



XIII. Economy & Economic Development

Economic Past

Since the history of a community directly reflects the past economic stability and the potential future growth and/or declines, an outline of the history needs to be formalized in order to understand and learn from it.

The first white men entered the area of Southwest Virginia approximately 200 years ago. As in the case of most of the frontier areas of the country, migration moved from the Atlantic Coast westward toward the Mississippi River Valley and beyond. Southwest Virginia was a rugged wilderness and the survival of these first pioneers was dependent upon the land. This was even more prominent in Tazewell County because the physical geography made accessibility limited; so the entire economy was a closed, self-contained system with few goods leaving or coming into the county.

Prior to 1883, Bluefield was referred to as Pin Hook and Harman; however, with the large discovery of coal in western Tazewell County, the railroad brought more and more families to the area. In 1883, the town was chartered and changed its name to Graham, after Thomas Graham, an engineer and promoter who came to this area from Philadelphia to survey for the building of the railroad. In 1924, the town's name of Graham was officially changed to Bluefield, creating a bi-state metropolitan area with a common name.

The discovery of coal touched off an economic boom for the area. Many citizens of the day had illusions of grandeur concerning the potential growth prospects for Graham; however, this was to become short-lived. Many speculators foresaw Graham as the headquarters of the Norfolk & Western Railway; instead, the Norfolk & Western selected Graham's sister city, Bluefield, West Virginia for its rail yard and shops. Since the railroad selected Bluefield, West Virginia for its terminal, the town surpassed its sister city in Virginia in growth and population.



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In the early 1890's, another economic boom struck these small communities. This was not a boom caused by land speculations and mining ventures; this became an era of industrial expansion. It was during this time that a number of important industries located in Graham. Although as had happened in the past, the anticipated rapid expansion and growth never materialized; industrial growth and diversification did enable the town to become less dependent upon the railroad and mining.

During the early 1920's and 1940's Bluefield and Tazewell County experienced substantial growth. The growth can be attributed to the expansion of the mining industry in the area. This expansion brought in new families from outside the area. However, during the 1950's, the steady growth lessened and mining employment decreased due to automation; but by 1970 Bluefield again showed economic resurgence as it had in the past.

In summary, the past and future economic prosperity of Bluefield is closely related to its geographical location. Bluefield's close proximity mining has tended to strongly influence the local economy. However, Bluefield has moved toward a more diversified economy. This diversity was one of the reasons Bluefield was able to withstand the depressed economic situation in the coal industry during the 1950's.

With world-wide recognition of energy resources and conservation, the mining of coal once again becomes of national importance. The various ramifications of the future expansion of mining is too speculative to discuss in this study; however, any large expansion of coal mining in the area will definitely affect the development pattern of Bluefield.



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Current Economy



Since 2001, there has been over 90 new businesses open within the town limits. In 2006, the town had 9 new businesses locate to Bluefield and 5 additional in 2007. The Town of Bluefield has become a center for development in Tazewell County.

One of the most deciding factors for the town to pursue the recent annexation of the St. Clair's property was to open up the town for future growth. This area is over 700 acres of property that can be utilized in a variety of ways. The property has a master plan map which includes a variety of zoning designations. The property provides acreage that large companies may require along with town amenities.

The Leatherwood Properties has large amounts of available property and the town awaits the development of the residential and commercially designated areas.

With the variety of available undeveloped property, any potential business will have the opportunity to locate in the town once development starts, whether it is a restaurant, a manufacturer, or a residential development.



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A major concern which affects development patterns of Bluefield is the construction of new highways in the area. With Interstate Highway 77 running adjacent to the Bluefields, and its connections with Interstates 81 and 64 enhance the flow of goods from east to west, which historically was a deterrent to growth, now moves rapidly and with greater ease. In addition, U.S. Highway 460 has been upgraded adding in the east - west movement of goods and services. The completion of the four-lane 460 bypass has allowed goods and vehicles to travel more easily through the area. While the bypass has allowed for truck traffic to flow easier through the area, it has not eliminated this traffic from other streets of the Town. Route 19, Virginia Avenue, and Route 102 still bring large volumes of tractor-trailers through downtown on a daily basis.



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Current Jobs Available

There are 397 job openings advertised online in Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia on June 16, 2015 (Jobs De-duplication Level 1)

Monthly Job Count

There were 752 job openings advertised online in Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part Virginia in May, 2015 (Jobs De-duplication Level 2)

Employers by Number of Job Openings

The employers with the highest number of job openings advertised online in Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia on June 16, 2015 are LifePoint Hospitals, Inc. (27), Clinch Valley Medical Center (17), McDonald's Corporation (17), Pizza Hut, Inc. (16), Hardee's Food Systems, Inc. (15), Carilion Clinic (14), US Xpress Inc. (12), Genesis HealthCare (10), Staples, Inc. (9), and Family Dollar Stores, Inc.(7), (Jobs De-duplication Level 1)

Education Requirements on Advertised Jobs

The most common minimum education requirement on job openings advertised online in Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia on June 16, 2015 was a High School Diploma or Equivalent with 47.52% of the total specified. The second most common requirement was a No Minimum Education Requirement with 16.83% of the total specified. (Job De--duplication Level 1)

Work Experience Requirements on Advertised Jobs

The most common minimum experience requirements on job openings advertised online in Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia on June 16, 2015 was Entry Level with 47.13% of the total specified. The second most common requirement was 1 year to 2 years with 29.89% of the total specified. (Jobs De-duplication Level 1).

Employment Wage Statistics

The average weekly wage for Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia in 3rd quarter, 2014 was \$617. This would be equivalent to \$15.43 per hour or \$32,084 per year, assuming a 40-hour week worked the year around.

Area Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Data

The total civilian labor force (not seasonally adjusted) for Bluefield, WV- VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia in April, 2015 was 17,138, of which 15,879 were employed and 1,259 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 7.3% percent.



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Population Totals

The 1996 population of Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia was estimated at 45,960. The 2006 population of Bluefield, WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area, VA part, Virginia was estimated at 44,195. This represents a -3.84 percent decrease from 1996.

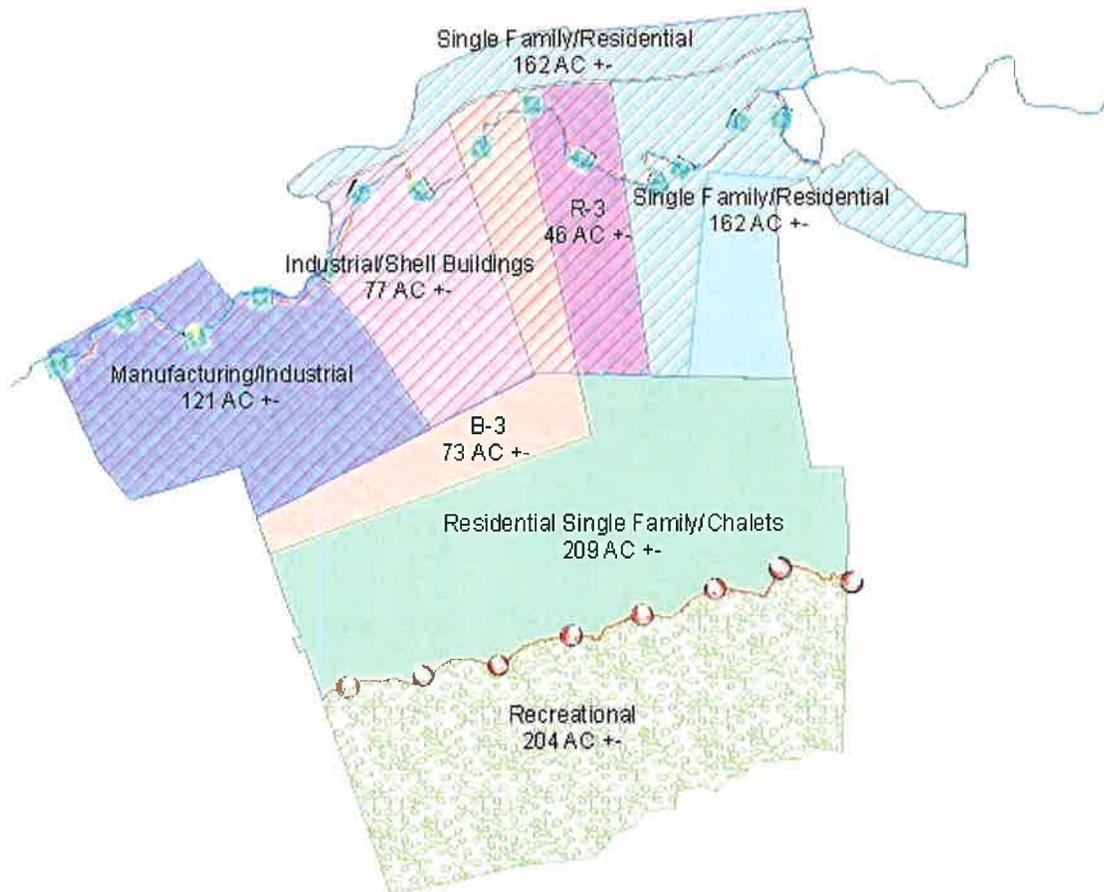
The Leatherwood Development

The Leatherwood Company is pursuing a proposed development of 1,071 acres of land south of US Route 460, east of Commerce Drive/ Huffard Dr., and west of Leatherwood Lane. Proposed for this development are areas of commercial, light commercial/office, multi-family residential, single-family residential and retirement uses. Leatherwood Lane, Commerce Drive and the Huffard Drive area of Valley Dale Street, State Route 720, are all proposed sites of access.

In anticipation of this development, the Leatherwood Company commissioned several engineering firms to do a global traffic impact study of the afore mentioned intersections and adjacent roadways. The global impact study required by VDOT will determine what improvements will be needed. The study will be necessary for the proposed break in limited access and the Town's requirement that no future development may negatively impact existing roads or streets.



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In analyzing a community, there are many factors which determine the future of that community. Of these various factors, none is more viable than its economy. The economy of a community is the catalyst for future growth. In short, the economic aspects of a community determine whether an area is growing, remaining stable, or is in decline. By studying the various economic indicators of the past and present, reliable predictions can be made concerning the future of the area.



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50 Largest Employers in the Bluefield WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area–
VA part as of 3rd quarter 2014 stated by www.virginalmi.com
1-25

Employer	Size Class
Walmart	500-999
Tazewell County School Board	500-999
Clinch Valley Community Hospital	500-999
Cumberland Mountain Community Services	250-499
Southwest Virginia Community College	250-499
Pocahontas State Correctional	250– 499
Tazewell County Virginia	250-499
Lowes' Home Center, Inc.	250-499
McDonald's	100-249
First Community Bank	100-249
Bluefield College	100-249
Appalachian Agency for Seniors	100-249
Food City	100-249
Joy Technologies	100-249
Magic Mart	100-249
Heritage Hall	100-249
Knox Creek Coal	100-249
Town of Bluefield	100-249
Jennmar Corporation of Virginia	100-249
Town of Richlands	100-249
Pyott Boone Electronics Inc.	100-249
Tazewell Community Hospital	100-249
Pemco Corporation	100-249
Spandek Inc.	100-249
Food Lion	100-249



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50 Largest Employers in the Bluefield WV-VA Micropolitan Statistical Area–
VA part as of 3rd quarter 2014 stated by www.virginalmi.com
26-50

Employer	Size Class
Westwood Medical Park Ope LLC	50-99
Aramark Services	50-99
Wendy's	50-99
K.S. & J Roustabout	50-99
Marshall Miller and Associates	50-99
Grants Supermarket	50-99
Hardee's	50-99
Clinch Valley Physicians LLC	50-99
Tammy Bostic	50-99
Clinch Valley Community Action	50-99
Emats Inc.	50-99
Clinch River Forest Products I	50-99
Contemporary Builders	50-99
Tazewell County Board of Social Services	50-99
Tidewater Wholesale Grocery	50-99
Ramey Chevrolet Inc.	50-99
Pounding Mill Quarry Corporation	50-99
Gasco Drilling	50-99
Omega Surface Mining, LLC	50-99
CNX Gas Company	50-99
Ryan's Family Steak House	50-99
Kwik Kafe Vending Company	50-99
Postal Service	50-99
Town of Tazewell	50-99
Valley Mart	50-99



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Growth

In 2005 the town of Bluefield, Virginia conducted a friendly annexation. This added an additional 744 acres of undeveloped land into the town. The Town and land owners are working in coordination with the Economic Development Committee, Industrial Development Authority, Planning Commission, and other agencies to develop a master plan to attract businesses to the property.

Currently the property is zoned A-5 (Agricultural) and will be rezoned as development takes place. Following is a conceptual map which shows proposed areas of development and potential zoning for those areas. The shaded area on the map depicts the current enterprise zone which offers several economic development incentives for potential businesses to locate to this area.

The property is adjacent to 460, which is ideal for commercial or residential access. This access would connect the property to an interstate network that links Charleston West Virginia; Knoxville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Washington, D.C.

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The Town of Bluefield is growing more and more everyday. We are growing industrially, commercially, and in all residential areas. The majority of this growth has occurred since year 2000 and the town has annexed other properties in order for anticipated future growth.

