

## A HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE COMMUNITY

The Index provides data and information on the following topics:

Topography Water  
Geology Air  
Weather and Climate Ecosystems

Land Energy  
Housing Risks, Hazards, and Stressors  
Water Supply  
Transportation

Population

Education

Health

Culture

Income Agriculture

Total Employment Forestry

Employment Sectors

[These] findings underscore the importance of considering public health and wellness in land use planning and the need for cooperation between environmentalists and developers.

**This is a powerful collaboration.**

*Jason Ingle, President, Asheville Board of REALTORS®*

This will be an extremely useful tool for local planners, providing information needed to

**help grow business**

while protecting the natural resources so important to the area.

*Susan Fox, former Assistant Director, USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station*

Our culture and heritage are an integral and necessary component of our economy and quality of life. Those things are sometimes taken for granted, but

**they are the reason people live, visit, and relocate their businesses here.**

The Vitality Index gives us the ability to show the relationships between the economy, our culture, and the environment that may not otherwise be apparent.

*Angie Chandler, Executive Director, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area*



The 27 counties of the Mountain Resources Commission covered by the Vitality Index.

a project of  
**Mountain Resources Commission**

this project has been funded by



# WNC Vitality Index

[www.wncvitalityindex.org](http://www.wncvitalityindex.org)

## WHAT IS THE WNC VITALITY INDEX?

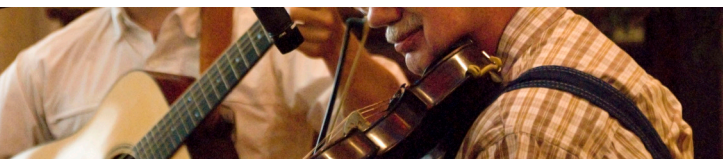
The Western North Carolina (WNC) Vitality Index reports on the 27 counties of Western North Carolina through the perspectives of four categories. This resource provides the information necessary to protect our region's abundant and unique natural resources, promote development and planning that accommodates healthy growth, and preserve the heritage and culture that defines our communities, all while strengthening public health and expanding the influence of the region's local economic activity



### THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



From the pristine streams and rivers to the towering Blue Ridge Mountains, this analysis of Western North Carolina's natural resources reports on the vitality of our topography, geology, and biological resources, and the state of our weather and climate, water quality, and air quality.



### THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

With generations of experience honed to an efficient craft, local music, art, heritage, and spiritual values are elements that reflect all Western North Carolinians. This study observes the region through a lens focused on our population, human health, education, and culture.



### THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Looking at the region's status on land use, housing, transportation, water supply, energy, and natural stressors and risks, this analysis covers the places we work, shop, play, travel, and live. Through careful planning, these can be balanced to minimize their environmental impacts in order to ensure a lasting and productive community.



### THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

A look at the region's standing on income and poverty, employment, agriculture, forestry, and tourism is essential to promoting a locally healthy and resilient economy.



## LOCAL AND REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Built upon the collaboration of many local and regional partners, the WNC Vitality Index draws data from local professionals whose expertise ranges from agriculture to geology to housing to cultural heritage. The information portrayed reflects the diverse elements that make up Western North Carolina.

The Vitality Index is designed to assist local governments, interest groups, and the public in furtherance of the Mountain Resources Commission's mission to "take care of our natural resources to enhance and sustain quality of life and ensure the long-term health of our region and our people."

### An Accessible Resource



The Vitality Index's metrics are available in their entirety online at [www.wncvitalityindex.org](http://www.wncvitalityindex.org), allowing the public to interface with the region's data in an interactive way, including a mobile-friendly map application. In addition to the website, a booklet version of the Index is available for download as either an interactive PDF or in ready-to-print book form. It is formatted to dynamically display on a variety of devices, including smartphones and tablets.

### Community Outreach



The downloads section of [www.wncvitalityindex.org](http://www.wncvitalityindex.org) features pamphlets that show how the Vitality Index can be used to illustrate meaningful relationships among the natural, human, built, and economic aspects of the Western North Carolina community. Other promotional materials such as information sheets and posters are available.

Additionally, supporting data used to create all content for the Vitality Index is accessible by download to the community, to encourage further collaboration.

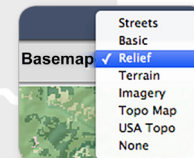
## INTERACTIVE MAP TOOL

The Vitality Index also includes a geographic information systems (GIS) map viewer that allows users to interact with the datasets featured within the Index. GIS allows layers of data to be placed over a map of the region to create a visualization that can be used to investigate the relationships between the diverse elements that make up Western North Carolina.




The GIS viewer can be accessed from anywhere in the Vitality Index by clicking on "GIS Viewer" in the black navigation toolbar at the top of each page.

### How to Use the GIS Viewer

Once the viewer loads in your web browser, the 27 counties of the the MRC region are displayed along with their major roads and highways. To change the basemap, click the drop-down box in the toolbar at the top, and select your preferred basemap.



### Navigation


The top toolbar is home to the hand  and magnifying glass icons , which allow you to pan around the map by clicking and dragging, or to zoom by drawing a box around your area of focus. You can zoom and pan at controlled increments using the slider and arrows on the left side of the screen. You can also type the name of an area into the "Find Area" search box to have the viewer automatically locate it. To return to a view of the entire 27-county region, click the globe icon .

### Exploring Data

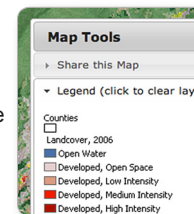
The "Map Layers" box contains the data layers used to overlay specific metrics onto the basemaps. The grey tabs represent each of the sectors covered in the Vitality Index, and within each tab are the data layers, categorized by type.




To activate or deactivate a data layer, check the box next to it.

More than one layer can be active at a time, but the other active data layers may appear hidden. The gear icon  beside the layer name allows the transparency of each layer to be adjusted so that others can be made visible. To do this, click the gear and move the slider to adjust layer transparency. With this function, the relationships between multiple data layers and the underlying geography can be examined.

The "Map Tools" window contains the legend for active layers, and provides options to share your created map by providing a link that you can copy and paste into your browser.



For additional support, click the question mark icon  and follow the on-screen instructions.