

Comprehensive Housing Analysis
Bland County, Virginia

Prepared for:

James Moss
Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

January, 2023

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January 31, 2023

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Jimmy,

We are proud to present our comprehensive housing study for Bland County. The aim of this study is to provide a detailed evaluation of the current and potential housing market in the County. The secondary objective of this report is to identify existing housing gaps and to recommend actions that the County can take to address them.

The key finding is that Bland County is experiencing limited job growth, with only a few larger local employers reporting active hiring. However, most new jobs in the pipeline are reported to address turnover rather than net growth. Despite this, the study has identified several viable sites that could potentially support new housing developments of various types in the future. However, it is important to note that the limited net job growth in the area may pose a challenge in supporting new large-scale residential development.

To address this issue, the study recommends exploring alternative strategies, such as promoting smaller-scale residential efforts. To support this approach, the study proposes several modifications to the County's ordinances to facilitate small-scale housing initiatives.

We were pleased to be able to assist local officials in Bland County and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission on this study and remain available to assist for future planning.

Sincerely,

Ariel Goldring

Ariel Goldring
President

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Introduction

The following study provides a comprehensive analysis of the Bland County housing market. This report is the fourth in a series conducted by S. Patz & Associates on the housing markets that comprise the Mount Rogers Planning District, following analyses of the Smyth County, Wythe County and Twin County Region housing markets. The purpose of these analyses is to identify strategies to promote the development of new housing in the region, as opportunities exist.

This report to follow will provide a thorough analysis of the economic and demographic trends in Bland County, with a particular focus on job growth and housing demand. Our findings indicate that the County is not generating new job growth, and its population has remained relatively flat over the past two decades. In contrast, neighboring counties are projected to experience significant levels of job growth, which may generate some housing demand locally. However, most demand is likely to be concentrated in the proximity of the new job opportunities, at least initially. Furthermore, the principal growth area in Bland County has been among the County's senior population. This modest expansion has been primarily driven by seniors aging in place, rather than by an influx of retirees relocating to the County. Based on these findings, the report concludes that the level of demand for new housing in Bland County is relatively low. This report will provide a detailed examination of the data supporting these conclusions.

The study is divided into four sections. The first section, the Bland County Setting Analysis, examines the County's location along the Interstate-77 corridor. The second section, the Economic Overview Analysis, presents trends in at-place jobs and employment, and includes an analysis of the employment impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section also addresses the significant projected employment growth in surrounding areas within the Mount Rogers Planning District and other nearby communities.

The demographic analysis of Bland County, which constitutes the second part of the Economic Overview, is a comprehensive examination of population and household trends in the County. Emphasis is placed on analyzing trends in household income, tenure and age.

The third section of the study analyzes the various housing markets in Bland County in terms of new additions, tenure, home prices and rents. This section analyzes both the for-sale and rental housing markets. The for-sale market has been dominated by resales, as there have been very few homes built speculatively to be sold over the past few decades. The rental market is also stagnant, as Bland County has no professionally managed apartment complexes. Renters in Bland County exclusively reside in scattered single-family homes, townhomes, mobile homes and small multi-tenant buildings of four or fewer units. There are no income-restricted apartment units in the County. Many prospective renters who work locally reside outside of Bland County and commute.

The fourth section of the report is a thorough analysis of the available development sites in Bland County. While there are multiple attractive sites available for new housing unit development, the sluggish growth of the local economy has not generated sufficient demand to support the development of large-scale housing projects, either for rent or for sale. Thus, most of the available properties are too large to attract new development. Additionally, the report highlights various other challenges that hinder the development of these sites, such as their proximity to public schools and limited local amenities. Bland County is home to only one public elementary and one public high school. This necessitates long drives for many students. There are no full-service grocery stores in Bland County.

The fifth and final section presents the Conclusions. The conclusions provide a comprehensive overview of the opportunities and challenges facing the housing market in Bland County and offer guidance on how to address these challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Section I: Bland County Setting Analysis

Bland County is located along the I-77 corridor in the eastern part of the Mount Rogers Planning District in Southwest Virginia. It is situated approximately midway between the cities of Roanoke and Bristol and just north of a major interchange with I-81 that bisects Wythe County to the south. This stretch of highway is a major transportation artery for Southwest Virginia, connecting the growing communities of Bristol, Wytheville and Roanoke and accessing a range of economic and recreational opportunities in Southwest Virginia.

The County is situated in a mountainous area, with the Appalachian Trail passing through it. It is home to a number of state parks and forests, including the Jefferson National Forest and the Spearhead Trail System, which offer a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities. The County is also home to the Wolf Creek Indian Village, an historic Native American site. Due in part to its small population, Bland County is one of a few counties in Virginia with no incorporated towns.

A topographic analysis of Bland County reveals that a significant portion of the land, approximately 75 percent, has a slope of 20 percent or greater. This challenging topography presents several difficulties for the provision of essential public services, such as water and sewage, and may also limit the feasibility of utilizing septic tanks for sewage treatment. Additionally, this topography can also necessitate additional cost considerations for erosion and sediment control during and after construction. These factors must be considered when planning for new residential development in the County.

The majority of Bland County's population resides along the I-77 corridor, which serves as a major transportation artery for the region. This corridor, running in a north-south direction, bisects the County and is a key driver of economic activity. The I-77 corridor extends for 67 miles within the state of Virginia, connecting Bland County to the neighboring states of West Virginia and North Carolina. It traverses several population centers in the County including Hicksville, Bastian and Bland. This interstate highway plays a vital role in shaping the built environment and socio-economic dynamics of the County.

In addition to the major north-south transportation corridor provided by I-77, Bland County is served by three other major roadways:

- **U.S. Route 52.** This is a major east-west highway that runs through the center of Bland County. It is a two-lane highway that is used for both local and long-distance travel. US-52 begins in New Orleans, Louisiana and runs north through Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia, terminating in the Winchester area. Along its route, U.S. Route 52 passes through a number of towns and cities, including Tazewell, Bland and Wytheville. There are a number of gas stations, restaurants, and other amenities located along the route for travelers to use. The roadway also provides access to a number of nearby employers.
- **SR 42.** This is a north-south state highway that runs through Bland County, generally parallel to I-81. The highway consists of three sections, with gaps filled by secondary routes in between. Some of SR 42 lies along the old Fincastle Turnpike, while another section, from near Clifton Forge to Buffalo Gap, parallels the old Virginia Central Railroad. Within Bland County, the roadway accesses the communities of Bland and Ceres in the central and western portions of the County. It also provides direct access to Smyth County in the west and Giles County in the east.
- **SR 61.** This is an east-west state highway that runs through the northern part of Bland County. The highway runs for nearly 50 miles from SR 16 in Tazewell, east to U.S. Route 460 in Narrows in Giles County. SR 61 passes through several narrow creek valleys as it parallels the West Virginia state line through Tazewell, Bland and Giles counties. The only population concentration between the highway's endpoints is the small community of Rocky Gap, where the highway intersects with U.S. Route 52 and I-77.

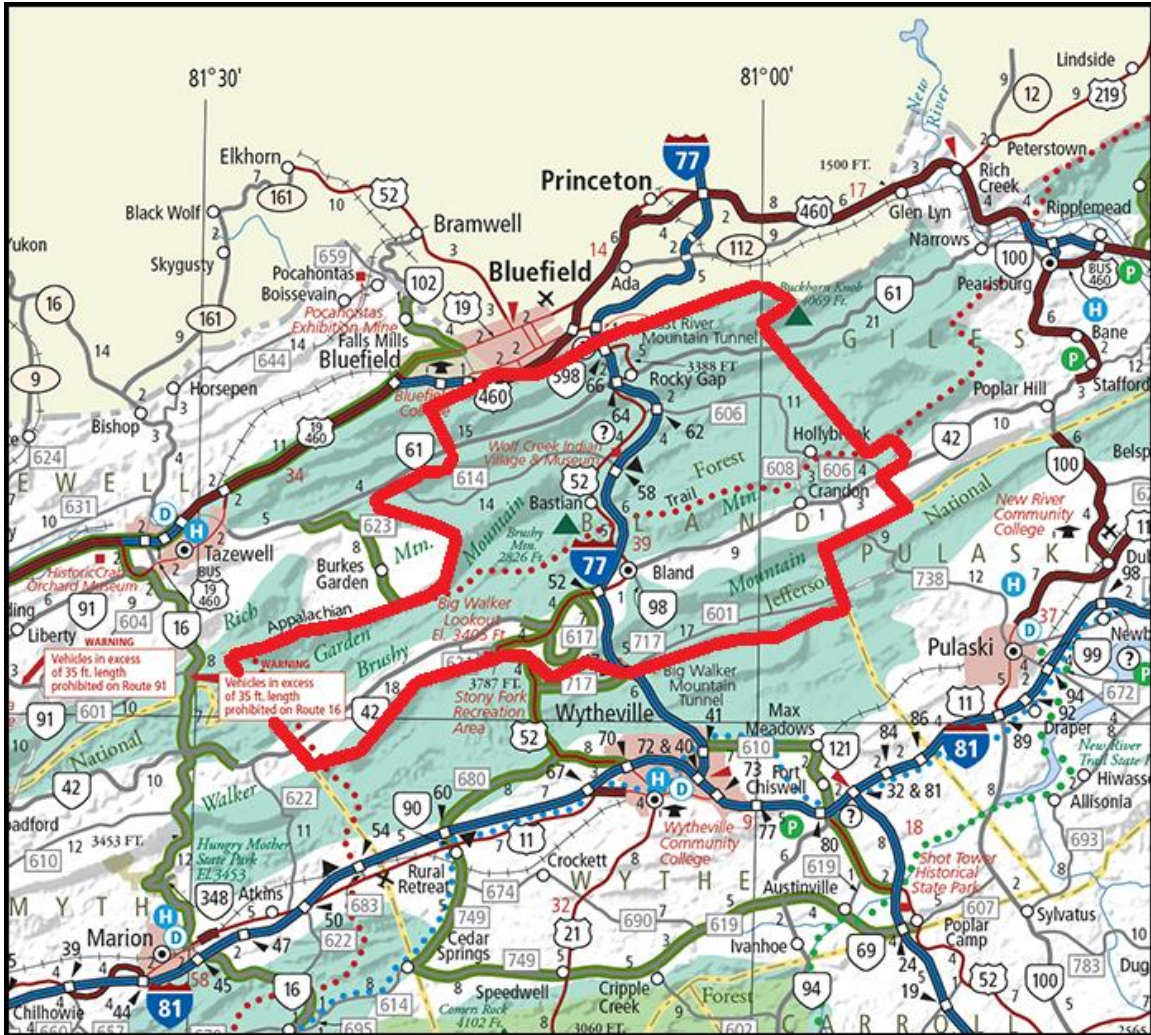
The Southwest Virginia region, including Bland County, is primarily composed of rural areas. However, there are notable pockets of economic growth in neighboring counties. Among them, Wythe County to the south of Bland County stands out as experiencing the most significant increase in job opportunities. Over 2,600 new jobs are expected to be created over the next five years in Wythe County, which averages to more than 500 new jobs per year. This represents a substantial increase compared to historical job growth trends in the region. The construction of new Blue Star NBR facilities near Wytheville is identified as the primary driver of this growth. Many Bland County residents currently commute to Wythe County for employment, and the influx of new job opportunities is likely to attract even more workers from the surrounding area.

Bland County is situated in proximity to several other communities that are also experiencing job growth, albeit at a more modest pace. To the west of Bland County, Smyth County is home to Emory & Henry College's School of Health Sciences, which is expected to expand its enrollment and staff in the near term, thus creating additional demand for housing. Additionally, major job expansions by Scholle IPN Packaging and Woodgrain Millwork in Smyth County are anticipated to add nearly 160 new jobs in the short term.

Similarly, Tazewell County, also located west of Bland County, is experiencing moderate job growth, with expansions by Pure Salmon, Ronald Mark Associates, Appalachian Millworks & Cabinetry, Signco and AMR PEMCO, which are expected to add nearly 290 new jobs. This county is a destination for many Bland County residents who commute for work, primarily to the Bluefield area.

To the north of Bland County is Mercer County, West Virginia, which is experiencing limited economic growth particularly in Princeton and Bluefield. Omnis Building Technologies recently announced plans to hire between 150 and 300 new employees at a new manufacturing facility in Bluefield.

Pulaski County and Giles County, located to the east of Bland County, are also witnessing job growth, particularly in the central part of Pulaski County, in and around the towns of Pulaski and Dublin. Notable job announcements in the area include Xaloy Holdings (40± new jobs), The Volvo Group (600± new jobs) and The Patton Logistics Group (60± new jobs). These job growth projections are expected to result in an increase in housing development proposals in the area. Pulaski County in particular has several new proposals for rental housing.



Map A - Regional Setting

To summarize, Bland County is a primarily rural area that is easily accessible through the regional transportation network, which includes the I-77 and I-81 interstates. The County’s location along I-77, in particular, provides convenient access to neighboring communities, including the Wytheville area, which are currently experiencing a significant increase in job opportunities. However, this growth in employment is also anticipated to result in a shortage of housing in the region.

Section II: Bland County Economic Overview and Demographic Analysis

The following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the economic landscape and employment trends in Bland County. It includes an examination of the current level of at-place jobs within the County and projections for future job growth in Bland County as well as within the Mount Rogers Planning District and surrounding areas. The data presented in this section illustrate that recent job announcements in the region have greatly exceeded recent trends.

Additionally, this section of the report includes a demographic analysis of Bland County. The analysis provides a detailed examination of the population and households within the County, including data on tenure, age and income. This data serves to provide an understanding of the demographic composition of the County and its potential impact on economic and employment trends.

Economic Overview

This section of the market analysis presents an economic overview of Bland County with a specific focus on at-place job and employment growth. The objective of this analysis is to thoroughly document the current and projected levels and types of job growth within the County. The analysis includes three key economic factors: (1) trends in at-place jobs, (2) employment and labor force trends and (3) active development plans that are anticipated to result in an overall increase in jobs.

It is important to note that job growth is closely linked to population and household growth, which in turn impacts the demand for housing units. The data presented in this section indicates that job growth in Bland County is currently limited.

At-Place Jobs

At-place jobs refers to the jobs that are physically situated within the geographical boundaries of Bland County. As of 2019, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County had a total of 1,960± at-place jobs. A comparison with the data from 2015 shows a slight

increase of fewer than 40 jobs, indicating a relatively stable employment landscape in the years leading up to the pandemic.

Data in Table 1 show that Bland County has many data disclosure issues in relation to employment data. This is due to several factors, including the need to maintain the confidentiality of the data collected by the BLS. To protect the privacy of individuals and businesses, the BLS may need to suppress or aggregate data to prevent the identification of specific individuals or firms. This can result in data disclosure issues if the data is not granular enough to provide a complete and accurate picture of the labor market. This is a common issue in rural, sparsely populated communities where data confidentiality is a concern and the number of employers is limited.

The Manufacturing sector is the dominant employment sector in Bland County, accounting for over 31 percent of local employment. This sector expanded by 50 jobs since 2015, driving the modest level of employment growth during that period. Several of the larger industrial employers in the County are located in the Bastian Commerce Park along U.S. Route 52, including Melvin Enterprises and Virginia Steel & Fabrication.

Hitachi Energy is the largest private employer in Bland County, with a workforce that accounts for over half of the employees within the local manufacturing sector. The company operates a 120,000± square foot facility situated along Industry Drive in Bland. This facility specializes in the design and production of medium-voltage transformers. Recently, in late-2021, the facility underwent an expansion that augmented its production capacity and introduced new capabilities, resulting in the addition of 40 new employees to its workforce. This facility has been in operation since 1972, making it a long-standing and vital contributor to the local manufacturing sector. The facility currently employs 400 individuals. Approximately a quarter of employees are salaried and earn average wages of \$85,000±. The remaining employees earn average wages of \$45,000±.

It is likely that local and state government entities constitute a substantial share of employment in Bland County, although specific data are not available due to disclosure issues.

Given the County's small population, it can be inferred that the proportion of public sector employment in Bland County is higher compared to other locations in the state of Virginia. The Bland County School Board, County of Bland and the Bland Correction Center are among the largest employers in the County. The latter, a medium-security prison, occupies an area of approximately 400,000 square feet and is home to approximately 650 adult male inmates. The average salary for corrections officers at this facility is estimated to be around \$42,000.

Industry	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Net Change
Agriculture	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Mining	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Utilities	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Construction	51	54	66	57	57	--
Manufacturing	552	512	511	570	602	50
Wholesale Trade	188	187	ND	ND	ND	--
Retail Trade	ND	ND	ND	101	125	--
Transportation/Warehousing	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Information	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Finance/Insurance	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Real Estate	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Professional/Technical	ND	14	16	17	ND	--
Management of Companies	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Administrative/Waste	30	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Education	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Health Care	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Accommodations/Food	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Other Services	15	15	18	16	ND	--
Local Government	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
State Government	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	--
Federal Government	13	14	15	14	14	1
Total	1,924	1,907	1,924	1,961	1,961	37

Notes: ND = Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.
Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

As illustrated in Table 2, the employment changes that took place in 2020 and 2021 were substantial deviations from the norm, owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local economy. The data presented in the table pertains to sectors that do not have any disclosure limitations.

The data reveal that there was a significant decrease in employment in 2020, totaling approximately 120 jobs, representing a decline of 5.9 percent. Due to data disclosure limitations,

it is not possible to identify which sectors were most affected by these job losses. Nevertheless, it is probable that the majority of the job losses occurred in the Retail Trade, Accommodations/Food Services and Local Government sectors, a trend that is consistent with other nearby regions in the state. Additionally, the Manufacturing sector also experienced a decrease of almost 80 jobs in 2020. The data for 2021 do not indicate an economic recovery, with on-site jobs declining by nearly 20. However, local realtors have reported that these job losses have not had a significant impact on the local housing market.

Table 2: <u>Change in Total At-Place Employment, Bland County, Virginia, 2019-2021</u>				
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
Construction	57	55	ND	--
Manufacturing	602	527	534	-68
Wholesale Trade	ND	174	ND	--
Retail Trade	125	ND	ND	--
Finance/Insurance	ND	ND	18	--
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	ND	14	ND	--
Federal Government	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>-2</u>
Total	1,961	1,845	1,829	-132
Notes: ND = Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.				
Source: U.S. Department of Labor				

Employment and Labor Force

At-place jobs refer to employment positions that are physically located within Bland County, while employment refers to the number of county residents who are employed, regardless of the location of their job. Table 3 shows that employment in Bland County increased by approximately 160 between 2015 and 2019. In 2019, approximately 2,800 residents of Bland County were employed, while only 1,960 at-place jobs were located in the County. This suggests that a substantial number of Bland County residents commute for work, primarily to Wythe County and the greater Bluefield area to the north.

The data for 2020 indicate a significant decrease in employment, mirroring the decline in at-place jobs that can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Total employment in 2020 decreased by approximately 150, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate

from a low of 2.7 percent in 2019 to 5.6 percent. This is the highest unemployment rate since 2015. Similar to at-place jobs, it is anticipated that many of these job losses will be temporary.

The data for 2021 do not show any improvements, with employment decreasing by nearly 30. It is worth noting that the labor force declined by 5.5 percent since 2019, indicating that many individuals have retired, stopped searching for work or relocated from the County. The 2021 unemployment rate of 3.4 percent is low, but this is partially due to the smaller labor force.

Table 3: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, Bland County, Virginia, 2015-2021

	<u>Labor Force</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Unemployment</u>	<u>Percent Unemployed</u>
2015	2,792	2,635	157	5.6%
2016	2,742	2,601	141	5.1%
2017	2,894	2,777	117	4.0%
2018	2,862	2,772	90	3.1%
2019	2,877	2,798	79	2.7%
2020	2,811	2,653	158	5.6%
2021	2,720	2,627	93	3.4%
Net Change	-72	-8	-64	-2.2%

Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

COVID-19 Pandemic and Employment

Table 4 presents a detailed analysis of monthly employment trends up to October, 2022, which is the most recent data available, to demonstrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local economy of Bland County. The data reveal that since January, 2020, employment has increased by nearly 60, resulting in a decrease in the number of unemployed individuals by fewer than ten people. Additionally, the labor force has expanded by 50 people, indicating that an increasing proportion of Bland County residents are optimistic about finding employment opportunities. This is a positive economic indicator.

An analysis of the data reveals a significant recovery in employment since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, there has been a resurgence of over 200 jobs since April, 2020, when the unemployment rate reached its peak of 11.9 percent, the highest level in over three decades. Despite an expansion of the labor force to its largest size since 2017, the current unemployment rate of 2.4 percent is 0.3 percent lower than the pre-pandemic rate recorded in

January, 2020. This is indicative of a sustained improvement in employment and represents the lowest unemployment rate in over 30 years, with fewer than 70 unemployed individuals in the entire county.

Table 4: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, Bland County, Virginia, 2020-2022

	<u>Labor Force</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Unemployment</u>	<u>Percent Unemployed</u>
January, 2020	2,830	2,755	75	2.7%
February, 2020	2,866	2,780	86	3.0%
March, 2020	2,857	2,754	103	3.6%
April, 2020	2,950	2,599	351	11.9%
May, 2020	2,762	2,519	243	8.8%
June, 2020	2,782	2,559	223	8.0%
July, 2020	2,817	2,621	196	7.0%
August, 2020	2,815	2,639	176	6.3%
September, 2020	2,793	2,669	124	4.4%
October, 2020	2,777	2,675	102	3.7%
November, 2020	2,754	2,641	113	4.1%
December, 2020	2,724	2,622	102	3.7%
January, 2021	2,729	2,599	130	4.8%
February, 2021	2,778	2,661	117	4.2%
March, 2021	2,773	2,668	105	3.8%
April, 2021	2,718	2,628	90	3.3%
May, 2021	2,712	2,610	102	3.8%
June, 2021	2,708	2,593	115	4.2%
July, 2021	2,720	2,619	101	3.7%
August, 2021	2,681	2,596	85	3.2%
September, 2021	2,652	2,578	74	2.8%
October, 2021	2,700	2,633	67	2.5%
November, 2021	2,723	2,663	60	2.2%
December, 2021	2,745	2,672	73	2.7%
January, 2022	2,753	2,662	91	3.3%
February, 2022	2,792	2,715	77	2.8%
March, 2022	2,810	2,736	74	2.6%
April, 2022	2,834	2,768	66	2.3%
May, 2022	2,831	2,755	76	2.7%
June, 2022	2,827	2,749	78	2.8%
July, 2022	2,839	2,761	78	2.7%
August, 2022	2,818	2,738	80	2.8%
September, 2022	2,873	2,809	64	2.2%
October, 2022	2,883	2,814	69	2.4%
Net Change	53	59	-6	-0.3%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Commuting Patterns

Table 5 provides data on the commuting patterns of employed individuals aged 16 and over who reside in Bland County. The table lists the top ten employment locations for County

residents. It is noteworthy that the majority of the workforce is employed outside of Bland County, with only 36.8 percent of County residents working and living in the County. Approximately 24 percent of county residents commute south to Wythe County, while 15.5 percent commute north to Mercer County, West Virginia. Additionally, more than 10 percent of county residents work in Tazewell County.

Table 5: Residence to Workplace Commuting Flows, Bland County, VA

<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Percent Commuters</u>
Virginia	Bland County	36.8%
Virginia	Wythe County	24.3%
West Virginia	Mercer County	15.5%
Virginia	Tazewell County	10.3%
Virginia	Pulaski County	4.0%
Virginia	Montgomery County	1.8%
Virginia	Roanoke City	1.8%
Virginia	Radford City	1.7%
West Virginia	McDowell County	1.1%
Virginia	Smyth County	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 5-Year ACS Commuting Flows

Table 6 shows the locations where the Bland County workforce resides. The data indicates that over 46 percent of employees in Bland County also live in the County, while 20.4 percent of employees commute from Mercer County, West Virginia. Approximately 16 percent of employees who work in Bland County reside in Wythe County. Fewer than five percent of employees in Bland County commute from Tazewell County.

Table 6: Workplace to Residence Commuting Flows, Bland County, VA

<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Percent Commuters</u>
Virginia	Bland County	46.5%
West Virginia	Mercer County	20.4%
Virginia	Wythe County	15.8%
Virginia	Tazewell County	4.5%
Virginia	Montgomery County	2.4%
Virginia	Giles County	2.4%
Virginia	Carroll County	1.5%
West Virginia	Raleigh County	1.4%
Virginia	Pulaski County	1.1%
West Virginia	Wyoming County	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 5-Year ACS Commuting Flows

Economic Development Activity

Interviews with economic development agencies at the local, regional and state levels did not reveal any companies that have made major public announcements regarding job growth. However, one notable development is the expansion of Titus Trucking, a commercial interstate trucking company operating in the Bastian Industrial Park. The company announced in November, 2022 plans to construct a new office and truck parking location, with the intent to hire an additional five drivers in 2023. Additionally, the opening of the Downshift Diner in April, 2022 along Indian Village Trail in Bastian represents another modest economic development within the County.

Also of note is that several businesses are actively filling vacant positions in Bland County. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics presented in Table 4, there were fewer than 70 unemployed residents of Bland County as of October, 2022. In comparison, there are over 50 job listings on Indeed in Bland County at this time, which undercounts total job availability. Some companies may prefer to advertise job openings on their own websites or through other channels, rather than using a job search platform like Indeed. Additionally, some job openings may not be widely advertised or may be filled through referrals or other means, rather than being posted publicly.

This discrepancy between the number of unemployed residents in the County and the number of job openings may suggest a potential need for new residents to fill the available positions. However, most of these vacancies are not identified as representing net job growth.

Regional Job Growth

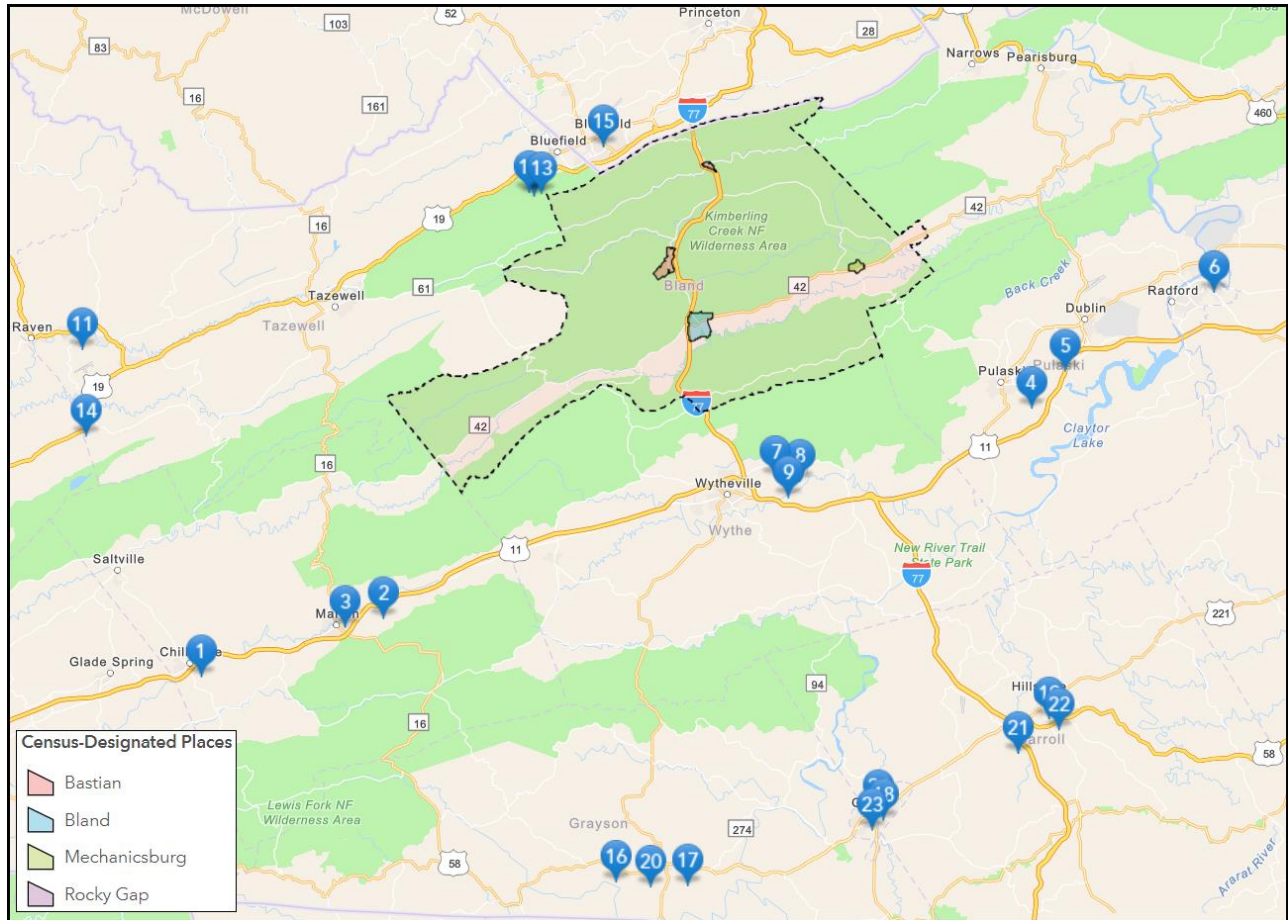
While job growth within Bland County is limited, neighboring counties are experiencing a significant level of ongoing and future expansions in employment growth. Many of these job opportunities are located in areas that are easily accessible from Bland County and already attract a large number of commuters from the County. These announcements are listed in Table 7. Most of these new jobs will be in the manufacturing sector, with annual wages starting at around \$35,000. In total, these employers will add nearly 4,300 new jobs in neighboring

communities. Many of these communities are located in rural areas and are experiencing a shortage of housing, particularly for the workforce population.

Table 7: <u>Regional Job Growth, January, 2023</u>		
	<u>Map B Key</u>	<u>New Jobs</u>
<u>Smyth County</u>		
Scholle IPN Packaging	1	75
Woodgrain Millwork	2	80
Emory & Henry College	3	<u>25</u>
<i>(Subtotal)</i>		<i>(180)</i>
<u>Pulaski County</u>		
Xaloy Holdings	4	35
The Volvo Group	5	600
The Patton Logistics Group	6	<u>63</u>
<i>(Subtotal)</i>		<i>(699)</i>
<u>Wythe County</u>		
Blue Star NBR	7	2,464
STS Group AG	8	120
Traeger	9	<u>15</u>
<i>(Subtotal)</i>		<i>(2,599)</i>
<u>Tazewell County</u>		
Ronald Mark Associates	10	29
Appalachian Millworks & Cabinetry	11	15
Signco	12	19
AMR PEMCO	13	<u>20</u>
Pure Salmon	14	<u>200</u>
<i>(Subtotal)</i>		<i>(283)</i>
<u>Mercer County (WV)</u>		
Omnis Building Technologies	15	150-300
<u>Galax/ Carroll County/ Grayson County</u>		
Woodgrain	16	100
Grayson Natural Farms	17	40
Galax Health & Rehab	18	15 1/
Mohawk Industries	19	35
Metalworx	20	59
New River Polymers	21	50
Blue Ridge Eye Care	22	30
Twin County Regional Health Care	23	20
Albany Industries	24	15
<i>(Subtotal)</i>		<i>(364)</i>
Total		4,275-4,425
Notes: 1/ Estimate		
Source: S. Patz & Associates, Inc.		

Map B illustrates the locations of the 24 job announcements listed in Table 7. Many of these employers are within a 45-minute drive of Bland County, and most of the new jobs will be located along the I-81 and I-77 corridors. Census data on local commuting patterns suggest that many Wythe County residents already commute long distances for work, particularly to

locations where these employers are actively adding new jobs. The Blue Star NBR facilities are a 15-minute drive from the center of Bland County.



Map B - Locations of Regional Employment Growth

The paragraphs below detail each of the job announcements that were listed in Table 7, most of which are for manufacturing-related positions. Excluded are retail, temporary construction, spin-off and smaller job announcements that are not tracked by any local, regional or state economic development agencies.

- **Scholle IPN Packaging Inc**, a manufacturer that operates a large sustainable packaging solutions facility along Deer Valley Road in Chilhowie, announced in June, 2022 that it would expand that facility by 73,000± square feet and hire 75 new employees. This follows 42 new hires with average wages of \$43,800± in 2020 and 2021.

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- **Woodgrain Millwork**, a manufacturer of wood molding and trim, announced in August, 2021 that it would expand its Marion facility, located at 4615 Lee Highway, and hire 80 new employees. Hiring is expected to begin in early-2023 with pay expected to average \$16 per hour.
 - **Emory & Henry College**. The Health Sciences campus in Marion is expected to add between five and 25 new employees by 2027 as the College expands its course offerings and student enrollment.
 - **Xaloy Holdings LLC**, a plastics industry equipment manufacturer, announced in July, 2021 that it would move its barrel manufacturing operation from Ohio back to Virginia, reopening its former facility in Pulaski County that closed in 2016. Xaloy will operate its 100,000± square foot, 30-acre site at 102 Xaloy Way in Pulaski to produce bimetallic barrels, which are formed by bonding metal linings to the insides of steel tubes, for use in the plastics manufacturing industry. The move is expected to create 35 jobs.
 - **The Volvo Group**, which operates a major truck manufacturing facility near Dublin, is in the midst of a major investment for advanced technology upgrades, site expansion and preparation for future products, including the innovative Volvo VNR Electric truck, slated for the serial production that involve adding approximately 600 new jobs in 2021 and 2022.
 - **The Patton Logistics Group** announced in August, 2021 that it would expand its trucking, logistics and warehousing operation in the New River Valley Commerce Park in Pulaski County, creating 63 jobs. The company will add 150,000± square feet to its 250,000± square foot logistics center. The expansion will include a trucking operations and maintenance center that will provide the infrastructure to support a future investment in electric trucks. The company will add 150,000± square feet to its 250,000± square foot logistics center that opened in August, 2021 and employs 33 people.
 - **Blue Star NBR**. In October 2021, Blue Star NBR announced plans to build multiple manufacturing facilities in Wythe County's Progress Park, located less than five miles east of the Town of Wytheville on the south side of Peppers Ferry Road, where the company will produce nitrile rubber medical gloves. This is the largest manufacturing job announcement in Virginia in nearly three decades.

The facilities will occupy the 233-acre rail-served Lot 24 in the industrial park and are expected to generate 2,464 jobs by 2028, excluding construction workers and spin-off jobs. This equates to approximately 490 new positions added per year on average between 2023 and 2028.

The first facility to open will be a nitrile butadiene rubber manufacturing facility, followed by six planned nitrile glove facilities. Construction on this facility began in early 2022 and is expected to open by mid-2023. The remaining five facilities are scheduled to open between 2023 and early 2028. Once the facilities reach full operating

capacity, Blue Star NBR will manufacture more than 60 billion nitrile gloves per year, or approximately 18 percent of the country's current supply.

Limited hiring has already begun at the chemical plant portion of the facility, which will generate annual salaries of approximately \$70,000. The bulk of the remaining hiring will occur as the glove facilities begin to operate, with positions paying annual salaries of approximately \$37,000.

- **STS Group AG**, a German auto parts manufacturer, announced in April, 2021 that it would establish its first U.S. manufacturing operation in Wythe County's Progress Park industrial park, creating 120 jobs. The new facility will operate as a subsidiary of STS Group North America and will supply Volvo Trucks in Pulaski County and other truck and automotive facilities throughout the Midwest and southeastern U.S. markets.
- **Traeger Grills**, the manufacturer of the world's top-selling wood pellet grill, announced in April, 2021 that it would build a new grill pellet manufacturing operation in Wythe County and create 15 jobs.
- **Ronald Mark Associates**, a New Jersey-based custom resin and vinyl manufacturer, announced in November, 2022 that it would establish a manufacturing operation in Tazewell County, a project expected to create 29 jobs. The company will occupy the former Komatsu Mining Corp. facility at 1081 Hockman Pike in Bluefield.
- **Appalachian Millworks & Cabinetry** is expanding by relocating to the former 49,500± square foot Magic Mart Building at 1809 Third Street in Richlands and hiring 15 new employees. The company is known for its custom cabinetry, trim, flooring and other millwork. The new facility is expected to open in early-2023.
- **Signco**, a custom sign manufacturer, announced in March, 2022 that it would occupy the former MC Signs facility at 334 Industrial Park Road in Bluefield. The facility will employ 19 people.
- **AMR PEMCO**, which designs and manufactures products including dry-type transformers, power distribution equipment and industrial control enclosures and buildings, announced in December, 2022 that it would expand its facility at 1960 Valley Dale Street in Bluefield. The company currently has 88 full-time employees at the Bluefield facility, but projects that number will increase to 108 by 2025.
- **Pure Salmon**, an international aquaculture company based in Abu Dhabi, plans to begin construction in early-2023 on a 750,000± square foot aquaculture facility on about 200 acres besides Southwest Virginia Community College. The facility, which will produce 20,000± tons of salmon per year, is expected to employ more than 200 people. The facility is expected to open by the end of 2024.

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- **Omnis Building Technologies** announced in February, 2022 that it would build a 150,000± square foot manufacturing plant in Bluefield, WV to manufacture housing materials. The facility is expected to employ between 150 and 300 people. Building Technologies is a manufacturer of energy-efficient, pre-engineered, home building systems made up of Concrete Insulated Building Units (CIBU) that are shipped and then assembled on-site to make pre-designed homes. The company is relocating from California to West Virginia.
 - **Woodgrain**, one of the largest millwork companies in the world, announced in August, 2021 that it would purchase and expand the former Independence Lumber sawmill in Grayson County, adding 100 new jobs. Independence Lumber is Grayson County's largest private employer, and when the sawmill upgrades are complete, it will become the primary supplier for Woodgrain's Smyth County operation. Hiring has not yet begun.
 - **Grayson Natural Farms**, an organic meat snack brand, announced in December, 2020 that it would expand its Grayson County operation by 35,000± square feet, creating 40 jobs. Grayson Natural Farms produces Landcrafted Food, which are grass-fed, organic meat snacks. Its smokehouse and production operations are currently located at 226 Industrial Lane in Independence. The company first opened its facility in 2017. Construction on the expansion is now underway.
 - **Galax Health and Rehab**, which is located at 836 Glendale Road in Galax, opened a new memory care unit in September, 2022. The facility has a capacity for 18 residents.
 - **Mohawk Industries**, a flooring manufacturer, announced in January, 2021 that it would expand its Carroll County operation, creating 35 jobs. Mohawk Industries will add 19,000± square feet to its 351 Floyd Pike facility in Hillsville and install new equipment to increase its production speed. Construction should begin soon.
 - **Metalworx**, a manufacturer of highly-engineered and precision-manufactured components, assemblies and products for industrial uses, announced in June, 2020 that it would relocate its headquarters and manufacturing operations from South Carolina to the former Core Fitness Complex in Grayson County. The move will create 59 new jobs. Approximately 16 jobs have been filled to date.
 - **New River Polymers**, a Hillsville-based manufacturer of plastic pellets from industrial scrap of medical gowns and face masks, announced in December, 2020 that it would expand its location in the Carroll County Industrial Park by roughly twice its size, while adding approximately 50 new employees by 2025.

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- **Blue Ridge Eye Care.** Family Vision Care at 1022 E Stuart Drive and Blue Ridge Eye Care at 1102 E Stuart Drive combined to form a new practice in March, 2021 at newly built office at 800 E Stuart Drive in Galax. The facility employs approximately 30 people.
 - **Twin County Regional Healthcare.** The 141-bed hospital at 200 Hospital Drive in Galax opened in 1973 and is the only full-service medical facility in the region. With approximately 350 employees (including about 100 physicians), this hospital is among the largest private employers in Galax. The hospital is actively trying to fill approximately vacant positions at this time and expects to add between 20 and 50 staff members by 2026, including a mix of doctors and nurses. There are currently approximately 20 vacancies, primarily for nursing positions.
 - **Albany Industries,** which operates an upholstery manufacturing facility at 626 Creekview Drive in Galax, is actively hiring approximately 15 new employees. These positions typically pay between \$13 and \$14 an hour.

Also of note is that a new industrial park called Pathway Park is planned to be built at the former site of the American Furniture factory in Chilhowie. Over the past year, the Smyth County Economic Development Authority was awarded two \$600,000 grants from the Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) and the Virginia Tobacco Regional Revitalization Commissions to fund infrastructure improvements at the County-owned park. These funds will be used to install 2,000 feet of eight-inch water line and 1,600 feet of sewer line. Site work could begin imminently. Although there have been no job announcements at the park, it could ultimately support up to 400 jobs.

The above announcements in neighboring areas represent a significant departure from previous trends in the region. Economic development officials attribute this growth to a combination of factors, including pent-up demand for the products being manufactured, state and local incentives that make new and expanding jobs attractive, and the ability of employers to offer competitive wages. However, a key challenge that must be addressed to support this growth is the availability of housing for these employees.

Bland County Demographic Analysis

Demographic trend data indicate a net population decrease in Bland County since 1990, with an approximate loss of 300 individuals. The decade of the 1990's, however, saw a net population increase of approximately 360 people, which can be attributed to expansions in the manufacturing sector by companies such as Henry Schien, ABB and Bland Sportswear leading to job growth and a modest influx of new residents.

However, in the 2000's, the population trend in Bland County reversed, with a decline of approximately 50 individuals during that decade. This population decrease occurred despite several moderate job expansions during the period, including by Appalachian Leasing and ABB. The closure of a large Tutlex Corp. fleece outerwear manufacturing facility in 1999, which resulted in the loss of 125 jobs, may have contributed to the population decline. This facility closure was the only major layoff in the County during that period.

As of 2021, population estimates for Bland County slightly exceed 6,200, according to data from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. This represents a decrease of 610± people between 2010 and 2021, or an average annual rate of nearly 60 people per year. This population decline can be attributed almost entirely to a loss in the Group Quarters population, as the methodology to count the prisoner population changed in recent years. Thus, the recent decline in the population did not impact the local housing market. It is noteworthy that there were no mass layoffs in the County over the past decade.

Table 8: Trends of Population and Households, by Tenure, Bland County, Virginia, 1990-2021

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2021</u>
Bland County Population	6,510	6,870	6,820	6,210
Group Quarters Population	570	640	690	60
Household Population	5,940	6,230	6,130	6,150
Person Per Household	2.65	2.42	2.39	2.37
Households	2,240	2,570	2,570	2,590
Owner Households	1,900	2,210	2,160	2,170
Percent of Total Households	84.8%	86.1%	84.3%	83.8%
Renter Households	340	360	400	410
Percent of Total Households	15.2%	13.9%	15.7%	15.8%

Source: 1990-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; S. Patz & Associates, Inc.

According to projections released by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service in July, 2022, the population of Bland County is expected to experience a reduction, falling to a total of 5,630± individuals by the end of the decade. This represents a decline of 580± people in comparison to current population levels.

Group Quarters Population

In 2010, the Group Quarters population in Bland County, which includes individuals residing in communal settings such as correctional facilities, nursing homes, or group homes, accounted for a significant portion of the County’s total population, at approximately 10.1 percent, or 690± people. This proportion is relatively high compared to most housing markets, particularly those without a significant presence of university students.

The majority of the Group Quarters population in Bland County is composed of inmates at the Bland Correctional Center, which houses an estimated 680 prisoners. A smaller proportion of the Group Quarters population consists of seniors residing in the 57-bed Bland County Nursing & Rehab facility in Bastian, which opened in 1989.

A new law requires the U.S. Census Bureau to count prisoners in the areas where they last resided (their last home address) rather than where they are incarcerated. Thus, even

though the Bland Correctional Center houses nearly 700 inmates, a decline is shown over the 2010 and 2021 period.

When analyzing housing unit demand, the Group Quarters population is subtracted from the total population to calculate the household population. The household population is the basis for the analysis of housing unit demand. Despite the increasing senior population in the area, there has been no growth in the Group Quarters population, which may be due to seniors moving away from the area upon retirement. The key point in Table 8 is that the population loss since 2010 is primarily attributed to the methodology of counting inmates in the County rather than people moving away.

Households

The 1990's saw an increase in the number of households in Bland County, with occupied housing units growing by approximately 330. This growth can be attributed to both an increase in population during that period and a significant decline in the average household size, from 2.65 in 1990 to 2.42 in 2000. The average household size has continued to decrease, primarily due to the County's aging population, reaching a low of 2.37 as of 2021.

In 2010, Bland County had an estimated 2,570± households, which is consistent with the number in 2000. Based on current population estimates and the ongoing reduction in average household size, the estimated number of households for 2021 is 2,330±, representing a decline of approximately 240 households. This decrease in households is a contributing factor to the slow growth in the new home market.

Owner Households

The data presented in Table 8 demonstrate that Bland County has consistently had a high percentage of homeownership, ranging from 84.8 percent in 1990 to 82.8 percent in 2021. This is significantly higher than recent state and national averages of 67.3 percent and 65.1 percent, respectively. The high ownership rate can likely be attributed to the limited availability

of new rental housing in the County, coupled with traditionally low home prices that has made homeownership more achievable. In 2010, there were an estimated 2,570± homeowners in Bland County. This number is estimated to have declined to 1,930± as of 2021, suggesting that recent population losses have primarily been among homeowners. Conversely, the number of renter households has remained consistent since 2010.

Owner Households by Income

The analysis of data in Table 9 reveals minimal changes in the total number of homeowners in Bland County since the year 2000. This trend is in contrast to the period between 1990 and 2010, during which the number of homeowners in the County increased by over 300, driven by job growth in the area.

The data are further divided into two income categories, with homeowners earning annual incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 constituting the first category, and those earning over \$80,000 comprising the second category. A modest decline in the first category has been observed since the 2000's, with this income level representing 10.6 percent of owner households in 2021. The second category, which represents the potential market for new home sales, includes approximately 17.5 percent of owner households in Bland County.

There has been essentially no net growth in either income category since 2010, which aligns with the overall decline in the number of homeowners in the County. This can be attributed to a combination of factors, including limited new housing inventory, slow job growth for households at these income levels during this period and the lingering effects of the Great Recession.

Table 9: Trends of Owner Households, by Income, Bland County, Virginia, 1990-2021 1/				
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2021</u>
Households	2,240	2,570	2,570	2,590
Owner Households	1,900	2,210	2,160	2,170
Percent of Total Households	84.8%	86.1%	84.3%	83.8%
<u>\$40,000-\$80,000</u>				
Total Households	30	260	230	230
Percent of Owner Households	1.6%	11.8%	10.7%	10.6%
<u>Above \$80,000</u>				
Total Households	310	380	370	380
Percent of Owner Households	16.3%	17.2%	17.1%	17.5%
Notes: 1/ Reported in constant 2022 dollars.				
Source: 1990-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; S. Patz & Associates, Inc.				

Renter Households

Data from 2021 show that the number of renter households in Bland County has remained relatively stagnant, with a total of 410± households. This figure is consistent with the total recorded in 2010 and represents a minimal proportion of the overall number of households in the County, estimated to be fewer than 16 percent. Notably, the County lacks any professionally-managed multi-family apartment communities. Although a small proportion of duplexes and townhomes are occupied by renters, the majority of rental properties in the County consist of single-family homes that were originally constructed for home ownership.

Renter Households by Income

Table 10 illustrates the trends in the distribution of renter households in Bland County by income category. The data suggest a significant presence of low- and moderate-income renter households, yet none of these households hold housing vouchers as no housing authorities operate within Bland County.

As of 2021, it is estimated that approximately 120 renter households in Bland County have annual incomes below \$20,000, while nearly 50 renter households have annual incomes between \$20,000 and \$35,000. This implies that nearly 42 percent of renter households in Bland

County have annual incomes below \$35,000. Notably, there are no income-restricted properties in the County, thus these lower-income renter households primarily reside in older homes of varying quality.

Renter households earning between \$35,000 and \$50,000 constitute the workforce housing population in Bland County. As of 2021, this income bracket totaled approximately 70 households, representing a slight increase since 2010. However, there are no apartment properties catering to this sector of the rental market, resulting in many who work in the County and earn incomes within this range to reside outside of the County and commute.

In 2021, there were approximately 60 renter households earning annual incomes of between \$50,000 and \$75,000, representing 14.6 percent of Bland County renter households. This is an increase of approximately ten households over the 2010 level. Additionally, there were approximately 70 renter households that earned annual incomes exceeding \$75,000 in 2021. As there are no upscale apartment properties in Bland County, these higher-income renters typically rent larger single-family homes scattered throughout the County, mostly with three-bedroom floorplans.

The data indicate a minimal level of growth among renter households in nearly all income categories over the past decade. This can be partially attributed to the scarcity of available housing units as well as limited job growth in the County.

Table 10: Trends of Renter Households, by Income, Bland County, Virginia, 1990-2021 1/				
	1990	2000	2010	2021
Households	2,240	2,570	2,570	2,590
Renter Households	340	360	400	410
Percent of Total Households	15.2%	13.9%	15.7%	15.8%
<u>Under \$20,000</u>				
Total Households	70	110	120	120
Percent of Renter Households	20.6%	30.6%	30.0%	29.3%
<u>\$20,000-\$34,999</u>				
Total Households	50	40	50	50
Percent of Renter Households	14.7%	11.1%	12.5%	12.2%
<u>\$35,000-\$49,999</u>				
Total Households	40	50	60	70
Percent of Renter Households	11.8%	13.9%	15.0%	17.1%
<u>\$50,000-\$74,999</u>				
Total Households	50	50	60	60
Percent of Renter Households	14.7%	13.9%	15.0%	14.6%
<u>Above \$75,000</u>				
Total Households	40	70	70	70
Percent of Renter Households	11.8%	19.4%	17.5%	17.1%

Notes: 1/ Reported in constant 2022 dollars.
Source: 1990-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce;
Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; S. Patz & Associates, Inc.

Senior Population and Households

Table 11 presents data on the net growth of the older adult population in Bland County, which is analyzed based on two demographic cohorts: (1) the active senior population, defined as adults aged between 62 and 79, and (2) the older senior population, defined as adults who are 80 years and older. The 62 to 79 age group is considered “active adults” and represents the sector of the housing market that is most likely to consider a “buy-down” home, meaning a smaller home without maintenance requirements. The population above the age of 79 represents the potential market for assisted living or nursing care facilities.

In 2010, the active senior population (adults aged 62 to 79) in Bland County totaled approximately 1,230, or 18.0 percent of the total county population. This proportion is higher than state and national averages, which are closer to 12 percent. Over the 2000’s, a period in which the general population in Bland County fell by approximately 50 people, the net growth of the 62 to 79 age group was 260±. This indicates that the senior population expanded during a period in which the general population declined.

The majority of the net population growth of active seniors since 1990 can be attributed to residents aging in place rather than an influx of seniors moving to the County. As of 2021, the active adult population totals approximately 1,380 people, an increase of approximately 150 people over the 2010 level.

	1990	2000	2010	2021
Bland County Population	6,510	6,870	6,820	6,210
Bland County Households	2,240	2,570	2,570	2,590
<u>Active Senior Population and Households (62-79)</u>				
Senior Population	890	970	1,230	1,380
Percent of Total Population	13.7%	14.1%	18.0%	22.3%
Senior Households	620	640	750	840
Percent of Total Households	27.7%	24.9%	29.2%	32.4%
Average Senior Household Size	1.44	1.52	1.64	1.64
<u>Older Senior Population and Households (80+)</u>				
Senior Population	200	240	260	260
Percent of Total Population	3.1%	3.5%	3.8%	4.2%
Senior Households	120	160	200	200
Percent of Total Households	5.4%	6.2%	7.8%	7.7%
Average Senior Household Size	1.67	1.50	1.30	1.30
Source: 1990-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; S. Patz & Associates, Inc.				

Active Senior Population and Households, by Income

Table 12 presents trends on senior households by income category in Bland County between 1990 and 2021. As of 2021, approximately 330 senior-headed households, or nearly 40 percent of senior-headed households, earned annual incomes below \$35,000 when reported in constant 2022 dollars. This accounts for nearly 13 percent of total households in Bland County.

The data show recent growth among modest- and high-income senior-headed households since 2010. The growth total for the \$35,000 to \$49,999, \$50,000 to \$74,999, and \$75,000 and above income categories ranged between ten and 30± households since 2010. No senior housing was built in Bland County during this period. This growth can largely be attributed to seniors aging in place rather than any significant influx of new, older residents to Bland County.

**Table 12: Trends of Active Senior Households, by Income,
Bland County, Virginia, 1990-2021 1/**

	1990	2000	2010	2021
Households	2,240	2,570	2,570	2,590
Senior Households (62-79)	620	640	750	840
Percent of Total Households	26.3%	24.9%	29.2%	32.4%
<u>Under \$20,000</u>				
Total Households	200	160	180	180
Percent of Senior Households	32.3%	25.0%	24.0%	21.4%
Percent of Total Households	8.9%	6.2%	7.0%	6.9%
<u>\$20,000-\$34,999</u>				
Total Households	170	120	140	150
Percent of Senior Households	27.4%	18.8%	18.7%	17.9%
Percent of Total Households	7.6%	4.7%	5.5%	5.8%
<u>\$35,000-\$49,999</u>				
Total Households	80	130	150	170
Percent of Senior Households	12.9%	20.3%	20.0%	20.2%
Percent of Total Households	3.6%	5.1%	5.8%	6.6%
<u>\$50,000-\$74,999</u>				
Total Households	90	100	130	160
Percent of Senior Households	14.5%	15.6%	17.3%	19.0%
Percent of Total Households	4.0%	3.9%	5.1%	6.2%
<u>Above \$75,000</u>				
Total Households	80	120	150	180
Percent of Senior Households	12.9%	18.8%	20.0%	21.4%
Percent of Total Households	3.6%	4.7%	5.8%	6.9%
Notes: 1/ Reported in constant 2022 dollars.				
Source: 1990-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; S. Patz & Associates, Inc.				

Housing Unit Trends

This subsection analyzes the overall housing unit inventory in Bland County, including new additions to the market and the ages of homes. Table 13 presents census data on total housing units in 2010 and 2020. For comparison purposes, data is shown for Bland County as well as for the other jurisdictions within the Mount Rogers Planning District.

The data indicate that Bland County had nearly 70 fewer housing units in 2020 compared to 2010, representing a decline of 2.0 percent. This trend is similar to that in most of the neighboring communities in the Mount Rogers Planning District, where the total number of housing units decreased by over 1,100, or 1.2 percent, since 2010. The only exception is Carroll County, where the housing stock expanded by only ten units.

Table 13 highlights the fact that there has been no net growth in the local or regional housing stock since 2010. Data show that there were essentially no net new housing additions in the Mount Rogers Planning District during this time. As a result, there are limited housing options available, even for those who are willing to undertake long commutes.

This does not mean that no new homes were built during this period. Rather, the data likely reflect a condition in which a larger number of older homes were demolished over the past decade compared to the number of newer homes that were constructed.

Table 13: Net Change in Housing Units, Bland County, Virginia and Mount Rogers Planning District, 2010-2020				
	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Bland County	3,265	3,200	-65	-2.0%
Bristol City	8,795	8,670	-125	-1.4%
Carroll County	16,569	16,579	10	0.1%
Galax City	3,252	3,156	-96	-3.0%
Grayson County	9,158	8,924	-234	-2.6%
Smyth County	15,426	15,097	-329	-2.1%
Washington County	25,637	25,424	-213	-0.8%
Wythe County	<u>14,079</u>	<u>13,990</u>	<u>-89</u>	<u>-0.6%</u>
Mount Rogers Planning District	96,181	95,040	-1,141	-1.2%

Source: 2010-2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce

According to Table 14, the number of newly occupied homes constructed in Bland County has declined in recent years. In fact, only 5.9 percent of occupied homes, or 130±, have been built since 2010. This represents a departure from past trends, as between 350 and 510 new homes were built and occupied in the County every decade between the 1980's and 2000's.

A significant proportion of occupied homes in Bland County were built prior to 1980, with nearly 40 percent falling into this category. Additionally, nearly 10 percent of occupied homes in the County were built prior to 1940. These data suggest that the housing market in Bland County has experienced a slowdown in new construction in recent decades, and that a significant portion of the housing stock is older.

**Table 14: Net Change in Occupied Housing Units,
Bland County, Virginia, 2020**

Occupied Housing Units	<u>Number of Homes</u>	<u>Percent of Homes</u>
	2,260	100.0%
Built 2020 or Later	6	0.3%
Built 2010 to 2019	126	5.6%
Built 2000 to 2009	350	15.5%
Built 1990 to 1999	372	16.5%
Built 1980 to 1989	506	22.4%
Built 1970 to 1979	278	12.3%
Built 1960 to 1969	151	6.7%
Built 1950 to 1959	160	7.1%
Built 1940 to 1949	88	3.9%
Built 1939 or Earlier	223	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Prevalence of Occupied Substandard Homes

The final aspect of census data on the Bland County housing market is the number of substandard housing units, in this case defined as occupied homes with incomplete plumbing or kitchen facilities. Table 15 indicates that there are no occupied homes without complete plumbing facilities and complete kitchen facilities in Bland County. An analysis was not performed for homes without telephone connection, as this is no longer a relevant measure of home quality.

Overall, there are likely to be a significant number of blighted vacant homes, but the number of blighted occupied homes is small. It is worth noting that nearly 30 percent of occupied homes in Bland County were built prior to 1970.

Table 15: Occupied Housing Units by Complete Facilities, Bland County, Virginia, 2020		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Occupied Housing Units	2,260	100.0%
<u>Plumbing Facilities</u>		
Complete Plumbing Facilities	2,260	100.0%
Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities	0	0.0%
<u>Kitchen Facilities</u>		
Complete Kitchen Facilities	2,260	100.0%
Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	0	0.0%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Section III: Bland County Housing Market

The following analysis studies the various components that comprise the housing market in Bland County. An in-depth examination of the for-sale housing market is conducted, including an analysis of single-family homes, townhomes and patio homes. The data suggest that the for-sale housing market in Bland County is entirely composed of resale properties, as new construction of homes has been minimal in recent decades. The vast majority of new residential construction in the County is undertaken by private lot owners. This trend is consistent with the demographic data presented in Table 8, which illustrates a decline in the County's population over the past two decades.

In terms of the types of homes available in Bland County, single-family homes constitute the majority of residential properties, although a limited number of townhomes have also been built in the past. The majority of townhomes in the County are mature properties, with a significant percentage being occupied by renters. Notably, there are no age-restricted subdivisions in the County, and no new homes with single-level floor plans or ground-level master bedrooms have been constructed speculatively to cater to the senior market.

Furthermore, this analysis also includes an examination of the rental housing market, including both affordable and market-rate properties. Similar to the for-sale housing market, the rental market in Bland County is relatively modest, with Census Bureau data indicating that it houses only 400± households. There are no affordable apartment units or professionally managed, market-rate apartment communities in the County. The rental housing stock primarily consists of small multi-family units built before 2000, mobile homes, scattered single-family homes and townhomes that were originally intended for homeownership.

For-Sale Housing Market

New Construction Single-Family Home Market

The for-sale housing market in Bland County is primarily made up of existing properties, with essentially no speculative construction of new homes observed in recent decades. The only exception to this trend is the Rolling Meadows subdivision, which is located along Big Bend Drive on the south side of U.S. Route 52. Comprised of 44 lots, the development offers a range of lot sizes from 0.75 to 6.0 acres, with 13 lots having been purchased and only eight developed with single-family homes. It should be noted that no new construction has taken place in Rolling Meadows for several years.

The available lots in Rolling Meadows are currently listed for sale, with prices generally ranging between \$9,000 and \$10,000 per acre. All of the lots are zoned AG. Data analysis reveals that only one home has been sold within the development in the past five years, which was a resale of a home that was built in 2007 and sold for \$100,000 in 2020.

All homes within Rolling Meadows are single-family homes, with valuations generally ranging from the mid-\$100,000's to the low-\$200,000 range. Photos of these homes are provided for reference below.



Rolling Meadows

Patio Home Market

The data presented in Table 11 demonstrate the expanding senior population in Bland County. The County has a large and growing senior population, many of whom have home equity and retirement savings, as well as a desire to remain locally if adequate housing is available. However, the majority of existing homes in Bland County are not designed for seniors to age in place, as they are often too large, have upper-level bathrooms or require significant maintenance.

There is a growing market for patio homes in Virginia and nationwide. Patio homes are a type of single-level attached housing that typically consists of a single-family dwelling with a small yard or patio. These homes are often part of a larger development or community and may be grouped together in a cluster or row. The size of patio homes can vary depending on the location and design of the development, but they are typically smaller than traditional single-family homes. This is because they are designed to be low-maintenance and energy-efficient, and therefore do not require as much space.

Patio homes typically range in size from around 800 to 1,500 square feet, with two or three bedrooms and one or two bathrooms. They offer a convenient and manageable living option for people who are looking for a low-maintenance, energy-efficient dwelling. No patio homes have ever been built in Bland County.

Although there is limited demand due to the small population, this type of home design is recommended at a small scale. Depending on size and features, these homes can be priced in the low- to upper-\$200,000's within the Bland County marketplace. Photos of newer patio homes built elsewhere along the I-81 corridor are shown below.



Berkley Commons



Medallion Hills

Typical Botetourt County Patio Homes

Mobile, Modular and Manufactured Home Market

Bland County has a large number of mobile, modular, and manufactured homes, though many of these homes are mature. The residential building permit data to be presented in Table 16 show a significant number of permits issued for this type of home construction. Nearly 73 percent of residential building permits issued in Bland County since 2019 were for these types of homes.

Manufactured homes, mobile homes, and modular homes are all types of factory-built homes that are constructed off-site and then transported to their final location. However, there are some key differences between these three types of homes.

Manufactured homes, also known as “trailer homes” or “prefabricated homes,” are built to a federal building code known as the HUD code. These homes are built in a factory and then transported to their final location on a trailer, where they are placed on a permanent foundation. Manufactured homes are typically considered to be less expensive and less durable than other types of factory-built homes.

Mobile homes, also known as “single-wide” or “double-wide” homes, are a type of manufactured home that is built in a factory and then transported to its final location on a

trailer. Unlike manufactured homes, mobile homes are not required to meet the HUD code, and are therefore not subject to the same construction standards. Mobile homes are generally considered to be lower-quality and less durable than other types of factory-built homes.

Modular homes, on the other hand, are built to the same building codes as site-built homes and are constructed in a factory in sections, or modules. These modules are then transported to the building site and assembled on a permanent foundation. Modular homes are generally considered to be higher-quality and more durable than manufactured or mobile homes and are often indistinguishable from site-built homes once they are completed.

According to census data, approximately 30.9 percent of Bland County residents live in manufactured, modular or mobile homes. There are approximately 640 occupied homes of this type in Bland County. These homes are primarily mature, as over 65 percent of occupied manufactured, modular or mobile homes in the County were built prior to 2000.

Of the approximately 1,650 people living in these types of homes, just over 71 percent are homeowners, while the remainder rent their units. There are 530± owner-occupied manufactured homes and 100± renter-occupied homes. Census data show that many of these homes are occupied by families with children, particularly the renter-occupied units.

Census data also show that of the 860± manufactured homes in Bland County, approximately 220 units, or over 26 percent, are vacant. Most of these vacancies are due to the age of the units. A large number of these older homes are likely uninhabitable. The cost to dispose of or relocate an old, manufactured home depends on a number of factors, including the size of the home, its condition, the distance it needs to be transported and any local regulations or fees that may apply. In general, the cost to dispose of a manufactured home can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars.

Townhome Market

The for-sale townhome market in Bland County is characterized by a scarcity of attached units, with a significant share of these properties being occupied by renters. This type of housing is typically considered an entry-level option for young couples and families with limited financial resources. The limited availability of this housing type in the County can be attributed to an interplay of factors, including zoning restrictions and a preference for larger, more spacious living environments within the rural setting of Bland County. Given local market dynamics, such as the limited scope of employment growth and recent increases in mortgage interest rates, it is unlikely that the demand for this housing type will experience significant growth in the near future.

Trends in Residential Building Permits

Table 16 presents an analysis of the trends in the number of residential building permits issued by Bland County over the past five years. The data indicate that the County has only issued 117 residential building permits between 2018 and 2022, averaging approximately 23 permits per year.

All of these permits were for the construction of homes on scattered lots throughout the County, with essentially none of these permits issued for the construction of new homes to be sold speculatively. Additionally, a portion of these building permits were also issued for the replacement of older homes that were destroyed by natural disasters or fires.

It is important to note that over 70 percent of residential building permits issued during this period were for manufactured and modular homes, many of which were older units that were relocated to new homesites. In contrast, only 32 permits were issued for stick-built homes between 2018 and 2022.

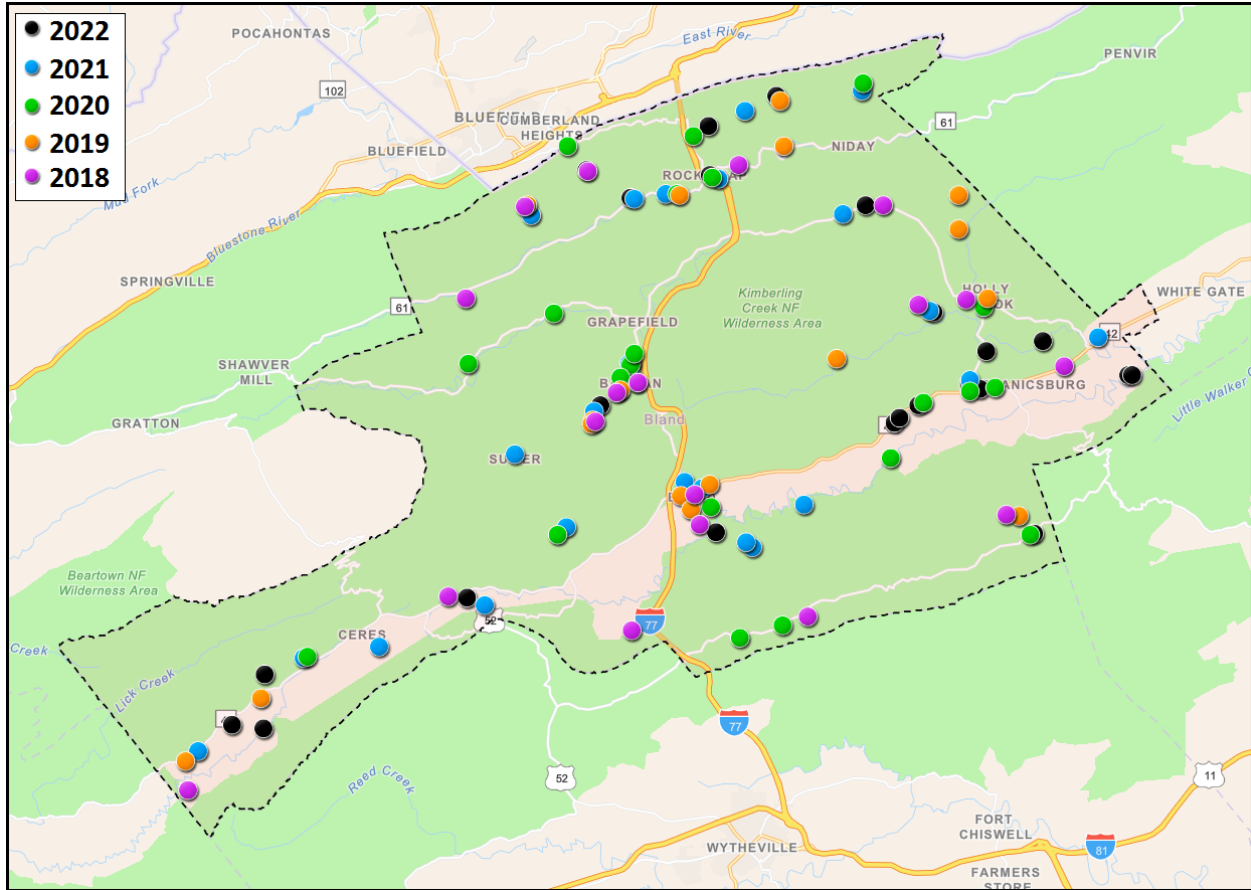
Table 16: Trends in Building Permits for New Homes, Bland County, Virginia, 2018-2022

	<u>Single-Family</u>	<u>Mobile/ Modular</u> 1/	<u>Duplex/ Townhome</u>	<u>Total</u>
2018	5	21	0	26
2019	8	18	0	26
2020	7	15	0	22
2021	2	16	0	18
2022	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>	25
Total	32	85	0	117
Percent of Total	27.4%	72.7%	0.0%	100.0%

Notes: 1/ 45.9% single-wide, 44.7% double-wide and 9.4% modular.

Source: Bland County, VA

An analysis of the residential building permits issued by Bland County over the past five years, as presented in Map C, illustrates a dispersed distribution of development. The data indicate that there were no significant clusters of new home construction, as active subdivisions with speculative home building are absent in the County. The majority of the building permits were concentrated along the I-77 corridor, with a smaller number of permits issued in the western and eastern parts of the County, specifically in the Ceres and Mechanicsburg areas respectively.



Map C - Locations of Residential Building Permits in Bland County

Trends in Home Sales

Table 17 presents an analysis of the trends in the home sales market in Bland County over the period of 2018 to 2022. The data indicate that only 199 homes were sold during this five-year period, with an annual range of 24 to 52 home sales. The majority of these sales were for mature homes, with an average age of nearly 50 years at the time of purchase. Additionally, the data show that the average sales price for these homes was under \$160,000.

A more detailed analysis of the construction year of the homes that were sold reveals that none of the homes that were sold during this period were built speculatively. Furthermore, fewer than ten of these homes were constructed after 2010, and nearly 80 percent of the homes sold since 2018 were built prior to 2000. This data highlight that the majority of the homes sold in the County in recent years were older properties, which suggests that the market in Bland

County is primarily driven by the demand for older, more established homes rather than new construction. This is partly due to supply constraints. Overall, the data suggest that the residential real estate market in Bland County is relatively stable, but not growing.

	<u>Homes Sold</u>	<u>Average Age (Years)</u>	<u>Average Sales Price</u>
2018	24	55	\$100,512
2019	32	53	\$104,376
2020	52	45	\$133,618
2021	40	46	\$235,315
2022	<u>51</u>	50	\$189,567
Total/Average	199	49	\$159,704

Source: Redfin

For-Sale Housing Pipeline

There are currently no for-sale subdivisions in active planning in Bland County.

For-Sale Housing Summary

The new home sales market in Bland County has been stagnant for several decades, as evidenced by local home sales data. Over the past five years, there have been no instances of speculative home construction and sales. This can be attributed to several factors, including the rising cost of building materials and the more recent high mortgage interest rates, which make new home construction financially challenging. Additionally, limited demand for new homes in the County has made large-scale speculative construction infeasible.

Despite the presence of available homesites within the Rolling Meadows subdivision and other scattered lots that could potentially be developed with new homes, area homebuilders have shown reluctance to engage in speculative home construction. The County has yet to attract major residential investments from outside of the region, and county staff have not reported any inquiries from prospective homebuilders.

Furthermore, local realtors and members of the development community have identified various land use regulations that make new residential development more expensive, time-consuming and uncertain. These factors will be analyzed in the conclusions of this report. It is worth noting that the new home market in Bland County is largely untested, as the for-sale housing market primarily consists of re-sales, primarily for older homes.

Excluding homes with contingencies, there are currently only eight homes listed for sale in Bland County. This is compared to 3,210± housing units in the County, according to the most recent census estimates. The majority of these available homes are mature properties, having been built between 1933 and 1993, with the exception of two homes that were constructed in 2007 and 2010 and are priced at \$750,000 and \$580,000, respectively. Additionally, only three of these listings are priced under \$200,000. A large number of vacant homes are not listed for sale.

Table 18: Homes Listed for Sale, Bland County, Virginia, January, 2023

	<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Days on Market</u>	<u>Listing Price</u>	<u>Bedroom/ Bathroom</u>
8306 Wilderness Rd (Bland)	2007	160	\$875,000	3/3.0
7647 S Scenic Hwy (Bland)	1993	775	\$750,000	5/3.5
5700 Laurel Fork Rd (Rocky Gap)	2010	145	\$580,000	2/2.0
273 MI Thompson Dr (Rocky Gap)	1978	258	\$375,000	3/2.5
15 Winter Place Ln (Rocky Gap)	1933	71	\$300,000	3/2.0
3793 Railroad Trl (Bastian)	1968	56	\$169,000	3/2.0
4288 Railroad Trl (Bastian)	1961	265	\$115,000	3/1.0
2920 Waddletown Rd (Bland)	1955	26	\$100,000	2/1.0

Source: S Patz & Associates, Inc.

Shown next are photos of each of the homes that are listed for sale in Bland County. Most have three-bedroom floorplans and are unaffordable to most local homebuyers.



8306 Wilderness Rd (Bland)



7647 S Scenic Hwy (Bland)



5700 Laurel Fork Rd (Rocky Gap)



273 MI Thompson Dr (Rocky Gap)



15 Winter Place Ln (Rocky Gap)



3793 Railroad Trl (Bastian)



4288 Railroad Trl (Bastian)



2920 Waddletown Rd (Bland)

Local real estate agents in the area have noted limited demand for new homes, and not enough demand to attract large-scale, speculative housing development. They note better opportunities in surrounding counties where job growth is more pronounced. Homes in the low-\$100,000 to low-\$200,000 price range are most marketable, but it is difficult to build new homes at those prices under current conditions.

Rental Housing Market

The analysis to follow examines the composition of the rental housing market in Bland County, specifically focusing on the market rate and affordable segments. The market rate rental market is characterized by a preponderance of small-scale rental units, primarily owned and managed by private investors and property management companies. Notably, there are no professionally managed apartment communities in the County.

Affordable Apartment Market

A comprehensive analysis of the housing market in Bland County reveals a lack of options for low-income families and seniors. Specifically, there are currently no income-restricted apartments available within the County. Despite this, a portion of older market-rate rental units, although not subject to income restrictions, may be considered affordable to

households that would qualify for such units, if they were available. These units offer modest, cost-effective rental options, primarily due to their age and condition.

Furthermore, no public housing agencies operate in Bland County, and therefore there are no local entities that allocate housing vouchers. The closest clusters of affordable rental housing are located in the Town of Wytheville to the south and the greater Bluefield area to the north. Both areas have a limited supply of affordable housing units. Most affordable rental properties in these locations are typically at full occupancy with extensive waitlists.

Market Rate Apartment Market

Bland County has no professionally managed apartment communities. Instead, the majority of rental units in the County are scattered townhomes and single-family homes that were originally built for sale but have since been converted into rental units. Additionally, a significant portion of the rental housing stock includes older mobile homes, which often do not meet the needs and preferences of prospective tenants. Census data presented in Table 8 shows that there are only approximately 400 renter households in Bland County. Nearly 85 percent of renter occupied housing units were built prior to 2000. There are seldom any vacancies among the County's rental units.

Nearly 57 percent of renter occupied housing units in Bland County are single-family detached homes. Most offer two- and three-bedroom floorplans, though few have two or more bathrooms. An additional 27.5 percent of renter occupied housing units are mobile or manufactured homes. The remaining homes that are occupied by renters are townhomes and small multi-family structures of four or fewer units.

Our research identified only eight multi-family, renter-occupied structures in the County. These buildings, with 27 units in total, primarily have duplex and townhome designs, with some featuring single-level homes and others with two levels. Most of these buildings are mature, having been built in the 1970's and 1980's. Most offer one- or two-bedroom floorplans

with one full bathroom. Despite their age, all of these units are currently occupied, which is typical for the County.

Attached are photographs of each of the rental buildings that were identified during this research. The designs of most buildings reflect the period in which they were constructed. Nevertheless, all of these structures are well-maintained and free of any blighting features.



63 High Chaparral Lane (2 units)



93 High Chaparral Lane (2 units)



145 Fairview Street (4 units)



165 Fairview Street (2 units)



170 Valley View Ln (2 Units)



258 Valley View Ln (6 units)



1318 East Blue Grass Trail (4 units)



8738 S Scenic Hwy (4 units)

Surveying these properties for rents was difficult, as is often the case in rural communities that seldom have rental vacancies. Census data presented in Table 19 show that most renters (44 percent) pay between \$500 and \$799 per month for housing costs. Approximately 14 percent pay between \$800 and \$999. The median gross rent Bland County is approximately \$700.

Of note is that over 32 percent of renters fall into the “No Cash Rent” category, which refers to a specific category of housing units that are not occupied by renters who pay cash for their housing. This could include housing units that are occupied by people who live rent-free or have a non-monetary arrangement for their housing, such as bartering or trading services for

housing. Of the nearly 68 percent of renter households that do pay rent, 20 percent are defined as rent overburdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of income on housing costs.

**Table 19: Monthly Housing Costs,
Renter-Occupied Units, Bland County, VA, 2021**

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Less than \$300	0	0.0%
\$300 to \$499	12	3.2%
\$500 to \$799	165	44.0%
\$800 to \$999	53	14.1%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	19	5.1%
\$1,500+	5	1.3%
No Cash Rent	121	32.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; ACS 2021 (5-Year Estimates)

Apartment Pipeline Proposals

There are no apartments in planning or under construction at this time in Bland County.

Section IV: Available Residential Development Sites

This section of the housing analysis identifies and evaluates available sites recognized by Bland County officials as being suitable for new residential development. All of these sites have access to, or are located near, public water and sewer services. This is a necessary condition for attracting new development as building in locations without public water and sewer can be more costly due to the need for private water and sewer systems or on-site septic systems. All of these sites are privately owned. County staff did not identify any vacant buildings with potential for rehabilitation into apartment or condominium units.

Vacant and Underutilized Parcels with Residential Development Potential

Table 20 presents the multiple vacant and underutilized properties in Bland County that offer the most potential for new residential development. The survey was limited to larger properties that could potentially attract homebuilders from outside the region, so smaller parcels and those with major development constraints, such as topographic issues, difficult access, and properties prone to flooding, were excluded from this analysis. All of the properties listed in Table 20 have access to public water and sewer. Fifteen properties were identified as having the most potential for residential development. All of these properties are privately owned and none are located within Opportunity Zones. Of note is that most of these properties are not listed for sale.

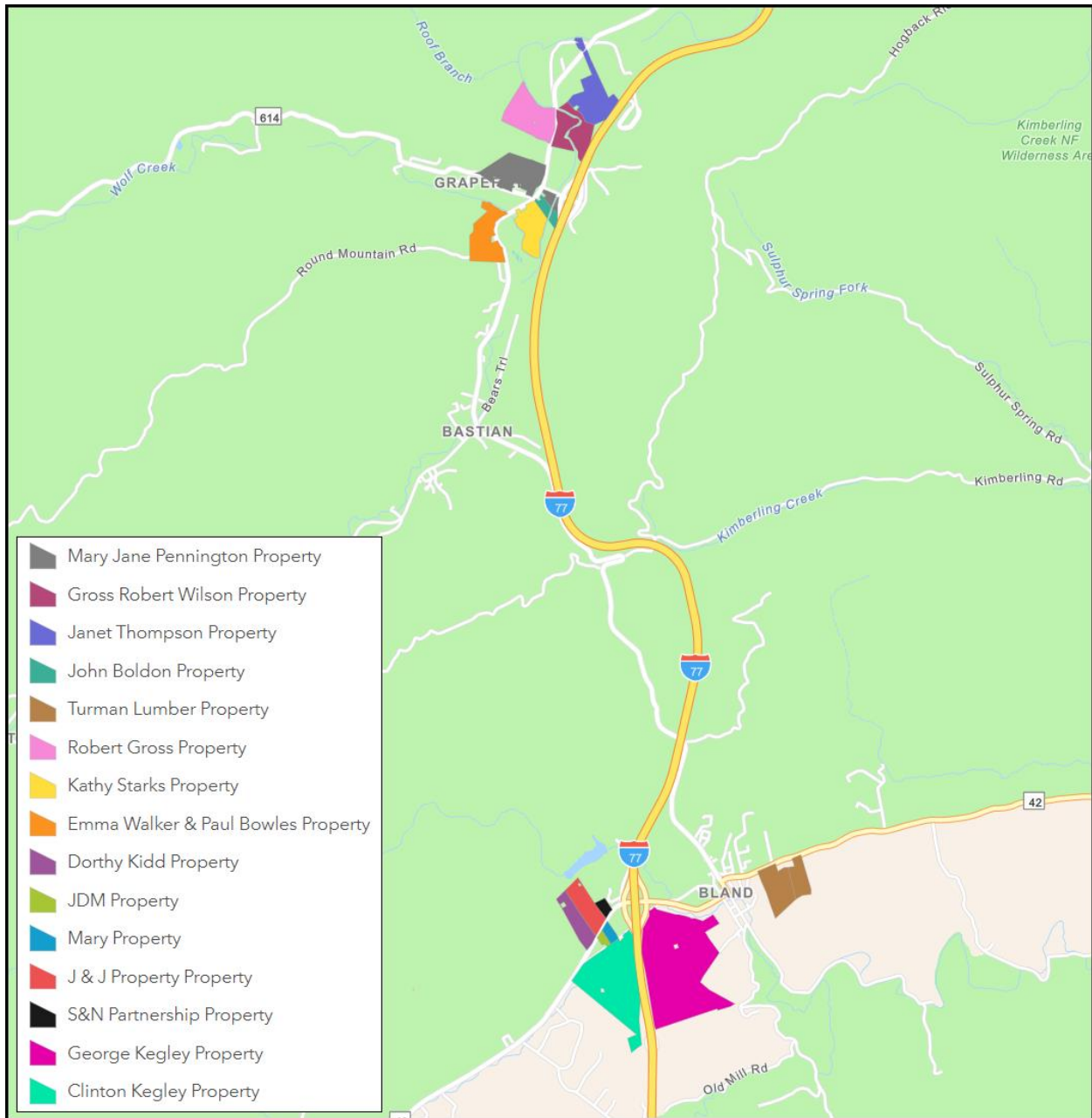
These properties have a wide range of sizes, varying from just under five acres to nearly 290 acres. The large size of many of these properties allows for the potential development of a mix of housing types on one property. All but one of these properties has an AG zoning designation.

**Table 20: Characteristics of Properties with Residential Development Potential,
Bland County, Virginia, January, 2023** 1/

	<u>Parcel ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Zoning</u>
George Kegley Property	91-A-9	289.0	AG
Clinton Kegley Property	91-A-9C	123.8	AG
Robert Gross Property	34-A-9	63.7	AG
Mary Jane Pennington Property	49-A-3	59.1	CUP
Emma Walker & Paul Bowles Property	48-A-34	55.9	AG
Kathy Starks Property	48-A-104	53.8	AG
Gross Robert Wilson Property	34-A-10	52.6	AG
Turman Lumber Property	77-A-33	39.1	AG
Janet Thompson Property	34-A-11	38.8	AG
J&J Properties Property	91-A-3B	29.1	AG
Dorothy Kidd Property	91-A-2	27.0	AG
John Boldon Property	49-A-7	6.0	AG
S&N Partnership Property	91-A-4	5.4	AG
Mary Property	91-A-3A	4.8	AG
JDM Property	91-A-3	4.7	AG

Source: Bland County, VA

Map D shows the 15 potential development sites listed in Table 20, which are located along the I-77 corridor. These sites are easily accessible and have good visibility. The locations along I-77 are due to the availability of public utilities. The map shows that eight of the available properties are located in the Bland area while seven are located in the Bastian area.

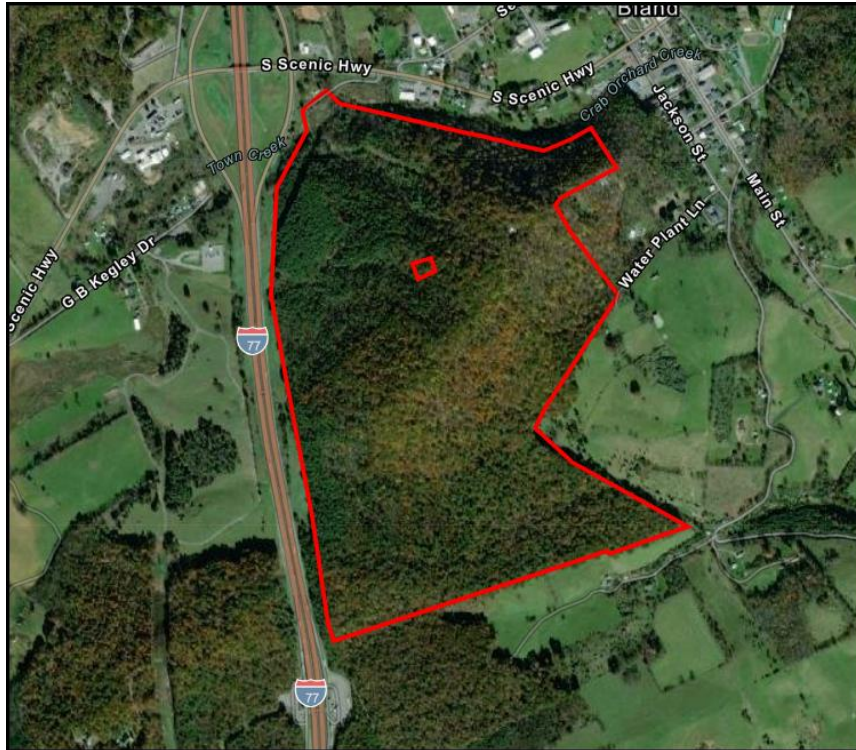


Map D - Locations of Vacant Properties with Residential Development Potential

The following section presents brief descriptions, photos and maps of the potential residential development sites that were identified in Table 20.

George Kegley Property

The George Kegley Property is located near the southeastern intersection of I-77 and S Scenic Highway in Bland. This is a large property of 239 acres that is essentially entirely wooded alongside some topographic challenges. The property is currently only accessible from Short Run Drive in the north and Water Plant Lane in the east. The property is zoned AG.



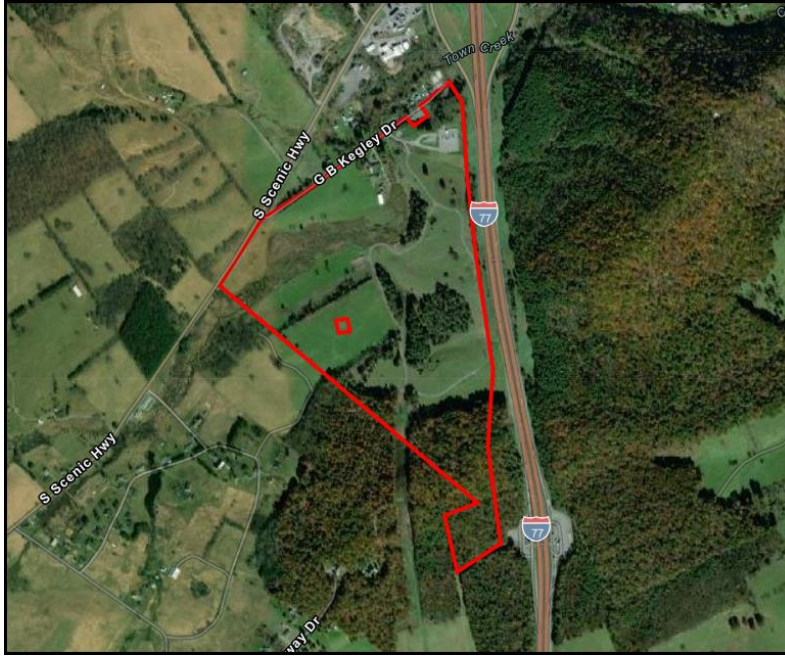
Map E - George Kegley Property Location



George Kegley Property

Clinton Kegley Property

The Clinton Kegley Property is located near the George Kegley Property, on the west side of I-77 and south of G B Kegley Drive. This is a 123.8-acre property that is zoned AG. It is largely flat and contains a mix of cleared and wooded areas.



Map F - Clinton Kegley Property Location



Clinton Kegley Property

Robert Gross Property

The Robert Gross Property is an irregularly shaped, 63.7-acre property located on the west side of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area. The property, which is zoned AG, is partially improved with agricultural structures. The western half of the property is wooded.



Map G - Robert Gross Property Location



Robert Gross Property

Mary Jane Pennington Property

The 59.1-acre Mary Jane Pennington Property is a largely wooded and slightly hilly property primarily located on the north side of Grapefield Road and west side of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area of Bland County. Its immediate setting is one of the more commercialized parts of the County, as it is adjacent to some retailers and the Bland County Nursing & Rehab facility. The size is zoned CUP and is the only available property that is no zoned AG.



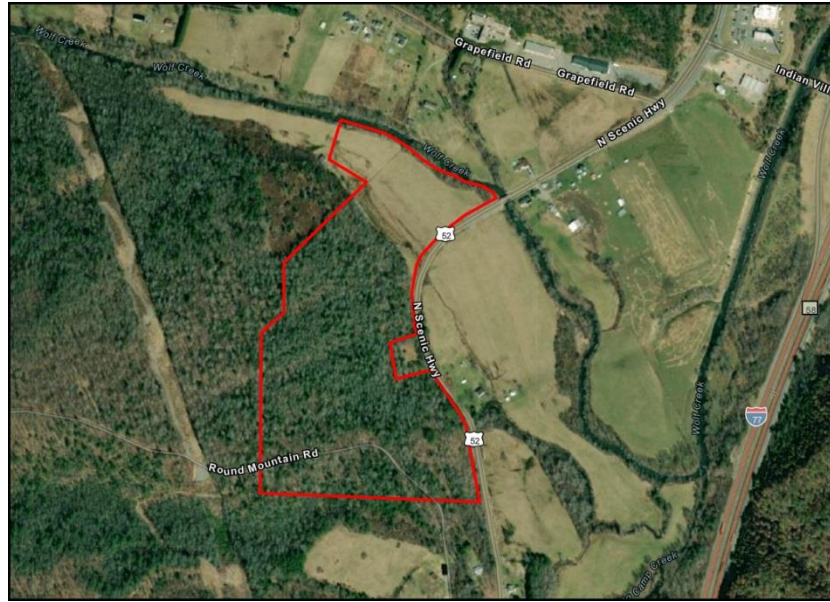
Map H - Mary Jane Pennington Property Location



Mary Jane Pennington Property

Emma Walker & Paul Bowles Property

The Emma Walker & Paul Bowles Property is an irregularly shaped parcel located on the west side of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area. This is a vacant property. The northern part of the property is cleared of trees while the southern side is wooded. Round Mountain Road runs through a small portion of the southern part of the property. Its northern boundary is Wolf Creek.



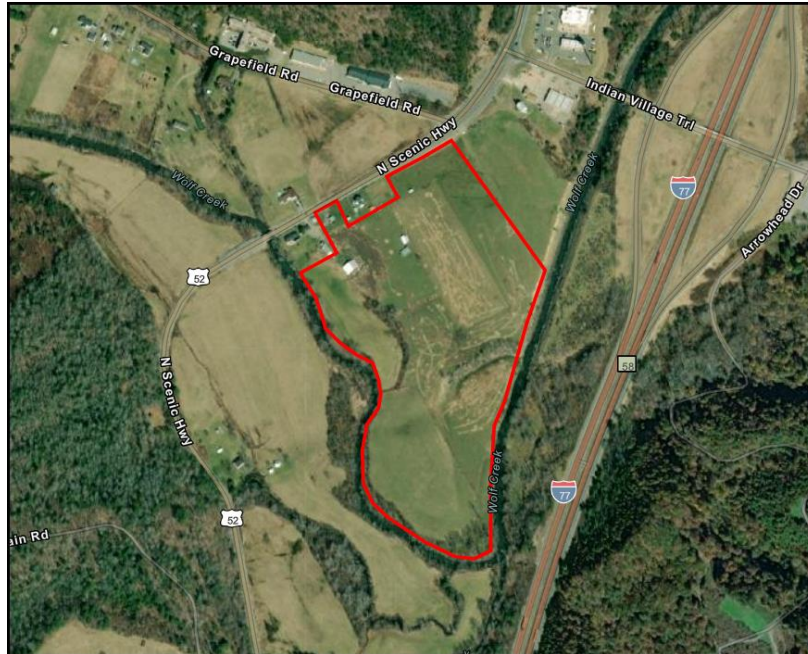
Map I - Emma Walker & Paul Bowels Property Location



Emma Walker & Paul Bowels Property

Kathy Starks Property

The Kathy Starks Property is located on the south side of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area. This is a largely cleared site that is bound to the south by Wolf Creek. There are a handful of small structures on the site. It has a generally flat topography. The property measures 53.8 acres and is zoned AG.



Map J - Kathy Starks Property Location



Kathy Starks Property

Gross Robert Wilson Property

The Gross Robert Wilson Property is unique in that it is bisected by Wolf Creek through the center. The 52.6-acre property has a mix of cleared and wooded areas and is located on the eastern side of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area. There does not appear to be vehicular access to the eastern portion of the property. This property is zoned AG.



Map K - Gross Robert Wilson Property Location



Gross Robert Wilson Property

Truman Lumber Property

The Truman Lumber Property consists of two adjacent parcels measuring 39.1 acres on the south side of E Blue Grass Trail in Bland. The western parcel is fully wooded while the eastern parcel has one small structure fronting a large, wooded area. This property is zoned AG.



Map L - Truman Lumber Property Location



Truman Lumber Property

Janet Thompson Property

The Janet Thompson Property flanks the northern and southern sides of U.S. Route 52 in the Bastian area. Most of the property is located on the south side of U.S. Route 52. This is a largely vacant and flat 38.8-acre property that is zoned AG.



Map M - Janet Thompson Property Location



Janet Thompson Property

J&J Properties Property

The J&J Properties Property is a triangular shaped parcel located on the northern side of S Scenic Highway in the Bastian area, just west of I-77. The property is slightly hilly. The rear section is fully wooded. The property spans 29.1 acres and is zoned AG.



Map N - J&J Properties Property Location



J&J Properties Property

Dorothy Kidd Property

The Dorothy Kid Property is located directly west of the J&J Properties Property. This too is a rectangular-shaped property located on the north side of S Scenic Highway. This is a largely vacant and flat property. It measures 27.0 acres and is zoned AG.



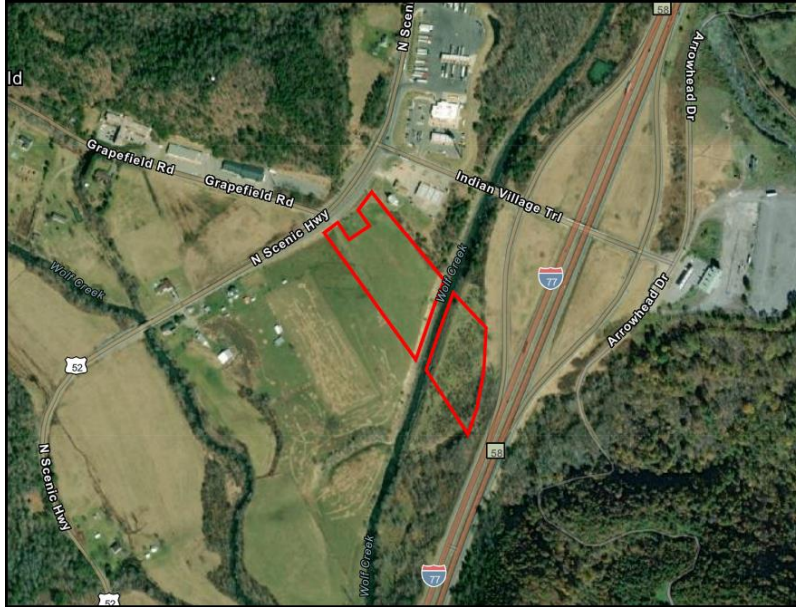
Map O - Dorothy Kidd Property Location



Dorothy Kidd Property

John Boldon Property

The John Boldon Property is located between U.S. Route 52 in the west and I-77, just south of Indian Village Trail in the Bastian area of the County. This 6.0-acre property is generally flat but is bisected by the Wolf Creek in its eastern portion. It is zoned AG.



Map P - John Boldon Property Location



John Boldon Property

S&N Partnership Property

The S&N Partnership Property is one of three identified potential development sites that is smaller than six acres. This is a rectangular shaped property located on the northern side of S Scenic Highway in Bland, just west of its interchange with I-77. This 5.4-acre property is largely wooded and zoned AG.



Map Q - S&N Partnership Property Location



S&N Partnership Property

Mary Property

The Mary Property measures 4.8 acres and is situated between S Scenic Highway in the north and G B Kegley Drive in the south in Bland. The south side is wooded while the north side is covered in gravel. This property is zoned AG.



Map R - Mary Property Location



Mary Property

JDM Property

At 4.7-acres, the JDM Property is the smallest potential development site that was identified by County staff. This is an irregularly shaped, partially improved parcel that is bounded by S Scenic Highway in the north and G B Kegley Drive in the south. The JDP Property is zoned AG.



Map S - JDM Location



JDM Property

Section V: Housing Analysis Conclusions

Conclusions

The market conclusions are as follows:

- 1) Bland County is generating a modest level of housing demand locally primarily from area employers and seniors aging in place. Apart from a small announcement by Titus Trucking that it would hire five new drivers in 2023, there are essentially no businesses that have active plans to add new employees in Bland County (apart from addressing normal turnover). Net job growth supports new housing unit demand, and Bland County is not currently adding enough new jobs to attract large-scale housing development.
- 2) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Bland County economy has been relatively limited, as evidenced by the stability of the employment market and the absence of significant disruptions in the housing market. The data indicate that the number of jobs in the County has modestly surpassed pre-pandemic levels, with an increase of over 60 jobs. This could be attributed to recent hirings at Hitachi Energy. This suggests that the County's economy has demonstrated a degree of resiliency in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic. The current unemployment rate of 2.4 percent is 0.3 percent lower than the rate recorded in January, 2020, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.
- 3) The analysis of future job growth in neighboring localities outside of Bland County reveals a substantial increase in comparison to past trends. Nearly 4,300 new jobs have been announced in neighboring counties and cities, with many of these located in areas that also face housing shortages. Notably, a large proportion of these new job opportunities, approximately 2,500, are associated with Blue Star NBR in neighboring Wythe County. This could potentially result in increased demand for housing in Bland County in the future. The lack of local amenities, such as a grocery store and proximity to public schools, is a challenge for new development.
- 4) Bland County has seen a steady population decline since 2000 with a reduction in population by 660 people over the past 21 years. This is primarily a function of a new methodology used to count inmates in the County.
- 5) Many of the larger local employers report that a significant number of their employees commute from outside of the County. This is consistent with data in Table 5 that shows that fewer than 40 percent of County residents work and live in Bland County. Hitachi Energy, the largest private employer in the County, reports that fewer than 35 percent of its employees reside in Bland County. This presents an opportunity to attract commuters to relocate to the County.

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- 6) As there is limited net job growth, Bland County is not likely to have a net growth in population in the near- or mid-term. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public service estimates that Bland County's population will decline to 5,630± by the end of the decade. This represents a decline of approximately 580 people over the current total.
 - 7) While the general population of Bland County has declined since 2010, the senior population has grown modestly. There are very few homes in the County that are designed specifically for seniors, such as single-level homes with low maintenance requirements. Essentially no new homes are being marketed toward this sector of the housing market, leaving many seniors with limited options. While modestly growing, the senior population remains small and is not expanding at a pace that is likely to attract development from outside of the region.
 - 8) The rental market in Bland County is small, as only 400± households are estimated to be renters. There are no professional managed apartment complexes of any type in the County, including both market rate and affordable properties. All rentals are scattered single-family homes, townhomes, mobile homes or small multi-family structures with four or fewer units. Given that net job growth is not expected in the near term, the level of demand from renters should remain stable.
 - 9) The for-sale home market in Bland County is dominated by re-sales, with essentially no new homes being built speculatively for sale in several decades. The market is comprised primarily of single-family and manufactured homes, with few other options available.
 - 10) Section IV of the report indicates that Bland County has multiple vacant and underutilized parcels with potential for residential development, though most of these properties are not listed for sale. The list in Table 20 is not exhaustive, but it provides an indication of the scale of available properties. Some of these larger parcels would need to be subdivided to support various housing types. Nevertheless, sufficient demand does not currently exist for any large-scale residential development. New housing development is more likely to occur on small, scattered lots. Such efforts are not likely to be undertaken by any of the larger developers from outside of the region.

Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, existing demand in Bland County is insufficient to attract large-scale residential development. Yet, small-scale opportunities exist, particularly for the scattered development of modestly priced single-family and patio homes. Easing local land use regulations, rather than seeking regional or national developers, could increase the viability of small-scale development and stimulate new residential construction efforts in the County.

Bland County's zoning ordinance contains only four zoning districts. It establishes definitions for varied housing types (manufactured, single, two-family, townhouses and multifamily) but permits manufactured, single-family, townhouse, and multifamily dwellings in its Agricultural District (AG) zone only. Amending the ordinance to ease restrictions on residential development is recommended. Suggested amendments with brief analysis are provided below.

- **Permit Residential Development in the Commercial District.** Currently, accessory dwellings are permitted in its Commercial District (C) zone only with a conditional use permit. The zoning ordinance defines an accessory dwelling as "...a dwelling unit located within a structure in which the principal activity is a commercial, professional or general personal service." Conditional use permits must be approved by the County's Board of Supervisors at a public hearing. In general, public hearings can create unpredictability in the approval process and add both expense and time to residential development projects.

Residential development is generally compatible with and complimentary to commercial uses. Higher-intensity residential development is particularly successful if co-located with neighborhood serving retail. The County should consider allowing residential development without special approval in its Commercial District. Further, residential development in the Commercial District should not be subject to minimum lot sizes nor widths. This way, existing commercial lots could be used for residential development without special approvals.

- **Expand Permissiveness of Accessory Manufactured Homes.** Accessory manufactured homes, defined as "...a manufactured home that is a subordinate residential use to a principal dwelling..." are allowed with conditional use permits in the Agricultural District (AG) only. In addition to needing special approval, these accessory manufactured homes can only be occupied by the property owner, their immediate family or their employees. The zoning ordinance does not allow an unrelated person to occupy the accessory manufactured home.

The County should consider eliminating both the conditional use permit requirement and the limitations on who can reside in the unit. The land use impacts of an occupied accessory unit are the same, regardless of how the persons who reside in it are related to the primary property owner. The County could consider adding use standards to limit the impact of accessory units including maximum sizes/heights and minimum setbacks. These accessory units would likely rent for less than traditional housing types. They also create an opportunity for property owners to build wealth from rental income.

- **Allow Duplexes and Two-Family Dwellings in the AG and C Districts.** Confusingly, duplexes and two-family dwellings are not listed as a permitted use in any zone, though

they are defined within section 62-1. Further section 62-171 requires site plan approval for these types of homes. The County should consider listing these dwelling types in the AG and C districts.

- **Modify Lot Size and Frontage Requirements.** The County code requires all lots to have frontage on public streets. The amount of frontage varies depending on whether the subdivided lots have public water and sewer access. It also establishes a minimum lot size that also depends on such access. These regulations establish the maximum number of lots that can be created within a tract of land. The County could consider smaller lot requirements which would allow for higher density within a tract. Lower requirements could be appropriate in certain areas of the County, especially in the potential growth areas identified by the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Eliminate Public Street Requirement.** Because the County is largely rural, it also lacks a comprehensive street network and centralized sewer or water supply system. As a result, most new subdivisions would require the construction of public streets and water and sewer infrastructure. The County could modify the public street requirement to encourage residential development. In a rural county such as Bland County, private streets may be acceptable, particularly in areas with little to no anticipated pedestrian activity.
- **Eliminate Arbitrary Lot Shape and Arrangement Requirements.** The County code generally requires newly created lots to be regularly shaped and not configured uniquely for the purpose of meeting lot frontage requirements. While it may seem intuitive that subdivided land should follow a regular development or grid pattern with rectangular or square shaped lots, ultimately this is a relatively arbitrary requirement that lacks a specific land use purpose.