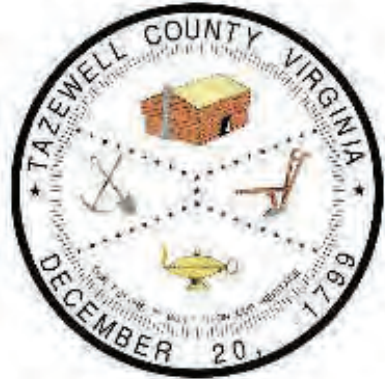


Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan



Adopted October 3, 2017

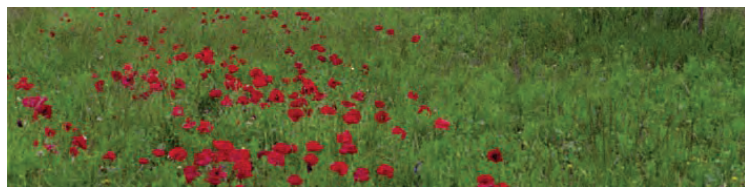


Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
A. The Purpose of the Plan.....	2
B. Developing and Organizing the Plan.....	3
C. Legal Basis for the Plan.....	3
1. Relationship to Other Planning Efforts.....	3
2. Citizen Involvement.....	4
D. Adoption Process for the Plan.....	5
E. Planning for the Future.....	5
1. Organization of this Plan.....	5
II. Location and Geography.....	7
A. Regional Perspective.....	7
B. Topography and Geography.....	7
III. Background and Demographics.....	11
A. Historic Development Patterns.....	11
B. Demographics and Background.....	12
C. Housing Patterns and Structures.....	18
1. Affordable Housing.....	20
2. Subsidized and Assisted Housing Programs.....	21
3. Assisted Living and Nursing Homes.....	22
IV. Transportation.....	26
A. Transportation Modes and Networks.....	26
B. New Transportation Regulations.....	35
V. Community Facilities and Governance.....	40
A. Community and Human Services.....	40
B. Healthcare Facilities and Services.....	41
C. Veterinary Services.....	43
D. Public Safety Services and Facilities.....	44
1. Fire and Rescue.....	44
2. Tazewell County Sheriff's Department.....	44
3. 911 Emergency Response Center.....	45
4. Pocahontas State Correctional Center.....	46

E. Recreational Services and Facilities	47
VI. Infrastructure and Land Use.....	50
A. Information Technology Infrastructure	50
B. Water and Sewer.....	50
C. Solid Waste Management.....	51
D. Telecommunications	51
D. Land Use.....	54
1. Land Use Tools	54
2. Environment and Land Use.....	55
3. Urban Forest (Green Infrastructure)	56
VII. Education and Training	59
A. Public Education.....	59
B. Higher Education	64
C. Continuing Education	65
VII. Economy and Culture.....	70
A. Development and Structures	70
B. Current Industry and Development	71
1. Mining and Related Industries	76
2. Healthcare and Service Industries.....	77
3. Agriculture and Agribusiness.....	77
C. Emerging Technology and Development	81
D. Tourism	85
IX. Future Land Use Designations	91
A. Agricultural	91
B. Forestal	91
C. Rural Residential	91
D. Residential.....	91
F. Industrial	91
G. Mixed Use	91
H. Scenic / Heritage Area.....	92

Table of Contents - Figures

Figure 2.1	Tazewell County Woodland Uses.....	7
Figure 2.2	Tazewell County Digital Elevation Model.....	8
Figure 2.3	Watersheds and Fault Lines of Tazewell County.....	10
Figure 3.1	Population Change from 1970-2012.....	13
Figure 3.2	Tazewell County Population Density by District in 2010.....	14
Figure 3.3	Age Distribution in Tazewell County.....	15
Figure 3.4	Median Family Income: County, State and National Comparison.....	16
Figure 3.5	Median Household Income: County, State and National Comparison.....	17
Figure 3.6	Health Insurance Coverage, 2010.....	17
Figure 3.7	1990-2011 Owner and Renter Occupation of Housing: Tazewell County, Virginia and the US Statistics.....	19
Figure 3.8	Subsidized Housing Properties in Tazewell County.....	21
Figure 3.9	Assisted Living Facilities and Nursing Homes in Tazewell County.....	23
Figure 4.1	Primary and Secondary Road Map of Tazewell County.....	27
Figure 4.2	2010 Commuting Patterns in Cumberland Plateau PDC.....	28
Figure 4.3	Map of Commuting Patterns in Cumberland Plateau PDC.....	29
Figure 4.4	1990-2010 Method of Transportation to Work: Tazewell County, Virginia and the US Statistics.....	31
Figure 7.1	Tazewell County Public School Enrollment 2013-2014.....	60
Figure 7.2	Tazewell County Vocational School Enrollment 2013-2014.....	61
Figure 7.3	Tazewell County High School SOL Scores 2011-2013.....	62
Figure 7.4	2010-2012 Graduation Rates for All Students: Cumberland Plateau Planning District.....	63
Figure 7.5	Tazewell County College Enrollment - Fall 2010.....	64
Figure 7.6	Education Attainment Comparison for Tazewell County.....	66

Figure 8.1	50 Largest Employers in Tazewell County, 2014.....	72-74
Figure 8.2	Annual Average Weekly Wage : Tazewell Count, CPPDC, and Virginia.....	75
Figure 8.3	Coal Production and Number of Mines, 2012/2013 (Thousand Short Tons).....	76
Figure 8.4	Agriculture in Tazewell County.....	78
Figure 8.5	Agriculture Types and Rank in Tazewell County.....	79
Figure 8.6	Wood Product and Type by Cubic Feet: Tazewell County.....	80
Figure 8.7	Site Plan Map of Bluestone.....	82
Figure 8.8	Ridgeline Ordinance Map	87
Figure 8.9	Tourism Economic Impacts.....	88
Figure 9.1	Future Land Use Map.....	93

I. Introduction

Located in southwestern Virginia, Tazewell County sits in a region known for agricultural, historical, resource, and cultural significance. With a total area of over 500 square miles, Tazewell County has many assets and resources that require attention and regular evaluation, promotion and even regulation to manage appropriately for the wellbeing and support of the citizens and industries of the county. Additionally, many natural, cultural, educational and economic challenges faced by citizens and organizations within the county demand the attention of local, regional, state and national governmental bodies and agencies. For appropriate development to occur within Tazewell County, these governmental entities must evaluate the needs and assets of Tazewell County and develop appropriate planning, implementation policies and tools to guide the growth and development of the county to the greatest benefit of all citizens while protecting the core values, resources, and historic context of this community.

The area, now called Tazewell County, was first occupied by an indigenous people known as Woodland Indians. Little is known of these early inhabitants, but from the artifacts found in cornfields, caves, and burial grounds that are scattered across the county, it is clear that they were an organized society of people and groups. One unique artifact in the county is the pictograph display at Paint Lick Mountain. The meaning of these paintings is not empirically known, but historic researchers to the site believe they are representative of many tribes and relate to the rituals around the summer solstice. The Woodland Indians were gone long before pioneers and European settlers arrived. The Cherokee and Shawnee Indians were using the lands as hunting grounds at that time, but had no permanent settlements in the area.

The first permanent European settler was most likely Thomas Witten who built a cabin on the Big Crab Orchard Tract in 1770. This tract's previous owners include Patrick Henry. Other settlers soon arrived by way of the Wilderness Trail, most of these early pioneers being of Scotch-Irish descent.

Tazewell County was formed in 1799 and was named for Senator Henry Tazewell of Norfolk County. Senator Tazewell opposed the formation of the county and only consented to support this westward expansion of Virginia when told the county would bear his name. The original boundaries of the county consisted of an area east of present day Giles County to the Kentucky border. The current land area of the Tazewell County is approximately 520 square miles with dramatically changing elevations from 1900 to 4700 feet above sea level. Tazewell County is split along the eastern continental divide and is thus home to many headwaters and streams. To the east, the streams flow into the New River; to the north into the Big Sandy; to the west into the Clinch River; and to the south into the Holston River.

This area of Virginia is also home to growing technologies and the challenges of competing development. As with many rural communities across the country, Tazewell County is feeling the development pressures driven by suburban housing sprawl and the infrastructure and services expected and desired by the populations living there. Agricultural uses, as well as commercial, and industrial developments vie for the same areas of arable land found in the valleys and small acreages of low-

slope sections of the county. Tazewell County is constantly changing and developing, just as it has throughout its history, a fact that has contributed directly to its rich and diverse community. By planning for and guiding that change toward a community-developed vision of the future, Tazewell County can maintain its most significant historic and natural treasures while still embracing the development that will employ its people and strengthen its economic base for the future. From past to present, Tazewell County has much to admire as well as a responsibility to protect valuable natural and cultural resources and promote growth and development in areas most desired by its residents.

A. The Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide a basis for assisting the County in promoting an optimal development pattern over the next 20 years, given existing constraints and opportunities. Recommendations are aimed at preventing haphazard and incompatible land use development through the implementation of locally-supported public policy. Additionally, the plan can help assist the county in developing strategies for better communication with citizens, businesses, and organizations functioning with the locality and with regional entities that affect county development. The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a framework for the long-range allocation of resources to meet identified needs and set the vision for land use in the county. The plan is general in nature and considers the physical, social, and economic factors that interact in the county and is the basis by which governing and recommending bodies assess development and preservation opportunities in their community.

This document is also a statement of goals and objectives designed to stimulate public interest and responsibility. A locality's plan must reflect the foresight of its leaders and the will of the citizens. It can enhance the citizens' knowledge of the developmental plans and commitment to the overall goals of the county. And, as such, the success or failure of Tazewell County's Comprehensive Plan depends primarily upon the commitment of county leaders and citizens. Periodic review and updating, the comprehensive plan may serve as the guiding vision for the community in areas of land use, population density guidelines, infrastructure enhancements, community service centers, and community involvement models.



The authority under which this plan has been prepared is contained in Chapter 15.2-2200-15.2-2224 of the Code of Virginia. It should be noted that this plan is not a law or ordinance. Rather, a recommendation by the Tazewell County Planning Commission and adoption by the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors establishes this plan as the official guide for development of the county in the areas of economic development, housing, quality of life, and land use. The implementation of this plan is accomplished by other means, such as the Subdivision Ordinance, County regulations and laws, and the Capital Improvements Program.

B. Developing and Organizing the Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is the most basic tool available to a local government that provides a means by which a community can assess these forces of change and thereby identify future needs and allocate its resources accordingly. The plan, as its name implies, is comprehensive in nature and intended to represent the long-range goals and visions for future growth and development throughout the area. The purpose of this document is to provide a set of guidelines for the future growth and development of Tazewell County.

The Comprehensive Plan consists of an inventory and analysis of past trends and development, as well as an analysis of existing conditions, and a statement of goals and objectives for the future. It should be noted that this document focuses on the unincorporated areas of the county and excludes the towns of Bluefield, Cedar Bluff, Pocahontas, Richlands, and Tazewell, which have their own comprehensive plans.

C. Legal Basis for the Plan

Comprehensive Plans have been mandatory in Virginia for all jurisdictions since 1980. The Code of Virginia contains a broad enabling legislation for counties, cities, and towns. Virginia legislation requires local planning commissions to “prepare and recommend a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the territory under its jurisdictions” (Section 15.2-2223).

The basic purpose of the plan is established in the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223, states: “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.”

The State Code of Virginia mandates that the planning commission review the Comprehensive Plan every five years to determine if any amendments are needed (Section 15.2-2230). Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the governing body, it has the following legal status: “Whenever a local planning commission recommends a local Comprehensive Plan or part thereof for the locality and such plan has been approved by the governing body, it shall control the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature shown on the plan” (Section 15.2-2232).

1. Relationship to Other Planning Efforts

A variety of documents relate directly to the planning goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The Tazewell County Comprehensive Plan incorporates several documents that currently guide the development of the county in areas such as transportation, water and sewer service, and economic develop. The policies set forth in these documents are an integral component of the revised Comprehensive Plan and thereby reinforce the goals and objectives presented herein. The following list represents documents and planning efforts that have substantial impact on the development of this plan:

- Tazewell County’s Tourism Strategic Plan
- Tazewell County’s Strategic Economic Development Plan
- Tazewell County Watershed Management and Water and Sewer Plan
- Tazewell County Public Schools’ Report Card
- Tazewell County Directory of Community Resources
- VDOT Access Management Regulations
- VDOT Chapter 527; Coordinating State and Local Transportation Planning

However, many unofficial and informal discussions and efforts have been and continue to be underway in the county and the Planning Commission commends and recognizes these efforts as crucial to the orderly and effective development and preservation efforts of the county.

2. Citizen Involvement

Comprehensive plans may be implemented through the various land use tools available to localities: an official map, a capital improvements program, a zoning ordinance and district map, a subdivision ordinance, and a mineral resources map, or some combination of any or all of the above (Section 15.2-2224). The Code also requires surveys and studies be made in preparing the plan and that the plan include methods of implementation and a current map of the area covered by the plan (Section 15.2-2224). Specific procedural requirements are contained in the Code to ensure at least a minimum level of public notice, so that citizens have an opportunity to provide their ideas and comments on the plan (Section 15.2-2225).

Citizen involvement in the planning process is a central requirement for a Comprehensive Plan. Citizen involvement assures that the plan adequately serves the community and all its residents. Diverse opinions assure that the plan is broad based. Since the county’s Comprehensive Plan drafted in 1996, the county has worked with established and informal citizen groups to gain insight and representation during the development of the previous plan edition in 2008 . Several topic-oriented committees were established in 2005 to gather data and form the backbone of that plan for the various areas of study and focus. Following this important data gathering phase, the committees developed comprehensive reports and recommendations that have been incorporated into the plan. Additional citizen input from 2008 came in many forms including surveys, interviews, neighborhood meetings, and public meetings. This process provided notable sources of public input into the planning process. The guidance of this plan for the future is more



beneficial because it is truly developed by the citizens of the county. A working committee with representation from the Planning Commission, was established in the spring of 2012 to guide the 2015 Comprehensive Plan planning process, based on changes from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and data updates from federal, state, and local agencies.

D. Adoption Process for the Plan

Following the completion of the Draft Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing to allow citizens the opportunity to provide comment on the document. The Comprehensive Plan is recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission and must be officially adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Once the plan is adopted by the governing body, it becomes an official plan for the county.

Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, all amendments to it shall be recommended, approved, and adopted in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Code of Virginia (Sec. 15.2-2229). The Board of Supervisors may direct the Planning Commission to prepare an amendment to the plan and submit it to public hearing within sixty days after formal written request by the board (Sec. 15.2-2229). The purpose of this process is to allow for amendments that must be made to the plan prior to the completion of the required review at the end of five years. By allowing for the gradual update of the plan, all of the major components will have been replaced or substantially revised to meet changed or future needs.

E. Planning for the Future

Planning helps to focus efforts and to access the most value from community resources. Planning creates a better place to live for current and for future generations. The complexity and interdependence of the world create impacts on Tazewell County and its residents. Without planning, these impacts can be unexpected and nearly always detrimental. Communities plan because it is the responsible thing to do.

1. Organization of this Plan

The 2013 Tazewell County Comprehensive Plan is organized into six chapters. Five chapters focus on the topical areas of assessment and review for development. These chapters contain demographic and area-specific information and are followed by the implementation that integrates goals, objectives, and strategies into the plan. The final chapter contains components that reflect the land use desires of the citizens of Tazewell County.

The Tazewell County Planning Commission meets regularly to discuss land use issues and provide guidance to the Board of Supervisors in areas of subdivision layout and protection and mitigation of environmental concerns of the county. In addition, there are many other departments within the county government structure as well as myriad of community-based organizations that work to advance the county and its citizens. These groups working together toward a common goal can bring the energy and resources necessary to reach the stated goals of Tazewell County. Each of the main heading categories were areas of specific focus that emerged from the Comprehensive Planning Task Force Committees during the last Comprehensive Plan cycle as critical areas for attention in the near future. The Tazewell County Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee chose to continue with these categories with this plan. With each category, there is a description of the current situation, which is then followed by the goals, objectives and strategies for this five-year cycle of planning for the county.

II. Location and Geography

A. Regional Perspective

Tazewell County is located in the north central portion of southwestern Virginia. The county lies within the valley and ridge province of the Appalachian Mountains on the southeast with the Cumberland Plateau and Allegheny Mountains on the northeast. Tazewell County is bordered by West Virginia on the north, Buchanan County and Russell County on the west, Smyth County on the south and Bland County on the east. It is one of four counties that comprise the Cumberland Plateau Planning District. Tazewell County is 520-square miles (the 20th largest out of 95 Counties and 39 Independent Cities in Virginia) and represents 27.5 percent of the total land area of the district.

B. Topography and Geography

Topographic features of Tazewell County are shown on the geographic features map. Elevation in the valley areas of the county ranges from 1,900 feet in the western and southeastern areas to 2,763 in the east central areas. The county is dissected by streams, and the presence of sinkholes that are the trademark of karst topography which gives the landscape its uneven relief pattern. Surface features range from sloping to hilly and steep with comparatively small areas of smooth and gently rolling sections across the county.

The mountain ridges range in elevation from 2,500 to 4,500 feet, though there are irregular peaks that are considerably higher. The ridges are penetrated by narrow, deep waterways that are sourced near the mountain summits. The mountainous terrain in the county creates innumerable scenic vistas for both residents and visitors in Tazewell County. The highly rugged character of the land also makes infrastructure and structural development difficult and expensive in many areas of the county. Much of the county's land remains as forested uplands with agricultural production a principle land use for the hill and valley areas.

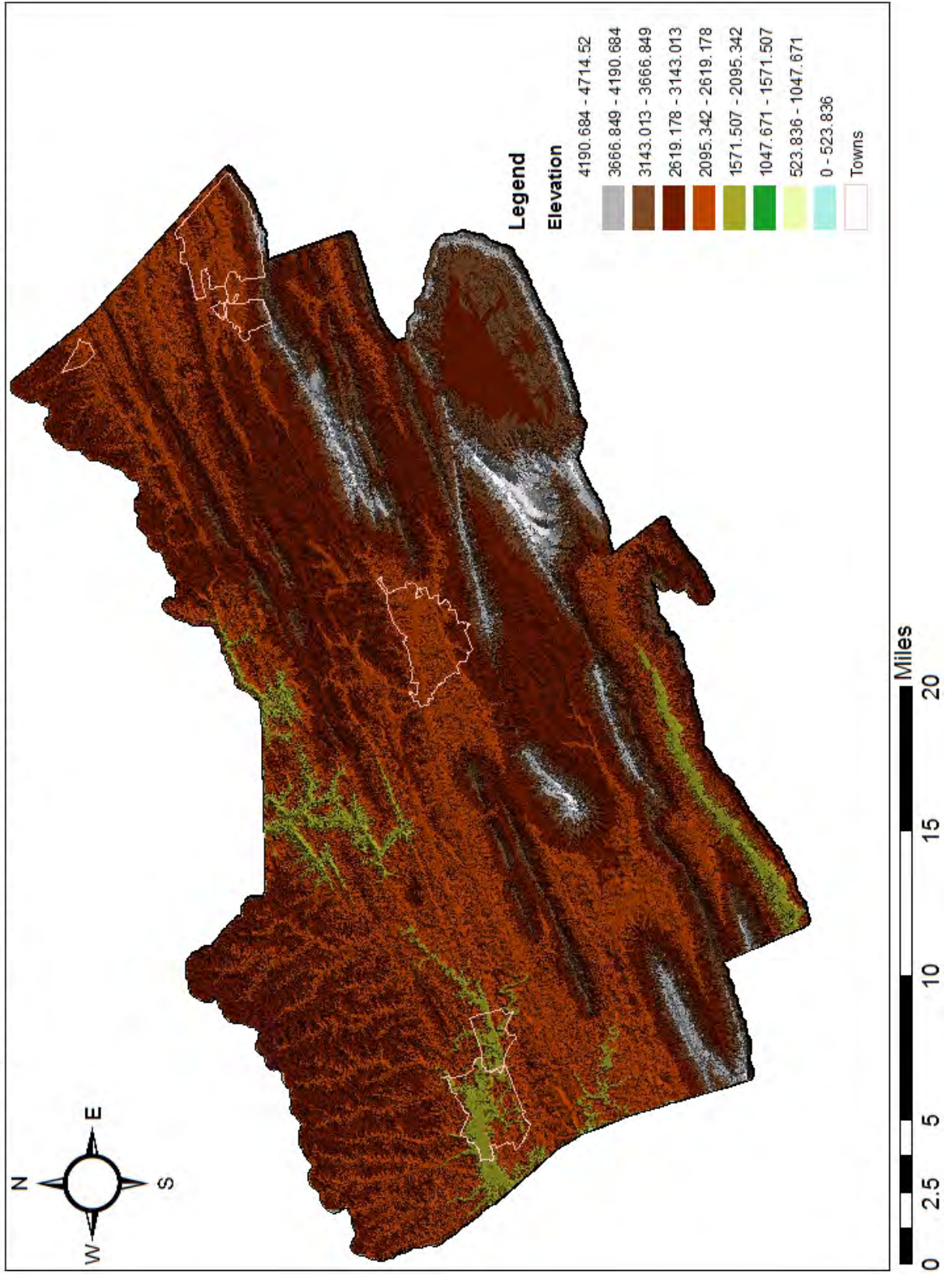
Figure 2.1
Tazewell County Woodland Uses

Year	Woodland (acres)	
	Pastured	Non-Pastured
1982	14,008	26,710
1987	16,560	23,271
1992	18,830	23,615
1997	15,483	32,445
2002	16,818	23,426
2007	15,797	23,140

U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2007.

Digital Elevation Model, Tazewell County VA

Figure 2.2
Tazewell County Digital Elevation Model



Burkes Garden is a unique feature in Tazewell County and is Virginia’s largest rural historic district. The 32,000-acre oval-shaped basin is located in the eastern part of the county. The rock layers that formed this basin were once a great dome. The basin was created by geologic erosion to point that just a rim of hard rock was left surrounding the basin floor of water-soluble layers of limestone. Burkes Garden is home to the largest contiguous area of smooth uplands in the county.

The watersheds and fault lines of the county are shown in Figure 2.2. Geology is a significant factor in the development patterns of Tazewell County. The county has two distinct geological variations: the Appalachian Ridge and Valley Province in the northeastern and southwestern portions of the county, and the Appalachian Plateau Province in the western area of the county.



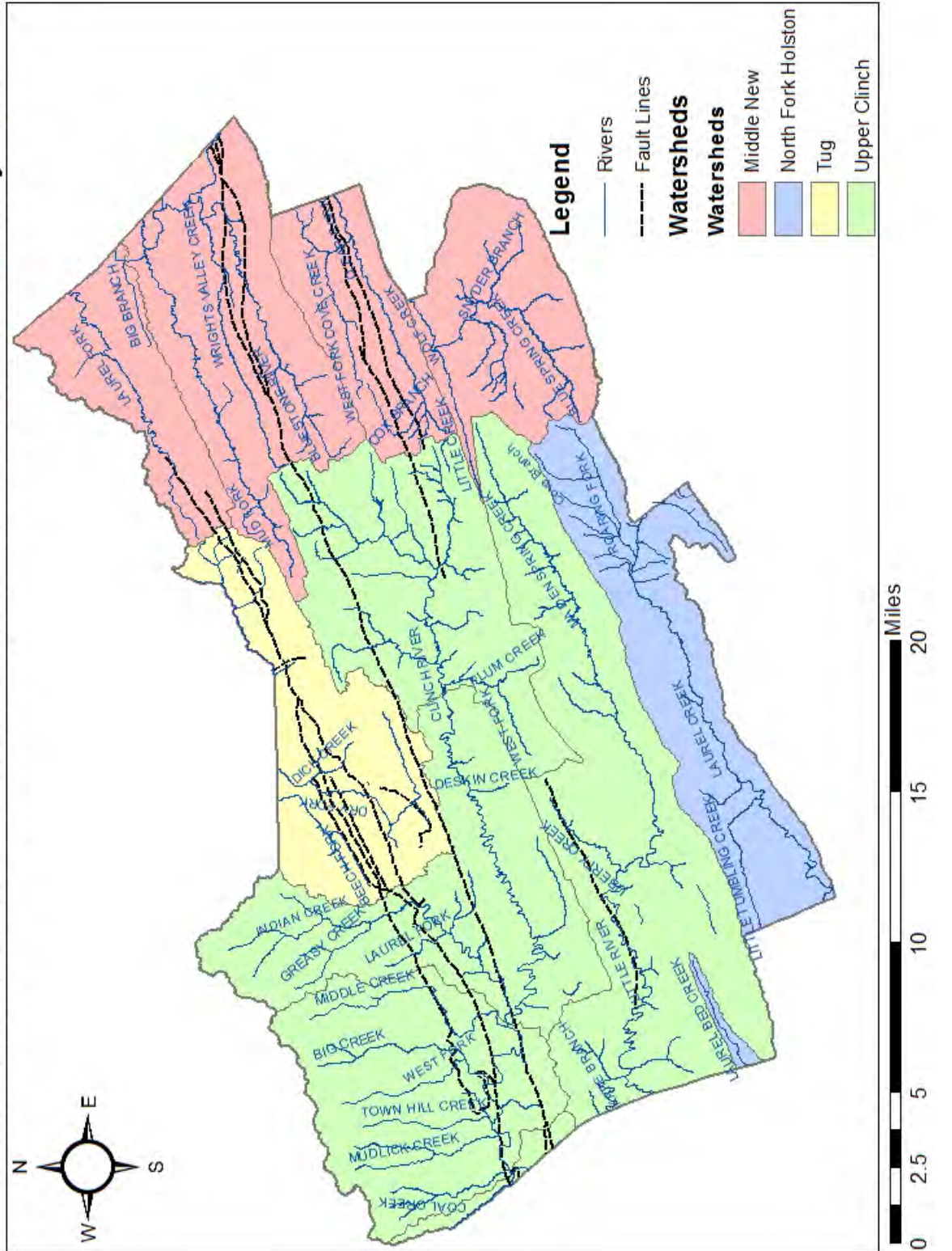
The Appalachian Ridge and Valley Province has various rock formations following the narrow bands of ridges and corresponding valleys. Limestone and dolomite with intermittent shale are the predominant rock types in the valley floors and mountain flanks, while weather-resistant hard sandstone strata form the ridge crests. The arrangement of hard and soft rocks in alternate formation accounts for the various elongated ridges and the position of most streams in the county. The limestone beds have provided the richest agricultural soils and the most important groundwater aquifers. They also are driving creators of the county’s caverns and associated karst topography. This combination of rock and soil suitability has targeted this area for development as well as rich agricultural uses in these areas of the county. However, these geological features are severe limiting factors for the building environment of commercial, industrial, and residential development in the county.

The western section of the county has a distinct and abrupt geological and physiological change in landscape due to its location in the Appalachian Plateau Province. This area is characterized by steep mountains with narrow, winding valley floors. The rock layers that define the plateau lie relatively flat and have been deeply dissected by historic stream drainage erosion. This portion of the county is divided into two distinct areas by the St. Clair, Boissevain and Richlands Fault System. This is coal-bearing land and has long been dominated by the coal extraction industry.

Figure 2.3

Watersheds and Fault Lines of Tazewell County

Watersheds and Fault Lines of Tazewell County VA



III. Background and Demographics

A. Historic Development Patterns

Formed from the counties of Russell and Wythe, Tazewell County was named in honor of Senator Henry Tazewell who made the motion to create the county. Chartered on December 19, 1799, Tazewell County is governed by a Board of Supervisors composed of five representatives, one elected from each magisterial district, who then appoint a county administrator. There are five incorporated towns within its boundaries: Bluefield, Cedar Bluff, Pocahontas, Richlands, and Tazewell.

In order to look forward and plan for future development and community enhancement, it is critical to assess historic trends and cultural influences that affect how a community has grown and developed to date. Tazewell County has a rich history in westward expansion and its more recent growth patterns and statistics have greatly influenced the use of resources and delivery of services to citizens of the county. This section attempts to provide a brief history of the development of the county and provide general demographic change information that impacts the opportunities and challenges to land use and preservation.

Before the arrival of European settlers in North America, the region now known as Tazewell County was hunting grounds for the Cherokee and Shawnee Indians. As was stated earlier in the Plan, the Woodland Indians who were the initial settlers of this area had long departed the land. Less than 150 years after the first European colony was established in Jamestown, settlers began to explore the present region of southwestern Virginia. Since it was bountiful with large herds of deer, elk, buffalo, and other game, this area of the state was exploited by professional hunters who exported animal pelts from the area to Europe.

The first recorded land survey in Tazewell County was completed in 1749 when the area was part of Augusta County. Operating under the name of The Woods River Company (formed by James Patton), James Burke led a survey party into what is today Burke's Garden. The survey recorded the area of that portion of the county as 4,400 acres, but today the area is known to be more than 32,000 acres. The same surveying expedition mapped the headwaters of the Clinch River and it is presumed that they reached the Bluestone and Abbs Valley. Their records show that they reached Maiden Spring and surveyed Dry Branch near Elk Garden in what is now Russell County.



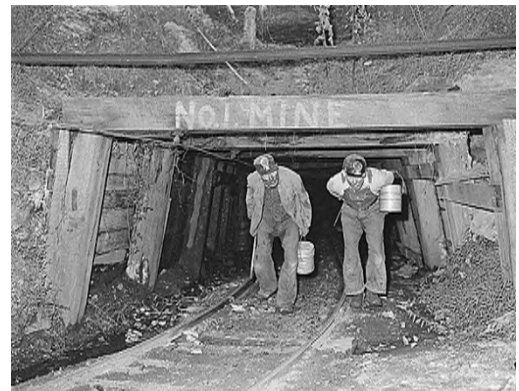
Early settlement of what became Tazewell County was slow due to the distance from the great migration road westward and also due to the hostile encounters with Indians in this area. Population figures of 1800, during the county's formation, show it as significantly less populated than surrounding jurisdictions. Even into the early 19th century development of the county was hampered by the difficulty in securing clear title to land due to the large-scale land speculation of the times.

Tazewell County's pioneer past forms a tradition that is a continued source of pride for the current residents and is reflected in the large number of historic sites in and around the county. The link to pioneer and Indian ancestors is strong and reflected in monuments and museum exhibits and holdings.

B. Demographics and Background

Population growth and diversity trends are key elements to understanding and implementing planning principles and strategies. Understanding and predicting the future trends in the demographics of Tazewell County are central to determining how and why particular land use strategies will be successful in this community. In the same way the geography and climate affect land use decision, the diversity and growth trends of the population can dramatically influence how land is used and what will be sustainable and successful strategies of maximizing resources and protecting valued assets within the county.

Tazewell County saw steady and at times dramatic growth through the early 1900s. This growth stalled after a 1950 high of 47,512 that marked the turning point toward population decline through 1970, which logged in a population for the county of 39,816. The coal boom in the 1970s also was a time of dramatic growth of nearly 27 percent with an all-time high in population for the county in 1980 of 50,511. Since 1980, the population of Tazewell County has declined on average with the 2012 census estimate documenting 44,268 as the total number of people living in the county (not a statistically significant change from the 2010 figure).



As the population change table shows (Figure 3.1), the entire Cumberland Plateau Planning District (CPPD) lost population each decade since 1980. The state, however, has continued to grow at a steady pace indicating that Tazewell County and the surrounding area are not keeping pace with the Virginia population growth trends. Though there may not be a desire to keep pace with the growth of Virginia's urban centers in the northern portions of the state, the loss of population over time is a detriment to economic and community development for any community. Understanding these population losses and how to address them will be a critical factor in achieving a sustainable economic model for the county.

Figure 3.1

Population Change from 1970 – 2012

PLACE	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2012
Tazewell County	39,816	50,511	45,960	44,598	45,078	44,268
CPPD	112,497	140,067	123,580	118,279	113,976	112,262
Virginia	4,648,494	5,346,818	6,187,358	7,078,515	8,001,024	8,185,867

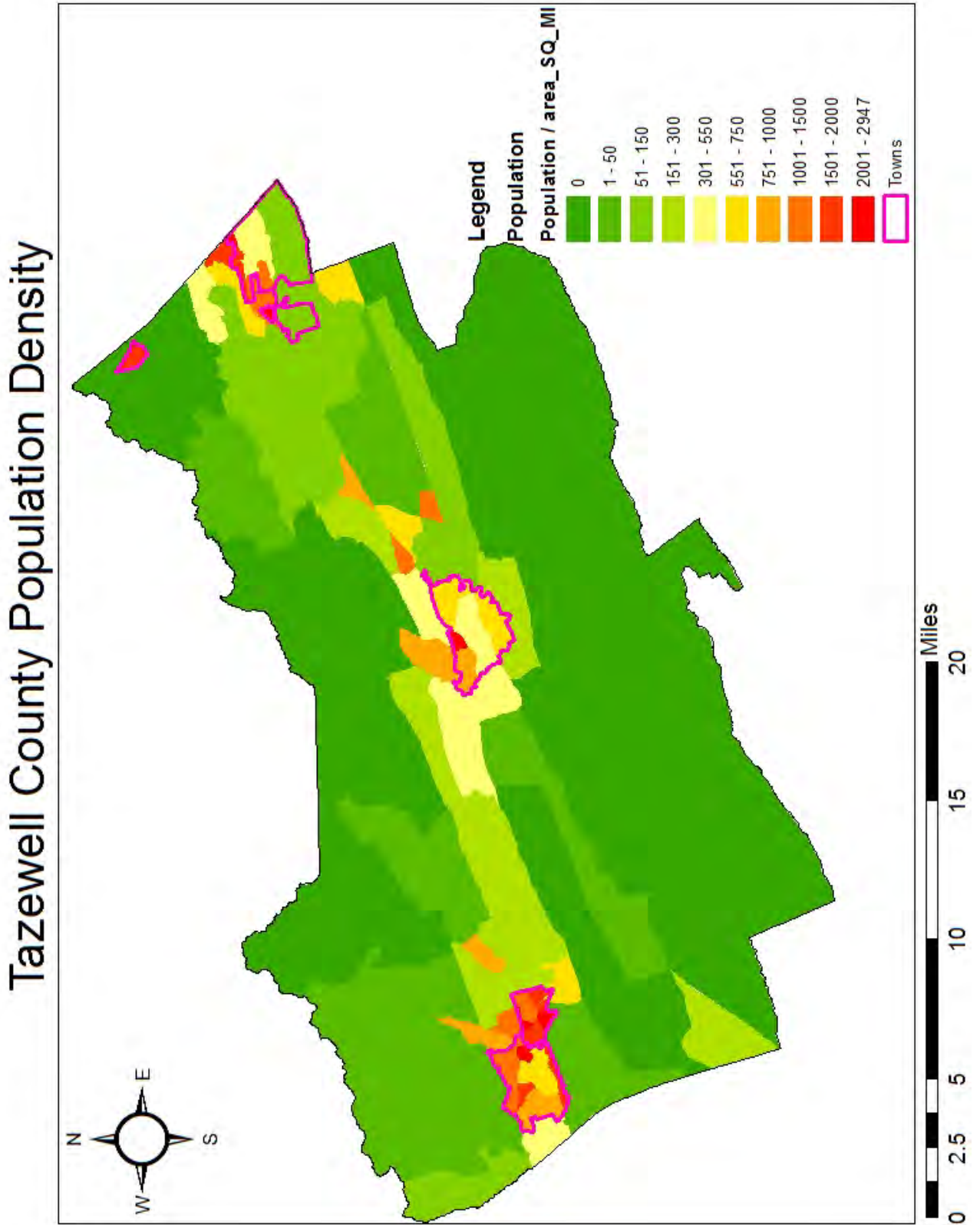
*2010 US Census Bureau
July 1, 2012 US Census Bureau estimate

The density and diversity of population is also a relevant factor for any community development strategy and assessment. Tazewell County has a primarily white population, with minority groups totaling less than five percent of the overall population. Though this number is low compared to state (just under 29 percent) and national (nearly 22 percent) averages, Tazewell County has the highest minority population in the planning district.

Due to the geography and historic westward advancement travel routes, Tazewell County’s population is not uniformly distributed. The average number of people per square mile is about 86.9 (a decrease from the 2000 census average of 87.5), but this does not reflect actual density across the county. As the population density map indicates (Figure 3.2), people live in and around the towns within the county and along major transportation routes.

Figure 3.2

Tazewell County Population Density by District in 2010



Tazewell County’s gender split is relatively equal with 49.4 percent male and 50.6 percent female. The age distribution of the population is not as even in Tazewell County. Tazewell County has a large working age population with approximately 48 percent of the people in the county are between 20 and 59 years old.

**Figure 3.3
Age Distribution in Tazewell County**

AGE	Tazewell County			Virginia	United States
	2000	2010	% of Total Population in 2010	% of Total Population in 2010	% of Total Population in 2010
<i>Under 5 years</i>	2,359	2,325	5.2	6.4	6.5
<i>5 - 17 years</i>	7,206	6,850	15.2	16.8	17.5
<i>18 - 64 years</i>	28,114	28,146	62.4	64.6	63.0
<i>65 yrs & over</i>	6,919	7,757	17.2	12.2	13.0
<i>Median Age (yrs)</i>	40.7	43.2	NA	37.5*	37.2*
<i>Males 18+ yrs</i>	16,468	17,618	39.1	37.2	36.9
<i>Females 18 + yrs</i>	18,565	18,285	40.6	39.6	39.1

United States Census Bureau 2010

**not a percentage, this is actual median age for 2010 in Virginia and the United States*

The Age Distribution table (Figure 3.3) shows that Tazewell County’s population is aging in place. Losses in population from 2000 to 2010 are evident in the under 18 age groups. Of significant note is the comparison of the median age in Tazewell (43.2 years) to that of Virginia and the US, both near the 37-year median mark. Unless there is a growth in the numbers of children and young adults over the next decade, this median age differential will continue to grow and the workforce population will begin to drift away from state and national averages as well.

Quality of life is always at the core of all community development and planning. Assessing quality is not always an easy process. Each locality has various goals and benchmarks to measure progress in targeted areas of development and service. How these goals translate into higher or sustained quality of life for citizens is not always a direct correlation and in many cases, the impact is felt long after investments in programs and infrastructure are made.

Income and access to services are considered important measures of quality of life for individuals and families. The ability to rent or own a home and maintain it is also an important measure of how well citizens of a locality are thriving. Though these measures are not the only factors in quality of life, they merit assessment and correlation for Tazewell County in relationship to the types and impact of investment in services and infrastructure by public and private sources.

**Figure 3.4
Median Family Income:
County, State and National Comparison**

Place	1990	2000	2010	2011	Percent Change from 2000 to 2011
Tazewell County	25,535	33,732	43,428	45,559	35.06%
Cumberland Plateau Planning District	-----	30,901	40,670	42,469	37.44%
Virginia	38,213	54,169	73,514	75,962	40.23%
United States	35,225	50,046	62,982	64,293	28.47%

*U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, and 2010.
U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey.
U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey.*

Though it is clear that Tazewell is below the median family income average of both the US and Virginia, the percent increase shows the county keeping relative pace with the state (Figure 3.4). The cost of living in Tazewell County is lower than many other areas of the state and with income levels still growing, the county residents are likely to be seeing that reflected as increases in spending power and investment opportunities. However, as in most rural areas, transportation costs are higher and almost exclusively born by individuals and families. With the significant increase in oil prices, this factor alone can be a dramatic impact on a family income balance. These are crucial factors of consideration for enhancing quality of life for individuals and families.



Figure 3.5 shows a comparison of median household income between Tazewell County residents and those in the rest of the state and with the nation. Tazewell County’s household income is roughly 60 percent of the median household income of the state and 72 percent of that of the United States. The US Census defines a family as consisting of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit. A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship, whether it is a singular individual living alone or multiple unrelated individuals or families living together. Family income has traditionally

been considered the more reliable measure of median income when making such comparisons. However, with the rise of unmarried housing partners, this figure must be tracked and assessed now and into the future. Tazewell County did see a large percentage increase in these figures within just a four year period with a nearly 4 percent increase from 2000 to 2010.

**Figure 3.5
Median Household Income:
County, State and National Comparison**

Location	1990	2000	2010	2011	Percent Change from 2000 to 2011
Tazewell County	19,670	27,304	35,485	36,521	33.76%
Cumberland Plateau Planning District	-----	25,504	33,699	33,816	32.59%
Virginia	33,328	46,677	60,665	60,665	29.97%
United States	30,056	41,994	50,046	50,429	20.09%

U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000.

U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program, November 2011.

U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program, December 2012.

Health care coverage is another emerging category that local, state and national governments are taking a closer look at in this decade. The health and welfare of citizens is in no small measure dependent on access to quality and affordable health care for the care of illness and injury as well as wellness care. Tazewell County is in between the state and national averages for uninsured rates for children and youth under 18 years old with just 7.5 percent of this population uninsured in the county. The adult population rate is above the state rate with 17.1 percent of adults uninsured in the county and 14.8 percent of adults uninsured in the state. Both of these figures are below the national average of 17.7 percent.

**Figure 3.6
Health Insurance Coverage, 2010**

Place	Under Age 65			Under Age 18		
	# Insured	# Uninsured	% Uninsured	# Insured	# Uninsured	% Uninsured
Tazewell	29,980	6,188	17.1	8,868	724	7.5
Virginia	5,817,583	1,009,466	14.8	1,787,955	133,975	7.0
US	215,846,576	46,556,803	17.7	70,462,624	6,505,941	8.5

Model-based Small Health Insurance Estimates for Counties and States

US Census Bureau, 2010.

Tazewell County has recently constructed a premier Community Facilities Building. The new 31,682 square foot facility is strategically located at 253 Chamber Drive, Tazewell, Virginia and is visible from U. S. Route 19-460. Prior to the construction of the new Community Facilities Building, the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors and the Industrial Development Authority recognized the need to improve accessibility to government services within the locality. They partnered together to provide a highly secure, yet accessible facility that would also have ample parking in a less congested part of town.

The new state-of-the-art Community Facilities Building will allow the locality to consolidate the services of the Department of Social Services and the Virginia Department of Health under one roof which will eliminate the need for clients to travel to several different locations for the services they seek. The mission of the County of Tazewell is to effectively seek opportunities to improve the quality of life for the citizens. The true worth of this facility cannot be measured in dollars. The lasting value and underlying importance is the power of partnership to provide improved services to the community.

As the above demographic and historic data shows (Figure 3.6), Tazewell County is a dynamic area of Southwest Virginia with many challenges and opportunities as the county continues to shift economically and demographically. The need for careful planning and thoughtful evaluation of the historic trends and projections are very important for the county. This assessment of data is a critical first step in developing a strong and logical road map for the future of Tazewell County.

C. Housing Patterns and Structures

Housing is one of the most basic needs (shelter) in an individual's life. Physically, socially, and economically, housing plays an important part in the well-being of individuals as well as families, and the community. Unsafe, unsanitary, and inadequate housing can affect local residents' physical, social, economic, and emotional well-being. Planning for safe and attractive communities is an important role of local government and a diverse and aesthetically pleasing housing stock is at the heart of such vibrant and growing communities.

The coal boom years of the 1970s created growth in the number of houses built in Tazewell County at that time. Tazewell County's housing growth during this period surpassed that of the state, and the population growth as well as incomes of the time supported this growth. From 1980 to 1990, population in Tazewell County decreased as did the average household size. Housing values did increase slightly during this time and the county maintained the highest average housing value (\$48,600) in 1990 within the Cumberland Plateau Planning District. This was 53 percent of the state's \$90,400 average house value in 1990.



**Figure 3.7
1990-2011 Owner and Renter Occupation of Housing
Tazewell County, Virginia, and U.S. Statistics**

Statistic	1990			2000			2011		
	Tazewell County	VA	US	Tazewell County	VA	US	Tazewell County	VA	US
Owner-occupied housing units	13,324	1,519,644	59,031,378	14,129	1,837,939	69,815,753	13,105	2,046,845	75,896,759
Median Value owner-occupied	\$48,400	\$90,400	\$78,500	\$67,900	\$125,400	\$119,600	\$84,900	\$254,600	\$186,200
Median selected monthly owner costs	\$529	\$831	\$737	\$664	\$1,144	\$1,088	\$901	\$1,782	\$1,560
	\$146	\$192	\$209	\$196	\$263	\$295	\$286	\$408	\$444
Renter-occupied housing units	3,985	772,186	32,916,032	4,148	861,234	35,664,348	4,131	887,768	36,689,881
Median Gross Rent	\$298	\$495	\$447	\$376	\$650	\$602	\$535	\$1,024	\$871

U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000.
U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

The population centers in Tazewell County are in the towns of Tazewell, Cedar Bluff, Richlands, Pocahontas, Bluefield, and the communities of Claypool Hill and Raven. The housing stock found throughout the county includes both single family and multi-family housing options. Figure 4.4 shows the breakdown of owner and renter-occupied housing units as well as the median values from 1990 to 2011. The 2011 Census Bureau estimates show an increase in the median value of owner-occupied houses to \$84,900 in Tazewell County. This value is approximately 33 percent of the state median of \$254,600. In comparison, the 2000 Census Data showed Tazewell County's mean home value being 54% of the State value. Tazewell County was surpassed in housing value in 2000 by Russell County in the planning district, and continues to be with a median housing value of \$89,000 by the latest census bureau estimates.

In 1990 Tazewell County had 566 housing units that lacked complete plumbing facilities. This was a major improvement of the 1970 number of 3,729 housing units lacking facilities. The county has continued to improve on this important housing measure to an estimated 143 housing units that lacked complete plumbing facilities in 2011. Given that nearly 33 percent of the housing structures in Tazewell County were built before 1960, the maintenance and rehabilitation of these older structures to provide adequate plumbing facilities is clearly evident in this area. Less than six percent of housing in the county has been built since 2000, as the rate of construction slowed dramatically from 2000 to 2011 (3.9% constructed in the years of 2000-2004, and 1.5% constructed in 2005 or later). Because housing growth is such an important indicator of economic stability and can even be used as a stimulus to economic development, this slowing of housing construction must be critically analyzed.

1. Affordable Housing

As stated earlier, Figure 3.7 shows the breakdown of owner and renter occupation in Tazewell County. The median mortgage and rent figures are important indicators of how incomes are keeping up with costs within a community. These costs are defined by the US Census to include mortgages, taxes, house protection-related insurances, fees (such as homeowner association fees), utilities, and home improvement fees (averaged annually based on the value and age of the home). Even with a median household income of \$36,521, Tazewell County still is considered a “livable community” because this income can still support the median mortgage costs using 30 percent of total income or less (29.6 percent in Tazewell County). Affordable housing is defined by the U.S. Housing and Urban Department as housing for which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities. When housing costs grow beyond 30 percent of a household income, it has been shown to be an unsustainable economic situation for most families and individuals.

Tazewell County offers an enviable cost of living compared to state averages. In Virginia, the average Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$890. In order to afford this level or rent following the 30 percent of income rule, a household must earn \$2,967 per month, or \$35,604 annually. This translates roughly to a \$17.12/hour full-time wage earner. The comparative FMR for Tazewell County is \$626, requiring a household income of \$25,040. This is nearly \$11,500 LESS than the median household income for the county. Full-time wage earners earning the regional average wage of \$12.04/hour can afford the two-bedroom FMR rate as well. For citizens on a fixed monthly

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), however, even Tazewell County’s single-bedroom FMR of \$528 is not affordable by the 30 percent of income rule.

2. Subsidized and Assisted Housing Programs

Subsidized housing is available to residents of the county who meet income and/or age requirements. Elderly, as well as family housing developments, funded through the USDA’s Rural Development Program, are located in the towns of Richlands and Tazewell. Figure 4.5 shows the type and number of units in each bedroom category available through the housing subsidization program known as Section 8 housing. Additionally, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development has assisted the Cumberland Plateau Regional Housing Authority to develop and operate three complexes in the county (the bottom three listed in Figure 4.5). Waiting lists exist as all of these facilities and several are undergoing renovations to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility issues of residents.

**Figure 3.8
Subsidized Housing Properties in Tazewell County**

Rental Property	Location	Complex Type	Units	Bedrooms*	Renter out of pocket costs
Hunters Ridge Apartments	Richlands	Family	48	1-24 2-24	30% of adjusted monthly income
Oxford Square Apartments	Richlands	Family	87	1-31 2-56	30% of adjusted monthly income
Aspen Square Apartments	Tazewell	Family	60	1-60	30% of adjusted monthly income
Sierra Springs Apartments	Tazewell	Family	36	1-16 2-20	30% of adjusted monthly income
Tazewell Square Apartments	Tazewell	Family	56	1-24 2-32	30% of adjusted monthly income
Crescent View Apartments	Bluefield	Family	106	1-18 2-34 3-54	30% of adjusted monthly income
Indian Princess Pocahontas	Pocahontas	Family	34	N/A	N/A
Graham Manor	Bluefield	Elderly/Disabled	30	N/A	N/A
Fairfax Court	Richlands	Elderly/Disabled	34	N/A	N/A

***Numbers to left of the hyphen indicated number of bedrooms, to the right is number of units of this type**

Sources: MFH Rental (USDA RD) Property Website; Property management companies

Housing assistance is also available through the state and federal government for purchasing, refinancing, and repairing homes of residents of Tazewell County. The county is one of seven Southwestern Virginian counties designated as a Federal Target Area. This allows local residents the opportunity to apply for a lower-interest rate mortgage from the Virginia Housing and Development Authority (VHDA). This regulation also allows first-time home buyer regulations to be waived.

Weatherization, utility assistance, heating and cooling, and emergency home repair services are provided by two service organizations in the region. The Weatherization Program and the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Program are operated by Clinch Valley Community Action. Both are designed to assist eligible low-income residents in Tazewell County to reduce energy loss in their homes through such installations as attic insulation, heating system inspection, window and wall sealing, and insulation. The Emergency Home Repair Program is funded by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and locally administered by the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens. This program provides repairs or makes minor modifications to homes of low-income persons. These repairs focus on the areas of plumbing, electrical, roof repair and replacement, heating, and installation of such modifications as wheelchair ramps, hand railings, grab bars, and doorway widening. Cooling assistance is also available to eligible individuals through the Department of Social Services, Clinch Valley Community Action, and the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens. The Virginia Water Project provides assistance to eligible citizens in the county who need wells dug, septic systems installed, septic system maintenance and repair, water tanks, or tap fees. Clinch Valley Community Action administers this program as well as the Indoor Plumbing Program that assists eligible residents who need indoor bathrooms.

3. Assisted Living and Nursing Homes

Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) are non-medical residential settings that provide or coordinate personal and health care services, 24-hour supervision, and assistance for the care of adults who are aged, infirmed or disabled. Nursing homes, on the other hand, have the primary function of the provision, on a continuing basis, of nursing services and health-related services for the treatment of inpatient care. Tazewell County residents have access to both types of facilities throughout the county and region.

The ALF gives residents an opportunity to remain as independent as possible. The services provided at these facilities vary across the country, however, most provide graduated access to services that can be used by residents as they need them. Some provide nursing home care within the facility as well. Supervision, congregate meals, and recreational activities are available to all residents at all ALF's located in Tazewell County.

Tazewell County residents who can no longer live safely in their own homes and need access to continuous care and medical attention have options for residential care in nursing homes in the county and the region. The facilities available locally are highlighted in the chart on the next page (Figure 3.9).

**Figure 3.9
Assisted Living Facilities and Nursing Homes in Tazewell County**

Assisted Living Facilities	Location	Type of Facility	Number of Beds
Westwood Center	Bluefield	Non-Ambulatory Residential Assisted Living Care	25
Mayfair House	Cedar Bluff	Non-Ambulatory Residential Assisted Living Care	60
Golden Age Assisted Living	Cedar Bluff	Non-Ambulatory Residential Assisted Living Care Special Care	49
Nursing Homes	Location	Ownership/Hospital Based	Number of Certified Beds
Heritage Hall	Tazewell	For-profit Corporation/No	180
Westwood	Bluefield	For-profit Corporation/No	65

Source: Virginia Department of Social Services Web Assisted Living Facility Search Virginia Department of Health Directory of Long Term Care Facilities, Nov. 2012.

Housing

Summary of Needs and Opportunities

Tazewell County saw steady and at times dramatic growth through the early 1900s. This growth stalled after a 1950 high of 47,512 that marked the turning point toward population decline through 1970, which logged in a population for the County of 39,816. The coal boom in the 1970s spurred a time of dramatic growth of nearly 27 percent with an all-time high in population reached for the county of 50,511. After 1980, the population of Tazewell County declined through the 2006 census estimate documenting 44,608 as the total number of people living in the county (not a statistically significant change from the 2000 figure of 44,598). Since then, population within the County have bounced up and down. After 2006, the population of Tazewell County has rebounded somewhat through 2010, when the census found a total population of 45,078. It then declined again with the 2012 population estimates indicating a population of 44,268. With the current trend of population loss, the age distribution within the county (62.4% of the population ranging from 18 – 64 years with the Median Age of 43.2; 15.2% of the population ranging from 5 – 17 years; 5.2% of the population under 5 years of age; and 17.2% of the population over the age of 65 - 2010 Census Data), and the limited amount of affordable, appropriate and suitable housing (more assisted living options, housing with 1 floor, and facilities for disabled adults) is a cause of concern. Tazewell County is growing older, with inadequately constructed and unaffordable housing for such circumstances.

This cause of concern is the onset of the “baby-boomers.” It is not uncommon for members of the aging population to choose to downsize their homes, move into an apartment or retirement community, or consider assisted living options. The planning committees within the county must be aware of the current housing availability, consider future housing needs, and plan accordingly.

Another area of concern is the affordability of housing. With the majority of the population (62.1%) being between the ages 18 and 64 years with the median age of 43.2, affordable housing is imperative for the aging population moving into retirement age and for residents who do not have the benefit of having higher paying jobs due to the lack of training, education or work experience. Individuals living on fixed incomes, SSI, or households with minimum wage earners will be those most impacted by the need for “affordable” housing.

Access and availability of adequate, diverse, and attractive housing is critical to the quality of life of all residents of Tazewell County. The county must continue to encourage the development of appropriate and desired housing stock within the county and ensure that these resources are linked directly with the provision of necessary services and access to good transportation and job opportunities.

Goal Statement:

To promote the development of decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing to meet present and future population needs.

Implementation of the Goal:

Increase the availability of housing by encouraging new residential development through implementation of zoning land use practices (IE. Cluster development multifamily housing, water and sewer services).

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Provide adequate and attractive housing options for County residents
 - Provide incentives to developers (density bonuses, fee reductions) to ensure the development of variety of housing types and price ranges within the county
 - Guide residential development through infrastructure improvements in targeted areas of the county
 - Assess and develop strategy for addressing workforce housing needs in the area
 - Develop strategy and partners for retirement community planning and promotion
2. Increase opportunities for low and moderate-income households to be able to afford quality, decent, safe, and sanitary housing.
 - To attract investors for more upscale housing, including condominiums, retirement centers, and assisted living.
 - Encourage the rehabilitation of residential properties.
 - Provide incentives to developers for inclusion of suitable and affordable housing.

IV. Transportation

The movement of people and goods through and around a community are important not only to the economy, but also to the development patterns of an area. As was earlier stated, Tazewell County was settled during westward expansion of this country and the towns and settlements that grew up in this area were anchored initially by agricultural settlements as well as the exploration and extraction of the salt and the coal-rich areas of the region. Of course, the geography of this area also played a significant role in the settlement and movement of people of goods. Mountains, valleys, waterways, and ridgelines all guided the placement of roads, rails, and communities.

Another factor driving this movement was the settlement of people throughout and around the county. Where people live and where they work drive the need for transportation corridors throughout Tazewell County. The relationship between where people live and where they work has changed dramatically over the past several decades and the road network in a community is not as crucial to citizens as access to clean water was to pioneers of this community.

A. Transportation Modes and Networks

The effects of a community's transportation system upon the land are vital. A transportation plan must take into consideration topography, population density and distribution, land development policies, and the overall planning objectives of a community. Additionally, how people and goods use various networks are crucial to the development of a community and the impact on the landscape and resources of the region.

Tazewell County, located within the Cumberland Plateau Planning District is situated in Southwest Virginia near the borders of the three states of West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. The network of highways running through this region includes two US numbered highways and eleven state highways. US Routes 460 and 19 runs through the center of Tazewell County linking three important county communities of Richlands, Tazewell and Bluefield as well as linking the county to Buchanan County within the region. Where these routes split (Claypool Hill), travelers diverge to take 460 toward Roanoke, Virginia to the east and Pikeville Kentucky to the west and Route 19 to Abingdon, Virginia or Bristol, Tennessee.



Interstates 81 and 77 run within 30 miles of Tazewell County's southern border and link the county and region to the rest of the eastern seaboard as well as urban centers to the west and north. These two interstate highways, along with the US and state highway networks link Tazewell County to population and economic centers within Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia. Tazewell County residents as well as goods from the county can be transported using this highway network to travel to

major metropolitan areas. People can easily travel to Knoxville, TN, Charlotte, NC, Roanoke, VA and Charleston, WV in less than two hours.

Figure 4.1

Primary and Secondary Road Map of Tazewell County



As the following map so vividly shows (Figure 4.2), people within the region often work in one county and live in another. Tazewell County has the largest number of citizens who live and work in their home county of any within the planning district. However, there are still a number of commuters to the county supporting the need for maintenance and efficient placement of transportation corridors within and around the county.

Figure 4.2

2010 Commuting Patterns in Cumberland Plateau PDC**

	Tazewell	Buchanan	Dickenson	Russell	VA
In place workers	11,397	5,189	2,242	5,987	3,511,116
In-Commuters	4,907	2,577	1,284	907	260,381
Out-Commuters	5,222	1,885	2,216	5,200	340,861
Net In-Commuters*	-315	-692	-932	-4,293	-80,480

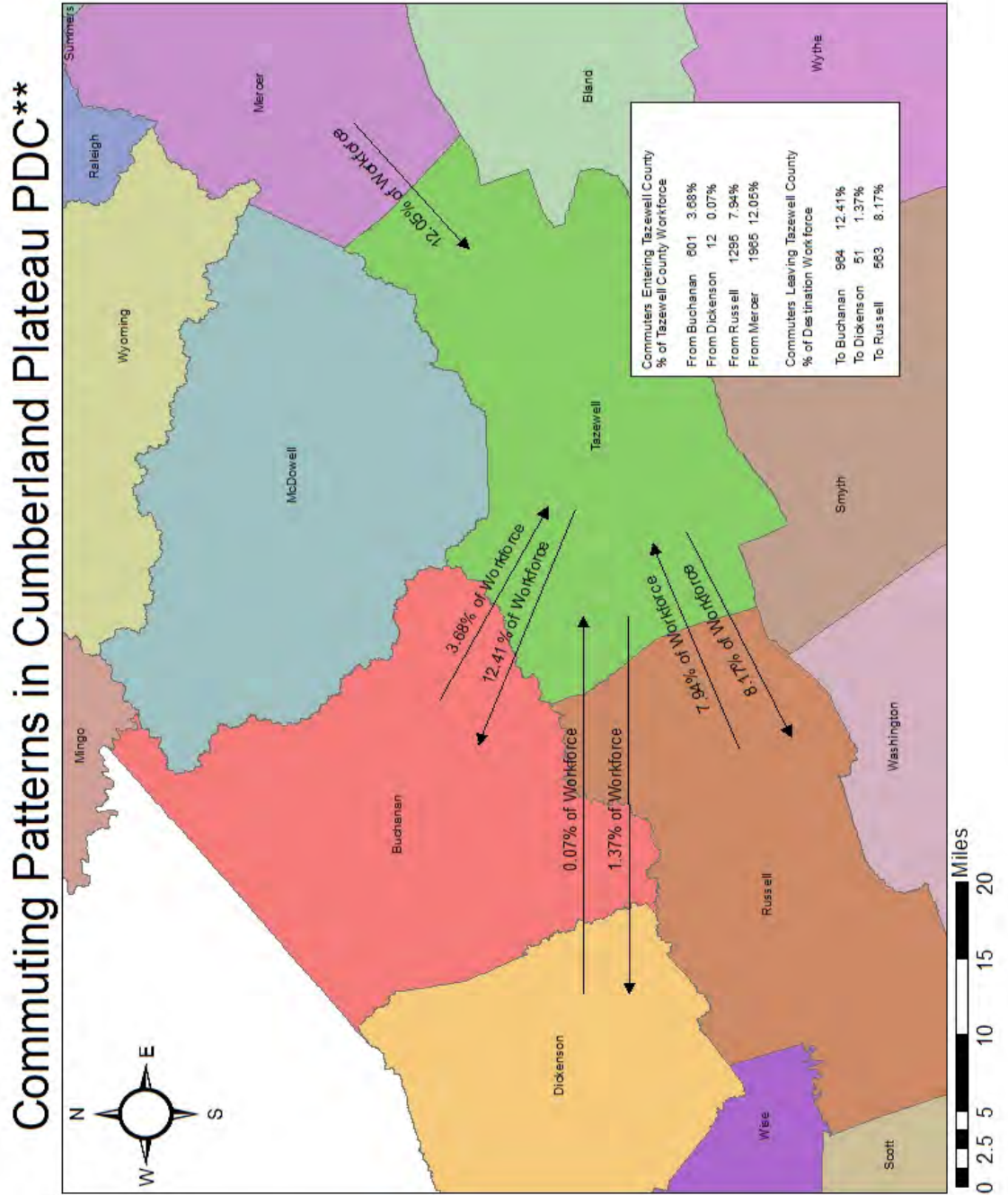
U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey.

** In Commuters minus Out-Commuters.*

The way people get to work is also an important indication of the transportation networks and lifestyles of citizens of the county. There was a significant increase in those traveling alone to work in a vehicle from 1990 to 2000 (Figure 4.3, see following page). This is a national phenomenon and has potential of great impact on roadways, parking, and costs of transportation for individuals and for the localities that provide the infrastructure to support vehicular transportation. Urban areas provide incentives for carpooling and public transportation and rural communities are beginning to consider these options as well. With gas prices expected to continually increase, and as the need to address public transportation and alternative transportation grows, the rural areas must not assume the concept is beyond their scope.

Figure 4.3

Map of Commuting Patterns in Cumberland Plateau PDC**



Freight services in Tazewell County are provided via rail and truck lines. Rail service in the region is provided by Norfolk Southern Railroad and CSX Transportation. Tazewell County is primarily served by Norfolk and Southern which has an east-west orientation within the region. Much of the coal mined within the county is shipped out of the region via rail on this line. Over 15 major interstate truck lines serve the region, with more than 20 smaller shipping companies provide trucking services within the county and other local areas. Travelers to and from Tazewell County have the options of using rail, bus, and air in addition to personal transportation. Amtrak passenger rail services are available in Hinton, West Virginia – about one hour from Tazewell County. Greyhound-Trailways bus service is accessible to citizens of the region at stops in Abingdon, Marion, Wytheville and Bristol. Four County Transit and Graham Transit are also available for public transportation needs. Four County Transit serves the Cumberland Plateau Planning District, while Graham Transit primarily serves the Bluefield area. Connections with other transit systems can be made from these services to allow travel to other areas of the Region, such as Roanoke, Bristol, and Mercer County, WV. The Tazewell County Airport has small plane capabilities and has a 4,300-foot airplane runway and instrument landing capability for single and twin-engine general aviation uses. Additionally, easy commercial airline transportation access is available at the Tri-Cities Airport (Bristol, Kingsport, Johnson City, TN area). The Bluefield/Mercer County Airport (Mercer County, WV) offers personal and charter airline services.

[Highway System](#)

The Virginia Department of Transportation is the primary governmental agency responsible for highway development and maintenance. Tazewell County is part of the Bristol District of the Virginia Department of Transportation, which includes eight other districts, each divided into five sections: interstate, primary, urban, public transit and secondary systems. The Bristol District covers a 12 county area consisting of 126 miles of interstate highways and 1,298 miles of primary system highways. As of June 2013, Tazewell County has a total of 152 miles of primary roads and 520 miles of secondary roads.

[Current Highway Improvements](#)

The Commonwealth Transportation Board is placing emphasis on the rehabilitation of bridges throughout the Commonwealth and in Tazewell County. The bridges in Tazewell County were originally constructed in the 1970's during the time that the primary routes 19 and 460 were constructed. The age and the wear of the bridges have caused a portion of these bridges to become an area of concern. The Department of Transportation is currently rehabilitating these bridges to improve their reliability and serviceability.

The recent and currently ongoing construction of State Route 696 (Big Branch) in the Falls Mills area has allowed better access to the Northern District of the county. With the projected additional traffic, this may lead to the increase of development throughout this district. More long-term regional highway improvement projects that could significantly benefit Tazewell County include the I-73 corridor (under construction) and the “Coal Fields Expressway”. Although neither project would be within Tazewell County, both would significantly improve access to the regional transportation network.

Figure 4.3
 1990-2010 Methods of Transportation to Work
 Tazewell County, Virginia, and US Statistics

Statistic	1990			2000			2010		
	Tazewell	VA	US	Tazewell	VA	US	Tazewell	VA	US
Car, truck, or van--- drove alone	12,926	2,280,939	84,215,298	14,419	2,685,914	97,102,050	13,710	2,966,159	105,840,717
Car, truck, or van--- carpooled	2,574	499,860	15,377,634	1,959	441,093	15,634,051	2,139	415,087	14,418,306
Public transportation (including taxicab)	47	125,827	6,069,589	67	124,166	6,067,703	89	164,107	6,872,730
Walked	444	97,766	4,488,886	254	80,487	3,758,982	292	90,824	3,962,070
Other means	195	39,048	1,512,842	124	40,093	1,532,219	105	53,024	2,401,488
Worked at home	294	103,418	3,406,025	318	110,067	4,184,223	284	162,788	5,759,724

U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, and 2006-2010 American Community Survey.

Planned Improvements

With the construction of State Route 696 as mentioned above, other safety projects are being planned within the Northern District. State Routes 644 and 747 are in the planning stages. These routes are improving the safety of the traveling public in these areas, and these routes also lead to the newly constructed state prison located in Pocahontas. State Route 631 in the Baptist Valley area is being planned as soon as money becomes available.

Many safety improvement projects are being planned throughout Tazewell County. The table below is a list of these projects.

Route Number	Road Name	Description	From	To	Mileage
460	Gov GC Peery Hwy	Improvement of Intersection at US Route 460 and US Route 19	Intersection at Claypool Hill	Same	---
102	Falls Mills Road	Turn Radius Increase, add northbound and southbound turn lanes	Intersection with Route 656 (Big Branch Road)	Same	---
644	Abbs Valley Road	Add right turn lane	Intersection of route 702 (Pauley Road)	Same	---
644	Abbs Valley Road	Reduce grade on southbound approach and reconstruct intersection	Intersection of Route 658 (Rosenbaum Road)	Same	---
61	Clear Fork Road	Widen existing pavement, add shoulders	Route 735 (Albany Street)	Route 662 (Cove Creek Road)	7.3 miles
91	Veterans Road	Widening of existing lanes	Route 607 (Little Tumbling Creek Road)	0.10 Miles North of Route 609 (Maiden Springs Road)	7.5 miles
609	Wardell Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 603 (College Estates Road)	VA 19 Southbound	2.4 miles
616	Bearwallow Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 621 (Stinson Ridge Road)	Intersection of Route 622 (Reynolds Ridge Road)	1.7 miles

624	Amonate Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	4.8Miles North of Route 627 (Bandy Road)	West Virginia State Line	1.4 miles
631	Baptist Valley Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	1.0 Miles East of Route 773 (Bailey Road)	Intersection of Route 635 (Mundytown Road)	6.9 miles
637	Dry Fork Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 643 (Station Hill Road)	West Virginia State Line	1.4 miles
643	Mud Fork Road	Widening of Existing Lanes	Intersection of Route 655E (Tiptop Road)	Intersection of Route 655W (Goss Road)	0.2 miles
644	Horsepen Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 16(Stoney Ridge Road)	Intersection of Route 668 (Daniels Road)	1.9 miles
651	T.R. Barrett Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 19/460 (Gov. G.C. Peery Highway)	Intersection of Route 650 (Wittens Mill Road)	1.0 miles
655	Goss Road	Reconstruction (widen lanes, add shoulders)	Intersection of Route 643 (Mud Fork Road)	Intersection of Route 644 (Abbs Valley Road)	1.8 miles
744	Triangle Road	Replace Bridge	Bluestone River		---
643	Johnsons Branch Road	Reconstruct and Repave Roadway	0.90 Miles East of Route 810 (Rooster Lane)	2.40 Miles East of Route 810 (Rooster Lane)	1.5 Miles

The large number of projects from the long range transportation plan is daunting. As such, the top five project priorities recommended are:

1. US Route 460/US Route 19 Intersection - Improvements of intersection for safety and congestion related issues.
2. Route 644 - Abbs Valley Road. Reduction of grade on southbound approach and reconstruction of intersection with State Route 658 (Rosenbaum Road)
3. Route 609 - Wardell Road. Reconstruction of roadway, including widening of lanes and addition of shoulders to roadway.
4. Route 744 - Triangle Road. Replacement of bridge over the Bluestone River.
5. Route 651 - T.R. Barrett Road. Reconstruction of roadway, including widening of lanes and addition of shoulders to roadway.

It is recommended that the Tazewell County Transportation Safety Committee continue to study and keep detailed records of hazardous locations within the county to update the priority list of safety improvements.

Needed Improvements

This section does not deal directly with specific projects, but rather with the general needs of the county, as well as safety issues. It is recommended that the Tazewell County Road Viewer Committee be responsible for implementing these recommendations and that this group report annually to the Board of Supervisors on their progress.

The first item involves the existing state road system. There are many high volume secondary roads and collectors that need to be upgraded. While a list of many of these roads is contained in the current long range transportation improvement plan, this list will be re-evaluated with the new statewide VTrans 2040. This document will be the guidance for long range transportation planning over the next 25 years. Larger construction projects will be funded and prioritized through the new House Bill 2 program and its criteria. Smaller projects and maintenance of existing roadways will be funded through the Bristol District and Lebanon Residency of VDOT. Tazewell County needs to work with the State and Federal Government to fully fund work on these roadways.

The next item involves the existing county road (Orphan Road) system. The county's orphan road program needs to be examined and renovated to determine present needs and a method of implementation devised to make it more efficient. With the rise in material prices and the economic down turn, funding also plays a critical role in the maintenance and construction of these roadways. The Tazewell County Planning Commission has recently developed an Orphan Road Subcommittee for the intake of additional roads into the Tazewell County Orphan Road System. Along with the Tazewell County Transportation Safety Committee and the Engineering Department, this committee should be used to help prioritize the needs of the county roads for the citizens of Tazewell County.

Another area of concern is the congestion of traffic in some parts of the county. In the Claypool Hill area of Tazewell County, there is a mixture of land uses located directly along this traffic

corridor. The combination of land uses and high traffic volume causes congestion which impedes the free flow of traffic in this area. While improvement of the intersection adjacent will have some impact, it will not do away with the problem altogether.

Of chief concern to the County is the development of the “Coal Fields Expressway” located within the region. The development of this expressway will cause an increase of congestion in the Claypool area with the increase of traffic volume. Tazewell County needs to work closely with the Department of Transportation to access the congestion in this area and to plan for the future impact of the “Coal Fields Expressway.” The assessment should also include the possible upgrade of U.S. 460 leading into Buchanan County and the improvement of Route 19 from the Bluefield Area to the Claypool Hill area with the construction of the I-73 Corridor already under construction. These two roadways are going to have a major impact on our current roadway system and possible development along the 460 and 19 road corridors. The future of the "Coal Fields Expressway" is somewhat in question, although new studies and recent public hearings do indicate that the project is still a possibility.

B. New Transportation Regulations

In July 2006, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) instituted the Rural Transportation Planning Program. This initiative created regional transportation plans in rural areas that compliment those in the metropolitan areas of the state. By partnering with Virginia’s Planning District Commission (PDCs), the local governments are all represented and VDOT provides regional transportation assessment and improvements that best satisfy existing and future transportation needs. Though not every rural area in the state is currently served, the goal of VDOT is to provide this type of programming statewide. Through this program, each planning district will develop a Rural Long-Range Plan (RLRP) that will have a minimum of 20-years planning horizons and will address the expected impacts of population and employment growth on the transportation system. Each will develop a vision statement and be updated every five (5) years and will ultimately be used to identify regional priorities for funding. The RLRP will also provide a GIS-based long-range multimodal transportation plan that integrates highways, bicycle/pedestrian/freight, aviation, and transit systems.

The Virginia General Assembly enacted Chapter 527 within the Code of Virginia (Section 15.2-2222.1) that authorizes VDOT to coordinate state and local transportation planning beginning July 1, 2007. This new regulation gives VDOT review and comment opportunity on local Comprehensive Plans drafts and updates prior to adoption of said plans as they relate to transportation on state controlled highways. VDOT comments shall relate to plans and capacities for construction of transportation facilities affected by the proposal. Within 30 days of receipt of such proposed plan or amendment, VDOT may request a meeting between VDOT and the local planning commission or other agency to discuss the plan or amendment. VDOT will make written comments within 90 days after receipt of the plan or amendment and such comments must become part of the official record of the plan or amendment’s adoption proceedings.

Chapter 527 also impacts the review procedures for rezoning and subdivision requests before the local governing body. If either such requests are expected to have a substantial affect on transportation on

state-controlled highways, the applicant must include a traffic impact statement that follows VDOT approved methodology. VDOT will review traffic impact statements and provide comments based on the local comprehensive plan, regulations and guidelines of VDOT, engineering and design considerations, any adopted regional or statewide plans, and short and long-term traffic impacts on and off site.

The Virginia General Assembly authorized VDOT to develop and implement access management standards for arterials, collectors, and local streets. These standards went into effect on July 1, 2008. These regulations are not advisory and all new entrances to the state highway system will have to meet the new VDOT requirements or permits will not be issued. These standards will be imposed by VDOT, not the local governing body, and these regulations have the force of law. The implementation of this new system is in two phases: Phase One will regulate principal arterial roads which went into effect on July 1, 2008; Phase Two will regulate minor arterials, collectors, and local streets which became effective on October 14, 2009. Additional regulatory changes were made during the 2011 Legislative session of the General Assembly to create a new category of Low Volume Commercial Entries.

These regulations currently apply only to designed highways with phasing planned to include the rest of the state highway system. Key features of these new regulations require: 1) Entrances must accommodate bicycles and pedestrians; 2) Entrances are not permitted in the functional area of an intersection or interstate interchange; 3) Private entrances are redefined to include some low volume uses that are currently classified as commercial as well as entrances to agricultural fields and public utility facilities; 4) VDOT will no longer provide on cost installation of private entrance pipes; and 5) Key changes in the Road Design Manual including new spacing requirements for commercial entrances, crossovers, and signals, and revised curb radii and clearances.

These changes in regulation are designed to provide more efficient and management development patterns throughout the state. The philosophy of these programs appear soundly in line with those of the county. Implementation of these regulations and procedures will be new work for both the county and private organizations involved in development and will undoubtedly have an impact on the cost and pattern of development within the county.

Transportation

Summary Of Needs and Opportunities

The effects of a community's transportation system upon the land are vital. Tazewell County's main transportation infrastructure is the road and highway system ranging from US Routes 460 and 19 to unpaved primary and secondary roads.

A transportation plan must take into consideration topography, population density and distribution, land development policies, and the overall planning objectives of a community. Additionally, how people and goods use various networks are crucial to the development of a community and the impact on the landscape and resources of the region.

The Tazewell County Airport is located two miles northwest of Claypool Hill off U.S. Route 19/460. The airport service has an important economic and transportation benefit for this tri-county region. The airport is governed by the Tazewell County Airport Authority. Commercial air service is also available at nearby Tri-City Regional Airport (Bristol, Kingsport, Johnson City). Having an airport can also help civil defense. It provides relief from natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. It also provides service for local police, Civil Air Patrol, and National Guard activities and may be used by aircraft involved in the detection and suppression of forest fires and assessment of damages caused by fuel and chemical spills. The Tazewell County Airport has small plane capabilities, including a 4,300-foot aircraft runway and instrument landing capability for single and twin-engine general aviation uses. An AWOS Beacon upgrade was completed at the airport in 2012. Additionally, a project was completed in 2011 with FAA assistance to improve the approach angle of aircraft during takeoff and landing, primarily by excavating out a portion of an adjacent mountain.

Rail service in the region is provided by Norfolk Southern Railroad and CSX Transportation. Tazewell County is primarily served by Norfolk and Southern which has an east-west orientation within the region. Much of the coal mined within the county is shipped out of the region via rail on this line. Amtrak passenger rail services are available in Hinton, West Virginia—about an hour from Tazewell County.

Major interstate truck lines and smaller companies provide trucking services. Local bus services are available within the region, and commercial bus service is accessible to citizens of the region at stops in Abingdon, Marion, Wytheville, and Bristol.

Goal: Create and support efficient and convenient transportation network for the movement of people and goods into, out of, and within the county.

Implementation of the Goal: Provide efficient and quality public facilities and services to reasonably and adequately serve all geographic sectors of the county.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Upgrade existing unpaved secondary roads
 - Continue to aggressively seek and utilize available state funds to upgrade unpaved roads.
 - Prioritize the unpaved road projects based on a set of criteria.
2. Improve unsafe conditions on county roads and bridges
 - Identify road sections with dangerous curves and inadequate bridges, or with pavement widths insufficient to carry existing traffic volumes, and include improvements in the six-year secondary road plan.
 - Continue to upgrade substandard subdivision streets to state standards through the Rural Addition Program.
3. Promote construction and enhancement of major transportation corridors in the county.
 - Support improvements to US 19 and 460 in order to address increasing traffic problems
 - Support the construction of a new interchange at Claypool Hill to serve the increasing amount of through traffic

4. Prevent unsafe entrances on to state roads from residential and commercial developments
 - Support the Virginia Department of Transportation new Access Management Regulations
5. Plan for future road improvement in designated growth areas in accordance with the land use plan and in coordination with proposed utility extensions
 - Encourage a pro-active role by elected officials in transportation planning
 - Continue to encourage all new structures to be setback an adequate distance from any state road right-of-way in order to promote safety and avoid problems in future road widening and utility projects
6. Establish a priority on needed maintenance improvements on existing roadways
 - Continue support of the Tazewell County Road Viewer Committee
7. Improve county Orphan Road System
 - Access the need to renovate the existing Orphan Road Policy
 - Utilize the Tazewell County Transportation Safety Committee, Tazewell County Planning Commission Orphan Roads Subcommittee, and Tazewell County Engineering Department to help prioritize the needs of the county's Orphan Roads
 - Explore means to increase funding for the Orphan Road System

Rail Transportation

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Preserve and enhance opportunities for greater industrial use of the railroad in the county
 - Identify and reserve potential industrial sites along or near the railroad
 - Seek state industrial rail access funds to construct rail siding, when necessary, to serve new or existing industrial sites
 - Study the possibility of establishing a train terminal for freight to be jointly used by area industries
2. Promote efforts to restore passenger rail service through southwestern Virginia
 - Take an active role in regional efforts to restore passenger rail service to the county
 - Assist the Town of Pocahontas in its efforts to convert the rail easement for the walking and biking rail by seeking available grant funds

Air Transportation

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Provide airport improvements to meet future needs of industry and the general public
 - Support the implementation of the master plan for the Tazewell County Airport
 - Investigate the long-range feasibility of commuter air service based on experiences of other small airports

Public Transportation

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Increase the availability of public transit services
 - Investigate the possibility of commuter transit services to transport workers from home to employment centers
2. Encourage ridesharing opportunities to assist county residents that lack transportation and reduce traffic loads in the county
 - Pursue local interest in organizing a ride sharing program among area industries to encourage carpooling
 - Study the need for “park and ride” lots in the county for commuters

Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Provide designated facilities for pedestrian and bicycle transportation
 - Plan and seek grant funds for the development of countywide systems of walking and biking trails
 - Work with the U.S. Forest Service to promote its existing recreational facilities for both local use and tourism
 - Support projects to provide safe pedestrian and bicycling access along roadways within towns and in developed areas of the county
 - Encourage development of safety regulation for bicycling on public roads, i.e. reflective gear, mirrors, helmets, and the deployment of necessary warning signs

All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Transportation

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Provide designated facilities for ATV transportation
 - Continue working with Southwest Regional Recreation Authority to complete the existing and funded ATV Trail system
 - Continue working with Southwest Regional Recreation Authority to plan and seek grant funds for the development of additional systems of ATV trails
 - Work with the U.S. Forest Service to promote its existing recreational facilities for both local use and tourism
 - Support projects to provide safe ATV access along roadways within towns and in developed areas of the county
 - Encourage development of safety regulation for ATV riding on public roads, i.e. reflective gear, mirrors, helmets, and the deployment of necessary warning signs

V. Community Facilities and Governance

The citizens of Tazewell County have access to a myriad of services for health, welfare, and recreation throughout the county. These facilities include buildings and services that provide for the quality of life as well as the health and safety of a community. The county provides many of these services and amenities to residents, some of which are paid in part or wholly through taxes and state and federal programs. Because much of the population is centered in the towns, the services and infrastructure are also centralized in these areas. It is not fiscally responsible or feasible to provide equal services across the vast geography of the county, but the provision of services and the burden of the cost for these services must be equitably borne. All citizens benefit from a healthy economy, and vibrant communities, even when not everyone lives in the center of these communities. Likewise, town residents benefit from the protection of natural beauty and resources available in the agricultural areas. The provision and management of services and infrastructure is an important role of government and one worthy of assessment, planning, and protection for Tazewell County.

A. Community and Human Services

Tazewell County is home to a myriad of community and human service organizations and governmental programs. These services provide resources to residents and visitors ranging from emergency needs to entertainment opportunities. Although a large number of these services are available, the majority of resources provided come from three sources: Clinch Valley Community Action (CVCA), the Tazewell County Department of Social Services (TCOSS), and the Cumberland Mountain Community Services Board (CMCSB). Both Clinch Valley Community Action and the Cumberland Mountain Community Services Board provide services to the region, in addition to Tazewell County.

Some of the services provided by these groups can be broken down into categories that include:

- Advocacy Services
- After School Programs
- Alcohol and Drug Support Services
- Case Management Services
- Civic Organizations
- Community Outreach
- Counseling
- Crisis Services
- Support Services for the Deaf
- Domestic Violence Support
- Education
- Emergency Food and Shelter
- Employment Services
- Group Homes
- Head Start Program
- Housing
- Indoor Plumbing and Weatherization
- Intellectual Disability Services
- Legal Services
- Medical Services
- Mental Health Services
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation
- Recreation
- Reproductive Health
- Senior Citizen Services
- State Agencies
- Tourism
- Transportation Services

The Tazewell County Department of Social Services and Clinch Valley Community Action compile a Directory of Community Resources that list the services available within the county along with valuable contact information and general descriptions of the type of service and eligibility requirements. The primary service area for both the CVCA and CMCSB is Tazewell County with additional services provided in Russell and Buchanan counties.

CVCA is locally managed and governed by a 15 member Board of Directors for the purpose of reducing poverty and promoting self-sufficiency of the poor. One-third of the board includes locally elected officials or their designees, one-third, representatives of local business or civic organizations and one-third, low income representatives. CVCA operates twelve programs with a total of 36 different projects. Over 8,000 individuals and more than 5,000 families are impacted by CVCA's services in the three-county area. The agency employs over ninety (90) full and part-time individuals throughout the three-county area. CVCA brings a cross-section of the community together to address the needs of low-income citizens.



CMCSB is one of forty (40) Community Service Boards in Virginia. Their services include mental health, substance abuse, and intellectual disability programs in their three-county area. Many of their programs have received recognition at the local, regional, state, and national levels for innovation in their service fields. Programs impact a wide cross section of the population, from services with infants, the elderly, the mentally ill, substance abusers, and the intellectually disabled. The Service Board employs approximately 480 full time, part time, and client-employees throughout the three-county area of Tazewell, Russell and Buchanan Counties.

B. Healthcare Facilities and Services

Tazewell County is home to two hospitals: *Carilion Tazewell Community Hospital* is a 56 bed acute care facility, approved by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. It is a part of the *Carilion* family of hospitals. It admits roughly 1,100 patients per year, offering emergency, diagnostic, medical, and surgical care for residents. *Clinch Valley Medical Center* is a 200 bed acute care hospital offering specialty care for the heart and lungs, complete cancer care and emergency services, plus rehabilitation, skilled nursing, pediatrics, obstetrics, and advanced diagnostics. Each hospital is independently owned (investor owned) by an out of county entity and receives little or no input regarding quality and services for area citizens.

Additionally the county is home to the Tri-County Health Clinic and the Tazewell Community Clinic that provide services to low-income families at no cost as well as the Tazewell County Health Department that provides regular and emergency care to residents and visitors to the county. Bluefield

Regional Medical Center supports a local Ambulatory and Radiology Diagnostic Center/Outpatient Surgical Center in Bluefield, VA. Additionally, the County now has a private Urgent Care facility in the *MedExpress, Inc.* facility in Bluefield, VA.

Tazewell County over the past decade has had access to average and above health care services whereas the emergency transportation system has struggled, and has been disjointed and not available on a timely basis to all areas of the county. The patient emergency receiving systems at the county's two acute care hospitals has been good.

It appears county officials and area leaders have little interest or concern regarding health care as it has been provided for decades by outside corporations and entities. This lack of input has led to a lack of quality and in some cases a lack of needed services

Health care professional and physician shortages continue to be an area of concern. Southwest Virginia Community College and the Tazewell County School System (LPN) have done an excellent job educating and supplying health care employees in some disciplines of the health care field. Adequate numbers of physicians in Family Medicine, medical/surgical specialties and subspecialties continues to be a major concern. A new Registered Nurse (RN) Program at Bluefield College has been formed and will assist in meeting this shortage in part. Additionally, the proposed Dental School partnership with Bluefield College will seek to meet the shortage in technicians and dentists within the region.

Tazewell County is fortunate to have multiple nursing homes, all of which are well established with reputations of adequate patient care. Unfortunately, as the residents of the County grow older, there is a greater need for such facilities. The need for a long term care nursing facility in Tazewell County can be adequately supported. While several assisted care facilities are located in the western section of the county, there is a need for more assisted care facilities in the central and eastern sections of the county.

Generally the population of Tazewell County has been very dependent on state medical assistance for payment of health care services. The general trend is 10-15% of all health care services are paid for by Medicare or other forms of state subsidized payments.

In the past, the employment base in the Western and Northwestern districts of the county allowed commercial insurance payments for health care services to be above state and national averages. It remains to be seen if this is still the case. Commercial third party insurance coverage in the center part of the county lags, while the eastern section's is just below average. In general, Tazewell County's coal mining, gas exploration, state and local government, and manufacturing sectors have provided above average third party commercial insurance for it citizens.

Cost of health care in Tazewell County is higher than the state average. A portion of the high cost can be contributed to the very high cost of malpractice insurance for all facilities and health professionals.

Tazewell County has an aging population which creates challenges for health care providers both from a service standpoint and payment perspective.

The Virginia Health Department continues to provide many health services to the area's citizens especially low-income families with children.

One item of importance is the impact on the Affordable Care Act on the health of the area. This law allows for those without insurance to gain access to health insurance at a subsidized rate through the federal government. This plan does not replace Medicaid or Medicare, instead providing services to those of working age and their dependents. The impact of the law is currently an unknown, with very little data to substantiate its success or failure.

The development of a Hospice program for portions of the county has been well accepted and extremely beneficial.

An area that should not be overlooked is cost of burials. While most funeral homes and mortuaries are locally owned, most grave yards in Tazewell County are owned by out of county, out of state companies. These companies have no charge controls thereby creating more pressure to utilize burials in unregulated grave yards or private burial plots.

C. Veterinary Services

Another area of community health is veterinary services. Tazewell County is home to four veterinary care clinics and multiple smaller providers. Due to the rural nature of the county, many of these providers and clinics have the ability to treat not only house pets, but also larger animals, such as livestock. Veterinary services are also provided in adjacent counties, both in Virginia and West Virginia. In addition, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is home to a highly lauded School of Veterinary Medicine, graduating many of the area's providers, and allowing for more complicated treatments for sick or wounded animals.

Goal: To provide assessable, affordable, health care services to the citizens of Tazewell County.

Objectives and Strategies

1. County and local officials take a more proactive role in health care. Input regarding services, costs, needs, insurance, etc, is badly needed.
2. Emphasis on physician and professional health service, personnel recruitment, and retention must be increased.
3. Recruitment from local medical schools (those within 100 mile radius) and professional schools must be undertaken. County citizen input is needed.
4. Development of more long term care facilities
5. Development of more assisted living facilities
6. Development of more outpatient services and sub-acute services. This provides lower cost alternatives to its citizens

7. Creation of a task force to study and recommend improved emergency care transportation services for the county.
8. Continued development of Hospice Program(s) to serve all county populace.
9. Continued development of healthcare needs, services, and methods of payment so needed services will be available and locally accessible for future generations.

D. Public Safety Services and Facilities

The citizens of Tazewell County have access to a myriad of services throughout the county. These facilities include buildings and services that provide for the quality of life, safety, and well-being of a community. The county provides these services and amenities to residents, which are paid through taxes and state and federal programs.

The Public Safety Department is dedicated to serving the Citizens of Tazewell County during times of county-wide crisis or single emergencies. It is the role of the Director of Public Safety to coordinate the efforts of the fire and rescue departments for the county.

1. Fire and Rescue

The county is home to three full-time fire stations: Tazewell County Fire-Rescue, the Town of Richlands Fire Department, and The Town of Tazewell Fire Department. Tazewell County Fire-Rescue was founded with the purpose of providing fire suppression, rescue and emergency medical services to Central and Western Tazewell County, Virginia. This department serves approximately 15,000 citizens for fire suppression and approximately 30,000 with emergency medical services.



Several communities and towns have volunteer fire departments that support the fire suppression efforts of the county within the towns and surrounding area. Tazewell County has now also added a Fire and Rescue Director to their staff. The primary purpose for the position is to foster cooperation between all of the emergency operators, as well as plan and budget for advancements in equipment and training for all departments.

2. Tazewell County Sheriff's Department

The mission of the county Sheriff's Department is to provide for the welfare and safety of the surrounding communities, its citizens and environment while enforcing the law and maintaining safe responsive emergency services throughout Tazewell County.

The Tazewell County Sheriff's Department has five divisions to serve the residents of the County with 24 hour a day law enforcement service:

- Patrol
- Detective
- Civil Processing
- Code Enforcement
- Court Security

There are 51 full-time sworn officers and 83 Sheriff's Department office personnel. Additionally, there are three (3) part-time employees in the courthouse. K-9 units serve with two primary purposes, narcotics cases and patrol duties. Two (2) full time K-9 animals are trained and on-duty for the County. Litter Control and Animal Control are handled by the Code Enforcement Division. Litter pickup, an excellent and active program. Two (2) employees coordinate the program through the court and patrol system. Pickup throughout the County is active five days a week. Drug issues are handled by the Drug Task Force. Three (3) full time officers are assigned to the drug task force, and this division is expanding due to the growing drug issues in Tazewell County. An Emergency Response Team has recently been organized. Ten (10) people make up this team, which are trained and prepared to respond to any emergency.

The Tazewell County Sheriff's Department has been accredited by the State of Virginia since 2008. Additionally, Sheriff Hieatt is a member of the Governor's School Safety Task Force.

It must be noted that the Tazewell County Sheriff's Department has no jurisdiction inside of town limits with the exception of animal licensing.

3. 911 Emergency Response Center

The Tazewell County 911 Emergency Response Center has been handling emergency calls since April 23, 1997. The 911 Center is comprised of 21 sworn employees under the Communications Division of the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office. The Communications Division is responsible for dispatching 25 Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS agencies within the County and its five Incorporated Towns. In 2012, the Communications Division processed 27,766 emergency phone calls and 95,432 non-emergency phone calls. Additionally, 38,663 incident reports were created, and 911,544 radio transmissions were processed.

The Communications Division has six (6) Dispatcher workstations within the 911 Center. Each of these use state of the art technology in processing calls for assistance. This includes a touch screen radio system, emergency medical dispatch (EMD) system that provides instructions on how callers can help prior to the arrival of emergency responders, two weather monitoring systems that provide up to the minute weather conditions and forecasts, mapping software that quickly plots a caller's location, and various software applications that assist the Dispatchers in their duties. The Sheriff's Office also utilizes a Mobile Crime Scene/Command Vehicle that assists in processing crime scenes and communications support at large incidents.

The Communications Division, along with the Board of Supervisors, are implementing improvements to the communications system countywide as detailed in various studies and reports completed in recent years. These improvements are to better strengthen the communications system to handle the increasing call volumes, improve radio coverage in the valleys, and to better withstand the unique weather conditions of Tazewell County.

4. Pocahontas State Correctional Center

Pocahontas State Correctional Center (PSCC) is a medium security correctional facility (Levels II and III) within the Virginia Department of Corrections. Located on County Route 734 just outside the Town of Pocahontas, the facility is located on 950 acres of land.

Construction of this facility began in 2004, with PSCC receiving its first offenders on October 2, 2007. Maximum capacity of the center is 1,024 general population offenders. The prison population is managed in a housing unit style environment and lends itself to program participation. The institution provides a variety of program and educational opportunities, including substance abuse classes, vocational classes, and a high school completion or GED class.

The physical plan consists of four (4) offender housing units with a 256 bed capacity for each. The inside support building contains Special Housing, Property, Intake, Commissary, Medical, Food Service, DCE and Vocational, Treatment, Laundry, Offender Gymnasium, and Offender Visitation. There is also a Warehouse / Maintenance Building and the Staff Range, which is also utilized by the Tazewell County Sheriff's Department for training. Security at the facility includes a double perimeter fence (with electronic motion detection equipment) with razor wire, a video surveillance system, and two sally ports for entry and exit.

Currently PSCC has 300+ classified positions, in the following arenas: facility management, correctional security, business and accounting management, human resource management, counseling, mental health care, postal services, food services, offender records, warehouse, laundry, building and grounds, clerical support, medical, and educational services. Pocahontas State Correctional Center has been a welcome addition to the County, and enjoys a close and cooperative relationship with local citizens, businesses, and public officials.

E. Recreational Services and Facilities

Tazewell, Bluefield, and Richlands all have recreation departments that provide a variety of regional services and facility management. Tazewell County has four established parks: Cavitt's Creek, Lincolnshire, Graham, and Richlands Recreation park. All have active as well as passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Since the last edition of this document in 2008, additional recreational attractions have



been created. These include the portion of Virginia Route 16, denoted



by the Governor of Virginia as the Back of the Dragon, a 32 mile portion of the highway in Tazewell and Smyth counties, which are major draws for motorcycle/sport car aficionados, including an annual rally that is held in Tazewell. Then there is the new "Original Pocahontas" ATV Trail, constructed by Tazewell County, and managed by Spearhead Trails, an offshoot of the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA.) This includes over 30 miles of ATV trails in the Pocahontas area. In order to

serve these new facilities, Tazewell County has also become home to several new cabin facilities which will cater to the ATV and motorcyclist/driver.

Additionally, the Clinch Valley Bioreserve is listed by Nature Conservancy among the "Last Great Places" in the WORLD's remaining ecosystems. Some of the most sensitive species of the Clinch River include 13 endangered species of freshwater mussels. As stated earlier in the plan, Tazewell County also has many natural and cultural areas that attract residents and visitors worthy of protection and enhancement such as Burke's Garden, Pioneer Park, and the Paint Lick area that is home to Native American cliff drawings. Jefferson National Forest has a rustic campground facility located along the county border and there are also several private fishing and hunting clubs throughout Tazewell County.



Community Facilities and Services

Summary of Needs and Opportunities

The citizens of Tazewell County have access to a multitude of services for health, welfare, education, and recreation throughout the county. These services not only provide for the health and safety of the community, but also improve the quality of life for the citizens. Opportunities range from amenities paid from local, state and federal programs, to the natural beauty and agricultural areas that are prevalent throughout the county. With the opportunities come challenges inherent to rural areas.

Human services agencies such as Tazewell County Department of Social Services and Clinch Valley Community Action provide resources, training, outreach, referral, and advocacy to meet the needs of those least able to provide for themselves. While no longer the highest, Tazewell County still has a high number of children in foster care, when compared to the other counties of Southwest Virginia. This is due in great part to the substance abuse problems that are prevalent. Finding an adequate number of foster homes within the county is a challenge. Some children must be housed in specialized foster care outside our area, since those homes are not always available locally.

Due to the aging population of the county, services are also provided by the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens. They provide a vast array of services for Tazewell County's senior citizens that aren't met by any other program. These include transportation, nutrition, day care and health care. Most of these services are on a sliding fee scale or free to the participant.

Tazewell County also has Taking Action for Special Kids (TASK) and the Center for Independent Living (CIL) to assist citizens with special needs. There are food pantry programs in each town that help those who need help providing food for their families. These agencies all provide a valuable service for those in need.

The county also offers a robust Public Safety Program. This includes fire and rescue services for all areas of the county; emergency services for any natural or man-made disaster; and law enforcement through the Tazewell County Sheriff's office, town police forces and Special Police. One challenge that faces the Public Safety Program is the terrain of the county. While providing natural beauty, it also tests the communication systems of these services. These needs have been addressed by a state communications grant to upgrade the radio systems for emergency services personnel throughout the county. A continuous effort is underway to upgrade these facilities to serve the citizens of Tazewell County.

Recreational opportunities abound in the county due to its terrain and natural beauty. The new motorsport facilities help showcase this beauty to visitors and residents of the "gearhead" persuasion. For others, the four established parks within the borders of the county will allow visitors and residents alike to enjoy the great outdoors. The Nature Conservancy listed the Clinch Valley Bioreserve among the "Last Great Places" in the world's remaining ecosystems. Some of the most sensitive species of the Clinch River include 13 endangered species of freshwater mussels. These endangered species also provide special challenges to development in the area, sometimes delaying projects because of the unique species that must be protected before construction can begin.

The county should maintain adequate library services and continue to support development of library services in the county.

Goal Statement:

To provide efficient and improved quality public facilities and services, so that to the greatest extent feasible, all geographic sectors will be adequately served.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Every citizen should be able to obtain help to meet their basic needs from a local agency, either by direct aid or referral.
 - Continue to support local and state public service agencies
2. Continue to look for recreational opportunities for the citizens, while protecting the natural beauty and endangered species.
 - Continued support of hiking, biking, and walking trails throughout the county.
 - Continue to encourage development of recreational lake and water activities.
3. Provide sufficient protection of the citizens with law enforcement, fire and rescue services.
4. Access the overcrowding of inmates in the regional jail
 - By accessing the feasibility of acquiring the deactivated state facility located in Gratton.
 - Study the feasibility of satellite sheriff offices throughout the county
 - Review the locations and services provided by fire and rescue squads in the county with the goal of expansions. The inclusion of more full time positions should be studied.
 - Investigate the availability of more grants to enhance these services
 - Encourage expansion of community involvement such as neighborhood watch groups.
5. Continue to develop more library services to meet the needs of all county citizens
 - To encourage the improvement of computer technology, such as on-line/database services.
6. Maintain a safe responsive emergency service for the citizens of Tazewell County.
 - The county should consider replacement and/or up-grades on the 911 communication infrastructure
 - Assess the need for new 911 center
 - Recommend inter-intra jurisdictional capabilities be installed
 - Examine the possibility of direct radio contact from school buses to 911 dispatch center

VI. Infrastructure and Land Use

The citizens of Tazewell County have access to a myriad of services for health, welfare, education, and recreation throughout the county. These facilities include buildings, lands, and infrastructure that provide for the quality of life as well as the health and safety of a community.

A. Information Technology Infrastructure

Over the past ten years, Tazewell County has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) which is used by the county government and staff. Within the last year, the County has made the internal system available for viewing and use for outside individuals and entities. The GIS is used to store visual and data sources related to road, house, parcel, as well as public and emergency service facility locations throughout the county. In order to fully utilize this important service, the technology infrastructure of the county must expand to include a robust internet network to transport and share this and other information technology data throughout the county and the region. The geography of the county is again a restrictive feature for this service and providing county-wide high-speed internet access is a challenge – but one worth accomplishing for the advancement and quality of life improvement for residents and businesses of the area. Projects recently completed have advanced the expansion of broadband internet lines along the primary roadways of the County, as well as providing internet access to the Tannersville area through the Tazewell County Wireless Authority.

B. Water and Sewer

Tazewell County has continued to make improvements in water and sewer service throughout the county. In 2000, only 1.1 percent of owner-occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities and only one percent of rental-occupied housing units fell into this category. The public wastewater facilities in the county are located in the Towns of Tazewell, Bluefield, Richlands, Pocahontas, Amonate, and the Tazewell County Public Service Authority facility at Wardell. Plans are underway to provide public sewer to several areas along the 19/460 corridor in the Central part of the county as well as to the areas of Kents Ridge, Baptist Valley, Jewell Ridge, Greens Chapel, Red Ash, Road Ridge, Bishop, Abbs Valley, and the Forest Hills and Willow Springs subdivisions. Funding such projects requires a multi-year planning and implementation program. Currently, septic systems provide sewer to the remaining areas of the county.

Public water service is provided by Tazewell County Public Service Authority (TCPSA). Facilities include plants in Claypool Hill and Raven/Doran, along with chlorinated wells in Buskill, Teller, Boissevain and Lake View. Bluefield, Tazewell, Richlands, and Pocahontas also operate water treatment facilities. Most of the 19/460 corridor is served by public water and is the targeted area for intensive development outside the towns. Planning is underway to extend water to many areas of the county and to improve flow and quality of water sources within the current system. Private wells provide water to the remainder of the county.

C. Solid Waste Management

Tazewell County operates a county landfill near Springville on approximately 42 acres of land. It is authorized to receive non-hazardous and municipal waste. The county continues to study and consider recycling programming to reduce waste in the landfill as well as compaction efforts to reduce the size of waste entering the system. Continued assessment of these efforts is important and valuable as the maintenance and any future expansion of the landfill facility is very costly.

D. Telecommunications

In order to assist with providing telecommunications services to citizens outside of the Towns of the County, the Board of Supervisors saw fit to create the Tazewell County Wireless Authority. The first and only project completed thus far by the Authority is the supplying of wireless internet to the community of Tannersville.

Cellular towers provide cellular communications services to most of the Towns within the County, as well as to the areas along the primary corridors. Unfortunately, this leaves a large part of the County without service. Over the last five years, cellular providers have made an impact on many of these areas, but there are many mountain and valley areas without any service at all.

INFRASTRUCTURE

SUMMARY OF NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Tazewell County provides many services and amenities to the residents of Tazewell County. These services include water, sewer, solid waste removal, GIS mapping, and alternative energy. Because the growth in Tazewell County has occurred in and around the five towns located in Tazewell County, these services and amenities have been centralized in and around these areas.

Tazewell County has many natural resources which include but are not limited to coal, methane gas and wind. These natural resources need to be considered in providing alternative energy. Natural gas is provided to the Tazewell County residences that live in the Town of Bluefield and the Falls Mills area. Tazewell County should assess the possibility of converting coal bed methane to natural gas and to provide an alternative energy source for the entire county. Another alternative energy source that Tazewell County needs to assess is wind energy. With the rising energy costs, wind energy has the potential to provide supplemental energy needs. Tazewell County has identified developed property in the western and northern portions of the County which previously were home to strip mining operations. These areas, due to their location, topography, and proximity to existing heavy power transmission lines would be best suited to renewable energy projects.

Tazewell County should consider the adoption of a Wind Energy Ordinance. By the adoption of this ordinance Tazewell County can ensure the infrastructure and safety of the public being addressed during the construction of the wind turbines, while supplying an alternate energy source.

Telecommunications in Tazewell County are centered around the Towns because this is where the majority of county residents live. Tazewell County needs to assess how to provide telecommunications to the entire county. These telecommunications should include broadband, cell

phone service, and cable. An area of concern with telecommunications is the need to expand the emergency communications system. Tazewell county should develop a written communication plan and provide at least 95% coverage for hand-held radios throughout the county.

Goal: To expand Tazewell County's Infrastructure to cover the entire county.

Implementation of Goal: Good planning and communication are a must to achieve all the desired elements of the infrastructure throughout the county.

Objective and Strategies

1. Increase cooperation and communication between towns and county government regarding infrastructure needs and services
2. Develop a plan to extend public water to the entire county.
 - Identify any county/town connections
 - Identify delivery rates at the connections
 - Establish and identify available source and production capacities
 - Recommendation to include towns in 604B study
 - Identify funding sources that aid in the elimination of inadequate sewage disposal
3. Develop a plan to extend public sewer to the entire county
 - Identify county/town and regional project connections
 - Establish and identify source discharge points
 - Development of agreements for use of sewer lines
 - Identify capacity for treatment and line delivery
4. Provide more accessible solid waste convenience areas with adequate site locations and staffing
5. Develop a plan to extend the life of the landfill.
 - Study the economical long-term development of the land fill
 - Purchase a tire shredder
 - Study and implement a re-cycling program

6. Develop a plan to expand the mapping network

- Expand GIS infrastructure to allow towns and other entities within county to have access to GIS system
- Coordinate water/sewer infrastructure of county/towns
- Each entity should provide information to county GIS coordinator to enhance mapping

7. Develop a plan to give Tazewell County residents an alternative energy source

- Include taps into the coal bed methane transmission lines as they are being constructed
- Pursue agreements with Coal Bed Methane companies to convert methane into natural gas for use by Tazewell County residents.
- Develop and Adopt a Wind Energy Ordinance.
- Develop and Adopt a Zoning Ordinance.

8. Develop a plan to provide telecommunications to the entire county

- Aggregation of governmental functions
- Study the establishment of county and town's consolidation of operations and maintenance facilities for broadband
- Utilize the Tazewell County Wireless Authority to develop telecommunications projects using available funds.
- Identify cell phone service deficiencies
- Identify broadband service deficiencies

D. Land Use

1. Land Use Tools

The County is tasked with managing the various land uses within the county to promote the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens. There are tools available to the county staff and governmental bodies to help with this effort. These currently include the subdivision ordinance, health and building regulations and inspections, the future land use map, as well as utility and infrastructure development and investment.

Tazewell County is home to rolling hills, fertile valleys and steep cliffs and rises. This geography is culturally and economically important to the residents and visitors of the region. The protection of these resources and of the scenic beauty of the county act as a great resource to the county's economic development. The ridgelines of the county provide the majestic views that attract tourism and encourage residential development in the county.

Tazewell County may also pursue various state and national programs that support land preservation. One such program is the Transfer/Purchase of Development Rights (TDR and PDR) program. This program is an economic and conservation tool to protect valuable farmland, forestland, and sensitive environmental areas in the county. It is a voluntary program that compensates owners of targeted property for their willingness to accept permanent deed restrictions on their land that limits future industrial, commercial, and residential development on the property. Easements are executed once fair market value is assessed and compensated to the owner of property. This compensation can come in the form of cash payment from a local government (under the PDR arm of the program) or from a private source who wishes to transfer the development rights of the targeted property to another property designated as a recipient land area (the TDR version). Once the easement is in place, the landowner still owns the land and retains all private property rights, including the opportunity to sell or give the land to heirs. The development rights are the only restricted rights under the compensated PDR/TDR easement.

The future land use map provides a visual representation of what citizens hope for development of Tazewell County. However, without land use regulations, this ideal land development pattern remains just that, a hope. Ownership of property is the driving factor behind its use and the type of development that can be expected under this system is individually motivated and driven. The county can limit the extension of infrastructure and services in targeted areas where growth is not desired. Additionally, the use of specified regulations of targeted areas of the county cannot only protect important and sensitive lands, it can also encourage the type and density of development desired in other areas of the county. The Code of Virginia allows for a zoning ordinance to be passed as a means of land use management. Tazewell County currently has no zoning outside of corporate limits of the

five municipalities. These municipalities each have their own zoning ordinance, which they are responsible for overseeing and enforcing. In the future, a District or County-wide zoning ordinance could be used as a tool for land use management.

2. Environment and Land Use

Summary of needs and opportunities

The landscape provides rolling hills, fertile valleys, and the scenic vistas for both the residents and visitors of Tazewell County, but with this scenic beauty comes environmental problems. The following is a summary of items indentified that hamper the preservation of the sensitive areas and open space.

Tazewell County contains surface and ground water resources of varying quality. Even though the diverse landscape and open space available in the county supports favorable conditions for water quality, past development has had harmful impacts within parts of the county. The county has several established watersheds within its boundaries that are being negatively impacted by soil erosion, storm water runoff, and agricultural runoff that has caused our streams and rivers to be designated as “impaired streams” by the Department of Environmental Quality. The Bluestone River and the Upper Clinch River are among the rivers that have this designation. Another contributor to the streams designation is the certain construction of communities near streams that are located within the 100 year flood plain. Tazewell County has a Flood Damage Ordinance, but construction within the flood plain should be discouraged and preservation of greenways/blueways should be encouraged. In addition to the above, failing septic systems and Municipal Waste Water Treatment Plant collection systems in need of repair are contributing to the impaired stream designation and could have harmful effects on the ground water located within Tazewell County. Adequate supplies of clean surface water and potable groundwater are vital to the economic and cultural well-being of Tazewell County.

Most of the county is underlain by limestone and dolomite rocks of the Ordovician and Cambrian ages. Usually, the carbonate hardness is high, and water is classified from moderately hard to hard. Acid conditions and iron are also encountered. Springs in the areas underlain by rocks constitute an important source of groundwater that are integral parts of the water supply. Experience has shown however that the water from these formations are susceptible to contamination from surface water and may require treatment. Karst features are severe limiting factors for the building environment of commercial, industrial, and residential development in the county. Adequate availability of clean water to sustain existing development and to foster future growth is critical.

Significant land use has changed from cropland use to grazing land us. Water quality issues of sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorous continue to be problems due to livestock access to streams. Erosion from new construction sites is regulated through the county’s Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, which requires specific measures to be taken when any land area of 10,000 square feet or

more is disturbed, including single-family homes.

Tazewell County supports the concept that proper management of forested property can protect soil, water quality, and wildlife. Erosion and sediment control practices that at least adhere to guidelines outlined by the Department of Conservation and Recreation are important to maintain while conducting forestry activities.

3. Urban Forest (Green Infrastructure)

The Virginia Department of Forestry has implemented a new program focused on establishing and maintaining trees located in urban areas. This is primarily in towns, but also includes areas where there is a significant level of buildup. Federal and state grant funds are available to support these programs, whether it be for education, startup, or maintenance. The benefits of this program include positive impacts on both the community and the surrounding ecosystem.

The use of the such forests reduce average air temperatures, sequester carbon, absorb stormwater, and provide an aesthetic benefit to the areas where they are located. VDOF has indicated that they can assist in grant requests, as well as recommendations for the best planting sites and species. This program will focus on the health and function of individual trees, not just disposal of damaged or fallen trees.

Goal: Improve the environmental quality of Tazewell County by conserving its natural and cultural resources and protecting them from exploitation and misuse.

Implementation of the Goal: This can be achieved through orderly development of the county and maintenance of a balance between rural and urban land uses.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Development and adoption of zoning ordinance for the county.
 - Prioritization of development and protection goals for land in the county
 - Assessment and accurate mapping of land values and uses
 - Assessment and mapping of prime agricultural lands
 - Assessment and mapping of environmentally sensitive areas
 - Assessment and mapping recreation and open spaces
 - Adopt Ridgeline Protection Ordinance language in to county ordinance structure

- Evaluate state and local models to develop local ordinance for utilizing the PDR/TDR land preservation program for Tazewell County
 - Adequate funding for implementation and enforcement of codes and ordinances
2. Protection of natural and building environment from flooding and storm water runoff
- Map watersheds, sensitive aquifers, floodplains, and steep slopes
 - Protect sensitive aquifer recharge areas in the county
 - Develop comprehensive storm water management programming
 - Develop and enforce floodplain protection programming in the county
3. Promote Regional land development and protection cooperation
- Work with local jurisdiction to coordinate development of land between Russell/Bluefield/Mercer and Tazewell
 - Coordination with neighboring jurisdiction for natural resource protection and promotion
 - Work with local, regional, and national agencies to ensure protection of endangered species
 - Support farm services agency Conservation Reserve Easement Program (CREP)
4. Protect prime agricultural lands
- Research Land Trust and conservation easement options and provide training and appropriate application
 - Support and promote cluster development in residential areas
 - Control development in karst agricultural areas, i.e. Burkes Garden and The Cove
 - Soil conditions may impose certain restrictions on development. When adverse soil conditions occur in combination with other prohibitive factors such as steep slope or located in an area with sinkholes, development may become completely infeasible
5. Protect the county's timberland resource from overuse and misuse while encouraging the protection of plant and animal habitats.
- Support the enforcement of state and federal regulations on logging operations by the Virginia Department of Forestry or other responsible agencies.

- Encourage local landowners to seek technical assistance from the Virginia Department of Forestry regarding the proper use of their timber resources.
- Encourage the participation of local landowners in the Forest Stewardship program and “showcase” exemplary land management plans.
- Encourage the establishment of Agricultural and Forestal Districts and conservation easements as voluntary measures by landowners to protect their forestlands

VII. Education and Training

The citizens of Tazewell County have access to a myriad of services for health, welfare, education, and recreation throughout the county. These facilities include buildings, lands, and infrastructure that provide for the quality of life as well as the health and safety of a community.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER



Tazewell County residents also have a wide and rich variety of learning and training opportunities within easy grasp and there is strong commitment to the maintenance and advancement of the facilities and resources required to provide this important lifelong learning environment. The county is home to 16 public school facilities, Southwest Virginia Community College, Bluefield College, and a satellite campus

program at the community college for Old Dominion University. The county oversees and funds the provision of public educational opportunities for kindergarten through 12th grades. Higher educational opportunities are also available from several institutions within easy driving distance of the county. Due to advances in technology, there are many on-line learning and training opportunities that citizens and businesses can take advantage of without leaving their homes or places of work.

A. Public Education

The Tazewell County School Division, in partnership with parents and the community, is committed to preparing students to become productive members of society by recognizing that each student is unique and possesses the potential to learn.

Figure 7.1

2013 - 2014 Tazewell County Public School Enrollment

School	Enrollment	Grades Offered
Graham High	553	9-12 grades
Richlands High	711	9-12 grades
Tazewell High	597	9-12 grades
Graham Middle	436	6-8 grades
Richlands Middle	567	6-8 grades
Tazewell Middle	465	6-8 grades
Abb's Valley Elementary	143	PK-5 grades
Cedar Bluff Elementary	438	K-5 grades
Dudley Primary	273	PK-2 grades
Graham Intermediate	282	3-5 grades
North Tazewell Elementary	302	PK-5 grades
Raven Elementary	201	PK-5 grades
Richlands Elementary	553	PK-5 grades
Springville Elementary	148	PK-5 grades
Tazewell Elementary	507	PK-5 grades
Tazewell Co. Career & Tech Center	NA*	High school – adult

Tazewell County Public Schools, August 2013

**The Center does not have separate enrollment*

The Tazewell County Career and Technical Center is a vocational center located on the grounds of Tazewell High School but is operated as a separate school with its own administration. It offers occupational training to all the high schools in Tazewell County. In addition to the trades offered during the school day and week, there are four trade extension classes in operation two nights per week. Because of the request for additional vocational offerings in Tazewell County, the Tazewell County Vocational Center has plans for an expansion to their building to include four more trade classes. Evening Classes include Welding and Carpentry.

Figure 7.2

2013 - 2014 Tazewell County Vocational School Enrollment

Class	Enrollment - AM	Enrollment - PM	Total
Auto Body Technician	20	16	36
Building Trades	9	11	20
Diesel Technician	18	11	29
Carpentry	17	12	29
Small Engine Technician	14	17	31
Cosmetology	46	23	69
Nail Technician		6	6
Computer Aided Drafting	13	10	23
Auto Service Technician	19	20	39
Welding	13	16	29
Masonry	14	16	30
Nursing (2nd Year)		14	14
Total Enrollment	183	172	355

Figure 7.3

Tazewell County High School SOL Scores 2011-2013

	% Pass			% Pass			% Pass			% Pass			% Pass		
	Reading			Writing			Algebra I			Geometry			Algebra II		
	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013
Tazewell	94	93	87	93	93	82	90	66	60	81	64	68	91	65	71
Buchanan	94	90	86	89	93	80	97	80	75	85	68	75	98	61	89
Dickenson	93	90	82	88	87	84	94	70	52	93	72	78	84	53	66
Russell	95	97	87	91	95	81	93	65	60	87	80	76	85	48	69
Virginia	94	94	89	93	93	87	94	75	76	87	74	76	91	69	76

Virginia School Report Card, Virginia Department of Education, 2013.

	% Pass			% Pass			% Pass			% Pass			% Pass		
	Biology			Chemistry			Earth Science			VA/US History			World Geography		
	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013
Tazewell	89	91	72	97	93	93	92	92	89	84	82	81	81	78	86
Buchanan	91	94	74	89	97	82	87	93	81	82	88	79	84	89	85
Dickenson	89	90	76	97	100	82	87	89	77	80	88	90	96	87	81
Russell	92	95	80	85	99	98	92	92	80	79	83	81	79	78	73
Virginia	90	92	83	93	93	86	89	90	83	83	85	86	85	85	86

Virginia School Report Card, Virginia Department of Education, 2013.

The Virginia Department of Education maintains school report cards on each public school within the Commonwealth. There is extensive data about curriculum, student performance and overall school assessments found in these reports that are accessible on-line through the Tazewell County Public Schools website, www.tazewell.k12.va.us. Figure 5.2 shows the Tazewell County High School Standards of Learning scores for the 2011-2013 school years. Tazewell County is meeting state standards in all categories of assessment. In addition to this state assessment process, the county developed a Comprehensive Plan Education Committee in January of 2006 that developed an extensive list of goals, objectives and strategies for implementation around issues and future visions of the educational resources for the county. This committee was made up of public educators and administrators, higher education personnel as well as social, community and economic development representatives from across the county and region. The primary targets for improvement and investment were career awareness and exploration, career readiness, emotional wellness, substance abuse prevention, and nutrition and physical well-being. Specific goals and strategies for addressing these needs can be found in the goal development section of this chapter.

Figure 7.4

2010-2012 Cohort Graduation Rates for All Students

Cumberland Plateau Planning District

Division	2010	2011	2012
Tazewell	69%	73%	74%
Buchanan	77%	81%	76%
Dickenson	79%	81%	81%
Russell	77%	81%	81%
Virginia	82%	84%	83%

Virginia School Report Card,

Virginia Department of Education, 2013. (Federal Graduation Indicator)

Tazewell County Public Schools strive to meet the changing needs of students and the communities that are home to the school facilities. Figure 5.3 indicates that Tazewell County had the lowest graduation rate in the Planning District in 2011-2013. Addressing the barriers for improving graduation rates in Tazewell County is a critical need in the school system. Teachers and administrators continually explore ways to address needs of students and support the development and quality of life desires of the community at large. The core beliefs of the public educational system in the county are reflected in the mission statement: The Tazewell County School Division, in partnership

with parents and the community, is committed to preparing students to become productive members of society by recognizing that each student is unique and possesses the potential to learn.

B. Higher Education



The Commonwealth of Virginia offers many higher educational opportunities throughout the state and Tazewell County benefits from the location of a valuable and community-integrated community college (SVCC). Additionally, Old Dominion University offers course work through the SVCC curriculum. Bluefield is home to an excellent private Baptist college, Bluefield College. Many graduating high school students from Tazewell County choose to attend these local institutions of higher learning as do other, non-traditional students and participants. The College Choices table (Figure 6.4) shows the distribution of Tazewell County residents at schools in Virginia.

Figure 7.5

Tazewell County College Enrollment Fall 2010

Virginia Institution	Number of Students Enrolled	Percent of Total Students attending VA Institutions
Southwest VA Community College	1,314	68.3
Virginia Tech	87	4.5
Radford University	85	4.4
Bluefield College	82	4.3
University of Virginia at Wise	53	2.8
Wytheville Community College	50	2.6
Liberty University	43	2.2
Old Dominion University	34	1.8
Virginia Commonwealth University	29	1.5
Emory & Henry College	21	1.1
University of Virginia	16	0.8
Other VA Community Colleges	31	1.6
Other VA 4-year College/University	71	3.7

VCC Institution Research Office, July 2011

C. Continuing Education

Offering opportunities for training and personal growth are important aspects of the quality of life for Tazewell County residents. SVCC and Bluefield College offer many opportunities for job training and personal development and advancement to adult learners in the county. Additionally, the community facilities made available to residents through the public school systems create a myriad of opportunities for learning and recreation. Maintaining these facilities for full community enjoyment is an important aspect of the county government. The cooperative and efficient use of these community assets is critical to getting the most benefit for all citizens from these significant facility investments.

In order to maintain the highest quality facilities that benefit the greatest number of citizens, the county government and staff must assess investment in the best cost-benefit scenarios. As with all community facilities, the initial investments are very large and the maintenance is an annual commitment that can often be costly. Creating facilities in areas that are accessible and convenient to a broad range of citizens is necessary to meet the needs of residents and create the highest cost-benefit situation.

All residents are contributors to the construction and maintenance of community facilities, the largest and most predominant of which are schools. Neighborhood schools can be the anchor to a community and create opportunities for citizen engagement and learning at all levels. Multi-generational access to these facilities are not only cost effective, they are community-building opportunities. Learning is a lifelong adventure and Tazewell County supports that pursuit with programming and facilities for all residents.

Figure 7.6

Education Attainment Comparison for Tazewell County

Statistic	1990			2000			2010			2012		
	Tazewell	VA	U.S.	Tazewell	VA	U.S.	Tazewell	VA	U.S.	Tazewell	VA	U.S.
Persons 25 & up	30,096	3,974,814	158,868,436	31,291	4,666,574	182,211,639	32,115	5,208,536	199,726,659	32,328	5,433,053	206,597,203
Less than 9th grade	7,533	443,668	16,502,211	5,227	338,184	13,755,477	3,833	286,383	12,435,227	3,488	278,157	12,299,194
9th-12th grade, no diploma	5,316	543,535	22,841,507	4,934	526,426	21,960,148	4,017	438,680	17,463,256	3,784	406,591	16,728,246
High school graduate	8,559	1,059,199	47,642,763	10,171	1,212,463	52,168,981	10,645	1,353,923	57,903,353	11,277	1,382,317	58,410,105
College, no degree	4,306	736,007	29,779,777	5,588	951,700	38,351,595	6,512	1,020,903	41,175,904	7,142	1,090,832	43,925,780
Associate degree	1,645	219,511	9,791,925	1,928	262,813	11,512,833	2,501	347,485	15,021,920	2,941	377,135	16,069,996
Bachelor's degree	1,927	612,679	20,832,567	2,280	835,011	28,317,792	3,243	1,038,321	35,148,428	2,600	1,106,898	37,090,877
Grad or prof. degree	810	360,215	11,477,686	1,163	539,977	16,144,813	1,364	722,841	20,578,571	1,096	791,123	22,073,005
% high school grad or higher	57.30%	75.10%	75.20%	67.50%	81.50%	80.40%	75.60%	86.10%	85.00%	77.50%	87.40%	85.90%
% bachelor's degree or higher	9.10%	24.50%	20.30%	11.00%	29.50%	24.40%	14.30%	33.80%	27.90%	11.40%	34.90%	28.60%

U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006-2010 5 Year Estimate, 2010-2012 3 Year Estimate

Educational attainment has long been a measure of the growth potential and diversity of a community. Tazewell County has shown an increase in all categories of educational attainment from 1990 to 2012 (Figure 6.5). In today's dynamic workforce, educational advancement is critical for success and Tazewell County residents are mirroring state and national trends. Though still lagging in actual percentage numbers of people with advanced education compared to state and national averages, Tazewell County actually grew at a higher rate than the state and federal averages in several categories (significantly in the category of high school grad or higher).

Much progress has been made in Tazewell County Schools yet problems remain. The county developed a comprehensive Education Plan to address needed improvements and investments in career awareness, emotional wellness, substance abuse prevention and nutrition and physical well-being. Tazewell County's high drop-out rate also highlights the need for innovative strategies to meet the needs of at risk students. It is also important that school administrators closely evaluate teacher performance before acquiring tenure.

Goal

To promote the advancement of quality public education by providing opportunities to increase education and training to ensure the highest educational standards and to improve the quality of life for all residents of Tazewell County.

Objectives and Strategies

1. To promote nutrition and physical well-being

Engage students, parents, teachers, food services

- professionals and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing division wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- Support community based fitness programs for children in town fitness centers.
- All schools meet the nutrition recommendations of the U.S. dietary guidelines for Americans
- Nutrition should be integrated into the health and education and core curricular areas.

2. To work with related agencies to prevent substance abuse

- Develop community wide information dissemination for substance abuse prevention
- Expand the life skills program for children
- Implement a program to promote a healthy lifestyle for students

3. To promote emotional wellness

- Implement a zero tolerance for bullying/harassment
- Instruct children on internet safety
- Develop strategies to inform and counsel students in coping with divorce, abusive parents, grief and custody battles.
- Increase parenting classes
- Promote early mental health screenings

4. To continue to implement programs concerning career awareness and readiness

- Encourage a study to examine current and future career and technical needs in Tazewell County
- Develop a long range plan for workforce development
- Work with area colleges and other state and local agencies in identifying needs and opportunities for future careers.
- Focus on good work habits at an early age such as regular attendance using various incentives.
- Design and promote training and retraining programs.
- Encourage more classes in consumer economics
- Offer more high-tech training

5. To increase the percentage of adults in the county who are high school graduates or (equivalent)

- Continue to offer opportunities in adult education
- Promote programs such as “ race to GED,” scale, continuing education, and higher education.
- Develop industrial skills enhancements training and encourage business industries to provide employees the opportunity for basic skill training.
- Assist the Tazewell County School Board and other higher education institutions.

6. To provide a comfortable atmosphere for learning

- Install air conditioning in all Tazewell County Schools
- Employ teachers who are cognizant to students needs.
- Provide alternative education for disruptive students

7. To reduce the dropout rate

- Address the issue of teen pregnancy
- Identify at-risk students and prepare an intensive program that enhances their self-esteem and feeling of success.
- Consider alternative education in the elementary grades
- Provide employment training opportunities that reflect student interests and strengths.

8. To encourage the growth of gravity and affordable childcare programs

- Increase the number of childcare centers to serve working mothers
- Instructive before and after school programs etc. latch-key
- Place emphasis on preparing toddlers for kindergarten

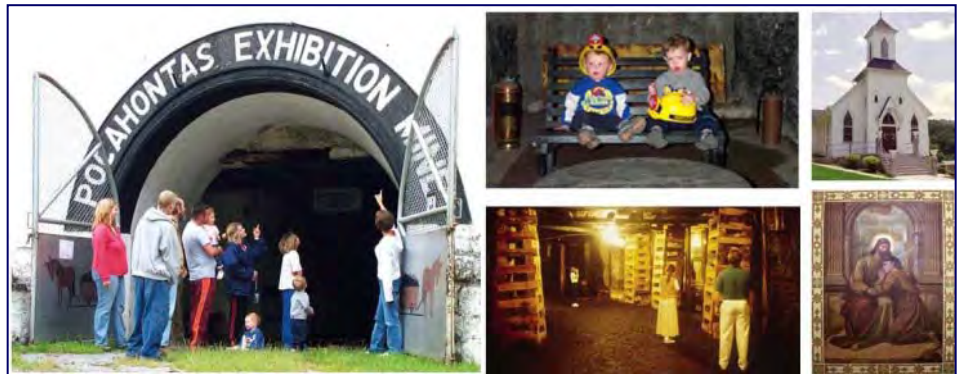
9. To provide parenting classes if possible to parents of children 1-4 years of age.

- Develop a program to provide opportunities for families to learn about the resources within the community
- Continue to encourage and offer opportunities for parents to become actively involved in the education of their children.

VII. Economy and Culture

Every community has a unique history. Though Tazewell County shares historic references with other westward expansion communities along the eastern coast of the United States, there are many attributes and influences that created this distinct community of work and culture. This area is connected to the geography both from economic connections of the natural resource bases that support agriculture, mining, and timber to the natural scenic beauty area reflected.

The core values held by Tazewell County citizens include the preservation of historic resources, a strong sense of community and family, and enjoyment of the environment. These values are evident by the local support of community associations, local chapters of the Chamber of Commerce, growth of historical societies, and preservation of cultural and historic sites and buildings.



A. Development and Structures

Prior to 1880, Tazewell County's economy was based in agriculture. Crop production and livestock were the basis for trade and wealth development along with a few trading post communities in the northern and western sectors of the county. With the discovery of rich coal seams near Pocahontas in the early 1880s, the economy took a major shift toward mining and coal-related industrial development. Boomtowns were literally erected overnight and although few of these coal-development based communities survive today, both Richlands and Pocahontas owe their existence to this era in the county's history. The national decline in both the mining and agriculture economies has been felt here in Tazewell County. Though not as dramatic as the economic shift of the 1880s, Tazewell County faces challenges and opportunities in this time of economic change and redirection. Industry and manufacturing related to the natural resources of the county remain important, but are not the growth industries of this century.

The Tazewell County economic development mission is to aggressively seek economic opportunities that enhance the business and residential communities of the county. The Tazewell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors are dedicated to building and supporting a strong economic base that enhances the quality of life for citizens of the county. Realizing the importance of a diversified economic base, Tazewell County has a progressive labor environment and is positioned among the country's northern most right-to-work counties. Continuing to work toward closer parity with the state's average income is an important goal and

maintaining pace with income increases is absolutely necessary to ensure Tazewell County's residents gain economic opportunities thus keeping them in the county.

The county supports strong and accessible educational and medical systems, low electric utility rates, and below average construction costs. Tazewell County has five successful existing industrial parks strategically located along U.S. 19/460 with a new development, The Bluestone, having been recently completed in the eastern section of Tazewell County.

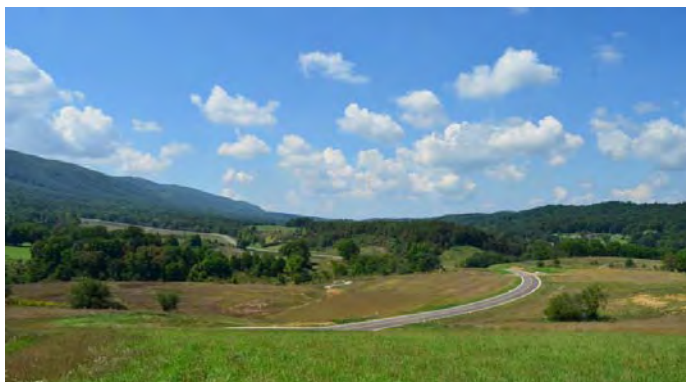
Tazewell County's community organizations, museums and libraries contribute greatly to the way of life in the county. The county's lead organization for promotion of cultural arts is the Citizens for the Arts (CART) whose purpose is to provide a variety of cultural experiences and opportunities to area citizens and visitors. The Historic Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park strive to preserve the history of the past. An active Arts-In-Education program provides the area schools with artist residencies in the performance fields that include art, music, and drama.



B. Current Industry and Development

For more than 100 years, the basis employment of Tazewell County has been coal mining or mining related industries. Basis employment, by its nature, is found in industries that sell the majority of their goods and services outside of the area of the industry. Because this employer is also based in resource extraction, Tazewell County cannot rebuild the source of this employment nor has it benefited from the value-added industries related to the coal industry. This traditional economic driver has been underutilized for the county as the raw mineral extraction is the primary economy of the region while the value-added processing and retailing of this resource is sourced outside of Tazewell County. Figure 8.1 shows the major employers in Tazewell County today. These businesses, though not always offering as high a wage as the mineral extraction industry, are building the new economy base in the county. The chart shows the major employers to largely be governmental and healthcare facilities, both with living wage opportunities for employees. Retail also holds a sizable share of the employers in the county and with their relatively low wage job opportunities, this growing segment merits notice and assessment from the view of long term sustainability.

New expansions into tourism, primarily recreation related will affect the county positively. Both the Back of the



Dragon and the "Original Pocahontas" ATV trail will boost the number of visitors who come to stay and play in our region. As time continues, this industry will play a greater part in the overall economics of the area, with lodging, restaurants, and other connected businesses.

The Bluestone Technology Center will also play a vital role in the economic success of the County in the future.

Figure 8.1

50 Largest Employers in Tazewell County, 2013

Rank	Company	Ownership Type	Number of Employees
1	Tazewell County School Board	Local Government	1000 and over
2	Wal-Mart	Private	500 to 999
3	Clinch Valley Medical Center	Private	500 to 999
4	Cumberland Mountain Community Services	Local Government	250 to 499
5	Southwest Virginia Community College	State Government	250 to 499
6	Pocahontas State Correctional Center	State Government	250 to 499
7	Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.	Private	100 to 249
8	Tazewell County, Virginia	Local Government	100 to 249
9	McDonald's	Private	100 to 249
10	First Community Bank	Private	100 to 249
11	Food City	Private	100 to 249
12	Magic Mart	Private	100 to 249
13	Bluefield College	Private	100 to 249
14	Joy Technologies	Private	100 to 249
15	Heritage Hall	Private	100 to 249
16	Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens	Private	100 to 249
17	Town of Bluefield	Local Government	100 to 249
18	Jenmar Corporation of Virginia	Private	100 to 249
19	Knox Creek Coal	Private	100 to 249
20	Town of Richlands	Local Government	100 to 249
21	Pyott Boone Electronics, Inc.	Private	100 to 249

22	Tazewell Community Hospital	Private	100 to 249
23	Pemco Corporation	Private	100 to 249
24	Spandeck, Inc.	Private	100 to 249
25	Food Lion	Private	100 to 249
26	Aramark Services	Private	100 to 249
27	Westwood Medical Park Operations, LLC	Private	100 to 249
28	Cardno MM&A	Private	100 to 249
29	Grants Supermarket	Private	50 to 99
30	K.S. & J. Roustabout	Private	50 to 99
31	Hardee's	Private	50 to 99
32	Tammy Bostic	Private	50 to 99
33	Wendy's	Private	50 to 99
34	Clinch River Forest Products, Inc.	Private	50 to 99
35	Justice Low Seam Mining, Inc.	Private	50 to 99
36	Clinch Valley Community Action	Private	50 to 99
37	Clinch Valley Physicians, LLC	Private	50 to 99
38	Emats, Inc.	Private	50 to 99
39	Ramey Chevrolet, Inc.	Private	50 to 99
40	Tazewell County Board of Social Services	Local Government	50 to 99
41	Contemporary Builders	Private	50 to 99
42	Tidewater Wholesale Grocery	Private	50 to 99
43	Pounding Mill Quarry Corporation	Private	50 to 99
44	CNX Gas Company	Private	50 to 99
45	Town of Tazewell	Local Government	50 to 99
46	Omega Surface Mining, LLC	Private	50 to 99
47	Kwik Kafe Vending Company	Private	50 to 99

48	United States Postal Service	Federal Government	50 to 99
49	Family Preservation Services	Private	50 to 99
50	Limestone Dust Corporation	Private	50 to 99

Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages,

2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2014.

As shown in Figure 8.2 on the next page, Tazewell County’s average weekly wage show the powerful incentive for supporting the mining industry. Wage rates, though lower than the average in the region, are still significantly higher for natural resources and mining than any other category. The Goods-Producing Domain has also be a strong growth category for wages in Tazewell County and the region. The county and region have lost the most ground in the professional and business services with the average wage for the county at less than half of the average for the state for many of those categories..

Figure 8.2**Annual Average Weekly Wage (\$)****Tazewell County, CPPDC, and Virginia**

Industry	Tazewell County	Cumberland Plateau Planning District	Commonwealth of Virginia
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	611	695	586
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,188	1,463	1,297
Utilities		1,704	1,838
Construction	810	862	934
Manufacturing	806	928	1054
Wholesale Trade	713	821	1346
Retail Trade	410	406	516
Transportation and Warehousing	504	673	924
Information	793	680	1,583
Finance and Insurance	652	740	1,447
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	481	541	897
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	746	791	1,792
Management of Companies and Enterprises	919	1,008	2,026
Administrative, Support, and Waste Management	452	485	706
Educational Services		606	789
Health Care and Social Assistance	671	735	855
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	270	301	427
Accommodation and Food Services	262	254	333
Other Services (except Public Administration)	645	665	751
Federal Government	704	817	1,594
State Government	629	691	856
Local Government	551	565	818

Virginia Employment Commission: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2nd Quarter 2014, 4th Quarter 2013

1. Mining and Related Industries

The county benefited in many ways from the mining industry. Whole communities were developed in response to the abundant natural resource opportunities found in this area, and several industries continue to employ residents of Tazewell County and the surrounding region that support and enhance the mining opportunities in the area. However, the dependence on this single source of economic development has had dramatic costs to residents and the overall development of the county. Dependence on a basic industry makes the economy of the county highly susceptible to changes in that base industry, and Tazewell County has felt the impact of the “boom-bust” cycles of the mining industry.

The national demand for coal decreased in the 1960s as oil and natural gas began to compete with the coal market for home and industrial heating. Greater mechanization has allowed for higher production with fewer workers in the mines, thus reducing the employment opportunities in the county. Coal had a short-lived resurgence in the 1970s, but this was followed by greater environmental regulations of the industries in the late 1970s that had the greatest impact on smaller mining companies, the very type operating in Tazewell County. Profit margins were shrinking for these firms due to the higher costs of doing business and as the overall market for coal dropped again in the 1980s, the unemployment rates in Tazewell County skyrocketed.

The recent Marcellus Shale natural gas boom has impacted the price of coal negatively in the region, leading many mines to close, or to drastically decrease production rates.

Figure 8.3

Coal Production and Number of Mines, 2013 and 2012

(Thousand Short Tons)

	Underground		Surface		Total	
	# of Mines	Production	# of Mines	Production	# of Mines	Production
Tazewell	2	481	2	767	4	1,248
Buchanan	18	6,305	9	1,390	27	7,695
Dickenson	11	3,032	6	510	17	3,543
Russell	4	298	2	100	6	398
Virginia	48	12,190	34	4,429	82	16,619

Energy Information Administration: Annual Coal Report 2013

Current mining production is highlighted in Figure 8.3 with total tonnage for the region broken down by county. As the chart shows, Tazewell and Russell County have the fewest mines in operation as well as smallest production capacity in the region. Because the average annual wage in the mining

industry is still one of the highest, there is still strong commitment to supporting this industry within the county and the region, even with the downturn in production and jobs. Due to the need for alternative energy sources, it is projected that coal production will maintain its current production and possibly increase over the next several years as natural gas prices level off. However, the need for diversification of the economy is a reality particularly for the county and even the region.

Methane gas extraction is a growing industry in Tazewell County. While not located in the larger gas fields, natural gas extraction and coal gasification are growing industries in Tazewell County and merit close observation for development and economic enhancement opportunities.

2. Healthcare and Service Industries

The county and surrounding local governmental partners spent the last two decades developing strategies and incentive programs to build new industry and job opportunities and to diversify the economic basis of the region. As was the national trend, the healthcare and service industries of Tazewell County have seen growth (Figure 8.1). However, the wages related to these industries are regularly lower than the traditional manufacturing wages associated with the mining and mineral extraction industries but continues to provide a strong employment base for the county. With the development of the Bluestone Technology Park, additional emergency, fire, and rescue services are needed in this area and are likely to be developed to include but not limited to: EMS, Fire and Rescue, Medical Air Evacuation, and general medical facilities.

3. Agriculture and Agribusiness

Agriculture is an important piece of Tazewell County's economic puzzle. Though the number of farms and acreage of land committed to agribusiness is shrinking in the county, the size of farms is growing. This may indicate a more corporate approach to this sector of the economy and also may be due to the larger number of livestock farmers vs. crop farmers because of the grazing needs of animals.

The number of farms in Tazewell County as well as nationwide is declining as shown in Figure 6.4. The average size and value has increased, but the overall number of acres in active farming is shrinking in Tazewell County according to the US Census. There has been a significant increase in the amount of governmental subsidies to farmers in the county. These can be directly attributed to the current tobacco subsidy programming which is not likely to be long term, making the continuation of crop farming possibly difficult to achieve profitability in the future.

Figure 8.4

Agriculture in Tazewell County

Farming Highlights	2012	2007	2002
Number of Farms	584	576	551
Land in Agriculture (acres)	150,181	153,677	138,977
Average size of farm (acres)	257	267	252
Average Value of Production per farm	\$46,268	\$37,308	\$32,182
Average farm production expense	\$45,710	\$34,788	\$29,524
Government Payments	\$572,000	\$137,000	\$252,000

US Census of Agriculture, 2012 and 2007

Tazewell County has been noted as “The County where bluegrass grows to the top of the mountains.” This is due to the vast under layer of limestone and may explain why the county is well known for its cattle industry. Grazing is a significant activity of the agriculture types found in Tazewell County. Figure 8.5 shows that cattle, sheep, and goats are the top livestock commodities for the county. Hay and related crops are the top items of acreage use in the county though the actual yield per acre would give a better representation of crop production in the crop categories. Population growth in Tazewell County will continue to remove agricultural land from production. Continued planning must take place to protect and conserve the counties most productive areas. Burkes Garden and the Cove must be off limits for commercial, industrial, and large housing developments. These areas are sensitive karst areas and the Cove serves as one of the primary watersheds for the county.

Figure 8.5

Agriculture Types and Rank in Tazewell County

Commodity	Quantity	State Rank	U.S. Rank
<i>Top Livestock Inventory Items (number)</i>			
Cattle and calves	37,199	15	762
Sheep and lambs	4,115	4	210
Layers	2,121	34	1,254
Goats, all	1,310	8	387
Horse and ponies	1,292	22	874
<i>Top Crop Items (acres)</i>			
Forage-land used for all hay and haylage, grass silage, and greenchop	21,437	23	900
Corn for silage	926	30	1,160
Corn for grain	(D)	78	(D)
Short-rotation woody crops	(D)	6	(D)
Vegetables harvested, all	39	57	1,746

U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2012.

(D) Cannot be disclosed.

Ranked items among the 98 state counties and 3,078 U.S. Counties, 2012.

Timber is another economic asset within Tazewell County. The wood products industry has struggled in recent years, however the natural resources within the county make this potential economic driver worthy of note and assessment today and for the future.

It is clear from Figure 8.6 that Dickenson County within the planning district is the only county still showing true economic benefit from the wood products industry. As with the coal industry, this economic driver is natural resources based and often does not return equal benefit for the level of long-term impact assessed to the community. Should Tazewell County pursue a renewal of development within this area, it will be crucial to create businesses that enhance the return on investment within the

wood products industry so the citizens of the county can benefit from the extraction of these valuable resources.

Figure 8.6

Wood Product and Type by Thousand Cubic Feet

County	All products		Saw logs		Veneer logs		Pulpwood*		Composite panels		Other industrial	
	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard
Buchanan	95	877	0	463	0	0	0	80	0	18	93	134
Dickenson	15	9,165	0	532	0	90	15	6,643	0	0	0	0
Russell	0	1,000	0	532	0	0	0	261	0	0	0	0
Tazewell	615	3,009	229	1,136	0	0	1	638	1	78	370	533

US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Resources Planning Act Timber Product Output Report, 2007.

**Includes roundwood delivered to nonpulp mills, then chipped and sold to pulp mills (138,000 cubic feet in 2003)*

C. Emerging Technology and Development

High speed fiber optic cabling has been deployed in a backbone fashion to provide access to this utility for opportunities that are expected in the region. Higher wages and stable business opportunities will come with these ventures thus preparations are necessary for this to occur. Information Technology (IT) industries have located in neighboring communities, and Tazewell is working to position itself to build on potential expansions and networked business.

An important initiative in that realm is the development of the Bluestone Regional Business and Technology Park overlooking the Bluestone River off Route 460. The master plan for this park includes office buildings, a hotel and conference center, retail shops, restaurants, a golf course, seasonal lodges, and residential units. As a result, high technology workers will work, play, and live in a well-planned and developed area. The local community will also benefit from the recreational, business, and tax-generating resources this park will offer.



BLUESTONE TECHNOLOGY PARK

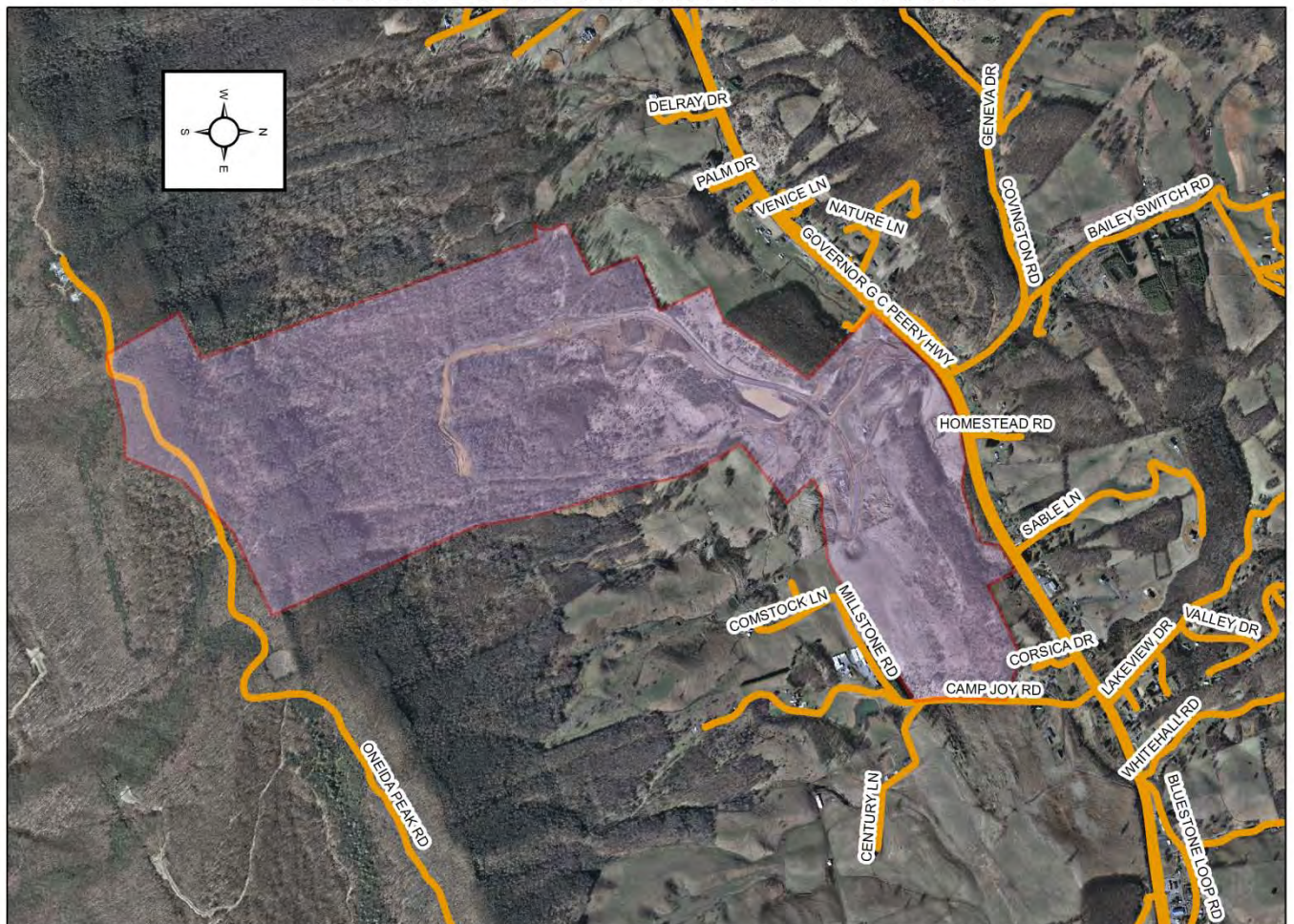
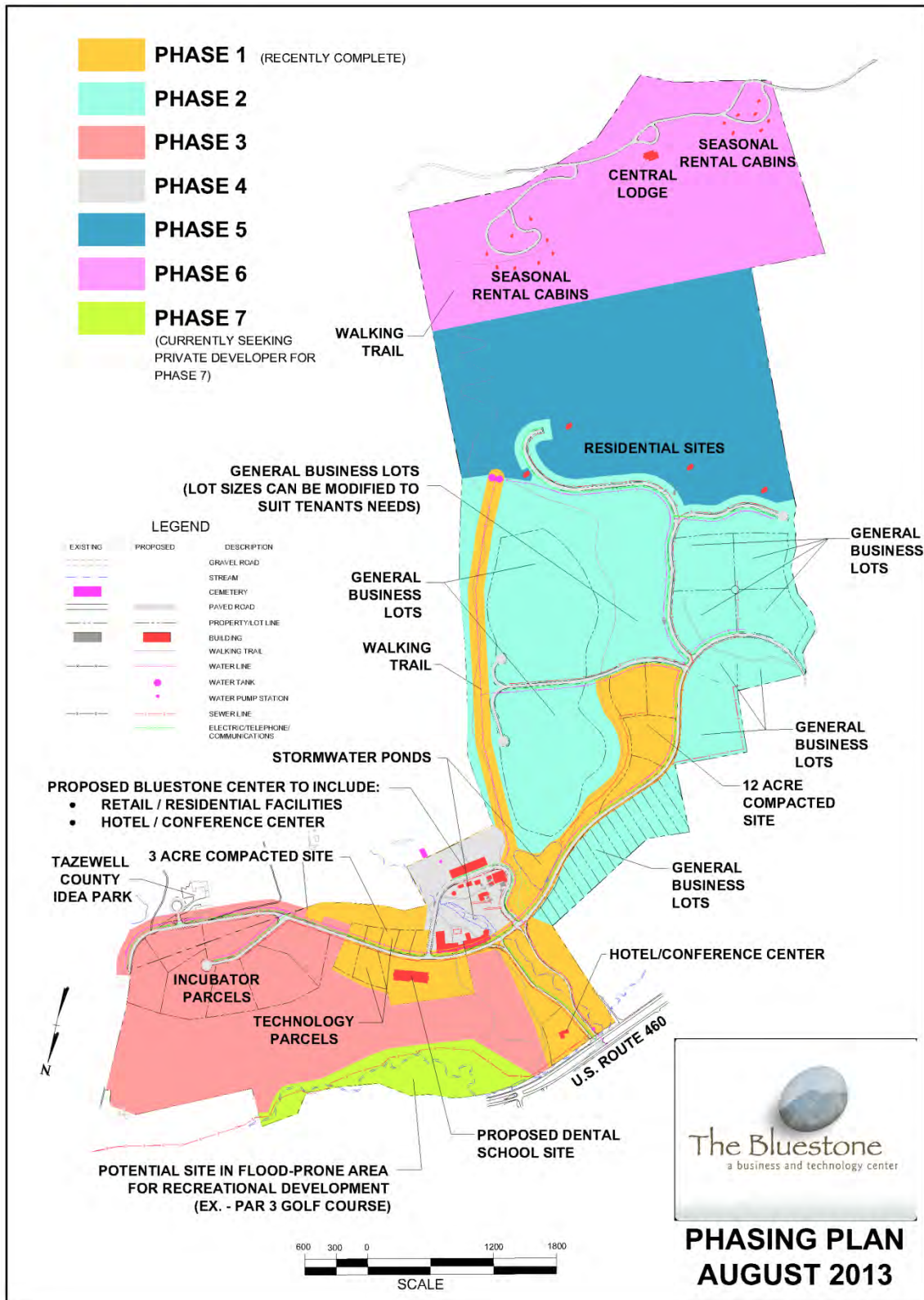


Figure 8.7

Site Plan Map of Bluestone



The Economy

The Vision

The vision for Tazewell County is for sustained economic growth that does not impair or diminish the rural character of the county. The economy would be characterized by abundant jobs that offer above state average wages, salaries and benefits resulting in very low unemployment, minimal public assistance and higher than average SAT/SOL scores. The economic development efforts of the county are focused on advanced countywide water, sewer and telecommunications infrastructure system, aggressive business recruitment and tourism development programs, as well as active existing business and entrepreneurship developmental programs.

Summary

Tazewell County, located in the majestic Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia, was officially formed in 1799 from the counties of Russell and Wythe. Named for Henry Tazewell, a United States Senator (1794-1799), the diversity of culture, history, and geography of Tazewell County has few rivals in all of Virginia or even across the globe.

Similar to other rural localities in Virginia, Tazewell County's economic base evolved from predominantly agricultural activity in its early history coupled with a concentration of employment in the mining and mine-related industry which peaked in the 1970's. The present day focus of economic growth incorporates the mission of Virginia's e-Region, promoting jobs in the electronic information technology, energy, education, and emerging specialty manufacturing industries.

Developed business sites, improved infrastructure, workforce development and training for the unemployed and/or under-employed, improved infrastructure, and aggressive business incentives are needed for sustainable economic growth.

During the past few years, the county has improved basic infrastructure to support new business and industrial facilities and have attempted to diversify the region's economy. In order to position itself in a more favorable marketing stance, fiber optic cabling has been deployed in a backbone fashion to provide high speed internet capability to portions of the county. A significant economic development project called *The Bluestone: A Regional Business and Technology Center* is being planned with components such as office buildings, hotel and conference center, retail shops and restaurants, a golf course, seasonal lodging, and residential units.

Access and availability of adequate funding for developed sites infrastructure, incentives, and marketing are necessary to provide necessary jobs and improved quality of life for the residents of Tazewell County.

Goal: Support, diversify, and expand the county’s economic base to provide employment opportunities for all and to increase income levels in all sectors

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Develop county financial strategy for future investments and creative programming to attain the progressive economic vision of the county.

- Support Bluestone project
- Target and market areas of the county for commercial and industrial development
- Develop and support appropriate and targeted workforce training opportunities for citizens and businesses within the county
- Target Claypool Hill area for commercial improvements to attract desired business and industry to the county
- Support current industry development and communication structure linked directly to economic development offices and staff
- Evaluate the possibility of hiring a full time Tourism Director for the county
- Create and support appropriate staffing for economic and cultural support of county goals
- Create incentives and welcoming strategies for targeted industries.

2. Support existing industries and businesses in the county

- Encourage existing industry expansion, by developing incentives and community relationship programs
- Promote “Made in Tazewell” concept—local produce and history at center of festivals, events, and local markets and shops
- Evaluate service industry growth in the county
- Support the expansion of agricultural-related businesses located in the county, especially “niche” farming like nurseries, viticulture, and agritourism
- Encourage the development of aquaculture activities in coordination with the Virginia Tech Aquaculture Research Center

D. Tourism

Along with business and industry, tourism has also proven to be an engine of growth in Tazewell County. Touted as Four Seasons Country, the Clinch River Basin is considered one of only twenty “Last Great Places” in the world according to the Nature Conservancy. Tourism and cultural heritage also play an integral role in Tazewell County’s economy, and the county offers diverse cultural, and recreational activities, including the [Historic Crab Orchard Museum](#), the Tazewell County Old Time and Bluegrass Fiddlers’ Convention, the Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine and Museum, beautiful [Burke’s Garden](#) and the [Appalachian Trail](#), just to name a few.



The Crab Orchard’s Pioneer Park is expanding to include a 16-acre tract that will include a Turn-of-the-Century community and include the relocated historic Pisgah Store and a farm heritage center. This facility hosts multiple special events including civil war re-enactments, pioneer recreations, and traveling exhibits from across Virginia and the world. Pocahontas is another leading tourist attraction in far Southwest Virginia and visitation at that museum continues to increase. The exhibition mine was designated a National

Historic Landmark in October 1994 and attracts visitors from across the country. There are efforts underway to enhance the downtown and preserve historic structures within the Pocahontas community.

Burke’s Garden is Virginia’s largest rural historic district, and its geography is so distinctive that it is visible from space. The community holds a Fall Festival that attracts crafters and visitors to “God’s Thumbprint” from around the world. Cultural institutions and unique communities like these are important to preserve the county’s cultural heritage and to create economic benefit for the county through the visitor traffic and expenditures. Tazewell County’s institutions of higher learning also contribute to community arts through their offering of special events and promotion to their student populations of local attractions and historic venues.





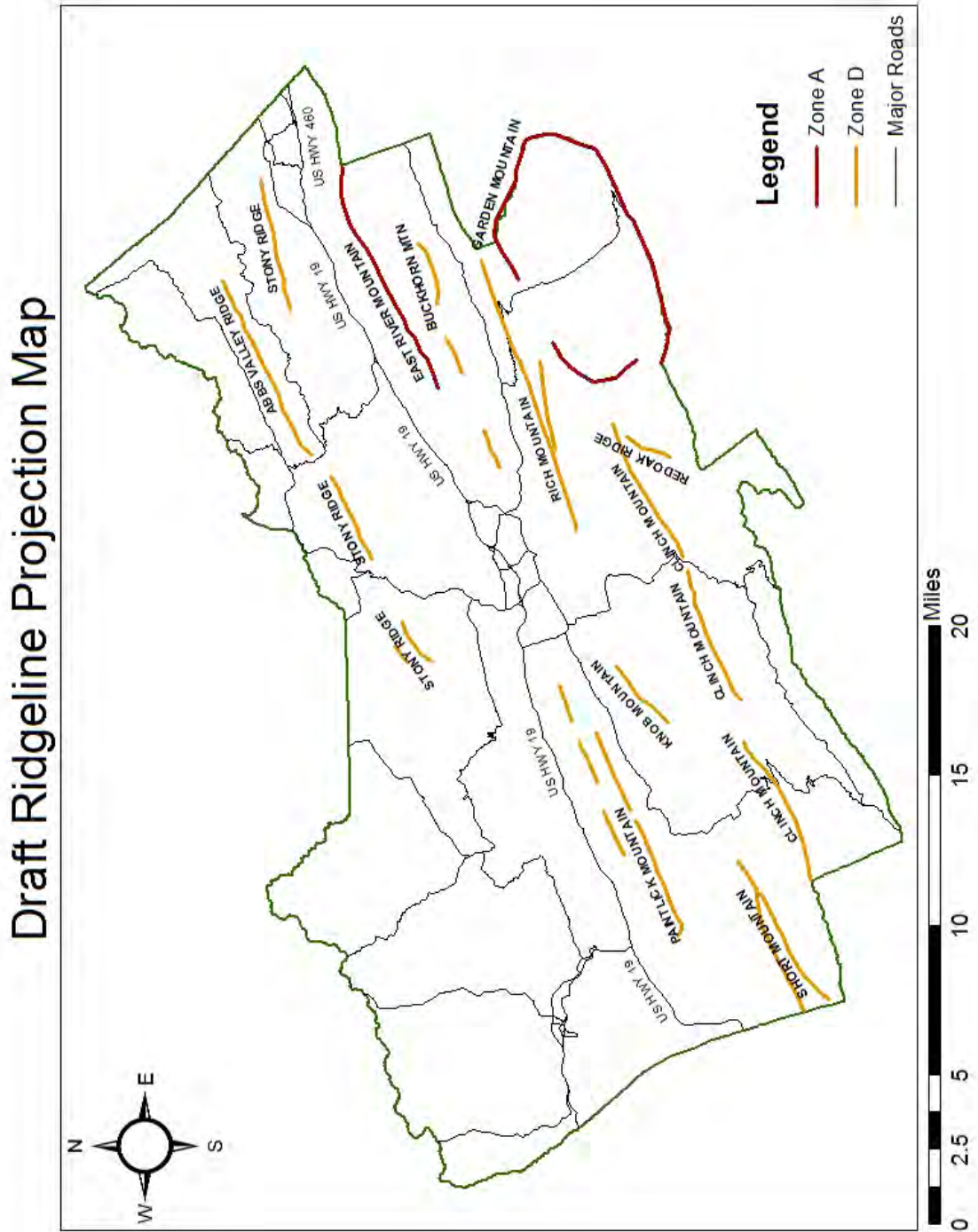
Other new tourism attractions include the Back of the Dragon and the "Original Pocahontas" ATV Trail. These attractions are for motorcycle/sports car/ATV aficionados. The Back of the Dragon has 32 miles of motorcycling and sports car excitement between Tazewell and Smyth Counties. The O.P. ATV trail



includes over 30 miles of ATV trails near to the Town of Pocahontas, as well as two trailheads and multiple lodging sites.

Local attractions include Tazewell County's majestic mountains with their scenic ridgelines. East River Mountain exemplifies this with the natural occurrence of the shelf spilling a waterfall of morning fog. This presents a need of the county to protect these ridgelines from uncontrolled development. The following figure identifies these ridgelines within the county that warrant protection.

Figure 8.8
Ridgeline Protection Ordinance Map



Tourism is clearly an important growth industry for Tazewell County and pursuit and support of enhancements in this area are crucial to the diversification of the local and regional economy. Unlike extracted resources, the natural and cultural tourist resources stay in the county, provide long-term benefit to the county and residents, and through support and enhancement, are a continually renewable source of financial and quality of life benefits for the entire county. Figure 6.8 helps to reveal the current economic impacts of tourism in the county today. These are based on the spin-off industry impact of visitors to the county such as restaurants, hotels, and gas stations. The growth over the three years that this chart shows is worthy of note as these numbers reflect historic visitor investment without the projected tourism enhancements pointed out in the Tazewell County Tourism Strategic Plan.

Figure 8.9

Tourism Economic Impacts

Travel Impacts	2003		2006		2013	
	Tazewell	Virginia	Tazewell	Virginia	Tazewell	Virginia
Visitor Expenditures	\$31,040,239	\$13,890,037,000	\$38,890,075	\$17,664,097,921	\$48,910,000	\$21,511,980,000
Payroll Generated	\$7,878,150	\$3,869,816,832	\$8,558,524	\$4,262,749,947	\$10,200,000	\$4,894,570,000
Employment Generated	531	201,130	542	208,236	570	213,000
State Tax Receipts	\$1,494,405	\$591,624,348	\$1,753,605	\$706,807,719	\$2,060,000	\$842,090,000
Local Tax Receipts	\$461,579	\$409,736,358	\$556,621	\$502,700,824	\$660,000	\$581,850,000

Virginia Tourism Corporation, 2006, 2014

The economy and culture of a community are strong indicators of the growth and trends. By understanding how the economic picture is changing and factoring in the cultural history of the county, there are many important lessons and opportunities present that can help direct Tazewell County into the future.

Along with business and industry, tourism has also proven to be an engine of economic growth in the county. Touted as Four Seasons Country, the Clinch River Basin is considered one of the “Last Great Places” in the world according to the Nature Conservancy. With phenomenal natural occurrences such as the East River Mountain shelf spilling a waterfall of morning fog, and the alluvial bowl known as Burke’s Garden, otherwise known as God’s Thumbprint, the tourism industry is clearly an important factor in the economy of the county, region and state.

In the past, the tourism efforts of Tazewell County have been coordinated through the Tourism Committee with limited planning. While the efforts have been productive, the increase of tourism activity have encouraged the Tourism Committee to consider a more organized, planned effort for tourism development and marketing. A SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis, facilitated by the Virginia Tourism Corporation, was used as a key method in developing a tourism-related strategic plan for Tazewell County. During the planning process, several issues were identified to include: lack of tourism infrastructure such as attractions, outfitters, and unique and formal restaurants, limited financial support to develop and market the area, and, lack of understanding of the positive economic impact of tourism among various groups such as elected officials, towns, and organizations.

The tourism committee has realized the potential for substantial future growth in many areas. Various opportunities of tourism development are possible through cooperative regional efforts, cooperative marketing, the development of public golf courses, the development of theme specific trails (i.e. Wilderness Road Trail, Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, Civil War Trail, Public Art Trail, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, etc.), and the development of ATV trails, hiking and biking trails, and blueway trails. The Tourism Committee further realized the opportunity to attract the tour bus market and other specific target markets such as history and railroaders pleasure trips, ladies retreats, father/son get-a-ways, artisan expos, and mountain music weekends.

To enhance tourism opportunities, Tourism Zones in Tazewell County have been created. The Tourism Zones set aside areas designated for tourism development and to offer incentives that will encourage tourism development in these zones for up to 20 years.

Goal Statement: Promote the development of the tourism industry in the county.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Increase tourism and residential visits to county landmarks and points of interest.

- Work with regional partners to promote and support development and events in the county.
- Develop new draws for tourism in the county
- Develop and support campgrounds and RV parks in strategic locations across county
- Develop incentives for promoting eating establishments and other “visitor support industry” in the county
- Access and map tourism destinations and opportunities in the county
- Advertise the existence of the tourist centers located with the county, i.e. Saunders House, Chamber of Commerce
- Advertise tourism through the existing tourism web site

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to continue to develop and support the tourist information center in the county
- Promote and support the Crab Orchard Museum as a major tourist attraction
- Encourage the development of tourism amenities such as lodging establishments (including “bed and breakfasts”), shopping attractions, and restaurants
- Promote Tazewell County to travelers through participation in regional marketing efforts
- Promote the "Back of the Dragon", "Original Pocahontas" ATV trail, and other new tourism attractions.
- Educate community leaders and citizens of the benefits of tourism
- Develop funding sources for tourism efforts
- Provide adequate tourism-focused staffing to implement the strategic plan
- Prioritize and develop tourism assets / products
- Implement and effective marketing effort
- Designate Areas of Tourism Zones
- Market tourism zones
- Promote further spin-off opportunities (i.e. Trails)
- Promote and Market events such as that put on such as the concert put on by the Second Chance Learning Center

IX. Future Land Use Designations

The following Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is designed to guide future development of the Tazewell County according to the goals and objectives specified in the Comprehensive Plan. This is not a zoning map nor does it represent specific or detailed land uses today or into the future. The map is a broad-brush visual representation of the best understanding of the goals of the citizens as they apply to the use and protection of land resources of the county. The following definitions give context to the map.

A. Agricultural

High resource value areas based on soil types, environmental sensitivity, or other unique land characteristics. Includes areas that are preserved from development through public or private conservation efforts. Clustering of housing units is supported in this district.

B. Forestal

High resource value areas based on soil types, environmental sensitivity, or other unique land characteristics. Includes areas that are used for mining and gas production.

C. Rural Residential

Small clusters of residential units with some low intensity agricultural uses. These areas are intended to preserve open spaces and the agricultural landscape while allowing clustered residential development that minimizes impervious surfaces across properties.

D. Residential

Residential areas located in close proximity to urban services and roads capable of handling higher traffic volumes. These are areas for single-family detached and attached units and apartments/condominiums. Small-scale neighborhood and/or lifestyle commercial (such as small convenience markets and marinas) are allowed where appropriate in this zone.

E. Commercial

Areas designated for intensive commercial development with access to major roads and public utilities. Includes, but is not limited to, wholesale, retail, and service commercial uses.

F. Industrial

Areas designated for manufacturing, fabricating, commercial and agricultural processing and other land uses that are often water intensive and generally characterized as having a greater impact on the surrounding land uses and the environment.

G. Mixed Use

Areas with a mixture of residential, commercial, light industrial and civic uses located along major transportation corridors. Intention of these areas is to provide convenient services for neighborhoods and prevent strip development and multiple access points along major and secondary transportation corridors.

H. Scenic / Heritage Area

Areas with an emphasis on scenery or heritage should be maintained for

Figure 9.1
Future Land Use Map

