



Gilmer County West Virginia

Gilmer County in central West Virginia, like many other counties, is located on the Allegheny Plateau. It is known for its oil and natural gas wells, coal, livestock, and timber.

The county government is located in Glenville, a college town and trading center for agricultural products. During the Civil War, a minor skirmish called the Battle of Tank Hill was fought here.

Glenville State Teachers' College was founded here in 1872. A 122-acre agricultural demonstration farm provided food for the dormitory kitchens. Gilmer County was founded in 1845.

Thomas Walker Gilmer served as Governor of Virginia in 1840 and 1841. Four years later, Gilmer County was named in his honor. Gilmer was later elected to Congress, where he opposed the dictatorial views expressed by Henry Clay. Still later Gilmer served as Secretary of the Navy in President Tyler's cabinet. Centrally located, Gilmer County has an area of some 342 square miles and is part of the Little Kanawha watershed.

In July 2003 Gilmer County had an unemployment rate of 8.0%, which was up from 6.3% in May 2003.

Transportation Development

Gilmer County has no commercial waterways and is served by one (1) mile of Interstate 79. This is the only four-lane highway in the county. There are some railroads that primarily haul coal. Transportation development in this rural West Virginia County is meager; however there is some promotion of a Little Kanawha River Parkway. This would be a Corridor style four-lane highway connecting I-79 and I-77 at Flatwoods and Parkersburg. Such a road would transverse Gilmer County east and west.

Little Kanawha River Parkway – Gilmer

This highway would connect I-77 from Elizabeth, WV and continue through Calhoun, Gilmer and connect with I-79 at Burnsville, Braxton County. This new highway would greatly enhance future development through a very rural underserved area. Region VII member governments are pushing forward for funding for initial development. Progress has been slow but is steadily gaining speed. The final plans were finally approved by the WV Department of Highways and planning funds were awarded to the Parkway board. The funds are being utilized to market the Parkway and plans are underway to hire staff in order to keep development momentum going

Infrastructure

Great strides have been made in constructing water/sewer infrastructure in the immediate Glenville area. Water has been extended to the Troy-Linn communities. Construction of a new Federal Prison to the east of Glenville has precipitated water/sewer service in that area. A water project for the Normantown community has been funded and is in the design phase (2003).

Infrastructure services have been completed from the City of Glenville and the Gilmer County PSD to the new Federal Correctional Facility. A new project is developing in western Gilmer County, which will provide rural water service along State Route 5 toward Calhoun County. The PSD is striving to complete their service area and provide quality and quantity public water in area that have poor water quantity and questionable water sources.

The Town of Sand Fork is in need of an upgrade to their sanitary sewer system. This was originally developed as a model “self-help” project, but lack of local resources has hindered adequate improvements. As Gilmer County begins to realize the impact of the Federal Corrections Facility, the Sand Fork area has been identified as having the most developable land in the County, but is lacking adequate water/sewer services to the properties. Region VII staff continues to work with the Sand Fork Town Council to address this problem.

Cluster Development

Glenville has a strong cluster of energy companies, mainly in the natural gas related sector. There are drilling firms, tool & pipe suppliers, and other service-oriented operations such as surveyor services, well tender services, and trucking support services. There is a gas compression station at Glenville. Gilmer County is adjacent to counties in the Hardwood Alliance Zone and has lumber mills, wood pellet (fuel) manufacturing, and other supporting enterprises for lumber related activities.

The Federal Prison System commissioned its newest correctional facility early in 2003 just east of Glenville. This addition to the County’s economy has spawned a new hotel/restaurant and has provided much needed cash flow to established businesses. It should be noted that the State of West Virginia has a fairly new Regional Jail located at Flatwoods within 15 miles in neighboring Braxton County.

Technology

ARC and the Benedum Foundation have funded a broadband communications pilot project for Glenville. Carnegie-Mellon is providing invaluable technical expertise. The project will serve residents, the Glenville State College Community, and the business community.

Neighborhood Revitalization

The County's make-up includes two (2) municipalities: Glenville and Sand Fork. Glenville is the County Seat. The County is also comprised of a number of small communities. Troy and Normantown are two small communities that still have elementary schools. The school at Tanner has been closed for a number of years. A project to provide water to the Troy/Linn area and that school completed construction in 2000. The Gilmer PSD recently is in the process of receiving funds to provide public water to Normantown, the Normantown Elementary School, and Cedar Creek State Park. Citizens of the Normantown and Stumptown communities had reported low quantities, terrible quality (high iron & sulfur), and community health concerns (especially associated to the school). Another issue is high economic drain on community and individual financial resources attempting to cope with the problem.

The City of Glenville is an older community with an aging residential area surrounding the city's struggling central business district (CBD). Many of the homes in the area surrounding the CBD are in sound condition with some being in need of rehabilitation. There is some new residential development occurring just outside the City limits. The area is provided both water and sewage collection and treatment service by Glenville Utilities. The City completed work on a 2.9 million-dollar project to improve sewage collection early in 2001.

Areas that are in need of improvement by the City include street paving, storm drainage, sidewalk replacement and scattered housing rehabilitation. While none of the problems are severe, attention now would keep the problems from becoming insurmountable.

The Central Business District has suffered decline in recent years. Although many of the remaining structures appear to remain sound there is at least one structure that is in need of major attention. Additionally, most of one (1) city block was demolished. This area is currently being used for parking. It should be noted that most of the CBD is located within the 100-year flood plain.

The Town of Sand Fork has a much smaller business district. The mainstay of this community, the general store, closed a number of years ago. The town recently was approved for a grant/loan from USDA Rural Development to renovate their community center.

Community Housing Needs

According to the U.S. Census Bureau there are 3,621 housing units within Gilmer County. Of these, 2,768 are occupied and 853 are vacant. Renters occupy 767 of the housing units, or 21%, and 2,001 units are owner-occupied.

The County's housing stock is fairly old, with almost 23% of the units having been built before 1939. However, new housing development has recently started, particularly single-family. Most of this construction is just outside to the municipal limits.

In general, there are no large areas of deterioration, but individual location of deteriorated units are scattered throughout the residential areas. The principal housing problem, which needs to be addressed, is the rehabilitation of the scattered units. There is a need for both elderly and family assisted housing. There are needs for spot rehabilitation in almost every neighborhood. There is also a need for the construction of a quality multi-family development.

At the March 22, 2000 public hearings a significant comments were made regarding flood/ development issues. The local county commission made the point that many residential sites are located in flood plains because water is available there in the form of shallow wells and is also the area that experiences flood damage on a regular basis. Public water is essential in development of this community due to flood loss management issues.

The wastewater treatment facility in Sand Fork is in need of upgrading to be in compliance and to add municipal customers. The Community is taking matters in hand and has secured a loan to install needed improvements by the "self help method." This small municipality is only one mile from a newly completed Federal Prison.

Community Wide Need for Public Facilities/Public Services

There is a need for both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. The City helps to support the Gilmer County Recreation Center, located just outside the Glenville City Limits. A number of the recreational facilities associated with Glenville State College are located within the municipal boundaries. These include an indoor heated swimming pool, a gymnasium, tennis courts and a track. Additional outdoor facilities are located at Cedar Creek State Park. The Gilmer County Senior Citizens have constructed a very well appointed Senior Center on Rt. 33/119 (Lewis Street). This facility was completed in 2001 and is a great asset to the community. Sand Fork is engaged in a renovation project to establish a community center.

The County has four (4) police officers. Both the fire station and the Emergency Medical Service station are manned by volunteers and are housed within the city limits. There has been some discussion of relocating these units because they are in the flood zone. Additional staffing for the Sheriff's department is not considered a major problem at this time. The County is looking to increase the number of EMS volunteers.

Economic Development Needs

The City of Glenville has its commercial area centered along Route 5 and has its traditional Central Business District located on Main Street. The city's economic base has been on the decline since the Flood of 1985. Existing industry, primarily Glenville State College and the oil and gas industries have also experienced reductions.

The County has developed a new industrial park in the Stout's Mill area, just outside the Town of Sand Fork. The primary tenant is Lignetics, who produces pellet chips for wood burning stoves. An industrial park and housing development project (Franklin Hills) is in early promotion stages near Glenville.

A new Federal Prison has been constructed in the Duck Run area, between Glenville and Sand Fork. This \$100 million capital investment will create 350 new jobs. The Town of Sand Fork is ripe for both industrial and residential development. There has been an increase in the capacity of water/waste water treatment facilities in the Glenville area in anticipation of the future growth. These facilities will also serve residents in towns that are not presently being served.

Documentation

Small Cities Block Grant Hearing
Data from 1990/2000 Census
Region VII Planning & Development Council CEDS
CEDS Project Priority List
West Virginia Economic Summary, August 2003

BEARFACTS 1991-2001 Gilmer, West Virginia (54021)

Gilmer is one of 55 counties in West Virginia. It is not part of a Metropolitan Area. Its 2001 population of 7,114 ranked 54th in the state.

PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME

In 2001 Gilmer had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$18,865. This PCPI ranked 35th in the state and was 83 percent of the state average, \$22,862, and 62 percent of the national average, \$30,413. The 2001 PCPI reflected an increase of 6.6 percent from 2000. The 2000- 2001 state change was 4.8 percent and the national change was 2.2 percent. In 1991 the PCPI of Gilmer was \$11,890 and ranked 41st in the state. The 1991-2001 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 4.7 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 4.2 percent and for the nation was 4.3 percent.

TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME

In 2001 Gilmer had a total personal income (TPI) of \$134,203. This TPI ranked 53rd in the state and accounted for 0.3 percent of the state total. In 1991 the TPI of Gilmer was \$90,447 and ranked 52nd in the state. The 2001 TPI reflected an increase of 5.9 percent from 2000. The 2000-2001 state change was 4.4 percent and the national change was 3.3 percent. The 1991-2001 average annual growth rate of TPI was 4.0 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 4.2 percent and for the nation was 5.5 percent.

COMPONENTS OF TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME

Total personal income includes net earnings by place of residence; dividends, interest, and rent; and transfer payments received by the residents of Gilmer. In 2001 net earnings accounted for 51.2 percent of TPI (compared with 54.5 in 1991); dividends, interest, and rent were 19.6 percent (compared with 17.9 in 1991); and transfer payments were 29.2 percent (compared with 27.5 in 1991). From 2000 to 2001 net earnings increased 6.8 percent; dividends, interest, and rent increased 2.9 percent; and transfer payments increased 6.3 percent. From 1991 to 2001 net earnings increased on average 3.4 percent each year; dividends, interest, and rent increased on average 4.9 percent; and transfer payments increased on average 4.6 percent.

EARNINGS BY PLACE OF WORK

Earnings of persons employed in Gilmer increased from \$58,099 in 2000 to \$64,168 in 2001, an increase of 10.4 percent. The 2000-2001 state change was 3.9 percent and the national change was 2.5 percent. The average annual growth rate from the 1991 estimate of \$46,862 to the 2001 estimate was 3.2 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 3.9 percent and for the nation was 5.6 percent.

Note: All income estimates with the exception of PCPI are in thousands of dollars, not adjusted for inflation.