

Reconnecting Bluefield

West Virginia Division of Highways
Planning Grant Application to the
Reconnecting Communities Pilot

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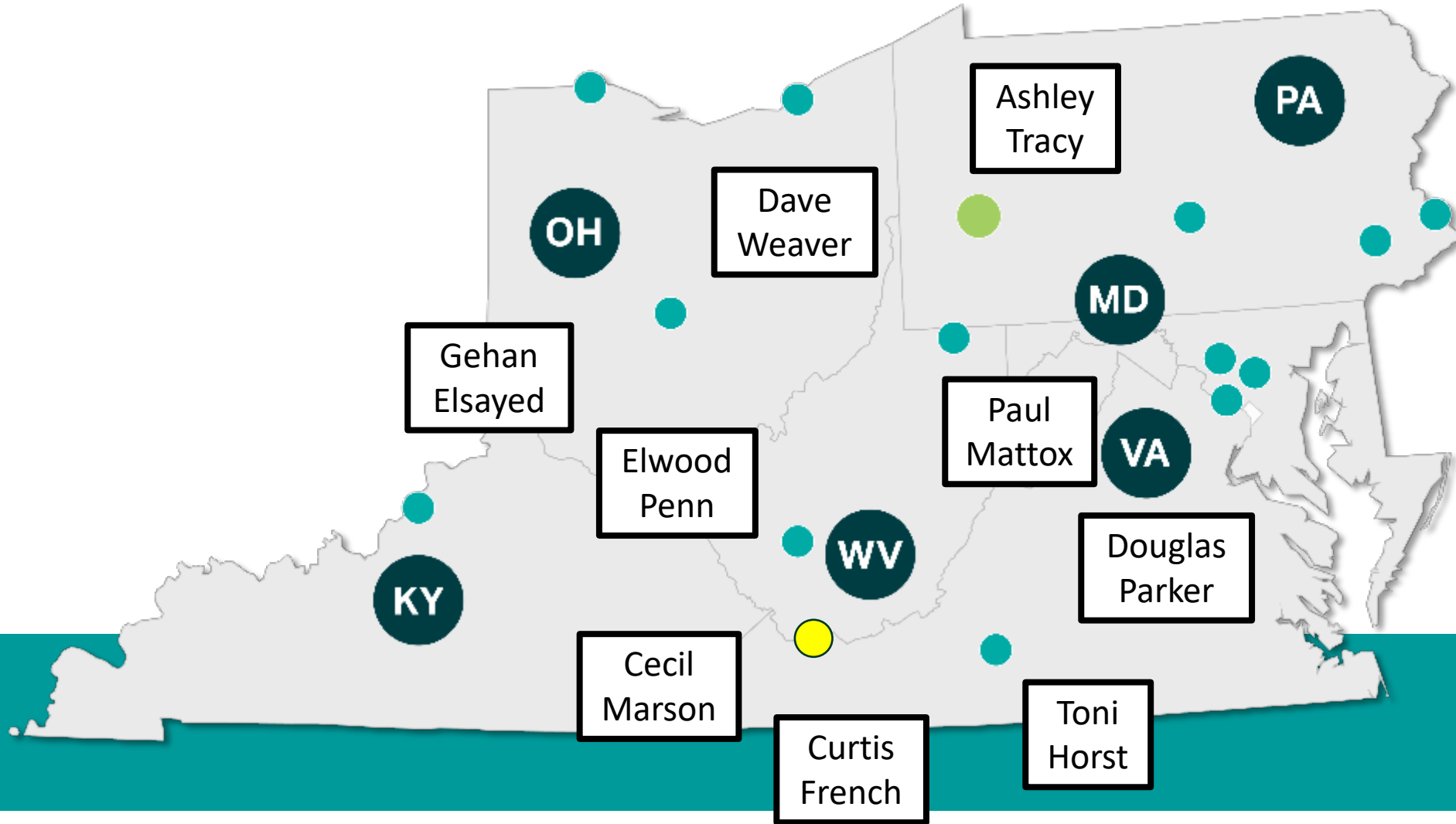




Agenda

- Grant Team
- City of Bluefield Context
- Reconnecting Communities Program
- Grant Application
- Lessons Learned
- Q&A

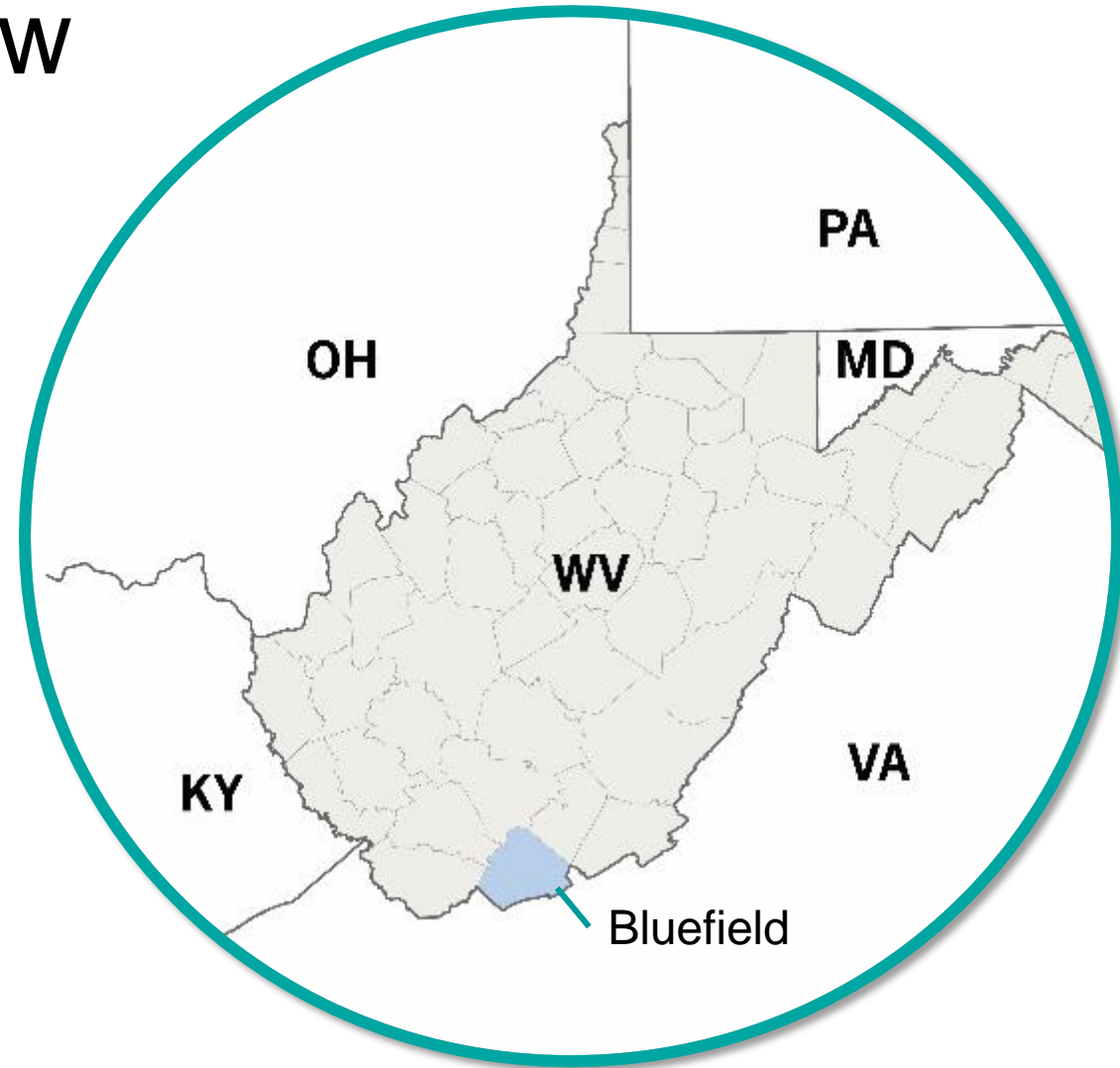
Grant Team



City of Bluefield



- Fast Facts – Then and Now
- Establishment 1889
- Location – Southern WV
- 10,000 Population



Establishment 1889



Existing Conditions



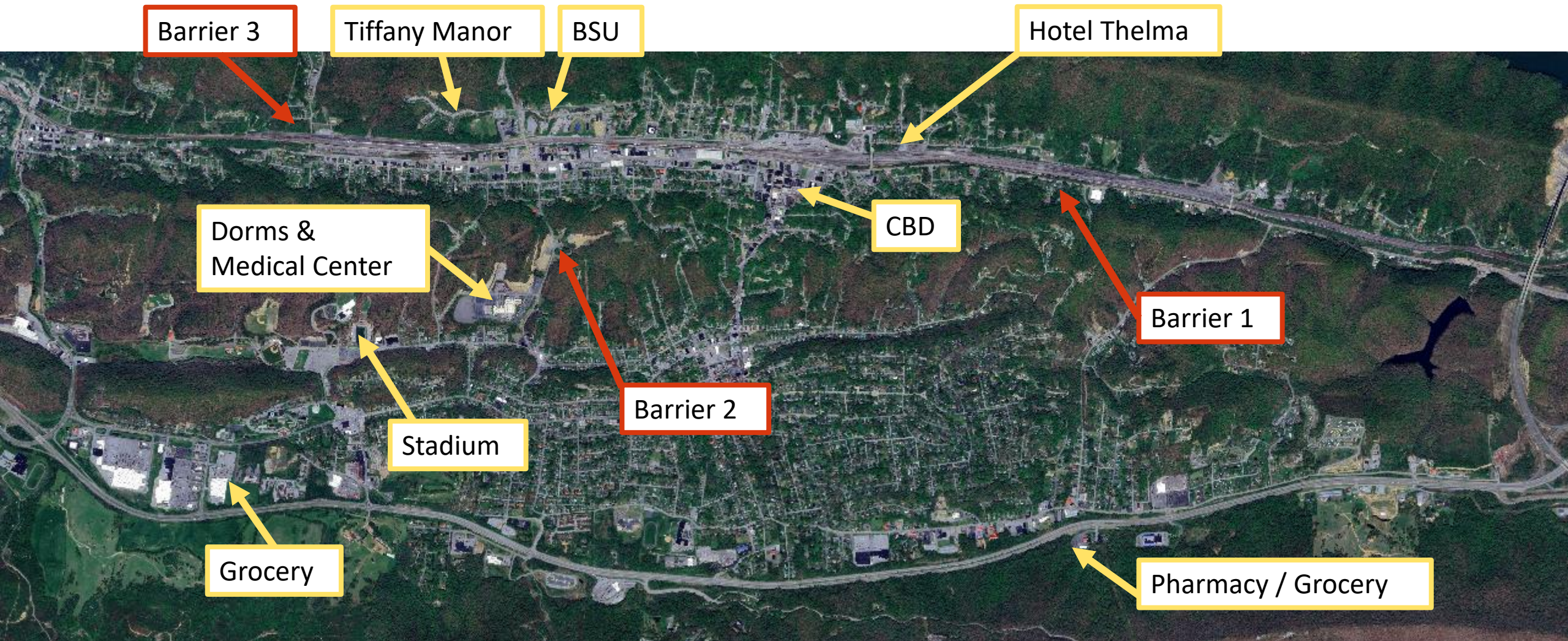
The Barrier



Project Location



Community Anchors and Barriers



James Brown



Little Richard



James Brown



Little Richard



James Brown



Tina Turner



East End History

The East End community has a rich history as a center of African American life and culture. When Bluefield State University had active dormitories, numerous famous African American musicians, such as James Brown, Little Richard, Duke Ellington, Tina Turner, Joseph Arrington (aka “Joe Tex”), etc. performed for the students. These musicians stayed in one of two hotels while in the East End, either Thelma’s or Traveler’s, both of which were listed in the “Green Book,” a travel guide that listed safe places for African American travelers to stay.² The East End’s Hancock Mansion (aka the “Alpha House”) is on the National Register of Historic Places.

There is a strong desire in the community to honor its rich cultural history by investing in its preservation. As such, the community would like to see the:

- Preservation and restoration of Thelma’s Hotel,
- Placing of Thelma’s Hotel on the National Register of Historic Places,
- Preservation and restoration of the Traveler’s Hotel, and
- Preservation and restoration of the Old Hancock School (currently apartments).

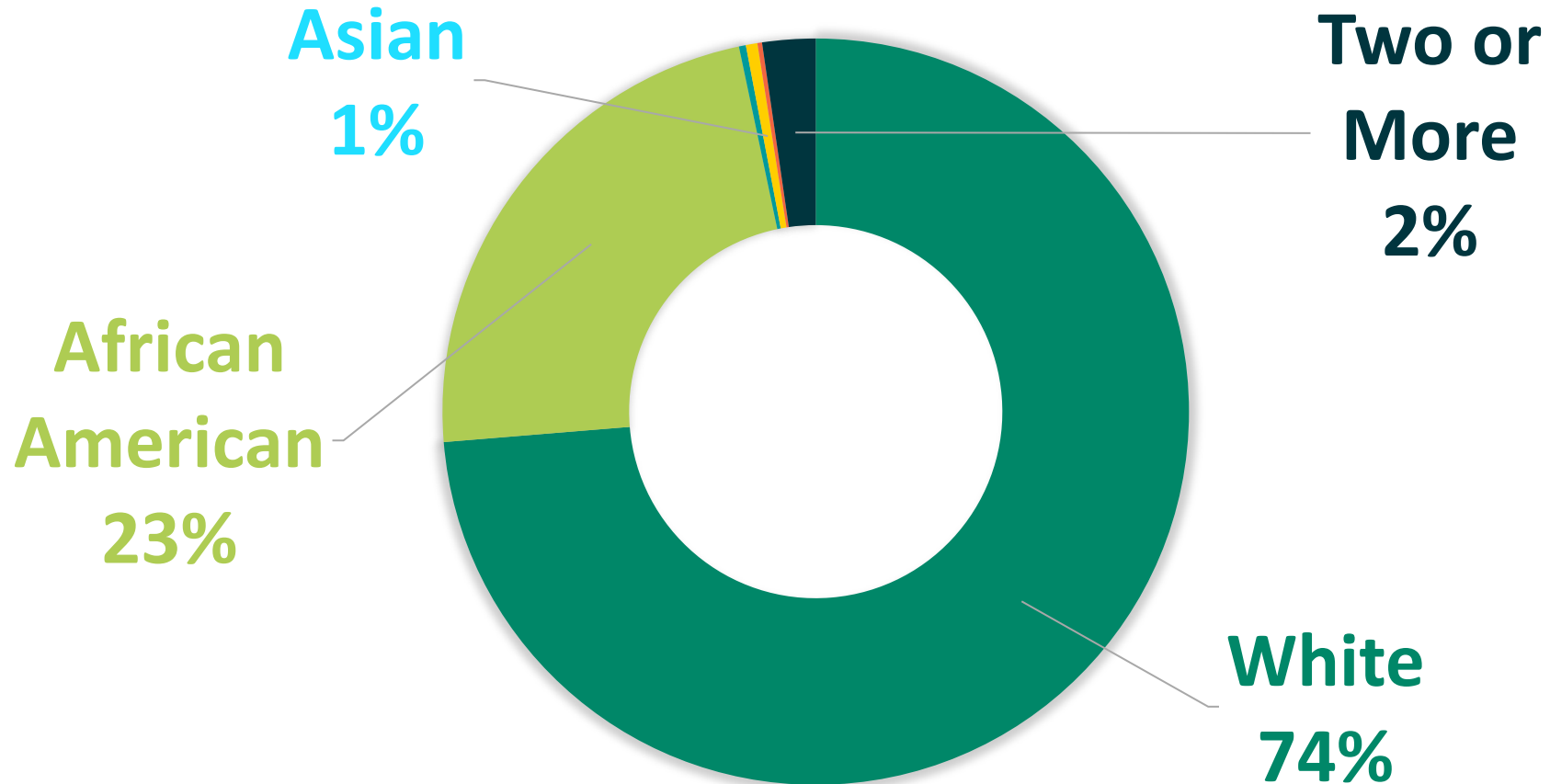
Historically, the East End community also provided basic services such as shopping to Bluefield State University students. Residents maintain that the loss of the dormitories and football program contributed to the East End’s decline. Current plans to re-establish those dormitories is, therefore, a boon to the revitalization of the East End community. The construction developed by this Project’s planning effort will directly support such economic development by improving safety and circulation for pedestrian and bicycle travelers, opening up options for transit, and creating a better connection between the East End, downtown, and Bluefield State University.



Bluefield State

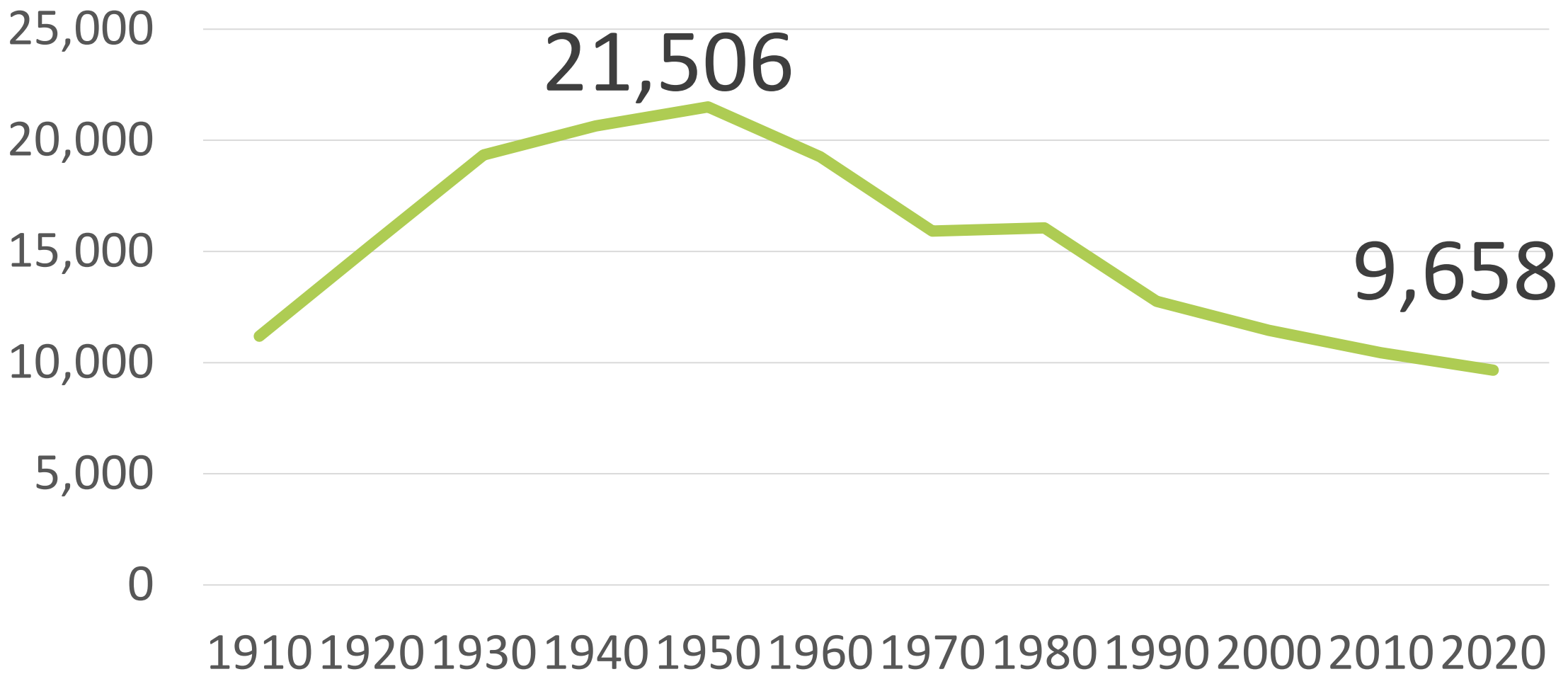
C O L L E G E

Demographics



<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/bluefield-wv>

Population Trends





Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods

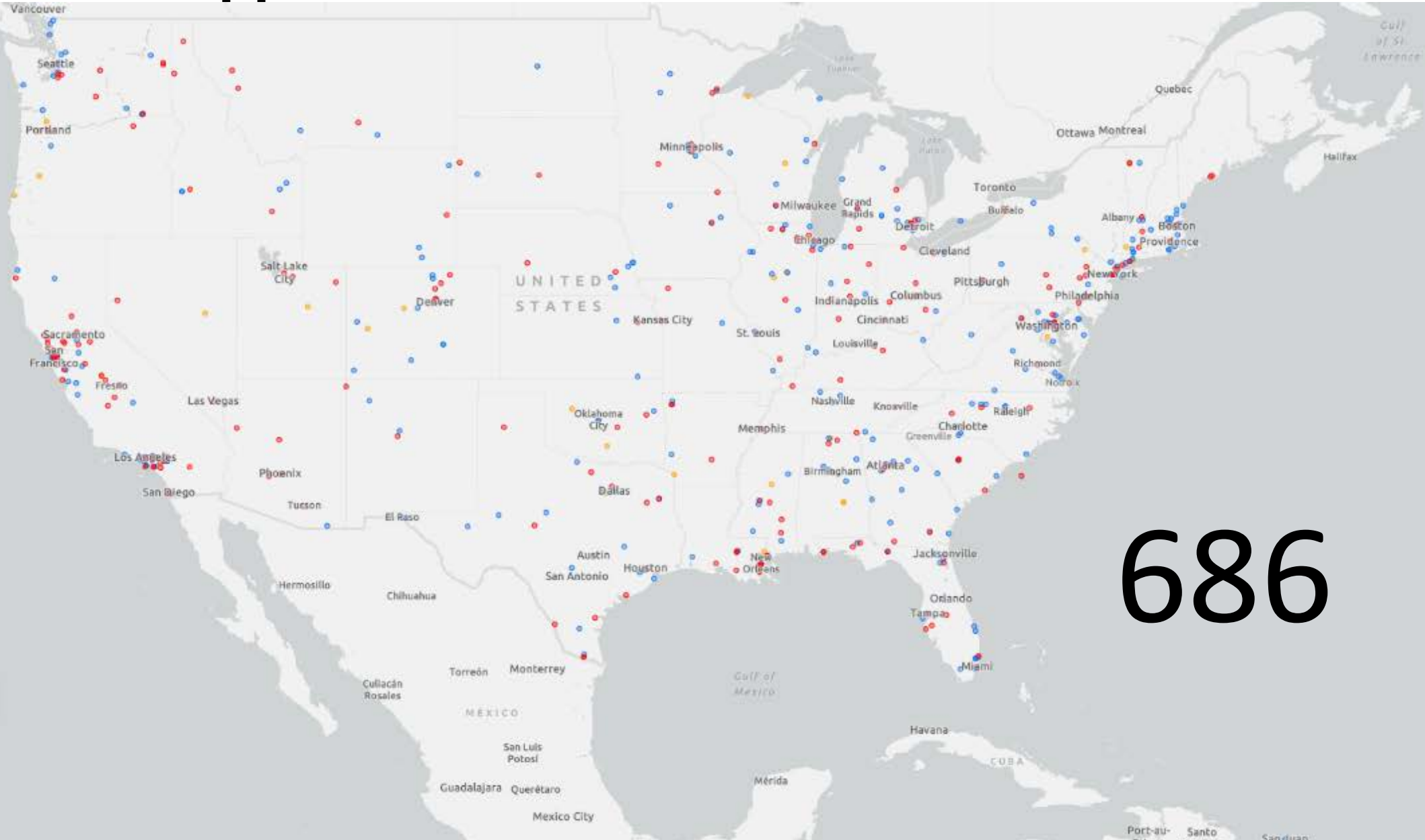
Repairing the harm caused by infrastructure choices of the past

U.S. Department of Transportation

Reconnecting Communities Program

- Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) FY2022
- Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) FY2023+
- Types of Awards
 - Planning
 - Construction
 - Regional Partnerships
- Competitive – 686 submitted, 132 awarded

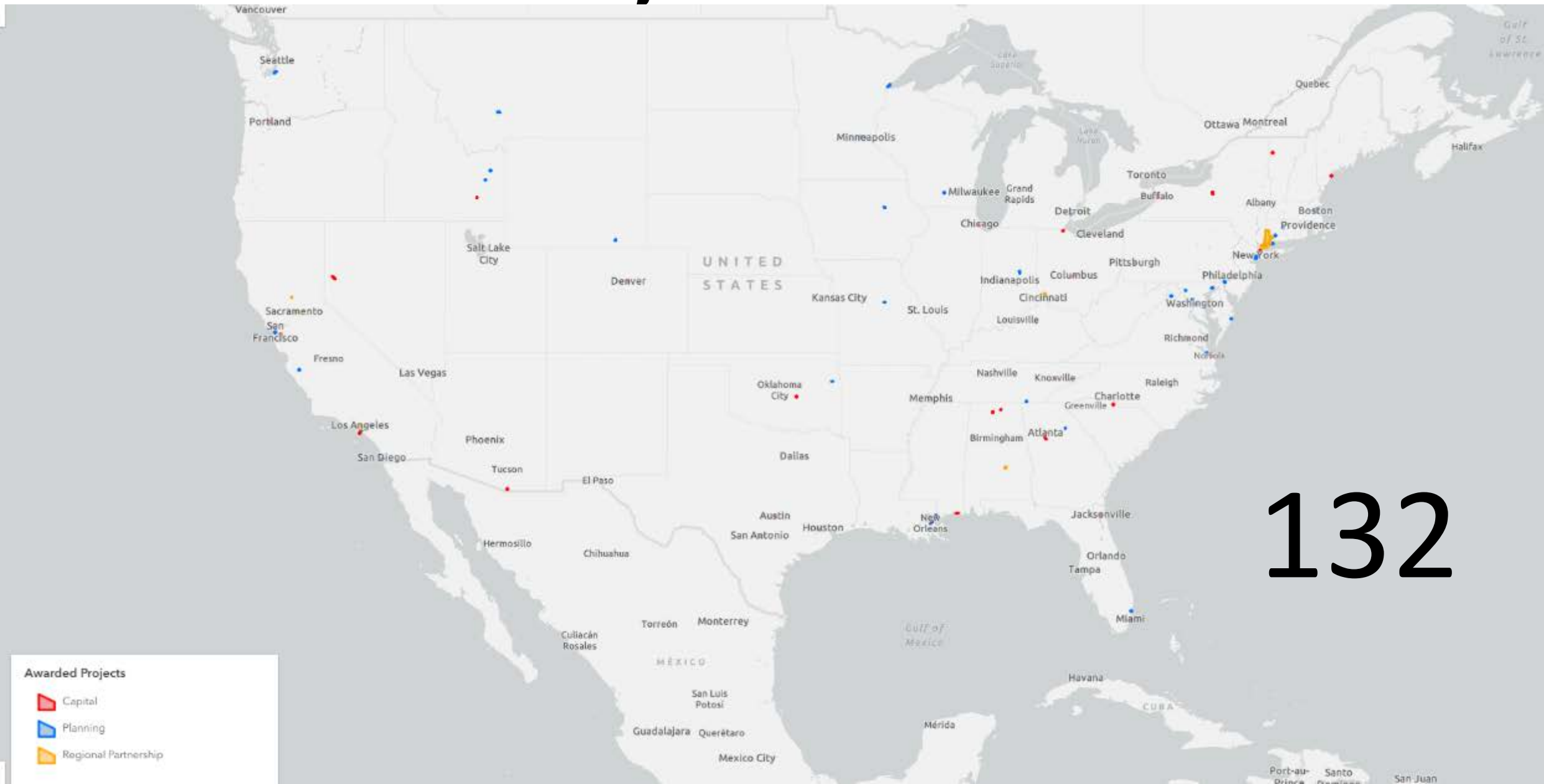
RCN FY23 AI Applications



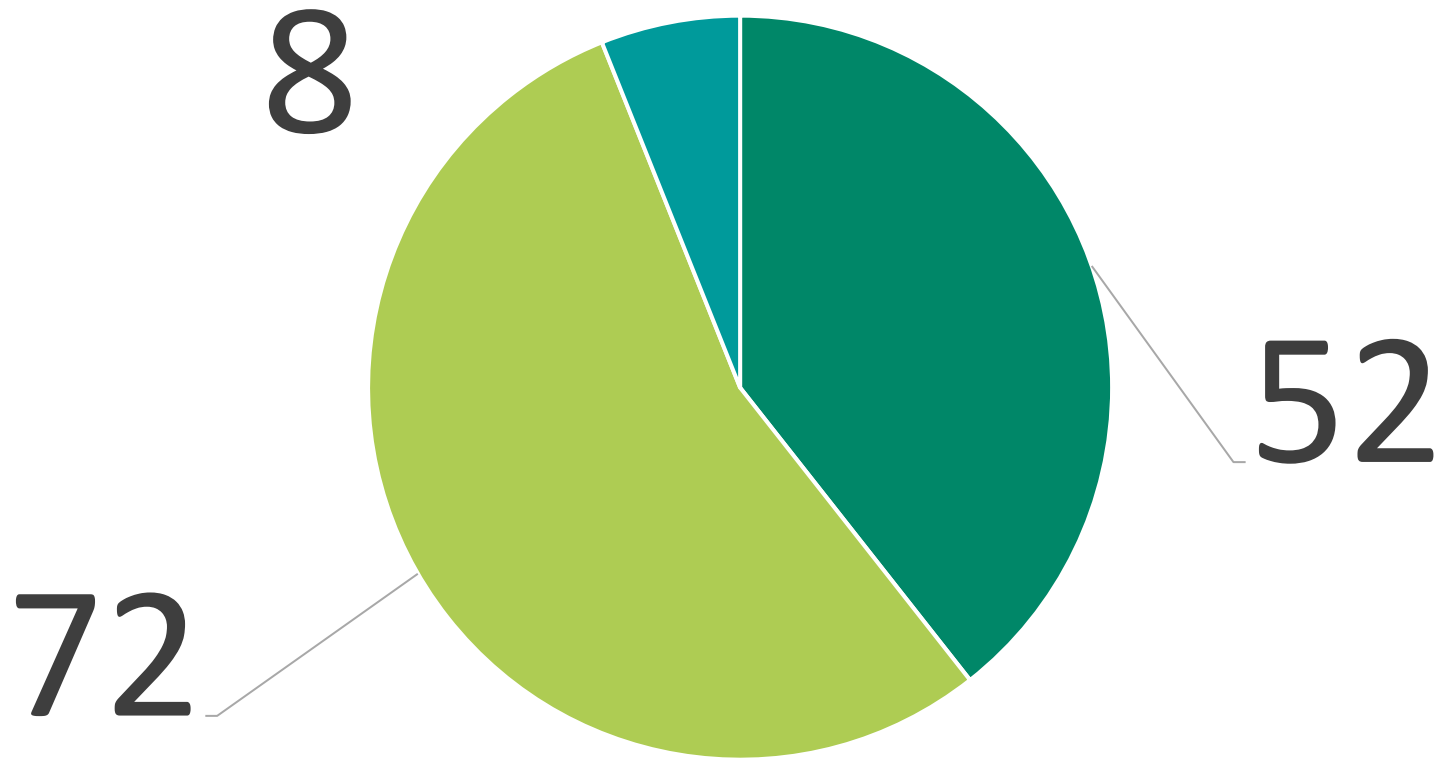
686

- All Applications
- Capital Construction Grant
 - Community Planning Grant
 - Regional Partnerships Challenge

RCN FY23 Awarded Projects



RCN FY23 Awards



■ Capital ■ Planning ■ Regional Partnership

RCN FY23 Grantees

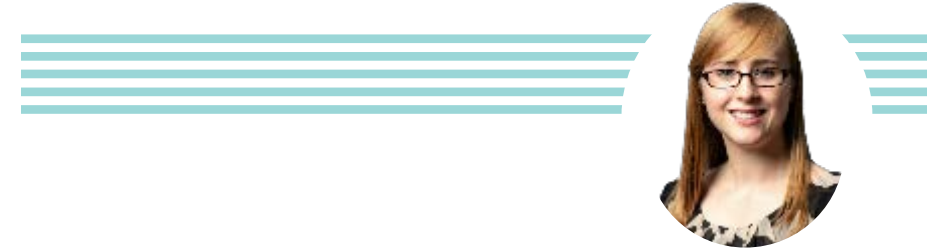
Applicant Type	Total
Unit of local government	82
State or U.S. territory	17
Higher education institution	10
Special purpose district or public authority	7
Metropolitan Planning Organization	5
Nonprofit organization	5
Special purpose district or public authority	4
Political Subdivision of a State	1
Federally recognized Tribal government	1
Total Awarded Applications	132

Reconnecting Bluefield Grant Timeline



- Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP)
 - June 30, 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
 - October 13, 2022 Grant Submitted
 - February 28, 2023 Announcements
 - Summer 2024 Obligation*

Grant Submission Format



- Merit Criteria Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Key Information Table
- SF 424
- Supplemental Information
 - Letters of Commitment
 - Photos and Article
 - Study Area Map

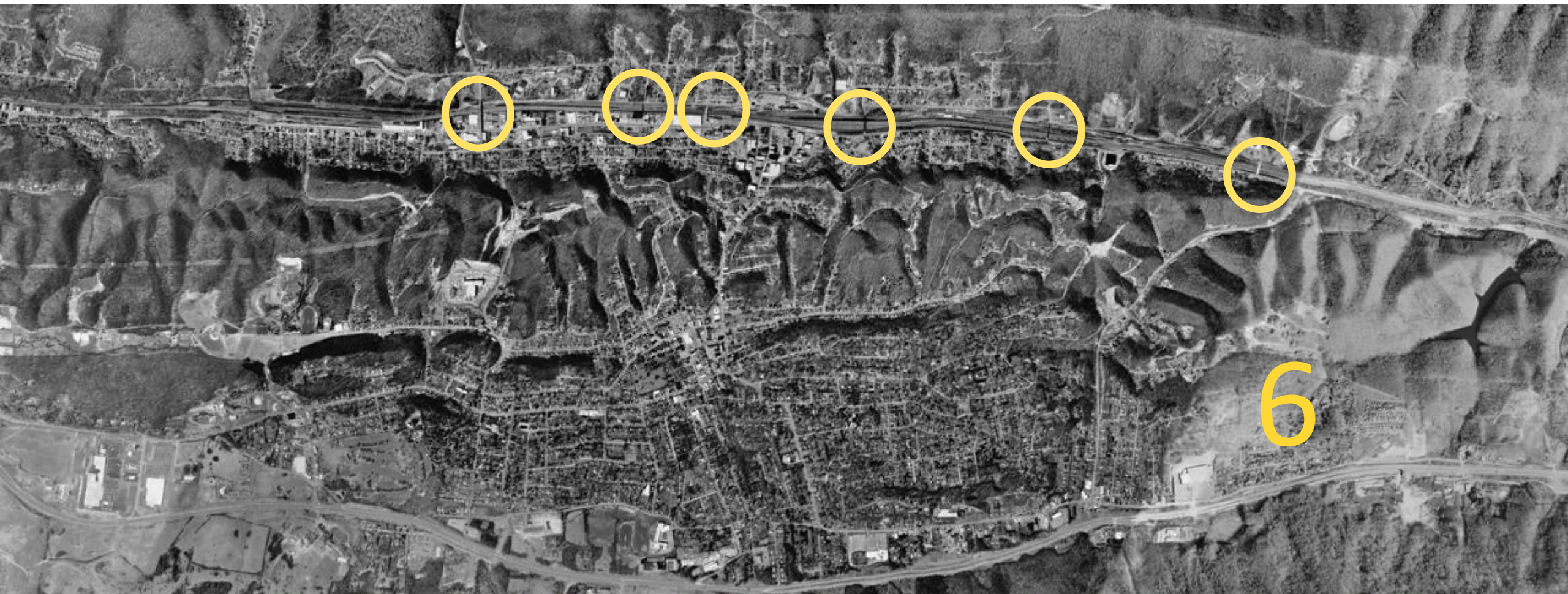
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**Read and
reread the
NOFO!**

Bluefield 2001



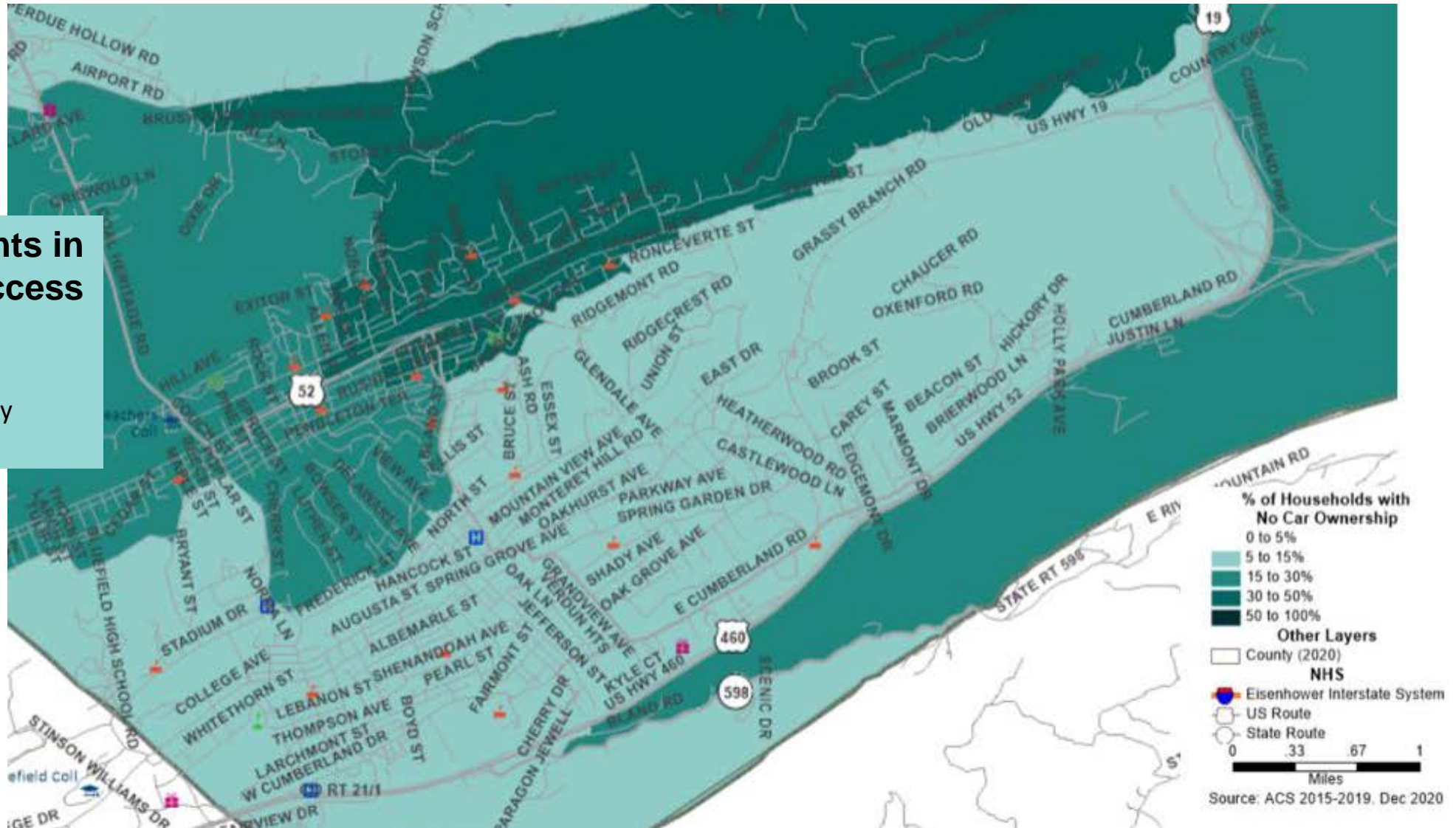
Bluefield 2021



Percent Households with No Car Ownership

Up to 50% of residents in East End have no access to private vehicle –

FHWA Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects



Sidewalk Conditions

Pulaski St.



Hardy St.



The Barrier

An active rail yard, mountainous terrain, and the social legacy of segregation divide the heart of Bluefield, West Virginia's historic African-American community "the East End,"¹ from the city's gentrified commercial center. The Appalachian Mountains, which provide the region with its rugged landscape and varied terrain, serve as a geophysical reminder of the racial and demographic schisms between these two sections of the city.

Bluefield's commercial center occupies a relatively flat, well-developed area that is predominantly white and of middle or upper-middle-class socioeconomic attainment, while the East End area, predominantly Black and lower-income, has grown up "on the other side of the tracks," quite literally across a railroad bed and nestled in surrounding hills. Residents of these two areas of Bluefield experience vastly different qualities of life, life expectancies, and economic prospects (as shown in Figure 1).

Bluefield's City Center
Poverty Rate: 28th percentile US
Avg Life Exp: 75.9 years

Bluefield's East End
Poverty Rate: 91st percentile US
Avg Life Exp: 64.1 years



300' wide

Grant St. Bridge Urgency



Grant St. Bridge Demolition



Bluefield 2023



Grant St. Bridge Re-Construction



Grant St. Bridge Re-Construction



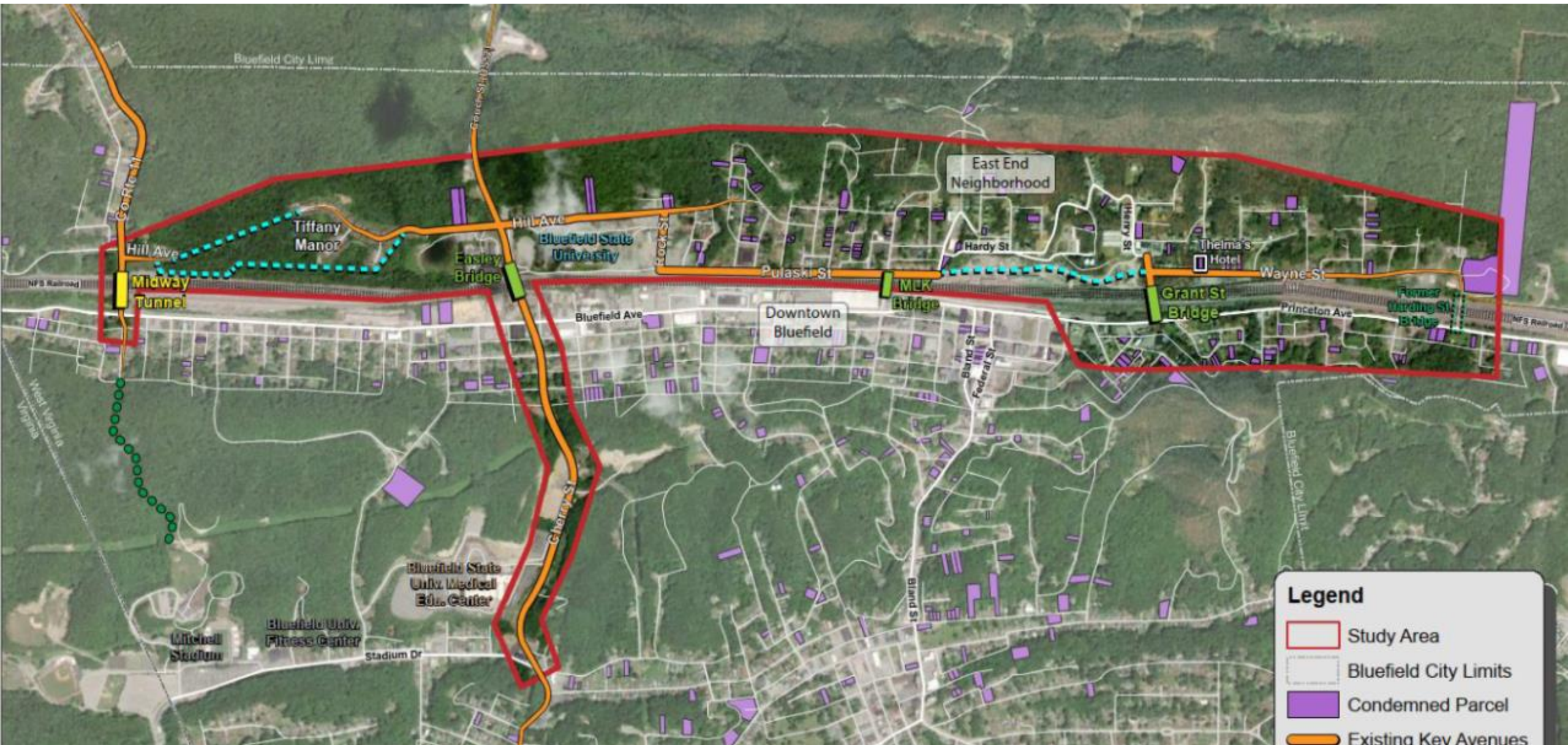
Past Investment Summary

Table 1: Summary of Past Investment to Build Physical Connections Between the East End and Downtown Bluefield

Bridge	Bid Date	Cost (YOE)
Easley Bridge	October, 1999	\$7,585,000
Martin Luther King, Jr. Bridge	November 2014	\$5,877,000
Grant St. Bridge	March 2021 (under construction)	\$8,097,000
Total		\$21,559,000

Source: WVDOT

Reconnecting Communities Study Area



Project Budget

Reconnecting Bluefield RCP Budget

Task	Cost
1. Public Engagement	\$ 205,000
2. Planning Studies	\$ 410,000
3. Conceptual and Preliminary Engineering	\$ 620,000
4. Performance Indicators	\$ 25,000
	\$ 1,260,000

Project Budget

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Planning Study

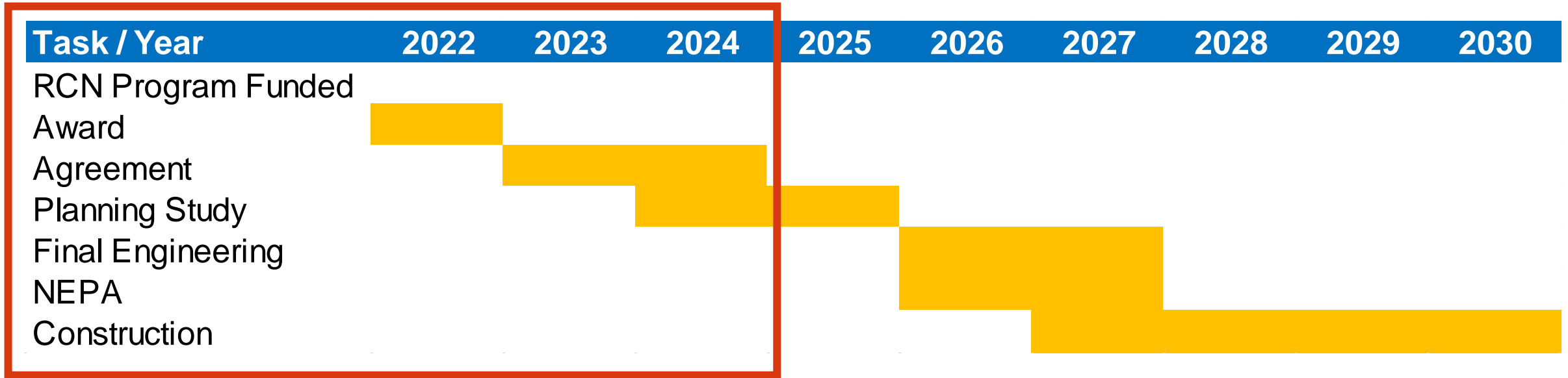


2. Planning studies to further assess the feasibility of the project

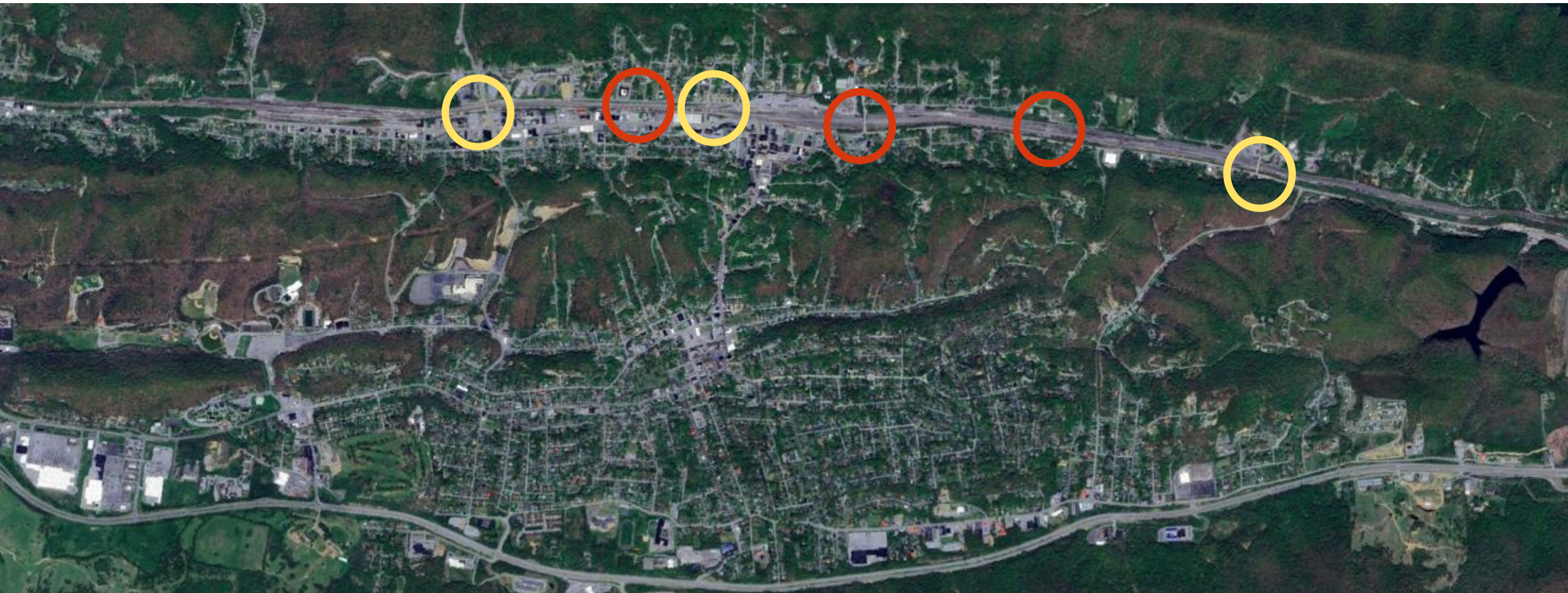
Planning studies to document the existing conditions on Bluefield's East End, study alternative corridors and alignments of the proposed East End connections, and examine traffic operations of the roadway network after the reconnection will be performed to initiate the project. The result of the planning studies will be a Design Study Report in general compliance with the WVDOT Project Development Process and are anticipated to include:

- Current traffic patterns on the facility and the surrounding street network.
- Capacity of existing transportation networks to maintain mobility needs.
- Alternative roadway and tunnel structure designs.
- The project's impact on mobility of freight and people.
- The project's impact on safety.
- The estimated cost to restore community connectivity.
- The project's environmental, public health, and community impacts.

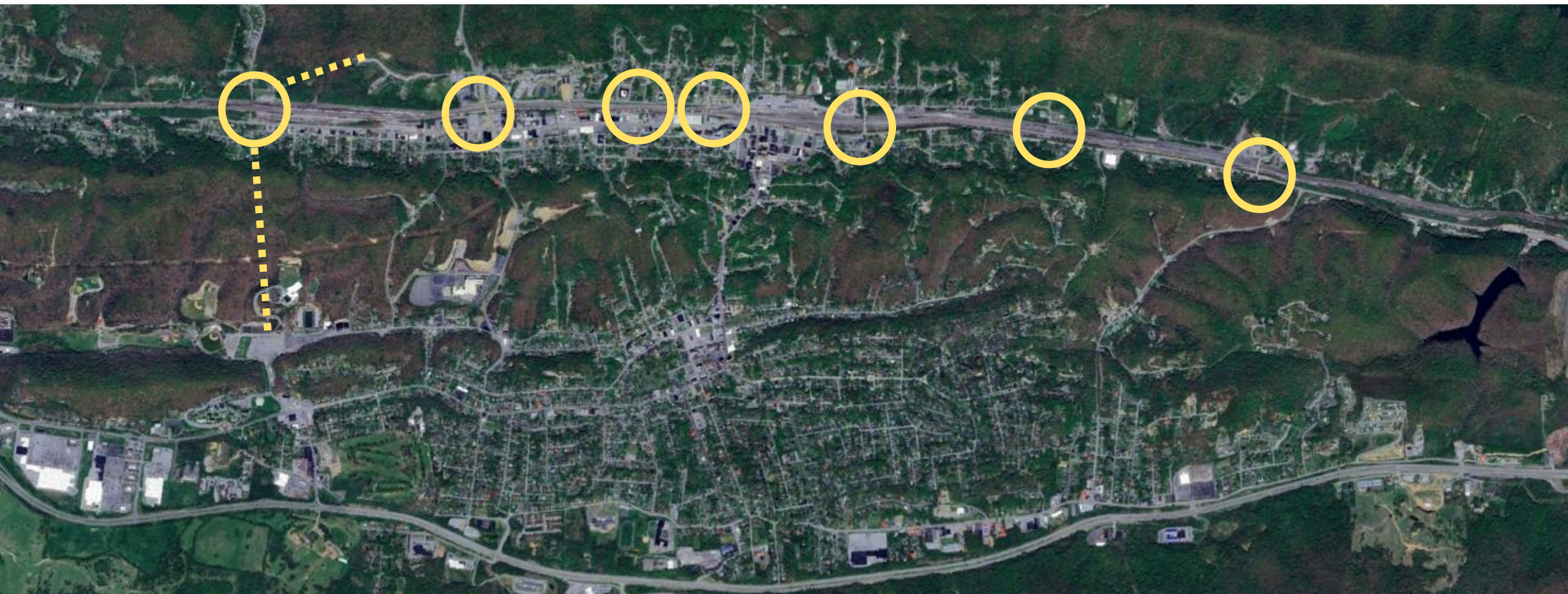
Project Schedule



Bluefield 2021



Bluefield 2030?



Lessons Learned



If you have a project idea, tell someone



Meaningful public engagement is key



Listen to the webinars and pay attention to the Q&A



Tell the human story, use data



Grant agreements take time



Look at last year's NOFO and winners to strategize



Questions?

Thank you for listening!

Contact Information

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