

Comprehensive Plan

Town of Marion, Virginia

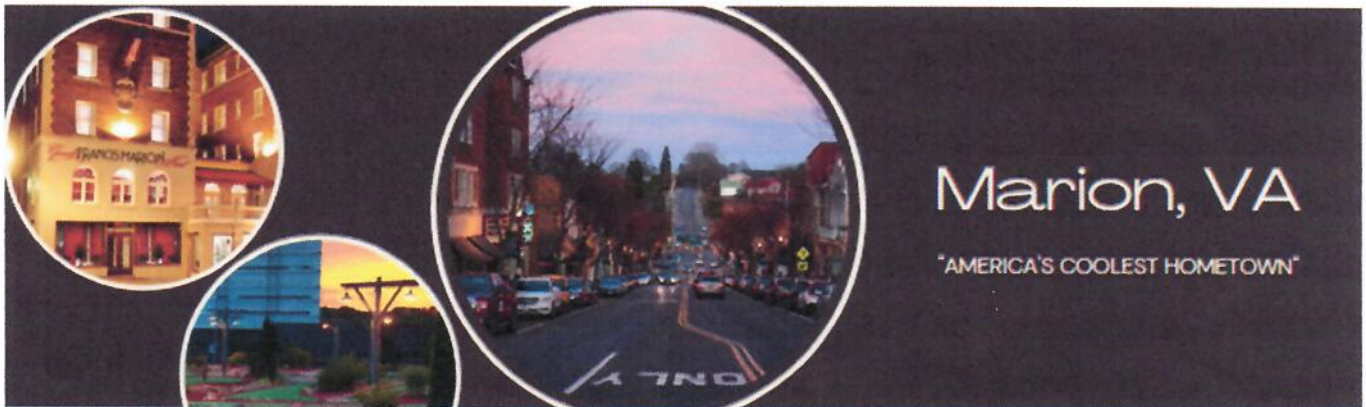


Certified by
Town of Marion Planning Commission

Date: December 19, 2022

Adopted by
Town of Marion Council

David P. Hillman
Date: December 19, 2022



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

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One. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a physical manifestation of a community and that community's vision for its future. A 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

This comprehensive plan was developed in accordance with Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia, 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 (Code of VA §15.2-2223 et al.). 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, including a plan for transportation facilities.

A duly approved and adopted comprehensive plan shall control the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature shown within such plan. The Plan is a guide for development. Features not shown on such plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Planning Commission as being substantially in accord with the adopted Plan (Code of VA §15.2-2232).

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 Capital Improvements Plan (Code of VA §15.2-2239) and 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 (Code of VA §15.2-2230). Such review is not required to be reported to the governing body but should be recorded, nonetheless. As part of this review process, the planning commission may also make a study of public facilities and infrastructure.

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, park plans, or streetscape plans, other strategic or master plans.

UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE PLAN

Plan Implementation

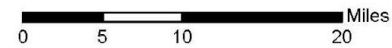
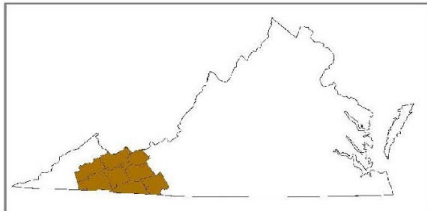
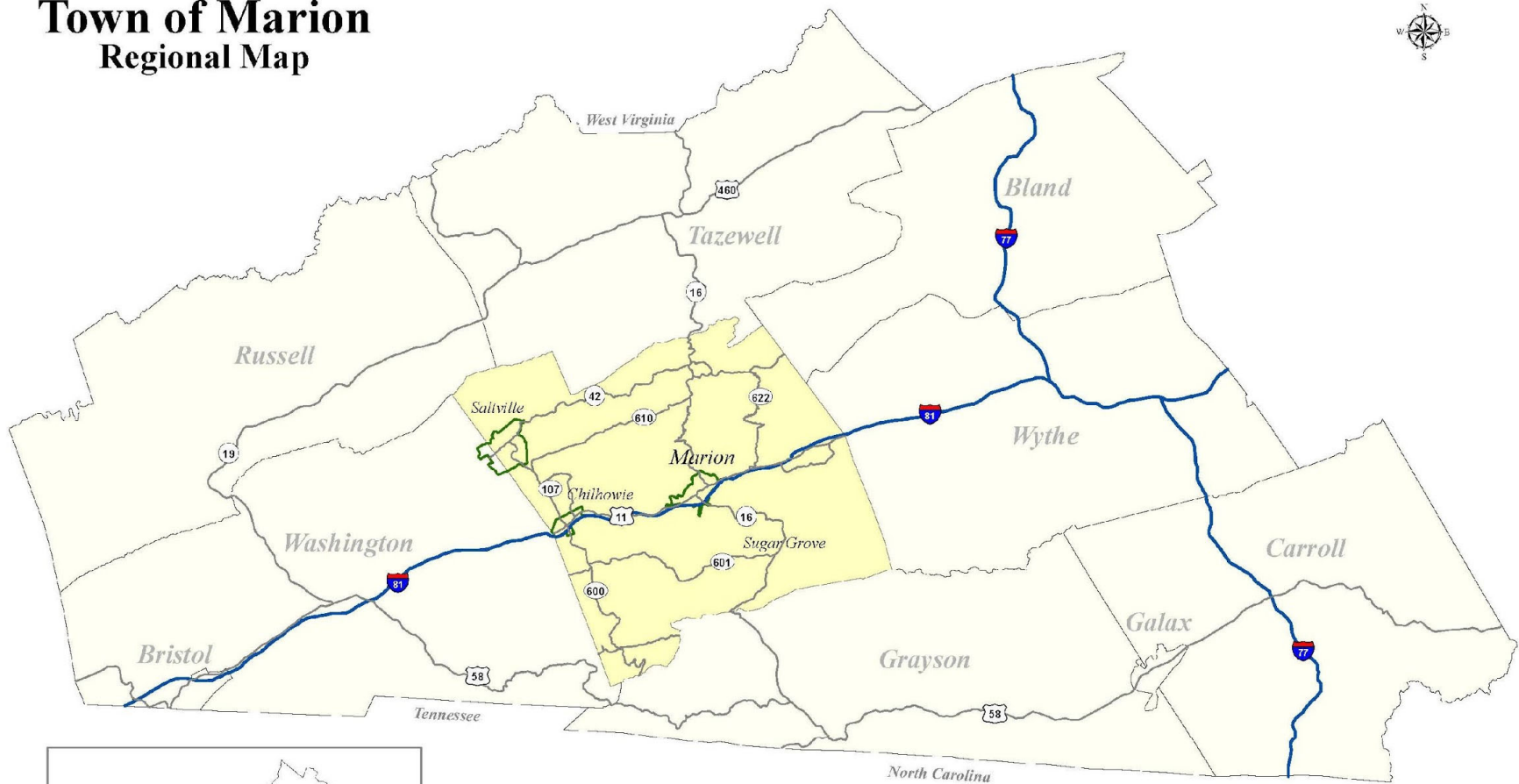
The Plan can be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools. Generally, the goals and objectives of comprehensive plans are implemented primarily through the Zoning Ordinance, Operating Budget, Capital Improvements Plan, and Master Plans for specific areas.

Comprehensive planning is a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development and sustainability. The *outcome* of comprehensive planning is the Comprehensive Plan, which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, economy, housing, and perhaps other applicable topics depending on the community. The *output* of the process would be the created, transformed, or sustained traits of the community as described in the Plan. The Comprehensive Plan encompasses the entire town, a broad range of topics, and covers a long-term time horizon. Through the comprehensive planning process, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will generally be illuminated.

The Comprehensive Plan *should* be a tool - *the vision, the guide* - 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 of the municipality (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, as well as identifying specific needs for studies, research, and/or outreach efforts. The Plan may also be used for solicitation of new business and industrial development.

Town of Marion Regional Map



Map by MRPDC
June, 2017

DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

Marion is the county seat and largest town in Smyth County, 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 5,751 persons in April 2020 (2020 ACS 5-YEAR). NOTE: The 2021 Annual Community Survey depicts a population of 5,646 - these figures are generally lower, with a higher margin of error rating.

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 (intersection of East Main and Pendleton Streets) on the east to the current location of the Blue Ridge Job Corps (245 West Main) 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 (102 East Main Street) 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 the old Norfolk & Western historic Marion train depot, 645 North Main), and the town pump. The town pump located at 102-109 East Main Street (where the General Francis Marion Hotel currently stands, 107 East Main), 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 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.

¹Adapted from the original Town of Marion Comprehensive Plan; March 1977.

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 sewage 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 improvements 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 Interstate 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 the town, Hungry Mother State Park north of town, and to adjoining areas west and south of the 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 significant federal funding during the 1980s, 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 to 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 Council terms have been staggered to preclude the election of seven completely new members. The Charter also provides for the appointment of a Town Manager, who serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and Town Council and is - very generally - responsible for the supervision of staff and administration of town affairs in a professional and unbiased manner.

Two. Marion First! DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Town of Marion, like most of rural America, has struggled through the two-plus-year Covid Pandemic. However, unlike many small towns, Marion has weathered the storm by solidifying our economic foundation 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 continue at a record low, currently under 5% (September 2022). New housing opportunities, including apartments and single-family homes, will support future growth, from expanding offerings at Emory & Henry College to drawing in new residents to provide additional customers and opportunities for success. Strip center vacancies mirror the downtown success and post an even lower vacancy rate (under 4%). Ongoing infill from local expansion and chain businesses, including Ollie's, Starbucks, 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 as an industrial site, and Summit Bottling continues to experience success in the former Pepsi bottling plant. The former Marion Police station at 555 South Main has recently opened as a senior services facility under PACE/Appalachian Agency on Aging, with plans for expansion. Community festivals continue to bring record numbers into the community. Hungry Mother State Park posted a record visitation last year, reaching nearly 300,000 people. The Southwest Virginia marketing initiative continues to help showcase the region, and our community. "Song of the Mountains", designated as "The Official Television Series of Virginia", has just finalized an agreement with ETSU to broadcast episodes on Public Radio. 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 with Wytheville Community Colleges continues to bring success. Our Farmers Market provides an outlet for local farmers and crafters each Saturday and draws people to our downtown. 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". Plans for a "Mountain Dew Museum" in the former Hayden's World building, repurposing of long-vacant buildings along Main into useful properties, and continued retention and recruitment will remain the hallmarks of this department into the future.

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. "We Serve" - 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 three full-time staff members and one part-time staff member: A director/Main Street manager, a Director of the Henderson School of Appalachian Arts, an Administrative Assistant, and a part-time Farmers Market Manager. 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 Association, 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 luthiery, woodshop, letterpress shop, multiuse 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, Marion's USDA-Rural Development Small Business Loan Fund, the Marion Technology Zone, the Marion Historic District, the Marion Farmers Market, CDBG Housing Projects, and serves as a Designated Marketing Organization for Virginia Tourism. The Office is also 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 four (4) central priorities: Economic Development, Community Development, Housing, 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 methods
- 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**, including maintaining a database of available properties and contact information
- ii) **Incentives**, including "Pop Up" grants, 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 cuttings, 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 each October. 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.

Additionally, Marion is working with Virginia Main Street on a pilot project to encourage "Live Here, Work Anywhere" to develop a core of amenities to attract

and retain professionals who, through telework and remote access, can choose Marion for our quality of life while working elsewhere via technology. By doing so, Marion can reap the benefits of the higher-salaries positions and brainpower while adding to our population.

- ii) **Recruitment.** 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 a 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.

2) Community Development

A) Quality of Life

The elusive term is a foundation for Marion's future development. It is the way the community perceives itself, and by that definition, how it assists or hinders future growth. The Office of Community and Economic Development champions "Quality of Life" as defined by our citizens and visitors. As our community at large grows in appreciation of our uniqueness, it provides the charm, the spirit, and the inspiration for other entrepreneurs, visitors, and residents to come and "join the Marion revolution", a program initiated in 2014 by the Marion Downtown Revitalization Association to stem the poor community perception 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) **Ongoing activities.**

The Office of Community and Economic Development provides community reinvestment through 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 8 AM until noon, and monthly during the winter.

- (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, and Americana music that is distributed to over 170 television markets across the US via public broadcasting and over public radio
 - (e) **Appalachian Spirit Gallery**. Located next to the Town Hall, the art 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 and Mount Pleasant Museum**. The heritage 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 and in the former Mount Pleasant Methodist Church. Located within the same former church for which it gets its name, the Mount Pleasant Museum is focused on the community's African American culture and history.
 - (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, educational, and music opportunities.
- ii) **Special events.**
- (a) **Marion "Hungriest Mother" Weekend/Hungry Mother 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, and the Saturday Food Challenges have been named as one of "Virginia's Best Food Festivals" by Virginia Living Magazine.
 - (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) **"Chili Cookoff" and Fall events**. As the leaves start to change, Marion welcomes "leaf peepers" with a variety of activities, including the Marion Downtown Chili Championship and street festival on the 2nd Saturday in October, "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 "Gobbler Gallop" 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. Additionally, each Saturday between Thanksgiving and Christmas, vendors fill the Farmer's Market Pavilion for a series of "mini-markets".

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 is also a certified DMO (Destination Marketing Organization)

through Virginia Tourism, and 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 serves 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.** For more information, please see page 49.
 - iii) **"Song of the Mountains".** For more information, please see page 49.
 - 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 houses The Summit Center. For more information on the Henderson School please see page 44.
 - v) **"Back of the Dragon".** For more information, please see page 48.
 - vi) **Recreation facilities.** For more information, please see page 49.
- C) **Medical/MedTech**
- i) **Smyth County Community Hospital.** SCCH offers many services. For more information on SCCH, see page 46.
 - ii) **Southwestern 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. For more information on SWVMHI, please see page 47.
 - 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. For more information on Blue Ridge Job Corps, see page 43.
 - 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, plus BSN and RN-BSN programs. For more information on E&H, please see page 44.
 - v) **Urgent Care.** Marion offers an Urgent Care facility through Smyth County Community Hospital, two physical/occupational therapy services, and a dialysis center through a private firm. 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.

3) 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 were renovated, adding 125 apartments to local housing options. These developments have brought new populations into the downtown, creating new customers for downtown businesses and encouraging extended hours and special events.
- ii) **Single-family CDBG rehab.** The Town of Marion continues to partner with the Virginia 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 also increase the town's tax base and provide a substantial uplift to the overall quality of life.
- iii) **BAUD Program.** A pressing priority for the Town is to curb future blight by addressing individual properties - "spot blight". A comprehensive property maintenance program is being implemented through the BAUD program, as is funding assistance to help renters transition to home ownership. Marion's innovative "BAUD" program will examine this town as it currently exists, determine the best pathway forward to provide clean, safe, sanitary, and inviting opportunities to work, live and play, and define the steps necessary to achieve our goals.
- 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".

4) 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 its natural pathway leading into the 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. Currently, the razor wire and gravel lot impede 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.
 - (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. Signs would be placed 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 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, including a new Medical Office Building in 2016, the purchase of the Marion Plaza and additional development.
 - (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 tenants, including standalones, and the nearby motel is just on the market for commercial development.
 - (b) **Lighting and flags along corridor.** Business owners have expressed a desire for the corridor leading from the exit to the town limits be enhanced with lighting. One alternative being suggested, instead of traditional overhead lights, is for 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 - the Town of Marion now owns this parcel.

PRIORITIES: Community and Economic Development

- BAUD Housing and Property Development
- Scattered Site Housing Rehabilitation
- Callan Drive Housing
- VDOT Relocation
- Entrepreneur Support/Business Retention & Recruitment
- Festivals and Events
- Tourism/Marketing and Promotion
- Gateway Landscaping and/or Lighting
 - Exits 45 & 47
- Wayfinding Signage
 - Back of the Dragon

Three. POPULATION (Demographics)

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 a more steady, average rate of 5.0 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
2020	5,751	-3.8

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

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

At the time of the 2020 Census, the population of the Town of Marion was 5,751, a nearly four percent decrease from the previous decade, but a more stable trend than the preceding decade (2000). The population per square mile is approximately 1,200. The male to female ratio remained relatively unchanged between 2000 and 2010 (53.3 percent female), however, the transition from 2010 to 2020 brought a ratio of 50.2% female, which is more consistent with the Virginia average. Of communities within Smyth County, including those incorporated and otherwise, Marion, Seven Mile Ford, Atkins, and McMullin all displayed a relatively small population decline; however, the communities of Sugar Grove and Adwolfe, along with the town of Chilhowie, displayed a growth in population, with Chilhowie showing a significant population growth of more than 20 percent. Comparatively though, Marion's birth rate is the highest in the county at 6.8 percent (2021 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY).

Marion has by far the most evenly spread age demographics for the county, only slightly heavier on the top and bottom. Age demographics from the 2020 census show children ages 5 and below at 4.3 percent of the population, while persons reported as age 18 and below account for 18.7 percent, and those folks reported as age 65 and over account for 23.9 percent (up from 19.7 percent in 2010). The age demographics for Marion versus that of the commonwealth represent a local average age above that of the commonwealth as a whole - Marion at 23.9% as compared to 16.8% for Virginia (population age 65+). Nearly 23.3 percent of the population is disabled, and 10.8 percent are without healthcare coverage.

Of those citizens reported as age 25 or higher, 79.6 percent hold a high school degree, and 15.6 percent hold a Bachelor's degree. Poverty rates for the jurisdiction are 25.8 percent, above that of the commonwealth (11.4%), and the median household income range is \$29,562 +/- \$2,644. Household income information for the town of Marion is displayed by income range specifically in the following table.

Household Income¹

	PERCENT	VALUE
	Town of Marion, VA	Town of Marion, VA
Total Households	—	2,309
Less than \$10,000	13.3%	307
\$10,000 to \$14,999	10.9%	252
\$15,000 to \$24,999	15.3%	354
\$25,000 to \$34,999	18.0%	416
\$35,000 to \$49,999	16.1%	371
\$50,000 to \$74,999	10.2%	235
\$75,000 to \$99,999	6.8%	157
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3.9%	89
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4.2%	96
\$200,000 or more	1.4%	32
Median Income (dollars) ²	—	\$29,562
Mean Income (dollars)	—	\$46,427
Source: JobsEQ® 1. American Community Survey 2016-2020 2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.		

With the establishment and growth of the Wytheville community College Summit Center at the Henderson School, the newly announced Wytheville Community College Technical School to be located at 1520 North Main, and the Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences, the population of full-time & part-time residents enrolled in higher education programs may impact the community demographics both year-round and seasonally. Marion's population density is higher than any other incorporated towns or census designated places within the county, but also higher than the Tri-Cities (Johnson City-Kingsport-Bristol, TN/VA).

POPULATION COMPOSITION

Population by Race			
Identified Race	2000	2010	2020
White	5,804	5,338	5,076
Black or African American	367	424	273
American Indian or Alaskan Native	15	9	12
Asian	33	33	59
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	2	1
Other	2	61	60
Two or more races	56	101	270
Total	6,349	5,968	5,751

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000, 2010, and 2020.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Hispanic and Latino population in the Town of Marion represented 2.5 percent (148 persons) of the total population; for 2020, that ratio climbs to 3.1 percent (181 persons) - still one of the lowest in Smyth County, second only to Adwolfe CDP².

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population growth between 1970 and 2020 proved to be stagnant, as the town's population actually declined along with the county as a whole; Smyth County saw a slightly greater percentage of population decline overall than Marion from 2010 to 2020 (-5.2% for Smyth County versus -3.8% for Marion).

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, likely due to new economic development initiatives in the Downtown, the Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences, the Wytheville Community College Summit Center and Technical Trade School, 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 1,538 people, an increase of 7.3 percent over 2010 numbers.

IN THE PURSUIT OF GROWTH

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 such a plan would be to develop diverse, high-quality job opportunities for the working-age population - including telecommuting, 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

² NOTE: CDP stands for *Census Designated Place* and references unincorporated communities; in Smyth County, these include: Adwolfe, Atkins, McMullin, Seven Mile Ford, and Sugar Grove.

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 incentives to return to the area after college, or traveling and experiencing the world, and new residents will be attracted to the area, all of which will serve to stabilize the population and promote a healthy growth trend.

Birthrates, according to the 2020 ACS, are the highest of any town within the county (6.8%) - and about 1.5x the rate of the county - and higher than that of Virginia (5%) and the broader United States (5.2%). For comparison, the birth rates for Chilhowie are 6.2% and that on the neighboring metropolitan area of the Tri-Cities fall further behind at 4.2% - compared to Marion at 6.8%. This information is based on the percentage of women recorded as age 15-50 which have given birth within 12 months prior to the 2020 ACS. Residential mobility to Marion from a different state shows a slight trend upward (1.2% +/- 0.9%), but not as large a trend upward as the state (3.1% +/- 0.1%).

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; this correlates to the residential mobility figures from the 2020 ACS (1.2% +/- 0.9%). 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, equitable, affordable, and safe housing for all population groups, including low-, middle-, and upper-income households as well as retirees and senior citizens.



Total Population

5,751



Median Household Income

\$29,562 +/- \$2,644



Bachelor's Degree or Higher

15.6% +/- 3.7%



Veterans

7.9% +/- 2.3%



Employment Rate

39.3% +/- 2.3%



Without Health Care Coverage

10.8% +/- 3.6%



Hispanic or Latino (of any race)

181



Median Age

46 +/- 4.9

Four. HOUSING

OVERVIEW

Marion had a total of 2,747 (+/- 10%) housing units according to the 2021 ACS - 84 percent being occupied - and of those housing units, there were 2,309 households identified. This data shows a 2.7 percent decline in total housing units from 2010 to 2021.

NOTE: THE TOTAL HOUSING UNITS ACCORDING TO THE 2020 DECENNIAL CENSUS WAS 2,942.

The majority of the housing units in Marion are single-family homes (68%). Multi-family units (apartments and duplexes) comprise only 30% of the housing stock, while 2% 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 (66.2 percent).

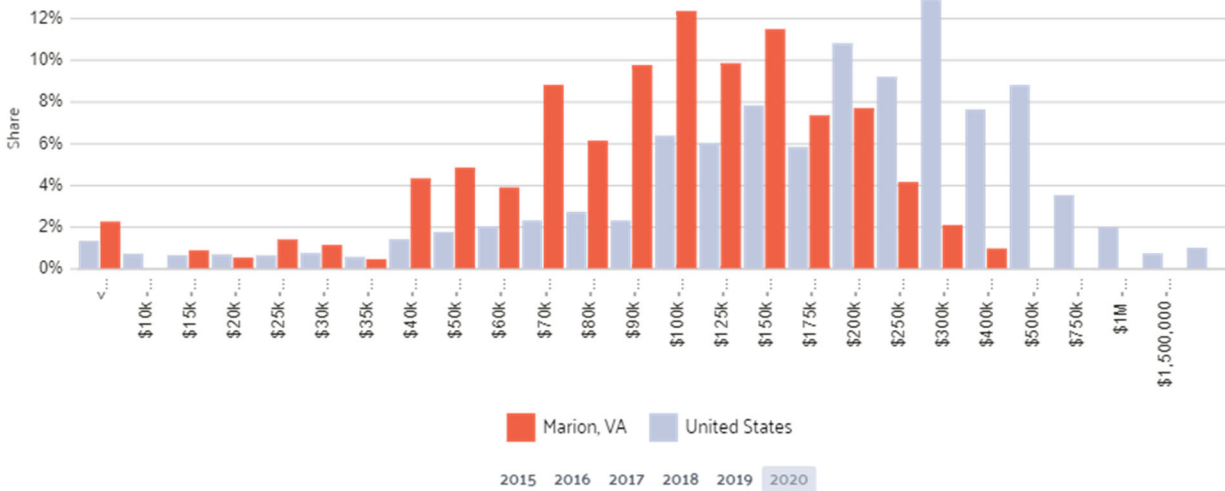
Of owner-occupied housing units, 538 are occupied by a married couple family, while 101 are classified as male householder with no spouse and 89 are female householder with no spouse.

Median gross rent was \$604 (+/- \$36) as compared to the \$1,257 median gross rent for Virginia.

Town of Marion Housing Characteristics

<i>Total Housing Units</i>	2,747	
Owner Occupied	1,154	42%
Renter Occupied	1,153	42%
Vacant	440	16%
<i>Housing Type</i>	2,747	
Single-family	1,868	68%
Multi-family	824	30%
Manufactured Home	55	2%
<i>Housing Age, (Year Built)</i>	2,747	
2014 or later	10	0.4%
2010 to 2013	21	0.8%
2000 to 2009	26	0.9%
1990 to 1999	81	2.9%
1980 to 1989	298	10.8%
1970 to 1979	491	17.9%
1960 to 1969	606	22.1%
1950 to 1959	464	16.9%
1940 to 1949	329	12.0%
1939 or earlier	421	15.3%
Avg. Household Size (Owner Occupied)	2.2	
Median Value (Owner Occupied)	\$111,700	
Median Gross Rent (Renter Occupied)	\$604	
Median Monthly Owner Cost w/ Mortgage	\$850	
Owner cost as % of Income (w/ Mortgage)	21%	
Rental Costs >30% of income	48%	
<i>Source: 2021 American Community Survey</i>		

The median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in Marion is approximately \$111,700 (2020) - the 2019 value was \$99,800, approximately - about 10 percent higher than Smyth County, but only about two-fifths that of the state median value of \$282,800. Ownership of occupied units in Marion was 50 percent as of the 2020 ACS, compared to approximately 71 percent for the county.



DATA USA: Marion, VA - Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimate

Furthermore, the *above* chart displays the owner-occupied housing units distributed between a series of property value buckets compared to the national averages for each bucket. In Marion, the largest share of households has a property value in the \$100k - \$125k range, heavily tapering towards lower value brackets. The graphic below depicts the relationship between household income ranges and households in Marion compared to the United States.

\$29,562

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

± \$2,644

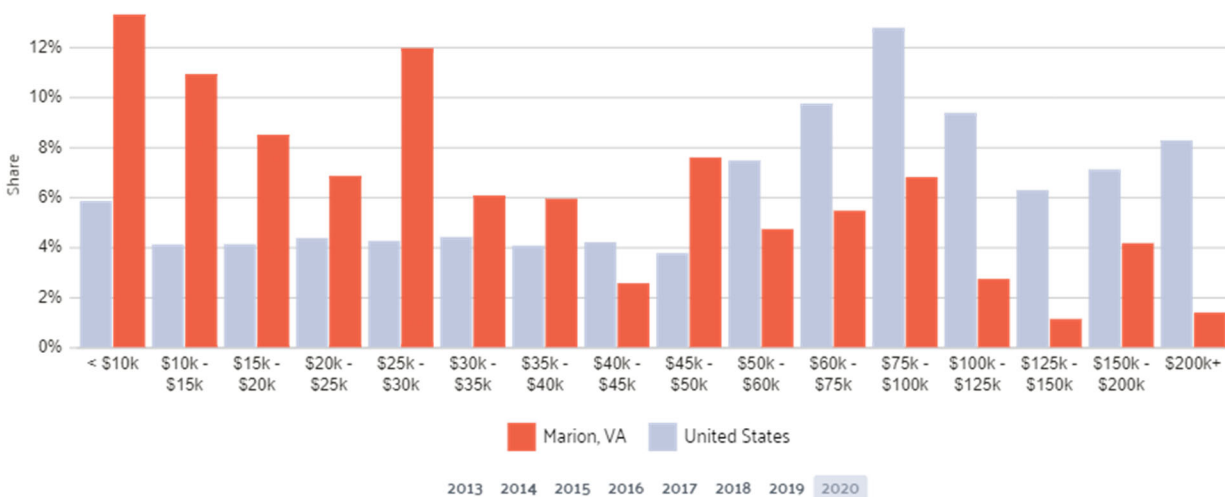
2,310

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS

± 304

In 2020, the median household income of the total 2,310 households in Marion, VA declined from \$29,562 from the previous year's value of \$31,544.

The following chart displays the households in Marion, VA distributed between a series of income brackets compared to the national averages for each bracket. The largest share of households has an income in the < \$10k range.



DATA USA: Marion, VA - Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimate

CURRENT HOUSING PROGRAMS

The town has been very successful in addressing the housing problems identified through the town's many Comprehensive Plans, and affordable, quality housing continues to be a high priority for Marion. Several reasons for the improvements are noted below:

Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority

The [Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority](#) (Marion RHA) was organized in 1970, and throughout the 1980s, it received funding for and constructed 238 rental units as part of four developments on eight different sites. Per its mission, the Marion RHA provides stable, quality affordable housing opportunities for low-and-moderate income families throughout the local community. Currently, through the provision of public housing apartments and the management of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, the Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority serves more than 246 low-income individuals, supporting healthy communities.

The Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority is a public housing authority/agency (PHA) capable of administering housing programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), typically Federal Public Housing units and Section 8 Vouchers, and may also administer state-funded programs as well as other publicly funded programs.

The Marion Redevelopment & Housing Authority administers the **HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Rental Subsidy Program** that serves eligible low-income residents in Smyth County.

Economic Development Authority

The Marion Economic Development Authority was formed in 2018 primarily to assist in the development of the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts. In 2020, facing new challenges in housing and commercial development, the Marion EDA turned its attention to addressing these needs. One of the primary projects overseen by the Marion EDA is the ambitious BAUD Program - Marion's initiative to address *Blighted, Abandoned, Underutilized and Dilapidated* properties (commercial, residential, industrial, and vacant) across town. Read more about the BAUD program further on in this chapter.

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. Since then, projects have been developed and funded based on these priority areas and the town plans to continue housing projects using funding from DHCD and the program income generated from previous projects in accordance with the adopted program design.

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

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.

BAUD Program

The BAUD Program is a project of the Marion Economic Development Authority. BAUD is Marion's initiative designed to address *Blighted, Abandoned, Underutilized and Dilapidated* properties throughout the Town of Marion, whether commercial, residential, industrial, or vacant. The goal is to continually discover, then address, every issue leading to properties not being used to their Best and Highest Use. BAUD will take a systematic approach to comprehensively address areas in the community where improvements, large or small, can provide immeasurable benefit in terms of livability, stabilization of property values, and overall community health. This is a large-scale project, more akin to the days of the building of the Interstate system than any other project of note in decades. Therefore, the progress will be measured in years, not weeks, but the lasting effects should impact generations to come. The BAUD is a bold endeavor. It will require patience, community input and acceptance, citizen leadership, and a little luck. But the goal is worthwhile; this project can impact every corner of Marion, every citizen, every business, every visitor. It can truly be transformative, changing the narrative and altering the trajectory of this community far into the future. Instead of repeating underfunded, undermanned, and haphazard approaches of the past, Project BAUD is taking the time to systematically "define the problems, determine the solutions" as we move forward into Marion's bright future.

Five. ECONOMY

OVERVIEW

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, this Plan will address both entities.

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.

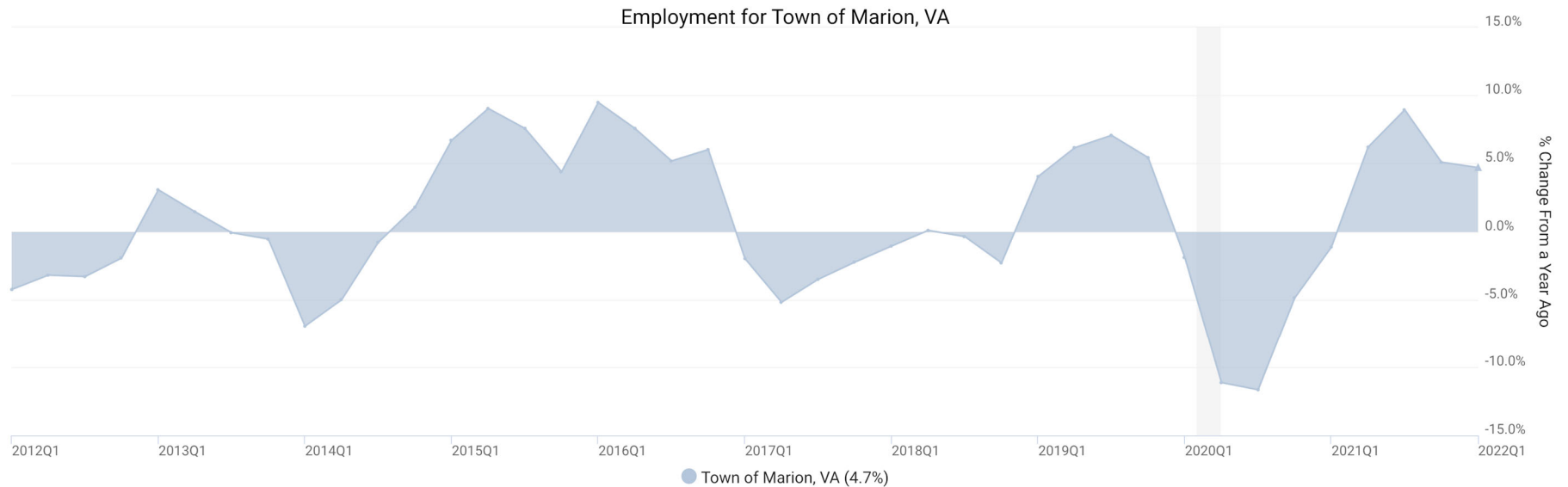
UNEMPLOYMENT

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, with a major increase in 2020 related to the COVID-19 global pandemic; since then, the rate has declined once again to nearly pre-COVID rates.

<u>Unemployment Rate</u>			
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%
2018	3.9%	3.0%	3.9%
2019	3.7%	2.8%	3.7%
2020	6.4%	6.2%	8.1%
2021	4.0%	3.9%	5.3%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

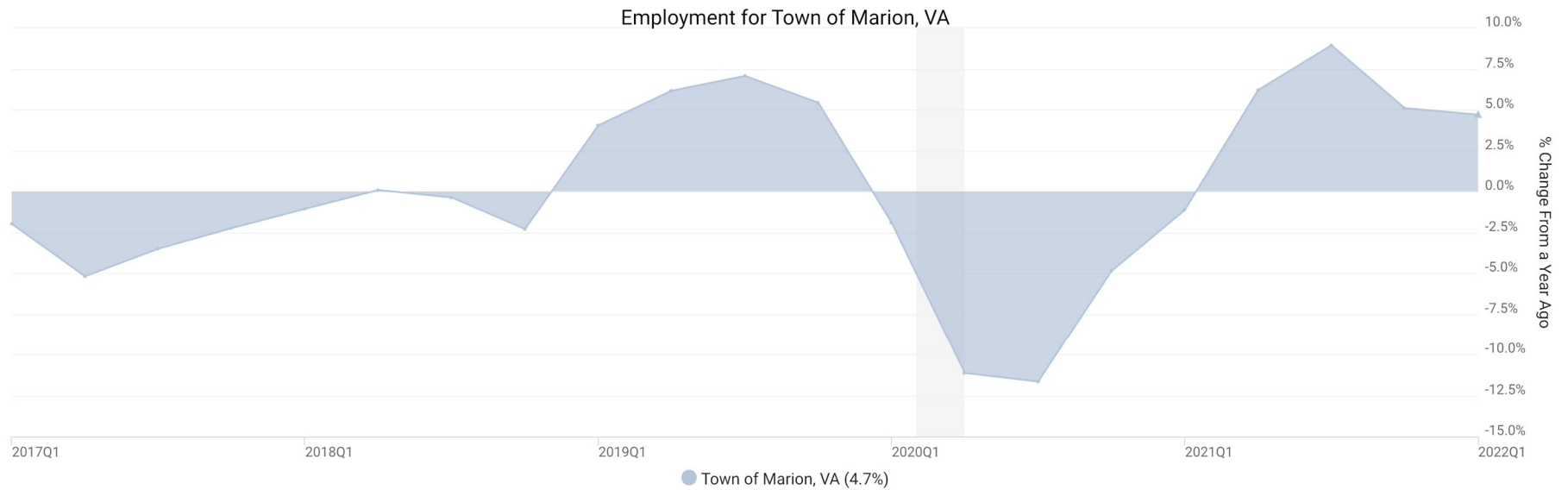
NOTE: This may fluctuate with the predicted impending recession and energy crisis in Europe related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict; the conversion to "green" energy may also relatively-briefly destabilize the global economy - *energy rates correlate strongly to economic growth factors.*



Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2022Q1. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

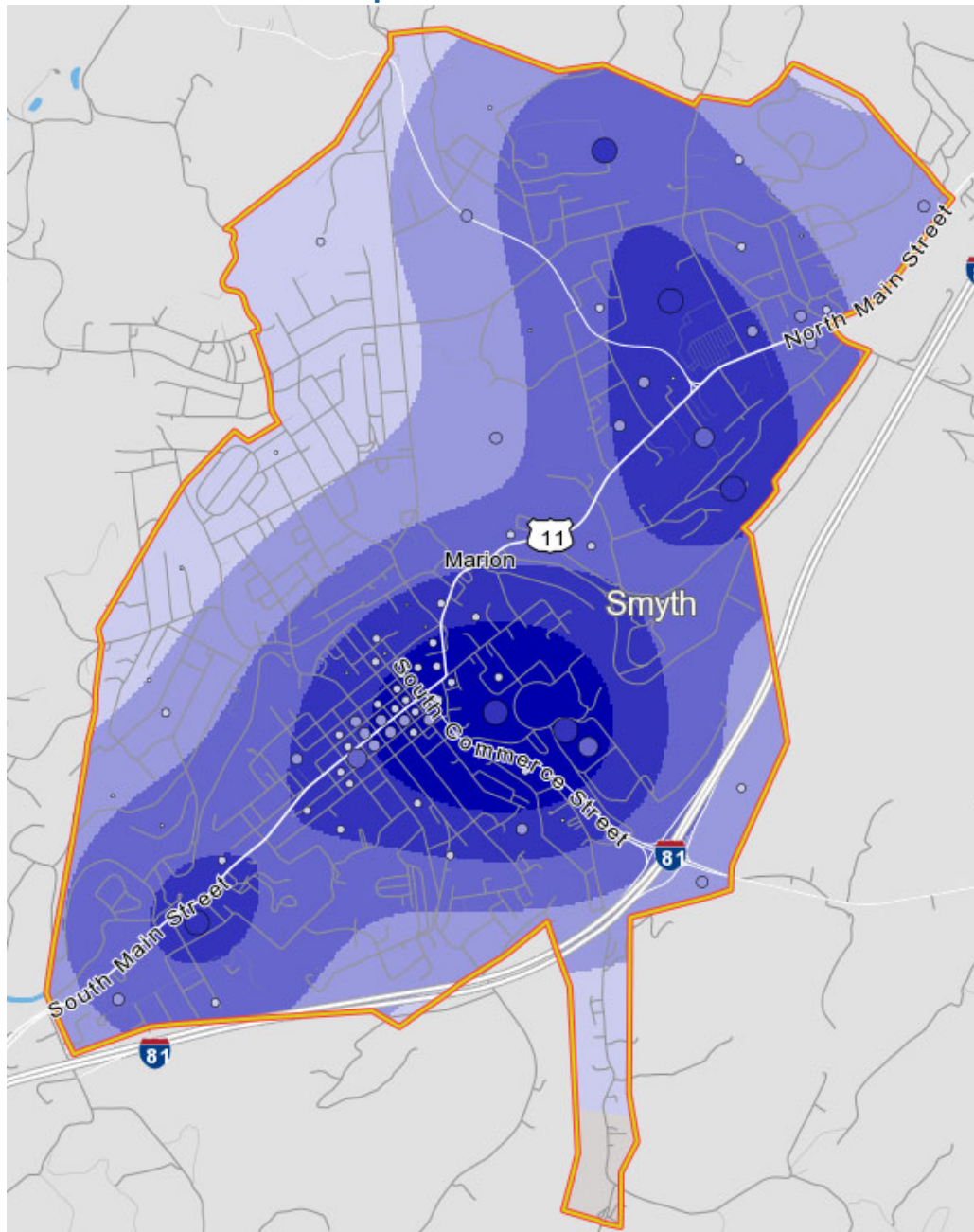
The above 10-year (2012 - 2022) employment graphic represents the employment trends for the Town of Marion, shown at 4.7% for the first quarter of 2022. The gray vertical bar represents economic turmoil during the latter two-thirds of 2020 Q1 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Similar to the graph on the previous page, the graph below depicts the more recent 5-year (2017 - 2022) employment trends for the Town of Marion, also included on the previous graph, but expanded below. The gray vertical bar represents economic turmoil during the latter two-thirds of 2020 Q1 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.



LABOR FORCE

Town of Marion Jobs Profile Map



5 - 233 Jobs/Sq.Mile	• 1 - 2 Jobs
234 - 920 Jobs/Sq.Mile	○ 3 - 29 Jobs
921 - 2,064 Jobs/Sq.Mile	● 30 - 143 Jobs
2,065 - 3,665 Jobs/Sq.Mile	● 144 - 452 Jobs
3,666 - 5,725 Jobs/Sq.Mile	● 453 - 1,104 Jobs

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies (2018)

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

For the Town of Marion, the growth and vitality of retail trade continues to be a primary goal. The town is a designated Virginia Main Street Community and a certified National 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 Association, which was created to oversee the rehabilitation of Downtown Marion, assists the Office of Community and Economic Development with coordination 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 Association has been successfully promoting the town's benefits to entrepreneurs and small business leaders.

The table below shows the employment mix for all industry types for the Town of Marion by ownership type.



	Empl	%
Private	4,136	62.9%
Self-Employment	228	3.5%
Local Government	1,248	19.0%
State Government	900	13.7%
Federal Government	45	0.7%
Other	15	0.2%

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

For Smyth County, the number of employed persons as of December 2021 accounted for 11,991 people. They are employed by 897 establishments county-wide, such establishments paying an average weekly wage of \$848.













According to the Census Bureau's most recent 2020 ACS 5-year Estimate, the most common industries held by residents, by number of employees, are *Health Care & Social Assistance* (464), *Retail Trade* (391), followed by *Manufacturing*, *Educational Services*, and *Accommodations & Food Services*, in that order. Compared to most other places, Marion has an *unusually high number of Retail Trade* (1.92 x higher than expected), *Health Care & Social Assistance* (1.79x), and *Public Administration* (1.19x), higher even than expected for *Waste*

Management Services and *Accommodations & Food Services*. The three highest paying industries, by median income, are *Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services* (\$82,857), *Transportation & Warehousing*, and *Utilities* (\$76,250), followed by *Manufacturing* and *Public Administration* (Data USA: Marion, VA).

Employment is one of the broadest and most timely measures of a region's economy. Fluctuations in the number of jobs shed light on the health of an industry. A growing employment base creates more opportunities for regional residents and helps a region grow its population.

Since wages and salaries generally compose the majority of a household's income, the annual average wages of a region affect its average household income, housing market, quality of life, and other socioeconomic indicators.

The following **Industry Spotlight** outlines the specific characteristics of the most common industries in Marion according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2-digit codes representing the sectors of Manufacturing (31-33), Retail Trade (44-45), and Transportation and Warehousing (48-49):

2-Digit Industry	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	5yr History	Annual Demand	Forecast Ann Growth
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,688	\$42,345	1.77		167	0.3%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,396	\$30,538	3.29		158	-0.2%
Public Administration	699	\$43,393	2.26		59	-0.9%
Retail Trade	661	\$24,749	0.97		75	-1.9%
Manufacturing	574	\$50,525	1.08		52	-1.3%
Educational Services	356	\$41,300	0.68		30	-1.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	354	\$18,236	0.65		64	1.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	139	\$27,479	0.49		15	-0.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	106	\$75,800	0.23		9	0.1%
Information	97	\$43,076	0.73		9	0.1%
Remaining Component Industries	503	\$38,642	0.48		51	-0.5%
Total - All Industries	6,573	\$40,592	1.00		692	-0.3%

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

According to the Census Bureau's most recent 2020 ACS 5-year Estimate, the most common occupations, compared to most other places, for Marion shows that the town has a high number of residents working as *Healthcare Support* (3.83 x higher than expected), *Law Enforcement* (3.47 x higher than expected), and *Installation, Maintenance, & Repair* (1.9 x higher than expected). The most common, non-specialized occupations for the town though are *Sales & Related*, *Healthcare Support*, and *Office Administration Support*. Of all, the highest paid occupations are in order as follows: *Business & Finance*, *Architecture & Engineering*, *Computer Engineering & Science*, *Management* (Business & Finance), and *Health Diagnosing & Treating Practitioners* (*Data USA: Marion VA*).

The following **Occupation Spotlight** outlines the specific characteristics of the most common occupations in Marion according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 6-digit codes, the sixth digit specifying the national industry:























6-digit Occupation	Employed	Avg Ann Wages	Annual Demand
Customer Service Representatives	344	\$29,600	41
Personal Care Aides	221	\$22,700	37
Cashiers	171	\$22,600	24
Fast Food and Counter Workers	148	\$21,700	32
Registered Nurses	142	\$61,100	6
Retail Salespersons	116	\$28,200	14
Office Clerks, General	116	\$30,100	11
Stockers and Order Fillers	114	\$27,400	17
General and Operations Managers	114	\$93,300	9
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	106	\$47,000	11
Remaining Component Occupations	4,929	\$55,400	474
Total	6,520		

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

The **Occupations Snapshot** on the following page illustrates current employment rates and wages, including a 5-year history, and a 1-year forecast for employment demands, mobility, and growth rate for various occupation classifications. Total number of employees for all occupations is 6,573, and the forecast for occupations in demand 2022-2023 shows mostly small negative growth rates or little change, except for occupations in Healthcare Support and Personal Care & Service.

OCCUPATIONS SNAPSHOT

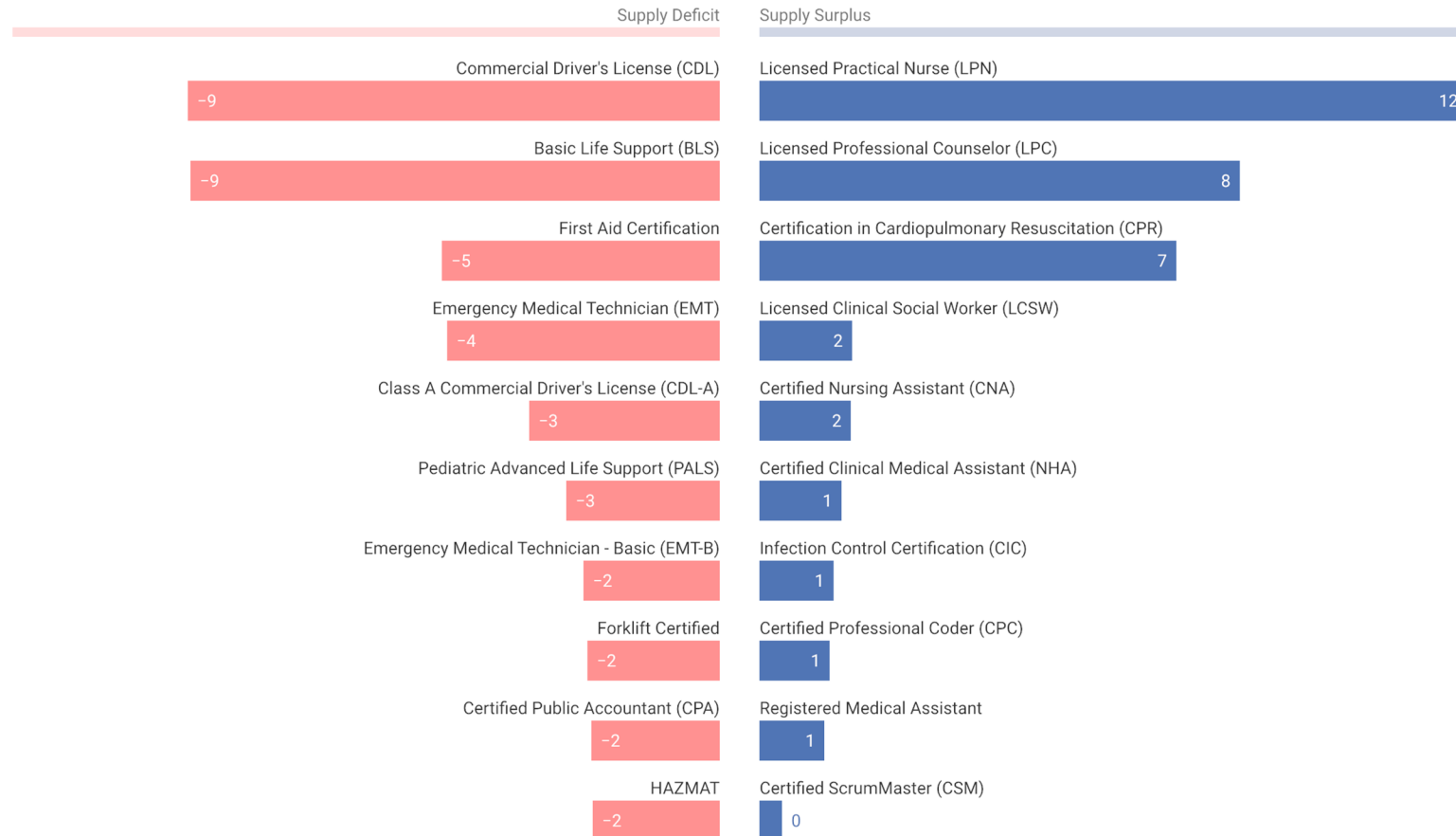
Town of Marion, VA, 2022Q1¹

SOC	Occupation	CURRENT						5-YEAR HISTORY		1-YEAR FORECAST				
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
 43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,050	\$34,200	1.29	8	3.1%	n/a	-159	-2.8%	105	47	67	-10	-1.0%
 41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	621	\$39,100	1.00	10	4.9%	n/a	-118	-3.4%	69	31	49	-11	-1.7%
 29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	539	\$63,900	1.40	2	1.2%	n/a	94	3.9%	28	13	18	-3	-0.5%
 31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	520	\$26,200	1.78	4	3.4%	n/a	61	2.5%	73	34	34	5	1.0%
 51-0000	Production Occupations	460	\$37,100	1.24	12	4.1%	n/a	-25	-1.0%	42	16	32	-6	-1.3%
 53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	410	\$35,600	0.71	9	4.8%	n/a	37	1.9%	51	19	33	-1	-0.2%
 35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	380	\$24,200	0.75	8	5.7%	n/a	-75	-3.5%	72	30	39	3	0.7%
 33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	373	\$40,800	2.64	2	2.1%	n/a	114	7.6%	36	18	20	-1	-0.3%
 13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	363	\$66,200	0.86	2	1.9%	n/a	30	1.8%	30	10	21	-1	-0.2%
 21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	354	\$43,000	3.03	1	1.5%	n/a	66	4.2%	37	12	23	2	0.6%
 11-0000	Management Occupations	304	\$82,900	0.68	2	1.4%	n/a	15	1.0%	24	7	17	0	0.0%
 25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	225	\$47,300	0.64	1	2.0%	n/a	7	0.6%	18	9	10	-1	-0.5%
 49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	182	\$46,300	0.72	2	2.1%	n/a	1	0.1%	16	6	11	-1	-0.4%
 37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	168	\$27,300	0.77	2	4.4%	n/a	0	0.0%	20	9	12	-1	-0.4%
 15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	163	\$79,600	0.72	0	n/a	n/a	-1	-0.2%	12	3	8	0	0.3%
 39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	122	\$28,100	0.77	2	5.4%	n/a	-6	-0.9%	19	8	10	1	1.0%
 47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	111	\$42,100	0.37	4	4.6%	n/a	-35	-5.3%	10	3	7	0	-0.4%
 27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	72	\$45,200	0.63	0	n/a	n/a	-6	-1.5%	7	3	5	0	0.2%
 17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	60	\$80,000	0.56	0	n/a	n/a	-21	-5.9%	4	1	3	0	-0.5%
 19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	48	\$80,500	0.83	0	n/a	n/a	9	4.2%	4	1	3	0	-0.7%
 23-0000	Legal Occupations	44	\$71,700	0.77	0	n/a	n/a	-1	-0.6%	3	1	2	0	-0.4%
 45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	7	\$32,900	0.15	0	n/a	n/a	0	0.8%	1	0	1	0	-0.9%
Total - All Occupations		6,573	\$44,400	1.00	n/a	n/a	n/a	-13	0.0%	685	283	424	-23	-0.3%
<p>Source: JobsEQ®</p> <p>Data as of 2022Q1 unless noted otherwise</p> <p>Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.</p> <p>1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.</p> <p>2. Wage data are as of 2021 and represent the average for all Covered Employment</p>														

The following **Skills Gaps (Certification)** for *Smyth County* depicts and supply and demand rate for particular skills in Smyth County, divided between Certification and Hard Skills. As can be seen with certified skills, there is a significant deficit for employees with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), medical and emergency rescue certifications, whereas there is a significant surplus of employees with certifications in the medical field.

Skill Gaps

Total - All Occupations, Smyth County, Virginia

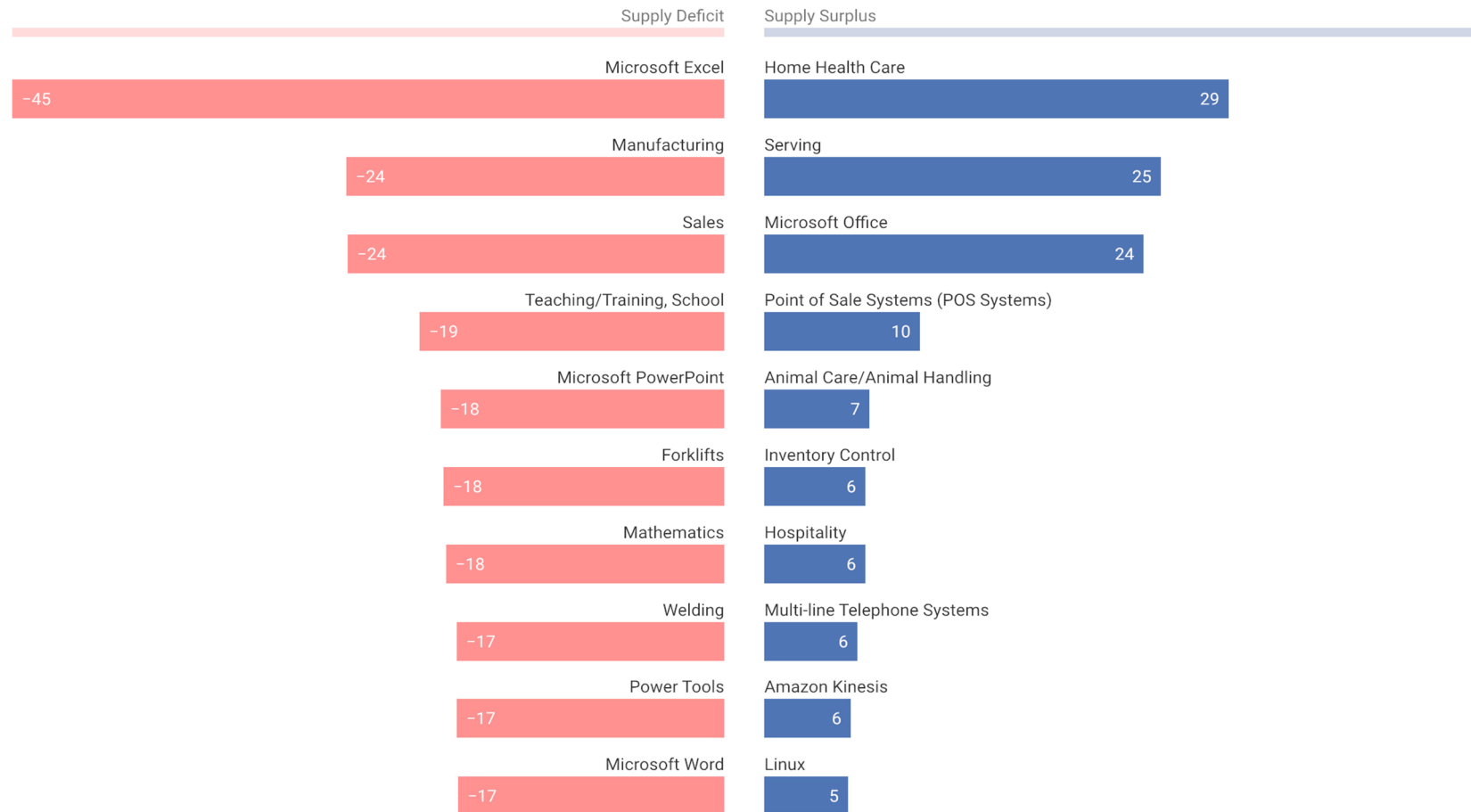


Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2022Q1; openings and candidate sample compiled in August 2021

The following **Skills Gaps** (Hard) depicts a much larger deficit within the county, as compared to surplus, regarding Hard skills. There appears to be a significant deficit in potential employees with proficiency in common office programs as well as manufacturing and common manufacturing-related skills, i.e., power tools, welding, forklift driving.

Skill Gaps

Total - All Occupations, Smyth County, Virginia



Source: JobsEQ®

Data as of 2022Q1; openings and candidate sample compiled in August 2021

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.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

According to the [Outdoor Industry Association's 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report](#), outdoor recreation continues to grow through the pandemic from record levels in 2019, with more than half of Americans (age ≥6) participating in at least one outdoor recreation activity in 2021, growing by 2.2% in 2021 from 2020 participants.

The following **Outdoor Participation Snapshot** graphic from the Outdoor Foundation's report shows growth trends in outdoor recreation participation from 2007 - 2021.

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION SNAPSHOT

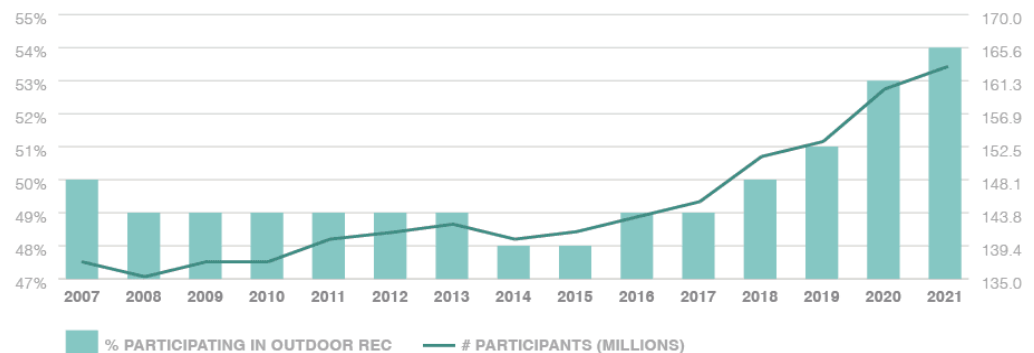
KEY FINDINGS

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the number of new and returning (lapsed) outdoor participants has increased 26%. The growth in new participants and returning participants in 2021 was the highest ever recorded.

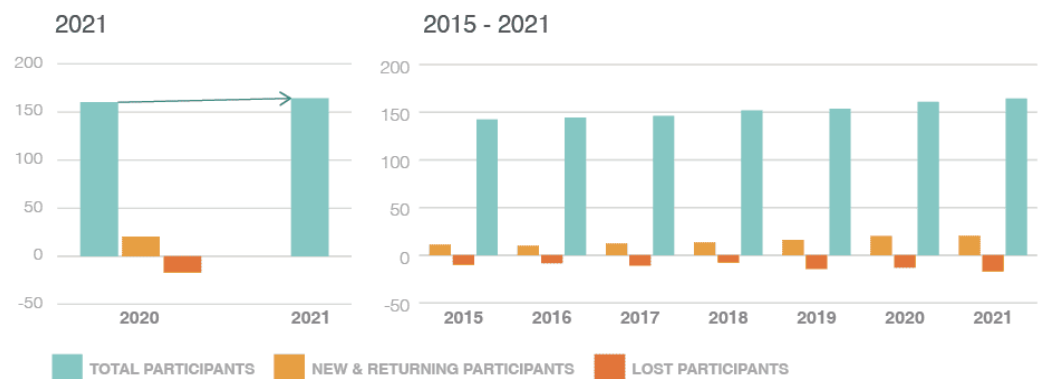
There was a reasonable expectation that during 2021, the second year of the pandemic, outdoor participation would return to 2019 levels as indoor activity including, dining, sporting events, and fitness centers and gyms, reopened. The 2021 data indicates that participation in outdoor recreation retained momentum in 2021. This data indicates that outdoor recreation is "sticky;" once someone begins to participate, they are likely to continue to participate.

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS

2007 TO 2021



TOTAL, NEW/LAPSED, & LOST PARTICIPANTS (MILLIONS)



The [Outdoor Foundation](#) has developed the referenced Outdoor Participation Trends Report for 15 years - the above report reflects data gathered throughout 2021. According to the report, key findings include:

- Youth participation is climbing, but frequency of participation is declining.
- Participant diversity, age and ethnicity is increasing.
- High frequency participation is declining and has declined by 13.2% from 2007 to 2021.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, participants ≥ 55 increased more than 14% and senior participants (ages ≥ 65) were the fastest growing age range at 16.9%.
- Though there is an increase in outdoor recreation participants, the number of outdoor outings is declining significantly for the past decade.

According to the [Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#), the [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#) calculates the economic output of outdoor recreation at \$689 billion, greater than the mining, utilities, farming, and chemical manufacturing industries - this is responsible for 1.8% of the U.S Gross Domestic Product. Outdoor recreation is responsible for the creation of 4.3 million jobs across a wide range of industries nationwide with 3% of all employees working in a field related to outdoor recreation.

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 for 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., the Town of Marion, and the Virginia Department of Business Assistance.

RBEG Marion Small Business Loan Pool

Through partnership with USDA-Rural Development, the Town of Marion has received \$300,000 in grant funds to establish a low-interest loan pool that is available to qualifying Marion small businesses for startups or expansions. The loans are \$15,000 at 2% interest over 60 months with no prepayment penalty and are administered through the Office of Community and Economic Development with initial review and recommendation from the Marion Small Business Loan Team, and final approval by the Marion Town Council. Loans are personal guarantees, with the individual being responsible for repayment even in the case of a business closing. To date, Marion has extended over 45 of these loans, and has lost only one (grantee passed away).

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 2025.

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

OVERVIEW

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 ("Mountain Lynx"), provided by District Three Governmental cooperative) and privately owned taxicabs. 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 Town is also a designated [Appalachian Trail Community™](#), connected to the Appalachian Trail via Route 16.

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 or both.

HIGHWAY AND STREETS

Interstate 81. 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.

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.

I-81 Gateways. Marion's primary Gateway is Commerce Street, extending from Interstate 81 Exit 45 to the historic downtown. The route provides maximum opportunity for visitors by bringing them into the heart of the town. Numerous recommendations have been made to strengthen this corridor connection, including relocating the existing VDOT shop to open that parcel for commercial development, landscaping, wayfinding signage, and a gateway monument sign to welcome visitors to town.

Exit 47 would benefit from lighting the roadway from the exit to the hospital and Exit 44 would benefit from the elimination of the split intersection and the development of a full interchange at the bottling plant - which would open another large parcel of land for future commercial and residential development on the south side of the interstate.

Town of Marion's Streets and Roads***

Average Annual Daily Traffic By Route, 2002, 2010, and 2021

Route	Route Name	From	To	Avg. Annual Daily			% Change
				Traffic Counts			2002-2010
				2002	2010	2021 ⁺	
I-81	Northbound (both sides)	State Route (SR) 16	Rt F-10*	14000	14000		0%
				31000	29000		-6.40%
I-81	Southbound (both sides)	SR 16	US 11**	17000	14000		-17.60%
				31000	29000		-6.40%
US 11	S. Main St.	Western Corporate Limits/ Washington Ave.	Greenway Ave.	9900	8700	7800 ⁺	-12.10%
US 11	S. Main St.	Greenway Ave.	College St.	10000	8700	7500 ⁺	-13.00%
US 11	Main St.	College St.	SR 16 S Commerce St.	11000	9100	7600 ⁺	-17.30%
US 11/SR 16	Main St.	SR 16 N. Commerce St.	E. Main St.	19000	17000	9700 ⁺	-10.50%
US 11/ VA 16	Main St.	E. Main St.	Chatham Hill Rd.; Lee St.			13000 ⁺	
US 11	E. Main St.	Commerce St.	N. Main St.	18000	12000		-33.30%
US 11/ VA 16	Main St.	Chatham Hill Rd.; Lee St.	Park Blvd.			15000 ⁺	
US 11	Main St.	Park Blvd.	Keller Ln.	14000	11000	14000 ⁺	-21.40%
US 11	N. Main St.	Keller Ln.	Eastern Corporate Limits	11000	11000	9800 ⁺	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.

⁺ This represents data collected during COVID-19 global pandemic from S Main Street to N Main Street.

Source: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT Primary Interstate).

Table 5-A

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, in 2002, 2010, and again in 2021 (*though the global COVID-19 pandemic would have affected the 2021 numbers*). 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, which is a prevalent shift across the U.S.

As pointed out in the *Marion 2020 Transportation Plan*, U.S. 11 along North Main Street is mostly a four-lane roadway with a 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, caused by 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, favoring a professional traffic study in the future to convert various streets with potential solutions. 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, 17,000 in 2010, but only 9,700 in 2021 during the height on the COVID-19 pandemic. Other than the downtown bottleneck problem already discussed, State Route 16 generally functions at an acceptable level and is expected to continue doing so beyond 2022.

MARION TRANSPORTATION PLAN

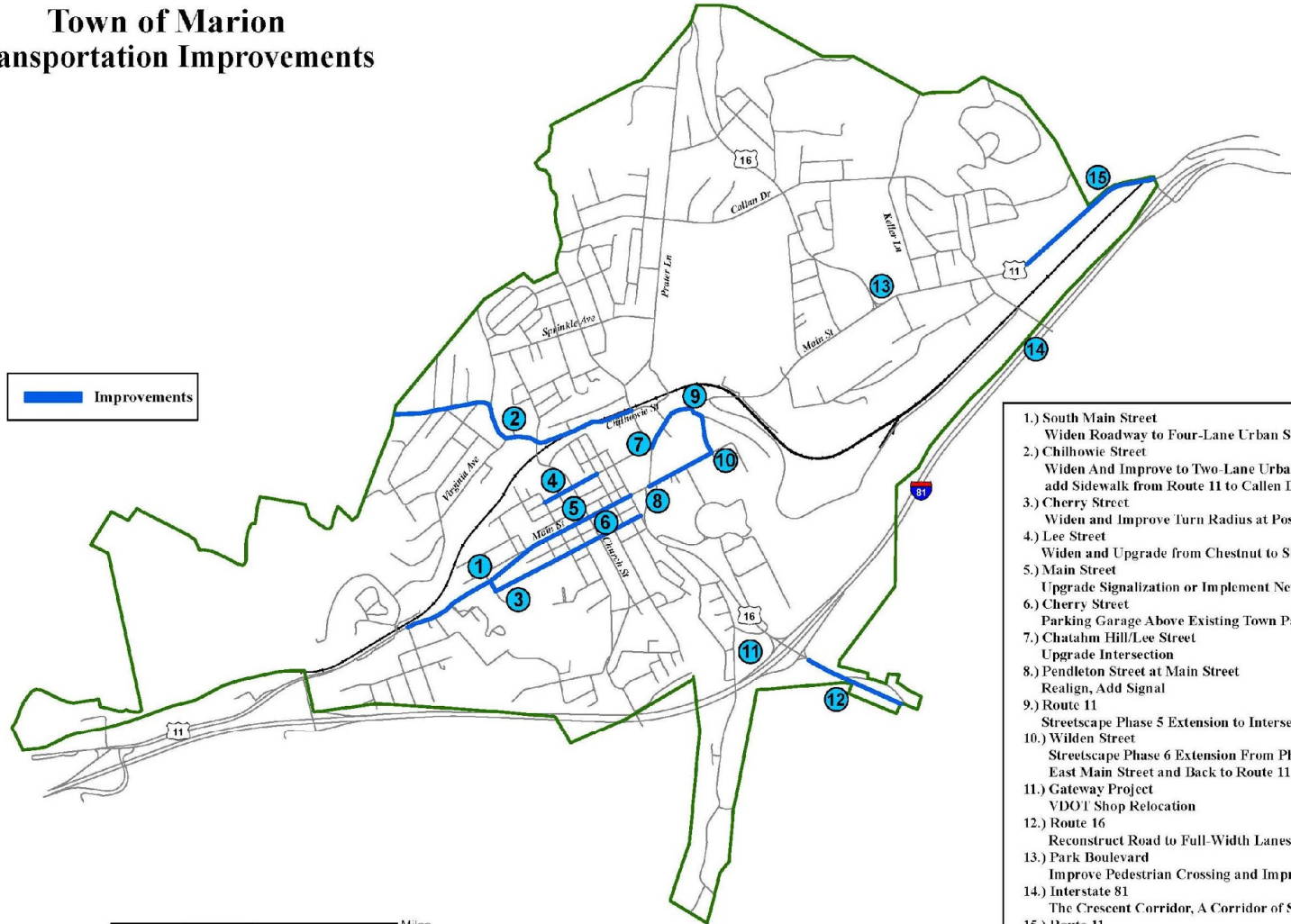
The Town of Marion is classified as a small urban area (communities with populations from 5,000 to 50,000) and qualifies for special transportation studies done in cooperation with VDOT. These localized 10-year plans are done from the standpoint of “providing effective, safe, and efficient movement of people and goods,” with the primary 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 Street to Sheffey Street
- Main Street - Upgrade Signalization or Implement New Traffic Control Options
- 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 (Rt. 16/Commerce St.) - VDOT Shop Relocation
- I-81 Exit 45 - Landscaping, wayfinding signage, gateway monument sign
- 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
- N Main St/I-81 Exit 47 to SCCH - add overhead lighting and wayfinding signage
- I-81 Exit 44 - eliminate split interchange and develop full interchange at bottling company; add wayfinding signage

Town of Marion Transportation Improvements



 Improvements



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

Map By MRPOC
August, 2017

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

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. In the past³, 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. For 2022, a new plan was released by Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transportation for developing freight and passenger rail, reporting that the commonwealth plans to double Amtrak service over the next 20 years. Tennessee transportation agencies are studying the feasibility of expanding Amtrak from the New River Valley through Bristol to Tennessee and will release their report in 2023.

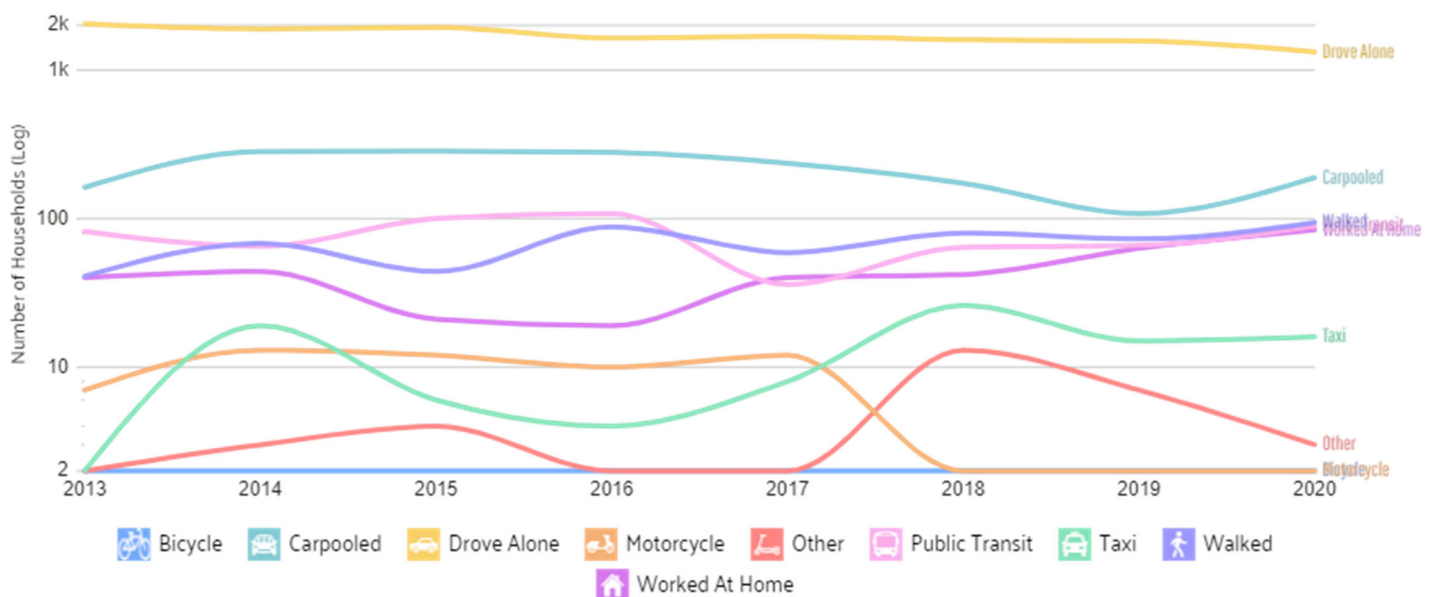
Commuter Transportation in Marion, VA

MOST COMMON COMMUTE (2020)

- DROVE ALONE (73.6%)
- CARPOOLED (10.5%)
- WALKED (5.22%)

In 2020, 73.6% of workers in Marion, VA, drove alone to work, followed by those who carpooled to work (10.5%) and those who walked to work (5.22%).

The following chart shows the number of households using each mode of transportation over time, using a logarithmic scale on the y-axis to help better show variations in the smaller means of commuting.



DATA USA: Marion, VA - Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimate

³ Based on the results of the 1998 feasibility study for passenger rail service.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The town 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 local taxicab services (currently 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 Riverwalk 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 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. Additional sidewalks connecting higher density residential areas to local parks and commercial areas with amenities would greatly increase efficiency of pedestrian connectivity. Assessments could be conducted to determine if any existing sidewalks might be decommissioned in favor of new sidewalks, which might show higher usage demands presently or in the future.

Seven. EDUCATION

K-12 EDUCATION

The public school system in Marion is part of the Smyth County school system and the schools that serve Marion are (SCHOOLQUALITY.VIRGINIA.GOV):

- Marion Senior High School (Grades 9-12); Enrollment (2020-2021) - 624.
- Marion Middle School (Grades 6-8); Enrollment (2020-2021) - 505.
- Marion Elementary School (Grades PK-5); Enrollment (2020-2021) - 316.
- Oak Point Elementary School (PK-5) Enrollment (2020-2021) - 357.

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, including as meeting places for civic and community groups. School facilities, including tracks, 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, along with other regional initiatives.

The Smyth County school system continues to improve technology 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).

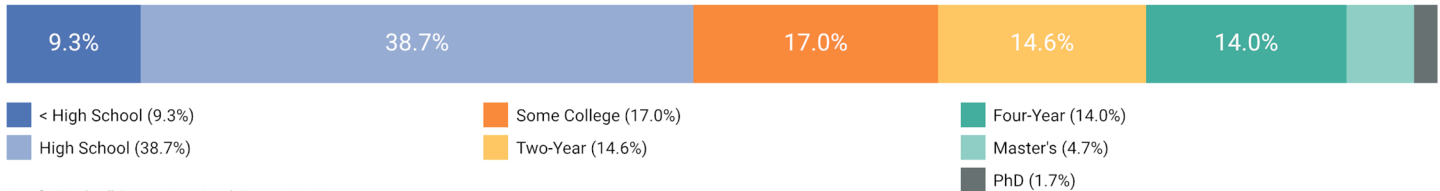
Blue Ridge Job Corps Center. Aside from the Smyth County school system, another major educational institution in Marion is the Blue Ridge Job Corps Center. Job Corps is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration. The program is aimed at low-income 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 a variety of health occupations, including 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.⁴

⁴ For more information, see the Blue Ridge Job Corps Center web site at <http://blueridge.jobcorps.gov>.

HIGHER EDUCATION

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. Educational attainment levels for Smyth County are represented in the following graphic:

Educational Attainment



Data for Total - All Occupations, Smyth County, Virginia
Source: JobsEQ®, Data as of 2022Q1.

The Wytheville Community College Summit Center. Wytheville Community College leases the upstairs of the Henderson School, bringing 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 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. Additionally, WCC has partnered with the Smyth County EDA to purchase the former Ford dealership at 1520 North Main to be repurposed into a technical training school for the college.

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. The four graduate programs offered are Exercise Science (BS/BA), and a Pre-health Program, while the School of Nursing offers a BSN program, RN-BSN program, and a MSN program. These new residents fill our apartments, support our shops and eateries, complete community service work, 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 at 203 North Church Street 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 a number of related programs and classes to enhance the arts, crafts, and music opportunities for our citizens and our visitors alike.

The Smyth County Historical and Museum Society also operates a local history museum open on a part-time basis at 123 East Main in downtown Marion.

As part of the Smyth County school system, the **Smyth Career & Technology Center⁵** offers

⁵ For more information, see the Smyth Career & Technology Center website at <https://sctc.scsb.org/>.

programs, including auto body, auto technology, building trades, cosmetology, criminal justice, culinary arts, cyber security, electricity and electronics, HVAC, machine technology, nursing, nurse aide, pre-engineering, and welding.

LIBRARY

The **Smyth County Public Library** system serves all residents of Smyth County through the Main Library in Marion and branches in Chilhowie and Saltville. The library makes available to the community print, digital, and physical resources to support lifelong learning and accomplishment of personal goals. Particular areas of focus include early childhood literacy in support of academic success for the children of Smyth County, digital literacy for patrons of all ages, collections and programs to promote health literacy, and workforce development.

Located at 118 South Sheffey Street in the downtown historic district of Marion, the Main Library houses the most comprehensive collection in the library system. In addition to books, DVDs, and books on CD for children and adults, the library collection includes newspapers, magazines, online databases, and the Southwest Virginia Heritage Collection of local history and genealogy resources. SCPL services include public computers and Wi-Fi internet access, engaging programs for children and adults, meeting rooms, and an outreach program for seniors. SCPL is helping to bridge the internet access gap in Smyth County by loaning Wi-Fi hotspots and tablets to residents without home broadband access and creating a telehealth privacy space with equipment needed to conduct medical appointments, job interviews, or other interactions virtually from the Main Library.

The Smyth County Public Library system is planned to join the Holston Association of Libraries (HAL) consortium on July 1, 2023, which will provide community members with access to the academic libraries of Emory & Henry College and King University, as well as the Washington County Public Library and the Tazwell County Public Library systems.

Eight. HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

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 Mel Leaman 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, and 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 now part of Ballad Health, which excludes 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 care/therapy by their physicians.



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.

1: *Lifetime Wellness Center*

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, dental care, and some mental 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 & 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 *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 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*. Facilities located in Marion include the Lisa H. Moore Counseling Center, Smyth Crisis Care Center (open 24/7/365), Riverchase (Smyth Youth and Family Services), Smyth County IDC, Evergreen, and Friendship House. Mount Rogers Community Services also operates a supervised apartment program (small-scale group homes) consisting of The Smyth Apartments (three two-bedroom apartments located within town limits). There is also the Appalachian Center for Hope, currently in development.

Nine. RECREATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

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 department⁶ is stationed in the William G. Carrico Recreation Building. General department staff includes a recreation director, programs coordinator, programs support technician, maintenance supervisor, and pool manager. Next to the recreation department stands the Marion Waterpark - what was once the Carl Taylor Municipal Swimming Pool - which was updated in 2021-2022. The waterpark now features a pergola, two slides, three diving boards, and a splash pad. The pool is now zero entrance. There is also a new party room located beside the front desk for use during pool parties.

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, 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.

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 Golf Course, a privately owned golf course, provides recreation for town and county residents through a user fee and is available for use by the school golf team. The facility can be used for conferences, concerts, plays, and other special events.

Hungry Mother State Park, we are pleased to provide ongoing marketing to this unique asset that offers a 108-acre lake and an abundance of outdoor recreation. The park brings in nearly 300,000 visitors every year. They also host the annual Hungry Mother Festival each July.

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

⁶ For more information, see the town's website at www.marionva.org/services/recreation.

at local shops, restaurants, and lodging facilities.

Marion Waterpark. The town has upgraded the waterpark and have many new features available. The park now has two slides. The pool is now zero entrance and there is a new splash pad with an attached bench in the zero-entrance area. There is a new pergola filled with brand new tables and chairs to provide some shade and a new speaker system that provides music to all areas of the deck. A newly added party room with a garage door entrance is available for an additional fee at parties.

Other recreation facilities within easy reach of Marion include the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Rural Retreat Lake, the Settlers Museum of Southwest Virginia, and the Appalachian Trail. The Town has plans to add additional opportunities, including extending the Riverwalk Trail, developing new hiking trails, outdoor sports facilities, and another amphitheater at the lower end of the Callan Drive property.

The **Callen Drive Recreation Park** will include softball fields, soccer fields, a playground, walking trails, an amphitheater, and restrooms located at the old quarry. The land already includes a dog park, which will be enhanced during the development of the other park components. The Callen Drive Recreation Park will incorporate the conservation of nearly 60 acres of prime green space/forest in the center of Marion. The park will incorporate 3,100 linear feet of trails. The new trails and facilities will bridge the community with a walking trail through the largest green space directly in the center of the town, providing much needed connectivity. The park will connect the Callen Drive area to the commercial district along North Main Street providing pedestrian access from town to the recreation facilities. The timeframe for this project will span anywhere from five to ten years.

MARION DOWNTOWN



The Town of Marion has a vibrant, walkable downtown that has undergone considerable revitalization over the past 28 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. *Song of the Mountains* has been designated by the Virginia General Assembly as “The Official Television Series of Virginia” and continues to draw audiences from across the country.

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, 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.



Marion Downtown hosts an assortment of special events, ranging from Halloween Madness kid-friendly events to the “Hungriest Mother Festival” in July (named one of Virginia Living magazines “Best Food Festivals”), to the annual Chili Cook-off and Music Event, which brings in an average of 5,000 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



The Smyth County 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.

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.



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 Mount Rogers PACE Center, located at 555 South Main, operated by the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens, offers a variety of opportunities for healthy aging through medical assistance, 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, Mountain Community Action Program, Project Crossroads, Retired Senior Citizen Volunteer Program, Salvation Army of Smyth County, Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, the Family Resource Center (based in Wytheville), and United Way of Southwest Virginia.

Ten. PUBLIC SAFETY, FACILITIES & UTILITIES

EMERGENCY SERVICES

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.

Currently, because Marion serves as the administrative seat for Smyth County, public safety services are provided through both the Smyth County Sheriff's Office and the Marion Police Department. In 2020, the Marion Police Department is staffed by a chief, two lieutenants, four sergeants, 14 officers, a chaplain, and an executive assistant. At the same time, the Smyth County Sheriff's Department was staffed 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 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.

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)⁷ 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 water treatment plant is located east of town near the Middle Fork of the Holston River.

The town's mission for the water treatment plant beyond meeting all quality and pressure

⁷ These are the locally famous "Hot" and "Cold" water reservoirs visible from Interstate 81.

standards set by the state is to maintain a fire reserve of three million gallons.

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 included pre-treatment, primary treatment, and secondary treatment with ultraviolet disinfection. Chlorine was not part of the process. The treatment plant could process 3.4 million gallons per day and had 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 TREATMENT

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, pg. 44*). One of the most serious challenges facing most towns across Virginia, and across America, is the aging Water and Sewer infrastructure. Like most 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)**...

Comprehensive Infrastructure Replacement Program

The CIRP plan is exactly what its name implies... comprehensive, a 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, and paving. The CIRP 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 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 two three-year renewals, and then told them to listen to town employees with the guidance of town management. Between the town's top four Public Works employees and Town Engineer, the town had over 150 years of institutional knowledge. The town let that knowledge be its guide and instructed them to design a replacement system based on that knowledge.

The Town has a sound financial plan in place, authorized annually by the Town Council, which ensures that the town only commit to what it knows it 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 Marion 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 per 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 Smyth County transfer station, which compacts the material and has it hauled away by a private contractor for disposal in a licensed landfill. Currently the town is utilizing the Blountville Landfill located in Sullivan County, Tennessee.

The town does not run its own solid waste recycling program; however, town residents are free to make use of the Smyth County system. Private recycling of aluminum cans is available at the Volunteer Fire Department. Other recycling includes a biosolids recycling operation, funded by the Department of Environmental Quality, located at the west end of the sewer plant.

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. Note: This recycling rate was met in part because of commercial recyclers.

Smyth County's recycling rates are as follows: 2016 (18.6%), 2017 (20.5%), 2018 (17.1%), 2019 (11.6%), and 2020 (10.9%).

Regional Solid Waste Management Plan

Smyth County and its incorporated towns participate in the Mount Rogers Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (MRRSWMP), originally prepared by Draper Aden Associates in 2004 per [9 VA Admin Code 9VAC20-130-10](#) for the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The purpose of the regulations establishing authority for this plan, broadly, with regard to solid waste, are to establish minimum standards, require development of a plan, promote environmentally sound local and regional planning, establish procedures for establishing boundaries, establish recycling responsibility, establish requirement to withhold permits, provide method to request reasonable variances, and provide for reporting and assessment.

Each participating jurisdiction is responsible for plan review, adoption, and implementation; however, participating jurisdictions in this plan only accept responsibility for those portions of the plan which specifically affect that particular jurisdiction. Key components of the plan include Collection, Transfer and Disposal, Recycling, Treatment, and Litter Control. Requirements and objectives - such as recycling - can be met regionally by jurisdictions participating in the plan.

Since 1991, the region has transitioned from a system of landfill operations within each county and the Town of Wytheville, to transfer operations with disposal outside the region - each county holding independent contracts for hauling and disposal. The most recent plan was prepared in 2004 with a planning period of 20 years; new initiatives and planning must take place to continue environmentally sound solid waste management practices to meet ever-challenging needs.

UTILITIES

Utilities include services such as electricity, natural gas, telephone, and Internet service. For Marion and Smyth County, American Electric Power alone supplies electricity, and currently has a monopoly as granted by the Virginia General Assembly and governed by the State Corporation Commission.

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. 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. *NOTE: BVUB is currently Point Broadband.* The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission has secured grants to provide further local access to that broadband capability throughout the town and county.

**Town of Marion
Water & Sewer**

Map showing the layout of Water Lines (blue) and Sewer Lines (red) in Marion, Ohio. The map includes major roads (US-11, US-16, I-81) and a legend indicating the line types. A scale bar shows distances up to 1 mile, and a north arrow is located in the top right corner.

Map By MRPDC
June, 2017

Eleven. LAND USE

REFERENCE POINT

During the 2006 Marion Comprehensive Plan update, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) staff collected information about existing land use and housing conditions via 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 (*right*) indicates, Marion's total land area is approximately 2,682 acres. Approximately 74 percent of this land is developed, with residential uses making up 46.3 percent of total land use; public/semi-public uses, including streets 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.

NOTE: Land use values have not been updated since 2011 - though few major areas have drastically changed, the redevelopment of the old hospital into the Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences in 2018 has encouraged significant development in the area along Callan Drive.

Existing Land Use Town of Marion		
<i>By Land Use Classification</i>		
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>		

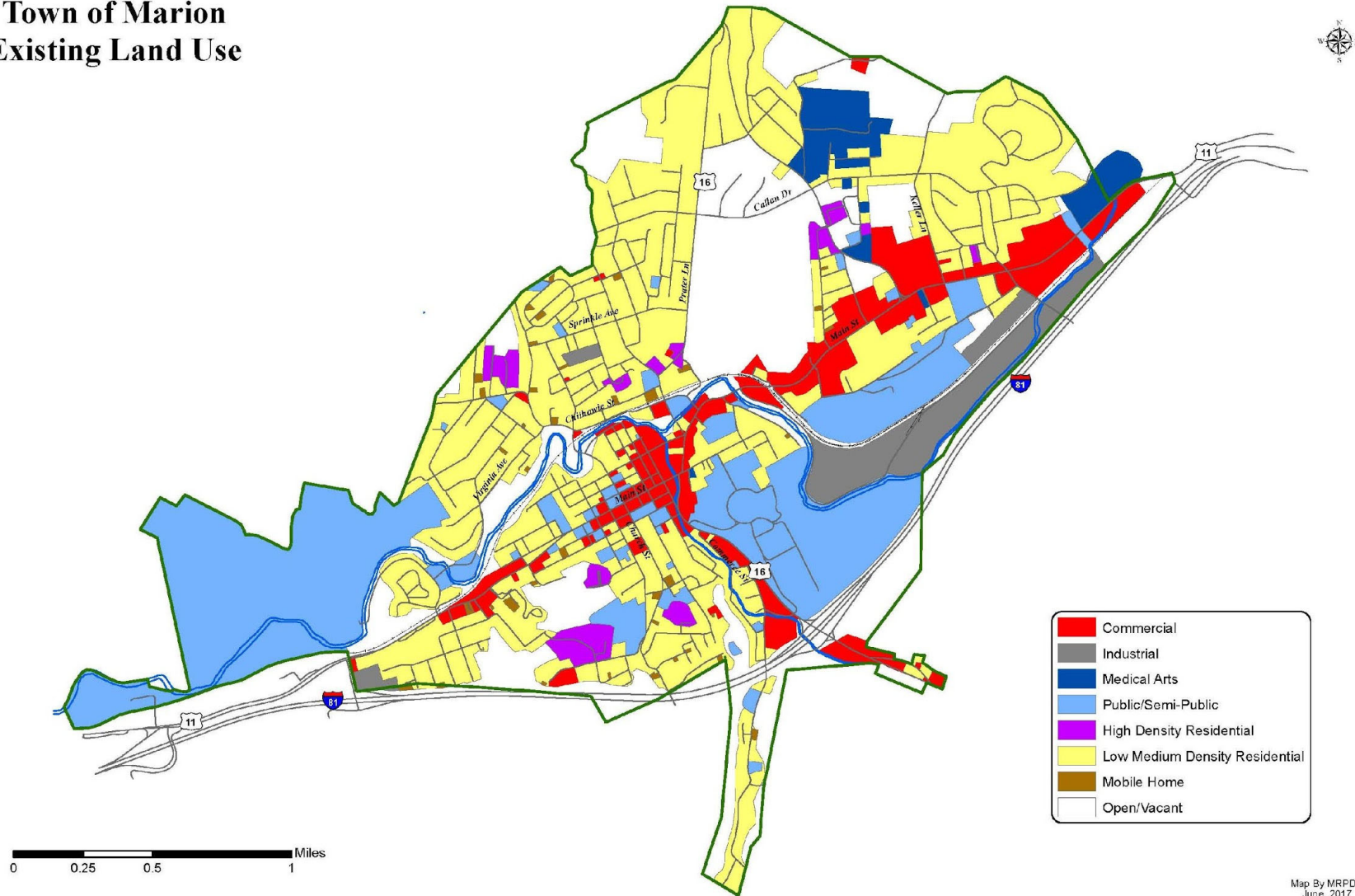
The table (*below*) below shows percentage of developed land by type of land use and percent change over time. In Marion, residential land, as a percentage of the total developable land in the town, makes up approximately 63 percent, while public/semi-public uses constitute 18 percent, industrial uses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

<u>Developed Land</u>						
Year	Developed Acres	Commercial	Industrial	Residential	Public / Semi-Public	Medical Arts
1974	1,579	7%	12%	45%	36%	NA
Change 1974 - 1994	99	1%	0%	1%	-2%	NA
1994	1,678	8%	12%	46%	34%	NA
Change 1994 - 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 within the mapped 100-year floodplain.

Town of Marion Existing Land Use



Map By MRPDC
June, 2017

CURRENT LAND USE CONTROLS

Marion adopted its first zoning ordinance and 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.

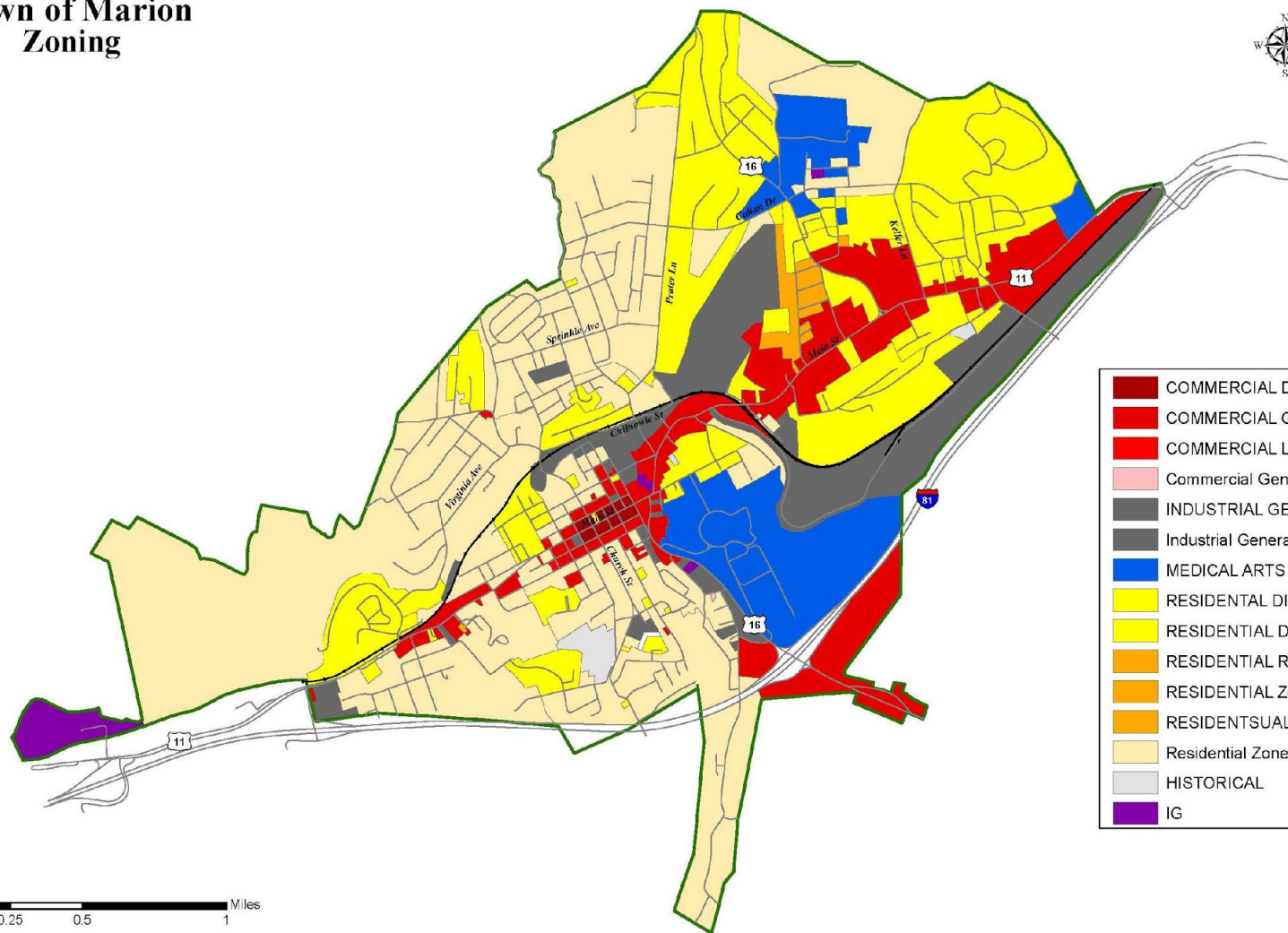
A complete comprehensive rewrite of the town's zoning ordinance most recently occurred between 2013 and 2015 with adoption in the March of 2015.

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.
4. The excavation or mining of soil or other natural resources.

The current 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, allowable 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. Zoning is a tool to accomplish the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The Town plans to expand and redefine the zoning districts in 2023 to better meet its goals and address ever-changing external and internal pressures.

Town of Marion Zoning



- COMMERCIAL DOWNTOWN
- COMMERCIAL GENERAL
- COMMERCIAL LIMITED
- Commercial General
- INDUSTRIAL GENERAL
- Industrial General
- MEDICAL ARTS
- RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
- RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
- RESIDENTIAL R-3
- RESIDENTSUAL DISTRICT
- Residential Zone
- HISTORICAL
- IG

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map By MRPDC
June, 2017

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 Statewide 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. In addition, the town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and has its own floodplain ordinance.

<u>Developed Land in Floodplain Zone</u>			
Classification	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Developed
Land in 100-year (1% chance) 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 were constructed directly over the creek at a lower elevation than the projected 100-year (1% chance) 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.

Above and beyond complying with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements, the Town may look into adding additional *freeboard* requirements to new and substantially reconstructed developments in the floodplain and floodway, and/or may look into joining the NFIP's **Community Rating System** to encourage higher flood resiliency and safer developments/investments, as well as lower flood insurance policy rates for property owners. The [Community Rating System \(CRS\)](#) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#). Over 1,500 communities participate nationwide.

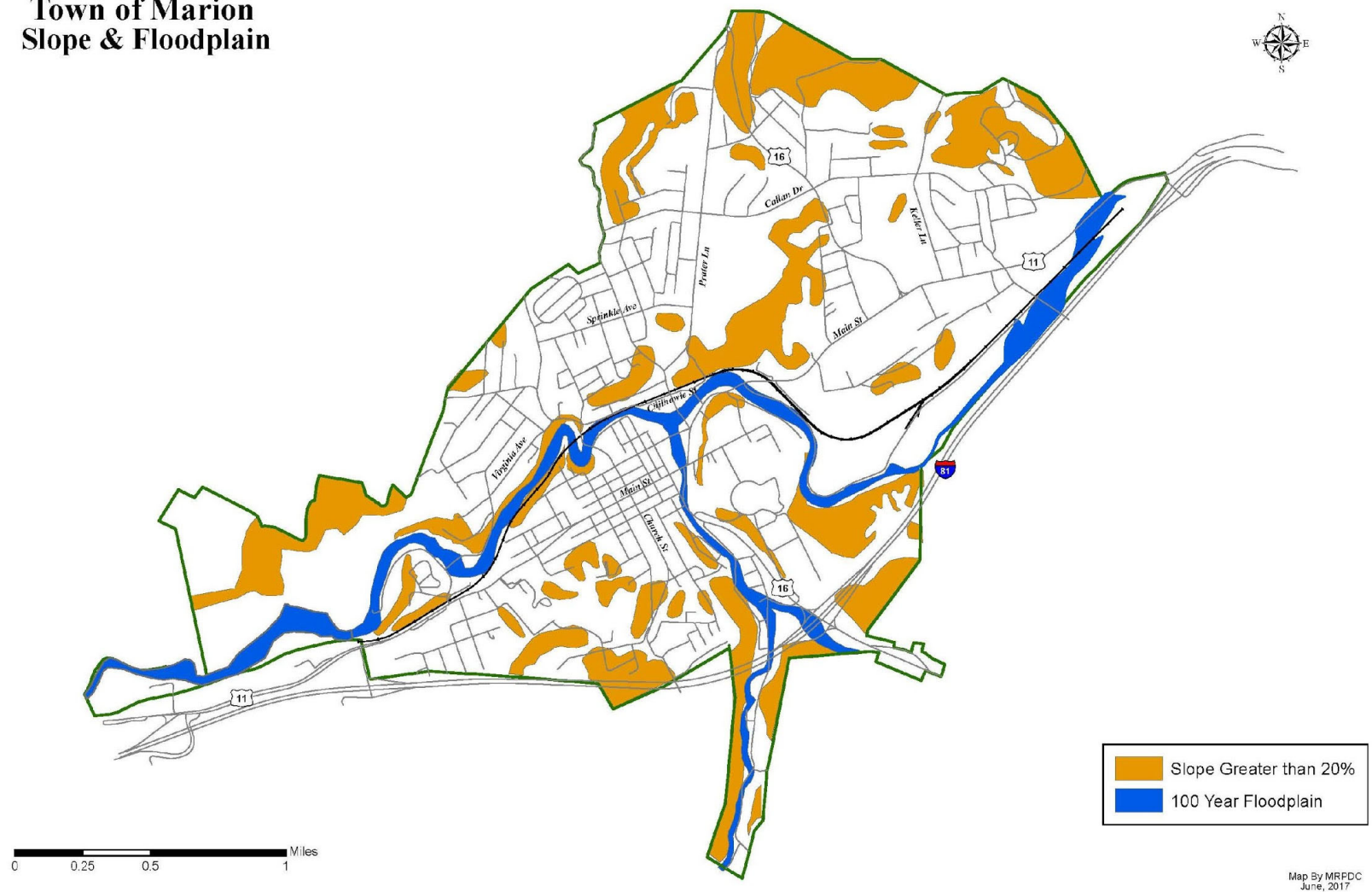
Slope Constraints

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 stormwater run-off from developed slopes.

<u>Developed Land on Slopes Greater than 20 Percent</u>			
Classification	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Percent Developed
Land on Slopes Greater Than 20%	593	225	37.9%
<i>Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, 2011</i>			

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



Man-made Constraints to Development

In addition to the physical factors previously cited, 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 Southern 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. *NOTE: The Town has purchased this quarry land and is in the process of redeveloping the parcel into recreational opportunities, including hiking trails, public use sports fields, and an amphitheater. The intention is to alter this parcel from a liability to an asset for future residential development in the area.*

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 Southern 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, and 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 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 (Code of VA §15.2-2200) to see that future subdivisions of land consider 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 as well as the railroad rights-of-way and major roads. An example of this development concern can 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 relatively steady or continue to slowly 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.

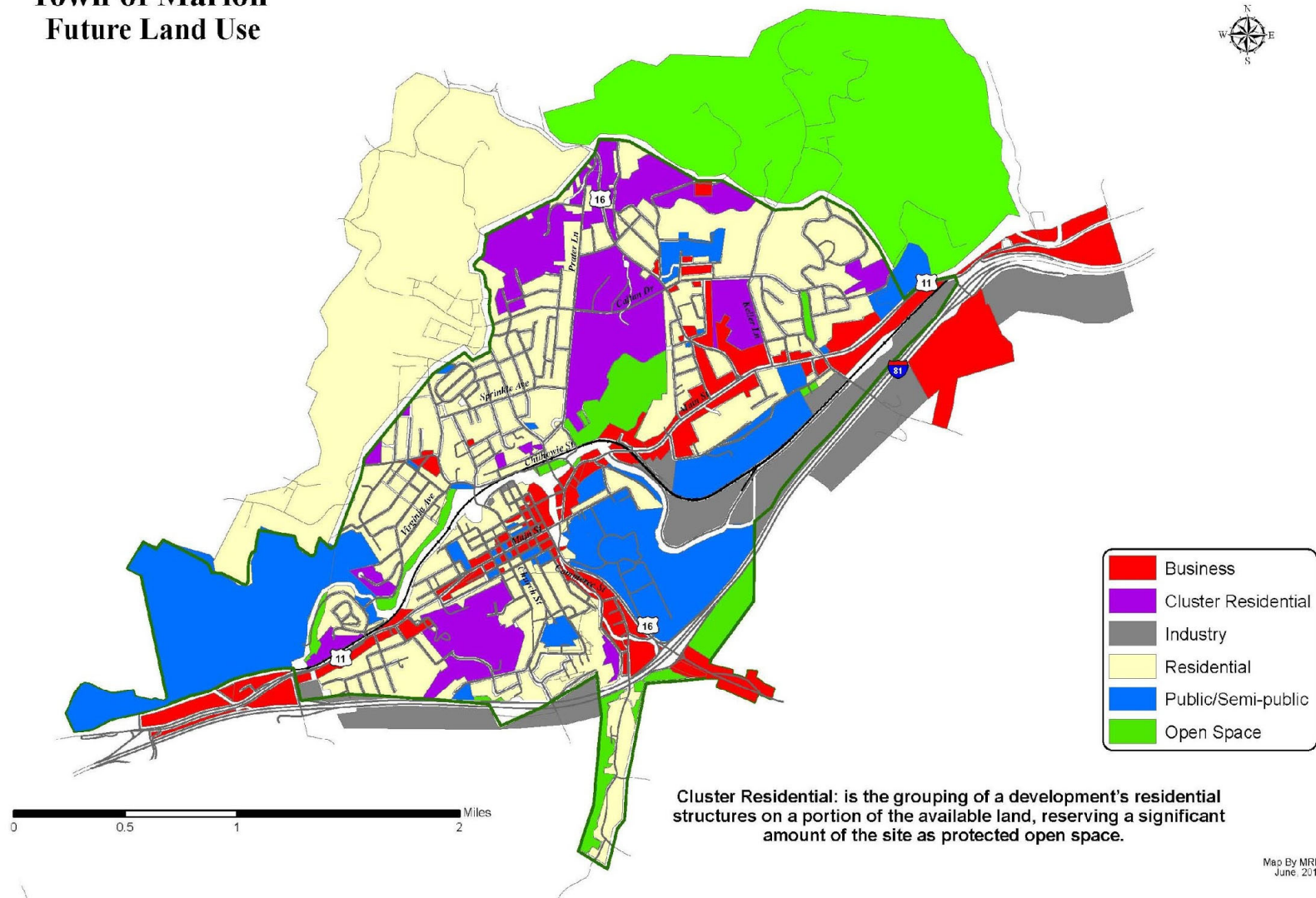
Major developments in the Town of Marion are occurring near the three Interstate 81 interchanges - Exit 44, Exit 45 and Exit 47. In 2019, the Smyth County School Board purchased a site and built Oak Point Elementary School in the McMullan/Adwolfe community near the west end of Marion. The operation of this newer school will likely promote development around Exit 44 and along the U.S. Route 11 corridor between Marion and the Town of Chilhowie. VDOT is currently planning to create roundabouts at the intersections of Route 11 crossing Interstate 81 nearest to the school.

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

Mountain States Health Alliance (now Ballad) built a new community hospital facility adjacent to Exit 47 just inside Marion town limits at 245 Medical Park Drive. With this new facility, a new traffic pattern was established with a new stoplight. Another medical office was built across the street and additional 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 continuation of 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, several medical uses near the old hospital on Radio Hill Road have been relocated. The former Smyth County Community Hospital facility has been repurposed as the Marion Campus for the Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences.

Town of Marion Future Land Use



Twelve. 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 contemporary 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 of Health Sciences, the town continues to welcome 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 expand the town's housing stock to capitalize on the new 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.
- Pursue 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 of Health Sciences.
- 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 and regional passenger rail.
- 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 & 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 and 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% (September 2022). New apartment tenants supporting the expanding offerings at Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences 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, Starbucks, 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 continued operation 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 300,000 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". 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 of Wytheville Community College is also growing, expanding into a new Technical Arts building in the former Ford Dealership at 1520 North Main Street. 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, including “Live Here. Work Anywhere.” telecommute opportunities.
- 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 all broadband providers to extend affordable, accessible, and redundant high-speed broadband 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 of Health

Sciences 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 and Marion Fire/EMS 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 PACE and other providers with 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 Festival, Marion Downtown, 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 and Mount Pleasant Preservation Society.
- Encourage residents to "buy local" by continuing to support the Marion Farmer's Market.
- Provide necessary funding to advertise town and community events, festivals, etc.

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 residents and visitors. Focus on upgrading and establishing smaller parks and playgrounds within neighborhoods to make recreation facilities as accessible as possible to 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.
- Study the feasibility of new recreation facilities, such as soccer fields, baseball fields, hiking/biking trails, pickleball, futsal, and amphitheater on the Callan Drive 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.
- 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 physical enhancements (wayfinding signage, aesthetic improvements) and additional façade improvements on Main Street and the downtown district.
- Encourage the Virginia Department of Transportation to relocate the maintenance shop on South Commerce Street near Exit 45 so the property can be developed for commercial use.
- Implement the 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 construct, which possesses a vitality that makes a resident identify with it, because each resident is an interconnected component. Consequently, decisions made by public and private officials regarding the shape, character, or form of the town has a potential to affect everyone connected. 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.
- Continue to encourage mix use, with residential in upper stories, while preserving storefronts for commercial business.

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 while preserving storefronts for commercial business.
- 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 while encouraging business development, 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, alternative energy facilities, 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 striped 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.
- 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.