

JOBS & HOUSING

Creating Opportunities for Everyone

GOAL

Provide for a strong, diverse community with inclusive housing opportunities, a sound fiscal base and a workforce that is competitive internationally, nationally and regionally to maintain a high quality of life in Blacksburg.

Sustainability Goal

Economic sustainability and social sustainability are two of the three major principles in the Town's sustainability vision. All citizens should have opportunities for jobs and access to housing. The Town is committed to being proactive in developing new economic opportunities that complement the quality of life found in Blacksburg while protecting the environment. The Town strives to be a desirable destination for employers and employees by supporting sound economic development, wise land use decisions, work force development, and housing choices that meet the demands of all ages and income levels.

Citizen Involvement

There are multiple Council-appointed committees addressing economic development and housing needs that involve citizen participation: Friends of the Blacksburg Farmers Market, Blacksburg Housing and Community Development Advisory Board, Blacksburg Museum Committee, Blacksburg Partnership, Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., Downtown Revitalization Committee, Historic or Design Review Board, Montgomery-Blacksburg-Christiansburg Development Corporation, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery County Council on Human Relations, Montgomery Regional Economic Development Commission, New River Valley Agency on Aging, New River Valley Development Corporation, Sixteen Squares, and the Virginia Tech Business Technology Center Advisory Board. Citizens are also encouraged to attend Planning Commission and Town Council public hearings when economic development projects and housing are being discussed. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the Blacksburg Citizens Institute to learn more about Town operations in general.

OVERVIEW

Creating jobs is one goal of economic development, but economic development includes much more. In order to be successful in economic development, a multi-faceted approach by multiple organizations is required. This approach should plan for and create an environment that welcomes and supports businesses, research, and industries that create local job opportunities. Successful economic development includes a diversified housing market for employees at various socioeconomic levels and telecommunications to connect Blacksburg globally.

The chapter begins with a summary of the **Economic Development** components in Town, followed by the Town's **Economic Development Partners** that promote the Town. Then the Town's **Economic Development Master Plan** is reviewed. Discussed next is **Historic Preservation and Broadband Technology**, two important factors contributing to the economic vitality and character of the Town. The chapter closes with a discussion of **Housing** needs and resources within the Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a university town in the New River Valley, Blacksburg's economy has been relatively stable and less susceptible to economic downturns due to the presence of Virginia Tech. The proximity of Virginia Tech provides opportunities for research and development businesses, as well as visitors to conferences and athletic and art events. The Town serves a diverse customer base ranging from undergraduate and graduate students, to Virginia Tech Football Game Day visitors, to permanent residents, to employees commuting to Blacksburg.

The Town of Blacksburg has competitive tax and utility rates, plus a low unemployment rate compared to other jurisdictions in the New River Valley. Over the past decade, an already strong employment base in the government and service sectors has grown, providing additional employment opportunities as the manufacturing sector has declined nationwide, including in Montgomery County.

Industrial

One of Blacksburg's primary areas for industry, the Blacksburg Industrial Park, provides quality jobs and access to the interstate for light industrial and manufacturing corporations. As of 2012, there are approximately 75 acres available for development in Blacksburg's industrially zoned land, with limited opportunities elsewhere in Town for industrial development. Based on historical absorption patterns, the Town may have less than a 15-20 year supply of privately owned land capable of supporting industrial development in the Town. However, the nature of manufacturing has changed and this land bank supply may be adequate. Some form of manufacturing will always happen in Town, but the manufacturing industries are often supporting larger manufacturing industries in the New River Valley, such as the Volvo Plant in Dublin or complementing Research and Development businesses in the Corporate Research Center.

Research and Development

Research and Development industries are an increasing component of the Town's economic base. The primary location has been at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC) adjacent to the Virginia Tech Campus. Created in July 1985, its first building was completed in 1988. As of 2012, the research park houses over 140 high-tech companies and research centers that employ over 2,200 people in 27 buildings totaling 956,000 square feet on 120 acres of land. Phase II total build-out is planned to be an additional 18 buildings totaling 870,000 square feet housing 3,000 employees over the next decade. The CRC is a for-profit, wholly-owned, private subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Foundation, and is, therefore, not a state entity and must meet Town Code requirements.

A future location for research and development is the Old Blacksburg Middle School site located in Downtown Blacksburg. The site is designated as a mixed use development area and urban development area. Once constructed in accordance with the approved master plan, the site will become a key anchor contributing to the vibrancy of Downtown Blacksburg. Research and Development businesses may wish to locate Downtown to take advantage of a more urban environment than the campus setting environment of the CRC.

Retail

Blacksburg has one of the highest concentrations of high-income households in the region. Blacksburg also has a “captive” commercial audience in the university students. This population has disposable income that matches the local offerings of many specialty retail shops. Although there is a mix of retailers in Downtown, there is a perception that Downtown is mostly oriented towards university students. The Town is committed to a healthy, active Downtown area that equally serves an increasing permanent resident population, students, and visitors. The Town of Blacksburg is also committed to supporting existing office, commercial, and retail establishments located primarily along North and South Main Street, plus Prices Fork Road and University City Boulevard, which all have high visibility and easy vehicular access.

Blacksburg is part of the Christiansburg/Blacksburg retail market/trade. As regional shopping centers have located in Christiansburg over the past decade, Blacksburg has sought to find its own specialty, niche-marketing approach. While seeking to diversify the Town’s economic base, the Town is committed to supporting the specialty retail stores in Downtown, many of which are independently owned and operated. Providing a wide variety of retail opportunities is part of a sustainable economy. The Blacksburg Farmers Market, located in Market Square Park, complements Downtown retail while furthering the Town’s sustainability efforts. The Farmers Market offers an outlet for locally-grown agricultural products, and it serves as a site for a growing number of special events throughout the year and supports the Town’s commitment to sustainability.

Blacksburg’s Downtown extends from the roundabout at Prices Fork Road and Main Street to the Old Blacksburg Middle School Site. To reinforce the Downtown identity, there have been concentrated streetscape improvements to connect and expand destinations along Main Street, Draper Road, Church Street, Roanoke Street and College Avenue Promenade. These improvements are based upon the Downtown Master plan detailed later in this chapter. Easy access to reach Downtown and a known parking plan are key to attracting people downtown. In addition to diverse retail stores and restaurants, special events and programming will supplement the vibrancy of Downtown. Developing the Old Blacksburg Middle School site is a key element to increasing the vitality of Downtown.

There are several challenges facing Downtown businesses. Several of the buildings Downtown are original buildings that have been renovated over the years but are nearing the end of their life cycle. While some buildings can be renovated, others will encounter problems with building code. Increasingly, young professional residents are seeking downtown residences and need a diversity of services. Restaurants and retail stores not geared exclusively towards the undergraduate student population are an unfulfilled market demand. As this demand is met, it is critical to maintain street level activity by avoiding the conversion of all available space to office or residential units. There needs to be a balance of uses to promote a vibrant Downtown.

The Town is cognizant that the general public’s perception of the health and vitality of Blacksburg’s overall economy is based upon the public’s perception of vacant stores Downtown and underutilized commercial properties, especially on Main Street. To begin addressing development concerns about South Main Street, which serves as a primary entrance corridor to Downtown, the South Main Task Force was formed to generate solutions.

Tourism

Blacksburg has a beautiful natural setting to attract new residents and tourists as well as well-established events and festivals, making it an attractive destination within the New River Valley region and the Roanoke Valley area. Blacksburg has visitor weekends associated with university special and athletic events, which draw people to the Town. The Town aims to continue capitalizing upon the positive economic development and tourism implications of having Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) university academic and athletic programs in the area. Blacksburg is an authentic university town, a place for nostalgia for thousands of alumni. The Town also has the potential to become a base camp for outdoor enthusiasts who want to take advantage of the great natural resources of the region such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, the New River and the Appalachian Trail. Blacksburg can be the hub of this visitor experience.

Arts

One of the emerging economic drivers within the Town is a growing arts and cultural presence. At the edge of campus abutting Main Street is the Virginia Tech Center for the Performing Arts. The Community Arts Information Office (CAIO) is located on the College Avenue Promenade. St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall, and the Blacksburg Museum, located in the renovated Black House, promote the cultural history of the Town. Under the auspices of the Blacksburg Partnership, an Arts Collaborative has been formed to promote the arts in Town. Also active is the Blacksburg Regional Art Association comprised of local artists, many of whom participate in the Round the Mountain Artisan Trail. Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. is increasingly sponsoring more special events that highlight the arts in Downtown Blacksburg.

Other ways the Town wishes to continue pursuing economic development strategies are by incorporating Blacksburg Transit vehicles into the Town's Art Initiative, by providing creative branding and marketing opportunities, as well as public transportation to events, and by working on wayfinding signs. Existing signage and other identifiers for visitors are not evident to those unfamiliar with the area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

There are a number of different entities that support economic development in the Town. Each has a different mission and a specific area served. All have the overarching goal of supporting and growing the local economy. The mission statements of the various economic development entities are detailed below, starting first with the entities that have a broader regional focus and narrowing to those with a specialized focus.

Montgomery County Department of Economic Development

The Montgomery County Virginia Department of Economic Development (MCDED) is a successful one-stop resource and single point of contact for companies looking for help with their relocation or business expansion plans in Montgomery County-Blacksburg-Christiansburg, Virginia. As part of its mission to ensure the success and growth of the local economy, the MCDED is committed to helping national businesses find a home in the community while also providing services and support to those companies already here. MCDED can provide businesses with vital business tools such as Montgomery County demographics, financing, site selection, and redevelopment services. The MCDED can also act as an intermediary between public/private-sector partners to help business thrive in Montgomery County-Blacksburg-Christiansburg and beyond. www.yesmontgomeryva.org

Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) serves Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County. The MCCC was formed in March 2003 when the Blacksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Christiansburg-Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce merged. The Mission of the MCCC is to promote and develop a positive environment for the operation and growth of business in Montgomery County and the New River Valley. Qualified small businesses in Virginia can have a dual membership in both the MCCC and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to promote local, regional and statewide connections. <http://montgomerycc.org/>

The Blacksburg Partnership

The Blacksburg Partnership is a non-profit, independent economic development organization formed by the Town, business and university communities. The purpose is to bolster the vitality of Blacksburg through projects that attract visitors and retail prospects. Partnership projects include development of property, the revitalization of retail districts, special events and the creation of marketing programs. The Partnership seeks to give action and voice to many recommendations in the Town's master plan. The Partnership focuses on Downtown revitalization, business corridor improvements, and retail and urban economic development. The Partnership will work to revitalize and optimize underused existing commercial properties within Town limits in order to preserve green space and facilitate quality development.

www.blacksburgpartnership.org

Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.

Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. (DBI) welcomes individual citizens, property owners, corporations, and others to be a part of this dynamic group and to become involved in the spirited activities that make Downtown Blacksburg unique. DBI is the primary organization that coordinates downtown programming, events and festivals such as Steppin' Out, Summer Solstice, Winter Lights and many other events throughout the year. DBI has a downtown presence located in the

Center for the Arts Information Office, which is on College Avenue Promenade. www.downtownblacksburg.com

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC) advances the research mission of Virginia Tech by helping to create relationships between companies at the CRC and Virginia Tech. In 2010, the Corporate Research Center was honored as the Outstanding Research Park by the Association of University Research Parks. The CRC advances the technology transfer mission of Virginia Tech with an incubator program, VT KnowledgeWorks, which helps to create companies. www.vtcrc.com

Blacksburg Farmers Market

The Blacksburg Farmers Market is located at the intersection of Draper Road and Roanoke Street in Downtown. Friends of the Farmers Market is a voluntary group of citizens who provide support to the Blacksburg Farmers Market and local community through development, educational programs about benefits of locally grown food and sustainable agriculture, as well as special events that enhance its role as a community gathering place within the region. The Blacksburg Farmers Market helps create a demand for locally grown produce and products that supports the Town's sustainability commitment. www.blacksburgfarmersmarket.com

Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport

Since 1913, the Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport has provided private and corporate aviation services that support the University and Town's economic development strategies. The general aviation airport provides convenience to local business executives and developers who otherwise would have to fly to Roanoke and then drive to Blacksburg. The airport also supports tourism in Town with convenient access for game day fans. The airport is further discussed in the *Transportation Chapter*. www.vtmea.com

BLACKSBURG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

There are a limited number of areas within Town that are currently undeveloped and zoned for economic development opportunities. In order to develop those opportunities, the Town of Blacksburg completed the Economic Development Strategic Plan and the Downtown Master Plan in 2001. The implementation of the two plans has helped develop a diverse economic base in Blacksburg by utilizing the Town's assets, natural environmental amenities and the fact that it is the home of Virginia Tech. The plans contain recommendations in the areas of downtown revitalization, business development and assistance, industrial development, housing, neighborhood enhancement, and quality of life. Recommendations have led to accomplishments such as:

- The creation of the Blacksburg Partnership
- The evolution of Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.
- The construction of Market Square Park
- The construction of the College Avenue Promenade
- The location of the Virginia Tech Center for Performing Arts on Main Street
- Numerous Downtown streetscape improvements, including brick sidewalks.

On July 9, 2013, Town Council accepted the 2013 Economic Development Strategy Update providing a unified plan for the entire Town. This plan capitalizes on the success of the past decade while planning for the next phase of sustainable economic development growth in Blacksburg that efficiently maximizes telecommunication innovations. As the 2013 update plan is implemented, these strategies will also aid in the implementation of the Jobs and Housing Objectives and Policies found at the end of this chapter. Additionally, the Blacksburg Economic Fact Sheet, located in the Blacksburg Administrative Manual, provides a general economic profile of the Town.

OTHER FACETS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the economic development plans and promoters, there are three other key facets to economic development in Blacksburg. Workforce development, telecommunications infrastructure and historic preservation all contribute to the economic development while also contributing to the quality of life in Blacksburg.

Workforce Development

Population trends for the past twenty years indicate that Montgomery County, including Blacksburg, has been growing faster than the rest of the New River Valley. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, this trend should continue, resulting in steady demand for new housing development, employment, labor, and commercial/industrial development. Employment trends indicate this expansion will most likely be in the service, retail, trade, and government sectors in addition to high-tech industrial employment opportunities. There will be increased demand for workers with solid education and skills. Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College provide opportunities for education and workforce development. New strategies for workforce development are an expected outcome of the NRVPCD Livability Initiative and should be incorporated as appropriate into the Town's comprehensive plan. As a region, the New River Valley should cultivate both skilled trades and higher education.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

The nature of employment is constantly changing due to new technological innovations. The one constant factor amongst these dynamic innovations is the increasing telecommunications requirements for businesses to reach customers and customers to reach businesses. To be economically competitive and to satisfy local demand for converged services, telecommunication infrastructure, including fiber optics lines, needs to be available to homes and businesses.

The Town also needs to coordinate with Virginia Tech on telecommunication infrastructure development and the rollout of such technology in larger metropolitan areas. Due to Blacksburg's Tier III status (small market size), large incumbent telecommunications companies have traditionally been slower to provide new infrastructure and services here as opposed to Northern Virginia areas that promise higher returns per dollar invested. To date, no commercial announcements, no plans, no requests to the Town, and no projects have begun with developers related to Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) in Blacksburg.

In 2010, Town Council established the goal of providing world-class community telecommunications infrastructure to Blacksburg for the 21st century and beyond. The Town acknowledges that telecommunications infrastructure is a critical utility for quality of life, just as roads, water, sewer, and electricity are. Every home, business, non-profit organization, government, and place of education should have the opportunity to connect affordably, easily, and securely to a locally managed data network. The Town intends to empower citizens and local businesses to be network economy producers, not just consumers of network information and data services. The Town realizes that doing so requires ubiquitous access to gigabit (or higher) broadband infrastructure to support these needed services and capabilities. The Town's goals are to:

1. Provide the infrastructure to enable every Blacksburg home, business, and public or private institution the opportunity to access affordable high speed broadband connections to the Internet, and other networks.
2. Demonstrate, support, and build a non-discriminatory, open-access infrastructure that should, to the maximum feasible extent, be open to all users, service providers, content providers, and application providers and be usable via all standard commercial devices.
3. Facilitate a local broadband marketplace that is as competitive as reasonably possible.
4. Provide stakeholders with the broadband capacity and affordability, plus the local, regional, and national connectivity they need to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

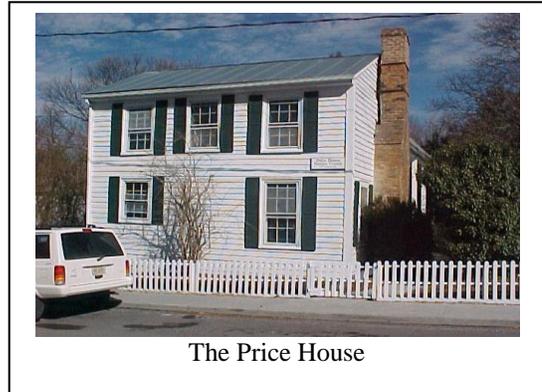
The Town envisions an operational network by 2015 with commitments from community and regional stakeholders with a shared common vision to make gigabit bandwidth available to all citizens of Blacksburg. The increased bandwidth will support telecommuting from home to work as well as make government meetings more accessible to the general public. Both of these opportunities support the Town's sustainability commitment to the economy, the environment and society.

To achieve the goals detailed above, Town Council appointed a Broadband Task Force in May 2011. <http://broadband2015.org/> The Task Force will explore the possibilities of expanding high speed Internet and data service delivery to the citizens and stakeholders of Blacksburg in the following four broad categories: Governance, Business Plan and Financials, Technology, and Outreach and Education. The Task Force recommendations should be considered in the context of the larger regional review of telecommunications infrastructure needs identified in the NRVPCD's Livability Initiative.

In addition to telecommunication infrastructure as an economic development, policies are needed to provide guidance for the actual implementation of telecommunications infrastructure similar to how polices are developed for more traditional elements such as water and sewer. Standards, priorities and key connection meet points are detailed in the Utilities Chapter. The Town's fiber network should complement other public or private existing fiber networks located within Town on the Virginia Tech Campus or in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center.

Historic Preservation

In 1798, William Black donated 38 acres of his land to establish the Town of Blacksburg along one of the main western migration routes. The plan arranged the Town in a four-by-four grid, creating sixteen blocks. Community buildings were placed strategically throughout the grid. This layout became known as the “Sixteen Squares” and is the foundation on which Blacksburg grows. In 1871, the Town became an incorporated part of Montgomery County.

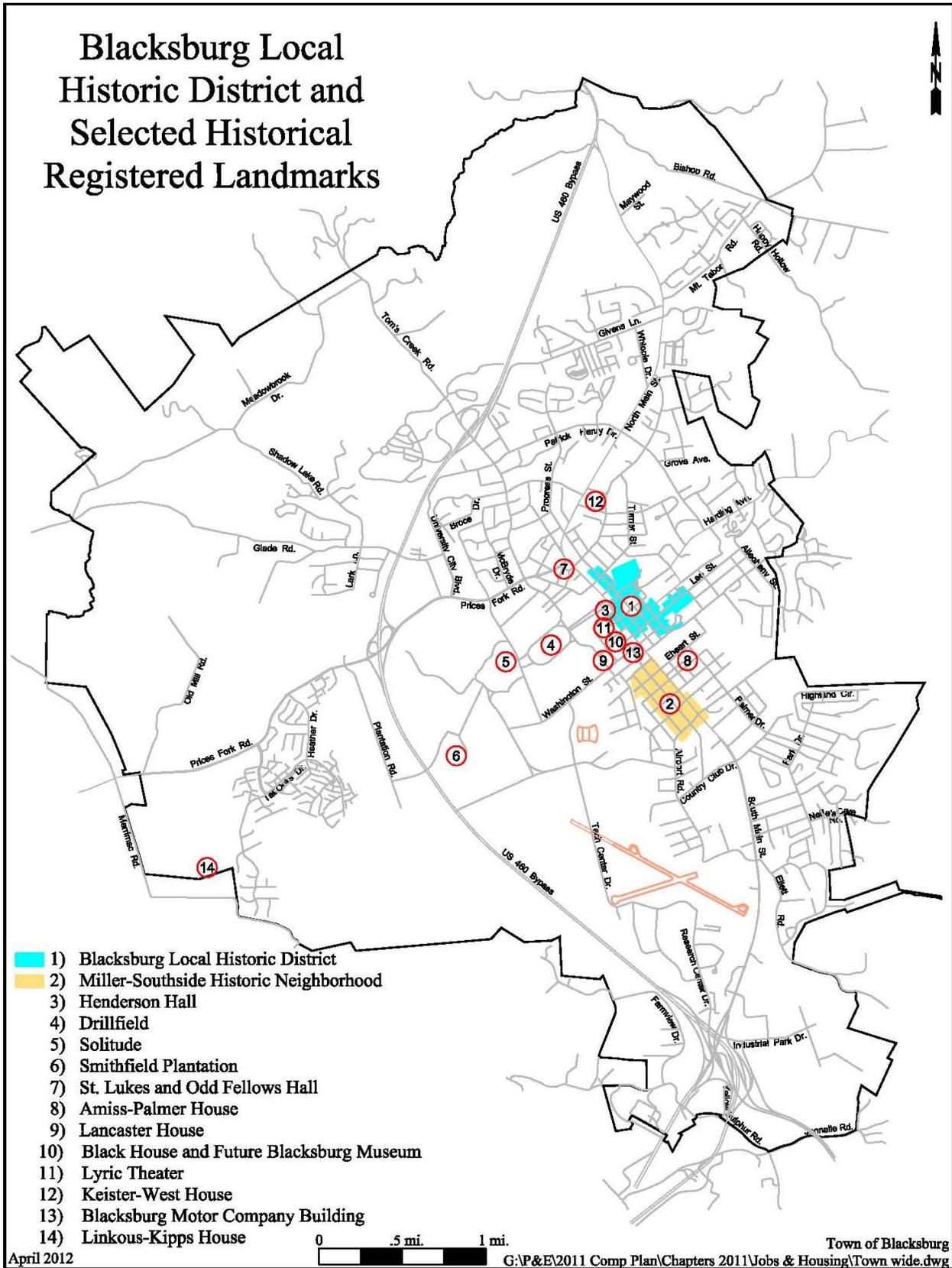


The Town's early beginnings are preserved in the historic buildings of Downtown. The Miller-Southside Neighborhood Historic District and the Blacksburg Historic Overlay District include several nationally registered historic buildings and landmarks. The Blacksburg Historic Overlay District was locally established in 1999 and subsequently amended in 2011. Along with the district, the Historic or Design Review Board and Blacksburg Historic Design Guidelines were also created in 1999. The District protects historic structures, contributes to the architectural integrity of the area, and seeks to educate citizens on proper preservation techniques. Additional information can be found in the following map and at www.blacksburg.gov.

Many historic structures and sites are in relatively good condition throughout Blacksburg. However, some structures are threatened by lack of owner maintenance and pressure for redevelopment. State and County policies, procedures, and funding all impact the Town and Virginia Tech's ability to conserve and protect many of these historic structures. The Local Tax Incentive Program provides relief from the Town's real estate tax and encouragement for maintenance and improvements to historic structures. To help reach the Town's goal to conserve and protect significant publicly and privately owned historic structures, landmarks, and properties, the Town of Blacksburg has set an example by successfully renovating the Blacksburg Motor Company Building into office space and the St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall into a public meeting space with educational information about the historic New Town community. Both of these buildings are on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The Town is also committed to the renovation of the Alexander Black House into the Blacksburg Museum to promote the history of the Town. The Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation is charged with fundraising for this project. A subcommittee of the Foundation, the Sixteen Squares Committee, assisted with a study, *The 16 Squares: the Heart of Blacksburg*, which was endorsed by Town Council in 2008. This study promotes the history and importance of the Sixteen Squares via specific objectives to identify, educate, and preserve the Sixteen Squares. Preserving and promoting the history of Blacksburg contributes to the Town's cultural identity and supports economic vitality in the Town.

Blacksburg Local Historic District and Selected Historical Registered Landmarks



April 2012

Town of Blacksburg

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HOUSING

The Changing Housing Market

Blacksburg's housing market is dominated by multi-family housing and converted single-family rental houses for undergraduate students. The remaining market for single-family houses is oriented toward higher-end, expensive housing, leaving few options for affordable starter homes. On average, real estate in Blacksburg is often priced higher than elsewhere in the New River Valley, largely due to demand to be located close to Virginia Tech and the Corporate Research Center. Many groups, such as young professionals, young families, married students, and graduate/professional students are forced to find housing in surrounding localities and commute into Blacksburg. Additionally, the market is often challenging for retirees who wish to downsize and to continue living in Blacksburg. Housing and Neighborhood Services has been addressing the issue of affordable workforce housing in Blacksburg, but there are still opportunities to increase the availability of affordable housing for these population segments and the other demographics discussed earlier in this chapter. Although Blacksburg has high development standards to ensure the quality of development, the affordable housing market is not transitioning rapidly enough to meet changing dynamics of the Town's economic development and growing population.

Housing Market Challenges

Enrollment at Virginia Tech has slowly increased but the University is poised for significant growth in the coming years. The availability of on-campus housing for undergraduate students has remained fairly constant, with approximately 9,000 students housed on-campus. The result is an influx of students inundating the local housing market, sometimes adversely impacting traditional owner-occupied neighborhoods, particularly in lower-income areas, which have housed the service sector workforce of the community. Lifestyle conflicts between students and non-students, particularly in neighborhoods immediately surrounding University areas, can create tension. Student demand for off-campus housing also has inflated the cost of available rental property and land values, eliminating much of the affordable housing stock in Town. Other Town concerns regarding off-campus student housing and rental properties include poor property maintenance, absentee landlords and over-occupancy in dwellings. These challenges plague some areas, contributing to deteriorating housing and property conditions, especially noticeable in the Blacksburg Historic District. Demand for off-campus housing also increases demands for and stresses on parking, streets, and utilities. The issues associated with the current and increasing demand for student housing necessitate the exploration and development of new context sensitive strategies in the five-year update to the Comprehensive Plan.

There are homes and condos in the Town that have been purchased or constructed with the intent to be used as second homes or game day accommodations. These homes are vacant the majority of time and do not contribute to the vibrancy of the neighborhood and economic vitality of the Town. In some neighborhoods in the Downtown Area, there is a mixture of residential buildings ranging from single-family homes, student-oriented duplexes and small apartment buildings. This varying mixture can be challenging for neighborhood identity and stability. When infill opportunities arise, it is important that new development supports the character of the neighborhood. The preservation of Blacksburg's neighborhoods can be threatened by new structures that, while technically meeting legal requirements, are out of character with those neighborhoods. When there is new development, the Town encourages that it be in scale and

character with the rest of the neighborhood. In December 2011, the *Town of Blacksburg Residential Infill Development Guidelines* were completed to address this very issue. The Guidelines are discussed in greater detail in the *Future Land Use Chapter*.

Housing Market Opportunities

To be responsive to changing demographics, a greater variety of housing options is needed in Town. There are a number of market segments based on lifestyle, age and/or income for which there is not a sufficient inventory of suitable homes. Meeting the housing needs of these identified populations is discussed below. The ability for the housing market to respond to these and other emerging segments of the population are important components to diversifying the Town's economic base. In particular, the desirability of downtown housing is a topic of interest that required further research.

Housing Study

To quantify the scope of unmet needs and current market demands for housing in Town particularly in the downtown area, the Town of Blacksburg and the Blacksburg Baptist Church jointly commissioned the market and feasibility analysis firm of Development Strategies to develop a downtown housing market strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to better understand what housing demand exists for downtown and the types of products that must be offered to capture this market demand, with a focus on the market for non-undergraduate student housing. The study results will assist in providing future direction to downtown housing development in conjunction with other types of uses. The study considers site context, marketability opportunities and constraints, socio-economic trends and characteristics, the performance of peer cities, competitive supply, and demand and market segmentation; these analyses result in conclusions about future resident characteristics, the products that they will demand, and the likely market performance and rate at which the development can occur. The resulting study will be used as a resource as the Town looks to shape future growth. Observations and data in the study have Town-wide implications beyond the geography of the downtown area. For more information, visit www.blacksburg.gov/downtownhousingstudy.

Graduate/Professional Students, Married Student Housing and Young Families

Virginia Tech plans to increase its graduate student body and research staff to help reach the University's goal of becoming a top national research institution. Thus, there are increasing numbers of graduate students, international graduate students, professional students, and post-doctorate researchers living and working in Blacksburg. These groups have different housing needs than undergraduate students. They may have spouses working in the community and young children. Additionally, there are no married student housing options currently provided by Virginia Tech on-campus. In 2011, *Bloomberg Businessweek* named Blacksburg as one of the best places in the United States to raise children, but housing options to rent and purchase starter homes must be available to retain young families in Blacksburg. Since the opening of the US 460 Bypass, many young families, married students, and graduate/professional students are choosing to live in Christiansburg and other surrounding localities where they can find affordable housing options. They commute into Blacksburg, which does not support Blacksburg's sustainability commitment to the environment, the economy, or social equity.

Young Professionals

Increasingly, Virginia Tech graduates desire to remain and work in the New River Valley after graduation. Blacksburg also attracts other young professionals. As employment opportunities in

the region increase for young professionals, and, in particular, in the Corporate Research Center, the unmet housing market demand for affordable living opportunities in and around Downtown will also increase. Young professionals often desire affordable housing options based upon their starting salaries, such as condos to purchase or apartments to rent that provide quick access by means other than the car to work, as well as convenient access to restaurants and retail. Young professionals have different housing needs than the undergraduate population and often do not wish to live in undergraduate-oriented housing.

Affordable Workforce Housing

Affordable workforce housing is for individuals or families who have low to moderate incomes (LMI). They earn no more than 80% of the area median income adjusted according to household sizes. There is a known shortage of affordable workforce housing in Blacksburg. However, this population is eligible for federal assistance from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that is administered by the Town's Housing and Neighborhood Services Office. Further information is detailed on the following page.

Workforce Housing to Mid-Range

Finding workforce housing, especially for those making 80-120% of the area median income is difficult. Those needing workforce housing could include a nurse at the hospital, an administrative worker at Virginia Tech, or an assembly worker in a local industrial plant. This group exceeds 80% of the area median income and is not eligible for housing programs provided by the Housing and Neighborhood Services office detailed further in the next section. This group works in Blacksburg but can only afford to live in Christiansburg and surrounding areas. Their incomes do not allow purchase of the higher end, single-family housing available in Town. This group finds itself competing for the homes in the same price range as those serving the student rental market in Blacksburg. Thus, there is a shortage of affordable single-family or multifamily homes in Town that can serve as workforce housing. This element of the workforce must then commute to Blacksburg, stretching their limited budgets for gas and not supporting the Town's commitment to sustainability.

Senior Housing Options

In 2011, Blacksburg was ranked as a great place to retire according to *US News and World Report*. Blacksburg is a desirable location for active adults, retirees and senior citizens because of the amenities associated with Virginia Tech, the lower cost of living compared to other major metropolitan areas and the mild climate. However, there is a lack of services and housing options for this segment, including affordable housing options, to serve these growing populations. Universal design living accommodations (entrance, kitchen, living room, bedroom and bathroom) located on a single floor are desirable because they accommodate a variety of ages and physical abilities. Smaller single-floor housing options allow senior citizens to "age in place"; otherwise, renovations and accommodations have to be made within existing homes. They also are suitable for people who wish to downsize from a single-family home. Smaller single-floor, universally designed housing options may be grouped together in an age-restricted community or intermingled throughout Town. Either way, these housing options should be located near public transportation and commercial services. Many retirees are especially interested in Downtown living amenities. As the population continues to age, additional nursing home facilities that provide all levels of medical care will be needed in the New River Valley. To serve the baby boom generation demographic, government and non-profit social service programs and medical services will need to be expanded.

Housing and Neighborhood Services

Blacksburg's Housing and Neighborhood Services (HNS) Division provides community planning, information, resources and financial support for LMI individuals, families, and organizations in a fair and equitable manner. LMI persons live in households that earn no more than 80% of the area median income adjusted according to household sizes. In 2003, the Town was awarded its first major Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the Roanoke-Lee Street Comprehensive Community Development Project. In 2004, the Town was designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as an entitlement community, eligible to receive federal funding on an annual basis for mostly LMI programs and services.

HUD requires every community receiving CDBG funding on an entitlement basis to complete a Consolidated Plan. The current Blacksburg Consolidated Plan, located at www.blacksburg.gov, covers the period from 2012-2016. The Consolidated Plan recommends specific goals and objectives to accomplish over five years to bring needs and resources together in a coordinated strategy utilizing federal funding along with housing data related to Blacksburg and the New River Valley. Affordable housing as defined by HUD is housing for which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of his or her gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

The Town has experienced significant population growth during the past 30 years, which is primarily due to the presence of Virginia Tech. The neighborhoods within walking distance of campus and in close proximity to Downtown, such as Bennett Hill/Progress and Kabrich Crescent, have specifically been impacted. These neighborhoods were the original focus areas to affordable housing opportunities before expanding the focus Town-wide. These neighborhood styles and land use issues are discussed further in the *Future Land Use Chapter*.

In addition to encouraging private developments of affordable workforce housing, the Town seeks to provide affordable housing opportunities integrated into neighborhoods throughout the entire community, utilizing a variety of funding sources. In addition to CDBG funding, Housing and Neighborhood Services works regionally to develop affordable housing options. The New River Valley HOME Consortium is composed of local government representatives from Giles, Montgomery, Floyd, and Pulaski Counties and the Towns therein, as well as the City of Radford. These local governments came together in 2007 to form the NRV HOME Consortium to be eligible for Federal HOME funds. HOME funding is provided by HUD. HOME funding can be used to assist low income homeowners with building or purchasing a new home, or with renovating an existing dilapidated home. The funding can also be utilized to build or renovate rental housing. The HOME Consortium is a successful regional partnership leveraging funds that are then distributed on a rotating schedule to increase affordable housing opportunities throughout the New River Valley.

Residential Rental Inspection Program

Proper maintenance of a dwelling unit or the property should not depend on whether it is tenant- or owner-occupied. The degradation of one property within a neighborhood can cause a domino effect as adjacent owners and tenants become less inclined to invest their time and money toward the upkeep of their properties.

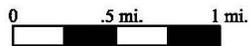
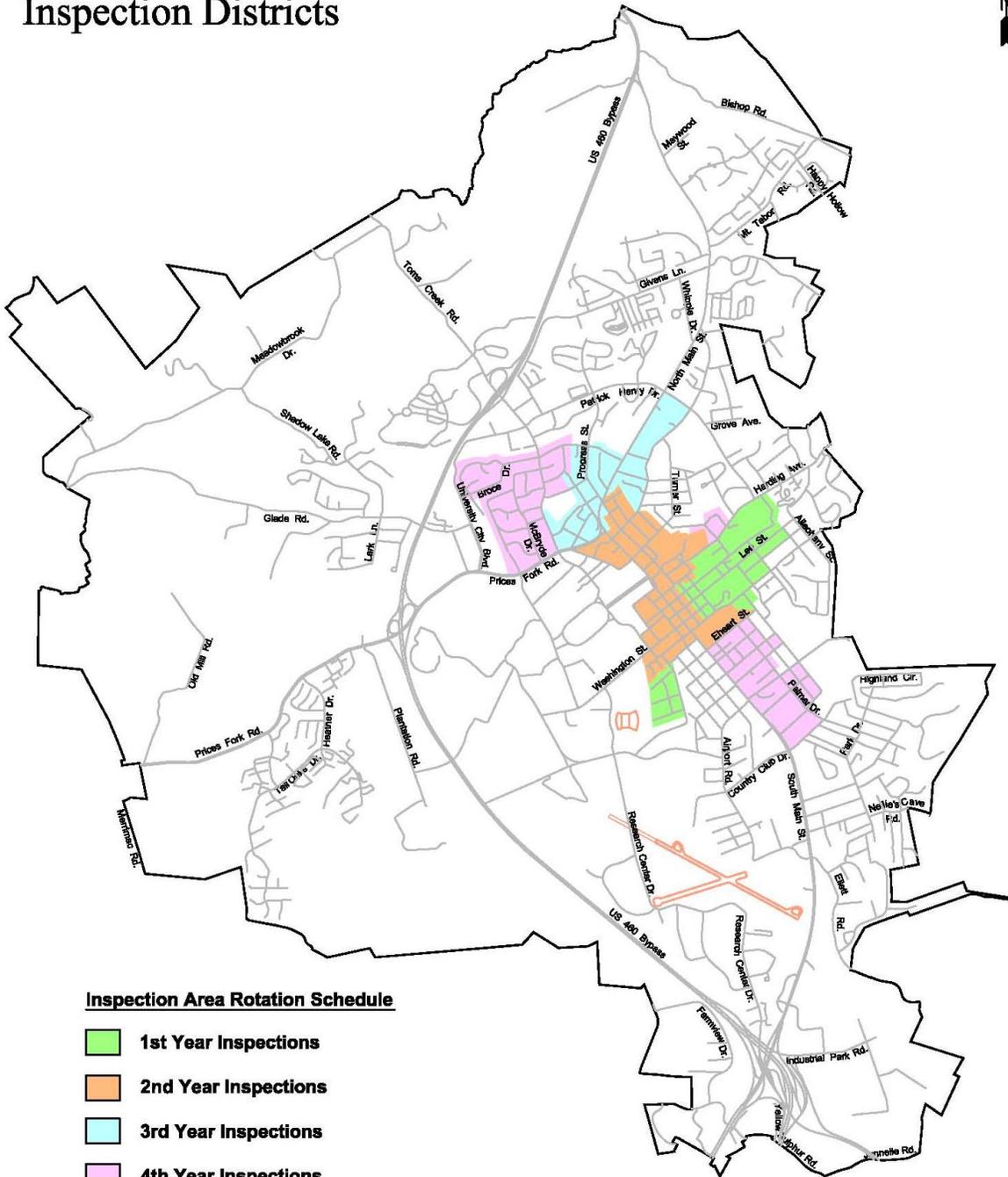
To maintain safe, decent, and sanitary living conditions for tenants, mostly students, living in older neighborhoods located close to campus, the Town has an established Residential Rental

Inspection Program. The objectives of this Program include:

- Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of occupants by improving substandard, unsafe housing
- Enforce the Property Maintenance Code
- Provide for regular inspections of rental properties in the Program
- Improve landlord awareness of occupancy limits set forth in the Town Zoning Ordinance
- Maintain tenant/landlord responsibility to the neighborhood upon conversion of a property to rental use
- Maintain an up-to-date database for contact information on rental properties.

Property that is rented for residential purposes in the Residential Rental Inspection Program areas is inspected by the Town on a rotating, four-year schedule. The rental inspection district areas are depicted on the map on the next page. The Town also responds to requests for inspection for rental units outside of the district. Further details about the Residential Rental Inspection Program are available at www.blacksburg.gov or by contacting the Planning and Building Department.

Rental Permitting Inspection Districts



May 2012

Town of Blacksburg
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Code Enforcement

The Town of Blacksburg is committed to enforcing the Town Code to improve the quality of life within neighborhoods. The primary objectives are to:

- Eliminate code violations that degrade the appearance and quality of life within neighborhoods and affect the public health, safety, or welfare of the occupants
- Address recurring violations in a proactive and timely manner
- Encourage communication between neighbors on individual or mutual concerns as a first approach to problem solving.

The majority of reported issues involve litter and debris, tall grass, inoperable vehicles, housing over-occupancy, incorrectly identified houses, and other nuisances. Code enforcement through Housing and Neighborhood Services focuses on that part of the Town Code regulating tall grass, debris, and inoperable vehicles. These violations are different from Zoning Ordinance violations such as over-occupancy, parking on grass and signage. The Town Code, including the Zoning Ordinance, are regulations enforced Town-wide and are not limited to a particular neighborhood or zoning district. The Town Code can be found at www.blacksburg.gov. The Zoning Ordinance is Appendix A of the Town Code.

Neighborhood Services

The Town seeks to educate residents on code enforcement issues while encouraging citizen involvement in problem solving and making the first contact with their neighbors. Town Code enforcement cannot provide the long-term solution that residents desire without neighbor-to-neighbor communication and involvement. In most cases, violations are resolved more effectively when a neighbor, or neighborhood organization, communicates a concern directly to an individual. Housing and Neighborhood Services provides information and assistance to help resolve neighborhood conflicts. Improving social interaction within neighborhoods, engaging in meaningful dialogues, and encouraging involvement in local government are the main goals. The Town's Housing and Neighborhood Services promotes neighbor-to-neighbor communication through a variety of programs, including the Town-Gown Community Relations Committee and mediation services.



Glade-Westover Neighborhood

JOBS AND HOUSING

OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Economic Development

- J&H.1. Recognize and grow economic development as part of a Sustainable Community.
- J&H.2. Support Go Green NRV and other regional sustainable partners to encourage businesses to be sustainable.
- J&H.3. Continue to support local and regional economic development organizations in the marketing of the Town/region and in recruiting and retaining businesses in Blacksburg.
- J&H.4. Implement and monitor implementation of the Town's updated Economic Development Plan. Inform the public and other interested parties about progress in implementation of the plan.
- J&H.5. Expand economic development strategies, content and delivery method to address the changing workforce population.
- J&H.6. Coordinate economic development efforts of the Corporate Research Center, the Arts Initiative and the implementation of the Campus Master Plan.
- J&H.7. Be open to the creation of special service districts or tax increment financing programs as needed to support economic development.
- J&H.8. Welcome new business operators by offering assistance with explaining and facilitating the regulatory review process.
- J&H.9. Use the Virginia Tech/Montgomery Executive Airport as an economic tool to recruit new businesses to the area.
- J&H.10. Develop a Town-wide public art program.
- J&H.11. Maximize the use of Blacksburg Transit in supporting economic development and tourism.
- J&H.12. Expand and market transit locally and regionally in economic development efforts.
- J&H.13. Continue to create task forces and support community interest groups to address economic development issues in specific areas of Town, such as the South Main Street Task Force.
- J&H.14. Conduct corridor area studies for coordinated improvements to South Main Street, North Main Street, and the Montgomery Regional Hospital area.
- J&H.15. Retain and recruit clean businesses/industries that support Blacksburg's sustainability goal.

- J&H.16. Support the build-out of the Blacksburg Industrial Park with industrial and manufacturing uses.
- J&H.17. Encourage the relocation of non-tax-generating uses from prime industrial land to less valuable locations.
- J&H.18. Work with the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development and other regional partners to encourage appropriate siting of industrial businesses.
- J&H.19. Evaluate future funding opportunities and the need of the Community Development Block Grant Façade Program.
- J&H.20. Encourage community broadband build-out and expansion to make Blacksburg a competitive location for companies that need robust technology infrastructure.

Downtown

- J&H.21. Continue Town involvement in and support of the Downtown Revitalization Committee.
- J&H.22. Continue economic incentives in the tourism district.
- J&H.23. Create an arts and cultural district for the Downtown area in which economic incentives will be provided to support the arts and arts-related business.
- J&H.24. Implement and monitor the Town's Downtown Master Plan.
- J&H.25. Support DBI in promoting Downtown businesses and marketing Downtown as a specialty retail destination.
- J&H.26. Support Downtown event planning, and, in particular, coordinate with Virginia Tech, DBI and other entities for programming on the newly-renovated College Avenue Promenade.
- J&H.27. Continue parking education plan and monitoring total public parking availability in the Downtown area.
- J&H.28. Develop a long term strategy for structured parking in the Downtown area. Encourage Virginia Tech to build structured parking on the Donaldson Brown surface parking lot.
- J&H.29. Continue streetscape improvements in Downtown.
- Finish brick sidewalks and street furniture upgrades in Downtown
 - Plan and construct Progress Street Corridor streetscape improvements
 - Plan and construct Draper Road Corridor streetscape improvements
- J&H.30. Implement Downtown Recycling programs for businesses, residents and pedestrians.
- J&H.31. Support implementation of the Old Blacksburg Middle School Master Plan as an

anchor to the south end of Downtown.

J&H.32. Keep core government services for citizens in the Downtown, such as municipal government offices, the police department, and the public library.

Workforce Development

J&H.33. Support Blacksburg's workforce by recruiting and facilitating the availability of needed services, including commercial, medical and other services such as child and adult daycare programs.

J&H.34. Support community leadership programs, such as the Chamber of Commerce's NRV Leadership program, to cultivate, train, and motivate new leaders and volunteers to assist with non-profits and Town committees' future volunteers.

J&H.35. Encourage Blacksburg Citizens Institute graduates to volunteer with Town committees and programs.

J&H.36. Support workforce development as part of the NRV Livability Initiative.

J&H.37. Market Blacksburg as a place for young professionals to live and work. Survey young professionals currently living in Town as to what jobs and housing opportunities need to be available to attract young professionals.

J&H.38. Market Blacksburg as a good place to live to high school graduates entering the trade and service industries.

Telecommunications

J&H.39. Encourage community broadband build-out and expansion to make Blacksburg a competitive location for companies that need robust technology infrastructure.

J&H.40. Complete the work of the Broadband 2015 Vision Task Force and implement Council-approved recommendations to connect businesses and residences with fiber optic networks and open access infrastructure.

J&H.41. Work regionally to advance broadband and telecommunications infrastructure in the New River Valley.

J&H.42. Encourage the completion of the "last mile" of infrastructure to homes, businesses and governments in Blacksburg.

J&H.43. Establish a clear "dig once" policy to include telecommunication infrastructure during construction of Town projects.

Blacksburg Historic District

- J&H.44. Support and promote the Blacksburg Historic District as both a cultural resource and an economic development tool.
- J&H.45. Educate the public about the value of the Blacksburg Historic District.
- J&H.46. Work with property owners to upgrade and renovate buildings in the Historic District, including adaptive reuse options that support the goals of the Historic District.
- J&H.47. Complete the renovation of the Alexander Black House into the Blacksburg Museum, and maintain all Town-owned buildings in the Historic District.

Housing

- J&H.48. Plan for the housing demands of a changing and diversifying population.
- J&H.49. Continue to provide affordable workforce housing in Blacksburg in accordance with the adopted Consolidated Plan.
- J&H.50. Work with regional partners to promote affordable and sustainable housing in the New River Valley.
- J&H.51. Promote varying types of housing types needed, including:
- Rental or starter homes for purchase by graduate students and young families
 - Young professional housing and services in the Downtown area
 - Workforce Housing for those making 80% to 120% of the area median income
 - Affordable workforce housing options for LMI families making less than 80% of the area median income
 - Housing with universal design features to allow for aging in place
- J&H.52. As the active adult, retiree, and senior citizen population increases, promote varying types of housing needed. For example, provide smaller homes that retirees can downsize to such as townhomes or condos, as well as retirement communities and nursing home facilities.