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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan provides a picture of the past, present and desired future of the community. The plan documents existing conditions and emerging trend, and identifies the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The plan defines the community’s vision and goals, and outlines specific implementation strategies that will be necessary in order to achieve the vision and goals.

The Code of Virginia §15.2-2223 requires that a municipality develop and adopt a comprehensive plan, and then review the plan for needed updates every five years.

Sections 15.2-2223 - 2233 identify specific requirements for elements of the plan, including:

- A transportation plan consistent with the Virginia Department of Transportation
- Affordable housing data
- Studies of:
  - Land use
  - Agricultural production and preservation
  - Current development and growth trends
  - Natural resources
  - Historic areas
  - Ground and surface water and geologic factors
  - Population factors
  - Employment and economic factors and
  - Existing public facilities
- Flood control and flood damage prevention measures
- Dam break inundation zones and
- Transmission of electricity.

This document is intended to serves as Buchanan’s comprehensive plan. It is comprised of a summary document and a technical appendix. The summary is meant to be read widely by community members and used to guide the future of Buchanan. The technical appendix contains the data and detailed information that serve as the foundation for the overall plan.
CHAPTER 2: OUR VISION

Our vision for Buchanan is... (to be filled in by Town staff)

FUTURE LAND USE

Figure 1 Future Land Use Map
CHAPTER 3: GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Our primary goals include:

1) Goal one
2) Goal two
3) Goal three

We will be able to achieve these goals if we do the following:

1) Implementation strategy one
2) Implementation strategy two
3) Implementation strategy three
CHAPTER 4: HISTORY

Buchanan is located at the intersection of the northeast-southwest overland route and the James River, providing east-west transport for goods within Virginia.

The history and economic growth of Buchanan followed changes and advances in modes of transportation along these two major transportation corridors. Between 1830 and 1860, commerce and artisan manufacturing boomed in response to improvements in roads and canals. The period between the American Civil War and 1880 saw a decline in activity due to the replacement of canal transport by railroad. Following the end of the Second World War, Buchanan benefitted from increased truck traffic resulting from the construction of Interstate 81.

Exploration and Early Settlement (1740-1830)

Robert Looney made settlement in what is now Buchanan around 1740. Looney founded the first recorded colonial American settlement south of Purgatory Mountain, along the James River. The ferry that he established helped to bring thousands of settlers from Pennsylvania across the James River into western Virginia and northwestern North Carolina.

Buchanan derives its name from one of these settlers, John Buchanan, who settled on 775 acres of land along both sides of the James River with his father-in-law James Patton. Buchanan and Patton had helped to mark the path of the Great Road from the Shenandoah Valley to Looney’s Ford on the James River before settling in the region. Upon
Patton’s death in 1755, Buchanan inherited his land, and their heirs posthumously founded the towns of Pattonsburg (1788) and Buchanan (1812).

**Internal Improvements (1830-1880)**

Between 1830 and 1860, two major projects contributed to the substantial growth of Pattonsburg and Buchanan: the Cumberland Gap Turnpike, and the James River and Kanawha Canal. The Cumberland Gap Turnpike paved the way for agricultural produce transport from Kentucky and southwest Virginia to Buchanan by wagon. The James River and Kanawha Canal opened river transport of goods from western Virginia to the City of Richmond. Both projects allowed Buchanan to serve as an important Confederate supply depot during the American Civil War by transporting agricultural produce and iron to Richmond through the James River and Kanawha Canal.

**Steel Rail (1880-1920)**

In the 1880s, the extension of railroads to Pattonsburg and Buchanan brought increased prosperity to the towns. Two Railroad lines, the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Norfolk and Western, significantly expanded the industrial capacities of Buchanan and Pattonsburg. This industrial boom resulted from the supply of heavier freight and products at a cheaper and faster rate. Steel rails not only increased the rate of transportation of goods going through the towns but also increased local industrial employment. The arrival of steel rail coincided with the consolidation of Pattonsburg and Buchanan into Town of Buchanan by an Act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1882.

**Twentieth Century and Onward (1920-Present)**

From 1920 to 1940, industrial employment in Buchanan would increase the production of limestone and the manufacturing of buttons and bone meal. At the end of World War II, industrial production and manufacturing expanded to silicone, rubber products, and textiles.

Since the 1960s, the development of Interstate 81 affected Buchanan with increased overland truck traffic and expanded shipping of garments for textile manufacturing.

Today, after decades of physical and economic decline, Buchanan boasts a strong heritage in commerce, industrial manufacturing, and its status as Virginia’s “Gateway to the Southwest.” It also enjoys a rich concentration of historic structures dating back to the early-to-mid 19th century, with over 200 structures that are more than 50 years old. Following recent annexations, Buchanan’s population has grown to nearly 1,200: the largest it has ever been.
HONORING BUCHANAN’S HISTORY

Buchanan prides itself in its history and historic preservation efforts. Two archeological sites and 368 structures are on, or are eligible for nomination to, the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

A pristine example of one of these structures is the Wilson Warehouse at 421 Lowe Street. Built in 1839, the historic house museum was once a combined store, warehouse, and private residence. The Wilson Warehouse is the only structure individually nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register.

In 1998, the National Register of Historic Place recognized the Buchanan Historic District in its registry. Consisting of over 200 structures, it is the focal point of Buchanan's small town charm.
CHAPTER 5:

NATURAL RESOURCES

Climate

Buchanan experiences moderate mild winters and warm summers. Average low temperatures range from 25.1 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 65.8 degrees in July. Average high temperatures range from 45.7 degrees in January to 88.9 degrees in July. Average rainfalls vary by month and range from 2.8 inches per month to 4.53 inches per month.

Geology and Soils/Topography

Bedrock in the area consists primarily of shale and limestone. Soils are mostly deep, well drained, and moderately permeable, on gently sloping to moderately steep high terrace land. They also include some deep, nearly level, mostly well-drained floodplain soils.

Buchanan is a part of the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province. The topography is a series of nearly parallel ridges and valleys. The town is linear in form due to the path of the James River.
and surrounding mountains. Elevations range from 810 feet at the James River to 1,050 feet on the eastern side of town.

**Surface Water**

Buchanan lies in the Upper James River watershed. The James River flows southward from the Alleghany Highlands through the Town of Buchanan. The James River is a vital asset to the town of Buchanan, and drains the largest watershed in the state connecting 38 counties and 17 cities that lie within the basin’s drainage. The headwaters of the James originate along the Virginia/West Virginia State line, at the confluence of the Jackson and Cow pasture Rivers in Alleghany Mountains. It flows 348 miles from its headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay.

A number of waterways flow through town. Looney Creek and Laurel Creek join with Long Creek and then enter the James River to the west of town, draining a large portion of Botetourt County. Dry Run Creek flows northward from Cove Mountain parallel to Gorge Road, to the James River. Bearwallow Creek flows into the James just east of town. Purgatory Creek flows south into the James River at the eastern limits of Buchanan, draining Back Creek Mountain and Purgatory Mountain.

Of the above waterways, Looney Creek is the only waterbody listed as impaired by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The 40,000 acre Looney Creek watershed lies almost entirely within Botetourt County. A 2007 Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation strategy for Looney creek indicated that it does not meet bacteria water quality standards for swimming. Approximately 60% of the bacteria found in the Creek comes from human, pet, or livestock sources.

Agricultural best management practices (BMPs), such as streamside fencing for cattle and pasture management, are necessary to meet the goals for bacteria reductions in the Creek. There is also a need for residential best management practices to identify and correct failing septic systems and pipes into the creek.

**Groundwater**

Groundwater is the source for all public and private water supplies serving Buchanan residents. Groundwater is obtained from three wells. The average well yield from a private well in Buchanan is about 18.88 gallons per minute. The average municipal well yield is about 240 gallons per minute. Water is distributed throughout the system by one concrete reservoir, three storage tanks, three booster pumping stations and the distribution piping. The town uses liquid hypochlorite to disinfect the well water; chlorination occurs after the raw water has been pumped to the surface by the well pumps and prior to discharge to the chlorine contact tanks.
As the primary water source for the town, Well #1 discharges water into a 15,000-gallon chlorine contact tank, feeding the area along Route 4 and the Carson's Hill pump station, and finally into the Boblett Tank, which is a 250,000-gallon main water storage tank constructed through the 2011 water system improvements project. Well #2 delivers water through the 100,000-gallon storage reservoir into the water system from the north side of the James River. Well #3 located at the end of the Red Horse Lane discharges water into the nearby 200,000-gallon water tank #3 after chlorination. The town added Well #4 during the 2001 water system improvement project near the intersection of Red Horse Lane and New Town Road, which will supply water to the storage tank #3 as well as the Boblett Tank in the future.

Groundwater recharge is improved by permeable landcover, so reducing hard surfaces facilitates groundwater recharge. In addition, the longer water is retained on site, the more likely it will be able to infiltrate and recharge the aquifer. Trees and vegetated open space facilitate water recharge by funneling water to the ground and facilitating absorption. Tree roots provide channels in the soil to facilitate water movement into the ground. Water moving through vegetated areas also is cleansed and arrives in better condition to the aquifer.
The characteristics of limestone allow for excellent wells for many property owners but this type of geology also poses problems such as the potential for sinkhole formation. Limestone geology also presents challenges with groundwater supply reliability when multiple developments can access and draw down a single groundwater source. Limestone also can be a problem because channels formed in the highly erodible substrate may allow land surface contaminants to reach the aquifer faster and with little to no filtration.

MAP 1: EXISTING TREE CANOPY AND PUBLIC WELLS MAP
MAP 2: IMPERVIOUS SURFACE MAP
Urban Forest

Trees are key to protecting clean water. A primary determinant of stream health is the degree to which the stream is buffered by natural vegetation. A woody vegetated buffer of 100 feet wide can remove more than 90% of the nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment from overland runoff. If stormwater pipes bypass the buffer underneath and discharge to the stream directly, then much of the buffer benefits for mitigating polluted runoff are lost. Even with these caveats, a general rule of thumb is that impacts to aquatic life tend to be seen even at impervious levels just above 10% (Schueler 2003). Even where there are forested buffers along streams, roads or underground utilities make it difficult to add more trees or the polluted runoff may still reach the stream through stormwater discharge pipes routed underneath the buffer. In those cases, additional strategies to intercept and clean stormwater flows are needed. However, a healthy urban forest canopy and well vegetated streambanks are the first line of defense against water pollution and stormwater runoff.

Taken together clusters of trees along with other native vegetation such as shrubs, native grasses and flowers, provide important habitats wildlife. Even in a Town, smaller habitats add up and provide myriad benefits for other wildlife, such as salamanders, birds, pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Towns across America are beginning to recognize the importance of their urban trees because they provide tremendous dividends. For example, Buchanan’s trees provide a strategic way to reduce excess stormwater runoff and flooding. Studies have shown that urban canopy can reduce a Town’s stormwater runoff by anywhere from two to seven percent (Fazio 2010).

The town’s urban tree canopy stands at 35 percent. The National Arbor Day Foundation recommends canopies of 40 percent as an ideal goal. To achieve 40 percent town-wide tree canopy by adding 5 percent more, about 70 additional acres need to be covered by trees. For example, this would equate to adding 5,700 Dogwoods, 2,500 Red Maples, 800 White Oaks or 39,000 Crape myrtles.

In the past few years, the town has planted 58 new trees (2015-16). This is an impressive number for a small town. For the future, rather than seeking a percentage of canopy increase, the town should focus its efforts on plantings that enhance historic areas, walking paths and the James River.

Even one tree can play an important role in stormwater management. For example, estimates for the amount of water a typical street tree can intercept in its crown range from 760 gallons to 4000 gallons per tree per year, depending on the species and age. The larger the tree, the greater its benefits for absorbing stormwater, providing shade and energy savings.
The town has recently planted trees in the fairgrounds along the river. However, street trees also need to be replaced periodically as they age and die across the town. To ensure continued canopy health, the town should regularly plant new street trees and encourage residents to plant native trees in their yards to prevent runoff and shade the town. For a small town such as Buchanan, having a landscape architect care for its trees and to be growing its urban forest is a noteworthy aspect of the town’s management. Buchanan is a Tree City USA and was recently provided a growth award from the State of Virginia and the National Arbor Day Foundation in recognition of the town’s stewardship of its trees.

However, even with the town’s current efforts, more work will be needed to maintain the town’s trees. In urban environments, many trees do not survive to their full potential life span. Factors, such as lack of watering or insufficient soil volume, put stresses on urban trees, stunt their growth or reduce their lifespans. For every 100 street trees planted, only 50 will survive 13-20 years (Roman 2014). Survival rates vary greatly due to differences in planting conditions, species and other factors, such as susceptibility to storms. This means that when planting new trees, the Town should plant more than are necessary to account for future mortality. In addition, it is important to recognize that an older, well-treed neighborhood of today may not have good coverage in the future unless more young trees – the next generation – are planted today.

As noted, a key determinant of the health of a stream is how forested its watershed is, not just along the stream, but overall, throughout the drainage. In urban areas, vacant and underutilized parcels often provide opportunities for revegetation and infiltration. The map of vacant parcels shows places that are still undeveloped or empty and might provide options to replant them with trees or to consider developments that have smaller footprints and more open spaces.
FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

Opportunities

Buchanan’s natural resources and landscape define the identity of the town. The surrounding mountains and waterways provide opportunities for recreation for residents and visitors and a beautiful setting for this historic community. The Upper James River Water Trail, the Appalachian Trail, and the Blue Ridge Parkway offer opportunities for recreation and tourism, promoting economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of Buchanan’s residents.

Studies show that Americans are aging in place. Older residents prefer to take walks near to where they live rather than driving long distances to access trails and paths. Buchanan’s sidewalk network and river access are key amenities and need to be maintained and expanded to provide safe travel throughout the town. Residents would like more opportunities for walking and greater promotion of the town’s proximity to nearby national trails can also be touted.

The town’s trees and vegetation provide many values for residents and visitors alike including shade, beauty, stormwater absorption and financial savings. For example, trees clean air pollution from cars and shaded pavement lasts longer. Properties with trees also have higher value.

Trees also absorb stormwater. One acre of pavement releases 36 times more runoff than a forest. During a rainfall event of one inch, one acre of forest will release 750 gallons of runoff, while a parking lot will release 27,000 gallons. (Penn State Extension). Protecting and expanding the town’s urban forest will help recharge the aquifer and clean and reduce stormwater runoff.

When trees are not present, distances are perceived to be longer and destinations farther away, making people less inclined to walk than if streets and walkways are well treed (Wolf 2008). Businesses often depend on pedestrian traffic to get new customers, so the more walkers there are, the more likely an attractive, street front store display will be able to lure new shoppers. The vacant parcels in the town provide opportunities for redevelopment as well as re-greening with trees and other native vegetation.

Following are issues that are key to both ecological and economic revitalization
Buchanan’s downtown is central to its wellbeing, as revenues from sales taxes support the town and provide shopping, food and entertainment for both residents and visitors. Shoppers in tree lined districts spend 13 percent more on average than in non-treed areas and people are more likely to walk in areas with trees because distances are perceived to be shorter (Wolf 2008).

**Challenges**

Just as we manage the built environment, the town also needs to actively manage its natural assets. The town’s natural resources can be thought of as its ‘green infrastructure.’ As Buchanan plans for grey infrastructure – sidewalks, drainage or utilities, it also needs to plan for its parks, trails, trees and landscaping. Green infrastructure includes all the town’s natural assets that include street trees and vegetation, water resources including the James River and tributaries and springs, groundwater, as well as public recreation spaces including the riverfront park.
These ‘green infrastructure’ assets also need to be well managed to ensure their healthful condition and longevity. The protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as streams and their buffers, protection of wellhead areas and natural areas and open space are necessary to ensure good surface and groundwater quality and quantity. Unfortunately, the town’s age and size mean that it lacks adequate stormwater management. Steep slopes channel untreated stormwater directly to the James River. Untreated runoff not only harms the river’s aquatic life but it can also exacerbate flooding and deter fishing and swimming.

Sound management of the town’s green infrastructure is also important for public safety. The James River will continue to flood and management of its floodplain as well as protection against flood damages are key to continued economic, environmental and public health. The James River’s 100-year floodplain varies from a few hundred feet to several thousand feet in width. The widest floodplain is between Interstate 81 and the Town of Buchanan. Flooding is concerning for Buchanan because of the flooding of the James River throughout the year.

Floods have damaged many structures in the past. In November 1985, the area was devastated by a crest that exceeded a 600-year flood event. Since 1985, the James River has peaked five times, the highest in 1996 at a gage height of 29.24 feet. Following the flooding damage, the town remediated the riverbank by removing flood debris and cleared the bank of trees. In the past several years, the town replaced some of the lost trees on the upper floodplain spaced to allow for use of the fields for festival parking. The immediate floodway and floodplain remain un-treed adjacent to the river below the fairgrounds.

Groundwater is an important resource for the near future. Groundwater resources are currently meeting the demands of residents and businesses, but this may not always be the case. The wise management of groundwater though recharge protection and water conservation can ensure an adequate supply of clean drinking water sources for Buchanan for years to come.

NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS

Goal One: Protect the health of the James River, its tributaries and groundwater by preventing excessive stormwater runoff.

Goal Two: Provide for enjoyment of the town’s natural assets though outdoor recreation and expanded access.

Goal Three: Protect the scenic and cultural resources of the town by preserving vegetation and viewsheds throughout the town.
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation Strategy One:

Goal One: Protect the health of the James River, its tributaries and groundwater by preventing excessive stormwater runoff.

Obj. 1A: Continue to plant trees in the town especially along the James River as well as along public streets and pathways to soak up rainwater and prevent stormwater runoff.

Use the town’s tree canopy map to guide plantings to areas lacking in canopy cover. Create a budget for annual tree planting and maintenance program, and establish a long-term partnership with funders such as Virginia Department of Forestry and US Forest Service. Consider asking residents to adopt a tree and provide pruning and watering during spring and summer months. Host tree care workshops at the library and park to teach proper tree care and maintenance.

Obj. 1B: Plant trees near town wellheads to prevent water runoff and to promote water infiltration and cleansing.

Use the existing map of well heads and canopy to guide planting goals. Educate landowners located near town wellheads about the importance of avoiding improper storage or chemicals or other machinery that may leak and leach into the groundwater. Encourage town residents to adopt water conservation measures such as low-flow showerheads and toilets to reduce demand on the aquifer and ensure its longevity. Post water conservation tips on the town’s website and in utility bills.

Obj. 1C: Consider the use of permeable pavement for parking areas used primarily by cars and light trucks.

The town currently has an innovative treed parking area along the river. This concept can be utilized throughout the town in a different way. Permeable pavement is concrete which is set with larger openings to allow water to flow through. This can be used on both lightly travelled parking areas as well as sidewalks. Not only does this allow water to run into the ground and recharge the aquifer, it also does not freeze in the winter. This means that sidewalks are safer for pedestrians and parking lots have less freeze-thaw cycles that lead to cracking and replacement. The town may want to offer incentives for developers to apply this technology or apply for grant to resurface city and school lots with this treatment, as they need to be

Implementation Strategy Two:
Goal Two: Provide for enjoyment of the town’s natural assets though outdoor recreation and expanded access.

Objective 2A: Create an improved sidewalk network to allow for pedestrian traffic throughout the town especially north to south as well as east to west to connect neighborhoods to Main Street.

Restore sidewalks running east to west in neighborhoods that connect to Main Street and plant trees along streets and new sidewalks where possible. Build new sidewalks connecting the South end of Main Street to the Elementary school. Use new opportunities to plant trees such as along sidewalks at Northern entrance corridor to Buchanan.

Obj. 2B: Consider cross promotion of tourism and outdoor recreation. Host events to link boating with tourism such as more water based festivals. Consider offering discount coupons to restaurants for those who visit the canoe livery or vice versa to encourage outdoor users to enjoy town amenities.

Goal Three: Protect the scenic and cultural resources of the town by preserving vegetation and viewsheds throughout the town.

Implementation Strategy Three:

Obj. 3A: Consider adding more pocket parks in the town. In order to provide a stronger outdoor recreation network, establish pocket parks within the town boundaries. Pocket parks are relatively cheap to implement and can transform a vacant lot into a natural haven. Prioritize placement of the pocket parks in neighborhoods that lack easy access to the elementary school and Buchanan Riverfront Park. Set up an “adopt a tree” program for adjacent businesses and residents to take ownership of the trees within these pocket parks.

Obj. 3B: Adopt an entrance corridor overlay to guide design of signage and street frontage on the main entrances and Main Street into the town. This will allow the town to present its historic character and ensure the protection of all residents’ property values.
Obj. 3C: Consider an ‘adopt-a-spot’ program for local businesses to sponsor small gardens throughout entryways. Similar efforts in cities such as Lynchburg and Charlottesville have allowed beautification at no cost to the municipality while allowing residents a change to promote civic pride.
CHAPTER 6: POPULATION

The Town of Buchanan has maintained a steady population over the last 20 years. The population was 1,222 people in 1990 and has dropped only slightly since then, to 1,217 people. The largest population growth in Buchanan occurred from 2010 to 2011, when Buchanan’s population changed from its lowest total to its highest over the past 25 years -- a gain of 245 residents.

LOCAL YOUTH

Buchanan strives to create an environment that encourages beneficial youth development. Buchanan is a fantastic place to raise children because of its strong community ties. About one-fourth of the population is below the age of 18. That number continues to grow; however, Buchanan is currently experiencing a decline in the number of residents between 15 and 34 years old. While the other age groups have experienced growth, the 15-34-year-old population decreased about 29% between 1990 and 2013.

POPULATION GOALS

1) Goal one
2) Goal two
3) Goal three

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1) Implementation strategy one
2) Implementation strategy two
3) Implementation strategy three
CHAPTER 7: HOUSING

Housing Age, Occupancy, and Safety

Only 19% of Buchanan houses were built after 1990. About half were built before 1970, and almost 30% before 1930. The oldest home dates back to 1837. Buchanan’s housing stock is too large for the current population, with over 120 vacant homes out of about 600 total. No homes lack plumbing or a kitchen according to the most recent census data.

Housing Value and Building Permits

Median home value is $138,300 in Buchanan and building permits total almost $2,000,000 in surrounding Botetourt County. These values decreased in the last ten years due in large part to the national housing and global financial crises.

Housing Characteristics

About one-fourth of all homes in Buchanan are renter-occupied. The remaining three-fourths are owner-occupied, and about 75% of all homes are single-family dwellings. The remaining homes are mobile or manufactured homes, plus a small number of buildings with two or more units.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There are currently no designated affordable housing areas in the Town of Buchanan. The Town has no public housing, nor do residents use Section 8 vouchers for their housing needs. Buchanan housing has become less affordable in the last ten years, with 27% of owners and 41% of renters paying 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Buchanan is still more affordable than at the state level. Median rent in Buchanan is only 72% of the statewide median rent. About 28% of residents spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs.

Access to Community Facilities

The following map shows the proximity of affordable housing to community facilities and access via existing transportation infrastructure. The Code of Virginia, §15.2-2223, states that localities “shall take into consideration how to align transportation infrastructure and facilities
with affordable, accessible housing and community services.” Because Buchanan has no designated affordable housing area and because housing cost data is only available by census tract, it is appropriate to show Buchanan’s affordability relative to the rest of the County. It includes community facilities outside of Buchanan since most residents use facilities outside of town limits.

Figure 5: Housing Affordability and Community Services Map

This map shows that Buchanan residents without a vehicle lack access to notable facilities such as a hospital, grocery store, and public transit. This lack of access may prohibit low-income families and families without vehicles from living in Buchanan. An aging population necessitates
attention to this issue. Public transit and hospital access are located in Roanoke or Bedford, 30 miles and 20 miles away respectively. On the other hand, community facilities are accessible via transportation infrastructure by car, and housing in Buchanan is fairly affordable relative to its surroundings.

**HOUSING GOALS**

1) Goal one  
2) Goal two  
3) Goal three  

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

1) Implementation strategy one  
2) Implementation strategy two  
3) Implementation strategy three
CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC FACILITIES

Buchanan has similar public facilities as other small towns. Many key services, such as police, fire, and schools are a product of Botetourt County. Buchanan houses one elementary school within town limits, and the location of the middle and high schools are within the surrounding county.

Buchanan has two railroads, one alongside the James River, and another that passes through the town from southeast to northeast. The distribution of roads exists intensively in between parcels in the center of town.

Figure 4 (on the following page) is a map shows the existing land use of all the different parcels in the town. The map highlights all of the publically owned lands. In total, the Town of Buchanan has 890 parcels. Approximately 44 of these are publically owned space.

PUBLIC FACILITY GOALS

1) Goal one
2) Goal two
3) Goal three

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1) Implementation strategy one
2) Implementation strategy two
3) Implementation strategy three
Figure 6: Public Facilities Map
CHAPTER 9: ECONOMY

Buchanan exhibits positive values for economic development and growth. The quality of life statistics show a strong, healthy community with low crime rates and high education attainment in the high school years. These statistics show the community’s education, healthcare, and crime rate, all of which are important factors in determining a community’s health in the long term. As Buchanan works to attract new businesses to the area, higher quality of life statistics will lead to more interest from firms and workers.

Education

James River High School scores higher than benchmarks set out by the Commonwealth of Virginia in all subjects and graduation rates. Sixty-five percent of James River High graduates go on to either a two or four-year college. Thirty-five percent of all graduates enter four-year colleges though only 12% of economically disadvantaged graduates do so. Only 52% of those students who enter college complete one full year within two years. These statistics show that while high school education is excellent, students do not tend to pursue higher education.

Crime Rate

Botetourt County’s crime rate is well under the Virginia average in the two categories of violent crimes and property crimes, though the County doubles the state average in number of drug arrests. Buchanan is ideal for attracting firms to the area based on safety.

Health Care

There is a major lack of health care facilities or shuttles to health care within the community. Adding health care facilities in Buchanan would create locally-based jobs and a new selling point for firms to move to the area.
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Major Industries

Major industries are measured based on the percent of employed persons and are comparable to Botetourt County and Virginia. The major industries within the area (industries above 10%) are manufacturing, retail trade, and education. Manufacturing is by far the largest employer with 23% of total employment. Buchanan’s retail employment is double the county and state percentages. Education is the third largest industry. Buchanan falls behind the state in public administration, construction, finance, arts, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services fields.

Commuting

The net inflow of commuting workers is about 300 into Buchanan, and the net outflow is 365. Many residents who live in the area commute outside of Buchanan to their place of employment. Below is a list of commuter patterns:

- 38.1% of outflow commuters work within Botetourt County
- 24.1% commute to the City of Roanoke for work
- 11.8% commute to Roanoke County
- 53% of the people who commute into Buchanan for work come from somewhere in Botetourt County

Income and Wages

Median household income in Buchanan is $41,750 and per capita income is $18,591. Buchanan’s median household income, median family income, and per-capita income are each $20,000 below those of Virginia and Botetourt County. From 2009 to 2013, the median household income in Buchanan increased by 11.1%, family median income increased by more than 12%, and per-capita income decreased by more than 14%. Income and the unemployment rate increased in Buchanan while per-capita income decreased overall. Figure 5 shows these income statistics in comparison to the County and the state.

Wage and salary income show that Buchanan earns half the average of the state as a whole. The wage and salary mean income level in Buchanan was 62% lower than the state figure.
Poverty

Buchanan contained a significantly high share of families and children under the poverty line in U.S. Census 2009-2013 estimates. Statistics are as follows:

- 19.3% of Buchanan families were labeled impoverished while the state’s comparable number was 8%
- Buchanan’s children were 26% poor with Virginia at 12.6%
- 43% of Buchanan families with a female householder were under the poverty line, doubling the state’s average percentage

Employment

The unemployment rates for Botetourt County have seen a major increase in the past ten years. The County’s unemployment rate held at 3%, lower than that of the state, between 2004 and 2009. The rate doubled to near 6% in 2010. Figure 5 shows the unemployment trends over the last five years. Unemployment remains lower than the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region as a whole.
In the labor force, there is a strong indication of a healthy small town economy. Manufacturing is, on average, higher than the rest of the area and the state, allowing a strong economic base to bring money into the community. Strong commuting allows for the same effect. The two main areas needing improvement are two and four-year college attainment levels and median household income, both of which affect Buchanan’s high poverty level.

The second major focus of the success of the community’s economy is the amount of money brought in from outside the Town. For a typical small town, major industries that bring in money from outside sources are:

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Tourism

The next section will address tourism, one of these key industries. Other local businesses and jobs are also valuable in that they recycle the local money supply within the community. This monetary velocity is the key to a strong local economy.
3) Goal three

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

1) Implementation strategy one

2) Implementation strategy two

3) Implementation strategy three
CHAPTER 10: RECREATION AND TOURISM

Five parks and recreational facilities are located in the Town Buchanan: [None of these mentions being along the river!]

**Buchanan Park:** Buchanan Park is nine-acres and is adjacent to the Buchanan Elementary School. Ownership belongs to Botetourt County.

**Buchanan Elementary School Recreational Resources:** The entire recreational facilities of Buchanan Elementary School span more than 11 acres.

**James River High School Recreational Resources:** The entire recreational facilities of James River High School span more than 32.5 acres.

**The Buchanan Town Park:** The Buchanan Town Park (also known as Lowe Street Park) consists of seven acres of park and owned by the Town.

**James River Limestone Park:** This park facility spans more than five acres. Ownership belongs to the Mill Creek Baptist Church.

THE ECONOMY OF TOURISM

Visitor Spending
Visitors spend a great deal on retail when visiting Buchanan. Other purchases include dining, entertainment, gas, and hotels. There is significant spending on outdoor recreation indicated by comparing spending data of the median visitor and average spending per person in Buchanan.

The Town’s rich history and culture are a key attractor and this drives not only tourism, but a special kind of tourist; the heritage tourist. Heritage tourists, spend on average, about 2.5 times more than all other tourists. The key is to attract them to the Town and provide them with multiple activities and options to extend their stays. However, heritage tourists are also more sensitive to their landscapes and less likely to want to travel through unattractive areas. With Heritage Tourists, impressions count. Efforts to improve entryways will attract them to enter and to stay longer.

Boutetourt County is rich with recreational and tourism opportunities, and Buchanan is located in the center of many of these tourist attractions, including kayaking along the James River, exploring the Hunter’s Raid Civil War Trail, and visiting any of several local wineries. Its location in such close proximity to these tourist opportunities makes it the ideal hub for information about tourism in the county.

Currently, no such facility with comprehensive information about tourist destinations in Boutetourt exists. Creating one in Buchanan, which makes the most geographic sense, would help to facilitate tourism in the county and attract tourists to Buchanan, as well as inform the citizens of Buchanan about the unique recreational opportunities available locally to them, which will help improve quality of life.

Retail
In 2015, the popular travel magazine, Fodor’s Travel, distinguished Buchanan as one of the “Top Ten Best Antiquing Towns in the U.S.” The Shenandoah and Roanoke Valleys garner the nickname, “The Antique Valley,” rich with its abundance of locally owned stores boasting unique finds. Buchanan’s Downtown District could account for the large retail purchases by tourists visiting the area.

Average Spending per Visitor (in dollars)

Figure 10: Dollars Spent per Tourist Visit

Outdoor Recreation

Nestled between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, Buchanan overlooks the James River. The river divides the Commonwealth of Virginia spanning 348 miles long and 444 miles wide. It is the 12th longest in the United States. Buchanan considers “The James” one of its most valuable resources.

Figure 11: Recreation on the James River
The River also supports local livery businesses which also drives demand for food and lodging. This can be promoted with more water themed festivals and river-based events to make the boating community more aware of the opportunities to stay and play in Buchanan. Much more could be done to drive tourism to the town by better promoting the town’s excellent river access. For example, the town could sponsor a regional river race, ending at the town with local vendors selling food and crafts.

Throughout the years, the river has served as a means of travel and economic vitality. Buchanan is also four miles from an area of plentiful opportunities for outdoor recreation, the Blue Ridge Parkway. More could be done to promote visitation from through hikers on the Appalachian Trail to visit Buchanan. The town also could better promote its amenities to day-trippers who might want to take a hike and have lunch.

Residents at the town-sponsored open house also expressed interest in having more walking opportunities. This map shows possible (not yet planned routes).
Proposed Sidewalk Connections

Based on feedback from Town Open House, these sidewalks (new and improved) could be good locations for future sidewalk development.
1) Goal One: Strengthen the tourism economy by making downtown pedestrian tourism more accessible.

2) Goal two: Capitalize on the diversity of recreational activities for residents and tourists in Buchanan by making information about tourism opportunities more accessible.

3) Goal three

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation strategy one

Obj. 1: Currently tourist attractions in Buchanan, such as the Civil War Trail sites or the Rail Car Inn, are difficult to find, and there is no visual street-side indication on Main Street of their location or presence in the town. Making these attractions easier to find while in the town will not only make tourists feel more welcome, and therefore more likely to spend more time in the town, but will also encourage people driving through the town to stop and see sites that are advertised street side. The longer tourists stay in town, the more money they are likely to spend, bolstering the local economy.
Obj. 2: Money spent on tourism can help fund the small businesses economy of Buchanan, improving the quality of life in the town and thereby encouraging residents to remain in the town and encouraging new residents to move into Buchanan (VHDA, 2014).

- Install strategically located way-finding signs throughout the town
- *This objective was modified from original comprehensive plan goal: Install unique signage that designates the historic district, landmark, or other structures. [CP: page 84]*
- **Action 1)** Design way-finding signs to be clear, readable, and incorporate both relevant information (direction and distances of site from signs) and town logo/brand.
- **Action 2)** Determine the size and material for the signs, accounting for economy, clarity, and imposition on the streetscape.
- **Action 3)** Purchase and install signs at predetermined locations, e.g. major intersections and entrance corridors. (See Map 2)

2) Implementation strategy two

**Objective 1B:** Create and publish a brochure of a self-guided historic downtown walking tour

**Action 1)** Measure distances and walking times between designated sites

**Action 2)** Use the above information to create multiple versions of the walking tour based on distance and time (e.g. the 30-minute tour, the 1-hour tour, etc.) (See Map 1)

**Action 3)** Write short summaries for each location, abbreviating what a tourist will see at that site, to be included in the brochure.

**Action 4)** Design and publish the brochures, stocking them in the current Buchanan Tourism information centers (that presently includes Town Hall & Twin River Outfitters, but in the future could include the Buchanan Historical Museum).

**Action 5)** Install marker signs at each of the identified locations, offering more in depth information about the significance of the site than is offered in the brochure.

3) Implementation strategy three

**Objective 2A:** (Short term) Expand the information center at Town Hall

**Action 1)** Design and install a sign in the window of Town Hall identifying it as an information center.

**Action 2)** Expand information services at Town Hall to include information about shuttling to and from the Appalachian Trail, locations and hours for restaurants, and locations and hours for antique stores.

**Objective 2B:** (Long term) Create an independent tourist information center/museum of town history with regular hours at the entrance corridor of downtown Buchanan.
This objective was modified from original comprehensive plan goal: Develop a Welcome Center & Museum in conformance with the town’s Downtown Revitalization Efforts. [CP: page 91]

**Action 1)** Purchase (or rent) and renovate a museum venue located on Main Street at the northeast entrance to the historic district.

**Action 2)** Determine which cultural/historical subjects are most important for the museum to feature, perhaps creating both permanent and temporary exhibitions.

**Action 3)** Publicly inquire about any donations of historic/cultural artifacts citizens would be willing to make to the museum.

**Action 4)** Stock the museum with relevant tourist information publications, such as downtown walking tour brochures, shuttle services to the Appalachian Trail, and maps to nearby attractions in the county.

**Action 5)** Hire staff to manage the museum at regular hours, including weekends.
CHAPTER 11: TRANSPORTATION

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A transportation network gave birth to Buchanan. The “Great Valley Road” was a principal crossing of the James River in the 1800s. Buchanan served as an intersection between the northeast-southwest overland route west of the Blue Ridge Mountains between Pennsylvania and the old Upland South and the James River. The historically significant Great Valley Road led travelers to the Shenandoah Valley, and the Town became a transportation-oriented community catering to traders passing through. Some of those travelers decided to settle here and create the rural community that still thrives today. The history of transportation in Buchanan spans from the transporting of Confederate supplies to the glory days of the railroad.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Transportation Networks

Buchanan is located two miles from Interstate 81 on Route U.S. 11 with a volume of 35,000 trips a day. It sits four miles from the 1935 “Appalachian Scenic Highway” project, now known as the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The construction of the parkway was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. Its purpose was to create a nearly 500-mile road connecting the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina to the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. The local stretch of road features prehistoric and early European settlements.

The Blue Ridge Parkway both brings visitors to Buchanan and provides recreational opportunities to residents. U.S. Route 11 divides into six separate segments with four constructing Main Street and the others creating routes extending from the western and northern corporate limits to Interstate Route 81. Virginia State Route 43 serves as Buchanan’s corporate limit, connects to Route 630 to the north, and leads to the aforementioned Blue Ridge Parkway to the south (see Figure 8).
Transportation Patterns

The rates of vehicle crashes and reported injuries are extremely low when compared with both the County and state levels. No reported fatalities occurred from 2009 to 2013. A low number of vehicle accidents indicates that travel through Buchanan is relatively safe.

Most Buchanan residents commute to work outside of the area. Figure 9 shows the true number of travel choices for Buchanan residents. Nearly 90% of residents commute to their workplaces by driving alone. This average reflects that of Botetourt County but is higher than both the Roanoke MSA and the Virginia averages. A low margin of workers (5.5%) choose to carpool to work. Less than 0.1% of the workforce in Buchanan choose public transportation. Both travel mode choices are lower than those at the county and state levels. These trends are likely due to the rural topography, low density, and lack of public transit facilities. Buchanan’s mean travel time to work is longer than the Botetourt County, Roanoke MSA, and Virginia State averages. This trend reflects that the majority of residents commuting outside the area.
TRANSPORTATION GOALS

1) Goal one
2) Goal two
3) Goal three

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1) Implementation strategy one
2) Implementation strategy two
3) Implementation strategy three

Figure 13: Travel Mode Choice
CHAPTER 12: LAND USE

Land Use Analysis

A small town feel defines Buchanan’s character. Property use is largely low-density residential (approximately 555 acres or 44% of land), agricultural (approximately 221 acres or 17.5% of land), and industrial (111 acres or 8.8% of land). The northern part of town, north of the James River, and to the southwestern portion of town consist of the majority of current low-density areas. Main Street consists of higher density residential development. Zoning for agricultural purposes exists in large tracts of land on the edge of town limits. The outer edges of town limits features a concentration of industrial areas. Commercial development occurs with varying scales and types in Buchanan. Dispersal of commercial development occurs throughout the town, with a large concentration of businesses located in the northeastern portion of downtown, surrounding Main Street. Larger lot commercial development occurs further from downtown.

Gateways

Gateways offer opportunities to incorporate local history, landscaping, and public art into points of transition to designated areas. As the “Gateway to the Shenandoah Valley,” Buchanan has three points of entry into town along Route 11 from the south and north, and Route 43 from the east. Incorporating historical, natural and cultural elements unique to Buchanan into gateway designs help to make Buchanan memorable and interesting.

Buchanan and the surrounding area have a variety of natural resources, including nearby mountains, the Upper James River Water Trail, and other undeveloped open space. The dispersal of undeveloped parcels throughout town occupy approximately 163 acres (12.9%) of land in Buchanan. Open space preservation is an important component of groundwater protection, which is a main priority.

Character and Historic Preservation

The protection of Buchanan’s historic structures, landscapes, and land use patterns is fundamental to protecting the heritage of the community, as well as promoting the Town’s economic health and wellbeing. There are currently 368 structures and two archeological sites either already included or currently (as of 2015) eligible for nomination to both the Virginia
Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. Main Street features ninety-four of these properties. Of these, 82 were located within the Historic District.

Historic preservation activities have the potential to become critical components of Buchanan’s economic development, downtown revitalization, and emerging tourism efforts.

**Figure 10. Existing Land Use Map.**

**Challenges**

Balancing various land uses may pose a challenge for Buchanan. It will be challenging to find a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and economic development uses. This balance would accommodate the projected demands for housing, shopping, and tourism, as well as promote new employment opportunities for current and future residents. Further preservation of historic structures may also pose a challenge for Buchanan into the future. The documentation
of the majority of historic properties within the town are fit for further historic preservation measures. There are still nearly one-third of the Buchanan’s cultural and historic resources that remain unprotected.

**LAND USE GOALS**

1) Goal one
2) Goal two
3) Goal three

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

1) Implementation strategy one
2) Implementation strategy two
3) Implementation strategy three