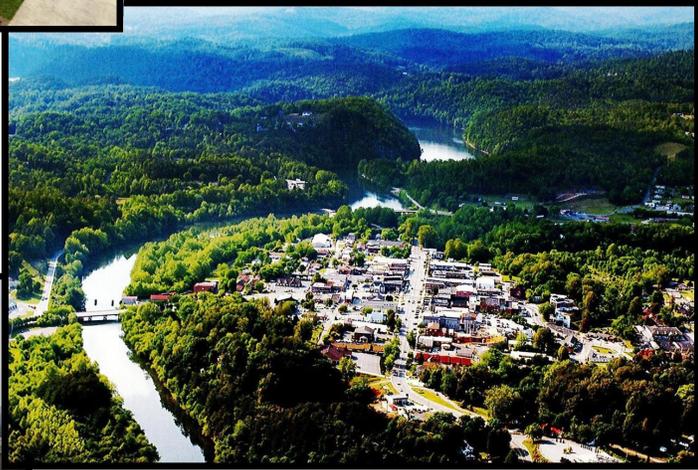




a community profile of
Murphy, North Carolina
established 1839

incorporated 1851 as the county seat
of Cherokee County, North Carolina

*commissioned by Murphy NC STEP
and prepared by its volunteers - October 2012*



*Photos courtesy of Murphy NC STEP volunteers
Linda Ray, Curiosity Shop Bookstore (town aerial);
Michelle Spies (town streetscapes) and Katherine Taaffe (courthouse)*

Every community has its unique history and sense of place; a present culture and presence forged on the character of its people and its resources; and the uncertain impacts of future changes that happen by chance, or by choice. **THE GOOD** is all around us, and we tend to describe it in terms of the beauty of our mountains, lakes, rivers, and streams; the charm of the historic downtown and its evolving streetscape, specialty retailers, restaurants and cultural arts community; the growers and self-sustainers throughout the community, and that "small town" quality of life that just *appeals*.

THE BAD & THE UGLY tend to be a matter of general consensus on most counts - and yet on any number of topics there are very mixed opinions. We've done our best to picture the Murphy area with photographs and brief narratives, and leave it to the reader to declare what's Good, what's Bad, what's Ugly - opportunities can be found in all mentioned.

SO, WHO ARE WE, AND HOW DO WE SEE THE FUTURE OF MURPHY?

- **We are gentle yet passionate people of all ages, occupations and walks of life who appreciate the heritage and natural beauty of this place, and who want a good life in Murphy.**



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- **We are families with children and parents and grandparents** working hard to make a good living and provide a good quality of life; we are singles and couples of all ages who want to be here and find our future here; we are active contributors in the community with our churches, schools and nonprofit organizations; we are older but young at heart retirees not ready to retire; we are part-time residents or property owners dreaming of the day we can live full-time here. We support the positive development of our youth through team sports, arts & cultural offerings, and a host of other church and school sponsored programs.
- **We are independent thinkers with VERY different ideas about what's good, and what's not, for our community.** We view the world from the different seats we've occupied and sit in. We want what we want, and resist any "messaging with" what we don't want to see changed. Whether born here or relocated here, our life experiences guide our views of the future.
- **We are diverse in age and backgrounds and interests and beliefs, but not so diverse in terms of ethnicity, race or religion.** We are predominantly Caucasian/White with long standing yet smaller numbers of native American Indian, African American/Black, Hispanic, and Asian. We are predominantly Christian, with long standing yet smaller numbers of other religions.
- **We are patriotic and love our freedoms.** We are identified as Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike when it comes to political affiliations. Our community enjoys a strong 2-party system with a strong contingency of independent voters. Yet, we're noted for low voter turnouts in local elections, and it's hard to say why.
- **We are community minded volunteers** - professionals and small business owners; entrepreneurs and independent contractors; employees of government, business and industry; educators; artisans and musicians; retirees; students of all ages; native born and later arrivals; clergy; and local elected officials.



Murphy NC STEP Kick-Off Community Celebration! October 13, 2012—Konehete Park

*The turn out for the **Murphy NC STEP community kick-off celebration** held at Konehete Park October 13 was impressive - and how 'bout that "**Murphy Has It ALL**" slide show, musicians and arts performances sprinkled about the Park, and Murphy's first "**Movie Under The Stars**" featuring **E.T.** on the big screen - all courtesy of Murphy NC STEP community celebration sub-committee volunteers and sponsors.*

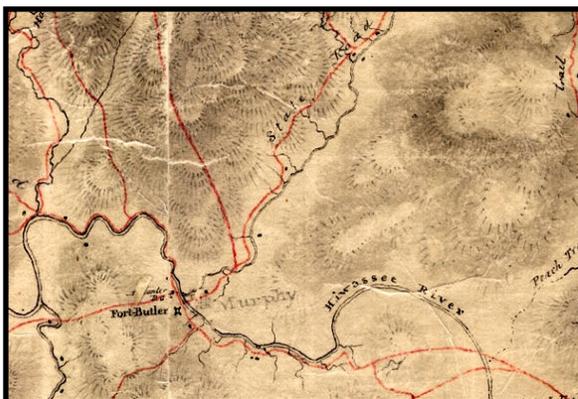


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- **We are proud** of our schools, proud of the character and charm and streetscape of our historic downtown, proud of the peace and beauty of our natural surroundings, proud of the community of artists and crafters and growers and writers and historians and ecologists sprinkled throughout the Murphy area, and proud **of the town we call HOME**. We appreciate the "soft side" of economic development; and the "quality of place" that brings and sustains people with the ability to invest, to invest in it.
- **We are people with big ideas, varied opinions, and a strong sense of community**, but always with limited resources to make something happen or get the job done. Yet, when people disagree, we've seen the splintering of not only local elected officials and appointees (those "powers that be" we call "they"), but also civic and church and nonprofit organizations and their financial and volunteer resources needed to accomplish goals. Those with persistence and patience, together with the talent for thoughtful planning and landing consensus, accomplish good things.
- **We are people who often wonder about the wisdom, motives or interests of local elected officials** governing the town and county. "The powers that be" who either disappoint us or come through with a welcomed act of support are just like we are - independent thinkers and doers who openly or behind the scenes make a new or different idea work, or not.
- **We are the people of the Greater Murphy Area** willing to find the extra time and make the extra effort to work hard, and to focus on a few things most can agree are worth doing for the future economic prosperity of our community. **Possibilities are endless, and progress is made one STEP at a time - however we define it.** *[photo right - one of two remaining welcome signs leading to downtown Murphy off the 4-lane; the third at the Peachtree Street turnoff recently was done away with.]*



The origins of a place tend to re-inspire its new beginnings. Before Murphy, there was the Cherokee Indian Town of Tlanusi-yi . . .



Populated by the Cherokee Indians for thousands of years, the area we call Murphy today was first one of the Cherokee Nation's Valley Towns called Tlanusi-yi, named for "The Leech Place" of Cherokee legend. The ancient *Unicoi Turnpike* ran through it, a trading and travel route connecting the Cherokee towns on the Savannah River at the Georgia/South Carolina border in the east, with those here in NC and to the west in Tennessee.



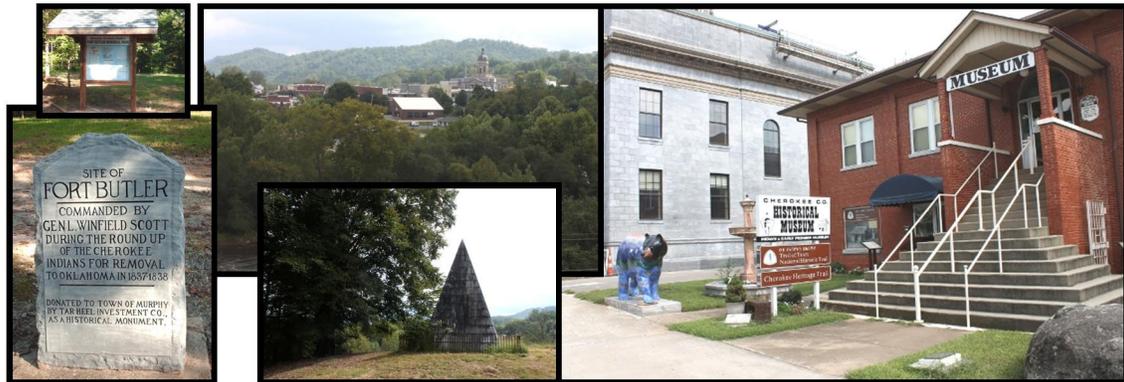
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Today in 2012, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians holds a substantial number of land tracts in the Greater Murphy Area and elsewhere in Cherokee County. Citizens and visitors and investors alike anticipate (with mixed feelings) the opening of a casino in the Murphy area by the Eastern Band, the first in NC outside its original operation in Cherokee.

. . . and then, in 1835, there was a Trading Post called Huntington, and the construction of Fort Butler and the infamous *Trail of Tears* would follow.

The Great State Road built through the mountains in the mid 1830s came with the soldiers and the earliest white settlers in the area, and even later those who would build the railroad line through the mountain terrain into the area. In 1835 Col. H. R. S. Hunter established the first trading post and post office, called Huntington. Nestled near the confluence of the Valley and Hiwassee Rivers, it was the origin of our historic town of Murphy.

In 1836, Fort Butler was the largest of seven area forts constructed for the collection and removal of the Cherokee Indians out west to Oklahoma in 1837-1838, on the tragic and infamous *Trail of Tears*. Today in 2012, Murphy is still known for and remembered as an originating place for *The Trail of Tears*. An awful blemish on our local and national history it was, indeed.



Pictured above: the Fort Butler interpretive sign and monument, the Pyramid, and the Cherokee County Historical Museum on Peachtree Street [photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe]

Col. H. R. S. Hunter's daughter, Martha, married an Army Surgeon, Charles Hitchcock, who had come to the area with the Fort Butler garrison. Hitchcock later left the Army and followed the gold rush to San Francisco where they raised their daughter, Lillie. Lillie married Howard Coit and lived a very colorful life out west. In her will, Lillie left money for the construction of the famous Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, and money for the construction of a pyramid in Murphy honoring her grandparents. The Pyramid still stands today overlooking the Hiwassee River and historic town center.

Today in 2012, the Cherokee County Historical Museum next to the courthouse in downtown Murphy provides citizens and visitors alike with the history and relics of our Cherokee Indian and frontier days heritage, as well as the area's Civil War era and more recent history. And in October 2012 the Murphy Library opened its Cherokee Cultural Heritage Language and Genealogy Room. As a significant grants supporter of the Museum, the Library, and the Murphy River Walk, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation has invested heavily in our local projects that honor and conserve our Cherokee Indian cultural heritage.



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Today in 2012, the Great State Road has evolved to a 4-lane highway, and a number of 2-lane highways and bridges through the Murphy area, maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. You'll find the usual big box stores, fast food franchises, hotels/motels, real estate offices, thrift stores for nonprofits, flea markets, locally owned restaurants and retailers, and much more along the highway commercial strip in Murphy.



above photo collages courtesy of Phil Mattox



SAMPLING OF SOME OF THE BIG BOX STORES ON THE 4-LANE - Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

In 1839, the Town of Murphy was established and named for a North Carolina Statesman known as "The Father of Education," Archibald D. Murphey. Go figure the spelling snafu back in the day, but so it goes.



SCHOOLS- Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

pictured above (clockwise) are Tri-County Community College; Murphy Elementary School; Murphy High School; Murphy Middle School; and The Learning Center Charter School



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Today in 2012, public education is alive and well in Murphy, North Carolina. Our K-12 Cherokee County public school system was again awarded TOP TEN NC DISTRICT honors, and MHS again received the HONOR SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE award. The highly regarded Learning Center Charter School, and a growing network of home schoolers, adds to the early educational mix. The Tri-County Community College serves the educational and work force training needs from early college to associate degrees and adult continuing education.

In the same year Murphy was established in 1839, Cherokee County was formed from a portion of Macon County; it was not until 1851 that Murphy was incorporated as its county seat. What became Clay County was originally included, but that part separated out in 1861.



Today in 2012, Cherokee County's 5th court house, built entirely of locally quarried marble and on the National Register of Historic Places, is in its final stages of its rehabilitation and expansion. The antiquated county jail relocated with the Sherriff's department from behind the court house downtown to new metal building facilities on the outskirts of town. Murphy made nation-wide media history in May 2003 with the capture of the notorious '96 Olympics bomber and survivalist, Eric Rudolph. It was M.P.D.'s rookie Police Officer Jeffrey Postell who apprehended Rudolph as he was dumpster diving after midnight, and as we later learned he was not far from one of his many deep woods hide-out camps in the mountains. The FL native and survivalist had eluded authorities for many years, including an initial 2-year intense FBI "manhunt" presence in Murphy where he had relocated. The \$1 million reward didn't apply for Rudolph's capture. It was all in a day's work for Murphy's local law enforcement officials.

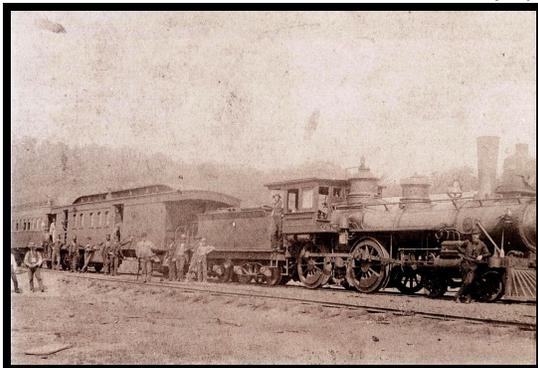
Today in 2012, Murphy is the home to public places and public works for the town and county.



pictured left to right, the Murphy Fire Department, the Murphy Police Department, the Murphy Power Board and City Hall, and the Murphy Public Library

PUBLIC SAFETY & SERVICES- Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

The first *economic* "boom" to Murphy came via the Railroads in the late 1880s . . .



Following on the heels of "the Great State Road" cut through the mountains and into Murphy in the 1830s were the railroad lines and trestle bridges beginning in 1873 from Asheville to the far western end of the State, Murphy. The first train pulled into Murphy in 1888 (shown left, courtesy of Mayor Bill Hughes' office), of the Marietta & North Georgia Railroad. The Louisville & Nashville Railroad would run from 1888 to the early 1970s. The Southern Railroad



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would run from 1899 to the 1980s. Part of the Old L&N Depot stands in Murphy today at the Hiwassee Street river bridge at Railroad Street. During the early passenger train decades of the railroads, people coming here or passing through brought lodging and restaurant and retail trade business to what we now know as the historic downtown business district.

Today in 2012, the NC DOT Railroad Division still tags the old Murphy line as "the end of the line" and a preserved railway corridor; the *Great Smoky Mountain Railroad* excursion rail service holds the lease - *and is ready to come in to Murphy* IF the NC DOT can manage the cost of needed rail line and bridge repairs. As for the economic value of excursion trains? **Bryson City, NC; Blue Ridge, GA - enough said.**

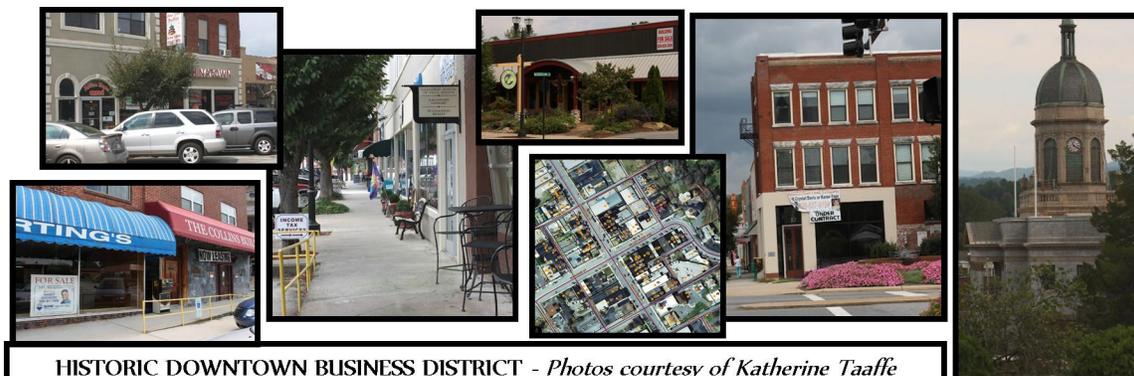


THE OLD L&N DEPOT AREA BY THE RIVER BRIDGE

The next "economic boom" to Murphy came via TVA and the construction of the Hiwassee Dam, beginning in the 1930s and continuing 'til the 1940s . . .

The advent of hydro electric power brought the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to Murphy early on, and every one from teachers to construction workers made their way from Murphy to what is now the Hiwassee Dam community. Farmers were relocated to make way for the Dam and its flooding of the reservoirs, Lake Hiwassee and on the other side of the new dam, Lake Apalachia. One relocated farm still stands off Old Hwy 64 in Murphy, yet it was the beginning of the end of an agricultural based economy. Between the advent of electricity, motorized travel, and all that would come next, our earliest generations began to adjust from an agrarian existence to finding other work that would pay for all the modern conveniences. Downtown Murphy flourished around the Railroad and TVA Dam construction eras, despite the Wars and Great Depression.

Today in 2012, downtown Murphy continues to evolve with great restaurants, specialty retail, banking, the arts, a court house and legal community surrounding it, churches, and more . . .



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT - Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe



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CHURCHES- Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe



The locally owned and operated restaurants in Murphy are favorites of citizens and visitors alike. Full service restaurants have expanded with the passage of pouring licenses in the town of Murphy.

[the 3 photo collages left and below courtesy of Phil Mattox]

Murphy area banking is strong and with money to lend for



viable owner occupied and other commercial business enterprises, as well as home and land purchases. The economy, and particularly the fall in real estate values in recent years, have proved a hard hit on many area banks.

The next "economic boom" in Murphy centered on real estate and peaked in early 2007, when Murphy alone had over 30 real estate offices and 300 agents working the land, home and commercial sales. The less than half who remain today keep plugging. Building contractors, building suppliers, bankers and lenders, appraisers, surveyors, real estate attorneys, home inspectors, electric and phone and internet service suppliers, and



a host of home goods retailers experienced the success of the years leading to the peak, and the often painful challenges of the market crash from 2007 to now. Foreclosures, once very rare here, continue to roll out and attract new investors and residents.

Today in 2012, Murphy remains a popular place for both retirees and families of all ages seeking a place to migrate to and escape the high congestion, high crime, high traffic, public school issues, high taxes and insurance costs, and what some would call the generally maddening



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nature of many metro areas and neighborhoods around the country. Many who relocated from up North down to Florida back in the day ended up relocating to Murphy, locally referred to as "half backs."

Once known as a popular retirement or vacation getaway community, Murphy is now regarded as a great place to LIVE by people of all ages, and by people from around the country (Florida and otherwise!). **The charm of its small town atmosphere, the beauty of its natural surroundings, and its culture of individual freedom, makes Murphy a great place to be.**

Today in 2012, Murphy offers a host of health care professionals via the Murphy Medical Center and Urgent Care facilities (shown top left and right above). Citizens take advantage of many services offered by the County Health Department in town (shown bottom right), and the sole drug & alcohol rehab facility in a 5-county area is provided by the Christian Love Ministries.



HEALTH CARE FACILITIES- Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

Today in 2012, Murphy offers an active Senior Center, and some amazing in-town recreational and wellness facilities.

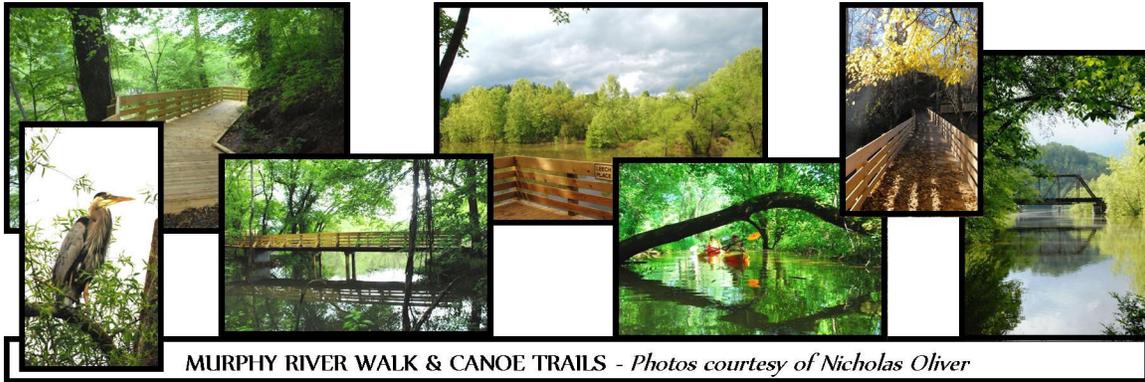


KONEHETE PARK, HIWASSEE VALLEY POOL & WELLNESS CENTER - Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

The **Konehete Park** and the **Hiwassee Valley Pool & Wellness Center** facilities in Murphy are a rare find in a town our size. It's where parents and kids enjoy their team sports, swimming, work outs, runs and jogs and walks. The picnic pavilions and playground, tennis and basketball courts, the old rock gym, ball fields, and Heritage Partners' **Murphy River Walk & Canoe Trails** are all there on both sides of the river bridge. The River Walk follows the Valley River to the Hiwassee River, and on to the Old L&N Depot, surrounding the historic town center, with trail access points at Konehete Park, McClelland Street in town, and the Old L&N Depot.



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MURPHY RIVER WALK & CANOE TRAILS - Photos courtesy of Nicholas Oliver

The Murphy area has always attracted talented and hard working growers, artists and crafters sprinkled throughout the area. An emerging and active **arts community** offers artisans and people of all ages wonderful opportunities to come together - the downtown **Saturday Farmers Market** and **First Friday Art Walks**, and annual events such as the Folk School's *Fall Festival* (and a host of wonderful other annual events), the Cherokee County Council's *Art, Garden & Music Festival*, and Heritage Partners' *Heritage Walk & Festival*.



FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK - Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe



POPULAR PLACES WITH TOURISTS & VISITORS

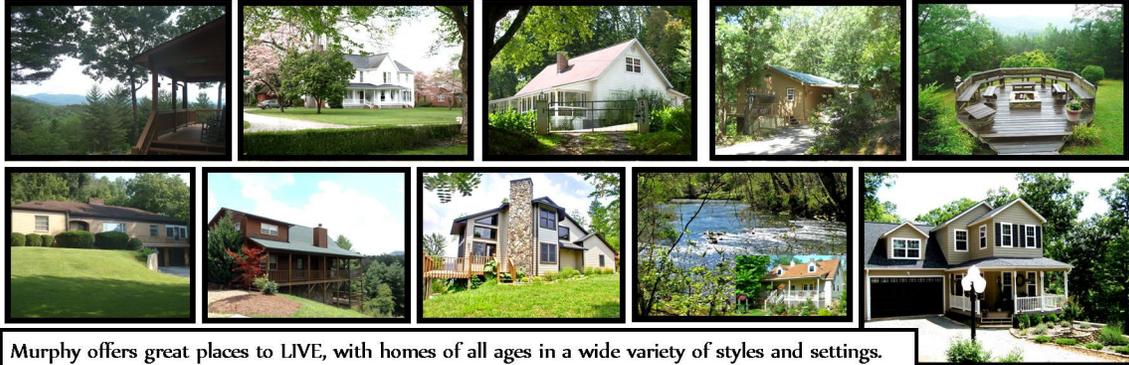
Today in 2012, **eco and heritage tourism** is enjoyed by over 14,000 annual stop-in visitors and direct calls hosted by the Cherokee Co. Welcome Center in Murphy, and with web site and *Facebook* hits by the thousands. In addition to ongoing and special events, our star attractions include the Folk School, the Museum, downtown Murphy historic sites, restaurants, retail shops, and art galleries in their charming historic buildings, the Murphy River Walk, and the scenic



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Cherokee Hills Golf Course. Exploring our beautiful mountain region with its U.S. Forest Service lands, trails, vistas, lakes, rivers and streams is what visitors come here for, yet they discover much more once directed off the 4-lane to all the neat local places and "goings on."

Today in 2012, Murphy has much to offer in terms of a wide variety of places to live, and to live a lifestyle of one's choosing. It's all about the quality of place, and quality of life, we're here for.



Murphy offers great places to LIVE, with homes of all ages in a wide variety of styles and settings.



MOUNTAIN VALLEY FARMS & HOMESTEADS- Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

Today in 2012, a rather limited Murphy area "job market" is centered on health care, education, government and public services, big box stores, franchises, and small manufacturing.



MANUFACTURING - Photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

The rest is up to the back bone of our local economy: the entrepreneurs who sustain themselves, their families and their employees by offering the services and products citizens and visitors appreciate. Most say we need more good paying jobs with good benefits in Murphy.



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Some say working in a manufacturing plant isn't what they want for themselves, or their children. **We're not sure what the actual unemployed say- 12.9% at last check.**

Murphy provides outreach services through its government social service offices, churches and nonprofits. There is often a waiting list for subsidized housing, and Murphy offers the only homeless shelter in a 5-county radius. It's run by volunteers and private contributions. Same goes for the Valley River Humane Society animal shelter, whose volunteers pick up the pieces from people who abandon or who can't care for their animals.



CHURCHES & NON-PROFITS- PEOPLE SERVING PEOPLE IN NEED photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe

Whatever the need, the people of Murphy respond with a way to help address it. Volunteerism is alive and well in Murphy, as people of all ages pitch in through their churches, schools, civic groups and nonprofit organizations to meet a need, or fill a void, in the community. While some say we have more than our fair share of "thrift shops" in Murphy, most all exist to raise money for these initiatives.



[photo collage above courtesy of Phil Mattox]

Today in 2012, in the downtown business district and beyond out on the 4-lane, Murphy has any number of vacant buildings and storefronts for sale or for lease. Some are more appealing than others, but all present opportunities for new businesses and jobs, as well as the expansion of the cultural arts and other neat "things to do" for people of all ages.



EMPTY BUILDINGS & STORE FRONTS photos courtesy of Katherine Taaffe



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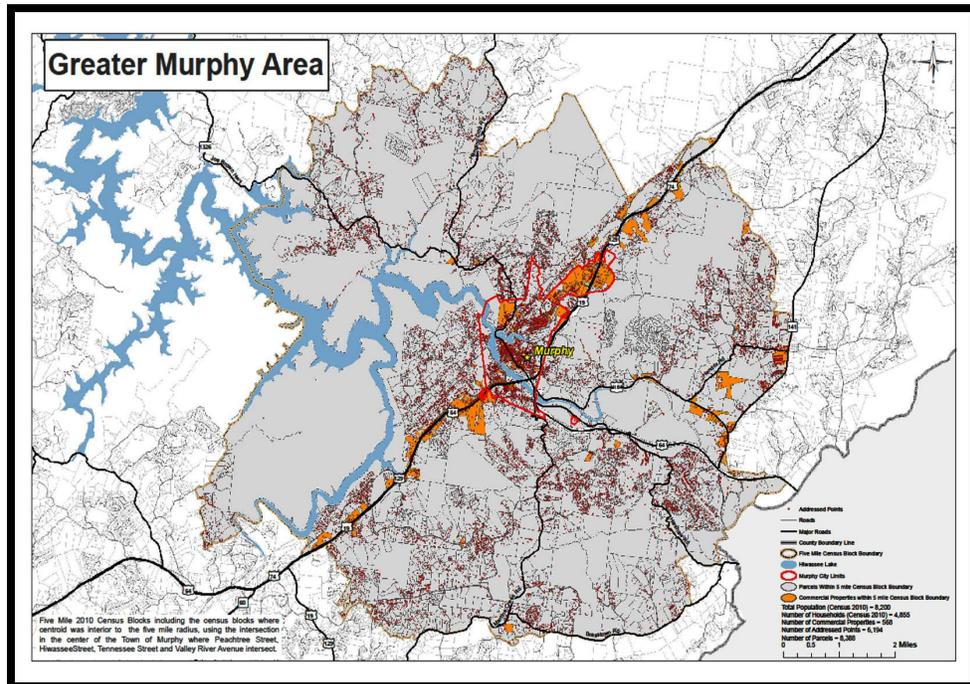
[pictured left- on the 4-lane in Murphy; right- Old Hackney Warehouse by the Depot; photos by Katherine Taaffe]

From the largely abandoned old Regal and Connaheta Streets manufacturing district just North of downtown, to the Old Hackney Warehouse and other buildings situated in the Old L&N Depot area at the prominent Hiwassee River bridge entrance to town, and along Hill Street and the Old Andrews Highway heading east from downtown, Murphy has more than a few empty buildings and store fronts. And then there are the multitude of eyesore metal buildings and strip centers, and visual clutter along the 4-lane commercial corridor heading west of town.

The blights begging for improvement and renewed development stick out like sore thumbs in contrast to charming historic building rehabs and newer construction throughout the Greater Murphy area. The latter reflect the investment of those in the private and public sector who have created, and are creating, attractive and welcoming places of business and public facilities.

About the Greater Murphy Area project area:

The incorporated limits seemed appropriate but *not quite* IT; and the Murphy NC zip code area was determined WAY too massive, covering over half the county from Marble to the TN line east to west, and north to south from the TN line



to the GA line. So, we landed on a 5-mile radius census blocks concept for a general parameter of the Murphy NC STEP project area [map courtesy of Cherokee County Mapping/GIS office].



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While the project area has been defined as a 5-mile radius census blocks area from the center of town, many who call Murphy home live well outside the town and project area limits. Basic points of information about The Greater Murphy Area, and its context with the incorporated town limits and the county it seats, follow [courtesy of Cherokee County Mapping/GIS office].

Just a few census & county records stats	Town of Murphy Incorporated Limits	5-Mile Radius Census Blocks: Murphy NC STEP Project Area	Murphy, NC 28906 Zip code area	Cherokee County, NC
Population- 2000 census	1,565	6,651	16,454	24,298
Population - 2010 census	1,627	8,200	18,475	27,444
% change 2000 to 2010	+3.8%	+23.29%	+12.28%	+12.95%
# Households- 2010 census	854	4,855	7,951	17,515
Avg # per Household- 2010 census	2.32	2.34	2.28	2.33
Est. # of Part-Time/Vacation Homes- 2012		1,101		
Est. # of Additional Part- Time Residents		2,576		
# of Commercial Properties- 2012	295	568	598	851
# of Addressed Points- 2012	1,367	6,194	15,381	21,194
# of Parcels- 2012	1,299	8,388	26,232	32,266
# of Vacant Parcels- 2012	365	4,260	13,825	17,259

In closing, we understand that ongoing economic development initiatives are traditionally focused on manufacturing and industry of a scale to justify the application of taxpayer dollars for a prudent return to the tax base. Understood! So, how's that working for Murphy so far?

Quite specifically, NC STEP excludes the road, water & sewer infrastructure elements our town tends to, and that we tend to take for granted (but shouldn't!). Reliable high speed internet, wireless, and even cell phone reception are spotty throughout the greater Murphy area, all considered essential for today's livelihoods and for some time an emerging economic development priority. Our tourism industry potential is great, yet all too modestly supported by part of the declining hotel/motel, B&Bs and vacation rentals occupancy tax collections from overnight guests of the community. QUALITY OF LIFE elements of our community have been left for the most part to all volunteer organizations and their sponsorships and fund raisers.

We appreciate that NC STEP provides a unique and first-time opportunity for the TOWN to focus on its own future economic development planning and prosperity, separate yet always dependent upon the county and its network of outside resources. We look forward to working on some good things for the future of Murphy, one STEP at a time.

Respectfully submitted by the Murphy NC STEP Community Profile sub-committee: Katherine Taaffe (spokesperson), Phil Mattox, Paula Bryan, Pattie Reynolds, Francis Juhlin, Cecilia Crawford, and Rob Rollins. Special thanks are extended to Murphy NC STEP volunteers Mamie Patton, as well as Josh Carpenter and the capable staff of the Cherokee County GIS/Mapping office, for their significant contributions to this project.



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