

Richlands 2016 Comprehensive Plan

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

This Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the physical development of the Town of Richlands for the next ten years. It addresses the entire Town and is intended to positively influence all of the physical elements which make up its form. Towards this end, the overriding purpose of the Plan is to encourage the continued development of a safe, healthy and prosperous community by offering a distinctive “vision” for the Town.

A Comprehensive Plan represents the most important public document for orchestrating growth and development in the years ahead. It establishes goals, objectives, and strategies to guide both civic and public activities related to land use and resource utilization for a minimum of ten years and up to twenty years. Though a Comprehensive Plan outlines a long-term vision, it is not static. It is meant to be a “living document” – continually reviewed and updated with a major update at least every five years per the Code of Virginia based on changing conditions and shifting resources. Additionally, a Comprehensive Plan is only as good as the tools and actions utilized in implementing the plans on the ground. It only really comes to life as action plans and specific project plans are developed and implemented.

1.2 AUTHORITY

Chapter 22 of Title 15.2 in the Code of Virginia grants local governments distinct powers and responsibilities to plan for future

growth and regulate the existing use of land within their jurisdictions. One primary way this is accomplished is through the Comprehensive Plan. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia mandates that:

The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.

The Planning Commission of the Town of Richlands is tasked with the responsibility of preparing the Plan and recommending the plan for adoption by Town Council.

The Richlands Comprehensive Plan was developed in the context of large shifts in the local and regional economy as the mining industry continues to decline. These changes create ripples that impact population, housing, public services and transportation and require a plan that identifies opportunities for new growth and the best use of land within the Town boundaries. Because of the need to understand these changes and their ripples, background data and data analysis make up a large part of this document. Such information is an essential element to any planning process and key to creating a Comprehensive Plan that is on target and useful.

Equally essential to the planning process and the “jumping off” place for a Comprehensive Plan is community input, the subject of the next sub-section of this plan.

1.3 COMMUNITY INPUT

1.3.1 Community Survey

A community survey was created to better understand citizen values and specific opinions on public services, housing, recreation and the local economy. 151 paper and 54 online surveys were received over the course of 3 months in the fall/winter of 2015-2016. Three-quarters of survey respondents were residents of Richlands, a third work in Richlands, and two-thirds shop in the Town. Respondents of the paper survey were older, with a quarter of them retired, and only half currently employed. Whereas, 85% of online survey respondents were employed and a little over half of them had children. A majority of respondents had family ties and/or were raised in Richlands.

Through these surveys it was determined that respondents were generally pleased with essential Town services, but would gladly welcome enhanced recreational opportunities, a more vibrant local economy, and improved housing options and conditions for all residents. A summary of all survey responses is found in the appendices to this plan.

Town Problems

Survey respondents were asked to specify what they personally believed were the three biggest problems in Richlands among a list of twelve choices with the option of writing in an “other” choice. The three most common problems chosen were lack of jobs as the top choice, drugs as the second choice, and lack of restaurants, stores and services as third. Lack of activities and events was the only other option chosen more than a quarter of the time as a current problem. Several also stated that Town leadership was

inadequate and lacked unity within and cooperation with the larger community.

Housing

Only 15% of residents and other respondents felt that poor housing conditions was one of the largest problems, but most agreed that derelict housing and housing in disrepair is an issue to be addressed. Many strongly agreed that more affordable housing options should exist for the elderly, and disagreed that there should be more mobile homes to meet housing needs. Respondents also agreed that more single-family homes should be made available to meet housing needs in the Town.

Town Services

Respondents were generally satisfied with Town services. Fire and rescue services and police were listed as the most admired services. Experiences with the water, sewer, and electrical utilities were somewhat less satisfactory.

Recreation

The overall sentiment of respondents regarding recreation was that services and facilities are fairly adequate, but need to be better maintained and updated. Additionally, respondents indicated that the Town should add more recreational opportunities for youth and elderly alike. Residents and Town visitors expressed that they would welcome more playgrounds, more picnic facilities, and more hiking/biking trails specifically along the Clinch River, as long as they were better maintained. Many respondents would like to see safe walking trails, more communal gathering spaces, and recreational clubs become the cornerstone of leisure in Richlands. Respondents also thought that there needs to be more cultural activities that

celebrate the Town's art and history to attract more visitors and expand tourism revenue.

1.3.2 Public Input Meeting

To gather public input, the Town held a comprehensive planning workshop on the evening of December 1st, 2015 to dialogue about the future direction of the Town and to create a community vision. About thirty local residents and business owners were in attendance. The input received on a series of subjects is as follows:

Housing and Neighborhoods

The negative impact of vacant and blighted buildings was the most common response to questions about housing and neighborhoods. The residents in attendance strongly support community clean-up efforts, specifically in the west end of Town. Another common theme was the desire for better housing options, especially for elderly residents. Respondents wanted to see housing that was still affordable, but offered better alternatives than aging manufactured housing such as stick-built housing and retirement communities. Calls for better housing options also came with the acknowledge-



ment that improved housing is difficult if household incomes do not improve.

Getting Around Town (Transportation)

Residents in attendance noted the lack of street lights in certain areas of Town and the poor condition of sidewalks, especially in the west end.

Recreation and Culture

A predominant theme expressed by those in attendance was the desire for increased events and recreational activities. Attendees noted several reasons to do so: economic development, options for youth/teens and attracting new residents. The second most common theme was the need to better leverage existing recreational assets. Suggestions included: hosting sports tournaments, updating Richlands Recreation Park (as a draw for the region), improving the condition of Critterville and completing plans already started for the Riverwalk Trail.

Local Economy

To solicit input on the Richlands economy, residents were asked to finish the statement: "The future of Richlands' economy depends on _____." Responses were divided between four general answers. Some attendees noted the need to focus on downtown revitalization as a driver for new business and outside visitors. Some saw the growth of the elderly population as an economic opportunity to innovate and expand services. Some noted that new jobs must pay better wages. A final, but equally common response was a concern that there was not strong enough vision, unity and cooperation to drive new economic development opportunities.

Town Services

Residents were generally positive on the quality of services they received from the Town. However, some attendees advocated for the expansion of natural gas to residential users.

Community Vision

To solicit input on core concerns and desires for Richlands, those in attendance were asked to finish the statement: “My vision for Richlands is a community where _____.” Most attendees stressed the importance of jobs and a healthy economy that would allow residents to enjoy their lives. Economic vitality was the most important issue, followed by taking better advantage of the natural beauty of the area, strong governmental leadership and better cooperation.

The Evening’s Common Thread

“Grow or die” was a common sentiment when considering the future of Richlands. Many attendees noted that without new jobs and investment, children raised in Richlands would leave to find better opportunities elsewhere. Without suitable housing and good support services, the elderly would leave as well to be closer to their grown children. The four goals that emerged were: 1) proactive and collaborative leadership; 2) improved housing options; 3) less blight; and 4) a renewed emphasis on recreational and cultural activities and events all for the purpose of serving one large goal: improve the local economy.

1.3.3 Summary of Community Input

In-person and in writing, residents and neighbors of Richlands communicated their concerns and vision for the future of the Town. Battered by the regional economic downturn, survey and meeting

participants emphasized the importance of cultivating higher quality jobs that flourish in the modern economy and spread wealth throughout the community. Next on their agenda was a yearning for better and more affordable housing options that cater to the local demographic, both the community’s aging population and its families. Residents would also like to see an overall clean-up effort to remove blight that places an unwanted burden on the community.

Once the more pressing issues are resolved, survey and meeting participants expressed that they would like to enjoy expanded recreational and cultural activities, particularly for the youth and elderly. It was felt that additional activities and events could work in tandem with efforts to revitalize the economy. Richlands, to the desire of its residents, friends and neighbors, could then better market itself as a Town with a rich and vibrant history and a wealth of culture and opportunity. However, in order to strive for this vision and sustain it for the next generation in Richlands, unity and cooperation among Town leadership is a must.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 POPULATION AND AGE

Projections for Richlands and the region show flat growth and an aging population.

Figure 1: Population Change

	1990	2000	2010	1990-2010 Change	1990-2010 % Change	2014 Estimate	2010-2014 % Change
Richlands	4,456	4,144	5,823	1,367	30.7%	5,583	-4.1%
Western/NW Tazewell Co	15,895	14,484	18,125	2,230	14.0%	No Data	-
Tazewell Co	45,960	44,598	45,078	-882	-1.9%	44,654	-0.9%
Cumberland Plateau PDC	123,580	118,279	113,976	-9,604	-7.8%	112,785	-1.0%

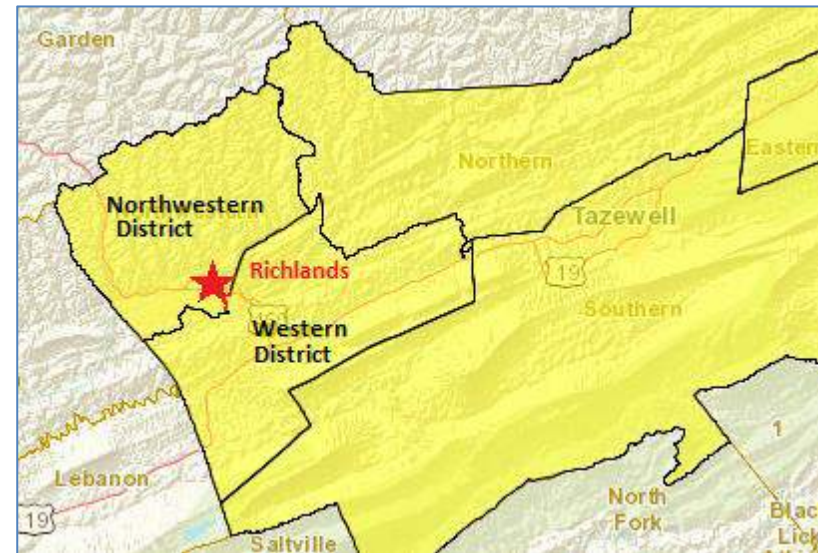
Source: U.S. Census, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Figure 1 shows population change in Richlands and the surrounding region. The 30.7% increase in Richlands’ population between 2000 and 2010 can be accounted for by the land brought into the Town by Boundary Adjustment in 2005 – 1,495 residents according to the Commission on Local Government. Without the adjustment, the population would have decreased by 2.9% between 1990 and 2010. Since 2010, the Town’s population has declined by 4.1%, as of 2014. The population for the census-designated districts of Northwestern and Western Tazewell County have been included in Figure 1 to show the population changes in areas surrounding Richlands over

the same time periods. The two county districts that Richlands falls within are shown in the map in Figure 2 below.

The Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (PDC) region, which includes Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell Counties, lost 7.8% of its population – 9,604 residents – between 2000 and 2010. In contrast, the Western/Northwestern Tazewell County districts grew by 14% or by 2,230 residents.

Figure 2: Tazewell County - Western and Northwestern District



The increase in population surrounding Richlands may be attributed to the growth of the unincorporated “suburbs” west of Richlands including the Raven community and the approaches to Richlands along the U.S. Route 19/460 corridor including Claypool Hill and

Cedar Bluff. As can be seen in Figure 3 below, these areas have continued to grow since 1990.

Figure 3: Population Change – Neighboring Areas

	1990	2000	2010	1990-2010	Percent Change
Claypool Hill	1,468	1,719	1,776	+ 308	21.0%
Cedar Bluff	525	1,085	1,137	+ 612	116.6%
Raven	985	2,593	2,270	+ 1,285	130.5%

Source: U.S. Census

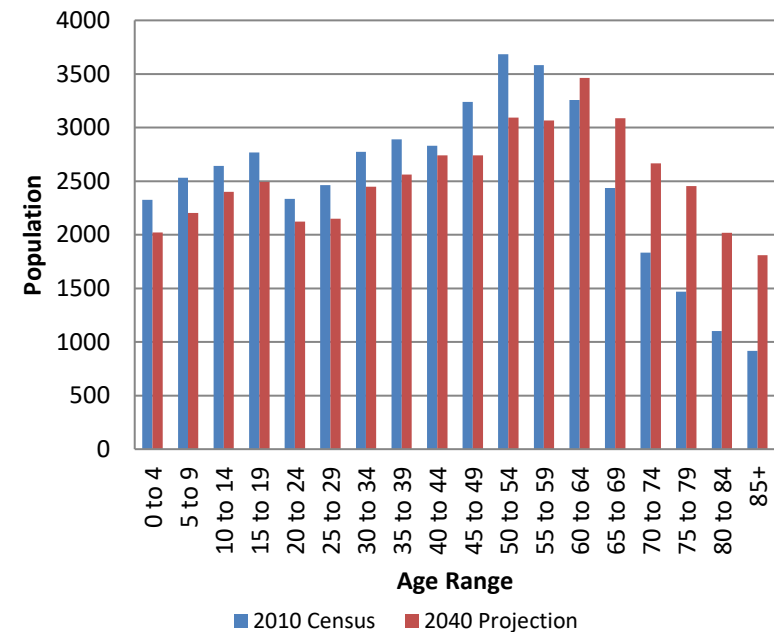
Future projections (Figure 4) for Richlands and the surrounding region show population growth to remain essentially flat. However, as demonstrated in Figure 5, there is growing shift in age cohorts. Age projections for Tazewell County (the only level available) show an increase in residents over the age of 60 and a decrease in children and working age adults. Residents over the age of 60 made up 24% of the total County population in 2010. By 2040, this number is projected to be 34%. In 2010, median age was 41.3 for the Town and 37.2 nationally.

Figure 4: Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2020-2040	Percent Change
Richlands	5,832	5,841	5,850	+ 18	0.3%
Tazewell County	45,300	45,436	45,535	+ 235	0.5%
Cumberland Plateau PDC	113,334	113,370	113,558	+ 224	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

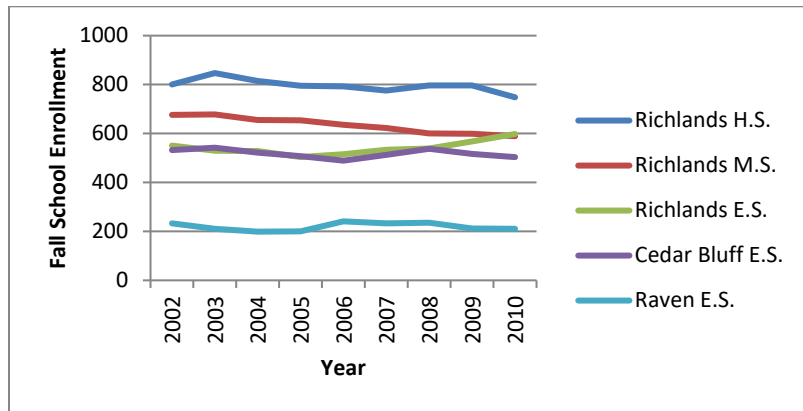
Figure 5: Projected Population in Tazewell County by Age



Source: U.S. Census

As Figure 6 on the next page shows, Tazewell County showed a 5.3% decrease in total school enrollment between 2002 and 2010, from 7,002 students to 6,628. Richlands area schools also declined in enrollment, with the exception of Richlands Elementary, which gained 48 students over this time. Combined enrollment from Richlands High School, Richlands Middle and Richlands Elementary School decreased by 4.5%.

Figure 6: School Enrollment



Source: Virginia Department of Education – Fall Membership Data

Summary

Overall population trends show flat growth or decline for Richlands, Tazewell County and the region. In contrast the surrounding nearby communities have grown significantly in the past decades, resulting in a population increase for the western portions of Tazewell County.

Age projections for Tazewell County show that the number of elderly residents will grow and the numbers of children and working age adults will shrink. Correspondingly, school enrollment trends are down for the County and Town.

Key Takeaway

According to 2040 projections, the current population will essentially be the same, but with a higher proportion of elderly residents. Without an influx of working age adults contributing to the tax base, the population will stagnate while social assistance

costs will increase due to a greater proportion of elderly residents. A change in this scenario is unlikely without new jobs and a growing economy to attract working age adults.

2.2 HOUSING

Housing in Richlands is primarily made up of single-family homes and mobile homes. Compared to Tazewell County, the Town has a higher percentage of mobile homes and multifamily units. Multifamily units represent a small percentage of housing in both the Town and County but mobile homes comprise almost a third of all units in Richlands.

Figure 7: Housing Units

	Richlands	Percentage	Tazewell	Percentage
Total housing units	2,648	[x]	20,718	[x]
Single Family	1,453	55%	13,789	67%
Mobile home	848	32%	4,984	24%
Attached and Multifamily	347	13%	1,945	9%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2009-2013 Estimates

Compared to Virginia overall, Richlands has a much higher rate of mobile homes than the statewide average of 5.4% and a much lower rate of attached and multifamily units than the statewide average of 32.5%. The high rate of mobile homes in Town is partly due to the limited amount of buildable land and the historic need for affordable workforce housing. Much of the manufactured housing that was located in Richlands in the mid-20th century to meet economic demand still remains and is in poor condition.

Figure 8: Households

	2000	2010	Change
Total households	1,882	2,552	670
Family households (families)	65.0%	63.9%	-1.1%
Female Householder with children under 18	5.5%	5.7%	0.2%
Nonfamily households	35.0%	36.1%	1.1%
Households with individuals under 18 years	25.8%	28.3%	2.5%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	32.1%	29.0%	-3.1%
Average household size	2.20	2.28	3.6%
Average family size	2.76	2.84	2.9%

Source: U.S. Census

As noted previously, the 2005 Boundary Adjustment makes finding trends between census counts difficult. Figure 8 is a comparison of percentages between different household types from 2000 and 2010. It demonstrates that the average household and family size grew and the percentage of elderly households shrank.

As outlined in Figure 9 on the next page, the Town added 723 housing units between 2000 and 2010, mostly due to the 2005 adjustment. The rate of occupied housing units was largely unchanged over this time. The largest change was in reduced vacancy rate for rental property.

Figure 9: Housing Occupancy

	2000	2010	Change
Total housing units	2,137	2,860	723
Occupied housing units	88.1%	89.2%	1.1%
Vacant housing units	11.9%	10.8%	-1.1%
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	3.2%	2.4%	-0.8%
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	15.5%	10.5%	-5.0%

Source: U.S. Census

As shown in Figure 10, the number of occupied households in Richlands grew by 670 units. The number of renter-occupied units grew at a faster rate, however, and now makes up a greater percentage of the number of total units than before.

Figure 10: Housing Tenure

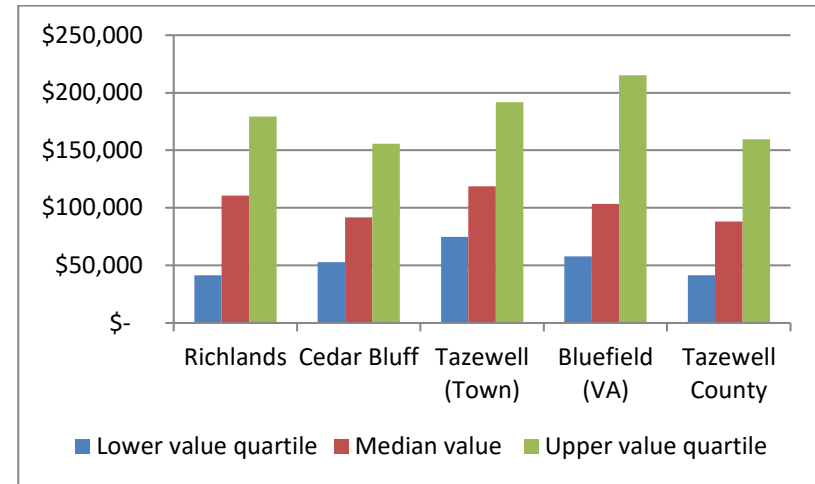
	2000	2010	Change
Occupied housing units	1,882	2,552	670
Owner-occupied housing units	68.7%	63.7%	-5.0%
Renter-occupied housing units	31.3%	36.3%	5.0%

Source: U.S. Census

Figure 11 shows the value of owner-occupied housing in relation to other communities in the County and to the County overall. Lower- and upper-quartile values can show the range of home values within a community that a median value cannot capture. The lower quartile is the value point of a house that is valued higher than 25%

of other homes, and the upper quartile is the value point of a house that is valued higher than 75% of other homes.

Figure 11: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2009-2013 Estimates

Richlands has a relatively high median home value, second only to the Town of Tazewell. The Town's lower value quartile of \$41,500 shows that one out of four owner-occupied units are valued at or below \$41,500. The lower quartile home value in Richlands is lower than those in Cedar Bluff, Tazewell Town and Bluefield, Va. This lower value can be an indicator of poor housing conditions and may correspond with Richland's rate of mobile homes and manufactured housing.

With the exception of Bluefield, Va., Richlands has the highest spread between lower- and upper-value quartile housing among the localities shown. This means that there may be fewer homes

available at a median price range and a higher proportion that are valued either relatively low or relatively high.

Summary

The housing stock in Richlands is primarily a mix of single-family and mobile and manufactured housing at a wide range of values. Though the majority of housing is owner-occupied, rates of rental housing are growing.

Key Takeaway

As the population of the Town and the region ages, there will be a greater demand for age-appropriate housing than is currently provided. Also, the Town has a shortage in multifamily housing and an abundance of mobile and manufactured homes compared to statewide averages. These two trends suggest that over the next few decades the Town's growing elderly population may encounter difficulties in maintaining their existing single family homes and hence their independence. It can be expected that the need for age-appropriate housing, including apartments, townhouses, assisted living facilities, and retirement communities will continue to grow.

2.3 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

2.3.1 History

Richlands can credit its name to the fertile soil of the Clinch River Valley. However, it was the rich and abundant coal reserves in Southwest Virginia and the extension of the railroad into the region in the late 19th century that shaped the character of the Town into the 20th century and beyond. The Town's success has been closely reflected in the booms and busts of the coal industry since being platted in 1888.

The Town is a stop along the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, which connects several towns through seven counties in Southwest Virginia's historic coal mining region. Visitors and local residents can visit the Coal Miners' Memorial and the soon to be renovated Railroad Section House.



Railroad Section House

Source: Rod Cury

The Railroad Section House was the home of the railroad section foreman, tasked with maintaining the section of railroad in and around the Town. The historic building was erected in the 1890's by the Norfolk and Western Railroad and still has its original board and batten siding, windows and tin roof to this day. Once renovated, the Railroad Section House will document and interpret the Town's railroad and coal heritage.

The Coal Miners' Memorial of the Commonwealth is located in a prominent location in front of Town Hall. This attractive memorial is the official state memorial and is a tribute to coal miners throughout the region, especially those who lost their lives in mining-related accidents.



Coal Miners' Memorial

Source: Visittazewellcounty.org

Surrounding the Coal Miners' Memorial is the Richlands Historic District. This district is part of the original Town street grid as laid out by the Clinch Valley Iron and Coal Company in 1888. This district includes Richlands' historic downtown area and earliest residential

neighborhood, both of which show the architectural styles prominent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Richlands Historic District

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

The creation of murals and the Fire and Rescue Department sculpture in the downtown (seen at right) highlight the Town's history and creativity. Additionally, the Richlands Farmer's Market is located downtown. Venues like these help generate needed downtown foot traffic and serve to draw people to the Town from across the region.



Downtown Murals and Fire & Rescue Sculpture

Source: Photographs by Community Planning Partners

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The Tazewell Avenue Historic District was developed after the Richlands Historic District, but has similar architecture. The neighborhood includes a commercial district that fronts the railroad with a residential district laid out in a grid pattern behind it. Architectural styles include Late Victorian and Queen Ann homes, but also more modest Colonial Revival, American Craftsmen and Bungalow styles. Historic commercial buildings in this district are two-story brick structures that provide storefront commercial and retail space along the sidewalk.



Tazewell Avenue Historic District

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

The Williams House is the only building in Richlands singularly listed on the State and National Historic Registers. It was built in 1890 and is one of the earliest buildings constructed in the Town. It was built to serve as the main office for the Clinch Valley Iron and Coal Company that intended to transform Richlands into a prominent coke and iron manufacturing center.



The Williams House

Source: Town of Richlands

2.3.2 Arts, Culture & Events

Richlands honors its culture and heritage by coordinating a number of community-wide annual events and serving as a local hub for the arts in Tazewell County.

CART (Citizens for the Arts),

CART, operating for 36 continuous years, is located near Richlands' public library. Funded by state and national arts endowments and the area's local governments, CART supports the performing arts. A core value of CART is to provide Arts-in-Education programs that enlighten the public and nurtures students. Over the course of the year CART schedules, organizes and stages numerous theatrical,

dance and musical performances at various venues throughout Richlands and Tazewell County for the public to enjoy.

Richlands Farmers' Market

The Richlands Farmers' Market is owned and operated by the Town of Richlands and operates six days per week from April 1 to December 31. The Town funds the Market so that area small businesses and organization can find a staging area for their economic endeavors and is open to area farmers, gardeners, crafts persons, and food vendors.



The Richlands Farmers' Market

Source: Town of Richlands

Richlands Annual Freedom Festival

The Freedom Festival has become a regular annual event in mid-summer supported by a host of local and regional sponsors. Across the two-day event, a variety of attractions and vendors are amassed to illustrate the culture, history, and artisanship of the Clinch Valley

region. Festival participants enjoy historical tours and reenactments, musical performances, a motorcycle show, unique art, patriotic contests, carnival rides, a 5K race, and large fireworks display.

Annual Winter Honey Festival

This festival is an annual gathering of Richlands area beekeepers, craftsmen, and honey artisans to showcase their bee-related craft. Over 40 vendors participate in the festival representing a variety of honey types and other handcrafted items.

Richlands Annual Town Wide Yard Sale

The annual Town Wide Yard Sale is sponsored and hosted by the Freedom Festival Committee. Serving as a treasure-seeking occasion not only for Richlands, but Tazewell County as well, the event is held in late spring each year.

Local Parades

Richlands also sponsors or hosts a number of parades each year that have wide draw including the Richlands High School Homecoming Parade, a Veteran's Parade, and the annual Christmas Parade.

Summary

Richlands' rail and coal history provide a strong sense of place and heritage and the historic districts help communicate its history. Citizens are rightfully proud of this history and these symbols of the past.

Richlands also has a growing array of arts, culture and big events that not only entertain and inspire local citizens, but serve as a draw to the community.

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Key Takeaway

Richlands' rail and coal history, as well as its historic districts should be protected and showcased as a means of maintaining community pride and attracting visitors. The Town's arts, culture and event offerings should be expanded and utilized as a means of marketing the Town and supporting Richlands economic development efforts.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

2.4.1 Forest Resources

One of the Town's most important resources is its character as a rural community located in a natural setting. The Town is surrounded by hills and ridgelines, most of which are forested. These forested slopes protect against erosion and create attractive vistas for citizens and visitors alike.

At the same time, this defining feature also limits development in Richlands. Because development on steep slopes can lead to soil erosion that impacts streams and rivers and potentially undermines building safety, modern building codes limit construction on steep slopes. Construction on slopes above 25% grade is not advised and above 33% is not allowed by the International Building Code (IBC), a provision that is incorporated into the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). Additionally, the IBC (and hence the USBC) recommends a setback of 40 feet from the top of a steep slope and 15 feet from the bottom of a steep slope. As delineated in Figure 12 on page 16 and depicted in the Environmental Constraints Map and Land Suitable for Development Map that follow page 21, these restrictions limit the amount of undeveloped land in Richlands that is suitable for development.

2.4.2 Hydrology and Water Resources

The Clinch River, traversing through the center of Richlands, is a crown jewel natural resource in Southwest Virginia. Originating in the mountains northeast of Town, the river travels some 135 miles through Tazewell, Russell, Wise, and Scott counties before reaching Tennessee. With its smooth valleys carved out of the mountains



Looking North from Richlands Town Hall

and foothills, the Clinch has played a considerable role in the exploration and settlement of Southwest Virginia.

The Clinch is truly a treasure trove of aquatic life. According to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the river supports about 50 species of mussels, more than any other river in the world. Over 100 species of non-game fish also claim the Clinch as their home. Lying toward the bottom of the food chain, they play an important role in the survival of other fish and mussel species. The variety of sport fish that flock to the Clinch make it an ideal destination for anglers.

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While a natural marvel for Richlands, the Clinch and the low-lying lands adjacent to it can on occasion flood from heavy rain events that fill the Clinch’s mountain feeder streams and rush into the main stem. The Clinch’s extent and the 100-year flood plain surrounding it are shown in the Environmental Constraints Map that follows page 21.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitors water quality for the Clinch River as well as the creeks that feed it. The following bodies of water have been listed as impaired in one form or another:

Figure 12: Impaired Bodies of Water

Name	Length (miles)	Impacted Function	Probable Cause
Clinch River (from the eastern terminus of River Street to Raven)	3.37	Fish Consumption (Mercury in tissue), Recreation	Unknown (Mercury), Rural Residential, and Stormwater Runoff
Clinch River (from the eastern terminus of River Street to Cedar Bluff)	11.77	Recreation (E Coli present)	Unknown
Town Hill Creek	0.25	Aquatic Life, Recreation	Rural Residential , Silviculture
Big Creek	1.33	Aquatic Life, Recreation	Coal Mining, Silviculture, Rural Residential
Mudlick Creek	2.43	Aquatic Life, Recreation	Rural Residential, Unknown

Source: EPA Water Quality Assessment

The most commonly listed “probable cause” of impairment are rural land uses. The impact of septic systems and livestock can both

increase levels of E Coli. The presence of E Coli doesn’t necessarily mean that there are disease-causing bacteria present in the water, but it is a good indicator that other more harmful bacteria might be present and swimming or eating shellfish might be a health risk per EPA guidance. Important steps can be taken locally to reduce levels of E Coli: the extension of public sanitary sewer to all households in the Town, the restoration of vegetated buffers along the creeks and the Clinch River, fencing around creeks and the river where livestock are located, and ensuring that local residents pick up pet waste.

The presence of mercury in fish tissue has been identified in the Clinch River, however the Virginia Department of Health has not issued a fish consumption advisory for the river or any local tributary. It should be noted that some of the impacts to the local watershed result from uses beyond the Town boundaries – mining and silviculture.

Even with these challenges, the Clinch River is being recognized more and more as a regional asset that not only needs protection, but can also provide opportunity. As part of a regional initiative to expand access to the Clinch River, the Town has been designed as one of the “Hometowns of the Clinch.” The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) is a collaboration among local, regional and state organizations to improve the environmental quality of the river, provide opportunities for increased recreational access and connect the River to economic development strategies for communities in the Clinch River Valley. CRVI has five goals:

1. Develop a Clinch River State Park.
2. Develop and integrate access points, trails, and campgrounds along the Clinch River.

3. Enhance water quality in the Clinch River.
4. Develop and enhance environmental education opportunities for all community members in the Clinch River watershed.
5. Connect and expand downtown revitalization, marketing and entrepreneurial development opportunities in the Clinch River Valley.

Currently the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has partnered with the Richlands Christian Academy on the Mile 3118 Riverbank and Riparian Corridor Restoration Project to regrade and stabilize a portion of the River in Richlands to its original channel. These local and regional efforts are already beginning to pay dividends including CRVI being awarded the Scenic Virginia's Scenic Tourism Award in 2015.

2.4.3 Mineral & Energy Resources

Some of the earliest coal mined in America was mined in Central Virginia just south of Richmond and for many years, small coal mines existed in both eastern Virginia and portions of the Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains. As the extent of the Southwest Virginia Coalfield was more fully explored and with the help of the railroad, coal mining in the lucrative Southwest Virginia Coalfield far surpassed the production of these early finds and they were all abandoned by the early 1950's. In Southwest Virginia there are over 70 individual coal beds within the rock layer beginning in western Tazewell, Russell and Scott Counties and extending further into Southwest Virginia and into West Virginia and Kentucky. The bituminous coal that is native to these coalfields is regarded as among the highest quality, with less than 1 percent sulfur, less than

10 percent ash, and high heat content. Though production has been declining each year since the early 1990s, the value of the quality coal that remains has increased from the uptake in demand for metallurgical coal and high-grade steam coal according to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy.

As coal mining has declined, hydraulic fracking of natural gas reserves has heightened in intensity. Continued development of the gas present in the Marcellus Shale sediment formation that extends into this part of Virginia serves as an opportunity for energy independence and economic development, particularly for workers in the out-of-commission coal mines.

The Division of Mine Land Reclamation within the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) is tasked with correcting environmental and public safety hazards posed by abandoned mines and former mining activity like landslides, land subsidence, stream sedimentation, dangerous structures, acid mine drainage and open mine portals. DMME classifies items in three priority levels: Priority 1 - features posing an extreme danger to public health and safety; Priority 2 - features posing adverse effects to public health and safety; and Priority 3 - features posing environmental concerns. There is one Priority 2 hazard within Town boundaries that is prioritized for abatement. According to a representative from DMME, this particular feature is a "low Priority 2" as it is the remains of an abandoned brick structure that is causing some erosion. No Priority 1 threats were located within one mile of Town boundaries. Per Figure 12, impacts to local water quality are primarily tied to rural land uses like septic systems and livestock.

Richlands

Comprehensive Plan 2016

Key Takeaway

The Town's waterways and hillsides are valuable assets that should be protected. Local development policies should include building restrictions on steep slopes. Additionally, whether through public or private efforts, opportunities to revegetate stream banks and the banks of the Clinch River should be pursued.

2.5 EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

2.5.1 Historic Development Patterns

The Town's development patterns grew up around the level ground of the Clinch River Valley and the access provided by the historic Norfolk and Western Railroad. Industrial uses located adjacent to the railroad, commercial districts located nearby along Front Street, and the earliest residential neighborhoods were located within walking distance to both.

Development patterns continued to change as Front Street also became U.S. Route 460, an important transportation route for business and industry as well as individual travelers. Shopping centers and other retail uses were positioned along the 460 corridor. Given the topography and strong demand for affordable housing, much new housing in Richlands in the middle of the 20th century was manufactured housing built on or next to surrounding hillsides.

In 1971 the Route 460 bypass was constructed to reroute through traffic away from Front Street lined with retail shops and the Town's historic downtown.

In 2005, the Town annexed a large section of land to the south and west of its then existing boundaries, increasing total land area from 1,674 acres to 3,651 acres. The annexed area includes a series of hills and bisecting streams, as well as additional flat land in the Clinch River Valley. Most of the land in the annexed area is either vacant or residential, and includes the Hidden Valley subdivision and the former Richlands Municipal Airport. Most of the remaining vacant or forested land in the 2005 area is not buildable due to steep slopes. One primary exception is the area surrounding the

former airport. This flatland represents the largest area of land within Town boundaries that is suitable for development.

2.5.2 Existing Land Use

Within the borders of Richlands there are 3,651 acres of land or about 5.7 square miles. Currently, 44.1% of the Town's land area is developed. Most of the developed land is dedicated to single-family residential use, which represents 40.0% of all the developed land. Manufactured homes are the second most common use of developed land (excluding road rights-of-way), a use found on 10.0% of the developed land. Nearly all residential neighborhoods in Richlands include a mix of stick-built and manufactured housing, the primary exception being the Hidden Valley subdivision which is the only area of Town that is zoned R-1, a zoning classification which excludes manufactured and modular housing. Multifamily development is very limited and essentially includes only two apartment complexes.

Commercial uses are primarily located along the U.S. 460 Business/Front Street corridor and make up 7.1% of the developed land. Most retail uses are located in shopping centers while the historic commercial districts include a mix of retail and professional/personal services. Retail use predominates the three commercial land uses and occupies 5.1% of the developed land. This is reflected in Figure 19: Town Employment Trends which identifies *Retail Trade* and *Accommodation and Food Services* as the second and third largest employment sectors for the Town.

6% of developed land is allocated to industrial uses. Land use that is defined as industrial can include manufacturing, heavy goods storage, or solid waste management. Most industrial uses in

Richlands

Comprehensive Plan 2016

Richlands are related to storage, recycling or waste with limited manufacturing. The low percentage of industrial land use is also reflected in Figure 19, which shows that *Manufacturing* only accounts for a small percentage of total employment.

The table in Figure 13 identifies both developed and undeveloped land. 55.9% of all land within the Town is classified as undeveloped, a category that includes agricultural, river, and vacant/forested land. However, only 365 acres (17.8% of the undeveloped land and 10.0% of the total land area) is suitable for development. Land considered unsuitable for development includes those areas that are prone to flooding (within the 100-year floodplain) and areas with steep slopes. Steep slope calculations were performed based on the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code/International Building Code standards. Unbuildable vacant land includes floodplains, slopes of 25% or greater, and a buffer of 27.5 feet adjacent to those slopes (the average of a 15-foot setback from the bottom of a steep slope and a 40-foot setback from the top of a steep slope delineated in the Building Codes).

The undeveloped land that is suitable for development includes 280 acres that are currently vacant and/or forested and 85 acres of agricultural land. As illustrated in the Land Suitable for Development Map that follows page 21, much of this buildable land is found in scattered, small sites. The median size of a buildable section of forested land is about 0.10 acres and for agricultural land, 0.5 acres.

Figure 13: Existing Land Use

		Land Use Classification	Acres	Percent
Developed Land	Commercial	Retail	82	5.1%
		General Commercial	17	1.0%
		Business/Professional	16	1.0%
	Industrial	Light Industrial	87	5.4%
		Heavy Industrial	3	0.2%
		Warehousing	6	0.4%
	Residential	Single-Family Residential	643	40.0%
		Mobile Homes	161	10.0%
		Multifamily Residential	37	2.3%
	Public and Institutional	Community Facilities	81	5.0%
		Worship/Cemeteries/Lodges	55	3.4%
		Parks & Recreation	39	2.4%
		Road/Rail Rights of Way	357	22.2%
	Unbuildable Portions	24	1.5%	
Subtotal - Developed Land			1,608	44.1%
Undeveloped Land	Suitable for Development	Agricultural	85	4.1%
		Vacant/Forested	280	13.7%
	Not Suitable for Development	Agricultural	179	8.8%
		Vacant/Forested	1,458	71.4%
		River Acreage	40	2.0%
Subtotal - Undeveloped Land			2,042	55.9%
Total Land Area			3,651	100.0%

Summary

Only 10.0% of the Town's total land area is undeveloped and suitable for new development. Most of the buildable land classified as vacant/forested is bounded by steep slopes and will only support limited single-family construction. With few buildable acres remaining, agricultural land represents the greatest opportunity for new development where located beyond the 100-year floodplain.

Key Takeaway

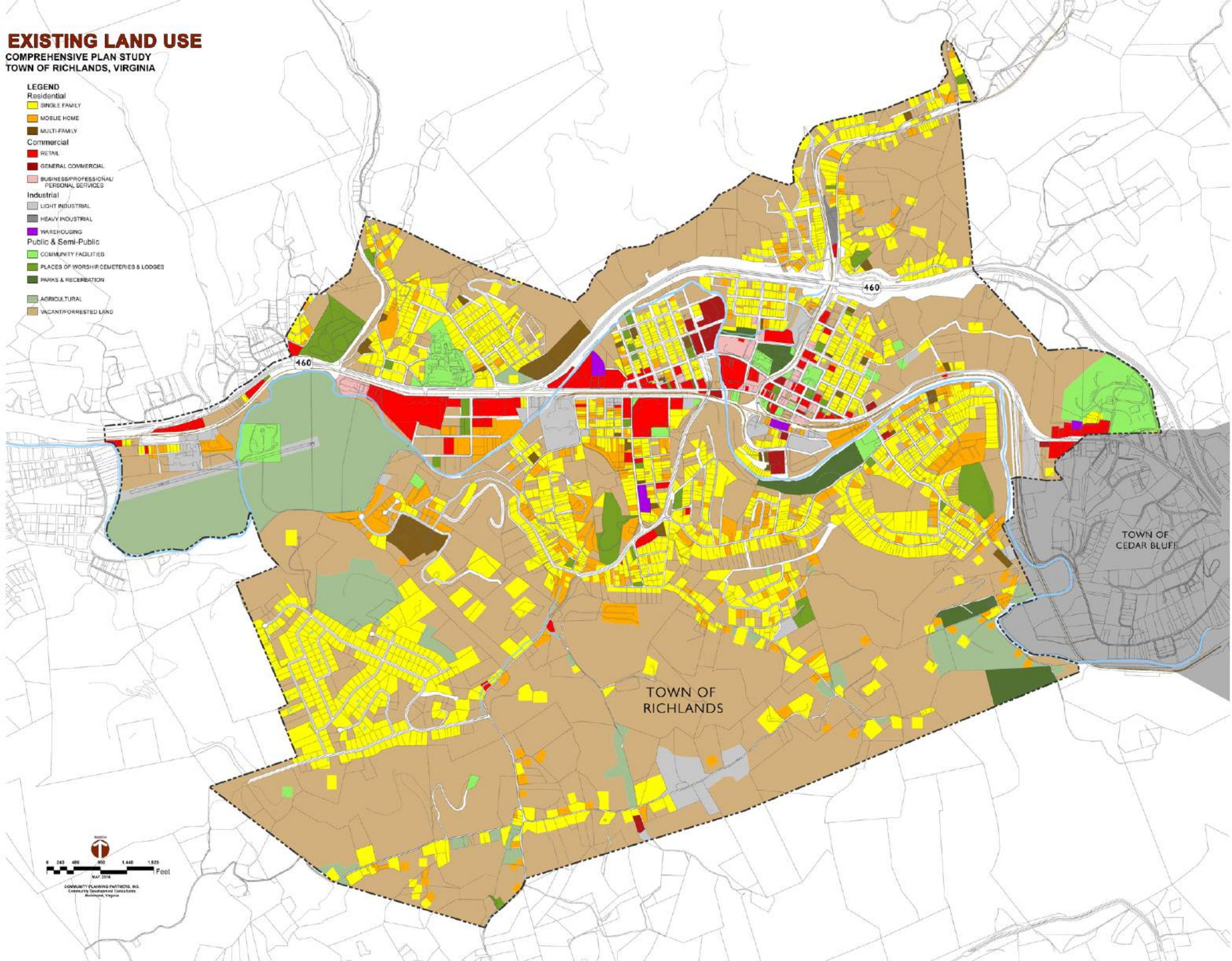
The Town must use the remaining buildable and undeveloped land to best further the goals and objectives identified in this plan. In addition, opportunities for revitalization and redevelopment of land already developed should be considered. Finally, an additional future boundary adjustment might be in order to capture additional land better suited for development than that currently found within the Town limits.

EXISTING LAND USE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- Residential**
 - SINGLE FAMILY
 - MOBILE HOME
 - MULTI-FAMILY
- Commercial**
 - RETAIL
 - GENERAL COMMERCIAL
 - BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL/
PERSONAL SERVICES
- Industrial**
 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
 - WAREHOUSING
- Public & Semi-Public**
 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES
 - PLACES OF WORSHIP, CEMETERIES & LODGES
 - PARKS & RECREATION
 - AGRICULTURAL
 - VACANT/FORRESTED LAND



TOWN OF
CEDAR BLUFF

TOWN OF
RICHLANDS



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

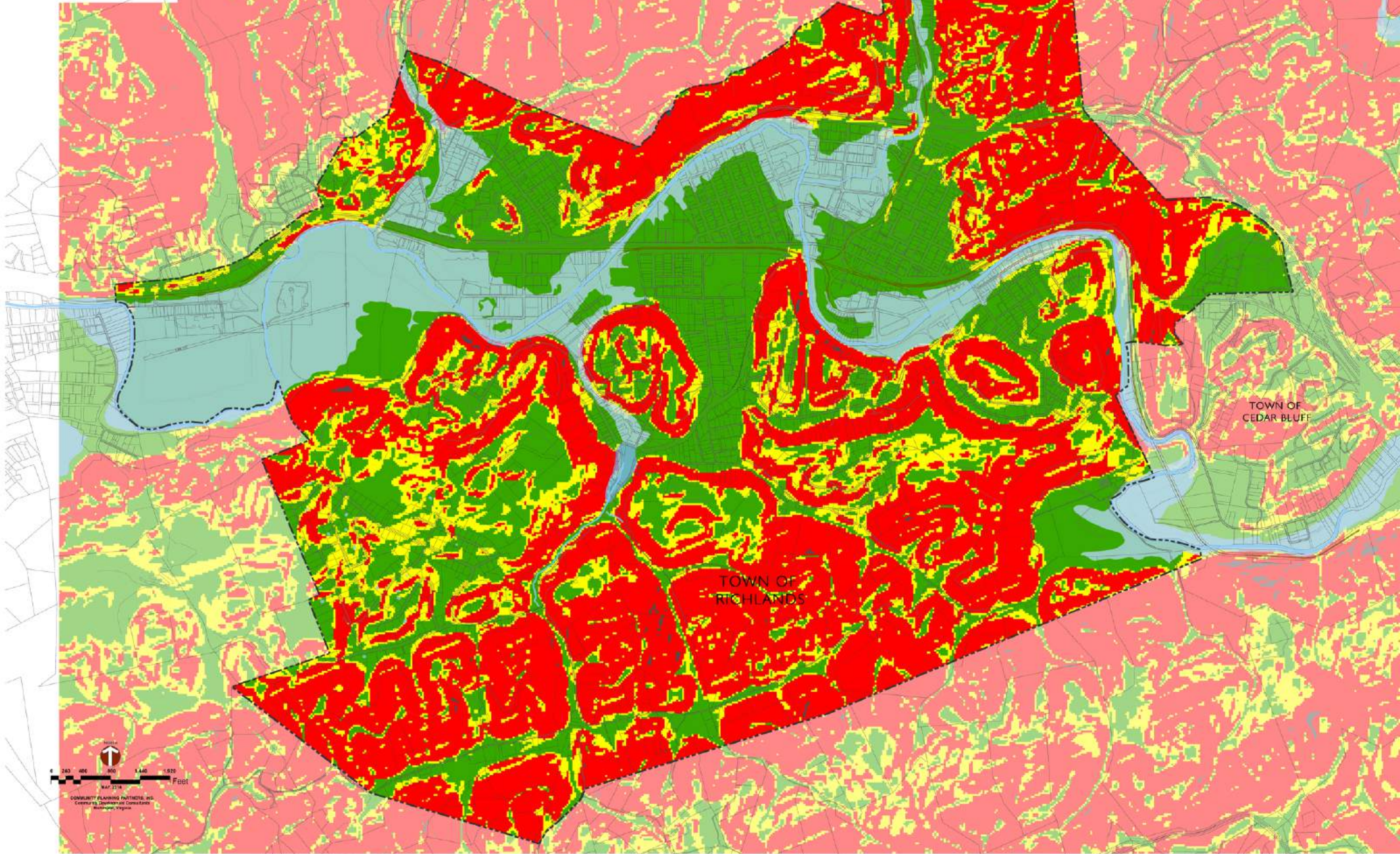
LEGEND

Percent Slopes

- 0% - 15%
- 15.1% - 25%
- 25.1% - 100%
- 100.1% - 158.1%

Floodplains

- 100 YEAR FLOODPLAINS

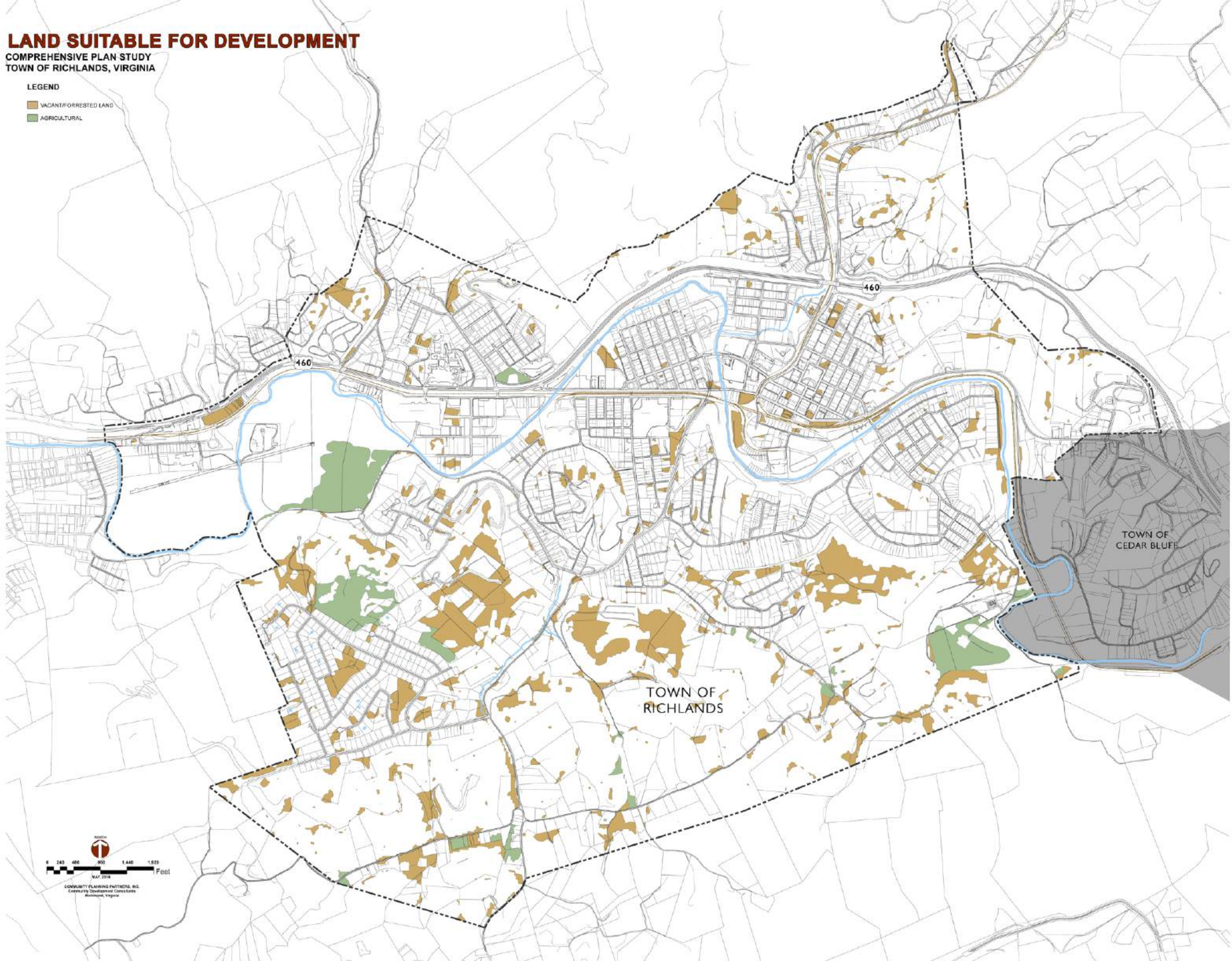


LAND SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- VACANT/ORRESTED LAND
- AGRICULTURAL



TOWN OF
RICHLANDS

TOWN OF
CEDAR BLUFF



2.5.3 Existing Zoning

The Richlands Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 1971, classifies all Town land into six categories or districts:

- Limited Residential (R-1) – a single-family classification that restricts manufactured or pre-fabricated housing.
- General Residential (R-2) – a classification that allows a wide range of residential uses, including stick-built and manufactured single-family residences, townhomes, multifamily structures as well as some commercial and institutional uses. R-2 is the most widely applied district in the Town, including most undeveloped land.
- General Business (B-2) – a commercial classification that permits retail businesses, office buildings and some institutional uses (e.g. churches, libraries). It allows for commercial uses that generate traffic and deliveries but excludes industrial uses.
- General Industrial (M-1) – an industrial classification that permits manufacturing and heavy goods storage that can be located near residential areas without creating a nuisance. Prior to issuing a building permit for a new use, plans must be submitted that demonstrate the proposed use will not create a nuisance.
- General Agricultural (A-1) – a classification that allows agriculture, dairying and forestry uses, as well as a broad list of residential uses, limited commercial uses and limited recreational uses with conditions.
- Special Conservation (C-1) – a classification that is intended

to protect environmentally sensitive areas and flood plains and allows for agricultural uses. This classification has not been assigned to any land parcels at this point.

The Existing Zoning Map that follows page 23 shows where the different classifications have been applied. It further shows where the Town has chosen to put in place mixed zoning with three combinations: M-1/B-2, M-1/R-2 and B-2/R-2. This very unusual provision came about when the Zoning Ordinance was created because there were areas in Town that did not neatly break out into the established districts.

Recent amendments to the Zoning Ordinance include the addition of the R-1 residential district for the Hidden Valley subdivision in 2005 and the reversion of some of those parcels to an R-2 designation in 2011. Any land use that is not specifically permitted by the zoning ordinance for the district in which it is located, but was already present before the zoning ordinance was adopted or changed, is considered a nonconforming use. The State of Virginia gives protection to nonconforming uses, with some limits, in Title 15.2, Chapter 22, Section 2307 of the Code of Virginia. Nonconforming uses may legally continue indefinitely so long as the building's use isn't discontinued for a period of at least two years. The law gives particular protections to manufactured homes. Any nonconforming manufactured home can be replaced with a newer model and keep its nonconforming status.

The Nonconforming Land Uses Map that follows page 23 identifies those buildings that may be considered nonconforming. This map is intended to be general in nature and each building's status should be verified individually. The largest concentrations of nonconforming uses are located in historically residential areas that

have been zoned for future commercial or industrial uses. In some cases, these areas are intact residential neighborhoods and historic districts. In addition to nonconforming residential uses, there are also a few commercial and industrial nonconforming uses located in the area that was annexed into the Town.

Local governments have statutory authority per the Code of Virginia to enact and enforce zoning ordinances. The enabling legislation for zoning is amended on a fairly regular basis and local zoning ordinances should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are in compliance with state law. The Richlands Zoning Ordinance has not been reviewed recently and in light of ongoing changes in the enabling legislation, should be updated in the very near future.

Summary

There are areas where the Town's historic development patterns do not match up with the allowable uses and the geography assigned to the various zoning districts. Additionally, the Town's most prevalent residential zoning district is very permissive and allows a wide range of residential uses, including manufactured, stick-built and multifamily housing. Finally, the Richlands Zoning Ordinance likely needs to be reviewed and updated.

Key Takeaway

The Town needs to add additional residential categories to encourage and guide the development of the housing stock that is needed for the future, particularly townhomes, apartments, and housing appropriate for senior adults.

The Town must continue to balance a need for an expanded economic base through commercial and industrial development and a need to protect established single-family neighborhoods. As

the Town considers locations for economic development, residential neighborhoods that are zoned for commercial or industrial uses should be rezoned.










Finally, the Town should consider including development standards in the Zoning Ordinance that protect sensitive environmental areas such as creeks, rivers, floodplains and steep slopes in accordance with the Uniform Statewide Building Code and Erosion and Sediment Control Act.

EXISTING ZONING

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

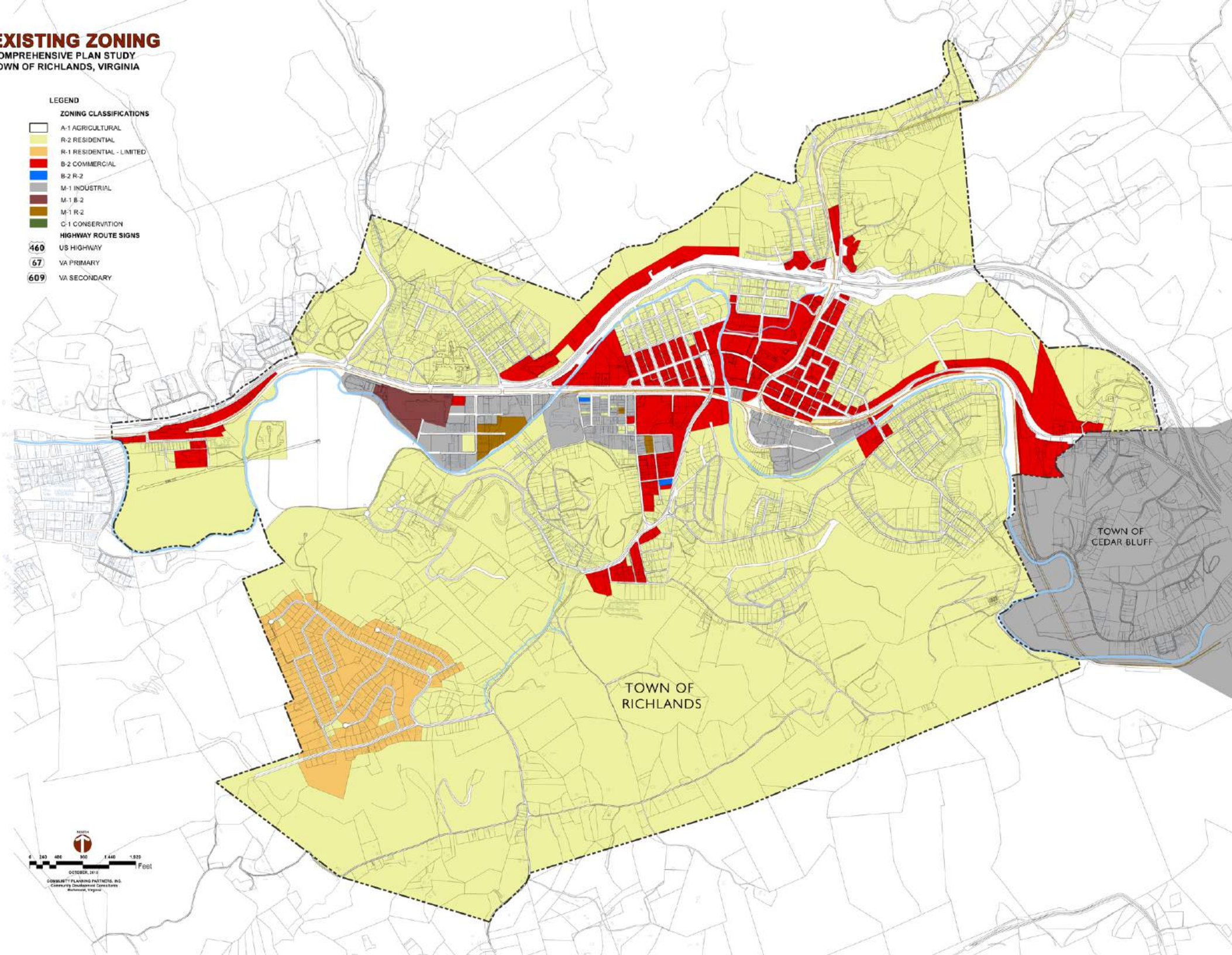
LEGEND

ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

-  A-1 AGRICULTURAL
-  R-2 RESIDENTIAL
-  R-1 RESIDENTIAL - LIMITED
-  B-2 COMMERCIAL
-  B-2 R-2
-  M-1 INDUSTRIAL
-  M-1 B-2
-  M-1 R-2
-  C-1 CONSERVATION

HIGHWAY ROUTE SIGNS

-  460 US HIGHWAY
-  67 VA PRIMARY
-  609 VA SECONDARY



TOWN OF
CEDAR BLUFF

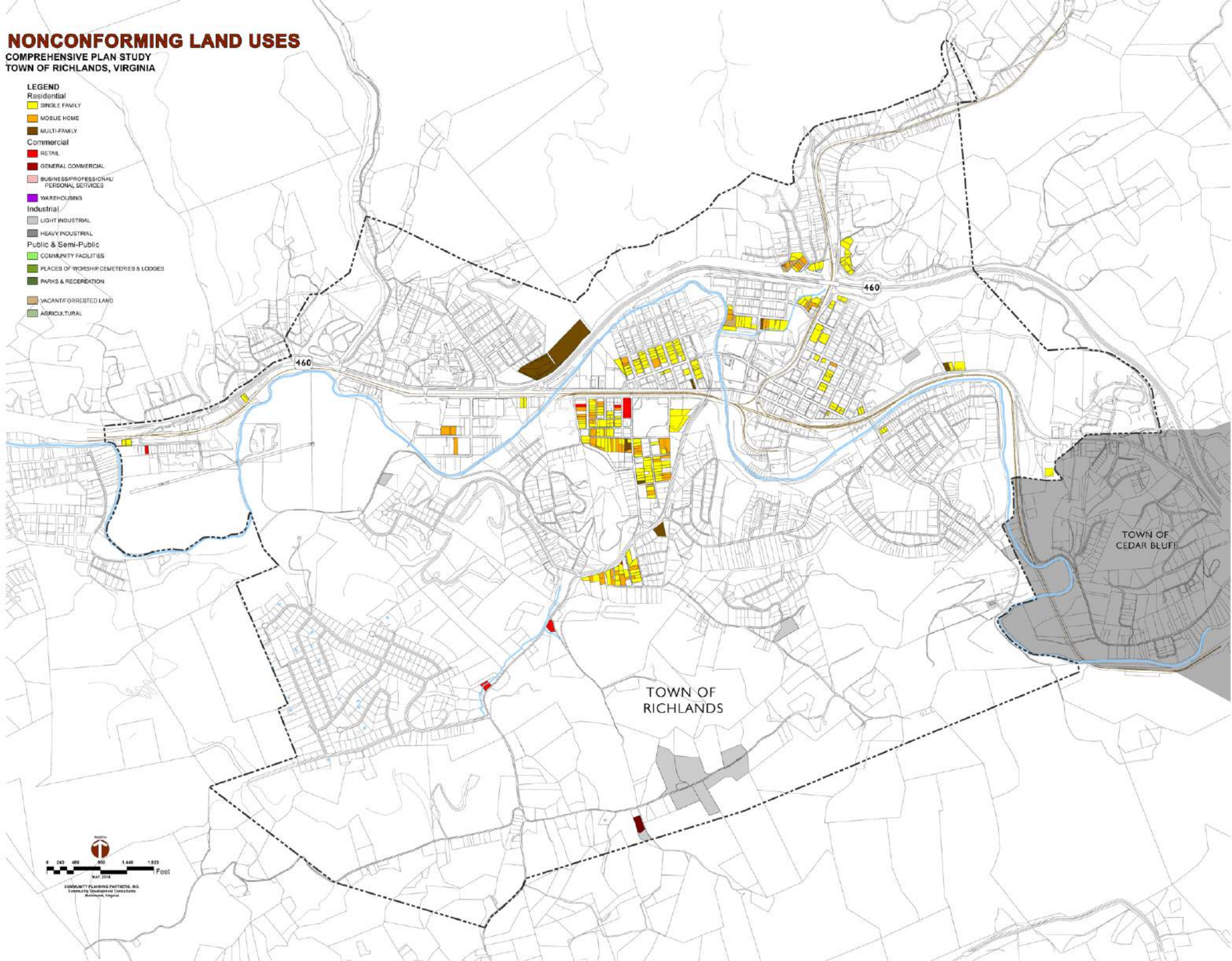
TOWN OF
RICHLANDS

NONCONFORMING LAND USES

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- Residential
 - SINGLE FAMILY
 - MOBILE HOME
 - MULTI-FAMILY
- Commercial
 - RETAIL
 - GENERAL COMMERCIAL
 - BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL/PERSONAL SERVICES
 - WAREHOUSING
- Industrial
 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- Public & Semi-Public
 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES
 - PLACES OF WORSHIP, CEMETERIES & LODGES
 - PARKS & RECREATION
 - VACANT/RESTRICTED LAND
 - AGRICULTURAL



2.6 ECONOMY

The economy in Richlands is tied to statewide, national and international market trends. Its location along the Norfolk Southern Railroad connects the coal fields of the Appalachian Plateau to the Port of Norfolk and to markets around the globe. Additionally, its location in western Tazewell County, on the U.S. Route 460 and near the U.S. Route 19 corridors ties its local economy with the economies of Russell and Buchanan Counties as well as greater Tazewell County.

Within this three-county region, Tazewell County has the largest employment base. *Trade, Transportation, & Utilities* employ the most people, and within that sector, retail trade jobs dominate. *Manufacturing* and *Natural Resources & Mining* both rank below *Education & Health Services* and *Leisure and Hospitality*

Like Tazewell County, Russell County's largest and second largest employment sectors are the *Trade, Transportation, & Utilities* sector and *Education and Health Services* sector, respectively. Buchanan County is unique among the three in that its largest employment sector is *Natural Resources & Mining* due to its location more squarely in the heart of the coal fields.

Figure 15 on the next page shows the Location Quotient for each sector. The Location Quotient (LQ) measures the saturation of an industry sector as compared to the national average. The LQ helps determine the number of dollars that an industry is drawing or not drawing from outside the market area. For example, with an LQ of 3.7, the *Natural Resources & Mining* sector is nearly four times more concentrated within Tazewell County than the national average. Industries with an LQ over 1.0 are called *Basic Industries* because

they draw money from outside of the community and form the base of the economy. This base is typically where a locality's better paying jobs are created in a good economy and lost in a bad economy.

Figure 14: Employment by Industry 2015

	Tazewell County	Buchanan County	Russell County
Base Industry: Total All Industries	17,883	5,728	5,103
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	3,864	1,206	1,227
Education & Health Services	4,016	839	1,047
Leisure and Hospitality	1,393	305	488
Manufacturing	1,178	199	187
Professional & Business Services	998	691	741
Natural Resources & Mining	761	1,613	304
Financial Activities	542	186	257
Construction	603	520	400
Other Services	911	ND	166
Information	90	ND	287

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
 ND: Non-disclosable indicates a local industry that is comprised of only a small number of employers and information is withheld to protect company specific data.

An industry sector with an LQ less than 1.0 means that that industry is less concentrated in that county than the national average and is solely reliant on dollars present in the local economy. Additionally, an LQ less than one means that dollars in that industry are flowing to other localities as local citizens spend their money elsewhere.

These industries are considered *Non-Basic Industries*. In any economy there will be a mix of both types, but the impact of a miner losing a job in Russell County is much greater than a waiter at a local restaurant losing a job because the miner’s job was bringing wealth from outside the county and the waiter’s job was being supported only locally by the miner’s disposable income.

Figure 15: Location Quotient by Sector 2014

	Tazewell County	Buchanan County	Russell County
Base Industry: Total All Industries	1.00	1.00	1.00
Natural Resources & Mining	9.04	32.45	8.80
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	1.32	0.84	0.91
Education & Health Services	1.14	0.91	1.13
Other Services	1.56	0.53	0.61
Manufacturing	1.13	0.37	0.87
Construction	0.73	1.03	1.54
Leisure and Hospitality	0.81	0.38	0.67
Financial Activities	0.68	0.46	0.69
Professional & Business Services	0.33	0.49	0.73
Information	0.28	0.18	0.41

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

The location quotient of the *Natural Resources & Mining* sector is the largest in all three counties. In Buchanan County in particular, this sector has an oversized impact on the overall economy. Fluctuations in this sector can have a huge impact on all other job

holders in Buchanan. In Russell County, coal is still “king” but the *Information* sector is the strongest alternative to the mining industry as a result of the new employment created by call centers that have opened in the County in recent years.

In Tazewell County, four sectors are shown to be supportive of the rest of the economy – *Natural Resources & Mining, Trade, Transportation, & Utilities, Education & Health Services* and *Other Services*. The following industrial subsectors represent the strongest component of each identified sector:

1. *Natural Resources & Mining*
 - Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
2. *Trade, Transportation, & Utilities*
 - Retail Trade
3. *Education & Health Services*
 - Educational Services
 - Health Care and Social Assistance
4. *Other Services*
 - Repair and Maintenance
 - Personal and Laundry Services

As can be seen in Figure 16 on the next page, private sector employment has dropped in all three counties in the region from 2004-2014. Both Tazewell County and Russell County lost hundreds of jobs. Tazewell County lost almost 1,000 jobs, mostly from manufacturing and retail trade. The largest increase in employment and Location Quotient for Tazewell County came from the *Natural Resources & Mining* sector. The County also saw modest gains in

the *Construction, Professional & Business Services* and *Leisure & Hospitality* sectors.

Figure 16: 2004-2014 Employment Changes

	Tazewell County		Buchanan County		Russell County	
	No.	LQ	No.	LQ	No.	LQ
Base Industry: Total All Industries	-972	-	-62	-	-1,404	0
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	-588	-0.05	-61	-0.01	-192	0.12
Manufacturing	-331	0.07	-140	-0.12	-1,287	-1.37
Financial Activities	-150	-0.05	-20	0	-25	0.16
Education & Health Services	-148	-0.20	10	-0.15	61	0.13
Other Services	-121	-0.08	-	-	51	0.44
Information	-77	-0.15	-	-	-183	-0.15
Construction	36	0.26	-133	-0.05	-222	-0.02
Leisure and Hospitality	51	0.02	-50	-0.11	177	0.34
Professional & Business Services	107	0.05	391	0.39	323	0.45
Natural Resources & Mining	248	0.93	-3	-2.37	-106	-0.76

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Russell County lost over 20% of its workforce, largely from a loss in manufacturing jobs. In spite of having a strong LQ, Russell County had a net loss of 183 jobs in the *Information* sector. Buchanan County only lost 62 jobs and saw the biggest job gain out of any sector in any county from the *Professional & Business Services* sector.

Natural Resources and Mining

In all three counties, *Natural Resources and Mining* remains the strongest *Basic Industry* even as employment has shifted within the industry. This is likely due to the growth of hydraulic fracking of natural gas and the dollars it brings into the local economy. This sector is particularly gaining momentum in Tazewell County, while Buchanan County remains most reliant on the sector. However, related to the coal industry specifically, the tonnage of coal produced and the number of mining jobs have been steadily falling in Virginia as a whole. (see figure 17)

Figure 17: 1980-2010 Virginia Coal Industry Trends

	Annual Tonnage	Total Employees
1980	42,794,010	18,688
1990	46,636,708	10,265
2000	33,259,580	4,948
2010	22,149,326	4,671

Source: Virginia Department of Mines Minerals and Energy

Manufacturing Sector

Compared to some other communities, manufacturing is not as strong in Tazewell and surrounding counties. However, with an LQ of 0.99, the *Manufacturing* sector comes close to hitting a 1.0 LQ which would indicate a balanced presence in the Tazewell County economy. Manufacturing employment in Tazewell County does account for 11% of all employment. Per the 2012 edition of *County Business Patterns* produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, Richlands

had a few small manufacturing firms and one larger construction machinery manufacturer.

Retail

In Tazewell County, the *Retail Trade* subsector has a Location Quotient of 1.79, meaning that the County’s retail outlets serve more than just local residents and bring money into the County from residents who reside outside of the County. It also represents almost a quarter (24%) of all employment in the County. Retail employment in Richlands is more centered on small businesses, with only 1 of every 44 retail establishments employing more than 50 people and because of this, the Town has a lower percentage of jobs in retail than the County overall.

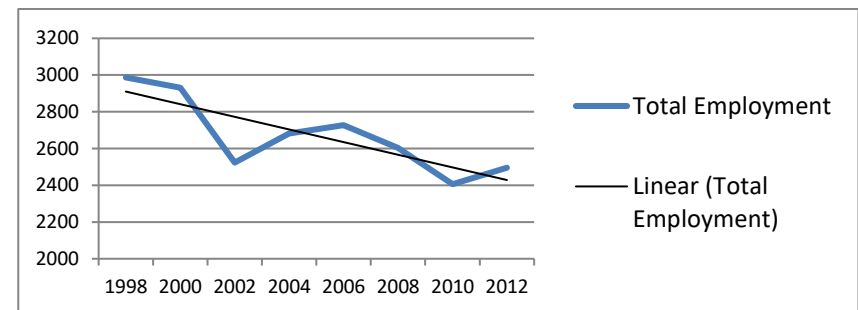
Health Care and Social Assistance

In northwestern Tazewell County, 45% of all civilian employment (or 755 jobs) is in the *Education, Health Care & Social Assistance* sector according to the American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-year estimates. Notably, Clinch Valley Health (CVH) employs 687 persons with an annual payroll of over \$43 million. CVH is comprised of four entities: Clinch Valley Medical Center, a 175-bed acute care hospital offering cancer services and specialty care for the heart, lungs, and vascular systems, emergency services, physical rehabilitation, pediatrics, obstetrics, and advanced diagnostics; Clinch Valley Physician Practices, a comprehensive group of physicians and surgeons; Preferred Home Health Services, a full-service healthcare agency providing quality home healthcare for patients in Southwest Virginia; and Clinch Valley Urgent Care providing walk-in care during early and late hours and weekends including X-ray, drug testing, and laboratory services. CVH is a key player in the local economy and pays \$512,652 in local taxes annually.

Town Employment

Private sector jobs in the Town of Richlands have fallen by 16% between 1998 and 2012. Figure 18 shows a negative trend despite employment shifting upward in 2012. It is unclear whether or not future employment will continue to increase and reverse this long-term negative trend. Figure 19 on page 28 displays the estimated number of private sector jobs for top local employment sectors and their variation from 1998 to 2012. The Town’s largest employment subsector, *Health Care & Social Assistance*, has decreased in the number of jobs since 2008, but still has more employees than in 1998.

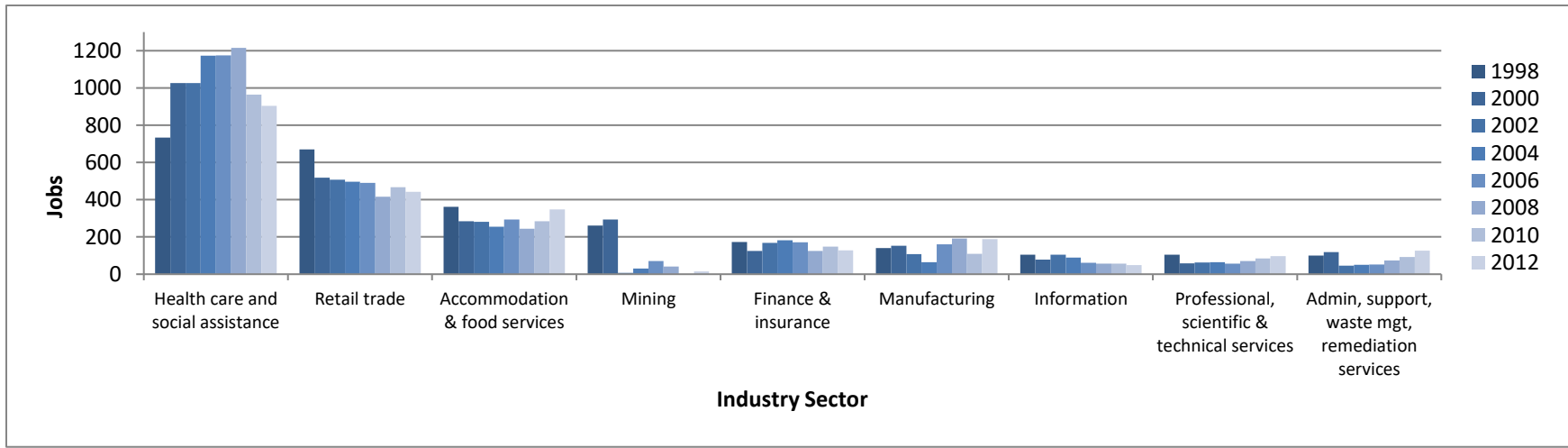
Figure 18: Total Town Employment



Source: U.S. Census – County Business Patterns (24641 ZIP Code)

This subsector is projected to grow nationwide and with the continued success of Clinch Valley Health, this number has most likely begun to increase again. Given its impact as a job creator, the trending growth or decline of this sector will be important to monitor as well as any other medical employment centers in the region and their impact on Richlands as a healthcare destination.

Figure 19: Town Employment Trends



Source: U.S. Census – County Business Patterns (24641 ZIP Code)

The most noticeable decline has been in mining jobs, though it should be noted that the numbers in both Figure 18 and 19 are for the entire 24641 zip code that includes areas outside of Town. Similarly, the retail sector has also declined. The impact of the construction of a Walmart in Claypool Hill in 2000 is reflected in a loss of retail employment within the Town. In addition to this sharp reduction, retail jobs have steadily declined since 2000.

Manufacturing and *Information* are two industry sectors that do not currently contribute a large percentage of jobs to the local economy but could become growth opportunities in the near future. The town has a strong transportation network of highways, rail and air connections, strong telecom infrastructure, competitive utility rates and opportunities to connect to natural gas. These assets are being promoted in order to attract manufacturing companies to the Town.

The attraction of Information companies like those that have located in Buchanan and Russell Counties would be a large asset to the Town. In addition to providing jobs, these industries are also high volume consumers of electricity, which could be provided by the Town’s local utility.

Enterprise Zone

The Town of Richlands cooperates with Tazewell County on the Tazewell County Enterprise Zone which includes a subarea in the Town as shown on the following page. In addition to state incentives, Richlands provides to qualifying business in the Enterprise Zone:

1. A declining Rehabilitated Real Estate Tax Exemption Incentive for qualifying improvements of 80%, 60%, and 40% over three years.

2. A Building Permit and Development Fee Refund Incentive.
3. A declining Lodging Tax Refund Incentive of 80%, 60%, and 40% over three years.
4. A declining Meals Tax Refund Incentive of 80%, 60%, and 40% over three years.
5. A declining Business License Fee Abatement of 80%, 60%, and 40% over three years.

These Enterprise Zone Incentives are new in 2016 and it is hoped that they will help incentivize new business and industry start-ups in the Town. There is a small trend developing where businesses in more distressed areas of Southwest Virginia are looking to be in a larger, more dynamic markets such as the Town of Abingdon and Richlands. It is hope that these Incentives will also help pull some of those relocating businesses to the Town.

Appalachian One-Stop Center

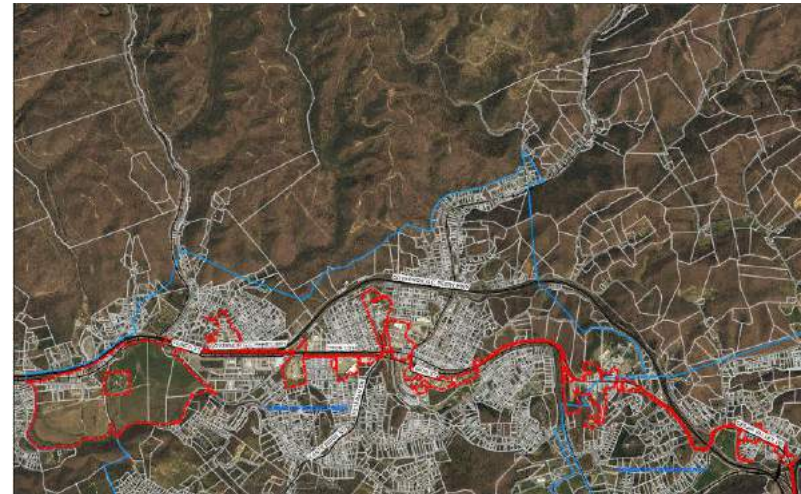
Richlands is home to Southwest Virginia's first American Job Center also known as One-Stop Centers, housed in the Richlands Business Incubator facility. Established under the Workforce Investment Act and reauthorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014, the One-Stop Center streamlines job search and job training efforts by offering referrals, career counseling, job listings, and other employment-related services under one roof.

Summary

Though it still plays a central part in the local economy, the *Natural Resources & Mining* sector is declining in the region. Town employment is also declining, impacted by the loss of these mining jobs and the loss of *Retail Trade* jobs that have moved to the U.S.

Route 19 Corridor. Currently the *Health Care & Social Assistance* subsector, and more specifically, Clinch Valley Health, is the largest private employer in the Town. The *Manufacturing* and *Information* sectors may offer the strongest opportunities for growth in Richlands due to the presence of assets needed by these industries.

Figure 20: Richlands Subarea -Tazewell County Enterprise Zone



Source: Tazewell County Office of Economic Development

Key Takeaway

Despite the decline of the coal mining industry and loss of retail jobs, the Town boasts infrastructure assets that could support Manufacturing, information and data driven industries. Though too new to tell, it is very likely that the recently adopted Enterprise Zone Incentives will pay significant dividends in the future if the Town is able to support business start-ups and attract businesses to relocate within the Town.

2.7 COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES & UTILITIES

2.7.1 Recreation & Tourism

The Town currently has two primary recreation facilities and a pedestrian and bike trail. A voluntary nine-member Recreation Commission is established to “provide, conduct, and supervise” the Town’s recreation facilities and activities. The Department of Parks and Recreation is tasked with daily operations for its two park facilities and recreational trail. The department focuses primarily on providing opportunities for leisure activities for town residents. The staff includes two full-time employees: the Executive Director and a supervisor. Part-time employees include a facility maintenance worker, life guards during the summer months, and others that work year-round to provide additional services such as coaching for local youth sports teams.

The expenses for the Department in FY 2015 was just under \$300,000. The Department is partially self-funded in that it collects approximately \$35,000 to \$50,000 annually from fees and services.

The Richlands Recreation Park provides a gym, weight room, two community rooms as well as an outdoor pool, three tennis courts, a soccer field and a baseball/softball field. This facility, built in 1976 is currently in the midst of an extensive renovation. Phases 1 and 2 are completed and included the renovation/replacement of the entire roof, gym floor and partitions, bleachers, and scoreboards and upgrading of the electrical system. Phases 3 and 4 are scheduled to begin in FY17 and include the expansion of the weight room as well as the renovation of the restrooms.

The Williams Park Complex is located on Farmer Street, on the southern side of the Clinch River, opposite of downtown. The complex provides four baseball/softball fields, two basketball courts, a picnic pavilion and playground. Funds for acquisition and development of the park came from the Town and County, local donations, and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The park is located in the 100-year floodplain and connects to the Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway and Bike Trail. The trail currently extends approximately 1,500 feet from the Williams Park Complex and follows the Clinch River downstream and westward but ends before reaching the Front Street Bridge. The trail was funded in part by a Transportation Enhancement Grant of the Virginia Department of Transportation in 2000.

An extension of the Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway and Bike Trail has been proposed that would extend the existing trail along the river for approximately 2 additional miles until it reached the swinging bridge located near the intersection of Page Street and Matney Lane. A site analysis and proposed route was completed in the fall of 2013 with assistance from the Community Design Assistance Center of Virginia Tech. In addition to identifying a course, the analysis also includes recommended locations for future public access, parks and open space along the river.

It should be noted that the users of the Town’s recreation facilities include Tazewell County residents and residents of other nearby towns. Town staff estimate that the ratio of in-town versus out-of-town users to be 30% in-town and 70% out-of-town.

Summary

All of the Town's existing and proposed recreational opportunities are located along or within walking distance to the Clinch River. As such, the river plays an important role in the quality of life of local residents and serves as a great local asset to attract others to the Town. Expanded access to the river also provides a high value use for land located within the 100-year floodplain that should and would not be developed otherwise.

Key Takeaway

By seeking to complete its portions of the Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway and Bike Trail and supporting the Clinch River Valley Initiative the Town is able to serve residents and visitors by providing recreational opportunities, making the Town a more attractive location for business and residents looking to relocate, and improving the environmental quality of the Clinch River. Additionally, the Town is the hub of much of the region's recreational events. This is a real plus for the Town in that it draws people in, but it does come at some expense.

2.7.2 Public Safety

Police

The Police Department serves the entire Town and occasionally responds to requests for assistance from neighboring departments through a mutual aid agreement. Average emergency response time for 2015 was three (3) to four (4) minutes and, as such, no need for a substation has been identified. The Department has seventeen (17) sworn officers and currently has twenty-one (21) vehicles in its inventory that range in age from one (1) to eleven (11) years. The radio consoles and radio paging systems at the Police

Communications Center are severely outdated. The cost for police protection in FY 2016 was \$1.82 million.

Fire and Rescue

The Fire and Rescue Department serves all areas within the Town limits and the Western and Northwestern Districts of Tazewell



Engine 504 in Front of Town Hall

Source: Richlands Fire & Rescue

County. Made up of thirty-eight (38) full and part-time staff, the Department has nine (9) fire trucks and other fire equipment, five (5) ambulances, and two (2) SUV's for the Fire and EMS Chiefs. The strength of the staff and training, the newness of the equipment, response times, distances traveled to a fire, and water availability and pressure have helped the Town achieve an ISO Rating of 6, thus helping keep insurance rates down for the community.

In 2015 (calendar year) the Department responded to 307 fire calls and 2,486 call for emergency medical services (EMS) at a cost of just

over \$770,000 (fiscal year). As with the other Town services, 70% of the fire and EMS calls are to areas outside of the Town of Richlands in an average year. Tazewell County contributes \$60,000 annually to the Town for fire protection services and \$10,500 for EMS services.

The Fire and Rescue Department also maintains a 1,730 square foot Burn Building for the purpose of training more than 300 firefighters from the Town of Richlands and surrounding communities.



Richlands Fire & Rescue Department Burn Building

Source: Richlands Fire & Rescue

The Fire and Rescue Department has successfully maintained an ISO Public Protection Classification rating of 6 in recent years which helps keep hazard insurance rates low for its residents and businesses.

2.7.3 Public Works

Streets & Roads

The Streets and Roads Department is in charge of maintaining, rehabilitating, and plowing the Town's roadways and maintenance and repair of storm sewers, drains, culverts and street markings/signs in Richlands. Generally speaking, maintenance equipment, roads, and sidewalks are not in optimal condition. The department is in possession of snow removal equipment that is fairly worn out, and some of the Town's sidewalks and curbs could greatly benefit from refurbishment. The Streets and Roads Department operates with a staff of twelve (12) and expended just under \$920,000 in FY 2015 supported by approximately \$900,000 annually in Urban Maintenance Program funds from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Sanitation

The Town's Sanitation Department is responsible for collecting and disposing of residential garbage, household trash and bulk items. It operates with a staff of six (6) and four (4) refuse trucks. The cost for sanitation services in FY 2015 was just under \$400,000 with just over \$407,000 collected in fees.

2.7.4 Water/Wastewater Utilities

Water

The Town owns and operates the Richlands Regional Water Treatment Facility, a 2.5 million gallons per day (MGD) facility that utilizes conventional methods to treat and deliver potable water to the Town's distribution system. Partnering with the Town of Cedar Bluff and the Tazewell County Public Service Authority, the facility was constructed in 1994 and currently furnishes water to the Town

of Cedar Bluff, the communities of Raven and Doran and other rural areas in the Northwestern district of Tazewell County through a contract with the Tazewell County Public Service Authority (PSA) and portions of Russell and Buchanan Counties as a wholesale supplier of treated water. The water treatment plant is currently operating at about 48% capacity and serves 2,465 in-town and 77 out-of-town customers. The plant also provides water treatment services to approximately 10,000 customers outside of the Town through the agreements with the Tazewell County PSA and neighboring counties.

Water distribution is accomplished through the use of booster pumping stations and storage tanks located throughout the service area. Water reliability is sustained through interties with other adjacent water producers.

Wastewater

Richlands owns and operates the Richlands Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility, a 4.0 million gallons per day (MGD) facility. The plant, located at 425 Plant Road, treats wastewater received from both the Town and the Tazewell County Public Service Authority's sewage collection system. Partnering with the Town of Cedar Bluff and the Tazewell County PSA, the facility was constructed in 1990 and currently serves the Town of Cedar Bluff and the communities of Raven, Doran and Banes Bottom. Treated wastewater is discharged into the Clinch River while sludge is disposed of naturally. The wastewater treatment plant is at approximately 30% capacity and serves 2,403 in-town and 60 out-of-town customers. Almost all potential users in the town with access to a nearby sewer line are connected to the system with the exception of a small number of households on West Fork Road. The plant also provides

wastewater treatment services to approximately 10,000 customers outside of the Town through agreement with the Tazewell County PSA.

In FY 2015 Richlands' operating revenue from water and sewer utilities was \$2.3 million and expenses were \$2.4 million. The water and wastewater utilities and line maintenance staff number fifteen (15) employees.

2.7.5 Electric Utility

The Town owns and operates its own user-supported electric utility that provides service to most residents and businesses within the town. It purchases energy wholesale from American Municipal Power and is able to provide electrical service at very competitive rates. Approximately 2,500 electric customers are served by the Town. Operating revenue for FY 2015 operating revenue matched expenses at just over \$6 million. Additionally, 500 electric customers are served by AEP (Appalachian Power), mainly in the areas incorporated into the Town in the 2005 Boundary Adjustment.

The Town's power supply portfolio consists of owned asset capacity, contracted assets, block purchases, and market purchases. The Town owns capacity in the following generation facilities: 1) 2,588 kilowatts (kW) in the Prairie State Energy Campus, a two unit, 1,600 megawatt (MW) mine mouth coal fired plant located in Southern Illinois with a 30-year coal reserve on site; 2) 2,208 kW in the Freemont Energy Center, a 675 MW natural gas combined cycle unit in Ohio; 3) 1,499 kW in the Smithland, Cannelton & Willow Island complex, a 208 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric plant in West Virginia; and 4) "behind the meter" generation through a 1.2 MW generator.

The Town has contracted assets with the Southeastern Power Administration of the U.S. Department of Energy for hydroelectric units in Virginia owned and controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers. These units provide 500 kW of the Town's needed capacity.

The remaining kW needed by the Town for its customers are provided through block purchases (contractual obligations with utilities and energy brokers of financial institutions) and market purchases.

The Town of Richlands is committed to seeking, evaluating, and pursuing power supply opportunities in order to maintain service reliability at cost competitive rates.

2.7.6 Gas Utility

Appalachian Natural Gas Distribution Company, a private utility, currently provides natural gas to the Clinch Valley Medical Center and the Lake Park community immediately behind it. Within (one) 1 mile of the Town of Richlands is an open-access, high capacity Transco pipeline which could supply the Town with an unlimited supply of natural gas produced from coal bed methane. The Town and Appalachian Natural Gas continue exploration of a partnership to develop a town-wide natural gas distribution system.

Summary

Public water, wastewater and electrical utilities are provided throughout the large majority of the Town. Water and wastewater are treated at plants that are operating at less than half of their capacity. The Police and Fire and Rescue Departments do an admirable job keeping Richlands citizens and citizens of surrounding communities safe given limited resources. The Town's public utili-

ties and services, including those provide by the Parks and Recreation Department, get mostly high marks from its citizens per the community survey and public input session.

Key Takeaway

The Town has the necessary infrastructure and utility capacity in place to support efforts at bringing in much needed additional employers. This infrastructure and capacity can also handle additional businesses and households, both within the Town if internal growth was to occur and outside the Town if a future boundary adjustment was to occur. As with any utility that has additional unused capacity, additional users would go far to help cover the costs of providing the utility in real time and over time as operational costs and the cost of ongoing capital improvements to the system climb.

2.8 TRANSPORTATION

2.8.1 Roadway Functional Classifications

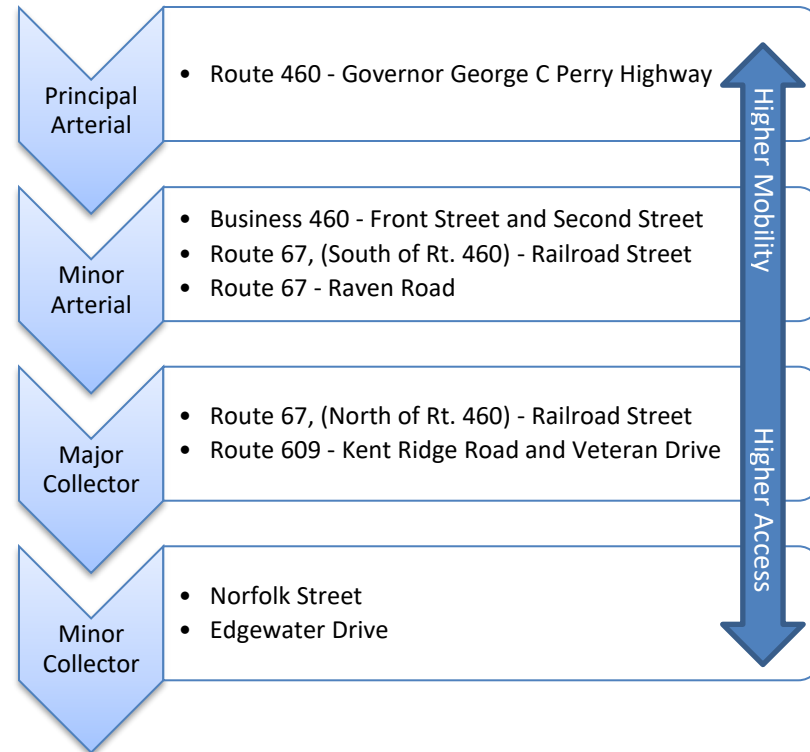
The Town’s road network includes routes classified by VDOT as principal or minor arterials and major or minor collectors. These classifications denote the kind of function each roadway serves. Arterials are intended to emphasize *mobility*, the efficiency by which traffic can move. Collectors are intended to emphasize *access*, connecting different uses along the route. Each functional classification exists on a scale between providing efficient mobility and access via points of entry and exit. The VDOT Functional Classifications are represented graphically in Figure 21 to the right and on a VDOT Functional Classifications Map that follows page 38.

U.S. Route 460 Bypass and Business are the primary arterials in Richlands. 460 is part of the Heartland Corridor, a designated *Corridor of Statewide Significance*. A major function of the corridor is to transport freight from the coalfields to Hampton Roads. In addition to moving freight towards the east coast, Route 460 also connects the coalfields to markets in the Midwest. The segment of Route 460 parallel to the railroad and adjacent to the Clinch Valley Medical Center is typically the most congested stretch of road in the area. Mobility along Route 460 is a high priority and as such, access points are tightly managed, especially along this segment.

2.8.2 Roadway Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data from 2014 shows the Town’s busiest roadways. The Route 460 Bypass carries the largest loads, particularly at the eastern and western Town boundaries. A reduction in total traffic volume on the Route 460 Bypass between the intersection with Front Street and the exit onto Railroad Street demonstrates that these two

Figure 21: VDOT Functional Classifications in Richlands



points are the most frequently used entrance and exit in and out of downtown. Route 460 Business where 2nd Street merges with Front Street is the busiest non-Bypass segment. There are several access points along this segment including fast food and convenience uses that create a tension between road mobility and access. To accommodate the high traffic volumes and increase accessibility, this segment has been identified for road widening and two-way left turn lanes. (An Average Annual Daily Traffic Map follows page 38.)

2.8.3 Alternative Transportation Options

In addition to local and regional roads, Richlands' transportation network includes railroads for freight and a local bus system operated by Four County Transit. Sidewalks are available in most commercial areas of town, in a few of the older residential neighborhoods and along some major roads. The town has no designated bike lanes and, perhaps due to topography, biking is not a widely used means of transportation.

Figure 22: Means of Transportation to Work 2009-2013

	Estimate	Margin of Error
Workers 16 years and over	2,044	+/-192
Car, truck, or van	94%	+/-4.4
Drove alone	87%	+/-5.1
Carpooled	7%	+/-3.4
In 2-person carpool	5%	+/-3.1
In 3-person carpool	2%	+/-1.2
In 4-or-more person carpool	0%	+/-1.7
Workers per car, truck, or van	104%	+/-0.02
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0%	+/-1.7
Walked	2%	+/-1.6
Bicycle	0%	+/-1.7
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1%	+/-0.8
Worked at home	3%	+/-3.5

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2009-2013 Estimates

As noted in Figure 22, private vehicles are the most common means of transportation to work. The sample size of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey means that the margin of error is especially large for the underutilized means of transportation. Despite the lack of precision, the findings demonstrate that there are currently very few workers in Richlands that are using modes of transportation other than personal automobile when commuting to work.

Walking and Biking

The commercial district and neighborhoods surrounding Richlands Town Hall as well as the entire lengths of 2nd Street and Front Street are well lined with sidewalks. Front Street from downtown to the school complex provides a key connection along a heavily trafficked road. In other areas sidewalks are less available. The Alternate Transportation Options map that follows page 38 identifies key sidewalk extensions needed along busy roads that could serve to connect residential areas with jobs and retail and service centers.

There are currently no bike lanes in Richlands. Per the data to the left, bike ridership is very low in Richlands. If bike usage increases, especially on busy roads with narrow or



A Bike Sharrow

Source: Flickr.com, Michael Andersen

no shoulders, bike “sharrows” can be installed to signal to drivers that they must be alert and share the road with bicyclists.

Public Transit

The bus service provided by Four County Transit is deviated fixed route service throughout the Town and connecting to the region. The Town contributes \$7,200 annually to Four County Transit in support of its citizens’ usage of the system. The Alternative Transportation Options Map shows the current fixed routes within the Town and a route that connects Richlands residents to retail destinations in Claypool Hill and Pounding Mill.

Figure 23: Total Bus Trips per Year

Fiscal Year	Richlands Route	Pounding Mill Connector
2010-2011	15,008	*4,141
2011-2012	15,672	7,635
2012-2013	14,949	8,532
2013-2014	16,294	9,750
2014-2015	11,935	10,648

Source: Four County Transit * Route began in November 2010

As demonstrated in Figure 23, ridership levels for the Richlands Route have remained relatively constant until FY 2014-2015 when total number of trips on the Richlands Route fell by 27%. Part of this reduction may be due to the fact that some bus stops along the Richlands Route were moved to the Pounding Mill Connector in that year. Even accounting for this change, total ridership between the two routes dropped in FY 2014-2015. Ridership levels for the

Pounding Mill Connector have risen steadily since service began in 2010.

Rail

Many of Norfolk Southern’s freight rail lines which run through Virginia’s coalfields converge in Richlands and connect to wider markets on the east coast and Midwest. In 2010, Norfolk Southern completed improvements that increased freight capacity on the Heartland Corridor, which runs from the Port of Virginia in Hampton Roads to markets in the Midwest. The corridor’s mainline does not pass through the Town, but it is easily accessible from Norfolk Southern’s network of rail lines that do enter the Town. Amtrak’s passenger rail corridors in Virginia do not provide access to Richlands.

Summary

Richlands’ transportation network is very robust, but does not adequately promote and support walking and bicycling as alternative means of transportation. However, constructing and maintaining additional pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure would be challenging given the ongoing expense of maintaining the road network that is already in place. Road maintenance costs will be significant in future years and the support and regular and special funding provided by the Virginia Transportation Department is crucial to the future success of Richlands.

Key Takeaway

Richlands needs to continue working with its local, regional, and state partners, both public and private, to ensure that resources are made available to keep the Town well-connected to national and international markets via a modern transportation network.

VDOT FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

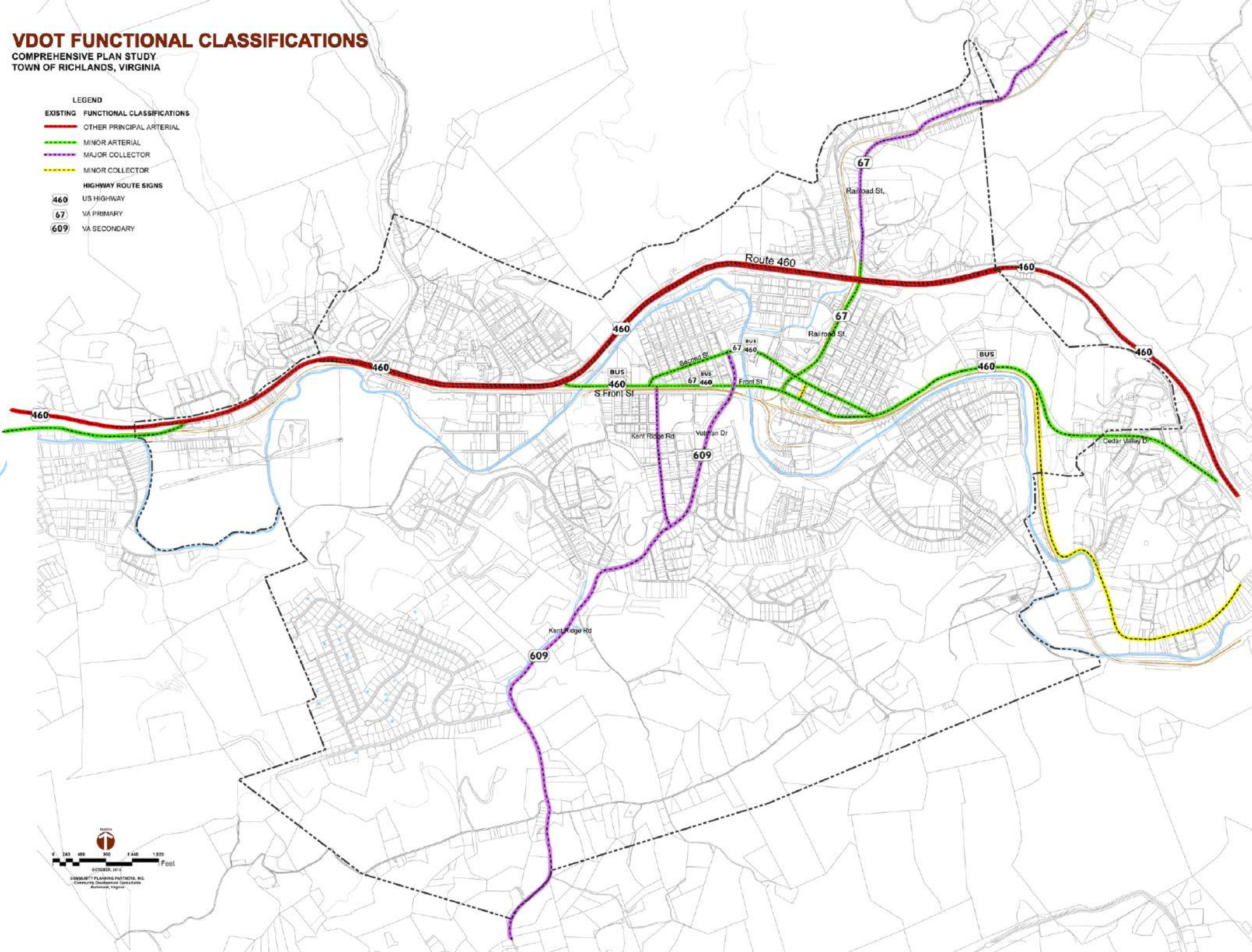
LEGEND

EXISTING FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

- OTHER PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL
- MINOR ARTERIAL
- MAJOR COLLECTOR
- MINOR COLLECTOR

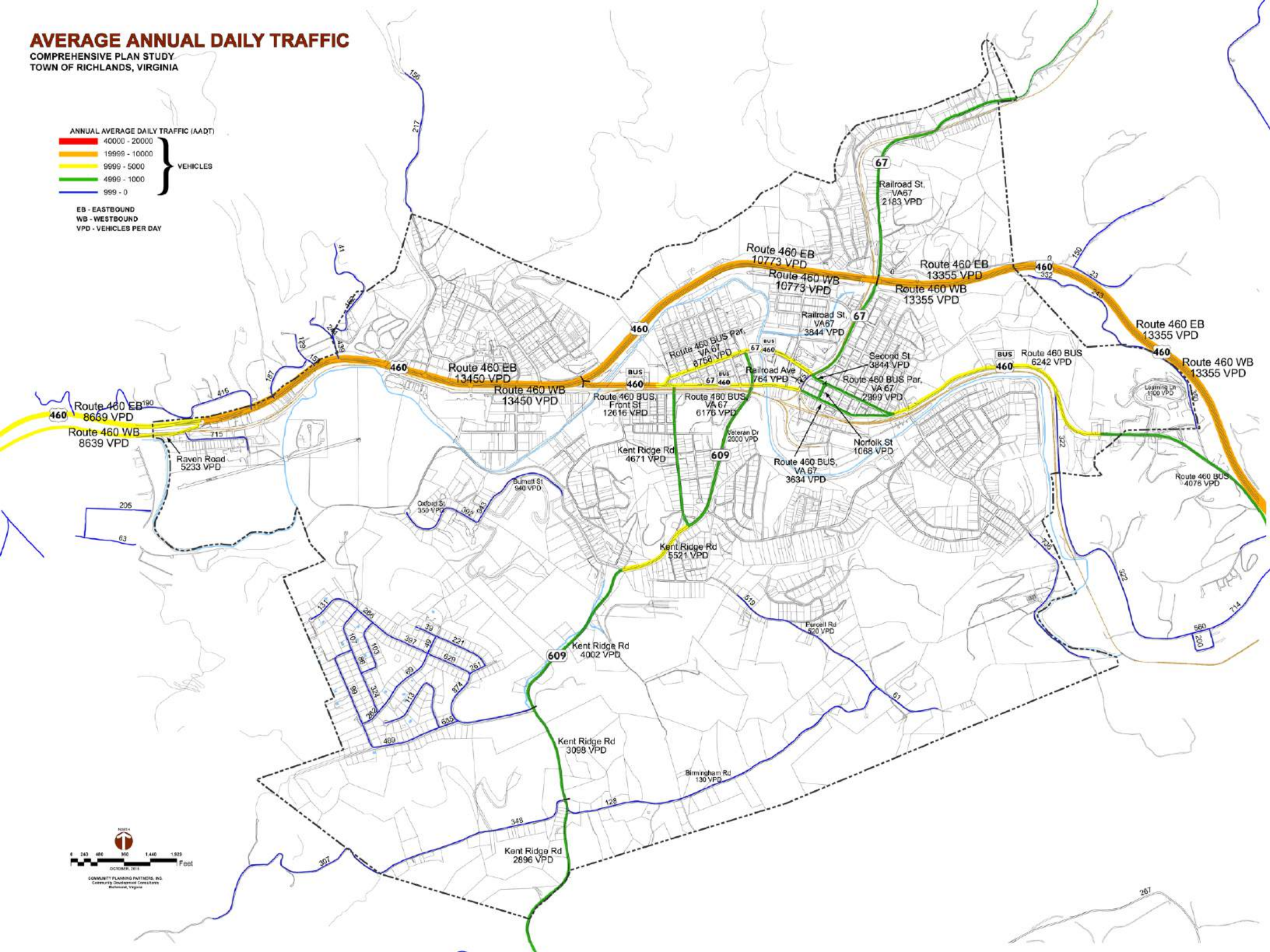
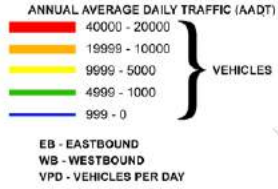
HIGHWAY ROUTE SIGNS

- 460 US HIGHWAY
- 67 VA PRIMARY
- 609 VA SECONDARY



AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA



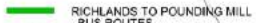
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

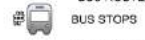
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

LEGEND

TRANSIT ROUTES

 RICHLANDS BUS ROUTES

 RICHLANDS TO POUNDING MILL
BUS ROUTES

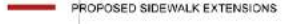
 BUS STOPS

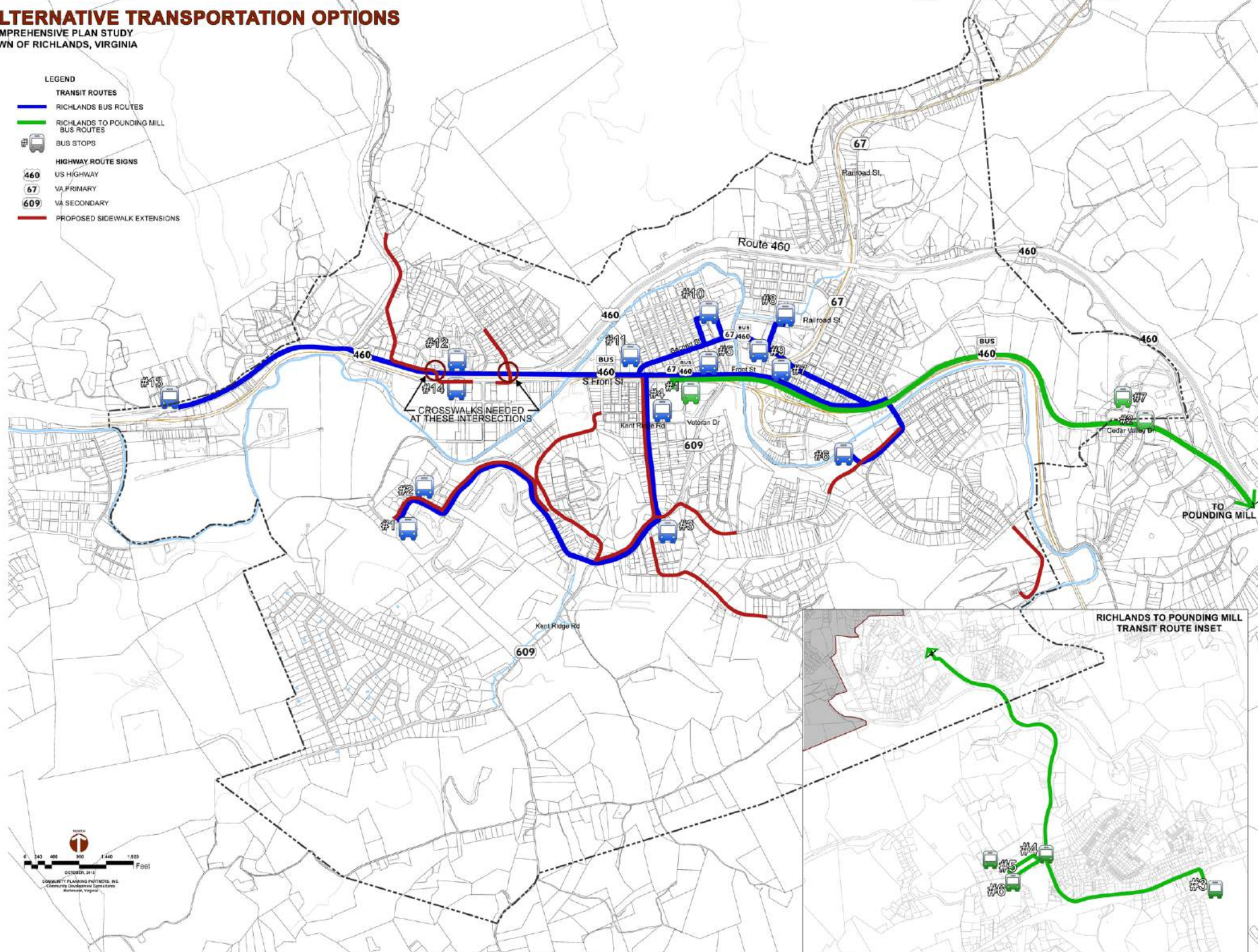
HIGHWAY ROUTE SIGNS

 US HIGHWAY

 VA PRIMARY

 VA SECONDARY

 PROPOSED SIDEWALK EXTENSIONS



3 THE PLAN

3.1 VISION

One of the most compelling themes to emerge from this Comprehensive Planning process is that even with its challenges, the Town of Richlands is better poised than many towns in Southwest Virginia to take advantage of the shifts in the regional economy. It sits at a hub for both the regional highway and rail transportation networks. It is home to a large regional hospital. It is a more developed locality with levels of public services often reserved for much larger communities. It is located well to take advantage of the growth in natural gas exploration and extraction.

From this opportunity emerges a vision statement:

Building on our rich history, ideal location, & “can do” attitude, Richlands will strive to be a premier community in Southwest Virginia.

This vision statement serves as a challenge to the Town of Richlands and as a reminder that it has what it takes to grow and advance in the future. It is an aspirational statement, intentionally short on details. The details come in the remainder of the Plan component that follows.

3.2 PLAN STRUCTURE

Beyond the vision, the Plan component of a Comprehensive Plan can take on many forms and formats including a vision statement; a

list of goals, objectives, and strategies; a list of policy initiatives; illustrative plans and conceptual drawings of particular public improvements or areas targeted for transformation; and/or a list of capital improvements needed to move the locality forward. At a minimum and as required by the Code of Virginia, it must include a generalized land use plan that encourages an orderly, harmonious arrangement of land that will meet the present and future needs of the locality. This is typically done through a Future Land Use Map that represents the vision the locality has for the development and/or redevelopment of the land within its boundaries. Additionally, in Virginia, a Comprehensive Plan must contain a transportation plan that lines up with regional and statewide road planning efforts and funding priorities as promulgated by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The remainder of the Plan has been structured with a combination of forms/formats. Sub-sections 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 that follow are set up as goals, objectives, and strategies that line out broad directions and specific strategies that need to be undertaken to move the Town of Richlands forward in the areas of land use and development, housing and neighborhoods, and economic development. For the most part, the strategies outlined in these sub-sections are not very capital intensive or depend on the infusion of outside capital via grants available through the Commonwealth of Virginia. They are also strategies that take a number of years to fully implement or are implemented in distinct stages. Sub-section 3.2 also contains the Future Land Use Map as referenced above.

Sub-section 3.5 addresses the capital needs related to community services, facilities, and utilities and is set up as a longer-term Capital

Improvement Plan (CIP) that provides guidance to the annual CIP planning process in future years. It also sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies to increase the sustainability and resiliency of the Town in light of the challenging financial atmosphere Richlands finds itself in these days.

Sub-section 3.6 outlines the transportation projects previously identified by the Town and regional leaders as priorities and provides additional information about a shift in funding priorities for the Virginia Department of Transportation. Because this shift is still a work in progress, this Comprehensive Plan can highlight its potential impact, but can not fully line up project needs and funding opportunities at this time. Therefore, this sub-section also includes a set of goals, objectives, and strategies aimed at developing more concrete transportation plans in the near future.

3.3 LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

As a community located in an economically challenged region of Virginia, Richlands has to walk a fine line of having land use and development guidelines and regulations that are both specific enough to guide development and flexible enough to not scare away new development. In Southwest Virginia competition is keen for the limited amount of growth that comes to the region in any given year. When it becomes too burdensome to undertake a project in one locality, a developer can move just down the road to where the development atmosphere is friendlier, either in a nearby town or in an unincorporated portion of Tazewell County or some other nearby county.

The following goal, objectives, and strategies do more closely regulate the development environment in Richlands. At the same time, they also include provisions that if implemented would incentivize development and redevelopment in Richlands. An example of an incentive is the Real Estate Property Tax Partial Exemption for improvements to older structures. Even delineating more clearly the zoning districts and uses is in itself an incentive to build a new house or develop a new business where you know there will not be incompatible uses or ongoing nuisances in close proximity to each other.

Goal: To spur the development of vacant land and the redevelopment of underutilized parcels and dilapidated structures by implementing forward-looking land use and development policies, ordinances, and strategies.

Objective: An increase in the amount of vacant land and existing retail, commercial, and industrial buildings being actively marketed.

Objective: A decrease in the number of underutilized parcels and dilapidated structures.

Objective: An increase in the annual number of issued Building Permits as a measure of development/redevelopment activity.

Objective: An expansion of the Town's boundary as warranted by a continued shift of development to nearby unincorporated Tazewell County lands and concurrent loss of business and industry in the Town of Richlands.

Strategy #1: Utilize the Future Land Use Map included in this Comprehensive Plan as a platform for making additional future land use designations in order to improve the Town's existing land use patterns and to encourage and accommodate new development.

Strategy #2: Update and upgrade the Town Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to provide stronger guidance to the proper development of land and structures including the elimination of split zoning and the creation of new zoning categories/districts such as Mixed Use.

Strategy #3: Additionally update and upgrade the Town Zoning Ordinance to allow for targeted economic development and redevelopment projects to be sited via one or more new "floating" zones similar to the typical Planned Unit Development floating zone utilized by many communities today. Such floating zones might be of three

types: Economic Development, Mixed Use, and Mixed Residential.

Strategy #4: Adopt and implement a Real Estate Property Tax Partial Exemption Ordinance for improvements to older structures [100% exemption of increase in assessment or 50% of actual cost of improvements phased out over a period of up to 15 years (as allowed under the Code of Virginia, § 58.1-3220)].

Strategy #5: Adopt and implement a Land Use Assessment Ordinance to allow for reduced property assessments for land in agricultural, horticultural, forestal, or open-space use (as allowed under the Code of Virginia, § 58.1-3230ff).

Strategy #6: Undertake a boundary adjustment study to determine the feasibility and efficacy of pursuing a future boundary adjustment with Tazewell County.

Because of the amount of land constrained by environmental factors (floodplain and steep slopes) [see Environmental Constraints map], the Future Land Use Map that follows this page does contain future land use designations indicating the extent to which currently vacant parcels can be developed. Those designations include:

- **Constrained** – parcels where approximately 75% or more of the land is in the floodplain or contains steep slopes.
- **Mixed Constrained/Developable** – parcels where approximately 25% to 75% of the land is in the floodplain or contains steep slopes.

- **Developable** – parcels where approximately 25% or less of the land is in the floodplain or contains steep slopes.

An additional factor in determining the uses outlined above was the isolation of certain parcels due to their distance from a public road or their location behind an already developed parcel.

The Future Land Use map that follows this page is hereby established as the Land Use Plan for the Town of Richlands. It may be amended from time to time through action of the Town of Richlands Planning Commission and subsequently approved by Town Council or by alterations made under a future comprehensive plan for the Town of Richlands.

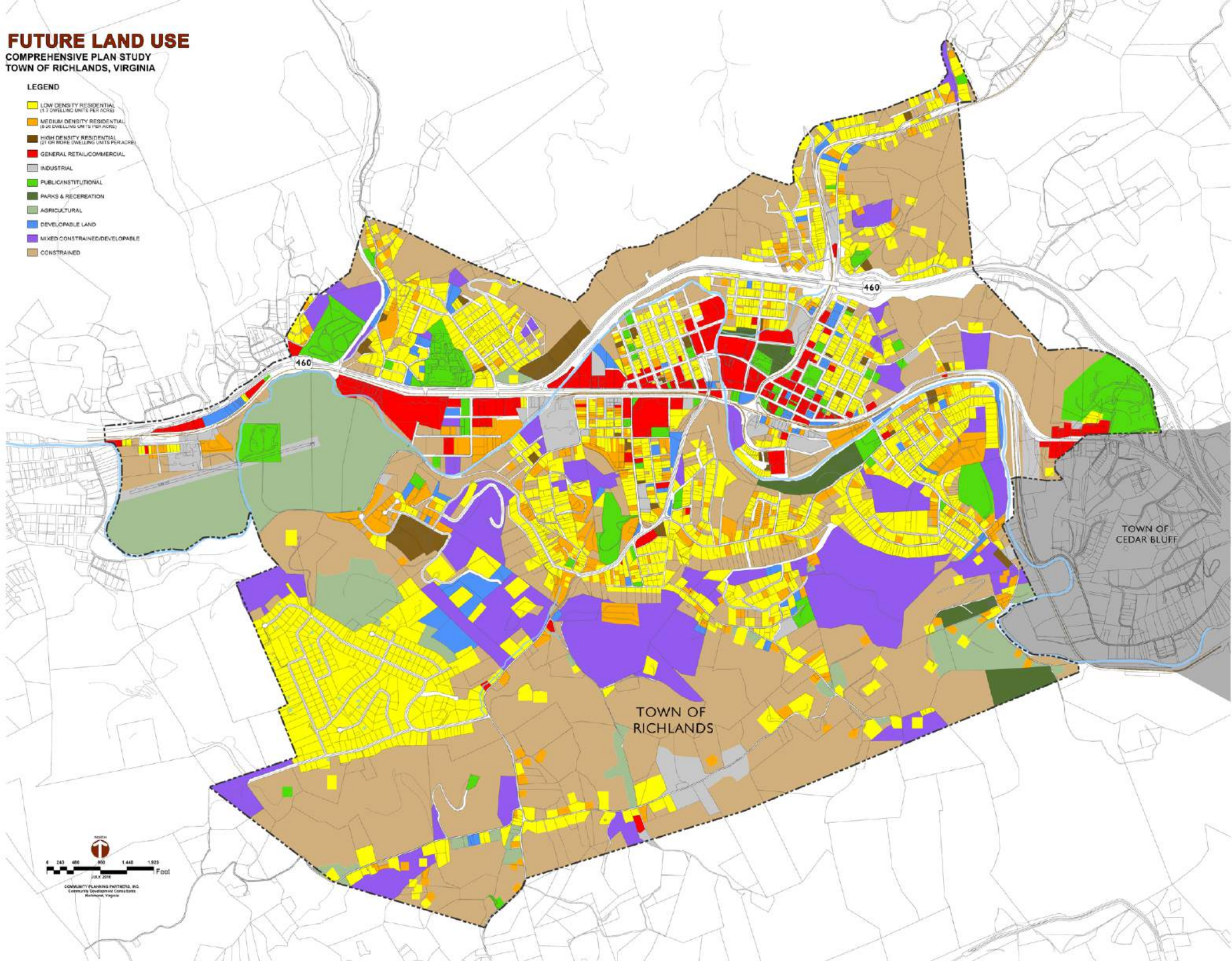
FUTURE LAND USE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY

TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
(1-7 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
(8-20 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
(21 OR MORE DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)
- GENERAL RETAIL/COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL
- PARKS & RECREATION
- AGRICULTURAL
- DEVELOPABLE LAND
- MIXED CONSTRAINED/DEVELOPABLE
- CONSTRAINED



TOWN OF CEDAR BLUFF

TOWN OF RICHLANDS

3.4 HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Even though Richlands' population is projected to stay relatively flat in future years, new and rehabilitated housing will still be needed as the housing stock continues to age. Additionally, additional housing types achieved through new construction will be needed to maintain a healthy mix of ages within the Town limits, particularly for young families and the elderly. The following goal, objectives, and strategies are established to address these issues and to hopefully position the Town for growth in the future as the local economy continues to adjust to the decline in coal mining in the region.

Goal: To provide a strong mix of housing options by promoting the rehabilitation of existing housing and the development of new housing for persons of varying income levels, household size, and stages of life.

Objective: A decrease in the number of households living in substandard housing in the Town of Richlands.

Objective: An increase in the annual number of major housing rehabilitations and additions in the Town of Richlands.

Objective: An increase in the annual number of new housing starts in the Town of Richlands.

Objective: The development of additional housing types in the Town of Richlands including townhomes, upscale apartments, senior apartments, well-built affordable housing units, and new or rehabbed small units for millennials.

Strategy #1: Secure a Planning Grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) to conduct a town-wide Housing Needs Assessment that prioritizes neighborhoods for housing rehabilitation and identifies new housing development opportunities.

Strategy #2: Secure a second Planning Grant from VDHCD to plan, apply for, and if awarded implementation funding, undertake a specific Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-funded housing rehabilitation project in a targeted neighborhood of high need.

Strategy #3: Work with a recognized and capable non-profit community development corporation to determine the opportunities for the development of additional low- and moderate-income housing communities with the assistance of various grants such as the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and various incentives such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Strategy #4: Secure grant funding from the Virginia Housing Development Authority a Mixed Use-Mixed Income (MUMI) Planning Grant to study the feasibility of adaptively reusing one or more downtown structures as a mixed use (residential rental/retail) facility.

Strategy #5: In cooperation with local realtors, develop and maintain a section of the Town of Richland's website as a means of promoting "housing opportunities available in Richlands" that promotes housing ready for occupancy, "fixer-uppers," and land available for residential

development. This strategy should have multiple target markets including young families and persons who grew up in Southwest Virginia that are seeking to return to the area in their retirement years.

3.5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In our modern world, local economies are more connected to and impacted by regional, state, national, and international economies than ever before. Because of this, local economic development efforts can never be undertaken in isolation. Securing resources, both private and public, and expertise from outside of the immediate community is key to building a strong local economy. This is even more true as localities seek to land larger companies and develop basic industries that bring new wealth into the community.

At the same time, there has been a burst of entrepreneurial development in America in recent years, particularly among younger people. Much of this new entrepreneurial development has occurred in the larger cities which serve as magnets, pulling Gen Xers and Millennials away from rural and small town communities. Countering this trend through supporting entrepreneurial development in non-urban settings is a very challenging, but essential part of developing the local economy. Such support also provides the benefit of helping keep at least some of the younger residents of the community at home instead of watching them all migrate to the big cities.

The following goal, objectives, and strategies keep these two trends in mind.

Goal: To expand economic opportunities for the citizens of Richlands by encouraging and supporting the development of new retail, commercial, office, tourism, and industrial enterprises within the Town of Richlands and on its doorstep through regional economic development partnerships.

Objective: An increase in employment and a commensurate decrease in unemployment and underemployment within the Town of Richlands.

Objective: A pattern of growth in median household income in the Town of Richlands in excess of the rate of inflation.

Strategy #1: Secure a Planning Grant from VDHCD to plan, apply for, and if awarded implementation funding, undertake a specific Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-funded downtown revitalization project for the section of Downtown Richlands west of the Clinch River along 2nd Street and Front Street.

Strategy #2: Continue to develop natural gas as a town-wide utility and explore at the appropriate stage of development the efficacy and feasibility of a stronger Town role in expanding the delivery of natural gas to residential, retail, office, commercial, and industrial users.

Strategy #3: In cooperation with the Tazewell County Office of Economic Development and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, actively promote the Town of Richland's Enterprise Zone and other key economic development opportunities to regional, statewide, and national markets.

Strategy #4: In cooperation with the Tazewell County Tourism Department and Clinch River Valley Initiative, actively promote the historic and cultural assets in Downtown Richlands including the Coal Miner's Memorial,

Section House, Clinch River access, downtown businesses and architecture, and the downtown murals.

Strategy #5: In cooperation with the Small Business Development Center at Southwest Virginia Community College, the Tazewell County Economic Development Department, and the Appalachian One Stop Workforce Center create an Entrepreneur “Boot Camp” and pursue all funding opportunities of support for the program and its graduates such as the Virginia Department of Housing and Economic Development’s “Building Entrepreneurial Economies” grant funding.

Strategy #6: In cooperation with the Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce, host a twice yearly forum of realtors, developers, and business leaders within the Town of Richlands to keep them abreast of developments within the Town, solicit their input, and gain their commitment as promoters of the Town of Richlands.

Strategy #7: Develop and maintain a section of the Town of Richland’s website as a means of promoting “economic opportunities available in Richlands.”

Strategy #8: Maintain an awareness of the state resources available for economic development and where opportunity arises, vigorously pursue all state funding available for economic development projects.

Strategy #9: Prioritize the participation of key Town staff and elected officials in regional and statewide economic

development forums, training events, and promotional events.

3.6 COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES & UTILITIES

The following information is set up as a longer-term Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that provides guidance to the annual CIP planning process in future years. The costs cited represent the best estimate of the various department heads for the Town of Richlands.

3.6.1 Public Safety

Police

The Police Department is funded mainly through the General Fund, but also receives categorical aid/grants from the Commonwealth of Virginia and to a lesser degree, fines and asset forfeitures. The Department identified two primary capital needs: upgraded technology and replacement of its vehicle fleet. Costs for these investments have been programmed through 2021.

Figure 24-a: Police Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$64,000	\$178,500	\$190,500	\$128,000	\$138,000	\$699,000

Fire and Rescue

The Fire and Rescue Department is funded through the General Fund and categorical aid/grants from the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also receives funding from Rescue Squad fees of \$550,000 to \$600,000 annually. Upcoming capital expenses include a new Fire/EMS building estimated at \$4.2 million. Additionally, the Department has identified the need for a new ladder truck. The cost

of a new truck is estimated at \$1.2 million, but it can also be purchased used for \$300,000.

Figure 24-b: Fire Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
\$0	\$650,000	\$1,550,000	\$30,000	\$0
2022	Total			
\$4,265,000	\$6,465,000			

Capital needs for the Rescue Squad are related to expanding capacity. The need for two new trucks and new staff hires have also been identified.

Figure 24-c: Rescue Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$171,840	\$22,000	\$13,000	\$160,000	\$25,000	\$391,840

3.6.2 Water/Wastewater Utilities

Water Treatment

The Richlands Regional Water Treatment Facility is in good condition and operates under capacity. Nevertheless, regularly scheduled maintenance and improvements needed to keep up with current standards are having a growing impact on the Water Utility budget. Repair/painting costs for the Airport tank that is a part of the water treatment plant are estimated at \$250,000.

Figure 24-d: Water Treatment Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$334,750	\$37,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$371,750

Wastewater Treatment

Projected capital costs are identified through 2019 and are primarily focused on the maintenance of the existing system. The largest upcoming capital needs are a dump truck for bio-solids (\$85,000) and an upgrade for the plant’s ultra-violet (UV) disinfection system (\$250,000).

Figure 24-e: Wastewater Treatment Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$167,650	\$435,000	\$5,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$637,750

Water/Wastewater Lines

Included in the projected capital costs below is a sewer line extension along West Fork Road, a water line extension to the Hill Creek area, and a water line extension on Sagewood Drive off of Route 629 (Daw Road). These extensions are programmed to be accomplished through 2022. The largest expense, however, is line replacement and enlargement on Clinch and Patterson Streets (\$100,000). Further extension of water and sewer lines within Town boundaries is limited because of topographical constraints.

Repair costs for the Farmer tank are estimated at \$150,000. A long-term solution needs to be identified for the School tank. The tank will need to be repaired or, if replaced, the Downtown tank could be moved and consolidated with a new School tank.

Figure 24-f: Water/Wastewater Line Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$230,800	\$65,000	\$70,000	\$100,000	\$40,000	\$505,800

3.6.3 Streets and Roads

The largest capital expense on an ongoing basis for the Streets and Road Department is repaving of existing roads. Additional capital expenses include equipment purchases, such as a new street sweeper scheduled for FY2019 at \$75,000 and other facilities, such as a new salt building scheduled for \$250,000 in FY2019.

Figure 24-g: Streets Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$540,000	\$40,000	\$755,000	\$27,500	\$80,000	\$1,442,500

3.6.4 Sanitation

The largest capital expense for the Sanitation Department is the replacement of garbage trucks and other equipment. A grapple truck is scheduled for FY2019 at \$125,000 and a new garbage truck is scheduled for FY2020 for \$150,000.

Figure 24-h: Sanitation Projected Capital Costs

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$0	\$0	\$125,000	\$150,000	\$0	\$275,000

3.6.5 Electric Utility

The cost of smaller capital improvements to the Electric Utility can be funded with minimal adjustments to the electric utility fees charged to the customers of the system. Larger and unanticipated capital costs that may be encountered in the future would likely require much larger adjustments in these fees. If the Electric Utility were able to expand to take in those AEP customers that remain within the Town’s boundary from the previous boundary adjustment or through a new boundary adjustment, these costs could be spread out over a larger customer base. However, AEP assets or any other electric company assets would have to be acquired at significant cost. This would be a difficult and expensive proposition and not necessarily included as part of any negotiated boundary adjustment since the assets are privately held.

Figure 24-i: Electrical Utility Projected Capital Costs.

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
\$45,750	\$106,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$151,750

The total of all the capital expenses outlined above and on the previous two pages is \$10.3 million over the next five (5) to six (6) years, or approximately \$1.75 to \$2.1 million per year. While not large by some standards, this amount can represent a challenge for a smaller community like the Town of Richlands. Additionally, having sufficient capital funds on hand is very important in that more and more of the funding agencies require matching funds to access their grant funds

The Town handles many of its capital expenses on a “pay as you go” basis through its Capital Improvement Plan, but an expense such as a new Fire/EMS Building requires taking on new debt. Every year, the budgeting processes for the General Fund, Utilities, and Capital Improvement Budgets are quite challenging. Town leadership anticipates that budgeting will be an ongoing challenge, short of having a large amount of new residential, commercial, or industrial growth come to the Town.

The following goal, objectives, and strategies are offered as a means of putting the Town of Richlands on better footing to handle the current and future capital needs and expenditures, as well as smooth out any ups and downs in General Fund revenue and expenses that might be encountered.

Goal: To raise and set aside the operational and capital resources needed to undergird the growth and development of the Town of Richlands as a premier Southwest Virginia Community.

Objective: An improvement in the sustainability and resilience of the Town of Richlands to weather the continuing shift in the Southwest Virginia regional economy, any future regional and economic downturns, man-made and natural disasters, and other unanticipated events.

Objective: A better and smoother transition to any increases in taxes and/or fees that might become necessary to continue functioning as a well-tuned local government.

Strategy #1: Regularly develop a more robust Capital Improvement Plan that anticipates annual and five-year capital needs and expenditures and outlines sources of

funding for each expenditure (General Funds, any applicable state and federal grants, partnering entities, private donations, etc.).

Strategy #2: Determine on a five-year basis an annual General Fund allocation to be set aside to fund the Capital Improvement Plan and adjust revenues and/or other expenditures to provide the funding needed.

Strategy #3: Create a “rainy day” General Fund reserve and a “rainy day” Capital Improvement reserve to be funded at percentages of the annual General Fund Budget and Capital Improvement Budget set by the Town Council and fund them from any revenue over expenses on an annual basis until the percentages are met.

Strategy #4: Undertake a boundary adjustment study to determine the feasibility and efficacy of pursuing a future boundary adjustment with Tazewell County. (Repeated from page 41.)

3.7 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation planning for Richlands is chiefly influenced by statewide and regional planning efforts. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) VTrans 2035 Surface Transportation Plan was the statewide plan that guided the most recent regional transportation planning effort of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (PDC) in partnership with its allied local governments. The projects identified in this plan were determined by locally identified needs and are not necessarily constrained by cost limits. Seventeen road projects in Richlands were identified for implementation over a 25-year planning horizon, divided into short-term, mid-term, and long-term timeframes.

The replacement of the US 460 Business/Front Street bridge over the Clinch River was the highest priority short-term road improvement project and work has been completed. Short term goals also include increased road signage for secondary roads that intersect with Front Street and Second Street and the widening of Front Street/Business Route 460 to three lanes between the convergence of Second Street and Front Street and the western Clinch River Bridge. Over the mid-term, the condition of Town bridges has been identified as a high priority. Two bridges that cross the Clinch River, as well as the Veterans Drive overpass have all been recognized as in need of repair. Long-term improvements include improvements to the railroad grade at the crossings that connect Clinch Street to US 460, expanding the width of Big Creek Road to modern standards, and extending Veterans Drive beyond the intersection with Second Street to connect to US 460 Bypass.

The full list of desired improvements put forward in this Regional Plan is shown in Figure 25 below and on the next page and are

shown on the Transportation Improvement Plans map that follows page 51.

Figure 25: Richlands Priority Road Projects in Current Regional Plan

	Location	Timeframe	Description
1	US 460 (Richlands Bypass)/US 460 Bus. (Front St.)	Short	Improve US 460 Bus. approach to the intersection as part of bridge replacement at west end Clinch River. <i>(COMPLETED)</i>
2	US 460 Bus. (Front St.)/Bridge over west end Clinch River	Short	Replace bridge and reconstruct nearby approaches. <i>(COMPLETED)</i>
3	460 Bus. (front St.)/Scott St.	Short	Add street name signs onto mast arms.
4	Second St./Scott St.	Short	Add street name signs onto mast arms.
5	Second St./Suffolk Ave.	Short	Add street name signs, "No U-turn" signs for westbound approach, and speed limit sign west of intersection.
6	Second St./Railroad Ave.	Short	Add street name signs and "No U-turn" signs for westbound approach.
7	US 460 Bus. (Front St.)/Railroad Ave.	Short	Add street name signs and speed limit sign just west of intersection.
8	US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Allegheny St.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.
9	US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Floyd St.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.
10	Second St./Rockbridge Ave.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.
11	US 460 Bus. (front St.) from bridge over west end Clinch River to Second St.	Short	Widen roadway to three-lane urban standards to provide two-way left turn lanes. <i>(COMPLETED)</i>

12	US 460 Bus. (Front St.)/Bridge over east end Clinch River	Mid	Upgrade bridge.
13	US 460 Bus. (Second St.)/Bridge over east end Clinch River	Mid	Upgrade bridge.
14	VA 609 (Veterans Dr.) at Bridge w. of Incubator	Mid	Upgrade bridge.
15	Clinch St./railroad crossing (near Altizer)	Long	Lower railroad to eliminate humped crossing.
16	Clinch St./railroad crossing (near Lake Park Dr.)	Long	Lower railroad to eliminate humped crossing.
17	VA 67 (Big Creek Rd.) from Kentucky Ave. to 0.62 Mi. SW of NCL	Long	Reconstruct to two-lane urban standards.
18	VA 67 (Big Creek Rd.) from 0.31 Mi. SW of NCL to NCL	Long	Reconstruct to two-lane urban standards.
19	Veterans Dr. Ext. from Second St./Veterans Dr. intersection to US 460 Bypass	Long	Extend Veterans Dr. from Second St. to US 460 Bypass and construct to two-lane urban standards, including new bridge over Clinch River.

Figure 26: Richlands Road Projects in Previous SYIP through 2022

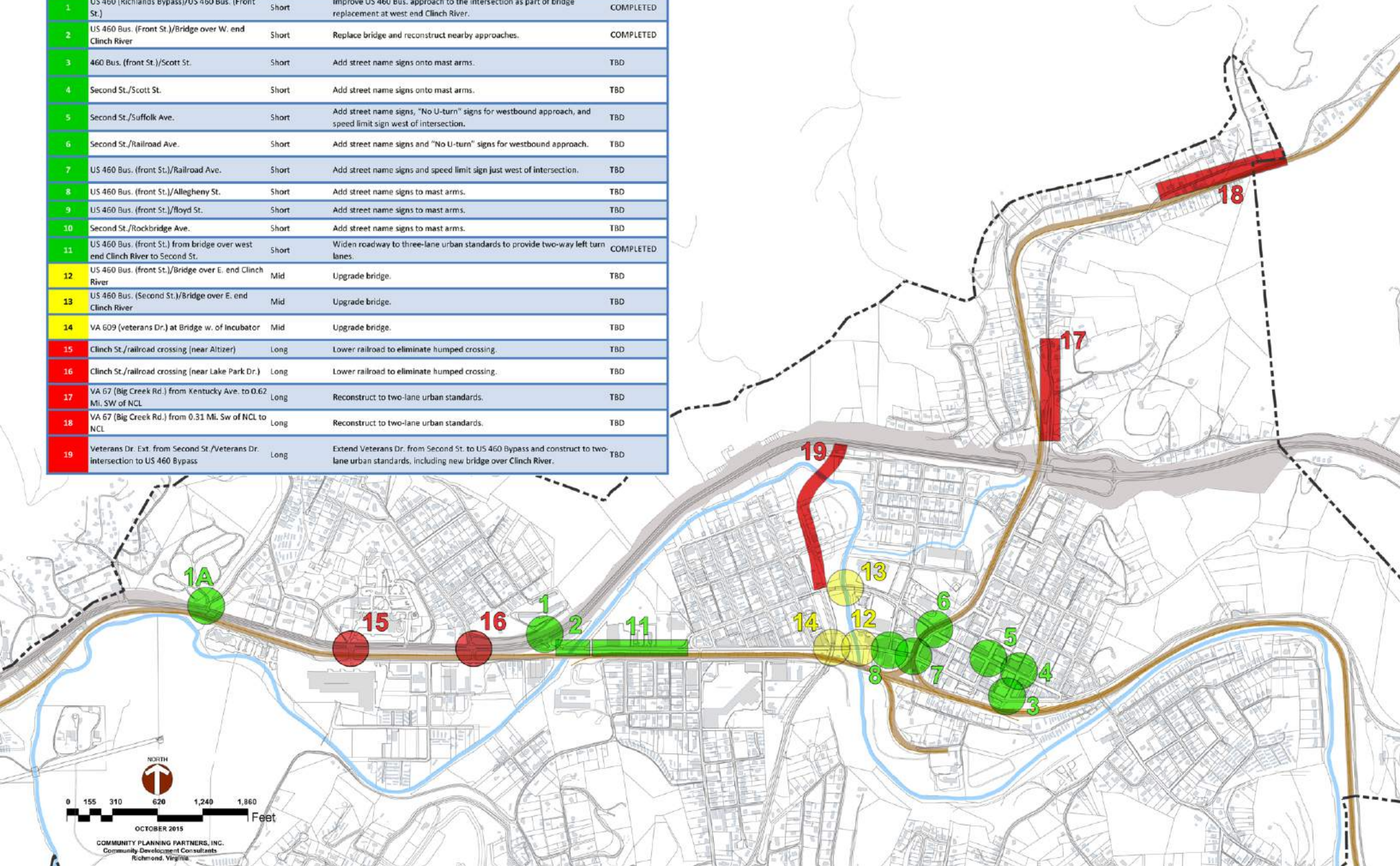
	Description (values in \$ thousands)	Estimate	Previous	FY17	FY18-22	Balance
1A	Bridge Replacement - Front Street (Bus. 460) over Big Town Hill Creek	\$3,770	\$2,095	\$-	\$1,675	\$-
2A	Railroad Section Foreman's House Restoration	\$532	\$604	\$-	\$-	\$(71)
3A	Pavement overlay and maintenance	\$700	\$700	\$-	\$-	\$-

Richland’s transportation projects currently scheduled in the Six Year Improvement Plan that was approved under the VTrans 2035 planning process are listed in the next column. Project 1A on this list is also shown on the Transportation Improvement Plans map that follows this page.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLANS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY
TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA

Location	Timeframe	Description	Est. Cost
1A Front Street (Rt 460) over Big Town Hill Creek	FY19-20	Bridge replacement (Identified in Six Year Improvement Plan)	IN PROGRESS
1 US 460 (Richlands Bypass)/US 460 Bus. (Front St.)	Short	Improve US 460 Bus. approach to the intersection as part of bridge replacement at west end Clinch River.	COMPLETED
2 US 460 Bus. (Front St.)/Bridge over W. end Clinch River	Short	Replace bridge and reconstruct nearby approaches.	COMPLETED
3 460 Bus. (front St.)/Scott St.	Short	Add street name signs onto mast arms.	TBD
4 Second St./Scott St.	Short	Add street name signs onto mast arms.	TBD
5 Second St./Suffolk Ave.	Short	Add street name signs, "No U-turn" signs for westbound approach, and speed limit sign west of intersection.	TBD
6 Second St./Railroad Ave.	Short	Add street name signs and "No U-turn" signs for westbound approach.	TBD
7 US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Railroad Ave.	Short	Add street name signs and speed limit sign just west of intersection.	TBD
8 US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Allegheny St.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.	TBD
9 US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Floyd St.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.	TBD
10 Second St./Rockbridge Ave.	Short	Add street name signs to mast arms.	TBD
11 US 460 Bus. (front St.) from bridge over west end Clinch River to Second St.	Short	Widen roadway to three-lane urban standards to provide two-way left turn lanes.	COMPLETED
12 US 460 Bus. (front St.)/Bridge over E. end Clinch River	Mid	Upgrade bridge.	TBD
13 US 460 Bus. (Second St.)/Bridge over E. end Clinch River	Mid	Upgrade bridge.	TBD
14 VA 609 (veterans Dr.) at Bridge w. of Incubator	Mid	Upgrade bridge.	TBD
15 Clinch St./railroad crossing (near Altizer)	Long	Lower railroad to eliminate humped crossing.	TBD
16 Clinch St./railroad crossing (near Lake Park Dr.)	Long	Lower railroad to eliminate humped crossing.	TBD
17 VA 67 (Big Creek Rd.) from Kentucky Ave. to 0.62 Mi. SW of NCL	Long	Reconstruct to two-lane urban standards.	TBD
18 VA 67 (Big Creek Rd.) from 0.31 Mi. Sw of NCL to NCL	Long	Reconstruct to two-lane urban standards.	TBD
19 Veterans Dr. Ext. from Second St./Veterans Dr. intersection to US 460 Bypass	Long	Extend Veterans Dr. from Second St. to US 460 Bypass and construct to two-lane urban standards, including new bridge over Clinch River.	TBD



VDOT's new VTrans 2040 Vision has been put forward that identifies statewide visions and funding priorities that will help direct future regional planning efforts. A more detailed transportation plan, the VTrans 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan will replace the existing 2035 plan in 2016. In the future, improvements identified in each regional plan will be prioritized for funding based on their connection to these specific funding priorities. The Six Year Improvement Plan (SYIP) has long been used as a means of listing the transportation improvements that have been selected by VDOT and scheduled for implementation over six years.

Under VTrans 2040, moving a project from the planning stage to being programmed and funded under the SYIP will be on competitive basis according to these new priorities:

- A. **Economic Competitiveness and Prosperity:** invest in a transportation system that supports a robust, diverse, and competitive economy.
- B. **Accessible and Connected Places:** increase the opportunities for people and businesses to efficiently access jobs, services, activity centers, and distribution hubs.
- C. **Safety for All Users:** provide a safe transportation system for passengers and goods on all travel modes.
- D. **Proactive System Management:** maintain the transportation system in good condition and leverage technology to optimize existing and new infrastructure.
- E. **Healthy and Sustainable Communities:** support a variety of community types promoting local economies and healthy multi-modal lifestyles that minimize vehicle travel, while

preserving agricultural, natural, historic and cultural resources.

Additionally, the VTrans 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan serves to delineate how funding decisions will be made in the future, particularly as related to the funding that are available according to the terms of House Bill 2 (HB2) approved in 2014, now called SMART SCALE. This competitive process has already begun with round one funding being awarded in 2016 and added to the Six Year Improvement Plan. Though a match is not required for SMART SCALE funding, in the first round, 321 applications were submitted requesting \$6.95 billion in funding with \$7.93 billion in other funds also included for the projects.

Future applications will be due in the fall of each year for funds to be awarded the following year through inclusion in the Six Year Improvement Plan as either a VDOT High Priority Project (category # 1 and #2 below) or through the Construction District Grant Program (all categories below). SMART SCALE funded projects fall into four (4) categories:

1. **Corridor of Statewide Significance** – key multimodal travel corridors that move people and goods within and through Virginia, serving primarily long-distance/interregional travel.
2. **Regional Networks** – multimodal networks that facilitate intraregional travel within highly urbanized areas.
3. **Urban Development Areas (UDA)** – areas where jurisdictions intend to concentrate future population growth and development consistent with the UDA definition in the Code of Virginia.

4. **Transportation Safety Needs** – statewide safety needs identified in VTrans2040.

SMART SCALE funded projects are scored and awarded funds based on their impact on the following evaluation criteria/measures:

1. Safety
2. Congestion Mitigation
3. Accessibility
4. Environmental Quality
5. Economic Development
6. Land Use Coordination for Areas Over 200,000 in Population

Though SMART SCALE applications are scored objectively on the criteria listed above, the criteria are weighted based on the location of the project. In Southside and Southwest Virginia, the weighting factor is skewed toward projects that generate economic development.

It is very important to note that U.S. 460 is a Corridor of Statewide Significance. Such Corridors include parallel roads and other adjoining transportation facilities such as airports and ports. Being on the U.S. 460 Corridor is a very big plus for the Town of Richlands.

Beyond projects funded through the Six Year Improvement Plan and the SMART SCALE funding process, the Town of Richlands will continue to receive an annual allocation of Urban Maintenance Program funds. The Town will also be able to apply for Revenue Sharing funds, but these funds must be matched dollar for dollar.

Of particular concern to the Town of Richlands is the number of bridges in the Town and the need for significant maintenance and upgrades that they require. Given this looming need, Town and Tazewell County staff and elected leaders and representatives from the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission will need to make a strong case for local improvements using the funding priorities identified in VTRANS 2040 and by the SMART SCALE funding process.

The following goal, objectives, and strategies are intended to help the Town of Richlands take the lead in meeting its transportation needs for the future:

Goal: To improve the quality, viability, connectivity, and safety of the existing transportation network in the Town of Richlands including improvements that promote a “multi-modal lifestyle” and expand the economic opportunities and prosperity of the community and its citizens.

Objective: A reframing of all existing and future transportation improvements per the priorities established by the VTrans 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Objective: A repositioning of the Town of Richlands as a key part of the U.S. Route 460 Corridor of Statewide Significance as delineated in the VTrans 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan and the funding protocols and scoring criteria for SMART SCALE funding as established by VDOT in order to secure needed resources.

Richlands

Comprehensive Plan 2016

Strategy #1: In cooperation with the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (PDC), Tazewell County, and the VDOT Bristol District Office, update the Town of Richlands portion of the PDC's Regional Long Range Transportation Improvement Plan.

Strategy #2: On annual basis and in consultation with the VDOT Bristol District Office, seek to submit a SMART SCALE funding application for new, expanded, and significantly improved roadways and other components of the transportation network as a part of a Corridor of Statewide Significance with a goal of improving the economic competitiveness and prosperity of the Town and region or to alleviate unsafe conditions.

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4 IMPLEMENTATION

The success of a Comprehensive Plan depends on a scheduled implementation of the Plan's goals, objective, and strategies that is monitored and adjusted as needed over the life of the Plan. The following Implementation Schedule outlines out how the "on the ground" work of this Comprehensive Plan is to unfold. It serves the purpose of pacing the work in order that planning proceeds expenditures to make sure funds are secured and expended in a timely and prudent manner.

This Implementation Schedule also lines out the less capital intensive actions that reflect changes in focus or priorities, in the budgeting process, and in how the Town publicizes development opportunities within the Town. While not capital intensive, these actions could be just as impactful. It is hoped that these actions become imbedded in the DNA of the Town of Richlands and are repeated on a regular basis as long as they prove useful to the Town's growth and development.

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Implementation Schedule

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Land Use & Development										
Strategy #1: Utilize Future Land Use Map as a platform for future land use decisions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #2: Update and upgrade the Town Zoning Ordinance and Map.		✓	✓							
Strategy #3: Develop new "floating zone" zoning categories for inclusion in the Zoning Ordinance.		✓	✓							
Strategy #4: Adopt and implement a Real Estate Property Tax Partial Exemption Ordinance.	✓	✓								
Strategy #5: Adopt and implement a Land Use Assessment Ordinance.	✓	✓								
Strategy #6: Undertake a boundary adjustment study to determine the feasibility and efficacy of a future adjustment.	✓									
Housing & Neighborhoods										
Strategy #1: Conduct a town-wide housing study utilizing a Planning Grant from VDHCD.				✓						
Strategy #2: Plan for, submit an application, and implement a CDBG-funded neighborhood housing rehab project.					✓	✓	✓			
Strategy #3: Work with a non-profit community development corporation to develop new low- to moderate-income housing.				✓	✓	✓	✓			
Strategy #4: Secure VHDA Mixed Use-Mixed Income (MUMI) Planning Grant for downtown adaptive reuse.		✓								
Strategy #5: Develop and maintain a "housing opportunities available in Richlands" section of the Town's website.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic Development										
Strategy #1: Plan for, submit an application, and implement a CDBG-funded downtown revitalization project west of the Clinch River.		✓	✓	✓						
Strategy #2: Continue to develop natural gas as a town-wide utility and at the right stage take a stronger role in developing the asset.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #3: In cooperation with Tazewell County and VEDP, promote the Town of Richland's Enterprise Zone.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #4: In cooperation with Tazewell County and the CRVI, promote Downtown Richland's historic and cultural assets.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #5: In cooperation with the SBDC of SVCC, Tazewell County, and the Workforce Center, develop an Entrepreneur "Boot Camp."	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Strategy #6: In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, host a twice yearly forum on development opportunities in Richlands.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #7: Develop and maintain an "economic development opportunities available in Richlands" section of the Town's website.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #8: Maintain an awareness of and vigorously pursue all state funding available for economic development.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #9: Regularly participate in economic development forums, training events, and promotional events.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community Services, Facilities & Utilities										
Strategy #1: Regularly develop a more robust 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #2: Determine on a 5-year basis an annual General Fund allocation to fund the Capital Improvement Plan.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #3: Create "rainy day" General Fund and Capital Improvement reserves to be funded at percentages set by Council.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy #4: Undertake a boundary adjustment study to determine the feasibility and efficacy of a future adjustment.	✓									
Transportation										
Strategy #1: In cooperation with local/regional partners, update the Town's portion of the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan.	✓	✓								
Strategy #2: On annual basis, seek to submit a SMART SCALE application for funding to improve and expand the transportation network.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓