

# Preston County Vision Report



**Sera Zegre**

Downstream Strategies

219 Wall Street  
Morgantown, WV 26505  
304.292.2450

[www.downstreamstrategies.com](http://www.downstreamstrategies.com)

PREPARED FOR:  
City of Kingwood

313 Tunnelton Street  
Kingwood, WV 26537  
304.329.1225  
[citykgwd@wvdsi.net](mailto:citykgwd@wvdsi.net)

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**Downstream  
Strategies**  
building capacity for sustainability

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this vision report is to document and analyze the data collected via surveys and town hall meetings during the visioning efforts in Preston County between 2005 and 2006. This report also serves as a tool for strategic planning and decision-making in the county and its communities, as well as a resource for grant or technical assistance applications. This vision report is intended to reflect perspectives of Preston County residents, and give back to community members after their participation in the visioning process.

The survey results highlight assets and issues identified by Preston County's residents. Of the assets listed, two reference the county's natural environment and the beauty and activities the environment offers; the other assets listed include "nice people" and a "quiet" and "safe community." Of the issues listed, "lack of jobs and poverty" and "poor school system" were identified as the first and second issues, respectively. "Lack of entertainment for both youth and adults" was ranked the fourth most important issue by adult residents. Adult and student residents both identified "drugs and alcohol use" as a top issue.

The survey results also highlight issue importance; the most important issues for adult residents included the following: create jobs (100%), protect the environment (96%), prevent crime (96%), construct shops (96%), improve access to emergency services (95%), improve community appearance (95%), and improve the school system (95%).

Town hall meeting results highlight the following topics: community's appearance, jobs, school system, roads, health and wellness, and what residents do not want in the county. Meeting attendees identified means to improve their community's physical appearance, including the following: clean up property, pick up litter, maintain yards, improve roads and signage, impose ordinances and enforcement, and develop disposal programs; they expressed the need for solutions to involve citizens in these efforts. Types of jobs and industry desired by residents included the following: jobs with tax base and benefits, clean industry, industry that uses natural resources, tourism and recreation, retail and restaurants, and overall job diversity. Meeting attendees offered suggestions to attract jobs to the county, summarized by the following: plan growth; improve infrastructure, roads, education and internet and cable capabilities; support existing businesses; and use partnerships. Most discussed school system-related needs included the following: facility improvements, funding (via a bond/levy), limiting consolidation, increasing trust and communication with the school board, improving other communication, recruiting good teachers, and addressing busing issues. Meeting attendees discussed the need for improvements to roads in the county, including improving connections, maintenance and construction, planning, as well as funding and other assistance.

Meeting attendees did not want to see the following in the county: unplanned or uncontrolled growth and development, loss of farms and farmland, eyesores, Wal-Mart, gambling or strip clubs, drugs or crime, school consolidation, and loss of values.

Health and wellness-related topics were further analyzed for the Kingwood Pool Committee. This analysis demonstrates community awareness of recreation, health, and wellness needs, as well as support for improved recreation, health, and wellness-related activities and options in Preston County.

Related only to health and wellness-related topics, survey results indicate the most important health and wellness-related issues to adult and student residents included the following: preventing crime (96%), expanding youth programs and activities (93%), and improving community health and wellness (93%). Student residents also highly ranked the following issues: develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers (88%); create public access to outdoor recreation (87%); and build public facilities like recreation buildings and playgrounds (83%). Out of all the issues offered in the survey, five health and wellness-related issues ranked in the top 15 most important issues for adult residents, including: prevent crime, expand youth programs and activities, improve community health and wellness, attract young professionals, and improve senior citizen services. Additional issues ranked by the student sample included:

create public access to outdoor recreation; develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers; and build public facilities. In open-ended questions, lack of entertainment for youth and adults was identified as an important issue by adult and student residents.

Related only to health and wellness-related topics, town hall meeting results indicate residents recognized health-related problems within the county. Residents also voiced support for increased education and improved options as means to improve health and wellness. Residents offered specific programming suggestions, and identified key partnerships related to improving community health and wellness, including: schools, businesses, seniors, civic groups, the health department, the extension office, and those involved in public transportation.

The visioning data presented in this report offer a variety of specific suggestions from Preston County residents. Some changes in the county have occurred as a result of the visioning effort, which can be highlighted as examples of citizens and municipalities responding to an issue and taking action to improve the situation. Alongside these success stories, the issues presented in this vision report also highlight potential opportunities for the county. The survey results describe relative importance, and the town hall meeting results describe in more detail community needs and solutions by topic. Readers of this vision report should note the interconnectedness of many of the issues and their solutions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was made possible through a contribution from Kingwood residents, Imre and Janet Szilagyi, who contributed to the City of Kingwood to promote planned decision-making in the city with the county and other municipalities.

We thank these funders, as well as all who participated in the visioning efforts in Preston County by residents and municipalities, including the City of Kingwood during 2005-2006. The creation of this document would have not been possible without the individual visions of those involved.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
PCEDA	Preston County Economic Development Authority
PCHD	Preston County Health Department
PCSD	Preston County Sherriff’s Department
PSC	Public Service District
RRC	Rowlesburg Revitalization Committee
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WVDHHR	West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
WVHAZ	West Virginia Hardwood Alliance Zone

# 1. INTRODUCTION

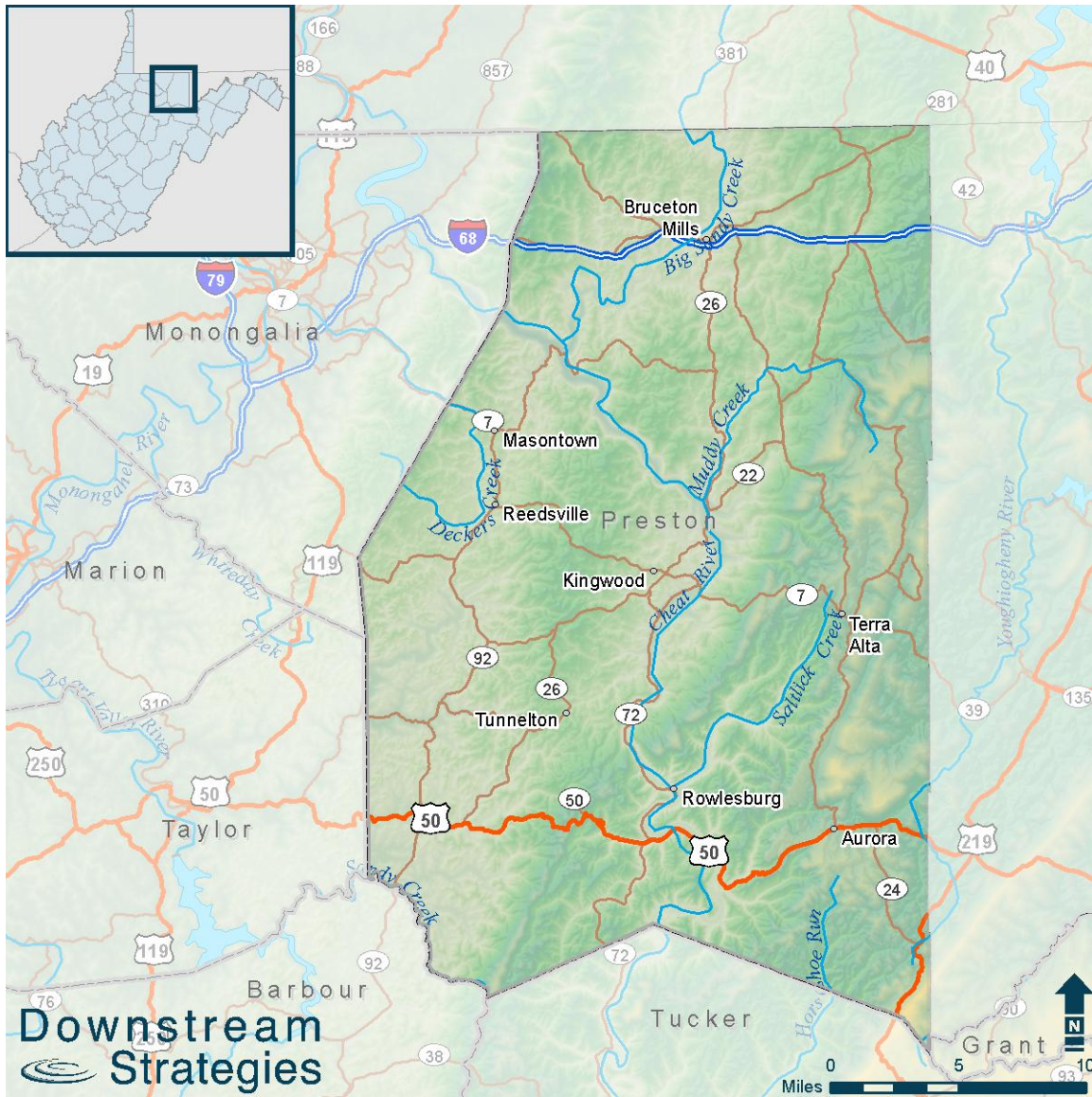
In summer 2010, Preston County residents Imre and Janet Szilagyι contributed monies to the City of Kingwood to promote planned decision-making in the city. Although the contribution primarily focused on assisting decision-making related to the Kingwood pool, one of the goals associated with the contribution focused on planning efforts with the county and other municipalities. This vision report for Preston County, based on the data collected from residents and stakeholders in the 2005-2006 visioning efforts, serves to lay a foundation for planned decision-making.

The primary purpose of this vision report is to document and analyze the data collected during the visioning process. This vision report is intended to serve as a community resource that reflects the voices of the residents of Preston County, giving back to community members after their participation in the visioning process. This report documents the past visioning efforts in Preston County, and serves as a tool for strategic planning and decision-making in the county and its surrounding communities. Health and wellness–related topics were further analyzed based on the needs of the Kingwood Pool Committee. This report can also serve as resource for applications for grants or technical assistance.

## 1.1 Visioning process background

Between 2005 and 2006, over \$20,000 and uncountable hours were spent on visioning efforts in Preston County (Figure 1) by residents and municipalities, including the City of Kingwood. The work was conducted by the Community Vision Foundation, which was funded through the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. Various notes and data exist from surveys and town hall meetings, but an actual report or vision document was never produced. Three committees focused on key issues identified in the meetings and surveys, including the following: Beautification, Education, and Economic Development. These committees worked in various ways to plan and implement visions related to their topics. Another product of the visioning efforts includes a logo for Preston County.

**Figure 1: Map of Preston County**



Note: Valley District includes Masontown and Reedsville.



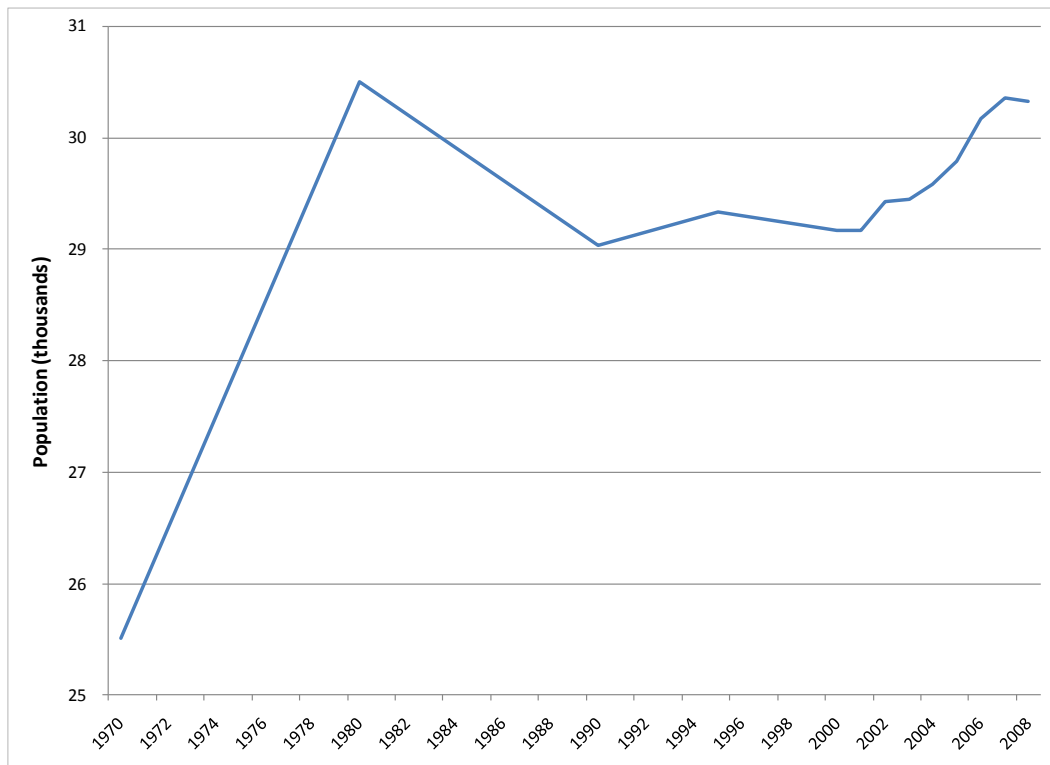
## 2. DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic data are social characteristics used to analyze a population. Demographic trends help describe changes over time, and can be used to identify needs and enhance decisions. Most demographic data is obtained from the United States (US) Census, which has been performed every ten years since 1790. Collected data include, for example, statistics about populations, educational attainment, and economic status. This section highlights selected demographic data and trends in Preston County.

### 2.1 Population statistics

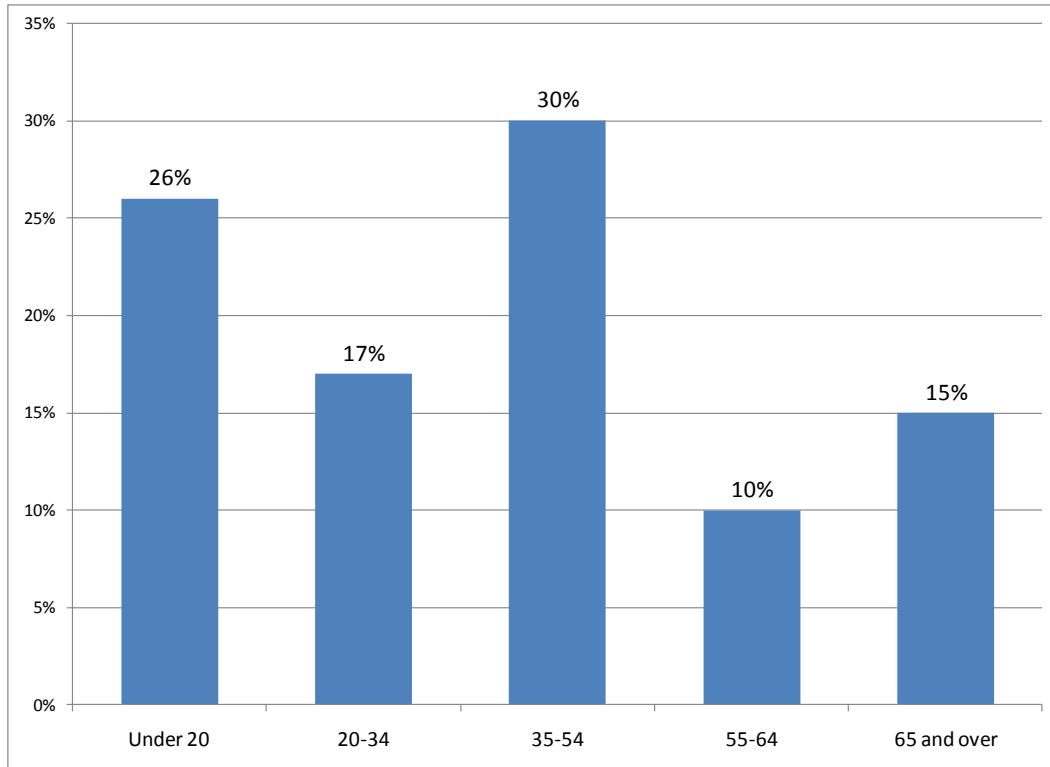
The 2009 US Census estimated Preston County's population at 30,247, which ranks the county as the 18<sup>th</sup> most populous in the state (US Census, 2010). Preston County's population has remained relatively constant since 1980 (Figure 2). By age group, the population in Preston County consists of 26% residents less than 20 years of age and 30% residents from ages 35 to 54 (US Census Bureau, 2010, as cited in PCEDA, 2010b.), shown in Figure 3. Preston County's median age is 42.1 (PCEDA, 2010a).

**Figure 2: Preston County population, 1970-2009**



Source: US Census Bureau, 2010, as cited in PCEDA, 2010b. Note: The following years are estimates: 1995, 2001-2009.

**Figure 3: Preston County age groups by percent of total population in 2000**



Source: US Census Bureau, 2010, as cited in PCEDA, 2010b.

## 2.2 Labor and income statistics

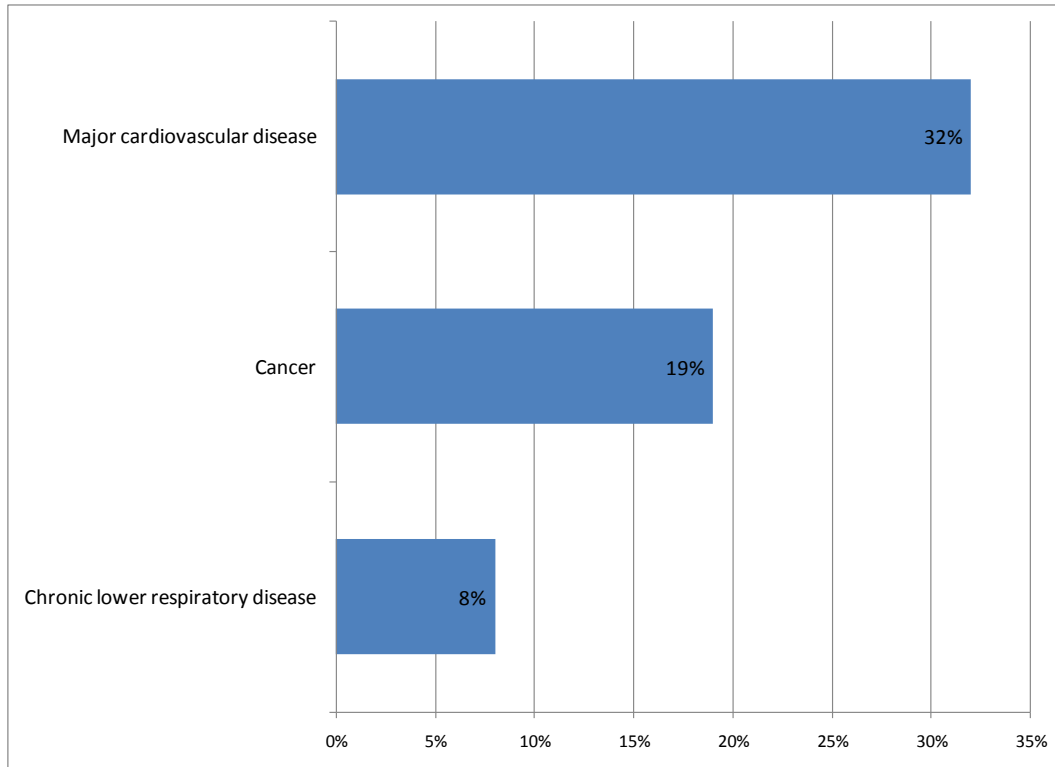
In 2009, Preston County’s unemployment rate was 7.2%, ranking the county 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for highest unemployment (PCEDA, 2010a).

In 2008, Preston County’s per capita personal income (PCPI) was \$28,154, which ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the state that has an average of \$31,634 (national average: \$40,166). Growth in PCPI has averaged 5.5% annually between 1998 and 2008. In 2008, Preston County’s total personal income (TPI) was \$853,916, which ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in the state (PCEDA, 2010a).

## 2.3 Health statistics

In Preston County, the leading causes of death in 2004 included the following: major cardiovascular disease (32%), cancer (19%), and chronic lower respiratory disease (8%), as shown in Figure 4 (WVDHHR, 2006, as cited in PCHD, 2006). In 2004, the average age at death in Preston County was 72.1 years, which is only slightly lower than the state’s average age of 72.5 years (WVDHHR, 2006, as cited in PCHD, 2006).

**Figure 4: Leading causes of death in Preston County in 2004**



Source: WVDHHR, 2006, as cited in PCHD, 2006.

The leading causes of death in Preston County and the associated risk factors such as obesity and sedentary lifestyle are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Diseases and associated risk factors relevant to Preston County**

Disease	Risk factor
Major cardiovascular	Smoking
	Hypertension
	Sedentary lifestyle
	Obesity
	High fat diets/elevated cholesterol
Cancer	Tobacco use
	High fat diets
	Heavy alcohol use
	Environmental exposure
Chronic lower respiratory	Sedentary lifestyle
	Smoking
	Environmental exposure

Source: PCHD, 2006.

### 3. SURVEY RESULTS

Surveys are typically conducted to collect quantitative information about a population. Rather than conducting a census of the entire population, researchers can collect information about a population from a smaller group called a sample. Researchers can use the sample to make inferences about the population.

To launch the Preston County visioning effort, 1,000 surveys were distributed in 2005 at various locations in Preston County. Different samples were created from each location; details include the following:

- Student (N=242): sample includes 91% students, 9% teachers
- Preston County Health Department (N=22)
- Preston Chamber of Commerce website (N=27)
- Preston Chamber of Commerce (N=8)
- Random sample mailing (N=138): sample includes adult Preston County residents

Because the sampling strategies are unknown to author of this report, the analysis in this document assumes that all samples were samples of convenience—getting anyone to answer who will—except for the random sample mailing. Results and analysis in this report use the random sample mailing to draw conclusions about the population of adult Preston County residents.

The samples from the health department and chamber locations were excluded from the final analysis for two reasons: (1) the samples were not random and may not be representative of adult Preston County residents, and (2) no differences existed when data from those samples were analyzed and compared against the random sample. The student sample were mostly (91%) students 13-18 years old; because this population represents a potentially unique and interesting view of Preston County, this sample was analyzed and discussed in this report. The analysis in the report is descriptive only; statistical significance and other analysis—such as exploratory factor analysis to get themes or categories—were not conducted because only cumulative survey data existed.

The survey entitled “Your input to Preston County’s future” consisted of eight questions related to community assets and issues, as well as demographics. Two questions asked respondents to list community assets and issues; one asked respondents to determine the importance of a list of issues.

#### 3.1 Asset and issue identification

Two open-ended survey questions asked respondents to identify the most important assets and issues in their community; one asked respondents to list the three best things about living in the county, and the second asked respondents to list the three most important issues facing their neighborhood.

The results from adult residents are listed in Table 2. Of the assets listed, two reference Preston County’s natural environment and the beauty and activities the environment offers; the other assets listed include “nice people” and a “quiet” and “safe community.” Of the issues listed, “lack of jobs and poverty” and “poor school system” were identified as the first and second issues, respectively. “Lack of entertainment for both youth and adults” was ranked the fourth most important issue by adult residents. Adult and student residents both identified “drugs and alcohol use” as a top issue.

Although the adult and student residents revealed similar responses, the student responses are listed separately in Table 3 for comparison and reference.

**Table 2: Assets and issues identified by adult Preston County residents**

Rank	Assets	Rank	Issues
1	Nice, friendly people	1	Lack of jobs/poverty
2	Quiet	2	Poor condition of schools, weak school system
3	Beautiful scenery, environment	3	Poor road conditions
4	Low crime rate/safe communities	4	Lack of entertainment for both youth and adults
5	Abundant outdoor activities (e.g., hunting, fishing)	5	Drugs and alcohol use

N=138. Note: In comparison to the data presented in this table, the student sample included the same assets and issues in the same order. However, additional assets from the student sample included (in order): (6) Not crowded, sparsely populated; (7) Close-knit, family-oriented communities; and (8) Fresh air. Additional issues from the student sample included (in order): (4) the need to pass a school levy, and (7) lack of good stores, shopping.

**Table 3: Assets and issues identified by student Preston County residents**

Rank	Assets	Rank	Issue
1	Not crowded, sparsely populated	1	No jobs, poor economy
2	Abundant outdoor activities (e.g., hunting, fishing)	2	Poor condition of schools, weak school system
3	Close-knit, family-oriented communities	3	Poor road conditions
4	Quiet	4	The need to pass a school levy
5	Beautiful scenery	5	Not many activities for kids, boring
6	Fresh air	6	Drugs and alcohol use
7	Safe	7	Lack of good stores, shopping

N=242. Note: The first-ranked issue "No jobs, poor economy," is listed differently than the similar item in Table 1 based on 2005 survey notes.

### 3.2 Issue importance

The main section of the survey offered respondents a list of 31 issues, asking them to determine each issue's importance in Preston County over the next 10 years. Respondents were given a modified Likert scale that included the following options: not important, important, very important, and no opinion. As is standard with Likert-scale questions, responses from "important" and "very important" were combined for analysis.

The importance of all issues listed in the survey to adult Preston County residents are listed in Table 4. The most important issues for adult residents included the following: create jobs (100%), protect the environment (96%), prevent crime (96%), construct shops (96%), improve access to emergency services (95%), improve the community's appearance (95%), and improve the school system (95%). Although "support the arts" and "expand the rail-trail network" ranked lowest in importance compared to all issues presented, over half of adult residents still considered both issues to be important.

**Table 4: Issue importance from adult Preston County residents**

Issue	Rank	Importance	N
Create more jobs/increase the economic base	1	100%	136
Protect and restore the environment	2	96%	135
Prevent crime	2	96%	138
Construct new malls, shopping centers, and shops	2	96%	136
Improve access to emergency services	5	95%	133
Improve your town's/community's physical appearance	5	95%	136
Improve the quality of the school system	5	95%	134
Build new roads- spanning North-South and East-West	8	93%	137
Expand youth programs and activities	8	93%	138
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	8	93%	135
Increase cooperation among local governments	11	91%	138
Expand water and sewer systems	12	88%	137
Plan for future housing needs	13	87%	133
Attract young professionals to live in Preston County	13	87%	137
Provide job training and adult education	13	87%	135
Improve senior citizen services	16	86%	135
Strengthen the tourism industry	17	84%	138
Increase the availability of high-tech services, i.e. broadband	18	80%	137
Improve and develop agricultural marketing opportunities	19	79%	134
Attract families to live in Preston County	19	79%	138
Develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers	19	79%	138
Building public facilities such as recreation buildings and playgrounds	19	79%	136
Create public access to outdoor recreation	19	79%	135
Improve or widen existing roads	24	77%	137
Develop a land-use plan	25	75%	136
Expand child day care facilities	26	74%	134
Preserve historical sites	26	74%	137
Reduce taxes	28	70%	135
Attract retirees to live in Preston County	28	70%	136
Expand the rail-trail network	30	60%	134
Support the arts	31	53%	135

Note: N = the number of responses for each issue. Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

The results from the student residents are listed in Table 5. The most important issues for the student residents included the following: improve the quality of the school system (95%), protect the environment (93%), and prevent crime (92%). Although “expand the rail-trail network” and “attract retirees to live in Preston County” ranked lowest in importance compared to all issues presented, over half of student residents still considered both issues to be important.

**Table 5: Issue importance from student Preston County residents**

Issue	Rank	Importance	N
Improve the quality of the school system	1	95%	257
Protect and restore the environment	2	93%	245
Prevent crime	3	92%	259
Provide job training and adult education	4	90%	258
Expand youth programs and activities	4	90%	255
Improve access to emergency services	6	89%	259
Improve your town's/community's physical appearance	6	89%	261
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	8	88%	258
Develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers	8	88%	259
Create public access to outdoor recreation	10	87%	261
Create more jobs/increase the economic base	11	86%	259
Build public facilities such as recreation buildings and playgrounds	12	83%	259
Improve or widen existing roads	12	83%	257
Improve senior citizen services	12	83%	259
Improve and develop agricultural marketing opportunities	15	82%	260
Preserve historical sites	16	81%	259
Construct new malls, shopping centers, and shops	17	77%	260
Expand child day care facilities	17	77%	260
Attract young professionals to live in Preston County	19	76%	259
Increase the availability of high-tech services, i.e. broadband	20	75%	261
Reduce taxes	20	75%	247
Plan for future housing needs	22	74%	253
Increase cooperation among local governments	23	73%	255
Build new roads- spanning North-South and East-West	24	72%	260
Develop a land-use plan	24	72%	260
Expand water and sewer systems	24	72%	259
Attract families to live in Preston County	27	70%	259
Strengthen the tourism industry	28	64%	259
Support the arts	29	59%	254
Expand the rail-trail network	30	56%	255
Attract retirees to live in Preston County	31	55%	259

Note: N = the number of responses for each issue. Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered “important” and “very important.”

The top ten most important issues for both adult and student residents are listed by adult importance in Table 6 and represented in Figure 5. Although not ranked in the top ten issues by adult residents, student

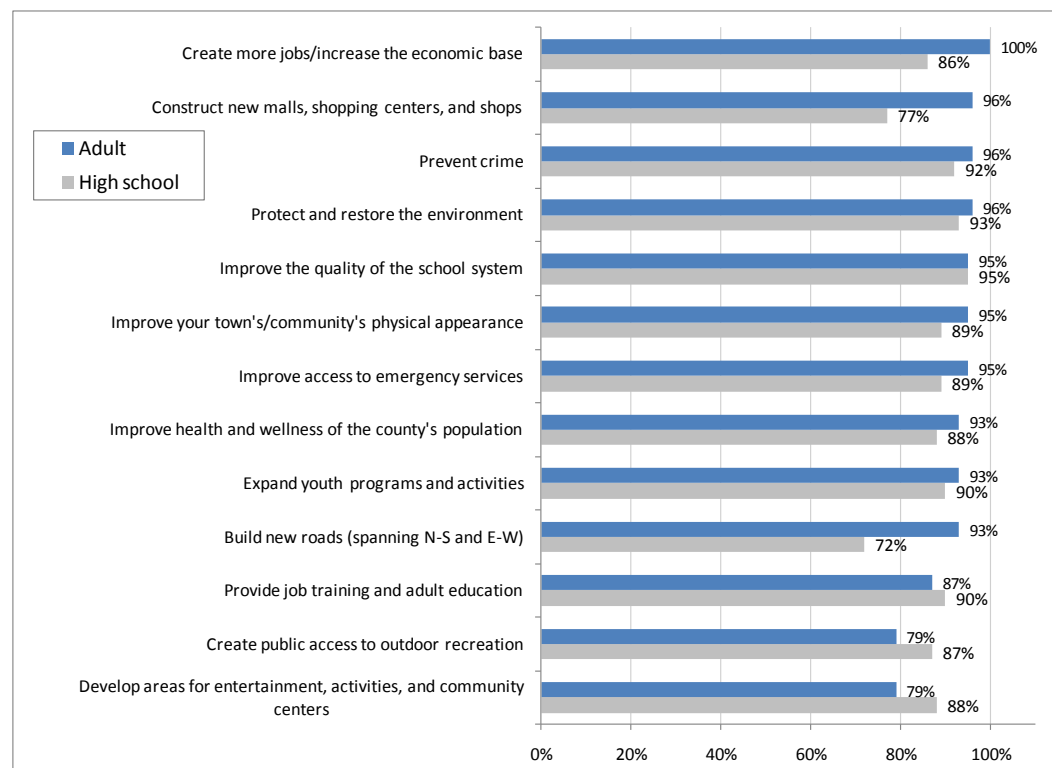
residents highly ranked the following: provide job training and education (90%); develop areas for activities, entertainment, and community centers (88%); and create public access to outdoor recreation (87%).

**Table 6: Top ten most important issues from both adult and student Preston County residents**

Issue	Adult		Student	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Create more jobs/increase the economic base	1	100	11	86
Protect and restore the environment	2	96	2	93
Prevent crime	2	96	3	92
Construct new malls, shopping centers, and shops	2	96	17	77
Improve access to emergency services	5	95	6	89
Improve your town's/community's physical appearance	5	95	6	89
Improve the quality of the school system	5	95	1	95
Build new roads- spanning North-South and East-West	8	93	24	72
Expand youth programs and activities	8	93	4	90
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	8	93	8	88
Provide job training and adult education	13	87	4	90
Develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers	19	79	8	88
Create public access to outdoor recreation	19	79	10	87

Note: Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

**Figure 5: Top ten most important issues from adult and student Preston County residents**



Note: Adult residents (N=138); student sample (N=242). Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

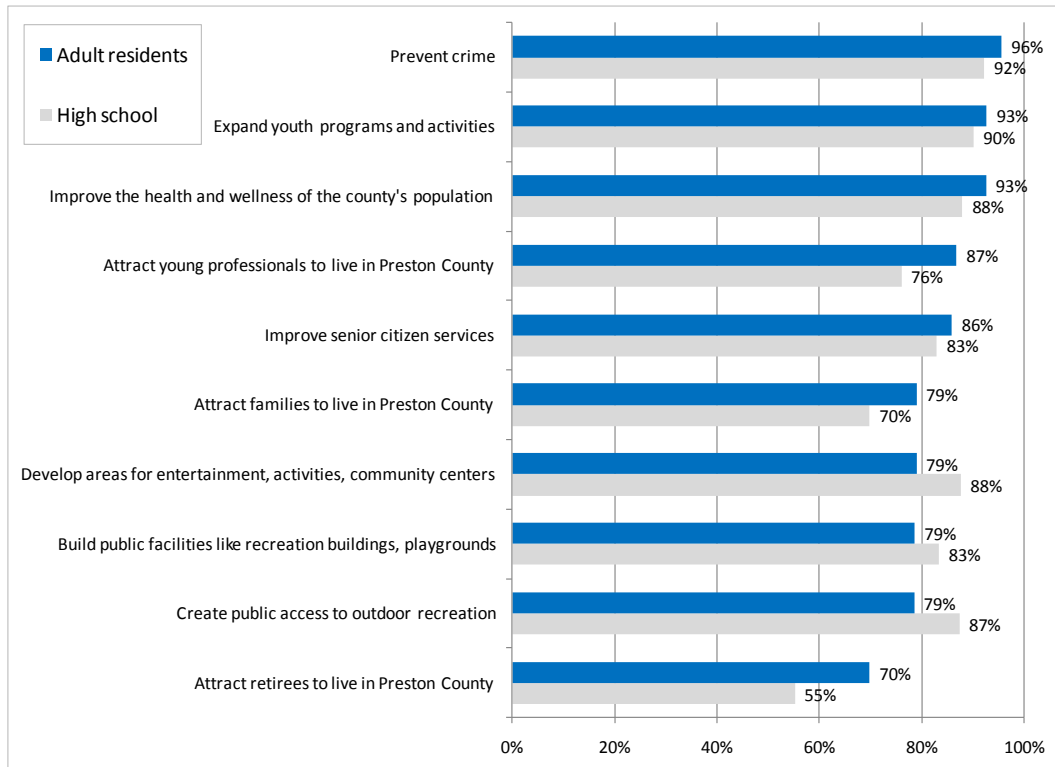


### 3.2.1 Health and wellness–related issues

The importance of health and wellness–related issues to Preston County residents are listed in Figure 6. Based on responses from both adult residents and the student sample, the most important health and wellness–related issues included the following: prevent crime (96%), expand youth programs and activities (93%), and improve community health and wellness (93%).

Although not as important to adult Preston County residents, the student sample also highly ranked the following issues: develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers (88%); create public access to outdoor recreation (87%); and build public facilities like recreation buildings and playgrounds (83%).

**Figure 6: Importance of health and wellness–related issues to Preston County residents**



Note: Adult residents (N=138); student sample (N=242). Percentages include cumulative responses from responses “important” and “very important.”

A ranking method was used to determine relative importance of health and wellness–related issues compared with all 31 issues listed. Five health and wellness–related issues ranked in the top 15 most important issues for adult residents; these included the following: prevent crime, expand youth programs and activities, improve community health and wellness, attract young professionals, and improve senior citizen services (Table 7).

**Table 7: Health and wellness–related topics in the top 15 most important issues to adult residents**

Topic	Rank
Prevent crime	2
Expand youth programs and activities	6
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	11
Attract young professionals to live in Preston County	13
Improve senior citizen services	15

Note: N=138. Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

Seven health and wellness–related issues ranked in the top 15 most important issues by the student sample, whose rankings included the top three issues identified by adult residents, and excluded “attracting young professionals.” Issues that were ranked by the student sample but not adult residents included the following: (a) create public access to outdoor recreation; (b) develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers; and (c) build public facilities (Table 8).

**Table 8: Health and wellness–related topics in the top 15 most important issues from student residents**

Topic	Rank
Prevent crime	2
Expand youth programs and activities	6
Create public access to outdoor recreation	7
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	8
Develop areas for entertainment, activities, & community centers	8
Build public facilities such as recreation buildings and playgrounds	12
Improve senior citizen services	13

Note: N=242. Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

Seven health and wellness–related issues were ranked in the top 15 most important issues for both adult and student residents (Table 9). Because the student population represents a potentially unique view of Preston County, this combined list may be prove important to planners and decision-makers.

**Table 9: Health and wellness–related topics in the top 15 most important issues to adult and student residents**

Topic	Rank
Prevent crime	1
Expand youth programs and activities	5
Improve the health and wellness of the county's population	8
Develop areas for entertainment, activities, & community centers	10
Create public access to outdoor recreation	11
Improve senior citizen services	12
Build public facilities such as recreation buildings and playgrounds	14

Note: Adult residents N=138; student sample N=242. Reported ranks based on cumulative responses from those who answered "important" and "very important."

## 4. TOWN HALL MEETING RESULTS

Town hall meetings were conducted between October and November 2005 (6-8 PM) at the following Preston County locations: Aurora, Bruceton Mills, Kingwood, Rowlesburg, Terra Alta, Tunnelton, and Valley District (Masontown/Reedsville) (Figure 1.) Each facilitated meeting addressed the following topics:

1. Improving community's physical appearance
2. Types of jobs desired, and how to attract them
3. How to improve the quality of the school system
4. How to improve the county's roads
5. How to improve citizens' health and wellness
6. A hypothetical funding allocation exercise
7. Things not desired in the county in 2010

Notes that were taken during the meetings by the Community Vision Foundation were used for this analysis. Although the notes appear to be comments directly from residents, it is unclear if they are direct quotes.

Key themes and issues that emerged from the meeting comments were analyzed within each topic area. The analysis involved creating and refining thematic codes through an open coding process where themes emerged freely from the data (Berg, 2007). This section is organized by discussion topic, and excludes discussion of the hypothetical funding allocation exercise due to limited documentation of the process.

### 4.1 Community's appearance

Preston County residents identified many solutions to improving their community's physical appearance. The solutions involve residents, as well as businesses and government entities, working towards improvement of the communities' appearances. Many comments suggested individual solutions such as clean up property, pick up litter, and maintain yards. Other solutions suggested were more relevant for organizations to initiate changes; those solutions include improve roads and signage, impose ordinances and enforcement, and develop disposal programs. Meeting attendees expressed the need for solutions to involve citizens in efforts to improve the community's appearance, and suggested that boosting community pride and increasing litter education could help the process. One Rowlesburg resident suggested that the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources could help educate residents of all ages using discussions and pamphlets. The key issues and themes related to the town or community's appearance are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10: Suggestions to improve community appearance from Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Ordinances</b>	We need county-wide zoning to keep property clean and maintained. (Valley District) Establish minimal requirements for abandoned homes (i.e., keep the grass cut, etc.). (Terra Alta) Municipalities need to enforce ordinances and the county needs to adopt ordinances. (Rowlesburg)
<b>Enforcement</b>	The [Preston] County Commission needs to enforce laws and ordinances. (Terra Alta) The county needs to crack down on illegal dumps and people need to remove furniture, tires, and appliances from their property. (Kingwood)
<b>Improve roads</b>	Need road improvements—the problem is that many of them are state-owned. (Terra Alta) West Virginia Division of Highways employees are stationed in other parts of the county and do not see the needs in Aurora. (Aurora)
<b>Improve signage</b>	The city and county need improved signage. Kingwood needs a gateway sign, which will give the town an attractive, small town feel. (Kingwood) Improve signage throughout the county. Need nicer street, stop, and speed limit signs. (Terra Alta)
<b>Develop disposal programs</b>	The cost of disposing of some appliances may prohibit some people from throwing out this trash. (Aurora, Bruceton Mills)
<b>Maintain rural character</b>	Bruceton Mills wants to maintain its rural character. This means appropriate development in appropriate places (no 7-11s on the Brandonville Pike). (Bruceton Mills)
<b>Preserve historic buildings</b>	We need to revive the Historic Landmarks Commission, to ensure that historic buildings stay attractive, and to develop themes. (Valley District)
<b>Clean up litter on roads and property</b>	Major arteries leading into the county need to be cleaned up. This includes trash, litter, and large items such as junk cars, trucks, and household appliances. (Rowlesburg, Tunnelton) Property needs to be landscaped and well-maintained. (Kingwood)
<b>Clean up homes</b>	We need to clean up dilapidated homes. They need...refurbished, or torn down. (Kingwood) Homes need to be cleaned up—the structures, yards, porches, and other property. (Rowlesburg) Maintain homes—clean exteriors, manicure lawns, improvements to sidewalks, curbs, and retaining walls. (Terra Alta)
<b>Maintain public property</b>	Maintain school buildings and other public property for safety and structural soundness. (Terra Alta) We need to cut overgrown vegetation. (Valley District)
<b>Control weeds, maintain lawns</b>	High weeds and grass along county roads and community gateways are unsightly and dangerous. (Aurora) Clean up property—cut the grass and weeds, landscape property, etc. (Tunnelton)
<b>Education and pride</b>	The residents need to be educated...to understand the need to clean up their property. (Rowlesburg) Residents need to be educated about not littering. (Valley District) Individuals and businesses need to take pride in their property. (Kingwood)
<b>Involve citizens</b>	Residents could try to clean up some dilapidated structures through volunteer groups. (Valley District) Citizens need to be involved in local projects. (Valley District) Use people who need community service hours to clean up public property. (Tunnelton)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

## 4.2 Jobs

Types of jobs and industry desired by residents included the following: jobs with tax base and benefits, clean industry, industry that uses natural resources, tourism and recreation, and retail and restaurants. Overall job diversity was another common theme expressed by resident. The key issues and themes related to jobs are summarized in Table 11.

**Table 11: Types of jobs desired by Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Jobs with tax base and benefits</b>	<p>We need jobs that create a tax base...jobs that pay a good salary and benefits. (Valley District)</p> <p>We hope new opportunities are higher paying and offer more benefits than current employment options. (Bruceston Mills)</p> <p>The county needs better jobs that provide solid health care benefits. (Kingwood)</p>
<b>Clean industry</b>	<p>We need to recruit non-polluting energy creation companies [and] clean manufacturing. (Kingwood)</p>
<b>Use of natural resources</b>	<p>We would like to...take advantage for our natural resources. The communities need to work with the [PCEDA] in order for this to happen. (Rowlesburg)</p> <p>Tourism is better to have than heavy industry, but many realize that modern industry does not mean dirty smoke stacks. An example of this would be to utilize natural resources. (Aurora)</p>
<b>Tourism and recreation</b>	<p>Improve the tourism industry—this will also bring in more basic services too. (Terra Alta)</p> <p>Service jobs such as tourism and landscaping would be good...because they are quite stable forms of employment [in comparison to extraction industries]. The community could use the Deep Creek area as a model of tourism. (Aurora)</p> <p>Rail-trail establishment, other recreational opportunities will bring in more people. (Terra Alta)</p>
<b>Retail and restaurants</b>	<p>Bring in retail/shopping in order to keep money inside the state, county, and community. Need basic services such as gas stations and grocery stores that are open late at night. (Terra Alta)</p> <p>We need to attract prospective residents with shopping, restaurants, recreation, and other activities. (Rowlesburg)</p>
<b>Overall job diversity</b>	<p>Manufacturing jobs [are] higher paying with better benefits. (Terra Alta, Tunnelton)</p> <p>More professional jobs (dentists, doctors, etc.). This helps the entire county. (Terra Alta)</p> <p>New jobs that focus on: woodcrafts and construction; home-based businesses; sale of grain for bio-fuel development; high-tech industries. (Bruceston Mills)</p> <p>We should work to attract transportation-related industries. (Valley District)</p> <p>We also need to expand job opportunities for vocational and technical students. (Kingwood)</p> <p>The construction sector is expanding...and we need to continue to support this expansion. (Kingwood)</p> <p>Bring in cottage industry—home-based industry. (Terra Alta)</p>

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

One Valley District resident suggested that the county must first decide the types of jobs desired: “We need to decide what we want. Do we want service industry jobs, heavy industry, etc.?” Echoing that sentiment, one Tunnelton resident expressed that types of jobs sought should align with the county: “We must attract jobs that fit into the county's mold.”

One repeated theme in the meetings included wanting to avoid being a “bedroom community” for Morgantown. One Tunnelton meeting attendee explained the desire for change:

Preston County usually gets the service sector, second tier service jobs because we are a bedroom community. The citizens want this to change.

Meeting attendees offered suggestions to attract jobs to Preston County, which are summarized by the following: plan growth; improve infrastructure, roads, education and internet and cable capabilities; support existing businesses; and use partnerships. These are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12: Suggestions to attract jobs to the county from Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Plan growth</b>	The residents want to see planned growth and recognize the need for zoning. (Aurora) Business development and job growth in appropriate geographic areas. (Bruceton Mills)
<b>Improve infrastructure</b>	To achieve any kind of growth, the community must improve infrastructure. (Aurora) Improved infrastructure is vital for supporting industries and business. (Rowlesburg) County utilities and general infrastructure needs to be improved for the entire county. (Kingwood) We need the resources in place to attract...jobs. That means water and sewage systems, manpower, education, and workforce investment. (Valley District, Tunnelton)
<b>Internet and cable capabilities</b>	High-speed internet needs to be available in order to attract high-tech jobs. (Kingwood) The area needs high-speed internet and cable capabilities to attract business and allow people to work from home. (Aurora, Bruceton Mills)
<b>Improve roads</b>	We need to improve road access throughout the county. (Kingwood) Aurora is a unique...because of its geography and topography. Once Corridor H is complete, more people will move into the community. (Aurora) Transportation is the biggest component to bringing in more business. (Rowlesburg)
<b>Improve education</b>	Children need to be prepared for college. (Rowlesburg) Some residents need educated about job development and basic educational tools. (Tunnelton) The county needs improved general job training, including basic computer skills. (Kingwood)
<b>Support existing businesses and resources</b>	We need to take advantage of the resources already in the county. (Terra Alta) We should help the existing businesses to help them grow within the county. We should start small businesses, then buy locally and use our own locally created resources. (Valley District) Preston County has an existing workforce [that] we need to utilize. (Kingwood)
<b>Use partnerships</b>	Economic development could be achieved by the [Preston] County Commission passing development incentives. (Bruceton Mills) The county needs to encourage public/private partnerships to provide job training. (Kingwood) To achieve clean industry, the community could partner with WVU in order to benefit from the university’s technology programs. (Aurora) Various groups in the county need to combine to educate the public about economic development. These agencies include...the Chamber of Commerce and the [Preston] County Commission, with a close partnership with other public and private entities. A one-stop shop or clearinghouse can be established for these different bodies to share information and collaborate. (Tunnelton)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

### 4.3 School system

The top most discussed school system–related needs in Preston County included the following: improving facilities, funding (via a bond/levy), limiting consolidation, increasing trust and communication with the school board, improving other communication, recruiting good teachers, and addressing busing issues. The key needs related to the county school system are summarized in Table 13.

**Table 13: School system–related needs from Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Improve facilities</b>	The school facilities need to be improved. (Kingwood)
	The facilities are in bad shape...Many have leaky roofs, high grass, and other issues. (Terra Alta)
	We need good facilities. The schools need to have adequate heat, no lead-based paint, no roof leaks, good ventilation systems, and other structural necessities in place. (Tunnelton)
<b>Improve funding (via bond/levy)</b>	County schools need more money (Tunnelton). [F]unding levels low. (Bruceeton Mills)
	Need to pass a bond/levy (Kingwood, Terra Alta, Tunnelton)
	Residents need to pass a levy...[Don't let] levy money only go to Kingwood. (Valley District)
<b>Limit consolidation</b>	Consolidation has hurt every community that lost a high school. Local identity and pride were lost. (Tunnelton)
	Consolidation has been a major problem—classes are too big, travel time is too long. (Rowlesburg)
	We can't attract families to live here without a community school. (Terra Alta)
<b>Increase trust with school board</b>	The school board needs to earn the trust of the citizens. (Tunnelton, Valley District)
	School board members do not have the full support from the state board of education. (Aurora)
	Get new board members and administrators. (Valley District) Elect a new school board. (Rowlesburg)
	Citizens don't trust the school administrators; [they] must work to regain this trust. (Bruceeton Mills)
<b>Improve communication</b>	Improve communication between administration and parents, and schools and parents. Parents must participate and encourage the teachers to communicate with them. (Rowlesburg)
	Many residents want improved communication between the schools and parents. (Aurora)
	Communication and information between the school board and citizens must be clear. (Valley District)
	We need to listen to the children...find out what it important to them. (Tunnelton)
<b>Address busing issues</b>	Busing is a huge problem—travel time is much too long for our children. (Tunnelton)
	Children's safety is compromised because they wait for the bus when it is still dark out and then travel far distances. (Aurora)
<b>Recruit good teachers</b>	We need to recruit young, qualified teachers due to the high number of retiring teachers. (Kingwood)
	Attract more teachers and principals. (Terra Alta)
	The county should work to recruit more creative teachers. When these teachers are hired, they need to be allowed to implement creative classroom solutions. (Aurora)
	We need to hire and retain quality teachers; good pay attracts the best teachers. (Tunnelton)
	The board of education needs to re-vamp its hiring procedures. They need to begin filling vacancies at the beginning of the summer...they wait too long and all of the qualified teachers are hired elsewhere. The board of education also needs to improve teachers' benefits and wages. (Kingwood)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

## 4.4 Roads

Preston County residents discussed the need for improvements to roads in the county, including improving connections, maintenance and construction, planning, as well as funding and other assistance. The key issues and themes related to roads are summarized in Table 14.

**Table 14: Road-related improvements desired by Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Improved connections</b>	The county needs a major artery or corridor throughout the southern part that can connect I-68...tying rural areas together. These road and other infrastructure improvements attract people, jobs, and increase the tax base. (Bruceton Mills)
	We need better north to south access throughout the county. (Tunnelton)
	Rowlesburg (and the entire Valley) needs to be connected to I-68. (Rowlesburg)
	Construct a road to connect Corridor H to I-68, north to south. (Terra Alta)
	A connector from Bruceton Mills to Masontown would be ideal. (Kingwood)
	East to west roads including I-68, Routes 7, 5, 26 connects all of these and it is a major problem from Bruceton Mills south. Route 92 needs to become a better connector. Route 50 has a multi-county, multi-state association trying to improve the road. (Rowlesburg)
<b>Maintenance and construction</b>	The road maintenance system needs to be improved. (Bruceton Mills, Valley District)
	Roads need to be better maintained. They need paved, painted, strengthened, straightened, widened (passing lanes), better signage, and guard rails. (Aurora, Kingwood, Terra Alta, Tunnelton)
	Need more fluorescent paint for the lanes and borders. (Terra Alta)
	Roads throughout the county need to be widened. (Bruceton Mills)
	We need four-lane, straighter roads leading to more populated areas. (Tunnelton)
<b>Planning</b>	The community hopes for improved planning and funding of secondary roads. (Aurora)
	Planning needs to be improved to deal with increased traffic levels on I-68. (Bruceton Mills)
	Route 26 has too much traffic. (Bruceton Mills)
	Road priorities: Route 7 (bypass Masontown with some sort of loop), Route 26, Route 119, and Route 50. (Valley District)
<b>Funding and assistance</b>	The governor needs to be enlightened as to the necessary road improvements. (Rowlesburg)
	To accomplish any road improvements, the tax base needs to be increased. The county needs to improve its lobbying efforts in Charleston. (Kingwood)
	We should explore the possibility of getting federal money because of Camp Dawson's growth, although federal highway dollars are not available right now. (Valley District)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

Meeting attendees demonstrated an awareness of road and access issues in the county. One Valley District resident explained: "There is no fast way to get to Preston County." Residents explained that the county roads need maintenance and other incremental road improvements such as passing lanes. Meeting attendees also recognized the connections between access and business: "Many citizens realize that if roads are improved, then business recruitment will become easier," said one Kingwood resident.



## 4.5 Health and wellness

The key issues and themes related to health and wellness are summarized in Table 15. Most of the meeting comments related to health and wellness were obtained from discussions explicitly on that topic. Some health and wellness–related comments, however, emerged in discussions on improving education and roads, as well as attracting jobs; this demonstrates the connectedness of issues, as well as potential partnerships to address these issues.

Meeting attendees demonstrated recognition of health-related problems and solutions within the county, including awareness of obesity and diabetes and the use of education as a means of achieving improved health. Meeting attendees expressed support for health education in the county, and offered suggestions on what, who, and how to teach. For example, residents suggested that students could learn about health and wellness in gym class, and also that employees could learn about lifestyle changes through workplace programming. One Valley District resident suggested that educational programming should inspire personal responsibility, in saying it could: “Encourage people to help themselves.”

Meeting attendees expressed the need for more health and wellness options, as well as for improving and developing parks, facilities, and trail systems. One Tunnelton resident expressed a desire for new exercise options specifically in the winter months:

Winter activities also need to be made available. These [activities] can include racquetball, sled riding, skiing, ice skating/hockey, and other activities that get people off of the couch.

Beyond general support for more education and increased exercise options, one Tunnelton resident expressed the need for a health and wellness center: “After education, we need to provide outlets to utilize the knowledge. A wellness center needs to be established and groups need to be formed for people to join.”

One side benefit of focusing on health and wellness, as identified by residents when discussing job retention and growth, included attracting a good mix of prospective residents and jobs.

**Table 15: Health and wellness–related comments from Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Recognition of health problems</b>	Health is a big issue in Preston County because of culture, which perpetuates unhealthy living. (Aurora) Citizens need to realize the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles. Tobacco use; cancer; overeating—obesity, diabetes; improper diet; and other health issues. (Rowlesburg)
<b>Support of health education</b>	We need more public education. (Valley District) Health education is vital in order for people young and old to establish healthy lifestyles. (Kingwood) This education will help fight obesity and other diseases. Early education establishes healthy living habits. (Bruceton Mills)
<b>What to teach</b>	Public education is vital—the Health Department, schools, and other entities need to teach healthy eating habits, exercise, and other healthy lifestyles. (Tunnelton) Citizens need to be educated about the causes of diabetes, obesity, tobacco use, etc. and how to combat these problems. (Rowlesburg)
<b>Teaching needs: who and how</b>	The county needs a children's nutritional program. (Bruceton Mills) We need to emphasize exercise for children—gym class, recess, etc. (Rowlesburg) Local businesses, along with all other employers in the county, need to be educated on starting their own wellness programs. Not only does this improve health, but the healthy employees would be more productive. (Bruceton Mills) Take advantage of word-of-mouth communication when promoting healthy living programs. (Kingwood) Encourage people to help themselves. (Valley District)
<b>Support for health and wellness</b>	We need more efforts aimed at kids and adults to encourage healthy activity, personal responsibility, and improved attitudes towards healthy living. (Aurora) Encourage physical activity—walking trail, gyms, recreation, and any other sort of health and wellness. (Bruceton Mills) Encourage all age groups to be active. (Kingwood)
<b>Need for more options</b>	We need to improve recreational opportunities—develop a trail system, build new parks, etc. (Valley District) Winter activities also need to be made available. These can include racquetball, sled riding, skiing, ice skating/hockey, and other activities that get people off of the couch. (Tunnelton) Improve the parks—include basketball and tennis courts, skate areas, and other amenities. (Kingwood)
<b>Establish wellness center</b>	After education, we need to provide outlets to utilize the knowledge. A wellness center needs to be established and groups need to be formed for people to join. (Tunnelton)
<b>Side benefit of focus on health and wellness</b>	We need to attract prospective residents with shopping, restaurants, recreation, and other activities. (Rowlesburg) We want a good mix of young and old people coming to the county. (Valley District)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

Although meeting participants were not specifically asked, many of their comments regarding health and wellness identified key partnerships. Key partnerships identified in the town hall meetings include the following: schools, businesses, seniors, civic groups, the health department, the extension office, and those involved in public transportation (Table 16). Besides limitations in programming and facilities, transportation was identified as a constraint to improving health and wellness in the county. Because access to recreational activities was an identified constraint, efforts to improve community health and wellness should include those involved in transportation such as the Buckwheat Express and school busing programs.

**Table 16: Health and wellness partnership comments from Preston County residents**

Theme	Comment
<b>Transportation constraint</b>	Public transportation is needed to get people to and from these activities. (Tunnelton)
	Improve public transportation so young and old have better access to community activities. (Kingwood)
	The county needs to make sidewalks and roads more walker-friendly. (Kingwood)
<b>Schools as community centers</b>	The community would like greater access to the public schools. The school is the only community center and has traditionally been open to the public. This has not been the case in recent years due to lack of funding. (Aurora)
	If a levy passes, schools can offer activities as a community center after school hours. (Tunnelton)
<b>Partnership between students and seniors</b>	The recreational activities within schools need to partner with seniors. (Tunnelton)
	Good health habits are contagious. Also, integrating people can help everyone; seniors can mentor kids and the kids can teach the seniors as well. (Tunnelton)
<b>Partnerships with retirees</b>	Preston County is becoming a retirement community—they have time for recreation. (Valley District)
	Some retirees have wealth. They come here for recreation, peace and quiet, etc. (Valley District)
	If seniors are involved, they may vote yes for a levy. (Tunnelton)
<b>Other key partnerships</b>	Work with businesses to create incentive programs for exercise. (Kingwood)
	Work with civic groups to increase community outreach. This could include organizing walking clubs or healthy food picnics. (Kingwood)
	Support the Health Department and Extension Office as they offer healthy living programs. (Kingwood)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

The concept of “schools as community centers” came forward in the Aurora and Tunnelton meetings. These comments demonstrate a connection between schools and community; this linkage can justify schools as an important location for community health and wellness education.

Meeting attendees discussed the importance of seniors and retirees in supporting recreation, health, and wellness; they also discussed the importance of this demographic in relation to both the educational process and support of recreation. One Tunnelton resident said that integrating seniors and youth in educational efforts concerning health and wellness can serve both parties:

Good health habits are contagious. Also, integrating people can help everyone; seniors can mentor kids and the kids can teach the seniors as well.

Other key partners identified include businesses, civic groups, the health department, and the extension office. These outlets could create incentives and healthy lifestyle programs.

## 4.6 What residents do not want

Meeting attendees did not want to see the following in the county in 2010: unplanned or uncontrolled growth and development, loss of farms and farmland, eyesores, Wal-Mart, gambling or strip clubs, drugs or crime, school consolidation, and loss of values. The key issues and themes related to things not desired in the county are summarized in Table 17. Table 18 summarizes residents' visions by community.

**Table 17: Summary of what Preston County residents do not want in the county in 2010**

Theme	Comment
<b>No unplanned or uncontrolled growth and development</b>	Don't want unplanned/uncontrolled development/growth. (Aurora, Bruceton Mills, Kingwood, Valley District)
	Want a balance between growth and preservation. (Tunnelton)
	No environmental degradation. (Kingwood, Rowlesburg)
	Want zoning, permitting, and impact fees (especially for big businesses). (Bruceton Mills)
<b>No loss of farms and farmland</b>	Do not want to lose farmland. (Aurora, Kingwood, Tunnelton, Valley District)
	Do not want the farms to disappear—we need to provide good incentives to preserve farms. (Rowlesburg)
<b>No more eyesores</b>	Do not want run-down property. (Terra Alta) No junk cars in yards. (Aurora)
	No heavy, dirty industry (industry is fine, just not polluting industry). (Terra Alta)
	No more dilapidated schools. (Terra Alta)
	No empty store fronts, strip malls, manufacturing or commercial buildings (Kingwood, Tunnelton)
<b>No Wal-Mart</b>	No Wal-Mart in every town. (Aurora)
	No Wal-Mart effect (destroying small businesses). (Kingwood)
	No Wal-Mart. Encourage small business development and retention. (Terra Alta)
<b>No gambling or strip clubs</b>	No "hot spots" or gambling establishments. (Bruceton Mills, Kingwood, Terra Alta, Tunnelton)
	Don't want gambling to be a centerpiece of our county. (Valley District)
	No adult entertainment, strip clubs. (Aurora, Terra Alta)
<b>No drugs or crime</b>	No drugs or drug use. (Kingwood, Rowlesburg, Terra Alta, Tunnelton)
	No poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, social/family problems, environmental destruction. (Aurora)
	Don't want violence and drug use. (Bruceton Mills)
	Want a low crime rate. (Bruceton Mills, Terra Alta, Tunnelton)
<b>No more school consolidation</b>	No further school consolidation. (Rowlesburg, Terra Alta)
	Do not want a school-less community. (Aurora)
	Don't want more inappropriate school consolidation, [which] has increased travel, which results in more safety concerns and decreased parent participation in school activities. (Bruceton Mills)
<b>No loss of values</b>	Do not want to lose traditions and culture. (Aurora)
	Don't want to lose our hometown values. (Valley District)

Source: Notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005. Note: Meeting locations in parentheses.

**Table 18: Summary of what Preston County residents do not want in the county in 2010 by community**

	Aurora	Bruceton Mills	Kingwood	Rowlesburg	Terra Alta	Tunnelton	Valley District
Adult entertainment/strip clubs	X				X		
Bedroom community		X					
Crime, drugs/drug use		X	X	X	X	X	
Damming Cheat River					X		
Defeated school levies					X		
Dilapidated schools					X		
Dirty industry					X		
Disappearing farms/farmlands	X		X	X		X	X
Empty storefronts, manufacturing and community buildings			X		X	X	
Environmental degradation			X				
Gambling establishments		X	X		X	X	X
High rise buildings				X			
High school dropouts				X			
Increased traffic, gridlock			X				
Inflated housing prices			X				
Loss of values, traditions, culture	X						X
Low paying jobs	X						
Out-of-area developers				X			
Population decline			X				
Prison facility	X						
School consolidation	X	X		X	X		
Unplanned growth	X	X	X				X
Wal-Mart effect	X		X		X		
Waste from other states				X			

Source: Summary notes from town hall meetings throughout Preston County between October and November 2005.

## 5. INTO THE FUTURE

### 5.1 Summary of findings

The survey results highlight assets and issues identified by Preston County's residents. Of the assets listed, two reference the county's natural environment and the beauty and activities the environment offers; the other assets listed include "nice people" and a "quiet" and "safe community." Of the issues listed, "lack of jobs and poverty" and "poor school system" were identified as the first and second issues respectively. "Lack of entertainment for both youth and adults" was ranked the fourth most important issue by adult residents. Adult and student residents both identified "drugs and alcohol use" as a top issue.

The survey results also highlight the most important issues for adult residents including the following: create jobs (100%), protect the environment (96%), prevent crime (96%), construct shops (96%), improve access to emergency services (95%), improve community appearance (95%), and improve the school system (95%).

Town hall meeting results highlight the following topics: community's appearance, jobs, school system, roads, health and wellness, and what residents do not want. Meeting attendees identified means to improve their community's physical appearance including the following: clean up property, pick up litter, maintain yards, improve roads and signage, impose ordinances and enforcement, and develop disposal programs; they expressed the need for solutions to involve citizens in these efforts. Types of jobs and industry desired by residents included the following: jobs with tax base and benefits, clean industry, industry that uses natural resources, tourism and recreation, retail and restaurants, and overall job diversity. Meeting attendees offered suggestions to attract jobs to the county, summarized by the following: plan growth; improve infrastructure, roads, education and internet and cable capabilities; support existing businesses; and use partnerships. Most discussed school system-related needs included the following: facility improvements, funding (via a bond/levy), limiting consolidation, increasing trust and communication with the school board, improving other communication, recruiting good teachers, and addressing busing issues. Meeting attendees discussed the need for improvements to roads in the county, including improving connections, maintenance and construction, planning, as well as funding and other assistance.

Meeting attendees did not want to see the following in the county: unplanned or uncontrolled growth and development, loss of farms and farmland, eyesores, Wal-Mart, gambling or strip clubs, drugs or crime, school consolidation, and loss of values.

#### Health and wellness-related findings

Health and wellness-related topics were further analyzed for the Kingwood Pool Committee. This analysis demonstrates community awareness of recreation, health, and wellness needs, as well as support for improved recreation, health, and wellness-related activities and options in Preston County.

Related only to health and wellness-related topics, survey results indicate the most important health and wellness-related issues to adult and student residents included the following: preventing crime (96%), expanding youth programs and activities (93%), and improving community health and wellness (93%). Student residents also highly ranked the following issues: develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community centers (88%); create public access to outdoor recreation (87%); and build public facilities like recreation buildings and playgrounds (83%). Out of all the issues offered in the survey, five health and wellness-related issues ranked in the top 15 most important issues for adult residents including: preventing crime, expand youth programs and activities, improve community health and wellness, attract young professionals, and improve senior citizen services. Additional issues ranked by the student sample included: create public access to outdoor recreation; develop areas for entertainment, activities, and community

centers; and build public facilities. In open-ended questions, lack of entertainment for youth and adults was identified as an important issue by adult and student residents.

Related only to health and wellness-related topics, town hall meeting results indicate residents recognized health-related problems within the county; they also voiced support for increased education and improved options as means to improve health and wellness. Residents offered specific programming suggestions, and identified key partnerships related to improving community health and wellness including: schools, businesses, seniors, civic groups, the health department, the extension office, and those involved in public transportation.

## 5.2 Discussion of findings

The visioning data presented in this report offer a variety of specific suggestions from Preston County residents. Some changes in the county have occurred as a result of the visioning effort, which can be highlighted as examples of citizens and municipalities responding to an issue and taking action to improve the situation. Alongside these success stories, the issues presented in this vision report also highlight potential opportunities for the county. The survey results describe relative importance, and the town hall meeting results describe in more detail community needs and solutions by topic.

Readers of this vision report should note the interconnectedness of many of the issues and their solutions. For example, although “support the arts” and “expand the rail-trail network” both ranked lowest in importance compared to all issues presented, the top most important issues were “protect and restore the environment,” and “prevent crime.” It behooves the community residents and decision-makers to seek interconnected solutions that address multiple issues of importance; for example, protecting the environment and expanding the rail-trail network are not mutually exclusive, and preventing crime can be achieved by supporting the arts or providing increased opportunities for recreation. It is also important to note that over half of all residents still considered the lowest ranked issues to be important.

## 5.3 Changes since visioning

Since 2005-2006, community circumstances have changed; some changes can be attributed to the visioning process. Although not meant to provide a comprehensive list, the following highlights some of those changes:

- After the visioning effort, a beautification committee was created. This committee supported the Preston County Commission's efforts to establish a county litter control officer in 2009, and create litter control and clean-up committees. Annual events have started, such as clean-up day and tire clean-up day. Also, the county commission took up the beautification initiative, hiring a landscape architect to design new landscaping for the courthouse annex areas to beautify the county office building. Several community groups including Rowlesburg Revitalization Committee (RRC) and Main Street Kingwood have enhanced their town's landscape with beautiful plantings and flower baskets.
- United States Penitentiary at Hazelton was built in 2004, and has grown since then, providing 250 new jobs, employing about 700 people.
- Since 2005, PCHD has sponsored annual health and wellness programs, such as *Walk 100 Miles in 100 Days* and *Healthy Holidays! Maintain—Don't Gain!!* The healthy holiday's program began in 2004.
- Formed in 2005, the Preston Prevention Partnership, a group of individuals and agencies including the PCHD, have worked to increase awareness of substance abuse and to decrease drug use in the county. The partnership sponsors annual events, such as the Family Life Expo, the After Prom Event, and community education. Past events include a Prescription Drug Abuse Summit, a legislative dinner to discuss children's issues, free teen summer swimming, a summer activities guide, and the *Summer in the Park Program* in Rowlesburg.

- In 2007, Wal-Mart opened its doors in Kingwood.
- In 2006, the Arts Council of Preston County was established; in 2010, the council was named Main Street Kingwood Business of the Year. Council projects have included art classes for children, murder mystery dinners, and open houses in Kingwood and Rowlesburg to foster awareness of the council and art in the county. The council has also offered mentoring programs and photo workshops to assist emerging artists in photographing, displaying, and marketing their art.
- In November 2008, county residents Imre and Janet Szilagyi donated the old Rowlesburg School to the RRC. The Imre and Janet Szilagyi Center for the Performing and Visual Arts hosts events such as the River City and Chestnut Festivals, as well as a World War II museum that opened in May 2009.
- Since 2008, the Milan Puskar Health Right Clinic has provided a monthly clinic at the PCHD to provide free health care to Preston County residents who have no health insurance and qualify for services.
- Since 2008, Main Street Kingwood has obtained healthy lifestyle grants to promote healthier lifestyles by providing opportunities for adult and student residents. These efforts are supported by various private and public entities, including PCHD and the City of Kingwood. Efforts include resurfacing Kingwood's basketball courts, building a trail around the county soccer fields, and hosting events such as the *Family Fun Challenge*. They also offer the *Kids' Garden Project*, which financially and technically supports local children to create backyard gardens. With an adult mentor, they chose and receive plants and advise; they dig and tend their garden, documenting it with a diary and photographs. Gardens are judged at the end of the year and announced at Buckwheat Festival.
- Since 2008, progress has been made on the development of new rail-trails through the Preston Rails to Trails Committee and Friends of the Cheat, including two trails: the Kingwood to Tunnelton trail and the Cheat River Trail (Albright to Rowlesburg).
- In 2008, Friends of the Cheat received a \$294,000 earmark through Congressman Mollohan for the purchase of the Cheat River Trail; this railroad corridor offers trail assets, including access to the river for fishing and boating. Another major partner in this project is Cheat River Limestone, a subsidiary of Greer Limestone. Trailheads are secured at the Friends of the Cheat property on the northern end, and the Szilagyi Center in Rowlesburg at the southern end, with assistance from Greer Limestone. In 2009, the City of Kingwood Police Department obtained \$75,000 from an earmark through Congressman Mollohan for technology equipment, including a crime reporting system.
- In 2009, FOCUS WV Brownfields Grants were awarded in Rowlesburg, Reedsville, and Kingwood. Each award included \$5,000 and technical assistance to revitalize underutilized or contaminated sites. Based on success, all three projects were awarded an additional \$12,000 each. Arthurdale Heritage was among the 2010 grantees to revitalize the Arthurdale school buildings.
- In 2009, the Preston County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA) was awarded a \$200,000 Brownfields Grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency for Phase I and II Environmental Assessments on the Kingwood to Rowlesburg rail corridor for possible trail development, as well as assessments on the Arthurdale Heritage school buildings, the Kern Valley railroad yard for possible tourism development, and a former mill site at Hazelton for possible industrial development.
- In 2010, the Preston County Arts Council and RRC have collaborated to create an art and pottery studio in the Szilagyi Center in Rowlesburg to serve as a teaching environment. A private grant of \$9,900 to RRC will fund room preparation, as well as the purchase of pottery wheels, a kiln, and supplies for pottery classes. The room will also be used for other art classes planned for spring 2011.
- In October 2010, space was purchased in downtown Kingwood by Peterson Ventures, LLC to house individuals such as artists, businesses such as an information technology, and nonprofit organizations



such as Preston Community Arts Center, Inc. They also hope to host meetings, trainings, and events. The vision is to increase life and vitality to the downtown area that can spin off to other businesses.

- The County Commission and City of Kingwood have both held e-cycling events. The City of Kingwood had its first event in 2010, and has scheduled another in 2011. A new law that disallows electronic items to be put into the landfill has created the potential for a new business opportunity.
- In May 2010, the Preston County Excess Levy of an annual \$1.5 million was approved for three years for continued maintenance and operating expenses for Preston County schools.
- In November 2010, a school bond passed in Preston County that amounts to nearly \$39.6 million, issued for the next 15 years; the last school bond was passed over 20 years ago. The School Building Authority is also providing \$24 million to help with school construction and improvements. These funds will be used to improve seven existing schools and build new schools, including: Central Preston Middle, Tunnelton-Denver Elementary/South Preston Middle, Terra Alta Elementary/East Preston Middle, and Valley Elementary/West Preston Middle (Wolford, 2010).
- Capital investments of over \$50 million in water and sewer have been made. Preston County has seen great growth in the water and sewer projects. Public Service District (PSD) 1, PSD 2, the County Sewer District, and the City of Kingwood are currently in design or construction phases to bring water or sanitary sewer to citizens who have suffered from the lack of safe water and sanitary sewer.
- In 2010, the Town of Newburg was awarded a total of \$2,875,000 for the Fellowsville, York Run, and State Route 26 Water Extension Project. US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Community Facilities provided a \$400,000 loan, \$941,000 grant, and \$185,000 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant to the project. A Small Cities Block Grant for \$1,000,000 and a West Virginia Infrastructure Council grant for \$349,000 are also assisting in the total project cost.
- In 2010, the Town of Rowlesburg received a grant of \$920,000 to assist with their Phase II waterline project, addressing substantial water loss due to leaks within the system.
- In 2010, the City of Kingwood replaced the water tank that supplies drinking water to the city.
- In 2010, the state Department of Transportation awarded a \$1.9 million contract to replace the Jessup Cut Bridge over West Virginia Route 26 near Tunnelton.
- Growth has occurred at Camp Dawson, the West Virginia National Guard Training Site Command. For example, \$5 million was earmarked in 2009 for construction.
- In 2010, \$14.5 million was invested to create state-of-the-art facilities for the Mountaineer Challenge Academy, a program run at Camp Dawson to train and mentor at-risk youth to become contributing members of society.
- Within Preston County, nine active neighborhood crime watch programs exist, which serve as a direct line of communication between police and the community.
- In 2010, the City of Kingwood formed a neighborhood watch program; this program, however, does not substitute the overall reduction in the number of police officers employed by the City since 2005.
- In 2010, the Board of Education received a grant to hire a resource prevention officer for Preston High School through the Preston County Sheriff's Department (PCSD).
- In 2010, a new position was created for a canine officer at the PCSD to use a canine as an additional asset on patrol for drug and addition prevention.
- As of 2010, two properties are under easement with the Preston County Farmland Protection Board.

- In 2010, Allegheny Wood Products announced it was starting a new company, Appalachian Wood Pellets, which will provide 10 new jobs to the county.
- In 2010, the Preston County Land Use Management Plan, based on surface mine–impacted watersheds, was completed in coordination with West Virginia University and PCEDA.
- In 2011, the county Office of Emergency Management completed construction of a new 911 center with ADA-compliant facilities that feature updated wiring and technology, as well as a training room.
- In 2011, Preston Community Arts Center, Inc. was founded as a nonprofit corporation with a vision to offer art classes, as well as classes that integrate exercise as well such as music, song, and theater.
- Transportation services have improved, made possible by the Preston County Senior Citizens, Inc.
- Hydrologic fracturing for natural gas is rising in the Marcellus Shale region, including Preston County.
- Wind energy development is rising in the state and region to diversify the state’s energy portfolio.

#### 5.4 Vision update suggestions

Some limitations should be noted with the 2005-2006 visioning efforts. First, although the sampling strategies are unknown to authors of this report, it appears that few responses were from a random sample, which would be necessary to draw conclusions about Preston County residents. Second, survey questions and town hall discussions did not specifically focus on the following topics: health and wellness (e.g., facilities, scheduling, limitations), outdoor recreation, tourism (e.g., agritourism), land use planning and zoning, public transportation, wind energy, and Marcellus Shale development. Finally, as is a limitation in all public meetings, the format mostly draws information from those who are able and willing to attend and speak. Limitations to this format can be reduced by providing alternative methods and times of involvement.

Updated visioning efforts could help to reflect the current needs and vision in the county and its communities. Additional public outreach could serve to ground, update, and enrich the vision document. Means to update the vision—and address missing elements of the 2005-2006 visioning process—include the following: providing a public comment period on the vision report, updating the survey(s), hosting facilitated public meetings, and conducting a Photovoice project. One or more of these methods can be used to ground the vision and collect additional information not originally collected. This process could include school-age youth, and could also include elements such as natural resources, recreation opportunities, transportation issues, and health and wellness. To activate personal responsibility, these processes could also include questions regarding what citizens are willing to contribute to make their vision(s) a reality.

One means to activating personal responsibility and updating the vision could be through a Photovoice project. The participatory action research method of Photovoice involves the use of participant-produced photography and narratives, coupled with a professionally-facilitated process and group meetings, to identify community concerns and promote group action. Using photography to create images that record facts and to communicate perspectives, Photovoice is typically used to solicit information from disenfranchised and marginalized populations. This professionally-facilitated process can also be used as an enjoyable and equitable means to solicit ideas from various individuals and communities through photographic language.

These suggestions offer a range of means to accomplish a vision update. Additionally, a range of effort may also be used in implementing each suggestion. For example, if the time and funding do not exist for a full-blown effort, a few well-publicized meetings can solicit some citizen feedback. Other efficient means of soliciting updated information may involve a professionally-facilitated focus group of key stakeholders. These efforts may be used in conjunction with a Photovoice project, where participants use their images as discussion topics.

## 5.5 Institutional support and partnerships

Beyond the results from the community visioning, awareness of institutional objectives can support community decision making. Institutions, such as those mentioned below, have the data, strategic plans, programming, or other opportunities that support many of the topics discussed in the community visioning process. The data presented in this report can be useful in applying for grants and other technical assistance. Creative partnerships can help achieve positive change. This section is intended to provide a few key partners, rather than a comprehensive list of organizations.

### 5.5.1 *Preston County Economic Development Authority*

PCEDA seeks to support and promote economic growth in the county, and increase the standard of living and quality of life for residents (PCEDA, 2010a). Community profiles, as well as site and building inventories for Preston County are available at [www.prestonwv.com](http://www.prestonwv.com).

PCEDA recently developed its strategic plan for 2010-2011 (PCEDA, 2010a). Submitted as part of the Certified Development Community Re-Certification Program, the plan outlines the direction of PCEDA. It identifies short-term objectives and long-range goals, and uses available demographic and economic data and discussions with PCEDA members and community leaders. The plan includes an assessment of the county, as well as an identification of key local issues.

The plan's seven main objectives include the following:

1. Update PCEDA's marketing strategy.
2. Work with Preston County school system on school bond and other issues.
3. Business retention and expansion program along with the development of a business resource guide and small business roundtable with Senator Williams.
4. Work with West Virginia University on a county-wide land use plan.
5. Begin to work on plan to upgrade county roads serving Camp Dawson.
6. Work with Sewer PSD and PSD 4 on infrastructure for new prison at Hazelton.
7. Partner with the Preston County Chamber of Commerce and the Preston County Commission to represent the county at Preston County Day at the Legislature (PCEDA, 2010a).

The PCEDA objectives should serve to assist decision-making associated with business retention and expansion, road and infrastructure upgrades, school system improvements, and land use planning. Working with PCEDA to pursue grant opportunities and technical assistance can ensure successful integration and support of county goals.

### 5.5.2 *West Virginia Hardwood Alliance Zone*

The West Virginia Hardwood Alliance Zone's (WVHAZ) mission includes preserving and expanding wood processing businesses in the North Central West Virginia Hardwood Alliance Zone through a cooperative economic development effort (WVHAZ, 2010). WVHAZ is working within seven counties, including Preston, and focused on hardwoods. WVHAZ is participating in the Stronger Economies Together program, sponsored by USDA, in Preston County.

### 5.5.3 *Preston County Health Department*

The Preston County Health Department (PCHD) develops a community needs assessment every five years, which assesses conditions in the county using demographic data and health trends. It also prioritizes health and wellness objectives for Preston County. In addition to identifying the leading causes of death in Preston County, the assessment (PCHD, 2006) also identifies risk factors such as obesity and sedentary lifestyle (Table 1), which can be addressed through health and wellness programs and activities.

Based on Preston County's health status and correlating risk factors, PCHD (2006) plans to support activities in Preston County that address the following objectives defined in the state initiative "Healthy People 2010" (WVDHHR, 2010, as cited in PCHD, 2006):

- Reduce the proportion of adults who engage in no leisure-time physical activity (Objective 22-1)
- Increase the proportion of adults who engage regularly, preferably daily, in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day (Objective 22-2).
- Reduce the proportion of adults who are obese (Objective 19-2)
- Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese (Objective 19-2)

Two additional objectives within the Community Health Plan (PCHD, 2006) address reducing tobacco use. The objectives of PCHD should serve as a foundation for recreation, health, and wellness activities and decision-making and programming. Federal and state funding exists for programming related to health and wellness, including prevention activities. Working with PCHD to pursue these grant opportunities can ensure successful integration and support of county goals.

### 5.5.4 *Juvenile justice organizations*

Based on the results of the community visioning surveys and town hall meetings, preventing crime and addressing issues related to drugs and alcohol were both identified as top priorities for both adult and student residents in Preston County. Therefore, solutions to address these concerns should involve agencies and organizations that address juvenile justice.

At the state level, the mission of the West Virginia Division of Juvenile Services (WVDJS) is to provide services to youth that promote positive development and accountability, while also preserving community safety (WVDJS, 2010). In addition, the Kingwood Youth Center provided opportunities for youth-at-risk about 10 years ago. Opportunities may exist to work with a similar type of center—or in coordination with local police departments—to provide similar programming.

Federal and state funding exists for programming related to crime prevention, juvenile justice, including wellness and prevention goals. Working with state and local entities to pursue these grant opportunities can ensure successful integration and support of county goals.

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