

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Bland County, Virginia



CERTIFIED BY
BLAND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

(DATE)

ADOPTED BY
BLAND COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

(DATE)

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. The Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to guide decisions regarding the provision of public services for existing and future structures and other uses of land.

The essential characteristics of the plan are that it is comprehensive, general, and long range. “Comprehensive” means that the plan encompasses all geographical parts of the county and all functional elements, which bear on physical development. “Long Range” means that the plan looks beyond the foreground of pressing current issues to a desirable possible future 20 to 30 hence. “General” means that the plan does not indicate specific locations or detailed regulations.

B. Purpose

State legislation made it mandatory that all political jurisdictions in the Commonwealth adopt comprehensive plans by July 1, 1980.

According to Title 15.2, subsection 2223 of the Code of Virginia, “The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction”.

The law goes on to state that: “In the preparation of a comprehensive plan the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources best

promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.”

Subsection 2223 goes on to state that the plan, “with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the long-range recommendations for the general development of the parts of the county covered by the plan. It may include but need not be limited to:

- 1) The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, business, industrial, agricultural mineral resources, conservation, recreation, public service, floodplain and drainage, and other areas;
- 2) The designation of a system of transportation facilities such as streets, roads highways, parkway railways, bridges, viaducts, waterways, airports, ports, terminals, and other like facilities;
- 3) The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;
- 4) The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;
- 5) The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable ground water protection measures;
- 6) An official map, a capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning districts map, mineral resource

districts map and agricultural and forestall districts map, where applicable;
and

- 7) The location of existing or proposed recycling centers.

The plan shall include: the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.”

C. 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 the following more detailed plans, which have been developed by the County, citizen groups, regional organizations, state, and federal governments.

Bland County Comprehensive Plan: The County Planning Commission has reviewed in detail the recommendations that were made in the update of the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1999.

Bland County 604b Study: In 1998 a comprehensive water and sewer study was completed for Bland County. The recommendations contained in that study have been reviewed by the Planning Commission and will be contained in this plan.

Vision 2025: The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission conducted a strategic planning process during 2001 and 2002. The applicable goals, objectives and strategies of that planning process have become a part of this plan.

Regional Transportation Plan: The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission has prepared and approved a set of Regional Transportation Priorities. The appropriate provisions of that plan have been included in the Bland County Comprehensive Plan.

D. Legal Status Of Plan

Legal status of the Comprehensive Plan is described under Subsection 2232 of Title 15.2 in the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended. That part of the code reads as follows:

A. Whenever a local planning commission recommends a comprehensive plan or part thereof for the locality and such plan has been approved and adopted by the governing body, it shall control the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan. Thereafter, unless a feature is already shown on the adopted master plan or part thereof or is deemed so under subsection D, no street or connection to an existing street, park, or public service corporation facility other than railroad facility whether publicly or privately owned, shall be constructed, established or authorized, unless and the general location or approximate location, character, and extent thereof has been submitted to and approved by the commission as being substantially in accord with the adopted comprehensive plan or part thereof. In connection with any such determination, the commission may, and at the direction of the governing body shall, hold a public hearing, after notice as required by 15.2-2204.

B. The commission shall communicate its findings to the governing body, indicating its approval or disapproval with written reasons therefore. The governing body may overrule the action of the commission by a vote of a majority of its membership. Failure of the commission to act within sixty days of a submission, unless the time is extended by the governing body, shall be deemed approval. The owner or owners or their agents may appeal the decision of the commission to the governing body within ten days after the decision of the commission. The appeal shall be by written petition to the governing body setting forth the reasons for the appeal. The appeal shall be heard and determined within sixty days from its filing. A majority vote of the governing body shall overrule the commission.

C. Widening, narrowing, extension, enlargement, vacation, or change of use of streets or public areas shall likewise be submitted for approval, but paving, repair, reconstruction, improvement, drainage or similar work and normal service extensions of public utilities or public service corporations shall not require approval unless involving a change in location or extent of a street or public area.

D. Any public area, facility, or use as set forth in subsection A which is identified within, but not the entire subject of, a submission under either 15.2-2258 for subdivision or provision 8 of 15.2-2286 for development or both may be deemed a feature already shown on the adopted master plan, and, therefore, excepted from the requirement for submittal to and approval by the commission or the governing body; provided, that the governing body has by ordinance or resolution defined standards governing the construction, establishment or authorization of such public area facility or use or has approved it through acceptance of a proffer made pursuant to 15.2-2203.

E. Approval and funding of a public telecommunications facility by the Virginia Public Broadcasting Board pursuant to Article 12 (2.2-2426et.seq.) of chapter 24 Title 2.2 shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section and local zoning ordinances with respect to such facility with the exception of television and radio towers and structures not necessary to house electronic apparatus. The exemption provided for in this subsection shall not apply to facilities existing or approved by the Virginia Public Telecommunications Board prior to July 1, 1990. The Virginia Public Broadcasting Board shall notify the governing body of the locality in advance of any meeting where approval of any such facility shall be acted upon.

F. On any application for a telecommunications facility, the commission's decision shall comply with the requirements of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996. Failure of the commission to act on any such application for a telecommunications facility under subsection A submitted on or after July 1, 1998, within ninety days of such submission shall be deemed approval of the application by the commission unless the governing body has authorized an extension of time for consideration or the applicant has agreed to an extension of time. The governing body may extend the time required for action by the local commission by no more than sixty additional days. If the commission has not acted on the application by the end of the extension, or by the end of such longer period as may be agreed to by the applicant, the application is deemed approved by the commission."

E. 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 II
Population

A. 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 which continued to 2000 (please see Table 2-A). 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. The Mount Rogers Planning District experienced a 6.6 percent population increase during the 1990's.

TABLE 2-A
Population
Bland County and Mount Rogers Planning District
1950 to 2000
By Year

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

The population of Bland Correctional Center accounted for 8.6 percent of the total population of the county at 590 persons. Bland County experienced a 26.7 percent increase in population between 1970 and 2000, while the population of Bland Correctional Center grew by 50.1 percent during the same period. Overall, population

growth in Bland Correctional Center between 1970 and 2000 accounted for 13.6 percent of the total population increase in the county.

**TABLE 2-B
Population
Bland County and Bland Correctional Center
1970 – 2000
By Year**

Year	Bland County Population	BCC Population	County Population minus BCC
2000	6871	590	6281
1990	6514	509	6005
1980	6349	440	5909
1970	5423	393	5030

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

The population growth for the 1990-2000 decade was concentrated in two of the four magisterial districts, with the only significant growth experienced in the Mechanicsburg (+9.9 percent) and Seddon (+9.5 percent) districts. These growth patterns are shown in Table 2-B. Approximately 3.6 percent of the population growth in the Mechanicsburg magisterial district was contributed by the population living in Bland Correctional Center. Only six percent of the 9.9 percent growth in the Mechanicsburg district can be considered an increase in Bland County citizens.

**TABLE 2-C
Population Change
Bland County
1990 - 2000**

By Magisterial District

Magisterial District	1990	2000	Percent Change
Mechanicsburg	2,085	2,291	9.9%
Rocky Gap	2,307	2,316	0.4%
Seddon	1,430	1,566	9.5%
Sharon	692	698	0.9%
Bland County	6,514	6,871	5.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Population density of the county increased only slightly with 19.1 persons per square mile in 2000, compared to 17.7 persons per square mile in 1990. Without considering the population of Bland Correctional Center, the county's population density was 17.5 persons per square mile. The population density in the Mechanicsburg magisterial district was approximately 24.9 persons per square mile in 2000 or 18.5 persons per square mile if the population of Bland Correctional Center is not counted. Interstate 77 has opened a corridor for growth which has been a factor for stimulating the population growth registered in the last twenty years; nevertheless, the potential for growth is yet to be realized. The population growth expected as a result of major drinking water improvements and the construction of a wastewater treatment system in the Rocky Gap and Bastian Communities has not occurred.

B. Population Composition by Age, Sex, and Race

The following table (Table 2-D) shows the population composition of Bland County by age group for 1990 and 2000. The data indicate that the county's population is continuing to age, as the median age has increased 36.4 in 1980 to 40.3 in 1990. The elderly population (persons 65 years and older) in Bland County increased by 11.9 percent during the 1990s and is 3.3 percent higher than the elderly population in the Commonwealth. Additionally, the percentage of children and teenagers (persons under 18) has continued to decline from 22.2 percent of the total population in 1990 to 19.4 percent in 2000. This trend is reflected in declining school enrollments in the county; since 1995, enrollment in Bland County schools has declined by 10.9 percent.

TABLE 2-D
Age of Population
Bland County
1990 and 2000
By Age Groups

Age Group	1990		2000		Percent Change 1990 - 2000
	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent	
Under 5	334	5.1%	308	4.5%	-7.8%
5 to 14	831	12.8%	773	11.3%	-7.0%
15 to 24	849	13.0%	775	11.3%	-8.7%
25 to 34	1,069	16.4%	1,000	14.6%	-6.5%
35 to 44	1,105	17.0%	1,105	16.1%	0.0%
45 to 54	782	12.0%	1,123	16.3%	43.6%
55 to 64	656	10.1%	794	11.6%	21.0%
65 and older	888	13.6%	993	14.5%	11.8%
Total Population	6,514	100.0%	6,871	100.0%	5.5%
Under 18 yrs	1,444	22.2%	1,334	19.4%	-7.6%
Median Age	36.4		40.3		--

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

After a decade of decline during the 1980s, births in Bland County generally held steady throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. The death rate during the same time period fluctuated greatly with 80 deaths in 1999 and only 43 deaths in 2000. Total deaths during the period still outnumbered total births, which contributed to a negative natural increase in Bland County between 1995 and 2003.

All age categories under 34 years declined. The 45 to 54 age group grew by over 43.6 percent, which is consistent with the 49.5 percent growth in the 35 to 44 age group during the 1980s. The decrease of persons in the “under 5” age group is reflective of the national trend toward smaller families. In 2000, there were 2.85 persons per family, a slight decrease from the 1990 average family size of 3.08 persons.

The Census Bureau did not release detailed age data for group quarters population with the 2000 Census. The group quarters statistics released for Bland County show 584

males between the ages of 18 and 64 living in Bland Correctional Center. There are an additional six males living in the correctional center that are 65 years of age or older.

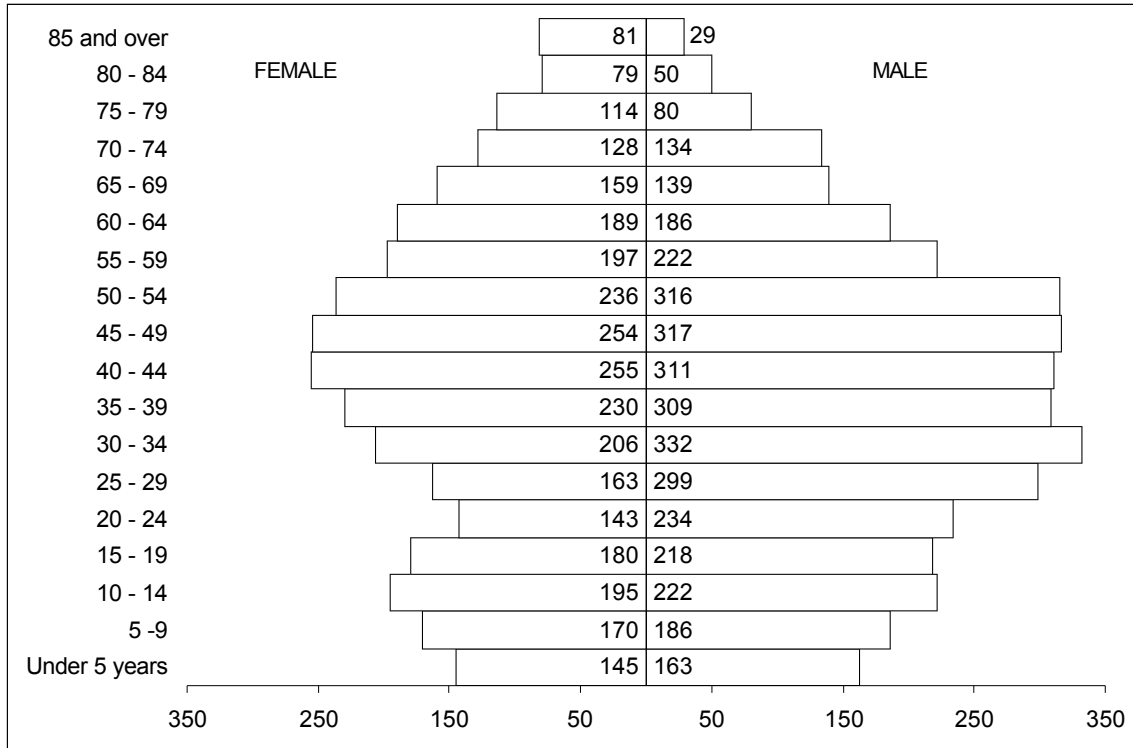
There are no persons under the age of 18 living at Bland Correctional Center.

C. Gender

In 2000, Bland County had a population comprised of 3,747 males (54.5 percent of the total population) and 3,124 females (45.5 percent of total population). The median age of the male population was 38.4 compared to 42.6 for females. Bland Correctional Center population likely skews the median age of the male population; however, the exact impact the Bland Correctional Center has on the median age of the county's population can not be determined.

Chart 2-A is a population pyramid showing the distribution of people in Bland County by designated age and sex groups. The shape of the pyramid is of particular interest. A pyramid with a broad base indicates an increasing growth rate. A pyramid with a narrow base indicates declining growth rate.

CHART 2-A
Population Pyramid¹
Bland County
2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

The population pyramid for Bland County shows a narrowing base indicating a declining growth rate. The 25 – 29 and 30 – 34 age groups are larger than the 20 – 24 age group, which may indicate that the county’s young adults, for the most part, are returning to the county following college years. Out-migration was quite severe in the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, these age groups are likely influenced by the Bland Correctional Center, which houses 584 males between the ages of 18 and 64. It is impossible to determine the size of the male age groups for actual Bland County citizens based on the data released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The data indicate several significant gaps between males and females, with males outnumbering females by more than 600 persons. Nevertheless, when the population

housed at Bland Correctional Center is removed from the overall population, males outnumber females by only ten. It is interesting to note that males outnumber females in nearly every age group, especially the prime age working groups between the ages 20 to 54. Again, this trend is influenced by the all male population of Bland Correctional Center. The only age groups showing more female dominance were those between 65 – 69 and 85 and over, most likely the result of the greater longevity of women over men.

Both the trends in greater male population and larger 25 – 29 and 30 – 34 age groups are likely influenced by the presence of the Bland Correctional Center. In 2000, this facility housed 584 males between the ages of 18 and 64 and only 6 males age 65 or older. There are no females are housed in the Bland Correctional Center.

D. Race

Bland County’s population in 2000 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 5.4 percent of the total population in 2000 (376 persons). The majority of the non-white population is black residents, with only 1.3 percent of the population composed of other minorities.

TABLE 2-E
Race of Population
Bland County
2000

By Magisterial District

Magisterial District	Total	White	Percent	Black	Percent	Other	Percent
Mechanicsburg	2,291	2,032	88.7%	218	9.5%	41	1.8%
Rocky Gap	2,316	2,221	95.9%	67	2.9%	28	1.2%
Seddon	1,566	1,546	98.7%	0	0.0%	20	1.3%
Sharon	698	696	99.7%	0	0.0%	2	0.3%
Bland County	6,871	6,495	94.5%	285	4.1%	91	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Race information becomes extremely skewed when institutionalized persons are included in Bland County's 2000 Census data. When looking at race for the county as a whole, African Americans make up approximately 4.1 percent of the population. However, 76.1 percent of the African American population in the county lives in Bland Correctional Center. This leaves the true number of African American persons living in the county at 68 or approximately one percent of Bland County's population. Furthermore, this will lower the number of African Americans in the Mechanicsburg District that do not live in Bland Correctional Center from 218 to 1. Countywide statistics for other racial groups are not heavily impacted by the presence of Bland Correctional Center.

**TABLE 2-F
Population
Bland Correctional Center
2000
By Race**

Race	Population
White	371
Black	217
Asian	1
Pacific Islander	1
Total	590

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

E. Population Growth Factors

Migration and Natural Increase

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. Two key variables merit review over the last decade, and for the first half of the 2000s. The number of persons in the child-bearing age groups has, in fact, increased in

Bland County due to migration into the county. Yet, the birth rate has generally declined. Out-migration plagued the county in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; however, the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s showed a return to in-migration and natural increase (births minus deaths). Data from the 2000 Census indicate that this trend is beginning to slow down. Bland County is actually experiencing negative natural increase and the size of the 20 – 24 age bracket is declining, especially for females.

The following tables (Tables 2-G and 2-H) show the trends in a number of key variables that predict and reflect population change. Table 2-G shows an analysis of natural increase in population (births minus deaths) and net migration (movement in and out of the county). Between 1995 and 2003, both natural increase and net migration in Bland County followed the same trends experienced in the Mount Rogers Planning District, a decline in natural increase and an increase in net migration.

TABLE 2-G
Natural Increase and Net Migration
Bland County and Mount Rogers Planning District
1995 - 2003

	Total	% Change	Natural Increase		Net Migration	
			Number	% Change	Number	% Change
Bland County	100	1.4%	-80	-1.2%	180	2.6%
MRPD	2,200	1.2%	-2242	-1.2%	4,442	2.4%

Source: Virginia Department of Health & Weldon Cooper Center, University of Virginia
Population figures are estimated between census years.

TABLE 2-H
Variables that Predict Population Change
Bland County
1999 - 2003
By Variable

Variable	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
School Enrollments (Grades K - 8)	641	634	622	625	564
State Tax Returns	2,413	2,462	2,456	2,388	2,403
Residential Housing Permits	39	54	47	41	50

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Department of Taxation, and Weldon Cooper Center, University of Virginia

School enrollment data reflect enrollment in grades 1 – 8 and upgraded students under 15 on September 30 of the year proceeding the estimate year. For example, 2000 contains data from fall 1999. These data were collected by the Virginia Department of Education. State tax returns are those filed in the estimate year. For example, data in the 2000 column refer to returns filed in 2000 for tax year 1999. The source of state tax information is the Virginia Department of Taxation. Housing permits are for new residential units, excluding manufactured homes. The source of permit data is the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia. A review of these key factors for the five-year period indicates a consistent decrease in school enrollments, little change in the total number of state tax returns filed, and a 28.2 percent increase in residential housing permits.

F. Population Trends and Projections

Bland County has experienced a statistically dramatic fluctuation in population since the 1950 census. There were 6,436 persons residing in the county in 1950, and by 1970, population had bottomed out at 5,423 (see Table 2-A). However, the trend of out-migration ended by the 1970s and the 1980s marked a reversal in population declines. The overall growth rate between census years 1980 and 1990 was greater than that of the

planning district; however, during the 1990s, the population growth rate in the planning district was slightly higher than that of Bland County.

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 in the Rocky Gap and Bastian Communities, while not spurring automatic population growth, will have a pro-growth effect 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 will be possible which in-turn will bring new families to the county.

Thirty-year population projections released by the Virginia Employment Commission predict Bland County will have the highest rate of population growth in the Mount Rogers Planning District. As shown in Table 2-I, Bland County's rate of population change is only slightly lower than that of the Commonwealth, 28.07 and 31.03 respectively. Overall, the Virginia Employment Commission predicts that Bland County will experience an increase of almost 2,000 persons over the next three decades. To achieve this growth, the county must continue to support basic infrastructure improvements, expand local tourism attractions, retain and recruit industry, and nurture small business development.

TABLE 2-I
Population Projections¹
Mount Rogers Region and Virginia
By Decade
2000 and 2030

Locality or Region	2000 Census²	2010 Estimate	2020 Estimate	2030 Estimate	Change 2000 - 2030	Percent Change
Bland County	6,871	7,600	8,300	8,800	1,929	28.07%
Carroll County	29,245	31,000	32,900	34,900	5,655	19.34%
Grayson County	17,917	17,100	17,299	17,500	-417	-2.33%
Smyth County	33,081	33,800	34,500	35,200	2,119	6.41%
Washington County	51,103	52,400	53,400	54,400	3,297	6.45%
Wythe County	27,599	28,600	29,599	30,600	3,001	10.87%
City Bristol	17,367	16,800	16,600	16,400	-967	-5.57%
City Galax	6,837	6,800	6,800	6,800	-37	-0.54%
MRPDC	190,020	194,100	199,398	204,600	14,580	7.67%
Virginia	7,078,515	7,892,900	8,601,900	9,275,101	2,196,586	31.03%

1. Virginia Employment Commission, March 2005

2. US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

H. Conclusions

- The population of Bland County has increased steadily since 1980.
- Population growth is concentrated in two of the four magisterial districts, Mechanicsburg and Seddon.
- Bland County's population is aging with the median age of both males and females higher in 2000 than in 1990.
- 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.
- In-migration will be the single greatest form of population growth in the next ten years.

CHAPTER III
Economy

A. Economic Indicators and Conditions

The economy of Bland County is largely driven by its location. Located along the Interstate 77 Corridor in Southwest Virginia, the county is just 12 miles north of the intersection of Interstates 77 and 81. With superb interstate access, Bland County lies within a day's drive of half of the United State's population and major industrial centers.

TABLE 3-A
Economic Indicators
Bland County

Total Population, 2000	Percent Change, 1990 - 2000	Percent White, 2000	Median Household Income, 2000	Per Capita Income, 2000	Per Capita Income Percent of State	Number of Households, 2000
6,871	5.5%	94.5%	\$30,397	\$17,744	74.0%	2,078
Percent of Population in Poverty, 2002		Number & Percent of Children (0 - 17) in Poverty, 2002		Percent Change Residential Building Permits, 1999 - 2004		Percent Change Manufactured Home Permits, 1999 - 2004
12.5%		14.4%		-38.5%		-14.0%
Percent Change New Vehicle Registrations, 1999 - 2004		Unemployment Rate, 2004		Average Weekly Wage Per Worker, 2003	Average Weekly Wage Percent of State	Average Weekly Wage Per Worker, 1999
13.5%		4.4%		\$564	76.1%	\$484

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 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

Bland County stands out among the jurisdictions in the planning district, with a greater average population growth (2000 - 2004), second lowest percentage of population in poverty (2002), an unemployment rate (4.4 percent in 2004) below that of the planning district, an average weekly wage (\$564) for non-farm workers that is higher than the planning district average (\$496), and an average weekly wage for manufacturing workers

(\$799) that was almost level with the State of Virginia average (\$800) during third quarter 2004.

B. Labor Force, Employment, and Unemployment

Like other rural localities in the region, Bland County's economic base has evolved from predominantly agricultural to a concentration of employment in the manufacturing, government, and trade sectors. While the number of farms declined (-1.4 percent between 1997 and 2002) the total market value of products sold for the 1997 - 2002 period increased by \$1,077,000.

The unemployment rate has generally been a problem in the county since the national economic downturn in 1991-92. The lack of infrastructure (water and sewer) and limited industrial recruitment have been limiting factors to job growth. Until the county can expand its industrial base and diversify its economy, much of the county's labor force will continue to look for opportunities in Mercer County, West Virginia, Tazewell County, and Wythe County. A review of 2000 Census data on commuting patterns reveals that approximately 45 percent of the county's resident workforce can find jobs in the county.

It is evident that the retention of several major industries and the presence of the Bland Correctional Center have helped to stabilize the industry base and increase average wages. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, employment in the county decreased from 3,370 in 1995 to 2,930 in 2004. Nearly 23 percent of the county's workforce employed in non-agricultural jobs was employed in the manufacturing industry. Government employed an almost equal number of workers in the county, at approximately 24 percent, followed by the wholesale and retail trade sectors at 20

percent. Both the retail trade and manufacturing sectors have suffered a dramatic loss of jobs during the early 2000s, with a decline of 36.1 percent in manufacturing jobs and 49.8 percent in retail trade jobs.

**TABLE 3-B
Non-Agricultural Employment
Bland County
1999 and 2003
By Industry**

Industry	1999		2003		Percent Change
	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent	
Mining	***	***	***	***	***
Construction	72	4.4%	85	5.4%	18.1%
Manufacturing	562	34.0%	359	22.7%	-36.1%
Wholesale Trade	***	***	207	13.1%	***
Retail Trade	229	13.8%	115	7.3%	-49.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	26	1.6%	42	2.7%	61.5%
Finance and Insurance	16	1.0%	16	1.0%	0.0%
Real Estate	***	***	***	***	***
Professional and Technical Services	15	0.9%	***	***	***
Administrative and Waste Services	3	0.2%	***	***	***
Health Care and Social Assistance	65	3.9%	87	5.5%	33.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	18	1.1%	27	1.7%	50.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	13	0.8%	11	0.7%	-15.4%
Public Administration	385	23.3%	376	23.8%	-2.3%
Other Services	19	1.1%	18	1.1%	-5.3%
TOTAL	1,654	100.0 %	1,579	100.0 %	-4.5%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
Note: Asterisks indicate non-disclosed data.

Bland County has traditionally been faced with periods of unemployment in excess of the state and national unemployment rates. In the ten-year span between 1986 and 1996, the unemployment rate peaked at 7.3 percent and hovered at nearly 7.0 percent in 1995 and 1996. These rates are far in excess of the state and national averages. With over 50 percent of Bland County residents forced to leave the county for jobs in localities such as Bluefield, West Virginia, Tazewell and Wythe Counties, areas where jobs have

not been plentiful, unemployment rolls swelled in Bland County due to the lack of economic stimulus to absorb those seeking jobs.

TABLE 3-C
Labor Force
Bland County
1995 to 2004
By Year

Year	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2004	3,065	2,930	135	4.4
2003	3,577	3,435	142	4
2002	3,570	3,417	153	4.3
2001	3,563	3,371	192	5.4
2000	3,536	3,341	195	5.5
1999	3,475	3,324	151	4.3
1998	3,481	3,336	145	4.2
1997	3,535	3,316	219	6.2
1996	3,541	3,298	243	6.9
1995	3,606	3,370	236	6.5

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

An analysis of employment trends, shown in Table 3-C, over the past ten years shows a change in the past trend of high unemployment with a fairly steady decline in the county's annual unemployment rate. Although unemployment has declined, the actual number of persons in the Bland County workforce has also declined. This indicates that the lower unemployment is a result of people leaving the workforce and not new jobs. Growth in employment and labor force will result only from a diversification of the county's economy, retention of existing industries, and recruitment of new industry.

C. Income

TABLE 3-D
Income
Bland County and Virginia
1989 and 1999
By Income Type

Income Type	Bland County			Virginia		
	1989	1999	Percent Change	1989	1999	Percent Change
Median Household Income	23,587	30,397	28.9%	33,328	46,677	40.1%
Median Family Income	28,750	35,765	24.4%	38,213	54,169	41.8%
Per Capita Income	9,765	17,744	81.7%	15,713	23,975	52.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Per Capita Personal Income

In 1999, Bland County had an average per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$17,744. This PCPI ranked 81st in the state, and was 74.0 percent of the state average (\$23,975) and 63.5 percent of the national average (\$27,939). In 1995, the PCPI of Bland was \$13,682 and ranked 104th in the Commonwealth. The average annual growth rate of PCPI over the past 10 years was 8.2 percent, while the average annual growth rate for Virginia was 5.3 percent.

Household Income

It is important to view how income is distributed in a community. In Bland County, 13.7 percent of the households had incomes less than \$10,000 and just over a quarter of the households had annual incomes ranging from \$10,000 to \$24,999. In contrast, 27.9 percent of the households have incomes exceeding \$50,000 in Bland County. Table 3-E provides data on household income in the county, which are distributed fairly evenly across the income categories.

TABLE 3-E
Household Income
Bland County
2000
By Income Category

Income Category	Households	Percent
Less than \$10,000	350	13.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	193	7.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	474	18.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	448	17.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	379	14.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	449	17.6%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	112	4.4%
\$100,000 or greater	150	5.9%
TOTAL	2555	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Poverty Income

Another indicator of income distribution is poverty status of the population.

Tables 3-F and 3-G provide data on persons and families below the poverty level for the county with comparative data for the state.

As shown by the data in Table 3-F, the “poverty rate” in Bland County is slightly higher than the rate in the Commonwealth. The disparity is particularly strong when one looks at the groups with persons age 65 and over and families with female householder. The rate of families living in poverty with female householder with children under eighteen is lower than that for the state, indicating a declining trend for this family group.

TABLE 3-F
Poverty Status
Bland County and Virginia
1999
By Group

Group	Bland County			Virginia
	All persons for whom poverty status was determined	Number below poverty level	Percent below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
All Persons	6,215	768	12.3%	9.6%
Persons 65 & over	966	218	22.5%	9.5%
All Families	1,902	174	9.1%	7.0%
Families with children under eighteen	716	75	10.5%	11.4%
Families with female householder	190	50	26.3%	23.0%
Female householder with children under eighteen	92	26	28.3%	29.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

TABLE 3-G
Children in Poverty
Bland County and Virginia
1989 and 1999
By Locality

Locality	Families in Poverty				Families in Poverty with Related Children 5 to 17 Years Old			
	Number		Percent		Number		Percent	
	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
Bland County	125	174	7.1%	9.1%	13	29	2.4%	5.3%
Virginia	126,897	129,890	7.7%	7.0%	46,451	53,065	9.4%	8.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Data published by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2000, shows there has been no improvement in breaking the incidence of the poverty during the decade of the 1990s. Both the number and percent of persons in poverty increased between 1989 and 1999 in the county and state. While the rate of families in poverty in Bland County is similar to

the rate in the Commonwealth, there are some signs that poverty is increasing in Bland. First, the rate of all families in poverty increased by two percent between 1989 and 1999 in Bland County, while the state experienced a decrease of 0.7 percent over the same period. The same trend can be seen in families with related children five to 17 years old. The rate of poverty for this family group is lower in Bland than in Virginia; however, the rate in Bland County increased by 2.9 percent in the 1990s and the rate in Virginia decreased by 0.5 percent.

Average Weekly Wage

Another measure of income in the county is average weekly wage information from the Virginia Employment Commission. Table 3-H indicates the change in average weekly wage rates between 1997, 2000, and 2003.

TABLE 3-H
Average Weekly Wage
Bland County, Mount Rogers Planning District, and Virginia
1997, 2000, and 2003
By Locality

Locality	1997	2000	2003	Percent Change 1997 - 2003
Bland County	\$449	\$517	\$564	25.6%
MRPD	\$399	\$450	\$496	24.3%
Virginia	\$568	\$676	\$741	30.5%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Bland County’s wage rate remained well below the state average; however, it has grown at a faster rate than the Mount Rogers Planning District. By 2003, the average weekly wage had climbed to 76.1 percent of the state average, compared to 66.9 percent for the planning district. Bland County has had a consistently higher weekly wage than the planning district for the entire period.

Another way to look at wages is to compare industry averages and draw comparisons with other jurisdictions in the district. Table 3-I shows the average weekly wages per worker by industry sector and locality during the third quarter of 2004. Bland County's average wage for all industries has increased over the past ten years to a point where it is now the highest in the planning district. Bland County leads the district in average wages in manufacturing jobs and has exceeded the state average for this industry by 1.1 percent. It is interesting to note that Bland County's average wage in retail trade jobs reached 90.8 percent of the state in 1996, but has since fallen to the lowest average wage in the planning district.

TABLE 3-I
Average Weekly Wage
Mount Rogers Planning District Localities
Third Quarter 2004
By Industry and Percent of State

Locality	All Industries	Percent	Manufacturing	Percent	Retail	Percent
Bland	589	77.8%	799	99.9%	272	60.4%
Carroll	405	53.5%	498	63.0%	342	76.0%
Grayson	420	55.5%	639	80.9%	285	63.3%
Smyth	500	66.1%	640	81.0%	335	74.4%
Washington	519	68.6%	595	75.3%	360	80.0%
Wythe	455	60.1%	614	77.7%	386	85.8%
Bristol	510	67.4%	681	86.2%	349	77.6%
Galax	457	60.4%	463	58.6%	363	80.7%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Income and Bland Correctional Center

The manner in which the Census Bureau includes institutionalized persons in the general statistics for a community does impact the community's Per Capita Income statistics. In 2000, Bland County's per capita income was calculated at \$17,744. The per capita income of the county using only the non-institutionalized population in 1999 could

be estimated at approximately \$19,411. This figure is closer to the per capita income in the State of Virginia in 1999, which was \$23,975. Household and family income levels released in the 2000 Census are not impacted by Bland Correctional Center, because institutionalized persons are not counted as living in households or families. Additionally, labor statistics released for Bland County were not impacted by the presence of Bland Correctional Center.

D. Tax Base

Real estate and personal property in Bland County represented the two major revenue generating sources of income available to the county. These two indicators provide a good measure of the overall economic base and relative wealth of its citizens. The following tables compare real estate fair market values and personal property values between 1998 and 2003. As can be seen in the table 3-J, real estate fair market values and fair market values per capita in the county have grown at a faster rate than statewide. However, personal property values, shown in Table 3-K, grew at a much lower rate than personal property values in the state.

TABLE 3-J
Fair Market Value of Real Estate
Bland County
1998 and 2003

	Bland County			Virginia
	1998	2003	Percent Change	Percent Change
Fair Market Value	\$198,589,900	\$306,797,200	54.5%	52.1%
Fair Market Value Per Capita	\$28,781	\$43,828	52.3%	42.8%

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation & Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Population Estimates

**TABLE 3-K
Personal Property Values
Bland County
1998 and 2003**

	Bland County			Virginia
	1998	2003	Percent Change	Percent Change
Total Personal Property Value	\$43,153,671	\$51,790,207	20.0%	36.0%
Personal Property Value Per Capita	\$6,254	\$7,399	18.3%	27.6%

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation & Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Population Estimates

E. Economic Sectors

Agriculture

The 2000 Census found that a total of 116 county residents (16 years and older) were employed in agricultural production, a decrease from 145 in 1990 and 278 in 1980. Although the number of persons employed in agriculture in Bland County is relatively small and continues to decline, the economic impact of agriculture cannot be ignored. In 2002, 94,343 acres of land were devoted to farms from which \$8.6 million in farm products were sold. Table 3-L provides some comparative data from the 1997 and 2002 Census of Agriculture.

**TABLE 3-L
Agricultural Data
Bland County
1997 and 2002**

	2002	1997	Percent Change
Land in Farms (acres)	94,343	88,475	6.6%
Number of Farms	417	423	-1.4%
Average Farm Size (acres)	226	209	8.1%
Total Market Value of Products Sold	\$8,564,000	\$7,487,000	14.4%
Average Per Farm	\$20,536	\$17,699	16.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2002 and 1997

Although the average market value of products sold per farm increased by 14.4 percent, this increase did not keep pace with the inflation rate for the period. The

consumer price index rose 19.4 percent between 1997 and 2002. Major cash crops in Bland County, based on 2002 data, include tobacco (32 acres and 58,580 pounds production or 0.09 percent of the state production) and cattle (17,316 or 1.1 percent of the state total). Of the \$8.6 million in agricultural products sold in 2002, 5.6 percent of the value was from crops and 94.4 percent was from livestock and poultry products. The percentage of farms with sales of \$10,000 or more was 30.5 percent and for those with sales of \$100,000 or more was 4.8 percent. The average value of buildings and land per acre in 2002 was \$1,452.

Manufacturing

Bland County has a manufacturing employment base that has been declining consistently since the early 1990s. Employment peaked at 709 persons in 1992, declined modestly to 639 in 1995, and continued to decline to 359 persons in 2003. Between 1999 and 2003, employment in the manufacturing section declined by 36.1 percent. Based on employment, manufacturing is the second largest industry in the county after public administration.

The employment base is quite diversified as shown in Tables 3-M and 3-N. Like most counties in the region, Bland County did experience an out-migration of textile industries, most notably Tultex Corporation; nevertheless, the county has been able to recruit and retain several smaller manufacturing firms with a range of industry types. This diversity will help shelter the county's economy from major factory downsizings.

TABLE 3-M
**Major Employers
Bland County
Second Quarter 2005**

Rank	Employer	OC *	Size Code**
1	Bland Correctional Center	20	7
2	ABB, Service Division	50	7
3	General Injectables and Vaccines	50	6
4	Bland County School Board	30	6
5	County of Bland	30	5
6	Afs of Bastian, Inc.	50	5
7	Angus I. Hines, Inc.	50	5
8	East River Metals	50	4
9	Pascor Atlantic Corporation	50	4
10	Venco Business Music	50	4
11	Walker Mountain Sawmill	50	4
12	3300 Artesian, LLC	50	4
13	Bland County Clinic	50	4
14	Melvin Enterprises	50	4
15	American Mine Research	50	3
16	Wolf Creek Golf and Country Club	50	3
17	United Central Industrial Supply	50	3
18	Virginia Department of State Police	20	3
19	Skyway Outdoor	50	3
20	T&N Electric Motor Exchange Inc	50	3
21	Greenbrier Allegheny Construction	50	3
22	Consolidation Coal Company	50	3
23	Superior Paint Contractors	50	2
24	Quarter Tyme	50	2
25	Virginia Department of Correctional	20	2

Ownership Code (OC)*	Ownership Type
20	State Government
30	Local Government
50	Private

Size Code**	Number of Employees
7	250-499 Employees
6	100-249 Employees
5	50-99 Employees
4	20-49 Employees
3	10-19 Employees
2	5-9 Employees

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, 2005

**TABLE 3-N
Major Manufacturing Employers
Bland County
Second Quarter 2005**

Company Name	NAICS Classification	Number of Employees
---------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------

ABB, Service Division	Electrical equipment and appliance mfg.	250 to 499 Employees
East River Metals	Fabricated metal product manufacturing	20 to 49 employees
Pascor Atlantic Corporation	Electrical equipment and appliance mfg.	20 to 49 employees
Walker Mountain Sawmill	Wood product manufacturing	20 to 49 employees
3300 Artesian, LLC	Beverage and tobacco product manufacturing	20 to 49 employees
American Mine Research	Computer and electronic product manufacturing	10 to 19 Employees
United Central Industrial Supply	Computer and electronic product manufacturing	10 to 19 employees
Skyway Outdoor	Miscellaneous manufacturing	10 to 19 Employees
Affordable Dentures	Miscellaneous manufacturing	5 to 9 employees

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Retail Trade

In Bland County, growth in retail trade employment far out paced growth in total employment between 1985 and 1995. The retail trade industry experienced a 160 percent increase as compared to the 33 percent increase in total employment during that time period. A better indicator of the health of the local retail trade industry is the trend in taxable retail sales. Taxable retail sales data portray the size and volume of the retail trade industry and demonstrate how much revenue is being redistributed in the local economy via sales tax revenues. Taxable retail sales reflect the total taxable value of retail goods exchanged within a locality. Table 3-O displays retail sales data for the county comparing 2000 with 2004 and the percent change with that of the state.

**TABLE 3-O
Retail Sales
Bland County
2000 and 2004**

	Bland County	Virginia
--	--------------	----------

	2000	2004	Percent Change	Percent Change
Total Retail Sales	\$12,458,095	\$13,358,482	7.2%	26.9%
Total Retail Sales Per Capita	\$1,813	\$1,908	5.2%	20.4%

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation

As shown in Table 3-O, Bland County's retail sales increased by 7.2 percent between 2000 and 2004 as compared to a 26.9 percent increase for the state. The rate of change in retail sales per capita, at 5.2 percent, was well below the state's per capita increase of 19.1 percent. More detailed information is available on retail sales by the type of business category. Table 3-P provides this data and compares the years 2000 and 2004.

TABLE 3-P
Retail Sales
Bland County
2000 and 2004
By Business Category

Business Category	2000	2004	Percent Change
Apparel Group	***	\$0	***
Automotive Group	\$3,261,309	\$2,328,106	-28.61%
Food Group	\$3,911,277	\$5,381,521	37.59%
Furniture, Home Furnishings, & Equipment Group	***	***	***
General Merchandise Group	\$1,123,008	\$1,210,966	7.83%
Lumber, Building Material, & Supply Group	***	***	***
Fuel Group	***	***	***

Table 3-P is continued on the following page.

Machinery, Equipment, & Supplies Group	\$414,129	***	***
Miscellaneous	\$3,748,372	\$4,437,889	18.40%
Total	\$12,458,095	\$13,358,482	7.23%

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation

Note: *** indicates that data have been withheld to avoid identification. Amount is included in the total.

Services

Both national and state trends in employment have confirmed increases in the proportion of the workforce employed in the service industry. The term “service industry” is widely misused, with many people stereo-typing the industry as low paying and dead-end. A closer look at the component businesses contained within the service sectors reveals higher paying types: healthcare, consulting, engineering, accounting, etc. These businesses require specialized jobs skills and offer above-average pay.

**TABLE 3-Q
Service Employment
Bland County
Third Quarter 2000, 2002, and 2004
By Job Category**

Job Category	3rd Quarter 2000	3rd Quarter 2002	3rd Quarter 2004	Percent Change 2000 - 2004
Professional and Business Services	15	18	8	-46.7%
Education and Health Services	246	238	260	5.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	41	43	47	14.6%
Other Services	22	26	28	27.3%
Total	324	325	343	5.9%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

While many of the industry sectors in Bland County have declined in employment, such as manufacturing and retail trade, the services industry continues to grow. Between 2000 and 2004, service industry employment increased by 5.9 percent. In contrast, employment in the manufacturing sector declined by 27.7 percent during that same period. However, one must put in perspective the manufacturing sector’s contribution to economic output and income in the county. Review of relative wage

levels among industry sectors in Bland shows manufacturing way-ahead of the pack with \$799 per week wage. The average weekly wage in the service sector has almost doubled since 1997 and was \$652 per week in 2004. Of course, this is slightly misleading, because the service sector includes professional, educational, and health services as well as leisure and hospitality services.

Tourism

The tourism industry is often overlooked as an important element of a local economy. Bland County, with easy access to Interstates 77 and 81 and the State of West Virginia, can benefit from private, state, and federal recreational attractions that add economic benefits from tourism. Table 3-R provides a glimpse at tourism-related data and trends through 2001, including jobs, taxes collected, and traveler spending.

In 2001, over \$8.5 million dollars were spent by travelers in Bland County. This is an increase of nearly \$1.8 million between 1997 and 2001. By 2001, there were 90 jobs in the county directly related to tourism. Furthermore, between 1997 and 2001, local travel taxes increased by almost \$100,000 and total tourism-related payroll increased by over \$300,000.

Bland County's major travel attractions include: the Wolf Creek Indian Village and Museum, a Palesaded Indian Village dating back 600 years and the Big Walker Lookout scenic tower and gift shop on the National Scenic Byway, showcasing year-round scenic mountain beauty, frozen winter wonderlands, fall colors, and springtime flowers. There are excellent camping, hiking, and picnicking opportunities along the byway at Stony Fork Campground. Unique 18th century shops specializing in unique

gifts and antiques are found in Historic Downtown Bland, and nearby streams offer unparalleled trout fishing opportunities.

Understanding the economic benefits of tourism, the Bland County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on January 25, 2005 to support tourism as a new economic and community development effort. The county is optimistic that the promotion of and investment in tourism will provide an opportunity for greater economic prosperity for Bland County. By embracing tourism, the county is guaranteeing a diversified economy that will provide the environment necessary for small business development, while also ensuring the continuation of traditional economic development.

The adopted resolution calls for a stronger partnership with the United States Forest Service to develop a multi-use trail network in the National Forest located in the county. The Board of Supervisors also indicated the county's support for several wilderness designations and federal funding opportunities. Finally, the resolution serves as the first step toward the establishment of the Visitor and Eastern Wilderness Interpretive Center that will serve as Bland County's central hub of tourism activities.

TABLE 3-R
Tourism
Bland County
1997 - 2001

Travel Impacts ¹	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001

Traveler Spending	\$6,760,000	\$7,480,000	\$7,568,000	\$8,013,866	\$8,565,029
Change from Previous Year	11.3 %	10.7 %	1.2 %	5.9 %	6.9 %
Travel Payroll	\$1,010,000	\$1,260,000	\$1,105,000	\$1,184,455	\$1,316,120
Travel Employment	70	81	79	81	90
State Travel Taxes	\$360,000	\$385,000	\$379,000	\$402,084	\$441,326
Local Travel Taxes	\$560,000	\$601,000	\$583,000	\$620,423	\$657,729

Retail Sales, Excise Tax Collections and Excise Tax Rates ²

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
State Taxable Lodging Sales	***	***	***	***	***
Local Lodging Excise Tax Collected	\$0	\$1,519	\$4,290	\$3,482	N/A
Local Lodging Excise Tax Rate	0.0 %	0.0 %	2.0 %	2.0 %	2.0 %
State Taxable Food Service Sales	\$558,888	\$655,055	\$639,057	\$852,724	\$666,644
Local Food Serv. Ex. Tax Collected	\$60,552	\$60,919	\$64,870	\$67,660	N/A
Local Food Service Tax Rate	4.0 %	4.0 %	4.0 %	4.0 %	4.0 %
Local Admissions Ex. Tax Collected	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A
Local Admissions Tax Rate	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %

Lodging ³

	Hotel / Motel	Bed & Breakfast	Cabin / Cottage	Campground	Total
Establishments	1	0	0	0	1
Share of State	0.1 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Rooms	20	0	0	0	20
Share of State	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation

1. Travel Economic Impact Model, Travel Industry Association of America.

2. Total state taxable sales, state lodging sales, and state food service sales: Virginia Department of Taxation. Local lodging, local food service, and local admissions excise taxes collected: Auditor of Public Accounts. Local lodging, local food service, and local admissions excise tax rates: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

3. Survey of lodging establishments: Virginia Tourism Corporation.

*** Indicates data withheld by the Department of Taxation to avoid identification.

Commuting to Work

The 2000 Census data regarding commuting to work reveal that Bland County sends over half of its workforce to surrounding localities for jobs. Approximately 1,439 residents commuted out for jobs, compared to 657 in-commuters to the county. Interstate

77 bisects Bland County and serves as a direct link to Wythe County in the south and Mercer County, West Virginia in the north. Over 60 percent of the out-commuters that live in Bland County commute to these two counties for jobs. To reduce the number of residents that commute out of the county for employment, Bland County must continue to focus on opportunities for expanding its industrial base and diversifying its economy.

**TABLE 3-S
Commuting Patterns
Bland County
2000**

People who live and work in the county: 1,191			
Out-Commuters to:		In-Commuters from:	
Mercer County, WV	393	Mercer County, WV	176
Wythe County	521	Wythe County	212
Tazewell County	189	Tazewell County	80
Buchanan County	29	Buchanan County	6
Smyth County	11	Smyth County	14
Pulaski County	67	Pulaski County	37
Giles County	34	Giles County	66
Montgomery County	21	Montgomery County	13
Washington County	7	Washington County	3
Work Elsewhere	167	Elsewhere	50
Total Out-Commuters	1,439	Total In-Commuters	657
Net In-Commuting: -782			

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

F. Conclusions

Bland County has been successful in attracting a diversified manufacturing base that pays an average wage exceeding the remainder of the Mount Rogers Planning District. The county's other mainstay of economic support comes from the location of

the Bland Correctional Center, providing as many as 499 jobs. Moreover, plans to promote and market the county as a tourism destination will have a positive impact on the diversification of Bland County's economy.

Agricultural Economy

Agriculture in Bland County represents an important sector of the economy. In 2002, \$8.6 million of products were sold from farms in the county. The majority of sales are from livestock and poultry products (94.4 percent), while 5.6 percent of sales were from crops. The average value of farm products sold increased 16 percent between 1997 and 2002.

Industrial Development

The county has developed a viable industrial base that is characterized by a higher than average weekly wage per worker. However, the county is still not insulated from future economic downturns and needs to continue to recruit new industries to ensure employment opportunities for county residents.

Commercial Development

Commercial development and tourism go hand-in-hand in providing a stable component to economic growth. As stated earlier, the county has experienced a decline in retail trade sector employment and a slight increase in taxable retail sales. Bland County experienced little growth in the commercial sector during the early 2000s; however, there has been some new development, such as the new Dollar General store at interstate exit 52. Increased growth in the retail sector will be a result of the planned tourism development in Bland County.

Tourism

Bland County's location along Interstate 77, bordered by West Virginia to the north and Wythe County to the south, gives it a competitive edge for tourism. Traveler spending exceeded \$8.5 million in 2001, up from \$6.8 million in 1997 and \$4.5 million in 1995. Travel-related establishments provided 90 jobs to the county economy in 2001.

The Bland County Tourism Initiative outlined in the resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2005 will guide tourism development in the county. The core of this initiative is to develop a Visitor and Eastern Wilderness Interpretive Center, seek and support federal wilderness designations for several of the county's natural areas, and identify funding to construct a multi-use trail network. This new initiative will further diversify Bland County's economy and encourage an environment that fosters small business development.

CHAPTER IV
Housing

A. Housing Trends and Type of Housing

A community’s housing trends are linked to its population trends. As noted in Chapter II – Population, Bland County’s population experienced its highest growth during the 1970’s, 17.1 percent. The county once again experienced growth in the 1990’s at 5.5 percent, yet at a slower pace. Table 4-A compares population, households, and housing unit trends between 1990 and 2000.

TABLE 4-A
Population and Housing
Bland County
1990 and 2000
By Magisterial District

District	Population			Households			Housing Units		
	1990	2000	Percent Change	1990	2000	Percent Change	1990	2000	Percent Change
Mechanicsburg	2,085	2,291	9.9%	592	661	11.7%	658	775	17.8%
Rocky Gap	2,307	2,316	0.4%	894	955	6.8%	1,021	1,132	10.9%
Seddon	1,430	1,566	9.5%	498	661	32.7%	635	808	27.2%
Sharon	692	698	0.9%	251	291	15.9%	392	446	13.8%
Bland County	6,514	6,871	5.5%	2,235	2,568	14.9%	2,706	3,161	16.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

As the county’s population grew from 1990 to 2000, its housing stock also grew. Table 4-B provides information about the trend in the county’s average household size. The county’s household size fell by almost 23 percent during the decade of the 70’s, while the state’s average household size declined by 13.0 percent. As of 2000, the county’s household size is lower than the state average, 2.43 and 2.54 respectively.

TABLE 4-B
Average Household Size
Bland County and Virginia
1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Bland County	3.18	2.59	2.65	2.43
Virginia	3.20	2.77	2.61	2.54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Bland County had a total of 3,161 housing units according to the 2000 Census which is an increase of 16.8 percent from 2,706 dwelling units in 1990. At the same time, the total population increased 5.5 percent and the number of persons residing in households decreased. Bland County followed the national trend in that average household size is shrinking due to several factors including delayed marriages, postponement of childbearing, decisions to have fewer children, and divorce.

The predominant housing type in Bland County is the single-family conventional home. The county has a low percentage of multi-family housing; however, manufactured homes comprise a significant proportion of the housing stock. Table 4-C shows the distribution of housing types in the county and by district. Rocky Gap has the largest concentration of single-family conventional houses and manufactured homes, while Sharon has the largest concentration of multi-family or other units. Almost 30 percent of the housing units in the county were manufactured homes.

**TABLE 4-C
Housing Units
Bland County
2000**

By Magisterial District

District	Single-Family Conventional		Manufactured Homes		Multi-Family or Other		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Mechanicsburg	626	76.8%	177	21.7%	12	1.5%	815
Rocky Gap	723	63.3%	386	33.8%	34	3.0%	1,143
Seddon	512	67.2%	169	22.2%	81	10.6%	762
Sharon	304	68.9%	125	28.3%	12	2.7%	441
Bland County	2,165	68.5%	857	27.1%	139	4.4%	3,161

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

The mix of housing stock has shifted since 1980 toward a larger proportion of manufactured homes. Table 4-D provides housing trends data for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Single-family conventional homes continue to dominate the housing scene, even though the percentage of this type is on the decline. The number of manufactured homes tripled between 1980 and 2000, an increase of 571 units. Multi-family housing represents a small proportion of the housing mix. Multi-family housing development has concentrated in housing developments with three to four units in one structure. According to the Census, the county has no multi-family structures containing 10 or more units. Table 4-E shows trends in occupied multi-family housing.

TABLE 4-D
Housing Trends
Bland County
1980, 1990, and 2000

By Type

Type	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single Family Conventional	1,847	83.6%	2,030	75.0%	2,165	68.5%
Multi-Family and Other	77	3.5%	66	2.4%	139	4.4%
Manufactured Homes	286	12.9%	610	22.5%	857	27.1%
Total	2,210	100.0%	2,706	100.0%	3,161	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

TABLE 4-E
Occupied Multi-Family Housing
Bland County
1980, 1990, and 2000

By Number of Units

Number of Units	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Townhouse	28	43.8%	13	34.2%	43	45.3%
Duplex	0	0.0%	5	13.2%	7	7.4%
3 - 9 units	23	35.9%	20	52.6%	45	47.4%
10 - 49 units	13	20.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50 or more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	64	100.0%	38	100.0%	95	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

TABLE 4-F
Housing Permits
Bland County
1995 - 2004
By Housing Type

Year	Single-Family	Manufactured Home	Total
1995	38	52	90
1996	54	32	86
1997	31	28	59
1998	49	49	98
1999	39	57	96
2000	54	23	77
2001	47	45	92
2002	41	37	78
2003	27	39	66
2004	24	49	73
Total	404	411	815

Source: Bland County Building Official

The growth in manufactured homes in the county can be seen by the number of manufactured home permits issued since 1995. Table 4-F provides data on housing units authorized between 1995 and 2004. Overall, the numbers of manufactured home permits and single-family home permits issued during this ten-year period were basically equal.

One must view this data above, however, with caution. Manufactured home permits are issued whenever a unit is moved from one location to another or when a new manufactured home replaces an existing unit. Therefore, the number of permits does not translate directly into new manufactured housing starts. It is difficult to determine what percentage of the manufactured homes are replacement structures or moved units, because this information is not recorded on the permit.

Housing Tenure and Occupancy

Approximately 70 percent of all housing units in Bland County are owner-occupied, while 11.3 percent are renter-occupied and 18.8 percent are vacant. This characteristic has remained virtually the same for the last thirty years. Logically, the multi-family dwelling units are virtually all renter-occupied, while about 9.0 percent of the single-family conventional and 9.5 percent of the occupied manufactured homes are rental units.

Table 4-G shows housing tenure and occupancy by housing type. The vacancy rate for all housing units in the county is 18.8 percent. The vacancy rate is much lower for multi-family units and manufactured homes than single-family conventional homes. This data indicates there may be a housing supply problem in the county, particularly with multi-family housing.

TABLE 4-G
Housing Tenure and Occupancy
Bland County
2000
By Housing Type

Housing Type	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Vacant		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single-family	1,563	70.7%	194	54.2%	408	68.8%	2,165	68.5%
Multi-family	13	0.6%	74	20.7%	8	1.3%	95	3.0%
Manufactured Home	634	28.7%	81	22.6%	142	23.9%	857	27.1%
Other	0	0.0%	9	2.5%	35	5.9%	44	1.4%
Total	2,210	100.0%	358	100.0%	593	100.0%	3,161	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Housing Age and Conditions

Table 4-H indicates the number of housing structures by age. A majority of the homes in Bland County were built prior to 1970. The housing stock in the county is considerably older than housing statewide, 11.7 percent was built prior to 1940 as compared to 9.1 percent of homes in Virginia. A housing boom in the 1970's brought approximately 600 new homes to the county during the decade, representing almost a quarter of the housing stock in 2000. During the decade of the 1980's, housing production slowed, but still produced approximately 500 new homes.

TABLE 4-H
Age of Housing Structures
Bland County
2000
By Occupancy Status

Year Built	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1999 - March 2000	41	1.9%	0	0.0%
1995 - 1998	236	10.7%	39	10.9%
1990 - 1994	240	10.9%	21	5.9%
1980 - 1989	430	19.5%	68	19.0%
1970 - 1979	511	23.1%	80	22.3%
1960 - 1969	189	8.6%	15	4.2%
1950 - 1959	176	8.0%	37	10.3%
1940 - 1949	141	6.4%	44	12.3%
Before 1940	246	11.1%	54	15.1%
Total	2,210	100.0%	358	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

An examination of trends in housing conditions in Bland County reveals that some improvements to the existing housing stock have been made over the years. Table 4-I provides data on housing without complete plumbing facilities, which is an objective measure of substandard housing. The number of homes lacking complete plumbing

facilities dropped from 308 units in 1990 to 278 units in 2000 or from 13.7 percent of the total housing units to 10.8 percent.

TABLE 4-I
Condition of Occupied Housing Units
Bland County
1990 & 2000
By Census Definition

Condition	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lack Complete Plumbing	308	13.7%	278	10.8%
Overcrowded (More than 1 person per room)	46	2.0%	7	0.3%
Total Housing Units	2,244		2,568	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Home overcrowding is also indicated by census data. Table 4-I shows that the number of households considered to be overcrowded experienced a significant decrease from 46 in 1990 to just 7 in 2000. Decreasing family size is a primary factor influencing this decline.

Even though these numbers have improved, there are still problems with substandard housing in Bland County. Of the 2,568 occupied housing units in the county, 278 lack complete plumbing. Of the 278 units lacking complete plumbing, 32 are households living in poverty, 231 are vacant units, and 25 are renter occupied.

It is very important to note that these numbers do not include the households with “malfunctioning plumbing” and those with “structural problems.” Community Development Block Grant programs are designed to address housing rehabilitation and indoor plumbing problems in communities.

A windshield survey conducted by Mount Rogers Planning District Commission staff in late 2005 resulted in a slightly larger number of residential structures that appear to be substandard or deteriorated. Conditions were assigned using a ranking system that included an analysis of siding, shingles, windows, and exterior paint. Generally, if two of these characteristics appeared to be in poor condition (cracked or broken windows, missing shingles, etc.) the structure was considered to be substandard. A deteriorated structure appeared to have more than two of these characteristics in poor condition and seemed unsuitable for habitation.

TABLE 4-J
Condition of Residential Structures^{1,2}
Bland County
2005

Condition	Number	Percent
Standard	2,930	86.0
Substandard	391	11.5
Deteriorated	86	2.5
Total	3,407	100.0

1. Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
2. Based on exterior conditions

Housing Affordability

In addition to housing conditions and availability, another crucial issue in housing today is affordability. Homes may be available, but not within the financial resources of the majority of the population. The comparison of the annual increase in income with the increase in housing costs will give some insight into the ability of people to buy a home.

In Bland County, the median value of a house in 2000 was \$65,700 as compared to \$118,800 for the state as seen in Table 4-K. This represents an increase of approximately 50 percent in the county during the decade of the 1990s. During the same

period, median contract rent in the county decreased by 2 percent, from \$252 in 1990 to \$247 in 2000.

**TABLE 4-K
Median Value of Homes
Bland County and Virginia
1990 and 2000**

	1990	2000	Percent Change
Bland County	\$43,800	\$65,700	50.0%
Virginia	\$91,000	\$118,800	30.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

**TABLE 4-L
Median Contract Rent
Bland County and Virginia
1990 and 2000**

	1990	2000	Percent Change
Bland County	\$252	\$247	-2.0%
Virginia	\$495	\$550	11.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

How do these increases in value and rent compare to inflation over the period? The inflation rate was approximately 2.21 percent per year, or 22.1 percent increase over the decade, so the rise in the value of homes exceeded the rate of inflation in both the state and county during the 1990s. However, the change in median contract rent was much lower than inflation during the decade.

Another method to analyze affordability is to compare the increase in household income with the increase in housing costs. The following two tables, Table 4-M and 4-N, provide a look at this comparison for the county.

TABLE 4-M
Comparison of Change in Median Home Value with Change in Median Household Income
Bland County
1990 and 2000

	Change in Median Home Value	Change in Median Household Income	Ratio
Bland County	50.0%	28.9%	1.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, MHI 1990 (23,587) and 2000 (30,397)

TABLE 4-N
Comparison of Change in Median Contract Rent with Change in Median Household Income
Bland County
1990 and 2000

	Change in Median Contract Rent	Change in Median Household Income	Ratio
Bland County	-2.0%	28.9%	-15.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, MHI 1990 (23,587) and 2000 (30,397)

Table 4-M indicates that median home values have risen at almost twice the rate of household income. On the other hand, Table 4-N shows that median household income in the county has increased at a much faster pace than rental costs. In fact, rental costs decreased during the 1990s, while median household income increased by 28.9 percent. Using the established assumption that a household should not spend more than 30 percent of its income on housing, 26.5 percent of all households in the county could not afford the fair market rent. Based on 2000 census data, the median gross rent is \$349 for the county.

The median monthly owner costs, including mortgage, for owner-occupied homes in Bland County is \$626. Again, assuming no more than 30 percent of the household income is available for housing costs, it is estimated that only 15.4 percent of all owner-occupied households in the county with a mortgage cannot afford the median monthly

owner costs. This compares to 20.8 percent in Smyth County and 22.0 percent in Wythe County who cannot afford the median monthly owner costs.

How many residents in the county spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs? Table 4-O shows this information for homeowners. Only 11.8 percent of homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their household income on housing. Of that group 43.2 percent do not have a mortgage. Therefore, of those homeowners with a mortgage, 15.6 percent spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Surprisingly, a majority (55.9 percent) of homeowners with a mortgage pay less than 20 percent of their household income on housing costs.

TABLE 4-O
Mortgage Status
Bland County
2000

By Monthly Owner Cost as a Percentage of income

Percent of Income	Number of Units	Percent of Total	With Mortgage	Without Mortgage
0 - 19%	768	72.7%	254	514
20 - 24%	81	7.7%	59	22
25 - 29%	83	7.9%	70	13
30 - 34%	27	2.6%	11	16
35% or greater	98	9.3%	60	38
TOTAL	1,057	100.0%	454	603

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Statistic was not computed for 6 owner-occupied units.

Table 4-P indicates that 53 percent of renters spend less than 20 percent of their income on rent, while 26.5 percent spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. This result indicates that a significant number of renters living in the county may be struggling to meet their budgets.

TABLE 4-P
Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income
Bland County
2000

Percent of Income	Number	Percent
0 - 19%	114	53.0%
20 - 24%	37	17.2%
25 - 29%	7	3.3%
30 - 34%	20	9.3%
35% or greater	37	17.2%
Total	215	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Statistic was not computed for 99 renter-occupied units.

Not surprisingly, it is the lowest income households who spend the higher proportions of income on housing costs. Table 4-Q indicates that of those households paying 30 percent or more of their income on monthly owner costs a large percentage are low to moderate income households. In fact, 71.2 percent of the households paying more than 30 percent on housing earn an annual household income of less than \$20,000.

TABLE 4-Q
Percentage of Income Spent on Monthly Owner Costs
Bland County
2000

By Income Range

Income Range	Total	30% or Less Spent on Monthly Owner Costs	More than 30% Spent on Monthly Owner Costs	Not Computed
Less than \$10,000	103	36	55	12
\$10,000 - 19,999	140	106	34	0
\$20,000 - 34,999	343	307	36	0
\$35,000 and up	483	483	0	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

The correlation between low income and high proportion of income spent on housing is even stronger in the rental housing market. Table 4-R shows that of the total 215 specified renter-occupied households, 57 spent more than 30 percent of income on monthly gross rent, 64.9 percent of those were households earning less than \$10,000 in income per year. Approximately 96 percent of households with annual incomes of \$20,000 or more spent less than 30 percent of their income on monthly gross rent.

TABLE 4-R
Percentage of Income Spent on Gross Rent
Bland County
2000

By Income Range			
Income Range	30% or Less Spent on Gross Rent	More than 30% Spent on Gross Rent	Not Computed
Less than \$10,000	9	37	55
\$10,000 - 19,999	15	14	20
\$20,000 - 34,999	60	6	15
\$35,000 and up	74	0	9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

B. Current Housing Assistance Activities

The data presented in this chapter point to needs in the county for state and federal housing assistance programs. With substandard housing from a structural view to homes lacking public sewer and adequate plumbing, the need is demonstrated. The following discussion highlights information regarding existing housing assistance programs or activities in Bland County.

Mountain CAP, Inc., a regional community action agency, administers a minor home repair program which provides funds for emergency and energy-related repairs.

In addition to these, communities are eligible to receive Community Development Block Grant funds for low-to-moderate income households to provide much needed

sewer and water connections, such as in the communities of Rocky Gap and Bastian. The Community Development Block Grant program also has grant funds available for housing rehabilitation and indoor plumbing.

As far as home ownership and rental housing assistance, there are available programs from Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) for both single-family home loans and lending programs for multi-family developments. The Rural Housing Program from Farmers Home Administration provides for subsidized monthly payments with a minimum of one percent interest.

In addition, access to housing programs for both the public and private sectors are available through private non-profit organizations like Habitat for Humanity and the Crossroads Project (located in Smyth County). The Wytheville Housing Authority could expand into Bland County by action from the Bland County Board of Supervisors passing a resolution acceptable to the Housing Authority. Other programs available for housing assistance include Virginia Mountain Housing, Mountain Shelter, Inc, and the Indoor Plumbing Rehabilitation program administered by Mount Rogers Planning District Commission.

C. Summary of Problems and Opportunities

Population Increase

Bland County's population through the 1990s has grown at a 0.5 percent annual rate of change. Geographically the county is positioned on an interstate highway corridor, making it ripe for moderate growth. The engines are there for new industrial

and commercial development which in turn will bring new persons to the county. Ultimately, this will bring the need for residential development.

Residential Development

Although the number of housing units has continued to advance, the peak of housing growth was in the 1970's. Limited suitable land and inadequate water and sewerage facilities are factors that hinder subdivision development in some areas of the county.

Lack of Affordable Housing

There is a definite lack of affordable rental housing in the county.

Substandard Housing Conditions

A large number of homes in the county suffer from old age and deteriorated conditions. While the number houses lacking complete plumbing has decreased slightly since 1990, many of the occupied substandard homes are owned or rented by elderly residents or those living in poverty. A large majority of the substandard housing stock is composed of vacant dwellings. Overcrowded housing is not a significant problem in Bland County.

Assisted Housing for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

This type of housing is not available in the county. Demographics would indicate that a market is available, as the elderly population in Bland County is growing.

CHAPTER V
Community Facilities

A. Education

The Bland County public school system consists of four schools, including two elementary schools and two high schools. Due to the decrease in enrollment and higher costs to operate the Bastian, Ceres, and Hollybrook Elementary Schools they closed at the end of 1991-1992 school year. Students from these schools attend Bland and Rocky Gap Combined School. The following is a list of the school facilities in the County, including current school membership.

TABLE 5-A
School Enrollment
Bland County
April 30, 1998
By School

School	Membership
Bland Elementary	253
Bland High School	178
Rocky Gap Elementary	281
Rocky Gap High School	184
TOTAL	896

NOTE: Ceres Elementary and Hollybrook Elementary combined with Bland Elementary.

Wythe County Vocational Technical School serves high school students from Bland Combined School, while Tazewell County Vocational Technical School serves high school students from Rocky Gap Combined School. These vocational technical schools provide training in numerous different trade skills to prepare students for entry level jobs.

In addition, Wytheville Community College offers two year college curriculums to area residents and currently has an enrollment of approximately 2,500 students.

A four-year curriculum is offered at Radford University in Radford, Virginia and at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in Blacksburg.

B. Libraries

Bland County has one public library, the Bland County Public Library, which was completed and dedicated April 19, 1998, and is a branch of the Smyth-Bland Regional Library. The Bland County Public Library has approximately 6,000 items, including books, cassettes, and videos. Over 72,000 volumes are in the Smyth-Bland Regional System, which is located at the Library in Marion.

C. Health

Bland County residents seek medical attention from Wythe County Community Hospital, a 106-bed facility, located in Wytheville on a 12.5 acre tract of land. Adjacent to the hospital is a community health facility, operated by the Virginia State Health Department, which provides public health services.

Other hospitals in the area, from which Bland County residents seek medical attention, are: Bluefield Regional Medical Center; Princeton Community Hospital; and Humana Hospital St. Luke's in Bluefield West Virginia.

Bland County residents also seek medical attention at the Bland County Medical Center in Bastian, which has two doctors. The Mountain Medical Clinic (a private facility) has one doctor.

The Mount Rogers Community Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services Board is a regional public agency responsible for planning, developing, and implementing services for the mentally ill and retarded. The Board's main offices are in Wytheville. Facilities provided by the Community Services Board include the Industrial and Developmental Center (sheltered workshop) and a new independent living 12-unit

group home for mentally retarded adults. A mental health clinic in Wytheville serves Wythe and Bland Counties.

The County has one nursing home, Bland County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, to serve the elderly. It is privately owned and operated with 57 beds.

The County is also served by the Appalachian Independence Center. The center is designed to educate communities and train individuals who have disabilities. They offer independent living skills training and disability specific training as well as many other services for people with disabilities.

D. Recreation

Large portions of Bland County lie within the boundaries of the Jefferson National Forest. Within this forest lie some of the best hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting areas on the eastern seaboard. The Forest Service maintains several developed camping, picnicking, and fishing areas and hiking and horseback riding trails.

Bland County has its own recreation board made up of eight members, two from each voting district. The County maintains five public recreation areas. They are located at Rocky Gap, Hollybrook, Ceres, Mechanicsburg, and Bland proper.

A football program was established in 1991 for school age students in Bland County, high school students from Bland and Rocky Gap participate in this program.

The Appalachian Trail begins at Ceres and runs through the County. There is also a private 18-hole golf course west of Bastian adjacent to Wolf Creek.

E. Emergency Services

Bland County is served by Rocky Gap, Grapefield, Hollybrook, Ceres, Little Creek, and Bland Fire Departments, all volunteer fire departments. In case of large fires, mutual aid agreements exist between separate fire departments within the County as well as outside the County.

The County rescue squad is headquartered in Bland. It is comprised of approximately twenty-one members and five associate member volunteers and four ambulances, one search and rescue vehicle, and one crash truck. Primary medevac air transport services are provided by Carillion Health System at the Mountain Empire Airport in Groseclose, Healthnet 5 at the Bluefield/Mercer County Airport, and Virginia State Police Med-Flight II at the Virginia Highlands Airport in Abingdon.

F. Law Enforcement

Bland County security is maintained by the Bland County Sheriff's Department with the assistance of the Virginia State Police. Other law enforcement represented in Bland County include: Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, FBI, ABC, and Fire Marshals.

G. Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment

Bland County has a water and sewer authority made up of five members that is responsible for providing water and sewer services in the County. The 604(b) water and sewer study completed by Anderson and Associates in October 1998 is used whenever new construction is considered. Currently public water is provided in Rocky Gap, Bastian, and Bland proper. Public sewer is provided in Bastian.

H. Solid Waste

Solid waste is collected on a regular basis throughout the County and is transported by a private hauler to a transfer station in Wythe County for disposal in North Carolina. Bland County's landfill is closed. Bland County and Wythe County have formed a joint PSA for the disposal of municipal waste.

I. Public Utilities

Appalachian Power Company (A subsidiary of American Electric Power) provides power to Bland County.

Telephone service is provided by Sprint Telephone Company, a subsidiary of the United Telephone System. Hollybrook and Rocky Gap are served by Verizon.

J. Social Services

The local department of welfare/social services in Bland County provides assistance through programs financed by federal, state, and local funds. The type and amount of assistance is determined by the number of eligible persons in a household, certain income limitations, and the amount of different types of resources available.

Assistance Programs include: 1) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); 2) Aid to Dependent Children-Foster Care (IV-E); 3) Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) Program designed to help troubled youths and their families. State and local agencies, parents and private service providers work together to plan and provide services. In each community local teams decide how to accomplish this; 4) Emergency Assistance to Needy Families Children; 5) Auxiliary Grant Program; 6) General Relief (GR); 7) Food Stamp Program; 8) Medical Assistance (Medicaid); 9) State/Local Hospitalization (SLH); 10) Refugee Program; 11) Adult In-Home Services-special state

allocation of funds for companion services; 12) Fuel Assistance Program; 13) Adoption Subsidy-Federal IV-E foster care children placed for adoption who have special needs; 14) TANF-UP-Temporary Assistance to Needy Families of Unemployed Parents; 15) Other Purchased Services—Funds used for companion in-home services for elderly and disabled individuals; 16) Family Preservation Support-Funds used to help a family with problems to try to prevent child abuse/neglect; 17) VIEW TANF Working/Transitional Day Care payments to eligible TANF welfare to work clients; 18) Independent Living Foster Care-Funds to help improve foster care for children) ability to live independently when they leave foster care/agency custody; 19) Safe and Stable Families Grant-Federal program funding to help prevent foster care, child abuse/neglect and stabilize families with problems; 20) Non-VIEW Day Care for working (low income) families; 21) Adult Protective Services—purchase of emergency services to protect elderly living at home.

Programs are established under federal and state law to provide financial assistance from public funds to or in behalf of needy person who meet certain specific criteria. Persons who meet the criteria established for each program fall into a group “category” and are eligible to receive assistance under the appropriate program classification.

The State Board of Social Services has established the following direct social services to be provided by each local department: 1) Intake Services; 2) Adult Services; 3) Family Services; 4) Adult Protection Services; 5) Child Protection Services; 6) Foster Care and Adoption Services; 7) Employment Services; and 8) Welfare to Work.

Each local social service agency is allotted a certain sum of money and must develop a local annual plan showing services expected to be provided and target groups

to be served. In the planning, once the mandated services are funded, any remaining dollars may be spent on one or all of the optional services previously listed. This selection is based on available dollars and local priorities.

CHAPTER VI Government

A. County Government

The county government is the local legislative and administrative body and serves as an agent for the state. As with all local governments in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the state expressly grants to the county the powers and functions that are specifically detailed in the *Code of Virginia*. To this end, the county only has these specific powers or those necessarily implied.

Bland County utilizes the traditional form of county government that combines the strong political leadership of elected officials in the form of a four-member board of supervisors with the strong managerial experience of an appointed county administrator. This form establishes a representative system where all the power is concentrated in the elected board members and where the board hired county administrator is delegated such powers as the board deems necessary to oversee the delivery of public services.

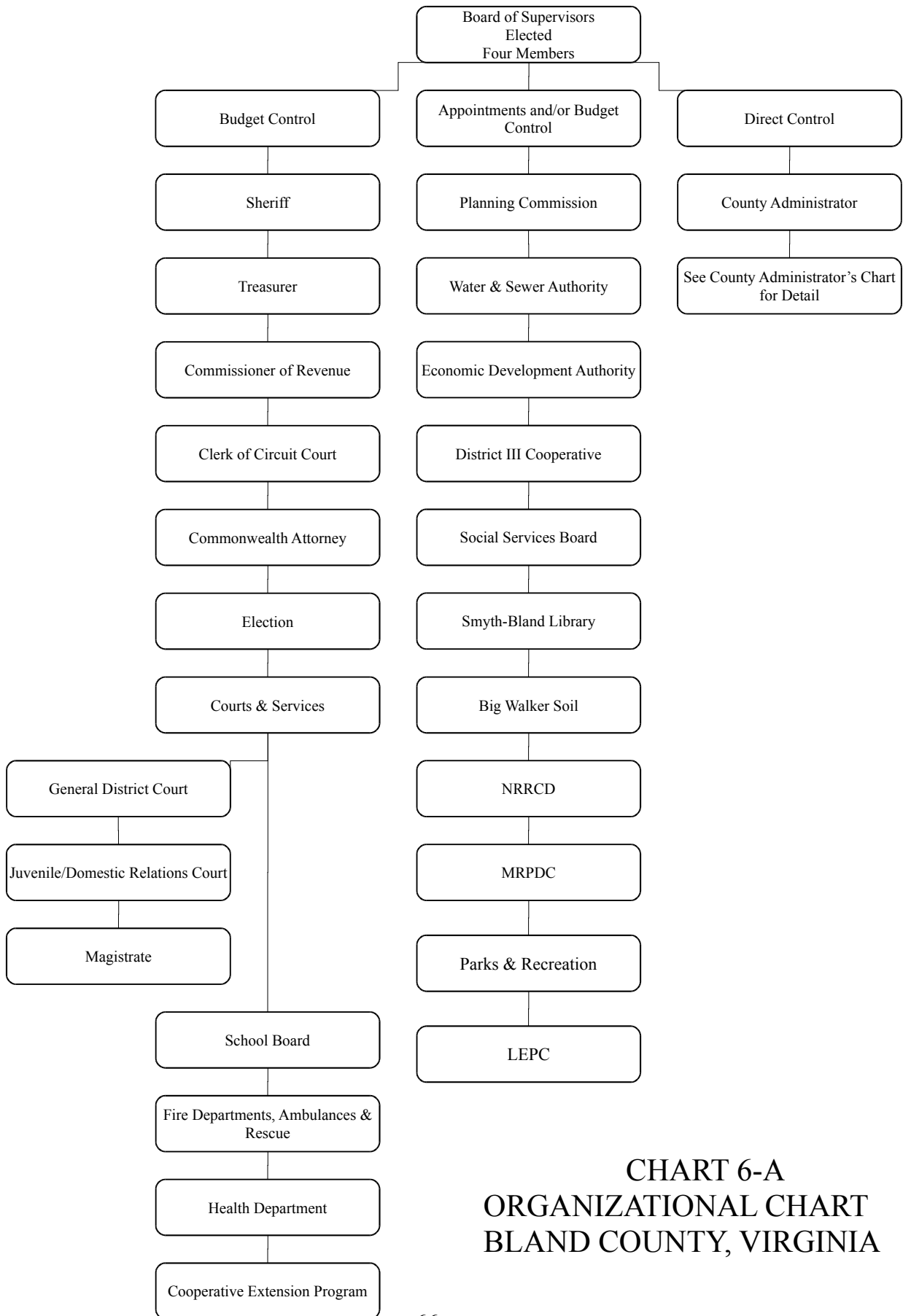
In the county manager form of government, the board of supervisors is the legislative leader and policy maker elected to represent various segments of the community and to concentrate on policy issues that are responsive to citizens' needs and wishes. The appointed administrator carries out all board-determined policy and ensures that the entire community is being served.

The county's board of supervisors also has the authority to appoint members to various boards and commissions to administer and/or advise the supervisors on particular matters. The appointed members of the planning commission advise the supervisors on matters related to the growth, development, planning, and zoning. The planning commission is also responsible for preparing the county's Comprehensive Plan.

Professional county staff members manage the planning process and administer the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations.

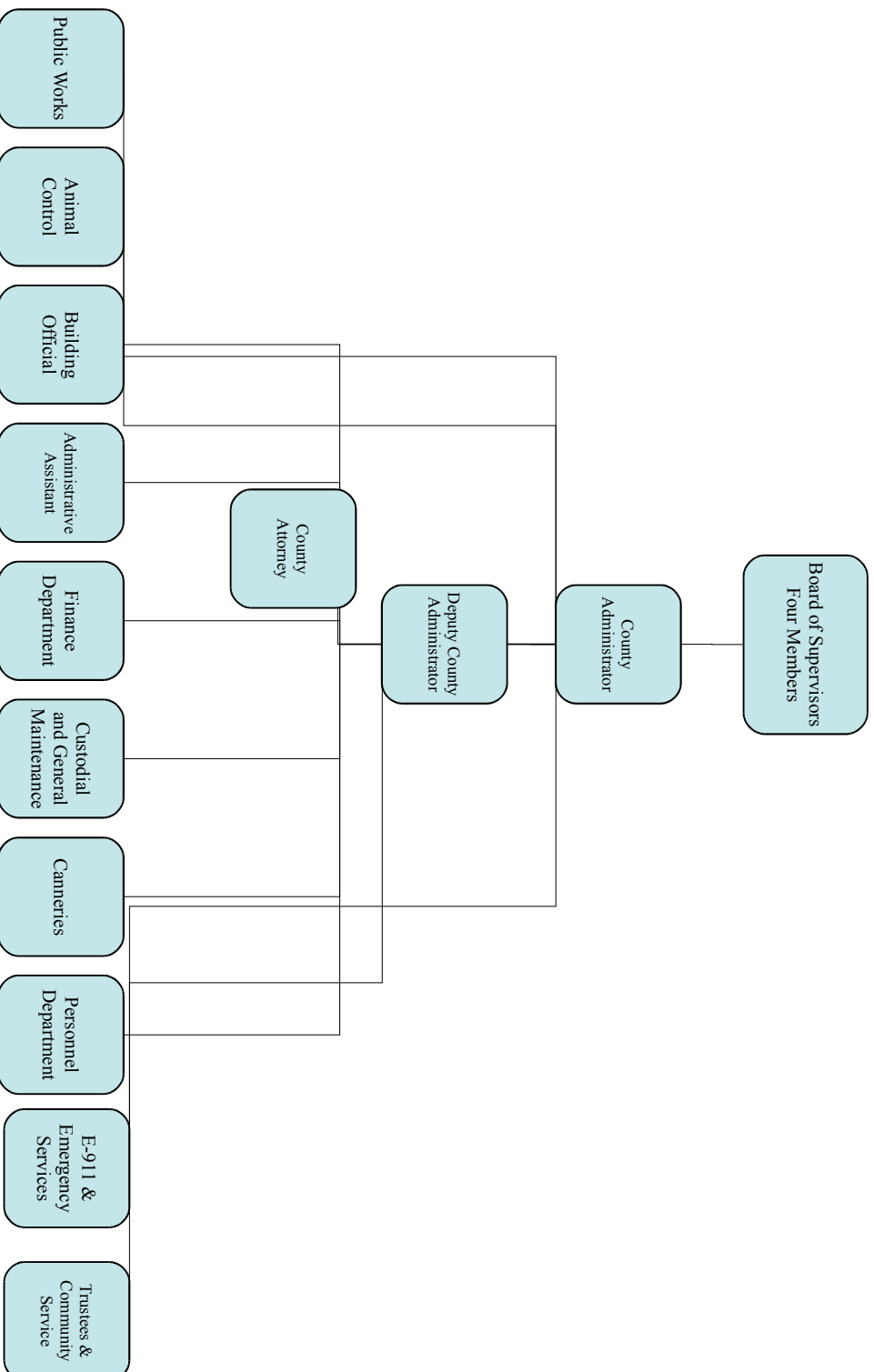
The final component of county government administration is the constitutionally elected officers, including the Commissioner of Revenue, Clerk of the Court, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, and Treasurer. Also appointed on a referendum vote decision, Bland County has chosen to create a non-constitutional elected position for members of the School Board.

Charts 6-A and 6-B on the following pages detail the county's organizational structure. Chart 6-A separates the county's structure by level of control, i.e., budget control, appointments and budget control, and direct control. Chart 6-B details the county's direct control division (County Administrator's Organizations Chart) of operations.



**CHART 6-A
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
BLAND COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

**CHART 6-B
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BLAND COUNTY, VIRGINIA**



B. Local Government Services

Bland County provides a wide variety of facilities and services for its citizens. The Board of Supervisors allocates revenues derived from federal, state, and local sources to support a wide variety of local expenditures.

Expenditures

Recent general government expenditures indicate a consistent rise in the cost of providing services and facilities for the county. For example, in fiscal year 2003 expenditures totaled \$10.6 million, while fiscal year 2004 expenditures totaled \$11.5 million, a 9.2 percent increase. Bland County has experienced a similar annual increase in expenditures since fiscal year 1995 as seen in Table 6-A.

Traditionally, education represents the single largest expenditure category. In fiscal year 2004, expenditures in this category totaled approximately \$7.2 million, or 62 percent, of total general government expenses. Chart 6-C presents the breakdown of the \$11.5 million general government expenditures during fiscal year 2004.

CHART 6-C

Bland County Expenditures Fiscal Year 2003 - 04

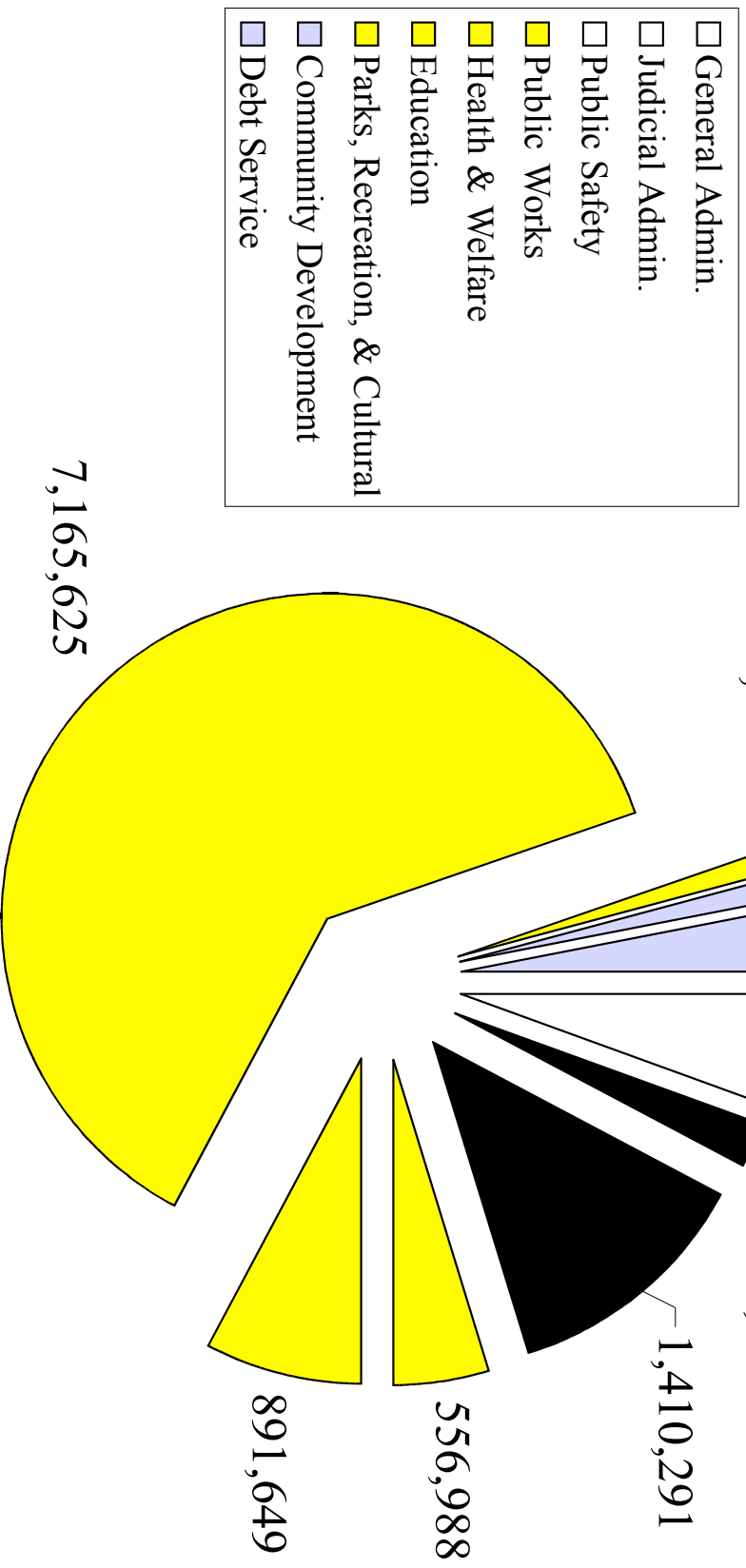


TABLE 6-A
Government Expenditures
Bland County
Fiscal Years Ending 1995 - 2004

Fiscal Year	By Function ¹											Totals
	General Admin.	Judicial Admin.	Public Safety	Public Works	Health & Welfare	Education ²	Parks, Recreation, & Cultural	Community Development	Debt Service			
1994 - 1995	467,191	80,590	601,483	336,746	310,846	5,851,946	24,901	104,670	228,333		8,006,706	
1995 - 1996	501,860	79,747	674,391	286,350	409,490	5,933,716	102,721	50,734	182,114		8,221,123	
1996 - 1997	513,014	97,556	783,297	346,362	437,934	6,041,370	123,862	128,692	220,418		8,692,505	
1997 - 1998	674,666	90,765	741,161	415,382	496,323	5,917,699	571,303	78,589	134,788		9,120,676	
1998 - 1999	667,798	194,590	735,955	456,221	571,800	6,115,703	102,979	191,883	173,192		9,210,121	
1999 - 2000	757,437	245,354	668,149	506,489	594,820	6,370,777	61,720	107,715	188,976		9,501,437	
2000 - 2001	780,632	271,774	816,103	563,529	746,591	6,617,954	65,998	289,224	229,136		10,380,941	
2001 - 2002	836,356	248,528	784,665	784,409	928,036	6,632,772	94,487	193,488	234,694		10,737,435	
2002 - 2003	635,889	266,246	1,100,205	560,904	744,286	6,836,170	89,467	98,578	230,088		10,561,833	
2003 - 2004	643,310	268,737	1,410,291	556,988	891,649	7,165,625	105,440	150,777	337,706		11,530,523	

Source: Bland County, County Administrator's Office

1. Includes General and Special Revenue funds of the Primary Government and its Discretely Presented Components Unit.

2. Excludes contribution from Primary Government to Discretely Presented Component Unit.

Revenues

Several sources of revenue are used to offset the cost of operations. The primary sources are local taxes and state and federal aid. Most local revenue comes from general property taxes and the local option sales tax. State aid consists of funding for school, public assistance, and general government expenses shared by the state with local governments. Federal assistance includes payment in lieu of taxes for National Forest lands, public assistance, and categorical school aid. Proceeds from loans, charges for services, and other miscellaneous sources are also considered sources of revenue.

Table 6-B details primary government revenues collected by Bland County over the ten year period between fiscal year 1995 and 2004. During this period, revenue sources experienced a steady and substantial growth of approximately five percent each year. In fiscal year 1995, revenues totaled \$8.3 million; by fiscal year 2004, revenues total \$12.4 million.

Historically, the state and federal government have been the primary sources of revenues necessary to provide services and facilities for the county's residents. In fiscal year 2004, state and federal revenues accounted for about \$7.7 million, or 62 percent, of the \$12.4 million total revenue. Chart 6-D presents the breakdown of the \$12.4 million primary government revenue during fiscal year 2004.

CHART 6-D

Bland County Revenues

Fiscal Year 2003 - 04

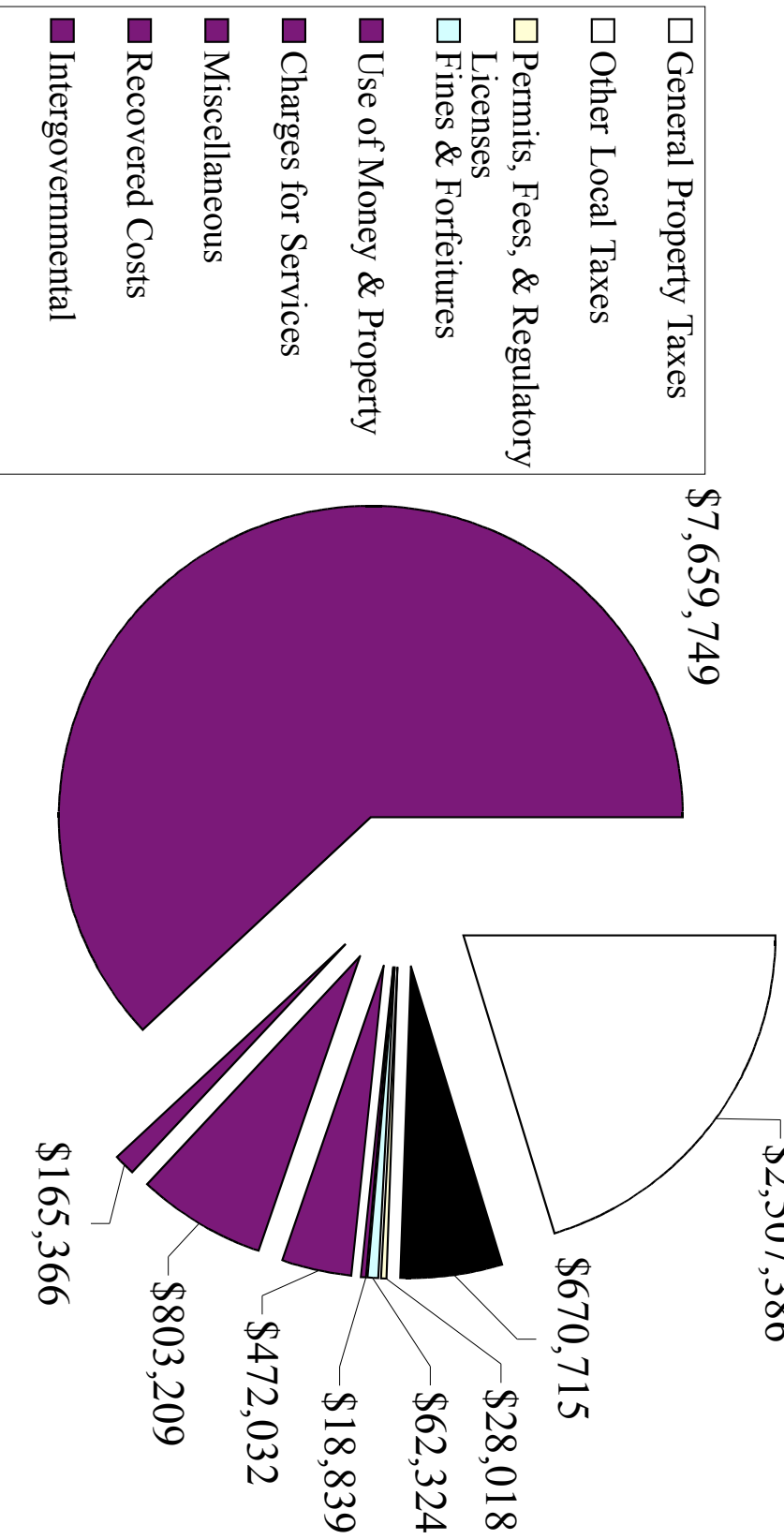


TABLE 6-B
General Governmental Revenues
Bland County
Fiscal Years Ending 1995 - 2004

	By Source ¹										
Fiscal Year	General Property Taxes	Other Local Taxes	Permits, Fees, & Regulatory Licenses	Fines & Forfeitures	Use of Money & Property	Charges for Services	Miscellaneous	Recovered Costs	Intergovernmental ²	Totals	
1994 - 1995	\$1,798,912	\$418,526	\$49,586	\$9,655	\$87,510	\$195,005	\$13,102	\$80,883	\$5,684,457	\$8,337,636	
1995 - 1996	\$1,963,496	\$426,371	\$24,432	\$4,803	\$103,349	\$141,627	\$20,309	\$37,524	\$5,778,478	\$8,500,389	
1996 - 1997	\$2,045,790	\$479,496	\$19,639	\$8,260	\$121,671	\$241,755	\$103,916	\$55,411	\$5,984,843	\$9,060,781	
1997 - 1998	\$2,057,449	\$511,145	\$20,717	\$17,669	\$118,541	\$341,835	\$34,966	\$55,490	\$6,024,723	\$9,182,535	
1998 - 1999	\$2,080,598	\$525,133	\$28,151	\$66,618	\$104,674	\$388,681	\$51,001	\$128,172	\$6,387,618	\$9,760,646	
1999 - 2000	\$2,030,577	\$550,020	\$24,191	\$70,740	\$134,261	\$330,499	\$95,788	\$206,828	\$6,460,697	\$9,903,601	
2000 - 2001	\$2,076,006	\$656,870	\$25,691	\$93,822	\$133,980	\$391,691	\$52,844	\$270,979	\$6,774,368	\$10,476,251	
2001 - 2002	\$2,030,621	\$646,359	\$52,156	\$74,527	\$62,453	\$410,508	\$33,215	\$226,891	\$7,343,739	\$10,880,469	
2002 - 2003	\$2,466,323	\$655,469	\$28,861	\$140,234	\$34,172	\$428,282	\$44,901	\$196,990	\$7,178,022	\$11,173,254	
2003 - 2004	\$2,507,386	\$670,715	\$28,018	\$62,324	\$18,839	\$472,032	\$803,209	\$165,366	\$7,659,749	\$12,387,638	

Source: Bland County, County Administrator's Office

1. Includes General, Special Revenue, and Debt Service funds of the Primary Governmental and its Discretely Presented Component Units.
2. Excludes contribution from Primary Governmental to Discretely Presented Component Unit.

Taxes

Taxes are a significant component of the county's locally generated revenue sources. Of these revenues, in fiscal year 2004, property taxes accounted for approximately \$2.5 million, or 20.2 percent, of the general governmental revenues. Property taxes are separated in five different categories, which are: real estate, personal property, machinery & tools, merchant's capital, and mobile homes.

The tax rates in these five categories for fiscal year 2004 were: real estate at \$0.65 per \$100 assessed value, tangible personal property at \$1.60 per \$100 assessed value, machinery & tools at \$0.73 per \$100 assessed fair market value, merchant's capital at \$0.73 per \$100 assessed value, and manufactured homes at \$0.65 per \$100 assessed value. Table 6-C details the county's property taxes during fiscal years 1995 to 2004.

TABLE 6-C
Property Tax Rates¹
Bland County

Fiscal Years Ending 1995 - 2006

Fiscal Year	Real Estate	Personal Property	Machinery & Tools	Merchant's Capital	Manufactured Homes
1994 - 1995	\$0.85	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.85
1995 - 1996	\$0.85	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.85
1996 - 1997	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
1997 - 1998	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
1998 - 1999	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
1999 - 2000	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
2000 - 2001	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
2001 - 2002	\$0.69	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.69
2002 - 2003	\$0.65	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.65
2003 - 2004	\$0.65	\$1.60	\$0.73	\$0.73	\$0.65
2004 - 2005	\$0.69	\$2.29	\$0.89	\$0.73	\$0.69
2005 - 2006	\$0.69	\$2.29	\$0.89	\$0.73	\$0.69

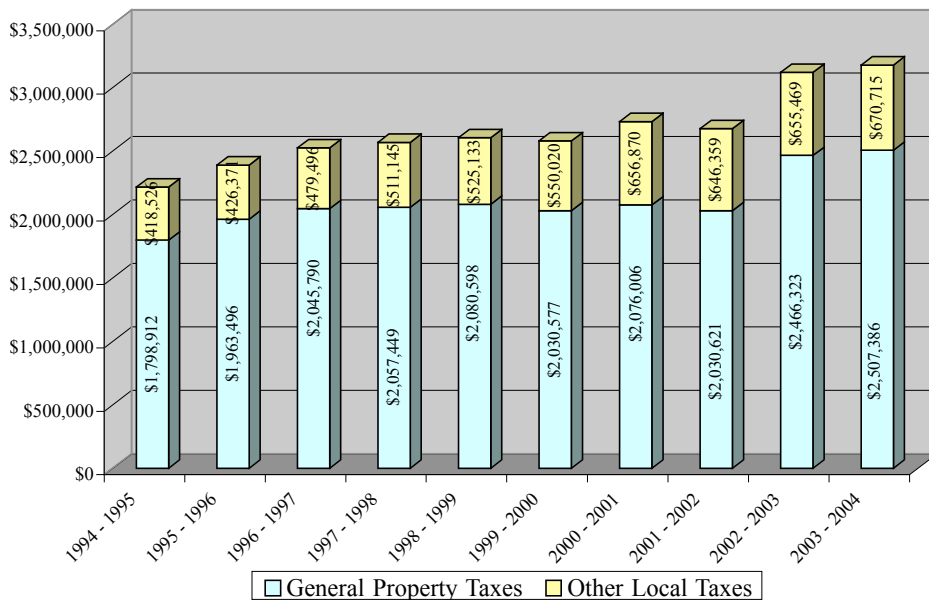
Source: Bland County, County Administrator's Office

1. Per \$100 of assessed value.

Another significant source of locally generated tax revenue is those taxes categorized as Other Local Taxes. Other Local Taxes include the following: the local sales and use tax, consumer’s utility tax, franchise license, motor vehicle licenses, bank stock tax, and the recordation tax.

In fiscal year 2004, Other Local Taxes accounted for approximately \$670,715, or 5.4 percent, of general governmental revenues. Local sales tax revenues are significant because these particular revenues provide a good barometer of local economic conditions. In this revenue category, a 60.3 percent increase in collections occurred during fiscal years 1995 through 2004. An extended expansion of tax revenues in this category is indicative of a local economy that is vibrant and thriving. During fiscal year 1995, Other Local Taxes were \$418,526; by fiscal year 2004, these were \$670,715. Chart 6-E details Bland County’s ten-year historical collection of General Property Taxes and Other Local Taxes from fiscal year 1995 to 2004.

CHART 6-E
Bland County General Property & Local Taxes
Fiscal Years 1995 to 2004



CHAPTER VII
Land Use and Developmental Issues

A. Current Land Use by Categories

The existing land use information for Bland County was collected and mapped in the winter of 2005 by the staff of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. The collected data has been placed in Table 7-A. This table gives a breakdown of land contained in Bland County by land use classification.

TABLE 7-A
**Existing Land-Use
Bland County
By Land-Use Classification
2005**

Classification	Acres	Percentage of Total
Residential	2,044	.85%
Commercial	84	.03%
Industrial	60	.02%
Public & Semi-Public	8,700	4%
Agriculture	44,084	18%
Conservation/Recreation	181,188	77%
TOTAL	236,160	100%

Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

Based on the information in Table 7-A, approximately 95 percent of the land in Bland County was used for agriculture and conservation/recreation in 2005. The remaining 5 percent was utilized for more intensive commercial, industrial, residential, and public/semi-public uses.

Conservation/Recreation lands are, because of their location and use, removed from consideration for more intensive uses, such as residences, commercial centers, and industry. 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.

One of the most striking features in the county is the number of manufactured homes. They are scattered in a relatively random fashion along almost every road in the county. In some instances, they are mixed in with homes in subdivisions; in other instances, they are sited directly adjacent to existing homes and tied into the same water and wastewater disposal systems. There are also several manufactured home parks in the county.

The dispersion of structures is not limited to manufactured homes. 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 21.

This type of uncontrolled development will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to serve with public sewerage. Septic systems can, and are, being utilized, but there is a danger that the water recharge areas for private wells will be contaminated by septic tank seepage into the ground water.

The impact of relatively random development upon agricultural land is being ignored for the most part. As a result, valuable agricultural land is being forced out of production and converted to other uses. Moreover, as development takes place along major roads, the goal of maintaining a safe and uncongested collector road system is being compromised by speculators wanting to minimize their development costs.

B. Current Land Use Controls

Subdivision Ordinance

Bland County adopted a subdivision ordinance approximately 25 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 has been adopted as a section of the zoning ordinance.

Zoning Ordinance

The County adopted a zoning ordinance in 1995 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.

C. 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 either to provide treatment in that watershed dig a trench deep enough to allow gravity flow, or to install a pumping station to pump sewerage back to the watershed where the treatment facilities are located. Either alternative can be costly. 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.

D. 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.

History is the record of human affairs, and, as such, influences, but does not govern, the future. Human needs, human concerns, and human desires are constantly changing. The fact that settlements have occurred in certain places in the past, does not, by itself, mean that future settlements must be restricted to the same areas.

Physical factors, however, are another story. The land is a relative constant. It is also a resource that is becoming increasingly fragile and increasingly vulnerable to the demands that human requirements impose upon it. Man can alter the landscape, at times almost beyond recognition. But he cannot do so with impunity. There must be a balance between the needs of human beings to develop the facilities and structures that are essential to the conduct of human affairs; at the same time, there must be a regard for the inherent limits of the land to carry certain types of development.

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.

CHAPTER VIII

Transportation

A. Highways and Road Systems

The main transportation infrastructure in Bland County is its road and highway system that includes all public roadways ranging from Interstate 77 to light-surfaced (gravel) secondary roads. The following information provides a historical profile of traffic volumes for all interstate, primary, and secondary roadway systems.

Interstate System

Interstate 77 traverses Bland County for approximately 21 miles and it provides a superb north/south passageway that can reach 50 percent of the USA's total population and many of its major industrial centers. In the County, I-77's average daily traffic during 2004 was 27,875. This data shows a 5% increase in traffic volume since 1996. I-77 accounts for only 6.5% of all linear road miles in Bland County but records show that it makes up nearly 82% of all daily vehicle miles traveled. This makes I-77 by far the most used road system in Bland County

Interstate 81 provides an equally superlative northeast/southwest passageway located twelve miles to the south in Wythe County to complement the County's north/south access. I-81 extends from just east of Knoxville, Tennessee to provide multiple east/west and north/south interstate highway connections.

On I-77, multiple axle freight vehicles have been determined to be major contributors to the increase for average daily traffic count totals. Recent data obtained from the Department of Transportation shows that on any given day 20% of all vehicles are multiple axle freight carriers.

Primary System

Bland County has 79.80 miles of primary roadways. Traffic volumes on the three primary roads, VA Routes 42, 61, 98, 598 and U.S. Highway 52, ranges from heavily traveled to

very light. There has been no significant change in linear road miles or traffic volume for VA Route 42, or U.S. Highway 52 since 1996. There has only been a slight decrease in traffic volume for VA Route 61. These relatively small changes in linear miles and traffic volume show that Bland County's primary roads have stabilized.

Secondary Roads

Bland County has a total of 224.36 linear miles of secondary roads. This number is up 16.62 miles since 1996. An increase in the number of linear road miles can mean that new roads have been built or that more roads have been accepted into V-DOT's maintenance program. Secondary road surfaces range from paved to unpaved and the total mileage of these roads make up 69% of all linear road miles in the County. Secondary roads are the least traveled of the three road classifications making up only 9% of daily vehicle miles traveled in Bland County. Information concerning specific secondary road segments can be found on V-DOT's web site.

B. Air Transportation

Commercial Service

Air passenger service for Bland County is provided by Roanoke Regional Airport, 90 miles northeast, Smith-Reynolds Airport in Winston Salem, North Carolina, 80 miles southeast, and Tri-Cities Regional Airport in Blountville, Tennessee, 99 miles to the southwest. In combination these airports offer direct connections to six major hubs: Nashville, Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. Together, in turn these hubs offer direct flights to 157 national and 17 international destinations.

General Aviation

General air services are provided at Mountain Empire Airport approximately 27 miles southwest of Bland, New River Valley Airport, 30 miles east of Bland, Mercer County Airport in

Bluefield West Virginia, 22 miles northwest of Bland, and Tazewell County Airport in Richlands, 60 miles west of Bland. Airfreight and charter services are available at both airports.

C. Public Transit

This Area Agency on Aging, District Three Governmental Cooperative, provides rural transportation services to the elderly and disabled persons. The Agency uses one 13-passenger bus and one 15-passenger van to provide transit services. Three routes are traversed, two days a week, to provide congregate meals, access to shopping centers, and to home deliver meals.

D. Pedestrian Trails

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a public footpath across 2,144 miles of the Appalachian Mountain ridge lines. More than 500 miles of the Appalachian Trail lies in Virginia. In Bland County the Appalachian Trail crosses through the Jefferson National Forest from west to east for approximately 36 miles. This is a section of Trail well known for its mature timber and wilderness with high summits. Seasonal floral displays in June and July of rhododendron and azalea are outstanding.

CHAPTER IX Goals

In the previous chapters the Bland County Planning Commission inventoried the economic, physical, and social attributes of Bland County. In going through this process the Commission was enabled to identify some characteristics, which give the County potential for development. The Commission was also able to identify some barriers, which hinder the County from being able to achieve its potential. The commission was also able to bring some issues to light that will contribute to better public decision making in the future.

This chapter discusses goals developed by the Commission to guide the future development of the County. The general goals are long-range, broadly defined policy statements, which list accomplishments the County desires to achieve in the future. The specific goals are more narrow statements that suggest means through which long-range goals can be achieved. The goal statements in this chapter and the recommendations, which follow in Chapter X, constitute a framework for guiding the decisions that must be made concerning the County's future growth and development.

The Planning Commission reviewed the information adopted in the April 6, 1999 update of the Comprehensive Plan and has revised this section based on more current needs and issues.

A. Vision 2025 Mount Rogers Region

From January through April of 2002, a series of 9 visioning sessions were held throughout the Mount Rogers Planning District. The ideas offered during the process were either ranked by the participants or assigned a numerical value of 0.5 and collapsed to mimic a voting process. The result of that has provided a "sense" of the ideas that carry the most weight for the region.

This process has relevance for Bland County in determining its own future. For example, the County and only the County can determine what it needs to do to be a partner in the regional effort to improve education, government, transportation, tourism, infrastructure, economy, etc.

Some of the priorities elicited for Vision 2025 are as follows:

- Educational opportunities for all ages, with emphasis on higher education and improved educational facilities.
- A region wide willingness to welcome change in order to advance to the future.
- Improved healthcare, human development, and sense of community and family.
- Protecting the region's natural resources, rural character, environmental cleanliness, and historic resources.
- More and better housing – affordable housing.
- Modernized downtowns as shopping areas and controlled physical development.
- Development of the region as a nationwide destination point for outdoor recreation.
- Development of a wider range of cultural attractions as well as more facilities for sporting competitions and possibly development of a major regional theme park.
- Creation of a diversified regional economy with more high-tech industry, along with alternate enterprises, such as eco-tourism.
- More workforce training in all categories.
- More small business development.
- Improved efforts and incentives to attract new industry to the region.
- Consolidated government to avoid duplication.

- Improved transportation systems on the ground and in the air.
- Planned growth and land-use control.
- More infrastructure development, especially water and sewer service.

B. General Goals

This plan seeks to achieve the following broad goals:

- 1) To provide a safe and adequate water supply and wastewater treatment system(s) to county residents of the identified growth centers.
- 2) To provide adequate police, fire, and rescue services to all its citizens.
- 3) To provide public education with regard to disaster preparation and to ensure the timely updating of the county's emergency plans.
- 4) To promote the wise use of all its natural resources and environmentally safe industry.
- 5) To strengthen its economic base through a more diversified economy.
- 6) Maintain a balance between commercial and industrial development, blending the scenic beauty of the County with development.
- 7) To promote and recruit more technology driven business and industry
- 8) To preserve unique customs, traditions, and sites of historic, archeological, or architectural significance.
- 9) To provide housing opportunities for all its citizens.
- 10) To provide the desired level of community services, including but not limited to, recreation, library, senior citizens, and medical services.

- 11) To promote tourism and scenic and natural beauty of the county.
- 12) To provide for broadband telecommunications services throughout the county.
- 13) To foster entrepreneurship opportunities for citizens of Bland.
- 14) To further promote a positive perception of the county and its future.

C. Specific Goals

Goals of the Bland County Comprehensive Plan are presented here by specific category. These goals are designed to be attainable in both the near term and the future. Attainment of these goals will lead toward fulfillment of previously stated general goals. It is important to point out that the development categories and their respective goals listed below are not necessarily presented in order of importance.

Agricultural And Natural Resources Goals

Historically, agriculture has been the predominant force behind the development and settlement patterns of the County. Agriculture still plays a key role economically and socially in the County, even though its place is of lesser economic importance than in the past. In addition, the importance of the natural resources of the County cannot be overstated. The area is rich in tangible natural resources such as soil, water, timber, and wildlife, as well as natural scenic beauty.

It is important, therefore, to preserve and maintain agriculture's role in the overall economy and life of the County and to preserve natural resources for the future residents of the communities in the County. Bland County's goals for agriculture and natural resources are:

- 1) To protect highly productive agricultural lands from conflicting land uses;
- 2) To encourage the agricultural industry by protecting it from encroachment by residential, commercial, and recreational developments;

- 3) To encourage the location of residential, commercial, and industrial uses onto marginal agricultural areas;
- 4) To protect surface and ground water supplies for the use of present and future populations of the County through the promotion of good land use development practices;
- 5) To encourage development away from stream valleys that flood; and
- 6) To encourage the implementation of good erosion and sedimentation control practices.
- 7) To create opportunities for local venues to market and sell agricultural goods. (i.e. farmers' market)
- 8) To identify and provide agricultural services to eradicate harmful species of plants and animals (i.e. multiflora rose, coyote, etc.).

Commercial Goals

Traditionally, commercial activity within the county has been limited to scattered small general merchandise stores located within farming communities, while high-density commercial development has occurred only in the community of Bland. Evidence suggests a change in this historic pattern, however, as the commercial sector expands to meet the increasing demands of the traveling public. Commercial activity is an important element within the economy of Bland County and is likely to become more so. With the completion of Interstate 77 through the County, income from travelers has played an expanding role in the commercial sector. Bland County's goals for commercial development are:

- 1) To encourage the development of I-77 interchanges as region serving commercial centers.

- 2) To encourage the development of local-serving commercial centers in the communities of Bland, Bastian, and Rocky Gap.
- 3) To encourage the development of the federally owned land in the county as a destination recreation center.
- 4) To encourage commercial developments that will enhance rather than detract from the natural beauty of the county.
- 5) To establish the I-77 interchanges as a premier stop for interstate travelers.
- 6) To promote niche commercial developments within respective communities.
- 7) To work with private developers to explore commercial opportunities.

Industrial Goals

Through the growth of manufacturing employment, industrial activity has become a more relevant economic factor in the County's economy. It is important to recognize the changes that have occurred in the County's employment. In order to enhance the continued economic growth of the County and provide a stable and broad employment base to residents, the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes continued development of the industrial sector. Bland County's goals for industrial development are:

- 1) To work with the EDA to be certain that all avenues are being taken in the pursuit of industrial clients for County owned or optioned land.
- 2) To work with the EDA to always have land in ownership or under option for purchase for commercial and/or industrial development.
- 3) To always remember the importance of I-77 in the purchase of land for future development.

- 4) To continue to work with adjoining counties to develop and participate in Regional Industrial Facility Authorities.
- 5) To continue to develop economic profiles for access to websites that host such information.
- 6) To work with the private sector to explore development opportunities.
- 7) To utilize any and all available privately owned property and facilities to attract and secure industrial prospects.
- 8) To continue a strong existing industry program.
- 9) To continue to evolve our approach to industrial recruitment.

Residential Goals

Residential development is the single most intensive use of developed land in rural areas. As the county expands, the demand for land for residential development far surpasses the demand for land for other uses. Bland County has a relatively low projected rate of growth, but the greatest demand on the land will come from the residential sector. Bland County's goals for residential development are:

- 1) To develop standards for Manufactured Home Parks that will meet state requirements and county needs.
- 2) To recommend residential development of the county consistent with environmental limitations of the particular sites.
- 3) To require Subdivisions meet the minimum state requirements for streets.
- 4) To continue the efforts to give everyone in the county an opportunity for a decent, safe, and sanitary structure in which to live.

- 5) To encourage the implementation of State Programs to minimize danger from flood, fire, and other natural disasters.

Public Facilities Goals

Activities under the category of public facilities and services include those provided by both the public and private sectors. Specifically they may include such functions as public water supply and distribution systems, sewerage systems, schools, churches, parks, health and social services, fire protection, and rescue services. The planning for and provisions of the activities should be directed toward providing the maximum benefits for present and future residents of the County at the safest and most convenient locations, and in the most efficient and economical way. Although discussed separately the relationships between them are strong and definite.

Bland County's goals for community facilities and services are:

- 1) To continue to apply for federal and state funds to assist in providing for planning and the construction of water and sewer facilities.
- 2) To continue to support the community centers.
- 3) To continue to implement the recommendations in the 604b countywide water and sewer study.
- 4) To continue to support broadband deployment and "Last Mile" connectivity.
- 5) To continue to seek funding for planning, implementation, and the construction of a fiber optic backbone for business and industry and wireless for the remainder of the county.
- 6) To encourage the School Board to include the Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and others in planning for the long-range Education Facility needs of the County.
- 7) To continue to upgrade fire and rescue facilities and training.
- 8) To implement a feasible resource recovery program when such can be identified.

- 9) To identify places in the county that can be served by alternative methods of sewage treatment and to seek funding for their construction.
- 10) To look at logical means of consolidating public facilities to ensure long term sustainability of the services they provide.

Transportation Goals

Transportation planning is vital to any community and should be an integral part of countywide comprehensive planning. Transportation systems should seek to provide for the efficient movement of people and goods within and between the County and other areas. Planning of this type should be accomplished also with a view towards safe and convenient access to and from specific sites as well as to and from major collector streets and arterial roadways. Thus far the plan has set forth goals under previously mentioned development categories concerned with this aspect of Transportation planning. More specifically, Bland County's goals for transportation are as follows:

- 1) To develop a priority list for secondary highway improvements. This should be a joint effort with the Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and VDOT staff first developing criteria and then applying the criteria to all the secondary roads.
- 2) To become part of a Regional Bikeway Plan that will include access to Burkes Garden from Bland County
- 3) To regulate building setback lines in areas of projected high-density growth so as to provide for future road widening if and when needed.
- 4) To preserve highly productive agriculture areas within the County by encouraging new highways to be routed where possible along existing right-of-ways.
- 5) To require that streets be built to minimum state standards in all subdivisions.

- 6) To utilize the most cost effective approach to road improvements. (i.e. rural rustic roads concept and revenue sharing)

Historic Preservation Goals

While the preservation of historic sites and structures is not a vital necessity in the development of a community, it is nevertheless important. All too often sites and/or structures of historic value are ignored and destroyed in programs of community development as a result such locations are lost to future generations. In the development of this plan, the preservation of historically and archaeologically important sites is deemed as important and the following goals are recommended:

- 1) To encourage the preservation of known sites and/or locations of important historic or archaeological value for the benefit of present and future residents of and visitors to the county.
- 2) To contract with the state for a study of the County to identify such sites in order that they may be preserved.
- 3) To protect, wherever possible, historical landmarks against encroachment from incompatible land uses.
- 4) To encourage the active use of historically important sites so that they may become or remain an integral function of County life.

CHAPTER X

Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Introduction

The goals and objectives presented in the previous chapter and the analysis of the data contained in this document, as well as the conclusions from other studies conducted in the county, form the pantry from which the strategies and recommendations are drawn that make the Comprehensive Plan for Bland County.

The Comprehensive Plan for Bland County is not an instrument designed to impose the will of the state or other governmental body upon the citizens of Bland County. The Comprehensive Plan is the product of the efforts of the Bland County Planning Commission. This is a group of citizens that care about their home county and share a deep sense of purpose in helping to guide its development. They have approached the task of formulating a Comprehensive Plan with the attitude that the plan is not a restrictive document, but is a guide for the county's development and the provision of community services while taking into account market trends and physical limitations. The plan will serve as a guide to the county's governmental leaders in making decisions affecting the development of the county and to citizens in making decisions affecting their own lives. It will also serve as a guide to private sector individuals, institutions, and corporations that are interested in making an investment in Bland County.

B. Findings of the Plan

Bland County, as with most of the rural counties in southwestern Virginia, has been in a state of economic transition for thirty years or more. First the changes in employment in agriculture, then in coal mining, and most recently textiles in particular and manufacturing in general. The county has to its credit begun the rebuilding process with investments in

infrastructure, an emphasis on tourism, and joining in the formation of regional partnerships to provide essential public services in a cost effective manner.

The county has approximately 50 percent of its land in public ownership, which represents a large natural resource for economic benefit. The economic stimulus of Interstate 77 (I-77) is just beginning to be felt and represents opportunity for many years into the future. The county has many things in its favor as it moves into the planning period of this Comprehensive Plan.

C. Population Conclusions

An important characteristic for Bland County, which is not found in most of the counties in southwestern Virginia, is that Bland County has been slowly growing since 1970. The growth hasn't been from natural increase, but a combination of natural increase and in-migration. This growth is expected to continue for the time period covered by this plan and reach 7,500 by the year 2030.

Population growth in the county, to some extent, is in response to the trend of people looking for a rural setting in which to retire or to raise a family. To a larger extent, it is in response to growth taking place along I-77 and the county's ability to add jobs in the service industry. The continuation of that growth is dependant upon the county implementing the recommendations contained in this plan, replacing the jobs lost in manufacturing with above minimum wage jobs and continuing a pro-growth attitude in decision-making.

D. Land Use Decisions

Where the people have located in Bland County over the past ten years has been, to a large extent, directly related to implementation of the recommendations contained in the previous plan. That will also be the primary factor, which will determine location decisions for the next

twenty-five years. The Interstate 77 corridor has been the center of attention for public investment over the past several years and this plan recommends that trend continue. The major change in this plan for Bland County is that of actively bringing into focus the tourism economy and the related land-use decisions.

E. Agriculture Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1) 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.
- 2) The county should look at the feasibility of establishing a local farmers' market.
- 3) The county should encourage local producers to participate in farmers' markets in neighboring communities.
- 4) The county should encourage the Appalachian Sustainable Development organization to promote its programs in Bland County.
- 5) The county should look at local government subsidy programs that could be offered as assistance to the agricultural community.

F. Commercial Conclusions and Recommendations

The commercial development that has taken place in Bland County over the past twenty years has been oriented primarily towards the travel industry. The following are recommended to improve commercial development to the year 2030:

- 1) The county should construct sewerage facilities to serve the Bland Community including the commercial area at I-77.
- 2) The county should extend waterlines across I-77, as well as into the Bland Community.

- 3) The county should construct replacement waterlines in the Bland Community where needed, including water meters.
- 4) The county should work with the U.S. Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conference to construct a spur off the Appalachian Trail into the Bland Community.
- 5) The county should look at creative investments to bolster the patronization of existing commercial businesses and the attraction of new commercial developments. (i.e. directional signage, street lighting, free Wi-Fi internet access)

G. Tourism Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1) The county should work with interested parties to develop a plan for and acquire the support facilities in the Bland Community for the hikers that will come to Bland.
- 2) The county should work with the Cumberland Plateau PDC and the Mount Rogers PDC to develop a Bikeway Plan that will tie the county into Hungry Mother State Park and Burkes Garden.
- 3) The county should continue with plans to develop the Round Mountain Multi-Use Trail Network and the Eastern Wilderness Interpretive Center/Bland County Visitor's Center.
- 4) The county should look at ways to better market its assets both locally and regionally.
- 5) The county should devise a plan to tie together all tourism assets and attractions.

H. Industrial Conclusions and Recommendations

The county has done a good job in diversifying its economic base and, as a result, it has not suffered drastically as the textile jobs have left the area. The partnerships that have been formed with neighbors in both Wythe County and Pulaski County have insured that facilities are available for Bland County citizens to find employment when land was not available in the county. The following are recommended for the county to continue its industrial development:

- 1) The county should continue its membership in the Industrial Facilities Authorities in Wythe County and Pulaski County.
- 2) The county should seek opportunities to expand the existing Industrial Parks in Bland County.
- 3) The county should develop a plan for the installation of fiber-optic facilities to the existing business and industry in the county.
- 4) The county should continue to construct water and sewerage facilities to existing business and industry in the county.
- 5) The county should continue to participate in the regional marketing efforts of the Virginia aCorridor.
- 6) The county should continue to work with existing industry to ensure that a true partnership exists and that industry knows a friend is present in the Courthouse.
- 7) The county should continue to pursue the resources necessary to complete the development of the new Bland County Commerce Park.
- 8) The EDA should look at better ways to market their products and assets.

I. Residential Conclusions and Recommendations

The provision of decent, safe, and sanitary housing for its citizens is in the forefront of actions for any government and Bland County has not shirked this responsibility. However, to accomplish this goal is an ongoing task, because the need seems to never go away. The following are recommended for the county to continue to meet this responsibility:

- 1) The county should seek funds to implement a housing rehabilitation program in those neighborhoods that have been identified as having a disproportionate number of substandard houses (more than 50 percent).
- 2) The county should seek funds to implement a housing rehabilitation program for scattered sites where a disproportionate number of substandard houses exist over a wide area that can not be considered a community or neighborhood.
- 3) The county should seek funding for a housing relocation feasibility study for the houses in the floodplain in the Rocky Gap Community that have flooded more than once in the last 20 years.
- 4) The county should encourage the construction of housing for the elderly and for those with a disabling condition.
- 5) The county should continue to support the program of housing rehab for those who live in houses without adequate plumbing facilities.
- 6) The county should encourage and support the private development of residential housing for all income groups.

J. Transportation Conclusions and Recommendations

The following are recommended to implement the goals as stated in this plan:

- 1) The county should identify those secondary roads with particular scenic qualities and, when next improved, a bike lane should be constructed on each side (paved). For consideration the road to Burkes Garden from Ceres, the road (615) from Route 42 to Bastian, and U.S. Route 52 from Bland to the Stony Fork Recreation Area in Wythe County are recommended.
- 2) The county should implement a policy of committing all the secondary road money required to complete the paving and other improvements for the number one priority road until it is completed.
- 3) The county should support the construction of a walking lane on either side of Route 52 from Bland north to the intersection with the Appalachian Trail.
- 4) The county should look at resourceful programs for completing necessary road improvement projects (i.e. rural rustic roads concept and revenue sharing).

K. Public Facilities Conclusions and Recommendations

The primary reason for a government to exist is to provide public services and facilities. In some cases, the government simply has to encourage a secondary group to provide the service or facility. In other cases, the government has the responsibility to provide the service or see that the service is provided in a responsible manner. The following are recommendations that will fit either category:

- 1) The county should continue to maintain its educational facilities in a decent, safe, and sanitary manner.
- 2) The county should continue to work with adjoining counties for the provision of vocational training programs.

- 3) The county should provide excellent guidance and specialized programs for all students, including financial support for the Governors School.
- 4) The county should participate in the interactive two-way video tele-conferencing program (Teletechnet) provided thru Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network.
- 5) The county should continue to make the recreation facilities at the schools available for county recreation programs.
- 6) The county should continue to look at partnerships with the public school system and private citizens with respect to recreational opportunities.
- 7) The county should look to support community centers and clinics through grant applications.
- 8) The county should push the U.S. Forest Service to work with the county to prepare and implement a plan for the active use of some of the forest service holdings (begin the discussion with Congressmen and Senators).
- 9) The county should continue to actively seek funds through Homeland Security and other applicable avenues to adequately respond to emergencies at the tunnels.
- 10) The county should continue to encourage the sheriff to assist the State Police in the provision of enforcement of traffic laws on I-77.
- 11) The county should utilize fees earned from enforcement activities to purchase equipment and training to make transportation in Bland County safe.
- 12) The county should encourage the fundamentals of local law enforcement and the routine patrolling of the entire county to ensure a safe and secure community.

- 13) The county should continue to work with the Regional Solid Waste Authority to provide a means of solid waste disposal in a cost effective manner.
- 14) The county should establish a recycling program for all recyclable products in order to meet the 15 percent state requirement.
- 15) The county needs to follow through with water and sewer improvements by completing the improvements in the Bland Community to replace existing waterlines that are worn out (including meters).
- 16) The county needs to extend waterlines across I-77 consistent with the Route 52 West water plan.
- 17) The county needs to prepare a preliminary engineering report for the feasible provision of sewer services in the Bland Community.
- 18) The county needs to continue to study the feasibility of an alternate source of water by looking at a variety of options, including but not limited to: purchasing water from the New River Water Authority, being a member of an authority with Tazewell and Bluefield, or identifying an alternative local source.
- 19) The county has a comprehensive countywide water and sewer study which was completed in 1998. The study (called a 604b study) recommended a twenty-year build out for water facilities and a ten-year build out for sewer. Some progress has been made on both; however, much is left to be done. The Bland sewer project should be number two on the priority list right after the Route 52 West water project.
- 20) The county needs to prepare a five-year Capital Improvement Program, go through the process of adoption, and begin to implement the recommendations (many of which are contained in this Comprehensive Plan).

- 21) The county should initiate the process of establishing and maintaining, in-house, a Geographic Information System (GIS) for service of all county departments and agencies, the base mapping for the system is already in place (911 maps and digitized tax maps).
- 22) The county should contract with the State Division of Historical and Archaeological analysis to catalog everything of significance in the county for future use by owners of the property.
- 23) The county should expand the existing broadband mesh network to provide high-speed telecommunications service to population-rich segments of the county.
- 24) The county should revise its Board structure by providing for an elected at-large seat, this would represent a step forward towards making everyone in the county feel that they are equally represented, as well as to provide an odd number (five) for a definitive conclusion to voting.
- 25) The county should recognize the importance of volunteers by establishing an annual volunteer of the year award.
- 26) The county should encourage and support the use of volunteers for the provision of essential services.