

Livability In Action



In The New River Valley

July 2016

The Livability Initiative was a three-year regional planning process which provided an opportunity for New River Valley residents to develop a vision for the future and develop strategies that businesses, community organizations, local governments, and individuals can use to make this future vision a reality. This newsletter provides a progress update on the partnerships, projects and initiatives underway in the region that are contributing to the vision and goals outlined in this plan.



Old Prices Fork School Revitalization Project Becomes a Reality

The transformation of the Old Prices Fork School brings together diverse community partners to support affordable housing, economic development and local food access for residents of the New River Valley. This spring the project was awarded \$2.5 million from the Vibrant Communities Initiative through the State of Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and a \$500,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The project's first phase, which is already underway, converts the former classrooms of the old Prices Fork Elementary School into 16 two bedroom apartments, with 10 affordable and six market-rate units for people 55 and older. The second phase includes two components: (1) the Old School Food Center, which will provide innovative economic development opportunities for new or expanding local food-based entrepreneurs through the creation of a commercial incubator kitchen, farm-to-table restaurant, retail market, craft brewery and business competition with support services, and, (2) 16 new apartments with a mix of affordable and market rate units.

The project is a unique and unprecedented collaboration of 21 public and private organizations including the Regional Commission, Montgomery County, Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Community Capital, Community Foundation of the NRV, Taylor Hollow Companies, the New River Valley HOME Consortium, Beans and Rice, and Old School Food Company. Project planning and design will continue through 2016, with construction slated to start begin in early 2017. For further information, please contact Jennifer Wilsie, jwilsie@nrvc.org.

Did you know?



The Livability Partnership is developing a way to measure our progress.

The Livability Data Dashboard

The Livability Partnership has launched a 'Livability Data Dashboard' that allows users to view and interact with data like never before. This data dashboard will not only be helpful to track our progress at meeting Livability goals, but will provide useful data for community decision-making, program design and evaluation, grant applications, and more. The Data Dashboard can be found on both the NRV Livability Initiative and New River Valley Regional Commission's websites. We will then be looking to receive feedback from YOU to ensure that it is as user-friendly as possible.

To access the dashboard:
[http://www.nrvlivability.org/
livability-in-action/
livabilitydatadashboard](http://www.nrvlivability.org/livability-in-action/livabilitydatadashboard)

For more information contact James Jones, jjones@nrvc.org.

Enhance Living and Working Environments

Goals

1. Provide Support for an Aging Population
2. Ensure Affordability of Housing, Energy, and Transport
3. Improve Transportation Options for Residents
4. Improve Building Energy Efficiency
5. Expand Renewable Energy



NRV TimeBank: Ready for Launch

After two years of research and planning, the New River Valley TimeBank, a project developed and supported through the efforts of the NRV Livability Initiative and the NRV Aging in Place Leadership Team, will officially launch this fall.



A TimeBank helps to connect people to exchange skills and services, using *time* rather than *dollars*. When a member provides one hour of service for someone, they earn one Time Credit. They can then spend this Time Credit by receiving an hour of service from someone else. The possibilities for exchange are endless and may include home repair, animal care, yard work, cooking lessons, computer instruction, etc. All services are valued equally, and all members are respected for what they have to offer. It is **an old idea made new**—the idea that our community is stronger when neighbors make a practice of helping each other.

The NRV TimeBank is currently developing partnerships with local organizations to help support its work. The Blacksburg Chapter of AARP and LewisGale Montgomery Hospital are partnering with the TimeBank in an effort to help residents of the NRV 'age in place', as well as promote TimeBank membership with their volunteers.

Information about signing up and attending an orientation session can be found on the website at: nrvertimebank.org. The public is invited to the NRV TimeBank Launch Event on Sept 22 at 11:30 am at Market Square Park in Blacksburg. For more information contact Ellen Stewart at nrvertimebank@gmail.com.

Habitat Builds its First Home in Floyd County

Comfort is the name of the game with the new home design for Habitat for Humanity of the New River Valley. The organization recently completed its first new home in Floyd County. The home boasts super high energy efficiency due to walls comprised of structural insulated panel walls, loads of blown cellulose in the attic, a sealed crawl space and high efficiency appliances. But the comforts don't stop there, with more and bigger windows, nine foot ceilings, the space feels light and airy. The engineered hardwood floors offer durability and beauty while the kitchen and both baths sport ceramic tile. The home is universally designed to ensure accessibility for all.

But a home is only a home with a family to love and live inside. The home buyers are a young couple with deep roots in the Floyd community. With their families, they contributed 750 hours of "sweat equity" in the construction of their home. For more information, contact: Shelley Fortier, sfortier@habitatnrv.org.





New Affordable Homes Will Soon be Available in Blacksburg

Construction has just begun on the Fieldstone development in Blacksburg along Givens Lane. The development will be the largest affordable housing development in Blacksburg and provide much needed housing for 144 households. The development supports numerous housing, aging in place, and sustainability goals in the Town of Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan and in the Livability Initiative. Montgomery County and the Town of Blacksburg provided 15 year tax abatements for the development. Without this support the project would not have scored high enough to receive the needed low income housing tax credits from the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

When completed in late 2017, 84 apartments will be reserved for households with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income (AMI). In 2015, for a family of three, the 60% income threshold was \$36,420; for a family of four, the 60% income threshold was \$40,440.00.

The other 60 apartments will be designed for senior (55+) households and include universal design standards for aging in place. The senior apartments are reserved for households with incomes at or below 60% AMI.

Amenities at Fieldstone will include a community building with fitness center, gardens, trails, picnic area and playground. The community will be developed in accordance with EarthCraft sustainable standards for site design and building. For more information, contact: Matt Hanratty, mhanratty@blacksburg.gov.

Award Winning Grissom Lane

Grissom Lane Apartments in Blacksburg, Va. is the first EarthCraft Virginia Net-Zero certified project in the state. As a net-zero development, each rental home produces as much or more energy than it uses. Community Housing Partners (CHP) developed, designed, and constructed Grissom Lane Apartments in partnership with the Town of Blacksburg, as a model of low-income housing for residents aged 55 years and older. The eight two-bedroom apartments were designed using Universal Design features to help facilitate aging in place for its residents, and the site was rezoned to 'planned residential,' which allowed the homes to be more intimately arranged along a short walking loop in order to create space for a community garden and central gathering area.

Electricity at Grissom Lane Apartments is generated by a 28kW photovoltaic system, while high insulation values, extensive air sealing, Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERV), and mini-splits are used to reduce the energy demand on the homes. The Grissom Lane Apartments are so energy efficient that in 2016 they were recognized by Viridiant, formerly known as EarthCraft Virginia, for being on its Top Ten High Performance Homes of the Year list. CHP was also named the Top High Performance Builder of the Year for the Grissom Lane Apartments development. Grissom also received the Virginia Housing Award for Best Affordable Housing Energy Conservation effort and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council Best Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency 3iAward in 2015. For more information, contact: Kim Strahm, kstrahm@chcp2.org.

Make the Business Environment More Productive

Goals

10. Enhance Education and Workforce Readiness
11. Support Infrastructure Needed for Economic Development
12. Support Small Business Development
13. Strengthen Agricultural Viability



The POWER Project

A recent study completed by the Appalachian Regional Commission identified that coal production peaked in the Appalachia region in 1990 and has been declining ever since. The changes in America's energy production have placed significant economic challenges on coal reliant communities. As a result, the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) initiative was launched.

Giles County, home to a recently closed coal-fired power plant in Glen Lyn, partnered with the Friends of Southwest Virginia to build on on-going initiatives to develop its tourism and recreation clusters, while also providing training for entrepreneurship and emerging in-demand occupations. The Regional Commission is working with Giles area partners to develop an action oriented plan to establish destination centers that connect river users to communities.

The project kicked-off on May 24, 2016 in Pembroke. Shortly afterwards, Natalie Warren spent a weekend in Giles County to present on river town experiences, paddle a segment of the New River, and provide recommendations at a community meeting. Ms. Warren, an expedition paddler, formed the non-profit organization Wild River Academy to present rivers as natural, dynamic classrooms for youth.

The POWER funding will also be used to prepare preliminary engineering reports suitable for future construction funding requests, work with experts on river-based community development and investments, and open source marketing packages that highlight potential investment opportunities. The planning phase will be complete by December 2016. For additional information, contact: Elijah Sharp, esharp@nrvc.org.

Medicinal Herbs in Floyd County

The Blue Ridge Center for Chinese Medicine (BRCCM) in Floyd County recently received grant awards from the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC) and Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for the next phase of their Appalachian Herbs Growers' work. The project is a county-wide and region-wide economic development initiative that introduces a new high-value crop and helps agriculture to be a more profitable segment of our economy. Already, through private funding and initial TRRC funding, BRCCM is working with 50 farmers and has 30,000 plants in the ground in five different tobacco counties. A number of Chinese medicinal herbs are perennials and require 2 to 3 years to mature for harvest. This is very different than annuals (like corn or tomatoes) that are harvested annually. This will require that farmers adjust their thinking, but the projections indicate that it will be well worth the effort.

The project goal is for the Floyd region to become the hub of Chinese medicinal herb production and distribution in the U.S. In effect, BRCCM is creating a new industry because there has never been the quantity of domestic production of Chinese medicinal herbs to satisfy the demand of the 27,000 Chinese medicine practitioners in the U.S. This new funding will now double plantings and begin the first major harvest of existing farms, plus add capacity for drying, processing and packaging herbs (using solar power) and selling to licensed Chinese Medicine clinical practitioners in the mid-Atlantic region and beyond. This promises not only to improve income for 50 farm families, but BRCCM has committed to provide free herbal medicine to 50 patients per year. For more information, contact Rob Glenn at: rob@researchrg.com.

& Resilient



New Businesses- Coming to Pulaski

Launch Something Pulaski is a downtown economic revitalization project aimed at supporting new business formation and expansion in the Town of Pulaski's downtown businesses district and beyond.

This July, all-time great Virginia Tech football coach Frank Beamer helped award cash prizes totaling \$45,000 to five of the new and expanding businesses opening in Pulaski by the end of this September. These businesses include a new Bounce Town Indoor Playground and Party Center, Café & Gelato Company, a multi-vendor indoor marketplace to support artisans/craftsman, retailers of specialty items, food vendors, and performers, a shaved ice business, and a new restaurant that will serve fresh and healthy home style prepared meals. Multiple national studies show that on a per dollar basis local eateries return twice as much revenue to our local economy and independent retailers return more than three times as much money compared to national chains.

The project is made possible with \$60,000 of principal funding from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Business Launch (CBL) program, support to Beans and Rice, Inc. as the lead agency from The Community Foundation of the New River Valley, and contributions to the cash prize funding pool from both Pulaski County and the Town of Pulaski. Project partners include the Town of Pulaski, Pulaski County, Beans and Rice, Inc., Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Pulaski Alliance, NRV Regional Commission, Town of Floyd Economic Development Department, and VT Knowledge Works. For more information, contact: Eric Bucey, ebucey@beansandrice.org.

Floyd C4 Business Development Series begins this Fall

The Floyd County Economic Development Authority (EDA) will be hosting its second Floyd C4 Business Development Series beginning September 12th, 2016. "C4" stands for Curriculum, Creators, Coaches and Challenge. During six weekly sessions, participants will learn how to start and grow their businesses successfully from testing the idea, to legal formation, to marketing, to financing and making an elevator pitch. Participants who complete the program can compete in a business plan and pitch competition for up to \$5,000 in cash, plus other prizes to help them launch or grow their business. At the first Floyd C4, there was an average of 22 participants each night. Recently, the participants in the first Floyd C4 were polled to see what has happened with their business idea in the 12 months following that series; 8 businesses have started; 9 have created or upgraded a website; 7 sought financing; 10 started marketing on social media; 12 bought equipment for the business; 7 made their first sale; and 14 honed their ideas and products. Altogether, 12.5 full-time equivalent jobs have been created, and a total of \$565,000 in private investment has been made to date. For more information on this year's event, see www.yesfloydva.org or contact Lydeana Martin at lmartin@floydcova.org.

Want to **START** or **EXPAND**
a business?

FREE Business Development Sessions



Preserve Rural Heritage and Community Character

Goals

6. Encourage Development that Preserves Rural Character
7. Protect Natural Landscapes and Ecosystems
8. Recognize & Strengthen Natural, Cultural, and Historic Assets
9. Support Arts, Culture, and Community Character



Young Artists in Giles

The Moss Arts Center's *Young Artists* exhibition program has traditionally featured artwork from art classes in Southwest Virginia schools. In 2016, the program's focus shifted from the exhibition of work by art students to the creation of works with students without access to art education. With help from Giles County Public Schools art teacher Amber Nelson and area artists (including Tacie Jones from LoCo Arts and Meggin Hicklin — Moss Arts Center Exhibition Program Manager) offered a series of workshops, called "art breaks," for students in 4-7th grades in Giles County: students who currently do not have art class in school. Workshops were held at each of the county's three elementary/middle schools—Eastern, Macy McClaugherty, and Narrows—both during and after school hours. The purpose was for students to unleash their creativity and capture the stunning landscapes of Giles County using a variety of techniques. Their exhibition named "Home" focused on celebrating our natural and cultural surroundings. This project successfully called attention to the lack of art education in our rural school systems. The Moss Arts Center is currently working to create a sustainable and scaleable in-school workshop program for counties where students may go years without an art class. For more information, contact: Meggin Hicklin, megh79@vt.edu.

Planning for Floyd's Future

Floyd County received a Planning Grant from the Virginia Housing Development Authority to develop options for revising its Subdivision Ordinance to allow for cluster development, where applicable. Cluster development allows for higher housing density so that remaining property can be conserved as working farm, forest, or open lands. The planning effort will include legal assistance to help revise current ordinances and engineering support to establish minimum standards for privately developed water and sewer so that the Floyd-Floyd County Public Service Authority can expand the provision of clean water. Based on the planning grant work, two County Board of Supervisor members and staff will prepare recommended revisions to the Subdivision Ordinance. Contact: Lydeana Martin, lmartin@floydcova.org.

16 Frogs

There is a new project literally underfoot in Blacksburg that has potential for changing our built streetscapes, as well as restoring the health of one of our natural waterways. The project, titled "16 Frogs" is a public arts initiative with an environmental conscience. It highlights the region's freshwater heritage which fostered Blacksburg's development in its earliest days, and references the town's original 16-block street grid. 16 life-size bronze statuettes modeled after the native Green Frog *Lithobates clamitans*, will form a trail through the Stroubles Mill watershed, which is considered one of the most polluted waterways in the state and desperately needs clean-up and restoration. Though recent efforts have been made to create biological filters and to daylight the stream in strategic locations, Stroubles Creek still largely runs under town streets, beneath buildings, and below the VT drill field. Stormwater enters the creek, unfiltered, and flows directly back into the New River, our drinking water source. For more information about the 16 Frogs initiative, please contact: cdavis@blacksburg.gov.

Build Healthy Communities



Goals

14. Enhance Access to Healthcare
15. Create Health Environments
16. Promote Healthy Behaviors and Lifestyles
17. Support Children and Youth Reaching their Full Potential
18. Protect and Improve Water Resources

Carilion Health Needs Assessment

This year Carilion Clinic and the New River Valley Partnership for Access to HealthCare (PATH) have partnered to conduct the 2016 NRV Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which included Floyd, Montgomery and Pulaski counties. PATH is a collaborative, community-focused alliance of 50+ health, community and human service organizations and businesses with a mission to maximize access to health care for all residents in the NRV. Conducted every three years, the CHNA helps uncover community health concerns, indicate where improvement is needed, and track progress in key areas. This year special emphasis was placed on uncovering the needs of the low-income, uninsured and/or underinsured, and those living with chronic illness. Results from the Community Health Survey, focus groups with key stakeholders, providers, and target populations as well as secondary data collection will be posted on www.carilionclinic.org/about/chna on October 1, 2016.

Renew the New Expands

The successful river clean-up effort, known as ReNew the New has expanded this year to all NRV localities and will culminate in a regional clean-up event on August 29th, 2016, on the New River near Radford, VA. At this event volunteers will remove trash and debris from 11 miles of the New River, starting at the I-81 bridge south of Radford and extending to the Highway 114 bridge to the north. The focus of this effort is to improve the quality and beauty of the New River, and to celebrate it as a regional economic, environmental, and natural resource. For more information about this event, please visit: www.renewthenew.org.

Local Food Incentive Program

Vouchers Increase Produce Access (VIPA) is an innovative new pilot program designed to increase access to affordable, local and fresh food for low-income citizens in Montgomery County. For a three-month trial period this July- September, partners including New River Health District, the Family Nutrition Program, the Department of Social Services, and the Community Health Center are distributing \$10 vouchers for the Christiansburg Farmers Market to their clients. Each voucher

contains information about the Market (including hours of operation and location), the SNAP Double Value Program (an existing incentive program at the CFM that doubles SNAP benefits up to \$10 each Farmers Market), as well as information on how to get involved with the Farmacy Garden (a community garden in downtown Christiansburg that offers a fresh produce in exchange for helping in the garden). By streamlining outreach efforts project partners are able to educate low-income consumers about the accessibility and affordability of local foods, while providing them a direct incentive to try the CFM for the first time. Virginia Cooperative Extension's Family Nutrition program will also be providing cooking demonstrations, recipes, and nutrition education at the market. For more information, contact:

maureen.mcgonagle@gmail.com.



The Livability Partnership

The Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) and the NRV Regional Commission (NRVRC) are proud to be leading partners in supporting implementation of the Livability Initiative's many goals and strategies. The partnership will continue to convene the community around critical issues, support collaboration, track progress on key indicators, and identify the resources needed to move vision to action. To learn more about the Initiative or download a copy of the report, visit: www.nrvlivability.org or contact the CFNRV or NRVRC.

To support the Initiative with a tax-deductible contribution, visit www.cfnrvgivebig.org and make a secure contribution to the Fund for the NRV or any of the CFNRV's Future Funds supporting the Initiative's four main themes featured in this newsletter.



Contact Us

Do you want to share information on a project you are working on or would you like more information about the Livability Initiative or one of the featured projects?

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PLACE
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HERE