

Blount County Land Use Plan: A Plan for Mountain Areas

INTRODUCTION

Think Quality - Think Future is the theme of the county long range planning process. The process was formally started in April of 1996 with resolution of the County Commission to initiate a county-wide regional planning process for land use and roads. Analysis was undertaken of population trends, showing that Blount County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state - mainly from net new immigration of people. A review of the Blount County: 1990 Land Use Plan and Policy adopted in 1976 (hereafter referred to as the 1976 plan) was undertaken as a background for discussions of policies in the new planning process.

Citizen input into the planning process was considered very important. The Planning Commission and the County Commission conducted 17 community meetings from April to June of 1997, going directly to the citizens to seek their guidance on what is good about the county which needs to be preserved in the future, and what needs to be changed to make a better future. Approximately 250 citizens participated in the first round of meetings.

The Planning Commission and the County Commission also sponsored a second round of meetings from September to November of 1997 in the same 17 community sites to report results of the first round of meetings, to seek citizen guidance on possible policies for a county plan, and to seek guidance on possible implementation options for a plan. Approximately 450 citizens participated in the second round of meetings.

The County thus has been embarked on a long term planning process for more than a year. The process involved technical analysis, strong citizen input, and continuity back to the last plan of 20 years ago. The Planning Commission and the County Commission continued the process in early 1998 to its next level of considering specific policy options, and specific alternatives for implementation.

CITIZEN INPUT

The results of the first round of citizen input showed a strong preference for preserving the rural, small town and natural character in the county. Also noted was a strong sentiment against land use restrictions and preservation of freedom in the use of land. However, there was also a strong countervailing sentiment that, as part of needed change, something should be done to address land use problems in the county. There was strong support for rational consideration of land use controls, including zoning, in the first round of citizen input meetings.

When results of the first round of citizen input meetings were translated into specific policy options and presented at community meetings, the strong sentiment for preserving the rural/small town and natural character of the county was again confirmed in the second round of citizen input. Responses on specific policy options were as follows:

GUIDING POLICY 1: The rural, small town and natural character of the county should be preserved.

Agree: 86% Disagree: 6% Other: 8%

Objective policy 1A: New development should be designed to fit into the rural character of the county.

Agree: 80% Disagree: 13% Other: 7%

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

Agree: 77% Disagree: 12% Other: 11%

Objective policy 1C: Our beautiful and scenic environment should be protected, including commonly shared views, ridgetops, lake shores, and river banks.

Agree: 85% Disagree: 9% Other: 6%

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

Agree: 88% Disagree: 8% Other: 4%

Objective policy 1E: New commercial development in Townsend and Tuckaleechee Cove should be consistent with the small town and Appalachian heritage look of the area.

Agree: 73% Disagree: 10% Other: 17%

MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

In looking at the policy options, the county could look at the whole jurisdiction at once. However, the county is very diverse. The overall planning process may better be served by directing efforts to one specific aspect or area of the county, while retaining commitment to address all the important aspects and areas of the county in turn.

Mountains are one of the greatest assets in Blount County. This was shown to be of great importance in the citizen input results. Mountain areas of the county will be the focus of this plan as allowed in state statutes (TCA 13-3-303).

In focusing attention on mountain areas, a framework is needed to organize efforts for gathering and analyzing information, identifying issues, and ultimately addressing these issues. This plan focuses on the following aspects of mountain area planning (adapted from "Planning for Hillside Development", by Robert B. Olshansky, Planning Advisory Service Report Number 466, November 1996):

Topography: "mountain" definition based on slope, land form and elevation; topographic map, slope map;

Slope Stability: geological characteristics: geology map;

Soils, Drainage and Erosion: soil capability for septic systems; erosion potential and possible downstream effects on flooding, sedimentation, and water quality; soils map;

Infrastructure: capacities and constraints of roads and utilities;

Access: appropriate road and access design;

Fire Hazard: potential for fire hazard and response;

Natural Qualities: important animal habitats and vegetation communities which may need protection;

Aesthetics: important views; desired components of viewscales;

Recreational/Open Space Values: potential areas for public acquisition; criteria for open space conservation; and

Historical Development: present development patterns and traditional development practices.

ANALYSIS

The 1976 plan developed a wealth of technical information and analysis which may be used as a starting point for addressing many of the above aspects of mountain area planning. Much of the following technical analysis on topography, geology and soils was taken from the 1976 plan analysis sections.

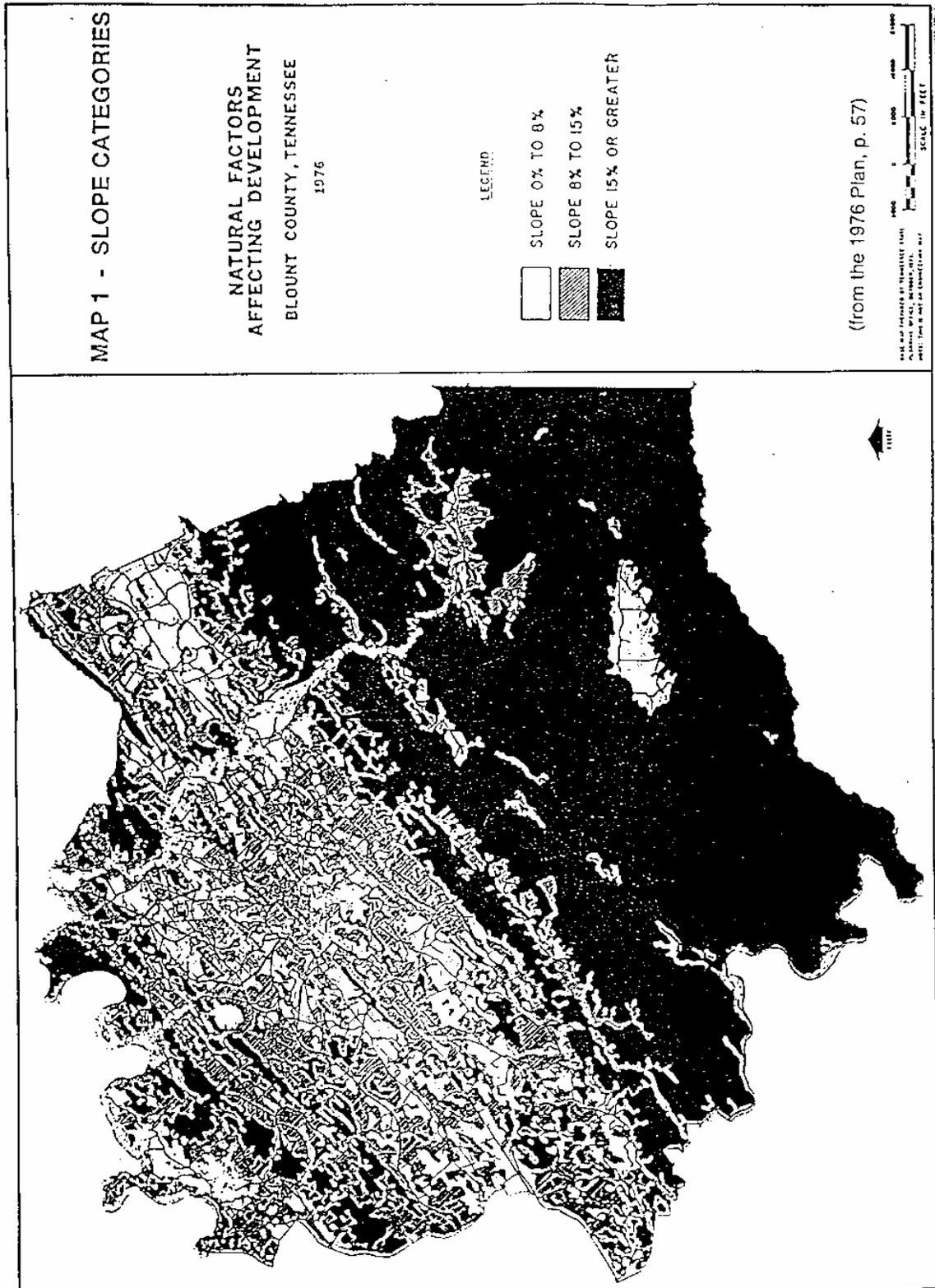
Topography. Mountain areas in the county are identified or defined by three main criteria. First is topography, or the elevation of the land. It is obvious from USGS topographic maps that certain parts of the county from Chilhowee Mountain range to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park reach elevations in excess of 2,000 feet which set these areas apart as different from the lower elevated land toward Maryville and Alcoa. Second is land form, which is directly related to topographic elevation but also considers the characteristic prominence of elevation from surrounding context. Again, there is a dramatic change in land form from the lowland hills and valleys to the prominent mountains of the Chilhowee Mountain range and other mountains into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Also of importance in defining mountain areas is slope of land, or the relationship of vertical elevation of land over a horizontal distance. Slope may be measured in three ways - as angle, as ratio, and as percent slope. For planning purposes, the last measure is most commonly used. Percent slope places the relation between elevation and horizontal distance in whole number form. For example, for an elevation of 60 feet over a horizontal distance of 200 feet, the slope would be $60/200=.30$, or 30 percent. Using this measure, the 1976 plan (pp. 56-59) noted the following major slope categories for development.

Slope 0 - 8 %. Development and land use choices in this area may generally be made with limited attention to topographic factors. However, land use choices must respect other natural factors which influence the land's development capability. Special attention should be given to areas having less than 2 % slope in order that adequate drainage is provided.

Slope 8 - 15 %. The topographic characteristics of land in these areas usually pose no significant barriers to land use or development as long as other natural factors are respected. Land use and development should proceed with caution, however, because slope problems such as road grades, soil erosion, and drainage may occur, especially in the construction of roads. Development should occur in accordance with the basic standards described in the Subdivision Regulations.

Slope 15 % or greater. Land development in these areas is subject to many problems including steep road grades, sewerage disposal, soil erosion and landslides, availability of water, and even vehicular access to the building site.



Except for very low density residential development in some cases, it is recommended that development be restricted in these areas of extreme slope conditions. In cases where land owners wish to subdivide land in these areas, they should do so in accordance with the "Special Development Standards" established by the "Hillside Subdivision Regulations" of the Blount County Planning Commission. A detailed study of all the natural factors is recommended for these areas.

In addition to the above analysis from the 1976 plan, there are two other slope categories of importance to mountain area development planning.

Slope 30 % or greater. This slope is defined in the "Hillside Development Standards" of the Blount County Subdivision Regulations as undevelopable except when the subdivider can prove that development is feasible. This does not apply to division into tracts of five acres or greater, or to land which will be developed with no division involved.

Slope 50 % or greater. Septic fields can be approved on slopes up to 50 %. Thus 50 % or greater slope identifies an extreme classification of feasible development potential under present regulations.

Map 1 is taken from the 1976 plan and shows the extent of the first three slope categories above. The darkest shading highlights the mountainous region in the south of the county, generally from the Chilhowee Mountain range onto the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Slope Stability. The 1976 plan provides a detailed analysis of geological constraints to development in the county. In summary, the plan identifies two main geological associations, being the ridge and valley formations of the lowlands, and the Unaka Mountains. The 1976 plan (pp. 71-72) summarizes analysis of the mountain areas of the county as follows (emphasis added):

The Unaka Mountains are the high, rugged peaks and ranges in southern Blount County. The rocks are meta-morphosed sediments, and consist of slates, quartzites, and conglomerates, with minor limestones. These rocks are greatly folded and faulted, relatively tough and resistant and underlie the high ridges and mountains. They are generally lacking in available lime and so weather to produce acid soils. The steep slopes, high rainfall, and slow decay of the rocks result in generally thin soil cover, commonly with stone fragments in a humic clay. The slaty rocks have cleavages (partings) as a result of metamorphism and break up into slabs or thin sheets. All the rocks are thoroughly fractured. Water and roots penetrate these fractures, loosen the broken fragments, and start them moving down-slope. These conditions produce masses of unstable materials that if undercut, over-saturated, or denuded of vegetation may slide suddenly and with great force and possibly disastrous consequences. Many of

the streams and wet weather drainage courses are marked by trains of bouldery material so formed. Cuts and structures through or located on such materials are extremely hazardous as are developments located down slope from these hazards.

These rocks are generally poor aquifers and yield only small amounts of water to wells. Most of the subsurface water flows along the soil-bedrock interface. Dug wells in places where soils are 10 feet or more thick may supply enough water for a household. Large-yield drilled wells are rare.

The 1976 plan thus documents hazards associated with slope stability in the mountain areas of the county, and also identifies two other constraints of thin soil cover and limited well water supply capability which are related to the geology of the area. Map 2 delimits (with shading) those geological associations identified as having poor capability for mountain development based on slope stability and other geological constraints.

Soils. Given that public sewer treatment is not a viable option in mountainous areas at present, and probably within the foreseeable future, private septic systems or leachate fields will be a necessary part of any development in the mountains of the county. For this reason, soils are of utmost importance in analysis for planning in such areas.

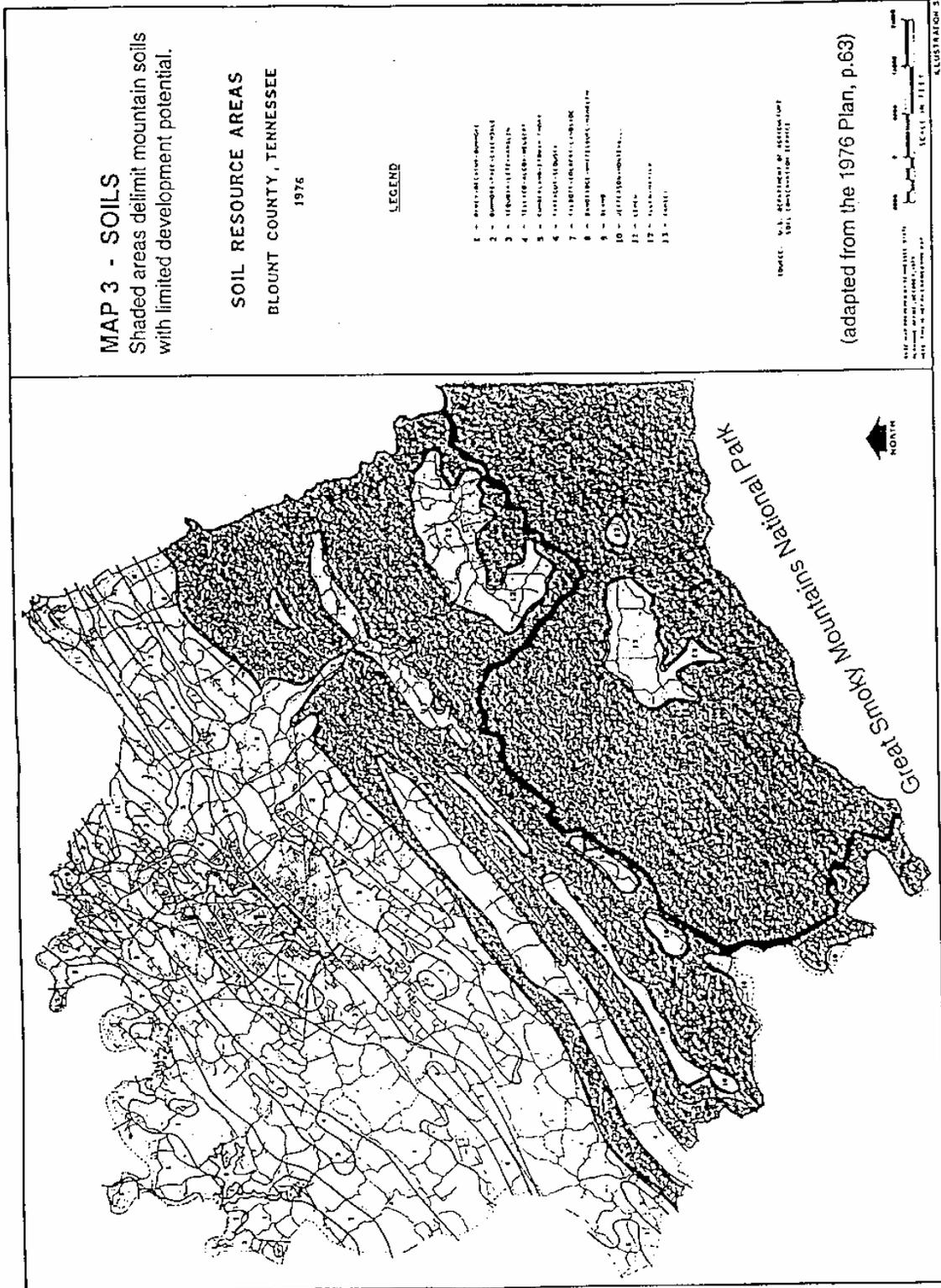
As seen in the analysis under slope stability, soils are generally thin in mountain areas due to underlying geological characteristics. The 1976 plan (pp. 59-69) identifies six major soil associations present in the mountain areas as follows:

Ramsey Association: In general, housing is not recommended for this area. Septic tank systems, due to steep, shallow soils, do not function well. (Great Smoky Mountains, Chilhowee Mountains, other mountains in-between.)

Bland Association: In general this land is not suitable for housing or to septic systems, due to steep, shallow soils. (Little and Short Mountains in southwest of county)

Dandridge-Whitesburg-Hamblen Association: In general, this area is not suitable for housing or to septic tank systems due to steep, shallow, hillsides and wet bottom lands. (Knobs, downslopes of Short and Little Mountains in southwest of county, downslopes of Chilhowee Mountain north of Walland Gap.)

Tellico- Alcoa-Neubert Association: In general, the area is not suitable for housing or septic tanks due to steep slopes and shallow bedrock. There are some areas of gentle slopes with deeper soils, however, that may be suited for urban use. (Land either side of Six Mile and Old Piney Road.)



Jefferson-Montevallo Association: Except for the steepest parts, this area is suitable for housing. Septic tank systems will function in some of the area but the steeper and more stony areas often prevent proper functioning. (Happy Valley, parts of steep slopes of Chilhowee Mountains north of Happy Valley.)

Allen-Hayter Association: Except for the steepest parts, this area is well-suited for housing and septic tank systems. (Millers Cove, Tuckaleechee Cove, and Cades Cove.)

Note that the first three soils associations are identified as not suitable for development. Map 3 highlights (with shading) those soils and shows that they are characteristic of most of the mountain area in the county from the Chilhowee Mountain range and into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Infrastructure - Utilities. Public utilities such as, electricity, water and sewer are often necessary to make development feasible. Electricity can generally be provided to any development in the county. However, provision by means of poles can often mar a mountainside due to the poles and wires themselves, and due to the cutting of trees necessary to clear a path for the lines. Underground power lines are also an option, but face the problem of cutting into already hazardous geology.

Provision for utility water is generally not available at this time at extended mountain elevations due to limits of water pressure. Well water is often not feasible due to limits of aquifer recharge in the mountain geology. Leaching from private septic fields may also pose a problem for on site and down slope wells and springs.

Public sewer is not available to and generally not feasible in mountainous terrain. Private septic systems require disturbance of hazardous geology, construction in poor soils, and leaching into underground drainage flows which may cause health hazards down slope.

Infrastructure - Roads. There are several aspects of roads which are of concern in mountain area planning. Roads are difficult to engineer in mountainous terrain, and the cutting and filling required disturbs the already hazardous geology of the area. Road cuts divert and concentrate drainage on sensitive slopes, increasing hazards of erosion and land slides. Maintenance of roads is more expensive in mountainous terrain, especially for snow removal. Road cuts on mountain slopes require removal of vegetation and exposing of underlying rock that leaves highly visible disturbance to the natural viewscape. Existing roads leading into mountain areas are often of limited capacity for further development. Other aspects of roads are considered under access below.

Access. Existing access to mountain areas is often limited and constrained by road width. Public fire and emergency access is often constrained by narrow

road width, excessive slope of roads, sharp cut-back curves, and remoteness of developed sites. Access to development parcels for construction and for driveways is often constrained on slopes perpendicular to main access roads. Although lowland road engineering design standards may be relaxed in mountainous terrain, construction of new roads often pushes the limits of reasonable access standards for slope and curve of roads. The frequent choice of private roads in mountainous terrain often poses problems of long term maintenance and limits to access for public services such as school buses.

Fire Hazard. Fire hazard is increased with introduction of development and other human activity into forested mountain areas. Remoteness of sites and limitation of both access and infrastructure capacity makes fire response difficult. Sloping land tends to intensify spread of fire due to generally higher winds and upslope drafts.

Natural Qualities. The mountains provide natural habitat for many species of plants and animals, particularly the bear population which ranges from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park over to the foot slopes of Chilhowee Mountain.

Aesthetics. The Chilhowee Mountain range provides a very important component of the mountain viewscape for most lowland development in the county. Chilhowee Mountain and other mountains in the county provide a very important viewscape not only for residents in the coves and hollows of the mountains, but also for the tourist industry in the county. Natural and uninterrupted ridgetops and uninterrupted steep side slopes of mountains are an especially important component of county viewsapes.

Recreation/Open Space Values. Mountains have traditionally been a rural recreational resource for hiking, camping, nature observation and hunting. Open space is often lost to functional use due to fragmentation of parcels with development of mountains.

Historic Development. Any planning for mountain development should consider existing, historical development patterns which have generally not intruded onto steep slopes. Traditional values of contiguous, extended family homesites are common in the community and should be accommodated whenever possible. Existing parcels with formal plans, developed infrastructure, and intended for immediate development should be accommodated whenever possible.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO ISSUES OF MOUNTAIN LAND DEVELOPMENTS

There are several alternative approaches to issues of mountain land development. Some are best left to private entities to implement. Others are best left to other levels of state and federal government. Still others provide avenues for present consideration by the Blount County Government. The following are the alternatives considered in this plan:

Public Use. The county or state government could consider purchase of land for public use. This would require considerable funding to address the extent of mountain area in the county, and would take private land off the tax roles. While this option may be considered in some instances for public parks and recreation areas, it is not considered as a realistic option to address all the mountain area in the county and all the issues related to development in the mountains.

Land conservancy. Land conservancy involves either voluntary private restriction of development and use, voluntary donation of land to a second party for restriction of development and use, or private second party purchase of land, development rights, development easements, or restrictions on use. This avenue is being actively pursued by the Foothills Land Conservancy to provide an undeveloped buffer to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and to protect the wildlife habitat of animals such as bears which migrate extensively in the mountains of the county. This option may be supported by Blount County Government, but again may not be feasible to cover all the mountain areas in the county, and would not necessarily address all the issues of mountain development.

Ridgetop act. Johnson County in upper East Tennessee was able to have special state legislation passed to address development on ridgetops above 3,000 feet elevation. This special state legislation was very limited, and would not apply to Blount County. The county may wish to consider a request to the State Legislature for a special act to address ridgetop development, but this would not be a viable alternative to address all the issues of mountain development.

Local mountain development ordinance. An option to address all mountain development issues in a free standing mountain development ordinance was considered. However, there are no specific or general state statutes which allow a county to adopt such freestanding ordinances. The county is limited in this respect as in all actions by what state enabling statutes allow.

Specific and Limited Development Regulations. There are various special purpose regulations which may be applicable to development of mountain land. These regulations are limited to specific aspects of development such as septic field approval through the County Environmental Department, and erosion control

permits through state regulations under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. The County may wish to review the septic field approval process to find ways of addressing some of the hazards and constraints to mountain development. The County may also wish to take a more active role in identifying when and under what circumstances the state may need to be involved in local development approvals for erosion control. There may be other local, state or federal regulations which need to be explored. However, the one weakness of all special purpose regulations is the limited span of authority to address the wide variety of issues of mountain development.

Recommended Good Design Practice. Literature in planning and land development provides guidance on good design practice for various development situations, including mountain situations. In general, the literature recommends that steeply sloping land not be developed, but also provides some guidance on how to appropriately develop in steeply sloping land if necessary. This literature could be collated as a body to provide local recommendations on good design practice. However, if the good design practice is not combined with regulatory enforcement capability, its effect is limited to voluntary compliance.

Subdivision Regulations. State statutes already exist which enable local governments to adopt subdivision regulations to address the development of land in the process of dividing that land and providing improvements such as roads and utilities.

The subdivision regulations are intended to provide the following (from state statutes on county subdivision regulations - TCA 13-3-403):

harmonious development of the region and its environs;

coordination of new roads with existing or planned roads;

adequate open spaces for traffic, light, air and recreation;

conservation of or production of adequate transportation, water, drainage, and sanitary facilities;

avoidance of population congestion; and

avoidance of such scattered or premature subdivision of land as would involve danger or injury to health, safety, or prosperity by reason of the lack of water supply, drainage, transportation, or other public services or would necessitate an excessive expenditure of public funds for the supply of such services.

The regional planning commission of any county is empowered to adopt subdivision regulations to address the following (from state statutes on county subdivision regulations - TCA 13-3-401, 402 and 403):

the subdivision of land (division of any tract into lots less than five acres, or any division of land no matter how large the resulting tracts which requires extension of new roads or utilities).

the manner in which roads shall be graded and improved;

the manner in which water, sewer, and other utility mains, piping, connections, or other facilities shall be installed; and

other regulations consistent with purposes identified above.

Subdivision regulations are immediately available for addressing many of the physical development issues involved with mountain land development. The County already has adopted subdivision regulations, and already has a set of specific regulations addressing mountain land development. However, the present mountain development regulations do not cover divisions of land greater than five acres. Also, if there is development of land without any associated division of the land, or if the land is exempt under state statutes from subdivision regulations by division into parcels of greater than five acres with no extension of roads and utilities, then present regulations do not apply. In addition, subdivision regulations only address issues of division of land and provision of improvements such as roads, utilities and septic field capability. The site specific development of the land into structures, specific septic field construction, and grading of the landscape are not addressed in the subdivision regulations.

Zoning. State statutes already exist which enable local governments to adopt regulations of land development and use.

State statutes set forth several purposes for zoning (from state statutes on county zoning - TCA 13-7-103) Such regulations shall be designed and enacted for the purpose of the following:

promoting the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the state and of its counties;

lessening congestion on roads and reducing wastes of excessive amounts of roads;

securing safety from fire and other dangers;

promoting adequate light and air;

preventing excessive concentration of population, and excessive and wasteful scattering of population; and

promoting such distribution of population, development and land use as will facilitate and conserve adequate provisions for transportation, water flowage, water supply, drainage, sanitation, educational opportunity, recreation, soil fertility, food supply, and protection of urban and nonurban development.

The county legislative body of any county is empowered in accordance with the conditions and the procedure specified in state statutes, to regulate the following (from state statutes on county zoning - TCA 13-7-101):

location, height and size of buildings and other structures;

percentage of lot which may be occupied, the sizes of yards, courts and other open spaces;

the density and distribution of population;

the uses of buildings and structures for trade, industry, residence, recreation or other purposes;

the uses of land for trade, industry, residence, recreation, agriculture, forestry, soil conservation, water supply conservation, or other purposes; and

flood areas to gain eligibility for flood insurance

Zoning could directly address many of the issues involved with mountain development, particularly those issues not addressed through subdivision regulations or where there is development of undivided land. Zoning is particularly well suited to be used to integrate specific and limited regulations such as septic field approval and erosion control into site specific development review. There are some weaknesses in zoning as far as addressing issues of aesthetics and reservation of land for public use recreation.

REGULATION AS A VIABLE AND ACCEPTABLE OPTION FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES OF MOUNTAIN AREA DEVELOPMENT

As noted in the introduction, there is a strong sentiment against zoning and land use regulation in the county. On the other hand, there is a growing realization among a majority of citizens that some sort of regulation may be necessary to address the issues of land development and use in our fast growing county. In this regard, results of the second round of citizen input meetings provide some basis for identifying viable and acceptable options from those options identified above. Responses on specific regulatory policy options were as follows:

GUIDING POLICY 2: Land use and development should be managed and regulated in order to preserve the quality of our growing county.

Agree: 74% Disagree: 14% Other: 12%

Objective policy 2A: Zoning and other land development regulations should be formulated and adopted.

Agree: 65% Disagree: 24% Other: 11%

Objective policy 2B: Development on mountains and ridgetops should be regulated to protect sensitive areas of slope and viewscapes.

Agree: 76% Disagree: 13% Other: 11%

Objective policy 2C: Development in flood plains should be regulated to allow county residents the opportunity to purchase flood insurance

Agree: 65% Disagree: 17% Other: 18%

Objective policy 2D: Junk on private property should be regulated.

Agree: 73% Disagree: 21% Other: 6%

Objective policy 2E: The safety and quality of buildings should be insured through regulation.

Agree: 72% Disagree: 19% Other: 9%

Objective policy 2F: Billboards, signs, towers, and other structures which could impact the views of the county should be regulated.

Agree: 80% Disagree: 14% Other: 6%

While the above results indicate that land use regulations are considered as a viable and acceptable option, there is still a reluctance to unduly infringe on traditional values of freedom in the use of land. One policy option was presented in the second round of citizen input which stated that there should be no zoning or any similar ordinances of any kind to regulate the use and development of land in Blount County. This policy option was agreed to by only 20 percent of participants, with 71 percent disagreeing. An alternative policy which recognized the need for some form of land use regulation, but with limits on what government should address, was also presented with the following result:

GUIDING POLICY 3: The guiding principle in any government actions in relation to the use and development of land should be to limit regulations to specific health, safety and welfare objectives balanced with responsible freedom in the use of land.

Agree: 58% Disagree: 26% Other: 16%

This indicates that any planning for land use in the county should not unduly infringe on the private use and enjoyment of land, and should be directly linked to a clear determination of public health, safety and welfare.

In the second round of citizen input meetings, a question was also asked whether or not specific implementation options were appropriate and desirable for consideration in a county plan. Responses were as follows:

Subdivision Regulations	Yes: 75%	No: 10%	Other: 15%
Zoning	Yes: 64%	No: 22%	Other: 14%
Recommended examples of good design	Yes: 53%	No: 24%	Other: 23%
Land Conservancy	Yes: 56%	No: 18%	Other: 26%
Ridgetop Development Ordinance	Yes: 65%	No: 17%	Other: 18%
Building Codes and Building Permits	Yes: 62%	No: 22%	Other: 16%

These results highlight three things. First, regulation of land development and use is acceptable as an option for implementing the county plan. The specific options of subdivision regulations and zoning showed strong acceptance for

inclusion in the county plan. These two options were also identified in a previous section as viable tools available to the county government for addressing land development and use issues for mountain areas.

Second, specific regulations of ridgetop development showed strong acceptance for inclusion in the county plan. This provides a more specific indication of viability and acceptability of measures directed to mountain development.

Third, those options with little or no potential for direct and mandatory regulation of land development and use, being land conservancy and recommended examples of good design, showed weakest acceptance. Compared to results for subdivision regulations and zoning, this would indicate a greater preference for some sort of certainty in application and enforcement.

Note that building codes and building permits showed strong acceptance as a tool for implementing a county plan. Building permits or some sort of permit system would need to be a part of any zoning plan to allow proper enforcement of regulations.

Another indication of acceptability of zoning as an option to address land development and use issues in the county concerns two referenda which were outside the formal planning process. The first referendum was held in November of 1993 with the questions being "For the adoption of county zoning in Blount County by the county legislative body" and "Against the adoption of county zoning in Blount County by the county legislative body". The results of that referendum were 13,633 (45.87%) for and 16,085 (54.13%) against, thus indicating a majority against zoning at that time.

The second referendum was held November of 1996 with the question being "Should Blount County formulate its own land use planning or zoning plan?" The results of that referendum were 18,017 (63.82%) yes, and 10,216 (36.18%) no. The results of the last referendum were consistent with subsequent results through the citizen input meetings. This would again indicate that there is still strong opposition to land use controls in the county, but that a majority of the citizens have come to realize that some form of land use controls are necessary for proper development of land.

A PLAN FOR MOUNTAIN AREAS

Basis for a Partial Plan. State statutes allow for partial area planning in the county as follows: “The regional planning commission may adopt the regional plan as a whole by a single resolution, or, as the work of making the plan progresses, may from time to time adopt a part or parts thereof.” (TCA 13-3-303) This plan is presented as a partial plan of Blount County focusing on mountain areas. It is the intent of the Blount County Planning Commission that planning will proceed in successive parts to cover the whole of the county.

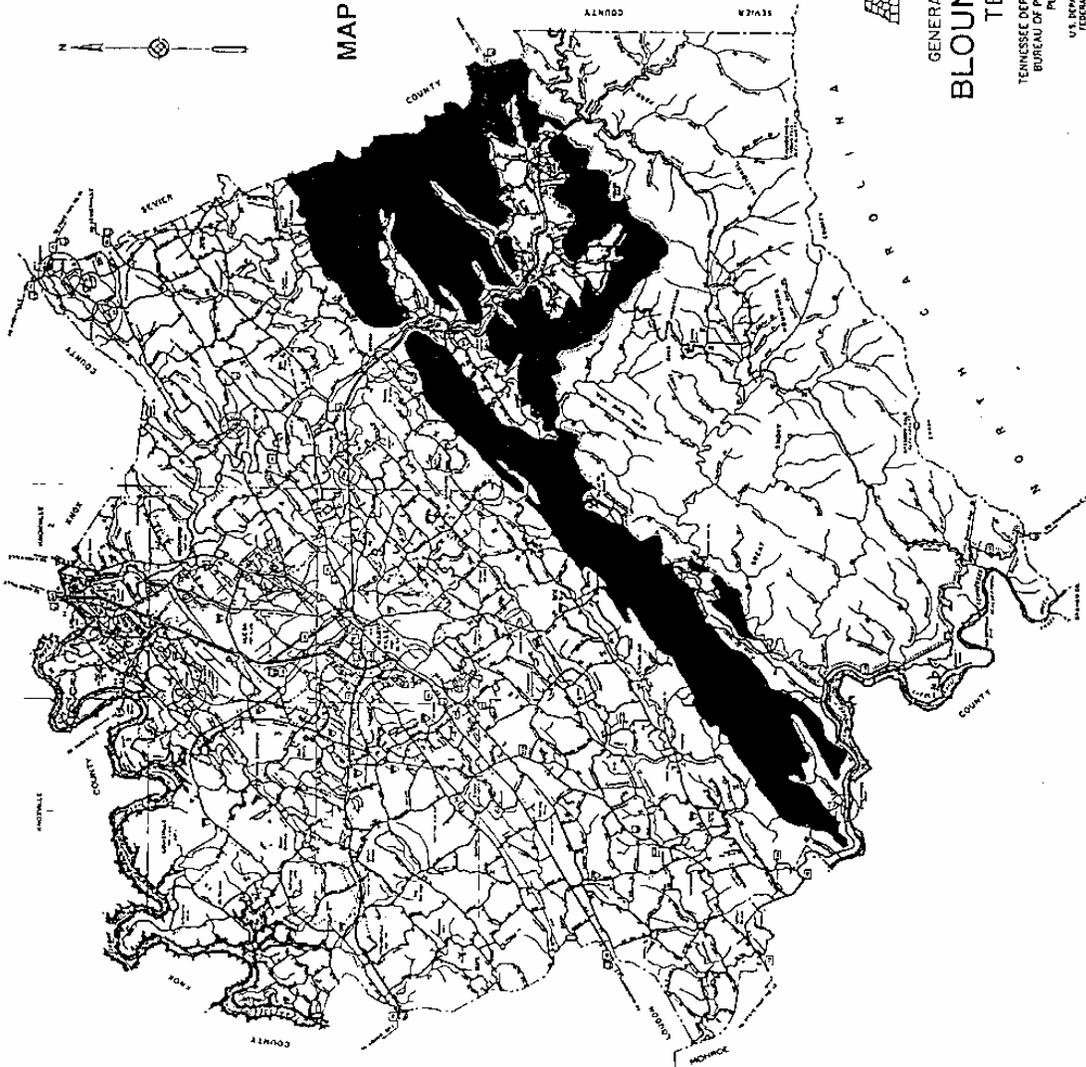
Purpose of the Plan. In accordance with state statutes (TCA 13-3-302), this plan is made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated, adjusted, efficient and economic development of mountain areas within the county region which will, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of present and future inhabitants of the county, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including among other things, such distribution of population and of the uses of land for urbanization, trade, industry, habitation, recreation, agriculture, forestry and other uses as will tend to create conditions favorable to transportation, health, safety, civic activities and educational and cultural opportunities, reduce the wastes of financial and human resources which result from either excessive congestion or excessive scattering of population, and tend toward an efficient and economic utilization, conservation and production of the supply of food, water, minerals, drainage, sanitary and other facilities and resources.

Limitations on Purpose of the Plan. It is not the purpose or intent of this plan to so limit the development of land that it has no viable private economic use. It is also not the purpose or intent of this plan to limit farming, or the development of land for farm uses. However, the intent of this plan is to help preserve farmland when reasonable and consistent with general policies below.

Definition of Mountain Area. Mountain area shall be defined as all land from the base of the north face of the Chilhowee Mountain range southward to the boundary of the Great Smoky Mountains national park in Blount County generally of elevation greater than 1,200 feet, except for areas of Happy Valley, the Flats in Top of the World, East and West Millers Cove, Tuckaleechee Cove and Dry Valley with slopes less than 15 percent. Such area is identified in Map 4 and associated larger scale map adopted as part of this plan.

Findings. This plan finds that mountain areas in Blount County pose several issues for land development and use. Mountain areas are characterized by highly sloping land, hazardous geology, and thin soils generally unsuitable for development. Development on highly sloping land of greater than 15 % slope creates several potential impacts on health, safety and welfare including limited

MAP 4 - MOUNTAIN AREAS FOR THIS PLAN



GENERAL HIGHWAY MAP
BLOUNT COUNTY
TENNESSEE

PREPARED BY
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUREAU OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING DIVISION
101 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37203



existing road capacity serving mountain areas, steep road grades and difficult road geometrics, difficulties with constructing viable septic fields, increased potential for soil erosion, increased potential for regional ground and surface water pollution and flooding, increased potential for landslides and shifting of residential and other structures, limited availability of potable water for human consumption, limited availability of water for fire protection, limited access for fire protection services, increased public expense for provision of public services such as school buses, road maintenance and snow removal, degradation or destruction of wildlife habitat, degradation or destruction of important regional viewscales, and disruption of functional openspace.

General Policies. Based on direct citizen input and consideration of a desirable future for Blount County, this plan adopts the following general policies:

The rural and natural character of mountain area in the county should be preserved.

New development should be designed to fit into the rural character of the mountain area.

Our beautiful and scenic environment should be protected, including commonly shared mountain area viewscales and ridgetops.

The rivers and streams in and flowing from the mountain area should be protected as part of our natural environment and drinking water resource, and as part of our scenic and recreational resource.

The health, safety, and welfare of present and future inhabitants in the mountain area, and those inhabitants in the rest of the county which may be affected by activities in the mountains, should be preserved and protected.

Specific Policies. Based on direct citizen input, based on the importance of mountain areas in defining quality of life in Blount County, and based on the above findings in relation to issues of health, safety and welfare, this plan proposes the following specific policies:

Land use and development in the mountain area should be managed and regulated in order to preserve the quality of our growing county.

Zoning and other land development regulations should be formulated and adopted specific to the mountain area.

Development on mountains and ridgetops should be regulated to protect sensitive areas of slope and viewscales in the mountain area.

The safety and quality of buildings in the mountain area should be insured through regulation.

Billboards, signs, towers, and other structures in the mountain area which could impact the views of the county should be regulated.

Guiding Policy on Land Use and Development Regulations. The right of individuals to the ownership, use and development of their land is highly valued as part of our traditional values, and is also protected in the Tennessee and U.S. Constitutions. Within any society, there exist potential avenues for conflict in the use and development of land which affect the health, safety and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the county. It is within the power of county government, and also its responsibility, to regulate activities in the use and development of land which may cause such conflicts and result in such effects on health, safety and welfare. Such power and responsibility has been upheld as consistent with constitutional provisions relating to the private ownership of land. However, it is very important that government actions do not unduly infringe on the private use and enjoyment of land. This plan adopts the following policy to guide any government actions in relation to the regulation of use and development of land:

The guiding principle in any government actions in relation to the use and development of land should be to limit regulations to specific health, safety and welfare objectives balanced with responsible freedom in the use of land.

Plan for Action. In relation to issues of mountain land development, the Blount County Planning Commission commits to the following:

Review the Blount County Subdivision Regulations and adopt possible amendments to better address issues of mountain area development;

Formulate and recommend to the County Commission a zoning plan, including text of zoning regulations and a zoning map, for mountain areas as defined in this plan;

Study and recommend to the County Commission a building permit system for the county as part of the enforcement mechanism for regulations;

Study and recommend to the County Commission a building code for the county to help insure proper construction of buildings in mountain areas;

Research planning and land development literature to collate a set of recommended examples of good design for mountain land development; and

Review existing special purpose regulations of county, state and federal governments which may be applicable to addressing issues of mountain area development.

Plan for Support and Coordination. The Blount County Planning Commission recommends the following actions for county government:

Explore avenues to identify and acquire mountain land specifically for public recreation, conservation and openspace use.

Recommend to the state legislature special or general acts to regulate development on or near ridgetops at elevations greater than 1,200 feet in the county.

Recommend to the state legislature special or general legislation to limit cutting of trees in the process of development of land for other than farming or forestry purposes.

Coordinate with and support private sector efforts to limit development within mountain areas.

(NOTE: This is a copy of the plan adopted in March of 1997, with maps from the original plan scanned and inserted into the original Microsoft Word document.)