

APPENDIX B – WESTLAKE – HALES-FORD AREA PLAN **GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

WESTLAKE – HALES-FORD AREA PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES

Introduction

This Appendix provides goals, strategies, and an implementation matrix that brings the adopted Westlake Hales-Ford Area Plan to life. The Goals and Strategies developed here provide a framework for how the public sector, private sector, community members and regional partners can work together to foster the continued development of the Westlake Hales-Ford community. The provided goals and strategies are reflective of previously discussed priorities found in the guiding document, *Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond*, for the adopted Plan; community-planning best practices; and community-driven concepts identified during engagement with the Westlake Advisory Committee. The intent of this Appendix is to identify actions that will need to be undertaken to implement the Area Plan. See the Implementation Matrix, page 77, for further detail.

See page 59 for a timeline of previous and current efforts.



Former Gills Creek Supervisor Bob Camicia established a Westlake-Hales Ford Planning Advisory Committee to review the Westlake and Hales Ford areas and make recommendations for the area's future.

The Advisory Committee met monthly for two years and had discussions with subject-matter professionals, close dialogue with the business community, and numerous discussions with individuals and small groups. In addition, the Committee held three public community meetings over the two years.

Current Gills Creek Supervisor Lorie Smith established a new Westlake Work Group to review the recommended goals and strategies found in *Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond*. Between January and September, the Work Group revised new goals and strategies to be included in the adopted Westlake Hales Ford Area Plan.

2014

2016

2023

Spring

In March of 2016, the Advisory Committee presented to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors a report entitled *Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond*.

The Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Commission and staff to write a community plan for the Westlake-Hales Ford area, based off of, and informed by, *Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond*.

Fall

The Franklin County Planning Commission held a public hearing and recommended approval of the Plan on October 11, 2016. The Franklin County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on November 15, 2016 for the adoption of the Westlake-Hales Ford Area Plan by resolution. The Area Plan was adopted as part of the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 1: Improve the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area multimodal transportation network for increased safety, access, and mobility.

Franklin County's overall transportation network impacts the day-to-day life of residents in a variety of ways; the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is a critical component of that network, as it serves as a commercial and residential hub for those on the northern portion of Smith Mountain Lake, as well as those travelling into Franklin County from Bedford County. All Franklin County residents are entitled to safe and efficient access to a multimodal transportation network that supports the existing forms of transportation including automotive, pedestrian, and biking – while being adaptable and accommodating to additional innovations, such as transit. Westlake Hales-Ford's transportation network should equitably and reliably connect all residents to their jobs, their homes, where they shop and receive healthcare, and where they go for educational, recreational, and social opportunities. Further, the transportation network should provide a variety of access means – whether travelling by vehicle, foot, or bike.

Strategy 1.1 Maintain a working relationship with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to work on road improvements, safety needs, grant funding opportunities, and other transportation projects with the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

A transportation network's needs and demands are constantly changing, based on increased populations and development – and even travel patterns. Planning for an efficient transportation network not only includes existing concerns and improvements, but also looks ahead to determine what transportation should look like years from now.

All transportation networks are complex systems that require coordination among localities, State and Federal Agencies, and occasionally neighboring communities – particularly for regional transportation needs. Franklin County relies heavily on VDOT to ensure a safe and accessible transportation network; this reliance comes in the form of funding opportunities, maintenance and repair, as well as plans and studies that improve the transportation network. As the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area continues to grow, the County and VDOT must maintain the established working relationship to pursue all available opportunities to study, plan, and continually improve the existing transportation network.

Strategy 1.2 **Seek funding opportunities to improve dangerous intersections and other safety needs along Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway) and Scruggs Road. Known priorities include the intersections of Brooks Mill Rd and Scruggs Rd, Village Springs Dr and Route 122, Lakewatch Dr and Route 122, Lakemount Dr and Route 122, Harmony School Road and Route 122, and Morewood Rd and Route 122; however, the County should continually assess other intersections not directly mentioned, as needed.**

To improve identified and known intersections that impose safety concerns, the County should continue to pursue State funding opportunities as they become available – including SMART SCALE, Revenue Sharing, Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), and other programs. Additionally, the County should leverage all applicable and available Federal opportunities, as they become available. While these are more competitive than State-funded programs, and often not as consistently offered, they can be a viable option for funding of large, costly projects, and they should not be overlooked.

Strategy 1.3 **Consider a study to determine the need and viability of four-lane segments along Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway).**

During the 2016 process of creating the Area Plan, public engagement indicated a goal of redesigning segments of Route 122 into a four-lane roadway. While the need is yet to be established, and the funding unrealistic to leverage through the current funding opportunities, the Westlake Advisory Committee indicated that this idea should remain on the County’s radar, so that if Westlake Hales-Ford reaches the point that it has “outgrown” the size of Route 122, the conversation has already begun. The County and VDOT will need to work together in the future to first determine the need for four lanes – based on traffic flow, congestion, etc. – and then move on to a feasibility study, and lastly leveraging and sourcing funds to construct.

Strategy 1.4 **Ensure that multimodal interconnectivity – including pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle connections and mobility – is considered during development planning and design.**

Much of the existing development in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, particularly along Route 122, Scruggs Road, and Westlake Towne Center, came before current zoning regulations were put into place that required the construction of sidewalks. In 2002, the Westlake Village Overlay District was adopted, and regulations were put into place that requires new development to include the construction of sidewalks along public roads. These regulations do not require connector roads for larger developments, nor do they suggest or require that new developments incorporate multi-modal paths where appropriate, for pedestrian and

bicycle mobility. Further, the regulations do not require sidewalks along private streets. While some developers have constructed sidewalks and crosswalks along private streets, such as those in the Westlake Towne Center, the zoning regulations should be revised to require pedestrian infrastructure along all streets at the time of any new development. See Strategy 1.5.

To ensure that the current regulations are being met, and until revisions occur, the County should be diligent in site plan review and at the time of development to ensure that sidewalks are being incorporated. In the interim, the County should continue to try and leverage Federal and State agency funding opportunities, such as HSIP and Transportation Alternatives (TA), to help bridge the gaps in the pedestrian infrastructure throughout the Village. Additionally, in 2023, the County partnered with Bedford County, West Piedmont Planning District Commission, and Central Virginia Planning District Commission to pursue a RAISE grant to study the 122 corridor; the grant was not secured and the County and partners should pursue this grant in 2024.

Strategy 1.5 Revise zoning regulations to encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections at the time of new development – including connector roads within developments, sidewalks and crosswalks, and multimodal paths.

As noted above, the existing zoning regulations lack robust measures for mobility within and along new development. Further, the existing roadways largely do not provide pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; no roadways provide dedicated bike lanes or pedestrian crosswalks (namely Route 122), and sidewalks are intermittent throughout the developed Village area. The Westlake Village Overlay District should be revised to include requirements that ensure pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular mobility are a priority for all new development, especially as the area continues to grow and State and Federal funding opportunities are not always available in the short-term to construct these facilities.

Strategy 1.6 Assess the existing gaps and opportunities for pedestrian infrastructure within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area; and seek funding through grants, public-private partnerships, and other revenue streams to design and install signalized pedestrian infrastructure and sidewalk/trail connectivity between developed areas. Additionally, seek funding opportunities pertaining to pedestrian safety at the intersection of Parkcrest Dr and Route 122.

In early 2023, Franklin County was awarded a Growth and Accessibility Planning (GAP) Technical Assistance grant to study and assess the existing gaps in Westlake Hales-Ford’s pedestrian infrastructure gaps, particularly along Route 122 and the small roads around the concentrated development of the Westlake Towne Center. This study will provide a document that shows the identified gaps – where there is a lack of sidewalks and crosswalks – as well as provide conceptual alternatives to fill those gaps.

However, the study is one piece of the puzzle. Looking ahead, the County will need to work closely with VDOT, as well as private developers, to coordinate the construction of the needed sidewalks and crosswalks to serve the community. Further, the County should continually seek opportunities through funding, partnerships that share cost, and potential new revenue streams that would ensure availability of funds to construct future pedestrian improvements as the Village grows, such as further along Route 122, and along Scruggs Road and Lakewatch Drive, as three examples.

Strategy 1.7 Pursue and foster public-private partnerships to offer shared transportation options, such as micro-transit or other transit services, particularly for the aging-in-place population.

As the more commercialized area of Smith Mountain Lake, thus drawing more residents, Westlake Hales-Ford’s population has steadily increased since 2016. Each year between 2016-2021, an average of 2.8% of the population moved into the Westlake Hales-Ford area from elsewhere in the Commonwealth; all those individuals were between the ages of 45 and 74.¹ This indicates that the future transportation network must consider those aging-in-place and how to incorporate elements into the transportation network that make mobility efficient for the older population. These elements include transit services that offer connection to necessary services, such as medical visits, and grocery and pharmaceutical shopping needs.

¹ Source: US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021 datasets.

The County should first seek opportunities to understand the transit needs at the present time, as well as forecasted transit needs. Further, the County should seek to understand the potential for transit services, including routes and stops, capital expenditures, and management. Lastly, the County should seek partnerships and funding opportunities to implement an efficient transit system that operates within the Westlake Hales-Ford Area and into other necessary destinations, such as Rocky Mount and Roanoke.

At present, the Franklin County Office of Aging provides transportation primarily to qualifying seniors. This service is funded through Southern Area Agency on Aging (SAAA) and is intended primarily for medical and dental transportation but does include some transportation for shopping and socialization programs. In FY23, 8,053 seniors in Franklin County were provided transportation! Interested persons need to simply contact the Office of Aging to schedule a ride. Typically, services are available Monday through Friday during business hours. To learn more, visit the Office on Aging website at: www.playfranklincounty.com/236/Transportation.

Goal 2: Strengthen the quality of life through increased recreational, cultural, and community facilities that provide opportunities for physical, mental, social, and community health.

Community services go beyond utilities and emergency service; community services *also* include facilities and opportunities that benefit overall community health – both personally and socially. A community’s quality-of-life is determined by many elements – income, access to services, decent transportation, and recreation and community connection. The Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is prime for intentional development of community spaces, such as parks and gathering spaces to hold events. Over the next several years, and as growth is ushered in, the County must make deliberate choices to provide opportunities, and carve out spaces, specifically for recreational and social facilities.

Strategy 2.1 Engage with partners and/or consultants to research, design, fund, and implement a system of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. (See Goal #1).

The ability to walk or bike to a destination not only provides an opportunity to recreate, which provides physical and mental health benefits, but it also affords residents and visitors the opportunity to see the Westlake area through a different lens, and perhaps discover new areas or businesses that they may have missed when traveling by car! As growth continues, the County must ensure that new development incorporates, or provides space for, pedestrian infrastructure.

Strategy 2.2 Research and identify viable areas for future recreation facilities on County-owned property within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. Subsequently establish public-private partnerships and seek funding opportunities to create and construct identified recreation facilities.

As with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, recreation facilities are a crucial need to provide physical, social, mental, and community health. These include parks, whether larger-scale or pocket parks, athletic fields,

playgrounds, and even community gardens. At present there are several privately-owned physical fitness studios and gyms within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, as well as a YMCA, which offers a variety of indoor and outdoor classes and activities. There is a multi-use trail in the planning phase, which will be located behind the Westlake Towne Center and will connect to the Booker T. Washington National Monument. This multi-use trail is expected to be completed by 2025.

However, there is not currently a publicly owned or communal open-air park or outdoor space designated for recreation. The Board of Supervisors and County departments, particularly the Department of Parks and Recreation, should leverage partnerships, funding opportunities, and studies that would provide the necessary tools to identify and construct needed facilities on existing, available County-owned property within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. Any future partnerships for park and recreation spaces should include conceptual design and planning at early stages.

The County owns 19 acres at the end of Lakewatch Drive; as of Fall 2023, this property is undeveloped. In July 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved a request from the Smith Mountain Lake Rotary Club to construct a disc golf course at the site. As of late-2023, the Smith Mountain Lake Rotary Club and community members are diligently working to collect all funds and oversee all aspects of its construction for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Strategy 2.3 Leverage public-private partnerships to create a neutral community gathering space that can accommodate a variety of community needs - such as a space for the arts, education, special events, conferences, and "town hall" gatherings in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

As previously discussed, the Westlake Advisory Committee observed that in addition to the lack of public recreational facilities, the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area would greatly benefit from a brick-and-mortar community gathering space. This space would serve as a hub for both special interest group meetings, town hall gatherings, and even arts and culture events – among others.

Although the area will continue to develop, private development may not guarantee that a community space is ever developed. To effectively provide a community gathering space, the County should leverage partnerships with local and regional groups to identify a suitable existing structure or available land, pursue funding mechanisms, and to determine the administration of the space.

Strategy 2.4 Leverage a public-private partnership to identify a suitable area for, and to develop, a farmers’ market within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

Farmer’s markets are increasingly becoming a staple in rural communities; they serve as a means for fresh food access, a tool to support local agriculture, and they often serve as community spaces for seasonal events. For a number of years, a seasonal, open-air farmers’ market has been in operation within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth area; however, this market is comprised of tents and does not have a permanent structure. The Westlake Advisory Committee concluded that members of the community have expressed interest in a more permanent farmers’ market, with the potential to operate year-round. The County should collaborate with local partners in pursuit of a public-private partnership to develop a more permanent space and/or facility to host the existing farmer’s market.

Strategy 2.5 Collaborate with County, Federal, and private partners to foster, retain, and promote the unique agricultural, historical, and cultural heritage elements within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

The Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is home to several places of unique significance, such as the Booker T. Washington National Monument, the Hook-Powell-Moorman Farm, and the Holland-Duncan House; the latter two are both on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places and are privately owned and not currently open to the public. Additionally, many of the active farms within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area and surrounding communities are steeped in agricultural history. By way of collaboration with Federal partners, such as the National Park Service, and private residents and special groups, there is an avenue to strengthen the community’s quality of life through increased opportunities and activities focused on the unique agricultural, historical, and cultural heritage elements of the community.

Strategy 2.6 Foster collaboration with the Booker T. Washington National Monument, regarding relevant recreational and cultural opportunities, in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

The Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is unique for many reasons, one being that it is home to the Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA), a national treasure and important local asset. The park hosts walking trails, interpretive exhibits, and demonstrations of farm life during the 1850's. Residents and visitors to Westlake area are afforded a prime opportunity for historical connection through the presence of this national monument; an average of over 20,000² visitors per year attend BOWA! The County should maintain a relationship with the BOWA and the Friends of Booker T. Washington National Monument (a nonprofit organization) to collaborate on social, recreational, and cultural initiatives.

² Source: NPS Park Stats: <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park/BOWA>

Goal 3: Foster an economically sustainable village center that offers needed shopping, dining, work, education, lodging, and entertainment opportunities to residents and visitors.

As one of the County's Designated Growth Areas, the Westlake DGA is one of the targeted areas of the County in which future growth and development is being directed. By strategically planning for, *and* actively working towards, the continued expansion of the Westlake "village center," an economically sustainable hub will be a destination within the County and can directly support the Westlake area residents on a daily basis. Communities benefit from thriving village centers, as they provide convenient access to goods and services, opportunities for social interaction, and reinforce the local tax-base.

The challenge of maintaining and growing viable village centers is ensuring there is enough ongoing demand from residents and visitors to support local business. The last few decades' residential and commercial development within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area – particularly Westlake Towne Center and surrounding development – has solidified the area as a viable and successful economic center. The future growth and continued expansion of Westlake's village center requires a combination of regional and local initiatives oriented around the community's existing, planned, and even potential place-based assets. Additionally, strategic and coordinated economic development efforts are essential to ensure that appropriate development continues to build on the existing Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

Strategy 3.1 Consider the creation of County-funded grant and incentive programs to attract new businesses and industries to the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

The previous decades of growth within the general Westlake Hales-Ford area have resulted in a mix of local and national and/or regional businesses within the area. Many of these businesses are geared toward everyday living – such as banking, grocery, medical offices, and restaurants, among others. However, there are still businesses and industries that are missing from the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area that, if established, would provide residents and visitors with the ability to fulfill their needs without leaving the area for Rocky Mount, Roanoke, Bedford County, or other nearby locations.

By creating tailored incentivization programs for businesses of all sizes, the County can position itself to invite an increased number of businesses, ultimately resulting in an improved tax base and more options for residents and visitors within the immediate Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth area and county-wide.

Strategy 3.2 Revise zoning regulations for the Westlake Village Center Overlay District to better accommodate "village center" development - including signage regulations, bulk and siting regulations, etc.

In order to ensure that future development meets the concept of a “village,” existing zoning regulations should be revised to implement regulatory measures that would require certain elements that are found in “village” style developments - including uniform signage regulations, specific bulk and siting regulations, basic design elements, modern parking requirements, pedestrian infrastructure, etc.

Strategy 3.3 Explore opportunities and initiatives to recruit businesses that would fill known gaps in the Westlake Hales-Ford Area market, such as restaurants, childcare services, retail, and tourist accommodations. Utilize the Franklin County Economic Development Strategic Plan, and accompanying research, to identify those gaps.

At present, those businesses and industries that were noted to be the most needed include lodging, childcare, general retail, and restaurants. Specifically, lodging that is offered by a hotel(s), whether a business, conference, or resort style hotel, rather than smaller bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals. While there are a number of eating establishments, mostly locally owned restaurants, located within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, the Westlake Advisory Committee noted that a greater variety of sit-down, full-service restaurants are needed. Within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, there is one³ operational childcare facility, Trinity Preschool; while the number of children living within the immediate Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area has decreased over the last decade, the overall need for childcare facilities on a regional basis has greatly increased. Many residents look for childcare facilities within a 15-minute drive, or along their work commute. As a commercial hub for the northern-end of Smith Mountain Lake, a childcare facility could be utilized by those residing in both Franklin and Bedford Counties.

³ At the time of publication, Fall 2023.

The County's Economic Development Department and Department of Planning and Community Development, with direction and support of the Board of Supervisors, should work closely to identify tasks borne by each department, respectively, that would serve to invite businesses into the County that would fill the identified gaps.

Strategy 3.4 Consider local funding and create partnerships to develop a shared (co-working) office space, or make existing space available, to accommodate those residents that are a part of the tele-work industry.

In 2016, when the Area Plan was first adopted, there were 474 workers⁴ in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, 16.2% of which worked from home. In 2021, there were 672 workers, 11.3% of which worked from home. While the percentage of tele-workers *seems* to have decreased, the increase of overall workers keeps the percentage of tele-workers steady, resulting in approximately 75 tele-working residents in both years, and assumedly in the years leading up to 2021. As the culture of tele-work continues to grow and more companies offer flexible office conditions, new and existing residents of the area may be looking for areas that offer shared office spaces to complement their tele-work schedules.

Co-working spaces can provide workers with the opportunity for social interaction that is often found in an office setting, while also providing necessities that they may not have at home, including adequate internet access, printing capabilities, and meeting spaces, among others.

Strategy 3.5 Review and amend Zoning Ordinance regulations that can be a barrier to desired commercial development.

A locality's zoning regulations can often be a barrier to development, particularly when processes are timely and expensive, or when ordinance regulations are burdensome or difficult to meet. In the current landscape, developers are looking to locate in areas with smooth and relatively easy permitting processes, as well as flexible regulations. Specifically, regulations pertaining to setbacks, minimum lot sizes, lot coverage, and even parking and landscaping requirements can influence where a developer chooses to locate.

⁴ "Workers" are those residents that lived within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area and were in the workforce, according to the US Census.

The overall Zoning Ordinance, and specifically the Westlake Village Center Overlay District, should be reviewed and revised as necessary to provide more flexible regulations that correlate to the development within the overlay district that includes the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. More flexible and modern zoning regulations provide more leverage for the County to invite in new and expanding commercial development.

Strategy 3.6 Pursue and foster public-private partnerships to create program(s) that provide matching façade grants for community design elements - such as benches, landscaping, and consistent signage; and village branding - such as gateway and wayfinding signage.

Creating an identity for the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area (DGA) is imperative to inviting new businesses to the DGA. To market the area as a marketable and desired location for both residents, businesses, and visitors, the DGA must be inviting and create a sense of place that transports you from the overall boundaries of the County, into a unique community.

Strategy 3.7 Work towards attracting more lodging development within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, through a variety of means known to be effective in attracting commercial development within the tourism industry.

As discussed previously, the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is ripe for hotel development, to serve Smith Mountain Lake specifically, but also to accommodate all visitors to Franklin County, as there are few hotels. The County, particularly the Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Department, will need to utilize consistently proven methods to understand the barriers to hotel development, as well as how to invite more lodging into the area – namely feasibility studies, careful site selection, and appropriate incentive packages, just to name a few.

Goal 4: Deliver superior public services that focus on infrastructure capacity, accessibility, and efficiency to support growth pressures and that respond to the high quality of life desired by today's businesses and residents.

Superior public services – whether water and sewer service, broadband connection, healthcare, or public amenities – are critical to ensuring a high quality of life and the success and growth of the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. As the area continues to grow and develop, more pressure and demand will be put on the existing facilities and infrastructure that are currently available. Strategic, thoughtful, and transparent planning *must* be done by the Franklin County Board of Supervisors to ensure that the needed improvements are planned, scheduled, and constructed in a fiscally sound and timely manner. These strategies in particular should work in concert with and be reviewed diligently at the time of any updates to the County budget(s), and the Capital Improvement Plan.

Strategy 4.1 Engage with Western Virginia Water Authority (WVWA) to stay informed of plans and studies for infrastructure expansion; additionally, seek partnerships with both WVWA and developers to provide increased water and wastewater infrastructure access as development continues within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

While much of the existing Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is served by water, particularly along the main thoroughfares, some areas will require further infrastructure for connection as development occurs. Additionally, the wastewater infrastructure within the DGA must be improved and expanded to accommodate more housing and commercial development, as it is ushered in. As development occurs, there should be transparent and early conversations between the County, developers, and WVWA in respect to the needs of the incoming businesses, and how partnerships may expand services.

Strategy 4.2 Strive for active and responsive emergency services and care; work with partners and service providers to expand the operation, accessibility, and efficiency of Franklin County and/or volunteer emergency EMS, fire services, and law enforcement.

A community expects emergency services to be available, responsive, efficient, *and* prepared if services are required. As the workforce and population changes within a community, the make-up of personnel and volunteers can change over time. To better plan for improvements to facilities, equipment, and service, the County *must* maintain engagement between regional and local partners, volunteer organizations, and local and state agencies that provide the area's emergency services. As discussed in Strategy 4.6, below, the Board of Supervisors and County staff should ensure that the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget reviews reflect emergency services needs.

Strategy 4.3 Continue to work on increasing broadband infrastructure, accessibility, and availability, through partnerships, grants, technical assistance programs, and other support mechanisms available through Federal and State agencies and programs.

Broadband access is a critical component of infrastructure necessary to support modern businesses, as well as those students and workforce that work and learn remotely. Broadband service within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area is continuing to expand as a result of the County's recent efforts in securing grants for planning and infrastructure. While good progress has been made, the County should continue to seek opportunities to expand and increase broadband services, as technology changes and additional grant opportunities become available.

Strategy 4.4 Seek initiatives and work with community and regional partners to increase access to primary healthcare.

Primary healthcare covers a range of prevention, wellness, and treatment for common illnesses. Primary healthcare providers include doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. Typically, primary healthcare providers maintain long-term relationships with patients and may coordinate care with specialists. As such, primary healthcare providers is a staple for any community, particularly those with an aging population. While the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area currently hosts several primary healthcare

providers, such as Carilion and Lewis Gale, there remains an overall lack of primary healthcare throughout the nation, particularly for those that are under- or uninsured.

The County should work, with partners as necessary, to attract more primary healthcare providers into the area; partnerships and grants, such as those provided through the Virginia Health Care Foundation, may help bridge the gaps.

Strategy 4.5 Continue to seek opportunities for improvements to other County services and facilities, such as enhancements to the library and waste "green box" collection site.

While adequate healthcare/emergency services, utilities infrastructure, and broadband access are paramount to a community's overall quality of life, there are other public services that also play an important role in ensuring that residents feel supported by the County. Namely, social and education resources such as libraries, and necessary facilities, such as waste collection should not be overlooked for improvements and expansions as the area grows. While these improvements can take extensive planning of resources and funds, over extended periods of time, the County should frequently review and assess available options.

Strategy 4.6 Annually review and work with the Board of Supervisors to update the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure major expenditures are coordinated with the goals and strategies included in this Plan, alongside County-wide expenditures - so that they are planned, and programmed in a transparent and fiscally sound manner.

The County's CIP coordinates the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period. "Capital improvements" refers to major, non-recurring expenditures such as the purchase of land, buildings, public infrastructure, and equipment. While the CIP is County-wide and not specific to each Designated Growth Area, it does include capital improvements and expenditures that may be present or needed within specific DGAs, such as Westlake.

The CIP is a working document that is reviewed and updated annually to reflect changing community needs, priorities, and funding opportunities. Moving forward, this Area Plan, in concert with the County Comprehensive Plan and other Village/Area Plans, should be included at the time of CIP review, to ensure that the goals and strategies of this Area Plan are being met through capital planning, when required.

Goal 5: Create an inclusive, livable community that provides a balanced inventory of housing opportunities for all residents.

As defined by the [*Virginia Blueprint for Livable Communities*](#), a “livable community” is a community that is designed and functions in a way that facilitates well-being for all the people who live there – regardless of age, income, or ability. It is a holistic goal that is achieved through a long-term, open-ended community planning process.

⁵The median age in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area has remained relatively unchanged since 2016, when the Area Plan was first adopted, hovering right around 58 years old. In 2016, the median household income was \$77,115, and the current⁶ median household income has dropped to \$54,286. In 2016, 11% of households rented and the median rent was \$848; currently 21% of households rent, nearly double from 2016, and the median rent is \$876. In 2016, for homes with a mortgage, the median monthly cost was \$2,512. This has steadily declined and the current median monthly cost for homeowners with a mortgage is \$1,455.

This data shows that smart housing policies are imperative for the health of the overall housing market in Franklin County, and particularly those looking for housing within the Westlake Hales-Ford DGA. This data is particularly alarming for residents that rent; while median household income has steadily decreased, rent prices have remained the same. With a near-100% increase in the percentage of renters within the area, it is crucial to ensure that housing is available within the DGA that is affordable for all residents.

Strategy 5.1 Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow a greater diversity of housing types that would accommodate a range of incomes, lifestyles, and stages of life - including affordable and workforce housing, and housing for those aging-in-place.

A balanced inventory of well-designed, safe, and affordable housing choices is imperative to fostering a healthy community – no matter the size. Housing can also be a source of financial security, health, and safety for residents – and provides a sense of pride. Whether the residents of Westlake are renting or looking for

⁵ Note: The data included in this paragraph is sourced from US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021 datasets.

⁶ Note: “Current” data is reflective of the latest US Census ACS data, from the year 2021.

homeownership, there should be a variety of options available to accommodate any resident regardless of age or socioeconomic status. In order to meet this need, Zoning Ordinance regulations must be amended to accommodate a greater variety of housing types and sizes, including townhomes, patio homes, and accessory dwelling units.

It should be noted that “affordable” housing and subsidized housing are different; affordable housing is housing that is offered below typical market rate prices, geared towards residents earning 80% of the Average Median Income (AMI) or less, and is *not* subsidized by the State or Federal government. Access to affordable housing is critical to the well-being of a variety of households – from those aging-in-place with lower incomes after retirement, to those in the workforce that serve our communities (teachers, healthcare workers, hospitality professionals, etc.).

Strategy 5.2 Utilize the Franklin County Housing Study (2020), regional housing studies (from the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission and the West Piedmont Planning District Commission), and future housing studies, for guidance on mitigating known housing barriers and to capitalize on housing opportunities; review and amend Zoning Ordinance regulations to mitigate the identified barriers.

Aside from the inclusion of additional housing types as permitted uses within the Westlake Village Overlay District, other regulations may need to be revised and/or introduced – such as minimum and maximum lot sizes, lot coverage, density bonuses for inclusion of affordable housing – just to name a few. With the current housing market and nation-wide housing crisis, Franklin County should stay aware of any resources and opportunities that may become available that aid in lowering the known barriers to housing. Housing barriers typically include costs, requirements for large lot sizes, strict single-family dwelling zoning regulations, public perception of affordable housing, construction costs, and more!

Goal 6: In concert with the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan, protect existing agricultural uses and lands to preserve and maintain the rural character and active agricultural uses that surround the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.

While agricultural uses are not typically compatible with other land uses within Designated Growth Areas, Franklin County's strong agricultural history is a cornerstone of the County's identity, and the Westlake Hales-Ford area is no exception. As such, the County must plan carefully to strike a balance of growth and modernization within a concentrated area, while maintaining the rich farming history of the community at large.

At present, there are active agricultural operations within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, as well as on lands that lie just beyond the DGA boundary. Many of these operations are vital to the livelihood of residents, as well as the regional and state-wide agricultural industry. However, as previously noted, agricultural operations are not directly compatible with the concepts of Designated Growth Areas; agricultural operations consume larger swaths of land rather than concentrated development, and agricultural operations interspersed throughout concentrated development can cause gaps in utilities infrastructure. Yet, the Westlake Advisory Committee has stated that the community does have an appetite for both agricultural uses, and growth and denser development. In order to protect those active lands within *and* outside the DGA, deliberate consideration should be given to pursuing tools that maintain, retain, and protect working agricultural lands.

Strategy 6.1 During the next Comprehensive Plan update, assess and amend the Designated Growth Area (DGA) boundary for the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area to consider the agricultural uses.

In an effort to align growth and new development to more concentrated areas, such as the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, the County should study the potential outcomes of reducing the overall boundary of the DGA to exclude some of the working farms within the DGA. As growth occurs and development continues, periodic review of both this Area Plan and the DGA boundary would allow for additional amendments to the boundary, as needed and as growth occurs in the future.

Implementation Matrix

The Implementation Matrix builds on the goals and strategies identified above. The Matrix is a tool to measure the progress in the implementation of those identified actions. The primary measurement of implementation is whether progress has been made in implementing an action. Implementation will need to be encouraged through capital projects, infrastructure improvements and public facility investments, regulatory revisions, as well as partnerships and engagement with and by the residents of the Westlake Hales-Ford area.

The Implementation Matrix brings the goals and strategies to life by identifying responsible parties and anticipated timeframes for completion. The Implementation Matrix should be reviewed annually by the Franklin County Board of Supervisors as part of the budgeting process to set priorities, as well as measure progress toward the Area Plan's vision. Additionally, the Implementation Matrix should be reviewed annually by the Franklin County Planning Commission, which serves the Board in an advisory capacity on matters concerning planning and development. Particularly, the Planning Commission is tasked with recommendations pertaining to long-range planning, which includes the County Comprehensive Plan and Village and Area Plans, such as this one. As such, the Planning Commission should strive to hold an annual review of each Village/Area Plan's Implementation Matrix to analyze progress and to make recommendations and progress reports to the Board of Supervisors.

While the County (Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and staff) is the primary pilot of this Area Plan, community citizen groups can be an indispensable partner in seeing many of the identified goals come to fruition. Ferrum Forward, a citizen organization formed during the Ferrum Village Area Plan process, is a local success story of residents coming together, creating a structured organization, and working with both the County and local, state, and regional partners to better their community. Citizens committees focus on myriad community aspects – including business retention and expansion, beautification and community aesthetics, and securing grant and funding opportunities. The creation of a Westlake Hales-Ford citizen committee, with members from a range of backgrounds, would be an advantageous step for the community to foster collaboration between residents, businesses, and the County.

The Implementation Matrix provides the following information, along with each strategy:

Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
<p>Each strategy will require a certain tool to see that strategy implemented. “Tools” are categories that describe the specific action item and how it will be implemented. All tools assume there may be a need to contract with professionals in planning, engineering, architecture, and other consulting firms for implementation. Categories include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory Tools • Community Outreach and Education • Partnerships • Capital Projects • Programs and Services • Plans and Studies 	<p>The organization(s) responsible for partnering, administering, managing, and/or implementing the specific action item. These organizations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Franklin County: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board of Supervisors ○ Planning Commission ○ Staff Departments • State and Federal Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ VDOT ○ Federal Highway Administration ○ Department of Housing and Community Development ○ Etc. • Regional and Institutional Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission ○ West Piedmont Planning District Commission ○ Carilion Clinic ○ Western Virginia Water Authority ○ Etc. • Nonprofit Organizations • Local Business Partners <p><i>Note:</i> While each strategy may list a Franklin County Staff department as the responsible party, County Administration and Finance Departments will likely be involved with each strategy.</p>	<p>Some of the actions included in the Implementation Matrix will require the approval of a governing body; particularly when it comes to allocating funds, creating programs, and pursuing initiatives.</p> <p>Typically, this will be the Franklin County Board of Supervisors, but some actions will require the approval of other entities, such as the Commonwealth Transportation Board for certain transportation-related funding scenarios.</p>	<p>The assigned priority speaks to the <i>need</i> for each strategy and is a guide for how best to plan actions over time. However, the priorities listed in this Plan also work in concert with goals and strategies of the County’s other Village/Area Plans, Strategic Plans, and Comprehensive Plan. Planning will need to consider <i>each</i> of these documents and their assigned priorities.</p> <p>High (Short-term) (1-3 years) — short-term actions can be completed within 3 years of the Village Plan’s adoption.</p> <p>Medium (Medium-term) (3-5 years) — medium-term actions may be initiated within 3 years but will be completed by 5 years from the Village Plan’s adoption.</p> <p>Low (Long-term) (5+ years) — long-term actions may be initiated between 3 and 5 years from the Village Plan’s adoption but will be completed beyond the first five years of the Plan’s adoption, or later.</p> <p>Ongoing — ongoing actions should continue for the life of the Village Plan.</p>

The following acronyms are found throughout the Implementation Matrix:

ADB –	Agricultural Development Board
BA –	Broadband Authority
BOS –	Board of Supervisors
CTB –	Commonwealth Transportation Board
DHCD –	Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
FC –	Franklin County
FHWA –	Federal Highway Administration
PC –	Planning Commission
RAC –	Recreation Advisory Committee
RVARC –	Roanoke Valley Allegheny Regional Commission
VDOT –	Virginia Department of Transportation
VH –	Virginia Housing
WPPDC –	West Piedmont Planning District Commission
WVWA –	Western Virginia Water Authority

Strategy		Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 1: Improve the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area multimodal transportation network for increased safety, access, and mobility.					
1.1	Maintain a working relationship with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to work on road improvements, safety needs, grant funding opportunities, and other transportation projects with the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships	FC BOS; FC Planning and Community Development; State Agencies (VDOT; CTB)	N/A	Ongoing
1.2	Seek funding opportunities to improve dangerous intersections and other safety needs along Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway) and Scruggs Road. Known priorities include the intersections of Brooks Mill Rd and Scruggs Rd, Village Springs Dr and Route 122, Lakewatch Dr and Route 122, Lakemount Dr and Route 122, Harmony School Road and Route 122, and Morewood Rd and Route 122; however, the County should continually assess other intersections not directly mentioned, as needed.	Partnership; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Planning and Community Development; State Agencies (VDOT; CTB)	FC BOS; CTB	High; Ongoing
1.3	Consider a study to determine the need and viability of four-lane segments along Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway).	Plans and Studies	FC BOS; State Agencies (VDOT)	FC BOS	Low
1.4	Ensure that multimodal interconnectivity – including pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle connections and mobility – is considered during development planning and design.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Developers	FC BOS	Ongoing
1.5	Revise zoning regulations to encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections at the time of new development – including connector roads within developments, sidewalks and crosswalks, and multimodal paths.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Planning Consultants	FC BOS	High

Strategy		Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 1: Improve the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area multimodal transportation network for increased safety, access, and mobility.					
1.6	Assess the existing gaps and opportunities for pedestrian infrastructure within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area; and seek funding through grants, public-private partnerships, and other revenue streams to design and install signalized pedestrian infrastructure and sidewalk/trail connectivity between developed areas. Additionally, seek funding opportunities pertaining to pedestrian safety at the intersection of Parkcrest Dr and Route 122.	Plans and Studies; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Planning and Community Development; State Agencies	FC BOS CTB	High
1.7	Pursue and foster public-private partnerships to offer shared transportation options, such as micro-transit or other transit services, particularly for the aging-in-place population.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	FC BOS; State Agencies; Regional Partners	FC BOS	High / Medium

Strategy		Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 2: Strengthen the quality of life through increased recreational, cultural, and community facilities that provide opportunities for physical, mental, social, and community health.					
2.1	Engage with partners and/or consultants to research, design, fund, and implement a system of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. (See Goal #1).	Plans and Studies; Capital Projects	FC BOS; State Agencies (VDOT); Regional Partners	FC BOS	High
2.2	Research and identify viable areas for future recreation facilities on County-owned property within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area. Subsequently establish public-private partnerships and seek funding opportunities to create and construct identified recreation facilities.	Plans and Studies; Capital Projects; Partnerships	FC BOS; FC PC; FC RAC; FC Parks and Recreation; Regional Partners	FC BOS	Medium
2.3	Leverage public-private partnerships to create a neutral community gathering space that can accommodate a variety of community needs - such as a space for the arts, education, special events, conferences, and "town hall" gatherings in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	FC BOS; Regional Partners; Local businesses and developers; Nonprofit Organizations	FC BOS	High
2.4	Leverage a public-private partnership to identify a suitable area for, and to develop, a farmer's market within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships; Capital Projects; Programs and Services	FC BOS; Regional Partners; Local businesses and developers	FC BOS	Medium
2.5	Collaborate with County, Federal, and private partners to foster, retain, and promote the unique agricultural, historical, and cultural heritage elements within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships; Community Outreach and Education	FC BOS; Regional Partners; State and Federal Agencies	N/A	Ongoing
2.6	Foster collaboration with the Booker T. Washington National Monument, regarding relevant recreational and cultural opportunities, in the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships	FC BOS; Federal Agencies	N/A	Ongoing

Strategy	Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 3: Foster an economically sustainable village center that offers needed shopping, dining, work, education, lodging, and entertainment opportunities to residents and visitors.				
3.1 Consider the creation of County-funded grant and incentive programs to attract new businesses and industries to the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Programs and Services; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Economic Development	FC BOS	High
3.2 Revise zoning regulations for the Westlake Village Center Overlay District to better accommodate "village center" development - including signage regulations, bulk and siting regulations, etc.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Planning Consultants	FC BOS	High
3.3 Explore opportunities and initiatives to recruit businesses that would fill known gaps in the Westlake Hales-Ford Area market, such as restaurants, childcare services, retail, and tourist accommodations. Utilize the Franklin County Economic Development Strategic Plan, and accompanying research, to identify those gaps.	Plans and Studies	FC BOS; FC Economic Development; Regional Partners; Local businesses	FC BOS	High
3.4 Consider local funding and create partnerships to develop a shared (co-working) office space, or make existing space available, to accommodate those residents that are a part of the tele-work industry.	Partnerships; Capital Projects; Programs and Services	FC BOS; FC Economic Development Regional Partners; Local businesses and developers	FC BOS	Medium
3.5 Review and amend Zoning Ordinance regulations that can be a barrier to desired commercial development.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Planning Consultants	FC BOS	High
3.6 Pursue and foster public-private partnerships to create program(s) that provide matching façade grants for community design elements - such as benches, landscaping, and consistent signage; and village branding - such as gateway and wayfinding signage.	Partnerships; Programs and Services; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Economic Development; FC Planning and Community Development	FC BOS	High
3.7 Work towards attracting more lodging development within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area, through a variety of means known to be effective in attracting commercial development within the tourism industry.	Plans and Studies; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Economic Development; Developers	FC BOS	High

Strategy		Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 4: Deliver superior public services that focus on infrastructure capacity, accessibility, and efficiency to support growth pressures and that respond to the high quality of life desired by today's businesses and residents.					
4.1	Engage with Western Virginia Water Authority to stay informed of plans and studies for infrastructure expansion; additionally, seek partnerships with both WVWA and developers to provide increased water and wastewater infrastructure access as development continues within the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC County Administration; Regional Partners; Developers	N/A	High; Ongoing
4.2	Strive for active and responsive emergency services and care; work with partners and service providers to expand the operation, accessibility, and efficiency of Franklin County and/or volunteer emergency EMS, fire services, and law enforcement.	Programs and Services	FC BOS; FC Public Safety; Volunteer Fire Departments	FC BOS	High; Ongoing
4.3	Continue to work on increasing broadband infrastructure, accessibility, and availability, through partnerships, grants, technical assistance programs, and other support mechanisms available through Federal and State agencies and programs.	Partnerships; Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC County Administration State and Federal Agencies	FC BOS	High; Ongoing
4.4	Seek initiatives and work with community and regional partners to increase access to primary healthcare.	Partnerships; Programs and Services	FC BOS; FC County Administration; Regional Partners; Local businesses and developers	FC BOS	High
4.5	Continue to seek opportunities for improvements to other County services and facilities, such as enhancements to the library and waste "green box" collection site.	Capital Projects	FC BOS; FC Public Works; FC Public Library	FC BOS	Low
4.6	Annually review and work with the Board of Supervisors to update the County's capital improvement plan (CIP) to ensure major expenditures are coordinated with the goals and strategies included in this Plan, alongside County-wide expenditures - so that they are planned, and programmed in a transparent and fiscally sound manner.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC County Administration	FC BOS	Ongoing

Strategy		Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 5: Create an inclusive, livable community that provides a balanced inventory of housing opportunities for all residents.					
5.1	Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow a greater diversity of housing types that would accommodate a range of incomes, lifestyles, and stages of life - including affordable and workforce housing, and housing for those aging-in-place.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Planning Consultants	FC BOS	High
5.2	Utilize the Franklin County Housing Study (2020), regional housing studies (from the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission and the West Piedmont Planning District Commission), and future housing studies, for guidance on mitigating known housing barriers and to capitalize on housing opportunities; review and amend Zoning Ordinance regulations to mitigate the identified barriers.	Plans and Studies; Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development Regional Partners (RVARC, WPPDC); State Agencies (DHCD, VH)	FC BOS	High

Strategy	Tool	Responsible Party	Approving Authority	Priority
Goal 6: In concert with the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan, protect existing agricultural uses and lands to preserve and maintain the rural character and active agricultural uses that surround the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area.				
6.1 During the next Comprehensive Plan update, assess and consider amending the Designated Growth Area (DGA) boundary for the Westlake Hales-Ford Designated Growth Area to reflect the agricultural uses.	Regulatory Tools	FC BOS; FC PC; FC Planning and Community Development; Property Owners	FC BOS	High