



BLAND COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Officially Adopted on:
May 22, 2018

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

The County's Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by the Board of Supervisors upon recommendation of the Planning Commission. The plan is to be used as a long-term guide for land use decisions related to growth and development and to assist the County in determining when and where new public facilities and improvements are needed. Recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are typically general and long-range to outline a vision of the County over a 20 –year period.

Legal Basis for the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan was developed in accordance with Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. The local planning commission is authorized to prepare and recommend a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction. Every governing body is required to adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. The Plan is to be general in nature and designate the general location, character, and extent of public facilities.

Updating the Plan

Annual Report

The County's planning commission recommends conducting an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan in coordination with the annual budget, as well as other financial, planning, and regulatory tools.

Five-Year Updates

The Code of Virginia requires that the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed at least every five years. Detailed procedures for the updates are recommended within this plan.

Amendments

As with any document, amendments may be needed over time depending on new initiatives, more detailed planning, or changes in governmental policy. Examples of possible future amendments include neighborhood plans, transportation improvement plans, housing plans, parks plans, or other strategic or Master plans.

Relationship to other Plans

The Comprehensive Plan is a policies statement, an overview of land use in the County, and the first step in the County's planning effort. This plan is supplemented by other more detailed plans, which have been developed by the



County, citizen groups, regional organizations, state, and federal governments.

Plan Implementation

The plan can be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools. Generally, Comprehensive Plans are implemented primarily through the Zoning Ordinance, Operating Budget, Capital Improvements Plan, and Master Plans for specific areas.

Historical Overview

Bland County was formed in 1861 from portions of Giles, Tazewell, and Wythe Counties. The people of the area had become dissatisfied with the distance to the various county seats. The rough mountain trails did not lend themselves to the quick and pleasant conduct of necessary legal affairs. There was also great dissatisfaction with taxes paid for the benefit of those far removed from the rugged mountains and valleys of Bland. Thus an act to establish the County of Bland passed the General Assembly of the State of Virginia on March 30, 1861. The county was named after Richard Bland, a leader of Colonial Virginia whose arguments laid the intellectual foundation for freedom and independence from the mother country.



CHAPTER TWO: GOALS

Goals

Bland County's Comprehensive Plan is based on the goals in the following areas:

Transportation

Goal: A sustainable transportation system that links highways, transit systems, greenways, sidewalks and bike trails to provide multimodal transportation options.

Land Use and Developmental Issues

Goal: Facilitate land use patterns that offer a variety of housing choices and convenient access to neighborhood shopping, schools, parks, and other services; protect property owners from incompatible land uses; make efficient use of Bland County's limited land capacity; and coordinate land uses with infrastructure needs.

Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Goal: Preserve, enhance, and protect Bland County's environmental resources to maintain high quality of life for residents and sustainable development for the future.

Economic development

Goal: Attract new businesses and expand existing businesses to provide a broad range of employment opportunities and a high quality of life for residents of, and those employed in, Bland County.

Agriculture and Rural Character

Goal: Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality of Bland County's agricultural areas and promote traditional rural lifestyles, farmland, agricultural enterprises, open space, recreation, and historic resources within the county.

Housing

Goal: Enhance neighborhoods within Bland County through preservation, revitalization, and quality infill development. Create quality affordable housing and mixed-use development in higher population areas.

Community

Goal: Improved health and well-being; access to improved and enhanced community services, facilities, and infrastructure for all; and expanded opportunities for social equity among diverse community groups.



CHAPTER THREE: POPULATION

Historical Trends

The population of Bland County has fluctuated over the past 50 years. The county witnessed a declining trend between the 1950s and the 1970s. However, population began to increase in the 1980s and continued to do so until 2000 (See Population Changes over Time Table). The decade experiencing the highest growth rate was 1970-1980 with a 17.1 percent increase. This rate of growth exceeded the Planning District’s rate of 13.6 percent. During the decade from 1980-1990, the county once again gained in population (2.6 percent growth rate), compared to a decline from the Mount Rogers Planning District. The county’s population in 1990 was only 78 persons more than the 1950 figure. By 2000, the population of Bland County reached 6,871 persons, a 5.5 percent increase from 1990, but then fell again during the period from 2000-2010 to 6,824, a decrease of less than 1 percent.

The population of Bland Correctional Center accounted for 9.3 percent of the total population of the county at 637 persons. Bland County experienced a 25.8 percent increase in population between 1970 and 2010, while the population of Bland Correctional Center grew by

62.1 percent during the same period. Overall, population growth in Bland Correctional Center between 1970 and 2010 accounted for 17.4 percent of the total population increase in the county during that period.

After the 2010 Census, Bland County was redistricted to try to ensure that voting precincts were relatively equal. The population change for the decade from 2000-2010 was a result of small growth in three of the four districts and a large decline in the fourth. These growth patterns are shown in Table below. All of the population growth in District 3 can be attributed to the population growth at the Bland Correctional Center; without the inclusion of inmates, the population in the district dropped by 3.1 percent from 1,125 to 1,090 residents.

**Population Changes over Time
1960 to 2010**

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Bland County	6,436	5,982	5,423	6,349	6,514	6,871	6,824
MRPD	161,514	160,065	159,412	181,139	178,205	190,020	193,595

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census



Population Change By District			
2000 - 2010			
District	2000	2010	Percent Change
District 1	1,699	1,774	4.4%
District 2	1,698	1,754	3.3%
District 3	1,715	1,727	0.7%
District 4	1,759	1,569	-10.8%
Bland County	6,871	6,824	-0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Population density of the county increased only slightly with 19.1 persons per square mile in 2010, compared to 17.7 persons per square mile in 1990. Without considering the population of Bland Correctional Center, the county's population density was 17.3 persons per square mile.

Population Composition by Age, Sex, and Race

The following table shows the population composition of Bland County by age group for 2000 and 2010.

Age of Population					
2000 and 2010, by age groups					
Age Group	2000		2010		Percent Change 2000 - 2010
	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent	
Under 5	308	4.5%	285	4.1%	-7.5%
5 to 14	773	11.3%	695	10.1%	-10.1%
15 to 24	775	11.3%	682	9.9%	-12.0%
25 to 34	1000	14.6%	804	11.7%	-19.6%
35 to 44	1105	16.1%	1099	16.0%	-0.5%
45 to 54	1123	16.3%	1023	14.9%	-8.9%
55 to 64	794	11.6%	1051	15.3%	32.4%
65 and older	993	14.5%	1185	17.4%	19.3%
Total Population	6,871	100.0%	6,824	100.0%	-0.7%
Under 18 yrs	1334	19.4%	1220	17.9%	-8.5%
Median Age	40.3		43.6		--

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census



Gender

In 2010, Bland County had a population comprised of 3,765 males (55.2 percent of the total population) and 3,059 females (44.8 percent of total population). The median age of the male population was 42.0 compared to 46.4 for females. This data is influenced by the all-male population of Bland Correctional Center.

Race

Bland County’s population in 2010 continued to be predominantly white. This is a fairly consistent characteristic of every locality across the planning district and Southwest Virginia. The minority population represented only 4.5 percent of the total population in 2010 (307 persons). The majority of the non-white population are African American residents, with only 1.2 percent of the population composed of other minorities.

Population of Bland County By Race		
2000 and 2010		
	2000	2010
White alone	6,495	6,517
Black or African American alone	285	228
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	5	1
Asian alone	8	18
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	1	1
Some other race alone	32	10
Two or more races	45	49
Total:	6,871	6,824

Population Growth Factors

There are a number of key factors that have an impact on population growth or decline, and there are a number of variables that are predictors of future population change.

The following table shows an analysis of natural increase in population (births minus deaths) and net migration (movement in and out of the county) between 2000 and 2014, both natural increase and net migration in Bland County followed the same trends experienced in the Mount Rogers Planning District.



Change in Population						
Bland County and Mount Rogers Planning District						
2010 - 2014						
	Total	% Change	Natural Increase		Net Migration	
			No.	% Change	No.	% Change
Bland County	(199)	-2.9%	(156)	-2.3%	(35)	-0.5%
MRPD	(2,653)	-1.4%	(2,291)	-1.2%	(262)	-0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (*Population figures are estimated between census years.*)

Population Trends and Projections

Projecting population for a community the size of Bland County can be an almost impossible task because of the vulnerability to change based upon outside forces. For example, decision-making at the county level can have a profound effect. The construction of public water and sewer infrastructures, while not spurring automatic population growth, can have a pro-growth affect as the county looks to the future. These services alone are critical public health improvements and will provide the opportunities for future residential and industrial expansion. With public sewer connections available to land parcels near Interstate 77, new industrial development is possible, which, in-turn, will bring new families to the county.

Thirty-year population projections released by the Virginia Employment Commission (see table on following page) predict Bland County will have the second highest rate of population growth of the counties in the Mount Rogers Planning District. Overall, the Virginia Employment Commission predicts that Bland County will experience an increase of almost 600 persons over the next three decades. To achieve this and other potential growth, the county should continue to support basic infrastructure improvements, expand local tourism attractions, retain and recruit industry, and nurture small business development.

Conclusions

The population of Bland County increased steadily from 1980 to 2000, but has slowly declined in the years since. Currently Bland is experiencing the region-wide issue of out-migration of the younger population.

Bland County’s population is aging with the median age of both males and females higher in 2010 than in 2000. Almost one in three residents (32.7%) is age 55 or older and the only two age groups with positive changes in population were the “55 to 64” and “65 and older.”

Despite the boom of new births that resulted in county growth in the 1990s, the percentage of persons under age 18 has declined since 1980, which is largely the result of low to negative natural increase and smaller families.



Population Projections ¹							
Mount Rogers Region and Virginia							
By Decade, 2000 to 2040							
Locality or Region	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	Difference	Percent
	Census ²	Census ³	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	2010-40	Difference
Bland	6,871	6,824	7,001	7,212	7,415	591	8.7%
Carroll	29,245	30,042	30,514	30,877	31,187	1,145	3.8%
Grayson	17,917	15,533	15,014	14,727	14,520	-1,013	-6.5%
Smyth	33,081	32,208	32,302	32,599	32,913	705	2.2%
Washington	51,103	54,876	57,040	58,800	60,402	5,526	10.1%
Wythe	27,599	29,235	30,030	30,581	31,035	1,800	6.2%
City Bristol	17,367	17,835	18,746	19,645	20,431	2,596	14.6%
City Galax	6,837	7,042	7,632	8,261	8,854	1,812	25.7%
MRPDC	190,020	193,595	198,278	202,702	206,757	13,162	6.8%
Virginia	7,078,515	7,892,900	8,811,512	9,645,281	10,530,228	2,637,328	33.4%
<i>1. Weldon Cooper Center, October 2015 2. 2000 Census 3. 2010 Census</i>							



CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSPORTATION

Goal: A sustainable transportation system that links highways, transit systems, greenways, sidewalks and bike trails to provide multimodal transportation options.

Introduction

The main transportation infrastructure in Bland County is the road and highway system which includes all public roadways ranging from Interstate 77 to unpaved state secondary roads. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for all roadway maintenance and construction. The County works with VDOT representatives to coordinate and request maintenance and improvement projects.

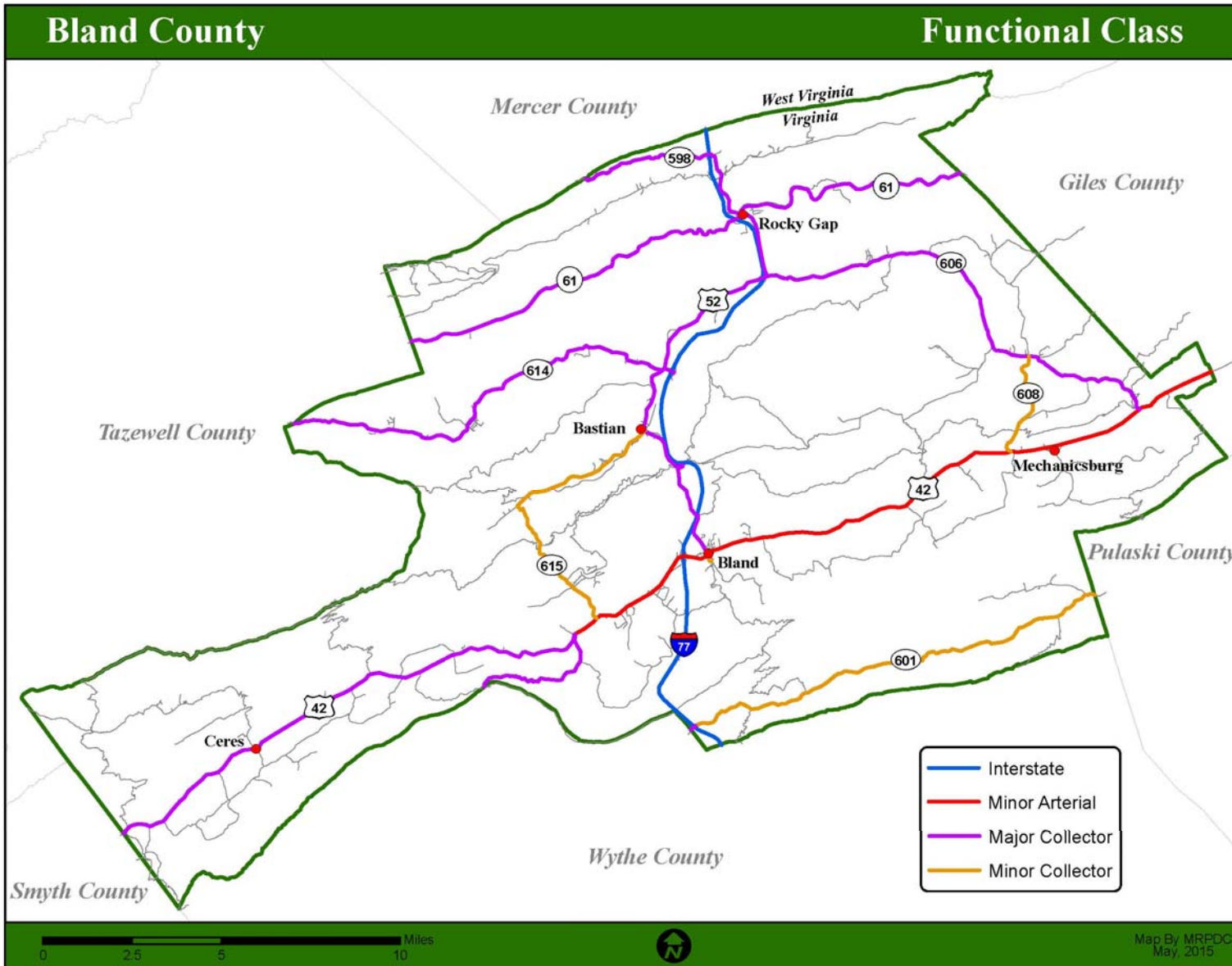
Interstate System

I-77 travels nearly 22 miles South/North from the Wythe County line, Virginia border to the Mercer County line at the West Virginia border. There are five exits/entrance ramps along I-77 in Bland County, including exit 47, exit 52, exit 58, exit 62, exit 64, and exit 66. I-77 is considered a Corridor of Statewide Significance (CoSS) in the VTrans Plan and is known as the West Mountain Corridor.

Highways and Roads

VDOT-Primary (Rural primary or arterial highways-two lane, multi-lane, and divided highways with controlled access points), Secondary (rural secondary road or collector road, two to four lanes and typically undivided), and Private. A segment of US Route 52 is considered a minor arterial road running through Bland County. The segment runs from Route 42 south in Bland proper to Route 42 north. The other minor arterial in Bland County is a segment of VA Route 42 that runs from Route 52 east in Bland proper to the east at the Giles County line. Bland County has twelve major collector roads. They include segments of VA Route 42; VA Route 61; VA Route 98; VA Route 52; VA Route 606; VA Route 614; VA Route 666; and VA Route 717. Bland County has six minor collector roads. They include segments of VA Route 601; VA Route 608; VA Route 615; VA Route 717; VA Route 1001; and VA Route 1002.





Six-Year Improvement Program, House Bill 2, House Bill 1887 – SMART SCALE Program

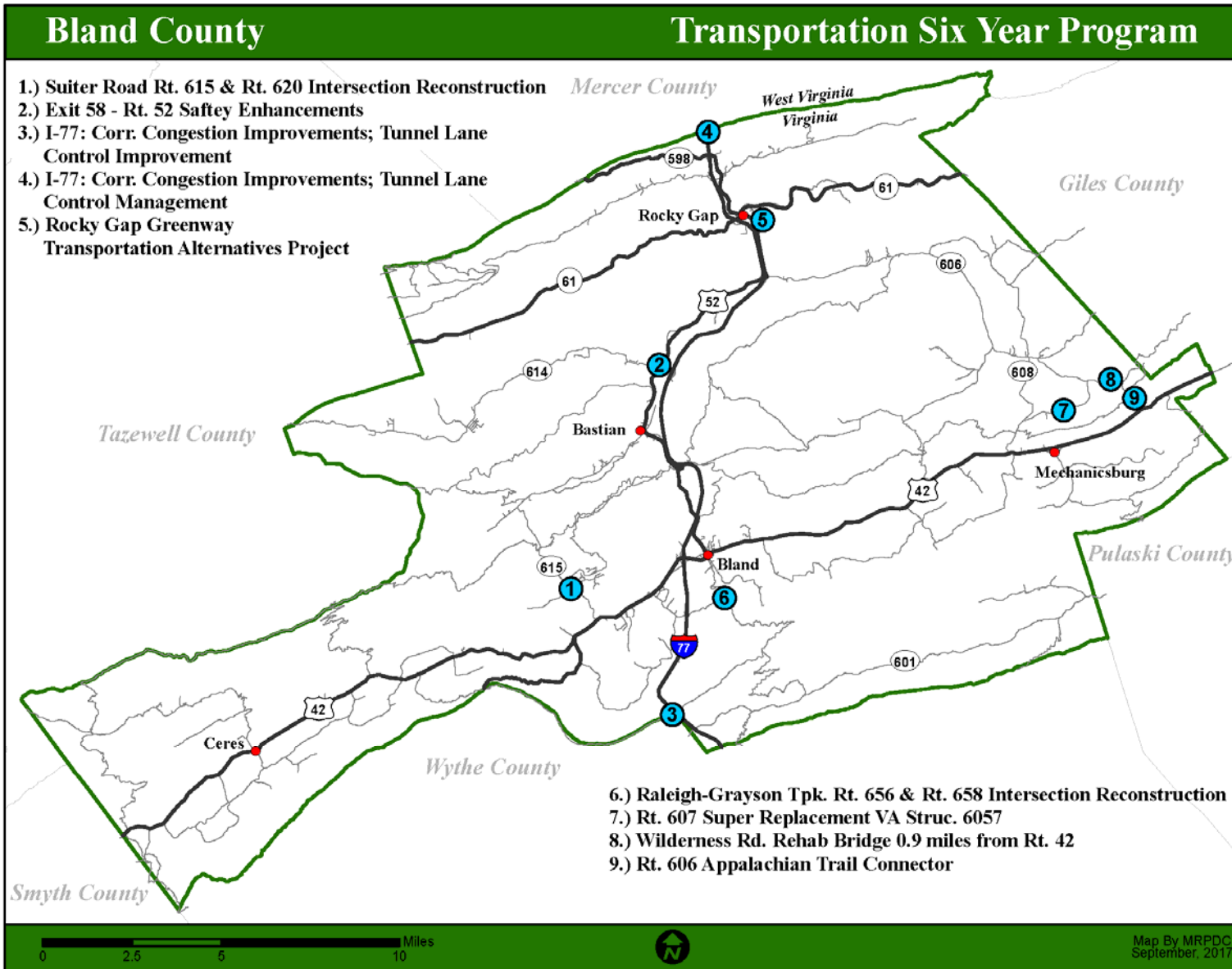
Transportation needs will almost always be greater than the funds available to address them. The signing of House Bill 2313 in 2013 created a more sustainable revenue source supporting transportation funding. While passage of this bill enabled the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to add significant revenues to Virginia's transportation program, there are still many transportation needs that cannot be addressed with available revenues. To find a way to better balance transportation needs and prioritize investments for both urban and rural communities throughout the Commonwealth, new legislation – House Bill 2 – was signed into law in 2014. In 2016, the process was renamed "SMART SCALE, Funding the Right Transportation Projects in Virginia." SMART SCALE stands for System Management and Allocation of Resources for Transportation: Safety, Congestion, Accessibility, Land Use, Economic Development and Environment.

The purpose of SMART SCALE is to fund the right transportation projects through a prioritization process that evaluates each project's merits using key factors, including: improvements to safety, congestion reduction, accessibility, land use, economic development and the environment. The evaluation focuses on the degree to which a project

addresses a problem or need relative to the requested funding for the project.

For Bland County, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission will represent the regional agency that will work with Bland County representatives to prioritize transportation projects. House Bill 2 will continue to evolve in the following years to become more efficient and fair in the selection of transportation projects and it will be important for the county to work with VDOT and Mount Rogers Planning District Commission in order to be aware of changes to the planning process. Not all transportation projects are subjected to the scoring system of SMART SCALE. The law excludes safety projects and asset management projects such as rehabilitating aging pavements and bridges. Certain funding sources are exempted, including the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, Highway Safety Improvement, Transportation Alternatives, Regional Surface Transportation and Revenue Sharing programs, and secondary/urban formula funds. Projects that have been fully funded and have completed environmental review for FY 2015-2019 Six-Year Improvement Program will remain. All other projects that are currently listed on the Six-Year Improvement Program will be subjected to the VDOT scoring system and may change designation. New Six-Year Improvement Projects and SMART SCALE projects will be selected in August 2018.





program is on leaving trees, vegetation, side slopes, and open drainage abutting the roadway, undisturbed to the maximum extent possible.

Bland County is very lucky in that many of the County roads are paved. Some of the less traveled roads and roads with few residents are unpaved yet maintained by VDOT. The County entertains requests for paving roads and reviews paving possibilities on a case by case basis while working closely with VDOT to determine eligibility.

System Deficiencies and the 2035 Rural Long Range Improvement Plan

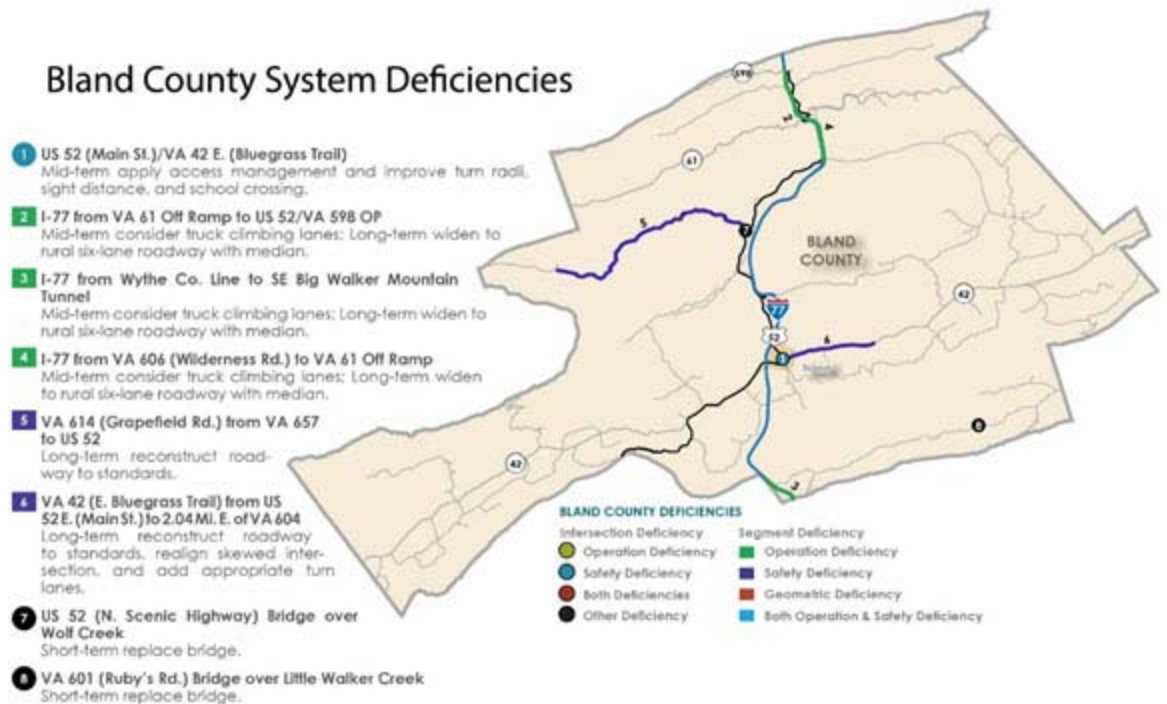
VTrans is Virginia’s statewide long-range multimodal policy plan that establishes the vision, goals and investment priorities for the Commonwealth’s transportation systems. The update of VTrans2035 links the investment priorities to the goals, provides more detailed investment strategies to expand upon the investment priorities, and introduces a framework for performance-based planning.

The draft document was available for public review from December 4th to January 31st. The adoption of the final draft was unanimously concurred upon by the Commonwealth Transportation Board at the

February 20th CTB meeting. The final VTrans2035 Update and Executive Summary are now available online.

Scenic Roads

A scenic byway/road is a road recognized for one or more of six "intrinsic qualities": archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic. Scenic Roads / Byways are designated as a way to preserve and protect the state’s / county’s scenic but often less-traveled roads and help to promote [tourism](#) and economic development. Bland has



three designated Scenic roads and three Virginia State Byways.



Alternative Methods of Transportation

Public Transit and District Three Governmental Cooperative – Mountain Lynx

District Three Public Transit, Now Mountain Lynx, is a Division of the District Three Governmental Cooperative is the only public transit service offered in Bland County. The District Three Governmental Cooperative headquarters are based in Marion. Certain areas in Bland County are served by District Three Public Transit on specified days of the week. Ceres, Route 42, and the Bland areas are served on Tuesday to Wytheville. Route 42 E., Kimberling, Hollybrook, Bastian, and the Bland areas are served on Monday to Bluefield. Route 42 E., Kimberling, Hollybrook, Bastian, and the Bland

areas are served on Thursday to Wytheville. Route 42 E., Mechanicsburg, South Gap, Bastian, and the Bland areas are served on Friday to Bland. Ceres, Route 42, and the Bland areas are served on Friday to Bland.

Rail

Currently there is no passenger service in Bland County. In 2013 Virginia state legislators passed laws that will bring passenger rail through Roanoke, via Lynchburg. There are proposals to stretch the line further through southwest Virginia through Blacksburg and down to Bristol. The title of the project is U.S. 29, US. 460, and I-81 Passenger Service. Regional cooperation should be encouraged to support passenger rail service from Roanoke to Bristol.

There are no freight lines that run through Bland County. Norfolk Southern lines run just north of Bland County through West Virginia and south of Bland County in Wythe County. The Norfolk Southern line in Wythe County is known as the Shenandoah Line.

REGIONAL AIRPORTS

Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport

Located 87 miles east from Bland County, the airport offers nonstop service to nine major cities and averages 50 scheduled flights per day. Service includes passenger flights, general aviation, airfreight carriers, corporate, air taxi, charter operators and the military.



Tri-Cities Regional Airport

Located 100 miles southwest of Bland County, the commercial airport is full-service and serves the four corners of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Kentucky. Non-stop flights are offered to international airports including Charlotte, Atlanta, Tampa/Clearwater-St. Petersburg and Orlando.

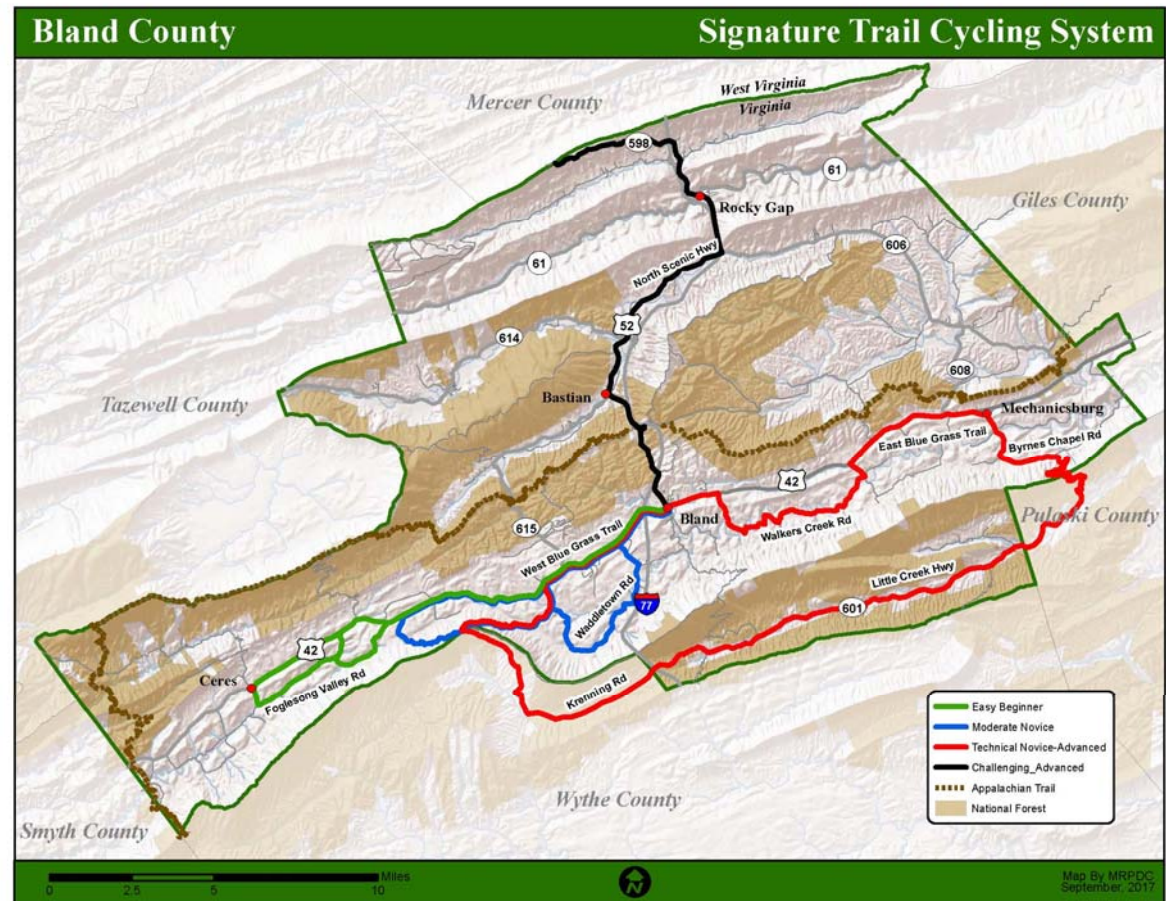
Charlotte-Douglas International Airport

Located 153 miles south of Bland County, it is the sixth busiest airport in the world serving over 39 million passengers per year. The airport averages more than 700 departures per day and more than 140 nonstop flights to national and international destinations.

Pedestrian/Bicycling

Bland County is a recreational paradise, and along with the rest of southwest Virginia, is becoming a hub for tourism. Bland has many hiking trails through-out the Jefferson National forest, including 56 miles of the Appalachian Trail running the entire length of the County.

In 2011, Bland County and the EDA developed the Frederico Morini Signature Bicycle Trail system. The trails will utilize State Primary and Secondary roads and the trail network follows directional signs throughout bland County. The Trail System will be the centerpiece of the county's tourism initiative and will play a large roll in economic development.



Objective 1: Land Use and Transportation Coordination

Promote integrated development patterns and transportation networks that work together to support pedestrian- friendly communities and active modes of transportation. Land use and transportation decisions should be consistent and mutually reinforce each other.

Policies

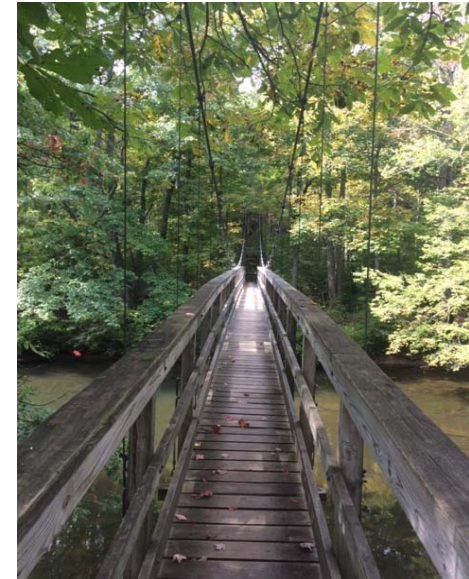
- **Plan Integration** – Work with Mount Rogers Planning District Commission and VDOT to promote Bland County’s transportation projects in coordination with regional and state transportation plans.
- **Land Use Supports Transportation** – Invest in transportation projects that support economic development and land use goals.

Actions

- **Planning Commission Review** - Have transportation plans reviewed by the County Planning Commission to ensure that these plans support land use proposals and maximize the potential for economic development and alternative transportation modes.
- **Road Classifications** Use road classifications as a factor in zoning districts and land use conditions. Review and revise language to assure consistency between transportation function and land use.

Objective 2: Integrated Transportation Network

Develop a high quality, multimodal transportation network that provides transportation options that meet the short- and long-term transportation needs of residents and businesses in Bland County.



Policies

- **Road Network** – Maintain a road network that will enhance our manufacturing and logistics strengths and contribute to further development of our economic base.
- **Multimodal Transportation** - Promote and develop a multimodal transportation network that offers safe and attractive choices among modes including sidewalks, bike paths, greenways, public transportation in addition to roadways.



Actions

- **Significant Road Projects** - Work to fund and implement road projects of countywide significance. See Six Year Program map.



Objective 3: Street Design

Design roads that are safe and efficient for motor vehicle drivers while accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists, and limiting negative environmental impacts.

Policies

- **Multimodal Projects** - Ensure that new roadway projects and major reconstruction projects provide safe, convenient, and

attractive accommodations for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

- **Safety** - Prioritize the safety and needs of pedestrians and bicyclists over the convenience of motorists for upcoming transportation projects.
- **Sustainable Roadway Design** - Encourage sustainable roadway design and construction best practices to

reduce stormwater runoff, maintain and enhance vegetation, and minimize environmental impacts.

- **Roadway and Bridge Design** - Design roadways and bridges to be community assets, serving to connect communities and to enhance the visual appearance of the built environment.

Actions

- **Safety** - Consider the safety of all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians, when evaluating road and intersection improvement projects. Review VDOT safety data for locations with high vehicular crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists to identify needed improvements.
- **Road Diets** - Consider road diets on roads with excessive widths and/or travel speeds. Use available right-of-way for landscaping and/or bicycle and pedestrian facilities or preserve right-of-way for other future use.

Objective 4: Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Create a safe and effective bikeway/sidewalk/greenway network that is an integral part of the transportation system, links together resources and destinations, provides an alternative to automobile travel, increases recreational opportunities, and advances healthy lifestyles and quality of life.



Policies

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning** Consider use of bicycle and pedestrian transportation at every level of community planning, including development review, community development, recreation, and schools.
- **Locations for Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements -** Enhance pedestrian and bicycle circulation, access, and safety near community facilities, including schools, library, parks and recreation centers.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Funding -** Ensure adequate funding for construction and maintenance of bicycle facilities, sidewalks and greenways as a critical component of the transportation system. Leverage state and federal grant funds, including VDOT's Transportation Alternatives program, to supplement local resources whenever possible.
- **Road, Bridge, and Intersection Improvements -** Seek to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in all road, bridge, and intersection improvement and construction projects. Continue to coordinate and implement pedestrian and bicycle accommodations with maintenance projects, such as striping bike lanes as part of resurfacing projects.
- **Underused Right-of-Way** Add bike lanes to roadways by converting underused right-of-way.

- **Child Safety -** Support programs such as Safe Routes to School, and provide new infrastructure to encourage children to walk and bicycle safely to and from school. Consider expanding such programs to connect to parks and other community facilities.

Actions

- **Integrate Bicycle/Pedestrian/Greenway Planning -** Develop a comprehensive active transportation plan, the Recreation and Greenways Plan, and that integrates bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway components (see chapter 9 Communities and Agriculture for more information).
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans -** Implement the Recreation and Greenways plan.
- **Pedestrian Planning -** Perform a gap analysis and a sidewalk construction priority list based on an objective ranking system. Fund sidewalk construction based on the priority rankings and geographic diversity.
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Rights-of-Way -** Reserve, obtain and/or acquire right-of-way or easements for proposed bikeways, sidewalks, multiuse paths and greenways if facilities are not required to be constructed as part of the development approval process.



- **Walkability/Bikeability Deficiencies** - Undertake walkability and bikeability audits to identify deficiencies and target areas for infrastructure improvements.

Objective 5: Regional Transportation

Create a strong multimodal regional transportation system that provides regional mobility, encourages economic development, promotes sustainable growth patterns, and preserves the natural and built environments of the region.

Policies

- **Regional Transportation Planning** – Continue to work with regional planning partners and local transportation agencies to coordinate transportation planning, operations, and funding priorities for roads, transit, commuter rail, and other transportation modes.
- **Regional Planning** Work with regional organizations and other jurisdictions on collaborative land use and transportation planning efforts.
- **Regional Sustainability Planning** Support regional planning and sustainability efforts.
- **Roadway Improvements** Coordinate roadway improvement projects to support regional transit service.

- **Regional Greenways and Bikeways** Work with regional partners to develop multijurisdictional greenways and bikeways.

Actions

- **Regional Transportation Projects** – Help Implement regional transportation planning projects.
- **Rural Technical Committee** – Continue to provide representation on the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission’s Rural Technical Committee to help assist with regional transportation planning efforts.

Objective 6: Transportation Funding

Ensure adequate long-term funding for maintenance and construction of all modes of transportation facilities.

Policies

- **Adequate Funding** - Ensure adequate funding for construction and maintenance of all modes of transportation.
- **State and Federal Funds** - Aggressively seek State and federal funds for local transportation projects. Leverage State and federal grant funds to supplement local resources whenever possible.
- **Funding Sources** - Consider a wide range of standard and innovative funding sources for transportation funding, including bond issues, assessments and



fees-in-lieu, taxes, toll roads, and public/private partnerships.

- **Equitable Transportation Investment** - Ensure that transportation infrastructure investments are equitably distributed in the community.

Actions

- **Funding Strategies** - Develop funding strategies for maintenance of existing and new construction of transportation facilities.
- **Development Impacts** - Require developers to provide right-of-way, make improvements, construct facilities, or provide fees-in-lieu to help alleviate the traffic impacts of their projects.
- **Innovative Financing** - Pursue local, state, and federal sources and innovative financing options to assist in funding transit infrastructure investments.

Objective 7: Transportation Planning Process

Support an open, inclusive, and participatory transportation planning process.

Policy

- **Collaborate** - Ensure that transportation planning and decision-making is an open, collaborative process that includes citizens and local, state, and federal governments

Actions

- **Public Participation Policy** - Follow the public participation policies adopted by the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Mount Rogers Rural Technical Committee to bring a broad cross-section of the public into transportation policy, planning, and investment decision-making processes.



CHAPTER FIVE: LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

Goal: Facilitate land use patterns that offer a variety of housing choices and convenient access to neighborhood shopping, schools, parks, and other services; protect property owners from incompatible land uses; make efficient use of Bland County's limited land capacity; and coordinate land uses with infrastructure needs.

Current Land Use by Categories

The existing land use information for Bland County was collected and mapped by the staff of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. Based on zoning information, approximately 95 percent of the land in Bland County was used for agriculture and conservation/recreation in 2016. The remaining 5 percent was utilized for more intensive commercial, industrial, residential, and public/semi-public uses.

Conservation/Recreation lands are removed from consideration for more intensive uses, such as residences, commercial centers, and industry because of their location and use. The land required for these purposes will most likely come from the land currently classified as agricultural.

Any additional public land required for recreation uses is most likely to come from land currently classified as conservation/recreation. This classification includes commercial forest acreage, woodland on the farm, and

acreage owned or managed by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Jefferson National Forest.

Bland County's structures are scattered in a relatively random fashion along almost every road in the county. A number of small communities are located along major roads and intersections. There is a tendency for these communities to grow toward one another, creating what are, in effect, linear communities. This trend can be seen along portions of Routes 42, 52, and 61.

Current Land Use Controls

Subdivision Ordinance

Bland County adopted a subdivision ordinance approximately 35 years ago. This ordinance reflects the view of the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, and is sufficient to carry out the goals and objectives of this plan.



Manufactured Home Park Ordinance

There is a Manufactured Home Park Ordinance in Bland County that contains the rules and regulations for constructing a manufactured home park in Bland County. This ordinance should become a section of the zoning ordinance at such time as the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors feel comfortable with amending the Zoning Ordinance to add a Manufactured Home Park District.

Zoning Ordinance

The County adopted a zoning ordinance in 1996 that appears to be serving the County's needs for the present. The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors should continue to watch development trends in the County and amend the ordinances as necessary to encourage development into those sections of the County being provided with water and sewerage facilities.

Physical Constraints to Development

This survey of existing land use and a study of the previous land use maps show that most of the intensive uses of land in Bland County are taking place around the existing communities, Bland, Bastian, Rocky Gap, Mechanicsburg, and Ceres. However, this trend is changing to a more linear type of development. This type can be seen along the I-77 corridor and the major roads of the county.

Development of land is restricted naturally by certain physical features, such as slope, watershed and surface

water, groundwater conditions, and problems associated with floodplains.

Slope Constraints

Approximately 75 percent of the land in Bland County has a slope of 20 percent or greater. Slopes in excess of 20 percent or greater do not preclude development. However, the provision of services (water, sewerage, other utilities) is more difficult and therefore more costly. The cost of constructing and maintaining roads is also higher. The use of septic tanks for sewage treatment is generally limited by steep slopes, and in some instances, public sewage treatment systems are not economically feasible. Erosion and sediment control during and after construction is also an additional cost factor. Therefore low densities (dwelling units per acre) and extreme care in platting are recommended when developing on slopes of 20 percent and greater.

A hidden cost to the development of steep areas is the cost of improving existing roads to handle traffic generated by them. Costs of reconstructing and improving can be extremely high, and the cost of improving access roads should be recognized as part of the cost of any additional development, especially when areas of changing relief are involved.



Watershed and Surface Water Constraints

The boundaries of the watersheds are an important restriction to the provision of sewage collection facilities, since gravity flow is a highly desirable feature for sewage lines. Once a watershed boundary is crossed, it becomes necessary to provide treatment in that watershed. Where watersheds pose a problem for the provision of sewage treatment facilities, lot sizes should be kept large enough so that septic disposal systems are not overloaded and central treatment does not become necessary.

The characteristics of the area and amount of development in a watershed are also important from the standpoint of stream flow characteristics. Most important are peak flow and low flow characteristics, total run off, and water quality. Such characteristics can be altered by the type of vegetation, the percentage of area made impervious by various types of development, by alterations of the stream channels, and by changes in the depth of the water table. In general, as development increases within a watershed, the peak flow of the streams is increased, the low flow is decreased during dry weather, total run-off is increased, and water quality may decline if numerous septic systems are in operation or there is increased soil erosion.

Groundwater Constraints

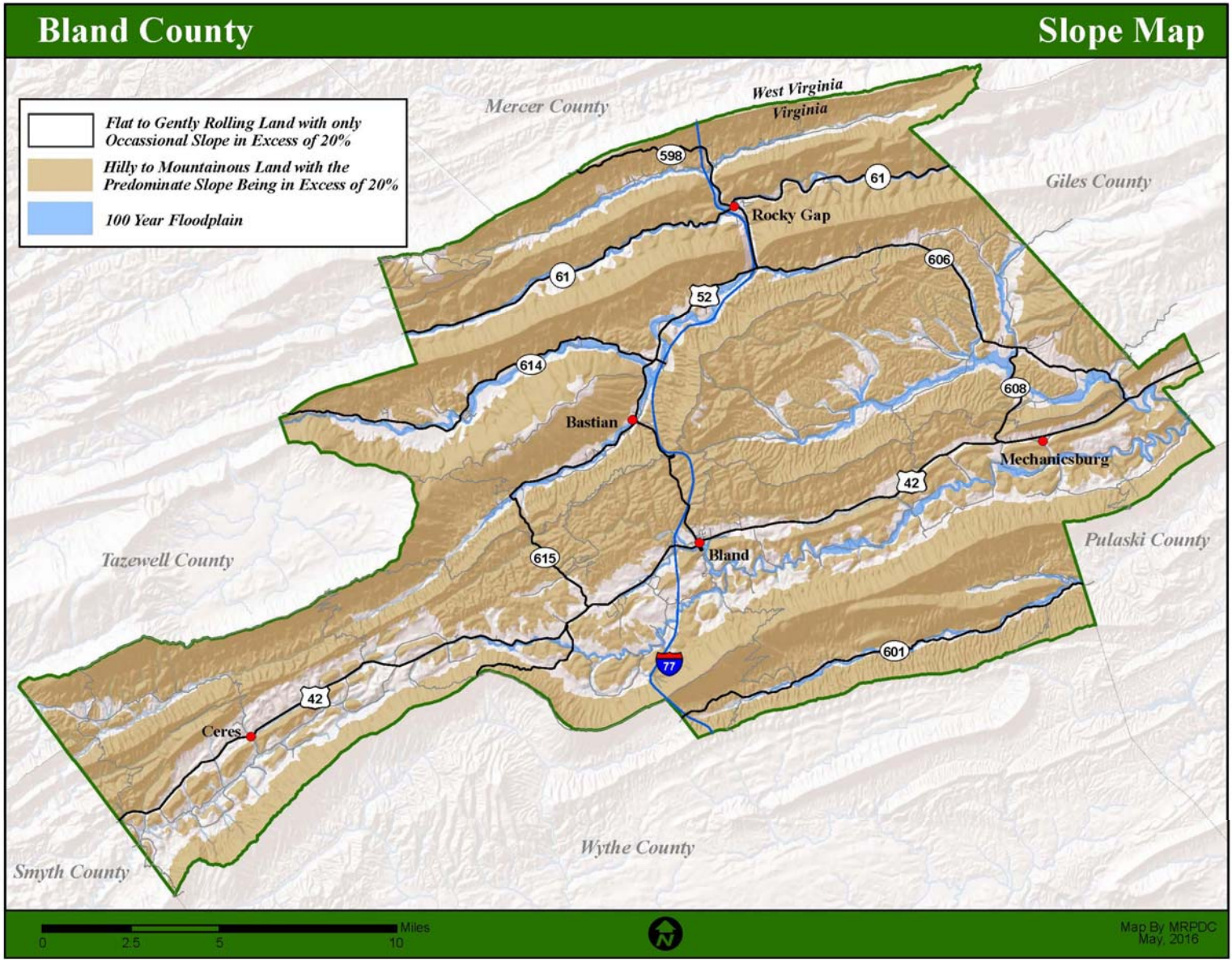
Area with sinkholes (karst areas) and springs create special problems. Since little filtration of run-off from surface water or seepage from septic systems occurs, contamination of

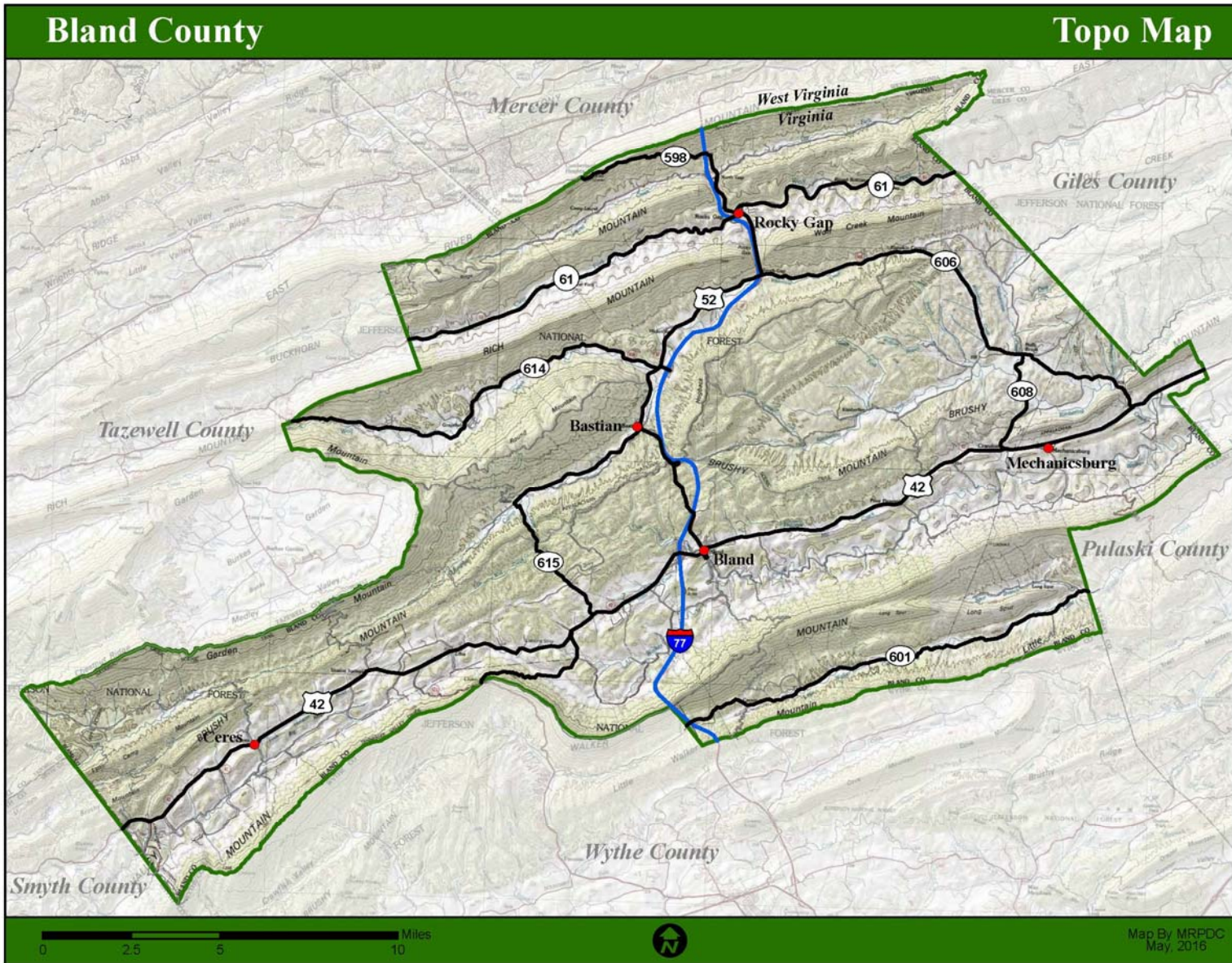
the water table can be severe problem. In general, intensive development should be discouraged. However, when development occurs, it is recommended that low densities (larger lot sizes) be maintained. Sewage treatment should be handled by public treatment systems instead of private septic systems. Care should be taken not to build structures or roads over sinkholes or in areas where there are wide variations in the depth of the soil.

Within the drainage area of the sinkhole, the effect of the development on run-off water must be considered. Sinkholes act as natural storm sewers and have limited capacities to handle run-off. Houses, roads, parking lots, schools, and industrial and commercial structures increase the run-off during rainy periods and may cause localized flooding. When development is allowed in these areas, care should be exercised to see that the capacity of the underground drainage is not exceeded and that the area at the bottom of the sink, where the water drains into the ground, is protected. If these precautions are not observed, flooding may result. If the flow of water is increased beyond the capacity of the drain in a kitchen sink, or if the drain becomes plugged, the sink will start filling up.

There are several areas in Bland County where sink holes (karst areas) could create a problem, and development in these areas should be controlled. These areas can be observed along Route 42.







Floodplain Constraints

Flooding poses a limitation to development in approximately two percent of the land in Bland County.

The provisions in the State Building Code enforced by the county presently restrict residential construction within the 100-year floodplain. However, this does not prevent the development of structures not intended for human habitation and other non-intensive uses such as recreation or agriculture.

Care should also be exercised to prevent the flooding of existing developments on floodplains, which are extremely vulnerable to additional development or modification of the channel upstream.

Development Issues

As this and previous surveys of existing land use conditions in Bland County should make clear, only a relatively small portion of the land is currently being used for intensive development. The rest is, for the most part, sparsely settled.

The situation is fortunate in many ways. For one thing, it means that residents of the county have access to woodland and open spaces and that some vestiges of an older, more rural America are retained.

It must be realized that history and topography have limited Bland County's past growth to a relatively small area. This

trend is changing as more and more development is beginning to spread out adjacent to highways leading out of existing communities.

In effect, it must be recognized that whatever intensive development takes place in Bland County should be restricted to a relatively small part of the County. This means there will be competition between equally desirable uses of land for the same tracts. If new industrial plants are to locate in the County, land will have to be converted from agricultural or other low density uses. The amount of land retained in agricultural use will in turn be a limiting factor on residential, commercial, and industrial development. Such a course will also necessitate more prudent use of land resources in already established commercial, residential, and industrial centers.

A growth policy like the one just described will require County Planning Commission Members and County Supervisors to make difficult decisions regarding future uses of land. There will undeniably be problems associated with the specific steps to be followed to put such a policy in action. However, the kinds of decisions and the kinds of problems to be faced are those that can be dealt with by community planning. The specific steps to be undertaken, to make such a policy a reality, will be presented in the recommended goals, objectives, and strategies discussion.



Planned Growth District (PG)

The PG district provides an area of transition between Agricultural Zones and the Commercial and Industrial Zones. The PG district applies to properties within the urban growth areas not platted for intensive development due to the low short-term prospects of the availability of community facilities and in consideration of existing land uses.

Because portions of developable land are in what the County considers potential growth areas, as designated in the Comprehensive Plan or any other plan adopted by the County, may not develop in the near future, the permitted uses in the PG district shall not lessen the potential for the potential growth areas to eventually develop as needed. On the following pages are maps of PG districts surrounding commercial areas within the county.













CHAPTER SIX: ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: Preserve, enhance, and protect Bland County’s environmental resources to maintain high quality of life for residents and sustainable development for the future.

Introduction

With approximately one-third of the county designated as National Forest, the natural character and scenic beauty of Bland County is some of the most well preserved in Southwest Virginia. Bland County’s citizens protect its natural resources and many residents note that the rural character is one of the reasons why they located or stay in the county. Much of the Bland County way of life is tied back to the land and it is one of the driving factors of entrepreneurial economic development within the county. As a designated Appalachian Trail Community, Bland County has 56 miles of preserved trail that are a beckon for adventurers and naturalists and provide economic development opportunities for the county. This well-known Trail is only one of many natural assets in Bland, but, in combination with the National Forest, it often serves as a guiding force for environmental protection efforts.

Goals

In order to maintain, enhance, and protect Bland’s environmental resources, specific goals have been laid out to help determine the best ways to main resources and a high quality of life while not being detrimental to County industries. These goals are:

- Provide clean, high-quality water to meet the domestic, economic, and recreational needs of the community.
- Protect high-quality natural areas and sites with rare plants and animals.
- Protect watersheds, wetlands, and streams to reduce pollution runoff, soil erosion, and flooding.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive development that respects natural areas and enhances the quality of our built environment.
- Create a cost-effective solid waste management program that protects public health and the environment, promotes recycling, reduces the amount of solid waste, and successfully manages and reclaims landfill sites.
- Enforce cost-effective environmental regulations.



- Increase community understanding of and sensitivity to the area's natural systems and related environmental issues.

Objective 6-1: Water Quality and Conservation

Use water resources efficiently and sustainably. Protect watersheds and streams by reducing pollution runoff, soil erosion, and flooding. Determine ways to provide high-quality drinking water to meet home, business, and recreational needs of the community.

Water in Bland County is a key issue as much of the water used within the county comes from outside its borders. The County is driven to become self-sustaining and is developing its own water resources for the use of its residents. Working with both engineering firms and regional resources, the County currently has several water projects in various stages of development. County staff is determined to see these plans to fruition for the benefit of both residents and county resources. In addition to developing these resources for usage, the County understands the need to preserve and protect water resources for the future prosperity and growth of the county.

Policies

- **Watershed Protection** – Continue to promote the protection of watersheds and amend regulations as necessary.
- **Regional Watersheds** - Promote regional cooperation for watershed issues.
- **Natural Water Filtering** - Encourage the protection and development of natural water filtering methods, such as riparian buffers.
- **Stormwater Runoff** - Encourage sustainable design and construction best practices to reduce stormwater runoff. Strive to maintain and enhance vegetation and minimize environmental impacts, especially in areas with sinkholes (Karst topography).
- **Stormwater Management Systems** - Promote environmentally sensitive and aesthetically pleasing stormwater management systems.
- **Groundwater Protection** - Protect groundwater from the adverse effects of development and natural resource extraction. Land development and use should be managed to reduce the likelihood of groundwater contamination.
- **Wastewater** - Explore opportunities for wastewater recycling/reuse systems at wastewater treatment facilities to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus load further and to reduce potable water consumption for nonessential purposes.



- **Land Protection** – Limit any land use that poses an undue risk to the quality and quantity of groundwater supply.
- **Natural Streams** - Discourage, where feasible, further channelization and piping of streams.

Actions

- **Water Quality Regulations** - Continue to monitor water quality and conditions in current and future water supply watersheds. Study the effectiveness of current watershed regulations and recommend changes as needed for watershed protection.
- **Watershed Management** - Maintain an open dialogue on watershed management with upstream and downstream localities.
- **Stormwater Education** - Educate land owners and businesses about the benefit of best management practices for stormwater protection.
- **Update Stormwater Regulations** - Update current stormwater regulations as needed to follow best practices for managing stormwater runoff.
- **Erosion Control** - Update erosion control ordinances and enforcement processes as necessary.
- **Water Conservation Campaign** - Promote a countywide water conservation campaign.
- **Stream Crossings** - Install bridge systems instead of culverts, where feasible, for stream crossings to help

maintain the natural ecosystem associated with the stream.

Objective 6-2: Land Preservation and Sustainable Development

Protect natural areas, as well as areas with rare plants and animals, high-quality soils, and/or tree canopy. Develop and redevelop land in the most productive method while protecting natural resources.

Bland County is often thought of as a largely undeveloped county and with that, land preservation may not immediately spring to the forefront as a concern for the county. However, Bland's slopes make it a relatively difficult place to build as approximately 75 percent of land in the county has a slope of 20 percent or greater. With steep slopes and a multitude of National Forest acreage, readily developable land is a resource in small quantity, so sustainable development practices and land preservation are imperative for the county's future.

Policies

- **Environmental Partnerships** – Work with state and federal government agencies to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas, especially those surrounding national forest.
- **National Forest and Trails** – Work with the National Forest Service to protect the National Forest, Appalachian Trail, and other ecotourism designations.



- **Appalachian Trail and other Trails** – Recognize and build upon the efforts of Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs or other organizations to help utilize the Appalachian Trail and other clubs for the betterment of the county.
- **Greyfields and Brownfields** – Encourage redevelopment as a means to preserve previously undisturbed land.
- **Redevelopment and Infill** – Encourage redevelopment of existing structures and infill in neighborhoods
- **Sustainable Development** – Encourage sustainable development practices including using green building technologies, retaining natural site features, and mixed-use development.

Actions

- **Natural Landscapes** – Explore options to protect scenic views and natural landscapes that are important to maintain the visual character of the county.
- **Appalachian Trail** – Work with Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH), Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC), the Outdoor Club of Virginia Tech (OCVT) and other organizations to maintain the Trail.
- **Natural Resource Acquisition** – Develop and maintain a list of properties that will help ensure long-term natural resource conservation.

- **Green Infrastructure Plan** – Consider developing a green infrastructure plan to analyze and protect the county’s ecosystems.
- **Greyfield and Brownfield Incentives** – Provide incentives to redevelop greyfield and brownfield sites.
- **Natural Areas Integration** - Study methods for integrating natural areas into the site design of development projects and ensure that these areas are protected during construction.
- **Pervious Parking Surfaces** – Consider whether to encourage using pervious parking surfaces in appropriate development situations.
- **Green Building Techniques** – Assess green building techniques and consider incentivizing their usage within the county.
- **Karst Topography** – Practice controlled development around areas with sinkholes and other Karst topography features.
- **Trees Along Roadways and Infrastructure Lines** – Coordinate with utility companies to preserve existing trees and plant new trees within county to maintain healthy tree canopies while not impeding power or water infrastructure operations.
- **Environmental Performance Standards** - Consider investigating environmental performance standards for private and public development projects that address such issues as air emissions, pollutant



discharges, erosion and sediment controls, and natural features.

Objective 3: Waste Management

Promote a cost-effective solid waste management program that protects the environment and citizens, promotes recycling, and reduces solid waste quantities, and successfully manages and reclaims landfill sites.

As a never-ending concern, waste management is an issue targeting communities worldwide. The effective use of landfill sites and reduction of solid waste quantities are especially important in an area where developable land is so valuable. The county can embrace newer technologies and promote recycling programs as ways to ease the burdens of solid waste management.

Policies

- **Recycling Committee/Plan for Recycling** – Consider creation of a recycling committee for all districts or a plan for recycling.
- **Solid Waste Disposal Technology** – Determine the need for newer solid waste disposal technologies that could reduce the volume of materials going into landfills.
- **Recycled and Recyclable Products** - Promote the use of recycled or recyclable products among citizens and businesses.

- **Commercial and Industrial Recycling** - Encourage recycling efforts for private commercial and industrial businesses.
- **Zoning Ordinances** - Consider creation of zoning ordinances to combat trash and junk alongside major highways and byways. If such ordinances are enacted, then consider full-time enforcement officers for the ordinances.
- **“Keep Bland Beautiful” Campaign** - Consider a campaign to get citizens involved with roadside cleanup.

Actions

- **Waste Reduction** - Study processes for reducing the amount of waste going to landfills and implement chosen strategies.
- **Environmental Education and Outreach** - Establish a public program or collaborate with a nonprofit or private agency to educate the public on the environmental impacts of waste and the benefits of recycling.
- **Unauthorized Landfill Sites** – Identify unauthorized landfills and their sources and organize cleanup efforts.



Objective 4: Environmental Regulation

Encourage the creation and enforcement of cost-effective environmental regulations.

While environmental regulations on a state and federal level are set up to protect our local areas, it is necessary to foster close working relationships with the agencies determining these regulations to provide the most benefit for our communities. Providing local input into plans can help determine the best solutions for the local area and avoid duplication of efforts amongst different agencies.

Policies

- **Environmental Input** - Encourage local input in the development of environmental plans and regulations.
- **Regulation Coordination** - Coordinate the development of local regulations with the state and federal agencies.
- **Environmental Sources** - Monitor the status of environmental resources.
- **Clear Regulations** - Assess how local environmental protections and administration can be made clear, understandable, and effective.

Actions

- **Regulation Assistance**- Work with businesses and individuals to assure their understanding of environmental regulations and maintain their compliance with those regulations.

- **Effective Regulations** – Assure that regulations are working as expected and revise ineffective or unclear regulations.

Objective 5: Environmental Awareness

Increase community understanding of Bland County's natural systems and related environmental and sustainability issues.

Before Bland can be successful in fully implementing policies and regulations to preserve and enhance its environment, the County must educate its citizens about the importance of protecting its environmental assets. Education is one of the most important components to creating a cleaner, more sustainable community.

Policies

- **Environmental Awareness** – Increase public awareness of environmental issues.
- **Environmental Partnerships** – Support organizations and/or programs that educate residents about environmental issues.
- **Appalachian Trail Partnerships** – Support organizations that provide outreach and help maintain the Trail.

Actions



- **Environmental Issues Outreach** – Use public communications such as the media and social media to educate residents about environmental issues.
- **Appalachian Trail Outreach** – Use public communications to educate residents about the Trail, the importance of maintaining it and the impact it has upon the County.

Conclusion

Much of Bland County's future economic development depends on maintaining the environmental quality of its landscape. Bland's rural character ensnares people, be they tourists, potential residents, or long-time citizens. Protecting Bland's environmental assets is one step along the way to developing greater prosperity for the county and maintaining the high quality of life for future generations.



CHAPTER SEVEN: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Attract new businesses and expand existing businesses to provide a broad range of employment opportunities and a high quality of life for residents of, and those employed in, Bland County.

Introduction

Bland County’s location along I-77 is one of its key economic drivers. The county line is just 12 miles north of I-77’s intersection with I-81 and with this superb interstate access, the county lies within a day’s drive of half of the United States’ population and major industrial centers. Its location has historically been one of Bland’s greatest assets, as it allows access to population centers while maintaining its rural character and charm. Location becomes increasingly more important as quality of life factors assert themselves more into economic development considerations.

Bland County stands out among the jurisdictions in the Mount Rogers Planning District with an average weekly wage (\$763) in 2014 for workers that is higher than the planning district average (\$711), and an average weekly wage for manufacturing workers (\$1,170) that was above the State of Virginia average (\$1,116) during second quarter 2015.

TABLE 7-A				
Economic Indicators				
Unemployment Rate, 2014	Avg Weekly Wage Per Worker, Qtr. 2 2015	Avg Weekly Wage Percent of State	Avg Weekly Wage Per Worker, 2014	Avg Weekly Wage Per Worker, 2010
6.0%	\$796	79.6%	\$763	\$723
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census; U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, Economic Trends 2004; & Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages				



Industries

Manufacturing

Bland County's manufacturing cluster is a key asset to the county and the largest provider of jobs, with over one-quarter of Bland's workforce being employed by a manufacturing facility in 2015. Manufacturing remains the highest paying industry within the county and one for which the county is renowned. Bland County Economic Development Authority (EDA) must remain diligent in keeping up-to-date with the needs, successes, and issues within the environment of its current manufacturers, because it will be more productive and beneficial for the county to retain its current manufacturing base instead of having to attract new businesses to take their place.

Government

Government employment in Bland County is higher than other localities in comparison percentage wise because of the low population of the county and number of government based job opportunities. The Bland Correctional Center (state), Bland County School Board (local), and the County of Bland (local) are among top government employers. The Bland Correctional Center is the second largest employer and its operation within the county has helped stabilize the industry base and increase average wages.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a declining industry within the county, with the 2010 Census reporting that a total of 71 county residents (16 years and older) were employed in agricultural production, a decrease from 116 in 2000, 145 in 1990, and 278 in 1980. As agriculture has gotten progressively more global and competitive, many producers have become part-time and now earn their main income in other industries. However, despite these trends, the 2012 Agriculture Census reports that 77,456 acres of land were devoted to farms from which \$9.3 million in farm products were sold, up from \$8.6 million in 2007. Nationally, the number of farms are decreasing as farm size grow, and Bland County is no exception. The number of farms in Bland County decreased by 6.5% (387 in 2007 to 362 in 2012), while the acreage increased from 209 to 214 acres per farm. The County must remain supportive to its agriculture producers and help them determine ways to better market their products.

Tourism

Tourism has become one of the key components of the economy for Southwest Virginia in recent years. Asset-based economic development, or development centered on historical, cultural, and natural assets has been noted as the new "creative economy" within the region. This type of development not only builds businesses and livelihoods out of resources already at hand, but also builds a strength of pride in the region and its heritage. Bland's location also gives a competitive edge for tourism, because it gives



visitors easy access to the Appalachian Trail and other tourism based assets.

Workforce

Bland County's ratio of in-commuters to out-commuters, in which 70% more people leave the county for work than come in (2,436 vs. 1,425 in 2012), may label it a bedroom community. I-77 provides the direct link between Bland and Wythe County, Virginia and Mercer County, West Virginia, and with it over 700 people leave Bland each work day to work in one of these two counties. This out-commuting pattern shows both an available workforce and need for localized employment.

Goals

In order for Bland County to prosper and diversify, specific goals have been laid out to help the county progress into the future. Many of these goals are multi-disciplinary and apply over several objectives, even objectives outside of Bland's Economic Development goals.

Goals for Economic Development:

- Attract new businesses and expand existing businesses
- Support expansion of infrastructure, including water, sewer, and internet
- Support a broad range of employment options
- Encourage economic diversification

- Support entrepreneurial innovation
- Support opportunities for higher educational attainment by the local workforce
- Identify and protect suitable large industrial park sites
- Rehabilitate older, derelict, and underutilized commercial properties
- Retain and improve quality of life factors
- Support tourism, historic, recreational, and arts-related attractions
- Support development of commercial property along the interstate corridor.

Bland County's economic development goals hinge on one very important factor: being diversified and ready to adapt to change. Many Southwest Virginia communities have long been dependent on a single major industry whose slowdown devastated the local economy—coal, tobacco, and furniture manufacturing being only a few examples. These tough transitions lay case to the need for a diversified economy and a resilient, well-trained workforce. As discussed, several communities are moving toward an asset-based tourism economy, and while it may be one component of Bland's plan for the future, tourism cannot be the backbone.

Three overarching objectives have been developed to help achieve Bland's goals: the development and/or redevelopment of business sites, promotion of a diversified economy, and the continuing improvement of education on all levels.



Objective 7-1: Business Sites

Create viable, development-ready business/industrial park sites for high-quality companies and primary job generation. Recognize the availability of good industrial land and promote the wisest economic use of those resources to generate needed jobs and create wealth for the community. Stimulate redevelopment and increased economic activity on aging sites that have become less economically attractive.

Development in designated areas within the county will help protect resources, both natural and financial, and promote growth within predetermined sectors. As well as being a more cost-effective method of development, marketing targeted areas in Bland can help further its appeal for specialized industries and the development-ready quality of locations.

Policies

- **Planned Growth Districts** - Consider plan for Planned Growth Districts, or development zones, for future business expansion along the Interstate 77 corridor.
- **Protect future industrial land** - Encourage protection of industrial opportunity areas from other types of development that would subdivide parcels
- **Infrastructure for growing business** - Continue to improve the transportation and utilities infrastructure to support the needs of industries

- **Physical Improvements** – Encourage property owners of existing structures and industrial-zoned land to rehabilitate their physical facilities to accommodate new business
- **Organize for Business Development** – Align efforts of business owners, property owners, and the community to strengthen business development efforts

Actions

- **Industrial Land Designation** - Explore industrial plan protection mechanisms such as industrial zoning, tax credits, tax abatement or deferrals for industrial land protection
- **Industrial Land Protection** - Protect planned industrial areas by following established land management plans
- **Industrial Zoning** – Allow property to be zoned for future industrial use without tax penalties
- **Telecommunications Infrastructure** - Develop broadband internet infrastructure to support needs of businesses and industry
- **Development-ready Sites** - Create and market development ready sites
- **Economic Development Target Areas** - Map Economic Development Target Areas and have available as a marketing tool



- **Transportation Plan Alignment** – Align transportation plans with potential economic development opportunities

Objective 7-2: Business Atmosphere/Economic Diversification

Promote a business atmosphere that is supportive to entrepreneurial endeavors and diversification.

With the transitioning economy in Southwest Virginia, communities with an atmosphere supportive to entrepreneurs and small businesses have seen growth, especially in through redevelopment in their downtowns. Small businesses help create interest in local assets and help keep capital and other resources local.

Policies

- **Long-Term Economic Growth** – Support and implement a coordinated long-term strategic plan that fosters sustainable economic growth within the county.
- **Public-Private Partnerships** – Support public-private partnerships as a method to facilitate the growth of capital investment in combination with economic development activities.
- **Business Recruitment** – Support the recruitment and retention efforts of both the Bland County Economic Development Authority and Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA).

- **Small, Entrepreneurial, and Home-based Businesses** – Support entrepreneurial businesses and other small start-up businesses, including home-based businesses.
- **Telecommunications Infrastructure** – Support the development of county-wide broadband infrastructure.
- **Environmentally-sound Community** – Support an environmentally-sound community with a high quality of life to attract quality, high-paying employers.
- **Agricultural Economy** – Support farming and agricultural tourism businesses.
- **Tourism and Asset-Based Economic Development** – Support tourism and development focused on the county's historic resources, arts-related, and recreation-related activities such as the Appalachian Trail and National Forest.
- **Cultural Diversity** – Recognize and support business opportunities associated with the growing diversity of cultures.

Actions

- **Regional Business Opportunities** – Participate in regional planning and business recruitment opportunities.
- **Telecommunications Infrastructure** – Develop the Bland County Wireless network to provide wireless or hybrid internet networks throughout the county.



- **Suitable Business Clusters** – Target and market suitable and feasible business/industry clusters.
- **Asset-based Economic Development** – Embrace asset-based economic development centered on the County's natural and cultural assets.
- **Find Disadvantageous Codes and Regulations** – Investigate existing county codes and regulations that may hurt small and home-based businesses or impede entrepreneurial business growth.

Objective 7-3: Education

Improve education on all levels for a trained workforce with varied skills

As previously noted, Bland County's location is one of its most valuable assets; this asset relates to education as well. Bland's public schools offer students the basis needed to move into higher levels of education, whether the student is university-bound or looking for receive additional training needed for a more hands-on or technical profession. Residents of Bland have access to numerous world-class institutions of higher education within a short drive. Bland's ability to attract new businesses and support its current businesses weighs heavily upon its workforce having the education and training needed to support the needs of these companies.

Policies

- **Educated Workforce** – Support institutions of higher learning within the region to provide a well-trained and highly-educated workforce.
- **K-12 Education** – Promote community initiatives to maintain and improve the quality of Bland County's schools.
- **Recruiting Companies** – Capitalize on the presence of large companies and institutions of higher learning within the region to recruit prospective companies.
- **Wythe-Bland Foundation Scholarship Program** – Continue to support and market the program, which offers tuition waivers for qualifying students.

Actions

- **Education Programs** – Work with business community, learning institutions, and workforce development board to assure that necessary education programs are available to students.
- **Training for emerging job sectors** – Work with the business community, learning institutions, and the workforce development board to assure students are receiving training for jobs in emerging sectors, particularly in the STEM curriculum (science, technology, engineering, and math).
- **Volunteer Programs** – Support school volunteer activities, including STEM-related programs.



- **New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMWDB)** – Work with NRMWDB to determine trends in employment and help meet the needs of the region’s employers.

Conclusion

Southwest Virginia’s transitioning economy can be looked at as a catalyst for needed change in many communities within the region. Bland County has long been one of the stronger, more-resilient areas in the region, and with the proper guidance, it will continue as a region leader. Bland County’s residents need safe and healthy job opportunities providing a living wage and through the combined efforts of the citizens, the County, and its businesses, that is a realistic goal. The county and its citizens have both the capacity to meet the demands of industry in the future and to grow Bland’s economy into one of the most vibrant within the region.



CHAPTER EIGHT: AGRICULTURE AND RURAL CHARACTER

Goal: Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality of Bland County’s agricultural areas and promote traditional rural lifestyles, farmland, agricultural enterprises, open space, recreation, and historic resources within the county.

Introduction

One of Bland’s key assets is its agricultural lifestyle and many Bland County residents still make their living through some sort of agricultural pursuit. There are various local, regional, and state agriculture efforts for the advancement of local agriculture in which Bland County residents participate. Bland’s land use, housing, and economic development efforts all center on the natural and agricultural resources of the county.

In an effort to support economic diversification, the county should be open to and encourage alternative agricultural processes and applications. Agriculture should not be ignored when efforts to diversify the economy are being considered.

Objective 1: Farmland/Agricultural Enterprises
Preserve and protect the County’s farmlands and agricultural enterprises.

Policies

- **Agricultural Land Conservation** - Protect and conserve agricultural land in Bland County.
- **Farm and Agricultural Development** - Promote and support land use measures that support farm and

agricultural development as part of Bland County’s economy.

- **Farm-Friendly Regulations** - Maintain a farm friendly regulatory and community environment.
- **Agricultural Enterprises** - Promote agricultural enterprises as a component of Bland County’s economic development program.
- **Agricultural Tourism** - Encourage and promote Bland County’s agricultural tourism provisions.
- **Community-Supported Agriculture** - Support community-supported agricultural programs.
- **Agricultural Education** - Support agricultural education programs and events.
- **Agricultural-Related Businesses** - Encourage farm and agricultural-related businesses to locate in the rural areas of the community, such as equipment/feed and seed establishments and other supply and service providers.



- **Priority to Farming** - Give agriculture priority over other uses on land suitable for farming.
- **Conservation Easements** - Support the placement of conservation easements restricting development on farmland.
- **Farmers Markets** - Promote and support the establishment of farmers markets and food cooperative facilities in commercially attractive locations to help create new markets for locally grown agricultural products.

Actions

- **Agriculture in Rural Areas** - Continue to encourage farming and agricultural activity in the county.
- **Agriculture Viability** - Initiate a dialogue with farmers and agricultural property owners about how the community can enhance the viability of agriculture in the county and recommend possible changes.
- **Agricultural Outreach** - Enhance public outreach programs and activities to inform the public about the benefits of farmland and agricultural activity to the community.
- **Connect Farmers** – Work with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to connect beginning farmers with experienced ones.

- **Local Foods Movement** – Promote the existence and expansion of the local foods movement
- **Farmers Markets** - Encourage local producers to participate in Bland’s farmers’ market and farmers’ markets in neighboring communities.
- **Agriculture Programs** - Encourage the Appalachian Sustainable Development organization to promote its programs in Bland County.

Objective 2: Open Space and Scenic Vistas Maintain open space and scenic vistas as part of the rural character of Bland County.

Policies

- **Open Space Preservation** - Encourage the preservation of open spaces and passive land uses through public and private programs.
- **Farmland Preservation Program** – Continue to support farmland preservation programs and identify additional sources of funding.

Actions

- **Open Space Informational Materials** – Distribute informational materials about open space and scenic vistas to introduce or reintroduce citizens, including school children, to the community’s resources.



- **Tax Benefits Education** - Educate property owners about available tax benefits for protecting rural open space and scenic vistas.

Objective 3: Recreational Opportunities Provide for improved and additional recreational opportunities within Bland County.

Policies

- **Outdoor Recreation Areas** – Support the establishment of additional outdoor recreation areas or opportunities in Bland County.

Actions

- **Maintain Recreational Facilities** – Maintain existing recreational facilities, and improve them as necessary.
- **New Recreational Sites** - Investigate the establishment of new recreational sites.
- **Agricultural Tourism and Recreation** - Provide additional recreational opportunities.
- **Passive Outdoor Recreation** – Expand opportunities for passive outdoor recreation, such as hiking and fishing.

Objective 4: Historical Area Resources Preserve and protect Bland County’s rural historic resources.

Policies

- **Rural Historic Resources** - Preserve, protect, and promote significant rural historic resources in the community.
- **Historic Farm Buildings** - Encourage the reuse of historic farm buildings.
- **Financial Incentives** - Support financial incentives that retain rural historic resources.

Actions

- **Education Programs** - Initiate local education programs outlining and supporting the value of the county’s historic rural character.
- **Identify Historic Resources** - Identify the rural historic resources, including historic farms, landscapes as well as prehistoric and historic archaeological sites.
- **Rural Historic Preservation Programs** - Sponsor programs and workshops that directly address the preservation of rural historic resources.
- **National Register Nominations** - Continue to support and assist property owners when requested in the nomination of eligible rural historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places.



- **Rural Historic Easements and Covenants** - Promote the placement of conservation easements and protective covenants on rural historic properties.
- **Tax Credits** - Encourage the use of federal and State income tax credits for the rehabilitation of the county's rural historic resources.
- **Historic Farm Buildings** - Assist property owners interested in the retention of historic farm buildings.
- **Rural Historic Outreach** – Consider developing public outreach programs that explain the importance of rural historic resources.



CHAPTER NINE: HOUSING

Goal: Enhance neighborhoods within Bland County through preservation, revitalization, and quality infill development. Create quality affordable housing and mixed-use development in higher population areas.

Introduction

Bland County had a total of 3,222 housing units according to the 2010 Census, which is an increase of almost 2 percent from 3,161 dwelling units in 2000. Of these, approximately 2,189 (68%) were owner occupied. In comparison, Virginia’s home ownership rate was 66%.

The majority of the housing units in Bland are single-family homes (71%). Multi-family units (apartments and duplexes) comprise only 2% of the housing stock, while 27% are manufactured homes.

The majority of the housing in Bland consist of older homes, approximately one-third of homes in Bland were built prior to 1970.

The median value of an owner-occupied home in Bland is approximately \$100,000, which compares to the State median value of \$245,000. With respect to housing affordability, most of the residents who own their own

Total Housing Units	3,222	
Owner Occupied	2189	68%
Renter Occupied	391	12%
Vacant	642	20%
Housing Type	3,222	
Single-family	2259	71%
Multi-family	65	2%
Manufactured Home	852	27%
Housing Age (Year Built)		
2011-2017	156	
2005-2010	279	
2000-2004	244	
1990-1999	616	
1980-1989	277	
1970-1979	634	
1960-1969	171	
1950-1959	197	
1940-1949	190	
Before 1940	252	
Avg. Household Size (Owner Occupied)	2.19	
Median Value (Owner Occupied)	\$100,000	
Median Gross Rent (Renter Occupied)	\$585	
Median Mortgage Cost	\$853	
Housing Owner Costs > 30% of income	17%	
Rental Costs >30% of income	20%	
<i>Sources: US Census and Building Official</i>		



homes are paying less than thirty percent of their incomes for housing; however, about twenty percent of the rental tenants, pay more than thirty percent of their income for housing. This may indicate that there needs to be more affordable rental housing in the County to meet the needs of residents.

Objective 1: Sustainable and Diversified Communities

Enhance existing communities emphasizing connectivity, walkability, a variety of land uses, and access to services.

Policies

- **Existing Infrastructure** - Encourage development in areas with existing infrastructure before extending infrastructure farther.
- **Pedestrian- and Bike-Friendly** – Promote communities to be pedestrian- and bike-friendly by developing interconnected street networks that include sidewalks and bike lanes.
- **Affordable Housing** - Foster a climate that is hospitable to affordable housing developments.
- **Rehabilitate and Retrofit** - Continue revitalizing and rehabilitating existing developed areas to provide a variety of housing types and attract new investment.

Actions

- **Diverse Housing Types** - Encourage diversity of housing types by identifying sites for higher density residential uses in area plans.
- **Affordable Housing** - Ensure a variety of quality housing types for all income levels.
- **Incentives for Redevelopment** – Explore a range of incentives to make redevelopment faster and economically feasible.
- **Increased Connectivity** – Increase connectivity by linking roads to form a network that provides multiple routes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers (see Transportation chapter for more information).
- **Public-Private Partnerships** - Support public-private partnerships for the provision of affordable housing

Objective 2: Integrated and Livable Communities

Enhance livability features within communities and preserve natural and historical assets.

Policies

- **Open Space, Parks, Greenways** - Encourage the development of open spaces, parks and greenways that link existing and new neighborhoods.
- **Community Gathering Places** - Develop accessible community gathering places within the county that



include spaces such as parks and farmers markets that encourage interaction and provide places for people to visit and relax.

- **Community Plans** - Recognize local community plans and include them in countywide planning efforts.
- **Main Street Character** - In community centers establish continuous building street frontages and reduced setbacks to frame and enclose a Main Street character for pedestrians.

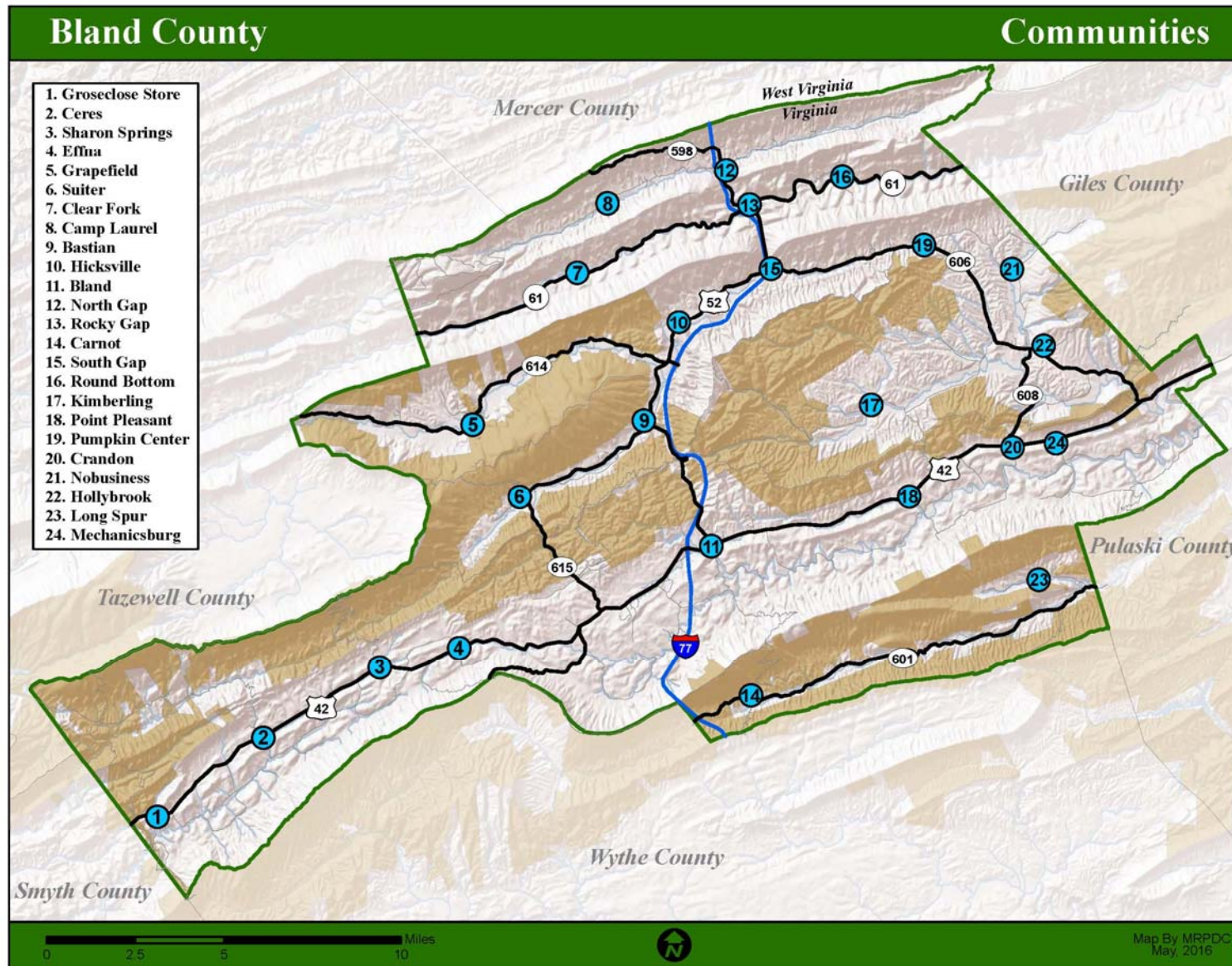
Actions

- **Historic and Natural Resources** - Protect historic resources and the natural environment.
- **Community Character** - Preserve character of individual communities within the county.
- **Rural Landscapes** - Preserve natural features of the existing rural landscapes through conservation efforts.

Bland County Communities

Bland County is one of the only counties in the nation without an incorporated town. Bland instead has various unincorporated communities throughout the county. While other, lesser known, or more historical communities exist, Bland County's most easily recognizable communities are: Hollybrook, Bastian, Bland, Rocky Gap, Ceres, and Mechanicsburg. The communities map on the following page shows the two dozen recognized communities within the county.





CHAPTER TEN: COMMUNITY

Goal: Improved health and well-being; access to improved and enhanced community services, facilities, and infrastructure for all; and expanded opportunities for social equity among diverse community groups.

Introduction

The push for outdoor recreation activities in Southwest Virginia has helped the region capitalize on its natural assets. With Bland's multitude of National Forest land, there are several projects that could increase the use and value of these natural resources. Thanks to the newly completed enhancement project in Rocky Gap, that community is now a walkable community with safe access to schools, shopping, and other community facilities. Bland has sidewalks with connectivity to schools, shopping, fairgrounds, and the library.

Objective 1: Promote and Protect Health and Equity

Develop and establish guidelines, standards, and mechanisms that ensure that land use planning and design positively affect community health and well-being.

Policies

- **Planning and Health Awareness** - Increase public awareness of the contribution that comprehensive planning can make to creating healthy, complete, and equitable communities.

- **Health-Related Policies** - Strengthen the community's capacity to support and implement health-related policies and programs.
- **Health Communication** - Work with the Public Health Department to increase communication and collaboration between health officials, health care providers, and planners.
- **Consider Health in Planning** - Ensure that decisions on land use, transportation networks, and the built and natural environment promote healthy lifestyles and access to healthy food choices.
- **Health Opportunities** - Improve the community's infrastructure and resources to maximize opportunities for all residents to make healthful choices and positively affect community equity.

Actions

- **Input on Health Concerns** - Solicit input from interested organizations and individuals to integrate health concerns into land use planning.



- **Health Impacts** - Consider the health and equity benefits and impacts of significant land development plans and projects, including the possibility of health impact assessments for major projects.
- **Health Awareness** - Raise awareness of health related issues through creation of a development review checklist. These can include a mix of land uses, access to parks and recreational facilities, provision of and/or access to sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and location relative to retail food stores and services.
- **Affordable Transportation** - Ensure that affordable transportation services are available to and from health and other community facilities, especially for the elderly, special needs, minority, and low-income groups

Objective 2: Age-Friendly Communities

Design and develop age-friendly neighborhoods that cater to the needs of different age groups.

Creating child-friendly communities.

Policies

- **Design for Active Children**- Encourage the design of developments that facilitate children walking, biking, and taking transit to schools, retail areas, recreation centers and other facilities.

- **Safe Parks and Playgrounds** - Provide safe, accessible facilities and services that cater to children and youth including parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, and recreation centers.
- **Childcare Facilities** - Encourage the development of a range of childcare facilities.
- **Childcare Locations** - Locate childcare facilities near schools, wherever feasible.
- **Safe Streets** - Promote land use patterns and street connectivity that allow children to be more self-sufficient.

Actions

- **Safe Routes to School** - Continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School Program.
- **Connectivity Issues** - Review neighborhood connectivity issues near existing schools and parks through the area plan process.
- **Access for Children** - Consider access for children when making locational decisions for new parks and schools.

Creating senior-friendly communities

Policies

- **Senior/Special Needs Housing** - Facilitate the development of affordable housing for seniors and people with special needs, including accessory



dwelling units or granny flats to allow them to age in place, as well as independent living and assisted living facilities.

- **Senior Services Locations** - Promote the co-location of adult day-care and on-site health care services with senior housing.
- **Senior Services** - Facilitate the provision of safe, accessible senior activities, facilities, and services.
- **Community Facilities** - Encourage the establishment of multipurpose, intergenerational, age-friendly community facilities.

Actions

- **Aging in Place** - Investigate the creation of neighborhoods with lifecycle housing opportunities that allow seniors to age in place.
- **Housing Variety** - Use the area plan process to promote a variety of housing types, including those that cater to seniors within the same neighborhood.
- **Mobility Barriers** - Collaborate with community organizations to help remove barriers to mobility and access to public and private facilities and services.
- **Expand Transit** - Work with District Three to expand the Mountain Lynx Transit system's services for seniors and persons with disabilities to provide more frequent services in the county.

- **Senior Citizen Needs** - Analyze senior citizen needs for possible new or additional projects, programs, and activities for this growing segment of the community.

Objective 3: Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space

Provide parks and recreational facilities that meet the needs of residents at accessible locations throughout the county.

Policies

- **Public Parks** - Enhance and expand public parks within the county, particularly in lower-served areas identified in adopted plans.
- **Existing Parks and Facilities** - Reinvest in existing parks and recreational facilities.
- **Routes to Parks and Recreation** - Consider the availability of public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle routes to existing and new parks and recreational facilities.
- **Municipal Cooperation** - Increase cooperation between Bland County, surrounding counties, and other agencies in providing parks, open space, and recreational facilities.
- **Collaboration for Parks and Recreation** - Increase collaboration with nonprofit, corporate, and private



entities to provide or to allow access to parks, open space, and recreational facilities.

- **Safe Park Environment** - Use sustainable design principles and promote park and facility design that discourages vandalism, deters crime, provides natural surveillance, and creates a safe and comfortable environment.
- **Public Farmers' Markets** - Facilitate the use of public parks, plazas and other appropriate open space for public farmers' markets.
- **Safe Access to Parks** - Promote safe access to parks for children.

Actions

- **Parks Plan** – Develop and implement the Recreation and Greenways Plan.
- **Park Development** - Prioritize areas for new park development based on: the lack of available parks and recreational facilities in identified areas, projected population growth, recommendations made in area plans, and feasibility.
- **Acquisition Program** - Develop a parks/ open space/land acquisition program and take action to acquire land, obtain easements and develop facilities as opportunities arise.

- **Underutilized Parks and Recreation Facilities** Address safety concerns, access, and other barriers to usage in existing underutilized parks and recreation facilities.
- **Funding New Parks and Recreation Facilities** Identify funding mechanisms to develop parks and recreation facilities, particularly in the most underserved areas.

Objective 4: Greenways

Create a network of greenways that provide recreation, open space, and alternative transportation links to shopping, employment, neighborhoods and community facilities.

Policies

- **Greenway System** - Establish a connected greenway system throughout the county to provide connectivity between existing greenways, sidewalks, and bikeways, as well as neighborhoods, major destinations, and community facilities.
- **Greenway Extensions** – Support expansions/extensions and future
- **Greenway Easements** - Consider new tools for acquiring greenway easements.
- **Interagency Cooperation** - Strengthen intergovernmental and interagency cooperation in planning, funding, developing, and maintaining the greenway system.



- **Greenway Connections** - Connect greenway trails to existing and proposed sidewalks and bike paths to facilitate access to community facilities.

Actions

- **Greenway Planning** - Develop of the *Recreation and Greenways Plan* and implement its recommendations.
- **Greenway Priorities** - Build priority trails identified in the *Recreation and Greenways Plan*.
- **Greenway Acquisition** - Develop and fund a greenway easement acquisition program, including a description of greenway benefits to property owners.
- **Greenway Design Guidelines** - Establish design guidelines that include safety in the design and management of greenway trails.
- **Greenway Coordination** - Continue to hold regular meetings with surrounding municipalities and counties on greenway coordination.
- **Greenway Marketing** - Develop a greenway marketing plan.
- **Greenway Maintenance** - Establish a countywide Adopt-a-Greenway Program.

Objective 5: Educational Facilities

Bland County's schools are community assets that provide quality education to students, foster community equity, and provide opportunities for physical activities.

Policies

- **Unused School Property** - Consider alternative uses for school property that is no longer needed for school facilities.
- **Educational Facilities** - Locate and design educational facilities that provide high quality learning opportunities for all, contribute to healthy living, and are assets to the neighborhoods where they are located.

Actions

- **Use of School Facilities** - Consider programs for after-school use of school facilities for playing fields, park spaces, and other activities.
- **Joint Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities** - Continue employing joint use agreements between the Bland County school system and public agencies that allow schools without adequate playgrounds and recreation facilities to use public parks, recreation facilities and open spaces.
- **Active Transportation Options** - Design new facilities and reconfigure older buildings with safe sidewalks,



bike paths, greenways, and transit stops that facilitate walking, biking, and taking transit.

- **Underutilized Educational Facilities** - Forge partnerships between schools, higher education institutions, community organizations, and local government departments by transforming underutilized school grounds, playing fields, and other educational facilities into safe, vibrant community spaces for community events, recreational activities, community gardens, and green/edible schoolyards.

Objective 6:

Create safer, more livable neighborhoods that facilitate active and healthy living.

Policies

Emergency Services - Ensure that all properties can be adequately served by fire, police, and emergency medical services.

- **Blight Removal** - Facilitate the reuse or removal of vacant and abandoned land and buildings that contribute to neighborhood blight.
- **Property Maintenance** - Encourage and support private landowners to maintain and upgrade their properties.

Actions

- **Safe Design** - Consider safe design guidelines when assessing designs for new development or redevelopment projects.
- **Blighted Areas** - Concentrate code enforcement and the promotion of conservation and rehabilitation in areas in danger of becoming blighted.
- **Safety Standards** - Consider creating standards to address safety concerns with respect to the location, design and maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, and greenways.
- **Law Enforcement Issues** - Work with law enforcement to identify land use issues affecting safety and security that can be considered as part of the rezoning process.
- **Emergency Services Recruitment** - Consider recruitment efforts to increase number of Emergency Services personnel.

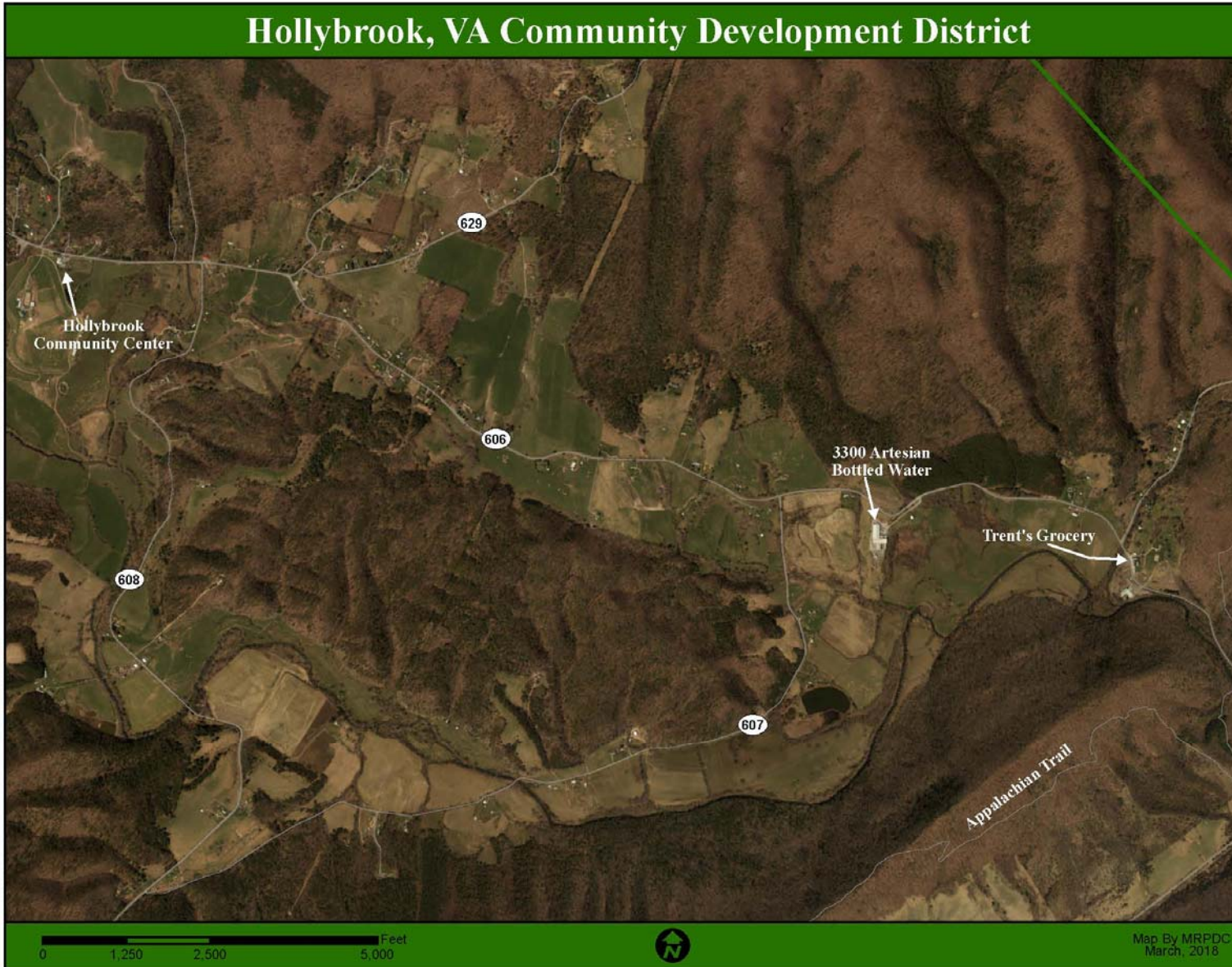


APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT MAPS

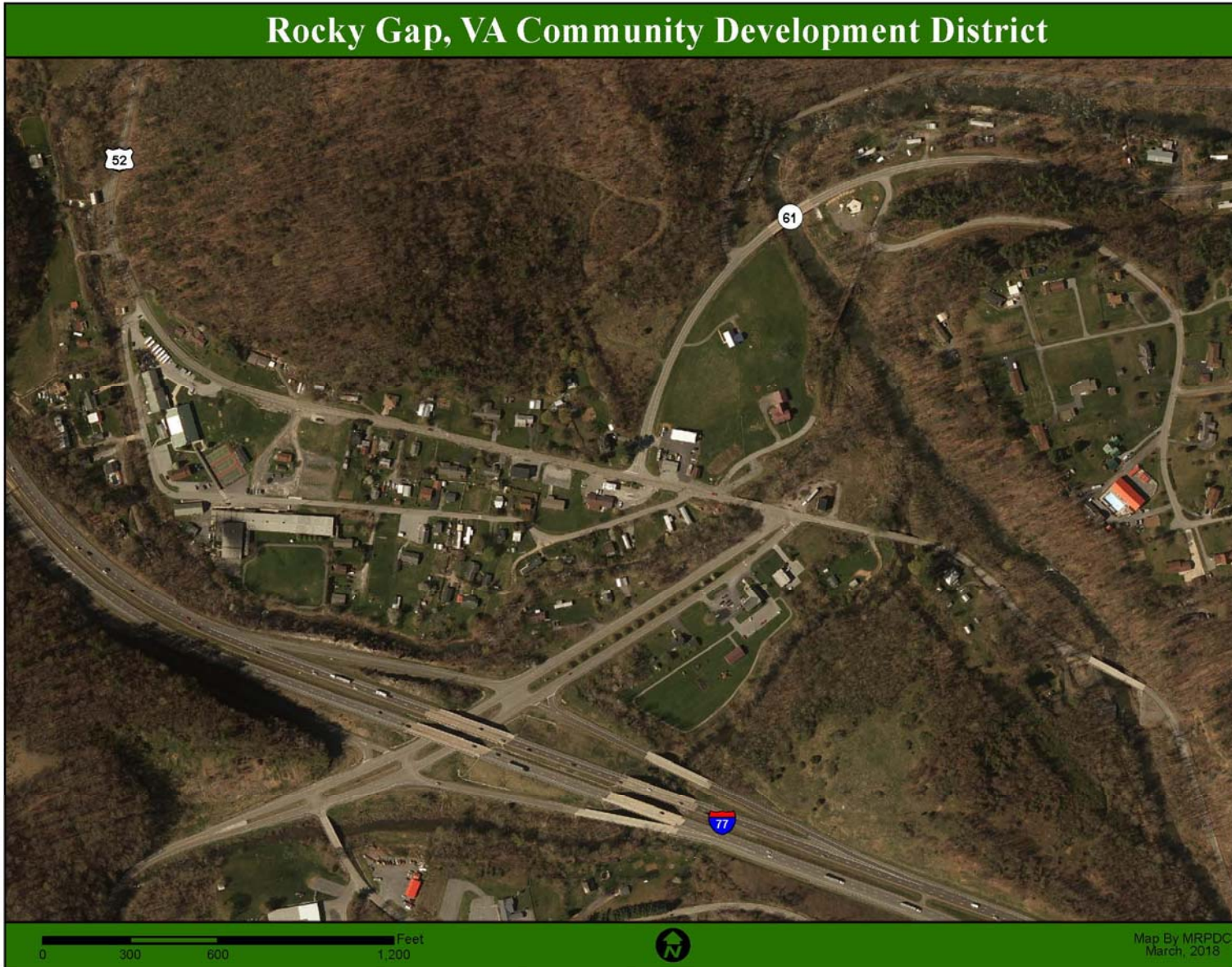












APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

This SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) Analysis was created by the Bland County Planning Commission during a planning session for the development of the comprehensive plan. These items were used to help develop the goals, policies, and actions of the plan.

Strengths

- RT61 Scenic beauty
- Great viewscapes
- Rocky Gap Greenway
- Mountain Home—history resource
- Educational institutions
- Trout streams (natural assets)
- Dental care/Bastian Clinic
- Hunting opportunities
- National Forest
- Appalachian Trail and hostels with shuttle service
- Loves Travel
- Progress Park
- Shopping Center
- Virginia Welcome Center
- Interstate access
- Public water at interstate exits (RG)
- Wilderness Trail

- Recycling facility
- Walker Mountain Bike Trails (C)
- FFA Museum
- Tuition waiver for Bland County students to WCC
- Appalachian music classes at high school
- Outdoor Recreation areas
 - Wolf Creek Golf course (B)
 - Boy Scout Camp (B)
 - High school sports complex (B)
 - Church Parks
 - County Parks (Ceres, Hollybrook, Mechanicsburg, Rocky Gap, Bastian)
- Water and sewer availability (B, S)

Weaknesses

- Lack of zoning ordinances to help with keeping areas clean
- Limited public facilities for Wolf Creek access
- Limited access to National Forest
- Limited expansion potential at RG exit
- Lack of access to stores (fuel, groceries)—RG and Ceres
- Aging population and reduced work force
- Travel time to public services



- Busing times for school children
- Rescue squad response time

Opportunities

- Development potential at interstate exits
- Vacant land for future development
- Greenway expansions
- Increase access to National Forest
- Historic buildings
 - Bank building restoration
 - Taylor's Mill restoration (RG)
 - Tilson Mill restoration (Ceres)
 - Ceres School with auditorium (music jams, etc.)
- Last exit in VA before tunnel
- First exit in VA after tunnel
- Potential store opportunities in RG area
- Additional access to Wolf Creek
- Increase marketing for FFA Museum
- Increase marketing for WCC tuition waiver
- Increase marketing for Appalachian music classes/jams
 - Work with District Three for transportation
 - Consider as a satellite of Henderson School

- Potential revenue from family retreat center (equestrian facilities) and other retreat facilities in county
 - Enhance marketing and partnership with other county activities
 - Embrace visitors and their potential contributions to the community

Threats

- Growing amount of roadside junk
- Lack of good cell service
- Lack of good internet service
- Lack of care property owners have for properties
- No future plan for expansion of businesses
- Lack of enforcement of ordinances

