Methodology for community development report

Obtaining baseline third-party data on community trends

To categorize broad statewide trends over the last 10 years, U.S. Census data was utilized and obtained directly from the Census Bureau as well as through other sources.

PolicyMap's web mapping application was utilized to view Census and other data changes over time across a wide range of subject areas including demographics, income, housing, economy, education, and health.[1] Census data collected and summarized by Midwest Evaluation and Research was also utilized. In an effort to ensure that there was a complete picture of trends and data , other third-party sources were sought out that highlighted exceptions to downward trends. These sources included the United Health Foundation's summary of West Virginia in its 2018 America's Health Rankings report and the 2014 West Virginia Civic Health Index, as well as a number of news articles.

Review of metrics

The list of metrics was collaboratively drafted by Midwest Evaluation and Research and Downstream Strategies. The initial list of potential indicators was produced by Midwest Evaluation and Research and expanded upon and categorized according to the WealthWorks framework by Downstream Strategies. This list was evaluated by the Advisory Committee overseeing the development of the Community Development Report, and narrowed based on that committee's recommendations. The full categorized list produced by Downstream Strategies can be found in Appendix A.

Both Midwest Evaluation and Research and Downstream Strategies recommended that comparing long-term, third-party indicators (population, income, percent of population below the poverty level, employment, health and wellness statistics, etc.) with short-term, community-specific, and project-based indicators to show on-the-ground community change (number of jobs produced or dollars leveraged from a given project, number of community volunteers, number of people participating in a given program, number of lives improved, etc.) could be an effective method of capturing an individual community's overall progress.

The recommended key indicators are summarized in Appendix B. These indicators were categorized by The Hub to reflect the seven types of community capitals, as defined by Flora and Flora.[2]

Additionally, two main categories of qualitative metrics were also reviewed:
- metrics on perceptions of community development activity, optimism, and progress, gathered through qualitative survey questions on the Hub's focus group surveys; and
- metrics on engagement and civic health from the National Conference on Citizenship's 2014 Civic Health Index.

---

[1] A full list of the sources compiled by PolicyMap is available here: https://www.policymap.com/data/our-data-directory/.

[2] Flora, C and Flora, J. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (3rd Edition). Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 2008.

Surveys

In total, from July through September 2019, 131 people participated in a survey designed to capture thoughts and feelings around community change. Survey participants represented 22 communities from across West Virginia: Alderson, Buckhannon, Capon Bridge, Charles Town, Elkins, Fairmont, Fayetteville, Grafton, Hinton, Huntington, Kingwood, Philippi, Princeton, Richwood, Rowlesburg, Shepherdstown, Sutton, Thomas, Webster Springs, Weirton, Wheeling, and Williamson.

Local leaders who are already aware of (98% of respondents) and actively involved in (90% of respondents) community development efforts in a volunteer, professional, and/or elected capacity were targeted for input. These are the citizens in the state who are most closely tracking community change within their own communities and across the community development system. Survey developers recognized that this targeted outreach could create the potential for inherent bias impacting survey results, as survey respondents may view their town's outlook more favorably than their neighbor who is not involved in local community efforts was taken into account. The survey developers determined that this potential for inherent bias was outweighed by the intent of the survey to better understand the perceptions of those already deeply engaged in local community development activity.

The survey included 12 Likert scale survey questions and additional free-form response questions. A list of these questions can be found in Appendix C. Complete survey results are available here.

Community interviews and case study

Among the communities surveyed, 10 were selected as candidates for case studies to be explored in further detail. Five of these communities (Buckhannon, Fairmont, Grafton, Princeton and Williamson) participated in-person community focus groups with The Hub in June 2019, each focus group lasting approximately three hours and including a total of 63 participants. Five communities (Capon Bridge, Elkins, Huntington, Richwood and Thomas) were contacted for in-depth phone calls conducted by Downstream Strategies to gather more information about community development strategies, impacts, challenges, and success stories. . These towns were selected to represent West Virginia communities of varying sizes, geographies, and experiences with community development.

Detailed notes from focus groups and phone interviews conducted with key stakeholders were used to derive key trends, themes, and lessons learned within each town's local community development context. Transcripts from the Hub's earlier interviews with more than two dozen select community development leaders from January and February 2019 were also used to inform the themes and trends that emerged for the case study communities.

Of these 10 communities, Buckhannon was selected as a case study to be featured briefly in the preliminary findings report. Information for this case study was derived from the Buckhannon focus group and personal communication with multiple local stakeholders and the Upshur County Development Authority.

Appendix A: WealthWorks categorization of indicators and metrics

Capital	Indicator category	Metric
Individual	Health/wellness	Life span; premature mortality
Individual	Health/wellness	Opioid overdoses; obesity, diabetes, other diseases, etc;
Individual	Health/wellness	Uninsured Population
Individual	Skills	Educational attainment; graduation rates; level of schooling
Individual	Skills	Labor Force; Labor Force employment
Individual	Skills	Number of people with increased skills from training programs
Individual	Other	Total population
Individual	Income	Median Family Income
Individual	Income	Average Annual Salary; Average Weekly Wages
Individual	Income	Percent with high housing burden
Individual	Income	Unemployment rate
Individual	Income	Poverty; children in poverty
Individual	Income	Families with SSI
Individual	Income	Cost of Living Index
Individual	Income	Housing availability?
Intellectual	Innovation	Access to entrepreneurial/business assistance programs
Intellectual	Knowledge	Access to community college/training programs
Intellectual	Technology	Access to high-speed internet
Intellectual	Knowledge	Conferences, trainings, and other learning opportunities
Social	Mutual support	Number of volunteers; total volunteer hours
Social	Networks	Number of community development organization by sector
Social	Mutual support	Number of businesses, enterprises, and/or organizations created.
Social	Mutual support	Number of community projects/initiatives started and/or completed.
Social	Networks	Presence of cross-entity/sector collaboration
Social	Cultural	Presence of creative place-making initiatives
Social	Cultural	Public art, music; traditional/heritage events
Social	Cultural	Number of tourism events, attendance
Financial	Community investment	Number of Opportunity Zones
Financial	Other income	Tax Revenue
Financial	Other income	Retail Sales
Financial	Community investment	Grants - gov and private foundations
Financial	Community investment	Total monies leveraged/invested
Financial	Other	Tourism economic impact
Individual	Other	Commuting
Natural	Natural resources	Acres of green space/parks preserved
Natural	Natural resources	Miles of rivers/streams enhanced/protected
Natural	Natural resources	Miles of impaired streams

Natural	Natural resources	Number of drinking water sources protected/monitored
Natural	Natural resources	Number of farmers markets; food hubs...
Natural	Outdoor recreation	Miles of trails created
Natural	Outdoor recreation	Dollars spent in recreation economy and participation rate in recreation activities
Natural	Natural resources	Ecologically resilient lands permanently protected
Individual	Income	Population on Public Assistance
Built	Housing	Average Home Value
Built	Housing	Housing Starts
Built	Housing	Housing Units -- Private
Built	Housing	Housing Units -- Public
Built	Housing	Vacant buildings
Built	Buildings	Number/square footage of buildings remediated/redeveloped
Built	Infrastructure	Miles of roads improved
Built	Infrastructure	Documented broadband improvements.
Built	Buildings	Number of schools, hospitals, or other community resources built and/or improved
Political	Political	Voter participation/turnout

Appendix B: Suggested long and short-term indicators

Capital	Suggested indicator	Long term	Short term
Financial	Increased household incomes	X	
Human	Increased population; Increased population under 40	X	
Financial	Increased tax revenue	X	
Financial	Increased property values	X	
Built	Increased safe and affordable housing	X	
Built	Buildings constructed/rehabilitated	X	X
Built	Improved broadband access	X	X
Financial	Businesses created/expanded	X	X
Financial	New jobs created locally	X	X
Financial; Natural	Increased tourism and recreation	X	X
Financial	Increased resources and investment in local projects	X	X
Political	Increased voter turnout	X	X
Social; Natural; Cultural; Human	Improved quality of life	X	X
Social; Human	Increased civic engagement		X
Social; Natural; Cultural; Built; Financial	Increased number of completed community improvement projects		X
Human; Social	Increased community optimism		X

Appendix C: Survey Questions

12 Likert scale survey questions:
Respondents were instructed to answer each question by selecting from the following scale: Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree.
- *My community has visibly improved over the past 10 years.*
- *I am aware of the community development efforts that have occurred in my community over the past 10 years.*
- *The opportunities facing my community outweigh the challenges that we are facing.*
- *I am confident in my community's ability to plan for and accomplish significant projects through teamwork.*
- *I see that there are community revitalization activities led by local residents happening all across West Virginia.*
- *I believe the resources available to support local community development have been effectively utilized by my community*
- *Most of the community development work done in my community is done by the same 1-3 people.*
- *I consider myself to be an active participant in community development efforts in my community.*
- *It is easy to get involved in my community if you want to do something to improve the community.*
- *My community supports the engagement of new people in efforts to improve the community.*
- *Community leadership has a vision for how to improve and revitalize our community.*
- *I have been involved in community development efforts for the following amount of time: (1-2 years / 3-5 years / 6-10 years / 10+ years)*

Additional free-form response questions:
- *How could resources available to support community development better support your community?*
- *What are 3 major community development projects that your community has completed (in the past 10 years) that have had a visible impact on improving your community?*
- *What current projects (projects currently underway but not completed) are you most excited about?*
- *Who are key state or regional groups that have helped community development in your community?*
- *List the top 3 opportunities in your community.*
- *List the top 3 challenges facing your community.*
- *What else do we need to remember or consider as we think about how to drive forward more community development successes in West Virginia communities?*

Appendix D: Sources

The following sources were consulted throughout this project.

Third-party data sources
- Midwest Evaluation. 2019 Community Level Indicators Dashboard Report: Mercer County (draft). Prepared for the West Virginia Community Development Hub. 2019.
- Midwest Evaluation. Envisioning a Statewide Data System for Community Development (draft). Prepared for the West Virginia Community Development Hub. 2019.
- National Conference on Citizenship. West Virginia Civic Health Index. 2014. https://ncoc.org/research-type/west-virginia-civic-health-index/
- PolicyMap. Interactive data mapping tool. https://www.policymap.com/maps
- United Health Foundation. America's Health Rankings Annual Report: West Virginia. 2018. https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Overall/state/WV
- U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder. http://factfinder.census.gov

Focus groups and surveys
- Downstream Strategies. "Community development survey." SurveyMonkey. July–September 2019.
- WV Community Development Hub. Focus group internal notes and attendee surveys. June 3–20, 2019a.
- WV Community Development Hub. Think Tank internal notes and attendee surveys. February 26–27, 2019b.

Example studies and relevant frameworks
- City of Santa Monica. Wellbeing Index. 2019. https://wellbeing.smgov.net/about/wellbeing-index
- Main Street America. Main Street = Economic Impact. 2019. https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/mainstreetimpact
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "New Data on How We're Measuring a Culture of Health." September 12, 2019. https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2019/09/new-data-on-how-were-measuring-a-culture-of-health.html?rid=0032S000027HPoXQAW&et_cid=1831683
- The Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group. "Rural Development Hubs: Strengthening America's Rural Innovation Infrastructure." May 2019.
- WealthWorks. 2019. https://www.wealthworks.org/

Interviews
- Bush, James. Hub interview transcript. February 13, 2019.
- Cavender, Ric. Hub interview transcript. February 4, 2019.
- Clark, Dave. Hub interview transcript. January 31, 2019.
- Daugherty, Paul. Hub interview transcript. February 8, 2019.
- Foster, Michelle. Hub interview transcript. February 5, 2019.
- Hart, Thomas. Hub interview transcript. February 6, 2019.
- Hodges, Adam. Hub interview transcript. February 2, 2019.
- Hunt, Mary. Personal interview. July 17, 2019.
- Jackson, Cliff. Personal interview. August 26, 2019.
- Jenkins, Marten. Hub interview transcript. February 4, 2019.
- Kemp, Lauren. Personal interview. August 16, 2019.
- Kirby, Patrick. Hub interview transcript. February 6, 2019.
- Lusk, Jeffrey. Hub interview transcript. February 6, 2019.
- Martin, Nikki. Hub interview transcript. February 8, 2019.
- Moeller, Ray. Personal interview. July 30, 2019.
- Petry, Alex. Personal communication. October 1, 2019.

- Raffo, Stacy. Personal interview. August 7, 2019.
- Reese, Timothy. Personal interview. August 1, 2019.
- Roper, Natalie. Personal interview. August 12, 2019.
- Shepherd, Matthew. Personal interview. July 8, 2019.
- Sjostedt, Judy. Hub interview transcript. January 30, 2019.
- Smith, Dustin. Personal interview. August 8, 2019.
- Spellman, Kent. Personal interview. July 11, 2019.
- Stout, Margaret. Hub interview transcript. January 30, 2019.
- Upshur County Development Authority. Personal communication. October 1, 2019.
- Wilson-Hauger, Emily. Personal interview. August 1, 2019.
- Wrenn, Marilyn. Hub interview transcript. February 12, 2019.
- Wycoff, Barbara. Hub interview transcript. February 1, 2019.

Articles and other sources
- Blanke, A and Waler N. "Measuring community development: what have we learned?" *Community Development*, 44:5, 534-550. December 10, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2013.852595
- Create Buckhannon. "Create Buckhannon Initiatives List." 2019.
- Cunningham, C and Black, J. "This Appalachian town was America's 'fattest city.' Here's how it slimmed down." *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/this-appalachian-town-was-americas-fattest-city-heres-how-it-slimmed-down/2019/04/10/e0eb31e4-5622-11e9-814f-e2f46684196e_story.html
- Flora, C and Flora, J. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (3rd Edition). Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 2008.
- Grisham, V and Gurwitt, R. "Hand in Hand: Community and Economic Development in Tupelo." *The Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group*, 1999. https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/pubs/Tupelo_0.pdf
- International Association for Community Development (IACD). "Towards a global definition of Community Development: IACD Board approves historic global definition of community development." August 1, 2016.
- http://www.iacdglobal.org/2016/08/01/iacd-board-approves-historic-global-definition-of-community-development/
- Johnson, Shauna. "As new school year begins, state superintendent offers year in review for last school year." *WV Metro News*, August 14, 2019. http://wvmetronews.com/2019/08/14/as-new-school-year-begins-state-superintendent-offers-year-in-review-for-last-school-year/
- Knicely, Leah. "Buckhannon Mayor celebrates economic growth during groundbreaking event." *12WBOY*, July 14, 2018. https://www.wboy.com/news/upshur/buckhannon-mayor-celebrates-economic-growth-during-groudbreaking-event/
- Main Street America. Wheeling Heritage. 2019. https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/mainstreetawards/gamsa/new-item/wheeling
- McCullough, Jeff. "Experts say West Virginia's economic woes have strong long-term solutions." *WV Metro News*, January 27, 2019. https://www.wvnews.com/news/wvnews/experts-say-west-virginia-s-economic-woes-have-strong-long/article_99bccfda-c3bb-5172-9f3f-d11cbde4ed1e.html
- UNTERM. "Community development." Archived from July 14, 2014. https://unterm.un.org/
- West Virginia CAD. Main Street WV and ON TRAC. 2019. https://wvcad.org/infrastructure/main-street-wv-and-ontrac
- WV Community Development Hub. "Assessing Community Capacity" white paper. Prepared for the WV Community Development Gathering. 2006.