



PUBLIC SAFETY & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

GOAL

Foster an equitable environment that encourages mutual care and respect, engagement and cooperation between public safety services and the community. Promote a safe community by providing the highest quality of public safety services and facilities available, with first-class equipment and well-trained personnel who are prepared for a wide variety of emergencies and services.

Sustainability Goal

Provide public facilities and services that are accessible, equitable, responsive to current needs, and promote the public health of the community. Protect the environment for future generations by designing new public facilities and renovating existing facilities and infrastructure to meet U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system standards to provide for lower-impact, resource-efficient and cost-effective operations over the expected life of the facilities. Similarly, utilize the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure's ENVISION rating system as appropriate to design and redevelop public infrastructure projects with a significant anticipated environmental or community impact.

Community Engagement

Meaningful community engagement is key to the Town's ethic of governance. To foster an inclusive planning process, the Town should ensure that all community members feel welcome and empowered to participate. This can be achieved by providing a wide range of convenient opportunities, providing transparent and responsive communication, and applying innovative engagement methods. In addition, the Town recently created a new standing committee, the Blacksburg Police Advisory Board, that will make recommendations to Town Council regarding law enforcement issues. There are other opportunities for residents to actively engage with public safety such as volunteering with the Blacksburg Volunteer Fire Department and Volunteer Rescue Squad. Community members can also participate in Citizens Police Academy and attend Planning Commission and Town Council public hearings when related topics are being discussed. Participation in climate adaptation and resiliency planning offers another avenue for residents to engage on issues of public safety that are anticipated to emerge in a changing climate, as detailed in the [*Environment* chapter](#).

OVERVIEW

One of the primary concerns of a Town government is the safety of the community. The threat of crime, fire, medical emergencies, and natural or man-made disasters calls for emphasis on the facilities and services that provide protection for people and their property. Providing suitable, accessible community facilities and services is a principal function of local government and one that affects the quality of life of every community member. The effectiveness of local government is measured largely by its ability to plan for and finance these facilities adequately.

The Town provides police services for Town residents. The Town and Montgomery County share libraries, fire, and rescue services. The County provides human services, a court system and schools for all County residents, including Blacksburg residents. Town residents pay both Town and County real estate property taxes, which help fund all of the above amenities and services.

Public safety departments within the Town have established mutual aid agreements with Virginia Tech, Montgomery County, and other surrounding jurisdictions to provide a wide range of assistance from large-scale disasters to an individual health emergency (911) call. Blacksburg's emergency services maintain good response times that exceed their targets.

As the community continues to grow, the types of services requested by the community will change. Public safety personnel must seek opportunities to obtain a wide variety of training in order to maintain high levels of service. As the community grows, maintaining or improving response times will become more difficult without proper facility and equipment improvements. As existing community facilities age, maintenance becomes more important, and renovations may be required to maintain service levels that meet community expectations. Many existing facilities must be retrofitted to meet current building codes, accessibility requirements, and other recommended standards. As demands for services increase, the Town must continue communications and regional cooperation between the Blacksburg Police, Fire, and Rescue Squads, their respective Virginia Tech departments, and regional colleagues. Examples of these collaborative partnerships include the regional firing range located in Montgomery County and the NRV Dispatch Center.

Town-Owned Facilities & Infrastructure

The Town-owned Municipal Building, Blacksburg Motor Company Building, Blacksburg Police Department, and the County-owned Blacksburg Branch of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library serve as an anchor for the southwestern corner of Downtown and a central location for the community to access Town services. The 2009 conversion of the Blacksburg Motor Company Building adjacent to the existing Municipal Building on Main Street was a key priority in the Downtown Master Plan and has helped to address the Town's long-term operational needs. The Town has had a policy in place since 2008 to pursue a minimum certification of Silver through the U.S. Green Building Council LEED green building rating program for new construction and major renovations of Town-owned facilities. The Blacksburg Motor Company reflects environmentally conscious building practices and received LEED Platinum certification, which is the highest rating a building can receive through the U.S. Green Building Council's rating system. The Town has also utilized the LEED framework to build or substantially renovate the following buildings: the Hubbard Street Fire Station, the Patrick Henry Rescue Squad, and the Municipal Building Renovation. The new Police Station, described later in the chapter, is anticipated to attain LEED Silver designation.

Expanding on its commitment to environmental objectives for Town-owned facilities, Blacksburg is integrating the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure's ENVISION rating system as a means to significantly reduce the environmental impact of major infrastructure projects while reducing future operational and maintenance costs, and improving quality of life and community resiliency. The first Town project to pursue ENVISION accreditation is the Draper Road Streetscape revitalization project for downtown.



Blacksburg Motor Company Building, Certified LEED Platinum

The Town owns many historic buildings, which can present unique maintenance challenges. Several public buildings including the Municipal Building, the Bennett House, Old Town Hall, and the Community Center are slated for future renovations. The Alexander Black House as well as St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall provide additional Downtown public meeting and gathering space. Other community parks, facilities, and spaces are detailed in the [Parks & Recreation](#) chapter and the [Economy & Employment](#) chapter.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Blacksburg seeks to foster a safe and resilient community built on mutual care and respect for individuals, families, and the Town as a whole. This approach includes supporting early intervention efforts that can help to prevent unsafe situations from arising as well as prompt response from emergency services when needed.

The Town provides public safety response through the Blacksburg Police Department and the Blacksburg Fire Department and Blacksburg Rescue Squad. Other outside organizations and partners provide key support services such as social services, mental health services, crisis intervention, and emergency sheltering. Knowledge of and access to these resources is a vital part of community safety and wellbeing. Services from the Town or other providers should be accessible, responsive, and compassionate to everyone in the community to meet the public safety needs in any given situation.

Blacksburg Police Department

The mission of the Blacksburg Police Department is to provide exceptional service and protection through leadership and partnership with the community. The Blacksburg Police Department works in partnership with community members and local businesses to promote, encourage, and enact ways to maintain a low crime rate, increase public safety, and enhance quality of life. The Police Department expresses this approach with the community through the values of service, integrity, and respect.

The Town has a long history of police service with a formal department established in 1871. The needs

of the community have changed over time and the growth of a large university population has shaped some of the service needs. The current Department is comprised of 82 personnel with a wide variety of specialties such as criminal investigation, community outreach, traffic, crime prevention, and parking enforcement.

The Blacksburg Police Department achieved national accreditation in 1993 from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. In 2020, the Department received Gold Standard Reaccreditation with excellence, the highest possible distinction. The accreditation, along with outreach efforts, reflects a commitment to a high level of service. There is an openness and desire to continue to improve how the Police Department can adapt to meet the growing and changing needs of the Blacksburg community.

The Police Department operates and supports numerous community programs and initiatives:

- Adopt-A-Cop outreach program for fraternities to promote neighborhood respect
- Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) in public schools
- Victim and witness assistance
- Security surveys for homes and businesses
- Prescription drug take back days
- No Hokie Left Behind safety campaign for college students with a focus on looking out for others and staying with a group
- Be Safe Blacksburg safety campaign for K-12 students with a focus on bullying, peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse prevention
- Citizens Police Academy

The Town is engaging in dialogue with the community about policy, practice, and police culture locally. In 2020, the Town Council established the Blacksburg Police Advisory Board to serve as a resource for open communication between the community and the Police Department. This local effort also responds to the national conversation occurring around policing practices, police violence and systemic racism. The Board membership includes a diverse group of community members that will make recommendations related to law enforcement issues and concerns, community outreach programs, training, and policy. The Blacksburg Police Department participates in other key initiatives in the New River Valley including:

- Dialogue on Race, Law Enforcement issue group
- New River Public Health Task Force, including pandemic response

On a day-to-day operations level, the Blacksburg Police have mutual aid agreements with the Virginia Tech Police Department, Christiansburg Police Department, and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. Blacksburg maintains a close working relationship with these surrounding agencies to provide exceptional, cooperative service to residents of the Town and Montgomery County.

The Blacksburg Police Department is also actively engaged in other efforts with regional partners to improve service in Blacksburg and the broader community. The New River Valley Emergency Communication Regional Authority was established and a new regional 911 operations center opened in 2016 serving the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, Montgomery County and Virginia Tech. The

center delivers coordinated dispatch that is more operationally efficient and provides improved response time that was previously lost due to transferring calls between jurisdictions.



Blacksburg Police Department

The Blacksburg Police Department currently operates from one station located at 200 Clay Street SW. A new public safety building with an integrated parking garage is planned for the Midtown development at 200 Clay Street SE. The building will house the Police Department in a visible location that is intended to represent a focus on accessibility for the whole community. This facility will provide a public gathering room along the Clay Street frontage to serve as a resource for community groups such as scouts, support groups, and other local initiatives. The new building will also include space for holding trainings, which the current location cannot accommodate. The structure is slated for completion in Spring 2022.



Artistic Rendering of New Public Safety Building

Blacksburg Volunteer Fire Department

The Blacksburg Volunteer Fire Department protects the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, and the area of Montgomery County surrounding the Town. The department provides services such as public fire education, inspections, fire prevention, fire suppression, fire investigations, and hazardous materials containment. The Fire Department operates as a volunteer organization with only two career firefighters, which poses a challenge when the department must respond to routine calls during the day when many volunteers are at work or in class. Fortunately, the Fire Department has a core group of community members with years of experience who provide a continuity of service that balances the high turnover rate of student volunteers, who generally leave after two to three years of service.



Blacksburg Fire Department: Station 3

Blacksburg operates three fire stations. Station 1 is located on Progress Street. The Rescue Squad has moved to a new location, which resolved the previous overcrowding and parking issues, and the Fire Department is now operating out of the whole building. The building has some issues related to age including the need for a new roof, air conditioning system and permanent repair of cracks in masonry. Station 2 is located on Prices Fork Road across from the Hethwood Shopping Center and provides coverage West of Route 460. Station 3 is located on Hubbard Street and serves as the department's administrative headquarters. Station 3 helps provide faster response times to the south end of Blacksburg, including the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport, and the Ellett Valley.

Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad

The mission of the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad is to provide professional and responsive emergency medical and technical rescue services that enable residents and visitors to enjoy a high quality of life. The Rescue Squad has been providing emergency medical and technical rescue services to the Town of Blacksburg and a large portion of Montgomery County since 1950. The Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad is a 100% volunteer staffed organization and a Virginia nonprofit organization separate from the Town, yet services and coordination with the Town are seamless. Not only does the Rescue Squad respond to emergency calls in Town and on the Virginia Tech campus, but it also responds

regionally to provide unique resources and capabilities when requested by other agencies and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. The Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad also conducts community outreach in the form of educational demonstrations at local schools and provides support to community events such as local sporting events, town festivals, celebrations, and Virginia Tech football games.

The Rescue Squad maintains state-of-the-art rescue equipment that includes advanced life support ambulances, first response vehicles, specialty technical rescue vehicles, and technical rescue trailers to facilitate full spectrum special operations. As the sole entity tasked with all aspects of technical rescue, the Rescue Squad has established a Special Operations Division that specializes in technical rescue operations such as high angle, confined space, trench, emergency police operations, vehicle extrication, swift water, dive, basic structure collapse, wilderness search and rescue, and cave rescue operations. The Rescue Squad consistently meets or exceeds the nationally accepted standards for response times, membership certification, and professional conduct.



Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad opened in 2016

The Rescue Squad faces many challenges as it moves into the future. The growing population continues to place increased demand on rescue services. A steady increase in requests for service not only demand an increase in availability of members but also in the professional standards upheld by the volunteer membership. The standard of care and service continues to evolve with the public's expectations of the rescue squad. In order to meet these increased demands, the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad has developed a strategic plan to address 24/7 ambulance and technical rescue service coverage, unity of effort within the agency, incident command capabilities to effectively manage larger incidents and multiple scenes, and effective community engagement and outreach.

Recruitment of new members to replace those who are no longer able to serve, as well as the retention of existing members who have a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge, remains a top priority for the agency. Outside of the Rescue Squad, the agency looks for opportunities to improve interoperability with other emergency services organizations within Montgomery County and beyond. Although the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad provides a number of unique services, operating in the community most effectively requires integration, interoperability, and cooperation with many different

entities. The Rescue Squad will continue to meet the challenges of the future with its dedication to serve the community.

Town of Blacksburg Comprehensive Emergency Management Strategic Plan

The Town's goal is to have a Comprehensive Emergency Management Strategic (CEMS) Plan that prepares for, responds to, recovers from, and mitigates natural and man-made emergencies and disasters. This CEMS Plan would enhance the Town's capabilities and capacity to prevent and reduce its vulnerability to disasters. Adopting an all-hazards approach to planning, training, and exercising for emergency response and recovery will greatly enhance the Town's overall readiness. Key findings from Blacksburg's Climate Vulnerability Assessment that have the potential to impact public health and safety should be included in the CEMS Plan. Completing the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Strategic Plan is an exceedingly complex task, both to draft and implement, and requires coordination, cooperation, communication, and focused efforts from the entire Town and all partnering organizations.

Currently, individual Town departments, Police, Fire, Rescue, Public Works, and Transit, have their own respective emergency response management plans. Additionally, the Town participates with the Local Emergency Planning Committee, which is coordinated by the State-recognized Montgomery County Emergency Management Department.

Regional communication is an important part of the success of implementing the Plan between the Town and its many partners, which include neighboring jurisdictions, State government, community members, the private sector, and non-profit organizations. Using new and existing technology will make the emergency management initiatives more efficient and effective. The Town will need to continue its ongoing efforts to provide quality planning, training, and exercise assistance to those agencies and organizations responsible for prevention and emergency response and recovery. This will ensure that the Town's readiness and prevention capabilities are among the best in the nation.

One issue that must be taken into account in all planning efforts is the sustainability of programs and strategies. Efforts will be taken in the implementation of these strategies to ensure that they can be maintained or upgraded as necessary to reflect anticipated changes and concerns associated with the national and statewide requirements and standards.

OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES LOCATED WITHIN TOWN

Public Schools

Blacksburg public schools are an area of community focus and a gathering place for both adult and youth activities. The location and administration of public schools is not a Town function but instead is under the direction of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). While the existing four elementary schools in Blacksburg are and should remain neighborhood based schools, the Blacksburg Middle School and Blacksburg High School are regional schools serving students from the Town of Blacksburg, the Village of Prices Fork, Merrimac, Ellett Valley, and other northern areas of the county.

The School Board periodically conducts redistricting assessments to project the future needs of schools and adjusts district boundaries as appropriate based on population changes. The MCPS admissions policy requires residency within the school district with a limited exception procedure. Four of the

schools serving Blacksburg are located along Prices Fork Road. The other three are spread through the rest of Blacksburg. For more detailed information about each public school and the school districts, please visit the Montgomery County Public Schools website.

Whether designing a new school or renovating an existing school, the school's facilities and recreational amenities need to be planned and operated to seamlessly integrate into the community. The joint-use of all public facilities, particularly schools, with other compatible civic uses, especially parks and recreation, will maximize the use and cost efficiency of public education facilities in the community. The future of public schools in Blacksburg is critical to the continued strength of the community.

Public Libraries

All community members have access to the Blacksburg Branch of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library and to the regional resources of the library system. The Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library system is funded through joint contributions from the counties and towns that participate in the regional partnership. Based on the 2016 Library Space Needs and Facility Feasibility Study commissioned by Montgomery County, the Blacksburg Branch is undersized for the current service population. The Study also included public input meetings and an online survey that showed overwhelming public support for keeping the Blacksburg Branch in a central location. The community also has access to the largest library in the state on the Virginia Tech campus.

Court System & Social Services

Montgomery County provides all district court and social services for the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, and the unincorporated parts of the County. The Montgomery General District Court operates out of the Montgomery County Courthouse, located in Downtown Christiansburg. The Department of Social Services assists Montgomery County residents, including Town residents, with benefit programs such as Medicaid and food assistance as well as social work programs including protective services, foster care, and adoption assistance.

Health Care

Access to quality health care is key to a sustainable and healthy community for residents of all ages. Additional information regarding public health can be found in the [*Equity & Community Wellbeing*](#) chapter.

PLANNING FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES

Meeting Future Needs

Local government must provide public community facilities that meet the needs of a growing population and are responsive to the types of facilities that the community desires.

Typically, sites are identified and acquired well in advance of the need and construction of the public facilities. However, when unpredicted public needs develop or unexpected opportunities arise, the Town must be nimble in pursuing these. For example, the Town acquired a parcel in Downtown adjacent to the Progress Street Parking Lot when it became available for sale. Seizing this unexpected opportunity has allowed for the future planning of a parking garage on this enlarged footprint.

Properties owned and operated for public use should be identified on the Town's Future Land Use Map and compliant with Virginia State Code §15.2-2232. Projects are funded through the Capital Improvement Plan. The design of new public facilities should reflect the identity of the Town and its commitment to sustainability.

Design of New Public Facilities

The community values public buildings and these facilities are often important elements in placemaking. Public buildings reflect the character of the community and the time in which they were built. New facilities should not only meet their functional need but also contribute to the fabric of the community. The community is committed to sustainability and this commitment should be reflected in the construction of new public buildings and retrofitting of existing public facilities.

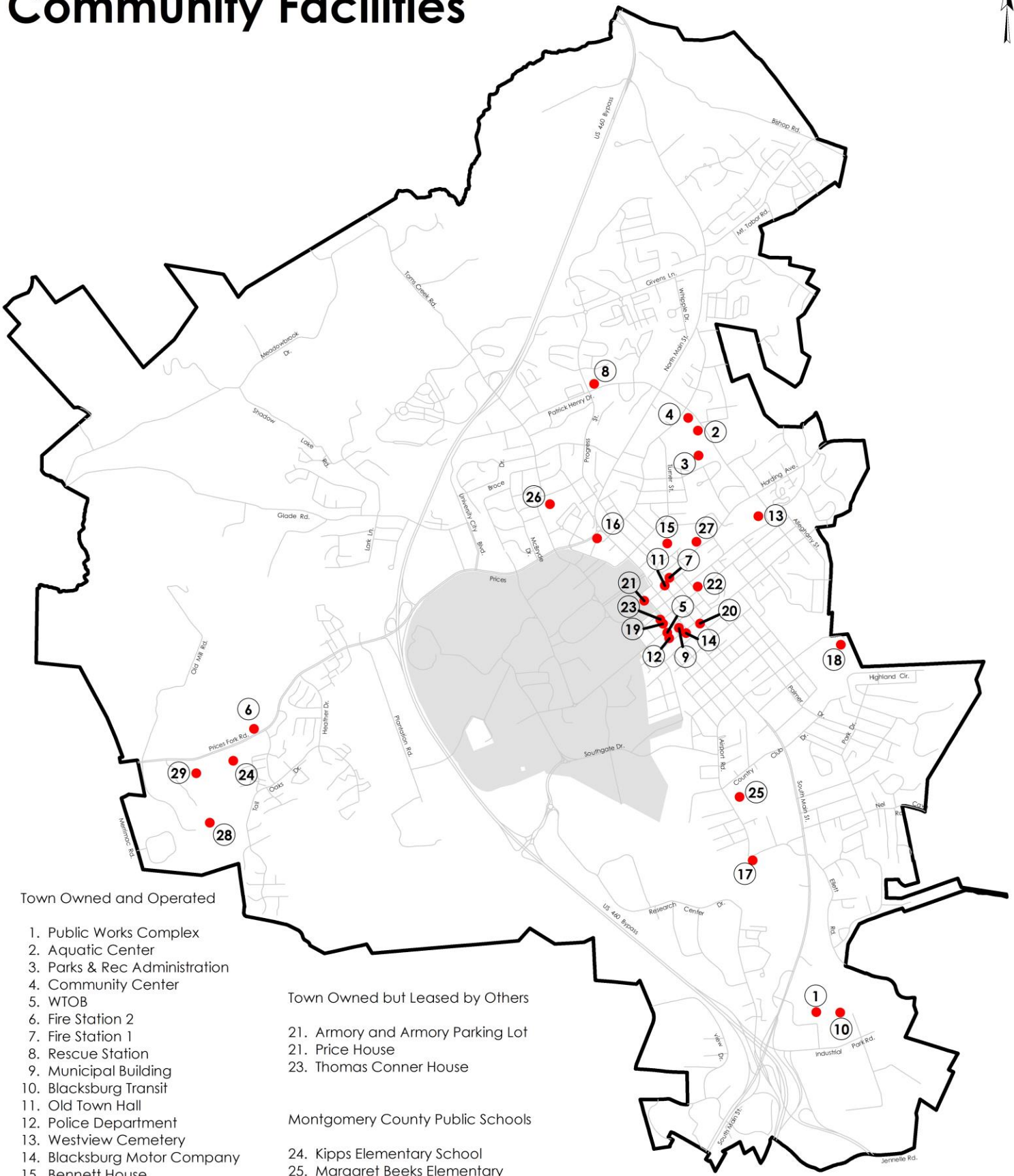
New facilities should demonstrate environmentally friendly design practices with respect to sustainable sites, indoor environmental quality, energy efficiency, and the efficient use of materials and resources such as the practices prescribed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

In order to remain good stewards of public funding, design of spaces within new buildings should be flexible in order to easily adapt to varied future needs. In planning for new facilities, the Town must be mindful of the upfront construction costs as well as ongoing costs that include building maintenance.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES MAP

All of the previously discussed existing facilities, regardless of ownership, are shown on the following Community Facilities map. The location of existing facilities also helps illustrate where future facilities will be needed to meet increasing demands. The map can be used as an aid to site future public facilities.

Community Facilities



Town Owned and Operated

- 1. Public Works Complex
- 2. Aquatic Center
- 3. Parks & Rec Administration
- 4. Community Center
- 5. WTOB
- 6. Fire Station 2
- 7. Fire Station 1
- 8. Rescue Station
- 9. Municipal Building
- 10. Blacksburg Transit
- 11. Old Town Hall
- 12. Police Department
- 13. Westview Cemetery
- 14. Blacksburg Motor Company
- 15. Bennett House
- 16. Odd Fellows Hall
- 17. Fire Station 3
- 18. Golf Pro Shop
- 19. Blacksburg Museum
- 20. New Public Safety Building

Town Owned but Leased by Others

- 21. Armory and Armory Parking Lot
- 21. Price House
- 23. Thomas Conner House

Montgomery County Public Schools

- 24. Kipps Elementary School
- 25. Margaret Beeks Elementary
- 26. Gilbert Linkous Elementary
- 27. Harding Avenue Elementary
- 28. Blacksburg High School
- 29. Blacksburg Middle School

Campus Core

Town of Blacksburg
Engineering & GIS
April 27, 2021
Map is Not to Scale

PUBLIC SAFETY & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Objectives and Policies

- PSCF.1. Foster a safe and resilient community through support for early intervention efforts.
 - PSCF.1.1. Support partners providing social services, mental health services, crisis intervention, and emergency sheltering, to ensure the whole community has knowledge of and access to these services.

- PSCF.2. Create an environment that encourages respect, mutual responsibility, community outreach, and cooperation between public safety officials and the community through public education programs, safety education programs, mediation and conflict resolution services, and other outreach opportunities.
 - PSCF.2.1. Continue community engagement opportunities for community interaction with public safety personnel to foster positive relationships and address issues of community concern.
 - PSCF.2.2. Utilize programs such as Be Safe Blacksburg to foster this environment.

- PSCF.3. Provide the community with the highest quality public safety services and facilities by maintaining high levels of training opportunities for police, fire, and rescue personnel.
 - PSCF.3.1. Establish public safety levels of service and consider these levels when evaluating the impact of future land uses on Town service demands and costs.

- PSCF.4. Provide resources for ensuring the highest quality police, fire and rescue services.
 - PSCF.4.1. Maintain the Police Department's national accreditation status.

- PSCF.5. Expand emergency response capabilities through collaboration with Virginia Tech, Montgomery County, and other surrounding jurisdictions to ensure quality public safety services.
 - PSCF.5.1. Maintain an alternate Town emergency operations center and coordinate with the regional emergency response teams, assisting where appropriate with the New River Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan.
 - PSCF.5.2. Continually monitor emergency response times to ensure quality service delivery.

- PSCF.6. Enhance the Town's all-hazards disaster preparedness, mitigation and response by completing the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Strategic Plan, which focuses on improving communications, providing training opportunities, and working regionally.
 - PSCF.6.1. Integrate key findings from Blacksburg's Climate Vulnerability Assessment into the New River Valley All-Hazard Mitigation Plan (AHMP) and the Town's future Comprehensive Emergency Management Strategic (CEMS) Plan.

- PSCF.7. Provide public facilities and infrastructure that serve as examples of the desired development quality in Town.

- PSCF.7.1. The design of new public facilities and the renovation of existing facilities will meet U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system standards and meet current best management practices that provide for efficient and cost-effective operations over the expected life of the facilities.
 - PSCF.7.2. The design of public infrastructure projects with a significant anticipated environmental or social impact will meet the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure’s ENVISION rating system and meet current best management practices that provide for efficient and cost-effective operations over the expected life of the infrastructure.
 - PSCF.7.3. New public facilities should emphasize efficient service delivery systems to meet existing and anticipated community needs.
 - PSCF.7.4. All Town facilities must meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and should be equipped with proper emergency medical supplies such as Automated External Defibrillators (AED).
- PSCF.8. Continue to ensure that building needs assessments and cost evaluations are thoroughly explored prior to construction of any new public facility or renovation of an existing public facility. Ensure that the final public facility is compatible with other public facilities surrounding it. Where feasible, integrate the development of new public facilities as components of regional programs or public/private partnerships.
- PSCF.9. Maintain and fully utilize existing Town facilities according to their level of service and in a manner consistent with the community’s high level of expectation.
- PSCF.9.1. Establish a program to routinely review the adequacy and needs of existing public facilities and financial cost for upgrades and improvements through the Town’s Capital Improvement Program and annual budget process.
 - PSCF.9.2. Conduct an examination of potential uses of public property prior to disposal by the Town.
 - PSCF.9.3. Prioritize and provide emergency power capability to critical Town facilities for temporary and extended power outages to ensure continuity of services to Town residents.
 - PSCF.9.4. Ensure the coordination of development with adequate and accessible existing and future public facilities.
- PSCF.10. Work with Montgomery County Boards and Agencies, the Town of Christiansburg, Virginia Tech, and other public and private agencies to plan for future needs, develop shared facilities, and provide joint-use of existing facilities.
- PSCF.10.1. Work cooperatively with Virginia Tech to plan for potential university growth and development.
 - PSCF.10.2. Work with Montgomery County to keep community resources on existing school properties.