

FERRUM VILLAGE AREA PLAN

Franklin County, Virginia
Adopted August 20, 2019

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Developing a Plan for Ferrum

The Ferrum Village Area Plan provides a blueprint to guide both community efforts and public sector initiatives and investments over the next several years. This plan has not strayed from previous plans completed over the last several decades, rather it reinforces the long-term vision for a revitalized village center and outlines priorities to support implementation. The goals and strategies described herein require both people power and financial resources to bring them to fruition. The purpose of this plan as a strategy document is not to sit on a shelf, but rather inspire and instigate actions to move forward on a range of community goals.

Planning Context

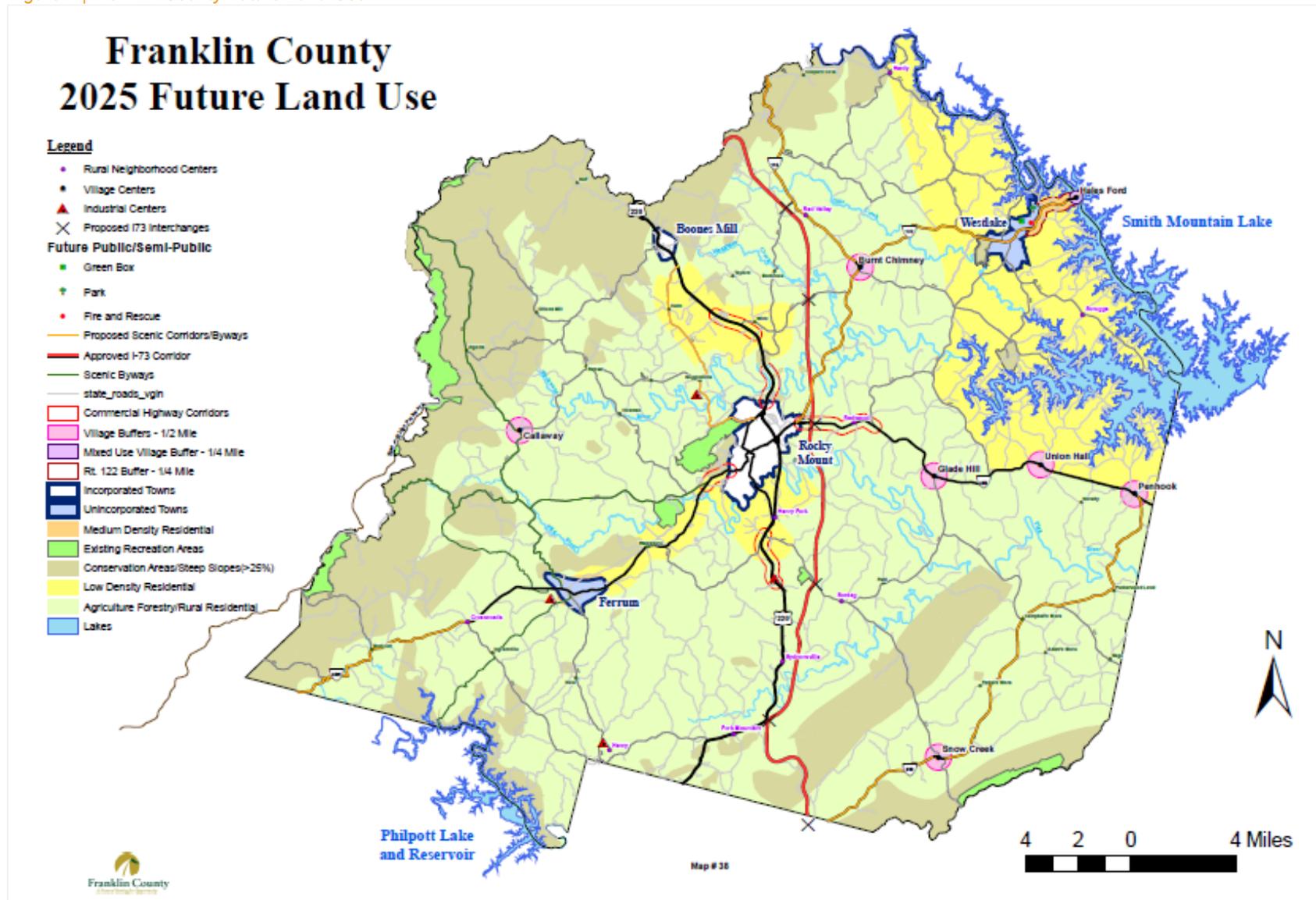
The Franklin County Board of Supervisors adopted their first comprehensive land use plan on April 19, 1976. The Generalized Future Land Use Map of 1975-1985 shows Ferrum as having a predominately residential use along with agricultural, with small areas of industrial and commercial, as well as public use for Ferrum College.

The 1975 adopted plan focused on growth areas surrounding Smith Mountain Lake, as well as the county seat, Rocky Mount. However, the plan did give mention to Ferrum's water and sewer coverage. The Ferrum Water and Sewer Authority was established in 1969 after recognizing both the need for upgrades to capacity for waste-water treatment at Ferrum College, and the importance of providing public water and sewer services to the community. Subsequently, college water facilities were extended into the community in 1971, resulting in an estimated 80 percent of the community utilizing the Ferrum Water and Sewer Authority's system. Each of the adopted comprehensive plans have assessed and commented on the Ferrum Water and Sewer Authority, concluding that the water facilities in the Ferrum Study Area are excellent with well-planned expansion potential.

The Franklin County Board of Supervisors adopted their second comprehensive plan on December 16, 1985. The plan suggested that – along with the town of Rocky Mount, Boones Mill, and Smith Mountain Lake area– the County direct residential development to Ferrum; area(s) with the greatest opportunity for cost-effectively serving residential developments with public facilities, services, and utilities.

The Franklin County Board of Supervisors adopted their third comprehensive plan titled: Inventing Franklin County's Future – 1995 Comprehensive Plan on April 4, 1995. This plan was the first to provide policies for Ferrum as a growing town within the county; suggestions included a community land use plan to identify local resources and opportunities, identify and market industrial sites for long term growth, upgrade park and recreation facilities, and the encouragement of both a family physician and a center for senior citizens within the community. The plan further introduced the suggestion of creating a direct road link between Ferrum and Route 220 that would be capable of carrying commercial and commuter traffic to Roanoke, while bypassing Rocky Mount.

Figure 1 | Franklin County Future Land Use



In March of 2000, Frazier Associates, with the help of Anderson & Associates, prepared a “Village Center Revitalization Plan” for Ferrum. The draft focused on design goals for the Ferrum area with specific guidelines for streetscapes, sidewalks, and gateway signage. The plan offered design visuals that aligned with the visions of the Comprehensive Plan; however, it was not adopted.

In July of 2000, the Franklin County Department of Planning and Community Development, with the help of Ferrum community citizens and officials and staff, built upon the foundation of the 1995 County Comprehensive Plan in order to develop the Ferrum Community Plan. The draft supplied background information including history, landscapes, and demographics of the Ferrum area. As an expansive element to the existing Comprehensive Plan, it also provided design goals, development policies, goals and objectives, as well as implementation strategies for the vision. The Ferrum Community Plan provided strategies to achieve results that would otherwise be found through zoning, which continues to be absent in Ferrum. This plan was not adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

The Franklin County Board of Supervisors adopted the County’s fourth, and current, comprehensive plan in May of 2007. The Future Land Use Map designated Ferrum as an unincorporated town due to the potential growth of the area that is in response to the presence of on one of the County’s most important cultural and educational centers, Ferrum College. The Plan builds upon its predecessor and suggests policies that include transportation planning and industrial development. In addition, the plan offers new policies that focus on both the support for Ferrum College’s expansion and development, as well as design throughout the Ferrum area; gateways and entry points that align with landscaping guidelines.

Connectivity and access within Ferrum and to the larger region has been a focus of planning efforts in recent years. In July 2017, the West Piedmont Health District completed a Walkability Assessment in Ferrum (and other municipalities in the West Piedmont Planning District), to analyze and score street segments for sidewalk conditions, connectivity to destinations, accessibility, and safety. Another effort to improve connections and pedestrian safety within Ferrum is a planned pedestrian bridge across the Norfolk Southern railroad adjacent to Route 40 funding by Revenue Sharing grant from VDOT, Franklin County, and Ferrum College. In the fall of 2018,

Why is walkability important?

The Surgeon General stated in his “Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities” that walking is a great way to increase a community’s physical activity, social cohesion, pedestrian safety, and local economy, and to reduce air pollution.¹ With 29.2% of Virginia adults in 2015 classified as obese and only half engaging in regular aerobic activity,² it is more important than ever that exercise be prioritized in every aspect of life. Walking is a great way to achieve physical activity goals for many reasons: it does not require special equipment or skills; it is low-impact and has a low risk of injury; it can be done year-round, indoors or outdoors; and it can be multipurpose, such as for transportation or leisure. Walkable communities often have more pedestrian safety features such as designated crosswalks and are safer for kids who walk to school. Walkable communities support social cohesion by encouraging people to walk to the store with friends, take the dog for a walk, chat with neighbors, and participate in walking groups. Walkability reduces air pollution because people are more likely to walk or bike to work, and it boosts local businesses by making them more accessible. Walkability should be a priority for city planners, local health groups, and community members alike.”

Excerpt from July 2017, the West Piedmont Health District completed a Walkability Assessment in Ferrum

VDOT applied for funding through BPSP (Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program) for crosswalks on Franklin Street (Route 40). In addition to connectivity within the Village, there are planning efforts underway to improve Ferrum's connection to the County and broader region. For example, the West Piedmont Planning District Commission completed a Regional Bicycle Plan in 2018, which includes Ferrum in the Western Franklin County Priority Zone for bicycle facilities. Finally, the Tri-Area Community Health Center on Ferrum College's campus is expanding within Ferrum, which could attract visitors from around the county and region for clinical care.

UDA Technical Assistance Grant

As enabled by Virginia Code § 2.2-229, the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) of the Secretary of Transportation offers grants for professional planning consultant assistance to local governments and regional entities to establish and support Urban Development Areas. Urban Development Areas (UDAs) can cover a wide variety of community types, ranging from small town or village centers to suburban activity areas to urban downtowns. UDAs can help local governments and regional entities to focus investments and create great places that attract businesses and workers alike.

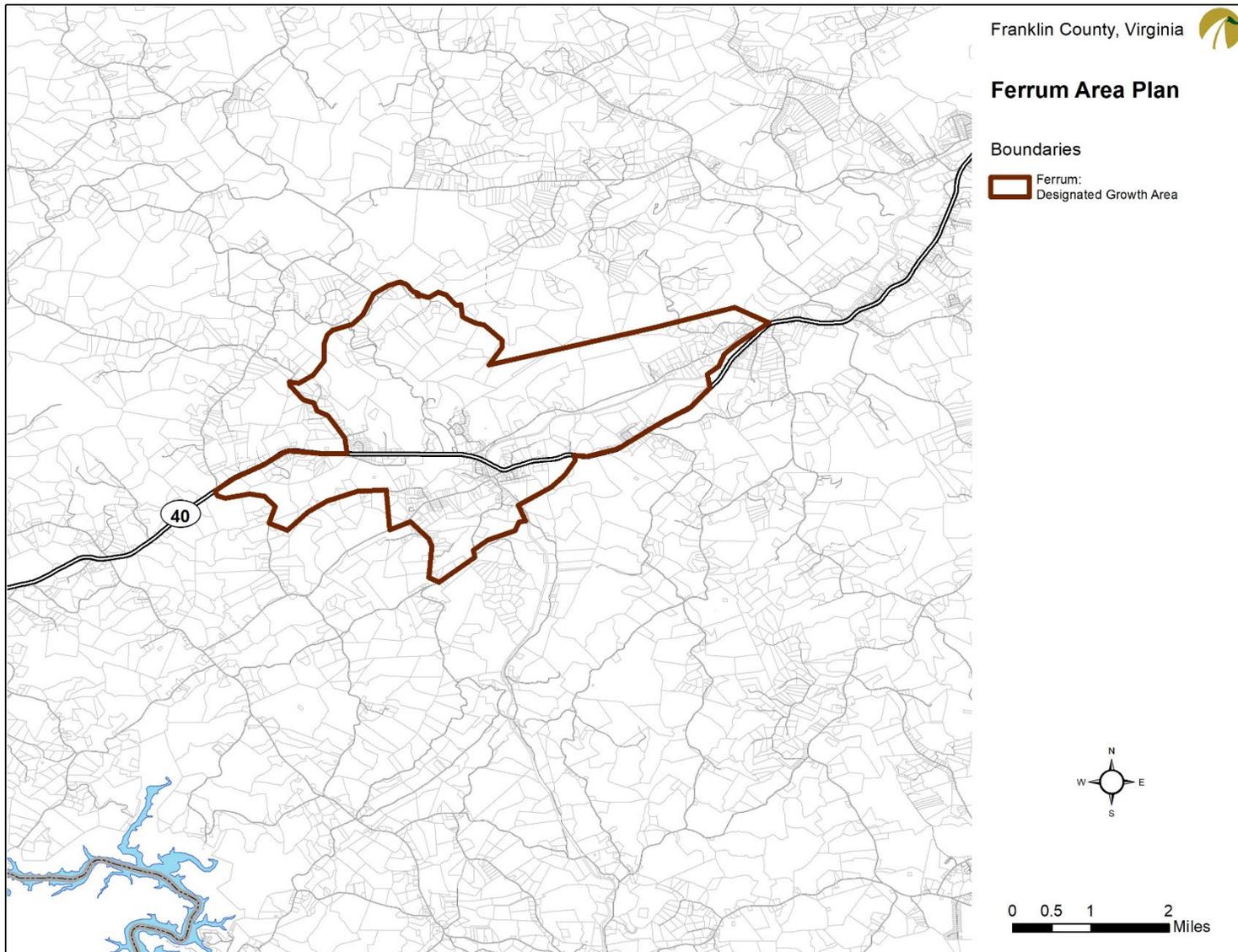
The Franklin County Planning Department applied for a technical assistance grant on August 31, 2017 and was awarded in October of 2017. The technical assistance, in the form of direct on-call consultant support, assisted the County in the following:

- plan for and designate at least one urban/village development area in their comprehensive plan,
- revise as appropriate applicable land use ordinances (including appropriate zoning classifications and subdivision ordinances) to incorporate the principles of traditional neighborhood design (see §15.2-2223.1 of the Code of Virginia),
- assist with public participation processes, and other related tasks.

In response to emerging regional, state, and national demographic and real estate trends, the County has incorporated Designated Growth Areas (DGA) as the mechanism for future development that is consistent with traditional neighborhood design principles. Market pressure for new residential and non-residential development, along with preferences among existing residents and businesses for opportunities to age in place is expected to increase demand for different types of development than traditional single-family detached homes and highway-oriented commercial development. In many counties across Virginia, these trends are leading to the development of walkable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types that have easy access to shops, jobs, and entertainment. Moreover, enabling this type of development in Franklin County supports the housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental goals and objectives of the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan.

The County's DGA designation is consistent with Section 15.2–2223.1 of the Virginia State Code for urban development areas. This designation does not restrict development outside of the DGA, it merely provides clarity of purpose in future development patterns within the DGA. Figure 2 on the following page illustrates the boundaries of the DGA for Ferrum.

Figure 2 | Ferrum Village Designated Growth Boundary



Policies for Designated Growth Areas

Designated Growth Areas are intended to encourage development that makes use of traditional neighborhood design principles. Encouraging these principles in new development or infill development within the DGAs will help position Franklin County for growth and economic development, while maintaining its rural look and feel. It is the County's policy to encourage within the DGAs the following traditional town design principles:

- Pedestrian-friendly road design
- Interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads
- Connectivity of road and pedestrian networks
- Preservation of natural areas
- Mixed-use neighborhoods and a mixture of housing types
- Reduction of front and side yard building setbacks
- Reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections to calm traffic on local streets, as permissible by VDOT standards.

Given the history of planning within the Ferrum Village Center, the DGA designation aims to further desires of community members to create a more economically vibrant and walkable Village Center.

Regulatory Framework

In other areas of the county, zoning ordinances are in place as the primary regulatory tool to encourage and guide development of land. Zoning ordinances typically prescribe regulations concerning building and structure designs, building and structure placement and the type of uses (e.g. residential, commercial, etc.) allowed. Zoning ordinances are also used to create historic overlay districts in support of community goals for historic preservation and/or to determine the type of public improvements that may be required as a result of new development. However, the Village of Ferrum does not have a zoning ordinance. Therefore, there are no regulatory tools in place to encourage desired types, character and scale of development. The primary regulatory tool applicable to development in Ferrum is the Building Code which focuses primarily on ensuring public health, safety and welfare associated with the construction and use of buildings. The Building Code requires that a building permit be obtained from the Building Official to construct, alter, repair, add to and remove or demolish any building or structure in Franklin County and specifies compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Public Involvement

The Planning Commission held work sessions to develop the Ferrum Village Area Plan. The work sessions were facilitated by county planning staff and a consultant team that was provided by a technical assistance grant from the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) under the Urban Development Area Grant Program.

The consultant team facilitated three community engagement events. The first event, a community meeting, was held on February 21st, 2018 at the Ferrum Faith Ministry Center next to Ferrum College. At this event, county staff and the consultant team solicited feedback from community members on transportation, improving community features, community assets, and future improvements. This feedback was used to develop the strategic goal areas of this Plan.

The second community engagement was a two-day workshop, that involved a community meeting, a stakeholder meeting, and staff meeting, and a presentation to the Planning Commission. The consultant team worked together with county staff to invite members of the general public to attend both community meetings, as well as to identify key stakeholders for participation in the stakeholder meeting on September 11th. The community meeting held on September 10th, 2018, hosted by the Ferrum Faith Ministry Center, included a presentation of the results from the previous community meeting and soliciting feedback from community members on strategic goal areas for this planning effort. The stakeholder meeting on September 11th, 2018, hosted by Ferrum College, presented the community's feedback from the two community meetings and identified actionable goal areas that key stakeholders could help realize. The study team also held a meeting with county staff and gave a presentation to the Franklin County Planning Commission on September 11th, 2018 to share work in progress and discuss the next steps to develop this Plan. The final community meeting to present the recommendations occurred on May 16th, 2019.



Photo 1 | Public meeting, September 10th, 2018 at the Ferrum Faith Ministry Center. Photo Credit: Renaissance Planning.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT & EXISTING CONDITIONS

History

The community of Ferrum, Virginia is a U.S. Census Bureau Census Designated Place (Ferrum, CDP) that more than two-thousand people call home. Throughout its history, Ferrum has cultivated rural charm and respect for the working-class. It is home to Ferrum College, and the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum, which hosts the annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival and is a “Major Venue” on the *Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail*.

In the 1890’s, The Southern Railway Company, or what is now known as Norfolk Southern Corporation, began building their railway through the valley; railway officials formally named the depot in 1892, calling it “Ferrum,” despite the community already having a Post Office with the name of “Sophronia.”

There is speculation that the name choice came from the suggestion of Rev. Thomas P. Duke. Further speculation tells that the first president of the railway, Colonel Houston, subsequent to his involvement with Crozier Iron Works of Roanoke, had an interest in the iron ore found in the valley; Southern Railway Company opened a mine during the early times of the railway construction. Thus, the Latin word for iron, “Ferrum”, became the namesake for this small rural community.

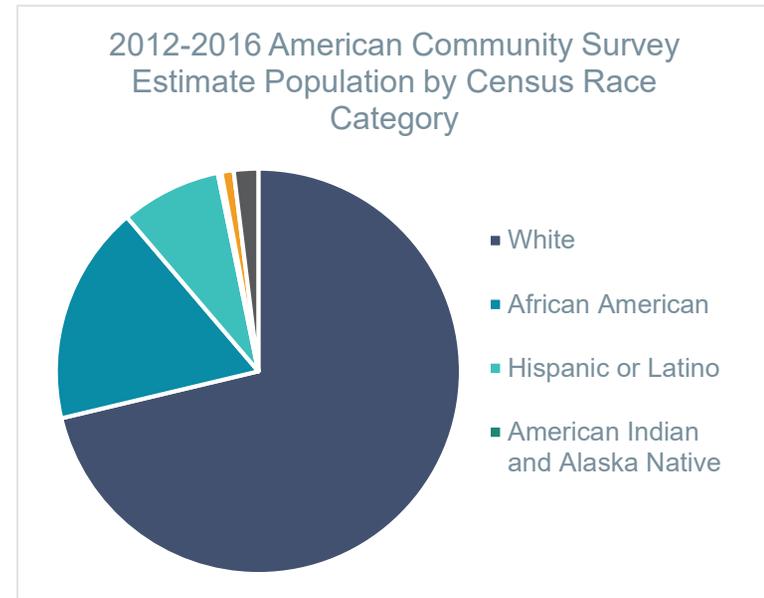


Photo 2 | Blue Ridge Institute Outdoor Farm Museum which is a recreated farmstead circa the early 1800’s. Photo credit: Renaissance Planning

Demographics

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the American Community Survey (ACS) which is an ongoing statistical survey. The data is collected and estimated for five (5), three (3), or one (1) year estimates. The ACS regularly gathers information previously contained only in the long form of the decennial census, such as educational attainment, income, disability, employment and housing characteristics, to name a few. The ACS is estimated data unlike the decennial census which is an actual count every ten (10) years.

According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2,357 individuals were living in the Ferrum CDP (Census Designated Place) in 2016; the majority percentage of the population between the ages of 15-24. The estimated racial breakdown of the Ferrum population is as follows: 1,680 White, 412 African Americans, 189 Hispanic or Latino, 7 American Indian and Alaska Native, 23 as some Other Race, and 46 as Two or More Races.



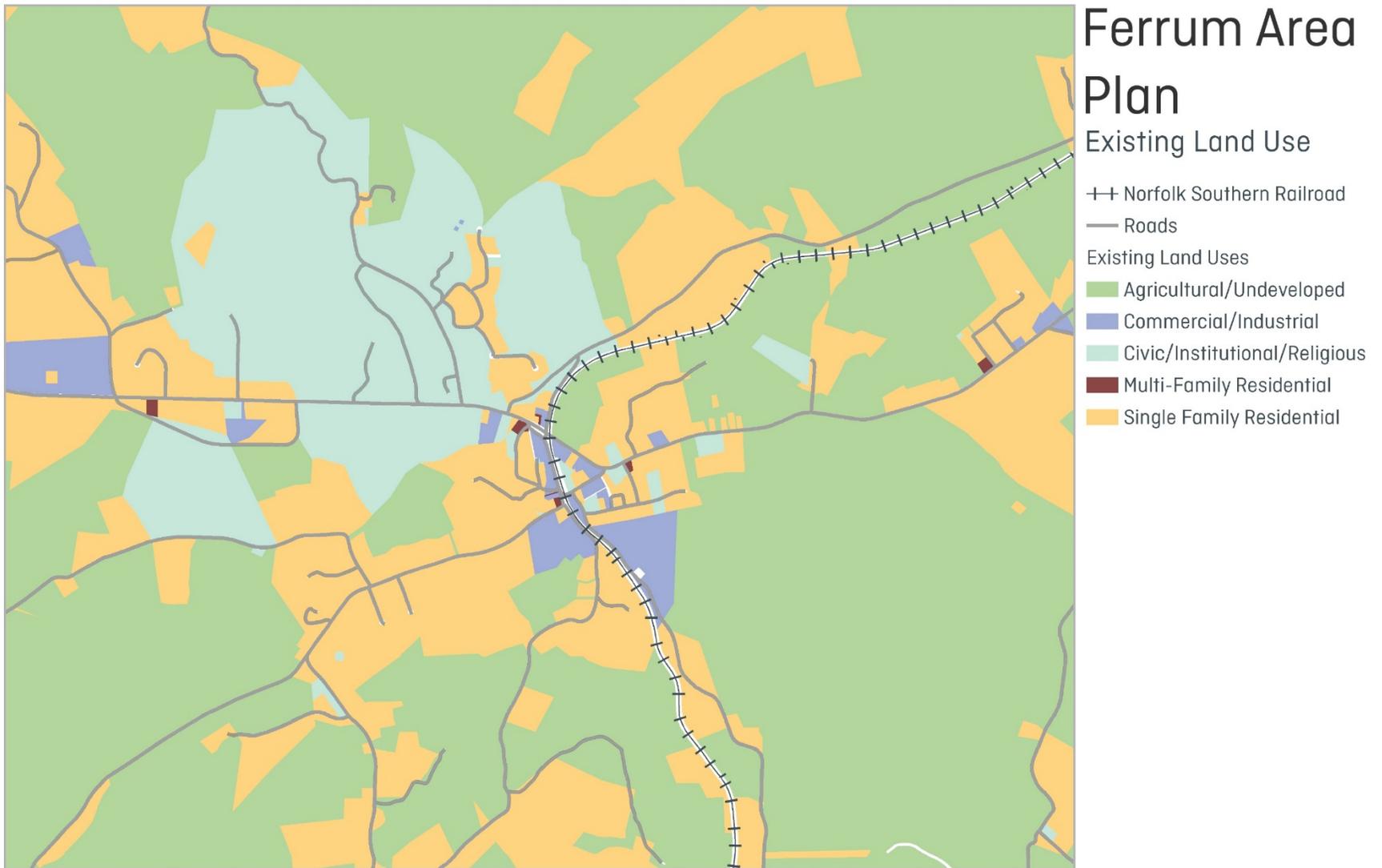
Existing Conditions

This section offers context for the Ferrum Village planning area's future by analyzing and defining the current conditions. This analysis includes information on: land use, vacancy and occupancy; transportation conditions, such as traffic, sidewalks, and safety; environmental conditions and existing infrastructure; and community assets for cultural and eco-tourism, as well as key destinations to leverage tourism activity. This information can help identify existing assets and barriers that could impact the ability to implement the Ferrum Village Strategic Plan.

Existing Land Use

Existing land uses are shown in Figure 3. The dominant land use is institutional with Ferrum College and the Blue Ridge Institute as the anchor institutions for the Village area. The private college is home to approximately 1,700 students living on and off campus. The campus also has on campus amenities such as a YMCA, Tri-Area Health, faith-based institutions and restaurants that are open to students and local residents. Adjacent to the college is a vacant, county owned 84-acre tract of land originally designated for industrial park uses.

Figure 3 | Existing Land Use



In addition to the college and county-owned land, there is a variety of agricultural and low-density residential land uses in the area. The commercial center of Ferrum Village straddles the intersection of the major transportation corridors and the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The existing commercial uses in the Village Center include a small grocery store, gas stations, locally owned retail, banks, civic uses and restaurants that cater to nearby residents or people traveling through the area.

The land vacancy and occupancy in Ferrum are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5. The dominant land vacancy in Ferrum Village is undeveloped agricultural and there is land available in the periphery of the Village Center. There are several, larger parcels that are vacant that are either tax-exempt or intended for commercial uses. One of these is the county-owned property, mentioned above, that is at a strategic location adjacent to Route 40 and Ferrum College. Additionally, there are several smaller, vacant buildings and parcels previously in commercial use – particularly along Timberline Road and Route 40 past Ferrum College. One of the major challenges of the Ferrum Village Center is that the commercial uses are physically disconnected from one another. There are a cluster of auto-oriented buildings and uses located along the highly visible, high-speed Route 40; and there are a handful of businesses located along the less visible, historic main street area along Timberline Road. These two commercial streets are not very walkable and due to the major overpass and railroad tracks, they are not oriented in a manner that creates a true village center or single main street area. Additionally, the commercial buildings along Timberline Road also experience high vacancies and turnover rates, which many believe is due to the poor visibility and access to these businesses.



Photo 3 | Commercial uses along Timberline Road. Photo credit Renaissance Planning.

Figure 4 | Land Vacancy and Occupancy - West

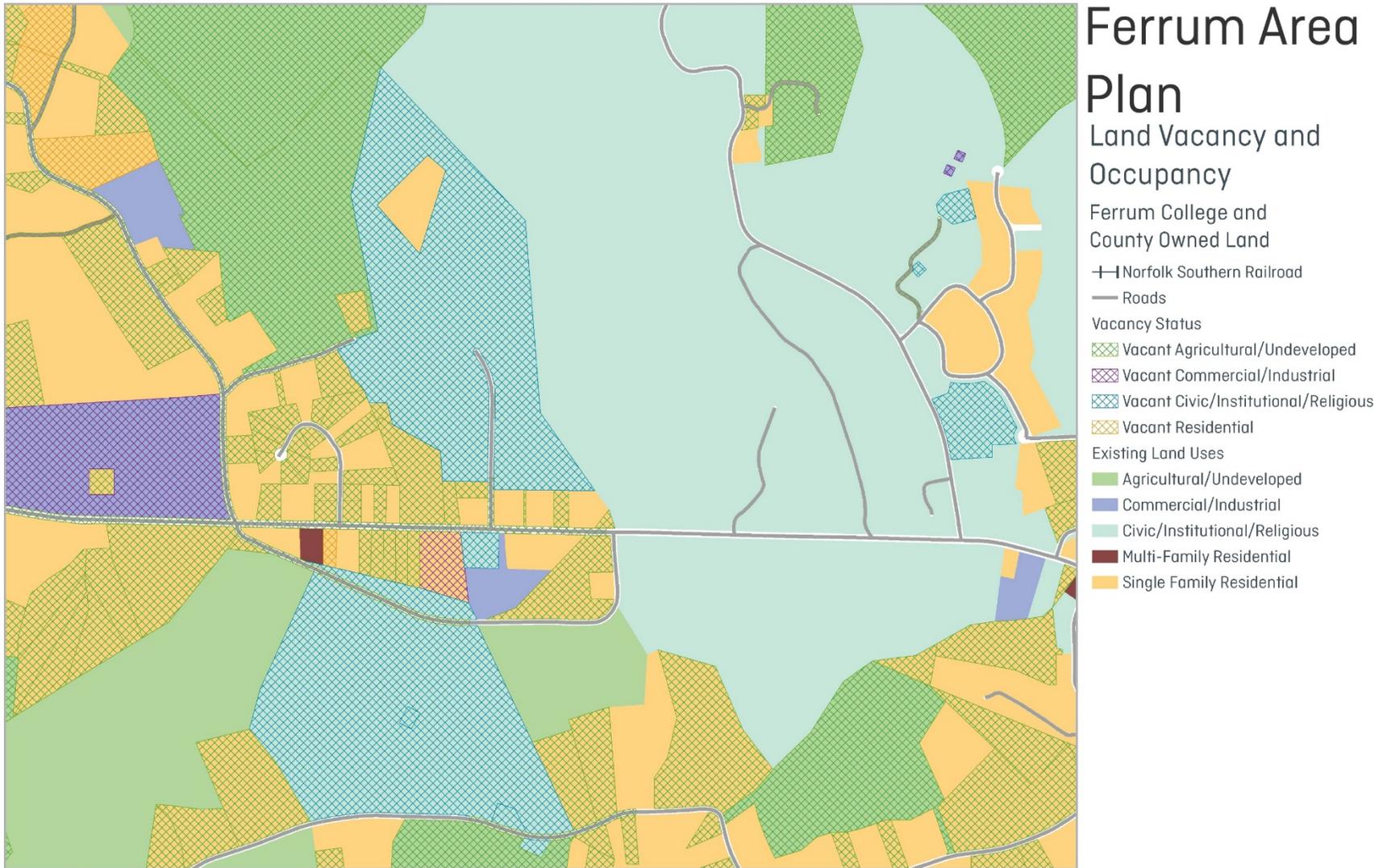
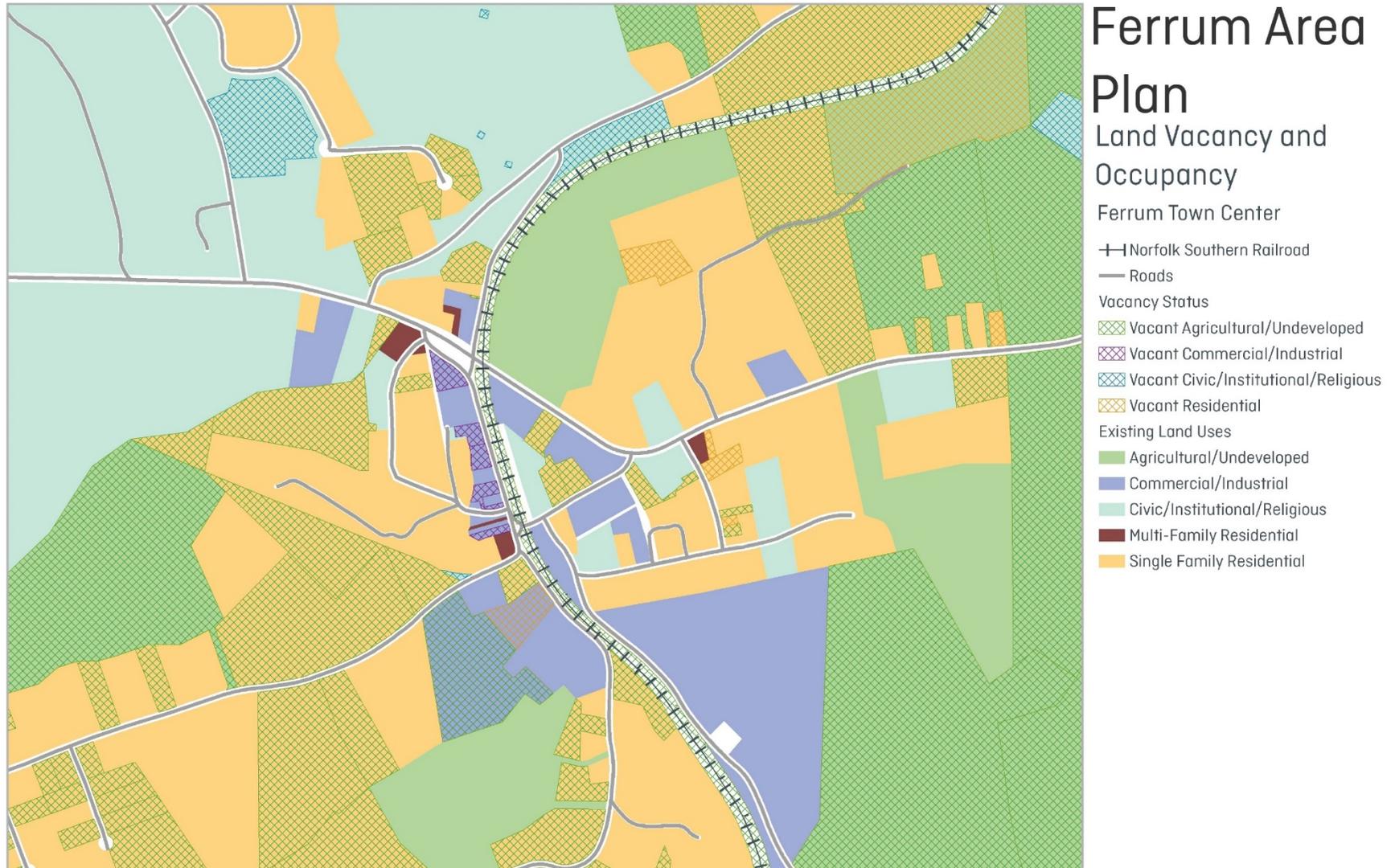


Figure 5 | Land Vacancy and Occupancy - East



Multimodal Transportation Assets

Ferrum Village sits at the intersection of three major roadways including Routes 40, 864 and 865. It is a 10-mile drive along route 40 to Rocky Mount, VA and about a 50-mile drive to the City of Roanoke. The Norfolk Southern railroad also runs through the Village Center; however, there is no longer passenger rail service on this corridor or a rail stop along this route. The Village is also served by the Ferrum Express which is a rural transit bus route that connects Ferrum to key stops in Rocky Mount and the City of Roanoke. The community has some pedestrian infrastructure in the form of existing sidewalks and is about to see the construction of a new pedestrian bridge that will run parallel to Route 40 over the railroad tracks to better connect the Village Center to Ferrum College. The following describes the different conditions of these various transportation assets.

Roadways - Average Daily Traffic

Average daily traffic in the Ferrum Village area is illustrated in Figure 6- Average Daily Traffic Volumes. Vehicle traffic moves easily through Ferrum - the existing roadways in Ferrum have adequate capacity to handle existing traffic flow. In comparison to the surrounding area, the most heavily trafficked segment in Ferrum is on SR 40 (Franklin Street) between Ferrum Mountain Road and the western city limit of Rocky Mount, carrying 3,900 Average Daily Traffic (ADT). In contrast, the least trafficked road in the area, carrying 970 ADT, is Timberline Road. The highest volume of traffic in Ferrum is traveling at high speeds on Franklin Street with little opportunity to slow down to turn into the Village Center.

Roadways - Safety

A map of the VDOT ranked intersections with Potential for Safety Improvement (PSI) Scores is provided in Figure 7- Intersections with Potential Safety Scores. There are safety issues for walking, biking and car access at two key intersections, both on Route 40. It is expected to record such safety issues on 40, given that it is a high-speed rural road. VDOT uses a ranking system called Potential for Safety Improvement (PSI) to identify intersections that could be modified for increased safety. The intersection of Ferrum Mountain Road and Route 40 has the highest PSI score and therefore greatest potential for safety improvement. This score could be attributed to the high speed of cars traveling Route 40 at an unlighted intersection that also has high volumes. The Route 40 intersections with Timberline Road and Fieldcrest Road are not ranked in the PSI Scores; however, they are illustrated below because of the number of comments received from community members during public meetings that there are visibility and accessibility issues at these intersections.

Transit Access

Ferrum College operates the Ferrum Express which is a shuttle bus service that is free to students, staff and community members. The service runs from 5 PM to 11 PM on Thursday and Friday, and 1PM to 11 PM on Saturday, and makes a total of six (6) stops in the round trip to-and-from Ferrum Campus: Rocky Mount Farmers' Market, Eagle Cinema, Rocky Mount Wal-Mart, Bowling Alley, Campbell Court in downtown Roanoke, ending with a return to Ferrum. The Ferrum Express only runs when the college is in session.

Figure 6 | Average Daily Traffic Volumes

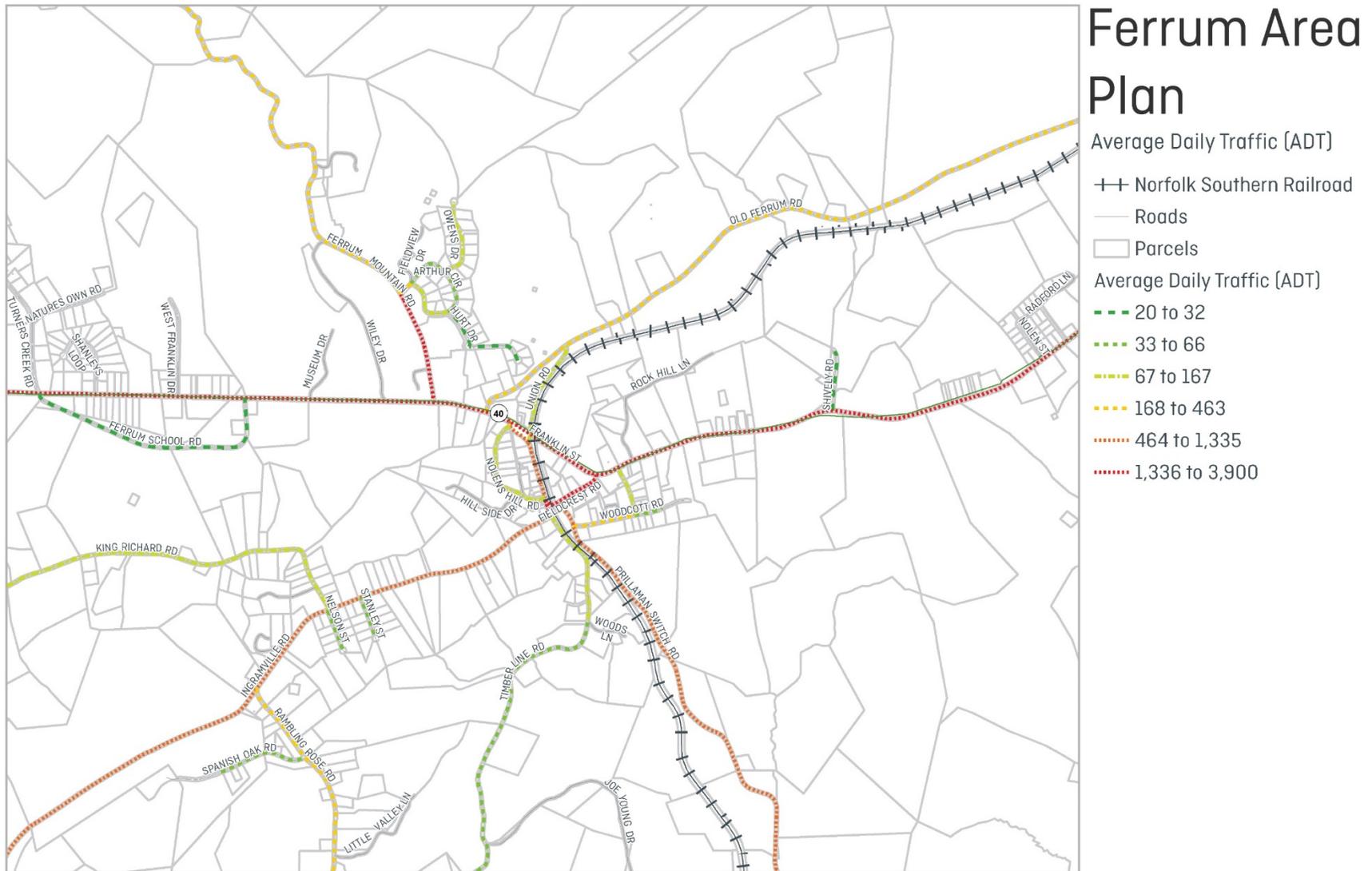
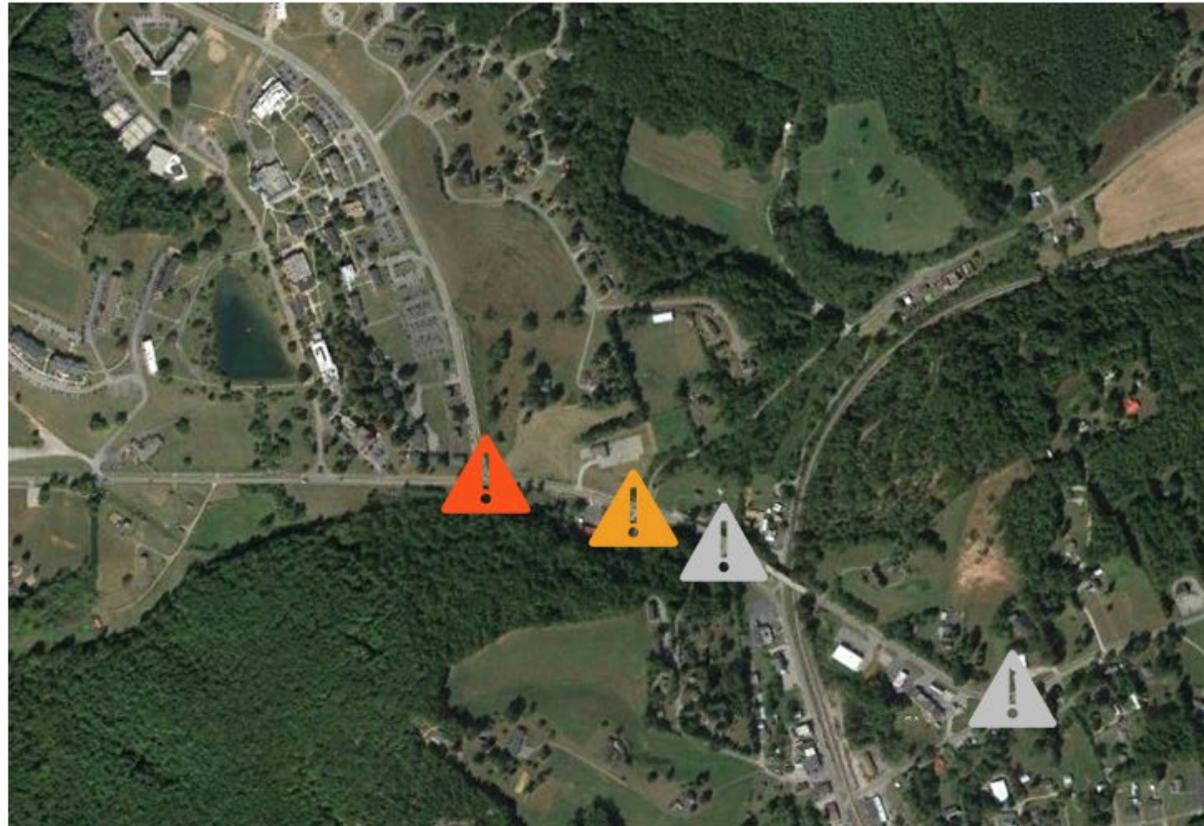


Figure 7 | Intersections with Potential for Safety Improvement Rankings



Ferrum Area Plan

PSI Rank

Source: PSI Rank – Crash Date
2013-2016

 **357**
Ferrum Mountain
Road and Route 40

 **318**
Old Ferrum Road
and Route 40

 **Not ranked**
Timberline Road
and Route 40

 **Not ranked**
Fieldcrest Road and
Route 40

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

A map of pedestrian infrastructure in Ferrum is depicted in Figure 9. There is a mix of high quality and moderate quality sidewalks and crossings – quality considers condition and location in relation to the roadway. Quality categories illustrated here are based on the findings of the West Piedmont Complete Streets Coalition Ferrum Walkability Assessment, listed in Table 1. The assessment results indicate that there is limited connectivity between the Village Center and the Ferrum College area. Any future improvements should be guided by the recommendations outlined in the Walkability Assessment. One near term investment to improve connectivity between the Village Center and the College area is the soon to be constructed pedestrian bridge Figure 8 currently in the construction bidding phase, to be built adjacent to Franklin Street and across the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks.

Street segments with sidewalks, paths or trails on any or both sides of the street	Sidewalk Rating (Out of 10)
Franklin Street: Old Ferrum Rd to Wiley Dr	8
Franklin St: Wiley Dr to Ferrum School Rd	8
Franklin St: Timberline Rd to Old Ferrum Rd	6
Franklin St: Old Ferrum Rd to Fieldcrest Rd	1
Timberline Rd: Fieldcrest Rd to Franklin St	0

Table 1 | Results of Walkability Assessment

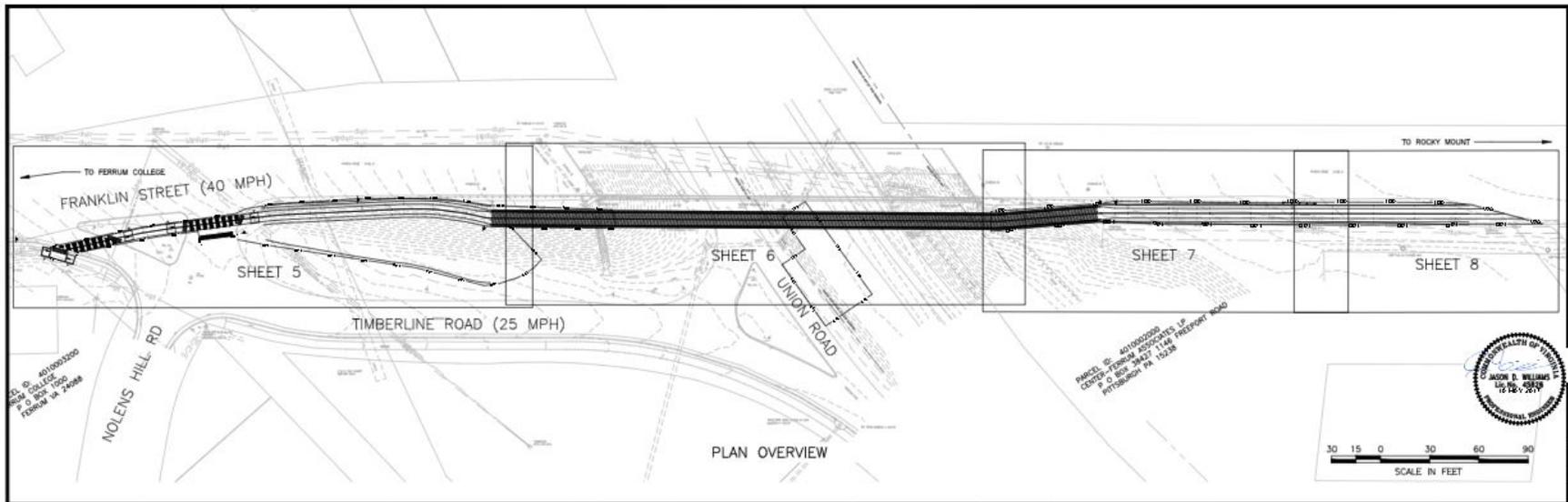
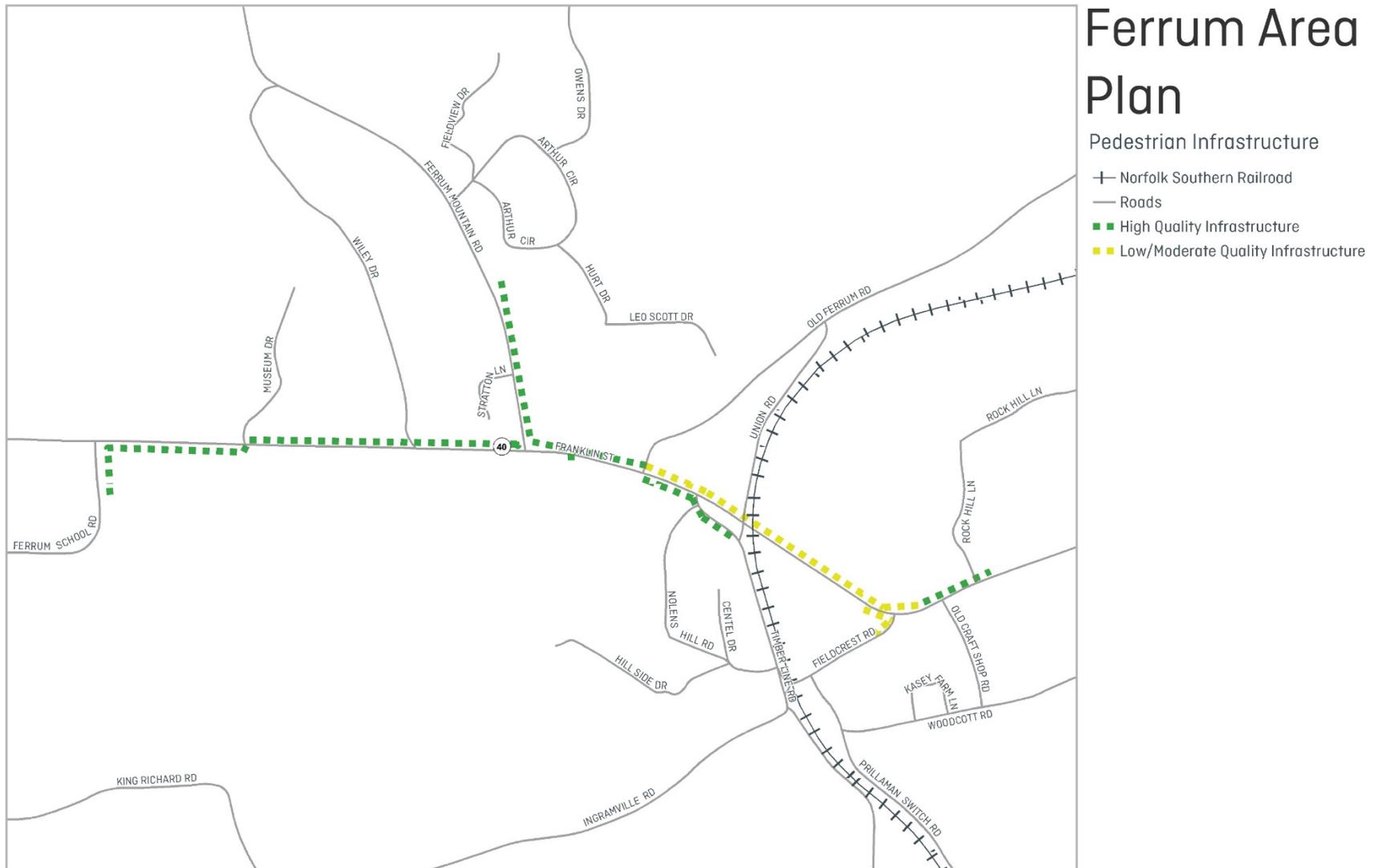


Figure 8 | Schematic drawing of new pedestrian bridge

Figure 9 | Existing Pedestrian Infrastructure



There are no designated bicycle facilities in Ferrum, however the 2018 West Piedmont Regional Bicycle Plan encourages on-road bicycling throughout the western parts of Franklin County. The plan notes that “the Western Franklin County Priority Zone is characterized, in general, by low-traffic rural roads offering outstanding scenery, and a variety of road surfaces including paved and gravel to satisfy the tastes of a broad range of bicyclists.” Additionally, the plan calls out the Pigg River Heritage Trail and the Wade Recreation Park Multi-use Trails in Rocky Mount, and the Jamison Mill Park Trail at Philpott Lake as nearby off-road bicycle amenities.

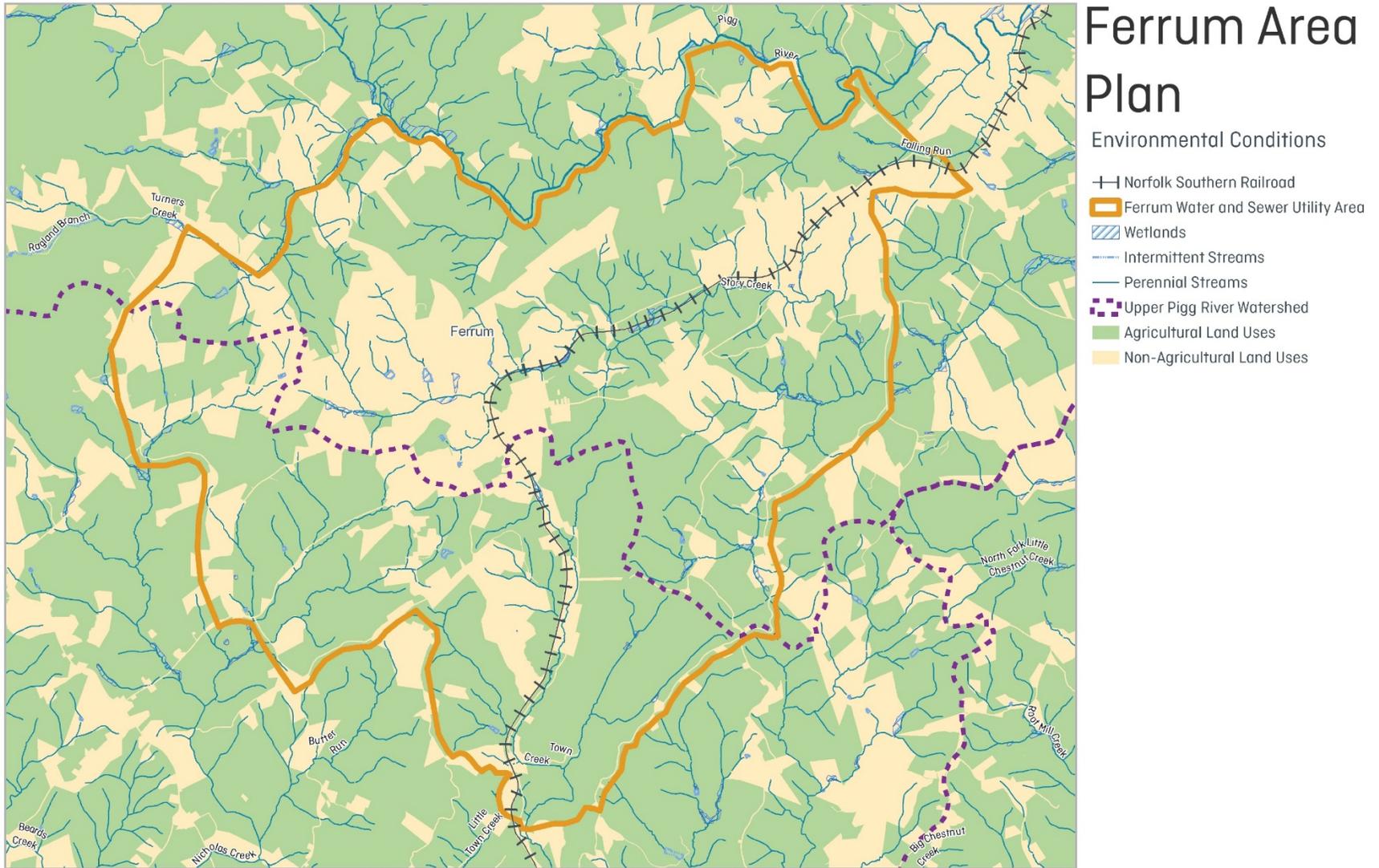
Environmental Conditions and Existing Infrastructure

Ferrum is in the Upper Pigg River Watershed and south of the Pigg River, an important ecotourism destination in Franklin County. The Pigg River Blueway is one of four rivers highlighted as an opportunity for tourists to experience the natural beauty of Franklin County. The proximity to the Pigg River Blueway, and other tourism and recreation activities, presents an opportunity to leverage ecotourism assets for economic development in the Village. Additionally, Ferrum is served by the Ferrum Water and Sewage Authority, which provides water and sewer service to Ferrum Village and Ferrum College. The service area of the Authority is illustrated by the orange line in Figure 10. Potential development can often be limited by access to water and sewer infrastructure, particularly in rural places; fortunately, this is not a problem for Ferrum, as it is in many ways “development ready” to potential development partners.



Photo 4 | Image of cyclist sharing the road with cars along Route 40 near Ferrum. Photo credit: Renaissance Planning

Figure 10 | Environmental Features



Community Assets

Major Institutions and Key Destinations

Anchor institutions such as Ferrum College and the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum provide local jobs, draw people to the area and create demand for nearby amenities such as restaurants, retail and lodging. Ferrum College, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is an open campus that has walking trails, a YMCA, and the Tri-Area Community Health Center. The college also holds many events throughout the year for students and community members alike. The college is currently expanding programs under its Lifelong Learning Institute, which is targeted to kids and adults not currently enrolled in college. Ferrum College also operates the Ferrum Express, which provides free shuttle bus service between Ferrum, Rocky Mount and Roanoke for students and faculty, as well as members of the community.

The Tri-Area Community Health Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and is currently located in the basement of the Vaughan Chapel on the campus of Ferrum College. It provides general family medicine services for local residents and students including regular preventative well-care for all ages, sick-care, minor surgeries, x-ray capabilities, routine laboratory testing, women's health services and an on-site pharmacy. In October of 2018, the Health Center broke ground on a new standalone facility that will be located on Ferrum College campus just off of Route 40.

Ferrum is also home to the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum, designated by the Virginia General Assembly as the official state center for Blue Ridge Folklore. It seeks to document and preserve the traditional life and culture of the Blue Ridge mountain area through various learning experiences for the community. Open seasonally, the Blue Ridge Farm Museum is a living-history museum featuring demonstrations, gardens, livestock, and other hands-on activities that portray an 1800's Virginia-German farmstead. Each October, the Blue Ridge Institute coordinates the largest regional event of its kind – the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival. The event is held across the grounds of the living-history museum farmstead, as well as much of Ferrum College's campus. Events



Photo 5 | Ferrum College Photo credit: Renaissance Planning



Photo 6 | Live performances at the annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival which draws hundreds of people annually to the Ferrum area. Photo credit: Pat Jarrett, Virginia Humanities

include plowing and bailing demonstrations, dog and horse shows, crafts, games for children, moonshine lore, and canning tutorials. Additionally, the festival abounds with music, from Bluegrass to Gospel, found on three different stages.

Local Community Assets

Ferrum also functions as the commercial and civic hub for many nearby residents. There is a local post office, a bank, Ferrum Elementary School, and local serving retail and services in Ferrum. However, these key community assets are physically spread out from one another, which makes it difficult to create a strong sense of place and support strong foot traffic which is often a way to spark economic vitality. Additionally, there are limited fresh foods options in Ferrum and there is no designated public gathering spaces where events are regularly held within the Village Center. Yet functionally, the Village remains an important hub for the community, which presents opportunities to build upon.

Cultural and Ecological Tourism

Ferrum is located on the Crooked Road Music Trail, also known as Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, a 330-mile driving trail that runs through southwest Virginia, which serves to support economic development in southwest Virginia by promoting the region's heritage of traditional music. Ferrum, Rocky Mount and Floyd are prime stops along the trail, as illustrated in Figure 11. This designation comes from communities that have dedicated venues with regular musical performances, affiliated venues or festivals or wayside exhibits. The communities of Rocky Mount and Floyd have embraced this designation and built the musical branding and folklife history into their main street revitalization efforts. Similarly, Ferrum Village has an untapped opportunity to do the same.

Ferrum Village is also strategically located in between many regional eco-tourism destinations including the Blue Ridge Mountains, Blue Ridge Parkway, Pigg River, and Philpott Lake. The combination of the cultural and natural recreational assets in the region presents opportunities for Ferrum to continue seeking ways to attract its share of this regional tourism. One such initiative currently underway is the potential of bringing in some additional wayfinding signage to Ferrum to better connect it with the various assets of Virginia's Blue Ridge and Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission attractions.

Figure 11 | Crooked Music Trail Venue Map

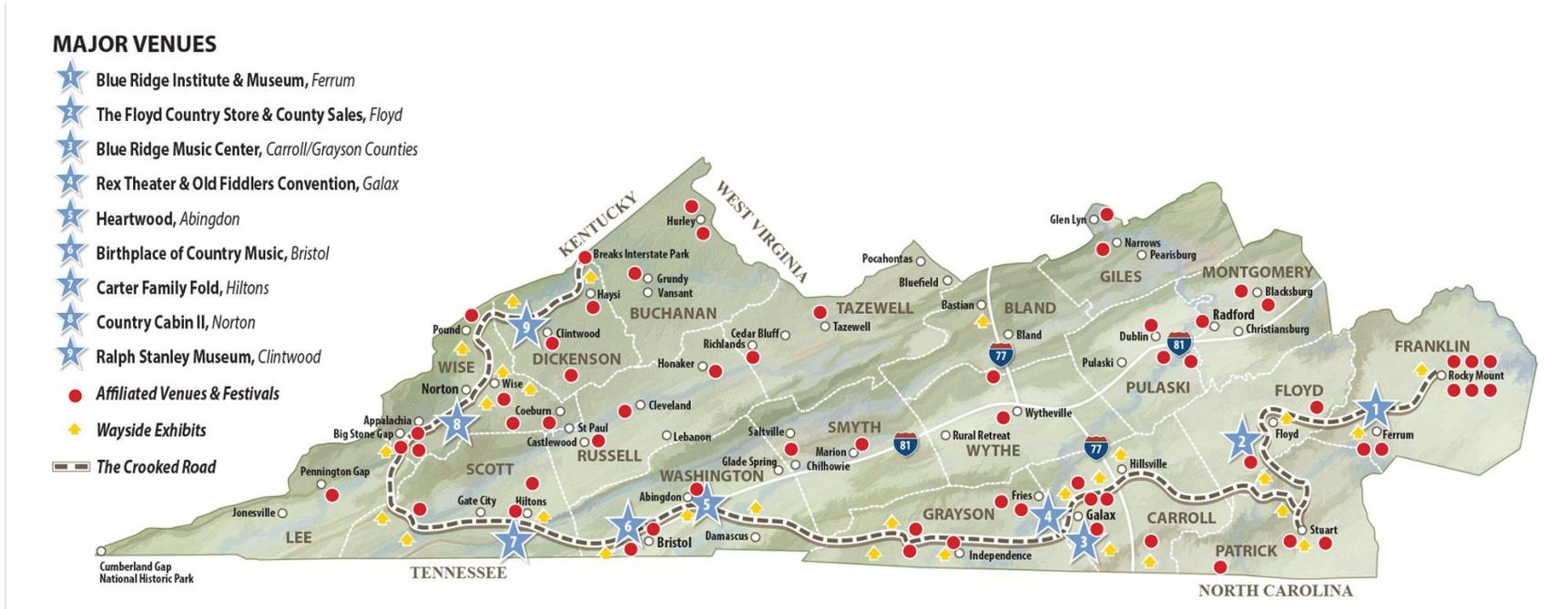
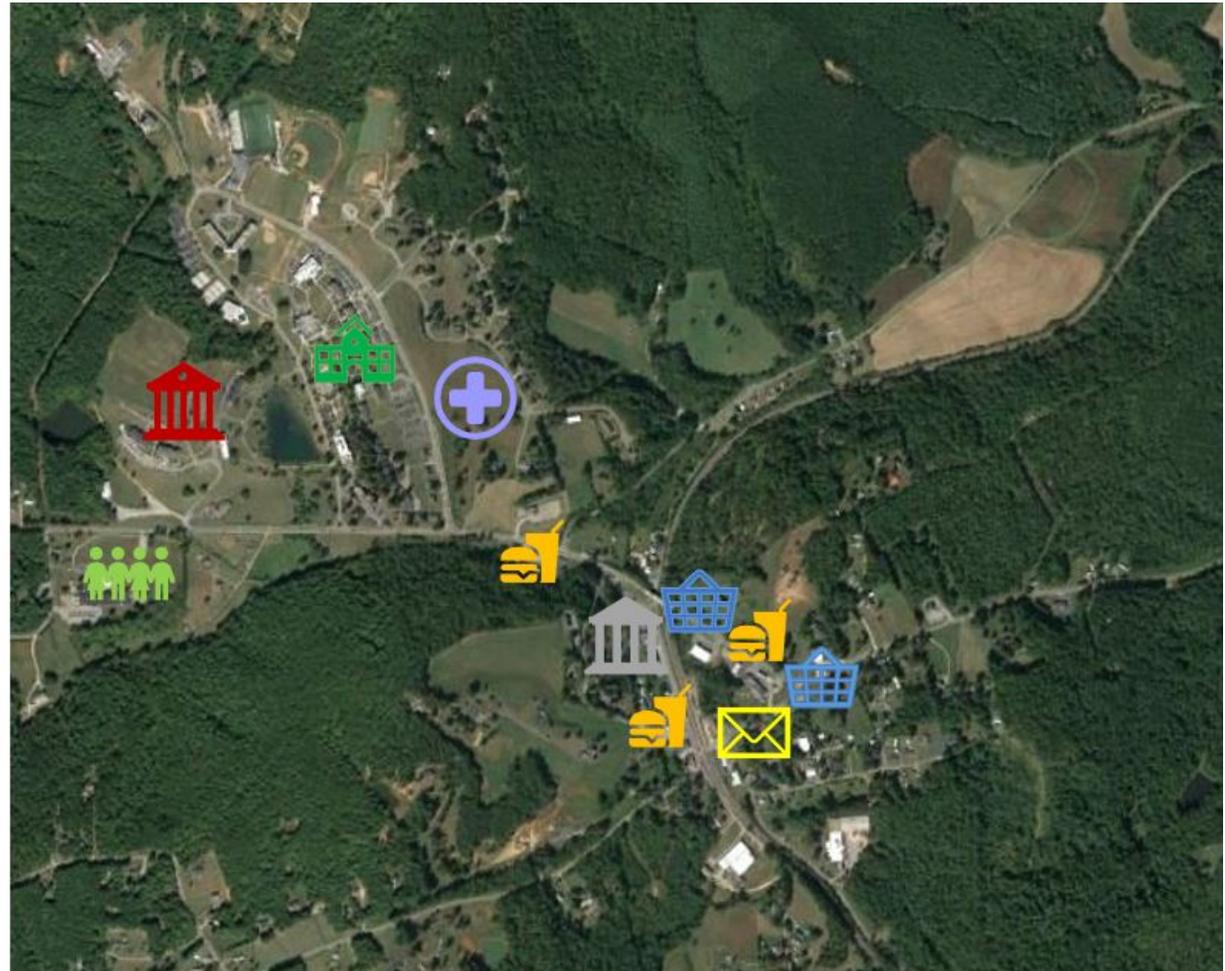


Figure 12 | Community Assets

Ferrum Area Plan

Community Assets

-  Ferrum College
-  Ferrum Elementary School
-  BB&T Bank
-  Retail
-  Restaurant
-  USPS Post Office
-  Proposed Clinic
-  Blue Ridge Institute and Museum



COMMUNITY GOALS AND REVITALIZATION CONCEPTS

To kick off the Ferrum Village Strategic Plan, a community meeting was held in February 2018 to engage community members in a discussion about issues and opportunities related to transportation, improving community features, community assets, and future improvements. The feedback from that meeting is highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2 | Feedback from February 2018 Community Meeting

	What are the most critical transportation needs in Ferrum?	What existing community features need improvement?	What makes Ferrum a great place to live and work?	What would you like to see in the community in the future?
Most frequent responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidewalks and pedestrian safety • Turn lane and intersection improvements • Bicycle accessibility • Connectivity between Ferrum College and Village Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to shopping (food, clothing, etc.) • Walkability, pedestrian access, and access to recreation opportunities • Internet and cellular access • Healthcare access • Revitalization of downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic beauty and mountain landscape • Local heritage • Rural identity and low-density development • Ferrum College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development (business, retail, medical, etc.) • Improved internet and cellular access • Sidewalks, biking and walking trails • Increased housing options (mixed-use, senior housing, apartments, etc.)

Ferrum Village Goals

This information combined with the existing conditions analysis, broader goals of the Designated Growth Areas, and best practices in small town and rural planning resulted in the creation of three primary goal areas for the Ferrum Village Strategic Plan: **1) Create a stronger sense of place; 2) Support economic development and Village Center vitality; and, 3) Enhance community wellbeing, health, and safety.** Figure 13 illustrates each goal area and the relevant community priorities for each.

Figure 13 | Community Priorities and Goals of Ferrum Village Strategic Plan



At the second community meeting on September 10th, 2018, the study team presented the three goals along with some illustrative examples of transportation improvements and development concepts that reflected those goals and asked for feedback. Some of the narrative feedback is illustrated in Figure 14. Specific feedback on development concepts and transportation investments are highlighted in the subsequent pages. Finally, community members were engaged in small working groups to brainstorm ideas on how best to implement the three goals. This information helped to inform the final set of strategies and implementation steps described in Chapter 4.

The study team also held a stakeholder meeting on September 11th, 2018, hosted by Ferrum College, where participants reviewed the community’s feedback from the two community meetings and identified actionable goal areas that key stakeholders could help realize. Stakeholders at this meeting included representatives from Franklin County Planning Commission, Franklin County Parks & Recreation, Virginia Department of Transportation, West Piedmont Planning District Commission, Ferrum College, Blue Ridge Institute and Museum, Ferrum residents, and business owners in the Village Center. To move this plan forward, community members identified some additional stakeholders within the community and the larger region that would be needed to help bring the Ferrum Village Strategic Plan to fruition, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 | Additional Stakeholders to Engage in Ferrum Village Strategic Planning

Additional Stakeholders to Engage in Ferrum Village Strategic Planning	
Water and Sewer Board	Local residents
Principal of Ferrum Elementary School	Faith-based community
Future Farmers of America at Ferrum High School	YMCA
Army Corps of Engineers (Philpott Lake)	College students
Tourism Board	Public relations staff at Ferrum College
Business owners	Local artist group in Ferrum
Property owners	United Way
Tri-Area Community Health	Franklin County Council on Aging



Photo 7 | Image from community meeting in Ferrum on September 10th, 2018. Photo credit: Renaissance Planning

Development Concepts – Revitalizing the Village Center

The study team presented a wide range of potential uses illustrated through photographs of other communities to help workshop participants imagine what a revitalized Village Center could include and the range of uses that could occur on the county-owned land. These uses and designs also reflected the key policy goals of Designated Growth Areas, which includes: creating walkable places, preserving open spaces and natural areas, promoting a mixture of uses and housing types, and promoting compact and efficient development. These development concepts could be applied to three specific land areas within the community: (1) the Village Center bounded by Franklin Street, Fieldcrest Drive, the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and Timberline Road; (2) a segment of Timberline Road in the Village Center; and (3) a large parcel of County-owned land west of Ferrum College. Workshop participants used green dots to select their top three choices.

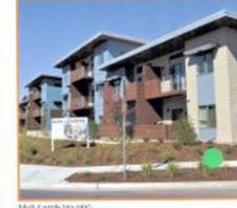
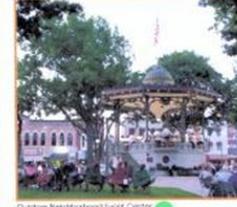
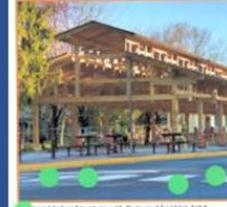
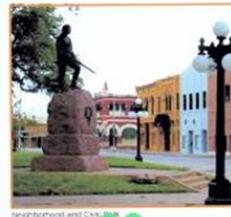
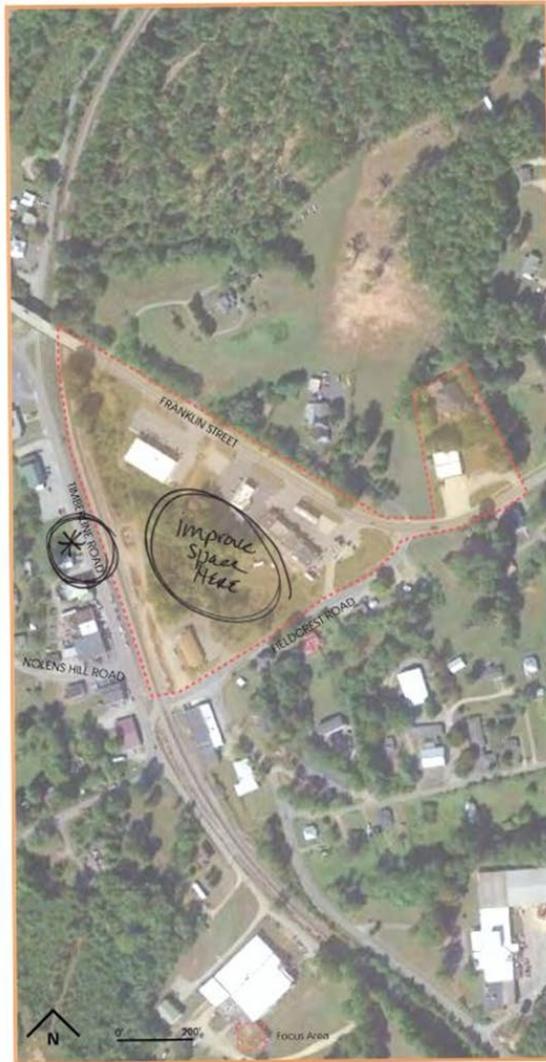


Figure 15 | Development Concepts Focus Areas (from left to right) Village Center, Timberline Road, and County-owned land west of Ferrum College

Figure 16 | Workshop Participants Feedback on Development Concepts for Ferrum Village Center

FERRUM TOWN CENTER: WHICH CONCEPTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE FOCUS AREA?

Place green dots on the IMAGES below that you think are most important for the Ferrum Town Center within undeveloped areas



Got a Better Idea? Tell Us About It: (Place your Comments on Yellow Stickers Here)

Top Development Concepts Selected by Workshop Participants for Ferrum Village Center

Designated Space for Community Events – many communities seeking to revitalize their village centers create new pavilions or other spaces where events like farmer’s markets, musical performances, dances or other community activities can be held.

More Arts and Culturally Based Community Events – one way to bring together the cultural and historic elements of a community is to highlight arts and culture through art fairs, music festivals, craft fairs, etc.

Commercial Areas with Outdoor Seating and Open Spaces – restaurants and retail establishments with public parks or other public seating areas fronting them often benefit from additional foot traffic. Customers of these places often enjoy sitting outdoors and meeting up with neighbors or friends, or just enjoy the open space.

Additional Village Scale Housing – locating new infill housing in a village center can generate additional demand for groceries, retail and restaurants. Additionally, housing that is located within walking distance of the center of an area can support more active living and reduce the need to drive for every trip. Housing for seniors located in areas that are walkable can also help keep older generations more engaged in community life.

Play Areas for Kids – great community centers are welcome places for all ages. Having a centrally located children’s play area in downtown would not only provide opportunities to mingle with neighbors, but that additional foot traffic can support retail and restaurants.



Photo 8 | Farmer's Market, Winchester, VA Photo credit: Michael Baker International

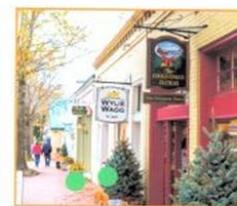
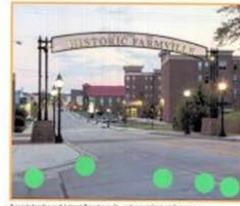
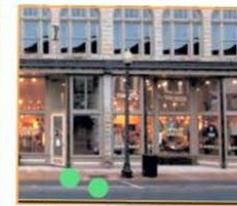
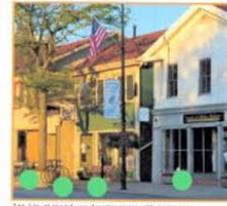


Photo 9 | Town square in Cumings, GA Photo credit: Michael Baker International

Figure 17 | Workshop Participants Feedback on Development Concepts for Timberline Road

FERRUM TOWN CENTER - WHICH TIMBERLINE ROAD CONCEPTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Place green dots on the IMAGES below that you think are most important for Timberline Road



Got a Better Idea? Tell Us About It: (Place your Comments on Yellow Stickers Here)

Top Development Concepts Selected by Workshop Participants for Commerical Areas along Timberline Road

Traditional Main Street retail with residential on the second floor – the area to the west of the railroad tracks represents the original main street area of the historic Ferrum Village. Some existing buildings remain with this form and character. Traditional main streets create a strong building edge and walkable street fronts. Residential on the second floor supports additional retail and restaurant demand and makes it easy to walk to daily destinations.

Outdoor plazas, strong landscaping, wayfinding signage and streetscape elements – when trying to promote vitality in commercial areas, one key strategy is to make it inviting for people to sit and linger. Outdoor spaces with seating, landscaping and other place-making features signals that people are welcome and signifies a community pride in public places. These areas also provide opportunities to incorporate signage, wayfinding, public art and historical features that capture the story of a given place.

On street parallel or angled parking – creating a single row of parking on both sides of the street can help calm traffic and maintain easy access to establishments fronting Timberline Road. Utilizing street parking also allows for maximum use of land for other purposes such as buildings, open spaces and other, more productive uses. Providing street parking also reduces the cost of individual development projects because the cost of parking can be subtracted out of the site by site construction costs thereby making infill and redevelopment more attractive in the Village Center.



Photo 10 | Commercial buildings, Leesburg, VA Photo credit: Michael Baker International

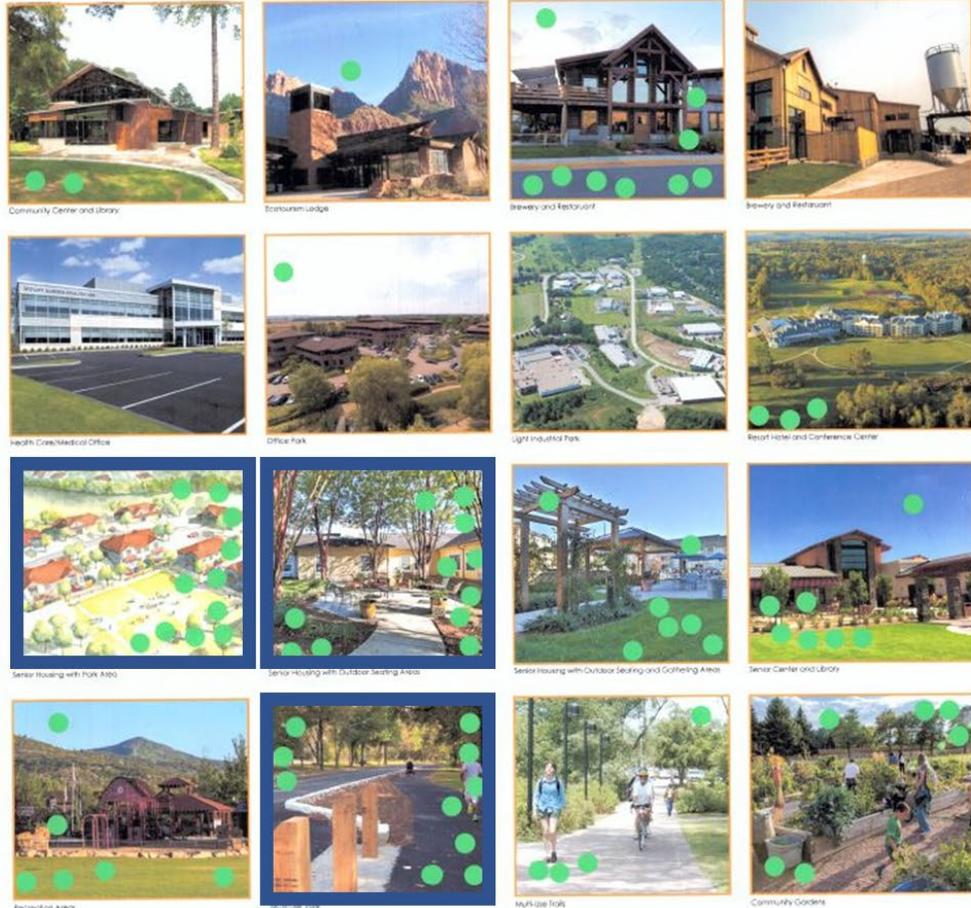


Photo 11 | Landscaping, streetscaping, benches and crosswalks, San Francisco, CA Photo credit: Michael Baker International

Figure 18 | Workshop Participants Feedback on Development Concepts for County-owned Land

COUNTY OWNED LAND - WHICH CONCEPTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Place green dots on the IMAGES below that you think are most important for County owned land



Got a Better Idea? Tell Us About It: (Place your Comments on Yellow Stickers Here)

Top Development Concepts Selected by Workshop Participants for County Owned Land*

Senior Housing – community members cited an unmet need for senior housing that would allow residents to downsize and still ‘age in place’ in Ferrum. Senior housing located adjacent to colleges can also create some positive synergies in terms of engaging seniors in lifelong learning, sharing oral histories and other community engaging activities. Finally, the proximity of senior housing to campus would provide seniors with close access to the YMCA, walking trails and the Tri-Area Community Health Center.

Destination Restaurant/Brewery – this parcel is situated in a location with great views and access to the main roadways through town. The creation of a destination restaurant or brewery at this location could build off the existing eco-tourism attractions of the area. To maximize the synergy with other cultural assets of the area, the restaurant could feature local farm to table options and celebrate recipes and offerings related to the rich Blue Ridge and West Piedmont cultures.

Conference Center and Lodging – conference centers and associated lodging can be a positive complementary use for colleges and often work well in rural settings. The attraction of these types of facilities is to provide a space for people to get away from the day to day for a retreat for business or pleasure.

Recreational Area, Community Gardens and Multi-Use Trails – given the lure of the region for recreational activities, this parcel could be repurposed as a major county recreational area with off-road biking, multi-use trails and community agriculture. A partnership with the Blue Ridge Institute’s Living Farm could help focus the cultivation efforts. These agricultural assets could in turn be used to support a Ferrum farmer’s market and/or farm to table restaurants.

**Given that this parcel is 80+ acres, community members discussed the option of combining all the above uses on the site.*



Photo 12 | Elmcroft Senior Housing with community gathering spaces in Cypress, TX. Photo credit: Michael Baker International



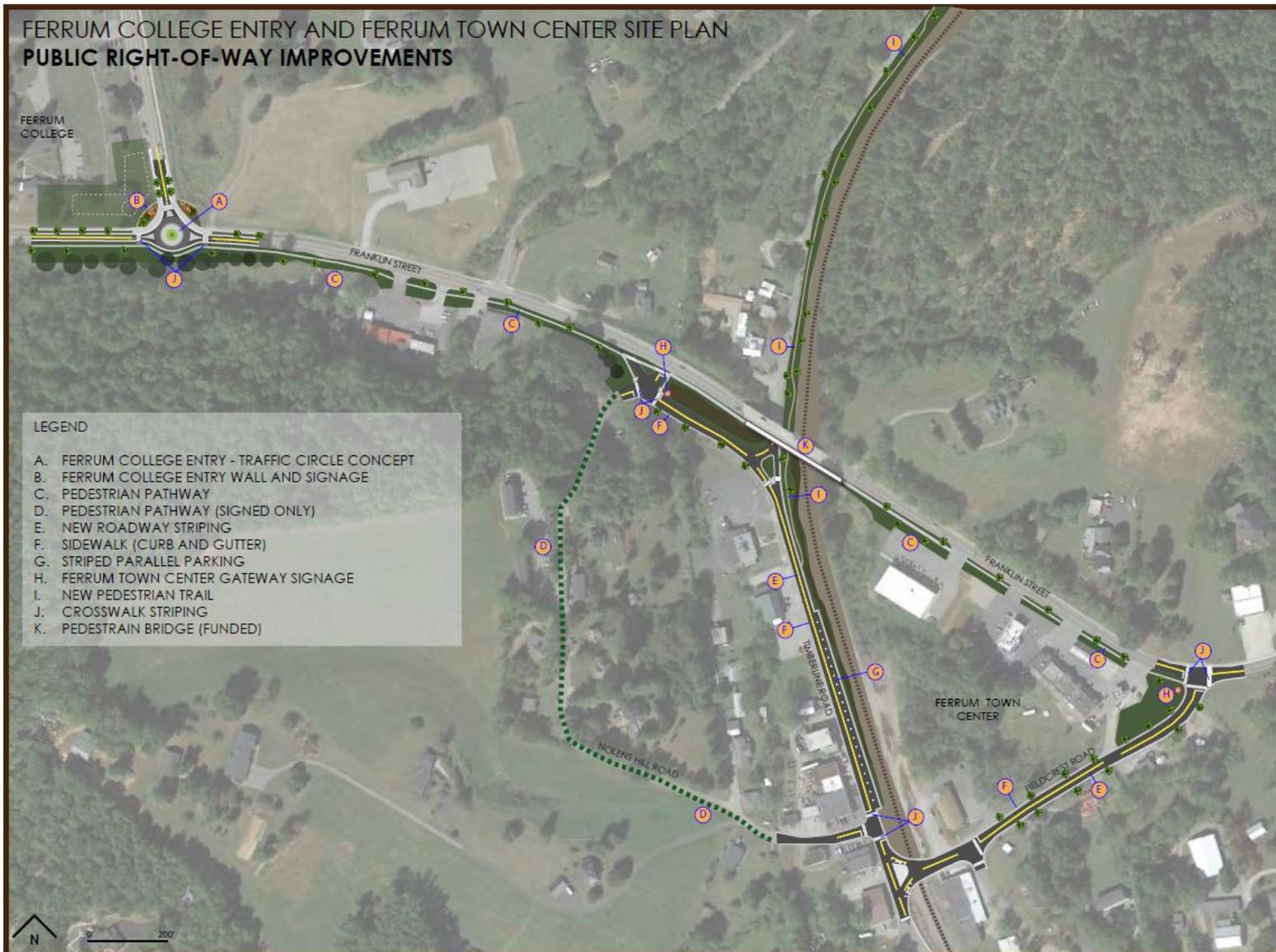
Photo 13 | Tree House Brewery Chatham, MA Photo credit: Michael Baker International

Multimodal Transportation and Public Realm Concepts

In addition to the development options for three focus areas, community members were prompted to provide feedback on maps that exhibited potential transportation improvements that could enhance safety and increase pedestrian connectivity between Ferrum College area and the Village Center. Figure 19 illustrates potential public right-of-way improvements between the Ferrum College entrance and the Village Center, including sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, alternative pedestrian pathways, new roadway striping, and reconfigured parking. These changes would facilitate a more walkable environment in the Village Center, encourage through traffic to turn off Franklin Street into the Village Center, and encourage pedestrian activity between Ferrum College and the Village Center. Community members support these improvements overall. These improvements also integrate with the new pedestrian bridge.

Additionally, a traffic circle concept at Ferrum Mountain Road, illustrated in Figure 18, was developed to encourage slower speeds at the intersection of Ferrum Mountain Road and Franklin Street, to emphasize the entryway to Ferrum College, and to address stormwater drainage concerns at the intersection. The concept was introduced to the participants of the community and stakeholder meetings. Participants of the community meeting were supportive of the concept. Representatives from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Ferrum College – two key potential funding partners – also supported the traffic circle concept. The traffic circle concept also includes pedestrian crossings that promote safer pedestrian environments and slowed vehicular traffic near the west entrance to the Village Center.

Figure 19 | Potential Public Right-of-Way Improvements



FERRUM VILLAGE REVITALIZATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The culminating product of this planning process is a strategic plan for Ferrum Village that is focused on long term goals and strategies with some near-term priorities and action steps that can be taken in the next 1-5 years. The following strategies are organized around the three community goals previously discussed and reflect best practices and community ideas and developed through the entire engagement process. Strategies are briefly described in the following pages, with the suggested actions and next steps to advance those strategies presented in Chapter 4.

Goal 1: Create a stronger sense of place

A strong sense of place emerges from the distinct cultural and natural environmental influences from the past and present on a given location. It manifests in the form and character the buildings, open spaces, streetscapes, public art, signage, pathways for travel and other physical features of a community. It is also reinforced and reflected in the specific institutions, businesses, land uses and social networks present. Creating a stronger sense of place, means tapping into those key elements of place and celebrating them in a manner that reinforces a community’s unique identity. For the Ferrum Village Center, improving the sense of place can support other key goals such as improving the economic vitality of the Village Center and promoting community well-being. Additionally, there are many existing place-based attributes that create the foundation of a strong sense of place in Ferrum; therefore, the following key strategies aim to further enhance what is already there.

Strategy 1.1 Implement gateway signage and Village branding efforts

Ferrum Village could benefit from stronger gateway signage at the intersection of Fieldcrest Road and Route 40 and at its most western edge along Route 40. This signage would indicate a sense of arrival and could help direct people to businesses on both Route 40 and Timberline Road. The signage and branding could be done in a manner that is complementary and potentially integrated with the existing signage associated with Ferrum College and the Crooked Road Trail. The Village brand could be designed to reinforce the key community assets and destinations like the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum, the Folklife Festival, the College and the town’s railroad and industrial history.



Photo 14 | Rocky Mount incorporated the banjo to reinforce its brand as a community on the Crooked Road Music Trail and incorporated that into public seating and other streetscape infrastructure. Photo credit: Renaissance Planning

Photo 15 | Rocky Mount incorporated the banjo to reinforce its brand as a community on the Crooked Road Music Trail and incorporated that into public seating and other streetscape infrastructure. Photo credit: Renaissance Planning

Strategy 1.2 Create a community event space within walking distance of the Village Center

While there are many events that occur on the campus at Ferrum College, community members support the creation of event space in the Ferrum Village Center to bring more vitality into the area and further support foot traffic for local retail, restaurants and other businesses in this area. The event space could be utilized as a venue for a farmer’s market, musical events, rentals for weddings and other family gatherings, etc. The space could be designed to function year-round.

Strategy 1.3 Create safe, convenient walking and biking infrastructure and improve streetscapes in, to, and from the Village Center

The new pedestrian bridge will be a major improvement in better connecting Ferrum College with the Ferrum Village Center. However, the area would also benefit from additional pedestrian infrastructure and streetscaping particularly along Timberline Road to further enhance the visual appeal of this area and help further attract private investment. Figures 19 and 20 illustrate conceptual plans for the additional streetscaping and roundabout for Ferrum.

Strategy 1.4 Incorporate local art, history, and cultural stories into new hard infrastructure and facades of existing/new buildings

One of the key principles behind creating a stronger sense of place is to tap into a community’s unique story or history. For Ferrum this could be explored with a branding effort aimed at identifying some of the key historical, cultural and natural attributes of the community that can be recreated through new public art sculptures, murals on walls, painted sidewalks or the new pedestrian bridge, etc. The Blue Ridge Institute and Museum along with the local schools could be strong partners in helping to develop these stories and implement new ways of sharing them in the public space. Doing so can also be a strategy to bring life to vacant buildings or structures.



Photo 16 | Image of murals painted onto vacant buildings on Main Street in downtown Wenatchee, WA. The goal was to create the look of active storefronts which included placing tables, chairs and umbrellas on the sidewalks.

Goal 2: Support Village Center Vitality and Economic Prosperity

Rural communities' benefit from thriving village centers as they provide convenient access to services, opportunities for social interaction and reinforce the local tax-base. The challenge of maintaining rural town centers is ensuring there is enough ongoing demand from residents and visitors to support local businesses, civic institutions and other key destinations. This means supporting existing businesses and institutions while also attracting more people and activities to the area. It also means encouraging new development and growth that complements and reinforces the small town, historic village character and its unique sense of place. Economic development requires a combination of regional and local initiatives oriented around a community's existing place-based assets. Ferrum has several existing assets including Ferrum College, the Blue Ridge Institute, the Crooked Road Music Trail, scenic views and regional recreation destinations nearby, and several existing businesses, faith-based and civic institutions that already support the existing economic base of the community. It also has many existing stakeholders interested in furthering this goal. Therefore, the focus of strategies under this goal will include investments in human capital and physical infrastructure that can build from what is already there. There is also an emphasis on bringing new stakeholders into the discussion such as potential developers, regional tourism interests, and others to further additional economic development opportunities.



Photo 17 | Events held on main streets attract local residents and visitors alike. From farmer's markets, to parades, to public art exhibits, programming activities in the center of town supports vitality. Photo credit: Corbin, KY Facebook Page

Strategy 2.1 Establish a regular convening of local and regional stakeholders to advance the broader economic goals and actions of the Ferrum Plan and strengthen the relationship between Ferrum College, residents and local merchants

Currently there is no group focused on economic and community development in Ferrum, yet this is an important step in advancing community driven economic initiatives. This group could be established to meet quarterly with a focus on implementing the Ferrum Village Area Plan. The group should include members of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, Ferrum College, regional tourism interests, local banks, etc.

Strategy 2.2 Establish a new Village Center merchants' group to organize local business owners and faith-based institutions around supporting more activities and events in the Village Center

Currently there is no local group that meets regularly to organize and sponsor events in the Village Center aimed at supporting local businesses. Assembling this group can help to coordinate efforts to hold events, establish regular business hours, conduct 'clean up and green up' activities, share information, and other initiatives to support the Village Center.

Strategy 2.3 Conduct Market Position Analysis of the County Owned Property

As noted in the previous chapter, local residents and business owners see many possibilities for the development of the 80 acres of county owned property adjacent to Ferrum College. The challenge with developing this property is to ensure that it is properly positioned in the marketplace and developed in a manner that supports (and doesn't compete with) the Ferrum Village Center. As a public sector asset, Franklin County can create incentives for future development by co-locating public uses on the site and/or providing infrastructure and land to attract developers willing to advance some of the community desired uses. However, in order to better understand its leverage with the private sector, the county would be well served by conducting a market study to look at the different potential uses for the site and the county's potential return on that investment. Given the size of the property, the development potential could create a significant catalyst for the community in terms of bringing more people and jobs to the area.

Strategy 2.4 Invest public resources in community infrastructure in the Ferrum Village Center to attract more private sector investments

Investment follows investment. While Ferrum has a lot of existing infrastructure already in place to support increased development, more investment in place-making infrastructure (see Strategy 1.3), community services and broadband internet access will accelerate the economic development goals (see Strategies 3.3 and 3.6). Specifically, the County can work with state and federal partners to determine how best to plan for and expand broadband services in the area. Additionally, the county can look at its county-wide public services and look at opportunities for expanding or relocating uses in the Ferrum Village Center. Placing a library or administrative offices in the Village Center can help spark additional demand for services and create more foot traffic in town.

Strategy 2.5 Encourage additional housing or housing adaptations in the Village Center

Having a mixture of housing and businesses co-located in the Village Center can support economic vitality by creating more direct retail and services demand. Additionally, having more people living in the Village Center will increase the overall activity levels throughout the day and create more opportunities for social interactions and community building. Furthermore, expanding housing in the Village Center can also create attractive options for young residents or older adults who would benefit from living closer to community amenities.

Strategy 2.6 Advance efforts to further promote eco-tourism and cultural tourism events in and around Ferrum Village Center

Ferrum College and the Blue Ridge institute already host the Folklife Festival and other events that draw visitors to the community. Ferrum is also located on the Crooked Road Music Trail and the regional recreational economy including biking tours is growing. These activities present further opportunities to spark potential business activity in the Village Center. Doing so would entail coordinating more directly with regional tourism efforts and seeking ways to encourage unique businesses in the Village Center that would further serve to attract visitors. This in turn will help foster additional foot traffic for existing merchants.

Goal 3: Enhance Community Wellbeing, Health, and Safety

People living in rural communities often face unique challenges in maintaining good health. Rural places often are located farther away from healthcare facilities, providers and healthy food outlets; they are very car dependent; aging populations are more susceptible to social isolation due to dispersed rural housing; and many rural areas have higher rates of poverty due to economic decline. Yet many rural communities are leveraging their social capital and place-based assets to address these issues. Notably in Ferrum, the Tri-Area Community Health Center is a full-service community health care center that is expanding locally. Additionally, there is a strong Council on Aging in place targeting programs and services for aging populations. Efforts to expand the walking and biking infrastructure locally also provides opportunities for local community members to live more active lifestyles. The strong agricultural assets in the area means that fresh, local produce and livestock can be made available to community members. Finally, the emphasis on creating a strong, economically vibrant Ferrum Village can directly reverse economic decline and support local job creation.

Strategy 3.1 Engage the Tri-Area Community Health Center in community development discussions and increase awareness and use of the Center by local residents

The Tri-Area Community Health Center is another anchor institution for the community. There remains untapped potential in partnering with the Center on local health related events and activities such as health fairs, walking/running/biking events, senior health, telemedicine, veggie prescription programs, and health education. There are several models of the positive role that FQHC's can provide in engaging in holistic community health betterment.

Strategy 3.2 Pursue “aging in place” initiatives and identify opportunities for senior housing and local senior activities

The Franklin County Council on Aging is very active locally, yet more can be done to link their initiatives with other community betterment efforts. Specifically, community initiatives to add more housing in Ferrum could include specific efforts to provide more senior housing options locally. Those options could be through the provision of new housing, or through efforts to help seniors adapt



Photo 18 | The image above is from the "connect2affect.org" initiative from AARP which identifies strategies to combat social isolation in aging adults.

their existing homes for easier upkeep and management, including the potential to subdivide and create co-housing or rental units in larger homesteads. Additionally, the Council on Aging can partner with local faith-based organization and Ferrum College to engage more seniors locally in the Lifelong Learning Institute program.

Strategy 3.3 Increase broadband access to strengthen the local business climate and improve telemedicine access/options

Broadband access is a critical component of infrastructure necessary to support modern businesses and resident access to education, health services and other information. Broadband services and internet coverage is lacking in Ferrum today, yet there many state and federal opportunities to support the expansion of broadband services in the community. One such opportunity is to seek grant funding by partnering with Ferrum College and the Tri-Area Community Health Center to create broadband services in support of online education and telemedicine. Telemedicine is fast becoming an effective solution for increasing the delivery of healthcare in rural communities.

Strategy 3.4 Organize local walking, running and biking events to promote use of new infrastructure, support active living and reinforce sense of community

There are many existing assets such as the Ferrum College Campus and the Village Center where community events such as family run/walks, bicycle rodeos, outdoor dance or yoga classes and other healthy living events can occur. There are also many existing health-oriented stakeholders who could be brought together and partner on healthy events and programs including GO Healthy West Piedmont, The Tri-Area Community Health Center, the Council on Agency, Ferrum College, local schools and Village Center merchants would be a key way to increase local events and positive community health outcomes.



Photo 20 | Healthy in the Hills is a partnership in Appalachia that pulls together partners including FQHCs, schools, businesses, farmers, etc. and sponsors programs and events around active living, healthy eating, stopping addiction, workforce development and chronic disease management.

Strategy 3.5 Improve access to local foods by creating a local foods focus group and establishing a farmer’s market, local food trucks and other food-based initiatives

Rural communities are often home to major food production assets within a given region – yet that food isn’t always accessible to local residents. In many communities there is a strong desire to strengthen the local food system in support of increasing the local production and consumption of food locally in support of local farmers and healthy eating. In Ferrum there is an opportunity to gather local food champions and begin mapping out a strategy for advancing local foods initiatives in the community. Specifically, this could include creating a farmer’s market, food hub, community supported agriculture (CSA) drop boxes, food truck events, institutional power buying, local foods in schools, community gardens, farm to table restaurants, etc. These types of enterprises and events can locate in the Ferrum Village Center to bring additional vitality to the community and support better health outcomes through more readily available healthy food options.

Strategy 3.6 Expand the existing Fire Department/Public Safety Building in Ferrum to include community gather spaces and other potential governmental services like a library

Franklin County’s Department of Public Safety provides emergency services such as Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) career and volunteer professionals. The Ferrum Volunteer Fire Station, Company No. 3 is located just northwest of the Ferrum Village Center on Route 40. As a major civic institution, there is an opportunity to expand the uses on this site in a manner that could support additional community betterment initiatives such as the creation of new community meeting spaces, library services, a health and wellness center, or other community functions. Doing so would improve amenities in the community and foster additional levels of activity in the Village Center.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS, PARTNERS, RESOURCES AND TIMELINE

The goals and strategies described throughout the Ferrum Area Plan provide a framework for how the public sector, private sector, community members and anchor institutions can work together in support of creating a revitalized Ferrum Village Center. As described in previous chapters, there are no zoning regulations in place to guide development in the town. Therefore, implementation will need to be encouraged through capital projects, infrastructure improvements and public facility investments combined with other community-driven programmatic efforts such as organizing local stakeholders to establish local events. Doing so can help spark interest and increase potential demand for new private sector investments in the community. The following outlines next steps and implementation actions for each goal and strategy. It should be noted that the establishment of a new committee to advance the Ferrum Area Plan can result in the identification of additional next steps and actions, thereby keeping the momentum going for these larger initiatives.

Goal 1 – Create a stronger sense of place

Strategy 1.1 Implement gateway signage and Village branding efforts

There is already signage along Route 40 signifying Ferrum College and the Crooked Road Music Trail. Additionally, there is an effort underway to bring in new wayfinding signage to Ferrum that connects it to other Blue Ridge destinations. Therefore, this effort needs to build on these previous efforts and create new, complementary gateway and streetscape signage on Rte. 40 and Timberline Road.

- **Next Steps:** Determine the needs, format and location for new signs. Then seek grant funding and/or volunteer services to design and implement.
- **Partners:** Local artists community, Blue Ridge Institute, Ferrum College, Lions Club, local merchants, local schools, county and other civic groups.
- **Resources:** Virginia Tourism Corporation Grants; revenue sharing between County and Ferrum College

Strategy 1.2 Create a community event space within walking distance of the Village Center

The Blue Ridge Institute is currently advancing planning to create a new event space near its main building (Leo Scott Pavilion). Therefore, efforts to create a space in the Village Center should be oriented towards complementary uses and activities. One key site identified is Les Scott's Old Garage Space and the Old Ferrum School (owned by Ferrum College) as a potential farmer's market and community event space.

- **Next Steps:** Approach current owners about purchase or donation. Identify a program of activities (tap into existing events and relocate to this space) such as the for the site and develop a plan for the reuse of that site in terms of additional capital improvement needs.
- **Partners:** Blue Ridge Mountain Institute, local property owners, Ferrum Elementary School and Village Center merchants, event sponsors.
- **Resources:** USDA Rural Development Grants; local schools and student volunteer time; people power to construct and cleanup site.

Strategy 1.3 Create safe, convenient walking and biking infrastructure and improve streetscapes in, to, and from the Village Center

The next big investment under this strategy will be the new pedestrian bridge. Therefore, the priorities beyond this project should seek to connect new pedestrian paths from the pedestrian bridge along Route 40 and along Timberline Road. Secondly, the next major investment to support this goal would be to implement a new roundabout at the entrance to Ferrum College (See Figures 19-20). This will tie into the new pedestrian bridge, slow traffic down and contribute to the creation of a stronger sense of place. Lastly, sidewalks, signage and organized parking along Timberline Road will strengthen the visual appeal and transportation function of this area, further positioning it for additional development.

- **Next Steps:** Continue working with VDOT and Ferrum College on next steps in funding the roundabout and additional Route 40 pedestrian enhancements.
- **Partners:** Franklin County, VDOT, Ferrum College.
- **Resources:** VDOT funding and local revenue sharing with Ferrum College.

Strategy 1.4 Incorporate local art, history, and cultural stories into new hard infrastructure and facades of existing/new buildings

The opening of the new pedestrian bridge represents a prime opportunity to incorporate some new public art, temporary displays or naming of the bridge that celebrates the unique cultural and historical aspects of the community and strengthen the village to College connections. Additionally, there are willing business owners located along Timberline Road that would welcome the creation of murals on their buildings. Beyond these two near term initiatives, community members could work with County staff to come up with an overall public arts program for the village and then seek partners to implement. These efforts should also be coordinated with Strategy 1.1

- **Next Steps:** Identify a community champion to coordinate with local artists and merchants to identify potential opportunities associated with the new pedestrian bridge. Additionally, set up meetings with local businesses open to public art/façade improvements and local artist groups to explore near term mural opportunities.
- **Partners:** County, local property owners, local schools, local artist groups and the Blue Ridge Institute.
- **Resources:** People time; National Endowment for the Arts placemaking grants.

Goal 2: Support economic development and village vitality

Strategy 2.1 Establish a regular convening of local and regional stakeholders to advance the broader economic goals and actions of the Ferrum Plan and strengthen the relationship between Ferrum College, resident and local merchants

Many of the economic development goals described in this plan will require new partnerships and focus from community stakeholders, the County and other interested parties. Therefore, this strategy remains a critical step in implementing the Ferrum Strategic Plan.

- **Next Steps:** Establish the Ferrum Revitalization Steering Committee (FVRC) and set-up a quarterly meeting schedule. Committee should have wide representation from the stakeholder groups described throughout. Within this group, not only can they focus on the agenda of implementing the economic development initiatives in this plan, but they can also partner with the college and the Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Martinsville to help support small business growth in the community.
- **Partners:** County, Ferrum College, SBDC, Virginia Tobacco Regional Revitalization Commission, Lions Club, local banking institutions, and other local and regional economic development interests.
- **Resources:** People time and meeting space.

Strategy 2.2 Establish a new Village Center merchants' group to organize local business owners and faith-based institutions around supporting more business growth, activities and events in the Village Center.

Some of the local merchants that participated in the public meetings associated with this plan are willing to begin organizing local business owners around this strategy. This action could become a subset of Strategy 2.1 depending on the local capacity to advance both sets of strategies.

- **Next Steps:** Address this action at the first convening of the Ferrum Village Revitalization Committee (FVRC) to determine if this is a near term or longer-term next step. Depending on the outcome, there are several placemaking and event organizing actions described throughout that need a champion to advance within the next 1-2 years. Therefore, these actions should be taken on by a newly created Merchants Group or the FVRC. Of note, there is already interest by the West Piedmont Alliance in the use of vacant buildings for a coworking and incubator space for existing and new business owners. The Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission has funded projects like this and Ferrum could pursue an initiative like this as well.
- **Partners:** County, Ferrum College, SBDC, Virginia Tobacco Regional Revitalization Commission, Lions Club, local banking institutions, and other local and regional economic development interests.
- **Resources:** People time and meeting space.

Strategy 2.3 Conduct Market Position Analysis of the County Owned Property

The County is in the best position to obtain a market study to look at a range of possibilities for the development of the county owned site. From this analysis, County leaders can determine what actions they wish to take to create additional incentives for private investment.

- **Next Steps:** Brief the County Board of Supervisors on recommendations and determine best way forward. This strategy might also benefit from organizing a developer roundtable with local stakeholders to gain insights on what might be possible or feasible on the County owned land.
- **Partners:** County, developers, Council on Aging, other interest groups.
- **Resources:** People time; funding for market study.

Strategy 2.4 Invest public resources in community infrastructure in the Ferrum Village Center to attract more private sector investments

See strategies 1.3, 3.3 and 3.6

Strategy 2.5 Encourage additional housing or housing adaptations in the Village Center

This strategy supports the creation of more housing options within the community and having more people living within walking distance of the Village Center. As part of the examination of the County owned property, the community will gain some insights into local residential demands. These insights can be used to explore conversations with housing and mixed-use developers regarding new infill development within the Village Center.

- **Next Steps:** In concert with efforts supporting Strategy 2.3, additional outreach to local developers and real estate professionals is needed to garner a better understanding of unmet needs, needs for adaptive reuse of existing housing and additional needs for student housing from Ferrum College. Additionally, the County could benefit from an overall residential demand study to determine what near term opportunities exist in Ferrum for new residential. Finally, there is a need to work with the state to identify applicable programs aimed at helping seniors remodel, reconstruct and otherwise adapt their existing homes to age in place.
- **Partners:** County, local property owners, Ferrum College, developers, other housing interest groups.
- **Resources:** People time; funding for market study.

Strategy 2.6 Advance efforts to further promote eco-tourism and cultural tourism events in and around Ferrum Village Center.

This strategy advances efforts to heighten the potential for economic development from the recreational and cultural tourism economy. Specifically, this strategy could include the identification of additional recreational investments in the area that would connect with Ferrum College, Ferrum Village and other local assets. It would also involve engaging the new Merchants Group and Stakeholder Groups (Actions 2.1 and 2.2) to identify specific events and related promotional efforts needed to bring more people to the area.

- **Next Steps:** Identify opportunities for additional recreational asset investments (biking and hiking trails) that could be prioritized in the county adjacent to Ferrum College and Ferrum Village. Once Merchants group is established, they can invite state and regional representatives on tourism to present and brainstorm on additional efforts to promote the area.
- **Partners:** Ferrum College, county, regional and state tourism interest, local restaurants and shops.
- **Resources:** EPA Recreational Economy Technical Assistance, state tourism resources, county parks and recreation funding, etc.

Goal 3: Enhance community well-being, health, and safety

Strategy 3.1 Engage the Tri-Area Community Health Center in community development discussions and increase awareness and use of the Center by residents.

This strategy aims to engage the Tri-Area Community Health center as a more prominent Ferrum Village anchor institution. Many FQHC's have served as strong partners in advancing community-based health initiatives and therefore this remains an untapped resource in the local community.

- **Next Steps:** Invite representatives from the Tri-Area Community Health Center to join the Ferrum Village Revitalization Committee (FVRC) meetings. As part of these discussions, committee members jointly explore new communication efforts and discuss new/joint events targeted to Ferrum community residents with a health focus. From these early discussions, a health advocates summit could be held to bring together all of the local health related partners and resources to talk about how best to leverage resources in Ferrum, particularly around the opening of the newly constructed facility.
- **Partners:** Tri-Area Community Health Center, GO Healthy West Piedmont, the Council on Aging, Ferrum College, local schools
- **Resources:** People time; event logistics and communications

Strategy 3.2 Pursue "aging in place" initiatives and identify opportunities for senior housing and local senior activities

In conjunction with strategies 2.3. and 2.5, community members cited a strong need to create a more holistic approach to helping community members stay in Ferrum and 'age in place.' Key elements of creating an aging in place plan include looking at community assets and needs in the areas of health, well-being and safety, transportation, housing, community engagement, and services. The Council of Aging is already working on these issues; therefore this strategy aims to better connect these initiatives with efforts to revitalize the Ferrum Village Center. One near term idea cited for further exploration is to pursue historic tax credit grants to renovate the old Ferrum Elementary school into apartments for seniors.

- **Next steps:** Initiate outreach to Council on Aging and determine how best to coordinate efforts. Council on Aging should also be present on the Ferrum Village Revitalization Committee. Additionally, the needs of senior relative to housing should be factored into the feasibility efforts associated with development of the county owned site.
- **Partners:** Council on Aging, Tri-Area Community Health Center, Ferrum College Lifelong Learning Institute.
- **Resources:** People time; event logistics and communications; public and private funding for senior housing

Strategy 3.3 Organize local walking, running and biking events to promote use of new infrastructure, support active living and reinforce sense of community

Regular events that encourage multi-generational exercise and physical activities can make a positive impact on community health outcomes. When these types of activities are held in town centers where there is a desire to increase activities and foot traffic – additional economic impacts can be realized. Currently there are some events sponsored by Ferrum College that could be expanded or brought into the Ferrum Village Center. Additionally, the Tri-Area Health Center could become a strong local partner to support similar types of activities.

- **Next Steps:** Identify a local champion to inventory all of the existing events and activities happening in the Town. From that assessment, identify 1-2 additional activities or events that can be held over the next year to engage more residents in active living events and occur within the Village Center. Then seek partnerships and sponsorships and get the word out.
- **Partners:** Tri-Area Community Health Center, GO Healthy West Piedmont, Ferrum College, local schools.
- **Resources:** people time; event logistics and advertising costs.

Strategy 3.4 Improve access to local foods by creating a local foods focus group and establishing a farmer's market, local food trucks and other food-based initiatives

There are local food assets and opportunities across the county that can be brought to bear in helping Ferrum bring more local foods to the community. Therefore, a key step in this strategy is to understand those opportunities relative to other efforts underway in the region. The goal of doing so is to identify the best local food initiatives that will be complementary to nearby efforts like other farmer's markets, food truck events, food hubs, etc. and tailoring the actions in Ferrum accordingly. Of note, there is interest locally from local farmers and Ferrum College School of Agriculture in supporting this strategy and interest by community members in creating a Cooperative Grocery Store and a farm to table restaurant at the Mercantile restaurant.

- **Next Steps:** Identify a local foods champion and initiate a local food system assessment and opportunity analysis. This is something that can be done by local stakeholders to gather insights on existing producers, food outlets, consumers, etc. From this analysis, a set of local food opportunities can be identified, and additional support or technical assistance can be sought to implement.
- **Partners:** USDA, Future Farmers of America, Ferrum College, local farmers, other interested parties
- **Resources:** UDSA Local Food grants; EPA Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance, people time and capital needs for new food venues or incubator farms.

Strategy 3.5 Expand the existing Fire Department/Public Safety Building in Ferrum to include community gather spaces and other potential governmental services like a library.

The county has existing assets in Ferrum that could be repurposed, expanded or otherwise evaluated for additional uses. The larger goal behind this strategy is to create more activity in the Village Center.

- **Next steps:** Conduct a western Franklin County assessment of existing county-owned assets and needs and determine what if any near-term opportunities exist to strengthen community assets in Ferrum.
- **Partners:** County Departmental Staff, Ferrum Village Revitalization Committee.
- **Resources:** people time to conduct assessment; capital costs of relocation/expansions.

Strategy 3.6 Increase broadband access to strengthen the local business climate and improve telemedicine access/options

There are many sources of funding to bring broadband access to rural locations. However, in order to tap into this funding, communities must first identify their needs and preliminary plans for service. Increased broadband services can support many community goals, but there is growing interest in using broadband in rural areas to provide telemedicine. This option should also be explored as part of the broadband planning efforts.

- **Next Steps:** Seek additional technical assistance to better define broadband needs and investment plan. Partner with state/federal partners like the US Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) on defining next steps.
- **Partners:** County, state, federal agencies, local or regional healthcare providers, Ferrum College.
- **Resources:** state and federal funding.

Implementation Timeline

The following summarizes a potential timeline for implementation of key strategies over the next five years. It prioritizes many activities in the short-term (next 1-2 years) that rely primarily on people resources to organize, coordinate and plan. Additional near-term priorities for capital projects include placemaking infrastructure and bicycle and pedestrian improvements subject to funding availability.

Goals and Strategies	Implementation Tool	Timeline (years)		
		1-2	3-4	5+
Goal 1: Create a stronger sense of place				
Strategy 1.1 Implement gateway signage and Village branding efforts	Capital Project			
Strategy 1.2 Create a community event space within walking distance of the Village Center	Capital Project			
Strategy 1.3 Create safe, convenient walking and biking infrastructure and improve streetscapes in, to, and from the Village Center	Capital Project			
Strategy 1.4 Incorporate local art, history, and cultural stories into new hard infrastructure and facades of existing/new buildings	Capital Project			
Goal 2: Support economic development and village vitality				
Strategy 2.1 Establish a regular convening of local and regional stakeholders to advance the broader economic goals and actions of the Ferrum Plan and strengthen the relationship between Ferrum College, resident and local merchants	Program			
Strategy 2.2 Establish a new Village Center merchants' group to organize local business owners and faith-based institutions around supporting more business growth, activities and events in the Village Center.	Program			
Strategy 2.3 Conduct Market Position Analysis of the County Owned Property	Program			
Strategy 2.4 Invest public resources in community infrastructure in the Ferrum Village Center to attract more private sector investments	Capital Project			
Strategy 2.5 Encourage additional housing or housing adaptations in the Village Center	Program			
Strategy 2.6 Advance eco-tourism and cultural tourism events in and around Ferrum Village Center.	Program			
Goal 3: Enhance community well-being, health, and safety				
Strategy 3.1 Engage the Tri-Area Community Health Center in community development discussions and increase awareness and use of the Center by residents.	Program			
Strategy 3.2 Pursue "aging in place" initiatives and identify opportunities for senior housing and local senior activities	Program			
Strategy 3.3 Organize local walking, running and biking events to promote use of new infrastructure, support active living and reinforce sense of community	Program			
Strategy 3.4 Improve access to local foods by creating a local foods focus group and establishing a farmer's market, local food trucks and other food-based initiatives	Program			
Strategy 3.5 Expand the existing Fire Department/Public Safety Building in Ferrum to include community gather spaces and other potential governmental services like a library.	Capital Project			
Strategy 3.6 Increase broadband access to strengthen the local business climate and improve telemedicine access/options	Capital Project			

