



## **Randolph County West Virginia**

Elkins is the county seat of Randolph County. It is situated in a shallow bowl-shaped valley in a bend in the Tygarts Valley River. The town is constructed on gentle slopes gradating from the Tygarts Valley River. Former railroad amenities and yards are located in Elkins.

Before 1889 the area was home to a scattered rural community known as Leadsville, where the farmers' corn was loaded on boats and floated down river.

Elkins was incorporated in 1890 and renamed for U.S. Senator Stephen Benton Elkins, son-in-law of U.S. Senator Henry Davis. Together they promoted business, industry, and commerce. Senator Elkins became a railroad magnate, coal baron, lumber king, banker, and as astute and powerful politician. He was secretary of war under President Benjamin Harrison. Later he was chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission under President Theodore Roosevelt. The original Davis and Elkins estates are now the site of Davis and Elkins College.

The town of Elkins became the county seat in 1900 after a three-year fight with Beverly, which also sought the honor. Bands of armed men were trained to defend their towns. At one point a special train was formed at Elkins to attack Beverly. The attack was averted, though, by a speech given by C. Wood Dailey, chief counsel for the Western Maryland Railroad.

Randolph County is in Eastern West Virginia at the base of the Eastern Panhandle. Much of it is in the Monongahela National Forest. The county has coalmines, timber operations, and limestone quarries. Livestock production is the major agricultural commercial activity.

Randolph County is the largest county in the state. Consisting of 1040 square miles of area, the county is named in honor of Edmund Jennings Randolph. This easy central county was established in 1787. Several West Virginia "firsts" took place here. The first white settler in what is now West Virginia located on the shores of the Monon River. The first Indian massacre took place here. Randolph County also became the site of the first 4-H camp in the world. Points of interest include Kumbrabow State Forest, the Rich Mountain Battlefield, and parts of the Monongahela National Forest. During the Civil War, federal forces maintained the highest fortified camp of the war at White Mountain. The elevation of the camp was over 4000 feet.

Randolph served as Governor of Virginia from 1786 to 1788. He had served as an aide to General Washington during the Revolutionary War. He had been a member of the Continental Congress. A delegate to the Constitutional Convention, Randolph proposed the famous Virginia Plan. He refused to sign the Constitution, feeling that it was not adequately republican, but urged Virginia to ratify the Constitution.

Randolph County is located in east central West Virginia. With a population of approximately 28,267 it is the largest county served by the Region VII Planning and Development Council. Total youth population (ages 5-19) is about 5,550, with over 27% living in poverty. The county seat is located at Elkins. In April of 2003, Randolph County had an unemployment rate of 7.9%, which was down from 9.3% in April of 2002. This unemployment rate is ranked "Worse Than Average" statewide.

### **Transportation Development**

US Route 33 (Corridor H) currently provides about twenty (20) miles of four-lane access. That highway is currently being extended across Randolph County and into Tucker County. Other four-lane facilities include a 5-mile section of US 219 south of the City and 7 miles of US 33 to the East. The eastern US 33 four-lane is an aborted section of Corridor H and has limited development potential for the industry and retail economic sectors.

A scenic railway has been established with a railhead in Elkins and another across the Randolph-Barbour County Line at Belington. This system is serviced by historical equipment and caters to the tourist sector. Elkins has received a congressional appropriation to restore rail transportation amenities in the historic RR Depot District.

A public airport is located at Elkins and a private airfield in Harmon.

### **Infrastructure**

Randolph County has a comprehensive water resource plan; however, it will take a long period of time to fully implement service to all residents of the county. Several interim projects are in development that will compliment the overall plan and/or meet the immediate needs of residents.

The Leadsville PSD and the Huttonsville PSD have completed large water extension projects. Huttonsville PSD recently was awarded a SCBG for another water extension and that project is in final design stage. The Town of Mill Creek is considering an upgrade of their water plant to better serve their jurisdiction. There is a major sewer redevelopment plan being considered by the Huttonsville PSD, which will serve several hundred customers and a 75-acre industrial park when completed.

Construction is underway for the communities of Valley Bend, Dailey and East Dailey for public sewage collection and treatment. The East Dailey area is also in need of natural gas service. Residents in this area have expressed interest in this service.

The Town of Harman is in dire need of both water and sewer. A water extension project and sewer system project are fully developed. The Town has applied for funding for both of these projects.

### **Cluster Development**

Randolph County has a significant cluster of industry based on the abundant hardwood forests in the region. Timber harvesting equipment is sold and traded by four major dealerships in the county. Timber crews supply log yards and manufacturing facilities in Randolph County. Timber is also exported to other facilities in the region. There is a national hardwood floor manufacturer and a high-end cabinet manufacturer located in the county. Logs, rough sawed lumber, posts & rails, hardwood flooring and cabinets are a few of the wood products originating in Randolph County.

Natural resource management continues to play a significant economic role in Randolph County and can be considered a specialty cluster. The Supervisors Office of the Monongahela National Forest is located in Elkins and administrates and supervises various aspects of the public forest holdings. USDA has a wildlife damage control unit stationed in Elkins that provides technical service for the entire state. West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resource Section, maintains an Operations Center at Elkins. Statewide supervision, research and administrative duties are performed at this office. Non-profit organizations such as the WV Rivers Coalition and Nature Conservatory are located in Elkins. Much work on the new National Forest Heritage Area is originating from Randolph County and will encompass parts of 4 states.

The abundant natural features found in Randolph County have stimulated the development of a tourism sector in the local economy. The National Forest attracts many visitors every year. Elkins is home to the Forest Festival and is a major event in the region. The City of Elkins is currently working on a major renovation to the downtown railroad depot area. This is an origin/destination terminal for the scenic railroad mentioned in the transportation section.

The Helvetia Restoration Committee has taken the lead in sponsoring a project to utilize local heritage assets and develop them into economic development projects for the Village. Work continues on the **Community Development Action Plan**. Focusing primarily on the cheese industry, this plan will encompass: 1.) A Business Plan which will include necessary start-up capital cost, 2.) A Facility Plan, which will include accurate costs of equipment, building renovations, and wastewater treatment system, and 3.) identification of appropriate procurement processes of any needed professional services and funding sources. To date, a local resident who is trained in Swiss cheese making is working in the Village as a Vista Volunteer in order to continue to the small business development of cheese making and other entrepreneurial efforts. In August 2003, a congressional appropriation was earmarked for these efforts. Details are not yet available.

## **Technology**

Randolph County has a state of the art technology-training center that specializes in the wood products industry cluster. Knowledgeable, skilled employees are in great demand in today's wood products manufacturing industry. The Wood Tech Center is responding to that need by providing specialized training programs that allow people to succeed in

the current technology-driven workplace. Students completing courses are well prepared for technician-level positions in the growing, highly competitive wood industry.

Students come to the Center for different reasons with various goals. Some are employees of local companies, looking to improve their ability to do a specific job. Others are entrepreneurs, struggling with the learning curve associated with the acquisition of computerized woodworking equipment. Others yet are people desiring to enhance their skills in order to find a better job. Some are unemployed, who realize that their marketability as a future employee is tied to their knowledge of current technology. All students gain the ability to operate, maintain, troubleshoot and repair today's production woodworking machinery.

Not only does the Wood Technology Center offer a nationally accredited log-grading program (complete with certificate), the Center also offers an innovative training and technical support facility, with a combination of:

- Low-cost business incubator space
- Technical expertise for wood production issues
- A shared-use facility with state-of-the-art equipment for rent
- Training programs for new and existing businesses.

For the individual who is looking to learn about the industry, the Wood Tech Center can help develop skills. Training services for commercial business can save precious time and money.

### **Existing Community Conditions**

Randolph County's population has increased by 45 people since 2000. This is not a significant increase in population. The stabilization of population levels can be attributed to the increased development along Corridor H and in the Tygart Valley. The county still has a lower population than reported in the 1980 census (28,734).

Although Randolph County does contain neighborhoods that resemble more urban-like areas, it is mostly composed of many small towns and unincorporated communities. For the most part, lower income persons with a variety of community needs occupy these areas. The incomes of county families have increased since 1980. In 1980, the median household income of Randolph County households was \$12,801, whereas in 1990 the income was \$18,278. Median household income was \$27,299 in 1999. This large increase can be attributed to developments in the economic structure of the County, State and Nation over the past 20 years.

The City of Elkins is the county seat and is the largest municipality in the county with 7,032 residents (It is also the largest municipality served by the Region VII Planning and Development Council). Other county municipalities include Beverly (651 residents), Coalton (247 residents), Huttonsville (217 residents), Harman (126 residents), Mill Creek

(662 residents), and Montrose (156 residents). Local unincorporated communities include Whitmer, Helvetia, Pickens, Dailey, Kerens, Valley Head, and Valley Bend.

Randolph County has a variety of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. There are baseball, football and soccer fields. Basketball and tennis courts are also available. There are outdoor city parks in Elkins and other county municipalities. Other parks are planned, such as the Dry Fork Recreation Area near the Town of Harman. There are community centers, senior centers, etc... located around the county.

The Randolph County Sheriff's Department employs five (5) deputies, while the Randolph County Detachment of the WV State Police staffs fifteen (15) officers. The Huttonsville Correctional Facility is located in the county and a new regional correctional facility is being constructed west of Elkins. In addition to law enforcement services, there is a countywide EMS service as well as eight (8) rural volunteer fire departments. The City of Elkins maintains a paid-staff fire department.

Local areas in the county need street paving, storm drainage and sidewalk replacement. There are targeted economic development needs in areas such as Helvetia and Pickens. A unique challenge is presented to the residents of the Helvetia / Pickens area. They are served by individual wells and have no sewer treatment of any kind. Many septic systems drain directly into the small streams in the area. There is a desire to look at providing that area with water and wastewater infrastructure to allow for residential and commercial development; however, the area is geographically secluded, making any infrastructure extension into the area extremely difficult.

Other targeted economic development needs are being addressed. The county recently deeded 75 acres next to the Huttonsville Correctional Facility to the Randolph County Development Authority (RCDA) for development as an industrial park. The RCDA is also looking for new tenants to move into the existing industrial park in Elkins.

### **Housing Conditions**

According to the Census 2000, there are 13, 478 housing units within the county's boundaries. Of these, 11,072 are occupied and 2,406 are vacant. Renters occupy 2,678 of the housing units and 8,720 are owner occupied.

The age of the county's housing stock is in transition. In 1990 24.9% of the units were built before 1939 while in 2000 only 19% of the houses were in this age bracket. Approximately 2,344 units (17.3%) were constructed between 1990 and 2000. Randolph County's population increased only 1.65% from 27,803 in 1990 to 28,262 in 2000 and will not be a significant factor to new home construction. New housing starts between 2000 and 2005 can be expected due to the historic low interest rates of 2003 and the need to replace older structures.

New housing development is underway, especially single-family development. Most of this construction is in the Tygart Valley area. In general, there are no large areas of

deterioration, but individual locations must be addressed. Opportunity exists for both elderly/family assisted housing and multi-family development. There are plans for an independent senior housing project in the Town of Harmon.

### **Community Needs Assessment and Priorities**

Public water and wastewater infrastructure needs, as discussed in the infrastructure section, are among the most immediate needs of Randolph County. Several residents, from various parts of the county, have expressed interest in receiving such service. Any attempt to extend this service to a large number of low to moderate-income residents is endorsed by the Randolph County Commission.

In addition to public water/sewer, Helvetia needs a commerce center to support the ethnic and agriculture tourism niche that the community has identified as marketable. “Heritage” economic development has kept the Swiss Village viable and the town has become a destination tourist attraction.

### **Documentation**

1. Small Cities Block Grant Hearing
2. 1990 Census
3. 2000 Census
4. Region VII Planning and Development Council Regional Development Plan / Overall
5. 2000 Region VII Planning and Development Council Project Priority List
6. <http://www.state.wv.us/bep/lmi/datarel/drcntyem.htm>
7. West Virginia County Profiles Website, <http://www.state.wv.us/bep/lmi/cntyprof/CP99rand.htm>

## **BEARFACTS 1991-2001 Randolph, West Virginia (54083)**

Randolph is one of 55 counties in West Virginia. It is not part of a Metropolitan Area. Its 2001 population of 28,224 ranked 20th in the state.

### **PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME**

In 2001 Randolph had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$21,384. This PCPI ranked 17th in the state and was 94 percent of the state average, \$22,862, and 70 percent of the national average, \$30,413. The 2001 PCPI reflected an increase of 5.6 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 Randolph was \$13,776 and ranked 22nd in the state. The 1991-2001 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 4.5 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 Randolph had a total personal income (TPI) of \$603,537. This TPI ranked 19th in the state and accounted for 1.5 percent of the state total. In 1991 the TPI of Randolph was \$387,629 and ranked 21st in the state. The 2001 TPI reflected an increase of 5.6 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 4.5 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 Randolph. In 2001 net earnings accounted for 56.3 percent of TPI (compared with 55.5 in 1991); dividends, interest, and rent were 16.3 percent (compared with 18.1 in 1991); and transfer payments were 27.3 percent (compared with 26.4 in 1991). From 2000 to 2001 net earnings increased 5.5 percent; dividends, interest, and rent increased 2.7 percent; and transfer payments increased 7.6 percent. From 1991 to 2001 net earnings increased on average 4.7 percent each year; dividends, interest, and rent increased on average 3.5 percent; and transfer payments increased on average 4.9 percent.

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

Earnings of persons employed in Randolph increased from \$354,566 in 2000 to \$373,151 in 2001, an increase of 5.2 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 \$230,107 to the 2001 estimate was 5.0 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.