



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **NRV Livability Initiative Update**
- **Transportation Program**
- **Project Updates**
- **NRVPCD Meeting Summary**
- **Economic Indicators**
- **The Competitive Edge**

UPCOMING MEETINGS:



Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

Tuesday, March 17th, 1:30 p.m.
NRVBC - Conference Room

Regional Transit Coordinating Committee

Tuesday, March 17th, 3:00 p.m.
NRVBC - Conference Room

PDC Commission Meeting

Thursday, March 26th, 6:00 p.m.
NRVBC - New River Room

PDC Commission Meeting

Thursday, April 23rd, 6:00 p.m.
NRVBC - New River Room

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NRV Livability Initiative Update

On February 12, 2015, the Livability Leadership Team hosted a regional convening to provide an update on progress within the partnerships, projects, and initiatives formed as a result of the Livability Initiative. Livability's three-year regional planning process concluded in November of 2013 with a regional information-sharing event. The initiative then moved to implementation, spearheaded by a partnership between the Community Foundation of the New river Valley and the Commission

Livability In Action

In The New River Valley



Seventy participants from throughout the region attended the event and were able to hear about on-going initiatives that are advancing the vision and goals of the Livability Initiative. Speakers presented brief overviews on projects such as the Pearisburg Farm to Fork program, Solarize Blacksburg, the Appalachian Spring project, NRV Passenger Rail study, the Market Place Farmer's Market in Pulaski, Smart Beginnings early childhood education initiative, the Floyd Innovation Center, Summit Place Assisted Living in Rich Creek, Blacksburg Broadband, and NRV Agritourism.



Participants then broke into small groups to share specific projects they were working on, challenges they were experiencing, or discuss opportunities for further collaboration.

The Livability Leadership Team has also released the first issue of a bi-annual newsletter, titled "Livability In Action," which highlights the projects listed above and will provide continual updates on future projects, collaborations, and initiatives related to the Livability goals.

The event concluded with a chance for all participants to mingle and connect further on upcoming projects.

Confirmed by overwhelming participant feedback, the Leadership Team plans to host the event annually in order to continue sharing progress and ideas from across the region.

For further information, please contact Jennifer Wilsie (jwilsie@nrvpcd.org), 540-639-9313, ext. 204.

Transportation

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization recently kicked off the 2015 Passenger Rail Study. The purpose of the study is two-fold: 1) identify the potential demand for service in the region; and 2) gain consensus from regional partners on a future passenger rail stop location.

Over the next eleven months the Commission will be reviewing local plans, collecting new data through surveys, evaluating potential site locations, documenting logistic and operational needs, and measuring local impacts. The planning process is led by the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). All TAC meetings are open meetings and the public is welcome to join. To stay up to date on the latest project news, visit: <http://www.nrvpdc.org/PassengerRailStudy/>. The project website provides links to the most recent project materials and serves as a portal for public engagement.

Exploring passenger rail service is supported by the region's highest levels of leadership in local government, university, and private sectors. The Blacksburg Partnership's Passenger Rail Committee initiated the regional groundswell of support for this study. The Commission is pleased to partner on this project – providing the initial step towards potentially extending passenger rail service into the New River Valley.

For further information, please contact Elijah Sharp (esharp@nrvpdc.org), 540-639-9313, ext. 210.

NRV tourism departments collaborate on trail guide

The Commission is working with the tourism departments in Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties and the City of Radford to promote the New River Valley's popular outdoor recreation activities. The team will develop a trail guide for popular hiking and biking trails in the region, such as the Cascades, the Huckleberry Trail, New River Trail State Park, and Bisset Park. The guide will include a map of trail locations, and information about each trail, such as the length, elevation and difficulty of the trail, descriptions and pictures of trail features such as scenic views, and a listing of amenities such as restaurants, parking, etc., near each trail.

The trail guide will be a 'pocket-sized' brochure that visitors can take with them on their hike, and will feature 10-12 of the region's most popular hiking and biking trails. The Commission and their local partners have already developed a comprehensive inventory of regional outdoor recreation and tourism assets as part of their efforts to create the 'Explore New River Valley' website. This tourism-focused website features a variety of regional attractions, as well as information on local hotels, restaurants, shopping and other businesses. The website is located at: <http://explorenewrivervalley.com/>.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation is helping to fund the cost of developing the guide through their Marketing Leverage Program, which is designed to stimulate new tourism marketing programs and create tourism partnerships that leverage the limited marketing budgets of state and local tourism programs. The local tourism departments have pledged to match this grant funding with their own resources in order to develop and distribute the guide. More information on the VTC's Marketing Leverage Program at: <http://www.vatc.org/PAM/leverageprog/>.

The NRV trail guide pamphlet will be completed by May 2015, in time to distribute to visitors who are looking for an outdoor adventure in the NRV this summer. For further information, please contact Patrick O'Brien (pobrien@nrvpdc.org), 540-639-9313, ext. 206.

The Commission would like to introduce Michael Gottfredson who joined the staff in February as a Regional Planner. His duties include developing and preparing professional plans, reports and studies. They also include presenting to various groups and stakeholders, conducting research, and facilitating technical committee and working group meetings. He is currently assisting Montgomery County with their Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, and with Floyd County's Solid Waste Plan Update. He will also be assisting a transit study for the New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Michael's previous work was with Bear River Association of Governments in Logan, Utah. For the past 2 ½ years he assisted their Community and Economic Development Department's with various planning projects. These include recreation planning and design, writing technical reports, and doing environmental assessments for CEDS and other grant programs.

Michael will receive his Master of Science in Bioregional Planning this spring from Utah State University, and has a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from the same institution. He enjoys outdoor recreation, a good book, and being with his family. Michael can be reached at (540)-639-9313, ext. 205, or mgottfredson@nrvpdc.org.

New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board



The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (NR/MR WIB) and their partners, seek to improve access to educational programs, and to create learning environments that will enable citizens to gain the skills and knowledge needed to be viable in today's workplace so that they can live and thrive in Southwest Virginia, by reaching out to them "where they are" (literally and figuratively).

The NR/MR WIB received a Local Coordination Grant from the Virginia Workforce Development Board, using funds provided by the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and administered by the U.S. Department of Labor*, for an outreach project. The intent of the project is to create **Small Learning Communities** utilizing four **Roving Computer Labs** (RCLs) in small towns and communities throughout our rural region. Each RCL will be made up of five laptop computers, a printer and a variety of ways to access the internet. The NR/MR WIA is made up of 4,234 square miles which covers ten counties and three independent cities. Each of the RCLs will cover a smaller regional area and can be moved throughout that area offering programs in many out-lying areas and creating small Learning Communities throughout the region.

Each RCL will begin as a remote One-Stop resource room, offering core services (job search assistance, resume building, on-line job application assistance, informal digital literacy, etc.). Once the Learning Community is established, the programs offered can then be flexible enough to meet the needs of those that participate (e.g. digital life skills & literacy, basic adult literacy, elements of work readiness, financial literacy, or other programs that may be desired by the local/regional businesses).

The NR/MR WIB also has an iPad lab made up of seven iPads. The NR/MR WIB has partnered with New River Community College (NRCC) to use the iPad lab late February or early March. NRCC's Office of Workforce Development provides customized training programs for local businesses, during this partnership the employees of a local business will be trained to use touch screens that will be integrated into the manufacturing process.

Currently four lab sites are scheduled to open in March:

- Fairlawn: NRV Business Center, the 2nd Monday of every month 3-4:30PM
- Narrows: 211 Main Street, Suite 101, Monday through Friday 9AM to 4PM
- Willis: St. Mark Lutheran Church date and time TBD
- Saltville: Town of Saltville Municipal Building, 2nd and 4th Wednesday 1-3PM and the 2nd and 4th Friday 10AM to noon

Other uses of the RCLs will be:

1. Training labs for small businesses (to use for their current staff).
2. Pulling all RCLs together for "business" training session offered by local chamber or economic development.
3. Use of RCL sites/equipment to Skype to a Case Manager at a remote site.
4. Enable Adult Education providers to use computers in out-lying areas where they offer programs, but may not have access to computers.

For further information, please contact Marty Holliday (marty.holliday@nrmrwib.org), 540-633-6764.

NRVPDC Meeting Summary

January 22, 2015 Meeting

Economic Development:

- Commission staff is working with local government tourism offices to produce a NRV Trail Guide. The guides are scheduled to be completed this summer and will be available in hard copy as well as digital for websites.
- The Blacksburg Broadband Committee released a Request for Information (RFI) in November and three firms provided responses. The RFI process is intended to generate private sector solutions to increasing bandwidth in the community.

Transportation:

- The NRV Passenger Rail committee met in February at the Pulaski Train Station. The committee discussed setting a target date for expansion.
- The NRV MPO is in the process of updating their long range plan. A survey for public input is available at the following [link](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NRV_L RTP). http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NRV_L RTP Please visit the link and provide feedback on transportation needs in the MPO area.

Regional:

- The NRV Livability Initiative hosted a regional convening on 2/12 to pull stakeholders together across the region to hear quick updates on projects/programs underway in the NRV.

PDC:

- The branding process kicked-off with a four hour focus group meeting with Allison Development Group. Four Commissioners and six staff members participated in the focus group.
- Michael Gottfredson was selected to fill the newly created regional planner position.
- The VAPDC Winter Conference took place February 5-6 in Richmond.

February 26, 2015 Meeting

Economic Development:

- The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee met for the second time in February. Their focus was on project evaluation criteria and reviewing the software tool, EMSI, which enables labor force analysis.

Transportation:

- The NRV MPO is contracting with the Commission to conduct a Regional Transit Study.

PDC:

- The process of securing resolutions of support for changing the Commission's name is going well. Currently staff has 11 of the 14 resolutions requested.
- VAPDC awarded NRVPDC the Robert M. deVoursney Award for Best Practices in Regional Planning for the NRV Livability Initiative. Also, the Commission was recognized by the Virginia Bicycling Federation for outstanding service and actions in supporting US Bike Route 76.

**AGENDAS AND MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
WWW.NRVPDC.ORG**

Economic Indicators

Population Estimates			
New River Valley	US Census 2010	Change since 2010 Census	
		July 2014 Estimate	% Change
Floyd County	15,279	15,641	2.4%
Giles County	17,286	17,399	0.7%
Montgomery County	94,392	97,405	3.2%
Pulaski County	34,872	34,871	0.0%
Radford City	16,408	17,441	6.3%
NRV Total	178,237	181,835	2.0%

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Demographics & Workforce Group, www.coopercenter.org/demographics/, 1/27/15.

Population Estimates

The New River Valley population has grown based on the July 2014 estimates. The City of Radford saw the largest increase of 6.3% or 1,033 residents, while Pulaski County saw the only decrease in our region -0.0% or 1 resident.

Car Registrations			
Jurisdiction	3rd Qtr 2014	4th Qtr 2014	% Change
Floyd County	102	85	-16.7%
Giles County	98	95	-3.1%
Montgomery County	487	407	-16.4%
Pulaski County	203	144	-29.1%
Radford City	66	73	10.6%
Total	956	804	-15.9%

Source: Virginia Automobile Dealers Association.

Truck Registrations			
Jurisdiction	3rd Qtr 2014	4th Qtr 2014	% Change
Floyd County	20	23	15.0%
Giles County	26	35	34.6%
Montgomery County	81	75	-7.4%
Pulaski County	43	47	9.3%
Radford City	7	17	142.9%
Total	177	197	11.3%

Source: Virginia Automobile Dealers Association.

New Vehicle Registrations

Car registrations decreased in most localities between the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2014 with the City of Radford showing the only increase (7). Truck registrations increased in most localities with Montgomery County showing the only decrease of six registrations.

Broadband in the NRV

The goal of the Blacksburg Broadband project is "to explore the means and determine a path forward for businesses and residents in the Town of Blacksburg to have access to the most robust internet bandwidth possible. The intention is to establish a last-mile deployment model which allows expansion of high bandwidth service beyond the town and is replicable in other communities." The project team is working to see 1 gigabit symmetrical (upload AND download, not just download) speeds delivered in the town. Broadband, as defined by the Federal Communications Commission, is 25 Mbps (megabits per second) download and 3 Mbps upload.

To explain what these numbers mean; a 300 MB file would take 1 hour, 20 minutes to download at 0.5 Mbps; 4 minutes at 10 Mbps; 24 seconds at 100Mbps; and 2 seconds at 1 Gbps. If you're telecommuting, running your business from your home, or collaborating on multimedia projects, these speeds can be the difference in being productive and competitive or not.

With a steering committee composed of representatives from the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech and the local business community, the project team has identified current broadband assets in the area, met with the current local providers, and issued and received responses to a request for information. The next few months will see progress toward launching a community survey to identify areas of residents interested in 1 GB internet speeds and developing a sustainable deployment model.

For further information, please contact Christy Straight(cstraight@nrvpdc.org), (540) 639-9313, ext. 209.

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

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

Doug Hudson
Incubator Manager

March - April 2015

Revolving Loan Fund Update

The New River Valley Development Corporation board has approved a new loan for Barrel Cave Wines, LLC to expand their selection of food and beverage products. Barrel Cave Wines has grown significantly from their origins as a web-based wine seller located in the NRV Business Center, to their current retail location on Peppers Ferry Road in Fairlawn. The Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce recently named Barrel Cave Wines the Small Business of the Year for 2014 in recognition of their success. The shop carries a variety of wine, beer, coffee and baked goods, and hosts regular beer and wine tastings as well as special events. For more information, please visit their website: www.barrelcavewines.com.

The NRVDC would also like to thank Healing Tree Wellness Center, for paying the final installment of their loan in December 2014. Healing Tree received a loan in 2011 to purchase equipment and renovate their facility on Main Street in Floyd. Healing Tree Wellness Center provides an array of preventative health services, wellness services, and education to clients in the New River Valley and southwest Virginia. For more information, please visit their website: <http://www.healingtreehealth.com/>.

The New River Valley Development Corporation (NRVDC) revolving loan fund has additional funds available to invest in New River Valley small businesses like Barrel Cave Wines and Healing Tree Wellness Center. Loans of up to \$20,000 are available on favorable terms to businesses that meet RLF application requirements. In addition, the NRVDC can help applicants to access other lenders and a variety of small business development services, such as counseling and networking opportunities. For more information, please visit the NRVDC's website <http://www.nrvdc.org/dcfinance.html>.

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

For Business Center information contact:

Doug Hudson, Incubator Manager
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Elected Officials in Bold

Kevin R. Byrd, AICP
 Executive Director
kbyrd@nrpdc.org

Julie Phillips, Newsletter Editor

Local Technical Assistance

Town of Narrows Comprehensive Plan Update: The Narrows Planning Commission will be doing some additional work on goals and objectives. Commission staff are starting to draft sections of the plan document.

Town of Pulaski Comprehensive Plan Update: The Town Planning Commission will be working on goals and objectives with assistance from Commission staff. Project staff have begun drafting portions of the plan narrative.

Pulaski County Development Ordinances: Pulaski County is reviewing its subdivision, zoning, and development-related ordinances to identify opportunities for updating, reorganization, and streamlining of the ordinances. As part of this process, Commission staff are providing facilitation assistance for public meetings held by the County. The first three meetings focused on zoning districts and took place in late January and early February. Additional meetings will be held through the spring.

For further information, please contact Patrick Burton (pburton@nrpdc.org), 540-639-9313, ext. 217.

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