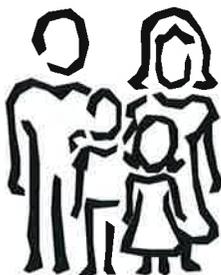
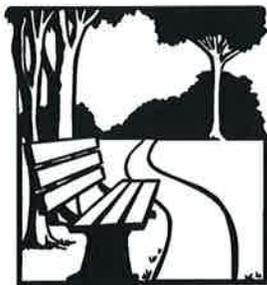


TOWN OF DAMASCUS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



August 2013

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR
DAMASCUS, VIRGINIA**

Prepared by
Damascus Planning Commission

Adopted by
Damascus Town Council
June 2, 1980

Revised
July 1988, February 1995
Lawrence Lewis, Chairman
Damascus Planning Commission

Rewritten
December 1999
Creed Jones, Chairman
Damascus Planning Commission

Revised
September 2007
Tom Horsch, Chairman
Damascus Planning Commission

Rewritten
August 2013
Jim Cartwright, Chairman
Damascus Planning Commission

The preparation of this document was
financed in part by comprehensive
planning grants from the
Appalachian Regional Commission
and the U.S. Department of
Housing and Community Development

Town of Damascus

"The Strength of a Town Lies in the Confidence and Cooperation of Its People"

PO DRAWER 576
DAMASCUS, VIRGINIA 24236-0576

TELEPHONE 276-475-3831
FAX # 276-475-3241

RESOLUTION DAMASCUS PLANNING COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the Damascus Planning Commission is charged by Section 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, to prepare and recommend a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the territory within the Town; and

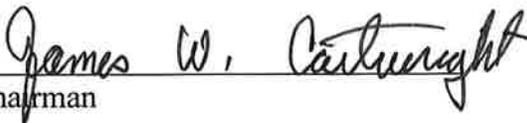
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has met regularly during the re-writing of this Plan and has carefully examined the existing conditions and trends of growth and the probable future requirements of the Town and its inhabitants; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission agrees that this re-written Comprehensive Plan should be presented to the Town Council as its general guide for decision making regarding the provision of the public services for existing and future needs of the Town; and

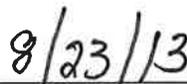
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission and Town Council have jointly advertised their intent to conduct a joint public hearing pursuant to Section 15.2-432 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Damascus Planning Commission that the re-written Comprehensive Plan is hereby certified to the Town Council; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Damascus Planning Commission doth hereby and hereon recommend that the Town Council adopt the Comprehensive Plan as the guide for the future development of the Town of Damascus.



Chairman



Date



Secretary



Date

TOWN OF DAMASCUS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	1
A. Purpose	
B. Background	
C. Relationship to other plans	
D. Definitions	
E. Description of the Planning Area	
F. Legal Status of the Plan	
II. Geographic and Physiographic Features	6
A. Physiographic Provinces and Geology	
B. Relief	
C. Climatology	
D. Hydrology	
E. Soils	
F. Vegetation	
G. Physical Constraints to Development	
III. Population	15
A. Historical Trend	
B. Age and Sex Distribution	
C. Migration	
D. Racial Distribution	
E. Population Density	
F. Population Projections	
IV. Economy	24
A. General Description	
B. Income Levels	
C. Education, Labor Force, and Distribution Analysis	
V. Housing	40
A. Existing Housing Conditions	
B. Cost of Renter and Owner-occupied Housing	
C. Inadequately Housed Households	
D. Manufactured Homes	
E. Current Housing Program	
F. Housing Problems and Needs	

VI. Community Facilities	52
A. Education	
B. Libraries	
C. Health Care	
D. Human Services	
E. Recreation	
F. Fire Department	
G. Rescue Squad	
H. Law Enforcement	
I. Water Supply and Treatment	
J. Wastewater Transport and Treatment	
K. Solid Waste	
L. Public Utilities	
M. Internet Access	
VII. Transportation	60
A. Roads and Highways	
B. Design Standards	
C. Traffic Volumes	
D. Transportation Enhancements Federal Fund (SAFETEA-LU)	
E. Airports	
F. Rail Service	
G. Public Transit	
H. Non-Motorized Transportation	
I. Problems and Opportunities	
VIII. Land Use and Development	75
A. Introduction	
B. Current Land Use by Categories	
C. Current Land Use Controls	
D. Development Issues	
IX. Government	82
A. Town Government	
B. Local Government Services	
C. Revenue Sources	
D. Expenditure by Type	
E. Tax Rates and Development Impact	
F. Intergovernmental Cooperation	
G. Governmental Issues	
X. Goals and Recommendations	86
A. Goals and Objectives	
B. Summary of Recommendations	

List of Tables

Flood Discharges	II-1
Population	III-1
Percentage Change in Population	III-2
Age Distribution	III-3
Components of Population Change	III-4
Non-White Population	III-5
Count of Households by Income	IV-1
Count of Family by Income	IV-2
Count of Non-Family Householders by Income	IV-3
Per Capita and Medial Family Income	IV-4
Household income by Type	IV-5
Poverty Status	IV-6
Educational Level for Persons Over 25 Years Old	IV-7
Persons by Labor Force Age 16 and Over	IV-8
Female Labor Force	IV-9
Employed Labor Force by Industry by Residence	IV-10
Employed Labor Force by Occupation by Residence	IV-11
Number of Establishments by Industry Type	IV-12
Employment by Industry Type	IV-13
Taxable Retail Sales	IV-14
Year of Construction of Housing	V-1
Condition of Residential Structures	V-2
Plumbing Facilities 2000	V-3A
Plumbing Facilities 1990	V-3B
Plumbing Facilities in Damascus 2000 and 1990	V-3C
Over Crowded Units	V-4
Count of Housing by Tenure 2000	V-5A
Count of Housing by Tenure 1990	V-5B
Count of Housing by Tenure 1980, 1990, 2000	V-5C
Value of Owner-occupied Houses 2000	V-6
Median Family Income as Percent of Median Housing Value	V-7
Monthly Rent of Specified Renter-occupied Housing	V-8
Average Yearly Rent as a Percent of Median Family Income	V-9
School Enrollment and Number of Teachers	VI-1
Required Right-of-way Standards	VII-1
Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes for Route 58	VII-2
Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes for Route 91	VII-3
VDOT SYIP Projects in Damascus Area	VII-4
Land Use by Acre	VIII-1
Use of Developable Land	VIII-2

Charts

Population by Age Groups
Population Estimate
Population Projections

III-1
III-2
III-3

List of Maps

Damascus Zoning Map
VDOT SYIP Projects

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Damascus Comprehensive Plan is to provide a guide or a “vision” for the future development of the town. Planning is an organized way of determining a community’s problems and opportunities, then setting goals, objectives, and strategies to address those problems and opportunities. Planning is a forward-looking process that bridges the gap between where we are today and where we want to go in the future. A comprehensive plan by its very name addresses a variety of often-interrelated public facilities and services, quality of life, economy, and transportation.

A comprehensive plan is a tool to guide local government decisions pertaining to the provision of a better environment and efficient public services, both now and in the future. To accomplish these purposes the plan must be comprehensive, general, and long range. A comprehensive plan should include surveys of existing conditions, an analysis of those conditions to determine what changes will take place, and recommendations for action on strategies that will improve existing conditions in order to prepare for the future.

B. Background

As of July 1, 1980, Title 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia states that all localities in Virginia had to have adopted a Comprehensive Plan. The Code of Virginia also requires that the plan be updated at least every five years and that “The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development

of the area which will be in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the inhabitants.”

Damascus adopted a Comprehensive Land Use Plan on June 2, 1980 with subsequent amendments in 1988 and 1995. None of those amendments were a result of an overall review of the original plan, but were additions primarily necessitated by community improvement projects that were not included in the original plan. In 1998, the town completed a thorough update of the Damascus Comprehensive Plan, which formed the foundation for this version of the plan.

C. Relationship to Other Plans

The comprehensive plan is a general plan and is not designed to stand alone as the sole guide for the development of a locality. However, the plan fulfills a number of specific purposes. It is the basis for a town zoning ordinance and serves as a sounding board for examination of an application for rezoning. It provides a comprehensive frame of reference for the review and evaluation of conditional use permits, subdivision plats, site plans, and developmental proposals. It gives official recognition to areas of natural, historical, geological, or archeological significance, thus insuring their conservation and protection. The plan serves as a guide for efficient and coordinated improvements in public services. It identifies the assets of the town and outlines ways to preserve and take advantage of those assets. The comprehensive plan may be implemented by zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and capital improvements programs. Other plans of importance to the town in the development of this plan include the Washington County Comprehensive Plan; the Washington County 604(b) Comprehensive Water and Wastewater Quality Plan; the Mount Rogers Regional Strategic Plan;

the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area Unit Plan; the VDOT Corridor Plans for U.S. Route 58 and Route 91; and the Highway Improvement Plans of Tennessee and North Carolina.

D. Definitions

“Comprehensive” means that the plan must include all the land within the town as well as be cognizant of all decisions which may have an impact on the land. “General” means that the plan does not dictate specific locations or include the ordinances which are needed to put the plan into effect. Rather a general plan provides the goals, objectives, and strategies to which decisions and ordinance of the local government can be directed.

“Long Range” means that the plan, while addressing current problems, also considers future situations and the impact of changes 10 to 15 years from now. “Goals” are general statements or future conditions considered desirable to the town; they are ends toward which actions are aimed. “Objectives” are statements of measurable activities to be accomplished in pursuit of the goals; they refer to some specific aspirations which are reasonably attainable. “Strategies” or “recommendations” are specific proposals that directly relate to accomplishing the objective; they are the actions recommended to implement the plan. Strategies or recommendations represent the “how we are going to get there” component of the Plan.

E. Description of the Planning Area

Damascus is located in the southeast section of Washington County. The town is 12 miles from the Town of Abingdon and Interstate 81 and 28 miles from Bristol. The Tennessee border lies 1 ½ miles to the south of Damascus and the Smyth County line is 17 miles to the east. Highways 58 and 91, as well as Laurel and Beaverdam Creeks, intersect within the corporate limits.

Damascus is favorably situated as a service area for a number of tourist attractions. Backbone Rock is two miles to the southwest, while Whitetop Mountain, Mount Rogers, and Pine Mountain, the three highest peaks in Virginia, are approximately 20 miles to the east. Grayson Highlands State Park is approximately 30 miles to the east, and to the south, east and west, adjoining the corporate limits, is the Congressionally designated Mount Rogers National Recreation Area of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. The Appalachian Trail, Virginia Creeper Trail, Iron Mountain Trail, Daniel Boone Trail, the Crooked Road, and Transamerica 76 Bicycle Route pass through the corporate limits. Damascus also lies at the entrance to Shady Valley, Tennessee and joins the Cherokee National Forest to the south.

F. Legal Status of the Plan

“§15.2-2232. Legal status of plan. -- A. Whenever a local planning commission recommends a comprehensive plan or part thereof for the locality and such plan has been approved and adopted by the governing body, it shall control the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan. Thereafter, unless a feature is already shown on the adopted master plan or part thereof or is deemed so under subsection D, no street or connection to an existing street, park or other public area, public building or public structure, public utility facility or public service corporation facility other than railroad facility, whether publicly or privately owned, shall be constructed, established or authorized, unless and until the general location or approximate location, character, and extent thereof has been submitted to and approved by the commission as being substantially in accord with the adopted comprehensive plan or part thereof. In connection with any such determination, the commission may, and at the direction of the governing body shall, hold a public hearing, after notice as required by § 15.2-2204.

B. The commission shall communicate its findings to the governing body, indicating its approval or disapproval with written reasons therefor. The governing body may overrule the action of the commission by a vote of a majority of its membership. Failure of the commission to act within sixty days of a submission, unless the time is extended by the governing body, shall be deemed approval. The owner or owners or their agents may appeal the decision of the commission to the governing body within ten days after the decision of the commission. The appeal shall be by written petition to the governing body setting forth the reasons for the appeal. The appeal shall be heard and determined within sixty days from its filing. A majority vote of the governing body shall overrule the commission.

C. Widening, narrowing, extension, enlargement, vacation or change of use of streets or public areas shall likewise be submitted for approval, but paving, repair, reconstruction, improvement, drainage or similar work and normal service extensions of public utilities or public service corporations shall not require approval unless involving a change in location or extent of a street or public area.

D. Any public area, facility or use as set forth in subsection A which is identified within, but not the entire subject of, a submission under either § 15.2-2258 for subdivision or provision 8 of § 15.2-2286 for development or both may be deemed a feature already shown on the adopted master plan, and, therefore, excepted from the requirement for submittal to and approval by the commission or the governing body; provided, that the governing body has by ordinance or resolution defined standards governing the construction, establishment or authorization of such public area, facility or use or has approved it through acceptance of a proffer made pursuant to § 15.2-2303.

E. Approval and funding of a public telecommunications facility by the Virginia Public Broadcasting Board pursuant to Article 12 (§ 2.2-2426 et seq.) of Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section and local zoning ordinances with respect to such facility with the exception of television and radio towers and structures not necessary to house electronic apparatus. The exemption provided for in this subsection shall not apply to facilities existing or approved by the Virginia Public Telecommunications Board prior to July 1, 1990. The Virginia Public Broadcasting Board shall notify the governing body of the locality in advance of any meeting where approval of any such facility shall be acted upon.

F. On any application for a telecommunications facility, the commission's decision shall comply with the requirements of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996. Failure of the commission to act on any such application for a telecommunications facility under subsection A submitted on or after July 1, 1998, within ninety days of such submission shall be deemed approval of the application by the commission unless the governing body has authorized an extension of time for consideration or the applicant has agreed to an extension of time. The governing body may extend the time required for action by the local commission by no more than sixty additional days. If the commission has not acted on the application by the end of the extension, or by the end of such longer period as may be agreed to by the applicant, the application is deemed approved by the commission. “

CHAPTER II GEOGRAPHIC AND PHYSIOGRAPHIC FEATURES

A. Physiographic Provinces and Geology

The Town of Damascus lies within the Blue Ridge subregion of the Appalachian Mountain Range. Immediately north-northwest of town is the Ridge and Valley subregion of the Appalachians, within which lies most of Washington County. Damascus, at the division of these two subregions, is flanked by the Iron Mountains, which are part of the Blue Ridge.

Geologically, the Ridge and Valley are characterized by underlying layers of sedimentary rocks. Most of the sedimentary rock types in Washington County are sandstone, shale, limestone, and dolomite. Because such rock types are not particularly resistant to erosion and shifting, faulting has occurred throughout parts of the Ridge and Valley. In addition, the valleys of the County are characterized by sinkholes and underground caverns, which pose a problem in maintaining water quality. As development increases, if proper water and sewage treatments are not provided, pollution of springs and wells is unavoidable.

Unlike the sedimentary rock types of the Ridge and Valley, outcrops of rock characterize the Blue Ridge subregion around Damascus, which are volcanic in nature. Sandstone, red shale, limestone and dolomite underlie the town itself.

B. Relief

Generally, the elevation of the Town ranges between 1,900 and 2,000 feet, with an average elevation of approximately 1,950 feet. One knob, in the southern part of Town, rises above 2,300 feet. Directly next to Town is the Iron Mountain range that has peaks of up to 4,000 feet.

C. Climatology

Washington County has a moderate climate with July being the warmest month and January the coldest month. The daily maximum temperature averages about 84°F in July with the average daily minimum temperature in January being about 27°F. The growing season ranges from more than 200 days in the western portion of the County to less than 160 days in the Konnarock area.

Average annual rainfall in Damascus is about 45 inches. Precipitation during the six warm months, April through September, averages approximately 25 inches. Snowfall averages above 15 inches annually.

The prevailing winds in the County are from a westerly direction, with southerly and northerly winds occurring less frequently. The mountains, along with the prevailing westerly winds, generally protect the County from severe storms originating in the Atlantic Ocean. Tornadoes have been reported in Washington County at roughly ten-year intervals since 1944.

D. Hydrology

The hydrology associated with Damascus and the surrounding area is very important. The Town serves as a catch basin for water that flows out of the adjacent mountains in the Jefferson and Cherokee National Forests.

Beaverdam and Laurel Creeks that join within the Town represent the culmination water drainage from three major watersheds encompassing 156 square mile area.

Whitetop Laurel Drainage Area represents a 56.4 square mile watershed. Water drains in a southwestward direction from the Jefferson National Forest into Whitetop Laurel Creek, which flows into Laurel Creek at Laureldale. Although not as major a factor as the two other watersheds, the Whitetop-Laurel Drainage Area provides a significant volume of water to the streams that flow through Town.

The Laurel Creek Drainage Area originates in Johnson County, Tennessee. Encompassing approximately 43.1 square miles, the watershed is bounded on the south by Lord Ridge, Red Fox Ridge and Bald Knob. Elevations range from more than 4,300 feet at Bald Ridge to approximately 2,000 feet at Damascus. Laurel Bloomery is found approximately in the center of this watershed.

The Iron Mountain Ridge separates the Beaverdam Drainage Area from the Laurel Drainage Area. Located west of Laurel Creek, The Beaverdam Drainage area also originates in Tennessee, encompassing the community of Shady Valley and part of the Cherokee National Forest. This natural bowl drains an average of 100 cubic feet of water per second in the Town and encompasses a 56 square mile area. Because of these vast areas of drainage, particularly Beaverdam and Laurel, the Town has suffered from severe floods, three of which occurred in 1977 (April, October and November). The 1977 flood study, Comprehensive Flood Damage Reduction Study for the Town of Damascus¹ estimates the civil damage alone to have been \$118,000 in the November 1977 flood. Damages to business and personal property are not included in this estimate. The November 1977 flood was not the largest in the Town's history; however, it is the only one for which damages have been calculated.

¹Dewberry, Nealon & Davis: Comprehensive Flood Damage Study for the Town of Damascus, August 1979.

The consensus of reports on flooding of Damascus is that the 1901 flood was the largest. Other major floods occurred in August 1940, March 1955, April 1956, January 1957, and October/November 1977. The occurrence and severity of these floods can be more clearly seen in Table II-1.

Table II-1.

FLOOD DISCHARGES AT DAMASCUS IN ORDERS OF SIZE			
LOCATION	DRAINAGE AREA (SQ. MI.)	DATE	QUANTITY (CFS)
BEAVER CR. STREAM GAGE	56.0	MAY 1901	---
		AUG. 1940	6,500
		OCT./NOV. 1977	6,000
		JAN. 1957	4,200
		MAR. 1955	5,280
		APR. 1956	3,880
		JAN. 22, 1954	2,880
		JAN. 16, 1954	1,870
LAUREL CR. ABOVE BEAVERDAM CREEK	99.5	MAY 1901	15,000
		AUG. 1940	---
		JAN. 1957	8,900
		APR. 1956	6,500
LAUREL CR. BELOW BEAVERDAM CREEK	156.0	MAY 1901	23,000
		AUG. 1940	---
		JAN. 1957	12,600
		APR. 1956	9,100

SOURCE: TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY, DIVISION OF WATER CONTROL PLANNING, HYDRAULIC DATA BRANCH
FLOODS ON LAUREL AND BEAVERDAM CREEDS IN THE VICINITY OF DAMASCUS, VIRGINIA: SUPPLEMENT NO.1,
 1960 AND DEWBERRY, NEALON AND DAVIS, COMPREHENSIVE FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION STUDY FOR THE
TOWN OF DAMASCUS, 1979.

The Dewberry, Nealon & Davis report specifies six possible plans of action that could be undertaken by Damascus. The Town Council has adopted this study and its recommendations and the implementing suggestions will be incorporated in the recommendations of this plan. Damascus is presently participating in the National Flood

Insurance Program. Under the provisions of this program the federal government subsidizes individual flood insurance policies.

E. Soils

Damascus has both sewage and water systems thus soil limitations to development due to slope, soil type and location or relation to the flood plain are the major deterrents to future growth. There are nine general soil types in the Town. The most prominent soil type is the Allegheny series that comprises 43.1 percent of the Town. The Allegheny series includes deep well-drained soils made of material deposited by Beaverdam and Laurel Creeks. The soils map shows, these soils comprise most of the flat land and developed area in Damascus. These soils make good agricultural land and are well suited for all types of development.²

The Jefferson Series underlies 21.2 percent of Damascus. This soil is formed from material that has washed down from nearby hillsides and is found in many locations with different slope characteristics. The Jefferson series is similar to the Allegheny series in its capability to support agriculture and development. However, these capabilities decline quickly with the steepness of the slope.

The next most prominent soil is the Braddock series comprising 13.9 percent of the town. The Braddock series is made up of material carried by the creeks and washed down from higher elevations. The Braddock soil type, while productive for agriculture, is unstable for building purposes due to its elasticity.

²Soil information is Soil Survey of Washington County, Virginia, 1945, and Soil Survey Interpretations, by U.S. Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Ramsey series is found on the hills surrounding Damascus and comprises 11.1 percent of Damascus. Ramsey series soils are poor for agriculture and pose problems to building because the slopes are generally too steep and hard rock is usually encountered within seven to 20 inches of the surface. The Weikert series, which accounts for 4.6 percent and the Gilpin series, which accounts for 2.5 percent of Damascus have similar characteristics. Both types are found on hillsides. Bedrock can be encountered at between 18 and 30 inches in depth, thus limiting development.

Remaining soil types are the Frederick (2.5 percent) Elliber (0.7 percent) and the Whelling series (0.4 percent). These soils account for only a small percentage of the land in Damascus. The Frederick series poses moderate limitations to development due to its slope and its clayey consistency that restricts its ability to support buildings. The Elliber series poses problems to development due to its stony nature. The Whelling series poses only slight difficulty to development where the slope is moderate but poses serious problems where slope exceeds 15 percent.

F. Vegetation

Most of the original forests in the Town have been removed as development has taken place. However, in the surrounding mountains are found scarlet oak, chestnut, oak, locust, pitch pine, sourwood, hickory, white oak, red oak, black gum, tuliptree, hemlock, white pine, linden, cucumbertree, beech, maple, willow, sycamore, holly, elm, scrub pine, black walnut, red cedar, several types of cherry, mountain laurel, huckleberry, and

rhododendron. Other vegetation includes broomedge, greenbrier, blackberry, dewberry, raspberry, strawberry, ironweed, riverweed, nettle, thistle, mullein, ragweed, narrow-leaved plantain, mint, daisy, aster and watercress.³

G. Physical Constraints to Development

As noted earlier in this chapter, the three physical constraints to development are flooding, slope, and soil conditions.

The 100-year floodplain occupies approximately 113 acres that is about 21 percent of the land area of Damascus. The 100-year floodplain is that area that has a 1.0-percent chance of being flooded in any single year. Lower lying areas within the floodplain have a greater chance of being flooded. Those areas outside the 100-year floodplain have a lesser chance of being flooded.

The 100-year flood is a limitation to development for three reasons. The first and most obvious reason is that a 100-year flood will reach any structure placed in the floodplain. Secondly, any development in the floodplain or in the watershed area will replace existing ground cover. A change in ground cover from forestland or another natural ground cover to non-porous materials like buildings or asphalt will greatly increase surface runoff and therefore the severity of the flood. A third factor is that a building inundated by water will displace a specific amount of water and will raise the flood level by the water displaced. Thus as development takes place in a flood prone area such as Damascus the cost of flood damage increases through increased runoff and higher flood elevations.

³Vegetation information is from Soil Survey of Washington County, Virginia by U.S. Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Soil characteristics are another impediment to building. Some soils are too elastic or clay-like to support the weight of a structure. The Frederick series is such a soil found in Damascus. These soils are generally 70 to 80 inches deep and would require specialized construction methods. A conventional foundation would not be stable and basements have a tendency to crack or buckle. A soil may also be shallow or contain large stones that would require that foundations be set in hard rock thus increasing the expense of construction as drilling and blasting are needed. Examples of these soils found in Damascus are the Elliber, Ramsey, Weikert, and Gilpin series.

Because most hillsides are underlain with these types of soil, steep slopes are another deterrent to development. Generally construction is made more difficult with slopes of 10 percent or more. With a slope of 20 percent, construction costs usually make development impractical. Slopes of 20 percent or more comprise 30.9 percent of Damascus' land area.

Future development is limited by flood hazards, suitable soils and excessive slope. These limiting characteristics are not absolute. Land can and has been developed in these areas. In areas where soil characteristics may pose problems, specific soil analysis must be done to set exact capabilities.

In a comprehensive plan these restraints should be kept in mind. Land that is found unsuitable for such development can still be effectively used as parkland, open space and agriculture. The land that is uneconomical for intense development due to excessive slope and flood hazards in the 100-year flood plain includes about 255 acres or

50 percent of the Town. A good amount of the remaining land is already developed and other portions may not be developable due to soil constraints. These factors and others to be discussed in this plan suggest that the potential for future development within the corporate limits be restricted to a small area of land.

CHAPTER III POPULATION

A. Historical Trend

During the first half of the 1900's, the population of the Town of Damascus was on the rise, peaking at 1,726 in 1950. This trend was not smooth, however, as Damascus experienced wide fluctuations in population during that time period. Between 1910 and 1920 population increased, then leveled off through 1930. The population declined during the Depression era, but increased again in the 40's, finally reaching its peak in 1950. The next forty years posted a dramatic loss of over 800 persons; over half of that decline occurred between 1980 and 1990. The 1990s and first five years of the 2000s posted a slight growth trend in population; however, by 2010, the population of the town had declined to 814.

Most of the decrease in population during the 1980s in Damascus, Washington County, and the rest of the Mount Rogers Planning District occurred primarily because people left the area. Net out-migration of some 1,460 people occurred in Washington County. This number was determined by comparing the change in population over the time period to the natural increase (births minus deaths) that occurred over the same time period.

The early 2000s showed a return to population growth in Damascus, as well as the eastern portion of Washington County. The Town of Abingdon and Washington County as a whole experienced a much slower population growth during the same period, with increases of 1.9 percent in both localities. While population continued to increase in Abingdon and Washington County, the population in Damascus declined after 2003 due to out-migration. Table III-1 shows the population trends between 1910 and 2010.

**Table III-1
Population
Damascus, Glade Spring, Abingdon, Washington County
By Census Period
1910 - 2010**

Year	Damascus	Glade Spring	Abingdon	Washington County
1910	1,299	324	1,757	32,830
1920	1,599	281	2,532	32,376
1930	1,610	669	2,877	33,850
1940	1,441	686	3,158	38,197
1950	1,726	827	4,709	37,536
1960	1,485	1,407	4,758	38,705
1970	1,230	1,615	4,376	40,835
1980	1,330	1,722	4,318	46,587
1990	918	1,435	7,003	45,887
2000	981	1,374	7,780	51,103
2010	814	1,456	8,191	54,876

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

The rate of population growth for Damascus, Washington County, the Mount Rogers Planning District, and the Commonwealth of Virginia between Census years 1940 to 2010 is depicted in Table III-2.

Table III-2
Percentage Change in Population
Town of Damascus, Washington County, Mount Rogers PD, and Virginia
By Census Period
1940-2010

Year	Damascus	Washington County	Mount Rogers PD	Virginia
1940 - 1950	19.8	-1.7	4.1	23.9
1950 - 1960	-14	1.4	2.3	19.5
1960 - 1970	-17.2	7	-0.5	18.9
1970 - 1980	8.1	13.8	13.6	15
1980 - 1990	-31	-1.3	-1.6	15.7
1990 - 2000	6.9	11.4	6.6	14.4
2000 - 2010	-17	7.4	1.9	13

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

B. Age and Sex Distribution

In 2010 there were 385 males and 429 females in the Town of Damascus. The town had a slightly higher proportion of females (52.7 percent) than did the county (50.7 percent) or the state (50.9 percent).

Table III-3
Age Distribution
Town of Damascus
By Number and Percent
1980 – 2010

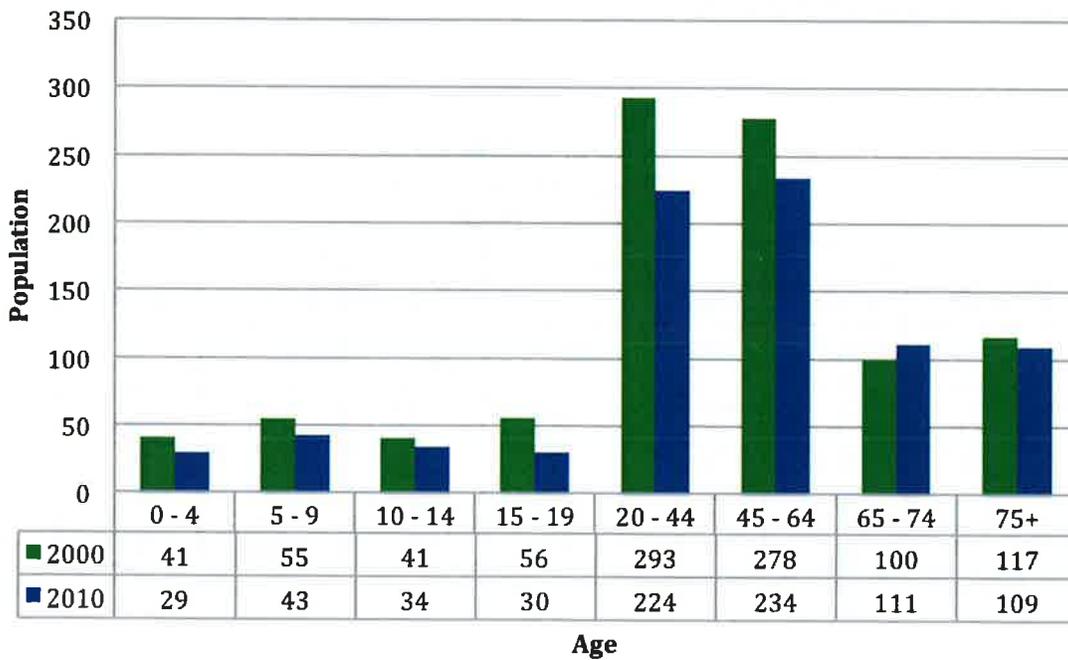
Age Group	1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0-14	252	18.9	145	15.8	137	14.0	106	13.0
15-24	199	15.0	76	8.3	100	10.2	63	7.7
25-44	315	23.7	246	26.8	249	25.4	191	23.5
45-64	331	24.9	225	24.5	278	28.3	234	28.7
65+	233	17.5	226	24.6	217	22.1	220	27.0
Total	1,330	100	918	100	981	100	814	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Table III-3 shows the age distribution for 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010. A careful review of these data, shows that the population of Damascus is aging. In 1980, the

proportion of persons age 44 and under was 57.6 percent. In 1990 that proportion had dropped to 50.9 percent, and by 2000 the proportion of persons age 44 and under fell below the majority to 49.5 percent of the total population. By 2010, the proportion of person age 44 and under had dropped to 44.2 percent of the total population. Damascus has a relatively high percentage of persons over 45 years, 55.7 percent, versus Washington County at 48.3 percent and the State at 39.3 percent. In 2010 the median age for Damascus was 49.8 years, compared to 45.3 in 2000 and 44.4 years in 1990. Median age was 43.7 years in Washington County and 37.5 years in Virginia, as calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010. These trends can also be seen in Chart III-1, population by age groups in 2000 and 2010.

**Chart III-1
Population
Town of Damascus
2000 & 2010
By Age Groups**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

C. Migration

The declining percentage of younger persons in Damascus can be primarily attributed to out-migration. Table III-4 presents data on net migration for Washington County. Between 2003 and 2012, Washington County experience continual population growth. This growth was due entirely to net migration, as natural increase in the county during the time period was negative. Negative natural increase is a result of more deaths than births. Overall, the population change varied drastically year to year with the highest growth and migration in 2008.

**Table III-4
Components of Population Change
Washington County
2000 - 2012**

Period	Population Change	Natural Increase	Net Migration
2000 to 2001	-15	39	-54
2001 to 2002	239	37	202
2002 to 2003	21	27	-6
2003 to 2004	243	-28	271
2004 to 2005	373	-67	440
2005 to 2006	741	-65	806
2006 to 2007	583	-79	662
2007 to 2008	581	6	575
2008 to 2009	758	-71	829
2009 to 2010	187	-33	220
2010 to 2011	303	-84	387
2011 to 2012	300	-77	377

Source: U.S. Census Bureau & Virginia Department of Health. Calculated by Mount Rogers Planning District Commission using the Demographic Equation.

D. Racial Distribution

In 2000 the non-white population percentage for Damascus was estimated to be 3.1 by the U.S. Census Bureau. This was similar to the percentage for Washington County but well below the state. The non-white population in Damascus decreased

slightly by 2010, and the town continued to have a much less diverse population than the Commonwealth of Virginia. Statistically, the non-white population in both Damascus and Washington County were similar in both 2000 and 2010.

**Table III-5
Non-White Population
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
By Jurisdiction
2000 and 2010**

Jurisdiction	2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Damascus	30	3.1	23	2.8
Washington County	1,249	2.4	1,627	3.0
Virginia	1,958,405	27.7	2,514,172	31.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

E. Population Density

Based on the 2000 population estimate, the population density for the Town of Damascus was 1.5 persons per acre. In 2010, the population density in Damascus was approximately 1.7 persons per acre. Because of physical constraints, particularly the flood-prone areas and steep mountain land, very little developable land for residential and housing development exists in Damascus.

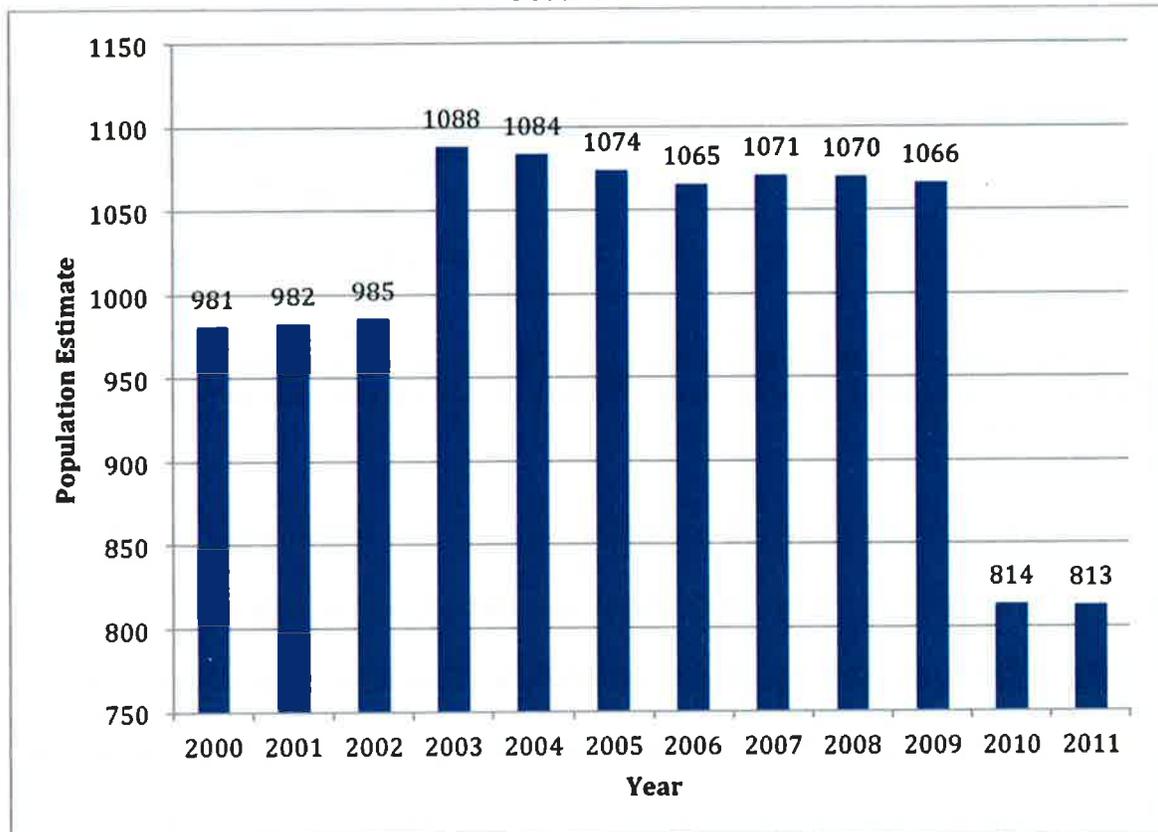
F. Population Projections

Population is expected to show gradual, steady growth through the year 2040 in Damascus, based on the projected population growth in Washington County. Much of this growth could be a result of the desire many people have to live in less urban environments and to seek the scenic mountain vistas of Washington County. Due to the limited amount of developable land within the corporate limits, private development and growth is more likely to take place adjacent to the town. For these reasons, population

growth will be limited unless the town expands its boundaries to surrounding developable areas.

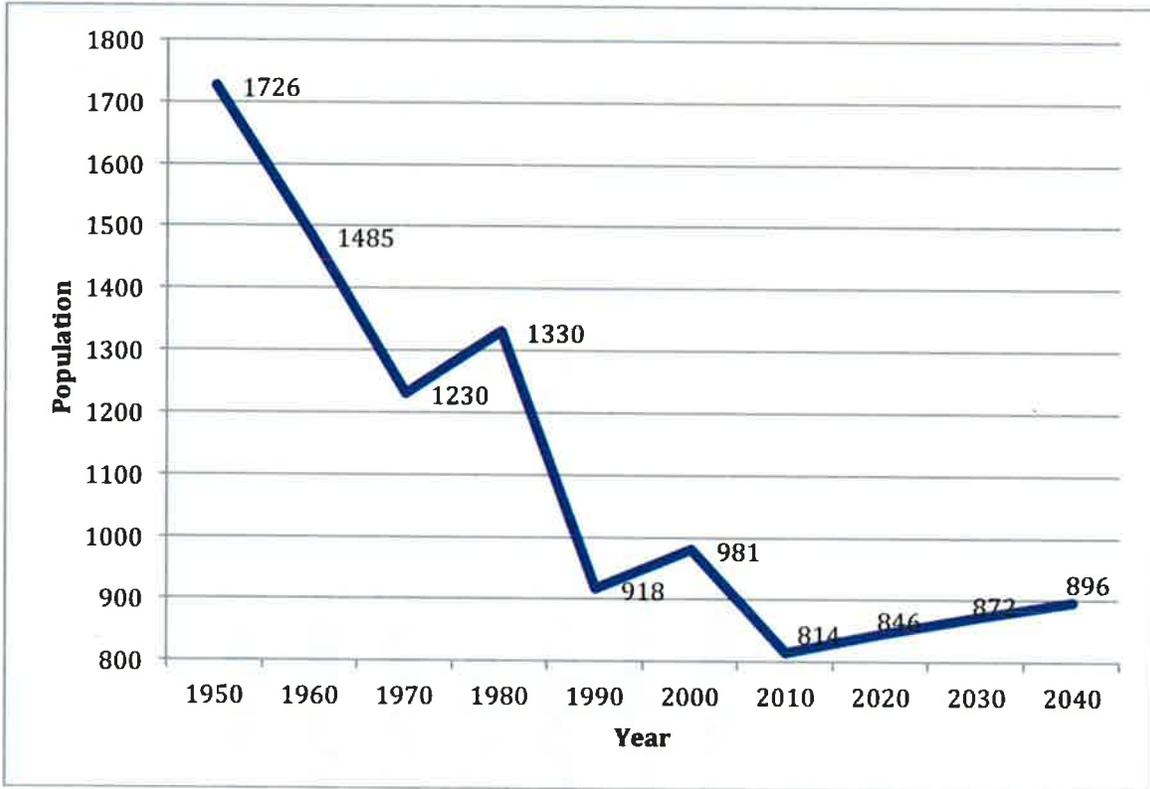
Population estimates calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau for the years between 2000 and 2011 are depicted in Chart III-2. Chart III-3 shows historical population counts and population projections through 2040 for the Town of Damascus. Population projects for the town were calculated by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission based on Washington County population projections released by the Weldon Cooper Center.

**Chart III-2
Population Estimate
Town of Damascus
By Year
2000 - 2011**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places in Virginia

**Chart III-3
Population Projections
Town of Damascus
By Year
1950 - 2040**



Source: 2005 Town of Damascus Comprehensive Plan & Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (Based on previous Comprehensive Plan chart and Washington County population projections from the Weldon Cooper Center)

The basis for any projected increase in a community's population is the continued growth of the local economy and the availability of housing and developable land for housing. It is anticipated that the continued development of tourism opportunities, such as the Crooked Road, and other community and infrastructure improvement projects will initiate an additional boost in the population of the Damascus area. The Town of

Damascus is strategically located to make the most of the tourism projects being developed and marketed in Southwest Virginia. Furthermore, the town's status as a prime eco-tourism destination will generate continued opportunities for economic growth and entrepreneurial activity.

CHAPTER IV ECONOMY

A. General Description

Like many small towns in the planning district, Damascus has a declining commercial business district, a light manufacturing base in and around the town, and a heavily seasonal service providing industry; the residents of Damascus are still reliant on Washington County and Abingdon, as well as areas in Tennessee and North Carolina, for jobs, consumer goods, major health care, entertainment, and dining.

The central business district is bisected by U.S. Highway 58 and includes: retail establishments selling clothes, general merchandise, groceries, used automobiles, repair services for automobiles, flowers, bikes, camping and outfitting equipment, professional medical services, banking, dining, churches, a fire station, town hall, and library. Several small dining establishments are located in the community; however, as the town continues to attempt to expand the tourism industry, there will be a need for dining facilities that can accommodate large groups. The Old Mill is the only establishment that has the capacity to serve approximately 100 customers and also provides conference facilities. The Old Mill has also been opened and closed several times in the past five years proving that such an establishment will find it hard to survive in the current economic climate.

Over the past decade the town fostered and developed a primary economic engine to its economy – tourism/recreation, travel, and lodging. Damascus is a destination point for people who want to leave behind the traffic, smoke, and hectic pace of city life. The town is at the crossing of seven significant trail systems for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The Appalachian Trail is routed along Laurel Avenue, the community's main

street. The Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, a congressionally designated parcel within the Jefferson National Forest, surrounds the town. The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail and the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail also run through Damascus. Special events bring thousands of visitors, hikers, bikers and outdoor enthusiasts, converging in the town to sightsee, lodge, eat, and purchase crafts. The Trail Days Festival, a three day celebration and event to honor the Appalachian Trail brings as many as 2,000 hikers and over 15,000 visitors to share in the events of the weekend. The town offers a unique lodging experience that includes bed and breakfasts, vacation rentals, and 12 rooms available at the Old Mill. Complete trail services are available for hikers and bikers, including outfitters, shuttles, and guide service. These all bring tax revenue to the town. In recent years however the Town has seen a decline in meals and lodging tax revenues demonstrating that less tourism dollars are being spent in town.

B. Income Levels

Income levels for Damascus are directly linked to the age distribution of the town's population. The 2010 population of the town was reported by the U.S. Census at 814 persons. Twenty-seven percent of the population was age 65 and over. Approximately 18 percent of the population in Damascus lives below the poverty level. Almost 66 percent of the population (536 persons) of the Town is in the 'working age' group with wage and salary income. In 2011, 376 residents were not in the labor force; those consisted primarily of homemakers, the elderly and retirees. Examination of income brackets, per capita income, mean income, median household and family income aid in describing income and disparities and inequities in the town versus Washington County and Virginia.

As shown in Table IV-1, the majority of households in Damascus earn less than \$24,999 per year. This household group accounted for 52.0 percent of all household earnings. The largest income group for families was the \$35,000 to \$49,999 group at 24.7 percent. Fifty-two percent of the households in Damascus earned less than \$24,999 compared to only 27.3 percent in Washington County. The percentage of non-family households earning less than \$24,999 was a dramatic 75.9 percent, pointing to Damascus' high proportion of elderly population living on fixed incomes.

Table IV-1
Count of Households
Town of Damascus and Washington County
By Income Groups
2011

Income	Washington County	Percent	Damascus	Percent
HOUSEHOLDS	23,064	100.0%	480	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	1,799	7.8%	80	16.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,661	7.2%	90	18.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2,837	12.3%	79	16.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,252	14.1%	92	19.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3,967	17.2%	74	15.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4,336	18.8%	35	7.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	2,237	9.7%	14	2.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,891	8.2%	13	2.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	577	2.5%	3	0.6%
\$200,000 or more	507	2.2%	0	0.0%
Median household income	\$41,526		\$24,297	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table IV-2
Count of Families
Town of Damascus and Washington County
By Income Groups
2011

Income	Washington County	Percent	Damascus	Percent
HOUSEHOLDS	16,565	100.0%	223	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	712	4.3%	3	1.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	629	3.8%	16	7.2%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,739	10.5%	39	17.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2,153	13.0%	47	21.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2,816	17.0%	55	24.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	3,711	22.4%	33	14.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	2,071	12.5%	14	6.3%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,839	11.1%	13	5.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	447	2.7%	3	1.3%
\$200,000 or more	447	2.7%	0	0.0%
Median family income	\$69,424		\$45,910	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table IV-3
Count of Non-family Householders
Town of Damascus and Washington County
By Income Groups
2011

Income	Washington County	Percent	Damascus	Percent
HOUSEHOLDS	6,499	100.0%	257	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	1,228	18.9%	77	30.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,066	16.4%	74	28.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,170	18.0%	44	17.1%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,014	15.6%	41	16.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,098	16.9%	19	7.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	585	9.0%	2	0.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	136	2.1%	0	0.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	65	1.0%	0	0.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	91	1.4%	0	0.0%
\$200,000 or more	45	0.7%	0	0.0%
Median household income	\$22,834		\$12,750	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

(A non-family householder is a householder living alone or with non-relatives only)

There are a high percentage of households and householders living alone with low- to moderate-income, which is below the median income in the community. Fifty-two percent of households and 75.9 percent of non-family households had income below \$24,999 in 2010.

Income inequality, as compared to the state, is of great concern across Southwest Virginia. Per capita income for Damascus fell to 47.6 percent of the state in 2010, compared to 75.8 percent for Washington County and 64.0 percent for the Mount Rogers Planning District. Median family income shows a similar pattern with Damascus at 60.4 percent of the state level.

Table IV-4

**Per Capita and Median Family Incomes
Town of Damascus, Washington County
MRPD and Commonwealth of Virginia
2011**

Jurisdiction	Per Capita Income	Median Family Income
Damascus	\$15,739	\$45,910
Washington County	\$25,043	\$51,082
Mount Rogers Planning District	\$21,153	\$44,991
State of Virginia	\$33,040	\$75,962

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

The number of households by income type and the number of persons determined to be below the poverty levels are shown in Tables IV-5 and IV-6. These tables again point to a dominance of elderly and retired persons on fixed incomes of social security and retirement, while only 55.0 percent of the households in Damascus work and have wage and salary income. Approximately 2.9 percent of households were on public assistance income while 17.9 percent of persons in Damascus are considered to be living in poverty.

**Table IV-5
Household Income
Town of Damascus
By Type
2011**

Damascus	Number of Households	Percent
Households	480	100.0%
With Wage and Salary Income	264	55.0%
With Self Employment Income	55	11.5%
With Social Security Income	222	46.3%
With Retirement Income	62	12.9%
With Public Assistance Income	14	2.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**Table IV-6
Poverty Status
Town of Damascus and Washington County
2011**

	Damascus	Percent	Washington County	Percent
Total Persons for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	906	100.0%	53,220	100.0%
Total Persons Below Poverty	162	17.9%	7,255	13.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

C. Education, Labor Force, and Employment Distribution Analysis

Education

Table IV-7 shows the educational attainment levels of Damascus' population versus Washington County and the state. A total of 116 persons (17.1 percent) in the town age 25 and over had less than a ninth grade education. This compares to 5.4 percent for Virginia. An additional 16.5 percent in the Town had a ninth to twelfth grade education, but no high school diploma. While the percentage of persons age 25 and over with less than a high school diploma in the town exceeds both Washington County and state percentages, the percentage of high school graduates is only slightly higher than the county. The town's workforce has the ability to be trained and fully employed in skilled and semi-skilled occupations in the town and surrounding county; however, of concern is the number of persons with no diploma, especially if they are actively participating in the workforce or unemployed and seeking a job.

Table IV-7
Educational Level for Persons Over 25 Years Old
Town of Damascus/Washington County/Virginia
2011

School Years Completed	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent
Less than 9 th	116	17.1%	3,110	7.9%	282,932	5.4%
9 th to 12 th grade – no diploma	112	16.5%	4,016	10.2%	424,932	8.0%
High School Graduate	186	27.4%	12,822	32.5%	1,353,561	25.6%
Some College – no degree	118	17.4%	8,068	20.5%	1,050,703	19.9%
Associate Degree	59	8.7%	3,115	7.9%	354,025	6.7%
Bachelor’s Degree	48	7.1%	5,203	13.2%	1,064,406	20.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	41	6.0%	3,094	7.8%	749,438	14.2%
TOTAL	680	100.0%	39,428	100.0%	5,279,997	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Labor Force

Table IV-8 breaks down labor force data by sex for the Town of Damascus and Washington County. The figures show that unemployment, which had been a persistent problem in Damascus during the 1980s, improved during the 1990s to 2000. In 2000, the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent with little difference between the male (2.8 percent) and female (4.5 percent) populations. The unemployment rate decreased from 10.9 percent to 3.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. By 2011, the unemployment rate in the town had increased dramatically, with a total unemployment rate of 13.3 percent according to the 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimate.

Approximately 67.2 percent of the male population age 16 and over were in the labor force in 2010 compared to 36.8 percent of the female population. Table IV-9 show more detailed information about females in the labor force in 2011. As expected, there are always persons counted as unemployed that lack the skills, education, and experience to match employer’s needs, which also contributed to the unemployment rate.

**Table IV-8
Persons by Labor Force Age 16 and Over
Town of Damascus and Washington County
By Gender
2011**

	Damascus						Washington County		
	2011			2000			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total Labor Force	375	221	154	394	215	179	25,130	13,755	11,375
Employed	321	189	132	378	207	171	24,627	13,445	11,182
Unemployed	50	32	18	14	6	8	1,602	959	643
Percent of Unemployed	13.3%	14.5%	11.7%	3.6%	2.8%	4.5%	6.4%	7.0%	5.7%
Not in Labor Force	376	108	268	472	174	298	18,861	7,546	11,315
Percent of Persons in Labor Force	50.2%	67.2%	36.8%	45.5%	55.3%	37.5%	55.7%	62.6%	49.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

For women to actively participate in the labor force without barriers, the community should ensure that day care services are available either in the town and/or surrounding community.

**Table IV-9
Female Labor Force
Town of Damascus
2011**

LABOR FORCE STATUS	NUMBER OF PERSONS
Total females 20 to 64 years	253
With own children under 6 years	21
Percent in labor force with children under 6 years	14.30%
Under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	7
Percent in labor force with under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	0.00%
With own children 6 to 17 years only	43
Percent in labor force with children 6 to 17 years	100.00%
No children under 18 years	182
Percent in labor force with no children under 18 years	41.80%
Total females employed or in Armed Forces	108
Total females unemployed	14
Total females not in labor force	131

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table IV-10 shows a breakdown of the employed residents of the Town of Damascus by industry group. Manufacturing, retail trade, and services accounted for three quarters (75.0 percent) of the total employment for town residents in 2010. As would be expected in a small rural town, wholesale and retail trade accounted for a large proportion (18.7 percent) of employment. Table IV-11 depicts residential employment by occupation. Approximately 18.1 percent of residents hold executive, administrative, managerial, and professional positions, while 12.8 percent of the labor force is self-employed. Overall, 80 percent hold private sector wage and salary jobs.

Table IV-10
Employed Labor Force
Town of Damascus
By Industry and By Place of Residence
2011

INDUSTRY	NUMBER	PERCENT
Employed persons 16 and over	321	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	6	1.9%
Mining	0	0.0%
Construction	21	6.5%
Manufacturing	39	12.1%
Wholesale trade	18	5.6%
Retail trade	44	13.7%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	11	3.4%
Information	11	3.4%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	2	0.6%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	25	7.8%
Educational, health and social services	63	19.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	49	15.3%
Other services (except public administration)	21	6.5%
Public Administration	1	0.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**Table IV-11
Employed Labor Force
Town of Damascus
By Occupation and By Place of Residence
2011**

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENT
Employed persons 16 and over	321	100.0%
Management, professional, and related occupations	58	18.1%
Service occupations	98	30.5%
Sales and office occupations	69	21.5%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	49	15.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	47	14.6%
Class of Workers		
Private wage and salary workers	259	80.7%
Government workers	21	6.5%
Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers	41	12.8%
Unpaid family workers	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Employment Trends by Industry Type

Table IV-12 depicts the number of business establishments in Damascus in 2000 and 2011. During that period, the total number of establishments decreased by 15 with the largest shift occurring in the number of retail trade establishments. The retail trade industry continues to have the largest number of establishments in town, which supports the town's goals of tourism development and downtown revitalization. The number of jobs in Damascus decreased by 67 during the same period.

**Table IV-12
Number of Establishments
Zip Code 24236
By Industry Type
2001 and 2011**

Industry Type	2011	2001	Percent Change 2001-2011
Construction	7	8	-12.5%
Manufacturing	1	4	-75.0%
Wholesale trade	0	1	-100.0%
Retail trade	13	18	-27.8%
Transportation & warehousing	2	2	0.0%
Finance & insurance	5	4	25.0%
Real estate & rental & leasing	2	1	100.0%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	2	0	200.0%
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation services	1	1	0.0%
Health care and social assistance	6	7	-14.3%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	0	1	-100.0%
Accommodation & food services	7	10	-30.0%
Other services (except public administration)	5	9	-44.4%
TOTAL	51	66	-22.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table IV-13 further illustrates the decline in manufacturing and the dominance of trade and service sectors in the local economy. Like many towns, the Town of Damascus is land-locked in terms of available land and property to recruit new manufacturing industries. Without any further infusion of manufacturing jobs to Damascus, the town's most important economic assets are its commercial district and tourism/outdoor recreation.

**Table IV-13
Employment
Town of Damascus
By Industry Type
2000 and 2011**

Industry Type	2011	2000	Percent Change 2000-2011
Construction	21	32	-34.4%
Manufacturing	39	80	-51.3%
Transportation, Communications, & Utilities	22	28	-21.4%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	62	93	-33.3%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	2	10	-80.0%
Services & Education	158	119	32.8%
Government (Public Admin.)	1	10	-90.0%
TOTAL Non-Agricultural	305	372	-18.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Manufacturing

Over the past several years, many of the many manufacturing employers have closed in the Town of Damascus. According to the American Community Survey, there was only one manufacturing firm in the Damascus zip code in 2011. That company, Columbus McKinnon Corporation, manufactures material handling products and employs approximately 250 persons. Columbus McKinnon is physically located less than one mile outside the town's corporate limits.

Wholesale and Retail Trade

Wholesale and retail trades are one of the most significant providers of jobs for Damascus residents accounting for over 18 percent of the total employment. In 1962, wholesale and retail establishments in the region employed 450 residents, which was 67.6 percent of the total employment. By 1990, these numbers had decreased to 86 residents. The dramatic decrease from 1962 to 1990 was due primarily to out-migration and population loss. The development of commercial centers in Abingdon and Bristol has

drawn businesses away from places like Damascus, because of Abingdon's status as the governmental, cultural, medical, and educational center of Washington County. The town did experience a small growth in trade sector employment during the 1990s, however, and by 2010 there were 62 residents employed in the trade sector.

Although the trend away from small town shopping has been influenced by an increase in online shopping and the presence of Wal-Mart, K-Mart, and Lowe's in Washington County and Bristol, Damascus experienced an increase of small commercial businesses in the town's central business district. Commercial retail sales in town have increased along with the development of the tourism opportunities in and around Damascus. Attractions like the Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail have led to improved marketing of the town's assets and the number of tourists flocking to local shops and downtown establishments, especially during the town's many festivals, has grown accordingly. As reflected in revenue trends from taxable retail sales, shown in Table IV-14, Damascus has certainly benefited from tourism and commercial sales.

**Table IV-14
Taxable Retail Sales
Town of Damascus
2008 - 2012**

Year Ending	Taxable Retail Sales	Percent Change	
		Year	Percent
2008	\$51,854		
2009	\$55,313	2008-2009	6.67%
2010	\$55,564	2009-2010	0.45%
2011	\$57,694	2010-2011	3.83%
2012	\$60,210	2011-2012	4.36%

Source: Town of Damascus

Service Sector

Over the last 30 years, the service sector of the Damascus economy has been stimulated and driven by the needs of the population and a growth in tourism and recreation oriented activities. The addition of the Damascus Medical clinic, apartments, and tourism- and recreation-related businesses, including bed and breakfasts, transient lodging, a 9-hole public golf course, and mountain outfitters, bike rental, and trail guide services have put Damascus on the map as a destination point for travelers. The demands of hikers, backpackers, horseback enthusiasts, and bikers have elevated the demand for various services.

Tourism and Travel

Damascus continues to be a desirable destination for thousands of hikers and outdoor enthusiasts, converging on the Town during Appalachian Trail Days, and Fourth of July Celebrations and concerts.

Damascus serves as a crossroads for seven significant trail systems and is adjacent to Whitetop Laurel Creek, one of Virginia's premier trout streams. The tourist

'generators' create demands in hiking, biking, horseback riding, lodging, and personal service industry. Damascus is bordered by both the Jefferson and Cherokee National Forests and Backbone Rock, a popular tourist stop. Additionally, one of the highest rated trout streams in Virginia and Tennessee, Beaverdam Creek, runs through the town. Virginia's tallest mountains, Mount Rogers and Whitetop trail heads are located within a short drive from Damascus. Damascus tourism has been bolstered by the celebration of the Appalachian Trail Days Festival which takes place in May of each year. As many as 2,000 hikers return to Damascus to celebrate, renew acquaintances, share stories, and eat, shop, and lodge in the Town. Trail Days brings some 15,000 visitors to the weekend events. Trail services have blossomed with businesses to meet the needs of visitors including backpacking supply stores, shuttle services, full service bicycle shops, guide service and bed-and-breakfasts. Multiple lodging opportunities are located in the Damascus area to serve visitors and vacationers desiring a scenic mountain retreat and vacation. A relatively new aspect to Damascus' tourism opportunities is motorcycle tourism. Motorcycle tourism in and around Damascus is growing, as every year more motorcycle enthusiasts travel from Damascus to Shady Valley, Tennessee enjoying the area's natural beauty.

In 2012 the Washington County Library built a new Damascus branch library including a tourism information center. In 2013 the Town received grant money from VTC to market the town as more than a one day attraction and planning funds from DHCD to create an economic restructuring plan to address the current problems of its cyclical economy.

CHAPTER V HOUSING

A. Existing Housing Conditions

Housing conditions must be looked at from a number of viewpoints. While an inspection of exterior conditions may give one impression, an examination of the interior may yield a different picture. A comprehensive examination must be made in order to determine correctly how well housing conditions are providing for the needs of people. The major factors that should be examined include physical considerations such as the age of the house, the structural condition, and plumbing facilities, as well as other conditions such as overcrowding and the ability of residents to afford the housing in which they live.

Housing in Damascus is generally older than Washington County or Virginia. As shown in Table V-1, 27.3 percent (163 houses) of the housing in Damascus were built before 1940. Many of these homes have seen substantial improvements, but more still have outdated antiquated electrical wiring and plumbing, including lead pipes, and are in poor condition. These homes continue to be candidates for Community Development Block Grant housing rehabilitation.

Table V-1
Year of Construction
Of Housing for Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
To 2011

Year	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Built 2005 or later	23	3.9%	1,199	4.7%	179,863	5.4%
Built 2000 to 2004	13	2.2%	2,205	8.7%	306,996	9.2%
Built 1990 to 1999	56	9.4%	4,589	18.0%	541,505	16.2%
Built 1980 to 1989	82	13.8%	4,649	18.2%	579,460	17.3%
Built 1970 to 1979	32	5.4%	4,858	19.1%	572,270	17.1%
Built 1960 to 1969	79	13.3%	2,432	9.5%	393,799	11.8%
Built 1950 to 1959	62	10.4%	1,908	7.5%	325,294	9.7%
Built 1940 to 1949	86	14.4%	1,244	4.9%	172,375	5.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	163	27.3%	2,396	9.4%	274,336	8.2%
TOTAL	596	100.0%	25,480	100.0%	3,345,898	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

A windshield survey conducted by Mount Rogers Planning District Commission staff in 2006 indicated a significant percentage of homes in Damascus that are substandard or deteriorated. Conditions were assigned using a ranking system that included an analysis of siding, shingles, windows, and exterior paint. Generally, if two of these characteristics appeared to be in poor condition (cracked or broken windows, missing shingles, etc.) the structure was considered to be substandard. A deteriorated structure appeared to have more than two of these characteristics in poor condition and seemed unsuitable for habitation.

**Table V-2
Condition of Residential Structures¹
Town of Damascus
2006**

Condition	Number	Percent
Standard	344	76.6
Substandard	86	19.2
Deteriorated	19	4.2
Total	449	100

Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

1. Based on exterior conditions

Plumbing conditions are shown on Table V-3 (A-C) for Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia. The U.S. Census Bureau lists any dwelling which does not have hot piped water, a flushing toilet, and a bathtub or shower as substandard. Under these guidelines, Damascus has made significant strides in reducing the number of houses with substandard plumbing facilities. In 2000, 9 houses had substandard plumbing compared to none in 2011 as shown in Tables V-3A and V-3B.

**Table V-3A
Plumbing Facilities
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2011**

Plumbing Condition	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Complete	596	100.0%	24,838	97.5%	3,287,490	98.3%
Lacking	0	0.0%	642	2.5%	58,408	1.7%
TOTAL	596	100.0%	25,480	100.0%	3,345,898	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**Table V-3B
Plumbing Facilities
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2000**

Plumbing Condition	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Complete	552	98.40%	22,431	97.60%	2,870,927	98.90%
Lacking	9	1.60%	554	2.40%	33,265	1.10%
TOTAL	561	100.00%	22,985	100.00%	2,904,192	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

**Table V-3C
Plumbing Facilities in Damascus
2011 and 2000**

Plumbing Condition	2011		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Complete	596	100.0%	552	98.40%
Incomplete	0	0.0%	9	1.60%
TOTAL	596	100.0%	561	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate and 2000 Census

The town has no houses lacking one or more plumbing facilities. These figures show that the percentage of houses with substandard plumbing in Damascus is lower than the average for the county and district. Plumbing conditions are no longer a problem in the Town of Damascus with the exception of older homes with lead pipes.

**Table V-4
Overcrowded Units (1)
Damascus and Washington County
2000 and 2011**

Overcrowded	Damascus		Washington County	
	No.	%	No.	%
2000	3	0.6%	199	1.0%
2011	7	1.5%	271	1.2%
Change 2000 - 2011	4	133.3%	72	36.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

(1) Units having over 1.01 persons per room.

Conditions of overcrowding are shown in Table V-4. Overcrowding has been defined as over 1.01 persons per room. Damascus, with only (1.5) percent of all housing units identified as being overcrowded, compares favorably with Washington County. The number of overcrowded households has decreased dramatically in both the town and county.

B. Cost of Renter and Owner-occupied Housing

Tables V-5 A-C depicts the number and percent of owner-occupied, rented, and vacant housing units for Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia. The Town of Damascus had a 19.5 percent vacancy rate in 2011, which is higher than the 9.3 percent vacancy rate in 2000. Owner-occupied rates are considerably lower in Damascus than in Washington County; however, the percentage of renter-occupied housing is much higher in Damascus than in Washington County.

The overall number of owner-occupied housing units declined over the last decade, with 301 units in 2000 and 246 units in 2011. Nevertheless, renter-occupied units in Damascus increased by approximately 12.5 percent during the 2000s. This trend can be attributed to several factors, including an increase in seasonal employment and housing turnover due to an increasing death rate.

**Table V-5A
Count of Housing by Tenure
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2011**

Tenure	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Owner-occupied	246	41.3%	17,279	67.8%	2,046,845	61.2%
Renter-occupied	234	39.3%	5,785	22.7%	944,180	28.2%
Vacant	116	19.5%	2,416	9.5%	354,873	10.6%
TOTAL	596	100.0%	25,480	100.0%	3,345,898	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table V-5B
Count of Housing by Tenure
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2000

Tenure	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Owner-occupied	301	53.70%	16,268	70.80%	1,837,958	73.60%
Renter-occupied	208	37.10%	4,788	20.80%	861,215	34.50%
Vacant	52	9.30%	1,929	8.40%	205,019	8.20%
TOTAL	561	100.00%	22,985	100.00%	2,496,334	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Table V-5C
Count of Housing by Tenure
In Damascus
1990, 2000, and 2011

Tenure	1990		2000		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Owner-occupied	303	62.5	301	53.70%	246	41.3%
Renter-occupied	122	25.2	208	37.10%	234	39.3%
Vacant	60	12.4	52	9.30%	116	19.5%
TOTAL	485	100	561	100.00%	596	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**Table V-6
Value of Specified Owner-occupied Houses
Damascus and Washington County
2011**

Value (\$)	Damascus		Washington County		Virginia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than \$10,000	3	1.2%	926	5.4%	25,223	1.2%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0	0.0%	235	1.4%	16,555	0.8%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	2	0.8%	214	1.2%	11,881	0.6%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	0	0.0%	116	0.7%	12,351	0.6%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	3	1.2%	41	0.2%	9,847	0.5%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	24	9.8%	313	1.8%	9,906	0.5%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	3	1.2%	179	1.0%	7,866	0.4%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	3	1.2%	552	3.2%	17,907	0.9%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	5	2.0%	481	2.8%	22,573	1.1%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	2	0.8%	750	4.3%	25,629	1.3%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	33	13.4%	964	5.6%	32,145	1.6%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	26	10.6%	1067	6.2%	39,527	1.9%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	9	3.7%	636	3.7%	37,095	1.8%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	30	12.2%	1970	11.4%	103,047	5.0%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	35	14.2%	1243	7.2%	108,175	5.3%
\$150,000 to \$174,999	36	14.6%	1914	11.1%	146,642	7.2%
\$175,000 to \$199,999	2	0.8%	812	4.7%	127,919	6.2%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	14	5.7%	1645	9.5%	250,677	12.2%
\$250,000 to \$299,999	3	1.2%	983	5.7%	200,375	9.8%
\$300,000 to \$399,999	7	2.8%	1,095	6.3%	298,111	14.6%
\$400,000 to \$499,999	0	0.0%	488	2.8%	184,794	9.0%
\$500,000 to \$749,999	3	1.2%	353	2.0%	233,387	11.4%
\$750,000 to \$999,999	0	0.0%	61	0.4%	75,185	3.7%
\$1,000,000 or more	3	1.2%	241	1.4%	50,028	2.4%
TOTAL	246	100.0%	17,279	100.0%	2,046,845	100.0%
Median Value	\$108,300		\$128,900		\$254,600	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

The 2011 median value of owner-occupied houses in Damascus is significantly less than Washington County, \$108,300 and \$128,900 respectively. Between 2000 and 2011, the value of owner-occupied housing increased from \$62,000 to \$108,300. Table

V-7 compares housing costs to income of owner-occupied units by taking the median housing value and dividing it by the median family income. These figures show that homeowners in Damascus must pay a lower percentage of their family income for housing than do average homeowners in the county, which is a change over the 2000 figures. During the 2000s, housing prices in Damascus increased 74.7 percent while incomes increased by only 30.7 percent. In Washington County, housing prices increased 42.6 percent while incomes increased 29.0 percent.

Table V-7
Median Family Income as Percent
Of Median Housing Value (Owner-occupied)
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2000 and 2011

Jurisdiction	Median Family Income		Median Housing Value		Percent Yearly Income of Value of Home	
	2000	2011	2000	2011	2000	2011
Damascus	\$29,250	\$38,229	\$62,000	\$108,300	47.20%	35.30%
Washington County	\$40,162	\$51,820	\$90,400	\$128,900	44.50%	40.20%
Virginia	\$54,169	\$75,962	\$125,400	\$254,600	43.20%	29.84%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table V-8
Monthly Rent of Specified Renter-occupied Housing
Damascus and Washington County
2011

Contract Rent	Damascus		Washington County	
	Housing Units	Percent	Housing Units	Percent
Less than \$100	0	0.0%	66	1.1%
\$100 to \$149	33	14.1%	153	2.6%
\$150 to \$199	25	10.7%	171	3.0%
\$200 to \$249	20	8.5%	161	2.8%
\$250 to \$299	25	10.7%	247	4.3%
\$300 to \$349	8	3.4%	439	7.6%
\$350 to \$399	11	4.7%	687	11.9%
\$400 to \$449	12	5.1%	694	12.0%
\$450 to \$499	18	7.7%	531	9.2%
\$500 to \$549	8	3.4%	554	9.6%
\$550 to \$599	23	9.8%	214	3.7%
\$600 to \$649	11	4.7%	364	6.3%
\$650 to \$699	0	0.0%	148	2.6%
\$700 to \$749	8	3.4%	156	2.7%
\$750 and higher	0	0.0%	425	7.3%
Total With Cash Rent	202	86.3%	5,010	86.6%
No Cash Rent	32	13.7%	775	13.4%
TOTAL	234	100.0%	5,785	100.0%
Median Rent Value	\$296		\$442	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table V-8 depicts the monthly rent and median rent of renter-occupied housing for Damascus and Washington County. When compared with Washington County, the median monthly rent in Damascus is lower by \$146; however, renters in Damascus generally pay an equal percentage of their monthly income to rent as those in Washington County. Average yearly rent as a percentage of median family income for Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia are depicted in Table V-9.

Table V-9
Average Yearly Rent as a Percent
Of Median Family Income
Damascus, Washington County, and Virginia
2011

Jurisdiction	Median Family Income	Yearly Rent Based on Monthly Median Rent	Percent Yearly Rent of Yearly Income
Damascus	38,229	\$3,552	9.29%
Washington County	51,820	\$5,304	10.24%
Virginia	75,962	\$10,272	13.52%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimate

C. Inadequately Housed Households

Census figures provide indication of housing inadequacies using age of structure, overcrowding, and lack of complete plumbing or kitchen facilities.

Inadequately housed households are defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as those houses which have plumbing deficiencies, are overcrowded, or housing built before 1940. Using housing built before 1940 as the prime criteria for ‘inadequately housed households’ 27.3 percent of all housing units in Damascus are inadequate and in need of rehabilitation for such problems as electrical wiring, poor insulation, plumbing standards, etc.

Low- and moderate-income households are defined as those whose average yearly income is 80 percent or less of the median household income of the county. According to this methodology the 80-percent median is \$33,221 and there were approximately 341 low- and moderate-income households in Damascus in 2011.

D. Manufactured Homes

There were approximately 76 manufactured homes in Damascus in 2000. Damascus, which needs low priced housing and has potential for attracting tourists, needs

to plan for orderly and attractive manufactured home development. In the past, the development of manufactured homes within Damascus has been haphazard. This was perhaps due to poor regulation or the lack of legislation to sufficiently regulate the growth of manufactured homes. Presently the Damascus Zoning Ordinance only allows manufactured homes if they are greater than 12' feet in length and are placed on a permanent foundation. This has been done to keep the number of manufactured homes from growing. However, an existing manufactured home can be replaced with a manufactured home of the same size as long as the replacement is done within a ninety day time period and the replacement home is less than five years old.

E. Current Housing Program

Currently, there are two housing programs in effect in the Town of Damascus, the Farmers Home Administration Section 502 program and the Rock School House Program. Under the latter program, the Rock School has been renovated to provide low-income housing. The Farmers Home Administration program guarantees loans to low- and moderate-income families for the construction, repair or purchase of homes. Also included in this program are funds for development of sewage facilities, weatherization, purchases of land, and in special cases, refinancing of mortgages. They must also have an adequate dependable income which is able to meet present financial obligations plus the debt incurred by the loan. In addition, individuals must not be able to obtain a loan at a reasonable rate from private lending institutions without the FmHA guarantee.

F. Housing Problems and Needs

As described in this chapter, the two major housing problems are physical housing conditions and inadequately housed low-income families. Money to rehabilitate

blighted homes can be obtained through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Block Grant program or through Farmers Home Administration Section 502 or 504 funds.

Houses that are uneconomic for rehabilitation should be removed. The first step toward removal of dilapidated housing would be the adoption and enforcement of a town housing code. The demolition of dilapidated houses can then be funded through a HUD Block Grant or the town can demolish the house and charge the cost to the owner in the form of a lien on the property.

In the case of inadequately housed households which are owner-occupied, the programs available for rehabilitation of blighted homes would also provide relief to these families. Where inadequately housed households are renters, the owners of the property, a developer, or a public housing agency can apply for HUD Section 8 rent subsidy funds. The town can, by referendum, institute a housing authority for the purpose of receiving and administering public housing funds.

The Town of Damascus needs:

- Rehabilitation of existing blighted and substandard homes, where feasible, to improve conditions for low and moderate income citizens and thereby providing more safe housing;
- To prevent the large number of blighted houses from becoming dilapidated;
- Demolition of unsafe, unoccupied housing structures;
- Assistance in financing homes and housing renovations for low- and moderate-income citizens to help retain an available, affordable housing supply;
- Housing that accommodates the special needs of the aging population and disabled.

CHAPTER VI COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and public services play an important role in the vitality of a town. For the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, community facilities will include a brief description of the following: education, libraries, health care, social services, recreation, public utilities, fire, police, public water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste collection and disposal. The Town of Damascus, Washington County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Federal Government and private corporations provide a broad array of public services. This chapter will also include a discussion of the Town's needs in these areas as well as recommendations for long-term and continued improvement of these services. The benefits of effective public services and community facilities are essential for attracting new businesses, residents, tourists and industries while improving the overall quality of life for the Town's inhabitants.

A. Education

The Washington County Public School System provides most of the educational facilities and services for the Town's residents and surrounding communities. Income eligible preschool children ages four through five may attend the Damascus Headstart Center run by People Incorporated, a non-profit Community Action agency. Rhea Valley Elementary School, Damascus Middle School and Holston High School teach students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The public schools each provide a library, computers, a gymnasium, and athletic fields. High school students have access to vocational training through the Neff Center in Abingdon. Maintaining community schools is a high priority of the Town. Table VII-1 summarizes data concerning Damascus area public schools.

**Table VI-1
School Enrollment and Number of Teachers
Fall 2012**

School	Enrollment 2006	Number of Teachers	Student to Teacher Ratio
Damascus Head Start	17	2	8.5 to 1
Rhea Valley Elementary	483	24	20.1 to 1
Damascus Middle School	243	26	9.3 to 1
Holston High School	295	29	10.1 to 1

Source: Superintendent's Office, Washington County Schools

Opportunities for job training and higher education within commuting distance include the Washington County Technical School, Virginia Highlands Community College, Emory & Henry College, Virginia Intermont College, King College and the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. Appalachian State University, East Tennessee State University, Milligan College and Appalachian School of Law are further options, though they necessitate longer commutes. At present, Town residents have convenient access to a variety of educational facilities.

B. Libraries

A new 6,500 sq.ft. branch of the Washington County Library serves Damascus residents. The new Library, which opened in August of 2012, includes a 500 sq.ft. visitor center with restrooms. The library is open to the public for 44 hours per week; and has Internet access on 10 computers along with Wifi for public use. There is a large Community Room for meetings and library programs as well as a Study Room for Tutoring and Adult Education opportunities. The library offers more than books for its patrons, there are DVD's, audio books, and CD's as well as ebooks. In addition, for

reference purposes, Damascus residents can access the local public school libraries and the libraries of the region's colleges and universities.

C. Health Care

The primary health care provider in the Town of Damascus is the Holston Family Health Center. The center is managed by Stone Mountain Health Services of Pennington Gap, VA. One family practitioner, one Nurse Practitioner, a lab and a limited license x-ray technician, and support personnel staff the office. Medical services are provided for 35 or more patients per day.

Town residents have easy access to the Johnston Memorial Hospital, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation, in Abingdon. The hospital is licensed to operate 116 acute care beds with a staff of more than 900 persons that provide a broad range of inpatient and outpatient services. Residents also have access to a new Urgent Care Facility located within one half mile of Johnston Memorial Hospital. The Washington County Department of Health offers services to all eligible residents including family planning, immunization and well-child check-ups and the WIC (Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infant and Children) Nutritional Program. Health care services for Damascus are adequate to meet present and future needs.

D. Human Services

The Washington County Department of Social Services, located near Bristol, provides a wide range of human services to Damascus residents. People Incorporated provides skills training, financing and marketing for potential entrepreneurs, summer jobs and training for area students, a home ownership program, low income housing assistance, housing rehabilitation services and a weatherization program as well as senior

citizen services and a variety of projects designed to help low-income residents become more self-sufficient. District 3 (three) Governmental Cooperative provides nutritional support, transportation services, meeting facilities and other related services for Damascus' senior citizens.

E. Recreation

The Town has two baseball fields in Backer Park and a junior Olympic-sized pool near the Creeper and Appalachian Trails. Washington County built a new recreation facility on the Bayer property including a Tee-ball field, two little league baseball fields and a multi-use field. Town Park has restroom facilities, picnic tables, benches, a playground and a gazebo for every day use and for the seasonal festivals that occur in the spring and summer months. Water and electrical service with multiple hook-ups is available for festival vendors' booths. Finally, Damascus residents have access to the Coomes Center in Abingdon as well as all other facilities operated by the Washington County Recreational Department.

The close proximity of the Jefferson National Forest and the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area to the Town provides an excellent opportunity for a wide-range of outdoor activities. The Beaverdam and Laurel Creeks provide some of the best trout fishing opportunities in the state.

The Town is the local access point for many highly popular recreational trails. The Virginia Creeper Trail, the Appalachian Trail, the Iron Mountain Trail, the Virginia Wildlife Trail and the Transamerica 76 National Bicycle Route transect Damascus, as do the driving routes of the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail and Crooked Road Music Heritage Trail. The Virginia Creeper Trail, a non-motorized 33 mile converted Norfolk and

Western railbed, runs from Abingdon through Damascus and the Jefferson National Forest to the North Carolina border. This combination hiking, biking, and horse trail attracts more than 250,000 annual visitors. The Appalachian Trail, a hiking trail of national significance that traverses the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to Georgia, passes through the Town. The Damascus United Methodist Church has a hostel located near the trail for thru-hikers. The Iron Mountain Trail, the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail and the Transamerica 76 National Bicycle Route all pass through Damascus, making it a hub of activity for trail enthusiasts and eco-tourists. As noted earlier, the Town celebrates several festivals and celebrations throughout the year such as the Appalachian Trail Days, and a Fourth of July celebration.

The abundance of outdoor activities within and surrounding the Town continues to encourage the growth of tourism-related businesses. In response to the widespread and increasing use of recreational trails, the Town is spearheading the development of the Beaverdam Creek Trail, a rail-to-trail conversion which will follow the now retired Virginia-Carolina Railroad bed and spur lines. The design phase of this project is currently 90% completed.

The development of a variety of outdoor recreational activities to both encourage tourism and provide for local residents is considered a priority. The Town council has recently applied for and received Virginia Tourism Commission marketing funds to draw people to our current outdoor attractions and create a stable flow of outdoor enthusiast to spark growth in the Town's outdoor recreation economy.

F. Fire Department

Damascus is served by a volunteer fire department. Their equipment includes two large pumpers, one small light-duty pumper, a fully equipped light and air truck, a small light-duty rescue truck, a four wheel off road rescue vehicle and a large utility truck. The department responds to approximately 140 calls per year. Seventy percent of those calls are for automobile accidents. Washington County provides dispatch service for the fire, police, and rescue departments. The fire department responds to calls from areas both inside and outside the immediate Damascus area.

G. Rescue Squad

The Damascus Volunteer Rescue Squad Incorporated has been in independent operation since 1986. The Damascus squad has three ambulances and serves a thirty square mile area and more than 3,000 people. They answer calls from any part of the county; however, they are primarily responsible for the Damascus area.

H. Law Enforcement

Damascus Town Police have a reciprocal agreement with Washington County that frequently requests their services outside the town's corporate limits. The police department staff consists of the police chief, one lieutenant, one detective, two patrolmen, 12 auxiliary officers and 5 part-time officers. The officers share five equipped vehicles and seasonally patrol on bicycles. The Virginia State Police, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Jefferson National Forest Law Enforcement also provide policing services to the town and Washington County.

The offices of the Police Department are in the Town Hall building and space is limited. The facility is currently undergoing an upgrade. A new physical facility, new and upgraded equipment, and interfacing software for effective coordination with both Washington County and the Sheriff's Office could positively impact the efficiency and performance of the Town's officers.

I. Water Supply and Treatment

The Washington County Service Authority, in Abingdon, supplies treated water to the town. The Service Authority provides a sufficient supply of water to meet the present and future needs of the Town.

J. Wastewater Transport and Treatment

Since 1976, the Town of Damascus had owned and operated its own sewer system but in 2012 the Town transferred ownership to the Washington County Service Authority. The treatment plant is located three miles west of town on U.S. Route 58. Historically, the Town's gravity flow sewer system has been plagued by excessive infiltration and inflow (I/I) compounded by frequent flooding of the Beaverdam and Laurel Creeks, high groundwater levels in general, and the mountainous terrain. Excessive amounts of I/I have caused hydraulic overloading of the wastewater treatment plant resulting in untreated wastewater and raw sewage bypassing the treatment plant to the South Fork of the Holston River and eventually into the Tennessee-Big Sandy River Basin.

Washington County Health Department approved a Preliminary Engineering Report for the detection, identification, and remediation of direct I/I sources in the sewage collection system and Rural Development financed an upgrade of the entire sewer system. The upgrades are ongoing and the plant is now operating under capacity.

K. Solid Waste

Residential solid waste pick-up is available to citizens of the town by private contract. Washington County operates self-serve convenience stations throughout the county. Industrial and commercial solid waste collection is open to free market competition.

L. Public Utilities

Electric service is provided by American Electric Power. Adequate electric power is available for future growth. Centurylink, provides long distance and local telephone, with Sprint providing cellular service to the Town. A new Verizon cell tower was recently installed. Telephone service is reliable and adequate, and existing facilities will support future growth. Cable television is available to citizens by private contract.

M. Internet Access

Centurylink also provides DSL Internet access for the Town. Public Internet access is available at several downtown retail establishments courtesy of the “Adam Committee” which was funded by the Town. The Town has recently installed free public Wi-Fi covering approximately seventy five percent of the Town. A town website, Damascus.org , has been established on which local businesses can advertise to promote both their services and Damascus in general.

CHAPTER VII TRANSPORTATION

A. Roads and Highways

The main transportation infrastructure in Damascus is the road and highway system which includes all public roadways ranging from primary to secondary state roads. The quality of such a network is vital to the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. The following section provides background data, traffic volumes and trends, pertinent Six-Year Plan elements and finally, a summary of problems and opportunities.

Interstate

The nearest interstate highway is Interstate 81 which extends from Interstate 40 east of Knoxville, Tennessee, to Canada. The Interstate passes through Bristol, Abingdon, Glade Spring, Marion, and Wytheville. At Wytheville, I-81 intersects with Interstate 77, which links Columbia, South Carolina, and Cleveland, Ohio. Travelers from Damascus to points south can reach I-81 via U.S. Route 58 to Abingdon in approximately 12 minutes. For northward travel, the interstate can be reached via Route 91 at Glade Spring in the same amount of time.

Traffic volume on I-81 in southwestern Virginia has risen by approximately 75 percent over the past 30 years. A major contributor to the rise in traffic volumes is tractor-trailers and other freight trucks that comprise approximately 20 percent of the vehicles on the roadway system in Virginia. However in the last five years traffic volumes recorded at the Interstate 81 / Route 58 intersection have fallen from 42,000 vehicles per day to 41,000 vehicles per day. During this same time period the traffic volumes recorded at the Interstate 81 / Route 91 intersection have fallen from 29,000 vehicles per day to 28,000 vehicles per day. These recent changes show that Interstate 81

traffic growth is beginning to level out but years of growth have left the interstate inadequate to safely handle traffic volumes at peak hours. This leveling trend may be caused by the last five years of economic recession.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) defines an Interstate Highway as: limited access roads designed for high-speed travel. They have a minimum of four lanes and are divided by a median strip.

Arterial Highway

VDOT defines a Rural Arterial Highway as: roads which range from two-lane to multilane, divided highways with controlled-access, designed to move high volume traffic at high speeds between rural and urban areas of concentrated activity. At full design, rural arterials include the Interstate System and most rural freeways. The primary arterial route serving Damascus is U.S. Route 58, which is the main east-to-west corridor for through traffic. Route 58 runs northwest to I-81 near Abingdon, which is 10.87 miles in length; and east to Volney which is 33.74 miles in length. The section of Route 58 connecting Abingdon to Damascus is currently under construction and when finished will be converted from two to four lanes throughout the majority of its 10.87 miles. In the easterly direction Route 58 connects Damascus with Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and the communities of Konnarock and Whitetop.

The Daniel Boone Heritage Trail is a regional highway established in the early 1920s and 30s to follow the route Daniel Boone took on his first journey to Kentucky. The highway travels Route 91 from Mountain City, Tennessee. In Damascus, the trail joins Route 58 where it remains throughout the State of Virginia.

Major Collectors

Route 91 is the major collector in Damascus. The route runs north to I-81 at Glade Spring which is 13.08 miles in length; and south to the Tennessee line is 1.62 miles. In the southerly direction Route 91 connects Damascus with the Wildlife Management Area of the Cherokee National Forest, the communities of Taylor's Valley, Virginia and Laurel Bloomery and Mountain City, Tennessee.

VDOT defines a Major Collector as: roads having two to four lanes and usually undivided. They are intended to link neighborhoods or areas of homogeneous land use with arterial streets. It is usually a public highway serving moderate traffic volumes. Collectors serve dual functions: collecting traffic between local roads and arterial streets and providing access to abutting properties.

Minor Collectors

A minor collector that serves Damascus is Virginia Route 716. Route 716 runs south from Damascus toward Shady Valley, Tennessee. It becomes Tennessee Route 133 at the state line. This route connects Damascus with Backbone Rock Recreation Area and the Wildlife Management Area of the Cherokee National Forest. VDOT defines a Minor Collector as: a two lane road that serves to collect low density local traffic and carry it to local centers or to traffic distributors of a higher order. The collector road or street should allow access to abutting properties consistent with the level of service desired.

Scenic Highways

The closest designated Scenic parkway is the Blue Ridge Parkway at the southeastern tip of Grayson County. The section of Route 91 from Glade Spring to the

Tennessee line is designated as a Virginia Scenic Byway. Route 58/603 from Damascus to Konnarock is also designated as a Scenic Byway, and Route 58 from Damascus to Volney is designated as a Scenic Road. These designations are decided by VDOT. The Scenic Roads Maps for the Commonwealth states “This road meet(s) the agencies’ standards of high aesthetic or cultural value and lead to or (is) within areas of historical, natural, or recreational significance. The designations are made in cooperation with local governments”.

B. Design Standards

Design standards for roads are established by VDOT. Required right-of-ways (ROW) are based on the annual average daily traffic volumes (AADT) and the physical constraints of the project area.

C. Traffic Volumes

The following information was provided by VDOT, Traffic Engineering Division in Richmond and Abingdon. According to the office of the TMPD, the year 2012 figures are based on historical trend lines and on the Six Year Improvement Plan, Surface Transportation Plan. VDOT no longer takes a visual count of traffic that would provide a breakdown in vehicle type and identify out of state cars, trucks and buses. Instead electronic devices are used.

**Table VII-2
Annual Average Daily Traffic Volume Estimates
Route 58**

Section	2005	2012
Rt. 708 to Rt. 91 W (Damascus)	5,200	4,600
Rt. 91 W to Rt. 91 E (Damascus)	4,000	3,300
Rt. 91 E to Rt. 603 (Damascus)	710	620
Rt. 603 to Grayson County Line	440	550
Washington County Line to Rt. 362	620	650
Rt. 362 to Rt. 740	390	380

**Table VII-3
Annual Average Daily Traffic Volume Estimates
Route 91**

Section	2005	2005
Tennessee State Line to S. Rt. 58	2,600	2,600
Rt. 58 South to Rt. 58 North	4,000	3,300
Rt. 58 North to Rt. 803 South of Lodi	3,500	1,600
Rt. 803 South of Lodi to Rt. 762 North of Lodi	2,000	1,800
Rt. 762 North of Lodi to Rt. 11 South	2,300	2,200

D. VDOT Six Year Improvement Plan

New construction and major expansion projects taking place on state maintained roads are set out in VDOT's Six Year Improvement Plan. The project list is updated yearly by removing completed projects and adding newly needed construction items. While the projects are listed by county, the current SYIP has the projects listed in Table VII-4 that will directly affect Damascus.

**Table VII-4
VDOT SYIP Projects in Damascus Area**

Project Parameters	Reason for Project	Distance	Cost
US 11 (Main St) / US 58, exit 19 north bound on-ramp I-81	Congestion with opening of Lowes and other new and existing businesses.	0.4 mile	unknown
US 11 (Main St) exit 19 southbound on-ramp I-81	Congestion due to multiple entrances and 3-lanes only (5 lanes needed)	0.8 mile	unknown
US 11 (Main St.) exit 19 southbound off ramp I-81	Congestion and delays. Need for signals and turn lanes	intersection	unknown
US 58 (JEB Stuart Hwy) VA677 to VA712	Improvement	5.0 miles	\$55,409

Although the current SYIP does not list any projects inside town limits there are two projects on the list that will directly affect Damascus. First, Route 58 from Abingdon to Damascus is being converted from a two-lane undivided highway to a four-lane divided highway. The project is composed of three phases and the second phase of construction has just begun. The final result will be a four-lane divided highway from the intersection of Route 58 and Interstate 81 to just outside of town limits. Another SYIP project which will affect Damascus is the improvement to be made to the entrance and exit ramps for the I81 and Route 58 intersection at interstate exit 19. This exit serves as one of two of Damascus' main interstate access points. Another VDOT funded project of considerable size is the rebuilding of the Orchard Hill Road Bridge. The one lane bridge was shut down due to safety concerns in 2012 and is planned to be reopened in 2015. This project falls under VDOT's maintenance program. The accompanying map shows the location of the projects listed above.

E. Transportation Enhancements Federal Fund (MAP-21)

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) allocates funds to specific projects on a statewide, competitive basis. Project proposals are examined by a VDOT

Transportation Enhancement Selection Panel. Based upon the recommendations of the Selection Panel and a review by the CTB's Environmental Committee, projects are selected for implementation. Examples of eligible transportation enhancement projects include some of the following categories:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities; Acquisition of Scenic Easements and Scenic/Historic Sites; Scenic or Historic Highway; Landscaping and Scenic Beautification; Preservation of Abandoned Railway Corridors by Converting them to Rail-Trails; Archaeological Planning and Research; Provision of Safety and Educational Activities for Pedestrians and Bicyclists.

Tea-21 funded projects locally include the restoration of bridges and trestles on the Virginia Creeper Trail, the construction of White Top Station, and the construction of a multi-use rail-trail at Beaverdam Creek.

F. Airports

Commercial air passenger service is provided by Tri-Cities Airport, located near Blountville, Tennessee. Tri-Cities Airport is served by Delta, USAir, and United

Airlines which provide service to airports throughout the country. Also available at Tri-Cities Airport are air freight and charter services.

Virginia Highlands Airport, located three miles southwest of Abingdon, is the nearest general aviation facility to Damascus. Airport facilities include a 75 foot wide, 4,470 foot long paved runway, dusk-to-dawn lighting, hangar space, and fuel.

G. Rail Service

Rail service to and from Damascus was discontinued in April of 1976. Prior to this time, rail service was provided by the Norfolk and Western Railway, formerly the Virginia-Carolina Railway. The railroad tracks have since been removed and the main railroad bed has been converted to the Virginia Creeper Trail, a non-motorized shared-use trail.

The nearest rail service is the Norfolk and Southern Railway terminal in Bristol, which provides freight connections throughout the country. There is no passenger rail service in Washington County; however, a feasibility was completed in 2001 which outlines the projects needed and their cost to extend passenger service to Bristol.

H. Public Transit

District Three Governmental Cooperative – The Area Agency on Aging, District Three Governmental Cooperative, provides rural transportation services to elderly, handicapped and other individuals in Damascus. The service is branded as “District Three Public Transit (DTPT) and is open to general public as well as providing elderly and handicapped persons with transportation to Abingdon for meals and to shopping centers.

The routes listed below serve Damascus:

- WA5 – Damascus, Taylors Valley Friendship, Rhea Valley, Wideners Valley and Rt. 58. Primary destination is Abingdon. Runs every Tuesday.
- WA7 – Damascus, Taylors Valley Friendship, Rhea Valley, Wideners Valley and Rt. 58. Primary destination is Damascus. Runs every Wednesday.
- WA8 – Rt. 600, Konnarock, Green Cove, Whitetop, Rt 58 West (passes through Damascus). Primary destination is Exit 7 in Bristol. Runs every 1st, 3rd and 5th Friday.

I. Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is the use of programs and services to make the entire transportation system (roads, HOV/HOT lanes, buses, trains, automobiles, etc.) more efficient. Damascus does not currently offer TDM services

J. Non-Motorized Transportation

The existing bikeway and pedestrian system in the Town of Damascus has developed over the last 50 to 75 years. Bicycle and horse paths and hiking trails exist throughout the Mount Rogers region traversing some of the most beautiful scenery in Virginia. Damascus' centrality to the recreational trails and many outdoor amenities as well as its close proximity to the National Recreation Area make planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities a necessity and make tourism important to the economy. The purpose of this section is to present the town's existing pedestrian and bicycle transportation corridors and facilities in a format that focuses upon the future of that transportation

network. This pedestrian and bicycle plan will guide the development, maintenance, and future of on- and off-road bike and pedestrian facilities with planned sidewalk and streetscape improvements that will encourage non-motorized travel throughout the town. One of the goals of this plan is to connect outlying residential areas with Laurel Avenue and downtown, the Town Park, Backer Park, the new Sports Complex and regional hiking and biking trails through an established sidewalk and bicycle network.

The on- and off-road bike paths, horse, and pedestrian trails are a unique and integral part of Damascus' transportation system. The Virginia Creeper Trail, the Appalachian Trail, the Iron Mountain Trail, the Bike 76 Route, and the Trail at Beaver Dam Creek all interconnect and pass within the corporate limits of the town. The Daniel Boone Heritage Trail is a regional highway that is more fully described in the motorized transportation section.

Virginia Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail is a multi-use (footpath, bicycle, horse) trail that connects Abingdon with the Virginia-North Carolina border 1.1 miles east of Whitetop Station, Virginia. Its total length is 33.4 miles. From the Town of Damascus, Abingdon is 15.5 miles northwest and the Virginia-North Carolina line is 17.9 miles southeast. Approximately three miles of the Virginia Creeper Trail lies within the corporate limits of the town. The Town of Damascus owns the former railroad right-of-way from its corporate limits west to Drowning Ford. The town jointly owns the right-of-way (with the Town of Abingdon) from Drowning Ford west to Abingdon. Since its designation by Congress in 1985 as a National Recreation Trail, there has been a tremendous increase in

its use. This has had a positive impact on tourism in Damascus and has led to substantial growth in town businesses, such as bike shuttle services.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a continuous, marked footpath extending approximately 2,180 miles from Katahdin, Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, along the crest of the Appalachian mountain range. In 1968, Congress established a national system of trails and designated the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail (in the west) as the initial components. Virginia has the longest section of the Appalachian Trail, with about 536 miles. Approximately 1.2 miles of the trail lies within the corporate limits of the town. Usage has increased tremendously since the 1966 Act of Congress designating the area around Damascus as a National Recreation Area. Surveys show that the greatest increase is among weekend and week-long hikers utilizing not only the Appalachian Trail but also the many loop trails to which it connects. This type of use offers the potential to impact tourism in Damascus and outdoor recreation business development.

Iron Mountain Trail

The Iron Mountain Trail is one of many recreational trails in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and Jefferson National Forest. A trailhead is located at the end of Fourth Street in the Mock Hollow section of the town where the trail travels down Damascus Drive to join the Virginia Creeper and the Appalachian Trail within the corporate limits, continuing to Orchard Hill Road, where it reenters the woods and proceeds south into Tennessee.

Bike 76 Route

The Bike 76 Route is presently the only designated on-road bike route in the corporate limits of the town. The bike route coincides with Route 58 to the east of the corporate limits. It joins Route 91 in town where it remains on Route 91 north to the town limits and then travels westerly toward Meadowview, Virginia. The bike route currently has limited signage throughout its length.

Trail at Beaver Dam Creek

The Trail at Beaver Dam Creek is the newest addition to Damascus' pedestrian and bicycle network. This rail-trail conversion will utilize what remains of the old Virginia-Carolina Railway and the Beaverdam Railroad railbed and corridor that ran from Damascus to Shady Valley, Tennessee; a link that was shut down in 1926. This trail has received funding through the Federal Highway Administration's T-21 program for trails, bicycles, and pedestrian facilities. The Trail at Beaver Dam Creek will be a multi-use, partially paved recreational trail with handicap accessible trail and fishing pier access. The trail will link to the Virginia Creeper Trail at Beaver Dam Creek where it heads south and circles the old Smethport Extract Company (Bayer Chemical Corporation) site. The trail will then follow Route 716 to the Jefferson National Forest in Phase I, approximately 1 mile. Phases II and III of this project (if supported) will follow Route 716 into the Cherokee National Forest, Backbone Rock, and Shady Valley, Tennessee (TN Route 133), potentially converting nearly 15 miles of abandoned railbed.

The attached map inventories, identifies, and designates Damascus' present and future non-motorized transportation system. The improvements needed to enhance and

"fill the gaps" in the sidewalk system are shown. On-road bike lanes are hereby designated and future road and signage improvements should address these designations.

K. Problems and Opportunities

Roads and Highways

Presently, traffic growth has leveled off but traffic at peak tourist season is increasing in Damascus and the impact of any highway improvements and/or further increases in tourist traffic should be closely monitored. The topography and physiographic features in and around the town impede the development of an arterial highway system based on a cost/benefit factor and environmental impacts. There are presently no officially designated on-road bike lanes within the corporate limits. The opportunity is present to develop bike lanes and signage prior to any road construction improvements or sidewalk and curbing decisions.

In May 1992, the CTB recommended that, as money becomes available, the curve and grade hazards be eliminated on existing two-lane Route 58 between Damascus and Volney; and, that Route 58 from Interstate 81 to Damascus be improved to a four-lane facility. Route 58 improvements from Abingdon to Damascus are currently included in VDOT's six-year plan. Phase one improvements have been completed making Route 58 a four lane highway from its intersection with I 81 until its intersection with Watauga road. The second phase of the project is in the Preliminary Engineering/Right-of-Way phase. This project is supported by a resolution passed by the Town Council in 1999.

There is concern regarding the traffic safety problem at the intersections of Routes 91 (N) and 58. The intersection is presently controlled by a stop sign on Route 91, which is unexpected and subsequently often missed by drivers not familiar with the town.

Several proposals have been made regarding the construction of a four-lane Route 58 through the Town of Damascus. This proposal covers an area between Abingdon and Volney and includes a four-lane beltway. Need, location, costs, environmental impacts and economic benefit to the Town will be studied to determine the best alternative. VDOT and the CTB have not approved any of the above proposals.

VDOT has performed a full length study of Interstate 81 including the environmental impact of widening from four to six lanes. The construction has been completed from exit three to exit seven. Further widening is in VDOT's Six Year Improvement Plan for Washington County.

A lack of parking facilities on Laurel Avenue in the commercial district creates potentially unsafe entrances from side streets. Another problem is the location of bridges in floodplains.

Airport

The topographic constraints inhibit a closer airport than Virginia Highlands, however, Damascus is well-served by this facility.

Rail Service

There is no passenger rail service in Washington County, however; the Bristol Rail Passenger Study to determine the feasibility of providing service from Bristol to Richmond and Washington, D.C., could prove beneficial to Damascus.

Public Transit

The nearest fixed route transit system is in Bristol. Damascus is served by District Three Governmental Cooperative, which operates District Three Public Transit (DTPT), and

local shuttle services. There are opportunities for exploring both commuter-oriented bus service (for example: to Abingdon, Bristol, and Mountain City) and ridesharing. A local ridesharing program involving area employers would not only assist those persons in need of transportation to work but would conserve energy and lessen traffic loads.

Welfare-to-work initiatives can help fund transit services and may offer some solutions in the future.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Damascus does not currently offer TDM services however the Statewide Transit and TDM Plan envisions new TDM services by 2040. In non-urban areas, TDM programs are primarily residence based and focus on commuting within and outside the area. They usually focus on telework and long distance commutes and coordinate with neighboring employment areas. TDM programs can be administered by county governments, planning district commissions or transit agencies.

Non-Motorized Transportation

There has been a tremendous increase in usage of pedestrian, bicycle, and horse paths and these systems are recognized as the backbone of the local economy. Paramount to the planned development of tourism, it is important that these facilities be identified and that future development or construction, maintain, preserve or improve the visual and structural integrity of these systems. The development of complementary facilities, information centers, and rest areas should be encouraged.

CHAPTER VIII

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

A. Introduction

A major part of comprehensive planning is determining how land is used within the corporate and planning boundaries of the Town of Damascus. The character of a community is created by the combination of various land uses. There are competing demands for land use: residential, commercial, office, industrial, open space, recreation, and public & semi-public institutions such as schools, medical facilities/offices, and religious uses.

The present and future character of the community will depend on the balance of various land uses and the intensity to which each is developed.

The guiding principal behind comprehensive land use analysis is creating a balanced community where current and future residents have a wide range of housing choices, employment opportunities, consumer opportunities, and a full range of government and semi-public services. Residential areas should include housing for individuals and families throughout the various life-stages. Employment opportunities should include full and part-time work, provide entry-level positions, and exist in all major sectors of the economy: industrial, office/service, and retail. The consumer needs of the residents should be met by a variety of settings, including retail shops, service-related businesses, and community centers.

In addition, the town should encourage a broad spectrum of business interests, ranging from larger firms to small local businesses and entrepreneurs and should market the Town as inviting to these activities. In all instances, the town seeks to work with the

private sector to protect and enhance the natural features of the area, protect existing development and to insure that the infrastructure necessary to serve proposed development is available. Developers are encouraged to work with the town, and other public bodies, so that appropriate contributions of land, money or improvements will be made in concert with the timing of development. This process ensures that planned and existing development can proceed without overextending the existing infrastructure, the transportation and public services systems, which benefit existing residents and business. A creative partnership between the various governments and the private sector can provide the physical, social, and government structure needed to ensure a well-run thriving community in the future.

B. Current Land Use by Categories

In past years three land use surveys have been conducted in Damascus. All three were conducted by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, one in 1980, one in 1999, and the other in 2006. The results of these three surveys (Table IX-1) have made it possible to examine past trends of land use in Damascus.

**Table VIII-1
Land Use by Acre
Town of Damascus
1980, 1999, 2006**

CATEGORY	Residential	Commercial	Industria l	Public/ semipubli c	Vacant	Roads and Streams
1980	145	11	57	16	223	51
1999	203	19	25	67	169	54
1980 – 1999 Change	58 acres	8 acres	-32 acres	51 acres	-54 acres	3 acres
1980 – 1999 % Change	+40 %	+72.7 %	-56.1 %	+318.7 %	-24.2 %	5.8 %
2006	308	28.5	1	14.1	128.4	54
1999-2006 Change	105 acres	9.5 acres	-24 acres	-52.9 acres	-40.6 acres	0 acres
1999 -2006 % Change	+51.7 %	+50 %	-96 %	-78.9 %	-24 %	0 %

Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, Land Use Survey, 1980, 1999, 2006.

It should be noted that through better surveying methods and technologies it was found that the total land area within the Damascus corporate limits has changed to a total of 534 acres. This is a 3 acre decrease from the 1999 estimate of 537 total acres, and a 24 acre increase from the 1980 estimate of 510 total acres.

The greatest acreage change of land use in Damascus during this time period occurred in the residential category. Since 1980 residential land use has increased from 145 acres to 308 acres representing a 163 acre increase. The majority of this growth has occurred in the last seven years. Between 1999 and 2006 the residential acreage has grown 105 acres representing a 51.7 % change. This means that the Town's residential area has grown twice as much in the last seven years than it did in the previous 19 years. The 308-acre total is the largest of all the land use categories in Damascus. While there has been an increase in residential land use the population of Damascus has slightly decreased, meaning that growth in this category corresponds to a decrease in the number of people per household. This increase in residential land use has caused a significant decrease in the amount of vacant and public/semipublic lands.

A sharp drop in Industrial land use has also created an opportunity for Residential and Commercial growth. Commercial land use has grown more in the last seven years than it did in the 19 years prior. From 1999 to 2006 Damascus saw a 50% increase in commercial land use. This can mostly be contributed to tourism generated by the Town's close proximity to various hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

A large portion of the vacant land in Damascus lies within the 100- year flood plain, which takes up a total 135.5 acres or approximately 25 percent of the total land area. The majority of the remaining vacant land is not suitable for development due to flood hazard or excess slope. This will cause the decreases in the amount of vacant land seen in the past to taper off in the next few years.

The amount of land used for industry has dropped significantly since 1980. Fifty-seven (57) acres of land was used for industrial purposes in 1980, while in 1999 only 25 acres remained in use by industry. This 56.1 percent decrease has allowed for the increase of residential and commercial land use. A further drop in industry has occurred leaving only 1 acre of industry in the Town of Damascus.

Roads and streams were put in a category separate from public land use. This was done so it would be easier to understand how much land there was that could not be used for other land uses. Roads and streams cover 54 acres in Damascus. The amount of land that fell in this category increased only by four acres, or ten percent from the 1980 total of 50 acres. The primary uses of developed land in Damascus at the present time are depicted in Table IX-2.

Table VIII-2
Use of Developed Land
Town of Damascus
2006

CATEGORY	ACRES	PERCENT
Residential	308	87.60%
Commercial	26.5	8.10%
Industrial	1	1%
Public/semipublic	14.1	14.10%
Total Developed Land	351.6	100%

Source: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, 2006.

C. Current Land Use Controls

Zoning Ordinance

The present zoning ordinance for the Town of Damascus was originally adopted in 1982. A revised version of the original zoning ordinance was adopted in 2002 under the official name “2002 Damascus Zoning Ordinance”. The 2002 Damascus Zoning Ordinance has since been amended to better guide development within the town limits. A zoning ordinance is needed to put the comprehensive plan into action. This ordinance can be referenced in the Town Code of Damascus.

Subdivision Ordinance

A subdivision ordinance for Damascus was adopted by the Town Council on August 18, 1977, after its preparation and recommendation by the Planning Commission. With a few exceptions, the subdivision ordinance sets standards for the division of land into two or more parcels for the purposes of development or sale. Article 8.2 of the ordinance prohibits the subdivision of land for building purposes within the Floodway District as specified in the Flood Study done by the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1957.

Flood Control Ordinance

In addition to the provisions of the subdivision ordinance concerning areas subject to flooding, section nine of the Damascus Town Code specifies that, unless approved by the Planning Commission, no structures may be built within the floodway district.

D. Development Issues

As is true with most of Southwest Virginia, physical factors have played a significant role in the development of Damascus and its land use. The primary factor that limits further development in Damascus is the shortage of land both available for and suitable for development. Approximately six percent of the land in the corporate limits of Damascus is not developable due to excessive slope, flooding, or previous use.

Slope is and will continue to be one of the major constraints to development in and around the Town of Damascus. A large portion of the land in Damascus has a slope in excess of 20 percent. Although all slopes of 20 percent and greater do not exclude development, it would be more difficult and more costly.

There are two approaches to solving the land availability problem. One solution is through boundary adjustment. The Town of Damascus already provides a number of municipal services to areas outside the corporate limits. Therefore, boundary adjustment may be financially feasible for the town and would allow room for development to occur within the new corporate limits.

A second way to increase the amount of land with developmental potential in Damascus is through more efficient use of existing land. Land that is currently available for development or becomes available in the future could be developed into condominiums or clustered housing. This type of development would allow the town to achieve more efficient use of its present territory. This would allow for further development through increased density of buildings (more per gross acre).

CHAPTER IX GOVERNMENT

A. Town Government

The town government in Damascus is a strong mayor form of government composed of a Mayor and six Town Council members who are elected every four years. The terms of these offices are staggered. If there is a vacancy on the council between elections, a successor is appointed by a majority vote of the council until the next election. The council elects a chairman who serves as the vice-mayor. In the case of a tie vote of the Town Council, it is the responsibility of the mayor to break the tie. The mayor is by charter the chief administrative officer. The Council is responsible for appointing a planning commission to advise the Town Council on matters affecting land use within the town. One member of the Town Council also serves on the planning commission.

The Town Council employs a clerk, a treasurer, a police chief, and a maintenance superintendent. In addition, since 1978 the town has been a participant in the circuit rider town manager program through the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. These individuals are responsible for their departments and employees of the town under those departments. Public services including trash pick up and disposal are provided by the private sector via procurement and competitive negotiation.

B. Local Government Services

Through the aforementioned offices, the Mayor and the Town Council ensure the provision of the following services to the residents of Damascus: police protection, fire protection, the maintenance and lighting of streets, solid waste removal, land use controls, and the provision of recreation facilities.

C. Revenue Sources

Finances to provide these services in order of size, come from real estate and personal property taxes, merchant licenses, Washington County sales tax, a bank franchise tax, food and lodging tax, cigarette stamps fines, automobile tags, miscellaneous income, interest, and ABC profits. The total revenues projected for the Town of Damascus were \$1,176,945 in fiscal year 2013-2014.

D. Expenditure by Type

The primary expenditures of the town can be grouped in the following rank order: general fund; public works; general government administration; public safety; and parks and recreation. The town has an operating fund balance of \$61,954 which is approximately three months of operating expenses. The town should strive to attain at least one year of an operating fund balance. This would allow the Town Council to aggressively pursue growth opportunities without having to wait on revenues from tax increases. A more detailed report of expenditures and revenue for the town can be found in the budget available from the treasurer's office in the Damascus Town Hall.

E. Tax Rates and Development Impact

The real estate tax rate is .46 per 100 and the personal property tax rate for 2013 is .52 per 100 in the Town of Damascus. The County real estate rate in 2013 is .63 per 100. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that business and industry wanting to locate in Damascus should not find tax rates to be a deterrent.

F. Intergovernmental Cooperation

In the area of providing public services, Damascus has working agreements with the Washington County Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, Rescue Squad, Parks and Recreation Department, School Board, and Public Service Authority. One member of the Damascus Town Council is appointed by the Washington County Board of Supervisors to serve on the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. The Town of Damascus has contracted with the MRPDC for professional town management services since 1978.

Close cooperation also exists between Damascus and the Washington County Industrial Development Authority; the First Tennessee Development District; the Virginia Department of Transportation; the U.S. Forest Service; the National Park Service; the Appalachian Trail Conference; the Tennessee Valley Authority; the Virginia Health Department; the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; Virginia Highlands Community College; People, Inc.; District Three Governmental Cooperative; the Mount Rogers Development Partnership d.b.a. Virginia's ACorridor; the Virginia Southwest Blue Ridge Highlands, Inc.; and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission.

The town also maintains close ties with the County Executive in Johnson County, Tennessee, the Mayor and Alderman in Mountain City, Tennessee, and the Board of Supervisors in Grayson County, Virginia. In addition, the population of Damascus accounts for a large part of the Taylor District of Washington County. Thus, residents of Damascus often represent the District in County affairs.

G. Governmental Issues

The government of Damascus serves its residents in an efficient manner with the terms of the Town Council staggered for four-year terms. The Mayor is elected every two years. This prevents a complete turnover of elected officials. The effective government of a town is a delicate task requiring some skills which can only be acquired by experience. Thus, because of the overlap between terms of council members, the council can be more effective in maintaining and improving services to the citizens.

Boundary Adjustment

Given the proposed changes to the major arterials that intersect in Damascus, the Town needs to prepare a boundary adjustment feasibility study. If an adjustment appears feasible the Town should initiate discussion with the Taylor District Representative on the Washington County Board of Supervisors to determine if the Board of Supervisors would work with the Town to achieve this objective.

Highway Improvements

The Town should stay permanently engaged in the planning process to determine the location of U.S. 58 and State Route 91. The future direction and growth of the Town will be determined when the road improvements are made. The direction taken by the roads around the Town will be the greatest determinant in the future of the Town of any single factor not controlled by the Town Council.

CHAPTER XI GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the comprehensive plan are based on two considerations. First, the existing conditions are described and evaluated (preceding chapters). Next, the results of these evaluations are compared with the goals and objectives of the town. The comparison of future goals and past accomplishments then indicate the needs of the town.

A. Goals and Objectives

A goal is the general direction toward which future actions are directed. Goals are general, long term statements of purpose which provide a target toward which town development can be directed. Generally, goals are not easily measurable nor are they attainable in the near future. An objective is a measurable part of a goal. Thus, a number of objectives are directed toward each goal. The objectives provide the manner in which the town should develop in order to achieve the goals. The following are the goals and objectives for the orderly and effective development of the Town of Damascus.

There are several over-arching goals which apply to all aspects of development for the Town of Damascus. The following are those goals:

- Become a town that's recognized as being encompassed by outdoor recreation, and make that a priority
- Provide adequate police, fire, and rescue services to all citizens and tourists;
- Preserve historic sites and other unique characteristics of the town;
- Retain and develop the scenic beauty of the region;
- Protect the town from flooding; and

Residential Zones and Structures

Traditional residential development requires land with stable soil conditions, minimal slope characteristics and protection from flooding. In addition to these requirements, residential growth requires more acreage than most other land uses. Thus, the shortage of developable land within the corporate limits has the effect of restraining residential land use more than other uses. In addition, to satisfy the housing needs in Damascus, the Town must first identify the areas with the highest concentration of substandard homes, especially those where the owners are of low-to-moderate income. Taking these factors into consideration, specific goals for residential development in Damascus are as follows:

- Maintain the best possible living conditions for all citizens;
- Provide housing opportunities for all, regardless of income;
- Prevent blighted houses from becoming dilapidated;
- Increase growth of residential areas;
- Protect the investment of current property owners;
- Plan residential development in order to blend with and protect the surrounding environment; and
- Plan and prepare for an aging population.

The objectives required to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Bring all blighted homes up to HUD Section 8 criteria via participating in government grant programs, such as the Community Improvement Grant program and Rural Development housing opportunities;
- Demolish all unsafe, unoccupied housing structures;
- Ensure adequate sewage, water and transportation facilities are provided prior to allowing any new or replacement residential development;
- Identify residential developable properties with utilities that can be added to the town by boundary adjustment;
- Ensure zoning promotes the outdoor recreation aspects of the Town
- Bring existing facilities and future facilities up to ADA code
- All new construction will use protection measures recommended by the flood reduction plan as adopted by the Town Council and the building codes as adopted by the authority having jurisdiction as a standard for development;
- Ensure all new and replacement residential development is compatible with existing and future land use;
- Enforce Zoning Code and insure compliance of all new activity with the Town Ordinance;
- Acquire funding to rehabilitate or substantially reconstruct the LMI homes through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Block Grant Program;
- Complete Orchard Hill Road and east Damascus Phase II housing projects;
- Prioritize housing renewal efforts;
- Identify remaining substandard housing;
- Apply for a "scattered housing" CDBG grant once the Orchard Hill Road and east Damascus Phase II housing projects are complete;
- Enforce the public nuisance part of the ordinance; and
- Conduct a study of potential residential developable properties with utilities in order to decide if a boundary adjustment is necessary.

Industrial

Damascus has a limited industrial base and there is a notable need for jobs that are high paying and attractive to a young population. Thus, the industrial goals for the Town of Damascus are:

- To promote the retention and expansion of existing industries; and
- To attract environmentally-responsible, light industry that will be compatible with the recreational and tourist aspects of the local area.
- The objectives required to achieve these goals are as follows:
 - Identify promising locations for new industries taking into account the need to maximize compatible land use and minimize pollution and traffic congestion;
 - Search for new environmentally-responsible, light industry that are nonpolluting in their operations and clean in appearance and encourage their relocation to the area;
 - Expand the town's boundaries to make available developable properties for industry;
 - Extend public water and sewer service to developable properties in boundary adjustment areas;
 - Ensure the availability of affordable high-speed telecommunications capabilities in and around the town; and
 - Provide opportunities for the development of industrial skills in our community.

In the past, commercial growth in Damascus has been limited due to the proximity of major commercial hubs, such as Abingdon and Bristol. With the continued expansion of tourism support services and development of the National Recreation Area, however, the commercial growth trend has reversed. Commercial growth and development should be expected. Toward this end, the following specific goals are as follows:

- Strengthen the town's economic base through commercial development;
- Guide the development of the commercial sector of Damascus in accordance with approved development plans, town ordinances, codes, and zoning regulations and;
- Promote new commercial growth within the Town of Damascus.

With these goals in mind, commercial development should be encouraged according to the following objectives:

- Support commercial development which will integrate and complement the tourism-related economy of Damascus including dining, transient lodging, bed and breakfasts, shopping, biking and hiking support activities;
- Facilitate the establishment of new commercial enterprises, particularly banks, grocery stores, specialty shops, and dining within the Town of Damascus;
- Locate commercial establishments in areas that are most accessible to residents and tourists alike;
- Plan all new commercial activity to ensure harmony with existing land uses;
- Ensure adequate walkways, parking, road capacity, sewage, and solid waste collection are provided for existing and future commercial activity; and
- Support local and regional programs offering entrepreneurship and small business development.

Tourism

Damascus is endowed with a number of recreation and tourism attractions, and the town has become the model for a successful tourism economy in Southwest Virginia. Nevertheless, there are several opportunities for Damascus to grow the local economy and improve the tourism- and recreation-related attractions. Tourism goals are as follows:

- Strengthen the town's economic base through tourism;
- Establish a workable plan for the Bayer property and the Beaverdam Creek Trail;
- Ensure appropriate and attractive tourism development through proper planning efforts;
- Retain and develop the scenic beauty of the region;
- Coordinate the town's goals and objectives with the surrounding recreation areas;
- Promote and encourage tourism and its related activities;
- Continue to market Damascus as a prime tourism destination for families, heritage tourists, hikers, bikers, motorcyclists, and outdoor enthusiasts; and
- Use floodplains, and other land that is not suitable for other uses, for recreational purposes that will not create flood hazards.
- Establish a method through planning to dealing with the cyclical economy

The Town of Damascus is using the following objectives to accomplish these tourism goals:

- Maintain existing multi-use recreation facilities year round to meet the needs of both the tourists and local citizens throughout the year. An example of this type of facility is the community center/information center/library;
- Extend the hours of the tourist information center through local volunteers during the tourist season;
- Maintain existing recreation activities and/or facilities for youth and senior citizens;

- Provide new recreation activities and/or facilities for youth and senior citizens where a need is identified;
- Extend wireless internet accessibility throughout the town;
- Develop and implement a workable plan to utilize the Bayer property as a multi-use facility supporting recreational activities and Beaverdam Creek Trail;
- Plan and develop a comprehensive Bicycle/Pedestrian plan;
- Improve signage along Creeper Trail to direct tourist to desired business locations;
- Maintain restroom facilities to continually provide clean, well-stocked, and functioning facilities;
- Provide additional signage for the existing public parking areas;
- Create more centrally located public parking in Town;
- Expand Creeper Trail maintenance activities to make the Trail more user friendly and aesthetically pleasing;
- Improve fishing opportunities to support recreation, tourism, and retirement activities, including stream stocking;
- Plan the creation of additional trails and non-motorized facilities to link existing facilities with Tennessee and North Carolina;
- Build upon the town's many cultural heritage and outdoor recreation assets through activities such as regularly held music jams, concert series, artisan festivals, and outdoor competitions (fishing, hunting, etc.);
- Participate in and support regional tourism projects, such as The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail and 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network; and
- Promote and encourage tourism/recreation related activities, i.e., dining and lodging such as camping, bed and breakfasts.
- Increase awareness of attractions other than the creeper trail creating more overnight stays through a VTC Marketing Grant.
- Create an economic restructuring plan with DHCD planning funds to address the town's cyclical economy

- Use the created economic restructuring plan to apply for a Community Development Block Grant for Downtown revitalization.

Recreation

Damascus is endowed with a number of outdoor recreation opportunities.

However, there remains a need for indoor facilities and for a greater variety of facilities.

Recreation goals are as follows:

- Provide the best possible recreational opportunities for all citizens;
- Guide the growth of recreational activities to comply with other stated goals; and
- Promote and encourage new recreational activities.

Thus, recreational objectives are as follows:

- Plan development of floodplains and land that is not suitable for other uses for recreational purposes in a way that will not cause flood hazards;
- Maintain multiple-use recreation facilities such as a community center/information center/library to meet the needs of all citizens throughout the year;
- Plan and implement adequate recreation activities and/or facilities for its youth and senior citizens;
- Support fishing opportunities to encourage recreation, tourism, retirement activities, and fund raising;
- Plan and implement development of the Bayer property as a multi-use facility supporting recreational activities; and
- Work with other government and/or private organizations to create additional trails and non-motorized facilities to link existing facilities with those in Tennessee and North Carolina.

Transportation

At present, there are no severe problems concerning vehicular traffic through Damascus. However, increased traffic can be expected with the development of the tourism industry, the National Recreation Area, and the highway improvements underway in neighboring states. Plans for future transportation improvements will be critical to the Town's prosperity. Transportation goals for Damascus are:

- To support the Commonwealth Transportation Board's decision to improve the curve and grade hazards on existing U.S. 58;
- To provide bikeways and sidewalks in order to encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel rather than vehicular travel around town;
- To plan street improvements in such a way that the town will be prepared for increased traffic and will not adversely effect neighboring land uses;
- To require future transportation improvements maintain or improve the visual and structural integrity of existing and proposed non-motorized transportation facilities;
- To promote operation and utilization of public-alternative transportation systems.

Objectives for the implementation of transportation goals are as follows:

- Participate in the planning, engineering, route selection and construction of improvements to U.S. Route 58 and State Route 91;
- Provide bike lanes and sidewalks in order to allow people to bicycle or walk rather than drive for travel around town;
- Develop a bike and pedestrian transportation plan coordinated with the Virginia Department of Transportation for future roadway enhancements; and
- Investigate acquisition and development of off street parking to alleviate down town congestion.

Future Land Use

Land use in Damascus is illustrated on the accompanying map. Future land use is governed by the Damascus Zoning Ordinance and Map. The Damascus Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, along with the Zoning Administrator are responsible for upholding the Zoning Ordinance. The goals of the ordinance and these administrative bodies are as follows:

- To minimize loss of life, injuries, and property damage in case of a flood or natural disaster; and
- To promote and protect the downtown area.

Future land use objectives are:

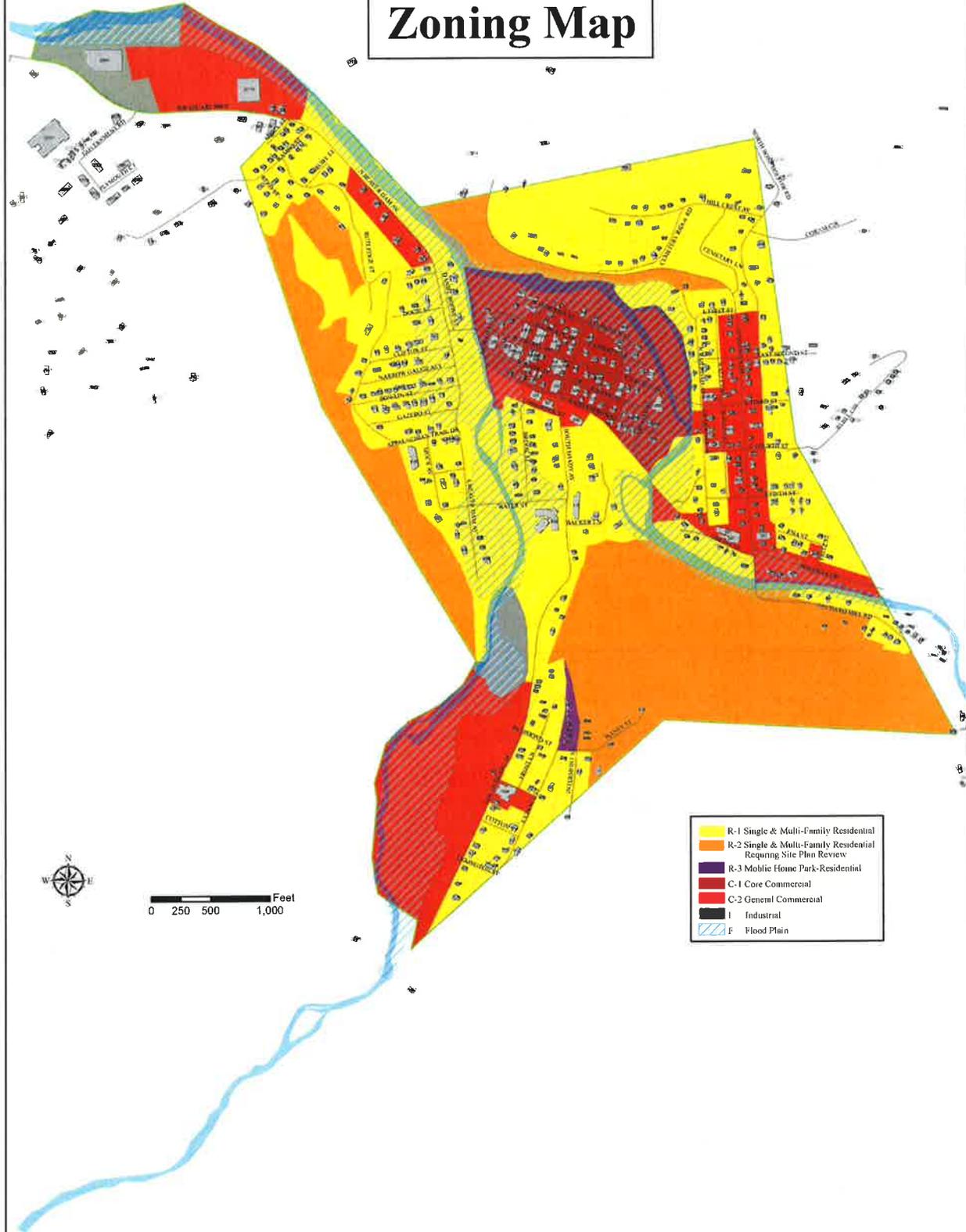
- All buildings presently in the flood plain should be flood proofed or relocated;
- All new construction in the flood plain will be flood proofed;
- All new construction will use protection measures recommended by the flood reduction plan as adopted by the Town Council and the building codes as adopted by the authority having jurisdiction as a standard for development;
- Pursue the conversion of an area of the 100-year flood plain into linear recreational parks;
- Promote the downtown area as a center for retail stores, restaurants, and tourism related businesses;
- Protect the strips of commercial growth along Route 58 on either side of the downtown as an area for shops and restaurants to accommodate tourists.

B. Summary of Recommendations

After reviewing existing conditions in Damascus, the following actions are recommended by the comprehensive plan in order to meet the present needs of the town. The justifications for these recommendations are found in the preceding chapters. These recommendations are in order of the preceding chapters and not in order of importance.

- The comprehensive plan should be reviewed every five years after its adoption and revised as conditions warrant.
- Environmentally-friendly industrial and commercial activity should be encouraged.
- Municipal parking, and town beautification projects are needed to help attract commercial growth.
- Water supply, sewage, solid waste collection and public facilities should be upgraded as State and Federal Regulation requires.
- Street improvements should keep pace with traffic demands and provide for walking and biking paths.
- Any new commercial buildings which locate in the downtown area should provide safe public access ways and parking facilities/capabilities for its customers.
- A boundary adjustment feasibility study should be conducted to determine if adjusting the boundary of the Town would be advisable.

Damascus Zoning Map



- R-1 Single & Multi-Family Residential
- R-2 Single & Multi-Family Residential Requiring Site Plan Review
- R-3 Mobile Home Park-Residential
- C-1 Core Commercial
- C-2 General Commercial
- I Industrial
- F Flood Plain



0 250 500 1,000 Feet

