



2017 Comprehensive Plan

Town of Mount Jackson, Virginia

October 30, 2017



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Included Map Exhibits:

- Flood Zones
- Existing Zoning – Town
- Future Land Use – Town
- Existing Zoning – Growth Area
- Future Land Use – Growth Area
- Functional Classification of Roadways
- Existing and Planned Sidewalks
- Planned and Proposed Transportation Improvements



I. Introduction



I. Introduction

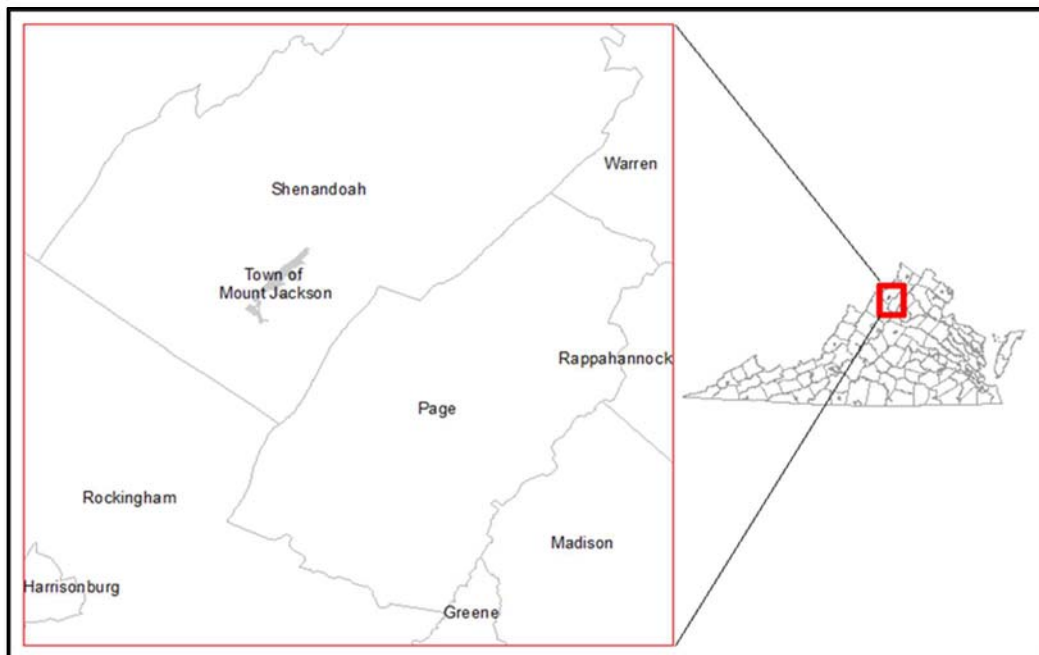
What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that is designed to guide the future growth and development of Mount Jackson over the next twenty or more years. It is the local government's guide to future community, physical, and economic development. All Towns, Cities, and Counties in Virginia are required by Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia to adopt a Comprehensive Plan, and update the plan every 5 years.

It is important to note that the Comprehensive Plan is not a legal regulatory document like the Zoning Ordinance or Subdivision Ordinance. Instead, it is a vision for what the citizens and leadership of Mount Jackson want the Town to be in the future. The plan will serve as a guide for Town leaders and property owners as they make many land use, fiscal, and other decisions over the coming years. The primary goal of this plan is to protect and improve the Town by providing for the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare of its residents.

Regional Setting

The Town of Mount Jackson is located in southern Shenandoah County midway between the Towns of Edinburg and New Market in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Mount Jackson developed along U.S. Route 11, an important transportation route that was the major link connecting the towns of the Valley for over 200 years until Interstate 81 was completed. The Town is situated on Mill Creek just west of where the Creek empties into the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.



Mount Jackson History

The earliest recorded inhabitants of the area that is now Mount Jackson were the Senedo Indians. Sometime before 1734 settlers from Maryland moved to the area, eventually setting up mills along Mill Creek, including flour and saw mills. The Town was laid out in 1812 and originally called Mount Pleasant. In 1826, the Town's name was changed to Mount Jackson in honor of Andrew Jackson, a frequent visitor to the area and soon to be President of the United States. By 1835 Mount Jackson contained eight houses, one church, one school, a store, a tavern, a tan yard, a smith shop, and a boot factory.



In the period between 1830 and 1840, the Valley Turnpike was built between Winchester and Staunton, forming what is today known as U.S. Route 11. A railroad connection between Mount Jackson and eastern Virginia was built around the time of the Civil War, during which many buildings in the Town served as hospital facilities for both sides of the conflict. Mount Jackson was officially chartered in 1888, by which time it had become an important shipping point for the valley's agricultural products.

In 1972, lands to the north and south were annexed, increasing the size of the Town from 258 acres to 775 acres. Further annexations between 2002 and 2015 increased the size of the Town to 1906 acres.

In 1993, a portion of Mount Jackson's downtown was placed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The designated Historic District is located between 5850 Main Street and 6091 Main Street and includes Gospel, Broad, Race, King, Bank, Wunder, Tisinger, and Bridge Streets, as well as Orkney Drive and portions of Bryce Boulevard. These designations recognize the cultural, architectural, and historic significance of the Town, encourage preservation, and require historic review of state or nationally-funded projects.

Population

This Comprehensive Plan will be a guide to the future growth and development of Mount Jackson. Given population trends in the nation, state, region, and in Shenandoah County, it should be taken as a certainty that the population of the Town will increase. As it grows, the Town will be faced with the need to expand its capacity to serve citizens and businesses with services including police protection, water and sewer utilities, adequate public facilities, and other services. Therefore, an understanding of population is important to the planning process.

The table below shows the population growth of Mount Jackson over time, according to the United States Census. Changes in population have been affected by a variety of factors, including national economic

conditions, opening or closing of large local employers, and the changing boundaries of the Town. Note that significant increases in the Town's population between 1970 and 1980, as well as in the 2000s, was due in large part to annexation of land, bringing people into the Town who had previously lived just outside it.

Mount Jackson Historic Population

Year	Mount Jackson	% Change	Shenandoah County	% Change
1930	575	- -	20,655	- -
1940	562	-2.2%	20,898	1.2%
1950	732	30.2%	21,169	1.3%
1960	722	-1.6%	21,825	3.1%
1970	681	-5.8%	22,852	4.7%
1980	1,419	208.3%	27,559	20.6%
1990	1,583	11.5%	31,636	14.8%
2000	1,664	5.1%	35,075	10.9%
2010	1,994	19.8%	41,993	19.7%
2015	2,253 <i>est.</i>	12.9%	42,724 <i>est.</i>	1.7%

United States Census – 2015 estimated.

Population Projections

How much and how fast Mount Jackson may grow in the future is even more important than the existing population or past Town growth. Future growth must be met by the expansion of facilities and services to continue to serve residents and businesses at expected levels.

The Virginia Employment Commission and the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center are two sources for population projection statistics, both using advanced models to predict the growth of Virginia localities. While these organizations do not provide projections for towns, they do maintain projections for Shenandoah County. The Weldon Cooper Center expects the County to grow to 46,803 residents by 2030, and to 50,507 residents by 2040. The Virginia Employment Commission predicts even more aggressive growth in the region, expecting the County to have 49,045 residents by 2030, and 52,104 by 2040.

Since the 1980s, the population of Mount Jackson has hovered at around 5% of the population of the County that surrounds it. If this rate continues, the Town will likely grow to around 2,400 residents by 2030, and to as many as 2,600 residents by 2040. This is presented below as the Low Estimate.

However, through its own Comprehensive Plan Shenandoah County has affirmed its commitment to keeping the County primarily rural. The County intends most new growth to be directed toward Towns, and to areas near Towns where future commercial and residential growth can best be served by existing roads, utilities, and other services. Under such policies, Mount Jackson may make up greater than 5% of County population in the future. A High Estimate is provided below, and represents Mount Jackson growing to 10% of the total County population. At this higher rate, the Town would have around 4,800 residents by 2030 and over 5,000 by 2040.

Projected Population

Low Estimate: 5% of County Population	
Year	Population Range
2030	2,340 – 2,452
2040	2,525 – 2,605
High Estimate: 10% of County Population	
Year	Population Range
2030	4,680 – 4,905
2040	5,051 – 5,210

Weldon Cooper Center; Virginia Employment Commission

Employment

The employment sector in Mount Jackson is a diverse mix of service, manufacturing, retail, government, and other industries and careers. The town has a very low unemployment rate of 3.3% as of April 2017. This rate is better than both the Virginia rate of 3.6% and national rate of 4.4% unemployment. The Town's commercial sector is an important contributor to employment, shopping and service needs, and the Town's economy.

Unemployment Rates



National – 4.4%

Virginia – 3.6%

Mount Jackson – 3.3%

Jobs of Mount Jackson Residents

Industry	Residents Employed	Percent of Total
Total Employed Population	1005	--
Farming and Mining	20	2.0%
Construction	110	10.9%
Manufacturing	204	20.3%
Wholesale Trade	31	3.1%
Retail Trade	161	16.0%
Transportation and Utilities	37	3.7%
Information	30	3.0%
Finance and Real Estate	22	2.2%
Professional and Scientific Services	65	6.5%
Education and Health Care	159	15.8%
Entertainment and Food Service	93	9.3%
Public Administration	29	2.9%
Other	44	4.4%

United States Census – 2015 estimates.

Major Employers in Mount Jackson

Name of Employer	Business or Product	Employee Range
Andros Foods North America	Preserved Fruits and Vegetables	400-500
MASCO--Merillat Division	Wood Kitchen Cabinets	300-400
Little Apple Corp 1 (ex. Denny's)	Restaurant	200-300
Toms King LLC (ex. Burger King)	Restaurant	200-300
Holtzman Propane Inc.	Liquefied Petroleum Gas	100-200
Holtzman Oil Corp.	Petroleum Products	100-200
Bowman Andros Products	Preserved Fruits and Vegetables	100-200
Holtzman Oil Corp.	Petroleum Products	100-200
Food Lion	Grocery Store	50-100
LD&B	Insurance	50-100
Valley Fertilizer & Chemical	Farm Supplies	25-50
Sheets Travel Center	Grocery and Fuel	25-50
DBI	Transportation/Road Work	25-50
Holtzman Transport	Transportation	25-50
Rt. 11 Chips	Food	25-50
Holtzman Fuel Delivery	Transportation	10-25
Inboden Environmental Ser. Inc.	Water Supply	10-25
Holtzman Propane Delivery	Transportation	10-25
Shenandoah Valley Electric	Electric Services	10-25
Town of Mount Jackson	General Government	10-25
Cabin Hill Homes LLC	Residential Construction	10-25
Save A Lot	Grocery Stores	10-25
Shenandoah Truck Center	Grocery and Fuel	10-25
Bowman Orchards Center	Deciduous tree fruits	10-25
James E. Zerkel Inc.	Hardware	10-25
Cornerstone Technology Services	Technology & Security	10-25

Town of Mount Jackson, April 2016

Commuting

It is important to note that Mount Jackson participates in a regional employment economy, meaning that many employed Town residents work outside of the Town limits. At the same time, many employees of Mount Jackson businesses commute to the Town for work. Excellent transportation links like Interstate 81 make commuting convenient. While there is nothing wrong with regional employment, it should be the long-term goal of the Town to continually increase its share of regional commerce.



Commuting and Mount Jackson

Live and Work in Town	17%
Work in Shenandoah County	56%
Work Outside of County	26%

United States Census

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Mount Jackson is governed by a seven-member Town Council, as well as by an elected Mayor who serves as the presiding officer at Council meetings. Each of these representatives is elected to a four-year term.

Day-to-day operation of the Town and the supervision of Town employees is carried out by a Town Manager, serving at the direction of the Council, who also serves as Zoning Administrator and Secretary to the Board of Zoning Appeals. An Administrative Assistant works closely with the Town Manager, also serving as Town Clerk responsible for minutes of Council and Planning Commission meetings.



The Finance Director/Treasurer and one Assistant Treasurer are responsible for financial records, payroll, payments, and revenue collection. The Town's Maintenance Supervisor, along with his staff, handle a variety of maintenance tasks for Town facilities and equipment. The Town's water and wastewater systems are run by a System Supervisor, along with one assistant.

Planning Commission

A seven-member Planning Commission advises the Town Council on current and future development of land and structures, including zoning issues and long-range planning. One member of the Council serves on the Planning Commission and the remaining Commissioners are appointed by Council.

Board of Zoning Appeals

A five-member Board of Zoning Appeals, nominated by the Council and appointed by the Circuit Court, hears and decides appeals of decisions pertaining to zoning. Members serve staggered terms, and one member must be a member of the Planning Commission.

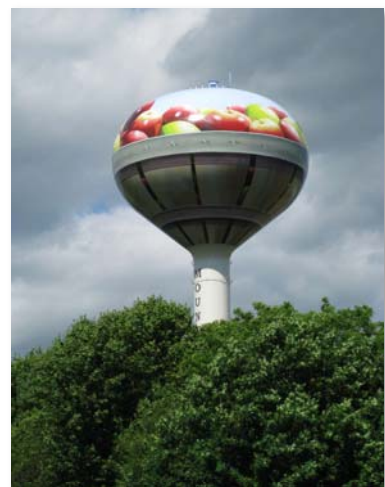
Economic Development Authority

Seven members appointed by the Town Council comprise the Mount Jackson Economic Development Authority, created to promote the public interest, safety, health, welfare, convenience, and prosperity of the citizens of the Town. It is empowered to issue revenue bonds for industrial development and certain other types of development for the public benefit pursuant to the Code of Virginia. Two members of Council currently sit on this board, out of three allowed. The Town Manager serves as Executive Secretary of the Authority. The Authority acts as the issuing agent only and incurs no monetary obligations to the Town by its actions. The Town benefits monetarily from application fees paid to the town by bond applicants.

TOWN SERVICES & FACILITIES

Water

The town provides a drinking water system drawn from a series of municipal wells. The town wells produce up to 300,000 gallons per day, with water stored in three 500,000 gallon tanks. In addition, the Town maintains a connection with the water system of Andros Foods North America, which can supply approximately 150 gallons per minute to the Town in case of emergency. Work is underway on a 450 gallon per minute water treatment facility that will help to remove nitrates found in several town wells. The town's water is distributed through 23 miles of underground distribution pipes. Among these pipes are 4800 feet of aging 6-inch cast iron pipe under Main Street which are in need of replacement.



Summary of Town's Existing Water Capacity

Description	Gallons per Day
Current Capacity	1,300,000
Town Share of Capacity	650,000
Capacity Currently Used*	190,000
Additional Capacity Commitments**	230,000
Current Capacity Remaining	230,000
** 80,000 gpd committed to Industrial Park; 150,000 gpd committed to Bowman Apple	

Town of Mount Jackson

The Town of Mount Jackson must continue to expand and improve services to adequately serve a growing population. As of this writing, the Town has 230,000 gallons per day of remaining water capacity. This existing free capacity can accommodate some growth, with additional growth requiring expansion of infrastructure, including, but not limited to, new supply wells, storage, distribution, and treatment facilities.

The Town must also be conscious of the balance between residential and commercial water needs. The Town is likely to grow across sectors over time, with new housing, as well as commercial and industrial uses. While new housing requires relatively low, and somewhat predictable, levels of water use, commercial and industrial uses will vary widely in their water needs. The table below summarizes the capacity of the Town to grow within the limits of its current water system. The scenarios presented here cover growth of between 383 and 766 new residential units, and 919 to 1,800 new residents without expanding the Town's existing water system. However, Mount Jackson must plan well in advance for the eventual expansion of its water system, as water infrastructure can be complex, costly, and time consuming to build.

Water Capacity and Projected Growth

Current Capacity Remaining: 230,000 gallons / day		
	New Residential Units *	New Population **
100% residential use	766	1,800
90% residential use	690	1,656
80% residential use	613	1,470
70% residential use	536	1,286
60% residential use	460	1,104
50% residential use	383	919

* assumes 300 gallons / day per unit
** assumes 2.4 persons per unit

Wastewater

The town provides a wastewater system consisting of over 17 miles of sewer pipes and a 700,000 gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant completed in 2008 to meet all nitrate and phosphorus removal requirements of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality as part of the Chesapeake Bay Clean-up Program. The Town has a long-term contract with one local industry for up to 200,000 gallons per day of wastewater treatment capacity. Including that commitment, the average treatment for 2015 was 370,000 gallons per day or 53% of the plant's capacity.

Police Department

The Mount Jackson Police Department is made up of six full-time officers, and is equipped with six police vehicles. As the town grows in the future it will be necessary for the police department to grow to meet the needs of a larger population. In addition to more officers, the town must be prepared to provide additional office space and equipment to the police department to maintain an efficient force. As public safety is a basic need for any community, Mount Jackson must be committed to providing training, equipment, and pay that allows the town to attract and retain officers.



Town Hall

Mount Jackson's town hall was opened and dedicated in 2004 to serve the town in a variety of ways. The building contains administrative offices for the town, including the police department, the town library, and a museum of local history. The building also houses community meetings, serves as a visitor's center, and is used as a polling station during elections. The building was truly a community effort, with two-thirds of building costs funded by community donations and state or federal grants.



Library

The library has over 13,000 volumes, seven online computers for community use, a volunteer staff of 12, and occupies 2,500 square feet of space in the Town Center, including a children's area. The Library space is paid for by citizen donations and a donation from the Shenandoah County Library. Work toward the following enhancements would maintain, improve, and expand library services to the Mount Jackson community: the funding of a part-time library manager, and the recruitment of additional library volunteers.

Mount Jackson Museum

The Mount Jackson Museum opened in 1997 and moved into town hall in 2004. The Museum's purpose is to collect, preserve and display historical items and photos about Mount Jackson's past and its citizens. The Museum is operated entirely by volunteers. Displays are located on both levels of Town Hall, and the museum is staffed entirely by volunteers. With a growing collection, the museum is already looking for a new, larger space. Funding for the Museum is from membership fees and donations from private individuals. The Museum also has printed a "Walking Tour of Mount Jackson" brochure. The brochure describes the older homes on Main Street that are part of the Historic District, and is available in the racks in Town hall.

SERVICES BY OTHERS

Electricity

Electrical power is supplied to various areas of the town by either Dominion Virginia Power or Shenandoah Valley Electric Co-operative. Neither company anticipates any problem supplying the power needs of the town and surrounding area in the foreseeable future.

Trash

The town contracts with private companies to provide trash pickup. A fee is billed to residents for this service. Disposal is provided by Shenandoah County at the county landfill between Edinburg and Woodstock. In addition to regular trash service, a curbside recycling program has been established, with pickups every two weeks.

Rescue and Fire

Firefighting and EMT services for the town are provided by Mount Jackson Rescue and Fire. The organization is based in a recently constructed facility south of downtown Mount Jackson, and is staffed by volunteers, with the exception of two career firefighter/EMTs from Shenandoah County Fire and Rescue who are available weekdays during daytime hours. The department responded to 931 calls for service during 2015.

Mount Jackson Rescue and Fire faces a variety of challenges that the town should carefully address to provide for the necessary public safety for town residents. First, with volunteerism declining, the town and MJRF will need to find a way to increase volunteer numbers, or to further supplement volunteers with



career firefighters and EMTs. Second, fire and EMS equipment must continually be replaced to ensure that the organization's apparatus and supplies are current and functional. Costs range from \$4000 to outfit a firefighter in personal protective equipment, to over \$1 million for a ladder truck. The town should assist MJRF through grant support, or through local funds, to meet financial needs. Finally, although MJRF operates from a recently-constructed facility, the organization and the town should plan for the future growth of the town and its population by working well in advance to predict future facility needs.

Education

Students in Mount Jackson are served by the Shenandoah County Public Schools system, and attend Ashby-Lee Elementary, North Fork Middle, and Stonewall Jackson High School, all located on a campus just south of the town limits.

Triplett Business & Technical Center, located in Mount Jackson, provides vocational programs to students from local public high schools. The Massanutten Regional Governor's School, also located in the Triplett Center, provides programs for gifted and talented high school juniors and seniors from Shenandoah, Page, and Rockingham Counties, and the City of Harrisonburg. The Governor's school had a 2016 enrollment of 76 students, with 4 faculty.





II. Community Engagement



II. Community Engagement

The Comprehensive Plan is a community's future vision of itself. This plan, like any good Comprehensive Plan, is built on the opinions and desires of local people. Residents and business owners have contributed to this plan through a community survey, local focus group, and open public meetings of the Planning Commission and Town Council. Mount Jackson is committed to an open and responsive government for its residents, and to listening to the needs of locals.

Community Survey

To collect local opinion before revising this plan, the Mount Jackson Planning Commission created a survey, allowing the community to have a say in the Comprehensive Plan vision. The survey was sent to every business and household in the 22842 zip code. The same survey was also provided to Stonewall Jackson High School juniors and seniors to gather youth opinion on topics facing the Town. The general survey received 136 responses, while the student survey received 106 responses.

A summary of selected topics and answers is presented below, with results used throughout this plan to guide recommendations and included topics. This information should serve as a continual guide to the policies and efforts of Town government, as well as a resource for residents, businesses, and community groups.

Selected Survey Results

	General Survey	School Survey
What types of housing are needed?	#1 senior living #2 single-family homes	#1 townhouses #2 single-family homes
Most important public services and facilities?	#1 medical services #2 fire department #3 rescue squad	#1 rescue squad #2 law enforcement & medical services #3 fire department
Most important for quality-of-life?	#1 safe feeling #2 low crime #3 clean air/water	#1 clean air/water #2 low crime #3 safe feeling
What community events are best?	#1 Fall Festival #2 Christmas parade #3 community clean up day	#1 4 th of July #2 Fall Festival & Carnival #3 concerts at park
Is Mt. Jackson's image good now?	#1 Yes [66%]	#1 Yes [61%]
Are the Shenandoah River and creeks important to you?	#1 Yes [95%]	#1 Yes [89%]

	General Survey	School Survey
With respect to future growth and development of Mt. Jackson, which are very important?	#1 protecting water quality and resources #2 improving employment opportunities #3 providing public safety & preserving agriculture & small-town character	#1 improving employment opportunities & providing public safety #2 attracting new businesses #3 protecting water quality and resources
Town's most desirable quality?	#1 small community atmosphere	#1 close, nice community
Town's most undesirable quality?	#1 not enough entertainment #2 unkempt, rundown buildings	#1 need to improve amenities #2 too rural, not growing
Town's greatest problem?	#1 lack of business/industry	#1 employment & wage rates
Types of services or businesses needed?	#1 restaurants #2 commercial/retail stores	#1 restaurants #2 small & large retail stores
What types of transportation are needed?	#1 public transportation	#1 public transportation
Desired local employment opportunities?	#1 commercial/retail/wholesale #2 manufacturing, processing, distributing	#1 commercial/retail/wholesale #2 manufacturing, processing, distributing
Other employment options you would like to see?	medical, restaurants, clerical, government, small scale business, large industry	medical, starter jobs, computer field, large vehicle garage

Focus Group

A group of citizens and local leaders appointed by the Planning Commission met between November 2015 and July 2016 to explore some of the topics included in this Comprehensive Plan, including Town history and facilities. The focus group also established, in conjunction with the Town Council, the Town vision statement found herein, and constructed, distributed, and compiled the above survey. The work of the focus group also extended to Mount Jackson's Zoning Ordinance, where they created initial drafts of revisions to the Town's industrial zoning classifications. The Town is thankful to these citizens and leaders for their efforts to promote and improve their town.



III. Vision and Goals



III. Vision & Goals

The Vision Statement for this Comprehensive Plan was developed through the joint efforts of the Comprehensive Plan Focus Group, Planning Commission, and Town Council as the following:

Mount Jackson Vision Statement

Our Town of Mount Jackson seeks to:

- Preserve and enhance its natural beauty and cultural heritage.
- Promote economic development through diverse jobs and business opportunities.
- Encourage educational opportunities through partnerships with local business.
- Support wellness of all generations through recreational, cultural, and educational activities to promote a vibrant community.
- Provide a safe and secure environment for all citizens.
- Promote environmental responsibility.
- Continue to be a visitor destination of choice.
- Create an environment in which residents and neighbors can live, work and retire in a family-oriented community.



The Comprehensive Plan's goals are closely tied to the Town's vision of its future. The Plan's recommended strategies are specific actions the Town should take to accomplish the goals. This list should be aspirational, but realistic enough to be accomplished with the Town's limited staff and budget

Goal: Maintain an open, active, and informed government that welcomes citizen participation, and is responsive to the needs of residents.

- a. Require staff and elected and appointed leaders to pursue appropriate education and certifications opportunities.
- b. Require the Planning Commission to annually review and report on desirable updates to the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision ordinance.

Goal: Provide high quality services and facilities that meet the current and future needs of the town.

- a. Develop a utilities master plan to address long term maintenance needs, capacity and growth issues, rates and fees, and well-head protection both within the town and adjacent county growth areas.
- b. Promote a safe community by providing the highest quality of police services available with first-class equipment and well-trained personnel who are prepared for a wide variety of emergencies and who serve the community in a personal effective manner.
- c. Expand and improve park facilities and events to serve a growing population.
- d. Expand library and museum promotion, hours, staff, and programs to better serve residents and visitors.
- e. The town government should seek all financial aid for which the Town may be eligible from State, Federal, or other sources toward providing or enhancing community facilities and economic development.



Goal: Protect the small-town character of Mount Jackson for the benefit of existing residents, future residents, and visitors.

- a. Update the town's corridor and downtown design guidelines.
- b. Design and install welcome and wayfinding signage for the benefit of visitors and tourists.
- c. Enhance landscaping, signage, and lighting provisions of the zoning ordinance.
- d. Participate in regional tourism programs, trails, and promotional efforts.

Goal: Protect, preserve, and promote the town's environmental assets.

- a. Create and implement guidelines that address environmental issues related to property including tree preservation, landscaping, screening/buffers, stormwater, and waterways.
- b. Incorporate an environmental conservation overlay district into the town's zoning ordinance.
- c. Promote the purchase and acceptance donations of open space for resource protection along streams.
- d. Plan, implement, and promote greenway trails, rail trails, and river trails as an amenity for residents and as an attraction for visitors.



Goal: Provide for a balanced mix of new growth including housing, commercial, and industrial development.

- a. Study the growth and development potential of existing town lands, as well as areas designated by the county as "Town Growth Areas".
- b. Actively promote the town as a location for new business growth within the region.

Goal: Provide development regulations that are concise, understandable, business friendly, and reflective of the Town's vision for its future.

- a. Ensure that a broad range of housing types including attached, multifamily, and elderly housing are permitted in the zoning ordinance.
- b. Ensure that a broad range of modern and flexible business uses are permitted in the zoning ordinance.

Goal: Work cooperatively with the County on growth, transportation, and land use issues.

- a. Incorporate planning for areas designated by the county as "Town Growth Areas" into the town's comprehensive plan.
- b. Explore opportunities for a Transfer of Development Rights program to encourage growth in or near the town.

Goal: Plan for adequate transportation and access for all areas of Mount Jackson and all modes of travel.

- a. Provide convenient, free, and well-marked parking for visitors and customers of the central business district.
- b. Continue to pursue and fund the construction of sidewalks throughout the Town.
- c. Support efforts to promote public transportation.



IV. Environment



IV. Environment

Community Input:

- Clean air and water are important to Mount Jackson's quality of life. (*#1 general survey, #3 school survey*)
- The Shenandoah River and local creeks are important to us. (*95% general survey, 89% school survey*)

Section Objectives:

- Incorporate environmental conservation into the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines.
- Purchase or accept donations of open space for resource protection along streams.
- Plan, implement, and promote greenway trails as an amenity for residents and visitors.



With attractive views and clear skies, Mount Jackson enjoys a beautiful setting in the Shenandoah Valley, surrounded by farmland, and bordered by rivers, streams, and wetlands. The Town's environment is not just for looks though, it plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of its people, and can have a role in the Town's economic success.

When responding to the Comprehensive Plan survey, residents and students both ranked clean air and water among the Town's most desirable qualities, and recognized protection of these environmental resources as among the most important issues as the Town grows in the future.

Environmental Resources

Shenandoah River, Mill Creek, and Other Streams

Mount Jackson enjoys a setting adjacent to the Shenandoah River, a major watercourse winding north through the Shenandoah Valley, and a major tributary of the Potomac River. The Town also includes Mill Creek, a tributary to the Shenandoah, and the site of some of the Town's original buildings and industries. Other smaller streams and drainage paths also flow throughout the Town and nearby areas. Waterways serve an important drainage function in the Town, but can also be open space amenities for locals and residents.

Wetlands and Floodplains

Wetlands and floodplains are found along many local rivers, creeks, and streams. These areas may have a marshy character and flood during periods of heavy rain and snow melt. These areas, and their periodic flooding, are an important part of the natural water cycle both adding capacity to rivers and streams when its needed and helping to filter water as it runs into waterways.

Soils & Topography

Mount Jackson is generally a karst area, meaning the land is underlain by limestone that can be worn away by water flows over time resulting in sinkholes, caverns, and other formations. Karst areas can be challenging for development, but can also bring major attractions like Shenandoah Caverns. The area is rock-strewn, but with good agricultural soils also present. In general, development should be guided away from areas with natural limitations, such as steep slopes, shallow depth to bedrock, floodplains, prime agricultural lands, wetlands, and sinkholes.








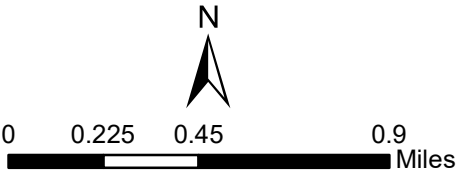
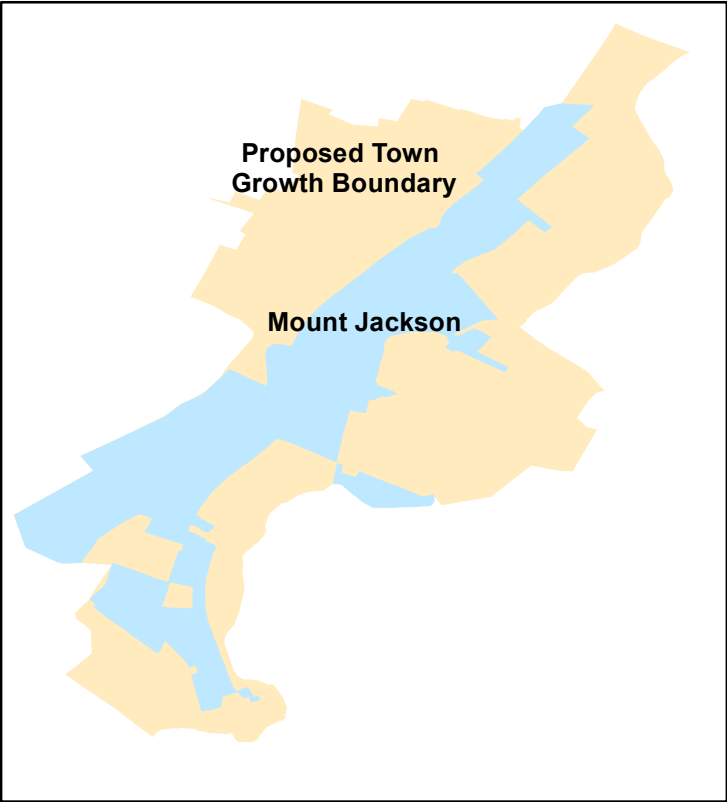
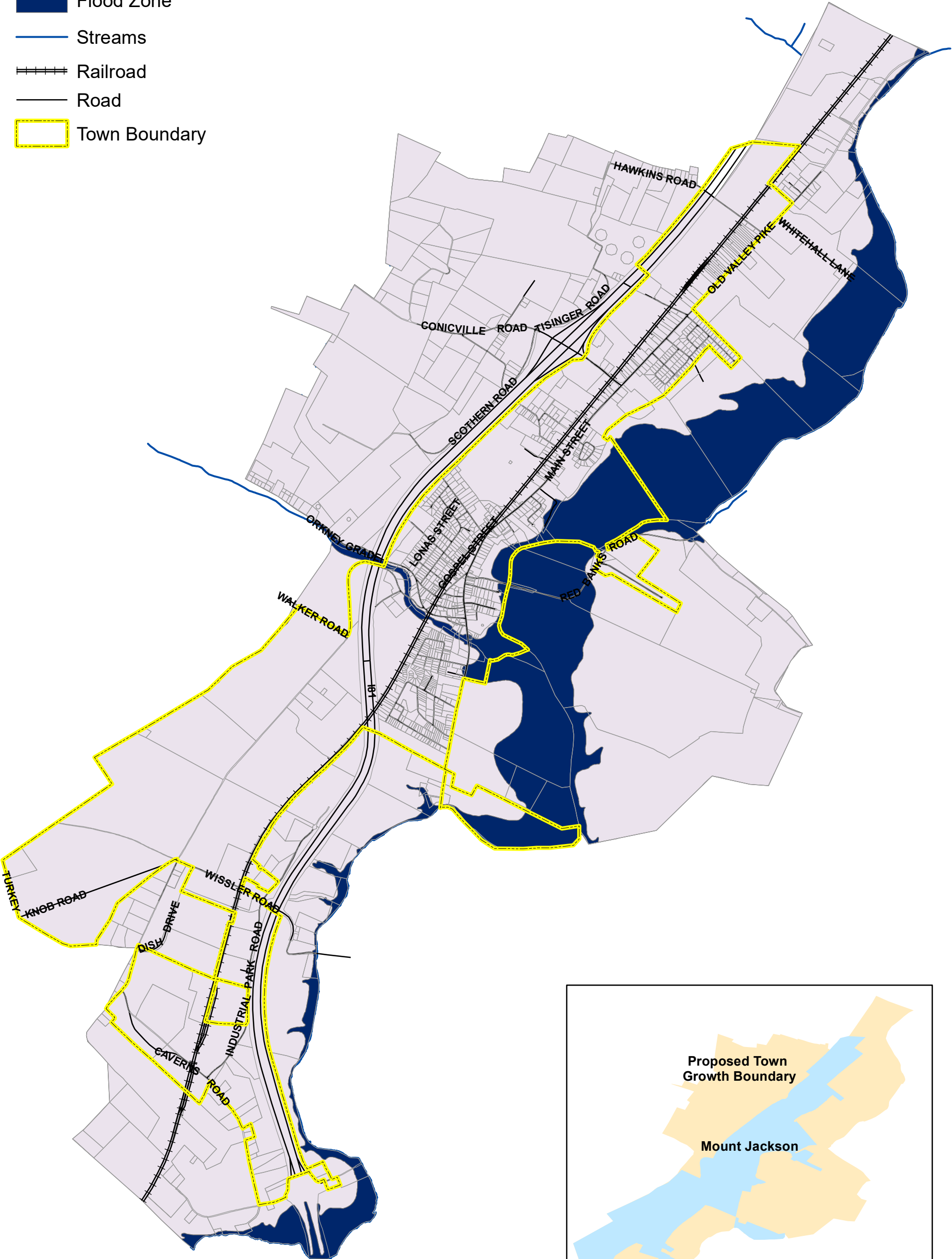
Groundwater

The Town of Mount Jackson maintains a public water system for the use of its residents and businesses. The system includes three (3) tanks and 23 miles of water distribution lines, all supplied by six (6) groundwater wells, together producing 500 gallons of water per minute. These wells represent a substantial infrastructure investment on the part of the Town, and the quality of this groundwater supply is essential to the health of the Town and its citizens. The commitment of the Town to continuing to provide a sustainable and clean supply of drinking water will be a deciding factor in the capacity of Mount Jackson to continue growing in the future.

Flood Zone

Legend

-  Flood Zone
-  Streams
-  Railroad
-  Road
-  Town Boundary



The Town must take action to protect the vicinity of its public wells from pollution that could damage the water supply or take any of these wells out of use. At the same time, the Town should carefully monitor existing land uses near the wells for pollution hazards.

Land uses that can pose threats to ground water include:

Industrial: Industrial pollution sources vary widely depending on the nature of the industry and the products used or produced. However, the volumes associated with industrial applications make spills or other mishandling a greater danger to groundwater supplies. Materials such as petroleum, cleaning supplies, solvents, paints, metals, and others pose a potential threat unless carefully managed.



Commercial: Even the most basic commercial and service industry uses sometimes use toxic and hazardous materials in their processes. Specific land uses of concern include auto repair shops, gas stations, railroad uses, construction areas, dry cleaners, laundromats, medical facilities, and printing establishments.

Residential: Sources of residential pollution are usually of much smaller concern than commercial or industrial sources, but potential sources include abandoned septic systems, sewer lines, fuel tanks for heating systems, and household, lawn, automotive, and pool chemicals.



Agriculture: The Town still contains agricultural land, including some that is still actively farmed. Specific pollution concerns on farms include pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers, both as applied in fields or when improperly stored, as well as confined feeding operations that can create excessive nitrate/nitrite and bacteriological problems from animal waste.

Transportation: Many hazardous materials can be released by spills and accidents along Mount Jackson's public roads, including fuel and other fluids from vehicles, or from materials being transported. Two of the Town's six wells are located within 1000-feet of Interstate 81. Although the Town has no ability to regulate the vehicles and materials that pass through on public roads, accident prevention, as well as the ability of the Town to respond quickly to contain spills is crucial.



Protecting Natural Resources

Land development and Town growth can affect waterways and groundwater in two main ways; water quantity and water quality. Developed land covers up naturally absorbent soils with roofs and parking lots, meaning that less rainfall soaks into the ground and more is channeled into storm drains and ultimately into creeks and rivers in increased quantities that may cause flooding or erosion. Water quality can also be affected by the byproducts of development, including spilled chemicals from industrial applications or drips of oil and gas washed off parking lots by rain, resulting in a variety of impacts to land, vegetation, and animals.

Mount Jackson's primary tools for protecting its environment are found in development regulations, including its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. These ordinances should help to locate the most intensive uses away from waterways, specify appropriate building and parking setbacks from rivers and streams, and prevent future development in wetland and floodplain areas.

The Town has the ability to institute overlay zoning that would give additional protections to both groundwater resources and surface water courses. Such an overlay should include additional setbacks from water resources, as well as enhanced landscape requirements that would ensure the placement of vegetated buffers between development and natural resources. The overlay zone may also enforce stricter site planning regulations in environmentally sensitive areas, including limits on impervious surfaces or the promotion of low impact development techniques.

Outside of regulatory issues, residents of Mount Jackson are proud of their environment and willing to help in other ways. Educational campaigns on behalf of the Town can help to better teach residents and business owners about water issues. Community groups can also help. The Friends of the North Fork and the Friends of the Shenandoah have each engaged in monitoring and other stream related efforts. These efforts should be embraced by the Town and encouraged to continue or expand.

CAPITALIZING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS

Greenways

Greenways are corridors of undeveloped land set aside for recreation or conservation. Greenways usually follow natural land features, most often rivers and streams. They can be used for walking, hiking, biking, alternative transportation and other pursuits, or just preserved as untouched open space. Active greenways however can be a major amenity to local residents and businesses, as well as an attraction for visitors. Successful greenway trails can benefit adjacent property owners, lodging, restaurants, outfitters, and other businesses as tourists attracted to the greenway fill out their day. In this way, unbuilt space that benefits the environment by cleaning



runoff and providing habitat can also benefit the Town and its people. Properties proximate to green space have a higher economic value than average which is beneficial for both the Town and the property owners.

Communities and developers can plan and reserve land for greenways through a number of different strategies. Communities can acquire park land through subdivision and site planning as new development occurs, or they may acquire land in floodplains over time to create a greenway network. Developers can integrate greenways into their landscape plans linking residential areas to adjoining parks, greenways, and open spaces. Communities may also use public rights-of-way for greenways and work with private companies to gain access to private rights-of-way, such as utility and railway corridors.



V. Land Use



V. Land Use

Community Input:

- Mount Jackson needs senior living and townhouses in addition to single family homes.
- Increased local employment is needed, including retail, wholesale, and manufacturing jobs.

Section Objectives:

- Actively promote the town as a location for new business growth within the region.
- Study the growth and development potential of existing land in town, as well as areas designated by the county as “Town Growth Areas”.
- Ensure that a broad range of uses, including attached, multifamily, and elderly housing, along with modern and flexible business uses, are included in the zoning ordinance.



Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use map is a common Comprehensive Plan element that is meant to show an idealized picture of land use in the long-term future. For Mount Jackson, uses have been grouped into seven broad categories, with consideration given to an appropriate balance of residential, commercial, industrial, public, and open space for the Town's future.

Future Land Use is not the same as zoning, although the two are related. Future Land Use can be thought of as a picture of what zoning in the Town could look like over the next 20 or more years. This map does not change what is allowed on a piece of property right now, although it could be used by a property owner to help justify rezoning a parcel. Because current zoning and future land use are related, zoning maps are included in this section for reference.

Future Land Use

Use Category	Town of Mount Jackson		Town Growth Area	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Low Density Residential	1,173	33.2%	1,809	66.8%
Medium Density Residential	715	20.3%	598	22.1%
High Density Residential	138	3.9%	54	2.0%
Commercial	339	9.6%	132	4.9%
Industrial	1,113	31.5%	67	2.5%
Government and Institutional	36	1.0%	0	0%
Parks and Open Space	16	0.4%	49	1.8%

Town Growth Areas

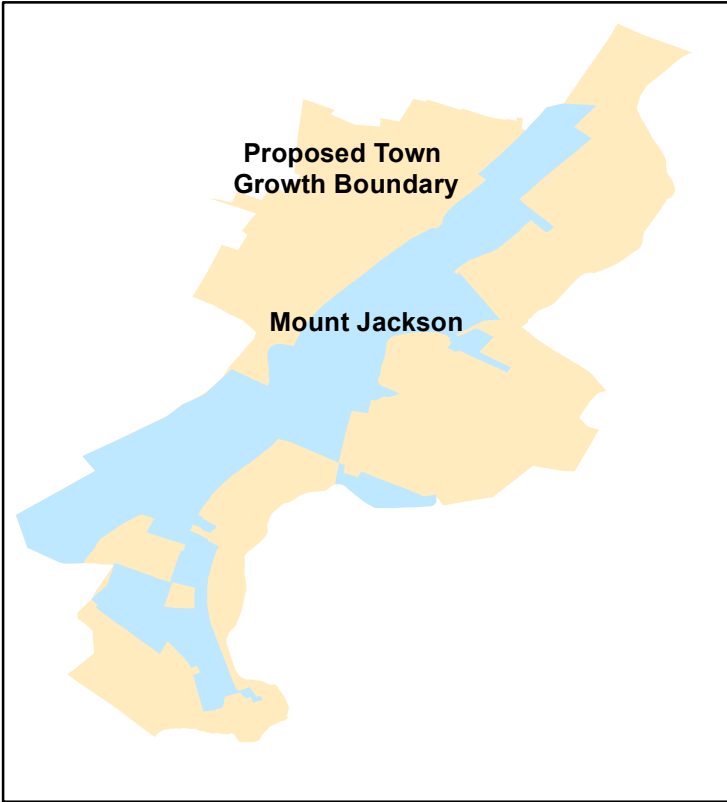
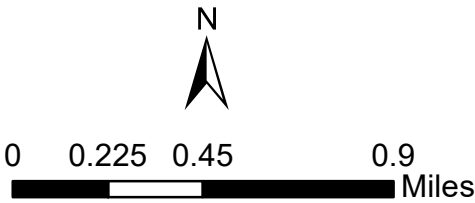
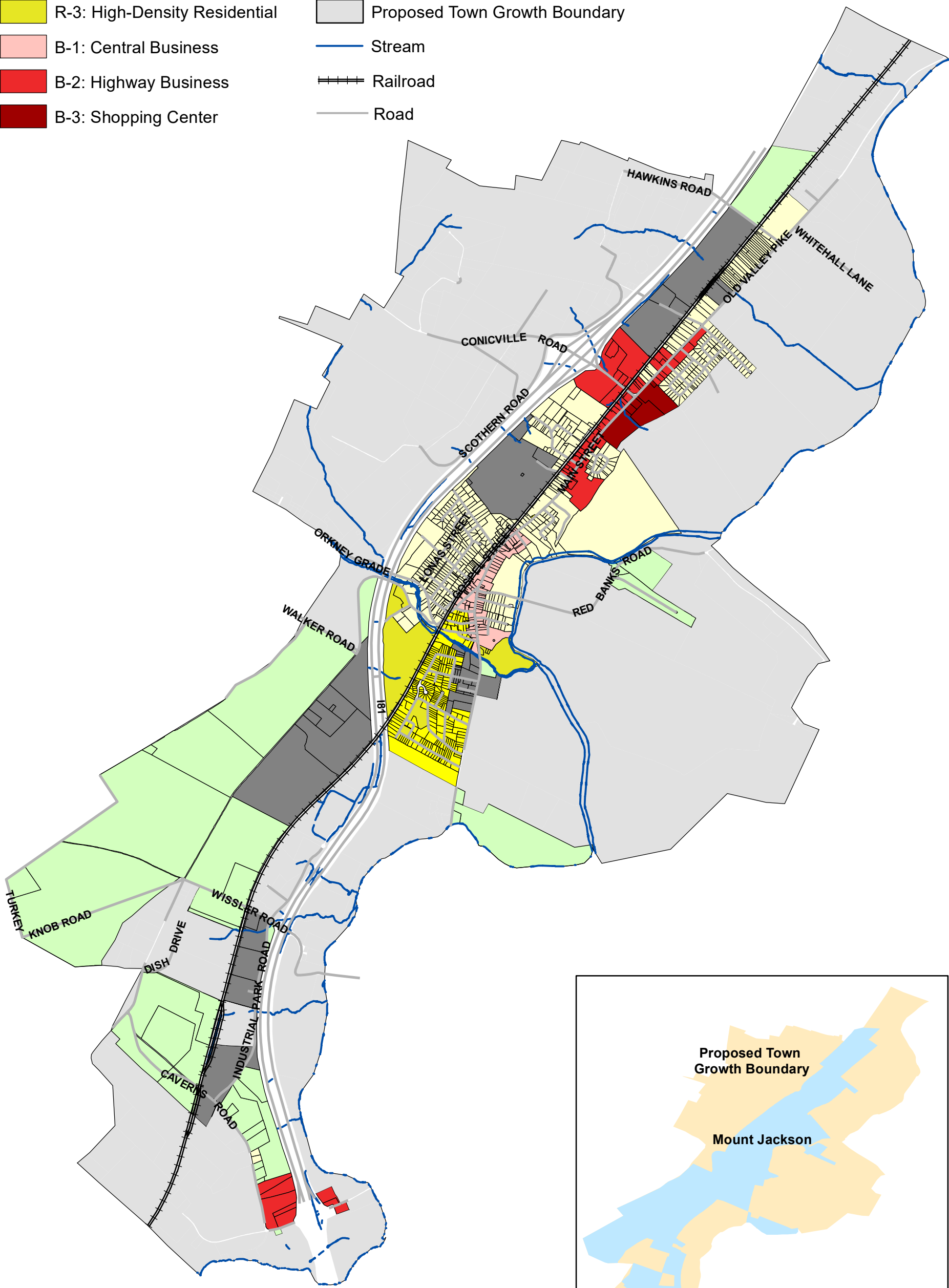
One of the biggest influences on the future growth and land use of Mount Jackson will be the Town's relationship with Shenandoah County. Just as the Town is taking this opportunity to plan for its future growth, the County has its own Comprehensive Plan, with its own vision and goals. The County's Comprehensive Plan largely revolves around the preservation of rural areas. One goal to help achieve this is working to concentrate most future County growth in or near the County's existing towns. The County has mapped an area surrounding Mount Jackson as a Town Growth Area, and intends that this area grow faster, and more densely, than anywhere else.

Because of this relationship, the Future Land Use Maps included in this plan forecast uses for the Town, as well as for the surrounding growth area. Mount Jackson should welcome growth in this area, annexing County parcels where necessary, while ensuring that new growth meets the intent of this plan with quality development that does not take away from the Town's character and charm.

Town of Mount Jackson Zoning Map

Legend

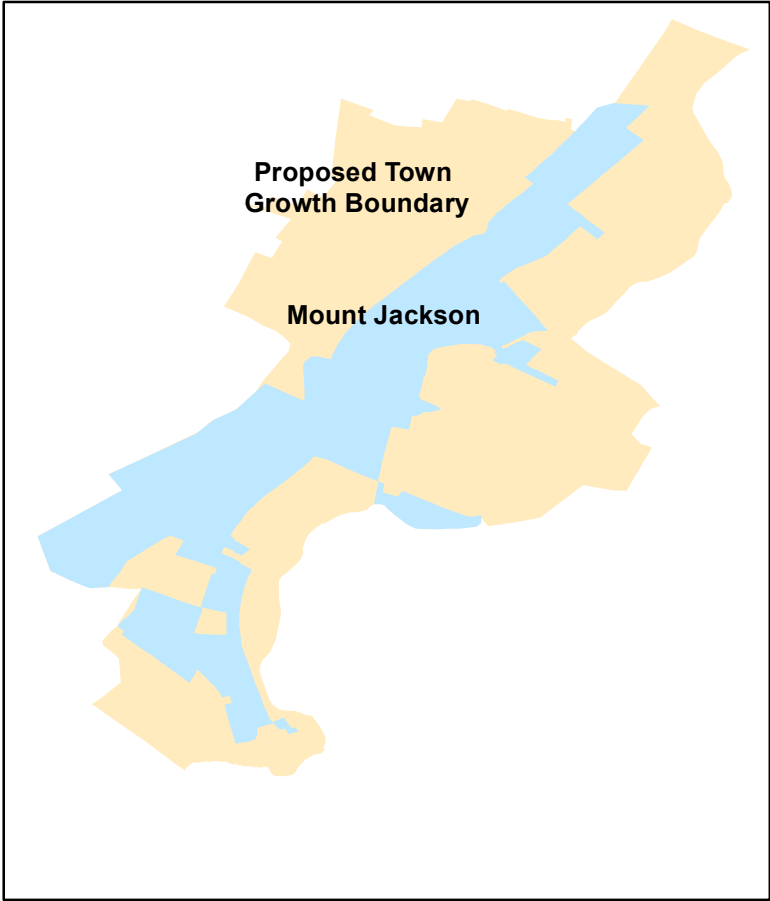
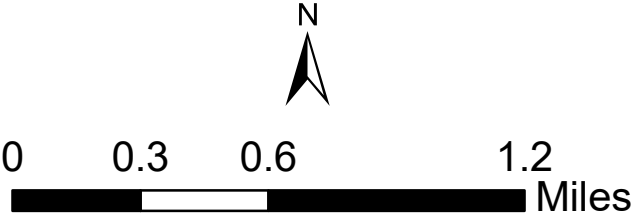
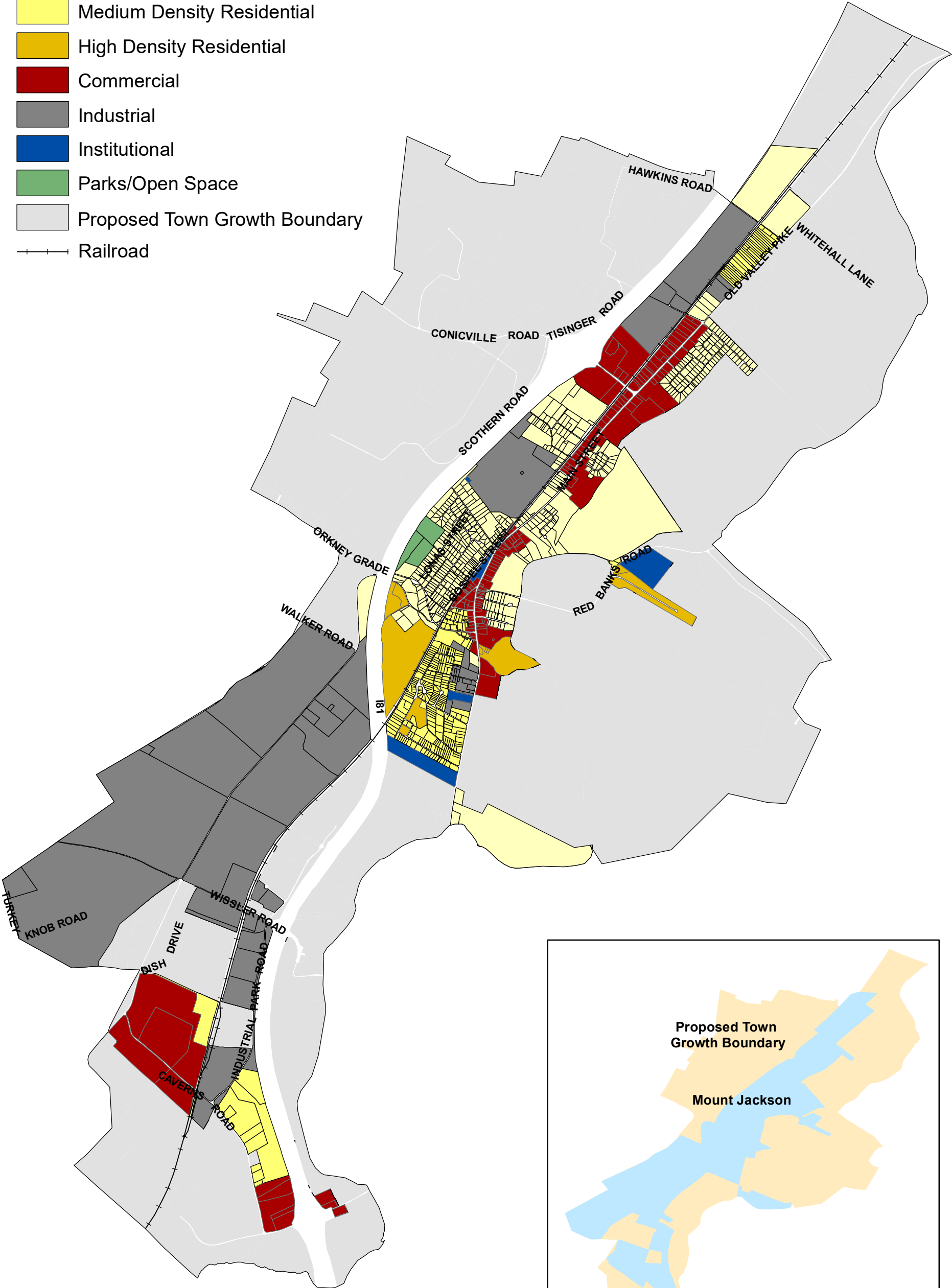
- R-1: Low-Density Residential
- R-2: Medium-Density Residential
- R-3: High-Density Residential
- B-1: Central Business
- B-2: Highway Business
- B-3: Shopping Center
- I-1: Limited Industrial
- A-1: Agriculture
- Proposed Town Growth Boundary
- Stream
- Railroad
- Road



Town of Mount Jackson Future Land Use Map

Legend

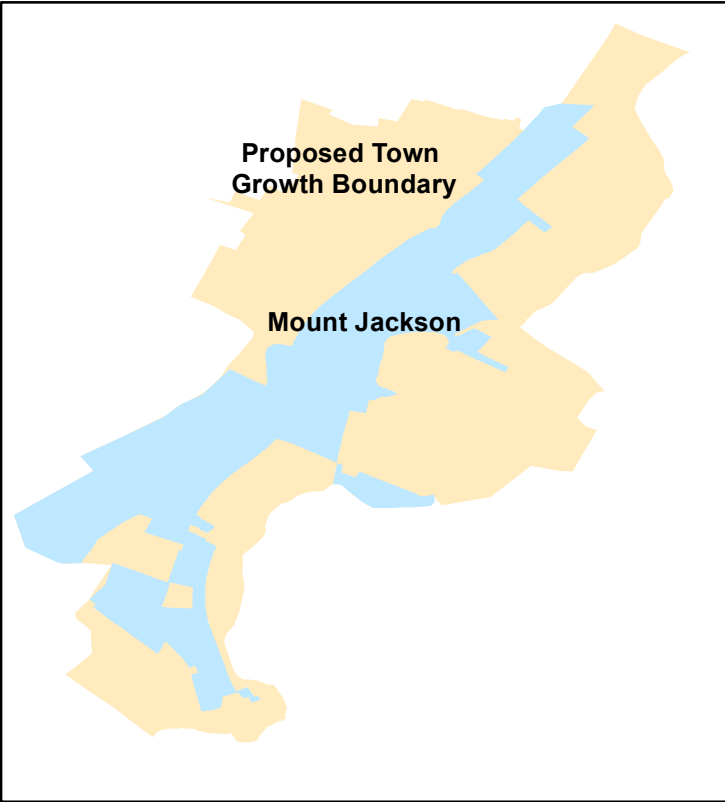
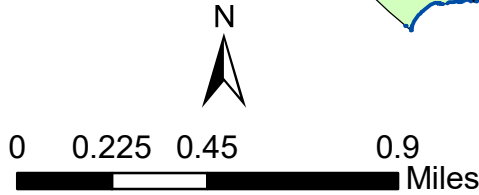
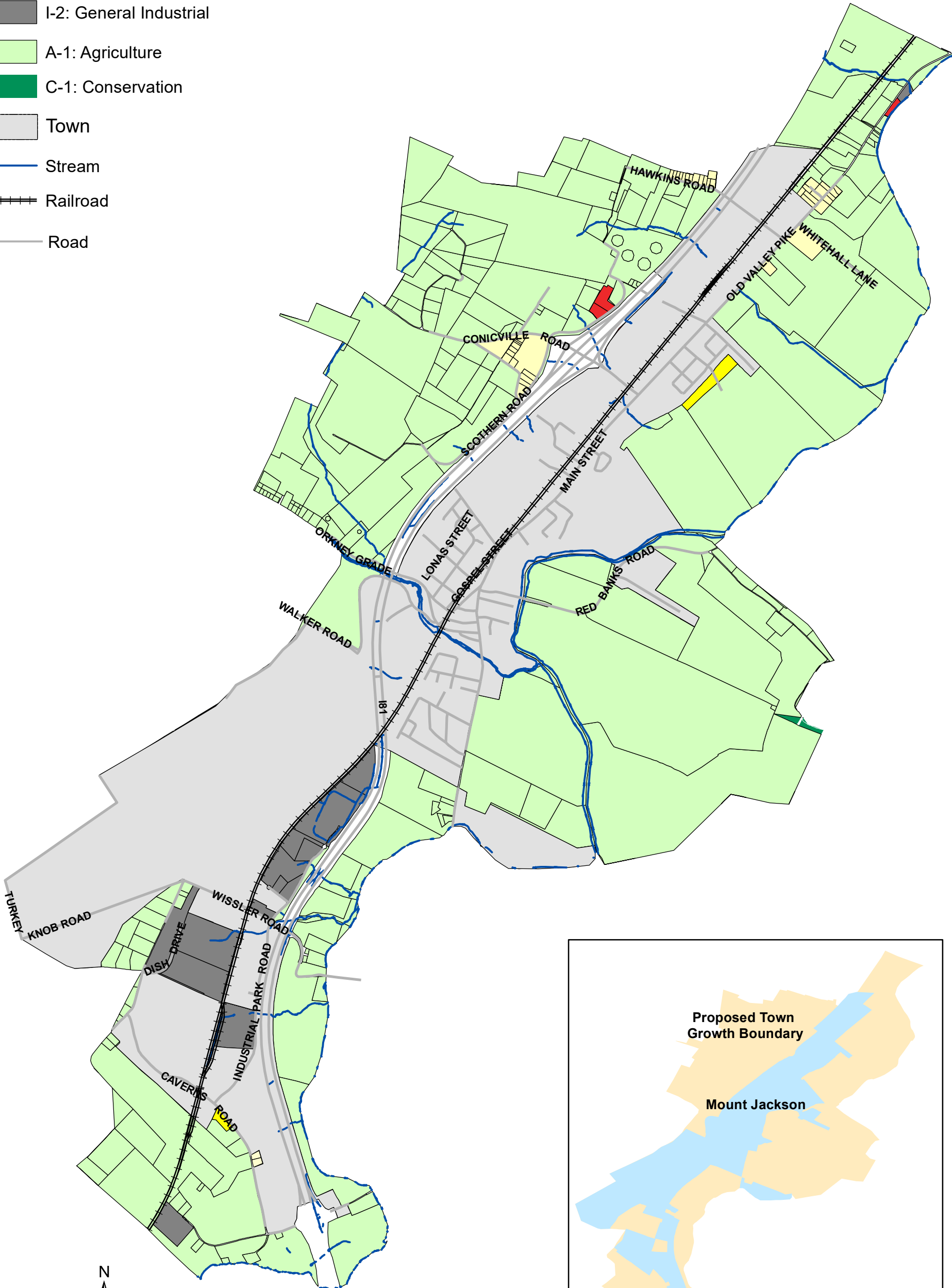
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parks/Open Space
- Proposed Town Growth Boundary
- Railroad



Growth Area Zoning Map

Legend

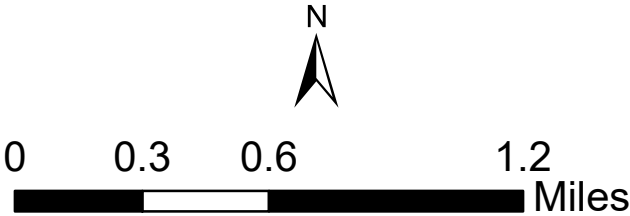
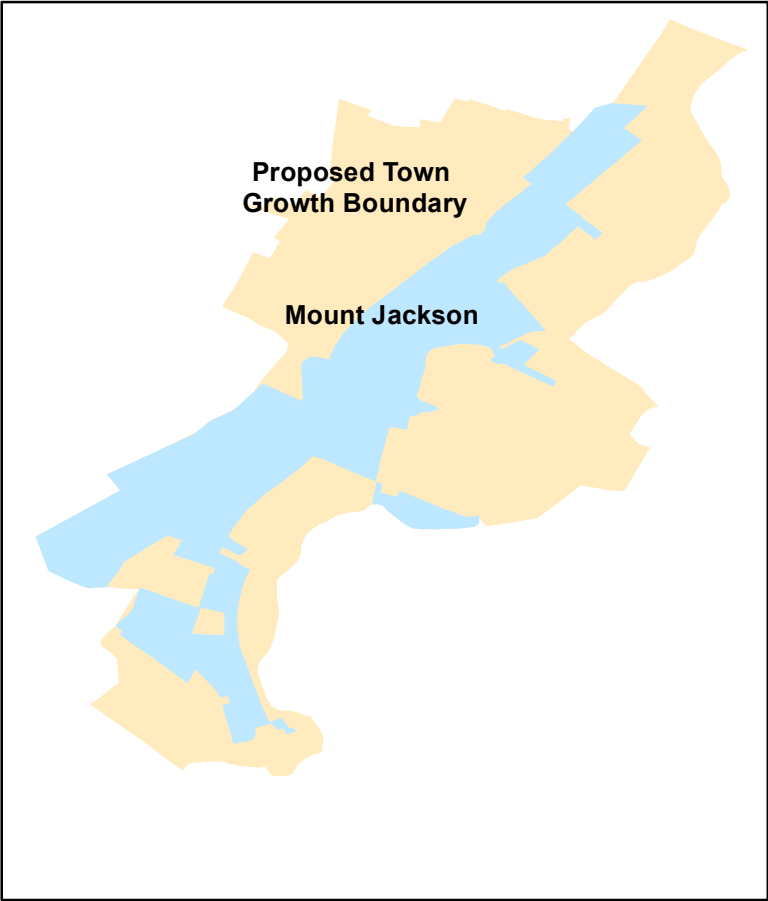
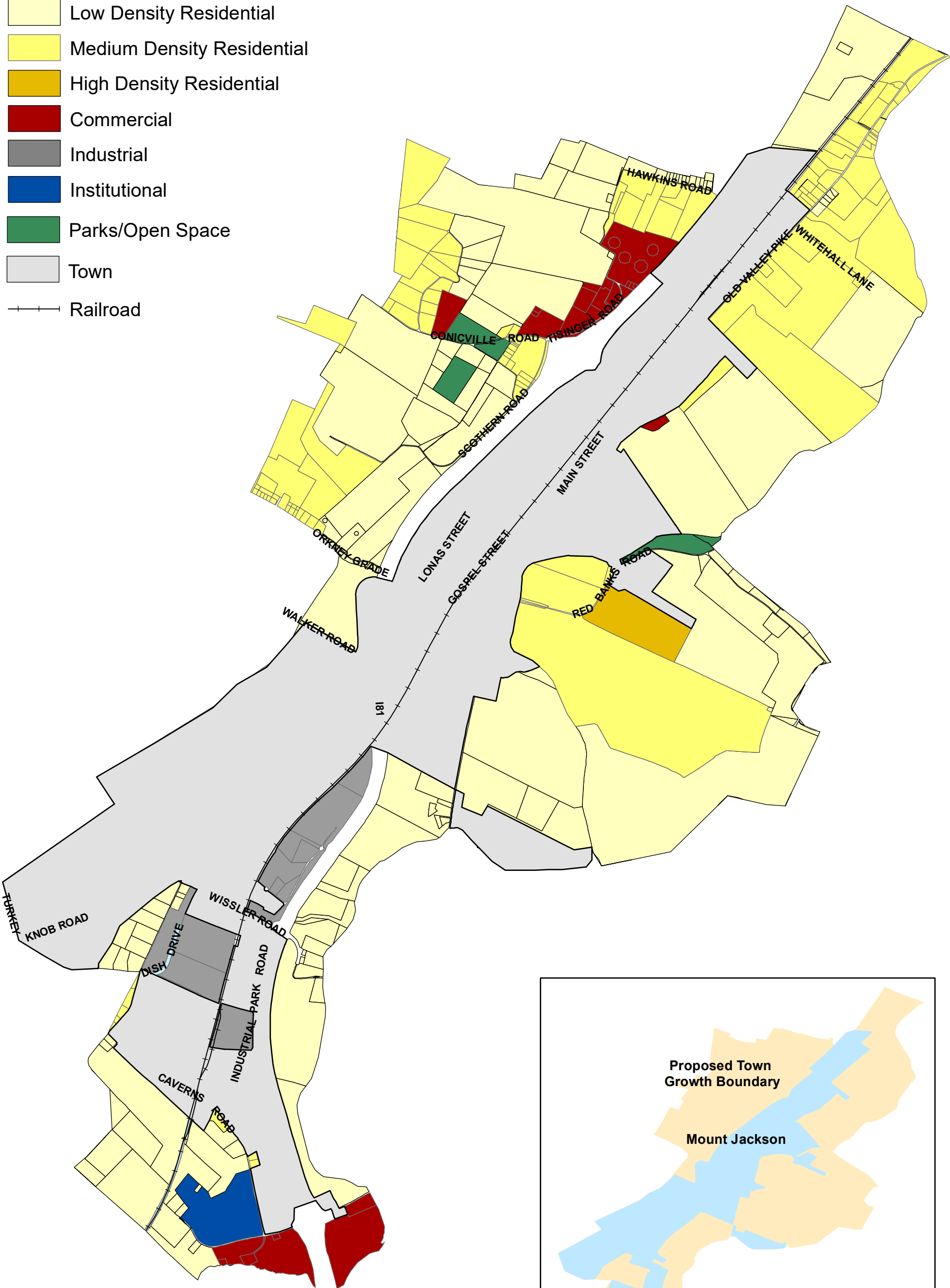
- R-1: Low-Density Residential
- R-2: Medium-Density Residential
- B-2: Highway Business
- I-2: General Industrial
- A-1: Agriculture
- C-1: Conservation
- Town
- Stream
- Railroad
- Road

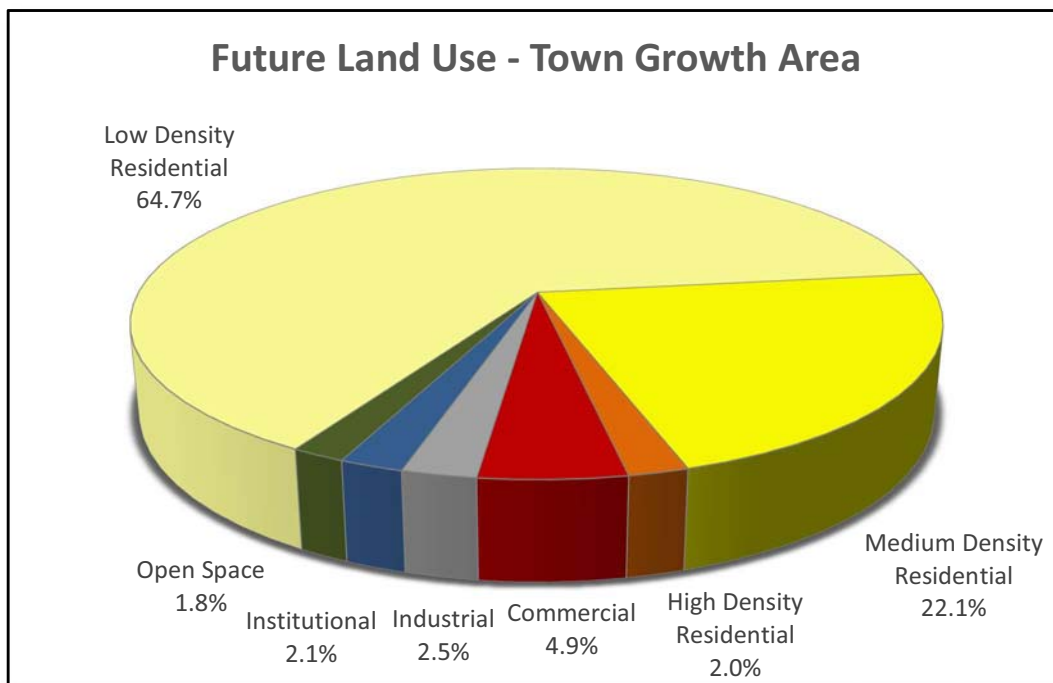
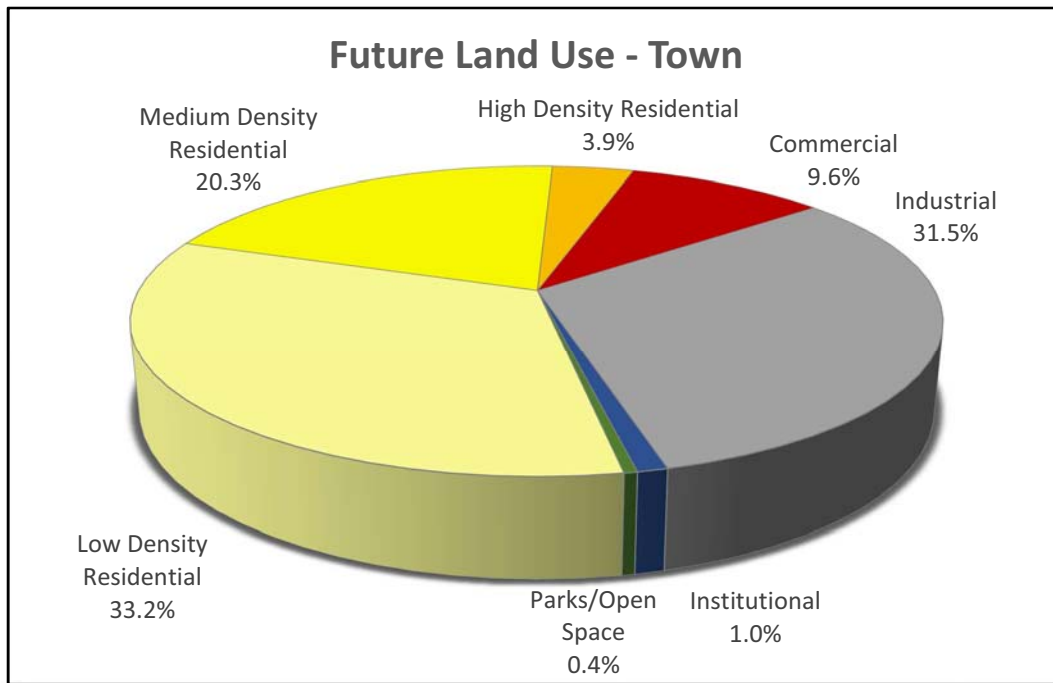


Growth Area Future Land Use Map

Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parks/Open Space
- Town
- Railroad





Residential Use

By percent, more Mount Jackson parcels fall into residential land use categories than any other. Residential land uses in Mount Jackson include a variety of homes, from homes on small lots near the downtown, to homes on significant acreage in outlying areas, including recently annexed agricultural areas. While single family houses are most common by far, The Town includes some other unit types, including apartments. Town leaders must understand the state of housing as it exists today, but also how future growth may affect the supply of housing.



Selected Housing Statistics

		% of total
Total Housing Units	907	--
Occupied units	772	85.1%
Vacant Units	135	14.9%
Single unit structures	548	60.4%
Multi-unit structures	202	22.2%
Mobile homes	157	17.3%
1 bedroom units	107	11.8%
2 bedroom units	297	32.7%
3 bedroom units	390	43.0%
4+ bedroom units	113	12.5%
Owner occupied units	448	58.0%
Renter occupied units	324	42.0%
Median rent	\$776	--
1 person households	202	26.2%
2 person households	236	30.6%
3 person households	105	13.6%
4+ person households	229	29.7%
Median household size	2.89	--

American Community Survey, 2015.

Housing Vacancy

Of the 907 housing units in Mount Jackson, 135 were vacant as of 2015, or a vacancy rate of about 15%. While some amount of housing vacancy is normal, this rate is higher than ideal, and represents the challenge of attracting and retaining buyers and renters in rural areas. For this same period nearby Harrisonburg had a vacancy rate of 8.5%, while Virginia's overall vacancy rate was 10.5%. The town should continue to pursue programs to reduce housing vacancy, and to encourage new housing as the town grows.

Owners vs. Renters

A healthy community should hope to have a balance of owner-occupied housing and units for rent. Home owners make a long-term investment in the community, and are more likely to be involved in local life and leadership than are renters, but renters are also necessary. Rental units provide housing flexibility for new residents, short-term accommodations to meet the needs of local businesses and industries, and options for those who aren't in the financial position to buy. In Mount Jackson, 58% of all housing units are owner-occupied, while 42% are rented. This follows the typical trend of towns and cities having higher rates of rental housing than rural counties. Shenandoah County has a rental rate of 27%, while Virginia's overall rate is around 34% rental to 66% owner occupied.



Projected Housing Needs

The following chart shows potential housing needs under two potential growth scenarios for Mount Jackson. As with the general population projections given earlier in this plan, the low growth scenario assumes that Mount Jackson will continue to make up about five percent (5%) of the total population of Shenandoah County, and will grow modestly over the next 10 to 20 years. Under this scenario, the town could still need several hundred new homes by 2040.

The high population growth scenario is driven by Shenandoah County's own comprehensive plan recommendation, that all new growth in the County should occur in or near towns. While Mount Jackson is only one of several towns in the County, this plan has the potential to raise Mount Jackson's share of County population to as high as 10%, although such a change would take place gradually over an extended period of time. While this scenario may be extreme, we should still note that this high growth scenario would more than double the town's existing population by 2040, and require a doubling of the town's existing housing stock to meet demand.

Projected Housing Unit Demand

Low Growth Scenario		
Year	Projected Population	Additional Housing Units Demanded
2030	2,396	49
2040	2,565	108
High Growth Scenario		
Year	Projected Population	Projected Housing Demand
2030	4,793	879
2040	5,131	996

New Types of Housing

The majority of housing in Mount Jackson is made up of single family detached homes. A survey of town residents shows demand for alternative forms of housing, including senior living and townhouses. The town must work to enable a diverse mix of housing types to satisfy all areas of market demand, making it possible for local businesses to attract employees, for growing families to trade up to larger homes, and for older residents to age in place.

While less than 12% of Mount Jackson housing is made up of one bedroom units, 26% of local households contain only one person. This, along with survey responses from young people stating a preference for townhouse units, points to a need for smaller units. Townhouse and apartment units may also be more affordable, and offer lower maintenance, than larger single-family homes.

Survey results also point to the need for senior housing. Senior housing may take a variety of forms, from age-restricted communities that offer no health care services but feature one-level plans, low maintenance, and accessibility features, to skilled nursing and assisted living developments that provide a combination of housing and healthcare to the elderly. In both cases, this result points to the desire for aging residents of Mount Jackson to continue to live in their own community, even as property maintenance or living independently become difficult.

In both of these cases, the Town must ensure that its regulations, from zoning to building, are compatible with a wide variety of housing products, and that market forces are allowed to work freely in all town neighborhoods.

Housing Affordability

Another facet of Mount Jackson's need for a greater variety of housing types is the relative affordability of smaller or attached housing units. While as a small town in a rural location, Mount Jackson is generally quite affordable, housing costs can still be a burden for some households, including an increasing

proportion of older adults. In 2015, nearly 21% of Mount Jackson's population was estimated to be below the poverty line. Many low-income households pay a large portion of their income for housing. Generally, households are advised to spend less than one-third of their total income on housing costs. However, 42% of renters in Mount Jackson spend greater than 35% of their income on housing. Homeowners in Town can also be affected by high housing costs, with 37% of homeowners with mortgages also spending greater than 35% of their income on housing. While real estate markets are largely outside of the Town's control, a greater diversity of housing types, including small and attached units, is one way to provide greater housing options to those who seek more affordable housing.

Commercial Use

The downtown is made up of a variety of small commercial buildings, primarily found between Depot Street and Bryce Boulevard. These spaces currently feature a variety of thrift and antique stores, with other retail mixed in. The downtown is an ideal place for tourism and boutique retail, as well as restaurants catering to visitors. Most downtown businesses do not provide on-site parking, but do have ample sidewalks and attractive landscaping. Mount Jackson should continue efforts to promote the downtown as a destination for tourism, including encouraging local startup businesses, attracting secondary locations of successful regional businesses, improving signage to attract highway users downtown, and working to better connect the town with visitors to nearby Bryce Mountain Resort.



Mount Jackson's Conicville Road businesses, as well as other scattered commercial sites, tend to be larger facilities, often national chains, with on-site parking and primarily appeal to local needs for grocery and fuel shopping, as well as a stop-in for Interstate 81 traffic. While these establishments do not meet with the town's small-town charm and character, they are wanted by locals and visitors alike, an important factor in the town's tax base, and should not be discounted.

The Town must concentrate on supporting two kinds of commercial economies. First, the town should



continue to support businesses that provide convenient services to locals, including grocery, pharmacy, cleaning, hardware, and other needs. Second, the downtown should be effectively promoted as a tourism destination, capturing highway travelers and regional visitors. A mix of unique shops and restaurants can be very attractive to visitors to Bryce Mountain Resort and Shenandoah Cavern's visitors, helping to extend stays and increase tourism spending. In total, visitors spend more than \$200,000,000 annually in Shenandoah County. Mount Jackson must continue to work to increase its share of this revenue.

Industrial Use

Mount Jackson is home to a variety of industries, providing jobs and contributing to the Town's tax base. Industries in and near the town include Andros Food North America, Holtzman Corporation, MASCO Cabinets, Route 11 Potato Chips, and Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Company. Industrial sites are scattered throughout Mount Jackson, with Andros on the Town's north side, Valley Fertilizer and Holtzman located just north of the downtown, and other industries located south of town. Together, existing manufacturing, utility, and wholesale industries contribute 272 local jobs to the economy, or about 27% of all local employment.



Between 2007 and 2015, the Town moved to annex significant parcels of land to Mount Jackson's south, with the aim of promoting this area for industrial and economic development. This effort involved three annexations totaling 580 acres of land. Several major parcels are available in the southern industrial area, and the Town and County are engaged in efforts to improve and market them.

Mount Jackson should continue to promote economic development on large tracts south of the town, including updates to local codes that will support appropriate development on these properties, and using grant and other funds to improve utility and transportation access to eligible sites. While industrial and commercial development in this area can serve Mount Jackson by supplying needed jobs and tax revenue, the town must ensure that development on these parcels is compatible with the character and history of the town, using regulation as necessary to prevent industrial pollution of water, land, air, and other local resources.

Public Use



Outside of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, Mount Jackson contains a variety of public and semi-public uses including schools, churches, government buildings, and parks. One of the town's greatest assets, and an area in which it can have the greatest effect on resident's lives, is through the provision and maintenance of parks and greenways.

The town has one sizable park totaling seven (7) acres at the end of Wunder Street, with an outdoor swimming pool, concession area, one baseball field, two basketball courts, a walking trail, a picnic shelter, and a variety of playground equipment. A small Veterans' Park is located on the corner of King and Main Streets. An additional park with a gazebo, walking path, and landscaping is located on the north side of town hall.



As Mount Jackson grows, the town should take care to maintain an adequate supply of parks for residents, as well as for short and long-term visitors. Both active parks and passive open space are valuable additions to the community. In particular, the town should plan well in advance for the acquisition of additional park and other open space. Given the responses of residents about the importance of the Shenandoah River to the town's image, particular effort should be made to locate and acquire a greenway park with river frontage for its value to residents, as well as its value to tourism.



VI. Urban Design



VI. Urban Design

Community Input:

- Its close-knit, small-town atmosphere is Mount Jackson's most important quality. (*#1 in general and school surveys*)
- As the Town grows, attracting business and employment are important, but small-town character must be preserved.

Section Objectives:

- Require the Planning Commission to annually review and report on desirable updates to the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision ordinance.
- Develop a utilities master plan to address maintenance, growth, and well-head protection both in Town and in the growth area.

Mount Jackson is a small town whose residents value its charm and character. Respondents to the Comprehensive Plan survey ranked small community atmosphere as the Town's most desirable quality. Suburbanization and the expansion of chain stores throughout the region, state, and nation also mean that small town charm is increasingly rare and a welcome attraction for tourism. Mount Jackson must identify its character, and preserve the uniqueness of the community, both for the benefit of residents and the local economy.

In 2000, the Town worked with the Community Design Assistance Center at Virginia Tech to develop Urban Design Guidelines for the Town's Downtown and Corridor areas. In 2004 the Town also adopted the Caverns Road Interchange Master Plan to extend an urban design vision to the Town's southern gateway. These urban design exercises were intended to shape future growth in the Town in ways that:

- Preserve the historic character of the town
- Improve navigation and traffic safety
- Enhance economic development opportunities



The focus of these guidelines is to assist property owners, not to dictate to them. Therefore, the results are not changes to zoning or other regulatory documents, but flexible guidelines that encourage character

through comprehensive planning. These Urban Design Guidelines have been a feature of past Comprehensive Plans, and are continued in this 2017 update.

Downtown District Guidelines

The Downtown District consists of all B-1 zoned properties along Main Street (US Route 11) from Medical Avenue in the north to Bryce Boulevard in the south. As new buildings are added to this district, or as older buildings are modified or redeveloped, the following guidelines for community design should be adhered to:



Building Style: Building style should be compatible with existing buildings nearby, especially historic buildings. New construction should be similar in detail to existing structures, but refrain from duplicating what exists.

Building Height: New buildings should be constructed to a height within 30 percent of the height of existing adjacent buildings.

Width and Proportion: The width and proportion of buildings and their doors and windows should be similar to, and compatible with the existing adjacent buildings.

Materials and Textures: Similar materials and textures should be used if there is a strong dominance of one type within the same area.

Roof Shapes and Materials: Roofs should be similar in shape and materials to existing adjacent buildings.

Relationship to the Street: New buildings should be set back from the street at a distance between 80 and 120 percent of the average setback of adjacent buildings. In the core of the downtown, this may mean no setback at all.

Rhythm of Buildings and Spaces: New buildings should be of similar spacing to adjacent buildings; spaced within 20 percent of the average distance between other structures on the same block.

Color: Use of historic colors should also be a consideration for any rehabilitation or new construction.

Facades: The arrangement of openings such as windows and doors should be in relation to that of existing buildings in the district, as well as in proportion to the wall area of the building. Large, blank areas of wall should be avoided.

Awnings: Standard slanted fabric awnings should be used and located within or above the storefront openings. Awning color should be compatible with the overall scheme of the building.

Building Usage: Buildings within this district are encouraged to be multi-use with commercial on the first floor and residential or offices on the second floor.

Signage: Signs should be in the form of window, awning, wall or projecting signs, and be no larger than 30 square feet or 1.5 square feet per 1.0 linear feet of building frontage, whichever is smaller.

- a) Signs should be visible, legible and appropriate to the business and its image.
- b) Lighting should be added only if the business is open at night and then only to make the sign visible to passers-by. Internally-illuminated signs should be avoided, as should up-lighting.
- c) No more than three contrasting colors should be used on a sign.
- d) The proportion, scale, materials and texture of the sign and lettering should be in relation to the building and its surroundings. A sign should appear to be an integral, natural part of the structure.

Sidewalks: There should be a continuous concrete sidewalk between 5 – 15 feet wide, along both sides of all streets. Sidewalks shall have accessible curb cuts, with textured paving, that direct one into a crosswalk. Crosswalks should be provided, and all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act met.

Street Trees: Trees should be located every 30 feet along both sides of the street. New trees should be 3 – 5-inches in caliper, properly installed, staked, and well maintained. Suggested trees include Amur Maples, Serviceberry, and Washington Hawthorn.

Lighting: Street lights should be placed every 30 feet on center, halfway between street trees, along both sides of the street. A standard, dark-sky compliant style of light should be chosen to reflect the image and historic character of the Town. Merchants should be encouraged to leave window display lights on to increase visual interest at night. Light fixtures placed on private property in this district should be in the style of public street lights.

Street Furniture: Benches and trash receptacles should be placed approximately every 120 feet along both sides of the street. A standard style and material for all street furniture should be chosen to reflect the image and historic character of the Town.

Public Signage: The Town should install public wayfinding signs to direct visitors to public parking areas, points of interest, and historical features. Signs should be coordinated in their design, and in keeping with the image of the Town.

Parking: Parking lots, with well-defined spaces and circulation, should be located to the side or rear of buildings. Parking lots with street frontage should include landscaping along the street edge. All parking lots should have landscape areas in a ratio of 1:8 to paved areas. Parallel parking along both sides of Main Street should be provided wherever width allows. Public lots should have landscaped sidewalk links to Main Street. A maximum of one access point from Main Street should be allowed per lot.

Screening: Storage areas, exposed machinery, parking lots, and outdoor areas used for trash collection should be visually screened from roads and surrounding land uses using fences of plants.

Utilities: All overhead wires and transformers should be placed underground and the poles removed. Alternately, utility wires may be placed along rear property lines of lots facing Main Street. All new service should be provided underground.

Open Spaces: Parks and open spaces should be carefully designed spaces that relate strongly to the street system and the town's architectural fabric. Open spaces should be relative in scale, use, and character with their surrounding neighborhoods. Existing, structurally sound buildings should not be demolished to create open space, but opportunities to add open space should be pursued.

Corridor District Guidelines

The Corridor District is identified as the remainder of the US Route 11 corridor within the town limits. As the Town grows in these areas, new development should adhere to the following guidelines to appropriately blend in with the character of Mount Jackson:

Building Style: New buildings should be compatible with the historic and architectural character of surrounding buildings.

Roof Shapes and Materials: Roofs shall be similar in shape, pitch, and materials to existing adjacent buildings.

Materials and Textures: Building materials should be compatible with the Mount Jackson area.

Building Height: New construction should be built to be within 30 percent of the height of existing adjacent buildings, generally no higher than 35 feet tall, with exceptions made for church spires, cupolas, towers, and the like to be no more than 60 feet tall.

Width and Proportion: The width and proportion of buildings should be similar to, and compatible with, the existing adjacent buildings.

Relationship to Street: Appropriate setbacks should be determined based upon an inventory of existing conditions with the goal of placing parking behind buildings.

Rhythm of Solids and Voids: New buildings should be of similar spacing [within 20 percent of the average distance] to the existing adjacent buildings.

Color: Use of historic colors should be a consideration for rehabilitation or new construction. Trim should be a darker, contrasting color to the wall.

Facades: All buildings should be compatible with the surrounding existing buildings and be in harmony with traditional facades.

Building Usage: Buildings within this district are encouraged to be multi-use, with buffering between conflicting uses.

Undeveloped Properties: Properties in this area should be encouraged to remain undeveloped or rural. If development occurs, special attention should be paid to preserving scenic views of existing natural features and historic structures.

Signage: Signs should be in the form of wall, projecting, or freestanding signs, and should be set back at least 10 feet from the property line for signs up to 40 square feet, or set back 20 feet for signs over 40 square feet. No sign should be larger than 50 square feet or 1.5 square feet per 1.0 linear feet of building frontage, whichever is smaller.

- a) Signs should be visible, legible and appropriate to the business and its image.
- b) Lighting should be added only if the business is open at night and then only to make the sign visible to passers-by. Internally-illuminated signs should be avoided, as should up-lighting.
- c) No more than three contrasting colors should be used on a sign.
- d) The proportion, scale, materials and texture of the sign and lettering should be in relation to the building and its surroundings. A sign should appear to be an integral, natural part of the structure.

Sidewalks: There should be a continuous concrete sidewalk that is at least 5-feet wide along both sides of all streets. Sidewalks shall have accessible curb cuts, with textured paving, that direct one into a crosswalk. Crosswalks should be provided, and all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act met.

Street Trees: Trees should be located every 40 feet along both sides of the street. New trees should be 3 – 5-inches in caliper, properly installed, staked, and well maintained. Suggested trees include Amur Maples, Serviceberry, and Washington Hawthorn.

Lighting: A lighting style that is different from the Downtown District, yet reflects the historic character of the town, is dark-sky compliant, and is suitable for both pedestrians and vehicles, should be selected. Any other fixtures placed within the corridor by private property owners should be of a similar or coordinating design.

Parking: Parking lots, with well-defined spaces and circulation, should be located to the side or rear of buildings. Parking lots with street frontage should include landscaping along the street edge. All parking lots should have landscape areas in a ratio of 1:8 to paved areas. A maximum of one access point from Main Street should be allowed per lot.

Screening: Storage areas, exposed machinery, parking lots, and outdoor areas used for trash collection should be visually screened from roads and surrounding land uses using fences or plants.

Utilities: All overhead wires and transformers should be placed underground and the poles removed. Alternately, utility wires may be placed along rear property lines of lots facing Main Street. All new service should be provided underground.

Open Spaces: Parks and open spaces should be carefully designed spaces that relate strongly to the street system and the town's architectural fabric. Open spaces should be relative in scale, use, and character with their surrounding neighborhoods. Existing, structurally sound buildings should not be demolished to create open space, but opportunities to add open space should be pursued.

Public Signage: The Town should install public wayfinding signs to direct visitors to public parking areas, points of interest, and historical features. Historic Downtown signs should be placed on Interstate 81, near exits 273 and 269. Similar directional signs should be placed at off ramps at Routes 730 and 703. Signs should be coordinated in their design, and in keeping with the image of the Town.

Caverns Road Interchange Guidelines

The Caverns Road Interchange is defined as the land area around the Caverns Road Interchange, including land along Route 698, Route 730 on both sides of I-81, and the land between I-81 and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. As this area develops, new development should adhere to the following guidelines to create an appropriate gateway to the Town of Mount Jackson:

Land Use Strategy: Coordinated commercial and residential projects in this area should provide a clear gateway to Mount Jackson.

Parking: Parking should be located to the side and rear of structures, and appropriately landscaped.

Landscaping: Ensure that landscaped buffers are provided at the edges between industrial sites and non-industrial sites.

Site Planning: To limit the visual impacts on the historic, rural landscape of the area, ensure that new residential development is designed and placed on the site in such a way as to preserve the sensitive features of each site, including ridgelines, stream corridors, karst features, and mature trees.

Open Space: Require that new residential projects and neighborhoods have a unifying focal point, such as a community green or commons that provides a sense of place and distinct identity. Projects should also connect where possible with greenway corridors and into any existing sidewalks.

Transportation: Ensure that new commercial and residential development sites are well connected to adjacent sites to provide alternative means of access for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles.

Aesthetics: Limit the visual impacts of signs, lighting, parking and other features of new commercial development to maintain and enhance the historic character of the Town and its surrounding landscape.



The Importance of Landscaping

Trees are a major contributor to the quality of life, beauty and structure of our landscapes in each community. Environmentally, trees perform many functions, including improving air quality by removing pollutants and particulate matter from the air and releasing oxygen. Noise pollution is reduced by tree leaves which absorb sound waves directly and modify the transmission of sound waves. Solid masses provide even more sound insulation than individual trees. Environmentally, trees play a major role in controlling soil erosion by stabilizing soils, acting as windbreaks, and decreasing quantities of stormwater run-off. They play a significant role in modifying the climate of the immediate vicinity helping to conserve energy. The shade and filtering trees do with sunlight help reduce reflection and glare making the surrounding areas more hospitable and safe. Growing evidence shows that trees also enhance real estate values on an individual lot or project basis. The aesthetic value of trees, as well as their important effect on our physical health and the ecology of the community, demands more sensitivity to their protection and retention in the development process. Opportunities for tree retention and plantings are dependent on the space available, so the setback area is crucial [For example, a 50-foot undeveloped strip along the front of businesses would help encourage tree retention and provide a wider area for landscaping appropriate for a rural community.]. As there are two different conditions in town—one being urban and the other rural—both should be treated appropriately, not necessarily identically.



Additionally, other plant materials have similar properties. Landscaping requirements in buffer/screen zoning should address the number of plants, credit for existing trees, types of landscape materials and the care, upkeep, and replacement of all landscaping elements.

With respect to parking lots, creating attractive, functional, safe parking lots is a way of maintaining community appearance and property values. Distribution of landscaped islands in the lot, trees/plants per island, the sizes of the plantings, as well as the sizes of the islands themselves, should have zoning guidelines established. Consideration of using swales versus curb-and-gutter designs can improve the ability of the landscaping elements to survive and to retain and filter run-off. Entrances, exits, and internal circulation must be developed for the greatest pedestrian and vehicle safety. The pavement should be asphalt, pavers, or concrete for appearance, longevity, removal of rain and snow, lot marking, preventing damage to vehicles and the higher costs to business owners for cleaning tracked in dirt and gravel damaging floors and carpeting.



VII. Transportation



VII. Transportation

Community Input:

- Traffic, safety, and maintenance are all immediate transportation concerns.
- Public transportation, sidewalks, and trails are long term transportation needs.

Section Objectives:

- Provide convenient, free, and well-marked parking for visitors and customers of the central business district.
- Continue to pursue the construction of sidewalks and trails throughout the Town. Support efforts to promote public transportation.



Safe and efficient transportation is necessary for a wide range of activities for residents, businesses, and visitors. The most visible part of Mount Jackson's transportation network is its street system. In total, Mount Jackson has 35 centerline miles of streets. Most Town streets are maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), with a small number maintained by the Town. To meet the needs of future Town growth, the transportation network must be maintained, and expanded where necessary, to provide efficient access to all areas of the Town.

Functional Classifications

VDOT divides the streets in its network into categories based on their character, design, and place in the regional transportation network. The classifications of Mount Jackson area streets include Interstate Highways, Major Collectors, Minor Collectors, and Local Streets.

Interstate Highways

- Interstate 81

Interstate Highways are designed to move high volumes of traffic as quickly as possible across great distances. They are important for both personal and commercial travel, and are limited-access roads with ramps and interchanges instead of intersections, and no access to individual properties along the route. Interstate 81 is a major east coast highway running over 850 miles (325 miles in Virginia) from Tennessee to the Canadian border in New York. I-81 in the vicinity of Mount Jackson has become an important trucking route, with 25-30% of its traffic made up of tractor trailers. The interstate is a major asset for the Town, making travel easy for personal, commercial, and tourist trips, and making the Town a potential business location for companies and industries who rely on highway shipment of materials or products.

Major Collectors

- Main Street (Rt. 11)
- Conicville Road (Rt. 292)
- Bryce Boulevard (Rt. 263)
- Orchard Drive (Rt. 698)
- Daniel Gray Drive (Rt. 698)

Major Collectors are important and highly active regional roads, providing connections between town and other destinations. Route 11 parallels Interstate 81, providing a secondary route, for much of its length, and forms Main Street within the Town. Main Street is Mount Jackson's most important town street, but also receives a high volume of regional through traffic, including redirected traffic from I-81 during frequent traffic incidents. Other Major Collectors, including Conicville, Bryce, and Orchard, connect Route 11 to nearby places and destinations. Unlike Interstate Highways, these major collectors do have intersections and direct access to adjacent properties.

Minor Collectors

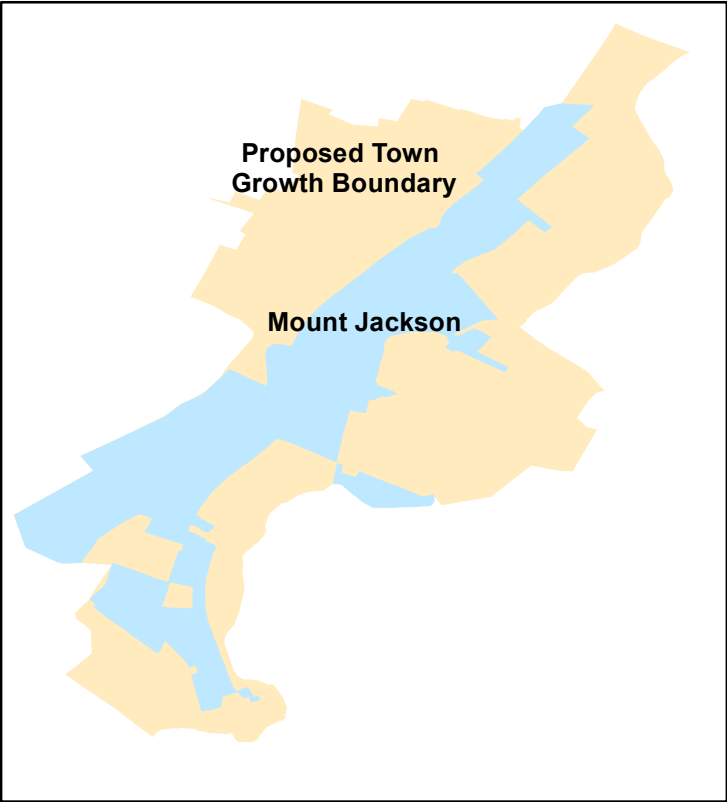
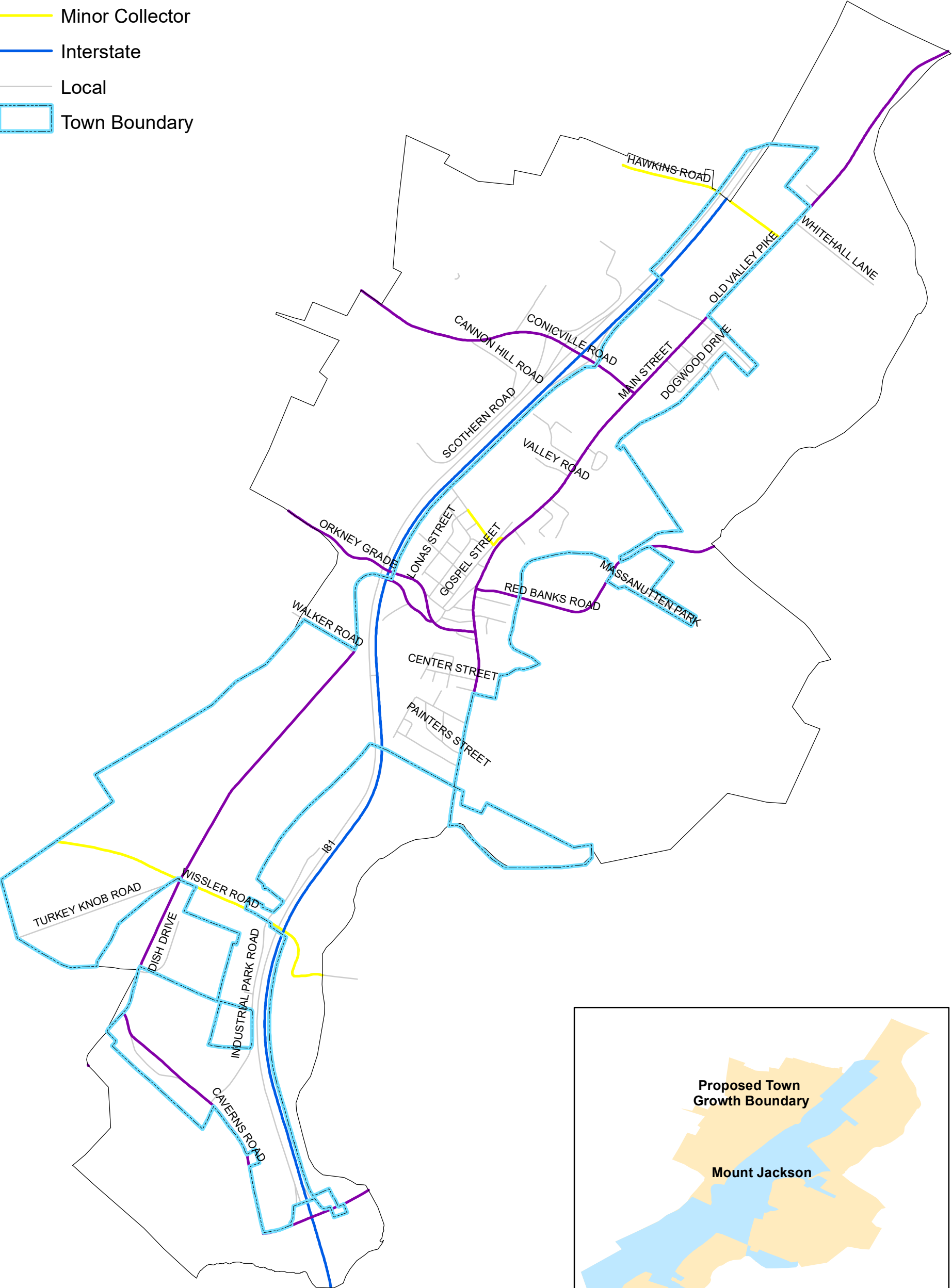
- Dutch Lane
- Wissler Road
- Hawkins Road

Minor Collectors are smaller, local roads with slow speeds, but are positioned in such a way that they deliver traffic from local streets to Major Collectors. Mount Jackson's Minor Collectors include Dutch Lane, which helps to organize traffic into and out of the residential area west of Route 11.

Functional Classification of Roadways

Legend

- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Interstate
- Local
- Town Boundary



Local Streets

All other streets within the Town are part of the Local Street network. Traffic on Local Streets is light, and speeds are low. These streets are not often used for cross-town trips, but to connect individual parcels to the larger Collector roads. Among these local streets are the small number that the Town maintains without VDOT support. These self-maintain streets total around one mile of the Town's 35-mile street system, and include:

- Bank Street
- Clifford Street
- Depot Street
- King Street
- Wunder Street (from Gospel to Broad Street)



Measuring Traffic Volume

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) periodically measures traffic volume on roads within its network in order to diagnose traffic problems, and to determine when new routes or upgrades may be warranted. These measurements can show us Mount Jackson's busiest routes and destinations. The measurements in the table below are given in Average Daily Trips (ADT). For purposes of this statistic, a trip represents one-way travel, meaning leaving home to go to work and returning later counts as two trips.

Mount Jackson Traffic Counts – Average Daily Trips

Route	2006 Traffic	2010 Traffic	2016 Traffic
Interstate 81	41,000	39,000	44,000
Conicville Road (rt. 292)	10,000	9,100	9,800
Main Street (rt.11) – north of rt. 263	4,400	3,800	8,000
Main Street (rt.11) – south of rt. 263	4,800	4,700	5,300
Bryce Boulevard (rt. 263)	2,800	3,200	3,400
Daniel Gray Drive (rt. 698)	840	740	1,000
Orchard Drive (rt. 698)	790	790	730
Dutch Lane	430	760	660
Center Street	630	620	470
Jackson Street	580	560	430
Orkney Drive	510	680	480

Virginia Dept. of Transportation

Traffic volumes have been relatively steady over the course of the 10-year period of recording from 2006 to 2016, with some routes rising modestly and others declining. Outside of Interstate 81, only five Mount Jackson Streets see 1,000 trips per day or more. Also note that of the high volumes on Conicville Road (9,800), represent traffic visiting the interstate exit businesses in this area and returning to I-81 without passing through the core of the Town.

Truck Traffic

While very important to local and regional commerce, the presence of large commercial trucks is not always welcome in small towns due to their size and concerns about noise. Interstate 81 hosts a great deal of truck traffic in the Mount Jackson vicinity, with 21% of all trips made by tractor-trailers. Conicville Road is a popular exit for I-81 truck traffic with its two large truck stops. On this road, 27% of all vehicles are tractor-trailers. Daniel Gray Drive (Route 698) also sees some truck traffic, at about 10%, while trucks make up less than 5% of all traffic on other Town streets, including Main Street (Route 11). As long as speed limits are adhered to, truck traffic should not detract from downtown Mount Jackson, and can continue to be an economic plus for businesses near I-81 that rely on it.



Traffic Projections

Mount Jackson Traffic Projections – Average Daily Trips

Low Growth Scenario			
Route	2016 Traffic	Projected 2030 Traffic	Projected 2040 Traffic
Main Street (rt.11) – north of rt. 263	8,000	8,504	9,064
Main Street (rt.11) – south of rt. 263	5,300	5,634	6,005
Bryce Boulevard (rt. 263)	3,400	3,614	3,852
Daniel Gray Drive (rt. 698)	1,000	1,063	1,113
Orchard Drive (rt. 698)	730	776	827
High Growth Scenario			
Route	Current Traffic	Projected 2030 Traffic	Projected 2040 Traffic
Main Street (rt.11) – north of rt. 263	8,000	17,016	18,216
Main Street (rt.11) – south of rt. 263	5,300	11,273	12,068
Bryce Boulevard (rt. 263)	3,400	7,232	7,742
Daniel Gray Drive (rt. 698)	1,000	2,127	2,277
Orchard Drive (rt. 698)	730	1,552	1,662

The above charts show potential traffic increases under two potential growth scenarios for selected Mount Jackson streets. In both cases current traffic volumes were multiplied by the rate of forecast growth to arrive at a straight-line projection of future traffic levels. Interstate 81, as well as Conicville Road, are not shown because traffic on these routes is influenced by factors outside of the town much more so than inside it.

As with the general population projections given earlier in this plan, the low growth scenario assumes that Mount Jackson will continue to make up about 5% of the total population of Shenandoah County, and will grow modestly over the next 10 to 20 years. Under this scenario, traffic would increase only modestly. It is likely that Mount Jackson's streets could accommodate this increase in traffic without any modification or upgrade of existing routes.

The high population growth scenario is driven by Shenandoah County's Comprehensive Plan recommendation that new growth in the County should occur in or near towns. This plan has the potential to raise Mount Jackson's share of County population to as high as 10%, although such a change would take place gradually over an extended period of time. However, the town has the responsibility to consider all scenarios, especially those that may require change.

Under the high growth scenario, traffic on some town streets could more than double causing some streets, including Main Street, to become congested at some times. However, given the historic nature of Mount Jackson's downtown, it may not be possible or desirable to add capacity to this route.

The high growth scenario also incorporates potential commercial or industrial growth on unbuilt industrial parcels in southern areas of Mount Jackson. While it isn't possible to forecast the impact of individual developments without knowing what type of industry may locate here, some industrial applications could produce high levels of both truck traffic and employment traffic in this area. The Town must carefully consider any development application for its transportation impact in this area, including plans for the movement of truck traffic, and should require any applicant to provide a Traffic Impact Analysis and contribute any transportation improvements that may be necessary to support the proposed development.

It is also very important to note that under current VDOT rules, any town with a population greater than 3,500 is responsible for maintaining its own streets. The high growth scenario shown here would push Mount Jackson past that benchmark, requiring the Town to acquire both staff and equipment to maintain its streets.

Parking

As long as automobiles remain the primary means of travel in Mount Jackson and elsewhere, there will be a significant need for conveniently accessible parking. In order to promote tourism and business in the downtown, parking must be convenient, free, and clearly marked. The Town provides visitor spaces in lots located at the town hall/visitors center, and ample parallel parking spaces are available along many streets. However, existing parking opportunities are not clearly marked, which may confuse first-time visitors. Signs should be provided at the entrance to public lots to announce free public parking, along with any time limit on that parking. At this time, it is unlikely that any time limit is necessary, but this may be needed in the future to ensure adequate turnover. Street-side parallel parking spaces should be marked to show the beginning and end of the allowable parking area, and again to show any time limit.

As downtown business grows in the future, the Town must monitor parking needs and continue to provide adequate parking. These strategies may require the Town to purchase land on which to build additional public parking. The town should plan ahead, purchasing well-located parking when the opportunity is available.

Pedestrian Transportation

While travel by car and truck is by far the biggest factor in Mount Jackson's transportation picture, the Town does provide sidewalks along some Town streets, and continues to expand opportunities for walking. With relatively low levels of vehicle traffic, closely spaced homes and businesses, and gentle terrain, Mount Jackson can, and should, be a pedestrian center. Walking can benefit Town residents who could make short local trips by foot in a convenient and healthy way, and could be an attraction for visitors. Pedestrian benefits can include:

- Recreation
- Savings on fuel and vehicle costs
- Fitness/Health
- Reduced traffic
- Tourist and visitor appeal



Sidewalks

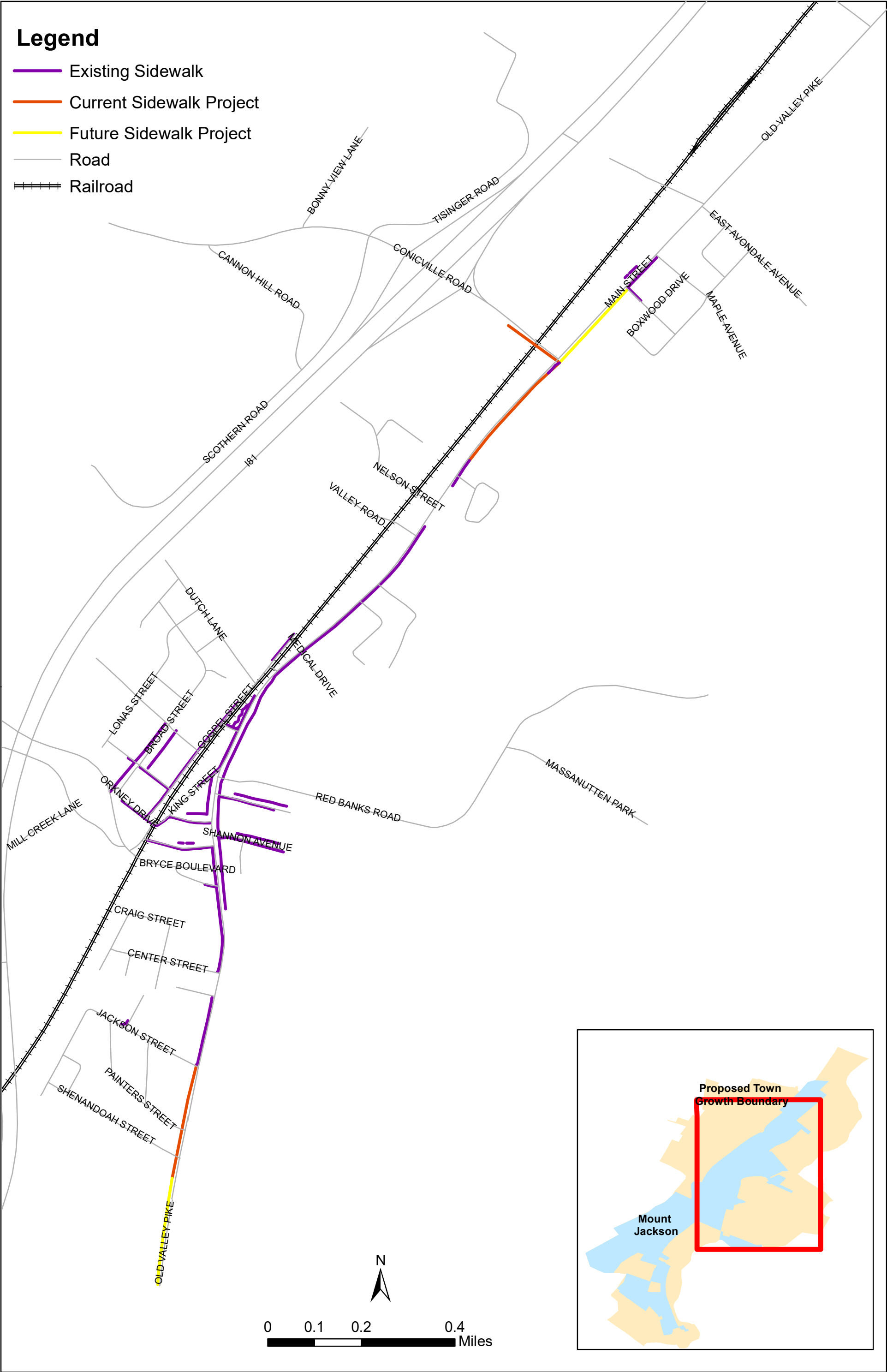
Mount Jackson maintains 3.5 miles of sidewalks, including many in the downtown area, as well as long stretches on the east side of Main Street. Efforts are underway to construct additional sidewalks, including extensions of the existing sidewalk on the east side of Main Street from its current end near Shenell Drive, north to the intersection of Main with Conicville Road. Additional planned sidewalk phases include connections even further north along Main Street to new development near Apple Avenue, as well as sections along Conicville Road. These planned phases would add an additional 0.7 miles of sidewalk to the Town's system, and make important connections to existing businesses.

The Town should continue to pursue sidewalk construction to provide walking opportunities to Town residents and visitors. Walkability can both increase community wellness, and help to facilitate tourism. Important connections will include downtown business areas, as well as parks and commercial areas.

Trails

While sidewalks provide short distance, on-street pedestrian access mainly to people transacting business, public trails have the ability to serve recreational pedestrians and people traveling longer distances. Mount Jackson currently has no off-street pedestrian facilities, but has significant potential to develop public trails in the future. Pedestrian trails, or larger multi-use trails that accommodate bicycles, can be an asset for residents as well as for visitors.

Existing Sidewalks and Current/Future Sidewalk Projects



Rails to Trails

Unused railroad lines present another opportunity for communities to develop pedestrian and bicycle trails. Rail lines are long, flat, and often connect small downtowns whose economies can benefit from the recreational tourism that trails provide. Mount Jackson has begun to work with Shenandoah County, and with nearby towns including Woodstock, to develop a rail trail along the unused Norfolk Southern rail line at the center of Town. This line runs 5-miles through the heart of Mount Jackson, and has the ability to connect residential neighborhoods, the Town's museum and visitors center, downtown businesses, beautiful areas of farmland, and popular destinations like Shenandoah Caverns. This same line stretches through great areas of the County, and can be used to link Mount Jackson and Woodstock, while also being easily accessed from Interstate 81 for the convenience of visitors. The town should develop this project as a way to attract tourism and boost local businesses.

While Mount Jackson has no existing bicycling facilities, bicycle tourism has become increasingly popular in the Shenandoah Valley, drawing tourists who support a variety of local attractions and businesses. Whether using long-distance trails along rivers or rail lines, or using existing country roads, bicycle tourism should be embraced for its potential to bring visitors to the Town who support local lodging, restaurants, and shops.



Public Transportation

The need for local public transportation was a noted outcome of the public survey, with both the general audience and students selecting it as a transportation need. Public transportation can be a valuable asset, or even a necessity for the elderly or disabled residents, or those who are financially unable to own a car. Some limited transportation is available to the elderly and disabled, including the Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging's WellTran program, which provided pre-arranged ride for a fee. Further transportation options, including regular, set route service, can help to increase community wellness, and to promote the ability to age in place. As a small town, Mount Jackson is unlikely to support its own public transportation system, but should work closely with the County, regional authorities, and other nearby towns to support efforts to establish public transportation connections that can serve Mount Jackson residents.

Planned Transportation Improvements

The transportation projects listed below are being actively pursued by the Town's state and regional partners, including the Virginia Department of Transportation and Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission. The Town should continue to use these resources to advocate for future transportation improvements to match the Town's growth.

Sidewalk Improvements

Efforts are underway in several phases to expand Mount Jackson's network of sidewalks, improving pedestrian access and offering greater non-automobile transportation choices within the Town. The first phase of this sidewalk expansion involves adding a five-foot wide concrete sidewalk to the east side of Route 11 (Main Street) from the current sidewalk terminus near Shenell Drive north to the Food Lion shopping center at the intersection of Route 11 and Conicville Road (a distance of approximately 1,050 feet), as well as a five-foot wide concrete sidewalk along the west side of Route 11 (Main Street) from the current sidewalk terminus at Jackson street south to the Triplett Business and Technical School (a distance of approximately 1,450 feet). At the time of this writing the Town has accepted bids for this work and will begin construction soon. This project should be completed in 2018, and is expected to cost approximately \$700,000.

Future phases include construction of approximately 650 feet of sidewalk along the south side of Conicville Road from Route 11 (Main Street) to the Sheetz store, further extension of the sidewalk along the east side of Route 11 (Main Street) from the Food Lion shopping center north to Apple Avenue (a distance of approximately 1,150 feet), and further extension of the sidewalk along the west side of Route 11 (Main Street) from the Triplett Business and Technical School to Route 11's crossing of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River (a distance of approximately 1,000 feet). These sidewalk projects may be pursued together, or as multiple phases, but have a total expected cost of approximately \$700,000 based on bids for other Town sidewalk projects.

Route 11 Bridge

The existing steel trestle bridge carrying Route 11 over the North Fork of the Shenandoah River between Race Street and Center Street in the southern area of Mount Jackson has been slated for replacement to improve its structural safety. This project is in the preliminary engineering stage, and is expected to cost \$5.14 million.

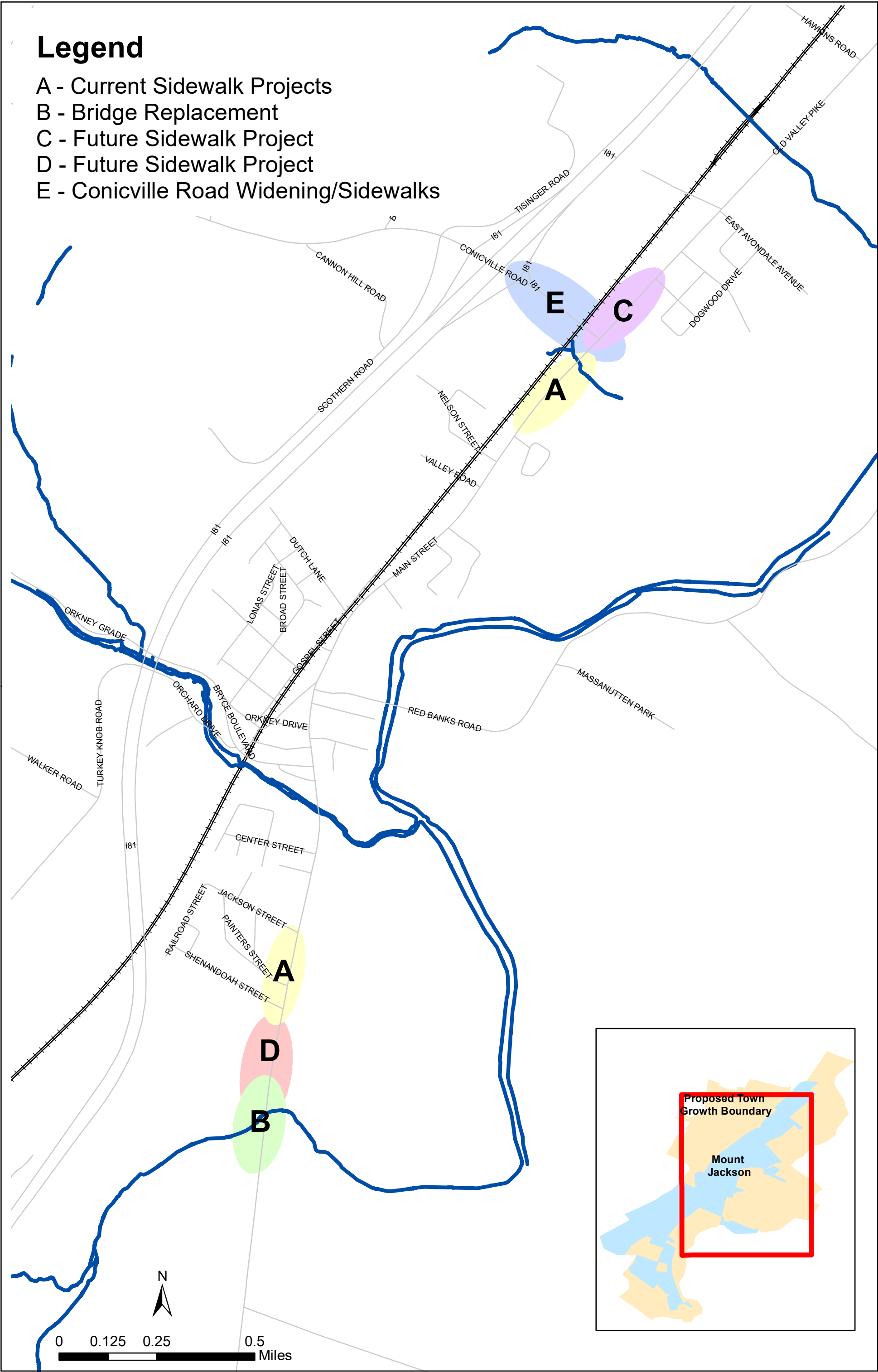
Conicville Road

With a high volume of commercial truck traffic, improvements to Conicville Road (State Route 292) provide an opportunity to improve traffic flow as well as safety. Improvements to this route were proposed by the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission in their 2011 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan. This proposal would involve widening Conicville to create an urban four lane roadway with a median between Route 11 (Main Street) and exit 273 from Interstate 81. In addition to traffic and safety improvements, this project could provide a more attractive entrance to Mount Jackson for local and visitor traffic. This remains a long-term project for which no engineering work has been conducted. A conceptual cost estimate for these improvements is \$6.35 million.

Planned and Proposed Transportation Improvements

Legend

- A - Current Sidewalk Projects
- B - Bridge Replacement
- C - Future Sidewalk Project
- D - Future Sidewalk Project
- E - Conicville Road Widening/Sidewalks



Transportation Survey Input

As a part of community survey efforts in support of this Comprehensive Plan, residents of Mount Jackson had the opportunity to identify transportation issues in Town, and to suggest solutions. A summary of the most popular responses is found below. The Town should consider these suggestions for future study and improvements as it works with its state and regional partners to identify transportation needs and prioritize limited transportation spending.

Transportation Safety Concerns:

1. Traffic and trucks on Conicville Road
2. Crosswalks in various locations, especially at Main Street near Holtzman Oil
3. On-Street parking that obscures the view of motorists
4. Speeding

Areas Needing Transportation Improvements:

1. Conicville Road
2. Drainage issues in the vicinity of Dutch Lane
3. Neighborhood streets and small side streets
4. General road maintenance

Transportation Issues 20 Years from Now:

1. Public transportation in the form of buses, trains, or taxis, particularly for seniors
2. Sidewalks and trails
3. Convenient public parking
4. Traffic from commercial and industrial growth



VIII. Implementation

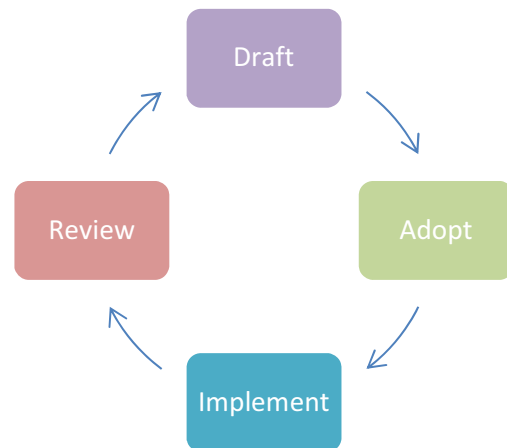


VIII. Implementation

The real work of the Comprehensive Plan begins after the document is adopted. This plan provides an important look at where the Town stands now in its population, services, land uses, and transportation infrastructure. The comprehensive plan forecasts the future effects of growth and proposes goals and strategies to accommodate change. It also embodies the vision of Mount Jackson's residents for the future of their town. However, the real purpose of this plan is as a guide, helping advise Town staff and leaders as they make a multitude of programmatic, regulatory, and funding decisions in the future. For the vision expressed in this plan to become reality, the plan must be used actively and frequently.

Updating the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan must, by Virginia law, be reviewed by the Planning Commission every five (5) years to determine its validity. In reality though, Mount Jackson is gradually changing at all times, and so the plan should be continually reviewed. Outside of the 5-year review period, the Comprehensive Plan may be updated at any time according to section 15.2-2229 of the Code of Virginia. The plan may warrant updates due to development proposals, new industries, updated statistics, or changes in the vision or direction of the Town and its residents.



The Planning Commission

According to the *Code of Virginia*, Mount Jackson's Planning Commission is ultimately responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan, and should remain engaged in comprehensive planning throughout the year. To help accomplish this, the Planning Commission should commit itself to annually reviewing and reporting on the status of the strategies contained within this plan, and identifying desired amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, as well as other Town documents, including the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance.

Prioritizing Strategies

As the Planning Commission, along with the Town Council and Town staff, consider the implementation strategies proposed in this Comprehensive Plan, some will require immediate action, while others are long-term actions meant to accommodate growth in the more distant future. The summary below roughly organizes this plan's proposed strategies, from short term needs for tourism promotion and regulatory changes to encourage business growth, to long term environmental and parks initiatives.

Short, Medium, and Long-Term Strategies

Short-Term Strategies: 0 - 5 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require staff and elected and appointed leaders to pursue appropriate education and certifications opportunities.• Require the Planning Commission to annually review and report on desirable updates to the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision ordinance.• The town government should seek all financial aid for which the Town may be eligible from State, Federal, or other sources toward providing or enhancing community facilities and economic development.• Design and install welcome and wayfinding signs for visitors and tourists.• Study the growth and development potential of existing town lands, as well as areas designated by the county as “Town Growth Areas”.• Actively promote the town as a location for new business growth within the region.• Continue to pursue and fund the construction of sidewalks throughout the Town.• Incorporate an environmental conservation overlay district into the town’s zoning ordinance.• Enhance landscaping, signage, and lighting provisions of the zoning ordinance.• Ensure that a broad range of housing types including attached, multifamily, and elderly housing are permitted in the zoning ordinance.• Ensure that a broad range of modern and flexible business uses are permitted in the zoning ordinance.
Medium-Term Strategies: 5 - 10 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a utilities master plan to address long term maintenance needs, capacity and growth issues, rates and fees, and well-head protection both within the town and adjacent county growth areas.• Promote a safe community by providing the highest quality police services available with first-class equipment and personnel who are prepared for a wide variety of emergencies and who serve the community in a personal, effective manner.• Expand library and museum promotion, hours, staff, and programs to better serve residents and visitors.• Participate in regional tourism programs, trails, and promotional efforts.• Incorporate planning for areas designated by the county as “Town Growth Areas” into the town’s comprehensive plan.• Plan, implement, and promote greenway trails as an amenity for residents and as an attraction for visitors.

- Provide convenient, free, and well-marked parking for visitors and customers of the central business district.

Long-Term Strategies: 10+ years

- Expand and improve park facilities and events to serve a growing population.
- Update the town's corridor and downtown design guidelines.
- Create and implement guidelines that address environmental issues related to property including tree preservation, landscaping, screening/buffers, stormwater, and waterways.
- Promote the purchase and acceptance donations of open space for resource protection along streams.
- Explore opportunities for a Transfer of Development Rights program to encourage growth in or near the town.
- Support efforts to promote public transportation.

Other Implementation Recommendations

To fully realize the guidance of this document, Mount Jackson must take steps to incorporate the broad recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan into the Town's other planning and regulatory documents through further study and refinement, including the following important initiatives:

- **Updates to the Zoning Ordinance**

While this plan guides local decision making, the Zoning Ordinance plays a definitive regulatory role, in many ways carrying out the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. To fully implement the recommendations of this plan, the zoning ordinance should be updated to remove barriers to desired development and to protect the Town's character, environment, and other assets.

The Town should revise its zoning ordinance to permit the full range of residential unit types envisioned by this plan, and by Town residents, including definitions and districts that make town houses, multifamily complexes, and senior living units viable development types. The ordinance should also permit a broad variety of commercial and industrial uses that are important to the economic development of the Town, including new or emerging uses such as solar facilities, microbreweries, and other uses not considered by many zoning ordinances, but important in modern commerce. Finally, the Town should study the inclusion of an Environmental Overlay District within the Zoning Ordinance that would protect sensitive environmental areas from incompatible development including wetlands, flood zones, and areas near the Town's existing and planned drinking water wells.

- **Utilities Plan**

The provision of safe, efficient, and sustainable water and sewer services are some of the Town's most basic responsibilities to its residents, businesses, and visitors. As noted in this document, Mount Jackson has sufficient capacity to accommodate some growth without expanding its current water and sewer systems, but not enough to satisfy all potential growth scenarios for the coming 20 years. The Town should undertake a utilities study to forecast necessary improvements to the existing utility system, including the replacement of aging infrastructure and mitigation of quality issues, as well as plan well in advance for system expansion to meet the demands of population and business growth.

The Utilities Plan should also consider the sustainability and safety of the Town's drinking water, including the quality of existing wells, how to improve quality, and how to protect Town wells from the effects of future development. This may include wellhead protection planning or regulations in concert with the zoning ordinance.

- **Updated Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines included in this plan for the Downtown, Corridor, and Caverns Road areas were originally conceived between 2000 and 2004 to help guide building and develop in those areas in a way that maintains their look and feel, and contributes to Mount Jackson's small-town charm rather than detracting from it. As the Town grows in the future, these guidelines should be revisited and revised as necessary to continue to reflect the Town's aesthetic vision, even in the face of new and different residential and commercial building types and designs.

The Urban Design Guidelines should be further expanded to include guidance on landscaping (as a major contributor to the Town's feel) and signage (especially wayfinding signage) to guide visitors to local attractions, parking, and other points of convenience and interest. Urban Design Guidelines should also be developed to advance the future design, development, and maintenance of Town parks and public open spaces as a valuable resource to residents and visitors.