



# *McDowell County*

*A Community Profile of Current Conditions and Capacity*

**Prepared for the  
West Virginia Blueprint Communities Initiative**

**April 2007**

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McDowell County is located in Southern West Virginia on the border with Virginia. The County was established in 1858 and named after a Governor of Virginia who served from 1843-46. The original county seat was established at the town of Perryville and later moved with considerable controversy to Welch after the Civil War.

McDowell County was a coal mining center during the industry's boom period and the population of the county reached close to 100,000 people by 1950. With the decline of the coal industry during the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the county has steadily lost population.

The latest population estimates available (2005) for McDowell County reflects a population of 24,273 people. About twenty-three percent (23.3%) of the population is under 18 years of age and sixteen percent (16.1%) is 65 years of age or older. There are 11,169 households in the county and about 7,840 families.

**Introduction:**

This community profile is provided for use by the Blueprint Team in order to provide a general overview of some of the more relevant measures of local conditions and community capacity. It is one of many tools you may find useful. The profile should be reviewed and kept in your community toolbox for future reference. Local Blueprint Teams will undoubtedly wish to examine some of the areas addressed in the profile in more detail once specific priorities are established for local community development. The profile should initially be useful in identifying areas of concern that may require further study and assessment by local citizens and later on it may provide guidance about measures that can be used to monitor progress.

The McDowell County community profile is intended as a resource for community builders. It is a portrait of current conditions and local capacities. Information presented here can be useful to local Blueprint Community Team members and other community residents in considering where to invest time and energy and in establishing both short and long term priorities and goals for community improvements. However, the statistics and other information summarized here are no substitute for local initiative. Objective facts and individual perspectives must be considered in the context of local knowledge, opportunities and desires which can only be gleaned from community members. For example, if the general profile suggests increased attention to healthy lifestyle choices, local health care professionals should be consulted to assist the community in understanding the links between lifestyle and health. If programs or facilities to encourage physical fitness are suggested, local residents should be asked what activities would be of interest and what types of facilities would be used. It is important to know what types of facilities or programs would be used before

making plans for development. If people are involved in the planning they will be more likely to be involved in the doing.

### **A Few Words about Community Capacity and Capital:**

Community Capacity may be defined as the level of resources, assets, human capital, and social capital available to a group of people (a community) to achieve the results they want and care about. "Community capacity, in a general sense, is what makes communities work. It is what makes well-functioning communities function well." (Chaskin, et.al., 2001). Capacity may be found in local people, in the strength of the relationships among people, in civic enterprises, in local institutions, in the value of property and buildings, in financial investment, and in the quality of the environment.

*"Community capacity is what makes well-functioning communities function well" – (Chaskin, 2001)*

Sufficient levels of community capacity are necessary prerequisites for successful community development. Community capacity can be measured and it can be built. The Blueprint Communities Program is focused on increasing community capacity in order to build stronger and more prosperous communities.

The community profile is organized by capacity domains - important areas of influence defined by the *West Virginia Community Development Gathering*. A domain of capacity may be thought of as a significant area of influence that affects the ability of a community to get things done. If capacity is lacking in any particular area it should be built so that available resources and investments can be optimally utilized. Each of the seven domains (areas of influence) of capacity is discussed in the profile based on selected quantitative data and the opinions of Blueprint Team members reflected in their on-line survey responses.

"Capital" is another term that is helpful in organizing information within the profile. We are generally familiar with financial capital, the monetary investment that is made available to build something useful. Other forms of capital discussed in the profile are no less important. Human capital, social capital, cultural capital, and environmental capital are all local resources that can be drawn upon to improve community conditions.

## *Human Capital*

Human Capital includes the health and well being of local residents as well as the knowledge skills and abilities of local people. There is considerable data available that can be used to measure health and well being. The measures of local health and well-being discussed here are reflective of McDowell County. If the Blueprint Team wishes to look more specifically at towns within the county some data is available at that level.

### *Health and Well Being of Local People*

#### **Healthy People:**

Three key measures of health were compiled for county residents. These measures include health insurance status, adult obesity, and low birth weight. Adult obesity which is defined as significantly exceeding recommended healthy weight is 30.4 % in McDowell County. This level of obesity is above the average for West Virginia (27.7%) and significantly above the average for the U. S. (22.8%). The number of adults without health insurance is 35.2% of the adult population of the county. This is significantly higher than the state average of 22.8% and the national average of 18.2% of adults uninsured. The percentage of low birth weight babies (14.9% in McDowell County) is almost double the national average of 7.8% and above the statewide average of 9.3%.

*The percentage of low birth weight babies in McDowell County is almost double the national average*

Obesity and low birth weight are significant risk factors for major health problems and these measures of health should be of concern to residents of the county. Local residents may wish to look closer at this issue by engaging in discussions with local health care professionals to get a more accurate picture of the health status of local residents. The high number of adults with no type of health insurance coverage is an issue of particular concern. Adults without access to third party payers will tend to put off needed healthcare and visits to a health care professional. Most children are able to qualify for health care insurance through public programs if they are not insured through a parent's employer; however, that is not the case for many adults residing in the state. Local health care professionals would have a good sense of the extent of this problem for adults and they should be consulted. A good measure of the extent of the problem locally might be secured from local rural health clinics or hospitals that serve county residents by checking to see how many people they see with no form of third party payment.

*The high number of adults with no type of health insurance coverage is an issue of particular concern. Adults without access to third party payers will tend to put off needed healthcare and visits to a health care professional.*

#### **School Readiness:**

At least three long term research studies (Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, & Chicago Child-Parent Centers) have established a significant link between early childhood development and future success in school and later life. Two key measures of school readiness – that is early childhood development that prepares children for school – were considered. The percentage of kindergarten children enrolled in public preschool programs is a good measure of school readiness as is the rate of retention in preschool and kindergarten programs. Preschool enrollment as a percentage of

kindergarten enrollment in McDowell County is 32.7%. This is below the statewide average of 43.2%. When children are provided with preschool programs their success in later grades will be enhanced.

The percentage of pre-K and kindergarten students who are retained in McDowell County (not promoted to the next grade) was 3.2% (2003-04 data). This is much better than the state average of 12.2% retention.

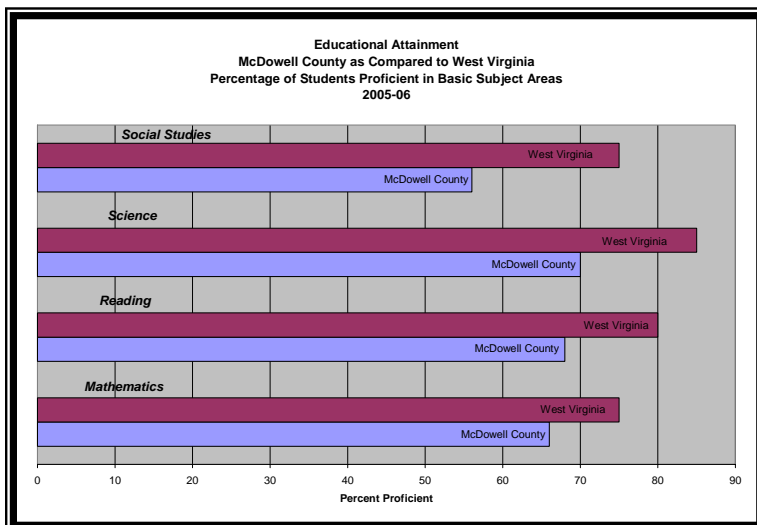
The measures cited above (particularly the retention rate in pre-K & K programs) would indicate that school readiness is not a major problem in McDowell County; however, the percentage of children enrolled in public preschool programs lags behind the state average. These measures also do not reflect other local early childhood development programs and services. Given the importance of early childhood development as a predictor of future success, the Blueprint Team may wish to consult with local preschool and kindergarten teachers to gather further information about how well children are prepared when they enter school.

**Educational Attainment and Access:**

Success in school may be measured by looking at several key indicators of continued education and achievement in the public schools. Measures selected for the profile include education levels of the population, high school graduation rates, students going on to college, and test scores on standardized testing.

Fifty percent (50.0%) of the residents of McDowell County did not complete high school (2000 census data). This is an extremely high percentage as compared to the statewide rate of 24.8% and the U. S. population as a whole (19.6%). The current high school graduation rate in McDowell County (2006) is 79.9%. This rate of current high school graduation is lower than the statewide rate (84.6%). The high percentage of county students who drop out of school indicates a continuing lack of educational attainment by county residents.

Only 5.6% of McDowell County residents over the age of 25 years hold a college degree. The statewide percentage is considerably higher at 14.8% and the national percentage is 24.4% of the population over age 25 holding a bachelor’s degree or higher.



For the 2005-06 school year, the students in McDowell County schools achieved at a lower rate than the state average in all basic subjects areas. See chart.

Young people in McDowell County appear to go on to college at a much lower rate than the state average. One measure of the college going rate is the percentage of high school graduates who take college entrance exams. In 2006, 32% of McDowell

County high school graduates took the ACT college entrance exam; the percentage of students taking the ACT test statewide is twice this rate at 64%. The composite ACT score for McDowell students at 18.2 is lower than the state average of 20.6.

**Community Safety:**

The overall crime rate for West Virginia as a whole is one of the lowest in the nation at 28.98 crimes per 1,000 population. Crimes reported by all McDowell County law enforcement agencies are at a rate of 17.46 per thousand population –significantly lower than the statewide crime rate (2005 Uniform Crime Report). The McDowell County Sheriff’s Office reported 2.01 drug and narcotics related offenses per 1,000 population in the County; however, the Welch Police Department reported a higher number of narcotics related crimes (5.38 per 1,000 pop.).

There are thirty six offenders with McDowell County addresses listed in the WV Sex Offender Registry. This is a rate of 1.24 per 1,000 population. The statewide rate is 1.39 per thousand.

McDowell County appears to be a relatively safe community with less crime than some other areas of the state; however, there may be local safety issues of concern. Not all safety issues are related to crime and local residents are in the best position to assess any safety concerns county residents may have.

**Family Stability:**

Two measures of family stability were researched for the community profile – domestic violence investigations and the ratio of marriages to divorces. Statistics for McDowell County indicate a rate of 14.56 investigations related to domestic violence per 1,000 households. This rate is close to the statewide rate of 16.39 per thousand households. The ratio of marriages to divorces in McDowell County is 1.29 marriages to every divorce. This is lower than the statewide ratio of 1.49 marriages to each divorce.

A third measure of family stability that was selected for review is the rate of confirmed child abuse and neglect; however, reliable data at the county or local community level is not available. Local child protective services workers can provide considerable insight into this issue. If this is an area of concern for the local Blueprint Team it is recommended that local child protective service staff be consulted to obtain information about the extent of this problem in the community. In general, families in McDowell County appear to be somewhat less stable than families in the state as a whole based on the limited measures available.

**Economic Security:**

Perhaps the most telling component of family and individual well being is economic security. Unemployment, poverty, and a general lack of financial resources place families under severe stress that often leads to other problems. This results in depressed levels of human capital in the community. Five measures of economic security are included in the profile.

The most recent (January 2007) unemployment rate for the county is 7.9%. This is significantly higher than the state and federal rates of 4.8% and 5.0% respectively. Additional information about available jobs and local industries will be discussed later in the profile in relation to financial and manufactured capital.

Very high levels of poverty are present in McDowell County. In 2003, 32.4% of all families in the county were estimated to have household income below the federal poverty level. The poverty rate for all families in West Virginia is 18.5% and for the nation it is at 12.7%. What is even more telling is the 2000 census data for families residing in the county. The 2000 census data is more

*The 2000 Census data documents severe levels of poverty in McDowell County where nearly half of all families with children live below the federal poverty level.*

accurate than the estimates for non-census years and reflects the poverty situation in McDowell County in 1999. The poverty rate for all families reflected by the 2000 census was 33.8%; however, the rate for families with children was 47.5% in poverty. For families with children under age five years the poverty rate was 56.2% as recorded in the 2000 census. Among families with young children headed by a female with no husband present (a total of 324 total families)

the poverty rate is exceedingly high at 86.9%.

Per capita annual income in McDowell County for 1999 (as reported in 2000 census data) was \$10,174. This is significantly lower than the state average of \$16,477 and less than half the national average of \$21,587. Even though these figures describe the average personal income per person living in McDowell County when the 2000 census was conducted, they provide a basis for relative comparison of income levels that is the most accurate available. Income levels may have increased in McDowell County to some degree over the past several years but, when adjusted for inflation, there is little reason to believe that county residents are significantly better off than the 2000 census figures would indicate.

Data from 2000 also indicate that 19.2% of households have a severe burden related to housing costs as defined by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is a lower than the statewide percentage with severe housing cost burden (21.3%) and the national figure of 25.8% of households. Severe housing cost burden is based on the number of low income families that pay more than 50% of household income for housing.

A further measure of economic security is the *Universal Living Wage*. This is the hourly wage necessary to afford housing based on Fair Market Rents in any particular area assuming that someone works 40 hours per week and 52 weeks per year. For McDowell County this wage is \$7.62 per hour for a one bedroom apartment. The current federal minimum wage is \$5.15 per hour although the Congress appears ready to increase it to \$7.25 over a two year period.

The quantitative data tells us that families in McDowell County do not have an adequate level of household income and that families with children are particularly vulnerable.

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Health and Well Being:**

Responses to the survey from six members of the Blueprint Community Team average -0.36 for the statements related to community capacity in this domain. (See appendix A for an explanation of survey scoring and interpretation of this average score.) This average score would indicate that there is a lack of capacity present within this domain when all five components of health and well being

discussed above are considered. The team's responses indicate that team members believe McDowell County is a safe place to live but all other areas of health and well being are seen as deficient by the team members. These perceptions by the Blueprint Team members are supported by the quantitative measures discussed above.

### **Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities of Local People**

Indicator areas related to using and enhancing skills, knowledge and abilities of local people, citizen engagement, and data driven decision making are included in this domain of capacity. Some information is available in existing data sets that can provide us with measures of citizen engagement; however, measures relating to using and enhancing skills knowledge and abilities will, at least for the present, need to be identified locally. The perception of Blueprint Team members as reflected in the survey results is one measure of this domain and team members are encouraged to consider relevant local information and knowledge to identify other measures.

There are no current depositories of local information about how people use and enhance their skills. The Blueprint Communities training program is an example of how local people (the Blueprint Team members) are enhancing their skills and the participation of team members in the program is a positive measure of local capacity in this area. The level of participation on local boards, task teams, work teams etc. is another such measure. Other useful measures of this domain where information may be known to the Blueprint Team or information could be collected locally might be participation of citizens in community meetings; training programs offered locally in areas of leadership development, group facilitation or planning; number of local community members who have participated in such training, or observations about how local government or town meetings are conducted. Are plans developed based on good data and information about community needs and opportunities? Are there local opportunities to gain leadership skills? Are citizens encouraged to participate in local town meetings? Are diverse parts of the community represented and are all opinions welcomed?

#### **Citizen Engagement:**

Measures of citizen engagement have been compiled for consideration by the Blueprint Team members. Some information is available in existing data sets related to participation in elections and volunteerism. Participation in elections is often used as a measure of citizen engagement. In 2004 (a Presidential election year), 40.3% of registered voters in McDowell County cast a ballot. Voter turnout in McDowell County was much less than the statewide voter turnout of 65.9%. An additional measure of citizen participation is the percentage of the voting age population that actually registered and exercised their rights as a citizen to vote for their elected officials. In McDowell County the percentage of the voting age population that voted in the 2004 election was only 36.4%. Again, this measure documents a lower level of citizen engagement than is the case in other parts of West Virginia and the nation. 54.7% of the voting age population cast a ballot in West Virginia and 55.5% across the nation.

Volunteerism is another measure of this domain for which we have some data. Local residents participate in the Adopt-A-Highway program at a lower rate than the state average – 8.4 volunteers per 1,000 population in McDowell County and 13.2 per 1,000 statewide. Another measure of

volunteer interest is the number of persons expressing interest in volunteering through the state registry maintained by the WV Commission on National and Community Service. This registry includes 11.5 McDowell County residents per 1,000 population. The state average is a little lower at 9.1 per 1,000.

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Knowledge and Abilities of Local People:**

The measures reported above related to voting and volunteerism drawn from available data provide some useful information; however, we are forced for the most part to rely on the perceptions of Blueprint Team members about the level of capacity in this domain as reflected in their survey responses. When the survey responses of the six team members were averaged across the five variables related to this domain the score for this domain was -0.23 indicating team members as a group see a lack of capacity in this area. Team members generally agreed that there were few opportunities for local people to gain new skills and abilities in the local area but there was no clear consensus of opinion on other statements related to using and enhancing the knowledge skills and abilities of local people. The collective opinion of the group was that capacity needs to be built in this area.

The team may want to consider how the skills knowledge and abilities of local people can be improved in McDowell County and develop strategies to identify and engage additional community members in training opportunities to enhance their leadership skills. It may also be useful for the Blueprint Team to discuss their individual perceptions about using and enhancing local skills and knowledge with one another and with the larger community since there was some difference of opinion reflected in the survey responses.

## ***Social Capital***

*“Although some...continue to believe that healthy economies create vibrant communities, in fact, the reverse is more often the case. A strong community is a prerequisite for creating a healthy economy because it alone produces social trust.”*  
(Jeremy Rifkin, 2000)

Two domains of community capacity make up social capital – ***Relationships and Interpersonal Communications*** and ***Community Initiative Responsibility and Adaptability***.

These domains address levels of shared values, trust, connectedness, participation, collective vision, leadership planning, and sense of hope in the community. There are currently few if any sources of local data that effectively measure these important components of community capacity. One measure that may be useful was secured from school survey data. Youth in McDowell County schools were asked if they participate in community activities such as scouts, sports teams, youth clubs, etc. Participation in such activities is one way social capital is built among young residents in the community. For 2004-05, 17.1% of McDowell County students reported participation in such activities which is quite low compared to the statewide rate of 26.7%.

With the exception of this one measure of relationship building in the community state and national data sets are of little use. We can gain some insight into this domain of local capacity through the perceptions of Blueprint Team members (survey data). However, the levels of social capital are best considered locally by observing local interactions among people, identifying local leaders, and encouraging a collective vision and plan for the community. Are public issues discussed in local newspapers or community forums? How many adults attend youth activities? Are pot luck dinners a routine event and are new members of the community welcomed at community events? Are local organizations and local government connected to one another and engaged in joint planning to improve the community? Do communities work (and play) well with other communities in McDowell County? Do community residents resolve disagreements amicably and trust one another? The Blueprint team can develop its own local measures of social capital by asking themselves these types of questions and then asking: how would we know?

Local information can also be gathered by talking to local government officials, local agency directors, and others in leadership positions about their vision for the community and how they plan for the future. Is there a collective vision for local development? How many citizens are engaged in discussions about the future? What is the level of resources dedicated to planning?

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Relationships and Interpersonal Communications:**

This domain of capacity within the community is also seen by Blueprint Team members as an area where little or no stores of existing capital is available to draw upon. The average score for this domain across the five variables is 0.00 which is indicative of a belief that capacity needs to be built. Some difference of opinion was noted among the team members related to levels of trust in

the community; however nearly all of the team members doubt that county residents trust their local officials to act in the best interests of the community. These trust-related issues should be of considerable concern since sustainable local development requires social trust.

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Community Initiative, Responsibility, and Adaptability:**

Overall, team members see little existing capacity in this domain with an aggregate score of -0.10. This overall score would indicate a collective belief among team members that little capacity exists in this area; however, there was no clear consensus of opinion about three of the five variables making up the aggregate score. Some team members saw this domain more positively than others. Team members are encouraged to discuss their perceptions of community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability in order to better understand one another.

It would probably also be helpful to further assess how diverse people in McDowell County define their future and seek out ideas about how to build the elements of capacity that seem to be lacking. Is there a collective vision for the county? Do county residents feel that existing planning efforts are relevant to their lives? A broad-based dialogue could contribute to building social trust in addition to providing information that would allow the Blueprint Team and county officials to better understand local perspectives.

## *Cultural Capital*

### **Cultural Diversity and Quality of Life**

This is another domain where existing databases offer little useful information. The 2000 census data reflects some degree of cultural diversity among the population. County residents are predominately White (87%) but Black residents make up 12% of the population and other races account for the remaining 1%. More than one percent of the county population (1.4%) or 368 people reported that they spoke a language other than English in their homes.

McDowell County has one museum or art gallery located in the county and five libraries. Thirteen people in the county are employed in the Arts, Entertainment, or Recreation sector.

#### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Cultural Diversity and Quality of Life:**

Blueprint Team members believe the quality of life in McDowell County is positive. The average score for this domain is +0.13. This score reflects a low level of capacity within this domain that can be drawn upon as community projects are developed and implemented. Quality of Life is the only assessed domain where the Blueprint Team members as a group perceive a positive level of capacity. Most team members believe county residents lack opportunities for enrichment through music and the arts and all see recreational opportunities as limited within the county.

The local Blueprint Team may want to build on the positive aspects of quality of life they perceive in McDowell County. Further assessment of quality of life issues in the county may be useful to identify areas where these positive attributes might be further developed. Do community residents want more access to live music performances and the arts? How can the positive aspects of the local quality of life be leveraged to improve other domains of community capacity? What types of projects or activities can tap into the positive perception of local quality of life?

## *Financial and Manufactured Capital*

### **Investments in Community and Financial Resources**

A significant number of measures have been identified from existing data sets to describe levels of community capacity and current conditions within this domain.

#### **Financial Investments:**

Data obtained from the WV Secretary of State Business Organization Information System indicates that almost eight percent (7.83%) of the for-profit businesses in McDowell County have started up within the past year. This is above the statewide percentage of new business start ups at 4.18%. This level of new business activity may be a positive development for the county or it may indicate a lack of stable businesses. This is an area where local knowledge is necessary to interpret this measure in the context of local business activity.

Data from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act database provides some measure of new housing starts. There were 3 home purchase loans made per 1,000 existing housing units in the county during 2005. The state rate is 32 per 1,000 housing units and the national rate of new home loans is 75 per 1,000. Thus, there appear to be relatively few new investments in housing being made in McDowell County.

#### **Local Financial Resources:**

One measure of local financial resources is deposits in local banks. This measure for McDowell County was calculated from available 2004 data at \$8,034 in per capita deposits (average deposits per county resident). The state average per-capita deposit is quite a bit higher at \$12,472. McDowell County has ten banking locations in the county and a total of \$195 million dollars in total deposits (2004 data).

Another measure of local financial resources is average wage per job. McDowell County residents' earnings are, on average, \$29,582 per job held. This is a little less than the state average of \$30,879 (2005 data).

These measures tend to indicate a lower level of available local financial resources than are present in the state as a whole.

#### **Access to Outside Financial Resources:**

Several measures of federal spending and investment of federal financial resources in the area have been identified. The most recently available data for McDowell County (2004) documents an average federal investment in personal transfer receipts of \$8,997 per capita. These federal dollars are related to federal payments to individuals for unemployment benefits, retirement, social security, disability payments, and other forms of payment not attributable to earnings from work. Statewide the per capita amount is \$6,929. McDowell County residents are more dependent on these federal programs than the general population of people in West Virginia.

Federal per-capita spending in McDowell County for salaries and benefits of federal employees, military personnel, procurement contracts, grants and other forms of investment averaged \$11,235

per person in 2004. This is a more federal investment than the state per capita average of \$8,364. Federal grant funds received in McDowell County during 2004 totaled \$89,553,000. These grant funds include grants made directly to local governments or organizations as well as federal grant funds distributed by state government to the county.

### **Business Efficiency:**

One measure of business efficiency is retail sales. The Economic Census of 2002 reported per capita retail sales in McDowell County as \$4,099. This is less than half of the statewide average of retail sales which was \$9,277 per capita. Given the high rates of poverty in the county, the low level of retail sales is most likely due to county residents having less to spend. Another possible explanation is that it may be, at least in part, an indication that county residents do a substantial portion of their shopping outside the county. Local knowledge about where county residents buy needed goods and services can better inform the interpretation of this statistic.

Job creation and changes in net employment are other measures that can be used to assess business efficiency within the county. During 2005, McDowell County had a net gain of 57 jobs with 277 new jobs created during that period. Average new hire earnings are reported at \$2,414 per month. These measures indicate minimal growth in jobs within the county during 2005. There was a net decrease in county-based jobs from 2000 to 2004 (a loss of 384 jobs). Data available seems to indicate an overall job loss within the county in recent years.

### **Business Diversity:**

Business diversity within the county is reflected in the number and types of business establishments and in the types of jobs available. Total non-farm business establishments in McDowell County in 2004 were 328. The 2002 Survey of Business Owners conducted by the Census Bureau included 326 businesses with employees. The WV Secretary of State Business Organization Data System lists 447 current (2007) for profit businesses and 118 registered non-profit organizations in McDowell County.

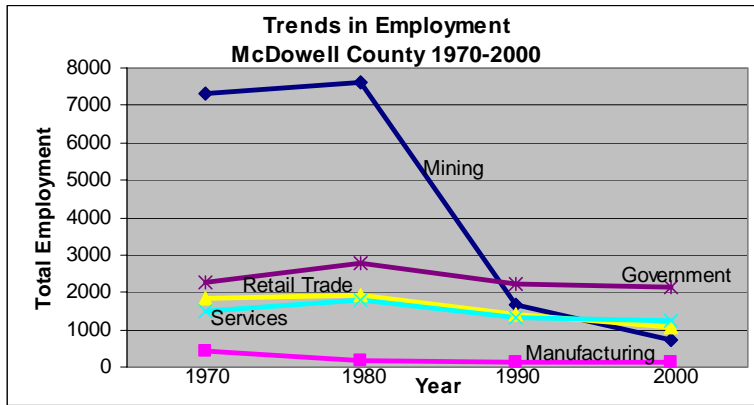
Employment in McDowell County for 2004 (the most recent available data) reflects a total employment of 5,950 persons. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the employment is in private sector jobs while government employment accounts for 33%.

2000 Census data for McDowell County reports 6,054 residents employed. Seventy-one percent (70.7%) were private sector employees, 25.1% were government employees, and 4.1% were in their own business at that time. McDowell County residents' occupations in 2000 were listed as:

- Management and Professional – 22.4%
- Service Occupations – 18.8%
- Sales and Office – 23.6%
- Farming, fishing and forestry – 0.4%
- Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance – 15.7%
- Production, Transportation – 19.1%

**Trends in Employment 1970 to 2000:** If we look closer at selected industries over a thirty year period from 1970 to 2000, the total employment in McDowell County within these particular industries shows a dramatic loss of jobs (15,302 jobs in 1970 and 7,367 jobs in 2000). This is a loss

of more than half of all jobs in these sectors during the period. Some analysis of types of employment is even more enlightening.



Employment in mining jobs which was the single most important sector of the economy dropped precipitously between 1980 and 2000. The loss of jobs in the coal mines accounts for nearly the entire loss of overall jobs during the period. There were some accompanying losses in the retail trade and services sectors as well and manufacturing jobs also fell during the thirty year period. Government jobs remained fairly stable during the

period. See chart showing trends in these selected industries over thirty years.

Employment data by sector for 2004 documents little increase in the number of mining jobs between 2000 and 2004 in McDowell County.

### **Cultivating Entrepreneurship:**

Limited data is available in this area. Some measure of entrepreneurship within McDowell County may be implied from statistics indicating that 4.1% of workers were self employed in not incorporated businesses; however it is hard to draw any hard conclusions about the level of entrepreneurial activity from this measure.

### **Community Resident Assets:**

Resident assets may be measured to some extent by looking at the value of owner occupied housing. For most home owners their home is the greatest asset they have. The 2000 census data reflects that 79.8% of McDowell County householders owned their homes. This is a little above the state average of 75.2% and higher than the national home ownership rate of 66.2%. The high home ownership rate is limited good news, however, since the average value of the homeowner's property in McDowell County was very low at \$29,718. The average value of owner occupied housing statewide was \$86,995 and nationally it was \$158,934 (2000 census).

The average value of farm land and buildings in McDowell County is much less than state averages as well. The 2000 census of agriculture documents an average value for farm land and buildings in McDowell County of \$109,816. The average value of farm land and buildings statewide in West Virginia was \$231,999.

McDowell County resident's assets appear to be much less than the state average based on these limited measures of home and farm value.

### **Community Infrastructure:**

Community infrastructure is an area where local resident knowledge generally exceeds available statistics drawn from large data sets. Blueprint Team members can most likely assess infrastructure issues fairly accurately based on their own local knowledge.

Census data provides us with some information related to housing and utilities infrastructure. About 56% (56.4%) of the occupied housing in McDowell County was built prior to 1960 and 29.8% was built prior to 1940. Occupied houses are heated with a variety of fuels including gas (9.6%), electricity (43.9%), fuel oil (18.6%), and coal or coke (19.1%). Close to two hundred (186) occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities in 2000 and over thirteen percent (13.1%) of occupied houses had no telephone service.

Over fifteen percent (15.6%) of workers commute outside the county to work. This is lower than the state average of 20.18% and higher than the national average (3.6%). Average travel time to work (32.6 minutes) is a little higher than the state average of 26.2 minutes. Net commutation (persons coming into the county to work minus those leaving to work) is -103 telling us that more people work outside the county than those that travel into the county for work. Commuting patterns may have implications for highway infrastructure or the development of public transportation systems.

Other measures of local community infrastructure should be examined by the Blueprint Team. One measure of the increase in local assets is the number and type of building permits sought by local residents. This data may be available for municipalities in the county and it is good measure of investment being made to increase the value of homes or business property.

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Investments in the Community and Financial Resources:**

The objective data used as measures for this domain is reflected in the survey responses of the Blueprint Team members. Capacity is lacking in this domain. The average score for this domain was -0.03. This score indicates a general perception on the part of team members that the county lacks financial and manufactured capital. The team members see little in the way of local financial resources to draw upon. Blueprint Team members may wish to focus attention on planning and strategy development to build capacity within this domain through entrepreneurship programs, small business development workshops, and further assessment of what types of economic activity might attract investment to the area.

## *Environmental Capital*

### **Sustainable Healthy Ecosystems with Multiple Community Benefits**

Local environmental issues are another area where existing data sets are not particularly useful. Information about the environment is available from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State Department of Environmental Protection as well as the State Department of Natural Resources. Much of the information is for regional areas or metropolitan areas however which are generally not applicable to largely rural counties such as McDowell.

There were no grant awards made to McDowell County by the state Department of Environmental Protection REAP office for 2007. Although this is not necessarily a measure that would indicate a lack of environmental efforts in the county it is one of the few measures available from state level data that provide some indication of activity to enhance the environment.

There were no environmental clean up sites listed for McDowell County in state and federal databases and no appreciable amount of toxic chemicals were reported as released into the environment based on 2005 data.

The percentage of surface waters with impaired or threatened uses in McDowell County is 21.66%. This ranks McDowell County 10<sup>th</sup> among West Virginia counties where the highest percentage of threatened surface water quality for any county is 55.1% and the lowest is 5.01%.

Local environmental issues may be monitored and potential problems identified through local projects to monitor water quality and bio-diversity. Local schools might be encouraged to conduct tests on local streams or conduct wildlife counts as student science projects. Recycling is another development option that can be considered to maintain a high quality environment. Any local environmental organizations should be included in visioning and planning for local development to provide some assurance that projects are environmentally sensitive and existing environmental capital is preserved.

### **Survey Responses from Blueprint Team Members Related to Sustainable Healthy Ecosystems with Multiple Community Benefits:**

This domain of community capacity is seen by the McDowell County Blueprint Team members as an area that needs attention. The average score for this domain was -0.45 which indicates a lack of any significant level of capacity in this domain. The average response for four of the five variables used to calculate the team perception about this domain was negative. Team members agree that land use is unplanned in the county and that the quality of the environment is not really important to people, but other statements related to environmental capital received mixed responses.

# Appendix A

## Methodology and Technical Information

A Capacity Assessment Framework was used as the basis for constructing a community profile for each of the ten West Virginia Blueprint Communities. The framework is based on a community capitals model and it addresses levels of capacity - that is stores of capital- that might be drawn upon to improve local conditions. Seven domains or “areas of influence” effecting community capacity were defined by a group of stakeholders known as the “Community Development Gathering” in West Virginia during 2006. These domains were adapted from work done by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University. To the extent possible, measures for each domain were selected from relevant existing databases and these selected measures are discussed in the profile. The community profile discusses current conditions in the context of five capitals, seven domains and defined indicator areas that say something significant about each of the domains of interest. This framework is included as Appendix B.

Compiled and published information at the level useful for local assessment and planning is very limited for some areas of influence that determine local community capacity. Consequently, domains relating to social capital, cultural capital, and environmental capital are more difficult to measure using existing data sets. Given this lack of good information readily available for some of the defined domains, a survey was developed to assess the opinion of key informants about the levels of capacity within each of the Blueprint Communities. Blueprint Community team members were asked to complete the web-based survey in order to secure information about how the team members see their community and identify (from the perspective of the team members) areas where local capacity appears to be present. Because of the makeup of the Blueprint Teams, the Blueprint Community Team members are considered to be appropriate key informants knowledgeable about the local community.

The information discussed in the community profile was compiled from existing data sets and from analysis of survey results solicited from local Blueprint Team members. The profile is a portrait of current community conditions and existing areas of capacity with some historical trend information related to key indicators when such trends in the data appear helpful in understanding current community conditions.

### **Methodology for Analysis of Survey Responses:**

Blueprint Team members were asked to complete a survey in order to measure beliefs held by each of the team members related to 35 measures of local capacity. The survey is composed of a series of 35 statements. Each of the seven domains of community capacity defined in the framework is measured by five statements contained in the survey. Survey respondents (Blueprint Community Team members) were asked to evaluate each statement based on their personal knowledge of the larger community (county or town designated as a Blueprint Community) and choose the degree to which they agree or disagree with the 35 statements using a five point Likert scale. Responses for each statement can range from “strongly disagree” to strongly agree”.

Individual survey responses were analyzed to produce a composite score for each of the thirty-five variables. For purposes of analysis individual responses were scored from -2 to +2. Responses were scored as follows: “a response of strongly disagree was assigned a value of -2, disagree was valued at -1, neither agree or disagree received 0 value, a response of agree was valued +1, and strongly agree was assigned a value of +2. The average of the assigned values for each team was then used as the team score for each individual statement (variable). Finally, a score was calculated for each of the seven domains by averaging the team scores of the five variables related to each domain. The score for each domain is based on a total of five variables multiplied by the number of team members responding. Thus, if eight team members completed the survey the score for the domain is based on a total of 40 responses (5 variables X 8 team members). Domain scores can range from minus two (-2.0) if all respondents strongly disagree to plus two (+2.0) if all respondents strongly agree. For any given statement it is highly unlikely that the average response will approach either -2 or +2. In general, positive domain scores indicate capacity is present and negative scores indicate the community lacks capacity in the area defined by the domain. Higher scores are interpreted as indicative of higher levels of capacity.

Since this “capacity score” was derived from the opinion of a small number of key informants, it is reflective only of the collective belief or opinion of the Blueprint Team members about the level of capacity that exists within the designated Blueprint Community. Survey results are used to supplement the more objective quantitative data related to community capacity when such data is available.

## Appendix B - Framework for Assessing Community Capacity

<i>Capacity Domains (Areas of Influence)</i>	<i>Indicator Areas</i>
<b><i>Human Capital</i></b>	
<b>1. Health and Well-Being of Local People</b>	1(a) Healthy People 1(b) School Readiness 1(c) Educational Attainment & Access 1(d) Community Safety 1(e) Family Stability 1(f) Economic Security
<b>2. Skills, Knowledge, and Ability of Local People</b>	2(a) Using Skills, Knowledge, Abilities 2(b) Enhancing Skills, Knowledge, Abilities 2(c) Citizen Engagement 2(d) Data-driven Decision Making
<b><i>Social Capital</i></b>	
<b>3. Relationships and Interpersonal Communication</b>	3(a) Shared Values 3(b) Participation 3(c) Internal Connectedness 3(d) External Connectedness 3(e) Trust 3(f) Ability to Solve Problems
<b>4. Community Initiative, Responsibility, and Adaptability</b>	4(a) Shared Vision 4(b) Leadership 4(c) Planning 4(d) Building on Local Resources 4(e) Seeking alternative ways to improve 4(f) Sense of Hope
<b><i>Cultural Capital</i></b>	
<b>5. Cultural Diversity and Quality of Life</b>	5(a) Heritage 5(b) Arts 5(c) Recreation 5(c) Spirituality
<b><i>Financial and Manufactured Capital</i></b>	
<b>6. Investments in Community and Financial Resources</b>	6(a) Financial Investments 6(b) Local Financial Resources 6(c) Access to Outside Financial Resources 6(d) Resource Mobilization 6(e) Business Efficiency 6(f) Business Diversity 6(g) Cultivating Entrepreneurship 6(h) Community Resident Assets 6(i) Community Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing</li> <li>- Facilities</li> <li>- Water/Sewer</li> <li>- Transportation</li> <li>- Communications</li> </ul>
<b><i>Environmental (Natural) Capital</i></b>	
<b>7. Sustainable, Healthy Ecosystems with Multiple Community Benefits</b>	7(a) Air Quality 7(b) Water Resources 7(c) Biodiversity 7(d) Soil 7(e) Landscape (sense of place) 7(f) Ecosystem Knowledge and Appreciation

## Appendix C

### *Data Sources and References*

Data and information used within the community profile has been drawn from a wide range of secondary data sources. For purposes of the Blueprint Community Profiles, secondary data is defined as information and statistics collected by government agencies or private organizations that are useful in describing and measuring the defined domains or areas of influence of local community capacity.

A great deal of data is readily available through internet based websites and documents that are related to the defined domains of community capacity. Some of this data is readily available at the local community (municipality) level, some is available at the county level, and some is only available for regional or statewide areas. Some of the information referenced within the community profile is reported at the county level since that is the geographic unit of analysis that is generally available to the public. Local communities also operate within the larger context of the county in which they are located. Thus, county level data is often useful in providing measures of local capacity and community conditions. In cases where the designated Blueprint Community is a town or city, information is reported for that smaller geographic area when the specific small area measure could be obtained.

Over fifty data sets were reviewed in order to identify relevant measures that would provide local Blueprint Teams with meaningful information about their community. The information compiled within the profile paints a portrait of current community conditions and provides guidance for planning and priority setting. Since the data profile is organized under seven areas of influence (or domains) that collectively define community capacity, the profile also provides some level of insight into specific areas (domains) where local capacity may need to be built.

Much of the information reported in the community profile is drawn from publicly available data sets published on the Internet by federal and state agencies. Local Blueprint Teams may wish to access one or more of these sites for further information or more detailed information about specific local issues determined to be an area of concern or identified as a priority for local planning. The community profile provided for use by the Blueprint Team is designed to provide a general overview of some of the more relevant measures of local conditions and community capacity. Once the Blueprint Team begins to focus on specific areas for community development, additional or more detailed information about that area may be useful. Therefore, the most useful and comprehensive data sites reviewed in developing these profiles are listed on the following pages with web addresses.

## ***Federal Data Sites:***

- United States Bureau of the Census <http://www.census.gov>
  - USA Counties – Provides many data sets from decennial census and annual estimates organized by county  
Web address: <http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml>
  - American Communities Survey – Provides data from the annual American Communities Survey for larger geographic areas. Data is generally not available from the ACS for rural counties and towns in West Virginia.  
Web address:  
[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?\\_program=ACS&\\_submenuId=&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=)
  - Consolidated Federal Funds Report – Provides information about a wide range of federal expenditures at state and county levels.  
Web address: <http://harvester.census.gov/cffr/>
  - Quarterly Workforce Indicators – Provides current and recent information about economic indicators and employment by quarter (every three months).  
Web Address: <http://lehd.dsd.census.gov/led/datatools/qwiapp.html>
  
- United States Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis – Provides detailed information about economic conditions, jobs, employment, labor markets, industry types, etc.  
Web Address: <http://www.bea.gov/>
  
- United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics – Provides information about labor markets, employment, occupations, economic conditions, etc.  
Web Address: <http://www.bls.gov/>
  
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxic Release Inventory – Provides detailed information about reported releases of toxic chemicals into the environment.  
Web Address: <http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer/>
  
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Call Reports and Thrift Financial Reports – Database of information about all FDIC insured Banks and Savings and Loans that contains detailed financial status reports by quarter.  
Web address: [http://www2.fdic.gov/call\\_tfr\\_rpts/search.asp](http://www2.fdic.gov/call_tfr_rpts/search.asp)
  
- United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service – Data by county about farms and farm products.  
Web address: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census/Create\\_Census\\_US\\_CNTY.jsp#top](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census/Create_Census_US_CNTY.jsp#top)
  
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting System – Local, state, and national statistics of crime.  
Web address: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/>

### *State Data Sites:*

- WV Department of Health and Human Resources - Bureau for Public Health; Health Statistics Center – Statistics related to births, deaths, marriages, divorces, etc.  
Web Address: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/vital04/index.htm>
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources – Office of Accountability and Management Reporting – Information related to recipients and expenditures for major social welfare programs.  
Web address: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/oamr/DAMRreports.htm>
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources - Bureau for Public Health; Behavioral Risk Factors Survey Reporting – Results of the Behavioral Risk Factors Survey addressing wide range of health status and health behavior indicators.  
Web address: [http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/BRFSS\\_2003/default.htm](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/BRFSS_2003/default.htm)
- WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence – Statistics on prevalence of domestic violence in West Virginia.  
Web Address: <http://www.wvcadv.org/>
- WV State Police Uniform Crime Reports – Statistics on crime in West Virginia.  
Web address: <http://www.wvstatepolice.com/ucr/ucr.htm>
- Sex Offender Registry – Locations of known sex offenders in West Virginia.  
Web address: <http://www.wvstatepolice.com/sexoff/websearchform.cfm>
- WV Department of Education – Wide range of information about educational facilities, performance, accountability, enrollment, expenditures, personnel, etc.
  - Report Card Data – Accountability indicators, testing data, graduation rates, etc. for every school in West Virginia.  
Web address: <http://wveis.k12.wv.us/nclb/pub/rpt0506/pickreportcard.cfm>
  - West Virginia Education Information System – Detailed statistics for every school and county school district related to personnel, expenditures, facilities, enrollment, needy students, etc.  
Web address: <http://wveis.k12.wv.us/>
- West Virginia Secretary of State Business Organization Information System – Searchable database containing information about types and numbers of businesses registered in West Virginia.  
Web address: <http://www.wvsos.com/wvcorporations/>

- WV Department of Environmental Protection – Information about the environment including air quality, watersheds, waste sites, permits, etc. Information is provided on a regional basis.  
Web address: [http://www2.fdic.gov/call\\_tfr\\_rpts/search.asp](http://www2.fdic.gov/call_tfr_rpts/search.asp)
  - WVDEP Enviromap Explorer – Interactive geographic information system containing environmental information for West Virginia regions and local areas including aerial maps (large files).  
Web address: <http://gis.wvdep.org/>
- WorkForce West Virginia Labor Market Information – Information drawn from federal and state data sets related to workforce, employment, and economic conditions in West Virginia.  
Web address: <http://www.wvbep.org/bep/LMI/default.htm>

### ***Private Organization Data Sites:***

- Universal Living Wage – Information about Fair Market Rents and household income levels necessary to afford housing.  
Web address: <http://www.universallivingwage.org/>
- Scorecard – This website compiles a wide range of information related to environmental pollution, air and water quality, and other environmental information about larger municipalities and counties in the U.S.  
Web address: <http://www.scorecard.org/>

### ***Compiled Data Sets and Profiles for Counties and/or Local Municipalities:***

#### **Local Area Data Sets:**

- DataPlace - <http://www.dataplace.org/>
- EPodunk - <http://epodunk.com/>
- West Virginia Development Office State Data Center Profiles of WV places from 2000 Census - <http://www.wvdo.org/business/2000CensusProfiles.html>

#### **West Virginia County Data Sets and Profiles:**

- WorkForce West Virginia County Profiles - <http://www.wvbep.org/bep/LMI/CNTYPROF/DEFAULT.HTM>
- West Virginia Development Office State Data Center Profiles of WV counties from 2000 Census - <http://www.wvdo.org/business/2000CensusProfiles.html>
- West Virginia University Bureau for Business and Economic Research – County profiles of business and economic conditions. [http://www.be.wvu.edu/bber/data\\_profiles.htm](http://www.be.wvu.edu/bber/data_profiles.htm)