

TOWN OF BANNER ELK  
2010 – 2030 LAND USE PLAN

**TOWN OF BANNER ELK  
LAND USE PLAN  
BANNER ELK, NORTH CAROLINA  
2010 - 2030**



**ADOPTED XX MONTH, 2012  
LAND USE UPDATE COMMITTEE, BANNER ELK PLANNING BOARD AND  
BANNER ELK TOWN COUNCIL**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CONTEXT

Banner Elk is a small but vibrant mountain resort town located deep in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Banner Elk's quality of life is enhanced with breathtaking views, crystal clear rivers, and an abundance of hospitality. It is this serenity, along with its natural beauty, that draws visitors to Banner Elk. During the summer months there is hiking, whitewater rafting, fishing, canoeing, biking, horseback riding and loads of relaxation. The main winter activities are skiing and snowboarding, as Banner Elk lies in the valley at the base of three of North Carolina's top winter sport resorts – Beech Mountain, Sugar Mountain and Hawk's Nest. Our town park graces the center of a network of this pedestrian-friendly community's sidewalks, greenway and walking trails.



#### *Banner Elk's Vision Statement*

*The historic village of Banner Elk is a college and mountain resort community committed to preserving and enriching its unique heritage, natural beauty and quality of life.*

In the midst of this natural beauty, Banner Elk is home to Lees-McRae College, a Presbyterian-affiliated institution founded in 1900. Lees-McRae College is a four-year liberal arts college that emphasizes student leadership and service to the community.

Each year Banner Elk is host to thousands from all over the world who attend the annual Woolly Worm festival the third weekend in October. Woolly worms are gathered and the winner of the woolly worm race is used to predict the coming winter weather by reading its stripes. For those of you who are not familiar with what a woolly worm is... → Woolly Worm → →



Banner Elk is located in the northwest quadrant of Avery County near the border of Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee. At 36.16N Latitude and -81.87W Longitude, Banner Elk can be found 3,739 feet above sea level in the Eastern Standard time zone. An 86-mile trek to the northwest of Charlotte, NC, or a 75-mile trek northeast of Asheville, NC, means Banner Elk is readily accessible to all.



Many area attractions are within a short distance from Banner Elk, most notably the Grandfather Mountain State Park, the highest peak in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Hiking trails, a mile high swinging bridge, examples of native animals in their natural habitat, and a nature museum are among the sights available to those who visit Grandfather Mountain. Mining for gems, fly-fishing lessons and guided trips, antique shops, mountain gifts and crafts, and several art galleries are abundant in the area as well.

Within walking distance of the downtown area is Wildcat Lake. Open to the public during the summer, it is also used by the children of Grandfather Home For Children and the summer visitors to Holston Presbyterian Camp; located on the opposite shores of the lake. The dam was recently renovated and a new pier was built for canoeing, fishing and swimming.



Banner Elk is rich in history and it is believed that the first inhabitants were the Cherokee Indians. The initial European influence dates back to the year 1825 when white settlers Delilah Baird and John Holtsclaw came to this area. John and Delilah's child, Alfred B. Baird, was the first white child born in what is now known as the Banner Elk Township. Martin Luther Banner, of Welch descent, established the earliest permanent settlement in 1848. The area where they lived became known as "Banner's Elk"; a name still heard among the older local folk today.

In the summer of 1895 Edgar Tufts, a seminary student from the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, came to settle in Banner's Elk to be the pastor of a church until his death in 1923. Edgar Tufts still has living descendants in this area today. Reverend Tufts' ministry reached much farther than the church since he began a school, an orphanage and a hospital for the local residents of Banner's Elk. This ministry continues to live today. The school is now known as Lees-McRae College; the orphanage is now Grandfather Home for Children; and the hospital merged with other entities and carries the name of Charles A. Cannon Jr. Memorial Hospital with a new location in Linville, North Carolina. The community changed its name to Banner Elk when the North Carolina General Assembly incorporated the town in 1911.



Lees-McRae College, Banner Elk, North Carolina

Banner Elk's natural beauty, clean water and fresh mountain air, the friendliness of the people, its community-oriented atmosphere, and its tranquility draws people from all walks of life. Many come to visit but find that Banner Elk is a great place to stay year round. All of these factors have contributed to the increase of population and development. These changes are encouraging the Town to look at its planning policies as a way of guiding future growth while protecting its same natural beauty and community atmosphere.

## **1.2 AUTHORITY , PURPOSE AND INTENT**

Under North Carolina General Statute §160A-361, municipalities are authorized to create Planning Boards to help guide their town's growth. The authority granted to these boards allows them to create plans and make recommendations for implementing such plans. The General Statutes also require that developments be in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Banner Elk has worked on several smaller plans that will all become elements of this comprehensive plan. Banner Elk's planning staff has been involved in a 2020 Vision, Master Pedestrian Plan, and Master Recreation Plan, to name a few. Because Banner Elk has grown so rapidly in the past 15 years, the Town's leadership recognizes the need to update its existing land use plan, to make it more effective. Therefore, this updated land use plan has an effective horizon date of 2030, giving broad vision and goals that the community can work toward over the next twenty years.

Revising the current plan and bringing it up to date will establish a legal foundation for planning regulation changes, guide future land use decisions, and provide a legal basis for future regulations. Along with planning-related issues, other needs such as water and sewer infrastructure, police and fire protection, and recreation become a very real part of

this planning process. Due to the rapid changes experienced by the Town of Banner Elk, the Land Use Plan can be a vital tool to protect the Town's rich historic legacy and as a result it should be reviewed every five years to ensure its continued effectiveness.

The Banner Elk Town Council's intention is to use the comprehensive plan to implement the planning policies adopted by the Council for the Town and its ETJ area. Included in this is the consideration of *Banner Elk's Mission Statement*:

*“Banner Elk will preserve and protect its heritage while progressively supporting the development of the community infrastructure, recreational opportunities and the viability of the business community. Banner Elk will be a responsible steward of its natural beauty and resources, while enhancing the aesthetics of our town. Banner Elk will enhance the quality of life for citizens, Lees-McRae College students and visitors, and for those people living in our surrounding communities.”*

The plan will support the Town Council's decisions to prepare for future services and development, while efficiently allocating the necessary public funds. While the Town Council reaffirms its commitment to this ordinance and any other amendments that are in conformity with adopted planning policies, the council hereby expresses its intent that neither its ordinances nor any amendments to it may be challenged on the basis of any alleged nonconformity with any planning document.

### **1.3 PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE PLAN**

The Town of Banner Elk, along with help from the Division of Community Assistance and a high level of involvement from the community and concerned citizens at various levels, have worked together to gather input to aid in the development of this plan. The process followed these steps in its evolution toward the finished product.

1. Project Beginning – With a request from the Planning Board, Town Council adopted a resolution recognizing the need for an updated land use plan. Also, with the resolution was a Memorandum of Understanding requesting the participation of the Division of Community Assistance. A group of 16 committed individuals was formed as the Land Use Update Committee. They met on a monthly basis to provide guidance and offer valuable input, time, and knowledge toward the success of this endeavor.
2. Research and Analysis – The information collected through numerous processes gave guidance as to how the community perceives the Town and the functions it provides along with a future “wish list” of items they would like to see addressed. Listed below are the activities used to gather the information:
  - a. Community Survey - A survey was adopted with a link accessed through the Town's website to the survey on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The community was notified of the survey through e-mail, passing out of the survey to anyone who visited town hall, and through a newsletter sent to all residents of Banner Elk. Out of 550 newsletters, 54 surveys

- were returned. The website, surveymonkey.com, aided in the summation of the information as it was received.
- b. Public Input Session – An open house for the community was held on 24 September 2009 from 4:00 to 5:30 pm, with stations for participants to interact with staff about perceptions of the Town and their function. Further interaction was documented about the recently adopted Pedestrian Master Plan and the Recreation Master Plan in progress at the time of this writing.
  - c. Land Use Update Committee Meeting – Scheduled for a review of the survey materials along with an executive summary of the Public Input Session for November 2009. This meeting provided the participants with an opportunity to review the information and list items to be addressed in the future plan.
  - d. Planning Board and Land Use Update Committee – Information gathered from this committee as a joint effort provided the beginning framework for the plan.
  - e. High Country Council of Governments, Region D – helped with the mapping and offered additional input.
3. Plan Development – This phase involved a community open house event with a review of the survey and summary of the public input session, combined with the annual lighting of the tree in the park in early December. This event brought a lot of attention to the town and ensured good public participation, a must for an effective land use plan.
  4. Plan Documentation and Adoption – The final step in which a recommendation is made by the Land Use Update Committee for Town Council to adopt and begin implementation of the new plan.

#### **1.4 COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY**

An eight-page survey was mailed to everyone within the corporate limits of Banner Elk. The surveys were also passed out at events such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration in the park, at Town Hall, at the Woolly Worm Festival, and placed in the mailbox of each Lees-McRae College student. A public hearing was held in December 2009 and articles were placed in the local paper. The survey was posted on surveymonkey.com and e-mails were sent to everyone on the Town's mailing list. The total survey response was 90.7 percent. A committee consisting of the members of the Planning Board along with seven additional community members made up the Land Use Update Committee that reviewed each section and had input into the text.

Additionally, the Division of Community Assistance Office located in Asheville, North Carolina, was on hand to help guide the Town through this process. They gave valuable input into this plan and were very knowledgeable about the materials that should be included in this plan.

## 1.5 VISION GOALS

In reviewing Banner Elk's vision statement, "*The historic village of Banner Elk is a college and mountain resort community committed to preserving and enriching its unique heritage, natural beauty and quality of life,*" Banner Elk is committed to the preservation of its heritage. In 2008 Banner Elk was named to the Preserve America Community Program sponsored by the White House in Washington, DC. Banner Elk also created a Heritage Overlay District in the heart of the downtown area to aid in these preservation efforts.

Some of the areas in which Banner Elk will be looking at fulfilling these goals are listed below:

### Under Land Survey Analysis:

1. Land Use Survey
  - a. The Corporate limits, uniformity
  - b. ETJ areas defined, perhaps expanded
  - c. Divide areas into districts with current and proposed zoning
  - d. Utility capabilities
  - e. Green space, conservation easement areas defined
  - f. Highway 184 corridor
2. Conditions of buildings and property
  - a. Heritage Overlay District
  - b. Historic Banner Elk School
  - c. Banner House Museum
  - d. Old Hospital Property
  - e. Lees-McRae College – (future needs)

### Under Infrastructure

1. List existing – and future
  - a. Water
  - b. Sewer
  - c. Roadway system
  - d. Natural gas lines
  - e. Sidewalks
  - f. Parks
  - g. Greenway Trails
  - h. Public parking
  - i. Bicycle/Pedestrian needs
  - j. Convention Center/Community Center
  - f. Grandfather Home expansion
  - g. LMC expansion
  - h. Needs for students and elderly (facilities and travel)
2. Physical Environmental Considerations
  - g. Hydrology
  - h. Flood Zoned areas
  - i. Steep Slopes
  - j. Viewshed areas

- k. Well Head Protection Zones
- l. Tree Protection Ordinance

## 1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The plan is organized in a manner to provide continuity so that the ending of each chapter continues into the next in a smooth manner, with each chapter addressing its own topic. The Table of Contents will guide each reader through the chapters, defining each topic in the chapter.

## 1.7 KEY TERMINOLOGY

Banner Elk School – Located in the heart of Banner Elk, this historic structure is a focal point for the downtown area and future plans are to turn it into a community center.

Banner House Museum – One of the oldest houses in Banner Elk, dating back to the 1860's, this property has been restored and stocked with a collection of antiques donated by members of the community. Guided tours are available.

DCA – Division of Community Assistance – a division of the NC State Department of Commerce with a staff of professional planners that provide local government and community based non-profit group assistance through economic development, strategic and infrastructure planning, growth management, and housing and community development.

ETJ – Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction. This is a zoning jurisdiction extending approximately one mile beyond Banner Elk's corporate limits. Zoning is the only authority the town has in this jurisdiction.

Goals and Objectives – a “comprehensive list” of planning ideals the town is working towards.

Grandfather Home for Children – Begun in 1914 when a farmhouse belonging to Lees-McRae College was converted to an orphanage for homeless children. In the 1970's Grandfather Home began accepting neglected and abused children and continues with this ministry today. Today a branch of this ministry is also referred to as Properties for Children.

Heritage Overlay District – an overlay district established by the Town of Banner Elk designed to protect and manage the heritage of Banner Elk.

Land Use Update Committee – members of the Planning Board and a group of citizens interested in working towards making Banner Elk a great place to visit and live.

Lees-McRae College (LMC) – Established in 1900, LMC began as a girl's boarding school. In 1927, LMC became a co-education school. In 1931 LMC became a junior college with a two-year curriculum and in 1990 it became a four-year curriculum college.

Preserve America Community – Designated in 2008 by Laura Bush's national “Preserve America” program, Banner Elk is happy to support the ideals this program sponsors, as they are in line with our mission statement.

Steep Slopes – Our mountainous terrain has made it necessary to adopt an ordinance that guides development through protection of our slopes.

Tree Protection Ordinance – Adopted in 2008, this ordinance guides the removal and replacement of another of our greatest natural resources.

Well Head Protection Zone – This zone is designed to protect Banner Elk’s delicate and most valuable resource, water. This area is protected against certain activities that could damage our water.

Woolly Worm Festival – A widely attended festival held each year on the third weekend in October. Arts and Crafts, Games and Food are available, along with the woolly worm race.

## 2.0 DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Population Growth
- 2.3 Race Characteristics
- 2.4 Age Characteristics
- 2.5 Housing Characteristics
- 2.6 Labor Force Characteristics
- 2.7 Population Projections
- 2.8 Farmland and Agriculture
- 2.9 Employment Trends
- 2.10 Educational Attainment
- 2.11 Income and Poverty
- 2.12 Summary
- 2.13 Goals and Objectives

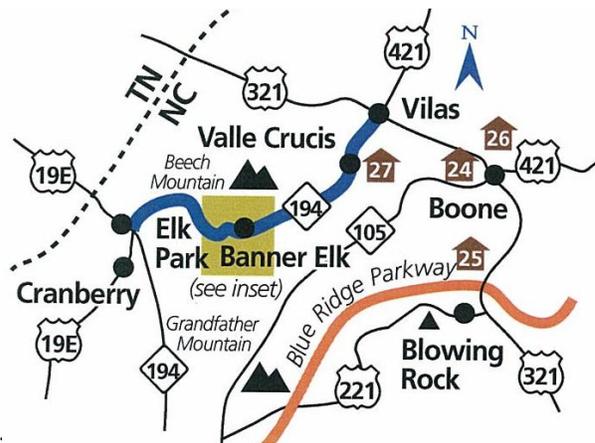
### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Banner Elk's humble beginnings are recorded in history as a few settlers came to the area in 1848, consequently they names were "Banner". At 3,739 feet above sea level Banner Elk can be found in the northeast quadrant of Avery County, North Carolina. Today, Banner Elk's population is a diversity of local people as well as those who decided to move here to live, either seasonally or full time, after visiting the area. Lees-McRae College adds to the diversity with a mix of international students, as well as students for all over the United States. Banner Elk's population grew the most between 1970 and 1980 (44.2 percent). After experiencing a decrease in growth between 1980 and 2000, Banner Elk's population growth is once again climbing.

Three of the most well known geological features in the area are the Pinnacles of Beech Mountain, Blood Camp Ridge and Horse Bottom Ridge. Grandfather Mountain State Park is within a short distance of Banner Elk. The Town of Boone is approximately 14 miles away to the north and is the home of Appalachian State University. The southern boundary of the town is flanked by the Elk River, which is fed by the Whitehead and Shawneehaw Creeks and empties into the Tennessee River Basin. The Tennessee River Basin is the largest tributary to the Ohio River and is recognized as one of the most diversified rivers for North America, supporting 240 species of fish.



Resource: NC Scenic Byways



## **2.2 POPULATION GROWTH AND THE CURRENT ECONOMIC STATE OF BANNER ELK**

Much of Banner Elk's livelihood is gained through tourism related business. The small town atmosphere is supported by a walkable downtown suitable for window-shopping and enjoyment of the natural beauty of the area. The shopping experience is supported by an array of small shops and family restaurants. Running a close second to this is the construction industry. Many of the local residents earn a living by providing some element to the construction industry. Banner Elk's part time residents make up 60% of the population, illustrating that Banner Elk is a destination for many second homebuyers. In previous years the Town of Banner Elk experienced a "boom" of construction. However, with the collapse of the housing market, construction has almost come to a standstill, with only 5 zoning permits for new construction issued in 2009. Local residents and business owners are scrambling to find a way to re-invent Banner Elk in order to draw more tourism related business activity to the area.

This section examines historic and current population trends in Avery County and provides population projections. The review and comparison of demographic characteristics is a valuable tool in updating or developing any land use plan. Demographic characteristics can also be informative when comparing one municipality with another, within the county; how the county compares with other counties in the region and the state, and how North Carolina relates to the rest of the nation.

The 2010 Census began releasing data in December 2010 as the information was disseminated. It took a period of about a year for the information to be complete. The NC Demographics Unit provides yearly population estimates for all of the municipalities, counties and the state, which are updated yearly in the fall; however, the Town felt it was best to wait on the 2010 Census data because it was so close to being released. This option delayed our Land Use Plan approval by six months to a year, but was worth it in order to see the changes that had occurred in our area in the past 10 years.

Table 1 shows the Census population figures between 1980 and 2010 and the growth rates between 1970 and 2010 for the municipalities in Avery County, the county, the state, and the nation as a whole. It indicates the Town of Banner Elk has undergone the most dramatic change of all the municipalities in the county, increasing its population by almost 45 percent between 1970 and 1980; losing population between 1980 and 2000 and then regaining most of its 1980 population by 2010 for a Census count of 1,046 people. The 1990 Census population for Banner Elk has been corrected upwards by 47 people from the originally published figure of 886, to 933. However, because the 1990 information was not loaded onto the Census website until approximately 2005, the Census Bureau made the corrections retroactively so all of the statistics available on the website reflect the corrected figures. The 2000 Census population for Banner Elk has been corrected upwards by 17 people from the originally-published figure of 811, which continues to be shown in the documents on the main Census website; once data has been released on the website, this is standard Census Bureau policy and all corrections are found in once place.

All 2000 Census corrections for North Carolina can be found at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/notes/cqr-nc.pdf>. The 2010 Census population for Banner Elk is shown as 1,046; up 218 people from the 2000 corrected figure, an increase of 8 percent.

The Town of Beech Mountain is the only municipality that has consistently experienced growth between the years of 1980 and 2010; with a population of 320. The Town of Beech Mountain was incorporated in 1981, Grandfather Village in 1987, and Sugar Mountain in 1985. The State Data Center makes population estimates for areas that incorporate in-between Census years that are based on Census data (such as block group) from the previous Census year. The other municipalities of Crossnore, Elk Park, Grandfather Village, Newland, and Sugar Mountain all lost some population between the years of 1980 and 2010. (Let it be said that large *percentage* increases and decreases can be misleading when the numbers are small to begin with.) Banner Elk experienced a modest regain in population (7.9 percent) between the years of 2000 and 2010 with 1,046 people in 2010 and Beech Mountain at 320 in 2010. Beech Mountain has consistently gained, while Sugar Mountain's population has reflected extremes. In 1980, Sugar Mountain's population was 188; dropping to 132 in 1990, growing to 226 in 2000 and dropping again to 198 in 2010, with a net gain in population of only 10 in 30 years. Elk Park is the only municipality whose 2010 population (452) is quite a bit less than it was in 1980 (535).

Avery County's population during the time period between 1980 and 2010 has increased; the largest percentage gain of 15.5 percent was between the years of 1990 and 2000. The 2010 population data is 17,797, an increase of roughly 3,388 people since 1980. The slowest period of growth was between 1980 and 1990. However, the numbers indicate since at least 1970, the county's growth rate has consistently been behind that of the state. Conversely, since at least 1970, North Carolina has consistently grown at a faster pace than the nation as a whole. Between 1990 and 2000, while the nation increased its population by 13.2 percent, the state grew at a rate of 21.3 percent; and in the decade between 2000 and 2010 while the nation's population increased by 9.3 percent to 304,059,724, the state grew to a population of 9,535,483 or 8.4 percent, slightly under one percent each year.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 put Avery County's growth rate for the decades 1980 to 2010 in context with 18 other counties in western North Carolina and for the state as a whole. Table 2 compares birth and death rates and net migration between 1980 and 1990. It shows that during this decade Avery, along with Clay, Haywood, McDowell, Madison, Mitchell, and Yancey gained only a few hundred people or less while one, Graham County, lost population. Henderson County led the mountains with a growth rate of over 18 percent or 10,709 people, followed by Watauga (16.7 percent) and Macon (16.5). Buncombe County had the highest absolute number of population increase of 13,460, representing a growth rate of 7.7 percent. It is interesting to note this number is greater than the entire population of Clay, Graham or Swain counties. Avery County increased its population by 2,300 for a rate of 3.2 percent. This was much less than the state's growth rate of 12.8 percent during this time.

There are two factors that account for population increase or decrease—natural growth (the number of births minus deaths), and net migration (the number of people moving in minus the number moving out). Table 2 shows that in the decade between 1980 and 1990 in Avery,

Cleveland, Graham, McDowell and Mitchell counties although net migration was negative, the population decrease was offset by a larger rate of natural growth resulting in an overall population increase. In contrast, Polk County would have lost population were it not for in-migration, and Henderson County would only have gained approximately 600 people instead of over 11,000. In the state as a whole, in-migration counted for approximately one-half of its growth between 1980 and 1990.

The years between 1990 and 2000 were a time of growth for the region as a whole; Table 3 shows the same categories of data as Table 2 for this decade. No county lost population, and several that grew very little in the previous decade experienced a much higher growth rate including Avery (as noted earlier, 15.5 percent or 2,300 people); Clay (22.6 percent or 1,620 people); Graham (11.1 percent or 797 people); Haywood (15.1 percent or 7,085 people); McDowell (18.1 percent or 6,470 people); Madison (15.8 percent or 2,682 people) and Mitchell (8.7 percent or 1,254 people).

While Buncombe County's *percentage* increase was not as high at 18.3 percent, the number of people gained was again the most in the area at 31,973; this was greater than the population of 11 of the region's 19 counties at the time.

In-migration became an even more important factor in the region in this decade. Henderson County would have lost population in this time period because of a negative natural growth rate were it not for the high rate of in-migration; this was also true for Cherokee, Clay, Haywood, Macon, Mitchell, Polk, and Transylvania counties. In Avery County in-migration contributed almost 93 percent of the county's population increase, or 2,138, people; natural growth accounted for only 162 people of the increase. In-migration accounted for 70.6 percent of the state's population growth in this decade.

Table 4 illustrates growth rates by region for the years between 2000 and 2010. Mitchell County is the only county to reflect negative population growth, losing 99 people in the reported time period (-1.0 percent loss). The greatest natural growth and net migration was reflected in Buncombe County's data with 3,181 people and a net migration of 25,695 people.

Table 5 shows persons per square mile or density, comparing 1980 and 2010 Census data for the counties in the region. The number of persons per square mile in Avery County in 1980 was approximately 58.3, while in 2000 that had increased by just over 19 percent to approximately 69.5 people per square mile and 8.7 percent to approximately 75.54 people per square mile. For the state as whole, the figure in 2010 was approximately 192 people per square mile, greater than all but three counties in the mountains (Buncombe, Cleveland and Henderson). In the region, Madison County showed the greatest percentage increase in the 30-year period, 133.5 percent, followed by Cherokee at 14.9 percent, Buncombe at 11.1 percent, and Polk at 9.8 percent.

## 2.3 RACE CHARACTERISTICS

Table 6 compares 2000 and 2010 Census data for race and Hispanic origin. As noted at the bottom of Table 6, due to changes in the way data was collected between the 2000 and 2010, race data is not directly comparable between these two Census years. The question was asked differently, the categories changed, and it became possible to check more than one box for race. Also, “Hispanic” is considered to be a place of origin, not a race. Therefore in 2000 the numbers may not add up to the total population for a governmental unit, and the percentages may not add up to 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

The data indicates that all of the municipalities and Avery County as a whole are less diverse than the state and country. In general, there were not big differences between the two Census years. By far the largest group is white, making up approximately 94.0 percent of the county’s population in 2000. Banner Elk had 90 percent of its population in 2000 in this group. Elk Park, Newland, and Sugar Mountain were nearly 100 percent white, and the other municipalities were over 90 percent white. In 2010 the white population for the county had decreased to 92 percent; Banner Elk, Crossnore, and Newland were 89.0, 85.9, and 88.8 percent respectively. Grandfather Village reported 100 percent white while the remaining municipalities were all at least 90 percent or above white.

Black population increased slightly in the county between 2000 and 2010 from 3.5 percent to 4.0 percent, with the largest increase reflected in Crossnore from 0.4 percent to 9.4 percent. Four municipalities had less than one percent in both Census years. Banner Elk had the highest percent in Avery County in 2000 of 3.9 percent and an increase in 2010 to 5.4 percent. “Hispanic” is considered to be a place of origin, not a race. This group increased slightly in the county between 2000 and 2010 from 2.4 to 4.5 percent, as did the “Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Some Other Race” group, from 1.9 to 3.1 percent; with the largest percentage of increase reflected in Newland (9.5 percent.)

The State of North Carolina and the country as a whole are generally similar in diversity although not entirely: the state has close to the same percentage of whites as the country, a higher percentage of blacks, a lower percentage of people of Hispanic origin, and fewer Native American/Asian/Pacific Islander/Other race. The 2000 Census indicates that the county and municipalities have not experienced the large increase in Hispanics that has occurred in other parts of the state. It is noteworthy that North Carolina had the highest *percentage* increase of people of Hispanic origin in the nation between 2000 and 2010, increasing from 4.7 percent in 2000 to 8.4 percent in 2010.

## 2.4 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Tables 7, 8 and 9 look at age groups and median age in the incorporated towns, county, state and nation for Census years 1990, 2000, and 2010. Banner Elk, no doubt due to the presence of students at Lees-McRae College, had the youngest median age by far in Census years 1990 - 2010 at 34.8, 40.6 and 43.8 percent, respectively. Crossnore was next youngest at

37.6, 32.6 and 44.8 for 1990 - 2010 Census years. Grandfather Village had the highest median age in 2010 at 71.5, while Banner Elk had the lowest at 22.0. This is in contrast to the median age for Avery County in 1990 at 34.4, in 2000 at 38.4, and in 2010 at 42.3. This is much closer to the state figures: 33.1, 32.8 and 37.4, respectively, and national figures of: 33.0, 35.3 and 37.3 respectively.

There was some variation among the municipalities and Avery County regarding which age group had the highest percentage of its population in 1990. Table 7 indicates that in Banner Elk and Newland, the age grouping with the highest percentage was less than 21 years, at almost 66 percent for Banner Elk and 51 percent for Newland. Newland's age range with the highest percentage was 45 to 64, at 42.3 percent; the age range with the highest percentage for the other towns, county, state, and nation was 21 to 44.

In 1990, all the towns in Avery County were much less than the state and national percentage in the 85 and over category, which was 2.5 and 2.8 percent respectively. Both Beech Mountain and Grandfather Village had no people in this age range, while the other towns ranged from 1 (Sugar Mountain) to 11 (Newland). The county had only 1.4 percent of its population in that age range in the 1990 Census.

By 2000, the age grouping in Banner Elk with the highest percentage of the population was that of 20 to 44, with 40.6 percent; Elk Park, Newland, Sugar Mountain, Avery County, the state and nation also had their highest percentage in this age grouping. There had been a modest increase in the number of people in the 85 and over age grouping in all of the towns in Avery County (with the exception of Grandfather Village) and county; the state and nation also experienced an increase in this age grouping to 2.9 and 3.2 percent, respectively.

In Table 9, 2010 reflected the highest concentration of population less than 20 years of age in Crossnore (44.8 percent) with a close second in Banner Elk (43.8 percent), much higher than the county, state and national averages at 19.9, 26.8 and 26.9 respectively. The highest concentration of population at 85+ years was in Newland (2.9 percent), much higher than the state and national average at 1.5 and 1.8 respectively. However, Avery County's percentage was 2.1, much closer than the state and national average.

## **2.5 HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

Tables 8, 9, and 10 provide information regarding housing units, tenure, and group quarters in 1990, 2000, and 2010. While Banner Elk had the highest population of the municipalities in 1990 at 933, Beech Mountain had the most dwelling units (1,477) for a population of 239 people. There was a similar discrepancy between population (132) and dwelling units (1,090) in Sugar Mountain. There were several municipalities and the county that had a higher percentage rate of occupied home ownership than the state (68.0 percent) and nation (64.2 percent); these included Crossnore (85.4), Avery County (80.9), Beech Mountain (78.9), Elk Park (76.3), and Newland (69.0). Banner Elk's percentage of 61.3 was the lowest, which is not surprising, given the presence of students at the college who rent.

The 1990 Census indicates that most of the municipalities and the county had a high percentage of seasonal dwelling units as compared to the state and nation. The highest percentage was that of Sugar Mountain, at over 91 percent, followed by Beech Mountain (86.3), Grandfather Village (17.9), and Banner Elk (18.3); Elk Park had the lowest percentage of 3.2, and Newland was next lowest at 3.9 percent. The county's rate was just over 30 percent, while that of the state was 3.8 percent, and the nation's was just over 3.0 percent.

“Group Quarters” population includes persons in living arrangements which are not households, such as nursing homes, rooming houses, military barracks, college dormitories, sorority and fraternity houses, and correctional institutions, among others. The municipality with the largest number of people living in “group quarters” in 1990, 2000, and 2010 was Banner Elk, due to the presence of college students living in dorms on campus.

As noted previously, the 2000 Census population for Banner Elk has been corrected upwards by 17 people from the originally published figure of 811. Another correction was made to the count of housing units, (an increase of six, from 290 to 296); however, the original figures continue to be shown on the main Census website. In addition, no re-calculations were done regarding the number or percent of people owning or renting. The number of vacant units stayed the same, as did the population in Group Quarters. All corrections for North Carolina can be found at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/notes/cqr-nc.pdf>

The 2000 Census indicates the continued trend of discrepancy between population and dwelling units in Beech Mountain, where the number of units increased by 391 to 1,868 while the population increased by 71 to 310. In Sugar Mountain, the number of units increased by 122 to 1,212 while the population increased by 94 to 226. The number of units in Grandfather Village increased by 283 for a total of 377, while the population only increased by 21 for a total of 73.

While the percentage of occupied home ownership increased slightly in the state to 69.4 percent and the nation to 66.2 percent, in Banner Elk there was a decline to 50.7 percent, in Crossnore to 69.8 percent, in Elk Park to 72.7; in Sugar Mountain and in the county, there was only two-tenths of one percent decline. Beech Mountain saw an increase of approximately 6 percent, to 84.8, while the rate of occupied home ownership in Grandfather Village increased from 76.3 to 100 percent.

The 2010 Census indicates the trend of discrepancy also continued between population and dwelling units. In Beech Mountain, where the number of units increased by 419 to 2,287, the population increased by only 10 to 320. In Sugar Mountain, the number of units increased by 328 to 1,540 while the population decreased by 28 to 198. The number of units in Grandfather Village and Crossnore increased by 32 for a total of 409 and 119 respectively, while their population decreased by 48 and 50 for a total of 25 and 192 respectively.

While the percentage of occupied home ownership decreased in the state to 76.5 percent (was 80.6), nationwide to 65.1 percent (was 66.2), in Elk Park to 67.1 percent (was 72.7), Newland to 59.0 percent (was 67.7), and Sugar Mountain to 68.1 percent (was 75.2). In Banner

Elk there was an increase to 52.2 percent from 50.7; an increase in Crossnore to 81.5 percent from 69.8. In the county, there was a decline from 80.6 percent to 76.5. Beech Mountain saw a very minimal decrease of 2.3 percent; the state saw a decrease of 2.7 percent, and the nation saw a decrease of 1.1 percent. Basically, Banner Elk and Crossnore are the only two entities that maintained growth in occupied home ownership through the 2000-2010 Census era.

The county's percentage of seasonal units increased from 2,697 units in 1990 to 4,751 in 2000, or approximately 40 percent. In this same time period, the number of seasonal units in Sugar Mountain increased from 996 to 1,023, but shows a decrease to 84.4 percent from 91.4 percent. Grandfather Village became the municipality with the highest percentage of seasonal units (91.0), followed closely by Beech Mountain (90.7). The municipality with the lowest number was Newland (3.6), followed by Elk Park (4.6) and Crossnore (11.8); and Banner Elk's percentage increased to 18.6 percent. These statistics indicate the county is very popular as a place to vacation or live part-time. In 2010, Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain continued to lead in seasonal units by 89.6 percent and 88.2 percent respectively, with Banner Elk coming in third place with an increase of 164 units (35.9 percent.)

Tables 13 and 14 show the median value of owner occupied housing units (adjusted for inflation to 2010) and average household size for 1980 through 2010. When inflation is taken into account, across the nation housing increased in value between 1980 and 2010 from a 1980 adjusted figure of \$124,500 to \$151,500 in 2010, while in North Carolina it increased by almost 44 percent from \$95,300 to \$137,140 during the same time period; Banner Elk showed the greatest percentage increase of all the municipalities and county, at over 89 percent. Sugar Mountain had the lowest increase (as measured from 1990 since 1980 data is not available for them), at 1.81 percent. Avery County's percentage increase was 46.7, from \$76,000 in 1980 (adjusted to 2010 dollars) to \$111,500 in 2010.

In 2010, Grandfather Village had the highest median value housing, at \$1,055,800 when adjusted for inflation to 2010; Banner Elk had the second highest value of \$231,750 and Elk Park had the lowest of \$91,047.

The figure of persons per occupied household decreased percentage wise for all governmental entities from 1980 to 2010; across the nation it was 2.67 while in the state it was 2.54, followed by Newland (2.74), Banner Elk (2.33), Elk Park (2.27), Crossnore (2.26), Beech Mountain (2.18), Avery County (2.17), Sugar Mountain (1.81), and Grandfather Village (1.71).

## **2.6 LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS**

Tables 15, 16, and 17 provide information regarding the population 16 years and over and the percentage based on the total population for the years 1990 and 2010. The tables also depict the number of people in the labor force; the number employed, unemployed and the unemployment rate; those in the armed forces; and the number and percent of those not in the labor force for the municipalities, county, state and nation.

These figures in Table 15 indicate that in 1990 the national percentage of the population 16 years and over was approximately 77 percent; for the state it was 78.4 percent. Avery County's was very close to the state's figure, at 79.7 percent. Of the municipalities, the one with the highest percent was Banner Elk, with almost 90 percent; Grandfather Village had the lowest percent, at 23.5. According to the 1990 Census, none of the municipalities had any part of their population in the armed forces; there were 13 people in the county in the armed forces. Unemployment rates ranged from a high of 8.3 percent for Newland to 0 percent for Grandfather Village; Elk Park was the next lowest at 2.3 percent, while Banner Elk had 4.3 percent unemployed and the county 6.1 percent. This compares with a national figure of 6.3 percent and 4.8 percent for the state. The national percentage of population not in the labor force was 34.7 percent; the state's figure was slightly lower at 32.3 percent, and among the municipalities Banner Elk had the highest percentage at 63.5 percent, followed by Beech Mountain at 42.3 percent. The lowest percentage was 0, in Grandfather Village; the next lowest was Sugar Mountain at 20.5 percent; Avery County had 40.4 percent of its population not in the labor force.

Table 16 gives the same information for the 2000 Census. While the percentage of the population that was 16 years and over stayed about the same, as compared with 1990 Census data in the nation and state, in the county there was a small increase to 82.6 percent, and Beech Mountain had a small increase to 91.5 percent. (Labor force characteristics statistics are derived from the "long form," which is based on information gathered from a sample of the population. There is an error factor included in this sampling. While the 100 percent, or "short form" Census indicated the population of Beech Mountain was 310, the computer model calculated the population at 351 residents, which is the number used in the percentage for this table. There were larger increases in Grandfather Village to 91.8 percent and in Sugar Mountain to 90 percent. Banner Elk, Crossnore, and Elk Park all saw declines in the percent of the population 16 years and over.

Again, the number of people in the armed forces continued to be very minimal, with the county increasing by four people to 17; Newland had two people. All the other municipalities had no people serving in the armed forces. While unemployment in the nation declined from 6.3 percent to 5.8, it increased in the state from 4.8 percent to 5.3 as well as in Avery County, to 7.0 percent, in Banner Elk to 35 percent, in Sugar Mountain to almost 15 percent, in Beech Mountain to 6.7 percent, in Elk Park it increased to 6.3 percent, and in Newland and Crossnore unemployment declined. There was no unemployment in Grandfather Village. There was a large increase in the percentage of people not in the labor force in Grandfather Village, to almost 51 percent; there were smaller increases in Beech Mountain and Crossnore, to approximately 44 and almost 35 percent, respectively. In the nation and state the increase was about two percentage points.

These figures in Table 17 indicate that in 2010 the national percentage of the population 16 years and over was approximately 79 percent; for the state it was 91 percent, a significant increase from 2000. Avery County's was very close to the state's figure, at 89 percent. Of the municipalities, the one with the highest percent was Newland, with 93 percent; Grandfather Village and Elk Park came in second with 91 percent; Banner Elk was 84 percent. Sugar Mountain had the lowest percent, at 46. According to the 2010 Census, none of the

municipalities had any part of their population in the armed forces; however, there were 35 people in the county in the armed forces. Unemployment rates ranged from 2.9 percent for Banner Elk to 0 percent for Crossnore and Grandfather Village; the next highest was Elk Park with 4.6 percent, Beech Mountain with 3.9 percent, Newland with 2.0 percent, while Sugar Mountain had 2.8 percent unemployed and the county reported 3.7 percent. This compares with a national figure of 6.9 percent and 8.0 percent for the state. The national percentage of population not in the labor force was 35.6 percent; the state's figure was slightly higher at 36.0 percent, and among the municipalities Grandfather Village had the highest percentage of people not in the labor force at 80.5 percent, followed by Beech Mountain at 51.9 percent, Elk Park at 50.7 percent, and Banner Elk was a close third at 42.2 percent. The lowest percentage was 16.7, in Crossnore; the next lowest was Newland at 32.2 percent; Avery County had 46.5 percent of its population not in the labor force.

The NC Department of Commerce website gives economic profiles of all counties and updates them quarterly (see <https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/EDIS/demographics.html>). The Employment Security Commission collects unemployment data monthly; the latest figures available at this time are for June 2010. The county's unemployment rate has dropped from 11.1 percent in January to 8.0 percent in June; the state's rates during this time are 11.1 and 10.0 respectively. The county's 2009 annual percent was 8.8 percent.

## **2.7 POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

Tables 18, 19, and 20 contain population projections for the county, state, and region respectively for the years 2010, 2020, and 2030; these projects are updated annually in the spring by the State Demographics Unit. The Demographics Unit does not undertake projections for municipalities, only for counties. Table 18 shows the projections for Avery County and indicate a slowing of the rate of growth from the moderate 15.5 percent amount between 1990 and 2000, to 6.5 percent between 2000 and 2010. Projections between 2010 and 2030 indicate that practically no population growth is expected during that time period. The number of deaths is expected to be greater than the number of births during these years, which means in-migration will be the reason the county is not losing population. However, the pace of in-migration is expected to slow.

The median age of county residents is expected to increase from 38.4 as indicated in the 2000 Census up to 46.3 years of age by 2030. The projections in Table 19 also indicate the current trend of the county's population being older than that of the state is expected to accelerate in the future. In 1990 the median age for the county was almost two years higher than the state's; by 2030 the county's is projected to be almost eight years higher than the state's, which is expected to increase to 38.6. The state's growth rate is projected to gradually decline from the very fast pace between 2000 and 2010 of 18.3 percent (which is still less than the 21.3 percent of the previous decade) to 12.2 percent between 2020 and 2030.

Table 20 compares population projections for Avery County with other counties in the region and the state as a whole. For the decade from 1990 to 2000, the county's growth rate was

approximately in the middle of the 19 counties in our region, at 15.5 percent; for the decade between 2000 and 2010, it is estimated Avery County will have dropped several positions to number 14, with a 6.5 percent change over the decade.

For the decades of 2010 to 2020 and 2020 to 2030, the county is predicted to be last in the region, with basically no growth. In contrast, Clay County is expected to have the highest growth rate between 2000 and 2010, at 22.3 percent, followed by Henderson (20.3 percent) and Macon (18.1 percent); Rutherford County is predicted to have the lowest growth rate of 2.0 percent. The state's growth rate during this time is predicted to be 18.3 percent. Buncombe County is expected to gain close to 27,000 people even though the county's growth *rate* is the fifth highest in the region; this number of people is more than the entire populations of seven counties, including Avery's. During the decade from 2010 to 2020, the state is predicted to have a growth rate of 14.3 percent.

## **2.8 TOURISM, FARMLAND AND AGRICULTURE**

Table 21 examines the economic impact of tourism on the county for selected years between 1991 and 2009, with these figures adjusted to account for inflation to 2010. All numbers in this paragraph are adjusted for inflation. The NC Department of Commerce collects data on travel and tourism across the state. In 1991, the domestic tourism impact in the county was \$70.4 million; by 2009 the impact had risen to \$90.1 million, although there was some variation up and down in the intervening years. In 1991 the county was 33<sup>rd</sup> in the state for money spent on the tourism industry; while this number went up and down in the intervening years, in 2009 the state had fallen three places to 36<sup>th</sup>. During this time, the number of jobs directly attributable to tourism was 1,200 in 1991; in 1995 it rose to 1,370 when the county's rank had risen to 30th in the state, and in 2009 the number of jobs was 1,210. There was likewise some variation in payroll generated between 1991 when the figure was \$20.3 million and in 2009 when it was \$22.2 million. State and local tax revenue generated from travel was 5.1 million in 1991, rising to a high of 9.8 million in 2000, and last year was at 9.0 million.

Leading tourist attractions, including the South's highest ski slopes, nine major golf resorts, and scenic Grandfather Mountain, attract visitors all year to support a variety of outdoor activities, restaurants and lodging facilities.

Table 22 looks at land in farms in Avery County, while Table 23 has information for the state. Generally speaking, the typical pattern for farmland is for it to be converted to other, more profitable uses over time. In Avery County, however, between 1992 and 1997, land in farms increased by 11,502 acres, from 19,712 to 31,214, reversing the downward trend going back to at least 1974 when land in farms stood at 29,491 acres. The number of farms has increased from 341 in 1974 to 477 in 2007. 2007 is the date of the most recent Census of Agriculture conducted by the US Department of Agriculture which takes place every five years. There has been a loss of farmland of approximately 3,400 acres between 1997 and 2007.

What was the reason for this large increase in the number of farms and acres in farmland? It appears that much of the reason lies in the growth of the Christmas tree-growing industry, which occurred in the late 1980's to the mid-1990's. One advantage of ornamental crops, including Christmas trees, is that they do not "spoil" if they are not picked by a certain date—they can keep growing, and generally speaking, become more valuable because they are larger the following year. This means farmers are not forced to sell by a certain time, which brings greater economic flexibility. The official county website (<http://www.averycountync.gov/ourCounty.htm>), notes that Christmas tree and ornamental shrubbery growing is the county's second leading industry. It states more Fraser firs and ornamental shrubbery are shipped from Avery County than any other county in the southern United States, with over 900 active families in the business.

According to the 2009 Annual Statistics book published by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, <http://www.ncagr.gov/stats>, North Carolina is second in the nation, after Oregon, for Christmas Tree cash receipts, accounting for 23.9 percent of production in the nation. The Avery County summary at the same website, <http://www.ncagr.gov/stats/codata/avery.pdf>, states that in the category of Nursery, Greenhouse, & Floriculture; the county produced \$24,041,000 million worth of crops in 2008.

The website of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association (<http://www.ncchristmastrees.com>) states, "North Carolina has 1,600 growers producing an estimated 50 million Fraser fir Christmas trees growing on over 25,000 acres. Fraser Fir trees represent over 90% of all species grown in North Carolina. The North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry is ranked second in the nation in number of trees harvested."

The website of the Avery County Christmas Tree and Nurserymen's Association provides information regarding growers (with web links), mail orders, tree availability, as well as information about other ornamental crops. It states, "The purpose of the association is to promote Avery County as a grower of premium quality Fraser Fir Christmas Trees and Mountain Greenery through national trade show exhibits, distribution of annual buyers' guides and personal response to buyer inquiries. Our purpose is also to provide educational information on the economics of growing trees, new technology, marketing techniques and current issues effecting the industry" (<http://www.averycountytrees.org>).

## **2.9 EMPLOYMENT TRENDS**

The N.C. Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 41 as Tier 2 and the 19 least distressed as Tier 3. Avery County is ranked as a Tier 2 county (<http://www.nccommerce.com/en/BusinessServices/SupportYourBusiness/Incentives/CountyTierDesignations2010.htm>). This Tier system is incorporated into various state programs, including the Article 3J Tax Credits, to encourage economic activity in the less prosperous areas of the state. Please see the 2010 County Tier Designations

(<http://www.nccommerce.com/NR/rdonlyres/08680749-788B-4343-9806-CF6AA3F58926/0/2010Article3JTier.pdf>) for a detailed view of designations.

It is not possible to directly compare 1990 Census information regarding employment with the 2000 Census because the categories changed in the interim. Quoting from the US Census Bureau website (<http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html>), “The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) has replaced the U.S. Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) System. NAICS will reshape the way we view our changing economy. NAICA was developed jointly by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to provide new comparability in statistics about business activity across North America.”

Given the constraints noted above, Tables 20 through 24 give a very rough comparison of the county’s and town’s economic mix between 1990 and 2000. In particular, the economic sector of “services” changed between the two Census years. In order to reflect the data as accurately as possible, when there were significant differences in the groupings, the economic sectors have been kept separate with the language as given in the particular Census year. However, some sectors seemed close enough to be compared directly and any differences in the Census language are given in the footnotes.

Table 24 shows that Avery County experienced a 7 percent increase in total employment between 1990 and 2000, from 8,436 to 11,962 and an increase of 9 percent from 2000 to 2010, where employment went from 11,962 to 12,945. In 1990 the economic sector with greatest percentage of employment was manufacturing, at 18.6 percent (1,233 jobs), followed closely by educational, health services and social services, at 18.5 percent (1,228 jobs). By 2000 the economic sector with the greatest percentage of employment had changed to the educational sector, with 20.9 percent of employment. Between 2000 and 2010, the economic sector shifted to a new leader in educational, health services, and social services at 14 percent (1,778 jobs) and following as a close second is arts, entertainment recreation, accommodations and food services with a 13 percent increase (1,666 jobs.) The economic sectors that experienced the greatest changes between 1990 and 2010 are:

- “Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services” (in the 1990 Census the category was listed as only “Entertainment and recreation services”), which maintained a 13 percent increase of employment and an approximate gain of 593 jobs in a twenty year span, from 1073 to 1666;
- Retail trade showed a steady decrease of 5.0 percent from 15 to 10, which represents a loss but a total gain of 109 jobs for 20 years from 1233 to 1332;
- Educational, health and social services showed a decrease of approximately 1 percent, from 15 percent to 14 percent and a gain of 550 jobs, from 1,228 to 1,778;
- Construction showed a steady increase from 9 percent to 11 percent by 2010. The number of jobs increased during that period of time was a total of 576.

Regarding occupation trends, there were not big changes between the three Census years in the county, as shown by Table 24. However, the jobs included in the various sectors changed, again due to the new NAICS system. The category with the greatest employment in both 1990

and 2000 was management, professional, and related occupations. Between 2000 and 2010 was educational, health and social services with a close second held by arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, showing a close relationship between Cannon Memorial Hospital, Lees-McRae College and the tourism industry.

## 2.10 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Table 25 provides information regarding the educational attainment of persons 25 years and older, and compares 1990 Census data with 2000 and 2010 information regarding those completing high school and college. The table indicates that every municipality and the county during that time period experienced an increase in the percentage of those people who graduated from high school. Both Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain had very slight increases of less than one percent, to 96.9 and 94.7, respectively between 1990 and 2000. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, Elk Park showed the slightest amount of increase of 1.2 percent. Grandfather Village held a steady 100 percent, however their population is relatively small and Beech Mountain came in second with 99.6 percent in 2010. The county had an increase of over eight percentage points, 62.2 to 70.6, but showed much improvement between 2000 and 2010 at 10.7 percent. Although these figures were still below the state's, at 78.1 percent in 2000 and 83.6 in 2010, the nation's percentage increased by five points, to 80.4 percent in 2000 and a much smaller amount of 0.6 percent to 85.0 percent in 2010. Banner Elk's percentage increased by five points to 90.6, and 6.6 points to 97.2 percent in 2010.

As might be expected with the presence of the college, the Town of Banner Elk and Beech Mountain outpaced the percentage of the population of the other municipalities, county, state, and country, with a college or above education. The exception was Grandfather Village. In Banner Elk, the increase between 1990 and 2000 was from 38 to 46 percent; in Grandfather Village it actually declined from 100 percent in 1990 to 78 percent in 2000. (As noted previously, large *percentage* increases and decreases can be misleading when the numbers are small to begin with). From 2000 to 2010, a decrease in percentage from 46.5 to 29.6 percent reflects the struggles of many to fund a college education. In the state and nation in 2000, the percentage of people with four or more years of college was 22.5 and 24.4 percent, respectively. In 2010, these percentages continued to climb at 26.1 percent for state and 27.9 percent for the country. In the county the number in 2000 was 14.5 percent, but jumped to 20.3 percent in 2010; Newland and Elk Park had the lowest percentages, at 7.5 and 8.4 percent, respectively. Newland showed vast improvement between 2000 and 2010 from 7.5 to 19.2 percent; while Elk Park fell from 8.4 to 5.4 percent.

## 2.11 INCOME AND POVERTY

Table 26 compares median household income and per capita income for the years 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2010 for the municipalities, county, state, and nation as original figures. (I could not locate "adjusted for inflation" figures.) "Household income" is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as total money income received in the prior calendar year by all household members 15 years and over, tabulated for all households; median household income figures are derived from

the entire distribution of household incomes. “Median” is defined as the middle value, which means that one-half the population earns less and one-half earns more than the figure given.

When inflation is taken into account, median household income in Banner Elk during the 30-year period increased from approximately \$32,200 to \$44,200 and then dropped again in 2012 to \$40,618, while the figures for the county increased from \$33,500 to \$40,100, and then down to \$36,733 in 2012. By way of comparison, median household income in Beech Mountain experienced a slight decline between 1989 and 1999, from \$62,300 to \$62,200, but found its way back up to \$85,474 in 2012. Sugar Mountain had a greater decline during the same time period, from \$85,000 to \$49,100, but did not experience as large an increase as Beech Mountain at \$54,353 at 2012. Crossnore and Elk Park both saw an increase between 1979 and 1989, and then a decline between 1989 and 1999, to a figure of \$32,300 and \$27,200 respectively, and rebounded in 2012 to \$42,079 and \$26,188. The state and nation experienced an increase during the 30-year period. The state had a greater percentage increase, rising from \$43,500 to \$51,300 while that of the nation rose from \$50,600 to \$55,000, with both dropping in 2012 to \$47,939 and \$52,648 respectively. The municipalities whose median household income, adjusted to 2010 inflation, is greater than that of the county include (starting with the highest) Grandfather Village, Beech Mountain, Sugar Mountain, and Banner Elk. Grandfather Village and Beech Mountain are the only two municipalities whose median household income in 1999 was greater than that of the state or nation.

The per capita income figures show a somewhat different picture of economic health. “Per capita income” is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as total money income per resident of the area, including young children, elderly, and others who may not be earning money, for the calendar year prior to census day. The only municipality that experienced a decline in per capita income was Sugar Mountain, from \$52,900 in 1989 (adjusted to 2010 inflation) to \$35,400 in 1999, but rebounded in 2012 to \$45,940. Banner Elk had the lowest per capita income of all the governmental entities in 1999 (adjusted to 2010 inflation), at \$16,700 and an adjusted amount for 2012 at \$18,390—however, this was an increase over 1979, at \$10,200 and 1989, at \$10,300.

Tables 28, 29, and 30 look at individual persons, persons 65 and older, and families in poverty in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010. The “number of persons for whom poverty status is determined” is explained on the LINC web site as: “Poverty is determined for all family members (by implication from the poverty status of the family) and also for persons not in families, except for inmates of institutions, members of the armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old.”

Table 28 reflected in 1980 that Banner Elk had the highest *percentage* of persons in poverty of all the municipalities and county, at 18.4 percent, or 84 people while Newland’s percentage was 14.2 but the number of people was 107. Banner Elk’s percentage rate was also greater than that of the state (14.8) and nation (12.4). Crossnore had the lowest rate (5.9 percent) and number of people (14).

Avery County, with a rate of 30.4 percent or 483 people, had a higher rate of poverty for persons 65 and older than the municipalities, state (23.9) and nation (15.1) percent, while Banner

Elk's rate of 22.9 percent seems high; the number of people was 14. "Families in poverty" does not include people living alone; Crossnore had no families in poverty; the county had 561, or 14.5 percent of families and the figure for Banner Elk was 11 families or 9.6 percent. The state percentage of families in poverty was 11.6 and in the nation it was 9.1 percent.

Table 29 looks at these same statistics for 1990. While there was a 3.4 point decrease in the number of persons in poverty in the county, to 14.6 percent or 411 fewer people, close to seven points in Banner Elk, to 11.6 percent or 49 fewer people, and less than once percent in Elk Park, to 16.7 percent, Crossnore experienced a small increase of five people. Although the percentage rose in Newland to 16.6 percent, that was only one more person in poverty than in 1980. The new towns spanned from zero people in poverty in Grandfather Village, to 4.9 percent or five people in Sugar Mountain, and to 11.5 percent or 28 people in Beech Mountain. The three new towns had no persons 65 and older in poverty; while the percentage of persons in this category in Banner Elk rose to 30.9 percent, the number decreased by one, to 13. The county's rate declined by slightly over two points, to 28 percent, but this was an increase of 77 people; the state had a rate of 19.5 percent and the nation of 12.8 percent. Most governmental entities experienced a decrease in families in poverty; Banner Elk's declined to two families or 2.4 percent while the county's decreased by 140 families to 421, or 10.2 percent. The county's number decreased 140, to a rate of 10.2 percent; this was higher than that of the state (9.9) and nation (10.0)

Table 30 has figures for 2000. All governmental entities had an increase in the number of persons in poverty. The town with the highest percentage was Newland, at 21.2 percent; Banner Elk's was 18.7 percent, and the county's was 15.3 percent. The rates of the state and nation increased to 12.3 and 12.4 percent, respectively. Most governmental entities experienced a decline in the rate of persons 65 and older in poverty; Banner Elk's number declined by 5, to 8; Avery County's number declined by approximately 80 to 487; the state's percentage declined to 13.2 percent, and the nation's to 9.9 percent. All municipalities experienced a modest increase in the number of families in poverty, with the exception of Beech Mountain, which had a decrease of three. The county added 72 families for a rate of 10.8 percent; this was greater than that of the state (9.1) and nation (9.2).

Data for persons and families in poverty for 2010 are not entirely available as of 30 April 2012. Table 31 has information at the county, state and national levels and the municipalities should be updated soon as that information is released.

## **2.12 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Most of the statistics for this section show that all entities were thriving during the 1990-2005 timeframe. However, the 2010 Census data shows that, because of the economic downturn, all have suffered some losses. On a positive note, Banner Elk grew in population by 218 persons. Banner Elk saw a decrease in persons per square mile from 19.2 percent to 8.7 percent. We could conclude that the increase in development between 2000 and 2010 spread residents out a little more. Banner Elk held its position as to persons aged 20 years or less, but lost a significant

number in the 20 to 44 age group with a loss of 122 persons. This age group is important because these are most of our wage earners. It is important for Banner Elk to identify what would and could draw this age group back. More specifically, there are a lot of empty buildings, with Banner Elk gaining 317 units, up to 607 from 290. Of these 607 units, 316 are vacant and 218 are seasonal rentals. Of the 607 total housing units, 152 are occupied and 139 are rented. The median value of owner occupied housing went up from \$168,800 to 198,700, with an adjusted amount for inflation for the 2012 year of \$231,750. This is a far cry from the sales of units during the height of the housing market boom. Between 2000 and 2010, the asking price for a two-bedroom townhouse was \$350,000+.

Banner Elk reported a very low unemployment rate of 2.9 percent for 2010. Projected growth rates show that Banner Elk should continue to grow, however relatively slowly with a 0.1 percent change to 2020 and 0.0 percent change for 2030. Avery County's employment by industry indicates that the three highest economic sectors are educational, health and social services; retail trade, and construction. The median household income reported for 2010 was \$38,611 per person, per year. This median figure tells us that half of our population earns less and half earns more. Per capita income for Banner Elk was next to lowest as Elk Park came in at \$13,170 and Banner Elk reported \$17,481. Per capita income is a total money income per resident of the area, including young children, elderly, and others who may not be earning money. The 2010 Census data for persons in poverty were not available as of this date.

The economic impact of tourism in Avery County drew \$88.7 million and ranked 36 among the 100 counties of North Carolina. The number of acres of land that are classified as farms in Avery County have continually shrunk since the 1974 data became available. The change between 2002 and 2010 is -11.0 percent, while the average size of farms in Avery County have also shrunk by -10.7 percent. On the educational front, Banner Elk was highest reported in 2000, 46.5 percent, but has dropped significantly as of the 2010 Census data down to 29.6 percent. Lees-McRae College has steadily lost enrollment since 2000 and those numbers are reflected in the 2010 Census data.

## **2.13 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES**

### *Goal 1. Diversified economy for long-term development.*

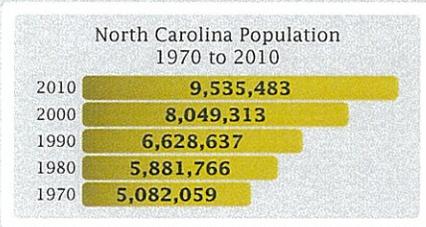
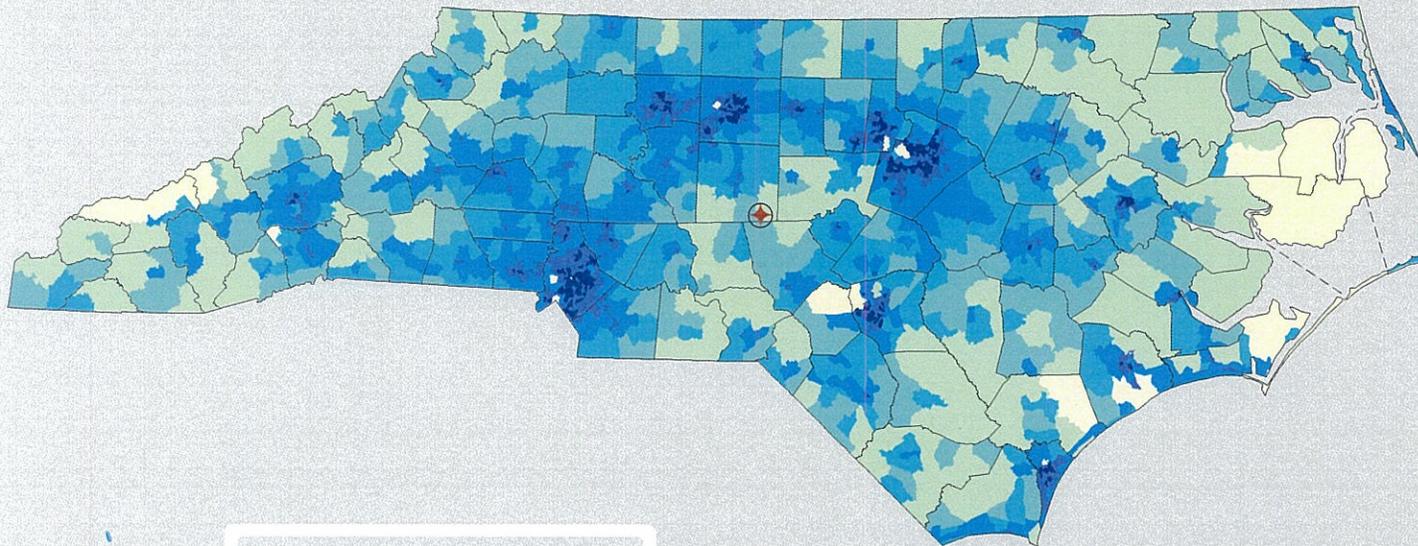
- Develop a unified economic development strategy based on the combination of recreation and natural heritage assets.
- Capitalize on economic opportunities to provide balance and stability for the future of the local economy, consistent with a unified concept.
- Encourage businesses (that are desired and non-existent within Banner Elk's jurisdiction) to locate operations within commercially zoned area.
- Support, as much as possible, the economic development of the Avery County Professional and Retail Incubator project proposed for the downtown area of Banner Elk.

*Goal 2. Identify a balance between small town residential atmosphere and tourism.*

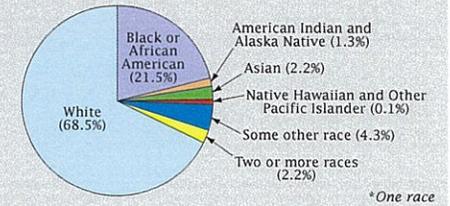
- Maintain and enhance tourism by developing a unified tourism strategy based on the combination of recreation and natural heritage assets.
- Create a special events calendar to include activities year-round.
- Create a definitive gateway into Banner Elk along the major thoroughfares, welcoming tourists to Banner Elk.

# 2010 Census: North Carolina Profile

## Population Density by Census Tract

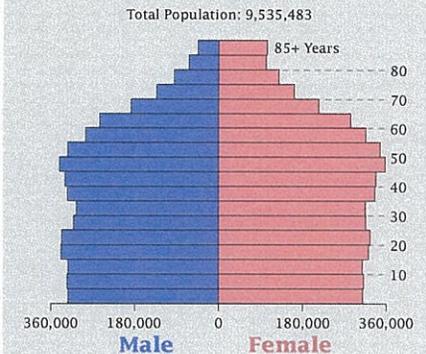


## State Race\* Breakdown

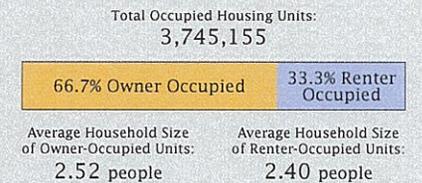


Hispanic or Latino (of any race) makes up **8.4%** of the state population.

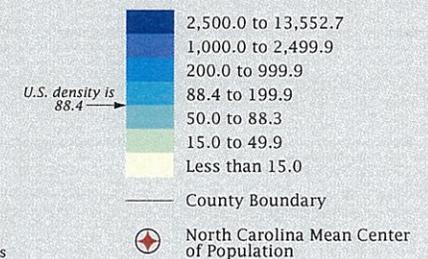
## Population by Sex and Age



## Housing Tenure



## People per Square Mile by Census Tract



**2.0 DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS  
SUPPORTING TABLE DATA**

**Table 1**

**Population Growth: Municipal, County and National Total Population and Percent Change 1980-2010**

	1980	% Change 1970-1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000	2010	% Change 2000- 2010
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>-14.2</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>-11.3</b>	<b>1,046</b>	<b>24.2</b>
Beech Mountain	190	-	239	25.8	310	29.7	320	3.2
Crossnore	297	12.5	271	-8.8	242	-10.7	192	-20.7
Elk Park	535	6.4	486	-9.2	459	-5.6	452	-1.5
Grandfather Village	24	-	34	41.7	73	114.7	25	-65.8
Newland	722	37.8	645	-10.7	704	9.1	698	-0.8
Sugar Mountain	188	-	132	-29.8	226	71.2	198	-12.4
Avery County	14,409	13.9	14,867	3.2	17,167	15.5	17,797	3.7
State of NC <sup>2</sup>	5,880,095	15.6	6,632,448	12.8	8,046,813	21.3	9,535,483	18.5
United States <sup>3</sup>	226,546,000	11.4	248,709,873	9.8	281,424,603	13.2	304,059,724	9.7

Source: Census 1980, 1990 2000, and 2010 Summary File 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>); the N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)) provided the corrected 2000 count for North Carolina. See the Appendix for more information regarding Census count corrections.

Notes:

1. The annual provisional population updates estimates for local governments, the state, and nation are provided by the N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)) in early fall. The U.S. Census Bureau also provides annual estimates (<http://www.census.gov>); however, this report uses state data.
2. The 2000 Census population for North Carolina has been corrected downwards by 2,500 people, mainly from a correction in Orange County. At this time the State Demographics Unit uses the figure of 8,046,813 as noted above for the 2000 population for North Carolina as opposed to the original figure of 8,049,313. The State Demographics unit continues to make adjustments at its website as new information is received, so minor data differences can exist between the population figures of the US Census Bureau and State Demographics Unit.
3. The 2000 Census population for the United States as a whole has been corrected upwards by 2,697 people from 281,421,906 to 281,424,603.

**Table 2**  
**WNC Regional Population Growth 1980-1990**

County	1980 Population	1990 Population	Growth	% Growth	Births	Deaths	Natural Growth	Net Migration	Migration as % of Growth
Avery <sup>1</sup>	14,409	14,867	458	3.2	1,917	1,311	606	-148	See Note
Buncombe <sup>2</sup>	160,897	174,357	13,460	7.7	21,217	17,031	4,186	9,695	69.8
Cherokee	18,933	20,170	1,237	6.5	2,223	1,920	303	934	75.5
Clay	6,619	7,155	536	8.1	764	727	37	499	93.1
Cleveland <sup>1,2</sup>	83,435	84,958	1,278	1.5	11,647	7,790	3,857	-2,579	See Note
Graham <sup>1</sup>	7,217	7,196	-21	-0.3	960	657	303	-324	See Note
Haywood <sup>2</sup>	46,495	46,948	447	1.0	5,165	4,790	375	72	16.1
Henderson <sup>2</sup>	58,617	69,747	11,130	19.0	7,659	7,016	643	10,066	93.9
Jackson <sup>2</sup>	25,811	26,835	1,024	4.0	2,914	2,111	803	232	22.4
McDowell <sup>1</sup>	35,135	35,681	546	1.6	4,484	3,187	1,297	-751	See Note
Macon <sup>2</sup>	20,178	23,504	3,321	16.5	2,371	2,434	-63	3,384	101.9
Madison	16,827	16,953	126	0.7	1,840	1,735	105	21	16.7
Mitchell <sup>1</sup>	14,428	14,433	5	0.0	1,840	1,574	266	-261	See Note
Polk <sup>2</sup>	12,984	14,458	1,432	11.0	1,358	1,807	-449	1,881	131.4
Rutherford <sup>2</sup>	53,787	56,956	3,132	5.8	7,315	5,595	1,720	1,412	45.1
Swain	10,283	11,268	985	9.6	1,772	1,332	440	545	55.3
Transylvania	23,417	25,520	2,103	9.0	2,836	2,095	741	1,362	64.8
Watauga	31,666	36,952	5,286	16.7	3,683	2,089	1,594	3,692	69.8
Yancey	14,934	15,419	485	3.2	1,755	1,359	396	89	18.4
North Carolina	5,880,095	6,632,448	752,353	12.8	901,708	527,545	374,163	378,190	50.3

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Notes: 1. In Avery, Cleveland, Graham, McDowell and Mitchell counties, the number of people moving out of the county was greater than the natural growth, resulting in a negative number for net migration.

2. In Buncombe, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Polk and Rutherford Counties, the Census Bureau issued post-1990 boundary corrections or shifts that altered the county populations. The largest such correction occurred between Buncombe and Henderson Counties when it was determined that almost 500 people counted in Buncombe County should have been listed in Henderson County; Cleveland County had a correction of 245 people; the other corrections involved between 11 to 50 people. The totals listed above reflect the corrected 1990 figure; however, the numbers for growth, births, deaths and other statistics listed above have not been changed by the State Data Center. The revised/corrected figures for growth and growth rate have been calculated for Buncombe and Henderson statistics for the purposes of this report and are shown above.

**Table 3**  
**WNC Regional Population Growth 1990-2000**

County	1990 Population	2000 Population	Growth	% Growth	Births	Deaths	Natural Growth	Net Migration	Migration as % of Growth
<b>Avery</b>	<b>14,867</b>	<b>17,167</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>2,138</b>	<b>92.9</b>
Buncombe <sup>1</sup>	174,357	206,330	31,973	18.3	23,473	20,219	3,254	28,719	89.8
Cherokee	20,170	24,298	4,128	20.5	2,484	2,542	-58	4,186	101.4
Clay	7,155	8,775	1,620	22.6	672	892	-220	1,840	113.6
Cleveland	84,958	96,287	11,329	13.3	12,983	9,174	3,809	7,520	66.4
Graham	7,196	7,993	797	11.1	938	890	48	749	93.9
Haywood	46,948	54,033	7,085	15.1	5,424	5,768	-344	7,429	104.9
Henderson <sup>1</sup>	69,747	89,173	19,426	27.9	8,816	9,604	-788	20,214	104.1
Jackson	26,835	33,121	6,286	23.4	3,198	2,663	535	5,751	91.5
McDowell	35,681	42,151	6,470	18.1	4,800	3,777	1,023	5,447	84.2
Macon <sup>1</sup>	23,504	29,808	6,307	26.8	2,692	3,264	-572	6,879	109.1
Madison	16,953	19,635	2,682	15.8	2,075	2,014	61	2,621	97.7
Mitchell	14,433	15,687	1,254	8.7	1,642	1,817	-175	1,429	113.9
Polk	14,458	18,324	3,866	26.7	1,643	2,314	-671	4,537	117.4
Rutherford <sup>1</sup>	56,956	62,901	5,943	10.4	8,051	6,663	1,388	4,555	76.6
Swain	11,268	12,968	1,700	15.1	1,700	1,416	284	1,416	83.3
Transylvania	25,520	29,334	3,814	14.9	2,863	2,926	-63	3,877	101.7
Watauga <sup>1</sup>	36,952	42,693	5,743	15.5	3,516	2,564	952	4,791	83.4
Yancey	15,419	17,774	2,355	15.3	1,838	1,641	197	2,158	91.6
North Carolina <sup>2</sup>	6,632,448	8,046,813	1,416,865	21.3	1,054,045	638,171	415,874	1,000,991	70.6

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Notes: 1. Buncombe (loss of 41, reassigned to Henderson), Henderson (gain of 41 from Buncombe), Macon (loss of 3), Rutherford (gain of 2) and Watauga (loss of 2) all had 2000 Census corrections issued by the Census Bureau and the corrected totals are given above; more information can be found at the State Data Center website listed above.

2. North Carolina's count was corrected downwards by approximately 2,500 people as shown above. The State Data Center did re-calculate the other statistics in this Table including growth, percent growth, births, deaths and migration.

**Table 4**  
**WNC Regional Population Growth 2000-2010**

County	2000 Population	2010 Population	Growth	% Growth	Births	Deaths	Natural Growth	Net Migration <sup>1</sup>	Migration as % of Growth <sup>1</sup>
<b>Avery</b>	<b>17,167</b>	<b>17,812</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>130</b>
Buncombe <sup>1</sup>	206,330	239,179	32,849	8.6	23,788	20,602	3,181	25,695	78
Cherokee	24,298	27,527	3,229	8.8	2,372	2,882	-510	3,441	106
Clay	8,775	10,622	1,847	8.2	763	1,071	-308	2,026	110
Cleveland	96,287	98,249	1,962	9.6	10,846	9,291	1,555	288	14
Graham	7,993	8,888	895	9.0	881	877	4	778	87
Haywood	54,033	59,148	5,115	9.1	5,158	6,035	-877	5,557	109
Henderson <sup>1</sup>	89,173	107,177	18,004	8.3	10,525	10,915	-390	16,703	93
Jackson	33,121	40,480	7,359	8.2	3,499	2,842	657	5,785	79
McDowell	42,151	45,031	2,880	9.4	4,646	3,976	670	2,015	70
Macon <sup>1</sup>	29,808	33,946	4,138	8.8	3,148	3,617	-469	4,603	111
Madison	19,635	20,795	1,160	9.4	1,835	1,989	-154	1,215	105
Mitchell <sup>3</sup>	15,687	15,588	-99	-1.0	1,474	1,872	-398	-269	See note 3
Polk	18,324	20,588	2,264	8.9	1,457	2,530	-1073	3,074	136
Rutherford <sup>1</sup>	62,901	68,006	5,105	9.3	6,843	7,010	-167	4,398	86
Swain	12,968	14,020	1,052	9.3	1,627	1,561	66	799	76
Transylvania	29,334	33,189	3,855	8.8	2,570	3,251	-681	4,189	109
Watauga <sup>1</sup>	42,693	51,326	8,633	8.3	3,295	2,681	614	6,767	78
Yancey	17,774	17,802	28	10.0	1,362	1,750	-388	247	882
North Carolina <sup>2</sup>	8,046,813	9,586,227	1,539,414	8.4	1,112,599	666,542	446,057	932,855	61

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Notes: 1. These totals are only available through 2005 all had 2010 Census corrections issued by the Census Bureau and the corrected totals are given above; more information can be found at the State Data Center website listed above.

2. North Carolina's count was corrected downwards by approximately 2,500 people as shown above. The State Data Center did re-calculate the other statistics in this Table including growth, percent growth, births, deaths and migration.

3. In Mitchell County, since growth was negative, the calculation could not be done.

**Table 5**  
**WNC Region Population Density in 1980, 2000, and 2010**

<b>County</b>	<b>Land Area (Sq. Mi.)</b>	<b>Persons/Sq. Mile 1980</b>	<b>Persons/Sq. Mile 2000</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>Persons/Sq. Mile 2010</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Avery</b>	<b>247.00</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>75.54</b>	<b>8.7</b>
Buncombe	655.99	244.2	314.5	28.9	349.64	11.1
Cherokee	455.19	41.9	53.4	27.4	61.35	14.9
Clay	214.70	30.9	40.9	32.3	49.83	-21.0
Cleveland	464.63	178.3	207.2	16.2	213.85	3.2
Graham	292.07	25.0	27.4	9.6	28.59	4.3
Haywood	553.66	83.8	97.6	16.5	106.68	9.3
Henderson	374.00	156.2	238.4	52.6	284.60	1.9
Jackson	490.71	52.7	67.5	28.1	76.77	1.4
McDowell	441.68	80.4	95.4	18.7	68.54	-2.8
Macon	516.47	39.0	57.7	47.9	47.18	-1.8
Madison	449.42	37.3	43.7	17.2	102.06	133.5
Mitchell	221.43	65.0	70.8	8.9	72.80	2.8
Polk	237.85	54.6	77.0	41.0	84.55	9.8
Rutherford	564.12	94.7	111.5	17.7	114.77	2.9
Swain	528.10	19.5	24.6	26.2	27.04	6.5
Transylvania	378.39	61.9	77.5	25.2	81.65	-6.7
Watauga	312.51	100.8	136.6	35.5	140.72	3.0
Yancey	312.45	47.6	56.9	19.5	60.24	5.9
State of NC	48,710.88	120.4	165.2	37.2	191.93	16.2

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

**Table 6**  
**Comparison of 2000 and 2010 Census Data for Race and Hispanic Origin**

	White				Black				Hispanic Origin (of any race)				Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Some Other Race			
	2000	%	2010	%	2000	%	2010	%	2000	%	2010	%	2000	%	2010	%
<b>Banner Elk<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>732</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Beech Mountain	302	97.4	313	97.8	0	--	3	0.9	3	1.0	10	3.1	0	--	4	1.2
Crossnore	227	93.8	165	85.9	1	0.4	18	9.4	11	4.5	8	4.2	10	4.1	6	3.1
Elk Park	457	99.6	442	97.8	0	--	1	0.2	11	2.4	40	8.8	2	0.4	22	4.8
Grandfather Village	70	95.9	25	100	0	--	0	--	4	5.5	0	--	1	1.4	0	--
Newland	697	99.0	620	88.8	0	--	6	0.9	11	1.6	71	10.2	7	1.0	66	9.5
Sugar Mountain	224	99.1	179	90.4	0	--	4	2.0	0	--	8	4.0	1	0.4	13	6.5
Avery County	16,129	94.0	16,364	91.9	598	3.5	709	4.0	413	2.4	797	4.5	318	1.9	574	3.1
State of NC	5,804,656	72.1	6,528,950	68.5	1,737,545	21.6	2,048,628	21.5	378,963	4.7	800,120	8.4	403,852	5.0	751,706	7.9
United States	211,460,626	75.1	223,553,265	72.4	34,658,190	12.3	38,929,319	12.6	35,305,818	12.5	50,477,594	16.3	28,476,862	10.1	37,253,881	12.1

Source: Census 1990 Summary Tape File 1 (complete count data); 2000 and 2010, Summary File 1 (complete count data), prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov> and [factfinder2.census.gov](http://factfinder2.census.gov)); and the "Log Into NC" website, [http://data.osbm.state.nc.us/pls/linc/dyn\\_linc\\_main.show](http://data.osbm.state.nc.us/pls/linc/dyn_linc_main.show).

Notes: Also, "Hispanic" is considered to be a place of origin, not a race. Therefore in 2000 and 2010 the numbers may not add up to the total population for a governmental unit, and the percentages may not add up to 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

**Table 7**  
**Population Characteristics—Age Groups, Median Age<sup>1</sup> 1990**

	Age Groups										Median Age
	< 21 Years <sup>2</sup>		21 to 44		45 to 64		65 to 84		85 +		
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>20.1</b>
Beech Mountain	40	16.7	75	31.4	88	36.8	36	15.1	0	0	45.4
Crossnore	102	37.6	85	31.4	38	14.0	41	15.1	5	1.9	25.0
Elk Park	138	28.4	170	35.0	112	23.0	63	13.0	3	-6	38.9
Grandfather Village	11	32.3	13	38.2	6	17.7	4	11.3	0	0	36.7
Newland	183	50.9	200	55.7	152	42.3	99	27.6	11	3.1	38.7
Sugar Mountain	25	18.9	49	37.1	39	29.6	18	13.6	1	.8	36.3
Avery County	4,489	30.2	5,129	34.5	3,068	20.6	1,972	13.3	209	1.4	34.4
State of NC	1,606,149	24.2	2,932,539	44.3	1,285,608	19.4	638,535	9.6	165,806	2.5	33.2
United States	63,604,432	25.6	107,492,601	43.2	46,371,009	18.7	24,227,927	9.7	7,013,904	2.8	32.8

Source: Census 1990, Summary File 1, General Profile 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).  
Produced by the N.C. State Data Center ([www.census.state.nc.us](http://www.census.state.nc.us)).

Notes: 1. The “median” is defined as the middle value when data is arranged from lowest to highest. In other words, half the population is older and half is younger than the median age.

2. Between the 1990 and 2000 Census, the Census Bureau changed the years in age groups. In 1990, the breakdowns made it possible to easily calculate those who were younger than 21; in 2000, this changed to those younger than 20. Thus it is not possible to directly compare the age groups of less than 20 (or 21) and 20 (or 21) to 44 between these two Census years, however, there is only one year’s difference.

**Table 8**  
**Population Characteristics—Age Groups, Median Age<sup>1</sup> 2000**

	Age Groups										Median Age
	< 20 Years <sup>2</sup>		20 to 44		45 to 64		65 to 84		85 +		
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>21.8</b>
Beech Mountain	42	13.6	92	29.7	105	33.4	70	22.6	1	.3	50.8
Crossnore	79	32.6	75	31.0	58	24.0	23	9.5	7	2.9	33.5
Elk Park	119	25.9	162	35.3	109	23.6	65	14.2	4	.9	38.1
Grandfather Village	16	21.9	8	11.0	27	37.0	22	30.1	0	0	53.2
Newland	161	22.9	240	34.1	161	27.9	131	18.6	11	1.6	39.8
Sugar Mountain	24	10.6	95	42.0	64	28.3	42	18.6	1	.4	43.0
Avery County	3,860	22.4	6,416	37.4	4,193	24.4	2,404	14.0	294	1.7	38.4
State of NC	1,964,047	24.4	3,307,356	41.1	1,808,862	22.5	735,221	9.1	233,827	2.9	35.3
United States	72,142,757	25.6	112,550,338	40.0	61,749,839	22.0	25,886,932	9.2	9,092,040	3.2	35.3

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 1, General Profile 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).  
 Produced by the N.C. State Data Center ([www.census.state.nc.us](http://www.census.state.nc.us)).

Note: 1. The “median” is defined as the middle value when data is arranged from lowest to highest. In other words, half the population is older and half is younger than the median age.

2. Between the 1990 and 2000 Census, the Census Bureau changed the years in age groups. In 1990, the breakdowns made it possible to easily calculate those who were younger than 21; in 2000, this changed to those younger than 20. Thus it is not possible to directly compare the age groups of less than 20 (or 21) and 20 (or 21) to 44 between these two Census years, however, there is only one year’s difference.

**Table 9**  
**Population Characteristics—Age Groups, Median Age<sup>1</sup> 2010**

	Age Groups										Median Age
	< 20 Years <sup>2</sup>		20 to 44		45 to 64		65 to 84		85 +		
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>22.0</b>
Beech Mountain	45	14.2	68	21.2	133	41.5	73	22.8	1	.3	52.0
Crossnore	86	44.8	42	21.9	37	19.3	24	12.5	3	1.6	27.0
Elk Park	102	22.5	125	27.6	144	31.9	68	15.0	13	2.9	44.9
Grandfather Village	0	0.0	3	12.0	7	28.0	14	56.0	1	4.0	71.5
Newland	161	23.0	218	31.1	187	26.7	112	16.0	20	2.9	40.5
Sugar Mountain	34	17.2	83	42.0	49	24.8	29	14.5	3	1.5	37.3
Avery County	3,564	19.9	5,980	33.6	5,156	29.0	2,730	15.4	367	2.1	42.3
State of NC	2,258,680	26.8	3,235,317	33.9	2,507,407	26.2	1,086,618	11.3	147,461	1.5	37.4
United States	83,267,556	26.9	103,720,553	33.6	81,489,445	26.4	34,774,551	11.3	5,493,433	1.8	37.2

Source: Census 2010, Summary File 1, General Profile 1, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).  
Produced by the N.C. State Data Center ([www.census.state.nc.us](http://www.census.state.nc.us)).

Note: 1. The “median” is defined as the middle value when data is arranged from lowest to highest. In other words, half the population is older and half is younger than the median age.

**Table 10**  
**General Housing Characteristics—Housing Units, Households, Tenure 1990**

	Total Housing Units				Occupied				Group Quarters	
	Total	Vacant	Seasonal	% Seasonal	Total	Owner Number	Owner %	Renter Number		Renter %
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>581</b>
Beech Mountain	1,477	1,368	1,274	86.3	109	86	78.9	23	21.1	0
Crossnore	107	18	10	9.3	89	76	85.4	13	14.6	67
Elk Park	220	22	7	3.2	198	151	76.3	47	23.7	0
Grandfather Village	28	14	5	17.9	14	9	64.3	5	35.7	0
Newland	334	50	13	3.9	284	196	69.0	88	31.0	9
Sugar Mountain	1,090	1,025	996	91.4	65	49	75.4	16	24.6	0
Avery County	8,923	3,403	2,697	30.2	5,520	4,471	80.9	1,049	19.1	965
North Carolina	2,818,193	301,167	98,714	3.5	2,517,026	1,711,817	68.0	805,209	32.0	223,900
United States	102,263,678	10,316,268	3,081,923	3.0	91,947,410	59,024,811	64.2	32,922,599	35.8	6,697,744

Source: Census 1990, Table DP 1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 1990, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Table 11**  
**General Housing Characteristics—Housing Units, Households, Tenure 2000**

	Total Housing Units				Occupied					
	Total	Vacant	Seasonal	% Seasonal	Total	Owner Number	Owner %	Renter Number	Renter %	Group Quarters
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>353</b>
Beech Mountain	1,868	1,723	1,694	90.7	145	123	84.8	22	15.2	0
Crossnore	119	23	14	11.8	96	67	69.8	29	30.2	10
Elk Park	237	32	11	4.6	205	149	72.7	56	27.3	0
Grandfather Village	377	345	343	91.0	32	32	100	0	0	0
Newland	363	29	13	3.6	334	226	67.7	108	32.3	5
Sugar Mountain	1,212	1,091	1,023	84.4	121	91	75.2	30	24.8	0
Avery County	11,911	5,379	4,751	39.9	6,532	5,265	80.6	1,267	19.4	1,874
North Carolina	3,523,944	391,931	134,870	3.8	3,132,013	2,172,355	69.4	959,658	30.6	253,881
United States	115,904,641	10,424,540	3,578,718	3.1	105,480,101	69,815,753	66.2	35,664,348	33.8	7,778,633

Source: Census 2000, Table DP 1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

Notes:

1. “Group Quarters Population: Actual census counts as of April 1 of the census year of persons in living arrangements, such as nursing homes or rooming houses, which are not households... This category includes persons in military barracks, on ships, in college dormitories, sorority and fraternity houses, missions, etc.” (Federal Agency Data: Bureau of the Census – Census of Population and Housing)

**Table 12**  
**General Housing Characteristics—Housing Units, Households, Tenure 2010**

	Total Housing Units				Occupied					
	Total	Vacant	Seasonal	% Seasonal	Total	Owner Number	Owner%	Renter Number	Renter %	Group Quarters
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>372</b>
Beech Mountain	2,287	2,133	2,049	89.6	154	127	82.5	27	17.5	0
Crossnore	87	33	24	27.6	54	44	81.5	10	18.5	74
Elk Park	250	207	7	2.8	207	139	67.1	68	32.9	0
Grandfather Village	409	394	394	26.3	15	15	100	--	--	0
Newland	362	52	16	4.4	310	183	59.0	127	41.0	31
Sugar Mountain	1540	1446	1358	88.2	94	64	68.1	30	31.9	0
Avery County	13890	7226	6004	43.2	6664	5097	76.5	1567	23.5	2,414
North Carolina	4,327,528	582,373	191,508	4.4	3,745,155	2,497,900	66.7	1,247,255	33.3	257,246
United States	131,704,730	14,988,438	4,649,298	3.5	116,716,292	75,986,074	65.1	40,730,218	34.9	7,987,323

Source: Census 2010, Table DP 1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2010, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

Notes:

1. "Group Quarters Population: Actual census counts as of April 1 of the census year of persons in living arrangements, such as nursing homes or rooming houses, which are not households... This category includes persons in military barracks, on ships, in college dormitories, sorority and fraternity houses, missions, etc." (Federal Agency Data: Bureau of the Census – Census of Population and Housing)

**Table 13**  
**Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units**  
**1980, 1990 and 2000 Data & Adjusted for Inflation to 2000**  
**and Average Household Size<sup>1</sup>**

	Owner Occupied Median Value						Average Household Size		
	1980	1980 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1990	1990 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	2000	2000 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1980	1990	2000
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>42,600</b>	<b>112,800</b>	<b>71,900</b>	<b>120,000</b>	<b>168,800</b>	<b>213,900</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>2.16</b>
Beech Mountain	--		97,100	162,100	133,800	169,500	--	2.27	2.11
Crossnore	30,900	81,800	52,100	87,000	84,000	106,428	2.39	2.45	2.43
Elk Park	23,800	63,000	40,000	66,800	71,900	91,100	2.82	2.48	2.33
Grandfather Village	--		500,000	834,700	833,300	1,055,800	--	2.89	2.28
Newland	33,300	88,200	57,200	95,500	83,600	105,900	2.67	2.34	2.09
Sugar Mountain	--		115,600	193,000	156,300	198,000	--	2.04	1.84
Avery County	28,700	76,000	55,100	92,000	88,000	111,500	2.79	2.57	2.37
State of NC	36,000	95,300	65,800	109,800	108,300	137,200	2.78	2.54	2.49
United States	47,200	124,500	79,100	132,000	119,600	151,500	2.75	2.63	2.59

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>) for owner-occupied median value. For average household size data, see Summary Tape File 1.

Notes: 1. "Average household size" was called "Persons per household" in the 1990 Census. It is defined by the Bureau of the Census as the average number of persons per household for the area. Only occupied housing units are considered to be households.

2. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), has developed a consumer price index inflation multiplier <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> for converting dollar figures in one year to comparable dollars in another year. This was the method used to convert dollar amounts from previous years to the year 2010. The numbers are rounded up or down to the nearest \$100.

**Table 14**  
**Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units**  
**2000, and 2010 Data & Adjusted for Inflation to 2010**  
**and Average Household Size<sup>1</sup>**

	Owner Occupied Median Value				Average Household Size			
	2000	2000 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	2010	2010 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>168,800</b>	<b>213,900</b>	<b>198,700</b>	<b>231,750</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>2.33</b>
Beech Mountain	133,800	169,500	306,500	169,430	--	2.27	2.11	2.18
Crossnore	84,000	106,428	133,300	106,369	2.39	2.45	2.43	2.26
Elk Park	71,900	91,100	96,000	91,047	2.82	2.48	2.33	2.27
Grandfather Village	833,300	1,055,800	690,200	1,055,203	--	2.89	2.28	1.71
Newland	83,600	105,900	157,100	105,862	2.67	2.34	2.09	2.74
Sugar Mountain	156,300	198,000	233,300	197,922	--	2.04	1.84	1.81
Avery County	88,000	111,500	155,100	111,434	2.79	2.57	2.37	2.17
State of NC	108,300	137,200	154,200	137,140	2.78	2.54	2.49	2.54
United States	119,600	151,500	188,400	151,449	2.75	2.63	2.59	2.67

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>) for owner-occupied median value. For average household size data, see Summary Tape File 1.

Notes: 1. “Average household size” was called “Persons per household” in the 1990 Census. It is defined by the Bureau of the Census as the average number of persons per household for the area. Only occupied housing units are considered to be households.

2. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), has developed a consumer price index inflation multiplier <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> for converting dollar figures in one year to comparable dollars in another year. This was the method used to convert dollar amounts from previous years to the year 2010. The numbers are rounded up or down to the nearest \$100.

**Table 15**  
**Labor Force Characteristics for Persons 16 Years and Over, 1990**

	Population 16 Years and Over	% Total Pop.	In Labor Force	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	% Unempl. Civil. Labor Force	Armed Forces	Not In Labor Force	% Not In Labor Force
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>89.4</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>63.5</b>
Beech Mountain	201	84.1	116	116	113	3	2.6	0	85	42.3
Crossnore	186	68.6	111	111	103	8	7.2	0	75	40.3
Elk Park	372	76.5	221	221	216	5	2.3	0	151	40.6
Grandfather Village	8	23.5	8	8	8	0	0	0	0	0
Newland	522	80.9	302	302	277	25	8.3	0	220	42.1
Sugar Mountain	83	62.9	66	66	61	5	7.6	0	17	20.5
Avery County	11,856	79.7	7,071	7,058	6,629	429	6.1	13	4,785	40.4
North Carolina	5,203,230	78.4	3,519,927	3,401,495	3,238,414	163,081	4.8	118,432	1,683,303	32.3
United States	191,829,271	77.1	125,182,378	123,473,450	115,681,202	7,792,248	6.3	1,708,928	66,646,893	34.7

Source: Census 1990, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Table 16**  
**Labor Force Characteristics for Persons 16 Years and Over, 2000**

	Population 16 Years and Over	Percent Total Pop.	In Labor Force	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Percent Unempl. Civil. Labor Force	Armed Forces	Not In Labor Force	% Not In Labor Force
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>29.0</b>
Beech Mountain	321	103.5	179	179	167	12	6.7	0	142	44.2
Crossnore	158	65.3	103	103	101	2	1.9	0	55	34.8
Elk Park	330	71.9	208	208	195	13	6.3	0	122	37.0
Grandfather Village	67	91.8	33	33	33	0	0	0	34	50.7
Newland	579	82.2	321	319	297	22	6.9	2	258	44.6
Sugar Mountain	203	90.0	135	135	115	20	14.8	0	68	33.5
Avery County	14,186	--	7,755	7,738	7,196	542	7.0	17	6,431	45.3
North Carolina	6,290,618	78.2	4,130,579	4,039,732	3,824,741	214,991	5.3	90,847	2,160,039	34.3
United States	217,168,077	77.2	138,820,935	137,668,798	129,721,512	7,947,286	5.8	1,152,137	78,347,142	36.1

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Table 17**  
**Labor Force Characteristics for Persons 16 Years and Over, 2010**

	Population 16 Years and Over	Percent Total Pop.	In Labor Force	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Percent Unempl. Civil. Labor Force	Armed Forces	Not In Labor Force	% Not In Labor Force
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>84.0</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>42.2</b>
Beech Mountain	538	59.0	259	259	238	21	3.9	0	279	51.9
Crossnore	144	75.0	120	120	120	0	0	0	24	16.7
Elk Park	495	91.0	244	244	221	23	4.6	0	251	50.7
Grandfather Village	118	91.0	23	23	23	0	0	0	95	80.5
Newland	752	93.0	510	510	495	15	2.0	0	242	32.2
Sugar Mountain	435	46.0	218	218	206	12	2.8	0	217	49.9
Avery County	15,215	89.0	8,147	8,112	7,552	560	3.7	35	7,068	46.5
North Carolina	7,526,813	91.0	4,814,286	4,727,122	4,128,576	598,546	8.0	87,164	2,712,527	36.0
United States	243,832,923	79.0	156,966,769	155,917,013	139,033,928	16,883,085	10.8	1,049,756	86,866,154	35.6

Source: Census 2010, Summary File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Table 18**  
**Actual/Projected Avery County Population to 2030**

Year	Population	Growth		Births	Deaths	Natural Growth	Net Migration		Median Age
		Amt. Since Previous Census	%				Amount	As % of Growth	
1990	14,867	438	3.2	1,917	1,311	606	-148	-32.3	34.99
2000	17,167	2,300	15.5	1,834	1,671	163	2,137	14.4	38.4
2010	18,287	1,120	6.5	1,759	1,963	-204	1,324	7.7	42.8
2020	18,300	13	.1	1,732	2,176	-444	457	2.5	45.84
2030	18,306	6	0.0	1,697	2,439	-742	748	4.1	46.3

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Note: These figures are updated annually by the State Demographics unit; these figures reflect data updated in 2010.

**Table 19**  
**Actual/Projected North Carolina Population to 2030**

Year	Population	Growth		Births	Deaths	Natural Growth	Net Migration		Median Age
		Amt. Since Previous Census	%				Amount	As % of Growth	
1990	6,632,448	752,353	12.8	901,708	527,545	374,163	378,190	50.3	33.2
2000	8,046,813	1,414,365	21.3	1,055,655	638,777	416,878	997,487	70.5	35.3
2010	9,519,300	1,471,536	18.3	1,269,465	768,168	501,297	970,239	12.1	37.22
2020	10,879,960	1,360,660	14.3	1,399,057	930,800	468,257	892,403	9.4	37.99
2030	12,204,161	1,324,201	12.2	1,538,175	1,156,229	381,946	942,255	8.7	38.6

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Note: These figures are updated annually by the State Demographics unit; these figures reflect data updated in 2010.

**Table 20**  
**Projected Growth Rates for Selected Counties in WNC Region**

County	April 1990	April 2000	% Change	Est. 2010	% Change	Est. 2020	% Change	Est. 2030	% Change
<b>Avery</b>	<b>14,687</b>	<b>17,167</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>18,287</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>18,300</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>18,306</b>	<b>0</b>
Buncombe	174,357	206,330	18.3	233,154	13.0	258,170	10.7	279,890	8.4
Cherokee	20,170	24,298	20.5	27,334	12.5	30,968	13.3	34,565	11.6
Clay	7,155	8,775	22.6	10,732	22.3	12,602	17.4	14,472	14.8
Cleveland	84,958	96,287	13.3	99,150	3.0	102,704	3.6	104,475	1.7
Graham	7,196	7,993	11.1	8,379	4.8	8,888	6.1	9,395	5.7
Haywood	46,948	54,033	15.1	58,368	8.0	62,361	6.8	66,354	6.4
Henderson	69,747	89,173	27.9	107,264	20.3	125,049	16.6	142,656	14.1
Jackson	26,835	33,121	23.4	38,535	16.4	43,075	11.8	47,251	9.7
McDowell	35,681	42,151	18.1	45,096	7.0	47,749	5.9	50,429	5.6
Macon	23,504	29,811	26.8	35,192	18.1	40,670	15.6	46,095	13.3
Madison	16,953	19,635	15.8	20,984	6.9	22,161	5.6	23,096	4.2
Mitchell	14,433	15,687	8.7	16,056	2.4	16,702	4	17,353	3.9
Polk	14,458	18,324	26.7	19,516	6.5	21,244	8.9	22,970	8.1
Rutherford	56,956	62,899	10.4	64,128	2.0	67,051	4.6	69,972	4.4
Swain	11,268	12,968	15.1	14,300	10.3	15,927	11.4	17,540	10.1
Transylvania	25,520	29,334	14.9	31,371	6.9	34,001	8.4	36,605	7.7
Watauga	36,952	42,695	15.5	45,750	7.2	49,410	8	53,076	7.4
Yancey	15,419	17,774	15.3	18,649	4.9	19,596	5.1	20,543	4.8
State of NC	6,632,448	8,049,313	21.4	9,519,300	18.3	10,879,960	14.3	12,204,161	12.2

Source: N.C. State Data Center, State Demographics unit ([www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)).

Note: These figures are updated annually by the State Demographics unit; these figures reflect data updated in 2010.

**Table 21**  
**Economic Impact of Tourism on Avery County Selected Years 1991 - 2009**  
**and Adjusted for Inflation to 2010<sup>1</sup>**

	1991	1995	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009
Domestic Tourism Impact <sup>2</sup>	\$44.0 m	\$62.8 m	\$75.7 m	\$82.8 m	\$90.7 m	\$89.8 m	\$88.7 m
<b>Adjusted for inflation</b>	<b>\$70.4 m</b>	<b>\$89.8 m</b>	<b>\$95.8 m</b>	<b>\$92.4 m</b>	<b>\$95.4 m</b>	<b>\$90.9 m</b>	<b>\$90.1 m</b>
County's rank among 100 counties	33	30	32	36	37	38	36
Number jobs directly attributable to tourism	1,200	1,370	1,360	1,270	1,230	1,190	1,210
Payroll generated <sup>2</sup>	\$12.7 m	\$17.1 m	\$22.3 m	\$21.9 m	\$22.1 m	\$22.1 m	\$21.8 m
<b>Adjusted for inflation</b>	<b>\$20.3 m</b>	<b>\$24.5 m</b>	<b>\$28.2 m</b>	<b>\$24.5 m</b>	<b>\$23.2 m</b>	<b>\$22.4 m</b>	<b>\$22.2 m</b>
State and local tax revenues from travel <sup>2</sup>	\$3.2	\$5.3	\$7.7	\$8.2	\$8.7	\$8.7	\$8.9
<b>Adjusted for inflation</b>	<b>\$5.1 m</b>	<b>\$7.6 m</b>	<b>\$9.8 m</b>	<b>\$9.2 m</b>	<b>\$9.2 m</b>	<b>\$8.8 m</b>	<b>\$9.0 m</b>

Source: NC Department of Commerce; "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties" study. This study was prepared for the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development by the Travel Industry Association of America. For more information, see <http://www.nccommerce.com/en/TourismServices/PromoteTravelAndTourismIndustry/TourismResearch/visitorspending.htm>.

Notes:

1. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), has developed a consumer price index inflation multiplier <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> for converting dollar figures in one year to comparable dollars in another year. This was the method used to convert dollar amounts from previous years to the year 2010.
2. All numbers are in millions of dollars.

**Table 22**  
**Land in Farms in Avery County**

	1974	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997 <sup>1</sup>		2002	% Change 1982-2002	2010	% Change 2002-2010
						Original Data	Revised Data				
Number of farms in county	341	313	291	280	274	429	535	495	+ 70.4%	477	-10.4
Land in farms (acres)	29,491	23,280	20,290	20,826	19,712	27,037	31,214	30,614	+ 33.6%	27,818	-11.0
Average size of farm	86	74	70	74	72	63	58	62	- 21.6%	58	-10.7
Proportion in farms as compared to total acres in county	18.8%	14.8%	12.8%	13.2%	12.5%	17.1%	19.7%	.02	+ 4.4%	.02	0

Source: Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture. For the years including 1992 and afterwards, see their website at [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census\\_of\\_Agriculture/index.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census_of_Agriculture/index.asp).

Notes:

1. The National Agricultural Statistics Service of USDA modified the way it collects data between 1997 and 2002 to more accurately reflect the number of smaller farms. This means that the figures originally released in the 1997 Census of Agriculture for the number of farms and land in farms have been revised upwards in an effort to reflect this new methodology.

**Table 23**  
**Land in Farms in North Carolina**

	1974	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997 <sup>1</sup>		2002	2007	% Change 1987-2007
						Original Data	Revised Data			
Number of farms in state	91,280	89,367	72,792	59,284	51,854	49,406	59,120	53,930	52,913	- 10.8%
Land in farms (acres)	11,243,933	11,352,783	10,320,832	9,447,705	8,936,015	9,122,379	9,444,867	9,079,001	8,474,671	- 10.3%
Average size of farm	123	127	142	159	172	185	160	168	160	0.6%
Proportion in farms as compared to total acres in state	36.0%	36.3%	33.0%	30.2%	28.7%	29.3%	30.3%	29.0%	27.1%	- 3.1%

Source: Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture. For the years including 1992 and afterwards, see their website at [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census\\_of\\_Agriculture/index.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Census_of_Agriculture/index.asp).

Notes:

1. The National Agricultural Statistics Service of USDA modified the way it collects data between 1997 and 2002 to more accurately reflect the number of smaller farms. This means that the figures originally released in the 1997 Census of Agriculture for the number of farms and land in farms have been revised upwards in an effort to reflect this new methodology.

**Table 24**  
**Avery County Employment Trends by Industry**

Economic Sector	1990 Census (Total Employment 8,436 )		2000 Census (Total Employment 11,962)		2010 Census (Total Employment 12,945 )	
	Number Jobs	%	Number Jobs	%	Number Jobs	%
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, <sup>1</sup> mining <sup>2</sup>	443	5	496	4	298	4
Construction	801	9	1238	10	883	12
Manufacturing	871	10	978	8	677	9
Educational, health services <sup>3</sup> social services					1982	26
Retail trade	1233	15	1279	11	1012	13
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services <sup>4</sup>			499	04	279	4
Other professional and related services	2688	32	4002	33		
Other services (except public administration)			839	7	993	8
Business and repair services <sup>5</sup>						
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services <sup>6</sup>			1293	11	925	26
Personal services <sup>7</sup>						
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing <sup>8</sup>	495	6	828	7	310	4
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities <sup>9</sup>	361	4	328	3	264	3.5
Communications and other public utilities						
Public administration					293	4
Information <sup>10</sup>			93	1	29	.4
Wholesale trade	180	2			677	9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Notes:

1. In the 2000 Census, the language was changed from “fisheries” to “fishing and hunting.”
2. The 2000 Census data category includes mining with the category of Agriculture; in 1990, mining was a separate category.
3. The 1990 Census data category lists educational and health services separately--there is no mention of “social services--” while the 2000 Census lists them all together.
4. The 2000 Census lists “Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services” and “Other services (except public administration)” while the 1990 Census data category states “Other professional and related services,” so the three groupings are kept separately in this Table.
5. There is no category listed in the 2000 Census for “Business and repair services.”
6. In the 1990 Census the category was listed as only “Entertainment and recreation services.”
7. There is no category listed in the 2000 Census for “Personal services.”
8. The 1990 Census category did not specifically list “rental and leasing” in the “Finance” category; this was added in the 2000 Census.
9. The 1990 Census category only listed “Transportation” with no mention of “warehousing and utilities.”
10. There was no category for “Information” in the 1990 Census.

**Table 25**  
**Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Older—1990, 2000, and 2010**

	High School Graduates or Higher 1990 (%)	High School Graduates or Higher 2000 (%)	High School Graduates or Higher 2010 (%)	Four or More Years of College 1990 (%)	Four or More Years of College 2000 (%)	Four or More Years of College 2010 (%)
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>85.5</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>97.2</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>29.6</b>
Beech Mountain	96.7	96.9	99.6	41.3	35.6	55.5
Crossnore	79.7	76.4	96.6	21.1	22.9	21.4
Elk Park	57.4	67.1	68.3	7.1	8.4	5.4
Grandfather Village	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	78.6	84.5
Newland	61.8	67.1	76.6	7.0	7.5	19.2
Sugar Mountain	94.1	94.7	97.8	29.4	29.3	54.1
Avery County	62.2	70.6	81.3	12.4	14.5	20.3
State of NC	70.0	78.1	83.6	17.4	22.5	26.1
United States	75.2	80.4	85.0	20.3	24.4	27.9

Source: Census 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Table 26**  
**Median Household Income<sup>1</sup> and Adjusted for Inflation<sup>2</sup>**  
**1979, 1989, 1999, and 2010 Data**

Median Household Income <sup>1</sup> and Adjusted for Inflation <sup>2</sup>								
	1979	1979 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1989	1989 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1999	1999 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	2010	2010 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>10,729</b>	<b>32,000</b>	<b>22,188</b>	<b>39,000</b>	<b>33,750</b>	<b>44,200</b>	<b>38,611</b>	<b>40,618</b>
Beech Mountain	--	--	35,417	62,300	47,500	62,200	81,250	85,474
Crossnore	10,625	31,900	23,750	41,800	24,688	32,300	40,000	42,079
Elk Park	10,268	30,900	18,558	32,700	20,764	27,200	24,894	26,188
Grandfather Village	--	--	31,250	55,000	53,125	69,600	121,563	13,216
Newland	12,195	36,600	15,240	26,800	24,375	31,900	35,568	37,417
Sugar Mountain	--	--	48,333	85,000	37,500	49,100	51,667	54,353
Avery County	11,135	33,500	20,403	36,000	30,627	40,100	34,918	36,733
State of NC	14,481	43,500	26,647	46,900	39,184	51,300	45,570	47,939
United States	16,841	50,600	30,056	52,900	41,994	55,000	50,046	52,648

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

Notes:

1. "Household Income" is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as total money income received in the prior calendar year by all household members 15 years and over, tabulated for all households; median household income figures are derived from the entire distribution of household incomes. "Median" is defined as the middle value, which means that one-half the population earns less and one-half earns more than the figure given.

1. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)) has developed a consumer price index inflation multiplier <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> for converting dollar figures in one year to comparable dollars in another year. This was the method used to convert dollar amounts from previous years to the year 2010. The numbers are rounded up or down to the nearest \$100. 2010's figures are adjusted for 2012.

**Table 27**  
**Per Capita Income<sup>1</sup> and Adjusted for Inflation<sup>2</sup>**  
**1979, 1989, 1999, and 2010 Data**

	Per Capita Income <sup>1</sup> and Adjusted for Inflation <sup>2</sup>							
	1979	1979 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1989	1989 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	1999	1999 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>	2010	2010 Adjusted <sup>2</sup>
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>3,404</b>	<b>10,200</b>	<b>5,870</b>	<b>10,300</b>	<b>12,725</b>	<b>16,700</b>	<b>17,481</b>	<b>18,390</b>
Beech Mountain	--	--	18,789	33,100	26,799	35,100	49,338	51,903
Crossnore	4,336	13,000	8,659	15,200	13,960	18,300	21,113	22,211
Elk Park	4,405	13,200	8,729	15,400	13,486	18,100	13,170	13,855
Grandfather Village	--	--	20,800	36,600	44,706	58,500	85,490	89,934
Newland	5,397	16,200	9,675	17,000	18,344	24,000	18,576	19,542
Sugar Mountain	--	--	30,047	52,900	27,063	35,400	43,670	45,940
Avery County	4,575	13,700	9,729	17,100	15,176	19,900	23,465	24,685
State of NC	6,133	18,400	12,885	22,700	20,307	26,600	24,745	26,031
United States	7,298	21,900	14,420	25,300	21,587	28,300	26,059	27,414

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

Notes:

1. "Per Capita Income" is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as total money income per resident of the area, including young children, elderly, and others who may not be earning money, for the calendar year prior to census day.
2. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)) has developed a consumer price index inflation multiplier <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> for converting dollar figures in one year to comparable dollars in another year. This was the method used to convert dollar amounts from previous years to the year 2010. The numbers are rounded up or down to the nearest \$100. 2010's figures are adjusted for 2012.

**Table 28**  
**Persons and Families in Poverty, 1980**

	Number of Persons for Whom Poverty Status is Determined <sup>1</sup>	Persons in Poverty		Persons 65 and Older in Poverty		Number of Families <sup>2</sup>	Families in Poverty	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22.95</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9.6</b>
Beech Mountain								
Crossnore	236	14	5.9	6	17.65	62	0	0
Elk Park	541	94	17.4	13	28.89	159	20	12.6
Grandfather Village								
Newland	754	107	14.2	15	21.43	231	25	10.8
Sugar Mountain								
Avery County	13,500	2,435	18.0	483	30.38	3,871	561	14.5
North Carolina	5,682,948	839,950	14.8	137,237	23.9	1,583,490	183,146	11.6
United States	Not available at this time	27,392,580	12.4	3,586,000	15.1	58,461,538	5,320,000	9.1

Source: Census 1980, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Notes:**

1. “Number of persons for whom poverty status is determined” defined on LINC web site: “Poverty is determined for all family members (by implication from the poverty status of the family) and also for persons not in families, except for inmates of institutions, members of the armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Not available for 1970.”

2. LINC definition of family: “A family consists of two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household; all such persons are considered as members of one family. (Persons not in families and not inmates of institutions are classified as unrelated individuals.)”

**Table 29**  
**Persons and Families in Poverty, 1990**

	Number of Persons for Whom Poverty Status is Determined <sup>1</sup>	Persons in Poverty		Persons 65 and Older in Poverty		Number of Families <sup>2</sup>	Families in Poverty	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>30.95</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Beech Mountain	243	28	11.5	0	0	80	6	7.5
Crossnore	193	19	9.8	4	10.53	47	1	2.1
Elk Park	473	79	16.7	20	23.81	140	16	11.4
Grandfather Village	8	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Newland	640	106	16.6	27	21.95	200	22	11.0
Sugar Mountain	102	5	4.9	0	0	32	2	6.3
Avery County	13,899	2,024	14.6	560	28.0	4,139	421	10.2
North Carolina	5,682,948	839,950	14.8	137,237	23.9	1,824,465	179,906	9.9
United States	241,977,859	31,742,864	13.1	3,780,585	12.8	65,049,428	6,487,515	10.0

Source: Census 1990, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Notes:**

1. “Number of persons for whom poverty status is determined” defined on LINC web site: “Poverty is determined for all family members (by implication from the poverty status of the family) and also for persons not in families, except for inmates of institutions, members of the armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Not available for 1970.”

2. LINC definition of family: “A family consists of two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household; all such persons are considered as members of one family. (Persons not in families and not inmates of institutions are classified as unrelated individuals.)”

**Table 30**  
**Persons and Families in Poverty, 2000**

	Number of Persons for Whom Poverty Status is Determined <sup>1</sup>	Persons in Poverty		Persons 65 and Older in Poverty		Number of Families <sup>2</sup>	Families in Poverty	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<b>Banner Elk</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17.02</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12.1</b>
Beech Mountain	351	30	8.5	0	0	96	3	3.1
Crossnore	235	30	12.8	7	14.58	62	7	11.3
Elk Park	431	86	20.0	14	19.18	125	19	15.2
Grandfather Village	82	12	14.6	0	0	25	2	8.0
Newland	726	154	21.2	37	21.26	207	34	16.4
Sugar Mountain	214	45	21.0	7	12.07	62	4	6.5
Avery County	15,365	2,345	15.3	487	18.9	4,546	493	10.8
North Carolina	7,805,328	958,667	12.3	122,248	13.2	2,158,869	196,423	9.1
United States	273,882,232	33,899,812	12.4	3,287,774	9.9	71,787,347	6,620,945	9.2

Source: Census 2000, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Notes:**

1. "Number of persons for whom poverty status is determined" defined on LINC web site: "Poverty is determined for all family members (by implication from the poverty status of the family) and also for persons not in families, except for inmates of institutions, members of the armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Not available for 1970."

2. LINC definition of family: "A family consists of two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household; all such persons are considered as members of one family. (Persons not in families and not inmates of institutions are classified as unrelated individuals.)"

**Table 31**  
**Persons and Families in Poverty, 2010**

	Number of Persons for Whom Poverty Status is Determined <sup>1</sup>	Persons in Poverty		Persons 65 and Older in Poverty		Number of Families <sup>2</sup>	Families in Poverty	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<b>Banner Elk</b>								
Beech Mountain								
Crossnore								
Elk Park								
Grandfather Village								
Newland								
Sugar Mountain								
Avery County	16,085	2,115	13.1	297	14.0	4,562	359	7.9
North Carolina	8,768,580	1,320,816	15.1	119,313	9.0	2,363,963	261,378	11.1
United States	203,507,923	39,537,240	13.5	3,574,499	9.0	75,082,471	7,405,282	9.9

Source: Census 2010, Summary Tape File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

**Notes: A portion of this information is not available as of 30 April 2012.**

1. “Number of persons for whom poverty status is determined” defined on LINC web site: “Poverty is determined for all family members (by implication from the poverty status of the family) and also for persons not in families, except for inmates of institutions, members of the armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Not available for 1970.”

2. LINC definition of family: “A family consists of two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household; all such persons are considered as members of one family. (Persons not in families and not inmates of institutions are classified as unrelated individuals.)”

### **3.0 TRANSPORTATION**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Inventory of Existing Conditions
- 3.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 3.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Transportation is the backbone of a region's economic vitality. Adequate transportation is essential for helping people arrive at their destination and for transporting goods to market in a cost-effective manner. Investors will look to areas that are better served by accessible transportation. Notwithstanding, travel in the High Country can present a challenge on a good day. Residents of Banner Elk realize the mountainous terrain hampers efforts to find alternative routes in and out of town. As in most North Carolina cities, roads built in the mid-1900's were a reflection of the jump in automobile ownership as well as the rural character of the Town. Often an expansion of the one-lane roads used by foot and animal traffic into two-lane roads produced narrow roads with little or no rights-of-way. Weather is another factor that must always be considered when planning for transportation in the High Country.

Interested citizens of Banner Elk are looking for ways to promote multi-modal paths and foster the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation; in addition, such a network could be a tourist recreational attraction. In 2009, Banner Elk and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) partnered for a grant to produce a Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan to help identify and offer solutions for the Town to use in planning a better multi-modal environment. Segments of that plan and the Master Streetscape Plan will be incorporated into this section of the Land Use Plan for Banner Elk.

#### **3.2 INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**

##### *Travel along roadways*

Banner Elk is accessible by two state highways that intersect at the center of Town. The Town is also comprised of a network of town-maintained and private streets. The two state highways are NC Highway 184 (NC 184) and NC Highway 194 (NC 194). NC 184, also referred to as Tynecastle Highway, runs southeast to northwest from its intersection with NC Highway 105 at Tynecastle to Dobbins Road. From this point it continues, as Shawneehaw Avenue up to the traffic light. From the light NC 184 turns left onto Main Street West and then right onto Beech Mountain Parkway, where it once again becomes NC 184. NC 194 travels northeast to northwest from Valle Crucis, in Watauga County, to Elk Park, in Avery County. At this point it intersects with US Highway 19E, connecting Avery County with Tennessee. In 1960 Banner Elk recorded 2.97 miles of town maintained streets, but as of the 2009 Powell Bill Map, Banner Elk's thoroughfares total 15.99 miles with 13.15 miles being town-maintained streets.

Traffic flows have increased since Banner Elk's previous Land Use Plan written in 1967. Travel demand is generally reported in "average daily traffic counts, or ADT. This is defined as the average number of vehicles passing a specific point in both directions in a 24-hour period. According to the 1967 Land Use Plan, data collected in 1965 indicated traffic counts of 1,650 ADT on NC Highway 184 near its intersection with NC Highway 194. This has changed to 12,000 ADT in 2008, a significant increase in visitors and residents to the area. According to a recent feasibility study by the NCDOT in April 2008, an estimated increase to 17,600 was forecast for the design year 2035. Due to the anticipated increase in traffic, the NCDOT has recommended a widening of the corridor along NC 184 to a four-lane divided thoroughfare with shoulders (See Map 1.) NCDOT estimates that 10 residences and 63 businesses will need to be relocated to accommodate these plans. This possibility makes planning along the corridor more problematic. The Town of Banner Elk has held several meetings with affected business owners to share ideas for improving this corridor to the south. One possibility is to design a uniform and cohesive look for the "entrance into Banner Elk". Although it is not the official municipal boundary, it may be one day. A "windshield survey" by the students of the Town, City and Regional Planning Class of Appalachian State University observed that they could not tell where Sugar Mountain ends and Banner Elk begins. This is noteworthy and should be addressed in the future.

*NC Highway 184 entrance to Banner Elk*



### *Public Transportation*

Banner Elk does not have its own public transportation system as larger cities do; however, there are options for people who are not able or choose not to drive. A local taxi service provides transportation to local destinations and occasionally to further destinations, such as airports. The Avery County Transportation (ACT) Department provides public transportation throughout the county, including Banner Elk. ACT helps provide safe, quality, low-cost transportation to all citizens of Avery County. ACT provides transportation, not only within the county, but also to surrounding areas such as

Boone, Spruce Pine, Marion, Morganton, and Roan Mountain, Tennessee. Longer trips to places further away including Raleigh, Chapel Hill or Johnson City, Tennessee, can be scheduled. All trips are fee based depending on the destination. ACT recommends that anyone wishing to plan a trip should call ahead before making any commitments

### *Travel by Air*

The Avery County Airport is located on Brushy Creek Road four miles northeast of Spruce Pine. The 32-acre tract of land is home to Morrison Field and serves Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties. At 2,750 feet above sea level, the airstrip is open to the public everyday except Mondays. Air traffic is not allowed after dark as the airstrip is not lighted and there is no control tower. The airport's identifier is 7A8. The services provided include fuel, tie-downs for parking, military landing rights, Fixed Base Operations (FBO) services, rental cars, and airframe and power plant services. There is a wind indicator and self-service fueling after hours with a credit card. Two runways, side by side, stretch 60 feet before confronting the surrounding mountainous terrain. Warnings of wildlife in and around the vicinity are posted for potential aircraft traffic. The FAA reports that the asphalt runway is in good condition and is able to accept 12,500



*Morrison Field, Avery County, NC*

pound, single-wheel aircraft. Avery County Airport averages 115\* aircraft a week. This average was based on a 12-month period ending 28 August 2008. Air traffic is made up of 50 percent general transient aviation, 33 percent local general aviation, and 17 percent military.

*\* Information obtained from [airport-data.com/airport/7A8](http://airport-data.com/airport/7A8).*

### *Bicycle Traffic and Movement*

Although the NCDOT has not officially addressed the concerns of the Town of Banner Elk in regard to bicycle traffic, it has been a topic of discussion for some time. Lees-McRae College has had a National Championship Cycling Team for three years. Also, between 1991 and 1996 a cycling stage race, the Tour DuPont, was held in the United States. It was intended to become a North American cycling event similar in format and prestige to the Tour de France. The tour's name came from its sponsor, DuPont Corporation. The race was held in the Mid-Atlantic States, affording Banner Elk and Beech Mountain national recognition as it passed through these locations in 1993 and 1994. Because of the exposure, many cyclists come to Banner Elk to train on its mountainous roads and trails. The event attracted high-level competitors, including Lance Armstrong and Greg LeMond, and was attended by high profile European based

cycling teams. After the sixth running in 1996, DuPont was not able to continue sponsorship and the race has not taken place since. However, the effects of that event have left a lasting impression on those who were exposed to Banner Elk. In an effort to improve the environment for cyclists, Banner Elk's Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan references several goals for obtaining this initiative. This plan produced a very strong vision statement:

*“The Town of Banner Elk is a more walkable and bicycle-friendly community that meets the needs of students, visitors, businesses, and residents of all age groups through an integrated network of greenways, walkways, and bicycle paths.”*

One of the recommendations of the Pedestrian Master Plan has been to create a bicycling counterpart for this pedestrian master plan. Bicycling is an important accompaniment to walking, and increases the range as well as the number of destinations available. (See Map 1:Transportation for a review of the plan's proposed routes.)

#### *Foot Traffic and Greenway Trails*

The Town of Banner Elk adopted the Master Streetscape Plan in 1999. The plan focused on the central section of town and showed the location of proposed sidewalks, seating areas, part of a proposed greenway, and potential locations for public parking as well as implementation strategies. There were four phases to the plan at that time; the first three phases have been completed. One section of phase four was completed in the fall of 2009 and the remaining section neared completion at the end of 2010. The implementation of the Master Streetscape Plan has given the downtown area roughly two miles of sidewalks.

Approximately 75 percent of the Greenway Trail has been completed. The brick sidewalk is certainly an asset to the Town of Banner Elk. The Banner Elk Tourism Development Authority has provided the funding. These funds are derived from collected occupancy taxes. It should be noted that this project is also a part of Banner Elk's Storm Water Management initiative in that the pervious brick pavers, the curb and guttering, and storm drains are major components in protecting Banner Elk's trout streams and water supply. More discussion about the Storm Water Management project can be found in Section IV, Utilities and Infrastructure.



*Sidewalk in the Streetscape Plan, Banner Elk, NC*

### *Access to Hiking and Mountain Bike Trails*

Connectivity to Sugar Mountain, Wildcat Lake and other outlying areas is one of the goals of the Town of Banner Elk. Hiking and mountain biking are two of the most popular outdoor sports in the High Country and are wonderful ways to see breathtaking views from the river valleys to the highest peaks. The Town has worked with the High Country Council of Governments to prepare a High Country Regional Trail Plan that can accommodate both of these activities. Banner Elk, Beech Mountain, and Sugar Mountain all have some pedestrian and mountain bike trails, but the goal is to connect these communities with one another and increase trail safety for everyone. The Town's Bicycle Committee has elicited discussions on how the Town can address a solution.

### *Thoroughfare Plan*

In October 2003, the Statewide Planning Branch of the NC DOT provided the Town of Banner Elk with a thoroughfare study. These studies are conducted to identify existing and future deficiencies in the transportation system, as well as document the need for new facilities. The study conducted in 2003 produced the following recommendations:

1. A NC 184 alternative would begin at NC 184, just north of SR 1341 (Banner Creek Road) and terminate at NC 194 (Main Street) across from Hilldrop Way Road. This alternative route would bypass the downtown area of Banner Elk.
2. NC 184 should be widened from a two-lane to a multi-lane facility beginning at the southern Banner Elk Urban Planning Boundary (BEUPB) and extending north to NC 194. Currently NC 184 from NC 105 to NC 194 is programmed for an upgrade on the unfunded list for the 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Town of Banner Elk asked that the section coming from SR 1337 Dobbins Robbins up to the traffic light not be widened to multi-lane to prevent the destruction of the downtown's appearance and to protect the businesses.

3. Realign the intersection of SR 1337 (Dobbins Road) and NC 184 further to the south to provide improved sight distance.

This study by NC DOT was prompted by the Town Council and the Planning Board and was designed to study the increased congestion along the main thoroughfares of NC 184 and NC 194; however the Town of Banner Elk never adopted the plan. The Town is mostly residential, with very light industry, and concentrated commercial development along the major thoroughfares of NC 184 and NC 194. Many of the houses in the area serve as vacation homes. It is important to recognize that the above recommendations are based on the anticipated growth within the planning area as indicated by past trends and future projections of NC DOT; however, the Town has not signed a formal agreement of support for NC DOT proposals.

### **3.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Roadway capacity and deficiencies need to be addressed to accommodate future projections of traffic. As a result of terrain restraints, Banner Elk does not have an efficient roadway network. The linkage of NC 184 and NC 194 is at the red light at the center of town, with no other alternate route available. The connectivity in the center of town does not allow for good maneuverability. Past discussions of a western bypass mentioned in #1 above would alleviate a lot of unnecessary pass-through traffic and allow those with a destination into Banner Elk much easier access. Safety is always an issue that a municipality needs to consider. Several accidents have occurred at the intersection of NC184 and NC 194. The bypass would allow for traffic, not destined for the central business district of town, to move around some of the slower traffic and greatly reduce the risk for accidents.

### **3.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*Goal 1. Commit to a pedestrian friendly community by continuing to expand sidewalks and greenway trails, with a possible connection to Sugar Mountain.*

- Ensure that legislation from the North Carolina General Assembly is in place to allow for the continuance of the occupancy tax to fund future sidewalks and greenway trails. The original legislation allowed for a 10-year sunset limit that expired in 2010.
- We would propose joint meetings with Sugar Mountain's TDA for complementary funding of any pathways that would connect Banner Elk and Sugar Mountain.

*Goal 2. Address requirements for the allowance of bicycle traffic to safely maneuver along the major thoroughfares.*

- Ensure that future widening of any thoroughfares allow for the movement of bicycle traffic along the roadways.
- Continue to educate the community on the benefits of cycling.

- The Town has a newly formed Bicycle Planning Committee with knowledgeable participants that will be able to offer insight into planning for future bicycle movement through a Bicycle Master Plan.

*Goal 3. Begin planning for a widening of NC 184 into Banner Elk and how this will affect the businesses along that corridor.*

- The Town of Banner Elk must consider the entrance into Banner Elk and the impression it makes on residents as well as visitors and would-be residents. A clear, definitive gateway near ACE Hardware would allow travelers to know exactly when they enter Banner Elk.
- The Town needs to develop a plan for trees and planters to line that section of the “entrance into Banner Elk” along NC 184, with the goal of providing visual continuity to the commercial corridor, and delineating the transition from Banner Elk to Sugar Mountain.
- It is important for Town leaders to establish dialog early in the thoroughfare planning process with NC DOT to ensure the voice of Banner Elk is heard.
- Another area of concern is that at least half of the properties that line this section of the NC 184 corridor are not in the Town’s corporate limits, instead, the municipal boundary weaves in and out due to past satellite annexations.
- An additional issue to consider is traffic flow and pedestrian access along Orchard Lane and the roads that lead to the new home of the Banner Elk Elementary School. Planners will also need to address storm water runoff in this area.

# Map 1: Street Ownership & Planned Transportation Improvements

Banner Elk Streets  
by Ownership

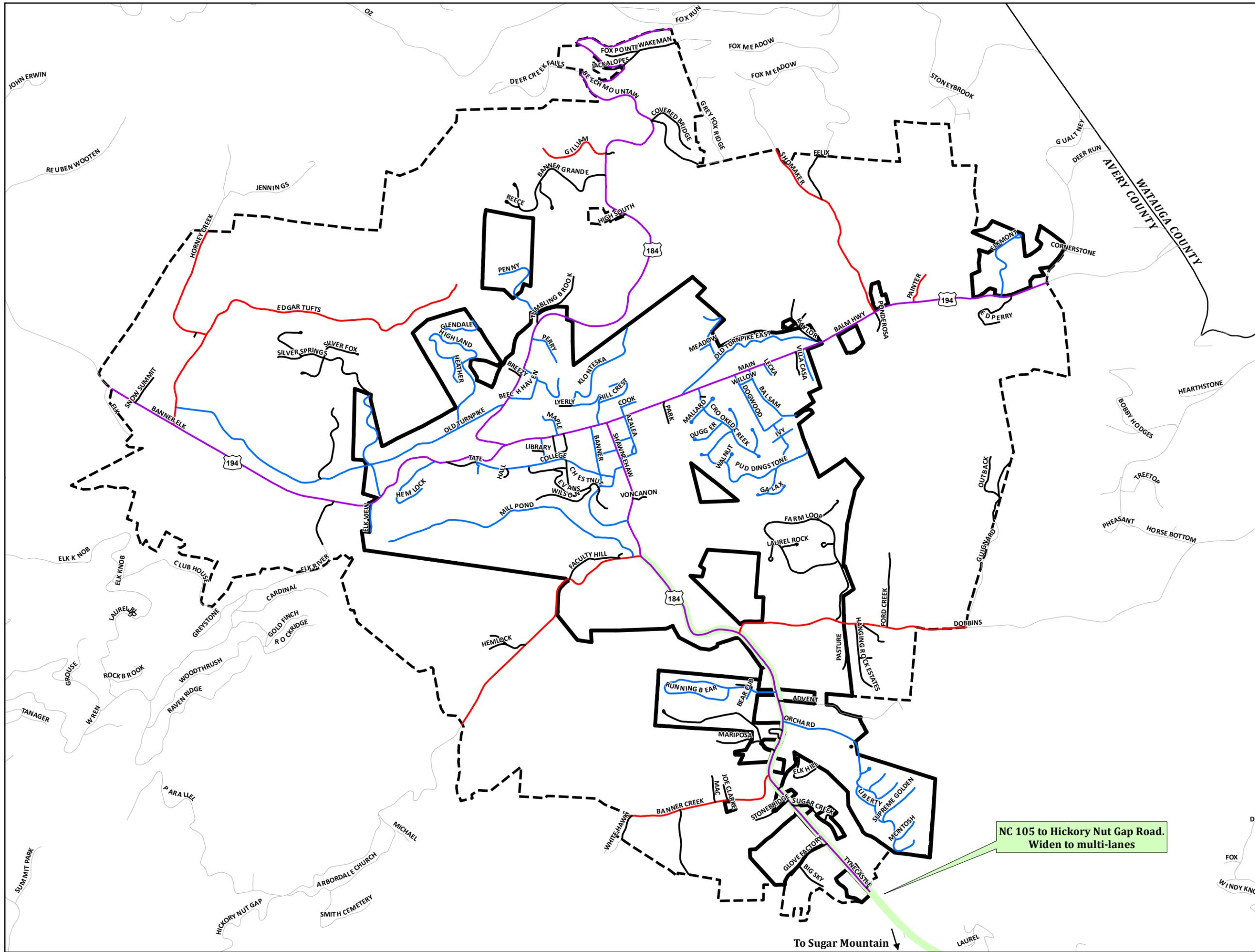
- Municipal Streets
- Private
- State Route
- U.S. Highway

(Banner Elk Powell Bill Map, July 2010)

NC DOT TIP  
(Transportation Improvement Program)

ETJ Boundary

Town Boundary



N

0    800    1,600  
Feet

NC 105 to Hickory Nut Gap Road.  
Widen to multi-lanes

To Sugar Mountain ↓

## **4.0 UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Inventory of Existing System
- 4.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 4.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Incorporated in 1911, the Town of Banner Elk has a long history of growth and development. Associated with that considerable growth, Banner Elk now provides the public with drinking water, wastewater treatment, street maintenance, a stormwater collection system, and an identified wellhead protection area.

The Town of Banner Elk is located in the Watauga River Basin in the northeastern quadrant of Avery County. The previous Land Use Plan (1967) does not include any mention of utility service or any future consideration of service for the Town. Management of these utilities is a crucial element in the developmental growth of a community the size of Banner Elk. With an economy based heavily on the tourism industry, careful planning of these systems is of the utmost importance in maintaining the attractive environment and desirable community that now exists, while allowing for planned growth and development. Residential and seasonal population growth will continue to increase the demand on the town's utility system (**See Map 2: Water and Sewer System Schematic.**)

Input received during the survey and public hearing sessions indicate that the utility services the Town now provides are adequate and are exceeding the expectations of the public. There was a strong indication that the protection of Banner Elk's natural resources is extremely important in the minds of residents and visitors alike. This concern along with the restrictions of state and federal regulations should be addressed in future planning measures.

### **4.2 INVENTORY OF EXISTING SYSTEM**

#### *Water*

The Town of Banner Elk has an estimated 20 miles of distribution system lines servicing 1,035 customers via 670 connections for utility service with an average daily usage of 250,000 gallons per day. Of the 670 connections, 601 are for either water or water *and* wastewater and 69 are exclusively for wastewater. The system partially serves the area within the town limits and a minimal area outside the town limits. Banner Elk currently gets its water from four wells and has four elevated storage tanks and four ground storage tanks, with a total capacity of 597,500 gallons. The Town's water and wastewater system is owned, operated, and maintained solely by the Town of Banner Elk, in compliance with North Carolina Local Government Commission requirements, and under the direction of a five-member Town Council. The Town of Banner Elk holds titles, deeds, and/or easements on property on which

these systems are located. These documents are recorded at the Avery County Courthouse in Newland, North Carolina.

Water treatment consists of sodium hypochlorite for disinfections, polyphosphate for lead and copper sequestration, and liquid caustic for PH adjustment. The Town of Banner Elk performs bacteriological sampling and reporting of the system on a monthly basis. In order to protect public health and safety, the Town Council adopted, as part of the Town Code, a Water and Sewer Use Ordinance. The ordinance governs the operation of the Town's water system and addresses issues of cross connection and backflow prevention, customer connection disconnection procedures, billing procedures, and a water shortage response plan. Other policies such as blood-borne pathogens, trenching and confined space entry are available to the public. Each year the Town of Banner Elk makes available a Consumer Confidence Report educating and informing the general public about the quality of water that they receive.

Recently, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation that requires municipalities to design their operating systems and policies to cover full cost pricing, a term used by the State of North Carolina, in other words, cover all costs in the rate structure. Basically the municipal water and sewer systems are now required by law to set their rates so that the utilities pay for themselves, without additional funding such as loans or tax revenues. This includes capital improvements such as current maintenance, expansion and new wells. Depreciation of equipment and the system is another area in which the State is requiring cost to be built into the rates.

#### *Wellhead Protection Plan*

The Town of Banner Elk has title to five wells, whose aquifer lies within the Watauga River Basin area and serves approximately 884 citizens. Well #4 is inactive at this time due to the infiltration of surface contaminates. There are no current plans to bring this well back online.

The Town leaders have chosen a regulatory method and non-regulatory management methods as their main line of defense against potential contaminant sources. The Town has adopted a zoning overlay district identifying the wellhead protection area. General public information is important to the success of this plan. The Town has provided information to property owners located within the protection area on waste handling practices, best management practices, standard operating procedures, and waste oil disposal methods; all of which help reduce the potential for ground water contamination. Owners of improperly constructed/abandoned wells within this area will be provided with information regarding the threat posed to the water supply by these wells. The State of North Carolina has standards to handle these wells that could pose problems. Fuel storage tanks, above and below ground, can also pose a threat of contamination. Each owner within this area has been notified of the possible threat and measures that can be taken to protect the wellhead protection area (**See Wellhead Protection Area Map.**)

With the growth experienced in the past 10 years, and looking to future growth, Banner Elk must look at additional sites for wells to ensure adequate supply of drinking water. This need became abundantly clear after the 2005-2008 drought years.

#### *Wastewater Lines and Wastewater Treatment Plant*

The Town of Banner Elk owns and operates its wastewater treatment facility and associated distribution system. The wastewater treatment plant operator oversees the day-to-day operation and requirements of the facility and the distribution system. The Town of Banner Elk's wastewater collection system consists of approximately 12 miles of gravity lines, and .25 miles of force mains, with one sewer lift station. These lines convey raw sewage to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), located at the end of Millpond Road. Upon arrival at the WWTP, the raw sewage is screened and then treated using the extended aeration process. Once treated, the clear water is disinfected using ultra-violet light. The disinfected water is then released into the Elk River. The solids that are removed during the treatment process are aerobically digested then de-watered using the Town's new belt filter press. After the bio-solids are de-watered, they are mixed with wood chips and composted, using the aerated static pile method. After composting has occurred, the Town is able to give the composted material away. It is used for fertilizer and as a soil-amending agent.

#### *Telemetry System*

The Town of Banner Elk has an advanced telemetry Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition system called SCADA. The SCADA system currently monitors the wells, tanks, and the sewer lift station. With this system, the operators monitor and troubleshoot from the base computer located at the WWTP, or from home using an Internet connection. We are in the process of changing from leased phone lines to a new VHF radio system. The radio system is cheaper to operate and it can eventually be used to turn the whole town into a Wi-Fi zone.

#### *Rate Structure for Water and Wastewater Services*

The Water and Sewer Ordinance, along with the Fee Schedule, spell out the procedures for establishing water and wastewater rates. The Town uses software that has been designed to accommodate these rates. Compared to nearby communities, Banner Elk has one of the lowest rate schedules. Due to recent legislation, rates may need to be adjusted to allow for the directive by the General Assembly of charging enough to ensure that the system can support itself, separate from other Town funds. With a total of 682 meters to be read each month, the Town of Banner Elk is ahead of the game when it comes to reading meters. Using a handheld reader, 366 meters are radio-read within 1,000 feet of the meter, while 222 meters are a simple touch-read. This leaves only 94 meters that actually have to be looked at and read. Installing remote-read meters has reduced the workload significantly; what would have taken

seven days now takes only two. This process has also greatly increased the accuracy with which meters are read, eliminating human error. The Town continues to change out the older meters with the new radio-read meters as the budget allows.

*Stormwater Management and Storm Water System Master Plan*

In October 2000, the Town of Banner Elk adopted a Stormwater System Master Plan. The major components of the plan include an inventory of the existing stormwater collection system, a hydraulic analysis of those components, and recommendations for improvements and/or rehabilitation of the system. Additionally, it addresses the relationship between proper stormwater management and its impact on wastewater treatment and collection systems. In 2000 the Town of Banner Elk received a grant from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund to implement stormwater management in the immediate downtown area of Banner Elk, to be used in conjunction with the Master Streetscape Plan. The measures allowed for stormwater to drain through a system of culverts into a large vault, located underneath the playground of the Banner Elk Elementary School, where the stormwater then filters through baffling and transfers to a wetlands area, finally seeping back into the ground. The stormwater vault for the downtown area can hold up to 150,000 gallons of contamination. The system has brought statewide attention to the advanced measures Banner Elk has taken to protect the environment.



Construction of Stormwater Vault

Section 313 of the Banner Elk Zoning Ordinance addresses facilitation of the Stormwater Maser Plan in relationship to development. Both of these documents ensure that the Town of Banner Elk adequately maintains water quality in the face of increased development pressures.

Banner Elk's Wetland (2000)



In the event of a major spill into the stormwater system, the Town has emergency response plans in place to deal with any emergency.

*Streets and Sidewalks*

At present the Town of Banner Elk maintains roughly 13.15 miles of town streets. The Public Works Department keeps a list of streets that are town-maintained, which describes the exact beginning and ending points of responsibility for the town. Any additions to the list of streets must meet certain criteria before being accepted as a town street. The process requires approval by the Town Council. The town-maintained street list is utilized to select streets for improvements as funding becomes available. As a part of the Capital Budget, Town Council approves these improvements each year.



*Culver Street Under Construction*

The Public Works staff oversees snow removal and the same staff performs resurfacing work. The Public Works Director must permit connections to a town street. The Town Code provides regulations for activities involving town streets and how they are to be mitigated.

The Public Works Department also oversees maintenance of sidewalks that are part of the Streetscape Program. Currently there is a requirement in the historic overlay district for any new development to provide sidewalks based on street frontage. Providing a sidewalk is a standard requirement of a Conditional Use Permit. Additional construction of sidewalks may need to be explored.

### **4.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The Town of Banner Elk has come a long way from the days when drinking water was supplied by a few lines from Lees-McRae College and a treatment facility managed by the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association. In ten years, the Town of Banner Elk has doubled the number of metered locations that it services. Although water is readily available now, any consideration of future development may create a need for additional well sites. Since 25 percent of the promised capacity for the WWTP has not been built yet, the town must also consider expanding the treatment facility in the next ten years in order to be able to serve any future development. The Town has enacted a capital improvement fee on all water meters to pay for future capital projects, to help ensure a viable system. Educating the public on the importance of protecting and conserving vital natural resources is also a priority for the Town.

### **4.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*Goal 1. Ensure Provision of Services to Developed Areas and Ensure Future Drinking Water for Current and Potential Customers.*

- It is not possible to determine exactly how much water is available through the existing wells supplied from the aquifer. The Town can, however, measure the capacity of water that can be held in storage tanks. The Town can also monitor the number of gallons of water that is pumped each day. Although the pace of development has slowed down considerably, once it begins to pick up, the need for water will again be a matter of concern. Any major future annexations and large developments must have the ability to help provide additional water to the current supply.
- A second option is to interconnect with the existing wells at Grandfather Home for Children. The Home currently has two functioning wells and funds are available for a third. These wells are aided by the reservoir of water supplied by Wildcat Lake dam.
- A third option is to interconnect with Carolina Water Systems, which currently serves Sugar Mountain.

*Goal 2. Improve Utility Systems to Accommodate Future Growth.*

- The Town of Banner Elk will need to consider incremental upgrades to its current utilities before any major expansion services are promised.
- The Town must also critically analyze its current funding to ensure proper operation of existing utility components. This is especially true in light of very little revenue being generated, due to the decline in impact fees.
- Aging components, as well as upgrades, have produced a financial situation that will require critical analysis over the next twenty years.

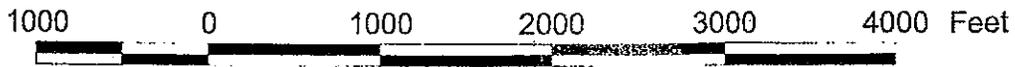
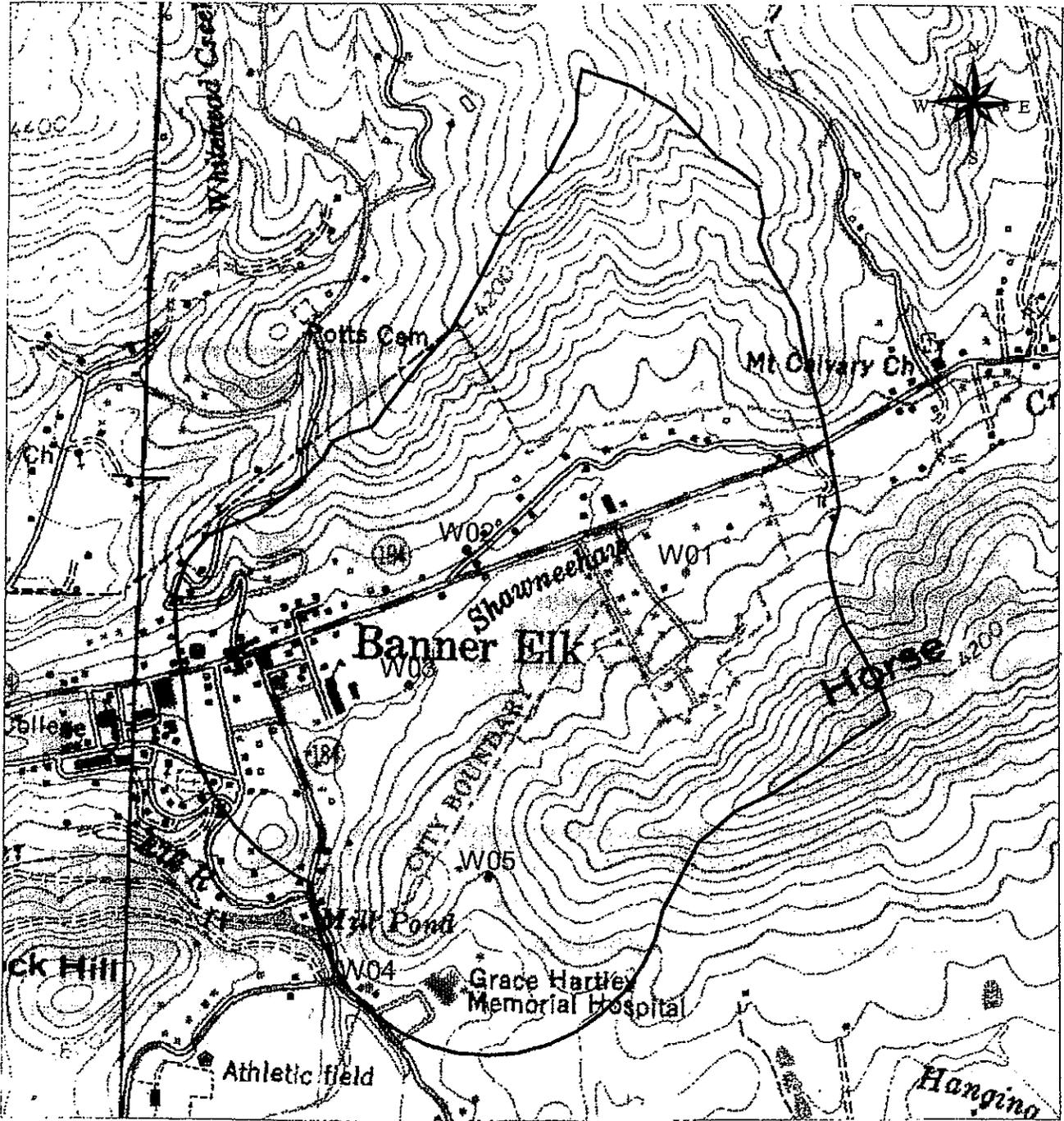
*Goal 3. Conservation of Resources and Utilization of Environmental Friendly Practices.*

- It is vital that the Town of Banner Elk Utility Department continues to be on the forefront of environmental friendly practices. This approach should be not limited to the utilities, but should be embraced by all departments within the Town. While many internal steps have been taken to support this goal, it is increasingly important to communicate with external stakeholders.
- Significant to this goal is the education in conservation of the general public. Reducing demand saves resources across the board and helps ensure future usage.

*Goal 4. Community Recycling*

- In the past several years, Banner Elk has taken steps to move towards a more proactive recycling program. While still falling short of a mandated program, citizen now have several small drop-off sites.
- These sites will need to be upgraded since they were not designed to handle the current flow of recyclable materials.
- A Construction Demolition Debris Ordinance has also fallen short of its mark and is a “policy” rather than an ordinance. In order to work towards a greener community these past deficiencies need to be addressed.

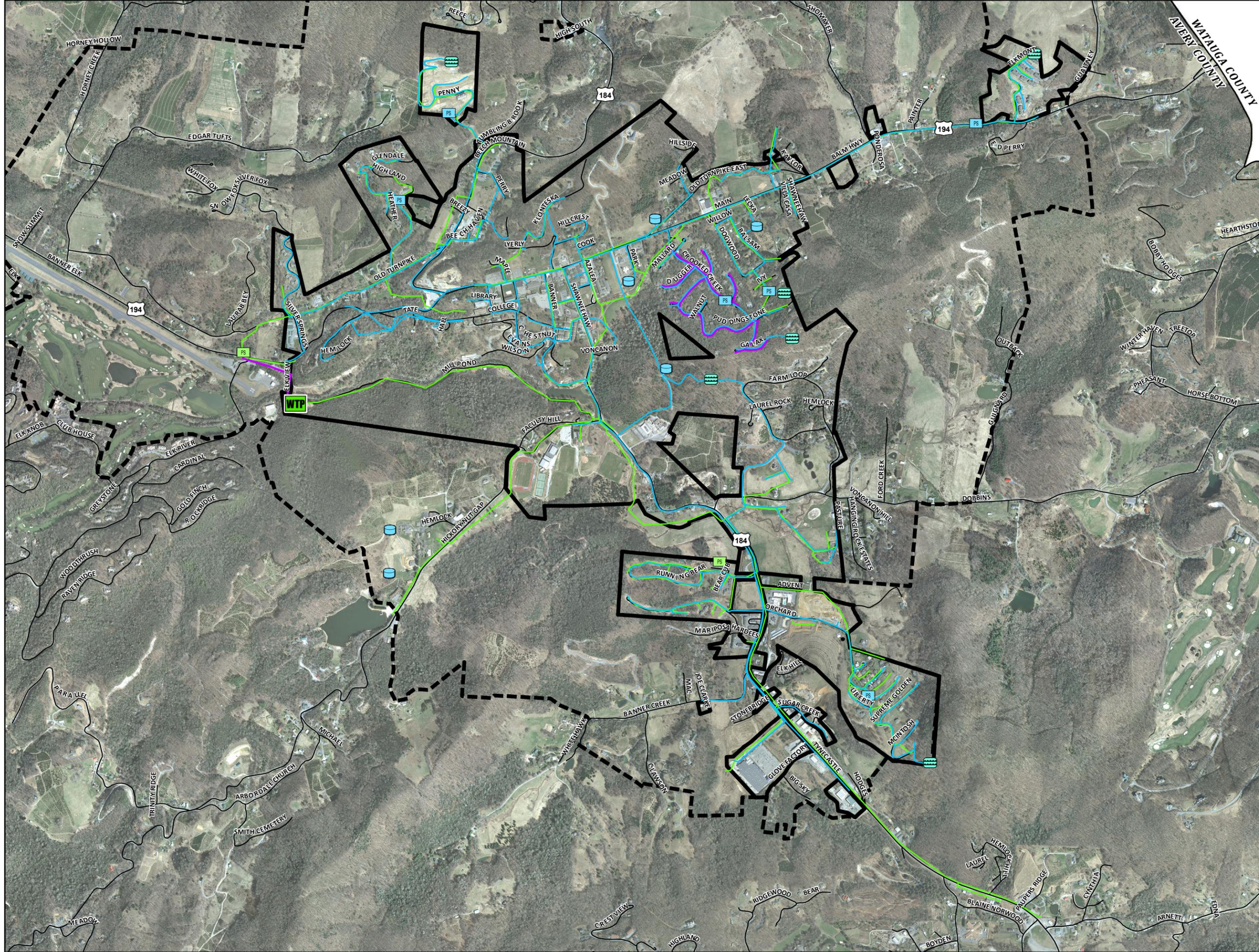
Draft Wellhead Protection Area  
Town of Banner Elk  
Avery County  
PWSID# 01-06-025



(02/06/07)

Scale  
1:12000

# Map 2: Water & Sewer System Schematic



- Water System**
- Well
  - Pump Station
  - Storage Tank
  - Water Main

- Sewer System**
- WWTP
  - Pump Station
  - Gravity Main
  - Force Main
  - Roads
  - ETJ Boundary
  - Town Boundary



0 700 1,400 Feet



## **5.0 PARKS AND RECREATION**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions
- 5.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 5.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Banner Elk offers a diverse recreational palette. There are activities for every season of the year, many of which are outdoor activities. The most valuable attraction is the natural beauty of this area, regardless of the season. In addition, there are amenities that can be accessed through local area communities, some public and some private. In 2008 Banner Elk held a planning retreat to take inventory of the town's status and establish a clear path for future development. During the retreat several goals were established. Goal 3 addressed the need to increase additional recreational opportunities. Under this goal were several possible objectives that will be explored further into this text. The Town of Banner Elk conducted a survey of the general public and found that those responding support encouraging the recreation and tourism industry. The Town of Banner Elk, in partnership with Region D High Country Council of Governments, is also in the process of drafting a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will become a part of the Land Use Plan 2030 (See **Map 3:Existing & Planned Recreational Facilities.**)

### **5.2 INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### *Tate-Evans Park*

Tate-Evans Park was established in 1984. It began with property donated to the Town for a well site by Tweetsie Railroad, Inc. Shortly after the well site was donated, an additional donation from Tweetsie Railroad, Inc., for two parcels of property was accepted by the Town and tagged for a public park and a town hall building, making the total donation 4.67 acres. The Town received a 50/50 match grant from the Department of Natural Resources, Land and Water Conservation Division for the design and implementation of a public park. The park's designer, Dennis Lehmann, had a vision for the park. This vision included an amphitheatre, which is currently used for summer concerts and other group activities. Mr. Lehmann also designed a public restroom facility in the back of the amphitheatre, picnic tables, one sheltered picnic area, a playground for younger children, and one playground area for older children. The Town arranged for a 1300-foot walking track to be paved. The track loops around the park crossing two foot bridges that span the Shawneehaw Creek. This provides opportunities for park visitors to have the pleasure of enjoying the natural beauty as they exercise.

In 2002 Bio-Vim donated .86 acres to the Town as an addition to the park. It has provided an additional 800 feet of walking track dedicated in memory of

the late Mary E. Dooner. Also in 2002, the Town of Banner Elk condemned a 4.13-acre tract and it was added to the park. This area is in a floodway and cannot support development. This third section includes an additional 692 feet of walking track and is part of the beginning of the Greenway Trail System. This section of the Greenway Trail meanders alongside the bio-retention pond that is part of Banner Elk's Storm Water System. Future plans are to add another loop to the walking track, with exercise stations intermittently placed along the track. These future plans include a second restroom and picnic shelter facility that could be located in the lower section to allow citizens better access to public facilities. Located in this section of the park is a barn that is being refurbished by Boy Scout Troop 807 of Banner Elk and could allow use for a wider range of events by other Boy Scout troops, as well as town residents.



*Footbridge crossing Shawneehaw Creek, Tate Evans Park*

Events in the park include the Summer Concert Series, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, the annual gathering around the campfire in the park (a final farewell to summer celebration), a *Spook-tacular* event at Halloween, and the annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Caroling. We cannot describe the park without mentioning the birthday parties, reunions, and weddings that regularly occur there.

In a recent survey, the Tate-Evans Park was mentioned as one of the greatest strengths of Banner Elk. Certainly, the Park is a focal point for Banner Elk. It is widely enjoyed by the citizens of Banner Elk, as well as residents of the County. The park is one of the greatest assets the Town of Banner Elk has and, considering the use in the warmer months, any expansion of the existing amenities would be well received.

#### *Friends of the Park*

The Town has formed a "Friends of the Park" group that helps patrol the park, offering ideas for improvements and events. The Friends of the Park group meets to discuss concerns for the park, future plans and events,

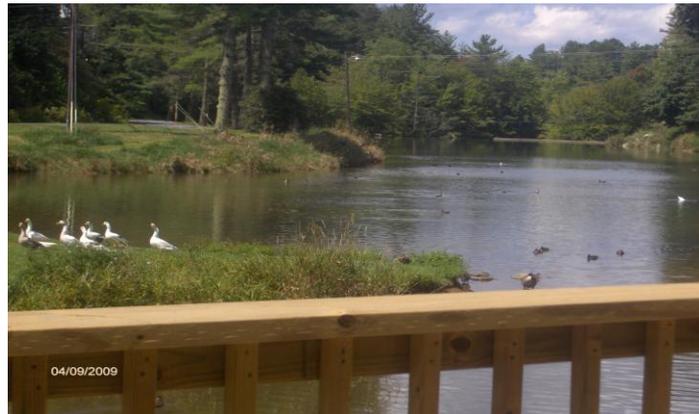
security, and overall maintenance of the park. Group members hope to encourage a volunteer group to maintain flowerbeds within the park.

### *Greenway Trail System*

For those who desire a more challenging walking experience, there is an opportunity on the Greenway Trail System. Banner Elk has approximately 1.1 miles of trails. The trail begins in the park and follows a couple of different paths where they currently end behind the Art Cellar Gallery. The Town of Banner Elk is exploring extension routes that will eventually take foot traffic out to the High Country Square area, and possibly serve as a connector with Sugar Mountain.

Once the Greenway Trail leaves the park, it offers two alternative paths. The first path is a little more challenging and leads through The Cottages of Banner Elk subdivision, where it turns left and follows the sidewalk along Banner Road. It then turns right and downhill, runs along the left side of the newly renovated Recreation Center on Lees-McRae's Campus, and comes to a crossing of the Elk River via a footbridge just below the Mill Pond Dam. This path continues left along the Mill Pond Road and crosses Hickory Nut Gap Road in front of the Banner House Museum. Of noteworthy interest on the right is the access to Hemlock Trail from Mill Pond Road, and a visit to Lees-McRae's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. The length of Hemlock Trail is 3,986 feet or roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles.

### *Boardwalk at Mill Pond*



The second pathway crosses Shawneehaw Avenue in front of the Banner Elk Consignment Cottage, via a wooden staircase. This section, aptly called Pine Needle Hill, traverses a hillside via a boardwalk coming out at Jackson's Corner. From there you cross Banner Road and access another boardwalk that runs parallel with the Mill Pond where it ends on Hickory Nut Gap Road. The two very different paths connect in front of the Banner House Museum and then travel to another footbridge, crossing behind the Art Cellar

Gallery. This segment of the trail is roughly 1,832 feet in length or 1/3 of a mile. The next section of the greenway trail is still under consideration.

*Hiking, Fishing, Swimming, Summer Camp, Camping, Horseback Riding, Biking, Skiing, Summer Concerts in the Park, Golfing, and Whitewater Rafting*

*Hiking*

Hemlock Trail is located off Mill Pond Road in Banner Elk. The trail is located on property owned by Lees-McRae College and Grandfather Home for Children. This short leg-stretcher meanders through some of Banner Elk's most majestic mountain property. The 1.18-mile trail follows the top of the ridge behind Grandfather Home for Children and opens up to a beautiful view of Wildcat Lake where the hiker can enjoy a picnic lunch, fishing or a refreshing swim. There are several well-known hiking trails within a 10-mile radius of Banner Elk and all offer beautiful vistas and fresh mountain air.

*Swimming*

The Edgar Tufts Memorial Association (ETMA), owner and administrator of Wildcat Lake, has worked diligently to ensure this beautiful amenity would continue to be made available to the public. The 13-acre recreational lake is located on Hickory Nut Gap Road in Banner Elk. The ETMA drained the lake in the fall of 2005 to begin a \$1 million project to repair major cracks and prevent catastrophic failure of the dam. After nearly four years of closure for these repairs, the cool waters of Banner Elk's Wildcat Lake reopened to the public on Saturday, May 23, 2009.



*Wildcat Lake*

The eastern side of Wildcat Lake is open to the public daily from mid-May through mid-August. After mid-August, the lake will only open on weekends through Labor Day. Everything at this park area of the lake is free. Lifeguards are on duty to supervise swimmers. A shallow swimming area is designated for younger children, and a deeper swimming area is available for use by adolescents and adults, and is accessible by the pier. The lake also has a white sandy beach area.

Fisherman can also take advantage of the lake. In April 2012, the Wildlife Resources Commission delivered 5,000 one to six-inch small bluegill to the body of water, and large mouth bass will be delivered this spring. The first trout are expected to be added in Spring 2011, and the lake will eventually become an official state trout impoundment with brook, rainbow and brown trout species.



*One half of Wildcat Lake is leased by the Holston Camp, a summer camp for Presbyterian churches in northeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina.*

Holston Presbytery Camp is located on the western side of Wildcat Lake, just one mile up Hickory Nut Gap Road from US Highway 184, near Banner Elk. The summer camp program has been going strong since 1959. Holston offers two standard programs throughout June and July: a weeklong residential co-ed camp for children and youth ages 8 to 17, and a day camp for ages 10 to 13. Throughout the year Holston provides other experiences to service groups.

The camp provides opportunities for, canoeing, rock climbing, backpacking, camping, campfires, outdoor cooking, Bible studies, evening worship, arts and crafts, kayaking, zip line, fishing, orienteering and much more. More information can be obtained directly from the Camp.

*Fishing*

The North Carolina Mountains is a preferred destination for avid fly-fishing enthusiasts, who travel from near and far. Banner Elk has beautiful clear waters and fresh clear air that makes spending a warm summer day on the creek bank a delightful time. Fishing in Banner Elk requires a license that can be obtained from the State. There are also guided fishing tours that are available. Fish found in the local streams are brown, rainbow and native brook trout. Ponds usually carry trout, bass, bluegill and catfish.

*Biking in Banner Elk*

There is an abundance of biking in Avery County with Banner Elk being the crossroads for many of the road races. Banner Elk boasts its own bike shop, Cycle 4 Life. The owner, Doug Owen, former head cycling coach at LMC and avid biker; offers guided riding trail tours and maps. He also repairs bikes in his shop. There are a number of challenging bike races in the area that have become very popular among mountain bikers. The Blood, Sweat and Gears Challenge is held annually and includes a 21 mile section of the Blue Ridge Parkway, a climb over the 4,500 foot gap of Snake Mountain, and another 10 miles of “flat” areas near Deep gap. Lees-McRae College is home to a national championship cycling team with nine national team titles and over 30 individual national titles that garnered national recognition between 2003 - 2010. People love the experience of being able to bike in one of the most beautiful places on Earth.



*Racing in Banner Elk*

*Summer Concerts in the Park*

The Banner Elk Chamber of Commerce kicks off the Summer Concerts in the Park on the third Thursday in June. The concerts, featuring well-known groups from Bluegrass to Motown, start at 6:30 pm and are well attended. The amphitheatre has a stage in front for those who wish to dance. Admission is free and there is food and drink available for sale from local vendors as well. Raffle tickets, that offer a prize, help fund this event and usually generate loads of fun for everyone. Concert schedules can be found on the Town's website.



*Summer Concerts in the Park – June through August*

*White Water Rafting*

The High Country has many great rivers and streams, perfect for whitewater rafting and kayaking. Banner Elk is home to businesses promoting several different outdoor adventures that include transportation to several locations in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. These day trips for rafters and kayaking are geared towards several different levels of rapids and always seek to provide the appropriate adventure to match the abilities of the participants. The rafting season usually starts in mid March and runs through mid October.

*Horseback Riding*

One of the more enjoyable ways to see the mountains is to go horseback riding. There are many area stables that offer guided trail rides. In addition, America's oldest running horse show is held each year in July and August, in nearby Blowing Rock. There are also more private trail rides provided at nearby farms but can also include more public activities such as horse drawn

carriage rides, hayrides in the fall of the year, and horse drawn sleigh rides in the winter.

### *Golfing*

Golf is perhaps one of the most popular mountain activities in the warmer months. There are several championship golf courses in the area. The private Elk River Country Club includes a golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus (rating 72.8); Grandfather Golf and Country Club, designed by Ellis Maples (rating 74.7). The Mountain Glenn golf course in Newland, designed by George W. Cobb is a semi-private golf course and is open to the public at certain times of the day. The Towns of Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain also have golf courses. Beech Mountain is a private course, designed by William C. Byrd (rating of 69.4); while Sugar Mountain is a municipal golf course, designed by Francis Duane and Arnold Palmer (rating of 61.1).

### *Skiing*

Banner Elk is bracketed on two sides by well-known ski resorts. The Beech Mountain Ski Resort is located in the town of Beech Mountain north of

Banner Elk. At a peak altitude of 5,500 feet, it is the highest ski resort in eastern North America. The Resort has artificial snow making equipment to supplement the 80 inches of average natural snowfall each year. They have the most natural snowfall of the ski resorts in



North Carolina. Beech also features a 7,000-square-foot outdoor ice skating rink. The rink is located in the middle of the Beech Tree Village.

Sugar Mountain is the largest ski area in North Carolina, by about 20 acres, with a total of 115 acres of ski-able terrain. Sugar is located in the Village of Sugar

Mountain, off US Highway 184. Sugar Mountain also boasts the largest vertical drop (1,200 feet) in the state. The lodge at the base of the mountain offers ski and snowboard rentals, a cafeteria, a lounge, a sports shop, a locker room and a gift shop. Sugar also offers snow-



shoeing (unique to the area), a snowboarding park that is closed to skiers, and a 700-foot-long tubing park. The 2007/2008 Season offered a brand new, 10,000-square-foot refrigerated outdoor ice skating rink! Skate sessions are 1 ¾ hours, with rental skates available. Sugar Mountain offers some of the most dramatic panoramic views from atop the mountain. A Zip Line was added in the 2008/2009 year and is available year round as well.

#### *Lees-McRae College Amenities*

#### *Summer Theatre*

Lees-McRae College's Summer Theatre program opened on July 17, 1985. Summer Theatre would not be possible without the generosity of numerous local donors. The 2008 Summer Theatre staff totaled 120 paid performers, technicians, and managers. Ticket sales now top 7,500 each summer. On July 17, 2010, Summer Theatre celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Summer Theatre benefits not only the locals and the summer visitors who appreciate the professional quality of outstanding talent; it is a boon to the local economy as well. In addition to the productions of Summer Theatre, the patrons visit Banner Elk's restaurants and specialty shops, and they purchase merchandise associated with the production, from the theatre. The Summer Theatre also supports the economy with the purchase of building supplies, food products, film, hardware, and much, more. This attraction is truly a delightful experience. More

information about the theatre schedule and tickets is available on the College's website.

#### *Indoor Pool*

The College has an indoor pool located at the Williams Recreation Complex. It is open to the public for a nominal fee per person and the public hours are posted on their calendar on their website.

#### *Athletic Track*

The track is open to the public for walking, as long as the public abides by the rules located on the signage at the track. There are no skateboards, roller blades, pets, or strollers allowed; and the public is asked to use the outside lane if the students are practicing.

#### *Bike Paths*

Mountain Bike Trails on the campus property are open to the public at the riders own risk.

#### *Outdoor Tennis Courts*

The tennis courts are open to the public, depending on practice schedules. All tennis court rules apply, and are posted.

#### *Indoor Athletic Courts*

The indoor courts can be rented out, depending on LMC's athletic scheduling.

#### *Varsity Fields and Gymnasium*

The varsity fields and the gymnasium can be rented out on occasions, but LMC athletic scheduling comes first. Anyone interested in renting any of these spaces may contact the Lees-McRae College Athletic Department.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

As Banner Elk's population grows, the demand for recreational opportunities grows. The Town may want to consider establishing a Recreational Management Department that could oversee activities in the Park, and more fully meet the maintenance demands of the Park.

Presently Tate-Evans Park functions well for most of the year. During the summer season, with the return of part-time residents and the joyful summer break from school for the children, the park can become somewhat crowded.

The park is a real asset to Banner Elk and is well liked. The current town park is located near the town's center and a second location further away could prove beneficial to the Town residents and visitors alike. The Town has identified the need to connect various recreational areas in town and, as a long-range goal, eventually connecting with Sugar Mountain. Support for Lees-McRae College and Grandfather Home for Children is a must for the viability of the community and those institutions. As Banner Elk grows, expansion of facilities will need to be addressed. Due to the beautiful landscape, the focus on natural activities needs to be promoted and protected. Banner Elk is in a good position to promote the area, with the help of the Banner Elk Tourism Development Authority. The TDA collects occupancy dollars and is mandated to use a portion for advertising and the promotion of tourism, which in turn is designed to help the economy in Banner Elk.

#### **5.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

##### *Goal 1. Expansion of the Tate-Evans Park*

- With the addition of the last tract of property to the Tate-Evans Park, the option for expansion became available. Once that area is developed, there will be a need for another shelter/restroom facility at the lower end. This will provide patrons with accessibility to much needed additional facilities.
- Creation of another deep wading pool in the Shawneehaw Creek that runs through the park will be of benefit to the children who visit the park. One pool is located near one of the footbridges, and the other footbridge would be an ideal location for another wading pool.
- Exploring expansion of the lower section with ideas such as a boulder climbing wall, an additional greenway loop interlaced with fitness stations, and possibly a basketball court would certainly benefit the community as well as any visitors to the park.

##### *Goal 2. Location of a second park*

- The Town has begun exploring the possibility of the location for a second park. Ideally, this would be located away from the current park and would serve another section of the Town. A donor for land would need to be identified and additional monies set aside for facilities to make the park worth visiting.
- It would be very beneficial if the second park could be integrated into the Greenway Trail System; where it could be accessible by a walk along the trail. This would also free up the existing park by making a second facility available, perhaps with different amenities than the current park.
- The idea of a second park would not be limited to the Town's corporate limits; but could be located in an area of the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction to better serve those residents as well.

*Goal 3. Develop plans for a community center*

- The Town of Banner Elk has been in discussions for quite some time about the possibility of locating a building for a community center. The old Banner Elk School building has long been looked at as the best possible scenario, with its central location in the heart of Banner Elk.
- The building has some historic significance, which exemplifies the Town's desire to protect its Heritage.
- Funding for the project will need to be identified. The Town has discussed the possibility of enlisting volunteer help to renovate the building using community professionals that have expertise in a wide array of fields.
- Planning discussions for this facility have included a possible relocation of the town hall, an indoor exercise facility for the harsher winter months, smaller classrooms for a possible incubator program that would work with LMC students that are ready to graduate and launch their careers, and a lending library.

*Goal 4. Partnering with LMC*

- Lees-McRae College has many recreational opportunities that could be made available to the public.
- The indoor pool at Williams Recreations Center is just one such opportunity.
- LMC has several mountain bike trails and the Town could explore partnering towards the expansion of mountain bike trails and making them available for public use. A joint venture would benefit both Lees-McRae College and the Town of Banner Elk.

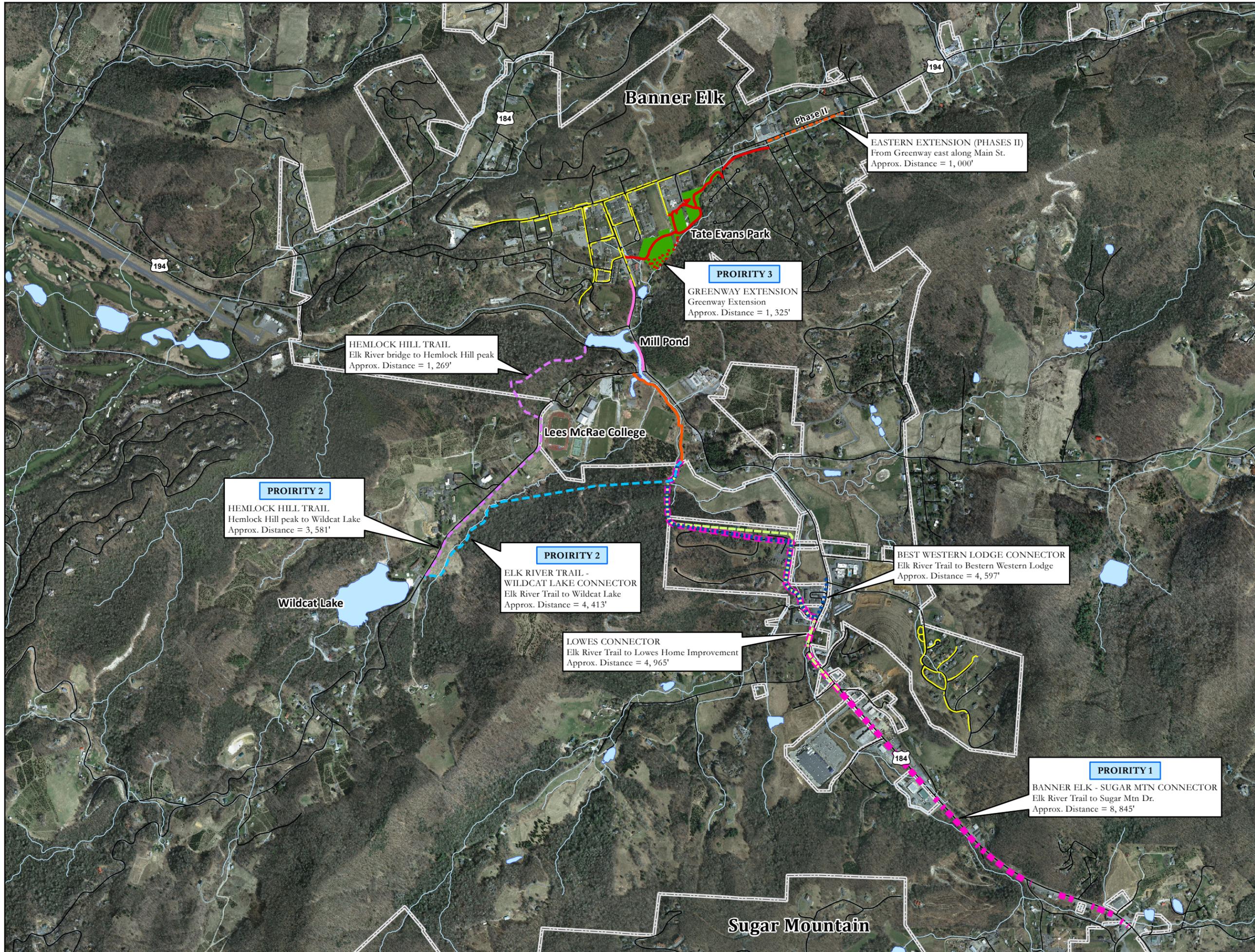
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# Map 3: Existing & Planned Recreation Facilities



Existing Sidewalks

**Existing Trails**

- Mary E. Dooner Greenway
- Pine Needle Hill Trail
- Elk River Trail

**Proposed Trails**

- - - Eastern Extension
- . . . Greenway ADA-Compliant Loop **PROIRITY 3**
- - - Elk River Trail - Wildcat Lake Connector **PROIRITY 2**
- - - Hemlock Hill Trail **PROIRITY 2**
- . . . Best Western Lodge Connector
- - - Lowes Connector
- . . . Banner Elk - Sugar Mtn Connector **PROIRITY 1**

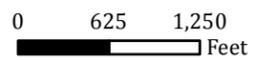
■ Tate Evans Park

■ Waterbodies

— Streams / Rivers

— Roads

- - - Town Limits



**PROIRITY 2**  
HEMLOCK HILL TRAIL  
Hemlock Hill peak to Wildcat Lake  
Approx. Distance = 3,581'

**PROIRITY 2**  
ELK RIVER TRAIL - WILDCAT LAKE CONNECTOR  
Elk River Trail to Wildcat Lake  
Approx. Distance = 4,413'

LOWES CONNECTOR  
Elk River Trail to Lowes Home Improvement  
Approx. Distance = 4,965'

**PROIRITY 3**  
GREENWAY EXTENSION  
Greenway Extension  
Approx. Distance = 1,325'

EASTERN EXTENSION (PHASES II)  
From Greenway east along Main St.  
Approx. Distance = 1,000'

BEST WESTERN LODGE CONNECTOR  
Elk River Trail to Bestern Western Lodge  
Approx. Distance = 4,597'

**PROIRITY 1**  
BANNER ELK - SUGAR MTN CONNECTOR  
Elk River Trail to Sugar Mtn Dr.  
Approx. Distance = 8,845'

HEMLOCK HILL TRAIL  
Elk River bridge to Hemlock Hill peak  
Approx. Distance = 1,269'

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**6.0 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions
- 6.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 6.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Banner Elk provides services for residents inside the corporate limits, as well as limited services to the residents in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). These services range from supplying drinking water and treating wastewater, to emergency response. There are also services that are not provided directly by the Town, but are contracted by the Town on behalf of the citizens they service (**See Map 4: Community Services and Facilities.**) An example would be solid waste removal and fire protection. It is important to consider the range of services and potential needs when considering future growth and development.

**6.2 INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The following section catalogs the variety of community services and the facilities that offer these services. It highlights the conditions that require the services and discusses possible present and future needs.

***POLICE, FIRE, and EMS***

*Banner Elk Police Department*

The Banner Elk Police Department (BEPD) currently employs eight full-time sworn officers, one administrative assistant, and one undercover Drug Task Force officer. The Drug Task Force is a joint effort between the Town of Banner Elk, Village of Sugar Mountain, Town of Beech Mountain, Town of Newland, Town of Elk Park, and the



Avery County Sheriff's Department to minimize, and possibly obliterate, illegal drug use and drug trafficking in Avery County. The policing jurisdiction is the town's corporate town limits, approximately 1.6 miles in diameter, and the ETJ that extends as far as one mile beyond that perimeter in many areas. The police department is equipped with a back-up generator and an educational classroom area large enough to handle 30 students comfortably. The BEPD has in-service training and mandatory annual training available on a 24- hour basis. They currently have four officers with advanced certification, three with intermediate certification, and two with general certification.

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The police department is the town's designated emergency management contact. The department has been trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which follows national guidelines for responding to natural disasters and/or terrorist attacks. NIMS is a system used to coordinate emergency preparedness and incident management among federal, state, and local agencies on an adjustable national framework within which government and private entities at all levels can work together to manage domestic incidents, regardless of their cause, size, location or complexity. NIMS provides training in domestic incident management and emergency prevention; including preparedness, response, recovery, public safety, and mitigation programs and activities. In case of an emergency, the department would work closely with Avery County's Emergency Management Director. On a more domestic level, the BEPD makes every effort to provide a helpful, visible presence within the community as they provide traffic and pedestrian assistance, a comforting presence within the town, and a watchful eye during and after all business hours.

### *Banner Elk Volunteer Fire Department*

One full-time employee, funded in part by the Town of Banner Elk; and 36 volunteers from the community, staff Banner Elk's Volunteer Fire Department (BEVFD). The BEVFD maintains five trucks: two equipment trucks, two tankers, and one brush truck. Training is conducted monthly with an average of 100 hours a month. The department strives to continually update and maintain their equipment, fire suppression, fire prevention, auto extraction, and search and rescue techniques. The volunteers also assist Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the Banner Elk Police Department and Avery



County Emergency Management, and respond to man-made and natural disasters. The department's funding sources include the North Carolina State's 50/50 match grant, the Avery County Commissioners, the Town of Banner Elk, and outside donations.

The Insurance Service Office (ISO) standards use a scale of 1 (most capable of coping with a fire) to 10 (no protection available) to determine the Town's fire district rating. The fire rating for the Town of Banner Elk is 6/9. The six represents the rating for inside the Town's corporate limits and the nine represent a six-mile barrier outside the corporate limits. To improve this rating the BEVFD needs additional equipment and better access to water through additional hydrants and dry-hydrant ponds in order to help them provide adequate services for extinguishing fires.

The BEVFD has also requested additional parking space from Avery County on the Banner Elk School grounds. The space may not be available and the fire department has begun looking for another site to build a new facility.

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*Avery County Emergency Medical Services*

The government of Avery County, through a joint effort with the Town of Banner Elk was able to locate an EMS station within the town limits. The importance of this move was to enable faster EMS response time to the northeastern quadrant of the County, greatly reducing the response time to remote locations. Banner Elk's facility rotates their members so as to provide a crew of two, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The crew consists of one field supervisor, who is always a paramedic and one other who is usually a paramedic. Occasionally, the facility is staffed with an intermediate crewmember that is working towards paramedic status.

The crewmembers are certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Basic Trauma Life Support, and Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation. At present, the Avery County/Banner Elk EMS Station is in need of an indoor main switch for the generator that will allow staff to be able to start the generator in the wintertime from indoors. In addition, the station needs newer computer equipment and a high-speed Internet connection for a daily reporting requirement to the State. The current dial-up connection has proven difficult to work with, and sometimes prevents the technician from reporting from this location.

***PUBLIC WORKS***

*Public Works Department*

The Public Works Department (PWD) is responsible for a number of services and facilities as listed below. The Town maintains the decorative streetlights that are a part of the Streetscape Program while Mountain Electric Cooperative (MEC) maintains other streetlights. The PWD maintains the town's vehicles and large equipment inventory. The Town currently employs five full-time maintenance employees. Certifications include CDL licenses and one employee who is working towards wastewater treatment certification.

*Streets*

The public works department is responsible for maintaining the town streets. This includes surfacing and resurfacing, roadside drainage, street signs, pavement markings, street sweeping, snow removal, and maintenance of sidewalks to eliminate weeds and remove snow. Currently there are 11.71 miles of town-maintained streets in Banner Elk. The Town participates in the State's street-aid (Powell Bill) program. Allocations are made to incorporated municipalities that meet the general statute guidelines for eligibility. The sum allocated is equal to the amount produced during the fiscal year by 1-3/4 cents on each taxed gallon of motor fuel. Powell Bill funds are disbursed only for the purpose of maintaining, repairing, constructing, reconstructing or widening of designated town maintained streets.

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### *Town Buildings*

The public works department is responsible for building maintenance. The following buildings are owned and/or maintained by the Town: town hall, maintenance building, police department, wastewater treatment plant, park pavilion, covered picnic shelters, playground equipment, dog park, and six well and pump houses. The maintenance building needs additional room for storage of equipment. The current location cannot be expanded and there is not enough room for the current equipment inventory, so the whole maintenance operation needs to be relocated.

### *Water System*

The public works department is responsible for ensuring that an adequate and safe supply of drinking water is available. They are also responsible for construction and maintenance of water mains and pipes, meters, manholes and hydrants. The public works department randomly draws water that is then submitted to a local laboratory for chemical monitoring. The water meters are read on a monthly basis and reports are prepared for various regulatory agencies. The Town recently partnered with the High Country Council of Government's GIS department to map out the Town's water and wastewater lines using the most current Global Positioning System (GPS) technology.

### *Stormwater Management*

The Town's certified wastewater treatment plant operator is responsible for maintenance of the catch basins and manholes located on town property and within granted easements. Individual developments are responsible for maintaining their catch basins while the town is responsible for the manholes. The stormwater detention vault underneath the Banner Elk School playground must also be cleaned out every six years. As mentioned in Section 4.0, the stormwater detention vault filters all the stormwater from the downtown area. This water then passes into a retention pond at the edge of the park for additional filtration, where it cools, and then seeps back into the Shawneehaw Creek.

### *Wastewater*

The wastewater treatment plant operator is responsible for ensuring that wastewater is properly treated in accordance with state and federal environmental regulations. The department has samples tested from various locations by an outside laboratory. In addition to testing, the department prepares reports for various regulatory agencies regarding wastewater treatment.

### *Other Services*

The Town of Banner Elk contracts its solid waste sanitation and recycling program for residents within the corporate limits. Currently solid waste removal is contracted with High Country Waste and the contract is up for bids every two years. Residents of the

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ETJ area use the Avery County recycling centers, the closest of which are located on Balm Highway and in Linville.

Grounds maintenance and landscaping of town property are the responsibility of the public works department. Recently the Town has begun contracting this work out to the private sector since the demand for aesthetic improvements has grown considerably in recent years.

### ***PARKS AND RECREATION***

The Town of Banner Elk maintains a park, recreational structures and grounds, but does not currently have a parks and recreation department. The Town has adopted the 2010 Master Recreation Plan with help in the preparation by the High Country Council of Government. The master recreation plan prepares the groundwork for a variety of grant funding opportunities to help the town prepare for future expansion.

### ***EDUCATION***

#### *Banner Elk Elementary School*

The Banner Elk School is a public elementary school, covering grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade and is one of six elementary schools in Avery County. The Banner Elk School has an enrollment of 171 students and 16 faculty and staff. It is among the few public schools in North Carolina to receive a distinguished Great Schools rating of 8 out of 10. The Great Schools ratings provide an overview of a school's test performance



by comparing the school's state standardized test results to those of other schools in the state. Ratings are given for each grade and student category (gender, ethnicity or other student group) for which test results are available. The current facility was built in 1939 and Avery County replaced it with a new facility on Orchard Lane. The new facility opened for the 2011-2012 academic year. A group

of concerned citizens have organized a committee in hopes of purchasing the old school to support a variety of uses that would benefit the community.

#### *Grandfather Academy*

Established in 1997, Grandfather Academy is a North Carolina public alternative charter school with approximately 38 students. Grandfather Academy is located on the grounds

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of Grandfather Home for Children on Hickory But Gap Road. The academy spans K-12 and is classified by the State as an “other level” school. This status refers to the schools ability to handle students who have a history of abuse(s).

*Lees-McRae College*

Lees-McRae College (LMC) is a private four-year liberal arts college with an enrollment of over 700 students and 56 faculty members. The average class size is 15 students. The college has two academic programs, the School of Arts and the School of Professional Studies. LMC offers 24 majors within these two programs. LMC’s short-term goal is to increase enrollment in 2011 and expand some of their curriculum.

*Library*

The Avery Morrison Library in Newland offers unlimited access to the public Monday through Friday, and half a day on Saturday. Lees-McRae College has the James H. Carson Library with limited access to the public. Newspapers and magazines are available along with computers if not being used by the students. LMC has not fully decided on a policy for checking out books.

***HEALTHCARE***

According to the 2000 Census, the median age in Banner Elk is 21.8 years of age. An increasing percentage of the population is 60+ years of age and Banner Elk must consider the increasing needs within the community for healthcare services. Banner Elk was once home to Charles A. Canon Jr. Memorial Hospital, a large building that now sits vacant. After merging with Sloop Memorial Hospital of Crossnore, the merged Charles A. Canon Jr. Memorial Hospital is located nine miles away in Linville and the two trunk hospitals have been closed. As mentioned earlier in the text, EMS services are stationed in Banner Elk and provide a quick response for serious needs. Banner Elk also has two doctor offices, two dental offices, and a full service pharmacy. Even with these facilities, newcomers have noted that it is difficult to find a doctor to take over their care while they are here. Services for senior care are not currently available in town but are within a 5-mile radius.

***CULTURAL***

Banner Elk and Lees-McRae College have always partnered to enhance cultural opportunities to its citizens and students through the college, local art studios, and the college’s library. The citizens and college students come from a variety of backgrounds, with Lees-McRae College also hosting some foreign exchange students. Several arts and crafts festivals are held during the warmer months in Banner Elk, and each year the annual Woolly Worm Festival is held on the third weekend in October. Locals and visitors alike attend all of these popular events. Lees-McRae’s Summer Theatre and Forum Series are a high priority for residents and visitors. Nearby Appalachian State University offers additional cultural experiences.

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### **6.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The Town of Banner Elk is blessed with goodhearted, faithful citizens who are always available to help one another. Banner Elk's Police Department is very well organized and is currently able to meet the needs of the community. Any future population growth would require the BEPD to expand as a reflection of that growth. Banner Elk's ability to respond to emergencies has greatly improved with the installation of the EMS station. The EMS station needs a new computer and modem that would allow staff to meet the reporting requirements imposed by the State, while helping the efficiency and services offered. Banner Elk's ISO fire rating level is 6 while outlying areas are a level 9. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the best score attainable, Banner Elk's grade of 6 leaves room for improvement. Additional equipment and better access to water sources, such as additional hydrants and/or dry-hydrant ponds, are needed to improve these ratings.

Banner Elk has two facilities that provide doctor services and two facilities for dental. Newcomers have noted that it is difficult to find a doctor. The educational needs of Banner Elk will exceed expectations with the completion of the new elementary school in 2011. Lees-McRae College is expecting to expand their enrollment in 2011 and is looking at the possibility of adding a Hospitality/Tourism course to their curriculum. Those responding to the Banner Elk Land Use survey showed support for encouraging the tourism industry.

The increase in popularity with visitors for the town park during the warmer months is taxing the current facility's capacity. With the recently approved 2010 Master Recreation Plan, Banner Elk has been provided with a much needed tool for planning additional recreational opportunities in Banner Elk. The plan provides guidance and suggestions for funding opportunities that will help the town expand the current recreation facilities and implement new ideas.

With an active tourism driven economy, Banner Elk is continually looking for ways to enhance cultural and recreational opportunities during the winter months.

### **6.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*Goal 1. Improved location and organization of the community's facilities.*

*Objective A. Optimize town-owned property for more effective use and consideration of possible future expansion.*

- Evaluate purchasing and building a new Public Works building to allow for a larger facility with more storage space and room for the current inventory of heavy equipment.

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- Expansion of the wastewater treatment plant must also be considered when looking at future expansion. Currently the wastewater treatment plant is operating at 80 percent capacity when all promised capacity, for units in already approved subdivisions that haven't been built yet, are included in the calculations. Any additional services provided by the town will certainly result in the need for expansion of this facility.
- The Tate-Evans Park has additional property in which it could expand. The Town will begin exploring grants to help provide additional space and amenities for recreational needs. The recently approved Master Recreation Plan puts the Town in a position to be able to request grant funding from many different sources in anticipation of future plans for expansion.

*Objective B. Improve emergency services throughout the town.*

- The BEVFD has expressed a need to relocate to a larger facility with additional parking spaces.
- The BEPD must consider retirement eligibility of their officers and continually looks for suitable replacements. Several of the officers have been with the Town for 15+ years. The BEPD remodeled their current facility in 2005-2006. The remodel provided them with a weight training room and classroom space large enough to host special training events. Continued monetary support among the members of the Drug Task Force must be supported.
- The Avery County/Banner Elk EMS station is an important component of the town's ability to address healthcare. Because of the relocation of the hospital facility to Linville, the EMS provides a valuable service to the residents of the greater Banner Elk area. The EMS station has expressed the need to update some computer equipment as well address being able to start the generator from the inside.

*Objective C. Address the needs of additional levels of service.*

- The Town has discussed the need for its own parks and recreation department. This department would be responsible for all plantings and maintenance of the landscaping areas in and around the park and Banner Elk proper. This department would also coordinate any community activities sponsored or co-sponsored by the town.
- The Town, in partnership with the citizens of Banner Elk, is exploring the possibilities of purchasing and renovating the old Banner Elk School as a possible multi-use community centered property while maintaining the heritage of Banner Elk.
- The Town recognizes the need to explore the possibilities of senior care for the community. Grandfather home for Children has expressed interest in developing their property to include some form of senior care. Additionally, a developer had approached the town and is still working on plans for

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building an assisted living facility at a location along highway 194 near the eastern edge of town.

*Objective D. Improve Compliance Standards for Solid Waste Management*

- Make an inventory of all businesses that have solid waste receptacles and follow-up with compliance issues.
- Ensure that any new businesses understand the Zoning Ordinance's solid waste section and what is required of them.

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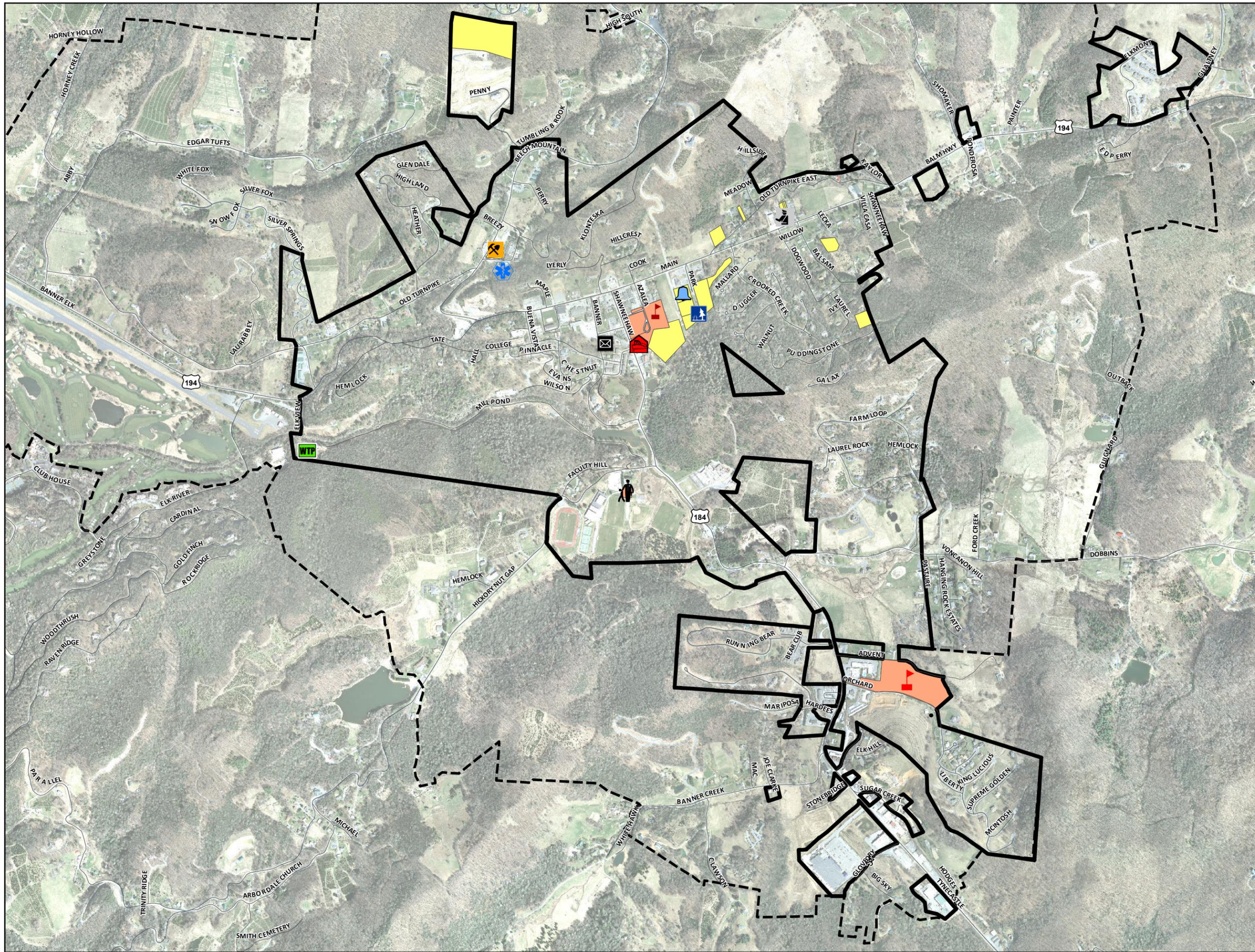
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# Map 4: Community Services & Facilities



### Community Services & Facilities

-  County EMS
-  County Parole Office
-  Fire Department
-  Maintenance Building
-  Police Department
-  Town Hall
-  Former Elementary School
-  New Elementary School
-  Tate Evans Park
-  U.S. Post Office
-  WWTP

- ### Public Parcels
-  County-Owned
  -  Town-Owned
  -  Roads
  -  ETJ Boundary
  -  Town Boundary



0 700 1,400 Feet



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## **7.0 COMMUNITY APPEARANCE AND DESIGN STANDARDS**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions
- 7.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 7.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Banner Elk offers a natural beauty that is unique to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The natural distant view of this “blue” range of the Appalachian mountain chain is the result of a moisture-rich atmosphere generated by pristine mountain streams, clean fresh air, and lush forests encompassing an abundant array of flora and fauna. The beautiful natural stone and chestnut buildings of Lees-McRae College were nestled into this setting over 100 years ago. The resulting breathtaking views in and around Banner Elk exude tranquility and foster a peace of mind. When describing the unique character of Banner Elk, residents are happy to share its rich history. Visitors often comment on how friendly and helpful the residents and businesses are in Banner Elk. These are all vital parts of our “small town” atmosphere. These special aspects are addressed in the Town’s mission statement: *“The historic village of Banner Elk is a college and mountain resort community committed to preserving and enriching its unique heritage, natural beauty and quality of life.”* This statement is a testament to the Town’s commitment to care for the environment, and to enhance the beauty and character that attracts so many visitors each year and influences their decision to return.

### **7.2 INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### *Landscape/Landscaping*

Banner Elk’s commitment to a better quality of life for its citizens and visitors has led the Town through a transformation in recent years. The Town went from having a few flowers around Town Hall and Tate-Evans Park to installing extensive sidewalks with flowerbeds and trees, decorative benches, refuse containers, banners and lighting throughout the entire downtown area. In addition, seasonal decorating has become an anticipated practice of the Town. Town Boards such as the Appearance Commission and the Tourism Development Authority have made generous contributions to the efforts of making Banner Elk more presentable to residents and visitors alike. Though the Town cannot claim credit for all of these natural landscaping amenities, we have an enormous responsibility for their care. Banner Elk’s zoning ordinance is a major element in addressing the issues of landscaping and aesthetics.

#### *Architecture*

Section 500 of the Zoning Ordinance addresses architecture by looking at site aspects, streets, sidewalks, lighting, building design, and signage. Generally, the

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mountain character of the buildings in the community grew out of a simple form built of natural materials using earth tone colors and located in a natural setting.



This character established the precedent for Banner Elk's architectural review process. As set forth in this section, the Town addresses such elements of design as roof pitch, exterior materials, windows, scale and location. Also addressed in Section 500 is the Town's Historic Overlay District (HOD). The HOD has additional guidelines for construction and renovation of buildings. The Town established a Historic Preservation Committee to review applications in this district. One important aspect of this Historical District is the Banner Elk School property. Declared

surplus property in the summer of 2011, the school is an important piece of Banner Elk's historic culture and the Town has marked this property for preservation. The location is strategic and will complement the Banner House Museum and add to the historical value of Banner Elk. Section 600 expands on signage guidelines and Section 700 details landscaping requirements. All of these sections are important components of the architectural review process in Banner Elk. The Town's goal is to support building designs that are well suited to the natural contours of a site, meaning they are tucked in rather than superimposed upon the landscape. This involves careful consideration to steep slope development (**See Historic Overlap Map.**)

### Quality of Development

While the intent of the Zoning Ordinance is to ensure that development blends into the surrounding landscape, protection of the environment is equally important in the planning process. A successful design approach takes into consideration all environmental factors during the planning stage.

Several concerns were addressed in a Citizen Survey, conducted in 2009, concerning future development in Banner Elk. A large number of those concerns addressed the need for controlled development. Most heavily rated was a need to limit multi-family units and the need to enhance affordable, but controlled growth of small businesses. To this end the Citizen Survey results showed that residents are concerned about the lack of small retail shops in the area and would like to see a small amount of controlled growth (density) in this area.

### Signs

Signs should be designed to have minimal detrimental impact on the environment. Controls are in place to limit size, location, light intensity and materials in order to

## TOWN OF BANNER ELK 2030 LAND USE PLAN

allow businesses to advertise without overwhelming the townscape. The Banner Elk Planning Board recommended a change in the Zoning Ordinance to Town Council that requires all signs to be sandblasted, hand carved or routed. The only signs that are not included in this requirement are temporary signs, controlled by a special permit and time limits. The change was enacted in 2007 and allowed for a 7-year grace period for all businesses to bring their signs into compliance by October 2014. The biggest challenge facing Banner Elk is enforcement, more specifically illegal use of signs over the weekend or holiday.

### Roadways

One of the issues addressed in the Citizen Survey is the need for public parking. The zoning district in the downtown area does not require parking to be provided by the business owner. The intent of this district is to have the patrons park and then walk through the town while shopping. Although this is an ideal scenario, the patrons must first have a place to park. Special events in town pose a particular problem for parking. Due to the high volume of tourists and second homeowners, property values are among some of the highest in Avery County. Therefore, purchasing property for parking has been considered cost-prohibitive, an approach that may have to be considered in the future.

Banner Elk's downtown area is comprised of one two-lane road coming in from the south, intersecting with an east/west two-lane road controlled by one traffic signal in the center of town. Beyond the population growth and the demands it has placed on our roadway system, increased activities also cause traffic congestion. This, combined with the lack of public parking, makes for one large headache for the Town. The Town established a thoroughfare committee in 1960 to explore alternate routes, in the form of a bypass around Banner Elk, in order to manage large truck traffic and perhaps alleviate some of the congestion. This met with strong opposition from affected landowners. In addition, NCDOT had the portion of Highway 184 that runs through the immediate downtown area identified as a future four-lane project. However, Banner Elk was able to find help in having this section removed from the State's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Widening to a four-lane road would have destroyed the extensive work of the Streetscape Program in the downtown and consequently the goal for a pedestrian-friendly downtown.

Future consideration will need to be given to traffic movements in and around Banner Elk as the population continues to grow. An additional need that should be addressed in future roadside planning is bike lanes or multi-modal lanes, as addressed in the Town's Master Pedestrian Plan. In addition to the pedestrian-friendly streetscape, Banner Elk has become a world-class cycling destination. For the safety of cyclists and motorized traffic alike, this is high on the Town's priority list of safety issues. However, there still appears to be a traffic problem. While the traditional traffic solutions, including construction of a by-pass and road widening, were not popular with residents, there is still recognition that the current situation is not workable either, especially given the growth in bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

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### Lighting

The Planning Board recommended a detailed lighting trespass ordinance in 2009. The Town began implementing conformance with this ordinance by installing more subdued streetlights in the downtown Streetscape program area. The main focus of the ordinance is to direct the light from streetlights downward in order to make the night sky more visible and reduce glare on adjacent properties; the Town then had the local electric company disconnect their larger lights. The newly installed lights provide adequate lighting without offensive spillage into the community. This provides an example of how the lighting ordinance can work for everyone.

### Noise

Chapter 93 of the Town Code addresses noise pollution. A description of the types of noise and their restrictions are listed in the text along with a penalty for any violations. Permits can be obtained from the Police Department for events that require the noise to exceed the curfew set in the Town Code. In general, the Code limits amplified noise to occur between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm.

### Trees

The Town currently has a simple tree ordinance for new construction. The Town is in the process of working jointly with the High Country Council of Government, Region D to work on improving its tree ordinance. The goal is to have a document that is an on-going comprehensive process regarding our stewardship of the environment and our natural resources. The Town recognizes a need to safeguard all trees of Banner Elk, while at the same time protecting homeowners.

### Storage and Waste Management

The issue of screening, both the storage of materials and the refuse of modern day living, is addressed in great detail in Section 708. One purpose of this section is to preserve the aesthetics of the Town, but an equally important consideration is the protection of our environment. It has been found that the standard screening practices of the past will not withstand the challenges of weather and service traffic. It is also imperative that drainage from refuse containers be controlled so as not to contaminate our fragile waterways. The monetary burden to businesses and the enforcement of this section of the ordinance is a challenge to both the businesses and the Town.



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### **7.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Banner Elk has been working toward trying to implement thoughtful planning within the Town and ETJ areas as it relates to future development and/or associated changes that could adversely affect the appearance of roadway corridors, our beautiful hillsides and scenic byways. Additionally, there is no sense of arrival into Banner Elk, as pointed out during a recent graduate level study of Banner Elk, conducted by students from Appalachian State University. The students commented on not knowing where Banner Elk began and Sugar Mountain ended. The current appearance of the Highway 184 corridor coming in to Banner Elk must also be taken into consideration. This main “gateway” needs to give the best first impression possible to those who visit the area. The Town also needs to consider the two entryways that are accessed by Highway 194.

The Historic Overlay District has been established in order to prevent adverse effects of development from destroying the feel of a small town atmosphere that is so important to everyone who resides in Banner Elk. At the heart of this topic is the Banner Elk School. The Town Council named this one of their top short-term goals and the citizens of the Town have also expressed concern for the structure. This objective is most prominent in the Citizen Survey conducted by Town Staff. The property is awaiting designation to be placed on the National Register for Historic Places and will add to the importance of this property.

Future development beyond Banner Elk’s Extraterritorial Zoning Jurisdictional boundary (ETJ), has the potential to degrade the quality of existing view shed areas that contribute to the Town’s appearance. Natural resources are also out of reach of the protection that could be afforded by Banner Elk’s Zoning Ordinance. A recent attempt to expand the ETJ failed due to a misconception that property would actually be annexed into the Town and property taxes would be assessed. This was never the intent of the Town Council.

The Town Zoning Ordinance is considered a viable document driven by the Town’s objective of protecting the natural resources and beauty of Banner Elk.

### **7.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*GOAL 1: Create a clear “sense of place”.*

- Define the gateway into Banner Elk along Highway 184 to more clearly distinguish between Sugar Mountain and Banner Elk’s jurisdictional boundary.
- Adopt a beautification plan for that corridor that will incorporate landscaping and multi-modal pathways, connecting Banner Elk and Sugar Mountain. This has

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been an expressed desire by both municipalities and the Banner Elk businesses along Highway 184.

*GOAL 2: Address the needs of the Public in relation to parking.*

- Creativity needs to be considered when addressing the public's need for public parking. The C-1 Zoning District in the immediate downtown area has no requirement for providing parking by the businesses. The intent of this zoning district is to have a walkable commercial area where patrons of the local shops and restaurants could walk along the sidewalks and spend time leisurely exploring the downtown area. The concept is an excellent one, but should the town wish to promote an atmosphere of strolling in the downtown area, it must first provide additional parking.

*GOAL 3: Control growth and natural resources protection.*

- The Banner Elk Planning Board has started working towards controlling growth by reducing the density as allowed in the Zoning Ordinance. Banner Elk has made great strides in protecting the outlying ETJ areas that are visible and could directly impact the appearance and image of the Town. Adopting a Steep Slope Ordinance has limited over-development on dangerously steep slopes, at the same time enabling the Town to protect both the residents and neighboring properties from any negative impact.
- Additionally, based on statutory authority, Banner Elk has the ability to expand its ETJ. In recent years, the growth of the corporate limits did not include a relative growth of the ETJ boundary. The option of expanding the ETJ is a tool the Town could use to protect a larger area from the negative impact of growth.
- If Banner Elk simultaneously wishes to grow and yet control growth, one strategy is to identify the potentially developable land. This should include the land inside the corporate limits, the outlying ETJ areas, and along commercial corridors. The Town must consider the percentage of property that should be developed in accordance with Banner Elk's standards, and the percentage that the Town would like to remain green and protected.
- Due to the economic downturn, there are three approved multi-family developments that have not been built as originally proposed. Out of the 280 units planned, only 104 have been built. This leaves 176 units with promised utility capacity resources that cannot be used for anything other than those specific units they were allocated for. In addition, there are many previously approved single-family units that are still not built. These unused, yet committed utility resources, greatly impact the Town's ability to plan for future development and the consideration of utility capacity, which plays an important part in protecting our natural resources.
- Some development failures have been the result of foreclosure proceedings. This has left them essentially abandoned with no one taking responsibility for

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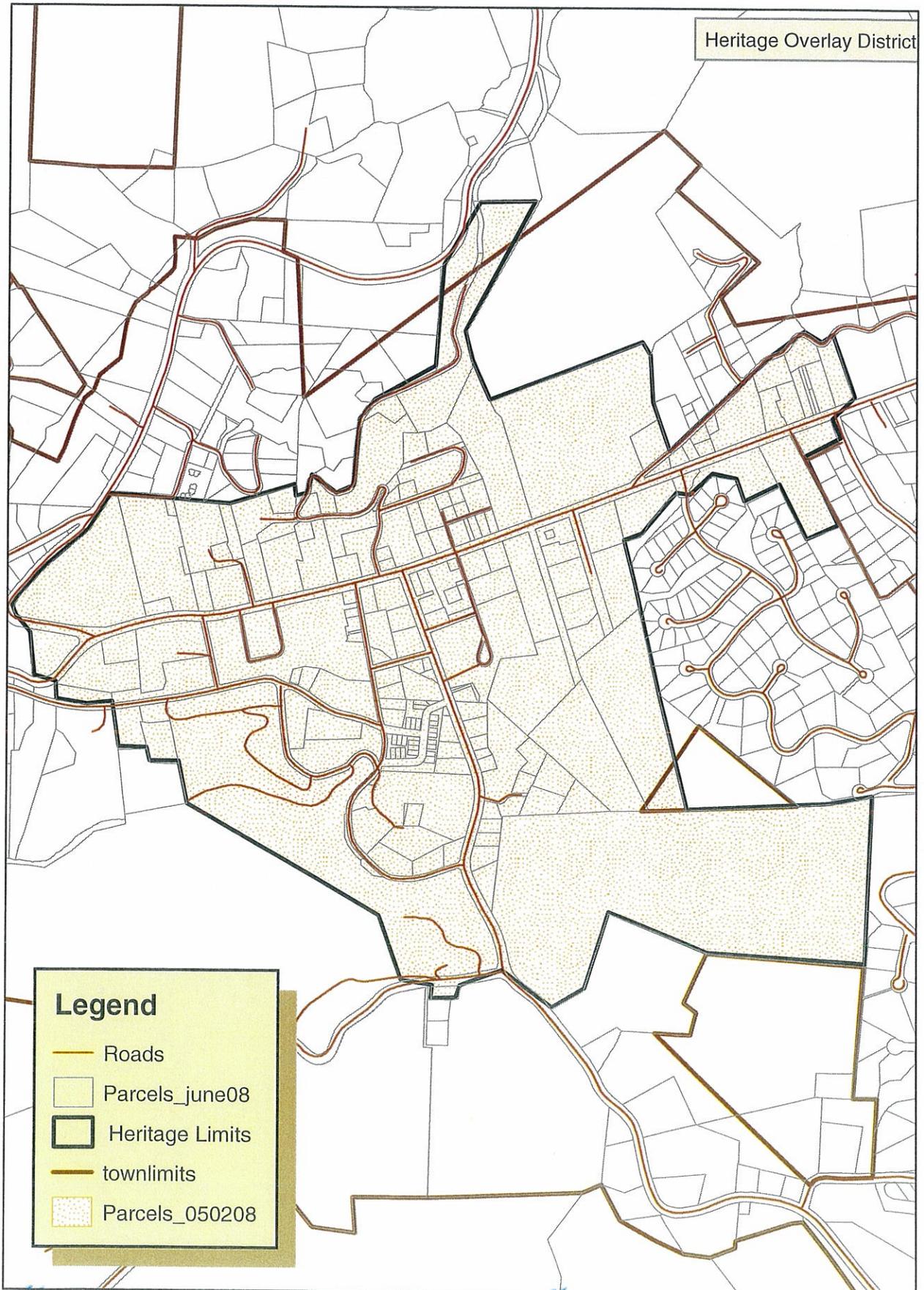
landscaping and maintenance of the developments. The resulting challenge for the Town is to identify and locate a capable party to carry on this responsibility of maintaining unfinished developments, a difficult task in today's financial environment.

- The Town must also clearly identify properties that need to be preserved and work towards a preservation program that protects them and the history associated with them.

*Goal 4. Validate the Importance of Our Landscape with Professional Support*

- Create a town-wide landscape plan with established plant beds with plants that will produce some display all through the year.
- Identify a professional support person to help develop this plan and oversee the care of the landscape.

Heritage Overlay District



**Legend**

- Roads
- Parcels\_june08
- Heritage Limits
- townlimits
- ▨ Parcels\_050208

## **8.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS AND OPEN SPACE**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions
- 8.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 8.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

Several elements are important to the natural environment of Banner Elk. They are water quality, soil erosion and sedimentation control, stormwater management, and clearly defined wellhead protection areas. Water quality and protection of the native flora and fauna are part of the natural environment. Regulatory measures can be put in place to help preserve the environment by identifying areas with poor soil types, soil erosion and sedimentation control measures, stormwater management, and wellhead protection. The Town recognizes the need to preserve open space and the many benefits it provides, while recognizing the importance of dedicated land(s) for the protection of conservation areas. A variety of habitats, elevation differences and natural features enable Banner Elk to flourish amid this natural beauty, which is one of its greatest assets. Because of its importance, we are compelled to strategically protect it from over-development.

### **8.2 INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### *Water Quality*

The Town of Banner Elk is located in the Watauga River Basin in the far northwest corner of the state. The entire watershed drains northwest into Tennessee where it flows into the Watauga River Reservoir. This basin is the second smallest in the state and the North Carolina portion is located entirely in the Blue Ridge Province of the Appalachian Mountains. The Town of Banner Elk's contribution to the basin is through the Elk River.

The North Carolina Division of Water Quality (DWQ) prepares a plan every five years whose goal is to protect and restore the quality of North Carolina's surface waters. Success for this plan depends on local governments participating in this program. According to the 2007 Watauga River Basin Wide Water Quality Plan conducted by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality, water quality can be negatively impacted by human disturbances. The purpose of the plan is to identify water quality problems and restore full use to impaired waters, to identify and protect high value resource waters, and to protect unimpaired waters while allowing for reasonable economic growth.

Pollutants enter water bodies through two types of sources, point and non-point, and contribute to water quality degradation. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines point source pollution as any single identifiable source of pollution from which pollutants are discharged, such as a pipe or ditch. Factories and sewage treatment plants are two common types of point source. Proper construction and maintenance of septic systems and efficient municipal wastewater treatment are critical to protecting water quality. Responsible management of land activities is also needed to help protect streams and rivers. Non-point source pollution is water pollution from diffuse sources affecting a water body, such as polluted runoff from impervious surfaces such as oil on paved parking spaces, sediment generated by construction activities, timber harvesting, and fertilizers used on golf courses and in agriculture. These pollutants make it difficult for aquatic life to survive.

The report indicates that the Elk River has stress indicators in areas of nutrient impacts and habitat degradation. Healthy and diverse aquatic life relies on the clean water because it provides essential habitat and nutrients. Rivers that fill up with silt or become polluted can harm animals, fish, reptiles, insects, and micro-organisms; and the areas where they live and feed. The current ratings of both the Elk River and the Mill Pond site since 1999, has gone from excellent to good and from good to fair, respectively. This decline in water quality was attributed to non-point source runoff including sediment and stormwater runoff from surrounding development and the resulting increase in impervious surfaces. It was also noted in the report that the sites that were sampled now have roads that run parallel to the stream, leading to narrow riparian buffer zones with frequent breaks and little shading. Even though two species of non-native trout (rainbow and brown) were caught in the segment of Elk River just below Banner Elk Township, this mountain stream no longer exhibits natural trout stream characteristics, due to increased road building. Characteristics of Southern Appalachian type trout streams include the presence of plunge pools, low conductivity, elevation, clear and swift waters, and vegetated (shaded) riparian zones. Based on DWQ's most recent use support methodologies, the Elk River's surface waters are supporting their designated uses. However, the water quality problems and concerns that were documented need attention to prevent additional degradation, with the ultimate goal of improving water quality. Public education is needed to show the importance of adequate riparian zones and the use of best management practices, such as stream bank restoration projects, to reduce habitat degradation and impacts from stormwater runoff.

#### *Sedimentation and Erosion Control*

Much of the land disturbing activities take place on steep mountain slopes, which are naturally vulnerable to soil erosion. Alteration of natural areas may damage or destroy wildlife habitat and harm surrounding areas. As land is cleared, rain and melting snow (stormwater) pick up eroded sediments, pesticides, fertilizers and road salt and carry them into streams. Runoff of human and animal waste may also be a problem.

The Town of Banner Elk's Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance mandates that sedimentation and erosion control measures are in place. The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate certain land-disturbing activities and to control accelerated erosion and sedimentation in order to prevent water pollution and other damage to lakes, watercourses, and other public and private property. Setback requirements are specifically spelled out and are modeled to State standards as set forth by DWQ.

#### *Stormwater Management*

Stormwater runoff is rainfall or snowmelt that runs off the ground or impervious surfaces (such as, buildings, roads, and parking lots, etc.) instead of being absorbed into the soil. Stormwater causes the most damage to water quality when it is channeled directly into streams and rivers from pipes. This means no pollutants have been filtered out, the water is typically warmer, and the water has more force when it enters the stream, causing scouring and erosion of the stream channels.



In order to proactively protect its water quality, the Town of Banner Elk installed a stormwater collection system. This system includes a 150,000-gallon underground

detention/storage vault and treatment wetlands. The project was installed in 2001 and has become a demonstration project for many mountain communities. Stormwater from the 65-acre downtown area is collected and transported via the stormwater collection system (curb and gutters) to the underground detention vault where it is stored and cooled. Sediment and debris settle out in the vault before the less turbid water is released into the wetlands at a controlled rate to prevent flooding. The treatment wetlands then trap additional sediment and pollutants before flowing into the Shawneehaw Creek, a tributary of the Elk River. The Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development (BRRC&D) Council, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) and the Town of Banner Elk partnered to fund the Stormwater Collection and Wetlands Project. The funding also established a 1.3-mile Greenway Trail along the controlled wetlands and the Shawneehaw Creek.

### *Wellhead Protection*

The Town of Banner Elk adopted a wellhead protection plan in 2008. A wellhead protection plan helps reduce the threat of contamination, but may not eliminate all risks. Potential groundwater contaminant sources are numerous and varied and include the following: accidental spills, malfunctioning septic tanks, leaks from underground storage and above-ground tanks, cemeteries, chemical storage areas, and infiltration of polluted surface water such as run-off from parking lots, lawn chemicals, and the like.

The Town's wellhead protection plan recognizes that the Town utilizes a surficial unconfined aquifer, defined as water near the Earth's surface, for its well supply. Unconfined surficial aquifers are particularly susceptible to contamination originating at or near the land surface. Potential containment sources and activities occurring within the wellhead protection area of wells should be closely monitored. Also, in the management of potential contamination sources, special attention should be given to improperly constructed and/or abandoned wells that can provide a pathway for contamination to reach the Town of Banner Elk's groundwater supply. The Town has given special consideration of this overlay district, when considering permitted or conditional uses, by reducing the amount of impervious surface allowed, requiring on-site stormwater controls, and increasing the setbacks from streams, creeks, and drainageways. Systematic testing of potable water also helps the town monitor drinking water and its sources. Several prohibitive scenarios are illustrated in the ordinance as well. The Town needs to remain vigilant in protecting the wellhead overlay district. **(See Wellhead Protection Area Map)**

### *Endangered Wildlife*

Banner Elk is home to some threatened and/or endangered species. Listed are the species and their status on the federal and state endangered/threatened species list. There are three categories as provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Threatened and Endangered Species List, 2002.

- *Federal Species of Concern* denotes a species under consideration for listing at this time.
- *Threatened* denotes a species that is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- *Endangered* denotes a species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Table 8-1

<b>Endangered Species</b>	<b>Federal Species of Concern</b>	<b>Threatened</b>	<b>Endangered</b>
<b>Birds</b>			
Carolina Warbler	X		
Cerulean Warbler	X		
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	X		
<b>Mammals</b>			
Allegheny Wood Rat	X		
American Black Bear	X		
Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel			X
Eastern Cougar			X
Red Wolf			X
Virginia Big-eared bat			X
<b>Reptiles</b>			
Bog Turtle		X	
Hellbender Salamander	X		
<b>Insects &amp; Arachnids</b>			
Spruce-fir moss spider			X
<b>Plants</b>			
American Chestnut *	X	X	
Blue Ridge Goldenrod		X	
Heller's Blazing Star		X	
Carolina Hemlock	X		
Roan Mountain Bluet			X
Rock Gnome Lichen			X
Spreading Avens			X
Yellow Lady's Slipper	X		

\*Species is being reintroduced after blight almost eradicated the species.



Species of Concern - Yellow Lady's Slipper

### *Ridgelines*

The Mountain Ridge Protection Act of 1983 states that, “Any county or city may adopt, effective not later than January 1, 1984, and may enforce an ordinance that regulates the construction of tall buildings or structures on protected mountain ridges by any person. The



ordinance provided for the issuance of permits to construct tall buildings on protected mountain ridges, the conditioning of such permits, and the denial of permits for such construction. Any ordinance adopted hereunder shall be based upon studies of the mountain ridges within the county, a statement of objectives to be sought by the ordinance, and plans for achieving these objectives. Any such county ordinance shall apply countywide except as otherwise provided in G.S. 160A-360, and

any such city ordinance shall apply citywide, to the construction of tall buildings on protected mountain ridges within the city or county, as the case may be.” The Town of Banner Elk adopted this act in 1984 and considers this a very important piece of legislation in the protection of our mountain ridges and natural beauty. The Town of Banner Elk’s Zoning Ordinance prohibits buildings taller than 35 feet.

### *Steep Slope Developments*

Dramatic elevation changes and rock formations define mountain topography in and around Banner Elk. Poorly controlled erosion and sediment from steep slope disturbance negatively impacts water quality, hydrology, and aquatic habitat and threatens human safety and welfare. Soil types, rock formations, geology, weather patterns, natural slope, surrounding uses, historic uses, and other factors all contribute to unstable slopes. Improper grading practices disrupt natural stormwater runoff patterns and result in poor drainage, high runoff velocities and increased peak flows during storm events. There is an inherent element of instability in all slopes and those who choose to undertake grading and/or construction activities are responsible for adequate site assessment, planning, designing and construction of reasonable safe and stable artificial slopes (see **Map 5: Topography.**)

The Town Planning Board adopted a Steep Slope Development Ordinance in 2007 to address this issue. A Geotechnical Engineer is required to provide professional guidance on grades of slope greater than 50.1 percent. The Planning Board was given the responsibility of regulating areas within the Town’s jurisdiction that are comprised of steep slopes. Slopes between 20 to 50 percent are categorized as “steep”, and slopes over 50 percent are “very steep”. The ordinance allows the planning staff to consult an independent geotechnical engineer to help determine the type of development steep slopes can best support, whether the opinion of a licensed engineer concerning the integrity and safety of steep slope development could be relied upon, and whether more stringent regulatory measures are needed in order to provide long term protection to steep slopes from inappropriate development. The cost of this review is borne by the person developing the property.

### *Geological Hazard Zones*

The Geologic Hazard Zones were identified by topography and established as an “overlay” district. (Overlay districts do not change the existing zoning classification of the properties within, but rather are “overlaid” upon existing zoning districts and impose additional standards designed to achieve a desired outcome.)

The following Geologic Hazard zones are recommended by the Planning Board:

**Red Zone (High Geologic Hazard):** Areas of high probability that disturbance of the slope will yield landslides. Areas over 50.1 percent slope.

**Orange Zone (Moderate Geologic Hazard):** Areas of moderate probability that disturbance of the slope will yield landslides. Areas 40.1 percent to 50 percent slope.

**Green Zone (Low Geologic Hazard):** Areas of low probability that disturbance of the slope will yield landslides. Areas 30.1 percent to 40 percent slope.

The boundaries of the Geologic Hazard zones are depicted on **Map 5: Topography**. Proposed requirements applicable to the development of all property located within Red and Orange Geologic Hazard zones include the submission of a geologic analysis as outlined in the Steep Slope Ordinance.

Table 308-3, in Section 310 of the Zoning Ordinance, addresses two factors: the requirements for developing property that contain steep slopes and the maximum allowable percentage of impervious surface per acre of land. The calculation can include the removal of active recreation areas as described in Section 312. The percentage of slope is to be determined on the whole acreage of the parcel by using the following formula:

Slope “S”= $0.0023 \times I \times L/A$ , “I” is the contour interval of the map,  
“L” is the total length of the contour lines within the parcel in feet,  
“A” is the area of the parcel in acres, and  
0.0023 is the constant that converts square feet into acres.

Additionally, developments with very steep slopes (greater than 50 percent) must be accompanied by a site-specific geological analysis concentrating on the areas that are proposed to be disturbed. The importance of this portion of the Zoning Ordinance is to ensure slope stability that can also affect the properties surrounding the site. If remedial measures are needed to ensure slope stability, then a Geotechnical Engineer, registered in North Carolina, must submit a plan for the stability measures to the Zoning Administrator for review.

### *Soils*

The National Cooperative Soil Survey Program (NCSS) is a partnership led by National Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) of Federal land management agencies, state agricultural experiment stations, and state and local units of government that provide soil survey information necessary for understanding, managing, conserving and sustaining the nation's limited soil resources. Soil surveys provide an orderly, on-the-ground, scientific inventory of soil resources that includes maps showing the locations and extent of soils, and

data about the physical and chemical properties of those soils. The survey also contained information derived from that data about potentialities and problems of use on each kind of soil in sufficient detail to meet all reasonable needs for farmers, agricultural technicians, community planners, engineers, and scientists in planning and transferring the findings of research and experience to specific land areas. Soil surveys provide the basic information needed to manage soil sustainability. They also provide information needed to protect water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Soil surveys are the basis for predicting the behavior of a soil under alternative uses, its potential erosion hazard, potential for ground water contamination, suitability, and productivity for cultivated crops, trees, and grasses. Soil surveys are important to planners, engineers, homeowners, developers, as well as agricultural producers. Soil surveys also provide a basis to help predict the effect of global climate change on worldwide agricultural production and other land-dependent processes. The 2009 survey is the most current information available for soil information on Banner Elk.

Identified in the survey were 24 important soil series in the Banner Elk planning jurisdiction (**See Table 8.1, Soil Types.**) The most predominant soils are Crossnore-Jeffrey complex (windswept), Cullasaja Cobbly Loam, Pineloa Gravelly Loam, Porters Gravelly Loam, and Unaka Porters complex. These predominant soils are found on mountain slopes, ridges, and summits and are well drained soils consisting of metamorphic and igneous rock and its residuum.

The Crossnore-Jeffrey Complex has slopes ranging from 30 to 50 percent and is found on mountain slopes, ridges, back slopes, and summits. Cullasaja has slopes ranging from 8 to 50 percent grades and can be found in coves on mountain slopes, drainageways and fans on mountain slopes. Pineola Gravelly Loam and Porters Gravelly Loam have slopes ranging from 8 to 50 percent slopes and can be found on mountain slopes, ridges and summits. Lastly, the Unaka-Porter complex ranges from 15 to 50 percent slopes and can be found on the upper third of mountain slopes and side slopes. All of these soils are well drained but are located on slopes, which makes development challenging. The remaining types of soil are found in floodplain areas and provide poor drainage. Ideally, the Udorthents-Urban Land Complex has a slope range of 2 to 15 percent, is well drained, and is best-suited to support development. Incidentally, the Udorthents-Urban Land Complex is the soil type that is found in the most densely populated downtown area of Banner Elk. Soils that have characteristics that can limit development are more critical in areas where public water and wastewater are not available. Certain soil types do not promote the use of septic systems, a concern that would need to be determined by the Avery County Health Department. These areas where wastewater is not likely or practical to extend during the 20-year planning period should maintain any proposed development at a much lower density, or set aside as open space.

Hydric soils, a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part, are unable to support freestanding vegetation but often have a layer of decomposing plant material. Banner Elk has five types of hydric soils: Cullowhee Loam, Dellwood Cobbly Sandy Loam, Nikwasi Loam, Reddies Fine Sandy Loam, and Rosman Sandy Loam which make up 9.8 percent of the soil types.

### *Open space*

Open space is any privately or publicly owned land in an undeveloped state unencumbered by impervious surfaces. In this state, such undeveloped land contributes to vital ecological functions and often contains important natural resources or cultural resources

worthy of potential conservation and protection. Local governments can use its zoning authority to protect drinking water sources by ensuring there is a sufficient percentage of open space, especially in subdivisions. Such areas may contain, but are not limited to woodlands, farmlands, very steep slopes, public parks, open fields, floodplains, and wetlands as a form of open space. Forty percent (274 acres) of land within Banner Elk corporate limits boundary is undeveloped.



Areas that are suitable for development should be identified and segregated as residential, areas that are designed for residential development; but are extremely difficult to develop, commercial or other. Areas that are currently in conservation easements should be identified as such. Also, areas that are in the floodway carry a special designation by the State of North Carolina, Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate

Map (FIRM) panels and should be noted as areas extremely difficult to develop (**See Map 6: Agriculture, Open Space, & Conservation Lands.**)

#### *Active Recreation Areas*

Section 312 of the Zoning Ordinance ensures that areas are provided, either within the development itself or in conjunction with the Town of Banner Elk, where active recreational activities can take place. These requirements are established to make certain that Banner Elk citizens have adequate open space areas and walking trails to promote good health and a positive sense of community. These regulations apply to planned residential developments and major subdivisions. The Town of Banner Elk provides some of these areas through the Tate-Evans Park and the Greenway system. Community access to an active recreation area should be provided either by an abutting street or community greenway easement. If sufficient property is available, the active recreation area requirement is determined by multiplying the site area by 15 percent. If not available, the developer may provide funds in the amount of 125 percent of the assessed value of the required, as determined by the Avery County Tax Assessor, to account for the cost of providing an active recreation area elsewhere in the Town. The funds collected from the cash-in-lieu-of-land is required to be spent on capital improvements to town-owned recreational facilities or acquisition of new land and facilities, including greenway construction.

### **8.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The potential for further development on steep slopes and ridges could adversely affect the natural environment and scenic views. Development on non-supporting soil types could have an impact on protecting water quality, and soil and erosion measures.

Standards have been added to the Zoning Ordinance to preserve trees and existing vegetation, establish stormwater run-off measures, identify wellhead protection zones, increase buffers along stream banks, decrease density on steep slope development, and provide for open space in Banner Elk's jurisdiction. The opportunity is always present to improve on these standards when deemed necessary by the governing boards.

Water quality is extremely important since surface water is the major source of water for the area. Continued support of systematic testing of potable water to help monitor drinking water and its sources can help monitor water quality. Stormwater runoff control measures are essential in order to ensure safe water for all. Inadequate buffer riparian zones need to be identified and improvements made to ensure that stormwater and flooding are greatly minimized for natural streams and rivers. Public education is needed on the importance of good riparian zones and use of best management practices, such as stream bank restoration projects to reduce habitat degradation and impacts from stormwater run-off.

The importance of open space within Banner Elk's zoning jurisdiction should be identified and measures put in place to ensure that a reasonable amount of natural land is available to enhance the natural resources of the area. These areas can be made up of environmentally sensitive areas that need additional protection. The Town needs to identify additional well sites and ensure that they are placed within the wellhead protection overlay district. The Town will also identify areas with steep slopes and poor soil types that are not supportive of development.

#### **8.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*Goal 1. Preserve and improve water quality through:*

- Education on the effects of sediment and increased stormwater runoff, and the importance of riparian buffers;
- Expanding the number of homes and businesses that use Best Management Practices for stormwater runoff;
- Increasing the miles of stream that are protected with riparian buffer zones and restore damaged riparian buffer zones; and
- Active participation in stream bank restoration projects that help restore riparian buffer zones.

*Goal 2. Preserve open space by identifying poor soil types and rock strata formations along protected ridgelines or flood prone areas, drawing attention to those areas that may not support development due to safety concerns.*

- Incorporate soil types and map into the zoning ordinance to facilitate the location of those areas that may present poor or negative impacts on development, or are environmentally sensitive.
- Encourage the dedication of open space inside developments through conservation easement programs as a way of providing pleasant view sheds and protection of the natural beauty of our area for the residents of the development, as well as the residents of Banner Elk. This will give the taxpayers some relief on their property taxes, as conservation easements are not valued as highly as other property.
- Create a map of environmentally sensitive areas by a qualified naturalist to inventory and establish areas that harbor endangered species of flora or fauna, unique geological formations, delicate ecosystems and waterways that need to be maintained in their current natural state.

*Goal 3. Geologically hazardous very steep slopes that can be incorporated into open space areas are identified on a map and made available to the general public for consideration.*

- Prepare informational material to share with the public on the impact of development on steep slopes.
- Include the steep slope information in the Subdivision Ordinance and make the requirements part of the checklists.
- Give special consideration to the trees and shrubs that grow on slopes and provide stability.
- Require hydroseeding for exposed slopes that are not currently under development.

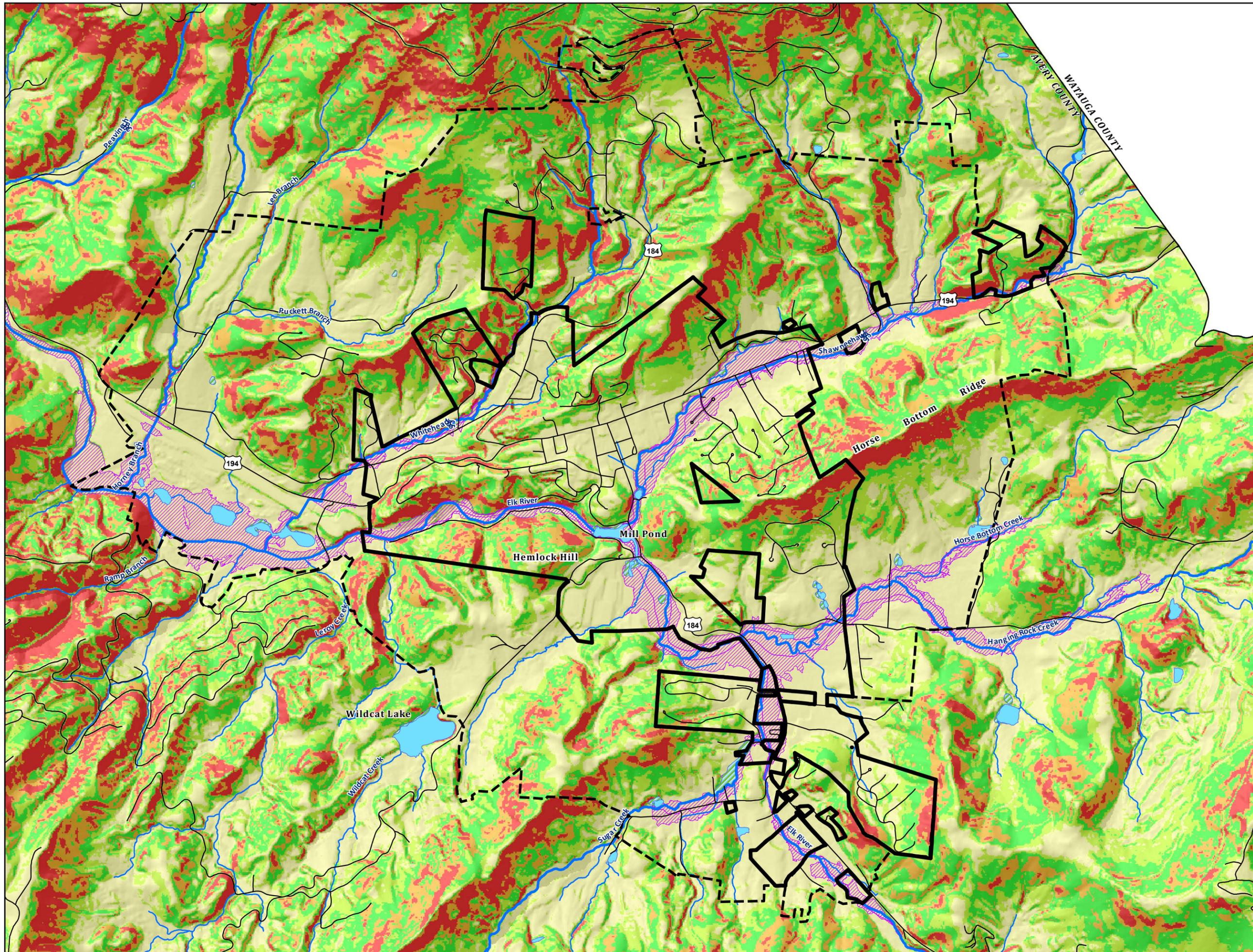
*Goal 4. Identify potential well sites and areas where additional protective measures are needed to ensure Banner Elk's water quality is not compromised.*

- The Town needs to make the search for new well sites a priority in the future to ensure clean potable drinking water for all the citizens that are part of our utility system.
- Once a new well is identified, review and establish it as part of the wellhead protection area.
- Maintain continuous attention to testing of current well sites.

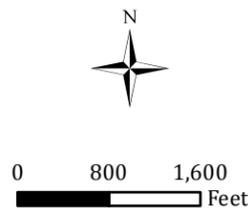
*Goal 5. Incorporate educational programs to help the town government educate the public on issues that are of concern to the protection of natural environments and open spaces.*

- Prepare a newsletter devoted to the issues being addressed in this section about the protective measures the Town is considering for the environment.
- Request feedback from the public on the programs Banner Elk is establishing.
- Use the kiosk and other means to get the word out about the importance of protecting the environment.

# Map 5: Topography



- Slope**  
Percent Rise
- 0% - 20%
  - 20.1% - 30%
  - 30.1% - 40%
  - 40.1% - 50%
  - 50.1% - 406.6%
- Trout Streams
  - Streams / Rivers  
(NC Div. of Water Quality Designation)
  - Waterbodies
  - National Wetlands Inventory
  - Flood Hazard Zone
    - AE (100-yr floodplain)  
(NC Floodplain Mapping Program)
  - Roads
  - ETJ Boundary
  - Town Boundary



**8.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS AND OPEN SPACE  
SUPPORTING TABLE DATA**

**Table 8.2  
Soil Types for Banner Elk**

<b>Soil Type</b>	<b>Map Symbol</b>	<b>Parent Material</b>	<b>Physiographic Position</b>	<b>Slope Range (in percent)</b>	<b>Natural Drainage</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Acres</b>
Balsam very cobbly loam, windswept	BaD	Stony and bouldery colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes	15 to 30	Well drained	9.3	0.2%
Balsam very cobbly loam, windswept	BaE	Stony and bouldery colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes	30 to 50	Well drained	18.0	0.4%
Burton-Craggy-Rock outcrop complex, windswept	BuC	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	8 to 15	Well drained	7.0	0.2%
Burton-Craggy-Rock outcrop complex, windswept	BuD	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	15 to 30	Well drained	12.1	0.3%
Burton-Craggy-Rock outcrop complex, windswept	BuF	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	30 to 95	Well drained	0.4	0.0%
Burton-Wayah complex, windswept	BwD	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	15 to 30	Well drained	9.1	0.4%
Burton-Wayah complex, windswept	BwE	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	30 to 50	Well drained	14.2	0.2%
Burton-Wayah complex, windswept	BwF	Residuum weathered from granite and gneiss	Mountain slopes, ridges	50 to 80	Well drained	5.1	0.4%
Crossnore-Jeffrey complex, windswept	CrE	Affected by coil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from akrose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Mountain slopes, ridges, backslope, summit	30 to 50	Well drained	612.5	0.1%

Soil Type	Map Symbol	Parent Material	Physiographic Position	Slope Range (in percent)	Natural Drainage	Acres	Percent of Acres
Cullasaja cobbly loam	CtC	Cobbly and stony colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on mountain slopes	8 to 15	Well drained	24.1	15.1%
Cullasaja cobbly loam	CtD	Cobbly and stony colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on mountain slopes	15 to 30	Well drained	134.3	0.6%
Cullasaja cobbly loam	CtE	Cobbly and stony colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on mountain slopes	30 to 50	Well drained	83.0	3.3%
Cullowhee loam	CuA	Loamy alluvium over sandy and gravelly alluvium	Flood Plains	0 to 3	Somewhat poorly drains	184.4	2.0%
Dellwood cobbly sandy loam	DeB	Cobbly and gravelly alluvium	Flood Plains	1 to 5	Frequently floods	44.2	4.5%
Nikwasi loam	NkA	Loamy alluvium over sandy and gravelly alluvium	Depression on Flood Plains	0 to 3	Very poorly drained	112.5	2.8%
Pineloa gravelly loam	PnC	Residuum weathered from metasedimentary rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	8 to 15	Well drained	15.8	0.4%
Pineloa gravelly loam	PnD	Residuum weathered from metasedimentary rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	15 to 30	Well drained	233.8	5.8%
Porters gravelly loam	PuC	Residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	8 to 15	Well drained	7.7	0.2%
Porters gravelly loam	PuD	Residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	15 to 30	Well drained	146.4	3.6%
Porters gravelly loam	PuE	Affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	30 to 50	Well drained	191.5	4.7%

Soil Type	Map Symbol	Parent Material	Physiographic Position	Slope Range (in percent)	Natural Drainage	Acres	Percent of Acres
		from igneous and metamorphic rock					
Porters loam	PwD	Residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, summit	15 to 30	Well drained	2.0	0.0%
Porters loam	PwE	Affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Mountain slopes, ridges, backslope	30 to 50	Well drained	26.1	0.6%
Reddies fine sandy loam	ReA	Laomy alluvium over cobbly and gravelly alluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Flood Plains	0 to 3	Moderately well drained	7.5	0.2%
Rosman sandy loam	RsB	Loamy alluvium	Flood Plains	0 to 5	Well drained	12.3	0.3%
Saunook loam	SaB	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes	2 to 8	Well drained	161.7	4.0%
Saunook loam	SaC	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes	8 to 15	Well drained	180.1	4.4%
Saunook loam	SbD	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes	15 to 30	Well drained	79.1	2.0%
Saunook-Nikawsi complex	SgC	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves, fans, drainageways on mountain slopes	2 to 15	Well drained	23.9	0.6%
Saunook-Thunder complex	ShC	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves, fans, drainageways on mountain slopes, very stony	8 to 15	Well drained	14.7	0.4%
Saunook-Thunder complex	ShD	Colluvium derived from igneous and metamorphic rock	Coves, fans, drainageways on mountain slopes, very stony	15 to 30	Well drained	86.3	2.1%
Soco-Ditney complex	SoE	Creep deposits over residuum weathered from phyllite and/or					

Soil Type	Map Symbol	Parent Material	Physiographic Position	Slope Range (in percent)	Natural Drainage	Acres	Percent of Acres
		slate; affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Mountain slopes and ridges, summit and backslope, very stony	30 to 50	Well drained	26.8	0.7%
Soco-Ditney complex	SoF	Creep deposits over residuum weathered from phyllite and/or slate; affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Mountain slopes and ridges, summit and backslope, very stony	50 to 95	Well drained	40.9	1.0%
Spivey cobbly loam	SpD	Cobbly and stony colluvium derived from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes, extremely bouldery	15 to 30	Well drained	105.6	2.6%
Spivey cobbly loam	SpE	Cobbly and stony colluvium derived from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes, extremely bouldery	30 to 50	Well drained	19.1	0.5%
Spivey-Whiteoak complex	SrC	Stony colluvium derived from phyllite and/or slate and/or metasandstone and/or metasedimentary rock	Fans on mountain slopes, drainageways and covers on mountain slopes, very boulder	8 to 15	Well drained	121.3	3.0%
Stecoah-Soco complex	StD	Affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from phyllite and/or slate	Upper third of mountain-flank. Side slopes, stony	15 to 30	Well drained	36.4	0.9%
Stecoah-Soco complex	StE	Affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from phyllite and/or slate	Upper third of mountain-flank. Side slopes, stony	30 to 50	Well drained	21.5	0.5%

Soil Type	Map Symbol	Parent Material	Physiographic Position	Slope Range (in percent)	Natural Drainage	Acres	Percent of Acres
Udorthents, loamy	Ua	Loamy and clayey mine spoil or earthy fill derived from igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock	Streets, parking lots, buildings, other structures	50 to 95	Well drained	23.8	0.6%
Udorthents-Urban land complex	UdC	Loamy and clayey mine spoil or earthy fill derived from igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock	Streets, parking lots, buildings, other structures	2 to 15	Well drained	83.1	2.1%
Unaka-Porters complex	UnD	Residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Upper third of mountain-flank. Side slopes	15 to 30	Well drained	141.9	3.5%
Unaka-Porters complex	UnE	Residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Upper third of mountain-flank. Side slopes	30 to 50	Well drained	582.2	14.4%
Unaka-Porters complex	UnF	Affected by soil creep in the upper solum over residuum weathered from igneous and metamorphic rock	Upper third of mountain-flank. Side slopes Mountain slopes, ridges, very rocky	50 to 95	Well drained	94.1	2.3%
Water	W	Water	--	--	--	23.9	0.6%
Whiteoak fine sandy loam	WhB	Colluvium derived from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on lower third of mountain-flank, base slope	2 to 8	Well drained	94.2	2.3%
Whiteoak fine sandy loam	WkC	Colluvium derived from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on lower third of mountain-flank, base slope	8 to 15	Well drained	132.4	3.3%
Whiteoak fine sandy loam	WtD	Colluvium derived from arkose and/or greywacke and/or metaconglomerate and/or metaquartzite	Coves on mountain slopes, drainageways on mountain slopes, fans on lower third of mountain-flank, base slope	15 to 30	Well drained	48.2	1.2%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>						4,054.8 Ac	100.0%

## Definitions

**Arkose** – Usually a pinkish or red sandstone consisting primarily of quartz and feldspar. Arkose usually forms as the result of the rapid disintegration of granite in areas of vigorous erosion. Its grains are usually angular and poorly sorted (mixed randomly in differing sizes).

**Alluvium** – Sand, silt, clay, gravel, or other matter deposited by flowing water, as in a riverbed, floodplain, delta, or alluvial fan. Alluvium is generally considered a young deposit in terms of geologic time.

**Clay** – a very fine-grained material that consists of hydrated aluminium silicate, quartz, and organic fragments and occurs as sedimentary rocks, soils, and other deposits. It becomes plastic when moist but hardens on heating and is used in the manufacture of bricks, cement, ceramics, etc.

**Creep deposits** - the slow progression of soil and rock down a low grade slope.

**Colluvium** – the name for loose bodies of sediment that have been deposited or built up at the bottom of a low-grade slope or against a barrier on that slope, transported by gravity. The deposits that collect at the foot of a steep slope or cliff are also known by the same name. Colluvium often interfingers with alluvium (deposits transported downslope by water). Often forms humps at the base of a mountain or fan-shaped deposits similar to shape of alluvial fans that cover former ground surfaces.

**Gneiss** – is a common and widely distributed type of rock formed by high-grade regional metamorphic processes from pre-existing formations that were originally either igneous or sedimentary rocks.

**Granite** - Granite is an igneous rock and is formed from magma. Granitic magma has many potential origins but it must intrude other rocks. Most granite intrusions are emplaced at depth within the crust, usually greater than 1.5 kilometres and up to 50 km depth within thick continental crust.

**Graywacke** – is a variety of sandstone generally characterized by its hardness, dark color, and poorly sorted angular grains of quartz, feldspar, and small rock fragments or lithic fragments set in a compact, clay-fine matrix. It is a texturally immature sedimentary rock generally found in Palaeozoic strata. The larger grains can be sand-to-gravel-sized, and matrix materials generally constitute more than 15% of the rock by volume. The term "greywacke" can be confusing, since it can refer to either the immature (rock fragment) aspect of the rock or the fine-grained (clay) component of the rock. Appearance looks like Banner Elk's "Puddingstone".

**Igneous** – rock formed by the crystallization of magma or lava.

**Loam** – rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand, clay, silt, and decaying organic matter

**Matrix** - is very fine material, which is present within interstitial pore space between the framework grains. The interstitial pore space can be classified into two different varieties. One is to call the sandstone an arenite, and the other is to call it a wacke. Below is a definition of the differences between the two matrices. **Arenites** are texturally "clean" sandstones that are free of or have very little matrix. **Wackes** are texturally "dirty" sandstones that have a significant amount of matrix.

**Metaconglomerate** – a rock type that originated from conglomerate after undergoing metamorphism. Conglomerate is easily identifiable by the pebbles or larger clasts in a matrix of sand, silt, or clay. Metaconglomerate looks similar to conglomerate, although sometimes the clasts are deformed. The cement matrix of conglomerate is not as durable as the grains, and hence when broken, conglomerate breaks around the grains. Metaconglomerate, however, breaks through the grains, as the cement has recrystallized and may be as durable as the clasts.

**Metamorphic** – Is the alteration of the mineral, texture and composition of a rock caused by exposure to heat, pressure, and chemical actions.

**Metaquartzite** – is a hard metamorphic rock that was originally sandstone. One of the most abundant minerals in the earth's crust, it has a chemical composition of SiO<sub>2</sub> and a hardness of seven. Occurs in sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rock.

**Metasandstone** – a sedimentary rock composed of sand-sized particles (1/16 to 2 millimeters in diameter)

**Phyllite** – a foliate metamorphic rock that is made up mainly of very fine-grained mica. The surface of Phyllite is typically lustrous and sometimes wrinkled.

**Residuum** – Material resulting from the decomposition of rocks in place and consisting of the nearly insoluble material left after all the more readily soluble constituents of the rocks have been removed.

**Sedimentary rock** – formed from the accumulation and consolidation of sediment, usually in layers.

**Slate** - A foliated metamorphic rock that is formed through the metamorphism of shale. It is a low-grade metamorphic rock that splits into thin pieces.

**Solum** - The **solum** (plural, sola) in [soil science](#) consists of the [surface](#) and [subsoil](#) layers that have undergone the same [soil forming](#) conditions. The base of the solum is the relatively [unweathered parent material](#), termed [substratum](#).

Farmland Classification—Avery County, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)

**MAP LEGEND**

**Area of Interest (AOI)**

 Area of Interest (AOI)

**Soils**

 Soil Map Units

**Soil Ratings**

-  Not prime farmland
-  All areas are prime farmland
-  Prime farmland if drained
-  Prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
-  Prime farmland if irrigated
-  Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
-  Prime farmland if irrigated and drained
-  Prime farmland if irrigated and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season

-  Prime farmland if subsoiled, completely removing the root inhibiting soil layer
-  Prime farmland if irrigated and the product of I (soil erodibility) x C (climate factor) does not exceed 60
-  Prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium
-  Farmland of statewide importance
-  Farmland of local importance
-  Farmland of unique importance
-  Not rated or not available

**Political Features**

 Cities

**Water Features**

-  Oceans
-  Streams and Canals

**Transportation**

-  Rails
-  Interstate Highways

-  US Routes
-  Major Roads

**MAP INFORMATION**

Map Scale: 1:42,500 if printed on A size (8.5" x 11") sheet.

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:12,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for accurate map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>  
Coordinate System: UTM Zone 17N NAD83

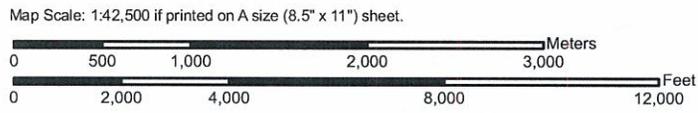
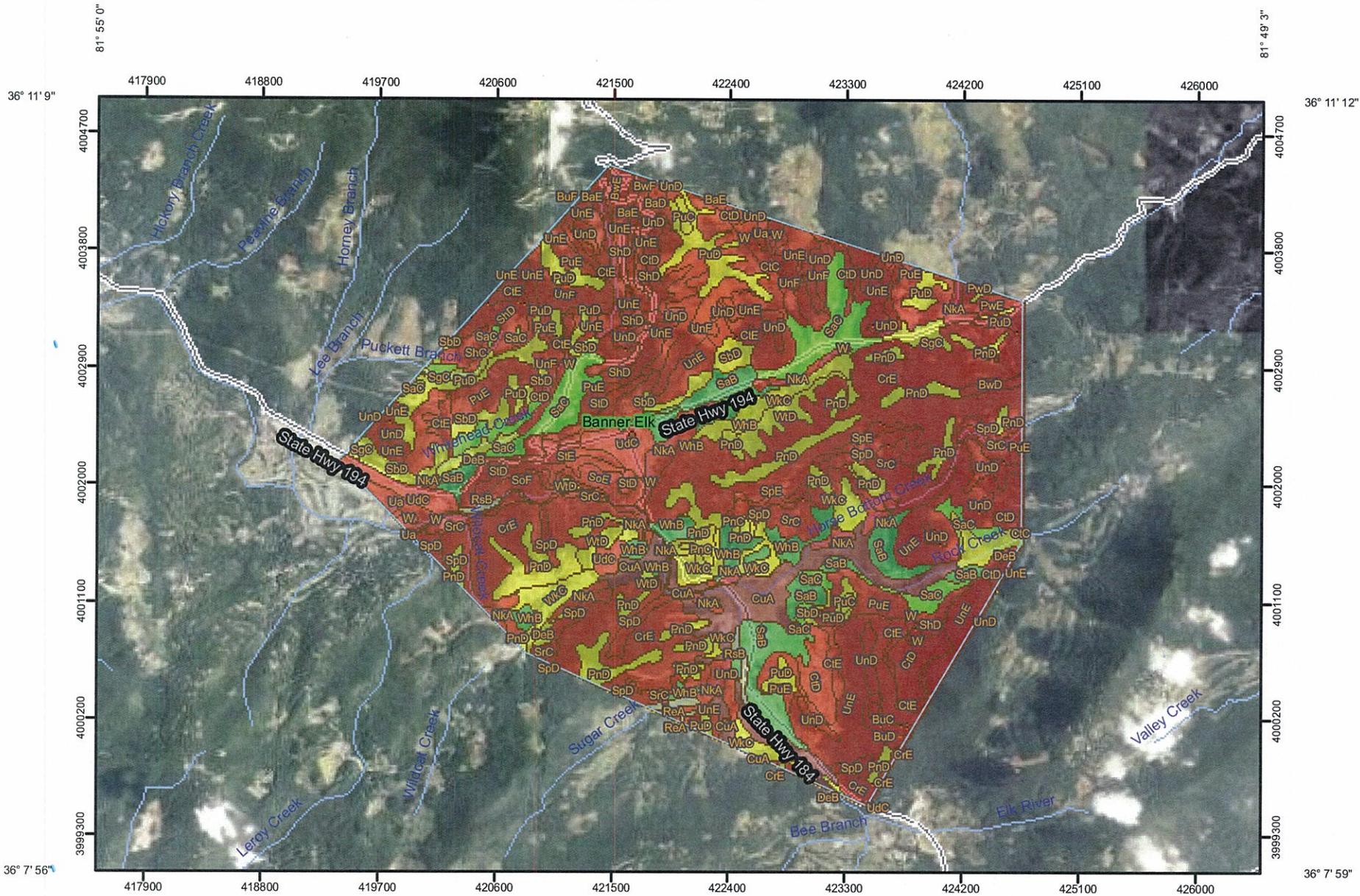
This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Avery County, North Carolina  
Survey Area Data: Version 14, Jul 21, 2008

Date(s) aerial images were photographed: 7/31/2006;  
3/25/1995

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

Farmland Classification  
Banner Elk Property, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)



Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Off-Trail)—Avery County, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)

## MAP LEGEND

### Area of Interest (AOI)

 Area of Interest (AOI)

### Soils

 Soil Map Units

### Soil Ratings

 Very severe

 Severe

 Moderate

 Slight

 Not rated or not available

### Political Features

 Cities

### Water Features

 Oceans

 Streams and Canals

### Transportation

 Rails

 Interstate Highways

 US Routes

 Major Roads

## MAP INFORMATION

Map Scale: 1:42,500 if printed on A size (8.5" × 11") sheet.

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:12,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for accurate map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>  
Coordinate System: UTM Zone 17N NAD83

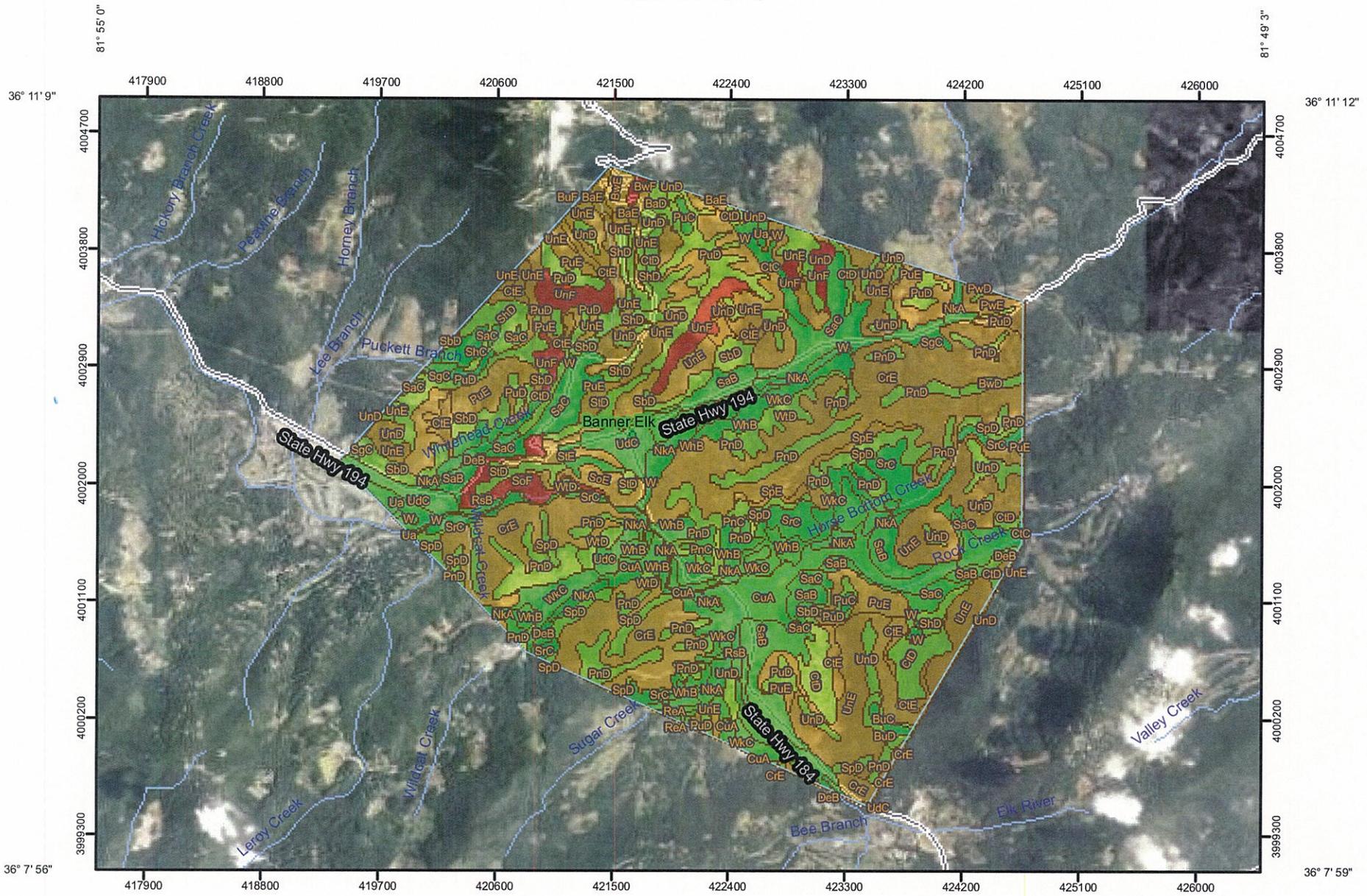
This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Avery County, North Carolina  
Survey Area Data: Version 14, Jul 21, 2008

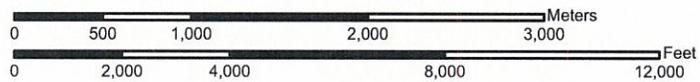
Date(s) aerial images were photographed: 7/31/2006; 3/25/1995

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Overall)—Avery County, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)



Map Scale: 1:42,500 if printed on A size (8.5" x 11") sheet.



Soil Map—Avery County, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)

**MAP LEGEND**

<b>Area of Interest (AOI)</b>		 Very Stony Spot	
	Area of Interest (AOI)	 Wet Spot	
<b>Soils</b>		 Other	
	Soil Map Units	<b>Special Line Features</b>	
<b>Special Point Features</b>		 Gully	
	Blowout	 Short Steep Slope	
	Borrow Pit	 Other	
	Clay Spot	<b>Political Features</b>	
	Closed Depression	 Cities	
	Gravel Pit	<b>Water Features</b>	
	Gravelly Spot	 Oceans	
	Landfill	 Streams and Canals	
	Lava Flow	<b>Transportation</b>	
	Marsh or swamp	 Rails	
	Mine or Quarry	 Interstate Highways	
	Miscellaneous Water	 US Routes	
	Perennial Water	 Major Roads	
	Rock Outcrop		
	Saline Spot		
	Sandy Spot		
	Severely Eroded Spot		
	Sinkhole		
	Slide or Slip		
	Sodic Spot		
	Spoil Area		
	Stony Spot		

**MAP INFORMATION**

Map Scale: 1:42,500 if printed on A size (8.5" × 11") sheet.

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:12,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for accurate map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>  
Coordinate System: UTM Zone 17N NAD83

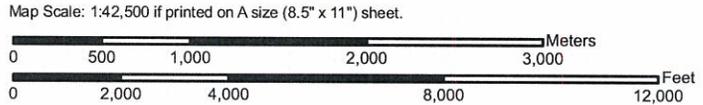
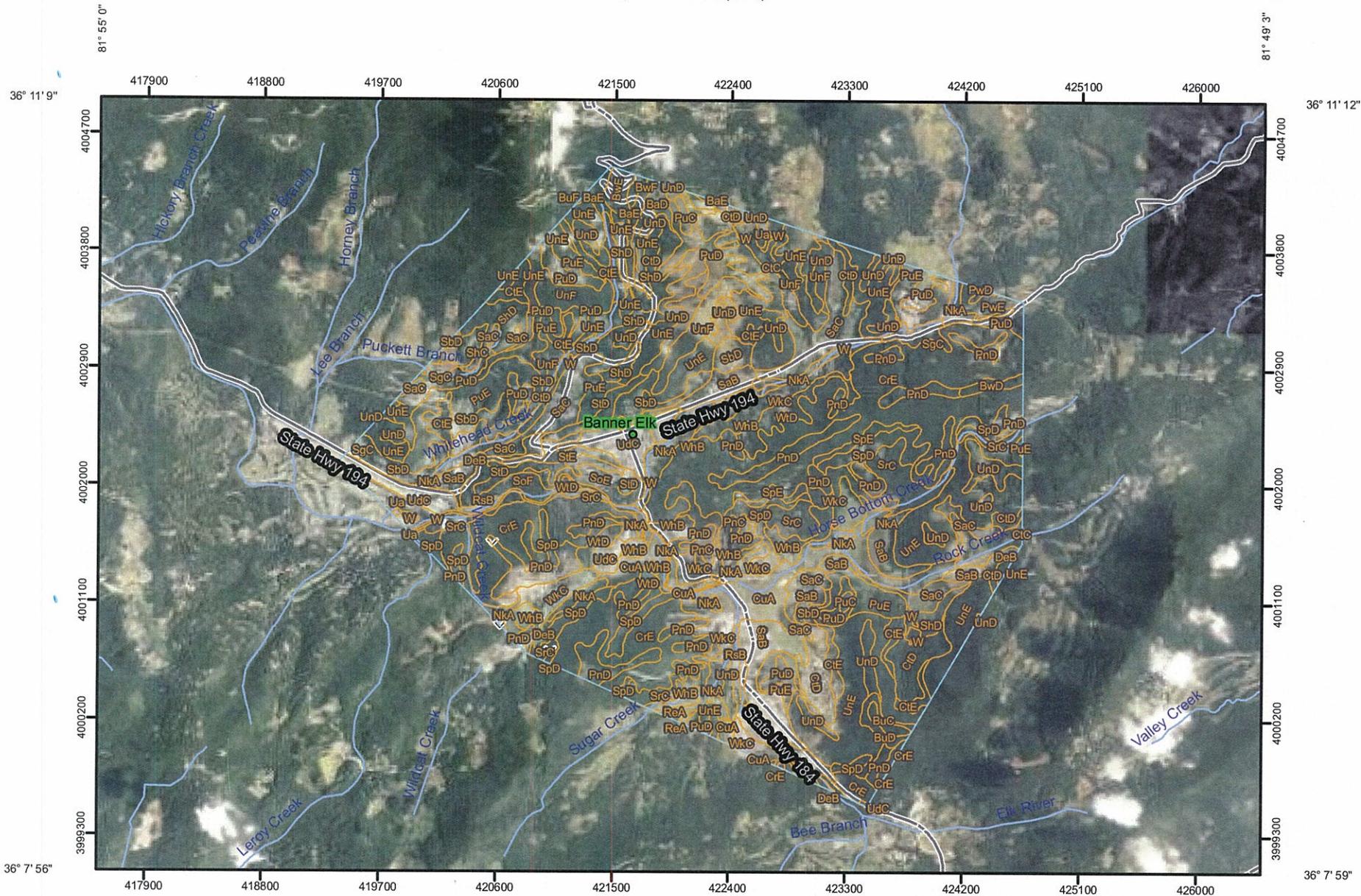
This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Avery County, North Carolina  
Survey Area Data: Version 14, Jul 21, 2008

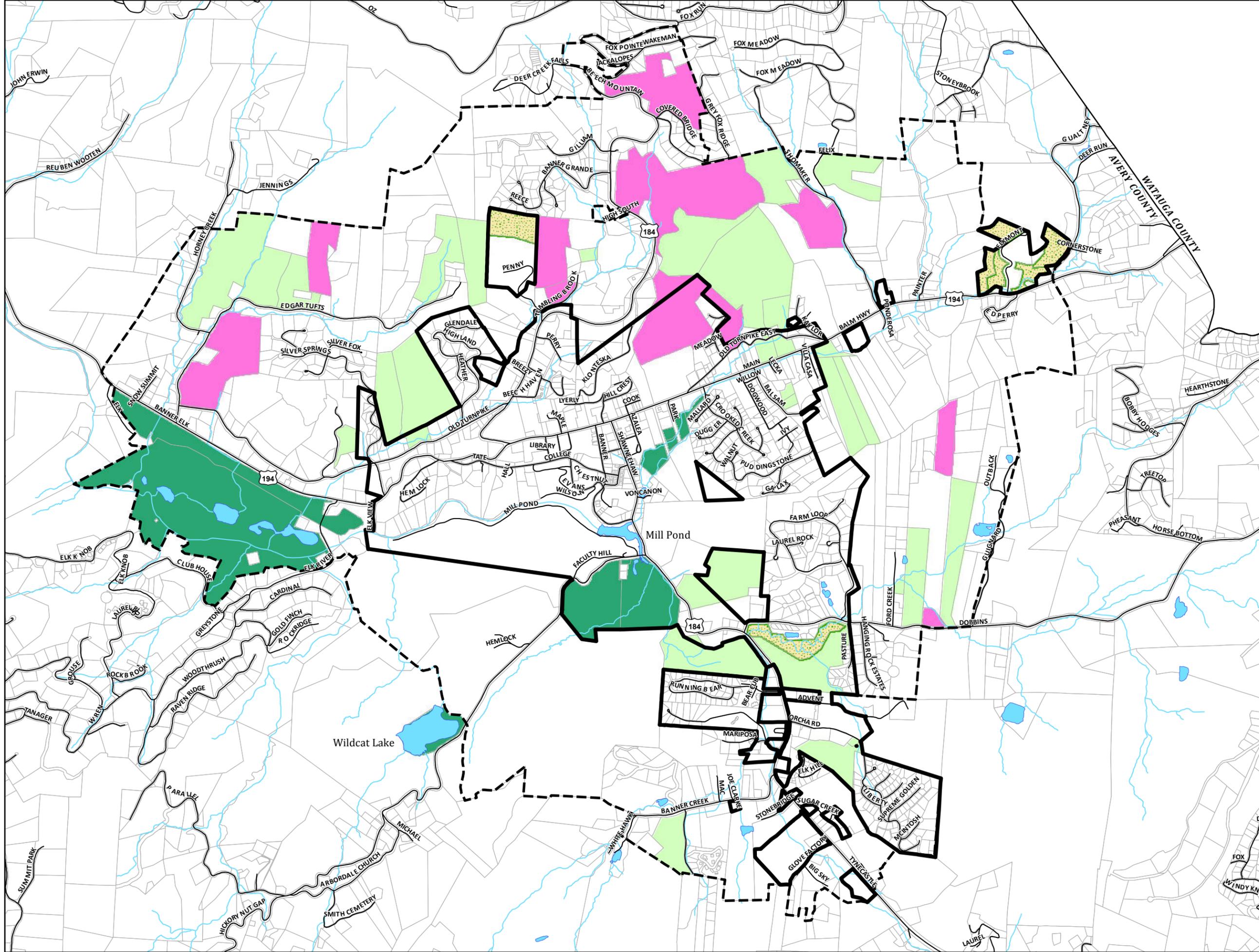
Date(s) aerial images were photographed: 7/31/2006; 3/25/1995

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

Soil Map—Ave County, North Carolina  
(Banner Elk Proper II)



# Map 6: Agriculture, Open Space & Conservation Lands



-  Conservation Easements
-  Active Agriculture
-  Residential Farms
-  Recreational Open Space
-  Waterbodies
-  Streams / Rivers
-  Roads
-  Parcels
-  ETJ Boundary
-  Town Boundary



0 800 1,600  
Feet



## **SECTION 9.0 LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions
- 9.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities
- 9.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

Banner Elk's natural beauty, clean environment and friendly atmosphere have attracted visitors for decades. As these visitors continue to frequent our area, many have purchased homes for vacation and/or investment reasons, while others have relocated permanently to Banner Elk. The interest in the natural beauty, clean environment and friendly atmosphere has increased the need for seasonal housing and the services associated with related tourism opportunities. In addition, Banner Elk has been home to Lees-McRae College since 1901. These factors have contributed to Banner Elk's success as a tourist destination, a second home/retirement community, and a college town; while impacting land use and development.

The land use component of this plan includes both existing land use and future land use requirements. The analysis of existing land use involves classifying different land uses in order to identify patterns on the landscape. This will prove useful in the analysis of future land uses and anticipated growth. Through proper growth management and land use planning, development can continue its course without jeopardizing the quality of the environment or the quality of life for visitors, residents and the students of Lees-McRae College.

### **9.2 INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Town of Banner Elk's total incorporated area as of 2011 consists of 1,215 acres or 1.9 square miles. In 1967, Banner Elk's incorporated area was recorded as 294 acres, a growth rate of 414 percent over a 44-year period. Of the 1,215 acres, an estimated 468 acres have not been developed. A third of this undeveloped acreage is included in existing subdivisions. The largest portion of this unoccupied acreage is not protected from future development and contributes to the natural environment and character of Banner Elk.

The Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) has a total area of 2,839 acres or 4.4 square miles. The subsequent sections provide a description of the development patterns within the Town and a brief description of the status of development, both in Town and in the ETJ. It should be noted that the ETJ was established in 1973 and its limits have never been modified. The corporate limits have grown considerably since 1973, but the statutory permitted ETJ limit of 1-mile beyond has not been adjusted in conjunction with the growth of the corporate limits. This process was attempted in 2010, but failed to pass a vote of the governing body.

## *Land Use And Development Within Banner Elk's Jurisdiction*

While Banner Elk's development is primarily for residential use, commercial and educational uses are also significant components of its land-use mix. The following tables describe the existing land patterns and zoning classifications in more detail. **Table 9.1** illustrates the zoning per acre, **Table 9.2** gives us the in-town and the ETJ acreage per zoning district and **Table 9.3** reviews land uses as percentages of in-town property. These tables help clarify the best zones for development and their intended uses. Included at the end of this section are the current Zoning Map (**See Map 7: Zoning**) and Existing Land Use (**See Map 8: Existing Land Use**.)

### **R-1 Low-Density Residential District**

#### **Single-Family Rural Residential**

This district was established wherein the principle use of the land is for single-family dwellings on large parcels of land and is considered rural by description. This district is intended to provide for limited residential development in areas where police and fire protection, protection against flood waters, and safe guards against excessive erosion are not possible without excessive costs to the community. The R-1, Low-density Residential district maintains and preserves a tranquil rural residential setting and has the highest number of parcels in the ETJ, as illustrated in **Table 9.1**.

### **R-1U Single-Family Residential District**

#### **Single-Family Urban Development**

The R-1U Single Family Residential district was designed for subdivisions where single-family residences were designed on single-family lots. This urban pattern offers limited use for optional non-residential development and provides justification for a more restrictive residential zone.

### **R-2 General Residential District**

#### **Multi-Family Residential**

The primary purpose of the R-2 General Residential district is residential, and allows for more density than the R-1. The R-2 district supports some multi-family and clustering type development, as well as single-family residential.

### **CUD Conditional Use District**

#### **Additional Conditions (Overlay)**

The Conditional Use district was designed with no specific uses in mind, but rather each development is subject to a conditional use permit that can only be acquired by the property owner's negotiations with the Town to show justification for a unique plan, outside the scope of the basic Town plan..

### **M-U Mixed-Use District**

#### **Residential and Commercial**

The Mixed Use district was introduced to encourage mixed land uses, where the promotion of residential and commercial high density, low impact

development of communities will be conducive to alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and biking. The residential and commercial uses should complement each other. The M-U district is intended to promote nodal development as opposed to strip development and can be located away from main thoroughfares. Town Council must agree that the location is consistent with the vision of the Town.

### **M-I Industrial District**

#### **Manufacturing and Industry**

Although the guidelines for a M-I Industrial district have been established, there are currently no parcels zoned as such. This district is designed for manufacturing, warehousing, and similar uses.

### **R-C Resort-Commercial District**

#### **Commercial Resort**

The Resort Commercial district provides a specific area within Banner Elk's zoning jurisdiction where specific and limited resort activities can be developed in a more rural setting. The R-C district has conditions and standards for uses that will provide protection for any established residential neighborhoods, while providing a more rural setting for resort and associated commercial activities.

### **M-E Medical-Educational District**

#### **Medical, Educational and Supportive Uses**

The Medical Educational district is designed for the specific circumstances and needs of the medical and educational institutions within the Town's jurisdiction. The uses permitted in this district are restricted to those of a medical and educational nature, and those closely related uses that are supportive of medical and educational institutions.

### **C-1 Central Business District**

#### **Town Center without Parking**

In order to protect and improve the main shopping and office area in the center of Banner Elk, the C-1 Central Business district was established. This district has no parking requirements, as the core of the downtown area has very little space to provide parking, and encourages patrons to walk along the Town's streetscape. The C-1 district discourages uses beyond the scope of retail and office space.

### **C-1P Central Business District**

#### **Town Center with Parking**

The C-1P Central Business district is established to expand the C-1 Central Business district with an additional condition that off-street parking requirements must be met, per the Zoning Ordinance requirements.

### **C-2 General Commercial District**

#### **General Commercial**

The General Business district is to provide for general and commercial activity along major thoroughfares and at other convenient points in the area. Regulations are designed to preserve the traffic carrying capacity of the thoroughfares and to provide for on-site parking. Extensive strip development is discouraged, but more concentrated general commercial activities are encouraged.

### **G-O Governmental-Office District**

#### **Governmental and Supporting Offices**

The Governmental-Office district includes property owned by governmental entities, such as the Town of Banner Elk and Avery County and their respective support and utility properties. Included in these properties are the Town Maintenance Facility, the Tate-Evans Park, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Town well sites, Town Hall, the Police Department, the Banner Elk Volunteer Fire Department, governmental offices, and any other such properties that may hereafter be designated for similar uses.

In addition to the twelve (12) zoning districts, there are various overlay districts. Two of these pose the need for special attention when considering zoning requirements. Chapter 8 covered the geological hazards in **Map 5: Topography**. The Heritage Overlay District is the second special consideration for zoning requirements (**See Heritage Overlay District Map.**)

### **HOD Heritage Overlay District**

#### **Historic Protective Overlay**

The Heritage Overlay district consists of 138 specific parcels that overlay existing zoning classifications. The HOD has additional zoning requirements as outlined in Section 503 of the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of this overlay is to protect, preserve, and encourage the architectural, cultural, village atmosphere and historical significance of the downtown core of Banner Elk.

**Table 9.1 Zoning Classifications**

<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Inside Corporate Limits</b>	<b>ETJ</b>
<b><u>Classification</u></b>	<b><u># of Parcels</u></b>	<b><u># of Parcels</u></b>
R-1 Low-Density Residential	135	457
R-1U Single Family Residential	105	22
R-2 General Rural Residential	451	125
CUD Conditional Use	0	1
M-U Mixed Use	2	0
M-E Medical – Educational	23	0
M-I Industrial	0	0
R/C Resort Commercial	0	1
C-1 Central Business	11	0
C-1P Central Business with Parking	40	0
C-2 General Business	43	38
G-O Governmental-Office	11	0
HDO Heritage Overlay	<u>138**</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total Parcels</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>644</b>

\*\* These parcels are not in addition, but are part of the overlay district.

At the turn of the century, Banner Elk already provided for the needs of medical, educational, and foster home services for residents, as well as resort and commercial activity. Years later a summer camp/retreat center opened its doors in Banner Elk. Today, the campus of Grandfather Home for Children (GHC), Holston Presbyterian Camp, and Lees-McRae College encompasses a combined 850 acres both inside the corporate limits and the ETJ, and a small portion outside the ETJ. Approximately twenty-five percent of this combined property has been developed and the remaining acreage has been left in its natural state. Currently Properties for Children and GHC is working on a long-range plan for the development of 200+ acres. The plan for mixed-use has a 5 to 20 year range for completion and should be considered as an element of this plan. Lees-McRae College has also begun thinking about utilizing their undeveloped acreage for some revenue generating purposes.

**Table 9.2 Acreage by Zoning District**

District	Name	Acreage In-Town	Acreage Out-of Town	Total Acreage
R-1	Low-Density Residential	119.8	1925.7	2045.4
R-1U	Single Family Residential	93.9	18.7	112.6
R-2	General Rural Residential	528.9	243.9	772.7
CUD	Conditional Use	-	1.9	1.9
M/U	Mixed Use	10.0	-	10.0
M/E	Medical-Educational	304.6	576.5	881.1
M/I	Industrial	-	-	-
R/C	Resort-Commercial	-	20.2	20.2
C-1	Central Business	5.1	-	5.1
C-1P	Central Business w/Parking	24.9	-	24.9
C-2	General Business	115.5	52.0	167.5
G/O	Government-Office	12.4	-	12.3
Totals		1215.0	2838.7	4053.7

An immediate pattern can be seen in density when comparing the number of parcels per Zoning Classifications in **Table 9.1** with Acreage by Zoning District in **Table 9.2**. Inside the corporate limits the density is 1.48 acres per parcel compared to the ETJ with 4.41 acres per parcel. Acreage inside the corporate limits shows a more dense concentration of development. The greatest concentration of multi-family and urban single-family zoned parcels is located in the corporate limits supported by the R-2 General Residential Zoning District. The majority of single-family rural residential concentration is located in the ETJ. All three of the commercially zoned districts (C-1, C-1P) can be found as the 94 parcels inside the corporate limits while the ETJ only has 38 general commercially zoned parcels (C-2.) The majority of governmental-office, medical-educational, and mixed-use parcels are located within the corporate limits. This aligns with the more dense development that is found inside the corporate limits, especially along major thoroughfares, leaving the ETJ area with less development and more open space. This reflects the current goals of Banner Elk and is considered to be on track with the survey results taken at the beginning of the Land Use Plan. It is noteworthy that the growth of the corporate limits has come from development in the ETJ that has in turn voluntarily sought annexation in order to have access to the Town’s services.

**Table 9.3** illustrates the percentage of acreage by zoning district. The majority of zoned parcels in the Town’s corporate limits are residential with the second highest being medical/educational. Lees McRae College and Grandfather Home for Children make up the largest part of the medical/educational percentage.

**Table 9.3 Percentage of Acreage by Zoning District within Town Limits**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>Percentage of total acres in town</b>
Residential	623	51%
Rural	118	10%
Resort	-	-
Special Use	24	2%
Medical-Educational	305	25%
Commercial	145	12%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1215</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 9.4** shows responses to questions about development that were posed in the community survey. It is these responses that should help guide the Town towards development patterns and future planning endeavors. One of the stated goals of the mission statement for the Town of Banner Elk is to maintain a small town atmosphere. The community survey asked participants to respond to the statement, “Banner Elk should maintain its ‘mountain town’ character.” The response was 76 percent strongly agreed and 19 percent agreed. Of the remaining 5 percent, 4 percent remained neutral and 1 percent disagreed. This is an admirable ambition and one of the reasons many people are attracted to Banner Elk. This attraction brings an increased population. Hence the challenge, Banner Elk must plan for growth and maintain its scale at the same time.

In light of this, if Banner Elk’s future needs are to grow, expansion of the ETJ will need to be addressed again. The majority of commercial property is located along major thoroughfares mixed with some residential property. Other than the property that is located in Tate-Evans Park, green space and conservation easements can only be found within a few subdivisions. As the other highly supported statement, “New development should have limited impact on views,” properties that are located within the floodway or on slopes too steep for development could be considered for donation of green space and/or conservation protection. This would provide a tax relief for the property owner and maintain and protect some open space within the corporate limits and Banner Elk’s view shed.

In addition to the questions in **Table 9.4**, some broader development questions were posed that required a rating of numerous answers. The participants rated their support or opposition to various types of potential development within the Town of Banner Elk. The strongest response was in favor of single-family homes at 74.5 percent. To counter this was a strong opposition to mobile homes, at 79.2 percent. Affordable housing had a positive response at 33.3 percent while time-share units had a 60.4 percent strong opposition response. The response for residential development over the next 10 years was 45.1 percent in favor of a slower pace while 33.3 percent approved of the current pace. The response for commercial development over the next 10 years was 35.3 percent in favor of a slower pace while 33.3 percent responded in favor of commercial development remaining at its current pace. The commercial types of development most

strongly favored were: restaurants, small retail shops, and parks and recreations areas. The strongest opposition for commercial development was industrial, campgrounds and RV parks, and shopping centers.

**Table 9.4 Survey Responses to Development**

Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Banner Elk should maintain its “mountain town” character.	2%	0%	4%	19%	75%
Banner Elk should remain mostly residential over the next 20 years.	0%	20%	8%	50%	22%
A variety of health care facilities need to be developed within the Town.	4%	6%	33%	39%	18%
The Town should limit commercial development in Banner Elk.	4%	17%	16%	43%	20%
The traditional character of Banner Elk is being threatened by new development outside the town limits.	0%	23%	13%	35%	29%
The traditional character of Banner Elk is being threatened by new development inside the town limits	2%	29%	11%	31%	27%
The town should extend its jurisdiction beyond the current municipal boundaries.	8%	13%	19%	37%	23%
The town should consider annexation possibilities.	8%	16%	14%	43%	19%
Banner Elk should concentrate on commercial development in designated commercial areas.	4%	12%	10%	59%	15%
New development should have limited impact on views.	0%	0%	6%	31%	63%

### 9.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Current economic opportunities for financing have brought the pace of new construction close to a stand still. This lull in the market can provide Banner Elk with some needed time to take stock of where they are and where they may want to grow in the future. The potential for future development to occur along steep slopes has been addressed in the ordinance, but areas along very steep slopes and floodways that cannot support development need to be identified and set aside in conservation programs. This will address the need to protect valuable green space and preserve our views. Also, there is the need to address undeveloped property along major thoroughfares and identify those properties that may support commercial development.

Future growth of Banner Elk’s tourism and second home/retirement community characteristics may need to be addressed, while at the same time evaluating the need for short-term rental accommodations. Commercial development should be designed in such

a way as to deter strip mall development and yet creatively concentrate those commercial areas along convenient thoroughfares. The mixed-use development pattern should be considered for residential and commercial uses on the same parcel, along with conservation easement requirements. A lack of health care and active aging requirements have been expressed in the community survey and need to be addressed to meet the concerns of current and future residents.

Future growth patterns need to be established and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction needs to be expanded to meet the growing needs of development. The Banner Elk Town Council needs to address the feasibility of expanding utilities and services in the event of expanded annexation requests beyond the Town's current corporate limits.

#### **9.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICES**

*Goal 1. Readdress zoning of parcels along major thoroughfares that may need to be rezoned.*

- The Planning Board has considered parcels located along a major thoroughfare and whether their zoning classification that were assigned in 1973, are appropriate for 2011 and beyond. Most specifically to be considered are vacant parcels.
- Develop a plan identifying where development and what type of development would be best suited and served by services and major thoroughfares.

*Goal 2. Expand the capabilities for preserving green space and educate the public towards this need.*

- The Town has already accepted a 9.5-acre parcel as a conservation easement in the name of the Town of Banner Elk.
- Additional parcels could be identified and property owners approached about placing property that cannot be developed into a conservation easement, allowing a tax reduction.
- Identify areas in floodways or wetlands that can be held as green space because of their nature, which prohibits development.

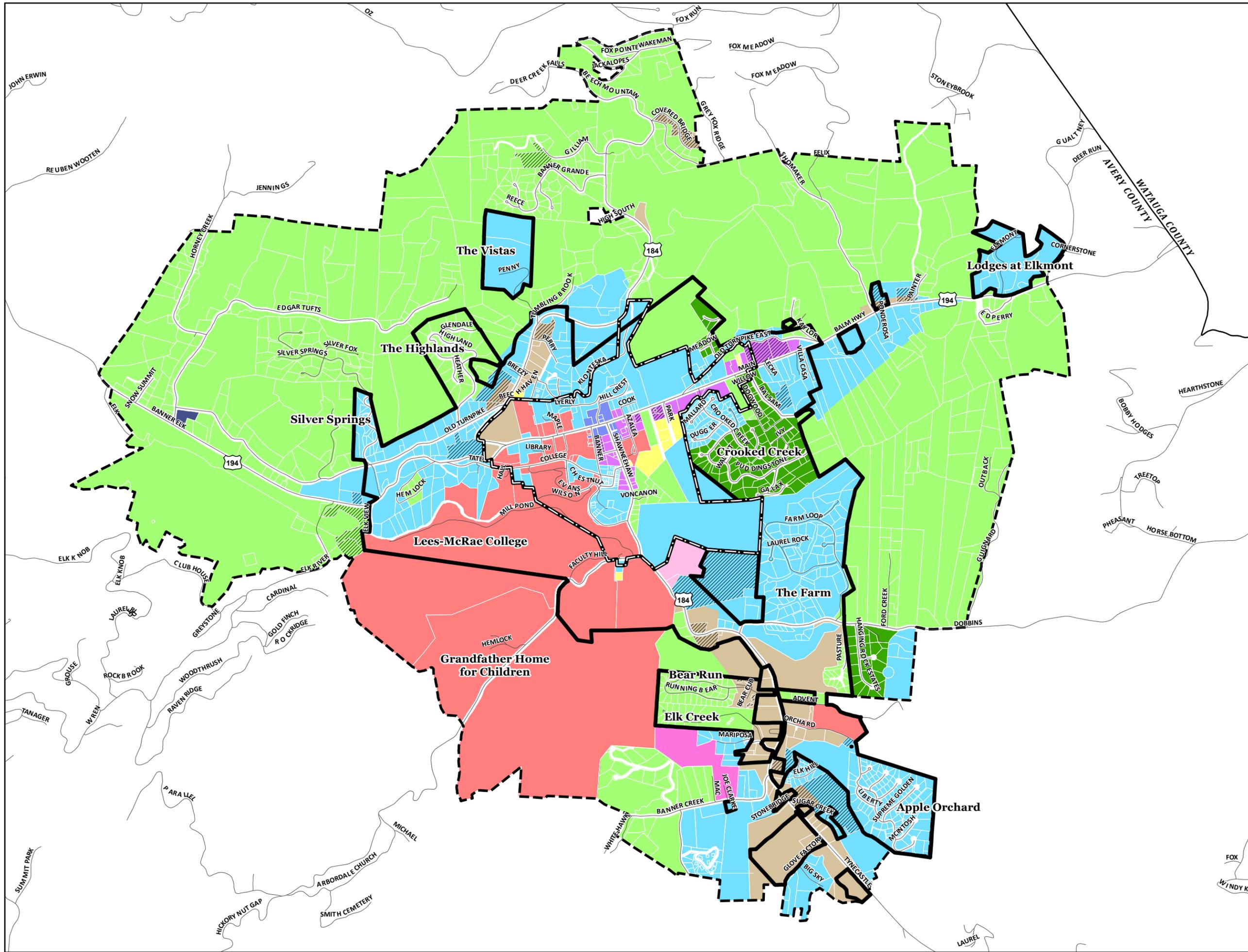
*Goal 3. Inventory the utility and infrastructure's current status and make a growth plan for the next 20 years.*

- An inventory of the current facilities and infrastructure should be updated.
- Ensure that all such components of the infrastructure are mapped out and available for public use.
- A study of the current rate system for water and wastewater should be done. This would allow the Town to make sure that they are able to support the system financially, as required by new legislation.
- Prepare a plan for future growth and provide details for how this can be accomplished.

*Goal 4. Future growth patterns need to be established for the ETJ.*

- The ETJ expansion will need to be revisited in the future. Expansion of the corporate limits and the responsibility to protect the surrounding environment will require additional measures before additional growth can be considered.
- Educate the public on the positive aspects of zoning and the protection this allows for their property as well as their neighbors.
- Address properties currently in the ETJ area that are receiving services and prepare an annexation plan to bring them into the corporate limits.

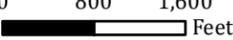
# Map 7: Zoning



- Zoning Districts**
- C-1: Central Business
  - C-1P: Central Business
  - C-2: General Business
  - CUD: Conditional Use
  - G-O: Governmental-Office
  - M-E: Medical-Educational District
  - M-U: Mixed Use
  - R-1: Low-Density Residential
  - R-1-U: Single Family Residential
  - R-2: General Residential
  - RC: Resort-Commercial
- Non-Conforming Parcels
  - Parcels
  - Roads
  - Heritage Overlay District
  - ETJ Boundary
  - Town Boundary



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## **SECTION 10.0 FINAL CONCEPT PLAN & DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS**

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Concept Development
- 10.3 Concept Evaluation and Summary
- 10.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

The many elements of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan has allowed the Town's Planning Committee to examine specific aspects as they relate to planning; individually and as a whole. While these elements are essential, a variety of overall concept plans would allow the Town to plan for the future under certain conditions. The planning process has allowed for the opportunity to set some goals and objectives to address current and future needs and put together a plan for the direction of possible growth and development for the Town of Banner Elk. The Planning Committee has taken smaller plans such as the Master Recreation Plan and the Master Pedestrian Plan and incorporated them into this comprehensive plan in order to provide uniform coverage of all the issues. No one plan is preferred over the other, but each will be considered in its own context and the goals and objectives are herein incorporated into these conceptual plans.

### **10.2 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**

Steps involved in developing these concept plans included the establishment of a joint committee made up of the Planning Board, the Land Use Update Committee, a select number of individuals from diverse backgrounds in Town, and representation by Town Council. Data collected from various sources indicate recent trends, knowledge of the past and present, and the stated desires of the residents. Concept Plan "A" assumes development based on current land use and is also known as the "trend line" concept. The concept includes a continuation of limited residential development and almost no commercial development (**See Concept Map A: Existing Conditions.**)

Of a primary concern is the status of the economy of the Town and the ripple effect that has on Banner Elk as a whole. Future endeavors will be to concentrate on an increase in tourism as the major element of Concept Plan "B". (**See Concept Map B: Tourism Development.**)

The final concept plan, Concept Plan "C" came at the suggestion of a planning board member. Instead of growth, it was suggested we concentrate on helping the current business infrastructure of Banner Elk "*thrive*". To this end we will look at the current zoning and the actual land use of property in Banner Elk's zoning jurisdiction, and any discrepancies there may be. (**See Concept Map C: US Highway 184 Beautification.**)

### **10.3 CONCEPT EVALUATION AND SUMMARY**

These three options were presented at the second joint meeting. The people present evaluated the plans for merit and identified the features that best reflected the overall visions for the future of Banner Elk. The most supported concepts were "B" and "C".

These two plans were viewed as important in developing Banner Elk to attract tourists, and secondly to develop Banner Elk itself so that its citizens may “thrive”.

The concept outcome of **Plan “A”** is not favored because it does not promote any development and is hereby established as a benchmark for improvement (**See Concept Map A: Existing Conditions.**)

In Concept **Plan “B”**, tourism is the active factor. In discussing the needs for supporting tourism, several questions will need to be asked. The first being the need to identify what attracts people to Banner Elk. If attempts to attract tourists prove to be successful then Concept Plan “B” would reflect these results. The Town anticipates having to address possible growth and adequate services and facilities as a result of any anticipated growth. Partnering with Lees-McRae College would help produce a stronger driving force for both entities in this endeavor as well. An aggressive advertising and marketing campaign is another element, and the Town has available through the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) monies for advertising and marketing. This could prove to be a valuable resource. It was suggested that the area chambers of commerce could pool their resources and have a more effective campaign, and perhaps look at marketing the region as a whole instead of individual municipalities and businesses. Banner Elk, as the “hub” of this region, was one of the focal points that were discussed when considering marketing the region. A last element was the Town’s ability to partner with entities such as Lees McRae College and Grandfather Home for Children. It was recognized that without these entities Banner Elk would be a much weaker municipality and that we need to help both of those organizations be successful with whatever resources we have available in order for the Town to enjoy success (**See Concept Map B: Tourism Development.**)

Concept **Plan “C”** raised concerns about NCDOT’s future plans to widen NC Highway 184 from the intersection of NC Highway 105 and NC Highway 184 to Hickory Nut Gap Road. In conjunction with the widening project, the committee has expressed concerns about the appearance coming into Banner Elk and how it looks to visitors and residents alike. A suggestion to establish a Visual Corridor Overlay District (VCOD), to help establish a plan for beautification along that corridor, was a strong recommendation. This recommendation also included a suggestion to incorporate a plan to connect with the Village of Sugar Mountain, as in prior discussions. The Town has held several meetings with the businesses along the NC Highway 184 corridor and the majority of those businesses have expressed interest in a corridor beautification project, understanding that it would improve business traffic. Instead of looking only at growth, it was suggested we concentrate on helping the current business infrastructure of Banner Elk to “*thrive*”. Construction of new storefronts that could one day stand empty was discouraged, recognizing that the opportunity to revitalize the current empty ones, as well as the entrance into Banner Elk may help produce the desired effect. Potential areas of growth are also identified in this plan based on evaluations of the current zoning and actual land use comparisons. Much discussion was given to the Historic Banner Elk School as a community center to help establish activities that could pool resources in Banner Elk and the surrounding community. The use of this property would promote activities that

would provide opportunities to foster a closer feeling of connection among the people of Banner Elk and the surrounding communities (**See Concept Map C: US Highway 184 Beautification.**)

#### **10.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

*Goal 1. Identify sources that promote growth of Banner Elk and list ways to reach these target markets.*

- List current sites and potential new sites.
- Look at various advertising outlets and mediums for availability and effectiveness.
- Address the need for expanded information through news media and kiosks.

*Goal 2. Work with the Tourism Development Authority to create a plan that more aggressively identifies markets for actively promoting Banner Elk.*

- Develop a list of target markets – geographically, distance as a consideration, outdoor sportsman outlets that service people who enjoy the types of recreation that we offer, for example – ski resorts in Virginia.
- Investigate forms of advertising, such as magazine, trade shows, and videos.

*Goal 3. Partnerships between Banner Elk, Lees-McRae College, and Grandfather Home for Children should be formed in order to unite the entities to further the advertising power of all three.*

- Form a committee that can meet with the different entities, not just in Banner Elk, but throughout Avery County such as the (YMCA) and the Economic Development Commission (EDC).
- Share ideas between the committee members and explore different activities that attract people to the area. For example: Lees-McRae College offers cycling, life-long education, and theatre opportunities, appealing to a broad span of age groups. Grandfather Home for Children offers volunteer and philanthropic opportunities as well.

*Goal 4. Establish a Visual Corridor Overlay District (VCOD) along Highway 184 to improve the appearance of the main entrance into Town and encourage connectivity to Sugar Mountain.*

- Establish a committee that is made up of businesses along NC Highway 184, and from Sugar Mountain, to explore various routes for connectivity.
- Develop a plan to improve the appearance of the entrance to Banner Elk along NC Highway 184.

# Concept Map B: Tourism Development

## Existing Tourism Attractions

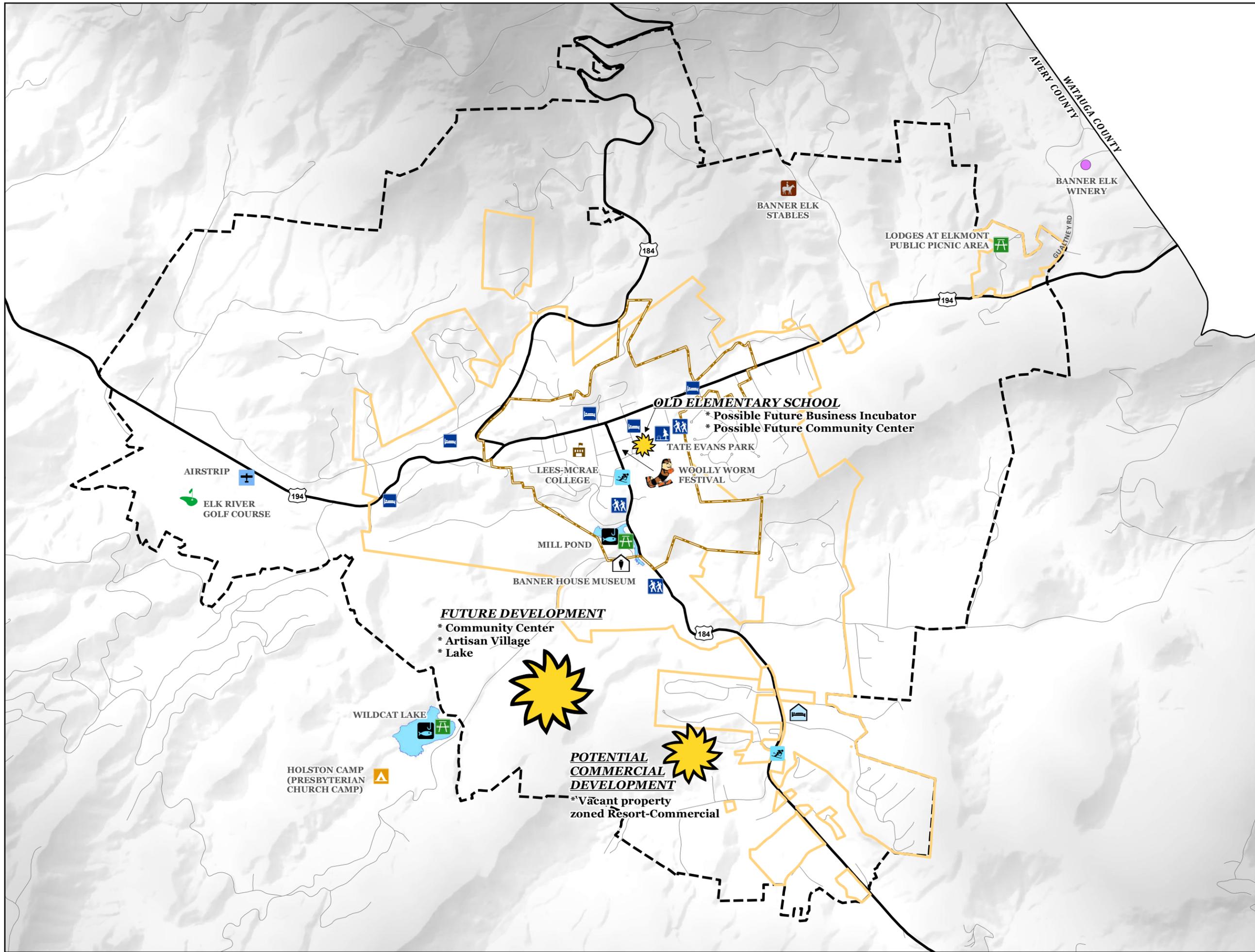
-  Airstrip
-  Elk River Golf Course
-  Banner Elk Stables
-  Banner Elk Winery
-  Banner House Museum
-  Bed & Breakfast / Inn
-  Best Western
-  Snow Sport Equipment Rentals or Sales
-  Holston Camp (Presbyterian Ch. Camp)
-  Picnic Area
-  Tate Evans Park
-  Greenway / Trail
-  Fishing / Picnic Area
-  Lees-McRae College

 Potential Commercial Development Area

-  Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Heritage Overlay District
-  ETJ Boundary
-  Town Boundary



0 800 1,600  
Feet



# Concept Map A: Existing Conditions

## Zoning District Types

- Commercial
- High-Density Residential
- Institutional
- Low-Density Residential
- Mixed Use

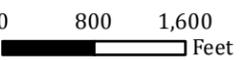
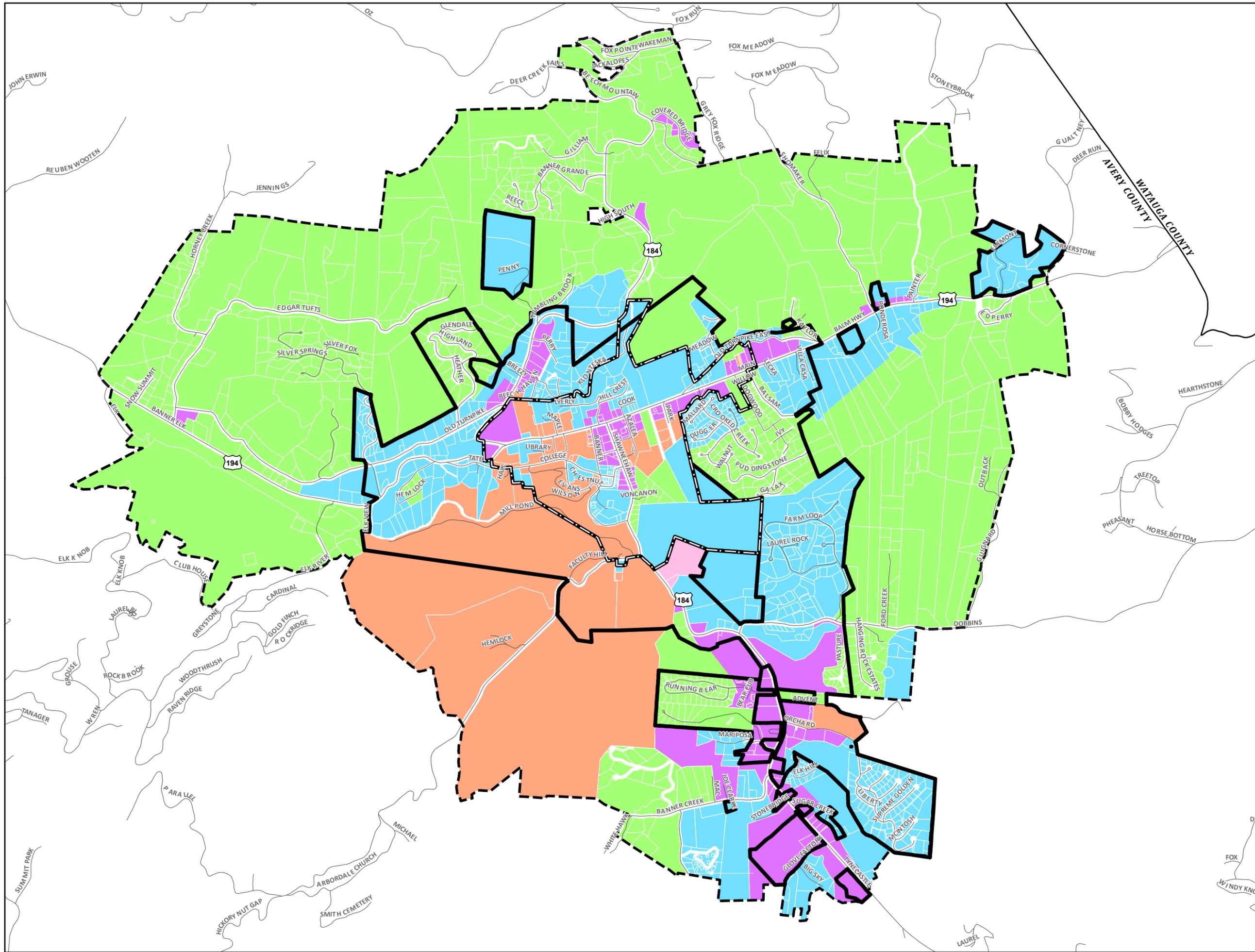
Heritage Overlay District

ETJ Boundary

Town Boundary

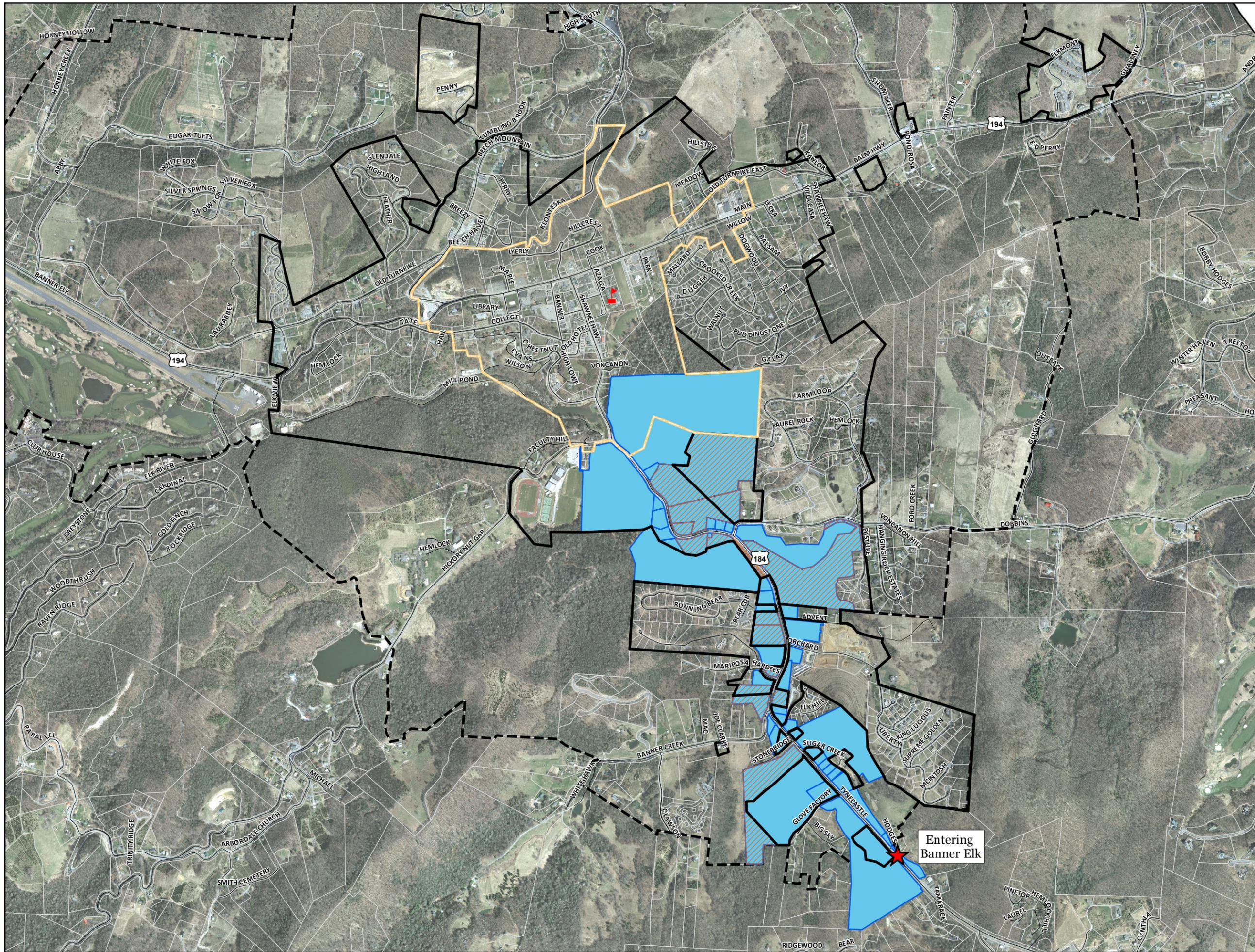
Roads

Parcels



# Concept Map C: US Hwy 184 Beautification

-  Sign Needed to Indicate Entering Banner Elk Town Limits
-  Former Banner Elk Elementary School
-  Focus Beautification Efforts: Zoned Commercial, but Non-Commercial Existing Land Use
-  Proposed Visual Corridor Overlay District (VCOD)
-  Parcels
-  Roads
-  Heritage Overlay District
-  Town Boundary
-  ETJ Boundary



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Feet

