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## **Survey of Botetourt's Historic Resources**

Botetourt County is blessed with a large number of historic resources. Unfortunately, many of those "rich agricultural resources" and historic heritages are "threatened by neglect, abandonment and development," a newly released Architectural Survey of the area says.

A year-long study of some of the county's historic assets is now complete. Hill Studio in Roanoke completed the study for Botetourt County, the Botetourt County Historical Society and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

It was the first-ever county-wide architectural survey of historic resources.

The report includes photographs and extensive documentation of 350 individual properties. A 100-page summary lays out the county's history and makes recommendations for preservation.

In addition to admonishing the county to create public policies for preservation efforts, the document notes that 16 properties are ready to be placed on the National Historic Register of Historic Places in addition to the 19 already there.

Another 16 are potentially eligible. Some of the sites that should be included, according to the report, are the Roaring Run Furnace and the Bessemer Archeological Site.

The survey recommends the creation of several historic districts in areas such as Springwood, Eagle Rock, Glen Wilton, Daleville College area and Troutville.

The architectural survey involved the exterior of structures only. The amount of time spent on one property depended in part upon its historic significance.

The document will be shared with the county's Comprehensive Plan update consultant and steering committees in hopes that Botetourt County officials can use it in long-term planning.

Once the Comprehensive Plan Update is considered and adopted by the Board of Supervisors next spring, subdivision and/or zoning changes necessary to implement provisions of the Plan will be considered by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, including any pertaining to historic preservation, a press release from Botetourt County says.

That means making preservation of historic resources a priority.

"The county should lead by example in the stewardship of county-owned historic resources," the Architectural Survey says. "The historic resources of Botetourt County are a valuable asset to the county and their value should be recognized."

The document urges the county to create a historic preservation plan that can be put into the county Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is undergoing review this year and will be updated and readopted in 2010.

Other recommendations include:

- Defining local preservation issues and goals
- Identifying strategies and actions to achieve preservation objectives
- Exploring tax credits and other financial incentives
- Developing historic zoning and conservation district zoning
- Developing an inventory of all county-owned historic properties
- Incorporating all historic properties onto the county's GIS map
- Creating a county-wide archeological database
- Implementing land use regulations to preserve historic assets

Additionally, the county should educate the public as to the value of historic properties. Tourism also comes into play and the document urges the county to build a county-wide visitor's Center "possibly at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield using the buildings that survive from the former Greenfield Plantation."

The county has such a building in its capital improvement plan, but it is many years away from development.

The summary document divides the county into historic time periods and places land use in context in a historic overview for each era. For instance, the county in 1830 had a population of 16,354 – about half of what the population is now.

Transportation, agriculture and industry are all discussed in the document. Researchers will find the summary a good place to start when they are looking for information.

The documentation, which ends at 1945, notes that the county had two major industries in its past – mining in the northern end and agriculture in the southern end.

Almost 1000 pieces of Botetourt property were already on record with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources prior to the survey. Most of those were in the towns of Fincastle and Buchanan. A few sites which had incomplete information were resurveyed. The document adds 327 new pieces of property to available information. Hill Studio researchers conducted field studies to gather information, consulted documents in the Botetourt County Courthouse and spent time with residents to uncover forgotten history.

The 100-page summary report will be available in hard copy form at the public libraries. Copies will also be available for purchase from the Planning and Zoning Office. Detailed property information will be available in hard copy and electronic formats at the Planning and Zoning Office for reference by the public; copies of the detailed information may involve a charge.