

**HIGHLAND COUNTY**  
*and*  
**THE TOWN OF MONTEREY**

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**2021 – 2026**



*Prepared by*

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The Highland County Board of Supervisors**

*and*

**The Monterey Town Council**

*with the assistance of the*

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# Table of Contents

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## Part I. Introduction/Overview

A. Purpose	I-1
B. Background	I-1
C. Today's View – And a Vision for the Future	I-3
D. The Planning Process	I-4

## Part II. Natural and Cultural Resources

A. Natural Resources	II-1
B. History	II-5
C. Demographics	II-6

## Part III. Infrastructure

A. Transportation	III-1
B. Utilities	III-10
C. Housing	III-13
D. Education	III-16
E. Government Structure and Finance	III-19

## Part IV. Community Development

A. Community Services	IV-1
B. Economy	IV-16

## Part V. Land Use/Strategies for the Future

A. Land Use	V-1
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## Appendices

Appendix A Comprehensive Plans in Virginia State Code	
Appendix B Recreational Routes in Highland County	
Appendix C Maps	

**List of Tables**

Table 1-Soil Associations .....II-4

Table 2-Historical Population Trends – 2000-2020 .....II-7

Table 3-Race and Ethnicity .....II-7

Table 4-Population Projections .....II-7

Table 5-Median Age .....II-8

Table 6-Demographic Goals and Objectives.....II-9

Table 7-Demographic Strategies .....II-10

Table 8-Annual Average Daily Traffic & Level of Service..... III-4

Table 9-Highland County Priority Projects..... III-7

Table 10-Highland County Projects in VDOT SYIP..... III-7

Table 11-Transportation Goals and Objectives .....III-8

Table 12-Transportation Strategies .....III-9

Table 13-Utilities Goals and Objectives .....III-12

Table 14-Utilities Strategies.....III-12

Table 15-Housing Costs .....III-13

Table 16-Housing Units Profile .....III-13

Table 17-Housing Goals and Objectives .....III-14

Table 18-Housing Strategies .....III-15

Table 19-Education Goals and Objectives .....III-17

Table 20-Education Strategies .....III-18

Table 21-Government and Finance Goals and Objectives.....III-20

Table 22-Government and Finance Strategies .....III-21

Table 23-Community Service Goals and Objectives ..... IV-13

Table 24-Community Service Strategies..... IV-14

Table 25-Economy Goals and Objectives ..... IV-18

Table 26-Economy Strategies ..... IV-19

Table 27-Growth in County Land Value..... V-1

Table 28-Growth Areas..... V-5

Table 29-Land Use Goals and Objectives..... V-6

Table 30-Land Use Strategies ..... V-7

**Table of Contents**

**Map Index**

**Demographics**

Magisterial Districts ..... p.1  
Median House Age ..... p. 2  
Median Housing Value ..... p. 3  
Median Household Income ..... p. 4  
Occupancy Status ..... p. 5  
Population Density ..... p. 6

**Environment**

Caves and Sinkholes ..... p. 7  
Developed and Agricultural Lands..... p. 8  
Elevation..... p. 9  
Elevation above 3,000 Feet ..... p. 10  
100-Year Floodplain..... p. 11  
Forested Land ..... p. 12  
Generalized Land Use Constraints..... p. 13  
Geologic Formations..... p. 14  
Hydrology ..... p. 15  
Public Lands..... p. 16  
Slope Classification ..... p. 17  
Soils..... p. 18  
Designated Watersheds ..... p. 19

**Towns & Villages**

Blue Grass (Aerial) ..... p. 20  
Hightown (Aerial) ..... p. 21  
McDowell (Aerial) ..... p. 22  
Mustoe (Aerial)..... p. 23  
Monterey (Aerial) ..... p. 24  
Monterey (Developed and Agricultural Land)..... p. 25  
Monterey (Elevation)..... p. 26  
Monterey (Growth Area Plan) ..... p. 27  
Monterey (Slope Classification)..... p. 28  
Monterey (Topographic) ..... p. 29

**Table of Contents**

**Transportation**

Average Annual Daily Traffic ..... p. 30

Highway Classification System ..... p. 31

Current Level of Service..... p. 32

Projected Annual Daily Traffic ..... p. 33

Projected Level of Service ..... p. 34

Functional Classification ..... p. 35

Pavement Conditions..... p. 36

Bridge Location & Condition..... p. 37

Crashes..... p. 38

Priority Projects ..... p. 39

**Utilities**

Power Companies Service Areas ..... p. 40

Sewer and Water Infrastructure..... p. 41

# PART I

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## Introduction and Overview

### A. PURPOSE

The challenge of planning for the future is to manage the process of change. The Code of Virginia mandates that jurisdictions prepare and regularly update a Comprehensive Plan for the development of their communities.

Planning can be used to guide and coordinate changes in Highland County by providing for, but not limited to, the following:

- The responsible use of land and natural resources
- Promotion of a high quality of life
- Anticipated future public facility needs
- Development patterns consistent with local land use regulations
- Promotion of entrepreneurial activities as part of a sound economic development policy
- A sound fiscal base
- Ensure public input in decision-making processes

### B. BACKGROUND

The planning process is ongoing, but the Comprehensive Plan itself is a point-in-time snapshot that answers three questions;

- 1) Where are we?
- 2) Where can we go?
- 3) How do we get there?

The first question, “Where are we?” is largely documented by statistics and facts. These include an overview of the physical characteristics of both the natural and man-made environments of Highland County as well as the data supplied by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC), which projects population trends, housing needs and availability and economic forecasts.

The second question “Where can we go?” accepts the fact that due to physical characteristics, which are either assets or liabilities, and current strengths and weaknesses of Highland County, there are limitations to what is feasible to accomplish.

The final question “How do we get there?” is the heart of the planning process. While we embrace the potential for change, we also believe that change does not preclude the recognition of those factors that make Highland County unique; including our natural areas, retention of agriculture lands and preserving both the cultural and historic resources of the County.

## **1. Legal Requirement**

The content of the Highland County Comprehensive Plan, and its technical preparation, is guided by the Code of Virginia 1950 (as amended). The Code establishes the legislative purpose, the general context and scope, and the review and adoption procedures for a community to follow. The complete text of the Code, as of October 2021, is included as Appendix A.

The County's Comprehensive Plan is a plan for the physical development of the territory within the County's jurisdiction. A single plan covers both Highland County and the Town of Monterey. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a guide for the coordinated, harmonious development of the County and Town that will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.

The Comprehensive Plan is general in nature and represents specific goals and objectives that are not meant to be legally binding on the Highland County Board of Supervisors or the Monterey Town Council, except as otherwise provided for in the Virginia Code. The Plan is intended to be flexible so as to accommodate changes in goals and objectives as future circumstances may require. More specifically, the governing bodies may exercise their discretion in how strictly they interpret and follow the goals, objectives and strategies in the Plan.

This Plan is a revision of the Comprehensive Plan approved in December 2011.

## **2. Planning History**

The Code of Virginia states that the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed every five years by the Planning Commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the Plan. A brief timeline of the planning history of Highland County follows:

**1978** – “Highland County-Town of Monterey Comprehensive Plan”. Prepared by the Highland County Planning Commission and the Highland Citizens Advisory Committee, with technical assistance from the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.

**1984** – “Update” prepared by the Highland County Planning Commission with technical assistance from CSPDC adopted by the Highland County Board of Supervisors (May 1984) and the Monterey Town Council (June 1984).

**1991** – First “All for Highland” survey completed (over 800 respondents).

**1993** – “Comprehensive Plan” updated using the Highland County Citizens Advisory Committee.

**1997** – Second “All for Highland” survey completed (810 respondents).

**1999** – “Update” of the Comprehensive Plan prepared by the Highland County Planning Commission with technical assistance from the CSPDC.

**2011** – “Update” of the Comprehensive Plan. Prepared by the Highland County Planning Commission; a Citizens Advisory Committee; the Highland County Board of Supervisors; and technical assistance from the CSPDC.



**2016** – Annual Review adopted as-is with no changes.

**2021** – Annual Review of the Comprehensive Plan prepared by the Highland County Planning Commission with technical assistance from the CSPDC. The 2021 review updates Goals, Objectives and Strategies with the organizations assigned to them.

### **C. TODAY’S VIEW - AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

#### ***Today’s View***

Highland County is known for its tree-covered mountains and open valleys, and its numerous streams which are the headwaters of major river systems that flow to the Chesapeake Bay. The diversity of wildlife, clean air and water and large amounts of open space all contribute to the attractiveness of this place. The large concentration of sugar maples and the corresponding maple syrup industry also make Highland County unique.

Highland County is known for its strong community spirit. This is manifested most noticeably in the exceptionally high rate of volunteerism and the many local institutions supported through voluntary contributions. Other unique features of the population include above-average participation in public affairs, friendliness, and people who are hard-working and honest. All of these factors also contribute to a safe environment. The low population (cattle outnumber people by 5 to 1) is characterized by numerous family farms as well as a high percentage of retired and semi-retired newcomers to the County.

While the scenic beauty is an outstanding feature, the mountains also impact the roads, and job opportunities. These factors have had a negative impact on retaining young people in Highland County after high school graduation.

#### ***A Vision for the Future***

We are challenged, as we look to the future, to protect the quality of our environment and its inherent quality of life while meeting the economic and social needs of our citizens. Our economy must expand beyond agriculture to include tourism, retail, commercial, and service-oriented businesses. We must seek innovative ways to diversify our economy and provide job opportunities.

The following principles are relevant to planning decisions in Highland County:

- Create a diverse, stable economy that provides a range of economic opportunities for all of our citizens.
- Provide good stewardship of our natural resources.
- Support agriculture and promote “working landscapes”.
- Preserve cultural and historic resources that are essential to maintaining our sense of place.
- Encourage planned growth to maintain the existing character of Highland County, with the objective of utilizing historic growth patterns as a blueprint for future growth.
- Maintain, enhance or expand the services necessary to enrich the lives of our citizens and to sustain a healthy community. These would include (but are not limited to) a high-quality education for all Highland County

students, opportunities for recreation and cultural activities, an effective transportation system, a variety of housing options and a safe and healthy environment.

## **D. THE PLANNING PROCESS**

### **1. Authority**

The Highland County Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing the Comprehensive Plan every five years to determine whether it is advisable to amend the Plan.

### **2. Process**

- a. The Planning Commission held a public hearing as required by Virginia Code §15.2-2225 (1950, as amended) on July 28, 2022. After the public hearing, the Commission approved the Plan and by Resolution certified it to the Highland County Board of Supervisors and the Monterey Town Council.
- b. Following additional public hearings as required by statute, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Plan on **date** and the Monterey Town Council adopted the Plan on **date**.

# PART II

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

### A. NATURAL RESOURCES

Highland County is defined by its natural resources. Although there is evidence of human activity throughout the County, the natural landscape dominates. Our low population density and lack of industry have maintained Highland County as a place where nature still has the upper hand; from the unbroken, tree-lined ridges to the free-flowing streams and rivers.

A long-term goal of Highland County citizens is the preservation and protection of Highland County's unique natural resources. While Highland County is obliged by a variety of State and Federal regulations to protect attributes such as air and water quality and unique habitats, the ultimate responsibility of achieving a healthy economic/environmental balance lies with the citizens of Highland County and its elected officials.

#### **Topography**

Situated in the Allegheny Mountains, Highland County is characterized by alternating ridges and valleys that trend from northeast to southwest. Elevations range from 1,625' above sea level (along the Cowpasture River at the Bath County Line) to 4,545' above sea level on Allegheny Mountain (where Little Ridge meets Ramshorn Ridge). The Elevation Maps (Maps #9, #10, and #26) clearly show the major ridges and valleys. From the east, these include Shenandoah Mountain,

Cowpasture River Valley, Bullpasture Mountain, Bullpasture River Valley (McDowell), Jack Mountain, Jackson River Valley (Monterey), Back Creek/Monterey Mountain, the Blue Grass Valley and finally the Allegheny Mountain that forms the western boundary of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Topography has presented a significant challenge to development within Highland County.

#### **Slopes (Maps #17 and #28)**

**0 – 8%** - Flat to moderately sloping land. Although these areas are the most easily developed, some of these areas are subject to flooding and poor drainage.

**9 – 16%** - Rolling land. Few limitations for residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial activities not requiring large amounts of level ground.

**17 – 25%** - Hilly land. This land is suitable for residential or agricultural development; however, construction of water and sewer facilities can be costly.

**Over 25%** - Steep slopes. Steep slopes are usually considered unsuitable for development or cultivation. Slopes above 25% may increase the cost of construction. Slopes may be used for outdoor recreation, wildlife management, watershed protection and forestry among other uses.

The Highland County Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance contributes to the uses of County land.

#### **Geology (Map #14)**

A general knowledge of local geology is central to understanding an area's potential for mineral resources, as well as the availability of groundwater, and the suitability of land for development.

Highland County is situated within the Valley and Ridge physiographic province, which is underlain by sedimentary rocks that are intruded by some igneous dikes. The mountains are generally capped by hard, resistant sandstone, while the valleys are underlain by soft shale and soluble limestone. Mountains in the western portion of the County are primarily sandstone, while the remainder of the County is a combination of sandstone, shale and limestone.

### ***Mineral Resources***

In the past, a number of limestone and dolomite quarries have produced crushed stone and gravel. Sandstones on Monterey Mountain and Back Creek Mountain are possible sources of silica sand and construction stone. Samples of shale, found throughout the County, have been tested and are potentially suitable for the manufacture of common and decorative brick, tile and lightweight aggregate. Manganese and iron mineralization occurs at numerous points throughout Highland, but the presence of commercial deposits has not been established. Natural gas deposits have been identified on the western slopes of the County.

### ***Wind***

Highland County is rich in wind. Commercial wind farms and utilities require a Class 3 or higher wind speed to make it economically feasible to convert wind energy into electrical energy. Highland County is one of the few jurisdictions in Virginia with Class 5 wind speeds.

Virginia has a growing need for reliable and affordable energy that is environmentally friendly and produces the resources necessary for economic development.

Although wind energy is a “green” energy source, there are potential issues that must be addressed prior to the development of a

wind turbine. Reasonable people can disagree about the visual impact of a wind turbine and its blades. Increasing the height of a wind turbine maximizes the amount of energy that can be produced at the cheapest cost. A commercial wind turbine requires a major transmission line to connect to the power grid already established, which often requires a 150–200-foot right-of-way along the line. The lighting that may be necessary on a tower is an issue.

Wind turbines may have a negative impact on migratory birds and bats. There are endangered species of both birds and bats that pass through Highland County or live in Highland County year-round. Concern for the welfare of these species will always be an issue in the siting and development of any wind farm.

### ***Solar Energy***

Many Highland County landowners are choosing to use solar collection systems to provide all or a portion of their power consumption needs. Small-scale Solar Energy Systems generating fewer than 15 kilowatts are permitted by-right in all of Highland County zoning districts except the Flood Hazard Overlay District, where it is permitted by Conditional Use Permit.

Regulations for medium-scale and utility-scale Solar Energy Systems can be found in the Highland County and Town of Monterey Zoning Ordinance. All utility-scale Solar Energy Systems must undergo review pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2232 prior to the consideration by the Planning Commission of a Conditional Use Permit.

### ***Karst Topography***

Much of Highland County is underlain by limestone and dolomite. These carbonate rocks are essentially water soluble. Over millions of years, slightly acidic rainwater seeping through the earth’s subsurface

dissolves the rock, creating holes and fractures, or enlarging cavities previously created by bedrock features. These cavities result in the many caves, sinkholes and sinking creeks found throughout the County. Topography in which such features are found is known as karst, karst lands, or karst terrain.

Karst terrain is typically identified by the presence of sinkholes and cave openings on the ground surface. Map #7 illustrates the general locations of such features in Highland County. As shown, karst lands tend to form two bands that stretch across the length of the County. Particular areas of concentration include the Butler-Sinking Creek drainage basin and the area around Blue Grass. Karst terrain is relatively weak and unstable and may present problems for development. The many caverns and caves attract spelunkers to this area.

#### ***Groundwater Availability***

The three most common types of water-bearing rock in Highland County are sandstone, shale and limestone. However, almost all sandstone present in the County is affected by siltation, cementation and/or poor sorting, meaning that the pore spaces between the rocks are reduced, therefore limiting groundwater yields. Shale is considered a reliable source of small groundwater supplies, although water from shale areas may be highly mineralized. Limestone is considered the best source for groundwater; however, it may be erratic. Because limestone is soluble in rainwater, joints and fractures often become enlarged and form channels. Channels may shift over time, just like a surface stream, causing a well to suddenly go dry, or to fill with mud. Another concern for limestone formations is the potential for contaminants to enter the aquifer through sinkholes.

#### ***Soils***

The identification and location of various soil types is an essential element for planning the land use of a particular area. Soil types influence building foundation strength, erosion, drainage, plant cover and crop yields, and the effectiveness of septic systems. Soils are classified according to particle size (from sand and gravel to silt and clay) and parent bedrock material.

While Map #18 and Table 1 show general soil associations and their development limitations, this information is not suitable for site or small-scale planning. The soils in any one association will vary in slope, stoniness, drainage and other characteristics which will affect their development and use.

#### ***Hydrology***

Based on drainage patterns, Highland County can be divided in seven major watersheds. As shown on Maps #15 and #19, the northern portion of the County containing the Laurel Fork, Strait Fork and Strait Creek watersheds flow into the Potomac River. The majority of the County drains into the James River watershed, including Back Creek, Jackson River, and the Bullpasture and Cowpasture Rivers.

#### ***Floodplains (Map #11)***

Floodplains are natural drainage basins for the discharge of heavy precipitation. Due to the mountainous terrain, many of the rivers and streams exhibit steep gradients, narrow floodplains and wide variations in flow. Flow rates are dependent upon the season and rain events. Generally, the flows are highest in late fall and early spring. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) determines the 100-year floodplain boundaries, which encompass areas that have a one percent chance of flooding each year.

<b>TABLE 1 - SOIL ASSOCIATIONS</b>		
<b>MAJOR SOILS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS TO EXTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND URBAN USE</b>
Dekalb-Berks- Lily-Lehew	Deep to moderately deep, sloping to steep soils on mountain slopes, and ridges	Depth to bedrock, permeability, erosion, steep slopes, and coarse fragments
Weikert-Berks-Rough-Shelocta	Deep to very shallow, well to excessively drained soils on gently sloping to very steep shale uplands, and colluvial soils derived from mudstone and shale	Depth to bedrock, droughtiness, erosion, steep slopes, and coarse fragments
Dekalb-Lily-McClung-Oriskany	Very deep to moderately deep, well to somewhat excessively drained soils on mountain slopes, ridges, rolling valleys and colluvial areas derived from sandstone	Depth to bedrock, steep slopes, coarse fragments
Wolfgap-Coursey-Zoar-Cottenbend	Very deep, well to moderately well drained, nearly level to gently sloping alluvial and stream terrace soils	Flooding and erosion
Murrill-Frederick-Faywood	Very deep to moderately deep, well drained soils in limestone valleys	Steepness and coarse fragments
Paddyknob-Madsheep Mandy	High elevation cool soils, moderately deep, well drained on mountain slopes and ridge tops on elevations above 3,600 feet	Steepness, depth to bedrock, coarse fragments

NOTE: The general soils map is not suitable for site planning or small-scale planning. The soils in any one association will vary in slope, stoniness, drainage, and other characteristics, which affect development, management, and use.

The federal government expects localities to take a proactive approach to flood damage prevention.

**Water Quality**

Water resources and water pollution in Virginia are regulated by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the State Water Control Board, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 402, established the National Pollutant

Discharge Elimination System to limit pollutant discharges into streams, rivers and bays. DEQ administers the system in the state of Virginia and calls it the Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES). VPDES permits are required for all point source discharges to surface waters.

DEQ also regularly monitors samples of the watersheds for designated uses which include: aquatic life support, fish consumption, swimming and drinking water.

### ***Climate***

According to the Koppen-Geiger climate classification system, Highland County has a Modified Continental climate characterized by moderately cold winters and relatively cool summers, modified by elevation. Monthly temperatures vary widely, from an average low of 17.5° F in January to an average high of 80.6° F in July. Highland receives an average of 43.8 inches of precipitation per year. Precipitation is fairly well distributed throughout the year. While the climate is relatively mild, hurricanes that track inland have caused localized wind damage and flooding.

### ***Atmospheric Quality***

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Ambient Air Quality Standards Program monitors six pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, ozone, particulate and sulfur oxides. Because of its physical association with the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, Highland County is in a Class I monitoring region, a category reserved for National Parks and wilderness areas.

### ***Dark Skies***

Most of Highland County currently rates a 7.1+ on the International Dark Sky Association's Dark Sky Finder scale ([darksky.org](http://darksky.org)). This is the highest rating possible and means that "the Milky Way's tremendous structure is visible all the way to the horizon. Its light is enough to walk about safely without artificial light. The Zodiacal light encircles the entire ecliptic. Many meteors are visible." Dark skies may attract visitors to the county. The Supervisors and Town Council adopted an Exterior Lighting Standards to the Zoning Ordinance in 2017 as a first step in limiting light pollution.

### ***Vegetation (Map #12)***

Forests cover 70 percent of Highland County's total area and produce multiple

environmental, economic and cultural benefits. The majority (64 percent) of forested land is privately owned, the remaining 36 percent is classified as public land. Forest resources support a strong local wood-products industry and are important in protecting watersheds, creating wildlife habitat and supporting outdoor recreation in the forms of hunting, fishing, hiking and camping.

### ***Roadways***

Highland County has an abundance of beautiful country roads. See Appendix B for suggested scenic drives.

### ***Summary***

Highland County is widely known for the scenic beauty of its physical environment. Both the natural land and agricultural landscapes contribute to this scenic beauty.

## **B. HISTORY**

Highland County is one of four Virginia counties named for its natural features. Settlement began about 1745 when immigrants of both German and Scots-Irish descent began to push up the tributaries of the South Branch of the Potomac and the James Rivers. Highland County's remote and isolated location was noted by early land speculators. One such petition to the Colonial Governor of Virginia asking for a grant of 50,000 acres on the "... head branches of the James River..." noted that "... the lands are very remote and lying among great mountains being about 200 miles from any landing..." \* Efforts to create a new county from the territory of Bath and Pendleton were begun in 1839 and continued in 1840. In both years, polls failed to capture a majority in the two parent counties.

In 1838, the area was opened to development by the completion of the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. The road

was built and sited by the famous engineer, Claudius Crozet, who believed the Turnpike would benefit the State by retaining and increasing its western population, clearing and settling an extensive territory, and adding to the State's revenues by the enhanced value of land through which the road would pass. His vision was accurate and the Turnpike served as a major artery through the Allegheny Mountains for more than 100 years.

Finally, in 1847, Highland County was created with its seat located in a patch of woods and laurel thickets between two straight creeks. The site was located on Bell's farm at the house and tavern of John Cook. Carved from Pendleton and Bath, Highland County consists of 422 square miles and has the highest average elevation of any county east of the Mississippi River.

By the time of the Civil War, Highland County was able to enlist more than 500 men into the Confederate Army. Fewer than a dozen joined the Union side. On May 8, 1862, a significant battle was fought at the small village of McDowell that resulted in Stonewall Jackson repulsing Union General Milroy and preventing Federal forces from advancing on Staunton. The battlefield at McDowell remains essentially unchanged, save for the growth of trees. The historic character of two ante-bellum brick homes in the village, and the Presbyterian Church (which served as headquarters and hospital) remains essentially the same. The names of some soldiers were carved into the bricks of the church and remain visible today.

Highland County was thought to be on the verge of a growth spurt in the late 1800s and early 1900s when plans were afoot to build a railroad into the County. When the railroad failed to materialize and investors lost significant sums, the promise of industrial growth faded. Highland County

has remained essentially an agrarian community.

Currently seven sites in Highland County are on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register: Crab Run Lane Truss Bridge, CP Jones House and Law Office, The Highland Center, The Highland Inn, the Mansion House, McClung Farm Historic District and McDowell Presbyterian Church. The Highland Historical Society, located at the Mansion House at McDowell, maintains information on these and other historic properties. The Society serves the County as the principal repository for Highland County artifacts and documents related to its history.

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\*Oren F. Morton, *A History of Highland County, Virginia*, Regional Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD, 1985; p. 61.

## C. DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding past, present, and future county demographic trends provides an essential framework for community planning. Specific trends have measurable impact on our land use requirements, transportation network, public services, zoning and schools.

### General Population

*Historical Trends* — With a peak population of 5,647 people in 1900, Highland County experienced the majority of its growth before the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to annual estimates, the Highland County population decreased by 3.8 percent between 1990 and 2000 and then between 2000 and 2010; it decreased significantly again by 8.5 percent.



TABLE 2 – POPULATION TRENDS			
	2000	2010	2020
Total Population	2,536	2,321	2,190*
Population Change	-3.8%	-8.5%	-5.6%

Source: 2000, 2010 Census, \*2019 Census Annual Population Estimate, Weldon Cooper Center

In 2010, 98.6 percent of residents were white. The population is almost evenly divided between males and females with females slightly edging out males according to the 2010 Census. This gender distribution mirrors statewide figures, while statewide the population is 72.3 percent white.

TABLE 3 – RACE & ETHNICITY			
	2000	2010	2020
White	2,517	2,289	2,138*
Black	2	6	24*
Hispanic	13	18	23*
Asian	3	4	14*
Other Race Alone			7*
Two or more Races			7*
Males	1,254	1,159	1,086*
Females	1,282	1,162	1,104*

Source: 2000, 2010 Census, \*2019 Census Annual Population Estimate, Weldon Cooper Center

*Population Projections* — The population projection for 2030 is 2,047 residents, and for 2040, it is 1,835 residents.

TABLE 4 – POPULATION PROJECTIONS	
YEAR	POPULATION PROJECTIONS
2000	2,536
2010	2,321
2020	2,190*
2030	2,047**
2040	1,835**

Source: 2000, 2010 Census, \*2019 Census Annual Population Estimate, Weldon Cooper Center,

\*\*Virginia Employment Commission

### Migration Factors

Aside from annexation, there are two ways a community sustains its population. One is to maintain a higher number of births than deaths (natural increase); the other is new residents moving in from elsewhere (migration).

The population of Highland County is decreasing as a result of natural change. As such, Highland County is unique among counties in our comparison. Generally, when population changes are the result of inward migration, one or more “push-pull” factors are at work. These may include family changes, housing affordability, educational opportunities, cultural and recreational outlets or job availability. However, in Highland County, the trend is for residents to leave the County in search of employment or to continue their education.

### Population Distribution (Maps #1 and #6)

Highland County is the least populated County in Virginia. The small population, coupled with a relatively large land area, results in a very low population density. According to 2010 Census, the population density per square mile for the three primary areas in Highland County were: Blue Grass (3.98), Stonewall (3.93), and Monterey/Town of Monterey (10.27).

### Population Characteristics (Map #2)

*Households* — Highland County’s total population decreased by 13.7 percent from 1980 to 2000, but the number of households increased by 2.0 percent. By 2010, the total population in Highland County decreased yet again to 2,321, while the number of households decreased by 4.4 percent.

*Age* — Age is an essential tool of community analysis because many resident needs and behaviors are life-cycle related. Highland County’s median age increased

significantly from 34.3 in 1980 to 40.7 in 1990 and to 46.0 in 2000. By 2010, the median age again increased significantly to 52.5.

TABLE 5 – MEDIAN AGE			
	2000	2010	2020
Median Age	46.0	52.5	58.9*

Source: 2000, 2010 Census, \*2019 Census Annual Population Estimate, Weldon Cooper Center

A significant trend in Highland County’s age distribution through 2030 is the projected *decrease* in various age groups up through middle age, with a projected *increase* in the number of late middle age and retirement age residents.

These trends have a substantial impact on Highland County’s workforce and economic status, as well as affecting County services such as the school system. Since Highland County’s proportion of child-bearing aged adults is shrinking, the total number of young children can be anticipated to decrease over the next few years. School enrollment and class size will reflect this trend.

An increasingly older population also presents additional challenges. One important example is the availability and accessibility of medical care in support of this growing population segment. Planning reflects the needs and desires of Highland County’s population. A stable population that gets increasingly older will have a different impact on the nature of county planning compared to a growing county with upward trends in all age categories.

## TABLE 6 - DEMOGRAPHIC GOALS

- DG-1 Encourage young adults to stay in Highland County and seek to attract young families with children.
- DG-2 Provide assistance, public policy, and support services for the elderly so they may lead fulfilling lives and be effective participants in the community.
- DG-3 Determine ways to increase access to services by local residents living at or below the poverty level.

## DEMOGRAPHIC OBJECTIVES

- DO-1 Encourage business opportunities for entrepreneurs who may want to stay in, or move to, Highland County.
- DO-2 Encourage young families to stay in, or return to, Highland County.
- DO-3 Provide services and programs that encourage independent living and assisted living options for older residents.
- DO-4 Provide services to enable older residents to live in in-home family situations longer (e.g., home health, hospice, senior center.)
- DO-5 Pursue ways to encourage retired residents with needed skills to participate in the workforce and volunteer force of Highland County.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS DEMOGRAPHICS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 7 - DEMOGRAPHIC STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
DS-1	Market Highland County’s low crime rate and “family-oriented” sense of community as being an ideal place to raise a family.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority, Tourism Council
DS-2	Market the quality of Highland County’s public school system as an asset of the county.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools, Chamber of Commerce
DS-3	Market the availability of current and planned technology infrastructure.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce
DS-4	Ensure ordinances enable and not discourage multi-generational family living arrangements.	Ongoing	Highland County Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator
DS-5	Support job and trade training, if necessary, through targeted school and community college programs.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, Highland County Public Schools

The resources the County has identified to assist in conducting the studies include the following list of agencies and organizations, among others:

- Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
- Highland County Economic Development Authority
- Highland County Chamber of Commerce
- Highland County Public Schools
- Highland County Planning Commission
- Valley Program for Aging Services
- Department of Social Services
- Shenandoah Valley Partnership
- The Highland Center

# PART III

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## Infrastructure

### A. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation system maintenance and improvements are essential for the safe, effective, and efficient movement of people and goods, and for economic development. This section evaluates the county's transportation system and provides recommendations to meet current and future multi-modal needs, and is consistent with the State Code Comprehensive Plan Transportation requirements and includes needs from the VTrans 2045 statewide long-range transportation plan.

#### Existing Transportation Facilities

##### **Roadways**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) classifies the transportation network by the federal functional classification system, which categorizes roads based on function and is used to determine federal funding eligibility and design standards.

There are no interstate highways in Highland County. The closest access from Monterey to an interstate is either a 1 ½-hour drive to the south (I-64W) or a 1-hour drive to the east (I-81 and I-64E).

There are three state highways in the County that are considered "primary roads". A primary road provides service that is relatively continuous and of relatively high traffic volume, long average trip length, high operating speed, and high mobility importance.

The three primary roads are:

- U.S. 250, Highland Turnpike/Mountain Turnpike – the main east-west artery through Highland County (and Monterey). U.S. 250 provides a direct connection to I-81 to the east and to I-79 in West Virginia.
- U.S. 220, Potomac River Road/Jackson River Road – runs north-south through the county (and Monterey) and provides a direct connection to I-64W, south of Bath County. The road is also designated as a Corridor of Statewide Significance (CoSS) due to the road connecting multiple regions and activity centers, and as a potential freight connection.
- State Route 84, Mill Gap Road – serves the southwestern portion of the county, running from West Virginia to the intersection with U.S. 220 three miles south of Monterey.

There are also more than 213 miles of secondary roads within Highland County that collect and distribute traffic between local roads and primary roads (Maps #30-35).

##### **Maintenance**

VDOT maintains all of the primary and secondary roads in Highland County, including snow removal.

Highland County participates in VDOT's Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) that designates funds for construction and improvements of the public road system. Improvements target repair, paving and bridge upgrades throughout the County. The SYIP is updated annually. Highland County has the highest percentage of low-quality pavement conditions in the five-county CSPDC region, and the lowest percentage of high-quality pavement conditions. Map #36 shows the county-wide pavement conditions.

### **Traffic Volume**

The 2019 average annual daily traffic (AADT) volumes are similar to the 2008 numbers cited in the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. Only two roadways, U.S. 220 and U.S. 250, have AADT over 1,000, and Highland County is the only county in the CSPDC region that does not have a road with over 2,000 AADT. The segment of U.S. 220 north of Monterey experienced a 6.7 percent increase, which was the highest percent increase for any road between 2008 and 2019, according to VDOT data.

### **Bridges and Culverts**

There are 85 roadway bridge structures and 69 culverts in the VDOT bridge and culvert inventory in the County. Each structure has a sufficiency rating based on structural adequacy, obsolescence, and level of service to prioritize funding. The rating varies from 0 percent (poor) to 100 percent (very good). Highland County has five bridges that are rated poor (Map #37).

### **Public Transportation**

There are no public transit services in the county. The Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS) offers transportation for adults 60 years and older or disabled adults under 60 years that need travel to necessary destinations such as doctor's appointments.

### **Commuter Services**

There are no ridesharing programs or park-and-ride lots specific to Highland County. The CSPDC established a regional rideshare program in 2009 that serves the entire county and matches commuters to any other destination within the five-county CSPDC region. Information is available at [rideshareinfo.org](http://rideshareinfo.org).

### **Rail**

There are no operating railroads within Highland County. The nearest railroad is the CSX line in southeastern Bath County.

Passenger rail service is available in Staunton and Clifton Forge three times a week.

### **Air**

There are no public aviation facilities in Highland County. One privately owned airstrip, Hannah Field, is located south of Monterey; however, this facility is not available for general or commercial aviation. The nearest public airfield is Ingalls Field in Bath County. It can accommodate aircraft the size of a DC-9 and smaller. There is no scheduled commercial service, but general aviation and charter services are provided. Commercial service is provided by the Roanoke Regional Airport, Charlottesville Regional Airport and Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave.

### **Bicycling**

Popular bike loop routes are listed in Appendix B, Recreational Routes. The "Mountain Mama Road Bike Challenge" has been held on the first Saturday in August annually since 2001. This event attracts over 200 cyclists from all over the country. The Challenge features four road bike routes based on level of difficulty. The Mountain Mama on-road routes are highlighted on the CSPDC's website [bikethevalley.org](http://bikethevalley.org) and the Highland County Recreation Commission's website [www.highlandcountyrecreation.org](http://www.highlandcountyrecreation.org).

### **Pedestrian Facilities**

Highland County is graced with beautiful mountains, wooded areas and an abundance of outdoor recreation potential. Hiking is available throughout Highland County and is an important part of the tourist industry for the area. A list of hiking trails and "themed" routes including historic, birding and wildflower opportunities are provided in Appendix B.

The Town of Monterey has a sidewalk network connecting to the Town's main destinations. A sidewalk and bike path

project called the Highland Community Trail was completed in 2015 and provides connectivity to the Highland County School Complex and the recreation area adjacent to the school.

### **Planning Assumptions**

This section highlights planning assumptions used to identify where the existing transportation network will need to be improved to meet demand generated by future growth and land use changes.

#### ***Population Data Affecting Transportation***

Between 2010 and 2020, the County's population decreased by 3.9 percent, and according to Weldon Cooper population projections, the population is expected to further decline by approximately 16 percent by 2040. While the projected population decline will not affect traffic capacity, providing mobility options such as fixed-route and demand-response transit for elderly and disadvantaged populations will continue to be an important consideration for Highland County's transportation system. As a result of declining population projections and modest economic growth, there are no planned expansions of community facilities.

#### ***Employment Data Affecting Transportation***

According to the 2020 Census, 62 percent of Highland County residents work outside of the county, while the remaining 38 percent work in the county. Approximately 11 percent of county residents work in Bath County, while most others work in the Shenandoah Valley to the east, or in adjacent counties in West Virginia. About 26 percent of the workers employed in Highland County live outside of the county. According to 2015 Census data, the average travel time to work is 23.7 minutes, which is shorter than the State average of 28.2 minutes. The county does not expect an

increase in employment or a subsequent increase in travel volume.

#### ***Land Use Data Affecting Transportation***

The County does not anticipate changes to its current land uses. The county has three designated growth areas in Monterey, the primary roads near Monterey, and McDowell, but there will be no significant changes impacting traffic volume.

### **Needs Assessment**

Based on current conditions and projected future growth, the county's main transportation needs are improving safety, increasing mobility for disadvantaged populations, developing multi-modal facilities, and maintaining the existing roadway infrastructure. The current roadway network meets operational needs and is projected to meet capacity needs over the next 25 years, and there is no need for significant improvement or expansion of the roadway network due to minimal changes in population growth, economic development, and land use.

#### ***Roadway Capacity***

The county currently has adequate roadway network capacity and does not anticipate population or employment growth that will impact roadway capacity in the next 25 years. Table 8 compares 2019 traffic volume data with VDOT's 2045 projections. From 2019 to 2045, traffic is projected to increase the most on VA-84 East, with a 64 percent increase to 821 ADT. Overall, projected traffic increases are modest over the 25-year period.

Levels of Service (LOS) describes roadway operating conditions by A through F designations. "A" represents the best operating condition, and "F" is the worst. LOS C is the generally accepted minimum operating standard for rural primary roadways. All roadways in Highland County

**TABLE 8 - AADT AND LOS COMPARISON, 2019 AND 2045 (Note: ■ indicates decline in LOS)**

Facility Name/Route	Segment From	Segment To	Classification	2019 AADT	2045 AADT	Percent Change	2019 LOS	2045 LOS
SC-678N (Highland County)	BATH CL	RTE 609	Minor Collector	82	93	13%	A	A
US-250E	RTE 220	ECL MONTEREY	Minor Arterial	1096	1238	13%	A	A
US-250E	RTE 629	RTE 615	Minor Arterial	1096	1143	4%	B	B
US-220N	RTE 611	RTE 606	Other Principal Arterial	472	621	32%	A	A
SC-640N (Highland County)	RTE 637	RTE 642 NORTH	Minor Collector	249	281	13%	A	A
VA-84E	RTE 600 WEST	RTE 600 EAST	Major Collector	305	345	13%	A	B
US-220N	RTE 642	WEST VIRGINIA SL	Other Principal Arterial	684	862	26%	B	B
SC-678N (Highland County)	RTE 612	RTE 615	Minor Collector	173	253	46%	A	A
US-220N	NCL MONTEREY	RTE 632 NORTH	Other Principal Arterial	1589	1733	9%	B	B
US-220N	RTE 632 NORTH	RTE 642	Other Principal Arterial	1589	1733	9%	B	B
SC-678N (Highland County)	RTE 615	RTE 250	Minor Collector	264	297	13%	A	A
US-250E	WEST VIRGINIA SL	RTE 600	Major Collector	269	415	54%	B	B
US-250E	RTE 656	RTE 616 EAST	Minor Arterial	1087	1109	2%	B	B
US-220N	RTE 605	RTE 607 NORTH	Other Principal Arterial	472	621	32%	A	A
US-220N	RTE 608	RTE 84	Other Principal Arterial	580	705	22%	A	A
US-220N	RTE 606	RTE 605	Other Principal Arterial	472	621	32%	A	A
US-220N	RTE 84	RTE 636	Other Principal Arterial	1335	1573	18%	B	B
SC-678N (Highland County)	RTE 610	RTE 612	Minor Collector	161	219	36%	B	B
VA-84E	WEST VIRGINIA SL	RTE 600 WEST	Major Collector	305	345	13%	A	A
US-220N	RTE 636	NCL MONTEREY	Other Principal Arterial	1335	1509	13%	B	B
US-250E	RTE 615	RTE 656	Minor Arterial	1096	1143	4%	B	B
US-220N	RTE 607 SOUTH	RTE 611	Other Principal Arterial	472	621	32%	A	A
US-220N	BATH CL	RTE 607 SOUTH	Other Principal Arterial	472	621	32%	B	B
SC-678N (Highland County)	RTE 609	RTE 610	Minor Collector	156	195	25%	B	B
VA-84E	RTE 600 EAST	RTE 640	Major Collector	506	821	62%	A	B
VA-84E	RTE 640	RTE 220	Major Collector	673	879	31%	A	A
US-220N	RTE 607 NORTH	RTE 608	Other Principal Arterial	580	705	22%	A	A
US-250E	RTE 637	WCL MONTEREY	Major Collector	328	501	53%	B	B
SC-640N (Highland County)	RTE 250	RTE 637	Minor Collector	75	85	13%	A	A
SC-654N (Highland County)	RTE 624	WEST VIRGINIA SL	Minor Collector	139	157	13%	A	A
SC-642E (Highland County)	RTE 640	RTE 220	Minor Collector	544	637	17%	A	B
SC-654N (Highland County)	RTE 250	RTE 617 NORTH	Minor Collector	594	754	27%	A	A
US-250E	RTE 600	RTE 640	Major Collector	269	415	54%	B	B
SC-609N (Highland County)	BATH CL	RTE 678	Minor Collector	80	111	39%	A	A
SC-640N (Highland County)	RTE 638	RTE 250	Minor Collector	84	95	13%	A	A
US-250E	RTE 616 EAST	AUGUSTA CL	Minor Arterial	1087	1109	2%	B	B
SC-600N (Highland County)	BATH CL	RTE 84	Minor Collector	80	90	13%	A	A
SC-654N (Highland County)	RTE 617 NORTH	RTE 618 NORTH	Minor Collector	393	567	44%	A	B



**TABLE 8 - AADT AND LOS COMPARISON, 2019 AND 2045 (Note: ■ indicates decline in LOS)**

Facility Name/Route	Segment From	Segment To	Classification	2019 AADT	2045 AADT	Percent Change	2019 LOS	2045 LOS
US-250E	RTE 640	RTE 637	Major Collector	328	501	53%	A	B
US-250E	WCL MONTEREY	RTE 220	Major Collector	328	501	53%	A	A
US-250E	ECL MONTEREY	RTE 629	Minor Arterial	1096	1143	4%	B	B
SC-654N (Highland County)	RTE 618 NORTH	RTE 624	Minor Collector	213	241	13%	A	A
SC-640N (Highland County)	RTE 84	RTE 638	Minor Collector	115	130	13%	A	A

are “A” or “B” LOS, with only five roads projected to decrease in LOS in 2045.

VTrans 2045 identifies the following capacity needs in the county:

- Preserve the traffic capacity of U.S. 220, which is a Corridor of Statewide Significance
- Consider new or expanded park and ride facilities, rail and public transportation services and passenger facilities, bike and pedestrian facilities, and commuter assistance services along U.S. 220 and U.S. 250.

**Roadway Safety**

A crash analysis was performed to review the county’s transportation safety needs. Map #38 displays the location of all crashes from January 2015 to September 2020. There was on average 3.2 crashes per month, and approximately 37 crashes annually. Of those crashes, 3 were fatal, and 28 were severe injuries. The majority (62 percent) of crashes were property-damage only. Most crashes occurred along U.S. 250 and U.S. 220.

VTrans 2045 and the CSPDC’s 2019 Rural Transportation Safety Hotspot Identification Report document multiple areas that have crash clusters:

- U.S. 250 near Monterey and Strait Creek Road – This segment includes a number of severe injury crashes. VDOT identifies this segment as a potential for safety improvement (PSI) segment.

- U.S. 250 near Augusta County – This segment included severe injury crashes.
- U.S. 220 south of Monterey – This segment has the second most crashes in a one-mile segment.

**Roadway and Bridge Maintenance**

As noted in the existing conditions section, the county has roads and bridges in poor and fair condition in need of improvement. The county should continue to work with VDOT to improve the condition and safety of primary and secondary roads through the Rural Rustic Road Program, State of Good Repair, and other funding programs.

**Public Transportation**

Due to the county’s rural setting, meeting the transportation needs of the county’s disadvantaged populations, specifically the elderly will continue to be an issue. Evaluating the feasibility of establishing a transit connection to destinations in the Shenandoah Valley should also be considered.

**Motorcycle Facilities**

Highland County has experienced an increase in the volume of motorcycle traffic over the past few years. Since the 2011 Comprehensive Plan, the county has created the “Sweet Rides” motorcycle route guide which designates nine different routes. This is an important component of Highland County’s expanding tourism industry and should continue to be promoted.

### ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities***

Highland County has very limited on-street pedestrian facilities, although Monterey has sidewalks connecting to most of the Town's activity centers. The county also lacks on-road bike facilities such as bike lanes or widened paved shoulders. Providing these facilities as part of on-going roadway maintenance or upgrades would benefit both residents and visitors.

With funding through VDOT's Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Grant Program, the CSPDC prepared the Central Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Plan. The Plan identifies a regional network of on-road bikeways to connect and enhance the historic, cultural and recreational resources of the region. The Plan was adopted by Highland County in December 2005.

The CSPDC's website [bikethevalley.org](http://bikethevalley.org) and the Highland County Recreation Commission's website [www.highlandcountyrecreation.org](http://www.highlandcountyrecreation.org) offer a wide range of on-road and off-road bicycling opportunities.

### ***Recreation Facilities***

Highland County should continue to leverage its unique outdoor resources to further develop economic and tourism assets. Identifying and developing future walking, biking, motorcycle, and ATV routes could generate future tourism traffic requiring capacity and safety improvements in the long-term.

The county should continue to promote existing routes and strive to designate new routes. The state designates roads of "high scenic, aesthetic, or cultural value" as Scenic Roads or Byways. Local governments must adopt a resolution of support. At the present, Highland County has not designated scenic byways. See further discussion under the "Land Use" section of this plan.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Priority Projects***

The recommended projects listed in Table 9 are based on the county's existing and future transportation needs. Five of the seven projects are located along U.S. Route 250, which has the highest traffic volume and the greatest number of crashes in the County.

### ***Six Year Improvement Plan Projects (SYIP) FY21-25 Projects***

Table 10 details the projects that are included in the most recent FY21-25 SYIP. The county will continue to work with VDOT on these projects, and future SYIP projects in the future. Map #39 provides the location of each project.

TABLE 9 – HIGHLAND COUNTY PRIORITY PROJECTS		
Project	Description	Cost Estimate (in 2021 dollars)
U.S. 250 near Strait Creek Road	Conduct a safety analysis study to identify safety improvements to address severe crashes	\$25,000
U.S. 250 near Augusta County Line	Conduct a safety analysis study to identify safety improvements to address severe crashes	\$25,000
U.S. 250 River Road Truck Pull-off	Provide a right turn lane and tapered truck-pull off area at the old County trash collection site near McDowell and Bullpasture River Road.	\$350,000; includes 35% right of way and utility costs
U.S. 250 Eastbound Truck Pull-off	Construct a truck pull-off Cowpasture River Road	\$350,000; includes 35% right of way and utility costs
Cowpasture River Road South Shoulder Widening	Widen the shoulder of Cowpasture River Road south in the Liberty area from U.S. 250 to Lower Fork Road. This 3.1-mile segment with a 4' shoulder widening.	\$3.2 million; includes 35% right of way and utility costs
Cowpasture River Road South Road Elevation	Elevate road along a .44-mile segment along Cowpasture River Road to address floodplain issues using a Rural Local Road standard with 20' of pavement.	\$1,650,000; includes 35% right of way and utility costs
Floodwall in New Hampden	Conduct a floodplain/hydraulics study to identify mitigation measures to construct a new floodwall at 3837 Blue Grass Valley Road on the north/west side of the road along the South Branch of the Potomac River.	\$100,000 for study

TABLE 10 – HIGHLAND COUNTY PROJECTS IN VDOT SYIP		
Project	Allocations	AD Date
Rural Rustic - Botkin Hollow Road (Rt. 619)	\$386,866	Under Construction
Rural Rustic - Davis Run Road (Rt. 615)	\$578,094	05/07/2024
Rural Rustic - Cowpasture River Road (Rt. 614)	\$198,729	05/13/2024
SGR - Rt. 640 Bridge Replacement over South Branch of Potomac River	\$4,630,089	10/8/2024
SGR - US 220 Bridge Replacement over East Branch of Strait Creek	\$6,706,427	10/8/2024

### TABLE 11 - TRANSPORTATION GOALS

- TG-1 Maintain and develop a safe, efficient and modern transportation system.
- TG-2: Encourage development of multi-modal transportation infrastructure to enhance social, economic, and recreational assets for residents, employers, workers, and visitors.
- TG-3: Enhance transportation plans and programs that respond to the needs of elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged residents.

### TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

- TO-1 Maintain the existing primary and secondary road system at acceptable levels, working with VDOT, to promote regularly scheduled maintenance, upgrades, and safety of all public roads. Review crash data on a frequent basis to prioritize improvements.
- TO-2 Utilize existing and future transportation infrastructure to meet social and economic needs.
- TO-3 Participate in the VDOT Rustic Roads program.
- TO-4 Develop a multimodal system for both recreational use as well as transportation access.
- TO-5 Develop scenic pull offs along roadways in Highland County.
- TO-6 Discourage non-essential alterations to scenic, agricultural, and historic areas on roads that traverse such areas.
- TO-7 Encourage development of non-motorized trail networks.
- TO-8 Continue to develop wayfinding and signage to promote multi-modal recreational tours.
- TO-9 Develop plans of the existing transportation system including a needs assessment to address transportation of the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 12 - TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
TS-1	Clarify short passing zones with appropriate signage on Bullpasture Mountain. Identify additional passing zones throughout Highland County. Continue installation of guardrails, centerline reflectors, and aggressive salting with winter maintenance.	2022	VDOT, Board of Supervisors
TS-2	Implement sidewalks and lighting.	2022	Board of Supervisors, Town of Monterey
TS-3	Conduct a feasibility study for Scenic Byways to determine the impact on future highway projects, tourism and economy.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, Tourism Council
TS-4	Identify VDOT opportunities to accommodate bicycle/pedestrian facilities such as designated bicycle lanes on roadways that are wide enough to do so.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors
TS-5	Identify opportunities to accommodate recreational walking, biking, and ATV facilities in the county.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors
TS-6	Continue to explore all options for additional federal and state funding to address transportation initiatives throughout Highland County.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors

The resources the County has identified to assist in conducting the studies include the following list of agencies and organizations, among others:

- Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
- Highland County Economic Development Authority
- Highland County Chamber of Commerce
- Highland County Public Schools
- Highland County Planning Commission
- Valley Program for Aging Services
- Department of Social Services
- Shenandoah Valley Partnership
- The Highland Center

## **B. UTILITIES**

Development and the availability, quality and cost of utility services can be guided by local government. Generally, development should occur where these services can be provided at the least cost or where they can be installed and function without additional costs or failure in the future.

### ***Electric Power***

Highland County receives its electrical power from both Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative and BARC Electric Cooperative. Currently, there is one 69 kV transmission line in Highland County, as well as one 69-12.5 kV substation. The 69 kV line enters Highland County at the West Virginia border, paralleling Route 250. The substation is located just north of Monterey (Map #40).

In general, the western half of Highland County is served by Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative and the eastern half by BARC Electric Cooperative. Generally, 7.2/12.5 kV lines are sufficient to handle light industry or large commercial or recreational facilities. For this reason, areas delineated by power providers in Map #40 offer little limitation to light industry or commercial/recreational development, in terms of available electric power.

Currently, three-phase electrical service can be provided in the area surrounding Monterey, along the corridor of U.S. Route 220 south to Route 84, and along Route 84 to the community of Mill Gap. It can also be provided along the corridor of U.S. Route 250 east of Monterey to the community of McDowell.

Single-phase and three-phase service can be extended from any existing single-phase or three-phase facility.

The cost of extending service depends on the following:

- the amount of electricity desired
- the length of time that electricity will be needed
- the length of new line required
- the terrain that the new line will cover

### ***Wind Turbines***

A commercial wind turbine farm, the first in Virginia, has been approved for construction on Allegheny Mountain on the western border of Highland County. The project will feed to the existing 69 kV transmission line operated by Allegheny Power. This project has not been completed.

### ***Solar Energy***

All utility-scale Solar Energy Systems must undergo review pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2232 prior to consideration by the Planning Commission of a Conditional Use Permit.

### ***Telecommunications***

Highland Telephone Cooperative provides land-line telephone service to the west side of the County, including Monterey and Blue Grass Magisterial Districts.

MGW Telephone provides service to McDowell and the Stonewall Magisterial District.

Cell phone service is available in parts of Highland County.

Both the Highland Telephone Cooperative and MGW Telephone provide Digital Subscriber Line broadband service. Internet access is also available throughout Highland County via dial-up services.

### ***Water Supply***

#### ***Town of Monterey Water System***

The Town of Monterey draws its water from three wells. The wells can produce up to 250,000 gallons of high-quality water per

day. Two storage tanks hold up to 300,000 gallons of water respectively. Residential water meters indicate the average daily usage is 70,000 gallons of water per day.

The most recent upgrades to the system are:

- The entire water system is equipped with a state-of-the-art warning system. Critical elements in the system such as the wells and the storage tanks are electronically monitored 24 hours a day. If a problem exists, the town office and designated town employees are notified by phone.
- The storage tanks have been completely refurbished inside and out.
- The Town of Monterey has fencing around the wells required by the Department of Homeland Security.

#### ***McDowell Water System***

The McDowell Water System, operated by the Highland County Board of Supervisors, currently serves 71 customers in the Village of McDowell and the surrounding area. Water is gravity-fed from three wells through approximately 4.5 miles of local distribution line. The system is connected to one storage tank which holds 96,000 gallons of water for the village. Records indicate that McDowell water users consume, on average, nearly 12,000 gallons per day. Since the village of McDowell is designated as a potential growth area in this plan, some expansion of the McDowell water system may occur in the future.

#### ***Other Water Systems***

Residents in the remainder of Highland County receive their water primarily from a variety of private wells and springs.

Because the U.S. Route 220 corridor between Monterey and Vanderpool is a potential growth area (particularly for industry), public water may need to be made available in this area in the future.

The Town of Blue Grass is in need of a dependable water system.

#### **Wastewater Disposal**

##### ***Town of Monterey Wastewater System***

The Town of Monterey operates one wastewater treatment facility. Wastewater is carried to the plant via 3½ miles of gravity sewer lines, ranging in size from four to eight inches in diameter. There are approximately 65 manholes in the system. On an average, the system treats 44,000-66,000 gallons of wastewater per day. With the construction of a proposed wastewater plant, the town will have the capacity to treat up to 120,000 gallons per day. The system currently serves just over 300 customers.

Extensions to the Town of Monterey's water and wastewater service lines may occur at the Town's periphery, as any growth is likely to grow outward from the Town's center. It is important that potential growth go hand-in-hand with planned utility extensions. Extensions made to the existing system will also depend heavily on the new customers' willingness to pay connection fees.

##### ***Town of Monterey Water and Sewer Fees***

The Town of Monterey bills customers every two months for water and sewer usage. A map of the Water and Sewer Infrastructure can be found on Map #41.

##### ***Other County Wastewater***

Wastewater in the remainder of Highland County is disposed of primarily via septic systems. Since the efficacy of a septic system can be dependent upon the absorption capacity of the soil, as well as slope, parts of Highland County are not conducive to traditional systems.

**TABLE 13 - UTILITIES GOALS**

UG-1	Ensure the utilities' capacity will provide adequately for the current population and allow for growth.
UTILITIES OBJECTIVES	
UO-1	Maintain awareness of level of electricity availability at all times.
UO-2	Continue to evaluate future operations and maintenance needs for Monterey and McDowell Water Systems.
UO-3	Continue to evaluate future operations and maintenance needs of the Monterey sewage system.
UO-4	Continue to evaluate future need for the creation of a McDowell sewage system.
UO-5	Plan for future needs of water and sewer through the designated growth areas of Highland County.
UO-6	Maintain awareness of level of telecommunications available, with emphasis on the expansion of broadband capabilities and cell phone coverage.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS UTILITIES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

TABLE 14 - UTILITIES STRATEGIES		TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
US-1	Require subdivision applicants to provide documentation on whether or not their project will fall within the utility's current capacity. If not, applicants should provide a plan for adequate utilities.	Ongoing	Building & Zoning Office
US-2	Coordinate with DEQ and pursue their assistance in ensuring permit requirements for Monterey's wastewater treatment facility are met.	Ongoing	Monterey Town Council
US-3	Seek innovative financing options to ensure appropriate improvements of Monterey and McDowell water systems are met.	Ongoing	Monterey Town Council, Board of Supervisors
US-4	Respond to emerging needs of public water and/or sewer based on public safety.	Ongoing	Highland Planning Commission
US-5	Pursue other potential water sources as required for anticipated growth.	Ongoing	Monterey Town Council, Board of Supervisors
US-6	Facilitate dialogue between people who have utility needs and electricity, water, sewer and telecommunications suppliers.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority



**C. HOUSING**

The median value of owner-occupied housing in Highland County declined from \$177,400 in 2010 to \$173,900 in 2020. Median contract rent for rental units in 2020 was \$618 per month, up from \$397 in 2010.

TABLE 15 – HOUSING COSTS			
	2000	2010	2020
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	\$83,700	\$177,400	\$173,900*
Median Rent	\$269	\$397	\$618*

Source: \*2015-2019 American Community Survey Five Year Estimate

**Housing Characteristics**

An essential characteristic of Highland County’s housing stock is its age. Over 50 percent of the existing homes were built prior to 1960. Approximately 40 percent of all housing stock was built before 1940. General housing guidelines state that a house more than 40 years old may require extensive renovation to remain a viable housing resource. While the majority of older homes in Highland County have been maintained or restored, some have not. While such problems do not appear widespread, it is important that Highland County stay abreast of the needs of residents living in older housing.

**Occupancy Characteristics (Map #5)**

In 2020, the average number of people per owner-occupied home was 2.45. This figure represents an increase from 2010 Census information, but is generally consistent with national trends toward smaller families.

The 2020 Census data reported a total of 2,006 housing units in Highland County. These are located fairly consistently around the County with 792 units in the Blue Grass

section, 657 units in the Stonewall section and 557 units in the Monterey section according to the 2020 Census.

Close to 54 percent of housing units in Highland County were occupied according to the 2020 Census. It is estimated that about 83 percent of occupied housing units were owner-occupied, while approximately 17 percent were renter-occupied units. Over 46 percent of Highland County’s housing units were vacant according to the 2020 Census.

TABLE 16 – HOUSING UNITS PROFILE			
	2000	2010	2020
Average # Ppl/Owner Occupied Housing	2.28	2.15	2.45*
Total Housing Units	1,822	1,837	2,006*
Occupied Units	1,131	1,081	1,078*
Owner-Occupied	948	906	894*
Renter-Occupied	183	175	184*
Vacant	691	756	928*

Source: \*2015-2019 American Community Survey Five Year Estimate

Having an adequate supply of affordable housing and the proximity of housing to job sites are important factors for quality of life. In 2003 the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 2406, requiring localities to designate areas and implement measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing that is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents at all income levels in the locality.

“Affordable housing” according to Section 15.2-2201 of the Code of Virginia is: “Housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below the area median income, provided that the occupant pays

not more than 30 percent of gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities.”

There are several segments of the population who have specific housing needs

not currently being met under market conditions. These include young families, workforce and/or “public servants” and senior citizens having need of assisted living facilities.

### TABLE 17 - HOUSING GOALS

HG-1 Promote an adequate supply of existing and new housing units to meet the diverse needs of Highland County residents by enabling a full assortment of housing choices and price ranges.

### HOUSING OBJECTIVES

- HO-1 Seek developments that enable independent living arrangements for seniors.
- HO-2 Seek ways to increase the supply of rental and multi-family housing options.
- HO-3 Give priority to developments that provide moderately priced, higher density housing for seniors, young families and the workforce.
- HO-4 Utilize Federal and State programs to enhance housing programs.
- HO-5 Protect and enhance the character of Highland County’s population centers.
- HO-6 Educate the public and development community on housing needs.
- HO-7 Encourage innovative developments that meet community wants and needs in designated growth areas.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 18 - HOUSING STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
HS-1	Determine housing needs of Highland County's growing senior population, young families, and the local workforce.	2023	Board of Supervisors
HS-2	Facilitate funding options for the construction and operation of independent-living and assisted-living facilities for seniors. (See <i>Demographics DS-8.</i> )	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, if requirement is validated
HS-3	Ensure that the zoning and subdivision ordinances encourage the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. New developments can be built in layouts that are consistent with existing residential and mixed-use areas and traditional neighborhood designs.</li> <li>b. Support and do not discourage the availability of an appropriate range of housing choices and price levels.</li> <li>c. Enable smaller lot and house sizes and higher densities in designated growth areas where appropriate utilities are available, planned, or included as part of the development.</li> <li>d. Permit options in designated growth areas such as housing over retail/business spaces in commercial areas and attached or detached accessory dwellings (ADUs) in residential areas.</li> <li>e. Provide zoning and subdivision regulations to encourage planned unit and clustered developments as a viable option.</li> </ol>	Ongoing	Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator
HS-4	Encourage further developments in and around the current population centers of Monterey, McDowell, and Blue Grass. Zone and plan utilities and infrastructure accordingly. Facilitate communication between those who own the land with those who may be willing to develop the land.	Completed within three years of adoption of Comprehensive Plan.	Economic Development Authority with assistance of Planning Commission
HS-5	Inventory county-owned land. Assess potentially viable locations for affordable housing developments on county-owned land and/or other options.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority
HS-6	Provide information to citizens on Federal or state programs to enhance housing.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, Department of Social Services

## D. EDUCATION

Highland County Public Schools is the smallest school division in the Commonwealth with fewer than 300 students in a one-campus K-12 school. The system has a full-time superintendent, two principals (elementary and middle/high school,) and a professional staff ranging between 30 – 40 individuals resulting in an extremely low teacher-to-pupil ratio. Highland High School grades 6 through 12 were awarded the Blue Ribbon Schools Award, the highest recognition for academic excellence, by the federal government in 2010. The three member Highland County School Board sets educational policy.

### ***Educational Programs***

Highland County Schools provide special education programs for identified students with learning and developmental disabilities, emotional disturbances, and physical limitations. In addition, speech/language and early childhood services are provided. Counseling services are also available to all students to support educational, sociological, psychological and career needs.

Enrichment programs are offered to all classes and the Challenge Program serves identified gifted and talented students through programs including, but not limited to, mentoring, independent studies and special projects. Advanced Placement courses are offered at the high school level through online coursework, as well as the school's distance learning laboratory. Approximately 25 percent of the students take at least one A.P. course.

Expanded course offerings for high school students include dual enrollment courses with Dabney Lancaster Community College and Blue Ridge Community College.

Vocational education courses are offered in business, agriculture and carpentry.

Approximately 70 percent of high school students take at least one vocational course. Highland County Schools offer courses in art, music and band, and co-curricular clubs and several other student interest areas. Approximately 90 percent of the students participate in at least one co-curricular club. The athletic program consists of 7 sports.

### ***Every Student Succeeds Act***

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal legislation requires that all public schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for student performance in statewide tests in reading and math. Since its enactment, Highland County Public Schools have made AYP.

In 2019-2020, Virginia's annual measurable objective for English was 75 percent, for math and science the measurable objective was 70 percent. Highland County Public Schools' average pass rate was 95 percent for English, 89 percent for math, and 91.5 percent for science. Highland County Schools drop out rate was 0 percent and the graduation rate was 100 percent. The data is from the 2019-2020 Accreditation Ratings. The Accreditation Rating for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years has been waived by the state due to the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and students.

### ***Higher Education***

The pursuit of higher education has been a priority for Highland County Public Schools. From 2017-2018 through 2021-2020 school years, 60 percent of Highland County Public School graduating seniors have pursued post high school education.

While there is no institution of higher learning in Highland County, there are several colleges and universities located within a two-hour drive of Monterey. These include liberal arts schools such as Dabney Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge (60 miles from Monterey), Davis and

Elkins College in Elkins, WV (61 miles from Monterey) and Mary Baldwin University in Staunton, VA (43 miles from Monterey.) Blue Ridge Community College, which offers both day and night classes, is in Weyers Cave, VA (59 miles from Monterey). Washington and Lee University and Virginia Military Institute are located in Lexington, VA (80 miles from Monterey;) and James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite

University and Bridgewater College are situated in the Harrisonburg, VA area (61 miles from Monterey.) In addition, the University of Virginia is located in Charlottesville (82 miles from Monterey).

**Support Groups**

GRASP is a non-profit scholarship program funded by generous individuals, businesses and foundations to help students become aware of financial opportunities for higher learning.

TABLE 19 - EDUCATION GOALS	
EDG-1	Provide Highland County students with the best education possible.
EDUCATION OBJECTIVES	
EDO-1	Promote the vocational, work-release and work-study programs in the public school system to strengthen the skills of young people so they can be more marketable as local employees. Seek apprenticeship programs for high school students.
EDO-2	Promote the preparation of students in the public school system for 4-year college programs or a vocational career.
EDO-3	Promote a variety of extracurricular activities and organized athletic programs for Highland County students.
EDO-4	Promote the improvement of communication between employers, the school system and parents to help develop education and training programs that balance needs and resources.
EDO-5	Promote more opportunities for adult technical education through expanded offerings of distance learning courses or apprenticeship programs.
EDO-6	Encourage cooperation and communication with the home school community.
EDO-7	Promote the potential for ethnic diversity.
EDO-8	Promote the maintenance of a Drug Free Zone around school property.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS EDUCATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 20 - EDUCATION STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
EDS-1	Encourage local contractors and businesses to establish apprenticeship programs in conjunction with work-release program in place in school system.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent
EDS-2	Continue to support and expand extracurricular activities and year-round athletic programs available to Highland County residents.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, Recreation Commission, Highland County Public Schools Superintendent
EDS-3	Promote a structured mentor program to both students and adult Highland County residents.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent
EDS-4	Solicit and identify adult citizens who would volunteer their time to participate in a mentor's program for Highland County students.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent
EDS-5	Continue to monitor and lobby the General Assembly for programs that benefit the local education system.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, Highland County Public Schools Superintendent, School Board
EDS-6	Continue cooperation and communication with home school community.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent
EDS-7	Continue cooperation with school and law enforcement to enforce and maintain a Drug Free Zone around school.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent, local law enforcement
EDS-8	Re-establish DARE or a similar program to combat drug abuse in the public schools.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Schools Superintendent, local law enforcement

## **E. GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FINANCE**

Highland County is divided into three magisterial districts: Stonewall, Monterey (including the Town of Monterey), and Blue Grass. Three representatives are elected at large to serve on the Board of Supervisors for a term of four years. The Board is responsible for handling the legislative and administrative affairs of Highland County. The chairman, who is the chief administrative officer of Highland County, is selected from among the members of the Board of Supervisors.

The Board's responsibilities include providing public services, adopting an annual budget based upon anticipated revenues, appointing a County Administrator, and setting policies by which Highland County is run. The Board meets the first Tuesday of every month at a time and place announced in advance. These meetings are open to the public.

Highland County provides building inspections, health department services, social services, emergency medical services, solid waste removal and recycling.

Highland County has a full-time County Administrator who serves at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors. The Administrator is responsible for implementing the policies of the Board, managing the affairs of the County, and hiring staff.

Elected constitutional officers in Highland County are the County Treasurer, the Commissioner of Revenue, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, the Commonwealth's Attorney, and the County Sheriff.

Highland also has a number of boards and authorities that perform specific functions for the County. These include the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Recreation Commission, and the

Economic Development Authority. Meetings of these boards and authorities are open to the public.

The Town of Monterey, Highland's only town, is governed by three council members and a mayor. The mayor is considered the chief administrative officer of the Town. All council members are elected for four-year terms. The council is responsible for all legislation directly applicable to the town. It oversees the town's service provision of water, wastewater, solid waste collection and disposal, streetlights, sidewalks, and fire hydrants. Town council meetings are held the first Thursday of every month at a time and place announced in advance.

Both the Town of Monterey and Highland County are part of the 25th Judicial Circuit, which is served by six full-time judges elected by the General Assembly of Virginia for eight-year terms. Circuit Courts are courts of record. Appeals from the Circuit Court go directly to the Supreme Court of Virginia or the Virginia Court of Appeals. Highland County is also served by four General District Court judges and five Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court judges. All District Court judges are full-time and are elected by the General Assembly for six years.

### ***Interlocal Relationships***

Highland County is served by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC). The CSPDC assists Highland County with a variety of projects and provides forums through which the County participates in many regional projects.

Other multi-jurisdictional organizations serving Highland County include agencies such as the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Valley Community Services Board, Valley Program for Aging Services and others.

**Federal and State Relationships**

Federal and State regulations and mandated programs are important factors in determining many daily operations of local government. In some cases, local assistance needed to comply with these regulations and mandates is supplied in the form of funding from the Federal and State governments. In other instances, Federal support is channeled through the State.

However, some regulations and mandates are not financially supported by Federal or State governments. Consequently, Highland County must develop new revenue sources to meet insufficiently- or unfunded-mandates. Examples of state-mandated programs are present in the areas of building inspections, education, sanitation and health services, public safety, welfare and social services.

**Highland County Revenues**

Healthy Highland County revenues enable the County to finance operations, provide

services, and build upon capital improvement funds. In 2021, local revenue represented 49 percent of total revenues; while state and federal revenues represented 51 percent of total revenues. Primary types of County revenue are taxes, fees, fines, service charges and grants. The most significant local revenue source is real property tax, which in 2021 contributed 72 percent of locally-generated County revenue. The primary allocation for County revenue has historically been education, generally comprising 55 percent of the total annual County budget.

**Military Airspace in Highland County**

All of the armed forces service branches currently use the airspace above Highland County for training missions. The military operations area is controlled by the National Guard and is designated as the Evers MOA. Military Training Routes currently cross the western portion of the County.

**TABLE 21 - GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE GOALS**

GFG-1 Continue to provide open, effective, responsive government service and financial management on behalf of all Highland County citizens.

**GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE OBJECTIVES**

GFO-1 Encourage the use of the Comprehensive Plan as a guide in decision making and operations at all levels of Highland County government.

GFO-2 Consider expanding the Board of Supervisors and the School Board to five members each with staggered terms.

GFO-3 Encourage the expansion of public information on the Highland County website.

GFO-4 Aggressively pursue creative solutions to meet special funding requirements.



**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 22 - GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
GFS-1	Revise the Comprehensive Plan regularly and update as required.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, County Administrator, with the assistance of Planning Commission
GFS-2	Hold a public hearing to acquire public input on the possibility of expanding the Board of Supervisors and the School Board to five members each with staggered terms.	During Fiscal Year 2023-2024	Board of Supervisors
GFS-3	Review and update the Zoning Ordinance to implement the direction and guidance found in this Comprehensive Plan.	Ongoing	Planning Commission

# PART IV

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## Community Development

### A. COMMUNITY SERVICES

The quality of life found in a community is partially determined by its community facilities and services. The presence of adequate medical care, library facilities, public safety, refuse collection, recreation, social services and child care is of major local concern. In Highland County, many services are provided or supplemented by an active network of volunteer organizations. These groups contribute greatly to the quality of life here, both for the essential services they provide and for affording citizens the opportunity to serve their community.

#### Medical Care

##### ***The Highland Medical Center, Inc.***

The Highland Medical Center is a non-profit, 501© corporation that, after incorporation in 1992, opened the doors of a 10,000 square foot building in September 1996. In 2003, the center attained status as a Federally Qualified Health Center, making the Highland Medical Center eligible for federal grants geared toward removing barriers for the underserved. The Medical Center added a 12,000 square foot addition including a dentist office, completed in March 2015. An outpatient retail pharmacy was added in 2017.

The mission of the Highland Medical Center is to provide high quality, primary and preventative health care services to the community regardless of the ability to pay. Staff includes one full time Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, a Family, Emergency, and Geriatric Board-Certified physician, a full

time Family Nurse Practitioner, a full time Dentist, a full time Dental Hygienist, two Physical Therapists, a Behavioral Health Nurse Practitioner, and two Counselors. The center offers a variety of primary care services including the treatment of acute and chronic illness, cancer screenings, electrocardiograms, minor surgical procedures, x-ray, laboratory services physical therapy and wellness. The retail pharmacy is classified as a 340B pharmacy allowing Highland Medical Center to obtain medications at a reduced cost and pass that savings on to patients of the center. Service lines excluding dentistry and physical therapy, offer telemedicine appointments. The Highland Medical Center relies on grant funding and donations to sustain operations and prepare for the future.

##### ***Highland Health Department***

Located in Monterey, the Highland County Health Department, a Virginia state agency, offers children's specialty services, communicable disease control, environmental health services, health education, medical and nursing services, nutritional services and vital records.

##### ***Bath Community Hospital***

Located approximately 35 miles south of Monterey in Hot Springs, Virginia, Bath Community Hospital is a critical access hospital with a licensed capacity of 25 beds although no more than 15 beds are used for acute inpatient care at one time including two intensive care beds. The remaining beds are skilled nursing care beds. Emergency services are provided 24 hours a day in the emergency department. Health care is provided for emergency illnesses, in an inpatient setting and in outpatient clinics. Elective ambulatory surgery and endoscopy are also performed.

Arrangements have been made with LewisGale Hospital Alleghany, Augusta Health, Carillion Roanoke Memorial Hospital,

Medical College of Virginia and the University of Virginia for the transfer of critical access inpatients who require extended stays greater than 96 hours and who require services such as cardiac, neurology, trauma, oncology, obstetrics, orthopedics, urology and pediatric intensive care. Other departments are Community House Home, Hospice of the Highlands and Bath-Highland Rehab. The active medical staff of Bath Community Hospital consists of three family practitioners who see inpatients, patients in the emergency department and maintain private office practices. Two family nurse practitioners provide patient care for inpatients under the direct supervision of a physician. Several specialty practitioners see patients in outpatient clinics and consults with the active medical staff as needed.

Bath Community Hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

#### ***Augusta Health***

Located in Fishersville, Virginia, Augusta Health is a full-service hospital that offers behavioral health services, a birthing center, community services, diagnostics, an emergency department, a pain management clinic, radiology, rehabilitation services and surgical services.

#### ***Augusta Regional Free Clinic***

Located in Fishersville, Virginia, the Augusta Regional Free Clinic offers medical care, pharmacy services, laboratory, radiology, referrals and patient education.

#### ***Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center***

Located in Fishersville, Virginia, the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center offers medical rehabilitation services that include occupational therapy, assistive technology, neurophysiology, spinal cord injury and audiology/speech-language therapy. Vocational rehabilitation services include

peer mediation, independent living skills, vocational evaluation and educational support.

#### ***Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents***

Located in Staunton, Virginia, this facility serves children and adolescents who have threatened or attempted suicide, have aggressive or assaultive behavior or need evaluation or medication management.

#### ***Western State Hospital***

Located in Staunton, Virginia, this facility serves citizens of the Commonwealth with serious mental or substance abuse disorders.

#### ***Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind***

Located in Staunton, Virginia, this facility provides comprehensive educational services to deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired children who require specialized instruction.

#### **Library Facilities**

##### ***The Highland County Public Library***

The Highland County Public Library, an independent facility located in Monterey, maintains a collection of approximately 23,000 volumes of material in the form of books, periodicals, audio books, DVDs, microfilm and bound genealogies.

The circulation for 2021 is estimated to reach 28,636 items. The library receives daily local newspapers from Staunton, Harrisonburg and Richmond and the weekly newspaper from Highland and Bath, The Recorder, and the Pendleton Times. The archives of The Recorder from 1889 through the present are available at the library on microfilm.

Local family histories are preserved in the Genealogy section. Services such as faxing, copying, scanning and laminating are available. Online services include Talking Books for seniors, links to legal, medical, and

career assistance, online language courses, Veteran’s assistance and live homework help. Children’s in-person programming include a monthly Family Movie Night, afterschool programs, STEAM kits and nature backpacks that may be checked out.

The library offers free high-speed internet access to the public on five computers and two tablets. Two computers and one tablet in the children’s section provide games and educational programs. Interlibrary loans are available upon request for a small fee. The library has a website at [highlandlibrary.com](http://highlandlibrary.com) which offers an online card catalog and password access to user accounts. A meeting room, The Mountain View Room, is available for public use. The library also maintains three book deposit locations; in McDowell, Mill Gap and at the Highland Senior Center.

#### **Public Safety**

Highland County is protected by three volunteer fire departments and three emergency medical services squads. In an effort to provide overlapping coverage and quick response times, these departments also work with adjoining fire and rescue departments in West Virginia, Bath County, U. S. Forest Service and Dominion Virginia Power.

#### **Highland County Volunteer Fire Department**

Responsible for the areas of Monterey and Blue Grass, this fire department maintains stations in both localities. The Monterey station houses five units and the Blue Grass substation houses two units. Maintaining the stations and equipment and replacing older equipment continues to be its main challenge.

#### **McDowell Volunteer Fire Department**

Responsible for the areas of McDowell, Doe Hill and Head Waters, this fire department maintains a station in McDowell and a sub-station in Doe Hill. Its members seek to acquire a new building to house their

equipment and double as an emergency disaster shelter.

#### **Bolar Volunteer Fire Department and Bolar Volunteer Rescue Squad**

Responsible for the area from Mustoe to Rocky Ridge and including Big Valley and Little Valley.

#### **Highland County Volunteer Rescue Squad**

This rescue squad covers the entire County with a station in Monterey and a sub-station in McDowell. This volunteer squad works very closely with the paid HCEMS staff, sharing equipment and training.

#### **Highland County Emergency Medical Services**

In 2019, the County created a new department of local government, the Emergency Medical Services Department. Currently the Department is led by the County EMS Chief, who is a paramedic, and includes several paid full-time and part-time Emergency Medical Technicians. The Department is housed in Monterey, and works closely with the Highland County Volunteer Rescue Squad. Currently, the Department uses the HCVRIS equipment, and with the assistance of the volunteers, is meeting the vast majority of calls for service.

#### **Highland County Sheriff’s Office**

Highland County Sheriff’s Office is located in Monterey, Virginia at 145 W. Main Street, and is responsible for maintaining a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) at this location. The Highland County Sheriff’s Office offers round-the-clock service, providing law enforcement, court duty, community service, civil process, corrections and detainee transportation.

Law enforcement services include police patrol, investigations, and cooperation with the regional drug task force. Reserve officer activities include crowd control, traffic

control and assisting regular officers. The department does not operate its own jail but partners with Augusta County in using the Middle River Regional Jail located in Verona, Virginia.

**Highland County Office of Emergency Management**

Highland County has an appointed Emergency Manager. Duties include the organized analysis, planning, decision making and assignment of available resources to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster. The goal of emergency management is to save lives, prevent injuries, and to protect property and the environment when emergencies occur.

**Local Emergency Planning Commission**

The purpose of the LEPC is to ensure that all acts required by SARA Title III, the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986, are taken; that all necessary work is accomplished to develop a comprehensive chemical emergency response plan for Highland County; and, the LEPC shall have advisory responsibility for emergency management planning for Highland County. The LEPC maintains communication with the County’s Department of Emergency Services.

The function of the LEPC shall include, but is not limited to, the preparation of and emergency plan that shall include, but is not limited to, the requirements of SARA Title III. Members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve three-year terms. Officers include a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. Regular meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.

**Red Cross**

The Jackson River Chapter of the American Red Cross responds to all types of disasters in Alleghany, Bath and Highland Counties. An integral part of the Red Cross’s disaster

mission is to be prepared for disasters before they occur.

The Chapter also provides information about upcoming blood drives, CPR/first aid, life-guarding, water safety, HIV/AIDS education classes and procedures for sending emergency military messages.

**Refuse Collection**

Highland County operates a solid waste and recycling center at the former landfill, located south of Monterey on Route 621 (Airport Terrace Road). This facility accepts household trash and recyclable material as well as large items such as white goods. Tires are accepted after payment of a disposal fee. Highland County also operates four convenience centers located at Blue Grass, McDowell, Headwaters and Vanderpool. These convenience centers accept household trash only and each site is equipped with a compactor. The Town of Monterey offers curbside trash collection to town residents every Friday at no charge.

Highland County engages independent contractors to service the convenience centers and haul the solid waste to the Augusta County Regional Landfill.

Recycling, a priority program, is funded in part by an annual grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The grant is used to fund the operation of a recycling trailer that was custom built by local service clubs. On the first, second, third and fourth weekends of each month, the trailer is parked at Blue Grass, Bolar, Mill Gap and McDowell, respectively. The trailer has bins to hold the various recyclable materials that include aluminum; tin; #1 and #2 plastics; clear, green and brown glass; cardboard; newspaper; computer paper; mixed paper; magazines; and catalogs. These materials can also be received during business hours at the main location on Route 621 (Airport Terrace Road).

## Recreation

### **Highland County Recreation Commission**

The recreation commission is comprised of volunteers who have been appointed by the board of supervisors. They offer organized youth and adult athletic programs, organized group trips, a fitness center and sponsor an annual road bike challenge.

The recreation commission funds much of its programs through donations, fundraisers and user fees.

The recreation commission spearheaded an effort to construct a Junior Olympic size swimming pool and a small building to house a bath house, equipment room, storage and an office.

The recreation commission's website details additional recreational opportunities for Highland County at [highlandcountyrecreation.org](http://highlandcountyrecreation.org).

### **Laurel Fork/Locust Springs**

Located in the extreme northwest portion of Highland County and accessible through West Virginia, this facility offers primitive camping, a shelter, picnicking, hiking and fishing.

### **Stonewall Ruritan Building**

Located in McDowell, this former school used by the Ruritans offers a multi-purpose room, softball field and a picnic shelter.

### **Blue Grass Ruritan Building**

Located in Blue Grass, this former school used by the Ruritans serves as a community center for area residents and offers a picnic shelter.

### **Mill Gap Ruritan Grounds**

Located in Mill Gap, the Ruritans maintain this five-acre facility that includes a picnic shelter, restrooms, softball field, basketball court and children's play area.

### **Highland County Public School**

Located in Monterey, this facility houses grades K-12 and has ball fields and gymnasiums available for sports activities.

## Organizations and Clubs

### **The Highland Center**

The Highland Center was established as a non-profit organization in early 1998. The historic building that houses The Highland Center was built in 1922 as a school and is listed on both the Virginia Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. The Highland Center is committed to preserving the historical integrity of the building and combining its preservation with regional development. With those goals in mind a \$3M renovation was completed in May 2016. The repurposed spaces and aesthetically sensitive additions now offer an auditorium/concert hall, conference/retreat space, events spaces, commercial kitchens with walk-in freezer and refrigerator spaces, an art gallery and multiple office spaces. The Highland Center is equipped as a community emergency shelter with a backup generator.

The Highland Center's mission is to be a catalyst for economic, cultural and community development in Highland County and the surrounding region. Community and cultural development are nurtured through maintaining space for public events and providing a home for community organizations. The Highland County Chamber of Commerce, the Visitors' Center, Highland County Arts Council, The Highland Children's House, Valley Program for Aging Services and the Allegheny Mountain Strings Project are anchor tenants.

Economic development is supported through the provision of entrepreneurial support and development, and facilitating the provision of services such as SCORE

(Service Corps of Retired Executives) and SBDC (Small Business Development Center) counseling. The Center's partnerships with organizations such as the Community Foundation for the Blue Ridge, the Rural Community Development Initiative and the Shenandoah Valley Partnership make it possible to provide information to local businesses about loan and grant opportunities. The recently established Coworking Studio offers low cost, shared office space and equipment to both start up and existing businesses.

Other programs that support the community include sponsoring the local Farmers' Market and participating in the local Food Coalition, housing the only local child care facility (The Highland Children's House), and conducting the Youth Employment Program, which gives actual work experience as well as job- and life-skills training to local youth. The Highland Center also sponsors the Youth Philanthropy Council which, in partnership with the Community Foundation for the Blue Ridge, teaches young people the value of philanthropy and adds approximately \$10,000 per year into local businesses.

Plans for the future include creating a public park-like setting in the lawn and pavilion area which will include raised beds for gardening and fruit trees for gleaning opportunities. A gathering space with picnic tables and benches will provide opportunities for families to gather and for visitors to review maps and information acquired at the Visitors' Center before setting off to explore. Free Wi-Fi is available both inside and outside the building, and the eventual addition of a handicapped restroom accessible from the outdoors will be a huge asset to the community during fairs, festivals and other events.

### ***Highland County Chamber of Commerce***

The Highland County Chamber of Commerce strives to lift up local businesses and entrepreneurs, promote Highland County, and champion economic prosperity and quality of life. The Chamber of Commerce serves as a resource for inquiries related to business and nonprofit opportunities, tourism, and relocation of families and businesses.

The following is a list of its primary functions:

- Community support
- Economic development
- Information resource
- Educational partnerships
- Regional partnerships
- Networking opportunities
- County marketing
- Legislative lobbying

The Highland County Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Highland County Maple Festival, an annual event that attracts as many as 30,000-50,000 people, as well as the Hands & Harvest Fall Festival and Wintertide Weekend. The Chamber of Commerce also a founding member of the Highland County Fair Association.

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, events and festivals were the driving force behind the tourist industry in Highland County. In 2000, the Chamber of Commerce re-defined its marketing strategies and began promoting Highland County as a year-round tourist destination. The Board of Supervisors matched funds from Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, and the Chamber of Commerce to produce a county brochure designed specifically to attract tourists to the area.

In 2001, Virginia's Western Highlands Travel Council (a partnership that includes Allegheny, Bath, Craig, and Highland Counties) initiated an eco-tourism project

that markets the region to birders, wildflower enthusiasts, hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders.

The Chamber of Commerce has also partnered with the Valley Conservation Council to secure funding through the Transportation Enhancement Program to:

- Study the historic significance of the Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike;
- Develop the Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike as a tourist destination by publishing an interpretive driving tour brochure;
- Collaborate with the Highland Historical Society to fund a museum/interpretive center for the Turnpike and the McDowell Battlefield (Highland Museum);
- And develop walking tours of the towns of Monterey and McDowell that both highlight local history and culture and also direct tourist traffic to retailers and restaurants.

The Chamber of Commerce is the official Destination Marketing Organization of Highland County. It manages an e-newsletter, a website [highlandcounty.org](http://highlandcounty.org), and [facebook.com/HighlandCounty](https://www.facebook.com/HighlandCounty). It is involved in economic development and tourism marketing, being a lead driver in the creation of the Virginia Maple Syrup Trail in 2020 and a brochure to showcase the Highland County Barn Quilt Trail. The Executive Director of the Chamber is also the ED of the Highland Tourism Council, contributing to many other marketing efforts, including a tourism map and advertisements in local and regional publications. The Chamber represents the county with regional support groups like the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, and Virginia Tourism Corporation. It relays important economic opportunities to its members and the public.

### ***Virginia Cooperative Extension***

The mission of Virginia Cooperative Extension is to enable people to improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge focused on issues and needs. Areas of emphasis are: agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, and family & consumer sciences.

Programming efforts in agriculture and natural resources address a broad range of problems from traditional agricultural management and production issues in livestock and crops, to farm business management, farm labor, soil and water conservation, environmental issues, pesticide applications, forestry and other natural resources, commercial and consumer horticulture, water quality, and skin cancer prevention.

4-H is a comprehensive youth development program for youth between the ages of 5 and 18 engaged in hands-on learning experiences under the guidance of adult or teen 4-H volunteers trained by 4-H agents. 4-H members learn how to: make decisions, manage resources, work with others, and utilize effective communication skills.

Family and Consumer Sciences programming is focused around three broad areas: nutrition and wellness; financial management, housing and consumer education; and family and human development.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is an educational service of Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, Virginia's land-grant institutions, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments cooperating.

### ***Highland County Fair Association, Inc.***

Known as the "Longest Running Small County Fair in Virginia," the Highland County Fair had



its official start in 1952, but a group held a white elephant sale in 1951 that served as a precursor to the first organized event. The fair association is made up of representatives from the Stonewall Ruritan Club, the Mill Gap Ruritan Club, the Bolar Ruritan Club, the Blue Grass Ruritan Club, the Monterey Lions Club, and the Highland County Chamber of Commerce. The fairgrounds are located behind Highland High School on Myers-Moon Road in Monterey. The association is totally volunteer-operated, except for two general managers who receive a small stipend for maintenance work. Fair dates are set to fall over Labor Day weekend, which is the Wednesday through Saturday prior to Labor Day each year. Almost everyone in the county plays a role in making the fair successful. From exhibiting crafts, canned goods or flowers in the gym to exhibiting a derby car, truck or tractor, the event has always been for the people, by the people. It's a safe, family-oriented event. Further information is available at the fair association website: [highlandcountyfairva.com](http://highlandcountyfairva.com).

#### **Monterey Lions Club**

The Monterey Lions Club was formed on September 17, 1941 with 18 charter members. The club now has approximately 35 members. All Lions Clubs share the motto "We Serve" and all clubs are committed to building a brighter future for their communities. Traditionally, the Lions Clubs main mission was helping people with sight and hearing problems but it has grown to include many other projects and services.

The club is very involved with the community and its members actively participate in local events such as the Maple Festival and Highland County Fair. The club hosts Bingo throughout the year and the Ground Hog Supper in February and a street dance in Monterey in July. These fundraisers not only support sight and hearing conservation but enable the club to support other local groups and organizations for example: two \$1,000

scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors from Highland High School each year. These activities also provide fellowship for its members and provides each member an opportunity to work toward making their community better through service.

#### **Mill Gap Ruritan Club**

The Mill Gap Ruritan Club was chartered in 1960 as part of Ruritan National, which has over 33,000 members in 24 states enjoying the spirit of fellowship, goodwill and community service. The club is a generous supporter of Highland 4-H through camp scholarships and support of young livestock growers. It gives numerous scholarships to college students each year. It also supports the Highland Medical Center, fire and rescue squads in Highland and Pocahontas counties and the public library. All told, the club supports over 30 organizations each year. Honoring veterans is a special focus of the club. In an ongoing project, the club has created an archive of Highland County veterans which is available at the Highland Public Library.

#### **Blue Grass Ruritan Club**

The Blue Grass Ruritan Club was chartered on April 15, 1952 with 29 members. Two of its charter members are still active in the club. The goal of the club is to make their community a better place to live and to assist those who are in need. Each year during Maple Festival, the club serves up buckwheat cakes and pancakes along with maple syrup, sausage and homemade sausage gravy at their location in Blue Grass. The proceeds from this fundraiser go toward scholarships for deserving seniors at Highland High School, Highland 4-H, the Medical Center and local fire and rescue. Other groups and organizations also receive support and the club often sponsors benefit dinners for those in the community who have experienced a health crisis. Another ongoing project of the club is the necessity to replace the existing

windows in their facility located in Blue Grass with energy saving windows.

***Bolar Ruritan Club***

The Bolar Ruritan Club was formed in 1954 and is committed to making the community a better place to live and work. The club has 26 active members and seven associate members. Meetings are held in the Ruritan Hall at 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month.

The members strive to promote fellowship, goodwill and to meet the needs of the community in both Bath and Highland counties. The club participates in Highland’s annual Maple Festival and Highland County Fair. Funds raised in these two events are reinvested in their neighbors through college scholarships and financial support for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H and numerous other organizations. The Ruritan Hall is available for community use. It is the regular meeting place for the Bath-Highland Bird Club and has served as a training location for both 4-H and EMT classes.

***Stonewall Ruritan Club***

The Stonewall Ruritan Club was chartered in October 1951 and still has two active charter members. Ruritan clubs serve America with fellowship, goodwill and community service in urban areas, small towns and rural areas. The Stonewall chapter also conducts fundraisers at the Maple Festival and Highland County Fair each year. The proceeds maintain an historic school house that serves as a meeting place for the club and the community.

The Ruritan grounds also include a regulation softball field, playground and basketball court that is available to area citizens. The club supports area youth at the Highland County Fair, 4-H and FFA Livestock Show and Sale, through several college scholarships and through donations to the FFA, 4-H and other clubs. The club also supports the local

fire and rescue squads, Hunters for the Hungry, radio WVLS and other worthy causes in Highland County.

***Highland County Humane Society***

The Highland County Humane Society is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting health, safety, welfare, compassionate care and protection of animals through a cooperative engagement with Highland County, its citizens, and other like-minded groups throughout the region. Highland County Humane Society is a group of dedicated volunteers and foster homes taking unwanted animals from the public, the Highland County pound, and neighboring animal shelters. Highland County Humane Society has no staff, nor physical building and has no boundaries. Our group consists of animal lovers, and each of us believes every animal deserves a loving home. Since forming in July 2012, HCHS has taken in over 4,000 dogs, cats and other creatures.

[highlandcountyhumanesociety.org](http://highlandcountyhumanesociety.org)

***Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals***

The SPCA is currently run by the Highland County Sheriff’s Office and animal control. The SPCA and the Highland County Humane Society collaborate on animal welfare concerns in Highland.

***Highland County Arts Council***

The Highland County Arts Council is a non-profit membership organization formed to promote the arts and to provide cultural enrichment for the community. Activities include organizing public concerts, exhibiting art shows at the library, providing plays through its community theatre group, and sponsoring various classes and events. The Arts Council organizes the Art and Photography Show at the Highland County Fair each year. It also brings professional performances to the school system annually,

and provides one or two scholarships per year to high school seniors planning to pursue their study of the arts.

### ***Highland Historical Society***

The Highland Historical Society is comprised of people who have a deep, abiding interest and compassion for Highland County and her history. The membership includes local people as well as those who live outside the county and state borders. Many members grew up in Highland County and have since moved away. In other instances, members recall visiting family that lived here. Still, there are those members who have simply passed through and fell in love with its character and have joined as a way to connect themselves with Highland County.

The Highland Historical Society is the parent organization of the Highland County Museum. The Historical Society acquired the property in 2001, embarked upon a rehabilitation project, and opened the museum in 2005. The museum is open to the public on a regular schedule as well as by appointment. Renovations have included outfitting one of the museum's rooms as the family history research room.

A board of directors governs the Highland Historical Society. They meet once a month to do the organization's business. All other positions in the organization are volunteers, except the executive director, who is hired to handle the day-to-day responsibilities of the society and the museum.

Volunteers are a critical component for the Highland Historical Society. Volunteers serve as greeters, educators and docents at the museum. Volunteers also help catalog and care for museum items, work in the museum gift shop, keep the building and grounds well-maintained, and assist researchers in the soon-to-be open family history research room. Other volunteers are engaged to help with the organization's special events.

McDowell Battlefield Heritage Days is held every other year in May, on the weekend closest to the anniversary of the Battle of McDowell. It is the largest authentic campaigner reenactment in the United States. Nearly 1,000 military and civilian reenactors are invited to participate at McDowell. They are all screened using the strictest guidelines.

The village is set to look like it would have in 1862 when the troops were occupying the village. In addition to historic first- and third-person interpretation throughout the village, there are lectures on various Civil War topics in the McDowell Presbyterian Church (which was used as a hospital at the time of the battle), a wreath-laying ceremony, and exhibits at the Highland County Museum and Heritage Center.

On Saturday afternoon of the event, military reenactors produce a military tactical demonstration to illustrate what may have taken place in some of the 1862 Shenandoah Valley battles. The event typically ends on Sunday morning with an 1860s church service at McDowell Presbyterian.

### ***Bath-Highland Bird Club***

The Bath-Highland Bird Club was formed in May 2002. The organization's mission is to promote conservation, education and community activities relating to the preservation and study of the unique bird population in the counties of Bath and Highland.

The club worked with the Highland Chamber of Commerce and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to help launch the Mountain Area section of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail. The group also has plans to establish a scholarship to be offered to students of Bath and Highland High Schools who are pursuing studies in wildlife related fields.

### ***Youth Organizations***

Highland offers many opportunities for youth activities, primarily through volunteer organizations. The Recreation Commission offers Little League, T-ball, soccer and other organized activities. 4-H offers three community clubs as well as in-school activities. There are local Girl Scouts of America organizations. Area churches offer a LOGOS program. The Arts Council offers opportunities to children and there is a youth clogging group.

### **Social Services**

#### ***Highland County Department of Social Services***

Located in Monterey, the Department of Social Services offer benefit programs that include Food Stamps, Medicaid and fuel/cooling assistance. These benefits are based on income and resource eligibility. Service programs include adult services, adult protective services, child protective services, day care services, foster care and adoption. Pursuant to the Comprehensive Services Act, an inter-disciplinary team accepts referrals for Highland County at-risk youth and their families, including but not limited to counseling, treatment and mentoring. The department also makes referrals to other area/regional agencies as needed.

#### ***Childcare***

Highland County has one public childcare facility. A feasibility study was conducted and determined that a certified facility would be economically viable. The Highland Children's House opened for infants and children in 2019.

#### ***Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS)***

VPAS is the area agency on aging for Planning District 6 and targets those 60 years old and older in the greatest economic or social need.

Services include information, assistance, case management, Meals on Wheels, Lifeline program and the operation of the Highland County Senior Transportation Program. Occasionally social and recreation programs are offered on topics Highland seniors are interested in. Other senior services include long term care ombudsman and legal assistance. VPAS completes a nutritional survey every year on all clients who receive Meals on Wheels.

The goal of the Valley Program for Aging Services is to make services available to at-risk seniors. The Senior Transportation Program is meeting the needs of seniors who need assistance to get to medical appointments outside of Highland County. VPAS is funded by federal, state, jurisdictional funds, local donations and grants.

Locally, VPAS Highland Senior Services' office is located at 49 Spruce St. Monterey, VA 24465.

#### ***Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Highland County Chapter***

Located at the intersection of US Route 220 and US Route 250 in Monterey, this local chapter distributes food boxes to Highland County families and individuals who are in need or in crisis. In 2018, food was distributed to over 100 households each month.

#### ***Highland Evangelistic Association***

A collection of local church representatives, this group provides assistance to individuals and families based on need.

### **Boards and Commissions**

#### ***Board of Supervisors***

This board enacts ordinances, manages the fiscal and municipal affairs of Highland County, acquires and sells property, builds and maintains public facilities, preserves

public safety, ensures the safe construction of houses and levies taxes.

#### ***Board of Zoning Appeals***

This board, appointed by the Highland County Circuit Court, reviews applications for variances to the zoning code, hears questions regarding district boundaries, and reviews decisions made by the Zoning Administrator or other administrative officers.

#### ***Electoral Board***

This board, appointed by the Highland County Circuit Court, conducts general and special elections and provides voter registrar and election information.

#### ***Economic Development Authority***

This board's purpose is to promote industry and develop trade by encouraging manufacturing, industrial, governmental, non-profit and commercial enterprises to locate or stay in the area.

#### ***Planning Commission***

The Highland County Planning Commission was established pursuant to Virginia Code § 15.2-2210 to assist the Highland County Board of Supervisors and the Monterey Town Council to accomplish the following objectives: improve the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of Highland County citizens; plan for the future development of Highland County to the end that transportation systems are carefully planned; assure that any new community centers be developed with adequate highway, utility, health, educational and recreational facilities; assure that the need for mineral resources and the needs of agricultural, industry and business are recognized in future growth; assure that residential areas are provided with healthy surroundings for family life; assure that agricultural and forestal lands are protected; and assure that the growth of the community is consonant with the efficient and economical use of public

funds. Primary tools used with regularity by the Planning Commission are the Highland County and Town of Monterey Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Media Communications**

##### ***Allegheny Mountain Radio***

The Allegheny Mountain Radio Network operates three non-profit public radio stations. WVMR-AM, WVLS-FM, WCHG-FM and a translator located in Durbin, WV ties together the counties of Bath and Highland, VA, and Pocahontas, WV. All stations have generator back-up and are linked to the emergency alert system. The Pocahontas Communications Cooperative Corporation board of directors is responsible for the radio network which works closely with the local emergency services agencies. The network can be on the air 24 hours a day in the event of an emergency if requested to do so by local authorities. As a daily service, the radio stations provide local, state and national news, local weather and a community calendar. The stations also promote local arts organizations and provide entertainment.

##### ***The Recorder***

The Recorder is an independently owned newspaper established in 1877. It is the legal paper of record for Bath, Highland and Allegheny counties, published each Thursday, with an average 4,000-circulation subscriber base. The paper publishes three to five seasonal sections annually to promote the region. Weekly coverage is primarily local in nature, with a focus on government, education, special events, sports, features, area history, a calendar of events, obituaries, classifieds, public notices, a community message board, and commentary. It has been repeatedly recognized statewide and nationally for quality journalism. The Recorder maintains a website at [TheRecorderOnline.com](http://TheRecorderOnline.com), where breaking

news alerts are posted through RSS feeds, and archived copies of all stories are available dating back to 2007. Microfilm of older sections is donated to the Library of Virginia and the Highland County Public Library in Monterey for public research. Free archives are available at [VirginiaChronicle.com](http://VirginiaChronicle.com). Offices are located in Monterey, in Highland County, and in Mitchelltown, in Bath County.

**TABLE 23 - COMMUNITY SERVICE GOALS**

CSG-1 Enhance the quality of life in Highland County through organizations, clubs, and agencies that plan and execute a wide range of services to the community.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE OBJECTIVES**

- CSO-1 Support local clubs, organizations, and agencies recognizing their importance to the community's quality of life.
- CSO-2 Encourage partnerships and conversation between clubs, organizations, and agencies, in order to leverage resources.
- CSO-3 Recognize the importance of volunteers to Highland County.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS COMMUNITY SERVICE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 24 - COMMUNITY SERVICE STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
CSS-1	Invite all community organizations to share their long-range plans and identify areas of technical assistance they need.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority
CSS-2	Utilize resources such as AmeriCorps, VISTA, Sr. Corps programs, or other organizations as needed.	As needed	The Highland Center, Pocahontas Communications Cooperative
CSS-3	Offer regulatory and resource development workshops for community organizations and businesses.	Ongoing	The Highland Center
CSS-4	Execute strategic plan of the Highland Medical Center Board to offer fullest medical care possible to the community.	Ongoing	Highland Medical Center Board
CSS-5	Continue to apply for grant monies from DEQ and other sources to provide recycling services.	Ongoing	County Administrator
CSS-6	Execute long range plans to increase services and public use of Highland County Public Library.	Ongoing	Highland County Public Library
CSS-7	Execute long range plans to assess and replace equipment; recruit and train volunteers to provide fire protection to county property owners.	Ongoing	Highland County VFD McDowell VFD Bolar VFD
CSS-8	Execute long range plans to recruit and train volunteers.	Ongoing	Highland County Volunteer Rescue Squad, Highland County Emergency Medical Services
CSS-9	Maintain Highland County resident to serve on Jackson River Chapter of the American Red Cross.	Ongoing	Highland County Emergency Management Coordinator

CSS-10	Continue to encourage further development of the pool and recreation facilities.	Ongoing	Highland County Recreation Commission
CSS-11	Continue to encourage citizens to coordinate with US Forest Service and VA Dept. of Game and Fisheries to allow for more recreational development on public land.	2024	Board of Supervisors
CSS-12	Execute long range plan to rehabilitate The Highland Center to both preserve the historic building and make it more serviceable as an economic development tool.	Ongoing	The Highland Center
CSS-13	Continue counseling services to businesses and non-profit organizations.	Ongoing	The Highland Center
CSS-14	Continue efforts to increase tourism in the community through events and festivals.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce
CSS-15	Execute plans and programs focused on agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, and family & consumer sciences.	Ongoing	Virginia Cooperative Extension
CSS-16	Continue services to county residents to have stray animals adopted and to prevent strays through spay/neuter program.	Ongoing	Highland County Humane Society, Highland County SPCA
CSS-17	Continue activities that promote arts and provide cultural enrichment for the community.	Ongoing	Highland County Arts Council
CSS-18	Continue activities that offer educational programs and exhibits, provide a genealogical research facility, and maintain the Mansion House, which houses the Highland County Museum.	Ongoing	Highland Historical Society
CSS-19	Continue to explore ways to assure funding to provide full services to Highland County's citizens who are 60 years and older.	Ongoing	VPAS Board
CSS-20	Continue radio coverage to Highland County through regular and special emergency programming.	Ongoing	Pocahontas Communications Cooperative Board, WVLS Steering Committee and Advisory Committee

NOTE: The Comprehensive Plan is general in nature and represents specific goals and objectives that are not meant to be legally binding on the Monterey Town Council or the Highland County Board of Supervisors, except as otherwise provided for in the Virginia Code.



## **B. ECONOMY**

The capacity of any community to sustain itself is largely dependent upon its economic assets. Such assets must be evaluated, understood and cultivated in order for Highland County to flourish economically. It may be a challenge for Highland County to capitalize on economic opportunities without sacrificing the rural character and beauty for which it is so well known.

### ***Economic Indicators***

Major indicators widely used in establishing an economic snapshot of a community include trends in demographics, the labor force, unemployment, underemployment and income.

There are over 900 residents participating in the civilian labor force. The annual unemployment rate was 3.7 percent in 2019, with a median household income of \$48,587.

### **Major Economic Sectors**

#### ***Government***

Government workers, primarily comprised of school system employees, hold 28.7 percent of the jobs in Highland County. Many of these jobs offer benefits which provide strong foundations for working families. Growth may come from attracting additional state or federal jobs to this area.

#### ***Services***

Services to individuals, businesses, government establishments and other organizations provide 14.0 percent of the jobs in Highland County. Many self-employed residents work in this sector. Opportunities for growth include adapting to changing demographics, capitalizing on increased tourism and getting ahead of economic trends.

#### ***Wholesale and Retail Trade***

This category consists mostly of retail trade and accounts for 7.1 percent of the jobs in Highland County. These are specialty businesses that cater to the tourism trade and other businesses that are sufficient to meet the basic everyday needs of the residents. However, due to Highland County's low population, large retail outlets do not locate here so many residents travel an hour or more to shop in larger localities. Growth may come from expanding tourism and finding ways to offer more products locally.

#### ***Construction***

Construction provides 8.4 percent of the jobs in Highland County. An expanding local economy and changing demographics may hold the key to increased opportunities in this area.

#### ***Manufacturing***

Manufacturing provides 5.8 percent of the jobs in Highland County. Most of these businesses involve lumber and wood products. Growth may come from additional processing of these products.

#### ***Agriculture and Forestry***

Agriculture and forestry provide 7.3 percent of the jobs in Highland County but have been instrumental in developing the natural character of the County. Many residents have expressed an interest in maintaining this rural, agricultural character. The number of farms, acreage farmed and farm incomes have remained relatively constant while the value of agricultural and forest lands has increased dramatically; thereby increasing the tax burden on the agricultural sector. The lack of diversity in Highland County's economy makes it difficult to find other sources of revenue in lieu of real property taxes.

#### ***Finance, Insurance and Real Estate***

This sector provides over 5.7 percent of the

jobs in Highland County and they are statistically the highest paying in the County. The real estate market has been strong as buyers from the more metropolitan areas seek to own a second property in a different environment. Highland County has two locally owned banks that serve the needs of both individuals and businesses. Both banks have expanded in recent years while providing solid employment opportunities.

### **Looking Ahead**

#### ***Up to the Challenge***

Highland County's small population and unique characteristics pose their own set of challenges to increased economic activity. The economies of scale frequently do not allow for traditional solutions so private citizens and County leaders will continue to look for innovative ways to ensure a viable economy for all Highlanders while preserving the scenic and rural character of Highland County.

#### ***Economic Development Authority***

Highland County has recently revitalized its Economic Development Authority. The group hopes to foster a proactive approach to economic development. It works closely with existing businesses while also identifying and attracting new businesses that are a good fit for Highland County's unique characteristics.

#### ***Tourism***

Rich in its own legacy and natural beauty, Highland County has acknowledged local and regional tourism as an important economic opportunity. The Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Council and The Highland Center work hard to expand and promote tourism as well as other areas of economic development.

#### ***Technology***

As more jobs become dependent on technology, opportunities are created for workers that live outside of large metropolitan areas. Highland County has a high quality of life that could attract such workers if the necessary infrastructure becomes available. The County should explore ways to take advantage of this trend.

## TABLE 25 - ECONOMY GOALS

EG-1 Maintain a viable, diverse economy for Highland County citizens.

## ECONOMY OBJECTIVES

- EO-1 Diversify the employment base.
- EO-2 Support and expand the existing businesses and industries now operating in Highland County.
- EO-3 Ensure that new business and industrial development occurs in suitable locations while considering Highland County's environmental, scenic and rural character.
- EO-4 Strengthen agricultural infrastructure to maintain it as an important economic sector. Establish best strategies for farmland management.
- EO-5 Assist local businesses in promoting their products at the local, state and national level.
- EO-6 Identify and attract businesses that offer wages and benefits adequate to support working families with children.
- EO-7 Maintain Highland County's high quality of life, which serves to attract new employers and employees.
- EO-8 Develop a strong telecommunications infrastructure.
- EO-9 Encourage value-added enterprises.
- EO-10 Investigate ways of obtaining affordable, comprehensive health insurance for as many local residents as possible.
- EO-11 Recognize tourism as a diverse and viable economic development opportunity with emphasis on regional heritage, eco-tourism, agri-tourism and outdoor recreation.
- EO-12 Develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan that encourages job opportunities.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS ECONOMY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 26 - ECONOMY STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
ES-1	Encourage and strengthen partnerships between businesses and the public schools to improve the preparation of graduates for the workforce.	Ongoing	School Board, Chamber of Commerce
ES-2	Request that the Economic Development Authority work to attract businesses that provide high-skill jobs.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority
ES-3	Continue to monitor the potential for a Highland County Enterprise Zone.	December 2022	Economic Development Authority, Board of Supervisors
ES-4	Continue to strengthen Highland County's relationships with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission and Virginia Department of Business Assistance.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, The Highland Center, Chamber of Commerce, Board of Supervisors
ES-5	Request that the Economic Development Authority develop a Business Call Plan to enhance relationships between Highland County and local business.	December 2022	Economic Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce
ES-6	Encourage continued support of commitment to the Virginia Western Highlands Travel Council to promote local and regional tourism.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, Board of Supervisors
ES-7	Request that the Chamber of Commerce and Highland Historical Society continue to market the Staunton to Parkersburg Pike and McDowell Battlefield as valuable historic, cultural and economic assets for Highland County.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, Highland Historical Society
ES-8	Create initiatives for bringing business and tourism to Highland County.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, The Highland Center
ES-9	Request that the Economic Development Authority, The Highland Center, and the Chamber of Commerce encourage businesses to occupy existing vacant buildings, rather than constructing new ones, subject to zoning regulations.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, The Highland Center, Chamber of Commerce
ES-10	Explore tax structures that minimize the burden on agricultural operations.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, Virginia Cooperative Extension

ES-11	Request that the Virginia Cooperative Extension and Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District continue to provide strong support for farm management planning and best management practices for local farms.	Ongoing	Virginia Cooperative Extension, Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District
ES-12	Continue to support efforts for reducing coyote attacks upon livestock.	Ongoing	Board of Supervisors, US Department of Agriculture
ES-13	Request that the timber industry explore adding more local value to its products.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, The Highland Center
ES-14	Continue training opportunities for businesses.	Ongoing	The Highland Center, Chamber of Commerce
ES-15	Identify and support the providing of the latest technology to local businesses at all levels.	Ongoing	Economic Development Authority, The Highland Center
ES-16	Continue to identify and promote new destinations and activities that will support tourism growth in Highland County.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce
ES-17	Monitor health care legislative initiatives and have businesses contact legislators to communicate the importance of being able to provide health insurance to their employees.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority, Board of Supervisors
ES-18	Develop a tourism strategic plan that will support local tourist- related services and businesses while encouraging increased traffic to Highland County.	2022	Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority, Tourism Council

NOTE: The Comprehensive Plan is general in nature and represents specific goals and objectives that are not meant to be legally binding on the Monterey Town Council of the Highland County Board of Supervisors, except as otherwise provided for in the Virginia Code.

# PART V

## Land Use and Strategies for the Future

### A. LAND USE

Existing land uses in Highland County are primarily forestry and agriculture. Nearly 22 percent is national forest and about 5 percent is state natural area and forest. (Map #16) Such federal and state lands are reserved primarily for conservation and recreational purposes. Approximately 36 percent of land in Highland County is used for agricultural purposes. Much of the County’s remaining land is undeveloped, privately-owned forest. About 1 percent of the land in Highland County is developed. The current land use in Highland County is the result of gradual development over time. Existing land uses play an important role in determining future land use trends. All parcels of land in Highland County are classified into one of the following general categories:

- Single-Family Residential – Urban
- Single-Family Residential – Suburban, up to 20 acres
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial/Industrial
- Agricultural/Undeveloped – 20-100 acres
- Agricultural/Undeveloped – over 100 acres
- Tax Exempt (Government, Religious, Charitable, Educational, or Other)

According to local revenue records from 2021, there are 4,156 parcels of land in Highland County. Of these, 206 are tax-exempt. The largest land-use category is single-family residential, and the smallest is educational. In 2020, the total appraised value of Highland County real estate was over \$760 million.

The table below illustrates the growth of Highland County land value:

TABLE 27 – GROWTH IN COUNTY LAND VALUE		
Real Estate Value	2010	2021
<b>Land-Use Taxable</b>		
Building Value	\$206,737,600	\$239,223,900
Land Value	\$414,665,000	\$435,268,700
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$621,402,600</b>	<b>\$674,492,600</b>
<b>Land-Use Tax Exempt</b>		
Building Value	\$17,370,600	\$25,761,200
Land Value	\$54,517,200	\$60,095,100
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$71,887,800</b>	<b>\$85,856,300</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL VALUE</b>	<b>\$693,290,400</b>	<b>\$760,348,900</b>

Source: Offices of the Commissioner of the Revenue and the Treasurer, Highland County.

### Blue Grass District

The Blue Grass District runs vertically along the western-most portion of Highland County. It is comprised of 60,299 acres. Within the district is the village of Blue Grass, a small community characterized by a tight linear pattern of development. The village is located along Routes 640 and 642, which intersect at the village center. The community of New Hampden, located to the southwest of Blue Grass, is somewhat smaller and more dispersed.

### ***Monterey District***

The Monterey District, comprised of 61,518 acres and extends along Route 220 on both sides through the middle of Highland County. It does not include the Town of Monterey. A potential growth corridor exists along the north-south and east-west primary highways passing through the Town of Monterey.

### ***Stonewall District***

The Stonewall District is the largest in area among Highland County's magisterial districts, consisting of 67,238 acres. Its eastern-most portion is comprised of the George Washington National Forest and the Highland Wildlife Management Area constitutes its southwest corner. The community of McDowell is the oldest permanent community in Highland County, but lacks the size and diversity of development found in Monterey. It is primarily a collection of residences and a few service-related businesses located along Route 250. There is growth area potential adjacent to McDowell based on the Battlefield Preservation Plan.

### ***Town of Monterey***

As the County seat and only incorporated Town in Highland County, Monterey has grown to be the largest community in the County. Major facilities in the town include the Highland County Courthouse, the post office, The Highland Center, Recreation Complex, plus numerous shops, restaurants, and service-related businesses. Adjacent to the town are the county elementary-high school complex and the Highland Telephone Cooperative.

The Town serves as a distribution center for government services and agricultural goods, and is the center of the County's tourist industry. Both the Highland County Fair and the Highland Maple Festival are centered in Monterey each year. There are a proportionally balanced mix of land uses in

the Town which provides it with healthy economic and social unity.

### ***Land Use Plan***

Land use planning entails the designation of local areas for various activities, such as business, industry, housing, conservation, and recreation. These land uses are based on the suitability of those parcels for specific activities and on the community needs. Suitability is usually determined by the characteristics of the land and of the environment, available infrastructure, and existing adjacent uses. It is the responsibility of the community, through its elected officials, to decide which areas of Highland County should be conserved and which areas should be developed.

Since development can either enhance or detract from a community, land use policies must include consideration of the local cultural, natural, and historic attributes. They must also provide for the fair and equitable treatment of all landowners.

The following land use discussion is based on the cumulative analysis of each of the preceding sections. It is a combination of present land use patterns, landowner's initiative, and Highland County's goals and objectives for future land use. The Plan strives to establish a guide for possible future development that will result in cohesive and logical growth. It is also designed to be flexible enough to accommodate changing conditions.

Highland County's Future Land Use Plan should be based on community principles. It is crucial for attributes that most define local character to be identified, protected and promoted. Highland County is distinguished by breathtaking mountain and valley scenery, vast stretches of pastoral land, a unique role in American history, and a close-knit sense of community. The most desirable developments would be those

that complement Highland County’s natural setting. Designated areas for development should be encouraged in lieu of random and scattered growth.

***Development of Business and Industry***

Highland County is genuinely concerned about stabilizing and expanding its employment base, and acknowledges that locating certain businesses and industries in the County may indeed be beneficial to the people of Highland County. Because of Highland County’s desire to preserve the rural character, it is recommended that potential business or industrial development sites, whenever possible, be encouraged to locate in “park-like” settings and encourages the centralized location of new industry within the County.

Industries requiring extensive resources such as water are unlikely to be feasible in Highland County. Because of the delicacy of local ground and surface water, potential industries handling or storing hazardous materials should be stringently evaluated and discouraged in many locations due to karst and watershed issues. In addition, proper buffers between new industries, utilities, and existing residential and agricultural uses are recommended to minimize impact on agricultural landowners.

***Commercial Development***

While some of our citizens’ retail needs can be met by patronizing Highland County’s current commercial sector, many agree that an expanded retail base is desirable. However, it is important to residents that increased commercial opportunities do not bring with them excessive signage, large expanses of open parking, little or no landscaping, poor pedestrian access, or building design that is inconsistent with the flavor of Highland County.

Guidelines for future commercial growth will encourage development in existing business districts and gradual growth at the edges of such areas. An expanding retail base should be encouraged in Highland County. The Highland County Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed and modified to encourage sustainable commercial growth practices and adequate parking areas.

***Residential Development***

As residential development occurs, it must be done in accordance with ordinances and applicable regulations. Highland County’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances must ensure that future residential development is sensitive not only to the quality of life for our current residents, but for future residents as well. In addition, it is recommended that they preserve the character of Highland County’s rural/cultural landscape.

Although additional development is anticipated, it should be planned carefully to correspond with the current and future placement of utilities and infrastructure. Highland County should guide the placement of new residential growth and expansions or extensions of existing subdivisions.

Densities of new residential developments will be determined by many factors including: the Future Land Use Plan, zoning, presence of utilities and roads, environmental factors such as steep slopes, proximity to floodplain, presence of karst topography, soil suitability, and public input/involvement.

***Wind Energy***

The Virginia Renewables Siting Scoring System (VRS3) is a screening tool to help land use decision makers evaluate the viability of land within their jurisdictions for wind energy installations. It includes land use and



environmental criteria as well as community development considerations. The VRS3 was consequently designed for use by government decision makers in the Commonwealth of Virginia to aid land use planning related to wind and solar energy. Although developers, private citizens, businesses, and non-profit groups may use the VRS3, the features and methods of these tools are designed to facilitate land-use planning and land-use decision-making.

In order to support these types of analysis, the VRS3 provides a workbook to help local officials evaluate the potential for renewable energy systems in their communities. The workbook can be obtained at the following website: [vrs3.cisat.jmu.edu](https://vrs3.cisat.jmu.edu).

### ***Battlefield Preservation***

Highland County recognizes the important role that the McDowell Battlefield plays in not only maintaining the area's character, but in attracting tourists and economic benefits to Highland County. The McDowell Battlefield core area surrounds the village of McDowell. The over 2,000-acre area around Sitlington Hill and the Bullpasture River was the scene of the heaviest fighting in the area in May 1862. A battlefield preservation plan has been completed for the McDowell Battlefield.

### ***Land Use Challenges***

Steep terrain and the high proportion of public ownership leave relatively little of the land area in Highland County feasible to develop. Thus, it is in the County's interest to ensure that suitable sites are developed as efficiently and carefully as possible, in ways that serve the long-term needs of Highland County citizens.

It is important to encourage development that protects the environmental integrity

and economic prosperity of Highland County. Another facet of Highland County's current land use is its appeal as a destination for second-home development in recreational settings. This contrasts with the continuing need for affordable residential options for local citizens. Increasing land prices and property tax values will make it increasingly difficult to balance these interests.

Agriculture and forestry management are Highland County's traditional land uses. As the County starts to experience more growth, there may be less understanding of these mainstays of the rural economy. These important uses will need to be protected and supported. Immediate land use challenges facing Highland County include the following:

- To balance varied needs of citizens, especially as more part-time residents are added to the community
- To protect the County's significant natural and historic resources
- To support the County's traditional rural lifestyle, including productive farming and forestry
- To address issues of affordable housing and employment as they relate to land use
- To promote connectivity among the places where people live, work, and play.

### **Highland County's Growth Areas**

The designation of potential growth areas should be predicated upon environmental constraints and the presence of existing or planned utilities. See Table 27 for details of three potential growth areas that exist in Highland County.

<b>TABLE 28 – GROWTH AREAS</b>						
	<b>Existing or Planned Utilities</b>	<b>Floodplain</b>	<b>Karst Topography</b>	<b>Public Land</b>	<b>Excessive Slope</b>	<b>Prime Agricultural Land*</b>
Monterey	Existing Public Water and Sewer	A small portion along West Mill Alley	No	No	No	No
McDowell	Existing Public Water	Runs north and south through McDowell along Bullpasture River and also along Crab Run	Minimal	No	No	No
Primary Road Corridor Surrounding Monterey	No Existing Public Water or Sewer	No	No	No	No	No

\* “Prime Agricultural Land” refers to land that is suitable for cultivation, not merely pasture land.

**Strategies for the Future**

In conclusion, Highland County shall consider all statutory tools available to promote coordinated and harmonious development and the health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of county residents and landowners, including but not limited to:

- flexible zoning
- agricultural and forestal districts
- conservation easements
- scenic road and river designations
- state park

<b>TABLE 29 – LAND USE GOALS</b>	
LG-1	Maintain and promote Highland County’s special rural character while also promoting a quality of life that attracts and sustains new families.
LG-2	Recognize the unique way Highland County’s natural environment, historic landscapes, and traditional land use patterns combine to make Highland County a distinctly scenic place to live and visit.
LG-3	Maintain and promote viable commercial, agricultural and forestry sectors.
LG-4	Ensure that effective land use planning is kept in balance with the freedom and rights of individual landowners.
<b>LAND USE OBJECTIVES</b>	
LO-1	Promote orderly land use planning and development of real estate.
LO-2	Continue to make tools available for protecting rural land.
LO-3	Encourage the sustainable productivity of farm and forest land.
LO-4	Explore incentives for agricultural land owners to keep or put their land in agricultural production.
LO-5	Assess the impact of commercial and non-commercial wind development.
LO-6	Balance growth by encouraging a mix of compatible uses in areas with appropriate utility and infrastructure support.
LO-7	Recognize the McDowell Battlefield in future growth decisions about the Village of McDowell.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED METHODS OF ASSISTING THE COUNTY  
IN ACHIEVING ITS LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>TABLE 30 – LAND USE STRATEGIES</b>		<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
LS-1	Review growth areas for non-residential use.	Ongoing	Planning Commission
LS-2	Explore alternative taxation to help preserve agricultural land and production.	2024	Board of Supervisors
LS-3	Work with State legislators to develop fencing laws that are favorable to agricultural.	2024	Board of Supervisors
LS-4	Review and revise current zoning ordinances to address specific goals of the Comprehensive Plan as appropriate.	Ongoing	Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors
LS-5	Assess impact of commercial wind development.	To be determined based on completion date of Highland County’s first commercial wind development.	Planning Commission
LS-6	Assess impact of non-commercial development.	Ongoing	Planning Commission
LS-7	Assess the impact of hydraulic fracturing in the exploration of fossil fuels.	As needed	Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors

NOTE: The Comprehensive Plan is general in nature and represents specific goals and objectives that are not meant to be legally binding on the Monterey Town Council or the Highland County Board of Supervisors, except as otherwise provided for in the Virginia Code.

# APPENDICES

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- A. Comprehensive Plans in Virginia State Code**
- B. Recreational Routes in Highland County**
- C. Maps**

# APPENDIX A



Code of Virginia  
Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns  
Chapter 22. Planning, Subdivision of Land and Zoning

**§ 15.2-2223. Comprehensive plan to be prepared and adopted; scope and purpose.**

A. The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.

In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be.

B. 1. As part of the comprehensive plan, each locality shall develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The plan shall recognize and differentiate among a hierarchy of roads such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. In developing the plan, the locality shall take into consideration how to align transportation infrastructure and facilities with affordable, accessible housing and community services that are located within the territory in order to facilitate community integration of the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Virginia Department of Transportation shall, upon request, provide localities with technical assistance in preparing such transportation plan.

2. The transportation plan shall include a map that shall show road and transportation improvements, including the cost estimates of such road and transportation improvements from the Virginia Department of Transportation, taking into account the current and future needs of residents in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.

3. The transportation plan, and any amendment thereto pursuant to § 15.2-2229, shall be consistent with the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Statewide Transportation Plan developed pursuant to § 33.2-353, the Six-Year Improvement Program adopted pursuant to subsection B of § 33.2-214, and the location of routes to be followed by roads comprising systems of state highways pursuant to subsection A of § 33.2-208. The locality shall consult with the Virginia Department of Transportation to assure such consistency is achieved. The transportation plan need reflect only those changes in the annual update of the Six-Year Improvement Program that are deemed to be significant new, expanded, or relocated roadways.

4. Prior to the adoption of the transportation plan or any amendment to the transportation plan, the locality shall submit such plan or amendment to the Department for review and comment. The Department shall conduct its review and provide written comments to the locality on the consistency of the transportation plan or any amendment to the provisions of subdivision 1. The Department shall provide such written comments to the locality within 90 days of receipt of the plan or amendment, or such other shorter period of time as may be otherwise agreed upon by the Department and the locality.

5. The locality shall submit a copy of the adopted transportation plan or any amendment to the transportation plan to the Department for informational purposes. If the Department determines that the transportation plan or amendment is not consistent with the provisions of subdivision 1, the Department shall notify the Commonwealth Transportation Board so that the Board may take appropriate action in accordance with subsection F of § 33.2-214.

6. If the adopted transportation plan designates corridors planned to be served by mass transit, as defined in § 33.2-100, a portion of its allocation from (i) the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority distribution specified in subdivision B 1 of § 33.2-2510, (ii) the commercial and industrial real property tax revenue specified in § 58.1-3221.3, and (iii) the secondary system road construction program, as described in Article 5 (§ 33.2-351 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 33.2, may be used for the purpose of utility undergrounding in the planned corridor, if the locality matches 100 percent of the state allocation.

7. Each locality's amendments or updates to its transportation plan as required by subdivisions 2 through 5 shall be made on or before its ongoing scheduled date for updating its transportation plan.

C. The comprehensive plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. It may include, but need not be limited to:

1. The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, including age-restricted, housing; business; industrial; agricultural; mineral resources; conservation; active and passive recreation; public service; flood plain and drainage; and other areas;

2. The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;

3. The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;

4. The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable measures to provide for the continued availability, quality, and sustainability of groundwater and surface water;

5. A capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forestal district maps, where applicable;

6. The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;

7. The location of military bases, military installations, and military airports and their adjacent safety areas; and

8. The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more.

D. The comprehensive plan shall include the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.

E. The comprehensive plan shall consider strategies to provide broadband infrastructure that is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents and businesses in the locality. To this end, local planning commissions may consult with and receive technical assistance from the Center for Innovative Technology, among other resources.

1975, c. 641, § 15.1-446.1; 1976, c. 650; 1977, c. 228; 1988, c. 268; 1989, c. 532; 1990, c. 19; 1993, cc. 116, 758; 1996, cc. 585, 600; 1997, c. 587; 2003, c. 811; 2004, cc. 691, 799; 2005, cc. 466, 699; 2006, cc. 527, 563, 564; 2007, c. 761; 2012, cc. 729, 733; 2013, cc. 561, 585, 646, 656; 2014, cc. 397, 443; 2018, cc. 420, 691, 796, 828.



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The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be.

B. 1. As part of the comprehensive plan, each locality shall develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The plan shall recognize and differentiate among a hierarchy of roads such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. In developing the plan, the locality shall take into consideration how to align transportation infrastructure and facilities with affordable, accessible housing and community services that are located within the territory in order to facilitate community integration of the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Virginia Department of Transportation shall, upon request, provide localities with technical assistance in preparing such transportation plan.

2. The transportation plan shall include a map that shall show road and transportation improvements, including the cost estimates of such road and transportation improvements from the Virginia Department of Transportation, taking into account the current and future needs of residents in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.

3. The transportation plan, and any amendment thereto pursuant to § 15.2-2229, shall be consistent with the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Statewide Transportation Plan developed pursuant to § 33.2-353, the Six-Year Improvement Program adopted pursuant to subsection B of § 33.2-214, and the location of routes to be followed by roads comprising systems of state highways pursuant to subsection A of § 33.2-208. The locality shall consult with the Virginia Department of Transportation to assure such consistency is achieved. The transportation plan need reflect only those changes in the annual update of the Six-Year Improvement Program that are deemed to be significant new, expanded, or relocated roadways.

4. Prior to the adoption of the transportation plan or any amendment to the transportation plan, the locality shall submit such plan or amendment to the Department for review and comment. The Department shall conduct its review and provide written comments to the locality on the consistency of the transportation plan or any amendment to the provisions of subdivision 1. The Department shall provide such written comments to the locality within 90 days of receipt of the plan or amendment, or such other shorter period of time as may be otherwise agreed upon by the Department and the locality.

5. The locality shall submit a copy of the adopted transportation plan or any amendment to the transportation plan to the Department for informational purposes. If the Department determines that the transportation plan or amendment is not consistent with the provisions of subdivision 1, the Department shall notify the Commonwealth Transportation Board so that the Board may take appropriate action in accordance with subsection F of § 33.2-214.

6. If the adopted transportation plan designates corridors planned to be served by mass transit, as defined in § 33.2-100, a portion of its allocation from (i) the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority distribution specified in subdivision B 1 of § 33.2-2510, (ii) the commercial and industrial real property tax revenue specified in § 58.1-3221.3, and (iii) the secondary system road construction program, as described in Article 5 (§ 33.2-351 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 33.2, may be used for the purpose of utility undergrounding in the planned corridor, if the locality matches 100 percent of the state allocation.

7. Each locality's amendments or updates to its transportation plan as required by subdivisions 2 through 5 shall be made on or before its ongoing scheduled date for updating its transportation plan.

C. The comprehensive plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. It may include, but need not be limited to:

1. The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, including age-restricted, housing; business; industrial; agricultural; mineral resources; conservation; active and passive recreation; public service; flood plain and drainage; and other areas;
2. The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;
3. The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;
4. The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable measures to provide for the continued availability, quality, and sustainability of groundwater and surface water;
5. A capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forestal district maps, where applicable;
6. The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;
7. The location of military bases, military installations, and military airports and their adjacent safety areas; and
8. The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more.

D. The comprehensive plan shall include the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.

E. The comprehensive plan shall consider strategies to provide broadband infrastructure that is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents and businesses in the locality. To this end, local planning commissions may consult with and receive technical assistance from the Center for Innovative Technology, among other resources.

1975, c. 641, § 15.1-446.1; 1976, c. 650; 1977, c. 228; 1988, c. 268; 1989, c. 532; 1990, c. 19; 1993, cc. 116, 758; 1996, cc. 585, 600; 1997, c. 587; 2003, c. 811; 2004, cc. 691, 799; 2005, cc. 466, 699; 2006, cc. 527, 563, 564; 2007, c. 761; 2012, cc. 729, 733; 2013, cc. 561, 585, 646, 656; 2014, cc. 397, 443; 2018, cc. 420, 691, 796, 828.

Code of Virginia  
Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns  
Chapter 22. Planning, Subdivision of Land and Zoning

### **§ 15.2-2223.1. Comprehensive plan to include urban development areas.**

A. For purposes of this section:

"Commercial" means property devoted to usual and customary business purposes for the sale of goods and services and includes, but is not limited to, retail operations, hotels, motels and offices. "Commercial" does not include residential dwelling units, including apartments and condominiums, or agricultural or forestal production, or manufacturing, processing, assembling, storing, warehousing, or distributing.

"Commission" means the Commission on Local Government.

"Developable acreage," solely for the purposes of calculating density within the urban development area, means land that is not included in (i) existing parks, rights-of-way of arterial and collector streets, railways, and public utilities and (ii) other existing public lands and facilities.

"Population growth" means the difference in population from the next-to-latest to the latest decennial census year, based on population reported by the United States Bureau of the Census. In computing its population growth, a locality may exclude the inmate population of any new or expanded correctional facility that opened within the time period between the two censuses.

"Urban development area" means an area designated by a locality that is (i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development.

B. Any locality may amend its comprehensive plan to incorporate one or more urban development areas.

1. Urban development areas are areas that may be appropriate for development at a density on the developable acreage of at least four single-family residences, six townhouses, or 12 apartments, condominium units, or cooperative units per acre, and an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.4 per acre for commercial development, any proportional combination thereof, or any other combination or arrangement that is adopted by a locality in meeting the intent of this section.

2. The urban development areas designated by a locality may be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 20 years, which may include phasing of development within the urban development areas. Where an urban development area in a county with the urban county executive form of government includes planned or existing rail transit, the planning horizon may be for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 40 years. Future residential and commercial growth shall be based on official estimates of either the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia, the Virginia Employment Commission, the United States Bureau of the Census, or other official government projections required for federal transportation planning purposes.

3. The boundaries and size of each urban development area shall be reexamined and, if necessary, revised every five years in conjunction with the review of the comprehensive plan and in accordance with the most recent available population growth estimates and projections.

4. The boundaries of each urban development area shall be identified in the locality's comprehensive plan and shall be shown on future land use maps contained in such comprehensive plan.

5. Urban development areas, if designated, shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design, which may include but need not be limited to (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets

with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.

6. The comprehensive plan shall describe any financial and other incentives for development in the urban development areas.

7. A portion of one or more urban development areas may be designated as a receiving area for any transfer of development rights program established by the locality.

C. No locality that has amended its comprehensive plan in accordance with this section shall limit or prohibit development pursuant to existing zoning or shall refuse to consider any application for rezoning based solely on the fact that the property is located outside the urban development area.

D. Localities shall consult with adjacent localities, as well as the relevant planning district commission and metropolitan planning organization, in establishing the appropriate size and location of urban development areas to promote orderly and efficient development of their region.

E. Any county that amends its comprehensive plan pursuant to subsection B may designate one or more urban development areas in any incorporated town within such county, if the council of the town has also amended its comprehensive plan to designate the same areas as urban development areas with at least the same density designated by the county. However, if a town has established an urban development area within its corporate boundaries, the county within which the town is located shall not include the town's projected population and commercial growth when initially determining or reexamining the size and boundary of any other urban development area within the county.

F. To the extent possible, federal, state and local transportation, housing, water and sewer facility, economic development, and other public infrastructure funding for new and expanded facilities shall be directed to designated urban development areas or to such similar areas that accommodate growth in a manner consistent with this section.

2007, c. 896; 2009, c. 327; 2010, cc. 465, 528; 2011, c. 561; 2012, cc. 192, 518, 805, 836.

**§ 15.2-2224. (Effective October 1, 2021) Surveys and studies to be made in preparation of plan; implementation of plan.**

A. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the local planning commission shall survey and study such matters as the following:

1. Use of land, preservation of agricultural and forestal land, production of food and fiber, characteristics and conditions of existing development, trends of growth or changes, natural resources, historic areas, groundwater and surface water availability, quality, and sustainability, geologic factors, population factors, employment, environmental and economic factors, existing public facilities, drainage, flood control and flood damage prevention measures, dam break inundation zones and potential impacts to downstream properties to the extent that information concerning such information exists and is available to the local planning authority, the transmission of electricity, broadband infrastructure, road improvements, and any estimated cost thereof, transportation facilities, transportation improvements, and any cost thereof, the need for affordable housing in both the locality and planning district within which it is situated, and any other matters relating to the subject matter and general purposes of the comprehensive plan.

However, if a locality chooses not to survey and study historic areas, then the locality shall include historic areas in the comprehensive plan, if such areas are identified and surveyed by the Department of Historic Resources. Furthermore, if a locality chooses not to survey and study mineral resources, then the locality shall include mineral resources in the comprehensive plan, if such areas are identified and surveyed by the Department of Energy. The requirement to study the production of food and fiber shall apply only to those plans adopted on or after January 1, 1981.

2. Probable future economic and population growth of the territory and requirements therefor.

B. The comprehensive plan shall recommend methods of implementation and shall include a current map of the area covered by the comprehensive plan. Unless otherwise required by this chapter, the methods of implementation may include but need not be limited to:

1. An official map;
2. A capital improvements program;
3. A subdivision ordinance;
4. A zoning ordinance and zoning district maps;
5. A mineral resource map;
6. A recreation and sports resource map; and
7. A map of dam break inundation zones.

Code 1950, § 15-964.1; 1962, c. 407, § 15.1-447; 1975, c. 641; 1977, c. 228; 1980, c. 322; 1981, c. 418; 1988, c. 438; 1990, c. 97; 1991, c. 280; 1993, cc. 758, 770; 1996, cc. 585, 600; 1997, c. 587; 2006, c. 564; 2007, c. 761; 2008, c. 491; 2018, cc. 420, 691; 2021, Sp. Sess. I, c. 532.

Code of Virginia  
Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns  
Chapter 22. Planning, Subdivision of Land and Zoning

**§ 15.2-2225. Notice and hearing on plan; recommendation by local planning commission to governing body; posting of plan on website.**

Prior to the recommendation of a comprehensive plan or any part thereof, the local planning commission shall (i) post the comprehensive plan or part thereof that is to be considered for recommendation on a website that is maintained by the commission or on any other website on which the commission generally posts information, and that is available to the public or that clearly describes how the public may access information regarding the plan or part thereof being considered for recommendation, (ii) give notice in accordance with § 15.2-2204, and (iii) hold a public hearing on the plan. After the public hearing, the commission may approve, amend and approve, or disapprove the plan. Upon approval, the commission shall by resolution recommend the plan, or part thereof, to the governing body and a copy shall be certified to the governing body. Any comprehensive plan or part thereof approved by the commission pursuant to this section shall be posted on a website that is maintained by the commission or on any other website on which the commission generally posts information, and that is available to the public or that clearly describes how the public may access information regarding the plan or part thereof approved by the commission and certified to the governing body. Inadvertent failure to post information on a website in accordance with this section shall not invalidate action taken by the local planning commission following notice and public hearing as required herein.

Code 1950, §§ 15-908, 15-921, 15-922, 15-964.2, 15-964.3; 1958, c. 389; 1962, c. 407, §§ 15.1-448, 15.1-449; 1968, c. 735; 1975, c. 641; 1976, c. 642; 1997, c. 587; 2009, c. 605.

Code of Virginia  
Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns  
Chapter 22. Planning, Subdivision of Land and Zoning

**§ 15.2-2226. Adoption or disapproval of plan by governing body.**

After certification of the plan or part thereof, the governing body shall post the comprehensive plan or part thereof certified by the local planning commission on a website that is maintained by the governing body or on any other website on which the governing body generally posts information, and that is available to the public or that clearly describes how the public may access information regarding the plan or part thereof being considered for adoption. After a public hearing with notice as required by § 15.2-2204, the governing body shall proceed to a consideration of the plan or part thereof and shall approve and adopt, amend and adopt, or disapprove the plan. In acting on the plan or part thereof, or any amendments to the plan, the governing body shall act within 90 days of the local planning commission's recommending resolution; however, if a comprehensive plan amendment is initiated by the locality for more than 25 parcels, the governing body shall act within 150 days of the local planning commission's recommending resolution. Any comprehensive plan or part thereof adopted by the governing body pursuant to this section shall be posted on a website that is maintained by the local governing body or on any other website on which the governing body generally posts information, and that is available to the public or that clearly describes how the public may access information regarding the plan or part thereof adopted by the local governing body. Inadvertent failure to post information on a website in accordance with this section shall not invalidate action taken by the governing body following notice and public hearing as required herein.

Code 1950, § 15-964.4; 1962, c. 407, § 15.1-450; 1975, c. 641; 1976, c. 642; 1997, c. 587; 2000, c. 893; 2009, c. 605; 2020, cc. 132, 760.

# APPENDIX B

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## Recreational Routes in Highland County

### Scenic Drives:

Nearly every road in Highland County could be described as a scenic drive with its rural character, scattered villages, rolling farmlands and mountain vistas. Scenic drives include:

**Routes 678 and 614** – Roads through the Bullpasture and Cowpasture River Valleys south of McDowell, including the beautiful Bullpasture River Gorge.

**Routes 642 and 640** – Roads through the Blue Grass Valley west of Monterey, one of the most scenic valleys in the country.

**Route 607** – Winding, paved road through “Big Valley” located just east of the Jackson River Valley south of Monterey.

**Route 617** – Road between McDowell and Doe hill runs along the eastern slope of Jack Mountain and parallels the Bullpasture Valley through an area known as “Seldom Seen”.

**Route 644** – Known as Hardscrabble Road, north of Blue Grass. This road is well known for birding.

**Route 600** – Follows the length of Back Creek Valley. This partially paved road borders National Forest in the westernmost valley of Highland County.

**Route 642** – This gravel road crosses Middle Mountain into Laurel Fork and borders the National Forest.

**Highland County Barn Quilt Trail** – Discover over 50 unique wooden quilt blocks and their stories on Virginia’s first barn quilt trail. Brochure and map available at the Chamber of Commerce.

**Staunton to Parkersburg Turnpike** – Enjoy dozens of historic sites and beautiful scenery along the route from Staunton to Parkersburg. Brochure and map available at the Chamber of Commerce.

### Historic Trails:

**McDowell Battlefield Trail** – Approximately 1-mile trail leading to the top of Sittlington Hill and the core of the McDowell Battlefield. Access from Route 250 at the Battlefield Park one mile from the top of Bullpasture Mountain or from the junction of Routes 250 and 678 in McDowell.

**Confederate Breastworks Trail** – 0.5-mile interpretive trail along the top of Shenandoah Mountain, connecting to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail in Augusta County.

**Monterey Walking Trail** – A self-guided tour (brochure available) through historic Monterey. Explore the history of Victorian homes, the Courthouse, early churches and an old-time General Store.

**McDowell Walking Tour** – A self-guided tour (brochure available) of historic McDowell detailing highlights of the Civil War battle that took place here in 1862.

### **Birding and Wildflower Trails:**

These thematic trails were developed primarily as driving tours but could also be enjoyed by cyclists or on foot. Interpretive brochures are available.

**Blue Grass Valley Trail** – 13-mile loop from Monterey through the Blue Grass Valley and Hightown.

**Bullpasture Valley Trail** – 31-mile tour from McDowell through the Bullpasture and Cowpasture Valleys.

**Bluebird Trail** – From Monterey to the Bath County line on U.S. 220. The road is lined with birdhouses for bluebirds. Approximately 15 miles one way.

**Monterey** – The town of Monterey is a designated bird sanctuary. Bird feeders and nesting boxes abound throughout town.

**Laurel Fork** – 21 miles of gravel roads in a remote wooded area of Highland County featuring abundant wildflowers and wildlife.

**Highland Wildlife Management Area** – The gravel roads throughout this area are best suited to foot or horse traffic and four-wheel drive.

**Big Valley** – Approximately 16-mile route from Monterey to Mustoe through Big Valley and Bolar.

### **Hiking and Horseback Riding:**

With large tracts of open space and thousands of National Forest and state-maintained lands, there are ample opportunities for hiking and enjoying nature.

**Highland Wildlife Management Area** – Comprises over 14,280 acres of upland forests with access to 20 miles of roads and trails, offering hiking, hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. Managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

**Sounding Knob** – The highest point in Highland County, at 4,390 feet, the site of a fire tower built in 1934, disassembled and removed in 2002, then restored and re-erected in 2017.

**Laurel Fork** – Over 28 miles of hiking trails, mostly on historic tram logging roads. Hunting, fishing and camping are permitted. Within parts of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, these hardwood forests contain an abundance of wildlife, including flying squirrel habitat. Key trails include:

**Laurel Fork Trails** – 6.5-mile trail runs along Laurel Fork, a well-known stream for anglers.

**Back Run Trail** – 2.9 miles trail located on historic logging tram with spectacular views of beaver ponds, open glades and unique vegetation.

**Locust Spring Run Trail** – 3.1-mile trail in a remote area of northern hardwoods ideal for viewing deer, wild turkey and native brook trout.

### **Bicycling and Motorcycling Routes:**

While there are no designated bikeways in Highland County, many of the county's roads are suited to cyclists. Popular loops include:

**Williamsville Loop** – 21-mile loop on gravel and paved roads along Bullpasture and Cowpasture Rivers, including a 1.5-mile climb across Bullpasture Mountain.

**Wallace Tract** – 20-mile loop near Williamsville with views of the Bullpasture and Cowpasture Rivers.

**Laurel Fork Trail** – 18-mile loop on a combination of Forest Service roads and creek beds in the Laurel Fork Special Management Area, 30 miles northwest of Monterey.

**Sweet Rides Motorcycle Guide** – Offering several loops and amenity information. Brochure and map available at the Chamber of Commerce.

# APPENDIX C

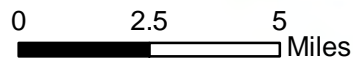
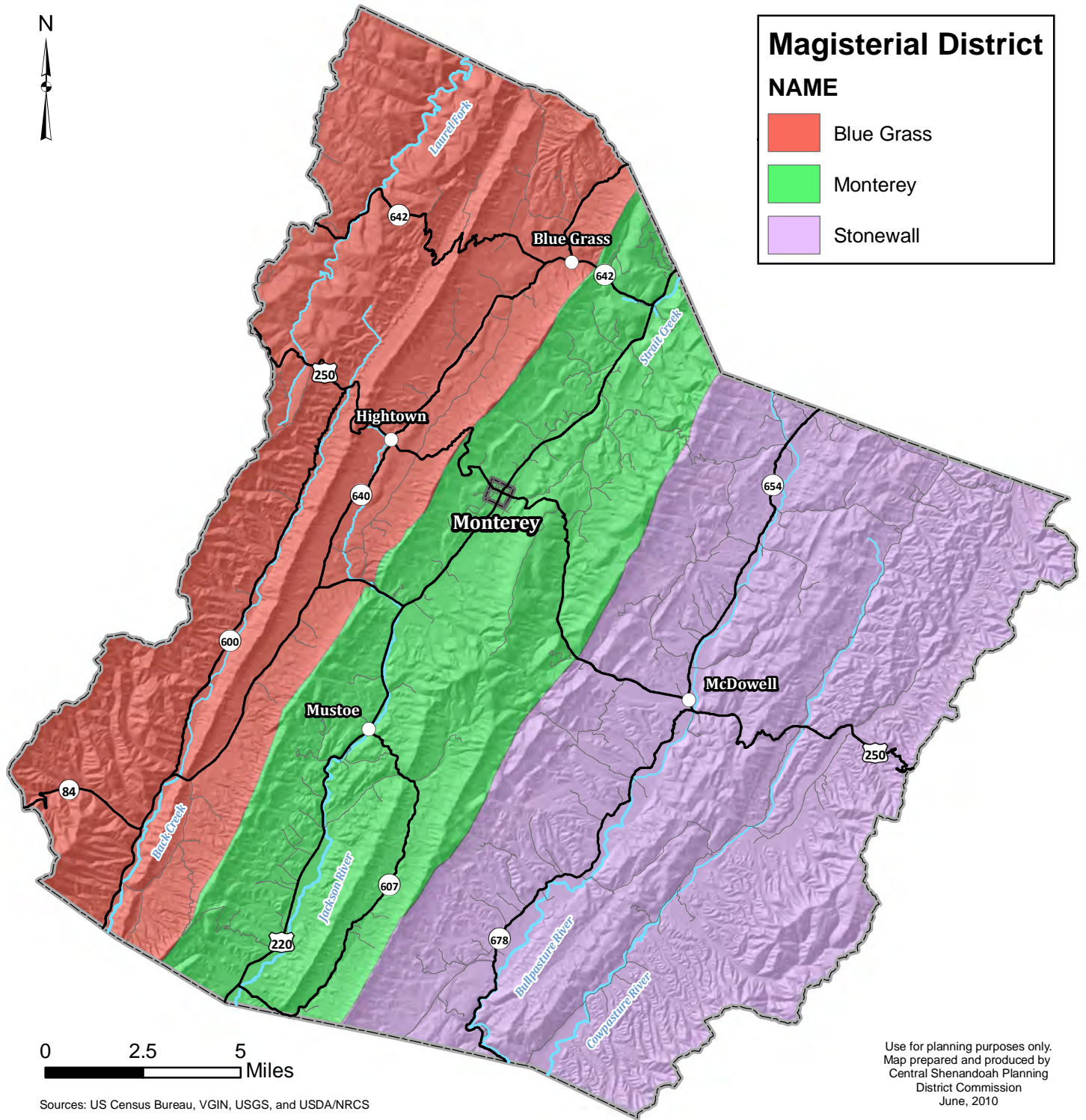
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# County of Highland - Magisterial Districts



**Magisterial District NAME**

- Blue Grass
- Monterey
- Stonewall



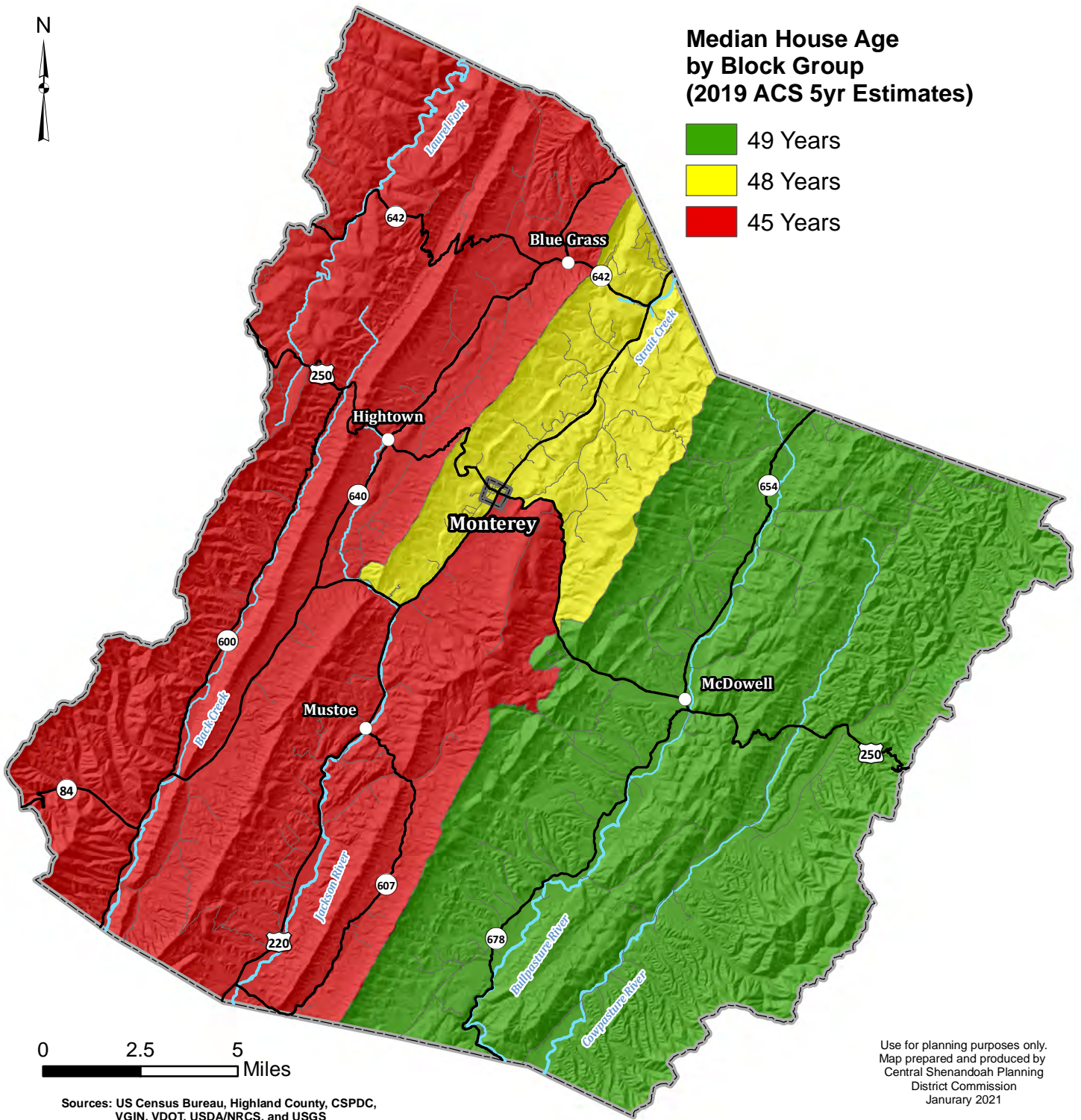
Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS

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Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Median House Age

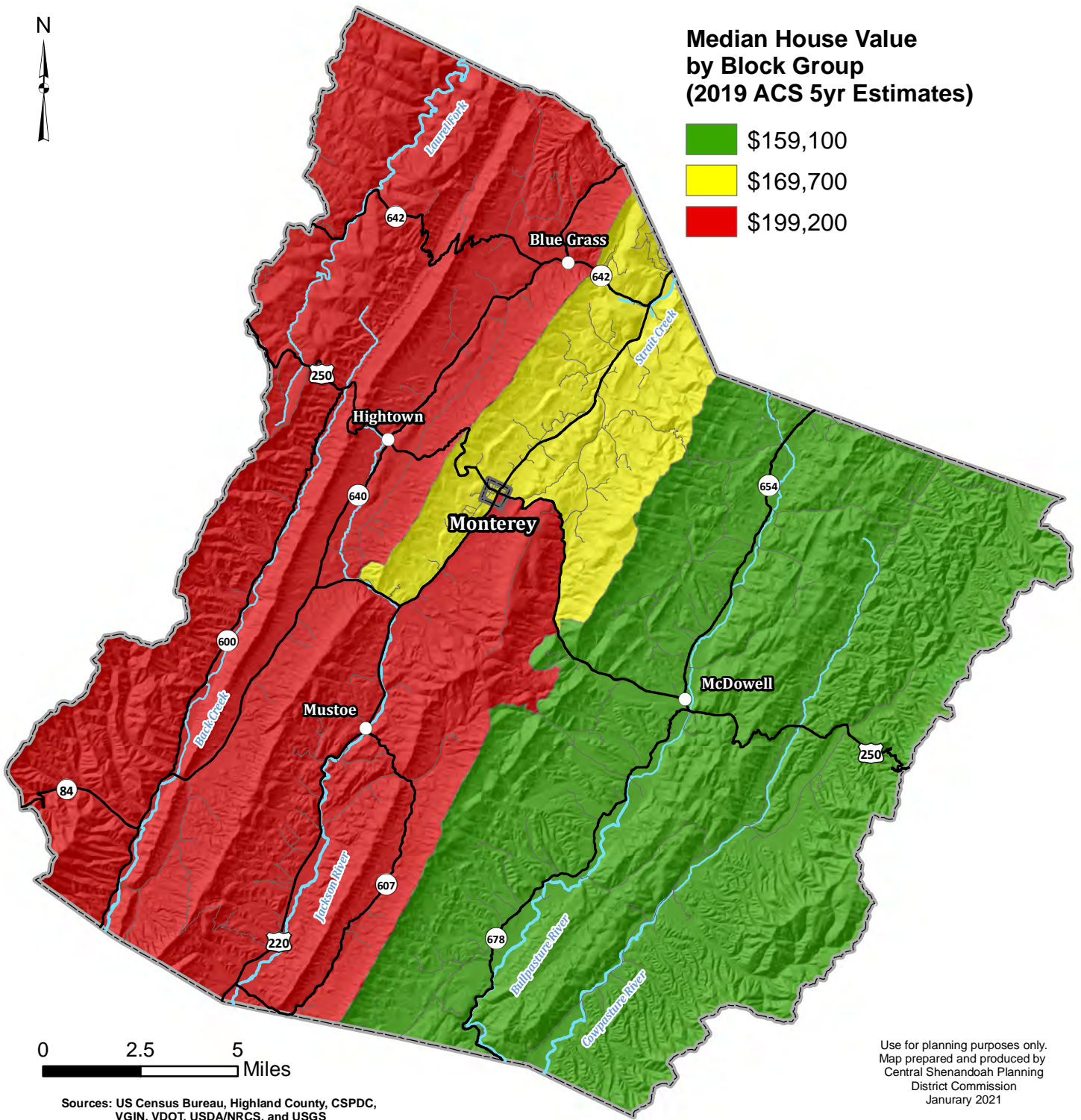


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 January 2021

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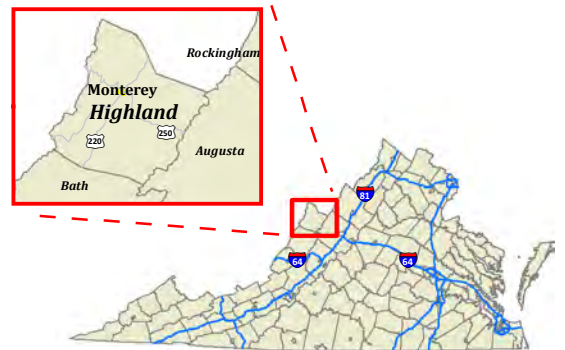


# County of Highland - Median House Value

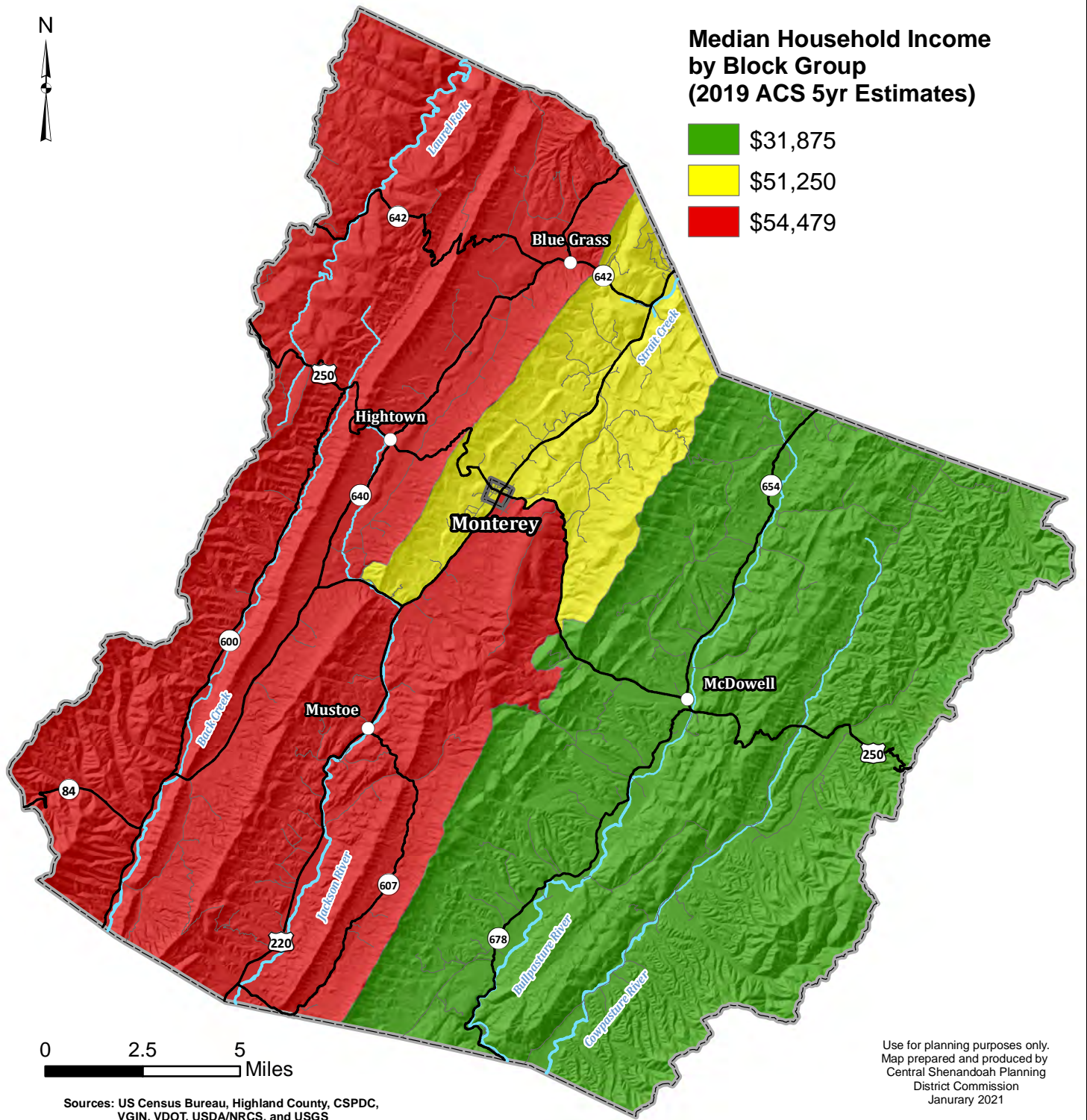


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January 2021

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- Town Limits
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# County of Highland - Median Household Income



- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology

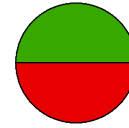




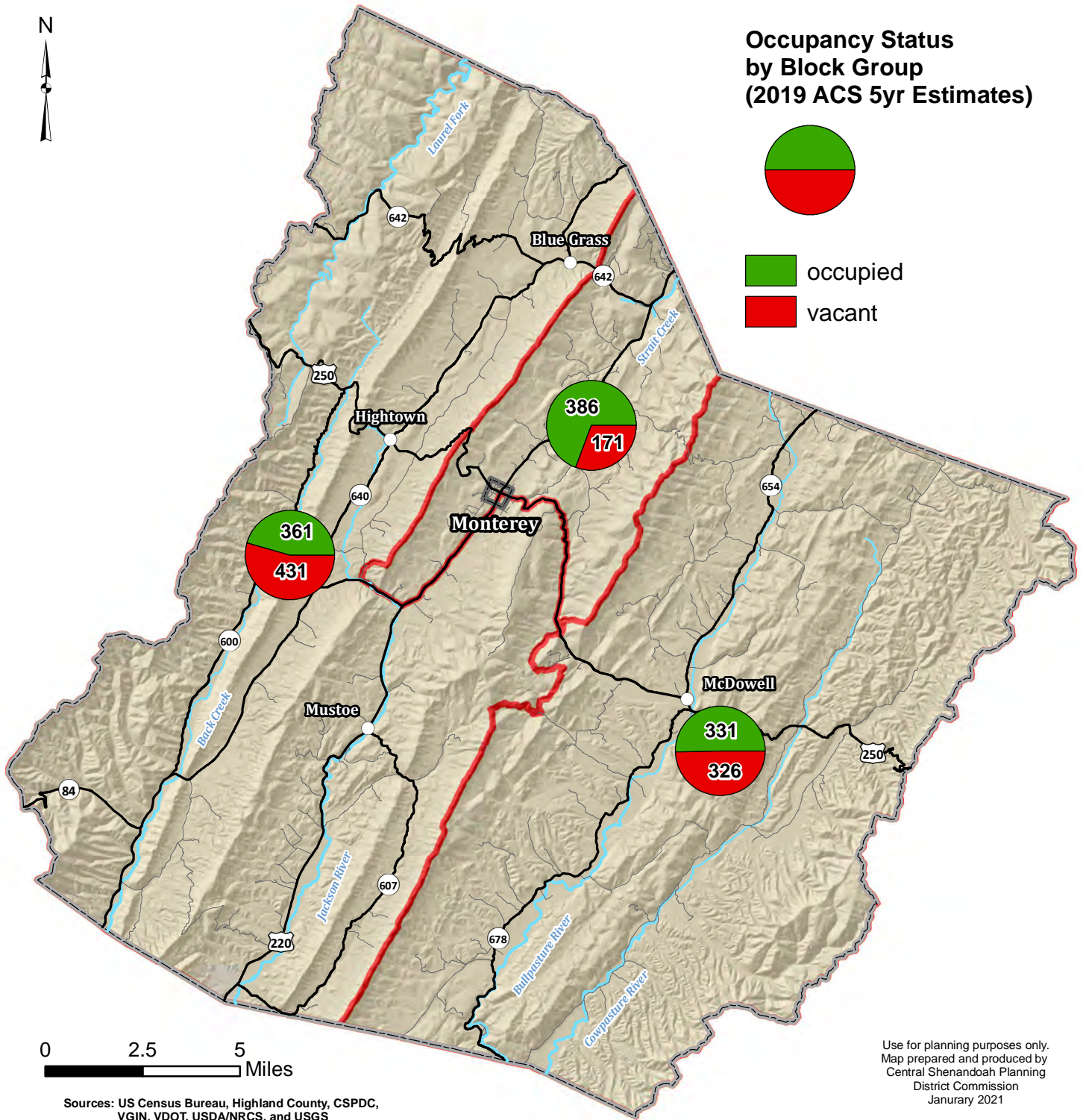
# County of Highland - Occupancy Status



## Occupancy Status by Block Group (2019 ACS 5yr Estimates)



■ occupied  
■ vacant



0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: US Census Bureau, Highland County, CSPDC, VGIN, VDOT, USDA/NRCS, and USGS

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 January 2021

- Block Groups
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology

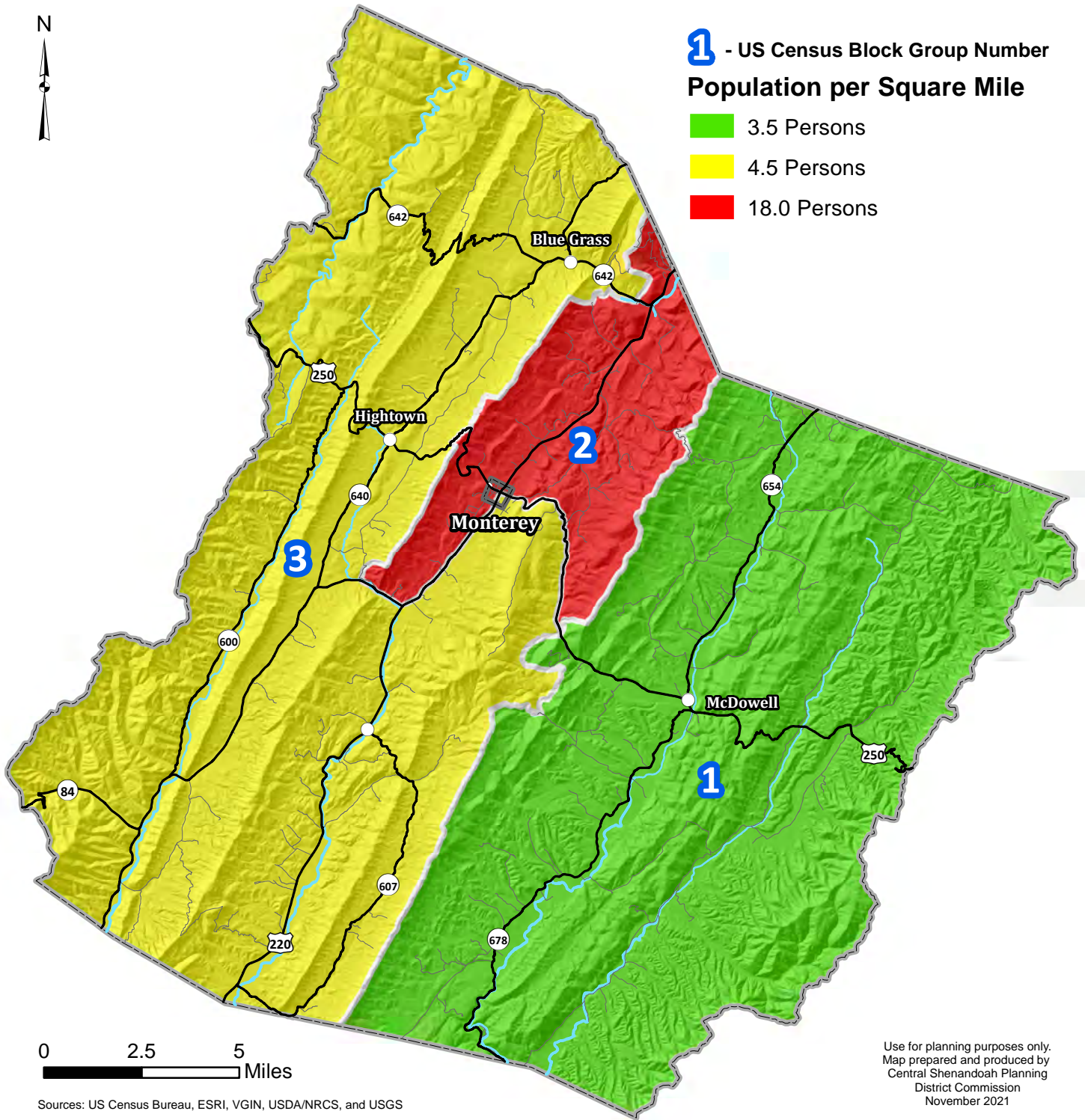


# County of Highland - Population Density



**1** - US Census Block Group Number  
**Population per Square Mile**

- 3.5 Persons
- 4.5 Persons
- 18.0 Persons



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 November 2021



- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
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- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology

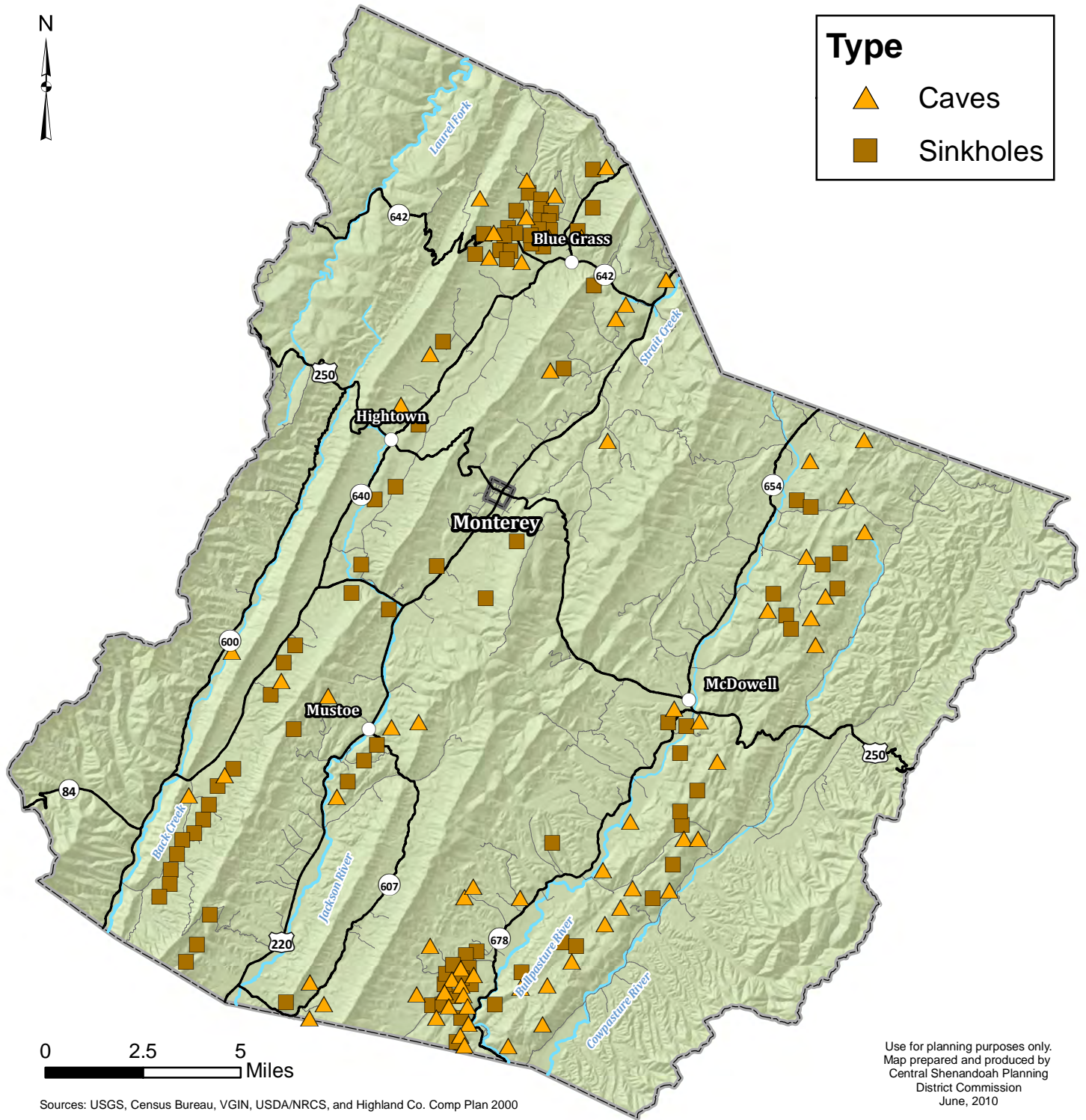


# County of Highland - Caves and Sinkholes



**Type**





-  Caves
-  Sinkholes

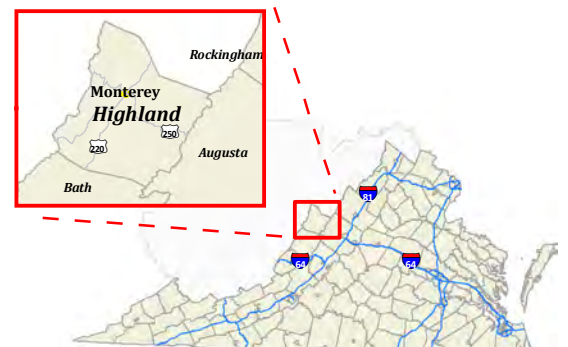


0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: USGS, Census Bureau, VGIN, USDA/NRCS, and Highland Co. Comp Plan 2000

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June, 2010

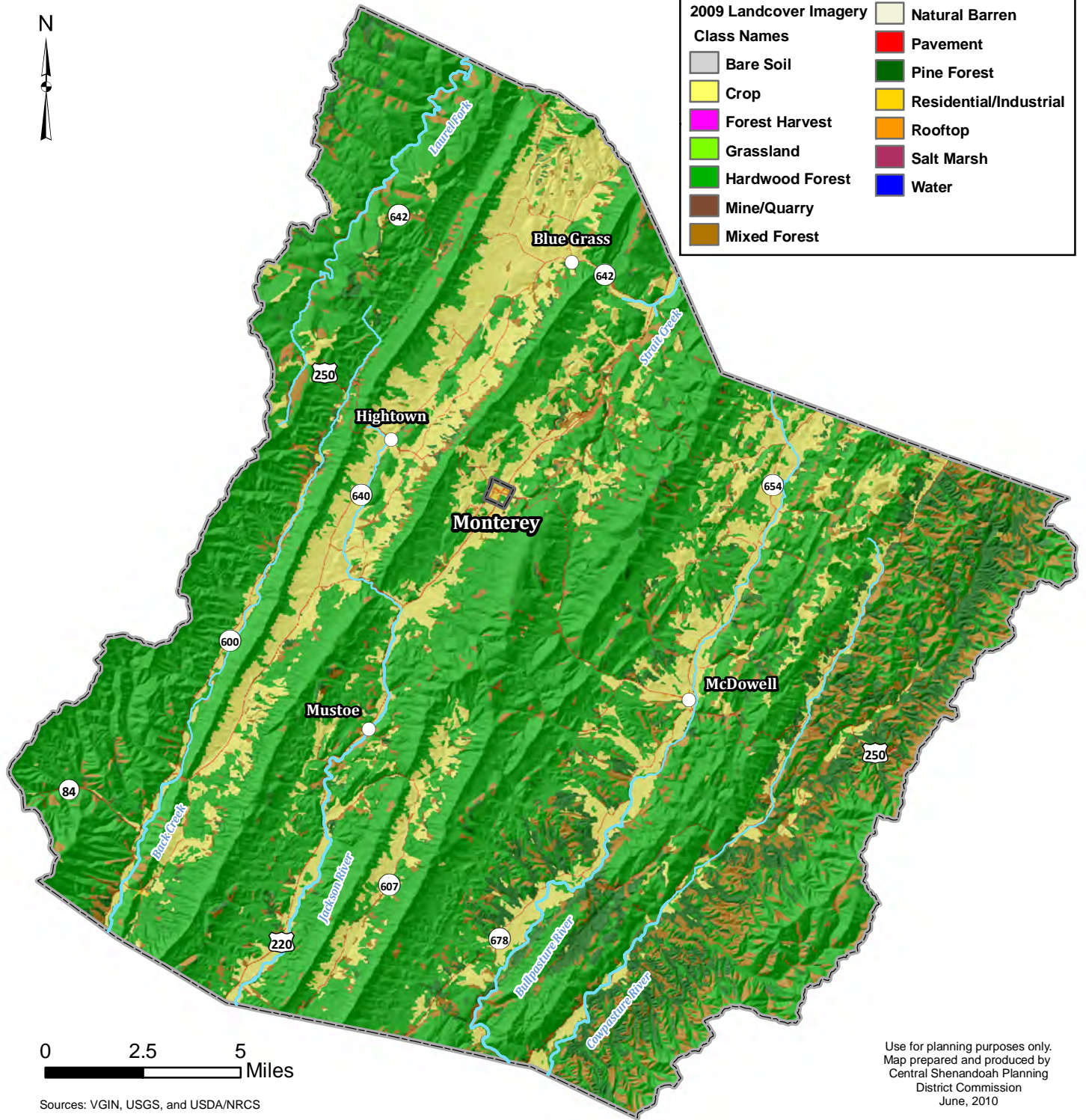
-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Town Limits
-  Populated Places
-  Major Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Hydrology



# County of Highland - Developed and Agricultural Land



2009 Landcover Imagery Class Names	
	Natural Barren
	Pavement
	Bare Soil
	Pine Forest
	Crop
	Residential/Industrial
	Forest Harvest
	Rooftop
	Grassland
	Salt Marsh
	Hardwood Forest
	Water
	Mine/Quarry
	Mixed Forest



0 2.5 5 Miles

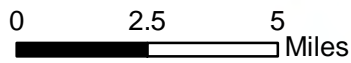
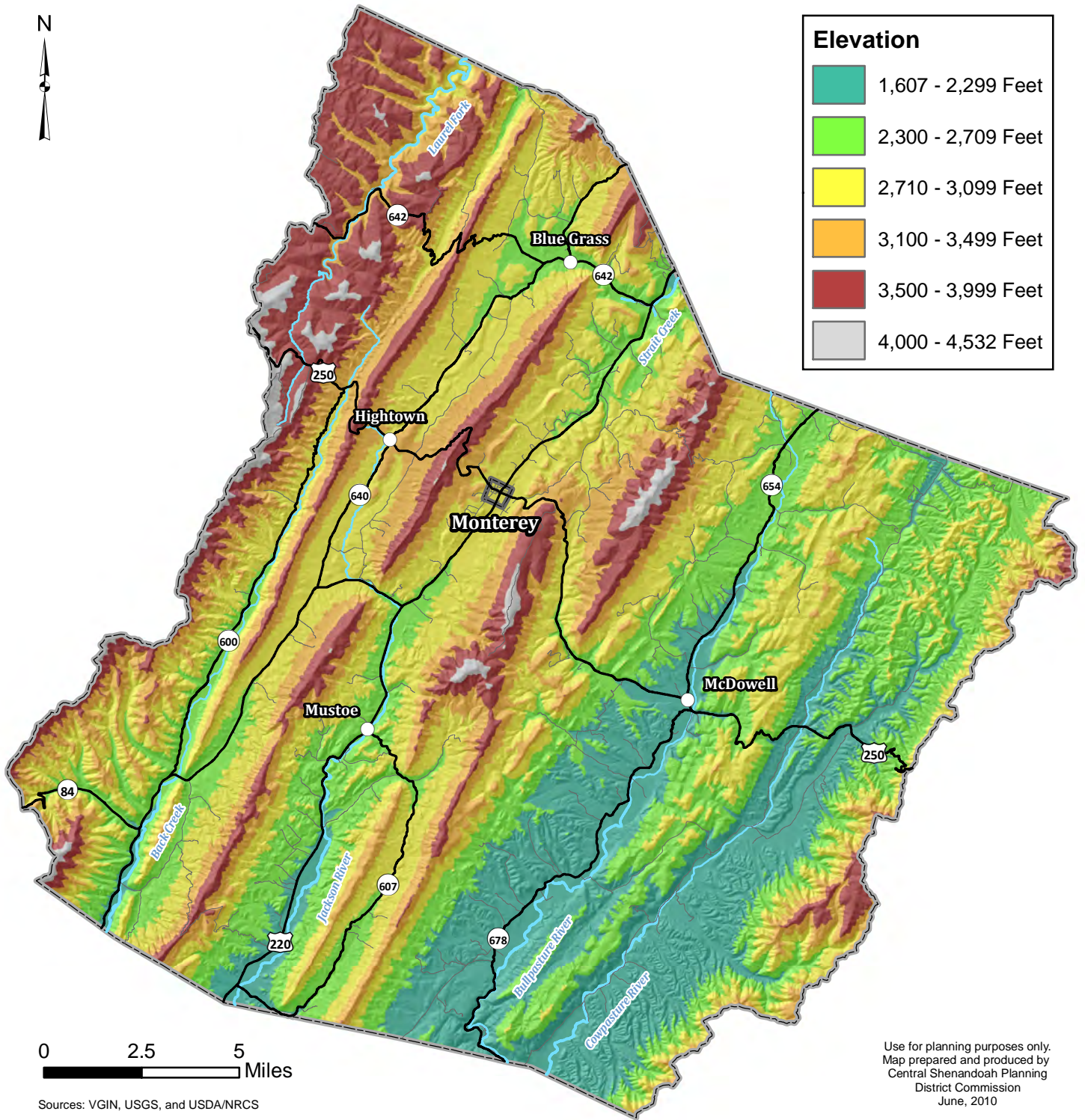
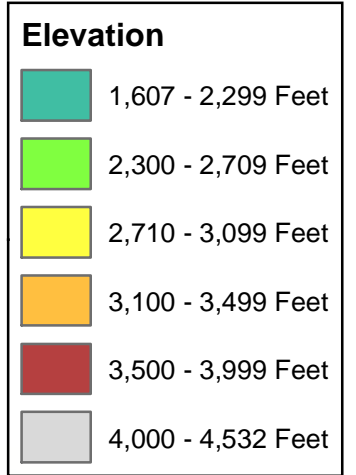
Sources: VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS

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- Highland Co. Boundary
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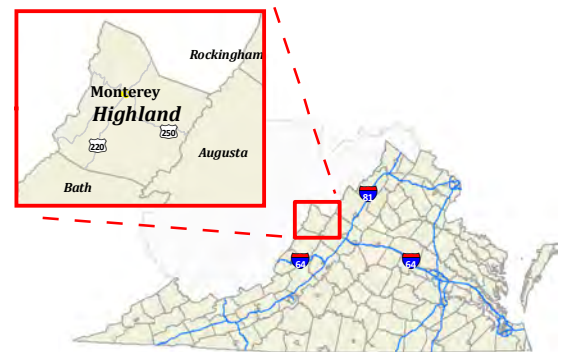
# County of Highland - Elevation



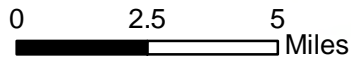
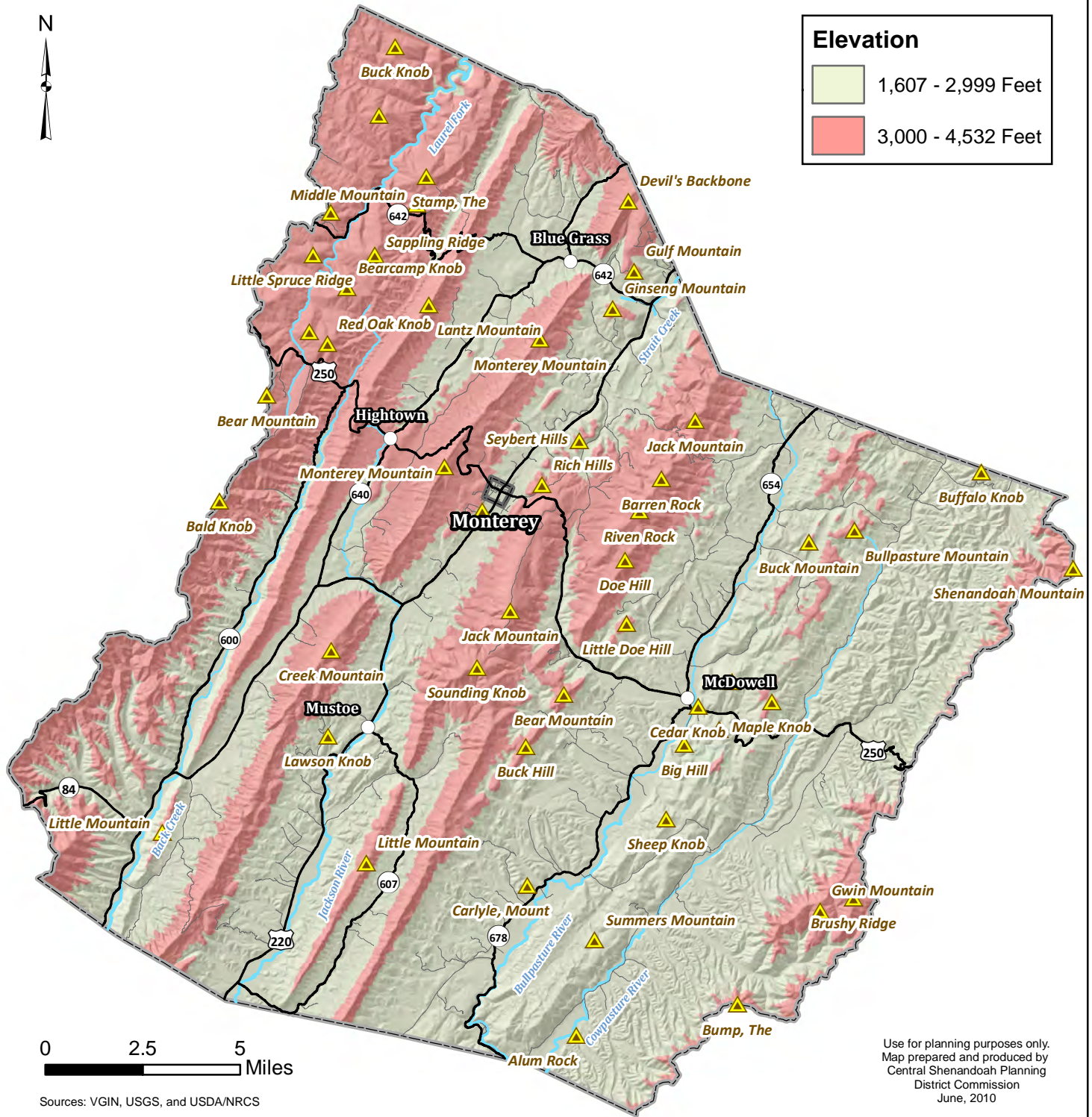
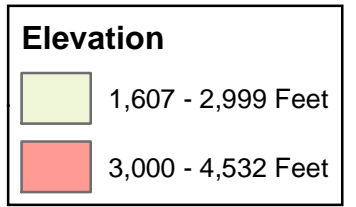
Sources: VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS

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- Highland Co. Boundary
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- Populated Places
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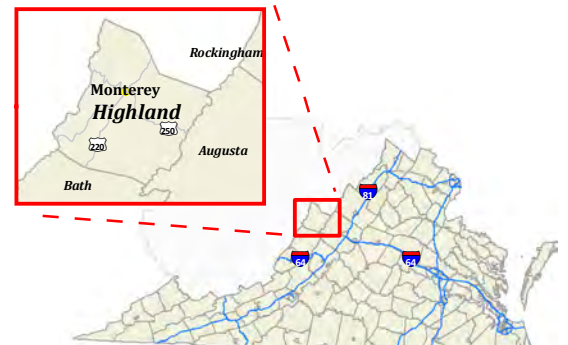
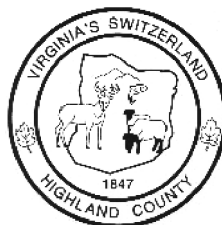
# County of Highland - Elevation Above 3,000 Feet



Sources: VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS

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District Commission  
June, 2010

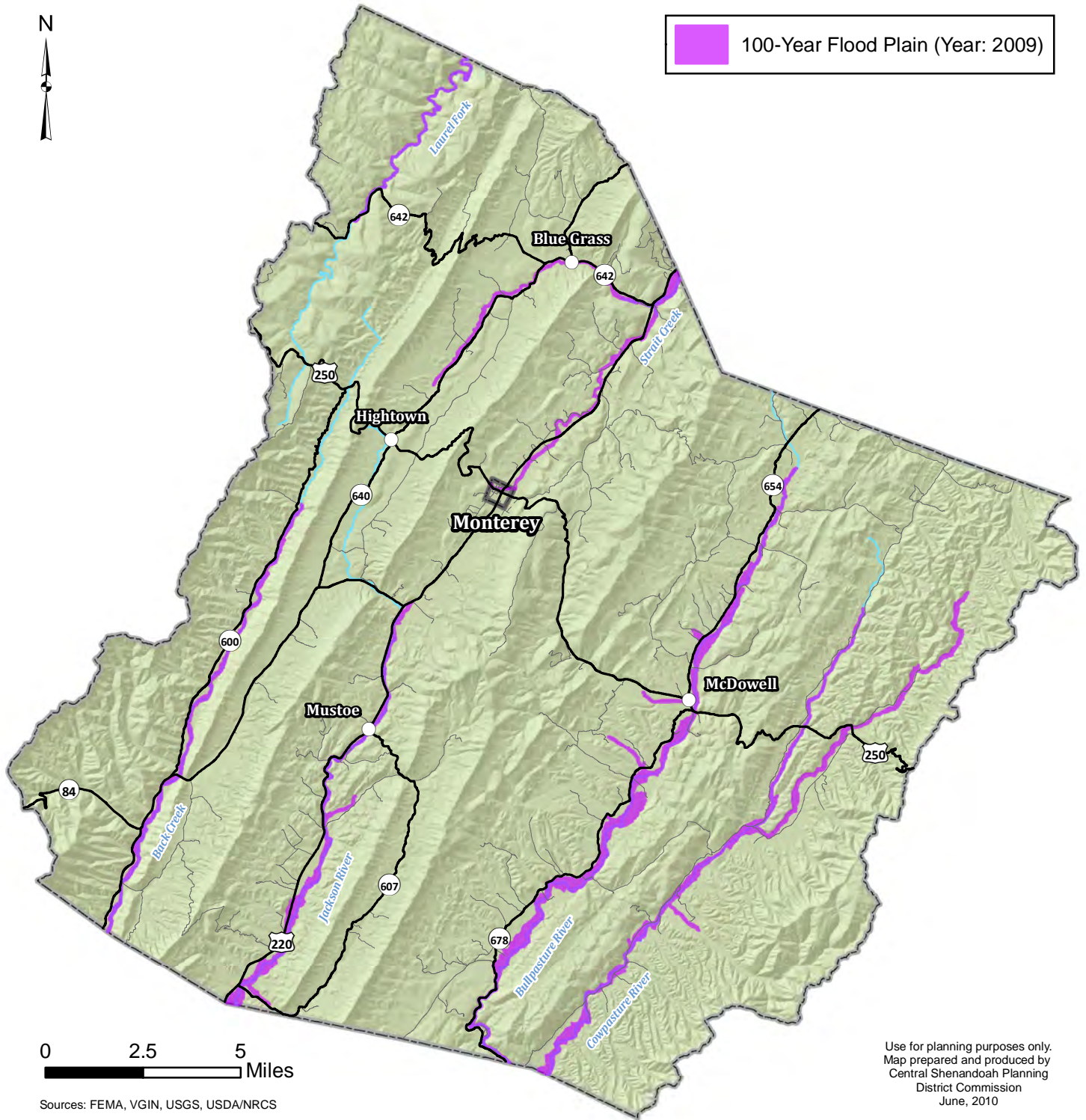
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology









# County of Highland - 100-Year Floodplain

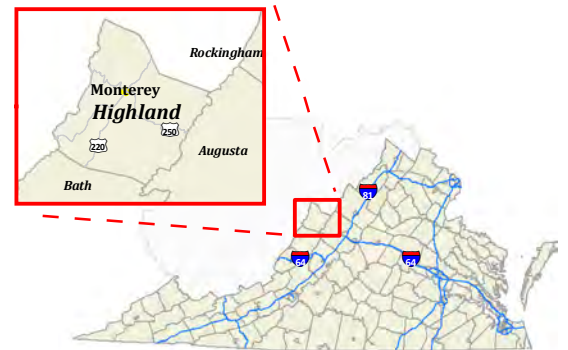


 100-Year Flood Plain (Year: 2009)

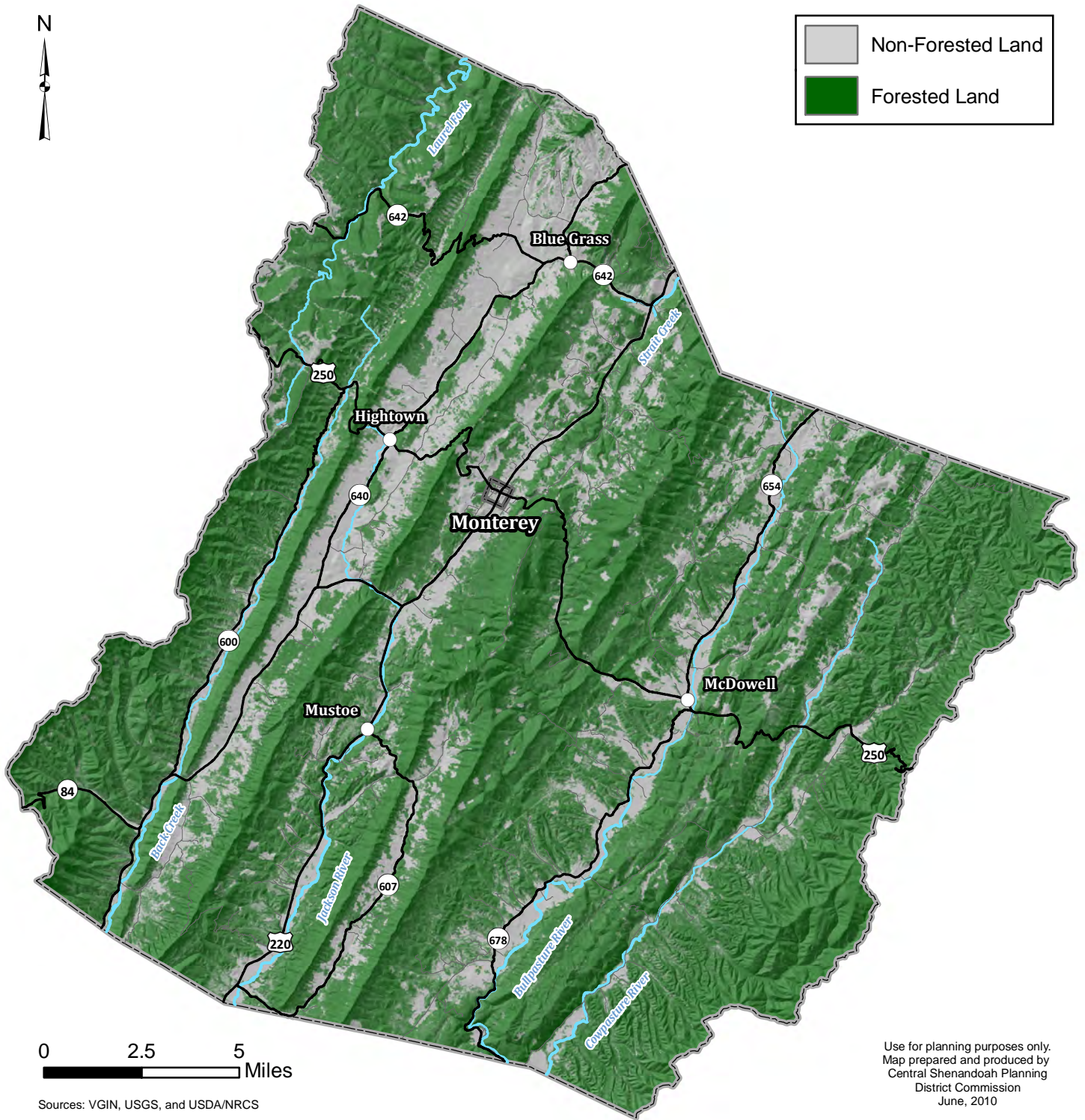
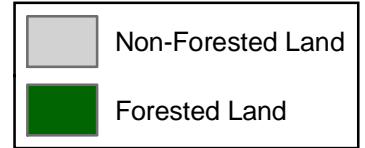


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Map prepared and produced by  
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District Commission  
June, 2010

-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Town Limits
-  Populated Places
-  Major Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Hydrology

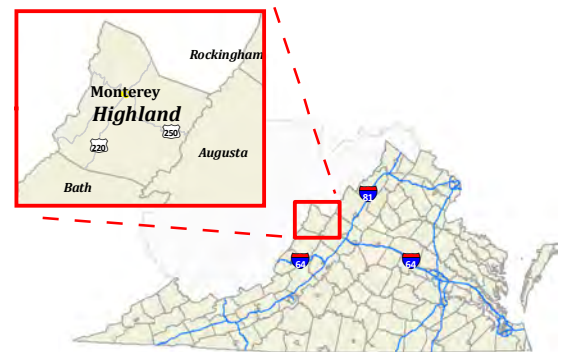


# County of Highland - Forested Land



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 District Commission  
 June, 2010

- Highland Co. Boundary
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- Hydrology

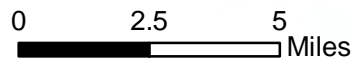
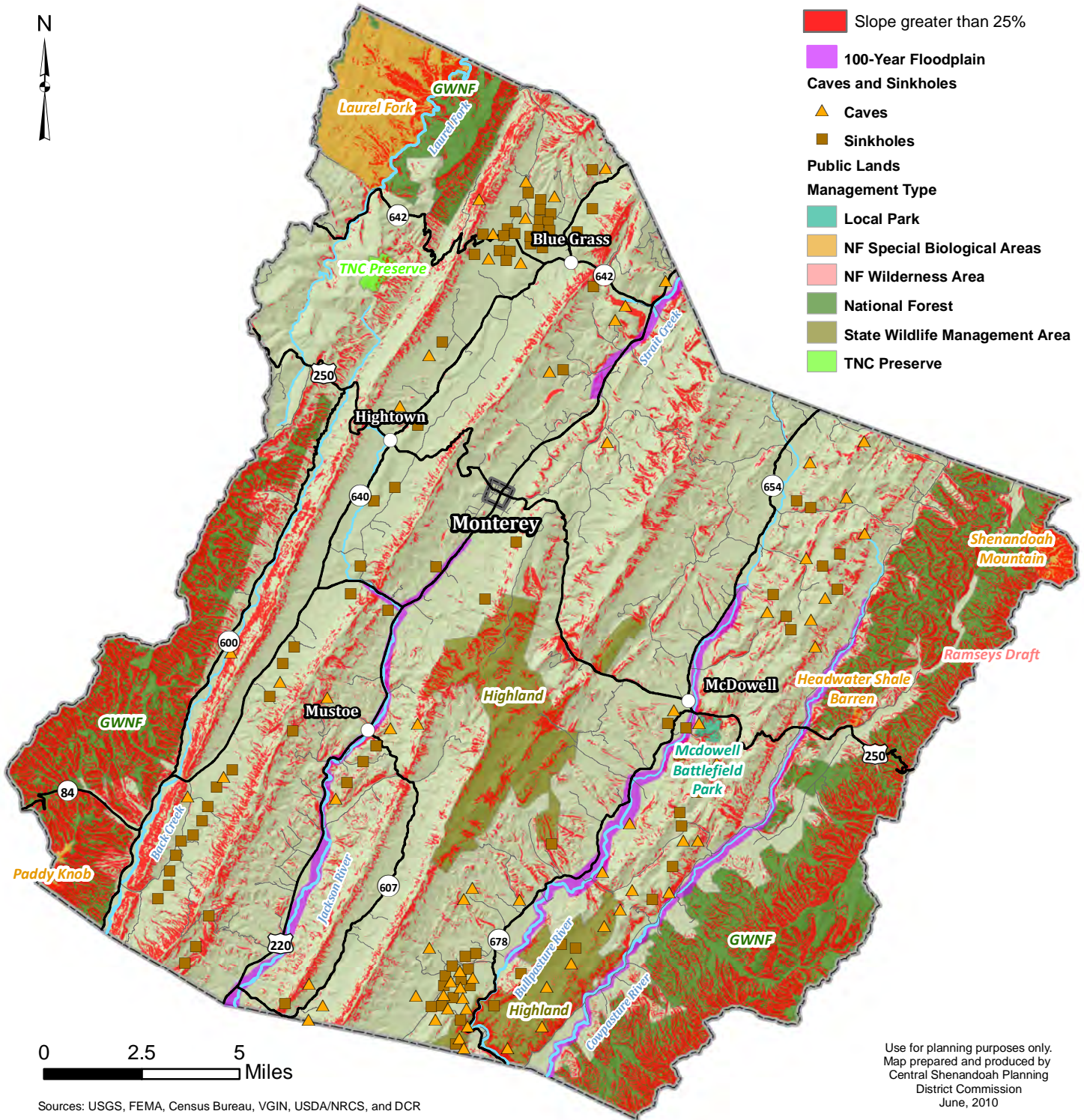




# County of Highland - Generalized Land Use Constraints Map



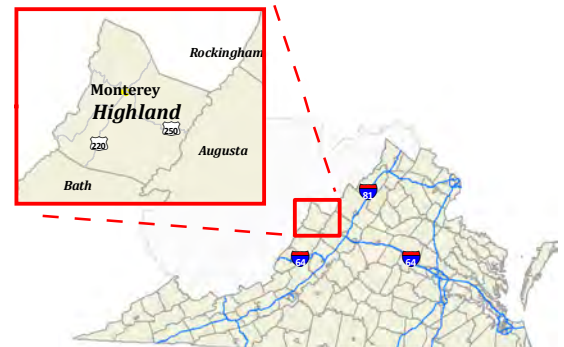
- Slope greater than 25%
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Caves and Sinkholes**
- Caves
- Sinkholes
- Public Lands**
- Management Type**
- Local Park
- NF Special Biological Areas
- NF Wilderness Area
- National Forest
- State Wildlife Management Area
- TNC Preserve



Sources: USGS, FEMA, Census Bureau, VGIN, USDA/NRCS, and DCR

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District Commission  
June, 2010

- Highland Co. Boundary
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- Hydrology



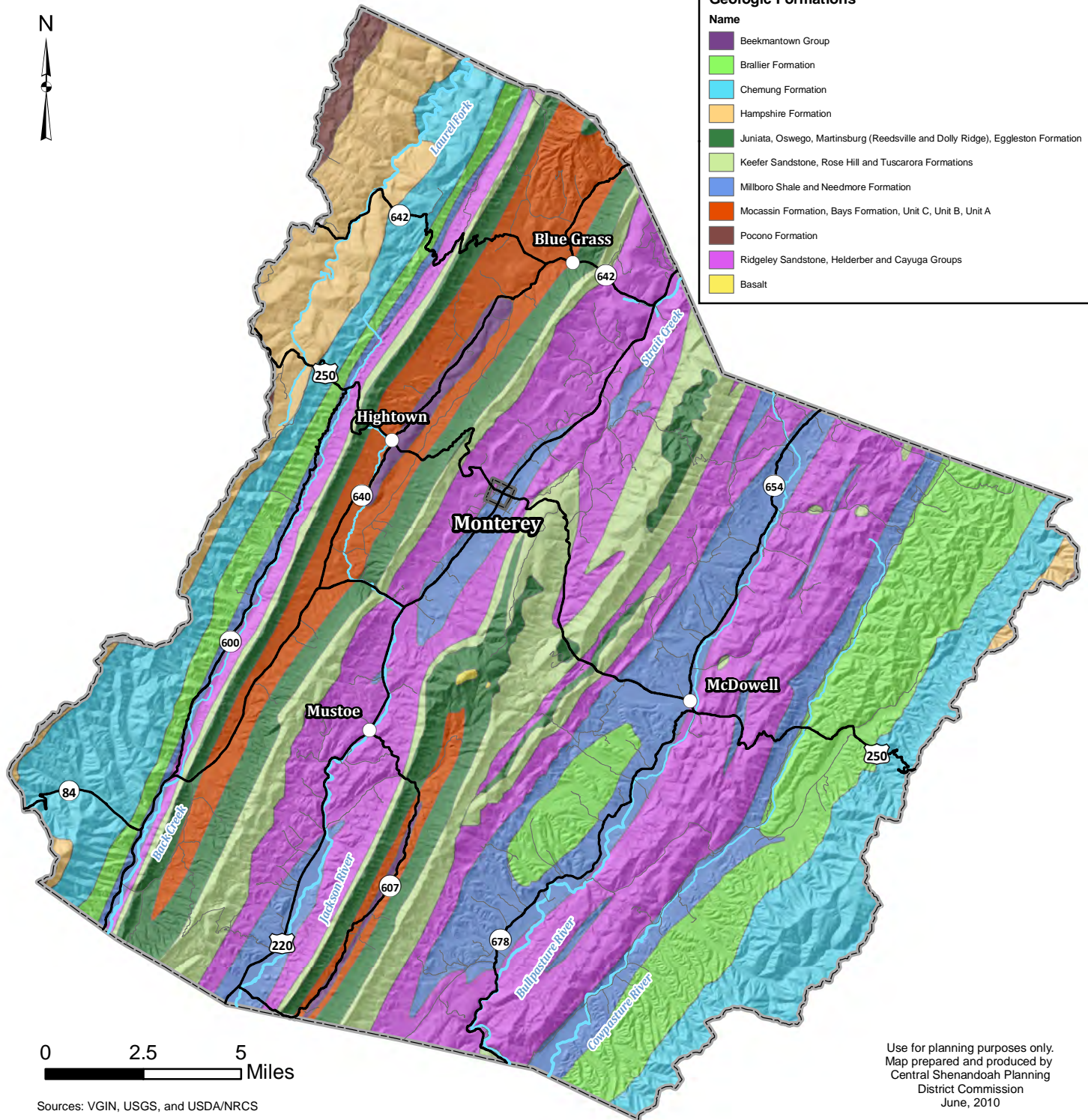
# County of Highland - Geologic Formations



## Geologic Formations

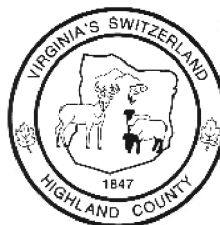
### Name

- Beekmantown Group
- Brallier Formation
- Chemung Formation
- Hampshire Formation
- Juniata, Oswego, Martinsburg (Reedsville and Dolly Ridge), Eggleston Formation
- Keefer Sandstone, Rose Hill and Tuscarora Formations
- Millboro Shale and Needmore Formation
- Moccasin Formation, Bays Formation, Unit C, Unit B, Unit A
- Pocono Formation
- Ridgeley Sandstone, Helderber and Cayuga Groups
- Basalt



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 District Commission  
 June, 2010

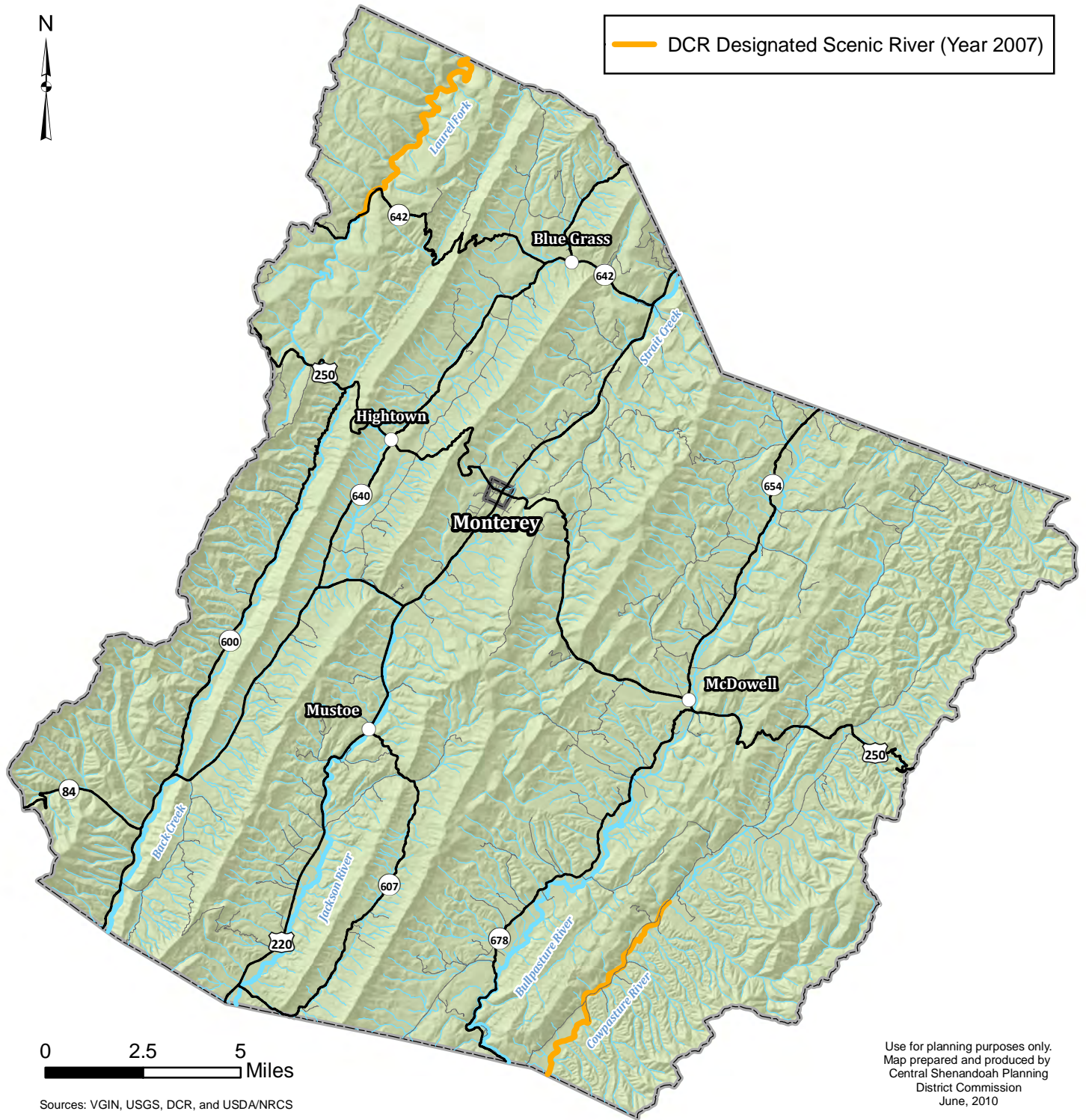
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology









# County of Highland - Hydrology



 DCR Designated Scenic River (Year 2007)

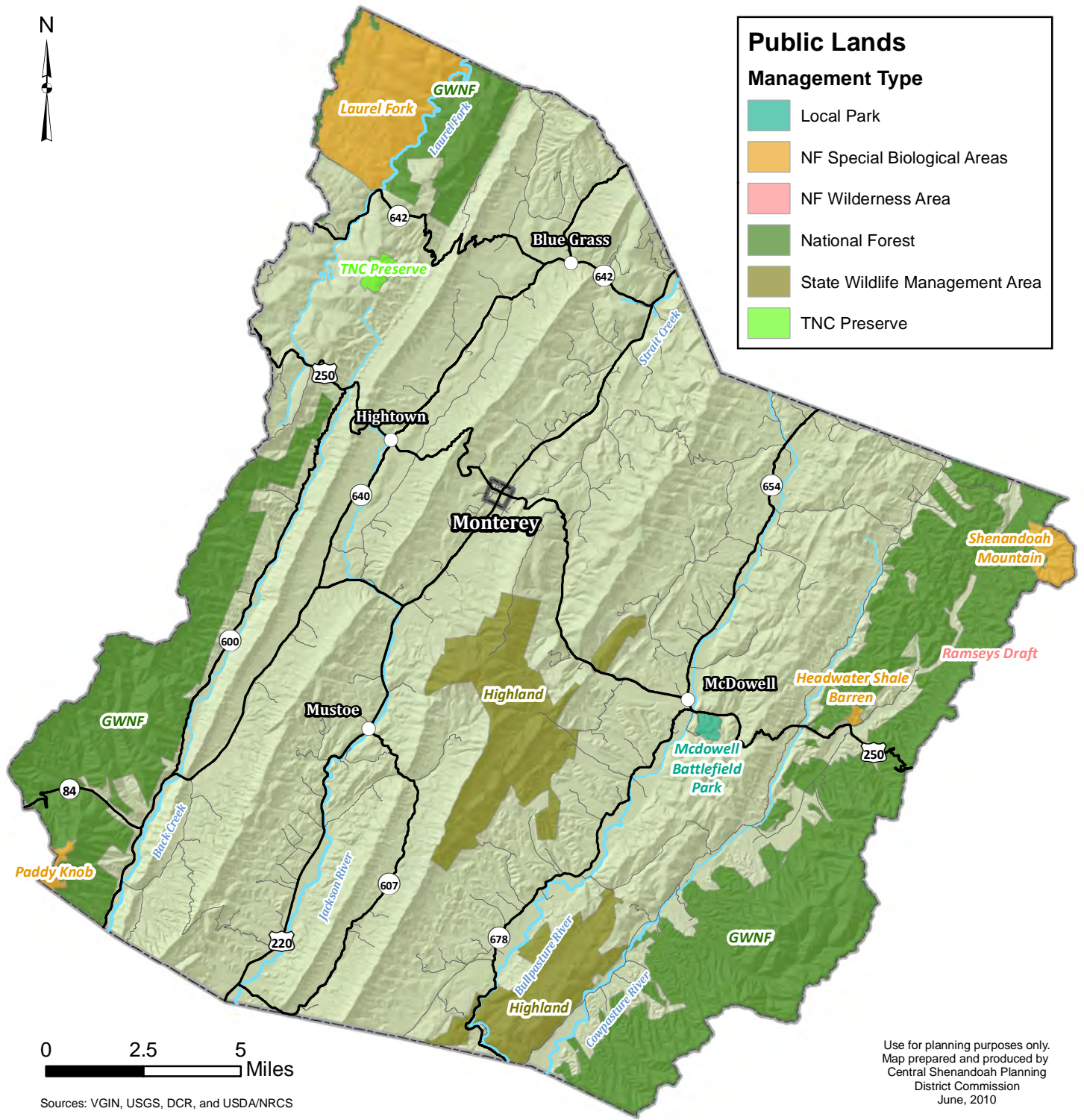


Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Town Limits
-  Populated Places
-  Major Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Hydrology



# County of Highland - Public Lands

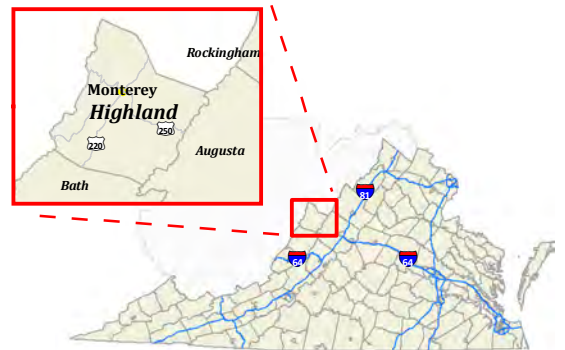


0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: VGIN, USGS, DCR, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
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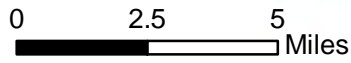
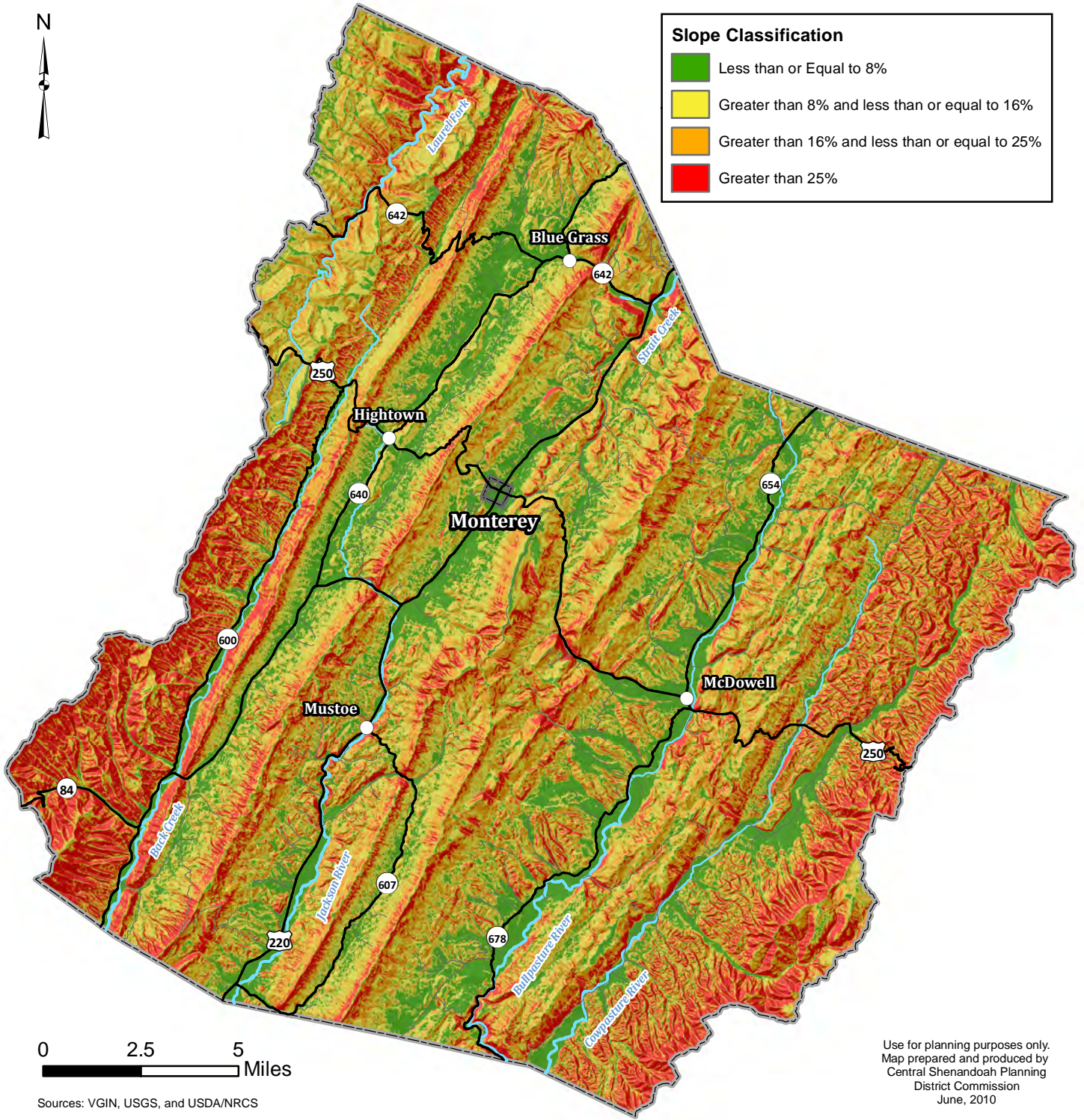


# County of Highland - Slope Classification



**Slope Classification**

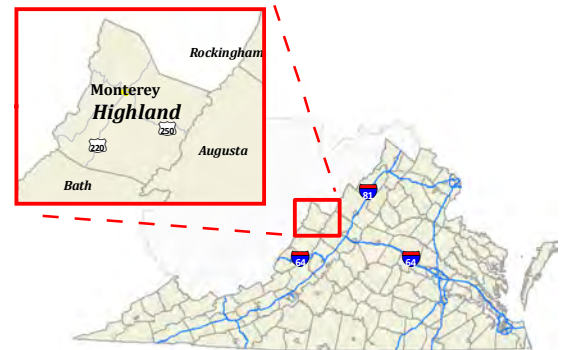
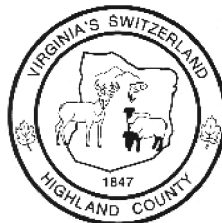
- Less than or Equal to 8%
- Greater than 8% and less than or equal to 16%
- Greater than 16% and less than or equal to 25%
- Greater than 25%



Sources: VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS









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Map prepared and produced by  
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District Commission  
June, 2010

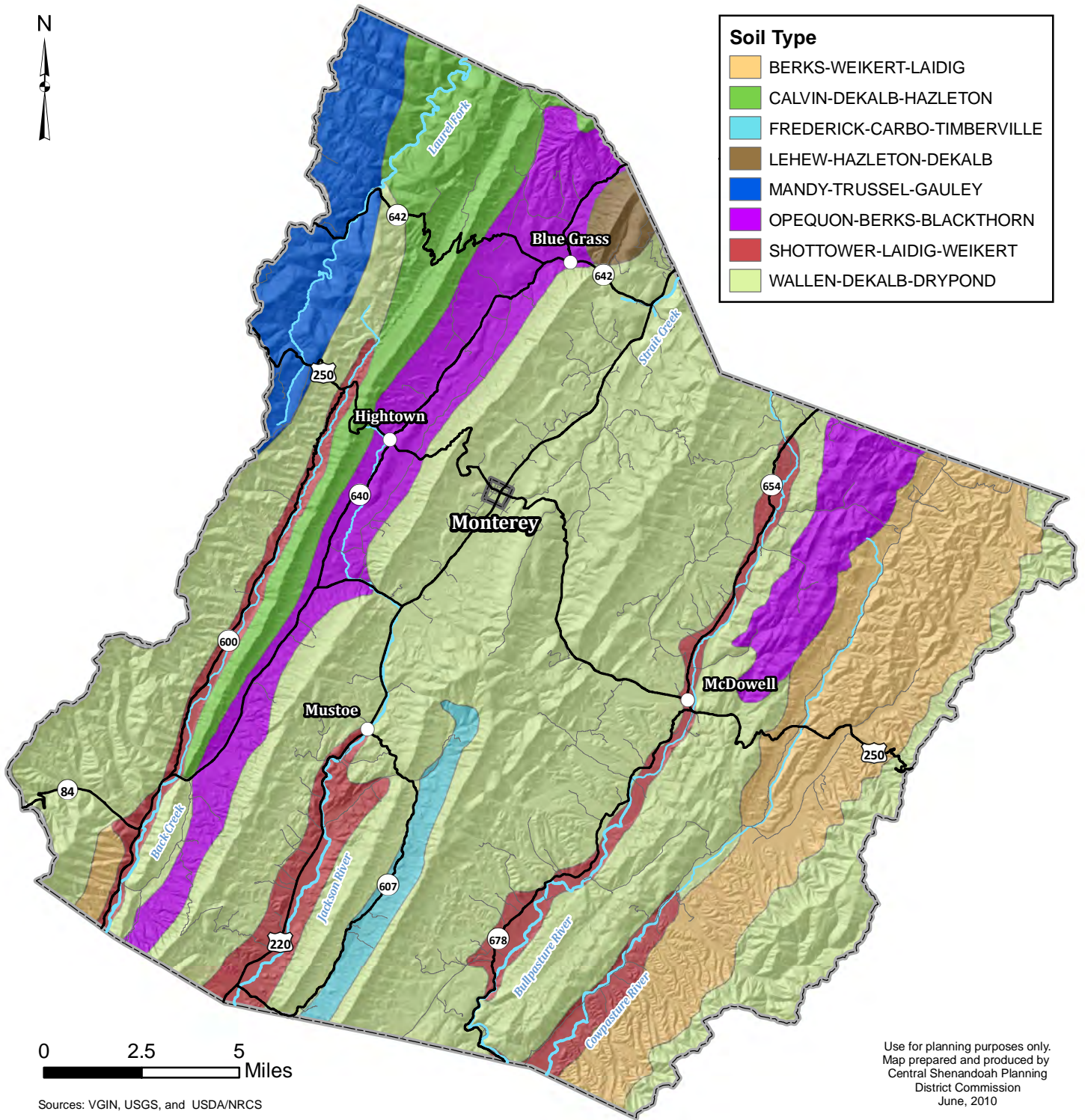
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology








# County of Highland - Soils

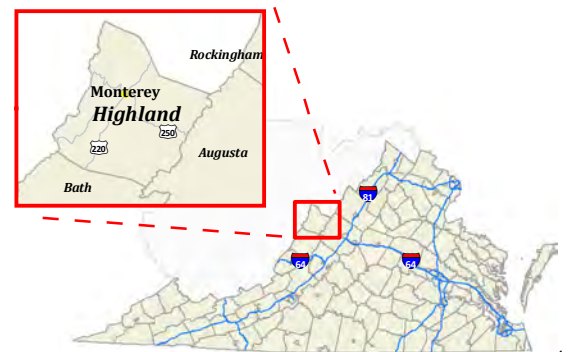
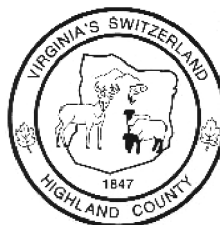


Soil Type	
	BERKS-WEIKERT-LAIDIG
	CALVIN-DEKALB-HAZLETON
	FREDERICK-CARBO-TIMBERVILLE
	LEHEW-HAZLETON-DEKALB
	MANDY-TRUSSEL-GAULEY
	OPEQUON-BERKS-BLACKTHORN
	SHOTTOWER-LAIDIG-WEIKERT
	WALLEN-DEKALB-DRYPOND

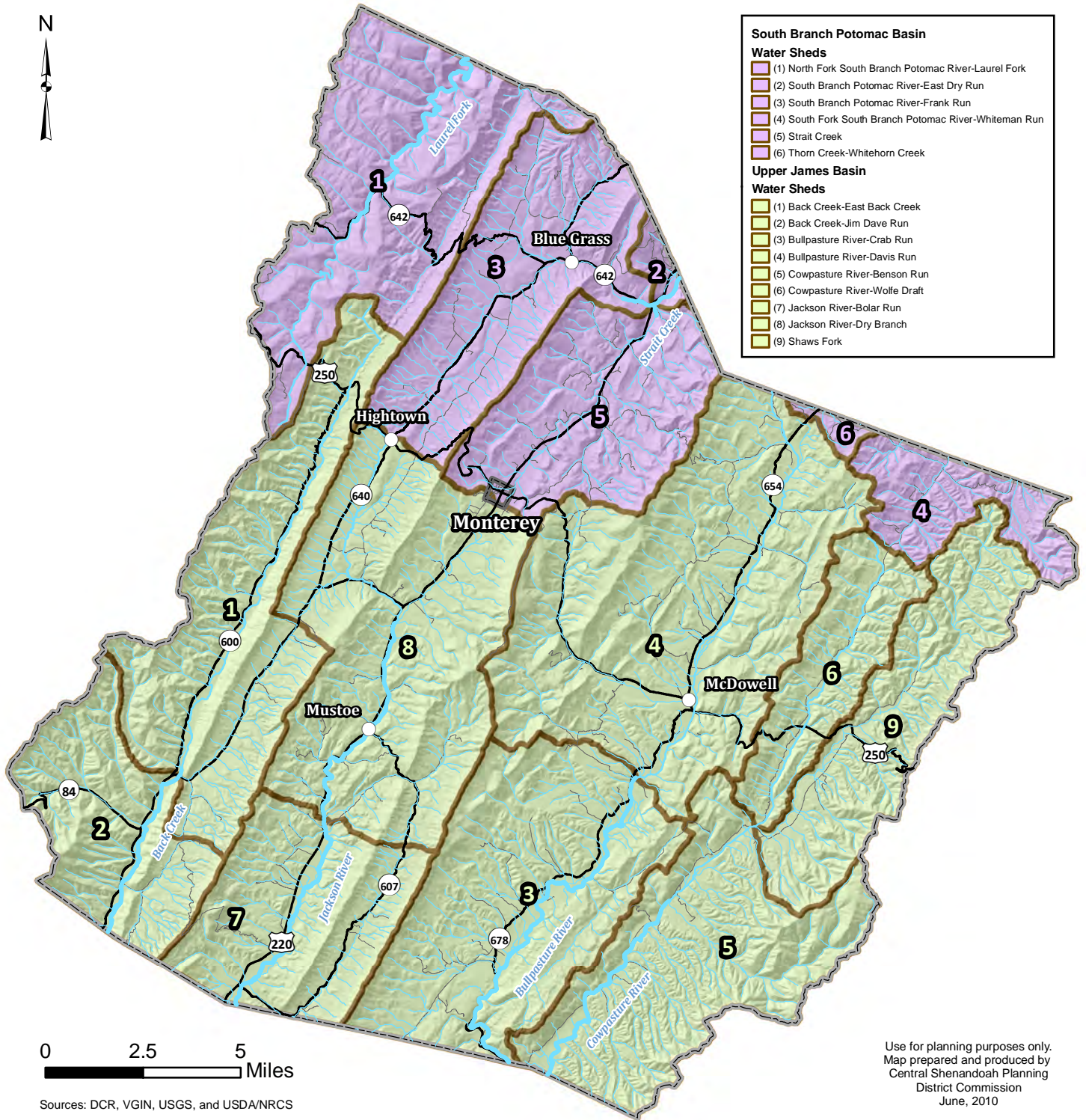


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 Map prepared and produced by  
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 District Commission  
 June, 2010

-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Town Limits
-  Populated Places
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-  Secondary Roads
-  Hydrology



# County of Highland - Designated Watersheds Map



**South Branch Potomac Basin**

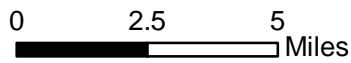
**Water Sheds**

- (1) North Fork South Branch Potomac River-Laurel Fork
- (2) South Branch Potomac River-East Dry Run
- (3) South Branch Potomac River-Frank Run
- (4) South Fork South Branch Potomac River-Whiteman Run
- (5) Strait Creek
- (6) Thorn Creek-Whitehorn Creek

**Upper James Basin**

**Water Sheds**

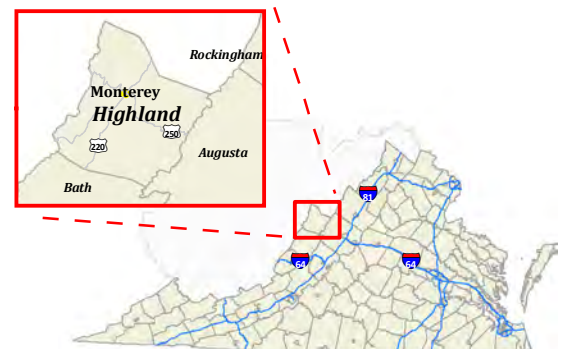
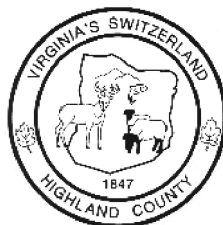
- (1) Back Creek-East Back Creek
- (2) Back Creek-Jim Dave Run
- (3) Bullpasture River-Crab Run
- (4) Bullpasture River-Davis Run
- (5) Cowpasture River-Benson Run
- (6) Cowpasture River-Wolfe Draft
- (7) Jackson River-Bolar Run
- (8) Jackson River-Dry Branch
- (9) Shaws Fork



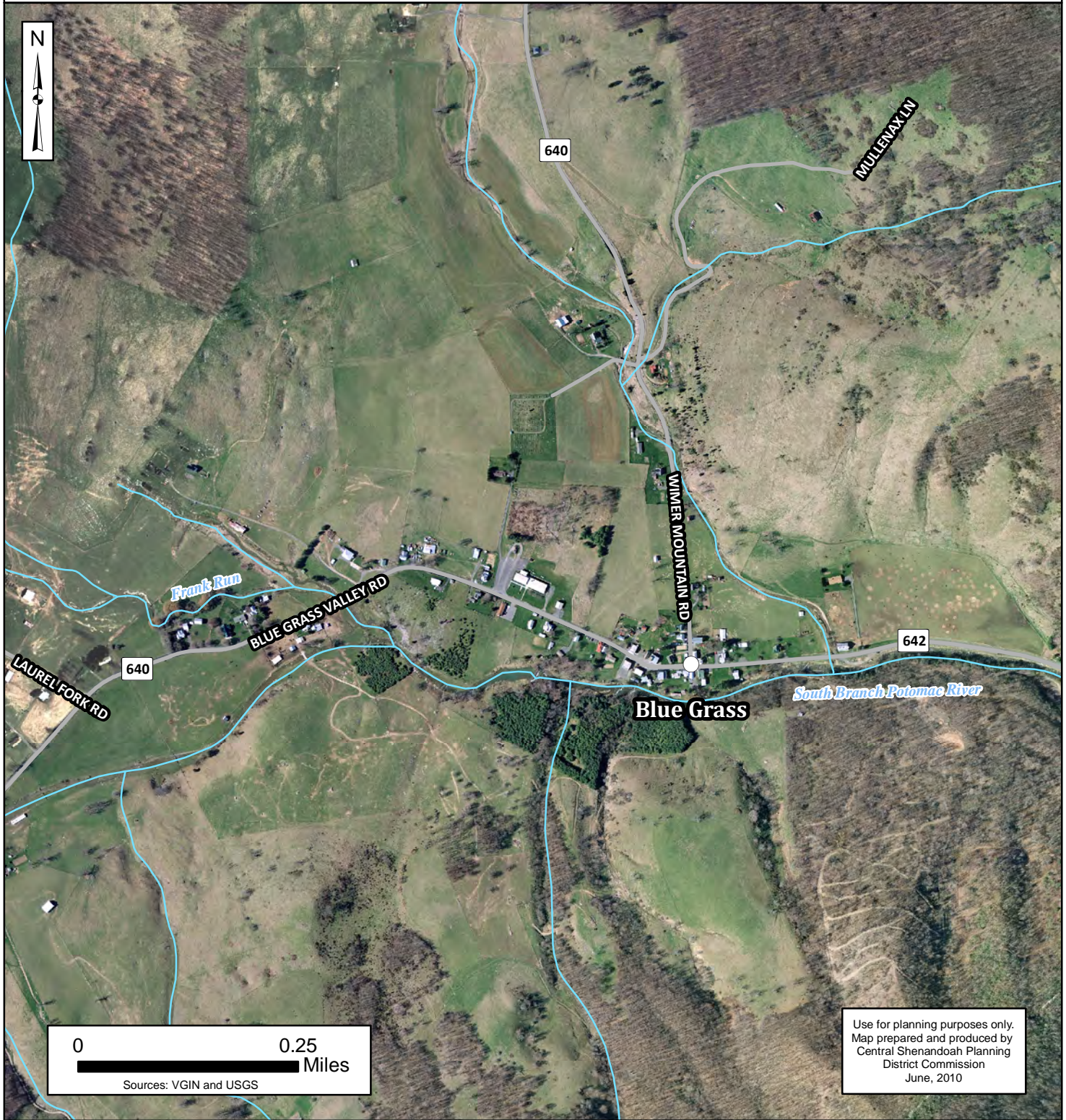
Sources: DCR, VGIN, USGS, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

- Highland Co. Boundary
- Town Limits
- Populated Places
- Major Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Hydrology

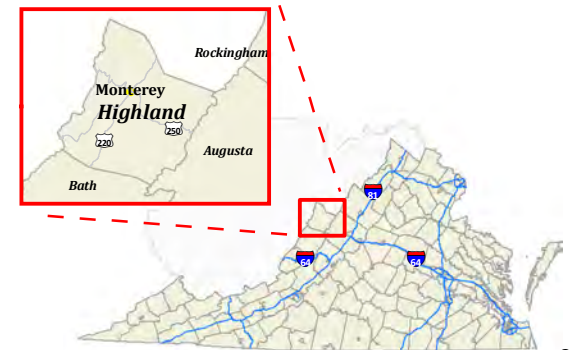


# County of Highland - Blue Grass



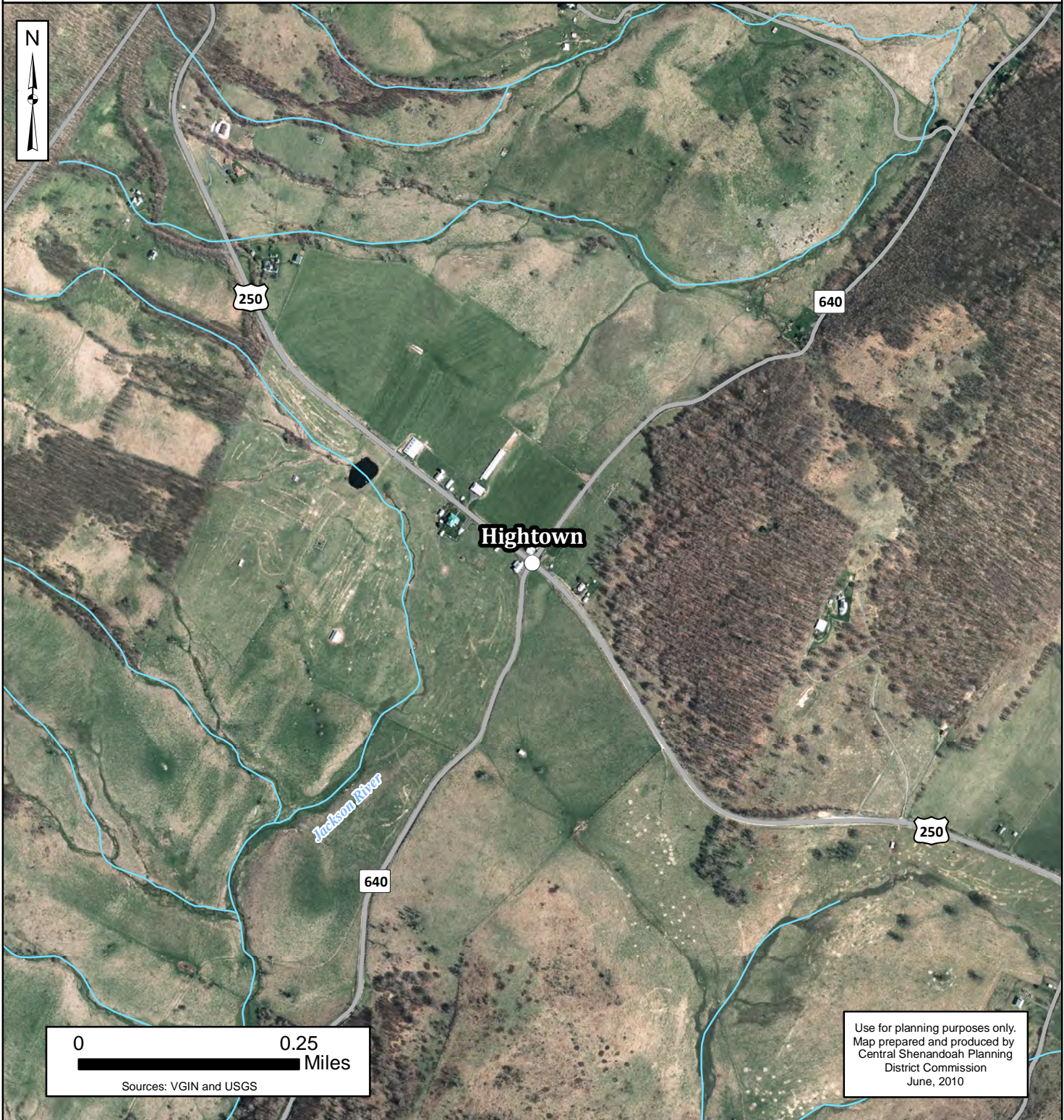
Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
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 District Commission  
 June, 2010

- Populated Places
- Road
- Hydrology





# County of Highland - Hightown



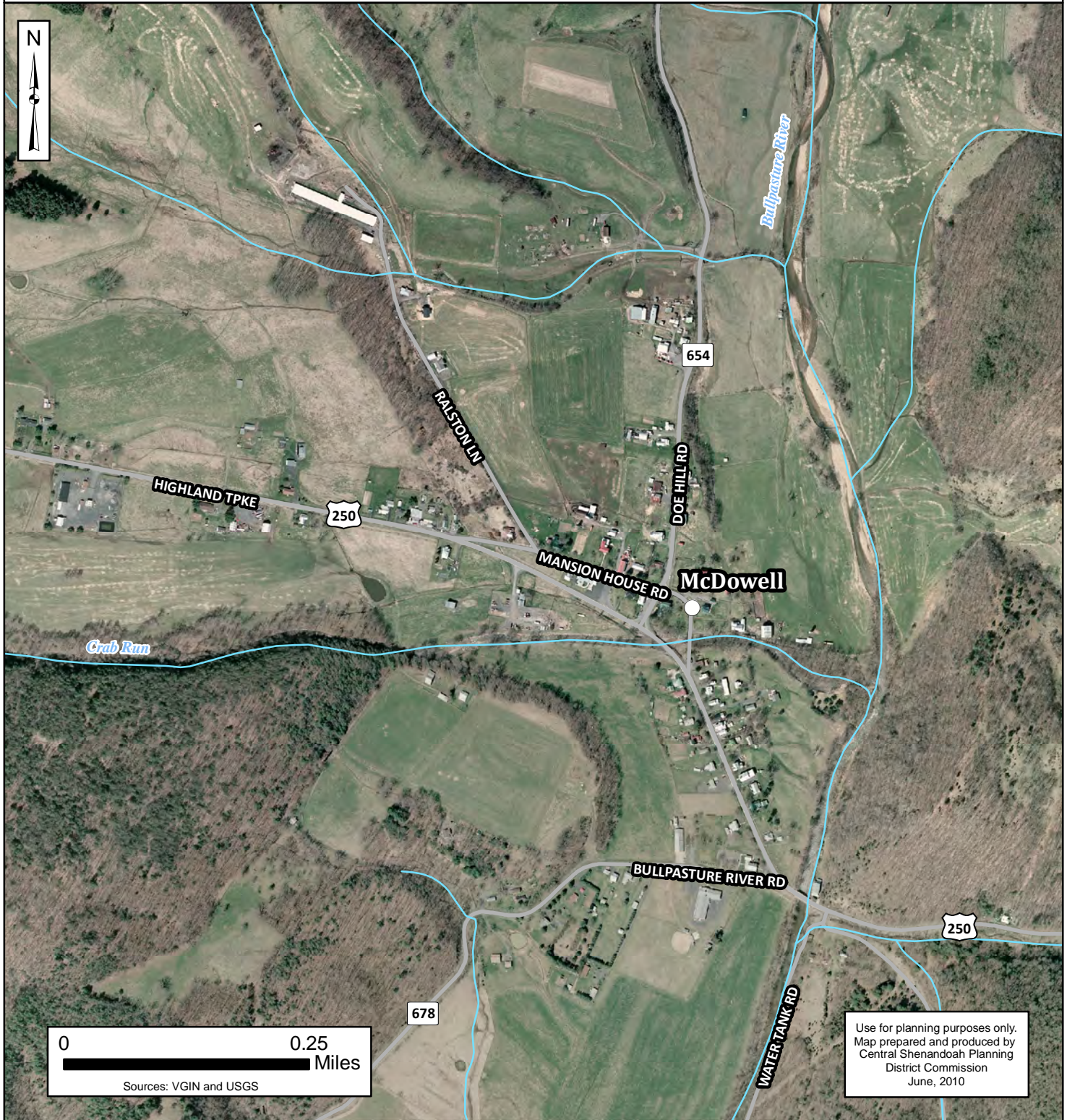
0 0.25 Miles  
Sources: VGIN and USGS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

- Populated Places
- Road
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - McDowell



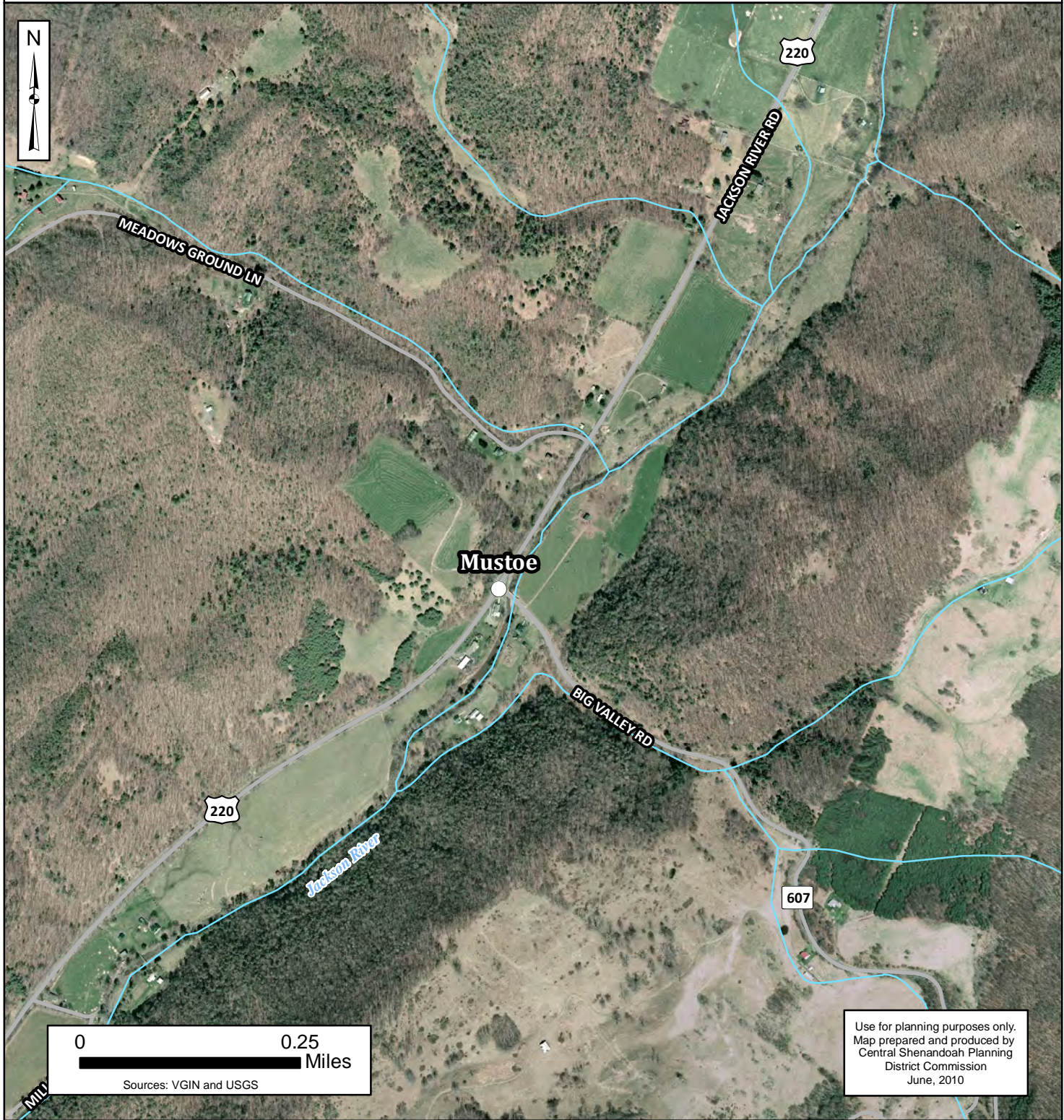
Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 June, 2010

0 0.25 Miles  
 Sources: VGIN and USGS

- Populated Places
- Road
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Mustoe

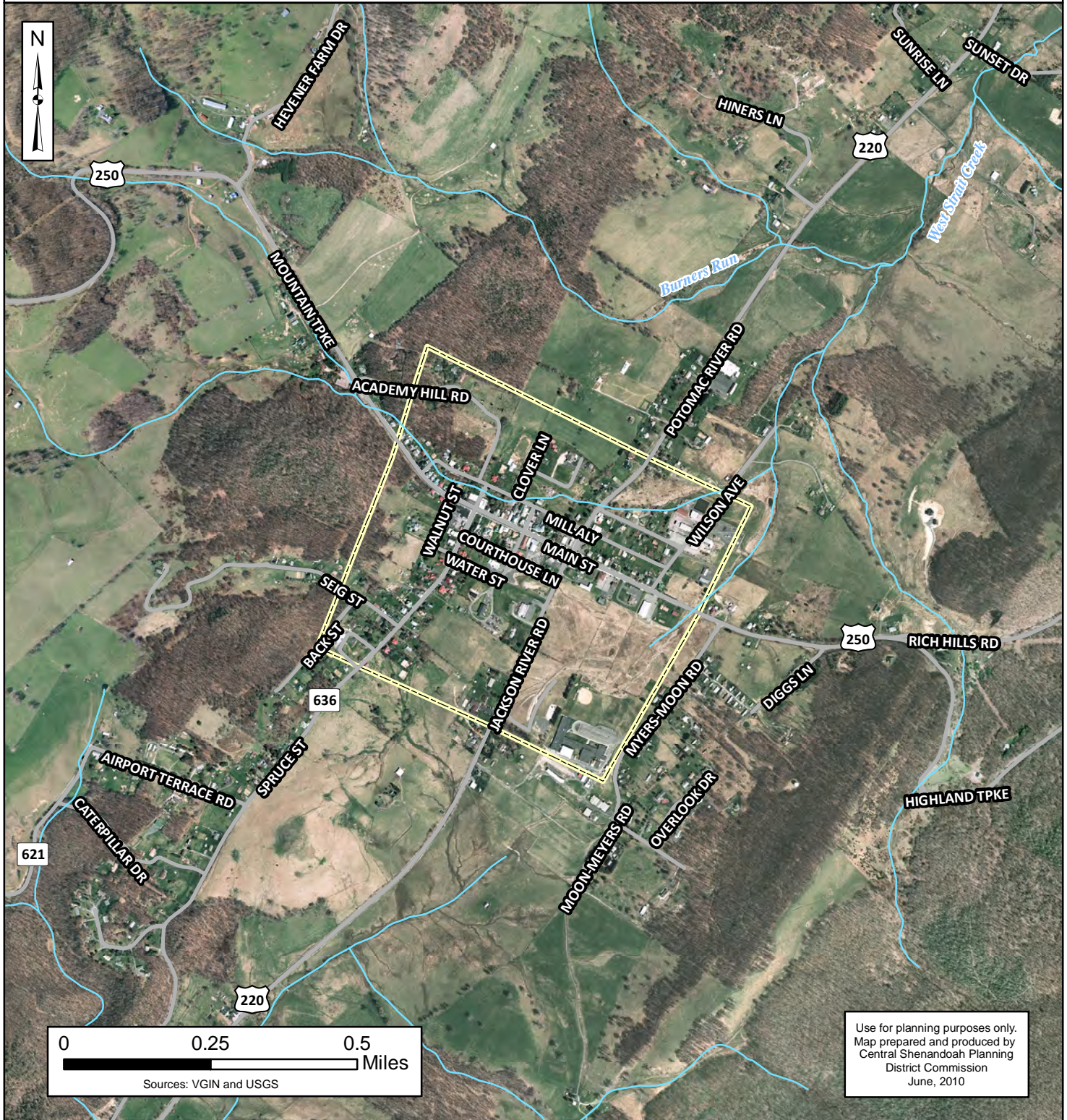


Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 June, 2010




- Populated Places
- Road
- Hydrology

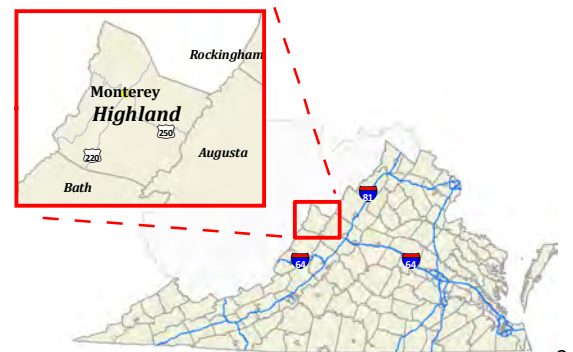
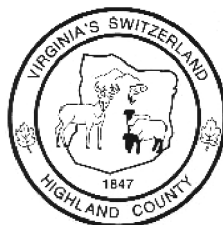


# County of Highland - Town of Monterey

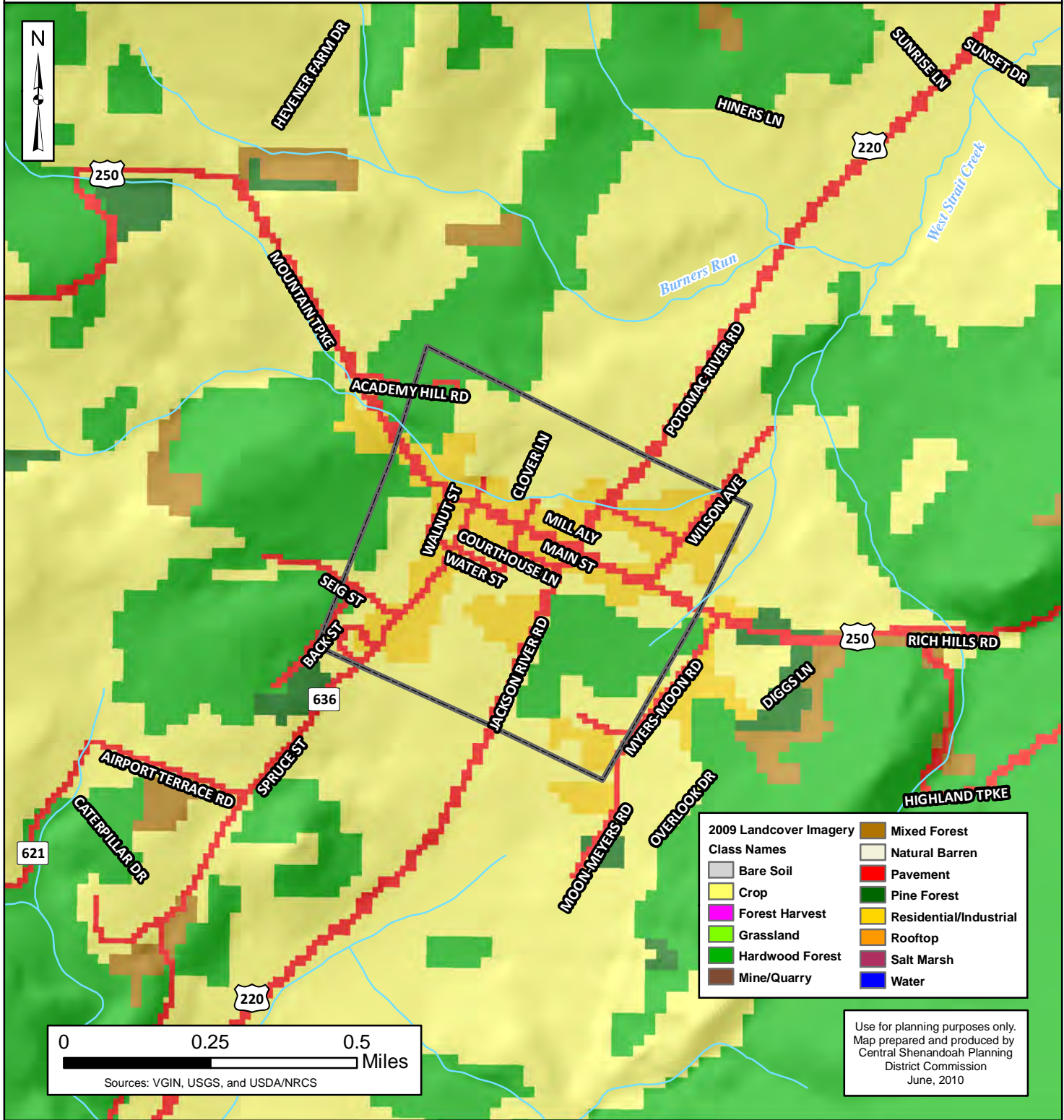


Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
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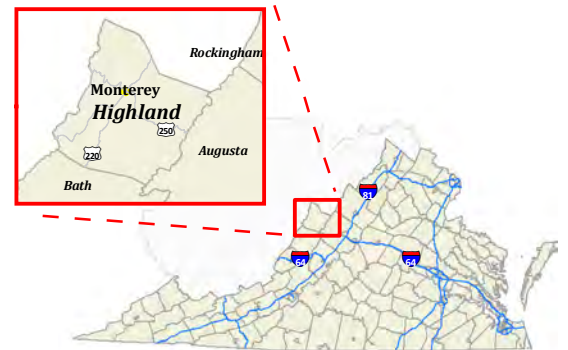
-  Town Limits
-  Major Roads
-  Hydrology



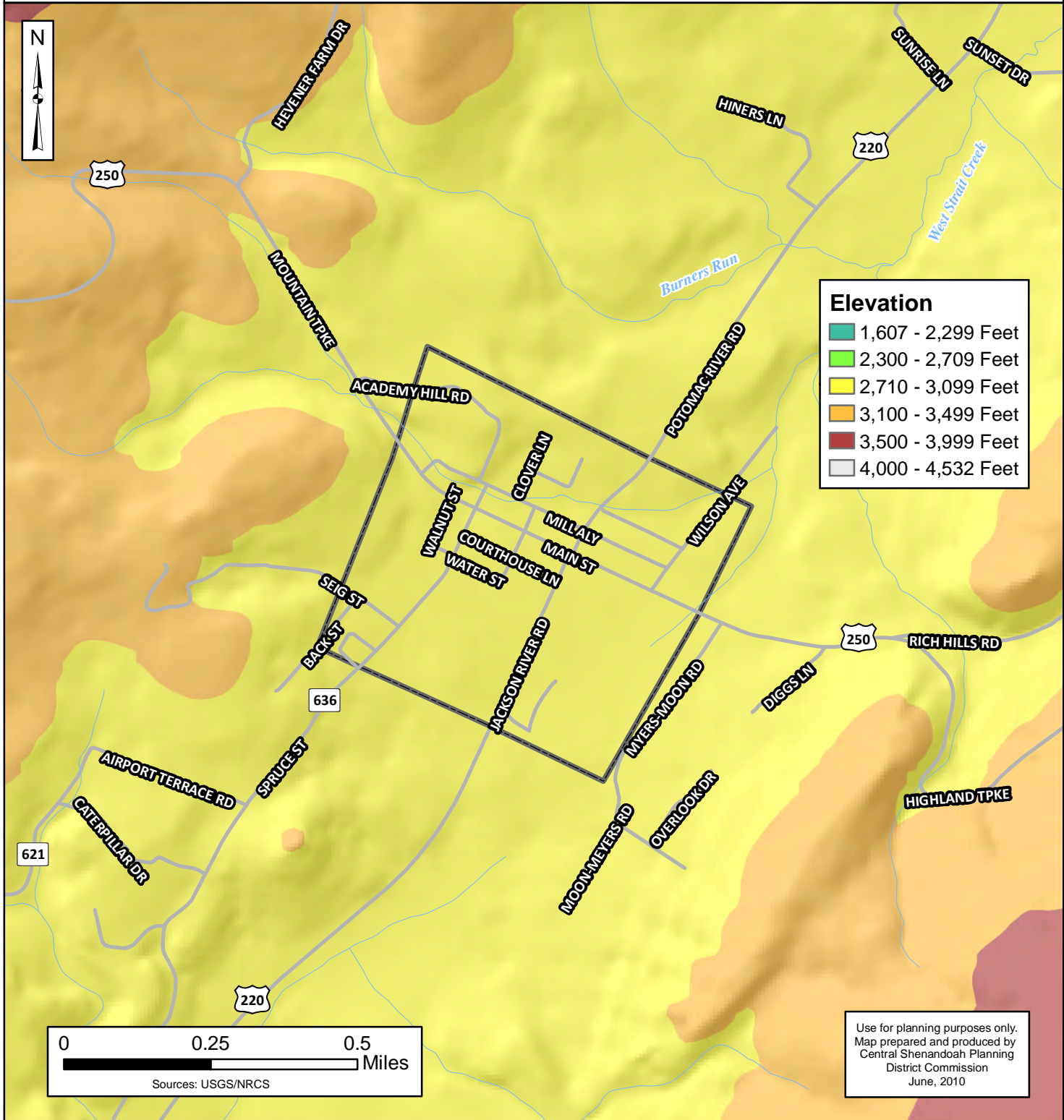
# County of Highland - Developed and Agricultural Land



Town Limits  
 Hydrology



# County of Highland - Elevation

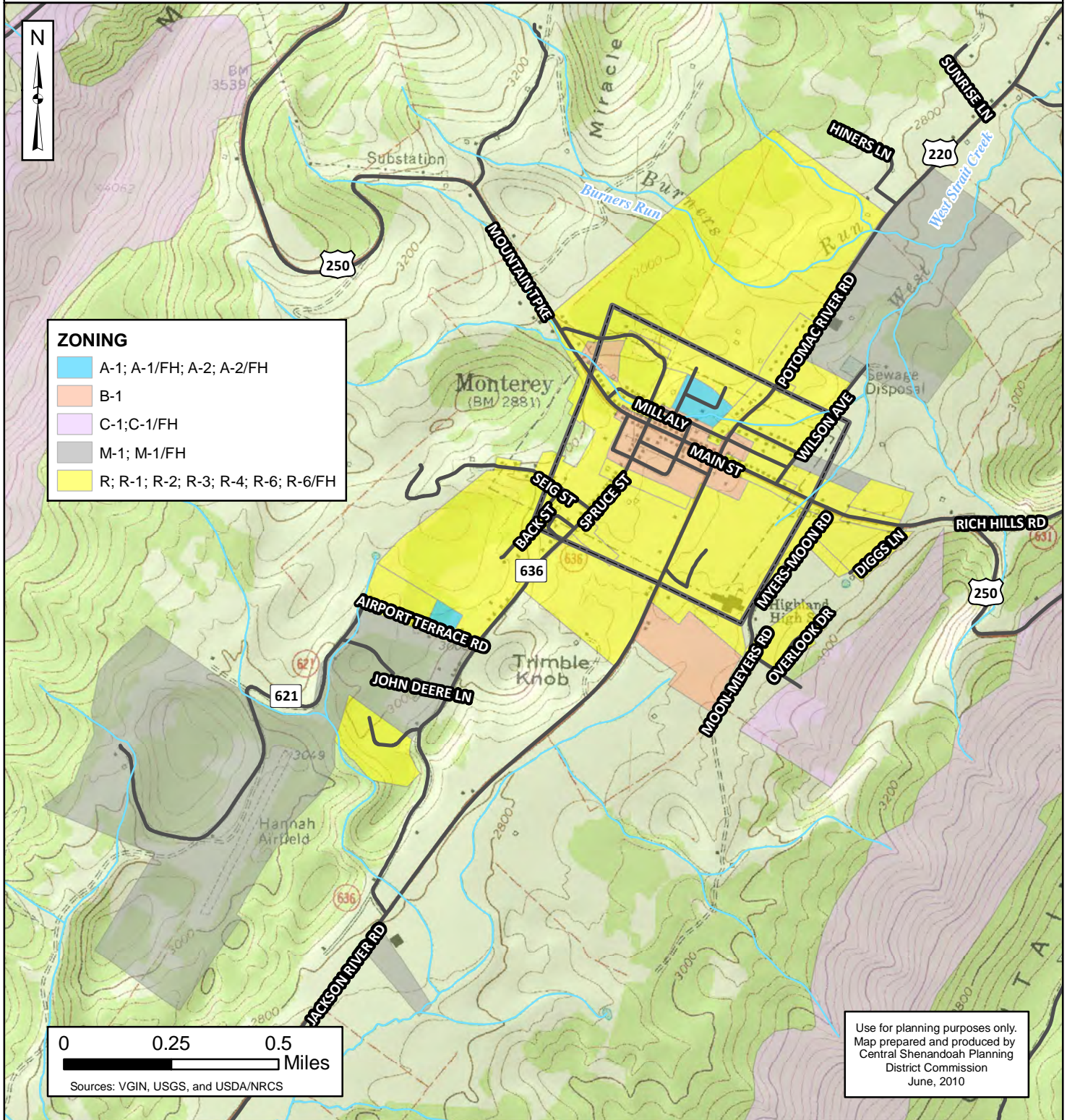


Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

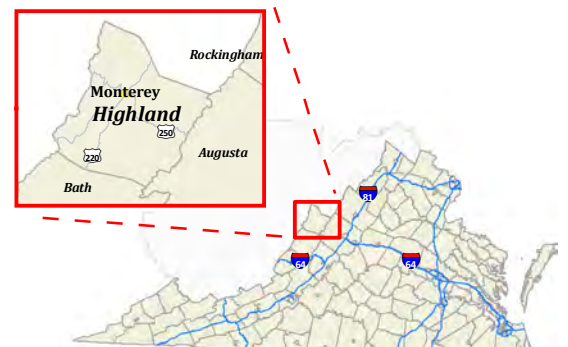
- Town Limits
- Road
- Hydrology



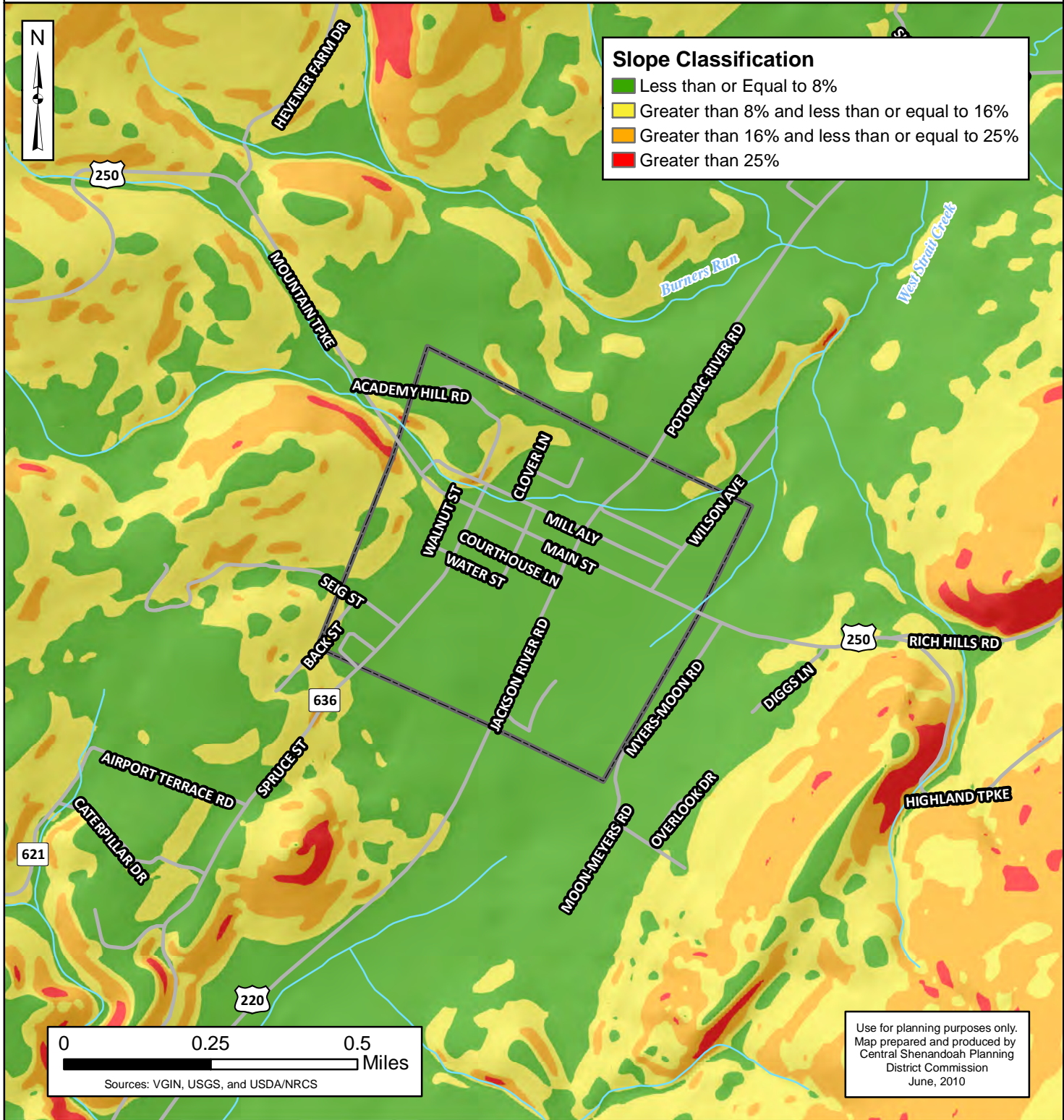
# County of Highland - Growth Area Plan






- Town Limits
- Road
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Slope Classification

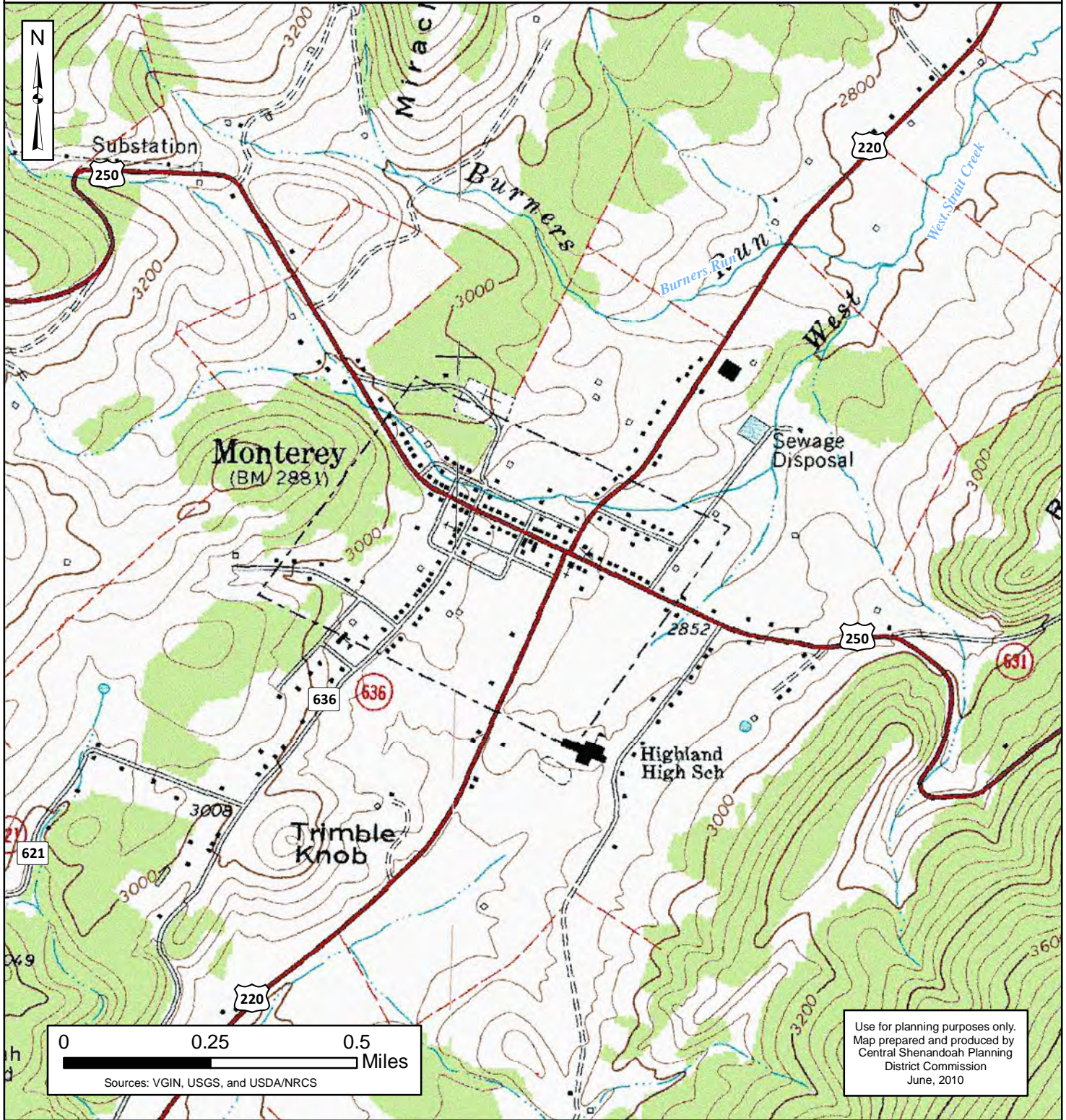


-  Town Limits
-  Road
-  Hydrology

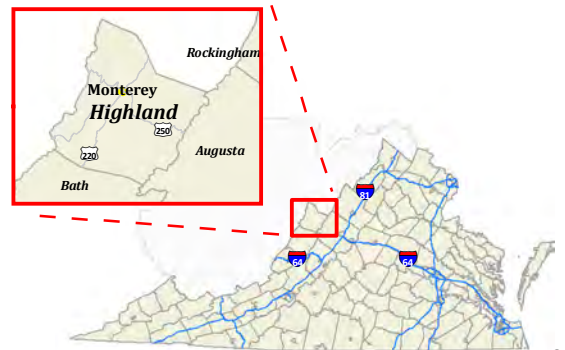




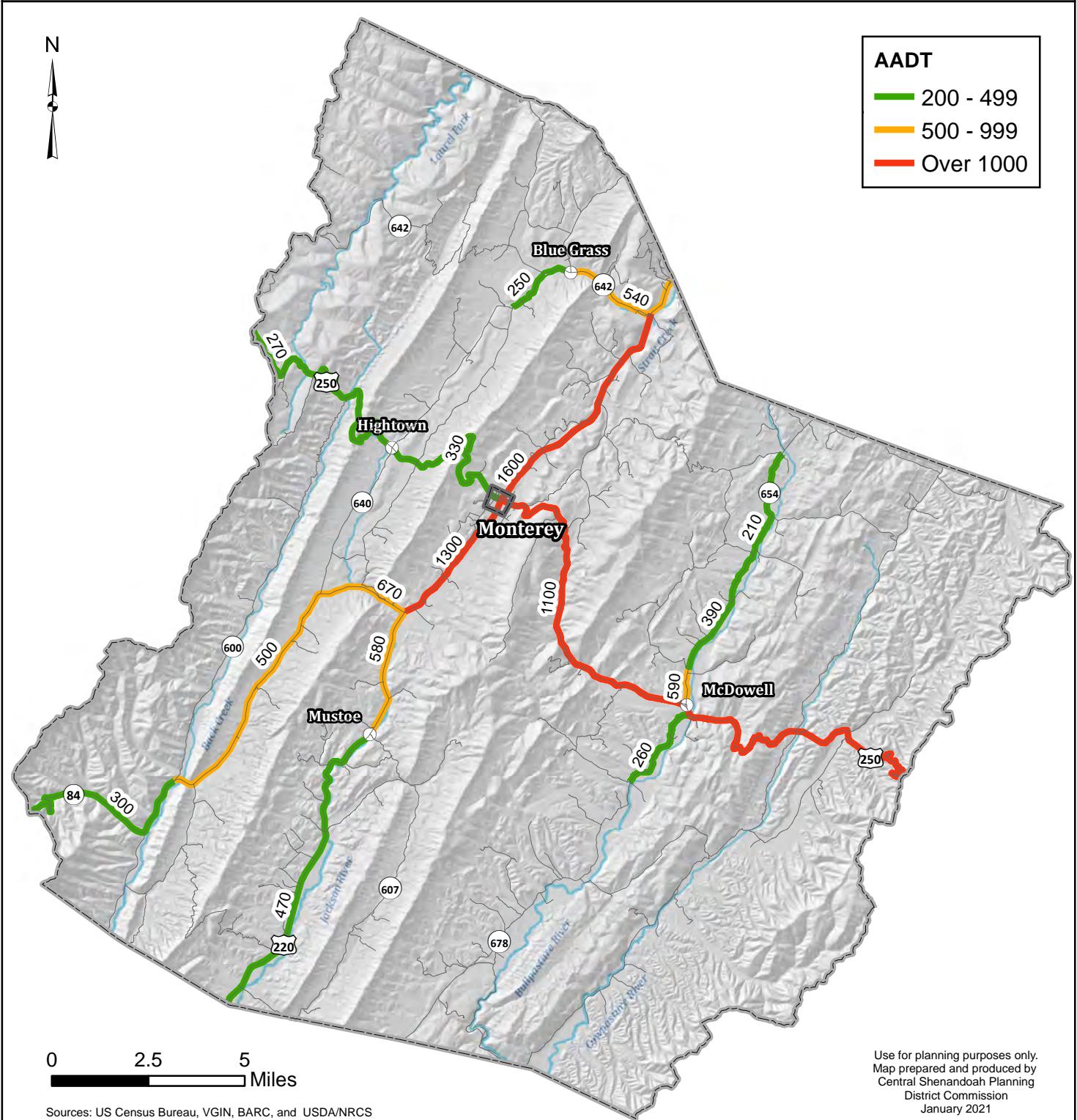
# County of Highland - Topographic Map








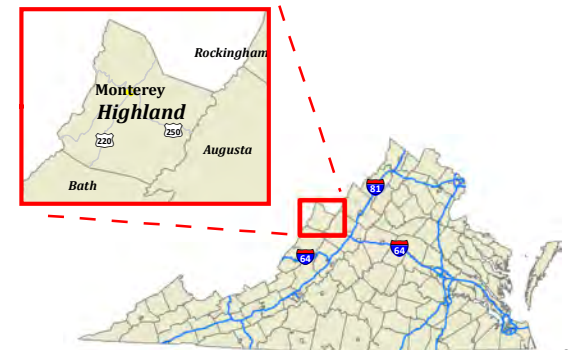
Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 June, 2010



# County of Highland - Average Annual Daily Traffic, 2019





-  Town Limits
-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Populated Places
-  Roads
-  Hydrology

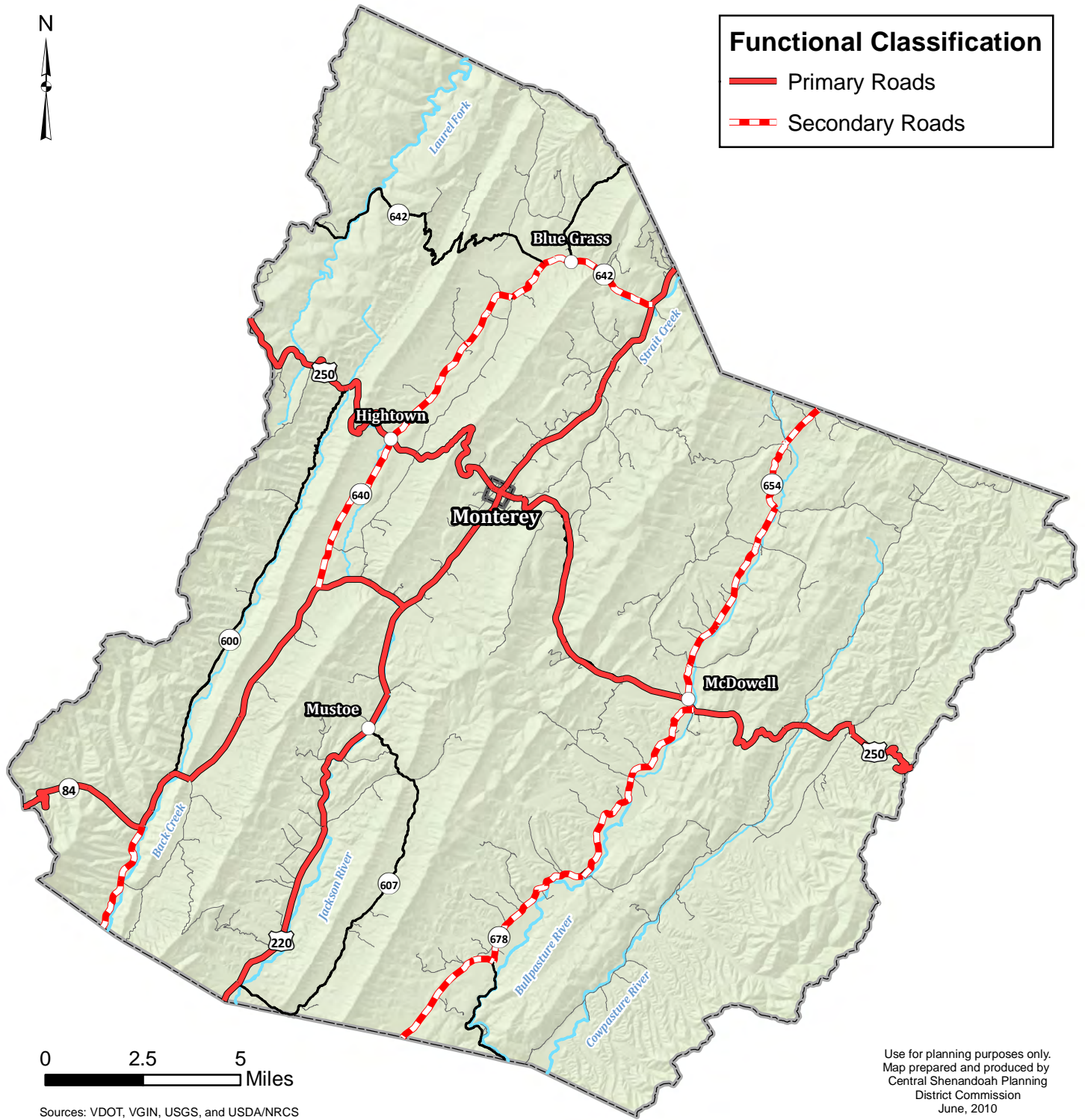


# County of Highland - Highway Classification System








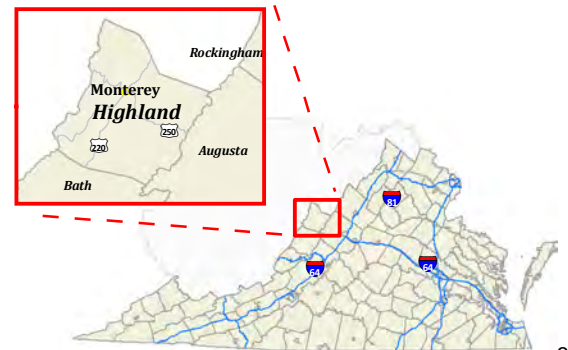
## Functional Classification

-  Primary Roads
-  Secondary Roads



Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 June, 2010

-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Town Limits
-  Populated Places
-  Major Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Hydrology

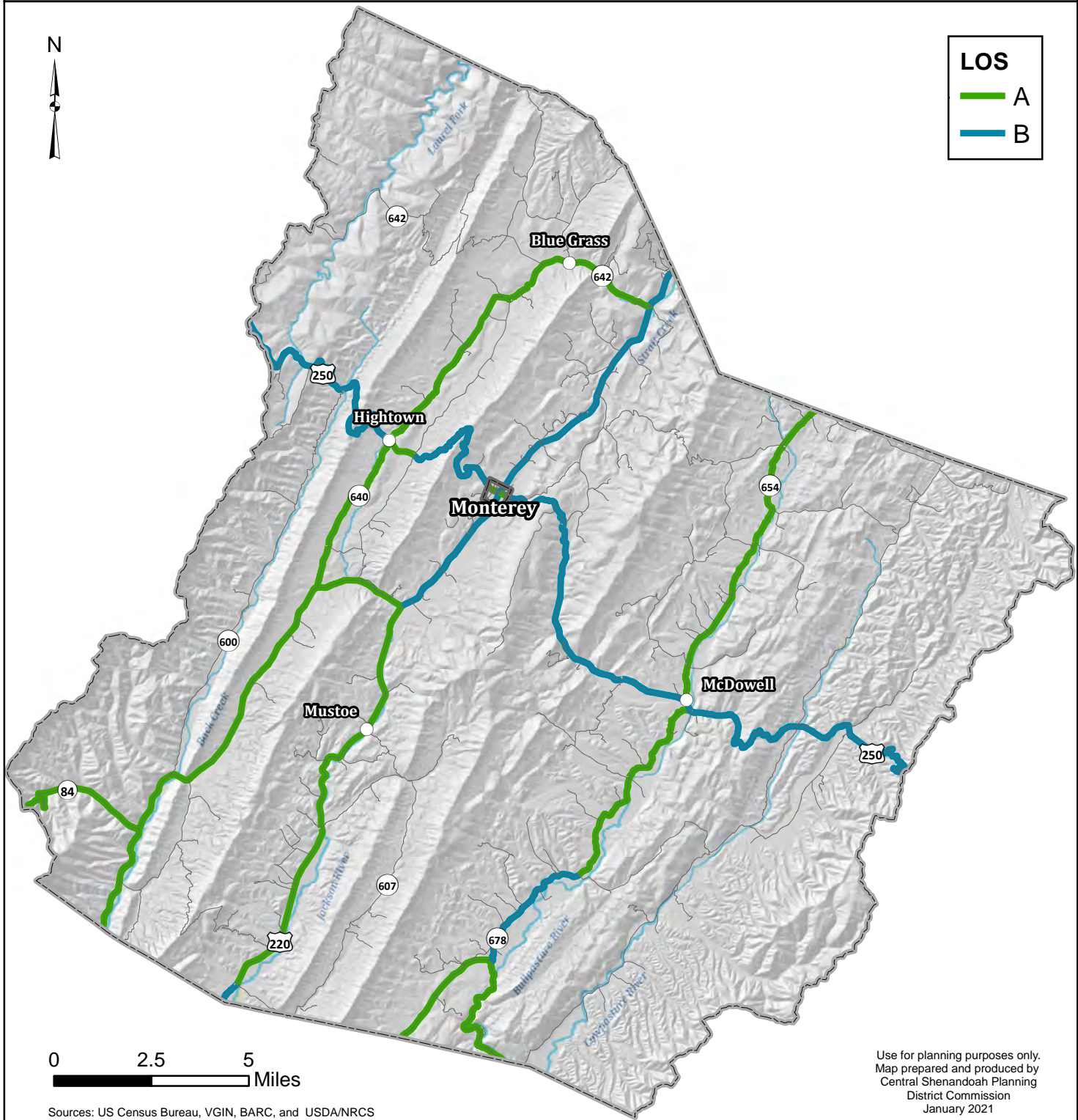


# County of Highland - Current Level of Service, 2019



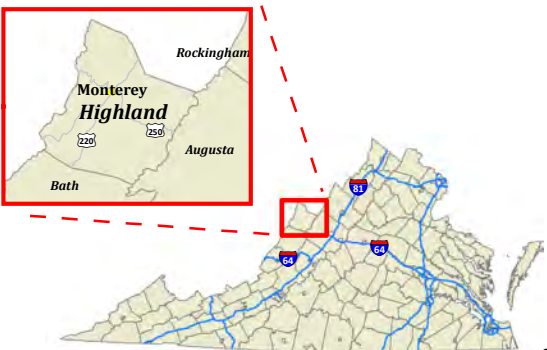
**LOS**

- A
- B

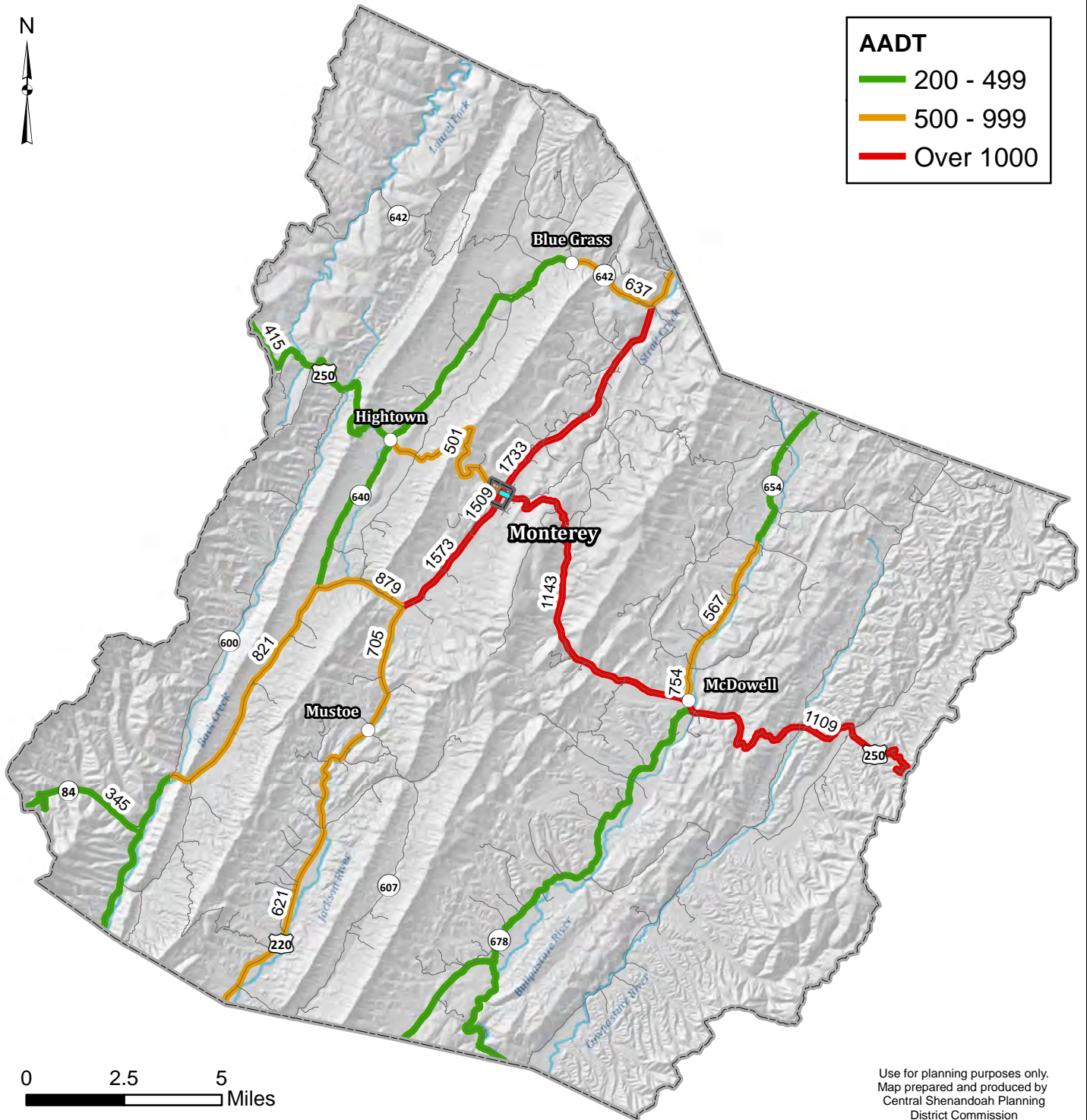
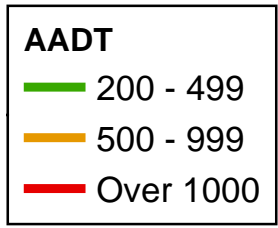


Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 January 2021

- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology








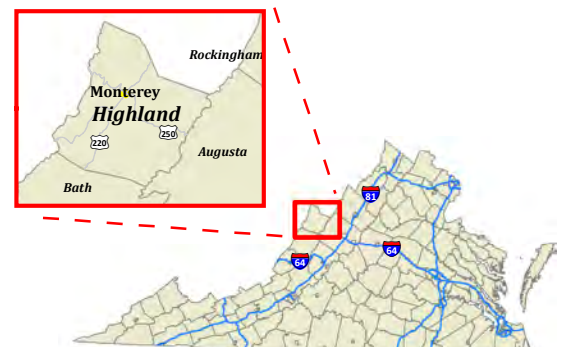
# County of Highland - Average Annual Daily Traffic, 2045



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
January 2021

-  Town Limits
-  Highland Co. Boundary
-  Populated Places
-  Roads
-  Hydrology

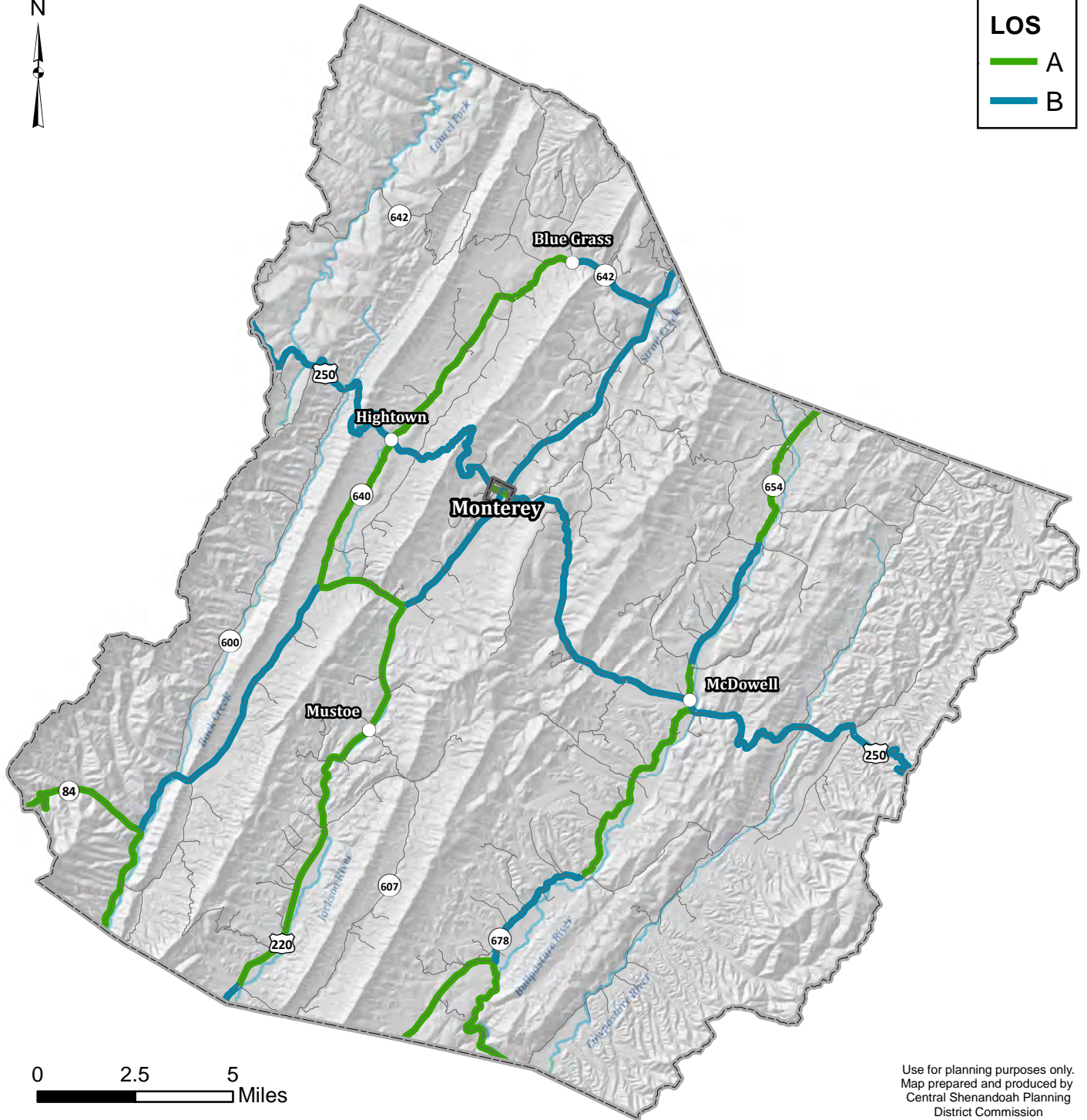


# County of Highland - Projected Level of Service, 2045



**LOS**

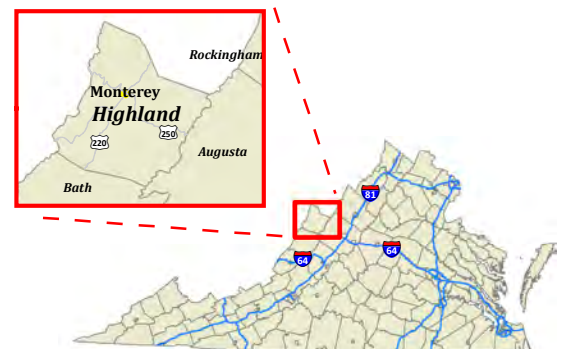
- A
- B



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
January 2021

- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology

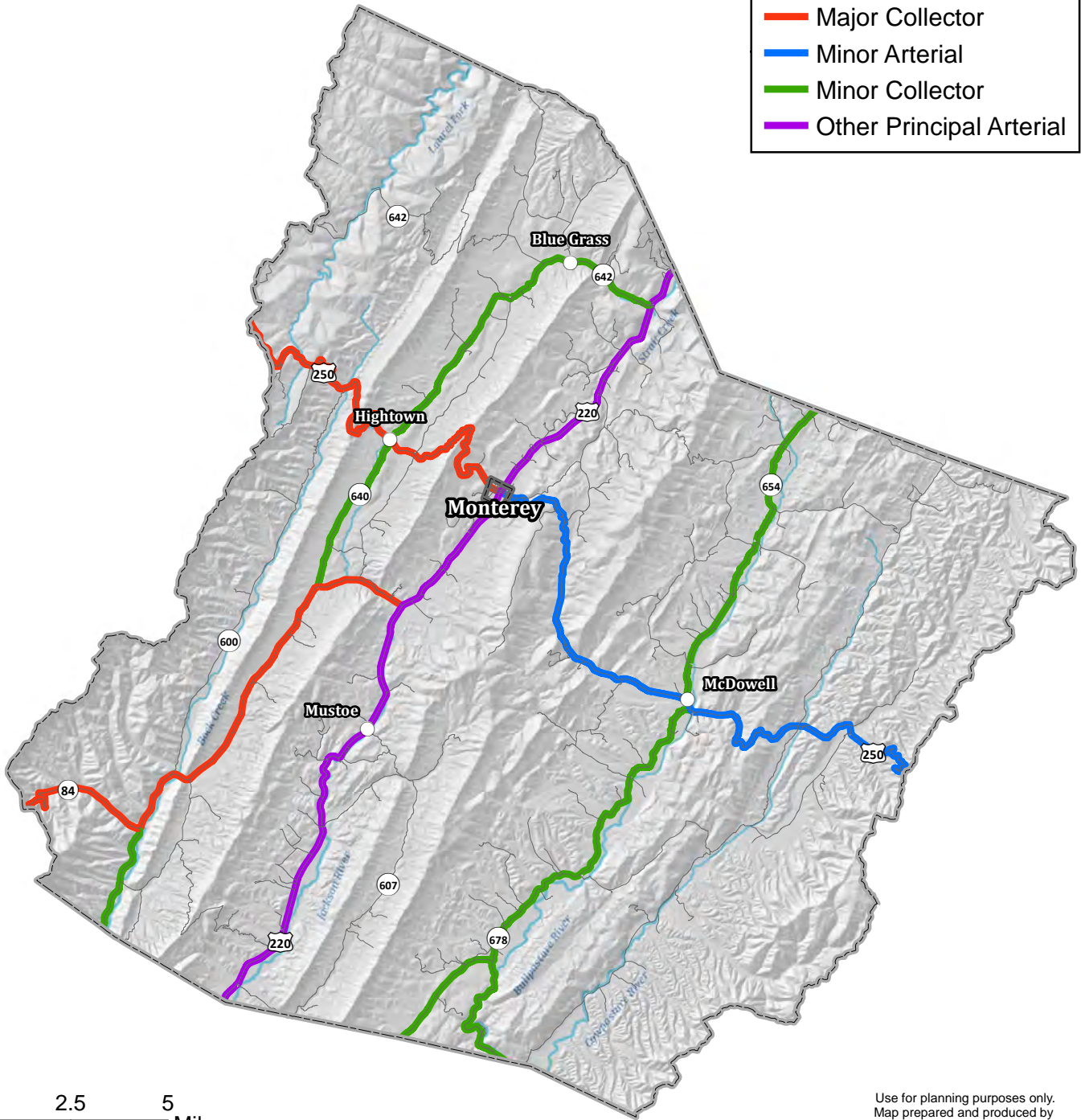


# County of Highland - Functional Classification



**Functional Class**

- Major Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Minor Collector
- Other Principal Arterial

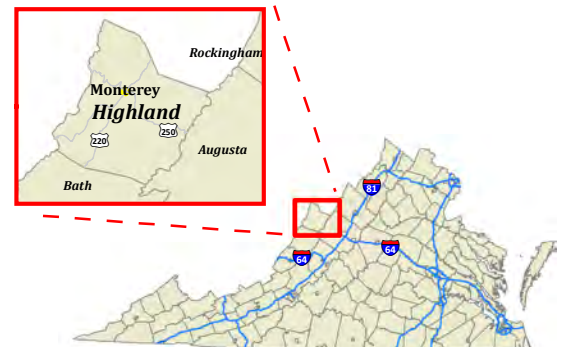


0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
January 2021

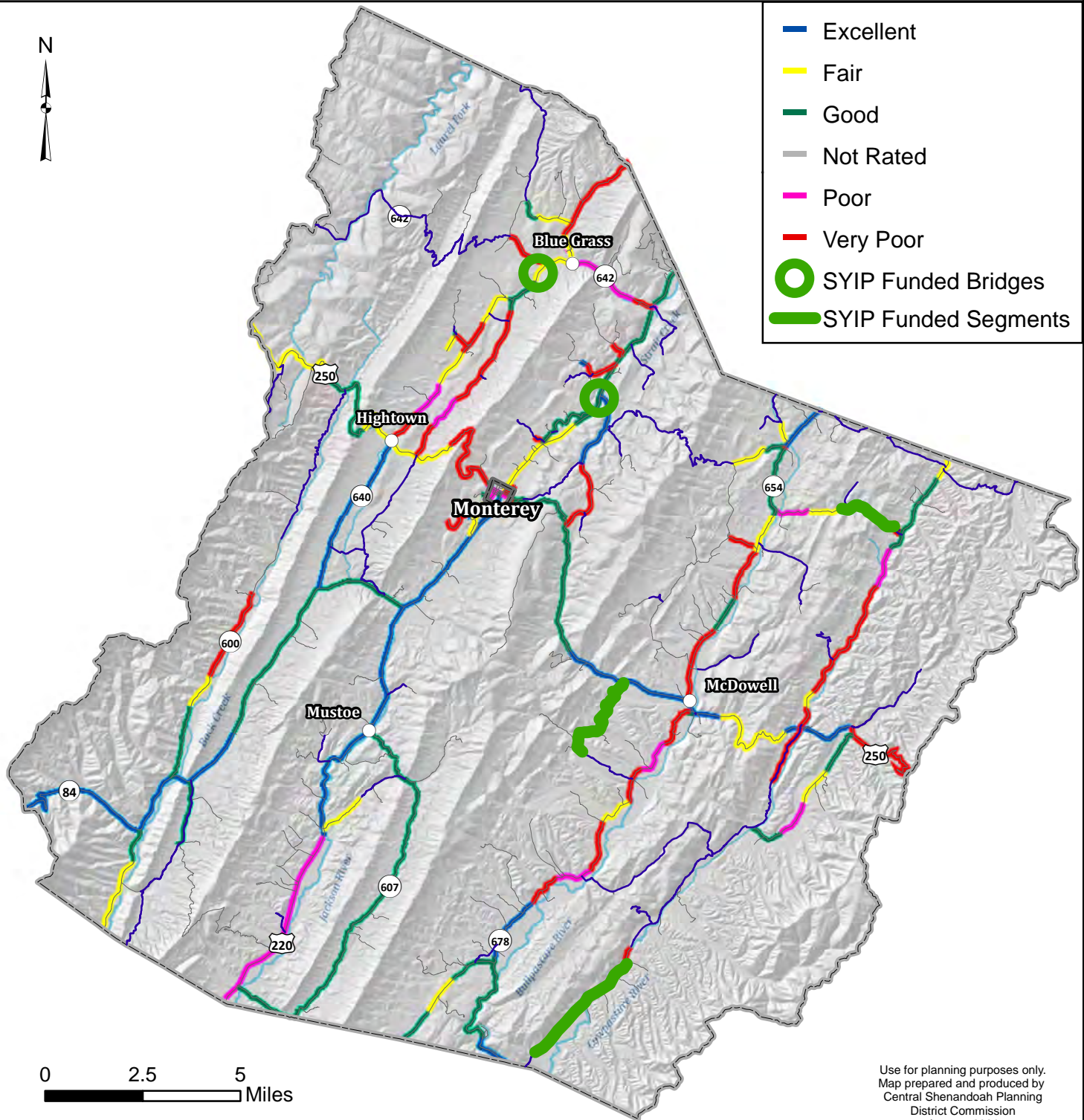
- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Pavement Conditions



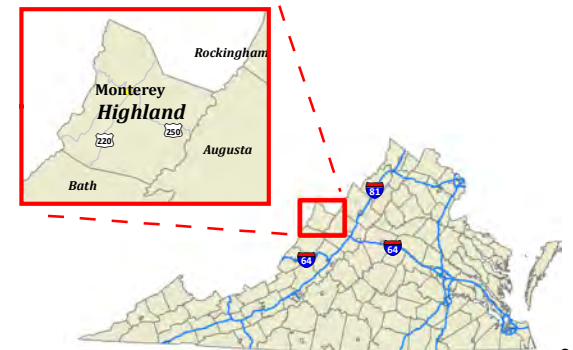
- Excellent
- Fair
- Good
- Not Rated
- Poor
- Very Poor
- SYIP Funded Bridges
- ▬ SYIP Funded Segments



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
 Map prepared and produced by  
 Central Shenandoah Planning  
 District Commission  
 January 2021  
 VDOT Maintenance Division, Fugro Roadware, Inc.

- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology

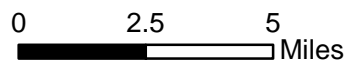
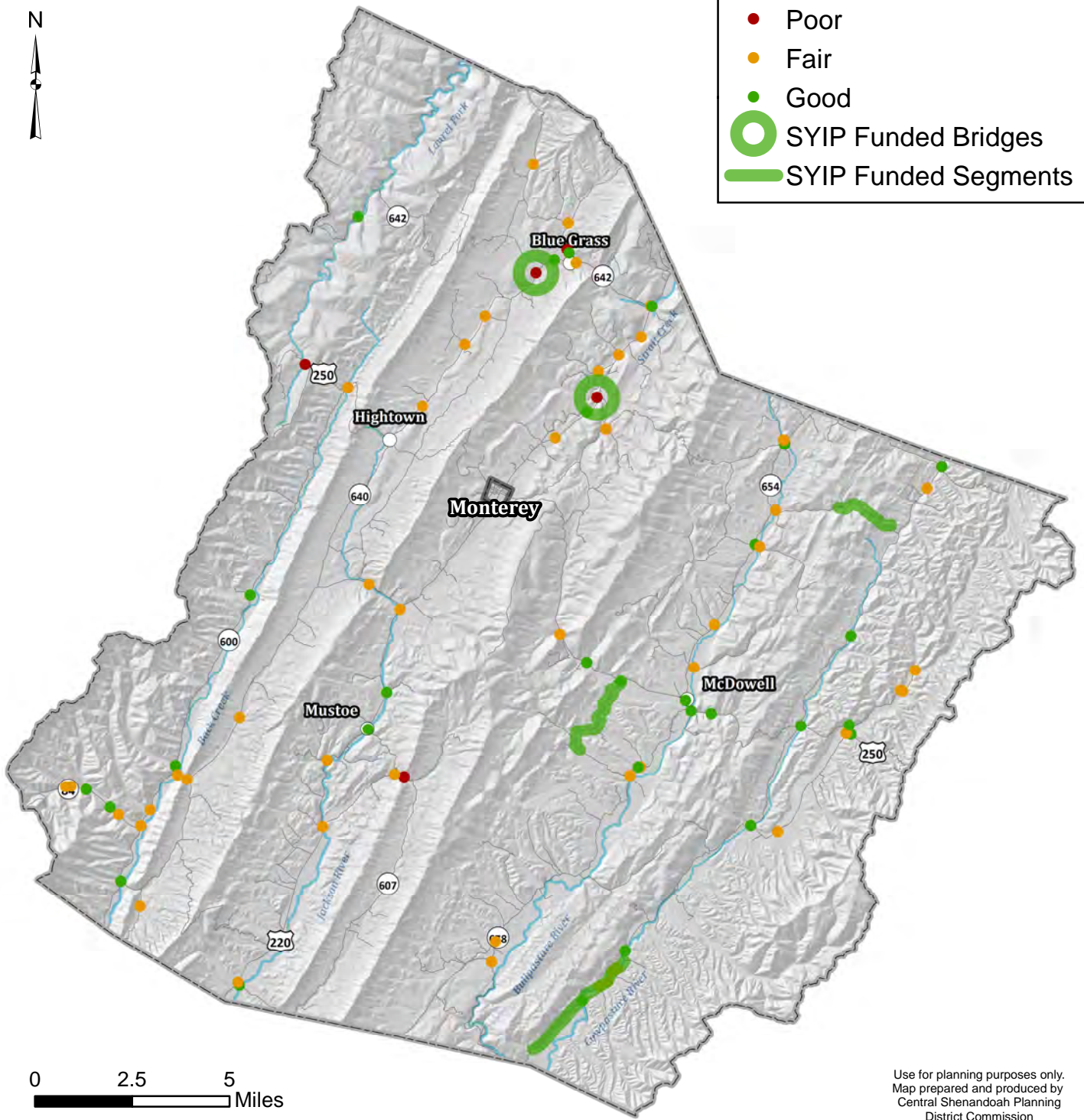




# County of Highland - Bridge Location and Condition



- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- SYIP Funded Bridges
- SYIP Funded Segments



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
January 2021

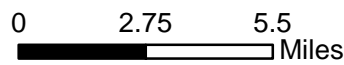
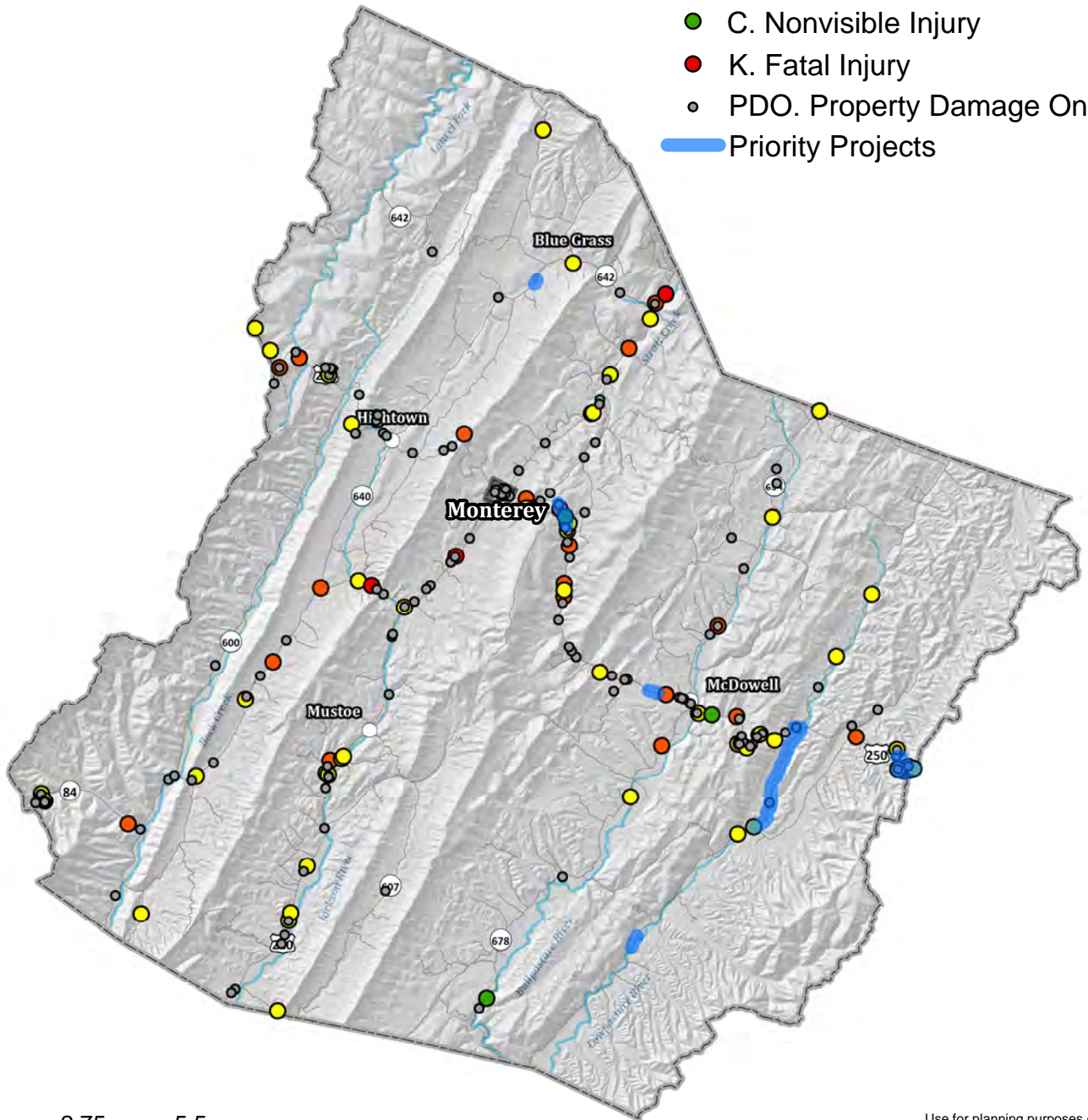
- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Crashes, Jan 2015 - Sep 2020



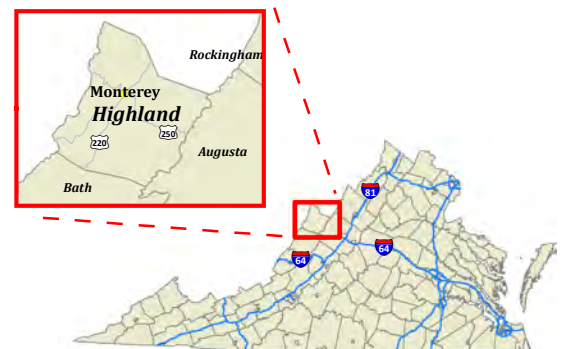
- A. Severe Injury
- B. Visible Injury
- C. Nonvisible Injury
- K. Fatal Injury
- PDO. Property Damage Only
- Priority Projects



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
January 2021

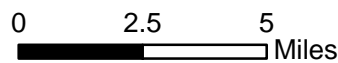
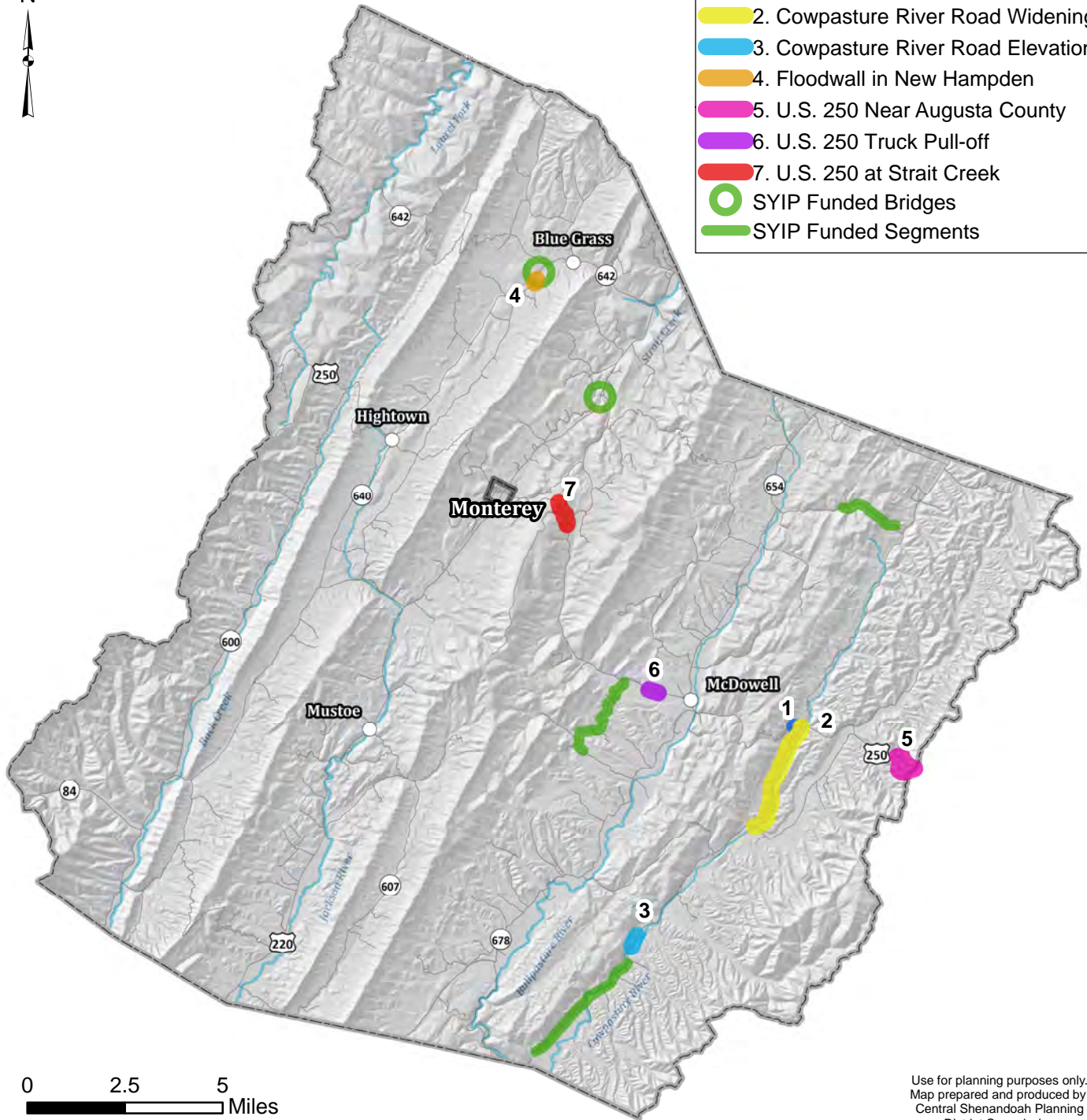
- Town Limits
- Highland Co. Boundary
- Populated Places
- Roads
- Hydrology



# County of Highland - Priority Projects and SYIP Projects



- 1. U.S. 250 East Truck Pull-off
- 2. Cowpasture River Road Widening
- 3. Cowpasture River Road Elevation
- 4. Floodwall in New Hampden
- 5. U.S. 250 Near Augusta County
- 6. U.S. 250 Truck Pull-off
- 7. U.S. 250 at Strait Creek
- SYIP Funded Bridges
- SYIP Funded Segments



Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
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District Commission  
January 2021

- Town Limits
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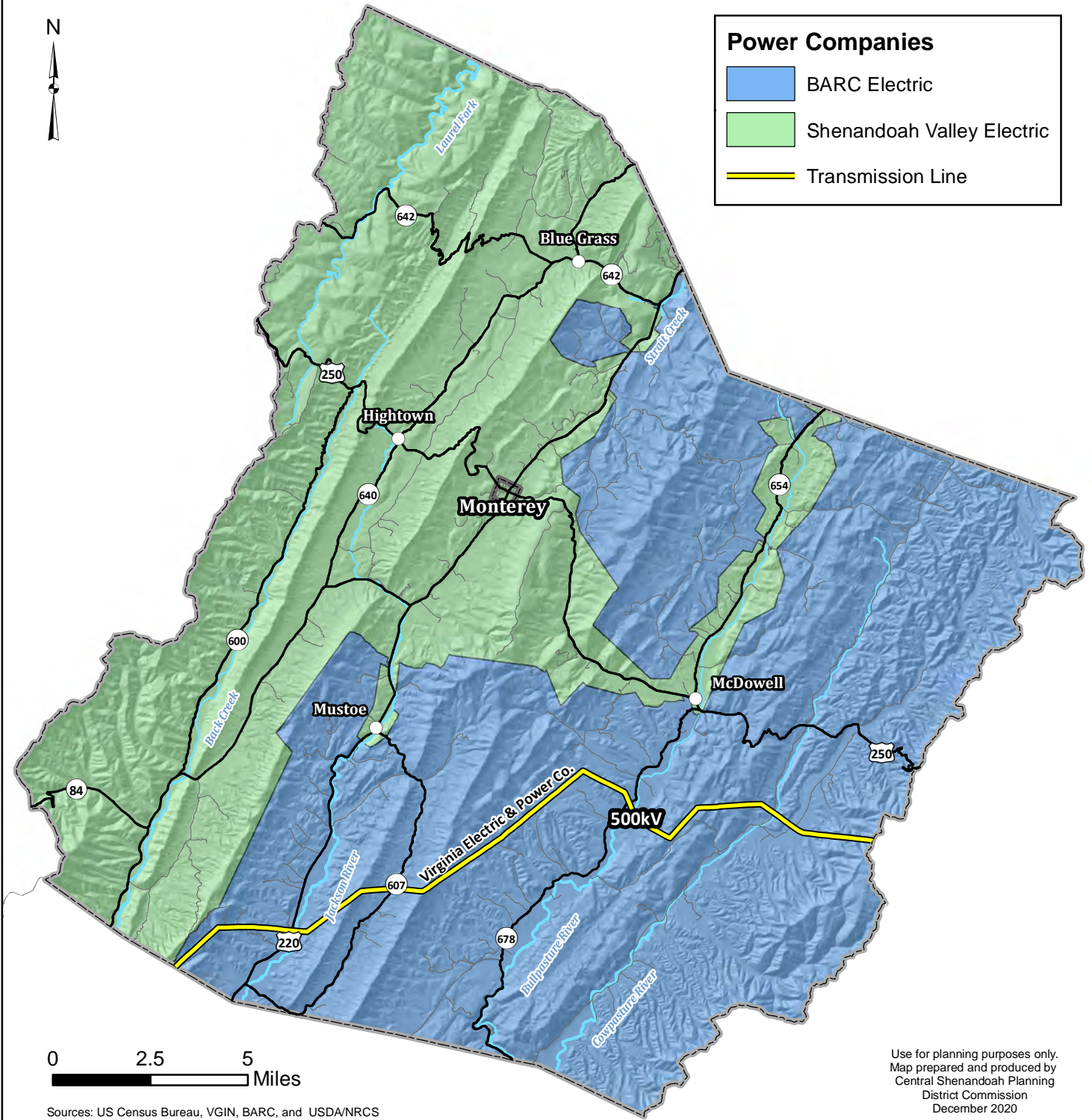


# County of Highland - Power Companies Service Areas



## Power Companies

- BARC Electric
- Shenandoah Valley Electric
- Transmission Line



0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: US Census Bureau, VGIN, BARC, and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
December 2020




- Town Limits
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- Roads
- Hydrology

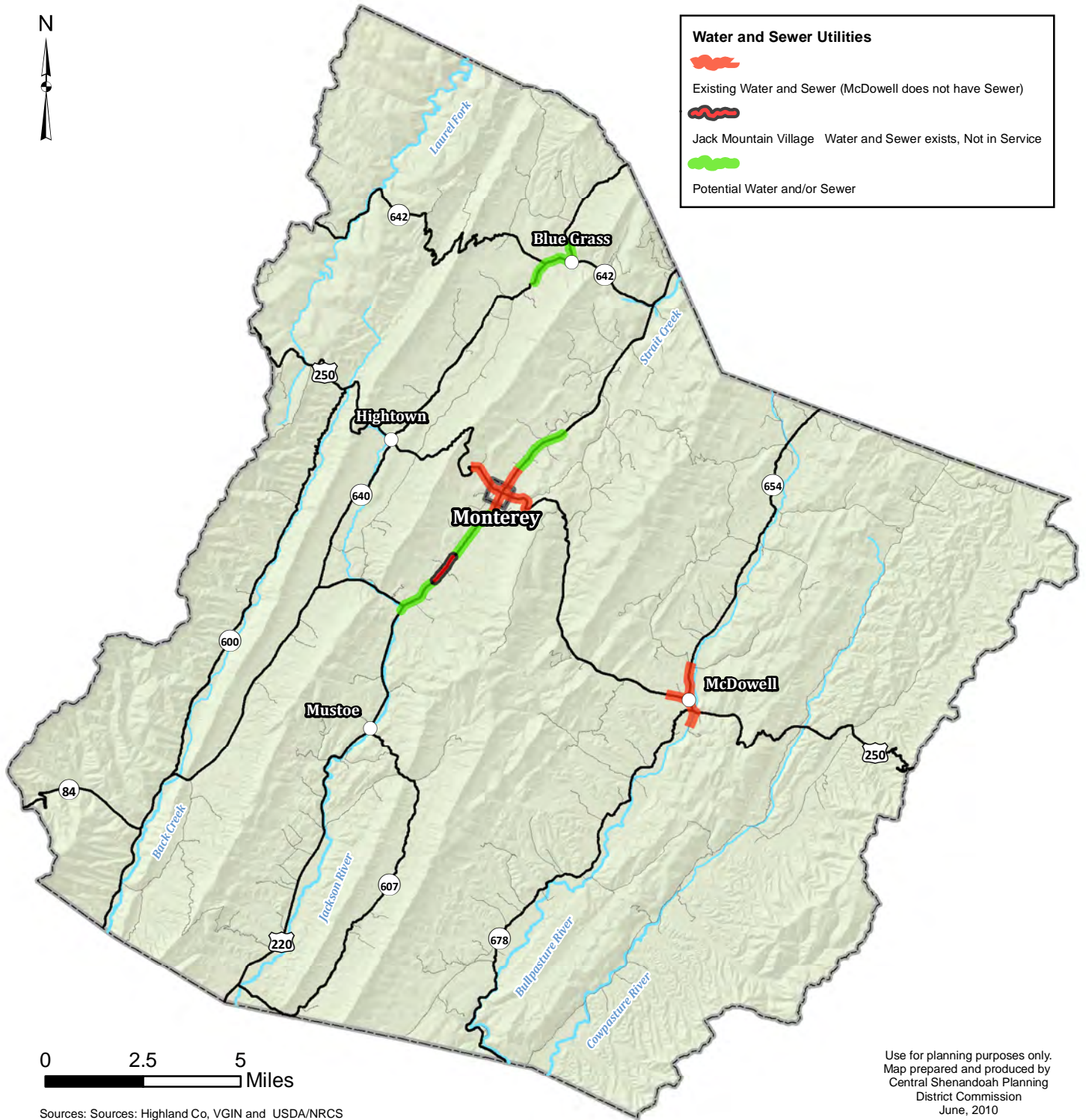


# County of Highland - Sewer and Water Infrastructure



## Water and Sewer Utilities






-  Existing Water and Sewer (McDowell does not have Sewer)
-  Jack Mountain Village Water and Sewer exists, Not in Service
-  Potential Water and/or Sewer



0 2.5 5 Miles

Sources: Sources: Highland Co, VGIN and USDA/NRCS

Use for planning purposes only.  
Map prepared and produced by  
Central Shenandoah Planning  
District Commission  
June, 2010

-  Town Limits
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-  Roads
-  Hydrology

