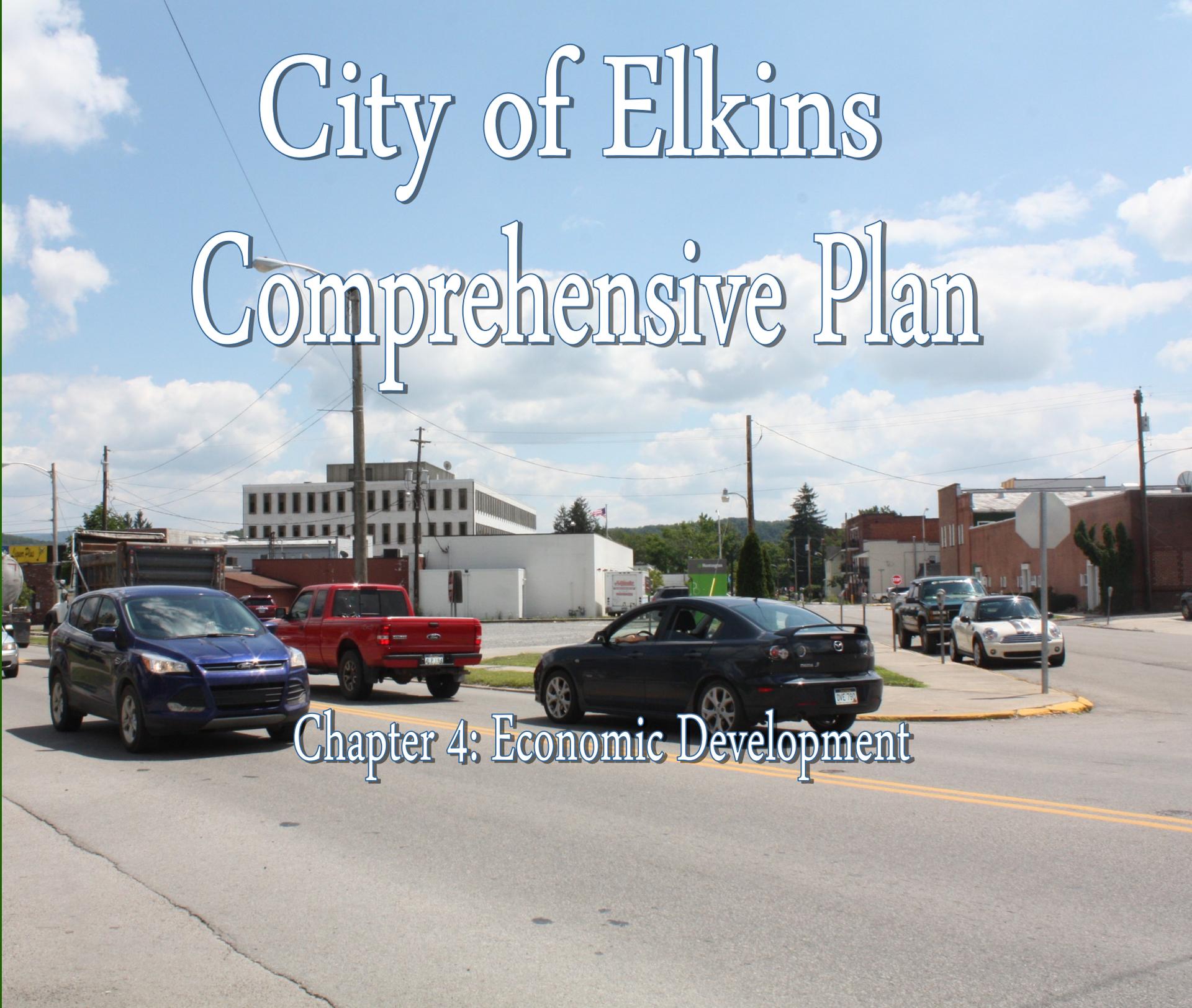


# City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan

## Chapter 4: Economic Development



## Background Information

Economic development was determined to be a priority for the City of Elkins during the planning process. Economic development contributes to the quality of life of those that live and work in Elkins. Therefore, it is important to examine what factors are hindering economic growth. This chapter will examine the economic structure of the City, as well as the revitalization of the downtown and the effect of tourism on the local economy in Elkins. The action plan then serves to address any issues that are discovered during the planning process.

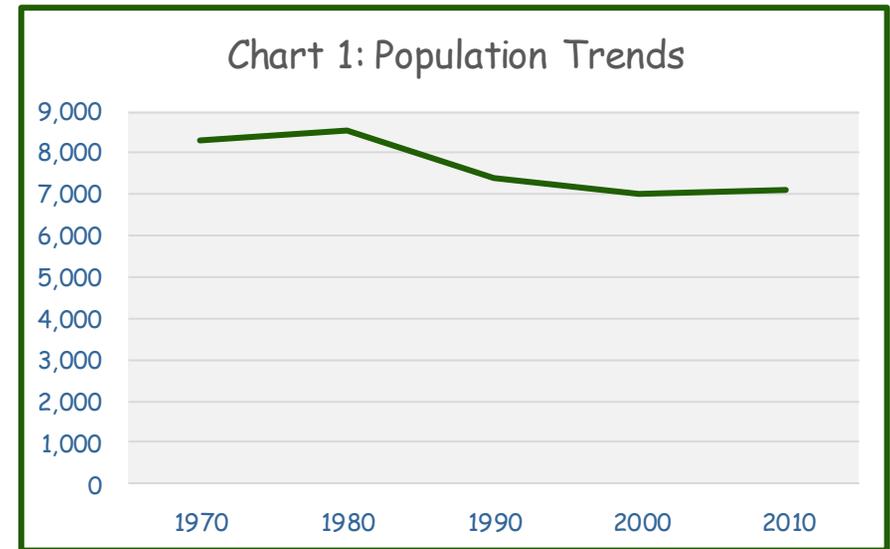
## Demographics

### Population Characteristics

To better understand economic conditions in Elkins, population trends in the City were examined utilizing US Census data. As shown on *Chart 1: Population Trends*, the City of Elkins has experienced population decline since 1980. While this is a concern, the change from 2000 and 2010 was not as significant, with only a loss of 62 people.

Looking to the future, population decline will probably continue but most likely at a slow rate. Determining actual population projections are difficult as there are many circumstances that are not taken into account when developing the models. Also, West Virginia has not yet developed projections for incorporated areas. In 2011 the WVU-College of Business and Economics completed population projections for all of the counties. The projections for Randolph County show a loss of 3.5 percent in population from 2010-2030. The County projections and past population counts were taken into account to develop Elkin's population projections.

- ☀ 1970-1980: 3% loss
- ☀ 1980-1990: 13% loss
- ☀ 1990-2000: 5% loss
- ☀ 2000-2010: 0.8% loss





The US Census is projecting a slight decrease (1%) in population for 2011 (7,189) and 2012 (7,180). Therefore, a conservative estimate of population change would be that the City of Elkins will either maintain its current population or decrease slightly by 2030.

### Age Cohorts

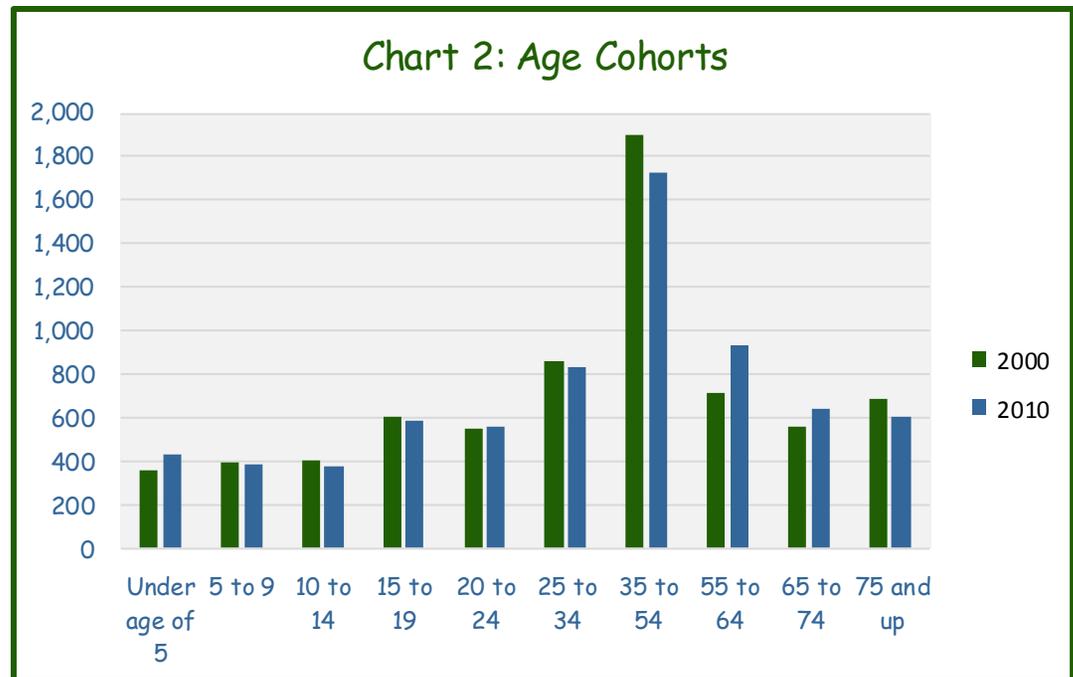
- Preschool- Under the age of 5
- Primary school- 5-9 age group
- Middle school- 10-14 age group
- High school- 15-19 age group
- Post Secondary- 20-24 age group
- Childbearing- 25-35 age group
- Childrearing- 35-54 age group
- Pre-retirement- 55-64 age group
- Younger retired- 65-74 age group
- Older retired- 75-up age group

The median age in the City of Elkins in 2010 was 39.6. This is slightly younger than the median age of Randolph County of 43.4. Age cohorts are very important for communities to understand during the planning process.

Different age groups affect the economic vitality of a community. For instance, the older retired age group may experience declining health and require full-time health care. This requires a greater amount of financial support from either family members or government resources. The younger retired age group may not have as many health issues as those in the older retired age cohort, but they may require health services and many rely on Social Security as a supplement to their retirement income. Therefore, both the younger retired and older retired tend to spend less money in a community than the younger age cohorts. The younger age cohorts, especially those in

the childbearing and childrearing age cohorts, usually comprise the work force of a community and tend to spend more money than other age cohorts.

Elkins has more residents in the Childrearing (35-54 years) age cohort than any other cohort, as shown on *Chart 2: Age Cohorts*. The City lost residents from this cohort between 2000 and 2010 and gained residents in the pre-retirement and younger retired cohorts. Therefore, the City should be prepared to deal with an aging population in the future, which can affect the available workforce for the community. The number of younger cohorts decreased slightly between 2000 and 2010. The City gained residents



under the age of 5 and in the post-secondary cohort but lost residents in the childbearing cohort. This could be a concern as residents in this age cohort may be leaving the City due to lack of economic opportunities.

## Economic Characteristics

Unemployment rates are important to review as they are an indicator of economic growth in a region. According to the 2010 US Census, the unemployment rate in Elkins at the time was 11 percent. The unemployment rate in Randolph County in November of 2013 was approximately 5.7 percent, which is slightly higher than the state rate of 5.3 percent. In November of 2012 the rate in the county was 8.1 percent. The significant decrease from 2012 to 2013 could mean that the local economy is improving or people are simply dropping out of the job search due to lack of jobs in the region.

According to the Randolph County Development Authority the following businesses are major employers within the County:

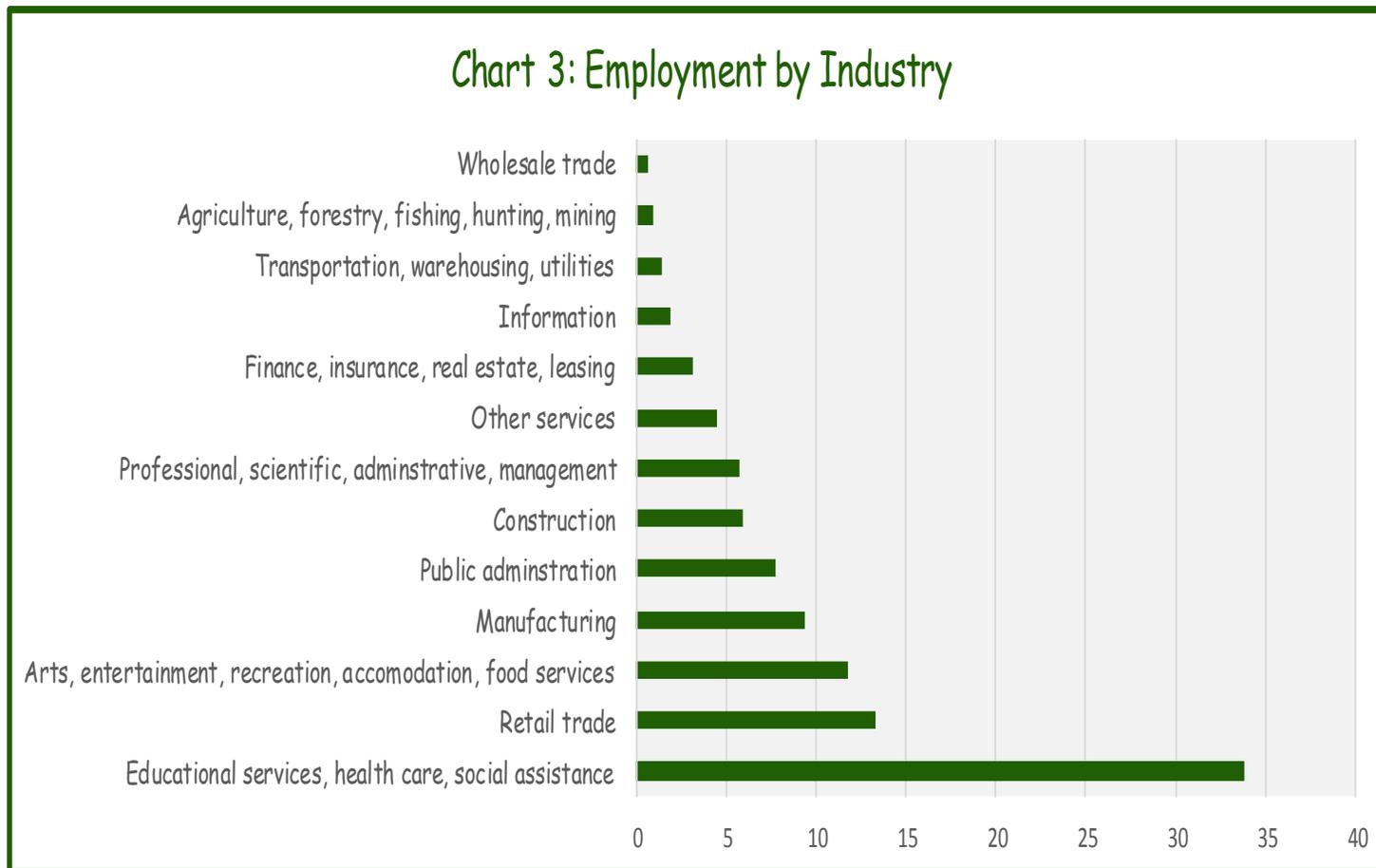
- Randolph County Board of Education
- Davis Health System
- Armstrong World Industries, Inc.
- TRG Customer Solutions
- Huttonsville Correctional Center
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
- Davis & Elkins College
- West Virginia Department of Highways
- West Virginia's Choice, Inc.
- Elkins Rehabilitation and Care Center



The mean travel time for residents for work is approximately 14 minutes. While residents are not traveling very far for employment opportunities, they are most likely leaving the City for neighboring areas to work. Residents within Elkins work in many different industries, which are shown on [Chart 3: Employment by Industry](#). As the top employers in the County are the Board of Education, Davis Health System, West Virginia's Choice, Inc., and Elkins Rehab and Care Center the majority of residents work in educational services, health care, and social assistance. Retail trade and arts,

entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services are the next highest industries for workers in the City. Since tourism plays such a huge role in the regional economy it is of no surprise that many people work in these industries.

The median household income for residents in the City of Elkins is \$32,632, which is considerably lower than Randolph County's median household income of \$37,350. A lower median household income is a concern as residents may not have the disposable income to spend money in the community, which in turns affects the economic growth of that community. In addition, there is less income to invest in and maintain personal property.

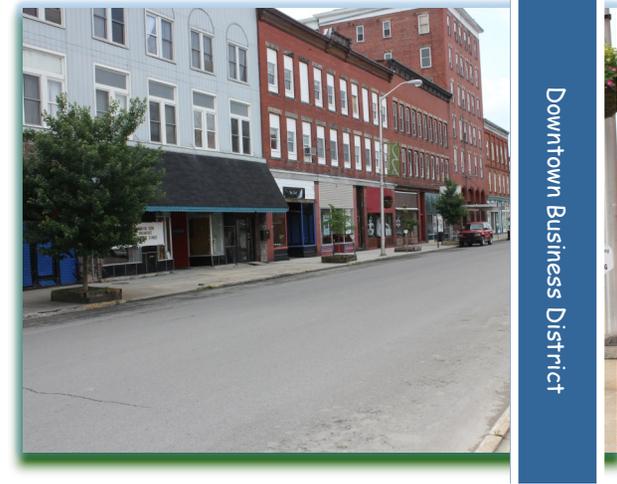


The lower median income could correlate to the educational attainment of the community. According to the US Census, only 23 percent of the population of Elkins 25 years and older have a bachelor's degree. Approximately 54 percent of the population between ages 18-24 percent have a bachelor's degree. However, according to the age cohort data, many of the residents in this age cohort are leaving the City, most likely to find jobs elsewhere.

## Downtown Elkins

The center of the City of Elkins is the downtown business district which includes approximately 90 businesses.

Revitalization efforts are currently underway in the downtown. This effort is being led by the Elkins ON-TRAC Team and under the direction of a full-time paid director. The ON-TRAC program comprises four volunteer committees; Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. Elkins ON TRAC will be applying for designation and accreditation in the national Main Street program in the Fall of 2014. This will enable the program to continue to grow and provide for more opportunities for funding and technical assistance.



## Design Committee

The design committee focuses on projects that will improve the appearance of the downtown business district. These activities include beautification projects such as planting flowers, holiday lighting and decorations, and benches. The committee is also working with business owners to improve the appearance of their businesses. One of the committee's long term endeavors is to complete a streetscape plan. Recently, the committee was able to secure help from the West Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to design gateways leading to downtown Elkins.

**ON TRAC Mission Statement**  
ON TRAC is cultivating success in downtown Elkins with economic development and revitalization through historic preservation and heritage development.

## Organization Committee

The organization committee leads fundraising, education and outreach activities. This group brings in donations and volunteers to help run the program.

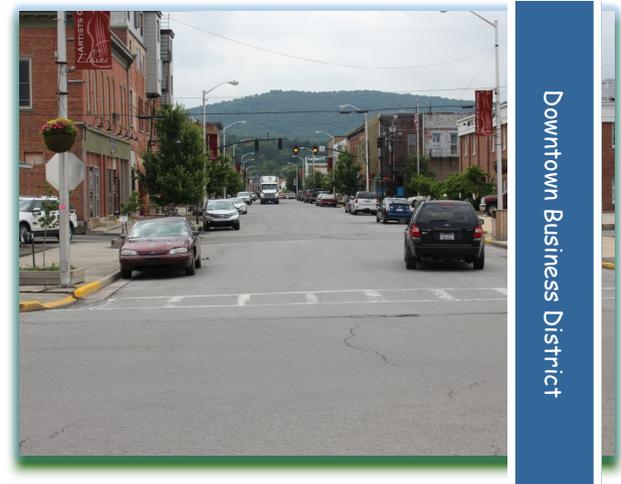


## Promotion Committee

The promotion committee works to increase business activity in the downtown business district by hosting events and activities. Events and activities that the committee has sponsored include the Spring Clean Sweep, Town Hall Annual Meeting, Downtown Yard Sale, Holiday Open House, Christmas Tree Auction, Mountains Beckon Bicycle Parade and Street Fair, Santa's Workshop, Artists Gather Street Fair, and First Fridays.

## Economic Restructuring Committee

The economic restructuring committee is tasked with supporting and retaining existing businesses and attracting new business to the downtown. This includes a partnership with the Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce to host Building Blocks for Business, a seminar offering training on business topics. The committee is also working on Business Jump Start, a business incubator program which will provide a rent-free location for up to six months for a new business and a program to encourage residential development in the upper stories in downtown businesses.



## Industrial Parks

There is one industrial park in Elkins, the Elkins Industrial Park, located on Industrial Park Road. The park was developed by the Randolph County Development Authority. Major businesses include Elkins Builders Supply, Wood Technology Center, Elkins Iron and Metal, Wilson Lumber, Hamer Lumber, Hamer Pellet and Fuels, Kelly Foundry, Elkins Truck Service, and Woodford Oil. Only a few lots remain for development.

## Elkins Railyard

The Elkins Railyard is owned by the Randolph County Development Authority. The railyard was developed for \$1.5 million with federal and state funding. The railyard is approximately 20 acres with 9 lots left to be developed. Any new development in the railyard must conform to design guidelines and standards for new construction. Current businesses in the railyard include medical offices, animal hospital, business offices, American Mountain Theatre, hotel, and a restaurant. The railyard is also home to the tourism train: the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad. The railyard is currently the hub for tourism in Elkins with over 40,000 people riding the train yearly.



Railroad Avenue at the Depot



Railroad Avenue at the Depot

In 2012 a streetscape project was initiated along Railroad Avenue, that included the installation of curbs, sidewalks, street lights and tree plantings to provide a welcoming entrance to Elkins. The city has also recently received a grant for 16 additional crosswalks in the downtown, including several along Railroad Avenue adjacent to the railyard.

## Economic Development Organizations

### Randolph County Development Authority

The Randolph County Development Authority (RCDA) assists with business development, community development, and workforce development.

- ☀ Business development- helps businesses locate or expand in the County by helping with land, facilities, training, or financial assistance
- ☀ Community development- facilitates community enhancement projects
- ☀ Workforce development- provides training for businesses

The West Virginia Wood Technology Center is a non-profit subsidiary of the RCDA. The center offers training and support services for the hardwood industry. The center is located in a 30,000 square foot building that includes classrooms, video conference/long distance learning center, and industrial wood working shop. Classes offered include wood production, safety, CNC routers, moulder operation, and kiln drying of wood.

The video conference/long distance learning center allows residents in Randolph County and beyond to get their master's in business administration from West Virginia University. Classes meet two evenings a week for five semesters (Hardwood Alliance Zone, 2014).

### Randolph County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Randolph County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is the official visitor center for Randolph County. The CVB provides information on attractions, lodging and dining in the County. The CVB's main mission is to promote and market tourism to bring in new dollars to the County. The CVB is funded by city and county lodging tax proceeds.



West Virginia Wood Technology Center

Currently the CVB is working with area attractions and businesses to bring a greater presence in tourism opportunities, such as providing new brochures and ad campaigns.

## Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce is to support the development of business opportunities, represent the interests of business, and preserve the quality of life for business, employees, and citizens (Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce, 2014). The chamber provides seminars to new and existing businesses that provide information as well as workforce development.

## Tax Structure

The City of Elkins has a municipal business and occupation (B&O) tax in place. The tax is determined as a percentage of gross receipts and allows no deductions for losses to the business. Different rates may be imposed for different types of business activities. *Table 1: B&O Tax Structure in the City of Elkins* displays the different B&O rates in the city.

The City also requires businesses to apply for a business license yearly. The fee depends on the type of business.

Property taxes are collected by the county and remitted to the City. The calculation is mainly based on assessed value, along with the year of construction and additions to the property.

A fire fee for both city residents and the first response area has also been established to help fund the Elkins Fire Department.



**Table 1: B&O Tax Structure in the City of Elkins**

<i>Business Classification</i>	<i>Tax (Percentage of gross receipts)</i>
Coal production	0.69%
Sand, gravel, or other mineral product not quarried or mined	1.94%
Oil, blast furnace slag	1.94%
Natural gas in excess of \$250 quarterly	3.88%
Limestone or sandstone quarried or mined	1.0%
Timber	1.0%
Other natural resource products	1.38%
Manufactured, compounded or prepared for sale products	0.19%
Selling tangible property (retailers, restaurants, etc.)	0.25%
Wholesalers and jobbers	0.13%
Water companies	2%
Electric light and power companies	2.75%
Natural gas companies	1.88%
All other public service or utility business	1.31%
Contracting	1%
Amusement	0.31%
Service or calling and all other business	0.50%
Rentals, royalties, fees and otherwise	0.50%
Banking and other financial business	0.61%

## Needs Assessment

Some communities struggle to make progress on economic development because of failing or inadequate infrastructure, poor availability of medical care, lack of educational facilities, and insufficient cultural and arts attractions. In these categories, however, Elkins is either already strong or is in the process of taking concrete steps toward improvements. The presence of Davis Medical Center, the Randolph County Community Arts Center, Augusta Heritage Center, and the Old Brick Playhouse are just a few of the many reasons people live in Elkins. Education is also important in Elkins with the presence of the Davis & Elkins College, Randolph County Board of Education, Randolph County Wood Technology Center, and the Kump Education Center, which all provide top rated educational opportunities for all different ages.

Elkins operates its own sewer and water utilities. Infrastructure assets that the city is responsible for include a water-treatment plant and its associated tanks and distribution lines, and a wastewater-treatment plant and its associated collection lines.

The city's water-treatment plant was put into service in 1921 and has served the city very well over its nearly 100-year lifespan. However, because of the plant's advanced age, certain repairs can require custom-machined parts that can be time-consuming to obtain. Also, because the plant's electrical systems differ from the standard systems in use today, the only way to power the plant during an electrical outage would be with prohibitively expensive custom generators. As a result, in the event of a multi-day power outage, the city could hypothetically run out of water. To address these and related problems, the city will in 2015 commence a long-planned \$31,000,000 project to replace the water-treatment plant.

The city's wastewater plant is newer and will not need replacing for some time. However, one wastewater-related problem facing the city has to do with the fact that the city's original system of wastewater-collection pipes was built to receive both wastewater (i.e., both sewage and household gray water) and rain (i.e., collected both through catch basins and drains in streets and from some buildings whose rain-gutter downspouts are still connected to the wastewater-collection system). During heavy rainfall events, the resulting volume of combined rain water and wastewater can overwhelm system capacity, causing discharges into the Tygart Valley River through various overflow or "outfall" openings. In 2011, the city entered into a consent decree with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection that requires the city to take certain steps to reduce these overflow events and other related problems. Construction on the first and second phases of these steps must be

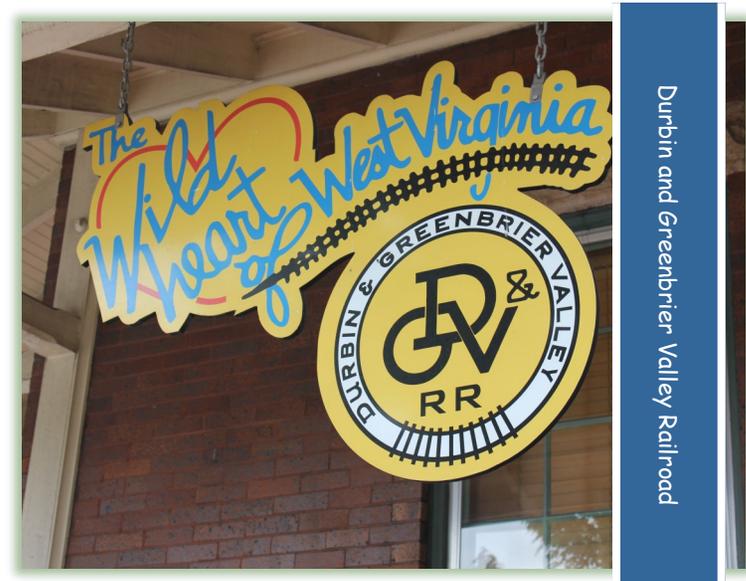
concluded by October 31, 2015 and December 31, 2021, respectively. The budget for the phase one project is \$3,100,000. The improvement of water and wastewater systems in Elkins will only strengthen the local economy in the future.

Several different sectors comprise the local economy in Elkins. As Elkins is the County seat of Randolph County it enjoys many economic benefits that other similar cities do not. The physical location of the County Courthouse and County administrative buildings brings people into downtown Elkins that may have not visited otherwise. Elkins is also home to the United States District Court-Northern District of West Virginia, Davis & Elkins College, United States National Forest Office, Davis Medical Center and numerous tourism attractions. All of these businesses bring people into the City. These people shop in the downtown, eat at restaurants, and stay at hotels.

While Elkins has many economic assets, continued economic development was identified as a concern of many. For purposes of this needs assessment, the concerns are centered among three different sectors; tourism and downtown revitalization, taxes, and annexation.

### Tourism and Downtown Revitalization

The Randolph County Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) promotes the City of Elkins as the heart of Randolph County and a good base camp to enjoy everything in the area. Tourism is a key economic driver in Randolph County and contributes greatly to the regional economy. A study was completed in October of 2013 for the West Virginia Division of Tourism. As part of the study, estimates of the direct impacts associated with traveler spending in West Virginia were produced using a Regional Travel Impact Model that was developed by Dean Runyan Associates. *Table 2: Economic Impact of Travel on Randolph County* details estimates that were completed for Randolph County. The estimates illustrate that tourism plays a major role in the economy in the County and therefore the City of Elkins. The City of Elkins is truly the center of tourism in Randolph County.



Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad

**Table 2: Economic Impact of Travel on Randolph County**

	2004	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Direct Spending (millions)	\$30.7	\$36.2	\$44.5	\$41.0	\$45.4	\$48.7	\$48.3
Earnings (millions)	\$8.5	\$9.2	\$10.9	\$12.2	\$13.2	\$12.8	\$12.5
Employment (jobs)	560	590	620	670	670	660	650
Local Government Revenue	\$117,000	\$130,000	\$411,000	\$452,000	\$525,000	\$606,000	\$612,000
State Government Revenue	\$2,167,000	\$2,331,000	\$2,791,000	\$2,857,000	\$3,028,000	\$3,016,000	\$2,977,000

Attractions in Elkins include the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVR), Allegheny Highlands Trail, American Mountain Theater (AMT), Augusta Heritage Center, and the Mountain State Forest Festival. The City of Elkins is also a certified arts community, and was named one of the top 100 best art towns in America. According to the Randolph County Development Authority the DGVR brings approximately 40,000 people a year into Elkins. The number keeps climbing every year. For instance, in 2011 the DGVR began to offer a Polar Express excursion train during the Christmas holiday season to boost sales during the train's off season. In 2011, DGVR offered 4,600 seats. In 2013, the DGVR sold 14,000 seats (2013, November 4 Inter-Mountain). The American Mountain Theater brings in approximately 35,000 to 40,000 people a year and continues to grow.

With both the railroad and theater located in the railyard many visitors are staying the night. Many of the attractions are also offering package deals, which includes AMT shows, train rides, overnight lodging, and meals. While the Elkins Railyard includes several tourism based businesses, it also includes several medical based businesses. Additional opportunities exist in the railyard for commercial development as lots are still available at this time.

In order to attract new business into downtown Elkins, the City and other organizations have offered several incentives. During the years 2012 and 2013, the City of Elkins waived B&O taxes for two years for any new business to locate in Elkins. Elkins On-Trac is also working on a Business Jump Start program which will provide a rent-free location for up to six months for a new business. The program will also offer support and counseling for start-ups.

However, many residents perceive that there are no incentives for businesses to locate in the downtown. Perhaps the



Elkins Railyard



incentives that are being offered are not being promoted enough to area residents and business owners.

While the City has much to offer in the way of tourism attractions, there is a general consensus that Elkins needs to increase its promotion of its assets and reinvent the image of the City. Suggestions include promoting the City as an outdoor town, Gateway to the Monongahela National Forest, or a ski and/or bike town. Right now the City of Elkins is lacking a "brand". Part of branding the City of Elkins would include the development of a slogan and logo.

Many throughout the planning process feel that more should be done to attract visitors into downtown Elkins. Railroad Avenue around the Railyard Depot is not inviting and lacks simple pedestrian amenities that would encourage people to walk into the downtown. There is also a lack of signage downtown identifying where shops, dining, and retail are located. Of those who completed the online survey, many stated that the businesses in downtown Elkins do not stay open late enough for residents, as well as visitors.

One of the biggest issues with the downtown is the number of vacancies. A focus should be to find tenants for the buildings. A branding and marketing strategy may help the City better understand what target or niche market should be explored to help fill empty buildings.

Many different organizations are working to increase tourism and economic development in Randolph County. However, local businesses may not be utilizing or communicating with these organizations to help with promotion of their business.

In addition, tourism planning is not integrated into everyday planning at the City government level. Members of the public are concerned that the City is simply not prepared for increased visitors and the impacts they may have on the City.

## Taxes

The B&O taxes that the City has established were brought up by many during the public meetings as a hindrance to growth. Many new businesses simply locate right outside of the City of Elkins municipal limits in Randolph County so they do not have to pay the tax. Simply lowering or getting rid of the B&O tax in Elkins is not an easy solution as in 2013-2014 the tax brought in approximately \$1,302,900 for the City, which is approximately 30 percent of the City's general fund

revenue. B&O taxes help pay for City services such as streets, fire, police, and certain city administrative staff. When comparing Elkins B&O taxes with other nearby municipalities, Elkins rates are comparable to other municipalities, and in some cases lower. *Table 3: Comparison of B&O Tax in nearby communities of Elkins* displays the comparison of rates. Not all of the B&O tax rates for the City of Buckhannon were available and therefore are not listed on the table. One big difference in the rates between Buckhannon and Elkins is that the Buckhannon retail rate has an annual exemption of one million dollars before any retail business pays B&O taxes.

**Table 3: Comparison of B&O Tax in nearby communities of Elkins**

<i>Business Classification</i>	<i>Elkins</i>	<i>Bridgeport</i>	<i>Weston</i>	<i>Clarksburg</i>	<i>Philippi</i>
Manufactured, compounded or prepared for sale products	0.19%	0.18%	0.05%	0.30%	0.22%
Selling tangible property (retailers, restaurants, etc.)	0.25%	0.4125%	0.20%	0.50%	0.13%
Wholesalers and jobbers	0.13%	0.1238%	0.15%	0.15%	0.0675%
Contracting	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Service or calling and all other business	0.50%	0.825%	0.60%	1.0%	0.5%
Banking and other financial business	0.61%	0.825%	0.75%	1.0%	0.5%

## Annexation

The City of Elkins is mostly built-out and therefore has little room for new development. Any new development would most likely occur in any vacant lots or in lots where buildings are demolished. The lack of new development limits Elkins ability to receive more tax dollars from businesses. Many new businesses have been built right outside the City limits and the City receives no revenue from them. Annexation of these growth areas may help the City's finances as well as provide for orderly planning of future growth in the region. Those that participated in the planning process support annexation. However, there are many residents and businesses that do not support annexation. Further, it is difficult, time-consuming, and very unpopular to annex property against property owners' will. The simplest path to annexation is when property owners request it themselves, but this requires businesses to voluntarily decide their own taxes. A public relations campaign on the benefits of annexation may service to help the City of Elkins in any future annexation efforts.

## City Charter

The city's antiquated charter and eccentric administrative structure present significant obstacles not only to the achievement of this plan's recommendations but to the viability of the city itself. As currently chartered, Elkins has what political scientists describe as a "weak-mayor/council" form of government (sometimes referred to as the "weak-mayor/strong council" or simply "mayor/council" forms). In Elkins, this means that the Common Council holds the local corporate and administrative authority over the city government. Although Elkins mayors sit as chairs of council meetings, they have no vote (except to break ties) and do not control the council agenda, veto council actions, hire or fire personnel, develop or propose budgets, or—with a few exceptions allowed by council via ordinance—exercise any direct authority over staff.



The book *State and Local Government Administration* describes the weak-mayor/council form of government as originating "in the early and mid-nineteenth century, when cities and other municipalities were primarily small, rural and suspicious of strong executive control." The authors point out that "weak-mayor/council systems exist today primarily in smaller cities and villages." (<http://www.amazon.com/State-Government-Administration-Public-Policy/dp/0824773551>; p. 20) Indeed, the Elkins charter has gone essentially unchanged since its adoption in 1901, a time when the city had a much smaller population, provided fewer services, and was required to operate within a significantly simpler framework of state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Although the Elkins charter worked well during the city's early years, more recently it has seemed to act as more of a hindrance than a help. A casual review of the charter will find many passages that no longer seem to be a good fit for a city of 7,000 people in the twenty-first century, not to mention provisions that are simply no longer enforceable, due to Supreme Court decisions and similar developments.

West Virginia Code §8-3-2 contemplates five possible structures for municipal governments. These are the "mayor-council plan" (the plan currently in effect in Elkins); the "strong-mayor plan"; the "commission government"; the "manager plan"; and the "manager-mayor plan." There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these, and it is not yet possible to say with certainty which would be the best fit for Elkins. Council should review the options available and make a decision regarding the best organizational structure for the city.

## Action Plan

The economic development action plan was developed to address the concerns of residents about the lack of job opportunities and need for downtown revitalization. The action steps detailed will help the City achieve the following goal:



*Provide opportunities for increased economic development*

Objective 1: Identify areas for re-development and new development to increase the tax base

*Action Step 1: Annex surrounding lands to increase tax base and potential development areas*

The City of Elkins has limited opportunity for new development. The City is in need of new development to increase their tax base to be able to continue to provide high quality services to residents. Areas that the City would like to consider in the future for annexation are shown on **Map 4: Future Land Use** in **Chapter 5: Land Use**.

*Action Step 2: Develop a public relations campaign on the benefits of annexation*

Because the simplest path to annexation is when property owners petition to join the city, it would be beneficial for the City to develop a public relations campaign on promoting the benefits of annexation to non-residents and businesses outside the city. Such a campaign could include mailings, editorials, or a promotional web site highlighting the benefits of joining the city. Success stories on annexation in West Virginia should also be included.

*Action Step 3: Publicize vacant properties to developers*

There are many vacant buildings located in the City that should be publicized on the City's website. This information could potentially help interested parties wanting to locate in Elkins determine if any buildings meet their needs. The listing on the website should include a photo and property information, as well as contact information.

## Objective 2: Capitalize on visitors to the American Mountain Theater and Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad



*Action Step 1: Develop a marketing and branding campaign to raise awareness of all that Elkins has to offer*

Elkins has much to offer to businesses and visitors. However, many businesses, industry, and visitors are simply not aware of all that the City has to offer. Therefore, the City should develop a marketing and branding campaign to raise awareness. The campaign should include the development of a brochure highlighting all the great assets in Elkins, as well as a slogan. The brochure about Elkins should be distributed at all local hotels and various events/festivals throughout Randolph County. The City's unofficial slogan is "A great place to call home." The City also has an official seal. The City's ON TRAC program has a different slogan "Mountains Beckon, Artists Gather, and History Lives." The slogan also includes a logo. The two different slogans and logos can create confusion when marketing Elkins.

Other methods to market the City include:

- *Implement a Passport Program that rewards people for purchasing products or services in Elkins*

A Passport Program would allow people to take the passport to businesses in the City to obtain stamps when they purchase a product or service. After all the stamps were obtained, then the person would be entered into a drawing for prizes. Local businesses could be solicited to donate items for the prizes.

- *Encourage local businesses to participate in discount programs*

A great way for local businesses to get exposure is for them to participate in programs like Groupon and Living Social. Groupon and Living Social send daily e-mails to thousands of subscribers featuring a discount for local business. Local businesses can visit [www.groupon.com](http://www.groupon.com) and [www.livingsocial.com](http://www.livingsocial.com) to learn how to participate in either of these programs.

- *Start a Cash Mob*

The purpose of a cash mob is to support local business and the overall community by getting a large number of people to patronize a store on a certain day. It is a great way to get people into Elkin's downtown. People are asked to show up on a specific day at specific store and spend at least \$20. To advertise cash mobs, emails are sent and the event could be posted on social media sites, such as Facebook.

- *Promote Small Business Saturday*

Small business Saturday is held the Saturday after Thanksgiving. It was created by American Express to encourage shoppers to patronize small, local businesses. More information can be found on the website <http://www.smallbusinesssaturday.com>

- *Promote downtown businesses/attractions at festivals/events in the region*

A great way for the City to gain additional exposure is by promoting the downtown at festivals and events in the County.

*Action Step 2: Develop a signage plan identifying where shops, dining, and retail are located*

During the planning process the lack of consistent signage consistently presented itself as an issue. There simply is no system directing people to various locations in Elkins. Elkins is in need of comprehensive wayfinding signage that would include directional signage, parking signs, and interpretive kiosks.

- Vehicular directional signage- This type of signage would be installed on poles and intersections that point to various destinations throughout the town
- Parking directional signage- This type of signage would be installed on traffic lights or poles with arrows pointing to public parking lots or spaces
- Interpretive kiosks- This type of signage is already installed at the Railyard Depot. Another kiosk should be installed somewhere in the downtown
- Pedestrian kiosks- This type of signage would also include a map that would be placed in the downtown to direct people on foot



### *Case Studies*

#### *City of Charleston, WV*

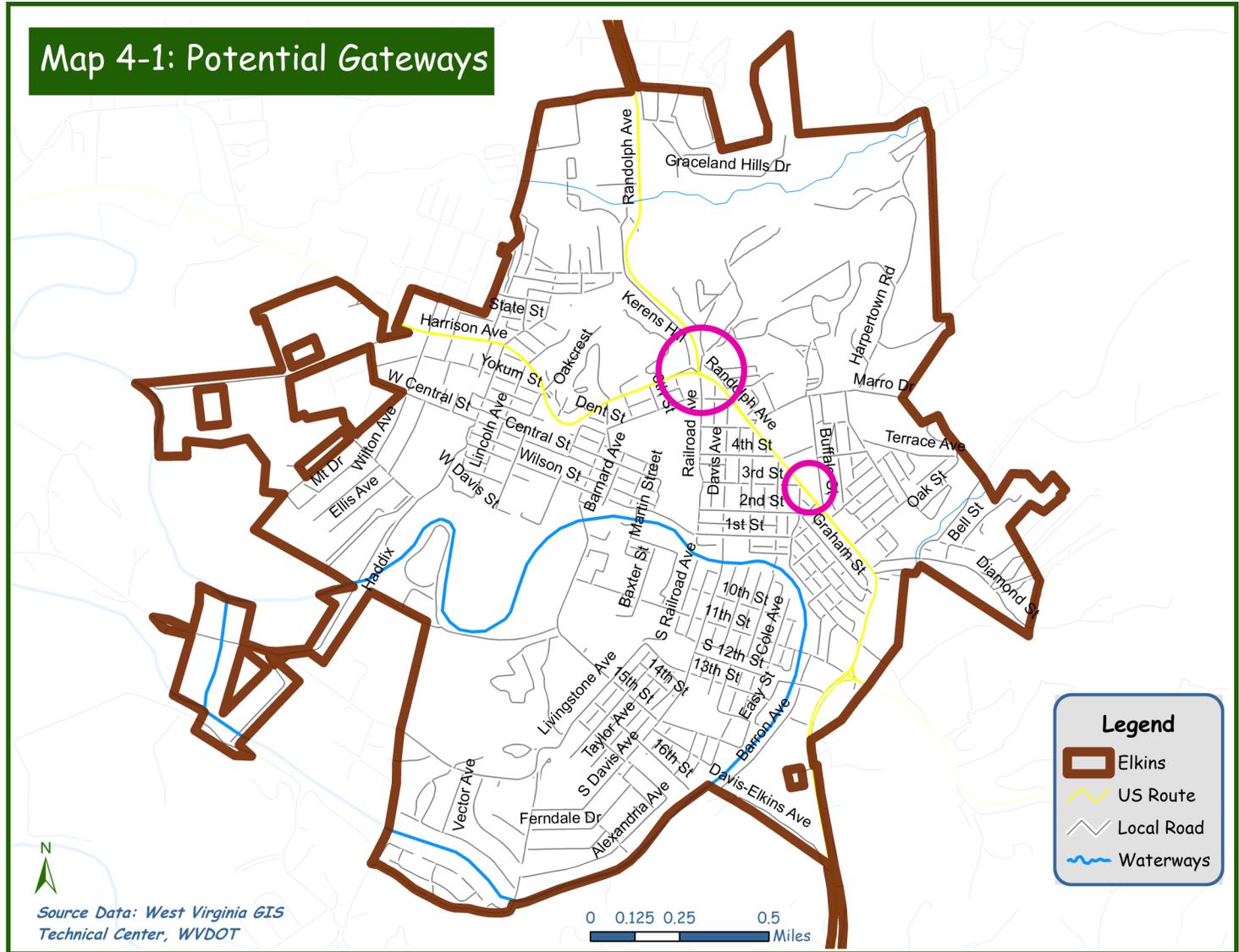
The City of Charleston, West Virginia has created a wayfinding commission to help create a uniform signage program. The members are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by Council. The Commission helped create design guidelines for the wayfinding system. For more information visit <http://wayfindingcharleston.org/>

Other cities throughout the United States have also developed a wayfinding system. The pictures shown are signs in Alexandria, Virginia and Winchester, Virginia.



## Action Step 3: Develop a gateway to promote Elkins to travelers along major corridors

The City of Elkins is in need of gateways at the entrance of the city from US Route 33 (Corridor H). When traveling into Elkins from US Route 33 on US Route 219, the entrance to the City is confusing as there is a very busy intersection with numerous road signs and commercial clutter. There is no visible gateway announcing to travelers that they are in Elkins. A potential opportunity for a gateway exists in this location when the construction of the Allegheny Highlands Trail into Elkins begins. The trail will cross the intersection of US Route 219 and Randolph Avenue.



Avenue. The construction of the trail should include a gateway into the City for not only trail users but vehicles as well. Other locations for gateways are shown on *Map 4-1: Potential Gateways*.

## Objective 1: Improve functions of city government

*Action Step 1: Determine whether the City Charter and administrative structure can be improved to support the continued success of the city and the implementation of the comprehensive plan*

As mentioned in the Needs Assessment, there are many issues with the city's current charter. Given the many out-of-date sections of the city charter and the drawbacks of the city's current administrative structure, the city council should place the highest priority on taking the following steps:

- Evaluate the city's existing organizational structure and make immediate modifications
- Form a charter review committee and develop recommendations to present to council

