

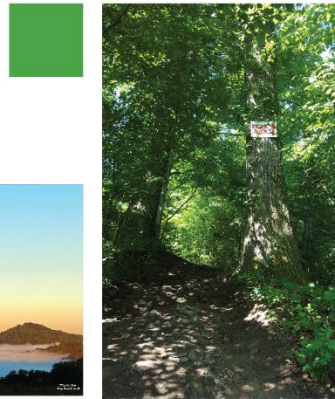
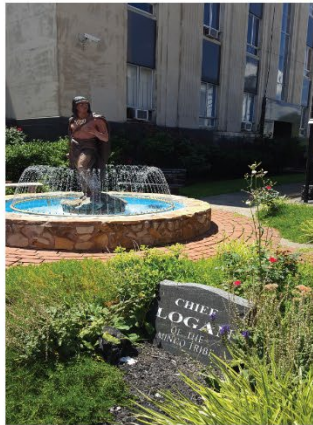


**MINGO COUNTY**  
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**2022-2026**

# Strategic Plan



Prepared by:



Center for Business and  
Economic Research

*Mingo County, West Virginia*  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN for 2022-2026**

**JUNE 2022**

**Prepared for:**

U.S. Economic Development Administration

**Published by:**

Center for Business and Economic Research  
Marshall University Research Corporation  
One John Marshall Drive Huntington, WV 25755  
(304) 696-5747  
[www.marshall.edu/cber/](http://www.marshall.edu/cber/)

**Prepared by:**

Robert Plymale  
*Associate Vice-President for Economic Development*

Christine Risch  
*Director of Research*

Brianne Salmons  
*Operations Manager*

Jim Atkinson  
*Graphics/Data Network Specialist*

Myia Hill  
*Research Associate*

Will Sheils  
*Research Associate*

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>County Profile</b>	<b>1</b>
Key Assets and Recent Developments	1
Production Industries	1
Infrastructure	2
Development Sites	2
Historical Sites	3
Museums	4
Recreation Assets	4
Population Characteristics	8
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	<b>10</b>
SCORE Analysis	10
The SCORE Process	10
Concurrent Economic Development Efforts	10
Online Surveys	12
Stakeholder Feedback	12
<b>Strategic Initiatives</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Business & Workforce	13
2. Infrastructure	13
3. Public Health	14
4. Tourism	14
Strengths & Challenges	15
Opportunities	19
Synergies	19
Sources of Funding	21
Desired Responses	23
Action Items	25
Effectiveness	30
<b>Integrated Economic Development</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Other Mingo County Economic Development Studies</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Measuring Success</b>	<b>37</b>
Employment	37

Labor Force Participation	37
Health	38
Education	40
<b>Summary</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix A – Development Sites</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>44</b>

## Figures & Tables

Figure 1 Map of Mingo County.....	7
Figure 2: Population Trends for Mingo County .....	8
Figure 3: Age and Workforce Trends for Mingo County .....	8
Figure 4: Strategic Initiatives .....	13
Figure 5: Integrated Economic Development Benefits.....	32
Figure 6: Integrated Economic Development Detriment .....	32
Table 1: Rank of Desired Responses from Survey Respondents .....	24
Table 2: Overall Top 12 Action Items .....	25
Table 3: Total Jobs in Mingo County - 2010 to 2020.....	37
Table 4: Industry of Employment for Mingo County in 2020 .....	37
Table 5: 2020 Labor Force Breakdown .....	38
Table 6: General Health Outcomes in 2020.....	38
Table 7: Mortality Statistics in 2020.....	38
Table 8: Behavioral Health (2020).....	38
Table 9: Lifestyle and Diabetes Statistics .....	39
Table 10: Child Health (2020).....	39
Table 11: Clinical Care (2020).....	39
Table 12: Social and Economic Factors (2020).....	40
Table 13: Mingo County School Enrollment.....	40
Table 14: Mingo County Education Proficiency Rate by Subject.....	40

## INTRODUCTION

The Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research (MU CBER) was tasked by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to produce this strategic economic development plan for Mingo County, West Virginia. This plan was produced by MU CBER in partnership with the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority (MCRA).

The purpose of this plan is to assist Mingo County and the MCRA by providing a guide for its ongoing pursuit of economic development. The planning process included the analysis of demographic trends, examination of existing studies, interviews with key stakeholders, public engagement via an online survey, and follow up with the MCRA. This work has resulted in the identification of priority planning areas and the development of goals and action items to attain them in the short, mid, and long-term.

This plan builds on the extensive work already completed by the MCRA, its public and private partners, and other economic and community development groups over at least two decades. The issues identified in this plan have persisted for many years and the county's ultimate goal is to grow its economy. Recent years have seen increased interest in moving away from an extraction-based economy toward a more diversified economy.

## COUNTY PROFILE

### Key Assets and Recent Developments

#### Production Industries

Mingo County's most important industries have historically been coal mining and wood products, although both these legacy industries are in steep decline.

**Coal Mining:** Mingo County is a coal-impacted community due to ongoing decline in coal production. In 2020 the county had only three primary producing coal mines and 1.5 million tons of production, down from five primary producing mines and 6 million tons of production in 2015. In 2005 Mingo produced 13 million tons of coal and had direct employment of 1,551. In 2020 direct employment had fallen to 332.<sup>1</sup> Production recovered somewhat in 2021 and is expected to remain higher through at least 2022 but is likely to remain small. As of 2022 there are about six producing mines.

Most of the county's development projects are located on former mine sites. The success of these projects is due to strong public-private partnerships, innovative reclamation projects, and both public and private investment. The MCRA is actively exploring creation of more of these projects, including solar energy installations.

**Timber and Wood Products:** Mingo County is home to several sawmills and related wood products producers, but this industry has also seen decline. Mohawk Industries, a producer of hardwood flooring, closed in 2017, affecting 111 workers. The MCRA has since assumed ownership of the facility and is working to recruit a replacement



manufacturer. The plant is located at the James H. "Buck" Harless Wood Products Industrial Park. As of 2022 there are two remaining sawmills in the county.

There is deep interest in attracting a manufacturing facility to diversify the county's economy and bring stable employment options to its residents. The need to replace these lost jobs is urgent due to related population loss and associated loss of technical and problem-solving skills possessed by former miners and contractors. These losses are accelerating as the coal industry continues to contract.

## Infrastructure

**U.S. Route 119** is a key 4-lane road connecting Mingo County with Logan, WV and Charleston, WV and intersecting with **U.S. Route 52**. Rt. 52 follows the Tug Fork River to Williamson and then travels through the center of the county east to Gilbert, splitting to become the **King Coal Highway (KCH)**, a high-elevation road with sweeping views.

Mingo County has utilized Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) between mining companies and development authorities to build high-elevation federal highways. These partnerships leverage mine operations into highway construction projects that transform land to be usable for economic development. The KCH is the flagship example of this initiative, creating more efficient travel routes through the county and developable land on ridgetops that were previously not accessible. The county's current P3 will connect Naugatuck and what is currently the western point of the KCH.

Mingo County has several historical railroad structures that are also tourism assets. The **Dingess Tunnel** is a nearly mile-long road tunnel located in the town of Dingess on Old N W Railroad Bed Road. The tunnel was built in 1892 as a train tunnel and later converted to a single lane road tunnel. In 2019, it was repaired and renovated with LED lights.

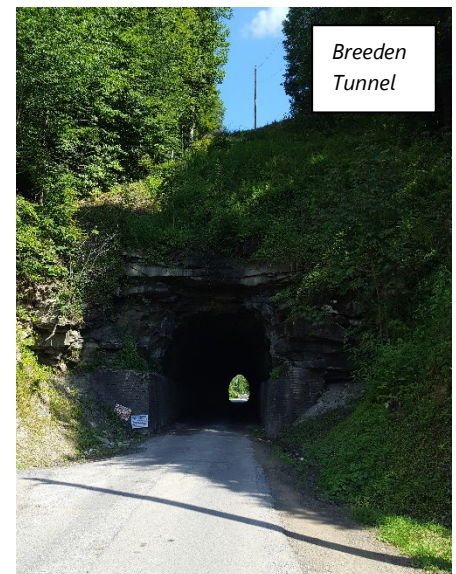
The **Breeden Tunnel** is a smaller tunnel on the same road.

The **Williamson Roundhouse** is a 21-stall roundhouse and turntable built in the early 1900s by Norfolk and Western Railroad, now Norfolk Southern. It is located in the East Williamson Rail Yard and is part of the **National Coal Heritage Trail**.

## Development Sites

Mingo County has three industrial parks, two of which are partially available for lease. These facilities, like several other developments in the county, are post-mining land use projects as they are built on former surface mines.

**Harless Industrial Park:** A 600-acre property with separate 80, 20, and 30-acre development sites. This site hosts an Army National Guard Readiness Center and several support contractors for the coal industry. It is also the location of the former Mohawk Industries wood flooring production plant which closed in 2017.



In 2018, the MCRA contracted a study to assess opportunities at the park. The resulting **Wood Products Feasibility Study** states that a critical impediment to attracting and retaining new tenants is the windy and lengthy access road. Solutions are to widen and improve either 22 Mine Road or Scarlet Branch Road, or to construct a cable system to transport raw materials up and finished products down.<sup>2</sup> The report concludes that the best anchor tenant would be a sawmill, due to the existing stock of wood. The next three top sectors are wood paneling, cabinet and vanity manufacturing, and cooperage.

**Air Transportation Park:** A 900-acre facility that includes the Mingo County Airport (Southern West Virginia Regional Airport), an FAA-approved general aviation airport with a 5,000-ft runway. The airport opened in 2012. The MCRA is working to expand use of the airport for aviation maintenance and repair services, and for testing of unmanned aircraft. The vision is to leverage the airport facilities and area aviation expertise to create an aviation-centric workforce and help modernize the economy. The MCRA is also producing a marketing plan for the airport that includes non-aviation industrial development.

**Belo:** This property is located near US 119 and is fully leased.

### Historical Sites

Mingo County is named after native **Iroquois** who resided in the area and who came to be known as the **Mingo**, a tribal confederation composed of Ohio Valley Iroquois and other displaced Indigenous groups. Chief Logan (c. 1723–1780), a leader of both the Cayuga and Mingo constituent tribes<sup>3</sup> is honored at the **Chief Logan Memorial** statue and fountain in Williamson.

Mingo County has one Civil War site. **The Battle of Beech Creek** was a short and lesser-known skirmish between Union and Confederate soldiers that took place on August 6th, 1862. The event was not formally recognized until 2017 when a historical sign was dedicated, partly owing to the changing boundary lines of Logan County and Mingo County.<sup>4</sup>

Mingo County is well-known for the **Hatfield-McCoy Feud**, an inter-family conflict that occurred in the area around Matewan and across the Tug Fork River in Kentucky. The feud began with the killing of Ellison Hatfield in 1882, brother of William Anderson “Devil Anse” Hatfield.<sup>5</sup> Many other revenge killings followed. The **Battle of Grapevine Creek**, which occurred in 1888, is considered the final battle of the feud and the only one to be fought using military tactics.<sup>6</sup>

There are numerous Hatfield family cemeteries in Mingo, including the **Ellison Hatfield Cemetery** and the **Original Hatfield Cemetery** where the parents of Devil Anse are buried. Devil Anse Hatfield is buried in neighboring Logan County in the town of Sarah Ann.

In May 1920, **The Battle of Matewan** (also known as **The Matewan Massacre**) occurred in the Town of Matewan. The event was a dramatic piece of the West Virginia Mine Wars, a series of confrontations between coal mine operators and union organizers supported

by the United Mine Workers (UMW). The battle began following evictions of the families of striking miners. Ten died, including the mayor of Matewan, Cable Testerman. Sid Hatfield, the Sheriff of Matewan, was not injured but was shot and killed by Baldwin-Felts agents in 1921 on the steps of the McDowell County Courthouse on the day of his trial for his role in the battle. The **Matewan Historic District**, which includes the battle site, is a National Historic Landmark maintained by the National Park Service.<sup>7 8</sup>

The **#22 Mine Disaster Memorial**, located at the Harless Industrial Park, is a memorial to 18 miners with the Holden Mine at Island Creek No. 22, who died when the coal seam in which they worked caught fire. This event occurred on March 8, 1960.

## Museums

**West Virginia Mine Wars Museum** – A museum devoted to the history of labor in the privatized coal camps of Central Appalachia and the conflict between mine owners and miners as they sought to unionize and improve their working and living conditions. In addition to the Battle of Matewan, the museum covers the Kanawha County-based Paint Creek & Cabin Creek Strikes (1911 to 1912) and the Logan County-based Battle of Blair Mountain (1921), the largest armed insurrection in U.S. history outside the Civil War. The museum is located in Matewan inside the Cecil E. Roberts building, which is owned and operated by UMW of America Local 1440.<sup>9</sup>

**The Matewan Depot Replica Welcome Center and Museum** – This museum is a replica of the train depot that served Matewan until the 1960s. It houses artifacts and info about the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, the Matewan Massacre, and the history of the coal industry. The museum was constructed by Massey Energy and later donated to the Matewan Development Center.

## Recreation Assets

**Hatfield-McCoy Trail System (HMT)** – An extensive off-road trail system for ATVs, dirt bikes, and in some areas OHVs, managed by the Hatfield-McCoy Trail Authority. The system is comprised of 10 individual trails with some interconnections. Three of the system's trails are fully or partially in Mingo County. The **Devil Anse Trail** and the **Buffalo Mountain Trail** are both entirely in Mingo County. The **Rockhouse Trail** connects to neighboring Logan County. The HMT has been a source of new economic activity in the county and throughout southern West Virginia. Demand for trail-riding permits continues to grow. According to the 2021 Economic and Fiscal Impact of the HMT, \$7.4 million in spending by the Hatfield-McCoy Trails generated an additional \$7.3 million in economic activity within the State, for a total operational impact of \$14.7million. Even more notably, the HMT brings non-local visitors to the area whose spending is estimated to generate an additional \$53.4 million in economic activity. Combined, the total estimated economic impact of the HMT in 2021 was more than \$68 million in West Virginia.<sup>10</sup>

**Laurel Lake WMA** – This 13,000-acre WMA is known for fishing and hunting. The 29-acre lake is stocked with trout from January until April. Some Native American



petroglyphs called the **Dingess Petroglyphs** are located near the lake, having been transported from their original location at a surface mine near Dingess.

**Tomblin WMA** – This 25,155-acre WMA includes hunting grounds in Mingo County and neighboring Logan County, and fishing at Chief Logan Lake in Logan County. The WMA is the location of the WV Division of Natural Resource's **Elk Restoration Program**. Listed game are deer, turkey, bear, squirrel, rabbit, grouse, dove, and woodcock. Portions of this property are reclaimed mine sites.

**R.D. Bailey WMA** – Listed game for this 17,280-acre WMA are bear, deer (archery only), grouse, fox, squirrel, raccoon, turkey, beaver, bobcat, muskrat, and coyote. Nearby R.D. Bailey Lake in Wyoming County is an impoundment of the Guyandotte River which then flows through Mingo County and into Logan County.

**Twisted Gun Golf Course** – This golf course is owned by the MCRA. It is located on a former surface mine, and water for the irrigation system is pumped from a nearby underground mine pool. MCRA is currently completing a waterline extension for the facility which is expected to be complete in 2022.



**Twin Branch Motorsports Complex** – This facility is a 1/8-mile concrete drag strip positioned on a ridgetop off U.S. Rt 119. This facility is also owned by the MCRA. Construction was financed via a partnership between Consol Energy, the Mingo County Commission, and the MCRA. The complex was constructed in 2015 but has only recently been released from the WV DEP's jurisdiction, and the access road from 119 was recently acquired by the WV Division of Highways. The dragstrip is projected to open in the summer of 2022.



**Beech Creek Community Park** – A public park with picnic shelters, a ball court, and a playground.

**Praise Park** – A small public playground in Sprigg.

**Tug Fork Water Trail** – A designated water trail on the Tug Fork River. The **Friends of the Tug Fork** is a stakeholder group working to clean up the river, raise awareness of its beauty, and promote it as a fishing and kayaking destination. One of the group’s goals is to have reliable public access sites every 4 to 6 miles. The 2020 draft **Tug Fork River Water Trail Access Plan** identified 124 locations along the stream where access might be possible. The plan includes the following quote “We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations.”<sup>11</sup> The plan was prepared for the National Coal Heritage Area Authority.



*Tug Fork River (Courtesy Friends of the Tug Fork)*

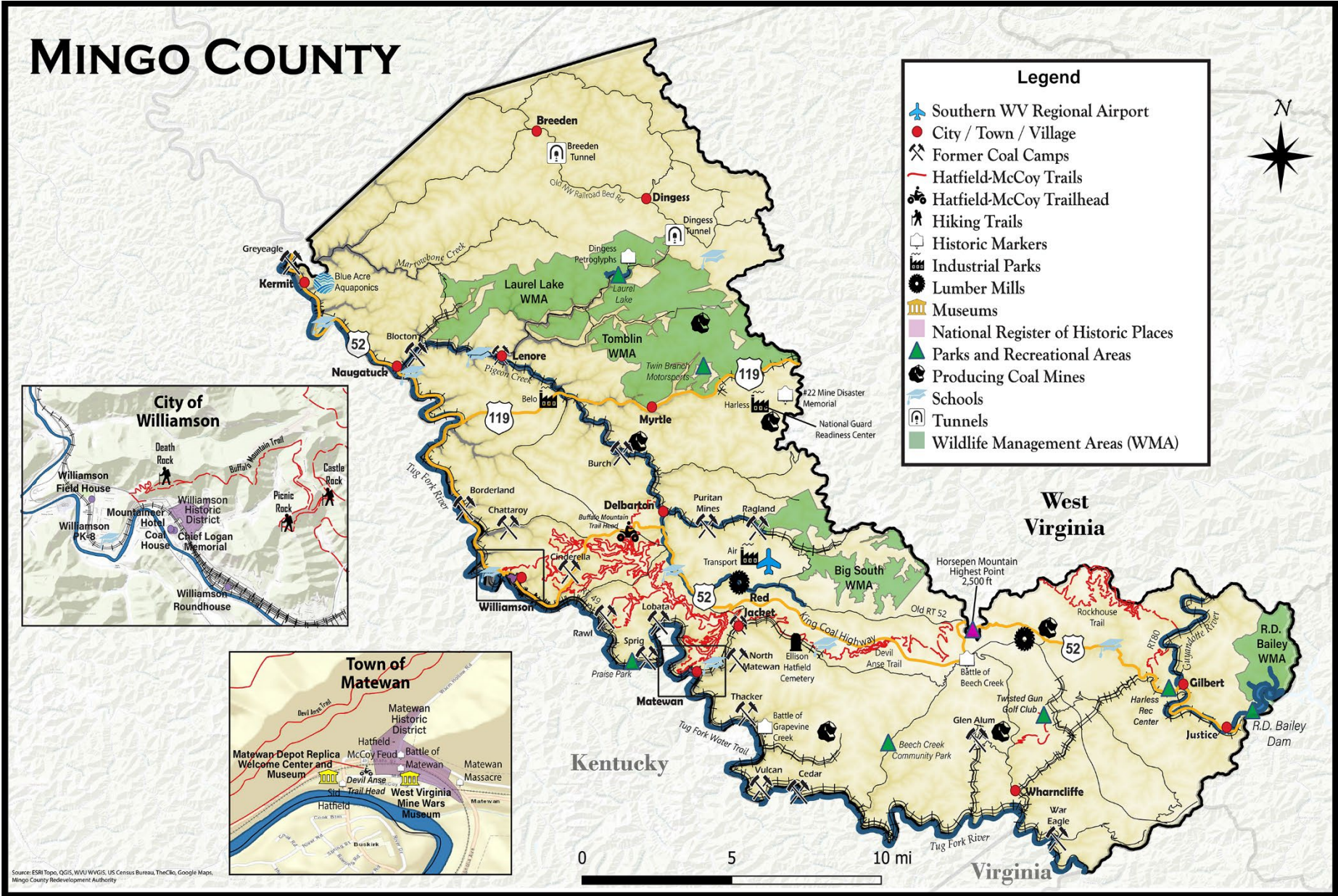
**Guyandotte Water Trail** – There are two access points on the border of Mingo County below R. D. Bailey Lake, a flood control project for the Guyandotte River.<sup>12</sup> The river flows west and then north into Logan County, with about 10 miles in Mingo County.



*The Guyandotte River at Gilbert, WV*



Figure 1 Map of Mingo County



## Population Characteristics

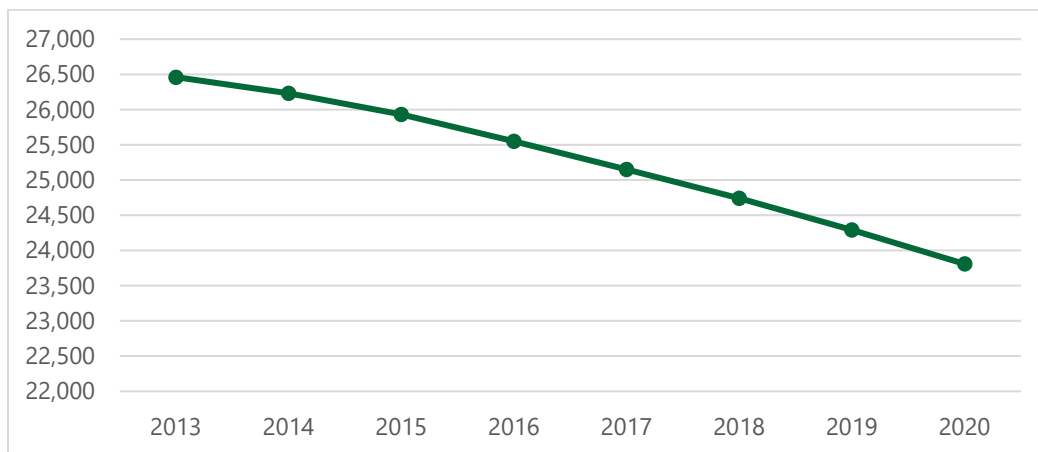
### Key Population Centers

2020 population estimates for towns and cities:

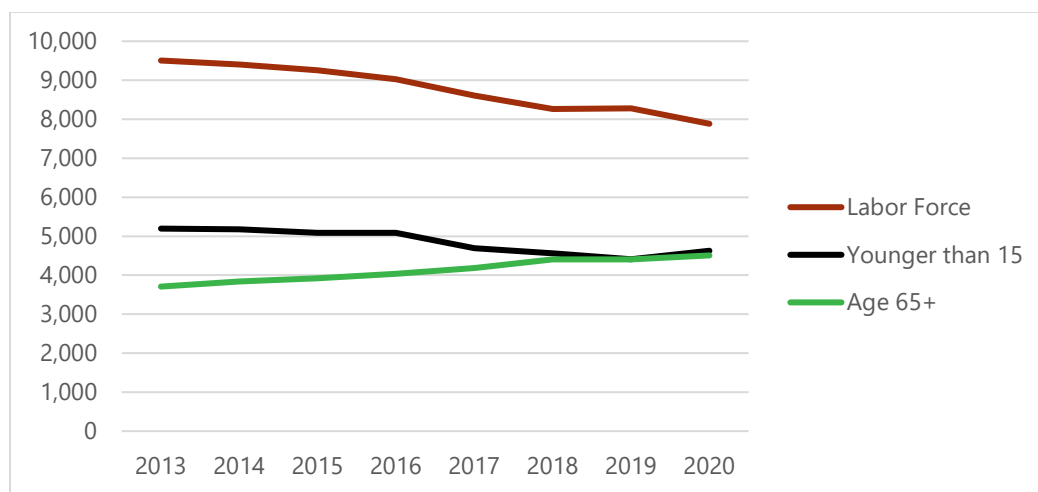
- City of Williamson – population of 2,735 (peak of 9,400 around 1930)
- Town of Gilbert – population of 370 (peak of around 900 in 1960s)
- Town of Delbarton – population of 520 (peak of 1,400+ in 1950s)
- Town of Kermit – population of 240 (peak of 1,000 in 1950s)
- Town of Matewan – population of 412 (peak of around 1,000 in 1950s)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2020 population of Mingo County was 23,808. Between 2013 and 2020 the county's population declined by about 2,650, or 10%. This corresponds with a shrinking labor force and an aging population.

*Figure 2: Population Trends for Mingo County*



*Figure 3: Age and Workforce Trends for Mingo County*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

It is hoped that these targeted development efforts will increase the number of people living and working in Mingo County and reduce the high level of poverty that has plagued the county for decades. Mingo county is a **Persistent Poverty County** according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS). This means that its most recent poverty rate estimate equates to at least 20 percent, while also evidencing poverty rates of at least 20 percent in the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses (i.e., 20 percent or greater poverty over the last 30 years). The CRS also states that areas for which the poverty rate reaches 20 percent experience more acute systemic problems than in lower-poverty areas.<sup>13</sup>



## STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Strategic Planning process documents the priorities of Mingo County with respect to economic development efforts. These efforts seek to improve work prospects and quality of life for its residents. The plan identifies approaches to build on the existing assets of the county to address barriers to growth and reverse the economic contraction experienced over the last decade.

### SCORE Analysis

The strategic planning approach for Mingo County was based on a SCORE (Strengths, Challenges, Options, Responses, and Effectiveness) process. The SCORE process lays out these elements and prioritizes where to direct resources by emphasizing areas with the most need and the most ability to be impactful. This plan:

- Addresses the top issues and desired outcomes for the county.
- Is relevant to short, mid-, and long-term timeframes.
- Contains realistic recommendations and action items.
- Contains metrics for measuring success.
- Will be as a guide for integrated economic development efforts for several years.

### The SCORE Process

#### Concurrent Economic Development Efforts

Significant economic development work was well underway in Mingo County prior to development of this plan. The participants in that work are strengths for the county and the intention of this strategic plan is to build on those efforts, and the efforts of those that came before them. These primary organizations and some of their efforts are:

- **Mingo County Redevelopment Authority (MCRA)** – The MCRA is involved with numerous economic development projects and is a primary point of contact for many initiatives within the county. The MCRA also owns several development sites and has spearheaded many unique projects including Blue Acre Aquaponics, Twin Branch Motorsports, Twisted Gun Golf Course, and the Mingo County Air Transportation Park.
- **Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce** – A key entity devoted to supporting and connecting businesses that operate in the area.
- **Tug Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau** – Maintains an extensive online visitor guide and is a link between local business and visitors.
- **Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority** – Manages and maintains the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System. The authority is a joint development entity established by the West Virginia Legislature.
- **Appalachian Power** – A significant stakeholder in the future of Mingo County and the key part of the State's innovative broadband initiative to bring high-speed internet to rural Mingo and Logan Counties. In 2022, the utility hired a consultant to prepare a regional marketing plan for a six-county area that includes Mingo County.

- **Williamson Health and Wellness Center** – A Federally Qualified Health Clinic and major employer that offers many public health and wellness-related initiatives and is an overall advocate for health in the county. The Center has purchased the assets of the former Williamson Memorial Hospital.
- **Mingo County Health Department** – Provides community health services including personal health monitoring, immunizations, and overall health promotion.
- **Mingo County Board of Education** – Prepares students to participate in the workforce and trains workers to meet the needs of industry at Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers at the county's two high schools.
- **Southern Community & Technical College Williamson Campus** – Offers a variety of degree and certificate programs emphasizing the needs of area employers. Areas of emphasis include medical professions, business administration, and industrial skills. Programs include an **Entrepreneurism Skill Set** that provides guidance on how to build a business plan and locate the resources to start a small business.
- **Gilbert Convention & Visitors Bureau** – A promoter of amenities and services in and near Gilbert, targeted toward riders on the Rockhouse and Devil Anse trails.
- **Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI) at Marshall University** – A designated EDA University Center that assists small manufacturers and agricultural producers with tooling, training, apprenticeships, and start-up business assistance.
- **Region 2 Planning and Development Council** – A lead organization involved in infrastructure grant applications for Mingo and other counties in the region.
- **The National Coal Heritage Area** – A National Park Service organization with a goal to “preserve, protect, and interpret lands, structures, and communities associated with the coal mining heritage of southern West Virginia.” The area covers 13 counties in southern West Virginia, including Mingo County, and is one of 55 designated national heritage areas in the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

### **Meetings with the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority**

CBER staff attended a series of in-person and online meetings with the MCRA Director, staff, and Board members for the purpose of validating the SCORE process and to create a preliminary list of SCORE elements.

### **One-on-One Interviews with MCRA Board Members**

CBER conducted 19 interviews with members of the MCRA Board and county leaders and stakeholders. The objective of these interviews was to understand the key strengths and challenges of Mingo County, to learn about ongoing development efforts and to get ideas for next steps. The results were used to refine the preliminary proposed strategic initiatives and to further develop the list of potential action items.

Individuals interviewed represented a diverse array of establishments within Mingo County. These included leaders in economic development, recreation, real estate, education, healthcare, elected officials, business leaders, and other professionals. The

strategic initiatives were selected and ranked based on this feedback and used to create a public survey.

### **List of Interviewees**

- Leasha Johnson – *Director, Mingo County Redevelopment Authority*
- Adam Bryant – *Mining Engineer, Coal-Mac*
- Dr. Pam Alderman - *President, Southern WV Community and Technical College*
- Mitchell Bias – *Pastor, Regional Church of God*
- Eddie Curry – *Manager, Cotiga Development Company*
- Diann Hannah – *Mingo County Commissioner*
- David Hatfield – *Owner, Historic Matewan House B & B*
- JB Heflin – *Manager, Mingo County PSD*
- Keith Blankenship – *Director, Mingo County Health Dept*
- Jeffrey Lusk – *Executive Director, Hatfield McCoy Trails Authority*
- Jennifer Miller - *Mayor, Town of Gilbert*
- Paul Pinson - *Attorney*
- Paula Blankenship - *Accountant*
- Randall Sanger – *President, Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce*
- Ruffner Woody – *Owner, Devil's Backbone Adventure Resort*
- Gavin Smith – *Mingo County Commissioner*
- Terry Sammons – *Attorney and Owner of Canebrake Cabins*
- Dr. Douglas Ward – *Principal, Tug Valley High School*
- Tim Salmons - *Executive Director, Coalfield Community Action Partnership*
- David Jewell – *CFO, Williamson Health and Wellness*

### **Online Surveys**

The public survey was available from Nov 22, 2021 to Jan 25, 2022, and was distributed by the MCRA. About 290 individuals participated, resulting in 193 complete surveys.

The survey instructed participants to, 1) rank the four Strategic Initiatives in terms of importance to Mingo County, 2) rank the desired responses for each initiative, and 3) mark the top three action items that would be most effective in creating the response.

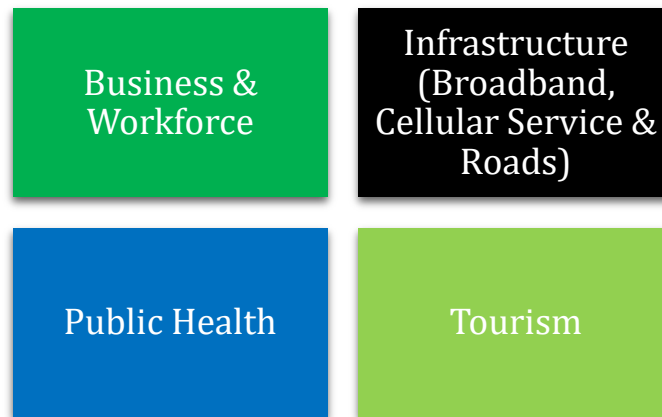
### **Stakeholder Feedback**

The results of the public survey were used to create the Strategic Plan by tallying the choices of the survey takers. This plan identifies and prioritizes economic development needs in Mingo County under four Strategic Initiatives representing four areas of need and opportunity. Due to length, the full survey results were provided in a separate report.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The following strategic initiatives are the product of the community and stakeholder engagement described above and listed in order of importance to Mingo County.

Figure 4: Strategic Initiatives



### 1. Business & Workforce

The high rank of this initiative reflects the understanding that business creation is the most direct way to improve the economy of Mingo County. Several proactive steps have been identified as action items to pursue, including working to recruit a manufacturing employer and improving the appearance of public-facing businesses. Other efforts that complement this goal are actions to increase workforce participation and preparedness.

---

***Bolstering Economic Activity is the #2 ranked desired response of the entire strategic planning exercise.***

---

Entrepreneurship is a key area of emphasis. MCRA and its partners hope to expand existing efforts that focus on trails and tourism-related services.

### 2. Infrastructure

This initiative is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, with expanding broadband and cellular infrastructure, and improving roads, being two top desired responses. As in many rural areas, faster and more accessible broadband and cellular infrastructure is a vital component of multiple aspects of the economy including education, healthcare, and tourism. Due to multiple broadband initiatives that are already underway, expanding cellular service is likely to become a more important goal.

---

***Expanding broadband and cellular services is the #3 ranked desired response of the entire strategic plan.***

---

With respect to roads, the county is anxious to complete the **King Coal Highway**, a high-elevation highway built via a P3 with coal operators. This road is important to improve access within the county. This project is an example of several successful development projects the county has completed on mined lands. Others include the Air Transportation Park.

Lower-ranked infrastructure goals are to improve the readiness of development sites and to improve water quality, focusing on public sewer service.

### 3. Public Health

The top priority for this initiative, and for the entire strategic plan, is to reduce the impact of addiction on Mingo County's residents. While many resources to assist individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) already exist, the challenge is persistent and continues to be a barrier to economic development. More comprehensive and continuous treatment options are needed. Many collaborative efforts are already underway, led by the Williamson Health and Wellness Center.

---

***Reducing the Impact of Addiction is the #1 ranked desired response for the entire strategic plan.***

---

Other areas of focus are to improve health outcomes with nutrition efforts and address high rates of chronic disease with more preventative and maintenance care. Mingo, Logan, Boone, and McDowell are the only counties in WV with **very low food security** per the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which means a high share of the population experience hunger. In 2019, 19 percent of the county's residents, and 28 percent of children were food insecure.<sup>15</sup> The USDA's definition of very low food security means there are "multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake."<sup>16</sup>

### 4. Tourism

This ranking reveals the county's practical sense of high-value economic development being tied to larger-scale economic activity like manufacturing, in contrast to typically lower paid work in tourism. However, the county's tourism industry has considerable untapped potential with respect to its natural, historical, and cultural assets. The county also wants to leverage the success of the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System and provide more activities and services for trail riders.

---

***Improving the Aesthetic Appeal of the Area is the #4 ranked desired response for the entire strategic plan.***

---

The top desired response is to improve the aesthetic appeal of the area by reducing the presence of trash and dilapidated properties. Achieving this goal would have a robust indirect impact on the tourism industry by improving the reputation of the county and the quality of life for residents. New public art in Delbarton, Williamson, and Gilbert is helping toward this goal.

New entrepreneurship is working to capitalize on the county's history, with retail sales of local crafts and unique artifacts like coal company scrip. There is also growing interest in developing more Appalachian-themed restaurants. The Tug Fork and Guyandotte Rivers are seeing more attention via "Friends Of" clean-up projects that improve opportunities for fishing and kayaking.



## Strengths & Challenges

### Business & Workforce

Strengths	Corresponding Challenges
<b>Existing industries:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional employing industries: mining, wood products</li> <li>Reclaimed mine sites available for redevelopment, (EX: solar arrays, trails-related tourism, manufacturing)</li> <li>Tourism-related industries (EX: lodging, restaurants, guiding/storytelling, gift shops, other recreation)</li> <li>Experienced workers with problem-solving skills</li> </ul>	<b>Sustainability issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional industries are declining (coal mining, wood products)</li> <li>Volatile employment opportunities</li> <li>Infrastructure to support growth is lacking</li> <li>Shrinking population</li> <li>Loss of tax revenue base</li> </ul>
<b>Existing educational and career training facilities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated teachers in public education</li> <li>Mingo Extended Learning Center and its CTE classes</li> <li>Southern West Virginia Community &amp; Technical College (SWVCTC) and its "Recovery to Work" program</li> <li>SWVCTC's industry-specific programs</li> <li>Summer youth employment program with Coalfield CAP</li> <li>Coalfield Development Corporation's training programs</li> </ul>	<b>Poor Education Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low math and reading scores on standardized tests</li> <li>Declining school enrollment</li> </ul> <b>Workforce issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard for employers to fill open positions</li> <li>Workforce participation is low</li> <li>The career center is too distant from many students</li> </ul>
<b>Many resources available to assist startups:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCIF/Partner Community Capital's "Growing Small Business in Hatfield McCoy Trail Communities"</li> <li>Other WV-focused investment firms: Country Roads Angel Network, The Hive, First Microloan of WV (for physical assets), BlueTree Allied Angels, Mountain State Capital, Wyoming County Microloan program</li> <li>RCBI's startup services for entrepreneurs</li> <li>West Virginia Small Business Development Center</li> <li>WV Small Business Administration</li> <li>Mingo County Business Assistance Program</li> </ul>	<b>Barriers to Starting Businesses:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to access resources to start a business</li> <li>Time required to operate a business</li> <li>Access to startup capital</li> <li>Access to enough working capital to maintain a business</li> </ul>

## Infrastructure & Site Readiness

Strengths	Corresponding Challenges
<p><b>Commercial and industrial development sites available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harless Industrial Park – 525 acres, all utilities, rail service, includes a former wood flooring plant</li> <li>• Air Transportation Park – 400 acres (180 non-aviation)</li> <li>• Belo Industrial Park – fully occupied commercial space</li> <li>• Former Williamson and Matewan High School sites</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status of development properties:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few "shovel-ready" sites for large-scale development</li> <li>• Inadequate broadband infrastructure</li> <li>• Water and sewer often not available</li> <li>• Some historic commercial properties are in disrepair</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transportation Assets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mingo County Air Transportation Park – 5,000 ft runway</li> <li>• US 119 from Charleston to Williamson, and on into KY</li> <li>• Partially completed King Coal Highway/US 52</li> <li>• Dingess Tunnel renovation in 2019</li> <li>• Breeden Tunnel Bridge repair in 2021</li> <li>• Matewan Mall Bridge replacement in 2021</li> <li>• US 52/KCH from Mountain View to Rt 10 and the Gilbert Connector – start in 2022</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roads:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King Coal Highway (KCH) still not complete</li> <li>• Dissolving of KCH and Coalfields Expressway highway authorities</li> <li>• Several dangerous roads (ex: Ben Creek Mountain Road)</li> <li>• Inadequate access roads to key facilities: the Air Transportation Park, James H. Harless Industrial Park, Twin Branch Motorsports Complex, and Twisted Gun Golf Course</li> </ul>
<p><b>Existing efforts and planned infrastructure upgrades:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mingo-Logan middle-mile and "Fiber to the Premises Project" fiber project with AEP, to be completed in 2023</li> <li>• Harless Industrial Park power expansion with AEP</li> <li>• Williamson Health &amp; Wellness Broadband Plan (2020)</li> <li>• Gilbert area broadband assessment and plan (2018)</li> <li>• Matewan sewer upgrade funded</li> <li>• Chattaroy Sewer extension – announced Aug 2021</li> <li>• Williamson Water upgrade – loan application pending</li> <li>• Gilbert/Hanover water supply system – grant submitted</li> <li>• Air Transportation Park - water supply upgrade complete, funding for access road secured, working to secure funding for sewer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure deficiencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate and expensive broadband services</li> <li>• Spotty cellular service</li> <li>• Garbage service is inadequate/ underutilized</li> <li>• Dilapidated properties are ubiquitous</li> <li>• Inadequate and aging wastewater systems</li> <li>• Unreclaimed mine sites pose potential hazards and water quality issues</li> <li>• Flood control outside of main towns (updates needed)</li> <li>• Many failing septic systems in areas where public service is not available</li> </ul>

## Public Health

Strengths	Corresponding Challenges
<b>Existing healthcare facilities and professional programs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Williamson Health &amp; Wellness Center in Williamson</li> <li>Valley Health in Kermit</li> <li>Gilbert Family Health and Family Health Care Association</li> <li>Southern WV Health System in Delbarton and Gilbert</li> <li>Facilities nearby (Appalachian Regional Healthcare in KY, Pikeville Medical Center in KY, Logan Regional in Logan)</li> <li>Medical technical training programs at SWVCTC</li> </ul>	<b>Prevalent chronic health issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistent Poverty</li> <li>Diabetes, hypertension</li> <li>Addiction</li> <li>Behavioral /Mental health-related</li> </ul> <b>Shrinking/at-risk healthcare assets:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting and retaining healthcare professionals</li> </ul>
<b>Existing facilities and initiatives devoted to public health:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mingo County Health Department and their Quick Response Team (QRT) for overdose intervention</li> <li>Logan Mingo Area Mental Health/Mountain Laurel Health</li> <li>OVP (Ohio Valley Physicians) Health</li> <li>Recent county-wide ban on smoking in public places</li> </ul>	<b>Poor health outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addiction</li> <li>Smoking</li> <li>Mental health</li> <li>Lack of personal health mindset</li> </ul>
<b>Existing initiatives to improve fitness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Williamson: Healthy Williamson, Williamson Forward</li> <li>Community centers in Williamson, Gilbert, Delbarton</li> <li>Williamson Field House</li> <li>WV Healthy People Healthy Communities</li> </ul>	<b>Inadequate access to recreation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unimproved/underused outdoor recreation areas</li> <li>Lack of public parks in many parts of the county</li> <li>Lack of hiking trails/walking areas (outside of Williamson)</li> </ul>
<b>Nutrition efforts and expertise:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area food pantries and cold storage projects</li> <li>Food prescription program by Williamson Health</li> <li>Williamson farmers market and community garden</li> <li>Blue Acre Aquaponics – a fish and vegetable growing facility in Kermit</li> <li>WV Food &amp; Farm Coalition – foodshed project</li> </ul>	<b>Nutrition-related health problems:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fresh food not accessible for many</li> <li>Obesity and diabetes are prevalent and increasing</li> <li>Only one full-service grocery store in the county</li> </ul>

## Tourism

Strengths	Corresponding Challenges
<p><b>History and Legends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native American history (Mingo and Iroquois tribes)</li> <li>• Hatfield &amp; McCoy family history – legacy, storytelling</li> <li>• Mining history - labor, mining methods, company towns</li> </ul> <p><b>Tourist settings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rivers - Guyandotte and Tug Fork Rivers, airboat tours, kayaking, fishing</li> <li>• Ridgetops with sweeping views</li> <li>• City of Williamson - Historic District, Coal House</li> <li>• Town of Matewan - Historic District restoration project, Matewan Depot replica, Mine Wars Museum, reenactments</li> <li>• Original Hatfield and Ellison Hatfield cemeteries</li> <li>• Historical transportation structures: Williamson Roundhouse, Dingess Tunnel, Breeden Tunnel</li> <li>• Hatfield-McCoy ATV Trail System (HMT)</li> <li>• Delbarton Opry House</li> <li>• Twisted Gun Golf Course</li> <li>• Twin Branch Racetrack – opening soon</li> <li>• Lakes &amp; WMAs - Laurel Lake &amp; WMA, R.D. Bailey WMA</li> <li>• Lodging options – cabins, B&amp;Bs, Airbnb rentals, apartments, resorts with amenities (EX: restaurant, pool)</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitor events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATV Festivals – Trail Fest, Dirt Days</li> <li>• Hatfield-McCoy Marathon</li> <li>• Other festivals: King Coal Festival, Magnolia Festival</li> <li>• Delbarton Homecoming</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inadequate infrastructure to serve visitors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadband is limited</li> <li>• Cellphone service not uniformly available</li> <li>• Roads are unimproved and dangerous in some areas</li> <li>• Water and sewer service is inadequate or unavailable in several residential areas and is needed on ridgetops</li> </ul> <p><b>Barriers to expansion of tourism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dilapidated industrial, commercial, and residential properties are prevalent throughout the county</li> <li>• Not enough restaurants or grocery stores</li> <li>• Legacy of environmental damage to water and land</li> <li>• Reputation for poor water quality</li> <li>• Difficult to find staff</li> <li>• Need for more ridgetop lodging</li> <li>• Need for more RV campgrounds</li> <li>• Need more destinations to keep visitors in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Underdeveloped or poorly maintained recreation areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laurel Lake needs improved in places (along spillway)</li> <li>• Some towns need more public spaces</li> <li>• Not enough sidewalks for pedestrians in some areas</li> <li>• The Matewan amphitheater is underutilized</li> </ul>

## Opportunities

By understanding the assets of Mingo County, its barriers to economic growth, and the extent of current development efforts, this plan positions the county to prioritize use of resources to build on these assets and address challenges. The ultimate goal is economic expansion e.g., more jobs and more income, and reversal of population loss.

## Synergies

The action items identified in this plan complement each other due to the connections between economic activity, household income, education, and individual health.

## Business & Workforce

**Business creation** is at the top of the list of Mingo County's economic development

Effective roles for local government and development groups to play to encourage business creation are to improve the business environment and quality of life amenities.

priorities, with support for **entrepreneurship** a key action item. According to the Kauffman Foundation, the best role for local government and development groups is to work to improve the business environment, focusing on infrastructure assets like cellular service and broadband, and quality of life indicators like beautification and public services. Roles could be to facilitate events that bring entrepreneurs and investors together or to provide support to

would-be business operators on how to start a business.<sup>17</sup>

There are many resources to assist entrepreneurs. Locally, the **Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce**, with a mission "to be a voice for our region, promoting, supporting, and recruiting businesses, while fostering a positive environment for a growing economy." Their focus is on business networking and promoting entrepreneurship and start-ups.<sup>18</sup>

The Mingo County Business Assistance Program (MCBAP) is an initiative created by the MCRA supported by U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant funding. The premise of the MCBAP is to support new business development and existing business expansion around the Hatfield McCoy Trails, small businesses affected by the decline of the coal industry, and businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Early success of the program includes business plan preparation to help businesses secure capital, new business startups, Airbnb support for lodging owners, marketing, business website assistance, operational support for new business owners, and business support workshops.

## Infrastructure

The MCRA has more than two decades of experience with innovative creation of development sites and recreation facilities on former surface mined land. This includes a golf course, the county airport and surrounding industrial development sites, a wood products industrial park, a commercial business park (Belo), and the Hatfield-McCoy ATV Trails. MCRA is interested in expanding use of mined properties to include renewable energy, solar energy in particular.



In 2022, the WV Legislature passed Senate Bill 530, which expands **use of P3s to build highways**. It allows mine operators to use severance tax funds for this construction. Companies are allowed to hold the coal severance derived by the project in abeyance at the State, which is returned once the highway right of way is given to a federal entity.<sup>19</sup>

Federal and State governments acknowledge that **broadband** is a necessary element of economic growth. The **WV Broadband Enhancement Council** exists to expand service in unserved and underserved areas of West Virginia. To enable this, the West Virginia Legislature established the WV Office of Broadband, with a primary duty to “Explore any and all ways to expand access to broadband services, including, but not limited to, middle mile, last mile, and wireless applications” and gave counties and municipalities more control over how broadband is developed and operated, by allowing flexible partnerships to install infrastructure.<sup>20</sup>

In 2021 the WV Public Service Commission approved a **middle-mile broadband expansion pilot project** with AEP in Mingo and Logan Counties. This initiative takes advantage of electricity distribution assets that are already in place to install fiber. The plan includes provision of both wireless and wired internet services via GigaBeam. As of February 2022, construction had begun on the Logan County part of the line.<sup>21</sup> The existence of this project makes expansion of **cellular service a higher priority** than broadband for the county.

The **Region 2 Planning and Development Council** is heavily involved in several of Mingo County’s grant-funded infrastructure projects, both past and present. Current proposals include applications for **water and sewer extension or repair** in the towns of Matewan, Chattaroy, Williamson, and Gilbert, and at the Air Transportation Park.

## Public Health

Health is a major factor in economic growth. According to a health economist “Health affects GDP directly through productivity gains and indirectly through educational gains.”<sup>22</sup>

The prevalence of **substance use disorder (SUD)** is a critical public health issue for Mingo County and much of the U.S. Many resources are already devoted to SUD in Mingo County. However, more comprehensive, and longer-term approaches are needed to end the cycle of addiction. Recommendations in the “Rural Community Action Guide” of the Office of National Drug Control Policy are to: 1) build a continuum of outpatient and inpatient services with medication-assisted treatment, psychosocial treatment, mental health, and other services, 2) expand access to telemedicine, 3) invest in alternative treatment delivery like mobile clinics and home visits, 4) increase the number of professionals practicing in rural areas, and 5) encourage peer-to-peer programs.<sup>23</sup>

**“Health affects GDP directly through productivity gains and indirectly through educational gains.” – Dr. Dora L. Costa (2015)**

The closure of many **rural hospitals** in the last few years has been very distressing for those communities, including one in Mingo County. Thankfully, the 2020 closure of the Williamson Memorial Hospital is temporary as the hospital building has been purchased

by **Williamson Health and Wellness Center**, which plans to preserve the hospital's critical functions and expand programs.<sup>24</sup>

Mingo County was one of the seven inaugural **WV Healthy People Healthy Places** communities that help provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the needy in summer. Communities partnered with youth groups, created pop-up markets, or partnered with food banks and faith-based organizations already involved in this service.

**West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition** works to build the local food and agriculture system in West Virginia in a way that provides viable incomes for farmers and local foods businesses and ensures all residents have access to locally produced food." Placemaking efforts include a conceptual idea for a **Hatfield-McCoy Heritage Food Dinner Series**.

## **Tourism**

Several efforts inform visitors about Mingo County's tourism destinations. Both the **Tug Valley Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau** and the **Hatfield-McCoy Trail Authority** maintain websites to assist visitors. These sites are <https://www.visitcoalcountry.org/> and <https://trailsheaven.com/>.

## **Sources of Funding**

Several federal agencies are devoted to economic development in rural places like Mingo County. The foremost of these are the **Appalachian Regional Commission** (ARC) and the **Economic Development Administration** (EDA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce. Special funds have been set aside for economic development in coal-impacted communities like Mingo. The **US Department of Agriculture** (USDA) also maintains several grant opportunities.

Federal funding is available for economic development projects of all sizes and smaller grants are available from non-profits like **Benedum Foundation**. Large projects will be public-private-partnerships, particularly infrastructure projects involving water/sewer, road building and utilities. **AEP/Appalachian Power** is a key private sector partner.

For broadband, a variety of funding opportunities like E-Rate, USDA, the **Rural Digital Opportunity Fund**, the CARES Act, the **American Rescue Plan** and other COVID relief funds allow innovative approaches. The WV Broadband Enhancement Council is responsible for distributing \$138 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to expand broadband in the State.<sup>25</sup> Additional funds are available via the 2021 **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**.

Funding to expand the county's career center programs may be available via the **Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act**, established for States to award in development and implementation of CTE programs.<sup>26</sup>

**Generation WV's High POWER Impact Project** is a new ARC award in 2022. The **Impact Fellowship** is a professional development program that helps employers "recruit and retain next generation leaders and rebuild coal-impacted economies" across West

Virginia. The program provides “matchmaking” services to employers and jobseekers via the **GWV Career Connector**.

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has Community Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant programs for activities to prevent and treat substance use disorder.<sup>27</sup> The **Marshall University Center of Excellence in Recovery** provides training, technical assistance, and support services to regional initiatives.<sup>28</sup>

While Mingo County is not known for agriculture, there is interest in creating farmers’ markets and in growing more local food. The USDA’s **Agricultural Marketing Service** supports these types of initiatives.<sup>29</sup> The WV Department of Agriculture also has an **Ag Business** program that markets WV grown and made products.<sup>30</sup> The **WV Farmers Market Association** has funds to support ecommerce platforms, to do a Rapid Market Assessment, and to support sanitation stations at markets. RCBI’s **Agricultural Innovations** is an initiative to improve opportunities for the agricultural economy.<sup>31</sup>

The **Tamarack Foundation for the Arts** is a local organization with interest in funding local artists.<sup>32</sup>

Funding for start-ups is available via several financiers including **Natural Capital Investment Fund, Country Roads Angel Network, First Microloan of WV, BlueTree Allied Angels, Mountain State Capital**, and **RCBI**. Some of these entities are willing to assist businesses unable to procure capital through traditional lenders. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) makes **SBA 504 Loans**, which are long-term, fixed rate loans available for existing and new facilities, equipment, and the improvement of land, streets, utilities, parking lots and landscaping.<sup>33</sup> The 504 loans may be helpful for Mingo County businesses looking to improve their public appearance.

A notable step taken by the West Virginia Legislature in 2022 is the establishment of the **Reclamation of Abandoned and Dilapidated Property Program Fund** to tear down abandoned and neglected housing stock across the State. The fund contains \$10 million for this effort. Senate Bill 722 authorizes the program using money from the American Rescue Plan and is held in a fund within the WVDEP. Senate Bill 552 revamped the tax sale status to speed up the process and reduce the time it takes for properties to be transferred by deeds.<sup>34</sup>

## Desired Responses

The planning process began with a set of 16 desired responses that reflect changes the County would like to see. Per the survey responses, these were narrowed to 15 responses, listed in the order of importance for each initiative.

### Business and Workforce

1. **Bolster Overall Economic Activity** – Work to recruit a manufacturing employer and improve the appearance of existing public-facing businesses. **(#2 priority)**
2. **Increase Establishment of Local Business** – Support entrepreneurship, focusing on businesses serving the tourism industry.
3. **Increase Workforce Participation** – Strengthen school-employer networks, create more youth internships and summer employment opportunities.
4. **Leverage the Education System to Increase Workforce Preparedness** – Make CTE classes easier to attend, recruit more teachers, and expand life skills help in schools.

### Infrastructure

1. **Expand broadband and cellular infrastructure** – Work to expand cellular service and ensure that high-speed internet is affordable. **(#3 priority)**
2. **Improve Roads** – Advocate for completion of the King Coal Highway and improved safety of 2-lane roads.
3. **Improve Readiness of Development Sites** - Prepare sites for commercial use by ensuring roads, water, and sewer infrastructure is adequate.
4. **Improve Water Quality and Water Supply** – Expand and repair public sewer access.

### Public Health

1. **Reduce Impact of Addiction** – Create more continuous treatment options to support individuals with substance use disorder. **(#1 priority)**
2. **Bolster Local Healthcare Assets** – Collaborate to expand services and recruit nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals. **(#5 priority)**
3. **Improve Health Outcomes** – Increase access to fresh food access and expand preventative care and chronic disease management.
4. **Enhance Recreation Assets & Use of Recreation Assets** – Plan to expand and revamp the network of local parks.

### Tourism

1. **Improve the Aesthetic Appeal of the Area** – Demolish dilapidated structures and find a solution to excessive presence of trash in creeks and along roads. **(#4 priority)**
2. **Increase entertainment and recreation options** – Plan for destinations to complement the HMT trail system.
3. **Bolster the Tourism Industry** – Help existing tourism businesses thrive by marketing the area and increasing the visibility of destinations.

Within each strategic initiative, survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of each desired response. The ranked orders were weighted by the number of votes for 1<sup>st</sup> (most important) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (runner up) to reveal priorities. These are from a total of 290 survey participants.

*Table 1: Rank of Desired Responses from Survey Respondents*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Desired Response</b>	<b># 1st</b>	<b># 2nd</b>	<b>Strategic Initiative</b>
<b>1</b>	Reduce Impact of Addiction	104	59	Public Health
<b>2</b>	Bolster Overall Economic Activity	104	55	Business & Workforce
<b>3</b>	Expand Broadband and Cellular Infrastructure	97	68	Infrastructure & Site Readiness
<b>4</b>	Improve the Aesthetic Appeal of the Area	96	51	Tourism
<b>5</b>	Bolster Local Healthcare Assets	83	71	Public Health
<b>6</b>	Improve Roads	74	71	Infrastructure & Site Readiness
<b>7</b>	Increase Entertainment and Recreation Options	67	77	Tourism
<b>8</b>	Increase Establishment of Local Businesses	39	71	Business & Workforce
<b>9</b>	Increase Workforce Participation	45	55	Business & Workforce
<b>10</b>	Bolster the Tourism Industry (Help existing businesses thrive.)	43	53	Tourism
<b>11</b>	Leverage the Education System to Increase Workforce Preparedness	49	36	Business & Workforce
<b>12</b>	Improve Health Outcomes	26	69	Public Health
<b>13</b>	Improve Readiness of Development Sites (For commercial use.)	34	51	Infrastructure & Site Readiness
<b>14</b>	Enhance Recreation Assets & Use of Recreation Assets	33	45	Public Health
<b>15</b>	Increase Visibility of Destinations	23	48	Tourism
<b>16</b>	Improve Water Quality and Water Supply	26	40	Infrastructure & Site Readiness

## Action Items

A total of 101 action items were initially proposed and reduced to 25 based on survey results. Survey respondents selected the Top 3 action items for each Desired Response.

*Table 2: Overall Top 12 Action Items*

Rank	Action Item	Strategic Initiative	Desired Response	# Of Votes
1	Collaborate with local healthcare providers, and medical schools to recruit and retain healthcare professionals.	Public Health	Bolster Local Healthcare Assets	185
2	Create a plan to retain and expand healthcare services and facilities.	Public Health	Bolster Local Healthcare Assets	179
3	Establish stronger connections between schools and employers to help place students in jobs.	Business & Workforce	Increase Workforce Participation	169
4	Create more wayfinding signs to assist visitors, promote heritage tourism and historical sites, and create connections between towns and destinations.	Tourism	Increase Visibility of Destinations	159
5	Recruit a new manufacturing employer in a new industry.	Business & Workforce	Bolster Overall Economic Activity	156
6	Focus on opportunities to increase adoption of broadband by making services more affordable.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Expand Broadband and Cellular Infrastructure	152
7	Provide more behavioral & mental health services by increasing the number of professionals in these fields.	Public Health	Reduce Impact of Addiction	152
8	Advocate for completion of the King Coal Highway.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Improve Roads	151
9	Formulate aggressive plans to replace aging public water and sewer systems.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Improve Water Quality and Water Supply	142
10	Create a committee to communicate with cellular providers and develop a plan to expand service.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Expand Broadband and Cellular Infrastructure	141
11	Elevate the need to improve the safety of certain 2-lane roads.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Improve Roads	134
12	Create plans to assist communities without public sewer or with failing septic systems or contaminated supply wells.	Infrastructure & Site Readiness	Improve Water Quality and Water Supply	131

The final **25 action items** are listed below. Potential lead organizations, in addition to the MCRA, are listed along with a timeframe and potential measures to track success. Implementation will be the responsibility of MCRA and the lead entity, if other than MCRA, with assistance of partner organizations. Some related items were merged.



## Top 25 Action Items by Rank Desired Response

<b>1. Reduce the Impact of Addition</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Work to create more comprehensive and continuous treatment options for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) that target the needs of each individual.	Short-to mid-term	# of overdoses	Williamson Health & Wellness, County Health Department, MU Center for Excellence in Recovery, Board of Education, Chamber of Commerce
Induce more workers with substance use disorder to participate in 2nd chance employment programs.	Short-to long-term	# of overdoses, # of employed	
<b>2. Bolster Overall Economic Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Aggressively work to recruit a new manufacturing employer to locate at the Harless Wood Product Park or Air Transportation Park, with specific focus on aviation and supply chain manufacturing, and build off the MCRA's Build Back Better component project to grow the Advanced Air Mobility sector.	Long-term	# of employers	Economic development orgs, Chamber of Commerce, WV Dept of Economic Development
Start a campaign to improve the appearance of restaurants, gas stations, and other public facing businesses via enhanced landscaping, painting, and maintenance.	Short to mid-term	# of business participants	
<b>3. Expand Broadband and Cellular Infrastructure</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Create a committee to communicate with cellular providers and develop a plan to expand cellular service and prioritize the business and tourist locations where it is most needed.	Short to Long-term	# of cellular towers, # of providers	AEP, County Commission, other local elected officials (mayors, delegates), MU, Region 2 Planning and Development Council
Identify opportunities to increase adoption of broadband services by households and small businesses by making services more affordable.		# of ISPs, # of subscribers, speed tests	
<b>4. Improve the Aesthetic Appeal of the Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Create a plan to reduce the extent of dilapidated properties, including use of more aggressive code enforcement.	Mid-term	# of demolitions	County Commission, Brownfields Centers, WVDEP, Mingo County

Start a beautification/waste management committee to create near-term and long-term county-wide plans for trash cleanup and disposal, including enforcement, which addresses the cause and effect of this issue.	Short to Mid-term		Solid Waste Authority, Waste Management Inc, community cleanup projects, Friends of the Tug Fork, Coalfield Development Corporation
<b>5. Bolster Local Healthcare Assets</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Collaborate with local healthcare providers and university medical schools to recruit and retain healthcare professionals and expand healthcare services and facilities.	Mid to long-term	# of positions open and filled	MU School of Medicine/ Center for Rural Health, WVU School of Medicine, Williamson Health & Wellness, AHEC, Osteopathic School of Medicine
<b>6. Improve Roads</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Advocate for completion of the King Coal Highway via public-private-partnerships with mine operators, using newly authorized flexibility to use the State portion of coal severance tax for this construction.	Long-term	Roads planned & funded	Local elected officials, County Commission, Region 2, WV Department of Highways, WV Department of Environmental Protection
Review and lobby for regulatory changes that are restricting road construction and maintenance, including safety improvements for certain 2-lane roads.	Short to Long-term		
<b>7. Increase Entertainment and Recreation Options</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Identify and plan for destinations to complement the HMT trail system (EX: Rail-Trail projects, historical park based on a coal camp/town, etc.)	Long-term	# of new destinations	CVB, Chamber of Commerce
<b>8. Increase Establishment of Small and Local Business</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Create plans to support entrepreneurship, focusing on businesses serving tourists and trail riders (EX: Appalachian cuisine, evening entertainment like concerts and yard games, local arts and crafts, outdoor recreation equipment manufacturing like boats and fishing gear).	Mid-term	# of new businesses	Chamber of Commerce, CVB, WV Dept of Ed, Mingo County BOE, Digicom Strategies

Continue to build on efforts to integrate entrepreneurship training and mentoring in the high schools and at SWVCTC.	Mid-term	# of classes / events offered	
<b>9. Increase Workforce Participation</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Strengthen connections between schools and employers, leveraging existing efforts and employment programs, to help place more students in internships, summer jobs, and full-time jobs, including in the tourism industry.	Short to mid-term	employment	Chamber of Commerce, Mingo County BOE, Workforce WV, RCBI (for training), existing employers, Coalfield Development Corporation
<b>10. Bolster the Tourism Industry</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Increase the awareness of Mingo County destinations with advertising and wayfinding, both locally and regionally, and consider hiring a Director of Tourism to focus on this goal.	Short to mid-term		MCRA, CVBs, Hatfield-McCoy Trail System, Hatfield Family Foundation
<b>11. Leverage the Education System to Increase Workforce Preparedness</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Continue to expand career technical education (CTE) classes at the high schools to avoid long travel times to the career center for students.	Mid to long-term	# of classes offered	WV Dept of Ed, Mingo County BOE, Marshall University College of Education
Add more leadership and life skills events and training in middle and high schools.	Short to mid-term	# of events held	
Create a plan to recruit and retain more teachers.	Mid to long-term	# of positions open and filled	
<b>12. Improve Health Outcomes</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Increase access to fresh food by expanding nutrition programs and food delivery throughout the county.	Short to mid-term	Food insecurity metrics	County Health Department, County Commission, Towns BOE, Williamson Health & Wellness
Expand the community health worker program for in-home preventative care, wellness checks, and health maintenance to enable more frequent chronic disease management.	Mid-term	Health metrics	

<b>13. Improve Readiness of Development Sites</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Create a plan to ensure adequate roads, water, and sewer infrastructure are available at key development sites, including ridgetop sites.	Long-term	Utilities and roads in place	County Commission, AEP, Region 2, Mingo County PSD, landowners, Hatfield-McCoy Trail Authority
Build on success of past projects and identify more opportunities to offer inactive or post-mining surface mines as development properties.	Mid to long-term	Projects funded	
<b>14. Enhance Recreation Assets &amp; Use of Recreation Assets</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Create a plan to expand and revamp the network of local parks and recreational facilities, including sidewalks enabling safer pedestrian access.	Mid to long-term	# of projects funded	County Commission, Williamson Parks & Rec, Towns
<b>15. Improve Water Quality and Water Supply</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Possible Lead Entities/Partners</b>
Formulate aggressive plans to replace aging public water and sewer systems where needed and assist communities that lack access to public sewer or have failing septic systems.	Mid to Long-term	# of projects proposed and/or funded	Mingo County PSD, Towns, County Commission, elected officials, Region 2

## **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of these actions is a function of 1) the resources required to complete the action; 2) the certainty of achieving the desired response; 3) the implementation timeframe; 4) the complexity of the action; and 5) buy-in from stakeholders. Implementation decisions will be made by the MCRA Board.

The plan can be separated into short, medium, and long-term actions. Short-term actions may have higher effectiveness than longer-term actions because they are less expensive and require less time to implement. These actions are opportunities for early successes for this plan. The longer-term actions, while more impactful, require greater resources and more time.

The resources required to complete the proposed actions include human resources. One of MCRA's visions is to create a county-wide community development organization with a director to start and manage projects. Having key projects in place, led by entities eligible for funding, enables more action as these projects become building blocks for larger-scale work.

### **Short-term actions (1 to 2 years):**

- Work to create more comprehensive and continuous treatment options for individuals with substance use disorder, including 2nd chance employment programs.
- Start a campaign to improve the appearance of public facing businesses.
- Create a committee to communicate with cellular providers and develop a plan to expand cellular service.
- Start a beautification/waste management committee to create county-wide plans for trash cleanup.
- Review and lobby for regulatory changes that are restricting road construction and maintenance, including safety improvements for certain 2-lane roads.
- Strengthen connections between schools and employers to help place more students in internships and jobs, including in the tourism industry.
- Increase the awareness of Mingo County destinations with advertising and wayfinding and consider hiring a Director of Tourism to focus on this goal.
- Add more leadership and life skills events and training in middle and high schools.
- Increase access to fresh food by expanding nutrition programs and food delivery throughout the county.

### **Mid-term actions (3 to 5 years):**

- Create a plan to reduce the extent of dilapidated properties.
- Collaborate with local healthcare providers and university medical schools to recruit and retain healthcare professionals and expand healthcare services and facilities.
- Create plans to support entrepreneurship, focusing on businesses serving tourists and trail riders.
- Continue to build on efforts to integrate entrepreneurship training and mentoring in the high schools and at SWVCTC.



- Continue to expand career technical education (CTE) classes at the high schools to avoid long travel times to the career center for students.
- Create a plan to recruit and retain more teachers.
- Expand the community health worker program for in-home health maintenance.
- Build on success of past projects and identify more opportunities to offer inactive or post-mining surface mines as development properties.
- Create a plan to expand and revamp the network of local parks and recreational facilities, including sidewalks enabling safer pedestrian access.

**Long-term actions (5+ years):**

- Aggressively work to recruit a new manufacturing employer to locate at the Harless Wood Product Park or Air Transportation Park.
- Advocate for completion of the King Coal Highway.
- Identify and plan for destinations to complement the HMT trail system.
- Create a plan to ensure adequate roads, water, and sewer infrastructure are available at key development sites, including ridgetop sites.
- Formulate aggressive plans to replace aging public water and sewer systems and assist communities that lack access to public sewer or have failing septic systems.

## INTEGRATED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The elements of economic development are highly interconnected. In Mingo County there is a great need for more stable, modern, good-paying jobs to stop and reverse population loss and disinvestment caused by out-migration and downsizing of traditional extraction industries. The circular effects of beneficial economic activity, and conversely detrimental job loss, are reflected in the health of individuals and the community.

Figure 5: Integrated Economic Development Benefits

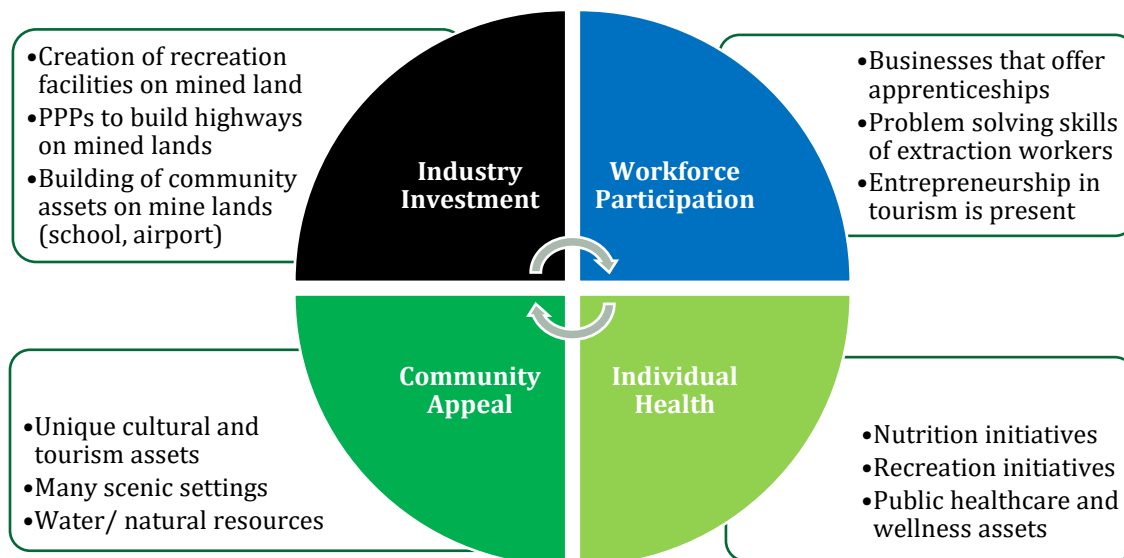
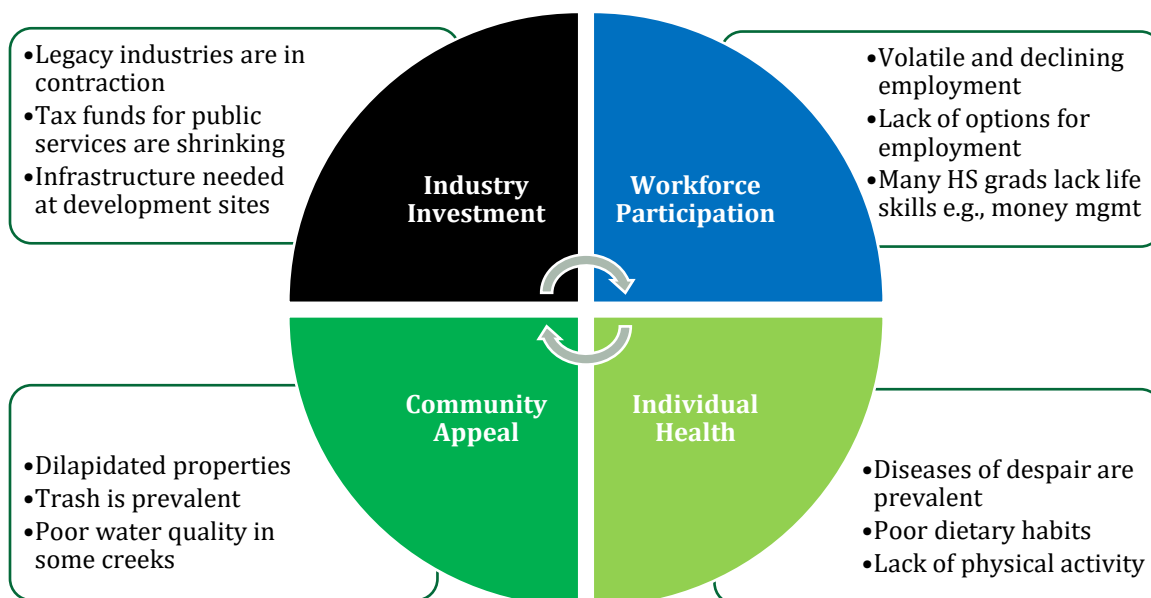


Figure 6: Integrated Economic Development Detriment



## OTHER MINGO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

This strategic plan is well-aligned with recommendations from other recent economic development studies.

The ARC's latest strategic plan, for fiscal years 2022 through 2026, echoes many of the challenges and desired responses identified in this plan. A key point is the view that access to reliable and affordable broadband is an equity issue essential to improving lives.<sup>35</sup> The report also states that "a singular focus on job creation does not fix or address underlying challenges like generational poverty and lack of internet access faced by some areas of Appalachia" and that "stakeholders prefer growing their own jobs through entrepreneurship and small business development rather than the traditional approach of business recruitment and new job creation."

The ARC's 2019 study "Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia" provides a broad overview of best practices for economic resilience based on an extensive literature review. Some of the key best practices listed are<sup>36</sup>:

- Invest in education, technology, infrastructure, and broadband.
- Engage the community over the long term.
- Create communities where people want to live.
- Grow youth engagement and next-generation leadership.
- Build networks and foster collaboration.

Several strategy studies have been conducted that are specific to Mingo County. The Region 2 Planning & Development Council's most recent **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** (CEDS) is for the years 2020 through 2024. The overarching focus of the CEDS is to help the area transition away from being an extraction economy and become "a vibrant business climate characterized by a balance of new investment, supporting existing businesses, and fostering local entrepreneurship."<sup>37</sup>

Mingo County has **AEROready Certification**, due to the presence of the Southern WV Regional Airport and the associated support skills, workforce training, and infrastructure that can support potential aerospace companies. This certification validates the area is ready for an aerospace industry, that there is an ample supply of labor and quality sites, opportunities to customize the training of labor, and the utility and transportation infrastructure is in place.

Recommended improvements to the airport include bringing water and sewer service, paving the access road, building a modern terminal, eliminating the coal company checkpoint, and providing way-finding signage. The **Aerospace Engineering Program** at Mingo Central High School is also a positive factor.<sup>38</sup>

The 2018 **Wood Products Feasibility Study**, while focused on opportunities at the Harless Industrial Park, identified several big picture challenges that are relevant to all economic development in Mingo County:

- Logging regulations are sometimes too restrictive, and compliance is costly.

- Timber stock is vulnerable to environmental impacts, such as pests and/or fires.
- Access to skilled and unskilled labor.
- Transportation access to and from the Wood Products Industrial Park.
- Focusing on wood products risks over-reliance on one industry, at cost to economy.
- Access to high-speed internet.
- Negative perception of the county, and region as a whole, due to the opioid crisis.

The study includes solutions to overcome the county perception issues. One is to recruit a product manufacturer in an industry related to **eco-tourism** or diversified recreation, like canoes or snowboards. Another is to upgrade marketing websites, something the county has taken steps to do, and to promote the facility in combination with promotion of tourist destinations.

The **WV Office of Broadband** was created to “explore any and all ways to expand access to broadband services, including, but not limited to, middle mile, last mile, and wireless applications.” Enabling legislation that established this office also allows flexibility in partnerships to install necessary infrastructure.<sup>39</sup> A key outcome of this is an AEP/Appalachian Power (ApCo) pilot project in Mingo and Logan Counties. This project is innovative in that it takes advantage of the distribution assets of the electric utility that are already in place. \$60 million was approved to add fiber cable to serve electricity customers and covers installation of more than 600 miles of fiber in Logan and Mingo counties. ApCo will then lease the broadband to an internet service provider, in this case GigaBeam.

In 2022, the Logan and Mingo Counties **Fiber to the Premises Project**, a project of the Logan County Commission in partnership with the Mingo County Commission, ApCo, and GigaBeam Networks, was awarded an additional \$19.7 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration.<sup>40</sup> This project is expected to provide high-speed broadband access to 12,859 unserved residences, 218 unserved businesses, 16 unserved educational institutions, 32 unserved government buildings, 6 unserved health care facilities, 11 unserved utility sites, and 130 unserved churches in Logan and Mingo Counties.<sup>41</sup>

At least two other **broadband studies** have been conducted for Mingo County. These include one for Williamson and one for the Gilbert area.

The Gilbert study developed recommendations for improved and affordable broadband service in Gilbert, Gilbert Creek, Justice, Horsepen, and Wharncliffe.<sup>42</sup> To encourage installation, a primary recommendation was that the County support “by right” permitting of wood utility poles on private property for use with small cell broadband poles. A show of support for an awareness campaign developed with local wireless service providers was also recommended. The report included technical network designs for these areas and vendor detail on the equipment used to develop those designs.

The **Williamson Health and Wellness Center Broadband Expansion Plan** was prepared in 2020. This plan is an engineering design of a broadband network to serve the City of Williamson. It includes routes for buried conduit and aerial cable. A preliminary engineering study for the project was conducted in 2021 that plans for 500 fiber drops to ultimate customers.<sup>43</sup>

In 2013, an initiative called **Sustainable Williamson** created an action plan for the City of Williamson. That effort had several ideas around the areas of sustainable tourism, food systems, healthy communities, energy optimization, integrative education, and sustainable construction. Although specific to the city, many of the strengths and weaknesses presented in the plan are the same as those listed in this plan for the county. For example, in that plan poor signage was identified as a weakness, as was lack of amenities for visitors. The plan listed 36 opportunities to improve quality of life in the city and has an extensive set of next steps to further these goals.<sup>44</sup>

The **2007 Mingo County Comprehensive Plan Update** was a compilation of goals and strategies from residents regarding key elements of the Mingo County economy and its communities. These included land use, development areas, housing, transportation, infrastructure, recreation, public services, rural development, and historical preservation.<sup>45</sup> Economic development recommendations from that plan were to:

1. Launch a positive media campaign for the county
2. Provide more drug and alcohol counseling
3. Create more job development training for middle and high-school students
4. Begin a coordinated effort with employers and educators to facilitate job retention
5. Better utilize the employment services of Workforce West Virginia
6. Improve workforce preparedness via the CTC and County Career Center programs.
7. Improve work ethic with mentoring, on-the-job learning, and personal support programs

One study oriented toward community development, as opposed to economic development, is worth mentioning is addresses social challenges that are barriers to development. A poverty-focused study, the Coalfield Community Action Partnership's (Coalfield CAP)<sup>1</sup> Community Needs Assessment, was conducted in 2019.<sup>46</sup> The assessment identified the county's greatest needs regard: 1) health and social/behavioral development, 2) employment, and 3) transportation. The study lists the primary reasons behind what keeps families in poverty. These are:

- Generational poverty
- Learned behavior
- Society encourages poverty with easily accessible government benefits
- Limited education
- Teenage pregnancy
- Attitude of "we can't do better" or "we like things just the way they are"
- Lack of awareness about opportunities
- No one is their champion – no one to show and help them find a way out of poverty

Coalfield CAP also identified several community strengths and needs. Strengths are:

- Togetherness
- Everyone knows everyone
- Partnerships

---

<sup>1</sup> Coalfield CAP manages several key community services programs including Head Start, Senior programs, weatherization, in-home care, veteran's support services, and food programs.



- Outdoor recreation
- Resiliency

Most of the community needs identified by Coalfield CAP are also action items in this Strategic Plan. Needs identified by Coalfield CAP:

- Provide quality, living wage jobs
- Address the drug crisis with prevention, treatment and recovery programs and resources
- Instill pride in our community by cleaning it up
- Motivate people to do better, be better
- Create more farmers' markets, teach gardening skills, encourage better nutrition
- Bring back life skills classes in schools
- Provide career counseling

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Benchmark data are essential to measuring the success of these initiatives. The following data are reference points for the status of targeted economic development areas of employment, income, health, and education.

### Employment

In 2020, there were about 4,300 full- and part-time jobs in Mingo County, a decline of 48 percent from 2010. Average 2020 wages per job were \$44,000 to \$45,000 annually. Average wages in goods-producing industries, primarily mining, were \$73,000 (BLS, 2021).

*Table 3: Total Jobs in Mingo County - 2010 to 2020*

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
8,267	8,522	8,094	7,356	6,331	5,563	4,770	5,145	5,338	5,101	4,271

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW. Average of monthly data submitted to Workforce WV by employers.*

*Table 4: Industry of Employment for Mingo County in 2020*

Industry Description	# Jobs
Natural Resources and Mining	765
Construction	178
Manufacturing	66
Trade, Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	750
Financial Activities	164
Professional and Business services	378
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,254
Leisure and Hospitality	242
Other Services (except Public Admin)	93
Public Administration	381
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,271</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020.*

### Labor Force Participation

Mingo County's labor force is in part defined by demographics that factor into a low participation rate. These are: (1) a growing number and share of individuals who are 65 or older, (2) a declining number of individuals of prime working age (16 to 64), and (3) a declining number of individuals under 15.

As shown in Table 6, only 33% of the county's population is in the labor force compared to 44% at the state level and 51% nationally. Nineteen percent of the county's population is comprised of individuals 65+ compared to 16% for the United States.

Table 5: 2020 Labor Force Breakdown

	Mingo County		West Virginia		United States	
Total Population	23,808		1,807,426		326,569,308	
Working Age (15+)	19,184	81%	1,485,332	82%	261,649,873	80%
Labor Force	7,884	33%	798,208	44%	165,902,838	51%
Employed	6,779	28%	744,272	41%	155,888,980	48%
Unemployed	1,105	5%	52,031	3%	8,870,516	3%
Not in Labor Force	11,300	47%	687,124	38%	95,747,035	29%
Age 65+	4,507	19%	360,246	20%	52,362,817	16%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

## Health

Table 6: General Health Outcomes in 2020

Measure	Mingo County	West Virginia
Life Expectancy	71.0	74.8
Food Insecurity	18%	15%
Limited Access to Healthy Food	2%	7%

Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings (based on CDC data).

Table 7: Mortality Statistics in 2020

Mortality Rates by Cause	Mingo County	West Virginia	United States
Heart Disease (per 100,000/ 35+)	280.3	197.8	211.5
Stroke (per 100,000/ 35+)	50.0	36.7	48.6
Drug Overdose (per 100,000/all ages)	52.2	52.8	21.6
Cancer (per 100,000/all ages)	220.6	177.0	182.8
Injury (per 100,000/all ages)	134.3	122.2	61.0
Diabetes (per 100,000/all ages)	35.6	41.3	31.0

SOURCE: Center for Disease Control (CDC), NCHS, 2020. Age-adjusted, spatially smoothed.

Table 8: Behavioral Health (2020)

Benchmark	Mingo County	West Virginia	United States
Depression Prevalence	19%	26.4%	19.5%
Suicide Mortality		19%	14%
Excessive Drinking	11%	12%	16%

Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Vital Statistics System

Table 9: Lifestyle and Diabetes Statistics

LIFESTYLE AND DIABETES	Year	Mingo County	West Virginia	United States
Leisure-time Physical Inactivity Prevalence (%)	2013	34.0	33.0	22.9
	2020	41	29.0	22.4
Obesity Prevalence (%)	2013	37.0	33.0	30.8
	2020	37	37.0	31.9
Diagnosed Diabetes Prevalence (%)	2013	12.0	13.0	9.7
	2020	20	15.0	10.6
Mentally Unhealthy Days (%)	2013	4.2	4.4	3.6
	2020	6.3	5.5	4.2

SOURCE: CDC National Health Interview Survey and County Data Indicators.

Table 10: Child Health (2020)

Indicator	Mingo County	West Virginia	United States
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	-	7	5.6
Low Birth Weight	12%	9%	8.24%
Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000)	65	34	16.7

Source: U of WI, County Health Rankings

Table 11: Clinical Care (2020)

Measure	Mingo County	West Virginia
Total Uninsured	14%	16%
Uninsured Adults	11%	9%
Uninsured Children	3%	3%
Primary Care Physicians	4,830:1	1,290:1
Dentists	2,640:1	1,810:1
Mental Health Providers	740:1	770:1
Preventable Hospital Stays	16,802	6,149

Source: U of WI, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2020)

Mingo County is a “Persistent Poverty County” according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS). This means that its most recent poverty rate estimate equates to at least 20 percent, while also evidencing poverty rates of at least 20 percent in the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses (i.e., 20 percent or greater poverty over the last 30 years). The CRS also states that areas for which the poverty rate reaches 20 percent experience more acute systemic problems than in lower-poverty areas.<sup>47</sup>

Table 12: Social and Economic Factors (2020)

Factor	Mingo County	West Virginia
High school completion	94%	89%
Some college	37%	55%
Unemployment	7.6%	5.3%
Children in poverty	37%	23%
Income inequality	5.3	4.9
Children in single-parent households	32%	34%
Violent crime (# reported /100,000)	282	330
Median household income	\$35,454	\$48,037

Source: U of WI, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2020).

## Education

Table 13: Mingo County School Enrollment

School Year						
14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
5,365	5,254	5,211	4,924	5,140	5,134	4,915

Source: West Virginia Department of Education.

Table 14: Mingo County Education Proficiency Rate by Subject

School Year						
	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	20-21
Math	22.1%	33.7%	34.5%	36.9%	35.3%	21.4%
Reading	45.0%	51.8%	51.3%	45.0%	42.8%	36.9%
Science	-	-	-	31.1%	22.0%	18.6%

Source: West Virginia Department of Education.



## SUMMARY

The action items identified in this strategic plan reflect Mingo County's desire to: 1) grow its economy, the number of people working, and the number of entrepreneurs operating businesses; 2) improve the health of its residents and expand its healthcare assets; 3) expand key infrastructure assets including roads, cellular service, and broadband; and 4) spur increased visitation to its tourism assets by improving the visual appeal of the county and adding complementary destinations and services.

Collaboration is important for this plan. So is having the resources to organize and apply for grant-funded projects. Fortunately, there are several potential leaders and partners for each of the strategic initiatives, which can build on the already substantial development efforts currently underway in Mingo County and West Virginia.

The MCRA and other area economic development entities already partner with Mingo County's public service organizations including the Health Department, Williamson Health and Wellness Center, the Board of Education, and the Public Service District. The Convention & Visitors Bureaus and the Chamber of Commerce are also involved stakeholders representing the business community. These efforts are furthered with the support of private employers including land companies, Appalachian Power, and local contractors. These stakeholders already do and will help development projects move forward.

## APPENDIX A – DEVELOPMENT SITES

### Southern West Virginia Regional Airport and Air Transportation Park





## Harless Industrial Park



## REFERENCES

---

- <sup>1</sup> West Virginia Coal Association (2021). *2021 Coal Facts, 2016 Coal Facts, and 2006 Coal Facts*.
- <sup>2</sup> Ground Floor Partners (2018). "Mingo County Wood Products Industrial Park Feasibility Study."
- <sup>3</sup> Haithcock, Autumn and Zachery Cowser. "Logan Massacre." Clio: Your Guide to History. September 15, 2020. Accessed March 16, 2022. <https://theclio.com/entry/44599>
- <sup>4</sup> Smith, Miranda, and Clio Admin. "The Battle of Beech Creek Historical Marker ." Clio: Your Guide to History. July 20, 2019. Accessed March 16, 2022. <https://www.theclio.com/entry/82537>
- <sup>5</sup> Victoria Endres and Kathleen Thompson. "Hatfield Cemetery in Mingo County, WV." Clio: Your Guide to History. October 5, 2020. Accessed March 16, 2022. <https://theclio.com/entry/20232>
- <sup>6</sup> Smith, Miranda, and Clio Admin. "Battle of Grapevine Creek (1888)." Clio: Your Guide to History. June 27, 2019. Accessed March 16, 2022. <https://theclio.com/entry/82558>
- <sup>7</sup> National Park Service, "Matewan Massacre". <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/matewan-massacre.htm>
- <sup>8</sup> National Park Service, "McDowell County Courthouse". <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/mcdowell-county-courthouse.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> West Virginia Mine Wars Museum. "What Were the Mine Wars?" Accessed March 16, 2022. <https://wvminewars.org/>
- <sup>10</sup> MU CBER (2022). "The Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Hatfield McCoy Trail System in West Virginia - 2021."
- <sup>11</sup> The Thrasher Group (March 2020). *Tug Fork River Water Trail Access Plan: WV-KY-VA*. Draft 3-10-2020. Prepared for the National Coal Heritage Area Authority.
- <sup>12</sup> Guyandotte Water Trail Alliance (2021). <https://guyandottewatertrail.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Guyandotte-map.jpg>. Accessed 4/5/2022.
- <sup>13</sup> Congressional Research Service (2022). The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties.
- <sup>14</sup> National Coal Heritage Area (2022). [National Coal Heritage Area/ Coal Heritage Trail](#)
- <sup>15</sup> Urban Institute (2019). "Disrupting Food Insecurity - Tapping data for strategies that tackle the root causes." [https://apps.urban.org/features/disrupting-food-insecurity/?county=Mingo\\_County&state=WV](https://apps.urban.org/features/disrupting-food-insecurity/?county=Mingo_County&state=WV)
- <sup>16</sup> USDA Economic Research Service (2021). Definitions of Food Security. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/#ranges>
- <sup>17</sup> Kauffman Foundation (2015). "Guidelines for Local and State Governments to Promote Entrepreneurship."
- <sup>18</sup> Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce (2022). <https://tugvalleychamber.com/>.
- <sup>19</sup> WV Legislature (2022). 2022 Regular Session, Enrolled Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 530.
- <sup>20</sup> West Virginia Legislature (2021). House Bill 2002. Passed April 10, 2021; in effect May 27, 2021.
- <sup>21</sup> Mingo Messenger (February 14, 2022). "County commission receives good news on projects."
- <sup>22</sup> Costa D. (2015). Health and the Economy in the United States, from 1750 to the Present. *Journal of economic literature*, 53(3), 503–570.
- <sup>23</sup> White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (2019). "Rural Community Action Guide: Building Stronger Healthy, Drug-Free Rural Communities".
- <sup>24</sup> Williamson Health and Wellness Center (2020). "Important Information on the Acquisition of Williamson Memorial Hospital." <https://williamsonhealthwellness.com/>
- <sup>25</sup> WV Broadband Enhancement Council (2021). West Virginia Statement on ARPA Broadband Investment Plan. <https://broadband.wv.gov/>.
- <sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. "Vocational education – Basic Grants to States." <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/ctesbg/index.html>.



- 
- <sup>27</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2021). "With Pandemic Worsening the Mental Illness and Addiction Crisis, Biden Administration to Provide Nearly \$2.5 Billion to States, Territories for Treatment, Prevention Aid." <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202103110230>.
- <sup>28</sup> Marshall University, Center of Excellence in Recovery (2021). <https://www.marshall.edu/coefr/>.
- <sup>29</sup> USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service. (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants>).
- <sup>30</sup> WV Department of Agriculture, Ag Business (2020). <https://agriculture.wv.gov/ag-business/>.
- <sup>31</sup> RCBI (2021). Agricultural Innovations. <https://www.rcbi.org/entrepreneurs/agriculture-innovations/>.
- <sup>32</sup> <https://tamarackfoundation.org/>.
- <sup>33</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration (2021). "504 Loans," <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/504-loans>.
- <sup>34</sup> Herald-Dispatch (April 18, 2022). "State, local leaders celebrate funding, creation of dilapidated buildings initiative,"
- <sup>35</sup> Appalachian Regional Commission (2022). "Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity," ARC Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2026.
- <sup>36</sup> Appalachian Regional Commission (2019). "Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia."
- <sup>37</sup> Region 2 Planning & Development Council (2020). "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2020-2024."
- <sup>38</sup> Tucson Atlantic Consulting (2017?). "Capitol Region Aerospace Assessment: Including Kanawha, Boone, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, Putnam, and Roane Counties."
- <sup>39</sup> West Virginia Legislature (2021). House Bill 2002. Passed April 10, 2021; in effect May 27, 2021.
- <sup>40</sup> MetroNews (March 6, 2022). "Broadband expansion projects in Logan, Mingo counties getting boost with additional funding."
- <sup>41</sup> Benton Institute for Broadband & Society (April 22, 2022). "NTIA Funds Public-Private Broadband Partnerships. [Weekly Digest | Benton Institute for Broadband & Society](#)
- <sup>42</sup> Design Nine, Inc. (2019?). "Broadband for the Gilbert Area of Mingo County: Broadband Assessment and Plan."
- <sup>43</sup> Thompson & Litton (December 22, 2021). Preliminary Statement of Probable Project Cost for Williamson Health & Wellness Broadband in Mingo County, WV.
- <sup>44</sup> U.S. EPA, Sustainable Communities in Appalachia, Technical Assistance Program (2013) "Action Plan for Sustainable Williamson Initiative."
- <sup>45</sup> Mingo County Redevelopment Authority (2007). "Mingo County Comprehensive Plan Update."
- <sup>46</sup> Coalfield Community Action Partnership (2019). "Coalfield Community Action Partnership Needs Assessment Report."
- <sup>47</sup> Congressional Research Service (2022). The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties.