

A person is seen from behind, sitting on a boat and looking towards a large waterfall. The scene is captured in a dark, moody style with a blue and green color palette. The waterfall is the central focus, with water cascading down. The person is in the foreground, slightly to the left, and the boat is partially visible. The overall composition is split diagonally, with the top right corner being white and the rest of the image showing the waterfall and boat.

2020 - 2021  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



**NRVRC**  
new river valley regional commission



**This last year has been extraordinary by almost any measure;** a year that has tested our relationships, patience, knowledge, and resolve. It has been a year in which the Regional Commission has been called upon to act at a level 'above and beyond the call of duty,' and I am proud to report that everyone performed in an outstanding manner!

From the very beginning of the pandemic, the Commission has been instrumental in working with all our local government agencies by contributing to a Task Force consisting of local health and community leaders; sharing and disseminating accurate information to our citizens; assembling a call center to answer questions, providing direction to credible information sources, and then later scheduling vaccine shots; assembling a Business Continuity Team to specifically help businesses with problems associated with the pandemic; and all the while continuing on with our previously established and contractual obligations. These are just a few examples of the excellent work everyone involved in the Commission contributed to last year, and I want to thank everyone for their outstanding commitment, dedication, and performance.

During this stressful time, the Regional Commission worked tirelessly with local government leaders to identify the needs of our communities and then rapidly implemented solutions to fill those needs. Collaboration, communication, and implementation: this is the core of what the Regional Commission really is and what we do, and this past year has proven that we can do it all very well.

The challenges moving forward might not be as urgent but are still just as important. As we move out of the pandemic and rush to 'get back to normal,' the Regional Commission will need to utilize all of its skills to help the New River Valley recover and move forward in a way that will ensure growth and prepare us for whatever the future may bring. This past year has proven that we are ready for those challenges!

 **Michael Maslaney**, *Chair*  
Fiscal Year 2020-2021



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## COMMISSIONERS

### FLOYD COUNTY

Mr. Michael Maslaney, *Chair*  
Mr. Justin Coleman  
Ms. Linda DeVito  
Kuchenbuch

### GILES COUNTY

Mr. Richard McCoy  
Mr. Leon Law, *Treasurer*

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Mr. Steve Fijalkowski  
Mr. Michael Harvey

### PULASKI COUNTY

Mr. Charles Bopp  
Dr. Doug Warren

### CITY OF RADFORD

Mr. David Horton  
Mr. Jeff Martin

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Mr. Daniel Breslau  
Ms. Susan Anderson

### TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG

Ms. Merissa Sachs  
Mr. Hil Johnson, *Vice Chair*

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Mr. Michael Patton

### TOWN OF NARROWS

Ms. Sarah Thwaites

### TOWN OF PEARISBURG

Mr. Jason Ballard

### TOWN OF PEMBROKE

Mr. Robert Lawson

### TOWN OF PULASKI

Mr. Larry Clevinger  
Mr. Tyler Clontz

### TOWN OF RICH CREEK

Mr. William Kantsios

### RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Dr. Angela Joyner

### VIRGINIA TECH

Ms. Catherine Potter  
Ms. Liza Morris

### NEW RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Angie Covey

# REGIONAL COOPERATION



## NRVRC Annual Awards

The New River Valley Regional Commission board of directors named their annual award recipients for 2020-2021. They will be honored at the annual dinner event to be held in October. The recipients include: Craig Meadows, Montgomery County Administrator, and Lydeana Martin, Floyd County, received the Champion of the Valley award. Shelley Fortier, Habitat for Humanity of the NRV, and John Dooley, Virginia Tech Foundation, received the Citizen of the Valley award. Dr. Noelle Bissell, New River Health District, and Chief Anthony Wilson, Blacksburg Police Dept., received the Hero of the Valley award. The Hero of the Valley award was added to the FY2020 awards as a sign of appreciation for leadership provided to the region during the pandemic.

## Business Continuity Team

Over the last year, the Business Continuity Team (BCT) has become the technical resource for business owners to operate in the COVID-19 environment. The BCT continues to offer wraparound services including public/employee relations and education, legal guidance, business sanitization reimbursement, and certification of best practices. The BCT is part of a multidisciplinary team that works closely with the New River Health District to provide on-site testing, education, and vaccination clinics.

The inception of the BCT brought about various COVID-19 informational activities which included N95 fit testing, electoral board training for safe election processes, educational materials for food distribution events, and workshops with businesses about the resources BCT can provide. Two additional positions were added in FY21: a volunteer coordinator to assist with vaccination efforts, and a public health school liaison to advise school leadership throughout the pandemic.



When COVID-19 vaccinations received Emergency Use Authorization in December, the BCT quickly worked to support the health district to ensure efficient scheduling of appointments for priority community groups and individuals. In January of 2021, the work of the public health school liaison focused on vaccination scheduling and clinic support to guide schools through the COVID-19 vaccination process. Through the relationships developed with school administrators and childcare operators, vaccine appointments were provided to nearly 5,000 faculty and staff from January to March.

With the BCT staff helping to train volunteers at vaccination clinics to provide screening and check-in, data entry and management, vaccinator support, and overall customer services at the clinics, the New River Health District was regularly providing 1,000-2,500 vaccines per day, *(cont'd)*

three to five days a week from January to May. From April to June, the public health school liaison helped coordinate student vaccinations with school administrators for students eligible for the vaccine (12 years or older). Parent and student education, appropriate school and community-based consent forms, and general support for minor children-focused vaccinations were key to ensuring successful engagement to support safe and normalized school schedules for the fall of 2021.

In January, the BCT opened the **first vaccination call center in the state**, operated by community volunteers. Shortly after, the BCT added a volunteer coordinator position. The volunteer coordinator developed a volunteer pool using the resources of the Task Force as well as direct community outreach. Through the call center, community residents were able to schedule vaccination appointments based on their priority group and receive answers to their COVID-19 vaccine questions. Volunteers were also used to staff the mass vaccination clinics to aid with administrative functions such as registration and data entry. From January to June, the BCT led employers through the process of employee vaccination in coordination with the health district, aiding more than **450 businesses and their nearly 30,000 employees in becoming fully vaccinated**.



The BCT directly impacted jobs in the New River Valley through almost every business sector. From August 2020 to June 2021, the BCT served **480 unique businesses representing 57,015 jobs directly impacted**. This project mitigated the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the New River Valley by providing public health and business continuity expertise to support cost-efficient resolution of problems for businesses and by instilling confidence in consumers and employees. The BCT offering immediate coordinated response to outbreaks, workflow sensitive vaccination scheduling, consistent public messaging, education, and the development of best practices throughout the region helped stabilize the region's overall economy with businesses remaining safely operational during the pandemic.



**1st** Vaccine Call Center in Virginia  
**6,000+** Call Center Volunteer Hours  
**100** Calls per Minute: Peak Call Center Volume



**7+** School-based Clinics  
**20+** Outreach Clinics  
**80** Large Scale Clinics



**100+** Homebound Visits  
**1,500+** Volunteers  
**11,500+** Clinic Volunteer Hours



**100,000+** COVID Stickers Distributed

**127,000+** Vaccine Doses



**200,000+** Masks



## NRV Passenger Rail

The New River Valley Passenger Rail Initiative, a public-private partnership focused on returning passenger rail service to the region for the first time since 1979, made tremendous progress this past year. The Regional Commission prepared draft legislation for local legislators to consider sponsoring in the 2021 General Assembly

session that would enable the establishment of the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority. The legislation was sponsored by Delegate Hurst as Chief Patron in the House of Delegates and he was joined by six other delegates as patrons including Delegate Rush. Senator Edwards was the Chief Patron on the Senate side. The legislation received strong bi-partisan support in both chambers. On May 5, Governor Northam came to the region for a bill signing event and announcement about the Western Rail Initiative, which includes returning passenger rail service to the region by 2025. In FY22, the Regional Commission will support the local governments and higher education institution members to establish the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority, an important step towards reintroducing service to the region.

## New River Valley HOME Consortium

The New River Valley HOME Consortium was created in 2007 and utilizes an annual funding allocation from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing for low-to-moderate income households in the New River Valley.

- Habitat for Humanity completed construction on seven townhomes in the Town of Blacksburg, located on land donated by Blacksburg Presbyterian Church.
- Taylor Hollow Construction completed construction on 16 additional rental units at the Old Prices Fork Elementary School site. Ten of the units are reserved for low-to-moderate income households and six units will be rented at market rate.
- Habitat for Humanity completed site planning for seven townhomes just outside the Town of Floyd.
- The Landmark Group was awarded State HOME funding to redevelop the old Claremont School in the Town of Pulaski, which will create 41 new rental housing units for low-income households.
- Community Housing Partners will be constructing an estimated 46 single-family homes for income eligible households on Merrimac Road.
- The HOME Consortium will be receiving an additional \$2.1 million in American Rescue Plan funding to be used on projects addressing those at the greatest risk of homelessness. The funds are to be spent by 2029.



## New River Watershed Roundtable

The New River Watershed Roundtable continued to serve as an avenue of collaboration across the region throughout COVID, hosting regular meetings online, hearing from speakers across the region on local watershed projects. The Watershed Roundtable promoted two virtual cleanups during COVID: #trashtagnrv and ReNew the New. More than 400 people across the region participated in going out on their own and picking up trash. The Commission developed an online interactive watershed map that serves as a resource for regional watershed information.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN SERVICES

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update

Each year the New River Valley Regional Commission reviews and updates the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The purpose of the CEDS is to guide federal and local partnerships for regional economic development. The update process is informed by a committee of representatives around the region who represent local government, economic development, non-profits, and private sector businesses. They are asked to inform and prioritize regional and local economic development goals and projects to foster thriving communities based on regional data and a SWOT analysis.

In response to the economic hardships felt across the region because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEDS process this year has been prioritizing regional goals and projects that will develop a resilient regional economy. The CEDS committee has been critically exploring the region's needs to develop strategies that address current pandemic-related economic hardships and promote a more robust regional economy for the future. Commission staff is presently updating the format of the CEDS to an online platform to improve usability. The launch of the new CEDS update will soon be under the new name Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS).



## EDA-CARES Act Grant

The Commission secured funding from the US Economic Development Administration through a CARES Act Grant. This grant enabled the Commission to assist in the region's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. **Activities included:**

- **NRV Road-to-wellness website** was developed to assist the New River Health District to coordinate and inform the public about vaccination and COVID testing locations and registration. The site assisted citizens in obtaining accurate information regarding community services, vaccine clinic and testing locations, and other health and safety updates.
- **New River Valley Vaccine Scheduling Center**, a volunteer-operated call center, answered general questions about vaccinations and scheduled appointments for people to receive their COVID-19 vaccination. The call center operated from January through May, scheduling approximately 40,000 vaccination appointments.
- **Regional collaboration for pandemic response** was more effectively implemented. The Commission invested in video conferencing equipment to continue participating in regional cooperative efforts and remain in contact with our regional partners. These efforts included participating in the NRV Public Health Task Force, maintaining monthly Commission meetings, and implementing other collaborative efforts to address COVID-19 response and recovery.
- **A Commission website redesign** is in progress. The new website is intended to improve access to information regarding the Commission's work, partnerships, and projects.

## Floyd County Housing Rehabilitation Project

- Assisted Floyd County to receive \$1,000,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to rehabilitate or reconstruct 15 homes in the County.
- Began meeting with potential applicants and conducting income verifications.
- Will partner with Habitat for Humanity, Floyd Initiative for Safe Housing (FISH), Renovation Alliance, New River Community Action, Community Housing Partner's Weatherization Program, Rural Development, SERCAP, Citizens Co-op, and Sustain Floyd as well as funding contributions from Floyd County.
- Grant period will run through 2023.



## Old Prices Fork School Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project

The Prices Fork Revitalization project was funded, in part, by a \$2.5 million Vibrant Communities Initiative grant and a \$500,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant. The project anticipates the creation of 49 new jobs as a result of the investment.

- Millstone Kitchen launched the Neighbors in Need program.
- Restaurant opened in summer of 2021.
- Construction is complete on 16 additional two and three-bedroom rental units.
- A total of 14 jobs have been created by the project.
- Live, Work, Eat, Grow, Inc., the nonprofit that oversees the project, has a new website. Check out [liveworkeatgrow.org](http://liveworkeatgrow.org) for more project details and updates.

## Neighbors in Need

The Neighbors in Need program, administered by Millstone Kitchen, came about in response to the pandemic as a way of feeding food insecure families, supporting local farmers, and providing critical income for local caterers. The Regional Commission has provided grant administration assistance for this project.



- From April to June of 2020, the Neighbors in Need program was funded via community donations. Every \$10 donation created a meal for a family in need.
- Since July 2020, the program has received three rounds of grant funding from the VA Department of Housing and Community Development, totaling nearly \$675,000. Funding will run through July 2022.
- Made from scratch meals were prepared at Millstone Kitchen by two local caterers.
- Partnered with seven local food distribution agencies to deliver meals to existing clients, including VT YMCA, Agency on Aging, Future Economy Collective, Newbern Community Center, NRV Diaper Pantry, Christiansburg Parks & Recreation, and Warm Hearth Village.
- More than 21,000 meals were served to 589 unique individuals.



## Planning District Commission Housing Development Program

- Regional Commission awarded \$2 million from Virginia Housing to pursue a regional housing trust fund and the development of at least 20 new affordable units in the region.
- Establishing a regional housing trust fund identified as one of seven regional strategies in the housing study.
- Project timeline is approximately four years and will involve significant coordination with public and private regional partners.



## Regional + Local Housing Study

The NRV Regional + Local Housing Study was funded, in part, by Virginia Housing (formerly VHDA) and spurred by local interest in housing needs.

- Final Regional + Local Housing Study complete!
- Final report includes both a detailed technical report and a consumer version.
- Local and regional data incorporated as well as input from 10 focus groups and over 1,100 online survey responses.
- Project team made presentations on study findings to community groups, Planning Commissions, Councils, and Boards throughout the region.
- Find the final report at [nrvc.org/regional-housing-study](http://nrvc.org/regional-housing-study).



## Christiansburg ARC Community Gathering Space

In early 2020, the Commission assisted the Town of Christiansburg in submitting a grant to the Appalachian Regional Commission.

- Christiansburg received \$275,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission to construct a community gathering space and farmers market structure in downtown Christiansburg.
- Commission is working with the Town and the funder to complete pre-contract items.

## New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund

Regional Commission staff continues to provide staff support for the New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The loan fund received several inquiries this year. Currently, the fund is servicing loans to businesses located in Floyd County (2) and the City of Radford (1). The loan fund has lent to customers, with approximately \$60,000 available to lend.



## New River Water Trail

With funding support from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Commission is working with local governments and stakeholders to better understand how to build from the work Giles County has done establishing the New River Water Trail. The Commission looks forward to facilitating the planning process and supporting an application for implementation funds to continue the expansion of the New River Water Trail across the region.



NEW RIVER | MOUNT ROGERS REGION

## New River Valley/ Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (WDB) is made up of representatives from regional businesses (51%) and federally required members (e.g. Economic Development, Education, Labor, Community Organizations, and more). The WDB oversees the programs and initiatives as specified in the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (which include programs for Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers) and other special grants and programs as available.





## Communication

In early 2020, the Commission assisted the Town of Christiansburg in submitting a grant to the Appalachian Regional Commission.

- Website: [vcwnewrivermtrogers.com](http://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com)
- Work Talk Podcast – guest speakers and discussions about regional business and workforce issues: [vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/category/work-talk](http://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/category/work-talk)
- Quarterly Workforce Reports on regional trends and data can be found here: [vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/regional-workforce-data/regional-economic-indicators](http://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/regional-workforce-data/regional-economic-indicators)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/nrnrworkforcenetwork](http://www.facebook.com/nrnrworkforcenetwork)
- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/virginia-career-works-newriver-mountrogers](http://www.linkedin.com/company/virginia-career-works-newriver-mountrogers)
- Career Exploration/Virtual Job Fair Platform: [www.knowledgetowork.com](http://www.knowledgetowork.com)

## Supporting Regional Economic Growth and Vitality

The NR/MR WDB continues to lead the region in developing a workforce system that is agile and flexible, enabling the system to adjust and/or respond to economic disturbances and shifts by leveraging and braiding the various federal, state, and local funds that come to the region to serve both businesses and job seekers. During FY20, the NR/MR WDB used the following projects to support this systemic change even through the unusual conditions that were created by the pandemic:

### Business Services

As the region's designated Workforce System Convener, the WDB provides businesses easy access to solutions to meet workforce needs without having to navigate the bureaucracy of dozens of program providers.

Besides acting as a central point of contact for businesses seeking specific assistance, the NR/MR WDB oversees and staffs four (4) regional Business Solution Units (BSU) that are made up of workforce, economic development, and business membership organizations. The WDB believes that services to the region's businesses should serve the widest possible range of businesses and be individualized and efficient with a single point of contact wherever possible (or a "no wrong door" approach). It is also our intent to share information with partner agencies about what services we are providing to businesses to avoid unnecessary duplication, including initial assessment and discovery, service plans, service coordination, and outcome and follow-up information. In order to mount this collaborative effort, the BSU members offer cross-training in one another's services so that we are able to provide more seamless referrals for needed services as well as being able to speak to the many services available, regardless of what agency may 'own' these services. Even during the pandemic, the WDB served the region's businesses through:



### Job Fairs

- Planned & Hosted two multi-company Virtual Job Fairs
- Planned & Hosted three multi-company 'Open Air' Job Fairs
- Planned 26 company specific events

(cont'd)



### Business Workshops:

- Co-hosted event for manufacturers to learn about working with Virginia Tech Engineering Students
- Hosted three Workforce Exchange events



### Existing Worker Training:

- Five projects supporting six workers



### Rapid Response COVID Grant

(support to small businesses):

- 21 projects affecting 386 workers



### B2B Engage:

- Over 1,003 business accounts entered into the system
- Over 1,862 business services logged



### Wagner-Peyser Business Services

(job postings, job matching, etc):

- Employer Services: 11,928

## Pathways to the American Dream Project

In January 2017, Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration awarded a \$6 million H-1B Job Training Grant to the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area Consortium Board to coordinate and manage a multi-partner/multi-jurisdictional collaborative. The project covers four Workforce Areas, which includes 34 jurisdictions in western, southwest, and southern Virginia (Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12). The project is soon coming to a close, and our focus is on sustainability and evaluation. Outcomes have exceeded performance targets. The service target was 1,100 individuals by December 2020. Through July 23, 2020 the project has served:

- **1,381** participants, of this number,
- **125** are employed workers (needing additional skills/training), and
- **1,256** are un/underemployed workers.
- **1,302** have completed training and earned credentials, and
- **1,173** have obtained or advanced in employment (others are still in job search).
- Median wage currently is **\$23.80**

Specifically, in the **New River Region**, the project has had the following outcomes:

- **815** participants, of this number,
- **45** are employed workers (needing additional skills/training), and
- **770** are un/underemployed workers.
- **768** have completed training and earned credentials, and
- **683** have obtained or advanced in employment (others are still in job search).
- Median wage currently is **\$24.00**

NR/MR WDB was one of three of twenty-three programs nation-wide identified as a best-practices program. Strategies for Success identified in the review include:

- Building Effective Regional Workforce Partnerships
- Designing Effective Employer Engagement
- Facilitating the Enrollment Process for Participants and Employers
- Integrating Credit for Prior Learning
- Promising Practices identified *include*:

#### Identified Sustainability Tasks:

- Onboarding and cultivating a high-performance team focused on the right tasks with the right information.
- Identifying gaps, barriers, and strategies to address each challenge at the start of the grant.
- Engaging partners and identifying the roles they will play to move the project forward.
- Building a data system that is open and transparent and gathers all information needed to make quick and informed decisions.
- Developing and employing a logic model that assesses the impact on industry, participants, system, knowledge, and attitude.

#### Three Systems were Employed and Customized to Meet Data Requirements:

- **ProjectHUB** - a project management tool customized to provide ongoing grant information, checklists, timelines, financial information, regular communications, and summaries of progress achievements. All documents were uploaded into this system.
- **B2B Engage** - a business and participant customer relationship management system that was used to collect data on each employer engaged and the status of every participant in the grant.
- **KnowledgetoWork.com** - a custom online portal that provided a database of over 25,000 learning resources aligned with the competencies that are part of the Pathways training initiatives.

Pathways put together an efficient and productive system for identifying and meeting local workforce needs. Two promising practices include (1) development of a sustainability plan that is integrated into the program from day one of the grant, and (2) establishment of a comprehensive data management system that is transparent, accessible to partners, and informs program strategies and operation of the grant.

**Conclusions**

The New River/Mount Rogers team encompassed more than just the program staff and intentionally included essential local employers, regional workforce development boards, community colleges, community-based organizations, and experts in specific areas. This expansive team was engaged throughout the implementation of the grant and worked together to establish the steps needed to meet the goals of the grant. Together, the team addressed challenges and barriers by focusing on data to make decisions and looking back at proven successes.



**POWER – Pathways to a Strong and Healthy Region**

To sustain the efforts, NR/MR WDB was granted an Appalachian Regional Commission POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) grant in the amount of \$1,494,000. POWER supports efforts to create a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities by cultivating economic diversity, enhancing job training and re-employment opportunities, creating jobs in existing or new industries, and attracting new sources of investment. The three-year POWER project, implemented in January 2021 and titled Pathways to a Strong and Healthy Region, directly partners with a wide array of agencies and organizations to improve coordination between the economic and workforce development sectors and healthcare and human service sectors to tackle substance use disorder, create continuity among support services, sustain long-term recovery for individuals, and scale efforts that benefit the individual and family, business and industry, and the region as a whole.

Specifically, our POWER project aims to develop a “Recovery Ready Region” and provide training and supportive services that assist individuals with substance use disorder with obtaining meaningful employment.



## RSVP- Pathways to Self-Sufficiency

A second initiative NR/MR WDB implemented to sustain the efforts of the DOL Pathways to the American Dream project is a state-wide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) project titled RSVP (Road to Success in Virginia) funded by the Virginia Department of Social Services to the Virginia Community College System. The region was awarded \$455,568 for a one-year project to provide job skills training and in-demand credentials for careers that matter for 75 TANF/TANF eligible individuals (200% of federal poverty with a dependent child). Services provided include job skills training, work experience, job readiness training, supportive services, and other work-related services with an emphasis on personal responsibility.

*Outcomes for the RSVP project include the following:*

- Enrollment: **80**
- Financial Literacy Credential Earned: **59**
- Digital Literacy Credentials Earned: **59**
- Professional Soft Skills Credentials Earned: **64**
- National Career Readiness Certificates Earned: **57**
- Industry Recognized Credentials Earned: **73**
- Work Readiness Training Completed: **64**
- Occupational Skills Training Completed: **73**
- Employed: **57**
- Median wage: **\$24.33**

Sustainability of the RSVP project is underway with a one-year award already granted to the consortium in the amount of **\$550,000**.



## Economic Equity Project

In the fall of 2019, NR/MR WDB was awarded \$200,000 by the Virginia Community College System for a US Department of Labor project to serve individuals with barriers to employment by providing job training and employment assistance. The project was set to wrap up in December 2020, but just as implementation began, COVID-19 hit. Subsequently, the project was put on hold and not re-started until early spring with an extended end date of June 2021. A majority of the participants are currently still in training.

The workforce partners in the NR/MR WDB provide multiple services to out-of-work populations through WIOA, discretionary grants, and various streams of partner funding. The focus of their collective work is to help individuals overcome challenges to gain employment. Activities that are provided include pre-employment related activities, occupational skills training, work-based learning, and needs-based supportive services. Regional Partner Meetings bring front-line staff together to collaborate and share programmatic information, and Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) are being encouraged as a tool to align resources.

*Outcomes to date are as follows:*

- Enrollment: **43**
- Completed Training: **11**
- Earned Credential: **11**
- Employed: **9**



## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs (WIOA)

The Adult and Dislocated Worker Program, under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, is designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals with finding and qualifying for meaningful employment and to help businesses find the skilled workers they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace. These programs did not have the normal participation rate during the pandemic. Case Managers worked diligently via (mostly) remote services.



Outcomes from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 are:

### Dislocated Workers

- Individuals that Received Individualized Career Services: **145**
- Number in Training: **145**
- Placement Rate of Those Exited: **75%**
- Avg. Wage at Placement: **\$13.59**

### Adult Program

- Individuals that Received Individualized Career Services: **162**
- Number in Training: **87**
- Placement Rate of those exited: **80%**
- Avg. Wage at Placement: **\$12.44**

WIOA Youth funds are targeted to young people, who are both in and out of school, to assist them in their career and educational development though the new law moves the focus from "in-school" to "out-of-school" youth.

Outcomes for Youth from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are:

- Individuals that Received Individualized Career Services: **159**
- Received Work Experience: **27**
- Received Training: **19**
- Placement Rate of those exited: **76%**

## Certified Work Ready Communities

The Certified Work Ready Communities effort is one critical component of meeting present and future workforce needs for the economic health and well-being of the region. Earning the status of a Work Ready Community is achieved when a percentage of a county's population obtains a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) by demonstrating individual mastery in three foundational subjects. The ACT NCRC comprises Applied Mathematics, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents—three cognitive skill areas most often determined to be important for job and task performance. The proficiency demonstrated in each subject determines NCRC certificate rankings including Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum. There was a delay in activity during the pandemic, but NCRC assessments resumed in December 2020. All WDB programs are testing individuals that can benefit from having the NCRC (and thus increase the number of individuals in the region with an NCRC).



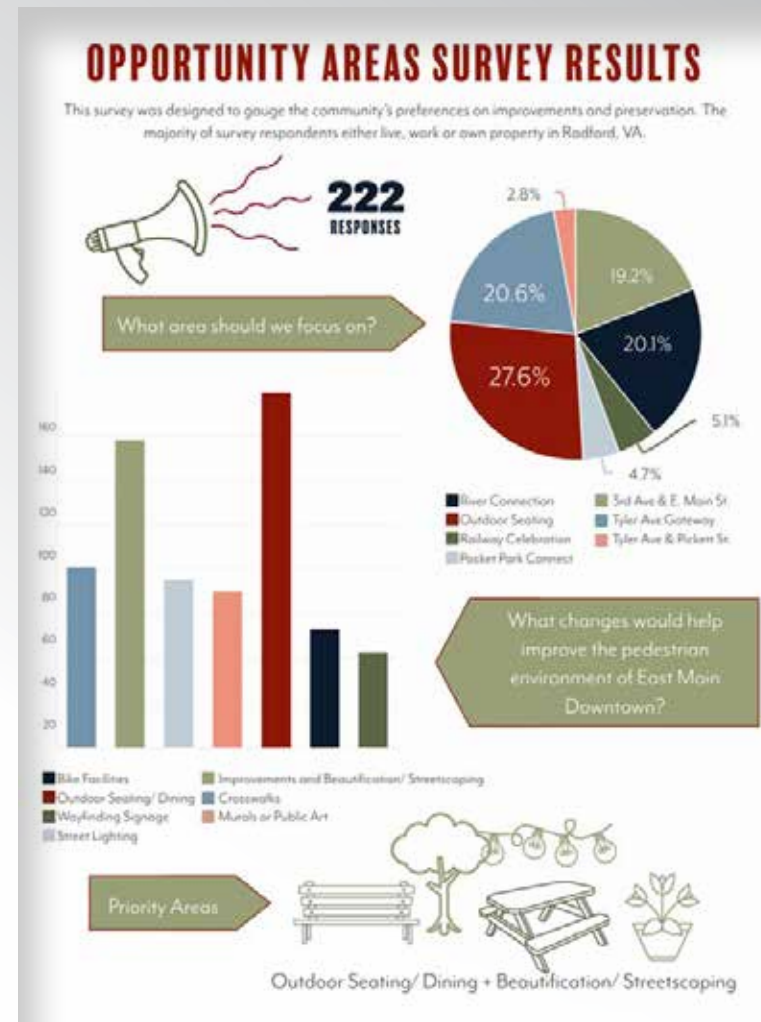
# PLANNING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



## Town of Pulaski Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Pulaski, in collaboration with the Regional Commission, has started the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan that captures the town's vision for the future and

guides growth, development, investments and services to improve quality of life and increase opportunities for citizens and current and prospective business owners.



## City of Radford East Main Downtown Plan

The City of Radford began planning efforts for the East Main Downtown to enhance its economic vitality and sustainability and to make it a more attractive destination for visitors. Community engagement strategies were developed to understand the perceptions and experiences of businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors of the area. An online community engagement platform was launched to solicit public feedback and options such as quick polls, an ideas board, interactive maps, and an opportunity areas survey were provided as part of the engagement.



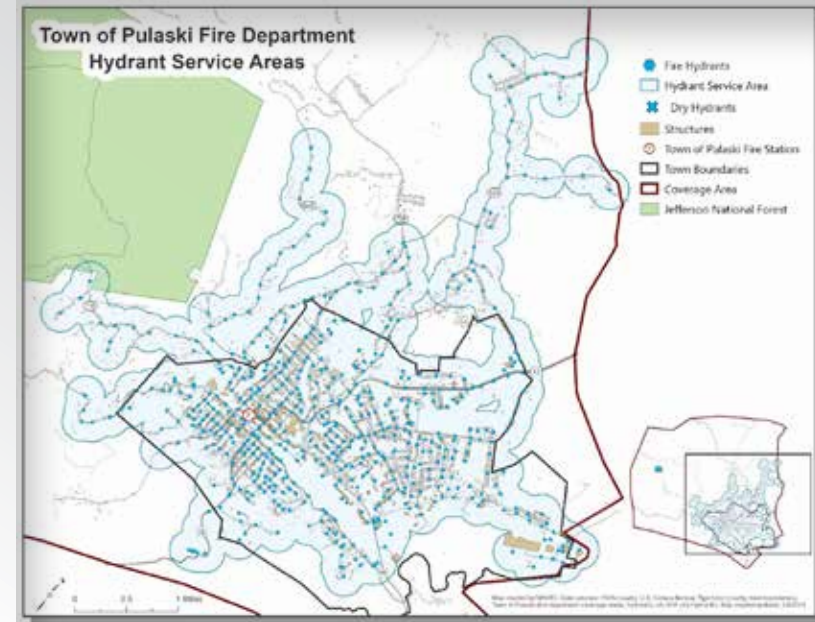
## GIS Partnership – New River Health District

The Regional Commission and the New River Health District (NRHD) continued their partnership for a fourth year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership revolved around the website the Commission created for

the Health District in 2019, [NRVRoadtoWellness.com](http://NRVRoadtoWellness.com). This website was used by the Health District and the NRV Public Health Task Force to communicate updates about regulations, data, and business continuity quickly and efficiently with residents of the New River Valley. The Commission’s primary role is to update the site when needed and manage any technical issues.

## Grant Administration Support

- **Floyd Industrial Access:** The Commission is supporting Floyd County’s project to build out the road in the Floyd County Commerce Center to support new pad sites with transportation access and utility extensions. Grant funding is being provided by the Tobacco Commission and ARC.
- **Commerce Park ARC Grading Project:** Virginia’s First Regional Industrial Facilities Authority leveraged private investment in the New River Valley Commerce Park with an ARC grant and loan financing to grade the parcel Patton Logistics has leased to expand operations in the New River Valley. The Commission continues to provide grant administration support to VFRIFA on this project.
- **Floyd Growth Center Building 1:** The Commission is supporting Floyd County’s project to build a facility in the Floyd County Commerce Center for lease to small businesses. Grant funding is being provided by the Tobacco Commission and the US Economic Development Administration.



## Town of Pulaski Community Fire Risk Assessment

The Town of Pulaski Fire Department partnered with the Commission to develop a community risk assessment. The plan provides information about current department capabilities, services, staff, equipment, and resources that are available to support the surrounding community. The purpose of the plan was to evaluate local needs and to develop an action plan for future community fire and non-fire emergency risks.

Over the last five years, call numbers have increased by more than 50%, largely due to support for emergency medical service. Calls for emergency assistance and/or vehicle accidents occur on nearly a daily basis. A 24-month action plan outlines staffing, and capital improvement needs to meet community expectations and department performance goals.

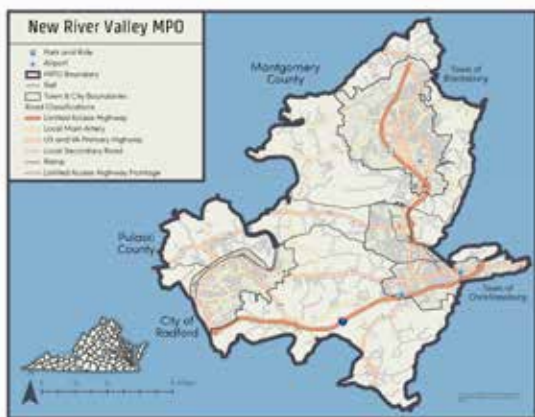
Nearly 90% of all structures within the Pulaski Fire Department Service area have access to a fire hydrant. The Commission assisted the department with a GIS analysis to determine service area gaps.



## SolSmart Designation

The Regional Commission received the SolSmart Bronze designation after engaging in the program and committing to advance solar energy options in the region. The NRVRC encourages solar energy growth in the region by offering technical assistance on solar planning and permitting to

local government and higher education member organizations in the region.



## NRVMPO Long-Range Transportation Plan Update

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is required to maintain a fiscally constrained multimodal transportation plan. The planning footprint includes the area defined by the most recent decennial

Census and the area that is expected to be urbanized within a 20-year forecast period. The Regional Commission supported the 2045 plan update process by developing public engagement activities, preparing supporting mapping, establishing an online resource, and creating the final consumer version of the plan.

Around 700 people contributed ideas about what the future transportation system needed most and what areas could use more attention currently.

Key takeaways included: 1) introducing electric vehicles across transit systems; 2) expanding transit services beyond town/city boundaries; and 3) improving busy intersection capacity and safety.

## Pulaski Parks

The Commission is working with Pulaski County and community stakeholders to create and update park plans across the county. Many of the spaces include walking trails, playgrounds, ball courts, fields and newly planted trees. To date, the Commission has supported design work at O'Dell, Draper and Old River Lawn Elementary. In the coming year, the work will continue at Fairview Home Park, Smith Farm, and Sheffey Park.





# TRANSPORTATION



**RIDESolutions**  
Connecting the Region's Commuters

## RIDE Solutions

RIDE Solutions operated under limited conditions in FY21 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Staff promoted Virginia's TeleworkVa! program and provided support by request to local organizations and their employees in transportation choices.

On April 25, attendees of the Blue Ridge Eco Fair got to hear more about the benefits and challenges of alternative transportation choices in the region. Staff member Christy Straight, along with representatives from the Town of Blacksburg, Gotcha powered by Bolt, League of American Bicyclists, and Generation 180, talked about the latest innovations in cycling (including electric bikes), shared micromobility, ride sharing, and autonomous vehicles. The group answered questions from the audience and shared their best practices on how to make these alternatives a part of one's personal transportation choices as well as advocate for making them more accessible in the community.

The RIDE Solutions app continues to be the primary online resource for individuals looking for carpool matches and transportation choices.

- Current app NRV user stats: **1,140 commuters** in the NRV; **119 employers**.
- This fiscal year RIDE Solutions' NRV members reduced **187,418 vehicle miles** and **9,353 trips**.
- Active users accumulated a savings of **\$107,765**.



## Downtown Rich Creek

The Town of Rich Creek was able to achieve another significant milestone through its partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation. The downtown streetscape improvement project, a

project 15-years in-the-making, is now complete! This year, the Commission continued to support the Town with grant administration and wage compliance requirements. The technical assistance was provided through the Commission's Rural Transportation Work Program.

The project totaled \$2.2 million in transportation alternatives funding and more than a half million in local match for a total investment of over \$2.8 million. Congratulations to the Town for persevering through several competitive grant cycles and reaching this milestone!



NRV Regional Commission receives \$13M SMART Scale funding for an intersection improvement in Pulaski County!

## NRV Communities are Successful in SMART Scale Round 4

The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the recommended staff funding scenario for the fourth

round of competitive SMART Scale transportation projects. Among the approved project list was the Commission's first application, a new round-a-bout project at the intersection of Newbern Road and Cougar Trail Road in Pulaski County. The proposed improvements will increase site accessibility for a new manufacturing facility and safety for thousands of daily workers who use Cougar Trail Road. In 2022, Volvo Trucks North America will be expanding, creating 700 new jobs within the immediate vicinity of the project.

Since the beginning of the competitive transportation funding process, approximately \$402 million has been allocated to the Virginia Department of Transportation's Salem District. Less than 15% of the total funding has been awarded to communities of the NRV; however, seven projects were selected in Round 4. The round-a-bout project submitted by the Commission in partnership with Pulaski County is estimated to cost \$13 million and will begin construction in 2027.



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**Without a doubt, FY21 was a year unlike any other!** The coronavirus pandemic struck in FY20 and the Regional Commission found numerous opportunities to serve our members and the region in innovative ways. In FY21, we continued to implement new programs launched in FY20 such as the Business Continuity Team (BCT) and regional economic recovery coordination. In January, the BCT rapidly shifted from general business advice to vaccine deployment with a focus on businesses and schools so people could return to work safely. In the same month, the BCT launched the first vaccine call center in the state!

The call center story is one that demonstrates the capacity the Regional Commission presents to its members when approaching a situation with a creative lens. From the start of the pandemic, the New River Health District was hosting a general COVID call center, which experienced high call volumes regularly. The New River Valley Public Health Task Force anticipated that when vaccines became available, the existing phone infrastructure could be overwhelmed. As a result, the Regional Commission offered to coordinate a separate call center dedicated to vaccine information and scheduling.

The vaccine call center was a leap of faith and thankfully everyone involved worked tirelessly to make it a valuable resource for the region. The call center initially started with a phone number and five phones, but two days in required adding an additional five phones. Once word got out that a call center was operating, there were calls coming in from all over the state - from Lee County to Virginia Beach and many from out of state, all seeking vaccines. The in-bound call volume had to be increased from 30 calls per minute to handle over 100 calls per minute. The voicemail box received so many messages a transcription service was purchased to enable faster follow-up by those working the phones. The center operated for five months from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., six days a week, all supported by volunteers! There were more than 6,000 volunteer hours contributed to the call center during this timeframe. Time and again volunteers would share experiences of how grateful people were scheduling their vaccine appointments. For many, the appointment was the first time they left their homes in over a year.

The Regional Commission truly appreciates being able to serve in such a capacity during the pandemic.

Perhaps most impressive over the past year, the Regional Commission's non-pandemic projects and programs continued to flourish. We observed progress on many substantive initiatives outlined in this report, such as completing the Regional + Local Housing Study, advancing economic development related infrastructure projects, implementing downtown community development work, and expanding the natural resource program to include recent grant awards for native plant focused efforts, which will take shape in FY22.

As we all reorient to life post-pandemic, we cannot forget the lessons learned. From the Regional Commission perspective, consistent regional communication among leaders proved to be invaluable in delivering a nimble response. Our role as convener among members and partners will continue with a focus on delivering creative solutions to meet regional needs.

 **Kevin Byrd**, Executive Director

## FINANCIAL REPORT

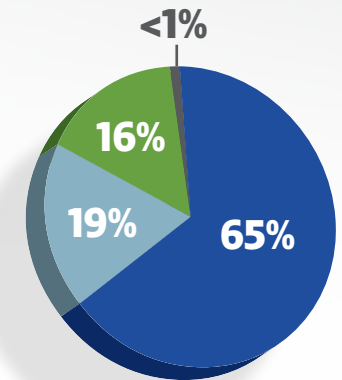
Year Ended June 30, 2021

### Revenues

#### Grants and Appropriations

Federal.....	2,091,554
State .....	608,238
Local .....	509,550
Other .....	13,211

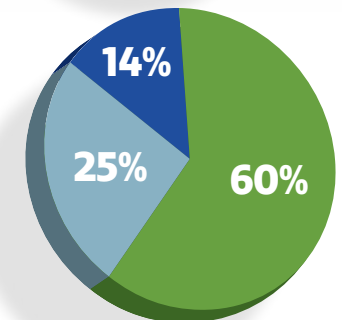
**Total..... \$3,222,553**



### Expenditures

Personnel .....	1,879,163
Contractual.....	797,167
Operations & Other .....	451,082

**Total..... \$3,127,413**





**NRVRC**

new river valley regional commission

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