



# Your Regional Commission

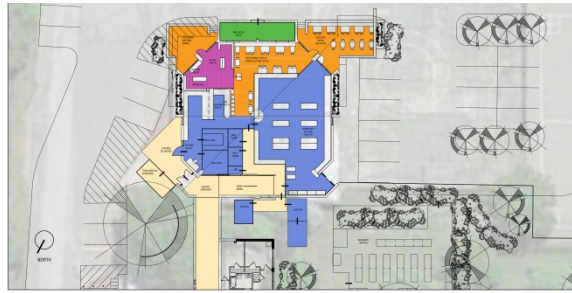
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N R V R C . O R G

## Old Prices Fork School Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project

The Prices Fork Project has gained a tremendous amount of momentum within the past six months. As a whole, the project will be multi-phased and involve the historic revitalization and renovation of the former Prices Fork Elementary School to provide two main components: mixed income rental housing for the area as well as the development of food processing, dining and retail opportunities for local food entrepreneurs. Recently, Taylor Hollow Construction purchased the property from Montgomery County. As project planning began, Taylor Hollow created a community advisory committee to help think through each of the project components. The Commission had the privilege of playing a role in this advisory committee and ultimately in the planning efforts for both the housing and local food components.

In its first phase of housing renovations, 16 apartments with 10 affordable and six market-rate units for people 55 and older will be constructed, converting the former classrooms in the old school to apartments. Financing has already been secured by local HOME funds, historic tax credits, State HOME funds, developer equity, and construction will begin in November of this year. Funding for an additional phase of housing has been applied for through the Department of Housing and Community Development's Vibrant Communities Initiative (VCI). This second phase of housing involves the new construction of apartments for mixed ages and incomes.



The second major component of the project will offer opportunities for local farmers and food entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and expand their reach to area residents and visitors. The scope will include the transformation of the space into: 1) a commercial incubator kitchen with high-capacity production equipment to support local food entrepreneurs, 2) a commercial dining space and kitchen for a farm-to-table restaurant, and 3) a retail commercial space that will market local products. A second space will be renovated to provide 1) storage space for commercial kitchen users, 2) production/marketing spaces for food-based businesses, 3) a meeting/gathering space for cultural and educational events, and 4) an office area for general administration. Outdoor development will include vegetable gardens to provide growing areas for the restaurant, food entrepreneurs and community members.

As pending funding for both of these components is announced, the project will be able to finalize all of its conceptual plans starting in early 2016. For further information, please contact Jennifer Wilsie ([jwilsie@nrvc.org](mailto:jwilsie@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 204.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Old Prices Fork School Project
- Transportation Program
- Project Updates
- NRVRC Meeting Summary
- The Competitive Edge

### UPCOMING MEETINGS:

- Transportation Technical Advisory Committee**  
Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 p.m.  
NRVBC - Conference Room
- Transit Coordinating Council**  
Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 p.m.  
NRVBC - Conference Room
- Commission Board Meeting**  
Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 p.m.  
NRVBC - New River Room
- HOME Consortium**  
Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 p.m.  
NRVBC - Conference Room

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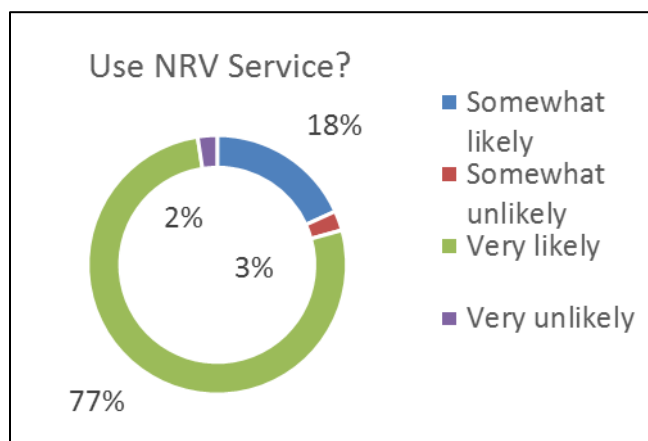
## Transportation

All aboard! The online Passenger Rail Study survey is closed and the results are in and indicate travelers would ride the train if service was available in the New River Valley. The region's Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee utilized Amtrak's Station Program and Planning Guidelines to estimate a conservative 40,000 boardings/alightings annually. In order to achieve that total, the survey respondents alone would only need to choose Amtrak 1 out of every 5 trips outside of the region.

A total of 6,189 responses were recorded. Survey input reflected a potential 1 million annual trips outside of the region. Based on VDOT traffic count data, the region generates that number of trips by car alone. Meaning that only 4% of existing trips outside of the region would need to utilize Amtrak to meet the 40,000 estimate. Understanding the potential ridership is important for determining specific characteristics of a new service in the New River Valley.

The survey not only provided information about potential ridership, but also desired amenities and traveler preferences for a station. The top desired station amenity is a restroom, while charging stations for phones scored low. 75% of respondents are willing to pay more than \$50 per ticket. 95% of survey respondents indicated that they would be likely to use a new NRV service. The survey consisted of 36% residents, 31% university faculty/staff (most likely residents as well), 26% students, and 7% visitors.

Next steps of the study involve conducting in-person surveys at the existing Amtrak Station in Lynchburg and Charlottesville. In addition, the Commission will continue to work with local stakeholders to evaluate potential sites for service. For further information visit: [www.nrvpassengerrail.org](http://www.nrvpassengerrail.org) or contact Elijah Sharp ([esharp@nrvc.org](mailto:esharp@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 210.



## Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Plan Update

Over the past nine months, the Regional Commission has been assisting Montgomery County develop and write a master plan for the County's Parks and Recreation Department. A community needs survey was launched in August will close at the end October. The survey was administered mainly online, with Commission and County staff administering in-person surveys at local events during these past three months. Printed signs were placed at local gathering places around the County, and the survey was shared electronically on social media. Preliminary results indicate a desire for more outdoor recreation opportunities, and satisfaction with the current program offerings. Most who responded on the survey were from Christiansburg and Blacksburg, with Riner, Shawsville, and Elliston responding as well. Commission staff is now working on analyzing the results and providing recommendations to Parks and Recreation Department staff. These recommendations will be combined into the outline of the master plan, and a draft will be developed in November.

For further information, please contact Jennifer Wilsie ([jwilsie@nrvc.org](mailto:jwilsie@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 204 or Michael Gottfredson ([michaelg@nrvc.org](mailto:michaelg@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 205.



## New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board



The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Consortium Board (CB) and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (WDB) are planning to convene regional partners/stakeholders to explore next steps to implementing effective Sector Strategies in order to effectively and efficiently address the needs of critical businesses and industry throughout the region. This work is being built on the Skills Gap Analysis that was prepared for the region by Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development in 2013 and 2014 (the full report can be found here: <http://nrmrwib.org/business-solutions/regional-workforce-data/skills-gap/>).

While the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation, evidence based research, and innovative programs praise the effectiveness of a sector based approach, the implementation of this approach is best established through an approach that takes into account the local context of the labor market Local Workforce Development Area, the economic development trends and priorities and matching them to proven sector strategies. Through the integrated implementation approach the Sector Strategy will be established in an integrated and sustainable manner.

The CB and WDB are contracting with Community Workforce Advancements, LLC, (CWA) to guide the region towards the implementation of Sector Strategies through a sequential series of activities that will introduce stakeholders to the concept of Sector Strategies, which will include three (3) one day Implementation Work Sessions and will provide follow up coaching and support sessions to help ensure the success of Sector Strategy as the way of doing business in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area.

This beginning process will be implemented over a six-month time frame as follows:

- 11/1 – 11/28-**Research and Analysis**: CWA will review existing reports and data of New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area
- 11/22 – 12/19-**Introduction and Notification to Stakeholders of initiative**
- 1/4 – 1/30-**Sector Strategy Workshops**
- 2/1 – 4/30-**Monthly Follow Up** webinars/calls to assist in Implementation Plan

*It is important to note - the Workforce Board (nor the workforce system) will NOT be developing a Sector Strategy for the region, they are facilitating the process. The Sector Strategy will be developed and implemented based on the input provided by regional businesses and industry on critical workforce need.*

For further information and/or to insure that you are on the stakeholder list, please contact Marty Holliday ([marty.holliday@nrmrwib.org](mailto:marty.holliday@nrmrwib.org)), 540-633-6764.

## NRVRC Meeting Summary

### September 22, 2015 Meeting

#### Economic Development:

- Commission staff is assisting Giles County with an application to participate in the Coal-Reliant Communities Innovation Challenge. This is a unique program offered by the NADO, NACO and EDA.
- Consumer version of the CEDS was distributed to provide an 'at-a-glance' understanding of the regional priorities to stakeholders.

#### Transportation:

- Virginia Tech is conducting a Parking and Transportation Master Plan and they want to receive input from the community and the region. Comments can be submitted on the project website [www.vt-ptmp.com](http://www.vt-ptmp.com).
- Town of Christiansburg, Montgomery County and Town of Blacksburg celebrated the dedication of the Huckleberry Bridge over Rt.114 on 9/11.

#### Regional:

- The Commission is convening quarterly meetings of the tourism staff across the region, also known as destination marketing organizations (DMOs).

#### PDC:

- Zach Swick started as Data Systems Manager September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### October 22, 2015 Meeting

#### Economic Development:

- Giles County was selected to participate in the Coal-Reliant Communities Innovation Challenge.
- Virginia Tech released a study on October 9<sup>th</sup> regarding regional economic development between Roanoke and the New River Valley. The report can be viewed at <http://goo.gl/CiYXiL>. The Commission and Alliance attended a study release meeting and will remain highly engaged as this evolves.
- Narrows and Pembroke were recently awarded a planning grant from the Community Development Block Grant program managed by the VA Dept. of Housing and Community Development for business district revitalization based on outdoor recreation assets. Commission staff assisted with the first phase of project organizing and inventorying. The two towns received authorization to move onto the second phase of planning work.

#### Transportation:

- The passenger rail project has potential station locations narrowed down from 29 to 3 finalists. Two sites are in Christiansburg and one site is in Radford.
- The Commission hosted an annual meeting with members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Local governments met with the representatives to cover potential projects, transportation needs and requests for Transportation Enhancement funding.

#### Regional:

- The Commission is awaiting responses from DHCD for two grant applications. One for Building Collaborative Communities to evaluate different models of tourism collaboration and a second application to the Broadband Planning Program for Blacksburg Broadband and determining transferable models for increasing internet bandwidth across the region.

AGENDAS AND MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT  
[WWW.NRVRC.ORG](http://WWW.NRVRC.ORG)

## Local Technical Assistance

***Town of Narrows Comprehensive Plan Update:*** Town of Narrows Planning Commission and staff have reviewed a draft plan document and resulting comments have been incorporated. An updated draft has been distributed to Town Council for review and comment. The next steps will include finalizing a public review draft and identifying a timeline for public review, public hearing, and adoption.

***Floyd County Solid Waste Management Plan Update:*** Through this effort, Regional Commission staff are assisting County staff in developing an update of the existing plan document. Draft information is currently being developed related to economic profile, peer locality solid waste collection approaches, and waste projections.

For further information, please contact Patrick Burton ([pburton@nrvc.org](mailto:pburton@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 217.

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## Rural Planning Caucus

Rural planners from Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina met at Berry Hill in South Boston in October for RPC's annual conference. This year attendees experienced a slate full of information on how rural communities are embracing new approaches to build stable economies and improved quality of life. The group toured South Boston's significant development projects such as a market-rate housing approach new to South Boston and the growth of a higher education center preparing local residents for new jobs. These projects may not be new in other areas, but their newness in South Boston is a demonstration of how communities built on declining industry can reinvent themselves to rebuild and attract business investment to remain economically viable and retain local talent. The conference also covered other relevant topics such as planning for the future of rural health care centers in a changing marketplace; cooperation and planning across jurisdictional boundaries, and how other regions approach economic development.

For further information, please contact Christy Straight ([cstraight@nrvc.org](mailto:cstraight@nrvc.org)), 540-639-9313, ext. 209.

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## Pembroke and Narrows receive grant to support downtown revitalization

The towns of Narrows and Pembroke have received a planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to develop an economic restructuring plan focused on downtown revitalization. The goal of the project is to identify projects that will increase the economic benefits the towns receive from visitors to their numerous outdoor recreation assets. Both towns have popular attractions, from hiking trails and wilderness areas such as the Cascades and Mill Creek, to public parks and access points for fishing, kayaking and other watersports on the New River.

The towns will use the planning grant to prioritize projects that can help their communities to attract and welcome visitors, and support the restaurants, lodging, shops and other businesses in their downtown areas who can serve the visitors other recreation needs. A team of community stakeholders is helping to select projects that are most important to improving the downtown areas, and to raise awareness for property owners and other community organizations to participate in the project. Over the next several years, the towns will be eligible to apply for larger grants from DHCD to undertake construction projects, infrastructure improvements, and other economic development projects in both towns.

In October, a team of community and government representatives visited Marion, VA to learn from their town officials about efforts to develop the downtown area of their town. The town's efforts include many DHCD infrastructure and streetscaping grants, participation in the Virginia Main Street program, as well as providing financing and business counseling services to new downtown-based start-up businesses.

In November, DCHD staff will come to Giles County to meet with the local team, and finalize the scope of the tasks to complete during the grant project, such as hiring consultants to develop master plan technical documents for the project. The downtown revitalization planning grant process is expected to take about a year, and will be complete in summer or fall 2016.

For further information, please contact Patrick O'Brien ([pobrien@nrvc.org](mailto:pobrien@nrvc.org)) or 540-639-9313, ext. 206.

# THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Publication of the New River Valley Business Center  
A Small Business Incubator

Doug Hudson  
Incubator Manager

November - December 2015

## NRV Business Center begins upgrades to meeting rooms

The New River Valley Development Corporation is renovating and upgrading the meeting rooms at the New River Valley Business Center facility. The Business Center has three meeting rooms available, with the largest able to accommodate up to 90 guests (depending on configuration). The heavily used training room near the main entrance to the east wing is the first room to undergo renovations. The renovations are nearly complete, including a new coat of paint, new carpeting and new classroom furniture. The new tables and chairs have wheels and are easily foldable, allowing each group to set up the room for different types of meetings or classroom configurations.

Guests who book any of these rooms can access the meeting room's Wi-Fi network, and the rooms have connections for AV equipment. Kitchen facilities adjacent to each meeting room are available for meetings that plan to serve refreshments. More information on the available rooms is available on the New River Valley Development Corporation website: <http://www.nrvdc.org/meetingspaces.html>. Tenants of the New River Valley Business Center are allotted meeting room use in the training and conference room monthly at no charge, while other businesses can reserve the rooms for a small fee. Fees vary by room, from \$25-\$75 for a half day (up to four hours), or \$50-\$150 for a full day. The room reservation request form is available at: <http://www.nrvdc.org/RoomRequestRevFeb2014.pdf>.

*For further information on the New River Valley Business Center, please contact Doug Hudson ([incubatormanager@nrvc.org](mailto:incubatormanager@nrvc.org)), 540-633-6730.*

### **For Business Center information contact:**

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Julie Phillips, Newsletter Editor	

## Travel Expenditure Gains in NRV Localities

The Governor's Office recently announced that domestic travel-related expenditures in Virginia during 2014 were estimated at \$22.4 billion, an increase of 4.1% over 2013.

Travel expenditure gains from 2013 to 2014 for NRV localities are as follows:

- Floyd: 2.4%
- Giles: 4.7%
- Montgomery: 2.8%
- Pulaski: 4.7%
- Radford: 2.4%

More information on the economic impact of travel in Virginia is available at: <http://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact/>

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