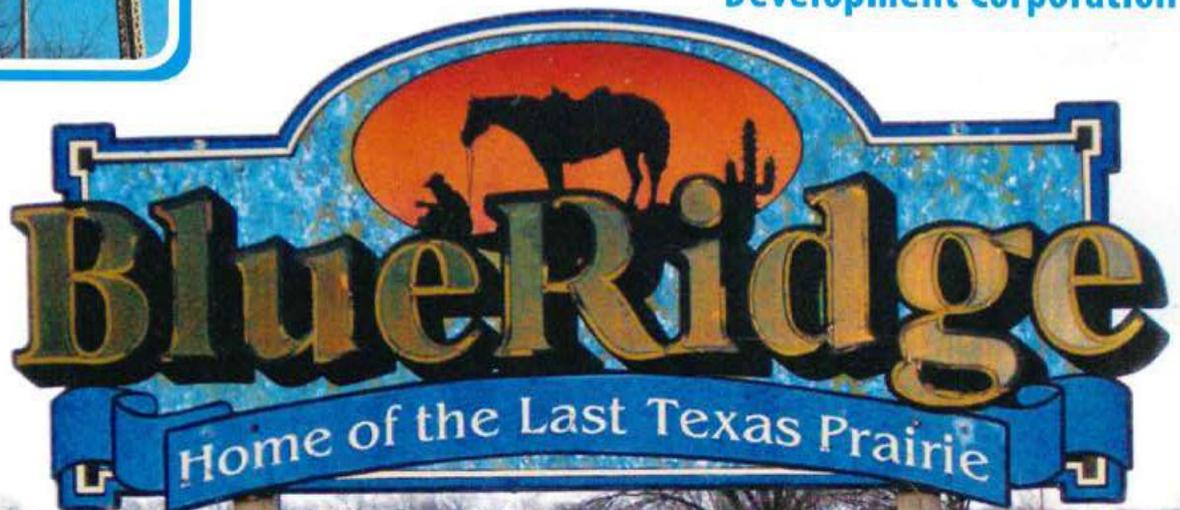


Blue Ridge, Texas

Economic Development Strategic Plan

July 2012

Prepared for
**Blue Ridge Type 4A Economic
Development Corporation**



Prepared by
**Texas Engineering Extension Service
Knowledge Engineering**



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

July 2012

Prepared For:
The City of Blue Ridge, Texas
Type 4A Economic Development Corporation
200 W. FM 545
Blue Ridge, TX 75424
Joe Denison, President Type A EDC

Prepared By:
Texas Engineering Extension Service
Knowledge Engineering
College Station, TX 77845

Point of Contact:
Lisa Mutchler
Lisa.Mutchler@teex.tamu.edu
979.458.6710

Table of Contents

Background and Approach.....	3
Community Assessment Summary.....	5
Demographics	5
Infrastructure	5
Education and Workforce	5
Favorable Business Environment	6
Quality of Place	6
Values, Strategic Goals and Objectives	7
Values-Driven Economic Growth and Prosperity	7
Strategy, Goals and Objectives.....	8
Action Plan.....	9
Appendix A: Participants of the Economic Development for Local Leaders Course.....	13
Appendix B: Participants of the Blue Ridge Community Visioning Session	15
Appendix C: Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix	17
Appendix D: Blue Ridge Community Assessment, 2012.....	21

BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

The City of Blue Ridge seeks to enhance the overall quality of life for citizens, create jobs, and stimulate the community's economic growth through implementation of activities that will give Blue Ridge a competitive advantage for visitors and businesses alike. The City of Blue Ridge Type 4A Economic Development Corporation partnered with Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) to design an economic development strategic plan. TEEX served as the facilitator for community visioning, community assessment, and for the development of Blue Ridge's Economic Development Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is to capture the community's vision for the future and establish a strategy and roadmap of activities for achieving that vision.

In order to document and analyze the current state of Blue Ridge, creating a "snapshot" of sorts, TEEX conducted a community assessment as the initial step in the strategic planning process (see **Appendix D, Blue Ridge Community Assessment, 2012**). The community assessment provides an examination of the community and an economic profile through several distinct but interrelated components such as community demographics, income statistics, employment data and an audit of infrastructure, financial vitality and other local assets. The assessment also provides a baseline against which Blue Ridge can measure progress as community leaders execute the strategic plan.

As a part of the strategic planning process, TEEX facilitated the Economic Development for Local Leaders Training Course on February 11, 2012 where nine community leaders were actively involved in discussing and learning more about economic development and strategic planning for Blue Ridge. (See **Appendix A, Blue Ridge Economic Development for Local Leaders Participants**)

In addition to the training course, TEEX facilitated a Community Visioning Workshop (See **Appendix B, Blue Ridge Community Visioning Session Participants**) in Blue Ridge, held February 28, 2012. Nineteen participants provided input during the workshop, sharing their insights into Blue Ridge's best assets and opportunities for the future. The Blue Ridge Type 4A Economic Development Corporation members invited community stakeholders (business leaders, school, land owners/citizens, developers and high school students) to represent the community at this workshop in order to identify the community's challenges, to discover notable assets and to establish a "community" vision. Through the workshop, TEEX captured the dreams and concerns of the community by allowing attendees to voice their vision for community development and economic prosperity. Following the successful Community Visioning workshop, TEEX staff documented the input from attendees, carefully including all ideas and visions (See **Appendix C, Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix**).

Blue Ridge citizens are extremely involved and have the best interest of Blue Ridge at heart. As a result, open communication is of paramount importance in order for the community to progress. To address this need, TEEX suggested the Blue Ridge leadership group travel to meet and discuss best practices utilized by a like-size similar city which recently overcame comparable challenges. The Blue Ridge leadership group met with officials from both the City of Glen Rose in addition to Somervell County.

This group included the following officials: Somervell County Judge, Glen Rose 4A Board President, Glen Rose Director of Convention & Visitors Bureau, Glen Rose City Administrator, and Somervell county resident/retired City Manager. After the leaders from Blue Ridge identified current challenges, Glen Rose and Somervell County officials shared several methods they used to positively involve citizens and overcome resistance. After meeting with the host city, the Blue Ridge leadership group continued its review and prioritization of projects and activities of the plan. While virtually all potential projects and activities received high priority rankings, infrastructure development, community improvement, developing the business environment, attaining a unified community vision and expanding the city limits were among the top ranked priorities and, as such, shaped the core of this strategic plan for Blue Ridge economic development.

The complete findings and recommendations of this effort are presented in this plan in addition to the Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix and the Blue Ridge Community Assessment. Based upon input received from workshop attendees and several weeks of additional research and documentation, TEEX has compiled this Blue Ridge Economic Development Strategic Plan.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Demographics

- Blue Ridge's optimal location for rolling prairies, open spaces and privacy with easy access to large cities makes it an ideal community to live and raise a family. Jobs are not as plentiful in Blue Ridge today as they will be in the near future, however one can find employment in a variety of businesses or have support and role models in which to start one's own business.
- Blue Ridge is located in one of the fastest growing counties in the nation.
- Collin County has a highly educated population and low poverty rates.
- Blue Ridge's population is expected to continue growing at a rate faster than the state. The ethnic diversity is growing, albeit at a slower pace than the state and county.
- The median age of Blue Ridge residents is lower than the state average.
- Young people are moving out of Blue Ridge at an alarming rate (42% decline in 10 years).
- Per capita personal income in Collin County is higher than the state average by almost \$6,000.

Infrastructure

- A bond package was approved in 2007 to support street and highway improvements throughout Collin County.
- Sam Rayburn Tollway (a part of Highway 121) was improved through Collin, Dallas and Denton Counties with more expansions planned for growing communities. This will increase access to Blue Ridge from in and around the Metroplex.
- The Texas Department of Transportation has approved funding to improve two bridges near Blue Ridge.
- Sewage and water capacity were recently expanded in the Blue Ridge Community in preparation for growth of businesses and residents.
- Railroad lines are not located in Blue Ridge, however are within 10 to 35 miles away.
- A potential Intermodal Hub site is being considered near Farmersville, about 10 miles from Blue Ridge.
- Two large and one regional airport are within 60 miles of Blue Ridge allowing one to travel or do business all over the world.

Education and Workforce

- The Blue Ridge Independent School District is implementing its' 20 year growth plan; preparing for growth in all grade levels.
- The school district achieved a Recognized Accountability rating for the 2010-2011 school year.
- Blue Ridge High School was nominated by the Texas Education Agency for a prestigious award for academic excellence; the only school in Collin County to be nominated.
- Blue Ridge ISD's drop-out rate for 2010 was 0%.

- Collin County is home to two universities and the Collin Higher Education Center, all within 36 miles of Blue Ridge.
- Collin County was ranked #1 in the state in 2009 for the number of adults with Bachelor's degrees or more.
- 43% of Blue Ridge residents earn more than \$3,333 per month.
- The most common industry type of job for residents of Blue Ridge is manufacturing, retail trades and educational services.
- There are 26 small businesses in the Blue Ridge Community.
- Collin County is home to two Fortune 500 Companies and many other large businesses.
- The North Central Workforce Development Area is second in the state in terms of job growth and is expected to grow at a rate of 25% between 2006 and 2016.
- The median salary for those working in the North Central WDA is slightly less than the state average.
- More people work in educational services, retail trade and health care and social assistance than in other industries in the North Central WDA.
- The unemployment rate in Collin County has been lower than the state average for the past decade.

Favorable Business Environment

- Local sales taxes increased 25% from 2009 - 2011
- Opportunities to establish local banking institutions in Blue Ridge
- City of Blue Ridge has both Type A and Type B Economic Development Organizations
- The school property tax is on the high end of other cities in Collin County

Quality of Place

- World class medical and dental care is available within 50 miles of Blue Ridge.
- Blue Ridge Fire Department is comprised of active and trained volunteers.
- The Blue Ridge Fire Department is one of two departments with Advanced Life Saving equipment.
- Law enforcement is provided by the Collin County Sheriff's office.
- Relatively low crime rate in Blue Ridge and in Collin County.

VALUES, STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The citizens of Blue Ridge enjoy the community's small town values and the wholesome experience and sense of place that form the quality of life in Blue Ridge. They appreciate the sense of family and the friendly, safe, and personal relationships that characterize their day-to-day interactions. Although the City of Blue Ridge has relatively limited commercial developments and employment opportunities, the city has great potential for economic growth given its location, available land and real estate, water capacity and outstanding school system.

Changes in technology and the attraction to large urban areas have reduced employment in farming and many rural-oriented industries. In order to strengthen the economy in Blue Ridge, local leaders realize it is important to develop a rural development strategy. In this case, a more efficient use of resources is for Blue Ridge to act regionally as opposed to individually. Blue Ridge seeks to identify their "legacy" where they have a comparative advantage while working cooperatively and in unison with neighboring communities.

Blue Ridge seeks to incorporate economic diversification into their development strategy. Supporting entrepreneurs and attracting/retaining small businesses with a strong basis of community development are vital keys to success. Blue Ridge seeks to improve infrastructure, housing and quality of life that will contribute to the community's economic success and provide an incentive to prospective new business.

This Economic Development Strategic Plan for Blue Ridge is built on local strengths, adjusted for local weaknesses, recognizes market realities and attempts to achieve development that can be sustained for the foreseeable future and create local support.

Values-Driven Economic Growth and Prosperity

The Blue Ridge Economic Development Corporation seeks economic growth that increases the tax base, creates job and attracts visitors all in a manner that is consistent with the values of the citizens who call Blue Ridge home. Blue Ridge citizens want to preserve their small town charm while preparing for growth and the anticipation of new businesses and residents.

The promise of community involvement and a sense of family resonates with the people of Blue Ridge and extends a welcome hand to visitors and businesses alike. This sense of community spirit forms the values that will drive Blue Ridge's economic development investment and the activities outlined in this plan. Blue Ridge's imperatives for growth and prosperity include:

- *Uphold and enhance Blue Ridge's sense of community and core family values*
- *Preserve and promote Blue Ridge's excellent schools, placing priority on education and community involvement*
- *Unification of community leaders*
- *Diversification of the economic base*

Strategy, Goals and Objectives

The central themes of Blue Ridge's economic development strategy are infrastructure development, community improvement, employer attraction/retention and unification of the community. By placing emphasis on these four areas, Blue Ridge will become a desirable destination for residents and tourists while attending to the needs of existing businesses. As Blue Ridge implements the plan and begins to invest in Blue Ridge's quality of place and more proactively supports its existing employers, the community will become known as a place where even small business and entrepreneurs are valued and where each visitor is welcomed.

The following goals were established in support of this overall strategy. Each goal has an associated roadmap in the Action Plan that follows, articulating measurable objectives that will lead to successful strategy implementation.

1. *Increase capacity for residential and commercial growth through continued infrastructure improvements.*
2. *Organize a community improvement program to enhance Blue Ridge's economic development opportunities.*
3. *Facilitate the creation of jobs through the development of a more attractive business environment*
4. *Execute a unified community vision through the implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.*

Goal 1: Infrastructure Development

Increase capacity for residential and commercial growth through continued infrastructure improvements.

Objective	Measure of success	Time frame
1A. Explore grants and other funding sources to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate new commercial and industrial developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and meet with NCTCOG Representative for Collin County/Blue Ridge to assist and identify prospective funding Identify and hire qualified proposal specialist/project manager Attendance at facilitated meetings with TEEX and state agencies in Austin Review agency websites to identify funding sources Establish working relationships with funding sources through attendance at training seminars and conferences 	3 rd quarter 2012
1B. Complete assessment of current infrastructure capacity and future growth needs.	Completed inventory	4 th quarter 2012
1C. Collaborate with neighboring communities and county to develop inter-local agreements for repairs and expansion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and meet with NCTCOG representative NCTCOG includes information on Blue Ridge on their website Inter-local agreements in place 	1 st quarter 2013
1D. Gauge interest of prospective developers to build commercial and residential property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of potential developers Contact with potential developers 	2 nd quarter 2014
1E. Develop recently acquired land to build industrial office complex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building is open and occupied Jobs are created 	1 st quarter 2015

Goal 2: Community Improvement

Organize a community improvement program to enhance Blue Ridge economic development opportunities.

Objective	Measure of success	Time frame for completion
2A. Establish a Blue Ridge beautification program to clean up properties, eliminate blight and increase community pride of place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beautification Committee established• Beautification Plan developed and implemented	4 th quarter 2012
2B. Coordinate community development efforts with Type B EDC board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint meetings held between boards• Both boards are working together to improve community	4 th quarter 2012
2C. Review and revise as needed current zoning ordinances to include retail and commercial.	Revised zoning ordinances	2 nd quarter 2013
2D. Support enforcement of zoning ordinances.	Visible improvement of properties	2 nd quarter 2014

Goal 3: Develop Business Environment

Facilitate the creation of jobs through the development of a more attractive business environment.

Objective	Measure of success	Time frame for completion
3A. Complete an assessment of existing commercial property inventory, identifying those requiring facility improvements, or available for lease or sale.	Inventory completed	1 st quarter 2013
3B. Prioritize commercial and retail improvement projects.	Prioritized list of Improvement projects	2 nd quarter 2013
3C. Market incentives available to promote business development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives are listed on city website • Promotional materials are created listing incentives 	2 nd quarter 2013
3D. Create and implement a Business Retention and Expansion plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify local businesses • Develop survey instrument to obtain business information plans and needs • Assess need for assistance in surveying businesses • Apply survey instrument • Identify trends • Seek assistance in providing employer training through North Central Texas Workforce Development and Texas Workforce Commission • Provide job training/ seminars for local businesses as per trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of local businesses • Survey instrument developed • Volunteers/assistants identified and trained • Businesses surveyed • Results compiled • Contact with NCT Workforce Development and TWC • Training/seminars announced and conducted 	4 th quarter 2013

Goal 4: Unify Community Vision

Execute a unified community vision through the implementation of the Economic Development Plan.

Objective	Measure of success	Time frame for completion
4A. Adopt and begin implementing the Economic Development Plan.	Plan adopted and implementation has begun	3 rd quarter 2012
4B. Encourage the creation of an open networking forum to share positive news and events with the community.	Open networking forum held monthly	3 rd quarter 2012
4C. Foster and support open communication and public meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance at meetings has increased• Open dialogue with citizens	4 th quarter 2012
4D. Hold quarterly meetings between City Council and Type A and B EDC Boards to review progress of the Strategic Plan's implementation.	Quarterly meetings are scheduled and progress is made on collaborative efforts	4 th quarter 2012
4E. Create a medium for communicating city and EDC business <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase domain name and develop Blue Ridge website• Newspaper – partner with neighboring cities• Newsletter to subscribed local citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domain name purchased• Development of website• Articles about Blue Ridge are picked up by area newspapers• Newsletter sent to citizens on a regularly basis	2 nd quarter 2013

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL LEADERS COURSE, FEBRUARY 11, 2012



(Pictured L to R) Cristy Reed, 4A Board Assistant; Shonda Powell, 4A Board; Joe Denison, 4A Board President; Cody Story, 4A Board; Trey Rickert, City Councilman; Debbie Marshall, City Councilwoman; and Nancy Southard, Blue Ridge City Secretary

(Not Pictured) Phillip Pulliam, Mayor of Blue Ridge; and Clayton Jech, City Councilman

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION, FEBRUARY 28, 2012



Listed Alphabetically:

Shawn Bailey, First Baptist Church

Lara Bowling, Jim Daniel's Installation

Joe Denison, Blue Ridge Economic Development Corporation, 4A

Brad Duncan, Blue Ridge Independent School District

Larry Eastman, Round Up Cowboy Church

Lisa Eastman, Round Up Cowboy Church

Connie Gibson, J. R & R Inv.

Jimmy Gibson, J. R & R Inv.

Claudia Gordon, Not Just Country Floral

Joe Harvey, Blue Ridge Citizen

Lee Harvey, Blue Ridge Citizen

Danny Henderson, Blue Ridge High School

Todd Lintzen, Blue Ridge Independent School District

Shonda Powell, Blue Ridge Economic Development Corporation, 4A

Jeremy Rice, Blue Ridge Resident

Trey Rickert, City of Blue Ridge

Cody Story, Blue Ridge Economic Development Corporation, 4A

Robert Todd, Frognot Water Supply Corporation

Bobby Yancey, Mane Street Attraction Salon

Kim Yancey, Mane Street Attraction Salon

APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES MATRIX

Resulting Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix

The centerpiece of Knowledge Engineering’s methodology, the resulting Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix, lists all the perceived wants and needs expressed by the stakeholders participating in the workshops. Each Matrix row denotes a specific function, feature, attribute or policy relevant to the successful implementation of a sustainable economic development initiative. We have incorporated the priority rankings assigned by each stakeholder representative along with specific comments contributed by the stakeholders. The priority section (column) of the Matrix consolidates under a single “User” column. In Blue Ridge’s case, all the stakeholder groups carry equal weight. The Administrative group (Blue Ridge’s leadership) had the opportunity to rank the ideas as a separate group as well as the Development groups (TEEX team) in order to influence the inclusion of specific elements based on their technical or strategically relevant merits.

The Blue Ridge Matrix is sorted listing the highest priority ranked elements at the top. Based on a specific cut-off parameter (equal to, or better than 7.75 rank) the top elements have been marked with an asterisk (*) under the “Inclusion” column. For the sake of clarification, following is an explanation of the contents of each column of the matrix starting from the leftmost column.

- The “Main Function” column represents the category/function to be addressed.
- The “Components” column identifies the elements that comprise the Main Function listed in the previous column.
- The “Priority” column includes sub-columns representing User, Administrative and Developmental rankings. Ranks provided by each User group provide the rankings for a given function. When an adjusted ranking is required from an administrative or developmental perspective, the two associated columns are used to adjust the ranking.
- The “p(f)” column shows the overall ranking of a given function.
- The “Inclusion” column will show an asterisk (*) if the function ranked at or above the project cut-off parameter, in this case 7.75 or better.

Community Economic Development Priorities Matrix Blue Ridge, TX 2012

	Main Function	Components	Priority				Incl.
			Usr	Adm	Dev	p(f)	v/X
1	Increase capacity for residential and commercial growth through continued infrastructure improvements.	<p>Complete assessment of current infrastructure capacity and future growth needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore grants and other funding sources to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate new commercial and industrial developments - Collaborate with neighboring communities and county to develop inter-local agreements for repairs and expansion - Gauge interest of prospective residential developers to build affordable housing - develop recently acquired land to build industrial office complex 	8.18	9	9	8.73	*
2	Organize a community improvement program to enhance Blue Ridge economic development opportunities.	<p>Review and revise as needed current zoning ordinances to include retail and commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a Blue Ridge beautification program to clean up properties, eliminate blight and increase community pride of place - Coordinate community development efforts with Type B EDC board - Promote creation of a "Keep Blue Ridge Beautiful" committee 	7.91	9	9	8.64	*

	Main Function	Components	Usr	Adm	Dev	P(f)	Incl
3	Facilitate the creation of jobs through the development of a more attractive business environment.	<p>Complete assessment of existing commercial property inventory; identifying those requiring facility improvements, available for lease or sale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritize commercial and retail improvement projects - Market incentives available to promote business development - Create and implement a Business Retention and Expansion plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify local businesses • Develop survey instrument to obtain business needs • Identify trends • Provide job training/ seminars for local businesses 	7.55	9	9	8.52	*
4	Execute a unified community vision through the implementation of the Economic Development Plan	<p>Adopt and implement an Economic Development Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster and support open communication and public meetings - Create a medium for communicating city and EDC business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase domain name and develop Blue Ridge website • Newspaper – partner with neighboring cities • Newsletter to subscribed local citizens - Encourage the creation of an open networking forum to share positive news and events with the community - Hold quarterly meeting between City Council and Type A and B EDC Boards to review progress of the Strategic Plan's implementation 	7.82	9	8	8.27	*
5	Explore feasibility of expanding city limits	<p>Assess inventory of available land, its cost, and expected return on investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a land use plan 	7.45	8	9	8.15	*

	Main Function	Components	Usr	Adm	Dev	P(f)	Incl
6	Increase tourism in Blue Ridge	<p>Determine Blue Ridge's legacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify more recreational activities (e.g. "Saturday Nights in Blue Ridge") - Capitalize on motorcycle traffic through town; explore Marketing opportunities through Texas Ride Magazine - Promote community events through the Texas Lakes Trail, such as the Blue Ridge Riding Club Rodeo. - Explore feasibility of developing a "Wild West Trail" with neighboring communities 	6.73	9	8	7.91	*
7	Develop Master Plan for Blue Ridge	<p>Review previous Blue Ridge Master Plan</p> <p>-Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial/ commercial park • Marketing • Parks • Master planned neighborhoods • Type of businesses desired • Infrastructure capacity 	7.73	7	7	7.24	
8	Continue to improve operational changes within Type A EDC	<p>Streamline process to approve and implement activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals that are manageable and aligned -Continual analysis 	7.00	7	7	7.00	
9	Establish a greater law enforcement presence in Blue Ridge	<p>Pursue possibility of sharing expense with a neighboring community</p>	5.55	6	6	5.85	
10	Explore feasibility of having a hospital in town that serves outlying areas too	<p>Evaluate the possibility of attracting a medical clinic or urgent care facility</p>	4.73	5	5	4.91	

APPENDIX D: BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT, 2012

January 2012

PREPARED FOR:

CITY OF BLUE RIDGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, TYPE 4A

PREPARED BY:

TEXAS ENGINEERING EXTENSION SERVICE

KNOWLEDGE ENGINEERING

200 Technology Way

College Station, Texas 77845

Lisa Mutchler, Economic Development Program Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for contributing their time and expertise to the development of this assessment:

Joe Denison, Blue Ridge Type 4A EDC

Cristy Reed, Blue Ridge Type 4A EDC

Nacy Southard, City of Blue Ridge

Cody Story, Blue Ridge Type 4A EDC

Trey Rickert, Blue Ridge City Council

Lisa Mutchler, TEEEX

Sue Ann Palmore, TEEEX

Lizzy Cezayirli, TEEEX

Megean Blum, TEEEX

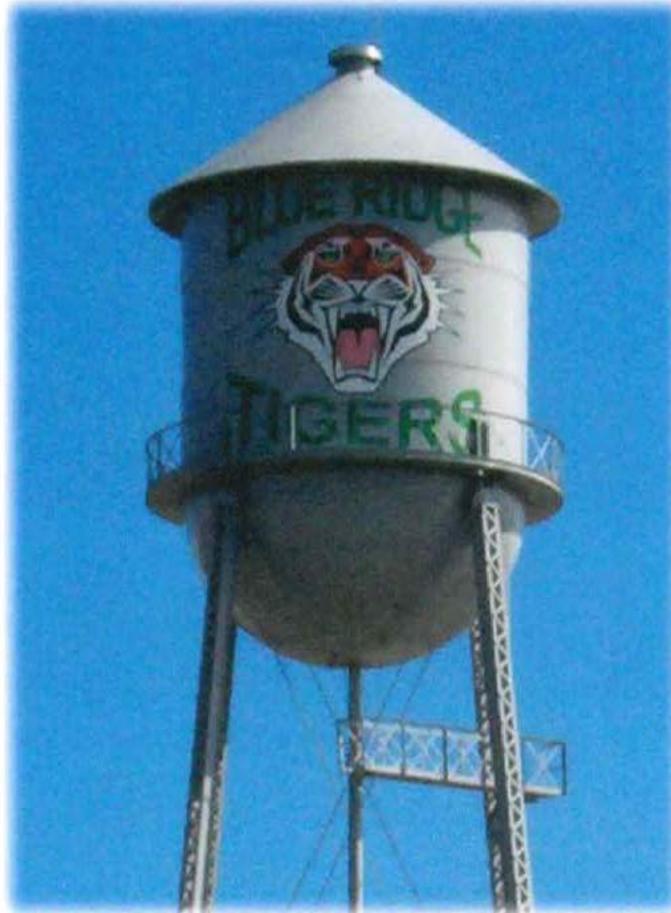
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	22
Executive Summary	25
The Founding of Blue Ridge.....	27
Demographics.....	29
Location	29
Population.....	30
Population by Age	31
Income	33
Infrastructure	37
Highways / Roads	38
Sewage and Water Services	40
Rail	40
Mobility Issues and Planned Expansions	42
Collin County Outer Loop Project	43
Intermodal Hub Study.....	43
Air	44
Education and Workforce	47
Education	47
Primary Education	47
College Education.....	49
Workforce	53
Wages by Occupation	57
Wages by Industry	59
Employment by Industry.....	60
Unemployment	60
Favorable Business Environment	63
Financial Vitality	63
Local Sales and Use Tax	65
Property Taxes.....	67
SWOT Analysis.....	68
Quality of Place	69
Health Care	69

Public Safety 71
 Blue Ridge Police Department 71
 Blue Ridge Fire Department..... 73
Recreational Activities 75

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2011, the Type A Economic Development Corporation of Blue Ridge contacted the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) Knowledge Engineering Division (KE) seeking technical assistance that would help the Blue Ridge Type A - EDC develop a program of activities to increase their local understanding of economic development, develop a strategic plan, and gain awareness of and access to federal and state resources. In support of these activities, KE conducted research and prepared a baseline report (Community Assessment) for the community. The baseline report represents a “snapshot” of the community demographics at a particular point in time and will serve as a basis for comparison for measuring effectiveness of future development efforts. The document that follows is the result of TEEX’s research, data collection, and evaluation.



THE FOUNDING OF BLUE RIDGE

Blue Ridge is located in the northeastern portion of Collin County, Texas, the sixth most populous and the fastest-growing large county in Texas.¹ According to the Texas State Historical Association, the land upon which the town was founded originally was owned by Matthis Mowry, the recipient of a land grant from the Republic of Texas for his service in the Texas Revolution. Established in 1876, Blue Ridge was named for the blue-flowering grasses of the area and its hilltop location. As part of the founding, a post office was established in 1876, and it was soon followed by a cotton gin, sawmill, and a gristmill. The population reached nearly 400 by 1900 and continued to grow through the early 1900s.

In 1915 the Greenville and Whitewright Northern Traction Company built a rail line spanning the 12 miles from Blue Ridge to Anna, a nearby town. The line was abandoned in only five years, but by 1930 Blue Ridge's 450 residents (a decrease from 600 in 1915) had both electric and natural gas utilities as well as a telephone exchange, paved roads, and more than 20 businesses. After incorporating in 1936, the city's growth continued to reach more than 30 businesses by 1940. However, the Great Depression brought decline to Blue Ridge as it did to the rest of the country, and the mechanization of farming and Dallas job opportunities after World War II increased this decline.

By 1960 Blue Ridge was home to 350 residents and 16 businesses, becoming a retail market for the few but prosperous farmers remaining in the heart of the Blackland Prairie. The community in 1984 had an estimated 442 residents and five reported businesses; in 1990 its population was 521. In 2000 the population was 672. There were 48 businesses located in Blue Ridge in that year.² Bringing us to 2011, Blue Ridge's population was 862 with a reported 26 business establishments.



¹ Collin County online. 2010. "Our Roots." Accessed 28 December 2011.

<http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/our_roots.jsp>

² Minor, David. "Blue Ridge, TX (Collin County)." *Handbook of Texas Online*. Accessed December 24, 2011.

Published by the Texas State Historical Association. <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hlb39>>

Location

Blue Ridge is a small community of 862 people (2011 estimate) located at the intersection of State Highway 78 and Farm Road 981 approximately 48 miles from Dallas, Texas. As a city of less than 1,000 inhabitants, Blue Ridge's current extraterritorial jurisdiction spans a half mile from the city limits. According to the US Census Bureau, Blue Ridge has a total area of 1.12 square miles, all of it land. Located within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex in North East Texas, Blue Ridge's proximity to the Dallas area and fast growing cities of Plano, Frisco, McKinney and Allen offers the benefits of small town life combined with easy access to the variety and amenities found in larger cities, including several top-rated hospitals and three active Nobel Laureates,³ as well as numerous opportunities for entertainment and recreation.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex is comprised of 12 counties and is split into two metropolitan divisions: Dallas-Plano-Irving and Fort Worth-Arlington. It is commonly referred to as DFW or The Metroplex. The Metroplex is home to approximately 6.5 million people total, making it the largest metropolitan area in Texas and the fourth-largest metropolitan statistical area (MSA) in the United States. Collin County is predicted to grow to nearly 1,000,000 residents by 2015, according to the County's web site, and has been named one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation.

Blue Ridge is one of 27 cities located in Collin County. The other cities are Allen, Anna, Carrollton, Celina, Copeville, a small portion of Dallas, Fairview, Farmersville, Frisco, Garland, Josephine, Lavon, Lowry Crossing, Lucas, McKinney, Melissa, Murphy, Nevada, New Hope, Parker, Plano, Princeton, Prosper, Richardson, Royse City, Sachse, Saint Paul, Van Alstyne, Weston, and Wylie. Collin County is a member of the North Central Texas Council of Governments. The county is approximately 848 square miles in area with 38 square miles of water. Plano is Collin's most populous city with 259,841 residents, making it the ninth-largest city in Texas. McKinney, the county seat, is 18 miles from Blue Ridge with a population of a little over 131,000 as per the 2010 US Census. Collin County officially estimates that it gained 74 new residents each day in 2009⁴ and is home to 8 of the 10 fastest-growing cities in North Texas with an average workforce education level of nearly double state and national averages.⁵

The majority of Collin County industries grew by double-digit percentages from 2000-2006. Service jobs increased by almost 90% in those seven years. Two out of the 24 Fortune 500 companies that chose the

³ Dallas Office of Economic Development. 2011. "Hospitals and Healthcare." Accessed 8 January 2011. <<http://www.dallas-ecodev.org/culture-and-lifestyle/healthcare/index.htm>>

⁴ Collin County online. 2010. "A Newcomer's Guide to Collin County." Accessed 31 December 2011. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/newcomers_guide.jsp>

⁵ Collin County online. 2010. "For Visitors and the Curious." Accessed 31 December 2011. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/for_visitors.jsp>

Metroplex for their headquarters are located in Collin County, as are several other major corporate headquarters.⁶

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Blue Ridge’s population as of the 2000 Census was 672. Figure 1 shows the U.S. Census estimates for population size in 2000 and 2010 for the city of Blue Ridge, Collin County, and Texas as a whole. Blue Ridge’s population percentage growth rate was slightly larger than that of the state of Texas, while Collin County almost doubled in size over the same ten year period.

Figure 1: Blue Ridge Population

Area	%age Growth		
	2000	2010	2000-2010
Blue Ridge	672	822	22.32%
Collin County	491,675	782,341	59.12%
Texas	20,851,820	25,145,561	20.59%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000, 2010

According to the State of Texas Industrial and Commercial Sites and Buildings’ Site Search, and based on the estimated population in 2011, the city of Blue Ridge’s population will grow to 1,002 residents by 2016, as shown in Figure 2. These predictions would indicate a 16.24% growth rate over just five years for Blue Ridge, surpassing Collin County’s predicted 11.86% growth over the same period.

Figure 2: Blue Ridge and Collin County Population Projections 2011-2016

Area	%age Growth		
	2011	2016	2011-2016
Blue Ridge	862	1,002	16.24%
Collin County	808,782	904,727	11.86%

Source: State of Texas Industrial and Commercial Sites and Buildings, [texassitesearch.com](http://www.texassitesearch.com)

Population estimates in the 2010 Census indicate Blue Ridge is a predominantly Caucasian community with lower percentages of African American and Hispanic individuals than both Collin County and the state of Texas as a whole, as shown in Figure 3 below. The percentages shown for each race or ethnicity are based on the numbers reported for each race alone, and/or in combination with one or more other

⁶ Collin County online. 2010. “For Visitors and the Curious.” Accessed 31 December 2011. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/for_visitors.jsp>

racess. For instance, a respondent might have answered that he or she was both “White” and “American Indian.”

Figure 3: Population by Race/ Ethnicity 2000-2010

Race	Blue Ridge		Collin County		Texas	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
White	94.8%	95.3%	83.2%	74.1%	73.1%	72.7%
Black or African American	0.3%	0.7%	5.2%	9.3%	12.0%	12.6%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1.9%	1.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.0%	1.3%
Asian	0%	0.4%	7.6%	12.4%	3.1%	4.4%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Other Race	4.5%	4.4%	5.2%	5.9%	13.3%	11.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	7.0%	13.1%	10.3%	14.7%	32.0%	37.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000, 2010

Population by Age

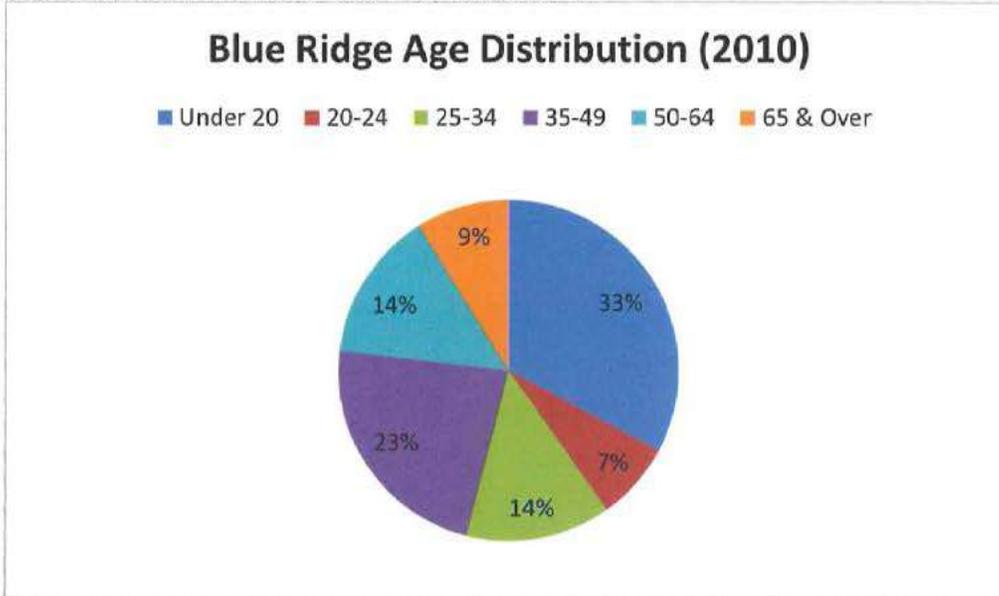
The age distribution of an area’s citizens can provide valuable insight into a region’s economic composition and income potential. As a state, Texas has a relatively young population by national standards. Blue Ridge’s median age was 32 years old as of the 2010 Census, slightly younger than the state of Texas, with a median age of 33.6 years, and three years younger than that of Collin County, with a median age of 35 years.

Figure 4: City, County and State Population by Age, 2010

Age	Blue Ridge % 2010	Collin County % 2010	Texas % 2010
Age 0-19	32.73%	31%	30.31%
Age 20-24	7.42%	4.96%	7.23%
Age 25-34	13.87%	14.03%	14.37%
Age 35-49	22.87%	25.77%	20.75%
Age 50-64	14.23%	16.56%	16.99%
65 & Over	8.88%	7.68%	10.35%

Source: 2010 Census Interactive Population Search

Figure 5: Age Distribution of Blue Ridge, 2010



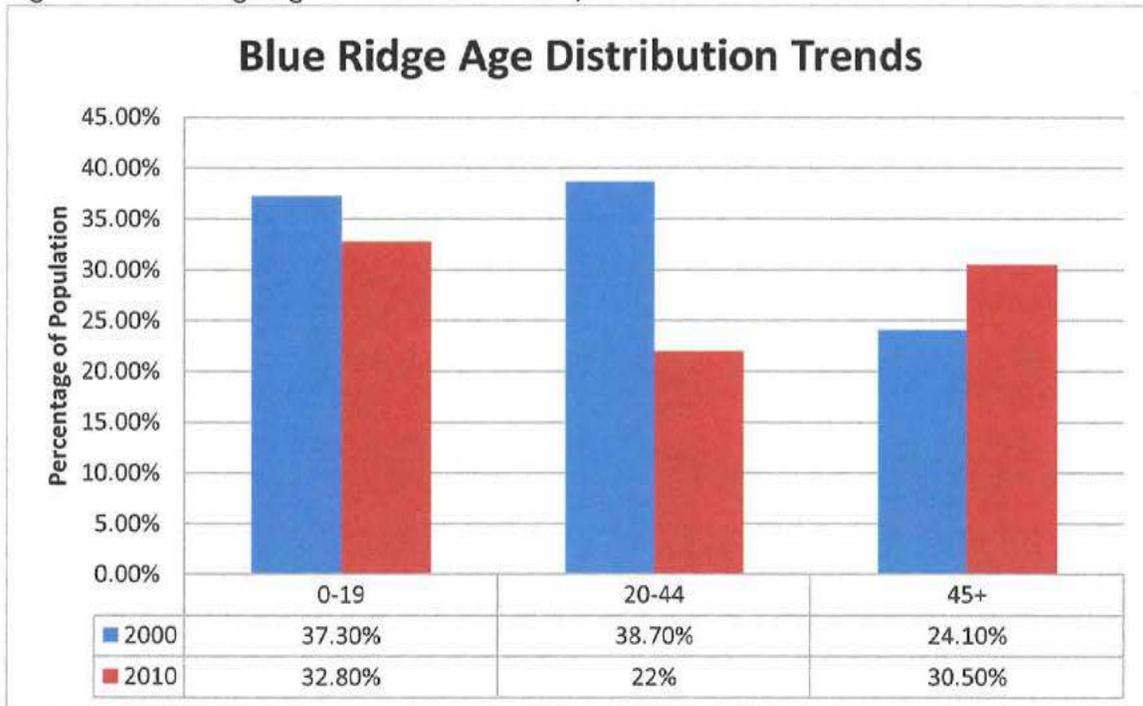
Source: 2010 Census Interactive Population Search

Between the 2000 and 2010 Census, the age distribution of the city of Blue Ridge changed slightly to become slightly older as a whole, as can be seen in Figure 6 below. While the median age in 2000 was 30, the median age in 2010 was 32 years of age. Individuals aged 0 - 19 are the up-and-coming workforce and taxpayers of a community, which means they are of great importance to Blue Ridge's future. In 2000, 37.3% of the population fell into this age group, and in 2010, this group accounted for approximately 32.8% of the whole population; a 13.5% decline.

Similarly, the 20 - 44 year old age group dropped significantly (42%) from 38.7% to 22% within this same 10 year period. This group encompasses the greatest share of the labor force. An important group for benchmarking community health, decreases in the size of this group can indicate negative perceptions of the community's economy as citizens may be moving away from an area they consider a poor labor market.

The age group including those individuals 45 years of age and older increased by 20%, from 24.10% of the population in 2000 to 30.50% in 2010. Individuals in this age group are typically either working or retired and contributing to the city's well-being.

Figure 6: Blue Ridge Age Distribution Trends, 2000-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000, 2010

Income

Per capita personal income is defined as “the income received by persons from all sources. It is calculated as the sum of wage and salary disbursements, supplements to wages and salaries, proprietors’ income with inventory valuation and capital consumption adjustments, rental income of persons with capital consumption adjustment, personal dividend income, personal interest income, and personal current transfer receipts, less contributions for government social insurance. This measure of income is calculated as the personal income of the residents of a given area divided by the resident population of the area. In computing per capita personal income, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses the Census Bureau’s annual midyear population estimates”⁷.

Per capita personal income (PCPI) is summarized below for the United States, Texas, and the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), which includes Collin County. Collin County’s per capita personal income is currently higher than both the state and national average, and it is also the highest in the NCTCOG region. The average growth rate for the NCTCOG region was 3.28% for years 1999-2009, with Collin County experiencing a 0.6% growth rate. Neighboring counties are Dallas, Denton, Grayson, Fannin, Hunt, and Rockwall.

⁷ Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2008

Figure 7: Per Capita Personal Income

Area	2009 PCPI	PCPI % Increase 2008-09	1999 PCPI	1999-09 Avg. Annual Growth Rate of PCPI
U.S.A.	\$39,635	-2.6%	\$28,333	3.4%
Texas	\$38,609	-3.1%	\$26,399	3.9%
Collin	\$45,884	-7.2%	\$43,074	0.6%
Dallas	\$45,406	-4.6%	\$32,709	3.3%
Denton	\$39,133	-3.2%	\$30,189	2.6%
Ellis	\$32,059	-2.1%	\$25,258	2.4%
Erath	\$29,830	-2.8%	\$21,768	3.2%
Hood	\$39,293	-2.6%	\$25,475	4.4%
Hunt	\$31,541	-1.9%	\$21,717	3.8%
Johnson	\$30,891	-2.8%	\$22,934	3.0%
Kaufman	\$32,082	-0.9%	\$23,920	3.0%
Navarro	\$28,516	0.1%	\$20,456	3.4%
Palo Pinto	\$33,746	-1.4%	\$20,818	4.9%
Parker	\$35,617	-5.1%	\$26,392	3.0%
Rockwall	\$42,999	-2.0%	\$35,682	1.9%
Somervell	\$36,159	-5.8%	\$22,899	4.7%
Tarrant	\$39,380	-3.6%	\$28,504	3.3%
Wise	\$33,802	-5.1%	\$22,447	4.2%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

In 2009 Collin County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$45,884. This PCPI ranked 9th in the state and was 119% of the state average, \$38,609, and 116% of the national average, \$39,635. The 2009 PCPI reflected a decrease of 7.2% from 2008. The 2008-2009 state change was -3.1% and the national change was -2.6%. In 1999 the PCPI of Collin County was \$43,074 and ranked 2nd in the state. The 1999-2009 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 0.6%. The average annual growth rate for the state was 3.9% and for the nation was 3.4%.

Total person income (TPI) is “a widely used measure of regional economic health while per capita income is generally used to compare the relative well-being of residents across areas. The personal income of an area is the income that is received by, or on behalf of, all the individuals who live in the area; therefore, the estimates of personal income are presented by the place of residence of the income recipients”.⁸ Total personal incomes for Texas and counties in the North Central Texas Council of Governments region are shown in Figure 8.

⁸ Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2008.

*Total Personal Income estimates are in thousands of dollars, not adjusted for inflation.

Figure 8: Total Personal Income

Area	2009 TPI (thousands)	TPI % Increase 2008-09	1999 TPI (thousands)	1999-2009 Avg annual growth rate of TPI
U.S.A.	\$12,168,161,000	-1.7%	\$7,906,131,000	4.4%
Texas	\$952,338,721	-1.2%	\$597,041,388	5.8%
Collin	\$36,323,016	-3.8%	\$20,185,406	6.1%
Dallas	\$111,322,583	-3.0%	\$71,883,800	4.5%
Denton	\$25,773,805	0.0%	\$12,577,280	7.4%
Ellis	\$4,864,521	0.4 %	\$2,732,308	5.9%
Erath	\$1,079,383	-1.7%	\$714,006	4.2%
Hood	\$2,022,104	-0.6%	\$1,018,223	7.1%
Hunt	\$2,612,546	-1.3%	\$1,630,634	4.8%
Johnson	\$4,849,860	0.8%	\$2,826,606	5.5%
Kaufman	\$3,305,707	1.7%	\$1,650,696	7.2%
Navarro	\$1,409,808	0.9%	\$909,078	4.5%
Palo Pinto	\$930,287	-1.2%	\$556,253	5.3%
Parker	\$4,093,049	-2.6%	\$2,271,989	6.1%
Rockwall	\$3,499,698	2.6%	\$1,458,095	9.2%
Somervell	\$290,394	-4.4%	\$154,134	6.5%
Tarrant	\$70,485,542	-1.4%	\$40,543,786	5.7%
Wise	\$2,008,331	-3.6%	\$1,054,215	6.7%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

In 2009 Collin County had a total personal income (TPI) of \$36,323,016. This TPI ranked 6th in the state and accounted for 3.8% of the state total. In 1999 the TPI of Collin County was \$20,185,406 and ranked 6th in the state. The 2009 TPI reflected a decrease of -3.8% from 2007-2008. The 2008-2009 state change was a 1.2% decrease, while the nation decreased 1.7%. The 1999-2010 average annual growth rate for the state was 5.8% and the nation's was 4.4%, while Collin County's average annual TPI growth rate was 6.1%, indicating a more healthy economic growth rate.

A person's total income includes net earnings, dividends, interest, and rent, as well as total personal current transfer receipts. A definition of each of these items has been placed below the table. The table below summarizes the components of total personal income as percentages of TPI in 1999 and 2009.

Figure 9: Components of Total Personal Income (%)

Area	Net Earnings	Dividends, Interest, Rent	Total Personal Current Transfer Receipts
Texas			
2009	69	17	15
1999	74	15	11
Collin			
2009	77	16	7
1999	85	12	3

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Net earnings by place of residence is earnings by place of work less contributions for government social insurance, plus an adjustment to convert earnings by place of work to a place of residence basis. Earnings by place of work are the sum of wage and salary disbursements, supplements to wages and salaries, and proprietors' income.

Dividends: This component of personal income consists of the payments in cash or other assets, excluding the corporation's own stock, made by corporations located in the United States or abroad to persons who are U.S. residents. It excludes that portion of dividends paid by regulated investment companies (mutual funds) related to capital gains distributions.

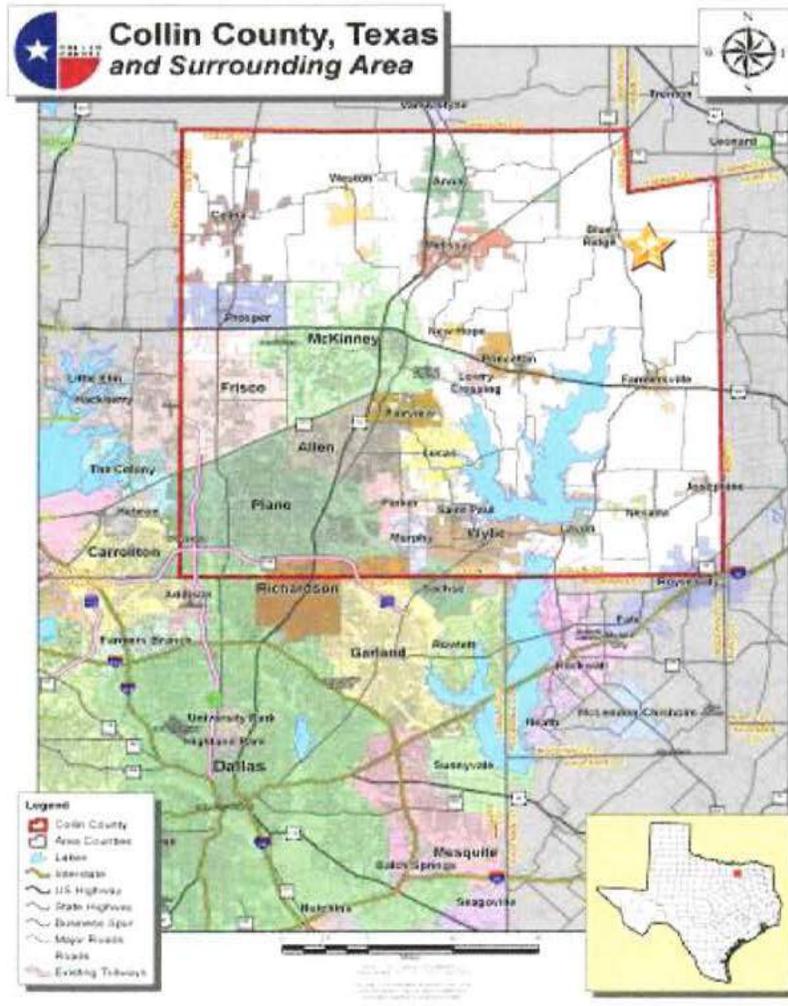
Interest: This component of personal income is the interest income (monetary and imputed) of persons from all sources.

Rent: Rental income is the net income of persons from the rental of real property except for the income of persons primarily engaged in the real estate business; the imputed net rental income of the owner-occupants of nonfarm dwellings; and the royalties received from patents, copyrights, and the right to natural resources.

Personal current transfer receipts refer to payments to persons for which no current services are performed. It consists of payments to individuals and to nonprofit institutions by Federal, state, and local governments and by businesses.

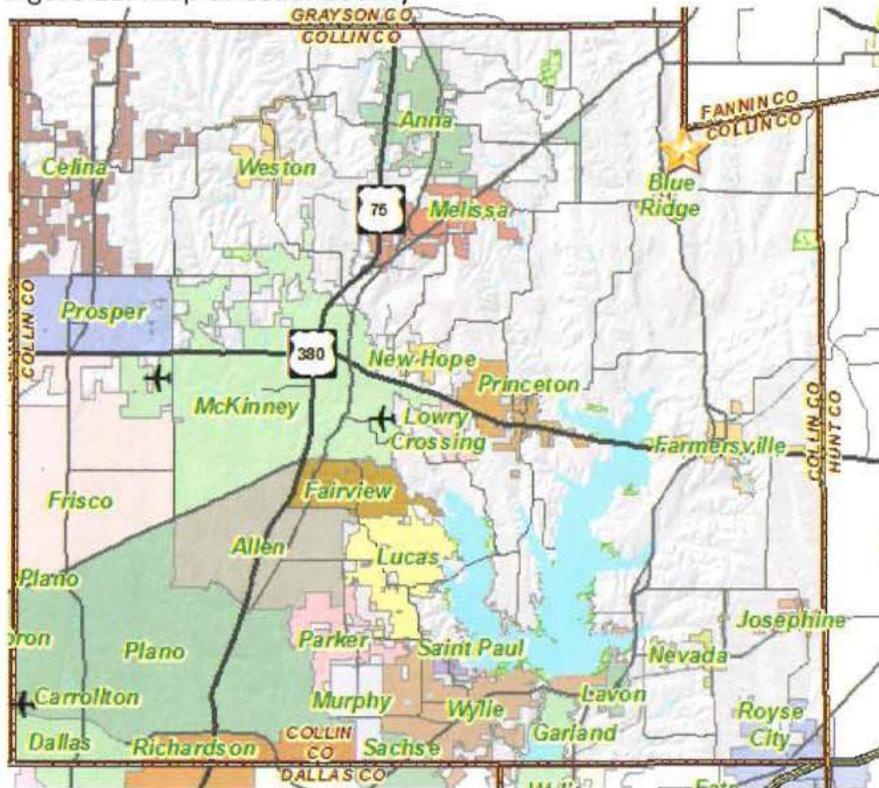
In community development terms, infrastructure generally refers to the elements providing a supportive framework to the community, particularly roads, sewage and water service, railroads and airports.

Figure 10: Map of Blue Ridge and Surrounding Area



Source: Collin County, GIS Department

Figure 11: Map of Collin County



Source: Google Maps

Highways / Roads

Collin County is part of the Dallas District along with Denton, Dallas, Rockwall, Kaufman, Ellis, and Navarro counties. Area offices are located in McKinney which is within Collin County, and two more offices are located within Dallas.

The county is served by a number of major highways, including U.S. Highway 75, U.S. Highway 380, State Highways 5, 78, and 289, as well as the Dallas North Tollway, President George Bush Turnpike, and State Highway 121, also known as the Sam Rayburn Tollway. US Highway 380 is an east-west highway spanning 673 miles. Collin County has received \$1.5 billion from Highway 121 (Sam Rayburn Tollway) toll revenues to complete new road expansion projects on Highway 121. The North Texas Tollway Authority had an opening ceremony January 30, 2012 to celebrate the completion and opening of the Sam Rayburn Tollway (SRT), which now extends 26 miles from Dallas/ Fort Worth to growing communities in Collin, Dallas and Denton Counties. The SRT features six main lanes and all-electronic toll collection⁹. Meanwhile, Dallas North Tollway expansion continues to push northward along the western

⁹ North Texas Tollway Authority. March 2012. "Sam Rayburn Tollway Progress Report."

county line. Voters approved a \$235.6 million transportation bond package in November 2007 to support street and highway improvements throughout the county.¹⁰

There are numerous currently funded TXDOT projects that will affect Collin County, and several others are proposed for the future. The table below summarizes the TXDOT funded projects in the Collin County area that most directly affect Blue Ridge and their estimated costs as seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Current and Planned Highway Projects, Collin County Area

Highway	Type	Funding	Estimate	Bid Date	Description
SH 78	28002040	Traditional	Unfunded	\$9,426,749.36	2016-01
SH 78	28102039	Traditional	Funded	\$25,699,600.06	2012-06
SH 121	36404048	Traditional	Funded	\$286,267.88	2013-11
SH 121	54903018	Traditional	Funded	\$52,721,486.45	2012-11
FM 545	101202025	Prop 12	Funded	\$3,060,623.77	2011-05
FM 981	101203017	Traditional	Funded	\$1,696,334.11	2014-01

Source: Texas Department of Transportation

Traditional: Projects funded by legislative appropriations and bond issuances. Most TxDOT projects are funded through these sources.

Prop 12: Highway improvement projects funded by general obligation bonds that are backed by the state’s general revenue rather than fuel tax revenues.

Updates to the above approved projects are as follows:

- **SH 78 (28102039)** - SH 78 – Adding new roadways of approximately 3.5 mile span between Wylie and Lavon ; Lavon is about 20 miles/ 25 minutes from Blue Ridge. They have received right of way coordination, and the district’s estimated bid date for construction is June 2012.
- **SH121 (36404048)** – Concerns repairing about one tenth of a mile of roadway between Frontage Road and Ohio Drive. (location uncertain). Estimated date to begin bidding for construction is November 2013.
- **SH121 (054903018)** - New roadways spanning about 6 miles between Melissa and Anna/ Chambliss on Sam Rayburn Highway; within 10 miles of Blue Ridge. Received environmental clearance in March 2012 to move forward with coordinating plans. Original estimate was to bid the project for construction in August 2012, however so far they are about 13 months behind schedule.
- **FM545 (Prop 12 funded)** - Replacing bridge on FM 545 over Sister Grove Creek, about 5 miles outside of Blue Ridge. Clearance for construction to begin was given in July of 2011, and it is estimated that approximately 7% of the project has been completed at this time.
- **FM 981 (101203017)**- Replacing bridge over Indian Creek, about 3.5 miles outside of Blue Ridge. Initial projected bid date for construction was May 2012; however, they started design on the project about 17 months later than planned, so they have not moved past the design phases at this time. The district’s estimated bid date is currently set for January 2014.

¹⁰ Collin County. 2010. “For Visitors and the Curious.” Accessed 13 January 2012. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/for_visitors.jsp>

Sewage and Water Services

Residents of the city/community of Blue Ridge are served by one of three water systems depending upon location: Blue Ridge Water, Verona Water and Frognot Water.

Blue Ridge Water is managed by the city of Blue Ridge, with a jurisdiction covering the city limits and currently servicing about 370 homes. Within the past two years, Blue Ridge added an additional well to increase their capacity and doubled their sewage capacity. Blue Ridge Water's jurisdiction borders those of Frognot and Verona, which both service into the more rural areas and outside of the Blue Ridge City limits. Verona Water's jurisdiction starts south of Blue Ridge Water's jurisdiction, beginning at 728 S Business 78, and ending close to Farmersville.

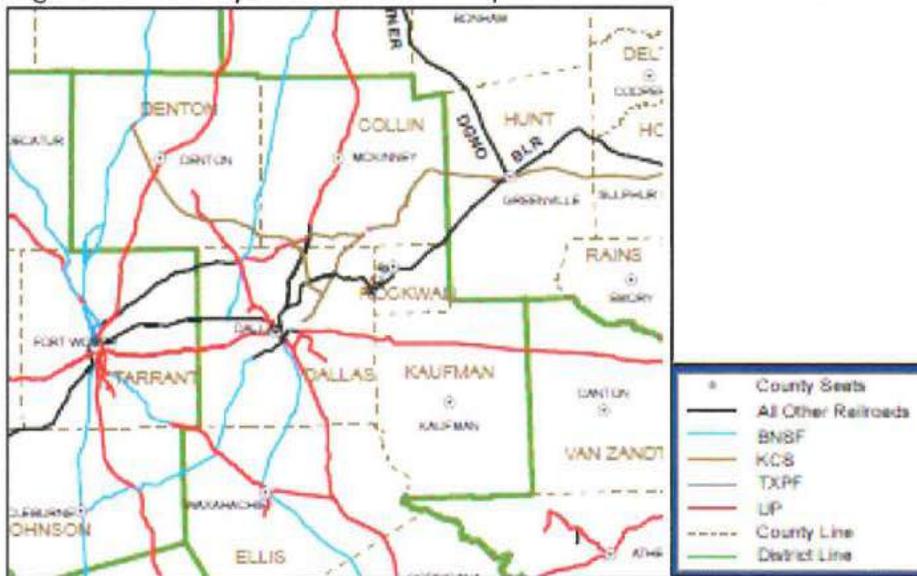
The Frognot Water Supply Corporation's service area starts at CR 504 just west of the new High School and goes North to CR 583; this area is all on the west side of Hwy 78. It also covers CR 583 on the East side of Hwy 78 going back South to CR 618, and services into Hunt County along FM 1562. Frognot currently serves 570 homes, or roughly 1500 people, with the capacity to serve an additional 700 homes. It has a total of three groundwater wells and the current water well was drilled in 2008. It also has the ability to add three additional 200,000 gallon storage tanks at the facility on CR 825.

The Verona Water System covers the area southwest of Blue Ridge and the Frognot Water system. At this time no other information was available.

Rail

In 1915, the Greenville and Whitewright Northern Traction Company, which later became the Greenville and Northwestern Railway, built a railroad line spanning from Blue Ridge twelve miles northeast to the small town of Anna, Texas. The line was abandoned five years later. Currently, there are three Class I railroad lines that travel through Collin County: Union Pacific, BNSF, and Kansas City Southern. The Union Pacific line runs through McKinney, about 20 miles away from Blue Ridge. The BNSF line goes from Dallas through Frisco up to Prosper and Celina in Collin County and continues north from there. Celina is about 35 miles from Blue Ridge. Kansas City Southern crosses through the Southeastern corner of Collin County, with a Railroad Station in Farmersville, about 10 miles from Blue Ridge. This site has also been determined by a NETEX Feasibility Study to be the best possible location for an Intermodal Hub within Collin County for the proposed Outer Loop, which is explained in further detail in following sections.

Figure 13: Railways near Collin County



Source: TXDOT

Collin County recently became a member of the Northeast Texas Rural Rail District (NETEX), which is considering re-establishing the rail system that was abandoned in the early 1990s in Collin and Hunt counties. Texas A&M –Commerce is conducting a study to determine both feasibility and potential economic impacts of the project. Thus far, Collin County has participated in four data acquisition and mapping projects that are part of the feasibility study.¹¹ A map of the rail line is below.

Figure 14: North East Texas Rural Rail Transportation District



Source: Collin County

¹¹ Collin County online. 2010. "Northeast Texas Rural Rail District." Accessed 28 December 2011. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/commissioners_court/mobility_projects/netex.jsp>

Mobility Issues and Planned Expansions

Collin County is working to create a comprehensive solution to the area's projected mobility problems based upon rapid population growth. According to the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the population of Collin County grew to 791,633 in early 2010, a 61% increase since the 2000 Census. While the County refers to this effort as "a constant work in progress," several major projects are already underway at the behest of various entities, including the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). The county considers the following to be the most important in the effort to accommodate the growing population.

- Mobility Plan Final Draft
- North Dallas Tollway Extension
- Collin County Thoroughfare Plan
- Collin County Outer Loop
- Lake Lavon Bridge Route Study
- FM 545 Alignment Study spans from Melissa to Blue Ridge
- 10 Year Asphalt Program
- Northeast Texas Rural Rail District
- 2007 Transportation Bond Projects
- Regional Toll Revenue Projects
- Collin County Intermodal Hub Study¹²

The U.S. Census Bureau' American Community Survey (ACS) determined that the average commute to work for a Collin County resident is 28.1 minutes. For those less fortunate with their daily commutes, especially those heading to downtown Dallas at the crack of dawn, voters here passed a \$235.6 million bond package in November 2007 to widen and improve the roadways. The Highway 121 stretches from Fort Worth to Bonham and passes near McKinney, cutting 25.9 miles through Collin, Dallas, and Denton Counties. Building a tollway here will not only bring a faster east-west trip across the middle of the county but also pull in added revenues to work on other large roadway expansions. In the distant future the County has also begun plans for an Outer Loop Project. Meanwhile, the ACS figures go on to point out that:

- More than eight out of 10 county residents drive alone to work, which is higher than state or U.S. percentages
- Those using public transportation more than doubled from 2000 to 2007
- Collin County residents work at home at a much higher rate than the state average
- County residents' mean morning work commute travel time shrunk by a fraction from 2000-2006, but remained a few minutes longer than national or state averages¹³

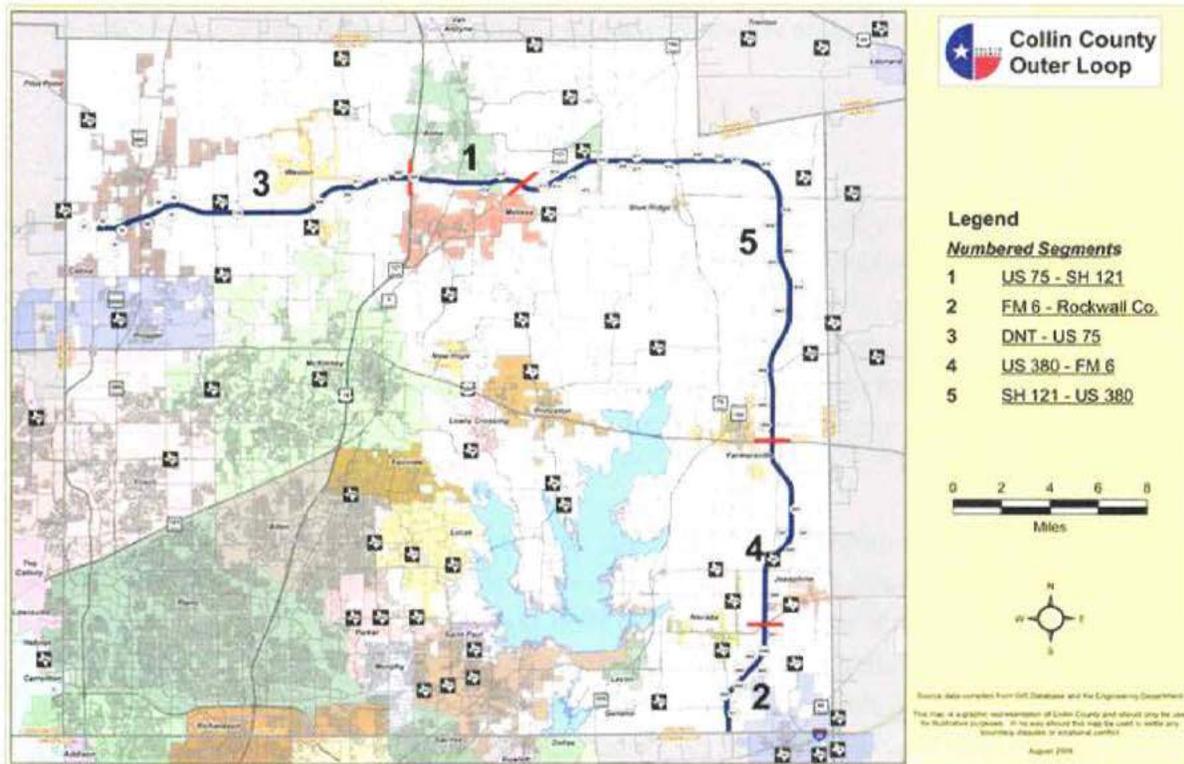
¹² Collin County online. 2010. "Collin County Mobility Projects." Accessed 28 December 2011. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/commissioners_court/mobility_projects/index.jsp>

¹³ --. <<http://www.co.collin.tx.us/business/numbers.jsp>>

Collin County Outer Loop Project

Collin County ranks as one of the top growth areas in the state and the nation. In light of the private and commercial development, Collin County initiated the Outer Loop Alignment Study to develop along a 3,000-foot-wide corridor. Commissioners are working with local engineering firms to finalize the engineering design of several segments of more than 50 miles of Collin County's portion of the regional outer loop. The proposed Outer Loop, as seen below, is less than three miles north of the city of Blue Ridge and passes through the ETJ.

Figure 15: Collin County Outer Loop



Source: Collin County, Outer Loop Overview

Intermodal Hub Study

In order to determine the need and logistics for a third regional intermodal/logistics hub, which would be located in Collin County, NETEX and the NCTCOG began a feasibility study in October of 2009. A logistics hub is a freight facility typically containing a Class I Railroad hub, yard, or terminal; manufacturing and distribution facilities; drayage; and office/retail development. A general aviation or cargo airport may also be present. A minimum of 2,500 acres is necessary to accommodate these facilities and the supplier businesses located within the hub. In addition, a minimum of 10,000 feet of track on a tangent within the acreage is necessary.

For this study, five potential sites within Collin County were reviewed. Based on the elements that are necessary for a successful intermodal hub, including access to rail, a major roadway facility, and availability of land, the Farmersville site at the intersection of the proposed Regional Outer Loop and the KCS rail line (Study Area 3), is the area best suited to an intermodal hub and warrants further study. While Study Area 3 is recommended for further study as an intermodal hub, the need for a third regional hub is not immediate. The location of an intermodal hub within Study Area 3 is dependent upon the wishes of the City of Farmersville and the needs of the railroad. The Study personnel recommended the city of Farmersville should begin acquiring the land if the city and county are interested in moving forward with locating an intermodal hub within Study Area 3. While the City of Farmersville and Collin County could move ahead and take these preliminary steps to make the area attractive as an intermodal hub, ultimately the decision to place an intermodal hub within Collin County rests with the Class I Railroads.¹⁴

Air

Collin County Regional Airport (CCRA) is located in McKinney, approximately 19.3 miles from Blue Ridge. It is owned by the City of McKinney and is located near SH 121, US 75 and US 380 and serves as a General Aviation Reliever to DFW International Airport. CCRA is a general aviation reliever airport that supports all civilian flying except scheduled passenger airlines, offering U.S. Customs for international flights, hangar and office pad sites, and business opportunities including economic incentives for those who qualify. Its 7,000-foot runway is capable of handling many of the largest general aviation aircraft, including a Boeing 737.

Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport is also easily accessible from Blue Ridge. Located about 57 miles away in Dallas, DFW rates 8th worldwide in terms of passenger travel with approximately 155,905 passengers passing through the airport each day in 2010, contributing to an annual total of 56,905,600. The airport features seven runways and 155 gates with both domestic and international service. Nineteen passenger airlines utilize this airport including eight foreign flags. DFW also states that each major city in the continental United States can be accessed within four hours from its facility.¹⁵

Dallas' Love Field Airport is located approximately 53 miles from Blue Ridge and is managed by the City's Department of Aviation. Located in the heart of Dallas, Cedar Springs at Mockingbird, the airfield is 20 minutes from the Downtown Convention Center, West End, Infomart, and the Dallas Market Center. Love Field is self-supported through reasonable user fees and charges, with no cost to the taxpayer. Love Field is served by Southwest Airlines, Continental Express and American Airlines/American Eagle.¹⁶

¹⁴ Collin County online. 2010. "Intermodal Hub Study." Accessed 28 December 2011.

<http://www.co.collin.tx.us/commissioners_court/mobility_projects/intermodal_hub_study.jsp>

¹⁵ Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. 2011. "DFW Fast Facts." Accessed 2 January 2011. <http://www.dfwairport.com/visitor/P1_009559.php>

¹⁶ Dallas Love Field Airport. 2011. "Dallas Love Field Airport." Accessed 8 February 2012. <<http://dallas-lovefield.com>>

Collin County is also home to private use airports including Lavon North Airport, located 18 miles from Blue Ridge, and JSI Airport, located 13 miles away, as well as Aero Country Airport, 18 miles and Square Air Airport, 18 miles.

Education



Primary Education

Blue Ridge Independent School District (Blue Ridge ISD) is a Texas Education Agency (TEA) Recognized School District with 632 students from 2008-2009, 673 from 2009-2010, 646 for the 2010-2011 school year and 660 reported enrolled as of October 2011. A rural 1A district consisting of three schools, portions of the district lie in Fannin County. The student to teacher ratio is 13:1¹⁷, and 51.1% of students were economically disadvantaged with 25.7% classified as at-risk. Student ethnicities were 81% Caucasian, 0.3% African American, 16.9% Hispanic, and 0.9% American Indian for the 2010-2011 school year¹⁸. The district's Blue Ridge High School was also recently nominated by the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, a program which honors schools for academic excellence and for significant progress in closing

¹⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. 2011. "District Directory Information." Accessed 3 January 2011. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?details=1&ID2=4810590>

¹⁸ TEA. 2011. "2011 District AEIS Report." Accessed 8 February 2012.

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=perfrept.perfinast.sas&prgopt=2011%2Faeis%2Falltyped.sas&year4=2011&search=distback&year2=11&topic=aeis&gifname=g_aeis11district&title=AEIS+Report&level=District&ptype=HTML&sublevel=dist&distback=043917>

the achievement gap¹⁹. Blue Ridge ISD was the only school district in Collin County nominated for this outstanding award. Winners are to be selected September 2012.

According to the Texas Education Agency, the annual drop-out rate of students in Blue Ridge ISD for the 2010 year was 0%! This is significantly lower than the state and Region 10 Education Service Center (ESC) averages of 2.4% each and an improvement over the 2009 school year. Annual drop-out data for the Class of 2011 is not yet available.

Figure 16: Blue Ridge ISD School Report Card

Class	Annual Drop-out Rate		
	State Average	Region 10	District
Class of 2010	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%
Class of 2009	2.9%	2.9%	1.0%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Blue Ridge District Report Card

The campuses and their accountability ratings for 2010-2011 are:

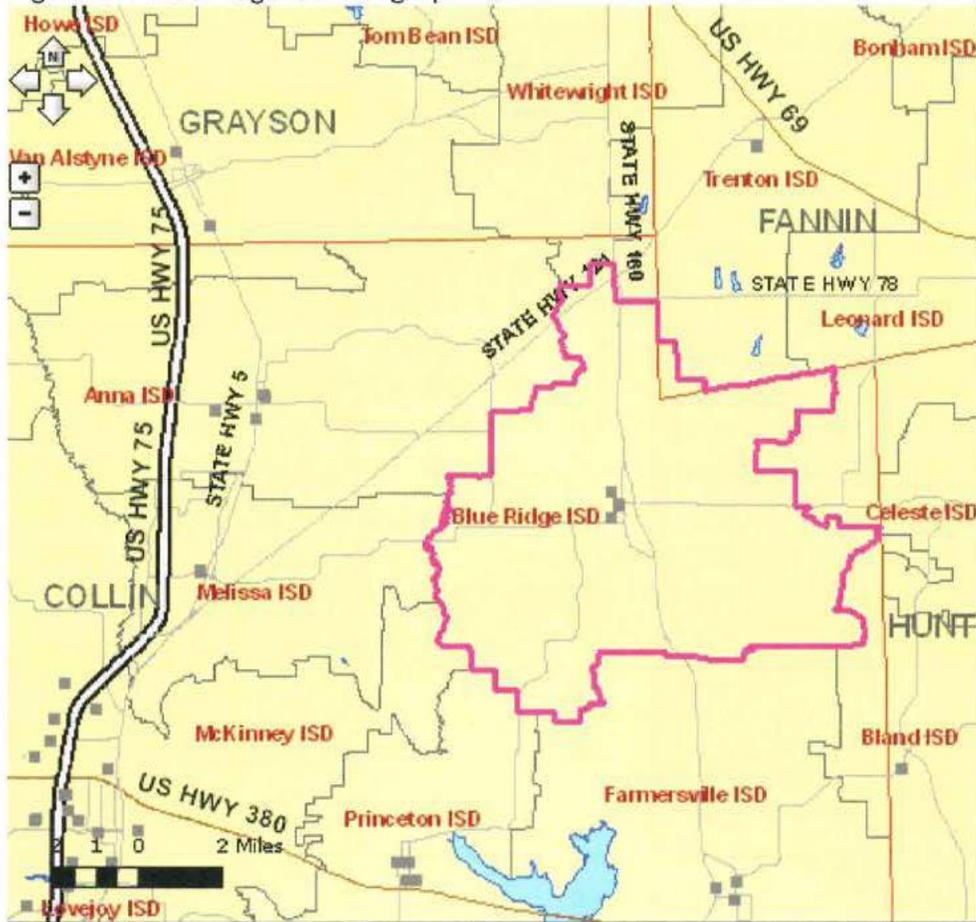
- Blue Ridge Elementary (PK-4) Recognized
- Blue Ridge Middle School (now combined 5-8) Recognized
- Blue Ridge High School (9-12) Recognized

Recent district achievements include the construction of a new elementary school and the 2012 Blue Ribbon Improving Schools Nomination as noted above. Additionally, reports available through the Texas Education Agency indicate students in the Blue Ridge ISD scored higher on the standardized tests in all subjects in 2011 and had better attendance and graduation rates compared to the state and Region 10 ESC.

The Blue Ridge ISD has implemented a 20 year plan to help them prepare for and build for expansions. The plan includes additional schools and faculty.

¹⁹ TEA. 2012. "26 Texas Schools Nominated for 2012 Blue Ribbon Honors." Accessed 8 February 2012. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/news_release.aspx?id=2147505041>

Figure 17: Blue Ridge ISD Geographic Location



Source: Texas Education Agency

College Education

Collin County is home to two universities-- Collin College, with a central campus located in McKinney is 17.4 miles from Blue Ridge, and Dallas Baptist University's extension campus, Dallas Baptist University North, located in Plano (approximately 36 miles from Blue Ridge). The Collin Higher Education Center is located in McKinney as well and is 21 miles from Blue Ridge.

Collin College

Since offering its first classes at area high schools in 1985, Collin College has expanded to serve about 53,000 credit and continuing education students each year. The only public college in the county, the college offers more than 100 degrees and certificates in a range of disciplines. Collin College offers credit and continuing education courses on campus, at area businesses or via the Internet. In addition to providing core curriculum courses, each location offers a selection of electives and specialty classes accredited by a number of bodies, including: Council on Dental Accreditation, American Dental Association, National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc., Committee on Accreditation for

Respiratory Care, Dietary Manager Association, National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences, National League for Nursing, Texas Commission on Fire Protection, Texas Commission of Law Enforcement Officers Standard and Education, Texas Department of Health and Texas Real Estate Commission. The college itself is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees and certificates.

Collin College offers training in the health professions and public service fields, including nursing, respiratory therapy, dental hygiene, emergency medical services, health information technology, surgical technology, fire science, and law enforcement. Certificates can be earned in a wide range of high-tech fields, as well. Augmenting the computer networking technology program, Collin College is one of six Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) Instructor training centers in the U.S. Collin College awards academic transfer degrees and certificates as well as technical workforce degrees and awards. Four types of Associate-level degrees are awarded: the Associate of Arts (AA), the Associate of Science (AS), the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT), and the Associate of Applied Science (AAS). Collin also awards post-associate degree Enhanced Skills Certificates (ESC) in specific areas in addition to Level One and Level Two Certificates, and Marketable Skills Achievement Awards (MSAA).

There are seven Collin College campuses. Their locations relative to Blue Ridge are shown on the map below. They are:

- Allen Center, located in Allen
- Central Park Campus, located in McKinney
- Collin Higher Education Center, located in McKinney
- Courtyard Center, located in Plano
- Preston Ridge Campus, located in Frisco
- Rockwall Center, located in Rockwall
- Spring Creek Campus, located in Plano

Dallas Baptist University North

Dallas Baptist University (DBU), a private faith-based university established in 1898, emphasizes “excellence, servant leadership, and Christ-centered education.” Enrollment figures have recently passed 5,400 with nearly 3,000 adult and graduate students attending.

DBU opened DBU North in Plano in August of 2001 as an expansion of existing Collin County services, which included a service center and class extension sites. Since then, enrollment has quadrupled at DBU North, and the facility has been enlarged to accommodate an even greater volume of students. Plano is 32 miles southwest of Blue Ridge.

At DBU North students can learn more about DBU’s undergraduate and graduate programs, apply for admission, receive academic counseling, register for classes, and make tuition payments, or attend undergraduate or graduate classes. DBU North offers a full rotation of classes leading to the completion of undergraduate degrees in Business Administration, Management, Psychology, and Communication, as well as graduate degrees in Business Administration (MBA), Management (MAM), Education (MED), School Counseling (MEDSC), and Counseling (MAC).²⁰

Collin Higher Education Center

The Collin Higher Education Center (CHEC) opened for classes in January 2010 in McKinney. Five university partners offer a variety of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees at CHEC—Collin College, Dallas Baptist University (DBU), the University of Texas (UT) at Dallas, the University of North Texas (UNT), Texas Woman’s University (TWU), and Texas A&M University- Commerce. Freshman and sophomore courses are not available at the CHEC, but are taught at Collin College’s Central Park, Preston Ridge, and Spring Creek campuses. Once freshman and sophomore courses are complete, students must apply for transfer to the university offering the selected degree. The remaining junior and senior-level courses may be taken at the CHEC to complete a baccalaureate degree without ever attending courses on their home university campus.

Bachelor’s degrees offered at the CHEC:

- Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences—UNT
- Bachelor of Arts, Criminology—UT Dallas
- Bachelor of Arts, Spanish—A&M Commerce
- Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, Communication—DBU
- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science, Interdisciplinary Studies (Elementary Education) -- A&M-Commerce
- Bachelor of Science, Accounting—UT Dallas
- Bachelor of Science, Business Administration—UT Dallas
- Bachelor of Science, Child Development—TWU

²⁰ Dallas Baptist University. 2010. “DBU North.” Accessed 8 January 2011. <http://www3.dbu.edu/north/n_dallas_center.asp>

- Bachelor of Science, Math (with teacher certifications)—TWU
- Bachelor of Science, Nursing, RN to BSN—TWU
- Bachelor of Science, Psychology—A&M Commerce²¹

Graduate Degrees offered at the CHEC:

- MBA—UT Dallas
- Master of Arts, Management with Human Resource Concentration—DBU
- Master of Arts, Professional Development, leadership studies—DBU
- Master of Arts, Teaching —DBU
- Master of Education, Curriculum and Instruction—A&M Commerce
- Master of Education, Administration—TWU
- Master of Education, Higher Education—UNT
- Master of Education, Special Education—TWU
- Master of Science, Accounting—UT Dallas
- Master of Science/Education, Counseling—A&M Commerce
- Master of Science, Engineering Systems—UNT
- Ed. D., Education Administration—UNT
- Ph.D./Ed.D., Higher Education--UNT²²

There are also numerous universities located within the Dallas area, including: University of Texas at Dallas, University of Texas at Arlington, Texas A&M University- Commerce, University of North Texas, Southern Methodist University, Texas Woman’s University, Criswell College, the Dallas County Community College District, Dallas Baptist University, the Art Institute of Dallas, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Texas Christian University, Texas Wesleyan University, and more.

Workforce

Trends in employment are used by planners for local workforce planning, research, and businesses looking to relocate. The table and figure following depict the concentration of residents living in Blue Ridge and their demographic characteristics (age, earnings and industry) regarding employment.

²¹Collin College. 2012. “Bachelor’s Degrees Offered at the CHEC.” Accessed 8 January 2012.

<<http://www.collin.edu/chec/degrees/bachelors.html>>

²²Collin College. 2012. “CHEC Graduate Degrees.” Accessed 8 January 2012.

<<http://www.collin.edu/chec/degrees/graduate.html>>

Figure 19: Jobs by Industry Type for Residents of Blue Ridge, Texas

Total All Jobs 2009		
	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	568	100%
<u>Jobs by Worker Age</u>		
Age 29 or younger	147	25.9%
Age 30-54	316	55.6%
Age 55 or older	105	18.5%
<u>Jobs by Earnings Paid</u>		
\$1,250 per month or less	103	18.1%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	216	38.0%
More than \$3,333 per month	249	43.8%
<u>Jobs by Industry Type</u>		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	5	0.9%
Utilities	8	1.4%
Construction	33	5.8%
Manufacturing	84	14.8%
Wholesale Trade	36	6.3%
Retail Trade	74	13.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	10	1.8%
Information	14	2.5%
Finance and Insurance	31	5.5%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	8	1.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	34	6.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3	0.5%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	23	4.0%
Educational Services	72	12.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	42	7.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8	1.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	39	6.9%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	20	3.5%
Public Administration	23	4.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau LED on the Map



Figure 20: Employers in Blue Ridge

Employers in Blue Ridge, TX			
Business	# of Employees	Business	# of Employees
First Baptist Church	12	Discovery Days	4
Advanced Plastic	8	Main Street Attractions	4
Branscome Grocery	8	Tiger EZ Mart	4
Cattlemans	7	Hwy 78 Feed Store	3
Methodist Church	7	Karen's Café	3
Steven Long (AC)	7	Texas Vineyard Homes	3
All American Garage Doors	6	Not Just Country	2.5
City of Blue Ridge	6	Rick's Place	2.5
Baker Funeral Home	5	Patty's Place	2
DeLeon Construction	5	AFLAC	1
Dollar General	5	Blue Ridge Carwash	1
Post Office	5	Ridgeview Fellowship	1
Blue Ridge Bible Church	4	Verizon SW	1

Source: Blue Ridge Type A Economic Development Council

Figure 21: Largest Employers in Collin County as of December 2011

Organization	# of Employees	Organization	# of Employees
Texas Instruments	11,300	State Farm Mutual Insurance of Texas	1,234
EDS	7,300	Cisco Systems	1,200
J.C. Penney	7,298	Hewlett-Packard Company	1,200
Richardson ISD	4,900	Collin College	1,187
Nortel	4,300	Microtune Inc.	1,139
Stonebriar Centre	3,456	Elcan / Raytheon	1,100
Shops at Willow Bend	3,240	Rockwell Collins	1,100
Frito-Lay	3,000	American Pad and Paper	1,050
Countrywide Home Loans	3,000	AT&T Wireless	1,000
Countrywide Financial	3,000	Dr Pepper/Seven-Up Corp	1,000
Raytheon	2,980	Network Associates	1,000
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Texas	2,900	City of Richardson	985
The University of Texas at Dallas	2,830	McKinney Medical Center	950
Perot Systems	2,811	Encore Wire	800
Alcatel	2,800	Fossil	800
Collin Creek Mall	2,418	Allen Premium Outlets	741
Verizon Business	2,256	Samsung Telecommunications America	725
SBC Communications	2,140	United American Insurance	700
AT&T Inc.	2,140	Credit Solutions	700
Collin County Government	1,700	Richardson Regional Medical Center	700
Ericsson	1,664	Caremark Pharmacy Services	700
Centre at Preston Ridge	1,500	Experian	696
Fujitsu Network Communications	1,500	Allen City Hall	684
Blockbuster Distribution	1,415	Timber Blind Mfg.	600
Presbyterian Hospital of Plano	1,300	Traveler's Property Casualty Insurance	600
Medical Center of Plano	1,266	Sanmina SCI	565
Watters Creek at Montgomery Farm	1,250	Tektronix	530

Source: Collin County Online

Wages

Collin County is part of the North Central Texas Workforce Development Area (WDA), along with 13 other counties surrounding Dallas and Tarrant County, including Denton, Ellis, Erath, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Navarro, Palo Pinto, Parker, Rockwall, Somervell, and Wise. The total of all occupations working in the North Central Workforce Development area can expect to earn a median cash salary of \$31,341 or \$15.07 per hour. The median wage is the 50th percentile wage estimate--50% of workers earn less than the median and 50% of workers earn more. The median salary for people working in this occupation is \$149 less than the statewide average of \$31,490 (\$15.14 per hour). The per capita income for Blue Ridge, a rural area located in an increasingly urban county and WDA, was \$19,522 in 2010, and the median family income was \$67,250 according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS).²³ The 2010 ACS showed that the per capita income in Collin County was \$37,362, with a median family income of \$94,785, which is substantially higher than in Blue Ridge.

Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly wage by a "year-round, full-time" hour's figure of 2080 hours. For those occupations where there is not an hourly wage published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

These estimates are based on 3811 mail surveys, sent by the Texas Workforce Commission, of establishments in the area taken through June, 2010 and have a relative standard error of 1.56%. The relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the reliability of a survey statistic. The smaller the relative standard error, the more precise the estimate.

Wages by Occupation

The following table summarizes wages by major occupational title for jobs in the North Central Workforce Development Board Area. This data is not available at the county level. Occupations with the highest entry level wage are listed first.

Figure 22: North Central WDA Wages by Occupation 2010

Occupation	Number Employed	Mean Wages	Entry Wages	Experienced wage	Median Wages
Total all occupations	706,690	\$42,090 \$20.24	\$18,436 \$8.86	\$53,917 \$25.92	\$31,341 \$15.07
Management Occupations	32,710	\$105,958 \$50.94	\$52,005 \$25.00	\$132,935 \$63.91	\$91,715 \$44.09
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	12,140	\$78,575 \$37.78	\$44,232 \$21.27	\$95,747 \$46.03	\$74,108 \$35.63
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	21,770	\$80,279 \$38.60	\$44,027 \$21.17	\$98,405 \$47.31	\$77,266 \$37.15
Business and Financial	27,830	\$69,944 \$33.63	\$38,398 \$18.46	\$85,717 \$41.21	\$63,016 \$30.30

²³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. "American Community Survey." Accessed 13 February 2012.
<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_5YR_DP03&prodType=table>

<u>Operations Occupations</u>					
<u>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations</u>	32,700	\$71,785 \$34.51	\$32,848 \$15.79	\$91,253 \$43.87	\$57,819 \$27.80
<u>Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations</u>	3,340	\$64,170 \$30.85	\$31,825 \$15.30	\$80,342 \$38.63	\$51,615 \$24.81
<u>Legal Occupations</u>	4,540	\$71,977 \$34.60	\$31,501 \$15.14	\$92,214 \$44.33	\$59,958 \$28.83
<u>Community and Social Services Occupations</u>	6,870	\$46,634 \$22.42	\$29,444 \$14.16	\$55,230 \$26.55	\$43,615 \$20.97
<u>Education, Training and Library Occupations</u>	67,150	\$46,580 \$22.39	\$26,607 \$12.79	\$56,566 \$27.20	\$48,297 \$23.22
<u>Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations</u>	24,850	\$39,329 \$18.91	\$23,547 \$11.32	\$47,220 \$22.70	\$36,566 \$17.58
<u>Construction and Extraction Occupations</u>	33,830	\$34,889 \$16.77	\$22,072 \$10.61	\$41,298 \$19.85	\$30,955 \$14.88
<u>Protective Service Occupations</u>	11,990	\$41,367 \$19.89	\$21,740 \$10.45	\$51,181 \$24.61	\$38,569 \$18.54
<u>Office and Administrative Support Occupations</u>	116,800	\$32,587 \$15.67	\$20,401 \$9.81	\$38,680 \$18.60	\$29,909 \$14.38
<u>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations</u>	7,330	\$47,837 \$23.00	\$20,115 \$9.67	\$61,698 \$29.66	\$37,497 \$18.03
<u>Production Occupations</u>	42,350	\$31,600 \$15.19	\$18,882 \$9.08	\$37,958 \$18.25	\$27,866 \$13.40
<u>Healthcare Support Occupations</u>	19,210	\$26,969 \$12.97	\$18,680 \$8.98	\$31,113 \$14.96	\$24,113 \$11.59
<u>Transportation and Material Moving Occupations</u>	41,120	\$29,133 \$14.01	\$18,106 \$8.70	\$34,647 \$16.66	\$26,536 \$12.76
<u>Sales and Related Occupations</u>	89,290	\$35,323 \$16.98	\$16,951 \$8.15	\$44,509 \$21.40	\$23,282 \$11.19
<u>Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations</u>	21,020	\$22,475 \$10.81	\$16,769 \$8.06	\$25,327 \$12.18	\$19,967 \$9.60
<u>Personal Care and Service Occupations</u>	17,260	\$23,905 \$11.49	\$16,619 \$7.99	\$27,548 \$13.24	\$18,889 \$9.08
<u>Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations</u>	920	\$24,338 \$11.70	\$16,591 \$7.98	\$28,211 \$13.56	\$18,860 \$9.07
<u>Food Preparation and Serving-Related Occupations</u>	71,670	\$19,127 \$9.20	\$16,529 \$7.95	\$20,426 \$9.82	\$17,895 \$8.60

Source: Texas Workforce Commission www.tracer2.com

*Note that the median wage was used rather than average, as it is a more useful measure when the data is not evenly distributed, as with salaries in organizations where most people will be in the lower to middle pay groups and fewer will be at the top

Wages by Industry

The following table summarizes wages by industry (highest entry wage listed first) for jobs in the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board area. Industries employing the largest numbers of people are educational services, retail trade, and accommodation and food services..

Figure 23: North Central WDA Wages by Industry 2010

Industry	Estimated Employees	Mean Wage (\$)	Entry Wage (\$)	Experience d Wage (\$)	Median Wage*
All industries	706,690	\$42,090 \$20.24	\$18,436 \$8.86	\$53,917 \$25.92	\$31,341 \$15.07
Management of Companies and Enterprises	9,710	\$89,667 \$43.11	\$37,350 \$17.96	\$115,825 \$55.69	\$75,479 \$36.29
Information	19,830	\$73,018 \$35.10	\$27,977 \$13.45	\$95,539 \$45.93	\$65,070 \$31.28
Utilities	3,450	\$51,503 \$24.76	\$27,105 \$13.03	\$63,703 \$30.63	\$46,082 \$22.15
Mining	8,070	\$45,333 \$21.79	\$25,415 \$12.22	\$55,292 \$26.58	\$36,625 \$17.61
Finance and Insurance	32,530	\$50,686 \$24.37	\$25,147 \$12.09	\$63,455 \$30.51	\$38,593 \$18.55
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	37,040	\$64,092 \$30.81	\$25,129 \$12.08	\$83,574 \$40.18	\$47,101 \$22.64
Public Administration	33,370	\$42,641 \$20.50	\$23,645 \$11.37	\$52,139 \$25.07	\$37,776 \$18.16
Transportation and Warehousing	19,250	\$38,327 \$18.43	\$23,603 \$11.35	\$45,688 \$21.97	\$34,369 \$16.52
Educational Services	99,410	\$45,501 \$21.88	\$22,864 \$10.99	\$56,820 \$27.32	\$44,962 \$21.62
Wholesale Trade	25,980	\$54,283 \$26.10	\$22,296 \$10.72	\$70,277 \$33.79	\$39,413 \$18.95
Construction	36,680	\$40,483 \$19.46	\$22,253 \$10.70	\$49,598 \$23.85	\$32,482 \$15.62
Manufacturing	64,250	\$47,183 \$22.68	\$21,671 \$10.42	\$59,939 \$28.82	\$35,857 \$17.24
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	11,240	\$39,608 \$19.04	\$19,610 \$9.43	\$49,606 \$23.85	\$29,706 \$14.28
Health Care and Social Assistance	76,040	\$45,574 \$21.91	\$19,538 \$9.39	\$58,592 \$28.17	\$32,909 \$15.82
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	34,860	\$38,260 \$18.39	\$18,159 \$8.73	\$48,310 \$23.23	\$27,952 \$13.44
Retail Trade	92,940	\$28,783 \$13.84	\$17,002 \$8.17	\$34,673 \$16.67	\$22,322 \$10.73
Other Services (except Public Administration)	18,080	\$32,273 \$15.52	\$16,972 \$8.16	\$39,924 \$19.19	\$23,057 \$11.09
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	610	\$25,440 \$12.23	\$16,928 \$8.14	\$29,696 \$14.28	\$22,784 \$10.95
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	10,630	\$28,769 \$13.83	\$16,628 \$7.99	\$34,839 \$16.75	\$19,377 \$9.32
Accommodation and Food Services	72,740	\$19,603 \$9.42	\$16,526 \$7.95	\$21,141 \$10.16	\$17,852 \$8.58

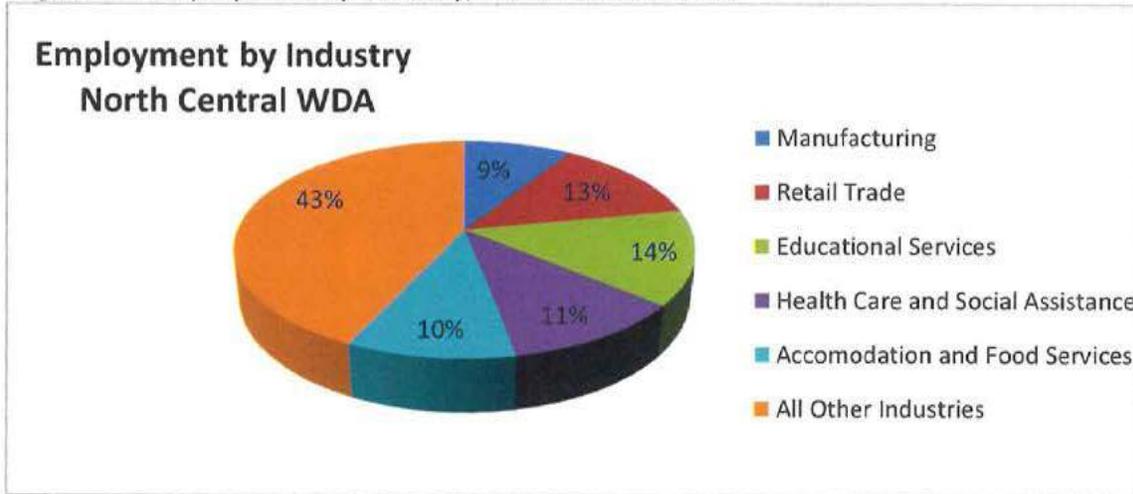
Source: Texas Workforce Commission www.tracer2.com

*Note that the median wage was used rather than average, as it is a more useful measure when the data is not evenly distributed, as with salaries in organizations where most people will be in the lower to middle pay groups and fewer will be at the top

Employment by Industry

The employment by industry percentages in Figure 24 below indicate the top three industries in the North Central Workforce Development Board area are: 43% all other industries (representing a sum of all industries not labeled here), educational services at 14%, retail trade at 13%, and health care and social assistance at 11%.

Figure 24: Employment by Industry, North Central WDA



Source: Texas Workforce Commission www.tracer2.com

Unemployment

Unemployment for Collin County was relatively stable throughout 2011, and has remained lower than the state unemployment rate since 2000.

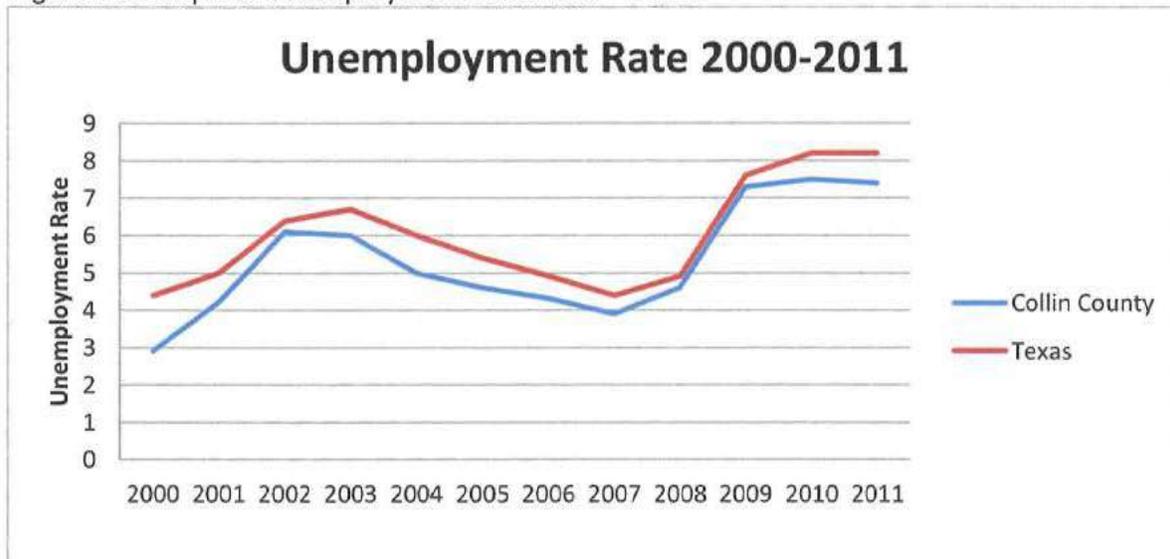
Figure 25: Unemployment Rate, 2000-11

Year	Collin County	Texas
2000	2.9	4.4
2001	4.2	5.0
2002	6.1	6.4
2003	6.0	6.7
2004	5.0	6.0
2005	4.6	5.4
2006	4.3	4.9
2007	3.9	4.4
2008	4.6	4.9
2009	7.3	7.6
2010	7.5	8.2
2011	7.0	7.6

Source: www.tracer2.com

As demonstrated below, Collin County's unemployment rate is consistently below that of Texas, although it does mirror the movement of the Texas rate.

Figure 26: Graph of Unemployment Rate 2000 - 2011



Source: Texas Workforce Commission www.tracer2.com

Figure 27 describes statistics for Collin County. This data captures the median income and workforce sectors prevalent specifically in this area. There are 254 Texas counties and Collin County has one of the lowest poverty rates in the state as well as the highest percentage of adults aged 25 and up with a bachelor's degree or higher in educational achievement. The County also has experienced the second highest growth in population in the state and has the third highest median household income in the state.

Figure 27: Collin County Labor Force Information

Labor for Collin County, TX				
Labor Force Annual Averages in 2009	Number	% of State	State	Rank in State
Total Labor Force	421,754	3.48%	12,1368,384	6
5-year % change	14.3%	-	8.0%	34
10-year % change	41.0%	-	17.3%	13
Employed	390,106	3.50%	11,141,903	6
5-year % change	10.9%	-	5.6%	40
10-year % change	34.2%	-	12.6%	18
Unemployed	31,648	3.18%	994,481	7
5-year % change	84.5%	-	66.0%	17
10-year % change	271.0%	-	120.1%	37
Unemployment Rate	7.5%	91.46%	8.2	122
5-year % change	63.0%	26.7%	51.9%	46
10-year % change	158.6%	61.7%	86.4%	4

Source: Statsamerica.org

With nearly 3.5% of the state labor force, Collin County is also currently ranked highly for numbers of both employed and unemployed in the state of Texas. The average wage per job is the 6th highest in Texas at \$53,463, and the area is number one for finance and insurance jobs as a percentage of the total jobs in the county. Collin County's average wages are influenced heavily by the higher incomes of its larger cities and connection to the DFW Metroplex.

The WDA has over 2.3 million residents and over 1.2 million workers. The WDA is second in the state in terms of job growth, and is expected to grow at a rate of 25% between 2006 and 2016.

Administrative/Support/Waste Management/Remediation and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services will see the fastest industry growth in the North Central WDA, and half of the projected growth will be in the Educational Services, Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance and Accommodation & Food Services industries²⁴.

²⁴Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, North Central Texas Council of Governments. Accessed April 11, 2012. <https://www.dfwjobs.com/business/economicstrends.asp>.

FAVORABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Financial Vitality

According to the FDIC, there are no banks in Blue Ridge as of January 2012. There are, however, numerous financial institutions in Collin County and nearby Celeste, Texas in Hunt County. Those banks within 30 miles of Blue Ridge are listed in Figure 28 below:

Figure 28: Banks within 30 miles of Blue Ridge

Bank	Locations of Offices in Collin County
American Bank of Texas	McKinney Prosper
Bank of America	2 institutions in Allen 3 institutions in McKinney Wylie
Bank of the Ozarks	Allen
Bankers Bank	McKinney
BOKT, National Association	2 institutions in Allen 5 institutions in McKinney
Capital One	Allen McKinney Wylie
Citibank	Allen McKinney
Citizens State Bank	Princeton
Comerica	2 institutions in Allen
Commercial Bank of Texas	Allen
Compass Bank	Allen 3 institutions in McKinney
First Bank of Celeste	Celeste (Hunt County)
First National Bank Texas	Allen
First National Bank of Trenton	Farmersville Melissa
First United Bank & Trust	2 institutions in McKinney
Independent Bank	Anna Celina Two institutions in Farmersville Lavon Three institutions in McKinney Princeton

	Prosper Van Alstyne
Inwood National Bank	Wylie
JP Morgan Chase	5 institutions in Allen 7 institutions in McKinney Wylie
LegacyTexas Bank	Allen 2 institutions in McKinney
Patriot Bank	Allen
Prosper Bank	Prosper
Prosperity Bank	2 institutions in McKinney
Regions Bank	Allen
Synergy Bank	McKinney
The American National Bank	Allen McKinney Wylie
Texas Star Bank	Anna Van Alstyne
Valliance Bank	McKinney
ViewPoint Bank, National Association	2 institutions in Allen 2 institutions in McKinney Wylie
Wells Fargo	3 institutions in Allen 6 institutions in McKinney
Woodforest National Bank	Allen 3 institutions in McKinney Wylie

Source: FDIC www.fdic.gov

Local Sales and Use Tax

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts returns (or allocates) money to cities for their local sales tax collection. Allocation amounts generally represent taxes collected on sales made two months or more prior to the allocation payment.

Figure 29: City of Blue Ridge Total Allocations from Texas Comptroller (Including Type A & B)

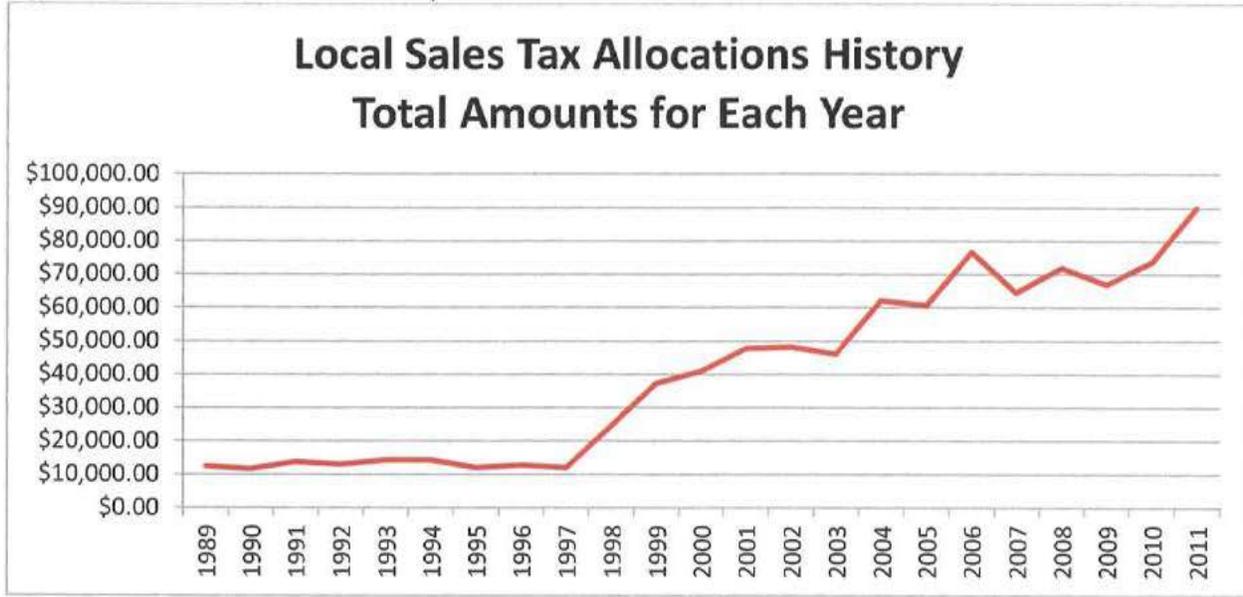
Month	2009	2010	2011	2012
January	\$4,249.95	\$4,798.63	\$7,761.44	\$6,914.10
February	\$6,732.95	\$7,992.41	\$8,889.61	
March	\$4,560.21	\$5,657.29	\$5,271.14	
April	\$4,636.76	\$4,335.24	\$5,012.69	
May	\$8,010.01	\$8,058.01	\$8,388.27	
June	\$5,022.69	\$5,313.76	\$6,046.95	
July	\$4,401.80	\$5,245.00	\$5,524.96	
August	\$7,410.63	\$7,066.09	\$10,116.51	
September	\$4,922.41	\$5,513.43	\$7,012.81	
October	\$4,692.84	\$5,154.35	\$7,941.44	
November	\$7,476.31	\$8,151.44	\$10,180.84	
December	\$4,796.73	\$6,361.84	\$7,797.49	
Total for the year	\$66,913.29	\$73,647.49	\$89,944.15	\$6,914.10

Source: Texas Comptroller <https://ourcpa.cpa.state.tx.us/allocation/AllocHist.jsp>

Sales tax amounts have remained low and stable across the last three and a half years, with the 2009 total of \$66,913.29 increasing to \$73,647.49, and continuing a steady increase through 2011.

On May 14, 2011, an election was held to legalize the sale of beer and wine for off-premises consumption in the city of Blue Ridge and it passed. Prior to the election, Blue Ridge was “dry” for all alcoholic beverage sales and after the election is now “wet” for the sale of beer and wine for off-premises consumption. The additional tax dollars in the later months may be attributed to the sale of wine and beer after the issue was passed.

Figure 30: Sales Allocation History over the Years 1988-2010



Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

In April 1998, Blue Ridge began collecting a sales tax of 1/2 of 1% for Type A and an additional 1/2 of 1% for Type B economic development corporations (EDCs). Under the Development Corporation Act of 1979, Texas law gives cities the ability to finance new and expanded business enterprises in their local communities through economic development corporations (EDCs). These changes must be approved by voters.

Type A EDCs are usually utilized to fund industrial development projects such as business infrastructure, manufacturing, and research and development. Type B EDCs, for developing industries and cultivating communities, can fund all projects eligible for Type A, as well as parks, museums, sports facilities and affordable housing. The main requirement for projects undertaken by EDCs is that the businesses bring new money into the community and, as of 2003; certain projects must create or retain primary jobs for cities. A primary job is one at a company that exports a majority of its products or services to markets outside the local region, thereby bringing new money to the local economy. Primary jobs are, by state definition, limited to specific industry sectors such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing and scientific research and development.²⁵

Under this arrangement, one fourth of Blue Ridge’s monthly sales tax allocation of 2 % should be transferred to the Type A corporation each month and one fourth of the city's total sales tax allocation should be transferred to the Type B corporation. Blue Ridge collected \$89,944.15 in 2011, and one fourth of this amount, \$22,486.03, was transferred to the Type A corporation, and the same amount also to the Type B.

²⁵ Texas Ahead. 2011. “Type A and B Economic Development Corporations Overview.” Comptroller of Public Accounts. Accessed 22 February 2012. <http://www.texasahead.org/tax_programs/typeab/>

Property Taxes

The average Collin County resident currently pays a total rate of about 2.18% of the property's assessed value. Collin County ranked 44 out of 792 counties in the United States with populations greater than 65,000 for the highest property tax as a percentage of the median home value in 2009²⁶. The majority of this tax is distributed to the local Independent School District (ISD) to provide revenue to help fund the schools' expenditures, with this rate varying by district. The remainder of the 2.18% tax rate is distributed amongst Collin County (.24%), the Collin County Community College (.0863%), and the respective city, (rate varies by city). In 2011, a 1.67% property tax was charged for the Blue Ridge ISD, and about .61% for the City of Blue Ridge, with a total property tax rate for a Blue Ridge resident being about 2.6%. After 2010 and 2011 school property tax rate increases, Blue Ridge and two other cities have the highest school property tax rates in Collin County (1.67%).

The average value of a Collin County home today is \$233,591. With a newly adopted five percent homestead exemption and a tax rate decrease in 2008 and 2010, that means the average homeowner will pay about \$540 in 2011 county taxes. These relatively reasonable housing costs continue to attract new residents from all over the nation, and contribute to the high occupancy rates. Per capita income (\$45,884) in this part of North Texas is \$6,000 a year higher than the U.S. norm.

On the flip side of the economic coin, only four percent of Collin families are considered living at or under the poverty level, less than half the national average and three times lower than the Texas average. It's estimated that less than two percent of the families received public cash assistance in 2006.²⁷

²⁶ Tax Foundation. <<http://taxfoundation.org>>

²⁷ Collin County, 2010. "For Visitors and the Curious." Accessed 13 January 2012. <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/for_visitors.jsp>

SWOT Analysis

TEEX employees have created a visual demonstrating the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) facing the continued economic development of Blue Ridge, Texas. This information is based upon this community assessment, employee observations, and a series of interviews and discussions with Blue Ridge representatives and citizens in order to create a snapshot of Blue Ridge today and the desires of its citizens, and well as the challenges that must be addressed as development continues and the city moves forward.

Figure 31: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to large urban areas- shopping, entertainment, recreation, medical care, higher education • Outstanding school district with low drop-out rate and new buildings • Open spaces • Recent purchase of industrial office building • Active volunteer fire department • Spirit of entrepreneurship • Population growth rate faster than the state • Increased water and sewage capacity • Abundant groundwater supply • Increasing sales tax • Citizens have strong core values of family, faith and pride in their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination between Type A and Type B EDC organizations • No city website • Limited number of job opportunities in Blue Ridge • No railroad service • Limited sales tax base • No over-night accommodations • Limited activities for youth • Cost of required building improvements for downtown development • Partial law enforcement coverage
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential commercial and residential development of land with the construction of the Outer Loop • Expansion of Highway 121/ Sam Houston Tollway • Increased retail business opportunities should the Intermodal Hub be developed outside of Farmersville • Decrease the cost of city expenses by developing inter-local agreements with neighboring communities • Attract outside visitors by promoting community events in various media • Downtown commercial development • Leverage partnerships with third party organizations to help market and promote Blue Ridge • Act regionally rather than locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in young adults • Unresolved issues among community leaders • Citizen tax dollars lost to retailers outside of city • Projected city growth may lead to increasing crime rates • No local financial institutions

Health Care

There are currently no doctors or medical facilities located within Blue Ridge city limits, but numerous physicians practice within Collin County and in nearby cities. There are more than 1,000 health care facilities in Collin County alone that are easily accessible to Blue Ridge residents. Doctor's offices of various medical specialties are abundant in surrounding towns. There are over 100 dental offices in larger cities close by such as Plano or McKinney, and additional options in nearby Farmersville, Anna or Melissa, all within a 15 mile drive from Blue Ridge. Also within a 10-15 mile radius of Blue Ridge city limits are two Emergency Medical Service providers including one in Anna and one in Farmersville, and several others within a 45 minute drive; all with easy access to more than 100 full-service medical facilities located within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

The following facilities are located near Blue Ridge within the DFW Metroplex and were ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the top-ranking 19 hospitals in terms of number of high-performing specialties relative to the 121 hospitals located within the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area:²⁸

1. University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas is ranked nationally in six adult specialties. It was also high-performing in six adult specialties. University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center is a 422-bed general medical and surgical facility with 19,595 admissions in the most recent year reported. It performed 7,079 annual inpatient and 8,739 outpatient surgeries. Its emergency room had 32,326 visits. University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center is a teaching hospital accredited by the Joint Commission (JC) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). It is nationally ranked in cardiology and heart surgery, diabetes and endocrinology, nephrology, neurology and neurosurgery, and urology. The facility is considered high performing (which means it ranks near the top national levels) in cancer; ear, nose and throat; gastroenterology; geriatrics; orthopedics; and pulmonology. The Medical Center also specializes in ophthalmology, psychiatry, and rehabilitation.
2. Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas is ranked nationally in four adult specialties. It was also high-performing in seven adult specialties, as shown below. Baylor University Medical Center is an 893-bed general medical and surgical facility with 39,008 admissions in the most recent year reported. It performed 17,025 annual inpatient and 8,986 outpatient surgeries. Its emergency room had 96,278 visits. Baylor University Medical Center is a teaching hospital accredited by the Joint Commission (JC). The medical center is national ranked in gastroenterology, nephrology, pulmonology, and urology. It is

²⁸ U.S. News and World Report. 2011. "Best Hospitals in Dallas-Fort Worth Texas." Accessed 14 January 2012. <<http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/area/dallas-fort-worth-tx>>

classified as high-performing in cancer treatment; cardiology and heart surgery; ear, nose and throat; geriatrics; gynecology; neurology and neurosurgery; and orthopedics. Other specialties include diabetes and endocrinology as well as rheumatology.

3. Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas is ranked nationally in two adult specialties. It was also high-performing in four adult specialties. Parkland Memorial Hospital is a 672-bed general medical and surgical facility with 41,364 admissions in the most recent year reported. It performed 7,127 annual inpatient and 9,522 outpatient surgeries. Its emergency room had 147,197 visits. Parkland Memorial Hospital is a teaching hospital accredited by the Joint Commission (JC). Parkland Memorial is national ranked in gynecology and orthopedics. It is considered high performing in diabetes and endocrinology; ear, nose and throat; nephrology; and urology. Other specialties include cancer treatment, gastroenterology, neurology and neurosurgery, pulmonology, and rheumatology.

Additional medical facilities ranked as the best in the Metroplex are:

4. Baylor Regional Medical Center, Plano
5. Medical City Dallas Hospital, Dallas
5. Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas
8. Baylor All Saints Medical Center at Fort Worth, Fort Worth
8. Baylor Medical Center at Garland, Garland
8. Methodist Dallas Medical Center, Dallas
8. Plaza Medical Center, Fort Worth
8. Texas Health Arlington Memorial Hospital
8. Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital
14. JPS Health Network, Fort Worth
14. Medical Center of Arlington, Arlington
16. Baylor Institute for Rehabilitation, Dallas
16. Baylor Medical Center at Irving, Irving
16. Denton Regional Medical Center, Denton

The Metroplex is also home to two nationally ranked children's hospitals, the Children's Medical Center Dallas (located in Dallas) and the Cook Children's Medical Center located in Fort Worth.

- Children's Medical Center Dallas is ranked nationally in 10 pediatric specialties. It is a 400-bed children's general facility with 20,123 admissions in the most recent year reported, having performed 6,379 annual inpatient and 18,131 outpatient surgeries, and 125,941 emergency room visits. Children's Medical Center Dallas is a teaching hospital. It is accredited by the Joint Commission (JC), and is nationally ranked in the following pediatric care areas: cancer; cardiology and heart surgery; diabetes and endocrinology; gastroenterology; neonatology;

nephrology; neurology and neurosurgery; orthopedics; pulmonology; and urology.

- Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth is ranked nationally in six pediatric specialties. It is a 300-bed children's general facility with 12,021 admissions in the most recent year reported, with 4,610 annual inpatient and 11,288 outpatient surgeries, and 87,129 emergency room visits. It is accredited by the Joint Commission (JC) and is nationally ranked in the following pediatric care services: cancer; diabetes and endocrinology; gastroenterology; neonatology; neurology and neurosurgery; and pulmonology.

Public Safety

Blue Ridge Police Department

Blue Ridge is policed by the Collin County Sheriff's Office, located in McKinney. The following reports have been compiled with information provided by the Sheriff's Office specifically for Blue Ridge, and represent the most frequent types of crime called into the Sheriff's Office by either police patrol or concerned citizens. It is important to note that these numbers indicate the number of reports called into the Sheriff's Office, and do not necessarily imply that a report or arrest was made.

Figure 32: 2009 Crimes Called into Sheriff's Office

Type	Number
Aggravated Assault	1
Arrest	5
Assault	3
Burglary	5
DWI	2
Rape	1
Suspicious Person	15
Theft	22
Vandalism	11
Vehicle Burglary	5
Vehicle Theft	5

Source: Collin County Sheriff's Office Call Log 2009

In 2009, the most common type of call to the Sheriff's Office within Blue Ridge was theft, with 22 accounts throughout the year. The second most frequent call was to report a suspicious person, with 15 reports in 2009. Vandalism accounted for 11 calls throughout the year. There were no serious crimes, such as murder, reported, and only five supposed arrests.

Figure 33: 2010 Crimes Called into Sheriff's Office

Type	Number	Percentage Change
Aggravated Assault	0	-100%
Arrest	5	0.0%
Assault	1	-66.6%
Burglary	18	260.0%
DWI	2	0.0%
Rape	2	100.0%
Suspicious Person	21	40%
Theft	20	-9.1%
Vandalism	16	45.4%
Vehicle Burglary	5	0.0%
Vehicle Theft	6	20.0%

Source: Collin County Sheriff's Office Call Log 2010

In 2010, the number of burglaries called into the Sheriff's Office increased by 260%, increasing from five reported burglaries to 18 in just one year. However, the number of arrests stayed stagnant at five for the entire year. Based on the call data, the reporting of some crimes did increase substantially, which could indicate that the community is increasingly aware and/or concerned of safety issues, that the police force has increased their supervision within Blue Ridge, thus resulting in higher frequency of reports, or there was an actual increase in crime.

Figure 34: 2011 Crimes Called into Sheriff's Office

Type	Number	Percentage Change
Aggravated Assault	1	100.0%
Arrest	4	-20.0%
Assault	3	200.0%
Burglary	17	-5.5%
DWI	5	150.0%
Rape	1	-50.0%
Suspicious Person	17	-19.0%
Theft	15	-25.0%
Vandalism	12	-25.0%
Vehicle Burglary	8	60.0%
Vehicle Theft	1	1.5%

Source: Collin County Sheriff's Office Call Log 2011

In 2011, most crimes decreased or stayed relatively stagnant in terms of frequency of calls made to the Sheriff's Office, with the exception of DWI reports, Vehicle Burglaries, and Assaults.

As a whole, Collin County has a relatively low crime rate. In comparison to Dallas, which has an average murder rate of 13.3 per 100,000 in population, Collin County has an average of 2.0 murders per 100,000 people. Similarly, Collin County's burglary rates are roughly one third of those in Dallas. However, while burglary rates in the rural areas of the county are still lower than the burglary rates in Dallas, it is much

higher than the national and state levels. Rural burglary rates in Collin County are 1,026.7 per population of 100,000, as compared to the national average rate of 730.8, and the state average of 946.5. Rural Collin County burglary rates exceed all but five states in the country, and also exceed the national average of burglary rates for suburban areas by 20%. Further, there is less of a difference in the rate of rapes in Collin County as compared to Dallas; while Dallas has an average of 39.1, Collin County has an average of 22.6. The occurrence of rapes is higher for rural areas that are policed by the Collin County Sheriff's Office than for larger towns such as Plano or Allen²⁹.

Blue Ridge Fire Department

The City of Blue Ridge is served by an all-volunteer fire department with 21 active and trained fire fighters. The Blue Ridge Fire Department's Mission Statement is "To provide skilled, volunteer fire and first response emergency services to the citizens of Blue Ridge and the surrounding communities of our district in order that we may save lives and property." It is one of two volunteer fire departments in the county that is equipped with Advanced Life Support (ALS) equipment, which provides paramedics with additional resources and equipment that enable them to better respond to emergency needs above what is provided in a Basic Life Support (BLS) equipped vehicle. The equipment that the Blue Ridge Fire Department currently has includes one rescue truck, three brush trucks (including one heavy brush), two engines, one quint fire truck with 75 foot ladder and master stream, two tankers, and one utility vehicle.



The following information was provided by the Blue Ridge Fire Department, and includes the categories and frequencies of runs that the BRFD responded to each year for the years 2009, 2010, and January 1, 2011 through June 24, 2011.

²⁹ Collin County Observer, 2010. "Crime and Punishment in Collin County: Murder, Rape and Burglary." Accessed March 27, 2012. <http://www.baumbach.org/b2evolution/blogs/index.php/2010/01/19/crime_and_punishment>

Figure 35: Blue Ridge Fire Department Runs, 2009- 2011

Type	2009	2010	2011*
Alarm Investigation	9	16	12
Brush Fire/Grass Fire/Hay	52	73	43
Controlled Burn	2	1	1
Down Tree	2	3	0
Down Power Line	3	0	0
Electrical Fire	2	4	0
Explosion	1	0	0
Fire Alarm	9	16	12
Flooding	2	0	0
Gas Leak	4	3	4
Lift Assist	1	3	0
Locked Vehicle	3	1	0
Medical Emergency	140	170	175
Missing Child	1	1	0
Motor Vehicle Accident	23	16	25
Odor Investigation	4	1	0
Other	0	0	14
Public Assist	3	4	0
Road hazard	2	3	0
Smoke Investigation	5	9	6
Structure Fire	23	30	15
Traffic Hazard	3	0	0
Traffic Assist	0	1	0
Trash Fire	1	0	0
Unauthorized Burn	3	1	0
Vehicle Fire	3	6	1
Water Leak	1	0	0

Source: Blue Ridge Fire Department. **Note: 2011 only includes January 1- December 31, 2011*

Recreational Activities

Blue Ridge recreation largely revolves around sports associations, including the North Texas Junior Basketball League, baseball and Pee-Wee Football opportunities for youth in the 3rd-6th grades. According to Collin County, Blue Ridge's Community Center is the recreational center for the city. The Blue Ridge Community Center was built to furnish a facility for community needs as well as other community projects. The air conditioned, brick, and metal building consists of: a large main area, men and ladies bathrooms, an open kitchen, and several storage areas. The kitchen is equipped with a refrigerator, microwave, and stove. There are tables and chairs available.



The Blue Ridge Riding Club (BRRC) is dedicated to helping and mentoring the younger riders and developing their skills as riders and horsemen. The BRRC Rodeo Arena is located across from the high school and is used year round. The BRRC hosts an annual rodeo which is sanctioned by three professional rodeo associations.



Collin County also maintains several facilities for recreational opportunities. The Collin County Farm Museum is an institution dedicated to the promotion of a greater awareness and appreciation of the rich agricultural heritage of the region. The County also maintains the Myers Park and Event Center, an Adventure Camp featuring 437 acres dedicated to outdoor education for area youth, the Parkhill Prairie 436-acre preserve located in northeast Collin County and featuring a 52-acre relic of the Blackland tall-grass prairie, the Sister Grove Park 75 acre hike/bike trail located between Princeton and Farmersville (adjacent to Lake Lavon), and Bratonia Park for radio-controlled airplane enthusiasts. The Collin County Adventure camp is 427 acres. It is approximately 3 miles north to south, and 1 mile east to west, located on the Black Land Prairie, approximately 14 miles from Blue Ridge, at the north end of Collin County in Anna, Texas. There are also numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation in the form of public golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools throughout the county.

Collin County is also home to several professional sports teams, including the Allen Americans (a Central Hockey League, Dallas Stars AA Affiliate 24 miles from Blue Ridge), the Frisco RoughRiders (a Texas Rangers AA Affiliate 33 miles from Blue Ridge), FC Dallas (Major League Soccer 33 miles from Blue Ridge), the Texas Tornado Hockey Team (North American Hockey League NAHL approximately 33 miles from Blue Ridge), and the McKinney Marshals (Texas Collegiate League, varied locations). 30

³⁰ Collin County online. 2010. "Professional Sports." Accessed 28 December 2011. <<http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/recreation/professional/index.jsp>>

There are also several lakes located within the county, including Lake Lavon (22 miles from Blue Ridge), Lake Texoma (55 miles), Lake Ray Hubbard (37 miles), Lake Ray Roberts (56 miles), White Rock Lake (48 miles), Lake Lewisville (42 miles), and Grapevine Lake (55 miles). All of these lakes allow fishing at boating, although some state regulations are in affect to place limits on catch size and/or motor types allowed. Recently, some lakes such as Lavon, have enacted regulations that require those with any water containing receptacles to drain all water and remove any zebra mussels to prevent the species' contamination other water bodies before leaving the premises. Lake Ray Roberts is also a State Park, offering camping, hiking, horseback riding and picnicking activities to visitors in addition to fishing and boating.

Dallas is known for offering more restaurant opportunities per capita than anywhere else in America, diverse cultural venues from small theater companies and galleries to the nation's largest arts district. Parks, trails, forests and lakes as well as professional sports venues round out the local opportunities.³¹ The city is home to an arboretum, the Dallas Zoo, numerous outdoor trails and facilities, and the Dallas Aquarium at Fair Park. The Texas State Fair is held annually in Dallas, and the city is noted for its professional sports teams as the only metro area in the Southwest to host teams from five major professional sports teams. The Dallas Cowboys (NFL), the Dallas Diamonds (women's football), the Texas Rangers (American League baseball), the Dallas Mavericks (NBA), Dallas Stars (NHL), the Dallas Vigilantes (arena football), and FC Dallas (MLS) all call the city home. The city also hosts the HP Byron Nelson Championship, a premier event of the PGA Tour each year, and is noted for horse racing at the Lone Star Park, Mesquite Championship Rodeo at the Resistol Arena, and the Texas Motor Speedway. College teams in the area include the Southern Methodist University Mustangs and the Texas Christian University Horned Frogs.

In downtown Dallas, visitors can explore the city's historic districts, the restored Majestic Theatre, Thanks-Giving Square, the bronze steers of Pioneer Plaza, the observation deck on top of the 50-story tall Reunion Tower, enjoy the ice rinks at Plaza of the Americas complex and at down-town's West End, shop among the shops and stores located in the underground network of downtown office buildings, or take advantage of the largest Arts District in the country.

With a large culture and art scene, Dallas offers various music attractions, including the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (DSO), the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, the Dallas Classic Guitar Society, and the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra. Dallas-area museums and galleries offer a wide range of exhibits and displays, particularly at the Dallas Museum of Art, with 370,000 square feet of space on an 8.9-acre site in the downtown Arts District.

Dallas is also known for its shopping opportunities with over 70 million square feet of retail space, including Valley View, North Park Mall, The Galleria Dallas, The West End Marketplace, and Traders Village, the weekend antique market in Grand Prairie, Texas. Dallas has more than four times the restaurants per capita than New York City, with more than 7,000 restaurants to enjoy, according to the

³¹ Dallas Economic Development. 2011. "Live Well Here." Accessed 8 January 2012. <http://www.dallas-ecodev.org/resources/competitive-advantages/quality_of_life.htm>

Texas Restaurant Association. Other nearby attractions include Six Flags over Texas in Arlington, Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Old City Park, and Deep Ellum, a former industrial neighborhood and center of the Dallas jazz scene.

For those wanting unique shopping and eating experiences and less big-city traffic, Blue Ridge's location allows easy access to several other nearby cities outside of the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex. McKinney, Frisco and Plano are within one hour of Blue Ridge and offer many venues for entertainment. Just 45 minutes from Blue Ridge, Plano's renovation of its historic downtown has attracted a large variety of retail shops, restaurants, and music and entertainment venues, such as the Courtyard Theater and the Plano Repertory Theater. Some of the notable attractions outside of downtown Plano include the Arbor Hills Nature Preserve, various golf courses, shopping malls, and museums, including the Interurban Railway Museum, the African American Museum, and the JC Penney Museum.

Another short drive from Blue Ridge, McKinney, offers various sites and activities for visitors, ranging from the numerous parks, sports, golf courses and recreation areas, to museums, galleries, shops and wineries, and historic sites such as the historic Downtown or Chestnut Square Historic Village.

Frisco offers a wide variety of award-winning hotels, shopping, concerts and events, four professional sports teams, over 150 pieces of art on public display, and over eight million square feet of retail and dining. Shopping venues include IKEA, Stonebriar Centre mall, and Sam Moon Trading Company.

Additionally, the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma are nearby and can be accessed easily on major roads.

