

Jefferson National Forest

The *Jefferson National Forest* extends throughout Grayson County and offers many easy access points to the forest and its numerous camping, picnic, and recreation facilities which are located throughout the area. Most of the trail facilities are open for use throughout the entire calendar year. Seasonal hunting and fishing is allowed in the Jefferson National Forest with state licenses and federal stamps (most of the land within the Jefferson National Forest Purchase Boundary is in private ownership).

The diversity of the vegetation and elevation of the area provide a variety of wildlife habitat equal to any in the Middle Atlantic States. Big game hunted in the forest includes deer, bear, and turkey. Grouse, quail, dove, rabbit, and squirrel are also hunted in season. More than 160 species of birds live here or migrate through the forest.

Virginia Creeper National Recreational Trail

The *Virginia Creeper Trail* is Virginia's finest shared-use, rail-to-trail conversion. The 33.4-mile trail connects the Town of Abingdon to the Virginia-North Carolina border near the Whitetop community in Grayson County and is available for use by bicyclists, hikers, and horseback riders.

Located on the site of the former rail line's Whitetop Station is a trail visitor center, which is designed to resemble the original train station. It contains interesting displays of the history of the area, the railroad, and the people of the community. The center also includes restroom facilities and excellent parking accommodations. The center is open to the public May through October.

Grayson Highlands State Park

Grayson Highlands State Park, is located in the western portion of the County, and adjoins the *Mount Roger National Recreational Area* and *Jefferson National Forest*. The Park is located adjacent to US Route 58, approximately midway between the Towns of Independence and Damascus. Recreational activities at the Park include a museum, camping, biking, climbing, fishing, and hiking.

New River Trail State Park

New River Trail State Park is a 57-mile linear park, following a former Norfolk & Southern railroad line. The park stretches from the City of Galax to the Town of Fries to the Town of Pulaski and parallels the banks of the New River for 39 miles. The park features 16

campsites, drinking water, restrooms, picnic tables, and shelters for day use. In addition to hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding opportunities, anglers, canoeists, and inner-tubers can enjoy cool water recreation on the New River.

Foster Falls

Foster Falls, located in Wythe County, is a major recreation area for the Park and provides both trail and river access. *Historic Foster Falls Village*, which was established in the mid- to late-1800s, features a railroad depot, hotel, saw/grist mill, iron furnace, and numerous buildings. At its peak, the bustling mining and railroad village was home to more than 100 families.

Hungry Mother State Park

Hungry Mother State Park is located four miles north of the Town of Marion in Smyth County. Hungry Mother is noted for its lake, woodlands, and extensive multi-use trail system. The Park is easily accessible from Interstate 81 and its facilities include a full-service restaurant, meeting rooms, cabins, swimming pool, sports complex, and picnic areas. The *Hemlock Haven Conference Center* can accommodate a wide variety of needs in both private and business applications and can house up to 78 overnight guests.

Matthews State Forest

The *Matthews Forest* is one of the newest additions to Virginia's State Forest System and was made possible through a land donation by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Matthews. Located near the City of Galax, this 154-acre forest is used for American chestnut research, demonstration of white pine management, watershed protection education, hiking/nature trail, and serves as a wildlife sanctuary. Area schools are encouraged to use the nature trail for educational field trips.

Health Care

Five full-service hospitals are available to the residents of Grayson County. These are the Twin County Regional Hospital in Galax, the Alleghany Memorial Hospital in Sparta, North Carolina, the Wythe County Community Hospital in Wytheville, the Smyth County Community Hospital in Marion, and Johnston Memorial Hospital, which is located in Abingdon. Preference for a hospital is most often dictated by the location of the person who needs professional medical services.

Twin County Regional Hospital

Twin County Regional Hospital provides a full-range of medical services and is located in Galax. Twin County is a 141-bed, full-service facility and staffs 60 medical specialists and related support personnel. The hospital services include a 24-hour emergency department, intensive care/cardiac care, X-ray/MRI/CT scans, pediatrics, behavioral health, nuclear medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, and pharmacy services.

Alleghany Memorial Hospital

Alleghany Memorial Hospital (AMH), a 46-bed facility, provides a wide range of inpatient, outpatient, and in-home services, including a 24-hour emergency room. Services include general surgeries, obstetric services, laboratory services, radiology services, with outpatient specialty clinics, and short-stay transitional skilled nursing care. For services that exceed its local capabilities, the hospital has developed alliances with numerous medical centers within an hour and one-half drive and also has emergency capabilities through its Air Care helicopter service. AMH is located approximately 10 miles south of Independence in Sparta, North Carolina.

Wythe County Community Hospital

Wythe County Community Hospital (WCCH) is located approximately 25 miles from Independence in Wytheville at 600 West Ridge Road. WCCH is a full-service, 104-bed facility and provides 24-hour, seven day a week emergency services. The hospital employs over 350 full-time personnel and is staffed by over 40 physicians.

Smyth County Community Hospital

Smyth County Community Hospital (SCCH) is located approximately 33 miles north of Independence in the Town of Marion. It is also associated with the Carilion Health System. SCCH operates a 170-bed, full-service acute care facility and offers a 109-bed intermediate nursing care service. The hospital provides 24-hour, seven day a week emergency services.

Johnston Memorial Hospital

Johnston Memorial Hospital (JMH), located in Abingdon, operates 135 acute care beds, provides primary care, and is also recognized as a regional referral center. JMH serves many surrounding localities in Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee. The hospital has more than 120 active, courtesy, and consulting physicians on its medical team, offering a wide variety of specialty and sub-specialty services.

The hospital provides a broad range of inpatient and outpatient services, including a critical care unit, obstetrical services, 24-hour emergency care, physical therapy, outpatient surgery, radiology, cardiology, endoscopy, and the only Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in Southwest Virginia west of Roanoke.

Medical Clinics

There are three local community primary care clinics situated across Grayson County for those who do not need emergency/critical care services. These are the *Troutdale Medical Center*, the *Family Care Center/Independence*, and the *Family Care Center/Fries*. There are also two private family medical practices in the Town of Independence that provide a variety of medical services.

Health and Social Services

Virginia Department of Health

The *Grayson County Health Department* is located in Independence at 186 West Main Street, and the Mount Rogers District Office of the *Virginia Department of Health* is located in Marion. The services of the department are available to all county residents. Some of the department's services include childcare information, maternity programs, immunizations, and family planning.

Southwestern Virginia Training Center

The Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services operate the Southwestern Virginia Training Center (SWVTC), which is located at 160 Training Center Road in the Town of Hillsville. SWVTC provides a complete range of rehabilitative services to mentally retarded citizens and serves persons from 17 counties and four cities in Southwest Virginia. All admissions to the Center are voluntary and are made through a Community Services Board review process.

Virginia Department of Social Services

The Virginia Department of Social Services works to promote self-reliance, prevention, and protection by serving as a catalyst to promote healthy families and communities. VDSS also responds to the needs of senior citizens age 60 and over, and adults over the age of 18 with disabilities and/or special needs. The *Grayson County Department of Social Services*, a local office of the Virginia Department of Social Services, is located at 129 Davis Street in Independence.

B. Conclusions

Grayson County offers a wide range of services and recreational opportunities of value to local residents. Many county services are based in the county seat of Independence. Other services, such as educational offerings, are available in the greater region and or in North Carolina and Tennessee.

One service that needs to be addressed in the near future is the provision of public water services. Water services in the county have been left up to each of the towns with the exception of the small area south of Galax, which is serviced via a purchase and resell agreement with the City of Galax. In the future, creation of new governmental structures and/or partnerships will be needed to provide public water to most county residents (as recommended in the 604B study) and have an ample supply of water for existing and future needs.

CHAPTER VII Land Use and Development

A. Introduction

Grayson County's total land area is approximately 443 square miles, for a total of 283,305 acres of land. Of that total, more than 50 percent of all land is identified as "woodlands." The general landscape of Grayson is characterized by high pastures and deep hollows which are watered by the New River and its many tributaries.

To the east, the land rises into the scenic height of the Blue Ridge Mountains. To the west are more spectacular heights, but are seen less often – Mount Rogers, Whitetop Mountain, and the Iron Mountain range.

The impressive New River lowlands contrast sharply with the high peaks of Iron Mountain sections of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and Jefferson National Forest.

As is true in many areas of Southwest Virginia, land use and development issues in Grayson County are affected by its distinct physiographic features. Since Grayson's last comprehensive land use study was conducted more than twenty years ago, most of the new residential and/or commercial developments have occurred outside of the incorporated localities of Fries, Independence, and Troutdale.



Figure VII-1. Rhododendron gap of the MRNRA.

B. Findings

This most recent land use analysis finds that Grayson very much resembles the same community that was first evaluated by the MRPDC staff in 1978. However, the study did identify some new residential development patterns, such as the increase of new homes along the

New River's shoreline and numerous ridgelines. The current residential development patterns will not likely change in the foreseeable future. Grayson's population, most recently estimated at 16,612²⁴, is projected to increase only moderately to 17,500 by the year 2030.²⁵

Also acknowledged in this analysis is the rapid growth of Grayson's Christmas tree farming industry on what historically had been identified as marginal farmland. This burgeoning agricultural activity is primarily occurring on, but is not limited to, lands that are 2,500 feet or more in elevation.

Growth is also expected in the Whitetop community due to improved transportation access (Rt. 600) into the Mount Rogers NRA. Whitetop is a prime hub of tourism activity by virtue of its scenic beauty and recreational activities. Residential development has also increased substantially in this area in recent years.

The cumulative impact of these new land expansions/changes on the greater study area present a minimal to moderate stress to the existing public infrastructure – primarily the road system.

For the foreseeable future this examination reveals that, unless there is a departure from the current land use development pattern, Grayson County will maintain a modest rate of increase in its land development. In sum, Grayson County is likely to continue to be a community that is



Figure VII-2. Fraser Firs on a Christmas tree farm.

²⁴ Grayson County Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, July 2002. This includes population totals of 585 in Fries, 944 in Independence, and 189 in Troutdale.

²⁵ County Population Projections, Virginia Employment Commission, May 2003.

best characterized as having a strong agricultural base, widely dispersed residential development, and intermittent residential subdivisions with a light mix of commercial and industrial uses.

C. Existing Land Use

The MRPDC staff conducted an extensive land use survey in the winter of 2003 and has compiled the following information related to the current land uses in Grayson County. Table VII-1, Comparative Land Use, details comparative changes in land use by broad category for the study area.

**TABLE VII-1
COMPARATIVE LAND USE¹
GRAYSON COUNTY
BY TYPE
1978 AND 2003**

CATEGORY	ACRES		PERCENT OF TOTAL	
	1978	2003	1978	2003
RESIDENTIAL	2,588	4,402	0.91%	1.55%
COMMERCIAL	91	130	0.03%	0.05%
INDUSTRIAL	114	285	0.04%	0.10%
AGRICULTURAL	109,950	136,312 ²	38.81%	48.10%
PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC	38,314	4,366 ⁴	13.53%	1.54%
CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE	132,248	138,423	46.68%	48.86%
TOTALS	283,305³	283,305	100.00%	100.00%

1. Grayson County Planning Commission, MRPDC, Virginia Department of Transportation, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Census Bureau.
2. Includes woodland on farm properties not reflected in the 1978 analysis.
3. 1978 Grayson Co. acreage totals, by category, reflect an adjustment to correct previous discrepancy of total acres from 293,760 acres to 283,305 acres.
4. Where the 1978 study had placed lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service and the Grayson Highlands State Park into this category, these are now a part of the Conservation/Open classification.

D. Land Use Comparison Summary

Conservation/Open Space is the largest single use of land in Grayson. This classification accounts for 49 percent (138,423 acres) of all land. Included in this class are lands owned/managed by the federal and state governments. These include the following: the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and Jefferson National Forest (33,079 acres), the Blue Ridge Scenic Parkway (323.8 acres), the Virginia Creeper Trail (19.4 acres), Grayson Highlands State

Park (4,822 acres), New River Trail State Park (12.2 acres), and Matthews State Park (154 acres). Within the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and Jefferson National Forest, in Grayson, the U.S. Forest Service owns approximately 33,079 acres of land. Within the federal “proclamation boundary,” there are roughly 13,270 acres that remain in private ownership.²⁶

Agriculture comprises the second largest type of land use, using approximately 48 percent (136,312 acres), of the county. Woodlands cover 34 percent (46,266 acres) of the farmlands.



Figure VII-3. Burley tobacco crop in the field.

There are 854 farms in the county, with an average size of 160 acres, and agriculture-related sales are in excess of \$20 million. In the past decade, raising Fraser Firs for Christmas trees has grown to become the leading source of farm income in Grayson County. An estimated 6,000 acres or more has been planted for Christmas tree production, and the yearly value of this crop is now estimated at roughly \$10 million, which surpasses the expected income from raising livestock.²⁷ Christmas tree production is especially important to farmers no longer willing or able to deal with the rigors of the livestock industry but still seeking to protect their income and their farmland.

Commercial land use totals 0.03 percent (130 acres); and land in industrial use equals 0.1 percent (285 acres). The industrial category includes the 44-acre Grayson County Industrial Park. Commercial and industrial developments are predominantly centered in or very near the incorporated towns, with the remaining properties broadly scattered across Grayson.

Residential land use total acreage has increased almost 59 percent since the previous analysis was conducted in 1978. At that time, residential uses accounted for 0.91 percent of land (2,588 acres). The percentage of residential land reflected in the 2003 total estimate was 1.5 percent (4,402 acres).

²⁶ U.S. Forest Service, October 2003.

²⁷ As related by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and its Grayson County agents.

The breakout for housing units by type in Grayson is as follows: single-family units account for 72 percent (6,582 units) of all homes, multi-unit structures total 4.2 percent (301 units), and the total percentage of manufactured homes is 21.5 percent (1,921 units). The percentage of boats, RVs, and vans that serve as homes is 3.1 percent (279 units).²⁸



Figure VII-4. Residential home, Elk Creek Community.

These estimates do not account for those homes that are located in the incorporated towns. Respectively, the highest concentration of residential development in Grayson occurs in the incorporated towns of Fries with 337 homes, Independence with 497 houses, and in Troutdale with 111 dwellings.

Public/Semi-Public uses account for 1.5 percent (4,241 acres) of all existing land use. Public and semi-public uses include the following: highways (4,070 acres), churches (50 acres), cemeteries (125 acres), schools (100 acres), and miscellaneous, library, rescue squads, fire departments, the Historic 1908 Courthouse, etc., (25 acres). A decrease in the total acreage allotted for this



Figure VII-5. Historic 1908 Courthouse in Independence.

category has been reduced to reflect more appropriately the lands assigned to this category.

E. Constraints to Development

Slope

The greatest constraint to development in Grayson County is severe slope. Over 60 percent of the land in the county has slopes in excess of 20 percent. For development purposes, steep slopes present a building challenge and possible environmental consequences.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau of Census, Census 2000, Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000.

Clearing, grading, building, cropping, and overgrazing of steep slopes can result in extensive erosion and encourage landslides or sloughing of soil and rock, extensive storm-water runoff, increased siltation and sedimentation, and degrading of aesthetic value. In the event of septic system failure, the septic effluent has a greater travel distance.

The following are generally accepted guidelines for the development of severe slope and can serve to substantially mitigate the above-noted hazards:

- Minimize the use of septic systems on slopes of 20 percent or greater.
- Roads should follow the natural topography to minimize grading, cutting, and filling.
- Minimize road construction in areas of 15 percent or greater slope.
- Maintain natural drainage channels in their natural state and/or stabilize natural channels to protect them from the impact of development activity.
- Design public utility corridors to fit the topography.
- Adapt development to the topography and natural setting. Excessive grading, cutting, and filling should be discouraged.
- Slopes of greater than 20 percent are not generally conducive to agricultural and forestal uses.
- As land slope increases, the rate of storm-water runoff also increases. Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals may be ineffective and can increase the probability of surface and groundwater pollution.

Flooding

Compared to some neighboring counties, Grayson is not as vulnerable to serious flood problems. Flooding is most likely to occur along the New and Little Rivers at relatively low depths.

Historically, occasional flash flooding does present a development concern as many streams flowing out of the mountains have the potential to create extensive property damage when heavy rain events occur. Any new development directly adjacent to such streams would have a high potential risk, and caution should be exercised.

In an effort to best-manage this type of problem, Grayson actively regulates the development of its recognized flood plain and has participated in the *National Flood Insurance Program* since July 1989.

Environmental/Soil Potential

When examining soil potentials, the areas that are most suitable for traditional agricultural uses are in a sense a reverse mirror image of the elevation map. The areas of Grayson County with steep slopes obviously exhibit limited potential for intensive row-crop agriculture use.

In Grayson, the lower lying flatlands and flood plains provide some of the best soils for agriculture. Good and moderate soils are more plentiful and are found on the study area's flat and rolling terrain. The county is attempting to protect these vulnerable agricultural lands through zoning and judicious use of the comprehensive plan. Other methods of protection are available to individual landowners via state enabling legislation.



Figure VII-6. Banks of the New River.

Some generally accepted protection measures for agriculture and forested lands include the following:

- ***Use-Value Assessment*** (land use tax) allows for real estate tax deferrals, with reduced assessments based on the actual use of the land. Ag/Forestal Districts allow a landowner to voluntarily enroll in a district. The participating landowner must also agree to limit development of the property for the specified time period that the district is in effect.
- ***Conservation / Open-Space Easements*** may be donated by the landowner to the Virginia Outdoors Fund, other federal or state agencies, or to an authorized private charitable organization.

- A *Purchase of Development Rights* (PDR) program is similar to conservation or open-space easement, but the easement is purchased rather than donated. Financial incentives such as a PDR program can encourage rural landowners unable to afford a gift of development rights. The PDR program allows owners to preserve their land as an alternative to sale for development.

Transportation

The *Transportation Network and Needs Map* identifies the present rural transit service routes and county roadways that show a present or future need for improvement. The link between transportation and land-use planning is important, because successful land-use planning does not over burden the existing or planned network. This map does not include the recommended long-range plan for secondary roads in the county. (See the Future Land Use Map for transportation highway needs.)

F. Regulatory Controls

Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance is one of the key tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning is the primary land-use regulatory tool that divides a locality into specific districts and lists the uses permitted in those districts. Grayson's Zoning Ordinance divides the unincorporated areas of the county into the following districts: Rural Farm, Rural Residence, Light Commercial, Heavy Commercial, Industrial, Highland/Recreation, Public, Service District, and Shoreline Recreation. (See attached Zoning Map.)

Grayson has designed flexibility into its ordinance in order to enact recommendations that are discussed in this document. For example, each district's "model-like" guidelines provide for a mix of potential uses; whereas an "all-this-use-or-nothing-else" approach to permitted use limits the flexibility of a mixed-use development pattern.

Site plans are extremely useful for addressing the general recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan to a specific piece of land or to a development proposal. This would apply to development that is not subject to the provisions of the Subdivision Ordinance.

Subdivision Ordinance

The regulations in the Subdivision Ordinance focus on the platting of lots, the layout of streets, and the building of any public utilities as is necessary to adequately subdivide the land. The Subdivision Ordinance is administered in close coordination with the Zoning Ordinance. The Subdivision Ordinance may also regulate design and standards, particularly in areas of environmental and aesthetic controls.

CHAPTER VIII

Transportation

A. Introduction

The purpose of this section of the Comprehensive Plan is to assess Grayson County's existing transportation system, its future needs, and to recommend a set of transportation strategies that can best meet current and future transportation needs.

B. Transportation System

Roadways discussed in this system, with the exception of Interstates 77 and 81, are identified as arterial, collector, or local routes. The distinction between these functional classifications (arterial, collector and local routes) is based on whether the road primarily serves "through traffic" or provides direct access to adjacent land. Roads in cities and towns with populations over 5,000 receive an "urban" designation from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and those with populations less than 5,000 are designated as "rural." Please note that all segments of roadway in this study area have a rural designation.

Roads and Highways

The main transportation infrastructure which serves the citizens of Grayson County is its road system. The system utilizes a combination of interstate (through nearby access points), primary, and secondary roads to serve the needs of residents. These road classifications have a strong influence on the location of future development and economic activity within the study area. The following section provides background data, traffic volumes and trends, VDOT's Six-Year Plan key improvements, and concludes with a summary of existing conditions, future needs, and opportunities.

Interstate

The Federal Highway Administration defines an interstate highway as a "limited access" road designed for high-speed travel, is divided at its center, and has a minimum of four lanes. Interstate 81 extends from Interstate 40, just east of Knoxville, Tennessee and terminates at the Canadian border. In Virginia, Interstate 81 extends for a total of 325 miles from the Virginia-Tennessee border near Bristol to the Virginia-West Virginia state line near Winchester. Interstate 77 extends for a total of 611 miles from Columbia, South Carolina to Detroit,

Michigan. In Virginia, Interstate 77 extends approximately 69 miles, from the North Carolina border in Carroll County to the West Virginia border in Bland County. Interstate 77 includes a high volume (49,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic), eight-mile overlap with Interstate 81 in Wytheville/Wythe County. Interstate access is available to Interstate 81, in Marion at Exit 45; to Interstate 77, eight miles east of Galax, at Exit 14, and the Interstate 77/81 overlap in Wytheville at Exits 73 and 80.

Traffic volumes on both Interstate 81 and Interstate 77 have risen dramatically since their construction. In Southwestern Virginia, commercial freight vehicles are a primary contributor to the dramatic rise in the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume. The most recent data indicates that this single element of roadway use accounts for approximately 25 percent of the AADT total (see Table VIII-1, AADT Volumes).

Primary

Rural primary (arterial) highways are defined as roads that range from two-lane, multi-lane, and divided highways with controlled points of access. These roads are designed to move higher volume traffic at greater speed between rural and areas of concentrated urban development. The US 58, 221/21 routes, and the VA 16, 89, 93, 94, 97, and 274 routes serve Grayson County as its key arterial primary highways.

Of these roads, US 58 and US 16 provide travelers the most favorable east-west route, while US 221/21 and 94 provide the preferred means to move from north to south. The traffic volume on US 58 ranges from 5,800 AADT at the Town of Independence's east corporate limit to 8,700 AADT, at the intersection of US 58/VA 94, just west of Galax. The traffic volume on US 221/21 is approximately 2,200 AADT at Independence, and US 21's AADT is 1,300 at the Wythe County line. The level of traffic on VA 94 between US 58 and the Town of Fries is 2,500 AADT.²⁹

Secondary

A rural secondary road or "collector" can have two to four lanes and is usually undivided. Secondary roads absorb traffic from lightly traveled local roads and busier primary roads. Generally, these facilities have fewer restricted access points to adjacent properties than either the primary or interstate systems. In Grayson County there are approximately 338 secondary

²⁹Virginia Dept. of Transportation – Daily Traffic Volumes, Jurisdiction Report 38, 2001.

roads in the study area. These roads have number designations in the range of 600 to 9999 with traffic volumes ranging from 10± AADT to 2,000+ AADT.

Road System Breakdown

Grayson County's road network consists of approximately 767 miles of roads. Approximately 16.4 percent (108 miles) of these roads are designated as primary highway facilities, and the remaining 83.6 percent (659 miles) of roadways are designated as secondary facilities. All 108 miles of primary roads in the study have a hard surface cover. However, only 46 percent (300 miles) of the secondary roads have a hard surface, 37 percent (245 miles) have an all-weather surface, and 17 percent (113 miles) have a light surface (109 miles) or are unsurfaced (4.3 miles).

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) maintains all recognized roads in the study area and posts speeds on roadways based on such factors as location, traffic volume, pedestrian volume, safety, and hazardous terrain issues. The speed on all secondary roads is 55 miles per hour unless otherwise posted. Please note that no light-surfaced or unsurfaced road is posted with a black-and-white speed limit sign. However, all drivers on these roads are required to maintain a safe speed.

Rural Rustic Roads

The 2002 Session of the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that revised *Section 33.1-70.1* of the state code (1997 Session) that became effective July 1, 2003. The initial section of Code known as the "Pave-in-Place" legislation has been left intact, and now has added language that authorizes what is known as the "Rural Rustic Road" legislation.

The Rural Rustic Road legislation represents an evolutionary change in the focus of VDOT's program to improve and pave dirt and gravel roads throughout the rural sections of the Commonwealth. The legislation is largely based on American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) published *Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT less than or equal to 400)*.

Eligibility guidelines for the rural rustic roads program are as follows:

- Must be an unpaved road within the State Secondary System.
- Must carry at least 50 but not more than 500 vehicles per day.

- Must be a priority line item in an approved Secondary System Six-Year Plan, even if the funding is not from normal secondary construction allocations.
- Governing body of the county, in consultation with the VDOT Resident Engineer or designee, must designate a road or road segment as a Rural Rustic Road.
- Roadway or sub-section must be predominantly for local traffic use.
- The local nature of the road means that most motorists using the road have traveled it before and are familiar with its features.
- The Board of Supervisors will endeavor to limit growth on roads improved under the Rural Rustic Road program and will cooperate with VDOT through its comprehensive planning process to develop lands consistent with the rural rustic road concepts.
- Requires a special Resolution designating the road as a Rural Rustic Road by the Board of Supervisors.

Traffic Volumes

VDOT's Traffic Engineering Division in Richmond and Bristol provided the following volume information. The traffic count data indicate that the highest levels of traffic are found in the eastern and the lower midsections of the study area. Substantially less traffic volumes are found in the less developed areas in the northern and western sections.

Table VIII-1, *Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts for Selected Roadways in Grayson County – 2001*, below, presents traffic volume data for the study area.

TABLE VIII-1
ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC COUNTS¹
GRAYSON COUNTY
BY SELECTED ROADWAYS
2001

ROADWAY	FROM	TO	DISTANCE	2001 AADT
Interstate 77	NC Line	Ft. Chiswell	33 mi.	32 – 36,000
Interstate 81	Marion Ex. 45	Wytheville Ex. 70	25 mi.	26 – 36,000
Interstate 77/81 (overlap)	Ex. 40 & 72	Ex. 32 & 80	7.0 mi.	49,000
US 58	US 21	ECL Independence	1.2 mi.	5,800
US 58	VA 94	WCL Galax	1.3 mi.	8,700
US 221/21	NC Line	CL Independence	3.4 mi.	2,200
US 21	US 58	NCL Independence	0.5 mi.	2,100
VA 16	WCL Troutdale	Smyth Co. Line	0.8 mi.	1,400
VA 89	NC Line	SCL Galax	4.9 mi.	4,900
VA 97	ECL Galax	Carroll Co. Line	0.8 mi.	3,100
VA 274	US 58	VA 94	7.4 mi.	900
SR 606	SR 1001	ECL Fries	0.2 mi.	3,300
SR 607	NCL Galax Gap	Carroll Co. Line	0.3 mi.	1,100
SR 613	NC Line	SR 785	1.6 mi.	2,100
SR 626	SR 622	US 58	0.1 mi.	1,000
SR 805	SR 881	SR 648	0.6 mi.	1,800
SR 1001	VA 94	SR 1005	.21 mi.	3,600
SR 1101	US 21	SR 1131	.24 mi.	1,100
SR 1124	US 58	SR 685	.33 mi.	1,200

1. The Virginia Department of Transportation, Traffic Engineering Division.

Road Design Standards

Design standards for roads are established by VDOT. Required minimum right-of-ways (ROW) standards are based on the annual average daily traffic volumes (AADT) and the physical constraints of the project area. These standards serve as key land-use development and design guidelines. VDOT maintenance funds are only available for road facilities that meet its right-of-way design standards.

Table VIII-2, *Roadway Design Standards by Traffic Volume*, at right, presents

TABLE VIII-2
Roadway Design Standards¹
By Traffic Volume

AADT	ROW
Up to 250	40'±
251 – 400	50'±
401 – 5,000	60'±
Over 5,500	80' – 120'±

1. VDOT, Traffic Engineering Division

vehicle volume thresholds and related right-of-way values required for VDOT to assume maintenance responsibilities for roads and other related infrastructure.

Process to Effect Secondary Road Improvements

Grayson County has two categories of road projects within its secondary road system: (1) state maintained road projects and (2) local road projects. To be included in the State's Six-Year Improvement Program, county officials coordinate with VDOT to prioritize, plan and construct its road improvement projects. Local road projects are those that may be initiated by county officials. These can take place on narrow road facilities that do not have sufficient right-of-way to be eligible for state maintenance, or they can also be projects that are constructed as the result of new private development. Only projects that follow VDOT construction guidelines are eligible for state maintenance funds through the county's secondary road maintenance allocation.

The county's secondary road system allocation for fiscal year 2003-2004 is approximately \$1.77 million and will average approximately \$1.65 million through fiscal year 2008-2009. These funds, in combination with local funds, can be used to construct and maintain the county's road system. In fiscal year 2003-2004, use of the \$1.77-million highway allocation is divided into three categories: 1) Incidental Construction – \$80,000, 2) Regular Construction – \$852,000, 3) Unpaved Construction – \$839,000. The Six-Year Improvement Plan includes 36 projects on 27 roads.

Key Road Projects

The US 58 Corridor Program represents the most significant road project in Grayson County. The Corridor Program calls for widening and four-laning upgrades to existing US 58 facilities and other related roads (VA 16, Rt. 603 and 725). A new alignment designed to bypass the Town of Independence is also part of the planned US 58 system improvements. Currently, state funding limitations continue to compromise the ability of the Commonwealth Transportation Board and VDOT to determine an anticipated completion date for large sections of roadway within the study area.

U.S. Scenic Highways

For driving pleasure, Virginia offers beautiful scenery year-round and can be enjoyed on several nearby roadways. The closest National Scenic Byway to Grayson County is the *Blue Ridge Parkway*. The Blue Ridge Parkway was constructed during the Great Depression and is the nation's longest rural roadway as it extends 469 miles along the crests of the Southern Appalachian Mountains between the Shenandoah and Great Smokey Mountain National Parks.

The Parkway traverses 217 miles through Virginia and allows visitors to travel from its beginning at the southern end of the Shenandoah National Park to the North Carolina border, near Fisher's Peak.

In Virginia, the Parkway offers spectacular views and interesting examples of Appalachian culture at places such as Humpback Rocks and Mabry Mill. The *Appalachian Trail* can also be reached from the Parkway at more than 20 overlooks and parking areas in the Commonwealth and provides opportunities to hike sections of this popular national scenic trail.

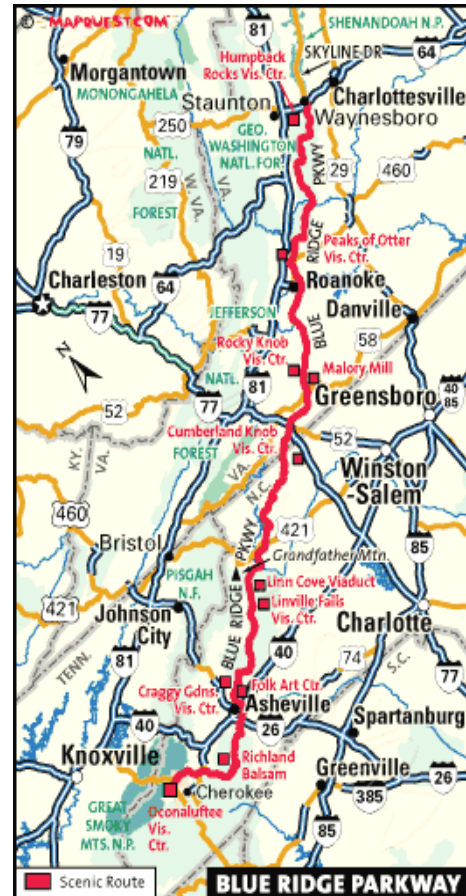


Figure VIII-1. Blue Ridge Parkway Route.

Virginia Scenic Byways

The Virginia Byways program began in 1972 and mirrors the federal program as a way to promote the Commonwealth's substantial natural beauty, historical places, and areas of social significance to travelers who desire a pace that will enhance their experience. Currently, about 2,600 miles of roads have received Virginia Byway designation.

Byways effectively stimulate local economies by attracting visitors to lesser-known destinations. Travelers can follow the highlighted byways on state transportation and scenic road maps to visit and tour the wineries, explore the Civil War battle sites and other historical

attractions, and experience the majestic natural scenery that connect the region's vast recreation resources.

Two designated scenic byways pass through the Jefferson National Forest and the Mount Rogers Planning District region. These are the *Mount Rogers and the Big Walker Mountain Scenic Byways*.



Figure VIII-2. Map of Virginia Southern Highlands Scenic Byways.

The *Mount Rogers Scenic Byway* is divided in two sections. The first begins at the Town of Troutdale and goes west for approximately 13 miles through Grayson and Smyth counties. This scenic route traverses the heart of the Mount Rogers National Recreational Area with

scenic, open, rural countryside characteristics. The second section leads 32 miles east from the Town of Damascus to the community of Volney. This section follows US 58 in Grayson and Washington counties. This route offers the excellent access to the “High Country” of the national recreation area as it passes the southwest slopes of Whitetop Mountain, the second highest peak in Virginia, at 5,570 feet.

The map and photograph inset of a hiker on the Appalachian Trail details the scenic roadway alignments for the Southern Highlands section of the Virginia Scenic Byway system.

Air Travel

Charlotte/Douglas International Airport (CDIA) is the region’s premier airport. CDIA is located approximately 140 miles from Independence and is sited seven miles west of uptown Charlotte. The nation’s 23rd busiest airfield offers non-stop domestic and international passenger service and averages over 530 flights daily to serve over 23 million passengers annually. The airport offers a main terminal with 1.8 million square feet of space; non-stop service to 146 cities, through 14 air carriers; utilizes five aircraft gates (with three additional gates under construction); and has 17,000 public, bus, and taxi parking spaces.

CDIA fast facts:

- Serves the fifth largest urban region in the U.S
- 6,000,000 persons live within a 100 mile radius
- Second largest financial center in the U.S.
- 50 percent of the U.S. population is within a two hour flight or one-day drive

Piedmont Triad International Airport, located approximately 102 miles southeast of Independence, about seven miles west of Greensboro, North Carolina, primarily serves the Piedmont area of North Carolina and portions of Southwest Virginia. The Piedmont airport offers:

- Non-stop service to 18 cities
- Passenger terminal with 256,000 square feet of public area on two levels
- 65,000 square feet of area on the underground service level
- 18 aircraft parking positions adjacent to the two concourses
- The main runway length is 10,001 feet

- The secondary crosswind runway length is 6,380 feet

The *Roanoke Regional Airport*, located approximately 109 miles northeast of Independence, is another full-service airport that offers a wide range of services for all aviation types and is the primary commercial airport serving a large portion of Western Virginia. Roanoke Regional Airport offers non-stop service to a dozen major cities, as well as connecting services to major air-transportation hubs. General Aviation services at Roanoke Regional Airport include the following:

- A full-service Fixed Base Operator
- 24-hour-a-day services
- Hangar and heated hangers storage
- Engine repair and maintenance
- Executive and Pilot Lounges
- Pilot training

Tri-Cities Regional Airport, located approximately 95 miles southwest of Independence, near Blountville, Tennessee, is another of the region's primary full-service commercial airports and serves as a gateway to Southwest Virginia, East Tennessee, Western North Carolina, and parts of Kentucky.

Tri-Cities Regional Airport offers non-stop service to six major hubs. With one connection you can get most anywhere in the United States and many destinations abroad. Tri-Cities Regional Airport property covers 1,040 acres with another 89.05 acres in easements. It includes:

- A terminal building of approximately 97,300 square feet
- A 23,000 square foot cargo building
- Eight conventional hangars ranging in size from 8,000 to 28,000 square feet of storage space
- Fixed-base operator, domestic and charter facilities
- An 8,000 foot primary runway and a 4,447 foot secondary runway

General Aviation

The *Twin County Airport* (TCA) provides general aviation services locally and is jointly owned by Grayson and Carroll Counties and the City of Galax. The airport has a 4,203 foot long runway and is located seven miles northeast of Galax. Planned expansions at the airport include a new terminal and commercial leasing service.

TCA's operational statistics show that there are 12 aircraft based at the field. Ten are single-engine, one multi-engine, and one helicopter. Aircraft arrivals and departures average 46 per day. Of these, 53 percent are transient general aviation, 44 percent are local general aviation, two percent are air taxi, and less than one percent is military. TCA offers full-service fixed base operations, hanger storage, engine repair and maintenance, and pilot training.

The *Mountain Empire Airport* (MEA) provides general aviation services locally and is jointly owned by Smyth and Wythe Counties and the Towns of Marion and Wytheville. It is located about 35 miles north of Independence, near the Town of Rural Retreat. Its 5,280-foot lighted asphalt runway provides an excellent landing location for corporate, charter, and air freight jets that service local corporate and general public customers. The airport is accessible from US 11 with signs on both US 11 and Interstate 81.

A \$3+ million-dollar parallel taxiway addition has just been completed and will allow MEA to increase the number of aircraft arrivals and departures by virtue of its enhanced takeoff, landing, and taxiing capabilities. The long-range plan for the facility includes additional space for hangars for corporate aircraft.

Rail Services

Passenger Rail Service is not currently available in the Southwest Virginia region and the nearest passenger service (Amtrak) station is located in Lynchburg. However, the United States Congress has approved legislation that directs Amtrak to partner with the Commonwealth of Virginia and freight railroad corporations to construct the operating agreements necessary to launch passenger rail service from Bristol to Richmond and Washington, D.C.³⁰

The 2000 General Assembly allocated \$9.3 million for the TransDominion Express rail project, which with stops in Abingdon, Marion, Wytheville, Pulaski, Radford, and

³⁰ <http://www.house.gov/transportation/railjuris.htm>.

Christiansburg, could increase heritage tourism travel into the area. An added benefit would be decreasing traffic congestion on Interstate 81.³¹

Commercial *Freight Rail Service* is not available in Grayson County. However, the Norfolk Southern Railway Corporation operates a Class A Mainline that passes through the nearby towns of Wytheville, Rural Retreat, and Marion. Numerous rail sidings and spurs are available to serve industrial customers throughout the region. Regional terminal facilities for the main line are based at Bristol and Radford. Norfolk Southern provides bulk, mixed freight, containerized piggyback and team track services. Approximately 13 trains a day pass through the region.

Transit & Taxi

Grayson County Public Transit, a service of *District Three Public Transit* in Marion, operates a limited schedule of bus service for a reasonable fare to the citizens of Grayson County. Regular routes are available for the Towns of Fries, Independence, Troutdale, and the Whitetop community. Figure VIII-6, below, presents a current schedule for the County's transit system.

District Three Senior Services also provides limited, on-demand response for medical transit service to eligible clientele in Grayson County. Private cab services are provided by three businesses in Galax, and two in the Town of Hillsville.

³¹ <http://leg1.state.va.us/001/idx/ishtm193.htm>.

Table VIII-3
Public Transit Route Schedule
Grayson County
Call 24 hours in advance for Reservations:
Toll Free: 1-866-238-4293 Round Trip Fare is \$1

Area Served	Destination	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Independence	Galax	1st, 2nd, 3rd		
Independence	In-Town Loop	4th		
Whitetop	Marion			1st
Whitetop	Abingdon			3rd
Whitetop	Independence			2nd
Troutdale	Marion		1st, 4th	
Troutdale	Independence		3rd	
Troutdale	Marion			1st
Fries	Galax			Every

Route Time - 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
A Service of District Three Public Transit

Bus and Motor Freight

Atlantic Greyhound Bus Lines (an independent agent) provides passenger and package interstate transportation from its full-service bus terminals that are located in Max Meadows and Marion. Limited bus services are also available in Hillsville. Interstate and intrastate freight service is also available from numerous trucking companies that provide service in Grayson County.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

There is excellent access to numerous trail facilities within the study area for bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian activities. In addition to the walking trail located at the county’s Ager Recreation Park, New River Trail State Park, Grayson Highlands State Park, Jefferson National Forest / Mount Rogers National Recreational Area, Virginia Creeper Trail, Appalachian Trail, and the US Bicycle Route 76 also provide outstanding multi-use opportunities.

- *New River Trail State Park* is the state’s only linear park and is 57 miles in length. The park is a rail conversion of a former Norfolk & Southern railroad line. The park stretches from the City of Galax to Fries and on to Pulaski, as it parallels the banks of the New River for approximately 39 miles.

- *Grayson Highlands State Park* is next to the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. Grayson Highlands was created in 1965. It was originally Mount Rogers State Park. The 4,822-acre park is located on US 58 between Independence and Damascus. Hiking, biking, and equestrian trail facilities are available for year-round use.
- The *Jefferson National Forest / Mount Rogers National Recreational Area* extends east to west across the entire length of Grayson County's northern boundary. This area includes many easy access points to the forest and its numerous campgrounds, picnic areas, and 400 miles of recreational trail facilities. Most Mount Rogers NRA's multi-use trail facilities are open for use throughout the entire year .
- The *Virginia Creeper National Recreational Trail* is a 33.4-mile, multi-use facility, which connects the Virginia / North Carolina state line one mile east of Whitetop Station to the Towns of Damascus and Abingdon. It is available for use by hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.
- The *Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT)* is a public footpath across over 2,000 miles of Appalachian Mountain ridgeline from Maine to Georgia. A beautiful section of this trail is located in the Mount Rogers NRA. Maintenance of the trail within the NRA is a partnership involving the Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conference.
- *US Bike Route 76*, a.k.a., the *Transamerica Trail*, is a well-known bicycle route that stretches 4,300 miles from the coast of Virginia to the coast of Oregon. The trail was established in 1976 as part of the U.S. Bicentennial celebration. Bike Route 76, a shared-use facility, is widely recognized as the greatest and most traveled bike trail in America. The trail's route passes through the Town of Troutdale, on State Road 603.

C. **Transportation Challenges**

- Grayson County does not have a four-lane connection through the county.
- Safety concerns are present on many roadways, such as line-of-sight problems.
- The current transportation system does not include safe networks for pedestrians and bicycles.

CHAPTER IX Government

Grayson County is one of 95 counties in the state of Virginia. The county is named after William Grayson, who served in the Continental Congress from 1784 to 1787 and was one of the first two senators representing Virginia in the U.S. Congress.

Contained within Grayson County is part of the independent City of Galax,³² which is not covered in this planning document, and three local municipalities – the towns of Fries, Independence, and Troutdale. County government is based in Independence, the largest of the three towns.

A. Historical Background

An act of the Virginia General Assembly created Grayson County from part of Wythe County in 1793.³³ The county seat, originally located in Old Town, moved to what became the Town of Independence in 1850. Formed near the base of Point Lookout Mountain, Independence became a compromise in a dispute between two established communities (Old Town and Elk Creek) over which one should serve as the permanent county seat. All county offices now reside in Independence, although the county schools occupy buildings scattered throughout the county. Many, but not all, county offices can be found in the Grayson County Courthouse.

Though the Town of Independence was created to settle an argument, the other towns in Grayson County came into being because of business and industry. The Town of Fries developed following construction of a dam at Bartlett Falls on the New River in 1901 and a mill that went into operation in 1903. The community originally was incorporated in 1901 as the Village of Washington Mills, named after the local milling company that produced textiles until 1989. In 1962 the community became known as the Town of Fries.

The Town of Troutdale was created in 1906, with its boundaries formed as a perfect circle within a one-mile radius of the town's center. The community originally developed around a local railroad and once thrived as a center of lumbering and furniture manufacturing. Those industries went into decline in the 1920s with the loss of business for the factories and the depletion of local timber, forcing the lumber companies to close.

³² Virginia's system of government allows cities to be independent and thereby equivalent to the counties.

³³ Part of Grayson County was later split off to form Carroll County.

Local history remains important in Grayson County. Gibson Worsham, an architect with the state Department of Historic Resources in Roanoke, recently completed a survey of historic architecture in Grayson County and the three towns. The survey, conducted in winter of 2001 and spring of 2002, covered 150 properties. It was the first coordinated survey effort of its kind for Grayson County. Further details can be found in Worsham's report, *A Survey of Historic Architecture in Grayson County, Virginia, Including the Towns of Independence and Fries*.

B. County Government Organization

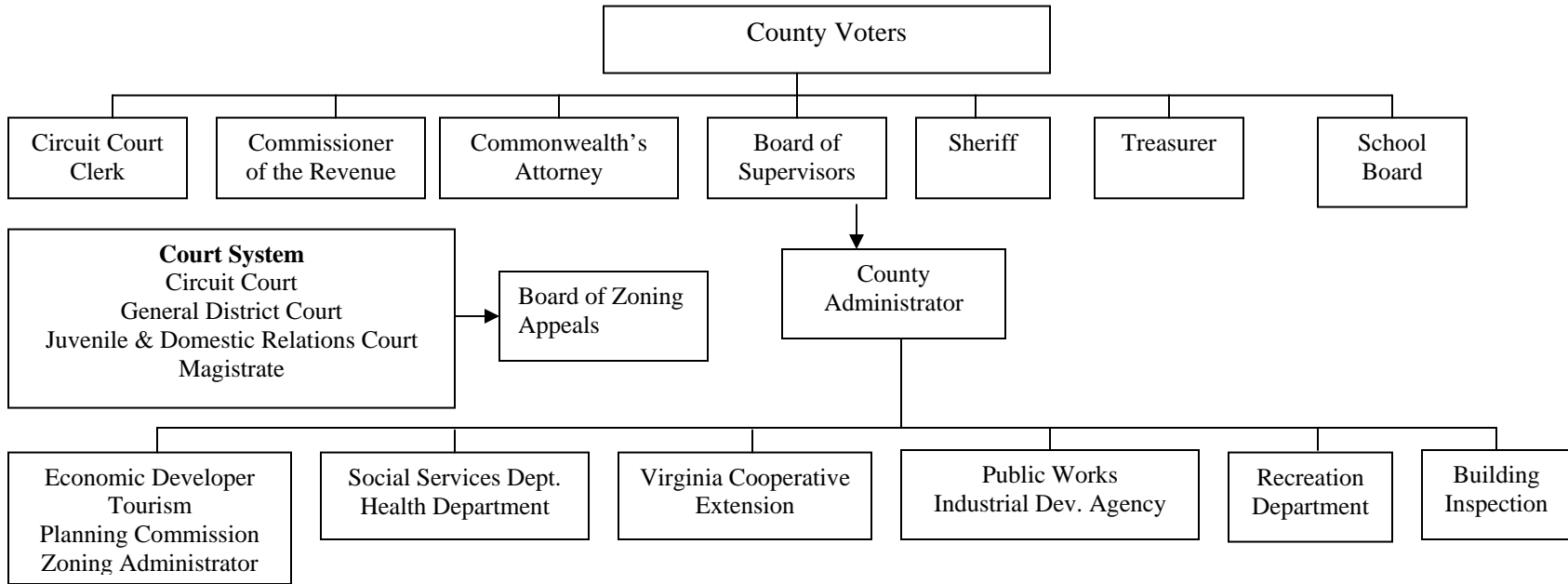
The Grayson County Board of Supervisors serves as the chief governing body for the county. There are five members of the board, with four representing the local magisterial districts and one at-large member. The magisterial districts are Elk Creek, Oldtown, Providence, and Wilson. Each supervisor serves a four-year term, and the terms have been staggered since 1979 to smooth out the transition process.

The policies and programs set by the Board of Supervisors are carried out by the county administrator, an appointed employee who serves at the pleasure of the Board. The county administrator has day-to-day supervision of county departments, serves as secretary to the Industrial Development Authority, and also as the county zoning officer. The administrator along with the Board of Supervisors is responsible each year for setting the county budget. The administrator performs other functions as directed by the Board and may make various policy recommendations from time to time.

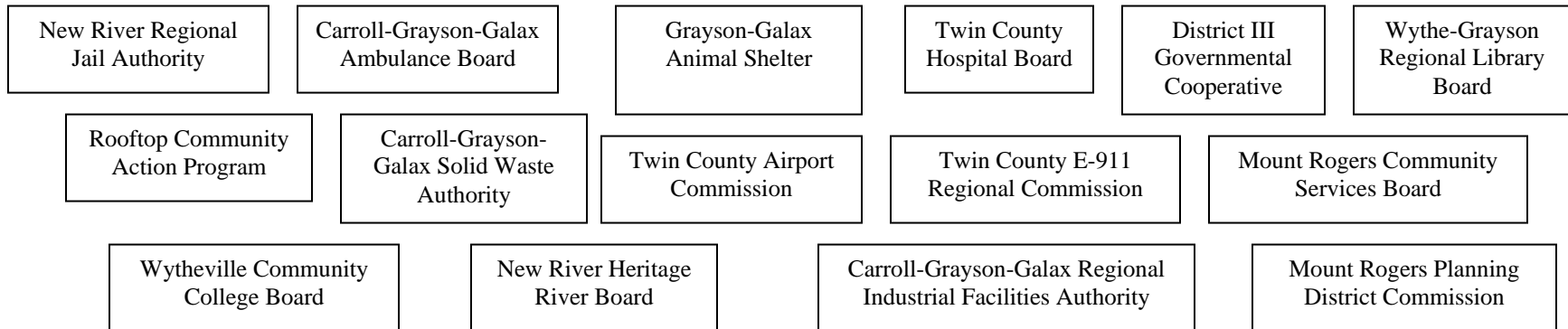
Other key elected officials in Grayson County government include the Circuit Court Clerk, Commissioner of the Revenue, Sheriff, Treasurer, and Commonwealth's Attorney. Every locality also must have a registrar of voters, a person who is appointed by the local electoral board to serve four-year terms. Grayson County also uses a county assessor for the valuation of real estate, which takes place every two years.

More recently, school board members also became elected officials. In the past the school board members were appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Prior to that, the members were appointed by the school electoral board which was appointed by the circuit court judge.

Grayson County Government Structure



Selection of Regional Organizations Serving Grayson County



C. Town Governments

All three towns have a mayor-council form of government, with elected terms of office ranging between two and four years.

The Fries Town Council is composed of seven elected council members who serve two-year terms. The town council appoints the mayor who serves a one-year term. The town, with a population of 614 (as of the 2000 Census) also has a town police department and fire department. The town charter provides for a treasurer, clerk, and chief of police.

In contrast, the Independence Town Council consists of six elected council members, who serve four-year terms, and an elected mayor, who also serves a four-year term. The town council elects a vice-mayor from among its own ranks for a two-year term. Other officers serving the town are appointed, and they include a town treasurer, town attorney, town chief of police, and town manager.

The Troutdale Town Council consists of six elected members who serve two-year terms. The mayor and town recorder are also elected positions with two-year terms.

The small size of these towns makes it difficult to afford to hire town managers, so the service is provided through staff of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, specifically for the towns of Fries and Troutdale.

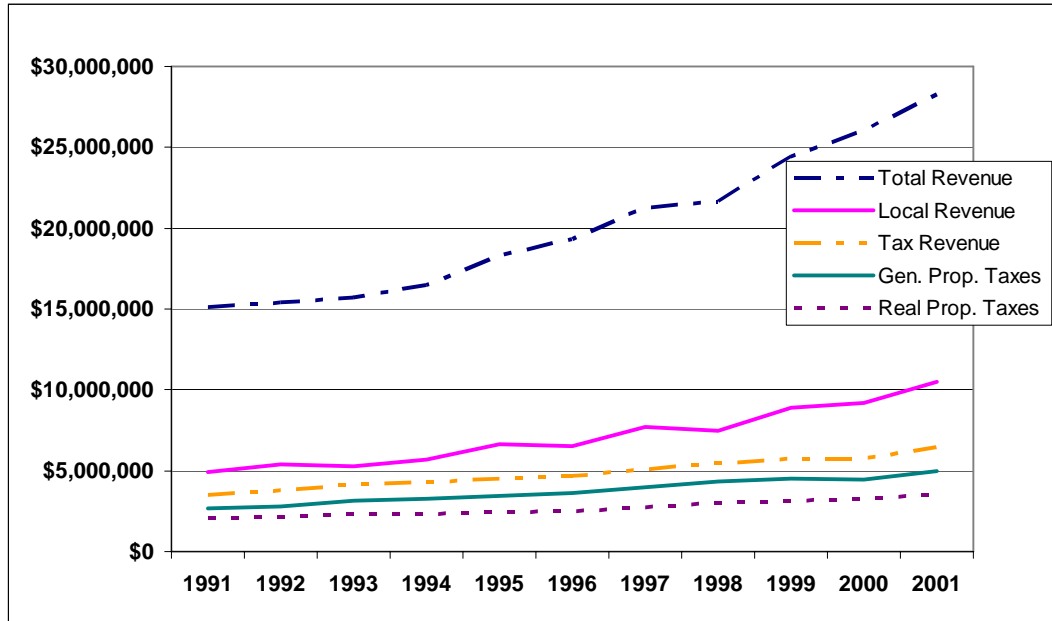
D. County Government Finances

To function efficiently, governments require sources of revenue to hire staff, purchase equipment, provide facilities and infrastructure, meet state and federal mandates, and provide services to the public. While Grayson County's financial status will not be reviewed in depth here, a few points will be made about trends in revenues and expenses since 1990 and the annual fiscal stress reports made by the Virginia Commission on Local Government.

Trends on revenues and expenses have been captured by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, as reported by the state auditor of public accounts. The chart shown below depicts Grayson County trends, going from fiscal year 1991 through fiscal year 2001.³⁴

³⁴ Data taken from the state annual *Comparative Report of Local Government Revenues and Expenditures*.

**Chart IX-1
Revenue Trends
Grayson County
By Type
1991 to 2001**



The data shows that total revenues for Grayson County have grown by 87 percent from 1991 through 2001, going from \$15.1 million to \$28.3 million. In the same time period, local revenues have increased by 113 percent (with the balance coming from state and federal sources).

On the statewide level, total revenues have increased by 78 percent, and local revenues have increased by only 66 percent, according to the data published by the state auditor.³⁵ The increases in revenues raised from general property taxes have kept pace with the general growth in all revenues collected by Grayson County.

Revenues from real property taxes have also increased, at an overall rate of 72 percent for the 11-year period. Revenues from personal property taxes, though they form only a small portion of all revenues, went up 162 percent for Grayson County. Statewide, revenues from general property taxes grew by 52 percent and from real property taxes by 46 percent.

³⁵ The data should be used only for general comparisons. Some localities were unable to meet the state's deadlines for inclusion in the *Comparative Report of Local Government Revenues and Expenditures*.

A more detailed comparison of Grayson County financial trends versus those for the state appears in the following tables.³⁶

Table IX-1
Selected Revenues and Expenditures
Grayson County
1991-2001

(as reported by state auditor of public accounts)

	1991	1996	2001	Rate of Change 1991-2001
Total Revenue	\$15,127,627	\$19,317,755	\$28,268,590	87%
Local Revenue	\$4,923,890	\$6,493,351	\$10,472,864	113%
Tax Revenue	\$3,486,128	\$4,693,130	\$6,480,621	86%
Gen. Prop. Taxes	\$2,685,649	\$3,597,824	\$4,996,157	86%
Real Prop. Taxes	\$2,074,924	\$2,462,944	\$3,575,341	72%
Expenditures	\$15,089,711	\$19,226,138	\$26,714,631	77%
Gen. Govt. Admin.	\$447,224	\$489,725	\$715,848	60%
Education	\$10,360,199	\$12,284,391	\$16,541,768	60%

Table IX-2
Selected Revenues and Expenditures
Virginia
1991-2001

(as reported by state auditor of public accounts)

	1991	1996	2001	Rate of Change 1991-2001
Total Revenue	\$9,785,454,291	\$12,423,721,922	\$17,382,806,946	78%
Local Revenue	\$6,179,858,248	\$7,923,791,271	\$10,237,314,447	66%
Tax Revenue	\$5,331,523,462	\$6,664,128,196	\$8,491,481,540	59%
Gen. Prop. Taxes	\$3,966,199,117	\$4,857,474,324	\$6,020,894,387	52%
Real Prop. Taxes	\$22,089,685	\$25,831,310	\$32,254,772	46%
Expenditures	\$9,022,474,631	\$10,728,116,522	\$15,591,483,774	73%
Gen. Govt. Admin.	\$429,014,546	\$494,408,261	\$660,291,693	54%
Education	\$5,152,482,862	\$6,179,068,943	\$8,572,777,226	66%

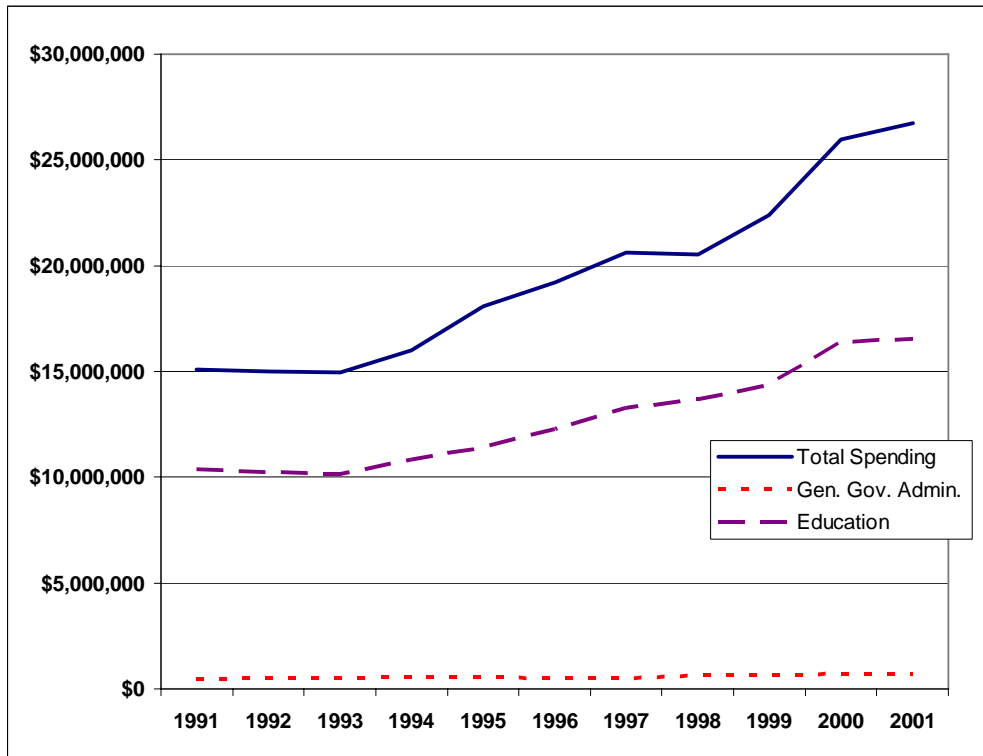
On the spending side for Grayson County, the overall rate of increase came to 77 percent, or four percentage points higher than the statewide rate.

As noted previously in this chapter, most of Grayson County's spending goes for education, which accounts for roughly two-thirds of all county spending. Education spending

³⁶ These are selected data. The columns will not add up.

went up at a rate of 60 percent, going from \$10.4 million in 1991 to \$16.5 million in 2001. Statewide, education spending increased 66 percent over the same 11-year period.

**Chart IX-2
Spending Trends
Grayson County
By Type
1991 to 2001**



It should be noted the chart shown above is somewhat misleading in its appearance. Spending for both education (heavy dotted line) and general government administration (light dotted line) increased by 60 percent over the 11-year period. The line for general government administration appears flat because the dollar amount is so small (\$715,848 in 2001).

For the Board of Supervisors and the general public, there is the continual struggle over government revenue needs versus the ability and willingness of local taxpayers to pay the bills. Virginia's Commission on Local Government studies this issue on the statewide level each year and reports the findings in a document called *Report on the Comparative Revenue Capacity, Revenue Effort, and Fiscal Stress of Virginia's Cities and Counties*.

In its analysis of revenue needs, the Commission on Local Government produces its Composite Fiscal Stress Index for each county and city in the Commonwealth. The Index is

derived from three measures: 1) level of *revenue capacity* per capita, 2) degree of *revenue effort*, and 3) level of *median adjusted gross income* among all residents filing state tax returns for the associated calendar year.

Revenue capacity is a measure of the potential revenues a locality can expect from taxes, service charges, licenses, privilege fees, and other similar instruments. The score is derived from a formula based on the full market value of real estate and public service corporation property, the adjusted number of registered motor vehicles, taxable retail sales, and the total adjusted gross income of the resident population.

Revenue effort measures a locality’s success in converting its revenue-generating potential into actual collections. This factor is based on income from taxes on real estate and public service corporation property, motor vehicle licenses, local sales taxes, and other locally controlled revenue sources, including personal property taxes. These factors are summed and then divided by the local revenue capacity to produce the numerical figure that describes revenue effort.

Median adjusted gross income is computed from income tax returns filed by all people (both individuals and couples) who are reporting income to the state. The median is the mid-point for all adjusted gross income – half of all incomes will fall above the median and half of all incomes will fall below the median.

Table IX-3
Scores on Fiscal Stress
Grayson County And MRPDC
By Two-Year Increments
1994 to 2001

	1994-95	1996-97	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Composite Fiscal Stress Index (Grayson)	169.49	168.77	167.57	167.65	168.41
Mean Fiscal Stress Index for MRPDC (Counties)	166.80	166.45	na	167.15	167.63
Statewide Rank (Grayson)	45.0	45.0	51.5	56.0	52.0
Range for Statewide Rank	1=highest 136=lowest	1=highest 135=lowest	1=highest 135=lowest	1=highest 135=lowest	1=highest 135=lowest
Stress Class (Grayson)	Above Average	Above Average	Above Average	Above Average	Above Average

1. Report on the Comparative Revenue Capacity, Revenue Effort and Fiscal Stress of Virginia’s Counties and Cities, by the Virginia Commission on Local Government.

All of these factors are rolled into the *Composite Fiscal Stress Index*, a score indicating the relative level of fiscal strain experienced by each of the counties and cities in relationship to each other. The Commission on Local Government uses the scores to create four classes of fiscal stress – low, below average, above average, and high. Grayson County’s standing regarding the Composite Fiscal Stress Index and related measures, as compared to other localities statewide, is shown in Table VIII-3 on the previous page.

As a general rule in the Commission’s reports, the cities fall into the high stress category, followed by the counties. Counties in the Mount Rogers region generally fall into the above average stress category. In the report for 2000-2001, both the cities of Bristol and Galax were classified as high stress, followed by the counties of Smyth, Wythe, Grayson, and Carroll in the above-average stress category. The counties of Bland and Washington were ranked in the below-average category. The Commission on Local Government issues its report on fiscal stress every year.

CHAPTER X

Goals And Objectives

The previous chapters of this Comprehensive Plan have inventoried the economic, physical, and social attributes of Grayson County. In some instances the potential for the county has been identified. In other instances barriers against achieving a potential have been identified. In other instances only issues have been exposed. This chapter will discuss the rationale for the strategies and recommendations to be presented in Chapter XI.

A. Vision 2025 Mount Rogers Region

From January through April of 2002 a series of nine visioning sessions were held throughout the Mount Rogers Planning District. The ideas (visions) offered during this process were either ranked by the participants or assigned a numerical value of 0 - 5 and collapsed to mimic a voting process. The result of this process has provided a “sense” of the ideas that carry the most importance for the region.

This process has relevance for Grayson County in formulating its own future. For example, the county can determine what it needs to do to be a partner in the regional effort to improve education, governments, transportation, tourism, infrastructure, economic development, etc. Some of the top priorities elicited for Vision 2025 were as follows:

- Educational opportunities for all ages, with emphasis on higher education and improved education facilities.
- A region-wide willingness to welcome change to advance to the future.
- Improved healthcare, human development, and sense of community and family.
- Protecting the region’s natural resources, rural character, environmental cleanliness, and historic resources.
- More and better housing – affordable housing.
- Modernized downtowns as shopping areas and controlled physical development.
- Development of the region as a nationwide destination point for outdoor recreation.
- Development of a wider range of cultural attractions as well as more facilities for sporting competitions and possible development of a major regional theme park.

- Creation of a diversified regional economy with more high-tech industry, along with alternative enterprises such as eco-tourism.
- More workforce training in all categories.
- More small business development.
- Improved efforts and incentives to attract other new industries to the region.
- Consolidated government to avoid duplication.
- Improved transportation systems on the ground and in the air.
- Planned growth and land-use control.
- More infrastructure development, including public water, electrical service, public sewer, and broadband telecommunications capabilities.

B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

Late in the year 2000, a volunteer committee comprised of local government officials, business, industry, education, and concerned citizens of Grayson County began to meet. They eventually called themselves the Grayson County Economic Resource Group. The group quickly determined its mission was to conduct economic development planning to: promote development of high-quality jobs, create opportunities encouraging businesses to locate and invest in the county, support the provision of public services, and improve the quality of life for Grayson County residents.

The Economic Resource Group began by conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the county's economic development environment. SWOT consists of two parts: 1) comment and data collection, and 2) analysis of the data.

The SWOT analysis aimed to identify assets of value in development efforts, along with issues of special concern. Upon review of the SWOT data, the Economic Resource Group divided itself into thirteen (13) subcommittees focusing on agriculture, buildings and sites, commercial businesses, community data, E-commerce, education, existing industries, government, infrastructure, quality of life, tourism, transportation, and workforce issues.

The subcommittees researched their focus areas, reported the results and provided recommendations and/or goals, objectives, and strategies on which to base future development efforts. Most of the committees used the results of the SWOT data as a starting point. Some of the top findings by the Economic Resource Group include the following:

- One of the more viable strategies appeared to be increasing the emphasis on tourism development, bed and breakfast facilities, and recreational facilities. Emphasis would be on development of new facilities, such as artisan, civic, equestrian centers, rafting facilities, hiking facilities, and other facilities where feasible.
- Both visitors and residents would benefit from more shopping, dining, entertainment and recreational amenities.
- Grayson County should develop a good stock of available commercial and industrial space in good condition; educating and training available workforce to promote good quality of life.
- Appropriate economic development strategies would include commercial, industrial and tourism development.
- Deficiencies in transportation and utilities infrastructure, as well as school curriculum and physical plant issues, will hinder economic development if these issues are ignored.

There are no quick fixes to reverse the negative cumulative effects of the myriad of influences on Grayson County's economy from the past. However, economic development programs can produce improvements over time. Specific objectives developed by the Grayson County Economic Resource Group are summarized in the following narrative.

Agricultural and Natural Resources

In a declining economy agriculture becomes increasingly important to Grayson County. Agriculture and open space defines the land use, lifestyle, and character of Grayson County. The farmlands of the county add significantly to its aesthetic quality and to its reputation as one of the most beautiful counties in the state. The natural resources of the county are inseparable from its agricultural resources. The wise use and conservation of the county's water, mineral, and timber resources are of prime importance. Grayson County's goals for agricultural and natural resources are:

- 1) To identify and protect highly productive agricultural lands from conflicting land uses;
- 2) To encourage retention of agricultural lands and timberlands where appropriate;
- 3) To promote the use of conservation practices to reduce the impact of soil disturbance or natural resource extraction activities on surrounding land uses;
- 4) To protect stream valleys, hills and mountain slopes from erosion and sedimentation by encouraging best management practices during development activities;
- 5) To promote wise use of all natural resources;
- 6) To promote sound development practices that protect surface and ground water supplies for present and future residents of the county.

Commercial Needs

Concentrations of commercial activity in Grayson County have been confined to areas that are serviced by public water and sewer facilities, with small pockets of commercial development in other areas.

With the continued development of the National Recreation Area, Virginia Creeper Trail, Grayson Highlands State Park, New River Trail State Park, and other associated attractions, commercial development will increase in the three local towns and along major roads. While this commercial activity will enhance the local economy, it has the potential to have a negative effect upon the character of the county, particularly in the eyes of visitors. Therefore, Grayson County's commercial objectives are:

- 1) To promote convenient and safe access to commercial centers;
- 2) To avoid linear or "strip" development;
- 3) To promote concentrations of commercial activities in areas served or planned to be served by public water and sewerage;
- 4) To encourage development of commercial centers to meet the needs of existing and future populations of the county.

Industrial Needs

During the last three decades, industry has lost 67 percent of its employment in the county. As was shown in Chapter IV, manufacturing is now the third largest employer in Grayson County, but its decline is not expected to continue. The county needs to reverse its continued economic decline and provide a stable and broad employment base to county residents. Grayson County's objectives for industrial development are:

- 1) To promote diversified industrial development providing a wide range of employment opportunities;
- 2) To encourage industrial location in areas where it will have a minimum adverse impact on existing and future residential developments, agricultural lands and natural resources;
- 3) To protect existing and potential industrial sites from encroachment by non-industrial activities, except when those activities are directly related to industrial functions;
- 4) To encourage safe and attractive industrial development by controlling the spacing, entrances, and exits of industrial sites.

Residential Objectives

The perceived quality of life in an area is directly related to the quality of its residential areas. Despite the low growth expected in Grayson County, the importance of new residential development, as well as existing residential areas, cannot be overemphasized. Grayson County's residential objectives are:

- 1) To promote construction of a broad range of housing types to accommodate the varied needs and incomes of the county's residents;
- 2) To encourage residential development in or near towns and village areas to assure adequate and economical service by proposed public water and sewer facilities;
- 3) To encourage only low-density development in areas where natural features and conditions are poorly suited for development;
- 4) In residential areas, to allow only those commercial uses compatible with residential use;

- 5) To require land developers and builders to follow reasonable conservation practices to reduce or eliminate impacts to slopes, soils, natural vegetation, floodways, and surface and ground water supplies;
- 6) To require development of manufactured home parks that are creatively planned, attractive, and adequately served by public facilities;
- 7) To encourage construction of “second home” developments meeting the standards of permanent residential developments.

Public Facilities Needs

Public services include governmental functions such as public health services, fire and police protection, and education. Public facilities support these services and include facilities such as libraries, schools, parks, and fire stations. The planning for public services and facilities should be directed toward providing the maximum benefits for all local residents. These facilities should be in the most convenient and safest locations possible, while providing efficient and economical service. The facilities should be located to reflect growth trends within the county and should also be used to direct future growth. Grayson County’s objectives for public facilities are:

- 1) To consider public service facilities in the planning of commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational developments;
- 2) To give priority to public facilities located to serve large numbers of people and reasonably close to major transportation routes;
- 3) To encourage the grouping of community facilities such as libraries, fire station, public health center, medical clinic, and general governmental service facilities;
- 4) To insure the location of public facilities to conform to other objectives in this Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Objectives

Transportation systems should provide for efficient movement of people and goods within the county and between Grayson County and other areas. Transportation systems should

also provide safe and convenient access to specific sites, streets and arterial roadways. Grayson County's objectives for transportation are:

- 1) Encourage development of access roads from major highways to residential areas, public facilities and service areas, industrial parks, and commercial centers;
- 2) To encourage subdivision design with consideration given to existing and future streets;
- 3) To regulate building setback lines in areas of high density to allow for future road widening, if and when needed;
- 4) To preserve highly productive agricultural areas within the county by encouraging new highways to be routed where possible through areas that would be least disruptive to agricultural activities;
- 5) To encourage use of existing rights-of-way whenever possible for proposed transportation routes.

Historic Preservation Objectives

Although preservation of historic structures is not a necessary part of community development, it is important in terms of local history and culture. Grayson County's objectives for historic preservation are:

- 1) To encourage preservation of known sites of important historic or archeological value;
- 2) To encourage reuse of historic structures in a manner compatible with their character;
- 3) To protect historic landmarks against encroachment from incompatible land uses;
- 4) To encourage the work of citizen groups and individuals in preserving the historic resources of the county.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusions And Recommendations

A. Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan for Grayson County is not an instrument designed to impose the will of the state or other governmental body upon the citizens of Grayson County. The Comprehensive Plan is the product of the efforts of concerned Grayson County citizens – citizens who love their home county and share a deep sense of purpose in helping to guide its development. These citizens have approached the task of formulating a comprehensive plan with the attitude that the plan is not a restrictive document, but a guide for the county’s development and community services against market trends and physical limitation.

This plan will serve as a guide to the county’s government leaders in making decisions affecting the development of the county and to citizens in making decisions affecting their own lives. It will also serve as a guide to private sector individuals, institutions, and corporations that are interested in investing in Grayson County.

B. Economy

Conclusion: Agriculture has been and will continue to be an important segment of the economy in Grayson County.

Recommendation #1

Local farmers continue to depend on off-farm income to support their families. By developing alliances between agricultural producers, such as cattlemen’s associations and tree growers groups, farmers can collectively bargain for reduced costs of supplies and increased profits. Farmer cooperatives have been beneficial in the past and should be encouraged to continue. (Responsible parties: Agricultural Community, Extension Service, United States Forestry Service, Virginia Department of Forestry, and the Chamber of Commerce)

Recommendation #2

Consider available incentives such as land use taxation to continue farmland ownership so the farming tradition can continue in Grayson County. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Commissioner of Revenue, and the Extension Service)

Recommendation #3

The Christmas tree industry is now the leading source of income in the local agricultural industry. Implement educational programs on forest product management and marketing to help producers maximize profits from the sale of Christmas trees and greenery products and maximize the value of timber resources. (Responsible parties: Extension Service)

Recommendation #4

The county can protect prime farming and forestland through its zoning ordinance to guide conversion of farmland to residential and recreational subdivisions. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Commission)

Recommendation #5

Explore other ways to increase agricultural revenue. Develop or attract agribusiness companies to serve the local economy. Investigate cooperative agri-tourism programs aimed at direct marketing of local farm products. State and regional agencies should be asked to target market these types of products. (Responsible parties: Extension Service, Chamber of Commerce, Grayson County Economic Development Office, Grayson County Tourism Office, and Wytheville Community College)

Recommendation #6

In the last few years, tobacco quota cuts have reduced production and revenue by more than half. These cuts have affected the income of more than 600 Grayson County farm families. By contracting tobacco agreements with tobacco processors, some lost revenue may be restored. (Responsible parties: Extension Service)

Conclusion: Grayson County must continue to work to retain existing businesses and industries while working diligently to build infrastructure to attract new industries and businesses.

Recommendation #1

Retain current industries and businesses by establishing a visitation committee consisting of the economic development director, county administrator, chairman of the board of supervisors, and the chairman of the IDA. Increase goodwill and identify problems before they become catastrophic. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Economic Development Office, County Administrator, Board of Supervisors, and the Grayson County Industrial Development Association)

Recommendation #2

Continue to work with and support the Carroll-Grayson-Galax Chamber of Commerce. Immediately address problems or opportunities cited by specific industries and businesses. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the Grayson County Economic Development Office)

Recommendation #3

Attract new industry and business by identifying and attending, when possible, trade shows, working with the Mount Rogers Economic Development Partnership (Virginia's aCorridor) and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Board of Supervisors)

Recommendation #4

Create an effective on-line resource for industry with comprehensive information about Grayson County. The county economic development profile should be established to IEDC standards and maintained for display on regional and state websites. (Responsible parties: Grayson County, MRPDC, and Virginia's aCorridor)

Recommendation #5

Work with neighboring governments and organizations to develop marketable business and industrial sites. (Responsible parties: Carroll-Grayson-Galax Industrial Facility Authority, City of Galax, Board of Supervisors, Town of Fries, Town of Troutdale, and Town of Independence)

Recommendation #6

Develop new industrial sites to meet minimum standards set by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership for its “virtual buildings” program. (Responsible parties: Grayson County, Carroll-Grayson-Galax Industrial Facility Authority, MRPDC, Virginia’s aCorridor, Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission, Rural Development, and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development)

Recommendation #7

Promote industrial park development. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Board of Supervisors, Carroll County, and the City of Galax)

Recommendation #8

Support development of small business and entrepreneurs through a local business incubation program that can offer expert guidance in areas such as business management, financing, effective marketing, use of the Internet, and other subjects of importance to new and emerging businesses in the county. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Board of Supervisors and the Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute)

Recommendation #9

Support light commercial development in areas of the county that will service rural communities. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Commission)

Conclusion: As the economy changes from a manufacturing base to a service base, the County needs to respond to every opportunity to encourage public, state, and federal businesses and services to locate and expand.

Recommendation #1

Revitalize Independence, the county seat, by soliciting core commercial businesses, organizing property and business owners, and developing plans for the business district. Encourage renovation of properties and consider tax penalties necessary to encourage the maintaining of properties. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Board of Supervisors and the Independence Town Council)

Recommendation #2

Develop new businesses in Independence, Fries, and Troutdale by locating land for commercial development and encouraging local investment to develop commercial properties. (Responsible parties: Grayson County, Board of Supervisors, and Town Councils)

Recommendation #3

Help new business owners succeed by providing business management training and seeking financial assistance and low interest loans to sustain new businesses during the first two years of operation. (Responsible agencies: MRPDC, Wytheville Community College, Historic Designation, and Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute)

Recommendation #4

Encourage economic development in Grayson County by establishing a scholarship at Wytheville Community College for Grayson County graduates to have tuition paid if they attend a for-credit program. An educated workforce will attract business and industry. (Responsible agency: Board of Supervisors, Wytheville Community College, and the Tobacco Indemnification Commission)

Recommendation #5

Develop programs and incentives that promote an atmosphere where money stays in Grayson County. (Responsible parties: Grayson County, Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute, MRPDC, and Local Banks)

Recommendation #6

Establish and maintain ongoing relationships with representatives and agencies of the state and federal governments to promote the location of governmental, quasi-governmental, and public/private partnership facilities and services within the County.

Conclusion: The global marketplace relies upon technology. To participate, the county must construct the necessary infrastructure and encourage its citizens to use the technology.

Recommendation #1

Allow the community to venture into e-commerce by providing consultation services to creating and managing an online business. (Responsible parties: Grayson County, Wytheville Community College, Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute, and the Extension Service)

Recommendation #2

Encourage e-commerce by providing startup cost incentives, similar to those provided for larger, traditional enterprises. (Responsible agencies: Wytheville Community College, Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute, People, Inc., and MRPDC)

Recommendation #3

The county needs to work with wireless telecommunications providers to construct infrastructure in areas that will provide countywide communication without spoiling the landscape and endangering its citizens. (See the Future Land Use map accompanying this plan for areas not suitable for placement of telecommunications infrastructure.) Design and co-location capabilities should be monitored closely. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Commission)

Recommendation #4

The county should work with its neighbors to provide a redundant fiber “backbone” for businesses, industries, and institutions that have a need to move data at an affordable price. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, Bristol Virginia Utilities, and MRPDC)

Conclusion: Tourism is a part of the Grayson County service economy which has begun to grow and has potential for additional growth. It is an essential piece of a diverse economy.

Recommendation #1

Educate the public about the value of tourism by inviting speakers from communities that have developed tourist economies. Educate public leaders on viability of tourism for economic development. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Tourism Office, Chamber of Commerce, Blue Ridge Travel Association, United States Park Service, and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)

Recommendation #2

Encourage development of service industries and businesses complimentary to specific attractions and destinations. Attract amenities for tourists, such as lodging, dining, and entertainment. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Town Councils, Grayson County Tourism Office, Chamber of Commerce, and the Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute)

Recommendation #3

Promote points of interest, including Mount Rogers, Whitetop, the New River, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Attract visitors by supporting outdoor recreational opportunities, including biking, hiking, and the equestrian industry. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Tourism Office, United States Park Service, Blue Ridge Travel Association, and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)

Recommendation #4

Support the many music festivals and conventions within Grayson County as tourism attractions. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Tourism Office, Blue Ridge Travel Association, United States Park Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Chamber of Commerce, Town Councils, City of Galax, and Civic Clubs)

C. **Housing**

Conclusion: To support a growing economy, there must be decent, safe, and sanitary housing available for all who reside in Grayson County.

Recommendation #1

Explore the possibility of creating a countywide housing authority to take advantage of federal and state financing of housing programs for low- and moderate-income, elderly, physically impaired, mentally impaired, and homeless persons. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the Town Councils)

Recommendation #2

Encourage bankers and private developers to take advantage of the financing programs available through the Virginia Housing Development Authority. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Town Councils, Local Banks, and the Virginia Housing Development Authority)

Recommendation #3

Continue developing applications for funding through the Virginia Community Development Block Grant program to rehabilitate substandard homes in the county owned or rented by low- and moderate-income persons who qualify and wish to participate in the program. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Town Councils, MRPDC and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development)

Recommendation #4

Continue to support the Indoor Plumbing Rehab Program to reduce the number of substandard housing units within the county. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Town Councils, Rooftop of Virginia-CAP Agency, and MRPDC)

D. Community Facilities and Services

Conclusion: The education of Grayson County students is a top priority; however, it is a continuing struggle to identify the funding necessary to maintain the school system as safely and adequately as possible to best serve the students.

Recommendation #1

Improve personnel policies and practices through an emphasis on staff development, correcting teacher and substitute teacher shortages, and striving for small student/teacher ratios in grades K-12. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Board of Supervisors, and the Virginia Department of Education)

Recommendation #2

Lobby for a statewide standardization of teacher salaries and benefits using adjacent states, such as North Carolina, as an example. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Board of Supervisors, Virginia Department of Education, and the General Assembly)

Recommendation #3

Many school buildings in the county need extensive renovations and repairs. A short- and long-range plan should be implemented to provide safe and adequate facilities for the students in Grayson County. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board and the Board of Supervisors)

Recommendation #4

Maintain and improve the existing school transportation system by providing information to decision makers about conditions of equipment and roads. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County School Board, Virginia Department of Transportation, Road Reviewers, Virginia Department of Education, and the General Assembly)

Recommendation #5

Seek state and federal funding for the modernization, expansion, and further support of vocational programs. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Virginia Department of Education, and the General Assembly)

Recommendation #6

Continue special programs, including adult education, early intervention, preschool, and the Individual Student Alternative Education Program (ISAEP). Develop a childcare center to serve faculty and students at Grayson County High School. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Wytheville Community College, and the Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute)

Recommendation #7

Improve the use of technology in the schools through adequate funding, incorporating new technology, providing adequate technical support, and developing partnerships with the community, local businesses, and industries. This will allow students to use technology in a professional environment. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Crossroads Entrepreneurial Institute, and the Board of Supervisors)

Recommendation #8

Lobbying for funding at state and federal levels should be encouraged and supported, as the needs for teacher benefits and facility upgrades are imminent. Seek alternative sources of funding through grants or establishing partnerships among the school district, business, and industry. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board, Grayson County Educators, Board of Supervisors, General Assembly and the United States Congress)

Conclusion: One of the most critical impediments to growth in Grayson County is the lack of necessary infrastructure.

Recommendation #1

Develop a regional water and sewer system to serve county residents and also attract new industries and businesses. The schedule recommended in the *1998 Comprehensive Water and Wastewater Study* includes the following communities:

Water

Independence, Fries, Baywood, Independence South
Elk Creek, Independence East, Stevens Creek, Providence
Meadow Creek, Independence North, Oglesby Branch, Whitetop
Mouth of Wilson, Grant, Snow Hill, Volney

Sewer

Independence Plant Expansion, Independence South
Independence North, Providence
Stevens Creek
Fairview
Troutdale, Elk Creek

(Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Economic Development Office, Chamber of Commerce, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #2

The county should seek ways that natural gas service can be provided by contacting suppliers of natural gas in Virginia and North Carolina to extend services to Grayson County. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Economic Development Office, Chamber of Commerce, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #3

Seek redundant electrical service for the Independence area. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Economic Development Office, Virginia's aCorridor, Town of Independence, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #4

Organize Grayson County residents, industries, and entities into an aggregated purchasing cooperative for the purchase of electrical service. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Chamber of Commerce, and the Grayson County Economic Development Office)

Recommendation #5

Secure better telephone service by identifying problems with the existing network and meeting with the provider to solve problems. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Chamber of Commerce, and the Grayson County Economic Development Office)

Recommendation #6

Initiate a planning process for the installation of wireless telecommunications technology. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Town Councils, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #7

Improve the process of locating telecommunications towers in the county by defining critical areas that will require special design considerations, identifying areas that are off limits, and requiring co-location on all facilities. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Commission)

E. Land Use and Development

Conclusion: The Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Board of Supervisors funded a survey of historic architecture of Grayson County structures. These recommendations were derived from that study.

Recommendation #1

A comprehensive survey is needed to document a more complete range of property types that represent all of Grayson County's historic themes and time periods. In addition, more intensive surveys for important buildings already identified could be done. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and the Grayson County Historical Society)

Recommendation #2

The zoning ordinance should contain a provision allowing historic overlay districts to be established that would protect specific historic properties. An architectural review board should be set up in the proposed districts to set standards for renovations and preservation of historic structures. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and the Grayson County Historical Society)

Recommendation #3

Prepare a preservation plan involving extensive participation among the county and town governments, local preservation advocates, owners of historic properties, the MRPDC, and other interested citizens, business interests, preservationists, and planners. The preservation planning process should be inclusive and comprehensive in nature. It should integrate the findings of this and future surveys into the policy-making procedures of the county. The plan should meet state and national standards to identify the essential elements that give rural districts their historic character, reduce potential conflicts between preservation and development forces, and resolve any such disputes in an orderly and productive manner. This would serve the county by integrating historic preservation with economic development, heritage tourism, education, conservation, and community development efforts. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and the Grayson County Historical Society)

Recommendation #4

Develop a local history curriculum in the local schools that incorporates information available through the Department of Historic Resources and the community's historic preservation groups. An understanding of the architectural and historic resources within the

county is essential to proper and successful stewardship of historic resources and the heritage they represent. Use field trips to take advantage of the local resources. (Responsible parties: Grayson County School Board)

Recommendation #5

Continue to develop and coordinate special events that combine natural resources of the county with historic and prehistoric resources to promote tourism, as well as a greater understanding and appreciation of the county's heritage. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Tourism Office, and the Chamber of Commerce)

F. Transportation³⁷

Conclusion: Transportation is a critical piece of Grayson County's infrastructure that requires improvements to adequately support the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendation #1

Work with state agencies and elected representatives to obtain vital funds for transportation. Improvement projects should include:

1. Completion of US Route 58 and State Route 16.
2. Improvements to US Route 21 South and Routes 94, 16, and 89
3. Funding for a secondary road improvement strategic plan.

(Responsible: Board of Supervisors, MRPDC, and the Virginia Department of Transportation)

³⁷ FHWA or VDOT acceptance of this report as evidence of fulfillment of the objectives of this planning study does not constitute endorsement/approval of the need for any recommended improvements nor does it constitute approval of their location and design or a commitment to fund any such improvements. Additional project level environmental impact assessments and/or studies of alternatives may be necessary.

Recommendation #2

Support the expansion of the Twin County Airport near Hillsville to stimulate economic development. (Responsible parties: Grayson County Elected Officials, Carroll County Elected Officials, City of Galax Elected Officials, Elected Officials for the Towns of Fries and Independence, Twin County Airport Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Grayson County Economic Development Office, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #3

Support rail transportation improvement by encouraging the containerized freight loading facility initiative in Wythe County. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Economic Development Office, Virginia's aCorridor, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #4

Support reintroduction of passenger rail service into region. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, and MRPDC)

Recommendation #5

Support the increased use of freight by rail through the region. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Grayson County Economic Development Office, MRPDC, and Virginia's aCorridor)

Recommendation #6

Support the construction of bike lanes as a safety feature on all future road improvement projects. (Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, County Planning Commission, MRPDC, and the Virginia Department of Transportation)