

# NELSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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JOINT WORKSESSION DRAFT

June 29, 2023

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Our Vision

Nelson is a welcoming community that values its natural resources, encourages economic growth, and provides excellent quality of life for all community members.

Nelson County today is a great place to work, live, and visit. Residents place high value on the rural character of the County and the strong sense of community, but they are concerned about unbalanced growth and limited economic opportunities. The question then, as we blaze a trail to the future, is how do we preserve our rural character as we grow and evolve with changing times? How do we increase housing choices for different types of individuals and families? How do we grow the economy and job opportunities while keeping our community accessible and affordable for everyone? How can we face our more difficult problems, improve the County, and meet our challenges head on?

The distinct benefit of a Comprehensive Plan is that it confronts these big issues in a big-picture way. The Comprehensive Plan fully considers how these big ideas are interrelated and interdependent. In creating this plan, we identified the defining issues that are central to the future success of Nelson County. The challenge before us now in reaching our destination — Nelson 2042 — is to leverage our strengths as we grow, while mitigating the negatives. The Nelson 2042 Comprehensive Plan sets us on a path and provides the directions to reach our destination.



*"I love the rural  
character of Nelson  
County and the  
diverse caring  
communities here."*

- Nelson Resident



## Guide at a Glance

The Nelson 2042 Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide for County officials and a resource for community members. The Plan is our guide to the Nelson of 2042. It articulates Nelson's shared vision for the future and identifies specific directions to reach that vision. These directions, referred to as goals and strategies, are established under a coordinated planning framework of Plan Elements.

### Creating Our Guide

Chapter 1 establishes the legal context for the Comprehensive Plan, describes the Plan's functional relationship to other planning efforts in the County and region, and summarizes the community input process - a key component of drafting the content of this plan.

### Setting the Direction

Chapter 2 describes the Nelson of today and outlines the Nelson of tomorrow. The chapter outlines the plan structure, including: vision, big ideas, plan elements, and supporting goals.

### Plan Elements

Chapters 3 through 8 describe the individual plan elements that contain the policies and strategies to reach our vision for the Nelson of 2042. The following plan elements are discussed in this Plan:

- Shaping Community Character
- Connecting People & Places
- Creating Livable Communities
- Protecting Valuable Resources
- Creating a Resilient Economy
- Serving the Community

### Blazing the Way

Chapter 9 catalogs the specific strategies included in the Comprehensive Plan in an Implementation Work Plan. The Work Plan prioritizes and provides accountability for the strategies from each Plan Element; provides specific guidance for decision-making; and defines the ongoing process that will be used to monitor progress towards the vision for the future.



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# Creating Our Guide



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## Using Nelson 2042

Nelson 2042 is Nelson County's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the County's long-range planning document that serves as **our guide** for future growth and development of the community. While it is not regulatory, the Plan, based on the vision and values of the community, is used by County staff, appointed officials, elected officials, and others as a decision making and policy guide.

The Plan describes the community's vision for Nelson County over the next 20 years and includes goals, strategies, and implementation measures to achieve the community's objectives. The Plan addresses

a wide range of topics related to development and land use including transportation, housing and neighborhoods, parks and open space, community facilities and services, economic development, and community character. Together, these elements contain the policy direction to help us reach the Nelson of 2042.





## Legal Basis for Comprehensive Plans

Every locality in Virginia is required by state code to adopt a Comprehensive Plan.

The Code of Virginia §15.2-2223 and §15.2-2224, among others, outline the required and optional Plan elements and offer a general framework for plan activities. Typical elements of the Comprehensive Plan, include, but are not limited to:

- Future land use planning maps and recommendations for development and physical improvements;
- A comprehensive system of transportation facilities, including maps and cost estimates for improvements;
- A system of community service facilities, including parks and recreation infrastructure;
- Areas and implementation measures for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing; and
- Approaches for coordinated economic development.

State requirements for Comprehensive Plans also recognize that community development is ongoing and ever-changing. Virginia Code §15.2-2230 requires localities to review the Comprehensive Plan every five years, and to amend it as needed, to ensure its relevancy and usefulness to the community.

### VIRGINIA CODE §15.2-2223

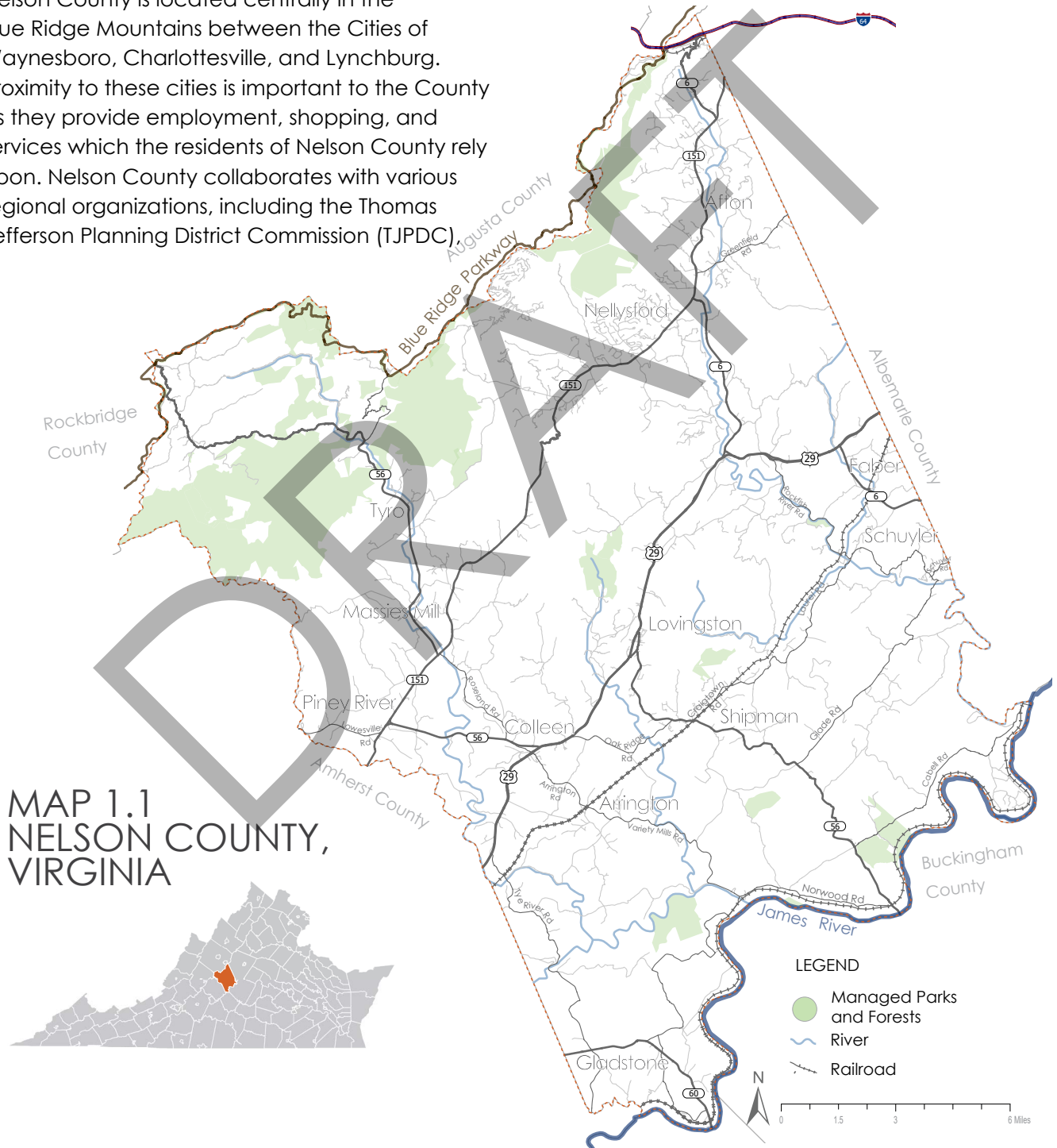
*"The Comprehensive Plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities."*

# Planning Jurisdiction

Nelson County's planning jurisdiction is shown in Map 1.1. The County contains 474 square miles of land area and a population of 14,775<sup>1</sup>. While Lovingston - the County seat - and Nellysford are sometimes referred to locally as Towns, they are unincorporated areas that are subject to this Plan.

Nelson County is located centrally in the Blue Ridge Mountains between the Cities of Waynesboro, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg. Proximity to these cities is important to the County as they provide employment, shopping, and services which the residents of Nelson County rely upon. Nelson County collaborates with various regional organizations, including the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPD).

to help implement many of the goals and strategies contained within this plan. As such, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that collaboration amongst regional partners is critical to effective long-range planning.



MAP 1.1  
NELSON COUNTY,  
VIRGINIA

1. US Census 2020 Population Count



## Relationship to Other Plans & Ordinances

Nelson 2042 is an organizing document for other plans, policies, and ordinances. The Comprehensive Plan includes data, ideas, and recommendations from many existing plans, studies, and strategic documents. The Comprehensive Plan informs and influences future updates to land development regulations and decisions. Zoning matters, capital improvements, transportation projects, and environmental and historic resource protection initiatives rely on the content of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance

Nelson County's zoning and subdivision ordinances are the primary tools used to implement the Comprehensive Plan. While the Comprehensive Plan offers vision, policy, and future land use recommendations, zoning and subdivision regulations directly control the location, form, and character of development. The Comprehensive Plan should guide updates to the zoning and subdivision ordinances. In addition, when a development or rezoning application is submitted to the County, decision makers must ensure that the application meets the specific standards of County ordinances and contributes to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Capital Improvement Plan

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is the County's resource and fiscal management process that coordinates the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period. Capital improvements are major, non-recurring infrastructure and equipment projects. The community's goals and long-range vision are achieved when the priorities of the CIP align with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

### Other Plans, Studies, & Initiatives

Nelson 2042 encompasses multiple community plans, studies, and initiatives to ensure regional coordination. Existing plans and studies considered in the development are listed in the appendix of this document.



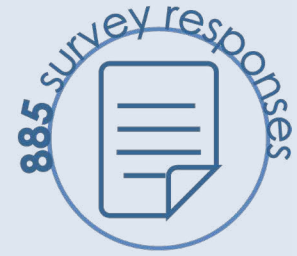
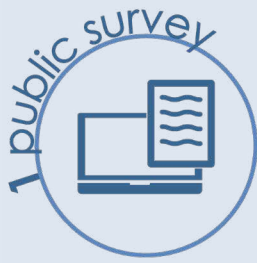




## Creating Nelson 2042

Nelson 2042 is the culmination of two years of research, data analysis, and most importantly, community input and engagement. Throughout the planning process this Comprehensive Plan update has taken deliberate steps to guarantee that citizen voices define Nelson County's vision and goals – past, present, and future.





= over 1,000 participants

## Community Input

### Community Survey

A survey consisting of 23 questions, tailored to identify strengths, weaknesses, and future needs of the community, was made available for community members to take on-line through the Comprehensive Plan website or in paper copies distributed throughout the County between July 1 and August 31, 2022. In total, 885 people completed the survey.

### Stakeholder Listening Sessions

Over 35 local organizations, business representatives, and industry professionals participated in four discussion based listening sessions. Each session focused on a separate theme relevant to the Comprehensive Plan update process.

- July 13, 2022 | Housing & Development
- July 20, 2022 | Tourism, Lodging & Hospitality
- August 3, 2022 | Agriculture & Agritourism
- August 3, 2022 | Community Groups & Nonprofits

### Community Workshops

During four community workshops, community members were introduced to the Comprehensive Plan process and invited to work together in groups to complete exercises on Countywide and the topic-focused issues: Growth & Development, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Recreation & Outdoors. Over 150 people participated.

- July 13, 2022 | Nelson County High School
- July 20, 2022 | Rockfish Valley Elementary School
- August 3, 2022 | Nelson Heritage Center
- August 28, 2022 | Nelson Center

### Input Results Forum

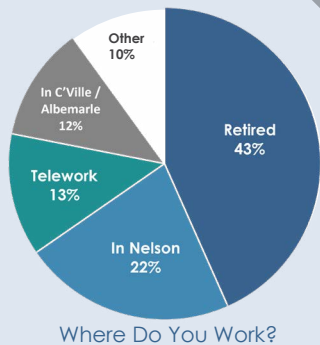
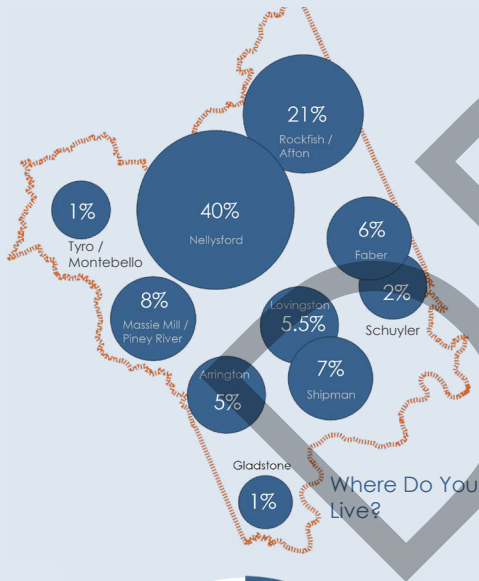
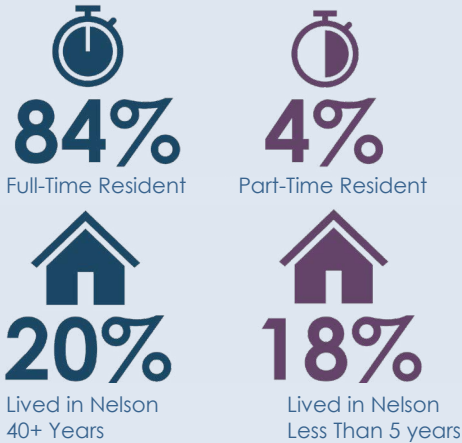
On October 2, 2022, a Public Forum was held to present the results of public engagement, verify and discuss results, and solicit additional input on goals and strategies to address the key issues and opportunities identified through public engagement.

## NELSON2042.COM



In July of 2022, Nelson County launched the official website for the Comprehensive Plan update process known as Nelson 2042. This website contained links to public engagement opportunities and useful resources, news posts and pertinent information, as well as an idea wall where community members were encouraged to post on the interactive site to let the County know their thoughts regarding the update process and what they hoped to see in Nelson in the future.

# Survey Respondents



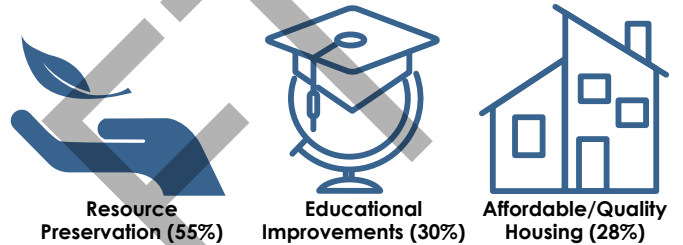
Detailed community engagement results are available in the Public Engagement Summary document posted on Nelson2042.com.

# Community Survey Results

Through the community survey, community members contributed their opinions on the current state of the County, focus areas for improvement, and priority issues and opportunities. The survey was available on-line and in paper form at government buildings, churches, businesses, and community centers throughout the County.

## What did the community have to say?

### TOP 3 FOCUS AREAS



### WHAT CONCERNS US THE MOST?



AGREE		DISAGREE
16.3%	There is enough affordable housing	61.4%
73.3%	Roads are in good condition	21.4%
91.1%	Nelson feels safe and secure	4.8%
32.3%	Provides equitable services	31.8%
17.3%	Has enough public transportation	47.9%





# Stakeholder Listening Sessions Results



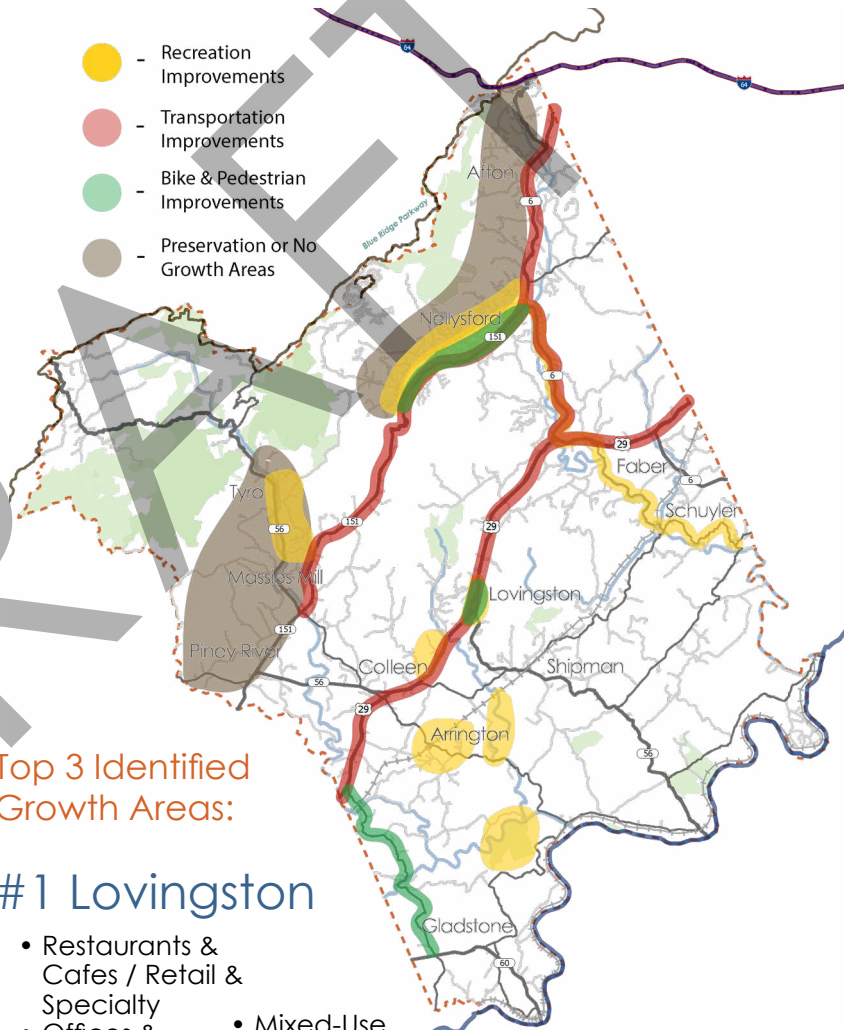
Stakeholder listening sessions are focused conversations regarding specific topics, industries, and/or issues facing Nelson County. Key themes heard throughout each listening session include:

- ✓ There is a lack of affordable housing & housing choice; Service & tourism employees must commute in to Nelson
- ✓ The poor condition and capacity of existing water & sewer infrastructure presents challenges to economic development as well as health & environmental concerns
- ✓ There is a lack of amenities for families and few local healthcare services
- ✓ There are few transportation choices — not unusual in a rural county — but there are opportunities to partner with services for commuters as well as tourists
- ✓ There are few career oriented job opportunities

# Community Workshop Results

Through the community workshops, community members had the opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the County and dive into hands-on exercise pertaining to specific topics such as where the County should grow, where transportation improvements are needed, and where there are recreation opportunities. The following map summarizes the results of the hands-on mapping exercise completed by participants.

## What did the community have to say?



### Top 3 Identified Growth Areas:

#### #1 Lovingsston

- Restaurants & Cafes / Retail & Specialty
- Offices & Community Services
- Mixed-Use
- Apartments & Condos

#### #2 Colleen

- Light Industrial
- Grocery or Farm Market/Retail & Specialty
- Offices & Community Services
- Mixed-Use
- Duplexes & Townhomes
- Apartments & Condos

#### #3 Schuyler

- Restaurants & Cafes
- Mixed-Use
- Single-Family Housing
- Multi-Family Housing



## Plan Drafting

Virginia Code § 15.2-2230 calls for the Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed by the local planning commission at least once every five years to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan. For this Comprehensive Plan update, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors met bi-monthly to review and draft plan content generated using the crucial information gathered during the community engagement process.

## Public Review & Refinement

Comprehensive Plans are a product of the community's input as interpreted by appointed and elected officials. As such, the Comprehensive Plan follows a public review and refinement period that ensures the Plan accurately represents the community's concerns and articulates ways to address them. On XX date, Nelson County hosted a Public Open House to showcase progress and gather feedback on the drafted plan.

## Adoption

During the public review and refinement period, the draft Plan was available for public review and comments, which were considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The Plan was adopted through a formal public hearing process on XX date.

*(Editor's Note: This section will be updated following the completion of the public review phase)*



## Using Nelson 2042

Comprehensive Plans are community documents and are used by a variety of individuals and stakeholders. The Comprehensive Plan serves the community well when it is consistently used to make recommendations and decisions. The Planning Commission should conduct annual reviews to identify necessary amendments and track progress. Annual reviews should analyze the implementation matrix and performance indicators to measure achievements and prioritize strategies to meet community goals.



Private citizens, business owners, and developers use the Plan to better understand the community's assets, vision, and development goals.



County staff and Planning Commission use the Plan when reviewing zoning applications and drafting ordinances, striving for consistency with the community's vision.



The Board of Supervisors uses the Plan to guide decisions on budget priorities, capital projects, and ordinance amendments.



Regional partners use the Plan to understand local priorities and advocate for grant funding and studies.

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# 2

## Setting our Direction



### IN THIS CHAPTER

#### Our Starting Point | Nelson Today

- People & Population
- Housing
- Economy
- Transportation

#### Our Destination | Nelson 2042

- Vision
- Big Ideas
- Plan Elements & Goals

To **reach our destination** we must first understand where we are, what tools and assets we have available to us, and what challenges we might face along the way. This chapter establishes a benchmark of information on Nelson's existing conditions and includes identification of socioeconomic trends and forces that affect Nelson today and into the future. The ultimate goal is to develop a strategy for addressing any critical gaps. To that end, this assessment provides the basis for the plan vision, big ideas, and goals and **sets the direction** for reaching the Nelson of 2042.



## Our Starting Point | Nelson Today

As a beautiful and scenic place to live and visit, Nelson County is a popular location that attracts a diverse population from many different socio-economic backgrounds. Located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Nelson County is part of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. Originally home to the peoples of the Monacan Native American tribe, European settlers started arriving to the area that is now Nelson County in the 17th and 18th centuries before Nelson County was incorporated in 1807.

In the past, similar to many rural areas across the Commonwealth, agriculture and forestry played an important role for the people of Nelson County. Mining also helped shape the County's economy and community. By railroad and river, many valuable stones and ores were extracted from the mountains of the County and transported across the Commonwealth and the Country.

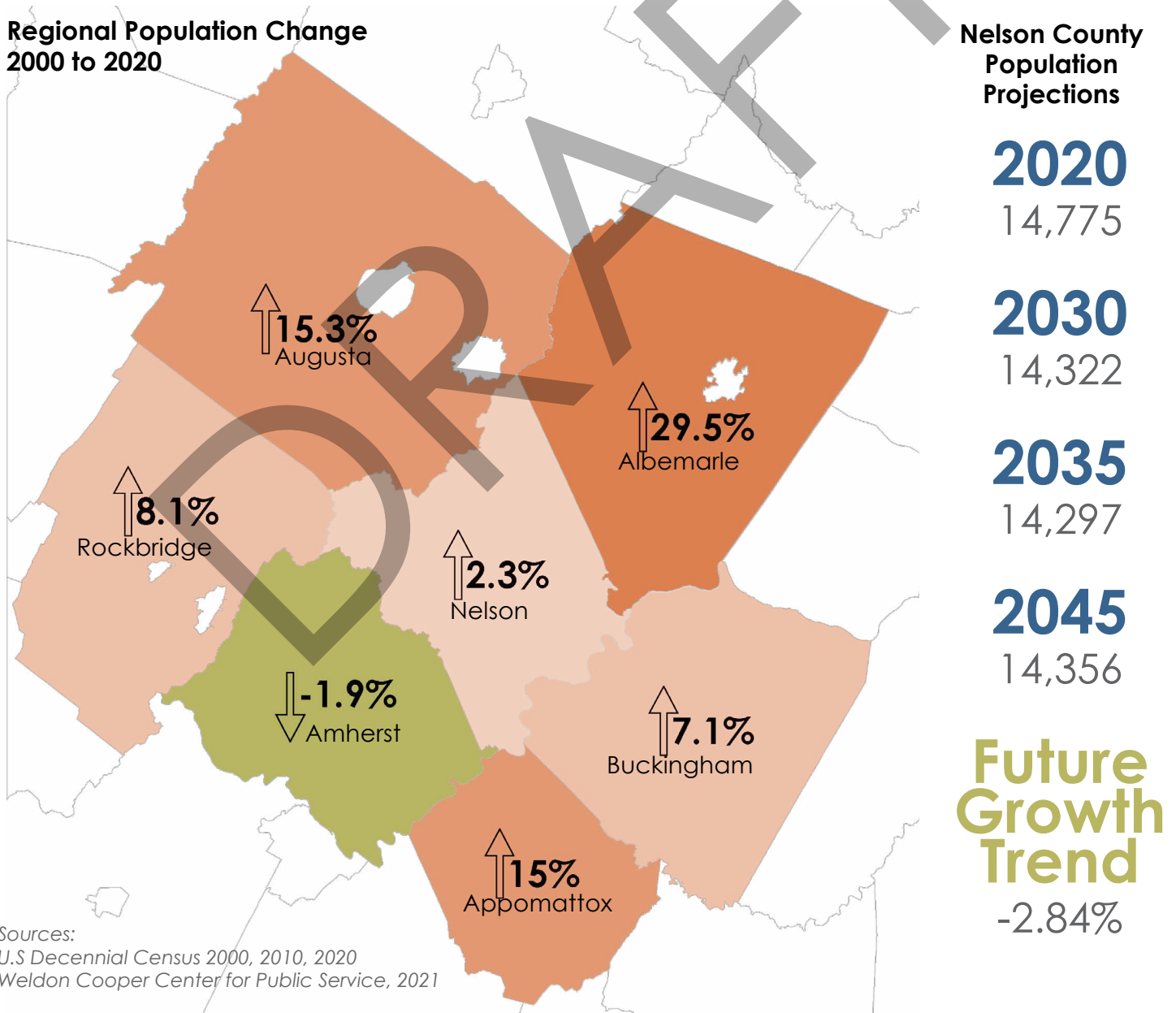
Today, as technology and the global economy has shifted over time, the community's character and makeup has also shifted. The natural beauty of the County has attracted retirees, remote workers, and part-time residents seeking to enjoy the scenic beauty of the mountains. These shifts in community demographics present new opportunities for the County, and with them come additional challenges.

The goals and strategies of this plan aim to manage these opportunities and challenges by preserving the historic values and natural beauty that have shaped Nelson County and that support all community members.

# People & Population

One of the most important resources in Nelson County is its people. The people who live here are proud to call Nelson home and have a strong sense of community pride. Understanding who lives here, works here, or visits here is a critical component of planning for future growth and County investment in services, infrastructure, and amenities.

Nelson County's population has grown slightly but consistently since the beginning of the 21st century. Despite the upward growth trend, the County's growth rate is far below the statewide (22%) and regional (10.7%) growth rate. Even accounting for the geographic and socio-economic differences between Nelson, Augusta, Rockbridge and Albemarle, Nelson County has not experienced the larger growth rates of the more comparable Appomattox and Buckingham Counties. Furthermore, population projections forecast a negative growth rate for the County over the next 20 years. The reasons for Nelson's declining population numbers are multi-faceted and complex, but reflect the realities of an aging population and a locale which has not retained young people and families in recent decades.





# People & Population

Over half of the population of Nelson County is over the age of 50. The median age of the County has consistently grown higher in the last 20 years. Today, the median age of the County is 51.3 years, significantly higher than the statewide median age of 38.4.

With the Census Tract containing Wintergreen Resort and Nellysford being the most densely populated, it has a significant effect on the aging statistics of the County overall.

**Largest Age Group of Nelson County Residents**

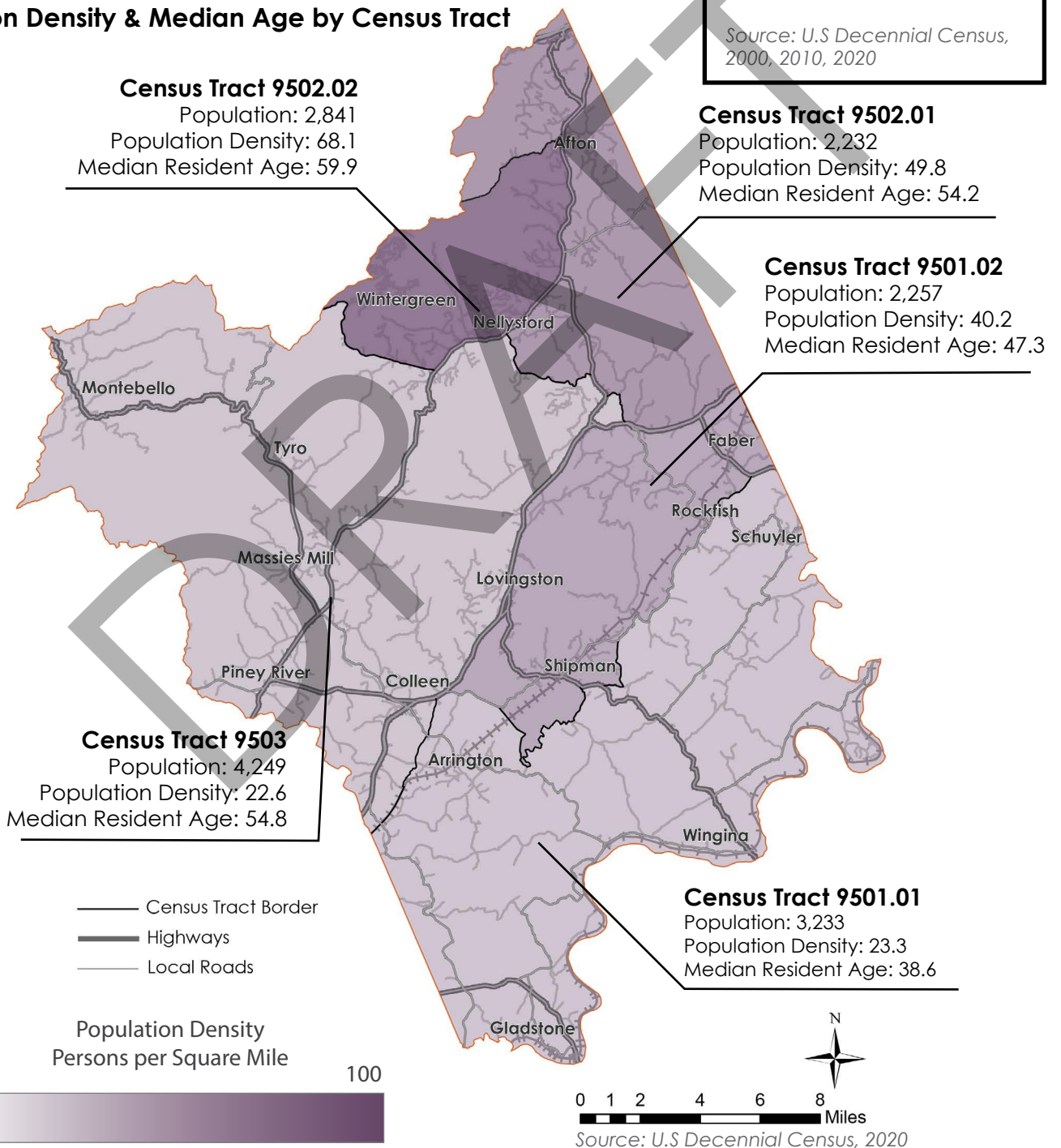
**2000: 45 - 49 Years**

**2010: 55 - 59 Years**

**2020: 65 - 69 Years**

*Source: U.S Decennial Census, 2000, 2010, 2020*

## Population Density & Median Age by Census Tract



# People & Population

## Race & Ethnicity

The demographic makeup of Nelson has changed over time. Though demographic data shows a largely white population, it is important to understand that Nelson does have a diverse population and cultural story that is often under represented. Nelson County and the surrounding region is the ancestral homeland of the Monacan people, who still live here. Like the rest of Virginia, enslaved Africans and free black homesteaders arrived with European immigrants. Over the last 20 years, the County's African American population saw a 20% decrease, but the American Indian and populations of multi-races has increased.

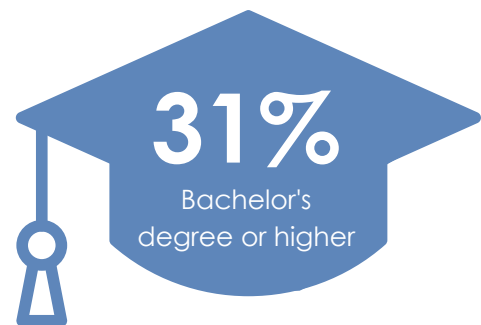
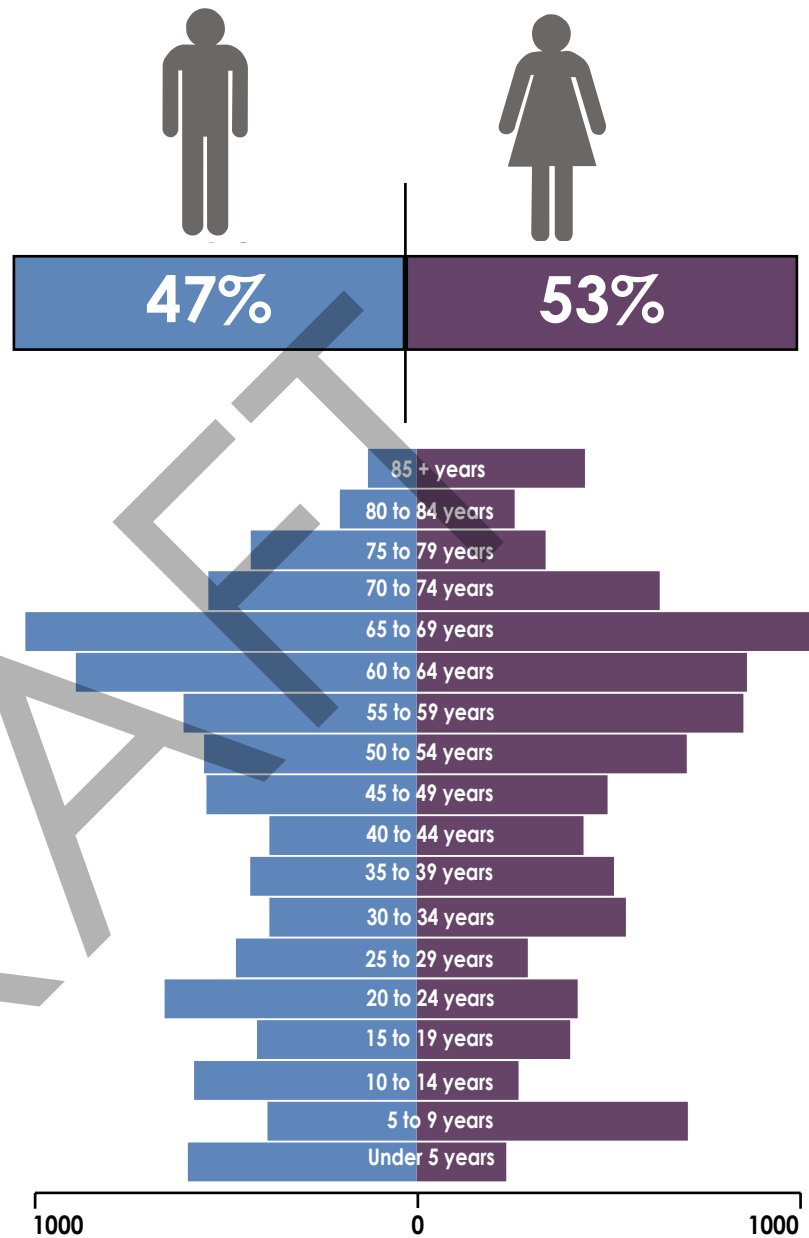
## Education

With a higher percentage of residents who have earned a bachelor's degree or greater compared to the Commonwealth (28% of Virginia residents have a bachelor's degree or higher), Nelson County citizens understand the importance of education. Even so, it is important for the County to support the education and training of the community to help create a balanced and diverse workforce.

## Race & Ethnicity\*

Nelson		Virginia
85.1%	White	68.8%
11%	African American	20%
0.6%	Native American	0.6%
4.8%	Hispanic	10.2%

\*As an ethnicity rather than race, Hispanic is listed separately from the White, African American, and Native American racial designations.



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2020

## Housing

Housing in Nelson County is predominately single-family, detached houses — making up over 80% of the entire housing stock. The remaining 20% of the County's housing stock is primarily composed of manufactured housing with some multi-family dwellings, such as apartments or condominiums.

Nearly 40% of the County's housing stock is 30 years old or older. Production of new homes hit its high point between the years 2000 and 2009, after which construction of new homes drastically decreased in the County.

The combination of challenging geography, lack of dwelling types, and new home construction has contributed to a housing shortage in the County and put additional financial strain on residents with housing insecurity. Primary among those are residents who do not own their home.

Even though median rents in Nelson are lower than the rest of the state, nearly 40% of all renters in Nelson are cost-burdened (compared to roughly 30% statewide), meaning that the rent they pay makes up over one third of their household income.

Due to the aged housing stock in the County, many houses have fallen into disrepair and are no longer habitable or occupied. Of the over 10,000 housing units in the County, 3,821 of those are considered vacant housing with 2,328 housing units considered vacant and being used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The remaining vacant units are either for rent, for sale, for migrant workers, or otherwise unoccupied. Due to the surge in popularity of tourism to the County, these unoccupied homes have increasingly been utilized as short-term rental homes as lodging for the County's many visitors.

Housing is further discussed in Chapter 5 of this plan where specific strategies are identified to help address the challenges and opportunities of the Nelson County housing market.

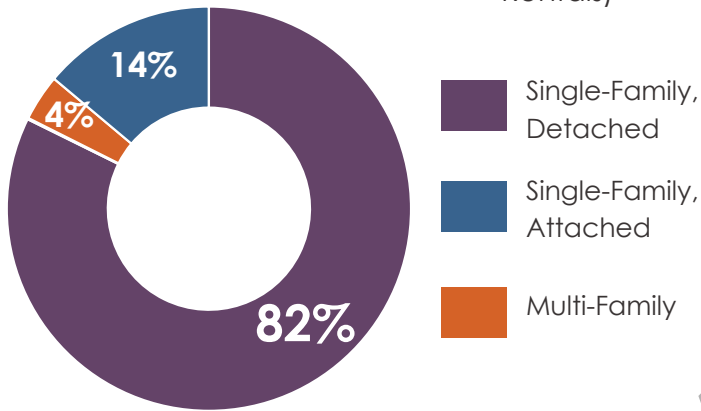


**10,219**

Total Housing Units

**2,382**

Housing Units in Seasonal Use (Including Short Term Rentals)



Median Home Value

**\$233,400**

Nelson

Median Gross Rent

**\$834**

Nelson

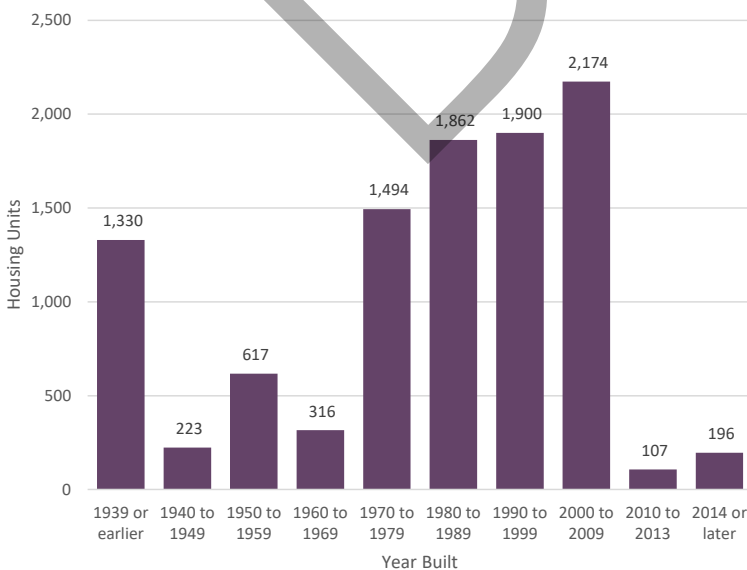
**\$335,198**

Virginia

**\$1,326**

Virginia

### Age of Housing Stock



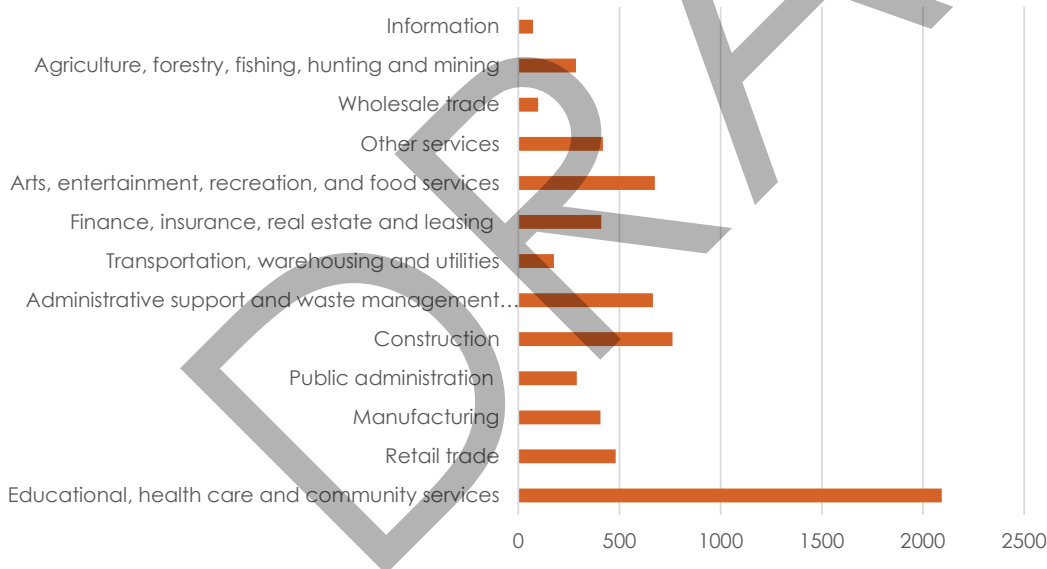
# Economy

Nelson's economy was historically rooted in agricultural and resource-extraction enterprises. The mining and resource extraction industries no longer play a large role in Nelson's economy, and agricultural production in the County is changing. In 2012, nearly 80,000 acres were in productive farmland. In 2017, that figure was down over 12,000 acres. Nonetheless, agricultural operations in the County accounted for nearly \$27,000,000 in agricultural sales in the latest available agricultural census. The value of agricultural production, even with less acreage, could be attributed to the growing agritourism industry. As the historically significant economies of the County shift, new opportunities for economic investment have appeared, and none has been more important to Nelson's economy as the tourism industry. Tourism in Nelson County accounts for \$3.3 million in local taxes and currently employs over 600 residents. Targeted and manageable growth into this sector of the County's economy is an important goal for the County moving forward.

The vast majority of the Nelson County workforce works in educational, health care, or community services. Many residents commute out of the County for work, with Albemarle County and Charlottesville being the top commuted to locations for Nelson County residents. Employers in Nelson County vary in terms of public and private entities as well as types of industry. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, most new hires found in the accommodation and food services, manufacturing, and retail trade industries.

Additional information and strategies for the economy of Nelson County is further discussed in Chapter 7 of this plan.

## Labor Force by Industry



## Top 3 Employers

1. Wintergreen Pacific, LLC
2. Nelson County School Board
3. Devils Backbone Brewing Company

### Unemployment Rate

**3%**  
Nelson

**3.2%**  
Virginia

### Poverty Rate

**12.4%**  
Nelson

**10.2%**  
Virginia

### Median Household Income

**\$62,203**  
Nelson

**\$76,398**  
Virginia

Sources:  
American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2020  
U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017  
Virginia Employment Commission



# Transportation

Centrally located between three major metropolitan hubs and with access to several important regional and interstate highways, Nelson County has become a hub for commuters wishing to live in a more rural setting than where they work. Over half of Nelson County's labor force commute out of the County for work. In addition, a significant amount of workers commute into Nelson County for work — a possible side effect of the difficulties of housing attainability.

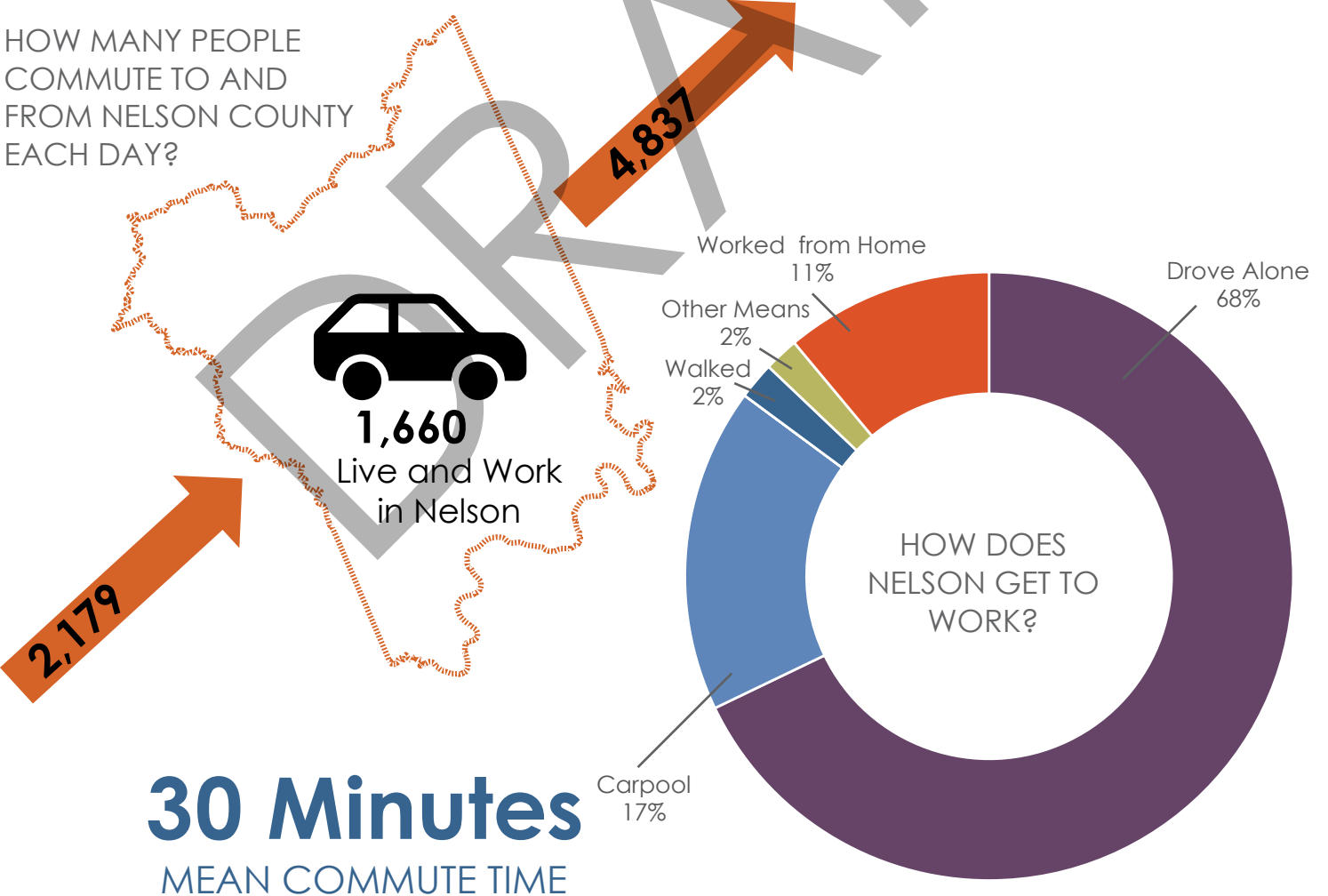
The primary method of transportation for commuter traffic is through private vehicles. While many residents choose to carpool, the majority of commuters drive alone.

Public transportation in the County is extremely limited, which is common across many rural communities in the Commonwealth. Regional public transportation is available in a limited capacity through private resources such as Jaunt, which provides ridesharing services to residents across the region.

Moving forward, Nelson County will focus to expand upon the existing transportation options in the County as well as identify innovative opportunities to offer additional transportation options to residents and visitors alike.

Further information and strategies regarding transportation can be found in Chapter 4 of this plan.

HOW MANY PEOPLE  
COMMUTE TO AND  
FROM NELSON COUNTY  
EACH DAY?



**30 Minutes**  
MEAN COMMUTE TIME

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2020



## Our Destination | Nelson 2042

### Vision

A meaningful Comprehensive Plan looks 10 to 20 years into the future toward a vision of what a place can be. This vision is based on the collective input from the community and should be supported by the County, by residents, by business owners, and by other community members. The vision serves as the **overarching principle for the Comprehensive Plan**, guiding the development of goals and strategies for each planning element. The vision is a broad, aspirational statement headlining the entire Comprehensive Plan — the words are carefully chosen to reflect the most important issues on the minds of community members. How the County achieves this vision is a long-term project, achieved through the goals and strategies identified in this Plan.







## Our Vision

*Nelson is a welcoming community that values its natural resources, encourages economic growth, and provides excellent quality of life for all community members.*





## Big Ideas

The Comprehensive Plan vision statement is supported by a series of big ideas or planning principles – those things that Nelson County, as a community, cares the most deeply about. Public engagement throughout the Comprehensive Plan update process elicited active participation, both in person and on-line. The ample hard and soft data collected throughout the process revealed strong themes from which four big ideas emerged. These ideas should serve as a guide for the many decisions community leaders will make over time for the County. With each decision, we must ask: **Are we following our guide and creating meaningful change for our community? Are we creating opportunity for people to live, work, and thrive here?**



### Plan & Provide Equitably for Everyone

Interwoven through all of the planning efforts and decisions Nelson County must make is the need to plan and provide equitably for all of the County's citizens. Housing and recreation are two areas of immediate need for improving choice and access, but equitable access to economic opportunity, a healthy environment, and quality of life are fundamental to great communities.



### Improve & Expand Vital Community Services

Providing services and maintaining infrastructure are among the core responsibilities of a locality. The provision of these services must be done in a way that is fiscally responsible while ensuring the community and environment are healthy, clean, and safe. Improving community infrastructure and services is also instrumental to attracting investments that will help diversify the local economy, protect community health, and provide equitable services for everyone.



### Diversify & Bolster the Local Economy

In recent years, Nelson's local economy has seen a strong shift towards the tourism and agritourism industries — a byproduct of the County's unparalleled natural environment. As we look to the future, we must find ways to build on these thriving industries while diversifying the economy in order to build resiliency and provide opportunities that will draw families and young people back to the County.



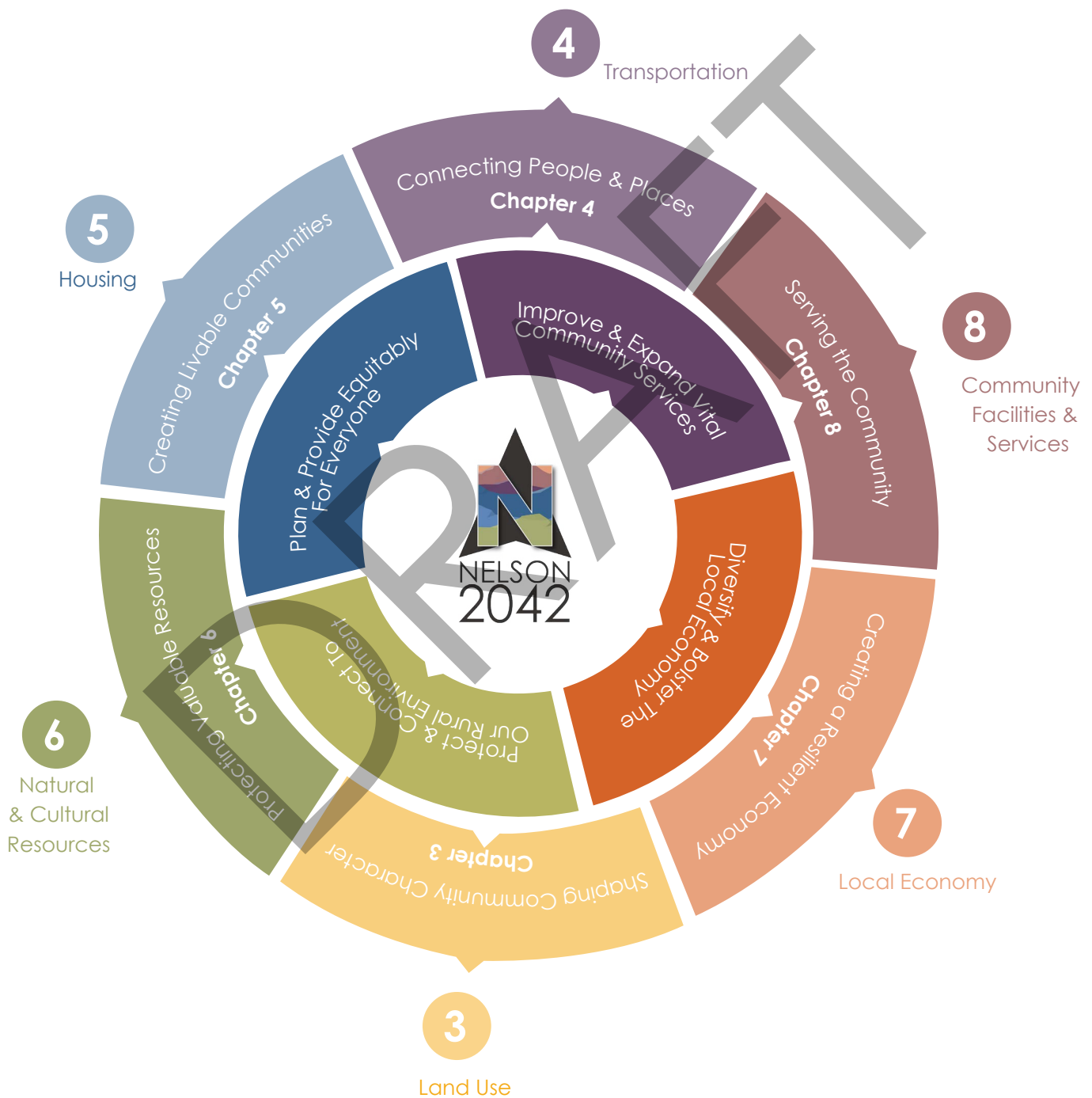
### Protect & Connect to Our Rural Environment

Nelson is defined by its natural beauty and rural character. Residents value the County's rural environment above all else. As we plan for future growth, we must do so intentionally and strategically, protecting natural areas and following sustainable development practices so that future generations can enjoy the beauty of Nelson County.

# Plan Elements





Plan elements are the backbone of the Comprehensive Plan. Every community is comprised of physical elements, economic factors, and social structures that combine to create the distinct places we call home. When we plan for communities, we must consider each of these elements. Nelson 2042 addresses six plan elements. Each plan element

chapter contains an analysis of key issues and opportunities, an overarching goal, supporting objectives, and specific strategies to bridge any gaps. Taken together, they create the guide that allows us to **blaze a trail to the Nelson of 2042.**



# Goals & Objectives

## Big Ideas

Element Goal	Objectives				
<b>3</b> Shaping Community Character	Nelson County preserves and enhances its rural character and natural resources by creating opportunities for strategic growth to create a stronger, more vibrant, and prosperous community.		●	●	●
	Protect Rural Character & the Environment		●	●	●
<b>4</b> Connecting People & Places	Create a Coordinated Framework for Strategic Growth	●	●	●	●
	Nelson County maintains a transportation system that provides a safe and efficient multimodal network to connect residents and visitors to places they live, work, recreate, and access services throughout the County and region.		●	●	●
	Maintain & Improve the Existing Road Network		●	●	●
<b>5</b> Creating Livable Communities	Coordinate Land Use & Transportation		●	●	●
	Nelson County strives to ensure the availability of quality housing for residents of all income levels and lifestyles by allowing for a variety of housing options, including affordable and workforce housing, and encouraging rehabilitation of existing units.		●	●	●
	Protect & Improve the Existing Housing Stock	●	●	●	●
<b>6</b> Protecting Valuable Resources	Expand Housing Types & Opportunities	●	●	●	●
	Support Livable & Connected Communities	●	●	●	●
	Protecting the Natural Environment		●	●	●
<b>7</b> Creating a Resilient Economy	Nelson County preserves its rural character and agricultural heritage by sustainably protecting and stewarding its natural and historic resources for future generations.		●	●	●
	Preserve Rural Character & Heritage	●	●	●	●
	Plan for Resiliency & Sustainability	●	●	●	●
<b>8</b> Serving the Community	Support & Cultivate Today's Workforce	●	●	●	●
	Diversify & Improve Local Industry		●	●	●
	Bolster & Promote Economic Growth		●	●	●
<b>8</b> Serving the Community	Enhance the Effectiveness & Transparency of County Government	●	●	●	●
	Improve Infrastructure to Support Sustainable Growth & Development		●	●	●
	Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability	●	●	●	●





**3D DRAFT**

**Shaping Community  
Character**



## Our Goal for Shaping Community Character

*Nelson County preserves and enhances its rural character and natural resources by creating opportunities for strategic growth to create a stronger, more vibrant, and prosperous community.*





## IN THIS CHAPTER

What We Heard

What We Know

Land Use Planning Considerations

How We Move Forward

Future Land Use Plan

Goals & Strategies

Create a Coordinated Framework  
for Strategic Growth

Protect Rural Character & the  
Environment

## Shaping Community Character

The physical landscape and land use patterns are often a reflection of community values and policies – reflecting who we are and how we function as a community. Land use is intertwined with all components of the Comprehensive Plan, and land use strategies are often directly tied to other planning policies. Policies for transportation, economic development, cultural and environmental resources, and community facilities must be compatible with the overarching land use plan to ensure that the County develops as envisioned. Thoughtful community development fosters community identity, protects sensitive resources, contributes to the wellbeing of residents, builds economic resiliency, provides cost savings by reducing strain on infrastructure and services, and improves traffic safety and congestion. By shaping character and development of the physical environment, we are creating policies to ensure the ongoing resiliency, livability, and prosperity of Nelson County.

# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



Land use is the backbone of every comprehensive plan and ties together the values and big ideas embraced by the community. Throughout plan engagement, the Nelson community felt strongly that Nelson should be a place that anyone could call home, where everyone can have access to vital community services, where the natural world is accessible by all, and where all can feel safe and secure.

The Nelson community strongly supports protecting the County's rural character while increasing economic opportunity. As the County looks to the future it must find ways to sustain the natural resources that provide the backbone of its economy, while allowing for diversified growth and investment to support a vibrant community. As the County plans where and how to grow in the future it must do so with the long-term economic well-being of the community in mind.

Access to robust and reliable community services that play critical roles in everyday life is fundamental to attracting new growth and investment. Thoughtfully locating new development near existing services and identifying key areas for expanding services ensures that the County is pursuing growth in a fiscally responsible and resilient manner.

The community ranked preserving environmental resources as the top focus area for Nelson County's future. Strategic planning, updating, and implementation of the County's land use policies is necessary to ensure that the rural environment is protected, and that the community has access to the natural world. This includes not only physical access to trails and recreation, but also protecting Nelson County's environmental, natural, cultural and visual resources.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #7**

Identify opportunities to connect neighborhoods and development through sidewalks, shared use paths, and trails and require such connections in new development or redevelopment proposals.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #14**

Review the zoning ordinance, and amend it as necessary, to allow for a wider mix of use types, including accessory dwellings and mixed-use buildings.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #15**

Encourage new development in designated growth areas so that existing infrastructure can be more efficiently used, and rural lands will be protected from development.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #6**

Ensure that new development complements and enhances its surroundings through proper land use, design, landscaping, and transitional buffers.



## What We Know | Land Use Planning Considerations

Nelson County today is home to unique landscapes and features that have shaped its character and development. Over time, much of the County has maintained its natural and rural character. The County's scenic mountains and rural setting have been protected not only through historical and environmental factors, but also land use decisions.

As the County continues to evolve, existing factors should be considered to focus growth in strategic areas of the County, protect rural community character, and support long-term resiliency through sustainable development practices. The following planning considerations are the backbone of the Future Land Use Plan.

# Create A Coordinated Framework for Strategic Growth

A coordinated framework for growth recognizes existing development patterns and takes steps to maintain, enhance, or change them based on the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the values of the community. As a rural community, most of the land in Nelson County is in rural use such as agriculture, recreation, and preservation of open space. Development in the County is primarily concentrated along the Route 29 corridor near Lovingston and Colleen and the northern portion of the County in and around Nellysford. Historically developed areas, such as Shipman and Schuyler, continue today as rural villages with clusters of denser housing. These development patterns and future development patterns are informed by existing regulations, development constraints, infrastructure and transportation networks, and other community amenities and plans. Each of these is discussed in more detail in this chapter and are analyzed by County location in Table 3.1.

## Existing Land Use Regulations

### Zoning Ordinance

Nelson County's Zoning Ordinance and Map regulate new development in the County. Zoning controls the types of uses permitted on the land, the density of development, and requirements for minimum lot sizes, lot widths, and building setbacks, among other criteria.

The Zoning Ordinance includes nine primary zoning districts: 1 Conservation District, 1 Agricultural District, 2 Residential Districts, 1 Planned Community District, 2 Commercial Districts, 1 Service Enterprise District, and 1 Industrial District. The Agricultural District is the predominant zoning district, covering most of the land in the County.

It is important to note that the zoning map and future land use map are not always the same. Future land use designations and maps in this Plan have no immediate effect on an individual parcel of land but are used to guide future zoning changes. Future zoning changes should conform with established future land use designations and maps. That said, the two maps must work in tandem. The Zoning Ordinance and Map should be reviewed to ensure compliance with the goals of the Nelson 2042 Comprehensive Plan.

### Subdivision Ordinance & Development Standards

Local regulations for the subdivision and development of land frame and shape the way that communities look and how efficiently they use land. While minimum lot sizes vary across the County, due to zoning districts and other factors, Nelson County has historically opted for larger lot sizes in an effort to preserve open spaces and the rural character of the County. In addition to large lot sizes, Nelson

County also limits the number of new lots that can be subdivided and created from larger lots, based on the size of the existing lots. The County has also adopted standards for cluster subdivisions which may ease regulations such as minimum lot size and maximum lot allowance to permit developers to build tighter groupings of homes with a promise to preserve a large amount of open space for common use.

In addition to development size and location, the design of buildings plays an integral role in defining the identity of Nelson as a rural mountain community. Ensuring the maintenance and improvement of existing character is accomplished through design standards regulated by the Nelson County Zoning Ordinance. While these standards are currently limited, Nelson County utilizes tools such as use standards, special use permits, and site plan regulations, all with the intention of ensuring a healthy and harmonious community that maintains the look and feel of traditional rural communities. Nelson County is committed to preserving the rural beauty of the County and regularly evaluating and updating the tools mentioned above will be paramount to achieving this goal.

Combined, these regulations help maintain the rural character that defines Nelson County by preserving open and natural spaces in the County; however large minimum lot sizes in certain zoning districts can limit the County's ability to meet its development and housing goals. Development and subdivision regulation should be closely reviewed to ensure the ordinance aligns with and supports the goals of this Plan.



## Development Constraints

Many of the physical characteristics of Nelson County limit where development can occur, including steep slopes, soil conditions, low-lying floodplains, and the presence of large swaths of permanently protected lands. An analysis of how these constraints impact the Future Land Use Framework is found in Table 3.1.

### **Steep Slopes**

Steep slopes are the natural gradient of land that have a slope of more than 15% or 25% depending on the source. These slopes have a more severe potential for erosion and are better left in their natural state. As a mountainous community, Nelson County has an abundance of steep slopes which can limit or restrict development. While grading can help reduce the slope and allow for additional development, preservation of these areas and their natural character should be encouraged. One of the primary purposes of the County's C-1 Conservation District (See Table 3.1) is to protect steep slopes, but the ordinance does not currently define the gradient range that qualify as steep. Chapter 6 further explores the County's topography and includes a map of elevation throughout the County.

### **Septic Suitability**

Slopes and ground soils can have an effect on the suitability of septic system in the community. The potential for hazardous conditions increases in areas where the soil layers are too thin, have poor infiltration, or are too steep. Septic suitability can be a major hinderance to development. Where the soil conditions are unsuitable for the approval of a conventional septic system, an alternative on-site wastewater disposal system may be necessary or multiple lots may have to be combined to acquire the necessary land for a conventional septic system.

Nelson County has limited suitability for septic systems throughout the County, though there are large swathes of land that are very limited to septic systems and would be unaccommodating to additional growth or development. Further discussion about septic suitability and a detailed septic suitability map is located in Chapter 3 of this plan.

### **Protected Lands**

Nelson County has a large number of lands that are permanently protected from additional development. These are portions of the County that are owned by local, state, or federal agencies, or are privately owned and protected by conservation entities and easements. The number of permanently protected lands in the County points to the value of Nelson's natural and scenic beauty. Many of these protected lands include recreation areas open to the public, such as George Washington & Jefferson National Forest. A detailed map of the protected lands in Nelson County can be found in Chapter 3 of this plan.

### **Floodplain**

Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to waterways that are subject to varying levels of inundation. These areas are mapped and rated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Nelson County regulates all development within these areas. Additional development standards can be placed upon buildings within these areas to help ensure their safety and that they do not become hazards to their occupants or neighbors. Additionally, development in some areas of floodplains may be completely banned. For additional discussion of floodplains in Nelson County, and to see a map, see Chapter 3 of this plan.





## Land Use & Infrastructure

### Cost of Public Services

Planning for future land use changes should inform where public system and service expansions and upgrades will be necessary. Balanced growth strategies that encourage efficient service and facility delivery should guide new development to appropriate areas where utilities are readily available or able to be expanded to meet demand. Future land use should consider realistic and sustainable service goals, expectations, and economic feasibility. Balancing the cost of public services is the backbone of fiscally responsible growth. Growth should support a balance of residential and business uses that will bring economic opportunity to the County while protecting rural character and community resiliency.

### Impact of Development on Transportation Networks

Increased growth and development can add vehicular traffic on major routes and small rural roads. Since most County residents travel by private automobile, future land use decisions should consider transportation access, level of service, and road capacity. Many locations in the County do not currently have adequate roads to support increased density. New commercial and medium-density residential developments should also support alternative transportation options. Future land use strategies should also consider ongoing and proposed transportation system improvements.

## Regional Planning & Coordination

Regional coordination and planning with neighboring communities, organizations, and state and federal agencies can help facilitate land use policies that expand across borders to better achieve more livable communities. Challenges and opportunities discussed in this chapter, as well as others, should be considered at the regional scale to avoid planning within a vacuum of a locality's borders. In addition, large scale planning projects, such as infrastructure or recreation improvements, can become less burdensome to one community when the efforts are shared amongst partners. This can help ensure smoother and improved planning projects across regions.

Nelson County works regularly with neighboring localities and the TJPDC to ensure large scale and regional planning efforts are being carried out and should continue to expand upon this practice in the future.



### Planning Resources

A list of regional planning organizations, efforts, resources, and studies is located in the appendix of this Plan.

Table 3.1 - Existing Development Villages & Features

	Lovington	Nellysford	Colleen	Piney River	Gladstone	Schuyler	Shipman	Faber	Afton	Massies Mill	Montebello	Roseland	Arrington	Wingina	Tyro	Rockfish
<b>Development Asset</b>																
Water Service	●	●	●		●	●	●									
Sewer Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●									
Potential for UDA Designation	●	●														
Primary Transportation Corridor Proximity	○	●	○	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Community Center and/or School	●	●	●		●	●			●	●						
Fire / EMS Facility	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	○	●	●				
Recreation Amenities and/or access	●	●		●	○	○		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Existing Residential Development	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				
Existing Commercial Development	●	●	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●			
Existing Industrial or Business Development	●	●	●	●												
<b>Development Constraints</b>																
Steep Slopes	●								●	●					●	
Floodplain		●						●		●		●			●	●
Limited or Untested Septic Suitability	●			●			●			●	●	●			●	
Protected Landscapes						●				●	●				●	●

● Route 29, Corridor of Statewide Significance    ○ Asset in Close Proximity

# Protect Rural Character & the Environment

The constraints of Nelson's steep terrain, the abundance of permanently protected land holdings, and the scope of the County's land use regulations play a critical role in the protecting of the County's rural character and environment. However, the quality and type of development also aids in the protection of the rural landscape and natural resources. Prioritizing and encouraging alternative construction methods, energy systems, and stormwater management when new development does occur, must be an integral component of the Future Land Use Plan for the County.

## Sustainable Design & Development

### Low Impact Development

Low impact development is a form of stormwater design that imitates natural processes and can help protect sensitive areas, promote the use of green space, and promote development practices that ensure long-term resilience of the environment and the development. These include things like tree filters to collect stormwater runoff at the base of a tree, rain gardens that act as sponges to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff, and permeable pavers which allow rainwater to filter between hard surface blocks into filtering gravel layers underneath. As Nelson County continues to develop its transportation infrastructure, these low impact development practices should be utilized where feasible.

### Alternative Wastewater Systems

Nelson County's natural resources are one of its most important assets which should be preserved and protected from harmful methods of development. Finding alternative and less environmentally impactful development practices is a top priority for Nelson County. Included in this is the encouragement of alternative wastewater systems from traditional septic fields. These environmentally sustainable alternatives can help ensure future development protects source waters and avoids activities that could lead to erosion and sedimentation, which could negatively affect water quality.

### Alternative/Renewable Energy

Virginia lawmakers have recently passed legislation, including the Virginia Clean Economy Act, which requires 100% zero-carbon electricity generation by the year 2050. It is the duty of all localities across the Commonwealth to plan for alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind facilities, and Nelson County is no exception. While the topography of the County may not be suitable for industrial and utility scale solar farms, Nelson County must work with developers to help accommodate the generation of energy through alternative sources as much as is feasible. In addition, Nelson County can help assist landowners with incorporating smaller scale renewable energy sources on their properties.





## How We Move Forward | Future Land Use, Goals & Strategies

Nelson County is committed to a strategic framework for growth that prioritizes rural conservation and community character. The following Future Land Use Plan and strategies provide guidance for fostering sustainable development, economic growth, and enhanced quality of life in the County.

The guiding principles behind the Land Use Plan are to:

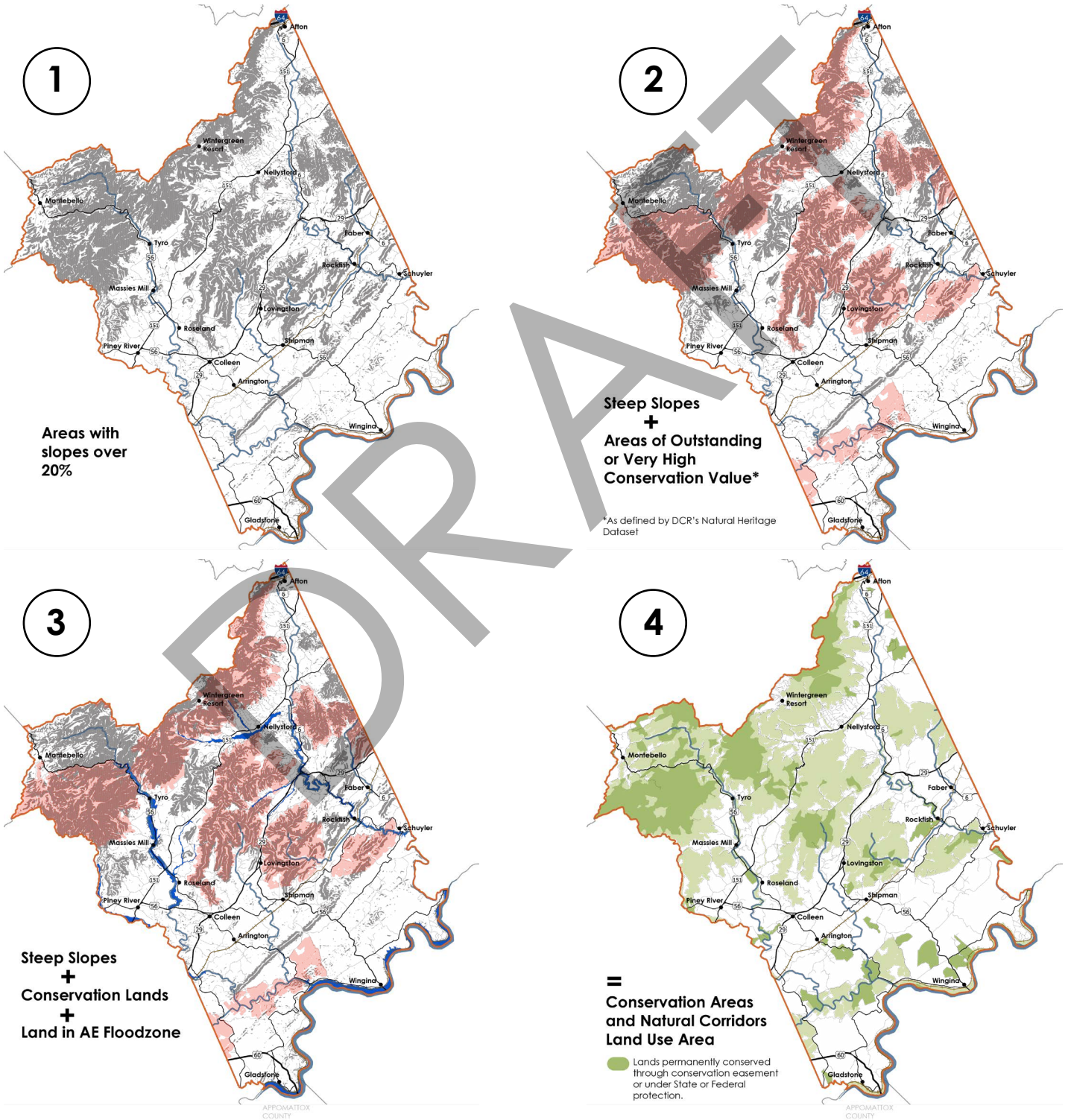
- Protect the County's rural character and sensitive natural and cultural resources.
- Provide a network of Corridors, Centers, and Villages to direct future investment and harness the economic potential of regional recreation, tourism, and industrial enterprises.
- Strategically accommodate growth around community centers and planned service extension areas to ensure efficient and sustainable development and the provision of a range of housing options. Designate sewer and water service expansion and development areas when needed.
- Encourage quality development and design that enhances quality of life and enjoyment for residents and visitors to the County.



# Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan establishes the backbone for Nelson County's physical growth and development. It provides direction and guidance on ideal development, conservation, and land use locations and compatibility. This section describes the recommended development patterns for the County over the next twenty years. The framework is derived from a coordinated analysis of the development suitability of land in the County and the land use implications of each of the Plan Elements included in this plan and priorities.

## Land Not Suitable for Further Development

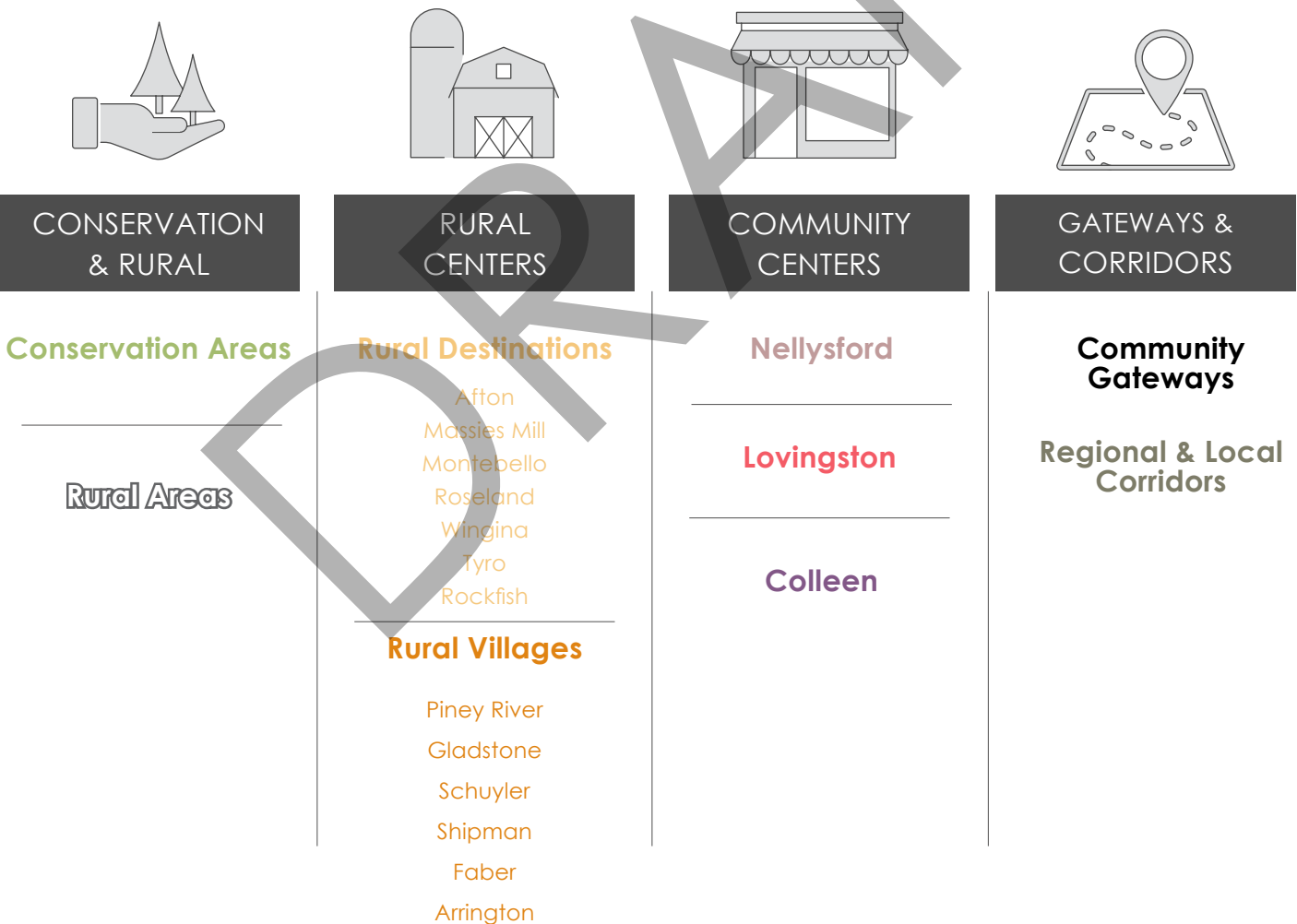


## Future Land Use Elements

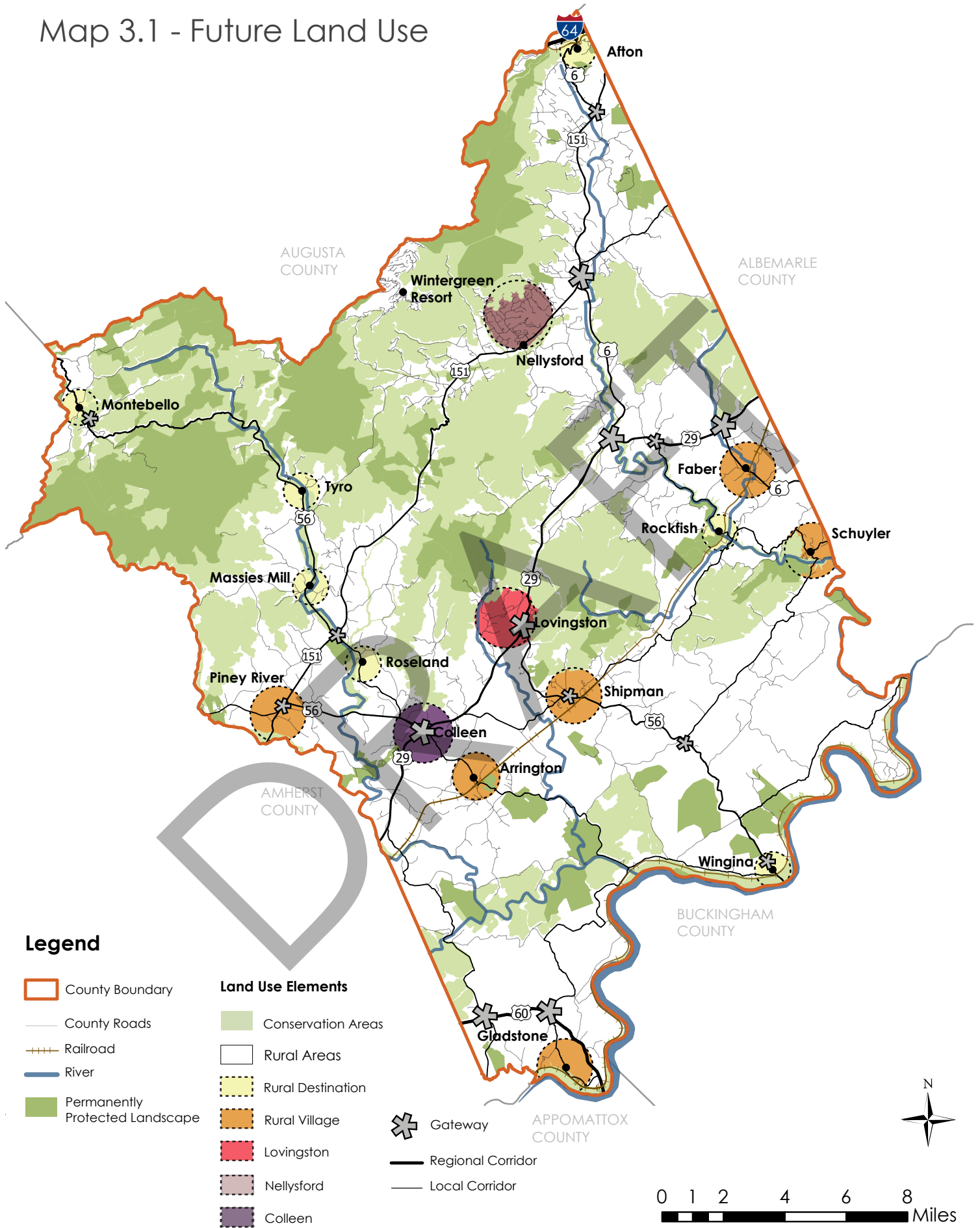
The Land Use Framework includes the Future Land Use Map with accompanying descriptions of each Future Land Use Element. The map and associated guidelines are crafted to provide flexibility for future conditions while holding to an overall defined pattern for shaping development in Nelson County. This Framework is not intended to substitute for detailed zoning and subdivision regulations, but rather provide broad land use concepts that support Nelson County's vision for the future. In weighing development applications, staff, Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors should be mindful of this framework as well as the environmental and infrastructure impacts of development and the economic necessity of expanding the County's tax base. Land use applications, capital improvement

projects, and County regulations should be assessed according to the concept, use, and development guidelines included in the Framework.

Descriptions for the Future Land Use Elements include a Core Concept, Primary Future Land Use Types, and Planning Guidelines. The Primary Future Land Use Types identified uses that help achieve the Land Use Element's Core Concept. Secondary or other uses not identified here may be appropriate. Along with the Planning Guidelines, the Primary Future Use Types are meant to guide development in accordance with the goals of this Plan. To that end, Supporting Strategies from the Plan are keyed to each Future Land Use Element. The Comprehensive Plan works as a unit to ensure the Vision for Nelson 2042 is met.

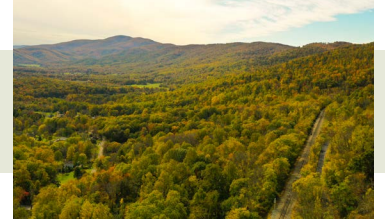


# Map 3.1 - Future Land Use





# Conservation Areas



Description

Conservation Areas are those areas with significant environmental sensitivity and/or areas that are currently protected from development through permanent conservation or recreation use. They are established to minimize detrimental impacts to the environment, maximize groundwater recharge capacity, and protect key natural resources. Examples include steep slopes, flood inundation zones, sensitive environmental corridors, and federal and state lands.

Core Concept

**Protect natural areas to maximize environmental services, economic potential, and recreation opportunities for the community.**

Primary Land Use Types

- Conservation
- Parks, recreation, and trails
- Low-impact agriculture and other resource-based uses

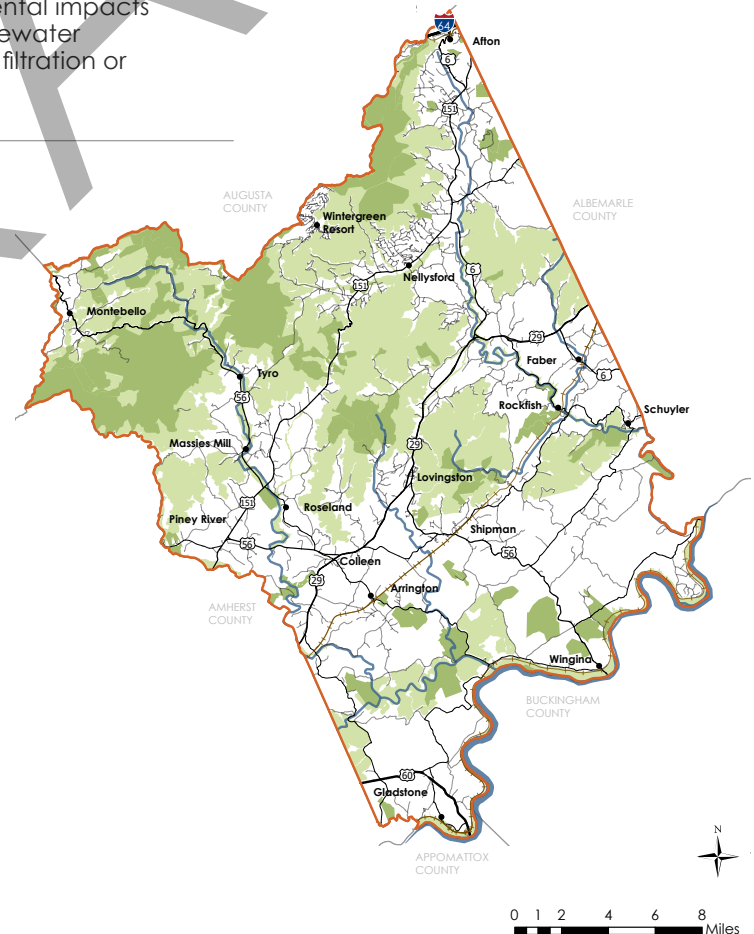
Planning Guidelines

- Incorporate cluster and/or conservation development principles in areas adjacent to this planning area to protect open space, productive land, views, and sensitive resources.
- Improve and mitigate negative environmental impacts with conservation design, alternative wastewater systems, and low impact development for filtration or runoff protection.

Supporting Strategies

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# Rural Areas



Description

The aspect of Nelson County valued most by the people who live and visit here is its rural character. *Rural Areas* comprise the majority of the County, aiming to protect rural character by maintaining natural areas and agricultural uses while allowing low density residential development that fits into the landscape. Rural Areas typify the historic and natural landscape of Nelson County that includes prime agricultural areas, forested mountains, and rural homesteads. The area also currently includes some low-density single-family subdivisions. Alterations and retrofits to these developments to enhance resiliency and conform to current health, environmental, zoning and subdivision standards is appropriate and encouraged; however, expanded, or new subdivisions is not the primary intent of this planning area. Any new residential development must be carefully planned for, taking into account slope, soil, and septic suitability, viewshed protection, resource impact, and other factors.

Core Concept

**Ensure the protection of the County's rural landscape and economy by maintaining open space, scenic views and agricultural uses with compatible low density residential.**

Primary Land Use Types

- Farms, agriculture, forestry.
- Agritourism uses
- Institutional uses
- Solar installations (contingent on-site conditions)
- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Manufactured homes
- Accessory dwelling units
- Parks, recreation, and trails

Planning Guidelines

- Incorporate cluster and/or conservation development principles in areas within or adjacent to this planning area to protect open space, productive land, views, and sensitive resources.
- Setback, screen, or locate development located along primary routes to minimize impact to views from these corridors.
- Improve and mitigate negative environmental impacts with conservation design, alternative wastewater systems, and low impact development for filtration or runoff protection.
- Buffer residences from more intense farming, forestry, or extraction-based uses.
- Discourage development of prime agricultural soils.
- Solar development should be sited to have minimal impact to scenic viewsheds and natural resources.

Supporting Strategies

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# Rural Destinations

Description

Nelson County's *Rural Destinations* are places with distinct character and identity within the County's rural landscape. These places have specific place names and carry historic and cultural significance for the community but did not develop into larger villages. Today, these places are home to many of the cultural assets and recreation amenities that identify Nelson County. Because of the development constraints that limited and continue to limit development in these areas, focused development is not encouraged. Rather, investment should prioritize improving and expanding access to community centers and recreation assets that serve as the backbone for these Rural Destinations and help bolster economic growth throughout the County.

Core Concept

**Maintain the existing character of and enhance amenities within the County's Rural Destinations to create places with a distinct identity that draw recreation and economic investment and improve quality of life for residents.**

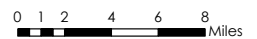
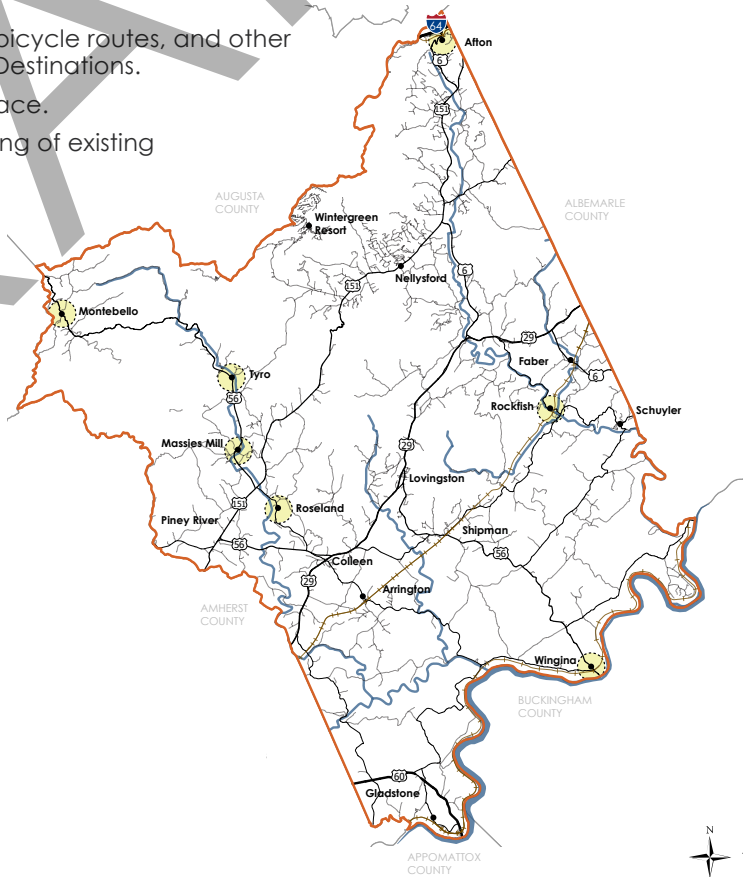
Primary Land Use Types

- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Accessory dwelling units
- Neighborhood commercial (Cafes, shops)
- Agritourism businesses
- Institutional uses
- Parks, recreation, and trails

Planning Guidelines

- Ensure materials, scale, and character of new buildings is compatible with existing structures in each Village.
- Enhance and protect cultural resources.
- Connect existing and establish new trails, bicycle routes, and other recreation amenities in and around Rural Destinations.
- Encourage shared open space or park space.
- Encourage infill development and retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Incorporate pedestrian connections and safety enhancements, such as stop bars and crosswalks.
- Encourage traffic calming, particularly along primary routes.
- Incorporate wayfinding and signage for Rural Destinations.

Supporting Strategies







## Afton

Afton is located in the Northwestern quadrant of Nelson County near the intersection of Routes 6 and 250. Afton is gateway to Nelson County and a stop for tourists and travelers. The Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Tunnel, and several breweries and wineries are located in the area. Steep slopes, protected lands, and traffic saturation hinder additional development in the area, but the community is a distinct destination with assets that contribute to a unique identity and opportunity for additional economic growth.



## Massies Mill

Massies Mill is located in the Southwestern quadrant of Nelson County along Route 56 and adjacent to the headwaters of the Tye River. Once a flourishing community with over 40 homes, a community center, businesses, and served by the now defunct Virginia Blue Ridge Rail, Massies Mill was one of the hardest hit communities during the 1969 floods spawned by Hurricane Camille. Of the 153 people killed in Nelson, 22 were from Massies Mill. Today, much of the community is classified as AE floodzone and unsuitable for development. However, the community remains a distinct destination with a sense of place and history.



## Montebello

Located in the Southwestern quadrant of the County, Montebello is a gateway to Nelson and a basecamp for outdoor recreation tourists looking to camp, fish, or hike Crabtree Falls or other trails along the Blue Ridge Parkway or in the National Forest. Like other Rural Destinations, additional development is limited by steep slopes and protected landscapes, but the community can still benefit from enhanced services, connectivity, and wayfinding projects.



(Photo Placeholder)

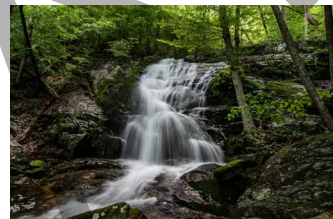
## Roseland

Roseland is a crossroads community near the intersection of Route 655 and 151. Agritourism businesses, country stores, a post office, and other community services are located in the region. The Tye River passes through the community and is a stop over for fisherman and paddlers. River and road access make Roseland a prime rural destination and continuing to support connectivity and services should be a priority.



## Wingina

Located along Route 56 near the James River and Southeastern border of Nelson County, Wingina is named after a Native American chief of the 16th century. The area was long home to the Monacan people before European settlers arrived. The relatively flat lands near the James River, which made it appealing as homelands for the Monacans, also appealed to railroad developers. Today little remains in Wingina to remind of us this history other than the post office and general store. The community remains a destination for those looking to access the James River and experience rural Nelson.



## Tyro

Located on Route 56 between Massies Mill and Montebello, Tyro is a distinct rural community. The designated historic properties, Pharsalyia and Tyro Mill, are located here and add to the rural mountain charm of the region. Along with agritourism businesses, these sites are destinations for tourists and events that contribute to the economic vitality of the County.



## Rockfish

Rockfish is a railroad community located in Northeastern Nelson along the Rockfish River. There is no longer a depot in Rockfish and the community is today little more than a rural crossroads. However, the community retains much of its charm along with the historic Rockfish post office. The landmark is a favorite destination for many people as the village was often highlighted in "The Waltons" who traveled there from neighboring Schuyler. These vestiges of rural Nelson and popular culture continue to serve as a draw for visitors.

# Rural Villages

## Description

Nelson County's *Rural Villages* are reminders of the County's rail and rural heritage. These communities grew up along rail lines and near rural commercial enterprises and traditionally functioned, and continue to function, as community focal points and gathering places. These areas contain a higher concentration of development than in other rural areas of the County and are served by water and/or sewer infrastructure. In addition to a clustering of homes, villages often contain a post office, church, general store, or similar facility that serves residents of the immediate rural area. While they did not develop into larger towns, they have specific place names and carry historic and cultural significance for the community. Future investment and development of these communities should take cues from the historic qualities of the villages, ensuring a continued sense of place that provides economic vitality.

## Core Concept

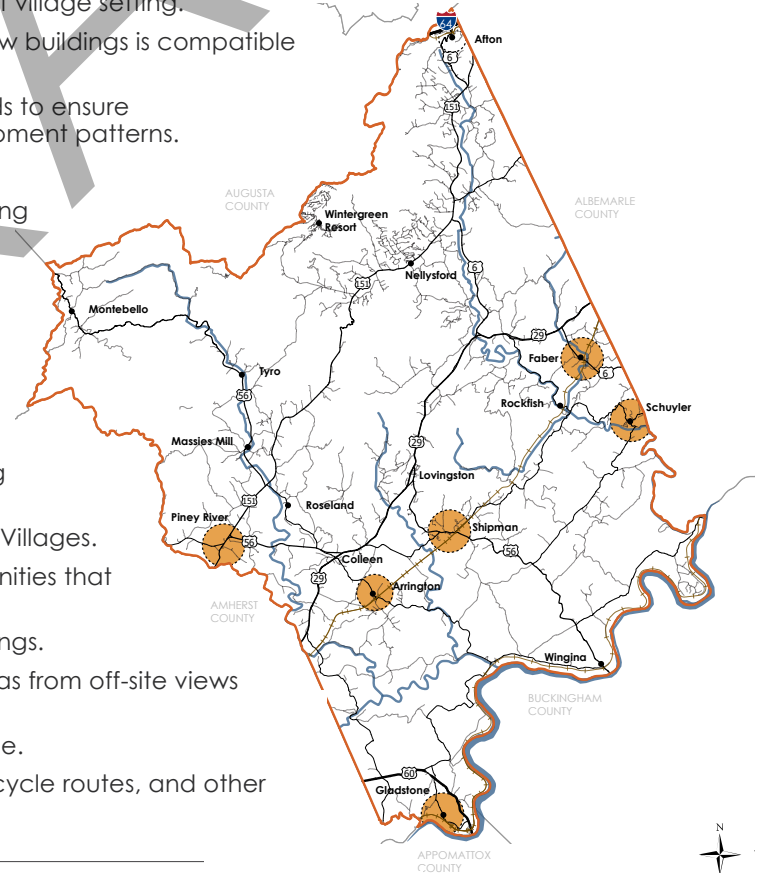
**Focus investment and small-scale development within the County's Rural Villages to protect the rural landscape, ensure more efficient and effective provision of community services, create a sense of place to bolster economic development, and improve quality of life.**

## Primary Land Use Types

- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Accessory dwelling units
- Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes
- Neighborhood commercial (Cafes, shops)
- Agritourism businesses
- Small-scale business and employment uses
- Parks, recreation, and trails

## Planning Guidelines

- Preserve existing structures and traditional patterns of development while allowing for a mix of uses in a more compact village setting.
- Ensure materials, scale, and character of new buildings is compatible with existing structures in each village.
- Enhance design and development standards to ensure compatibility with traditional Village development patterns.
- Enhance and protect cultural resources.
- Foster the development of a variety of housing types, including affordable housing.
- Orient new buildings toward the street.
- Encourage infill development and retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Incorporate pedestrian connections and safety enhancements, such as stop bars and crosswalks.
- Encourage traffic calming, particularly along primary routes.
- Incorporate wayfinding and signage for the Villages.
- Incorporate streetscape, planting, and amenities that contribute to the Village environment.
- Locate parking to the side and rear of buildings.
- Screen commercial parking and service areas from off-site views with low walls and hedges.
- Encourage shared open space or park space.
- Connect existing and establish new trails, bicycle routes, and other recreation amenities in and around Villages.





## Piney River

At the intersection of Route 151 and 56, Piney River is the Southwestern gateway to the County. The Virginia Blue Ridge Rail Trail and several long-standing agricultural businesses, such as the Saunders Brothers Orchard, are located in the Village. Though Piney River is small, it is served by sewer infrastructure and Fire/EMS facilities. The existing assets, access to transportation corridors, and infrastructure make Piney River a strategic location to absorb additional growth and investment in the County.



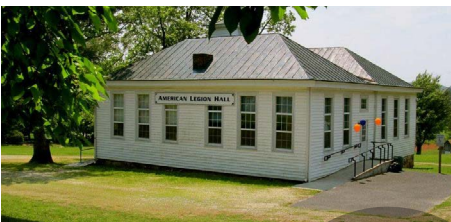
## Gladstone

The Gladstone community, known as Horsley's Landing until 1881, was established as a terminal on the C&O railroad main line. Railroad investment in the community included a church, YMCA and depot. The railroad terminal was closed in 1985, though the rail line remains active and the Village retains its historic rail town character. Without an active rail depot, the Village has declined, but it remains one of the most unique communities in the County with many assets to support redevelopment and investment. Close access to Route 60, proximity to James River State Park, and existing, though limited, water and sewer service, can be leveraged to support housing and commercial development.



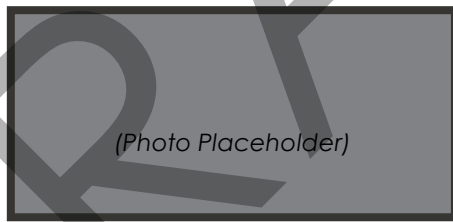
## Schuyler

Schuyler is perhaps one of Nelson County's most well known Villages. Home to the Walton family in the popular "Walton's" TV show, Schuyler epitomizes the rural mountain character captured in the show. In addition to this fame, the community thrived as a small industrial center supporting the quarries of the Alberene Stone Company. Like other Villages in Nelson, the closure of industry halted growth and investment in the community. Today, Schuyler retains much of its historic character and the Schuyler Historic District recognize. The unique character of the Village, existing water and sewer infrastructure, and relative close proximity for commuters heading north on Routes 6 and 20 to Charlottesville, can serve as a catalyst for investment in the community.



## Shipman

Like many of Nelson's Rural Villages, Shipman reflects the prosperity of the late 19th and early 20th century industry and rail communities. The Oak Ridge Rail Overpass, a recognized historic site is one of several landmarks that represent Shipman's past. At the intersection of Route 56 and 639 and served by water and sewer, Shipman has assets that support new investment. The Shipman Civic Center - one of many underutilized community centers in Nelson - provides an opportunity to provide additional services to support the surrounding community. Additionally, the Lockn Musical Festival, held nearby brings large crowds and the potential for economic gain to the area each summer.



## Faber

Faber is one of Nelson's smallest Rural Villages. Located on Route 6 with close proximity to Route 29, the community has easy vehicular access that is one of it's major assets. The Villages is not currently served by water or sewer, but does have a volunteer Fire Department. With rural character, easy access to a major transportation corridor, and emergency services, Faber has the potential to support additional commercial investment such as event centers.



## Arrington

Arrington shares many of the same characteristics of other rail oriented Rural Villages in Nelson. Though the Village is not served by Water and sewer, Arrington has found notoriety in recent history with the establishment of the Lockn Music Festival on the nearby Infinity Down Farm. This new economic opportunity combined with the Village's existing assets, provides a catalyst for investment in Arrington.



# Nellysford



## Description

Nellysford is one of Nelson's largest Villages and the largest center along the 151 corridor. Serving as basecamp for many of the county's tourists, Nellysford has a high concentration of commercial and recreation development including grocery and supplies, restaurants and breweries, and a golf course. Water and sewer service has supported the development of several large scale residential developments, some associated with Wintergreen Resort. Alternative transportation along and across 151 is a challenge and increased traffic volumes in recent years has compounded safety and connectivity issues. Nellysford has the potential for designation as an Urban Development Area (UDA) to support transportation improvements, though further study is needed to determine eligibility. Future investment and development of Nellysford should focus on creating a sense of place by focusing on increased connectivity and alternative modes of transportation, expanding uses and services, such as water and sewer, to both serve the community and grow the County tax base. The character of development should take cues from rural character of the County and encourage a mix of use types in a traditional Village development pattern.

## Core Concept

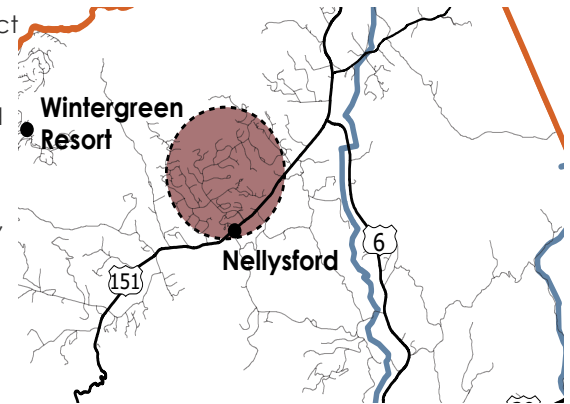
**Prioritize redevelopment, infill, and connectivity enhancement projects within Nellysford to protect the rural landscape, ensure more efficient and effective provision of community services, bolster economic development, and improve quality of life.**

## Primary Land Use Types

- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Accessory dwelling units
- Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes
- Apartments
- Live-work units
- Hotels & Lodging
- Agritourism Businesses
- Commercial (Retail, shopping, dining)
- Professional & Offices
- Business & Employment
- Institutional uses
- Parks, recreation, and trails

## Planning Guidelines

- Focus on allowing for a mix of uses in a more compact village setting.
- Enhance design and development standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding landscape and traditional Village development patterns.
- Enhance and protect cultural resources.
- Foster the development of a variety of housing types, including affordable housing.
- Orient new buildings toward the street.
- Encourage infill development and retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Incorporate pedestrian connections and safety enhancements, such as stop bars and crosswalks.
- Encourage traffic calming, particularly along Route 151.
- Setback, screen, or locate higher intensity development located along 151 to minimize impact to views along this corridor.
- Incorporate branding, wayfinding and signage for Nellysford.
- Incorporate streetscape, planting, and amenities that contribute to a Village environment.
- Locate parking to the side and rear of buildings.
- Screen commercial parking and service areas from off-site views with low walls and hedges.
- Encourage shared open space or park space.
- Connect existing and establish new trails, bicycle routes, and other recreation amenities in and around Nellysford.





## Description

Lovingston is Nelson's County seat and a hub for commerce and community services. The Village is one of the County's designated Historic Districts and retains much the historic look and feel of a traditional Village. Lovingston is served by water and sewer and contains a wide mix of uses - commercial, institutional, and residential. Lovingston is primed for additional residential growth, particularly multi family, and expanded commercial uses such as hotels and lodging, but limited water and sewer capacity hinders investment. Route 29, while a vital corridor for access and economic development, also presents a connectivity barrier and safety concern. Lovingston has the potential for designation as an Urban Development Area (UDA) to support transportation improvements though further study is needed to determine eligibility. Future investment and development of Lovingston should focus on expanding uses and services to both serve the community and grow the County tax base. Development should create a sense of place by protecting historic resources and taking cues from the scale and character of the Village. Transportation improvements should focus on increased connectivity and alternative modes of transportation within the Village and to the surrounding area and amenities.

## Core Concept

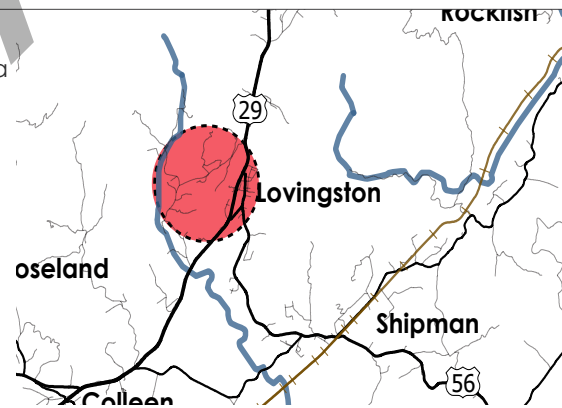
**Prioritize regional scale development, redevelopment, and infill within Lovingston to protect the rural landscape, ensure more efficient and effective provision of community services, bolster economic development, and improve quality of life.**

## Primary Land Use Types

- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Accessory dwelling units
- Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes
- Apartments
- Live-work units
- Hotels & Lodging
- Agritourism Businesses
- Commercial (Retail, shopping, dining)
- Professional & Offices
- Business & Employment
- Institutional uses
- Parks, recreation, and trails

## Planning Guidelines

- Preserve existing structures and traditional patterns of development while allowing for a mix of uses in a more compact village setting.
- Create design and development standards to ensure compatibility with traditional Village development patterns.
- Enhance and protect cultural resources by adopting design guidelines for new development and rehabilitation of historic structures.
- Foster the development of a variety of housing types, including affordable housing.
- Orient new buildings toward the street.
- Encourage infill development and retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Incorporate pedestrian connections and safety enhancements, such as stop bars and crosswalks.
- Encourage traffic calming, particularly along Route 29.
- Incorporate branding, wayfinding and signage for Lovingston.
- Incorporate streetscape, planting, and amenities that contribute to the Village environment.
- Locate parking to the side and rear of buildings.
- Screen commercial parking and service areas from off-site views with low walls and hedges.
- Encourage shared open space or park space.
- Connect existing and establish new trails, bicycle routes, and other recreation amenities in and around Lovingston.





Description

Colleen is an established center for business, industry, and community services including the Colleen Industrial Park and Blue Ridge Medical Center. This is a highly accessible location with water and sewer service that provides opportunity for additional business and residential development. Infill, redevelopment, and expansion of industrial and business uses in Colleen is preferable to new developments elsewhere in the County that might impact rural character and resources. Though the area currently has few mixed use or residential uses, thoughtful residential development can complement existing business uses and capitalize on proximity to Route 29, community services, and schools. Balancing these existing and new uses will require careful review of development proposals and a focus on high-quality design and site planning that prioritizes environmental sensitivity, buffering of uses, and design standards.

Core Concept

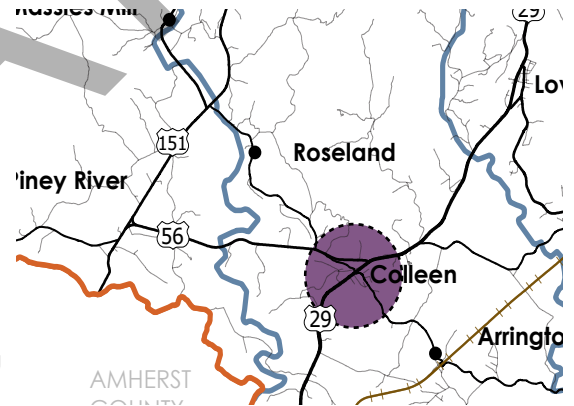
**Promote more cost-efficient land use protect the rural landscape by providing opportunity for new employment and housing uses in a highly accessible location.**

Primary Land Use Types

- Farms, agriculture, forestry.
- Agritourism uses
- Institutional uses
- Solar installations (contingent on-site conditions)
- Single-family detached residential
- Single-family attached residential
- Manufactured homes
- Accessory dwelling units
- Parks, recreation, and trails

Planning Guidelines

- Incorporate setbacks and perimeter buffers between incompatible land uses.
- Encourage a high degree of architectural design and environmentally sensitive site design.
- Ensure that developments reflect coordinated site design, architecture, signage, and lighting.
- Incorporate high-quality, enduring materials for all buildings, including franchise architecture.
- Incorporate sustainable, low impact and energy efficient design in buildings.
- Encourage infill development and retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Incorporate coordinated wayfinding and signage.
- Setback, screen, or locate higher intensity development located along Route 29 to minimize impact to views from these corridors.
- Parking lots should be well landscaped and provide on-site stormwater management.
- Locate parking lots to the side or rear of buildings or screened from view by outparcel development.
- Screen commercial parking and service areas from off-site views with low walls and hedges. Locate fleet vehicle parking to the rear of the property.
- Incorporate landscaping and streetscape planting and amenities that improve the community aesthetic.
- Provide access-management and inter-parcel connections.





# Gateways & Corridors



Description

Gateways and Corridors serve as the “front door” for Nelson County and connect and integrate the different elements of the Future Land Use Framework. Gateways are the key entrance points or intersections in the County. They should create a sense of arrival that portrays the identity of the County. Nelson County’s Regional Corridors include Routes 29, 6, and 151, which connect the County and Villages to the region. The County’s Local Corridors are those frequently traveled routes that connect Villages and Centers. The County prides itself on the rural scenery enjoyed along all of these corridors. These routes connect the community regionally and locally and should reflect the rural character of the community.

These designations overlay and include other Land Use Elements and are meant to supplement those land use designations. These designations should generally apply to any parcel adjacent to or highly visible from the corridors and gateways.

Core Concept

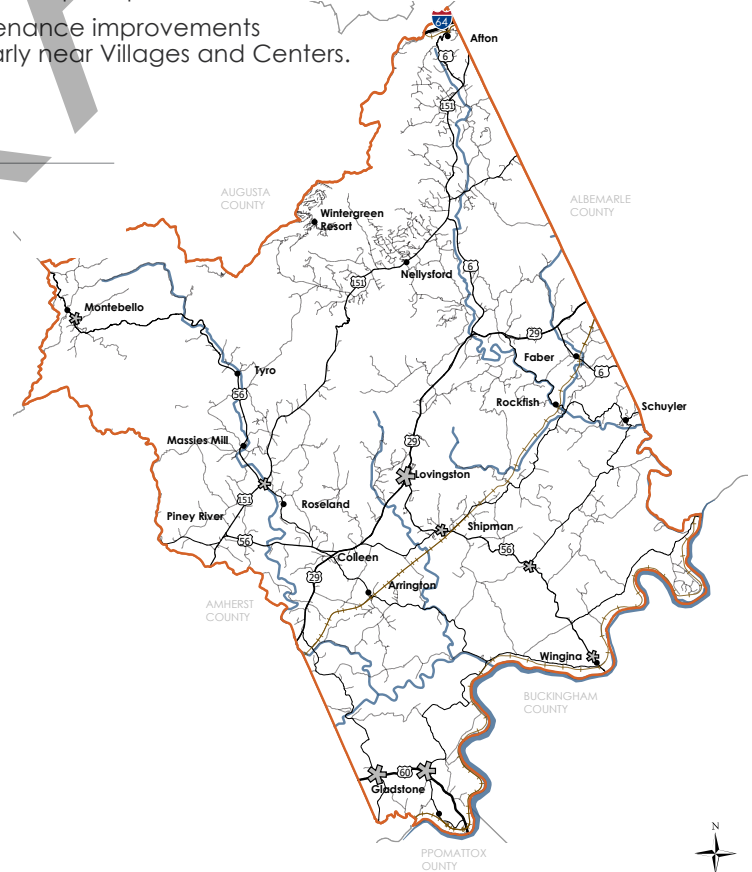
**Development along and within Gateways and Corridors should protect the rural landscape and incorporate features and quality design that enhance community character and quality of life.**

Planning Guidelines

- Incorporate signage controls, special wayfinding, public art, landscaping standards, quality lighting, undergrounding utilities (where feasible) in Community Gateways to elevate community appearance and create a sense of arrival.
- Discourage the removal of existing mature trees in Community Gateways and Regional Corridors along the front of sites, and parking should be screened from off-site views using plants of different types and heights.
- Prioritize Regional Corridors for viewshed protection through increased setbacks, cluster development, and conservation development principles.
- Include traffic calming, safety, and maintenance improvements in Regional and Local Corridors – particularly near Villages and Centers.

Supporting Strategies

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## Goals & Strategies

Nelson County preserves and enhances its rural character and natural resources by creating opportunities for strategic growth to create a stronger, more vibrant, and prosperous community.

→ **Objective 1**

Create a Coordinated Framework for Strategic Growth

**Strategies 1 - 8**

→ **Objective 2**

Protect Rural Character & the Environment

**Strategies 9 - 15**

## Create a Coordinated Framework for Strategic Growth

- 1 Conduct a review of zoning and land development codes and ordinances on a yearly basis to ensure compatibility with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of this Plan.
- 2 Evaluate land use applications for rezonings and special use permits against the criteria contained within this Plan.
- 3 Update land use regulations to provide clear and simplified requirements that promote economic development, enable creative housing choices, and protect sensitive resources.
- 4 Review the zoning ordinance, and amend it as necessary, to allow for a wider mix of use types, including accessory dwellings and mixed-use buildings.
- 5 Encourage new development in designated growth areas so that existing infrastructure can be more efficiently used, and rural lands will be protected from development.
- 6 Ensure that new development complements and enhances its surroundings through proper land use, design, landscaping, and transitional buffers.
- 7 Ensure that a natural transition is maintained between the Land Use Elements through careful development review.
- 8 Continue to encourage and administer cluster subdivision regulations and incentivize their use in rural areas of the County to preserve open space and reduce the impact of development.

## Protect Rural Character & the Environment

- 9 Review and update alternative energy standards to ensure the adopted standards protect rural character and the interests of the community.
- 10 Consider the use of alternative energy on private development through special programs, such as the Code of Virginia permitted solar tax exemption for residential and commercial small-scale solar installations, as well as public buildings and development such as schools and county office buildings.
- 11 Reduce or exempt permit fees for residential solar installations.
- 12 Encourage the use of energy-efficient lighting and investigate outdoor light standards to reduce the impacts of over-lighting, glare, and light pollution.
- 13 Explore changes to zoning and development provisions to reduce parking requirements and encourage permeable paving and other materials that promote infiltration of stormwater.
- 14 Revise landscaping regulations to require the placement of shade trees in parking lots and use of native plants in all commercial and institutional landscaping.
- 15 Encourage Low Impact Development practices and alternative wastewater systems in environmentally sensitive areas to ensure the preservation of water quality in the County.






4 DRAFT

# Connecting People & Places





**Our Goal**  
Nelson County  
maintains a  
transportation  
system that provides  
a safe and efficient  
multimodal network  
to connect residents  
and visitors to places  
they live, work,  
recreate, and access  
services throughout  
the County and  
region.





## IN THIS CHAPTER

What We Heard | The Big Ideas

What We Know | Transportation Planning Consideration

How We Move Forward

Priority Transportation Projects

Goals & Strategies

Maintain & Improve the Existing Road Network

Invest in Alternative Transportation

Coordinate Land Use & Transportation

## Connecting People & Places

The transportation system is an essential building block of any community. It connects people with where they work, live, shop, and recreate. Ensuring an efficient and safe transportation system is a paramount objective for Nelson County as access helps enable all other aspects of life. Expanding and improving upon the existing transportation system allows residents more options to connect to opportunities both within and outside of the County. Additionally, creating a variety of transportation options helps facilitate a more equitable, sustainable, and accessible system.

Centrally located along a significant state highway system between three cities, Nelson County's transportation network helps connect its residents to neighboring localities and caters to many non-resident users of the system. This chapter explores the existing conditions of Nelson County's transportation network and identifies key opportunities for the County to invest in the future of its transportation infrastructure.



# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



Access to transportation in rural communities is usually defined by a person's access to private automobiles, and Nelson County is no exception. Cars are a necessity for County residents to access their places of work, recreation areas, and vital services such as healthcare and shopping. Community members who may not have a personal vehicle or who otherwise cannot drive, such as aging seniors, therefore have greater barriers to accessing those basic amenities and services. Expanding alternative transportation options and providing additional public transportation throughout the County can help ensure more equitable connection of County amenities to residents.

The transportation system in the County connects community members with vital services such as education, healthcare, libraries, and community centers. It also connects community services, such as law enforcement and fire and emergency rescue services, to community members. Creating a safe and efficient roadway network will help ensure efficient and timely responses for emergency services and allow for greater access to other services for community members.

Ecotourism and agritourism are vital parts of the economy in Nelson County. Helping visitors easily access these attractions ensures overall economic success and future growth. Additional multimodal connections to important tourist destinations in the County, such as hiking and biking paths, can help ease navigation strains for tourists and reduce traffic. In addition, Nelson County greatly benefits from its location on and near important freight routes, along national and regional highways and railroads. Ensuring the maintenance of these routes and keeping logistical options open to prospective users can help continue to diversify and bolster the local economy over the timeframe of this Plan.

A transportation network expands beyond roadways and personal vehicles. Sidewalks, bicycle paths, railroads, and undeveloped open spaces all contribute to moving people where they want to go. Expanding and connecting Nelson County's valuable trail systems and adding pedestrian paths along existing roadways to link them, will facilitate greater access to the natural environment. Road projects like lane and road widening, should always be done with the least possible impact upon the natural landscape. Additionally, diversifying multimodal transportation options has added benefits for the natural environment by reducing emissions and pollution.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #18**

Facilitate the study of potential village and urban areas for designations as Urban Development Areas.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #3**

Target safety improvements at high-crash intersections and roadway corridors.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #7**

Identify areas to construct or expand natural trails and sidewalks for pedestrian traffic.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #12**

Evaluate the feasibility of installing solar panels above County-owned parking lots to provide both covered parking and clean energy infrastructure.



## **What We Know | Transportation Planning Considerations**

This section provides a detailed overview of the existing transportation network in Nelson County, including an analysis of the trends related to the safety and efficiency of the system. The data presented in this section supports key issues and opportunities related to transportation in the County, and helps recommend strategies to fulfill the County's current and future transportation needs.

# Maintain and Improve the Existing Road Network

## Road Network

Nelson County has a robust road network that facilitates travel between people and places. The County is primarily serviced by state and federal highways such as U.S. Routes 29 and 60 and Virginia Routes 6, 56, and 151. These routes are the most heavily traveled roads within the County and serve as its main arterial and collector systems. Interstate 64 spans a short distance in the far northern area of the County. There is no exit in the County, but nearby exits in Augusta and Albemarle Counties along U.S. Route 250 access Nelson County and play a significant role in helping attract visitors and connect commuters to their work in other localities.

As a rural and mountainous community, many of Nelson County's roads are low-volume private and public residential roads. These roads are less traveled but are important in providing local connections.

### Functional Classification

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) categorizes the streets and highways into functional classes according to the level of service they are intended to provide. The roadways in the County are classified into five categories – Interstate, Major Collector, Minor Collector, Minor Arterial, and Other Principal Arterial. Local roads are also classified by VDOT as an additional category. In total, VDOT maintains 573 miles of roadway in Nelson County, the rest being privately owned and maintained. The full classification of roads within Nelson County can be found on Map 4.2.

### Traffic Volume

Routes 6, 29, and 151 are the most heavily traveled roads within the County. These roads connect the major population centers in the County, such as Lovingston, Nellysford, and Wintergreen, and provide direct connections to Lynchburg to the south and Charlottesville to the north. The Average Daily Traffic Volume, updated through 2021, is displayed on Map 4.3.



## Local Asset

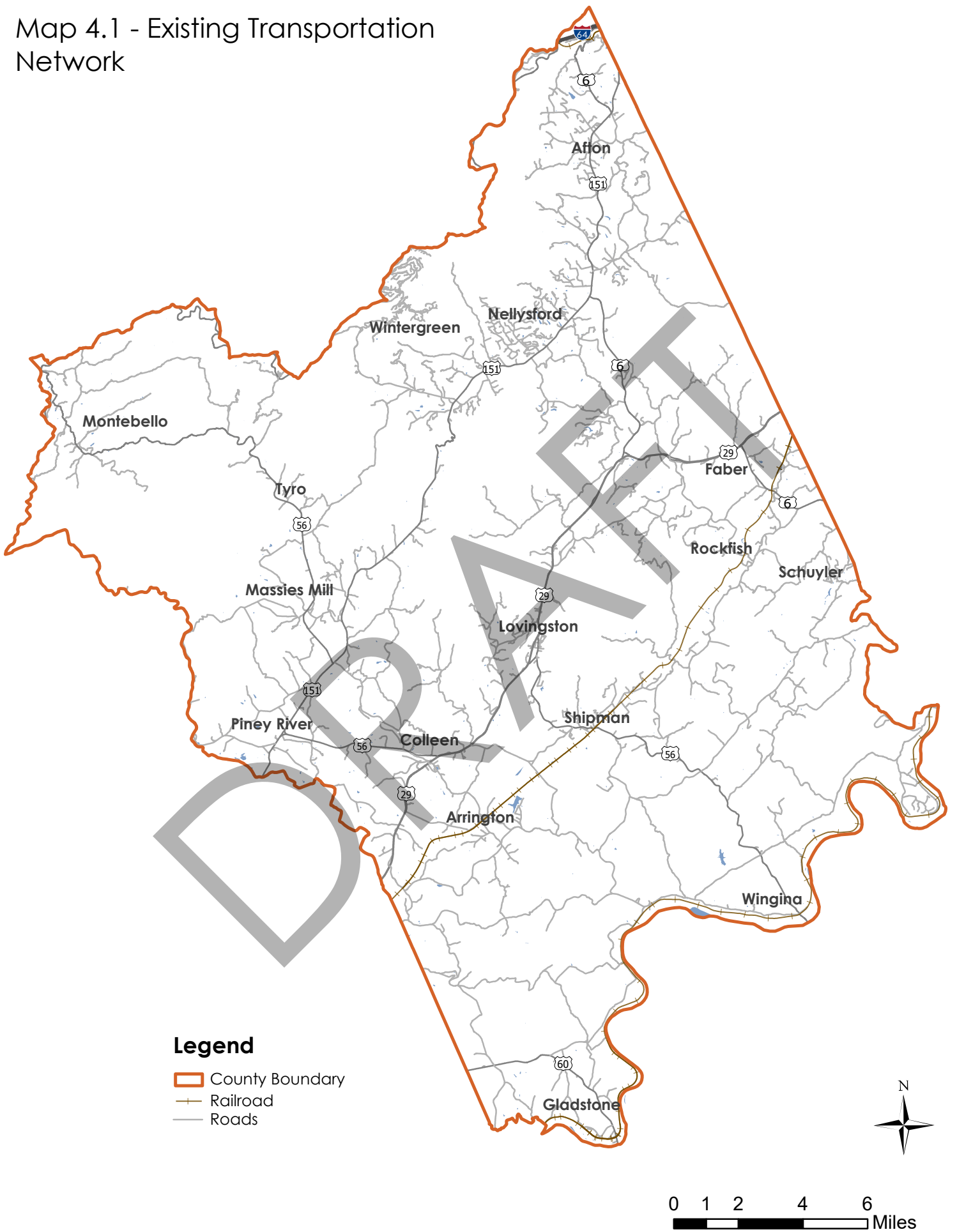
### Blue Ridge Parkway

*In addition to the County's road network, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a National Park Road which offers its travelers beautiful views and scenic vistas as they follow along the Blue Ridge Mountain range from North Carolina to Shenandoah National Park, just miles from Nelson County. The Parkway runs along the northwestern border of Nelson County with "X" miles in the County. Visitors to the Parkway can get on and off the road from any of the "X" exits within the County.*

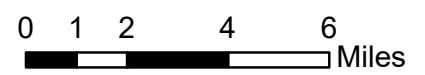
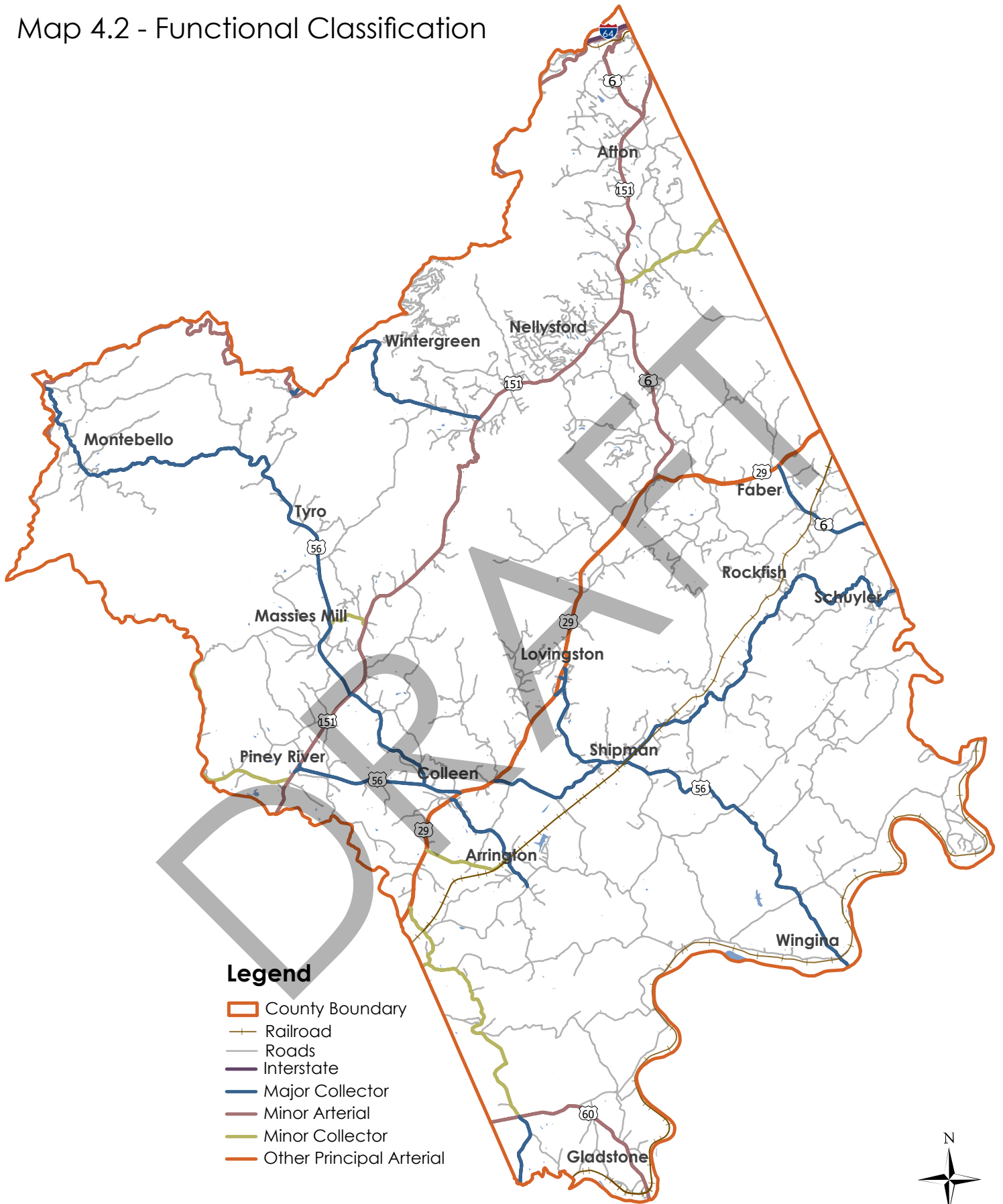




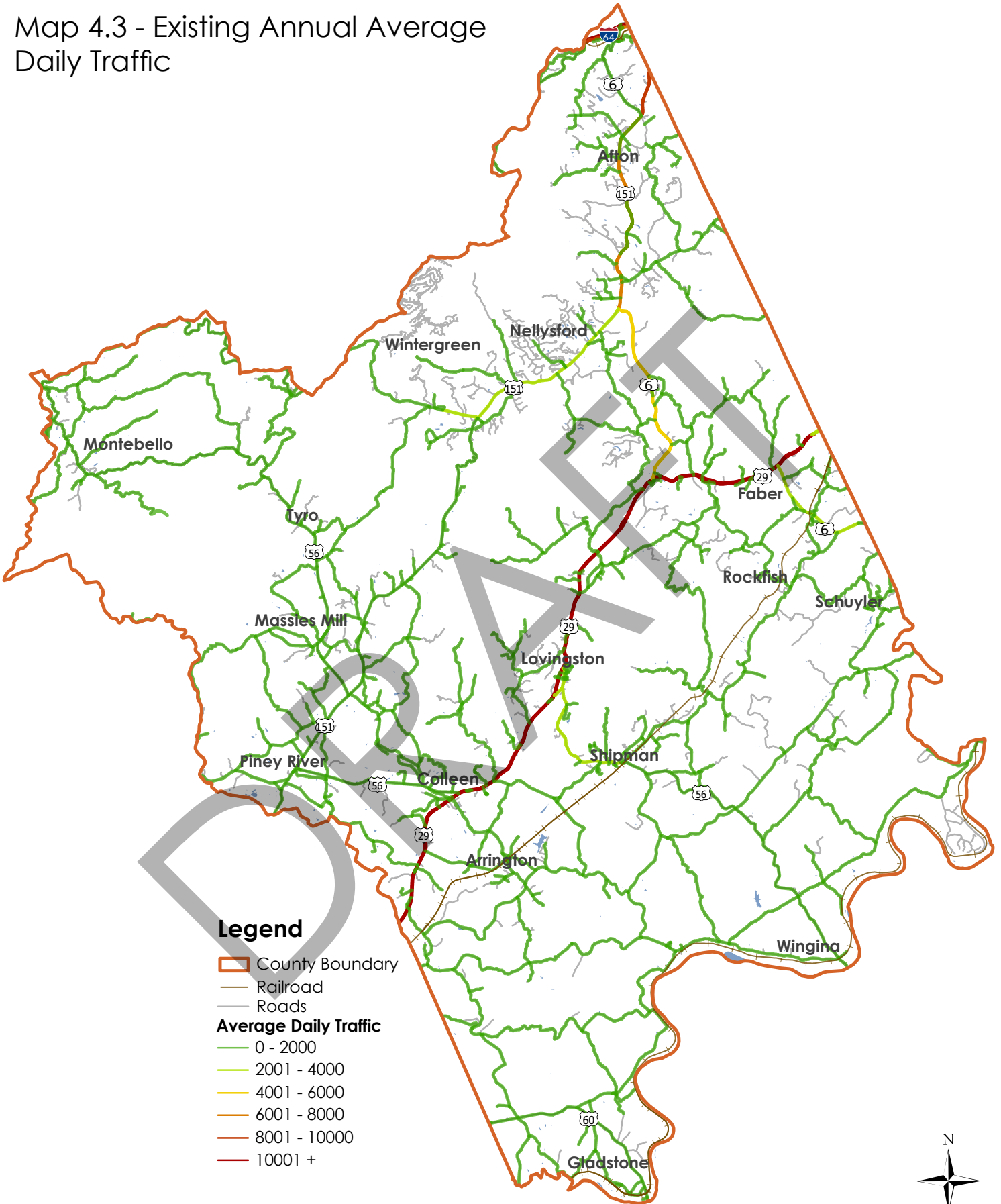
# Map 4.1 - Existing Transportation Network



# Map 4.2 - Functional Classification



Map 4.3 - Existing Annual Average Daily Traffic





# Road Safety

## Crashes

Between 2015 and 2022, there were a total of 2,327 automobile crashes in Nelson County, averaging 291 per year. Of the 2,327 total crashes, 169 were considered severe, meaning a serious injury was sustained as a result from the incident, and 42 were fatal and resulted in a death from injuries sustained during the crash within 30 days of the incident. Five of these fatal crashes occurred in 2022, which was down from ten fatal crashes occurring in 2021. In 2020, there were 0.018 crashes per capita in Nelson County, compared to 0.012 crashes per capita across the Commonwealth.

The most common type of crashes in the County since 2015 were collisions related to fixed objects located off-road, followed by rear-end collisions, angle collisions, and collisions with animals. Of the total crashes in Nelson County since 2015, only 184 involved drivers or pedestrians who had been drinking alcohol prior to the incident.

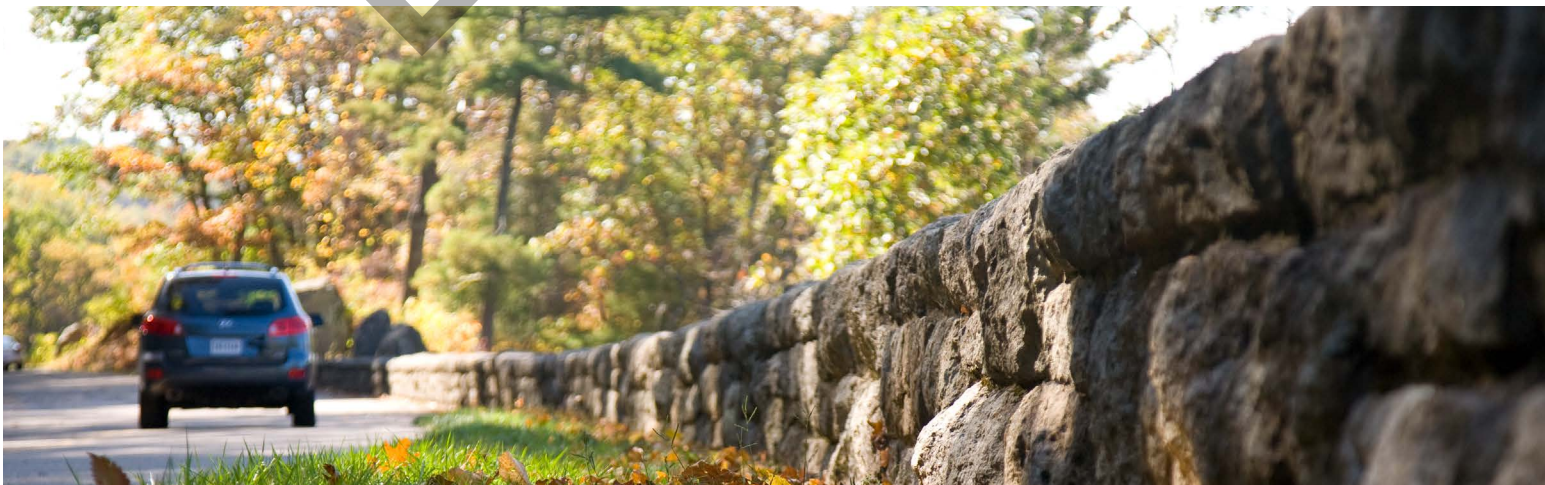
Most automobile crashes occurred along the major roadways within the County - Route 29, Route 151, and Interstate 64. Apart from those that occurred along Route 29, most crashes occurred in the northern portion of the County around Wintergreen, Nellysford, and Afton. These roadways are often heavily traveled by residents, tourists, and pass-through traffic. Large trucks and tractor trailers passing through Nelson County often drive Route 151 and Route 6 to Route 29 to continue south. This contributes traffic volume, potentially leading to additional hazards on rural roads. Crash volume and individual fatal crashes are displayed on Map 4.4.

During the community engagement phase of this Plan, Nelson residents voiced concerns about traffic safety on the County's rural and mountainous roads. Concerns include: many of the narrow backroads are unpaved and can be especially challenging to navigate as sightlines are limited around curves and steep grades; large agricultural equipment often has difficulty passing passenger vehicles; and road conditions are often affected by severe weather events.

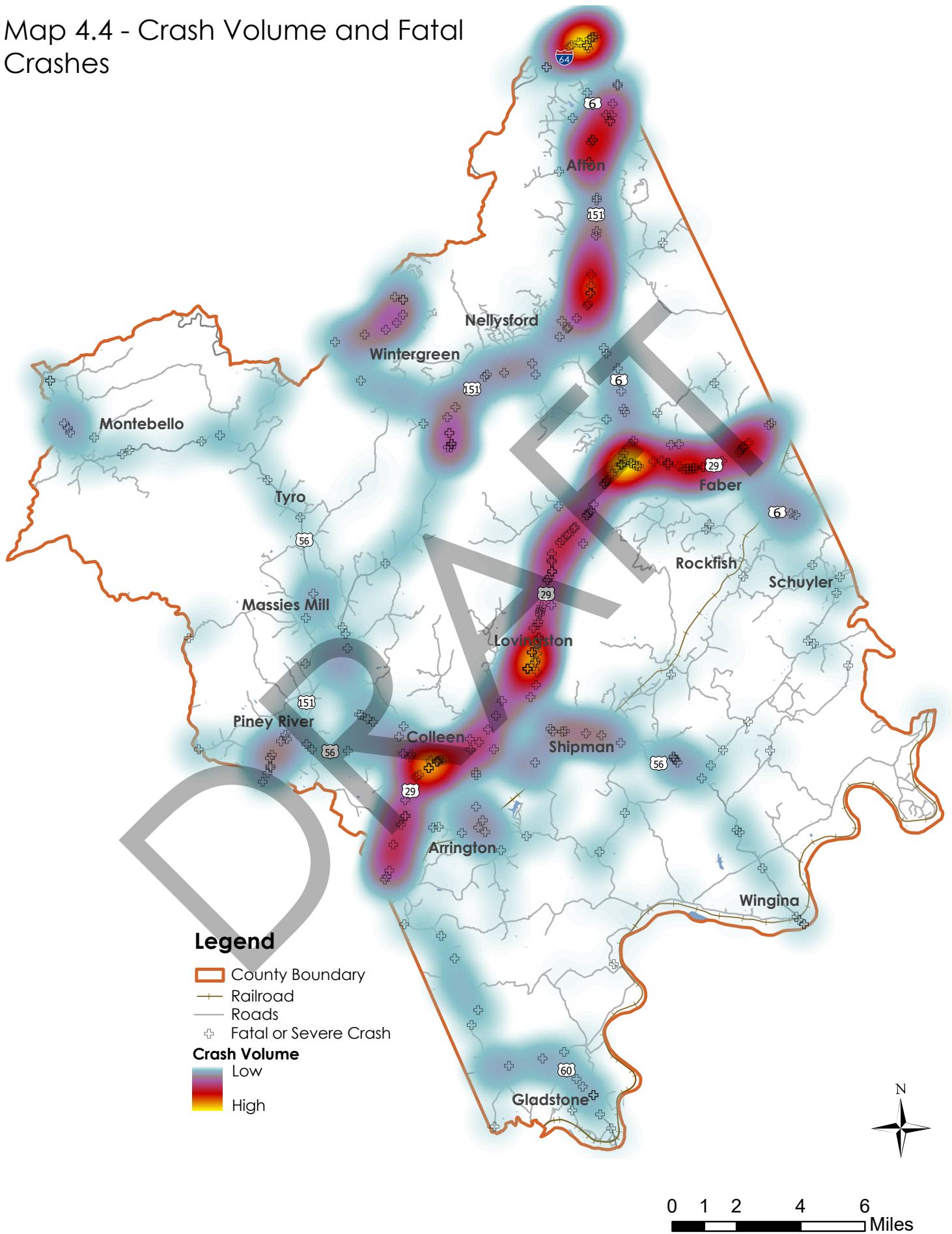
Because Nelson County does not maintain the roads within its borders partnering with VDOT is paramount to ensuring the safety of the County's roadways. Working with VDOT to conduct traffic studies, analyze traffic volumes, and identify priority improvements can all help reduce traffic crashes within the County.

## Bridges and Culverts

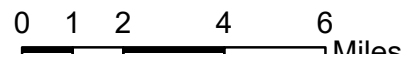
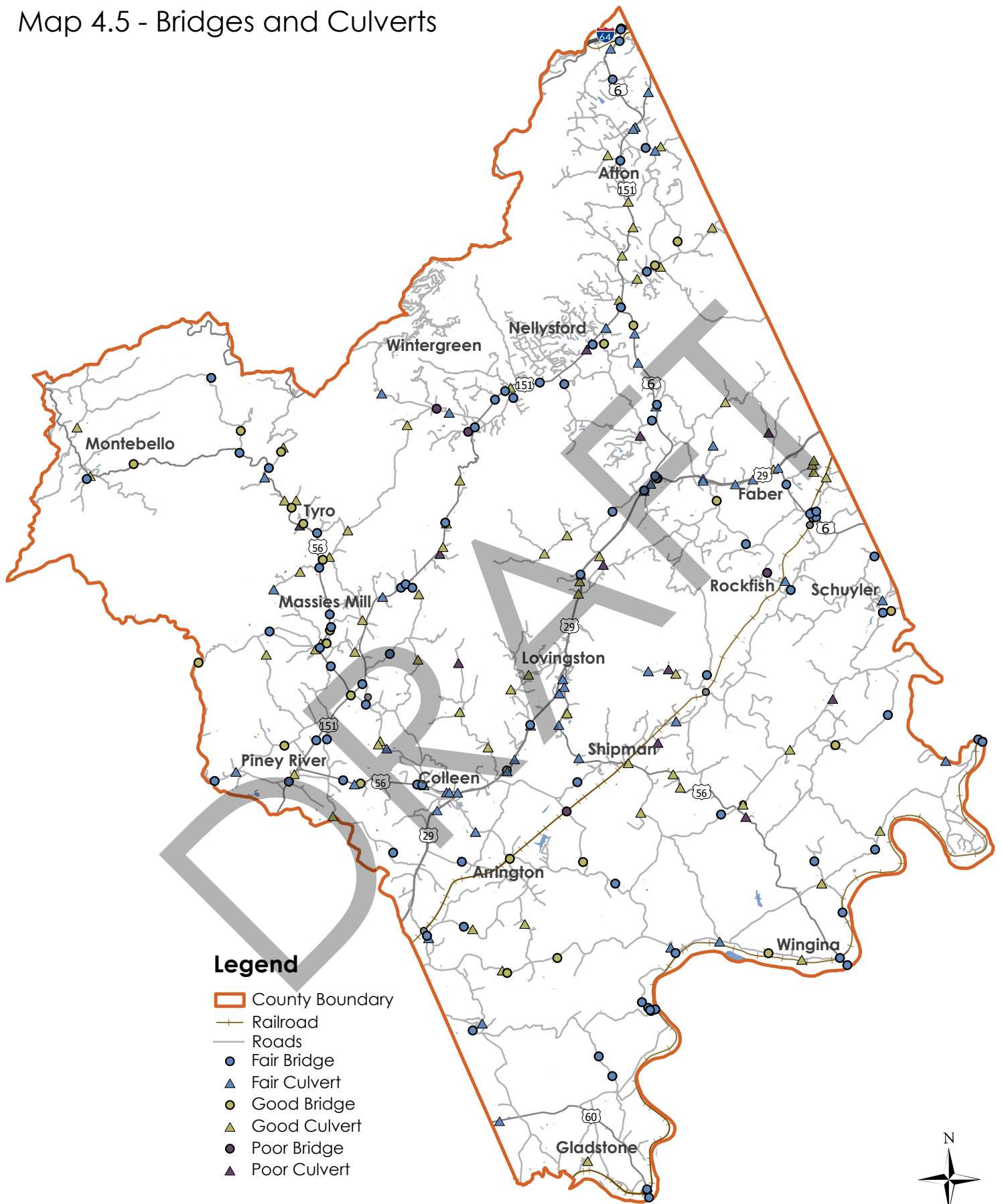
The maintenance, improvement, and replacement of bridges and culverts throughout the County is a high priority to ensure vehicle safety and maintain reliable and efficient access for heavy emergency vehicles and agricultural equipment. Ongoing repairs of bridges and culverts should be considered routine maintenance in addition to other roadway improvement projects. Repairs to bridges should be a top priority to prevent further degradation and weight limit reductions. All existing bridges and culverts, along with their conditions, are depicted in Map 4.5.



Map 4.4 - Crash Volume and Fatal Crashes



# Map 4.5 - Bridges and Culverts





# Invest in Alternative Transportation

While it is undeniable that the County's transportation network was developed around the use of personal automobiles, concerns about the future of our natural environment require adapting to a changing world and mitigating impacts on the natural environment. Rural communities such as Nelson County are uniquely challenged due to low-density development patterns and the physical distances between goods and services and peoples' homes. Nelson County can respond to the needs and demands of the future – and meet community desires – by offering alternative transportation methods for residents and visitors alike.

## Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

Non-motorized transportation alternatives such as walking or riding a bicycle are the simplest, and often cheapest, forms of alternative transportation. Expanding accessibility through creating safe infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycle traffic is an important step towards improving connectivity and allowing freedom of movement for the community. Improving and connecting walking and biking trails was at the top of the community's list for desired transportation investment in Nelson County

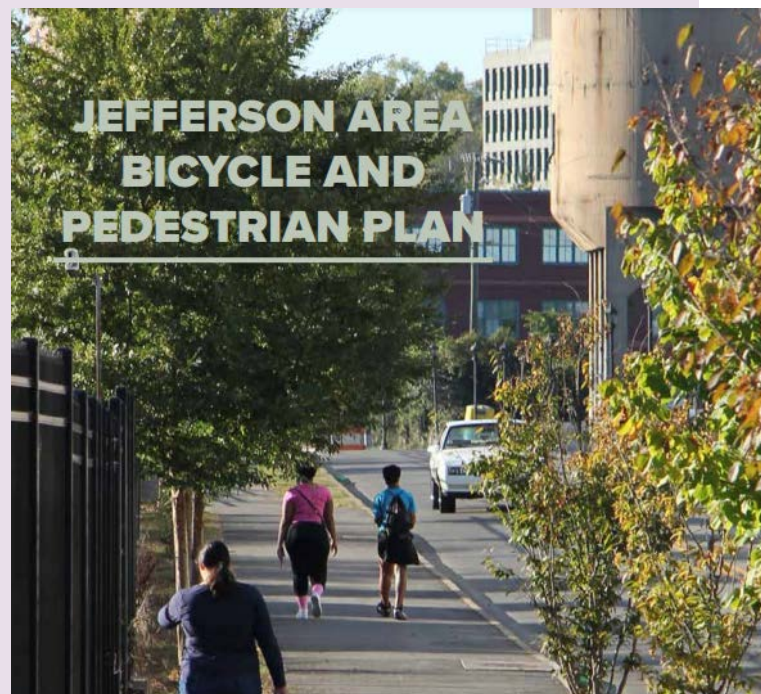
Pedestrian connectivity can be improved by conducting pedestrian studies to analyze viability for sidewalks where the community believes they are most needed, and adding sidewalks where feasible. Additionally, creating connectivity between existing natural trails can increase pedestrian traffic. Connectivity can be accomplished through public and private partnerships with local organizations to identify and acquire recreation easements to allow public right-of-way through private land, opening additional access and connections that would otherwise be impossible. Finally, the maintenance and improvement of existing sidewalks in the County should remain a priority. Repaving, repairing, and widening sidewalks as needed should be part of the County's routine maintenance. Currently, sidewalk infrastructure exists only in Lovington, Nellysford, and Gladstone.

Bicycles are a popular form of non-motorized transportation. In rural areas where biking is more likely to be recreational in nature rather than for commuting purposes, improvements to bicycle infrastructure can include widening roads to add bicycle lanes, widening and restriping road shoulders, or adding paved and unpaved off-road bicycle trails. The improvements help contribute to public health outcomes, economic benefits, and overall quality of life for the community.

### Planning Resource

#### 2019 Bike & Pedestrian Plan

*Created by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) in 2019, the Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan discusses the viability of pedestrian and bike improvements for Nelson County and creates strategies for the towns in the County. The plan proposes a system of interconnected pathways of existing and proposed shared use paths and designated shared roads. The information contained within the Plan will help improve access and connectivity for pedestrians and bicycle traffic in Nelson County.*



## Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail Connectivity

The Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail is a 0.6 mile walking trail in Afton that runs through the abandoned Blue Ridge Tunnel, which was originally constructed in the late 1800s to allow rail to pass through the mountains to the Shenandoah Valley. The eastern trailhead is in Afton, and the western trailhead is in Augusta County just south of the City of Waynesboro.

The Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail is a popular tourist attraction that facilitates pedestrian connectivity between Waynesboro and Crozet. The City of Waynesboro is working to create a walking and biking trail parallel to U.S. Route 250 to connect the City with the western trailhead, and there have been ongoing efforts to link the proposed Three Notched Trail – a shared use path running from the City of Charlottesville through Albemarle County – to Nelson County and the eastern trailhead.

Nelson County should actively support its regional partners' efforts to link the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail to regional destinations with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

## Greenway Plan

Greenways are linear corridors providing walking and biking opportunities alongside natural environmental features such as ridgelines, stream valleys, and rivers. In Nelson County, a greenway network would not only provide ample opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, but would capitalize on the County's abundant natural resources, scenic viewsheds, and budding eco-tourism industry. Map 4.6 depicts a conceptual greenway plan for Nelson County. Conceptual greenway paths primarily follow river corridors, ridgelines, and overhead transmission line easements.



## Local Asset

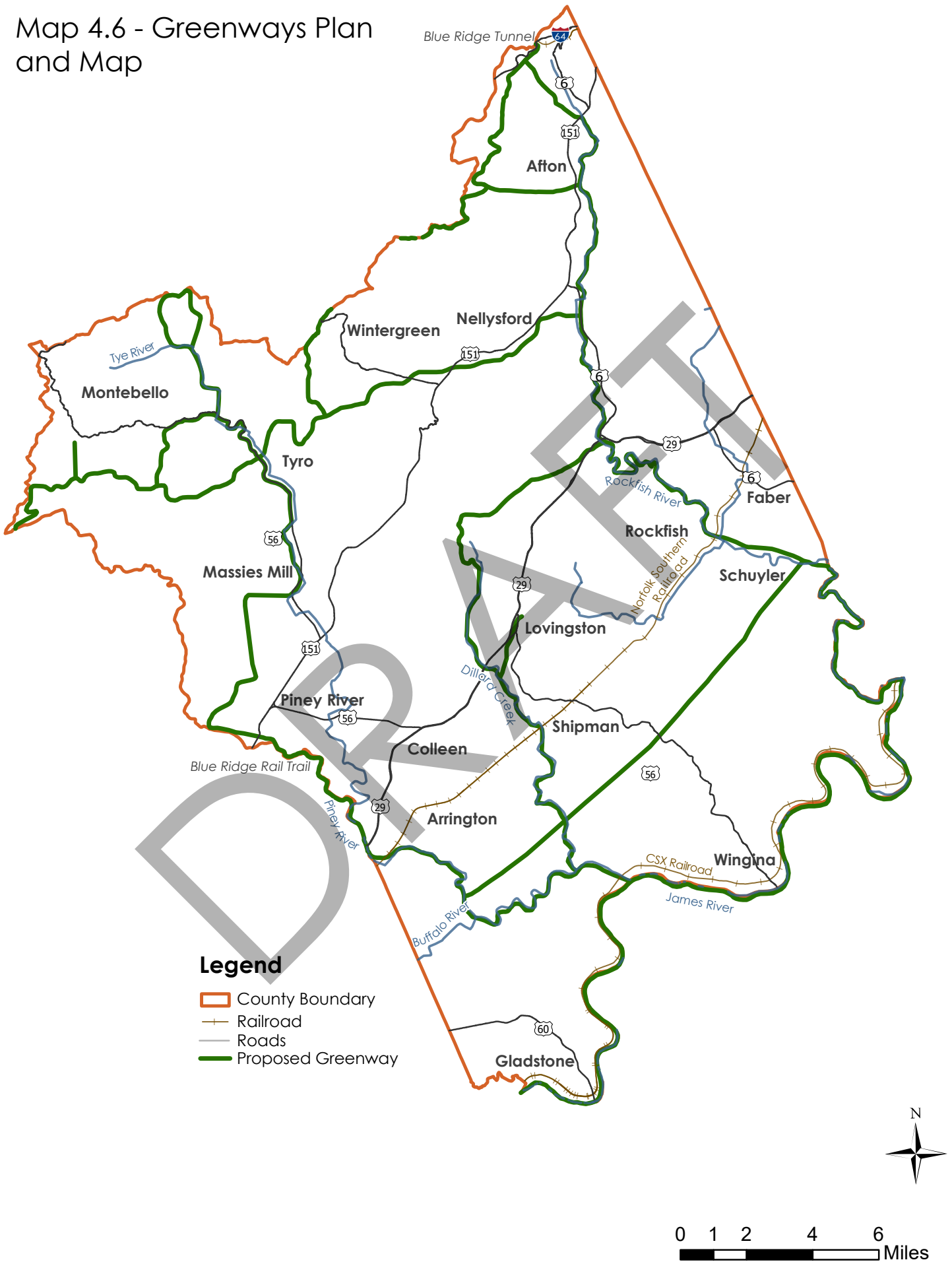
### Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail

The Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail is a 7-mile trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding that occupies the rail bed of the former Virginia Blue Ridge Railway, which ran from Tye River Depot (to interchange with the Southern Railway) to Massies Mill. Construction of the railroad started in 1915 and the line was abandoned in 1980. The main trail head is located in Piney River, and it follows the Piney and Tye Rivers. The Greenways Plan and Map (Map 4.6) identifies opportunity to further connect the Railway Trail to a larger system of greenways including a multi-use trail along the James River from the Albemarle County line to the Amherst County line.





# Map 4.6 - Greenways Plan and Map





# Shared Transportation

## Rideshare

Many Nelson County residents commute daily to jobs outside of the County in single-occupancy personal automobiles. As an alternative, ridesharing allows for people traveling to the same destination to carpool, thereby reducing automobile traffic and lowering transportation costs for commuters.

Nelson County has already taken steps to facilitate ridesharing through the installation of park and ride lots. Two designated commuter parking lots in Nelson County, the Woods Mill Park and Ride and Irish Road Park and Ride, are located along U.S. Route 29 at the westbound and eastbound intersection of Route 6. A number of unofficial park and ride lots may also be available to residents in public and private parking areas. Additional commuter parking lots would be beneficial to increase ridesharing for County residents. Park and Rides should be placed along major commuter routes or population centers such as Lovingston, Colleen, and Afton.

## Bus and Shuttle Service

During the public engagement phase of this Plan, Nelson County residents expressed a great desire for additional public transportation throughout the County. Currently very limited options are available for public transportation. The County can consider providing limited County-owned and operated public transportation, where appropriate. Also, the County should continue to work with private transportation providers and explore opportunities for additional partnerships to provide local and regional transportation options. These options can be shuttle services for residents and tourists in highly traveled areas or regional bus systems to connect Nelson County to the surrounding urban areas.



## Local Asset

### JAUNT

JAUNT is a regional semi-private public transit system that helps connect the residents of Albemarle, Buckingham, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson to all central Virginia. JAUNT is currently fare-free and offers several services to Nelson County residents:

- *Lovingston Circulator: The Lovingston Circulator is a demand response curb to curb service in Lovingston that runs Monday and Tuesday each week from 8AM-4PM. The circulator is designed for shopping, medical appointments, and other errands in Nelson County.*
- *Lovingston Connect: The Lovingston Connect is a fixed route service aimed at serving commuter schedules. The route runs from Nelson to Charlottesville and urban Albemarle County Monday through Friday every week. The morning service runs from 6:36 AM to 6:53 AM, while the evening service runs from 4:30 PM to 5:04 PM.*
- *Nelson Midday Link: The Nelson Midday Link is a demand response curb to curb service that runs from Nelson to Charlottesville and urban Albemarle County. This service is designed for going to work, shopping, and medical appointments.*

Nelson County will continue to work with JAUNT and further explore potential opportunities for service expansion. Additionally, Nelson County should evaluate its current advertising and promotion of JAUNT services and explore additional and creative ways of advertising service options to the community.



## Freight and Passenger Rail

Two major railways run through Nelson County: the Norfolk Southern railway, which travels through Arrington, Shipman, and Faber, and the CSX railroad, which follows the James River through Gladstone, Norwood, and Wingina. These railroads actively facilitate freight rail through the Commonwealth. In addition, the Norfolk Southern line carries passengers via Amtrak to the cities of Charlottesville and Lynchburg and beyond.

## Aviation

While Nelson County does not have an airport, there are multiple airports in the region that County residents are able to utilize for passenger air travel. Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport is located approximately 28 miles northeast of the County, and the Lynchburg Regional Airport is located approximately 33 miles south of the County.

## Electric Vehicle Accessibility

Electric vehicles (EV) are rapidly becoming a sustainable alternative to traditional combustion engine automobiles. One of the major barriers to the accessibility of EVs is the lack of charging stations. As a popular tourist destination, and with its critical major highway infrastructure, Nelson County would greatly benefit from introducing and expanding EV charging throughout the County. Nelson County can work towards encouraging and incentivizing the installation of charging stations in accessible and key locations throughout the County.

In addition to facilitating more EV infrastructure, Nelson County can lead by example by purchasing EV vehicles and County-owned charging stations. Phasing in new electric school buses, maintenance, emergency, and administrator vehicles can help create a low emissions, revenue saving fleet of County vehicles.



### Planning Resource

#### Smart Charging Infrastructure Pilot Program (SCIP)

*The Smart Charging Infrastructure Pilot Program (SCIP) offered by Dominion Energy supports EV adoption in Virginia by offering rebates to offset equipment and installation costs associated with EV charging stations. Information about the program is provided by EV Charging Incentives in Virginia — EV Connect. EV Connect provides a list of guides for developing EV charging stations that can be found on their website: [www.evconnect.com/guides](http://www.evconnect.com/guides).*



# Coordinate Land Use & Transportation

Strategic transportation land use planning can help bring people closer to destinations, therefore making daily trips more time and cost efficient. Nelson County can benefit from a transportation system designed around its existing and proposed land uses that supports both villages and rural areas in the County. Targeted investment in sidewalk and biking infrastructure in and around denser areas of the County can make transportation more cost-effective as well as safer, especially at high-priority intersections. Additional land use priorities and recommendations can be found in Chapter 3 of this plan.

## Urban Development Areas (UDAs)

The Commonwealth of Virginia allows communities to designate Urban Development Areas (UDA), which are defined in the Code of Virginia § 15.2-2223.1 as areas that are “...(i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development.”

UDAs coordinate land use and transportation planning efforts by implementing principles of traditional neighborhood design and development. Traditional neighborhood development incorporates classic characteristics of traditional communities such as walkable neighborhood centers, diversity of land uses, and easy access to jobs, housing, and recreation through a multimodal transportation network. The Virginia General Assembly has directed that transportation improvements that support UDAs be consistent with the needs assessment contained in VTrans 2040, and are required for consideration in the SMART SCALE statewide prioritization process for project funding.

While there are currently no designated UDAs in Nelson County, continued growth of developed areas such as Livingston and Nellysford provides an opportunity for designation. Nelson County should continue to monitor these areas and identify opportunities for UDAs in the future.

## Small Area Plans

Planning at smaller scale can help focus and prioritize improve opportunities for specific communities in the County. The same is true for transportation infrastructure which can be more manageably planned for through small area plans. These plans would highlight specific transportation improvements for towns and rural villages to help address problems specific to those areas.





## Planning Resources

### Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) assists Nelson County in meeting transportation-related challenges by providing technical expertise for various transportation plans and projects. Some of the services provided by CPDC include transportation studies, Human Service Mobility Plans, and congestion management.

### Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for building, maintaining, and operating the state's roads, bridges, and tunnels. VDOT assists localities through administering SMART SCALE funding for transportation projects, responding to hazard approval and road improvement needs, and working to provide feedback on a variety of public and private transportation improvements. Nelson County is included in VDOT's Lynchburg District, which includes approximately 15,000 miles of primary and secondary roads in 10 counties and two cities.

### Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is a state agency that works primarily to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective mobility options for the residents of the Commonwealth. DRPT's primary areas of activity include rail, public transportation, and commuter programs. DRPT provides support to government and private entities through assessing the feasibility and environmental impacts of new services, conducting statewide rail and public transportation studies, and capital improvement projects, and providing leadership, advocacy, technical assistance, and funding.

Additional studies that provide resources and recommendations for the future of transportation in Nelson County include:

- Lovington Safety Study (2005)
- Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan (2019)
- Nelson Route 29 Economic Development Corridor Plan (2017)
- Rockfish Valley Express (2009)
- Rockfish Valley Area Plan (2017)
- Capital Improvements Plan
- DRPT Transit Equity and Modernization Study





## **How We Move Forward | Priority Projects, Goals & Strategies**

Nelson County is committed to maintaining a safe and efficient transportation network that allows people the opportunity to choose how to get around the County. This section outlines Priority Transportation Projects, Objectives and Strategies to achieve the vision of this Plan and the Goal of this Chapter.

# Priority Transportation Improvement Projects

## Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP)

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) allocates public funds to transportation projects over six fiscal years under the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Currently, there are ten projects under the SYIP (FY 23) in Nelson County, included as an appendix to this Plan. The SYIP is updated annually by VDOT and therefore will include different projects throughout the life of this Plan. Nelson County will continue annual evaluation of projects included in the SYIP and work with VDOT to ensure their successful completion.

## VTrans

VTrans is the state's multimodal surface transportation plan developed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in partnership with the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI). The plan identifies mid-term needs, long-term risks and opportunities, and strategic actions to advance multimodal transportation in the state. VDOT allocates funds to projects based on their alignment with the goals of the VTrans Plan. VTrans prioritizes:

- Optimized return on investments;
- Safe, secure, and resilient transportation systems;
- Efficiency in delivering programs;
- Considering operational improvements and demand management first;
- Promoting performance management, transparency, and accountability;
- Improved coordination between transportation and land use; and
- Efficient intermodal connections.

Identified priority roadways and segments in Nelson County span several different needs, the most common of which is safety improvements. Additional needs include Rail on-time performance, capacity preservation, transportation demand management, or transit access. Map 4.6 shows the roadways and segments identified as needing improvements. Definitions for roadway needs and a further exploration of specific improvements can be found at the VTrans website.

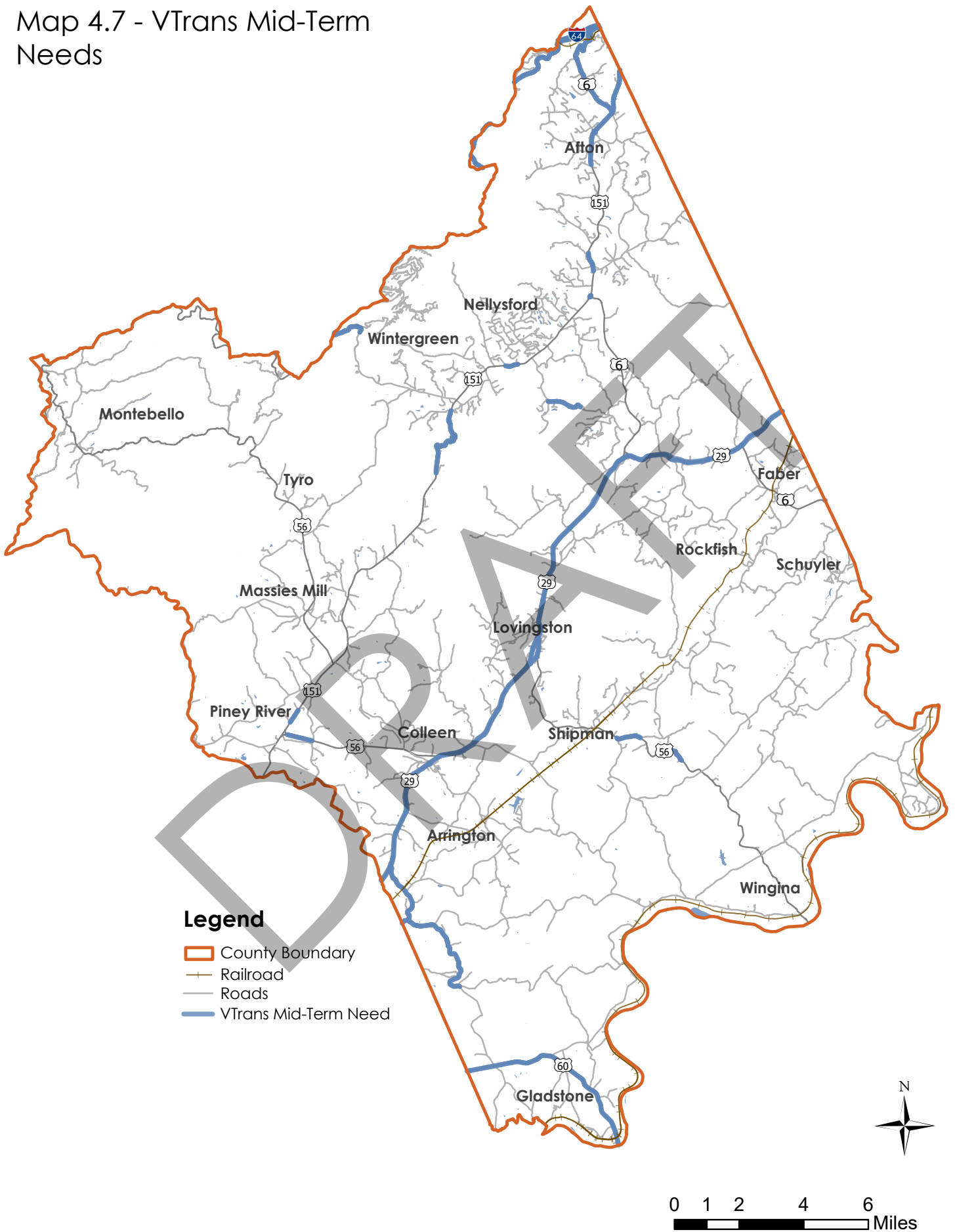


**Learn more about the SYIP here:** <http://syip.virginiadot.org/Pages/allProjects.aspx>

**Learn more about VTrans here:** <https://vtrans.org/interactivtrans/map-explorer>



# Map 4.7 - VTrans Mid-Term Needs



# Priority Transportation Projects

This section lists priority transportation projects for the future of Nelson County. These projects have been identified by examining the County's existing and future transportation needs while taking into consideration community input and existing information from the plans and programs included in this Chapter. Table 4.1 provides a list of these transportation projects that Nelson County can undertake to better connect the community to important destinations and services within and outside the County. Where possible, cost estimates have been provided along with the source of the project. The approximate location for each of these priority projects is illustrated in Map 4.7; the project number listed in the table corresponds with the numbers on the map.

Table 4.1 - Recommended Priority Transportation Projects

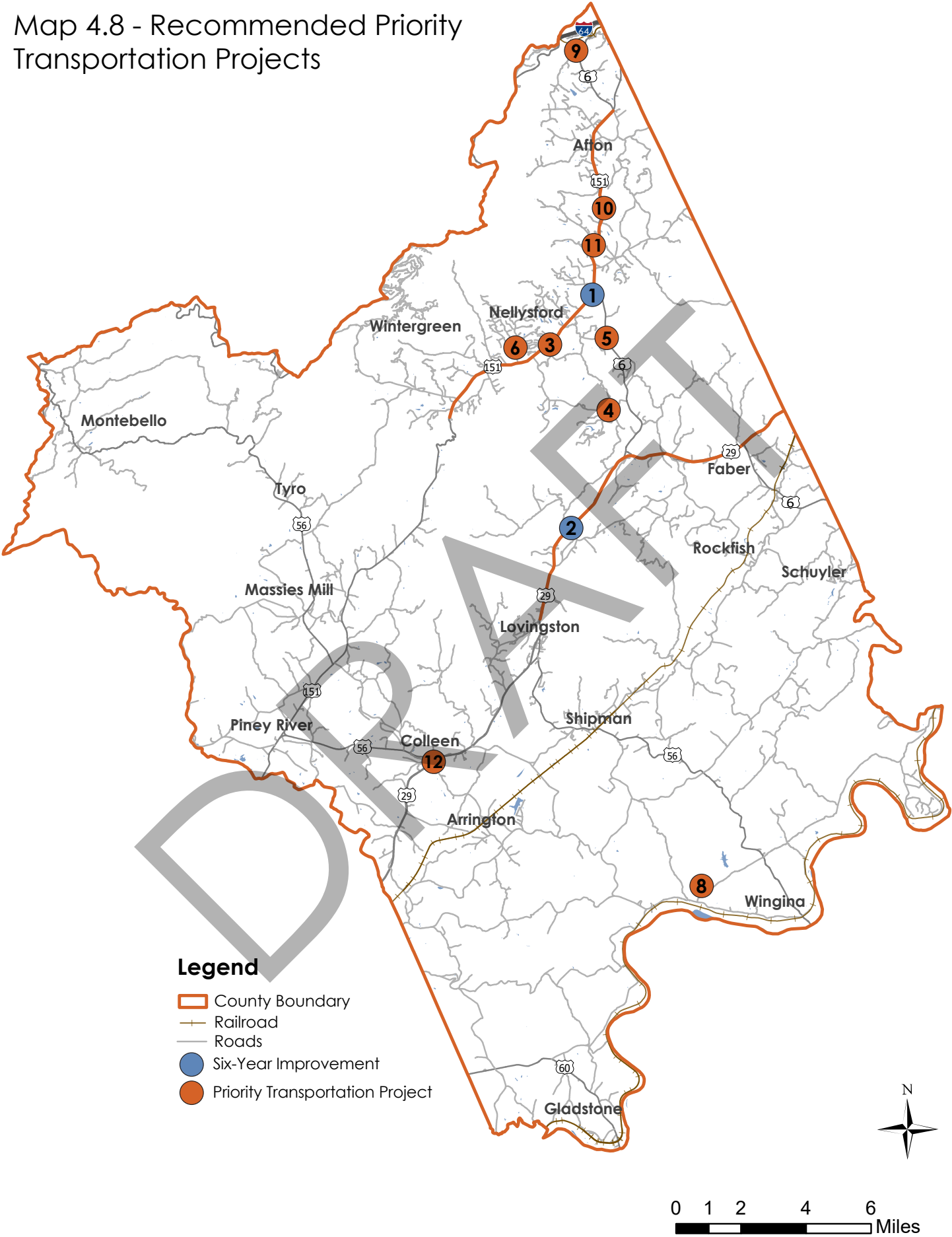
Project #	Project Name	Description	Cost (in thousands of dollars)	Improvement Type	Source
1	Route 6 Roundabout	Construct a roundabout at the intersection of Route 151 and Route 6.	\$15,705	Operations	VDOT; Nelson County
2	Route 29 Safety	Widen the shoulders along sections of Route 29 and add rumble strips.	\$9,952	Safety	VDOT; Nelson County
3	Route 151 Safety Study	Conduct a traffic study and evaluate for traffic and pedestrian safety improvements along Route 151 in Afton and Nellysford.	TBD	Traffic Safety Study	Nelson County
4	Adial Road Safety Study	Conduct a study to identify possible safety improvements along Adial Road (Route 634).	TBD	Traffic Safety Study	VTRANS
5	Route 6 Truck Reduction	Evaluate the truck traffic along Route 6 between Route 151 and Route 29 and consider restricting allowable truck size along Route 6	TBD	Safety	Nelson County
6	Route 151 Parallel Trail	Construct sidewalks and trails parallel to Route 151 to connect from Wintergreen to Afton and the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trailhead.	TBD	Operations	Nelson County
7	Greenway Connectivity	Connect and expand existing trails through a system of greenways.	TBD	Operation	Nelson County

Project #	Project Name	Description	Cost (in thousands of dollars)	Improvement Type	Source
8	James River Multi-Use Trail	Improve local and regional connectivity to trails by supporting a shared use trail along the James River from the Albemarle County line to the Amherst County line	TBD	Operations	TJPDC; Nelson County; Albemarle County, Amherst County
9	Blue Ridge Tunnel Connectivity	Improve local and regional connectivity to trails by supporting connection to the Blue Ridge Tunnel via the Three Notched Trail.	TBD	Operations	TJPDC; Nelson County; Albemarle County, Amherst County
10	Route 151 Speed Study	Conduct a speed study along Route 151 to evaluate safety concerns and the feasibility of lowering the speed limit.	TBD	Traffic Safety Study	TJPDC; Nelson County
11	Route 151 Road Widening	Widen the shoulders along Route 151 and add bicycle lanes where applicable.	TBD	Safety	Nelson County
12	Colleen Park and Ride	Construct an official park and ride lot near Colleen.	TBD	Operations	Nelson County





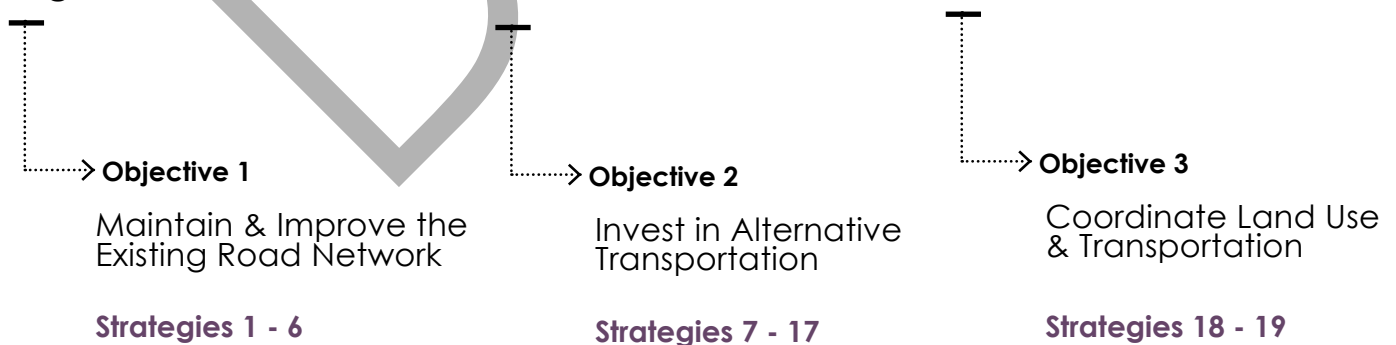
# Map 4.8 - Recommended Priority Transportation Projects





## Goals & Strategies

**Nelson County maintains a transportation system that provides a safe and efficient multimodal network to connect residents and visitors to places they live, work, recreate, and access services throughout the County and region.**



## Maintain & Improve the Existing Road Network

- 1** Continue to work with VDOT to develop, design, and implement transportation projects, including, but not limited to, SMART SCALE, Highway Safety, Bike Pedestrian Safety, and Transportation Alternatives projects.
- 2** Conduct traffic safety and speed studies throughout the County, as necessary, based on an analysis of existing traffic volume and crash statistics. Work with VDOT to address priority traffic safety issues, such as a reduction of speed limits.
- 3** Target safety improvements at high-crash intersections and roadway corridors.
- 4** Partner with VDOT and TJPDC to prioritize improvements to bridges and culverts with poor ratings.
- 5** Continue to work with VDOT and other regional partners to provide essential maintenance and expansion of vital transportation systems throughout the County.
- 6** Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions, state, and regional agencies in planning and achieving an efficient and cost-effective transportation network.

## Invest in Alternative Transportation

- 7** Identify areas to construct or expand natural trails and sidewalks for pedestrian traffic.
- 8** Explore opportunities to widen County roadways and introduce bicycle lanes to facilitate safe bicycle travel.
- 9** Support regional partners in their efforts to link the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail to regional destinations through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- 10** Support an expanded greenway trail network and ensure that the trail network connects to key public destinations such as parks, libraries, schools, and community centers, as well as to private developments and other trail systems, including regional trail networks.
- 11** Install EV charging stations at County-owned properties such as administrative offices, schools, and libraries.
- 12** Evaluate the feasibility of installing solar panels above County-owned parking lots to provide both covered parking and clean energy.
- 13** Work with community organizations to help facilitate the installation of EV charging stations in the County.
- 14** Encourage ridesharing, car/vanpooling, and other means of shared vehicle use.



**15** Explore opportunities to create additional commuter parking lots in other areas of the County, such as along U.S. Route 29 near Colleen or Lovingston.

**16** Continue partnership with JAUNT to monitor existing service and identify needs and gaps in the public transportation network for potential future service and sound barriers.

**17** Explore the feasibility of creating additional public transportation services in Nelson County, such as local or regional shuttle services.

## Coordinate Land Use & Transportation

**18** Facilitate the study of potential village and urban areas for designations as Urban Development Areas.

**19** Facilitate the creation of area plans that identify transportation improvements in County towns and villages, such as Lovingston and Nellysford.

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# Creating Livable Communities



## Our Goal

*Nelson County strives to ensure the availability of quality housing for residents of all income levels and lifestyles by allowing for a variety of housing options, including affordable and workforce housing, and encouraging rehabilitation of existing vacant units.*





## Creating Livable Communities

Housing is a basic need of all people regardless of income or economic status. Housing is also a source of financial security, health, and safety, and provides a sense of pride and belonging to its residents. Well-designed, safe, and affordable housing choices are vital to healthy communities. Nelson County is committed to ensuring that housing policies address the full spectrum of lifestyle considerations for residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities. This chapter identifies recent housing trends and discusses some of the key issues and opportunities to ensure safe, decent, diverse, and affordable housing for those who call Nelson County home.

### IN THIS CHAPTER

What We Heard | The Big Ideas

What We Know | Housing in Nelson County

How We Move Forward

Goals Statement

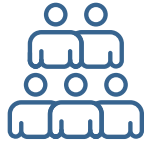
Strategies

Protect & Improve the Existing Housing Stock

Expanding Housing Opportunities

Support Livable Communities

# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



Community engagement cited the need for a broad spectrum of quality, attainable housing that fits the needs of all income levels and lifestyles. Residents noted that the existing housing stock is already limited and now at risk of over-conversion to short-term rentals, shutting out potential long-term buyers and renters. Protecting the existing housing stock for long-term residents and creating opportunities for affordable housing along with market-rate developments creates a fabric of stability that will ensure that all who choose to live in Nelson County can do so comfortably.

A diverse selection of quality housing attracts a quality workforce, which in turn attracts investments from employers and entrepreneurs who strengthen the economic landscape. Community engagement indicated that there is not enough affordable housing for the workers of Nelson County, leaving many to commute in from neighboring jurisdictions or commute out for better paying jobs. Providing a range of living options allows workers to upsize as their families grow or downsize as their needs simplify. A strong and diverse residential base provides a stable set of consumers and workers that attract businesses and grow the economy.

Access to robust and reliable community services, critical to everyday life, is fundamental to attracting and retaining residents. The revenue generated from a stable housing stock and other revenue generators can be leveraged and invested back into the community services economy: Schools, emergency services, community centers, mental health and day care services and community infrastructure. Locating development near existing services and infrastructure and identifying key areas for expanding services ensures that the positive benefits of new housing will not be offset by overloading local systems.

Nelson County residents care deeply about the surrounding environment and value opportunities to connect with it. Targeting development within growth areas helps protect the rural countryside. Where development is necessary, the natural landscape can be left intact through clustering and green infrastructure principles, providing a positive balance between the natural and built worlds. Enhancing opportunities for walking and biking within neighborhoods also encourages connection with the outdoors.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #2**

Consider allowing accessory dwelling units by right through zoning changes that can allow affordable rental options that benefit renters and homeowners.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #5**

Expand the types of allowable housing in appropriate areas to accommodate multi-family housing units, such as townhouses, condominiums, and duplexes.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #13**

Consider adding density bonuses and incentives to encourage affordable and senior housing options in denser developments.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #14**

Explore opportunities to implement cluster subdivision provisions within the Subdivision ordinance.





## What We Know | Housing in Nelson County

Nelson County's rural terrain has historically limited opportunities for development, with most modern development occurring along Routes 151 in the Rockfish Valley as well as Route 29 through Lovingston and Colleen. Community citizens expressed their concern about housing options and know that more affordable housing is needed to support the area's workforce. Increases in broadband access make Nelson County an ideal refuge for remote workers seeking to relocate, which has contributed to a strong housing market during the pandemic years. Capitalizing on the County's unique assets while proactively looking for opportunities to increase housing options and establishing and maintaining a strong transportation network to link Nelson's residential areas to recreational, tourism, and economic opportunities will help Nelson maintain a quality, attainable housing stock for all.



# Protect & Improve the Existing Housing Stock

## Market Forces & Trends

### Existing Housing Stock Characteristics

The following figures represent the current housing characteristics as they exist in Nelson County today. Most data presented was taken from the US Census and American Community Survey (ACS). While other sources of data may exist, that may or may not accurately reflect the statistics below, the US Census bureau is trusted throughout most local, state and federal agencies as the most accurate.

Overall, while median rents and home values remain low, the median sales price for housing in the community continues to rise while construction of new housing has significantly slowed. Since 2010, the median assessed value of properties sold has decreased by 33.45% while the median sale value of houses has increased by 51.61%. This makes purchasing a home for new homeowners extremely difficult. In addition, the housing market in Nelson, when compared to other regional markets such as Albemarle County and Charlottesville, is significantly easier to navigate and cheaper. This creates an opportunity for those who don't work in Nelson to buy up the new and existing housing stock and further exacerbate the difficulties for new homebuyers wishing to work and live within the County. In addition, these large amounts of commuters add additional strain to the County's infrastructure and transportation issues. Finally, the share of owner-occupied housing has decreased markedly in recent years. Many Nelson housing units are now seasonal or vacation homes, or short-term rentals.

## Nelson County Housing Statistics

**9,902**

Total Housing Units, 2021

**2.39**

Average Household Size, 2017-2021

**\$858**

Median Gross Rent, 2017-2021

**\$243,900**

Median Property Value, 2017-2021

Figure 5.1 - Housing Unit Type Percentage

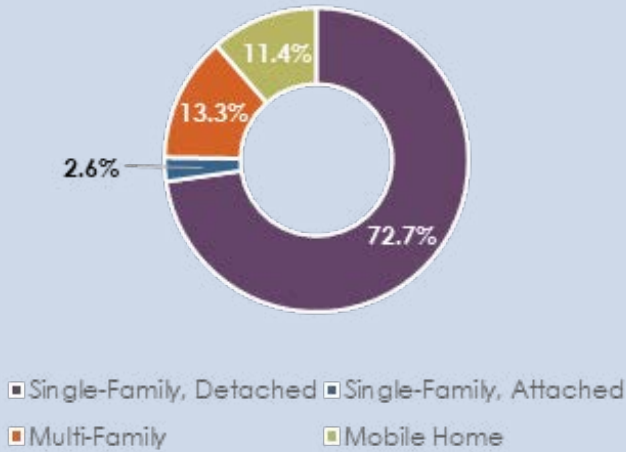
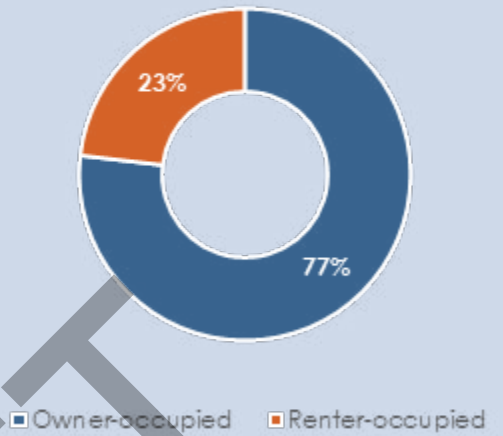
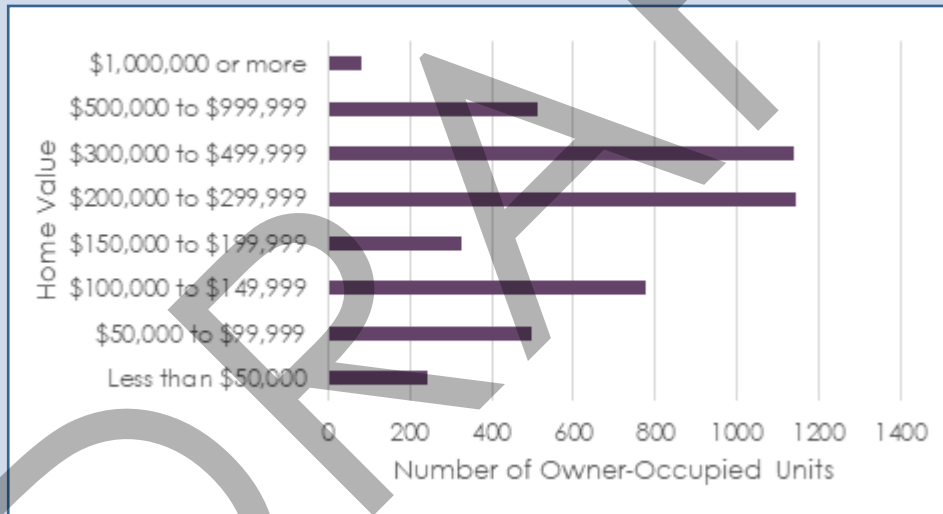


Figure 5.2 - Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Percentage



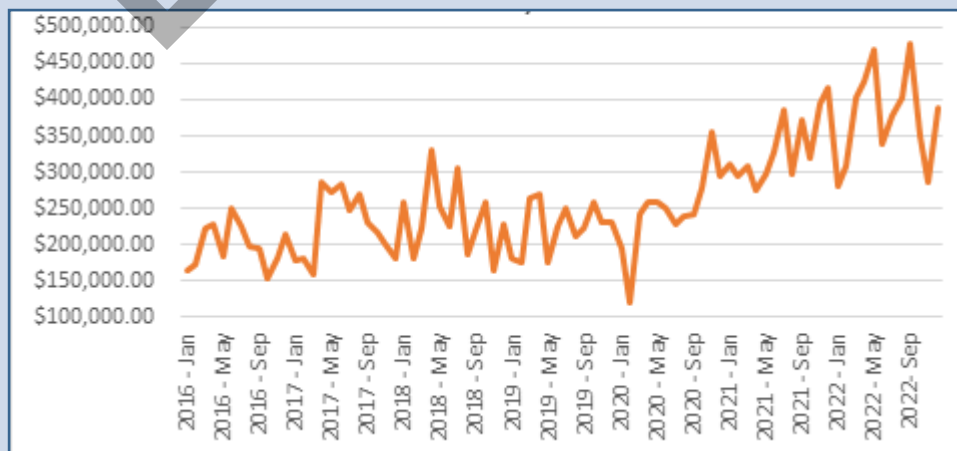
Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5.3 - Home Value Distribution



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

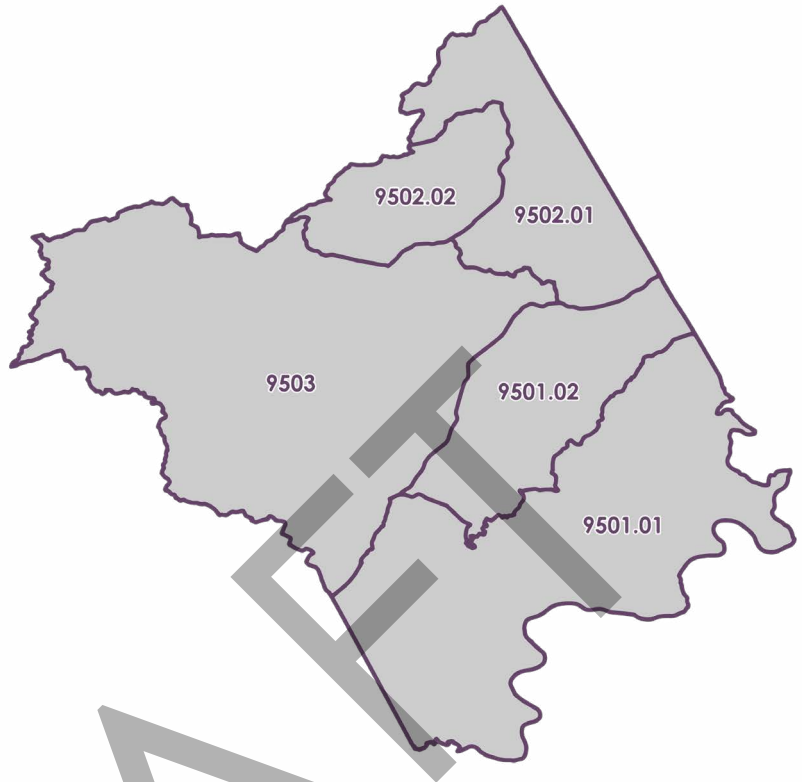
Figure 5.4 - Average Home Value



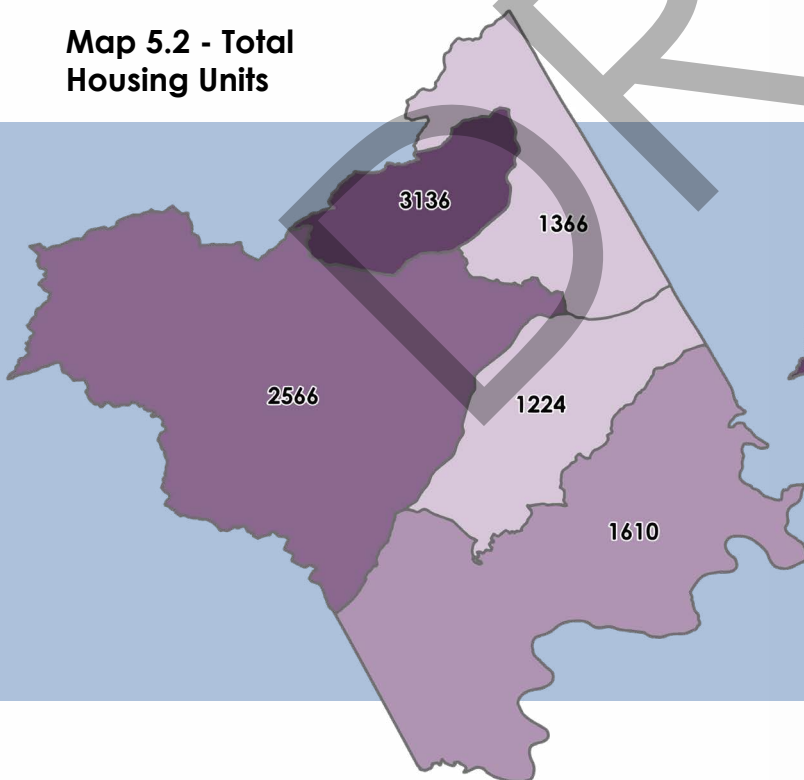
Source: Virginia Association of Realtors

Maps 5.1 – 5.10 show the various housing characteristics as they exist within Nelson County today. The data was taken from the U.S. Census and ACS in the most recent year available and is broken down into the five census tracts the County is divided into.

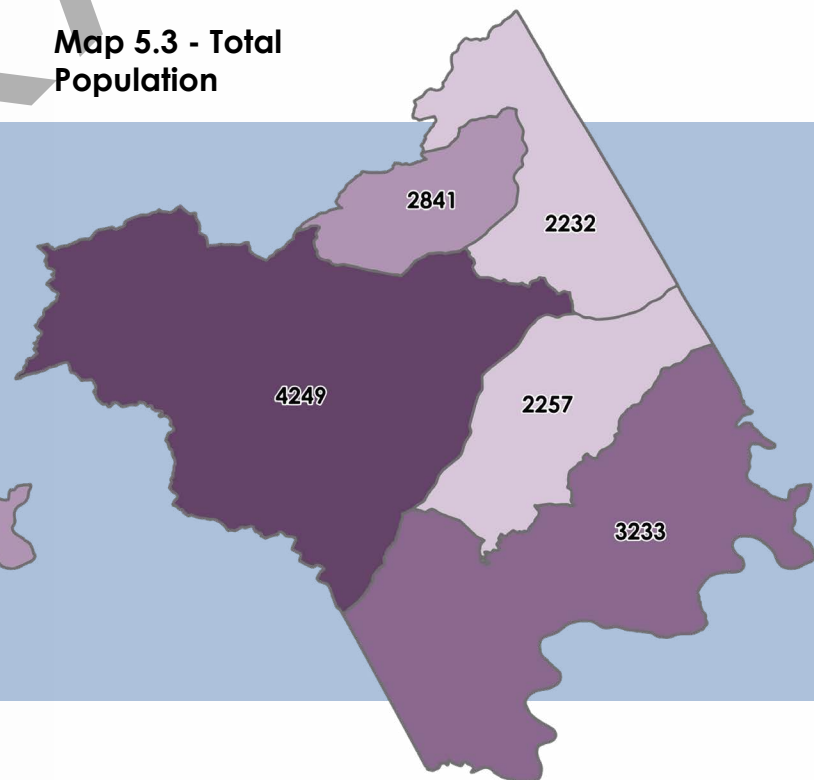
**Map 5.1 - Census Tract Reference Map**



**Map 5.2 - Total Housing Units**

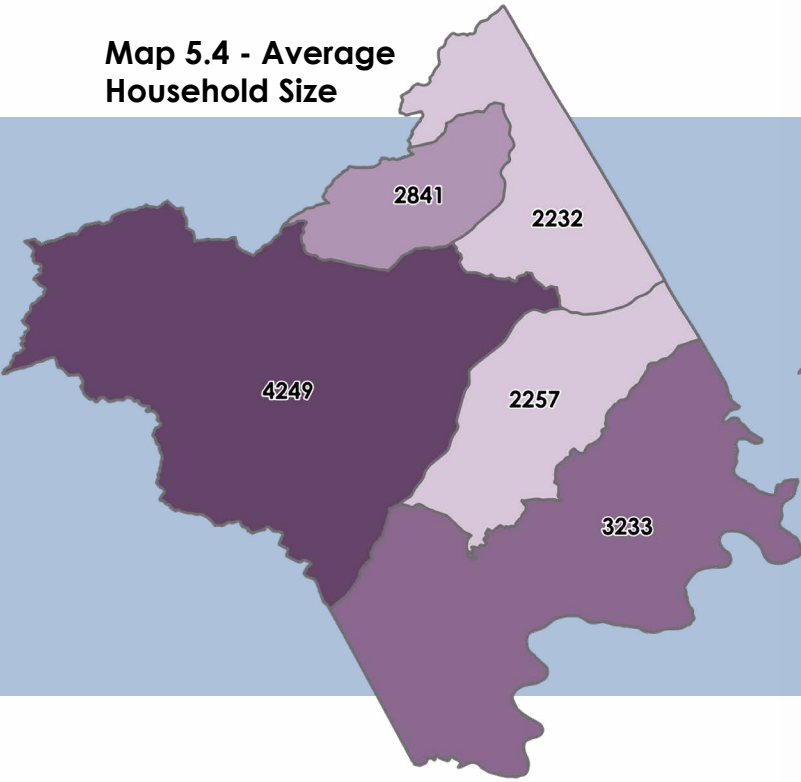


**Map 5.3 - Total Population**

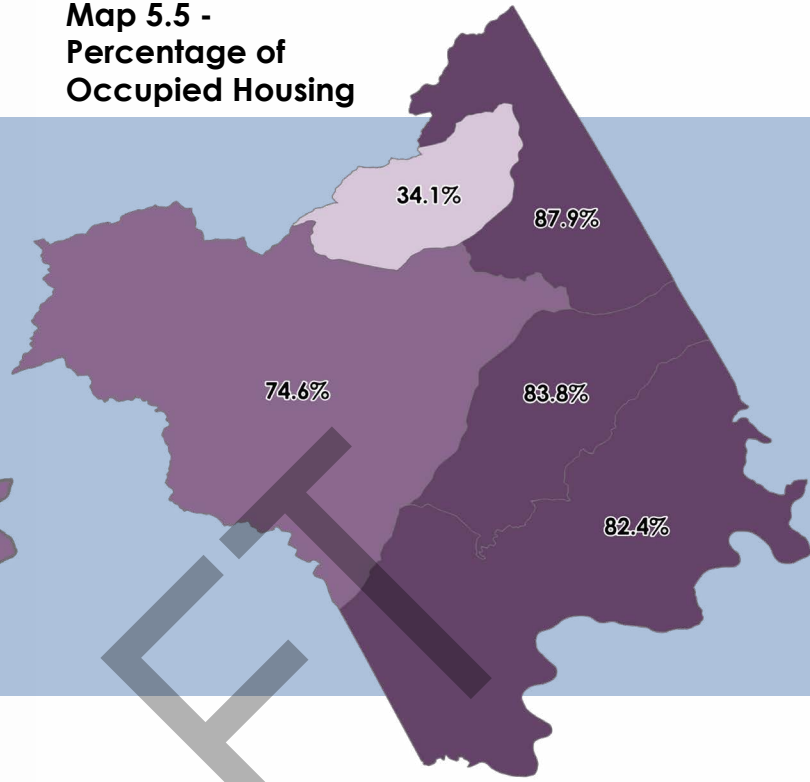




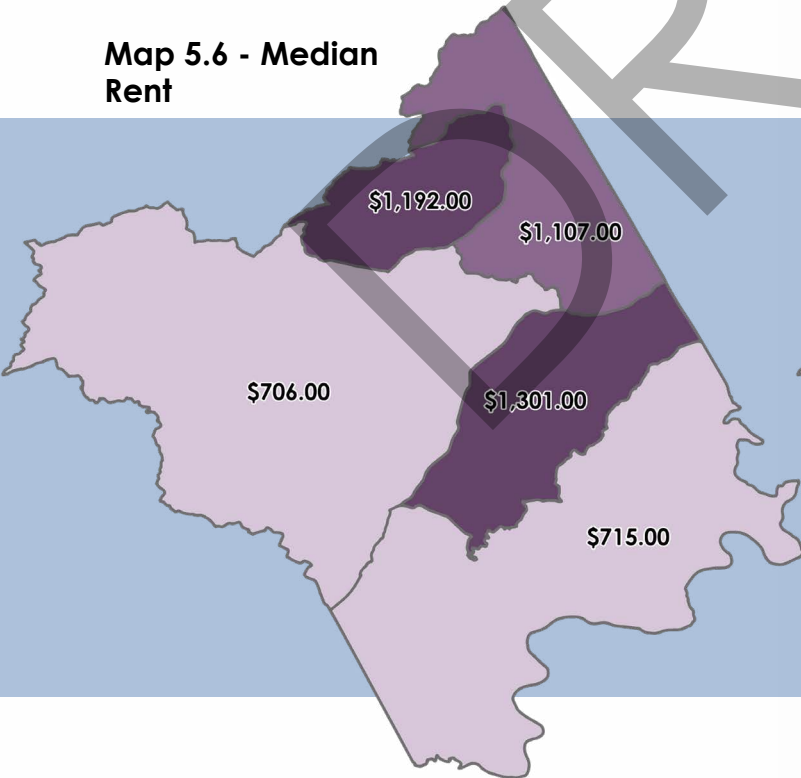
**Map 5.4 - Average Household Size**



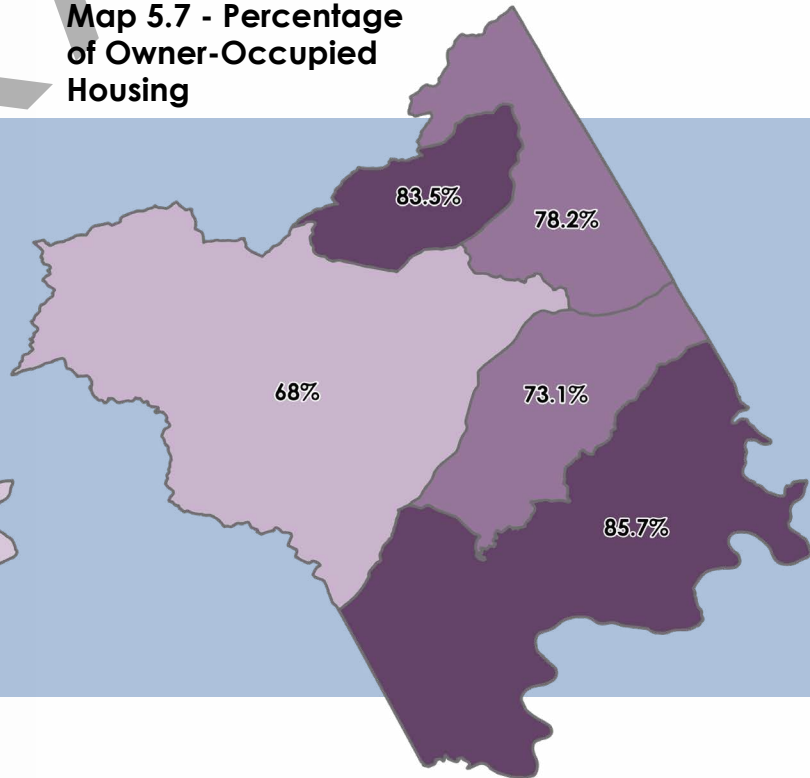
**Map 5.5 - Percentage of Occupied Housing**



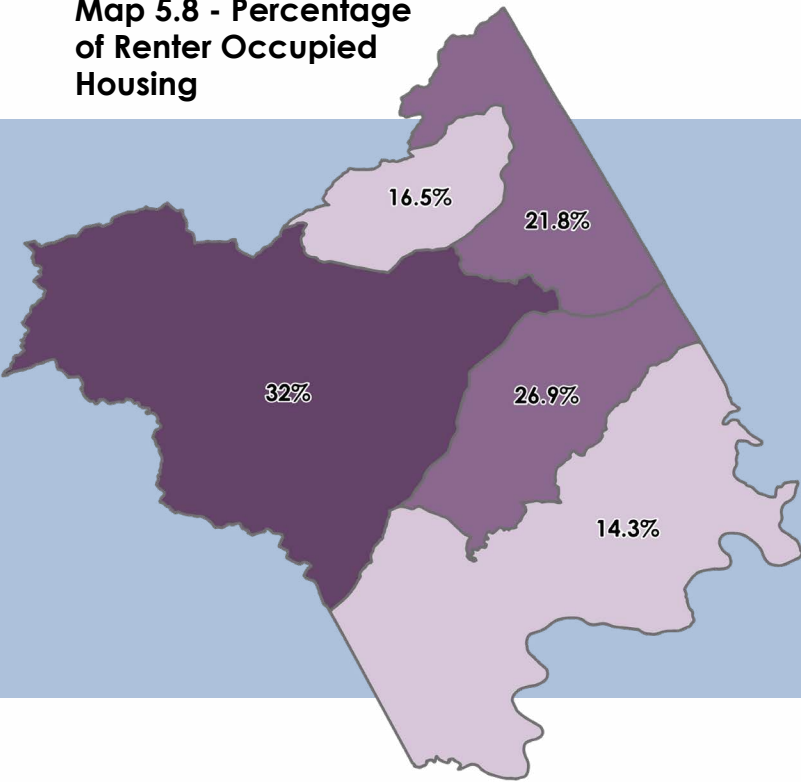
**Map 5.6 - Median Rent**



**Map 5.7 - Percentage of Owner-Occupied Housing**



**Map 5.8 - Percentage of Renter Occupied Housing**

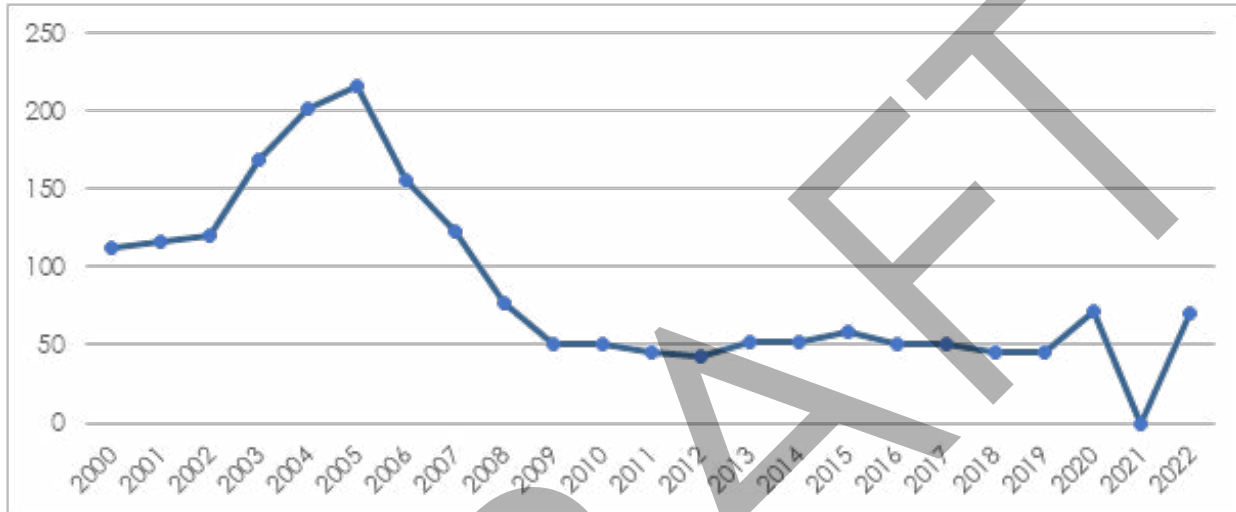


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## Post-Pandemic Housing Market Issues & Opportunities

In the wake of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the housing market both nationwide and locally experienced an increased demand that outweighed the available stock. Contributing to the demand was the need for more time and space at home to work remotely, opening up opportunities for people to move away from cities into more suburban and rural areas. With the construction industry shuttered for much of 2021, the housing stock became even more limited with fewer new units to offset demand. As shown in Figures 5.5 and 5.6, the number of residential building permits in the County had already declined since a peak in 2005 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a year when no permits were issued in 2021, the addition of 70 open permits in 2022 indicates that there is new movement in the residential industry.

Table 5.5 - Residential Building Permits 2000-2022



Source: Virginia Realtors Association and Weldon Cooper Center

\*Editor's Note: No Building Permit Data was Reported for the Year of 2021

Nationally, median home prices surged 39% between April 2019 and April 2022, influenced by both rising demand and supply chain costs. In Virginia and Nelson County, median home prices rose 32% and 58%, respectively, during the same time period. Interestingly, Nelson County had strong home sales in 2020 and 2021. According to Virginia Realtors, there was 37% sales growth in 2020 and 23% growth in 2021. This is likely attributable to Nelson County being a "Zoom Town" that attracts remote workers who take advantage of the County's strong internet offerings. According to Virginia Realtors, there are three factors that help Zoom Towns continue to attract residents:

1. Reliable high speed internet access
2. Recreation and cultural amenities
3. Quality public schools

Lessons learned from the pandemic can be applied locally to ease housing pressures and create livable communities in Nelson County. While Nelson County has taken exceptional steps in investing in the creation of reliable, high-speed internet, it would benefit from focusing future investments on public schools and recreational and cultural amenities. Opportunities include updating the Zoning Ordinance and land use policies to more specifically allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs), better regulate short-term rentals, and incentivize new affordable and workforce housing.



## Short-Term Rentals

A major factor contributing to the housing shortage is short-term rentals, which are a relatively new component of the housing market. The US Census bureau considers short-term rental units as vacant units for the sake of occupied housing status. Of the 3,821 vacant units of housing in the County, in 2020, 2,328 of them were considered for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, which includes short-term rental units. The majority of Nelson's short-term rental housing stock is found in the vicinity of Wintergreen and Stoney Creek, according to a 2022 Wintergreen Property Owner's Association survey with a 40% response rate. Of 2,140 homeowners polled, 91% indicated that their property exclusively serves as a short-term rental. This brings the total number of short-term rentals in Wintergreen and Stoney Creek to 1,948 and leaves only 380 short-term rentals across the rest of the County

The Commissioner of the Revenue requires operators of short-term rentals to obtain a business license and pay transient occupancy tax. Private homeowners associations may have additional requirements or restrictions for short-term rentals within their developments.

Short-term rentals can have some positive economic impacts by providing a supplemental source of income to the owner and supporting increased tourism in the community. However, they are not without their own planning considerations. When unregulated, short-term rentals can negatively impact neighborhood character and quality of life with issues such as parking, traffic, and noise. Short-term rentals also reduce the amount of housing available for long-term residents, which adds to the increased housing and rental prices in constrained markets – a specific concern cited during community engagement. In addition to licensing and transient tax requirements, the County should also consider defining short-term rentals and specifying performance standards in the Zoning Ordinance to help mitigate negative impacts.

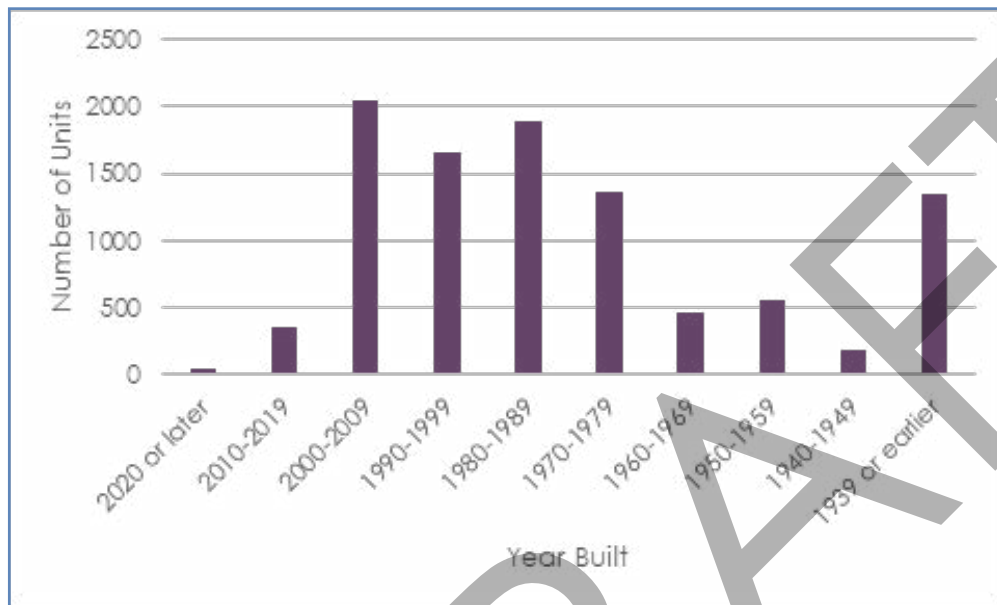


# Housing Quality & Maintenance

## Maintenance & Code Enforcement

Roughly 60% of the County's housing stock is 30 years old or older, and 37.9% of homes are considered vacant. This is relatively high compared to the statewide vacancy rate of 11%. While older units are an asset when well-maintained, they require upkeep and can present challenges related to weatherization, energy efficiency, accessibility, and building system repairs. Vacant homes are also at risk of falling into disrepair. Community engagement feedback supports repair and rehabilitation of existing homes whenever possible.

Table 5.6 - Age of Housing Stock



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

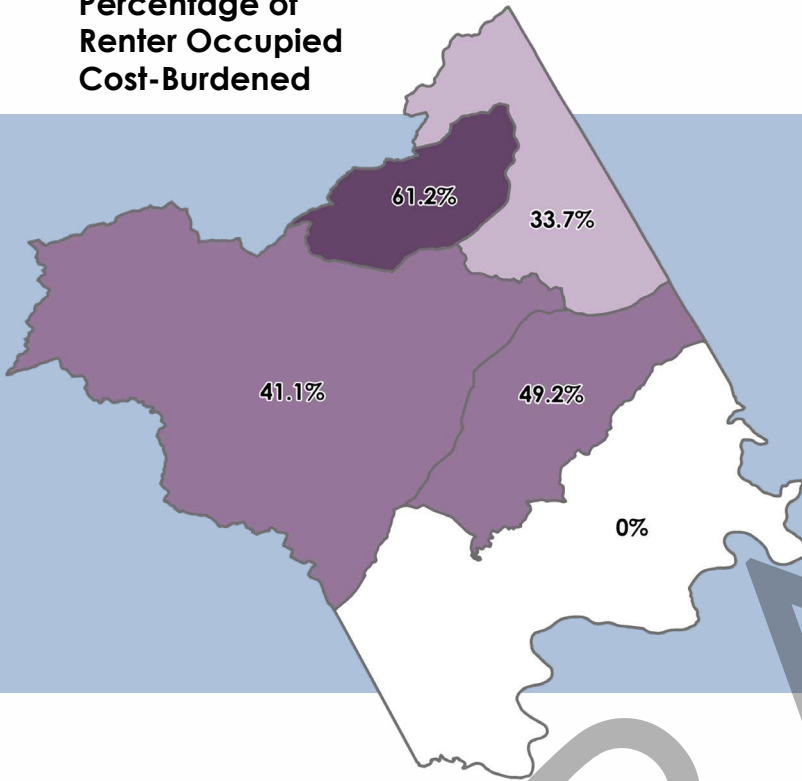
Through partnerships and available grants, the County can ensure that units are maintained and meet the changing needs of residents. The Nelson County Community Development Foundation (NCCDF) offers grants and low-cost loans to those in need for routine and emergency maintenance and repair. The County should also evaluate whether incentives, such as tax relief for seniors or substantial rehabilitation projects, would be appropriate to encourage residents to reinvest in their homes.



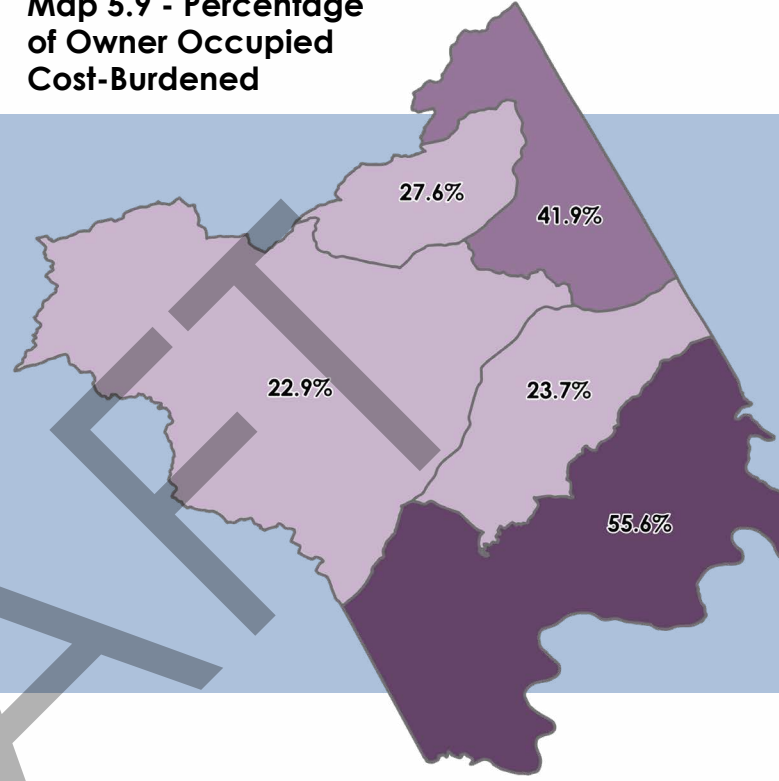
# Expanding Housing Opportunities

## Housing Choice & Affordability

**Map 5.10 - Percentage of Renter Occupied Cost-Burdened**



**Map 5.9 - Percentage of Owner Occupied Cost-Burdened**



### Affordable Housing

The lack of affordable housing options, especially for vulnerable populations, was identified as a major challenge facing the County. 42% of renters and 27% of homeowners are considered cost burdened. Maps 5.9 and 5.10 show the distribution of cost burdened households across the County. Cost-burdened households often face challenges to meet other basic needs such as food, transportation, and healthcare.

One way of addressing housing affordability is by diversifying the housing stock. Diverse housing options help create a strong economy that can satisfy different markets, provide housing options at all income levels, and ensure that each resident or family has access to housing that fits their unique needs and lifestyle.

Nelson County contains predominantly single-family residential units with varying lot sizes, and residents have expressed a need for more diverse housing stock to fulfill the needs of the entire community. This includes more multi-family units, as well as options for smaller homes on smaller lots, such as duplexes and townhouses. Zoning that allows and encourages diversity in dwelling types is a critical component of an effective affordable housing strategy. The County should ensure that requirements for conservation of open space are not diminished to the point of losing their usefulness as zoning regulations are reviewed and modified.

### Percentage of Cost-Burdened Homes in Nelson County

**42%**

Renters

**27%**

Owners



## Housing Types for Affordability and Diversity

### Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, are an increasingly common tool used to respond to housing demand and expand housing options. Where traditional zoning practices have limited single-family neighborhoods to one home per lot, ADU ordinances allow a second small dwelling to be constructed on the same lot as a single-family home. An ADU can also be part of the principal structure, such as a basement apartment. Updating the Zoning Ordinance to allow ADUs in residential and agricultural districts will be an effective way to accommodate multigenerational and workforce households while also providing supplemental income to cost-burdened homeowners.

### Small Homes

The rise of cottage communities and tiny homes offer additional alternatives for the housing stock. Cottage communities typically consist of small single-family homes grouped around a communal center. Tiny homes may or may not be portable and can be found clustered in communities, as accessory dwelling units, or as standalone dwellings. Small homes require less land, cost less to build, and provide innovative housing options for low- and moderate-income buyers and renters. Zoning regulations should be reviewed to allow small homes as principal or accessory units.

### Manufactured Homes

Manufactured homes are units built in conformity with the provisions of federal Housing and Urban Development code, while 'mobile homes' are homes built prior to the adoption of HUD code in 1976. Manufactured homes can be an affordable housing option in rural communities, but they are not without challenges, such as long-term durability, energy efficiency, and ongoing maintenance. Programs to promote replacement and refurbishment, combined with higher quality and permanent siting of manufactured units, can improve performance while maintaining affordability advantages. Stick-built housing offers the affordability benefits of manufactured housing without many of the drawbacks and is the preferred form of affordable housing for Nelson County as it expands its housing opportunities.

## Definitions Related to Affordable Housing

**Affordable housing:** housing that costs no more than 30% of gross income, including utilities.

**Workforce housing:** housing options that are affordable to the region's essential workforce and workers in the region's large and growing industries, usually making 60-110% of the area median income (AMI).

**Cost burdened:** total housing costs exceed 30% of a family's income.

**Severely cost burdened:** total housing costs exceed 50% of a family's income.



## Workforce Housing

Housing for essential workers, or workforce housing, is housing for individuals or families from low- to moderate-income households that do not require low-income housing assistance but need affordable homeownership and rental options. Workforce housing stock is an important part of the County's housing needs that should be located near employment centers to reduce commuting times and offer easy access to jobs. Currently, 54% of commuters live in Nelson County and commute elsewhere for work. Meeting this housing need is important to attract a qualified workforce and retain a younger population who might otherwise relocate for job opportunities and housing options.

In addition to supporting housing diversity, homeownership programs can help provide safe and affordable homes for the workforce, while also achieving community benefits like stabilizing neighborhoods, reducing poverty, and creating economic opportunity. Programs through Virginia Housing and USDA Rural Housing provide low- and moderate-income households with a pathway to homeownership that promotes thriving communities and improved quality of life in rural areas.

## Unhoused Populations

Also of vital importance to Nelson County is serving its unhoused population. Research indicates that homelessness is often directly correlated with a scarcity of below-market rate housing. In addition to raising the rate of homelessness, limited availability of affordable housing also leads to overcrowding in the existing housing stock. This causes the condition and quality of overcrowded housing to decline more precipitously than otherwise, bringing the owners the responsibility of higher maintenance and renovation costs.

The County should improve and expand investments in the capacity of community resource groups such as the Nelson County Community Development Foundation and Piedmont Habitat for Humanity to create emergency and affordable rental housing.

The adequate provision and function of homeless shelters for Nelson's unhoused population is also of great importance to the County. The County should ensure that non-profit institutions such as the Monticello Area Community Action Agency—Nelson (MACAA), the Nelson County Pantry, and other key community organizations are funded sufficiently and are meeting the immediate needs of Nelson's unhoused prior to obtaining permanent housing.

## Aging in Place and Senior Housing

*With the County's largest age demographic being 55 and older, it will be important to plan for independent and assisted living options for seniors, as well as supporting those who wish to age in place. Aging in place allows older adults to live in a familiar place where they have well-established social, medical, and family connections. The desire to age in place may also be an economical decision or attributed to health reasons in cases where physical mobility or mental capacity are limited. Connecting people to organizations such as the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) gives older adults the support they need to age in their home for as long as possible.*

*'Senior housing' is defined as housing which is suitable for the needs of an aging population, including assisted living, residential care, subsidized or age/income qualified, nursing care and rehabilitation, continuing retirement care, accessory apartments or dwelling units. Public engagement recognized the need for more senior housing options, and also noted that location is critical to creating a livable community for older adults. Lovingston was identified as the most appropriate place for new senior housing facilities.*

## Here to Stay in Wintergreen

*Here To Stay in Wintergreen is a non-profit community organization dedicated to making it easier for elderly community members to continue to live in the rural parts of Nelson by connecting them to the services they may need to age in place with dignity. Learn more about them at:*

*<https://www.heretostaywtg.org/>*

Table 5.1 - Housing-Related Programs & Resources

#	Available Program	Organization	Link
1	Emergency Home and Accessibility Repair Program	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development	<a href="http://dhcd.virginia.gov/eharp">dhcd.virginia.gov/eharp</a>
2	Indoor Plumbing and Rehabilitation	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development	<a href="http://dhcd.virginia.gov/ipr">dhcd.virginia.gov/ipr</a>
3	Weatherization Assistance Program	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development	<a href="http://dhcd.virginia.gov/wx">dhcd.virginia.gov/wx</a>
4	Weatherization Deferral Repair	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development	<a href="http://dhcd.virginia.gov/wdr">dhcd.virginia.gov/wdr</a>
5	Virginia Livable Home Tax Credit	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development	<a href="http://dhcd.virginia.gov/lhtc">dhcd.virginia.gov/lhtc</a>
6	Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants	USDA Rural Housing Service	<a href="http://rd.usda.gov/programs-services">rd.usda.gov/programs-services</a>
7	Virginia Housing Plus Second Mortgage	Virginia Housing	<a href="http://virginiahousing.com/homebuyers/plus-second-mortgage">virginiahousing.com/homebuyers/plus-second-mortgage</a>
8	Down Payment Assistance Grant	Virginia Housing	<a href="http://virginiahousing.com/partners/lenders/down-payment-assistance-grant">virginiahousing.com/partners/lenders/down-payment-assistance-grant</a>
9	Rental Unit Accessibility Modification Program	Virginia Housing	<a href="http://virginiahousing.com/renters/accessibility-grants">virginiahousing.com/renters/accessibility-grants</a>
10	Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program	Virginia Housing (Sponsored by U.S. Treasury Department)	<a href="http://virginiahousing.com/partners/rental-housing/rental-housing-tax-credits">virginiahousing.com/partners/rental-housing/rental-housing-tax-credits</a>
11	Home Equity Conversion Mortgage	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	<a href="http://hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/hecm">hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/hecm</a>



# Support Livable Communities

## Housing & Land Use

### Zoning Ordinance and Policies

Housing is inherently connected to local land use decisions and zoning ordinances. The location, type, size, density, and amenities of housing units are all informed by land use designations and zoning policies. In turn, these can directly impact the local housing market by influencing the value, quality, resiliency, and character of the County's housing units. Table 5.2 provides an overview of current housing types allowed based on the Zoning Ordinance. This information serves as a useful baseline of current conditions that helps inform where Zoning Ordinance updates may be necessary.

Table 5.2 - Housing Types by Zoning District

Housing Type	C-1	A-1	R-1	R-2	RPC	B-1	B-2	SE	M-1	M-2
	Conservation District	Agricultural District	Low-Density Residential District	Medium-Density Residential District	Residential Planned Community District	Business District	Business District	Service Enterprise District	Limited Industrial District	Industrial District
<i>P = Permitted By Right      SUP=Special Use Permit Required</i>										
Accessory dwelling unit	Not permitted									
Single-family detached	P	P	P	P	P/SUP <sup>1</sup>	SUP		P		
Single-family attached/townhomes					P/SUP <sup>1</sup>	SUP				
Duplex		P	P	P	P/SUP <sup>1</sup>	SUP		P		
Multifamily		SUP		P	P/SUP <sup>1</sup>	SUP		SUP		
Manufactured/mobile homes		P	SUP					P		
Mobile home parks		SUP								
Boarding house		P		SUP	SUP	P	P	P		
Onsite caretaker quarters									p <sup>2</sup>	SUP
Residential cluster development	P	P	P							
<sup>1</sup> SUP required if number of units exceed Master Plan designation <sup>2</sup> Permitted as an accessory use										

Many of Nelson County's current zoning regulations may unintentionally limit the housing market's ability to meet the demand for diversified housing types. The Zoning Ordinance should be evaluated to identify standards and regulations that limit the housing market such as: limited allowable dwelling types, standards that cater solely to single-family detached dwellings, large minimum lot sizes, etc. Addressing these zoning regulations may allow for the market to more adequately meet demand.

Clarifying the definition of accessory dwelling units and allowing them in agricultural and residential districts would fill in a gap that is not specifically addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. Varied housing types can also be encouraged by reviewing minimum density requirements and adding incentives that help offset the impacts of higher density developments. Bonus point incentives can be tied to enhanced appearance, landscaping, and stormwater management when a higher density is desired by developers. These could be particularly fitting in the R-1, R-2, and SE districts. Creating a mixed-use district could also spark new opportunities for both housing and economic development.

## Development Principles

To accommodate the call for additional housing, residential cluster subdivisions can be used as a land development tool to preserve the rural landscape of the County. Cluster subdivisions group residential lots into smaller areas by decreasing lot size, creating denser neighborhoods that result in more preserved open space than a traditional neighborhood. Green infrastructure principles discussed in Chapter 6 can be applied to create subdivisions that permanently conserve large tracts of connected natural land. When sidewalks, benches, and other community amenities are provided, cluster subdivisions achieve the shared goal of rural preservation and livable communities.

Opportunities for moderate- to high-density housing are constrained due to the terrain and the availability of public water and sewer connections. Public engagement cited Lovingson as the preferred area for new single-family units, apartments, condos, and townhomes. Residential clusters and green infrastructure principles would be appropriate here to provide housing units while maintaining as much natural green space and forest as possible. A housing study or small area plan for Lovingson, similar to what has already been done for Nellysford, would be beneficial for better guiding development in these areas.

## Connected Communities

### Regional Housing Collaboration

The Regional Housing Partnership serves as an official advisory board, created by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, in partnership with the public, private, nonprofit, and citizen stakeholders. Composed of an overarching consortium of housing interests, the Partnership enhances regional coordination and effectiveness to address the housing needs of the TJPDC region, with a focus on housing production, diversity, accessibility, cost, location, design, and increasing stability for the region's residents. The Partnership developed a regional housing strategies plan, *Planning for Affordability: A Regional Approach*, in August 2021 to recommend housing strategies for each of the counties of the TJPDC District. Strategies catered to Nelson County should be considered along with those from this Plan.

### Housing & Infrastructure

New housing developments should be targeted to areas with public water and sewer systems that can accommodate growth. Where capacity may be an issue for local systems, mitigating the impacts of new development should be considered during any rezoning or special use permit process. Lovingson in particular will need upgraded sewer lines and expansion or renovation of the water treatment plant to accommodate the additional growth slated for this area.

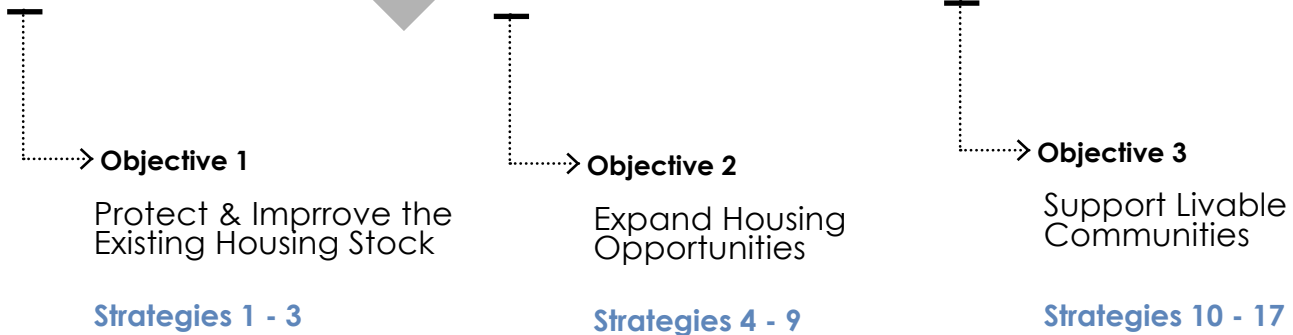
Given the County's rural landscape, many housing units are naturally car-reliant. Livable communities are characterized by pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, low traffic speed and congestion, and diverse housing options that are near to daily services. Internal and external pedestrian and bicycle paths should be provided to the highest extent possible. Traffic impacts should also be considered to determine if new residential development will warrant road improvements such as turn lanes or signalization.

Efficient, and affordable transportation services linking commercial centers and residential areas—particularly those with high concentrations of affordable housing—can reinforce housing and job security for Nelson residents. Further exploration of transportation within Nelson County can be found in Chapter 4 of this plan.



## How We Move Forward | Goals & Strategies

Nelson County strives to ensure the availability of quality housing for residents of all income levels and lifestyles by allowing for a variety of housing options, including affordable and workforce housing, and encouraging rehabilitation of existing vacant units.





## Protect & Improve the Existing Housing Stock

**1** Create a specific definition of short-term rentals. Maintain an inventory of all short-term rentals in order to track and better understand costs and benefits. Create regulations for short term rentals as necessary through the Zoning Ordinance and other tools that maintain a significant stock of single-family homes and long term rentals.

**3** Promote grant programs, provide incentives and partner with Nelson County Community Development Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and other local organizations and businesses that facilitate investments in maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing—as well as TJPDC septic and SERCAP—and create a vehicle for enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance.

**2** Consider allowing accessory dwelling units by right through zoning changes that can allow affordable rental options that benefit renters and homeowners.

## Expand Housing Opportunities

**4** Create ordinances that offer a mixture of housing types and sizes integrated within the development area, including affordable and senior housing.

**6** Evaluate current zoning district densities and adjust them to allow for additional housing in appropriate areas.

**8** Explore County investment in a community land trust that can create more affordable housing options.

**5** Expand the types of allowable housing in appropriate areas to accommodate multi-family housing units, such as townhouses, condominiums, and duplexes.

**7** Work with developers, non-profit agencies, and community groups to preserve and increase the supply of obtainable housing.

**9** Review and implement related strategies offered in regional housing study Planning for Affordability: A Regional Approach by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

## Support Livable Communities

**10** Target housing near the County's existing growth areas where public utilities are available with a range of housing types and densities.

In partnership with the Nelson County Service Authority, create a water Master Plan for the County that includes current maximum build out and considers possible expansion of public water and sewer systems to support housing goals and objectives.

**12**

**14** Explore opportunities to implement cluster subdivision provisions within the Subdivision ordinance.

Consider conducting a neighborhood study for the village of Lovington to identify community-based preservation, revitalization, and neighborhood improvement strategies. Pursue grant funding, as appropriate, to implement study recommendations.

**16**

**11** Consider development impacts on public water and sewer systems when reviewing residential rezoning and special use permits.

**13** Consider adding density bonuses and incentives to encourage affordable and senior housing options in denser developments.

**15** Protect and connect to the surrounding environment by encouraging cluster developments and green infrastructure principles for new developments.

**17** Ensure that any new housing development is strategically placed to complement the rural landscape and avoid burden to the existing public services.



**6** DRAFT

# Protecting Valuable Resources





## Our Goal

*Nelson County  
preserves its rural  
character and  
agricultural heritage  
by sustainably  
protecting and  
stewarding its  
natural and historic  
resources for future  
generations.*





## IN THIS CHAPTER

What We Heard | The Big Ideas

What We Know | Natural & Cultural Resources Today

How We Move Forward

Goals Statement

Strategies

Protect the Natural Environment

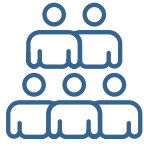
Preserve Rural Character & Heritage

Plan for Resilience & Sustainability

## Protecting Valuable Resources

Nelson County's natural and historic resources shape its physical landscape as well as the rural character and agricultural heritage that residents have appreciated for generations. Officially incorporated in 1807, Nelson County is filled with historic sites, century farms, country roads, traces of Native American settlements, and ancient mountains home to unique native species. The natural environment also provides valuable biodiversity and recreation opportunities, while influencing the suitability and capacity for development. Like many rural localities, there is a complex link between the natural environment, cultural resources, economic development, and overall quality of life. The strategies outlined in this chapter provide actionable steps to protect natural and cultural resources that contribute to the long-term equity, economic viability, livability, and protection of the County's rural environment.

# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



Protecting Nelson County's natural and historic resources is a top priority for the community. Maintaining a healthy environment that supports access to clean water and air, outdoor recreation opportunities, scenic landscapes, and cultural heritage are critical components of equitable public health and quality of life.

The community strongly supports protecting the County's rural character while increasing economic opportunities for all. Nelson County's economy is largely dependent upon natural resources to sustain tourism, agricultural, and agritourism industries. Economic resilience and diversity can be promoted by bolstering local economic drivers and protecting the environment that they rely on.

Public engagement feedback revealed that the majority of residents want Nelson County to do more to protect the natural environment, prepare for natural hazards, and plan for climate change. A resilient, healthy environment is critical to providing vital community services, such as reliable water and sewer infrastructure and quick recovery from natural disasters.

The community ranked preserving environmental resources as the top focus area for Nelson County's future. Strategic planning, updating, and implementation of the County's environmental protection policies is necessary to ensure that the rural environment is protected and that the community has access to the natural world. This includes not only physical access to trails and recreation, but also protecting the ambient resources that define Nelson County's peaceful, rural environment.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #2**

Avoid the use of septic systems on steep slopes and unsuitable soils.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #19**

Protect agricultural and forested landscapes from development through tools such as conservation easements, agricultural and forestal districts, use-value assessments, and purchase of development rights program.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #28**

Continue improving flood resiliency by updating the Floodplain District Ordinance as needed to reflect new flood maps and best practices, and participating in FEMA's Community Rating System.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #1**

Limit development on steep slopes to maintain balance between slope, soils, geology, and vegetation. Where disturbance is unavoidable, enforce erosion and sediment control measures to prevent unnecessary degradation.





## What We Know | Natural & Cultural Resources Today

Nelson County is a place of natural beauty enjoyed along scenic roadways with panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Public engagement showed overwhelming appreciation and support for Nelson's rural character with resource protection and planning for resiliency key concerns of residents. This section summarizes the key focus areas for Protecting Valuable Resources as identified through community input and data analysis. These focus areas are key opportunities for Nelson County to protect its natural and cultural resources while thoughtfully harnessing them for a sustainable future.



# Protect the Natural Environment

## Landscape & Geography

### Physiography & Topography

Nelson County is located in two physiographic provinces – the Piedmont province to the east and the Blue Ridge province to the west. Elevation ranges from about 300 feet above sea level on the floodplains of the James River in the eastern part of the County to 4,063 feet at Priest Mountain in the western part of the County.

The Piedmont province consists of broad rolling hills with moderate slopes and ridges, underlain by crystalline rocks such as gneiss and schist. Steeper side slopes generally occur along major drainageways. The soils of the Piedmont are typically deep and well drained and have a loamy or clayey subsoil. Relief ranges from about 20 to 200 feet. Within the Piedmont are several mountains that have a northeast-southwest orientation; maximum relief is about 1,800 feet. The Blue Ridge province consists of rugged steep slopes, narrow ridges, and broad mountains. It is underlain by a variety of metamorphic, igneous, and metasedimentary rocks. Relief ranges from 100 to 3,500 feet. The rock base includes a feature known as the “Albemarle-Nelson Belt,” a massive deposit of soapstone that has supported a successful mining industry in Schuyler since the late 19th century. Other prevalent minerals include feldspar, aplite, titanium, quartzite, iron, copper, and kaolin.

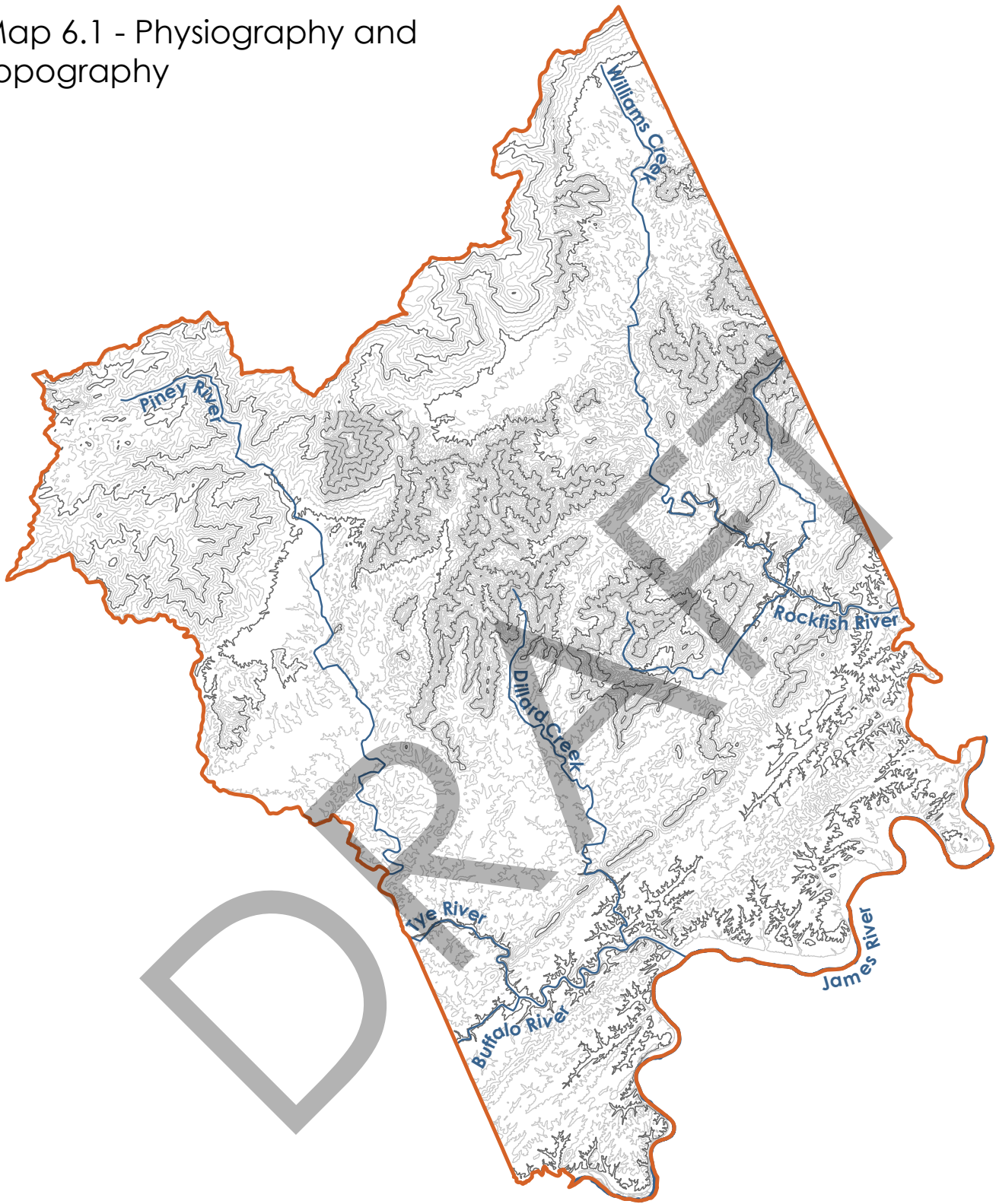
River valleys weave between the mountains and are where much of Nelson's development has occurred. Broad floodplains occur along the James, Tye, Piney, and Rockfish Rivers and other large streams in the County. The soils of the floodplains vary from well-drained to poorly drained. Most have a loamy subsoil, but those near the mountains have a cobbly subsoil.

The Blue Ridge Parkway closely follows the County's northern border, crisscrossed by 45 miles of the Appalachian Trail. The southern and western borders are defined by the James and Piney Rivers, respectively. The County's eastern border follows the Rockfish River from Howardsville to Schuyler before cutting northwest through the mountains to Afton.

See Map 6.1 - Physiography and Topography, on the following page, for a detailed view of the elevation profile of the County.



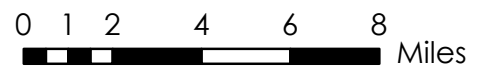
# Map 6.1 - Physiography and Topography



## Legend

Contour Interval = 50 ft

— River



Source: U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 2022



## Virginia Soapstone

Soapstone is a soft, dense rock known for its heat resistant properties and "soapy" feel. Native Americans used it during the Late Archaic period (8,000-1,000 B.C.E.) for pots, cooking slabs, ornaments, and molds for casting metal goods. A large soapstone deposit was discovered near Schuyler in the 1880s and spurred a successful soapstone mining industry that is still active today.



Photo courtesy of The Quarry Gardens at Schuyler

## Steep Slopes

Slope refers to the angle between the earth's surface and a horizontal plane. Slope is calculated as a percentage by dividing the change in elevation by the amount of horizontal distance covered. The potential for erosion is moderately severe in areas where the slopes range from 12 to 20%. Slopes in excess of 15% are best left in a natural state. Steep slopes can be found throughout Nelson County, with the steepest slopes (25% and greater) generally located in the western mountainous terrain.

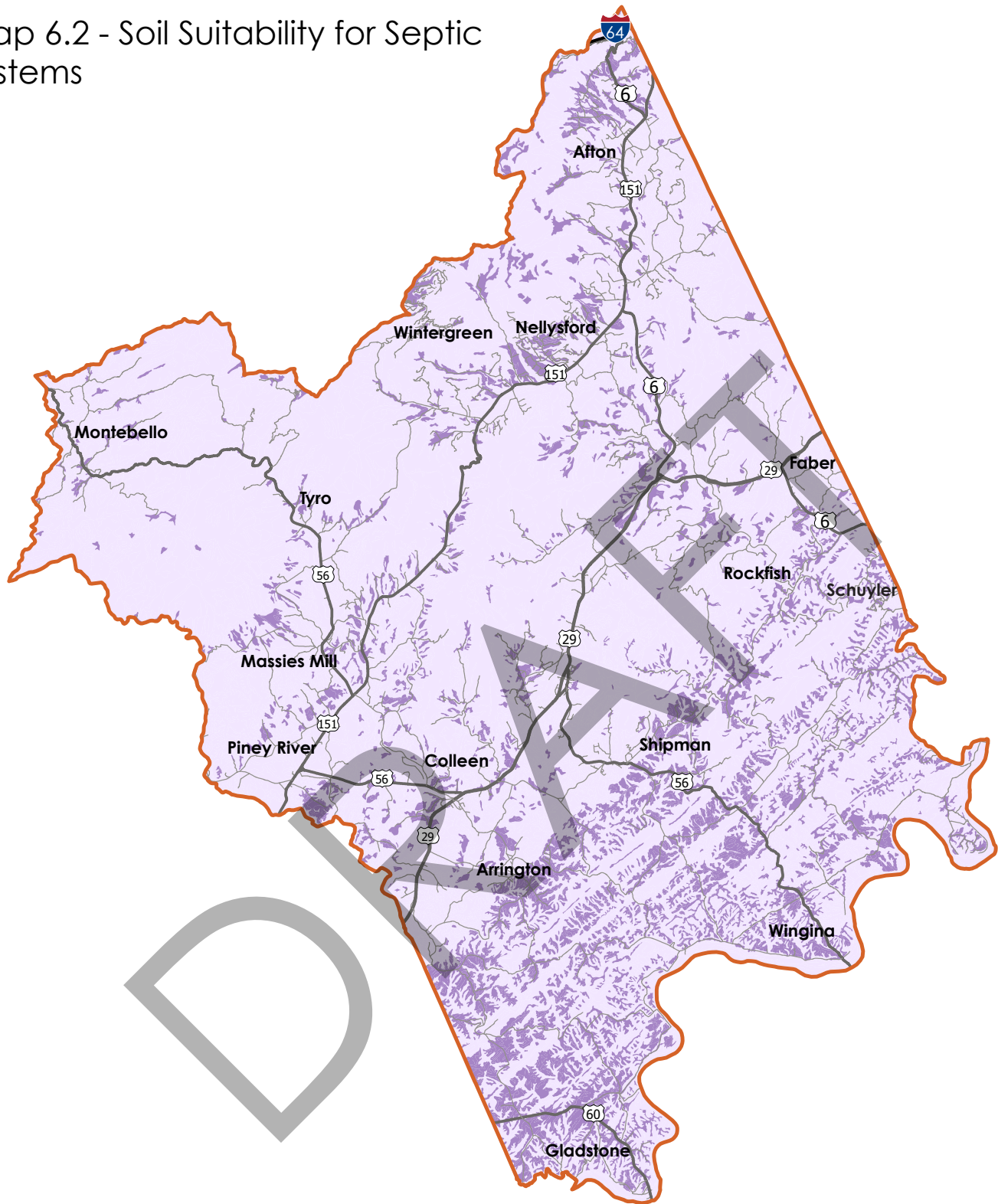
Development on steep slopes should be limited. Clearing, grading, and building on steep slopes can result in extensive erosion and stormwater runoff, which can lead to landslides and increased sedimentation in waterways. Septic systems should be avoided on slopes of 20% or greater to avoid hazards from system failures. Where land disturbance is necessary on steep slopes, erosion and sediment control measures should be enforced to the maximum extent possible to prevent unnecessary degradation.

## Soils




Nelson County has a wide variety of soils due to the diversity of the landscape and parent material. Parent materials are either residual (weathered in place from the underlying bedrock) or transported (alluvial and colluvial sediments transported by water and gravity). Properties of residual parent material are directly related to the characteristics of the underlying bedrock, and the resulting soils will reflect the acidic or basic qualities of the rock source. Soils of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge Provinces reflect the predominantly igneous and metamorphic rock base underlying the region. Soils deriving from transported sediments were deposited as layers of sand, silt, and clay, and primarily exist in floodplains along rivers and streams in lowland areas.

Generally, County soils where terrain is relatively flat or gently rolling are characterized as "good to moderate" and can accommodate septic fields. In areas of steep slopes, soil layers are thinner, runoff rates increase rapidly, and infiltration is poor.



# Map 6.2 - Soil Suitability for Septic Systems

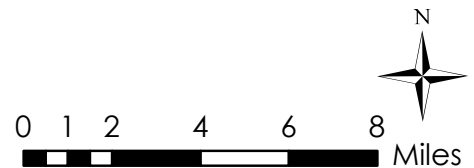


## Legend

-  Interstate Highway
-  State Highway
-  County Roads

## Septic Suitability

-  Somewhat Limited
-  Very Limited or Not Tested



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Land Cover

Nelson County's land cover reflects its mountainous, rural qualities. Forested lands dominate the landscape, covering 76.4% of the County's terrain. Much of the County's forestland is part of state and federal forests and parks. The 422-acre Lesesne State Forest is located on the lower slopes of Three Ridges Mountain adjacent to the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, which comprises a large section of Nelson County's northwestern area. Two U.S. wilderness areas lie in Nelson County's section of national forest: Three Ridges Wilderness (4,607 acres) and Priest Wilderness (5,994 acres). James River State Park and James River Wildlife Management Area are along the southern border of the County.

Farmland (including pasture and cropland) is the second highest land cover type, accounting for a combined 10.6%. Maintaining these landscapes and preventing the rapid conversion of agricultural and forestal tracts will be necessary to retain the rural charm that County residents value so highly.

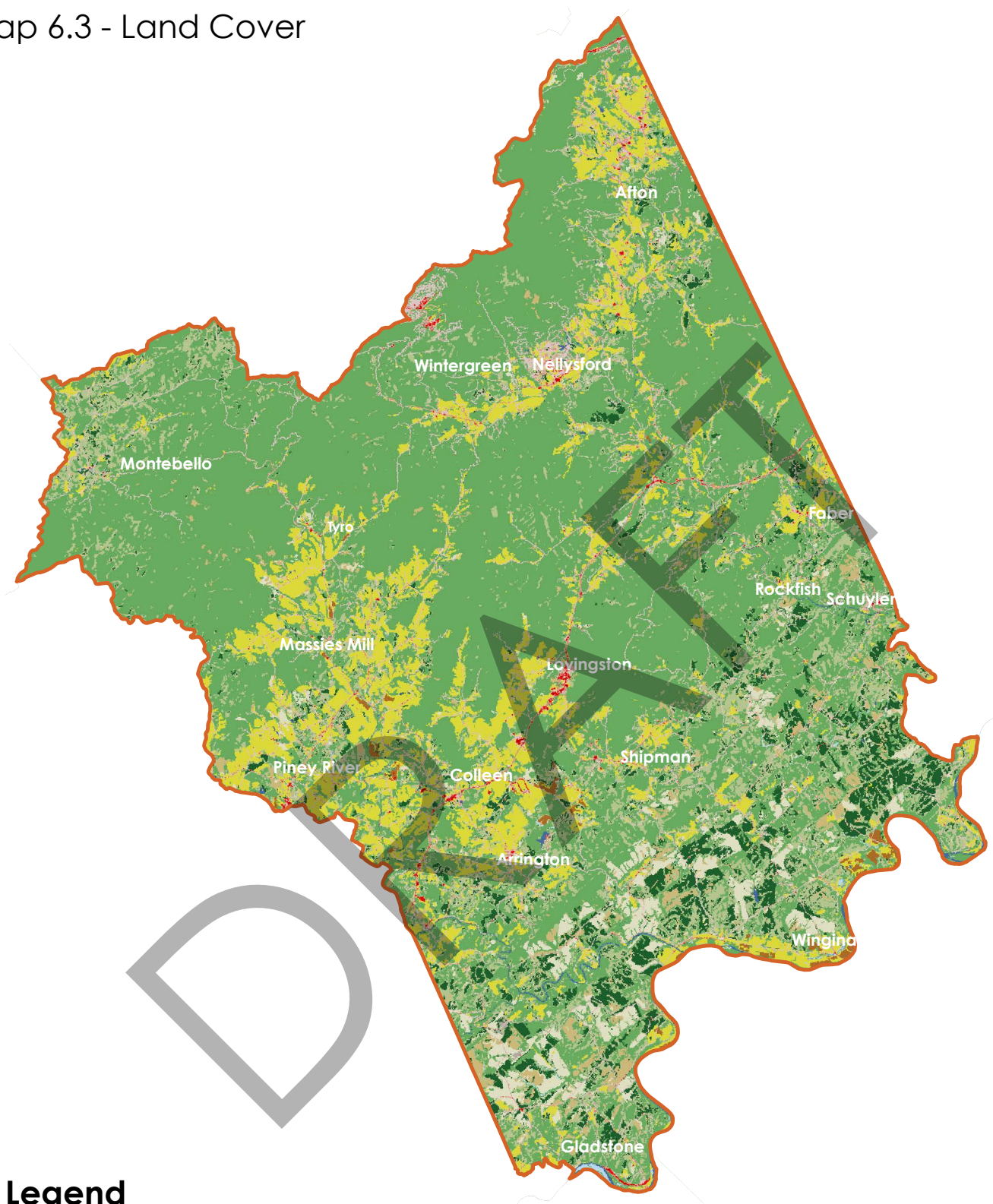
Table 6.1 - Land Cover Type

Class Name	Acres	Percentage of Total Area
Forest	231,934	76.4%
Pasture	29,106	9.6%
Tree	15,893	5.2%
Turf Grass	8,586	2.8%
Harvested/Disturbed	5,622	1.9%
Impervious	4,754	1.6%
Cropland	2,958	1.0%
Open Water	2,295	0.8%
National Wetlands Inventory/Other	1,411	0.5%
Shrub/Scrub	952	0.3%
Barren	44	0.0%
Total	303,553	100%

Source: Virginia Land Cover Dataset, 2016

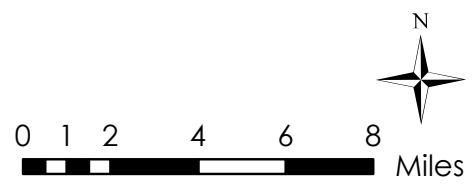


# Map 6.3 - Land Cover



## Legend

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Open Water                  |  Mixed Forest                 |
|  Developed, Open Space       |  Shrub/Scrub                  |
|  Developed, Low Intensity    |  Herbaceous                   |
|  Developed, Medium Intensity |  Hay/Pasture                  |
|  Developed, High Intensity   |  Cultivated Crops             |
|  Barren Land                 |  Woody Wetlands               |
|  Deciduous Forest            |  Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands |
|  Evergreen Forest            |  |



Source: National Land Cover Database, 2019

# Natural Habitats & Ecosystems

## Threatened and Endangered Species

Nelson County's pristine, undeveloped rural lands are home to unique ecosystems that support biodiversity and threatened species. Threatened and endangered species in Nelson County are outlined in Table 6.2. Habitats supporting these species should be carefully managed and protected throughout the County.

## Ecological Cores

Ecological cores are defined as large, unfragmented patches of natural land with at least 100 acres of interior cover. Cores provide habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna, as well as recreational and ecotourism opportunities for people. Over time, ecological cores may become fragmented and disconnected due to development and infrastructure such as roads and utility lines, making it difficult for animals to traverse the landscape and allowing invasive species to populate in interior forests. DCR's Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment has identified ecological cores in Nelson County and ranked them based on their potential for biodiversity, ecological function, and landscape conditions. As shown in Map 6.4, Nelson County has many ecological cores with High, Very High, or Outstanding value rankings. Development should be directed away from these areas whenever possible; where development is necessary, green infrastructure concepts can be implemented to maintain cores and connections between them.

Table 6.2 - Endangered or Threatened Species in Nelson County

Common Name/Natural Community	Scientific Name	Global Conservation Status Rank	State Conservation Status Rank	Federal Legal Status	State Legal Status
<b>BIVALVIA (MUSSELS)</b>					
Yellow Lance	<i>Elliptio lanceolata</i>	G2 - Imperiled	S2 - Imperiled	LT - Listed Threatened	LT - Listed Threatened
Green Floater	<i>Lasmigona subviridis</i>	G3 - Vulnerable	S2 - Imperiled	N/A	LT - Listed Threatened
James Spiny mussel	<i>Parvaspina collina</i>	G1 - Critically Imperiled	S1 - Critically Imperiled	LE - Listed Endangered	LE - Listed Endangered
<b>CHILOPODA (CENTIPEDES)</b>					
Montane Centipede	<i>Escaryus cryptorobius</i>	G2 - Imperiled	S2 - Imperiled	SOC - Species of Concern	N/A
<b>COLEOPTERA (BEETLES)</b>					
American Burying Beetle	<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>	G3 - Vulnerable	SH - Historic	LT - Listed Threatened	N/A
<b>INVERTEBRATES</b>					
Rusty-patched Bumblebee	<i>Bombus affinis</i>	G2 - Imperiled	S1 - Critically Imperiled	LE - Listed Endangered	PE - Proposed Endangered
<b>LEPIDOPTERA (BUTTERFLIES &amp; MOTHS)</b>					
Frosted Elfin	<i>Gallophtys irus</i>	G2G3 - Imperiled or Vulnerable	S1S2 - Critically Imperiled or Imperiled	SOC - Species of Concern	None
<b>MAMMALS</b>					
Northern long-eared Myotis	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	G2G3 - Imperiled or Vulnerable	S1S3 - Critically Imperiled or Vulnerable	LT - Listed Threatened	LT - Listed Threatened
Tricolored bat (Eastern pipistrelle)	<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>	G3G4 - Vulnerable or Apparently Secure	S1S3 - Critically Imperiled or Vulnerable	None	LE - Listed Endangered
<b>VASCULAR PLANTS</b>					
Swamp-pink	<i>Helonias bullata</i>	G3 - Vulnerable	S2S3 - Imperiled or Vulnerable	LT - Listed Threatened	LE - Listed Endangered
Small Whorled Pogonia	<i>Isotria medeoloides</i>	G2G3 - Imperiled or Vulnerable	S2 - Imperiled	LT - Listed Threatened	LE - Listed Endangered
Torrey's Mountain-mint	<i>Pycnanthemum torreyi</i>	G2 - Imperiled	S2 - Imperiled	SOC - Species of Concern	PT - Proposed Threatened

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Database



## Strategic Biodiversity Corridors

Nelson County is identified as a strategic biodiversity corridor for plants and animals to survive a warming planet in Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan. Nelson is one of the two primary areas identified in the Commonwealth where an important wildlife and biodiversity corridor connects the Piedmont with the Blue Ridge. The map and additional information about the Wildlife Action Plan can be found here: <https://maps.tnc.org/resilientland/>

Additionally, Nelson County is participating in the TJPDC's STEW-MAP (Stewardship Mapping) Project, undertaken through US Forest Service and USDA which the County will be participating in. The goal of the STEW-MAP project is to map the general location of every group that plays a role in stewardship activities to connect their resources and expand opportunities for forest stewardship. The completed map can be found on the USDA's Forest Service website: <https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov/stew-map/>.

## Using Green Infrastructure Planning to Connect Wildlife Habitats

Wildlife moves both daily and seasonally to survive; however, the habitats and corridors that animals rely on can become fragmented by housing, roads, fences, energy facilities, and other man-made barriers. As a result, animals increasingly struggle to reach food, water, shelter, and breeding sites.

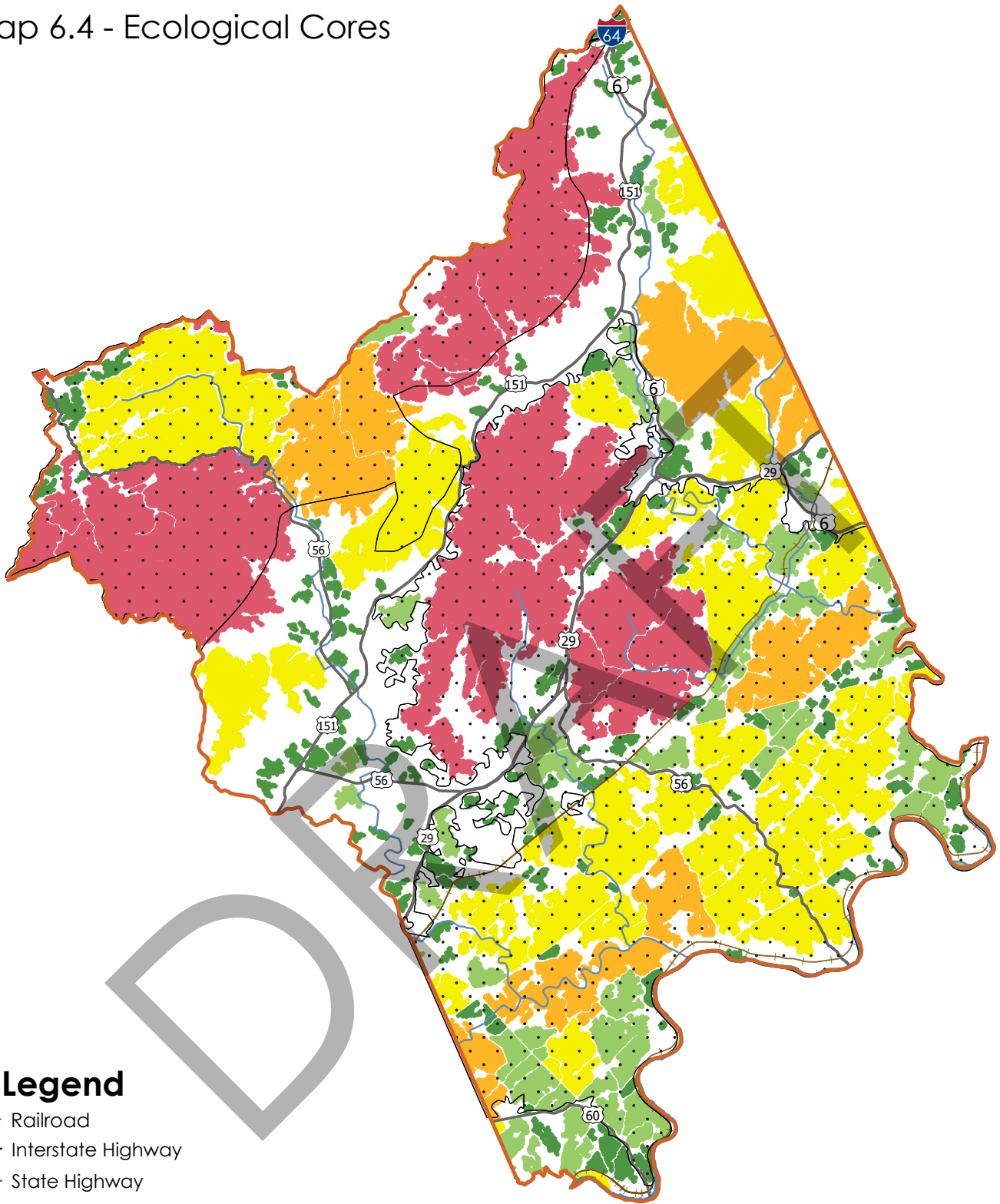
Habitat connectivity is defined as the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes animal movement and other ecological processes, such as seed dispersal. As habitats are fragmented, degraded, and lost to development, the need for a coordinated connectivity network is growing. Better habitat connectivity allows wildlife to migrate with the changing seasons, boosts biodiversity and resilience in degraded ecosystems, safeguards genetic flow between populations, and ensures species are better able to adapt to a changing climate.

Green infrastructure incorporates both the natural environment and engineered systems to conserve ecosystem values and support ecosystem services. On the local level, green infrastructure practices can include rain gardens, permeable pavement, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting systems. At the largest scale, the preservation and restoration of natural landscapes (such as forests, floodplains, and wetlands) are critical components of green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure planning seeks to preserve and maintain intact, connected cores to allow native wildlife and plants to thrive and move across the landscape. Knowing the location of key green infrastructure resources allows for better decision-making when locating new development and utilities.

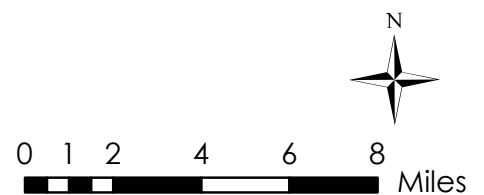


# Map 6.4 - Ecological Cores



## Legend

-  Railroad
  -  Interstate Highway
  -  State Highway
  -  River
  -  Important Bird Areas
- Ecological Core Rankings
-  C1: Outstanding
  -  C2: Very High
  -  C3: High
  -  C4: Moderate
  -  C5: General



Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,  
National Audubon Society

# Water Resources

## Surface Waters

Nelson County's surface waters are vital assets that provide scenic beauty and recreational opportunities as well as drinking water for the community. 2,220 miles of waterways comprising a complex network of rivers and streams extend across nine subwatersheds within the James River basin. The two main subwatersheds are the Tye River, whose headwaters begin just above Montebello and drain south, and the Rockfish River, whose headwaters begin north of Wintergreen and Greenfield and drain the eastern half of the County. Other major waterways include the Buffalo and Piney Rivers. Nelson's natural rivers and streams are complemented by several artificial lakes and impoundments used for recreation and drinking water, including Lake Nelson, Lake Monacan, Black Creek Reservoir, and Johnson Hollow Reservoir.

## Impaired Waterways

As part of the Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has established water quality studies called Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs) for state waters that do not meet water quality standards. TMDLs are essentially clean-up plans that identify pollution loads and create reduction goals to attain water quality standards. Locally, Hat Creek, Piney River, Rucker Run, Mill Creek, Rutledge Creek, Turner Creek, Buffalo River, and Tye River were added to Virginia's Impaired Waters list due to excess bacteria that can be hazardous to humans and wildlife. The source of the contamination is primarily from agricultural runoff carrying pollutants from fields to streams, livestock having direct access to streams, and failing residential septic systems.

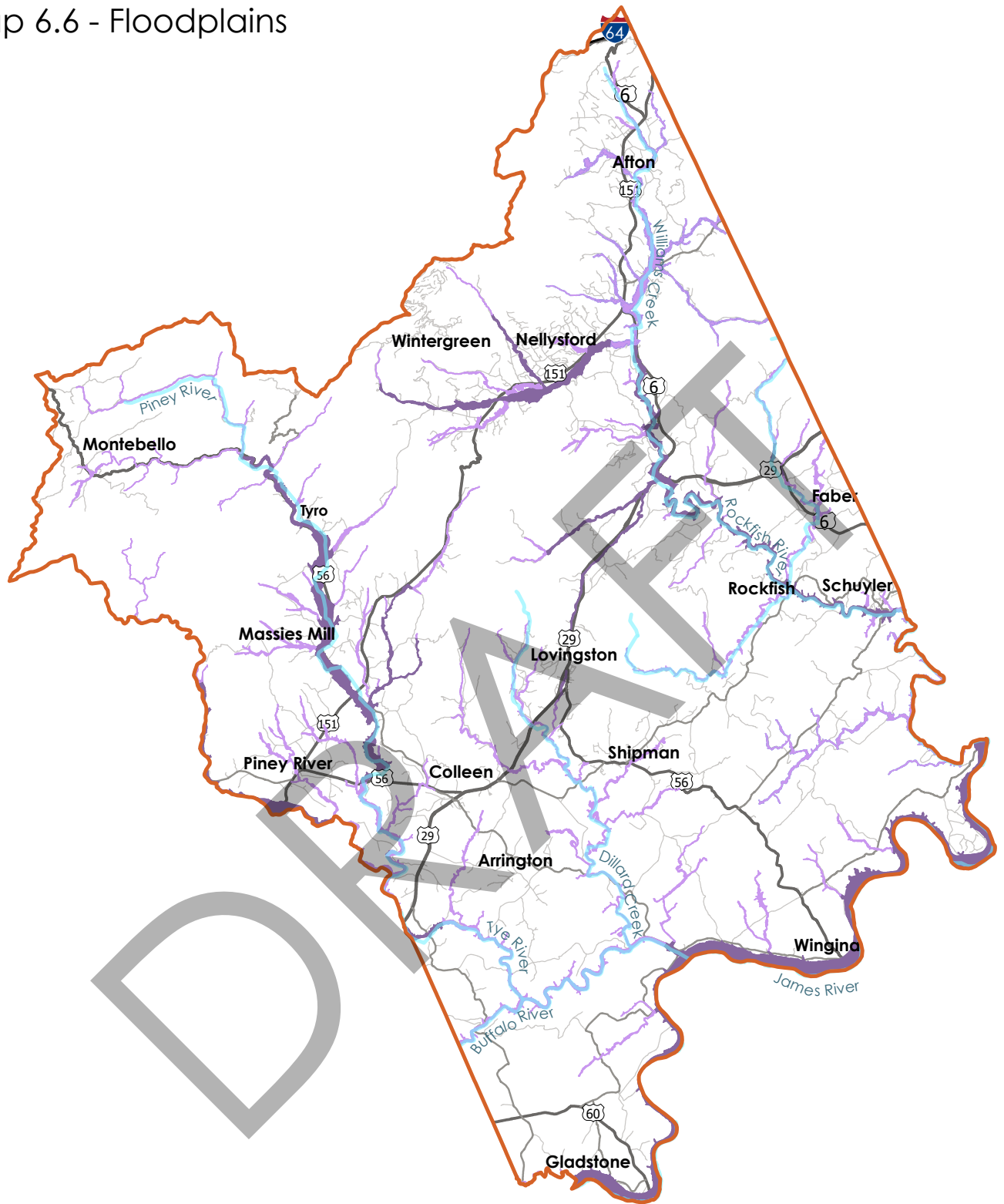
## Floodplains

Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to waterways that serve hydrologic functions and are subject to varying levels of inundation. Wetlands can also occur in these low-lying areas. The Nelson County Zoning Ordinance, Article 10, includes the General Floodplain District, which regulates and restricts uses, activities, and development in flood-prone areas. Nelson County can opt to participate in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) to improve floodplain management practices and reduce flood insurance premiums.









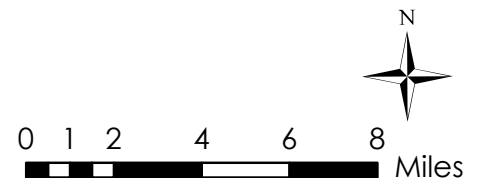


# Map 6.6 - Floodplains



## Legend

-  Rivers
-  Interstate Highway
-  State Highway
-  County Roads
- Flood Zone**
-  A
-  AE



Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Map Service Center



## Groundwater

Groundwater tapped from the Piedmont and Blue Ridge crystalline-rock aquifers supplies part of the Nelson County Service Authority's public water system, as well as all private individual and community well systems. The Piedmont and Blue Ridge aquifers generally have low dissolved solids contents; water is considered soft.

The Piedmont physiographic province contains a diverse geology; therefore, there are wide variations in groundwater quality and well yields. In areas with hard crystalline rocks, groundwater occurs in faults and fractures within 300 feet of the surface; well yields in such areas are typically 3 to 20 gallons per minute. The quality of groundwater in areas of crystalline bedrock is generally good, but in some areas may be acidic and have a high iron, manganese, or sulfate content.

The Blue Ridge physiographic province is a relatively narrow, mountainous region underlain by granite, gneiss, and marble. It is characterized by rapid surface runoff and low aquifer recharge. Groundwater use in the Blue Ridge is generally limited to domestic wells, which produce less than 20 gallons per minute. The groundwater is typically of good quality although it may be locally high in iron, manganese, or sulfur content.

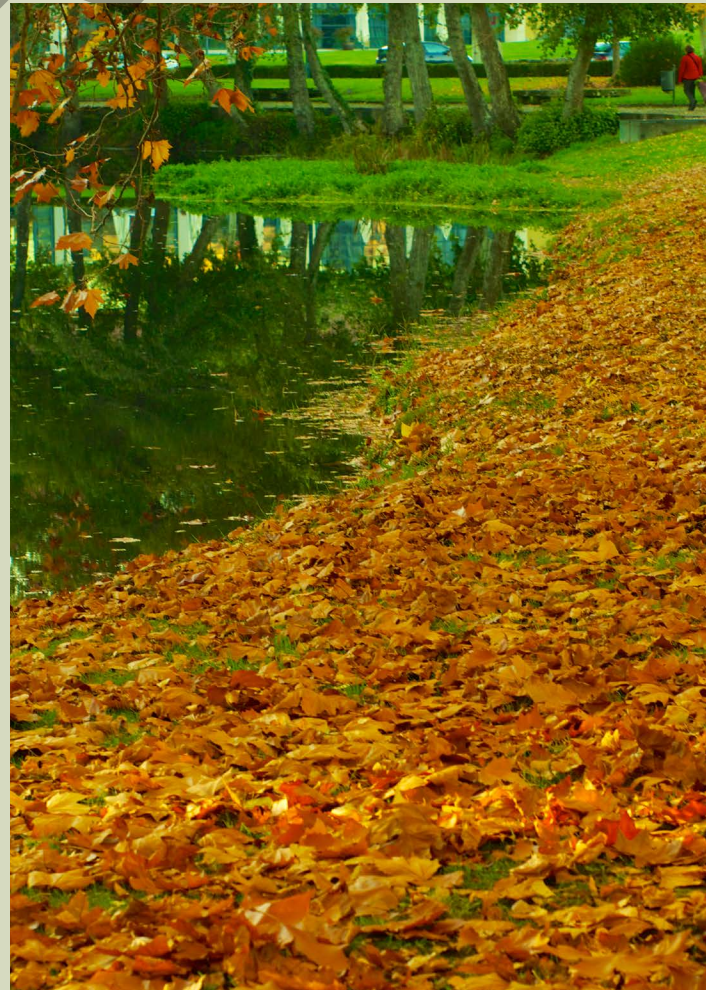
The Region 2000 Regional Water Supply Plan (WSP) was published in 2011. This report assessed the current and future water supply conditions of 12 jurisdictions in the Central Virginia region. The WSP found that Nelson County is expected to experience a water supply shortage by 2058. Reliance on groundwater for part of the public water supply may need to be supplemented by new surface water sources by that time. While Nelson already uses reservoirs to pull surface water from local rivers and streams, additional reservoirs and waterlines are necessary to meet the projected demand. Nelson County should work proactively with the Service Authority to identify alternative water sources and undertake necessary infrastructure development to ensure long-term water supply. In the short-term, the County should encourage water conservation measures, as outlined in the Region 2000 WSP.

## FEMA's Community Rating System

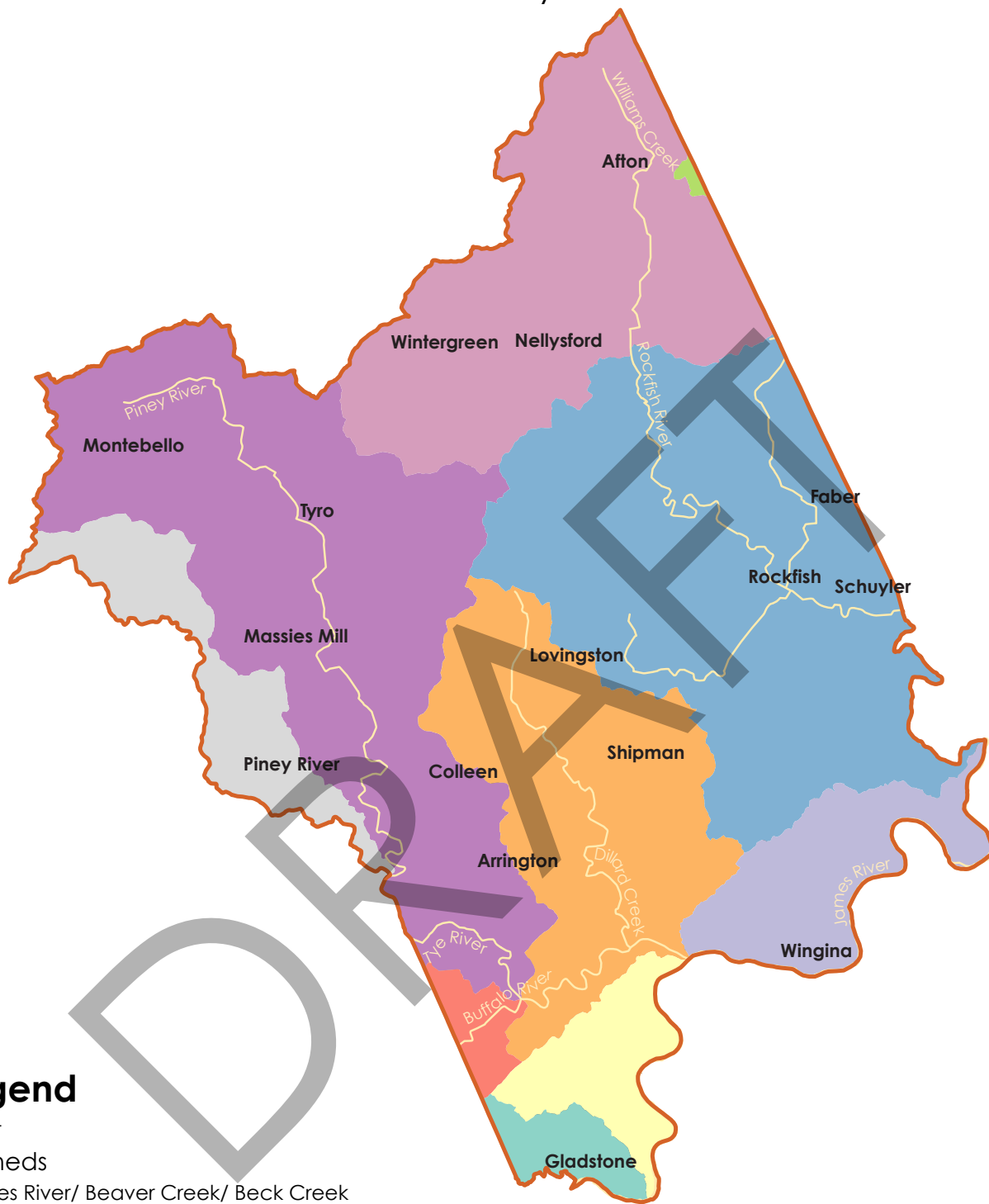
The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Over 1,500 communities participate nationwide.

In CRS communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community's efforts that address the three goals of the program:

1. Reduce and avoid flood damage to insurable property
2. Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the National Flood Insurance Program
3. Foster comprehensive floodplain management

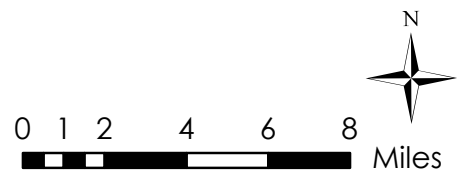


# Map 6.5 - Watersheds and Waterways



## Legend

- River
- Watersheds**
- James River/ Beaver Creek/ Beck Creek
- James River/ David Creek
- James River/ Sycamore Creek
- Lower Buffalo River
- Lower Rockfish River
- Lower Tye River/ Rucker Run
- Mechums River
- North Fork Rockfish River/ South Fork Rockfish River
- Piney River
- Upper Tye River



Source: Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, 2020

## Impacts on Water Quality

Nelson County's water resources are integral not only to the local community, but also to the health of the James River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Protecting them from contaminants and degradation is vital.

Surface waterways and groundwater can be negatively impacted by land development, agricultural operations, and failing septic systems.

Clearing and grading during construction strips building sites of the trees and vegetation that naturally intercept rainfall, so the water that normally gets absorbed during rain events instead gets converted into surface runoff. Once construction is completed, structures and pavement introduce new impervious surface that facilitates stormwater runoff and restricts groundwater recharge. The excess runoff carries sediments, pollutants, and animal waste into nearby waterways, which can erode streambanks and degrade the surrounding ecosystem. Agriculture operations can also degrade local water quality due to erosion, runoff from fertilizers, biosolids, and pesticides, and livestock access to streams. Agricultural activities generally introduce three types of contaminants into waterways: nutrients, sediments, and toxicants. Failing septic systems can also threaten water quality by introducing raw sewage into local streams, rivers, and aquifers. Abandoned septic tanks should be properly removed or sealed.

Pollutants to groundwater come in a variety of forms, but the predominate sources of pollution include septic system failure, industrial and sewage treatment plant pollution, and agricultural pollution from animal waste, sediment, nutrients, pathogens, pesticides, metals, and salts. The groundwater supply is also susceptible to threats from leaking underground storage tanks (USTs), septic tanks, and abandoned wells; abandoned wells can provide a direct channel for pollutants to enter the groundwater.

## Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Although Nelson County is not a Tidewater locality as defined in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Bay Act), the County lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and adheres to the Bay Act through coordination with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC). The TJPDC was contracted by DEQ to coordinate the region's urban sector stakeholder input process for the development of Phase I and II Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP). Topics included stormwater management, septic systems, and urban forestry. For the Phase III WIP, the District compiled lists of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to meet the region's TMDL goals.

The TJPDC continues to collaborate with DEQ and other partners to reduce loads of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL by providing educational resources to the region and technical assistance to local governments and other stakeholders in the region.

Additionally, the TJPDC is a partner to the #LoveYourWatershed campaign, whose mission is to motivate residents of the greater Charlottesville area to reduce their impact on waterways and improve local water quality and ecosystems.





## Improving Water Quality

There are many best practices that Nelson County can encourage to help control the quantity of stormwater runoff and improve the quality of the water that eventually gets discharged. To continue protecting water quality, the County should ensure its local ordinances are in compliance with state standards and encourage low impact development (LID) practices in all site designs. County-owned properties and existing stormwater ponds can be retrofitted with LID measures; funding and grants may be available through programs such as DEQ's Stormwater Local Assistance Fund. The County can also encourage residents to take advantage of cost-share programs offered through the TJSWCD.

- Cost-Share Programs, facilitated by Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD), can help Nelson County landowners pay for water quality best management practices (BMPs) on their properties. Programs are available for agricultural and urban/suburban properties. Eligible agricultural BMPs include nutrient management plans, riparian buffers, conservation tillage, cover crops, erosion control measures, and more that can be designed to fit the needs of the site and operation. Urban/suburban BMPs can include but are not limited to rainwater harvesting, conservation landscaping, and permeable pavement installation.
- Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinances regulate stormwater runoff during construction-related activities. Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law requires that development activities with 10,000 square feet or more of land disturbance obtain a land disturbing permit through the locality. The Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District provides plan review services to Nelson County under its Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Construction activities involving more than one acre of land disturbance require a Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) construction general permit. Nelson County opts to have the Virginia DEQ administer this program on its behalf.
- Low Impact Development (LID) is a form of stormwater design that imitates natural processes to manage and filter stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID complements the native environment and improves water quality through low impact measures such as vegetated green roofs, permeable pavement, and rain gardens. LID is becoming increasingly preferred because it reduces the need for large, expensive stormwater infrastructure and can have bonus benefits such as supporting pollinators with native plants.



# Ambient Resources

## Light Pollution

Light pollution is the overabundance of inefficient and improperly directed electrical lighting at night. Light pollution can disrupt human circadian rhythms and exacerbate sleep and mood disorders. It can also negatively impact natural ecosystems and wildlife, which may get confused under artificial light.

Nelson County has relatively low levels of light pollution and has become a destination for stargazing under its pristine dark skies. To continue maintaining natural darkness and prevent unnecessary light pollution, Nelson County should adopt a lighting ordinance that requires full cutoff fixtures, directs light sources downward, prevents a direct view of light sources from neighboring properties, limits light intensity, and incorporates other standards recommended by the International Dark Sky Association. Through the zoning process, additional conditions may be considered to address the potential light impact of specific development proposals. Reducing sources of ambient light and incorporating best practices to prevent unnecessary glare will help Nelson County retain its highly-valued dark sky views and will contribute to a healthy natural environment as well.

## Air Quality

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) monitors air quality in accordance with the Clean Air Act and National Ambient Air Quality Standards. If the air quality in a geographic area meets or is cleaner than the national standard, it is called an attainment area; areas that do not meet the national standard are called nonattainment areas. Currently, Nelson County has met or exceeded air quality standards and is designated as an attainment area.

Air quality is an important component to environmental and public health. Although Nelson County is an attainment jurisdiction, there is a need to remain vigilant of the Commonwealth of Virginia's directions concerning air quality. Maintaining vegetation along highway corridors is a good way to mitigate the effects of automobile emissions in addition to providing other environmental benefits. Measures to reduce fossil fuel consumption and emissions, such as promoting public transportation, supporting e-vehicle charging station placement, enacting a government vehicle idling policy, planting trees and vegetative buffers, protecting marshlands and floodplains, and minimizing solid waste by promoting recycling and composting, will also help to maintain air quality.

## Noise Pollution

Nelson County regulates noise through its Noise Ordinance, which generally restricts loud noises after 10:00 p.m. The Noise Ordinance is enforced through the Nelson County Sheriff's Office and enforcement should be improved. In addition to adhering to the Noise Ordinance, careful consideration should be given to proposed site developments that could generate high levels of noise, especially when located next to residential or rural areas. Noise impacts can be further mitigated through the zoning process by requiring noise generators (e.g. speakers, amps) to be oriented away from adjacent properties, planting enhanced vegetative perimeter buffers, or installing sound barriers. Mitigating ambient noise will contribute to the peaceful rural atmosphere that residents and visitors appreciate about Nelson County.



# Preserve Rural Character & Heritage

## Agricultural Heritage

### Prime Farmland

Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. Only 12% of Nelson County's soils are classified as prime farmland, which can typically be found in fertile river floodplains. However, Nelson's agriculture industry has successfully utilized the area's steeper, poorer soils for orchards and vineyards.

The Virginia Agricultural Model builds upon prime farmland criteria by also factoring in current land cover and travel time between agricultural producers and consumers, resulting in a suitability factor for agricultural lands. Scores range from Class I (Low Suitability) to Class V (High Suitability). Map 6.7 shows where land is most suitable for agriculture and can serve as guidance for steering future development away from these areas.

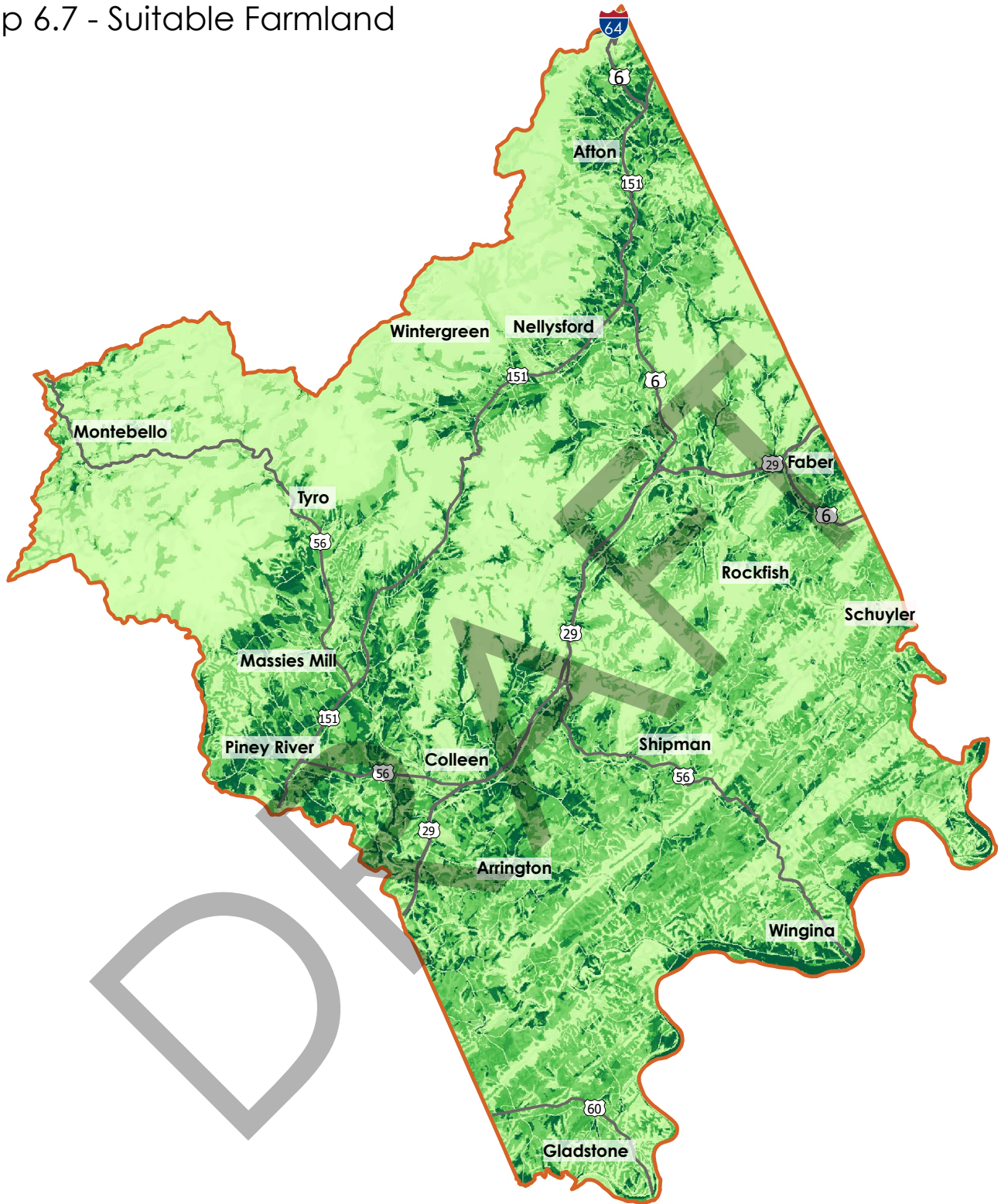
### Forested Landscapes

The Virginia Department of Forestry estimates that the Commonwealth's forests bring over \$28.6 billion to our economy annually. Virginia's forestry industry employs over 100,000 people and brings in more than \$21 billion annually. Forest ecosystems generate significant economic value in reducing air and water pollution, moderating temperature, and absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The value of Virginia forests in improving air and water quality is estimated to exceed \$6.6 billion annually. Forests also serve as important carbon sinks, with U.S. forests storing an estimated 15 billion metric tons of carbon in leaves, trunks, and limbs. In preserving its forest landscapes, Nelson is doing its part to protect a valuable piece of the local, regional, state-wide, national, and global economies.





Map 6.7 - Suitable Farmland



**Legend**

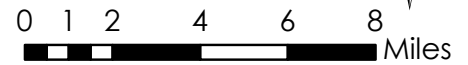
— Interstate Highway

— State Highway

**Agricultural Suitability**

95 - Suitable

0 - Unsuitable



Source: Virginia Agricultural Model, 2015

# Protected Landscapes

Rural landscapes and the natural resources they contain can be preserved through a suite of tools that limit development and provide tax incentives to landowners. Nelson County should continue implementing programs to protect and enhance the rich agricultural and forestal lands that are integral to the County's culture, identity, and economy.

## Conservation Easements

Conservation easements have been declared essential investments in making Virginia a desirable place to live and visit. ConserveVirginia was codified into law in 2021 as a key tool in guiding state investments for land conservation to ensure the highest conservation outcomes. Landowners can work with their choice of several land conservation organizations listed by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to preserve their land according to Virginia policies.

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or agency that permanently limits future development of the land to protect its conservation values. Under a conservation easement, landowners continue to own, use, and control their land, and can sell it or pass it on to heirs. Easements allow for and encourage rural land uses, such as forest management, agriculture, hunting and fishing, as well as protection of historically significant landscapes such as battlefields and archaeological sites. In return, landowners may qualify for federal, state, and local tax benefits.

## Agricultural and Forestal Districts

Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs) are rural conservation districts reserved for the production of agricultural products, timber, and the maintenance of open space as an important economic and environmental resource. A district is voluntary – it is initiated by a landowner or group of landowners as a mutual undertaking with local government. By establishing a district, property owners agree not to convert their farm, forestland, and other open space to more intense commercial, industrial, or residential uses for a term of four to 10 years. In return, the County and the Commonwealth agree not to take actions or make infrastructure investments that will place increased pressure on landowners to convert land to more intense land uses during the term of the district. Unlike easements, AFDs are intentionally renewed and not perpetual. There are currently five AFDs in Nelson County.

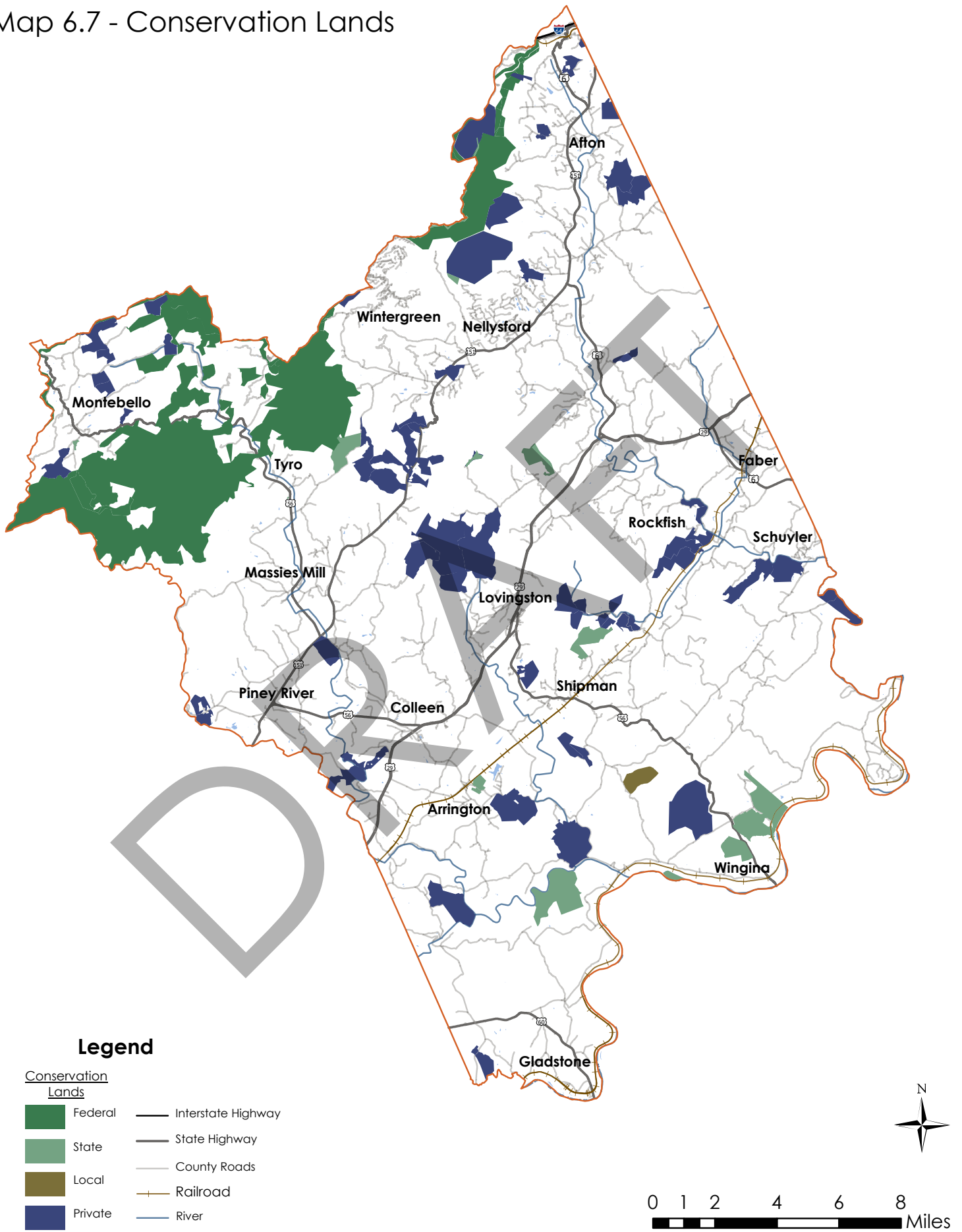
## Use-Value Taxation Assessment

Land used for agriculture or forestry operations can be assessed and taxed relative to its actual use, as opposed to its fair market value. If minimum acreages are met for certain uses (i.e. agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or open space), then the land may be eligible for use-value taxation. While this may result in less revenue based on lower tax assessments, the County can apply for reimbursement through the Virginia Department of Forestry's Forest Sustainability Fund for Local Government to help offset the decreased revenue.

## Purchase of Development Rights Program










Nelson County administers a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to preserve local farmland, forestland, and open space. Purchasing development rights is the same as purchasing conservation easements or that portion of the "bundle of rights" that allows landowners to construct dwellings or non-farm commercial structures on the property. When a locality purchases development rights from a landowner, it essentially buys the right to develop the land then retires that right by placing a permanent conservation easement on the property restricting further development. Typically, these easements run in perpetuity.

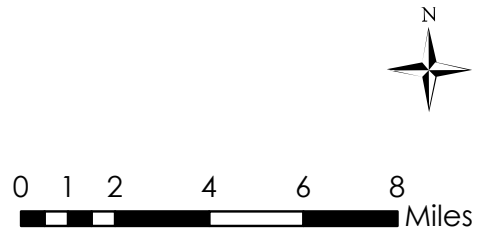
Map 6.7 - Conservation Lands



**Legend**

Conservation Lands

- |   |         |   |                    |
|---|---------|---|--------------------|
|  | Federal |  | Interstate Highway |
|  | State   |  | State Highway      |
|  | Local   |  | County Roads       |
|  | Private |  | Railroad           |
|   |         |  | River              |





## Historic Resources

From the County's first Native American inhabitants, to the arrival of European settlers, and to the growth of the modern agritourism industry, Nelson County's cultural heritage has developed in concert with the natural landscape. Nelson and its surrounding counties are the ancestral home of the Monacan Indian Nation (today headquartered in Amherst). The Monacans were an agrarian people whose very way of life was tied to the natural landscape. The Monacan Nation is one of the few native people who still occupy their ancestral lands and archaeological sites and grave mounds are present throughout the region.

Nelson County is home to 28 sites listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or the National Register of Historic Places. Nelson County should continue to work with local, regional, and state agencies and organizations to preserve the County's history. Property owners of non-registered historic sites can be encouraged to apply for register status.

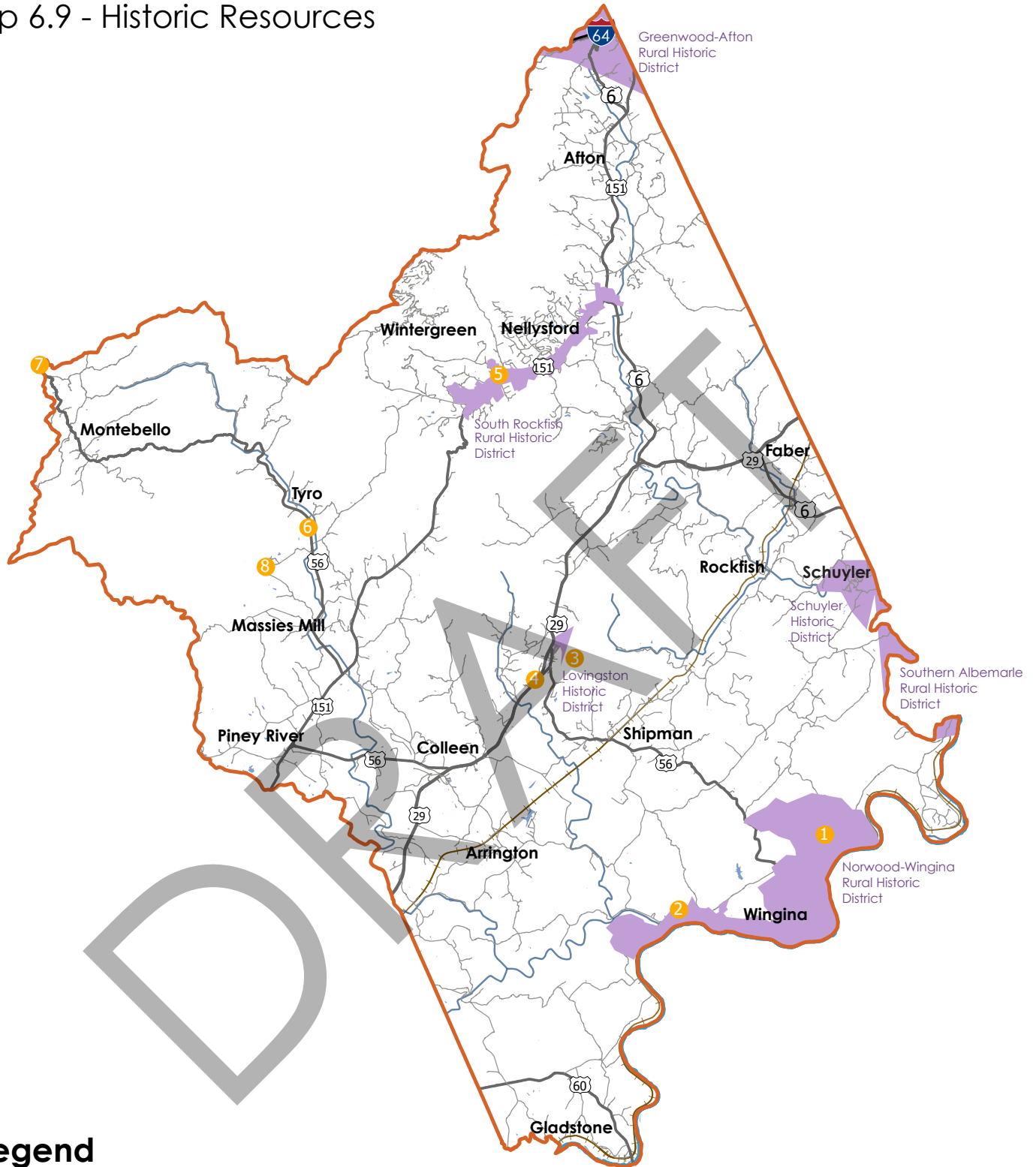


Table 6.3 - Registered Historic Sites

Site	Year Listed on VA Landmarks Register	Year listed on National Register of Historic Places
Arrowhead	2018	2019
Blue Ridge Tunnel	2022	N/A
Bon Aire	1980	1980
Edgewood	2006	2006
Elk Hill	2006	2007
Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District	2010	2011
Hamner House	2004	N/A
Lovingston High School	2002	2003
Lovingston Historic District	2005	2005
Mill Hill	1973	1973
Montezuma	1980	1980
Nelson County Courthouse	1973	1973
Norwood-Wingina Rural Historic District	2019	2019
Oak Ridge Railroad Overpass	1977	1978
Oakland	2006	2006
Pharsalia	2009	2009
River Bluff	1980	1980
Riverside Farm	2015	2016
Rock Cliff	2015	2015
Ryan Hall Elementary School	2022	2022
Schuyler Historic District	2006	2007
Soldier's Joy	1980	1980
South Rockfish Valley Rural Historic District	2016	2016
Swannanoa	1969	1969
Three Chimneys	2013	2013
Tyro Mill	2006	2006
Wintergreen Country Store	2005	2005
Woodson's Mill	1992	1992

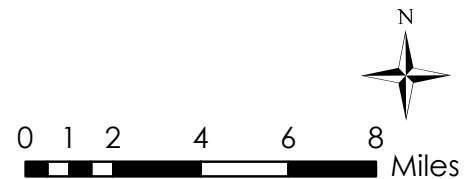
Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

# Map 6.9 - Historic Resources



## Legend

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Nationally Registered Historic Buildings | Nationally Registered Historic Districts |
| ① Bon Aire                               | — Interstate Highway                     |
| ② Montezuma                              | — State Highway                          |
| ③ Nelson County Courthouse               | — County Roads                           |
| ④ Lovingson High School                  | — River                                  |
| ⑤ Wintergreen County Store               | — Railroad                               |
| ⑥ Tyro Mill                              | — Water Features                         |
| ⑦ Haines Chapel and Cemetery             |  |
| ⑧ Pharsalia                              |  |



Source: National Register of Historic Places

# Plan for Resilience & Sustainability

## Climate Change

While the causes of climate change are global, the impacts are inherently local – increasingly powerful storms, higher average temperatures, and worsening drought can all directly affect a community's quality of life and ability to operate without disruption. Further, as the climate changes and sea levels rise, people living in coastal areas will adapt by moving to places that they perceive to be climate resilient. This is becoming known as climate migration. Inland communities in the Appalachian region are increasingly being targeted as safe havens from the deleterious effects of an uncertain climate. Nelson County can prepare for the impacts of climate change and climate migration by working with regional partners on hazard mitigation planning and ensuring development policies and ordinances direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas, and toward designated growth areas. Bolstering local infrastructure and proactive planning for future drinking water resources will also better prepare Nelson County for a growing population before an emergency occurs.

Table 6.4 - Average Temperatures

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average High in °F	47	50	59	70	76	84	87	86	80	70	61	50
Average Low in °F	25	27	34	43	52	61	65	64	57	45	35	28

**68°F**  
Average High Temperature

**45°F**  
Average Low Temperature

**45in.**  
Annual Rainfall

**16in.**  
Annual Snowfall



# Hazard Mitigation

Hazard mitigation planning is accomplished regionally through the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC). TJPDC works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), and local emergency managers to develop and maintain the Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Plan is updated every five years with details on how localities can prepare for natural disasters before they occur.

Nelson County participates in the Hazard Mitigation Working Group, which supports regional hazard mitigation efforts and planning. Implementing the strategies in this comprehensive plan will help the County adapt to changing weather patterns, mitigate hazardous conditions, increase renewable energy, and provide for the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Eight mitigation strategies were recommended for Nelson County to improve its disaster response and overall resilience:

- 1 Continue and expand use of citizen alert systems.
- 2 Provide training for building inspectors and code officials on mitigation techniques and hazard-resistant building.
- 3 Conduct FireWise workshops.
- 4 Provide educational instruction and materials to school age youth and their teachers on proper procedures for responding to natural disasters.
- 5 Investigate safety and maintenance of roads in private communities.
- 6 Ensure all houses have clear address signs that are visible during snowstorms.
- 7 Ensure that all homeowners and businesses located in areas prone to landslides are aware of the risks and appropriate responses to an event.
- 8 Maintain and add more fire rings in camping areas for controlled fires.



Photo courtesy Virginia Department of Emergency Management

## Hurricane Camille

*In 1969, Hurricane Camille was one of the worst natural disasters in Virginia's history. As the hurricane swept through the state, Nelson County received the brunt of the storm, causing floods and landslides that trapped residents as they slept. Hurricane Camille proved that inland flooding can be as great a danger as coastal flooding during extreme weather events.*

# Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Sources

Encouraging and promoting renewable energy systems is an important aspect of environmental resiliency and sustainability. Reducing dependence on fossil fuels and creating alternative sources of energy production will give Nelson County residents more options for energy stability.

## Utility-Scale Solar

Electric utility companies often site large solar energy systems on undeveloped land in order to lower installation costs. Large, utility-scale solar arrays can render the land useless for other activities, including agriculture, and introduce an industrial aesthetic to the landscape. In addition to locating solar energy systems on land, they can appropriately be positioned on top of buildings and over already-paved surfaces such as parking lots. Nelson County's Zoning Ordinance promotes the safe, effective, and efficient use of small and large solar energy systems and small wind energy systems for electrical generation. However, to protect agricultural lands and the rural and natural character of the County, more specific regulations are needed. Regulations should encourage and allow large solar energy systems in built environments (e.g. on commercial/industrial rooftops and paved areas). Enhanced performance standards, such as vegetated buffers and incentives for native plants will protect rural viewsheds and can help support local pollinators.

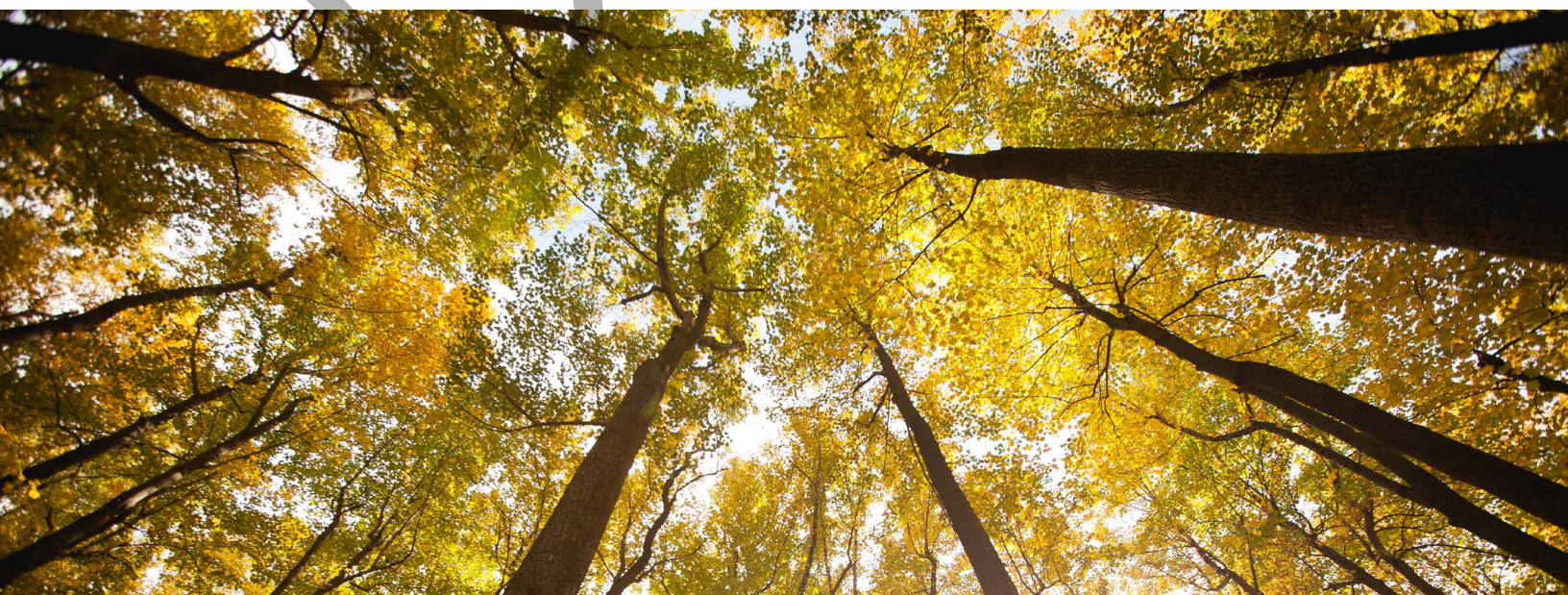
## SolSmart

Nelson County announced its commitment to become a SolSmart-designated community in February 2022. This commitment dedicates staff to work to improve solar market conditions and increase the efficiency of local solar development processes to make it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to install solar energy systems. SolSmart will be leveraged to achieve three goals:

- Review planning and zoning process and enhance siting options for solar photovoltaic technology while preserving community character and historic resources.
- Review current permitting processes and/or implement solar permitting best practices.
- Support small-scale and community based local solar energy development.

## Energy Improvements

To set a precedent and encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy, Nelson County should also improve the energy efficiency of its own facilities. Photovoltaic panels can be installed on County-owned buildings. The County could pursue grants to help fund energy efficiency and solar-ready retrofit projects. Adopting energy efficiency and renewable energy as standard procedure for building maintenance and improvements will yield cost savings while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

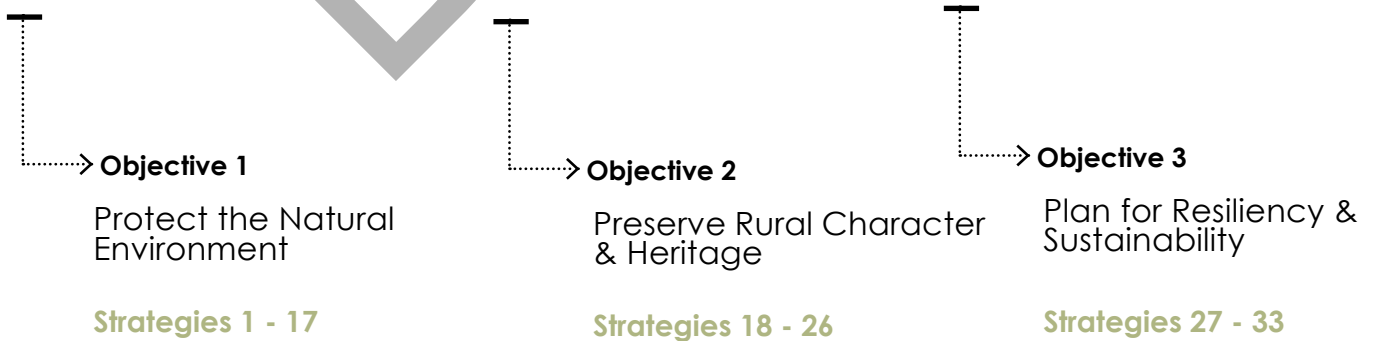






## How We Move Forward | Strategies

**Nelson County preserves its rural character and agricultural heritage by sustainably protecting and stewarding its natural and historic resources for future generations.**





## Protect the Natural Environment

- 1 Limit development on steep slopes to maintain balance between slope, soils, geology, and vegetation. Where disturbance is unavoidable, enforce erosion and sediment control measures to prevent unnecessary degradation.
- 2 Avoid the use of septic systems on steep slopes and unsuitable soils.
- 3 Direct development and infrastructure away from ecological cores, migration corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4 Implement green infrastructure principles to preserve and connect natural habitats to support native species and wildlife.
- 5 Support the use of low impact development and stormwater best management practices to reduce nonpoint source pollution in local waterways.
- 6 Encourage landowners to work with local organizations, such as TJSWCD, for cost-share opportunities to install LID and BMPs catered to agricultural, residential, and commercial sites.
- 7 Continue to work with state and regional partners (such as DEQ, TJPDC, and TJSWCD) to implement TMDL plans for impaired waterways.
- 8 Continue to work with regional partners on updates to the Regional Water Supply Plan and implement solutions to sustain the future water supply and commercial sites.
- 9 Encourage water conservation measures as outlined in the Regional Water Supply Plan.
- 10 Support efforts to identify and cap or remove abandoned wells and septic tanks to prevent contamination of the groundwater supply, and continue providing information on VDH's Septic and Well Assistance Program.
- 11 Condition approval of operations utilizing underground storage tanks (USTs) on assurances guaranteeing proper closure or removal of unused USTs and remediation of impacted soils.
- 12 Support scenic river and blueway designations for local waterways.
- 13 To protect air quality and reduce vehicle emissions, maintain vegetation along major roadways, support public transit, and promote recycling and composting.
- 14 Explore opportunities for an incentive program to increase use of existing recycling and composting facilities with a focus on public education and outreach.
- 15 Invest in partnerships with community organizations to ensure continued support and possible expansion of the Re-use sheds.
- 16 Carefully consider noise-intensive uses near residential or rural properties, and require noise mitigation such as perimeter buffers and sound barriers.

17

Adopt an outdoor lighting ordinance with design and performance standards that increase safety and protect dark skies, consistent with International Dark Sky Association recommendations.

## Preserve Rural Character & Heritage

18

Direct development away from prime agricultural soils and suitable agricultural lands identified on the Virginia Agricultural Model.

19

Protect agricultural and forested landscapes from development through tools such as conservation easements, agricultural and forestal districts, use-value assessments, and purchase of development rights program.

20

Maintain use-value taxation criteria and qualifications in the best interest of the County and landowners to ensure long-term viability of agricultural, horticultural, and forestal operations.

21

Continue to utilize the Virginia Department of Forestry's Forest Sustainability Fund to offset reduced tax revenue due to forestland use taxation.

22

Discourage ridgeline development to protect scenic viewsheds.

23

Encourage assessment of unlisted historic sites for inclusion on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or National Register of Historic Places.

24

Work with local partners such as the Nelson County Historical Society to identify, protect, and celebrate historic and culturally significant properties.

25

Pursue identification, recognition, and protection of historic areas representing Nelson County's diverse culture, including Native American and African American sites.

26

Encourage architectural compatibility of new development, including infill development, where significant historic resources exist.

## Plan for Resiliency & Sustainability

**27** Continue to work with regional partners to update and implement the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**28** Continue improving flood resiliency by updating the Floodplain District Ordinance as needed to reflect new flood maps and best practices, and participating in FEMA's Community Rating System.

**29** Continue working toward the stated goal of becoming a SolSmart-designated community.

**30** Encourage and incentivize green building certifications, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources for new developments and existing development retrofits.

**31** Consider amendments to existing ordinances to encourage installation of solar panels on existing impervious surfaces, such as rooftops and parking lots.

**32** Strengthen performance standards for ground-mounted solar energy systems to protect existing landscapes, such as limiting clear-cutting on undeveloped parcels, specifying minimum vegetation requirements, and increasing perimeter buffer widths.

**33** Assess County-owned buildings to identify opportunities for improving energy efficiency using the EPA's resources for Energy Efficiency in Government Operations and Facilities, or a similar program.

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# Creating a Resilient Economy



## Our Goal

*Nelson County creates and maintains a strong, resilient economy that promotes workforce development and diversifies business and tourism opportunities while supporting out agricultural heritage.*





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What We Know | The Economy Today

How We Move Forward

Goals Statement

Strategies

Support & Cultivate Today's Workforce

Diversify & Enhance Local Industry

Bolster & Promote Economic Growth

## Creating a Resilient Economy

Nestled on the sunrise side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Nelson County is home to a wealth of resources that have supported the community's evolving commerce profile. Once known primarily for its mineral and agricultural resources, the economic landscape has changed within a physical landscape that remains idyllic and rural. As traditional industries have evolved and scaled back, new trends in agritourism and remote work opportunities have been bolstered by a forward-thinking investment in broadband infrastructure. Nelson County is prime for fresh ideas and new investments while retaining the stunning rural character that makes it special for those who call it home. This chapter provides an overview of key issues and opportunities for economic development and recommends strategies to create a resilient economy.

# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



At the heart of any workforce are real people who desire long-term financial stability. Community engagement indicates that residents seek more workforce training and career-oriented opportunities that can support the cost of living in Nelson County. Equitable economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by attracting quality jobs of all skill and education levels, creating new opportunities for workers, and providing career ladders for upward mobility. A workforce that feels valued and employable becomes the next generation of homeowners, community leaders, and entrepreneurs, laying the groundwork for a stable future for Nelson County.

A resilient economy that diversifies its industries and services will be well-prepared to handle the unknown. As experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, unpredictable global forces can greatly impact local markets – diversifying key industries will ensure that the proverbial eggs are not in one basket. Access to remote working positions as well as brick and mortar establishments both small and large are desired by the community to create options for workers and consumers, helping to spread the tax base and provide stable revenue for the local economy.

A strong economy that creates jobs not only supports a healthy workforce – it also supports vital services that benefit the community, both public and private. Survey results indicate a need for better access to medical and emergency services, public transportation options, and recreation opportunities. The quality of healthcare, childcare, education, and outreach services reflect the quality of the local economy and investment back into the community.

The community seeks to be stewards of the natural environment while also supporting economic development. Protecting and connecting to the rural environment in a 21st century world may seem counterintuitive at first, but investments in business and technology can actually protect the rural landscape from changing. Traditional agriculture has been bolstered by new trends in agritourism while remote workers seeking work-life balance have found refuge in Nelson's idyllic setting. Broadband and wireless connections have allowed farmers and small businesses to keep pace with the modern world without sacrificing the land they call home.

## Key Strategy

### Strategy #1

Prepare for the needs of the next generation of workers by supporting both traditional higher education and vocational education opportunities.

## Key Strategy

### Strategy #20

Work with TJPDC to implement recommendations from the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## Key Strategy

### Strategy #15

Continue to extend high-speed internet and cellular service throughout the County with bandwidth capable of serving businesses and maintaining viability during technological advances.

## Key Strategy

### Strategy #13

Support multiple revenue streams for farmers by reviewing and amending ordinances to better allow farmers to host complementary agritourism uses on agricultural properties.



## What We Know | The Economy Today

Public engagement identified a need for enhanced workforce development and career opportunities to retain young professionals and middle-class families. The County's population is aging into retirement while the younger generations have declined in numbers. Tourism has become a backbone of the local economy, so it will be important to ensure that growth in tourism supports quality jobs for residents while retaining the integrity of the local resources that attract visitors. After experiencing the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nelson County is well-positioned to forge ahead with a renewed vision for a balanced, resilient economy that will set the stage for generational wealth and success.



# Support & Cultivate Today's Workforce

## Workforce Characteristics

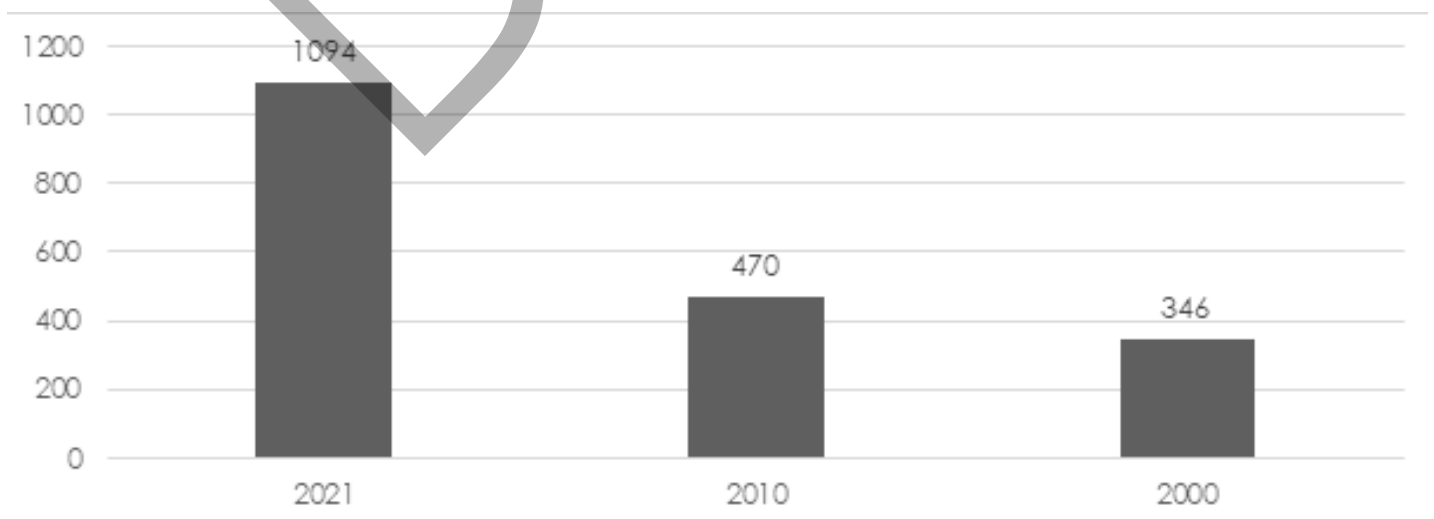
### Commuting Patterns

Fifty-seven percent of residents aged 16 and over are actively in the workforce, with an average commute of 31.7 minutes. Most workers (56%) live in Nelson County and commute elsewhere for their jobs, primarily traveling to Albemarle County, Charlottesville, Amherst County, Lynchburg, and Augusta County. This number has remained stable since 2004, with only a 1% increase. Twenty-five percent of workers live elsewhere and commute into Nelson, representing a 24% increase since 2004. The remaining 19% live and commute within the County, which represents a 21% decrease since 2004. This may be partly attributable to the rise in home-based remote work, which is not captured in commuting data and has increased 133% since 2010 and 216% since 2000.

Table 7.1 - Commuting Patterns

Commuters	2019	2014	2009	2004
People who live and work in Nelson	1,660	1,769	1,852	2,094
In-commuters	2,179	2,086	1,499	1,758
Out-commuters	4,837	4,755	4,705	4,785
Total	8,676	8,610	8,056	8,637

Table 7.2 - Remote Workers

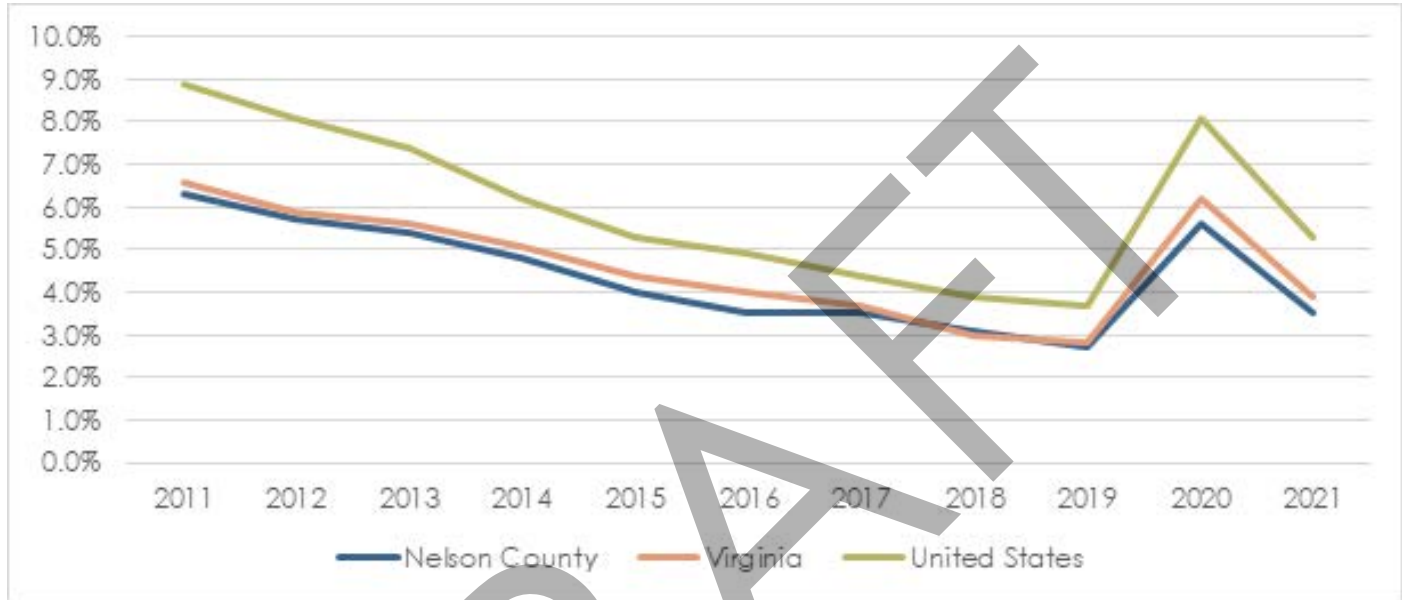


Source: 2021, 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates and 2000 Census

## Unemployment

From 2011 to 2021, Nelson County's unemployment rate was consistently lower than both state and national averages each year. Unemployment saw a net decline from 6.3% in 2011 to 3.5% in 2021, even after a notable increase to 5.6% in 2020, a likely result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From November 2021 to November 2022, the unemployment rate fluctuated between a high of 3.1% (August 2022) and a low of 2.2% (December 2021).

Table 7.3 - Unemployment Trends 2011-2021



Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Table 7.4 - Unemployment November 2021- November 2022

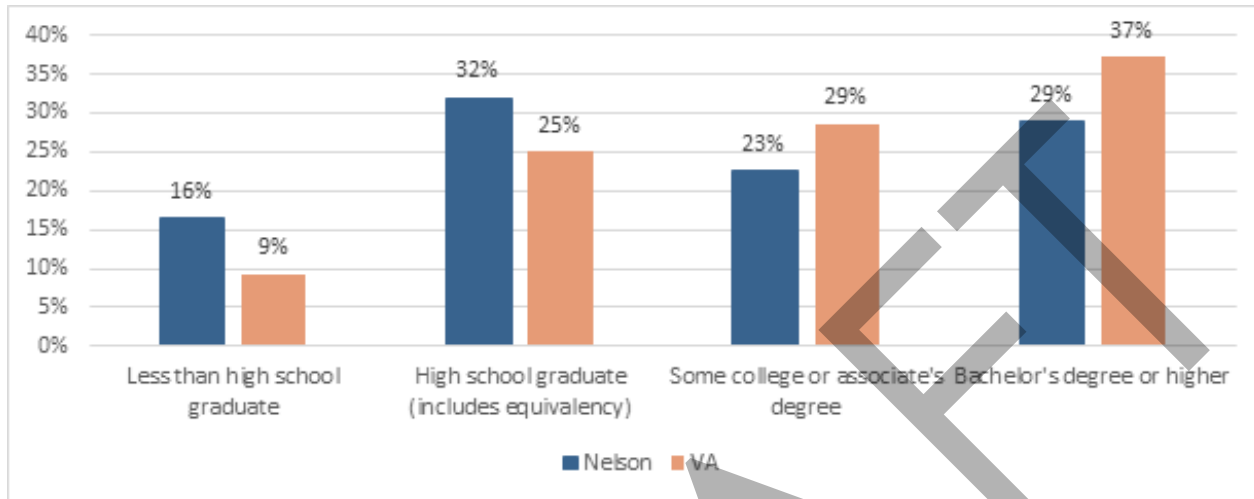


Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

## Educational Attainment

Nelson County residents have access to several colleges and universities within an hour's drive, including the University of Virginia, Liberty University, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Central Virginia Community College. 32% of the population are high school graduates, while 29% hold Bachelor's degrees or higher.

Table 7.5 - Educational Attainment



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

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Table 7.7 - Average Weekly Wages by Industry

Industry	Wage
Total, All Industries	\$899
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$675
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	*
Utilities	*
Construction	\$916
Manufacturing	\$786
Wholesale Trade	\$979
Retail Trade	\$456
Transportation and Warehousing	\$877
Information	\$1,143
Finance and Insurance	\$1,438
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$795
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$1,627
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$2,864
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$1,176
Educational Services	\$1,020
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$914
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$352
Accommodation and Food Services	\$676
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$770
Government Total	\$1,177
Federal Government	\$1,645
State Government	\$1,040
Local Government	\$846
Unclassified	\$982

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 3rd Quarter (July, August, September) 2022

Table 7.6 - Regional Median Household Incomes

County	Median Household Income
Albemarle	\$90,568
Augusta	\$69,082
Nelson	\$67,707
Amherst	\$60,876
Rockbridge	\$57,828
Appomattox	\$55,268
Buckingham	\$49,841

### Household Income and Weekly Wages

As shown in Table 7.6, median household income ranks third highest among surrounding counties at \$67,707. This is about 16% lower than the state median of \$80,615. Average weekly wages by industry are shown in Table 7.7.

## Workforce Trends

Residents aged 55 or older comprise 44% of the County's population, a sharp rise from 2000 when the same age group accounted for 29% of the population. Workers aged 55 or older comprise approximately 29% of the current workforce and are likely to retire by 2035. The next age group, ages 25-54, represents 31% of the County's population and 57% of the current workforce. The youngest age group, aged 24 and under, represents 25% of the population and 14% of the current workforce.

As older workers enter retirement, a knowledge gap is created when fewer skilled workers are prepared to take their place in the workforce. Since this age group also represents the largest portion of the population, Nelson County should prepare for the needs of the next workforce generation to attract new workers and families. The knowledge gap can be closed with improved access to job training and trades programs, as well as more direct partnerships with nearby colleges and universities. Both traditional higher education and vocational trades will be beneficial for cultivating a versatile, capable workforce.

The County demographics show a growing trend that demonstrates the need for an economy that supports seniors and the elderly as well as families and youth. The primary age demographic for working families in the County (ages 25-54) has declined from 43% in 2000 to 31% in 2020. Marketing Nelson as an ideal community for work-life balance could incentivize younger generations of workers to relocate permanently to the area with their families, which would help stabilize Nelson's population and strengthen the future tax base. Diversified business opportunities, job training, and improvements to amenities, parks, and schools will help make Nelson attractive to working families. Investments in schools, recreation, senior centers and workforce support services create jobs, support the local economy and build community.

Table 7.8 - Workforce Population Trends

Age Group	0 to 24 years of age	25 to 54 years of age	55+ years of age
Percentage of County Population, 2000	28%	43%	29%
Percentage of County Population, 2010	25%	37%	38%
Percentage of County Population, 2020	25%	31%	44%
Percentage of Current Workforce	14%	57%	29%

Source: 2021, 2010, and 2000 Census

Nelson County has already made significant improvements to broadband access, making remote work a viable option for many employees. While the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment trends are still being experienced and analyzed, the paradigm shift to remote work will likely remain a permanent fixture of the working landscape. Attracting remote workers is one significant step that Nelson County has already taken to maintain a steady population. Community Centers present opportunities to achieve many complementary economic and social goals and objectives. On site services, transportation hubs, recreation, and businesses can draw people to the center and contribute to the long term economic sustainability to the centers. In addition, many community centers help with the education and development of the local workforce.

## Diversify & Enhance Local Industry

### Industry Characteristics

#### Top 10 Employers

Leading employers in Nelson County reflect the community's culture and assets – public schools, recreation and tourism, and local businesses top the list of major employers.

1. Nelson County School Board
2. Wintergreen Resort
3. Devils Backbone Brewing Company
4. Nelson County
5. Blue Mountain Brewery
6. Blue Ridge Health Care Center
7. Bold Rock Cidery
8. Saunders Brothers
9. Veritas Vineyard & Winery
10. Wintergreen Property Owners Association





## Employment by Industry

The total number of working residents has remained consistent since 2000, with a net increase of 0.3%. As shown in Table 7.8, manufacturing, retail, and information have seen the largest employment decreases since 2000. Information, which includes publishing, broadcasting, and telecommunications, is distinct from information technology, which is categorized under professional services. Notable industry increases include professional and related services, finance and real estate, and education and health care.

Table 7.9 - Employment by Industry

Industry	Estimated Number of Workers 2021	Percent Change From 2010	Percent Change From 2000
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	6,797	-5.6%	+0.3%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2,044	+21.8%	+30.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	789	+19.0%	+53.8%
Construction	758	-10.9%	-7.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	705	-24.4%	+16.1%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	454	+1.6%	+117.2%
Retail trade	408	-26.4%	-29.8%
Manufacturing	345	-47.4%	-59.6%
Other services, except public administration	323	-16.8%	-17.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	320	+15.5%	+11.5%
Public administration	251	-14.9%	+5.9%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	208	-5.5%	-49.5%
Wholesale trade	136	-6.8%	-17.6%
Information	56	-39.8%	-58.5%

Source: 2021, 2010, ACS 5-Year Estimates and 2000 Census

# Industry Trends

## Manufacturing & Processing

Mineral mining and processing was a successful venture for the County after the world's largest deposit of architectural soapstone was discovered near Schuyler, sparking an economic engine that thrived throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. According to the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, Nelson County is a prime location for manufacturing and industrial-related businesses such as food processing and wood products. The abundance of forest cover presents opportunities for timbering, which can be successfully managed as a renewable product while preserving the majority of remaining forest.

Industrial and manufacturing jobs offer an important alternative for a rural workforce. However, community engagement also indicated that the least desired land uses in Nelson County are industrial and timbering-related. The County strives to manage a positive balance between manufacturing jobs and the community's desires by focusing industrial development within specific areas, such as Colleen Business Park, and ensuring that facilities can adequately connect to public utilities without disrupting undeveloped rural parcels. Infill and adaptive reuse of vacant sites can also be targeted for manufacturing. Timbering should be done with thoughtful consideration to prevent unnecessary destruction of pristine forests. Appropriate rotation, erosion mitigation, and replanting schedules can ensure that timbering remains a reliable, environmentally conscious industry. The Virginia Department of Forestry can assist with forest management plans that implement best practices to protect the environment while maximizing the profit potential of wood resources.

## Agriculture & Agritourism

Nelson County has been anchored by traditional agriculture for generations. Prime agricultural soils account for only 12% of the County's soils, but farmers have successfully maximized the growing potential of both prime and non-prime soils for cattle grazing, grains, orchards, and vineyards on lands of varying terrain. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are over 67,800 acres of land currently being used across 409 farms. This represents a decrease in farming lands of 10% and 15%, respectively, since 2012. Despite the decrease in land area, market value of products sold increased 69% between 2012 and 2017, and 115% from 2007 to 2017. By comparison, state sales as a whole increased by 6% and 36%, respectively, during the same time periods. These trends show that the value per acre has increased 131% from 2007 to 2017.

Table 7.10 - Agriculture Trends

	2017		2012		2007	
	County	State	County	State	County	State
Total Farms	409	43,225	455	46,030	462	47,383
Total Land in Farms (acres)	67,841	7,797,979	79,981	8,302,444	73,149	8,103,925
Avg. Size of Farm (acres)	166	180	176	180	158	171
Total Cropland (farms)	319	32,091	358	34,525	365	35,954
Total Cropland (acres)	20,163	3,084,067	22,429	2,990,561	22,898	3,274,137
Total Market Value	\$26.72 mil	\$3.96 bil	\$15.81 mil	\$3.75 bil	\$12.45 mil	\$2.91 bil
Total Market Value % Change Since 2012	69%	6%	-	-	-	-
Total Market Value % Change Since 2007	115%	36%	27%	29%	-	-
Total Market Value per Farm	\$65,328	\$91,625	\$34,741	\$81,540	\$26,937	\$61,334
Total Market Value per Acre	\$394	\$508	\$198	\$452	\$170	\$359

Source: 2007, 2012, and 2017 Census of Agriculture

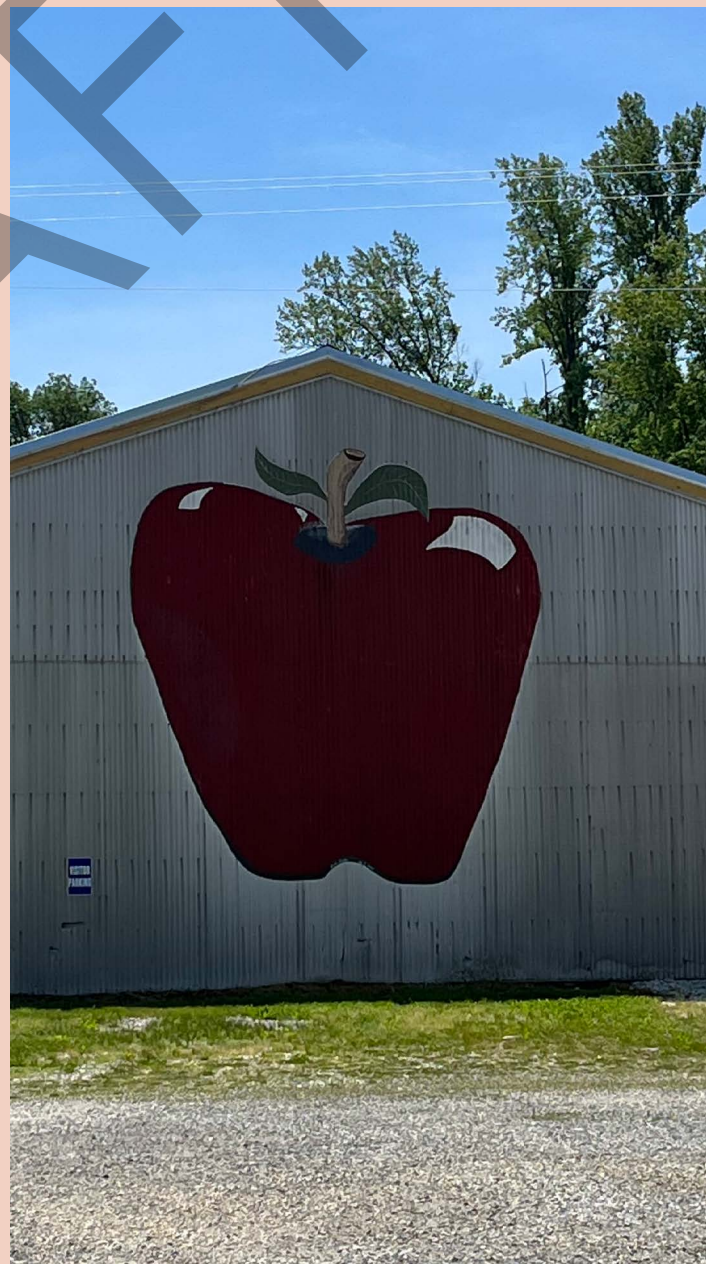
While there has been some decline in the farming footprint in Nelson County and throughout Virginia, agriculture remains a foundational component of local economic identity and cultural heritage. Challenges facing today's farmers include increased production and supply chain costs, recovery after severe weather or drought events, adapting to new technology, and inspiring the next generation of farmers to carry on the land's agricultural legacy. When farmers face economic burdens and uncertainties about the long-term viability of their business, there is increased pressure to sell the land for financial stability.

Utilizing land preservation tools as discussed in Chapter 6 can help sustain agricultural properties for the long-term and maximize their economic impact. Other methods to assist farmers include streamlining local permitting processes to remove unnecessary procedural barriers and connecting farmers to programs such as the Virginia Department of Agriculture's Farm Link Program, which links farm owners interested in exiting agriculture with those seeking farms and farm business. In addition to supporting farmers directly, community engagement indicated a need for more agriculture education programs for students.

Agritourism provides new opportunities for historically agricultural lands, breathing new life into business models while retaining the pristine condition of the land itself. Recent leadership in Nelson County has encouraged new breweries, wineries, cideries, and distilleries to take advantage of Nelson County's mild climate. A new agrotourism economy has sprung up around these industries, particularly along Routes 6, 29, and 151. Traditional farms and orchards have diversified and expanded their services, ranging from hosting events to supplying local restaurants. Preserving traditional agriculture while also supporting evolving agritourism opportunities will ensure that this vital industry remains a permanent fixture of Nelson's economic identity.

## Agricultural Education

Nelson County High School's chapter of Future Farmers of America (FFA) is a locally and internationally renowned chapter of the FFA program. Future Farmers of America is a youth organization which prepares members for leadership and careers in the science, technology, and business of agriculture. Nelson County should continue to invest in its FFA programs to cultivate a passionate and knowledgeable agricultural workforce and sustain its farming economy well into the future. To learn more about Future Farmers of America, visit their website: <https://www.ffa.org/>





## DRIVE 2.0

In 2019, Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) completed a long-term strategic plan, titled "DRIVE 2.0," to help increase tourism visitation and spending across the Commonwealth. DRIVE 2.0 positions Virginia communities to grow in directions that provide greater economic opportunities. The DRIVE 2.0 initiative can help Nelson County get funding to implement strategies that will increase tourism. Deliverables of DRIVE 2.0 include:

- DRIVE 2.0 Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan
- DRIVE 2.0 Regional Plan specific to Central Virginia
- How-To Guides to assist with implementing DRIVE 2.0 recommendations
- DRIVE Outdoor Grant Program providing up to \$20,000 for outdoor recreation development projects



## Tourism

Historically, Nelson County's economy has been driven by agriculture and raw materials processing, but in recent decades it has shifted to one centered more around tourism. A Blue Ridge Parkway Gateway Community offering a perfect balance of picturesque beauty, outdoor recreation, shopping and culinary destinations, and unique lodging opportunities, Nelson County has something to offer for every interest. While the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic caused revenue losses in the County's tourism sector, there was a remarkable post-pandemic comeback. As shown in Table 7.11, tourism revenues fell 18% between 2019 and 2020, then grew 28% between 2020 and 2021. Not only did this return Nelson's tourism revenue to pre-pandemic levels, it actually increased by 4% over 2019 and 13% over 2017.

Diversification is important not only between industries, but within industries as well. As outdoor recreation tourism becomes more popular, there is a risk of overwhelming rustic trails and rural roads. The development of new physical trails, such as rail-to-trail conversions and blueways, has helped spread out visitors to relieve congestion. Expanded options for craft beverages, local dining, and retail also provide a well-rounded experience that prompt tourists to visit multiple areas of the County. In the future, the County should direct more tourism opportunities to underserved areas such as along Route 29 and the southern and eastern portions of the County, where additional growth can be accommodated. This can help alleviate pressures to resources and infrastructure along Route 151 which has seen significant tourism growth in the recent years.

Wintergreen Resort, a key tourist destination and major employer for Nelson County, can also benefit from diversification. As temperatures trend warmer, artificial snow-making equipment may struggle to keep up with demand. The ski resort industry has proactively prepared for potential climate challenges by diversifying recreational offerings in summer months and upgrading facilities with warm-weather amenities such as water parks and mountain bike trails. Wintergreen has already successfully incorporated year-round resort offerings with outdoor recreation, spa amenities, and dining, while also having capacity to host large professional conferences and events. Continuing to evolve with industry and climate trends will ensure that Wintergreen Resort will remain a tourism and employment powerhouse for Nelson County.

## Tourist Trails

**Nelson 151** – Virginia Route 151 is a state-designated scenic byway on the sunrise side of the Blue Ridge Mountains that is home to the Nelson 151 community. The Nelson 151 trail offers seven wineries, four breweries, three cideries, and two distilleries.

**Brew Ridge Trail** – Virginia's original beer trail, seven Nelson County breweries are featured on the Brew Ridge Trail, which shares some overlap with Nelson 151.

**Nelson 29** – Nelson's newest craft beverage trail situated along Virginia Route 29, Nelson 29 includes four wineries, three breweries, and one distillery.

**Blue Ridge Fruit Loop** – From May until December, taste and tour more than 30 farms and orchards that grow the freshest fruits and berries in Nelson County.



## Craft Beverage Producers

- 12 Wineries
- 10 Breweries
- 3 Cideries
- 3 Distilleries

## Outdoor Recreation

- Appalachian Trail
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Blue Ridge Tunnel
- Crabtree Falls
- Fortune's Cove Nature Preserve
- Henry Lanum Memorial Trail and the Mt. Pleasant Spur
- Humpback Rocks Trail
- James River State Park & Wildlife Management Area
- Kids in Parks TRACK Trails at the Blue Ridge Railway Trail and Rockfish River Trailhead
- Love Mountain Ridge Wildlife Loop
- Lower Rockfish Valley Wildlife Loop
- Mau-Har Trail
- Montebello Nature Trail
- Montreal Park
- Nature Foundation at Wintergreen
- Nelson County Wayside
- Nelson County Wilderness Area
- North Fork of the Piney River
- Rockfish Valley Loop Trails
- Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch
- Rockfish Ruritan Park
- Virginia Blue Ridge Trail
- White Rock Falls



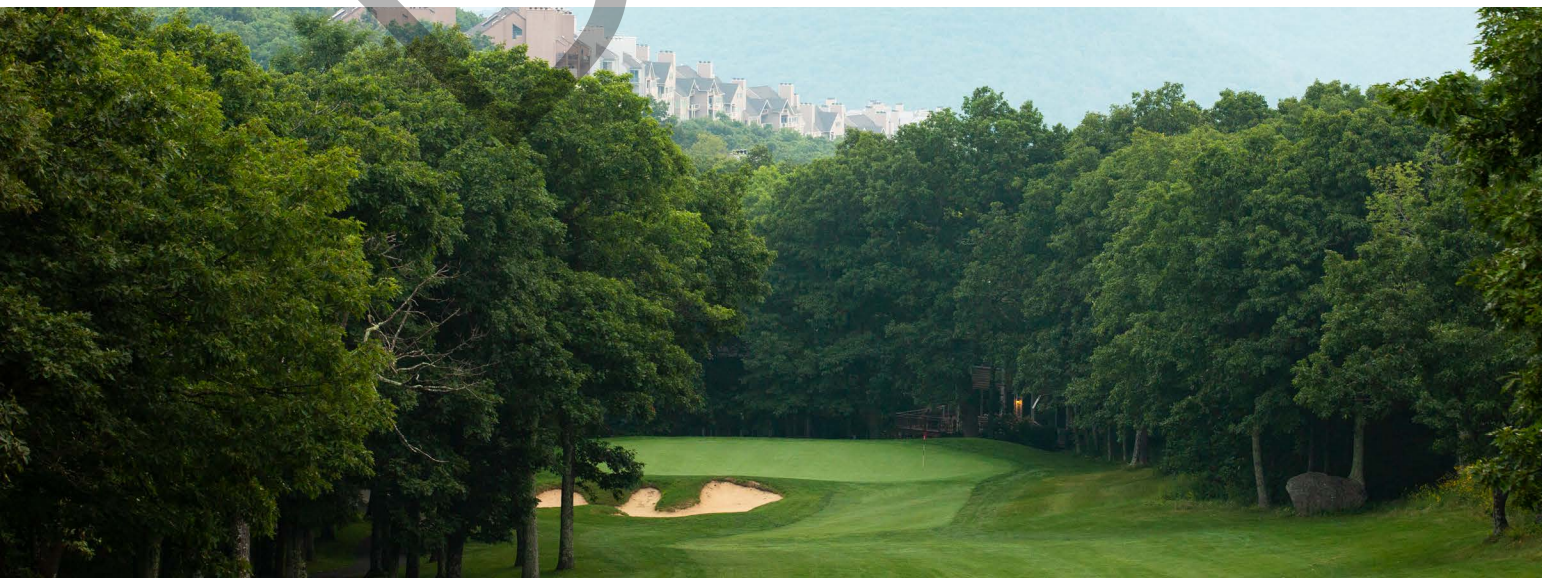
## Diversify & Enhance Local Industry

### Economic Development

#### Incentive Zones

Currently, there are no incentive zones in Nelson County. An Enterprise, Opportunity, or Tourism zone may be a good fit in areas that would benefit from new investment. These zones provide access to grants and tax incentives to increase investment by job creators in targeted areas, and can also provide tourism marketing. Pursuing a zone application, particularly around the Route 29 and 151 corridors where growth is targeted, could be a worthwhile investment with long-term returns.

- **Virginia Enterprise Zones** – The Virginia Enterprise Zone (VEZ) program is a partnership between state and local government that encourages job creation and private investment. VEZ accomplishes this by designating Enterprise Zones throughout the state and providing two grant-based incentives, the Job Creation Grant and the Real Property Investment Grant, to qualified investors and job creators within those zones, while the locality provides local incentives.
- **Tourism Zones** – Much like traditional business enterprise zone, a tourism zone allows businesses to take advantage of state and local tax incentives not available to businesses elsewhere. The goal of these incentives is to stimulate business attraction, growth, and increased employment opportunities within certain areas of a locality. This can include, but is not limited to: hiring credits, sales and use tax incentives, expense and interest deductions, discount utilities hook-up and payment plans, sewer facility hookup payment plans, and reduced parking requirements.
- **Opportunity Zones** – Opportunity Zones are a federal economic development and community development tax benefit program to encourage long-term private investment in low-income urban, suburban and rural census tracts. This is an economic and community development tax incentive that provides an avenue for investors to support communities that have experienced uneven economic growth and recovery. The tax incentive offers three benefits; tax deferral, tax reduction through long-term investment, and exclusion of certain capital gains tax.
- **Technology Zones** - Virginia localities have the ability to establish one or more Technology Zones to attract growth in targeted industries. Establishing a technology zone allows localities to create special incentives for qualified businesses locating or expanding operations in a zone.





## Service Industry

Private and public investments in the county's service economy are also crucial to providing long-term economic and community growth and stability. The service economy includes county administration, schools and community education—these provide the largest employment in the county—emergency services, medical and mental health services, day care and senior services, recreation and community service infrastructure, and communications and transportation infrastructure.

The County seeks to promote village areas through placemaking and wayfinding, grant opportunities for village branding/identity, and a mixed-use context through incentives for infill development. This will promote tourism and reinforce the local economy without significantly impacting the character of the County's rural and mountainous areas.

## Business Support Services

Economic development is guided by the Office of Nelson County Economic Development Authority, whose mission is to promote the diversity and growth of the County's economic base. Support for business owners includes small business toolkits and checklists, cashflow worksheets, and sample marketing outlines. Local businesses are also supported by the Nelson County Chamber of Commerce, a membership-based non-profit organization that provides resources to area businesses. Regionally, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission was awarded a grant in August 2022 to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan. The timeframe for completion is typically 18 months. Strategies and recommendations from the CEDS plan that positively impact Nelson County should be implemented along with the economic development strategies from this chapter.

## Business Support Agencies

**Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development** is a 501(c)6 non-profit, public-private partnership formed in 1995 to help create new jobs and investment in Central Virginia. The Partnership has integrated staff and resources with GO Virginia Region 9 and Virginia Career Works-Piedmont Region to expand its services for existing businesses, entrepreneurs, job seekers and employers.

**SCORE** is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and has been mentoring small business owners for more than forty years.

**Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** offers no-cost individualized advising, from start-up to established businesses. SBDC provides training to aspiring business owners on requirements for going into business, licensing and regulatory information, advertising and promotion, and more, as well as business planning, financing sources and capital formation, personnel management, and other forms of assistance for existing businesses.

**Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)** is the Commonwealth of Virginia's economic development authority. Created in 1995, VEDP collaborates with local, regional, and state partners to encourage the expansion and diversification of Virginia's economy. VEDP works to accomplish these objectives through a variety of activities, including marketing and lead generation; business retention, expansion, and attraction; trade development; business intelligence; competitive benchmarking; site development; performance-based incentives; and talent solutions.

**Virginia Tourism Corporation** seeks to expand domestic and international in-bound travel and motion picture production to generate revenue and employment in Virginia.

# Additional Economic Drivers

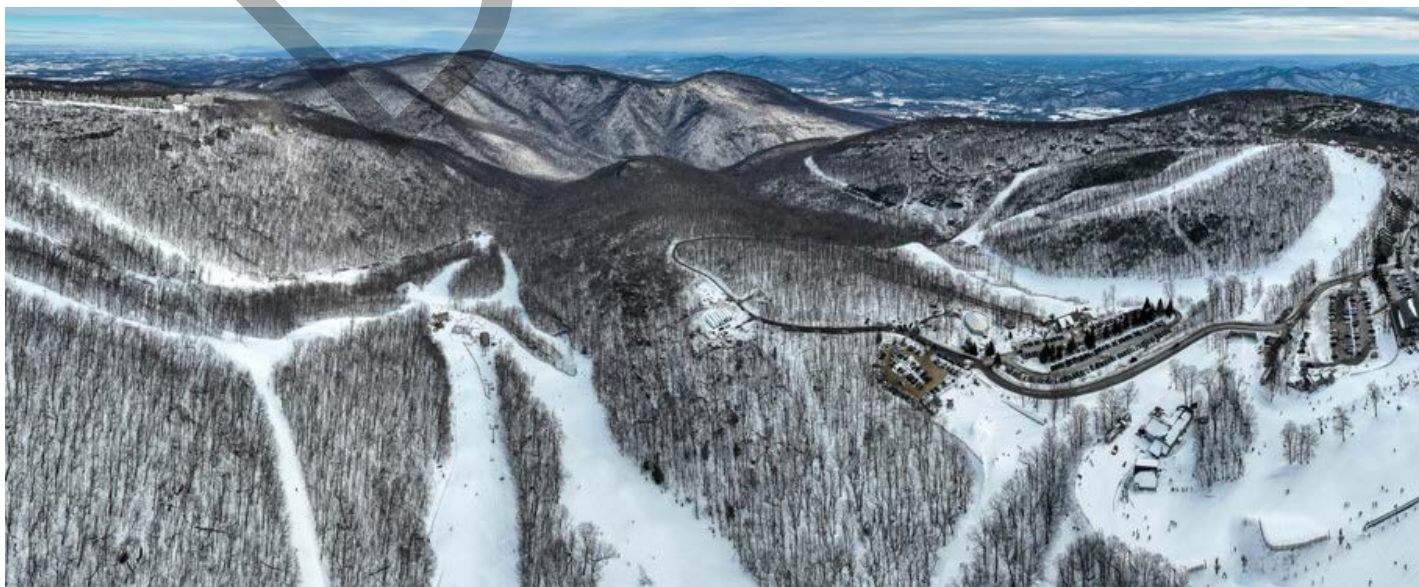
## Workforce Development

Community engagement responses indicated that there are few career-oriented economic opportunities for residents, leading to fewer families and young professionals staying in Nelson County. Training and maintaining a capable workforce is key to sustaining major employers. Additionally, investments in career and workforce training targeting specific community needs supports community health, well-being and the entire county economy. Workforce development in Nelson County is supported by the Virginia Career Work-Piedmont Region (VCW-P). Programs in VCW-P's workforce system include adult education and literacy support, vocational rehabilitation, and veteran employment assistance. Workforce development programs are also offered through Piedmont Virginia Community College and Central Virginia Community College. Advocating for a local community college branch would help provide more direct access to training for Nelson County residents, who must currently commute to Amherst, Lynchburg, or Charlottesville for the nearest campuses. Additionally, the County could use community centers as hubs for educational and economic development programs, achieving workforce development goals in an efficient and fiscally responsible way.

## Broadband Infrastructure

Thanks to a proactive approach by the Nelson County Broadband Authority and funds leveraged from grants and local investments, Nelson County has unparalleled access to high-speed internet. Over 6,200 homes and businesses have access to more than 450 miles of fiber and active circuits along the Route 6, 29, and 151 corridors, along with four towers extending wireless service to more remote areas. The investment in broadband allowed Nelson to be uniquely prepared for the unforeseen challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Nelson County's idyllic setting, quality of life, and access to world-renowned outdoor recreation has made it attractive for professionals and families who value work-life balance. Prior to the pandemic in 2019, Nelson County was ranked #1 in Virginia for remote work with 11.74% of its labor force working from home. In 2021 this increased to 16.8%, although the ranking is now lower relative to other counties who also saw increases in remote work. Brick and mortar businesses have benefitted from the broadband investment, which has made essential processes much more reliable and efficient. The targeted installation along major corridors supports development in planned growth areas. While working conditions have stabilized since the height of the pandemic era, Nelson's forward-thinking broadband investment means that businesses and workers have options and can adapt quickly to future situations.





## How We Move Forward | Strategies

**Nelson County creates and maintains a strong, resilient economy that promotes workforce development and diversifies business and tourism opportunities while supporting out agricultural heritage.**





## Support & Cultivate Today's Workforce

- 1 Prepare for the needs of the next generation of workers by supporting both traditional higher education and vocational education opportunities.
- 2 Support Nelson County Public Schools and regional partners in coordinating and enhancing workforce training programs, sponsorships, incentives, and financial
- 3 Support dual enrollment programs for high school students that contribute to college- or vocational-level programs.
- 4 Work with the Virginia Community College system to consider and advocate for a local branch in Nelson County, including collaboration between one or more existing colleges for a satellite branch.
- 5 Support private and public investments in the county's service economy to provide long-term economic and community growth and stability.
- 6 Promote and support community centers as hubs for education and economic development.

## Diversify & Improve Local Industry

- 7 Continue to support the tourism industry while being mindful of over-tourism; diversify tourism assets across the County to distribute traffic and prevent negative impacts to local quality of life.
- 8 Review the DRIVE 2.0 initiative and implement DRIVE Outdoor grant funding to implement recommendations of the related DRIVE 2.0 strategic and regional plans to increase tourism.
- 9 Support expansion and diversification in the agricultural and forestry industries while maintaining and encouraging environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.
- 10 Expand water access, trails, and bike infrastructure to promote outdoor recreation to encourage connection with the outdoors, encourage healthy recreation activities and enhance transportation options.
- 11 Support organizations and initiatives that provide agricultural assistance, community education, marketing strategies, information on agricultural support businesses, and information about alternative agricultural uses.
- 12 Assess local permitting, licensing, and fees for agricultural producers and streamline processes where practical to remove unnecessary procedural barriers.
- 13 Support multiple revenue streams for farmers by reviewing and amending ordinances to better allow farmers to host complementary agritourism uses on agricultural properties.

## Bolster & Promote Economic Growth

- 14** Explore opportunities to establish a Tourism Improvement District, ABC-designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas, a Tax-Incremented Finance District, and/or Technology Zones to increase business investment in targeted areas.
- 15** Continue to extend high-speed internet and cellular service throughout the County with bandwidth capable of serving businesses and maintaining viability during technological advances.
- 16** Review and modify the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, for regulations regarding special event venues and temporary events in the County.
- 17** Continue to support placemaking and wayfinding in village areas, grant opportunities for village branding and identity, and establish village mixed use to incentivize infill and development.
- 18** Create and enforce an ordinance governing temporary events to protect Nelson's rural character.
- 19** Support regional economic development partners that provide local business support services.
- 20** Work with TJPDC to implement recommendations from the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

DRAFT



Serving the  
Community





**Our Goal**  
Nelson County  
offers superior  
community  
services and  
facilities that serve  
all segments of  
the community,  
support economic  
development, and  
ensure community  
health and safety.





## Serving the Community

### IN THIS CHAPTER

What We Heard | The Big Ideas

What We Know | Community Facilities,  
Services, & Infrastructure Today

How We Move Forward

Goals Statement

Strategies

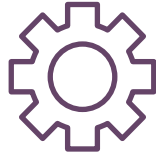
Enhance the County Government

Improve Infrastructure

Provide Quality Services

Community facilities, services, and infrastructure play an important role in shaping a community. Educational facilities, like schools and libraries, drive the local economy by educating the future workforce. Parks and recreation opportunities encourage active lifestyles and draw visitors that contribute to the local tourism economy. Availability of medical and emergency services support resident health, well-being, and safety. Infrastructure availability, including broadband, water, and sewer, is a key factor in where and how development occurs. The condition and accessibility of these and other community facilities and services influence the overall quality of life enjoyed by Nelson County residents. This chapter articulates how Nelson County is serving its residents' community facilities, services, and infrastructure needs today and planning for the needs of tomorrow.

# What We Heard | The Big Ideas



During community engagement, residents Countywide expressed a desire for enhanced public safety, medical, and educational services. Greater diversity in multi-model transportation and recreation opportunities, including family-oriented recreation, aquatics, and accessible trails, is also highly desired by the community at large. Community perception indicated potential disparities in delivery of these services, particularly in remote rural areas such as those East and South of Route 29. Equitable planning, partnerships, and innovations, like virtual and mobile services, can help ensure all residents can access the services they need.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #9**

Create a County-wide fire and emergency medical services (EMS) strategic plan that can be regularly updated and maintained to address response time, facility, and staffing needs.

Community facilities and services influence the local economy in important ways. The community recognizes the importance of the local school system and is supportive of partnerships with community colleges and trade schools to expand vocational training and create a more attractive and diverse workforce for employers. Residents also recognize water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure as an important factor for drawing businesses and workforce to Nelson County.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #27**

Support educational programs through County schools, community centers, community organizations, and regional community colleges to help prepare the community workforce for employment.

Fire and rescue, public schools, and medical/clinical services were the community's top-ranked community service priorities. Lack of infrastructure, such as water, sewer, electric vehicle charging, and broadband were also noted community issues. The County has a responsibility to its citizens to plan, provide, and maintain these and other vital services in an efficient and sustainable manner. Partnerships with private providers, non-profit organizations, and regional authorities are critical to achieve this mission.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #17**

Continue to work with the regional authority to create a water and sewer master plan to identify current system needs and target long-term strategies to maintain and expand service areas.

The community strongly supports expanding recreational opportunities, multimodal connectivity, and existing trail networks. Connecting residents with the natural environment through recreation will help promote a culture of conservation and stewardship, as well as enhance the well-being and quality of life for residents. Looking to the future, water service capacity and availability will be key determinants of how well the County is equipped to direct growth toward appropriate areas and protect its beloved rural lands.

→ **Key Strategy**

**Strategy #33**

Partner with local and regional organizations, as well as private landowners, to increase access to natural areas and riverways.





## What We Know | Natural & Cultural Resources Today

Public engagement identified a number of areas for improvement to County services. This section summarizes the key focus areas for Serving the Community as identified through community input and data analysis. These focus areas are key opportunities for Nelson County to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of the community, as well as provide a greater quality of life.

# Enhance the Effectiveness & Transparency of County Government

## Governance

Successful governance is the main objective of the five-member Board of Supervisors, one for each district of the County. A County Administrator is appointed by the Board, and it is their responsibility to ensure the effective delivery of services to the community, through the aid of many government departments and boards.

Nelson County's Board and administration is committed to transparency, efficient, and accountable government. Keeping the community informed and engaged is an important aspect of this responsibility. Nelson County's website details County facility information, provides all board meeting dates and agendas, and acts as a repository for County news and information. Additional communications efforts, innovative tools, and different information platforms should also be pursued to help keep residents informed of events and important news, as well as the changes and developments of regular governance. Examples include establishing a more robust social media presence, expanding the online geographic information systems (GIS) catalogue, and creating virtual/online service options.

## County Administrative Facilities

The Nelson County Courthouse, in downtown Lovingson, houses the County Administrator, Commissioner of the Revenue, Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology offices. Other County government offices are located in smaller offices around Lovingson. To better centralize and modernize functions that are not located in the County Courthouse, a new office building is proposed for the Social Services, Planning and Zoning, and Building Departments. This new office will help administrators be more efficient and accessible to residents.



*(Photo Placeholder)*

# Public Safety

## Fire & Rescue

Emergency fire services are managed by seven volunteer fire departments. These fire companies are located in Lovingston, Piney River, Faber, Gladstone, Rockfish, Wintergreen, and Montebello.

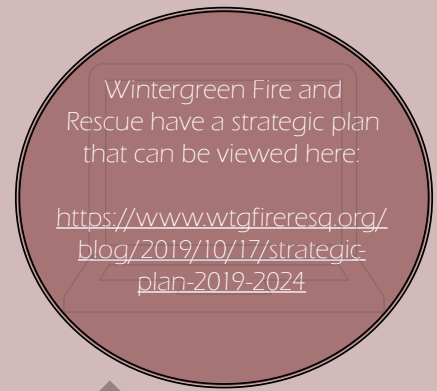
Nelson County staffs two full-time ambulances, based in Lovingston, for emergency medical services (EMS) across the entire County. In addition, there are four volunteer EMS agencies located in Gladstone, Rockfish, Roseland, and Wintergreen. With the exception of Wintergreen Rescue, volunteer staffing for EMS squads has been steadily declining, leading to longer and unequal response times for many areas throughout the County.

In addition to volunteers, Wintergreen Fire Department and Rescue Squad are supplemented with paid professional staff. Both companies respond to calls throughout Nelson County via mutual aid. This partnership has been invaluable and should continue to be supported. A master plan for Wintergreen Fire and EMS created in 2019 explores the status, needs, and goals for these entities up to the year 2024.

## Law Enforcement

Nelson County residents feel Nelson is a safe place to live and continued community safety is the top priority for the County's law enforcement. Nelson is served by an elected Sheriff and 21 appointed deputies responsible for jail operations, prisoner transportation, courthouse and courtroom security for local District and Circuit Courts, and civil process and mental hygiene warrants. They are given the statutory authority to enforce the laws and ordinances of Nelson County and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Sheriff's office is located within the County Courthouse in downtown Lovingston. Jail services are provided through regional cooperation with the Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail. The current Sheriff's office facilities support the Sheriff and deputies, but due to the shared space within the County Courthouse, additional space and expansion is needed. Storage space for records and evidence, safety barriers and visitor waiting areas, additional video surveillance equipment, fenced and gated parking areas, and upgraded training spaces that meet Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services standards are desired to further aid the Sheriff's office in its service to the County.



## Emergency Communications

*Responding to emergency 911 calls, and the subsequent dispatching of emergency service responders, is shared between the Nelson County dispatch center in Lovingston and the Wintergreen dispatch center in Wintergreen. While calls are handled well and in a timely manner, there has been some duplicity in dispatching between the two centers. Operations should be evaluated to help reduce redundancies. Operational improvements include adding additional fire and rescue channels as well as continuing to modernize and renovate dispatching methods with evolving technologies.*

Table 8.1 - Number of Crimes in Nelson County

Year	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Burglary	Larceny Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft
2019	26	166	27	123	16
2015	5	183	61	112	10
2010	10	218	55	141	22

Source: FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division



Table 8.2 - Fire & Rescue Facilities and Needs

Fire and Rescue Company	Station Location	Age and Needs
<b>Company 1 - Lovington</b>	53 Baker Ln, Lovington, VA 22949	Nearly 50 years old. This station only barely meets the needs of the company and requires significant expansion or improvement.
<b>Wingina/Norwood Station</b>	3639 James River Rd, Wingina, VA, 24599	Facility is adequate for the company's needs.
<b>Company 2 - Piney River</b>	249 Firehouse Rd, Piney River, VA 22964	Aged station. Well maintained and in great shape.
<b>Company 3 - Faber</b>	8207 Irish Rd, Faber, VA 22938	Two structures, one older and smaller and one newer and in excellent shape.
<b>Company 4 - Gladstone</b>	8786 Richmond Hwy, Gladstone, VA 24553	Two structures that provide ample space.
<b>Company 5 - Rockfish</b>	11100 Rockfish Valley Hwy, Afton, VA 22920	Newer station with suitable space and expansive grounds.
<b>Company 6 - Wintergreen</b>	2390 Wintergreen Dr, Roseland, VA 22967 487 Monocan Dr, Nellysford, VA 22958	Both the mountain station and Nellysford/Stoney Creek stations have been expanded twice and suit the current needs of the company.
<b>Company 7 - Montebello</b>	119 Fork Mountain Ln, Montebello, VA 24464	This station is of suitable size for the current company.
<b>Company 8 - Roseland Rescue Squad</b>	7745 Patrick Henry Hwy, Roseland, VA 22967	Renovated and expanded in the last decade. Provides ample space for the company.
<b>Company 9 - Nelson EMS</b>	8047 Thomas Nelson Hwy, Lovington, VA 22949	Recently renovated to provide living spaces to rescue personnel.

Currently, nearly all training needs for Nelson Fire and EMS agencies are being provided by Wintergreen Fire Department & Rescue Squad. A new state of the art, live fire, multi-story training facility has recently begun construction in Nellysford and will be available to all Nelson County agencies.

The County's fire and rescue facilities vary greatly in age, size, and complexity. Each facility has differing needs for upgrades and maintenance; these should be evaluated on an annual basis to prioritize urgency. Across all companies, standardized operational practices and expanded living spaces and amenities, such as bunks and kitchens, are identified needs. The County would also benefit from a master plan to prioritize facility, staffing, and equipment needs. With volunteerism declining nationwide, volunteer recruitment and retention should be an important consideration in the master plan.

*Roughly 35% of county residents are on public water supply.*

*As of 2022, NCSA has 2,951 water connections and 2,557 sewer connections.*



## **Improve Infrastructure to Support Sustainable Growth & Development**

### **Water and Sewer**

#### **Public Water and Sewer Utilities**

Nelson County Service Authority provides the County's water and wastewater services. Four water treatment and wastewater treatment plants serve the County, located in Lovingston, Schuyler, Wintergreen, and Gladstone. The Lovingston facilities also provide water and sewer access for Lovingston, Shipman, Colleen, and Piney River. While smaller than the other facilities, the Gladstone facility serves a significantly smaller number of customers.

The water treatment plants in Schuyler and Wintergreen are currently undergoing renovations with estimated completion by 2024. Water usage of the Lovingston facilities has begun to reach capacity and any further expansion of water access in the area will require additional expansion or renovation of the plant. Furthermore, the sewer lines in and around Lovingston are aged and require replacement. NCSA is actively pursuing funding to begin this project. Expanding capacity in Lovingston is important for the County's economic goals and will also help protect rural lands by directing growth to appropriate areas.

## Regional Water Supply

Nelson County is included in a regional water supply plan conducted for the Central Virginia Planning District Commission in 2009, revised in 2011, and proposed to be updated in 2023. The plan identified existing water sources, current water usage, and estimated future water demands. Based on outlined projections from the most recent iteration of the plan, Nelson County risks a water shortage by the year 2058 without the increase of additional water sources or the reduction in reliance upon groundwater. It is estimated that an additional 0.4 million gallons per day (mgd) will be required by 2060 to meet growing private water supply needs within the County.

The plan recommends increasing the Black Creek reservoir yield with withdrawals from Tye River during high water events. The plan also identifies alternative reservoir sites for short-term and long-term storage capacity based on the Rockfish Valley/Wintergreen Resort Water Source and Capacity Study (2007) and notes that future interconnection with Amherst County may also be explored. The County should work proactively with the service authority to identify its preferred solution, undertake additional environmental and feasibility studies, pursue easement or property acquisition, and develop necessary infrastructure to protect the water supply. An updated water supply plan or local comprehensive water and sewer master plan is also advisable to address current and future needs.

### Table 8.3 - Water & Wastewater Capacity

\*Capacity measured in Gallons Per Day (GDP)

Facility	Total Water Capacity	Average Daily Water Usage	Total Wastewater Capacity	Average Daily Wastewater Usage	Water Source
<b>Lovingston</b>	150,000	85,000	220,000	85,000	Groundwater (6 wells) Surface Water (Black Creek Reservoir, Nelson County Water Treatment Plant)
<b>Schuyler</b>	86,000	30,000	25,000	10,000	Surface Water (Johnson's Branch Reservoir)
<b>Wintergreen</b>	859,200	249,000	300,000	185,000	Groundwater (4 wells) Surface Water (Lake Monocan)
<b>Gladstone</b>	4,000	-	15,000	-	Collection Box Reservoir



## **Soild Waste and Recycling Collection Sites:**

1. *Faber Center (Staffed\*) – 366 Cove Valley Lane, Faber, VA 22938*
2. *Massies Mill Center (Staffed\*) – 921 Tan Yard Road, Roseland, VA 22967*
3. *Rockfish Center (Staffed\*) – 136 Rockfish School Lane, Afton, VA 22920*
4. *Shipman Center (Staffed\*) – 11535 James River Road, Shipman, VA 2971*
5. *Montebello Center (Unstaffed) – 1 Fish Hatchery Lane, Montebello, VA 24464*

## **Solid Waste Only Collection Sites:**

1. *Gladstone Center (Unstaffed) – 5607 Richmond Highway, Gladstone, VA 24553*
2. *Wintergarden Center (Unstaffed) – 3366 Wintergreen Drive, Roseland, VA 22935*

*\*Each staffed location features refuse sheds.*

## **Refuse and Recycling**

Solid waste disposal and recycling collection is an important County-provided service. Garbage and recyclables are collected at five different collection sites dispersed throughout the County. Two additional collection sites collect only garbage and do not handle recyclables.

Nelson County is a member of the Region 2000 Services Authority, which operates a regional landfill for solid waste disposal. From the collection sites, solid waste is transported to the transfer station in Arrington where it is collected, sorted, and stored before it is eventually transferred to the regional landfill in Rustburg, VA. This regional landfill is expected to reach its capacity sometime around the year 2029. Nelson County will need to work with its regional partners to determine how solid waste disposal will be handled past that year.

## **Electricity and Natural Gas**

Electricity is provided to Nelson County through three private electric entities: Appalachian Electric Power, Central Virginia Electric Coop, and Dominion Energy.

Natural gas is available through three oil and gas providers: Blue Ridge Oil, Foster Propane, and Tiger Fuel.

## **Telecommunications**

Nelson County recently partnered with Firefly Fiber Broadband to expand broadband availability throughout the County. The project will connect homes, businesses, and community centers plus create additional free Wi-Fi hotspots to help school children, remote workers, and the rest of the community access highspeed internet. When the project is complete in 2023, high-speed broadband connectivity will be available to almost all areas of the County.

Several areas of the County suffer from poor cellular service coverage due to difficulties imposed by the mountainous terrain. The County processes permit applications from cell service providers to install additional cellular towers in the County and update or renovate current ones as technologies evolve. Approximately 88% of the County is currently being served by 4G coverage, with the majority of poor or little coverage being located in the Montebello and Tyro areas of the County.

# Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability

## Education

Nelson County Public Schools include two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Rockfish River Elementary School is located in Afton and Tye River Elementary School is located along the Route 29 corridor, between Lovington and Colleen. Nelson Middle School and Nelson County High School are also located along the Route 29 corridor, just south of Lovington, in a combined building with shared facilities. In addition to these public schools, the County is home to a number of private pre-schools as well as North Branch School, a private, not-for-profit school offering pre-school through 8th grade, located in Afton.

Public school student enrollment has decreased steadily over the last decade and is expected to continue over the coming years. The schools continue to monitor student projections and will be evaluating division facilities, needs, and projected enrollment to make appropriate decisions to support the education of students to provide them with the skills and experiences they will need to be competitive when they conclude their K-12 schooling to successfully enter the next phase of their life—be it entering the workforce, joining the military or attending college. Short-term and long-term needs will be incorporated into the decision-making process.

School planning is facilitated through the County School Strategic Plan. The current strategic plan was created in 2017 and extended through to 2022. Work on a new strategic plan is expected to begin in 2023 and should outline specific projects for facility renovation or replacement. Long-term planning and maintenance of school facilities should be incorporated into a school facilities master plan that identifies improvements beyond the shorter two-year period of the strategic plan.

## Education Opportunities

Nelson County High School currently offers opportunities in career and technical education for its students. This helps prepare students for future careers in such fields as agriculture, ecology, automotive repair, business, health and medicine, and industrial trades. The Career and Technical Education wing of the high school should be evaluated for facility improvements to ensure that students experience the most modern technologies in their respective fields. Additional opportunities should also be explored to offer a wider variety of classes to students and better prepare them for careers and higher education opportunities. Partnerships with local community colleges, such as Blue Ridge Community College, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Central Virginia Community College, can help achieve this.

## School Enrollment

Student enrollment for all Nelson County Schools over the decades:

**2022-2023:** 1,480 Students

**2021-2022:** 1,583 Students

**2012-2013:** 1,993 Students

# Parks and Recreation

## Active Recreation

Providing indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities is a vital service Nelson County carries out to create a more livable community. Nelson County's Parks and Recreation Department provides recreation services for children, youth, and adults. The County actively partners with the public schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations to provide recreation programming and events throughout the County.

Based on community engagement, expanding parks and recreation opportunities should be a priority for the County. Community-identified needs include walking paths, aquatic facilities, parks, and playgrounds. Facilities should be geographically dispersed with accessible amenities such that residents of all ages and abilities can reap the physical, mental, and social benefits of recreational activity. Parks and recreation investments should be guided by a master plan, which the County has identified as a need. This plan should provide a detailed assessment of public needs and identify priorities and funding for expanded facilities and programs.

Table 8.4 - Parks and Recreation Facilities

Name	Type	Size	Ownership
<b>Lake Monocan</b>	Park		
<b>Montreal Park</b>	Park	13.59 Acres	
<b>Nelson County Wayside</b>	Park		
<b>Spruce Creek Park</b>	Park		
<b>Tye River Park</b>	Park		
<b>Ryan Field</b>	Sports Field	3.9 Acres	
<b>Nelson Middle/High School</b>	Sports Field		Nelson County
<b>Tye River Elementary</b>	Sports Field		Nelson County
<b>The Nelson Center</b>	Sports Field	1.9 Acres	Private
<b>Nelson Heritage Center</b>	Sports Field		Private
<b>Dixie Fields</b>	Sports Field	7.5 Acres	
<b>Rockfish Ruritan Park Fields</b>	Sports Field	2.25 Acres	
<b>Sturt Property</b>	Unimproved	344 Acres	Nelson County
<b>Larkin Property</b>	Unimproved	309 Acres	Nelson County

Table 8.5 - Paths and Trails Table

Name	Type	Size	Ownership
<b>Blue Ridge Tunnel</b>	Trail	2.25 Miles	
<b>Rockfish Valley Trails</b>	Trail		
<b>Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail</b>	Trail	6.7 Miles	



## Public Recreation Center

A public, centrally located recreation center was identified as a desire by the community. Such a center could provide indoor sporting facilities, exercise equipment, meeting spaces, and aquatic recreation for the community. With enough space, it could also provide additional centrally located outdoor recreation, such as sports facilities, playgrounds, or community gardens. Nelson County should explore the options available to provide the community with this service, including potential partnerships with the public schools and non-profit community centers.

Table 8.5 - Scenic River and Blueway Designations

River	Segment (within County border)	Scenic River Classification
Rockfish River	From South Fork Rockfish River to Salem Road	Potential
Rockfish River	From Salem Road to confluence with the James River	Designated
James River	Length of the southern County border	Qualified; also designated as a blueway
Tye River	From Tye River Road to confluence with the James River	Designated
Mechums River	From County border to Hollow Lane	Potential

## Outdoor Recreation

Nelson County is home to renowned outdoor recreation opportunities and is a well-known destination for these beautiful natural havens. Popular destinations include the Appalachian Trail, the Blue Ridge Parkway, George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, the James River, and Crabtree Falls, the tallest waterfall west of the Mississippi. These important natural recreation areas are part of what makes Nelson such a wonderful place to live and visit. Nelson County is committed to protecting and preserving them for future generations to enjoy.

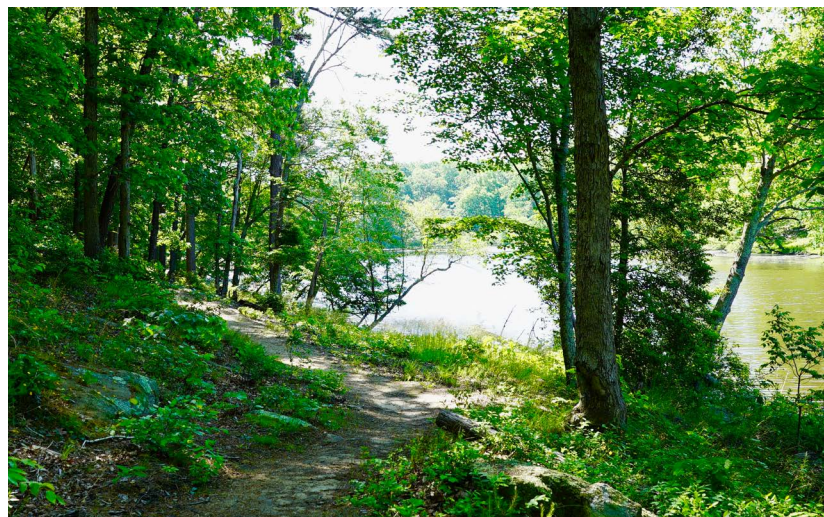
## Paths and Trails

While Nelson County has many hiking, walking, and bicycle trails, many of them are disconnected from one another and are difficult to access without a vehicle. The current stock of hiking and nature trails was also identified as being difficult to manage for the young, elderly, or disabled. Finding opportunities to create a more connected and accessible trail network should be a top priority for Nelson County. The TJPDC conducted a regional bike and pedestrian plan in 2019, which should be utilized to help the County expand trails and bikeways. Further discussion of pedestrian and bicycle trails is explored in Chapter Six of this Plan.

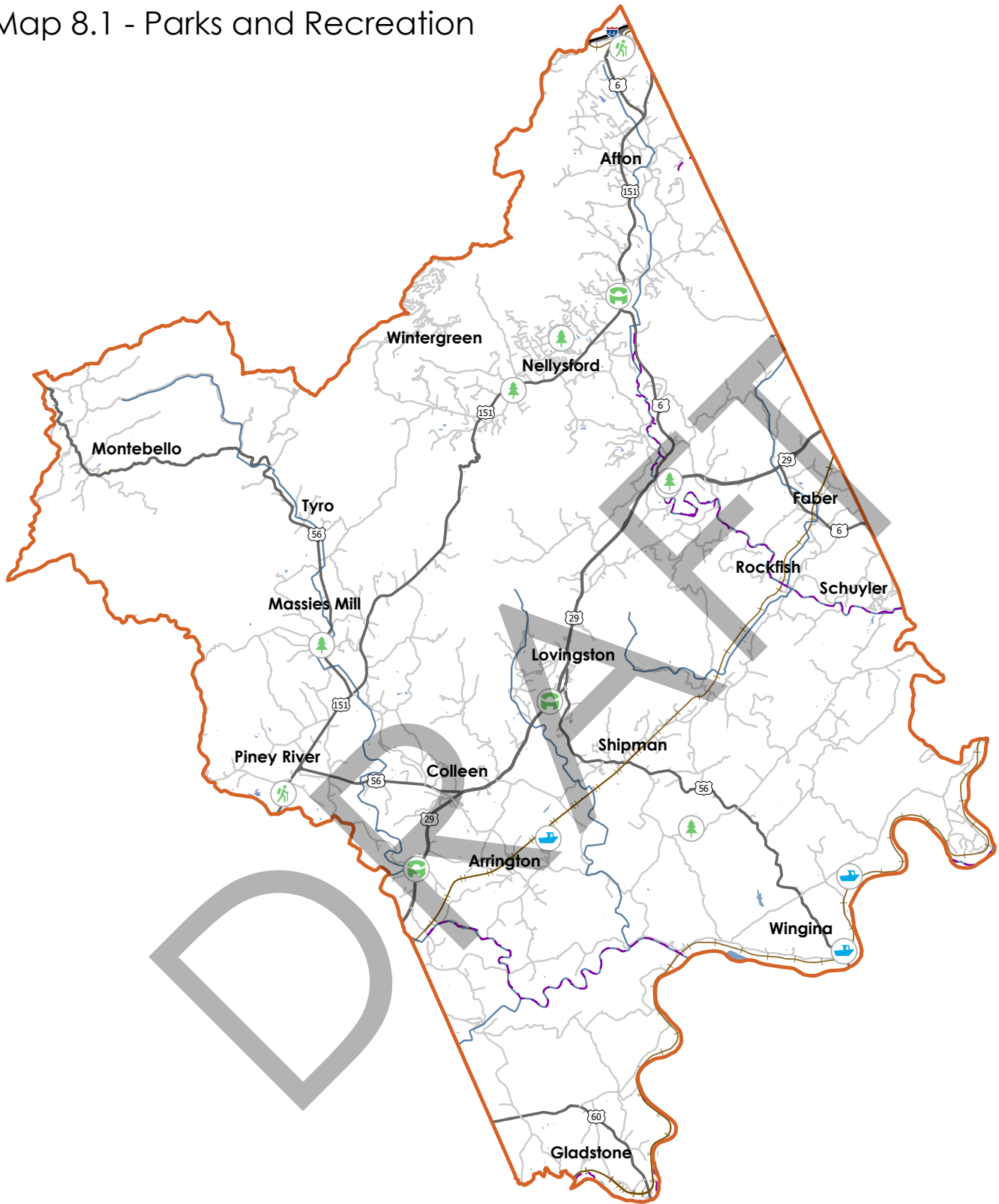
## Rivers & Waterways

Rivers and waterways in Nelson County are an excellent asset and hold many recreation possibilities for the community. These should be easily accessible for all, and the County should continue to work together with local organizations and landowners to facilitate additional water access points.










Five river segments are classified as Qualified, Potential, or Designated Scenic Rivers; the James River doubles as a designated blueway, or water trail (see Table 8.6).

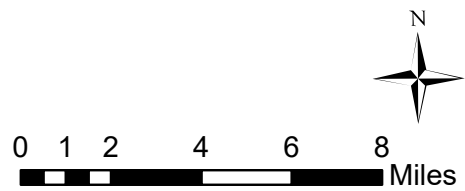


# Map 8.1 - Parks and Recreation



## Legend

-  Park
-  Sports Field
-  Trailhead
-  River Access
-  Interstate Highway
-  State Highway
-  County Roads
-  River
-  Railroad



# Community Centers

One of the most important aspects of Nelson County is its many vibrant communities. The pride and sense of community values is reflected in the seven privately-owned and funded community centers found throughout the County.

These community centers provide vitally important services, offering recreational, educational, and commercial opportunities as well as holding community events. Many of the services provided by these organizations are those that are not officially provided by the County but are still necessary to the community. Nelson County can support these organizations by providing resources, promotions, partnerships, and inter-organizational coordination.

Table 8.6 - Community Centers

Name	Location	Center Description
<a href="#"><u>Nelson Center</u></a>	8445 Thomas Nelson Highway Lovingston, VA 22949	Centrally located in the former Lovingston School along Route 29 in Lovingston, this facility contains community meeting spaces and offices for several organizations.
<a href="#"><u>Nelson Heritage Center</u></a>	1653 Thomas Nelson Highway Arrington, VA 22922	Located in the former Nelson Memorial High School along Route 29 just south of Colleen. Amenities include meeting spaces, a gymnasium, outdoor sports fields, a computer lab, and classroom spaces.
<a href="#"><u>Fleetwood Community Center</u></a>	1357 Crabtree Falls Highway Roseland, VA 22967	A non-profit organization located in the Massies Mill area. They strive to enhance the lives of their diverse community members through education and physical activities. The center is currently working to restore the historical Fleetwood School for use as a local education center, recreation facility, and tourism destination.
<a href="#"><u>Rockfish Valley Community Center</u></a>	190 Rockfish School Lane Afton, VA 22920	Located in Afton, this center offers commercial activities, events and event spaces, recreation, and educational activities to the surrounding area.
<a href="#"><u>Tuckahoe Clubhouse</u></a>	443 Monacan Drive Nellysford, VA 22958	Serves as the community center for the Wintergreen area, working as a party space, training facility, exercise room, meeting area, polling place, and much more.
<a href="#"><u>Walton's Mountain Museum</u></a>	6484 Rockfish River Road Schuyler, VA 22969	A privately owned museum that also serves as a community center and meeting space in Schuyler.
<a href="#"><u>Gladstone Senior &amp; Youth Center</u></a>	8786 Richmond Hwy ( RT 60 ) Gladstone, VA 24553	Serves as a community center for the Gladstone area.



## Libraries

Centrally located along Route 29 in Lovingston, the Nelson Memorial Library, a branch of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library system, provides many library services to the community. Renovations in 2020 expanded the available catalogue and space, as well as updated and modernized the building. The library offers several meeting spaces, computer and internet access, as well as community activities and events to help better serve the residents of Nelson County. Future plans include outreach services to better serve the residents of Rockfish Valley, Gladstone, Tyro, and Schuyler.

## Healthcare

Residents of Nelson County have access to some medical and dental services located within the County. For more specialized medical needs or emergency care, many Nelson residents must travel to hospitals or medical centers located in Augusta County, Charlottesville, or Lynchburg.

- **Blue Ridge Medical Center**, founded in 1985 in the Colleen area of Nelson County, offers primary care, pediatrics, dentistry, x-ray, lab, physical therapy, and behavioral health.
- **University of Virginia Family Medicine Stoney Creek** is located in Nellysford and offers primary care services for patients of all ages, with advanced specialization in women's health, pediatrics and geriatrics.
- **Sentara Afton Family Medicine** offers a range of medical services, including primary care, pediatrics and geriatrics, physical and mental health exams, lab work, gynecology, vaccinations, dermatology, minor surgery, referrals, and family counseling.
- **Region Ten's Nelson Counseling Center**, located in Lovingston, provides a variety of services to individuals of all ages who have mental health, substance use, or developmental disability concerns.

While these organizations provide important services to the people of Nelson County, there is a need for more emergency and urgent care services to help ease the burden on citizens that must travel great distances for these services. Promoting and encouraging additional medical service options, including increased access with mobile clinics and transportation services, should be a priority for the County.

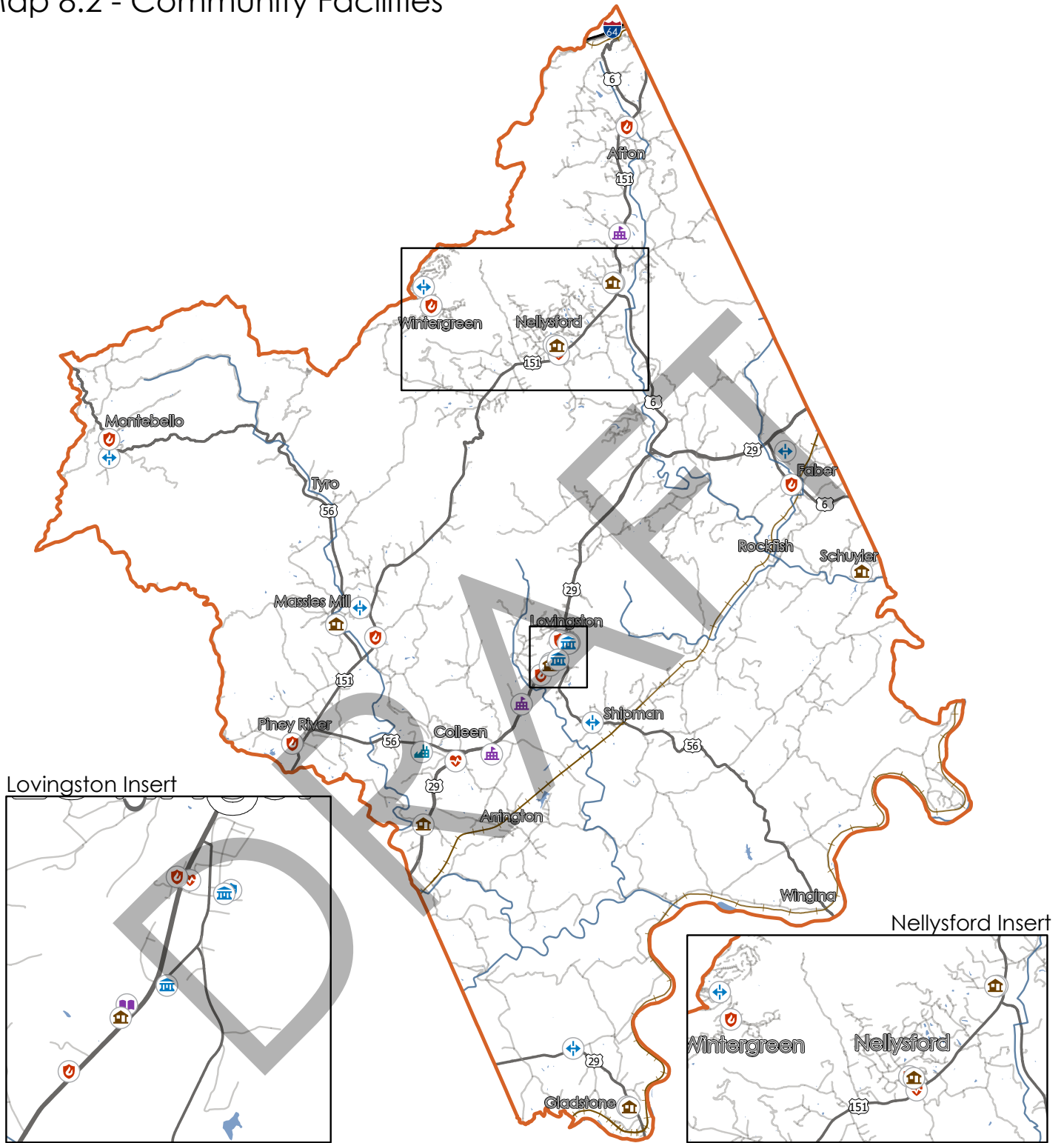
## Substance Abuse

*Nelson County is fortunate to have a lower-than-average rate of drug overdoses and opioid prescriptions per person than seen elsewhere in the Commonwealth. The drug overdose rate in Nelson County in 2018 was 33.1, while Louisa County saw a rate of 65.0 and Charlottesville/Albemarle a rate of 69.1. Similarly, Nelson County saw an opioid prescriber rate of 17.9, the lowest in the Thomas Jefferson Health District Commission.*

*However, Nelson also had the highest suicide rate among TJHDC localities as measured in 2017, reaching 26.8 suicides per 100,000. The violent crime and drug arrest rates rose markedly between 2007 and 2018, from 53.2 per 100,000 to 160.6 per 100,000; and 61 per 100,000 and 75 per 100,000, respectively. Although Nelson has seen relatively low rates of drug overdoses and opioid prescriptions in recent years, the violent crime and drug arrest rates increased significantly between 2007 and 2018. Additionally, the opioid prescription rate may not capture all opioid use due to discrepancies in rural access to prescription locations. Methamphetamine has also proven to be a more serious problem in Nelson County, though overdose rates for this substance are also low in Nelson County.*

*Encouraging as it may be to see relatively low rates of drug abuse by certain metrics, Nelson County would benefit from additional monitoring and education around substance abuse.*

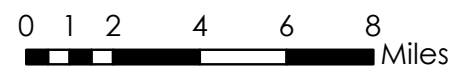
# Map 8.2 - Community Facilities



## Legend

### Community Facility

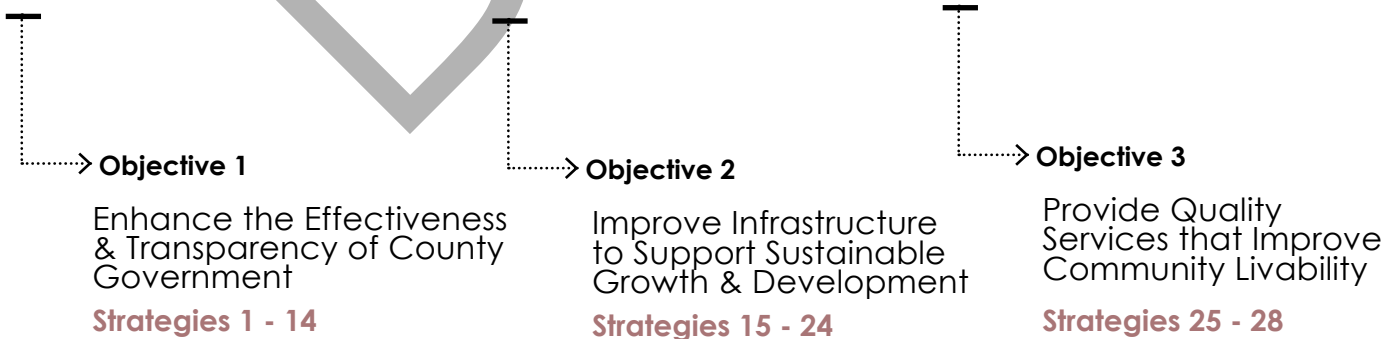
- |  |                       |  |                      |  |                    |
|--|-----------------------|--|----------------------|--|--------------------|
|  | Administration        |  | Library              |  | Interstate Highway |
|  | Community Center      |  | School               |  | State Highway      |
|  | Fire & Rescue Station |  | Solid Waste Disposal |  | County Roads       |
|  | Healthcare            |  | Water & Sewer        |  | River              |
|  | Law Enforcement       |  |                      |  | Railroad           |





## How We Move Forward | Strategies

Nelson County offers superior community services and facilities that serve all segments of the community, support economic development, and ensure community health and safety.





# Enhance the Effectiveness & Transparency of County Government

- 1** Expand and improve external government communications to increase transparency and public participation across all demographics.
- 2** Enhance interdepartmental communication across County government as well as between the various public boards.
- 3** Create a comprehensive facility inventory, maintenance schedule, and level of service standards to protect existing investments and ensure sound planning and budgeting for facility improvements.
- 4** Ensure that the County is using up-to-date information technology and cybersecurity practices.
- 5** Construct a new, centrally located facility to house additional administrative offices.
- 6** Construct additional Sheriff facilities to allow for additional training and storage spaces.
- 7** Renovate and modernize current Sheriff facilities to meet required security standards.
- 8** Identify possible mental health emergency service providers to support the community and reduce these burdens from the Sheriff's office. Consider that drug use is a facet of public safety, and pursue greater public education on this matter.
- 9** Create a County-wide fire and emergency medical services (EMS) strategic plan that can be regularly updated and maintained to address response time, facility, and staffing needs.
- 10** Expand fire and EMS facilities to include additional living spaces such as bunks, kitchenettes, and recreation areas.
- 11** Ensure that the Emergency 911 operations center is fully supported, with paid staff and most up to date technological capabilities, to continue to respond to community needs as quickly as possible in the face of an aging population.
- 12** Continually monitor public safety staffing needs, expanding as needed to maintain public safety as the County experiences additional residential and commercial growth.
- 13** Pursue stronger community outreach and training on disaster readiness and resilience.
- 14** Seek out stronger partnerships with community-based organizations to educate the public and collect more data on substance abuse in the population.

## Improve Infrastructure to Support Sustainable Growth & Development

- 15** Continue to work with regional partners to upgrade and develop necessary infrastructure to meet the County's long-term water supply demand.
- 16** Utilize results of the updated CVPDC water supply plan.
- 17** Continue to work with the regional authority to create a water and sewer master plan to identify current system needs and target long-term strategies to maintain and expand service areas.
- 18** Promote water conservation practices to reduce water use and conserve the water supply.
- 19** Work with regional partners to evaluate the needs of the County's solid waste and recycling disposal as the regional landfill nears capacity.
- 20** Support waste management and recycling planning through rational, cost-effective, and environmentally-safe approaches.
- 21** Assist in educating the community on recycling and waste reduction efforts.
- 22** Continue the County's partnership with Firefly Fiber Broadband to expand broadband services to all areas of the County.
- 23** Promote the broadband expansion project with additional public outreach so that residents remain up-to-date on deployment and availability of services.
- 24** Support expansion of cellular service quality and availability through cooperation with cellular providers. Evaluate the need for planning and zoning changes to improve service.

## Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability

- 25** Support the creation of an up-to-date Nelson County Public School's Master Plan that identifies and plans for critical needs of school facilities.
- 26** Continue to monitor student enrollment to ascertain short-term and long-term needs of students.
- 27** Support educational programs through County schools, community centers, community organizations, and regional community colleges to help prepare the community workforce for employment.
- 28** Develop a strategy for greater investment in personnel, facilities, and/or public-private partnership as needed to expand access to after-school childcare programs.

- 29** Create a Parks and Recreation master plan that identifies gaps in equitable services and opportunities to expand recreation across the community.
- 30** Investigate and pursue options to create a centralized County-owned recreational facility to offer athletic fields, aquatic recreation, and exercise opportunities to the community.
- 31** Continue partnerships with local organizations, such as community centers, to provide recreation opportunities across the community.
- 32** Create additional family-friendly parks and amenities throughout the County to provide alternative recreational areas for residents.
- 33** Partner with local and regional organizations, as well as private landowners, to increase access to natural areas and riverways.
- 34** Create a joint public-private partnership with Nelson County's community centers to facilitate coordination between different organizations, increase programming, and connect residents with their services.
- 35** Promote the use of school buildings, community centers, long-term care facilities, and multi-use facilities for citizens year-round.
- 36** Continue to work with the County library to ensure that it meets the needs of the community.
- 37** Encourage emergency, long-term care, and urgent medical care land uses in appropriate areas of the County.
- 38** Work with Virginia Department of Health, and other regional partners, to identify community health needs and increase the availability of healthcare services.
- 39** Continue to work with Jaunt and other regional transportation providers to expand transportation access to better connect residents to medical care.
- 40** Pursue public-private partnerships to expand access to and capacity for social service networks.



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# CHAPTER 3

## Shaping Community Character

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Protect Rural Character & the Environment	3.1	Review and update alternative energy standards to ensure the adopted standards protect rural character and the interests of the community.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.2	Consider the use of alternative energy on private development through special programs, such as the Code of Virginia permitted solar tax exemption for residential and commercial small-scale solar installations.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	3.3	Reduce or exempt permit fees for residential solar installations.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.4	Encourage the use of energy-efficient lighting and investigate outdoor light standards to reduce the impacts of over-lighting, glare, and light pollution.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organizations		
	3.5	Explore changes to zoning and development provisions to reduce parking requirements and encourage permeable paving and other materials that promote infiltration of stormwater.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.6	Revise landscaping regulations to require the placement of shade trees in parking lots and use of native plants in all commercial and institutional landscaping.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.7	Identify opportunities to connect neighborhoods and development through sidewalks, shared use paths,	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Protect Rural Character & the Environment		and trails and require such connections in new development or redevelopment proposals.				
	3.8	Encourage revitalization, repurposing, and rehabilitation of existing structures by promoting available resources, such as grants and tax credits, and pursuing funding to support such efforts.	Community Outreach and Education; Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	3.9	Encourage Low Impact Development practices and alternative wastewater systems in environmentally sensitive areas to ensure the preservation of water quality in the County.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.10	Continue to encourage and administer cluster subdivision regulations and incentivize their use in rural areas of the County to preserve open space and reduce the impact of development. Regularly evaluate and modify cluster subdivision regulations as need to ensure they are effective and meet County standards.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
Create a Coordinated Framework for Growth	3.11	Conduct a review of zoning and land development codes and ordinances on a yearly basis to ensure compatibility with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of this Plan.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.12	Evaluate land use applications for rezonings and special use permits against the criteria contained within this Plan.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.13	Update land use regulations to provide clear and simplified requirements that promote economic development, enable creative housing choices, and protect sensitive resources.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Create a Coordinated Framework for Growth</i>	3.14	Review the zoning ordinance, and amend it as necessary, to allow for a wider mix of use types, including accessory dwellings and mixed-use buildings.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.15	Encourage new development in designated growth areas so that existing infrastructure can be more efficiently used, and rural lands will be protected from development.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.16	Ensure that new development complements and enhances its surroundings through proper land use, design, landscaping, and transitional buffers.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	3.17	Ensure that a natural transition is maintained between the Land Use Elements through careful development review.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		

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# CHAPTER 4

## Connecting People and Places

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<b>Maintain &amp; Improve the Existing Road Network</b>	4.1	Continue to work with VDOT to develop, design, and implement transportation projects, including, but not limited to, SMART SCALE, Highway Safety, Bike Pedestrian Safety, and Transportation Alternatives projects.	Partnerships	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	4.2	Conduct traffic safety and speed studies throughout the County, as necessary, based on an analysis of existing traffic volume and crash statistics. Work with VDOT to address priority traffic safety issues, such as a reduction of speed limits.	Plans and Studies; Partnerships	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	4.3	Target safety improvements at high-crash intersections and roadway corridors.	Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	4.4	Partner with VDOT and TJPDC to prioritize improvements to bridges and culverts with poor ratings.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; State and Federal Agencies		
	4.5	Continue to work with VDOT and other regional partners to provide essential maintenance and expansion of vital transportation systems throughout the County.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; State and Federal Agencies		
	4.6	Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions, state, and regional agencies in planning and achieving an efficient and cost-effective transportation network.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Invest in Alternative Transportation</i>	4.7	Identify areas to construct or expand natural trails and sidewalks for pedestrian traffic.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	4.8	Explore opportunities to widen County roadways and introduce bicycle lanes to facilitate safe bicycle travel.	Plans and Studies; Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	4.9	Support regional partners in their efforts to link the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail to regional destinations through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	4.10	Support an expanded greenway trail network and ensure that the trail network connects to key public destinations such as parks, libraries, schools, and community centers, as well as to private developments and other trail systems, including regional trail networks.	Partnerships; Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partner		
	4.11	Install EV charging stations at County-owned properties such as administrative offices, schools, and libraries.	Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	4.12	Evaluate the feasibility of installing solar panels above County-owned parking lots to provide both covered parking and clean energy infrastructure.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	4.13	Work with community organizations to help facilitate the installation of EV charging stations in the County.	Partnerships	Nelson County		
	4.14	Encouraging ridesharing, car/vanpooling, and other means of shared vehicle use.	Partnerships; Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Invest in Alternative Transportation</i>	4.15	Explore opportunities to create additional commuter parking lots in other areas of the County, such as along U.S. Route 29 near Colleen or Lovingston.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	4.16	Continue partnership with JAUNT to monitor existing service and identify needs and gaps in the public transportation network for potential future service.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	4.17	Explore the feasibility of creating additional public transportation services in Nelson County, such as local or regional shuttle services.	Plans and Studies; Programs and Services	Nelson County		
<i>Coordinate Land Use &amp; Transportation</i>	4.18	Facilitate the study of potential village and urban areas for designations and Urban Development Areas.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	4.19	Facilitate the creation of area plans that identify the transportation improvements in County towns and villages, such as Lovingston and Nellysford.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		

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# CHAPTER 5

## Creating Livable Communities

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Protect and Improve the Existing Housing Stock</i>	5.1	Create a specific definition of short-term rentals. Maintain an inventory of all short-term rentals in order to track and better understand costs and benefits. Create regulations for short-term rentals as necessary through zoning ordinances and other tools that maintain a significant stock of single-family homes and long-term rentals.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.2	Consider allowing accessory dwelling units by right through zoning changes that can allow affordable rental options that benefit renters and homeowners.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.3	Promote grant programs, provide incentives and partner with Nelson County Community Development Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, and other local organizations and businesses that facilitate investments in maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing—as well as TJPDC septic and SERCAP—and create a vehicle for enforcement of the zoning ordinance.	Partnerships; Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
<i>Expanding Housing Opportunities</i>	5.4	Create ordinances that offer a mixture of housing types and sizes integrated within the development area, including affordable and senior housing.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.5	Expand the types of allowable housing in appropriate areas to accommodate multi-family housing unity, such as	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Expanding Housing Opportunities		townhouses, condominiums, and duplexes.				
	5.6	Evaluate current zoning district densities and adjust them to allow for additional housing in appropriate areas.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.7	Work with developers, non-profit agencies, and community groups to preserve and increase the supply of obtainable housing.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organizations; Local Business Partners		
	5.8	Explore county investment in a community land trust that can create more affordable housing options.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	5.9	Review and implement related strategies offered in regional housing study Planning for Affordability: A Regional Approach by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
Support Livable Communities	5.10	Target housing near the County's existing growth areas where public utilities are available with a range of housing types and densities.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	5.11	Consider development impacts on public water and sewer systems when reviewing residential rezoning and special use permits.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.12	Consider adding density bonuses and incentives to encourage affordable and senior housing options in denser developments.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.13	Explore opportunities to implements cluster subdivision provisions within the Subdivision Ordinance.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	5.14	Protect and connect to the surrounding environment by encouraging cluster developments and green infrastructure principles for new developments.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Support Livable Communities</i>	5.15	Consider conducting a neighborhood study for the village of Lovington to identify community-based preservation, revitalization, and neighborhood improvement strategies. Pursue grant funding, as appropriate, to implement study recommendations.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies; Regional and Institutional Partners		

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# CHAPTER 6

## PROTECTING NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Protect the Natural Environment Habitats &amp; Ecosystems</i>	6.1	Limit development on steep slopes to maintain balance between slope, soils, geology, and vegetation. Where disturbance is unavoidable, enforce erosion and sediment control measures to prevent unnecessary degradation.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	6.2	Avoid the use of septic systems on steep slopes and unsuitable soils.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	6.3	Direct development and infrastructure away from ecological cores, migration corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas.	Partnerships	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies; Local Business Partners		
	6.4	Implement green infrastructure principles to preserve and connect natural habitats to support native species and wildlife.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Local Business Partners		
	6.5	Support the use of low impact development and stormwater best management practices to reduce nonpoint source pollution in local waterways.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	6.6	Encourage landowners to work with local organizations, such as TJSWCD, for cost-share opportunities to install LID and BMPs catered to agricultural, residential, and commercial sites.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	6.7	Support efforts to identify and cap or remove abandoned wells and septic tanks to prevent contamination of the	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners;		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Protect the Natural Environment Habitats & Ecosystems		groundwater supply, and continue providing information on VDH's Septic and Well Assistance Program.		Nonprofit Organizations		
	6.8	Continue to work with regional partners on updates to the Regional Water Supply Plan and implement solutions and sustain the future water supply.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	6.9	Encourage water conservation measures as outlined in the Regional Water Supply Plan.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	6.10	Condition approval of operations utilizing underground storage tanks (USTs) on assurances guaranteeing proper closure or removal of unused USTs and remediation of impacted soils.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	6.11	Support scenic river and blueway designations for local waterways.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies; Nonprofit Organizations		
	6.12	To protect air quality and reduce vehicle emissions, maintain vegetation along major roadways, support public transit, and promote recycling, and composting, and the reduction of food waste through public education, signage, and outreach.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	6.13	Explore opportunities for an incentive program to utilize existing recycling and compost facilities. Focus on education and outreach. Continue to support and make better use of the Reuse shed.	Community Outreach and Education; Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	6.14	Carefully consider noise-intensive uses near residential or rural properties, and require noise migration such as perimeter buffers and sound barriers.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	6.15	Adopt an outdoor lighting ordinance with design and performance	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Protect the Natural Environment Habitats &amp; Ecosystems</i>		standards that increase safety and protect dark skies, consistent with International Dark Sky Association recommendations.				
	6.16	Direct development away from prime agricultural soils and suitable agricultural lands identified on the Virginia Agricultural Model.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	6.17	Protect agricultural and forested landscapes from development through tools such as conservation easements, agricultural and forestall districts, use-value assessments, and purchase of development rights program.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement; Programs and Services	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organization		
<i>Preserve Rural Character &amp; Heritage</i>	6.18	Maintain use-value taxation criteria and qualifications in the best interest of the County and landowners to ensure long-term viability of agricultural, horticultural, and forestall operations.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	6.19	Continue to utilize the Virginia Department of Forestry's Forest Sustainability Fund to offset reduced tax revenue due to forestland use taxation.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	6.20	Discourage ridgeline development to protect scenic viewsheds.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	6.21	Encourage assessment of unlisted historic sites for inclusion on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or National Register of Historic Places.	Community Outreach and Education; Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies; Nonprofit Organizations		
	6.22	Work with local partners such as the Nelson County Historical Society to identify, protect, and celebrate historic and culturally significant properties.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Preserve Rural Character & Heritage	6.23	Pursue identification, recognition, and protection of historic areas representing Nelson County's diverse culture, including Native American and African American sites.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	6.24	Encourage architectural compatibility of new development, including infill development, where significant historic resources exist.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	6.25	Continue to work with regional partners to update and implement the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	6.26	Continue improving flood resiliency by updating the Floodplain District Ordinance as needed to reflect new flood maps and best practices, and participating in FEMA's Community Rating System.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
Plan for Resiliency & Sustainability	6.27	Continue working toward the stated goal of becoming a SolSmart-designated community.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	6.28	Encourage and incentivize green building certifications, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources for new developments and existing development retrofits.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	6.29	Consider amendments to existing ordinances to encourage installation of solar panels on existing impervious surfaces, such as rooftops and parking lots.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Plan for Resiliency & Sustainability	6.30	Strengthen performance standards for ground-mounted solar energy systems to protect existing landscapes, such as limiting clear-cutting on undeveloped parcels, specifying minimum vegetation requirements, and increasing perimeter buffer widths.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	6.31	Assess County-owned buildings to identify opportunities for improving energy efficiency using the EPA's resources for Energy Efficiency in Government Operations and Facilities, or a similar program.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		

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# CHAPTER 7

## Creating a Resilient Economy

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Support &amp; Cultivate Today's Workforce</i>	7.1	Prepare for the needs of the next generation of workers by supporting both traditional higher education and vocational education opportunities.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	7.2	Support Nelson County Public Schools and regional partners in coordinating and enhancing workforce training programs, sponsorships, incentives, and financial support opportunities to promote student's enrollment in such programs.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.3	Support dual enrollment programs for high school students that contribute to college- or vocational-level programs.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.4	Work with the Virginia Community College system to consider and advocate for a local branch in Nelson County, including collaboration between one or more existing colleges for a satellite branch.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.5	Support private and public investments in the County's service economy to provide long-term economic and community growth and stability.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
<i>Diversify &amp; Improve</i>	7.6	Continue to support the tourism industry while being mindful of over-tourism; diversify tourism assets across the	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Local Industry		County to distribute traffic and prevent negative impacts to local quality of life.				
	7.7	Review the DRIVE 2.0 initiative and consider pursuing DRIVE Outdoor grant funding to implement recommendations of the related DRIVE 2.0 strategic and regional plans to increase tourism.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	7.8	Support expansion and diversification in the agricultural and forestry industries while maintaining and encouraging environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	7.9	Expand water access, trails, and bike infrastructure to promote outdoor recreation to encourage connection with the outdoors, encourage healthy recreation activities and enhance transportation options.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.10	Support organizations and initiatives that provide agricultural assistance, community education, marketing strategies, information on agricultural support businesses, and information about alternative agricultural uses.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	7.11	Assess local permitting, licensing, and fees for agricultural producers and streamline processes where practical to remove unnecessary procedural barriers.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	7.12	Support multiple revenue streams for farmers by reviewing and amending ordinances to better allow farmers to host complementary agritourism uses on agricultural properties.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	7.13	Proactively market Colleen Business Park for industrial development.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
Bolster & Promote	7.14	Explore opportunities to establish a Tourism Improvement District, ABC-	Programs and Services	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
Economic Growth		designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas, a Tax-Incremented Finance District, and/or Technology Zones to increase business investment in targeted areas.				
	7.15	Continue to extend high-speed internet and cellular service throughout the County with bandwidth capable of serving businesses and maintaining viability during technological advances.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.16	Review and modify the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, for regulations regarding special event venues and temporary events in the County.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	7.17	Continue to support placemaking and wayfinding in the village areas, grant opportunities for village branding and identify, and establish village mixed use to incentivize infill and development.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	7.18	Create and enforce an ordinance governing temporary events to protect Nelson's rural character.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		
	7.19	Support regional economic development partners that provide local business support services.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Local Business Partners		
	7.20	Work with TJPDC to implement recommendations from the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners;		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
				Local Business Partners		

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# CHAPTER 8

## SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Enhance the Effectiveness &amp; Transparency of County Government County Administrative Facilities</i>	8.1	Expand and improve external government communications to increase transparency and public participation across all demographics.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.2	Enhance interdepartmental communication across County government as well as between the various public boards.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.3	Create a comprehensive facility inventory, maintenance schedule, and level of service standards to protect existing investments and ensure sound planning and budgeting for facility improvements.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.4	Ensure that the County is using up-to-date information technology and cybersecurity practices.	Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	8.5	Construct a new, centrally located facility to house additional administrative offices.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	8.6	Construct additional Sheriff facilities to allow for additional training and storage spaces.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	8.7	Renovate and modernize current Sheriff facilities to meet security standards.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	8.8	Identify possible mental health emergency service providers to support the community and reduce	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Enhance the Effectiveness &amp; Transparency of County Government County Administrative Facilities</i>		these burdens from the Sheriff's office. Consider that drug use is a facet of public safety, and pursue greater public education on this matter.				
	8.9	Create a County-wide fire and emergency medical services (EMS) strategic plan that can be regularly updated and maintained to address response time, facility, and staffing needs.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.10	Expand fire and EMS facilities to include additional living spaces such as bunks, kitchenettes, and recreation areas.	Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	8.11	Ensure that the Emergency 911 operations center is fully supported, with paid staff and most up-to-date technological capabilities, to continue to respond to community needs as quickly as possible in the face of an aging population.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	8.12	Continually monitor public safety staffing needs, expanding as needed to maintain public safety as the County experiences additional residential and commercial growth.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	8.13	Pursue stronger community outreach and training on disaster readiness and resilience.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.14	Seek out stronger partnerships with community-based organizations to educate the public and collect more data on substance abuse in the population.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organization		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Improve Infrastructure to Support Sustainable Growth &amp; Development Refuse &amp; Recycling Telecommunications</i>	8.15	Continue to work with regional partners to upgrade and develop necessary infrastructure to meet the County's long-term water supply demand.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.16	Utilize results of the updated CVPDC water supply plan.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	8.17	Continue to work with the regional authority to create a water and sewer master plan to identify current system needs and target long-term strategies to maintain and expand service areas.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.18	Promote water conservation practices to reduce water use and conserve the water supply.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County; Local Business Partners		
	8.19	Work with regional partners to evaluate the needs of the County's solid waste and recycling disposal as the regional landfill nears capacity.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.20	Support waste management and recycling planning through rational, cost-effective, and environmentally-safe approaches.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	8.21	Assist in educating the community on recycling and waste reduction efforts.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.22	Continue the County's partnership with Firefly Fiber Broadband to expand broadband services to all areas of the County.	Partnership	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Local Business Partners		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Improve Infrastructure to Support Sustainable Growth &amp; Development Refuse &amp; Recycling Telecommunications</i>	8.23	Promote the broadband expansion project with additional public outreach so that residents remain up to date on deployment and availability of services.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.24	Support expansion of cellular service quality and availability through cooperation with cellular providers. Evaluate the need for planning and zoning changes to improve service.	Programs and Services Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County Regional and Institutional Partners; Local Business Partners		
<i>Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability Parks &amp; Recreation Community Centers Libraries Healthcare</i>	8.25	Support the creation of an up-to-date Nelson County Public School's Master Plan that identifies and plans for critical needs of school facilities.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County		
	8.26	Continue to monitor student enrollment to ascertain short-term and long-term needs of students.	Programs and Services	Nelson County		
	8.27	Support educational programs through County schools, community centers, community organizations, and regional community colleges to help prepare the community workforce for employment.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		
	8.28	Develop a strategy for greater investment in personnel, facilities, and/or public-private partnership as needed to expand access to after-school childcare programs.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.29	Create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that identifies gaps in equitable services and opportunities to expand recreation across the community.	Plans and Studies	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		



Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability Parks &amp; Recreation Community Centers Libraries Healthcare</i>	8.30	Investigate and pursue options to create a centralized County-owned recreational facility to offer athletic fields, aquatic recreation, and exercise opportunities to the community.	Capital Projects	Nelson County; State and Federal Agencies		
	8.31	Continue partnerships with local organizations, such as community centers, to provide recreation opportunities across the community.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organizations		
	8.32	Create additional family-friendly parks and amenities throughout the County to provide alternative recreational areas for residents.	Capital Projects	Nelson County		
	8.33	Partner with local and regional organizations, as well as private landowners, to increase access to natural areas and riverways.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organizations		
	8.34	Create a joint public-private partnership with Nelson County's community centers to facilitate coordination between different organizations, increase programming, and connect residents with their services.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Nonprofit Organizations		
	8.35	Promote the use of school buildings, community centers, long-term care facilities, and multi-use facilities for citizens year-round.	Community Outreach and Education	Nelson County		
	8.36	Continue to work with the County library to ensure that it meets the needs of the community.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.37	Encourage emergency, long-term care, and urgent medical care land uses in appropriate areas of the County.	Regulation Updates and Enforcement	Nelson County		

Focus Areas	Strategy Number	Implementation Strategy	Implementation Type	Responsible Party	Priority	Resources
<i>Provide Quality Services that Improve Community Livability Parks &amp; Recreation Community Centers Libraries Healthcare</i>	8.38	Work with Virginia Department of Health, and other regional partners, to identify community health needs and increase the availability of healthcare services.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners; Local Business Partners		
	8.39	Continue to work with Jaunt and other regional transportation providers to expand transportation access to better connect residents to medical care.	Programs and Services	Nelson County; Regional and Institutional Partners		
	8.40	Pursue public-private partnerships to expand access to and capacity for social service networks.	Partnerships	Nelson County; Local Business Partners; Nonprofit Organizations		

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