



**COMMUNITY
ACTION PLAN**

RECREATION ECONOMY
for
RURAL COMMUNITIES

**Town of Buchanan,
Virginia**

2023



Northern Border
Regional Commission



Appalachian
Regional
Commission



PROJECT CONTACTS

For more information about the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program, please visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>

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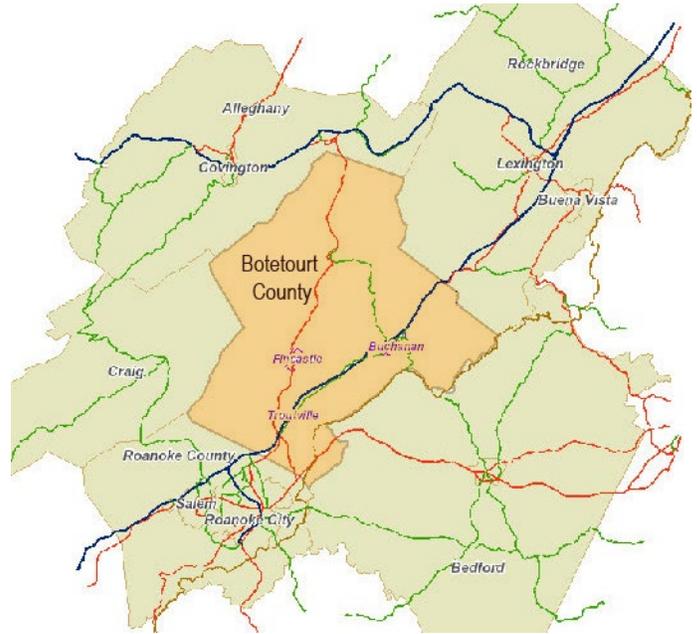
PLAN CONTEXT

Buchanan, Virginia, was selected as one of 25 communities across the nation to receive planning assistance through the second round of the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program. This program, sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the USDA Forest Service (USDA FS), the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), helps communities develop action plans to strengthen outdoor recreation and revitalize downtowns. Buchanan requested planning assistance to support efforts to strengthen connections between its downtown and outdoor recreation opportunities.

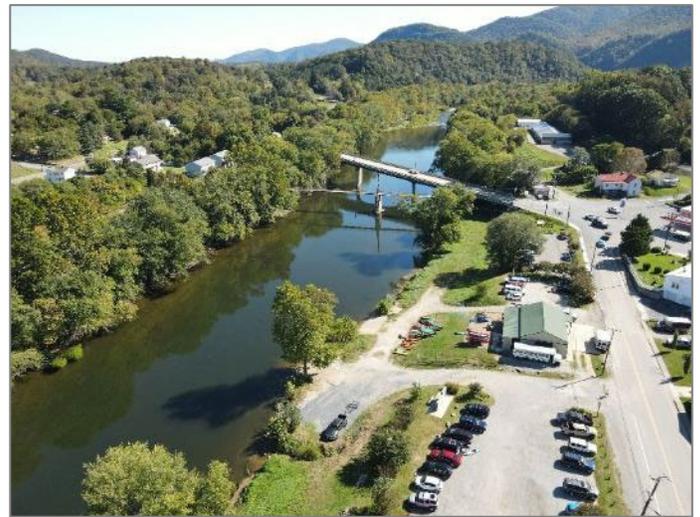
Buchanan, Virginia, was established in 1811 and is named after the prominent Buchanan family in the area. The town was strategically located along the James River and Kanawha Canal, which played a significant role in the town's development and economic growth.

The 2.5 square mile town, nestled between the Allegheny and the Blue Ridge Mountains, is a traditionally tight-knit, blue-collar community that housed three major industrial employers: Carneuse Lime & Stone, still operating today, and Virginia Forge and the Groendyk Factory, which have both closed. During the mid-19th century, Buchanan thrived as a transportation hub due to its canal and later railroad connections. It became an important point for the shipment of goods, particularly agricultural products, minerals, and timber. This period of growth contributed to the expansion of the town's economy and population.¹

Over the years, Buchanan faced challenges like economic fluctuations and changes in transportation methods. As the importance of canals and railroads diminished, the town adapted to new modes of



Botetourt County and Buchanan context map. Source: Botetourt GIS, <https://www.webgis.net/va/botetourtco/>



Aerial view of Buchanan and the James River. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan/SkyCam

¹ The context information provided in this here came from the application the Town made to RERC, or the Town's website. Town of Buchanan Website.

<https://www.townofbuchanan.com/> Accessed November 1, 2023

transportation and shifted its focus toward other industries.

US Route 11, a state road, coincides with the town's Main Street, which serves as an alternate route for I-81. Neighborhoods consisting of low and medium density are gridded on either side of the James River which flows through the middle of town.

Today, Buchanan celebrates its history with various events and festivals, including the Buchanan Carnival, held annually since 1902. The town also features historic architecture and landmarks that reflect its past.

Buchanan's Revitalization program started almost 30 years ago, following a year of participatory design workshops with the Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) at Virginia Tech. The CDAC is an outreach center in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design that employs students and provides planning and design assistance to communities and non-profit organizations throughout Virginia. Some of the design workshop results included more than 8.5 million dollars of private sector investment, with an additional 2-3 million dollars of investment taking place in 2022.

THE OPPORTUNITY

RERC gives the Town of Buchanan the opportunity to build on more than two decades of revitalization work. Recreation has become an organic outgrowth of the community's revitalization efforts. As new residents and businesses choose Buchanan as their home, these new eyes see assets and new opportunities, which were once considered obstacles.

This change in attitudes toward the Town's multiple outdoor recreation opportunities has contributed to a renewed sense of pride along with the preservation of historic and natural resources. In addition, it has attracted new residents, businesses, and investors which generate new jobs and produce additional tax revenue.

The RERC process is in keeping with past efforts to generate participatory design involving local citizens, elected officials, business leaders, community leaders,



Interpretative historical installation, near the river and swinging bridge. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan



Twin River Outfitters chose this location because of the direct river access downtown. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan/StartCitySkyCam



In the late 1990s-early 2000s, the Town planted cherry trees along Main Street. Their prime blossom period in spring draws visitors from across the region. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan Website.

regional partners, and outdoor enthusiasts. The Steering Committee that was formed through the RERC process identified RERC as a great opportunity to prepare a roadmap to leverage the town's historical and outdoor resources to benefit all citizens of the community.

“Given the resources in our area we could be providing so many more opportunities to our community.” – Survey Respondent

The town is experiencing a surge of recreation interest due in part to the Town Park that is adjacent to the James River. The park's name has changed over the years; once adjacent to the school, it was called the School Ground, then the Carnival Ground, as that festival draws over 10,000 people annually, and is now being referred to as Buchanan Town Park, serving the whole community. Another strong draw is the unique pedestrian Swinging Bridge, a half-block from Buchanan's downtown core. However, there is no master plan to guide future development of outdoor recreation amenities, to identify public and private opportunities, and to provide connectivity between the nearby Blue Ridge Parkway, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the Upper James River Water Trail, and the US Bicycle Route 76², part of the TransAmerica Trail. There is a strong need for biking and pedestrian connectivity from these assets to downtown and to the rest of the commercial corridor.

Following the Main Street approach, the community has worked with multiple stakeholders (private sector, volunteers, public agencies) to make incremental improvements to the community's main street, building stock, business mix, and public spaces – as well as adding a comprehensive Calendar of Events. Clear and safe navigation is needed around the railroad tracks on

² Bicycle Route 76, a part of the TransAmerica Trail, runs from Missouri to Yorktown. Bikecentennial, a predecessor to U.S. Bike Route 76 (USBR 76), was a series of cross-country bicycle tours in commemoration of the bicentennial of America's Declaration of Independence. Along with USBR 1, it is one of the two original U.S. Bicycle Routes established by AASHTO. Source: US Bicycle Route 76, A study of the Roanoke Valley – Alleghany Region. <https://rvarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Virginia-Bicycle-Route-76-Final.pdf> November 2017.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Community Point of Contact: **George Hayfield**,
Town Manager, Town of Buchanan,

Co-Point of Contact: **Dr. Molly O'Dell**,
Recreation enthusiast and Planning
Commission.

Daniel Bratcher, Resident, Appalachian Trail
Hiker

Jessie Burton, Resident, Events Committee,
Gauge Dock

Mike Burton, Resident, Events Committee,
Gauge Dock

Luke Campbell, Economic Development with
Botetourt County

Katie Conner, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Harry Gleason, Resident, formerly with Town
of Buchanan

Tristan Harris, Mayor of Buchanan

Rose Jeter, Agricultural Technology Program,
Virginia Tech

Melissa Lucas, Botetourt Resource Center

John Mays, Twin River Outfitters

Ken McFadyen, Economic Development with
Botetourt County

Cheryl Morales, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

Teresa Rothwell, Solomon's Mission

Jenny Wilson, School Board and Town
Resident

Eddie Wells, RVA Regional Commission

Robin Bruns, RVA Regional Commission

This local steering committee was formed to help prepare for the process, develop goals for the workshop, complete a self-assessment, and generally assist in logistics and coordination for the RERC process in Buchanan.

the south side of the river to encourage more walking into Buchanan. This lack of connectivity hinders pedestrian activity and weakens a physical and psychological link between the adjacent residential neighborhoods and the downtown.

“I’ve seen such a transformation of the community. We’re seeing people choose to live here because they love recreation activities, the people, and the beauty.”
– Harry Gleason, Buchanan Resident

Buchanan has laid the groundwork for the next phase of planning, including through the following efforts:

- Brownfields Grant resulting in the purchase and adaptive reuse of the historic Button Factory and old High School for 22 apartments and a brewpub.
- Establishment of the Buchanan Real Estate Investment Grant for Blight Elimination.
- Botetourt County Recreational Incentive Fund for Town Park Improvements.
- Purchase and renovation of several main street buildings.

These efforts, and many others in Buchanan, set the stage for the community to participate in the RERC program to continue to advance their outdoor recreation and main street revitalization goals.



The iconic swinging bridge has become a popular stopping point and a draw to the Town of Buchanan. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan/StartCitySkyCam

FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCY PARTNERS

Federal Agency Point of Contact: **Steph Bertaina**, U.S. EPA Office of Community Revitalization

Alexandria Anderson, USDA Rural Development

Terry Austin, VA State Delegate

Betty Barnes, U.S. EPA Region 3

Plinio Beres, USDA Forest Service, George Washington & Jefferson National Forests

Kevin Brandt, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation (Blue Ridge Rising)

Julie Childers, Office of Environmental Justice

Jaclyn Courter, Appalachian Regional Commission

Nicole Dias, WV Brownfields Assistance Center at West Virginia University

Ellie Dudding-Mcfadden, Virginia Main Street Program

Dan Goldeen, USDA Forest Service

Grace Gontarek, U.S. EPA Region 3

Edward Gonzalez, National Park Service

Caroline Guo, USDA Forest Service

Anne Herring, USDA Rural Development

Nathan Hilbert, NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

Bettina Jones, Appalachian Regional Commission

Megan Martin, USDA Forest Service

Charlie Rickard, Virginia Health Department

Lauren Stull, USDA Forest Service

James Thompson, USDA Forest Service

Karen Weber, VA State Brownfields Office, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

These federal and state agency partners participated in the RERC process in Buchanan to support the community’s goals and action planning efforts. These partners, combined with the consultant team, made up the Planning Assistance Team for this process.

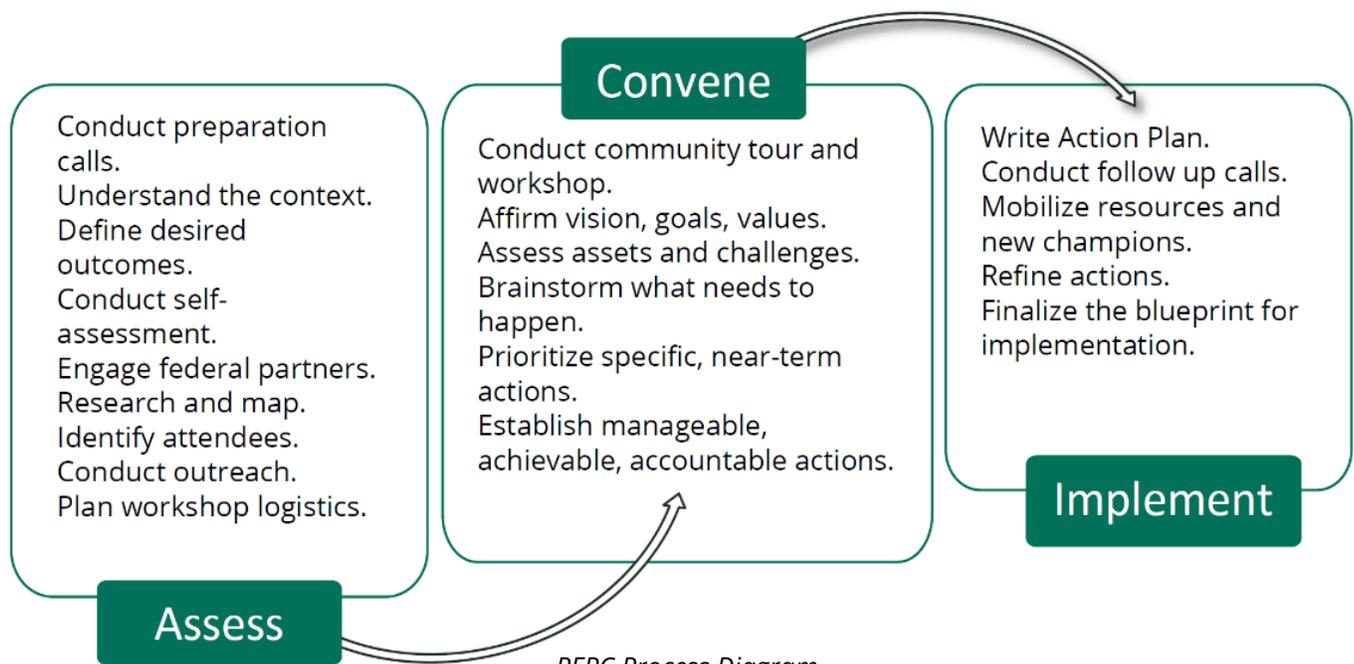
PLANNING PROCESS

The RERC planning assistance process consists of three phases, illustrated in the diagram below: Assess, Convene, and Implement. The “Assess” phase includes three conference calls with the Steering Committee and Planning Assistance Team to gain a baseline understanding of the community, clarify local goals, and arrange workshop logistics. The “Convene” phase is focused on the capstone event—a two-day public workshop. The “Implement” phase entails three follow-up conference calls to finalize the community action plan and strategize on how to maintain the momentum generated at the workshop and implement the plan. Buchanan’s workshop is described briefly below. The workshop contact list is provided in **Appendix A**, workshop exercise results in **Appendix B**, funding and technical assistance resources in **Appendix C**, recreation and downtown-related references in **Appendix D**, pre-workshop survey results in **Appendix E**, possible trail connections in Appendix F, and a detailed plan for the Gauge Dock in **Appendix G**.



Group photo prior during the community tour at the RERC workshop in Buchanan, taken in front of an old American Elm tree. Photo credit: EPA/Consulting team.

THE WORKSHOP



COMMUNITY TOUR

The RERC workshop with Buchanan took place on July 13 -14, 2023. The first day began with a community tour organized by the Steering Committee and included the Planning Assistance Team and federal and state partners. The tour stops allowed the group to explore and discuss the assets, history, possibilities, and challenges of each.

Step 1: The Tour began at **Wilson Warehouse**, where the workshop sessions were hosted. A place steeped in history and artistic significance, the paintings on display here were by Edward Beyer, an accomplished American artist.

The group visited the outside patio featuring an American Elm. This mighty tree, boasting a trunk circumference of 17 feet, has stood the test of time, surviving the elm blight. From this vantage point, the group also saw a view of Purgatory Mountain, a reminder of the region's geological and cultural heritage. Purgatory Mountain, once known as "Toryeaga" by the local Monacan tribe, holds within its name the echoes of the past. The transformation of its name from "Toryeaga" to "Purgatory" reflects the changing narratives of history and the complex layers of meaning that are woven into the landscape.

The floodwaters of November 5, 1985, are also etched into the memory of the building, narrating the story of a community's perseverance in the face of adversity. The focus on river and flood levels is a testament to the town's ongoing relationship with the waterways that have shaped its history.

Step 2: Buchanan Town Park – Festivals and Transformation. Buchanan Town Park is more than just a green space; it's a canvas where history, culture, and community converge. The longevity of events like the Buchanan Carnival, with a remarkable 69-year tradition, allowed tour participants to discuss the town's rich festivals.

The connection to nature is evident in Buchanan's recognition as a Tree City USA community. The deliberate efforts to reduce runoff and erosion through



The historic Wilson Warehouse served as the host venue for the workshop. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



Town Park is a central point for the community, has great river access, and hosts several popular festivals and carnivals through the year. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan /StarCitySkyCam



Harry Gleason, Town Planner, guiding a walk of Town Park, noting the carefully chosen tree plantings that provide a colorful view from the Blue Ridge Parkway. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants

thoughtful scenic planting strategies, cherry trees for spring tourism, and other species to pull in the fall color, demonstrate a harmonious relationship with the environment, echoing practices from centuries past when indigenous communities interacted with the land sustainably.

The park's transformation from a "drinking camp" to a vibrant community hub showcases the power of rejuvenation. The park has had a changing narrative, once called the school ground, then changed to carnival ground, and now is known as a community park.

Stop 3: River Gauge Dock at the Canal – Historical Crossroads. Standing by the River Gauge Dock at the Canal, tour participants were transported to a time when the James River was a lifeline of commerce and connection. The site's history intertwines with that of Thomas Jefferson, who played a pivotal role in designing this pre-railroad transportation network. This dock was once a bustling hub, where cargo weights were calculated by displacement.

Stop 4: Twin River Outfitters – Connecting with Nature. Twin River Outfitters embodies the spirit of adventure and connection to possibility with Buchanan's assets. John Mays, along with his brother Dan, has carried forward the legacy of exploration and outdoor engagement. The 24 jobs here, along with the additional six at the satellite location, represent opportunities for the community to thrive while embracing the region's natural beauty.

The canoe rentals, tubing, camping, and day trips offered by Twin River Outfitters honor the historical river-based transportation that once defined this area.

Acquiring land for expansion could alleviate pressure on residential areas and pave the way for additional camping, parking, and trails, linking the present with the past in harmonious coexistence.

Stop 5: Swinging Bridge – Bridging Time and Transportation. The Swinging Bridge serves as a connection and story of transportation evolution defined by the town. The Bridge has brought a new



The tour stroll through Town Park. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



Harry Gleason, Town Planner, explaining the history of the gauge dock, which was the terminus of the Kanawha canal that ran from Richmond to Buchanan. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



The Buchanan Theater at night. Photo credit: Town of Buchanan/StartCitySkyCam

surge of visitation, and not just human visitors. The influx of Canadian geese and the invasive species they leave behind is a challenge faced by the community.

Stop 6: Downtown Main Street – Revitalization and Community. Downtown Main Street is a beautiful one-mile walk through historic buildings, dating back to the early 19th century. From burying utility lines to creating pocket parks, the town's investment in its urban landscape reflects its commitment to providing a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

The revival of the theater, facilitated by non-profit efforts and run by volunteers, evokes the role of arts and culture. The presence of antiques and arts-oriented businesses echoes a long-standing tradition of creativity and craftsmanship. The local library, used by many Appalachian Trail hikers, has a uniquely hospitable feel with a freshly painted outdoor mural depicting town features on the back side of the building.

Agritourism is growing as well, with the fourth generation-owned Beaver Dam Farm hosting a sunflower festival, the largest sunflower and vendor show on the East Coast.

The Edward Beyer painting of Buchanan is proudly displayed in the town bank and speaks to the connection between history, art, and the community's identity. Beyer's portrayal of the town in 1855 immortalizes a moment in time.

Stop 7: The Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail, are only a short three-mile drive from Buchanan. Tour participants discussed possibilities of connecting these regional assets with those in town, and chatted about how the Buchanan Tri, a local race, encapsulates this journey, uniting athleticism and community spirit in a reflection of the town's multifaceted identity.

Stop 8: Elementary School and Limestone Park The group's final stops were on the south side of town and included a stop at the local elementary school's new walking track and playground. The school is somewhat isolated from the center of town, but there is a potential for connecting the school to town via a river walk. Just

TOUR REFLECTIONS A POEM

In Buchanan, a community united, outdoor assets and pride ignited.

Wilson Warehouse with Edward Beyer's art, an American Elm, nature's rarest part.

Buchanan Town Park, festivals galore, passive activities, lights that adore.

River access, reducing runoff's might, preserving history, a scenic delight.

Twin River Outfitters, adventures await, camping, tubing, a riverside escape.

Swinging Bridge, a town's transformation, witnessing transportation's formation.

Downtown Main Street, history on display, investments and renovations pave the way.

Agritourism blooms, sunflowers in bloom, theater revival. Volunteers are the foundational boom.

Outdoor triathlons, A.T. Community's dream, elementary school, new tracks gleam.

Limestone Park Ministries, a pool and more, walkable pathways, connections to adore.

Connecting trails, adding dog parks too, sustainable growth, preserving what's true.

Addressing parking and access with care, improving fields and pathways. A community to share.

In Buchanan, themes of recreation arise, nature's beauty, community ties.

With suggestions and needs, progress will unfold, a town of adventure, a story yet untold.

The consultant team took notes on their reflections from the tour, generated this poem with an AI assistant, and created the final version with edits from the consultant team for accuracy.

down the way, Limestone Park offers several visitors a stay with RV sites, a pool, and pickleball courts for community members. Named after the quarry, several churches acquired the property, making it a 501c3 to support resources as a community organization.

DAY ONE: July 13

Over 55 Buchanan residents and federal, state, and regional partners attended the workshop. The opening community meeting was held on the evening of July 13, 2023 at the Wilson Warehouse. Harry Gleason, the lead point of contact and Steering Committee member for the RERC project, and Triston Harris, Mayor, welcomed attendees and emphasized the exciting opportunity that this workshop provided to further Buchanan's success.

Harry Gleason, Community Planner, provided a presentation from the Steering Committee, sharing key changes and opportunities in the community including the asset of the Buchanan Town Park, the 60,000 people coming through every year now, several private sector investments, two big brownfields projects, selling of the high school, the hosting of 20-40 community events, the reuse of the button factory, and multiple future projects including marketing, signage, and streetscape enhancements.

Jessie and Mike Burton then shared a video about the history, impact, and possibilities of the Canal Gauge Dock, a historic tourist destination. All attendees introduced themselves and included one word that they felt described their community (see Word Cloud summarizing those responses, below).

The Planning Assistance Team then gave an overview of the RERC program, highlighting the opportunities presented by the growing outdoor recreation economy both nationally and locally. The Team provided data about the outdoor recreation industry in Virginia: at \$9.4 billion total outdoor rec value-added, the industry makes up 1.6% of the state's GDP and offers 106,993³

³ Outdoor Industry Association, Outdoor Foundation. <https://outdoorindustry.org/state/virginia>. Accessed November 1, 2023.



Virginia Tourism's iconic LOVE sign in Buchanan, near the swinging bridge. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



View of the Buchanan Theater, along the tour. The theater is an example of a community-driven project, run and operated as a nonprofit by residents. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



The tour included a stop at the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail. During the workshop, participant brainstormed actions to connect the BRP and AT to town. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants

OPPORTUNITIES

1. River and Outdoor Recreation:

- Enhancing river access for various activities
- Promoting river tourism and the water trail
- Expanding biking opportunities and horse trails
- Utilizing the town park and Limestone Park for outdoor events and activities

2. Community Engagement and Events:

- Strong community involvement and volunteerism
- Hosting community events, festivals, and concerts
- Appreciation for unique stores and restaurants downtown
- Recognizing the importance of historical buildings

3. Housing and Business Development:

- Opportunities for new businesses and restaurants
- Housing developments to support growth and attract residents
- Creating a draw for visitors through enticing attractions and activities

4. Natural Beauty and Wildlife:

- Emphasizing the area's natural beauty, wildlife, and plant life
- Utilizing proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway for scenic experiences
- Protecting farms and maintaining agricultural heritage

5. Improvements and Infrastructure:

- Ongoing improvements to town park and recreational facilities
- Enhancing wayfinding and communication for better navigation
- Creating family-friendly amenities like splash areas and play zones

Summarized responses to the exercise asking participants to identify opportunities. A complete listing of all responses is in Appendix B.

CHALLENGES

1. Marketing and Promotion:

- Lack of awareness and signage for the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) in Buchanan
- Need for updated digital marketing, improved website, and better social media presence
- Lack of coordination and uniformity in marketing efforts
- Buchanan's unfamiliarity to outsiders and the need to enhance its visibility

2. Infrastructure and Accessibility:

- Parking limitations and lack of parking in downtown
- Need for improved water and sewer infrastructure
- Lack of supportive businesses, retail/restaurants, and amenities for handicapped individuals
- Lack of pedestrian pathways and accessibility for disabled individuals

3. Outdoor Recreation and Tourism:

- Lack of a dedicated Tourism Coordinator for Botetourt outdoor amenities
- Need for more activities and attractions to entice visitors to Buchanan
- Educating the public about outdoor amenities and public land opportunities
- Lack of staffing and maintenance for parks and recreation facilities

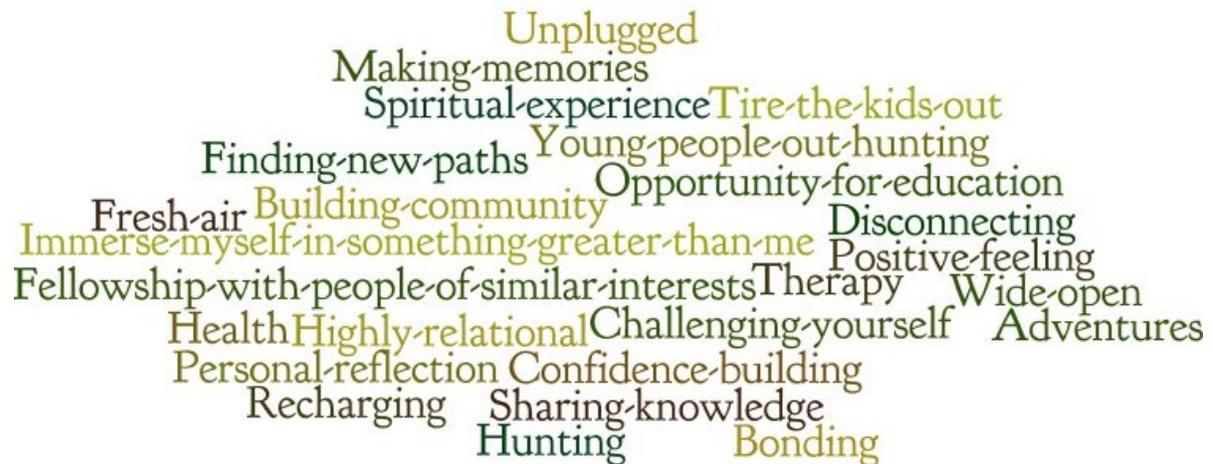
4. Community Engagement and Leadership:

- Lack of involvement from youth
- Need for stronger leadership and town engagement in festivals and activities
- Small business support during off-seasons and better connection between activities

5. Wayfinding and Trail Infrastructure:

- Lack of trail signs, maps, and wayfinding in Buchanan
- Unclear trailhead for hiking in town
- Incorporating site histories into recreational opportunities and planning

Summarized responses to the exercise asking participants to identify challenges. A complete listing of all responses is in Appendix B.



During the workshop, participants were asked “What does outdoor recreation mean to you?” Responses are summarized in the Word Cloud here, and complete answers can be found in Appendix B.

Opportunities identified included river access, community engagement and events, housing and business development, natural beauty and wildlife, and infrastructure improvements.

Several challenges facing Buchanan were also acknowledged, including capacity for growing outdoor recreation and tourism, infrastructure and accessibility, marketing and promotion, and community engagement and leadership.

In the last exercise of the evening, participants envisioned what was possible for the community by crafting aspirational headlines of what they might see in 3-5 years on the front page of the local news. Some inspiring responses are shown here, and a complete listing of all headlines can be found in Appendix B.

DAY TWO: July 14

The second day of the workshop was also held at the Wilson Warehouse, with over 56 total in attendance. Day Two was an interactive day of small group exercises, asset mapping, itinerary development, brainstorming, and planning for actions to make the community’s goals a reality.

The day kicked off with a recap of Day One and the discussion and ultimate approval of the workshop goals. The Planning Assistance Team then presented several case studies relevant to Buchanan’s interests,

MAKING HEADLINES

- *Buchanan Completes River Walk on the James River!*
- *Buchanan Elementary Awarded funding from Jane Goodall Institute for Roots and Shoots Garden and Bee Keeping*
- *Outdoor-themed Boutique Lodge Opens in Buchanan in Former Glo-A-Rama*
- *Buchanan Designated Appalachian Trail Community*
- *Buchanan Rated #1 Small Town in Virginia*
- *Buchanan Opens Hiking Trail on Purgatory and Limestone Opens a Splash Pad*

Some of the “headlines” from the Making Headlines exercise. A complete listing of all responses is in Appendix B.

including river-access improvements in Giles County, Virginia with guest speaker Cora Gnegy, Giles County Tourism Marketing Director. Cora participated in the RERC process in 2020, and she provided a background on Giles County's efforts and their implementation successes so far, and offered to be a resource.

The workshop included several interactive exercises, including an Asset Mapping exercise where workshop participants identified existing outdoor recreation assets, opportunities and big ideas, and supporting community assets. The workshop also included an Itinerary Planning exercise where workshop participants sketched out an ideal two or three-day trip for different types of visitors who might be coming to the area, exploring what activities, lodging, supplies, gear, and transportation they would need to support their visit. Both of these exercises helped to illustrate opportunities and gaps in the outdoor recreation economy and main street revitalization efforts in Buchanan. The summary of these exercises is in Appendix B.

ACTION PLANNING

Following the interactive exercises, workshop participants then engaged in the action planning process. First, participants reflected on their own, brainstorming specific actions that would advance one or more of the workshop goals. They wrote their ideas on post-it notes and were instructed to begin each action with a verb, be as specific as possible, think in the near- to-medium-term (within two years), and consider actions they could help with. Attendees then placed their post-it notes onto posters for each goal, and the Planning Assistance Team grouped and consolidated similar actions. Then each participant was given dot stickers and asked to vote on the highest-priority actions. The Planning Assistance Team tallied the votes, and then participants broke into small groups to assess the voting results and flesh out the details of three to five actions for each goal.

The community action plan that follows documents the workshop goals, actions, and next steps for implementation.



On the first day of the workshop, participants brainstormed opportunities and challenges on post-it-notes. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



Day two of the workshop involved asset mapping and brainstorming for new actions to take to advance the workshop goals. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants



After brainstorming actions by goal, participants voted for the ones they felt were most important, and then worked in small groups to detail each action. Photo credit: EPA/Consultants

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Goal 1 – Physical Outdoor Recreation and Other Critical Infrastructure: Invest in priority projects for new parks, trails, river access, campgrounds, wayfinding/signage, and other needed physical infrastructure, so that residents, visitors, and especially our youth can enjoy all that we have to offer. *(Goal Leads: Daniel Bratcher and John Mays)*

- Action 1.1 – Create an accessible walkway along the river from Buchanan Town Park to Limestone Park that allows for walking, biking, and jogging, with benches to allow for resting and wildlife viewing.
- Action 1.2 – Increase youth activities and school improvements for facilities, including finding walkable safe routes to school connectivity.
- Action 1.3 – Identify and build trail routes to connect downtown to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail (The Buchanan Trail or Bearwallow Trail).

Goal 2 – Business and Organizational Support and Connections: Support existing and new businesses and organizations in the outdoor realm, including hospitality, lodging, retail, the arts, and heritage sectors. *(Goal Leads: Luke Campbell and John Mays)*

- Action 2.1 – Work together with Botetourt County to expand the BOCO WILD branding through partnership with outdoor-related programs, businesses, and organizations in Buchanan.
- Action 2.2 – Provide education and communication regarding available support for small businesses to both current and potential entrepreneurs and enterprises.
- Action 2.3 – Create a volunteer network with a strong communication hub to support special events and volunteer culture.
- Action 2.4 – Support and expand outdoor recreation outfitters and businesses in Buchanan.
- Action 2.5 – Identify the capacity that is needed to support outdoor recreation and tourism initiatives in Buchanan.

Goal 3 – Authenticity and Downtown Revitalization: Consider placemaking strategies to make Buchanan’s downtown a pleasant and authentic place to live and visit, with an intent to retain and conserve the culture, character, and small-town charm of Buchanan for existing residents and visitors alike. *(Goal Leads: Rose Jeter and Steve Griggs)*

- Action 3.1 – Enhance accessibility and streetscaping for Buchanan's downtown.
- Action 3.2 – Create a venue to host cultural events.
- Action 3.3 – Create (or update) a park Master Plan for Town Park and implement recommendations.
- Action 3.4 – Facilitate a strong relationship with Limestone Park for support community improvements.

Goal 4 – Communication and Marketing: Articulate the important role that outdoor recreation can play in economic development and community health, recognizing the value of Buchanan as a center for outdoor recreation in the region. Highlight the ways that outdoor recreation is an asset for the community and region. *(Goal Leads: Katie Conner and Cheryl Morales)*

- Action 4.1 – Develop an interpretive plan for strategic communication.
- Action 4.2 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), incorporate outdoor recreation into the website redesign.
- Action 4.3 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), create wayfinding system.
- Action 4.4 – Create a mini visitor center and hostel out of two brownfield buildings near the gas station.
- Action 4.5 – Apply to become an Appalachian Trail Community.
- Action 4.6 – Forge strong partnerships with the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service to facilitate outdoor access for youth.

Goal I: Physical Outdoor Recreation and Other Critical Infrastructure: Invest in priority projects for new parks, trails, river access, campgrounds, wayfinding/signage, and other needed physical infrastructure, so that residents, visitors, and especially our youth can enjoy all that we have to offer.

Action 1.1 – Create an accessible walkway along the river from Buchanan Town Park to Limestone Park that allows for walking, biking, and jogging with benches to allow for resting and wildlife viewing.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>We need a Riverwalk to give folks a place to enjoy the river. There are many needs that such a project could meet, such as some additional parking, ADA accessible trails, kayak launches, and a paved trail for recreation and a place for physical activity and exercise. This action is also important because it is the connective tissue between the Appalachian Trail connection (Action 1.3) and the Town Park section of the trail (Action 3.3).</p>
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phase 1 (within 1 year): From the swinging bridge to the terrines of the Town Park: ADA accessible path along the park 8-10 feet, slightly elevated, crushed limestone/gravel. ● Phase 1a: Take advantage of potential beach; will need some clearing, will provide immediate access to all citizens to swim in the river, will not cost much, #14 on the opportunity map in Appendix B. Contact landowners to determine their interests, concerns, and get buy in from them. ● Phase 2: Contact Dan + Jon with Twin Rivers Outfitters and the town (Mayor); contact landowners Isabella Watts and Harvey Ransome; work with Susan Granbury from USDA Forest Service – local contact. ● Phase 2: Section between bridge and water treatment plant owned by a couple property owners all in the floodplain; potential for same kind of trail in phase 1 with ADA accessible kayak launch, parking lots, picnic tables. ● Phase 3: Runs along primarily two owners’ property, connecting Phase 1 trail to Limestone Park. Primarily used as a walking trail, would mainly be in a floodplain. Trail committee and town to work with landowners.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visitors and local residents are using the trail ● Health is improving ● Crowds are dispersed ● ADA access is improved ● A treasured asset is utilized well ● When people brag about how wonderful it is ● Affordability and inclusivity in family-fun offerings
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mayor Tristan Harris is working closely with the newly formed Buchanan Citizen Trails Committee (BCTC) ● Daniel Bratcher – Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee ● Ed McCoy ● Morgan Wilson – Town resident, Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies Hollins University

Action 1.1 – Create an accessible walkway along the river from Buchanan Town Park to Limestone Park that allows for walking, biking, and jogging with benches to allow for resting and wildlife viewing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Hollingsworth – Town Resident • Jenny Wilson – Botetourt County Public Schools Board Member • Lisa Moyer – Muddy Squirrel LLC • Cheryl Hines – Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club
<p>Supporting cast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Buchanan staff TBD • George Hayfield – Town Manager • RERC Workshop Participants • Community Volunteers • Botetourt County – Mandy Adkins, Botetourt County Parks & Recreation and Jon McCoy, Planner II, Botetourt County Department of Community Development • Connect with Virginia DOT about trail options along the road (Potential contact is Brian Blevins: brian.blevins@vdot.virginia.gov)
<p>Potential needs and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Rescue Plan Act funding • RERC-related grants • Recreational Trails Program Grants (RTP) https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/trailfnd#:~:text=The%20Recreational%20Trails%20Program%20(RTP,tra,ils%20and%20trail%2Drelated%20facilities • Phase 1: \$100,000 in resources needed • Recruit boy scouts to build benches • Botetourt County Capital Funds Greenway Commission • Local quarry for crushed stone/gravel • Phase 2: Resources could include USDA Forest Service Community Forestry Program; buy as 1 omit at least 5 acres to become a community forest • Anne Herring – USDA Rural Development may have resources for accessible equipment • Info on building accessible trails from American Trails: https://www.americantrails.org/resources/accessibility-hub

Action 1.2 – Increase youth activities and school improvements for facilities, including finding walkable safe routes to school connectivity.

<p>What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?</p>	<p>Young people in Buchanan need access to trails and outdoor equipment in order to be able to spend time outside and to live healthy lives. Engaging young people with their local environment through educational activities will help them become invested as stewards and active citizens and will strengthen the community’s future. Ideas for improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a nature walk for elementary school children. • Roots and Shoots
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Action 1.2 – Increase youth activities and school improvements for facilities, including finding walkable safe routes to school connectivity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore Safe Routes to School (SRTS) options • Build a mountain bike skills loop and pump track at the elementary school.
<p>Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update existing playground(s) with new mulch and cost estimates for playground equipment for kids with special needs. • Make a nature walk at the elementary school (Rose Jeter and Mandy Adkins from Botetourt Parks and Recreation are collaborating on this). • Find a champion to connect this project with other trail studies and work. • Create a new park with a walking trail at Buchanan Elementary School that connects to the surrounding neighborhoods. • Connect USDA Forest Service with champions to outline environmental opportunities for facilities and programming. Review VDOT current SRTS parameters to envision where the trail/path is feasible.
<p>Measures of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors and local residents are getting outside • Health is improving • Crowds are dispersed • ADA access is improved
<p>Lead Role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenny Wilson – Botetourt County School Board • Debbie Garrett – School Principal (Jenny to reach out) • Mandy Adkins – Botetourt County Parks and Recreation
<p>Supporting cast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Hayfield – Town of Buchanan • Community Volunteers • Rose Jeter – Resident and Town Council • School parents (maybe PTA? Rose will reach out) • USDA Forest Service • BCTC group to support trails at school and mountain bike course • Molly O’Dell
<p>Potential needs and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation Trail Program (state RTP grant) • Pathfinders for Greenways: https://greenways.org/about-the-greenways/pathfinders-for-greenways/ • Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Kids in Parks: https://www.brpfoundation.org/initiatives/kids-parks • Virginia Association for Environmental Education: https://www.eevirginia.org/ • Recreation Incentive Fund grant opportunity through Botetourt County Parks and Recreation – this is an annual matching grant through Botetourt County. Deadline for 2023-2024 is September 15th. • IMBA Grant • Transportation Alternatives (requires 20% match of local funds) • Virginia Safe Routes to School Safe Routes to School – Programs (Virginia Department of Transportation)

Action 1.3 – Identify and build trail routes to connect downtown to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail (The Buchanan Trail or Bearwallow Trail).

<p>What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?</p>	<p>Along with making Buchanan a designated Appalachian Trail Community, this action provides an opportunity for travelers from the Appalachian Trail to safely visit the town of Buchanan.</p> <p>This action could consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at shuttle options and methods to connect visitors and residents to and from these destinations. • A connected hiking route will also be a short loop for day hikers in and out of BOC. Alternate options include connecting the Buchanan trail along 43 to the river walk, exploring other alternate routes, and getting permission to walk the routes. There should be separated access trails 28"-48" wide for walking. • A second alternative, identified in the mapping exercise (see Appendix B) is access from Bearwallow trailhead, through private land (will need negotiations for right of way/easements) to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) property, which has a road that connects to main street.
<p>Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee evaluates options to connect downtown with trails. • Committee members to speak with landowners about access to FCC property. • Start communicating with landowners to explore the possibility of easements and/or access. • Reach out to Crown communication, owner of the cell tower property, which presents one possible new trail connection from the AT to town. • Identify landowners willing to allow trail access from town to Bearwallow of another trailhead. • Identify funding sources to build and maintain trails.
<p>Measures of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People have safe access to the Buchanan trail/town from the Appalachian Trail • Landowners agree with plans • Easements are in place • Funding is in place for the project
<p>Lead Role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly formed Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee (BCTC) • Mike Hollingsworth – Coordinator • Morgan Wilson – Town resident, Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies Hollins University • Jenny Wilson – Botetourt County Public Schools Board Member • Lisa Moyer – Muddy Squirrel LLC • Daniel Bratcher – Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee • Ed McCoy • Megan Martin – USDA Forest Service • Tim Miller – Muddy Squirrel LLC

Action 1.3 – Identify and build trail routes to connect downtown to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail (The Buchanan Trail or Bearwallow Trail).	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will need town support
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frank Maguire – Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission • Blue Ridge Off-Road Cyclists – If the identified trail will allow bikes, this group has machinery/tools to build trail and I imagine they would welcome a trail that connects the different existing trails adjacent to the Parkway as these are popular with mountain bikers. https://blueridgeoffroadcyclists.org/ • Nathan Hilbert – National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program • Mandy Adkins – Botetourt County Parks & Recreation • Jon McCoy – Planner II, Botetourt County Department of Community Development • Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Department of Transportation and Just Trails to improve Buchanan trail’s walkability • Apply for National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, Nathan Hilbert • Recreation Incentive Fund grant opportunity through Botetourt County Parks and Recreation – this is an annual matching grant through Botetourt County. Deadline for 2023-2024 is September 15th.

Participants at this Goal Table during the workshop: Jason Espie, Elizabeth Stull, Mike, Jenny, Morgan Wilson, Debi, Isabelle, Tim + Lisa Miller, Eddie Wells, Kip Stone, Molly O’Dell, Katie Conner

Participants also brainstormed these additional action ideas during the workshop. While these actions were not detailed further during the workshop, they could also support implementation of Goal 1.

School:

- International Mountain Bike Association, fuel #1.
- Establish a shaded trail connecting schools and neighborhoods.
- Connect elementary school to town via a trail system, involving property owners.
- Create a pedestrian/bike path between elementary school and Main Street, coordinating with Virginia Department of Transportation.
- Apply for school funding for Buchanan elementary to town connection.

Limestone:

- Construct a splash pad in town (may have to be out of flood zone) or Limestone Park for kids.
- Create a more accessible way to access the river.

Infrastructure Improvements:

- Explore the new idea of branding Arcadia Adventure Area to promote the natural resources of North Creek, Jennings Creek, and Middle Creek.
- Enhance base of route 43 for safety and accessibility.

- Acquire property easement for a hill greenway connecting the Town Park and Limestone Park.
- Establish a downtown trailhead linked to the Appalachian Trail.
- Construct an amphitheater by the river, with input from VA Tech Architects and potential funding from musical figures.
- Write Request for Proposals for managing new facilities and vendors.
- Enhance river beach area, restrooms, and stage in Buchanan Town Park.
- Add covered shelter/stage and walking path to Town Park.
- Collaborate with Star Foundation for outdoor stage sponsorship.
- Ensure Town Park infrastructure supports large events.
- Seek improvements and events through Matt Ramsey Foundation.
- Research cost and feasibility of a kayak launch.
- Acquire "Ransoms Bottom Land" for expanding parking and kayak/canoe-specific boat landing.
- Develop the Arcadia Opportunity area and Adventure Center.
- Prioritize the "Bear Tolley Jeep Loop" for development.
- Create a demonstration project grant and challenge the community.
- Explore creating a paragliding launch pad on Purgatory Mountain.
- Capitalize on camping trends by zoning for van/car camping near downtown.

Goal 2: Business and Organizational Support and Connections: Support existing and new businesses and organizations in the outdoor recreation realm, including hospitality, lodging, retail, the arts, and heritage sectors.

Action 2.1 – Work together with Botetourt County to expand the BOCO WILD branding through partnership with outdoor-related programs, businesses, and organizations in Buchanan.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Expanding the BOCO WILD branding can help promote outdoor recreation, create community ties, increase geographic-specific marketing, and increase walk-in business for local businesses.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask the County if they support using BOCO Wild in this way. ● Present to Town Council + Board of Supervisors (Parks and Rec Department will do the presentation). ● Town Council develops a resolution to support the use of BOCO Wild. ● Explore the specific Buchanan look and feel of the branding. ● Create a coalition of all the community who could support BOCO WILD branding. ● Work in partnership with Parks and Recreation to determine the requirements for being part of the BOCO WILD brand. ● Create bumper stickers. ● Develop the BOCO Wild passport to work towards a goal and encourage use of all our assets.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People refer to BOCO Wild (they know what it is!) ● BOCO Wild branding shows up in local businesses ● # of BOCO Wild bumper stickers on cars ● Increased revenues in the community ● Increased participation in the BOCO Wild Festival
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mandy Adkins – Botetourt County Parks and Recreation ● Ed McCoy – Botetourt 4-H Shooting Education and Hunting Skills Instructor
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● George Hayfield – Town of Buchanan ● Tristan Harris – Mayor of Buchanan ● Sherry Crumley – Short Term Vacation Rental ● Katie Conner – Virginia Tourism Corporation ● Amy White – Botetourt County Board of Supervisors ● John Mays – Botetourt County Parks and Recreation Commission ● Mike Montgomery – Meck’s Pawn & Guns Shop ● Wes Hensley – H&H Outdoors ● Shane Wilson – Department of Wildlife Resources ● Town of Buchanan staff TBD ● Terry Austin – State Delegate – Matt Miller ● Possible agricultural partners

Action 2.1 – Work together with Botetourt County to expand the BOCO WILD branding through partnership with outdoor-related programs, businesses, and organizations in Buchanan.

Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff capacity • Katie Conner – Virginia Tourism Marketing Grant could help • Interns with Botetourt County
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Action 2.2 – Provide education and communication regarding available support for small businesses to both current and potential entrepreneurs and enterprises.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs will help fill vacant storefronts, keep businesses open and viable, create momentum for Buchanan, provide resources for residents, and keep young people in the community.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect all the information about existing grants and technical support for both existing and new businesses. • Identify gaps in information and a plan to fill them. • Leverage the “Botetourt Open for Business Buchanan” report to help startup entrepreneurs. • Establish a merchant’s association. Form a community business arm with Botetourt Chamber of Commerce for new/existing outdoor businesses with Buchanan/Greater Botetourt. • Create a small business recruitment brochure to fill downtown spaces. • Hold a meeting of downtown businesses to assess needs.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High business retention rate • Increased business engagement with each other and the community • Business → community relationship
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Hayfield – Town of Buchanan • Town of Buchanan staff TBD • Heather Fay – Small Business Development Center • Katie Conner – Virginia Tourism Corporation • Chuck Whiting – SCORE • Ken McFadyen – Botetourt County Economic Development
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke Campbell – Botetourt County Economic Development • Anna Muncy (or someone else from the BCOC) – Botetourt Chamber of Commerce, info@botetourtchamber.com • The Gauntlet • Pat Brooks • Scott + Penny Felts – Rocky Top Properties
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity/time • Leadership

Action 2.2 – Provide education and communication regarding available support for small businesses to both current and potential entrepreneurs and enterprises.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Rural Development - Rural Business Development Grant (Anne Herring) • T-Mobile Hometown Grant https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants
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Action 2.3 – Create a volunteer network with a strong communication hub to support special events and volunteer culture.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Supporting existing volunteers and recruiting new ones will help to avoid volunteer burnout, create succession planning for volunteer longevity, tap into new energy and ideas, and pull in young people to contribute to Buchanan’s future. When there is greater transparency in the community organizations that people volunteer for in terms of funding, profits, and grants, this motivates volunteers and fosters a strong and healthy volunteerism culture.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create clear and transparent communications about volunteer opportunities using social media, websites, and other means of communications. • Collaborate with current volunteer efforts and groups, like the Town Improvement Society, Natural Bridge A.T. Club, and others. • Research best practices that are used by similar towns to host events that utilize volunteers. This may include developing new partnerships/collaborations with nonprofit organizations. • Identify the role of the Special Events Committee. Update the structure and process for volunteer organizing and develop a consistent meeting schedule. • Foster and support volunteerism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand the volunteer cadre for local events (like the Buchanan Tri). ○ Restructure special events in Buchanan → create a committee to explore + create a strategic plan that does not supplement town budget, but profits go back into special events and community grants only. ○ Explore opportunities with National Forest Trail Maintenance – Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club. ○ Develop a youth community conservation corps to be trail ambassadors and mountaineers.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More volunteers are plugged in • Younger people are volunteering • More events can be supported
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose Jeter – Resident and Town Council • Stacey Brugh – Resident • Pat Jasper – Town Improvement Society
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Buchanan staff TBD

Action 2.3 – Create a volunteer network with a strong communication hub to support special events and volunteer culture.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Room Only (nonprofit that manages the local theater) • Friends of Library • Special Events Committee • Buchanan Presbyterian Food Pantry • Town Council • Lions Club
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to coordinate • Town council buy-in

Action 2.4 – Support and expand outdoor recreation outfitters and businesses in Buchanan.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Having more outdoor recreation businesses will create more energy, support businesses, and provide more opportunities for economic development and outdoor recreation. This action supports Action 2.2’s focus on forming a new merchants’ association.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the existing Small Business Development Center Outdoor Economy Plan (revisit the 2019 Small Business Development Center Outdoor Economy Study). • Develop an outdoor recreation gear lending library by reaching out to example organizations to learn from their development: • Examples include: Maine Gear Share: https://www.maine-gearshare.org/ Glenwoods Springs CO Gear Library: https://www.glenwoodrec.com/260/Gear-Library • Support existing + create new outdoor recreation businesses: work with existing outfitter businesses to expand goods for sale to new user groups. Determine where there are gaps in products by surveying user groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruit bicycle outfitter tour by providing trail maps and funds for marketing materials/help and partnering with advertising. ○ Partner with existing businesses to expand offerings that cover gaps i.e., Twin Rivers (shuttle for bicyclists, rentals); H&H Outdoor Gear sales/rentals. ○ Create a beautification program around an outdoor theme and give small grants to support. • Support small businesses with grants, toolkits, and connections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore possible investments or partnerships with small businesses to bring more opportunities and activities for visitors. ○ Work with Botetourt Chamber of Commerce to provide a resource and support system for existing and new businesses. ○ Providing grants/funds for new businesses in town and getting their start, helping them to keep their doors open.

Action 2.4 – Support and expand outdoor recreation outfitters and businesses in Buchanan.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a toolkit for businesses so they can answer questions, ambassador hospitality kit. ● Create grant program or loan fund to support campground outdoor recreation business development. ● Make connections with organizations that offer grants and funding for small businesses in small towns.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More money spent in Buchanan ● Businesses are thriving
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Luke Campbell – Botetourt County Economic Development, lcampbell@botetourtva.gov ● Ken McFadyen – Botetourt County Economic Development, kmcfadyen@botetourtva.gov ● Heather Fay – Small Business Development Center, hfay@roanokesmallbusiness.org ● Anna Muncy (or someone else from the BCOC) – Botetourt Chamber of Commerce, info@botetourtchamber.com, offered to connect with county and town officials to collaborate.
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Town/Town Council ● Katie Conner – Virginia Tourism Corporation
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Merchants Association ● USDA Rural Development - Rural Business Development Grant (Anne Herring)

Action 2.5 – Identify the capacity that is needed to support outdoor recreation and tourism initiatives in Buchanan.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Consider whether there is a need to hire a tourism director in the County, or whether the capacity is available elsewhere. This could connect multiple communities and elevate main streets' capacity, such as Buchanan, Troutville, Eagle Rock, and Fincastle.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify capacity needed and funding structure for supporting a position. ● Prioritize action plan needs and create job description. ● Ideas from community meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organize a fundraising group who has a say where the money is used in the goals. Teach grant writing as a priority. ○ Hire a marketing firm and/or work with partners (Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge) to create a strategic marketing plan. ○ Work with County to obtain funding for main streets coordinator for Buchanan, Fincastle, and Troutville.

Action 2.5 – Identify the capacity that is needed to support outdoor recreation and tourism initiatives in Buchanan.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a public relations position to produce media releases and daily social media.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A new Recreation Director or Tourism Director is hired to support and implement the RERC Action Plan.
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Luke Campbell – Botetourt County Economic Development, lcampbell@botetourtva.gov ● George Hayfield – Town of Buchanan
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cheryl Morales – Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge ● Tristin Harris – Town of Buchanan ● Katie Conner – Virginia Tourism Corporation ● Amy White – Botetourt Board of Supervisors for district where Buchanan resides
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding for the position

Participants at this Goal Table during the workshop: Ed McCoy, Teri McCoy, Tristan Harris, Sherry Crumley, Mandy Adkins, Pat Jasper, Amy White, Luke Campbell, Steph Bertaina, Rose Jeter, Ken McFadyen

Participants also brainstormed these additional action ideas during the workshop. While these actions were not detailed further during the workshop, they could also support implementation of Goal 2.

- Outreach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) organizations to bring in more diverse recreationists and build relationships.
- Organize community hikes/rides/paddles led by a local “expert” on local trails/water.
- Develop lodging opportunities:
 - Connect (or reconnect) lodging businesses into Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge resources.
 - Give short-term rental grant and or incentives to provide more lodging opportunities while maintaining our small-town charm.
 - Create more temporary lodging i.e., hotels for professional individuals looking for a break from the “big city.”
 - Develop lodging businesses with a trail shuttle service to the AT.
 - Consider creating a AT hikers Hostel, modeled on the one in Damascus, VA.
 - Bridging Peaks of Otter – Arcadia – Natural Bridge as places to stay, but including visits in Buchanan as part of their day.

Goal 3: Authenticity and Downtown Revitalization: Consider placemaking strategies to make Buchanan’s downtown a pleasant and authentic place to live and visit, with an intent to retain and conserve the culture, character, and small-town charm of Buchanan for existing residents and visitors alike.

Action 3.1 – Enhance accessibility and streetscaping for Buchanan's downtown.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Enhancing accessibility and improving streetscaping is important to improve access to downtown for people with disabilities and for everyone else. It will also increase safety, encourage entry to local businesses, and provide a unified look. This action aims to maintain and preserve the town's cultural essence, character, and small-town allure while creating an environment that is easy to navigate and aesthetically appealing.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map/inventory sidewalks and identify needs for improvements. • Contact stakeholders, including business owners. Gather data through surveys, interviews, and observations from residents, visitors, and local businesses. Understand their perspectives on the existing accessibility challenges and streetscape aesthetics. • Based on the collected data, identify key areas that require improvement in terms of accessibility and streetscaping. This could include sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, landscaping, seating, and other elements. • Incorporate outdoor themes into public art (e.g., murals, sculptures, etc.). • Implement strategies for improved accessibility and streetscaping in Buchanan's downtown, ensuring that the area becomes a welcoming and genuine destination for both residents and visitors.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian activity is the primary mode of transportation downtown • All residents and visitors can safely and easily access downtown businesses and amenities
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Buchanan staff TBD • Brian Blevins – Virginia Department of Transportation • Town Council • Tristan Harris – Mayor of Buchanan
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan McCoy – Botetourt County Planning Department • Downtown business owners • Contractors
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master plan • Community Development Block Grant • Virginia Department of Transportation funds

Action 3.2 – Create a venue to host cultural events.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Creating a venue for cultural events in Buchanan will provide a place to hold community activities and to potentially serve as a location for a farmers’ market.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify locations: Town Park, Gauge Dock, Community House, Limestone Park, County-owned property adjacent to Elementary School, potential green space owned by Factory Flats. Determine whether property needs to be acquired and who will maintain it. Obtain the property and being holding events.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inaugural event(s) take place
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pat Jasper – Town Improvement Society
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chad Epperly – Limestone Park Kathy Austin – Standing Room Only (non-profit that manages the theater) Town Council – encouraging use of Town Park for events
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Community Facilities grant and loan program with USDA Rural Development (Anne Herring) Virginia Main Street (Ellie Dudding-McFadden)

Action 3.3 – Create (or update) a park Master Plan for Town Park and implement recommendations.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>The Town Park plays a central role in the community for recreation, community events, and festivals. The Park has been lovingly cared for with thoughtful tree plantings and serves multiple uses and hosts many events. It is a multi-use space and existing uses need to be considered in any planning process. A 2013 plan for the Park was conducted by Engineering Concepts, and it was obtained by Steve Grigg, the lead for this action. This study can be used to inform and update the Master Plan. This Plan could include a phasing plan, could evaluate all the existing assets and current uses, and then could imagine other potential uses, needs, and infrastructure improvements to make this an even greater community asset. Updating Town Park is also an economic development improvement as it will increase visitation and bring more dollars and visitors to town. Some ideas for potential Town Park improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for the extension of the trail from Town Park to water Limestone quarry (Action 1.1), and eventually the AT (Action 1.3). This would be the part of the trail linking to the AT eventually, elevating the potential for Buchanan to obtain Appalachian Trail Community status. Make improvements and interpretive signage to celebrate the canal Gauge Dock as part of the region’s heritage and prepare for Buchanan to be the terminus of
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Action 3.3 – Create (or update) a park Master Plan for Town Park and implement recommendations.

	<p>an interpretive trail for the Kanawha canal that ran from Richmond to Buchanan. Note, Appendix G contains a detailed action plan focusing on the Gauge Dock, drafted by Jessie and Mike Burton. It presents some action for this historic dock for when the master planning for the park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a hostel for AT hikers (like the one in Damascus, VA). ● Build public restrooms and changing facilities. ● Install EV charging stations. ● Include QR Codes for information on signs. ● This shower is located by the park towards the back; used mostly by AT hikers but could be useful. ● Partner with Limestone Park to offer recreational enthusiasts access to shower and changing areas. ● Increase public facilities. ● Consider new programming options, and the infrastructure needs and locations for new activities. ● Consider farmer’s market location and pavilion. ● Plan for movie nights in the park. ● Organize trail days a few weeks after AT Trail Days in Damascus. Troutville Park has one day already and could be for next 3-4 days. ● Organize and market music events in Town Park, which do not conflict with adjacent community festival scheduling. ● Consider fresh food and community gardens, to accompany the fruit trees already planted there. ● Create permanent stage partnering with Matt Ramsey (naming stage – Matt Ramsey?) and opening night have Old Dominion perform. ● Create a beach area for swimming. The mapping exercise identified a section of Town Park along the river that just needs to be cleared and could be a quick win. See Appendix B for the mapping exercise results.
<p>Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anticipated timeline is 1-1.5 years planning, 0.5 years implementation. ● Form a steering committee for the park Master Planning Process. ● Identify the need for a Town Commission or 501c3 to reach out to Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission or other organizations to help secure funding to support implementation of projects and to create a structure for how to move forward. ● Seek funding for Master Planning Study. ● Hire a consultant, or get County support, to help the Town with the planning process and product. ● Conduct a planning process (6-12 months) with public involvement. ● Seek funding for implementation of improvements.

Action 3.3 – Create (or update) a park Master Plan for Town Park and implement recommendations.	
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community-owned and driven master plan is created. • An improved community asset with new amenities that can host more events and connect the town eventually to the AT. • More people use and love the park.
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee for the Town Park Master Planning and Economic Development Study, Steve Grigg Chair • Ashleigh M. Kritzberger – Vice Chair • Daniel Bratcher – Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eddie Wells – Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission • Buchanan Library • Twin Rivers Outfitters • Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation • Troutville Park (example) • Planning / Landscape Design Consultant (if funding is secured) • Community Members
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance staff • USDA RD Community Facilities or other program for Master Plan and implementation (Anne Herring) • Botetourt County funds for recreation or capital improvements and construction

Action 3.4 – Facilitate a strong relationship with Limestone Park to support community improvements.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>Limestone Park has been an excellent community resource for many years and recently has undergone improvements, adding camping and river access to the park. Other amenities include a pool, covered pavilion, tennis courts, a playground, restroom, and kitchen/concession building. Additional activities under this action could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support future expansion of campground and park. • Connect with a riverwalk trail, as mentioned in Action 3.3. • Build ADA accessible bath and shower house facility. • Replace outdated playground equipment. • Design and fund a splash pad to replace the sandbox area that currently exists.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise funding to acquire adjacent land for future expansion of Limestone Park and Camping. • Seek funding for Master Planning Study/playground/splash pad designs and vendors.

Action 3.4 – Facilitate a strong relationship with Limestone Park to support community improvements.	
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An expansion is funded and improvements to current facilities are being enjoyed by park members/users and outside visitors.
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chad Epperly – Limestone Park Kim Lawrence
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning / Landscape Design Consultant (if funding is secured) Steering committee/grant writing group
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance staff Grants for recreation or capital improvements and construction.

Participants at this Goal Table during the workshop: Robin Bruns, Dan Goldeen, Charlie Rickard, Marguita Johnson, Ellie Dudding-McFadden, Shannon Reid

Participants also brainstormed these additional action ideas during the workshop. While these actions were not detailed further during the workshop, they could also support implementation of Goal 3.

Food

- Build and put process in place for a community garden to increase access to fresh food.
- Raise awareness and bring in more opportunities for fresh produce.
- Encourage local restaurants to provide grab-and-go fresh options for picnicking.
- Promote a plant-to-eat.
- Provide establish building, place, hours, for weekly fresh produce garden to table opportunities.

Events and Venues

- Establish a new community venue.
- Hold concerts once a month downtown.
- Hold open mic events for poetry/music/idea sharing.
- Increase recognition of cultural events to promote diversity.
- Create a gateway – work on the north end of the town and make it welcoming for people coming off I-81. Many turn around before they get to the river/town.
- If there are vacant storefronts and willing owners, invite businesses from the region to do pop up shops during community events.

Revitalization, Town Improvements, Beautification, and Walkability Needs

- Improve and reuse existing buildings.
- Inventory building stock choosing commercial, mixed-use, etc. for vacancies + building condition.
- Establish and enforce historic design guidelines for building renovations.
- Install pocket parks downtown.
- Explore + identify landowners within the town who may be willing sellers for trail or pocket park development.
- Talk to landowner near future brewery to acquire land to create a dog park. If that space doesn't work, identify other spaces in town to create a dog park. Find funding for land, fencing, benches, etc. (public and/or private).

- Illuminate the Swinging Bridge.
- Improve accessibility and streetscaping.
- Contribute and build upon streetscaping improvements on Main Street.
- Meet with Virginia Department of Transportation to discuss pedestrian-related improvements such as trails and crosswalks. Piecemeal now needs to be unified.
- Fix town walkways to allow better accessibility for special needs/disabled persons. These should be wider and smoother without holes, cracks, bumps.
- Design new paths and a play park to be disability-friendly.

Goal 4: Communication and Marketing: Articulate the important role that outdoor recreation can play in economic development and community health, recognizing the value of Buchanan as a center for outdoor recreation in the region. Highlight the ways that outdoor recreation is an asset for the community and region.

Action 4.1 – Develop an interpretive plan for strategic communication.	
<p>What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?</p>	<p>What it is: Creating an interpretive plan involves crafting a comprehensive strategy for communicating the significance of outdoor recreation in Buchanan's economic development and community well-being. This plan encompasses branding, messaging, and a cohesive narrative that highlights Buchanan's role as a regional hub for outdoor recreation.</p> <p>Why it is important: An interpretive plan serves as a roadmap for effectively conveying the value of outdoor recreation as an economic driver and contributor to community health. It aligns Buchanan's branding with its assets, reinforcing the town's identity as a center for outdoor activities, attracting visitors, boosting the local economy, and enhancing resident engagement.</p> <p>Who benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Economy: Highlighting outdoor recreation's impact on economic growth can attract tourism, increase local spending, and create job opportunities. ● Residents: A strong outdoor recreation identity fosters community pride, encourages healthy lifestyles, and provides access to recreational opportunities. ● Tourists: Clear communication about Buchanan's outdoor offerings can draw visitors seeking outdoor experiences, benefiting local businesses and infrastructure.
<p>Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research and Development: Assess Current Brand Identity: Evaluate Buchanan's current brand identity, slogans, and messaging to identify strengths and gaps related to outdoor recreation. Collect examples of other interpretive plans. ● Acquire funds to facilitate the planning process (6 months). ● Determine the core messages that convey outdoor recreation's importance, community benefits, and unique offerings. Create themes, management goals, visitor use, interpretive services, media types (digital, maps, signs), communication channels, desired experiences, visitor profiles, define navigation elements and resources to include natural resource, recreational, cultural, and historical. ● Develop a compelling narrative that weaves together Buchanan's history, culture, and outdoor recreation assets, creating a cohesive story for both residents and visitors. Develop a cohesive outdoor branding palette from the narrative. Develop a comprehensive communication plan that outlines strategies, channels, and tactics to effectively convey the narrative to target audiences. Establish a town brand and provide brand standards for businesses to use. ● Ensure that the communication plan aligns with Buchanan's existing slogans or develop new ones that resonate with the outdoor recreation theme. Modify "Simply Buchanan" to visually support the outdoor opportunities.

Action 4.1 – Develop an interpretive plan for strategic communication.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve local businesses, community members, outdoor enthusiasts, and town officials in the planning process to gather input and ensure buy-in. • Outline components of the communication plan, specifying when and how each message will be delivered through various platforms such as website, social media, local events, and community partnerships. • Update Town Website to include outdoor recreation focus (see Action 4.2).
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan is being implemented • Clear strategies are in place for what can be promoted
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town council • Tristan Harris – Mayor of Buchanan (or someone else TBD)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jon McCoy – Botetourt County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee • Ed McCoy – Botetourt 4-H Shooting Education & Hunting Skills Instructor • Tiffany Bradbury – Botetourt County Communications Director, tbradbury@botetourtva.gov • Mandy Adkins – Botetourt County Parks and Recreation • Matt Desemone – Fincastle Herald • RERC Steering Committee • Cheryl Morales – Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds • Student from Virginia Tech • Work with Roanoke Valley Greenwalk • Volunteers • Technical Assistance Resources • Nathan Hilbert – National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

Action 4.2 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), incorporate outdoor recreation into the website redesign.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	With a clear website that provides key information, visitors and locals will know how to access Buchanan’s assets. This action aims to leverage the current redesign and funds available to hire and execute the needed content, how to manage it, etc. into the current website.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey what people want (within 3 months). • Create a map of local trails for town website (downloadable) – also can be used as a print copy.

Action 4.2 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), incorporate outdoor recreation into the website redesign.	
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website launched with all outdoor assets improved communication number of hits Add: BOCO WILD! (See Action 2.1)
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Hayfield – Town of Buchanan Stacey Brugh – Resident (or another lead)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tristan Harris – Mayor of Buchanan Tiffany Bradbury – Botetourt County Communications Director
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy + Content

Action 4.3 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), create wayfinding system.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	With updated wayfinding, visitors and locals will know how to access Buchanan’s assets. This action aims to leverage the current redesign and funds available to hire and execute the needed content, how to manage it, etc.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit existing websites, programs, and signage that are already promoting areas for accuracy and provide improvements. Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge, Roanoke Outside, All Trails, Upward, etc. Utilizing the interpretive plan recommendations (Action 4.1), develop wayfinding and interpretive plan, drawing on these ideas from the community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map out Arcadia like the James River Water Trails while developing an adventure center. Create wayfinding signage and brochure for National Forest. Create visitor itineraries for websites – town of Buchanan, Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge, Roanoke Outside, etc. Capture knowledge and experiences of heritage 76 Bike Trail participants biking through Buchanan. Create a kiosk to show experiences, regroup. Hang signage on “Riverwalk” to educate public on river habitat and local wildlife and natural assets (plant + animal). Create a committee to create plan for wayfinding signage for roads and on river. Install wayfinding signage on the Blue Ridge Parkway to encourage drivers to visit downtown. Coordinate with Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and National Park Service for signage for Buchanan and Blacksburg.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wayfinding plan is created Funding is secured to print signage

Action 4.3 – Based on interpretive plan guidelines (Action 4.1), create wayfinding system.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautiful signs, maps, and content are created and visitors are using it to find their way to Buchanan and its assets
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Hayfield – Town Manager
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rose Jeter – Resident and Town Council Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge Tristan Harris – Mayor of Buchanan, Botetourt Technology Education Center Tiffany Bradbury – Botetourt County Communications Director
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretive Plan (4.1) Funding, Copy, Content

Action 4.4 – Create a mini visitor center and hostel out of two brownfield buildings near the gas station.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>Having a visitor center with information available helps people know where to find businesses and amenities in the area, including outdoor recreation offerings. A visitor center could also provide basic needs for hiking, maps, info, etc. Creating a hostel can provide lodging opportunities for visitors who may wish to stay in the area. There are some brownfields that have buildings that could be re-purposed, and this possibility should be explored as part of the investigation into potential visitor center or hostel locations.</p>
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open a temporary visitor center in library first, then move to other buildings. Collect information and create maps to share at the visitor center. Confirm permanent space for a visitor center and hostel, potentially in buildings on brownfield sites near the gas station.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A temporary visitor center is up and running. A permanent space for a visitor center and hostel is identified (potentially in buildings on current brownfield sites).
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Julie Phillips – Botetourt County Library Director Nicole Dias – Brownfield Assistance Center at West Virginia University
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library staff Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge Katie Conner, Virginia Tourism Corporation Ed McCoy
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers needed Buy-in from the library Library staff knowledge on recreation assets

Action 4.5 – Apply to become an Appalachian Trail Community.

<p>What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?</p>	<p>Becoming an Appalachian Trail Community can help support AT hikers, increase visitation to Buchanan, celebrate the community, and offer volunteer opportunities. The A.T. Community program is a nationally recognized network that includes communities who have gone through the designation process to stand out as a welcoming and safe community for hikers and visitors alike to explore, in addition to standing out in protecting and preserving the Appalachian National Scenic Trail for all for generations to come. Benefits include: having a community webpage listed on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) website; news and events shared to ATC followers; relationships within the ATC in addition to federal, state, and local partners and the growing network of designated communities along the entire Trail; resources for education, conservation planning, grants, and funding opportunities; and more.</p>
<p>Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Steering Committee submits application to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. ● Request application from the ATC. ● Start forming an A.T. Community committee. ● Meet with ATC staff to review initial questions and gain more understanding about the program and what being an A.T. Community entails. ● Proceed with completing the application. ● Undergo revisions to prepare a strong application for presentation at a biannual regional partnership committee meeting. If approved for designation, start planning the designation ceremony with guidance from the ATC. ● Note: A.T. Community applications are due prior to a biannual regional partnership committee meeting. These meetings are held in the Spring and Fall of each year. The application process typically takes several months (and can take over a year) to complete. ● Note: The current A.T. Community application is in the process of being revised. Some questions may change.
<p>Measures of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designation ceremony as the newest Appalachian Trail Community ● Maintaining active participation in the A.T. Community program network
<p>Lead Role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Daniel Bratcher – Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee
<p>Supporting cast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee ● Rachel Austin, Kathryn Herndon – Appalachian Trail Conservancy ● Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club ● Town of Buchanan staff TBD ● Info at: ATcommunity@appalachiantrail.org
<p>Potential needs and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time

Action 4.6 – Forge strong partnerships with the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service to facilitate outdoor access for youth.	
What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>Establishing robust collaborations with the National Park Service (NPS) and USDA Forest Service (USFS) ensures that every child, particularly fourth graders, gains access to outdoor experiences by obtaining park passes.</p> <p>Building ties with NPS and USFS enables the younger generation to become stewards of the environment. Providing fourth graders with park passes encourages them to explore nature, fostering a connection to natural spaces and a sense of responsibility towards conservation.</p> <p>Who Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fourth graders from free access to national parks and forests, cultivating a lifelong appreciation for the environment. ● Schools benefit from enriched curricula that emphasize outdoor education and foster a love for nature. ● Engaging youth in outdoor activities can enhance community health, promote local tourism, and strengthen environmental awareness.
Initial next steps and deadlines (Present >24 mos.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish communication channels with USFS and NPS to secure park passes for fourth graders. ● Promote Existing Apps: Raise awareness about the "National Forest Explorer" app (USFS) and the "Interactive Visitor Map" app/website. ● Explore funding and program opportunities in collaboration with the Jane Goodall Institute. ● Explore K-5 curriculum options for school gardens and potential funding support. ● Leverage the outdoor area at Buchanan Elementary to enhance K-5 curricula focused on fostering an attachment to the environment.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All fourth graders receive park passes
Lead Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tim Miller – Muddy Squirrel LLC
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elementary school
Potential needs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grant resources to support Muddy Squirrel for implementation

Participants at this Goal Table during the workshop: Julie Judkins, Mike + Jessie Burton, Cheryl Morales, Tristan Harris, Rose Jeter, Nathan Hilbert, Anne Herring, Ken McFadden, Luke Campbell, Tim Miller

Participants also brainstormed these additional action ideas during the workshop. While these actions were not detailed further during the workshop, they could also support implementation of Goal 4.

Brand/Website

- Create and implement an advertising campaign to draw visitors and businesses to Buchanan.

- Use the town website needs to promote local businesses.
- Upgrade social media to let residents and visitors know what is going on and what is available.
- Advertise town events in town – not just by the town.

Economic Development

- Create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) plan and encourage discussions on welcoming diverse tourists and include marginalized communities in planning process.
- Identify student at Virginia Tech to design digital downloadable brochure for Buchanan and Buchanan area's recreational assets with directions and annotations.
- Create more educational opportunities about history and culture.
- Allow for more opportunities of outdoor education through the schools by doing a partnership with private businesses and the county for funding/organization.
- Advertise our community not just to older generations who want to “get away” but also to younger folks looking to explore and to build a family in a safe community.
- Increase youth engagement through social media and strengthen ties with elementary and high schools: first through educational events (especially in terms of recreation) at schools and then by increasing walkability and accessibility (decrease car dependency so that children can freely explore both the downtown and recreation opportunities).

Visitor Center

- Create an experience center that also serves as a community gathering hub.
- Create a visitor center in conjunction with a coffee shop and /or at the library.
- Identify funding and a location for the community center in downtown area.
- Establish a visitors' center that could double as a gear/sundries store.
- Create an “Adventure Center” visitor center in Buchanan.

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Following the workshop, the Steering Committee and workshop participants continued working together to develop and begin implementing the RERC Community Action Plan. Four virtual Zoom/phone calls with the Planning Assistance Team were held on August 10, September 14, October 3, and November 9, 2023 during which the group refined the action plan, discussed progress made post-workshop and planned their next steps. The local Steering Committee also met to review the plan and provide edits. This meeting, which was convened at the library and was available via Zoom, was held on September 6, 2023. The community has already begun the initial steps to implement the action plan. Listed below are some key implementation steps made since the workshop.

- Completed a draft of the Appalachian Trail Community Program application.
- The RERC Steering Committee “plus” re-named themselves the “Buchanan Recreation Economic Advisory Council” (BREAC) going forward and committed to the implementation of the RERC goals and actions and other related initiatives in the future. The group has continued to meet since July. Their objectives are:
 1. *Finalize and obtain the final plan;*
 2. *Introduce the RERC plan to Town Council and the larger community;*
 3. *Organize/compile/document/facilitate RERC plan activities;*
 4. *Work on opportunities going forward focused on action items in the core plan facilitated by the goal champions, and;*
 5. *Work with Town Council on implementation.*
- Molly O’Dell and George Hayfield agreed to convene the BREAC bi-monthly to accomplish the above objectives.
- Molly O’Dell is communicating with the elementary school principal to see if teachers and parents are interested in Safe Routes to Schools and/or Roots and Shoots.
- Jenny Wilson and Rose Jeter met with county officials to discuss the creation of a nature trail on the county-owned property adjacent to the elementary school. There is no current county funding to do this project, but Botetourt County Parks and Recreation is willing to be involved should any resources be identified and will support such an endeavor. This property is between the school property and the road where a Safe Routes to School path would be feasible.
- Molly O’Dell also reported conversing with Ricky Boblett, who owns 300 acres of Purgatory Mountain outside town. Much of the property above his home is under a conservation easement. Ricky has expressed interest in collaboration to improve access, controlled use, etc.
- Cheryl Hines, Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club (NBATC) member, included mention of the RERC effort in the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club newsletter and featured RERC at their booth in the Buchanan Mountain Magic Festival, October 8, 2023.
- Ken McFadyen, Botetourt County Economic Development, reported that they received a \$450K grant from Virginia’s Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the revitalization of the Factory Flats building for the brewery and are currently making arrangements to work with Virginia Community Capital on the financing. They hope to wrap up the details on that shortly (Fall 2023). Planning to open up spring of 2024.
- Jessie and Mike Burton have met with the County and George Hayfield, Buchanan Town Manager, at the Gauge Dock Site and updated everyone on the project. They received info from the County on how to get permission

to fill in the gauge dock and move forward with that important historical interpretation project, which is a big part of the Town Park. Jessie and Mike continue to work on this and provide updates moving forward.

- Ken McFadyen, Botetourt County Economic Development, is contacting Ellie Dudding-McFadden from Virginia Main Street to see how they can facilitate a meeting in early December for local businesses on main street in Buchanan. The intent is to facilitate “economic gardening” for Buchanan, to convene entrepreneurs, identify opportunities that exist, and reverse-engineer potential entrepreneurs into those businesses that are needed in Buchanan.
- Luke Campbell, Botetourt County Economic Development, reported that they are moving forward on developing the grant repository for the town and for businesses within the town. The repository would include grant opportunities that could be available for the wider populace. The town’s brochure needs updating and are looking for revenue streams to do so. Most of this work is related to business development in Goal 2. Ideally, they would like to do a gap analysis to see where the gaps are in the town pertaining to recreation economy-related businesses, and then get the businesses together to identify where the gaps are and how to fill them.
- Mapping efforts for trails in Buchanan and for connector trails from the Appalachian Trail (AT) to Buchanan have started. Jason Espie of the Planning Assistance Team has organized meetings of the Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee and other interested partners, like Megan Martin from the USDA Forest Service. Participants in these conversations are working to identify safe alternative routes from the AT to town, which property owners might need to be approached for cooperation, and other details to facilitate connections between downtown Buchanan and the AT.
- Anne Herring, USDA Rural Development, offered to meet with BREAC and town leaders, to introduce them to local USDA RD staff, and to explore elements of the RERC Community Action Plan that could possibly be eligible for funding (grants or low-interest loans) from USDA Rural Development. BREAC will follow up in early 2024 with Anne Herring to make this happen.
- The RERC Plan will be presented to Town Council on January 6, 2024 by BREAC. Molly O’Dell, along with Jason Espie, RERC consultant/facilitator, will make the presentation.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Workshop Contact List
- Appendix B – Workshop Exercise Results
- Appendix C – Funding and Technical Assistance
- Appendix D – References
- Appendix E – Survey Results
- Appendix F – Buchanan Citizens Trail Committee Connections Mapping
- Appendix G – Action Plan for Gauge Dock

Other References

- *Botetourt County Comprehensive Plan:*
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a50f49d368474a4a8594125b2bdd4255>
- *Buchanan Comprehensive Plan:*
https://www.townofbuchanan.com/home/~ptow/public_html/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Comprehensive%20Plan%20-%202019%20-%202025.pdf