

City of Spencer

Comprehensive Plan

Draft 2021



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Chapter 1- Introduction

The City of Spencer is the center of trade and commerce for Roane County. Well known as the home of the Black Walnut Festival and Heritage Days, the City is developing a comprehensive plan to provide a blueprint for the future. Through the planning process, city officials, citizens, and stakeholders have identified issues and recommendations. The community has also prioritized the recommendations so that future leaders and community members have a roadmap.

The first part of the planning process is to create a vision for the future of Spencer. A vision statement is a sentence or short paragraph that succinctly describes the goals of a community. The vision statement serves as a touchstone for the community's future actions. The goals, objectives, and recommendations in the comprehensive plan should be consistent with the overarching vision statement, as stated here:

"Spencer is a warm, welcoming community with a small-town feel and educated workforce. The diversity of restaurants, lodging, and outdoor recreation appeal to tourists and residents alike. Historic areas maintain a sense of the past, while a vibrant entrepreneurial economy promises a bright future."



Figure 1: Hierarchy of Vision, Goals, Objectives, Action Steps

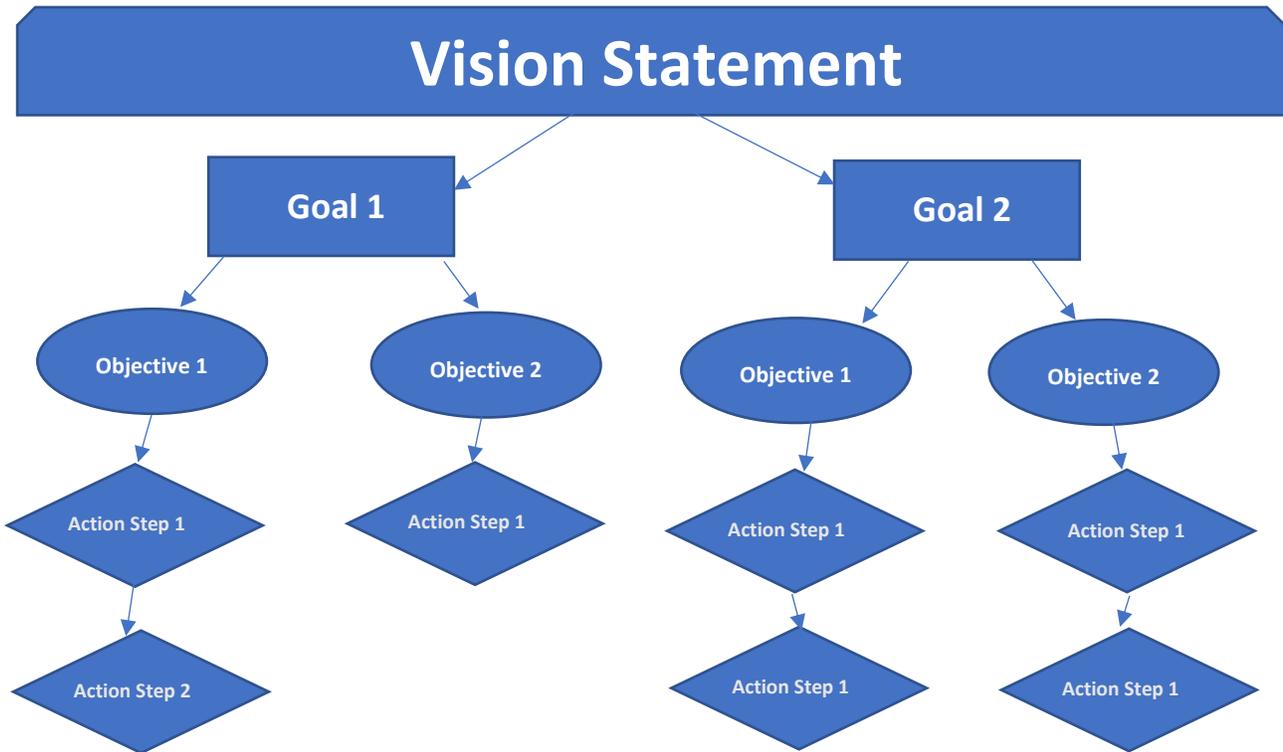


Figure 1 shows the vision statement as the foundation of the comprehensive plan. Based off the vision statement, the community creates goals, objectives, and action steps. The goals are broadly stated and provide general recommendations. An example of a goal would be “encourage better access to high-speed internet throughout the city.” Objectives are more concrete than goals with a narrower focus. An example of an objective is “educate the public on the importance of reliable broadband in the city.”

Action steps are the most discrete level of recommendation and provide an affirmative directive to achieve the relevant objective and goal. An example of an action step is “hold at least two open house meetings with internet service providers, elected officials, and concerned citizens.” Every action step should be consistent with the overarching vision statement, goals, and objectives as illustrated in Figure 1.

How is the comprehensive plan organized?

The City of Spencer Comprehensive Plan has been organized for ease of reading and navigation to specific content. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the comprehensive plan, including a description of the legal framework and detailed tables that show where each mandatory component and objective is found. Chapter 2 is the Community Profile, which gives the reader a historical overview as well as a profile of the town with regard to housing, economic development,

transportation, land use, recreation, and public facilities. Chapter 3 sets out the Needs Assessment, which identifies the issues essential to address in order for the City to achieve its vision. In Chapter 4, the Action Plan lists goals, objectives, and specific action steps prioritized primarily by importance, need, and feasibility. Finally, the appendices provides information that is supplemental to the comprehensive plan.

Layout of the comprehensive plan

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Community Snapshot
- Chapter 3: Needs Assessment
- Chapter 4: Action Plan
- Appendices

Who prepares the comprehensive plan?

West Virginia Code requires that a locality’s planning commission to prepare the comprehensive plan. While statute requires the planning commission to prepare the comprehensive plan,¹ the process is meant to be inclusionary in nature. City council, business owners, citizens, civic organizations, schools, and neighboring jurisdictions should participate in the development of the comprehensive plan.

Mayor
Terry A. Williams

City Council
Toby Ford
David Holland (Recorder)
Steve Hughes
Aaron Richardson
Robin Stump

Planning Commission
Robin Stump, Council
Dennis Carpenter
Linda Jernigan
Vacant
Vacant

¹ W. Va Code § 8A-3-3(a)

The comprehensive plan process begins with the creation of a planning commission. Once the planning commission is created by the governing body, the comprehensive plan process can formally commence.

While there are too many people to name individually, the comprehensive plan was a communitywide effort, as many people and organizations have provided support and feedback necessary to complete the comprehensive plan. One way to ensure that a comprehensive plan properly reflects a community's vision is to make sure the entire community has meaningful opportunities to participate in the comprehensive plan process.

As elected officials, the Mayor and City Council hold responsibility for adopting the comprehensive plan and play a large role in the subsequent implementation of the plan. City staff also proved instrumental during the comprehensive plan process by obtaining information, organizing meetings, and providing the necessary support to complete the comprehensive plan.

Countless citizens and stakeholders also provided input, completed stakeholder surveys, and spoke with planning commissioners or elected officials. The input from citizens and stakeholders is crucial in achieving a communitywide comprehensive plan.



The City also reached out to WVU College of Law, Land Use and Sustainable

Development Law Clinic to assist in the development and completion of the comprehensive plan. The Clinic facilitated meetings, ensured that all components and objectives required under the code were sufficiently met, helped develop surveys, and assisted in drafting the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive Plan Process Steps

The following non-exhaustive list highlights the City of Spencer comprehensive plan process:

- Ensure planning commission has been properly established according to state code
- Review Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code
- Complete a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) exercise
- Distribute surveys during the Black Walnut Festival
- Develop and approve public input procedures

- Take pictures of assets and challenges
- Develop vision statement
- Identify major issues based off SWOT exercise and vision statement
- Analyze the needs and the recommendations for each issue identified
- Develop and send out individualized stakeholder surveys
- Develop mapping utilizing GIS
- Hold an open house to invite public participation and comment
- Create a template and layout for the plan
- Draft the plan
- Create and complete the implementation matrix
- Hold public hearing with the planning commission
- Planning commission present draft to City Council
- Council hold a public hearing
- Council adopt the comprehensive plan



The Purpose of a comprehensive plan

According to Section 8A-1-2 of the West Virginia Code, the comprehensive plan is a “plan for physical development and sets forth guidelines, goals and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body’s jurisdiction.”

In order to make sound decisions related to land use and development, a community is often well served by not only adopting a comprehensive plan but utilizing the plan as a day-to-day policy and guidance document.

Legal Requirements of the comprehensive plan

Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code establishes the scope and purpose of a comprehensive plan. Each comprehensive plan and subsequent update must follow the requirements found in Chapter 8A.

West Virginia Code §8A-1-1(a)(5) describes the comprehensive plan as “a guide to a community’s goals and objectives and a way to meet those goals and objectives.” The comprehensive plan should “be the basis for land development and use, and be reviewed and updated on a regular basis” (West Virginia Code §8A-1-1(b)(3)), which the Code later defines as every 10 years (West Virginia Code §8A-3-11(a)).

A comprehensive plan is required if a governing body wants to enact a zoning ordinance, enact a subdivision and land development ordinance, require plans and plats for land development, or issue improvement location permits for construction. Under Chapter 8A, a comprehensive plan must meet certain objectives and contain certain components in order to be considered valid. Care has been taken to ensure that all required objectives and components have been sufficiently addressed in the City of Spencer Comprehensive Plan.

Required Objectives and Components

Each comprehensive plan in West Virginia must meet certain substantive and procedural requirements. The procedural requirements include the formation of a planning commission, the creation of public input procedures by the planning commission, and two public hearings, one by the planning commission and one by the governing body.²

There are several substantive requirements, which are split into “required objectives” and “required components.” The objectives are more general in nature, while the components are more specific to particular facets of community life, including housing, land use, economic development, and historic preservation. The tables enable readers to quickly find where certain objectives or components can be found in the comprehensive plan draft.

Required Objectives for a Comprehensive Plan	
<i>W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(b)(1)-(7)</i>	
Code Provision	Chapter
Statement of goals and objectives	
Timeline on how to meet short and long-term goals and objectives	
Action plan with implementation strategies	
Recommendations of a financial program for necessary public funding	
Statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies	
A program to encourage regional planning, coordination, and cooperation	
Maps, plats, and/or charts- that present basic information on the land, including present and future uses	

² W, Va Code § 8A-3-7

Required Components for a Comprehensive Plan

W. VA. Code §8A-3-4(c)(1)-(13)

Code Provision	Page #
<i>Land Use</i>	
Different land uses (including, for example, residential, agricultural, historic, etc.)	
Population density and building intensity standards	
Growth and/or decline management	
Projected population growth or decline	
Constraints on development (including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas)	
<i>Housing</i>	
Analyze projected housing needs and different types of housing needed (including affordable housing and accessible housing for persons with disabilities)	
Identify the number of projected housing units and land needed	
Address substandard housing	
Rehabilitate and improve existing housing	
Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing	
<i>Transportation</i>	
Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river, and any other mode	
Movement of traffic and parking	
Pedestrian and bicycle systems	

Intermodal transportation	
<i>Economic development</i>	
Analyze opportunities, strengths and weaknesses	
Identify and designate economic development sites and/or sectors	
Identify types of economic development sought	
<i>Miscellaneous Components</i>	
Infrastructure	
Public Services	
Rural	
Recreation	
Community Design	
Preferred development areas	
Renewal and/or redevelopment	
Financing	
Historic preservation	

Chapter 2- Community Snapshot

Spencer is the county seat of Roane County and, as such, plays an important role in the county. The city also represents the economic and governmental hub of Roane County and sits on important crossroads that connect Spencer and Roane County to the rest of West Virginia.

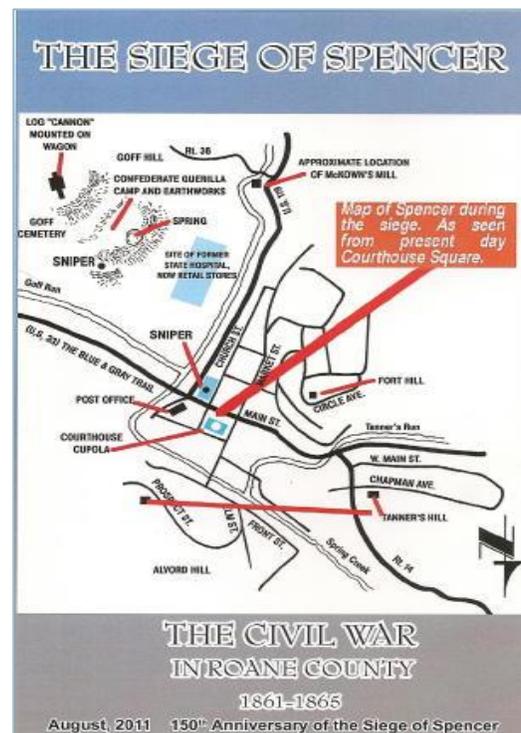
Chapter 2 focuses on the past and present conditions in Spencer. Highlighting certain aspects of Spencer can aid in identifying the community's strengths and weaknesses to help develop the goals and objectives for the city. This chapter is organized into the following profiles: history, transportation, economic development, land use, infrastructure, population, governance, education, and housing.

History

Spencer is a city with a long and storied past. Roane County was founded in March 15, 1858 by the Virginia General Assembly.³ Spencer was originally referred to as Tanner's Crossroads after on Samuel Tanner.⁴ The city was later renamed after Spencer Roane, a renowned Virginia attorney and son-in-law of Patrick Henry.

The City of Spencer's history, as with much of West Virginia, is marked by the Civil War. The town was captured by a unit of 500 Confederate soldiers led by General Albert G. Jenkins in the fall of 1862, with contingents of the 11th West Virginia Union Infantry surrendering without firing a shot.⁵ This initial, bloodless engagement, however, did not mark the end of Spencer's role in the War of Secession.

Spencer is home to the renowned Black Walnut Festival, which attracts some 60-80,000 people. If the sun shines, the Black Walnut Festival Shines.



³ <https://wvexplorer.com/communities/cities-towns/spencer-west-virginia/>

⁴ Dilger, Robert J., Ph.D, *Roane County History*, accessed from <http://archive.is/F17B>.

⁵ "The Civil War in Spencer, 1861-1865," Spencer Rotary Club

The festival, which has its roots surrounding the sale of black walnuts by Henry Young, began in 1954 and is held annually in Spencer.⁶ Ever since, Spencer has hosted the festival to promote the black walnut, once a local cash crop, and celebrate the culture of the area. The festival includes a parade, a baking contest—requiring black walnuts as an ingredient—and several other events.

Another well-known attraction in Spencer is the famous Robey Theatre. The Robey was opened in 1911, and remains the oldest, continuously operating theatre in the United States.⁷ To this day, the Robey shows popular and new films in downtown Spencer.

For much of Spencer’s history, the community was known for being the home of Spencer State Hospital. The hospital opened on July 1, 1893 and served patients until June of 1989.⁸



The mission of the hospital was to help care for the mentally ill; the hospital, however, eventually also cared for those with diseases such as typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and pneumonia. The gothic structure was made entirely of bricks. Standing at almost a quarter of a mile long, it was one of the longest brick buildings in the world for some time. The building is no longer standing, and a Wal-Mart currently stands in its place.

Transportation

Spencer sits at the crossroads of several routes that connect the City with other communities in the region. While Spencer itself may not be located near any of the major interstates in West Virginia, the roads running through Spencer supply its citizens with relatively easy access to these major roads.

U.S. Route 33 runs east-to-west and connects Spencer with Calhoun and Jackson Counties. Route 33’s westbound route from Spencer connects the City with I-77—about 25 miles away. In Spencer, U.S. Route 33 intersects U.S. Route 119, also known as “Charleston Road,” which runs southbound from Spencer to I-79 in Kanawha County, about 24 miles away. The southern end of West Virginia

⁶ <https://traveltips.usatoday.com/black-walnut-festival-roane-county-west-virginia-108045.html>

⁷ <https://wvtourism.com/theaters/>.

⁸ https://www.asylumprojects.org/index.php/Spencer_State_Hospital

Route 14 begins in Spencer and connects Spencer with the town of Reedy and Wirt County to the north.

Air Travel

The nearest major airport to Spencer is Yeager Airport in Charleston. Yeager Airport is approximately 45 miles from Spencer and a drive of a little over an hour away. The closest international airport to Spencer is the John Glenn Columbus International Airport in Columbus, Ohio. The airport is located 155 miles from Spencer and is about a three-hour drive.

There are also two private airfields located near Spencer: Slate Run Airfield and Boggs Field. Slate Run is a privately-run airfield with a paved runway. It currently serves ten planes and is located approximately 4 miles from Spencer. Boggs Field is a privately owned/public-use airfield equipped with a paved runway and fuel. It currently serves fifteen planes and is located a mile and a half from downtown Spencer.

Public Transportation

The Little Kanawha Transit Authority (LKTA) provides public transportation within Spencer’s city limits and Roane County in general. LKTA operates 9 buses that run Monday through Friday that travel throughout the region between Roane, Jackson, and Calhoun Counties. However, service is limited, and while there is regular service Monday to Friday within the Spencer city limits, most intercity routes only run once a week.⁹



Other Transportation

Spencer lacks other modes of transportation. Historically, railroads traversed through Spencer, but have long since closed. The closest Amtrak station is approximately 49 miles away in Charleston—about an hour drive away. Currently, there is not a taxi service in Spencer.

Intermodal Transportation

Spencer lacks any intermodal transportation. Intermodal transportation utilizes two or more different methods of freight (e.g. rail, barge, truck) to transport goods from manufacturer or extractor to the market. The lack of a railroad or navigable body of water running through or adjacent to Spencer limits the city’s ability to have intermodal transportation.

⁹ <https://www.littlekanawhabus.com/bus-schedules/roane-county-schedule/>

Economic Development

Spencer's economy has long revolved around being the county seat of Roane County, as evidenced by the high employment numbers in government-related industries (e.g., education). Manufacturing historically has been an important component to Spencer's economic footprint. The City once housed several small manufacturing companies that ranged from clothing producers to the manufacturing of airplane parts. While there historically has not been much activity within the town of Spencer itself, Roane County has been an important part of West Virginia's oil and gas industry.

Spencer State Hospital was an integral part of Spencer's economic livelihood until the facility closed in 1989. The departure of the Hospital, however, freed up hundreds of acres near the town for retail development and correspondingly, replacement jobs. Unfortunately, however, several major employers have closed since 1989, including several manufacturing jobs: NI Industries, a manufacturer of automotive parts; Kellwood Company, a clothing manufacturer; Spencer Veneer, a wood veneer manufacturer; and BF Goodrich, an aircraft slide manufacturer.

LARGEST EMPLOYERS OF ROANE COUNTY¹⁰

- Roane General Hospital
- Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
- Roane County Board of Education
- Mustang Survival Manufacturing, Inc.
- Armacell, LLC
- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
- Conserv Energy
- Roane County Family Healthcare



EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in Roane County has remained relatively stagnant—but it did see a rather large drop from 2016 through 2017. The unemployment rate, however, has consistently remained higher than the rest of the state. Further, it is important to understand that the unemployment rate does not take into account people who are not actively looking for a job.

¹⁰ <http://lmi.workforcewv.org/cntyprof/roane.html>

TABLE 2.1: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF ROANE COUNTY IN COMPARISON TO WEST VIRGINIA (U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS)

Year	Roane County	West Virginia
2009	12.0%	7.7%
2010	13.6%	8.7%
2011	12.9%	8.1%
2012	11.4%	7.5%
2013	10.4%	6.8%
2014	10.1%	6.6%
2015	11.5%	6.7%
2016	10.3%	6.1%
2017	8.5%	5.2%
2018	X	5.1%

According to U.S. Census Bureau’s five-year estimates, in 2017, Spencer’s unemployment rate was estimated at 7.6%—lower than the county’s unemployment rate (*See* Table 2.1, above). In comparison, however, Spencer’s unemployment rate is higher than West Virginia’s unemployment rate (*See* Table 2.1, above).

Spencer’s citizens are employed across a wide variety of industries. “Educational services and health care and social assistance” employs the largest percentage of Spencer’s citizens—at 36.1%.¹¹ Other significant industries in Spencer include retail trade and transportation (*See* Table 2.2, below, for a further break down of these statistics).

TABLE 2.2: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY-SPENCER (2013-2017 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5 YEAR ESTIMATE)

Industry	Percentage of Spencer’s Workforce
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	8%
Construction	4.5%
Manufacturing	3.0%
Wholesale Trade	1.5%
Retail Trade	15.8%
Transportation	8.4%
Information	0.8%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental Leasing	4.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	1.7%

¹¹ 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	36.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	5.3%
Other Services	7.4%
Public Administration	3.3%

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

According to 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate, the median household income in Spencer was \$25,337—only 58% of the state’s median household income of \$44,061. Roane County’s median household income was also higher than Spencer at \$37,931 during the same period.

COMMUTE TIME

Commute time is one factor used to gauge the health of a community—and it is a strength of Spencer. High commute times prohibit citizens from engaging in non-work-related activities, such as leisure and community events; conversely, low commute times illustrate that people are working closer to home and are thus able to spend more time engaging with the community.

The mean travel time to work in Spencer is 17.8 minutes:¹² in comparison, the mean travel time in Roane County is 31.4 minutes, and in West Virginia as a whole, average commute time is 25.9 minutes.¹³ The relatively low travel time for Spencer’s employed citizens should be seen as a strength of the community, as it indicates that people generally are devoting less of their time traveling to and from work.



LAND USE PROFILE

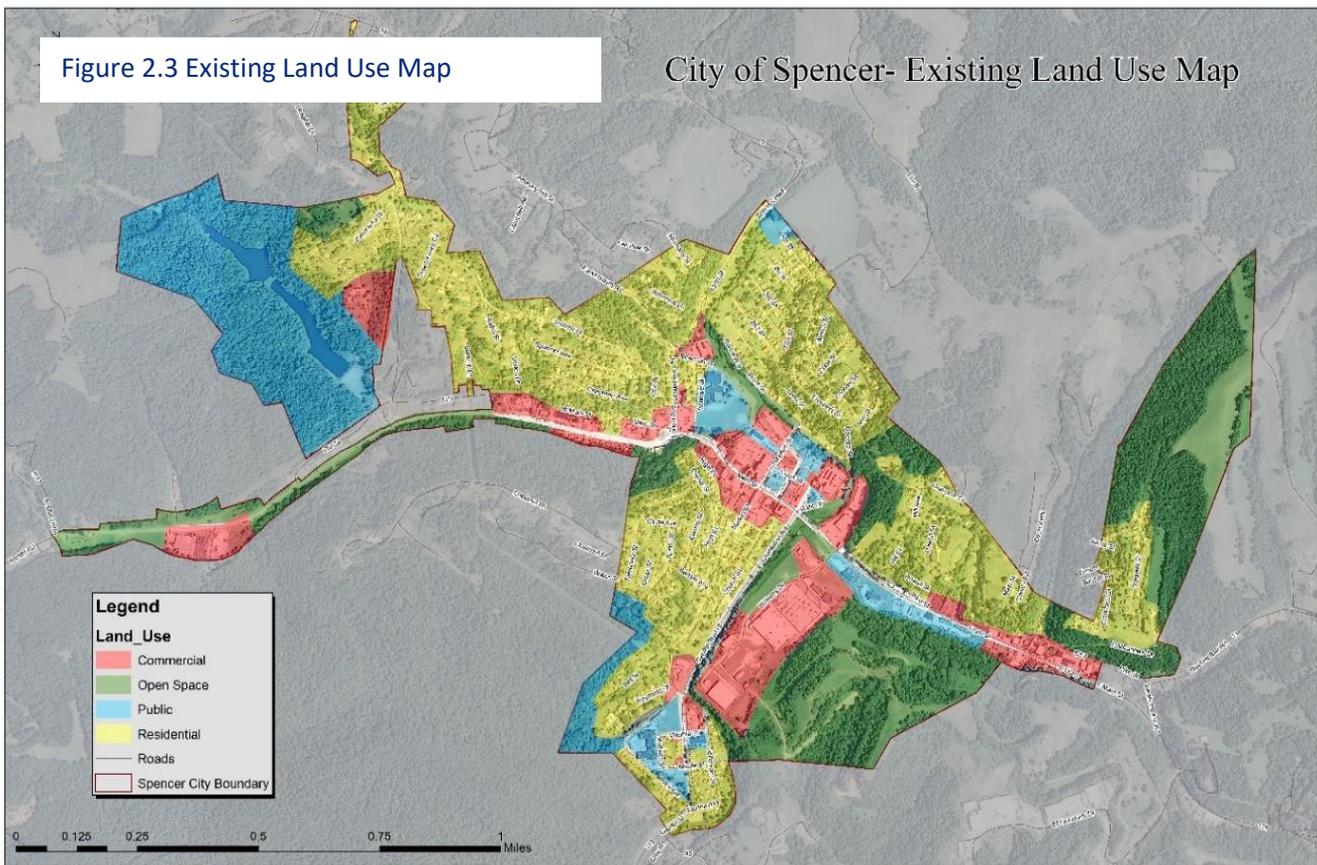
Spencer, situated in Central West Virginia, is located along Spring Creek, which runs through the City. As the county seat of Roane County, Spencer has a variety of government buildings, including the County Courthouse, Magistrate Court, Spencer Middle School, Roane County Public Library, and others.

¹² <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spencer-wv#:~:text=Housing%20%26%20Living&text=The%20homeownership%20rate%20in%20Spencer,of%201%20car%20per%20household..>

¹³ 2019 Census Quick Facts West Virginia. www.census.gov/quickfacts/

Spencer has a downtown business and industrial area, which is largely surrounded by residential areas. The site of the former Spencer State Hospital, located on a hill overlooking downtown, is the largest commercial area in the town. Spencer’s downtown business area is not without its needs. Currently, downtown is limited to one retail store, parking is rather limited, and there is a lack of “sit-down” restaurants and developable land remaining.

Figure 2.3 highlights how land is currently being utilized, generally. A larger copy of the map is available in city hall. Much of the city is residential in with significant portions open space/undeveloped or publicly owned used as park space or public office space.



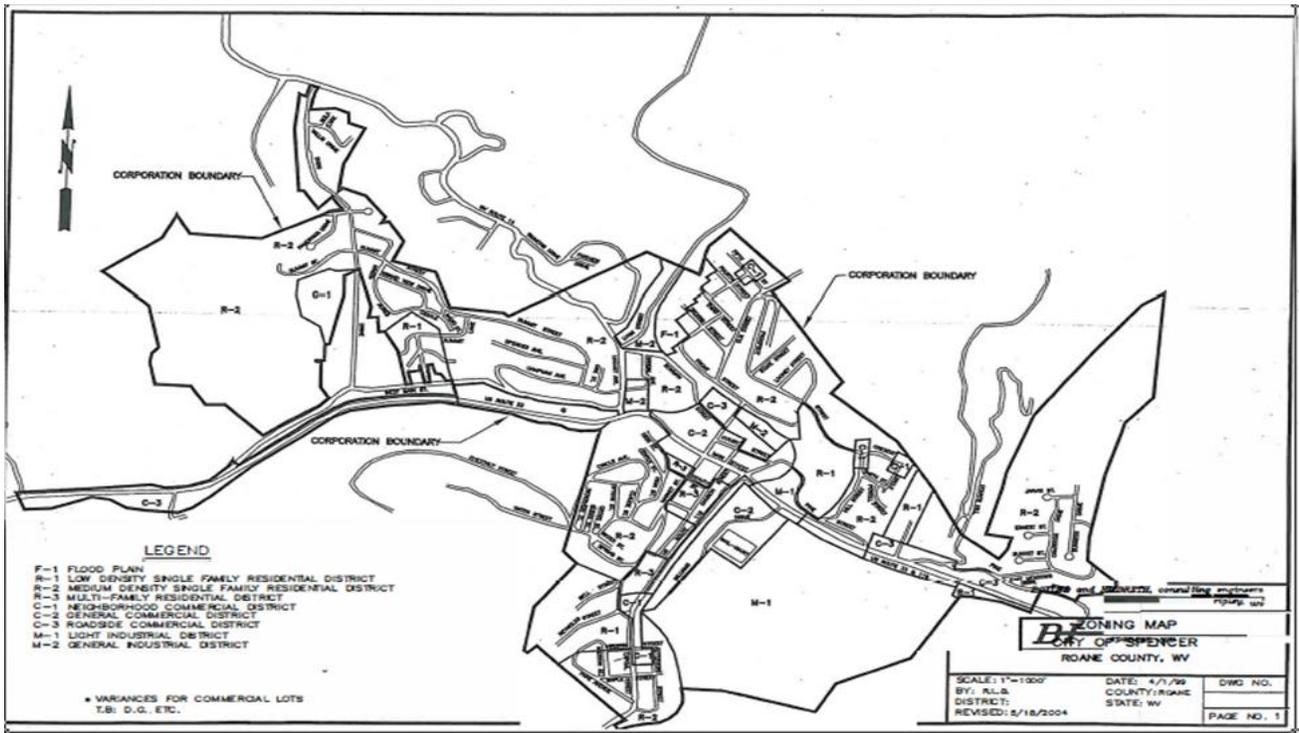
ZONING

Spencer has had a zoning ordinance in place since 1965, and the ordinance was most recently updated in 2008. In accordance with the ordinance, Spencer has been divided into nine zoning districts:

1. F-1: Floodplain District
2. R-1: Low-Density Single-Family Residential District
3. R-2: Medium Density Residential District
4. R-3: Multi-Family Residential District

5. C-1: Neighborhood Commercial District
6. C-2: General Commercial District
7. C-3: Roadside Commercial District
8. M-1: Light Industrial District
9. M-2: General Industrial District

FIGURE 2.4 EXISTING ZONING- CITY OF SPENCER (LARGER COPY AVAILABLE IN CITY HALL)



Residential districts in Spencer allow a wide variety of uses by right. R-1, for example, permits one-family dwellings, churches, libraries, public parks, and playgrounds, as well as governmental and school structures. The same are permitted by right in all other residential districts, illustrating the flexibility of Spencer’s zoning scheme. Further, permitted uses in Spencer’s commercial districts reflect the economic needs of the town by facilitating a wide variety of uses, such as personal services establishments, governmental buildings, and restaurants (District C-1).

Other features of Spencer’s zoning ordinance include lot regulations and setbacks. For example, in R-1 and F-1 districts, front yards require 30-foot setbacks, rear yards require 40-foot setbacks, and side yards require 20 feet for each side.

Height regulations are also governed by Spencer’s zoning regulations. The lowest maximum height requirement, 25 feet, can be found in C-1, while C-2 permits the highest buildings at 50 feet. The most common height maximum requirement, 30 feet, is enforced in districts R-1, F-1, R-2, and C-2. The zoning ordinance, however, accounts for structures that Spencer deem to be exempt from such

restrictions, and stipulate that height limitations throughout the zoning ordinance do not apply to “amusement uses, church spires, belfries, cupolas, domes, monuments, water towers, chimneys, smokestacks, flagpoles, radio and television towers, masts, and aerials or to parapet walls.”

Finally, Spencer’s zoning ordinance includes supplemental regulations that help address other community needs. For example, the ordinance has robust off-street parking and loading provisions, which set requirements for entities located in all districts.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Broadband is a critical component to communities in modern-America. Broadband not only is important for attracting businesses to a community, but also to the quality of life for residents. Spencer has both residential and business broadband providers, including Frontier Communications (offering 24 mbps and covering 91.3% of the City) and Sudden Link (offering 1,000 mbps and covering 68.4% of the City).¹⁴

Telecommunications service is another important type of infrastructure in modern-America. Recently, a Sprint affiliate invested \$350 million to bring 4G LTE to all Sprint cell service towers in Roane County—and specifically to Spencer.¹⁵ 4G LTE helps increase call reliability and offers better internet download speeds. Within Spencer, Sprint, Verizon, and AT&T all offer reliable telecommunications service.

The City of Spencer Waterworks provides residents with water and sewer. The public utility also provides services to several residences outside of city limits—including as far away as Reedy. The water utility ranks 41st out of over 300 water treatment utilities in the state in terms of lowest cost for water treatment services. The cost per 3,400 gallons is \$24.77, with a minimum bill of \$14.72.¹⁶

RECREATION AND TOURISM

As mentioned above, the Black Walnut Festival is one of Spencer’s principal tourist attractions. Occurring annually since 1954, this four-day event includes live music, a carnival, a parade, food, and a baking contest with walnuts.¹⁷

¹⁴ <https://broadbandnow.com/West-Virginia/Spencer#>

¹⁵ <http://unlimityourdata.com/mynetwork/roane-co/>

¹⁶ <http://www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/Utilities/ViewTariffWithUtilityInfoViewForm.cfm?TariffID=10327;>

<http://www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/Utilities/rptWaterRankings3400.cfm>

¹⁷ <https://wvtourism.com/event/west-virginia-black-walnut-festival/>

Chestnut Ridge Winery is considered one of the best wineries in West Virginia. The Winery grounds consist of a scenic overlook of the City of Spencer and a few hiking trails.¹⁸

Spencer has the longest continuously operated movie theatre in the United States, the Robey Theatre. Opened in 1911, the theatre was remodeled in the late 1920s to accommodate for sound equipment. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1989, it is open to the public 364 days per year.¹⁹

A few minutes south of Spencer lies Charles Fork Lake, an 1800-acre piece of municipal land that provides 21 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails and a primitive campground.²⁰ The lake is also known for its walleye, musky, and bass fishing. Every year the WV Mountain Bike Association has one of its longest-running races around the lake, and there have also been bass fishing tournaments.



POPULATION PROFILE

Overall, Spencer's population profile is very similar to that of Roane County and West Virginia, which are quite different from the United States as a whole. According to the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey of 2019, the total population of Spencer is 2,079.²¹ Spencer is 55% female and 45% male.²² Over 97% of Spencer is Caucasian, with less than 1% making up any particular minority group.²³ These statistics almost mirror Roane County, and are very similar to West Virginia as a whole (93.3% white) but pose a stark contrast to the United States as a whole (73% Caucasian).²⁴

¹⁸ <https://wvtourism.com/company/chestnut-ridge-winery/>

¹⁹ <https://wvtourism.com/company/robey-theatre/>

²⁰ <https://wvtourism.com/company/charles-fork-lake/>

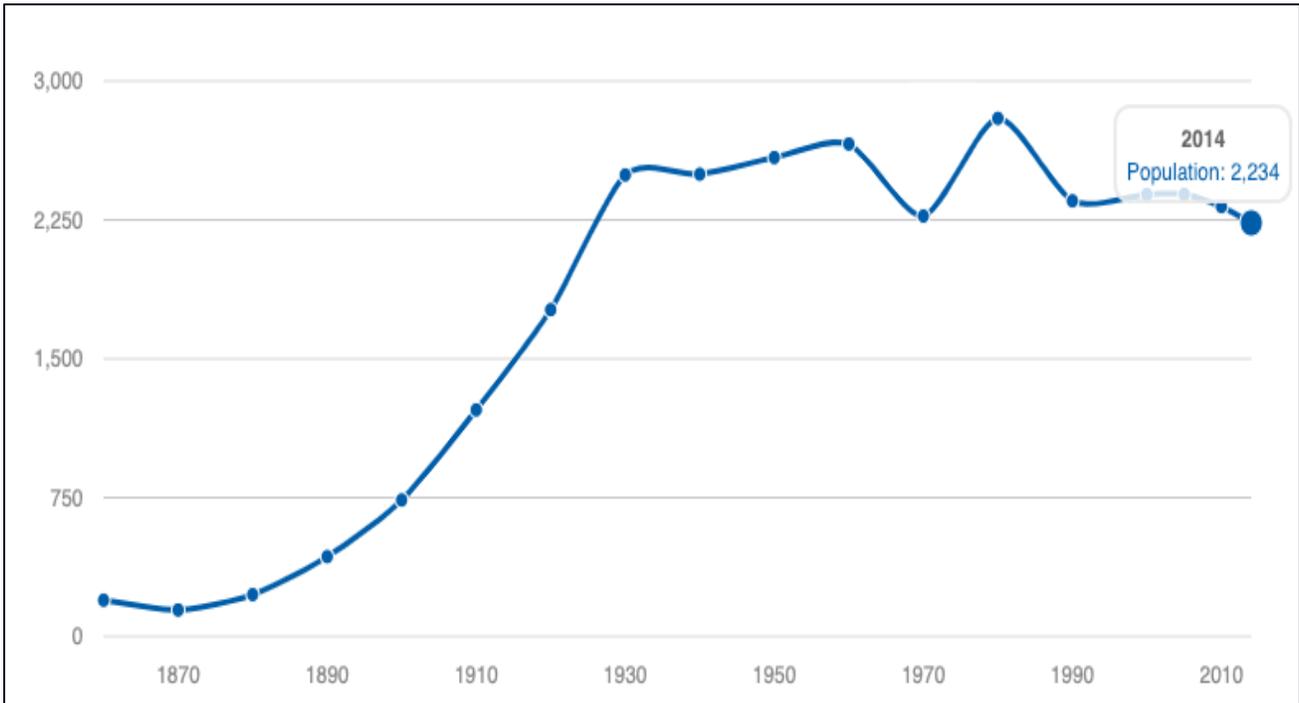
²¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=1600000US5475820&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>

²² Id.

²³ Id.

²⁴ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

FIGURE 2.5. CITY OF SPENCER: HISTORICAL POPULATION TRENDS (American Community Survey, United State Census)

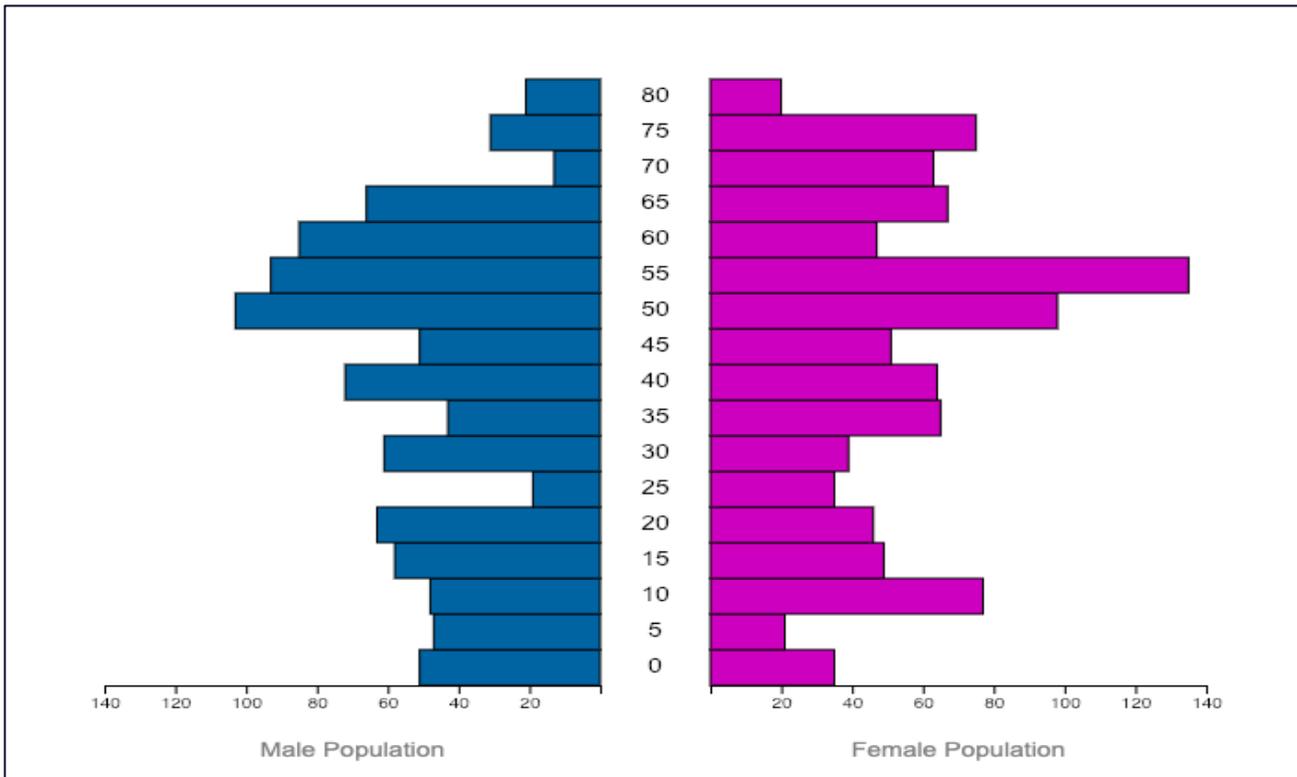


Since 1970, Spencer’s population has seen a slight decline. A number of factors could be contributing to Spencer’s population decline. First, Spencer has lost several manufacturing companies and other major employers over the years, including the state hospital. Additionally, Spencer has a relatively old population. Of Spencer’s population, 53% of people are over the age of 45, including 21% over 65;²⁵ these percentages are considered high. Roane County’s population is 51% over the age of 45,²⁶ while West Virginia’s population over the age of 45 is 47%.²⁷ Meanwhile, the national percentage of people over the age of 45 is only 41%. The median age in Spencer is 50 years old, much older than the median age of Roane County (45.8),²⁸ West Virginia (42.9),²⁹ and the United States (37.8).³⁰

The old age, on average, of Spencer residents presents several issues. One issue is the availability of suitable housing and amenities. Accordingly, Spencer will need to ensure there is ample space for retirement homes and assisted living facilities—as well as an availability of medical services and personnel.

²⁵ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=1600000US5475820&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>
²⁶ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0500000US54087&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>
²⁷ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>
²⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0500000US54087&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>
²⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>
³⁰ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmmk>

FIGURE 2.6 CITY OF SPENCER AGE DISTRIBUTION (AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, UNITED STATES CENSUS)



A typical age distribution chart often looks like a pyramid with the highest proportion being found in the younger cohorts. However, Spencer’s Age Distribution, as shown in Figure 2 is almost the inverse. In much of West Virginia and in Spencer, however, the cohort distribution is more heavily proportioned towards the older cohorts. For example, in Spencer the most common male cohort is the 50-year-old cohort while the 25-year-old male cohort has one of the lowest numbers represented. Additionally, for females, the most common cohort is 55, while the 5-year-old cohort is one of the least common cohorts represented.

Governance Profile

Spencer has a “strong mayor” form of government. This form of local government contains an executive branch consisting of a mayor who is elected by voters, and a town council elected to serve as the governing body. Since 1976, the Mayor has been Terry A. Williams. The City Council is currently made up of Toby Ford, Steve Hughes, Aaron Richardson, Robin Stump, and David Holland, who is also the Recorder. The City Attorney is currently Thomas Whittier. The City has Street, Water, and Sewer Departments to ensure that municipal services run smoothly. Due to the relatively small-city size, these services are accessible to the residents.

Spencer is the seat of Roane County, and is thus home to the county courthouse. In addition to the County Sheriff's Department, the City of Spencer has its own police department. The Spencer Police Department prides itself on being able to know the residents of the city much more intimately than law enforcement personnel in larger towns. Spencer Police also are able to use the latest in law enforcement technology (including a public notification app) to help keep the residents of Spencer safe. Spencer is also home to a volunteer fire department that not only serves the City of Spencer, but also the surrounding areas of Roane County. The volunteer fire department has mutual aid agreements with all the other volunteer fire departments in Roane County.

There are several options for outdoor recreation in the Spencer area. These amenities include Charles Fork Lake, Ben's Run, Washington Park, Miletree Lakes, Fifth Street Park, and Goff Hill Civil War Park. Local government employees help maintain these parks. In addition to these parks, Spencer has a town pool that attracts people from all over Roane County. The Spencer municipal government also operates Heritage Park, which includes a relocated early 1900's one-room school complete with period decor; the former train depot and caboose operated by B&O Railroad, which has been repurposed into a museum; along with the Community Building. The City is also home to the Spencer Municipal Center. The Municipal Center is a former armory, previously owned and operated by the West Virginia National Guard. Both the Spencer Municipal Center and Heritage Park Community Building offer ample space, kitchen facilities, and restrooms, and can be rented out for private parties.



Education Profile

The City of Spencer is home to Spencer Elementary School and Spencer Middle School; both schools primarily serve families living in Spencer, but also accommodate children from outside of the City. Spencer is situated near Roane County High School, a consolidated school serving the entire county. Roane County High School offers a wide selection of activities, including sports, band, and the performing arts. Spencer schools participate in the "Community Eligibility Option" for free lunches for students. This program allows Spencer schools to provide free or reduced-price lunches to all students, which in turn gets reimbursed by the state.

Spencer Elementary School serves 498 students. The elementary school has achieved a 42% rate of reading proficiency, while the math proficiency rate is 37%.³¹ Spencer Elementary offers a 16 to 1 teacher to student ratio³²—slightly better than the West Virginia average of 15 to 1.³³ Spencer Elementary, however, shows little diversity and is predominantly white.

Spencer Middle School serves 408 students. There is a 50%/50% split between boys and girls and a 14.9 to 1 student to teacher ratio.³⁴ Spencer Middle School has a 38% proficiency rate in reading and a 24% proficiency rate in math.³⁵ Comparing the performance of Spencer Elementary School and Spencer Middle School on a statewide level is difficult due to the different configurations and grade levels elementary and middle schools can have in different towns and counties.

Roane County High School is the largest school in the county. The high school has an enrollment of 668 students, with a 15 to 1 student to teacher ratio.³⁶ Although previously boys and girls had been evenly split, girl students currently make up 53% of the total student body. Roane County High School sits fairly close to the average of testing scores across West Virginia high schools. The reading proficiency rate at Roane County High School is 48%, compared to an average of 50% across the state; and the math proficiency rate is 24%, while the West Virginia average is 20%.³⁷

Spencer is also home to a branch of the Roane County Public Library. While there are two additional libraries in Roane County, the Spencer Branch of the Roane County Public Library is the largest and offers the most services. The library helps citizens access literature, including those who require large print books or audio books. The library also provides access to music and movies for those with a library card. Further, there are programs for children, adults, and seniors, and the library provides a place for people to meet, read, study, and hang out.

³¹ <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/west-virginia/spencer-elementary-school-212928>

³² Id.

³³ <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/student-teacher-ratio-stats/west-virginia>.

³⁴ <https://www.niche.com/k12/spencer-middle-school-spencer-wv/>

³⁵ Id.

³⁶ <https://www.niche.com/k12/spencer-middle-school-spencer-wv/>

³⁷ https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/west-virginia/districts/roane-county-schools/roane-county-high-21429#test_scores_section

Housing Profile

The United States Census Bureau’s has collected housing data for Spencer. According to the Census, the City contains 1,212 housing units, 915 of which are occupied—meaning Spencer has a 75.5% occupancy rate. Similarly, the Roane County occupancy rate is 74.8%,³⁸ but these percentages fall short of the West Virginia (81%)³⁹ and national (88%)⁴⁰ numbers. Of the 915 occupied housing units, Spencer has a relatively high rate of renter-occupied units. There are 442 housing units being rented, or 48%



of the occupied housing. Only 20.7%⁴¹ of Roane County citizens live in a renter-occupied unit, while at a state level, 26.6%⁴² of West Virginia residents live in rented units.

Aside from rentals, property values in Spencer are more affordable than other communities. The median property value in Spencer is \$76,000, \$35,600 less than the median property value in West Virginia—\$111,600. Spencer also offers even more affordable options. Approximately 18% of Spencer’s properties are valued at less than \$30,000. Spencer residents also own their houses outright at a much higher rate, as evidenced by the fact that 61% of housing units are not mortgaged. Across the United States, only 35% of houses are owned outright. Additionally, Spencer offers affordable taxes. On a national level, only 12.9% of Americans pay less than \$800 annually for property taxes, while 78.6% of Spencer’s residents pay less: the median real estate taxes paid for Spencer is \$429 annually.

³⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0500000US54087&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

³⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

⁴⁰ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0100000US&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

⁴¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0500000US54087&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

⁴² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US54&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true>

Chapter 3- Needs Assessment

While the City of Spencer has a long and fascinating history, the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a blueprint for the future. The Chapter 3: Needs Assessment focuses on assessing the future needs, goals, and objectives of the community.

The Needs Assessment is an important part of the comprehensive plan and informs the subsequent chapter, the Chapter 4: Action Plan.

There was a multi-faceted approach to obtaining input and information necessary for pulling together the Needs Assessment, including the completed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Exercise, the open house, meeting with school children, and stakeholder surveys results. Based on that analysis, the planning commission was able to develop a list of issues that need to be addressed.

The primary needs identified as part of the comprehensive plan process include:

- Improved Infrastructure
- Maintaining Historic, Cultural, and Community Values
- Safe, Healthy, Drug-Free Community
- Economic Development

While these are the primary issues identified, there were many other issues that have been included in the Needs Assessment, such as land use, education, housing, healthcare, and recreation.

Issue 1: Improve Infrastructure throughout Spencer

Improving infrastructure is often a goal for West Virginia communities. Infrastructure can include roads, sidewalks, water and wastewater treatment facilities, broadband, and telecommunications facilities. In order to address many of the other goals that Spencer has identified, such as improved economic development and tourism, improved infrastructure needs to be a top priority.

Roads/Transportation

There are several issues related to roads that were identified during the comprehensive plan process. Some issues are small in scale and can be completed in the short term, however most transportation projects are very costly and take years to complete.

The City of Spencer is over 25 miles from the closest interstate and difficult for semi-trucks to access. A common comment made during the comprehensive plan process was that there needs to be better access to Spencer. Route 33 is the primary East-West route through Spencer. A bypass at Scott Miller Hill for Route 33 is slated to be constructed. While this area is not in the city limits, the bypass project will provide easier access to the interstate.

Routine maintenance such as re-striping the roadways and filling small potholes can make a significant impact. One of the issues preventing quick response to routine road maintenance is that the state maintains some of the roads in town. Potholes should be maintained so that the patchwork lasts several years. A quick fix that must be addressed each year will likely be more costly in the long run.

In addition to routine maintenance, many of the streets need to be widened, including Market Street, Church Street, and East Main Street, while Ruby Bradley Bridge needs to be replaced and widened.

City officials should develop an inventory of roads and bridges that need to be widened. Road widening projects should be prioritized and ranked by cost, feasibility, and other considerations the community believes important. The West Virginia Division of Highways (DOH) will likely need to be involved in these discussions of project funding and prioritization.



One of the best ways for a community to address infrastructure projects, including road maintenance, is through the development and utilization of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). A CIP requires a community to prioritize, identify funding, and provide a timeline on specific infrastructure projects, such as road repairs, sidewalks, and water or wastewater projects.

To promote sustainability, city officials should encourage alternative transportation, such as bike lanes, walkability, mass transit, and modification of traffic patterns. For example, a dedicated bike lane system would connect various points around town and could encourage individuals to commute through town using bicycles.

There is a need to create more parking, not necessarily an increase in the total number of spaces, but rather an increase in the number of spaces where there is increased demand for parking. People want to park close to their final destination for convenience. Understanding where and for how long parking is needed is something that the City should analyze. A downtown business owner survey or a very short survey taken by customers could help the City decide if more parking is needed in certain areas. The City should also analyze whether parking should be free for a certain amount of time or if parking should be more expensive in certain places and at certain times due to excessive demand.

The City has also discussed adding a secondary water source. A second water source could be very important if there is contamination or depletion of the primary water source, which at this time is Charles Fork Lake. The primary considerations are identifying the second water source and how to finance establishing the secondary water source.

“With over 70 miles of water line serving Spencer and the places throughout Roane County, there is never a shortage of projects for Spencer Waterworks. One problem looming on the horizon is the need to replace a significant portion of 70-year-old cast iron water line.” -City of Spencer Home Rule Pilot Program Application

Stormwater Treatment

Stormwater entering the wastewater collection lines can be very taxing on a sewer treatment facility, especially when experiencing large amounts of rain in short periods of time. Over the years, the City of Spencer has worked to remove stormwater from entering the wastewater treatment system; however, more work is needed. Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) are a serious issue that not only strains existing infrastructure but impairs local water quality, as the overflows typically go directly into a local waterbody.

Cellular Communications

For many people, cell phones have become an important part of everyday life. Some people no longer have a dedicated land line, and many people use cell phone data technology found on their smartphone as the primary method to access the internet.

AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon provide telecommunications service in Spencer and throughout various parts of Roane County. The City leases land on the hill above Williams Drive for a cellular telecommunications tower. The City needs to continue to identify additional places where a cell tower could be placed in the future. Spencer officials should periodically contact other telecommunication providers and gauge their interest in either collocating on the existing tower or leasing city-owned land to place cellular facilities.

Goal 2: Maintain Historic, Cultural, and Community Values

Spencer needs to promote historic and cultural resources in the community as well as maintain and enhance community values.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Currently, there is no state or federally designated historic district in Spencer. The Albert S. Heck Mansion (also known as McIntosh Mansion) is on the National Register of Historic Places but is located outside the city limits. There are several properties, including the Robey Theater, G.C. Murphy Building, and Old Trader’s Bank Building that have historical significance to the community. Some historical structures in town have been restored as residential rentals. There is an interest in the city to highlight and maintain the historical appearance of the streetscapes. There is also a need to clean up and maintain the properties in the city, particularly located on Market and Church Streets.



A “Cultural Resource Management Report and a Final Design Study” was completed for the Colonel Ruby Bradley Bridge replacement project. The study indicated that “[t]his structure, which is eligible for registration for the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1932 and was rehabilitated in 1996. Since that time, the bridge has experienced substantial deterioration.”⁴³ Traffic Engineers also estimate that the Average Daily Trips (ADT) on the bridge is over 13,000 ADT, which means that the bridge is getting significant wear and tear.⁴⁴

The City needs to inventory and identify structures that are eligible for state or federal historic designation. Once an up-to-date inventory of eligible structures is completed, the community should speak with the State Historic Preservation Office to understand the advantages and disadvantages of creating a historic district for the city and for individual property owners. Having informal town hall

⁴³<https://transportation.wv.gov/highways/engineering/comment/closed/ColRubyBradleyBridge/Documents/FinalDesignStudy.pdf>

⁴⁴ Id.

educational sessions can provide the information necessary to decide whether establishing a historic district is in the best interest of the city and whether it will achieve the goals and objectives of the community.

Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse

One of the best ways to preserve the historic and cultural amenities is through adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse occurs when a building has been used for a specific purpose and is later retrofitted for another purpose. For example, the upper levels of a vacant office building in downtown Spencer could be redeveloped for residential living.

The City of Spencer had an armory for many years. The armory's primary function was to provide spaces for training, administration, and material storage for the assigned military units. The armory closed a couple of years ago for its intended purpose. However, the armory has been purchased by the city and opened back up. The space can now be rented out by local organizations and businesses and is considered an important community asset. For example, the armory is being used as a vaccination site for the region.

In 2014, the Friends of the Market Street Chapel, reinstalled stained-glass windows, replaced front and rear doors, repaired the steeple, detached a block structure from the original church, repaired brick, replaced the roof, and purchased oak pews for the church. Additional improvements made to the Chapel, by the Friends of the Market Street Chapel, could eventually turn the structure into a useable communal area.

A listing of all vacant retail or commercial buildings, which is updated periodically, could be very useful, especially for the Development Authority. A priority for the city, according to one open house participant was to "keep the downtown retail district full." It was also important to keep a "true commercial Main Street" near the courthouse square.

There are other reasons to promote redevelopment and adaptive reuse within Spencer. Abandoned and dilapidated structures can become eyesores and can lower nearby property values, harbor vermin, and are more likely to catch fire. Spencer is already enforcing the building code and should continue to address abandoned and dilapidated structures throughout the city. For example, there is a winery on top of the hill overlooking the City of Spencer. The winery is a big draw for the community. However, there are many dilapidated structures on the access road to the winery, and the road to the winery is in need of repair.

Community Events and Values

While protecting historic resources and encouraging the redevelopment of brick and mortar structures is important for the long-term viability of the community, so are holding events and clearly

delineating community values through programs and activities that celebrate and encourage community cohesion.

The City, in conjunction with a nonprofit organization, could block off part of the sidewalk at the Courthouse Square or Washington Park for live music and entertainment to encourage a festive, family-friendly atmosphere. If utilizing Washington Park, the City would need to upgrade the pavilion and improve the lighting.

A summer concert series could be coordinated with one or two other communities. Having multiple jurisdictions involved ensures that the sole responsibility to market, plan, and fund the concert series is not up to one community. A summer concert series not only provides local entertainment but could stimulate economic development and provide a venue for local artists to showcase their talents.

Several stakeholders indicated during the comprehensive plan process that they would like the Spencer area to be thought of as a destination for artisans, especially related to fine wine and food. Ancillary ideas, such as “sip and paint” and cake decorating, could be year-round business ideas. There can be cooking competitions, or the community could invite food trucks from around the region to set up when there is going to be live music and other events, cognizant of bricks and mortar establishments.

Several events can be completed with some planning and a minimal amount of capital, including 5K and “fun runs.” There is already an Ugly Sweater 5K race that is gaining popularity during the holidays. 5K and fun runs should be held more often and should be integrated with existing events. The City could also host a “mini” or “micro” triathlon with swimming in the pool and biking and running through the city.

One of the more interesting aspects of downtown Spencer is that the City plays music over loudspeakers throughout downtown to give the downtown a unique feel. The City has also acquired the whistle from the Old Spencer State Hospital. As a nod to Spencer’s past, city officials plan to blow the whistle at 5:00 p.m. every evening as it was done many years ago.



Issue 3: Spencer is a Safe, Healthy, Drug-free Community

Community health and safety were very important concepts articulated throughout the comprehensive plan process. The collective health of the community impacts education, economic development, and the overall wellbeing of the citizens.

Substance Abuse Prevention

In 2017, the United States declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency.⁴⁵ Across the country, particularly in West Virginia, many communities have been devastated by the effects of opioid addiction. In some counties, the overdose mortality rate is several times higher than the national average. Substance abuse and drug-related crimes are impactful issues in Roane County and the City of Spencer. To address the issue, the City of Spencer should focus efforts on asset sharing, prevention and education, and expanding treatment.

One of the biggest problems that most West Virginia communities are facing is the high usage of illicit substances. Opioids have been a commonly abused substance; recently, however, heroin and methamphetamines are also being abused in high rates. The City of Spencer and Roane County have not been exempted from the pervasiveness of substance abuse. Substance abuse threatens small-town living and makes achieving the community's vision much more difficult. Participants in the comprehensive plan process felt that there was a "drug culture" in the area stemming in part to the ease of access to public health services and the low cost of living. Typically, a low cost of living and readily available access to health services is seen as a positive.

Municipal and county officials should be leaders in the conversation on opioids.⁴⁶ Often, a stigma is attached to addiction. Overcoming such stigma requires community leaders, particularly elected officials who hold positions of trust, to initiate candid, respectful, and compassionate discussions. Confronting the "elephant in the room" and recognizing that a problem exists is the first step toward finding solutions. Efforts to increase recognition of the problem could include hosting town hall discussions and conducting public outreach through the county health department and local law enforcement.

Regional cooperation and asset sharing should be fostered by local officials and industry experts to bring positivity to the conversation and motivate the public to reach out to friends and family.⁴⁷ A

⁴⁵ <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-685r#:~:text=Opioid%20misuse%20and%20related%20deaths,problem%20in%20the%20United%20States.&text=On%20October%2026%2C%202017%2C%20the,has%20been%20made%20for%20opioids>

⁴⁶ <https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Opioids-Full.pdf>

⁴⁷ Id.

multi-jurisdictional approach can reach more people in need. Leaning on regional coalitions for support offers inclusive and diverse substance abuse reduction strategies.

Fortunately, there are already people and organizations in the area that are providing addiction services. For example, First Baptist Church provides a drug recovery program and counseling services, and Westbrook operates a group residential facility in Spencer. The Roane County Prevention Coalition is a “group of concerned citizens that are working together to decrease substance abuse in the county.”⁴⁸ These groups provide important services; however, in order to supplement or fill any gaps in service, the community needs to encourage the expansion of treatment and prevention options.

Drug Court is a national program for criminal defendants with alcohol or substance dependency issues. Drug courts seek to rehabilitate defendants with dependency problems so they can return to society as contributing members. The program also aims to reduce recidivism.

Drug court participants attend weekly hearings for at least one year. However, most participants take 18 months to two years to complete the program, which also includes intensive outpatient treatment, community service requirements, employment requirements, and random drug testing. The drug court program should continue to operate within the county to reduce expenses and recidivism of drug offenders. Drug court is largely seen as successful in the area. Specifically, Roane County has a Family Drug Court and is only the fourth county in the state to have such a program.

One objective is to reduce substance abuse arrests; however, at the same time, Spencer needs more certified law enforcement officers, as the city is often short staffed. There also needs to be a concerted effort to involve local law enforcement in more community activities. One successful program aimed at improving relations between law enforcement and citizens is “National Night Out.” A community can receive funding to hold an evening event that brings local law enforcement and the community together for games, food, and entertainment.

⁴⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/RoaneCountyPreventionCoalition/>

Healthy Living

Promoting a healthy and active lifestyle will enhance the experiences in Spencer. The City already has a farmer’s market; however, WVU Extension needs help in coordinating it. The market is always looking for ways to expand and to make itself more visible and appealing. There was some discussion of a possible change in location, but many people are content with the current location of the farmer’s market. An enhanced farmers market could be combined with a summer concert series, especially if held downtown.



Roane General Hospital is currently completing a large expansion project (\$20 million) and increasing the level of services provided. Additionally, Roane County Family Health Care is found within the city. Currently, there is nowhere to deliver newborns in Spencer and citizens typically go to either Charleston or Parkersburg. There is also a need for more long-term medical care homes for the city’s aging population.

There are a few blessing boxes in Spencer, where people can donate nonperishable food items. In addition, a local law office organizes the collection of hygiene products. There should be continued support of these grassroots efforts.

Recreation

Charles Fork Lake is owned and maintained by the city for drinking water and is used for fishing, mountain biking, hiking, camping, photography, picnicking, weddings, disc golf, and kayaking. However, there are opportunities for more usage of the property. There is also a campground with electrical hook up that is owned by the city which sits adjacent to the lake. One need is to add full-service campsites at Charles Fork Lake.

Dog parks can be constructed relatively inexpensively. Some of the concerns with dog parks are maintenance (cutting grass), aggressive dogs, excessive barking, the spread of canine diseases, and owners not cleaning



up after their dogs. Some of the advantages include socialization of dogs, getting people and dogs outdoors, and providing a safe way for dogs to get exercise.

Having a dedicated area means other public spaces can be dog-free. The Charles Fork Lake area was one place suggested for a dog park, however an area in town should also be considered.

The 2017 comprehensive plan draft (never adopted) stated that “the Civil War Park consists mostly of large fields which make improvements challenging since there are limited resources for keeping the area mowed on a regular basis.” Improvement of historical appeal and accessibility for the park could add to tourism in the area.



There are approximately 28 miles of trails situated in three city parks. There is also a community park which is owned by St. Johns United Methodist Church, just south of Spencer. The park is open to the public and has an archery range and a short walking trail.

As improvement funding becomes available, the City is interested in how to best improve parks and recreation in order to improve quality of life, healthy living, tourism attraction, community attachment, and economic attractiveness. (from 2017 Comprehensive Plan Draft) A subcommittee focused on recreation in Spencer should be created as an advisory board to City Council.

The City would like to create a downtown bicycle system to encourage safe bicycle transportation. The City should also map walking routes around town that provide mileage and highlight points of interest throughout Spencer.

Another idea is to cover the pool to utilize it throughout the year instead of just the summer months. This would be a significant investment but would provide a year-round recreational opportunity.

Address Rental Properties and Dilapidated Structures

There is concern with the abandoned and dilapidated properties found throughout the city. A particular concern is the rental housing stock that is not being properly maintained. There is some sentiment for a higher proportion of homeownership compared to renter-occupied housing.

Spencer desires to have a diverse housing stock that includes single family, multi-family, owner-occupied, and renter-occupied units. There should be an emphasis on the quality of the housing and a greater percentage of the homes being owner occupied.

Spencer needs to ensure that that City is enforcing the latest editions of the West Virginia State Building Code (WVSBC), as promulgated by the State Fire Commission. The City should ensure that the person or persons responsible for enforcing the building code are certified. The WVSBC is one of the most effective tools available to local governments to ensure that housing is built and maintained properly.



Before and After Demolition of Dilapidated Structure in Spencer

Vacant properties become dilapidated without proper maintenance. Municipalities can enact a vacant property registry and assess a fee on properties meeting the statutory definition of “vacant property or structure.”

The West Virginia State Code (§8-12-16c) defines “vacant building” and “vacant property” as:

“ “Vacant building” means a building or other structure that is unoccupied, or unsecured and occupied by one or more unauthorized persons for an amount of time as determined by the ordinance. A new building under construction or a building that by definition is exempted by ordinance of the municipality, is not deemed a vacant building. The governing body of a municipality, on a case-by-case basis, upon request by the property owner, shall exempt a vacant building from registration upon a finding for good cause shown that the person will be unable to occupy the building for a determinative period of time.”

““Vacant property” means a property on which no building is erected and no routine activity occurs.”

As part of the vacant property registry, a fee is generally assessed annually and increases each year the structure or property is on the registry. If a property owner does not want to pay the fee, they must ensure the property no longer meets the definition of “vacant.” A provision in the local ordinance

enacting the vacant property registry should provide that a property owner who is, in good faith, trying to sell or rent the property, is exempt from paying the annual fee. Currently counties are not enabled to enforce vacant property registries.

Similar to a vacant property registry, but enabled under a different state statute, is the uninhabitable property registry.⁴⁹ The primary difference between the registries is that, with the uninhabitable property registry, the municipality must have adopted the WVSBC as there needs to be a violation of the code before a property can be placed on the registry. Another significant difference is that, with the uninhabitable property registry, a property that has been on the registry for twenty-four (24) consecutive months may be taken by forfeiture by the municipality.

Youth Engagement

One of the most effective ways to address substance abuse is to encourage worthwhile activities, especially for the youth. Engaging activities lower the likelihood that children will get involved in substance abuse. The community already supports sports, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and other programs for kids. These programs should continue to be supported.

PATCH 21 provides a valuable program for the children of Spencer. Some citizens suggested having something like PATCH 21 until later in the evening.

Community Spotlight: PATCH 21

“The program currently serves 2,000 students in Roane, Jackson, and Mason Counties and operates 3 preschools in Roane and Jackson Counties. PATCH successfully administers several different grants that focus on character education, tobacco, drug, and alcohol prevention, civic duty and service learning, watershed and clean water awareness, entrepreneurial job skills, and leadership. The PATCH staff endeavor each year to offer programs that children are excited to participate in, and this maintains interest and involvement. From entrepreneurial and job skill courses to heritage and traditional instruction (fiddle, guitar, quilting/crocheting, fly tying, etc.) to science and technology, the courses offered through the PATCH program continue to offer students a choice of unique programs that “are intentional, involve choice, and develop the use of new and exciting opportunities for learning,” which are key components to successful academic achievement as cited by research presented in the Harvard Family Research Project” (Source: HFRP, Feb. 2008).

⁴⁹ See W. Va Code § 8-12-16a

Bullying is also a concern and can be detrimental for certain youth of the community. While the schools often have anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying programs geared for when children are not in school may still be needed. There could be a program tied to the library or an anti-bullying campaign with sports or at events including the Black Walnut Festival.

A lack of jobs available for youth was identified as an issue for high school students who participated in the comprehensive plan process. Job training for teenagers and young adults in Spencer is important for developing employable skills.

The downtown largely shuts down in early evening. One suggestion is to hold various activities well into the evening, like a concert series, especially in the summer.

A youth advisory board can offer solutions to issues affecting the community from a unique perspective. Providing local youth with a meaningful opportunity to learn responsibility and leadership, as well as to contribute to the community should be a priority. A youth advisory group can be temporary or permanent based on the needs of the community or serve as a standing committee to City Council.



Attract and retain young professionals

Many of the comprehensive plan recommendations are geared towards attracting and retaining young families. The community needs to invest in youth activities, education, and creating a safe environment. Young families also need places to work and decent housing. Also cited as important to attract young families was the need for a gym and the expansion of the hospital.

Goal 4: Enhance Economic Development

Many of the large employers that were historically in and around Spencer have closed, including the state hospital, Kellwood Industries, B.F. Goodrich, Roane Hardwoods, and Stella-Jones. However, the city is still the hub for trade and commerce in the county. As the county seat and the home of the public schools, many people still work in Spencer.

Many sites are available in Spencer to establish a new business. However, the community needs to market those sites regionally and encourage small business entrepreneurs to establish a business in Spencer.

During the open house, it was noted that many of the businesses close too early and incentives are needed for businesses to stay open longer, at least some evenings. A late-night event downtown once a month could incentivize some businesses to stay open later during certain times. The event could involve the farmers market, a chili cookoff, free music, and games, such as community bingo. The courthouse square could be closed off for pedestrian traffic.



While most agriculture practices need rural areas with space, there are some practices that can be done that do not take up as much space. Developing an apiary or working beehive can be done safely on large municipal lots. The need for pollinators is extremely important. Through zoning, Spencer can permit apiaries in town with safety precautions like minimum lot size, drinking water on site, or a flyway barrier and having the hives set back from lot lines. While typically not a significant source of economic development, small-scale agriculture can provide supplemental income for citizens. Small-scale high tunneling or aquaponics can also be encouraged in Spencer. Produce can be sold at the farmers market or as a home occupation depending on size and the number of customers visiting the home.

The community wants more manufacturing with new trade agreements and has the space to house new manufacturing. There are a handful of sites in Spencer that are shovel ready for manufacturing. Currently, Spencer is home to Armacell, which manufactures rubber products. The Armacell building located directly outside corporate limits used to be a BF Goodrich plant that made airplane emergency slides. While a part of the old BF Goodrich plant is being used by Armacell, another section of the old plant is vacant.

Small Business Retention and Creation

While developing larger scale manufacturing and employment opportunities is important, it is equally important for the community to take the steps necessary to ensure small business retention and creation. According to research, “revitalizing a town is less about what you can attract from outside

and more about what you can grow yourself. Experiment, try, fail, learn, try some more, help others try, connect people with resources. Those are the essential skills to revitalizing a town.”⁵⁰

Small-business succession is an increasingly important topic in rural America. Entrepreneurs now in their 60s and 70s often have a rough time finding people to take over their mom-and-pop stores.⁵¹ Fortunately, a growing ecology of organizations and businesses are matching rural entrepreneurs nearing retirement with younger people yearning to run businesses.⁵² Public university extension services, economic development agencies, bankers, business brokers and succession consultants, among others, offer matchmaking services.⁵³

Shared space could be a solution for small local business startups in Roane County and Spencer. Sharing workspace makes sense for many professionals, including doctors, lawyers, psychotherapists, massage therapists, acupuncturists, chiropractors, and financial planners. Many of these professionals are able to complete administrative work from home and only require office space for meetings and appointments. Office sharing works particularly well for professionals who see clients or patients since maintaining a physical office with a reception area and private meeting or treatment rooms can be costly.

Local officials could work with students from local colleges and universities, including Glenville State College or West Virginia University-Parkersburg, to develop business incubators, startups, or shared workspaces in Spencer, depending on an assessment of the needs of potential new businesses. An inventory should be taken and maintained by local officials to identify possible sites for an incubator or shared workspace.

The community, especially the Roane County EDA, should encourage business growth online through marketing and sales. Opening a business up to a regional, national, or global market can increase the likelihood of retaining small businesses in Spencer.

The Roane County EDA already provides several services for citizens that are interested in opening a small business, including small business micro grants, revolving loans, business startup support, and

⁵⁰ <https://smallbizsurvival.com/2016/02/want-your-small-town-to-prosper-youve-got-to-grow-your-own-small-businesses.html>

⁵¹ <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/matchmaker-programs-keep-small-businesses-alive-in-rural-america-2017-05-18>

⁵² Id.

⁵³ Id.

micro loan applications. The City should periodically host the Roane County EDA to explain the programs during an open house.

Tourism

Spencer should work on identifying how to enhance already established and popular events. While the community should encourage the continuation of the Black Walnut Festival and the Heritage Days Festival in Spencer, the community wants to be known for more than these festivals.

Tourism is an important industry throughout the Mountain State with many communities vying for tourism dollars. The questions each community must ask itself are the following: What makes us unique, and why would someone want to visit here as opposed to somewhere else? Do we have the amenities in place for tourism to flourish? Are lodging and dining available, and if so, are there different options? Are there activities? What is the main draw?

Lodging related to tourism in Spencer is a need. Hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, and short-term rentals would be welcome. A 2013 feasibility study concluded that the construction of a small hotel might be favorable in Spencer. However, that study is now eight years old, so an updated feasibility study might be prudent. A few comprehensive plan participants have indicated a need for more short-term rentals, such as VRBO and Airbnb.

A local Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) can be very helpful in marketing and promoting a local tourism industry. CVBs are funded, in part, by the collection of a hotel and occupancy tax. A CVB can operate in a city, a county, or a region.

Purpose of CVBs in West Virginia

“Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) in West Virginia help manage travel and tourism initiatives regionally and municipally. Such organizations, pursuant to West Virginia law specialize in developing conventions, meetings, conferences, and visits to cities, counties, and regions across the Mountain State.” (Source: <https://wvexplorer.com/travel-guide/convention-visitors-bureau-cvb/>)

Due to the relaxation of some state regulations a few years ago, craft brewing has seen an explosion across West Virginia. A good brewery, even located in a rural setting, can be a major draw. Spencer, because of its relatively central location, might be a good location in West Virginia for a brewery, as there is already a good water source, Charles Fork Lake. A brewery startup could be spearheaded by the Roane County EDA or a local institution of higher education.

The community should promote the expansion and continued development of the arts in Spencer and Roane County. Artisanry is seen as a strength of the community and a key part of the community that should be nurtured, promoted, and expanded if possible. A thriving artisan colony is not only a good way for increased economic development but can be of interest to folks visiting and looking for something different.



Other Community Concerns

Schools

Spencer Middle School located downtown is in need of repairs. The state school board has been reluctant to put any money into the building for repairs and maintenance. Landscaping work has been completed by the Hill and Hollow Garden Club and a brand-new gym floor has been installed.

The Roane-Jackson Technical Center offers vocational education and training and is shared with Jackson County. The Tech Center provides its students with real-life training through a co-op program with local businesses, but no longer offers business courses. Expanded educational services, including adult evening programs that teach basic business, administrative assistance, accounting, medical code billing, and similar courses would be beneficial to the local community.

Housing

A diverse and well-maintained housing stock is very important to the overall vitality of a community. In Spencer, there is a need to address the number and quality of multi-family housing, especially for seniors. Specifically, more independent, assisted living, and nursing homes are needed.

Habitable and well-maintained rentals are needed for young families. One comment that was echoed throughout the comprehensive plan process is that there were many rentals not being adequately maintained. Parking issues with rentals were also noted as a concern.

Currently several people are living above businesses, something that should be encouraged, especially in the downtown area. However, one of the concerns with living above businesses, especially downtown, is parking. Meanwhile, one of the advantages of having upper-level residential is a livelier downtown, especially in the evening. Upper-level residential units may also be a deterrent for crime on commercial enterprises as a human presence remains even after businesses have closed for the day.

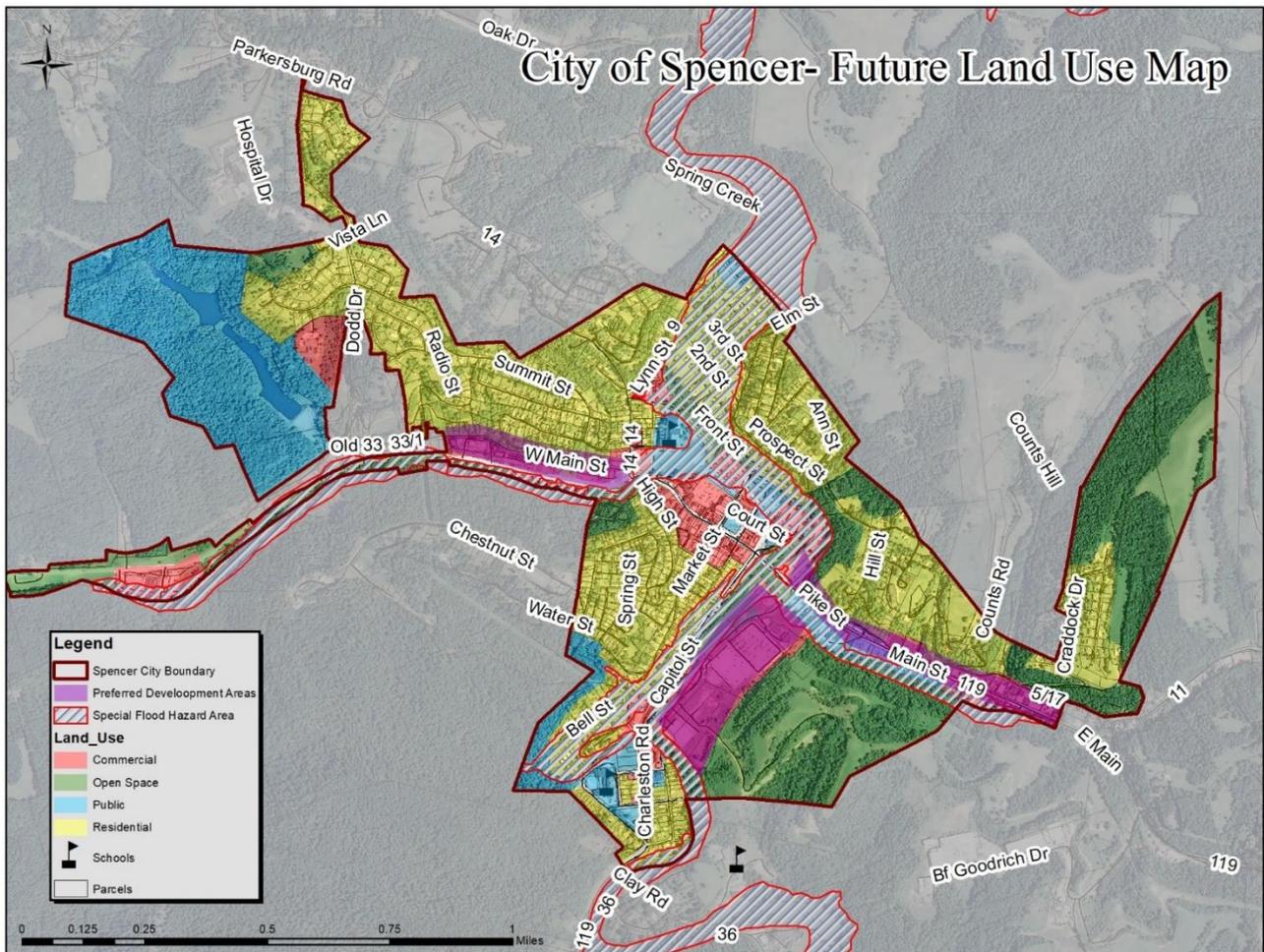
There is a disproportionately high number of public housing units in Spencer including Ann Street and Lynnview public housing. In addition, age-restricted and disability housing is available at Sunset Apartments, Marcap Manor, and Heart House. While the community believes there should be a diversity of housing options, including low-income housing, one desire of many comprehensive plan participants was to see an increased proportion of housing that is owner occupied compared to renter occupied.

Land Use

The community is largely built out, with some undeveloped areas near Wal-Mart and Miletree Lakes; therefore, land use decisions should be made with careful planning to the future needs and desires of the community.

Preferred development areas (see Figure 3.1) are areas designated by the City where incentives should be provided to direct development. The preferred development areas for the City of Spencer include Williams Drive, East Main Street, West Main Street. These areas are centers for commerce and business.

FIGURE 3.1- FUTURE LAND USE MAP



In 1977, the City of Spencer created a zoning ordinance to regulate the different areas of the City. There are currently nine (9) zoning districts. Much of the zoning ordinance is over 40 years old so the City should analyze the ordinance and ensure that it conforms to today's best practices and the desires of the community. Some of the considerations include:

- Revising definitions in the ordinance
- Considering consolidation of residential districts
- Including flexible regulations that allow for affordable housing
- Considering one industrial district that allows for both light and heavy commercial uses
- Re-examining neighborhood commercial district applicability and whether it could be consolidated within other districts
- Revising the administrative chapter of the ordinances to ensure consistency with West Virginia Code Chapter 8A
- Adding a section on sign regulations
- Developing design guidelines to regulate the façade of buildings

Floodplains

A significant portion of Spencer is located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (AKA 100-year floodplain). When a citizen has property within the floodplain with a federally backed mortgage, flood insurance is required. In order to get flood insurance, the community (town, city, county) must have adopted and enforce certain regulations aimed at minimizing damage from flood events. In West Virginia, this typically means a community will adopt a standalone floodplain ordinance.

In Spencer, there are several structures within the regulatory floodway. A regulatory floodway means the “channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height.”⁵⁴ Practically speaking, not much can be developed in the regulatory floodway.

Another way to address flooding in sensitive areas is to amend the existing zoning ordinance to include a riparian overlay district. A riparian overlay district could be a buffer between a water body and commercial or residential development. Future development in a riparian buffer zone is often significantly restricted. Implementing a riparian buffer through zoning would be consistent with portions of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations.

The City also needs to ensure that it is fully enforcing the floodplain ordinance. If a flood event occurs and FEMA determines that a locality is not enforcing required ordinances, not meeting minimum standards of the NFIP program may result in FEMA withholding disaster relief funds.

⁵⁴<https://www.fema.gov/glossary/floodway#:~:text=A%20%22Regulatory%20Floodway%22%20means%20the,more%20than%20a%20designated%20height.>

Annexation

There have been discussions over the years regarding possible annexation of land currently outside the corporate boundary. The City needs to understand the current annexation processes, especially since the State Legislature, in 2020, amended the annexation by minor boundary adjustment process. The City Council needs to understand the advantages and disadvantages of considering annexation of a certain area. The City also needs to have discussions with potentially affected landowners to answer any questions and to understand any concerns they may have about possible annexation.



Chapter 4- Action Plan

After identifying and articulating the needs of Spencer in Chapter 3, the next step is to organize recommendations to address those needs. The City of Spencer has organized the Action Plan into goals, objectives, and action steps aimed at strategically addressing the needs and issues of the community.

The format of the Action Plan is focused on the top five goals identified by the community.

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure throughout Spencer

Objective 1.1 Encourage better access to and from Spencer

Action Step 1.1.1. Replacement of Ruby Bradley Bridge

Action Step 1.1.2. Ensure a bypass at Scott Miller Hill, for Route 33, is constructed

Action Step 1.1.3. Encourage routine maintenance, such as restriping

Action Step 1.1.4. Fill in potholes so that work will last several years and not have to be replaced often

Objective 1.2 Properly plan and prioritize transportation projects within Spencer

Action Step 1.2.1. Develop and utilize a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Action Step 1.2.2 Develop an inventory of roads and bridges that need to be widened

Action Step 1.2.3. Create more parking in areas where there is a demand

Objective 1.3 Promote supplemental transportation improvement projects

Action Step 1.3.1. Prioritize streetscape projects, including adding streetlights and continuation of hanging flower baskets

Action Step 1.3.2. Retrofit streetlights with LED lighting



Objective 1.4 Develop sidewalks including crosswalks

Action Step 1.4.1. Work with the WV DOH to inventory and map all the sidewalks in Spencer

Action Step 1.4.2. Ensure crosswalks are clearly marked with correct signage and signaling

Action Step 1.4.3. Construct and replace sidewalks in various areas

Objective 1.5 Ensure water and wastewater facilities are maintained and improved so that there are no interruptions in service.

Action Step 1.5.1 Complete a comprehensive upgrade to the treatment plant, including a new digester, new facilities to house the equipment, and new processing equipment

Action Step 1.5.2. Hire and train skilled public works operators, which may cost more upfront for salary, but save the city money in the long run

Action Step 1.5.3. Repair and replace the water treatment distribution lines

Action Step 1.5.4. Identify and potentially develop a secondary water source

Action Step 1.5.5. Continue to separate combined storm sewers and wastewater collection lines

Objective 1.6 Encourage improved cell phone communications

Action Step 1.6.1. Continue to identify any additional spaces where a cell tower could be placed in the future

Action Step 1.6.2. Periodically contact various providers and gauge their interest in either collocating on the existing tower or leasing city-owned land to place cellular facilities

Goal 2: Maintain Historic, Cultural, and Community Values

Objective 2.1 Protect historic and cultural resources

Action Step 2.1.1. Highlight and maintain historical appearance on streetscapes

Action Step 2.1.2. Inventory and identify structures in the City that are eligible for state or federal designation onto respective, state, or national registries



Action Step 2.1.3. Communitywide discussion with State Historic Preservation Office to fully understand advantages and disadvantages of creating a historic district or designating historic properties



Objective 2.2 Promote redevelopment and adaptive reuse of Spencer

Action Step 2.2.1. Publish a list of all the vacant retail or commercial buildings, updated periodically, to market potential redevelopment or adaptive reuse sites

Action Step 2.2.2. Work with property owners to ensure the downtown retail district is fully occupied

Objective 2.3 Continue to develop community events

Action Step 2.3.1 Block off part of the sidewalk at the Courthouse Square or Washington Park for live music and encourage a beach-like atmosphere

Action Step 2.3.2. A summer concert series could be coordinated with one or two other communities

Action Step 2.3.3. Become a destination for artisans, especially for fine wine and food, and include activities like “sip and paint” and cake decorating

Action Step 2.3.4. Hold additional 5K running events and fun runs by integrating them with existing events in town

Action Step 2.3.5. Consider holding a “mini” or “micro” triathlon within Spencer

Goal 3: Spencer is a Safe, Healthy, Drug-free Community

Objective 3.1 Substance abuse prevention

Action Step 3.1.1. Municipal and county officials should be leaders in the conversation on opioids

Action Step 3.1.2. Host townhall discussions and conduct public outreach through the county health department and sheriff’s department

Action Step 3.1.3. Regional cooperation and asset sharing should be fostered by local officials and industry experts

Action Step 3.1.4. Promote existing services for substance abuse recovery and prevention and encourage filling any gaps in service

Action Step 3.1.5. Hire and actively recruit more quality, certified, and trained law enforcement officers

Action Step 3.1.6. Consider hosting a “National Night Out” aimed at improving relations between law enforcement and citizens

Objective 3.2 Encourage healthy living within the city

Action Step 3.2.1. Support the partnership between the City and the Spencer Farmers Market

Action Step 3.2.2. Promote the idea of creating more long-term medical care homes and assisted living housing for the city’s aging population

Action Step 3.3.3. Promote existing recreational facilities to encourage physical fitness throughout town



Objective 3.3 Improve recreational amenities in and around the City of Spencer

Action Step 3.3.1. Consider placement, costs, and usage of a dedicated dog park in Spencer

Action Step 3.3.2. Improve the historic appeal and accessibility of the Goff Hill Civil War Park to boost visitation to the park

Action Step 3.3.3. A subcommittee for recreation should be created as an advisory board to City Council to focus on recreation in Spencer

Action Step 3.3.4. Create a downtown bicycle system to encourage safe bicycle transportation

Action Step 3.3.5. Map walking routes around town that provide mileage and highlight points of interest

Action Step 3.3.6. Cover the pool to utilize it throughout the year instead of just the summer months

Action Step 3.3.7. Expand and create more trails, proximate to the downtown area, including around Miletree Lakes

Objective 3.4 Address rental properties and dilapidated structures

Action Step 3.4.1. Foster an environment of higher proportion of owner-occupied housing in Spencer

Action Step 3.4.2. Create a diversity of housing options, including single-family, multi-family, owner-occupied and renter-occupied units

Action Step 3.4.3. Enact an ordinance allowing the City to create a vacant property registry and assess a fee on properties meeting the statutory definition of “vacant property or structure”

Action Step 3.4.4. Review advantages and disadvantages of enacting an uninhabitable property registry

Action Step 3.4.5. Consider receiving Home Rule Authority to issue on-site citations for certain property maintenance violations



Objectives 3.5 Encourage youth engagement in civic activities

Action Step 3.5.1. Strive to have afterschool activities that go later in the evening

Action Step 3.5.2. Endorse a program tied to the library or an anti-bullying campaign with sports or at events such as the Black Walnut Festival

Action Step 3.5.3. Have various activities well into the evening, especially in the summer, such as a summer concert series

Action Step 3.5.4. City Council should create a youth advisory board to provide a platform for youth to help solve problems in the community

Action Step 3.5.5. Invest in youth activities, education, and creating a safe environment to attract and retain young families

Goal 4: Enhance Economic Development

Objective 4.1 Expand business opportunities throughout Spencer

Action Step 4.1.1. Market potential development sites regionally and encourage small business entrepreneurs to establish a business in Spencer

Action Step 4.1.2. Establish a late-night event downtown, once a month, to incentivize businesses to stay open later

Action Step 4.1.3. Encourage, through zoning, small-scale agriculture in town, like apiaries with proper safety precautions, high tunneling, or aquaponics

Action Step 4.1.4. Consider the best uses for some of the few undeveloped areas of Spencer, including behind Wal-Mart, Miletree Lakes, the sections of town on Route 33 W, and downtown where there are underutilized structures and lots.



Objective 4.2. Small business retention and creation

Action Step 4.2.1. Work with existing business owners to ensure there is someone available to take over when the original owner wants to retire

Action Step 4.2.2. Understand the advantages and disadvantages of creating a shared workspace for local entrepreneurs who are starting up and need space but may not need or cannot afford their own permanent business space

Action Step 4.2.3. Local officials could work with students of local colleges and universities, including Glenville State College or West Virginia University-Parkersburg, to develop business incubators, startups, or shared workspaces in Spencer

Action Step 4.2.4. Encourage business growth online, through marketing and sales

Action Step 4.2.5. Periodically host the Roane County EDA to explain programs and answer questions

Objective 4.3. Tourism and tourism-related expansion

Action Step 4.3.1. Enhance already established and popular events

Action Step 4.3.2. Answer the following questions: What makes Spencer unique and why would someone want to visit the city as opposed to somewhere else? Does Spencer have the amenities in place for tourism to flourish? Are lodging and dining available, and if so, are there different options? What activities are available? What is the main draw to Spencer?

Action Step 4.3.3. Study the need for additional lodging options, including short-term rentals in Spencer

Action Step 4.3.4. Consider the creation of a local Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to help promote the area and bring in commerce and tourism

Action Step 4.3.5. Encourage the development of local craft brewery as a regional and local draw, relaxing any local ordinances that would prevent such establishment from moving into Spencer.

Action Step 4.3.6. Promote the expansion and continued development of the arts in Spencer and Roane County, as it is seen as a strength in the community

Goal 5: Supplemental Objectives and Action Steps

Objective 5.1 Support Roane County schools

Action Step 5.1.1. Continue to support the upkeep of the downtown middle school facility to include landscaping

Action Step 5.1.2. Support expanded offering for the Roane-Jackson Technical Center for students

Action Step 5.1.3. Encourage the proliferation of adult education offerings for Spencer and Roane County residents, including basic business, administrative assistance, accounting, and medical coding for billing

Objective 5.2 Encourage the development and redevelopment of a diverse and well-maintained housing stock

Action Step 5.2.1. Ensure, through land use tools, adequate housing for seniors that includes assisted living, nursing homes, and independent living units

Action Step 5.2.2. Promote habitable and well-maintained rentals with a focus for young working-class families

Action Step 5.2.3. Ensure adequate parking for all types of housing in Spencer

Action Step 5.2.4. Continue to encourage residential units above or behind commercial units, especially in the downtown area

Action Step 5.2.5. Facilitate a more even proportion of owner-occupied dwelling units to renter-occupied units

Objective 5.3 Promote sound land use development in Spencer

Action Step 5.3.1. Consider the best uses for some of the few undeveloped areas of Spencer, including behind Wal-Mart and Miletree Lakes

Action Step 5.3.2. Determine what types of incentives should be utilized for future growth and development in the identified preferred development areas

Action Step 5.3.3. Analyze the existing zoning ordinance and determine what, if anything, needs to be updated and amended to conform to contemporary best practices and the desires of the community

Action Step 5.3.4. Consider adding sections to the zoning ordinance to include façade improvements and signage in certain areas of town

Action Step 5.3.5. Ensure there are adequate resources in place for the City to



properly enforce the floodplain ordinance to ensure that residents that need to purchase flood insurance can do so through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

City of Spencer Comprehensive Plan - Implementation Matrix

Timeframe:

Short Term = 0 to 3 years

Moderate Term= 4 to 7 years

Long Term= 8 + years

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Goal 1 : Improve Infrastructure Throughout Spencer						
Replace Ruby Bradley Bridge	High	Short-term		WV DOH	\$6.2 million	State or Federal transportation funding
Ensure a bypass at Scott Miller Hill for Route 33 is constructed.	High	Short-term		WV DOH	\$42 million	State or Federal transportation funding
Encourage routine transportation maintenance such as restriping	Moderate	Long-term (on-going)		WV DOH, City of Spencer	Restriping costs approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000 per mile of roadway	State transportation funding
Fill in potholes so that repairs will last several years and not have to be replaced often.	Moderate	Long-term (on-going)		City of Spencer Public Works, WV DOH.	Costs can vary. Size and number of potholes. Can cost up to \$50 per pothole.	General fund
Develop and utilize a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)	Moderate	Short-term		City Council; <u>Partner</u> - Private Consultant	<u>In house</u> - staff time and effort. <u>Private consultant</u> - \$5,000-\$10,000 est.	General Fund
Develop an inventory of roads and bridges that need to be widened and improved	Moderate	Short-term		WV DOH, City of Spencer	Staff time and effort	N/A

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Create more parking in areas where there is a demand	High	Moderate		City of Spencer Public Works, <u>Partner-</u> WV DOH.	Costs variable on scope of project.	General funds, and state transportation funds
Prioritize streetscape projects, including the addition of streetlights and continuation of hanging flower baskets.	Low	Long-term (on-going)		City of Spencer Public Works, WV DOH, WV Development Office. <u>Partner-</u> Hill and Hallow Garden Club	Costs vary considerably	General funds. Community Participation Grant Program
Retrofit streetlights with LED lighting.	Low	Long-term (on-going)		City of Spencer	Between \$100-\$200 per light fixture.	General Funds
Work with the WV DOH to inventory and map (GIS) all the sidewalks in Spencer	Moderate	Long-term (on-going)		City of Spencer; <u>Partner-</u> WV DOH, Region 5 Planning and Development Council	Could cost up a couple thousand dollars to produce electronic mapping	General Funds
Ensure crosswalks are clearly marked and the correct signage and signaling is in place.	High	Long-term (on-going)		City of Spencer Public Works, <u>Partner-</u> WV DOH.	Costs dependent on the number of crosswalks; \$1,000 to \$4,000 per crosswalk	General funds, state transportation funds
Construct and replace sidewalks in various areas.	Moderate	Short-term		City of Spencer, Property Owners adjacent to right of way.	Costs are usually between \$4.75 and \$5.50 per square foot of sidewalk	Private property owner, possible contribution from general fund in some cases
Complete a comprehensive upgrade to the water treatment plant, including new facilities to house the equipment, and new processing equipment	High	Long-term (on-going)		Mayor & City Council	[any cost estimates?]	Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council (IJDC) Funds

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Hire and train skilled public works operators, which may cost more upfront for salary, but save the city in the long run.	High	Long-term (on-going)		Mayor & City Council	Annual salaries in WV are anywhere from \$25K to \$50K, not including benefits.	Plant operating funds, General funds
Repair and replace the water treatment distribution lines	High	Long-term (on-going)		Public Works Department, 3rd Party Construction Company	\$3.2 remaining, already for distribution	IJDC Funding
Identify and develop a secondary water source	Low	Long-term (on-going)		Public Works Department; <u>Partner</u> - WV Rural Water Association	Costs highly variable on source and distance from treatment facility	IJDC Funding
Continue to separate combined storm sewers and wastewater collection lines.	High	Moderate		Public Works Department, <u>Partner</u> - private engineering firm	There is very high variability with separation projects. One project totaled \$443,000 per acre, however costs could be significantly lower	IJDC Funding
Periodically contact telecommunications providers and gauge their interest in either collocating on the existing tower or leasing city-owned land to place cellular facilities.	Low	Long-term		City Staff; <u>Partners</u> - telecommunications providers	Staff time and effort	N/A

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Goal 2: Maintain Historic, Cultural, and Community Values						
Maintain historical appearance on streetscapes	Low	Long-term		Private property owners, Mayor and City Council	Costs of renovations	tax credits, private capital.
Inventory the city and identify structures that are eligible for state or federal designation onto respective, state or national registries.	Low	Long-term		Private property owners, City Staff	Time and effort	N/A
Communitywide discussion with State Historic Preservation Office to fully understand advantages and disadvantages of creating a historic district or designation of historic properties.	Low	Long-term		City Officials; <u>Partner</u> - State Historic Preservation Office	Time and effort	N/A
Listing all vacant commercial buildings as potential redevelopment or adaptive reuse sites.	High	Short-term		Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority	Minimal costs to maintain listing	General funds
Work with property owners to ensure the downtown retail district is full.	High	Short-term		Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority	Time and effort	N/A
Block off part of the sidewalk at the Courthouse Square or Washington Park for live music and encourage a beach like atmosphere	High	Long-term (on-going)		Chamber, EDA, <u>Partners</u> - interested volunteers, businesses	Cost for law enforcement, payment of performing acts	Private donations, performing arts grants
A summer concert series could be coordinated with one or two other communities	Low	Long-term (on-going)		City Staff; <u>Partners</u> - surrounding communities willing to participate	Costs would be shared with participating communities	Private donations, performing arts grants
Become a destination for artisans, especially for fine wine and food and which include events such as 'sip and paint' and 'cake decorating.'	Moderate	Moderate		Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority; <u>Partners</u> - local businesses	Staff and business time and effort, possible costs associated with marketing and branding	Tourism grants, general fund of Authority and Chamber.

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Hold additional 5K running events and fun runs, integrating them with existing events in town.	High	Short-term		Interested citizens, local businesses	Time and effort, minimal costs for refreshments, prizes.	A portion of the costs can be recouped by modest entrance fees.
Consider holding a “mini” or “micro” triathlon within Spencer	High	Short-term		interested citizens, local businesses	time and effort, minimal costs for refreshments, prizes.	local businesses could sponsor the event. Could be held in conjunction with other existing events
Goal 3: Spencer is a Safe, Health, Drug-free Community						
Municipal and county officials should be leaders in the conversation on opioids.	High	Short-term to Long-term		Elected officials, both city and county	No costs associated	N/A
Host town hall discussions and conduct public outreach through the county health department and sheriff’s department.	Moderate	Long-term		Elected officials; <u>Partners</u> -County Health Department and Sheriff’s Department	Time and effort	N/A
Regional cooperation and asset sharing should be fostered by local officials and industry experts.	High	Moderate		Elected officials; <u>Partners</u> -local substance abuse treatment providers	Time and effort	General Fund
Promote existing services for substance abuse recovery and prevention and encourage filling any gaps in service	High	Short-term		Local substance abuse treatment providers; <u>Partners</u> -Elected officials	Time and effort	N/A
Hire more certified, trained law enforcement officers	High	Long-term (on-going)		Mayor & City Council	Salary + benefits commensurate with experience	General Funds
Consider hosting a “National Night Out” which is aimed at improving relations between law enforcement and citizens	High	Short-term		Law Enforcement, nonprofits; <u>Partners</u> - National Association of Town Watch in the United States	Costs vary considerably dependent on scale of festivities	Business sponsors, general fund
Support the partnership between the city and the Spencer Farmer’s Market.	Low	Long-term		Mayor & City Council; <u>Partners</u> - farmer's market organizers	Time and effort	General Funds

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Create more long-term medical care homes and assisted living housing for the city's aging population.	Moderate	Long-term		Private developers	Costs dependent on scale of the project	Private funds, can be leveraged with federal housing funds if certain conditions are met
Promote existing recreational facilities to encourage physical fitness throughout town.	High	Long-term (on-going)		City Staff	Time and Effort	General Fund
Consider placement, costs, and usage of a dedicated dog park in Spencer.	Low	Long-term		City Staff, Mayor and Council; <u>Partners</u> - Dog enthusiasts	Cost between \$10,000- and \$15,000 if land is already purchased. Could be lower if work was completed in house/ in kind	Donations of materials and funds necessary, fundraising, in kind volunteer work
Improve the historic appeal and accessibility of the Civil War Park to boast visitation to the park.	Moderate	Long-term		Mayor and Council; <u>Partners</u> - Roane County Historical Society	Costs dependent on scope of projects	General fund, could have "park clean up day" where people volunteer their equipment and time for various small projects at the park.
A subcommittee for recreation which is focused on recreation in Spencer should be created by Mayor and Council as an advisory board.	High	Short-term		Mayor and Council	Time and effort	N/A
Create a downtown bicycle system to encourage safe bicycle transportation.	Low	Long-term		Planning Commission; <u>Partners</u> - WV DOH	Cost dependent on scope of project, for example a bike lane can cost between \$5,000 and \$50,000 per mile depending on certain variables.	State and federal alternative transportation grants

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Map walking routes around the city that provide mileage and highlight points of interest.	Moderate	Short-term		Region 5 Planning and Development Councils	Costs for pamphlets could be \$150 to \$250 if 1,000 copies printed at a time.	America Walks grant funding
Cover the pool to utilize it throughout the year instead of just the summer months.	Low	Long-term		City Officials	Several thousand dollars	National Swimming Pool Foundation, fundraising
Expand and create more trails, proximate to the downtown area, including Miletree Lakes	Moderate	Moderate-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partners-</u> Planning Commission	Cost dependent on scope of the project, surfacing materials, etc.	Recreation grants, fundraising, in kind trail development by volunteers
Promote a higher proportion of owner-occupied housing in Spencer.	High	Short-term		<u>Partners-</u> Mayor and City Council	N/A	Lending institutions
Create a diversity of housing options available, including single family, multi-family, owner-occupied and rental occupied units	High	Long-term (on-going)		Private property owners, Mayor and Council	Cost of housing units depends on size and cost of materials at the time	Lending institutions
Enact an ordinance allowing the city to create a vacant property registry and assess a fee on properties meeting the statutory definition of “vacant property or structure.”	High	Short-term		Mayor and Council, City Attorney	Minimal costs to develop the ordinance	General fund. Although funds generated from registry fees can go towards other revitalization efforts.

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Understand the advantages and disadvantages of enacting an uninhabitable property registry.	High	Short-term		Mayor and Council, City Attorney	Staff, elected official time and effort	N/A
Strive to have afterschool activities that go later in the evening	High	Long-term		PATCH 21, Roane County Schools.	Costs dependent on level of service and programming provided	21st Century Community Learning Centers, Child Care and Development Fund, other grant opportunities
Endorse a program tied to the library or an anti-bullying campaign with sports or at events such as the Black Walnut Festival.	High	Long-term		Public library, Black Walnut Festival committee members, public school employees	Costs dependent on level of service and programming provided	Crowdfunding, sponsors,
Hold community activities well into the evening, especially in the summer such as a summer concert series.	High	Short-term		EDA, Chamber, nonprofit organization	Cost can be lowered holding it on public property, being part of a regional event series	Performing arts grants, sponsorship, private donations
Create a youth advisory board to provide a platform for youth to meaningfully participate in addressing community concerns.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partners-</u> Roane County Schools	School and City staff time and effort, costs should be minimal.	General Funds
Invest in youth activities, education, and creating a safe environment to attract and retain young families.	High	Short-term		EDA, City Officials, Roane County Schools	Costs vary on size and scope of activities	Fundraising, private donations, grant funding

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Goal 4: Enhance Economic Development						
Market potential development sites regionally and encourage small business entrepreneurs to establish their business in Spencer.	High	Short-term		Roane County EDA, Spencer Development Authority; <u>Partner-</u> West Virginia Development Office	Marketing can be relatively low cost, depending on medium and area of marketing	Authorities' funds
Establishing a late-night event downtown once a month could incentivize some businesses to stay open later during certain times.	High	Short-term		Chamber of Commerce; <u>Partners-</u> businesses, City of Spencer	Minimal costs for marketing and advertising	Chamber funds, grant funding
Encourage, through zoning, small scale agriculture in town such as apiaries, if there are safety precautions in place such as minimum lot size, drinking water on site, a flyway barrier and having the hives setback from a lot line. High tunneling or aquaponics can also be encouraged in Spencer.	Low	Long-term		Mayor and Council; <u>Partners-</u> planning commission, local apiculturists	Estimated costs for starting a beehive are approximately \$500 for first hive and around \$300 for each additional hive	USDA- Rural Enterprise Grant, WV Beekeepers Association grants
Work with existing business owners to ensure there is someone available to take over when the original owner wants to retire.	Low	Long-term		Roane County Development Authority, Chamber, Spencer Development Authority	Transactional costs	Private funds
Understand the advantages and disadvantages of creating a shared workspace for local entrepreneurs who are starting up and need space but may not need or can afford their own business space.	Moderate	Moderate-term		EDA, Chamber, Spencer Development Authority; <u>Partners-</u> WV Hive, local colleges and universities	Time and effort	N/A
Local officials could work with students of local colleges and universities including, Glenville State College or West Virginia University-Parkersburg to develop business incubators, startups, or shared workspace in Spencer.	Moderate	Moderate-term		Local elected officials; <u>Partners-</u> local colleges and universities	Significant set up and maintenance costs. Several thousand dollars	Grant funding, sponsorship, partnership with institutes of higher education
Encourage business growth online, through marketing and sales	Moderate	Moderate-term		Chamber, EDA; <u>Partner-</u> institutes of higher education	Staff time and effort	General fund

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Periodically host the Roane County EDA and allow them to explain their programs and to answer questions.	High	Short-term		Mayor and Council; <u>Partner</u> -Roane County EDA	Time and effort	N/A
Enhance already established events	High	Short-term		Faith based organizations, fraternal organizations, event organizers	Costs dependent on scope and type of activity	general fund, sponsorship, in kind donations.
Answer the questions of “what makes us unique and why would someone want to visit here as opposed to somewhere else?” “Do we have the amenities in place for tourism to flourish?” “Is lodging and dining available, if so, are there different options, are there activities, what is the main draw?”	High	Short-term		Mayor and Council; <u>Partners</u> -planning commission, business owners, citizens	Time and effort	N/A
Study the need for additional lodging options, including short term rentals in Spencer.	High	Short-term		City Staff, Planning Commission; <u>Partners</u> -interested property owners	Time and effort of staff and planning commission	General fund
Consider the creation of a local Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to help promote the area and bring in commerce and tourism.	Moderate	Moderate-term		City and County Elected Officials; <u>Partner</u> - Spencer Development Authority	Time and effort to create	One of the primary sources of funding for CVBs are hotel and occupancy tax, need overnight lodging first
Encourage the development of local craft brewery as a regional and local draw.	Moderate	Moderate-term		City and County EDAs; <u>Partners</u> - planning commission, Mayor and City Council	Nano brewery start ups can cost \$30,000, will likely cost upwards of \$250,000 or more to start a brewery	Loans, private fundraising, startup and seed funding
Promote the expansion and continued development of the arts in Spencer and Roane County, as it is seen as a strength in the community.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partner</u> - Local Artisan Community, Chamber of Commerce	time and effort, monetary costs for marketing	General fund

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Goal 5: Supplemental Objectives and Action Steps						
Continue to support the upkeep of the downtown middle school facility to include landscaping	High	Long-term (on-going)		Roane County Schools; <u>Partner</u> - interested citizens	Costs dependent on type of project, but many projects can be low cost	In kind work, private donations
Support expanded offerings for students at the Roane-Jackson Technical Center.	High	Short-term		Roane County Schools	Time and effort	School funds
Encourage the proliferation of adult education offerings for Spencer and Roane County residents, including basic business, administrative assistance, accounting, medical coding for billing.	High	Short-term		Roane County Schools	Costs for additional educators, usage of buildings	School funds
Ensure through land use tools that there is adequate housing for seniors which include assisted living, nursing homes and independent living units.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partner</u> - Private property owners	Costs dependent on type of housing developed.	Private equity
Promote habitable and well-maintained rentals with a focus for young working-class families.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partner</u> - Private property owners	N/A	N/A
Ensure there is adequate residential parking in Spencer.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission	Parking costs depend on off-street, on street number of spaces, surfacing	Transportation funds, general funds
Continue to encourage residential units above or behind commercial units, especially in the downtown area.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission; <u>Partner</u> - property owners	Time and Effort	N/A
Ensure that there is a more even proportion of owner-occupied dwelling units to renter-occupied units.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council; <u>Partner</u> - property owners	N/A	N/A
Consider the best uses for some of the few undeveloped areas of Spencer, including behind Wal-Mart and Miletree Lake.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission	Time and Effort	N/A

Recommendation	Priority	Timeframe	Page Number	Primary Party Responsible and any Recommended Partners	Costs & Financing	Funding Sources
Determine what types of incentives should be utilized for future growth and development in the identified preferred development areas.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission	Time and Effort	N/A
Analyze the existing zoning ordinance and determine what, if anything needs to be updated and amended to conform to contemporary best practices and the desires of the community.	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals	Time and Effort	N/A
Consider adding sections to the zoning ordinance to include façade improvements and signage in certain areas of town.	Low	Long-term		Mayor and Council, Planning Commission	Time and Effort	General funds
Ensure there are adequate resources in place for the City to properly enforce their floodplain ordinance to ensure that residents that need to purchase flood insurance can through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)	High	Short-term		Mayor and City Council <u>Partner</u> - WV Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, FEMA Region III	Staff time and effort	General funds