

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH PLANNING One Project At a time



With a Briefing on How Planning Got its Start in Sullivan County, TN
By: Ambre M. Torbett, AICP – Director of Planning & Codes



In 1948, the Sullivan County Regional Planning Commission met for the first time.

MEETING REPORT

ORGANIZATION MEETING OF SULLIVAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
June 2, 1948, 6:00 P.M., Kingsport, Tennessee

Present:

J. E. Crumley
Earl Geardel
Charles M. Gore
Paul Gray
D. Orier Martin
E. W. Palmer
Paul Stone

Also present: T. R. Sandy

Staff Representative: Donald F. Sault

Judge Sandy opened the meeting expressing his appreciation of the willingness of all the members to serve on this Planning Commission. In general he outlined the scope of the Planning Commission activities and emphasized their magnitude and significance. A number of specific projects were mentioned but he made it clear that he was not attempting to outline a program for the Planning Commission at this time.

As a means of getting the meeting organized Judge Sandy requested nominations for the chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Gore nominated Col. Palmer and after some discussion of the desirability of selecting the chairman from among the representatives of the Municipal Planning Commissions the nominations were closed and Col. Palmer was unanimously elected chairman of the Planning Commission.

With the new chairman presiding, Mr. D. Orier Martin was elected secretary of the Commission.

Further discussion of the present membership of the Commission brought out the fact that four out of the seven members of the Planning Commission were residents of municipalities. It was suggested that since this was a County Planning Commission it would be desirable to request the appointment of at least two additional members who were residents of the rural areas. This suggestion was considered desirable and Judge Sandy promised to make these appointments immediately.

The chairman suggested that the remainder of the meeting should be devoted to an examination of a program for the coming months. It was recognized that the necessity for controlling development of the areas surrounding the new South Holston Reservoir was the primary reason for the formation of this Planning Commission but it was pointed out by Judge Sandy and others that the Commission had broader responsibilities which should not be lost from view. County roads, the courthouse and jail, the county farm, the school system and other similar phases of the county activities were all cited as matters to be studied by the Planning Commission. The courthouse problem was noted as being particularly urgent.

After considerable experience with these various possible activities attention was again turned to the South Holston Reservoir and it was generally agreed that this was by far the most important project which should receive attention above all others. The nature of both rural zoning regulations and zoning controls were examined in further detail. While zoning was recognized as being important it was decided that at least some simple measure of zoning control should be exercised just as soon as possible in order to prevent wild and uncontrolled developments from creating undesirable conditions that would deteriorate the entire area. Emphasis was placed on simplicity in the preparation of these controls and experiences in connection with zoning around the proposed Watson State Park were cited as being of an undesirable type. In order to implement this program the technical staff was requested to secure and develop the necessary maps and other information which would enable the Planning Commission to study the problem in detail.

The problem of establishing such a zoning ordinance was next given careful attention. Since Sullivan County does not have a Building Inspector it was evident that such an office would have to be established or some other arrangements would have to be made which would accomplish this same purpose. The consensus was that a Building Inspector's office would have to be established and it was considered desirable to have this office organized separately performing other functions in addition to the administration of the zoning ordinance. In order that Sullivan County might profit from the experiences of other counties having Building Inspectors the technical staff was requested to obtain copies of zoning building codes and similar regulations in Tennessee.

A general conference of local Planning Commissions held in Bristol, Tennessee the night before was briefly reviewed and it was recalled that an agreement had been made to appoint representatives of the various Planning Commissions to sit on a committee for the purpose of coordinating planning activities in the vicinity of the South Holston Reservoir. It was stipulated that the chairman and one other member of the Commission should be selected. Accordingly Col. Palmer selected Mr. Paul Stone for this appointment and Mr. Paul Gray was designated as alternate.

The meeting was adjourned after it was decided that the next meeting should be held as soon as the technical staff could have map material ready for presentation.

RESOLVED

at Hayden B. Johnson
A. J. Gray
D. Orier Martin.

In 1960 the PC was already discussing where to put the racetrack...

MINUTE, SULLIVAN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the Sullivan County Planning Commission was held in the County Court House in Blountville, Tennessee, November 15, 1960 at 8:00 P. M.

Members Present:
Paul Gray, Chairman
Karl M. Harrop, Secretary
L. H. Fawcette

Members Absent:
W. E. Wallace
Wilfred Gillan
Harold Glover
Ernest B. Kline
Paul O'Dell
Irving Travis

Also present: David S. Haynes, County At-Large
Carl Moore
Larry Carrier

Staff Representative: Bill J. Starnes

The Chairman of the Commission presided. The Chairman stated that all action taken at this meeting would be subject to the Commission's confirmation. The minutes of the previous meeting were read.

Mr. Carl Moore presented a plat of a proposed automobile race track to be built near the intersection of U. S. 11-E (Bristol-Johnson City Highway) and the Piney Flats road. This facility, contained in approximately 130 acres, will include a one-half (1/2) mile asphaltic concrete track and concrete bleachers with a seating capacity of 15,000 persons. The track is sanctioned by NASCAR and there are plans to have two NASCAR races each year - the first being held during the latter part of July or the first of August 1961.

Mr. Moore stated that in addition to automobile races the facilities will be used for carnivals, ball games, horse shows and many other civic enterprises.

Mr. Gray stated that the Commission was delighted in seeing the layout and this seemed to be a good development for the area. Also, since this did not require approval by the Planning Commission, the Commission would nevertheless recognize the fact that it had been presented for their consideration.

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 P. M.

Signed: *Karl M. Harrop*
Karl M. Harrop, Secretary

Approved: _____
Paul Gray, Chairman

BJS:ob
cc: Karl M. Harrop
Charles Edwards
A. J. Gray
C. Herbert Brown
Bill J. Starnes

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SULLIVAN COUNTY MAJOR ROAD PLAN

SULLIVAN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MAY 8, 1951



NOTE: THIS IS A GENERALIZED MAP AND IS NOT ACCURATE. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL PLAN WITH CONTOUR LINES AND OTHER DATA IS ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY REGISTRAR AT BLOUNTVILLE.

EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 1951
UNIFORM SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS
SULLIVAN COUNTY, TENNESSEE



PREPARED AND ADOPTED
BY
Sullivan County Regional Planning Commission
Bristol Municipal — Regional Planning Commission
Kingsport Municipal — Regional Planning Commission

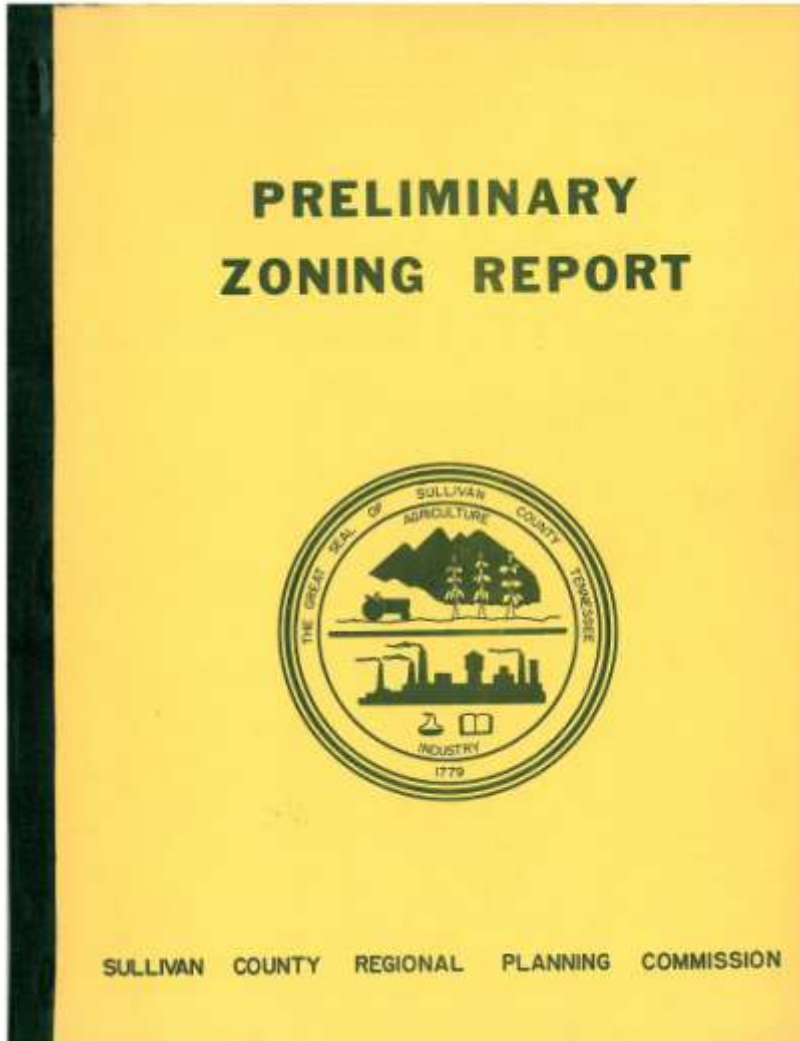


DEVELOPED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE STAFF
OF THE
UPPER EAST TENNESSEE OFFICE OF THE
TENNESSEE STATE PLANNING COMMISSION

** The first planning regulation adopted by the county in 1951. This meant that any division of property would first have to be approved by the county to ensure adequate public road frontage and utilities. Interesting, the county sought approval from the city planning commissions as well. Large tracts were exempt from this regulation, which is why many land-locked parcels of land still remain today.*

The Planning Commission has routinely updated the Subdivision Regulations to include new development techniques, changes in the TCA – State Enabling Legislation as well as other standards to ensure that the county is keeping up with common practices.

Zoning – Another Planning Tool



RESOLUTION NO. 28

TO THE HONORABLE KEITH WENTWORTH, COUNTY EXECUTIVE, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE SULLIVAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS IN REGULAR SESSION

THIS THE 25th DAY OF APRIL, 1988.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADUPT COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE FOR SULLIVAN COUNTY, TENNESSEE

WHEREAS, TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED, SECTION _____, AUTHORIZES COUNTIES TO _____

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Sullivan County, Tennessee, assembled in Regular Session on the 25th day of April, 1988.

THAT WHEREAS, Sullivan County, Tennessee is the 14th largest county in Tennessee and has undergone extensive urbanizing in the unincorporated areas of the County with such urbanization continuing at a rapid pace; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 30,000 people living in the unincorporated areas of Sullivan County in an urban environment without the protection afforded by County Zoning; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive zoning program provides protection for the health, safety, and welfare for all property owners of Sullivan County; and

WHEREAS, the Sullivan County Board of County Commissioners requested that a comprehensive zoning program be prepared for review and consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Sullivan County Board of County Commissioners established a Zoning Committee to make a study of the need for a Comprehensive Zoning Program; and

WHEREAS, said Zoning Committee did make a Study and did recommend a county zoning program for Sullivan County; and

WHEREAS, the Sullivan County Planning Commission prepared a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including zoning maps, and held three (3) open workshops for public inspection and review of all zoning material; and

WHEREAS, the Sullivan County Planning Commission, at regular meetings on March 15th, 1988 and April 17th, 1988 approved a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map for Sullivan County;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Sullivan County Board of County Commissioners do hereby adopt, zoning legislation for a Zoning Ordinance and Map for Sullivan County,

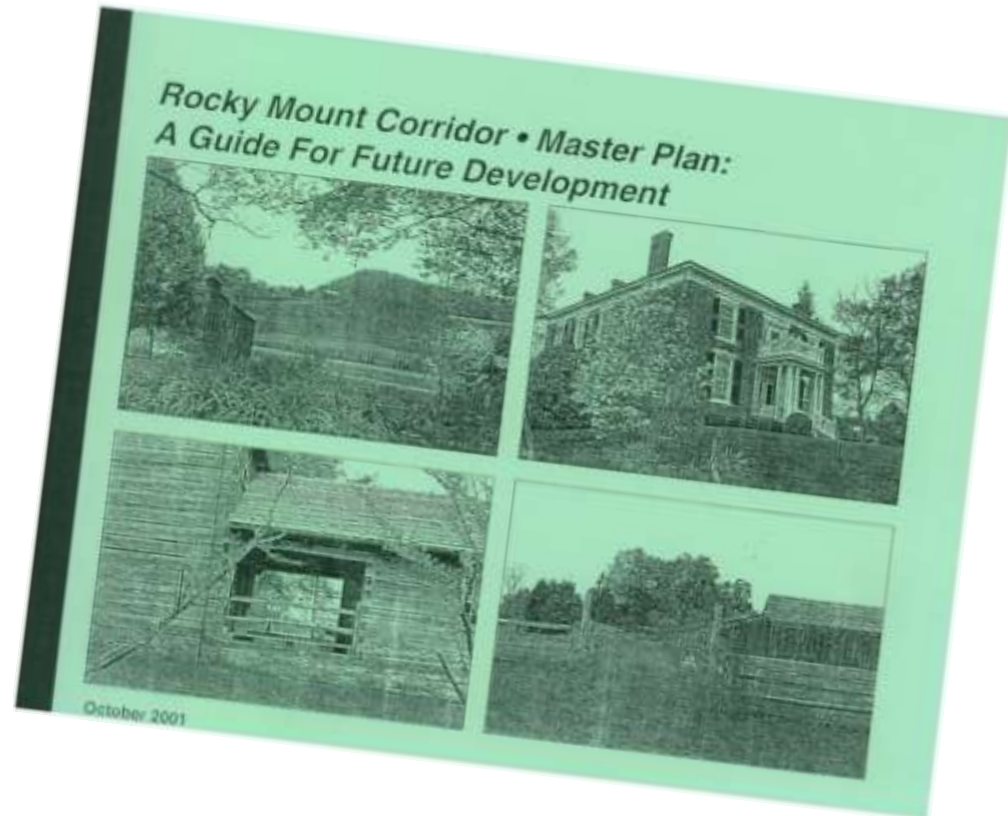
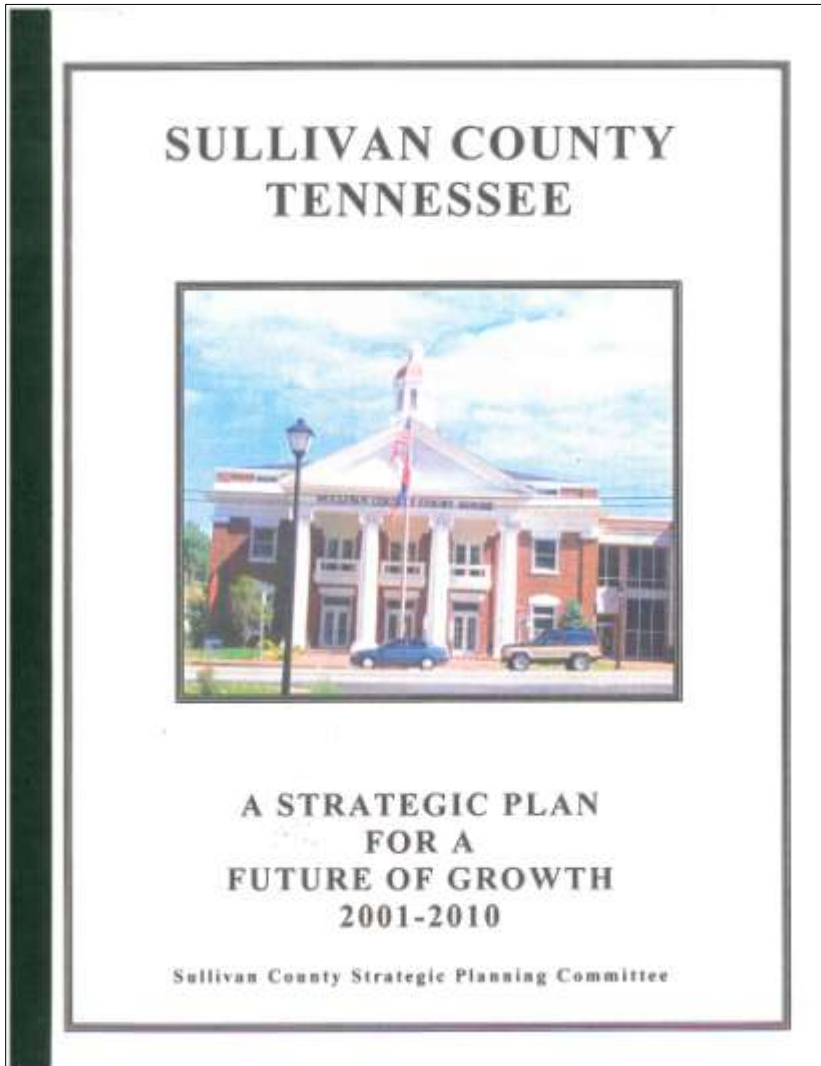
In 1971 the TN State Planning Commission prepared a Zoning Study for the county. However, it was not until August 15, 1988 that the 2nd and final reading of a Zoning Resolution was passed by County Commission. Thus the creation of the County Codes Office.

THE OFFICE:

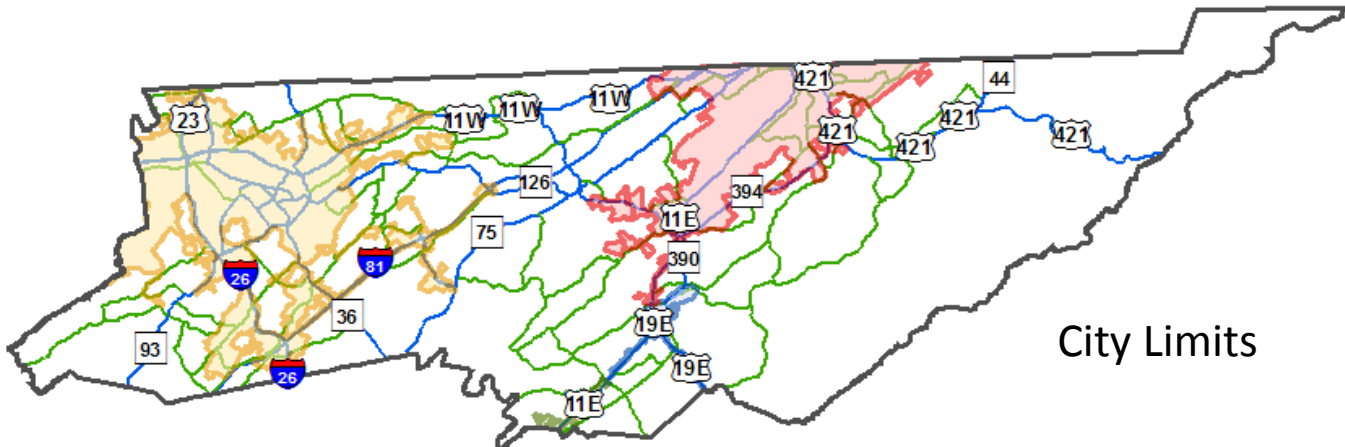
What is it that we actually do everyday?

- Review all Minor and Major Subdivision Plats within our jurisdiction;
- Issue Building Permits on all residential structures over 120 square feet (IRC 2006);
- Issue Zoning Compliance Permits for all non-residential structures and developments;
- Administer the Flood Damage Prevention Resolution – per the NFIP of FEMA;
- Administer the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Resolution per the EPA under TDEC oversight;
- Enforce the Property Maintenance Resolution;
- Advise the County Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Board of Construction Appeals, Property Maintenance Board, Historic Zoning Commission and other committees on all planning and development related requests;
- Prepare all maps using GIS for planning related tasks, school department; Election Office and others as requested;
- Attend the Bristol MPO, Kingsport MPO, 1st District RPO, TAPA, TBOA and other committees and boards as may be assigned.
- Continually coordinate with the city planning staff – Kingsport, Bristol, Bluff City, JC

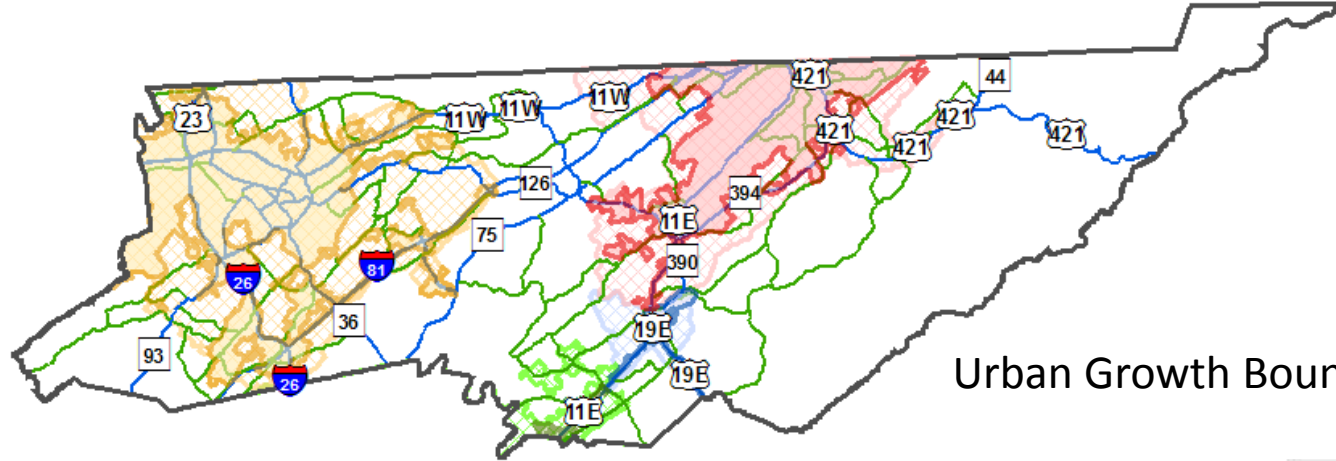
**Additionally, we coordinate, prepare and publish
Long-Range Planning Documents such as:**



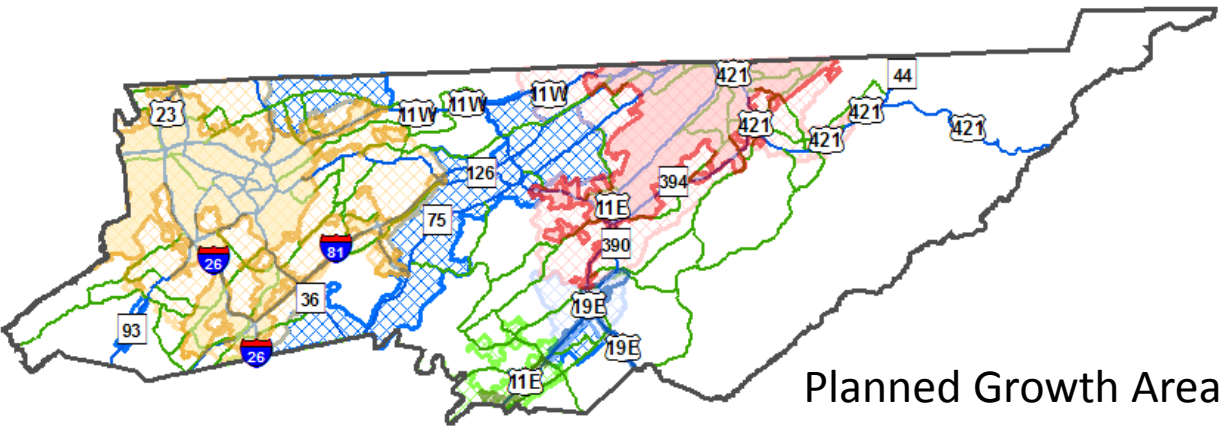
As well as



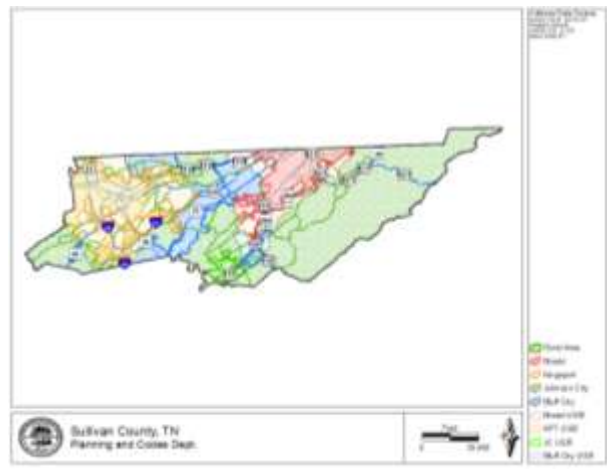
City Limits



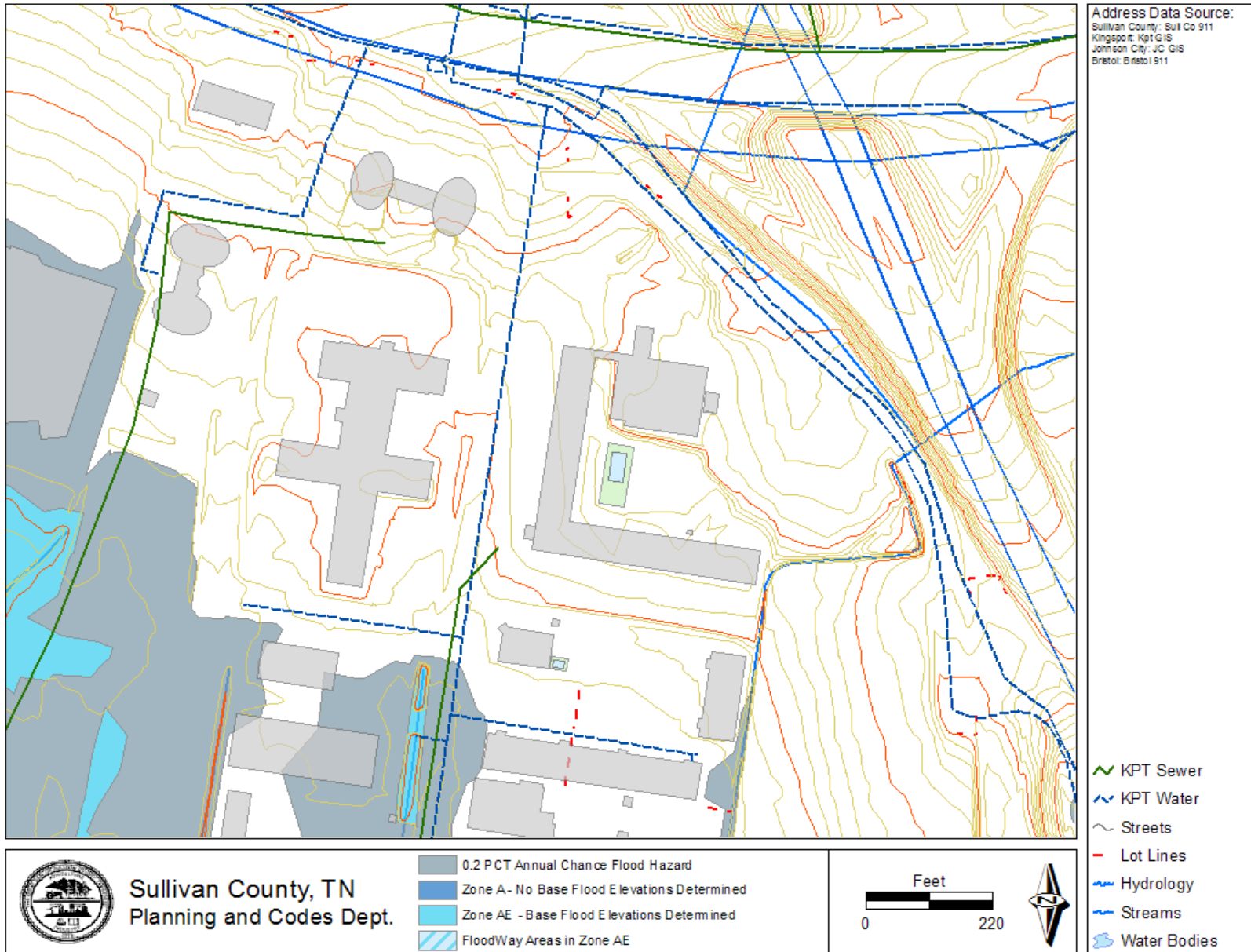
Urban Growth Boundaries



Planned Growth Areas




2006 – Partnership in Geographical Information Systems – Kingsport, Bristol & Sullivan





Address Data Source:
Source: Esri, DeLorme,
Intermap, Inc., USGS,
Swire, NOAA, IGN,
EPCRS © 2001

 Sullivan County, TN
Planning and Codes Dept.



Streets



Address Data Source:
Source: Esri, DeLorme,
Intermap, Inc., USGS,
Swire, NOAA, IGN,
EPCRS © 2001

 Sullivan County, TN
Planning and Codes Dept.




Streets

1997
Black and
White
Aerial Image



Address Data Source:
Source: Esri, DeLorme,
Intermap, Inc., USGS,
Swire, NOAA, IGN,
EPCRS © 2001

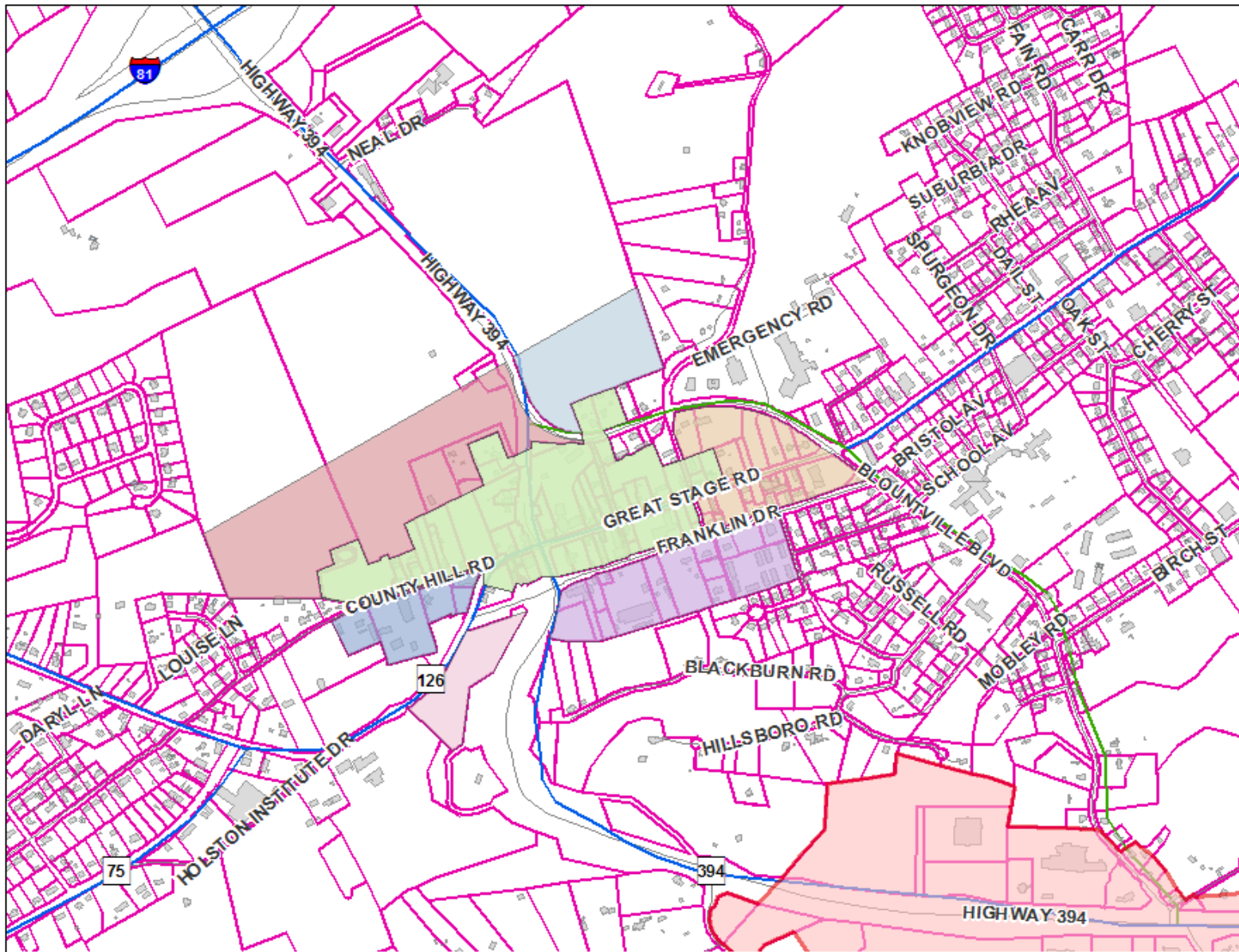
 Sullivan County, TN
Planning and Codes Dept.



Streets

2006
1st time in color

2008 – Updated Aerial



Address Data Source:

Sullivan County: Sul Co 911
 Kingsport: Kpt GIS
 Johnson City: JC GIS
 Bristol: Bristol 911

□ Piney Flats Hist.

□ Blountville Hist.

Blountville Conser.

□ CV-1

□ CV-2

□ CV-3

□ CV-4

□ CV-5

□ CV-6

□ H

□ Bristol

□ Kingsport

□ Johnson City

□ Bluff City

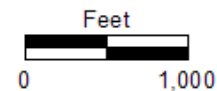
~ Streets

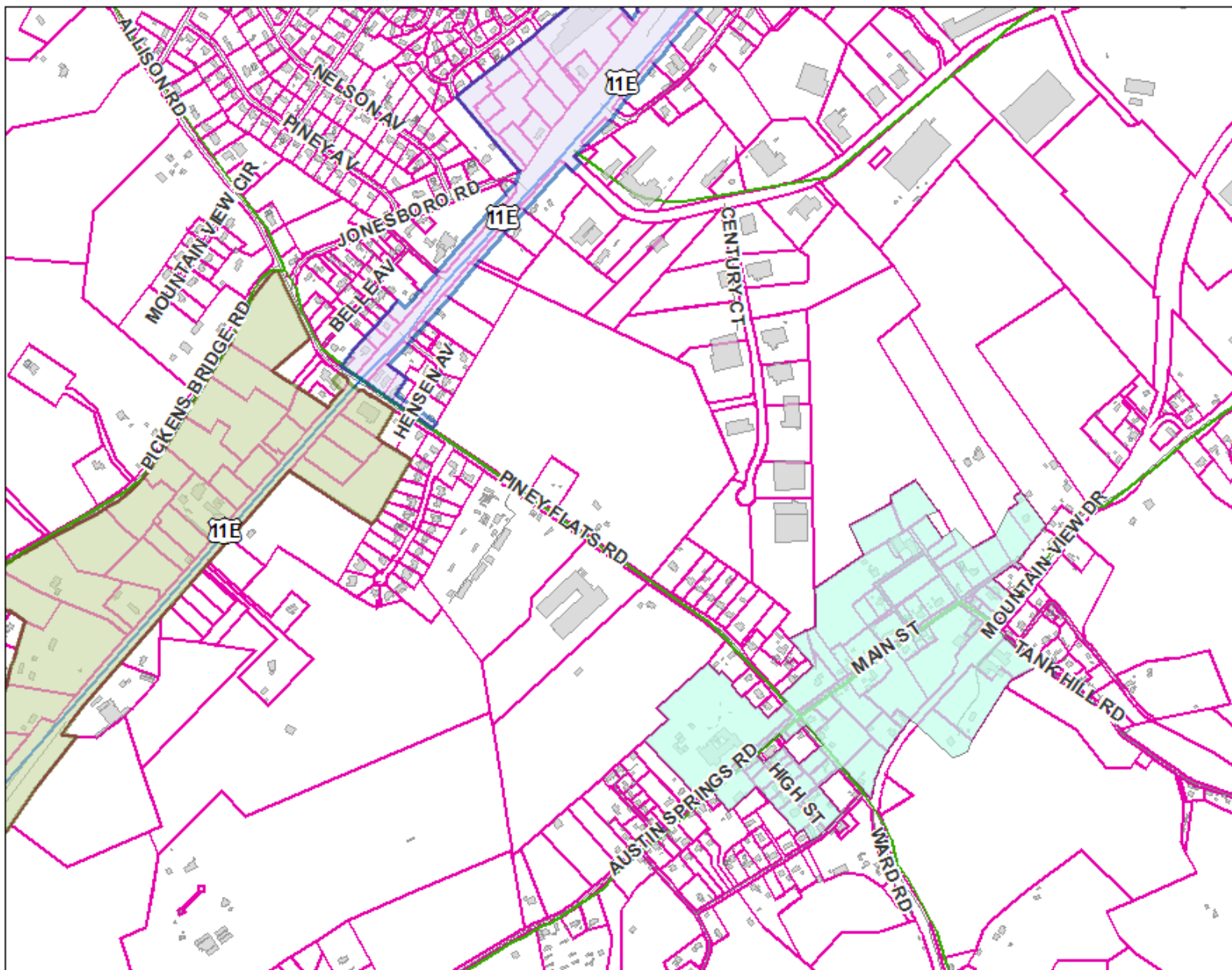
□ Parcel Lines

□ Water Bodies

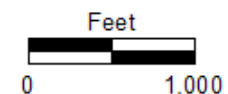


Sullivan County, TN
 Planning and Codes Dept.





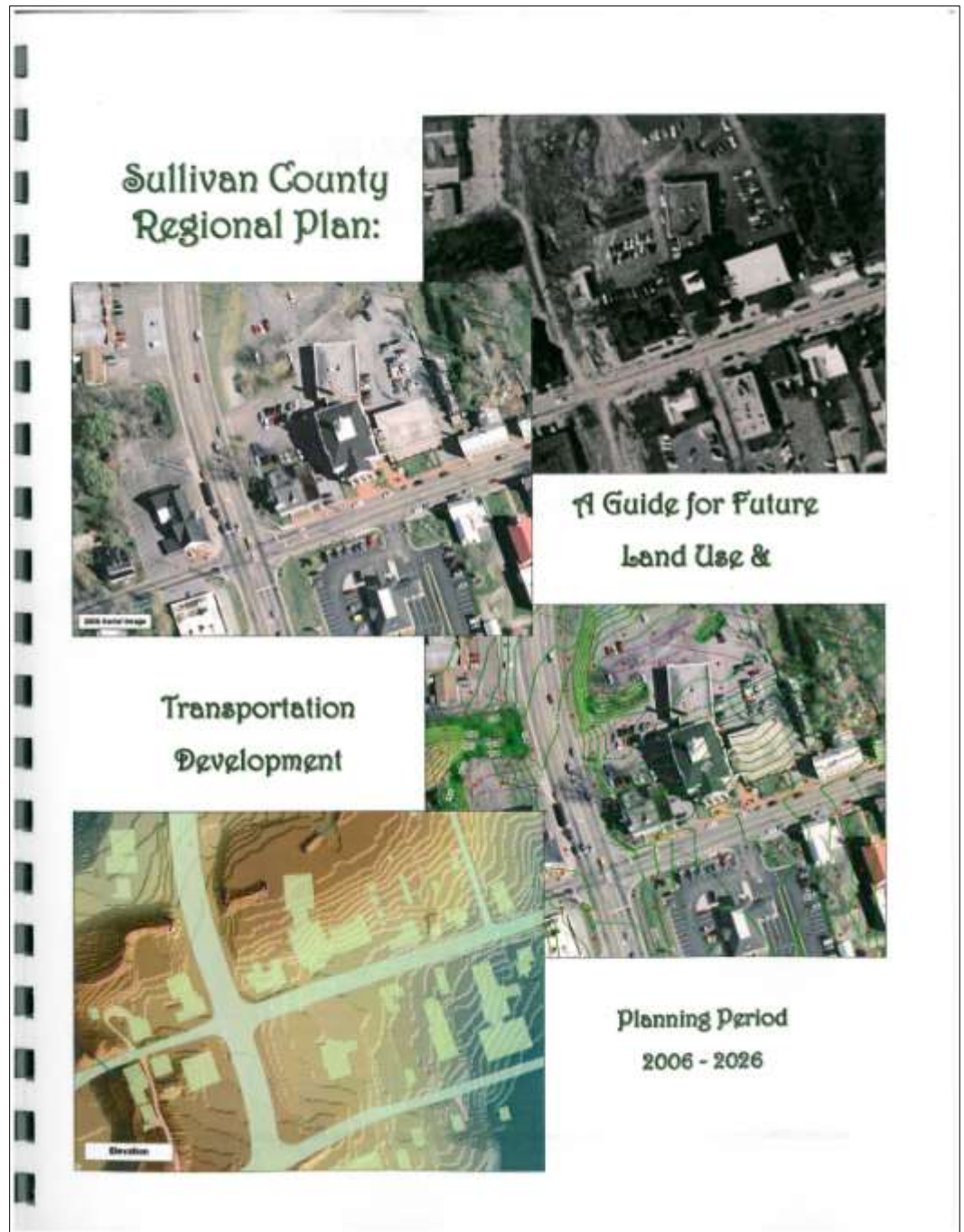
Sullivan County, TN
Planning and Codes Dept.



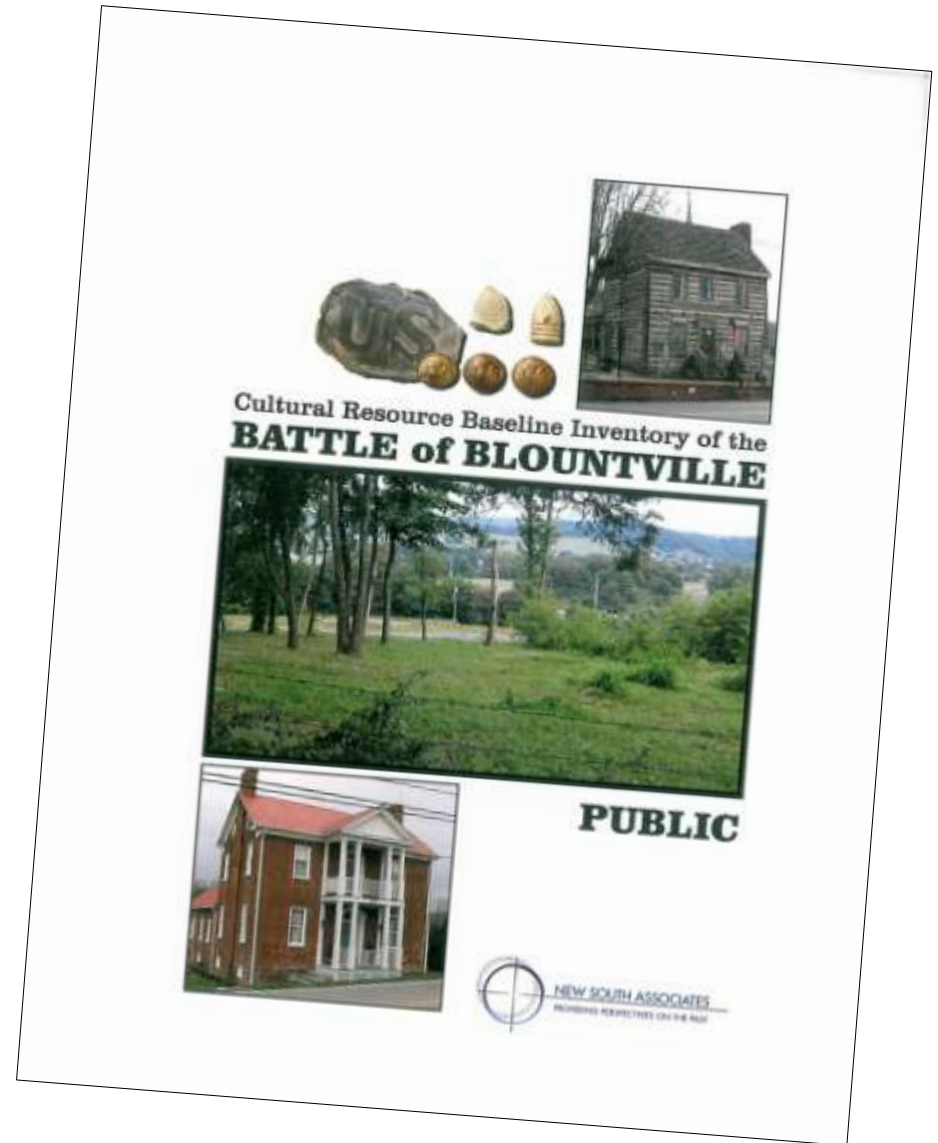
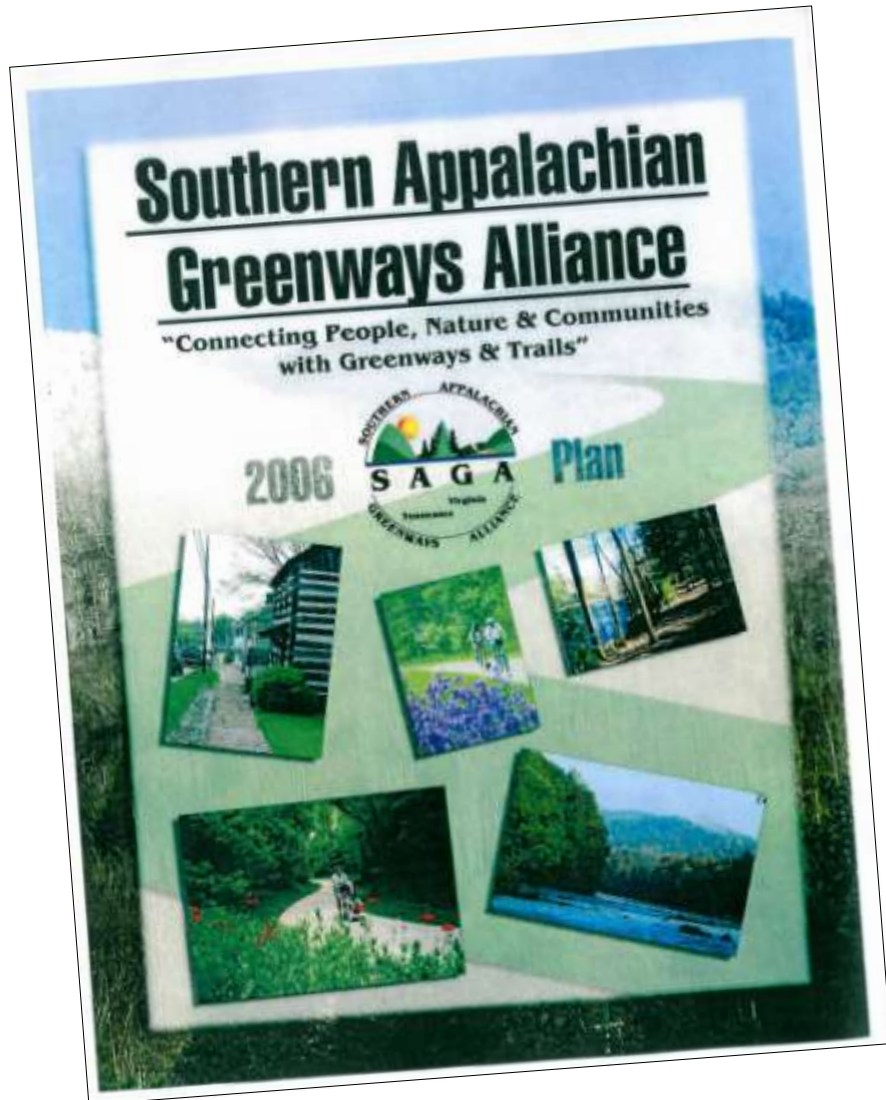
- Piney Flats Hist.
- Bristol
- Kingsport
- Johnson City
- Bluff City
- Streets
- Parcel Lines
- Water Bodies

After two years of input from the Sullivan County Regional Planning Commission, city staff planners, the mayor, the public and press, I published the first update to the county's Land Use & Transportation Plan since 1970.

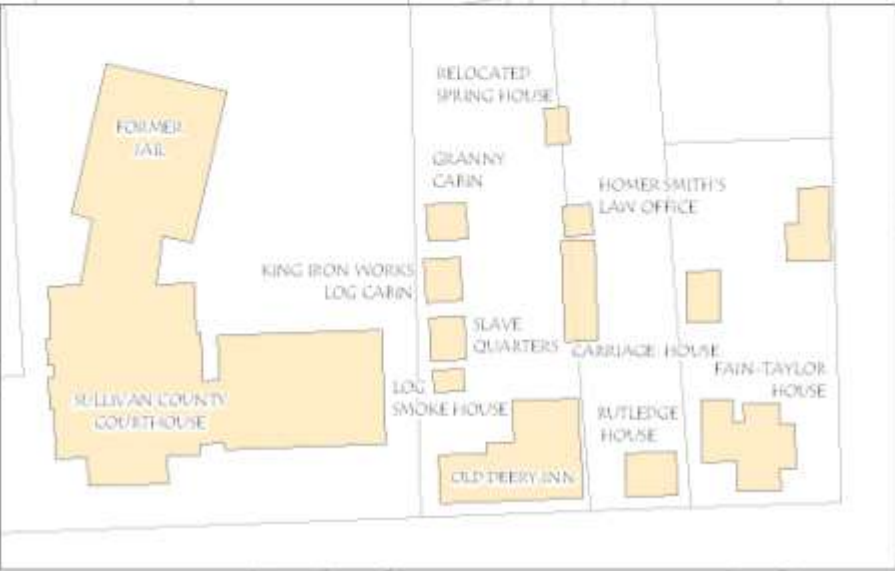
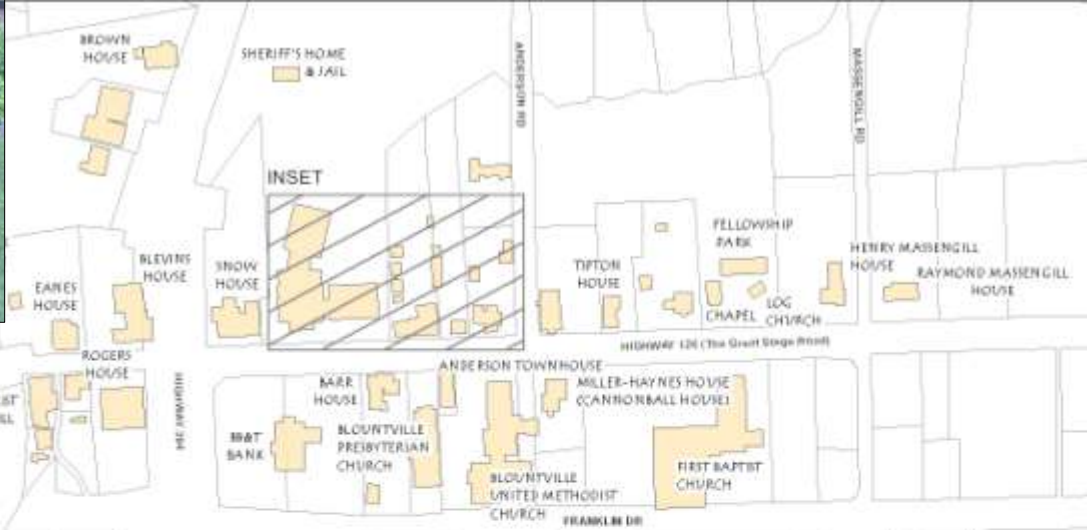
Utilizing the data from the 2000 Census and periodic updates as well as the Geographic Information Systems database maintained in the department, I was able to prepare the plan without using a planning consultant. Sometimes, you just learn more by doing...



Some other cool projects....



We have 5 Battle of Blountville Civil War Interpretive signs located within the battlefield zone, thanks to a partnership between the county, TN Dept. of Tourism and the Civil War Trails Organization.



One of my favorite projects has been working on the master plan of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail – Sullivan County’s 22-mile segment:

- Scenic Trail versus Historic Trail
- Commemorates the Battle of Kings Mountain – with the Overmountain Men’s victory over British Col. Ferguson’s Army in a time when Washington’s Army was losing the battle and Fort Charleston was under British control.
- A 330 mile trail from Abingdon, VA to Kings Mountain, SC
- Our part is about 22 miles on paper with 1 mile constructed so far and a Master Plan approved by the NPS (two grants awarded as “seed” money)
- Goes through the heart of Sullivan County from SEHS to Fort Womack to “Choates Ford (now known as Bluff City) and on down the Old Elizabethton Highway towards Sycamore Shoals.
- The Choate’s Ford Walking Trail is the first segment certified in Sullivan County, which connects both sides of the Holston River, to the Senior Citizens Center and to the Bluff City Middle School campus – all along the primary historic route taken by the Overmountain Men.
- Project will be completed in phases as funding and resources permit:
 - *Phase 1 – Choate’s Ford Walking Trail and trailhead – completed 😊*
 - *Phase 2 – Patriot’s Trail and Outdoor Classroom – initiated at SEHS campus*
 - *Phase 3 – Mountain View Trail – goes by Ridgewood BBQ, down to Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site*

Overmountain Victory
National Historic Trail


 Choates Ford Walking Tour


 Reenactment Route

Choates Ford Trail - 1997



Overmountain Victory
National Historic Trail

 Choates Ford Walking Tour

 Reenactment Route

Choates Ford Trail - 2006

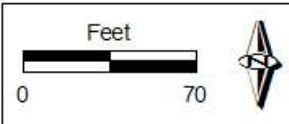




- Legend**
- County Line
 - Streets
 - Parcel Lines
 - Creeks



**Sullivan County,
Tennessee**





Before and After of the Trail that leads down to the restored Swinging Footbridge over the Holston River



Receiving the Trail Certificate are Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey; Ambre Torbett, Sullivan Co. Planning Director; Robert Thomas, Mayor; Betty Combs, Board of Education; Tom Anderson, Vice Mayor.



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

Vol. 4, No. 1

fall 2007

On the Path

Welcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

Five years ago, many people now reading this publication may not have even heard of this Trail, though it was authorized by the United States Congress in 1980. But today, more and more people and communities are partnering with the National Park Service to help tell the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. Together partners are adding more certified trail segments and hosting special events and programs all along the historic route to help commemorate this important event in America's fight for independence over 225 years ago. This year's Progress Report shares stories from all along the Trail about the efforts of communities to increase the visibility of the Trail and to share its historic legacy. Through the end of 2007, we now have 67 miles of certified trail available for public use. This is four times the total amount certified by 2002! The OVNHT is continuing to grow; and, we are pleased to welcome all who come to experience its story, to enjoy its beauty, and to travel the same historic path as those Patriot heroes.

We hope you enjoy your visit. Please linger and explore some or all of the 350 miles that make up the Overmountain Victory NHT. The Trail reveals a remarkable tale, step by step.

- Paul Carson, Superintendent

History in the Hallways

New trail segment runs near Bluff City Middle School

While changing classes, the students of Bluff City Middle School will be walking in history.

The first certified section of the OVNHT in Sullivan Co., TN was celebrated at a ceremony on September 24



The 400 students of BCMS watch OVTA marchers fire a commemorative volley at their school.

in Bluff City. The historic route followed by the Virginia volunteers on their way to muster at Sycamore Shoals ran southwest from Choate's Ford and continued along where the middle school buildings now sit.

"We are installing commemorative brass caps in the floor of the halls to let students know

(Continued on page 6)



Receiving the Trail Certificate are Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey; Ambre Torbett, Sullivan Co. Planning Director; Robert Thomas, Mayor; Betty Combs, Board of Education; Tom Anderson, Vice Mayor.

Exhibiting Courage—an Easy Touch

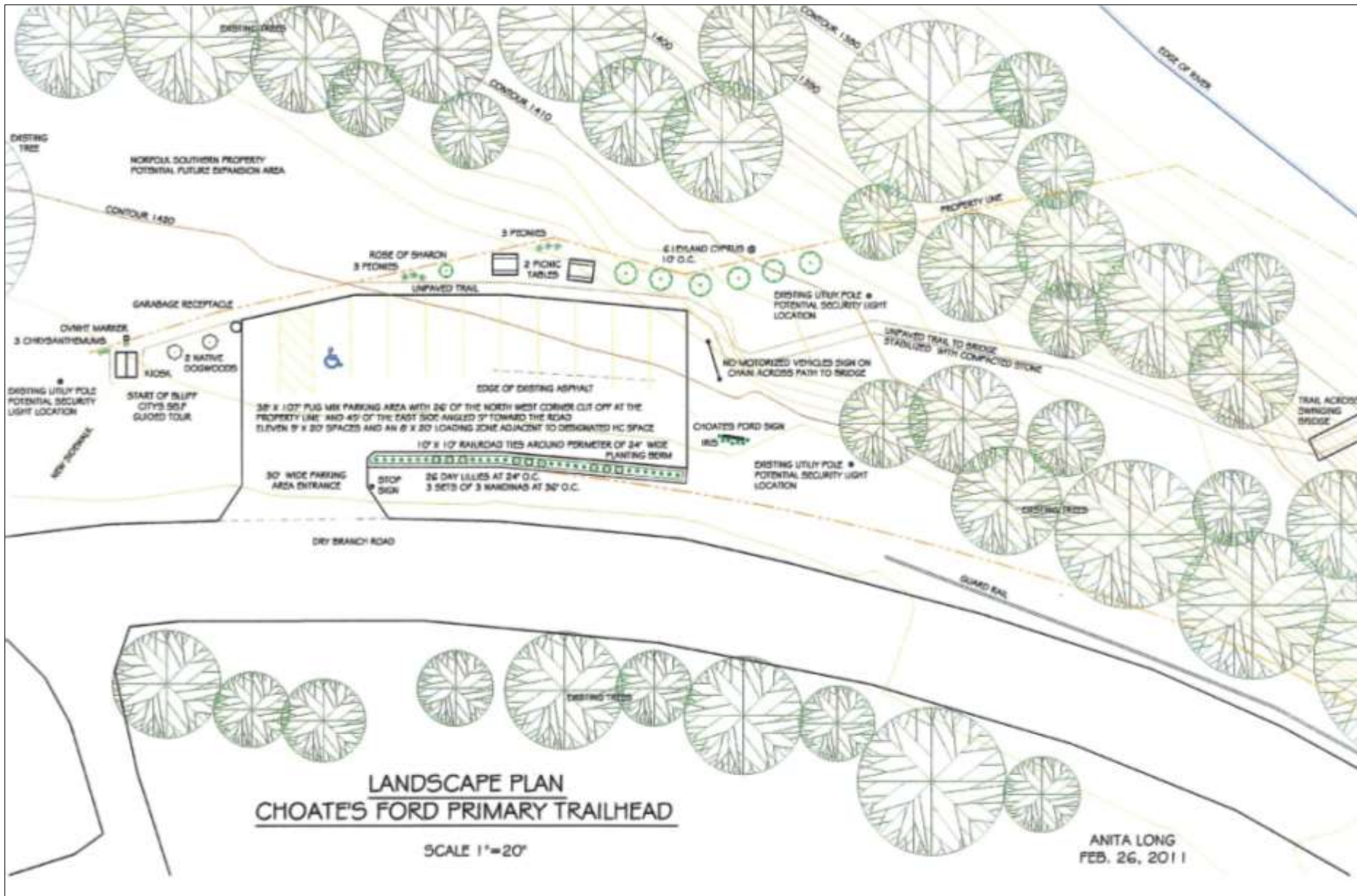
A new display at W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir

Visitors to the Yadkin River Valley can now get a feel for the Overmountain Men. A new educational exhibit with many "touchables" was erected in September at the W Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir Visitor Center. Filling an entire wall of the existing museum that presents displays on natural history, the new exhibit includes a



R.G. Absher inspects the new exhibit at W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir Visitor Center.

(Continued on page 3)



Site plan commissioned by the NPS, using a local architect, constructed with grant funds, trailhead maintained by city and county, plantings done by volunteers, used by all.



Here marks the spot

Richard Luce, left, and Tom Holmes, marching with the Overmountain Men on the annual Overmountain Victory March, look over one of the new signs for the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail that passes through Bluff City. The sign marks the location of (Choate's Ford) Shoutie's Ford where the Overmountain Men crossed the river on their way to Kings Mountain, where they defeated the British.

Net 2/18/11 - ©Chris Brown/overnet



Choate's Ford (Shoate's Ford)

Approximately 300 yards downstream lays the ford of the Holston River known as Choates Ford. This was the ford used by the Overmountain Men to cross the river, with its shallow depths and narrow span, making the terrain most suitable for horseback travel. On September 24, 1780 they marched along the Old Watauga Road that led from their mustering grounds in Abingdon, Virginia to their first encampment at Sycamore Shoals the following day. Choate's ford is now covered somewhat by waters from the Tennessee Valley Authority's South Holston Lake; however trail markers have been placed on either side of the banks of the river to help delineate the ford area.



The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail commemorates the primary routes used by the patriot militia in their campaign, which led to Kings Mountain, South Carolina, where on October 7, 1780 they defeated Loyalist forces, marking a turning point in the Revolutionary War. Long before the development of manmade structures, such as the railroad, swinging foot-bridge, Thomas bridge, the mill race or even flood control by TVA, this ford was used by the local settlers, Native Americans and the Overmountain Men, as it was the primary river crossing due to the conduciveness of the natural terrain. When first a settlement, this area was known only as Choate's Ford.

For more information visit: www.nps.gov/ovvt or www.ovta.biz
or www.sullivancounty.org/planning.htm

Painted image of the former mill dam at Choate's Ford (copyright)





Trail building can be done by 5 year olds as well as grown-ups. These are my best guys – AJ Torbett & Cephus Stracken.



Many hands make light work!



In addition to trees donated by the Langstaff



Tree Farm, the NPS donated two picnic tables



Partnerships Through Planning

- **Lessons Learned:**
 - Never turn away a volunteer no matter how young;
 - When you run out of money, plan for the next project. When the money comes in, you will have your plan ready for implementation (Plan your Work and then Work your Plan);
 - Involve as many stakeholders as you can – everybody just wants to be included – support can come from those you might not expect;
 - Successful projects or plans are the result of a common vision – it is not from the work of one.
 - Planning can often feel disjointed, piecemeal and pointless – never lose sight of the big picture;
 - Creating public spaces to last for many generations is what it is all about.
 - Keep the momentum alive with events – Include volunteers in Trail maintenance Days such as on Arbor Day, Earth Day, National Trails Day, and Heritage Day. **Recognize and Give Thanks!**

Other Projects in the Works:

- **Battle of Blountville Military State Park**
 - Interpretive Trail – Addition to Heritage Trail
 - Master Plan – Piecing Together All of the Projects
 - Monuments – Gateway Feature to Historic District
 - Battlefield Protection – National Register (planning grant)
- **Overmountain Victory Trail National Historic Trail**
 - Implementation of Patriots Trail – outdoor classroom at Sullivan East High School
 - Annual Heritage Day/Field Day at Schools with OVTA storytelling
 - Coordination with Rocky Mount, Sycamore Shoals and Abingdon's Craig Meadows/Muster Grounds
 - Archeological Survey of Fort Womack Historical Site
 - Trail Extensions – 3 phases along primary historic route
- **Blountville Farmers Market – Relocation and Shelter**
 - Coordination with BOB committee and UT Ext. Office
- **Preservation and Restoration of the Old Sheriff's Home**
 - Future Information Center for Historic District – TDOT Grant

While I would rather be out trail-building and planting trees, normally I can be found in the basement of the old courthouse reviewing plans and permit applications...

Historical Data:	
Year	# of Permits
1989	52
1990	750
1991	801
1992	1010
1993	1115
1994	1271
1995	1514
1996	1927
1997	1867
1998	1783
1999	1754
2000	1601
2001	1386
2002	1380
2003	1311
2004	1142
2005	1031
2006	1056
2007	1026
2008	917
2009	826
2010	953
2011	1342

On average, we run approximately 130 inspections a month with 2 full time building inspectors (county divided in half). Our codes inspector fielded 153 complaints in 2011 and I reviewed 175 minor and major subdivision plats and plans.

In the 1990s our office had 2 clerks, 2 inspectors, 1 building official, 1 codes inspector, 1 engineer, and the state planning office. (7 in house staff along with the state office resources).

Today, we have 1 codes clerk, 2 inspectors (one of whom is the building official) 1 codes inspector, and 1 planning director. (5 total with 1 GIS person part-time).

For more information on any of these regulations and plans, please check out our website at:

www.sullivancountyttn.gov/government/planning&codes

www.nps.gov

www.tn.gov