



## **Upshur County West Virginia**

Upshur County is located in central West Virginia. Upshur County government offices are located in Buckhannon, a college town that lies in the center of a rich farming region. The town is named for Delaware Indian Chief Buck-on-ge-ha-non, who lived in the area nearby, and who was called the "Washington of the Delaware."

Buckhannon was first settled in 1770, but the land in the area was not claimed by anyone until 1806, when Elizabeth Cummings Jackson bought the land. Her son, Col. Edward Jackson, platted the town in 1815. He was the grandfather of "Stonewall Jackson." Both the North and South occupied the town during the Civil War.

The Male and Female Academy of Buckhannon had a very short existence, but it is reported to be the first co-educational school west of the Alleghenies. The West Virginia Academy of the United Brethren Church was located here from 1882 to 1897, and then was moved to Mason. West Virginia Wesleyan Academy was established in 1890.

Upshur County is in central West Virginia on the Allegheny Plateau. Its economy includes livestock, bituminous coal mines, natural gas wells, and timber & wood products. Medical Services and retail auto industries also have a prominent place in the local economy. Recently a specialty order aluminum manufacturer has established a facility in the county and has a flourishing business.

Abel Parker Upshur was a distinguished American jurist and statesman from Virginia who also served as Secretary of the Navy from 1841 to 1843, and then as Secretary of State in 1843 and 1844. Upshur County was established in 1851, and is named in honor of Abel Parker Upshur. The county contains some 355 square miles of land area. The West Virginia Wildlife Center is located at French Creek.

According to 2002 population estimates, there are 23,318 people living in Upshur County. This is down slightly from 23,404 in 2000. In July of 2003, Upshur County had an unemployment rate of 7.8%, which is down from 8.4% in February of 2003.

### **Transportation Development**

Upshur County is served by less than 20 miles of four-lane access, consisting of Rt. 33 (Corridor H), which runs east west across the northern part of the county connecting I-79 and Elkins. U.S. Route 20 bisects the county from north to south. Collector roads serve the rest of the local area.

The Upshur County Regional Airport (UCRA) is in construction project that will result in a 5100-foot runway and hanger space for 60 aircraft. The FAA has been particularly interested in developing this facility because it is located on a plateau that affords no obstructions to aircraft operations. An aviation fuel tank farm is in the development plans

for the near future. The UCRA will be in position to service the air transportation industry as it transitions to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

CSX operates rail systems in the county. Coal is the primary product using rail freight. There are no rivers or lakes available for commercial shipping in Upshur County.

Emergency helipads are located at the State Wildlife Center and St. Josephs Hospital.

## **Infrastructure**

Upshur County has made great progress in providing its citizens with public water; however, much of Upshur County is not serviced by public wastewater infrastructure. All of the county public service districts need to explore the possibility of providing sewer service as funding becomes available for such initiatives.

Phase II of the Elkins Road PSD Water Systems Improvement project will begin construction very soon since all funding is in place. This expansion project will provide potable water to the communities of Vegan, Gormley, Swamp Run, Five Forks, McDermott Ridge, Hardman, King School, and Ivy. Adrian PSD is in the pre-construction phase of waterline extensions that will provide water to residents along Alton-Evergreen Road and Alexander Road. Adrian PSD also has a project developed to extend water service to the southeast portion of the county and will proceed as funds become available. Hodgesville PSD is in the construction phase of a project that will provide service to many residents in the northwest quadrant of the county.

Public sewer is not available outside of the Buckhannon-Tennerton area of the county.

## **Cluster Development**

Upshur County is rural in nature. Many families rely on the timber industry for a livelihood, though coal and natural gas production is also important. Approximately 1,110 of the county's 9,120 active workers are involved in logging, extraction industries, and/or the transport of such materials. 8,560 workers are classified as non-farm. There are 2,080 workers who produce goods and 6,480 who provide services.

Upshur County is part of the 6 county Hardwood Alliance Zone in central West Virginia. Many traditional raw timber-manufacturing facilities are located in the county. Besides the traditional sawmills, post & rail operations, and mine props Weyerhaeuser operates an engineered structure wood plant that manufactures laminated beams and trusses from raw yellow poplar logs. A large dry kiln operation is located in the county. Upshur County is home to a number of artisan furniture makers. Cherry and maple conference tables, hand made in Upshur County, grace the Federal Courthouses of the State.

Natural gas production is of importance in the county. Equipment and supply firms that service both the timber harvesting industry and natural gas industry are located in or near County Boundaries.

The auto business sector has a strong cluster development in Upshur County. Two major retailers are located on Corridor H in new multi-million dollar facilities. A third major franchise operates in the Central Business District (CBD) of Buckhannon. There are 3 large parts stores and NAPA has installed a regional distribution center in Buckhannon. There are many repair shops and used car dealerships. Recently an insurance salvage center opened in the County. This firm has contracts with major insurance companies to handle and liquidate wrecked vehicles. There is a flourishing insurance sector in Buckhannon.

A large number of local people left this area in the 1960's in search of work, but a significant number of those people are returning to retire. Medical services, including pharmacies, hospitals and MD partnerships & Clinics are clustered in the County. Multiple dentists, eye specialists and veterinarians are located in Buckhannon. Upshur County has a pool of many well-educated and accomplished professionals, educators, artisans, and craftsmen.

### **Technology**

Upshur County is rural in nature and the technology component of the community reflects common technology issues in a rural community. DSL internet service is available in Buckhannon but not in the outlying communities. Cable TV is available in most communities and along connector State highways. Wireless communication services are generally available. There is a well-known software development firm and several systems installation companies in the county.

West Virginia Wesleyan College is located in Buckhannon and is technology minded. All students receive a laptop computer when they begin classes. Hospital and medical technology available to the community is reasonably modern. Upshur County has a state of the art concrete block plant and an engineered structure wood production facility along Corridor H.

### **Existing Community Conditions**

Upshur County does not contain neighborhoods that are commonly found in large urban areas. The County is composed of many scattered unincorporated communities, which are occupied by people of diverse incomes with a variety of social and infrastructure needs. According to the newly released Census 2000 data, Upshur County's population is 23,404, which is up 2.35% from 22,867 in 1990. This increase in population is indicative of the development of the area around Corridor H and the resulting influx of employees of new businesses and industries. In 1999, development of property along this highway accelerated and that momentum has continued throughout 2002 and into 2003.

The only municipality in Upshur County is the City of Buckhannon, the county seat. Buckhannon's population has declined slightly since 1990. In that year, the census tallied 5,909. Census 2000 results reflect 5,725 residents. The decline can be attributed to

rural housing development throughout the county. Buckhannon does have a flooding problem in the central business district due to storm run-off. (The Buckhannon River flows through the northern areas of the city.)

French Creek, Alton, Frenchton, Ellamore, and Kanawha Head are all examples of residential communities that have no retail commercial components such as groceries, gas, etc. To the south of Buckhannon, the small community of Adrian has been in decline for several years due to local coalmine closure. Rock Cave has modest retail activities and is in need of planning and administrative services. Development in this area would have a positive effect on southern Upshur County, southeastern Lewis County, northern Braxton County, northern Webster County, and southern Randolph County.

Tennerton, the area immediate south of Buckhannon, was once considered an area of very high potential growth. However, the area is currently in commercial decline due to transportation issues. Tennerton is the site of a traffic bottleneck between a large geographical region (southern Upshur County) and the City of Buckhannon. The good four-lane highway (Corridor H) on the outskirts of Buckhannon magnifies the problem. Congested traffic flows need to be addressed to facilitate healthy development of this community and the rest of the communities in southern Upshur County.

The Upshur County Central Business District (CBD) is in a transition stage. Many new and old businesses are locating along Corridor H. The former CBD includes the City of Buckhannon and Tennerton; however one can continue to expect rapid growth to the north, east, and west of the city along Corridor H. The character of the old CBD is volatile. The county has great potential for new economic and residential growth. However, addressing infrastructure needs in a timely fashion is important to maintain current development momentum.

A central high school, a central intermediate school, and several primary schools serve the county. West Virginia Wesleyan College, a private college, is located in Buckhannon. The county also has a hospital, two health clinics and a countywide EMS service. There are several well-trained volunteer fire departments. The Upshur County Detachment of the West Virginia State Police is located south of Buckhannon. In addition, the Upshur County Sheriff's Department and the Buckhannon City Police serve the county. West Virginia Wesleyan College also maintains a security staff.

Upshur County has a rich and diverse selection of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. There are baseball fields, soccer fields, swimming pools, community parks, river accesses, close proximity to large lakes, a native zoo, and an excellent County Youth Camp. With the passage of the 5-year School Excess Levy, some major educational needs can be accommodated. Fred Eberle Technical Center and West Virginia Wesleyan College are important assets to the community. The Stockert Youth Center is located in the old East Main Street School and has had a significant impact on "at risk" youth.

## **Housing Conditions**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 10,751 housing units within the county's boundaries. Of these, 8,972 occupied and 1,779 are vacant. Renters occupy 2,089 of the housing units and 6,883 units being owner occupied. In 2001, these figures are grossly outdated; much new residential development countywide has occurred. Housing construction for independent seniors has not taken place although new personal care homes have been initiated in the private sector.

In 2000, the county's housing stock consisted of 19.9 % of the units having been built before 1939. 1,887 new homes were added to Upshur County between 1990 and 2000, representing 17.5% of the total dwellings.

New housing development has occurred countywide and has been mainly single-family units and multi-family complexes. This development has created a demand for more youth services and activities. In general, there are no large areas of deterioration, but individual locations of rehabilitation need to be addressed.

## **Project Needs Assessment and Priorities**

Upshur County has a high percentage of residents with public water service, and progress is being made in areas that do not have public water. New residential housing development and current enhancements depend on access to public water.

As mentioned, residents remaining unserved in this district are highly interested in receiving public potable water. The PSD, the Upshur County Commission, and other public meetings are repeatedly crowded. PSD officials hear constant complaints of inadequate private water supplies. As Upshur County meets the demand for public water, the need and provision of public sewage services will probably dominate community development for the next twenty years. Water service has paved the way for continued residential development and potential economic development and sewer services will be essential to maintain the quality of life and social/economic opportunities.

## Documentation

1. 1990 Census
2. 2000 Census
3. 2002 Project Priority List
4. Region VII Planning & Development Council Regional Development Plan/Overall
5. Small Cities Block Grant Hearing
6. West Virginia Association of Counties
7. [<http://www.wvcounties.org/map-frameset.html>]
8. West Virginia Economic Summary, January 2002
9. [<http://www.state.wv.us/bep/lmi/datarel/drcntylf.htm>]

## **BEARFACTS 1991-2001 Upshur, West Virginia (54097)**

Upshur is one of 55 counties in West Virginia. It is not part of a Metropolitan Area. Its 2001 population of 23,354 ranked 30th in the state.

### **PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME**

In 2001 Upshur had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$18,652. This PCPI ranked 36th in the state and was 82 percent of the state average, \$22,862, and 61 percent of the national average, \$30,413. The 2001 PCPI reflected an increase of 4.8 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 Upshur was \$12,595 and ranked 37th in the state. The 1991-2001 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 4.0 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 4.2 percent and for the nation was 4.3 percent.

### **TOTAL PERSONAL INCOMIE**

In 2001 Upshur had a total personal income (TPI) of \$435,601. This TPI ranked 28th in the state and accounted for 1.1 percent of the state total. In 1991 the TPI of Upshur was \$289,939 and ranked 31<sup>st</sup> in the state. The 2001 TPI reflected an increase of 4.5 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 4.2 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 Upshur. In 2001 net earnings accounted for 57.1 percent of TPI (compared with 57.7 in 1991); dividends, interest, and rent were 18.6 percent (compared with 18.4 in 1991); and transfer payments were 24.3 percent (compared with 23.9 in 1991). From 2000 to 2001 net earnings increased 3.9 percent; dividends, interest, and rent increased 2.8 percent; and transfer payments increased 7.5 percent. From 1991 to 2001 net earnings increased on average 4.0 percent each year; dividends, interest, and rent increased on average 4.3 percent; and transfer payments increased on average 4.4 percent.

### **EARNINGS BY PLACE OF WORK**

Earnings of persons employed in Upshur increased from \$257,988 in 2000 to \$270,490 in 2001, an increase of 4.8 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 \$175,390 to the 2001 estimate was 4.4 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.