

# Revised Blount County Policies Plan - 2008

Original wording of the 1999 Policies Plan is in regular script. The Blount County Planning Commission's additions are in *italics*. Generally, if the item is fully italicized, it comes from another plan or study (e.g., 1101 Growth Plan, Water Quality Plan) or it reflects a new priority of the Planning Commission.

The Raven Society (TRS) has studied the proposed revisions and suggests a number of additions (**noted in red**) and deletions (~~stricken words~~). **The blue explains our thinking.**

**1. Guiding Policy 1 - The rural, small town, **historic** and natural character of the county should be preserved.** (The county intends to utilize its history and heritage to promote tourism and should be explicit about its importance.)

**1A. Objective Policy - New development should be designed to fit into the rural character of the county.**

**1A-Implementation Strategy (1). Rural character should include trees and natural vegetation, open space, ~~and~~ natural features, **and respect for historic sites.****

- Review and revise the county regulations, and formulate *and adopt* design guidelines for preservation of open space, preservation of natural features, *protection of stream banks*, minimization of visual impact, and other design elements.
- *Establish a percent of usable open space standard in subdivision regulations and zoning, and require developer dedication of open space.*
- *Amend subdivision regulations and zoning to require retention of natural cover and minimize land disturbance during construction.*
- *Amend subdivision regulation to require open space treatment at entrance to subdivision, e.g., greater lot setback, berm or buffer.*

**1A-Implementation Strategy (2). Formulate a plan for the Tuckaleechee Cove, gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains Park, with input from the citizens of Townsend and Tuckaleechee Cove.**

- *Continue pursuit of National Heritage Area designation.*
- *Support Townsend and Cove efforts to define a suitable development character.*
- *Include Townsend as a site for citizen input in any County planning process involving citizen input.*

**1A-Implementation Strategy (3). Professional literature on designing new developments to fit into the rural character of the county should be reviewed to provide alternatives as part of identifying and formulating specific implementation activities.**

- Review professional literature on design guidelines for preserving rural character, preserving farmland, preserving scenic views, and other matters pertinent to further refinement of implementation strategies, *and in particular to:*

- *designate “villages” or “hamlets” in rural areas to allow clustering on community sewer service with dedication of open space **and appropriate density bonus;***

*(Any action that can increase the cumulative density of residences within areas the 1101 Growth Plan designates as “Rural” violates the law. Also, it is contrary to principles of smart growth and the goal of maintaining low-density development in rural areas. Encouraging higher density in rural areas is unnecessary for the creation of hamlets, and it is contrary to the law.)*

- *formulate and adopt guidelines for design, appearance, and relationships of buildings, parking areas, signs, pedestrian paths, landscaping, and other aspects of the visual and functional environment;*
- *concentrate commercial zoning at key intersections;*
- *require planting plan to screen development bordering major roads with particular emphasis on parking areas, loading areas, dumpster areas, HVAC areas, and other areas that may pose visual impact;*
- *reduce visual clutter of signs;*
- *restrict tower location and height, and require blending towers into surroundings.*

**1A-Implementation Strategy (4). Encourage historically sensitive development.**

- **Inventory all county historic sites and adopt guidelines to create buffers from moderate to high-density development to enhance historic settings.**

**1B. Objective Policy: Farmland should be preserved both for open space and to conserve prime agricultural production areas.**

**1B -Implementation Strategy (1). Encourage conservation groups to accept voluntary donations of land and to accept money contributions for purchase of development rights.**

- Any program would be voluntary and *may involve private and government partnership.*
- *Encourage and support public and private sector programs that directly preserve priority rural land in the County.*
- *Increase awareness among the public and officials of existing programs and incentives that can help preserve rural land, such as conservation easements and efforts of the Foothills Land Conservancy.*

**1B–Implementation Strategy (2). Pursue a purchase of development rights program.**

- *Formulate a strategic plan to preserve farmland.*
- *Explore options for funding purchase of development rights.*

**1B–Implementation Strategy (3). Professional literature on preserving farmland should be reviewed to provide alternatives as part of identifying and formulating specific implementation activities.**

**1C. Objective Policy: Our beautiful and scenic environment should be protected, including commonly shared viewscapes, ridge tops, lakeshores and riverbanks.**

**1C-Implementation Strategy (1). Formulate regulations to address engineering, geological, soils and public safety issues of development design in mountain areas. Require development design in mountain areas that minimizes visual impact.**

- *Maintain and review periodically regulations addressing issues of mountain development.*
- *Adopt regulations and standards to mitigate visual impact of hillside and ridge- top development in mountain areas.*

**1C-Implementation Strategy (2). Require a type of construction for communications towers which would blend in with the natural surroundings.**

- Adopt regulations to require that communications towers be disguised in such a manner to blend in with the natural surroundings, *including restrictions on tower location and height.*

**1C-Implementation Strategy (3). Encourage co-location of telecommunication facilities on existing towers.**

- *Maintain and periodically review regulations to require co-location of facilities and show specific reasons for lack of feasibility if not feasible.*

**1C-Implementation Strategy (4). Property owners should keep their property in proper upkeep.**

- Guidelines for compliance with incentives such as public recognition or monetary awards for well kept *properties*.

**1C-Implementation Strategy (5). Professional literature on preserving scenic views should be reviewed to provide alternatives as part of identifying and formulating specific implementation activities.**

- *Review literature in particular to identify:*
  - *guidelines for design, appearance, and relationships of buildings, parking areas, signs, pedestrian paths, landscaping, and other aspects of the visual and functional environment;*
  - *ways to screen development to mitigate impact;*
  - *ways to reduce visual clutter of signs.*

**1D. Objective Policy - The lakes, rivers and streams in the county should be protected as a part of our natural environment and drinking water resource, and as part of our scenic and recreational resource.**

**1D-Implementation Strategy (1). Formulate a countywide pollution prevention program, to include the following elements:**

- Coordinate a study of pollution sources with other agencies, such as TVA, and create an advisory committee to formulate a pollution prevention program.
- *Continue implementation of Phase 2 Storm Water Program.*
- *Conduct storm water system mapping.*
- *Extend Little River Watershed Plan to all watersheds in the County.*
- *Educate the public, agricultural and development community on water quality issues.*
- *Develop illicit discharge management program and regulations.*
- *Develop construction site storm water control regulations.*
- *Develop post construction storm water management regulations.*
- *Undertake joint review of development regulations and permit procedures. (County and Cities to assess effectiveness in addressing water quality issues.)*
- *Reduce pollution load in 303(d) listed impaired streams to remove them from the list.*

- *Support activities of the Little River Watershed Restoration Initiative and other watershed improvement activities.*
- *Continue current protocol for failing septic systems.*
- *Provide financial assistance to low-income families for septic system repair.*
- *Follow current county standards for septic system lot size requirements.*
- *Form a County Wastewater Board for oversight of sewer facilities outside municipal systems.*
- *Provide education materials on well maintenance and safety for those on well water.*
- *Maintain well water database create by the EHAT/Water Quality Subgroup.*
- *Follow state-approved (TDEC) response plan for sanitary sewer overflow incidents.*
- *Submit yearly overflow data to the county director of environmental health.*
- *Continue advisories for water bodies where contact and/or consumption of fish would be unhealthy.*
- *Add all stream miles in the county for testing under the 305(b) report: The Status of Water Quality in Tennessee.*
- *Encourage and provide incentives for adoption of best management practices for water quality in farming operations.*
- *Target one stream in the county for an intensive mitigation program every three years.*
- *Protect wellhead and aquifer recharge areas in proposed subdivisions.*

**1D-Implementation Strategy (2). The county should undertake a countywide sewer study and plan.**

- *Create a task force to study and evaluate long-range sewer needs and the feasibility of creating a county sewer system, and/or extension of existing municipal systems, and formulate policies and a plan for future sewer improvements.*
- *Form a County Wastewater Board for oversight of sewer facilities outside municipal systems.*

**1D-Implementation Strategy (3). Protect the health of the citizens of Blount County and protect the quality of water in the county.**

- *Pursue more stringent enforcement for violation of septic disposal standards, including protection of septic systems during construction.*
- *Continue current protocol for failing septic systems.*
- *Provide financial assistance to low-income families for septic system repair.*
- *Follow current county standards for septic system lot size requirements.*
- *Protect wellhead and aquifer recharge areas in proposed subdivisions.*

**1D-Implementation Strategy (4). Protect detention areas and drainage ways in a natural state to enhance drainage capabilities.**

- Amend subdivision regulations and any other development related regulations to require retention of natural cover for drainage facilities, require additional ground cover for degraded drainage facilities, and require minimization of disturbance and compaction during construction phase.

**1D-Implementation Strategy (5). Formulate a countywide drainage plan by drainage basin addressing quantity of runoff as well as quality of runoff, such plan to form the basis for judging needed drainage requirements of individual new developments.**

- *Seek grant funding for such a study and appoint a committee with professional technical help to formulate a plan.*
- *Formulate retrofit drainage plans in impacted watersheds.*

**1E. Objective Policy - Preserve *and provide* formal open space for parks and recreation.**

**1E-Implementation Strategy (1). Formulate a countywide parks and recreation plan, including utilization of existing public facilities such as schools.**

- Appoint a working committee composed of representatives from the Parks and Recreation Commission, the School Board and citizens.
- *Integrate a plan for community wide-open space and recreation into the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a comprehensive county plan, and other existing plans.*

## 2. Guiding Policy - Land use and development should be managed and regulated in order to preserve the quality of our growing county.

### 2A. Objective Policy – *Adopted zoning, subdivision regulations and other land development regulations should be maintained and improved if needed, with other regulations formulated and adopted as needed.*

#### 2A-Implementation Strategy (1). *Update and expand the Conceptual Land Use Plan and incorporate it into a Comprehensive Plan.*

- Integrate and update the analysis sections of the 1976 Plan.
- *Update the present land use map to show existing geographical structure of development in the county.*
- *Integrate road and transportation considerations into the land use plan.*
- *Integrate and possibly expand the following land use concepts in any land use plan update:*
  - *Suburbanizing Land Use – high to medium density development – mainly residential – commercial by special exception along major roads, allowing also home and family occupations – part of area expected to be annexed by cities as high density growth occurs – needs amendment of map to be consistent with 1101 Growth Plan.*
  - *Rural 1 Land Use – medium to low density development (~~1.5 units per acre or less~~) **(1.2 units per acre or less)** - mainly residential – limited commercial by special exception along major roads, allowing also home and family occupations **(TRS opposes any increase in allowable residential density in the Rural areas of the county)** not expected to be subject to annexation by cities – needs amendment of map to be consistent with 1101 Growth Plan.*
  - *Rural 2 Land Use – low density development (~~0.33 units per acre, average 3 acres per dwelling unit~~) **(1 dwelling unit per 5 acres)** - limited commercial by special exception, mainly tourism and recreation, allowing also home and family occupations – applies mainly to mountain areas with inherent constraints to development.*
  - *Special consideration of land use issues as follows: flood plain areas; the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a national and regional tourism area; McGhee-Tyson Airport and related uses as a regional transportation resource; areas around the McGhee-Tyson airport with issues of noise and flight path safety and security; allowing mixed use; allowing cluster development; signs and communication towers; allowing manufactured home parks and multi-family developments.*

- *Include as part of land use plan update consideration of the following:*
  - *Open space standards and required dedication of open space in new developments.*
  - *Intergovernmental agreements to encourage compact development through zoning and collaborative funding of sewer extensions.*
  - *Concentration of commercial land uses at key intersections and designated development nodes **that would be limited to rural neighborhood uses.***

*(TRS supports allowing services useful to rural residents but opposes creating “destination” development in rural areas.)*

- *Traditional town centers and village and hamlet designs.*
- *Planned mix of residential and commercial uses.*
- *Encouragement of urban development concentration and discouragement of rural development dispersion.*
- *Air quality impacts of development patterns and designs.*
- *Water quality impacts of development patterns and designs.*
- *Provision of pedestrian and bicycle linkages within developments and between residential and commercial areas.*
- *Preservation of tree cover.*

**2A-Implementation Strategy (2). Multifamily and manufactured home residential are acceptable housing types, but should be regulated for consistency with overall residential development design and density characteristics in the county.**

- *Multi-family and manufactured home park developments should be required to design for buffering from surrounding uses, minimum paved internal streets at least 18 feet wide, safe access to public roads, drainage, off street parking, common open space, and provision for fire and emergency service, and garbage service.*
- *Location of higher density developments should be limited to areas with adequate provision of utilities and services.*

**2A-Implementation Strategy (3). Higher density development should be limited to the cities or near to the cities along major arterial and collector status roads with sewer **within the Urban Growth Boundary**. Lower density development should be encouraged farther from the cities, and especially in situations where there is no sewer and limited road capacity. *(TRS wants to stress the importance of respecting the intent of Public Chapter 1101 and the concept of urban growth boundaries.***

- *Regulate density of development, with different regulations for areas close to the cities and areas farther away from the cities, and with different regulations for areas adequately served by high capacity infrastructure (especially sewer) and areas not adequately served by infrastructure (especially rural roads).*

- Commercial development should be allowed throughout the county with performance standards when adjoining residential areas.
- *Concentrate commercial zoning at key intersections and designated development nodes, which **would be limited to rural neighborhood uses.***
- *Establish intergovernmental agreements to encourage compact development through zoning and collaborative funding of sewer extensions.*

**2A Implementation Strategy (4). Encourage developers to build with innovative designs, allowing mixed uses, and providing for pedestrian friendly, esthetically pleasing, and livable neighborhoods.**

- Review Subdivision Regulations and any land use regulations to encourage *and require* such design of new developments.
- *Adopt regulations that would:*
  - *Require retention of natural cover and minimize land disturbance during construction.*
  - *Address design, appearance and relationship of buildings, parking areas, signs, pedestrian paths, landscaping and other aspects of the visual and functional environment.*
  - *Specify design guidelines for village and hamlet developments and traditional town centers. Allow mixed commercial and residential uses.*
  - *Reduce visual clutter of signs.*
  - *Require open space, sidewalks and/or pedestrian/bicycle pathways.*
  - *Preserve tree cover and integrate landscape trees.*

**2B. Objective Policy - Development on mountains and ridge tops should be regulated to protect sensitive areas of slope and viewsapes.**

**2B – Implementation Strategy (1). Formulate regulations to address engineering, geological, soils and public safety issues of development design in mountain areas. Require development design in mountain areas that minimizes visual impact. \***

- *Maintain and review periodically regulations addressing issues of mountain development.*
- *Adopt regulations and standards to mitigate visual impact of hillside and ridge- top development in mountain areas.*

**2C. Objective Policy – *Adopted flood plain regulations should be maintained and enforced to continue participation in the National Flood Insurance Program that allows county residents opportunity to purchase flood insurance.***

**2D. Objective Policy – *Effective options for regulating junk on private properties, junk cars, and maintenance of properties should be developed, adopted and enforced.***

**2E. Objective Policy – *Adopted building codes should be maintained and enforced to secure quality of buildings in the county.***

**2F. Objective Policy – *Billboards, signs, towers and other structures that could impact the views of the county should be regulated.***

**2F-Implementation Strategy (1) *Maintain regulations addressing billboards, signs and towers, and explore more effective measures to address billboards and signs, and restrict tower location and height and blending towers into surroundings.***

**3. Guiding Policy – The guiding policy in any government actions in relation to the use and development of land should be to ~~limit regulations~~ **limit regulations** to specific public health, safety and welfare objectives ~~balanced with responsible freedom in the use of land~~. (The underscore and last phrase are unnecessary.)**

**3A. Objective Policy – Objective Policy 3A: Any public regulation of land use and development should be in accordance with constitutional principles on rights to private use of land as interpreted by state and federal courts.**

**3B. Objective Policy - Any regulation of land use or development should be based on a clear ~~relationship~~ **set of guidelines related** to public health, safety and welfare.**

**3A and B–Implementation Strategy (1). ~~Education of–~~ Public officials **should be briefed** on constitutional provisions and basic decisions of the courts on land use issues.**

- **Staff should** provide education to public officials on the meaning of "public health, safety and welfare," **which has broadened to encompass the value of maintaining aesthetic, historic, and cultural elements of the surroundings, on** constitutional provisions and court decisions on land use issues, and **on** the need to balance private property rights with the community benefits of regulations to manage growth, **protect viewscapes, protect property values, and preserve quality of life.** The need for education on constitutional and legal issues of land use was recognized from the citizen input workshop process. It is incumbent on all officials concerned with land use regulations to be informed on the prospects and limits for such regulations.

**3A and B–Implementation Strategy (2). Any regulation should have a clear relationship to plan objectives in support of health, safety, ~~and/or~~ welfare **or protection of the common good.****

**3A and B–Implementation Strategy (3). A mechanism **for appeal** for relief from undue impact on property values should accompany any regulation of land use. As part of ~~any~~ land use regulations, establish a grievance, ~~review and relief or variance~~ process for property owners whose land value is substantially affected by county regulation of land use.**

(This policy needs to be more clear as to what the law and the courts have permitted since the initial Policies Plan was adopted).

**4. Guiding Policy - County roads should be improved and maintained to a level consistent with present development and expected future development.**

**4A. Objective Policy – The county should make plans to widen existing roads with substantial development and traffic to at least 18 feet of paved width *and adequate shoulders*.**

**4B. Objective Policy – As traffic warrants, the county should make plans to widen existing major roads (arterial and collector roads) to greater than 18 feet of paved width to accommodate present and projected traffic.**

**4A &B-Implementation Strategy (1). To improve roadways functionally and structurally so that they meet today’s traffic needs.**

- *Update the “Blount County Roadway Needs Study” as necessary, about every five years.*
- Formulate a prioritized capital improvements budget for roads. Funding from existing gasoline taxes and shared revenues (with effort to change sharing formulate state level), with possible new sources from local wheel tax.
- *Focus immediately on Morganton Road, Old Niles Ferry Road, and Ellejoy Road upgrades as highest priority road improvements identified by the Highway Superintendent.*
- *Update the Major Road Plan, and update the Plan with each update of the “Blount County Roadway Needs Study.”*

**4A &B-Implementation Strategy (2). Insure that roadways and intersections can handle traffic that is generated from all types of development.**

- *Maintain a minimum standard of 18 feet of paved road width with two-foot shoulders as a condition precedent for major developments.*
- Require a formal traffic impact study for subdivisions or other developments that would generate at full development 500 or more trips per day (approximately 50 lots in a subdivision).

**4A & B-Implementation Strategy (3). Encourage development of alternative transportation modes.**

- Study and support alternative modes of transportation such as mass transit busses, demand responsive vans, and bicycle routes.
- *Identify areas that can be serviced by mass transit.*
- *Adopt subdivision regulations to allow sidewalks and/or pedestrian pathways that would be interconnected with each other and the road system.*
- *Prepare a plan for bikeways and trails linked to the road system.*
- A committee should be formed to address this activity.

***4C. Objective Policy– Prepare for future increases in traffic demands as the County grows.***

***4C-Implementation Strategy (1). Build arterial and collector road segments that will create circumferential systems, and collaborate with Maryville and Alcoa on this. Utilize Blount County Growth Strategy Technical Memorandum #9 for proposed circumferential system.***

***4C-Implementation Strategy (2). Utilize “Blount County Roadway Needs Study” (2004 update), and the Transportation Planning Organization Long Range Transportation Plan to identify future priority roads.***

***4C-Implementation Strategy (3). Integrate and link air quality considerations, land use and transportation components in any future comprehensive plans.***

**5. Guiding Policy - Growth and development should be *balanced* with provision of adequate *publicly supported* infrastructure.**

**5A Objective Policy.** Development should be ~~encouraged~~ **restricted** to ~~locate in~~ those areas where adequate *publicly supported* infrastructure already exists or can be economically extended.

*(TRS believes making this stronger represents the direction the Planning Commission has moved and the desires of most county residents. Merely encouraging desired activity has not proven adequate.)*

**5A-Implementation Strategy (1):** Higher density development should be limited to the cities or near to the cities along major arterial and collector status roads with sewer. *Development should be limited and density should be lower farther from the cities, and especially in situations where there is limited infrastructure support, particularly inadequate school capacity, no sewer and limited road capacity.*

Regulate density of development, with different regulations for areas close to the cities and areas farther away from the cities, and with different regulations for areas adequately served by high capacity infrastructure (especially **schools and** sewer) and areas not adequately served by infrastructure (especially *schools and* rural roads).

*(Some areas of the county within urban growth boundaries have adequate sewer but not adequate school capacity).*

**5A-Implementation Strategy (2):** The County should *maintain* a growth plan under Public Chapter 1101 that is consistent with the general county policy plan and other plans of the County, *all plans* to be used as guides for decision making on land use and development matters.

- *Review the 1101 Growth Plan for consistency with County plans, and for appropriateness in addressing issues of growth and its impacts.*
- *The Cities and County should work together to address issues of growth and its impact.*

***5B Objective Policy. Plans should be formulated to ~~address~~ insure adequate schools, roads, parks and recreation, and other publicly supported infrastructure for growth and development, including a comprehensive plan, capital improvement program and capital improvement budget.***

***5B-Implementation Strategy (1): A reasonable balance between growth and school infrastructure should be developed, taking into consideration needed long term capital improvements, as well as interim accommodation of growth with school rezoning and the temporary use of portables for no more than one year per school.***

- *The Planning Commission should continue to work with the School Board to define school capacity standards appropriate for determining the adequacy or inadequacy of school capacities to serve proposed subdivisions.*
- *Establish reasonable measures of pupil generation from the various types of residential development to determine school capacity needs of proposed subdivisions. Share this information with the School Board to assist in planning future school capacity needs.*
- *Establish reasonable measures of available capacity, based on appropriate capacity standards. Determine how and when changes in school service boundaries or changes in the school year could alleviate capacity shortages.*
- *Determine a policy for reasonable use of portable classrooms to provide capacity to temporarily accommodate growth.*
- *Reach an agreement between the Planning Commission and School Board about methods of forecasting future pupil generation, as a basis for planning future school needs.*
- *The long-range plans for school facility needs should be updated periodically to reflect actual school construction, changes in grade organization by school facility, and growth trends.*
- *The Planning Commission and School Board should work with towns and cities to coordinate planning for school capacity and expansion.*

***5B-Implementation Strategy (2): The Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be used as a guide for facilities planning and developing a capital improvement plan and capital improvement budget.***

- *Parks and recreation facility needs should be incorporated into a county comprehensive plan and county capital improvements program and budget.*
- *Opportunities to partner with the school system for the development and operations of new parks and recreation facilities should be pursued.*

***5B-Implementation Strategy (3): Green infrastructure in the form of preserved farms, open space and natural recreation areas, is important to community character and quality of life. A green infrastructure plan should be formulated to identify strategic and priority lands, and should be incorporated into a county comprehensive plan.***

- *A purchase of development rights program should be formulated and **adequately** funded.*
- *Where appropriate, plans for green infrastructure should be coordinated with plans for parks and recreation.*

***5B-Implementation Strategy (4): Prepare a Countywide evaluation of long-range sewerage needs based on **the** projected densities of **planned** development in various areas, and adopt a policy plan to guide decisions concerning the location and funding of future sewerage improvements **so they encourage development only in specific areas.** (The community should determine the need for sewer extension, not the developers).***

- *Form a County Water and Wastewater Treatment Authority to address on-site wastewater permits **and monitor and enforce compliance.***

***(Compliance and enforcement by the state currently is inadequate and more important than the one-time permitting process.)***

- *Form an advisory committee with membership from city sewer utilities and onsite sewer utilities to advise on planning for sewer service in the County.*
- *Prepare a Countywide evaluation of long-range sewerage needs based on projected densities of development in various areas, and adopt a policy plan to guide decisions concerning the location and funding of future sewerage improvements, taking into consideration particularly the need to do the following:*

- ⊖ *Promote compact development in sewerred growth areas around existing cities and towns **within the urban growth boundaries.** ~~and in designated growth areas within the County.~~*
- *Establish intergovernmental agreements to promote compact development in city and town growth areas, tailor County zoning to achieve such a goal, and promote collaborative arrangements for funding sewer extensions.*
- *Consider designation of “villages” or “hamlets” in rural areas that would cluster development in densities suitable for community sewer service.*

***5B-Implementation Strategy (5): Other public and quasi-public support infrastructure for growth and development should be inventoried and assessed periodically for adequacy.***

- *Incorporate an infrastructure inventory into a county comprehensive plan, with assessment of adequacy based on defined standards.*
- *Address any inadequacies in support infrastructure by specific improvement plans.*