



**Bladen County Strategic Planning Committee Report  
May, 1997**



## Message From The Chairman

The process for developing a strategic plan for Bladen County is outlined in the introduction which follows. The four areas of most concern — the environment, infrastructure and economic development, education and quality of life — were determined from broad citizen input.

In most counties this process begins with one or two large community meetings to gather input from the county as a whole. In our case, the Steering Committee chose to have seven meetings, one in each of Bladen County's selected communities of Tar Heel, White Lake, Kelly, East Arcadia, Bladenboro, Clarkton and Elizabethtown. In this way we were able to gather input relatively free of bias favoring the needs of one area of the county over another. In terms of citizen participation over 500 people have been involved in this strategic planning process.

As chairman, I certainly want to thank the facilitators from Lumber River Council of Governments and the North Carolina Division of Community Assistance. Obviously the plan presented in the Final Report could not have been completed without their patient and professional guidance. Bladen County owes its greatest gratitude to the four Task Force Chairpersons and to the Vice Chairman of the Bladen County Strategic Planning Committee, Sherwin Rice.

I am proud to have served on a committee which included such outstanding members as Bruce Dickerson, Dr. Ann Elks, Darryl Hardee, David Kirby, Dr. Margaret Lawrence, Horace McKeithan, Dan McLaurin, Dr. Darrell Page, Dr. Martha Warner and Linda Melvin, who served diligently from beginning to end. The Steering Committee especially appreciates the interest and involvement of various county, municipal officials and invited resource people who served and provided first hand knowledge in key areas of concern for the four Task Forces.

The consensus of ideas and recommendations thus presented should be an invaluable tool for officials and planners who will be plotting the course and implementing the actions to "Bring On Bladen!" We already have a wonderful place to live, work and play blessed by natural resources and the friendliest people in North Carolina. Appropriate planning signals the dawn of a new day for Bladen County and all its citizens.

Lee W. Hauser  
Chairman

**Bladen County Strategic Plan**  
**Bring on BLADEN**

**INTRODUCTION**

*A sustainable county* has a strong economy, a clean environment, social equity, and civic engagement. It is the goal of this Strategic Plan to begin a process of continuous self-examination, built around citizen involvement, to:

1. assess strengths and liabilities,
2. establish long-term strategies to address liabilities, and,
3. provide a road map to becoming a more sustainable community.

Sustainability is an ethic and a vision of the future.

The complexity of problems and issues facing Bladen cannot all be solved through traditional thinking and actions. We cannot expect the traditional solutions that are based on fragmentation, confrontation, or bliss to guide us where our citizens want us to be. Sustainability is dependent upon relationships, strategic thinking, and efficient linkages between various partners.

How can we work towards a more sustainable county? One way is to adopt a set of goals and strategies, and then apply them to the management and development of Bladen County.

***The Process***

The Bladen County Strategic Planning process began in early 1994. Several parties began to notice the need to conduct a countywide planning process that could be used to assess strengths, identify liabilities, and focus limited resources to address the future's most crucial needs. It was also apparent that a number of federal and state funding agencies are beginning to look more favorably towards communities that are making efforts to improve a community's self-sustainability.

In order to take the initiative, the County Board of Commissioners agreed to assemble a *Steering Committee* to take charge of conducting a countywide strategic planning process. The Bladen County Strategic Planning Steering Committee was appointed with representation from throughout the County. The Committee represents a cross-section of the population, including geography, race, gender, employment, and other factors.

The Steering Committee conducted its first meeting on November 6, 1995. After an orientation concerning strategic planning, the Committee elected Lee Hauser as Chairman. The Committee also began the process of conducting seven community

meetings across the County during early 1996. In the Spring of 1996, the Steering Committee evaluated the results of the public meetings and began to consider the areas of most concern. The Committee also received and considered data and statistics pulled together as part of an environmental scan. The Committee completed work for early 1996 by selecting four areas of concern and by recruiting task force chairs to oversee the next phase of the process.

With the Fall of 1996 came a resumption of the process and the announcement of the Task Force Issues and the respective Task Force Chairs. These **Task Force Issues and Chairs** were:

Environment -- *EM Flynn, Chair*  
Infrastructure and Economic Development -- *Robin Summerlin, Chair*  
Education -- *Dennis Troy, Chair*  
Quality of Life -- *Dorothy McKoy, Chair*

On October 24, 1996, the Steering Committee hosted a Kickoff Reception announcing the creation of the four Task Forces, and inviting citizen participation. Numerous volunteers agreed to serve on the Task Forces. The Committee also circulated this information through the media and at such events as the Agricultural Exhibition.

The four Task Forces began meeting in early November and were given through March, 1997 to complete their work and submit their reports to the Steering Committee. The reports were then compiled to create this Strategic Plan.



## **SUMMARY**

**GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

**of the**

**TASK FORCE REPORTS**

**INFRASTRUCTURE / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE  
SUMMARY - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**MISSION STATEMENT:** To assure adequate infrastructure capabilities which continue to encourage sound economic development opportunities for the citizens of Bladen County. In assessing these needs, it is understood that to maximize economic opportunities, Bladen's human potential must be fully realized. Although it does not appear within our Task Force report, we recognize the need for an excellent, modern, high-tech oriented education system.

**GOAL #1**    Ensure essential water and wastewater infrastructure is in place throughout the county.

Priority

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Develop sufficient water and wastewater reserve capacities.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Encourage sound planning for the county-wide water system (currently in Phase III).

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Maintain a clean and safe groundwater supply.

**GOAL #2**    Reassess economic development efforts in a way that includes representatives from all agencies interested in development.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Develop policies to maintain and expand existing industrial base, including tourism.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Educate the public about the importance of economic development.

Second        **OBJECTIVE:** Explore barriers to economic development.

Second        **OBJECTIVE:** Develop a source of economic development funds/incentives for the county.

Third          **OBJECTIVE:** Diversify economic development recruitment.

Third          **OBJECTIVE:** Develop county industrial parks one at a time to ensure viable options for industry. Continue to encourage other locations that meet industry needs.

**GOAL #3** Encourage and support small business/industry start-up and expansion.

Second **OBJECTIVE:** Support the development of a small business incubator in the county.

Second **OBJECTIVE:** Increase level of business financing.

**ENVIRONMENT TASK FORCE  
SUMMARY - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The mission of the Environmental Task Force is to identify environmental issues affecting all Bladen County citizens today and in the future and to provide broad based proposals for any protective/corrective actions necessary.

**Goal**            Protection of Bladen County's Groundwater.

**Priority**

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Build and maintain effective private residential septic systems.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Reduce non point source pollution.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Regulate and monitor effects of Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs) on groundwater supplies.

**Goal**            To implement Land Use Planning within the County.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Plan for growth and development with major emphasis on environmental protection.

**Goal**            Improve the environmental aesthetics of the County.

First            **OBJECTIVE:** Involve the public in taking responsibility for the "clean and green" look of the County.

Second        **OBJECTIVE:** Encourage the establishment of new ordinances and the enforcement of existing ordinances to improve the aesthetics of the County.

**Goal**            Conservation of lakes and rivers

**Goal**            Preservation of Wetlands

**Goal**            Reduction of Exposure to Hazardous Materials

**Goal**            Selective Cutting Practices

**Goal**            Protection of Air Quality

## EDUCATION TASK FORCE SUMMARY - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**MISSION STATEMENT:** To identify strategies to involve the entire community in the support and enhancement of educational opportunities of all citizens of Bladen County. We believe in lifelong learning, diversity of opportunities, and encouragement of public involvement.

**GOAL** Educational opportunities to Bladen County residents of all ages and income levels, allowing greater employment opportunities and improved quality of life standards.

### Priority

**OBJECTIVE A:** Increase awareness of the importance of education and learning to families, parents, children, and the community as a whole and to increase the level of parental involvement.

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| First   | 1. Businesses encourage employee participation.               |
| First   | 2. Businesses provide employee resources.                     |
| First   | 3. Schools create alliances with local ministers.             |
| First** | 4. Increase teacher supplement.                               |
| First** | 5. Connect schools through technology infrastructure.         |
| Second  | 6. Academic Achievement Recognition Program                   |
| Second  | 7. Advertise school news.                                     |
| Second  | 8. Media give more recognition for academic achievement, etc. |

**OBJECTIVE B:** Reduce the level of illiteracy in adults.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| First  | 1. Greater support for Literacy Council.                            |
| First  | 2. Churches encourage participation in classes.                     |
| Second | 3. Publicize programs and services of BCC and the Literacy Council. |
| Second | 4. Churches encourage the desire to improve reading skills.         |

**OBJECTIVE C:** Reduce the dropout rate in the public schools.

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|---------|--|
| First** | 1. Expand Drop-Out Prevention Program of the public schools. |
| Second  | 2. Lobby to change state law.                                |

**OBJECTIVE D:** Find additional sources of funding for the public schools and other educational opportunities.

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| First** | 1. Create educational foundation.                      |
| Second  | 2. Hire full time person to research and write grants. |

\*\* *Notes the Committee's top four priorities.*

## QUALITY OF LIFE TASK FORCE SUMMARY - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The purpose of the Quality of Life Task Force is to identify and focus on issues that significantly impact the optimum quality of life for the citizens of Bladen County.

**GOAL**           Enhanced Law Enforcement and Public Safety Service Delivery.

**Priority**

First           **OBJECTIVE:** Enhance effective and efficient law enforcement through community involvement.

Second       **OBJECTIVE:** Enhanced Public Safety Services.

**GOAL**           Encourage opportunities for Local Government and citizens in Bladen to collaborate on future goals and strategies.

First           **OBJECTIVE:** Improve opportunities for communication between local elected officials and citizens.

**GOAL**           Encourage volunteerism to tap experience and foster neighborhood and community relations.

First           **OBJECTIVE:** Create an interagency council that includes all public agencies, non-profits, service agencies, and citizen volunteers in order to better coordinate service delivery to the public.

Second       **OBJECTIVE:** Develop a more systematic program for developing and harnessing volunteer organizations for use in human service resource delivery.

**GOAL**           Encourage Wellness and Preventive Health Care.

First           **OBJECTIVE:** Establish a total fitness center.

Second:       **OBJECTIVE:** Establish wellness programs.



# **TASK FORCE REPORTS**

## **TASK FORCE REPORT ON:**

**Infrastructure / Economic  
Development      Page 10**

**Environment      Page 18**

**Education      Page 26**

**Quality of Life      Page 33**

# TASK FORCE ON INFRASTRUCTURE / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## MISSION STATEMENT

To assure adequate infrastructure capabilities which continue to encourage sound economic development opportunities for the citizens of Bladen County. In assessing these needs, it is understood that to maximize economic opportunities, Bladen's human potential must be fully realized. Although it does not appear within our Task Force report, we recognize the need for an excellent, modern, high-tech oriented education system.

### Goal

**ENSURE ESSENTIAL WATER AND WASTEWATER  
INFRASTRUCTURE IS IN PLACE THROUGHOUT  
THE COUNTY.**

**Policy Statement:** Water and wastewater services are essential to County economic development.

### Target Objectives:

- A. Develop sufficient water and wastewater reserve capacities.

### Procedures:

- Recognizing there are three Wastewater Studies presently being conducted (Lumber River, Cape Fear and Lower Cape Fear), urge the County to oversee all three and decide which areas should participate in which regional project.
- Once Wastewater plans are endorsed, commit county resources to see the plans through to implementation.
- Encourage the County to take the lead in a study of alternative water sources (other than current groundwater sources). Take advantage of current USGS

study through LRCOG) and involve industries that use large amounts of water (Cogentrix, Carolina Foods).

**Resources:** County Commission, Municipalities, Industries

**Timetable:** ongoing

**Priority:** First

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Commitments by local governments to participate in various wastewater studies.
- County commitment of resources to wastewater projects.

**B. Encourage sound planning for the county-wide water system (currently in Phase III)**

**Procedures:**

- Identify economic development corridors and upgrade water lines to accommodate industry.
- Involve existing industries in water system planning to ensure their plans for expansion are considered when planning and sizing lines.

**Resources:** Municipal Officials, County Commission, Industry leaders

**Timetable:** ongoing

**Priority:** First

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Progress toward the county-wide water system.

**C. Maintain a clean and safe groundwater supply.**

**Procedures:**

- Support statewide legislation that would protect groundwater supplies.

- Encourage the development of land use control policies to protect groundwater supplies.
- Increase health department requirements for well testing.

**Resources:** County Planner, County Health Board, County Commission

**Timetable:** Summer 1997

**Priority:** First

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Adoption of land use plan and land use controls.
- Adoption of local regulations for well testing.

**Goal**

**REASSESS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN A WAY THAT INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL AGENCIES INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENT.**

**Policy Statement:** The most effective economic development efforts will be multi-agency efforts.

**Target Objectives:**

- A. Develop policies to maintain and expand existing industrial base, including tourism.

**Procedures:**

- Encourage all Economic Development groups to meet and work together by holding regular meetings of the chairs of all groups, including the Chamber of Commerce to encourage cooperation and good faith. This should be coordinated through the ED Commission.
- Monitor the effects of changing the school calendar on local tourism.
- Encourage businesses to open on-site child care.

- Continue on-going efforts to monitor existing industries (regarding their problems and concerns) and share this information with other economic development resource groups. These other groups may offer assistance in some cases.
- Encourage groups interested in hunting to promote hunting vacations in the County.

**Resources:** Committee of 100, Chamber of Commerce, EDC Team, Bladen's Bloomin', Bladenboro Development Corp, County Economic Development Board, Bladenboro Merchants and Friends, Civic Clubs, Elizabethtown Airport Commission, Elizabethtown Commerce Development Corporation

**Timetable:** Fall 1997

**Priority:** First

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Increases in number of jobs attracted to the County.
- Creation of a forum for all economic development interests.

**B. Educate the public about the importance of economic development.**

**Procedure:**

- Publicize the importance of the industrial tax base (in relation to the property tax base) through news releases, Chamber newsletter, monthly report and other means.

**Resources:** Chamber of Commerce, County Economic Development Commission

**Timetable:** Fall 1997

**Priority:** First

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Tax information published in various media.

**C. Explore barriers to economic development**

**Procedures:**

- Support control over land uses (mobile home park regulations, intensive livestock ordinances etc.) that may hinder economic development.
- Expand the role of the EDC Team to include working with existing industries and those being recruited.
- Simplify the permitting process by developing "how to" manuals for start-up small business to use.

**Resources:** Bladen Community College Small Business Center, County Economic Development Commission, County Commission

**Timetable:** January 1998

**Priority:** Second

**Benefit Level:** Medium

**Evaluation Process:**

- Adoption of appropriate regulations.
- The creation of a "How to" manual for start-up businesses.

**D. Develop a source of economic development funds/incentives for the county.**

**Procedures:**

- Develop a policy to make economic development grants based on projected tax base/number of jobs created/production. The policy could require the industry to make a contribution to the revolving loan fund.
- Create a capital reserve fund for Industrial Infrastructure improvements on a county-wide basis.
- Publicize and take advantage of the county's economic development Revolving Loan Fund.

**Resources:** County Commission, Committee of 100, County Economic Development Commission

**Timetable:** Spring 1998

**Priority:** Second

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Development and adoption of policies to maximize the use of the revolving loan fund.
- Creation of a capital reserve fund for infrastructure improvements.

**E. Diversify economic development recruitment**

**Procedures:**

- Review all current recruitment efforts to determine which are most effective.
- Encourage the Bladen County Economic Development Commission to review and coordinate all current economic development recruitment efforts.
- Survey industries to determine "why" they chose not to locate in Bladen. Determine how important the physical condition of school buildings was in the decision. To add to this information, survey existing industries to determine which school systems they choose for their children.

**Resources:** Bladen County Economic Development Commission, Committee of 100, Business and Industry Division of the NC Department of Commerce, NC Southeast

**Timetable:** Should be completed by fall 1997.

**Priority:** Third

**Benefit Level:** Medium benefit

**Evaluation Process:**

- Creation of a survey of industries who chose *not* to locate in Bladen.
- Review and refinement of all economic development recruitment efforts.

**F. Develop county industrial parks one at a time to ensure viable options for industry. Continue to encourage other locations that meet industry needs.**

**Procedures:**

- Develop policy to ensure that infrastructure is in place.
- Promote the park with appropriate signage.
- Make necessary minor improvements, including at a minimum rough access roads, to allow prospective clients to view proposed park sites.

**Resources:** County Commission, ED Commission

**Timetable:** ongoing

**Priority:** Third

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Infrastructure in place in industrial parks.
- Roads improved in industrial parks.
- New signage for industrial parks.

**Goal**  
**ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT SMALL**  
**BUSINESS/INDUSTRY START-UP AND EXPANSION.**

**Policy Statement:** While industrial recruiting is important, small business generally creates more jobs than large industries.

**Target Objectives:**

**A. Support the development of a small business incubator in the County.**

**Procedure:**

- Investigate funding sources (EDA, USDA, Rural Development funds etc.)

**Resources:** Bladen County Economic Development Commission, EDA,  
Bladen Community College

**Timetable:** Spring '98

**Priority:** Second

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Creation of a small business incubator.

**B. Increase level of business financing**

**Procedure:**

- Establish a forum for public and private lenders to insure adequate funding sources for new and expanding business)

**Resources:** Bladen County EDC, local banks, EDA, Advancement, Inc.

**Timetable:** Spring '98

**Priority:** Second

**Benefit Level:** High

**Evaluation Process:**

- Development of a fund for new and expanding business.

# TASK FORCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

## MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Environmental Task Force is to identify environmental issues affecting all Bladen County citizens today and in the future and to provide broad based proposals for any protective/corrective actions necessary.

### Goal

## PROTECTION OF BLADEN COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER

**Policy Statement:** The healthy future of Bladen County will be promoted through the protection of its groundwater resources, with special consideration given to the effects of private septic systems, non-point pollution and intensive livestock operations (ILOs) on groundwater.

### Target Objectives:

#### A. Build and maintain effective private residential septic systems

#### Procedures:

- Continue to permit private septic systems only on land meeting state standards.
- Adhere to state sewage standards. This is a state jurisdiction. Any pressure by local officials is inappropriate and:
  - a. Increases risk of waterborne diseases;
  - b. Compromises adjacent groundwater;
  - c. Increases the risk of systems failing; and
  - d. Places county tax payers at liability when such systems fail.

**Resources:** Bladen County Health Department, Bladen County Board of Health, and Bladen County Board of Commissioners.

**Timetable:** Immediately

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Septic inspections are completed in a timely manner.
- Septic permits are issued as quickly as possible.
- There are no permits issued for land which does not meet the established state standards.

**B. Reduce non point source pollution:**

**Procedures:**

- Educate chemical applicants concerning amounts, application times, conditions.
- Require developers to provide drainage plans on proposed projects.
- Monitor golf courses / turf farms (and other large scale fertilizer users) regarding chemical application and require them to meet established standards.

**Resources:**

Bladen County Inspection Department, Bladen County Cooperative Extension Service, and Bladen County Soil and Water Conservation Service.

**Timetable:** One Year

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / Medium Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Chemical Education classes established.
- Drainage Plan requirement established and inspected by county inspection department or other suitable department.
- Inspection Procedures in place for golf courses / turf farms and other large scale fertilizer users to insure adherence to established standards.

**C. Regulate and monitor effects of Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs) on groundwater supplies:**

**Procedures:**

- Continue to participate in the USGS Regional Groundwater Study with both financial and philosophical support. Studies should concentrate in the areas of quantity and quality.
- Continue expansion of the countywide water system utilizing Federal Clean Water Funds.
- Adopt a wellhead protection ordinance with enough staff provided to ensure compliance.
- Make emergency funds available for citizens with contaminated drinking water wells.
- Support legislation which will remove intensive livestock operations from the protection of "bona fide farm" definition. Bona fide farms are defined as any tract of land of five acres or more from which \$1000 or more of agricultural products, which were grown on the tract of land, was sold or normally would-could have been sold (including payments received under a soil conservation or land retirement program) during a year period. Agricultural products include those derived from the production of crops, forests, horticulture, livestock, poultry, livestock products, or poultry products.
- Contact local legislators to support such legislation.
- Educate the public concerning regulations vs. moratoriums.
- Provide enough staff to enforce current and future regulations; specifically to monitor groundwater and adherence to waste application plans.

**Resources:** Bladen County Board of Commissioners, Bladen County Legislative Delegation, Lumber River Council of Governments, Bladen County Health Department, Bladen County Board of Health, Bladen County Cooperative Extension Service, and the United States Geological Survey.

**Timetable:** Two Years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit:** High Impact / High Cost

### **Evaluation Process:**

- Completion of the USGS Regional Groundwater Study with plans for continued study.
- Expansion of the county wide water system with completion date established.
- Wellhead protection ordinance established and enforced.
- Emergency funds for contaminated drinking water wells established.
- Legislation adopted which takes intensive livestock operations out of the "bona fide farm" protection.
- Enough staff is available to enforce current and future regulations; specifically those dealing with groundwater and waste application plans.

## **Goal TO IMPLEMENT LAND USE PLANNING WITHIN THE COUNTY**

**Policy Statement:** Land use planning must be established and regulated on a county wide basis to protect our natural resources and the quality of life for our citizens. This protection will also improve the development of economic opportunities within the County.

### **Target Objectives:**

- A. Plan for growth and development with major emphasis on environmental protection.**

#### **Procedures:**

- Employ a county planner to lead land use planning and development.
- Develop a comprehensive county-wide land use plan.
- Initiate neighborhood focus groups to assist in developing land use options.
- Establish a countywide planning board with balanced representation.

- Hold joint planning board meetings at a minimum of twice a year with the county and all municipal planning boards participating to insure coordination and cooperation.
- Establish land use controls in order to implement the land use plan.

**Resources:** Bladen County Board of Commissioners, Lumber River Council of Governments, Municipal Association of Bladen County and the Institute of Government.

**Timetable:** Two Years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit:** High Impact / High Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- County Planner is hired.
- Comprehensive County-wide land use plan is adopted.
- County-wide planning board is appointed.
- Joint Planning Board meetings are being held at least twice a year.
- Land Use Controls are implemented.

**Goal**

**IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS OF THE COUNTY**

**Policy Statement:** A clean and green county will promote pride among county citizens, attract tourists, and invite clean industry.

**Target Objectives:**

- A. Involve the public in taking responsibility for the “clean and green” look of the County.**

**Procedures:**

- Encourage residents to landscape with native or well suited trees, shrubs, and flowers for low maintenance yard.
- Encourage churches, public school organizations, civic clubs, and businesses to Adopt-A-Highway.
- Establish Adopt-A-Street programs within each municipality.
- Institute a yard of the month program within each municipality and the county with recognition given to the winners at monthly meetings.
- Create a dogwood trail leading from the County's higher learning institution (Bladen Community College) to the center of the County's government (Bladen County Courthouse)
- *Protect our historic heritage by preserving old buildings and historical trees.*

**Resources:** Civic Clubs, Local Plant Nurseries, Local Landscaping Services, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Bladen County Historical Society, Municipal Boards, Bladen County Board of Commissioners, Bladen County Planning Department, Bladen County Economic Development Board, Bladen Community College Board of Trustees.

**Timetable:** Two Years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit:** High Benefit / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Increase in participation in the Adopt-A-Highway Program.
- Establishment of Adopt-A-Street Programs in each municipality.
- Dogwood Trail has been established.
- Program to preserve historical buildings and trees has been implemented.
- Yard of the Month Award Program has been implemented in the county and each municipality.

**B. Encourage the establishment of new ordinances and the enforcement of existing ordinances to improve the aesthetics of the County.**

**Procedures:**

- Utilize land use planning and local law enforcement agencies to develop and enforce ordinances to improve the appearance of the county.
- Include ordinances within the land use plan which restrict the time political candidates can display signs along the public highway.
- Encourage local North Carolina Department of Transportation officials to strictly enforce the existing regulations concerning advertising on public right-of-ways.
- Establish an ordinance forbidding the placement of public advertising on trees along a public highway.
- Encourage local law enforcement agencies to strictly enforce present penalties for littering.
- Encourage local law enforcement agencies to enforce law forbidding advertising on utility poles.

**Resources:** Civic Clubs, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Municipal Boards, Bladen County Board of Commissioners, Bladen County Planning Department, Bladen County Sheriff's Department, and Municipal Police Departments.

**Timetable:** 2 Years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit:** High Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Existing and new ordinances are being enforced which improve the appearance of the County.
- Littering has been reduced within the County and its municipalities.

**Goal D: Conservation of Lakes and Rivers**

**Goal E: Preservation of Wetlands**

**Goal F: Reduction of Exposure to Hazardous Materials**

**Goal G: Selective Cutting Practices**

**Goal H: Protection of Air Quality**

Due to the time restraints of this strategic planning process, the preceding five goals were not addressed by the Environmental Task Force. It is the opinion of this Task Force that each of these goals are vital to the future of Bladen County and must be addressed in the near future. Bladen County enjoys many recreational opportunities with its lakes and rivers. However these natural resources are being threatened with increased usage and growth within the community. Protection of these resources must be established before opportunity is lost. Bladen County is home to large tracts of wetlands which play a vital part in the protection of ground and surface water. These wetlands must be preserved if our water supply is to be protected. The quantity of hazardous materials being produced and transported through our county continues to grow with increased economic development. These amounts must be measured and additional monitoring of their presence must be undertaken to insure the safety of our environment and our citizens. The public is drawn to Bladen County because of its state parks, natural resources and acres of beautiful forests. Selective cutting of these forests and best management practices must be enforced before these resources are destroyed forever. Clean air is becoming a rare commodity for communities. Bladen must monitor the effects of economic development and other agents affecting the quality of its air before this essential element is substantially damaged.

# TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION

## MISSION STATEMENT

To identify strategies to involve the entire community in the support and enhancement of educational opportunities of all citizens of Bladen County. We believe in lifelong learning, diversity of opportunities, and encouragement of public involvement.

### Goal:

**EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO BLADEN COUNTY  
RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND INCOME LEVELS,  
ALLOWING GREATER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES  
AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE STANDARDS**

### Policy Statement:

When addressing issues regarding education it is important to consider the needs of all groups within the county, including diverse economic groups and residents, as well as the needs of the county as a whole. Education does not begin with attendance in school, nor does it end with graduation. Education is a lifelong process from birth to death. The early years are important in the preparation of an individual to function in society, to earn a living, raise a family, and contribute in the community. The adult years continue to be important in keeping the individual current with changing technologies and procedures, as well as encouraging personal growth and the development of personal interests. Continuing personal growth and the development of personal interests are important for mental health and an overall sense of satisfaction, enthusiasm, success, and general well being.

### Target Objectives:

**A: Increase awareness of the importance of education and learning to families, parents, children, and the community as a whole and to increase the level of parental involvement.**

### Procedures:

1. Continue and expand the existing academic achievement recognition program in the public schools.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

2. Expand the partnership with private businesses and industry to encourage employees to visit the schools (on and off company time) for functions such as parent/teacher conferences, lunch with their children, concerts, plays, presentations by their children, etc.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

3. Expand the partnership with private businesses and industry to provide employee resources (on and off company time), such as speakers, tutors, mentors, etc., such as an "Adopt-A-School" or "Adopt-A-Child" program.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

4. Advertise school news and functions through a school newspaper, flyers, church announcements and bulletins, local newspapers, and radio announcements.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

5. Each school create an alliance with the local ministers and meet with them regularly regarding school issues.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order

**Benefit Level:** Medium Benefit / Low Cost

6. Work with the local media to give more recognition for academic achievement, success, and activities, including recognition for those attending college.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years  
**Priority:** 2nd Order  
**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

7. Increase the teacher supplement to attract and retain more qualified teachers.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years  
**Priority:** 1st Order (One of committee's top 4 priorities!)  
**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / High Cost

8. Connect Bladen County Schools to other agencies through technology infrastructure.

**Timetable:** 2-5 Years  
**Priority:** 1st Order (One of committee's top 4 priorities!)  
**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / High Cost

**Resources:**

Bladen County Board of Education  
Bladen County Board of Commissioners  
Bladen County Individual Public Schools (esp. Parent involvement programs)  
PTA's and PTO's  
Municipal Town Boards  
Bladen County Library  
Social Agencies  
"Parents As Teachers", "Active Parenting", "Friends of Youth", and other programs  
Businesses and Industries  
Bladen Community College  
Retired Educators Association  
Business and Industry Partnership  
Chambers of Commerce  
Local Newspapers

Local Radio Stations  
Civic Clubs  
4H  
Boy and Girl Scouts  
Churches

**Evaluation Process:**

- Local funding for teacher supplements, technology infrastructure, etc.
- Level of parental involvement in the schools.
- Increased attention to academic success in the media.
- Increased level of publicity given to school functions.
- Increased number of businesses participating in partnerships with schools or *actively encouraging employees to become involved in education.*
- Increased level of teacher qualifications.
- Each school linked electronically with other schools, Bladen County Public Schools, other state and local agencies, etc.
- Each school has contacted and met with local ministers regarding school concerns.
- The academic achievement recognition program is expanded, with more and better awards, more media attention, etc.
- Each school has increased its level of communication with parents and the community as a whole regarding school activities and concerns.

**B: Reduce the level of illiteracy in adults.**

**Procedures:**

1. Provide greater support and funding for the Bladen Literacy Council.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Medium Cost

2. Publicize adult education programs and services of Bladen Community College and the Literacy Council.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Medium Cost

3. Encourage churches to use hymnals and other printed material in order to encourage the desire to improve reading skills.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** (A-5 must be done first!) 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

4. Work with churches to encourage participation in literacy and educational classes and other personal growth activities (self-help, reading, math, etc. to brush up skills).

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** (A-5 must be done first!) 1st Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Low Cost

**Resources:**

Bladen County Board of Education  
Bladen County Board of Commissioners  
Bladen County Literacy Council  
Bladen Community College  
Bladen County Library  
Retired Educators Association  
Business and Industry Partnership  
Churches

**Evaluation Process:**

- Increased funding for the Bladen Literacy Council.
- Increased level of publicity for the adult education program and other services of Bladen Community College and the Literacy Council.
- Churches become more actively involved in encouraging reading and other self-improvement among their congregations.
- More adult education and other classes offered in the churches.

**C: Reduce the dropout rate in the public schools.**

1. Increase support for and expand the Drop-Out Prevention Program of the Bladen County Schools.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order *(One of committee's top 4 priorities!)*

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Medium Cost

2. Lobby to change state law in order to allow greater communication and coordination among agencies and the public schools regarding individuals (potential drop-outs).

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** Medium Benefit / Low Cost

**Resources:**

Bladen County Board of Education  
Bladen County Board of Commissioners  
Bladen County Individual Public Schools  
PTA's and PTO's  
One-Stop Center of Bladen Community College  
Social Agencies  
"Parents As Teachers", "Active Parenting", "Friends of Youth", and other programs  
Businesses and Industries  
Local Newspapers  
Local Radio Stations  
Civic Clubs  
4H  
Boy and Girl Scouts  
Churches

**Evaluation Process:**

- Hire an additional person for the Drop-Out Prevention Program.
- Get the state laws changed which interfere with helping a child stay in school.

**D: Find additional sources of funding for the public schools and other educational opportunities.**

**Procedures:**

1. Create a nonprofit educational foundation to raise funds and identify new sources of funding for the public schools.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 1st Order *(One of committee's top 4 priorities!)*

**Benefit/Cost:** High Benefit / Low Cost

2. Give additional attention to researching and writing grants at the county level by hiring or assigning a full - time person to this responsibility.

**Timetable:** 1-2 Years

**Priority:** 2nd Order

**Benefit Level:** High Benefit / Medium Cost

**Resources:**

Bladen County Board of Education  
Bladen County Board of Commissioners  
PTA's and PTO's  
Business and Industry Partnership  
Chambers of Commerce  
Civic Clubs  
Churches

**Evaluation Process:**

- An educational foundation has been created and is functioning in Bladen County.
- A full time person has been hired to research and write grants.

# TASK FORCE ON QUALITY OF LIFE

## MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the *QUALITY OF LIFE* Task Force is to identify and focus on issues that significantly impact the optimum quality of life for the citizens of Bladen County.

### Goal

## ENHANCED LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY

### Policy Statement:

The well-being of the citizens of Bladen County will be enhanced by providing a safe environment at home, work, and play.

### Target Objectives:

- A. Enhance effective and efficient law enforcement through community involvement.

### Procedures:

- Implement the concept of community policing throughout the County.
  - a. Re-establish neighborhood watch as part of a community policing effort.
  - b. Continue drug education and enforcement.
  - c. Promote citizen involvement and participation.
- Create a local MADD Chapter (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers).
- Support more cooperation and interaction between State and Local law enforcement agencies.
- Enactment of nuisance ordinances by local governments, including noise pollution, illegal dumping, etc.

**Resources:** Bladen County Citizens, Sheriff's Department, Town Police Chiefs, Highway Patrol, County Commissioners and Town Councils, Bladen Public Schools.

**Timetable:** 2 years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Community policing concept implemented by Sheriff's Department and local law enforcement agencies.
- Reduced yearly crime rate.
- MADD Chapter created.
- Nuisance ordinances enacted.
- Citizen feedback is solicited on periodic basis through survey instruments.

**B. Enhanced Public Safety Services.**

**Procedures:**

- Continue to upgrade 911 communications system.
- Re-establish County Red Cross Chapter.
- Emergency services should utilize less trained staff or volunteers for non-critical duties to free skilled staff for critical duties.

**Resources:** County Commissioners, Bladen Emergency Management, NC Red Cross, Sheriff's Department.

**Timetable:** 2 years

**Priority:** 2nd

**Benefit Level:** Medium Impact / Medium Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- 911 database development completed and operational.
- Red Cross Chapter re-established in County.

**Goal**  
**ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS OF BLADEN  
TO COLLABORATE ON FUTURE  
GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**Policy Statement:** It should be the policy of local governments in Bladen to provide opportunities for citizen participation in goal setting and strategic planning. It should be the responsibility of the County's citizens to participate in collaborative efforts with local governments.

**Target Objective:**

- A. Improve opportunities for communication between local elected officials and citizens.

**Procedures:**

- Encourage County Commissioners and Town Boards to hold neighborhood/ community meetings that include elected and appointed officials to exchange information on projects and future issues.
- Encourage local governments and the local media to print or broadcast meeting agendas.
- Encourage Towns and County to run notices on vacancies for appointed boards and commissions in order to generate a pool of volunteers.

**Resources:** Bladen County Commissioners and Manager, Town Councils and Managers, Bladen Journal, WBLA/WGQR Radio.

**Timetable:** 1 year

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Customer satisfaction survey of citizens has been completed by county and shared with municipalities. (Possibly use Municipal and County Association as survey sponsor)
- Notices of Town and County meetings are published.

Goal  
**ENCOURAGE VOLUNTEERISM  
TO TAP EXPERIENCE AND FOSTER  
NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**Policy Statement:**

In an era of dwindling fiscal resources and expanding demand for human services, it is important to effectively use volunteers through efficient coordination with volunteer groups and opportunities. It should be the policy of public service and local government agencies to make opportunities available for volunteerism.

**Target Objectives:**

- A. Create an interagency council that includes all public agencies, non-profits, service agencies, and citizen volunteers in order to better coordinate service delivery to the public.

**Procedure:**

- County Manager's Office is charged with forming initial Interagency Council, with membership confined to senior level or management staff.

**Resources:** County Manager's Office, Public agencies, county non-profits.

**Timetable:** 1 year

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Interagency Council established.

- B. Develop a more systematic program for developing and harnessing volunteer organizations for use in human service resource delivery.

**Procedures:**

- Charge Interagency Council to lead collaboration with agencies to develop specific duties / needs that could be served by volunteers.

- Interagency Council identifies and collaborates with volunteer groups to develop system to match volunteers to needs.
- Create and maintain a volunteer directory.

**Resources:** Interagency Council, County public and non-profit agencies, volunteer groups.

**Timetable:** 2 years

**Priority:** 2nd

**Benefit Level:** Medium Benefit / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- System has been developed that matches agency needs with volunteers.
- Volunteer directory created.

*Goal*

**ENCOURAGE WELLNESS  
AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE**

**Policy Statement:** The quality of life for all citizens needs to be continually improved. One segment of the population which is not being adequately addressed are those individuals that are relatively healthy. It should be the goal of the county to emphasize wellness and preventive health care issues

**Target Objectives:**

- A. Establish a total fitness center.

**Procedures:**

- Establish a *total fitness center* or other facility which offers physical fitness and preventive health care services for all citizens. The Hospital should serve as sponsor and work in collaboration with health service agencies and the private sector to develop and finance the facility.
- The *center* will be utilized by all citizens, but at a reasonable cost.
- The sponsor and collaborators will provide information to the private sector about wellness programs and encourage them to offer incentives for employees to utilize this or other like facilities.

**Resources:** Bladen County Hospital, Health Watch, health service providers, local physicians and therapists, private sector.

**Timetable:** 2 years

**Priority:** 1st

**Benefit Level:** High Impact / High Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Total fitness center has been established.

**B. Establish wellness programs.**

**Procedure:**

- Expand the role of Health Watch to include coordination of efforts on establishing wellness programs in business, public and private agencies, and the educational system.
- Encourage the Hospital to sponsor a yearly *health fair*.

**Resources:** Health Watch, Bladen County Hospital, health service providers, public and for profit agencies, educational systems, and private businesses.

**Timetable:** 2 years

**Priority:** 2nd

**Benefit Level:** Low Impact / Low Cost

**Evaluation Process:**

- Wellness Programs established in many sectors throughout the County.
- Health Fair conducted.