

The Town of

# Capon Bridge

## Comprehensive Plan



***DRAFT***

***Adopted 2023***

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# **CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION**



## Acknowledgments

Developing a comprehensive plan is a communitywide process that involves many people, organizations, and groups. Business owners, nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, school officials, and residents are encouraged to take part in the development of the comprehensive plan.

By law, the planning commission is tasked with preparing the comprehensive plan, while the town council is tasked with adopting the comprehensive plan. However, other groups are encouraged to participate early, often, and throughout the comprehensive plan process.



The planning commission is made up of volunteer citizens, appointed by the town council to serve in an advisory role. The Capon Bridge Planning Commission has met numerous times over the past three years to gather information, analyze data, obtain input,

and develop a comprehensive plan draft for the community.

## Town of Capon Bridge Planning Commission (as of October 5, 2023)

- Ciro Grassi, President
- Laura Turner
- Dorinda Strother

The planning commission has held an open house, solicited stakeholder surveys, and created an online survey for widespread distribution. Based on the responses and their own analysis, the planning commission was able to prepare a draft comprehensive plan that meets all the requirements under Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code.

Town council decides whether to adopt the comprehensive plan. As elected officials, they, along with the planning commission, spearhead implementing the recommendations found in the comprehensive plan.

## Town of Capon Bridge Town Council (as of October 5, 2023)

- Laura Turner, Mayor
- Christopher Turner
- David McMaster
- Dorinda Strother
- Robert Toothman
- Michelle Warnick

Town staff has been vital in helping develop the comprehensive plan. Staff

members have provided information, made sure the building is open for meetings, and will be involved in helping implement various parts of the comprehensive plan.

In 2020, the town requested the assistance of the Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at the WVU College of Law. The Land Use Clinic has been assisting communities with comprehensive plans, land use ordinances, and other legal and planning related services throughout the state for more than a decade. The primary role of the Land Use Clinic with this project is to assist the town with the development of a comprehensive plan draft and to ensure that all steps are consistent with the state code and with the desires of the community.

## **How did the comprehensive plan process begin....**

Elected officials identified the need for a comprehensive plan in Capon Bridge. Some communities need a comprehensive plan to enforce land use tools such as zoning and subdivision regulations. Other communities want to develop a comprehensive plan in response to a specific issue. A comprehensive plan will not only provide clearer guidance on how to proceed, but the plan can show potential grant funders that the community is prepared to address particular issues.

Capon Bridge officials were initially interested in addressing dilapidated structures and were looking at options for code enforcement. The development of a comprehensive plan is an ideal process to determine the needs and to develop specific recommendations related to addressing dilapidated structures.

However, town officials also understood that the creation of a comprehensive plan could assist current and future town officials with key decisions on many other aspects of community life, as it should provide clear guidance on what should be prioritized. While the COVID pandemic slowed down progress of the comprehensive plan process, the planning commission was able to move forward and develop a plan that reflects the goals and objectives of the town over the next 10-15 years.

## **The comprehensive plan is best described as....**

A guidance document that is used by the community to make informed, vetted, and prioritized decisions. The comprehensive plan is defined by the state as “a plan for physical development, including land use, adopted by a governing body, setting forth guidelines, goals and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body's jurisdiction.” (W. Va Code 8A-1-2 (c)).

As the name implies, the comprehensive plan takes a holistic approach to planning. Housing, land use, economic development, historic preservation, transportation, infrastructure, public services, and education are all addressed by a community through their comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive plan is a “living document” meaning the plan should continually be utilized, critiqued, and updated as the conditions of the community change and as recommendations are completed. Comprehensive plans should be developed so that elected officials and staff members consult and utilize the plan in day-to-day decision making. The plan is only as good as its recommendations. Therefore, significant effort was taken by the Capon Bridge Planning Commission to ensure that the goals, objectives, and action steps are reasonable, achievable, and can move the town forward in achieving its vision for the future.

### **The utility of a comprehensive plan includes....**

Outlining a path for future growth and development of Capon Bridge. Another advantage of a comprehensive plan is identifying recommendations to address the needs of the community. Not only

does a comprehensive plan outline the recommendations of the town, but the community will prioritize and identify funding sources to complete various recommendations as part of the comprehensive plan process.

### **How were citizens involved in the comprehensive plan process....**

Citizens and business owners were afforded multiple opportunities to participate in the comprehensive plan process. All planning commission meetings were properly noticed and open to the public. The planning commission developed several individualized stakeholder surveys for various organizations, groups, and entities that are part of the Capon Bridge community. Many of these surveys were tailored to specific sectors of the community.

The planning commission also developed an online survey that was available and open to anyone. There were physical copies of the online survey that were available for those that did not have or want to complete the survey via the Internet. Posters with the QR code and link to the online survey were posted during the Founders Day Festival and then again during the winter holidays and the link was distributed through social media.

Lastly an open house was held so that folks could provide additional input, ask questions, and better understand the comprehensive plan process. An open house is an informal opportunity for anyone interested to provide comments and input that will help shape the comprehensive plan draft. Several community members attended the open house and provided recommendations related to the draft comprehensive plan.

## Vision Statement

One of the first steps after conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) exercise is to develop a vision statement. The community's vision is the foundation of the comprehensive planning process. The analysis and recommendations that emanate from the comprehensive plan should be consistent with the community's vision for the future. The vision statement is aspirational and should highlight the core values and characteristics of the county. The Capon Bridge vision statement is:

***The Town of Capon Bridge is a vibrant community nestled along the banks of the Cacapon River. Capon Bridge enjoys a small-town atmosphere with community-oriented events and embraces growth, while preserving its heritage and history.***

## What goes into a comp plan....

There are certain objectives that each community must address along with several required components that must be analyzed. Below are two tables that identify each required objective and component, along with where the Town of Capon Bridge Comprehensive Plan addresses each required objective and component.

While each community is required to address these objectives and components, it is important that each community analyzes these in relation to the conditions for their community. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to address issues and concerns. How a community develops recommendations to various components will be dependent on numerous variables particular to the municipality or county. The Town of Capon Bridge has analyzed each of the required objectives and required components, while focusing on its needs.

## Required Objectives for a Comprehensive Plan

*W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(b)(1)-(7)*

Code Provision	Chapter
Statement of goals and objectives	Chapter 4
Timeline on how to meet short and long-term goals and objectives	Chapter 4- Implementation Matrix
Action plan with implementation strategies	Chapter 4- Implementation Matrix
Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding	Chapter 4- Implementation Matrix
Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies	Chapter 4
A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation	Chapter 3 and Chapter 3
Maps, plats, and/or charts- that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	Chapters 2, 3, and 4



## Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan

*W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(c)(1)-(13)*

Code Provision	Page #
<b><i>Land Use</i></b>	
Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, etc.)	29, 36, 48
Population density and building intensity standards	17
Growth and/or decline management	15-17, 41
Projected population growth or decline	15-17, 41
Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas)	22, 23, 26, 30, 31, 40, 41, 52
<b><i>Housing</i></b>	
Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities)	17, 18, 39-42, 52, 53
Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed	18

<b>Address substandard housing</b>	<b>30, 31, 50</b>
<b>Rehabilitate and improve existing housing</b>	<b>30, 31</b>
<b>Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing</b>	<b>30, 42, 52</b>
<b><i>Transportation</i></b>	
<b>Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river, and any other mode</b>	<b>19, 20</b>
<b>Movement of traffic and parking</b>	<b>20, 21 38, 39</b>
<b>Pedestrian and bicycle systems</b>	<b>20, 32, 44, 50</b>
<b>Intermodal transportation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b><i>Economic development</i></b>	
<b>Analyze opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses</b>	<b>6, 16, 17</b>
<b>Identify and designate economic development sites and/or sectors</b>	<b>30, 37, 43-46</b>
<b>Identify types of economic development sought</b>	<b>43-46</b>

<b><i>Miscellaneous Components</i></b>	
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>21, 32-37, 50, 51</b>
<b>Public Services</b>	<b>22, 26, 36</b>
<b>Rural</b>	<b>13, 44</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>37-39, 51, 52</b>
<b>Community Design</b>	<b>32, 44</b>
<b>Preferred development areas</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Renewal and/or redevelopment</b>	<b>30, 42</b>
<b>Financing</b>	<b>Implementation Matrix</b>
<b>Historic preservation</b>	<b>42, 43, 53</b>



## We have a plan, what's next....

Celebrate! The comprehensive plan process is often a long and time-consuming process. It takes a determined group of planning commissioners, municipal officials, citizens, and business owners to complete a comprehensive plan that is useful and serves its intended purpose of providing long-term guidance to a community. There should be an amount of satisfaction tied to the completion of the comprehensive plan because the process itself is an important civic exercise in transparency, public participation, visioning, and strategically planning rather than being purely reactionary in nature.

The plan is only as good as how it helps achieve the goals and objectives of the community. A community can have a great plan but if the plan is not utilized or implemented then it fails to be a useful tool for the community.

After the adoption of the comprehensive plan, implementation should be one of the primary areas of focus for the community. While the governing body should be part of the discussion of how and what to implement, the planning commission, as an advisory board, can be instrumental in providing recommendations on how best to implement the comprehensive plan once adopted.





# CHAPTER 2- COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Town of Capon Bridge lies in Hampshire County, West Virginia. Hampshire County, established in 1754, is in both the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands regions. Capon Bridge was officially incorporated in 1902 by Amos L. Pugh, a local businessperson and West Virginia legislator.

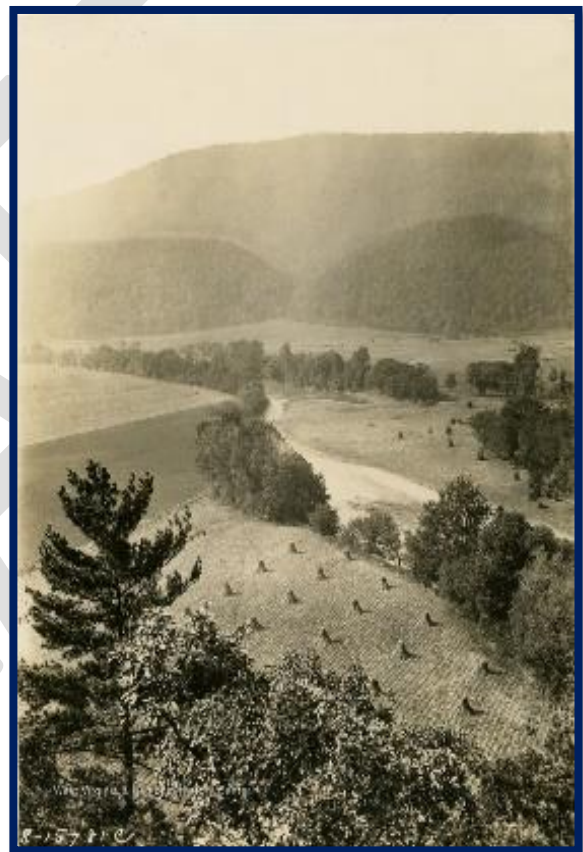
## Community History

The Town of Capon Bridge is situated on the banks of the Cacapon River.

The eastern panhandle of West Virginia, including what is now Hampshire County and Capon Bridge, was utilized by first peoples including the Huron, Iroquois Confederacy, Saponi, Shawnee, Mingo, and Delaware Tribes.

The area around Capon Bridge was later settled by the Europeans James Caudy and Joseph Edwards in 1738. During the French and Indian War, a small outpost named Fort Edwards was established in the area and was commanded by a young George Washington.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1820s, the settlement was dominated by the tannery business and small-scale agriculture.<sup>23</sup> By 1820, a resident known as Samuel Gard established a mill at Capon Bridge.

By 1830, the first stage of the Northwestern Pike reached Capon Bridge via Winchester. In 1834, the Pike reached Romney and by 1838 it reached Parkersburg on the western end of the state.



*Figure 1: A view of harvested fields and a tree-lined river running through Hampshire County. Tree-covered mountains can be seen in the distance. The date of this photograph is unknown.*

Before the bridge was constructed, a ferry was used to cross the river. In 1788, the Virginia legislature authorized Poston's Ferry on land near Capon



Bridge. The first bridge was constructed in 1836 and the classic Parker Through Truss Bridge, which now stands, was later erected in 1933.<sup>4</sup> In 1898, the first telephone lines in Capon Bridge were completed from Romney to Capon Bridge. In the early twentieth century, cattle drives were held each year in Capon Bridge. It reportedly was a two day walk to Winchester.

In 1992, construction on the Capon Bridge Elementary school was completed and students began classes there. Four years later, in 1996, Governor Caperton approved a state budget which apportioned \$200,000 for an industrial park east of Capon Bridge.

## Capon Bridge Today

The town is known as the "Gateway to the Mountains" and is just two miles from the border with Virginia. Capon Bridge has both a public elementary and middle school as well as many thriving local businesses, restaurants, churches, arts venues, and historic sites. In addition, the town hosts two banks, a public library, a post office, a volunteer fire department, a veteran's organization, and several medical practitioners.<sup>5</sup>

Life in Capon Bridge is characterized by friendly people, a relaxed pace, and a beautiful environment. The Cacapon River runs through the town and is a

beautiful place to fish, swim, or boat. Residents of Capon Bridge cherish the sense of community and the ability to engage with each other in-person, in the parking lot, or front porch. Town residents have an ethic of volunteerism and community service that helps foster a keen sense of community.



*Figure 2: An aerial photograph of Capon Bridge taken in May 2010.*

For outdoors recreation, there are many activities available on the Cacapon River. There is a park in Capon Bridge which includes a full basketball and tennis court, paved walking track, playground equipment, and a sports field making the park great for all ages.

For people interested in history, Fort Edwards provides a great opportunity to learn about the early European history of Capon Bridge. Fort Edwards also

hosts the Hampshire Family Frontier Days, a family-friendly event where people learn more about Hampshire County's colonial history.

Capon Bridge has a vibrant community life and hosts many celebrations and festivals during the year. Events include Founders Day, Veterans Appreciation Day, Riverfest, the Christmas Parade, and numerous music events.

## Age

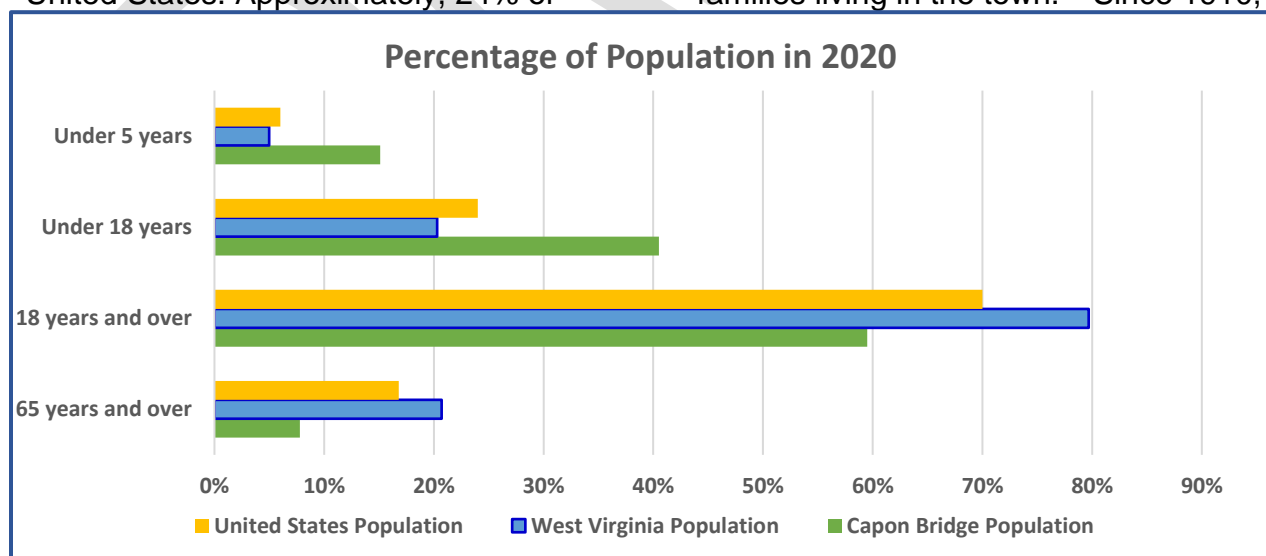
According to 2020 Census Data, the median age in Capon Bridge was 29.3 years old.<sup>6</sup> Capon Bridge's median age is significantly lower, compared to West Virginia's median age of 42.8 years old. The population under 5 years old in the United States in 2020 was only 6% of the total population compared to 15.1% in Capon Bridge.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Capon Bridge has a higher proportion of residents under 18 years old than the United States. Approximately, 24% of

the United States' population was under 18 years old in 2020, compared to 20.2% in West Virginia, and 40.5% in Capon Bridge. The lower median age is a result of a series of factors, but a significant reason is likely that the Capon Bridge elementary and middle school are both located inside the municipal boundary.

However, even though half of Capon Bridge's population is 29.3 years or younger, there is still an elderly population comprising 7.8% of the total population in the Town. Comparatively, 19.9% of West Virginia's population and 16% of the United States' population are over 65 years old.<sup>89</sup>

## Population

In 2010, there were 355 people, 156 households, and 96 families living in the town.<sup>10</sup> As of 2020, there were 420 people, 197 households, and 154 families living in the town.<sup>11</sup> Since 1910,



the town has had a population of approximately 200 residents, with 213 in 1910 and 223 in 1950.<sup>12</sup> Capon Bridge experienced significant population growth of approximately 18% in the last decade. However, compared to the 77.5% growth between 2000 and 2010, the last decade signaled a return to Capon Bridge's historical population growth rate. Unless there is annexation, it is unlikely that the town will see any significant population growth in the near future. However, there appears to be increased development pressure and so there will likely continue to be growth in Hampshire County.

## Ethnicity and Language

According to 2020 Census Data, 95.7% of Capon Bridge's residents identify as being white.<sup>13</sup> Comparatively, 98% of Hampshire County residents identify as white.<sup>14</sup> Of Capon Bridge residents, 93% speak only English, while an additional 7% can speak Spanish or another European language.<sup>15</sup> On the state level, 89.7% of West Virginians identify as being white.<sup>16</sup>

Nationally, White Americans make up only 57.8% of the population. Hispanic and Latino Americans are the largest ethnic minority, comprising 18.7% of the population, while Black or African Americans are the second largest racial minority, making up 12.1%.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Capon Bridge is relatively homogenous

in comparison to the United States, at large.

## Economic Characteristics

The median household income of residents of Capon Bridge in 2020 was \$57,734.<sup>18</sup> In comparison, the median household income of West Virginia in 2020 was \$51,248.<sup>19</sup> The median household income of Hampshire County residents in 2020 was \$48,528.<sup>20</sup> Capon Bridge's median income was higher than the West Virginia and Hampshire County medians. Consequently, these statistics suggest that Capon Bridge is one of the more prosperous areas of Hampshire County.

The Census Bureau estimated in 2020 that 303 residents of Capon Bridge were in the labor force. Of the 303 residents in the labor force, 291 were employed, leaving an estimated 12 residents unemployed. Accordingly, the employment rate of Capon Bridge was 66.8%. In comparison, West Virginia has an employment rate of 49.2% and the United States had a rate of 58.6%.

Several Capon Bridge residents commute to work. The Census Bureau estimated that in 2020 approximately 70% of Capon Bridge's labor force worked in Virginia.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, it was estimated that the average travel time to



work was on average, 34.5 minutes. That is almost ten minutes longer than the 2020 West Virginia and United States estimates of 25.7 and 25.6 minutes, respectively.<sup>22</sup>

Many of the largest employers of Capon Bridge residents are in Virginia including

Valley Health Systems, Walmart, Trex, Rubbermaid, FEMA, and Navy Federal Credit Union. Other employers are state and local government entities such as Frederick County, Virginia, and the West Virginia Department of Education.

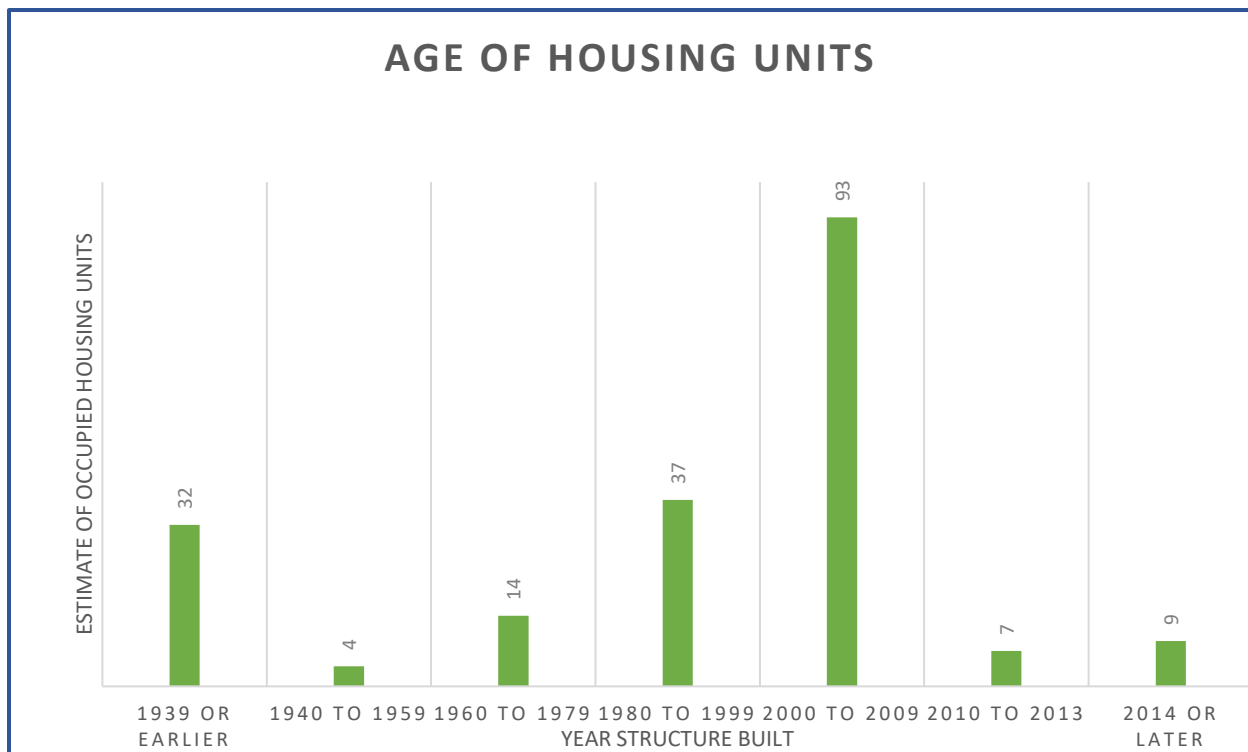
## Housing

According to Census Data, in 2010, the population density in Capon Bridge was 529.9 inhabitants per square mile. There were 180 housing units at an average density of 268.7 houses per square mile. In 2020, there were 420 people, 197 households, and 154 families living in the town. Therefore, the



town's population density increased to 575.3 inhabitants per square mile. There were 179 housing units at an average density of 245.2 houses per square mile. While there was an increase in inhabitants per square mile, there was simultaneously a decrease in the number of housing units per square mile. Therefore, it is likely that more residents of Capon Bridge are living as a family or in other shared living arrangements.

There were only 12 vacant units out of 179 housing units in town.<sup>23</sup> Capon Bridge has very few available vacant



housing units for people interested in moving into town. With a considerable number of young people, the demand for housing in and around Capon Bridge will likely increase in the next two decades.

The median gross rent in Capon Bridge was \$896 in 2020, compared to \$767 in West Virginia.<sup>24</sup> The median gross rent in Capon Bridge will likely continue to increase in the future as more people seek to live in a limited number of housing units. Approximately, 72.1% of Capon Bridge residents own their home, which is consistent with the West Virginia average. However, higher rent costs will increase the value of housing overall which will also affect homeowners.

Most of the housing units in Capon Bridge were built between 2000 and 2009. Several housing units were also built before 1939 and then between 1980 and 1999. Capon Bridge exhibits a much different historical development pattern from most of the communities in West Virginia. In most West Virginia communities many housing units were built before the 1970s and in some communities most housing units were built before the 1950s. Capon Bridge has a relatively young housing stock.

## Health Outcomes

*The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps* program is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Foundation

and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute. The Health Rankings provide county-wide health summaries throughout the United States. The data provided in the Rankings may help a community realize their strengths and weaknesses as it relates to healthy community living. The Rankings may also indicate areas in which a community should devote additional attention and resources.

Hampshire County ranks 35 out of 55 counties in West Virginia in terms of health outcomes such as length of life and quality of life.<sup>25</sup> Health outcomes are shaped by more than diet and exercise. Many aspects of a community influence health, including access to care, water and air quality, and the built physical environment.

According to the Health Rankings, twenty-five percent of Hampshire County residents have "poor" or "fair" health, according to the County Health Rankings: 40% of people living in Hampshire County experience adult obesity; and approximately 10% of residents in the county are uninsured. On a scale from 1-10 (1 worst, 10 best), Hampshire County ranks 7.1 in terms of access to healthy foods. The lowest score in West Virginia was Calhoun County at 5.6, the highest was Jefferson County at 8.9.<sup>26</sup> The life expectancy for Hampshire County residents in 2022 was 75.2 years compared to the West Virginia average of 74.3 years. In 2022,

there were fifty drug overdose deaths in Hampshire County, which accounts for 1.6% of West Virginia's overall drug overdose deaths that year.

Capon Bridge has multiple medical providers inside the municipal limits including Capon Bridge Family Practice, Capon Bridge Family Dentistry, and Reed's Pharmacy. The closest hospitals are the Winchester Medical Center in Winchester and the Hampshire Memorial Hospital, near Romney.



## Transportation

Capon Bridge is located on US Route 50, locally known as Northwestern Pike, and is two miles from the Virginia border. Route 50 is a transcontinental road going from Atlantic to Pacific. There are occasionally people that bike along the route through Capon Bridge. Route 50 connects Capon Bridge with



Romney, West Virginia and Winchester, Virginia. Interstate 81, which runs through Winchester, is the closest interstate. Access to the Interstate is a 24-mile drive from Capon Bridge. Potomac Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides a work bus that travels from Keyser to the Winchester Trex plant, including a stop at Capon Bridge. There are not any PVTA routes that go through Capon Bridge other than the work route to the Trex Plant.

Regarding air transportation, the closest commercial airport is the Greater Cumberland Regional Airport, 48 miles away. The next closest airport is the Hagerstown Regional Airport, which is approximately 80 miles away from Capon Bridge. For international flights, the nearest option is the Washington Dulles International Airport which is 88 miles away from Capon Bridge along with Baltimore/Washington International Airport. Lost Mountain Airport is 3 miles south of Romney. It is a private airport with permission required before landing. There is a runway that is grass/turf with 2,650 x 50-foot dimensions.

There are no active rail lines in Capon Bridge, and thus no rail transportation. However, there is an Amtrak Station about 50 minutes away in Martinsburg, West Virginia, which provides personal rail transportation to locations all over the continental United States.



Many areas in Capon Bridge lack sidewalks for pedestrian traffic, especially along Route 50. There are several areas in town where there are no sidewalks on either side of the road. Even though Capon Bridge has a lot of pedestrian traffic, most pedestrians are forced to walk directly along the side of the road.

There are no intermodal transportation options in Capon Bridge currently. There are no rail lines, no trucking transfer stations, or ports. It is unlikely that there will be opportunities for intermodal transportation in Capon Bridge in the near future.

## Education

Capon Bridge has two schools within the municipal boundary. Capon Bridge Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in Hampshire County. There are 47 full and part-time

employees at the school with approximately 300 students. The elementary school has recently constructed a gymnasium on campus. Capon Bridge Middle School is one of only two middle schools in Hampshire County, the other being in Romney. Hampshire County only has one high school. It is located near Romney Middle School to the east of the Town of Romney. Also at that campus, students can pursue a technical education at the Hampshire County Career Training Center.



In addition, Capon Bridge has a library. The library serves over 5,100 people in Capon Bridge and the surrounding areas. Over 15,000 books, audio books, and movies are available to the public.<sup>27</sup> The library employs 2 full-time and 2 part-time employees. Funding sources include the Hampshire County Commission and the West Virginia Library Commission. The library provides a myriad of services including

a summer reading program, Pre-K story hour, genealogy book department, and local artist displays. These programs, held throughout the year, are free to Capon Bridge and Hampshire County residents. The library also manages the Capon Bridge Museum, which sits adjacent to the library and can be visited during library business hours. The needs of the library include a new roof, a new coat of blacktop on parking lot, and the museum needs work for insulation, and heat and air to protect valuable papers and contents inside the museum. The library is growing and therefore the staff has created a 5-year plan.

## Infrastructure

Capon Bridge provides its residents with public water and sewer services. As part of its agreement with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, the Town of Capon Bridge has limited access to water. This limits the number of new homes that Capon Bridge can support with public water. The town's water treatment cost is ranked 283<sup>rd</sup> out of 363 water treatment utilities, charging \$52.15 for every 3,400 gallons treated. Capon Bridge's wastewater treatment rate is \$58.17 for every 3,400 gallons treated. This cost ranks 269 out of a total of 315 sewer utilities in West Virginia.

## Governance and Public Services

Capon Bridge has its own police department that is empowered to enforce the law, protect property, and maintain civil order in the Town. There are two (2) part-time police officers that serve the Town. The Town has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Hampshire County Sheriff Department and the West Virginia State Police. The primary needs of the police department include speed radar equipment, a new police vehicle, and updated law enforcement equipment.

Capon Bridge also has its own volunteer fire department that is responsible for the fire protection and first response services in Capon Bridge and the surrounding area. Capon Bridge Volunteer Fire Department has 20 total volunteers of which 6-8 are currently active. As of September 2022, the department had received 129 calls and in 2021 they responded to 207 calls. The Fire Department does have mutual aid agreements with Frederick County, VA and Morgan and Hardy Counties in West Virginia. The department does need more volunteers as the existing active volunteers are having to put in extended hours running calls and conducting fundraisers.

The Region 8 Planning and Development Council provides assistance to Hardy, Hampshire, Grant, Mineral, and Pendleton Counties. There

are 17 full-time and 2 part-time employees working for Region 8. The planning and development council provides numerous services to its member communities including GIS mapping for municipal water and sewer systems. Region 8 would also like to work with Capon Bridge to complete their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in the future.

For waste management services Apple Valley Waste offers waste disposal service for all of Hampshire County.

## Constraints on Development

Capon Bridge is situated along both banks of the Cacapon River. As a result, a sizable portion of the town is located within the floodplain.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, future development is constrained by the fact that much of the open ground near the center of the Town is also within the

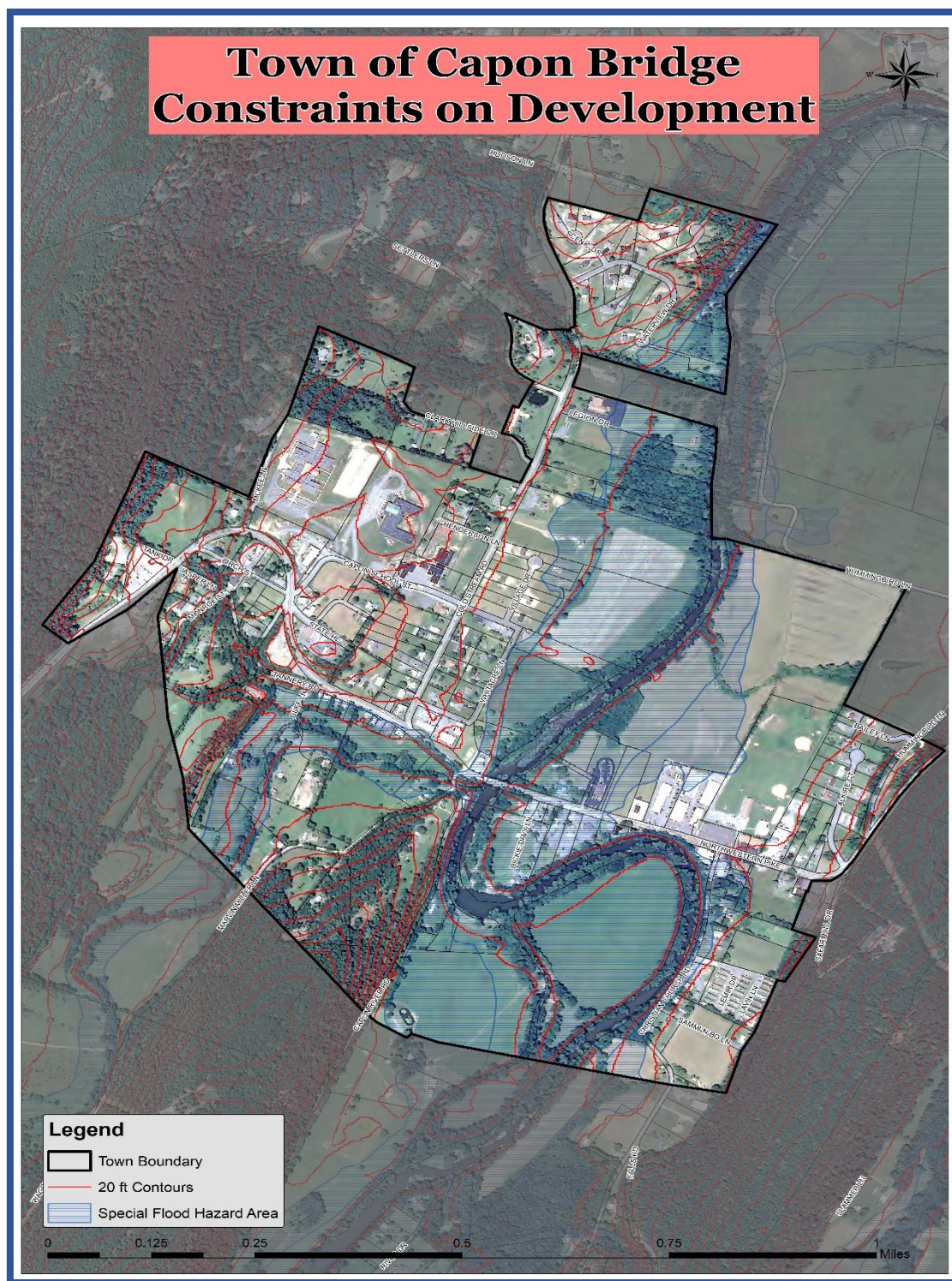




floodplain. Fortunately, critical services are located outside the floodplain. Neither the police department nor fire department are located with the floodplain.

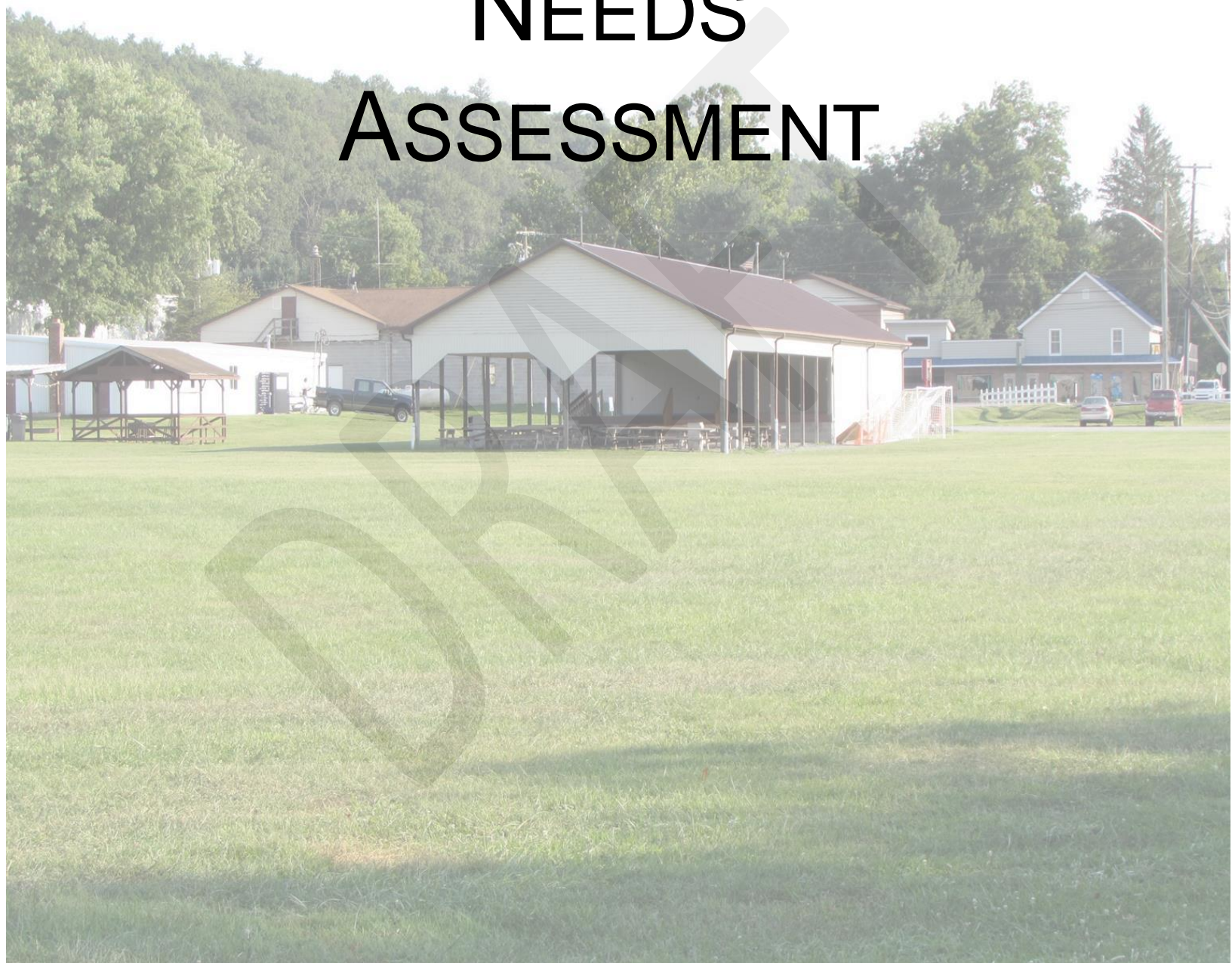
In the Capon Bridge area, “the predominant limestone units are the Helderberg Limestone (Dhl) and the Tonoloway Limestone.”<sup>29</sup> These particular limestone units are not typically associated with karstic features. However, any limestone unit that crops out at or near the surface can have karst format.<sup>30</sup>

The “constraints on development” map shows a significant portion of the town within the floodplain. However, there are not too many areas within the existing corporate boundary that exhibit steep slopes, which is often an impediment to communities in West Virginia that are looking for additional developable land.





# CHAPTER 3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT





The purpose of the Needs Assessment is to identify the concerns, issues, and priorities of Capon Bridge. By identifying the community's needs, the town can develop a comprehensive plan that promotes positive change by developing goals and objectives that are relevant to the community.

The issues outlined in Chapter 3 will be addressed by developing goals, objectives, and recommendations in Chapter 4: Action Plan. The needs of the community were identified and analyzed throughout the comprehensive plan process by the planning commission, town council, and the citizens. Information was collected from the open house, online surveys, stakeholder surveys, and through research related to housing, education, land use, public services, infrastructure, and transportation.

Historically, comprehensive plans were almost entirely centered around future land use and development. Many states' enabling authority, including West Virginia, now require local governments to prepare comprehensive plans which consider and analyze several aspects of community life beyond land development.

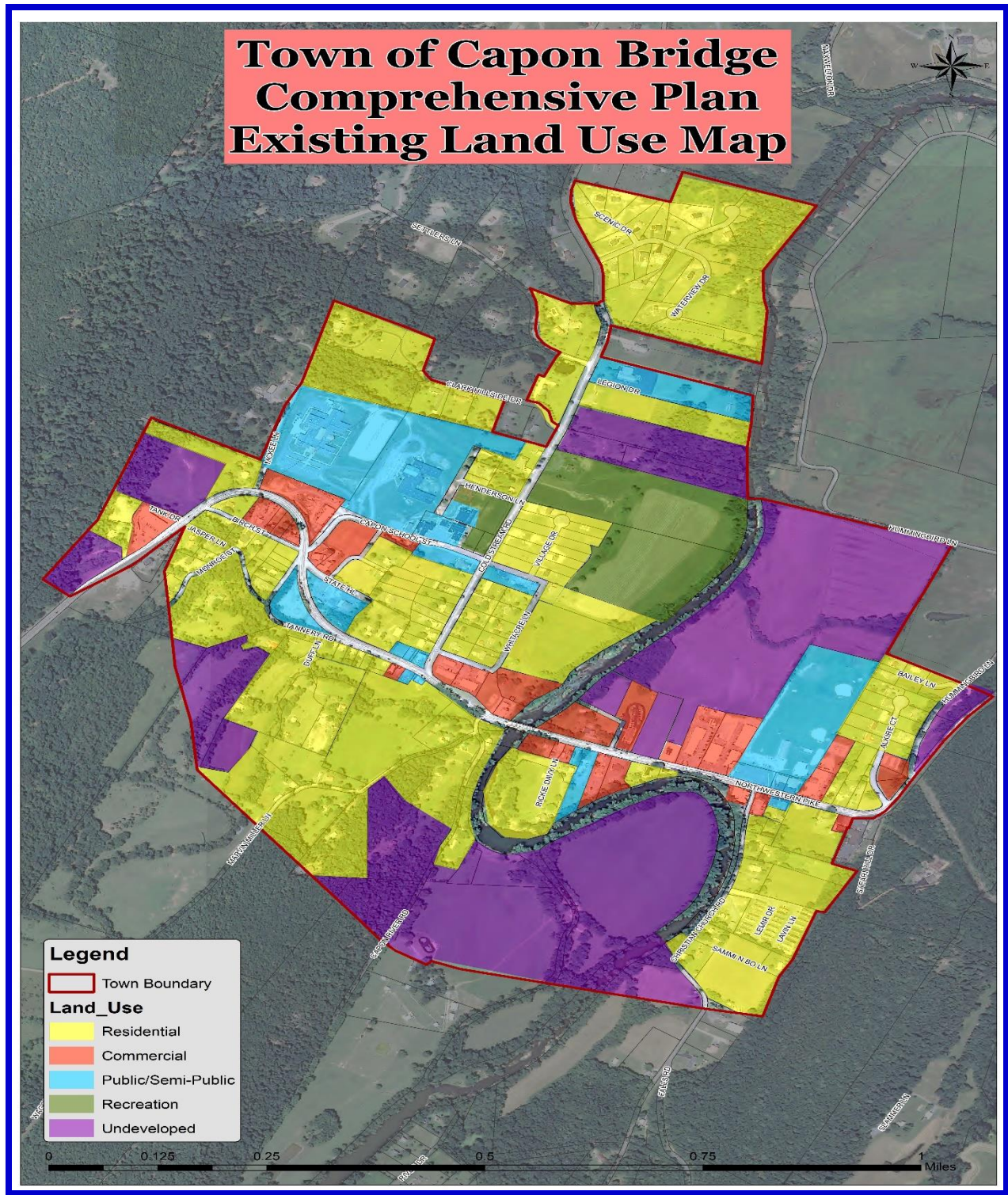
The primary issues/concerns that were identified during the Capon Bridge comprehensive plan process were:

- Land Usage and Development

- Adequate Infrastructure
- Public Space and Recreation
- Well Maintained Housing Stock
- Preservation of Historical Amenities
- Supporting the Business Community

## **Issue 1- Maintaining sustainable and appropriate land use development**

There are several factors that led to land use being identified as a primary concern in Capon Bridge over the next 10 to 15 years. One factor is the small size of Capon Bridge. The town is approximately 470 acres in size which is less than one square mile, making it one of the smallest municipalities in West Virginia. Another factor is the considerable proportion of Capon Bridge that is within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), also known as the "100 Year Floodplain."





The last significant reason land use and land development are significant concerns in Capon Bridge is proximity to regional urban centers. Proximity to the DC Metropolitan area is making the town susceptible to growth and development pressures that can strain existing public services and infrastructure if not carefully planned. While growth can be healthy, it should be coordinated and thoughtfully planned so as not to diminish the key qualities and characteristics that make Capon Bridge desirable.

One limiting factor for future growth and development is the lack of land available for new development, either commercial or residential, particularly outside the SFHA. Beyond lack of developable land, there are other practical limitations that may limit growth in Capon Bridge, including lack of broadband, childcare, and infrastructure that is nearing capacity.



Annexation is a tool that can expand the corporate boundaries of Capon Bridge. A major consideration to annexation is the limitations placed on the amount of water that can be drawn from the town spring. The WVDNR has placed a limit on how much spring water can be taken by the town. If the town gets a secondary water source, it will have to stop using the spring. While annexation should be considered, part of the analysis should be whether new areas will increase the amount of water usage beyond what is permitted by the WVDNR.

The most likely areas for annexation are adjacent to the existing corporate boundary, including the Capon Valley Market and properties that are already serviced by town water. There are three (3) methods of annexation in West Virginia, annexation by minor boundary adjustment, annexation by petition, and annexation by election. Each method of annexation has certain procedures and protocols which must be followed. Town officials should understand the laws and procedures for annexation in West Virginia before commencing with any annexation proceeding. Annexation should be a deliberate and carefully planned process with town officials discussing the advantages and disadvantages of annexation both from the point of view of the town and the property owners.

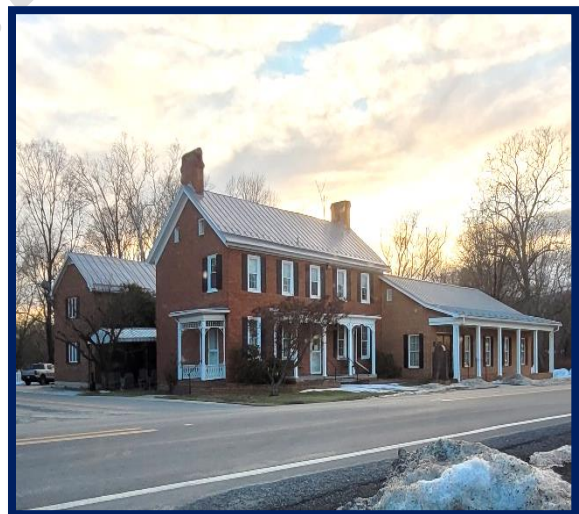


Zoning ordinances can be effective tools to address growth and development. A zoning ordinance can ensure separation of incompatible uses and ensure that development occurs in a way that is beneficial to the community. Capon Bridge currently has a zoning ordinance. However, the ordinance is dated (1992) and should be reviewed and analyzed by town officials to confirm that the provisions are consistent with the current vision, goals, and objectives of the community. As part of this analysis, town officials should create a zoning map that accurately reflects existing growth and development objectives. Short term rentals, floodplains, and signage were mentioned during the comprehensive plan process and are typically addressed through the zoning ordinance.

Short-term rentals (STRs) are properties that are used by nonresidents for lodging. STRs are becoming more popular with tourists, as they seek alternative lodging options. STRs are also becoming popular for property owners as an additional revenue stream. STRs can have a positive impact on a community, especially a community that does not have many traditional lodging options such as hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts. STRs give many rural communities, which are interested in developing their tourism industry, opportunities that would not otherwise be available.

However, if left unchecked, in some communities STRs can negatively impact neighborhoods and diminish a community's housing stock. There have been incidents where customers use STRs in a manner that significantly interferes with the neighboring property owner's use and enjoyment of their property. Therefore, Capon Bridge officials should consider regulations that limit the number of cars, quiet hours, or where to place refuse in residential areas.

Signage can be a controversial issue. The size, the materials used, where the sign is placed, and the content of signs can be a source of contention. With very few exceptions, local governments cannot place limitations on the content of signage due to First Amendment concerns. However, local governments can place reasonable limitations on the size, the materials, and the placement of



signs. Participants of the open house and online survey indicated that more uniformity of signage and for signage to be “right sized” for Capon Bridge is a priority. There is also a desire to remove the signage of businesses that are no longer operational or have otherwise been abandoned.

## Preferred Development Areas

According to the West Virginia Code, as part of developing a comprehensive plan, each community must identify and provide incentives for preferred development areas which are defined as “a geographically defined area where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities.” (W. VA §8A-1-2(y))

Two areas in Capon Bridge were identified during the comprehensive plan process as preferred development areas (PDAs). The old middle school site near the corner of Cold Stream Road and Capon School Street was identified as one PDA. This property is out of the floodplain, relatively flat, easily accessible, and has all utilities on site.

The old school site could be renovated, redeveloped, or through adaptive reuse could be utilized to provide residential, commercial, or public development. The property is currently owned by



Hampshire County Parks and Recreation and is over ten acres. The other portion of town that has been identified as a preferred development area is along Route 50 on the eastern portion of town. This area is also easily accessible and highly visible. There are already businesses and organizations in this area so it would primarily be redevelopment, infill development, or adaptive reuse. The area along Route 50 is also largely out of the 100-year floodplain.

## Addressing Abandoned and Dilapidated Structures

Another consideration of land use development is being able to address abandoned and dilapidated structures. These structures harbor vermin, have a much higher probability of collapse or fire damage, and can depress nearby property values. The town already enforces the West Virginia State

Building Code. Enforcing the building code is one of the most effective tools available to address dilapidated structures in West Virginia.

To decide which tools Capon Bridge can utilize to best address abandoned and dilapidated structures, town officials need to fully understand the breadth of the issue. Therefore, an inventory of all abandoned and dilapidated structures in Capon Bridge should be one of the first action steps completed. A completed inventory will highlight to town officials the number of structures, the type of structures, where they are located, and the types of issues associated with each property. Once the inventory is complete town officials must develop a strategy to address the abandoned and dilapidated structures. The town's strategy should be based on variables such as resources, number of structures, number of structures needing asbestos and lead remediation, whether structure is in the floodplain, and several other variables.

Other tools include the vacant and uninhabitable property registries. The vacant property registry can be enacted by any municipality in West Virginia. The idea behind the vacant property registry is to encourage property owners to either sell the property or to make necessary renovations so that the property is no longer considered "vacant" under the statutory definition. If a property meets the definition of a

being vacant and the town has enacted a vacant property registry, then officials place the property on the registry and the property owner is required to pay an annual registry fee. Typically, communities have a tiered registry fee schedule- the longer the property is on the registry, the higher the annual fee amount.

Similar to the vacant property registry is the uninhabitable property registry. The primary difference is that there needs to be a violation of the West Virginia State Building Code for a property to be listed on the uninhabitable property registry. The statute also allows for a municipality to take the property through forfeiture if the structure has been on the uninhabitable property registry for twenty-four (24) consecutive months. A community can enact both registries and a property can be listed on both registries simultaneously if the property independently meets the criteria for each registry.



## Issue 2- Ensure there is well maintained and reliable infrastructure

Infrastructure is the backbone of a community. From drinking water to streets and sidewalks, to reliable internet, many of the amenities we consider essential for daily living are part of our infrastructure. The planning commission studied the roads, sidewalks, stormwater, water treatment, wastewater treatment, broadband, and telecommunications of the community and several issues were identified through this process.

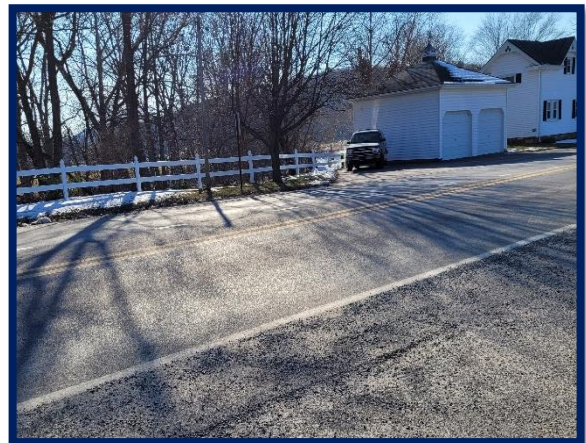


One of the greatest needs in Capon Bridge is the creation of sidewalks. There are two primary areas where sidewalks are needed, along Cold Stream Road and Route 50. There is a desire to have sidewalks on Route 50 throughout the corporate boundaries, with the greatest need being east of the bridge. Currently there are only certain areas of Cold Stream Road and Route 50 that have sidewalk facilities.

The primary reasons for wanting sidewalks are pedestrian safety, to attract more foot traffic in town, and to improve connectivity between businesses and other attractions in Capon Bridge. Along with developing sidewalk facilities, there should be designated crosswalks which give pedestrians a designated place to cross Route 50. Any new or renovated sidewalks, or crosswalks, including intersections, should be compliant with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

Many of the roads in town are in good condition. However, there are state controlled roads in town. Town officials are limited in what they can do to improve those roads and some of these roads exhibit wear and need maintenance.

There is a plethora of potholes on Capon School Street and the new bioswales create additional work for the town. The town cannot afford to fix that street because it is too expensive.



School, state, and town officials need to collaborate to fix the well-traveled street.

Another infrastructure issue that was identified during the comprehensive plan process was stormwater runoff.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “stormwater runoff is generated from rain and snowmelt events that flow over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, and does not soak into the ground.” Particular attention needs to be given to ensuring that stormwater does not overwhelm existing infrastructure in Capon Bridge. One of the primary concerns is inflow and infiltration (I/I) going into the wastewater treatment plant. The more stormwater that goes into the plant, the more graywater the plant will be unnecessarily treating. There should be an emphasis on diverting as much stormwater away from the wastewater treatment plant by keeping stormwater on site or channeling water into swales or retention areas. The town’s

wastewater plant is also receiving stormwater from unsealed manholes. As of 2023, the town is addressing the manholes and has started Phase II of the sewer improvement project.

Another stormwater concern is that some residents are not installing culverts properly. If culverts are not installed correctly, they could divert water to places that might not otherwise receive stormwater. An incorrectly placed culvert can also become clogged and thus serve as an impediment to the movement of stormwater, increasing the likelihood of inundation of surrounding properties. Stormwater is a significant concern on Capon School Street. Recently, the town received a grant to address stormwater through low impact development enhancements. The Capon School Street project should be highlighted as an example of a stormwater best management practice that could be implemented throughout Capon Bridge.



## Water and Wastewater Treatment

Being able to provide clean, safe drinking water and treating wastewater are two primary functions for many municipalities. The Town of Capon Bridge operates both a water treatment facility and a wastewater treatment facility. As part of these systems, there are miles of distribution and collection lines that need to be maintained. In

2023, the town began operation of a new \$3.1 million dollar wastewater treatment plant, which also treats sewage from the tech park, located outside town limits, on Smokey Hollow Road.

While most of the wastewater treatment facility is new, there are a few components still needed, including:

- at least one spare Sweetwater compressor
- one large blower
- one small blower
- one small air lift pump for the old plant, one for the new plant
- one large air lift pump for the old plant, one for the new plant
- a spare pump for the smaller lift stations at Water View and Village Drive
- a camera system to inspect the town's sewer lines
- a few skimmers in the sludge troughs of the new clarifier tanks
- a Sewer Line Jetter to unplug/flush our sewer lines
- a backhoe to dig and repair our water and sewer line

- a new work truck with changeable dump, flat and work beds



The availability of drinking water in the future is a significant concern for Capon Bridge. There are currently restrictions on how much water the town is permitted to draw from a DNR-owned spring. If the town gets a second water source, DNR will no longer allow the town to pump water from the spring. Town officials prefer to continue using the spring as the primary source of drinking water as the water is high quality. The town is currently permitted to draw 67,000 gallons per day from the spring. The town normally pumps between 42,000 and 50,000 gallons per day and has only drawn more than 60,000 gallons a few times, typically when people are filling up their swimming pools.

Town officials are cognizant that there are lots in town that could be developed



thus increasing the amount of treated water needed and so identifying a second water source is something the town needs to plan for in the next 5-10 years. The town signed a 25-year agreement with the WVDNR to continue to utilize Heitt Spring for municipal water. The agreement includes a stipulation that the town will “actively” look for a new water source. The current agreement runs through 2045 and is non-renewable. However, the town must secure a comparable water source before the DNR will extinguish their ability to use the spring.

The water treatment system, which was most recently updated in 2013 is in good operating condition, with an average loss ratio of 14%, occasionally operating as low as 11%, which is excellent for a small West Virginia community. EPA indicates that public water systems experience non-revenue water loss rates on an average of about 16%.<sup>31</sup> The loss ratio indicates how much of the treated water that leaves the water treatment facility gets to paying customers. High loss ratios are typically due to leaks in the distribution lines. The higher the loss ratio, the greater the amount of treated water that never makes it to a paying customer, resulting in financial inefficiency for the utility.

The town will collaborate with Region 8 Planning and Development Council to develop Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping for all water

and wastewater facilities distribution and collection lines and appurtenances. Digitally mapping town systems allows for easy data input (i.e., size of lines, line materials, when there have been leaks, or new lines placed underground) and data recall. Digitally mapping systems also alleviate the need to maintain physical maps or for workers to memorize where everything is located.

### Broadband and Cell Phone Service

Improved broadband and cellular service are routinely cited as priorities in Capon Bridge. According to the online survey participants, when asked “how would you prioritize the following amenities,” “Broadband” was the highest priority on average, indicating the importance placed on broadband in comparison to the other important amenities.

Broadband is increasingly being seen as a necessary part of day-to-day functioning. For those communities and individuals that do not have access, life is becoming more difficult to navigate. Reliable high-speed internet is important for educational purposes, healthcare, entertainment, and business growth and development. Improved broadband can facilitate an increased social media presence. A greater social media presence can enhance several aspects of town living including transparency, live streaming meetings and events,

improved tourism, and a more robust business environment.

Improved technology and a greater overall acceptance of telecommuting has allowed many individuals to move to locations where they prefer to live rather than where they are required to live. Communities like Capon Bridge could benefit from the increased interest in people that can telecommute. However, there are concerns that Capon Bridge is a place that, if not carefully planned, could experience growth that puts a strain on the existing infrastructure and public services.



During the comprehensive plan process, there were several individuals that indicated that improved cellular and broadband was a high priority. The town is fortunate to be serviced, in part, by HardyNet which is a high-speed broadband provider. However, only a small percentage of town residents currently have access to get HardyNet. The town and its residents need to work with HardyNet to increase high-speed internet coverage in Capon Bridge.

Residents without access are encouraged to contact HardyNet and indicate a need for increased internet infrastructure throughout the town.

Some of the town's infrastructure needs are going to require significant costs. A grant writer, especially for large infrastructure projects needs of the town should be considered by the town officials. The grant writer could work part-time, and grant administration costs can be built into the project budget. Hiring a grant writer was mentioned by several stakeholders as an important need.

There are a limited number of cellular providers resulting in limited telecommunications reception in Capon Bridge. The community should identify where future telecommunication facilities may be placed. Elected officials should decide whether to enact zoning regulations requiring collocation of



telecommunication facilities or concealment of cellular facilities.

### **Issue 3- Create and maintain public and recreational space for both citizens and visitors**

Capon Bridge is seeking to further redefine itself with improved amenities for both its citizens and visitors. Town leaders want to encourage the establishment of amenities that provide ancillary public and recreational benefits and that support river recreation. Currently there are no town-owned recreational amenities. Citizens have expressed a desire to create a town-owned park. Although there are several recreational opportunities, existing recreational facilities in Capon Bridge are owned by local nonprofits. These areas are appreciated and have largely been sufficient for the community, but a public area that is open to anyone would be ideal.

The Town does not own much land, which is largely seen as a positive. However, when it comes to adding public spaces, the options for additional recreational and public spaces are limited. For example, the fairgrounds and ballfields are owned by the fire department, the Ruritans own the community center, and the old middle school property is owned by the Hampshire County Parks and Recreation Office.

Town officials need to identify gaps in service regarding recreation and special events. Officials should host community-wide discussions on how best to fill gaps in service. As it relates to the lack of youth activities in Capon Bridge, officials should survey school children as an in-school activity. There should also be a survey given to parents either through take home surveys or at a parent-teacher association meeting.

During the comprehensive planning process, there was an indication that the community needed to continue to provide more youth activities. Sometimes the desires of the community and the willingness of entrepreneurs to provide amenities are not apparent. Therefore, town officials should encourage entrepreneurs to consider Capon Bridge to provide services that are desired by the community. Supplying data that supports the desires of the community for additional youth activities will be important. During public input for this plan several participants indicated a desire for a bowling alley or skating rink in Capon Bridge.

While new recreational amenities are needed, consideration also needs to be given to upkeep and maintenance of existing amenities such as the Ruritan's community center. The fire department's ball fields are another example of existing recreational facilities that are well utilized by the community. Town



officials should support enhancements to the ballfields and the community center. The Trails at Edwards Run need to be updated and could become a more integral amenity for the community.

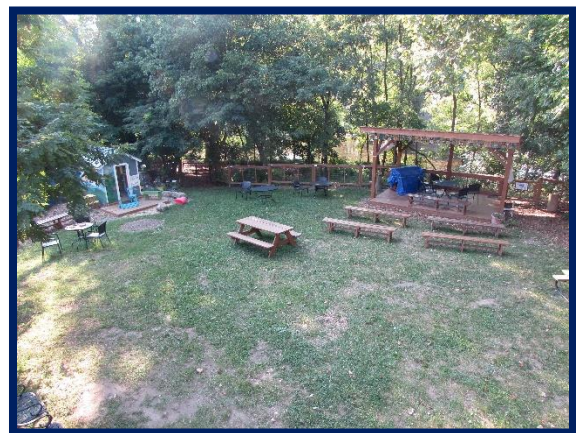


Another significant cultural amenity is the library. The town needs to ensure that the library is a high priority for future grants and projects, as it serves many people in Capon Bridge and throughout Hampshire County. Seen by many as the hub of the community, the library provides a myriad of services to the public. The library needs its parking lot resurfaced, a new streetlight outside the driveway, and periodic landscaping. The museum which is operated by the library needs heat and air installed, as well as insulation.

A logical place for new public and recreational space in Capon Bridge is the old middle school property. The property is large, relatively flat, and out of the 100-Year Floodplain. Because of the size of the property, the old Middle School property could be utilized for

new commercial development, residential development, and for recreational purposes. The property is currently owned by the Hampshire County Park & Recreation. A master plan specific to the property could help decisionmakers allocate resources which provide additional recreational and public amenities.

The greatest recreational asset in Capon Bridge is the riverfront. Ideally, there will be multiple river access points in town in the near future. River access in town should be coordinated and planned to complement additional ingress/egress points along the Cacapon River, outside the town. Town officials will need to work with West Virginia's Division of Natural Resources to develop small craft access points. At each river access point, there should be adequate parking, a delineated area for entry into the river, restroom facilities, potable water and possibly a few campsites available to rent. If the land is not town-owned, then the property



owner could provide a limited access easement. The primary concern with public access easements is removing liability to the property owner, otherwise a property owner is unlikely to allow an access easement.

Part of providing additional public and recreational space is also to provide enough parking so that people can safely access the town amenities. The need for additional parking should be balanced with not requiring or creating too much parking that is largely unused and unnecessarily reduces the amount of green space in town. Consideration for recreational access parking should include requirements for pervious surfaces in certain circumstances.

Capon Bridge has a few annual events that are popular including Founders Day and the Fort Edwards Foundation's Colonial Feast.



Town officials should encourage more events throughout the year to complement existing events such as Light Up Capon Bridge and Founders Day. The community is having free movie nights, with free popcorn and snow cones. Some examples of other community events that could occur include a sidewalk art contest, a cook off, best pet contests, and bicycling contests. These events should be low cost or free and be inclusive to the community. The primary concern with community events is the planning and logistical work required. There is a significant amount of volunteer time needed for community events. There needs to be an individual, organization, or group that will champion additional community events. One possibility is to have a local business or organization volunteer staff or financial resources. Allow these businesses and organizations to advertise freely, providing an incentive to participate.

## **Issue 4- Ensuring there is a housing stock that is maintained, affordable, and accessible to those who want to make Capon Bridge their home**

Housing in Capon Bridge is a significant concern for local leaders. There are several factors that make housing a critical issue for Capon Bridge over the next 10-15 years. Concerns include a lack of space, floodplains, a small

municipal boundary, limitation on the amount of drinking water that can be drawn, and increased pressure for vacation homes and short-term rentals.

Town officials must continue to analyze housing patterns and determine how best to develop, including the type of housing that will be encouraged.

Officials must consider whether there is a desire and need for more single-family housing that is occupied by long term occupants or is there a need for more multi-family housing, townhomes, manufactured housing, or vacation rentals. There are tools including zoning and subdivision regulations that allow the town to require a particular type of housing within certain districts or areas of town. However, there needs to be public education and support for these tools before they are enacted.

There are a few barriers to housing in Capon Bridge. One of the primary limitations is the lack of developable land in Capon Bridge not in the Special Flood Hazard Area. While housing can be built in the floodplain, it is discouraged for safety reasons and because changes in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) have made the cost of flood insurance quite expensive. If a property owner develops a residential unit in the floodplain, the town must ensure that the property owner meets the minimum standards of the NFIP, including floodproofing the house, installing flood vents, or raising

the structure. Failure to require housing and other development in the floodplain to meet NFIP requirements puts the entire community in jeopardy of losing the ability to get flood insurance.

The small size of the town is another limitation to increasing the housing stock in Capon Bridge. There is little undeveloped space in Capon Bridge. With its current boundary, a person is much more likely to find developable land outside the floodplain in the county rather than in Capon Bridge. Over the last decade there have only been a few new residential housing units constructed in Capon Bridge. Town officials estimate that there are only between 10-15 vacant lots in town currently.

For anyone looking to relocate to Capon Bridge, there is limited existing housing stock. The housing stock has been further limited in the last few years as some residential units in Capon Bridge have been turned into short-term rentals and vacation homes. During the comprehensive plan process, several individuals identified the increase of renters and vacation homes as decreasing the likelihood of finding long term housing in Capon Bridge.

Short-term rentals (STR) are a concern in many parts of West Virginia where there is an active tourism industry. Capon Bridge is not only experiencing growth from the outdoor recreation



sector but its proximity to major metropolitan centers including Baltimore and Washington DC makes the town particularly susceptible to an increase of STRs. One of the best ways to address STRs is to enact zoning that can limit where and how many STRs are in Capon Bridge.

The population of Capon Bridge has never been over five hundred people, yet there was significant growth between 2000 and 2020, when the population more than doubled from 200 to 418. It can be expected that there will be more residential development pressure in the next 10 to 15 years as people look for “small town” living near populated areas including, Washington, DC, Northern Virginia, and Frederick County. Consideration should be given to developing residential units vertically, allowing for residential units in the floodplain on piling alleviating the requirement of flood insurance and reducing the likelihood of loss of property.

Town officials should encourage new residential housing to be accessible to the elderly and persons with disabilities, particularly outside the floodplain. A residential unit that is universally designed allows abled bodied persons, elderly couples, or a person with a disability to reside in the same unit. Town officials should work with local housing and disability service providers

to ensure that the town is meeting the needs of the entire community.



During the comprehensive plan process, several individuals commented on the need for senior and assisted living facilities in town. Local decision makers should understand that more people are wanting to age in place and want to remain in their home or their community as they age. Many people would prefer to live in their existing home, if that is not feasible, they would like to remain in the community. There are two primary concepts the town can promote to facilitate aging in place in Capon Bridge. The first is to encourage more single-story houses out of the floodplain. Secondly, town officials should encourage more assistive care professionals and home health care professionals to provide services in Capon Bridge.

There is an ardent desire to protect and preserve existing housing in Capon Bridge. Local officials need to provide

more information to homeowners, particularly homeowners with structures that might qualify for historic rehabilitation tax credits. There are currently no structures that are listed on the National Park Service's Historic Registry, nor is there a federally designated historic district in Capon Bridge. However, there are individual structures that would meet the criteria to be considered historic and could apply for residential historic tax credits.

Adaptive reuse, in limited circumstances, needs to be considered in Capon Bridge. Adaptive reuse occurs when a property or structure is originally developed for a certain type of use and is later utilized for a different purpose. An example of adaptive reuse is an empty commercial building that was originally used for retail purposes, a new owner purchases the building, and converts the building into studio apartments. In Capon Bridge, adaptive reuse will be of limited import. There may be a few instances where adaptive reuse is advantageous, such as the trailer park being redeveloped into apartments. If left unchecked, adaptive reuse could unintentionally tip the balance between commercial and residential, to the detriment of the community.

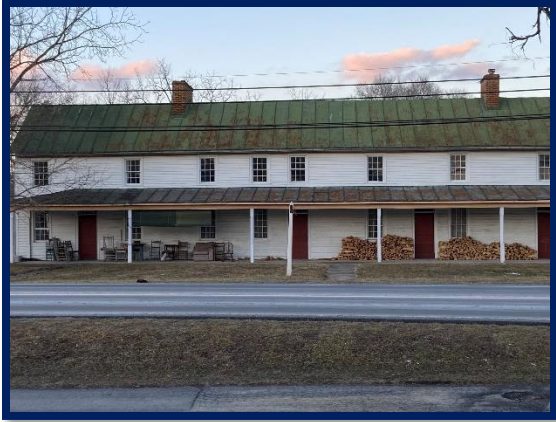
## Issue 5- Protection of the historical amenities found in and around Capon Bridge

There are significant historical resources not only in Capon Bridge but throughout Hampshire County. The county was one of the first areas of present-day West Virginia to be settled. Town officials want to further establish working relationships with existing entities to promote historic resources in and around Capon Bridge. Groups such as Historic Hampshire, Historical Society of Hampshire County, and the Fort Edwards Foundation can be valuable resources to Capon Bridge. To get a better idea of the historical resources, the town could contact the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office to inquire about funding related to "architectural and archaeological surveys; preparation of National Register of Historic Places nominations; heritage education programs relating to preservation activities; pre-development activities; comprehensive planning documents; and development projects."<sup>1</sup>

Known historic sites in Capon Bridge include the Bridge, Frye's Inn, the Fort

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mountainmessenger.com/historic-preservation-survey-planning-grants-available/>



Edward site, Old Post Office and Store, Moss Rock Inn, and the Amos Pugh Home now home to the Capon Bridge Museum. There have been recent efforts to place Capon Bridge's green bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. As part of the comprehensive plan online survey, participants were asked their level of satisfaction related to local historic preservation. Twelve percent of participants said "excellent, 44% said "good," 27% said "fair," and 6% of respondents said "poor." (Twelve percent responded "unsure") Town officials also need to help ensure that citizens and property owners have the information to understand the impact of what historic designation means to private property owners and to provide relevant grant funding opportunities for historic preservation and rehabilitation efforts.

There is no historic landmarks commission (HLC) for the town of Capon Bridge, but there is an HLC for

Hampshire County. Town officials should analyze whether there is a need and desire for the town to establish an HLC or to continue to work through the county's HLC.

In West Virginia, there is a spectrum of activities that HLCs can provide, ranging from an advisory role to issuing Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs). Under WV Code, HLCs may require COAs for new construction, alteration, removal or demolition of buildings, sites, or structures within a historic district or individually designated as a historic landmark. Current town officials would likely only be interested in creating an HLC that has advisory powers.

Town officials should support local organizations that have prioritized gathering and preserving historical documents and artifacts. The library is leading the effort to consolidate information to create a visual and written history of Capon Bridge. The Fort Edwards Foundation is also providing programs and working on community outreach to extend knowledge of local history.

## **Issue 6- The Need to retain existing and expand new business opportunities**

The overwhelming desire of the community is to retain existing businesses while promoting the





development of new businesses that fill existing gaps in service. Much of the public input during the comprehensive plan process was geared towards identifying the types of businesses needed in Capon Bridge. Participants wanted the town to continue to foster a business-friendly environment so that new and existing businesses can grow. There is some concern that both residential and commercial growth, along with increased tourism, will negatively alter the character of the town. The community needs to balance growth with the rural, small-town characteristics that make Capon Bridge charming, inviting, and appealing.

One of the best ways a community can encourage business growth and development is through the maintenance and upkeep of local infrastructure. Providing adequate public parking, well-kept roads, and safe

pedestrian amenities is particularly important to ensuring a healthy business environment.

During the comprehensive plan process, several citizens indicated that there was a lack of sidewalks, particularly along Route 50. Improving walkability and increasing the number of designated crosswalks for pedestrians is an important goal for Capon Bridge. Sidewalk access is limited along Route 50, particularly east of the bridge where a sizable portion of the businesses are located. At some point in the future town officials would like to have sidewalks on both sides of Route 50, from one end of town to the other.

Improved streetlighting is desired, particularly along Route 50. Any new streetlights should have fixture shielding which forces light downward limiting the amount of light pollution that intrudes onto private property and into the night



sky. Ideally, streetlight improvements coincide with sidewalk and other rights-of-way improvements.

Enhancement to the streetscape can provide both significant safety improvements and beautification for the town. Another project that could improve the image of the town is to focus on enhancing the gateways into town. Landscaping and signage that is inviting and aesthetically pleasing will give visitors a good first impression and show that citizens care about the community.

River tourism is going to continue to be one of the primary economic drivers in Capon Bridge. Continuing to develop niche businesses around the river should be an ongoing focus for the community. Development of additional river-related amenities including pavilions, restrooms, picnic facilities, and adequate parking can serve to expand tourism in town. Improvements at Capon Bridge River access points should be coordinated with other jurisdictions along the river. As part of developing river tourism, there needs to be secondary and tertiary businesses in Capon Bridge that support river tourism, including small craft rentals, foodstuffs, lodging, and camping.

The focus in Capon Bridge should be on developing and maintaining small businesses, especially ones geared towards the everyday lives of the town's

citizens. One stakeholder said, "it would be great if the town could provide or otherwise facilitate support for businesses that are here, resources such as business classes, opportunities for collaboration, public speakers, and seminars." Citizens also suggested quarterly meetings with business owners to foster collaboration and cohesiveness of the community.

During the comprehensive plan process there were several distinct types of businesses identified as being important to develop in Capon Bridge. The first was a grocer or co-op that provides fresh produce year around in Capon Bridge. Many residents go to Winchester for their shopping, particularly for produce. An additional family restaurant or a brewery would also be welcomed. Almost all participants that were asked about childcare said it was needed and would be well utilized. Before and after school childcare located near the school is also needed.

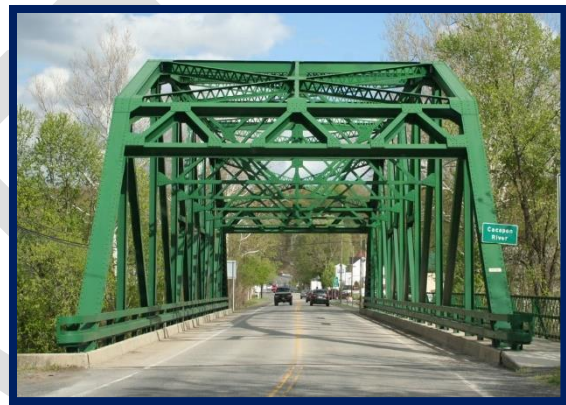


There is a need to encourage business development and non-profit creation that focuses on youth activities and recreational opportunities. Part of this is dependent on market forces and supply and demand. Local leaders can use survey data collected to show a desire and demand for youth-oriented businesses and activities.

There are only a few turnkey business spaces currently available in town, the most notable being where Greg's Restaurant was located. An activity that could be helpful is to develop and periodically update an inventory of storefronts that are available for business development. An inventory could be extended to include improved and unimproved land in Capon Bridge that could be purchased or leased for business development.

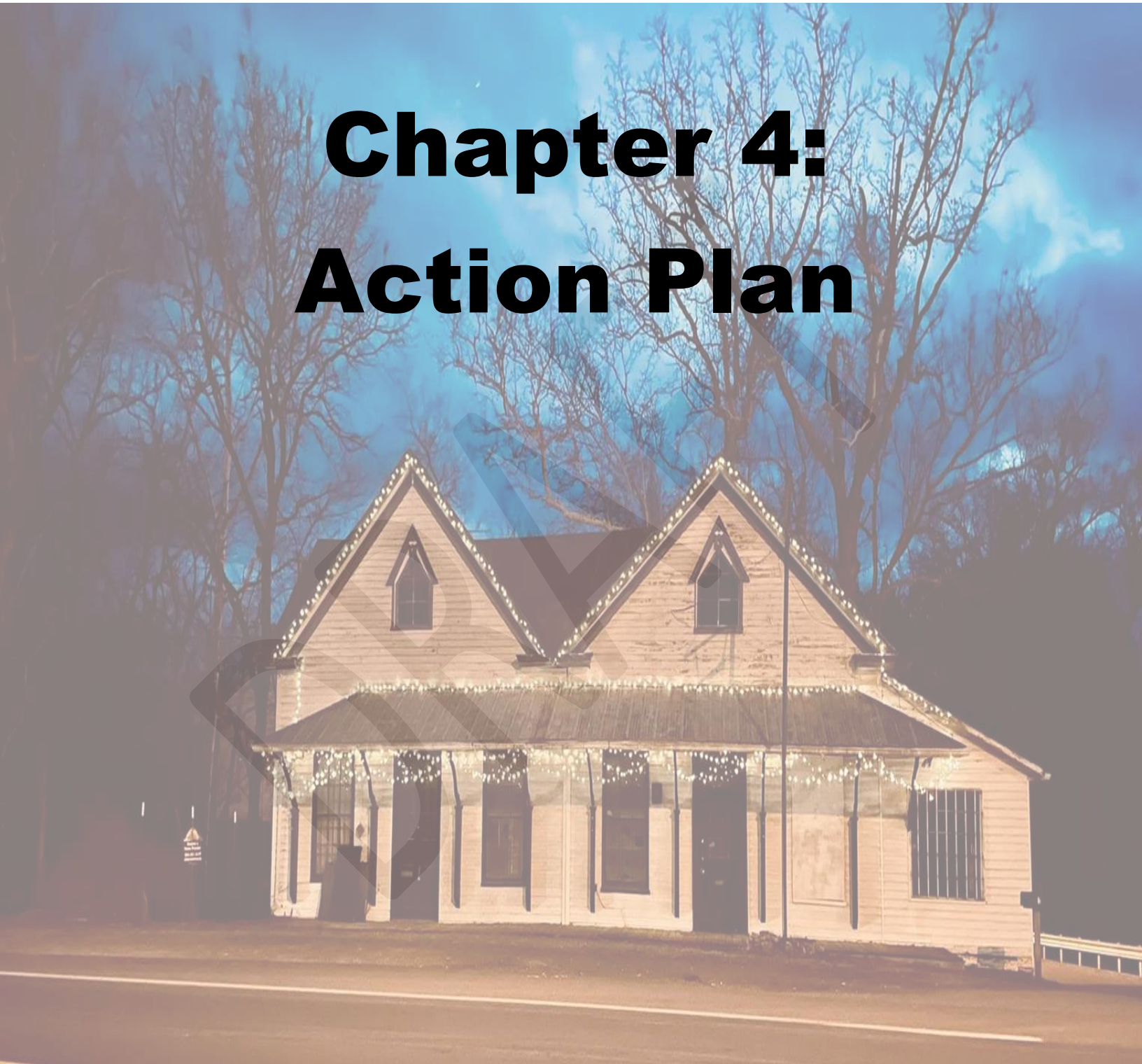
While it is important for town officials to focus their efforts on business development in Capon Bridge, they also need to participate in county and

regional economic development initiatives. For example, the town officials should work with Region 8 Planning and Development Council on the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).





# **Chapter 4: Action Plan**



The purpose of the action plan is to provide recommendations for the issues and concerns that were identified by the community in the Chapter 3 Needs Assessment. Goals, objectives, and action steps were created based on analysis of current conditions in Capon Bridge and feedback from community members. Goals are overarching and more aspirational in nature. There are six goals that were identified by Capon Bridge officials. Under each goal are multiple objectives which are more narrowly focused and provide more specificity towards reaching the overarching goal. Under each objective are a series of action steps. These action steps provide the community with specific and discrete directives to achieving the objective. The action steps provide guidance for achieving the overarching goals.

At the end of the Chapter 4 Action Plan is the implementation matrix. While part of the comprehensive plan, the implementation matrix can be used as a

standalone document. The purpose of the implementation matrix is to provide more information to future decision makers in Capon Bridge on how to achieve the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. The implementation matrix outlines the priority, timeline, entity responsible, and potential costs for each action step. The implementation matrix should be internally consistent with the rest of the comprehensive plan.

## **Goal 1 – Ensure compliance with relevant land use statutes**

### **1.1 Objective - Update zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with current goals and objectives**

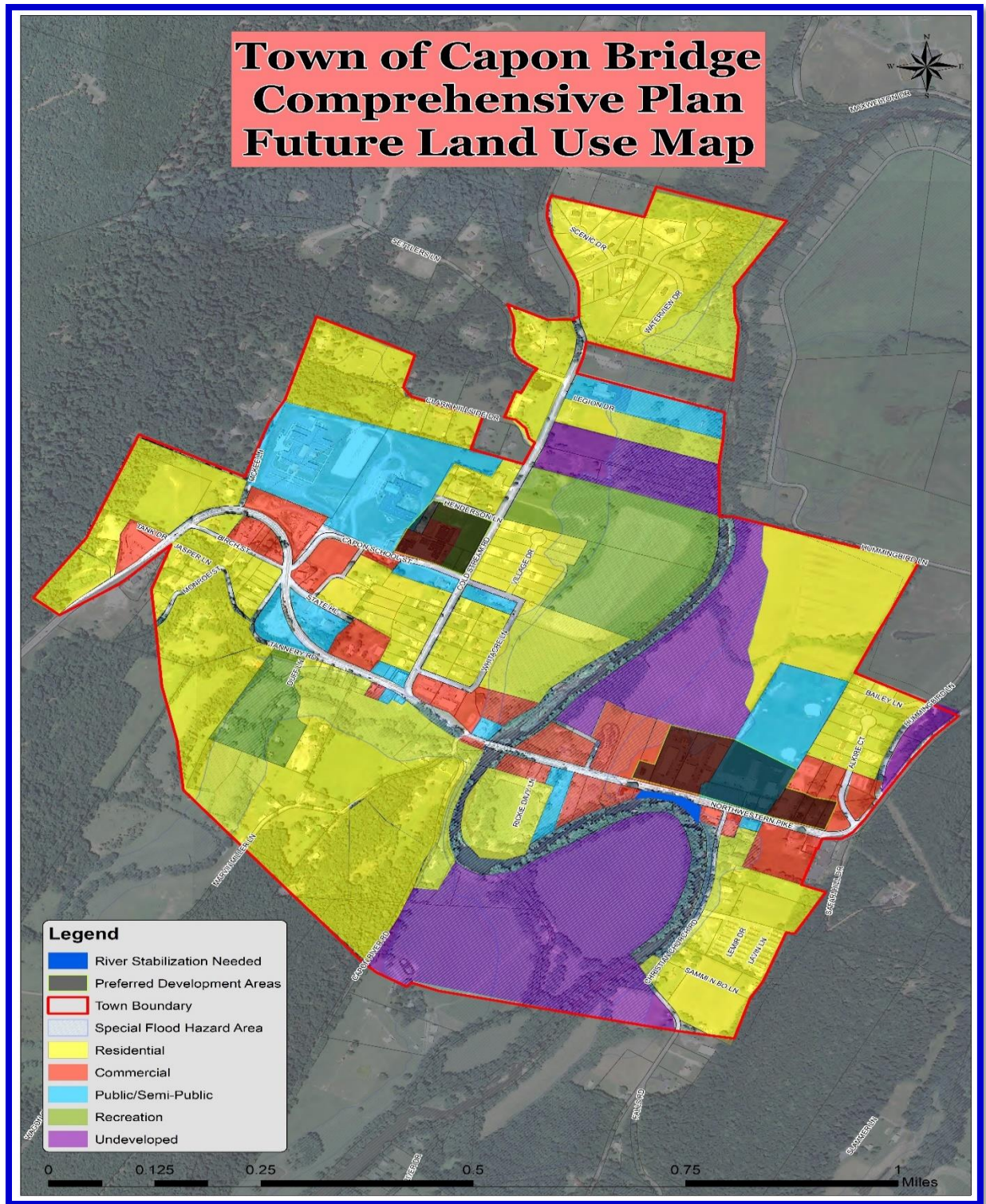
Action Step 1.1.1. Create a zoning map

Action Step 1.1.2. Ensure that uses and districts are updated to reflect changes in the community

Action Step 1.1.3. Proactively address concerns related to short term rentals









## 1.2 Objective - Adopt ordinances that address abandoned and dilapidated structures

Action Step 1.2.1. Ensure MDIA is fully satisfying needs of the community through enforcement of the building code

Action Step 1.2.2. Enact a vacant and uninhabitable property registry

Action Step 1.2.3. Seek grant funding for demolition or rehabilitation of dilapidated structures

Action Step 1.2.4. Create inventory of abandoned and dilapidated properties

## 1.3 Objective - Promote sustainable growth and development

Action Step 1.3.1. Consider annexation based on the limitations of available treated water from the town

Action Step 1.3.2. Develop building intensity and minimum lot size standards

Action Step 1.3.3. Growth policies must be considered against the limitations of available treated water

Action Step 1.3.4. Assist county officials with enforcing the floodplain ordinance inside the town's corporate boundaries

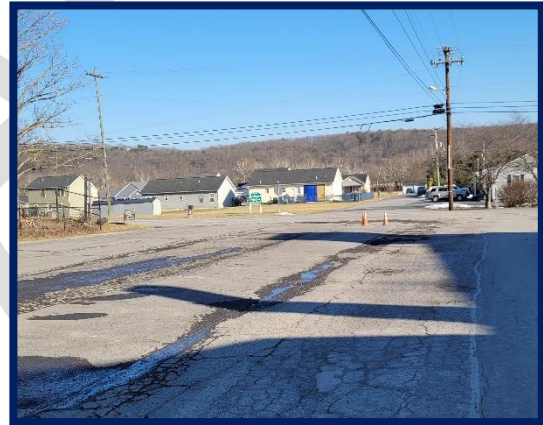
## Goal 2- Provide well maintained and adequate infrastructure

### 2.1 Objective- Emphasize walkability by way of additional sidewalks and trails

Action Step 2.1.1. Develop a detailed plan that focuses on pedestrian systems, including sidewalks and walking trails

Action Step 2.1.2. Work with WVDOH to develop a sidewalk along Route 50

Action Step 2.1.3. Develop pedestrian facilities along Capon School Street



Action Step 2.1.4. Consider connectivity for walking and biking around town, including existing trails at Fort Edwards

Action Step 2.1.5. Complete Phase II and Phase III of the Capon School Street infrastructure projects

Action Step 2.1.6. Include safety and aesthetic features such as benches, lamp posts, and uniform signage when

considering infrastructure and transportation improvement projects

## **2.2 Objective-Address water, wastewater, and stormwater issues**

Action Step 2.2.1. Identify and plan for a 2<sup>nd</sup> water source

Action Step 2.2.2. Work with DNR to continue to utilize the town spring as a primary water source

Action Step 2.2.3. Need to reduce Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) and properly seal manholes

Action Step 2.2.4. Ensure property owners are installing culverts correctly so that they are large enough and are not catching debris

## **2.3 Objective- Advocate for better broadband and telecommunications service in town**

Action Step 2.3.1. Periodically provide telecommunications providers with a list of available locations to place cellular communications facilities

Action Step 2.3.2. Continue to support HardyNet and any other reliable Internet Service Provider (ISP), to provide high-speed internet access for Capon Bridge residents and business owners

Action Step 2.3.3. Identify gaps in service for broadband and cellular service

## **Goal 3- Provide adequate public and recreational space to meet the needs of both residents and visitors**

### **3.1 Objective - Identify and prioritize recreational spaces and events**

Action Step 3.1.1. Seek entrepreneurs that will provide indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities

Action Step 3.1.2. Survey children and parents about what is needed recreationally in Capon Bridge

Action Step 3.1.3. Continue to develop and promote year-round events that benefit both residents and visitors, including Founders Day and Light Up Capon Bridge



Action Step 3.1.4. Organize new community-focused events such as fun runs, cooking contests, sidewalk chalk art contest, etc.

### **3.2 Objective- Develop town-owned recreational facilities, while supporting other recreational amenities open to the public**

Action Step 3.2.1. Improve recreational facilities along the riverfront, understanding the limitations of being in the floodplain

Action Step 3.2.2. Work with DNR to provide additional water access within in town limits, and with county officials to develop other access points outside Capon Bridge

Action Step 3.2.3. Develop town-owned recreational land

Action Step 3.2.4. Support existing recreational amenities in town that are not town-owned, including the community center, fairgrounds, and library

Action Step 3.2.5. Coordinate and collaborate with County CVB to develop a visitor/welcome center, preferably manned or a kiosk where information could be displayed prominently

## **Goal 4- Promote creation and retention of a housing stock that is well maintained, affordable, and accessible to folks who intend to make Capon Bridge their home**

### **4.1 Objective: Provide a well-maintained housing stock**

Action Step 4.1.1. Ensure the safety of renters through active enforcement of landlord-tenant laws and the building code

Action Step 4.1.2. Encourage mitigation measures for housing in the floodplain including floodproofing, elevating the structure, or relocation out of the floodplain

Action Step 4.1.3. Encourage adequate housing for seniors and persons with disabilities, including assisted living arrangements

### **4.2 Objective: Consider policies that protect owner-occupied and long-term renter housing**

Action Step 4.2.1. Identify new areas for housing, either through new residential construction or through adaptive reuse

Action Step 4.2.2. Consider methods to protect the limited housing stock for long



term renters and owner-occupied housing

Action Step 4.2.3. Ensure public is aware that limitations on future expansion of housing is based on the current municipal water situation

Action Step 4.2.4. At least once every other year, poll residents about housing needs, update regulations and ordinances to reflect any changes in the needs of the community related to housing

## **Goal 5- Preserve the historical amenities found in and around Capon Bridge**

### **5.1 Objective – Encourage the preservation of historical structures and places**

Action Step 5.1.1. Consider creation of historic district in Capon Bridge

Action Step 5.1.2. Complete a survey of all the historically significant properties and structures in town

Action Step 5.1.3. Research and forward grant funding materials for historic preservation and rehabilitation efforts to property owners

### **5.2 Objective -Coordinate efforts for existing and new historic preservation efforts**

Action Step 5.2.1. Create a municipal Historic Landmarks Commission

Action Step 5.2.2. Ensure that citizens and property owners understand what historic designation means

Action Step 5.2.3. Further cultivate the relationship between the town and the existing organizations that are focused on historic preservation in and around Capon Bridge

Action Step 5.2.4. Support the efforts by the library, Fort Edwards Foundation, and other organizations that are gathering historically significant documents and artifacts for preservation

## **Goal 6- Support the development of existing businesses and appropriately scaled new business**

### **6.1 Objective- Increase recreational activities in and around Capon Bridge**

Action Step 6.1.1. Improve recreational river access, both in number of access points and the amenities found at the access points

Action Step 6.1.2. Encourage the development of businesses that are

supplemental to the outdoor recreation business sector

Action Step 6.1.3. Provide more entertainment and recreational opportunities, particularly for local youth

## **6.2 Objective- Identify the types of businesses desired and space for these businesses to be located**

Action Step 6.2.1. Actively recruit businesses that are needed in town including childcare and a grocery store

Action Step 6.2.2. Seek entrepreneurs that might utilize turnkey business sites in Capon Bridge

Action Step 6.2.3. Create a list, updated yearly, of spaces that could be leased or purchased for commercial purposes

## **6.3 Objective- Provide support for small business development and startups in Capon Bridge**

Action Step 6.3.1. Help organize quarterly meetings of local business owners

Action Step 6.3.2. Support small business classes and identify opportunities for collaboration amongst Capon Bridge businesses and organizations

Action Step 6.3.3. Improve the aesthetics of the gateways into town

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fortedwards.org/history.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wvhistoryonview.org/image/012747.jpg>

<sup>3</sup> <https://historichampshire.org/histories/CB-earlyroads.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://townofcaponbridge.wv.gov/history/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://historichampshire.org/aerial/caponbridgeair/caponbridgeair.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101>

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0100000US&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101>

<sup>10</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=DECENNIALSF12010.P1>

<sup>11</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-3/volume-3-p8.pdf>, page 107

<sup>13</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

<sup>14</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Hampshire+County,+West+Virginia&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

<sup>15</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1601>

<sup>16</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0400000US54&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1901>

<sup>19</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1901>

<sup>20</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0500000US54027&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1901>

<sup>21</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0801>

<sup>22</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S0801>

<sup>23</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.H1>

<sup>24</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table?g=1600000US5413108&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP04>

<sup>25</sup> University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings West Virginia State Report 2022.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/west-virginia/data-and-resources>

<sup>27</sup> <https://caponbridge.lib.wv.us/aboutus.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.mapwv.gov/flood/map/?wkid=102100&x=-8731112&y=4764404&l=9&v=0>

<sup>29</sup> Email Correspondence, February 24, 2023, Phil Dinterman, WV Geological and Economic Survey

<sup>30</sup> Id.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.waterworld.com/home/article/14070145/nonrevenue-water-loss-its-causes-and-cures>