

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TOWN OF MARION, VIRGINIA



CERTIFIED BY

TOWN OF MARION PLANNING COMMISSION

CHAIRMAN

ADOPTED: 1/2/2018

ADOPTED BY

TOWN OF MARION TOWN COUNCIL

MAYOR

Dining - Shopping - Live Music - Nightlife

Your adventure is just beginning.

Arts, crafts, antiques,
a whole other world of
dining and entertainment.
Moonshine on Main Street.
Bluegrass and barbecue.
Our historic hotel, B&Bs,
Hungry Mother State Park.
All local. All authentic.

All yours. Welcome home

Visit
Historic
DOWNTOWN MARION
A Virginia Main Street Community since 1995

GRETT MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY 2014

marionva.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This planning document was prepared by the Town of Marion Planning Commission, the Town of Marion Town Council, and the Citizens of the Town of Marion. The background research, writing, and assembly of the document were completed by staff of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission and Town staff.

This plan does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation, rather a vision for the future of Marion.

TOWN OF MARION PLANNING COMMISSION

Chairman - Cameron Wolfe, Vice Chairman - Bob Ramsey, Alice Freeman, Jim Barker, Dan Surface, Ben Reedy, Trey White

TOWN OF MARION TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor David Helms, Vice Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Tricia Spencer, Suzanne Jennings, Larry Carter, Bill Weaver, Avery Cornett

TOWN MAYOR

David P. Helms

TOWN MANAGER

Bill Rush

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

ONE. INTRODUCTION.....	1
TWO. MARION FIRST! DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW	7
THREE. POPULATION	17
FOUR. HOUSING	20
FIVE. ECONOMY	23
SIX. TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND SYSTEMS.....	29
SEVEN. COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES.....	37
EIGHT. LAND USE.....	51
NINE. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES	63

ONE. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

The Town's comprehensive plan is an official public document adopted by Town Council. The plan is to be used as a long-term guide for land use decisions related to growth and development and to assist the Town in determining when and where new public facilities and improvements are needed. Recommendations of the comprehensive plan are typically general and long-range to outline a vision of the Town over a 20 -year period.

LEGAL BASIS FOR THE PLAN

The comprehensive plan was developed in accordance with Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. The local planning commission is authorized to prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction. Every governing body is required to adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. The Plan is to be general in nature and designate the general location, character, and extent of public facilities.

UPDATING THE PLAN

Annual Report

The Town of Marion's planning commission recommends conducting an annual review of the comprehensive plan in coordination with the annual budget, as well as other financial, planning and regulatory tools.

Five-Year Updates

The Code of Virginia requires that the comprehensive plan be reviewed at least every five years.

Amendments

As with any document, amendments may be needed over time depending on new initiatives, more detailed planning, or changes in governmental policy. Examples of possible future amendments include neighborhood plans, transportation improvement plans, housing plans, parks plans, or other strategic or Master plans.

Plan Implementation

The plan can be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools. Generally, comprehensive plans are implemented primarily through the Zoning Ordinance, Operating Budget, Capital Improvements Plan, and Master Plans for specific areas.

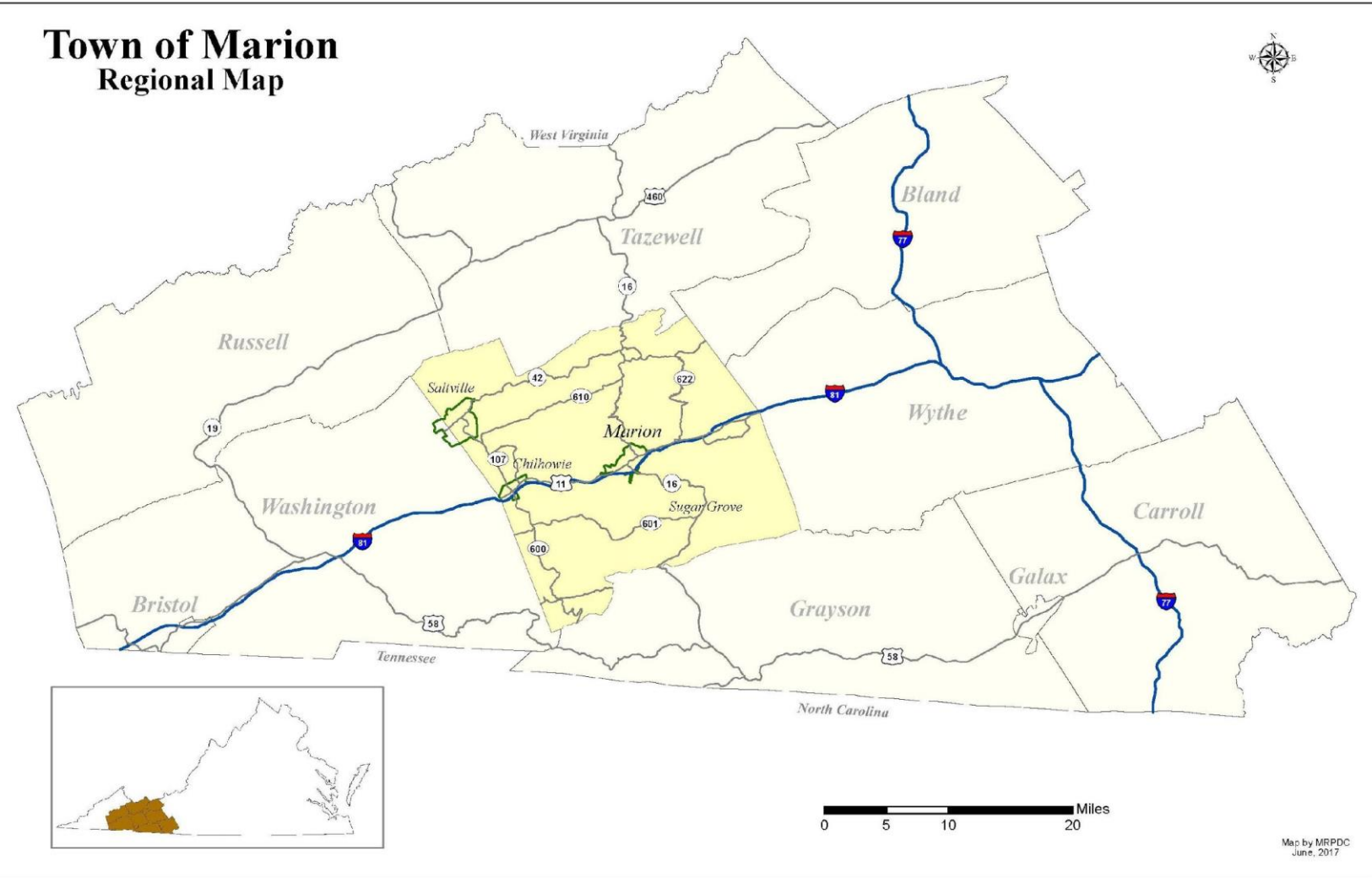
Understanding and Using the Plan

Comprehensive planning is a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The outcome of comprehensive planning is the Comprehensive Plan, which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, economy and housing. The Comprehensive plan encompasses the entire town, a broad range of topics, and covers a long-term time horizon.

The Comprehensive Plan can be a tool for planning the future growth of the local community. The document is official in nature, meaning it is designed to be adopted by the governing body (Town Council). The document can then serve as a policy guide to decisions about community development.

The Plan can be used to assist the governing body, committees, and town staff with strategic planning, visioning and project development. The Plan may also be used for solicitation of new business and industrial development.

Town of Marion Regional Map



DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

Marion is the county seat and largest town in Smyth County, which is located in the southwestern part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Smyth County is bordered by the Counties of Russell and Tazewell to the north, Bland and Wythe to the east, Grayson to the south, and Washington to the west.

Royal Oak, the predecessor of the Town of Marion, was formed in 1776, on the eastern edge of what is now Marion. Marion itself was chartered in 1832, the same year Smyth County was created from parts of Washington and Wythe Counties.

Present day Marion encompasses an area of approximately 4.2 square miles with a population of 5,968 persons in 2010.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND¹

The date of the first early settlers' arrival in what is now the Town of Marion is not of record, but the founding of Marion may be dated from May 25, 1832, when the Smyth County Court, in its second term, ordered the five appointed commissioners to lay out the town. These directions were promptly carried out, and the town was laid off in the fertile farmland belonging to a Mr. William Humes.

As originally laid out, the town extended from Staley Creek on the east to the current location of the Blue Ridge Job Corps on the west. Lots along Main Street were sold and the village began to grow on what had been farmland just a year before. The lot on which the old Hotel Marion stood, which is now the Wells Fargo, originally sold for \$220.

On March 15, 1849, the General Assembly passed an act incorporating the Town of Marion. At that time, the population of the town was between 300 and 500. Over the next three decades, during part of which the nation was fighting the Civil War, the town's population declined until about 1890 when it began to steadily grow.

Detailed records of all Town Council meetings since early 1888 have been filed and contain a wealth of information, both generally and historically, recording step-by-step the growth and progress of the town.

Early residents of the town had a water supply, which came from private cisterns like the Shugart Spring (near old N&W station), and the town pump. The town pump located on Main Street where the Lincoln Hotel now stands, was at the time known as Moore's Saddle Shop. A horse trough was conveniently located in front of the saddle shop near the town pump. Sometimes, water was hauled from Shugart Spring in

Adapted from the original Town of Marion Comprehensive Plan; March, 1977.

wagons.

On April 1, 1888, the “Preston” Spring was purchased and a six-inch pipe laid. Some years later, the “Short” Spring on the old Killinger farm was purchased and an eight-inch pipeline laid to it from the old line. After first declining to sell the spring, Mr. Killinger finally agreed to sell it for a \$3,000 insurance policy on his life with the town to pay the premiums. The town paid only one premium, however, as Mr. Killinger died six months later.

In 1910, while Mr. J.P. Sheffey was Mayor, the present springs above Attoway were leased from Mr. George M. Atkins for ninety-nine years for \$1.00 per day. They have furnished Marion with an almost unlimited supply of fine water. In May 1947, the town exercised its option on the springs and purchased them for a sum of \$10,000.

Before moving on to the modern progress of the town, it is interesting to note that records show quite a bit of time and deliberation being spent in 1888 before the Finance Committee finally agreed to levy a tax of forty cents on each \$100 of assessed value of real estate and personal property. In addition, a bill of \$2.40 was presented to the Finance Committee by the Lamp Lighter representing compensation for one month of lighting lamps on Main Street nightly. Also at that time, there was a town ordinance that all male citizens between the ages of 18 and 60 years would be required to give two days of work on the streets and roads.

Town policies similar to those of today were also in effect in 1888. If someone desired a plank walk in front of their home, they could appear before the council at its regular meeting held the first Saturday of each month. Most likely, it would have been granted with certain specifications as to the size and spacing of boards, provided the applicant paid one-half the cost of construction.

On January 1, 1959, Marion annexed an additional 885 acres and 682 people. In 1960, the citizens and the town passed a bond issue for one million dollars to renovate the sewer treatment plant. The town had been told several years prior that the plant would have to be brought up to state standards and that primary treatment of all sewerage would be required before effluent could be dumped into the Holston River. The bond issue, which was passed for improvements to the annexed area, also included water service, sewer service, fire and police protection, and other services that would be required by the court in a twenty-year period.

Since 1960, the Town of Marion has completed several capital improvement projects. First, the town has operated a water treatment plant, which obtains water from the Middle Fork of the Holston River. The intake for the treatment plant is located east of town (near I-81, Exit 47). The town is now able to supply water to the entire town via strategically located storage tanks. In addition, the town supplies water to the Atkins community east of town, Hungry Mother State Park north of town, and to adjoining

areas west and south of town.

A regional sewage treatment plant was constructed in 1994, which meets all water quality standards and has capacity to treat Marion and adjoining areas for many years in the future.

The Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority received funding during the eighties, which enabled the construction of low-income and elderly housing units, which are located on several sites in town.

The Town Charter is dated March 15, 1849, and has been amended from time to time, but there have been comparatively few changes in the original Charter.

Today, the administration and government of the town are vested in one principal officer, the Mayor, and seven Town Council members, all of whom are elected by the people. The Mayor serves a four-year term under the current system and each Council member serves for four years, but the terms have been staggered to preclude the election of seven completely new members. The Charter also provides for the appointment of a Town Manager to assist the Mayor and Council in the administration of town affairs in a professional and unbiased manner.

TWO. MARION FIRST! DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

CURRENT COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Town of Marion is currently enjoying an economic upswing. Initiated by the long-term goals and objectives established in the mid 1990's, Marion often refers to its success as "an overnight success, twenty years in the making." Following the basic precepts of the National Main Street Center's "Four Point Approach" to community revitalization, the town has brought together exciting new initiatives, public-private partnerships, and engaged the community to solidify the foundation for the current growth, and for the exciting future. Main Street vacancies are at a record low, currently under 4% (October 2017). New apartments supporting the expanding offerings at Emory & Henry College, in the former hospital site, is providing additional customers and opportunities for success. Strip center vacancies mirror the downtown success, and post an even lower vacancy rate (under 2%). New infill from local expansion and chain businesses, including Ollie's, Bojangles, Burger King, and a variety of service/medical arts businesses continue to serve as very encouraging outlook indicators. General Dynamics remains stable, the former woodworking factories along Brunswick Lane are being reused as warehouse/distribution centers, and Summit Bottling is celebrating their fifth year in the former Pepsi bottling plant. Community festivals continue to bring record numbers into the community. Hungry Mother State Park posted a record visitation last year, reaching nearly 275,000 people. The Southwest Virginia marketing initiative continues to help showcase the region, and our community. "Song of the Mountains" was designated as "The Official Television Series of Virginia," and is looking to expand their tapings to a second weekend in 2018. The Lincoln Theatre continues to grow their rentals and organic events. The Wayne C. Henderson School is expanding offerings and classes, and The Summit Center partnership between Wytheville and Virginia Highlands Community Colleges is also growing. Locally-owned eateries and businesses remain Marion's "market differentiator," and coupled with the arts/entertainment, educational opportunities, outdoor recreation, and overall community hospitality, Marion is proud to be known as "America's Coolest Hometown."

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Mission of the Town of Marion Office of Community and Economic Development is simple: "We Serve." It is our purpose to provide a sustainable and thriving quality of life for our citizens, visitors, businesses and industry. That basic principle shall be the foundation for continuing to secure the heart of the community, and from that, encourage continued growth.

The Office of Community and Economic Development currently employs five full time staff members: A director, a Main Street Executive Director, a Director of the



Henderson School of Appalachian Arts, and two Administrative Assistants (one for the Central Office, one for the Henderson that is shared with operations at Holston Hills Community Golf Course). The Office provides ongoing business retention assistance to all legally-operating businesses within the Town of Marion, including training, special events, and marketing/public relations. The Office, through the Marion Downtown Revitalization, provides intensified services for businesses located within the Town of Marion Historic Downtown District. The Office also provides programming and supervision of the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts building, which currently includes a luthery, woodshop, letterpress shop, multi-use classrooms, and offers a variety of classes in local and Appalachian music and arts. The Office is responsible for managing the Town of Marion Enterprise Zone, the Marion Technology Zone, the Marion Historic District, CDBG Housing Projects, and is the primary grant writing and administration arm of community and economic development grant opportunities from a variety of sources.

The Town of Marion Office of Community and Economic Development currently manages three central priorities: Economic Development, Community Development, and Gateway Development Opportunities/Other Projects. They are as follows:

1) Economic Development

The priority of the Office of Community and Economic Development is to continue to strengthen and grow Marion's business and industry base. The three objectives are Business Retention, Business Expansion, and Business Growth.

- A) **Business retention.** The Office understands the critical necessity and economies of scale achieved by keeping our existing businesses, and the negative effects created by business churn. To that end, the Office provides opportunities for continued education, marketing and creative problem solving to assist our local business core, including:
 - i) **Marketing**, through a variety of traditional and social media,
 - ii) **Training**, through a series of classes and workshops,
 - iii) **Outreach**, through a network of communication pathways, including onsite visits and an open-door policy that presents a variety of opportunities for interaction with staff members and extended hours.
- B) **Business expansion**
 - i) **Location Assistance** for finding new location, including maintaining a database of available properties and contact information,
 - ii) **Incentives**, including low interest loans, historic tax abatements, Enterprise Zone and Technology Zone incentives, liaison with county/state/federal agencies and officials, and grants when available.
 - iii) **Marketing and public relation assistance**, including ribbon cutting, press releases, and ongoing publicity for events, activities and milestones,
- C) **Business growth**
 - i) **Entrepreneurship development.** The Town of Marion continues the proud

tradition of encouraging and enabling local citizens to "be the change" and fill identified community business needs through the award-winning "Pop Up Marion" Entrepreneur Development Classes, offered twice a year. The program continues to draw significant numbers of local citizens and business owners from adjacent communities to assist with drafting and evaluating a business plan and assisting in locating space and funding to implement those plans to fill vacant spaces and provide additional local capacity and opportunity to capture dollars locally - while encouraging community vitality and sustainability.

- ii) **Recruitment.** Additionally, the Town of Marion continues to be very proactive in recruiting business and industry to fill community needs and complement the existing business base. The Office is a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers, attending annual recruitment opportunities, and the Southern Economic Development Council, also attending annual events. Through the Marion Downtown Revitalization Association, Marion has remained a Certified Virginia Main Street Community and a National Main Street Community continually since 1995. The focus on business recruitment is twofold: Local and chains
 - (a) **Traditional locally-owned.** Even in the age of declining "brick and mortar" shops, Marion continues to enjoy success in locally-owned "Mom and Pop" stores. The market differentiator this provides continues to be a tremendous advantage, especially in local restaurants and eateries, as Marion is becoming a destination for weekend diners and shoppers searching for an unique and memorable experience.
 - (b) **Chains.** Because of Marion's location adjacent to Interstate 81, Marion has tremendous potential for increased development by chain restaurants and "big box" retailers. The limitation has been available, affordable, attractive land. The Town continues to recruit through a variety of resources, including trade associations, letters and emails, developer contacts, and site visits, and continues to work on improving gateway enhancements primarily at the central exit (45) to attract interstate- driven businesses. The challenge is to find the "sweet spot" where the community realizes enough "chain" development without sacrificing its local charm and becoming homogenized along with most every other interstate adjacent community, with "battleship boxes" and nondescript skyward signage that does not indicate the unique culture and charm of the community.

2) Community Development

- A) **Quality of Life.** The elusive term is a foundation for Marion's future development. It is the way the community feels about itself, and by that definition, how it assists or hinders future growth. The Office of Community and Economic Development champion "Quality of Life" as defined by our



citizens and visitors as benchmarks to continue to strive to enhance. As our community at large grows in appreciation of our uniqueness, it provides the charm, the spirit, and the inspiration for other entrepreneurs, visitors, residents to come and "join the Marion revolution", a program initiated in 2014 by the Marion Downtown Revitalization Association to stem the negativity and empower our community. The benchmarks currently measured, other than the traditional metrics of business and resident growth, are Education, Activities, and Special Events.

i) **Education**

- (a) **Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences** continues to grow, currently providing four (4) graduate level disciplines and two research study programs on the Marion campus, attracting nearly 600 students and 150 faculty and staff. These new residents fill our apartments, support our shops and eateries, and add a new perspective to our community through continued interaction with the Town. The Town provides \$2,000 toward up to four (4) community events for new and existing student outreach each year, and hopes to expand to include Homecoming activities and other ties to the Emory campus.
 - (b) **The Summit Center.** Unique to the system, two community colleges partner to bring a full array of class offerings to the area at the Henderson School. The Summit Center occupies the upper floor of the building, include the auditorium/lecture hall, and is staffed by both Virginia Highlands and Wytheville Community College faculty and staff. This brings formal higher education back to Marion for the first time since Marion Women's College left in 1967.
 - (c) **The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts**, located in the former 1908 schoolhouse, occupies the central and lower floors of the structure, and offers a wide variety of fine and Appalachian arts, including woodworking, letterpress, instrument making, traditional music instruction, quilting, basket weaving, and most any class the community requests. The Henderson offers programming that includes homeschoolers, the Junior Appalachian Musicians program through The Crooked Road, and a number of related programs and classes to enhance the arts, crafts, and music opportunities for our citizens and our visitors alike.
 - (d) **Blue Ridge Job Corps.** The US Department of Labor program operates a \$5 million budget in the heart of Marion, training young women and men in medical arts on their downtown campus. The Town of Marion also provides up to \$2,000 for up to four (4) annual events for new and existing student outreach each year.
- ii) **Ongoing activities.** The Office of Community and Economic Development provides community reinvestment to a variety of ongoing activities that prove to produce both a direct Return on Investment through tax revenues

and increase the community vitality, livability, and quality of life. Primarily, the office provides budget allocation and marketing for a variety of ongoing activities, including:

- (a) **The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts**
- (b) **The Marion Farmers Market**, open seasonally May through October Saturday mornings 8am until noon
- (c) **The Lincoln Theatre**, providing cultural, music and theatrical programs
- (d) **"Song of the Mountains"**, the Official Television Series of Virginia, providing monthly television tapings of bluegrass, old time, Celtic and Americana music that is distributed to over 170 television markets across the US via Public Broadcasting.
- (e) **Appalachian Arts Gallery**. Located next to Town Hall, the gallery hosts seasonal art exhibits and live music offerings, and serves as a de facto welcome center for the town.
- (f) **Holston River Heritage Center Museum**. The museum features static exhibits and programs recounting the region's rich history, and is open in the former Parks Belk building in the heart of downtown Marion.
- (g) **Hungry Mother State Park activities**. While not funded by the Town, we are pleased to provide ongoing marketing to this unique asset that offers an abundance of outdoor recreation and music opportunities, and this tourism draw bringing in over 260,000 visitors each year also hosts the annual Hungry Mother Festival each July in conjunction with the downtown chili cook-off weekend.

iii) **Special** events

- (a) **Marion Downtown Chili Cook-off Weekend/Hungry Mother Arts and Craft Festival**. Always the third full weekend in July, these festivals combine to make for the perfect reunion weekend in Marion. The expanded two evening downtown festival, along with the weekend of activities at nearby Hungry Mother State Park make this the biggest weekend of the year for the community.
- (b) **Summer Concert Series/Cruise Ins**. A downtown staple designed to build and enhance the night activities in historic downtown, the live music showcase of up and coming talent combined with classic car "cruise in" continues to prove popular with locals, enhances visitor experience, and provides additional opportunities for traffic and revenues for downtown businesses and restaurants. The local restaurants are further enhancing the experience by following the town-sponsored events with their own live music, capturing the crowd and drawing from the region.
- (c) **Fall events**. As the leaves start to change, Marion welcomes "leaf peepers" with a variety of activities, including "Scarecrow Lane" and the popular "Halloween Madness" trunk or treat. Riders of the "Back of the Dragon" start their journey in downtown Marion, and the community is

becoming an autumn destination.

- (d) **Christmas Market/Parade.** The holiday season begins with the traditional "Turkey Trot" 5K on Thanksgiving Day, and is followed by a variety of programming at the Lincoln, and the Marion Christmas Market and Parade on the first weekend in December. Vendors for the market extend from the Farmers Market Pavilion along Iron Street to the Henderson, and the new night parade is anticipated to bring additional exposure to the businesses beginning Friday night and continuing through the weekend.
- B) **Tourism.** While local tourism is funded by a partnership between the three towns and Smyth County through the Smyth County Tourism Association, the Office of Community and Economic Development provides additional resources for marketing, advertising, and public relations for our local assets, including:
 - i) **Historic downtown.** The ten-block Central Business District and surrounding Special Tax District provides the heart of the community. The office works to enhance the livability of the community, the quality of life for our citizens, and the experience for our visitors through the uniqueness of our downtown, including our strong emphasis on "local".
 - (a) **Local businesses.** A tradition of "mom and pop" stores **continues** to serve as Marion's hallmark, drawing customers to the unique shops.
 - (b) **Local eateries.** A further market differentiator, Marion celebrates the number and variety of locally owned restaurants and eateries. While Marion enjoys several national chains, the unique offerings and atmosphere has started making Marion a regional draw for "foodies" and those seeking unique experiences over traditional interstate chain restaurants.
 - (c) **Events and activities.** Through a public private partnership, the Town of Marion, Marion Downtown, and sponsors provide budget for several events and activities throughout the year. In addition, local attractions provide "quality of life" enhancements that also serve as tourism draws.
 - ii) **Lincoln Theatre.** The Lincoln Theatre, one of only three remaining Mayan Revival movie houses in the US, continues to provide quality programming, events, activities, and workshops for the community and as a regional venue. Lola's, housing the business office and gift shop, is an attractive shop that serves the downtown as part of this anchor.
 - iii) **"Song of the Mountains".** In 2017, this nationally syndicated old time, bluegrass, and Americana music series taped monthly at the Lincoln Theatre was named as "The Official Television Series of Virginia". The program, in it's 13th season. In 2016, over 11,000 episodes were telecast on 134 PBS-TV channels and 79 television markets in 38 states, bringing Marion, the SWVA region, and our indigenous musical talent to a potential audience of over 112 million people. Plans are in discussion of enhancing the series with additional headliners, additional shows, and an outdoor festival.

- iv) **The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts.** Located in the historic 1908 schoolhouse in the heart of downtown, the Henderson offers a variety of Appalachian and fine arts classes and programs, including instrument building, traditional instrument playing, the Junior Appalachian Musicians afterschool program, paint parties, quilting, letterpress, woodworking, and series of classes and lectures. Upstairs, The Summit Center, a partnership between Wytheville and Virginia Highlands Community College, offers classes to allow students to achieve an Associate's degree and continuing education.
 - v) **"Back of the Dragon"** Virginia Route 16 North between Marion and Tazewell attracts over 50,000 motorcyclists and sports car enthusiasts, according to local tourism offices. The unique scenic ride will be enhanced with additional directional and monument signage, and local events continue to seek ways to enhance the rider experience to increase visitation and expenditures at local shops, restaurants, and lodging facilities.
 - vi) **Riverbend Park/amphitheatre/dog park.** The Town of Marion, through the Recreation Department, offers a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for the community, and for our visitors. While these alone are not significant tourism draws, they enhance the offerings for our visitors.
 - vii) **Holston Hills Community Club.** The Town of Marion, through the Recreation Department, owns and operates an 18-hole golf course with a banquet hall facility. In addition to drawing golfers, the venue is a popular regional attraction for weddings, class reunions, etc.
- C) **Medical/MedTech**
- i) **Smyth County Community Hospital,** includes a 44-bed acute care hospital, a 109-bed nursing care facility, and a variety of outreach programs. There are more than 50 physicians serving on its active medical staff. SCCH offers surgical services, rehabilitation services, women's services, emergency services, cardio-pulmonary services, most acute care including home health, skilled nursing and long-term care. Other services include a diagnostic sleep center, cardio/pulmonary rehabilitation and an inpatient rehabilitation unit.
 - ii) **Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute/Marion Correctional Treatment Center.** Operated by the Commonwealth of Virginia, these entities provide onsite and offsite mental health and addiction treatment, and MCTC is the Commonwealth's only Level 6 prison. Both provide strong, stable employment for the surrounding region.
 - iii) **Blue Ridge Job Corps.** Located on the west end of downtown, the BRJC provides training in medical arts on their campus. Their students, faculty and staff provide over \$5 million annually to the local economy.
 - iv) **Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences.** Located on the campus of the former Smyth County Community Hospital on Park Boulevard, E&H provides graduate level programs in four disciplines and two ongoing research

- projects. Plans to utilize the upper floors for two additional programs are underway. At full buildout, the college offers the potential of up to 600 students and 250 faculty and staff, providing a substantial economic impact to the town.
- v) **Urgent Care.** Marion has two Urgent Care facilities, and two dialysis centers. The expansion of medical services to the community not only keeps health care options closer for our citizens, but provides employment and adds to the tax base.
- D) **Housing.** Single family houses, patio houses, lofts, apartments, and townhouses remain in significant demand, and will do so for the foreseeable future as the existing housing stock continues to age. For Marion to grow, housing, from affordable housing to upper end development, is critical.
- i) **Apartment development.** Marion first re-allowed mixed use/upper story apartments in the late 1990's, with the first CDBG project that brought downtown living back to Marion. With Emory & Henry, 2016 brought new interest in downtown living, and several properties, including Francis Brothers Hardware, the upper floor of the Centre Building, the Herb House, and the Holston Harwood building are adding to the housing stock for the town, bringing a total of over 125 apartments, new populations into the downtown, and continuing to create new customers for downtown businesses and encourage extended hours and special events.
 - ii) **Single family CDBG rehab.** The Town of Marion continues to partner with the VA Department of Housing and Community Development to rehabilitate neighborhoods throughout town. The projects not only provide safe, affordable housing for some of our most vulnerable citizens, but increase the town's tax base and provide a substantial uplift to the overall quality of life.
 - iii) **Scattered Site Housing.** A pressing priority for the Town is to curb future blight by addressing individual properties. A comprehensive property maintenance program is being explored, as is available grant funding opportunities.
 - iv) **Callan Drive.** The largest developable neighborhood property in the center of town remains a top priority. Housing construction remains the elusive key to sustainable future growth for Marion, and this property is the most suitable for a large-scale, impactful development that would be a true "game changer".
- E) **Other priorities**
- i) **Exit 45 Gateway development.** As identified in a 2016 CDBG-funded study, Marion's primary opportunity for economic growth lies in attracting interstate traffic into town along a planned, attractive, and inviting greenway. Exit 45/VA16 was identified as the best opportunity due to topography, available land, and natural pathway leading into historic downtown and the business core. To facilitate this development, the

study identified a twenty-year, \$50 million vision. Out of that lofty plan, the following three items are top priority.

- (a) **VDOT move.** The current Virginia Department of Transportation maintenance shop is in an ideal location for commercial development. On the negative side, the razor wire and gravel lot impedes the view shed from the interstate, hindering additional infill development to connect the corridor into the CBD. The Town continues to work through the legislature for funding solutions. This remains a top priority for economic development for the Town of Marion. This would further enhance the commercial property located just to the south, and with some future housing relocation and redevelopment, a significant economic engine could be created as the focus of the gateway.
 - (b) **Crepe Myrtle/landscaping.** On the east side of the corridor, the view shed can be dramatically improved by landscaping that would draw the eye from the prison and beautify the area, setting the stage and leading into the CBD. It has been proposed that wayfinding signage and significant plantings, including crepe myrtle, dogwood, and redbuds be planted along the right of way from State Street toward the current "Welcome to Marion" sign, a civic sign be erected (and the multitude of single signs be removed), to clean up the corridor. Additional landscaping and perhaps traffic redesign at the Pendleton Street intersection should also be considered.
 - (c) **Wayfinding signage.** Marion is a certified DRIVE VA community through Virginia Tourism. As part of that program, Marion received funding for directional signage. In 2017, the Town added pedestrian maps across the downtown district and partnered with District Three to develop regular transit bus stops throughout town. The Town is working to implement a comprehensive signage plan to include corridor signage and "photo op" signage to market the community through social media, primarily downtown and on the "Back of the Dragon" near Park Place Drive In.
- ii) **Exit 44 corridor development.** The southernmost exit has potential for commercial and residential development. The primary issue is the split interchange; however, town officials have begun discussions with adjacent property owners if the opportunity were to arise.
- (a) **South Main availabilities and opportunities.** Infill development within the current town limits along South Main would primarily be upgrading and repurposing vacant and underused commercial and industrial spaces, including the former Dr. Pepper building, the former Lee General hospital building, and rehabilitating existing businesses along the corridor. By reusing vacant spaces and providing significant facade and landscape improvements, the entrance to the town would better serve for future growth.
 - (b) **Wayfinding signage.** The Town must consider adding additional

directional signage along this corridor to direct visitors to the CBD and to Hungry Mother Park.

- (c) **County opportunity.** The primary opportunity at Exit 44 lies not in the current town limits, but outside in Smyth County. Over 500 acres, opening back to Scratch Gravel Road, offers tremendous potential for future commercial and residential growth, and the Town of Marion stands ready to assist in any way possible.
- iii) **Exit 47 corridor development.** The northernmost exit has seen increased growth with the construction of Smyth County Community Hospital. A new Medical Office Building in 2016, the purchase of the Marion Plaza and additional development, and the new Bojangles construction in 2017 prove that this exit has potential for growth.
 - (a) **Development opportunity.** A prime opportunity for growth exists as infill along this corridor. The current owners of the Marion Plaza are actively seeking additional, including standalones, and the nearby motel is just on the market potential for commercial development.
 - (b) **Lighting and flags along corridor.** Business owners have expressed desire for the corridor leading from the exit to town limits be enhanced with lighting. One alternative being suggested, instead of traditional overhead lights, the north side of the corridor be lighted with a series of uplighted flagpoles that would serve as a patriotic tribute and an attractive gateway into the community.
 - (c) **County opportunity.** The opportunity for a larger development lies just to the northeast of the interstate, out of town limits. Several years ago, a "big box" development was planned, with Smyth County and the Town of Marion entering into a Commercial Development Agreement to use future tax revenue projections to provide infrastructure as part of a partnership. That opportunity can be revisited, if again presented.

PRIORITIES: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- VDOT Move
 - Scattered Site Housing
 - Exit 45 Corridor Landscaping And Signage
 - Back Of The Dragon Signage
 - Exit 47 Lighting
 - Callan Drive Housing
 - Entrepreneur Support/Local
 - Festivals And Events
 - Tourism
 - Marketing
- And
- Promotion

THREE. POPULATION

POPULATION CHANGES

Since 1960, the Town of Marion has experienced a decline in population, with the greatest decrease coming during the decade of the 1970s. Since 1980, the town's population has declined at an average rate of 5.4 percent per decade.

Population Change		
Year	Population	Percent Change
1960	8,385	20.1
1970	8,158	-2.8
1980	7,029	-13.8
1990	6,630	-6.0
2000	6,349	-4.2
2010	5,968	-6.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Smyth County History and Traditions

POPULATION TRENDS

At the time of the 2010 Census, the population of the Town of Marion was 5,968, a six percent decrease from a decade before. Of these, 2,778 were males (46.7 percent) and 3,180 were females (53.3 percent). The male to female ratio remained relatively unchanged between 2000 and 2010.

The town's official school age population, which includes ages 5 through 17, was 794 or 13.3 percent of the total population. If the school age population were expanded to include ages 3 through 21 to account for all individuals at the preprimary level through college, it would comprise 1,320 persons or 22.1 percent of the total population. Approximately 1,387 of the town's residents were enrolled in school, either preschool, primary, elementary, high school, or college. This represents 23.2 percent of the total town population and over 100 percent of the expanded school age population.

NOTE: The population of full time & part-time residents enrolled in college will fluctuate with the numbers of students attending the Summit Center at the Henderson School and the EHC School of Health Sciences.

Approximately 19.7 percent of Marion's population was 65 years old or older . If this retirement-age group were expanded to include persons age 62 and over, the percentage would grow to 23.6 percent, 59.2 percent of whom were female.

RACE COMPOSITION

Population by Race		
Race	2000	2010
White	5,804	5,338
Black or African-American	367	424
American Indian or Alaskan Native	15	9
Asian	33	33
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	2
Other race	2	61
Two or more races	56	101
Total	6,349	5,968

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000 and 2010

According to the 2010 U.S. Census the Hispanic and Latino population in the Town of Marion represented 2.5% (148 persons) of the total population.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

population growth between 1970 and 2010 proved to be stagnant, as the town's population actually declined along with the county as a whole. Since 1980, there are strong indications that the young adult population is leaving the area either to attend college without returning or to find job opportunities elsewhere. The 15 to 34 age group in 2000 contained 1,613 persons; however, by 2010 the same group had declined to 1,434 persons. However, due to new economic development initiatives in the Downtown, the EHC School of Health Sciences, The Summit Center, The Wayne C. Henderson of Appalachian Arts and new retail establishments, Marion has a more refreshed work environment with additional education and job opportunities. The age group previously mentioned, ages 30-50 in the 2015 ACS, has now increased to 1538 people, an increase of 7.3% over 2010 numbers.

Marion is pursuing actions to ensure a stable population base, a key to preserving the economic vitality of the Town of Marion. As a first step, the town and county should begin working together to develop and implement a strategic plan for economic development. A primary goal of this plan would be to develop diverse, high-quality job opportunities for the working-age population, thereby helping to slow the rate of out-migration. If the strategies formulated in such a plan are successful and other steps are taken, such as bolstering the educational opportunities in the county and ensuring affordable housing, the town could expect a natural increase in population produced by the number of new births exceeding the number of deaths. In addition, the young population would have incentive to return to the area after college and new residents will be attracted to the area, all of which will serve to stabilize the

population and promote growth.

There is a strong connection between housing markets, job markets, and population growth that must be considered while pursuing economic development programs. Economic growth influences a demand on the housing market. As jobs are created and filled, population will stabilize and, over time, increase. The demand for housing will also expand; housing prices and rents will increase and vacancy rates will decrease. The Town should generally plan to couple their economic development activities with housing programs that create adequate, affordable, and safe housing for all population groups, including low, middle, and upper income households as well as retirees and senior citizens.

FOUR. HOUSING

OVERVIEW

Marion had a total of 2,934 housing units according to the 2015 American Community Survey. Of these, approximately 1,302 (44%) were owner occupied. In comparison, Virginia's home ownership rate was 66%.

The majority of the housing units in Marion are single-family homes (71%). Multi-family units (apartments and duplexes) comprise only 2% of the housing stock, while 27% are manufactured homes.

The majority of the housing in Marion consists of older homes, approximately two-thirds of homes in Marion were built prior to 1970 (65.1 %).

The median value of an owner-occupied home in Marion is approximately \$100,000, which compares to the State median value of \$245,000. With respect to housing affordability, most of the residents who own their own homes are paying less than thirty percent of their

incomes for housing; however, about twenty percent of the rental tenants, pay more than thirty percent of their income for housing. This may indicate that there needs to be more affordable rental housing in the County to meet the needs of residents.

Town of Marion Housing Characteristics

Total Housing Units	2,934	
Owner Occupied	1,302	44%
Renter Occupied	1,215	41%
Vacant	417	14%
Housing Type	2,934	
Single-family		70%
Multi-family		28%
Manufactured Home		2%
Housing Age, (Year Built)	2,934	
2011-2017	-	0%
2000-2010	6	0%
1990-1999	97	3%
1980-1989	311	11%
1970-1979	610	21%
1960-1969	599	20%
1950-1959	616	21%
1940-1949	314	11%
Before 1940	381	13%
Avg. Household Size (Owner Occupied)	2.19	
Median Value (Owner Occupied)	\$89,500	
Median Gross Rent (Renter Occupied)	\$550	
Median Mortgage Cost	\$850	
Housing Owner Costs > 30% of income	17%	
Rental Costs >30% of income	48%	
<i>Source: US Census</i>		

CURRENT HOUSING PROGRAMS

The town has been very successful in addressing the housing problems identified in the town's first Comprehensive Plan. Several reasons for the improvements are noted below.

Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Since the initial Comprehensive Plan was adopted, the Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority received funding for and constructed 238 rental units on eight different sites. There are approximately 250 families or individuals on waiting lists for housing assistance from the housing authority.

HUD Section 8 Program

Marion Redevelopment & Housing Authority administers the HUD Section 8 Housing

Property Value

\$89,500

± \$17,572

2015 MEDIAN

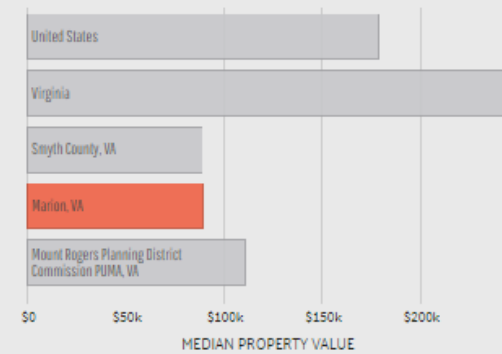
\$109,700

± \$26,980

2014 MEDIAN

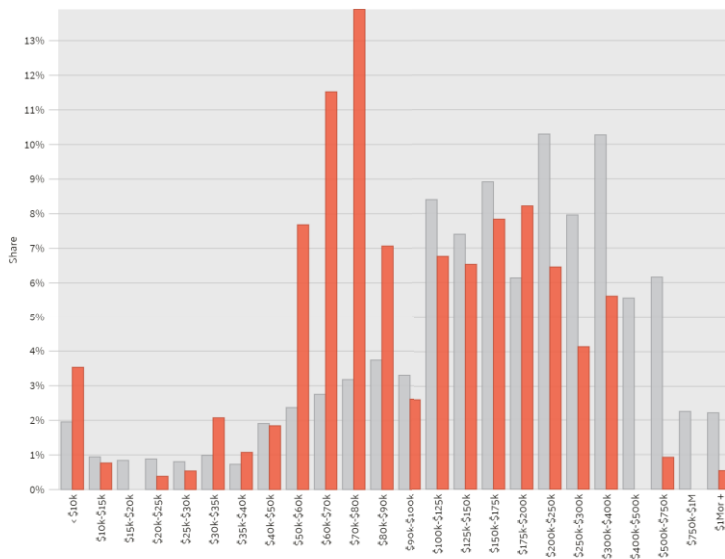
In 2015, the median property value in Marion, VA declined to \$89,500 from the previous year's value of \$109,700.

The following charts display, first, the property values in Marion, VA compared to other geographies and, second, owner-occupied housing units distributed between a series of property value buckets compared to the national averages for each bucket. In Marion, VA the largest share of households have a property value in the \$60k-\$70k range.



Property Value in Marion

Please note that the buckets used in this visualization were not evenly distributed by ACS when publishing the data.



Choice Voucher rental subsidy program that serves eligible low-income residents in Smyth County. Presently, there are 246 households scattered throughout the county being served by this program with 173 families or individuals on the waiting list.

Housing Rehabilitation Projects

In addition to these programs, the town is eligible to apply for funds under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to rehabilitate

homes for low- and moderate-income, eligible citizens. The Town of Marion has been successful at utilizing the CDBG program to rehabilitate housing in the town. In 2007, the Town of Marion secured a CDBG planning grant to evaluate housing needs in the south-central portion of town along Matson Drive, Buchanan Street, Pearl Avenue, Spruce Street, Crescent Street, and Palmer Avenue. The town plans to continue housing projects using funding from DHCD and program income.

Mountain Community Action

Mountain Cap, Inc. is a federally funded Community Action Agency that has funds available for minor home repairs for emergency and/or energy related circumstances for very low-income persons. In addition, there are volunteer organizations (Crossroads Project) located in the region that can provide limited assistance to improve the housing stock in the town.

Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA)

The Virginia Housing Development Authority was created by the General Assembly of Virginia in 1972 to make seed money loans, finance site development costs, provide construction financing, act as a permanent lender, and provide technical assistance to municipalities, nonprofit corporations, and private builders. Virginia Housing Development Authority funds have been used to rehabilitate apartments along the Town of Marion's Main Street as part of a project initiated by Marion Downtown.

FIVE. ECONOMY

The boundary between Marion and Smyth County is political rather than economic, and the town's economy is functionally interrelated with that of the county. Because of this interrelatedness and the fact that much of the economic data available for analysis does not treat the town as an entity distinct from the surrounding county.

Marion's economic growth and vitality have been influenced by a number of factors. For example, the town's location along the Interstate 81 corridor has proved beneficial over the years, as population and economic growth have tended to concentrate along the I-81 transportation corridor.

Smyth County has a strong manufacturing base which has shifted over the years from predominately apparel and furniture to a more diversified mix of transportation, machinery components, and building products. There is also substantial employment in the service sector, primarily health care.

UNEMPLOYMENT

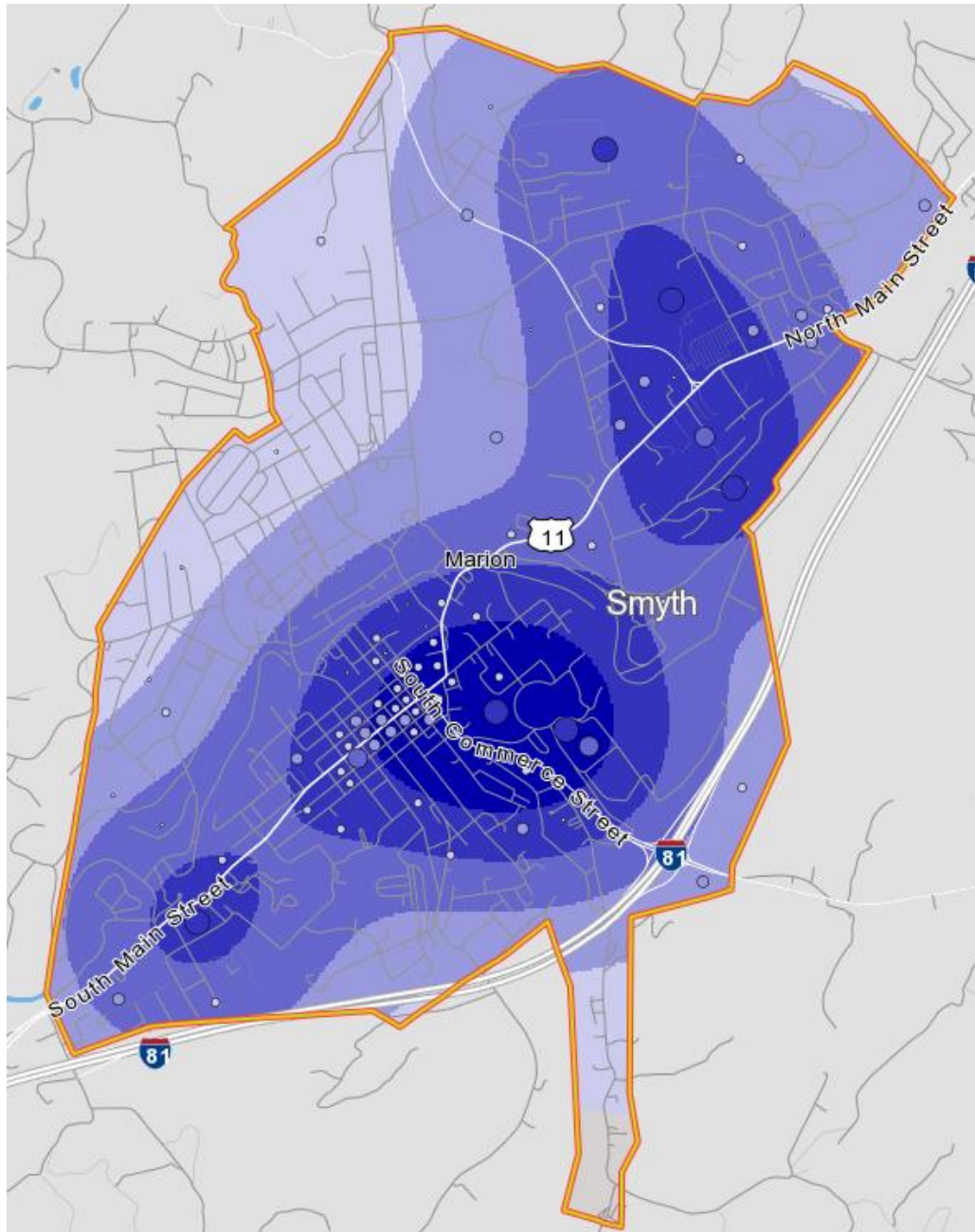
Since 2000, the unemployment rate in Smyth County (and by implication, the Town of Marion) generally has been higher than that of the state and nation as a whole. Locally, both the Town of Marion and Smyth County have endeavored to attack unemployment through the issuance of industrial revenue bonds, regional water and sewer cooperative ventures, industrial park acquisitions and developments, downtown revitalization, and the enhancement of the tourism industry. The unemployment rate in Smyth county has steadily declined in recent years.

Date	Smyth Co.	Virginia	United States
2012	9.6%	6.1%	8.1%
2013	9.1%	5.7%	7.4%
2014	7.9%	5.2%	6.2%
2015	6.5%	4.5%	5.3%
2016	5.8%	4.0%	4.9%
2017	4.7%	3.5%	3.9%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission labor market information

LABOR FORCE

Town of Marion Jobs Profile Map



1: Source: U.S.Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies

Jobs by Worker Age		
2015		
	Count	Share
Age 29 or younger		
Age 30 to 54	1,424	21.3%
Age 55 or older	3,476	52.1%
	1,770	26.5%

Jobs by Worker Sex		
2015		
	Count	Share
Male	2,564	38.4%
Female	4,106	61.6%

Total All Jobs		
2015		
	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	6,670	100.0%

Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment		
2015		
	Count	Share
Less than high school	534	8.0%
High school or equivalent, no college	1,645	24.7%
Some college or Associate degree	1,830	27.4%
Bachelor's degree or advanced degree	1,237	18.5%
Educational attainment not available (workers aged 29 or younger)	1,424	21.3%

INCOME LEVELS

Comparative Income			
Town of Marion, Smyth County, and Virginia			
2015			
	Marion	Smyth County	Virginia
Median Household Income	\$31,210	\$37,983	\$65,015
Per Capita Income	\$21,446	\$21,927	\$34,152

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 QuickFacts

Jobs by Earnings		
2015		
	Count	Share
\$1,250 per month or less	1,787	26.8%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	3,214	48.2%
More than \$3,333 per month	1,669	25.0%

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector 2015		
	Count	Share
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%
Utilities	10	0.1%
Construction	87	1.3%
Manufacturing	662	9.9%
Wholesale Trade	54	0.8%
Retail Trade	678	10.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	7	0.1%
Information	76	1.1%
Finance and Insurance	80	1.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	39	0.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	96	1.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	74	1.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1,028	15.4%
Educational Services	1,028	15.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,576	23.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	68	1.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	413	6.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	106	1.6%
Public Administration	588	8.8%

The growth and vitality of retail trade continues to be a primary goal of the Town of Marion. The town is a designated Virginia Main Street Community, which makes available technical assistance for the restoration of downtown architecture and offers retail training for merchants. Through the Main Street program and grant programs through various state and federal agencies, Marion has successfully completed several projects focused on the economic and physical revitalization of Downtown Marion, including streetscape improvements, building façade enhancements, pedestrian connectivity, a farmers' market, and heritage tourism attractions. Projects in the downtown area include the adaptive reuse of the 1908 Schoolhouse as the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Music and Arts and streetscape improvements along North Iron Street, Broad Street and Main Street.

The Marion Downtown Revitalization Authority, which was created to oversee the rehabilitation of Downtown Marion, has become the primary source of small business assistance and development in the town. Since the initiation of Marion's Main Street Program, the town has experienced a net gain of new businesses and new jobs. Research into additional plans and strategies for the restoration and development of the town's Main Street is ongoing, and the Marion Downtown Revitalization Authority has been successfully promoting the town's benefits to entrepreneurs and small business leaders.

Smyth County's Largest Employers (Employers within Marion Town Limits are in bold)	
1. Utility Trailer Manufacturing	26. Richardson Ambulance Service
2. Teleperformance USA	27. McDonald's
3. Smyth County School Board	28. C & A Fabricating
4. Southwest Virginia Mental Health Center*	29. McDonald's
5. General Dynamics Armament	30. Hardee's
6. Royal Mouldings Limited	31. Blue Ridge Knives
7. Mountain States Health Alliance	32. Innovative Millwork Technologies
8. W & L Construction and Paving	33. Morrison Management Specialists
9. Marion Correctional Treatment Center	34. Atwork Personnel Service
10. County of Smyth	35. Lifetime Wellness Center
11. Food City	36. Berry Enterprises, Inc.
12. TRW Automotive US LLC	37. Marion Mold & Tool Inc
13. Mount Rogers Comm. Services Board	38. Dolgencorp LLC
14. Mountain Empire Operation	39. Postal Service
15. Wal Mart	40. Internal Medicine of Smyth County
16. Town of Marion	41. Town of Chilhowie
17. District Three Government	42. United Salt
18. Woodgrain Millwork	43. Titan Wheel Corporation of Virginia
19. Blue Ridge Medical Management	44. Marty, Inc.
20. Scholle Packaging Inc	45. Virginia Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries
21. Saltville Medical Center	46. General Francis Marion Hotel
22. Food Country USA	47. Macado's Inc.
23. Virginia Department of Conservation	48. Marion Automotive Group
24. Oak Hall Industries	49. American Wood Fibers, Inc
25. The Bank of Marion	50. Smyth County Eye Associates, Inc.

TOURISM

Several tourism projects have been completed or are still underway in Southwest Virginia that are designed to market the region and to bolster the economy through tourism dollars. There is an array of tourism opportunities in the Town of Marion and Smyth County, including Hungry Mother State Park, The Back of The Dragon, Song of the Mountains, the Lincoln Theatre, and various annual festivals. Marion's economy already benefits greatly from these attractions, and further development of local and regional tourism opportunities will continue to add dollars to the town's economy. An example of such would be reuse of the historic 1908 Schoolhouse as the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Music and Arts.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

POP UP Marion

Marion Downtown offers education on Business Basics 101, where budding entrepreneurs can learn all the ins and outs of starting their own small business, even develop their own business plan, and compete for up to \$5,000 in startup grant monies to open that business in Marion! Classes are offered FREE and open to anyone interested in starting or expanding their business. Graduates are eligible to compete for grant funding to offset rent/mortgage and utility expenses for up to six months/\$5,000 for qualifying businesses in the Town of Marion. Partners include Virginia Main Street, Wells Fargo, People Inc., and the Virginia Department of Business Assistance.

Enterprise Zone

In 2005, Smyth County was awarded an expanded Virginia Enterprise Zone designation that included a majority of the commercial and industrial property in the Town of Marion. The expanded zone included 444.7 acres inside the town, including Downtown Marion and all of Main Street / U.S. Route 11. The enterprise zone will be in effect until 2020.

The purpose of the Virginia Enterprise Zone program is to support job creation and private investment in areas designated for growth through grants based on real property investment and the number of jobs created over a five year period. In addition to state grants, Marion offers several local incentives: building permit fee rebate, water and sewer cost rebate, economic stimulus grant, real estate rehabilitation tax exemption, Business and Professional Operators License Tax Credit, loan application and train assistance, tourism-business marketing incentive, downtown revitalization design assistance, and downtown revitalization façade grant.

SIX. TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND SYSTEMS

The transportation system serving the Town of Marion primarily includes U.S. Route 11, running east-to-west, and State Route 16, running north-to-south. Interstate 81 travels along the town's southern boundary with three interchanges leading into Marion. I-81 serves as the major regional transportation route for the area, providing for through traffic, commuters, visitors, and freight trucks.

Alternative transportation modes include the Marion Transit System and several privately owned taxicabs, as well as the Greyhound bus line. For hikers and joggers, the town maintains the Riverwalk trail system. The Riverwalk overlaps the main sewer interceptor line along the Middle Fork Holston River, going from Baughman Avenue to North Church Street. Another segment of the Riverwalk follows the Middle Fork Holston River along Campbell Avenue.

The Norfolk Southern Railway Company generally follows the I-81 corridor as the trains connect the Valley of Virginia with the industrialized South. The railroad crosses several streets in Marion, all of them at-grade and all of them are either gated or lighted.

HIGHWAYS AND STREETS

As part of the interstate highway system, I-81 serves as one of the major transportation routes across Virginia. It has been designated the Crescent Corridor and is one of the designated Corridors of Statewide Significance. The highway has been subject to an on-going corridor study by the state, due to continued growth in traffic volumes and the increasing effects of freight hauling trucks. Parts of the I-81 corridor are heavily overloaded by traffic, especially in and around major urban centers such as Roanoke and Harrisonburg and along difficult ascents such as Christiansburg Mountain. The heavy traffic issues are less extreme in southwest Virginia, although traffic volumes have generally increased in the region as a whole.

For the area in and around the Town of Marion, the total daily traffic volume on I-81 consists of 29,000 to 31,000 vehicles daily.

Town of Marion's Streets and Roads***							
Average Annual Daily Traffic By Route, 2002 and 2010							
Route	Route Name	From	To	Avg. Daily Traffic Counts	Annual		% Change
					2002	2010	2002-2010
I-81	Northbound both sides	State Route (SR) 16	Rt F-10*	14000	14000	0%	
				31000	29000	-6.40%	
I-81	Southbound	SR 16	US 11**	17000	14000	-17.60%	
	both sides			31000	29000	-6.40%	
US 11	S. Main St.	Western Corporate Limits	Greenway Ave.	9900	8700	-12.10%	
US 11	S. Main St.	Greenway Ave.	College St.	10000	8700	-13.00%	
US 11	Main St.	College St.	SR 16	11000	9100	-17.30%	
US 11/SR 16	Main St.	SR 16 N	Commerce St.	19000	17000	-10.50%	
US 11	E. Main St.	Commerce St.	N. Main St	18000	12000	-33.30%	
US 11	Main St.	Park Blvd.	Keller Lane.	14000	11000	-21.40%	
US 11	N. Main St.	Keller Ln	Eastern Corporate Limits	11000	11000	0%	
SR 16	S. Commerce St.	I-81	SR 217	9000	8500	-5.50%	
SR 16	S. Commerce St.	SR 217	US 11 Main St.	9100	7600	-16.50%	
SR 16/US 11	Main St.	US 11 Main St.	US 11 Main St.	19000	17000	-10.50%	
SR 16	Park Blvd.	US 11 Main St.	Northern Corporate Limits	4400	5800	31.80%	
* The 2002 segment went from SR 16 to Northern Corporate Limit Marion.							
** The 2002 segment went from SR 16 to Northern Corporate Limit Marion.							
*** This represents the most recent data available.							
Source: Annual traffic counts/estimates on roadway segments by VDOT.							

What happens in the long run to improve conditions on I-81 will depend largely on decisions made by Virginia and the surrounding states. The Town of Marion can help influence the decision-making process regarding I-81 development by acting as an advocate for its interests and by closely following (and commenting on) developments regarding future improvements for I-81.

U.S. Route 11 (Lee Highway in the county, Main Street in the town) continues its function as an important collector route in and around the town. Traffic volumes on some sections of U.S. 11 approach those of the interstate highway, though the most recent traffic counts show declining use of U.S. 11 since 1999 and again since 2002. These data appear in greater detail in Table 5-A.

It is possible U.S. 11 has become so heavily traveled in recent years that more drivers are using I-81 as a local by-pass route. As pointed out in the *Marion 2020 Transportation Plan*, U.S. 11 along North Main Street is mostly a four-lane roadway with center shared turning lane that constricts and becomes a heavily traveled two-lane (without center turning lane) roadway in the center of town (on East and West and South Main Street). During the afternoon peak travel hour, the downtown section of U.S. 11 becomes overloaded, has “moderate” congestion, and traffic movement is impeded. There is also a morning rush hour (traffic heading to the Marion schools on Dabney Drive) and a noon/lunch rush hour.

Adding to the downtown bottleneck is Pendleton Street at the intersection with U.S. 11. Westbound traffic on U.S. 11 often stops in the designated left turn lane to turn left onto Pendleton, a shortcut, rather than proceed directly to the downtown intersection with State Route 16 (Commerce Street). Suggestions have been made to convert Pendleton into a one-way northbound street or to simply ban left turns from U.S. 11. The town considered those suggestions but has opted against pursuing them at the present time. Realignment of the intersection and the addition of a signal at Pendleton Street is a future consideration.

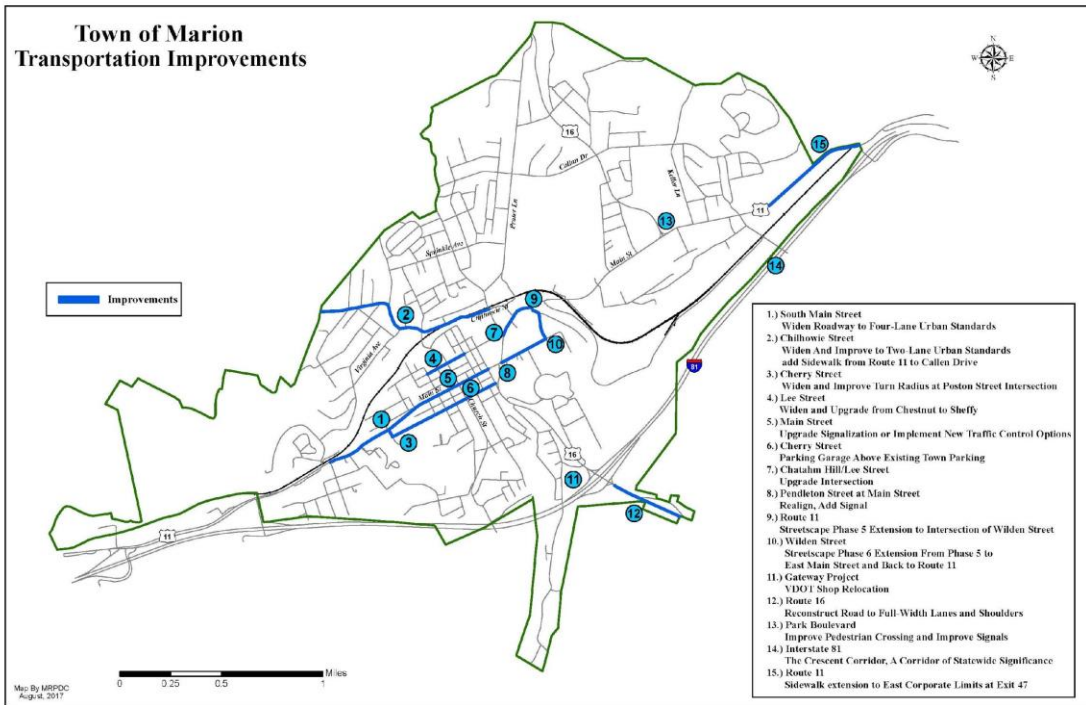
U.S. Route 11 attracts the greatest volume of traffic near the intersection with State Route 16, which goes in a north-south direction and cuts through the center of Marion on South Commerce Street, North Main Street, and Park Boulevard (and is coincident with Route 11 along North Main Street). The overlapping section of U.S. 11 and State Route 16 was carrying an average of 19,000 vehicles daily in 2002 and 17,000 in 2010. Other than the downtown bottleneck problem already discussed, State Route 16 generally functions at an acceptable level and is expected to continue doing so through 2020.

One high-priority local project for the town was successfully completed under the state Public-Private Transportation Act. This resulted in an extension of Fowler Street from Prater Lane to Park Boulevard, including a new traffic signal at Park Boulevard. The new street, known as Callan Drive, fulfills two important roles for the community - to provide a second east-west pathway through town and to open up land for residential development. Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts for Callan Drive in 2010 were 3700.

MARION TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Town of Marion is classified as a small urban area (communities with populations from 5,000 to 50,000) and qualifies for special transportation studies done in cooperation with VDOT. These localized 10-year plans are done from the standpoint of “providing effective, safe, and efficient movement of people and goods,” with the main focus placed on the thoroughfare highway system. The studies are limited to the transportation needs of a few selected roadways designated as the urban thoroughfares. In Marion’s case, these roadways included Main Street (south, north, east and west), Church Street (north and south), Cherry Street, Chilhowie Street, Pendleton Street, South Commerce Street, Chatham Hill Road, Park Boulevard, Keller Lane, and Johnston Road.

- South Main Street - Widen Roadway to Four-Lane Urban Standards
- Chilhowie Street - Widen And Improve to Two-Lane Urban Standards add Sidewalk from Route 11 to Callen Drive
- Cherry Street - Widen and Improve Turn Radius at Poston Street Intersection
- Lee Street - Widen and Upgrade from Chestnut to Sheffy
- Main Street - Upgrade Signalization or Implement New Traffic Control Options
- Cherry Street - Parking Garage Above Existing Town Parking
- Chatham Hill/Lee Street - Upgrade Intersection
- Pendleton Street at Main Street - Realign, Add Signal
- Route 11 - Streetscape Phase 5 Extension to Intersection of Wilden Street
- Wilden Street - Streetscape Phase 6 Extension From Phase 5 to - East Main Street and Back to Route 11
- Gateway Project - VDOT Shop Relocation
- Route 16 - Reconstruct Road to Full-Width Lanes and Shoulders
- Park Boulevard - Improve Pedestrian Crossing and Improve Signals
- Interstate 81 - The Crescent Corridor, A Corridor of Statewide Significance
- Route 11 - Sidewalk extension to East Corporate Limits at Exit 47



AIR TRAVEL



The nearest air service is available at Mountain Empire Airport, a general aviation facility in Groseclose approximately 12 miles northeast of Marion. The airport stands halfway between Marion and Wytheville, adjacent to Interstate 81 (near Exit 54).

The airport has a single 5252 x 75 ft. runway, with published localizer and GPS approaches and a full parallel taxiway. A ramp extension gives ample tie-down space for aircraft of all sizes. The terminal building completed in 2012; features a waiting lounge, flight planning area, and conference room. The airport provides full service fuel for both 100LL and Jet- A.

The Mountain Empire Airport is owned and operated by the Smyth-Wythe Airport Commission, a joint commission of representatives from Smyth and Wythe Counties and the towns of Marion and Wytheville.

The nearest commercial aviation service can be found at Tri-Cities Airport.



Tri-Cities Airport (TRI) is a full-service commercial airport serving Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina and Eastern Kentucky. The Airport offers nonstop flights to four hubs (Atlanta, Charlotte, Orlando and Tampa/Clearwater-St.Petersburg) on Allegiant, American, and Delta.

Tri-Cities airport is centrally located between the cities of Bristol, Kingsport and Johnson City, Tennessee, just 3 miles off Interstate 81 at Exit 63, 62 miles from Marion.

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport is located in Roanoke Virginia 103 Miles from Marion.

Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport offers more than 40 scheduled flights daily, providing nonstop service from Roanoke, Virginia to eight major cities. The major airlines that fly out of Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport daily include American Airlines, United Airlines and Delta. Allegiant Air also provides full-sized jets and frequent service to Florida.



RAIL

Freight service is provided by the Norfolk Southern Railway Company on its rail system that generally follows the I-81 highway corridor. Norfolk Southern provides long-haul service for coal from far southwest Virginia and also makes stops at several local industries in and around Marion. The trains pass through town several times a day and often create short-term traffic delays, especially at the North Main Street crossing. In recent years, the railway added special inserts where the train tracks cross the

roadway to reduce wear-and-tear to motor vehicles (particularly passenger cars) that cross the uneven track surface.

An effort known as the TransDominion Express has been underway for several years to provide passenger rail service throughout much of the state, including Marion and Southwest Virginia. The effort to establish passenger rail service has been complicated by the future development plans for I-81; there has been an effort among some to include rail development as a much more prominent feature of the proposed improvements to the interstate highway. In the past², Marion has been identified as a likely location along the route for a passenger rail station. It remains a recommendation that the Town of Marion and Smyth County undertake a detailed study of the local area to identify the best location for a proposed rail station.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Regular service by Greyhound Bus Lines provides for one form of public transportation going into and out of the town. The existing Greyhound station is located off Dabney Drive in the northern part of town.

The town also is a local government affiliate of the District Three Governmental Cooperative, which provides a range of transportation services. These include local transit systems, such as Mountain Lynx Transit. This mini-bus transportation service is available to all members of the public Monday through Saturday. Special transports for medical appointments and weekly shopping are available through the transit system for people aged 60 and over.

There is no recommendation at the present time to expand public transportation service for the town. Alternative, private transportation is available in Marion through three local taxicab services (Diamond Cab Company, Eller Taxi and Red Bird Taxi).

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION

A 2 mile multi-use pedestrian/bicycle path runs along Park Boulevard (Rt. 16) from Main Street to Mitchell Valley Road. The project became the first designated biking path in the Town of Marion. Hiking trails are also available in town, such as the Riverwalk trail, and in Hungry Mother State Park.

The Riverwalk trail, consists of two distinct (and separated) sections along the Middle Fork of the Holston River. The original part of the River walk follows the River starting near Baughman Avenue (at Riverbend Park) and ending at North Church Street. The second section of the Riverwalk stands further upstream on the other side of Main Street. That newer trail section follows Campbell Avenue opposite a

² Based on the results of the 1998 feasibility study for passenger rail service.

residential neighborhood. The original Riverwalk contains a graveled surface, while the Campbell Avenue section is paved to allow access by people with physical disabilities.

Pedestrian connectivity in the Town of Marion is very good along Main Street, with sidewalks extending from the east side of town to the west. Much of the commercial strip is accessible to pedestrians, although there are areas of disconnect between residential neighborhoods and the commercial centers. Pedestrian connectivity through the downtown area has been improved through grants from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

SEVEN. COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

EDUCATION

The public school system in Marion is part of the Smyth County school system and the schools that serve Marion are:

- Marion Senior High School (Grades 9-12) Enrollment 700.
- Marion Middle School (Grades 6-8) Enrollment 500.
- Marion Elementary School (Grades PK-5) Enrollment 375.
- Oak Point Elementary School (PK-5) Enrollment 460.

Marion schools, along with the entire Smyth County system, are fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. All schools in Marion have fully met requirements set by the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs), which have set statewide expectations for student learning in English, math, science, history and social sciences, technology, fine arts, foreign languages, health and physical education, and driver education.

Schools in Marion also serve other functions, and meeting places for civic and community groups. School facilities, including track, tennis courts, and gymnasiums, are also part of the town's recreation program.

For its part, the Smyth County school system participates in various initiatives designed to strengthen school program offerings and help prepare students for the workplace. These include nationwide initiatives, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, and regional initiatives.

The Smyth County school system continues to improve computer facilities and skills development for students and teachers, including increasing the number of computers available to students at the elementary and middle school levels, an ongoing professional development program for teachers, more instructional technologists to assist students and teachers, more space for computer labs, and methods to encourage students to improve their solid technology skills (i.e., working with spreadsheets, databases, CAD/CAM, network administration, and programming applications) as opposed to simply surfing the Internet.

Aside from the Smyth County school system, another major educational institution in Marion is the Blue Ridge Job Corps Center. Job Corps is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration. The program is aimed at low-income youth between the ages of 16

and 24. The Blue Ridge center offers a wide-ranging program at no cost to the student that includes high school diplomas, general education diplomas, off-center training, advanced training, and vocational training for business technologies, computer service technicians, food service, health occupations, and licensed professional nursing. The self-paced programs last from 8 months to 2 years. The Blue Ridge center has 60 dorm rooms and can accommodate up to 160 female students. An additional 30 women and 10 men may attend classes as non-residential students.³

In the southwest Virginia region, higher education is available through the state community college system (with the nearest branches in Abingdon and Wytheville), Emory & Henry College, Radford University, and Virginia Tech. The Smyth County Education Center, located at Mountain Empire Industrial Park in Atkins, about three miles east of Marion, offers a range of adult education classes in affiliation with Wytheville Community College.

The Summit Center. Unique to the system, two community colleges partner to bring a full array of class offerings to the area at the Henderson School. The Summit Center occupies the upper floor of the building, includes the auditorium/lecture hall, and is staffed by both Virginia Highlands and Wytheville Community College faculty and staff. This brings formal higher education back to Marion for the first time since Marion Women's College left in 1967.

Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences continues to grow, currently providing four (4) graduate level disciplines and two research study programs on the Marion campus, attracting nearly 600 students and 150 faculty and staff. These new residents fill our apartments, support our shops and eateries, and add a new perspective to our community through continued interaction with the Town. The Town provides \$2,000 toward up to four (4) community events for new and existing student outreach each year, and hopes to expand to include Homecoming activities and other ties to the Emory campus.

The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts, located in the former 1908 schoolhouse, occupies the central and lower floors of the structure, and offers a wide variety of fine and Appalachian arts, including woodworking, letterpress, instrument making, traditional music instruction, quilting, basketweaving, and most any class the community requests. The Henderson offers programming that includes homeschoolers, the Junior Appalachian Musicians program through The Crooked Road, and a number of related programs and classes to enhance the arts, crafts, and music opportunities for our citizens and our visitors alike.

³ For more information, see the Blue Ridge Job Corps Center web site at <http://blueridge.jobcorps.gov>.

The Smyth County Historical and Museum Society also operates a local history museum open on a part-time basis in downtown Marion. The town participates in the Virginia Civil War Trails program, with a pull-off area and information display located just off U.S. Route 11 on the east end of Marion.

LIBRARY

The Smyth County Public Library, located in the downtown area, is an outstanding resource for the region it serves. As a regional facility, the library operates branch facilities in Chilhowie, and Saltville. Among its stated roles, the library provides lifelong learning opportunities and assistance for home-schooled students, English-as-a-second-language patrons, and patrons with disabilities.

Library offerings include books, ebooks, audio-visual materials, public access computers, a computerized card catalog system, periodicals, reference materials, an inter-library loan service, books in large print, and an outreach service for those who are homebound or live in nursing homes. There are also programs and resources aimed at youth aged 6 months to 18 years.



HEALTHCARE

The healthcare industry is at the core of Marion's economy, and the Smyth County Community Hospital is a cornerstone of the local medical community. In addition to the hospital, the Lifetime Wellness Center, the Smyth County Health Department, the Smyth County Free Clinic, and several private practices create a regional medical hub in the town. Institutional care for the mentally ill is available at the Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute, which serves all of Southwest Virginia, and community-based mental health care is available through the Mount Rogers Community Services Board, a regional organization that operates several facilities in Marion.



1: Smyth County Community Hospital

In April 2012, Smyth County Community Hospital relocated to a newly constructed facility near Exit 47 on the east end of Marion. The Hospital includes a 44-bed acute care hospital, a 109-bed nursing care facility (Francis Marion Manor), and a variety of outreach programs. There are more than 50 physicians serving on its active medical staff. SCCH offers surgical services, rehabilitation services, women's services, emergency services, cardio-pulmonary services, most acute care including home health, skilled nursing and long-term care. Other services include a diagnostic sleep center, cardio/pulmonary rehabilitation and an inpatient rehabilitation unit. The hospital is currently an affiliate partner of the Mountain States Health Alliance, which includes the Smyth County Community Foundation, owner of the Wellness Center.

The old hospital facility has become a health education campus through a partnership with Emory & Henry College. Emory & Henry initiated a Physical Therapy program in fall 2012. Adjacent to the health education campus are the 109-bed intermediate care nursing home Francis Marion Manor, which offers long term care and the Lifetime Wellness Center. The Lifetime Wellness Center plays a major role in the health maintenance and recovery of good health after accident or illness of persons who are members by fee or who are prescribed by their physicians.



1: Lifetime Wellness Center

Health-related services are also available through the *Smyth County Health Department* located next to the nursing home. The county health department is part of the Mount Rogers Health District and the Virginia Department of Health. Health services include maternal and child health care, female reproductive care, various disease prevention programs, wellness programs (for heart health, worksite health screenings, and health education), and home-

based health care.

The Smyth County Health Department also enforces state-mandated environmental health programs through inspection, permitting, and testing services. This work relates to private well water supplies, on-site septic disposal, restaurants, milk sanitation, rabies prevention and control, insect and rodent control, institutional sanitation (for child and adult care facilities, hotels, and motels), migrant labor camps, campgrounds, and swimming pools.

Health care is also available through the Mel Leaman Free Clinic, formerly the Smyth County Free Clinic in Marion. The Free clinic additionally entered into a partnership with Emory and Henry College, and relocated into the first floor of the College of Health Sciences. The Clinic offers healthcare services to, “The working poor constitute the majority of the uninsured, and those workers between 18 to 64 years old are particularly vulnerable, as they generally do not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid.” The Clinic operates privately as a non-profit and does not receive any reimbursement from patients or insurance companies.

The Med Express Urgent Care facility offers convenient health care to walk in patients 7 days a week through the use of state of the art Telemedicine. It can provide treatment for everyday illnesses and injuries, provide X-rays, IVs and lab work, and treatment for sprains and broken bones. A registered nurse in the private exam room operates the equipment and works directly with the physician conducting the exam. The advanced audio and video capabilities enable our physicians to complete a thorough exam privately and securely.

The *Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute* (SWVMHI) stands on a large campus-like setting atop what is locally known as Hospital Hill. The entire facility consists of 24 buildings on more than 40 maintained acres of land. SWVMHI is a state psychiatric institute with 176 beds that is run by the state Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. SWVMHI presently serves adolescent, adult, and elderly populations from a wide region of southwest Virginia.

Community-based care for mental, physical and substance use intervention needs is offered through the *Mount Rogers Community Services Board*. Facilities located in Marion include a full-time counseling center, a psychosocial rehabilitation program located at The Friendship House, and Transitions, a halfway house for patients with substance abuse problems. The Community Services Board also operates a supervised apartment program (small-scale group homes) consisting of The Smyth Apartments (three two-bedroom apartments located within town limits).

SOCIAL SERVICES

In Marion, social services are provided through government and community-oriented agencies, such as the Smyth County Department of Social Services, Virginia



Department of Motor Vehicles, Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, Virginia Employment Commission, Mount Rogers Community Services Board (discussed in the previous section on health care), Mount Rogers Alcohol Safety Action Program, Marion Redevelopment & Housing Authority, and the W.W. Scott Senior Citizens Center in Marion.

The W.W. Scott Senior Citizen Center, located near downtown, offers a variety of opportunities for healthy aging through social engagement, civic involvement and learning.

Other activities for the aging citizens, such as arts and crafts, painting, quilting and musical instruction are offered at the Wayne C. Henderson School.

Other social services are provided by non-profit organizations such as the Guardian Angel Program, Mountain Community Action Program, Project Crossroads, Retired Senior Citizen Volunteer Program, Salvation Army of Smyth County, Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, Smyth County Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Family Resource Center (based in Wytheville), and United Way of Smyth County.

RECREATION

Recreational offerings available within Marion are varied, including programs offered through the town recreation department, the Lifetime Wellness Center, the Riverwalk hiking trail, and trout fishing along the Middle Fork Holston River.

The town recreation department⁴ is stationed in the William G. Carrico Recreation Building. Department staff includes the recreation director, programs coordinator, programs support technician, maintenance supervisor, and pool manager. Next to the recreation department stands the Carl Taylor Municipal Swimming Pool, a facility used by residents from the town, as well as from the surrounding area in Smyth County.

Marion's recreational offerings also include the town's system of parks and picnic areas. These include Ogburn Park, Royal Oak Park, Steele Park, Riverbend Park, Calhoun-Gwyn-Civitan Park, Wilderness Road Garden Club Park, Riverwalk Trail, and the Park Boulevard walking/biking trail. Riverbend Park hosts a picnic shelter, public restrooms, and a paved pathway that creates a link to the main stem of the Riverwalk Trail off Baughman Avenue on the west end of town, as well as, a fishing pier and Stage equipped for concerts.

In cooperation with the Grassroots Conservancy, a local citizen's action group, the Civitan Club has developed a "pocket park" at North Church Street. The pocket park,

⁴ For more information, see the town's web site at www.marionva.org/services/recreation.

named the Calhoun-Gwyn Park, includes a parking area and a picnic shelter and offers river access to add to the outdoor recreational opportunities in Marion. More details on the recreational offerings in Marion appear under the community services and facilities chapter of this comprehensive plan.

The Lifetime Wellness Center, owned by the Smyth County Community Foundation, has greatly added to the recreational and exercise programs available to the town and the county. The facilities include an indoor six-lane pool, indoor track, full-size gymnasium, group exercise studio, volleyball, weight/strength training area, and racquetball courts, as well as programs and services more directly related to health care and outpatient rehabilitation. The Marion Senior High School swim team uses the facility for practices and swim meets. The Lifetime Aquatic Swim Organization (LASO) also utilizes the pool for age-group swim teams in area wide competition.

Holston Hills Community Golf Course, a publicly owned golf course, provides recreation for town and county residents through a user fee and is available for use by the school golf team. A new driving range provides golfers a practice venue. The facility can be used for conferences, concerts, plays, and other special events.

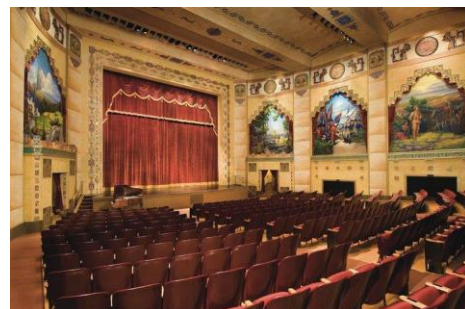
Other recreation facilities within easy reach of Marion include Hungry Mother State Park, the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Rural Retreat Lake, the Settlers Museum of Southwest Virginia, and the Appalachian Trail.

MARION DOWNTOWN



The Town of Marion has a vibrant, walkable downtown that has undergone considerable revitalization over the past 15 years. Due to the efforts of the town to revitalize the historic downtown area, Marion's downtown has been recognized as a National Main Street Community by Main Street America, and as a semifinalist for the Great American Main Street Award. The downtown district also lies within Marion's state-designated Historic District, the Marion Technology Zone, and the Marion Enterprise Zone.

The Lincoln Theatre, standing in the heart of Marion's downtown area, reopened its doors in the spring of 2004 as a



revitalized facility that aims to serve as a community cultural arts center. The old-time movie house originally opened in 1929 and served the community until the theater closed in 1977. The Lincoln Theatre has since been named to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of three remaining theaters in the country decorated in Mayan Revival (art deco) style, and is the only one to be fully restored to date. The theatre is home of the nationally syndicated Public Broadcasting System (PBS) television series *Song of the Mountains* with monthly performance tapings of bluegrass and old time music now in its thirteenth season. Recently, the theatre has expanded, utilizing a downtown storefront as a box office and merchandise/concessions store.



The Marion Regional Farmers Market was established in 2009, and is located in the town square parking lot, on the corner of Cherry and Chestnut Streets. Area growers and backyard gardeners alike can display their produce under permanent pavilion-style shelters in the Town Square Public Parking lot. The covered pavilion also serves as an outdoor venue space for special events and holiday gatherings. Twenty-two covered spaces with electrical hookups and access to potable water are available, as well as free parking, a small performance stage, and public restrooms.

The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts occupies a historically significant local landmark situated on the highest point in downtown Marion; a three-story brick structure known as the "1908 Schoolhouse." The building has housed a school, library, historic museum, and now, a school of Appalachian Arts. As a multi-purpose center, the school is home to a variety of offerings. A state of the art Lutherie and woodshop, a print shop, JAM classes for youth, painting parties, fine art classes and more - The Henderson is home to a variety of learning experiences. In addition, "The Summit," a higher education learning center, takes over the entire second floor of the school. The two surrounding Community Colleges, Wytheville Community College and Virginia Highlands Community College, partnered together to what is now known as The Summit.





Marion Downtown hosts an assortment of special events, ranging from Halloween Madness kid-friendly events, to the annual Chili Cook-off and Music Event, which brings in an average of 10,000 in attendance for a one-day festival. Today, downtown Marion is a thriving community full of service, retail and restaurant businesses. With over 180 businesses downtown, the overall focus is to create a vibrant place to work, live, play and enjoy.

SMYTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Smyth County recently completed construction of the renovation and expansion of the courthouse. The project consisted of approximately 44,600 square feet of three stories of new construction and a renovation of the old courthouse building. The updated courthouse contains four courtrooms and a hearing room, housing the three courts (Circuit, General District, and Juvenile/Domestic Relations) and their respective Clerks, Juvenile Court Services Unit, Commonwealth's Attorney, Treasurer, and Commissioner of Revenue. The site will accommodate 41 parking spots. The estimated construction cost of the project is \$17,340,000.

A parking deck to serve the court system was constructed immediately east of the courthouse and spans between East Strother and East Court Streets. The structure provides 99 parking spaces split between 2 levels. The lower level is accessed from East Court Street and the upper level is accessed from East Strother Street. The pre-cast structure is accented by brick inlay and colored concrete to blend into the downtown setting. The parking deck will only be available for public use on weekends and during evening hours.



PUBLIC SAFETY

The Marion Fire-EMS Department was established on March 1, 2015 through a merger of the Marion Volunteer Fire Department, which was established in 1888) and the Marion Life Saving Crew, which was established in 1948. Both organizations bring a long and proud history to the new Department and we look forward to serving the residents of our coverage area for many years to come!

Because Marion serves as the administrative seat for Smyth County, public safety services is provided through both the Smyth County Sheriff's Department and the Marion Police Department. The Marion Police Department is staffed by a chief, two lieutenants, four sergeants, 14 officers, a K-9 unit, a chaplain, and an executive assistant. The Smyth County Sheriff's Department with 47 full time and 23 part time employees, located near Interstate 81 Exit 45 on Matson Drive. The Smyth County Sheriff's Department transports prisoners to the Abingdon Regional Jail located in Washington County.

On the countywide level, the sheriff's department also handles all emergency radio communications through the central dispatch and E-911 center with eleven dispatchers. Smyth County upgraded its E-911 capabilities, so that callers using cellular telephones can be located to the nearest tower by either a GIS-based system, which is more accurate, or through triangulation.

By 2010 Smyth County installed four strategically located towers to serve its communications system for police, fire and emergency rescue with the ability to communicate across all their radio systems.

WATER SUPPLY AND TREATMENT

The Town of Marion draws its water supply from a spring system located near the junction of State Routes 16 and 601 (4.5 miles southeast of Marion), as well as from the Middle Fork Holston River. The town's system serves approximately 10,000 users in Marion, the communities of Atkins and Attoway, and Hungry Mother State Park.

The spring system includes a large limestone spring encased by a concrete structure that impounds 65,000 gallons of water, with chlorine and fluoride added to the basin water. Three smaller springs are connected to the main spring basin. The water flows by gravity into the town distribution system. The excess water is stored either in a 1-million-gallon covered reservoir on a hill west of the VDOT district maintenance shop or in a 500,000-gallon steel-covered reservoir on a hill south of the Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute. A booster station on Prater Lane pumps water to two covered reservoirs (365,000 gallons and 100,000 gallons) located north of town.

A water filtration plant with treatment capacity for 3-million-gallons per day draws its supply from the Middle Fork Holston River, via an intake located at the east end of Marion. Water storage for the treatment plant is provided by two steel-covered

reservoirs (total capacity of 1 million gallons each)⁵ located next to the plant and a 350,000-gallon high service tank located northeast of the treatment plant.

Additional water storage capacity has been developed via a 500,000-gallon storage tank in Mountain Empire Industrial Park, a 30,000-gallon storage tank in the Riverview Subdivision, and a 6,000-gallon tank at the end of Williams Road.

The total water system storage capacity is 4.85 million gallons. The town's mission statement for the water treatment plant is to meet all quality and pressure standards set by the state and to maintain a fire reserve of three million gallons. The water treatment plant is located east of town near the Middle Fork of the Holston River.

SEWAGE TRANSPORT AND TREATMENT

The sewage treatment system in Marion centers on a wastewater treatment plant completed in December 1993 and located just off Lee Highway, west of town. The treatment system at the plant includes pre-treatment, primary treatment, and secondary treatment with ultraviolet disinfection. Chlorine is not part of the process. The treatment plant can process 3.4 million gallons per day and has an average flow 1.5 million gallons per day.

The town completed a \$1.9 million renovation to the sewage treatment plant in 2012, which included the replacement of the ultraviolet system, bio tower repairs, and improved influent collection. These repairs also included a green reserve biogas project that replaced the use of oil and gas with recycled methane gas from the digester to power a generator.

WATER/WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Marion has an expansive water and sewer system serving the entire town as well as areas outside the town boundaries (see attached Water and Sewer map). One of the most serious challenges facing our towns across Virginia, and across America, is our aging Water and Sewer infrastructure. Like most of our towns, Marion's water and sewer system was installed piecemeal over generations, and much of it is at or past its useful life. A water or sewer leak patch and repair only increases the likelihood of another break down line, and the process of patching and repairing has been never-ending. In 2014, the Town of Marion began reassessing priorities to address this endemic issue, and developed the Comprehensive Infrastructure Replacement Program (CIRP). The CIRP plan is exactly what its name implies... a comprehensive program dealing with all facets of our town's aging infrastructure in a thoughtful and strategic approach, encompassing and upgrading the eight variables of our underground utilities: water, sewer, storm water, electric, phone, cable, natural gas,

⁵ These are the locally famous "Hot" and "Cold" water reservoirs visible from Interstate 81.

and paving. The project is broken into 711 individual projects, which represents the identification of the variables from intersection to intersection throughout the town. After two years intensive study and planning, Marion's CIRP program was implemented in late 2016. While certainly a major undertaking, the Town of Marion's CIRP plan is easily scalable to most any community large or small, and can be implemented with local staff and municipal forces in many cases.

The CIRP plan is a fifteen year capital outlay plan to replace 85% of the town's underground infrastructure. It is very flexible, but it has some hard and fast guidelines that are not traditionally used by municipalities. First and foremost, it's put together by the employees that have more knowledge and experience with the system than any engineering firm. The Town enlisted the services of an engineering firm through an RFP process, hired them for design services for a three year term with (2) three year renewals, and then told them to listen to our employees with the guidance of our management. Between our top four Public Works employees and Town Engineer, we have over 150 years of institutional knowledge. We let that knowledge be our guide, and instructed them to design a replacement system based on that knowledge. The Town has a sound financial plan in place, authorized yearly by the Town Council, which ensures that we only commit to what we know we can pay for based on committed revenues of a 5% rate increase paying a 10 year note for work anticipated in the next twelve months. This will allow us to implement the program in 15 years, and be paid out in 25 years.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING

The town, through its public works department, provides door-to-door collection of solid wastes from roughly 3,500 homes and 20 businesses, once a week. Other waste-hauling from commercial and industrial sources is handled through private contracts.

The Smyth County landfill, closed since 1994, has been replaced by a transfer station located on the old landfill site off State Route 107 in Chilhowie. Most solid wastes collected in the Town of Marion are delivered to the transfer station, which compacts the material and has it hauled away by a private contractor for disposal in a licensed landfill (Iris Glen Landfill, Johnson City, Tennessee).

The town does not run its own solid waste recycling program; town residents are free to make use of the Smyth County system. Private recycling of aluminum cans is available from a tractor-trailer stationed in the parking lot at the Food City shopping center and open 5 days a week.

In 2015, Smyth County's recycling rate was 20.5 percent, which is higher than the 15 percent recycling rate mandated by the Virginia General Assembly for rural counties. This recycling rate was met in part because of commercial recyclers.

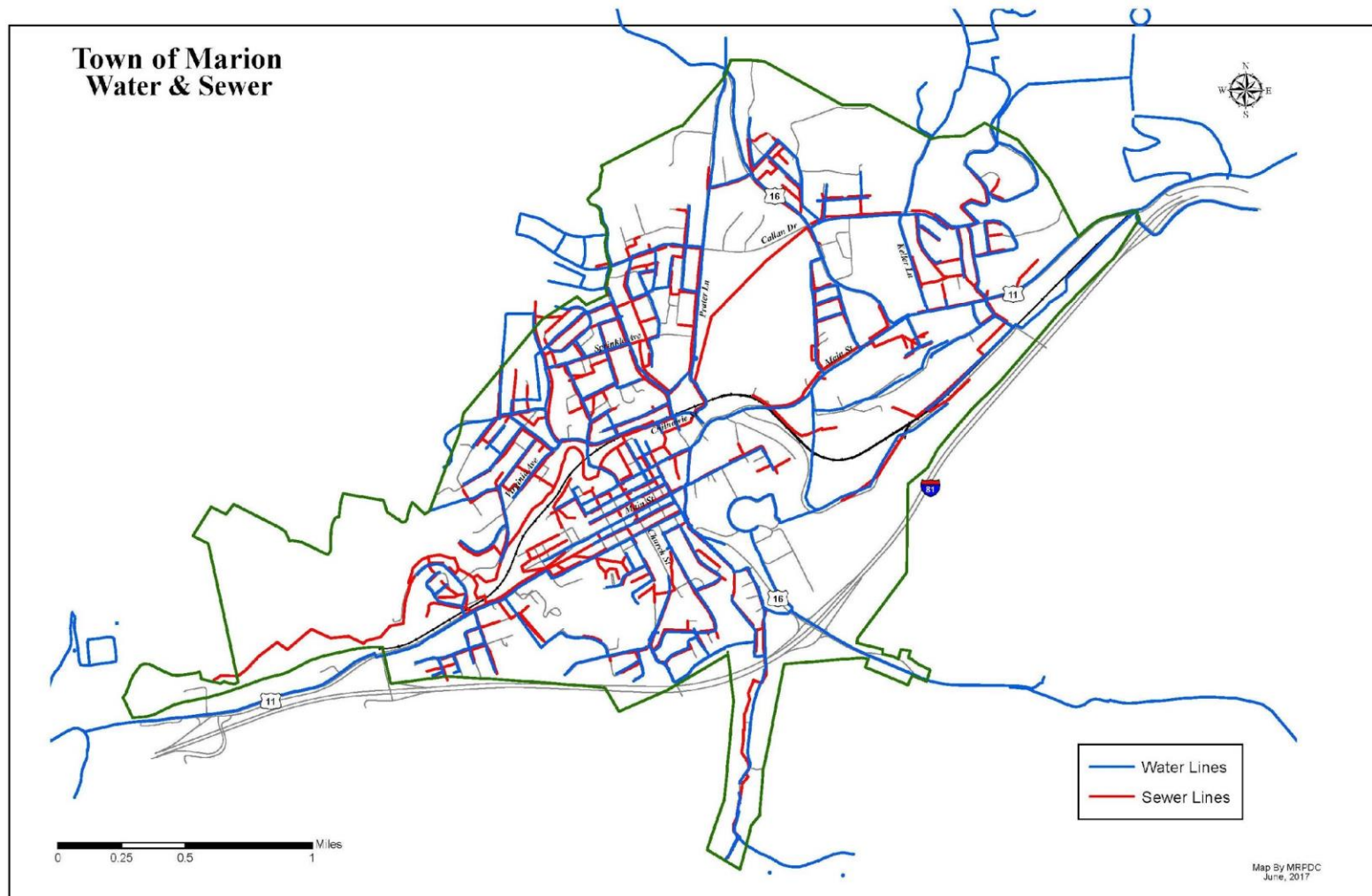
UTILITIES

Utilities include services such as electricity, natural gas, telephone, and Internet service. For Marion and Smyth County, American Electric Power supplies electricity, as has been the case for many years.

The East Tennessee Natural Gas Company pipes natural gas into the region, with local distribution in Marion handled through Atmos Energy Corporation, which acquired the former United Cities Natural Gas Company in 1997. Most parts of Marion have access to natural gas, and individuals who are not presently served can make arrangements with Atmos Energy to install a new connection.

Telephone service has taken on new forms with the rise of cellular telephone service and the installation of cellular communications towers along the Interstate 81 corridor through Smyth County. Landline telephone service is primarily provided through Centurylink.

For large and well-established communities such as Marion, Internet service is available through several providers, including independent Internet Service Providers (ISPs) as well as local providers. The Bristol Virginia Utilities Board (BVUB) leased and installed fiber optic lines along Interstate 81 from the City of Bristol to Interstate 77 in Wythe County. While the Town of Marion has no immediate plans to provide further local access to that broadband capability, BVUB does provide broadband Internet service to the Mountain Empire Industrial Park in the community of Atkins and several other industrial and governmental facilities in Smyth County.



EIGHT. LAND USE

CURRENT LAND USE BY CATEGORIES

During the 2006 Marion Comprehensive Plan update, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) staff collected information about existing land use and housing conditions through a windshield survey of all properties located in the town. In 2011, MRPDC staff updated the results of the earlier land use survey using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. The updated results of the survey are tabulated in this chapter and presented on the Existing Land Use Map.

The Table below indicates, Marion's total land area is approximately 2,682 acres. About 74 percent of this land is developed, with residential uses making up 46.3 percent of total land use; public/semi-public uses, including street and roads, comprising 13.5 percent; industrial uses accounting for 2.4 percent; and commercial uses making up 9.4 percent. Approximately 26 percent of the land in the Town of Marion is vacant.

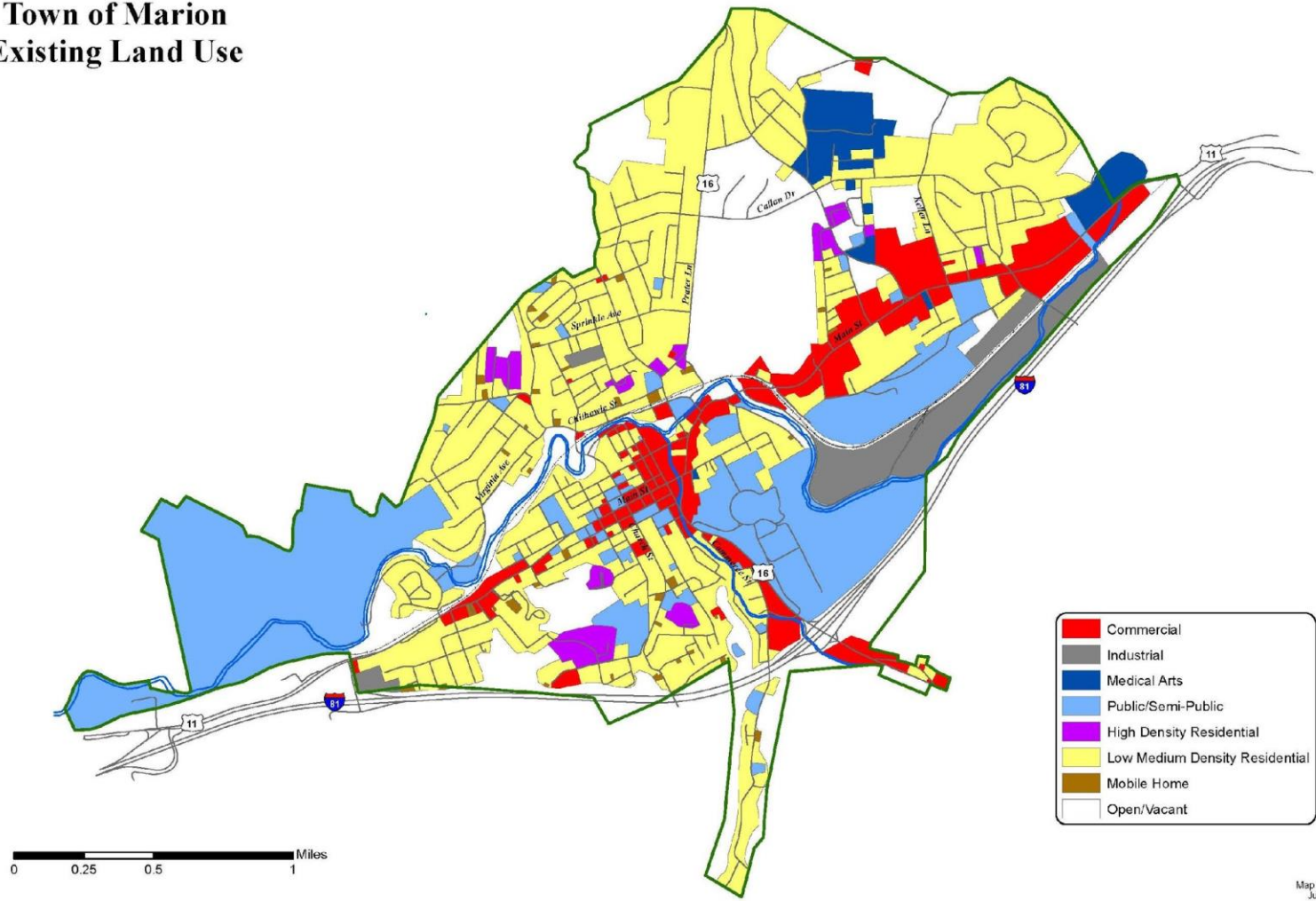
Existing Land Use Town of Marion		
By Land Use Classification		
Classification	Acres *	Percent of Total
Vacant	705	26.3
Medical Arts	58	2.2
Commercial	252	9.4
Industrial	65	2.4
Residential	1241	46.3
Public/Semi-Public	361	13.5
Total	2,682	100.0
<i>*Figures rounded. Source: MRPDC 2011.</i>		

Table below shows percentage of developed land by type of land use and percent change over time. In Marion, residential land, as a percentage of the total developable land in the town, makes up approximately 63 percent, while public/semi-public uses constitute 18 percent, industrial uses are 3 percent, medical arts uses are 3 percent, and commercial uses are 13 percent.

Developed Land						
Year	Total Developed Acres	Commercial	Industrial	Residential	Public / Semi-Public	Medical Arts
1974	1,579	7%	12%	45%	36%	NA
Change from 1974 to 1994	99	1%	0%	1%	-2%	NA
1994	1,678	8%	12%	46%	34%	NA
Change from 1994 to 2011	298	5%	-9%	17%	-16%	NA
2011	1,976	13%	3%	63%	18%	3%
Source: Town of Marion Comprehensive Plan, 2006 and Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, 2011						

A considerable amount of the land in Marion is vacant and suitable for development. The vacant classification includes land that is being used for agricultural purposes; however, active agricultural operations appear to have ceased throughout much of the town, including on the land adjacent to the drive-in movie theater on Park Boulevard and on the land east of Prater Lane adjacent to the quarry. GIS analysis of the town indicates that approximately 368 acres of the vacant land is marginal for additional development in that it occurs on the areas with slopes greater than 20 percent. In addition, 76 acres of the vacant land are unsuitable because they are located in the 100-year floodplain.

Town of Marion Existing Land Use



CURRENT LAND USE CONTROLS

Marion adopted a zoning ordinance and an official zoning districts map in 1960. Five zones were delineated at that time: residential (R-1), residential (R-2), local business (B-1), general business (B-2), and industrial (M-1). Later amendments added a Special Uses Area (SA-1) and definitions for manufactured homes, automobile trailers, and tents.

A complete comprehensive rewrite of the town's zoning ordinance occurred between 2013 and 2015 with adoption in the March of 2015.

The intent of the town's zoning ordinance is to carefully balance the fundamental property rights and interests of the private citizens with the needs of the community as a whole, as set forth in the Town of Marion Comprehensive Plan. Through the zoning ordinance, the Town of Marion is authorized to provide for the establishment of districts within the corporate limits, in which the town may regulate, restrict, permit, prohibit, and determine:

1. The use of land, buildings, structures and other premises for agricultural, business, industrial, residential, flood protection and other specific uses;
2. The size, height, area, bulk, location, erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, maintenance, razing or removal of structures;
3. The areas and dimensions of land, water and air space to be occupied by buildings, structures and uses and of courts, yards and other open spaces to be left unoccupied by uses and structures, including the establishment of minimum lot sizes based on whether a public or community water supply or sewer system is available and used; and
4. The excavation or mining of soil or other natural resources.

The Marion Zoning Ordinance identifies unique zones including, residential districts (R-1), (R-2), (R-3), (R-4) and (R-2 MH), industrial district (IG), medical arts (MA), commercial limited (CL), commercial general (CG), commercial downtown (CD), floodplain district (FP), and historical (H). The purpose, uses and requirements of these zones are described in the zoning ordinance, which serves as a flexible tool to guide the growth and development of the Town of Marion.

CONSTRAINTS TO DEVELOPMENT

Several factors are at work in the town that serve as constraints on future development and that, in some instances, produce problems on land that is already developed. Due to these constraints, there are areas in the town in which intensive development should be prohibited because of one or more of the following factors: 1) they are within the 100-year floodplain; 2) they are on lands with slopes in excess of 20 percent; and/or 3) they are in areas susceptible to sinkholes. In addition to these

natural constraints, there are also several manmade barriers to development, such as bridges and railroad tracks, that can influence development in the Town of Marion.

Floodway Constraints

Three streams in Marion, Staley Creek, Hooks Branch, and the Middle Fork of the Holston River, have a tendency to flood, causing property damage and disrupting traffic flow and business activities. The Tennessee Valley Authority studied these streams in 1961, following the then flood of record, which occurred on January 29, 1957. The record flood was mapped along with the projected regional flood and maximum probable flood, both of which occurred in 1977. Subsequently, the minimum area necessary to carry the waters of the 100-year floodplain was identified and mapped. This area does not coincide with the boundaries of the 100-year floodplain. Instead, it is an area that varies from 50 to 200 feet on either side of the three streams through which a calculated volume of water would move at high velocity during the projected 100-year flood. Structures in the floodway have the effect of serving as a dam during periods of high water and could cause areas upstream to flood, which might not otherwise be susceptible to flooding. Another equally undesirable possibility is that structures will succumb to the flood waters, (because of the energy created by the velocity and volumes of water trying to get through a constricted space), creating artificial debris dams downstream resulting in additional problems.

The Virginia State Wide Building Code requires special construction techniques in the 100-year floodplain. This code should have the effect of preventing further residential construction in the floodway and restricting development in the 100-year floodplain. As the table below shows, approximately 37 percent of the land in the 100-year floodplain is developed in Marion.

Developed Land In Floodplain Zone			
Classification	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Percent Developed
Land in 100-year Floodplain	121	45	37%
<i>Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, 2011</i>			

Staley Creek drains a large area south of Marion roughly parallel to State Route 16 from the State Fish Hatchery through the town. The confluence with the Middle Fork Holston River occurs just west of W.E. Francis Bridge. Approximately 93 percent of the acreage in the Staley Creek floodplain is developed inside town limits. In some cases, buildings and roads are constructed directly over the creek at a lower elevation than the projected 100-year flood.

Hooks Branch roughly parallels Matson Drive southwest of Staley Creek and joins

Staley Creek just west of the Virginia Department of Transportation's maintenance shop. The floodplain along Matson Drive is approximately 78 percent developed predominantly with residential structures.

As for the Middle Fork Holston River, it is sparsely developed with few of the structures in the floodplain intended for human habitation.

Approximately 76 acres in the 100-year floodplain are still undeveloped. A limited amount of this land could be viewed as having potential for development in conformance with sound planning and development techniques for floodplains.

Slope Constraints

Approximately 37.9 percent of the land in steep slopes in the town is developed. As would be expected where commercial, industrial, and public demands for land have suitable alternatives, practically all of this land is used for residential purposes. Some parts of the town provide excellent examples of how steeply sloped land can be developed. For instance, the residential neighborhood in the Panorama Drive area preserves the aesthetic qualities of the land and, at the same time, avoids undue engineering problems associated with the effects of storm water run-off from developed slopes.

Developed Land On Slopes Greater Than 20 Percent			
Classification	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Percent Developed
Land on Slopes Greater Than 20 percent	593	225	37.9%
Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, 2011			

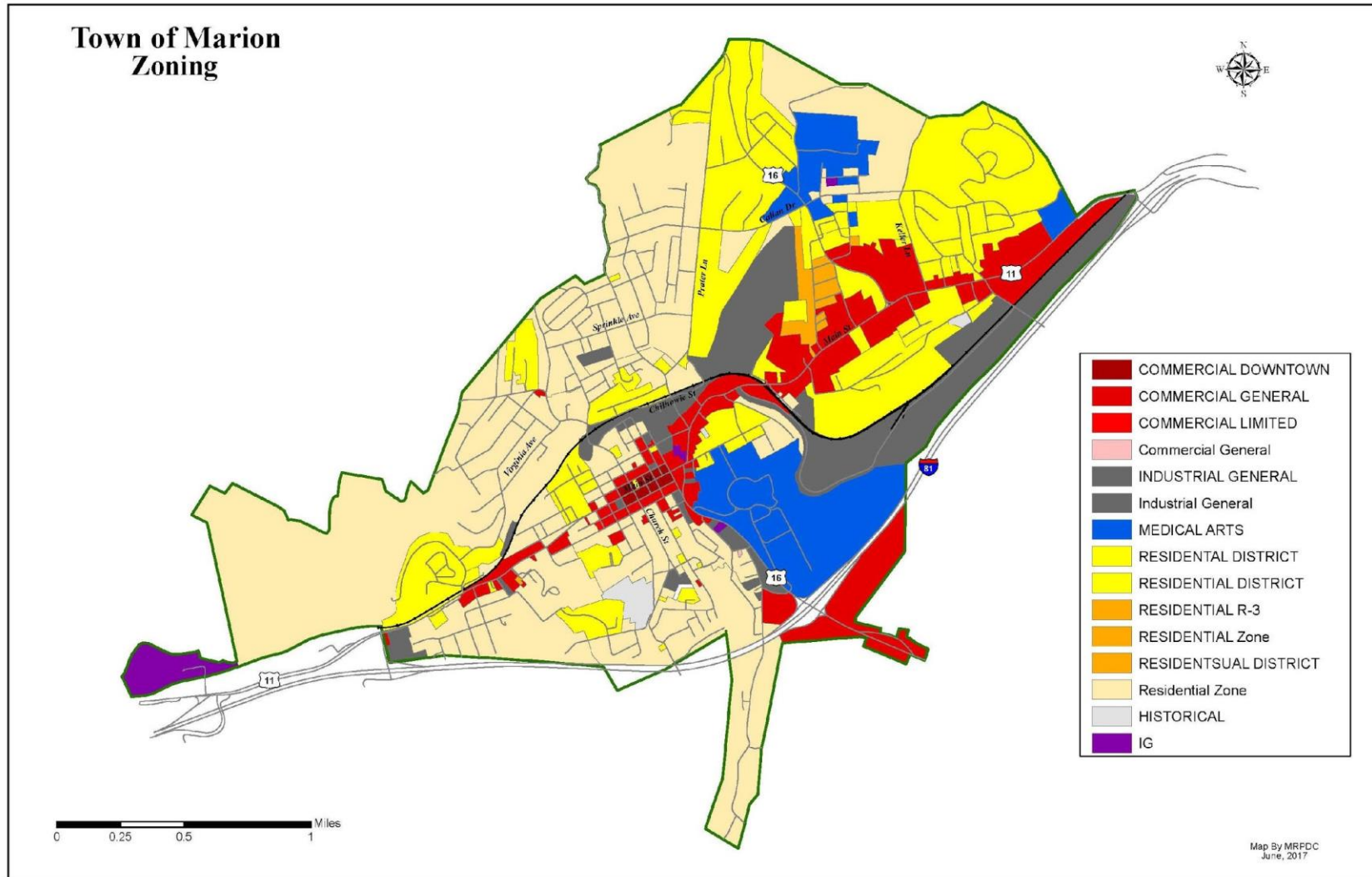
Additional residential developments on steep slopes occur on Spruce Street, Matson Drive, North Main Street, Staley Street, Prater Lane, Chatham Hill Road, Gilman Street, Prescott Avenue, Wolfe Avenue, Henderson Street, and Pearl Avenue. Again, some of these are well developed; however, in other instances residential development on steep lands is characterized by narrow streets without off-street parking or sidewalks.

Town of Marion Slope & Floodplain



Map By MRFDC
June, 2017

Town of Marion Zoning



Man-made Constraints to Development

In addition to the physical factors mentioned above, there are three man-made features in Marion that serve as barriers to future development, despite the fact that all three have stimulated economic development in the town. The first is Interstate 81, which bypasses the town to the south. In concert with natural features such as the ridges south of town and the Middle Fork Holston River, the interstate limits the expansion of the town limits to the south, east, and west.

The second man-made barrier to development is the Norfolk and Western Railroad, which runs along the Middle Fork of the Holston River and roughly bisects the town into a northern, predominantly residential section and a southern, predominantly commercial section. The northern section is deprived of desirable access to downtown Marion because at-grade crossings must be negotiated on every approach to the central business district. Moreover the noise and vibration associated with railway operations can discourage new residential development or the rehabilitation of existing residential structures.

A third man-made constraint to development is the quarry in the northeast section of town. Although the quarry is located on vacant land that has provided an adequate buffer to existing development, its location has discouraged additional growth due to safety issues and the potential for structural damage to homes. The location of the facility is particularly unfortunate, since it is situated on a large tract, which would otherwise be ideally suited for additional residential or commercial development.

LAND USE CHANGE

Since the founding of the Town of Marion in 1832, land use changes have occurred spontaneously without regard to a preconceived plan. This spontaneity has been evidence of vitality; however, at the same time, unplanned growth can create problems.

One of the major problems created by unplanned development is a lack of connectivity in the town transportation system. For example, in the section east of Prater Lane and north of the railroad, streets have no relationship to community facilities, shopping centers, or the inter-neighborhood movement of people and goods. North and west of Chilhowie Street, local streets intersect at odd angles and, on occasion, streets that should meet, do not. The same can be said for portions of Marion between the Norfolk and Western Railroad and Interstate 81. Although the original grid pattern of development has been adhered to for the most part, some streets—Poston, Miller, Greenway, Hull, Palmer, among others—appear to have been constructed without consideration for the future.

Another problem related to the spontaneous development of the town is associated with the size, shape, and serviceability of town lots. Lots and parcels vary from as

small as 2,500 square feet to over 100 acres. Many lots are oddly shaped or poorly drained, while others are not provided with 25 feet of frontage. Although this practice has been discontinued, the results will make it difficult to rationally plan areas that have been so divided in the past. The town government has the authority to prevent the creation of such lots and has exercised the responsibility to see that future subdivisions of land take into account the need for services and for access.

A third problem associated with unplanned growth is a lack of appropriate buffers between residential, commercial, and industrial developments and the railroad rights-of-way and major roads. An example of this development concern be readily observed along Chilhowie Street, North Main Street, and South Main Street. In addition, strips or corridors of residential and commercial land use are evident on Prater Lane, Matson Drive, South Church Street, and Chatham Hill Road. North Main Street, from the river to the town boundary, is typical of linear commercial or strip development. In some instances, development along highway strips is necessary or even desirable. Generally speaking, however, strip development increases the cost of providing municipal services, lowers resale value of residential and commercial property, and forces people to drive to obtain services, thereby creating highway safety hazards, congestion, and generally unattractive conditions.

Finally, as mentioned above, past development has severely encroached the floodplain along Hooks Branch and Staley Creek. This practice should be curtailed in the future, and the town should gradually convert existing intensive uses to uses more compatible with the limitations of a floodplain.

FUTURE LAND USE

Population is projected to hold steady or continue to decline in Marion, and there appears to be an adequate amount of residential land in town to support the projections. However, there are several major changes occurring in Marion that have a potential for future land use changes. The Future Land Use Map included as part of this Comprehensive Plan shows the planned future land use needs to meet the anticipated demands of these changes.

Major developments in the Town of Marion are occurring near the three Interstate 81 interchanges - Exit 44, Exit 45 and Exit 47. The Smyth County School Board purchased a site for a new elementary school in the Adwolfe community near the west end of Marion. The construction of this school will likely promote development around Exit 44 and along the U.S. Route 11 corridor between Marion and the Town of Chilhowie.

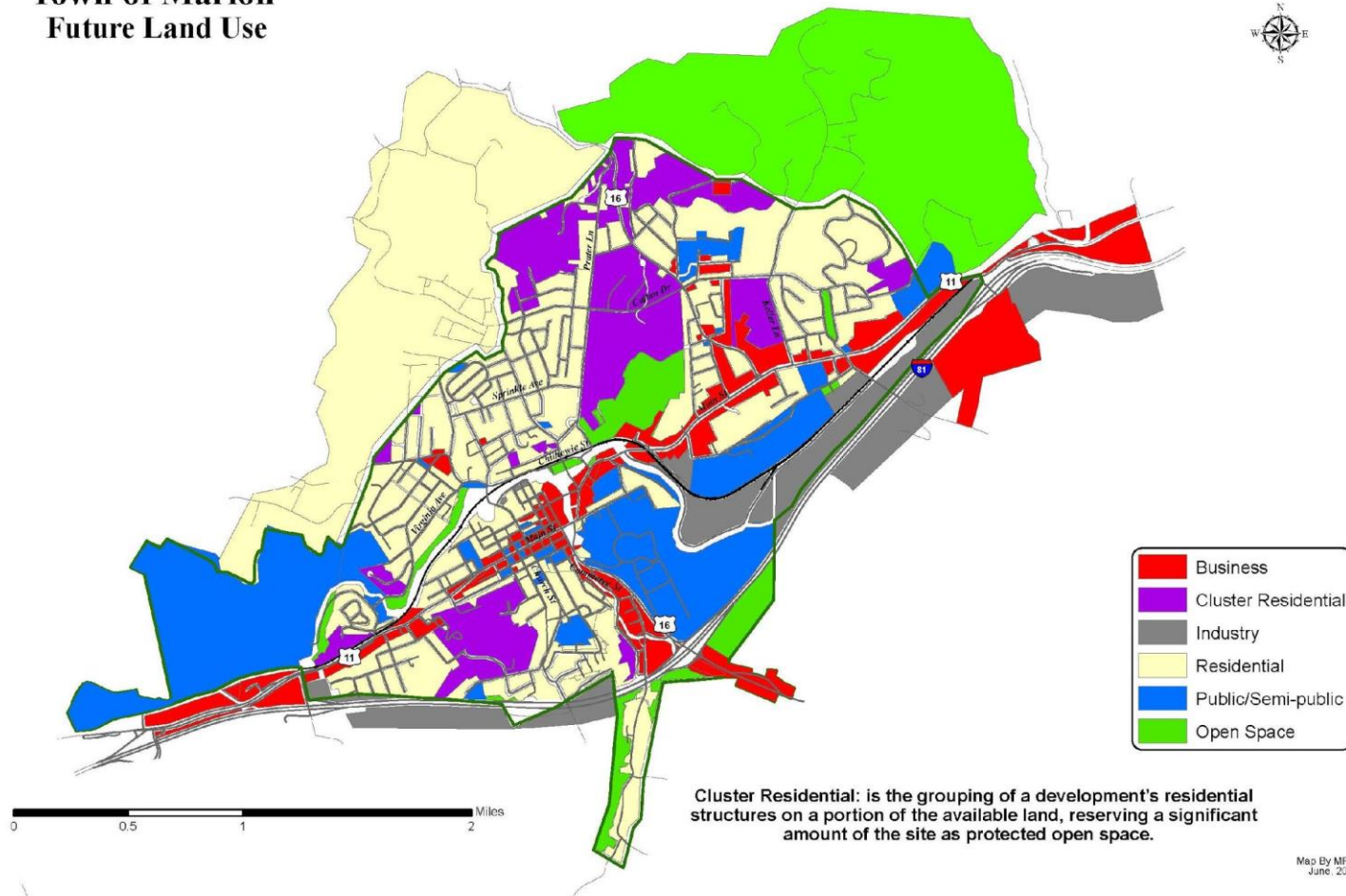
Immediately adjacent to Exit 45, the site of the former Harwood Industrial Property is undergoing several changes. Smyth County purchased two of the former industrial buildings to be renovated and used by the Smyth County Sheriff's Office and Smyth County E-911 Office. The main industrial building was demolished by a private owner who plans to market the site for hotel and restaurant development.

Mountain States Health Alliance opened a new community hospital facility adjacent to Exit 47 just inside Marion town limits. With this new facility, traffic patterns are changing with the addition of at least one new stoplight and related commercial and medical arts development is likely to occur in the vacant land around the interstate exit.

A fourth potential land use change to take place in Marion over the next five to ten years is the relocation of medical arts uses away from the predominantly residential area near Radio Hill Road, Snider Street, and Terrace Drive. With the construction of a new hospital near Exit 47, medical uses near the old hospital on Radio Hill Road may relocate. A portion of the old hospital facility is expected to be used as a teaching center for the Emory & Henry College Physical Therapy program; however, possible uses for the rest of the old hospital facility have not yet been determined.

Finally, a planned commercial development immediately south of Interstate 81 Exit 47, which has been on hold due to the poor national economic climate, may move forward in the near future. If that development occurs, the Town of Marion could experience a shift in commercial uses toward Exit 47 and away from established shopping centers, such as the Wal-Mart/Ingles shopping center. Commercial development at Exit 47 could impact businesses in Downtown Marion as well.

Town of Marion Future Land Use



NINE. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GENERAL GOALS

Several general goals were identified in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, and many of those goals are still relevant to the current conditions in the Town of Marion. Those goals are:

- Encourage the orderly conversion of vacant land to urban use.
- Guide new development into a pattern that will complement, rather than conflict with, existing uses.
- Encourage an orderly land use pattern by adopting and enforcing effective land use controls.
- Provide proper and efficient road system connectivity between different land uses.
- Encourage adequate and affordable housing for all socio-economic groups.
- Provide community facilities that are efficient, effective, and strategically located.
- Designate areas for and create a viable environment for commercial development.
- Encourage targeted industrial development.
- Utilize federal and state programs to the maximum extent possible in the achievement of the town's goals.
- Provide for the enhancement of the cultural life of Marion.
- Encourage the preservation of historic sites.

POPULATION & HOUSING

Situation Summary

Housing in Marion is predominantly single-family detached, although the proportion of single-family units declined by 15.8 percent over the last decade. Multi-family units increased by 20.9 percent during the same period. The cost and value of housing for both owners and renters increased at a much faster pace than family income during the 2000s. Maintaining and improving the affordability of both housing prices and rents requires critical consideration as Marion officials plan for the future. The quality of the town's housing stock appears to be good based on objective measures from the U.S. Census Bureau, and housing appears to be readily available in all price categories, although the percentage of middle and upper value homes is low.

The town should continue to implement housing rehabilitation projects to improve the quality and availability of low to moderate-income units, while encouraging the supply and diversity of all housing types.

With the addition of the Emory and Henry College School of Health Sciences, the town is prepared to welcome as many as five-hundred new students and the various faculty and staff required to operate the college. Much of the housing stock within Marion and the surrounding area contains older homes that despite their low prices would require renovation and repair to make them appealing to first time homebuyers. The town is exploring options to boost the towns housing stock to capitalize on the increased residents.

Goals

- Maintain a population level that provides adequate support and resources for the town and establishes a steady rate of growth.
- Promote safe, sanitary, and affordable housing with a diversification of housing opportunities for all residents of Marion.

Objectives

- Create an environment in the Town of Marion that supports and encourages a high quality of life for all population groups.
- Promote an adequate supply of safe, high-quality, affordable, and well-maintained housing for all residents of Marion.
- Encourage subdivision development for households in all income levels.
- Promote home ownership among all income levels in the town.
- Pursue opportunities for neighborhood housing rehabilitation with preference to owner-occupied housing.
- Encourage an adequate supply of safe, sanitary housing for lower and middle-income families, the elderly, and disabled residents.

Strategies

- Pursue overall objectives that create a high quality of life in Marion, such as diversifying the local employment and industrial bases, ensuring educational opportunities for all citizens, developing cultural and recreational amenities, recruiting businesses for improved shopping, dining, and entertainment, and supporting the expansion of healthcare services.
- Encourage housing rehabilitation through available grant programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant program, USDA Rural Development, and the Virginia Housing Development Authority programs.
- Consider the adoption of a housing maintenance code to establish minimum standards for upkeep and maintenance of all residential properties.
- Support the development of cooperative housing projects targeted for the retired and disabled population.
- Encourage the development of multi-family housing for middle and upper income families, especially townhouse and condominium developments.
- Work with Smyth County to ensure an adequate supply of quality rental housing for students enrolled in the Emory & Henry College Physical Therapy Program.

- Pursue innovative methods to expand the amount and range of affordable housing for existing and prospective employees and other residents. Such efforts may include:
 - Pursue public/private cooperation in expanding the supply of affordable housing for the town's labor force.
 - Establish and maintain a database to provide information to prospective housing developers as to suitable locations for housing development and rehabilitation.
 - Cooperate with existing local companies to find ways to meet the housing needs of employees.
 - Promote the development of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).
 - Promote well-designated, compatible infill development on appropriate sites.

TRANSPORTATION

Situation Summary

The transportation facilities in an urbanized area determine to a large extent the identification people have with the area. The efficient movement of existing and projected traffic is the primary objective of the transportation system; however, it is absolutely essential that transportation planning and development be integrated into the planning for churches, homes, businesses, industries, playgrounds, schools, and other community facilities.

Citizens in the Town of Marion generally did not cite transportation as a major issue during the community meetings or through the public input survey in 2011. Traffic congestion along U.S. Route 11 (Main Street) can become heavy at certain times during the day. Sidewalk improvements, including extending new sidewalks through residential neighborhoods, were identified by some residents as a need in Marion. Pedestrian access and connectivity has improved in Downtown Marion through projects such as the Iron Street enhancements. The following street improvements are recommended for Marion.

Goal

- Maintain a safe, efficient, compatible, and balanced town transportation network.

Objectives

- Ensure that the capacity of the town's major arterial and collector roadways are maintained as development occurs.
- Ensure that all new roadways are designed to balance the multiple functions of the road; to serve motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic; and to be visually and environmentally compatible with surrounding land uses.
- Design transportation systems to minimize through-traffic in residential areas,

to cause the least possible disruption of public parks and recreation areas, and to create the least displacement of homes and businesses, while promoting connectivity between land uses.

- Promote an effective, economical, and well-used public transit system.
- Develop an effective, safe, and convenient pedestrian and bicycle system.

Strategies

- Maintain and apply standards and procedures for design, access, zoning, and site plan review to ensure safe and coordinated access to arterial and major collector roads and limit or prevent the impacts of conventional strip development on safety, traffic capacity, and aesthetic quality.
- Segregate high volume through-roads from local neighborhood streets to protect the function, capacity, and safety of the neighborhood street system.
- Encourage new roads and road extensions that will connect to the existing road network to balance traffic loads and provide alternative routes for traffic flow.
- Ensure that new developments are sized and designed to be compatible with the function and capacity of the adjacent roadways that will serve them.
- Ensure that new commercial, industrial, and residential developments provide adequate transportation system improvements. Continue to Work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to monitor the traffic flow and safety conditions of the town's roadway system and to maintain improvements priority list and funding commitments.
- Review and update landscape and setback standards for parking areas adjacent to roadways to minimize the visual impact.
- Support increased federal and state funding for the expansion of public transportation services by the District Three Governmental Cooperative.
- Pursue opportunities to expand the sidewalk network throughout the town with specific focus on connecting residential neighborhoods to commercial centers.
- Evaluate the feasibility of extending bicycle routes through town along primary transportation corridors.
- Promote the Mountain Empire Airport as an important component of the regional transportation system.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Situation Summary

The Town of Marion is currently enjoying an economic upswing. Initiated by the long-term goals and objectives established in the mid 1990's, Marion often refers to its success as "an overnight success, twenty years in the making". Following the basic precepts of the National Main Street Center's "Four Point Approach" to community revitalization, the town has brought together exciting new initiatives, public-private

partnerships, and engaged the community to solidify the foundation for the current growth, and for the exciting future. Main Street vacancies are at a record low, currently under 4% (October 2017). New apartments supporting the expanding offerings at Emory & Henry College, in the former hospital site, is providing additional customers and opportunities for success. Strip center vacancies mirror the downtown success, and post an even lower vacancy rate (under 2%). New infill from local expansion and chain businesses, including Ollie's, Bojangles, Burger King, and a variety of service/medical arts businesses continue to serve as very encouraging outlook indicators. General Dynamics remains stable, the former woodworking factories along Brunswick Lane are being reused as warehouse/distribution centers, and Summit Bottling is celebrating their fifth year in the former Pepsi bottling plant. Community festivals continue to bring record numbers into the community. Hungry Mother State Park posted a record visitation last year, reaching nearly 260,000 people. The Southwest Virginia marketing initiative continues to help showcase the region, and our community. "Song of the Mountains" was designated as "The Official Television Series of Virginia", and is looking to expand their tapings to a second weekend in 2018. The Lincoln Theatre continues to grow their rentals and organic events. The Wayne C. Henderson School is expanding offerings and classes, and The Summit Center partnership between Wytheville and Virginia Highlands Community Colleges is also growing. Locally-owned eateries and businesses remain Marion's "market differentiator", and coupled with the arts/entertainment, educational opportunities, outdoor recreation, and overall community hospitality, Marion is proud to be known as "America's Coolest Hometown".

Goals

- Maintain a town government that is responsive, responsible, and accountable to its citizens and that is capable of efficiently providing high quality public services consistent with available resources.
- Provide and promote diverse community services and facilities that will enhance the quality of life for town residents.
- Maintain adequate open space, recreational facilities, and cultural opportunities for the benefit and enrichment of all citizens.
- Promote a vibrant local economy that is diversified, stable, and provides meaningful employment opportunities for all residents who desire to work.

Objectives

- Pursue regional solutions for the provisioning of public services such as education, public safety, and recreation.
- Provide an infrastructure of local government facilities and services that is adequate to meet the needs of present and future citizens, while striving to maintain reasonable and competitive tax and utility rates.
- Achieve broad-based cooperation within the community to provide excellent services, including public/private partnerships.

- Support projects and programs that will expand recreational opportunities and promote a healthier population.
- Foster the vitality and expansion of existing businesses and industries within the town.
- Pursue opportunities to diversify the local economy and create new high paying, career-oriented jobs.
- Promote regional cooperation in economic development initiatives to achieve economies of scale.
- Encourage commercial development that will support the needs of town residents and increase the tax base.
- Promote entrepreneurial growth and opportunities.

Strategies

Government Administration

- Maintain a town government that is responsive, responsible, and accountable to its citizens and that is capable of efficiently providing high quality public services consistent with available resources.
- Ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to participate in town decisions and foster community leadership.
- Continue to recognize that “services cost money” and that the town must continually balance the need for services with the ability and willingness of citizens to afford them.

Services and Utilities

- Encourage cooperative regional efforts to achieve economies of scale in government functions, including water and wastewater services, economic development and marketing, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal.
- The town should continue to upgrade and expand the water and wastewater systems using federal, state, regional, and local funding sources, such as the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission Water/Wastewater Fund.
- Be open to exploring the feasibility of a central countywide water services management plan and pricing system with the Smyth County Board of Supervisors, Thomas Bridge Water Corporation, Rye Valley Water Authority, Town of Chilhowie, and Town of Saltville.
- Work with Bristol Virginia Utilities and/or other providers to extend last mile telecommunications infrastructure to businesses and residents, which will increase service provider options and result in more affordable services.
- Implement expanded recycling and litter control efforts through public/private cooperative efforts with local companies and residential neighborhoods.
- Continue to participate in the regional transfer station with Smyth County for solid waste disposal in a regional landfill.
- Study the feasibility of installing free public Wi-Fi in Downtown Marion.

Education



- Continue to support the Smyth County Public School System so that it is recognized as among the highest quality systems in the state.
- Support Smyth County in the upgrading and modernization of the county's public school buildings, facilities, and programs.
- Work with the Summit Center to expand the educational and training programs offered at Wayne C. Henderson School.
- Continue to support the operations, development, and enhancement of the Smyth County Public Library.
- Support and market the ongoing development of the Emory & Henry College Physical Therapy Program at the former Smyth County Community Hospital facility.

Public Safety

- Maintain and improve the actual and perceived safety of public places through policies that promote well-equipped, highly trained emergency services.
- Encourage all emergency response agencies to comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and harm to the environment.
- Support, maintain, and improve the capabilities of the Marion Police Department, Marion Lifesaving Crew, and Marion Volunteer Fire Department through additional training, modern equipment, and innovative programs. Seek state and federal grant funding to provide training and purchase equipment.

Healthcare

- Support and assist the healthcare community in attracting qualified physicians to the town and county by promoting the area's strengths and making improvements related to housing and cultural needs.
- Support the operation of the Smyth County Community Hospital, and encourage opportunities to expand the services and programs available at the hospital.
- Support infrastructure development and improvements for senior citizens and those with disabilities, including facilities such as retirement homes, assisted living, age in place housing and specialized medical and recreation facilities.
- Support the operation of the Lifetime Wellness Center, and encourage the development and expansion of programs and opportunities available at the center.

Cultural Amenities

- Support the continued success of the Hungry Mother Arts & Crafts Festival, the Art Walk, and other cultural attractions and events.

- Continue to promote and support the Lincoln Theatre and Song of the Mountains.
- Support efforts of the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Music and Arts.
- Continue to promote and participate in regional organizations such as Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway and 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network.
- Continue to Investigate additional opportunities to enhance Downtown Marion through the development of museums, historical attractions, and venues for traditional music.
- Support the continued development and operation of the Smyth County Historical & Museum Society.
- Encourage residents to "buy local" by continuing to support the Marion Farmer's Market.
- Improve the use of community sign boards in strategic locations to advertise town and community events, festivals, and organizations.

Parks and Recreation

- Promote Hungry Mother State Park as a community asset and capitalize on the benefits the park provides for residents and as a tourism attraction.
- Encourage the continued development of a system of "greenways" and linear parks along the creeks in and around the town.
- Provide a full range of modern and accessible recreational facilities and services to local residents and visitors. Focus on upgrading and establishing smaller parks and playgrounds within neighborhoods to make recreation facilities as accessible as possible to local residents. Connect recreation facilities with linear parks and trails where possible.
- Focus on providing appropriate activities, facilities, and programs to meet the social and recreational needs of the town's youth. Work with the county to determine the feasibility of a jointly funded year-round recreation program.
- Ensure that recreation activities, facilities, and programs are structured and adapted as necessary to be readily available to the elderly population.
- Maintain the Holston Hills Community Golf Course and related facilities (formerly Holston Hills Country Club) as an affordable, high-quality public recreation facility.
- Study the feasibility of new recreation facilities, such as soccer fields, baseball fields, and hiking/biking trails, on the former Holston Hills Country Club property.
- Continue to be a strong Appalachian Trail Community and to support Appalachian Trail hikers and the development of longer regional trails that connect Marion to other communities.

Economy

- Develop a taskforce with Smyth County, Virginia's Industrial Advancement



Alliance (VIAA), Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, citizens, and other partners to develop and implement a detailed, goal-oriented economic plan for the Town of Marion.

- Work with Smyth County to develop and implement an industrial marketing program for the town.
- Work with Smyth County to establish a business retention and expansion program to ensure that existing companies are satisfied with conditions in Marion and to assist those companies to remain and expand their operations in the town.
- Encourage rehabilitation of industrial properties in Marion to create marketable sites for industrial development.
- Support Smyth County in the development, maintenance, and marketing of industrial sites around the county, such as the Mountain Empire Industrial Park.
- Encourage Smyth County to develop the relationship with the Crossroads Rural Entrepreneurial Institute in Galax to provide small business and entrepreneurial support and training and educational opportunities in Smyth County.
- Work with Smyth County to identify target industries that would be complementary to the existing industrial base, while offering needed economic diversity. Focus marketing efforts to attract and recruit the target industries.
- Continue to market the town's Enterprise Zone and the incentives available to businesses that locate or expand in the Enterprise Zone.
- Encourage Smyth County to pursue expansion of the town's Enterprise Zone to include areas of commercial and industrial growth.
- Continue to revitalize Downtown Marion through enhancements on Broad Street and Iron Street (LOVE SIGN), and additional façade improvements on Main Street.
- Encourage the Virginia Department of Transportation to relocate the maintenance shop located on South Commerce Street near Exit 45 so the property can be developed for commercial use.
- Pursue the creation of a comprehensive redevelopment and economic renewal plan for the Commerce Street area from Staley Creek Crossing on Route 16 South to Main Street then to the Broad Street intersection with River Street.
- Encourage the planned development of commercial establishments near Exit 47 and along South Main Street toward the west end of Marion.
- Encourage high quality, affordable childcare programs to serve working parents, specifically before and after-school programs and programs for infant and toddler care.
- Consider the use of existing public facilities and available industrial park lots to provide space for childcare and eldercare facilities.
- Coordinate economic development efforts with housing and land use efforts to

help expand the supply of affordable housing for existing and prospective employees.

- Enhance efforts to expand the tourism industry in conjunction with local businesses and non-profit groups, on a regional scale with organizations like The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail and 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network, and in cooperation with state efforts.
- Continue to promote the central business district (Downtown Marion) as a small regional shopping center. Continue to improve pedestrian connectivity throughout downtown and between downtown and residential zones.

LAND USE

Situation Summary

The Town of Marion is a living thing, and it has a vitality that makes a resident identify with it, because each resident is a component part. Consequently, decisions made by public and private officials regarding the shape, character, or form of the town has a potential to affect everyone in it for better or for worse. The policies in force concerning the uses of land in the town become very important from an aesthetic point of "how does it look," and the practical point of "how much is it going to cost?" Since cost considerations have first priority in most public decisions, it is intended that the goals and strategies in this section serve that purpose while establishing the Town of Marion as a vibrant, attractive, livable, but dynamic small town in Southwestern Virginia.

Like most towns and cities in Southwest Virginia, Marion has a relatively limited supply of land available for development; nevertheless, there should be enough suitable land to meet the expected needs during the next two decades. Major challenges include providing for affordable housing, continuing to strengthen the viability of the downtown, and enhancing the quality of the residential neighborhoods. Marion also faces the challenge of encouraging new, modern commercial services to locate in convenient areas along major roadways, while at the same time limiting the negative impacts that such development usually creates, especially traffic congestion and aesthetic degradation.

The town's visual appearance is important for economic development and the overall quality of life and sense of community pride. Encouraging property maintenance and beautification, buffering industrial sites, screening expansive parking lots, and controlling the visual appearance of signs, are among the strategies that the town can initiate to improve its aesthetic quality.

The Future Land Use Map found in this Comprehensive Plan reflects a blend of desired growth patterns, traditional or existing patterns, and patterns created inadvertently by the desire for convenient vehicular access to commercial uses. The balance between the supply and demand of land available for various desirable uses will need

to be monitored by the town as development continues.

Goals

- Land within the town will be developed in a balanced and reasonable manner, with consideration given to public health, safety and welfare, economic viability, and historic significance.
- Conserve and protect the town's natural resources and the beauty of its natural environment.
- Protect the integrity of the town's historic buildings and streetscapes.

Objectives

Overall Land Use Pattern

- Provide an adequate supply of land for expected future development needs.
- Ensure that new development is well planned, orderly, and attractive.

Downtown

- Maintain a vibrant downtown, with locally owned businesses, professional services, and housing opportunities.
- Improve, maintain, and strategically utilize vacant buildings.

Residential Neighborhoods

- Preserve and enhance the integrity and quality of residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure that zoning regulations protect neighborhoods from the encroachment or indirect impacts of incompatible land uses.
- Ensure that neighborhoods have adequate lighting, utilities, sidewalks, recreation areas, and other infrastructure.
- Provide residential areas with safe and convenient access to shopping, entertainment, and employment.
- Encourage innovative design techniques in new residential development that reduce costs and conserve natural resources.

Commercial and Industrial

- Achieve diverse and plentiful opportunities for shopping, lodging, entertainment, and dining within the town.
- Maintain attractive, well planned, and harmonious entrance corridors to Marion.
- Enhance Marion as a major tourism destination, focusing on its traditional heritage, natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and overall quality of life.

Historical Preservation and the Environment

- Promote the preservation and rehabilitation of significant historic buildings.
- Promote Marion as a clean, environmentally active town.
- Prevent the pollution of air and water resources, and alleviate pollution that has already occurred.

Strategies

Overall Strategies for Future Land Use and Development.

- Continue to enhance Downtown Marion as a unique regional center by continuing to focus public and institutional uses in and around downtown whenever possible, and by encouraging infill, redevelopment and rehabilitation, and mixed-use development projects.
- Preserve the traffic capacity of major corridors by requiring coordinated access points to major roadways and encouraging interparcel road connections whenever possible.
- Enforce the maintenance of vacant lots and buildings, particularly in the historic downtown area, to enhance the value of all adjacent properties.
- Preserve and enhance the visual quality of major corridors by requiring substantial vegetative buffering and screening between new developments along the corridors and by encouraging developments to enhance existing vegetative buffers and screens.
- Develop and implement a town beautification plan, including a review of the town's signs ordinance and the enforcement of the property maintenance/trash ordinance.
- Protect and enhance the visual quality of major entrances to the town by:
 - Locating visually compatible uses along entrance corridors,
 - Improving vegetative buffers along all major corridors,
 - Keeping signs to a minimum necessary size, height, and complexity, and
 - Maintaining the "Tree City" designation with a continued long term effort to foster the planting and maintenance of indigenous trees on public and institutional sites, within neighborhoods, and on new development sites.
- Maintain the essential character and function of steep slopes by:
 - Encouraging low-density development and open space uses on steep slopes,
 - Considering the creation of an overlay district for areas with severely steep slopes, and
 - Considering the restriction of tree removal on steep slopes.
- Coordinate water, sewer, telecommunications, and road improvements with land use objectives, and adopt a five-year capital improvement program to implement projects.
- Land developers and builders should be expected to follow reasonable conservation practices, such as:
 - using an incremental system for breaking ground,
 - constructing sediment traps to control run-off,
 - applying temporary and/or permanent ground cover, and
 - not using spoil to fill in floodplains and drainage ways.
- Coordinate planning and regulatory efforts with Smyth County to ensure that

the land development process does not harm regional water supplies from point and non-point pollution sources.

- Recognize and take advantage of opportunities where town boundary adjustments can create and support economic and community development.

Residential Uses

- Maintain an adequate supply of land for a full range of residential types.
- Locate medium and high-density residential uses in and around the downtown, in proximity to major road corridors, and adjacent to existing medium and high-density residential.
- Locate low-density residential uses farther from downtown and on land that is less suitable for higher density development.
- Promote the development of Planned Unit Development (PUD's) and clustered developments to utilize denser development, promote walking communities, and minimize impact on open parcels.
- Land subject to excessive runoff and all surfaces with greater than 20 percent slope should have only low-density development.
- Approved streets or roadways, providing access to all residents, should be developed preliminary to any large-scale residential development.
- Residential development should be pre-planned, incorporating housing with open space for playgrounds, parks, and adequate service facilities.
- Multi-family units should meet density requirement for sewer and water and should be located near existing or planned shopping and other service facilities, such as schools, parks, and recreational developments.
- Multi-family developments should be planned to harmonize with surrounding developments and should be located in anticipated areas of growth.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

- Focus general commercial uses in and around the downtown area and in compact nodes within or adjacent to existing centers and adjacent to Interstate 81 Exits 44, 45, and 47.
- Maintain an adequate supply of land for industrial and commercial expansion adjacent to or within existing sites.
- Industrial and commercial development should be planned to offer maximum protection to adjoining, existing, or planned residential areas.
- Promote infill development as the top priority for small-scale businesses and industries.
- Promote the reuse and redevelopment of existing sites and structures as a higher priority than developing open space.
- Industrial areas must be protected from encroachment by incompatible, non-industrial activities.
- Adequate access without congestion should be provided in advance of any industrial development, with access ways from public streets and highways designed to meet anticipated needs without disrupting normal traffic flow.

- Access points to industrial sites should, when possible, avoid conflict with residential traffic flow and should never be channeled into local streets or roads serving residential areas.
- Commercial activities complementing industrial development should be permitted in industrial zones.
- Commercial centers should be planned in keeping with the cluster concept where practical to prevent commercial “strip” developments and should be attractively designed and landscaped. Commercial design should:
 - provide for convenient vehicular and pedestrian access to the site;
 - effectively control and separate on-site vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems;
 - provide adequate on-site parking, loading, and storage facilities well screened from any adjacent residential areas;
 - provide easily accessible and sanitary solid waste collecting areas shielded from public view and contact;
 - minimize noise, glare, and visual impact on surrounding area; and
 - provide uniform sign treatment in harmony with the surrounding landscape.
- Gas stations, “fast-food”, and similar highway oriented establishments should be clustered in appropriate sites or located in planned centers to avoid mixed stripped development.

Public, Semi-public, and Institutional Uses

- Provide safe and efficient pedestrian and vehicular linkages between residential areas, Downtown Marion, and commercial centers.
- Maintain and enhance vehicular and pedestrian access through Downtown Marion.
- Establish adequate and convenient recreational areas for all neighborhoods.

Historic Preservation and the Environment

- Review the town’s ordinances to identify potential updates for the protection of environmentally sensitive resources, and maintain a subdivision ordinance that will restrict development on unsuitable lots.
- Support the enforcement of current and future federal and state regulations regarding air and water quality.
- Continue to encourage and support the recycling and reuse of solid waste materials by businesses, industries, residents, and the town government, to achieve and maintain at least a 25 percent recycling rate.
- Encourage the use of voluntary environmental conservation practices among residents, such as composting, trash compacting, tree planting, chemical and fertilizer reduction programs, etc.
- Encourage the establishment, enhancement, and maintenance of vegetative buffers and planted areas along the town’s major road corridors.
- Promote a tree protection and planting program to encourage landowners and

developers to preserve trees.

- Encourage effective visual screening of high-density commercial and industrial uses from the town's major road corridors using vegetative buffers, earthen berms, existing topography, and the placement and design of buildings.
- Continue to encourage the restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic structures, particularly within Downtown Marion.
- Establish a Historical Landmarks Preservation Committee, perhaps in connection with the Smyth County Historical Society, with the objective of identifying, documents, classifying, and listing historical landmarks on an official register. Such landmarks as are identified should be registered and protected through an established preservation program.
- Private groups or individuals should be encouraged to preserve features of historic significance over which they have control.
- Establish a special landscape review board for the purpose of reviewing and commenting on rezoning applications and development plans in areas surrounding validated historical landmarks.