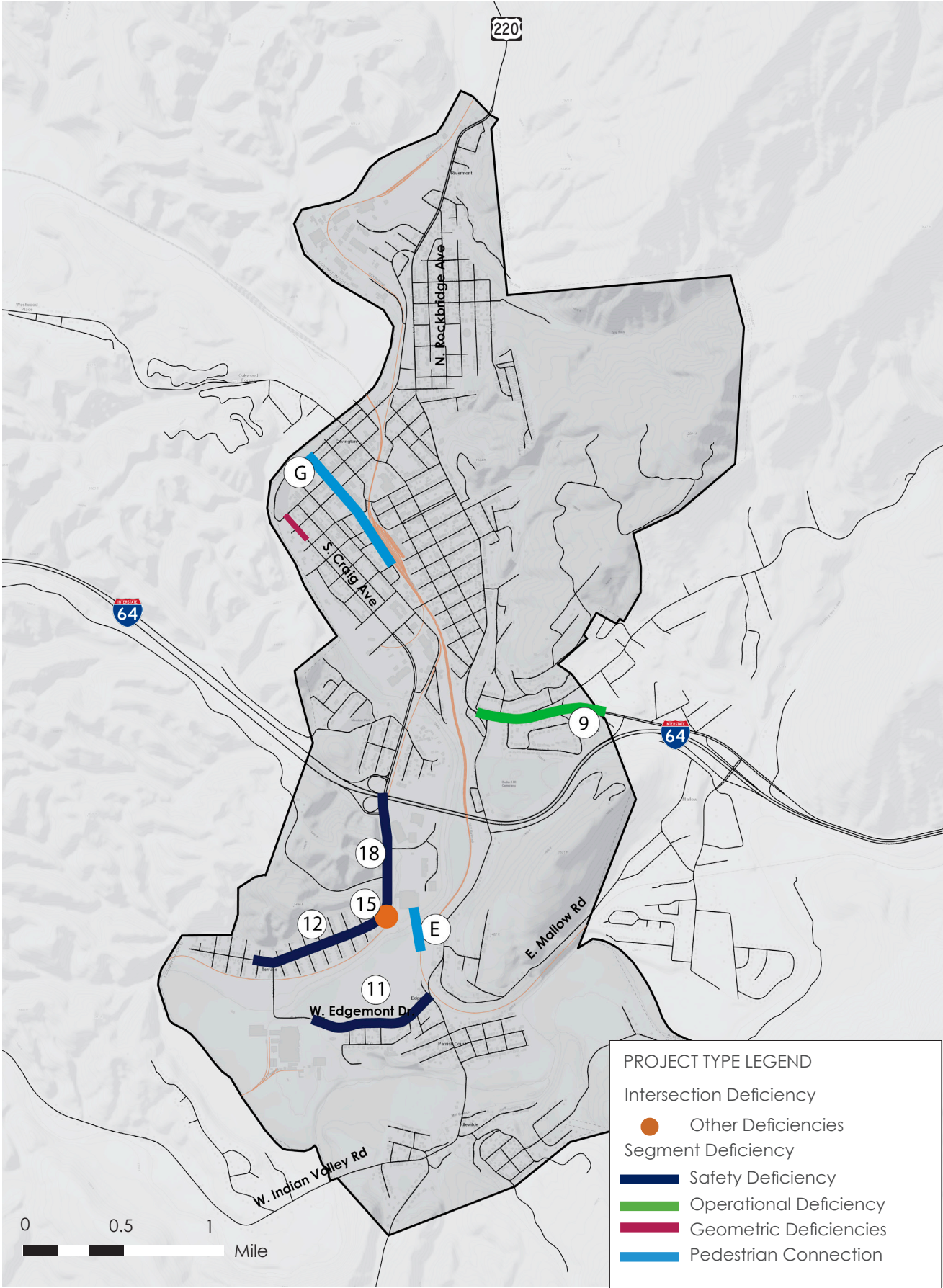
FY 2019 SYIP		
UPC	Project	Funding Allocations
68089	Durant Road Improvements	\$3,529,720
111416	Maple Avenue Improvements, Phase II	\$553,418
113688	Maple Avenue Improvements, Phase III	\$219,880

▼ TABLE 5.3 CITY OF COVINGTON PRIORITY PROJECTS (SMART SCALE &amp; SYIP '19 COMBINED))

MAP #	NAME	SCOPE OF WORK
9	East Madison sidewalk improvements	5' wide sidewalk with curb along south side of E. Madison Street
11	Edgemont Drive improvements	Widen two-lane roadway from Jackson River Sports complex to Route 18 and Edgemont Drive. Travel lane widths would be increased from 9 to 12 ft. with 2 ft. shoulder width on both sides.
12	Jackson Street improvements	Bicycle, pedestrian and traffic calming improvements starting along S. Rayon Dr. at a point 0.7 miles from the intersection with W. Jackson St., then, continuing eastward along W. Jackson St. for 0.47 miles near S. Willis Ave.
15	W. Jackson Street at the Walmart	Rehabilitate retaining walls
18	Durant St/ Jackson St/ S. Byrd Ave to I-64	Reconstruct roadway
E	Jackson River pedestrian bridge(Paper Trail Project)	Construct pedestrian bridge from Jackson River Sports Complex to Commerce Center
G	Maple Avenue improvements	Streetscape Extension , Bike/ Pedestrian Improvements (Phase II and III)

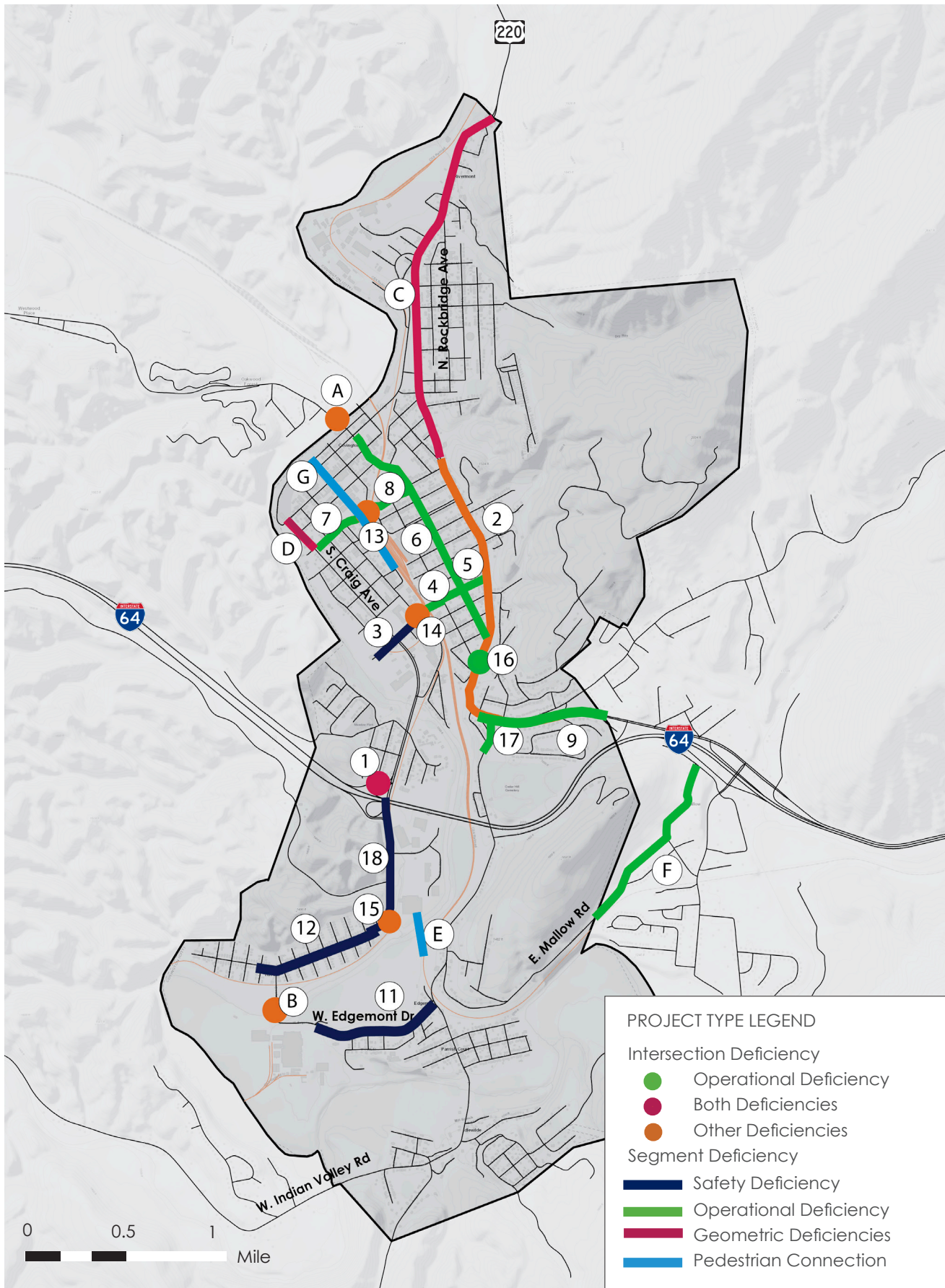


▼ MAP 5.5 PRIORITY PROJECTS





▼ MAP 5.6 CITY OF COVINGTON TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS



▼ TABLE 5.4 CITY OF COVINGTON TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

MAP #	NAME	SCOPE OF WORK
1	1-64 Exit 14/ VA-154 (S. Durant Road	Widen median and lengthen northbound lane
2	US 220 (N. Alleghany Drive/E. Madison Street)/N. Magazine Avenue	Repaint, widen roadway to urban 4 lane roadway standards
3	W. Chestnut Street/Craig Avenue	Widen to urban 2 lane road
4	E. Chestnut Street/Lexington Avenue to Highland Avenue	Widen to urban 2 lane road
5	E. Chestnut Street/Highland Avenue to Alleghany Avenue	Widen to urban 2 lane road
6	US 60 (S. Monroe Avenue)/ W. Riverside Street to S. Alleghany Street	Adding turn lanes
7	W. Hawthorne Street/ N. Maple Avenue to S. Craig Avenue	Adding turn lanes
8	E. Hawthorne Street/Monroe Avenue to Court Avenue	Adding turn lanes
9	East Madison sidewalk improvements	5' wide sidewalk with curb along south side of E. Madison Street
10	N/A	
11	Edgemont Drive improvements	Widen two-lane roadway from Jackson River Sports complex to Route 18 and Edgemont Drive. Travel lane widths would be increased from 9 to 12 ft. with 2 ft. shoulder width on both sides.
12	Jackson Street improvements	Bicycle, pedestrian and traffic calming improvements starting along S. Rayon Dr. at a point 0.7 miles from the intersection with W. Jackson St., then, continuing eastward along W. Jackson St. for 0.47 miles near S. Willis Ave.
13	S. Rayon Drive	Short-term replace bridge
14	E. Chestnut Street at CSX Railroad underpass	Rehabilitate retaining walls east of bridge
15	W. Jackson Street at the Walmart parking lot	Rehabilitate retaining walls
16	US 60/220 (S. Alleghany Drive) at S. Highland Avenue	Add traffic signal and southbound left-turn lane
17	VA-18 (S. Carpenter Drive) at US 60/220 (E Madison Street)	Extend northbound right turn lane
18	Durant Road / Jackson Street / S. Byrd Avenue to I-64	Reconstruct roadway
NEW PROJECTS (NOT LISTED IN CURRENT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DOCUMENTS)		
A	Route 661 (Monroe Ave)/ US 60 (Midland Trail)	Replace bridge over the river
B	South Rayon Drive	Replace bridge
C	US 220/ Northern Corp Limits	Reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies
D	Main Street Connector	Expand Craig Avenue to connect with Main Street
E	Jackson River pedestrian bridge	Construct pedestrian bridge from Jackson River Sports Complex to Commerce Center
F	VA 647/ Eastern Corp Limits	Widen to urban 2 lane road
G	Maple Avenue improvements	Streetscape Extension, Bike/Pedestrian Improvements











# HOUSING PROFILE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey, 2010, 2016



3,035  
HOUSING UNITS

## HOUSING TYPES

SINGLE FAMILY	86%
MOBILE HOMES	5%
MULTI FAMILY	4%
DUPLEXES	5%

\$70,900

MEDIAN  
HOME  
VALUE\*



\*Home value of owner-occupied homes

89.3%

HOUSING  
UNITS 39 YRS.  
& OLDER



Virginia's percentage of housing units that are 39 years and older is 49%.



61%  
OWNER  
OCCUPIED



20%  
RENTER  
OCCUPIED



19%  
VACANT

Overall occupancy decreased by 5% between the 2010 Census and the ACS 2016 5-year estimate while vacancy increased by 5%. Owner occupancy increased by 2%, but rental occupancy declined by 7%. Comparatively, Covington's renter occupancy is lower than the State's renter occupancy at 34%.

## PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

	2000	2010	2016
COVINGTON	34%	36%	37%
ALLEGHANY	20%	25%	31%
VIRGINIA	20%	25%	26%

The growing trend of single person households is typical across the U.S., and is true for Covington as well.

## Between 2010 and 2016

-25



REDUCTION IN  
NUMBER OF UNITS  
LACKING COMPLETE  
KITCHENS

-12%



DECREASE IN THE NUMBER  
OF RENTERS PAYING 30%  
OR MORE OF INCOME ON  
HOUSING

+48



INCREASE IN NUMBER  
OF UNITS LACKING  
COMPLETE PLUMBING

68%



INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF  
HOMEOWNERS PAYING 30%  
OR MORE OF INCOME ON  
MORTGAGE

7x

THE NUMBER OF MORE THAN  
ONE OCCUPANT PER ROOM  
GREW MORE THAN SEVEN  
TIMES.

-44%



DECREASE IN THE NUMBER  
OF HOMEOWNERS WITHOUT  
MORTGAGES PAYING 30%  
OR MORE OF INCOME ON  
HOUSING COSTS



## SECTION 6. HOUSING

The housing stock in the City of Covington, Virginia, is indicative of urban housing from the early-mid 1900s with traditional, two-story style homes on smaller city lots. These homes are predominantly single-family, detached homes (86%) built prior to 1960. Nearly 90% of the single family housing stock is valued under \$150,000. The median (or middle) value of these homes is \$70,900, which is higher than the median value in 2000 (\$52,500). Perhaps the largest issue for housing in the City of Covington is the lack of available multi-family housing (only 4% of the housing stock) for young professionals and aging residents. Another significant issue is the lack of maintenance on many of the older homes, leading to blight in certain neighborhoods.

### HOUSING OWNERSHIP

The City has 3,035 total housing units, 81 percent of which are occupied. Of the occupied units, 74 percent are owner-occupied and 21 percent are renter-occupied. Nationally, renter-occupied housing rates are increasing for all income brackets, including upper-middle class families. In Covington, however, the rate of renter occupancy actually declined slightly between 2010 and 2016. Covington's rate of renter occupancy is significantly lower than Virginia's renter-occupied housing rate of 34 percent. This is most likely influenced, in some part, by the small share of multi-family housing in the city, the high median age of the population, and the relative affordability of single family homes.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Code of Virginia, § 15.2-2223.D, states that the comprehensive plan “shall include the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.”

Generally, issues with housing affordability arise when the cost of housing exceeds 30 percent of a household's gross income. In Covington, there have been relative improvements in housing affordability in recent years, with declines in both the number of homeowners who had a mortgage on their property (indicating mortgage payoffs and cash purchases), as well as the number of households paying more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. At the same time, homeowners with a mortgage who are paying more than 30 percent of their income toward housing expenses has increased, which has offset the improvements in affordability to a certain degree.

### IMPLICATIONS

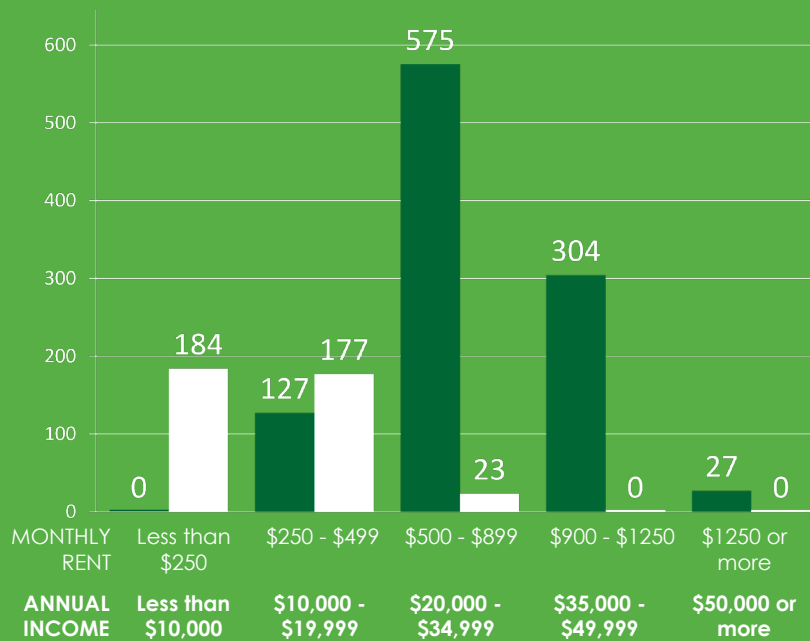
Covington's housing stock is aging, requiring more maintenance and repair than newer homes, which places additional financial burdens on homeowners, as well as landlords.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING MISMATCH Source: American Community Survey, 2016

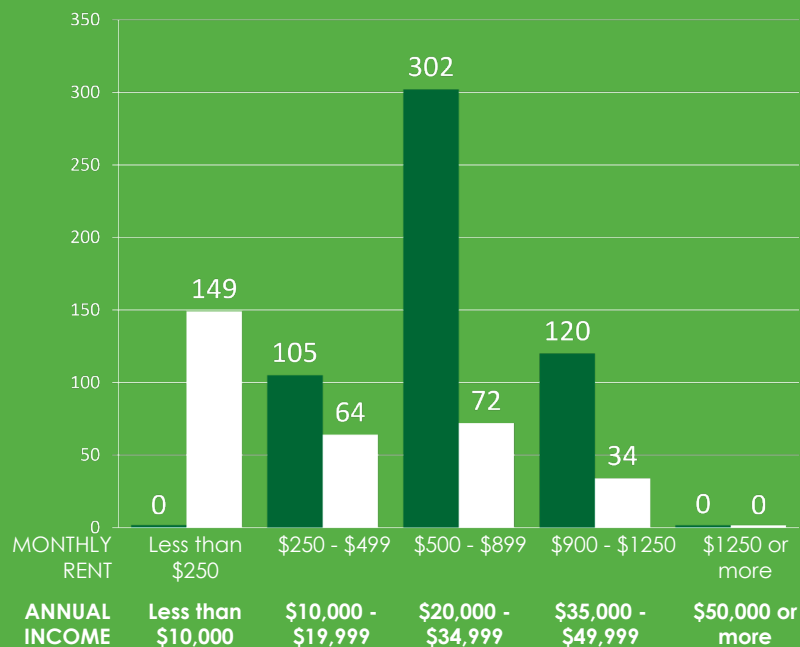
When the number of households, who are paying 30 percent or more of household income on housing, exceeds the number of housing units, there is a shortage of housing options. Whereas if there is a lower number of households than the number of units, there is an over-supply of housing options.

■ HOUSING UNITS      ■ HOUSEHOLDS PAYING 30% OR MORE OF INCOME FOR HOUSING

### MISMATCH FOR HOMEOWNERS WITH A MORTGAGE



### MISMATCH FOR RENTERS



The percentage of the population that rent homes has decreased, but the population has decreased as well, indicating that the residents leaving the city might have tended to be renters rather than homeowners. Although there have been some improvements in housing affordability, the cost burden on households with mortgages has increased. While this may indicate some economic optimism among home-buyers, it could constrain other economic activity in the city and lower the stability of the city's high home ownership rate in the event of a return to economic recession in the future.

The focus of future efforts in the City should be placed on housing maintenance and rehabilitation programs, as well as monitoring the rental market to ensure adequate housing for the renter-population. Different resources are available to homeowners, renters, local governments, non-profits, and other entities to help alleviate maintenance issues. While the City may not be the responsible organization for such measures, the City can work with citizens, non-profit groups, and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to leverage resources.

Balancing these existing needs while creating an inviting environment for new development is necessary for the future of the City of Covington. With the decline in population, the City can address the current issues without additional pressure for new housing development. However, the City still needs to create the opportunity for new development as a way to accommodate population growth

in the region, particularly with regard to the multi-family housing stock. Removing blight from neighborhoods where maintenance has not been a priority will help to improve the City's housing infrastructure and stabilize neighborhoods in decline.

## IDENTIFIED HOUSING NEEDS

While there are certain places within the City that need more improvement than others, needs for improvement and maintenance cannot be relegated to one or two neighborhoods. For this reason, the entirety of the City is the identified geography for housing needs. The City needs to evaluate neighborhoods and structures throughout the jurisdiction to determine a prioritization plan for housing improvement programs. Upon completion of this assessment and prioritization, the City can look into different funding and program opportunities that will help residents and property owners rehabilitate their structures in a cost-effective manner. Attention should also be placed on how to implement maintenance standards to keep housing from falling into disrepair.

## RESOURCES

There are numerous resources available to local governments, non-profits, and residents themselves. These include, but are not limited to:

- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Virginia Housing Development Authority
- USDA Rural Development
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project.









7



# INFRASTRUCTURE PROFILE

## WATER SOURCES & SYSTEMS

JACKSON RIVER



1

PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM

1

PUBLIC WASTEWATER SYSTEM

## WATER & WASTEWATER LINES



54 MILES  
OF WATER LINES



54 MILES  
OF WASTEWATER LINES

## OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES



PETER'S  
MOUNTAIN  
LANDFILL



1 GAS PROVIDER  
COLUMBIA GAS OF VIRGINIA



2 COMMUNICATION PROVIDERS

### **LUMOS**

TELEPHONE  
CELL PHONE  
INTERNET SERVICE

### **SHENTEL**

TELEVISION  
INTERNET SERVICE  
DIGITAL PHONE



1 ELECTRIC PROVIDER  
DOMINION ENERGY



## SECTION 7. INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Covington provides water, wastewater, and solid waste services to its residents, as well as to County residents that live within a certain proximity to the City. Additional utilities are provided by private companies for electricity, communications and natural gas.

### WATER

The main source of water for the City of Covington is the Jackson River, supplying the surface water for the City's distribution system. Because the US Corps of Engineers controls the flow of the Jackson River via the Gathright Dam, there is a constant flow of water to supply the City. The Jackson River Plant has enough capacity for the existing customer base, utilizing about one third of its capacity. This leaves a large amount of capacity for potential growth. The WestRock paper mill has its own water system, which also draws from the Jackson River.

Over the last few years, the City's water infrastructure has been a priority, with numerous pumps being upgraded or replaced and debris screens added. Currently, the only potential water concern would be a risk of water contamination, however, this has not been realized to date. Should water contamination become an issue, the City's system stores enough water to operate for one-to-two days without continuous input.

### WASTEWATER

The City's wastewater treatment plant also operates within its capacity (6 million gallons per day), with an average use of 1.5 million gallons per day. However, due to Inflow and Infiltration (I&I), during heavy rain events, the system becomes taxed, with flows exceeding 10 million gallons per day. For that reason, while standard capacity exists for growth, the system cannot adequately handle growth until I&I issues are remedied. In order to accomplish this, the overall collection system needs to be modernized to seal it from external flows that impair the City's ability to treat wastewater during heavy rain events and floods.

### SOLID WASTE

The City operates its own landfill, located on Peters Mountain in the George Washington National Forest. The landfill has capacity to handle solid waste disposal for the next 10 - 14 years with an additional cell that can be constructed to handle an additional seven (7) years of refuse. Beyond this timeframe, the City should look into additional options, partnering with regional entities, to determine a sustainable long-term solution. The City operates its own solid waste collection service, while recycling services are provided by Jackson River Enterprises.

## **ELECTRIC, COMMUNICATIONS, & NATURAL GAS**

Electric power is provided by the Dominion Virginia Power Company. Lumos provides telephone, cell phone, and internet services in the City. Fiber optic lines providing broadband connections have been installed along the major corridors in the City, however, as connection is costly, fiber based internet coverage is uneven. Shentel provides cable television, as well as high speed internet and digital phone services. Natural Gas is available to residential, commercial, and industrial customers within the City, with plenty of capacity for growth. This service is provided by Columbia Gas.

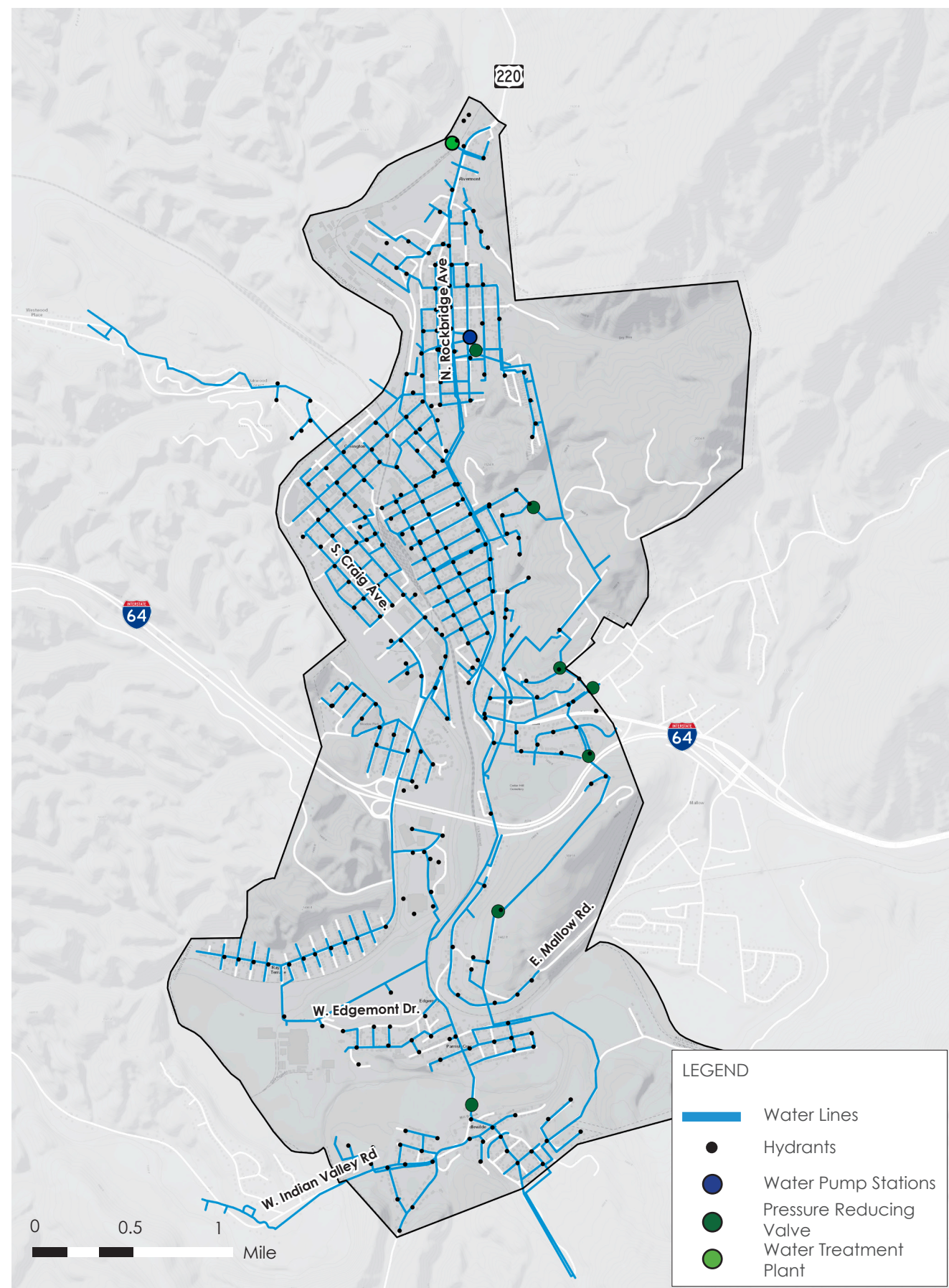
improve the availability of high-speed fiber based internet service in the city. Growing reliance on this service is seen in a wide variety of industries, professional, and personal service sectors. By expanding its availability to the greatest extent possible, the City will improve its ability to compete for a broader set of economic development opportunities.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Based on expected population growth figures for the City of Covington, there is no need to increase water or wastewater capacity for new development. However, upgrades are needed to ensure the integrity and long term viability of these systems. Such improvements should be incorporated into a long term Capital Improvement Plan that prioritizes needs and aligns necessary infrastructure projects with funding over time. Adopting and updating a CIP will help to ensure that projects are budgeted, funding can be obtained, and the project will be completed in a specified timeline.

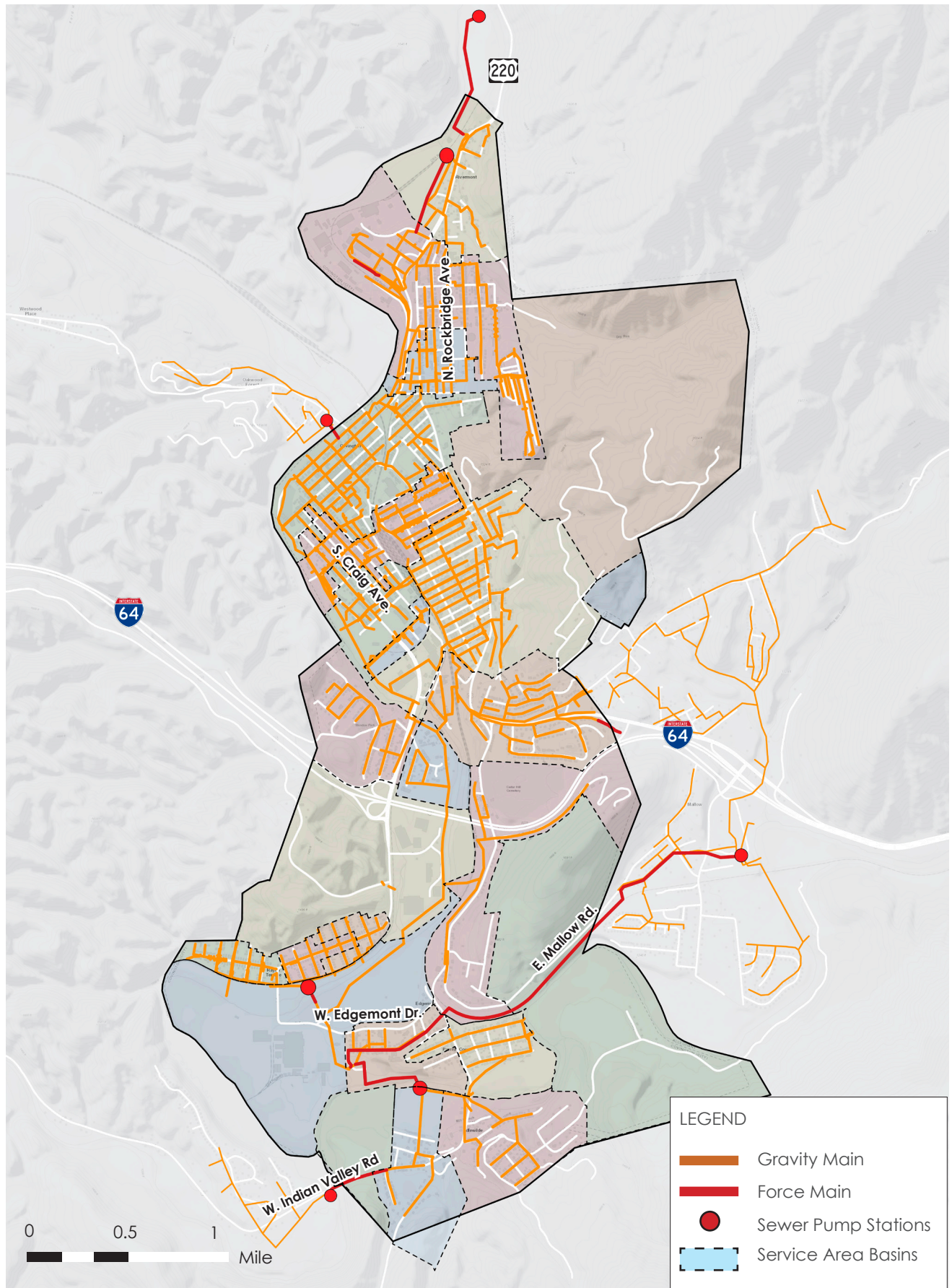
In order to ensure economic competitiveness, the City should work to identify funding resources and partnership opportunities to

▼ MAP 7.1 CITY OF COVINGTON WATER INFRASTRUCTURE





▼ MAP 7.2 CITY OF COVINGTON SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE







8



# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PROFILE



## FLOOD EVENTS IN PAST 50 YEARS

Source: Flood Insurance Study, 2010

Hurricane Camille [August 1969 ]  
Tropical Storm Agnes [June 1972 ]  
Flood Event [March 1973 ]  
Flood Event [December 1973 ]  
Flood Event [November 1985 ]  
Hurricane Jeanne [October 2004 ]

## RARE SPECIES & NATURAL COMMUNITIES

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation database, as of April 30, 2018, includes 65 rare species and natural communities within the Alleghany Highlands that need environmental planning consideration.



Of these 65 species and natural communities, 23 have a Federal and/or State legal status (whichever is more rare).

6 LISTED ENDANGERED  
2 LISTED THREATENED  
1 PROPOSED THREATENED  
14 SPECIES OF CONCERN

## AMBIENT AIR QUALITY

Source: Virginia Ambient Air Monitoring Data Report, 2016

The Highlands are in the Blue Ridge Monitoring region with a monitoring station located in Roanoke. The last report for the Roanoke station had no days exceeding attainment levels.



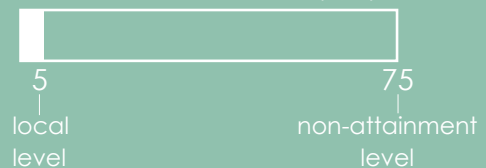
### PARTICULATE MATTER

\* 24-Hr Concentration ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



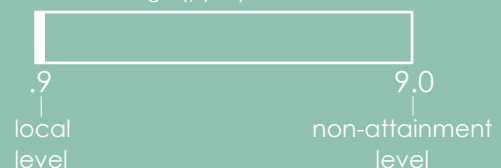
### SULFUR DIOXIDE

\* 1-Hr Daily Maximum Values (ppb)



### CARBON MONOXIDE

8-Hr Average (ppm)



### NITROGEN DIOXIDE

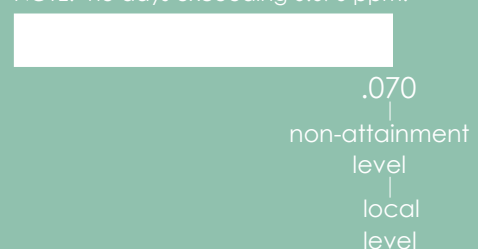
\* 1-Hr Daily Maximum Values (ppb)



### OZONE

\* Highest Daily Maximum 8-Hr Ave. (ppm)

NOTE: no days exceeding 0.070 ppm.



\* 3-year average, 2014-2016



## SECTION 8. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Alleghany Highlands have significant environmental value, with extensive forest stands, good air and water quality, and scenic ridge lines. Half of the County's forested land is managed by the United States (US) Forest Service in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests; preserving these assets from development pressure. Maintaining the quality of these environmental resources is a critical component of the region's long-term strategy for economic growth and to preserving the quality of life for local residents.

### RIDGE LINES

The region boasts striking mountainous terrain as part of the Appalachian Mountain region of the United States. Elevation ranges from 1,025 feet in the Town of Iron Gate, to 4,072 feet at Big Knob on Warm Springs Mountain in the northern portion of Alleghany County. The ridge lines that cross the region are mostly forested, and fall within the National Forests, providing a bucolic and rustic backdrop for the City of Covington.

### FORESTS

Over 50 percent of the Alleghany Highlands is forested land within the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, stewarded by the US Forest Service. The remaining forested areas are privately owned. Both the public and private forests are important to the economy as a source of raw wood products.

### WATERSHED

The City of Covington is located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, specifically the James River Watershed Basin. The Jackson and Cowpasture rivers run through the County, forming the James River around the Alleghany / Botetourt County line. Lake Moomaw, on the Jackson River in the northern portion of the County, was created by the Gathright Dam project in 1979. The dam and associated lake are managed by the Norfolk District of the US Army Corps of Engineers and are surrounded by a recreation area managed by the US Forest Service.

There is a certain amount of any pollutant that a water body can tolerate before it causes a violation of water quality standards, called the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). When water bodies exceed these values, they are placed on the 303(d) list, or the list of Impaired Waters, established by Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. The 2016 Impaired Waters list contains four (4) entries for the City of Covington.

### FLOODING & FLOODPLAINS

According to the Flood Insurance Study completed in December 2010 for Alleghany County and associated municipalities, the Jackson River has a relatively well-defined channel, with riverbanks and adjacent land being well vegetated with grasses, shrubs, and trees. This helps to cut down on flooding impacts, as vegetation can slow water down,

and absorb some water. The flood study identified risks associated with structures in the floodplain. In particular, Wilson Creek has some residential structures in its floodplain, while Smith Creek has a fair amount of residential and commercial buildings in the floodplain as it goes through the Town of Clifton Forge.

Flooding can occur at any time, but the chances for flooding are slightly higher in winter and spring, due to snow melt and spring rain showers flowing down the mountains and into the tributaries, pooling in the valleys. These valleys are where most of the development in the City of Covington and the Town of Clifton Forge is located. Flood events tend to run their course within a day, with extensive rainfall events clearing within a few days. Flood events in Covington can cause substantial damage, as has been seen in Covington's past. While the Gathright Dam was constructed for the purpose of flood control along the Jackson River, there are two tributaries, Dunlap Creek and Potts Creek, that join the river south of the dam that can still cause flooding.

## AIR QUALITY

The Alleghany Highlands are part of the Blue Ridge Monitoring Network for ambient air quality. Roanoke is the closest station that is within the monitoring network for the Highlands. As of the 2016 Virginia Ambient Air Monitoring Data Report, the Alleghany Highlands are in attainment for all of the measured pollutants.

The State of Virginia monitors particulate matter in two sizes ( $PM_{2.5}$  and  $PM_{10}$ ), carbon

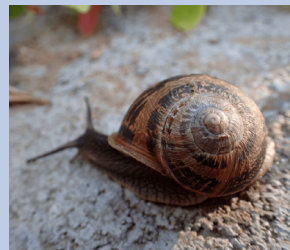
## LISTED ENDANGERED & THREATENED STATUS SPECIES



Peregrine Falcon  
(Listed Threatened)



James Spiny mussel  
(Listed Endangered)



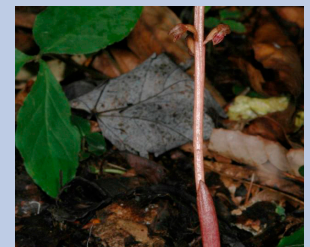
Shaggy Coil Snail  
(Listed Endangered)



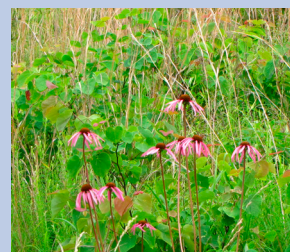
Appalachian Grizzled Skipper  
(Listed Threatened)



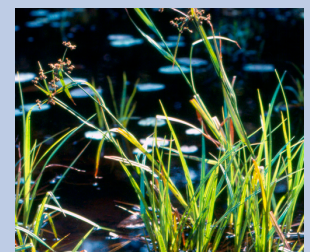
Shale Barren Rock Cress  
(Listed Threatened)



Bentley's Coralroot  
(Listed Endangered)



Smooth Coneflower  
(Listed Threatened)



Northeastern Bulrush  
(Listed Endangered)

monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and ozone for the Blue Ridge network. Roanoke's station measured averages for all pollutants well below the allowable limits.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is calculated from concentrations of ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide, most commonly seen as green, yellow, orange, or red air quality days. In 2016, Roanoke went into the yellow, or moderate range, in April, May and June, but maintained a primarily good, or green, rating the rest of the year.

## SPECIES OF CONCERN

In the Alleghany Highlands, there are numerous endangered species or species of concern that have been identified in the region. These species range from the Yellow Lance (mussel), which is a proposed threatened species, to the Northeastern Bulrush (plant) listed as endangered, to various others that are listed as species of concern, or those species that have not been petitioned to the endangered, threatened or candidate list, but have been identified as important to monitor.

## IMPLICATIONS

The Alleghany Highlands has a vast and rich environment full of impressive ridge lines, dense forests, and scenic waterways. Maintaining the integrity of the ridge lines within the Highlands is important as they create the unique views that draw tourists to the region. The majority of the ridge lines are within US Forest Service jurisdiction, however,

measures should be established to protect these areas from development should the US Forest Service sell the land.

As the Alleghany Highlands are part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, water quality is an important factor, with regard to both state and federal regulations. Today, water quality meets standards for the main concerns of the Chesapeake Bay, namely total nitrogen, total phosphorus, and total suspended solids. However, the four (4) items noted on the 303(d) list include evidence of benthic community (stream/creek bed) impairments in the Jackson River, low dissolved oxygen in the Jackson River, PCB (organic chlorine) evidence in fish tissue in the Jackson River, and E. Coli in the Jackson River. Sources of these impairments include urbanized areas, sanitary sewer overflows, industrial and municipal point source discharges, and/or other unknown sources. While the state monitors these conditions and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting, the City can monitor stormwater and associated sanitary sewer overflows as well as other potential events that could impair water quality in the region.

Flooding is and will continue to be an issue for the Alleghany Highlands. Impacts from flooding will be concentrated around the City of Covington, the Town of Clifton Forge, and potentially the Town of Iron Gate due to the density of housing and structures in and near the floodplain. Structures should not be developed within the floodplains, if it can be



avoided, as each structure reduces the flood carrying capacity of that area and increases the chance for flood casualty. Before any construction in or immediately adjacent to floodways, the economic benefit should be weighed against the increase in flood hazards. The City of Covington Code should be revised to reflect these concerns.

Air quality is not a current concern for the region, however, since the monitoring station for the region is in Roanoke, the City may want to reach out to the state to discuss a way to monitor air quality closer to home. In the event that new industrial development occurs in the region, special attention should be placed on monitoring air quality to maintain good AQI ratings.

Out of seventy-three listed species in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Rare Species Search, 20 (27%) are listed as a federal species of concern, four are listed as endangered at both the federal and state levels, and four are listed as threatened at the state level. To protect these species, habitat quantity and quality should be maintained to provide a good environment for these species to thrive.

Should the City's population begin to grow, there will be development pressure on sensitive lands, including, potentially, along privately held ridge lines. This could negatively affect water quality, flood risk, air quality and/or rare species. While the state of Virginia monitors for environmental quality, the City should improve its regulatory capacity to maintain

environmental quality through its land use and development regulations, and seek to implement policies and capital investments that enhance environmental protection.



CONINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STATION 1  
1900 S. 10TH ST.  
CONINGTON, NE 68027

9



# COMMUNITY SERVICES PROFILE

1 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

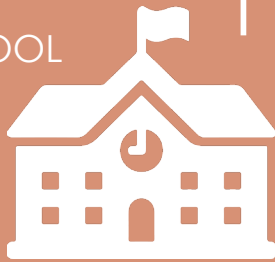
1 SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL

1 INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

1 TECHNICAL SCHOOL

1 HIGH SCHOOL

1 COMMUNITY COLLEGE



3 REGIONAL LIBRARIES



2 CITY FIRE & RESCUE STATIONS



CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT



1 REGIONAL HOSPITAL

1 URGENT CARE





## SECTION 9. COMMUNITY SERVICES

The City of Covington provides many services to its residents, such as schools, libraries, police protection, fire protection and emergency management services, while a regional hospital provides healthcare services to residents. With the decline in overall population, these services have also been affected. The City has the opportunity to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of these services, make associated updates or changes to service levels, and continue to provide services that are responsive to community needs and scalable to accommodate future growth.

### SCHOOLS

The City of Covington has three (3) active schools run by the city's school board. The City also offers the chance to attend Rivermont School for those students who have special needs. The Jackson River Technical Center is a collaborative venture with Alleghany County offering a wide range of technical programs that provide continuing adult education and diploma/technical certification for high school students.

The Edgemont Primary School, grades K-3, and the Jeter-Watson Intermediate School, grades 4-7, share the same school campus. Covington High School prepares grades 8-12 for further education or for the workforce. Each of these schools enjoy a low student to teacher ratio, which offers more specialized education for the students.

### LIBRARIES

There are three libraries in the Alleghany Highlands - the Alleghany Highlands Regional Library, the Clifton Forge Public Library, and the library at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, all of which are open to residents of the City. These libraries are important resources for children and adults alike as they offer numerous programs throughout the year and provide online access for those without it. Usage of the libraries will fluctuate with population, but these libraries provide basic functions in the communities and should be maintained as much as possible.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The City of Covington has a robust police department which provides law enforcement services in the corporate limits. These services include standard patrol and investigative services, along with traffic control and other specialized services, like animal control. In recent years, the department has responded to over 9,500 calls for service each year. The City operates its own 911 call center, which provides dispatch services for the department, as well as for fire and EMS calls.

### FIRE PROTECTION

The City of Covington has a volunteer-based fire/rescue service that is dispatched by the Covington Emergency Communications Center. The City has first due coverage and mutual aid agreements with Alleghany County.

The City has two fire and rescue stations, one dispatches to the north of Interstate 64 and the other to areas south. The department is well-equipped, trains in-house monthly, and is locally funded.

operating with about half of the primary care providers as they have in the recent past.

## HOSPITAL

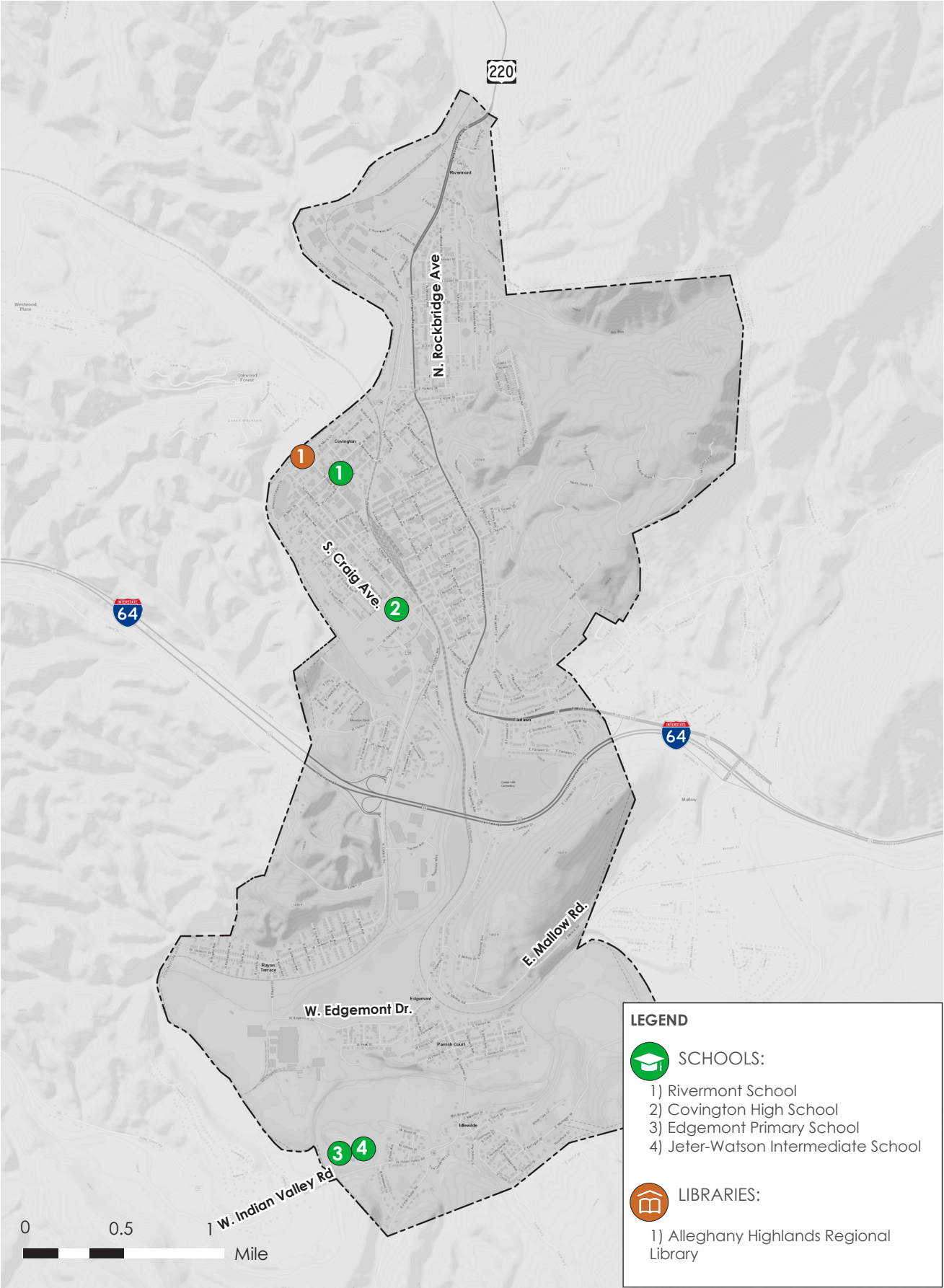
The local hospital, the Lewis Gale Hospital - Alleghany, is located in Low Moor. The hospital serves the Alleghany Highlands and adjacent areas with general medical and surgical care, along with emergency services.

## IMPLICATIONS

Population decline over the years, and the associated effects of lower revenue, have impacted community services. While there has been an overall decline in population and therefore school enrollment, the impact on City schools has not been as significant as the impact to the County's system. In response to declining volunteer rolls, the fire and rescue services have begun to add paid personnel. Rescue operations, focusing on medical calls, heavily outnumber fire calls, but with a limited pool of qualified respondents, it may be hard to keep pace with demand. It would be beneficial to look at ways to collaborate with nearby fire and rescue departments to share resources. Increasing collaboration could also include creating a consolidated 911 system with the City of Covington and the Town of Clifton Forge to further leverage limited resources.

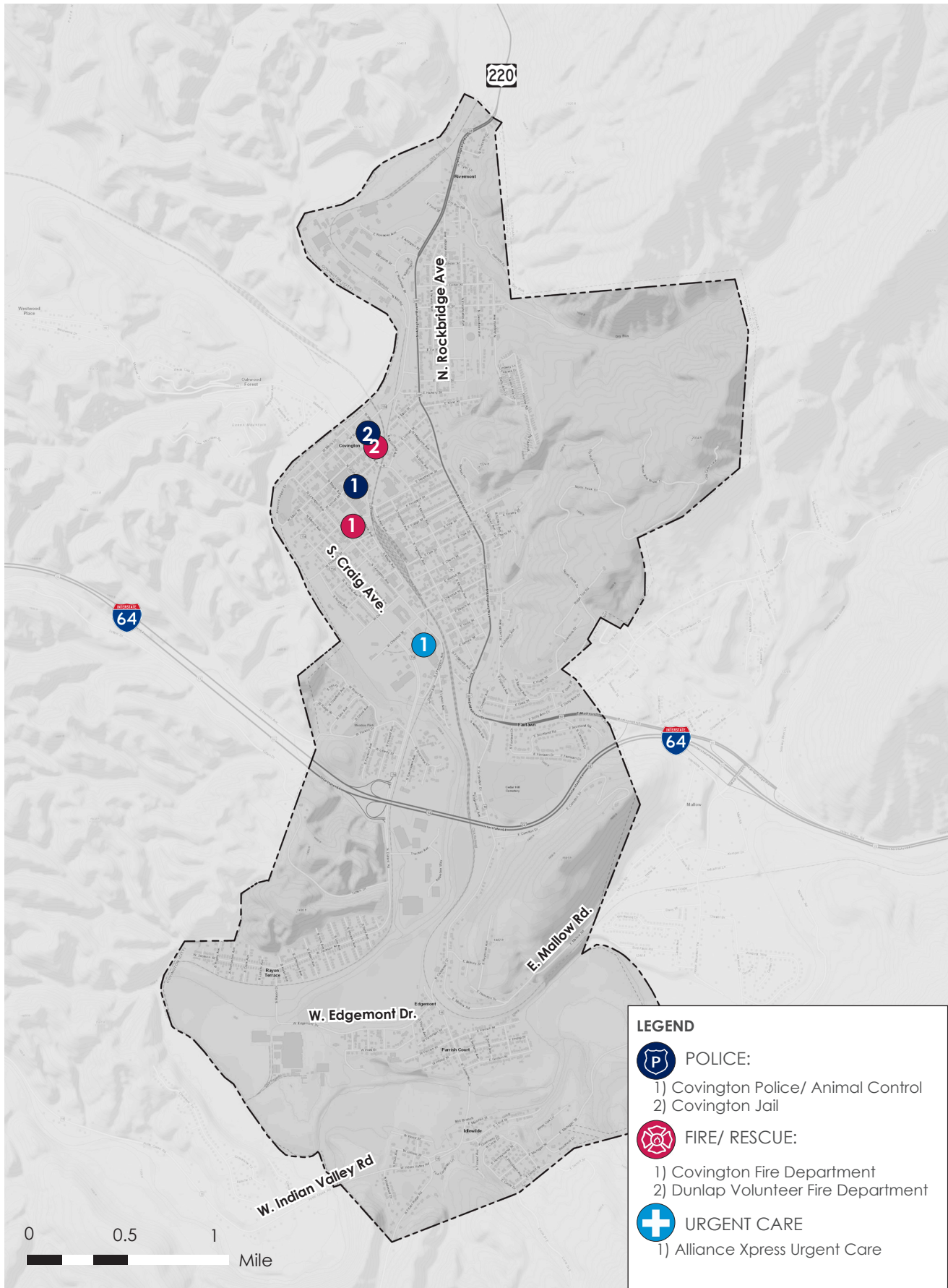
These issues are mirrored in the hospital system, where there is difficulty recruiting new doctors;

▼ MAP 9.1 CITY OF COVINGTON SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES





▼ MAP 9.2 CITY OF COVINGTON EMS, FIRE AND POLICE STATIONS





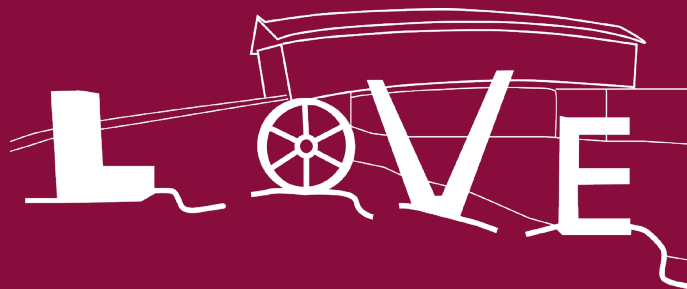


10

# HISTORIC & CULTURAL PROFILE

## #1 ONE OF THE MOST PHOTOGRAPHED VIRGINIA LANDMARKS

Source: Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, <http://www.visitalleghanyhighlands.com/main/index.php>



The only remaining wooden, covered humpback bridge of its design. Built in 1857, it is the oldest covered bridge in Virginia. The landmark is on the National Register of Historic Places.



## 4 CIVIL WAR SITES

1. Averell's Salem Raid
2. Jackson River Depot
3. Lucy Selina Furnace
4. Australia Furnace

Source: Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, <http://www.visitalleghanyhighlands.com/civil-war>



3 SITES

3 DISTRICTS

The City has both historic districts and places that are on the National Register that make up 212 total contributing resources.

Source: National Register of Historic Places, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp>

## HISTORIC MILESTONES

Sources: Previous Comprehensive Plans





## SECTION 10. HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

The City of Covington is situated on the Jackson River within the Appalachian Mountains of western Virginia, and serves as the economic and cultural hub of the Alleghany Highlands. First designated as a town in 1819 and later incorporated as a city in 1833, the City of Covington has served as the region's focal point since its founding. The City of Covington has a rich history in Appalachian heritage, cultivation, industry and railroad lineage.

In the late 19th Century, the region's agricultural economy became secondary to the mining and forging of iron, as the region contained rich deposits of iron ore. Mines and furnaces were established as early as 1827, but did not see substantial growth until after the Civil War. After production demand from the war had ceased, these mines and furnaces continued to experience increased demand for the mining of iron ore and the production of pig iron. Due to the iron industry, the region experienced growth in the late 1800s until the early 1900s. This growth occurred predominantly in the communities surrounding the mines and furnaces. As the iron industry grew, it quickly became the Highlands' main source of economic support.

Though the iron industry was fading by the early 1900s, its legacy was the establishment of an industrial workforce within the Alleghany Highlands. As a result, the stage was set to encourage new industrial growth. The majority of this growth was located in the City

of Covington. The C&O Railroad was also a major element in generating growth in the Alleghany Highlands. The Railroad operated daily passenger trains through Covington and provided many of the industries in the area with access to rail transportation. The availability of rail made Covington one of the highest freight paying stations on the C&O rail line.

Over the course of the industrial boom and into the current day, there have been many industries that have called the Alleghany Highlands home. Many of those that remain in operation are supporting industries of WestRock. WestRock, originally known as West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, is the largest and most enduring component of the local economy. The mill started operation in 1899 as one of the area's primary employers. It has gone through numerous ownership changes and expansions over the years, and continues to thrive within the Alleghany Highlands.

The City of Covington also experienced its most significant amount of growth during the late 1800s to the mid-1900s due to industrial development within and around the City. It was during this time that public services began to be developed and the recognizable form of the City took shape. The impacts of the industrial development boom can be seen in that 42 percent of the existing housing stock within the City, as of 2010, was built between 1940 and 1959.

There are six national register historic districts, which contain a total of 1,057 contributing historic structures, and thirteen national register historic sites designated throughout Alleghany Highlands. The contributing historical resources within the districts are largely associated with the economic growth experienced within region during the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. The listing of these districts and sites on the national register does not impose any additional restrictions on what the property owner may do with a designated property. However, these contributing resources and sites contain historical or architectural significance and are a source of community identity and cultural pride.

**LUKE'S MOUNTAIN** – Designated in 1998, the district contains 23 contributing historic structures, most of which are single-family residences and agricultural buildings built in the mid-nineteenth century by members of the Luke Family. William A. Luke Sr. owned the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company.

**ROSEDALE** – Designated in 1998, the district contains 79 contributing historic structures, most of which are mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century residential housing.

**COVINGTON** – Designated in 1991, the district contains 110 contributing historic structures and encompasses the historic core of the City of Covington. The majority of the district is composed of late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century commercial, governmental, educational, religious, industrial and residential structures.

**LONGDALE FURNACE** – Designated in 1998, the district contains 38 contributing historic structures built during the mid to late-nineteenth century. These were associated with the operations of the Longdale Iron Company and housing for the company's personnel.

**CLIFTON FORGE RESIDENTIAL** – Designated in 2012, the district contains 730 contributing historic structures that are predominantly single-family residential units dating to the turn-of-the twentieth century.

**CLIFTON FORGE COMMERCIAL** – Designated in 1992, the district contains 77 contributing late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century buildings located within the central business district of Clifton Forge.

## CULTURE

One of the greatest attractions and source of community pride is the natural beauty of the area. Nearly half of the region is designated as National Forest, most of which was purchased by the U.S. Forest Service during the 1930's and 1940's when the iron industries were closing. Around that same time, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) recruited enrollees from the area to construct roads, trails and lookout towers, and to plant trees. The CCC was also responsible for the construction of Douthat State Park and the Longdale Recreation area.

During World War I, the Alleghany Highlands community came together to support a

victory garden located below the Rosedale Community, in the County and adjacent to the City boundary. This garden was cultivated to provide a sustainable source of locally grown produce during the war. The County has acquired the land and at the request of the family donating the land has named it Rose Dale Park, which was the original name of the community before it was combined into Rosedale. The park is just over 14 acres and includes public parking, river access, and two graded soccer/football fields. A small community garden may be incorporated in the future if interest is expressed by the community. If a community garden is established in the future, informational signage could be placed at the site of the garden to recognize its historic past.

The Humpback Bridge also serves as a source of community pride. The bridge was built in 1857 and was restored in 1953 after the local woman's club began a campaign for the restoration of the bridge. The bridge is now the only remaining wooden, covered, humpback bridge in the United States. The area around the bridge serves as a wayside park and contains one of the area's most unique pieces of artwork. The LOVEwork at Humpback Bridge art piece in the park was created using materials historic to the area. The bricks are from historic structures, the gear is from one of the old paper machines at WestRock, the "v" shape in the tree represents the area's natural beauty, and the railroad ties forming the E represents the area's connection to the

railroad. This is one location that represents the full history of the Alleghany Highlands.

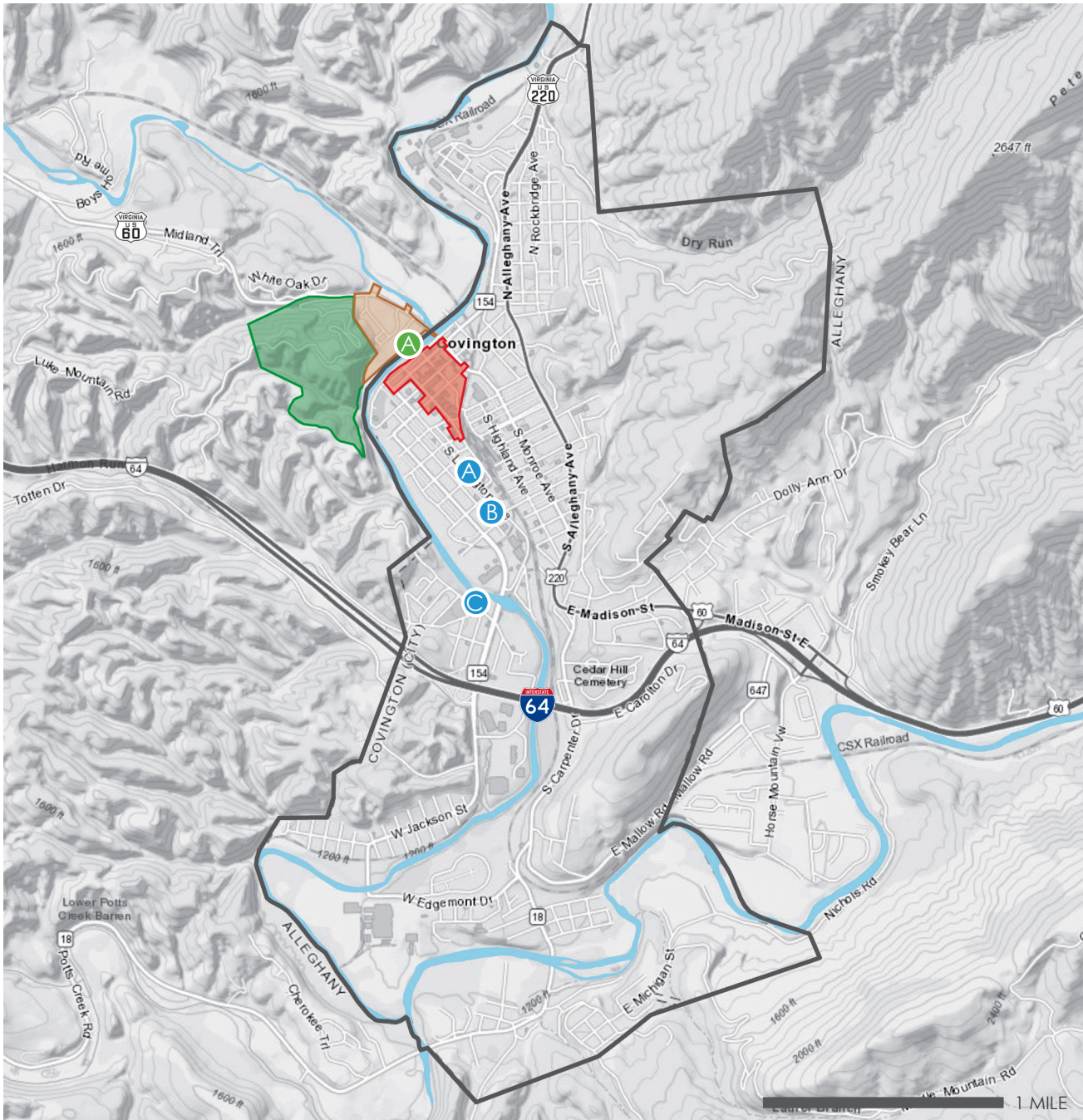
The City of Covington is developing the new Covington Heritage & Discovery Center, highlighting the City's industrial roots. The completion timeframe of the center is to be determined.

## IMPLICATIONS

The population of the Alleghany Highlands is aging, with the 65+ age group comprising a significant share of the region's population. While there are other implications with an aging population, one that is important to historic and cultural resources is that the older residents remember the region during its boom and growth period and contributed to the prosperity. The group remembers the area when it was thriving and wants to see it that way again.



▼ MAP 10.1 COVINGTON INSET: HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES

- Rosedale Historic District
- Covington Historic District
- Luke's Mountain Historic District

- A First Baptist Church
- B Covington High School
- C Conrad Fudge House

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- A Rosedale Park





11

# PARKS & RECREATION PROFILE

15 PARKS & RECREATION  
FACILITIES

100+ MILES OF ACCESSIBLE  
HIGHLAND TRAILS



## 2015 SOBA AWARD

THE WAYSIDE PARK BOAT SLIDE WON THE  
AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SMALL ACCESS  
CATEGORY AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN VERMONT

◀ Image courtesy of City of Covington - <http://www.covington.va.us/about-covington/parks-recreation/parks/teddy-dressler-wayside-park/>

21

ATHLETIC FIELDS  
& COURTS



11

SPORTS  
LEAGUES

## 3 PARKS WITH RIVER ACCESS

And 3 public boat launches



With Class I & II Rapids  
the rivers are great for  
Kayaking and Tubing!

23

JACKSON RIVER  
SPORTS COMPLEX  
EVENTS PER YEAR

The Complex is composed of

75 total acres

20 acres of turf fields

5 multi-use athletic fields

1 amphitheater among other amenities



## SECTION 11. PARKS & RECREATION

One of the points of community pride for the City of Covington is its parks and recreation program. From traditional playgrounds to boat ramps to award winning ballfields, the City has a wide range of opportunities for anyone who enjoys the outdoors. Not only do these spaces increase quality of life for residents, but they help to support an economic sector that thrives on the region's natural assets. Supporting these opportunities will be key in growing the recreation economy.

### PARKS & RECREATION

The rich open spaces and natural resources of the Alleghany Highlands are, perhaps, its best asset. These resources will be conserved, while allowing for the enjoyment of these places by residents and tourists alike. There are many places throughout the Highlands for recreation opportunities, specifically wildlife sites, recreation trails, gardens, boating access points, sites for fishing, the forests themselves, and even a few golf courses in the region. Additionally the local Parks Departments and the local YMCA have numerous recreation programs from camps and swimming to youth sports leagues and fishing. The Highlands are also home to Lake Moomaw and Douthat State Park, which offers unique recreation opportunities.

While the City has 15 parks, there are three locations that offer something special for residents. Main Street Park is the home for the City's pool, which was recently renovated.

Casey Field is a baseball and football multipurpose field that is the home field for Covington High School. The field is home to the Covington Lumberjacks and won the 1997 National High School Football Field of the Year designation.

Most recently, the City developed the Jackson River Sports Complex, which boasts a playground, various ballfields, a driving range, and an amphitheater. The complex attracts numerous visitors for sporting events. Future projects associated with the site include the Paper Trail pedestrian pathway and bridge connecting across the Jackson River to the Commerce Center. Additionally, there is available space to develop a campground for short-stay travelers.

There are numerous recreation opportunities through the US Forest Service in the nearby National Forests. There are recreation areas, wilderness viewing areas, and numerous trails. Uniquely, the Eastern National Children's Forest exists where over 1,000 children planted trees in 1972, one year after a wildfire burned 1,176 acres on Potts Mountain. There is a nearby monument to the children and the names of the children were placed in a time capsule to be opened on its 100th anniversary in 2072.

### TOURISM

Tourism related to the parks and recreation facilities within the Alleghany Highlands is part of asset-based economic development. Tourism

is largely monitored and encouraged by the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism (Chamber of Commerce), partially funded by the transient occupancy tax. The Chamber of Commerce has been marketing these recreational resources for quite some time to the benefit of the region. A large project of the Chamber of Commerce includes a new logo for the Alleghany Highlands region, mimicked throughout this plan, and signs utilizing the logo for the County and municipalities. The next stage of this initiative is to complete wayfinding signs throughout the Highlands. Additionally, the Jackson River Sports Complex and Casey Field draw crowds of sports enthusiasts for competitive sporting events.

## IMPLICATIONS

The parks and recreational assets of the Alleghany Highlands are one of the area's top attractions. These can be cultivated and grown to improve the economy and market the area to an entirely new set of potential residents. Utilizing the natural assets of the region is known as asset-based economic development and is one of the strongest opportunities the region has. Care should be taken to ensure that these areas remain high quality and continued connections occur in order to capitalize on these opportunities. Increasing the connection between the existing trails and the other nearby amenities will only strengthen the system.

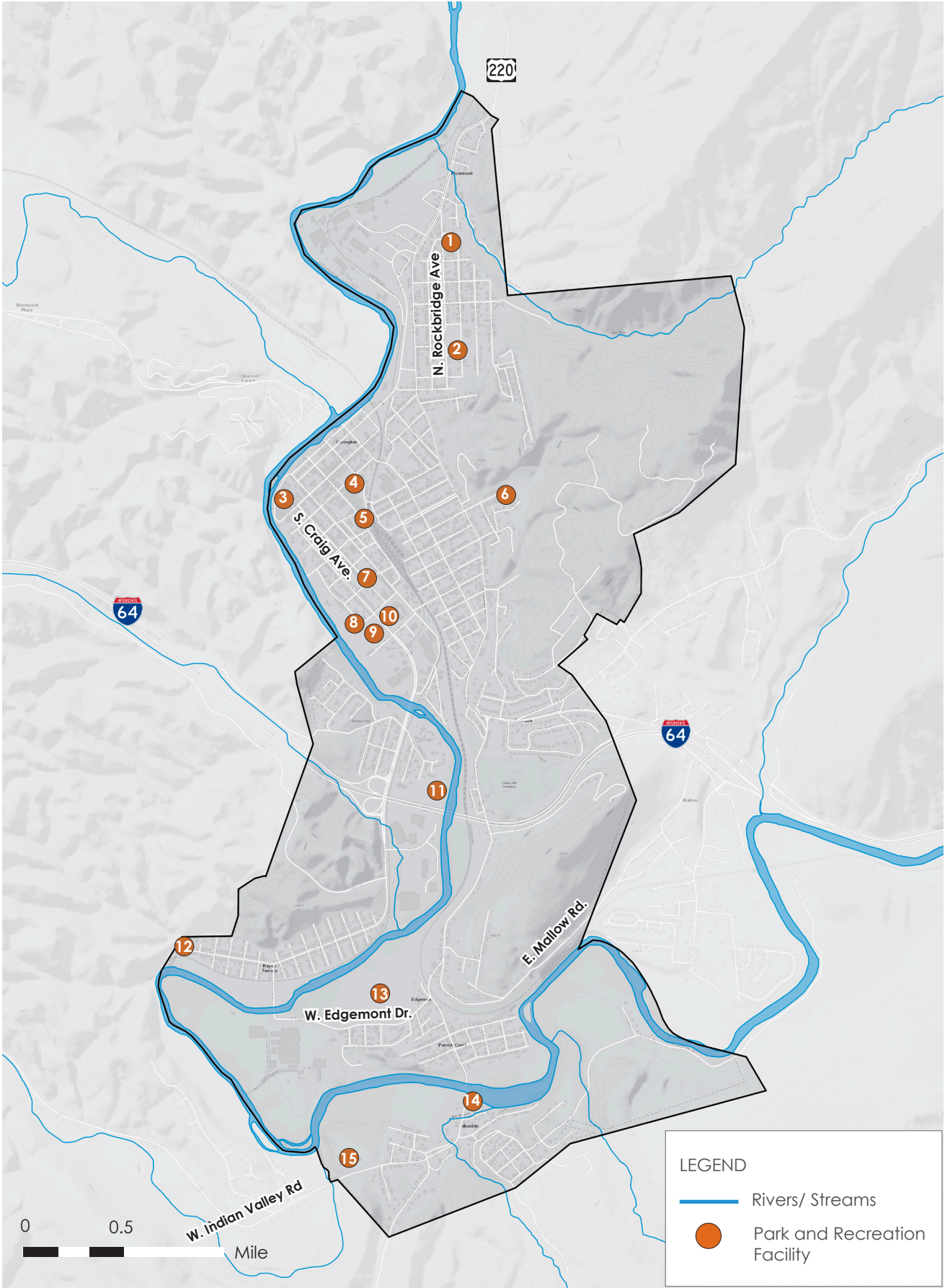
Alleghany County has been successful in developing and growing the regional Jackson

River Scenic Trail system. A major opportunity for the City of Covington is to connect an urban trail network to the existing regional trail, along Alleghany Avenue and throughout downtown Covington. The initial connection should be from where the Jackson River Scenic Trail ends at the northern boundary with the City, weaving through downtown and connecting the numerous parks. Secondary connections should include residential, commercial, and historic and cultural sites.










Aside from creating a trail system, land could be designated next to the parks or in strategic locations along the trails to accommodate outfitters, small food establishments, coffee houses, cycle repair shops, etc., that would cater to the users of the trails and the crowds for events. There is also an opportunity for hotel and other accommodation businesses to expand their appeal to tourists and recreation enthusiasts. This is a current opportunity that is ready for development. Care should be taken to ensure that the development of support businesses does not negatively impact the natural areas themselves.

While there may be little to no development pressure now, should development pressure increase over the next five to ten years, the City may want to look at provisions whereby land developers designate a portion of large sites to the County for park or recreation use, or pay a fee in lieu.

▼ MAP 11.1 CITY OF COVINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION





MAP #	PARK/ RECREATION FACILITY NAME	 BASEBALL FIELD	 COURTS	 OPEN PARK SPACE	 ATHLETIC FIELD	 BOAT LAUNCH	 RESTROOM FACILITY	 PLAY-GROUND	 PICNIC SHELTER	 RIVER ACCESS	OTHER
1	Rivermont Park		X	X	X			X			
2	Reservoir Park		X		X		X	X	X		
3	Main Street Park		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Pool
4	Covington Parks & Rec										
5	Covington Public Works			X							
6	Jeter Watson Center		X	X			X	X			
7	Hytower Park		X				X	X	X		
8	Skate Park										Skate park
9	Casey Field	X			X		X				
10	Covington High School		X		X		X				Gym
11	Fort Young Park		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Gardens
12	Nettleton Park	X	X				X	X	X		
13	Jackson River Sports Complex	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Amphitheater
14	Teddy-Dressler Wayside Park					X			X		
15	Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate Schools		X	X	X		X	X	X		





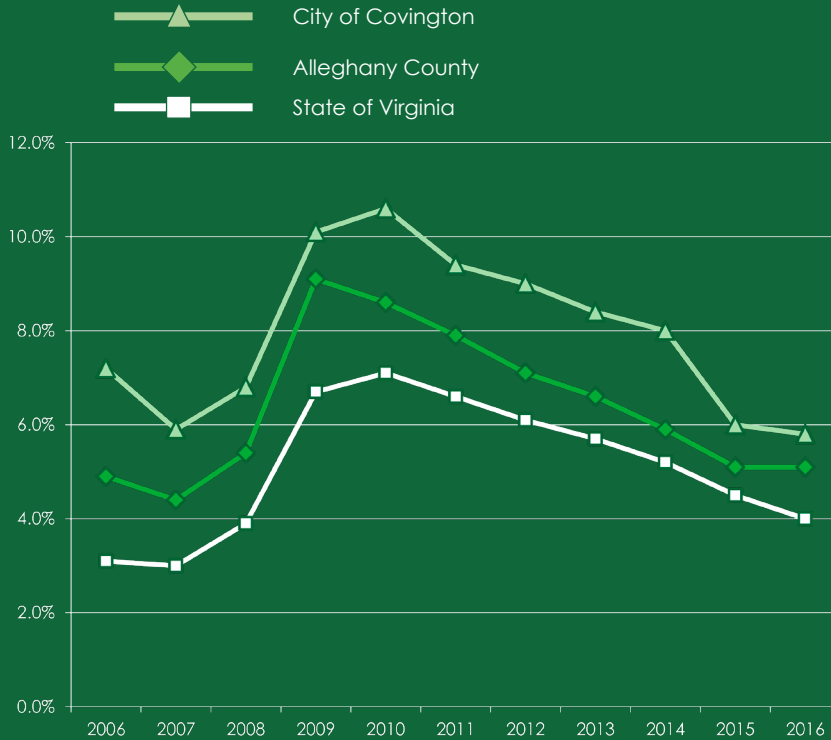
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# ECONOMIC PROFILE

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, 2018 and American Community Survey, 2016

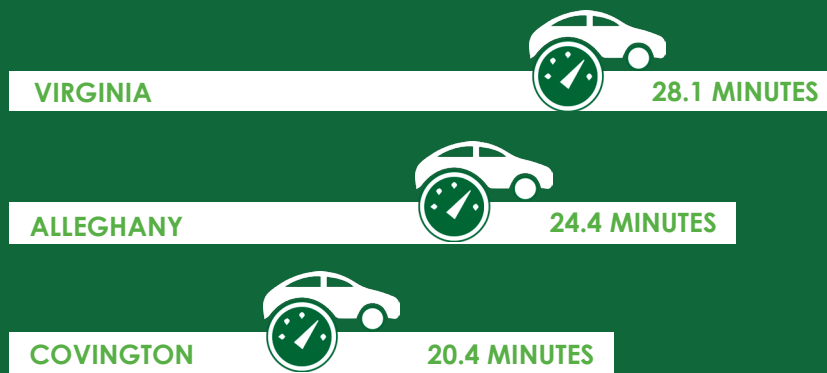
## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, % (2016)



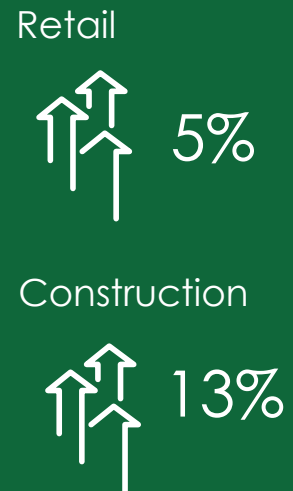
## LARGEST INDUSTRIES, % (2018)



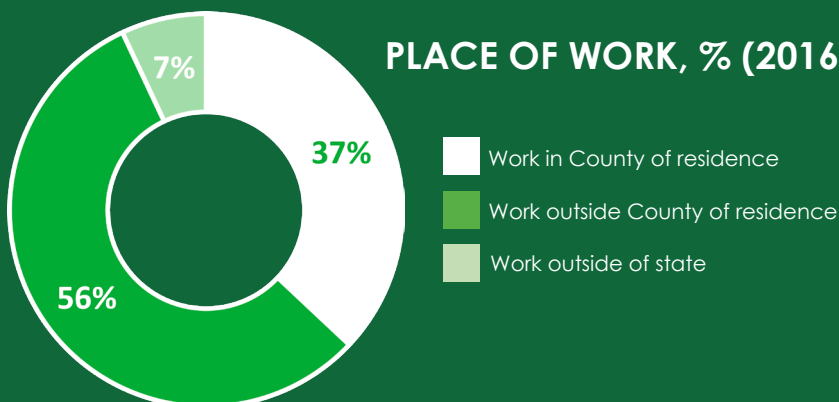
## COMMUTER MEAN TRAVEL TIME (2016)



## LARGEST INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS, % (2016)



## PLACE OF WORK, % (2016)





## SECTION 12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economy is of utmost importance to the sustainability and growth of the region. In the past, as mentioned throughout this Plan, when large employers left the area, so did the people and tax revenue generated by those residents. That being said, the Alleghany Highlands has many unique resources that, when fostered, can bring prosperity back into this region. While many may want to get back to the way the region was when thriving, it is important to realize that more sustainable growth will happen with diversification of the local economy, especially when based on the underlying assets of the region.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

*Virginia Labor Availability Report - 2010*

*Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation Strategic Plan - 2008*

*DRAFT RVARC Economic Development Strategy - 2017*

*Need for New Lodging Accommodations in Virginia's Alleghany Highlands Assessment - 2017*

*Defining and Implementing a Vision for Economic Growth in the Alleghany Highlands - 2014*  
*Alleghany Highlands - 2014*

### ECONOMIC PROFILE

Based upon the 2018 Virginia Employment Commission City of Covington Profile, the top three economic sectors are retail (14%), government (12%), and construction (9%). While no projections exist for government employment, retail is projected to increase (5%) by 2024 and the construction industry is projected to grow by 13 percent. The top five growth occupations in the City mirror that of the County and include personal financial advisors (51.4%), home health aides (47%), nurse practitioners (37%), medical assistants (33%), and physician assistants (32%). This information shows that 80 percent of growth occupations are within the health care field.

Median household income, or the middle household income, was \$34,703 in 2016, while it was \$35,277 in 2010 and \$30,325 in 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, there was an increase in median household income of \$4,592, roughly \$460 per year, while there has been a small reduction between 2010 and 2016,

The majority of residents (93%) drive alone to work, which on average takes 20 minutes. Thirty percent of residents work within the City, while 63 percent work outside the City.

Unemployment rates for the City have both risen and fallen in the last 10 years, starting with roughly five percent (5%) in 2006, rising

to ten percent (10%) in 2009, and falling back to five percent (5%) in 2016. While the unemployment rate seems relatively low, comparing that to the increase in individuals below the poverty level, up from 13 percent in 2000 and 19 percent in 2010, shows that while there are more people working, they are not making enough money to live, highlighting underemployment challenges in the region.

## IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

It is important to note that transportation is essential to the economy; industry cannot locate where employees, goods, and resources are not accessible. The City has high accessibility along Interstate 64 and along the CSX railway, creating multiple opportunities for shipping and accessibility for many industries. This network is an important asset to the region, as there is available land along the interstate for industrial development.

## IMPORTANCE OF LAND USE

The City's future land use designations take into account existing conditions, as well as desired conditions to accommodate economic development. For instance, while there are different designations with associated densities and uses, all designations can allow for some type of economic development. To highlight the changing nature of the City, many areas that have been traditionally residential are now designated as transitional mixed use to reflect changes from residential to commercial establishments. Additionally,

there are numerous areas that have been designated industrial, or at a higher intensity of use, to allow for economic development in these locations. If land is determined to be best suited for industry or commercial spaces in the future, the future land use map and zoning map should be updated to reflect the intended use of those areas.

## TOURISM

Tourism has grown in importance over the years and creates part of the foundation of the region's future economy. The many community events held in the area's parks and open spaces have drawn tourists to the area and increased tourism related spending. Domestic travel impacts have increased since 2011 as well. While increases have been modest, this highlights that tourism and the region's assets are economically strong in the region.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Alleghany Highlands has numerous economic development related plans and/or reports completed for the region, some with a general focus and some with a targeted focus. Each plan includes goals and recommendations, both short- and long-term. Not all reports recommend the same strategies, but all look to the region's future. This Comprehensive Plan looked at the recommendations of five (5) of these reports and incorporates support for many of these initiatives through suggested implementation

strategies. Further information on economic development initiatives for the Highlands can be found via the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation or Chamber of Commerce.

## IMPLICATIONS

The data shows the changes in the region's economy that resulted from the loss of numerous large employers. With the increase in poverty levels, it is evident that the area has been negatively affected by the loss of industry. The workforce, as discussed in the community profile, has mainly high school education levels and labor-based work experience, which creates a need for additional industrial jobs in the Alleghany Highlands.

It would be easy to determine that the only way to improve the economic conditions of the region is to attract another large industry; however, history has shown that this strategy can greatly improve the economy short-term, but also significantly handicap the economy in the long-term. Industry is important, but the economic strategies for the future should be based on the region's assets, industrial workforce and natural resources; the growth occupations in the region, namely in the healthcare field; and diversification with a range of smaller employers. The tourism economy needs to be supported and needs further investment to improve.

While there is a low rate of unemployment, the slow growth in income levels and the increase in poverty levels highlights the issue

of underemployment in the region, namely people who want to work full-time, but can only find part time employment or those individuals who are qualified for upper level positions, but can only find work in entry-level positions. In the future, the City should look to incentivize employers that will bring a higher quality of positions to the area for qualified residents to fill.









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## SECTION 13. IMPLEMENTATION

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide the actions of the City's elected and appointed officials, staff, and community stakeholders, as the City moves forward. This is a plan of action, with a focus on strategies and corresponding action items to achieve the vision. At a minimum, City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council should review and monitor implementation progress on an annual basis. This will provide the Council the opportunity to set priorities during each budget cycle to ensure that the budget includes the necessary funds or other resources needed to implement the plan.

The strategies and action items outlined in the plan were compiled into an implementation matrix to be used as a quick and easy reference. Each strategy is categorized by the jurisdiction it applies to, the timeframe for implementation and the estimated cost related to implementing each strategy. The following are descriptions of each of the categories in the implementation matrix:

### CITY/COUNTY CATEGORY

This portion of the matrix indicates if the strategy applies to the City, County or "Both" jurisdictions.

### TIMEFRAME CATEGORY

This portion of the matrix represents the timeframe in which each action step can be addressed. The timeframe is the length of time it take take to achieve a strategy, once begun. Timeframes are indicated in the matrix as short-term, intermediate, or long-term.

Below is a description of each timeframe.

- Short-term - can be achieved in less than two years.
- Intermediate - can be achieved in two to five years.
- Long-term - may take longer than five years to achieve.
- Ongoing - Some action items are designated as "ongoing" due to need for constant efforts toward implementing the strategy.

### COST CATEGORY

This column in the matrix represents resources that are primarily related to financial resources necessary to complete the implementation action items. The tables uses the "\$" symbol to represent a theoretical range of necessary capital. Actual resources could be more or less depending on the final scope of the project or more detailed cost estimates. The ranges are as follows:

- \$ - Less than \$25,000
- \$\$ - \$25,000-\$100,000
- \$\$\$ - \$100,000-\$500,000
- \$\$\$\$ - More than \$500,000
- Policy – Not outside of normal annual budget expenditures



## Goal 1: The Alleghany Highlands will become known as the recreation & cultural hub of Western Virginia.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE A: Develop arts and cultural centers within the Alleghany Highlands into tourism destinations</b>				
A.1	Highlight existing museums, cultural centers, cultural and historic sites, and historic landmarks through local government internet and social media sites to increase awareness.	Both	Short-term	\$
A.2	Develop a common marketing plan to improve connections between museums, cultural centers, and historic landmarks within the Alleghany Highlands.	Both	Short-term	\$
A.3	Invest in public art as a way to catalyze reinvestment in the City of Covington and Town of Clifton Forge.	Both	Intermediate	\$ - \$\$
A.4	Make regular and recurring public investments in existing cultural and tourism destinations.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$
A.5	Promote the cultural hub in Town of Clifton Forge.	County	Ongoing	Policy - \$
A.6	Continue to invest in the Alleghany Highlands recreation, arts, and cultural programming.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$
A.7	Collaborate with Douthat State Park and the US Forest Service to improve programming.	County	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE B: Promote the preservation of designated historic structures within the Alleghany Highlands</b>				
B.1	Preserve the historic character in the City of Covington and Town of Clifton Forge downtowns by encouraging property owners to voluntarily make historically accurate repairs and renovations to contributing historic structures.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
B.2	Support Olde Town Covington and Clifton Forge Main Street in their historic preservation efforts.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$
B.3	Link historic structures, buildings, and various other locations to the regional trail network.	Both	Intermediate	\$\$
B.4	Integrate historic sites with the current wayfinding signage program.	Both	Short-term	\$
B.5	Invite the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to facilitate public education meetings for developers and property owners looking to invest in historic structures.	Both	Short-term	\$

## Goal 1: The Alleghany Highlands will become known as the recreation & cultural hub of Western Virginia.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE C: Improve the health and vitality of the regional ecosystem.</b>				
C.1	Identify areas adjacent to significant natural features and recreational assets that should be maintained to support the viability of these assets	Both	Short-term	Policy
C.2	Create a regional forum with area non-profits and other agencies to discuss concerns and approaches to maintaining and improving the overall ecosystem and the region's viewsheds.	Both	Intermediate	Policy
C.3	Partner with the US Forest Service and private land owners to diversify forest habitat.	County	Ongoing	Policy
C.4	Identify ways to partner with the US Forest Service to improve the maintenance of their existing facilities, including the existing trails, that connect the City of Covington, Town of Clifton Forge, and to Douthat State Park	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$\$
<b>OBJECTIVE D: Preserve the rustic mountain landscape and views that create the beautiful natural setting of the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
D.1	Prepare an assessment and study of the mountain viewsheds and ridgelines that form the Alleghany Highlands.	Both	Short-term	\$
D.2	Develop a ridgeline protection ordinance that protects prominent views.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
D.3	Require a viewshed analysis for major development proposals.	Both	Intermediate	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE E: Improve connectivity and usage of the regional park system.</b>				
E.1	Ensure park facilities and historic sites are included in the regional wayfinding signage program.	Both	Short-term	Policy
E.2	Continue to support the Jackson River Scenic Trail segments and finish the Alleghany County trail system.	County	Ongoing	\$\$\$\$
E.3	Create an urban trail network to link the Jackson River Scenic Trail to the City's parks, residential, and commercial areas as well as providing a connection along Alleghany Avenue. Thus improving walkability and encouraging non-motorized, active transportation.	Both	Intermediate	\$\$
E.4	Develop a pedestrian trail connection from the Jackson River Sports Complex across the Jackson River to the Commerce Center off of South Durant Road.	City	Intermediate	\$\$\$

### Goal 1: The Alleghany Highlands will become known as the recreation & cultural hub of Western Virginia.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
E.5	Connect the Town of Clifton Forge with the US Forest Service and Douthat State Park Trail network.	County	Intermediate	\$\$\$
E.6	Connect the urban trail network to Fore Mountain Trail	City	Intermediate	\$\$\$
E.7	Utilize existing park facilities to emphasize a healthy lifestyle by including outdoor fitness equipment and similar amenities.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
<b>OBJECTIVE F : Develop outdoor recreation- and Eco-tourism-related business opportunities.</b>				
F.1	Develop an outdoor recreation and eco-tourism business recruitment plan.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$
F.2	Develop a plan to encourage the development of trailside parks, facilities, and recreation oriented businesses along trail heads.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
<b>OBJECTIVE G: Attract and Promote unique accommodations throughout the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
G.1	The City, County and local Economic Development Corporation should seek to cultivate opportunities for new lodging establishments.	Both	Short-term	Policy
G.2	Prepare and adopt a Tourism Zone ordinance and apply for assistance through the Commonwealth of Virginia Tourism Development Financing Program.	Both	Short-term	Policy



**Goal 2: Our communities will develop the regional economy by supporting existing industry, embracing economic diversification, and fostering emerging business and industry sectors.**

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE A: Ensure that an adequate supply of land is available to meet future economic development needs.</b>				
A.1	Evaluate land resources for future economic development needs.	Both	Short-term	\$\$
A.2	Utilize zoning to protect lands suitable for industrial or commercial development.	Both	Short-term	Policy
A.3	Plan phased extension of utilities for potential industrial or commercial development.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$\$\$\$
A.4	Create and maintain an inventory of available development sites.	Both	Short-term	\$
A.5	Identify urban fringe areas for collaborative economic development projects.	Both	Short-term	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE B : Increase business and industry development within the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
B.1	Develop economic development incentives along with the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation to attract business and industry to the region.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$\$\$
<b>OBJECTIVE C: Support the growth and expansion of the region's base economic sectors.</b>				
C.1	Identify support industries that supply and provide services to WestRock and Ingevity.	Both	Short-term	Policy
C.2	Establish a Council to advise on needs of the business community in the Alleghany Highlands to ensure business retention.	Both	Short-term	Policy
C.3	Collaborate with existing businesses to identify local government infrastructure improvements.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
C.4	Partner with industry to share costs of utility improvements	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$
C.5	Support existing small businesses throughout the Highlands.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
C.6	Work with CSX to improve rail service to industrial areas in the region.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$\$
C.7	Generate a jobs gap analysis to highlight sectors where more workforce training is needed.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$

**Goal 3: Alleghany County and the City of Covington will improve and expand collaboration to provide effective and efficient services to citizens.**

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE A: Continue collaboration and coordination between Alleghany County and the City of Covington on regional issues.</b>				
A.1	Enhance the public transportation system to be a more convenient and coordinated system throughout the Alleghany Highlands.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$\$
A.2	Create common development regulations for urban fringe areas to better coordinate development activities between jurisdictions.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
<b>OBJECTIVE B: Coordinate infrastructure improvements throughout the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
B.1	Provide utilities and/or upgrades in underserved areas.	Both	Long-term	\$\$\$\$
B.2	Align infrastructure and the capacity of public services with planned growth areas.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$\$
B.3	Provide broadband/wireless internet access (WiFi) to the City of Covington, Town of Clifton Forge and Town of Iron Gate, as well as immediately adjacent areas of Alleghany County where service currently does not meet today's need.	Both	Intermediate	\$\$\$
B.4	Improve coordination between public utility systems throughout the Alleghany Highlands.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
B.5	Leverage local government resources to address inflow and infiltration concerns in the wastewater collection system.	Both	Intermediate	\$\$\$\$
<b>OBJECTIVE C: Collaborate with the local education systems to improve career and technical-oriented education offerings in the region.</b>				
C.1	Support additional programming at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College and the Jackson River Technical Center for workforce training, adult education, and emerging economic sector programs.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$
C.2	Partner with business and industry to provide workforce training to residents.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$\$\$
C.3	Provide County school system with projects addressing current community needs for the New Tech Network program, which focuses on problem-based learning.	County	Short-term	Policy
C.4	Encourage the City school system to explore new and innovative education programs.	City	Ongoing	Policy
C.5	Improve the partnership between the City and County School Boards/systems.	Both	Ongoing	Policy

**Goal 3: Alleghany County and the City of Covington will improve and expand collaboration to provide effective and efficient services to citizens.**

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE D: Link the Medical/Hospital, Emergency Medical Service and Fire Protection efforts throughout the Alleghany Highlands to boost efficiency and coverage.</b>				
D.1	Consolidate radio and 911 systems.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$\$\$
D.2	Collaborate on mock disaster training within the region.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
D.3	Identify funding opportunities that will help attract and retain employees in the region's medical services industry.	Both	Short-term	Policy
D.4	Support the United Fire Association and its ongoing efforts to improve cooperation and collaboration between local fire service agencies.	Both	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$
D.5	Coordinate efforts to implement the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan for the protection of life and property.	Both	Ongoing	Policy



### Goal 4: Our communities will ensure the stability and vitality of our neighborhoods and commercial centers.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE A: Improve the quality of the housing stock in the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
A.1	Prepare an assessment of residential structures in neighborhoods for reinvestment or targeted demolition.	City	Short-term	Policy - \$
A.2	Prepare an evaluation of neighborhood conditions.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$
A.3	Develop a matching grant program for the improvement of owner-occupied housing.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$\$
A.4	Utilize building and minimum housing code enforcement, along with grant programs, to rehabilitate the deteriorated housing stock in the City of Covington.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$
A.5	Demolish five percent (5%) of residential structures per year that are designated as dilapidated and cannot feasibly be rehabilitated.	City	Long-term	\$\$
A.6	Implement a rental registration program to ensure that rental properties meet minimum housing standards prior to their occupancy by tenants.	City	Intermediate	Policy
A.7	Add additional staff to monitor minimum code requirements and violations.	City	Short-term	\$\$
A.8	Assist neighborhood organizations and work with advocacy groups to build community capacity and improve neighborhoods.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE B: Expand the variety of the housing stock in the Alleghany Highlands.</b>				
B.1	Prepare an analysis of the housing stock detailing the availability and need for housing tailored to young professionals, young families, and older residents.	Both	Short-term	\$
B.2	Encourage the development of housing types targeted for young professionals and young families.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
B.3	Encourage the development of housing types that offer the ability to age-in-place, targeted to people over the age of 55.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE C: Upgrade the quality of commercial spaces in the City of Covington.</b>				
C.1	Proactively enforce property maintenance regulations to ensure the quality of nonresidential buildings.	City	Short-term	Policy - \$
C.2	Fund a program to assist the owners of long-standing commercial development to implement enhancements to their property to improve the overall appearance of the property.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
C.3	Establish a program structure that will ensure buildings in the program outlined in C.2 retain tenants.	City	Ongoing	Policy

### Goal 4: Our communities will ensure the stability and vitality of our neighborhoods and commercial centers.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE D: Cultivate infill and/or redevelopment within the City of Covington.</b>				
D.1	Create infill/redevelopment regulations to ensure the compatibility of infill development with the existing character of neighborhoods and commercial areas within the City.	City	Short-term	Policy - \$
D.2	Identify priority funding locations for residential infill/redevelopment.	City	Short-term	Policy
D.3	Identify priority funding locations for commercial infill/redevelopment	City	Short-term	Policy
D.4	Offer incentive programs for qualifying infill or redevelopment projects.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
D.5	Create a Downtown Overlay zoning district	City	Short-term	Policy - \$
D.6	Update screening and buffer regulations to enhance the compatibility of new development with differing uses and density.	City	Intermediate	Policy
D.7	Create a vacant land inventory for use in promoting infill development opportunities to developers.	City	Short-term	Policy
D.8	Institute a lot cleanup/demolition program within the City to remove unsafe structures in areas where there is infill development potential.	City	Short-term	Policy - \$\$
<b>OBJECTIVE E: Establish an urban trail network to connect residential and commercial areas with parks, schools, and the regional trail network.</b>				
E.1	Develop an Urban Trail Network plan for the City of Covington	City	Short-term	Policy - \$
E.2	Build a pedestrian connection from the Jackson River Sports Complex over the Jackson River to the Commerce Center on South Durant Road.	City	Intermediate	\$\$\$
E.3	Require new, infill and redevelopment projects to connect to the urban trail network or set aside land to create future connections.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$
E.4	Connect trails to residential areas in order to link neighborhoods to recreation and other services.	City	Intermediate	Policy - \$\$
E.5	Restore existing historic brick sidewalks in the downtown area.	City	Short-term	\$\$\$
E.6	Improve the overall maintenance of sidewalks.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$

**Goal 4: Our communities will ensure the stability and vitality of our neighborhoods and commercial centers.**

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE F: Launch a gateway development initiative to enhance key entrances into Alleghany County.</b>				
F.1	Designate gateway areas/corridors for prioritized investment and overlay regulation.	Both	Short-term	Policy
F.2	Investigate options for moving the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center to a more prominent, visible, and accessible location.	Both	Long-term	Policy
F.3	Continue the installation of branded signage and landscaping at designated gateway locations.	Both	Short-term	\$\$
F.4	Designate transportation improvement projects in established gateways as priority investment projects.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE G: Improve land use compatibility in areas where incompatible development patterns and uses have been established that threaten the integrity of neighborhoods or quality of commercial areas.</b>				
G.1	Complete a comprehensive zoning map revision to reduce the amount of spot zoning that exists within the Alleghany Highlands.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
G.2	Complete a comprehensive zoning code update that includes enhancements to development standards to improve the compatibility of new development within the City of Covington/ Alleghany County (i.e. outdoor storage requirements, buffers between uses, etc.).	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$\$
G.3	Identify specific areas with complex compatibility issues and work with property owners to develop solutions.	Both	Intermediate	Policy
G.4	Utilize transitional zoning districts to buffer between districts of significantly different intensity.	City	Intermediate	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE H: Improve the appearance in the City of Covington's downtown</b>				
H.1	Continue to implement a streetscape master plan for downtown Covington.	City	Intermediate	\$\$\$\$
H.2	Utilize façade grants to help facilitate the improved appearance of at least two (2) downtown buildings annually.	City	Long-term	\$
H.3	Create a Downtown Overlay zoning district.	City	Short-term	Policy



### Goal 4: Our communities will ensure the stability and vitality of our neighborhoods and commercial centers.

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE I: Revitalize downtown Covington</b>				
I.1	Maintain involvement in the Virginia Main Street Program through the Olde Town Covington Main Street organization.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$
I.2	Create a direct link from Exit 14 off of Interstate 64 to Main Street.	City	Long-term	\$\$\$\$
I.3	Encourage the development of action-oriented strategies that implement the Main Street Four Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization.	City	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE J : Improve the Alleghany Highlands' road network.</b>				
J.1	Create a timeline for the completion of road improvements and make available to the public.	Both	Short-term	Policy
J.2	Research Smart Scale and alternative funding sources for safety improvements within the region.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
J.3	Work with Virginia DOT on transportation improvement plans in the region.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE K: Decrease the amount of commercial vehicle traffic on residential streets.</b>				
K.1	Designate specific transportation routes to commercial and industrial centers that mitigate truck traffic in residential neighborhoods and improve overall mobility throughout the Highlands.	Both	Intermediate	Policy - \$
K.2	Improve transportation routes for truck traffic to alleviate pressure on neighborhood streets.	Both	Long-term	\$\$\$\$
<b>OBJECTIVE L. Maintain and upgrade bridge infrastructure.</b>				
L.1	Evaluate and fund major bridge renovation projects in the City of Covington on the South Durant Road and Rayon Drive Bridge.	City	Long-term	\$\$\$\$
L.2	Evaluate, collaborate, and fund bridge renovation projects along the Route 60/Rosedale Bridge.	Both	Long-term	\$\$\$\$

**Goal 5: Our region will reverse the population decline of the past several decades.**

ID	Implementation Strategy	City / County	Timeframe	Cost
<b>OBJECTIVE A: Make the Alleghany Highlands a more attractive and appealing location for current and future residents.</b>				
A.1	Explore post-graduation residency requirements in the Alleghany Highlands for students who receive grant funding for higher education and technical training programs in the local area.	Both	Short-term	Policy
A.2	Create ex-officio positions for young residents to participate on local advisory boards.	Both	Short-term	Policy
A.3	Evaluate the need for housing types tailored to retirees, aging residents, and young professionals.	Both	Short-term	Policy - \$
<b>OBJECTIVE B: Create a positive sense of place for the Alleghany Highlands to attract population growth.</b>				
B.1	Market the unique identity of the City of Covington and Alleghany County.	Both	Ongoing	\$
B.2	Designate gateway areas/corridors for prioritized investment and enhanced development regulation.	Both	Short-term	Policy
B.3	Invest in public art as a way to catalyze reinvestment in the City of Covington and Town of Clifton Forge.	Both	Intermediate	\$ - \$\$
B.4	Establish an Urban Trail Network to connect residential and commercial areas with parks, schools, and the regional trail network.	City	Short-term	\$\$
B.5	Revitalize Downtown Covington.	City	Ongoing	Policy - \$\$\$\$
B.6	Focus economic development efforts to capitalize on our best assets, such as our natural capital.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE C: Achieve a zero-net loss of population between 2020 and 2025.</b>				
C.1	Implement the objectives and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan to reverse the decline in population.	Both	Ongoing	Policy
<b>OBJECTIVE D: Achieve a minimum five percent (5%) gain in population over each five-year (5) period between 2025 and 2040.</b>				
D.1	Implement the objectives and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan to help grow the region's population.	Both	Ongoing	Policy

