



Board of Supervisors

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Executive Summary

This document is the Highland County Strategic Economic Development Plan. It was prepared with the participation of Highland Economic Development Authority members and our local tourism council chair under the leadership of Virginia Cooperative Extension Community Viability Specialist Martha Walker, Ph.D. —all of which possessed knowledge of Highland County and an interest in promoting the economic health of the community. The Highland County Economic Development Authority will use this plan as a guide for establishing future economic development priorities and activities.

Key goals of the plan are:

- Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses: The existing businesses are of vital importance to Highland County. While Highland welcomes new businesses, its current local businesses provide ample opportunity for growth in the county. The Highland EDA's goal will focus on assisting existing businesses with marketing and support services.
- Promote new investments & incentives: The Highland EDA wants to encourage businesses to relocate or expand when possible. We will set up resources and programs that will give new and existing businesses the tools they need to discover areas of growth. The Highland EDA will also identify and enable individuals willing to invest in Highland.
- Ignite entrepreneurship: Attracting new businesses is important to the community, because it adds new dimensions to the local economy. By encouraging entrepreneurs to open their businesses in Highland and growing our own entrepreneurs from Highland's youth, the county will create new businesses.

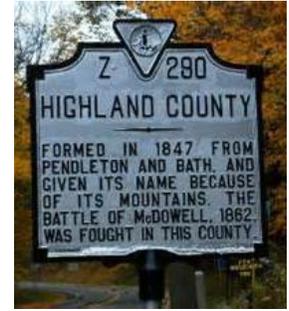
For each component, issues and opportunities are discussed, and goals, objectives and action strategies are presented. The seven community capitals we will be mindful of are:

- Natural
- Cultural
- Human
- Social
- Political
- Financial
- Infrastructure

Additionally, the EDA will focus on business opportunities that fall in its established community values—quality of life, culture, and environment.

A key theme of this plan is the necessity for Highland County to continue to be proactive in its economic development activities. This proactivity can be supported by the periodic review and update of this document to reflect changing economic conditions and emerging economic priorities.

Economic Development Authority of Highland County



Overview Highland County

Highland County, nestled in the Allegheny Mountains midway between the eastern border of West Virginia and western border of the famed Shenandoah Valley, is home to over 2500 residents and is known for its pristine scenic beauty and rustic rural charm. The County, often called “Virginia's Switzerland,” is graced by the headwaters of the James and Potomac Rivers and celebrates its high, narrow ridges forested in hardwoods and broad, open valleys.

The county seat was set at Bell's Tavern, which was immediately referred to as Highland Court House. In 1847 the town was renamed Monterey, commemorating Zachary Taylor's notable victory at Monterrey, Mexico the previous September. The Town of Monterey is located 45 miles west of the intersection of Interstates 81 and 64 in Staunton.

History

In 1847, 416 square miles of spectacular mountain terrain were formed into Highland County out of portions of Bath and Pendleton counties. The County has one of the highest mean elevations of any county east of the Mississippi River and was named to reflect its prevailing high altitude.

The County has a rich historical tradition. During the Civil War, the Battle of McDowell, a significant battle in Stonewall Jackson's 1862 Valley Campaign, was waged in Highland County. The Town of Monterey was established in 1848. Originally named Highland, the Town was renamed in honor of the Mexican town where General Zachary Taylor defeated the Mexican Army during the Mexican-American War.

Highland County was built around the richness of its natural resources. Wool remains one of Highland's major agricultural commodities. In 1990, the County ranked third in the State in the number of sheep. The County is typically one of the largest wool-producing counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Not surprisingly, early industry in the County was tied to the land. In 1950, Hooke Brothers Lumber Company opened its sawmill. They were followed in 1960 by another lumber company, Taylor-Ramsey Corporation, and in 1980 by Westvaco. Originally settled by Scotch/Irish highlanders and German immigrants, Highland is now an eclectic mix of native farm families and new residents drawn to the high quality of life.

Geography

Highland County lies within the Allegheny Mountains and is part of the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province. The county is characterized by high, narrow mountain ridges that run northeast to southwest, forming relatively narrow river valleys. Most of the level areas are found on the terraces adjacent to streams and



rivers. Elevations range from 4,546 feet above sea level in Highland County to 1,140 feet above sea level in Bath County where the Cowpasture River flows into Allegheny County.

The Jackson, Bullpasture, and Cowpasture rivers and other streams within Bath and Highland Counties are subject to moderate to severe flooding during periods of heavy rains or rapid thawing.

Soils in both counties are primarily mountain soils derived from the weathering of acidic sandstone, shale, quartz, and granite parent material. These soils are often shallow, rocky, and excessively drained. Soils in the valleys range from carbonate soils to alluvial soils along rivers and streams. Colluvial soils resulting from the weathering of the sandstone and shale mountains are also found in the valleys. The predominant geological structure underlying the area is a complex formation of sandstone, limestone, shale, and dolomite

Highlights

Highland is best known for its annual Maple Festival, which draws over 50,000 visitors each year to experience the old-time process of tapping maple trees and producing syrup. The Highland Farmers' Market draws crowds for fresh local produce, eggs, trout and meat—processed down the road at nearby Alleghany Meats. The Market also boasts live entertainment by local musicians and creative demonstrations by fellows from the Allegheny Mountain School. With small class sizes in the public schools, safe streets, and clean air and water, Highland is one of Virginia's best-kept secrets.

The area faces challenges common to many rural communities, including an aging population, decreasing workforce and declining economic opportunities. The Highland Center promotes the region's agricultural, artistic and entrepreneurial assets to spur economic development and, in doing so, serves as a model for other rural communities through its regional partnerships supporting the entire Allegheny Highlands region, including Highland and Bath Counties in Virginia and Pocahontas and Pendleton Counties, West Virginia.

Lifestyle

Highland County offers many outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, cycling, birding, hunting and fishing. Approximately 22% of the county is national forest, and a further 5% is Highland Wildlife Management land. Local amenities and resources include an incubator business center, commercial kitchen, Ag Center, a public library, a public swimming pool, museum, a genealogy research lab, and access to broad-band throughout the county.

Highland County Economic Development Authority

The Highland Board of Supervisors appoints Highland Economic Development Authority (EDA) members to four-year terms. The EDA meets on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at The Highland Center located at 61 Highland Center Drive in Monterey, Virginia.

The Code of Virginia § 15.2-4901 established the role and responsibilities of Virginia's Economic Development Authorities. Besides developing and implementing the county's economic development program, the EDA also has the authority to borrow money, issue bonds, and buy and sell land on behalf of the county to support economic development projects.

The EDA supplements the capacity of its members to carry out its mission by creating committees. Two committees have been established and include: 1) The Technology Committee meets on an as-needed basis; and the Highland County Tourism Council grew out of the EDA's Tourism Committee. The Tourism Council meets on the first Monday of each month at 5:30.

Highland County EDA Mission

Promote sustainable economic development in order to achieve a desirable quality of life for the citizens of Highland County, preserving our rural heritage and natural beauty. Supporting existing businesses, promoting new investment and igniting entrepreneurship enhances the county's economic vitality.

Highland County EDA Vision

The Economic Development Authority of Highland County is a catalyst for economic growth, diversification and sustainability within the county that promotes a spirit of pride, a strong sense of community, while practicing inclusiveness and cooperation.

Current Projects

The Highland County EDA is committed to its mission and its vision for the organization and the county. To achieve the vision, the EDA has launched several projects including:

- **Marketing the region** to tourists supported by the Tourism Council through the County's Transient Occupancy Tax
- **Exploring Broadband / Cellular services** directed by the Technology Committee
- **Completing Infrastructure Mapping** by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
- Investigating the establishment of a **State Park** in the county
- **Renovating the Highland Center Incubator Kitchen** to support local value added foods/ funded by Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services grant.
- **Attracting Entrepreneurial residents to the County** in partnership with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
- **Establishing the Retreat/Conference Center** scheduled to open Spring 2016 following the completion of the Highland Center's renovations
- **Opening the Community Park** consisting of six acres in Monterey donated by a local philanthropist with development spearheaded by The Highland Center
- **Implementing Community Revitalization** efforts

2014 Strategic Planning Process

The EDA's Strategic Planning process began in the summer of 2014 after Martha A. Walker, PhD, Community Viability Specialist with Virginia Cooperative Extension agreed to work with our group. She assigned the members "homework," compiled that information, and used it during our retreat held on July 23, 2014. Following that meeting, several workgroups continued to fleshed out the Mission and Vision Statements. The group met again on September 15, 2014, to fine-tune the Mission and Vision and draft the EDA's goals.

The EDA reviewed the strategic plans completed by the Counties of Bedford, Rappahannock, and Fauquier. Discussions were held with each county on the process and the strategic work of the counties' economic development organizations. In most all counties, the EDA strategic plan was discussed with and adopted by the local governing body.

The Highland EDA Strategic Plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at the March 18, 2015, work session.

EDA 2015 Goals

The Highland County Economic Development Authority understands the need to consider the seven community capitals (natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built) when building the County's economic base. The EDA celebrates the region's natural and environmental resources; respects the cultural values, beliefs, and traditions; engages individuals and develops local leadership; cultivates the social connections; leverages the financial resources; and utilizes and improves community infrastructure.

The EDA will accomplish its mission by focusing on three primary goals:

- 1. Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses.**
- 2. Promote new investments and incentives.**
- 3. Ignite entrepreneurship.**

Goal 1: Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses

The existing businesses are of vital importance to Highland County. While Highland welcomes new businesses, its current local businesses provide ample opportunity for growth in the county. The Highland EDA's goal will focus on assisting existing businesses with marketing and support services.

Strategies to accomplish this goal:

- Identify services offered by existing businesses in Highland
- Increase local support and traffic in county businesses
- Increase communication between the area's businesses

Goal 2: Promote new investments & incentives

The Highland EDA wants to encourage businesses to relocate or expand when possible. We will set up resources and programs that will give new and existing businesses the tools they need to discover areas of growth. The Highland EDA will also identify and enable individuals willing to invest in Highland.

Strategies to accomplish this goal:

- Create a marketing plan to attract new businesses in Highland.
- Establish incentive program & development fund for new and existing businesses
- Identify new investments in Highland businesses

Goal 3: Ignite entrepreneurship

Attracting new businesses is important to the community, because it adds new dimensions to the local economy. By encouraging entrepreneurs to open their businesses in Highland and growing our own entrepreneurs from Highland's youth, the county will create new businesses.

Strategies to accomplish this goal:

- Encourage new and existing business to take calculated risks
- Create a small business resource website including
 - Vacant building inventory
 - Current community services inventory
- Grow Highland business incubation program
- Create a "Grow your own Entrepreneur" program for middle and high school students in Highland

Partnerships

In order to implement the strategies that will ensure success in achieving these key goals, the EDA will engage a variety of local, state, and federal stakeholders. The following list identifies many of the current partners.

Highland EDA Partners

LOCAL

Highland County Board of Supervisors
Highland County Planning Commission
Town of Monterey
The Highland Center
Highland Chamber of Commerce
Highland County Public School System
Highland Medical Center
Highlanders for Responsible Development
Businesses (banks, telephone companies,
power companies, Verizon,
agricultural center)

Service organizations:

- Blue Grass Ruritan Club
- Bolar Ruritan Club
- McDowell Ruritan Club
- Monterey Lions Club
- Mill Gap Ruritan Club

Farmers

Loggers

Churches

Realtors

REGIONAL

Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP)
Central Shenandoah PDC
Virginia Western Highlands Tourism Council
Shenandoah Valley Tech Council
Valley Innovation Network
Blue Ridge Community College
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College

STATE

Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Virginia Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services
Virginia Department of Housing and Community
Development
Virginia Department of Education
Secretary of Commerce and Trade
Secretary of Technology
James Madison University/SBDC
Virginia Tech
Virginia Department of Conservation and
Recreation
Virginia Department of Game and Inland
Fisheries

SCORE

Virginia Cooperative Extension

NATIONAL

United States Department of Agriculture Rural
Development
Economic Development Administration
Appalachian Regional Commission

Implementation and Accountability

The Highland County EDA will utilize its committee structure to prepare a plan of work that includes timelines and measurements to assess its progress. Private sector business owners and citizens, and public sector experts from all levels of government are invited to engage with the EDA in implementing this dynamic plan that is designed to support existing businesses, promote new investment, and ignite entrepreneurship that enhances Highland County's economic vitality.

References

- **Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission:** Regional Strategic Initiatives and Community Profile. <http://www.shenandoah-valley.biz/About-SVP/Regional-Strategic-Initiatives.aspx>
- **Comprehensive Plan Comments** - Economic Development Review of Comprehensive Plan Highland EDA
- Flora and Flora (2008); Flora, Flora and Fey (2004); Jacobs (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d); Flage and Hauser-Lindstrom (2007); Emory, Fey and Flora (2006). The seven types of community capital. <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/ncrcrd/capitals.html>
- **Initial Steps** - Top 10 initial steps to begin implementation
- **Subcommittee Reports (Tourism & Technology)**
- **Tourism Strategic Plan**
- **Virginia Employment Commission Community Profile**
<https://data.virginialmi.com/gsipub/index.asp?docid=342>

Acknowledgements

The Highland EDA appreciates the leadership and facilitation of Martha A. Walker Ph.D.— Extension Specialist, Community Viability at Virginia Cooperative Extension. In addition to the time committed by EDA members, we appreciate Highland Tourism Council Chair Donna Bedwell joining in on this effort. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development’s BEE grant to The Highland Center provided administrative and research and editorial work. Appalachian Regional Commission’s grant to the Highland Center for consulting services provided by Craig Schroeder of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship validated the EDA’s community values through survey data.

Appendix

- **Appendix A: Virginia Code § 15.2-4905.** Powers of authority.
- **Appendix B: Inventory of Community**

Appendix A

Code of Virginia § 15.2-4905: Powers of authority.

The authority shall have the following powers together with all powers incidental thereto or necessary for the performance of those hereinafter stated:

1. To sue and be sued and to prosecute and defend, at law or in equity, in any court having jurisdiction of the subject matter and of the parties;
2. To adopt and use a corporate seal and to alter the same at pleasure;
3. To enter into contracts; however, any written contract of the authority shall contain provisions addressing the issue of whether attorney's fees shall be recoverable by the prevailing party in the event the contract is subject to litigation;
4. To acquire, whether by purchase, exchange, gift, lease or otherwise, and to improve, maintain, equip and furnish one or more authority facilities including all real and personal properties which the board of directors of the authority may deem necessary in connection therewith and regardless of whether any such facilities shall then be in existence;
5. To lease to others any or all of its facilities and to charge and collect rent therefor and to terminate any such lease upon the failure of the lessee to comply with any of the obligations thereof; and to include in any such lease, if desired, a provision that the lessee thereof shall have options to renew such lease or to purchase any or all of the leased facilities, or that upon payment of all of the indebtedness of the authority it may lease or convey any or all of its facilities to the lessee thereof with or without consideration;
6. To sell, exchange, donate, and convey any or all of its facilities or properties whenever its board of directors shall find any such action to be in furtherance of the purposes for which the authority was organized;
7. To issue its bonds for the purpose of carrying out any of its powers including specifically, but without intending to limit any power conferred by this section or this chapter, the issuance of bonds to provide long-term financing of any pollution control facility, whether any such facility was constructed prior to or after the enactment hereof or the receipt of a commitment from an authority to undertake financing pursuant hereto, unless the major part of the proceeds of such bonds will be used to redeem any prior long-term financing of such facility other than financings pursuant to this chapter or any similar law;
8. As security for the payment of the principal of and interest on any bonds so issued and any agreements made in connection therewith, to mortgage and pledge any or all of its facilities or any part or parts thereof, whether then owned or thereafter acquired, and to pledge the revenues therefrom or from any part thereof or from any loans made by the authority;
9. To employ and pay compensation to such employees and agents, including attorneys, and real estate brokers whether engaged by the authority or otherwise, as the board of directors shall deem necessary in carrying on the business of the authority;

10. To exercise all powers expressly given the authority by the governing body of the locality which established the authority and to establish bylaws and make all rules and regulations, not inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter, deemed expedient for the management of the authority's affairs;

11. To appoint an industrial advisory committee or similar committee or committees to advise the authority, consisting of such number of persons as it may deem advisable. Such persons may be compensated such amount per regular, special, or committee meeting as may be approved by the appointing authority, not to exceed \$50 per meeting day, and may be reimbursed for necessary traveling and other expenses incurred while on the business of the authority;

12. To borrow money and to accept contributions, grants and other financial assistance from the United States of America and agencies or instrumentalities thereof, the Commonwealth, or any political subdivision, agency, or public instrumentality of the Commonwealth, for or in aid of the construction, acquisition, ownership, maintenance or repair of the authority facilities, for the payment of principal of any bond of the authority, interest thereon, or other cost incident thereto, or in order to make loans in furtherance of the purposes of this chapter of such money, contributions, grants, and other financial assistance, and to this end the authority shall have the power to comply with such conditions and to execute such agreements, trust indentures, and other legal instruments as may be necessary, convenient or desirable and to agree to such terms and conditions as may be imposed; and

13. To make loans or grants to any person, partnership, association, corporation, business, or governmental entity in furtherance of the purposes of this chapter including for the purposes of promoting economic development, provided that such loans or grants shall be made only from revenues of the authority which have not been pledged or assigned for the payment of any of the authority's bonds, and to enter into such contracts, instruments, and agreements as may be expedient to provide for such loans and any security therefor. An authority may also be permitted to forgive loans or other obligations if it is deemed to further economic development. The word "revenues" as used in this subdivision includes contributions, grants and other financial assistance, as set out in subdivision 12.

The authority shall not have power to operate any facility as a business other than as lessor and shall not have the power to operate any single or multi-family housing facilities. However, the authority shall have the power to apply for, establish, operate and maintain a foreign-trade zone in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 14 (§ [62.1-159](#) et seq.) of Title 62.1. Any meeting held by the board of directors at which formal action is taken shall be open to the public.

If a locality has created an industrial development authority pursuant to this chapter or any other provision of law, no other such authority, not created by such locality, shall finance facilities, except pollution control facilities, within the boundaries of such locality, unless the governing body of such locality in which the facilities are located or are proposed to be located, concurs with the inducement resolution adopted by the authority, and shows such concurrence in a duly adopted resolution. Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing contained herein shall be deemed to invalidate or otherwise impair any existing financing by an authority or the financing of any facilities for which application has been made to an authority prior to July 1, 1981.

(1966, c. 651, § 15.1-1378; 1970, c. 598; 1972, c. 783; 1973, c. 528; 1981, c. 3; 1991, c. 6; 1993, c. 896; 1994, c. [317](#); 1997, cc. [587](#), [758](#), [763](#); 1998, c. [728](#); 2005, c. [575](#).)

Appendix B
Inventory of Community

Count the number of businesses you have in each of these areas and begin to development a database of business names, number of employees, length of time in operation, contact information, and other details that will help you assess your community.

HEALTH	Number of Businesses	Comments
Hospitals	0	
Total Physician offices	1	Highland Medical Center
Type of medical offices		
Dentistry	1	Highland Medical Center
Caring for the elderly		
Caring for the mentally ill		
Caring for the sick		
Caring for the physically or developmentally challenged individuals		
COMPUTER-RELATED		
Computer repairs		
Computer programming		
General software management		
Database management		
Preparing computer graphics		
Word processing		
Desktop publishing		
Data entry using spreadsheet software		
Help Desk support		
Web design/development		
CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR		
Painting		
Home construction or repair		
Tearing down buildings		
Wall papering		
Furniture repairs		
Furniture refinishing		
Repairing locks		
Tile work		
Installing drywall and taping		
Plumbing repairs		
Electrical repairs		
Bricklaying and masonry		
Cabinet making		
Furniture making		
Installing insulation		
Soldering and welding		
Concrete work (sidewalks)		
Installing floor coverings		
Heating/cooling system		

Installing windows		
Building swimming pools		
Carpentry skills		
Roofing installation or repair		
MAINTENANCE		
Window washing		
Floor waxing and mopping		
Washing and cleaning		
Routing clogged drains		
General household cleaning		
Mowing lawns		
Pruning trees and shrubbery		
Cleaning/maintaining swimming pools		
Floor sanding and stripping		
Wood floor stripping/refinishing		
FOOD/LODGING		
Catering		
Total Restaurants	3	Highs, Mountain Hideaway, Highland Inn
Fast food chains	0	
Local eateries		Evelyns, Country Convenience, Ellingtons,
Meat cutting		
Baking		
Hotel/Motel		
B&B, Cabins		
CHILD CARE		
Caring for infants/toddlers (0-3 yrs)		
Caring for pre-school children (3-5 yrs)		
Caring for children 5 to 11 yrs		
TRANSPORTATION		
Commercial delivery - tractor		
Hauling		
REPAIRING MACHINERY		
Repairing small appliances		
Repairing automobiles		
Repairing trucks/buses		
Auto body repairs		
Repairing large household appliances (such as a refrigerator, washer/dryer)		
Repairing heating and air conditioning system		
Retail Operations		
Retail operations		

Selling wholesale products or manufacturing products		
MUSIC		
Singing		
Playing an instrument (which instrument? _____)		
OTHER Enterprises in the community		
Upholstering		
Sewing		
Dressmaking		
Knitting		
Tailoring		
Moving furniture or equipment to different locations		
Managing property		
Tutoring students		
Hair dressing		
Jewelry and watch repair		