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Wyoming County Strategic Plan

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**Wyoming County
Economic Development Strategic Plan**

Final Plan

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I. Introduction and History

In March of 2007, Terrell Ellis and Associates (TEA) were obtained by the Wyoming County Economic Development Authority (EDA) to provide strategic planning services. The purpose of the project was to develop a ten year vision and three year strategic action plan for the county through engaging key stakeholders in a leadership role; creating dialogue and opportunity for residents to voice opinions; building on existing plans and assets; and developing concrete steps for implementation. TEA worked with a steering committee to guide the planning process, review draft deliverables, and make key decisions. The planning process included the analysis of key socioeconomic and demographic trends; the identification of the priority planning issues; the creation of a vision statement; and the development of goals, objectives, and an implementation plan. The planning process also included several methods of public involvement such as public opinion surveys and public information workshops.

Meetings with the steering committee and the review of the seven previous plans completed for the county and municipalities have led TEA to conclude that a lot of useful and valid information has already been developed for the county. Within these existing planning documents are numerous discussions about planning issues that continue to persist as the top priority issues in the county. These existing plans also include many recommendations for productive approaches to addressing the county's physical, economic, and social problems.

In the development of this strategic plan TEA has paid close attention to these existing documents while also acknowledging that the community still expresses a need for additional planning. In our mind, the planning need is not in the area of issue identification or recommended solutions, but rather in plan implementation. It appears that there is an ample body of information available to the county describing the issues and the possible solutions and what is lacking is an effective approach to organizing the county in a way to be able to begin putting these programs into place. This plan attempts to provide insight to the implementation challenge by providing some concrete suggestions for carrying out the recommendations.

We acknowledge that the majority of the issues and potentially some of the recommendations that are discussed in this document will be "old news" in a lot of respects. The fact that the previous plans identified the same areas of concern that are highlighted in this plan simply speaks to the fact that the challenges for the county still exist. Where we hope to provide new information is in the approach to organization and implementation to meet these challenges.

History

In the original strategic plan, the issue of organizational structure was raised due to the absence of a body capable of coordinating the efforts of different organizations within the county. In order for any plan created for the county to be carried out, an implementation vehicle was necessary to facilitate that process. To compensate for the void that existed,

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Terrell Ellis and Associates recommend to “organize the county government to create a county planning commission responsible for overseeing the plan implementation and the future development of the county.”

Since the completion of the original strategic plan, the goal of creating the WCPC (Wyoming County Planning Commission) along with its bylaws (see Appendix A) was successfully completed and adopted as of September 17, 2008. Since the creation of the WCPC, the group has met to discuss the status and development of the plan four times each year (for Minutes of these meetings, see Appendix C). These meetings represent a strong commitment by the commission toward completing the planning issues and objectives set out by the strategic plan.

Below is the proposed vision Terrell Ellis and Associates had for the function and network of the Planning Commission.



II. Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives

The identification of the focus areas with top priority came from information gathered from a review of the existing planning documents, the findings from the public surveys, and the input provided by the steering committee and stakeholders. Based on TEA's review of this information we have grouped the focus areas into the two following categories: Land Planning and Community Development.

A. Land Planning

The first category of planning issues deals with land use concerns that were identified by the steering committee and in surveys. These areas would largely be the focus and responsibility of the newly established planning commission to address and coordinate. The three focus areas are: Transportation, Developable Land, and Infrastructure.

1. Transportation

The highest priority transportation issues facing the county are the current conditions of the existing roadways and the need for construction of the future planned highways.

The old two-lane roadways have many deficiencies for today's transportation needs, including a high percentage of "No Passing" zones, many steep grades and areas of reduced speeds through many communities and school zones. Because of the evident need for improved highway service, the U. S. Congress in 1995 designated the Coalfields Expressway as a "Congressional High Priority Corridor." At the same time, Congress extended the Expressway concept further into Virginia, generally following Virginia Route 83 through not only Buchanan but also Dickenson and Wise counties.

The Coalfields Expressway has been designed to serve an area from Interstates 77 and 64 near Beckley southwest through West Virginia to Virginia Route 83 in Buchanan County, VA at Slate. The Expressway will generally follow West Virginia Route 16 through Raleigh and Wyoming counties and West Virginia Route 83 in McDowell County. This four-lane highway project is approximately 65 miles long. Sections of the highway in Raleigh (Sophia area) and McDowell County have been constructed or are already under construction.

In addition to the Coalfields Expressway, the completion of the King Coal Highway and the Shawnee Parkway would also have positive transportation and economic impacts on the county. When completed, the King Coal Highway will travel 95 miles through Mingo, Wayne, Wyoming, McDowell and Mercer counties with the Tolsia segment from Williamson to Huntington extending another 55 miles. It will interchange with the Coalfields Expressway in Welch near the Indian Ridge Industrial Park and the site of the new federal prison. The King Coal and Tolsia Highways represent the West Virginia corridors of Interstate 73/74. The Shawnee Parkway is a scenic highway through southern West Virginia with portions through Wyoming County.

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The King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway have both been studied extensively for their potential economic development impacts in southern West Virginia. Both major roadway projects are considered Economic Development Highway Corridors by the state highway department. The purpose of the Economic Development Highway Corridors is two-fold: promote tourism development, and create new commercial/industrial sites. These economic benefits will be achieved by¹:

- Making the region more accessible (i.e., lower one-way driving times and lower costs) to residents of adjacent counties and states, especially tourists who desire to come into the study area to pursue recreational opportunities.
- Increasing accessibility within the region by reducing the travel times.
- Making the region more accessible to companies present in adjacent counties and states who may want to either purchase goods and services from area businesses, or sell goods and services to them.
- Making adjacent counties and states more accessible to businesses in the region by lowering the cost and time of transporting their goods and services to customers within these adjacent areas.
- Inducing additional travel through the region along these new highway corridors.
- Reducing the costs of travel for trucks and automobiles along the new highways.
- Providing an opportunity to construct new, flat industrial/commercial sites, along with the required utilities, during highway construction activities.

Wyoming County, along with the other rural counties in the region of the Economic Development Highway Corridors, is forecasted to have the following positive economic development impacts from the completion of the new highway systems²:

- Per capita personal income: annual growth rates of 4.2 percent in 2002-12 and 4.8 percent in 2002-27-the former just below the statewide rate and the latter equal to the statewide rate.
- Total employment: annual growth rates of 0.1 percent in 2002-12 and 0.2 percent in 2002-27-the former below the statewide growth rates and the latter just above it.
- Manufacturing employment: annual growth rates of -2.5 percent in 2002-12 and -1.9 percent in 2002-27, but less than the statewide rates.
- Non-manufacturing employment: annual growth rates of 0.2 percent in 2002-12 and in 2002-27-the former below the state growth rate and latter equal to the statewide rate.
- Population: annual growth rates of -0.4 percent in 2002-12 and -0.3 percent in 2002-27, both below the statewide growth rates.

¹ Economic Development Highway Corridors Study, West Virginia, FHWA, November 2003.

² *ibid*

Goal 1: Continue efforts to support completion of planned highway improvements in county and surrounding region.

Objectives:

- 1. Continue to lobby for additional funding to complete the Coalfields Expressway and other regional highway systems.**
- 2. Identify potential development sites that are located near key interchanges. Future development at these sites could be for industrial, commercial, or residential uses. Sites should be prioritized based on the construction phases of the highway.**
- 3. Coordinate with mining companies and federal, state, and local highway officials to explore the use of public/private partnerships (PPPs) (similar to those used for the King Coal Highway) to support the construction of the highway and the creation of adjacent flat developable land.**
- 4. Develop strategic plans for the implementation of tourism promotion and business development based on the completion of various phases of the highways.**

2. Developable Land

Wyoming County has a severe shortage of flat developable sites for commercial, industrial and residential uses. This shortage is due to the rugged topography of the area and the fact that large landholding corporations involved in natural resources extraction own a large percentage of the land that would be most suitable for development. Another challenge to the creation of developable sites is the ability to provide infrastructure services to these areas.

Goal 2: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as future planned highway construction and mining activities.

There are several opportunities for the county to strategically identify potential sites that are suitable for future development. The first opportunity, which was also raised in the previous discussion of transportation issues, relates to the potential for development of sites adjacent to planned interchanges and other roadway improvements associated with the construction of the Coalfields Expressway. The county should work with the Coalfields Expressway Authority to identify potential developable sites adjacent to planned interchanges based on the phased construction of the highway. Site opportunities may also be created as a result of grading activities needed for the highway. These future development areas should be targeted as priority locations for the placement of future residential and commercial development in the county. Some locations may also be well suited for the development of a new industrial park or other similar uses. Coordination with land holding and mining companies will also be needed to support this effort as many of the prime sites are likely to be privately held for resource extraction. Mining opportunities may also present a vehicle for rendering sites flat if the agreement to not return the site to its original contour can be negotiated.

Objectives:

- 1. Work with the Coalfields Expressway, private landowners, and appropriate state agencies to develop a map that identifies future development sites in relation to planned construction phases of the Coalfields Expressway, permitted mine sites and existing infrastructure. Priority should be given to sites adjacent to areas of the Expressway that are currently under construction or that are programmed for completion in the near future.**
- 2. Identify site improvement needs (i.e., grading and clearing, infrastructure) for all identified sites, beginning with highest priority, and explore creative partnerships with WVDO, WVDEP, WVDOH, land holding companies, mining companies and other appropriate parties to prepare the sites for development.**
- 3. Link corridor-focused development sites with local and regional tourism opportunities.**
- 4. Ensure that new growth along the Coalfields, King Coal, Wyoming County Scenic by-way, Coal Heritage Trail and Shawnee Parkway Corridors harmonize with the natural environment and protects scenic resources.**

Another opportunity parallels existing work being conducted by the Wyoming County EDA to identify, inventory, and prioritize mine-scarred sites for potential future industrial/commercial, residential, or recreational development within the Upper Guyandotte Watershed in Wyoming County. This work is being conducted through a Brownfields Assessment Grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and has led to the completion of an inventory of 65 abandoned mine lands sites, 17 bond forfeiture sites and 32 points of interest identified by the site selection committee. Sites have been identified and prioritized and their proximity to existing and future planned roadways as well as existing water and sewer service areas has been mapped. Initial outreach efforts are already underway with Western Pocahontas Land and Pocahontas Land to identify which sites held by these two companies might be available for sale to the county. Efforts under the existing EPA grant include the completion of six Phase I assessments of the identified sites to determine what, if any, environmental issues exist in these locations and two Phase II assessments to determine what, if any, contamination exists.

Goal 3: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as Brownfields.

Objectives:

- 1. Continue to support and monitor the progress of the existing Brownfield project.**
- 2. Utilize the data in the Site Ranking Report from May 2007 to help identify other potential redevelopment sites to pursue.**
- 3. Assess remainder of County for the existing Brownfield project.**
- 4. Continue to explore strategic partnerships with land holding companies in order to support the creation of developable sites.**

According to comments provided by steering committee members there may also be redevelopment potential in some areas of the county where there are pockets of existing residential structures that have been abandoned. These sites would likely already have water and or sewer services and would not require as many infrastructure improvements as other more “raw” sites. These sites would have their own challenges however, including the potential for being within a designated floodplain or floodway that would greatly limit the redevelopment potential. The ownership of the property and the legal mechanics of acquiring abandoned properties from absentee landlords would also be a challenge. The opportunities for land assembly through the aggregation of such parcels however could be instrumental in sparking redevelopment efforts within the municipalities.

Goal 4: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as abandoned housing.

Objectives:

- 1. Continue to partner with the Mingo County housing authority and the Safe Housing and Economic Development (SHED) in support of housing needs and look for the need to create a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) in Wyoming County.**
- 2. Identify the appropriate legal procedures and resources necessary for the acquisition of abandoned buildings.**
- 3. Develop a county-wide inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures.**
- 4. Identify a subset of these properties which have the greatest redevelopment potential based on the size of the lot, potential for aggregation with adjacent parcels, and proximity to existing infrastructure, population centers, and other potential attractants.**
- 5. Coordinate with local governments as needed to encourage the acquisition and redevelopment of identified parcels that fall within municipal boundaries and work with the county commission on parcels located in the unincorporated portions of the county.**
- 6. Explore funding opportunities and the creation of a revolving loan fund for housing development.**

3. Infrastructure

Another key constraint in potential development of land in the county is the availability of infrastructure. There are limited areas in the county that currently have public water services and even fewer that have both public water and sewer. Some of these areas with existing services are located within the floodplain and may have additional capacity to serve new development, but regulations restrict new development from occurring in these areas. There are other locations where new development is occurring, such as the residential units being constructed in Pineville, but there is not any funding available to complete the necessary expansions to nearby water and sewer lines to bring such subdivisions on-line. There is a clear need for increased funding to support water and

sewer improvements for existing development as well as to open up areas of the county for future planned development.

Goal 5: Identify infrastructure improvements necessary to support future development in Wyoming County and determine the appropriate strategies for funding and constructing infrastructure projects.

Objectives:

- 1. Coordinate the development of an infrastructure plan for the county that would identify necessary improvements, potential costs, and prioritized implementation with consideration to areas of the county that may need to have services provided in the near term to support other development objectives.**
- 2. Work with all county watersheds, public service districts, and municipalities to develop a county wide wastewater treatment plan.**
- 3. Research a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the county.**
- 4. Create an inventory of infrastructure funding sources.**

B. Community and Economic Development

The second category of planning issues is classified as community and economic development because while they are related to land planning, they would not necessarily be part of the main mission of the planning commission. In fact other agencies and organizations already exist within the county whose main mission is to address the focus areas that are described below. Therefore, the role of the planning commission as it relates to these community and economic development areas would be to coordinate with the primary agencies and to evaluate the impacts of any potential policy decisions from such agencies on land use and future planning efforts.

1. Housing

Much of the worst housing in America is found in rural regions and rural communities.

The reasons for rural housing conditions are many and complex, including:

- Much of the rural housing stock is old and often not kept in good repair.
- Few rural areas have adopted and enforced housing, building, plumbing, electrical, and fire prevention codes.
- Many rural homes still lack indoor plumbing.
- Lending institutions generally prefer to loan money to individuals and development companies in larger towns, rather than in small towns.
- Low family incomes, due mainly to poor economic conditions and limited opportunities; mean that many families cannot afford better housing.
- Qualified builders and craftsman are becoming very hard to find in some small towns.

Goal 6: Provide safe, healthy, and affordable housing for existing and future residents of Wyoming County.

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Challenges to developing new housing were introduced in the previous discussion related to developable land and include lack of available sites and infrastructure.

Current indicators of the housing market in Wyoming County, such as homeownership and vacancy rates, demonstrate that the current inventory of houses may not be adequate to sustain potential future population growth. Adequate housing is essential in supporting economic growth. To attract new businesses or industries, the county should be able to house new workers moving into the area. One current example of this need is the anticipated housing demand as a result of the completion of the Federal Bureau of Prisons Medium Security Facility located on the McDowell/Wyoming County line. Areas in the county that are under consideration or currently being developed for housing are Indian Ridge, Toms Mountain, Barkers Ridge, and Pineville. In terms of meeting the expected demand from future employees of the prison, the Pineville and Welch areas would provide the best location based on proximity to the prison.

In addition to needs for additional single-family homes to meet future demand, low rental vacancy rates also indicate a need to increase the inventory of rental housing units in the county. The high poverty rates in the county also point to a need for affordable housing considerations.

Objectives:

- 1. Develop a housing study that would examine the current market conditions, estimate of the different types of new housing needed to accommodate the future population of the county (e.g., elderly housing, multi-family units, mobile home units, single-family units).**
- 2. Identify suitable locations for future residential development.**
- 3. Coordinate with existing non-profit organizations to determine what the duties would be for a housing authority in Wyoming County.**
- 4. The county should research and assess the process of adopting and enforcing a standard building code such as one of the three model codes used in the U.S.: the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) Code, the Southern Standard Building Code Conference Code, or the Uniform Building Code produced by the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO).**
- 5. Assist interested parties to acquire housing from the purchase or taking of existing abandoned and dilapidated properties (see Developable Land objectives).**

2. Job Growth and Retention

The presence of quality employment opportunities is a continuous concern for the residents of Wyoming County. Natural resource extraction industries, such as mining, timbering and natural gas, have historically been some of the predominant employers in the county. Over the past several decades, however, there has been a loss of jobs in the mining industry which has had significant impacts on the population and local economy. Recent employment data shows that the mining industry continues to provide jobs at a

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consistent level. In fact, recent concerns related to the mining industry are not necessarily based on lack of available jobs but rather lack of available employees who can pass drug-screening requirements. It is apparent through the review of data and from the comments of the steering committee that there is a need to diversify the local economy so that the dependence on the mining industry is lessened.

Another major employment sector for the county is the local education system which contributes roughly 16 percent of the total non-farm employment in the county. One of the challenges that the county will soon face is that large portions of the current teachers in the county are approaching retirement. Soon there will be a need to aggressively recruit new teaching staff for the district, perhaps through the creation of an incentive program.

Goal 7: To support and expand existing employment opportunities in Wyoming County and explore new employment opportunities through the diversification of the local economy.

*A Vision Shared: Creative Class*³

One approach that the state of West Virginia is taking to addressing the issue of economic diversification is through the Vision Shared program. The idea behind the program is that the state has been traditionally linked to “old economy” sectors like natural resource extraction that has hampered its ability to grow and prosper. The Vision Shared program offers local training opportunities for communities who are interested in learning more about the new economy and evaluating various factors in their communities which may help or hinder in the pursuit of local economic diversification. The Progressive Policy Institute defines the New Economy as "a knowledge and idea-based economy where the keys to wealth and job creation are the extent to which ideas, innovation, and technology are embedded in all sectors of the economy." The characteristics of the New Economy range from an increase in knowledge-based jobs and constant technological innovation to higher levels of entrepreneurial dynamism and continuous economic churning. See www.visionshared.com for more information on how to participate.

A Vision Shared is a comprehensive economic development initiative that builds on West Virginia’s strengths and seeks solutions to challenging issues. It identifies initiatives that need to be strengthened and establishes performance measures to gauge success in creating a new West Virginia economy. The long-range process takes a holistic approach to economic diversity, encompassing all elements that potentially could affect success (e.g., healthcare, education, tax reform, and infrastructure). The four key focus areas are 1) intellectual infrastructure, 2) new economy, 3) results-based government, and 4) “building bridges” (connecting people) and empowering citizens.

One of the critical goals for the state in its effort to transform to the New Economy is diversification of the existing economy. West Virginia has little choice but to actively

³ Culture, Creativity, and Innovation – West Virginia in the New Economy, A Vision Shared: Creative Class Work Group & The Industry of Culture Initiative, June 2007. <http://www.visionshared.com/>

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pursue diversification of the state's economy. Still dependent on its industrial heritage, West Virginia has seen extreme job and income loss over the last two decades. For example, a concerted effort has to be undertaken on building the tourism industry - using the competitive advantage of the natural beauty of the state as the foundation. The services sector, particularly higher wage jobs, needs to be the benefactor of concentrated efforts on upgrading the mix of jobs within the state. Additionally, the traditional industries already in place in the state need to become more competitive and continue to add value to West Virginia's economy.

Another critical component to success in the New Economy that is also pertinent to Wyoming County is entrepreneurship. The majority of new job creation in recent years has been from small- and medium-sized businesses. This trend is expected to hold strong as the transition to the New Economy continues. Increasing entrepreneurship needs to be a specific focus, given the rural nature of the state and the lack of Fortune 500 corporations headquartered in West Virginia. A new, targeted focus should be given to small businesses, including such efforts as educational outreach, micro-enterprise lending, technical assistance, tax credits, minority-owned business development, and gap financing.

Finally, a specific focus on technology, both as a business sector and as a component of all other business sectors, should be adopted and implemented. The integration of technology into West Virginia's economy will have positive effects on existing businesses, new businesses, and business start-ups. Additionally, all levels of government and education would be beneficiaries. Technology is a definite linchpin for successful diversification of the state's economy in the long term.

The Wyoming County Economic Development Authority (EDA) should be the lead agency in implementing the following recommendations related to job growth and retention:

Objectives:

- 1. Participate in the Vision Shared community training workshop and the Create West Virginia conference to develop strategies to implement new economy concepts.**
- 2. Identify targeted industry sectors to attract and develop a marketing plan for those identified sectors with consideration given to diversifying the economy and opportunities created through the construction of the Coalfield's Expressway.**
- 3. Identify a site and develop a new industrial park. Explore the potential for using a portion of the new park for microbusiness and other mechanism that would encourage entrepreneurship.**
- 4. Continue to work with the BREAD (Business Retention Expansion and Development) program sub-committee that can identify opportunities for growth in existing employment sectors.**
- 5. Increase Wyoming County Economic Development Authority loan program's scope and portfolio size.**

6. Identify and implement the resources necessary to develop a business incubator.

3. Recreation and Cultural Resources

Adequate access to recreational and cultural opportunities in the county was another focus area that resonated with the survey respondents and also with the steering committee. From the resident's perspective there is concern over the lack of facilities and activities geared toward providing recreation to youth and also to the elderly populations. Additionally, recreation is perceived as an opportunity that the county should more fully promote as a tourism attraction, especially due to the presence of Twin Falls State Park and R.D. Bailey Lake.

The rich coal history of the county also provides unique heritage tourism opportunities. The Coal Heritage Trail is a National Scenic Byway that is managed by the Coal Heritage Highway Authority (CHHA), that winds through Wyoming County along Route 16. Wyoming County is also within the National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA), a federally designated region classified for its national historic and cultural importance.

In 2009, Groundwork Wyoming County (GWWC), a locally led non-profit, was developed through partnerships with the Wyoming County Commission, National Park Service and Environmental Protection Agency. That mission is to bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships which empower people, business, and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being.

Goal 8: Enhance and promote recreation and cultural resources in the county for both residents and tourists.

Objectives:

- 1. Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the county that would evaluate existing recreational facilities and programs and determine the need for additional facilities/programs.**
- 2. Coordinate with the Coal Heritage Highway Authority, and the National Coal Heritage Trail to promote heritage tourism in the area.**
- 3. Support the creation of additional cultural tourism attractants in the county.**
- 4. Work with the Hatfield McCoy recreational trail to maximize its economic impact.**
- 5. Assist with the development of the portion of the Great Eastern Trail that runs through Wyoming County that is uncompleted.**
- 6. Coordinate with Groundwork Wyoming County, Convention and Visitors Bureau and other related organizations to identify and establish natural resource based recreational opportunities.**
- 7. Develop a market feasibility study to assess the needs of tourism assets in Wyoming County so that they can yield their highest potential.**

4. Resource Development

Wyoming County Community Fund

There are many people and organizations inside and outside of Wyoming County who would be interested in donating money and assets to worthy Wyoming County projects and programs. Unfortunately, there hasn't been a central trusted avenue for them to use. To answer this need, the Wyoming County Planning Commission created the Wyoming County Community Fund. Several tax-deductible funds have been set up giving donors flexibility in how their contributions are used. The Wyoming County Community Fund is made possible by the Beckley Area Foundation who manages the funds and acts as an umbrella non-profit organization that ensures the WCCF complies with IRS regulations and enables all donations to be tax deductible.

Funds can be directed to the:

- **Unrestricted Fund** – This fund allows donors to place no limitations on how those funds are to be used. These funds allow the WCCF flexibility to address the communities most pressing needs.
- **Children's Fund** – This fund supports youth programs and activities that provide Wyoming County's younger generations the platform to reach their full potential.
- **Parks and Recreation Fund** – This fund supports projects that create new parks enhance existing parks and recreational facilities.
- **Scholarship Fund** – This fund supports college scholarships to deserving Wyoming County youth.
- **Arts Fund** – This fund supports programs and projects that promote the arts in Wyoming County such as school art programs.
- **Cemetery Fund** – This fund was designed to help support the maintenance and upkeep of Wyoming County's many cemeteries.
- **Administrative Fund** – This fund is designed to support the every day needs of the Wyoming County Community Fund.
- **Donor Advised Fund** – This fund is for donors who wish to create their own fund and be able to advise the WCCF on how the money will be spent.

Goal 9: Build and grow a sustainable source of funds to provide for the needs of Wyoming County.

Objectives:

- 1. Provide the sub-committee with guidance to oversee the Wyoming County Community Fund to provide it guidance in its goal of expansion.**
- 2. Bring funding levels to a mark where the Wyoming County Fund can give award grants to worthy projects.**
- 3. Develop a sustainable fundraising program that raises funds on an annual or semiannual basis.**

4. Enhance and develop electronic media tools that serve the Wyoming County Community Fund in order to increase visibility and make donating easier for donors.

One problem that existed before the formation of the Planning Commission was that similar groups were working toward the same goal and competing for the same resources independently of each other. When the creation of the Planning Commission began, one of its main objectives was to assemble the already existing body of groups, information and resources that existed so that a network among them could exist. The ideal result would be a network that allowed similar groups to work with one another more efficiently through a more open line of communication. With a stronger network among the groups working toward improving Wyoming County, time and money could be saved allowing for their efforts to be spent more effectively.

Goal 10: Create a Community Network
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Objectives:

- 1. Create an inventory of Wyoming County community organizations.**
- 2. Create an electronic news-letter and list serve.**
- 3. Create a repository of planning documents within Wyoming County.**
- 4. Create a repository of grant information.**

III. Trend Analysis

The first step in the planning process was to collect data and analyze trends related to the economy, infrastructure, physical and social characteristics, and institutions of Wyoming County. This information helps to identify potential planning issues which may be addressed through goals and objectives in the strategic plan.

A. Demographics

Over the last several decades the population of Wyoming County has been declining. According to the 2008 American Community Survey Data from the Census bureau, the most recent population count of Wyoming County was 23,534. This figure reflects a decline in population of 19 percent since 1990. Exhibit 1 compares the population change in Wyoming County, its municipalities and the State.

**Exhibit 1
Population Change in Wyoming County, Municipalities,
and West Virginia, 1990 – 2008**

Area	Total Population			Numerical and % Change 2000- 2008	Numerical and % Change 1990-2008
	1990	2000	2008		
Mullens	2,006	1,769	1,584	-185 / -11%	-422 / -21%
Oceana	1,791	1,550	1,411	-139 / -9%	-380 / -21%
Pineville	865	715	655	-60 / -8%	-210 / -24%
Wyoming County	28,990	25,708	23,534	-2,174 / -9%	-5456 / -19%
West Virginia	1,793,477	1,808,344	1,819,777	11,433 / 1%	26,300 / 1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

Population Estimates and Projections

The trend in population decline is not expected to change in the near future; however, projections show this rate slowing down in comparison to previous years. Exhibit 2 shows the projected population for the county through 2020. These projected population change rates for the county continue to be higher than those projected for the overall state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the state is projected to have little growth (0.11%) from 2005-2010, no growth from 2010-2015, and slight population loss (-0.5%) from 2015-2020. Population estimates for Mullens, Oceana, and Pineville were only available through 2005 and are shown in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 2
Wyoming County Population Projections, 2010-2020**

Year	Total Population of County	Percent Change
1990	28,990	
2000	25,708	-11
2005 (estimate)	24,479	-5
2010 (projection)	23,406	-4
2015 (projection)	22,505	-4
2020 (projection)	21,732	-3

Source: West Virginia Regional Research Institute; Terrell Ellis & Associates

**Exhibit 3
Wyoming County Municipal Population Estimates, 2001-2005**

Year	Mullens	Oceana	Pineville
2001	1,725	1,522	700
2002	1,698	1,504	690
2003	1,691	1,500	688
2004	1,668	1,483	678
2005	1,653	1,478	676

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

Age Distribution

Current Census data also provides information on the age of the population in the county. Based on this data, approximately 47.2 percent of the total population is age 45 or higher. The younger segments of the population make up a smaller percentage of the overall population and have also experienced losses in total population between 1990 and 2008. See Exhibit 4 below.

**Exhibit 4
Age of Population in Wyoming County, 1990-2008**

Age	Population					
	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2008	% of Total
Under 5 years	1,686	5.8	1,467	5.7	1,271	5.4
5 to 24 years	9,226	31.9	6,528	25.3	5,225	22.2
25 to 44 years	12,117	41.8	7,074	27.5	5,930	25.2
45 to 64 years	4,840	16.7	7,053	27.5	7,766	33.0
65 years and older	1,121	3.8	3,586	14.0	3,342	14.2
Total	28,990	100.0	25,708	100.0	23,534	100.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

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The largest population growth in the county between 1990 and 2008 was in the 45-64 age group. This growth is consistent with county and statewide trends. The median age for the county (43 years) is higher than that of the state (40.5 years) as of 2008. The median ages are varied in the municipalities (based on the 2000 Census):

- Mullens - 43.1
- Oceana - 39.8
- Pineville - 47.0

This data indicates an aging population in the county that will only increase over time. These figures also indicate the loss of the younger segments of the existing population, which is most likely due to young adults and young families moving out of the county for education and employment opportunities.

Racial Composition

As shown in Exhibit 5, Wyoming County has a very small minority population, which reflects the overall county racial characteristics. While the populations are small, slight decreases were experienced in the Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and the Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander categories. The growth in the “Some other race” category may be explained by differences in the 1990 and 2000 census forms.

Exhibit 5
Population by Race in Wyoming County, 1990 – 2008

Race	Population					
	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2008	% of Total
White	28,673	98.9	25,345	98.6	N	N
Black or African American	234	0.8	161	0.6	N	N
American Indian and Alaska Native	40	0.1	31	0.1	N	N
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander	26	0.1	21	0.1	N	N
Some other race	17	0.05	19	0.1	N	N
Two or more races	-----	-----	131	0.5	N	N
Total	28,990	100.0	25,708	100.0	N	N

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

'N' - Data for this geographic area cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small.

B. Income Distribution

Households and Household Income

The number of households and the average household size in Wyoming County saw little change over the 1990-2000 period. While during the period from 2000-2008 there was an accelerated decrease of 6.5 percent. Pineville was the only municipality that experienced an increase in the number of households over the 1990-2000 period. Both the county and

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the municipalities experienced decreases in average household size, which were consistent with statewide trends during the 1990-2000 period.

Exhibit 6

Wyoming County, Municipalities, and West Virginia Household Trends, 1990-2008

Area	Households			Average Household Size		
	1990	2000	2008*	1990	2000	2008*
Mullens	857	771	--	2.34	2.24	--
Oceana	706	334	--	2.54	2.14	--
Pineville	350	660	--	2.43	2.35	--
Wyoming County	10,474	10,454	9,773	2.76	2.45	2.42
West Virginia	500,259	736,481	742,527	2.55	2.40	2.46

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

* 2008 data available only at county and state levels from Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

In 2008, the median household income in Wyoming County was \$33,768, an increase of 41 percent over the 2000 amount of \$23,932. Over the eighteen year period increases were experienced in the number of households with incomes of \$25,000 and higher and decreases were experienced in the number of households with incomes of \$24,999 and lower. These are both positive indicators of improvements to personal wealth.

Exhibit 7

Household Income Distribution in Wyoming County, 1990-2008

Income	1990		2000		2008		1990-2008 % Change	2000-2008% Change
	Total HH	% of Total HH	Total HH	% of Total HH	Total HH	% of Total HH		
< \$10,000	3,144	29.9	2,177	20.8	1280	13.1	-16.8	-7.7
\$10,000-\$14,999	1,503	14.3	1,145	10.9	714	7.3	-7.0	-3.6
\$15,000-\$24,999	2,193	20.9	2,117	20.2	1642	16.8	-4.1	-3.4
\$25,000-\$34,999	1,233	11.7	1,331	12.7	1417	14.5	2.8	1.8
\$35,000-\$49,999	1,439	13.7	1,515	14.5	1427	14.6	0.9	0.1
\$50,000-\$74,999	769	7.3	1,342	12.8	1593	16.3	9.0	3.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	118	1.1	482	4.6	1103	11.3	10.2	6.7
\$100,000-\$149,999	60	0.5	230	2.2	538	5.5	5	3.3
> \$150,000	29	0.2	140	1.3	68	0.7	0.5	-0.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

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Per Capita Personal Income

In 2006, Wyoming County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$23,462. This was 83 percent of the state average, \$28,206, and 64 percent of the national average, \$36,714. The 2006 PCPI reflected an increase of 15.6 percent from 2004. The 2004-2006 state change was 9.4 percent and the national change was 11.1 percent. In 1994, the PCPI of Wyoming was \$13,281 and ranked 42nd in the state. The average annual growth rate of PCPI over the past 10 years was 4.3 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 4.1 percent and for the nation was 4.1 percent.

Poverty

The percentage of people living below poverty level has mainly been declining at the state, county and municipal levels as shown in Exhibit 8 below. Oceana is the exception in the county with an increase in the number of people living in poverty from 1989 to 1999. Oceana and the county as a whole both have levels that are much higher than the statewide averages for the same time period. In the case of Oceana, this can be explained by the presence of several low-income housing units within the town. Only Pineville and Mullens have levels that were lower than the statewide average.

Exhibit 8
Percentage of Population below Poverty Levels in Municipalities and Wyoming County, Compared to West Virginia, 1989-2008

Year	Mullens	Oceana	Pineville	Wyoming County	West Virginia
1989	20.6%	30.6%	15.1%	27.8%	19.2%
1999	15.4%	33.5%	10.0%	25.1%	17.9%
2003*	--	--	--	22.3%	16.3%
2008*	--	--	--	17.5%	17.9%

* 2003 and 2008 data available only at county and state levels from Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates

Another important measure of poverty is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families with incomes below the U.S. poverty threshold as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The exhibit below shows the poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children for 2002-2004, 2008, and the percentages of the population at or under that threshold in the county and state. Wyoming County has had significantly higher percentages of children living in poverty than the statewide average.

Exhibit 9
Percentage of Children in Poverty in Wyoming County and West Virginia, 2002-2008

Year	Poverty Threshold	Wyoming County	West Virginia
2002	\$18,244	32.4%	24.3%
2003	\$18,660	37.4%	24.3%
2004	\$19,157	34.3%	24.4%
2008	\$21,834	33.7%	23.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kids Count; Terrell Ellis & Associates

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Self Sufficiency

In 2009 the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs (BEP) calculated self-sufficiency standards for the state and its counties. The standard is a measure of how much income is required for a family of a particular structure in a particular location to satisfactorily meet its fundamental needs without public or private assistance. Based on the BEP calculations the self sufficiency standard for Wyoming County would be \$18,025 annual or \$8.53 hourly for one adult and \$42,048 annual (combined) or \$9.95 hourly (per adult) for two adults and two school aged children. These figures are slightly lower than the statewide standard of \$18,515 annual or \$8.77 hourly for one adult and \$44,995 annual (combined) or \$10.65 hourly (per adult) for two adults and two school aged children (WVBEP, 2009).

C. Economy

According to the 2000 Census the leading industry sectors in Wyoming County are Mining, Government, Transportation/Public Utilities, and Services.

Exhibit 10
Earnings* by Major Industry Sectors in Wyoming County, 1990-2006

Category	1990	2000	2006	2000-2006% Change
Agricultural service, forestry, fishing & other	L	D	1,500	--
Mining	99,338	61,127	116,300	90.3
Construction	3,819	11,002	14,100	28.2
Manufacturing	3,156	6,134	8,000	30.4
Wholesale Trade	2,729	D	4,200	--
Retail Trade	13,597	17,261	16,600	-3.8
Transportation and public utilities	20,182	26,680	17,200	-35.5
Finance, insurance and real estate	3,183	4,166	3,800	-8.8
Government and government enterprises	35,772	49,718	61,500	23.7
Services	15,311	25,542	16,100	-37.0

* In thousands of dollars

L= Less than \$50,000, D = not shown to avoid disclosure

Source: BEA Regional Economic Information System; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

Earnings by persons employed in Wyoming County increased from \$223,084,000 in 2003 to \$231,860,000 in 2004, an increase of 3.9 percent. The 2003-2004 state change was 6.3 percent and the national change was 6.3 percent. The average annual growth rate from the 1994 estimate of \$218,777,000 to the 2004 estimate was 0.6 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 3.8 percent and for the nation was 5.5 percent. Wyoming County residents' earnings are, on average, slightly above the state average at \$31,823 per job held. The state average is \$30,879 (2005).

The most recent industry earnings data available is for 2004. This data was compiled using a different classification system and, therefore, cannot be directly compared with the information shown in the previous exhibit. The 2004 data does, however, indicate

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Coal

Wyoming County has consistently been among the top coal producing counties in the state. As of 2004, the county has 2,428,718,315 tons of recoverable coal reserves⁴. According to 2009 figures from the WV Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training, Wyoming County employed 889 people in the coal industry and produced 3,628,034 tons of coal (2,401,186 underground and 1,226,848 surface). The number of people employed by the coal industry in the past decade and a half has been relatively consistent with significant declines in 2003, 2006-2007, and 2009. The amount of coal produced annually has fluctuated over the past fourteen years with the highest amount produced in 1998. Since then it has mostly been declining with 2009 being the lowest production year in that period.

**Exhibit 11
Wyoming County Coal Industry Data, 1996-2009**

Year	Employment	Underground Production (tons)	Surface Production (tons)	Total Production (tons)
2009	889	2,401,186	1,226,848	3,628,034
2008	1,001	3,562,488	1,708,299	5,270,787
2007	729	2,407,173	2,190,350	4,597,523
2006	833	3,244,982	2,031,311	5,276,293
2005	1,240	4,402,037	2,283,553	6,685,590
2004	1,054	2,992,325	2,366,288	5,358,613
2003	844	3,68,15	2,681,301	6,366,406
2002	1,100	5,226,310	2,970,089	8,196,399
2001	1,089	5,123,894	2,612,893	7,736,787
2000	1,160	6,673,094	2,925,017	9,598,111
1999	1,016	7,251,134	2,735,945	9,987,079
1998	1,398	8,387,170	2,549,455	10,936,625
1997	1,199	8,560,155	1,221,498	9,781,653
1996	1,253	7,406,530	572,333	7,978,863

Source: West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety (<http://www.wvminesafety.org/Stats.htm>)

Natural Gas

West Virginia has abundant supplies of natural gas and the transportation pipelines throughout the state and region are extensive and reliable. Wyoming County is considered a major producer of natural gas and this sector should be considered as a future expansion area for the county. Currently, the major suppliers in the county are Mountaineer Gas, Hope Gas, Oceana Gas, WV Power Gas, Ravencliff Fuels, and Town

⁴ West Virginia Coal Reserves (<http://www.wvminesafety.org/PDFs/reserves2004.pdf>)

Gas Company. The following exhibit shows trends in natural gas production over the past decade.

Exhibit 12
Wyoming County Natural Gas Production, 1996-2008

Year	Total Production (Mcf)*	Number of Wells
1996	13,938,444	1,044
1997	13,816,409	1,119
1998	13,942,479	1,163
1999	16,097,771	1,239
2000	15,923,705	1,205
2001	19,517,925	1,341
2002	20,441,450	1,387
2003	18,797,366	1,466
2004	21,440,619	1,503
2005	29,033,145	1,657
2006	27,076,853	1,760
2007	27,498,068	1,843
2008	25,257,718	1,916

* Mcf = Millions of cubic feet

Source: WVGES; Terrell Ellis & Associates

Timbering

According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) data⁵, in 2000 Wyoming County has 277,700 acres of timberland comprised of 190,000 acres of saw timber, 60,100 acres of pole timber, 17,300 acres of sapling and seedling, and 10,300 acres of non-stocked timber. Of the timberlands in the county 6,700 acres are federally owned 79,600 acres are owned by the forest industry, 136,900 are corporately held, and 54,600 acres are owned by individuals.

Labor Force

Wyoming County has experienced a fluctuating labor force since 2000 with variable amounts of unemployment and an unemployment rate that is higher than the state average. The labor pool in the county is skilled and educated with almost half of the population graduating high school and 25 percent completing at least some collegiate level education.

During 2005, Wyoming County had a net gain of 51 jobs; however there were 325 new jobs created during that period. Average new hire earnings are reported at \$2,570.75 per month. Data available indicates a steady level of total jobs within Wyoming County in recent years.

⁵ Forest Statistic for West Virginia: 1989 and 2000, USDA, June 2003.

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Exhibit 13
Wyoming County Labor Force Statistics, 2000-2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Civilian Labor Force	8,620	8,530	8,760	8,300	8,080	8,320	8,350	8,220	7,980	7,960	7,820
Employed	7,960	7,990	8,160	7,640	7,560	7,870	7,880	7,740	7,610	7,070	6,960
Unemployed	670	550	600	660	530	450	470	480	370	890	860
Unemployment Rate	7.7	6.4	6.9	7.9	6.5	5.4	5.6	5.8	4.7	11.1	11.0
WV Unemployment Rate	5.5	4.8	6.1	6.1	5.3	5.0	4.9	4.3	4.3	7.9	8.6

Source: WV BEP; Terrell Ellis & Associates

Total non-farm business establishments in Wyoming County in 2004 were 392. The 2002 Survey of Business Owners conducted by the Census Bureau included 350 businesses with employees. Employment in Wyoming County for 2008 (the most recent available data) reflects a total employment of 7,610 persons. The following exhibit shows the breakdown by industry sector.

Exhibit 14
Wyoming County Non-farm Payroll Employment by Industry, 2008

Sector	Average Employment				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total Non-farm	5,810	6,030	5,990	5,228	5124
Goods Producing	1,500	1,750	1,770	--	--
Natural Resources and Mining	1,010	1,280	1,330	1,216	1,127
Construction	310	280	260	246	243
Manufacturing	180	190	190	153	134
Service Providing	4,300	4,280	4,220	Na	Na
Private Service Providing	3,070	3,020	2,950	3,910	4,004
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,080	1,030	1,050	963	964
Wholesale Trade	60	70	70	71	76
Retail Trade	690	640	660	641	643
Transportation and Utilities	330	330	320	251	245
Information	30	30	20	Na	24
Financial Activities	110	110	110	108	127
Professional and Business Services	170	170	170	141	143
Education & Health Services	940	890	790	742	737
Leisure and Hospitality	270	330	360	354	346
Other Services	470	470	460	Na	Na
Total Government	1,240	1,260	1,270	1,223	1,214
Federal Government	80	80	80	86	90
State Government	210	210	210	197	196
Local Government	950	970	980	941	928

Source: WVBEP; Terrell Ellis & Associates

<http://www.workforcewv.org/LMI/CNTYPROF/wyoming.pdf>

Employment Trends

If we look closer at selected industries over a thirty-year period the total employment in Wyoming County within these particular industries declined significantly during the period (9,942 total jobs in 1970 and 7,360 jobs in 2000). The shift in type of employment

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is particularly significant. Employment in mining fell precipitously between 1980 and 1990 and continued to fall during the next ten-year period. Jobs in the service sector, government jobs, and jobs in retail trade rose slightly during the thirty-year period while the relatively few manufacturing jobs available declined. The loss of 6,577 mining jobs between 1980 and 2000 is obviously a severe blow to the local economy. More recent data indicates a continued slow rate of job loss between 2000 and 2004.

Another concerning trend relates to resident worker commuting patterns. The percentage of workers in Wyoming County who commute outside the county to work was 36.8% in 2008. This is significantly above the state average (20.7%) and nearly ten times the national average. Average travel time to work is a little more than the state average at 31.5 minutes. Net commutation (persons coming into the county to work minus those leaving to work) is -1,649. These figures tell us that significant numbers of Wyoming County residents must leave the county to seek work. This is not surprising given the significant loss of county based jobs over the past thirty years.

Retail Sales

Retail sales are an important component of the local and regional economy. The Economic Census of 2002 reported per capita retail sales in Wyoming County as \$5,096. Statewide average retail sales were significantly high at \$9,277 per capita. Wyoming County residents most likely purchase a substantial portion of their goods and services in other counties. Based on Economic Census Data, Wyoming County experienced growth in retail sales revenue from 1997 to 2002. These trends are comparable to Wyoming's neighboring counties which experienced increases in sales revenue except McDowell and Mingo County which declined. The adjacent counties all lost retail establishments between 1997 and 2004, Wyoming County was the only county in the area to have an increase. Of all the neighboring counties Raleigh County had the largest number of retail establishments and highest revenue in 2002, however, Logan County had the largest increase in retail sales (29%) over the period.

Exhibit 15
Retail Sales in Wyoming County and Surrounding Counties, 1997 -2002

	Retail Trade	Wyoming	Raleigh	Mercer	McDowell	Mingo	Logan	Boone
2002	Establishments	103	364	305	84	102	165	87
	Sales (\$1,000)	127,124	918,983	745,891	106,823	124,854	432,841	156,269
1997	Establishments	98	390	321	97	122	204	110
	Sales (\$1,000)	108,377	826,776	588,156	108,253	176,131	335,709	146,266

Source: Economic Census, US Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

*2002 was last update

Financial Resources

Local

Available data from 2004 indicates that Wyoming County per capita deposits were \$8,987 (average deposits per county residents). The state average per-capita deposit is significantly higher at \$12,474. Wyoming County has eight banking locations in the county and a total of \$220 million dollars in total deposits (2004).

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Outside Resources

Federal transfer receipts are a measure of federal investment in the county and include federal payments made to individuals for unemployment benefits, retirement, social security, disability payments, and other forms of payment not attributable to earnings from work. For 2004 these payments average \$9,639 per each person in the county. Statewide this figure is \$6,929. Wyoming County residents are more dependent on federal government programs than many other areas of the state.

Federal per capita spending in Wyoming County for salaries and benefits of federal employees, military personnel, procurement contracts, grants, and other forms of investment was \$7,854 per person in 2004. This is less federal investment than the state per capita average of \$8,364. Federal grant funds received in Wyoming County during 2004 totaled \$45,441,000. These grant funds include grants made directly to local governments or organizations as well as federal grant funds distributed by state government to the county.

D. Housing

Wyoming County has not experienced a lot of housing growth or development over the last decade. The figures from the 2000 Census shown in Exhibit 16 reflect a stagnant housing market with the decline in housing units.

**Exhibit 16
Number of Housing Units in Municipalities and
Wyoming County, 1990-2008**

Place	1990	2000	2008*	1990-2000 % Change
Mullens	1,063	904	--	-15.0
Pineville	387	377	--	-2.6
Oceana	801	739	--	-7.7
Wyoming County	11,756	11,698	11,858	-0.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

* 2008 data available only at county level.

In 2008, the median house value in Wyoming County was \$60,700, a significant increase over the median value of \$47,400 declared in 2000. This figure lags behind the state median house values of \$93,500.

The median mortgage in the county in 2000 was \$574 per month, this value increased to \$789 per month in 2008. The median rent for the county over the same period was \$318 per month in 2000 and \$420 in 2008. These figures are slightly lower than the corresponding statewide averages.

Housing Stock Characteristics

The majority of the housing stock in the county is considered to be single-family detached housing. A traditional stand-alone house that is not a mobile home or designed for multiple families would be categorized as “single-family detached”. The second largest percentage (24.6) is in the mobile home category. Only 6.3 percent of all units in

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the county are considered multi-family units, which consists of duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. According to the Census, units were lost in the single-family attached, multi-family (5-9, 10 or more), and mobile home categories. Increases were shown in the single-family detached, multi-family (2 to 4), and mobile home categories.

Exhibit 17
Housing Units and Structure Types in Wyoming County, 1990-2008

Units and Structure Type	1990		2000		2008	
	Total	% Total	Total	% Total	Total	% Total
Total Housing Units:	11,756	100.0	11,698	100.0	11,858	100.0
1, detached	7,696	65.4	7,452	63.7	8,396	70.8
1, attached	74	0.6	90	0.8	71	0.6
2 to 4	194	1.7	194	1.6	285	2.4
5 to 9	182	1.6	130	1.1	107	0.9
10 or more	189	1.6	222	1.9	178	1.5
Mobile home, trailer, or other	3,421	29.1	3,610	30.9	2,810	23.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

Approximately 34 percent of the housing stock in the county was built after 1980. This indicates a newer housing stock but the majority of the construction occurred during 1940-1960. There has been limited new housing development in recent years. See Exhibit 18.

Exhibit 18
Housing Unit Age in Wyoming County, 2000

Age	2008	
	Total	% Total
Built 2000 or later	344	2.9
Built 1990 to 1999	1636	13.8
Built 1980 to 1989	2051	17.3
Built 1960 to 1979	3569	30.1
Built 1940 to 1959	3012	25.4
Built 1939 or earlier	1245	10.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

Vacancy

The homeownership rate in Wyoming County in 2008 was 81.6 percent. This rate is higher than the state rate for the same period (74.4). As shown in Exhibit 19, vacancy rates for both homeowners and renters have fluctuated at the municipal and county levels between 1990 and 2000. The county, Pineville and Mullens experienced increases in homeowner vacancy rates from 1990 to 2000, whereas Oceana showed a slight decrease. In comparison, the rental market fared a lot better over the same period with vacancy

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rates going down in all areas. Overall, the municipal vacancy rates are much higher than both the county and statewide averages.

Exhibit 19
Housing Occupancy in Wyoming County and Municipalities
compared to West Virginia, 1990 – 2008

Area	Homeowner Vacancy Rate			Rental Vacancy Rate		
	1990	2000	2008	1990	2000	2008
Mullens	3.3	4.6	N	25.9	9.0	N
Oceana	2.2	2.0	N	14.0	9.9	N
Pineville	2.6	4.2	N	7.3	4.9	N
Wyoming County	1.6	1.7	N	12.3	8.2	N
West Virginia	2.2	2.2	N	10.1	9.1	N

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc.

N- Data does not exist at this time

IV. Public Involvement

A. Steering Committee

The planning process began through the creation of a steering committee assigned with the task of guiding the development of the strategic plan. The committee was made up of a mixture of state and local elected officials, representatives from the county and municipalities, development agencies, and local non-profits. The first task of the committee was to approve the questionnaire used for the public and leadership surveys. The group also was responsible for identifying who would participate in the leadership survey and formulating a distribution plan for the questionnaires.

B. Public Opinion Survey

In June of 2007 two public opinion surveys were distributed in Wyoming County in support of the Strategic Plan process⁶. One survey was sent to a selected group of leaders in the county who were identified by the steering committee members, the other survey was available to the general community and was distributed in-person, through the local newspapers and on-line through a link on the Wyoming County Economic Development Authority's website. Respondents were given approximately four weeks to provide their responses. A total of 100 completed surveys were received by the April 16, 2007 deadline. Of those, 40 respondents out of 98 completed the leadership survey and 60 community surveys were completed (14 on-line). The purpose of the survey was to assist in identifying planning issues and setting priorities for the goals, objectives, and strategies in the plan. An overview of the survey findings is provided below and a detailed summary of each of the survey responses is included in the appendix.

Major Strengths:

- Cost of housing overall
- Level of crime
- Quality of air
- Quality of climate
- Quality of relationships between the race and ethnic groups
- Quality of local elementary education
- Quality of local secondary education
- Quality and availability of post-secondary education in the community
- Availability of vocational programs at the secondary level (job skills, computer classes, etc.)
- Adequacy of local police protection and public safety
- Adequacy of local fire protection
- Level of property taxes

⁶ It is important to note that the findings of this public opinion survey are only intended to provide an additional source of data to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in the county. The information was obtained from a very small subset of the overall population and should in no way be considered statistically significant or valid.

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- Cooperation of local government with business
- Cooperation of local government with each other
- Level of leadership support of economic development programs
- Level of leadership commitment to advancing the growth and development of the community
- Availability of post-secondary vocational training
- Availability of cable TV
- Availability of low interest loans for small businesses

Major Weaknesses:

- Availability of executive - level housing
- Availability of rental apartments
- Level of cultural activity and facilities
- Availability of recreational opportunities
- Presence of major sporting events
- Availability of adequate hospital facilities
- Availability elderly housing
- Availability of accessible housing
- Quality of housing

Most Important Issues Facing the county:

- Infrastructure (water, sewer and broadband)
- Lack of jobs
- Absence of urgent medical care
- Drug abuse
- Highways
- Housing
- Population loss
- Lack of recreational activities (youth especially)

C. Stakeholder Meeting

On July 9, 2007 a stakeholder meeting was held with members of the steering committee and other interested stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a project update, share information collected on the trends analysis and survey findings, conduct a visioning exercise, prioritize identified issues, and solicit comments on all the materials presented.

For the visioning exercise the attendees broke out into groups and came up with headlines for the local newspaper in the year 2017. For this exercise the participants were asked to envision what they would like to see Wyoming County become in ten years. The results of this exercise helped to formulate the vision statement for the plan. Concepts identified during this exercise were related to upscale housing, job creation and expansion, recreation, drug rehabilitation, highway development, inland port creation, and county-wide partnerships.

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In addition to the visioning exercise, participants at the stakeholder meeting were asked to vote on their top issues for the strategic plan to address. The list of issues to vote on was compiled from the recommendations listed in various existing plans as well as comments that were made in the public opinion survey responses. One additional issue was offered by the participants at the meeting and was added to the list: organizational structure. The participants were asked to place dots on the issues that should be addressed by this plan. They were also reminded that not all issues could be addressed by this planning effort and therefore to limit their choices to the highest priority issues.

Exhibit 20. Issue Rankings

Issue	Number of Dots Received
Transportation	10
Housing	9
Infrastructure	9
Developable Land	8
Organizational Structure	8
Recreation and Cultural Resources	6
Job Growth and Retention	4

Issues that were included for the ranking process because they were identified as concerns in other plans or in the survey responses but did not receive votes from the participants included: education, population loss, medical care, drug problems, workforce development, and senior services and facilities. The low ranking of these issues does not invalidate them as areas of concern for the county. When voting participants acknowledged that some issues (e.g., the drug problem) could not necessarily be addressed through a strategic plan such as this one. In other cases it was felt that by resolving some of the larger issues, such as transportation and infrastructure, the anticipated impacts would bring positive results to all other areas, thereby improving all aspects of the county.

D. Vision Statement

Using the information that was collected through the steering committee, surveys, and public meetings, a vision statement was created which describes what the participants would like to see for the future of Wyoming County over the next ten years.

Vision: With the completion of its infrastructure systems, Wyoming County leads the state in population, economic development and housing market growth. Additionally, the county continues to benefit from increases in tourism resulting from improved access to the area's natural and cultural resources.

E. Public Meetings

Public information meetings were held at two locations in the County to provide information on the interim draft plan and solicit feedback. On August 20, 2007 a meeting was held at Wyoming East High School that was attended by seven citizens including several steering committee members. The second meeting was held at Westside High School and was attended by eight citizens, including one steering committee member. The meetings had identical formats and presented the same information regarding the plan purpose and process, key findings from the trends analysis, and the draft goals and objectives.

Meeting participants were provided an opportunity to comment on the strengths, weaknesses, and key planning issues that had been identified for the County. Additional strengths that were mentioned by the meeting participants included: high speed internet; community loyalty; geography/natural environment; and small/rural communities.

Additional weaknesses included: local government opposition to change; cell phone service/reception; and after hour emergency care.

Participants were also given comment forms to provide feedback on the draft goals and objectives that were presented in the plan. The forms could be filled out and handed in at the meeting or mailed back at a later time to the EDA. Copies of the comment form and meeting attendance sheets are included in the appendix.

V. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Continue efforts to support completion of planned highway improvements in county and surrounding region.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Continue to lobby for additional funding earmarks to complete the Coalfields Expressway and other regional highway systems.	High	Year 1-6	Coalfields Expressway Authority, Local Elected Officials, Citizen Groups, EDA	N/A
Identify potential development sites that are located near key interchanges. Future development at these sites could be for industrial, commercial, or residential uses. Sites should be prioritized based on the construction phases of the highway.	Medium	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, EDA, Coalfields Expressway Authority	Community Participation Grants, Local Economic Development Grants
Coordinate with mining companies and federal, state, and local highway officials to explore the use of public/private partnerships (PPPs) (similar to those used for the King Coal Highway) to support the construction of the highway and the creation of adjacent flat developable land.	Medium	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, EDA, Coalfields Expressway Authority, DOH	N/A
Develop strategic plans for the implementation of tourism promotion and business development based on the completion of various phases of the highways.	Medium	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, EDA	Flex-E-Grant, Groundworks

Goal 2: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as future planned highway construction and mining activities.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Work with the Coalfields Expressway, private landowners, and appropriate state agencies to develop a map that identifies future development sites in relation to planned construction phases of the Coalfields Expressway and existing infrastructure. Priority should be given to sites adjacent to areas of the Expressway that are currently under construction or that are programmed for completion in the near future.	High	Year 1-4	Planning Commission, EDA, Coalfields Expressway Authority	N/A
Identify site improvement needs (i.e., grading and clearing, infrastructure) for all identified sites, beginning with highest priority, and explore creative partnerships with WVDO, WVDEP, WVDOH, land holding companies, mining companies and other appropriate parties to prepare the sites for development.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission	Community Partnership Grants, Local Economic Development Grants
Link corridor-focused development sites with local and regional tourism opportunities.	High	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, County Commission, Coal Heritage Authority, Hatfield-McCoy	N/A
Ensure that new growth along the Coalfields, King Coal and Shawnee Parkway Corridors harmonize with the natural environment and protects scenic resources.	Medium	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, Groundwork Wyoming County	N/A
Ensure that all surface mining activity discuss post land use opportunities with the county, to secure future opportunities for economic development.	Medium	Year 4-6	Office of Coalfield and Community Development, WCEDA, Mine Companies	N/A

Goal 3: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as Brownfields.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Continue to support and monitor the progress of the existing Brownfield project.	High	Year 1-4	Planning Commission, County Commission, Local Governments	N/A
Utilize the data in the Site Ranking Report from May 2007 to help identify other potential redevelopment sites to pursue.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission, County Attorney, Local Governments	N/A
Assess remainder of County for the existing Brownfield project.	High	Year 3-6	Planning Commission, Engineering Consultant Firm, Groundwork	
Continue to explore strategic partnerships with land holding companies in order to support the creation of developable sites.	High	Year 1-6	County Commission, EDA	WV Housing Development Fund, Demolition Program, EPA

Goal 4: Identify strategic future development sites in Wyoming County that capitalize on other existing opportunities such as abandoned housing.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Continue to partner with the Mingo County housing authority and the Safe Housing and Economic Development (SHED) and a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) in support of housing needs in Wyoming County.	High	Year 4	Planning Commission, County Commission, Local Governments	N/A
Identify the appropriate legal procedures and resources necessary for the acquisition of abandoned buildings.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission, County Attorney, Local Governments	WV Housing Development Fund – Demolition Program, CDBG

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Develop a county-wide inventory of abandoned and dilapidated structures.	High	Year 1-4	Planning Commission, Engineering Consultant Firm	N/A
Identify a subset of these properties which have the greatest redevelopment potential based on the size of the lot, potential for aggregation with adjacent parcels, and proximity to existing infrastructure, population centers, and other potential attractants.	Medium	Year 1-4	Planning Commission, Engineering Consultant Firm, OCCD	WV Housing Development Fund – Demolition Program, SCBG
Coordinate with local governments as needed to encourage the acquisition and redevelopment of identified parcels that fall within municipal boundaries and work with the county commission on parcels located in the unincorporated portions of the county.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission, County Commission, ABC, Municipalities	WV Housing Development Fund – Demolition Program, SCBG
Explore funding opportunities and the creation of a revolving loan fund for housing development.	Low	Year 4-6	Planning Commission, Mingo Count Housing Authority, SHED	

Goal 5: Identify infrastructure improvements necessary to support future development in Wyoming County and determine the appropriate strategies for funding and constructing infrastructure projects.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Coordinate the development of an infrastructure plan for the county that would identify necessary improvements, potential costs, and prioritized implementation with consideration to areas of the county that may need to have services provided in the near term to support other development objectives.	High	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, PSDs, Water Companies, utilities, EDA, UGWA, Region 1, OCDD	Community Participation Grants
Work with all county watersheds, public service districts, and municipalities to develop county wide wastewater treatment plan.	High	Year 4	UGWA	
Develop and adopt a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the county.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission, County Commission, Local Governments	N/A
Create an inventory of infrastructure funding sources.	High	Year 4	EDA VISTA	

Goal 6: Provide safe, healthy, and affordable housing for existing and future residents of Wyoming County.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Develop a housing study that would examine the current market conditions, estimate of the different types of new housing needed to accommodate the future population of the county (e.g., elderly housing, multi-family units, mobile home units, single-family units), and identify suitable locations for future residential development.	Medium	Year 1-4	Planning Commission, EDA VISTA	WV Housing Development Fund
Assist interested parties to acquire housing redevelopment from the purchase or taking of existing abandoned and dilapidated properties (see Developable Land objectives).	Low	Year 5-6	County Commission, Local Governments	WV Housing Development Fund – Demolition Program, SCBG
Identify suitable locations for future residential development.	Low	Year 4-6	Planning Commission, SHED, OCDD	
The county should research and assess the process of adopting and enforcing a standard building code such as one of the three model codes used in the U.S.: the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) Code, the Southern Standard Building Code Conference Code, or the Uniform Building Code produced by the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO).	Medium	Year 4-5	County Commission, County Accessor, Wyoming County Health Department	N/A

Goal 7: To support and expand existing employment opportunities in Wyoming County and explore new employment opportunities through the diversification of the local economy.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Participate in the Vision Shared community training workshop and the Create West Virginia conference to develop strategies to implement new economy concepts.	High	Year 1-6	EDA, Vision Shared	N/A
Identify targeted industry sectors to attract and develop a marketing plan for those identified sectors with consideration given to diversifying the economy and opportunities created through the construction of the Coalfield's Expressway.	Medium	Year 4-6	EDA	WV Tech EDA University, Community Participation Grant
Identify a site and develop a new industrial park. Explore the potential for using a portion of the new park for microbusiness and other mechanism that would encourage entrepreneurship.	High	Year 1-6	EDA, Planning Commission	US EDA, ARC, WV Infrastructure Council
Continue to work with the BREAD (Business Retention Expansion and Development) program sub-committee that can identify opportunities for growth in existing employment sectors.	Medium	Year 4-6	EDA	N/A
Increase Wyoming County Economic Development Authority loan program's scope and portfolio size.	Medium	Year 1-6	EDA	USDA, SBDC
Identify and implement the resources necessary to develop a business incubator.	Medium	Year 4-5	EDA	

Goal 8: Enhance and promote recreation and cultural resources in the county for both residents and tourists.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the county that would evaluate existing recreational facilities and programs and determine the need for additional facilities/programs.	Low	Year 1-3	Planning Commission, CHHA, Hatfield-McCoy, Groundwork	Community Participation Grant
Coordinate with the Coal Heritage Highway Authority and the National Coal Heritage Trail to promote heritage tourism in the area.	Medium	Year 1-5	Planning Commission, Coal Heritage Area Authority, EDA, Citizen Groups	WV Tourism Commission Advertising Grants
Support the creation of additional cultural tourism attractants in the county.	Medium	Year 1-6	Planning Commission, Coal Heritage Area Authority, EDA, RAIL, Citizen Groups	To Be Determined
Work with the Hatfield McCoy recreational trail to maximize its economic impact.	Medium	Year 4-6	EDA, Groundwork, Planning Commission	
Assist with the development of the portion of the Great Eastern Trail that runs through Wyoming County that is uncompleted.	Medium	Year 4-5	GET	
Coordinate with Groundwork Wyoming County, Convention and Visitors Bureau and other related organizations to identify and establish natural resource based recreational opportunities.	Medium	Year 4-6	Groundwork, CVB	

Goal 9: Build and grow a sustainable source of funds to provide for the needs of Wyoming County.

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Provide the sub-committee with guidance to oversee the Wyoming County Community Fund to assist in its goal of expansion.	High	Year 4	EDA VISTA	N/A
Bring funding levels to a mark where the Wyoming County Fund can give award grants to worthy projects.	High	Year 4	EDA VISTA	N/A
Develop a sustainable fundraising program that raises funds on an annual or semiannual basis.	High	Year 4	EDA VISTA	N/A
Enhance and develop electronic media tools that serve the Wyoming County Community Fund in order to increase visibility and make donating easier for donors.	Medium	Year 5	EDA VISTA	N/A

Goal 10: Create a Community Network

Objective	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Source
Create an inventory of Wyoming County community organizations.	High	Year 4-6	EDA VISTA	N/A
Create and electronic news-letter and list serve.	High	Year 4-6	EDA VISTA	N/A
Create a repository of planning documents within Wyoming County.	High	Year 4-6	EDA VISTA	N/A
Create a repository of grant information.	Medium	Year 4-6	EDA VISTA	N/A