

Livability In Action



In The New River Valley

January 2015

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.



Did you know?



The population of seniors in the NRV is expected to double in the next 20 years.



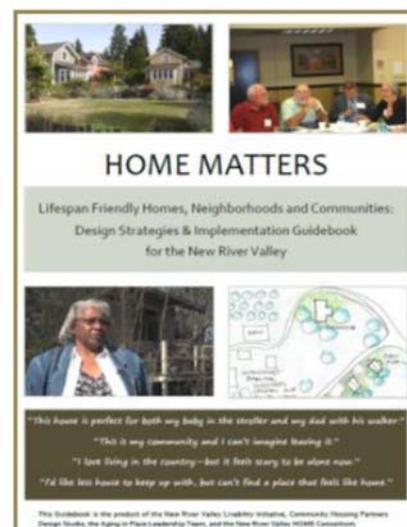
In Giles and Pulaski, the under 25 population is in decline relative to other age groups.

This is likely to create an increased demand for services to support older citizens and a smaller tax base to fund those services.

Home Matters

The New River Valley Aging In Place Leadership Team hosted its second workshop on October 22nd, 2014 to explore the financial, policy, and decision-making obstacles that traditionally get in the way of making our homes and communities truly lifespan friendly. 123 people participated in the workshop including local government staff, elected officials, in-home care givers, social workers, physical therapists, homebuilders, developers, assisted living administrators, realtors, and more. The workshop helped to increase participants' knowledge of aging in place issues in the NRV, identify respective challenges for caregivers, local governments, and developers, and share best practices for supporting aging in place.

The first workshop held in 2013 focused on exploring housing and neighborhood design features that could extend independence for older adults and foster healthy and successful aging in place in rural, suburban and core downtown areas. For a copy of the Lifespan Friendly Homes, Neighborhoods and Communities: Design Strategies and Implementation Guidebook developed after the first workshop go to: <http://www.nrvpdc.org/InteractivePubs/HomeMatters/>



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

Solarize Blacksburg

Solarize Blacksburg was a local initiative to bring solar to the Town of Blacksburg. The partners, which included Community Housing Partners, VA SUN, and Blacksburg's solar advocates and installers, asked solar installers across the state to bid on a group of installations. Through the power of bulk purchasing, Solarize Blacksburg helped drive down the cost of solar for Blacksburg residents. 59 homeowners purchased a total of 320 kW amount of solar. Additionally, 60 homeowners signed up for a free home energy evaluation, which were offered to all participants. More than a dozen localities around the state have expressed interested in creating similar programs, and 9 have actually done so since Blacksburg launched the first Virginia program in March of 2014.

Affordable Green Senior Housing in Blacksburg

On Grissom Lane in Blacksburg, there are now eight new apartments that provide affordable housing to low income people age 55 and older. The project came about as a result of Livability Initiative demographic projections of the aging population and the need for affordable rental housing in Blacksburg. The new homes are also "net-zero" which means that the housing produces as much energy as it consumes through the use of a solar electric photovoltaic system. Households earning less than 80% of the area median income and residents that live or work in Montgomery County receive first preference.

Summit Place: Supportive Housing in Giles

Summit Place, a residential supportive living community, is under construction in the Town of Rich Creek in Giles County. The housing, which will open in spring 2015, will serve people aged 62 and older in need of housing with support services including meals. The building will be highly energy efficient through the use of structural insulated panels and will include a solar hot water system.

Floyd's New Green Housing Start-Ups

The Floyd County Economic Development Authority is working with two green housing start-ups that are interested in producing modular, LEED-certified housing in Floyd for a large regional market. **Eco Works**, LLC is focused on great, locally-matched architecture for single and multi family housing while **Dwellings** is focused on smart, micro-housing that would be for individuals and specialized needs such as Habitat for Humanity and USAID. A Floyd Habitat for Humanity and HOME Consortium project is looking to incorporate a prototype of the micro-housing as an accessory dwelling unit.



IN 20 YEARS

12,000
NEW HOMES
NEEDED

14,000
EXISTING HOMES
WILL NEED REPAIR

*Center for Housing Research, Virginia Tech 2012

Preserve Rural Heritage and Community Character



Goals

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

Revisions Proposed to Floyd County's Subdivision Ordinance

The Floyd County Planning Commission has recommended a tightening of the family subdivision loophole in the Floyd County Subdivision Ordinance. Currently any piece of land (not under easement) can be divided into 1 acre parcels if landowners call it a family subdivision ordinance. The current ordinance is too difficult to enforce and also impacts the County's ability to protect vulnerable groundwater supplies and maintain the agricultural and rural landscape. The Board of Supervisors held their public hearing on the proposed changes in late November but have not made a final decision.

Appalachian Spring

Appalachian Spring is a program initiated by the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation and the Friends of Southwest Virginia to develop and promote the outdoor recreation and natural resource assets of Southwest Virginia (which includes 19 counties). The program's goal is to create an international awareness of the region as a travel, and ultimately, business development and living destination. The program is funded by the Economic Development Administration, Rural Development and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The program is focused on creating income, jobs and local government revenues through the promotion of major recreation destinations, connection of outdoor assets to local communities, and direct assistance to entrepreneurs and appropriate businesses. In the New River Valley region this program will focus on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the New River and the Appalachian Trail. An inventory is currently being developed of all the outdoor recreation businesses, campgrounds, boat launches, lodging, restaurants, and guide companies near these locations. Branding for SWVA and the Appalachian Spring Initiative will begin in February, 2015.

The Floyd County High School Farm: Growing the Next Generation of Farmers

The Floyd County High School Farm was launched this year on land left in trust for that purpose by a retired school teacher, Nola Albert. The farm will function as a "laboratory" for agriculture students to get hands-on experience with managing and operating all aspects of a diversified, functioning farm. The vision is for this to be a place for youth to get real world experience, get their hands dirty in vegetable production, livestock, orchards, and learn how to manage and market products produced at the farm.



"More than 20 million visitors enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities in the NRV each year."

*2007 Virginia Outdoor Plan

Make the Business Environment More Productive and Resilient

Goals

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



Passenger Rail Study

A study will start in January 2015, to better understand public demand for extending Amtrak passenger rail service from Roanoke to the New River Valley. The effort will also analyze potential station locations (Radford, Christiansburg, Pulaski) in terms of Amtrak needs, parking availability, and multi-modal access.



Blacksburg Broadband Initiative

A public-private partnership between the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, NRVPCD, Blacksburg Partnership, Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council is currently evaluating ways to increase internet bandwidth to users in/near the Town of Blacksburg. The partnership contributed \$75,000 for the effort. In 2015, the Planning District Commission staff will conduct a community survey to determine areas in need of a higher bandwidth.

The Floyd Innovation Center

The Floyd County Economic Development Authority is owner and landlord of a new 13,250 square foot facility, which provides a variety of office, research, event and shared meeting spaces for tenants and members. The mission of the Floyd Innovation Center is to support entrepreneurs and small, innovative design and technology-driven companies. The Center features timber framing from **Dreaming Creek Timber Frame Construction** and furnishings by **Phoenix Hardwoods**, both local companies based in Floyd County. The center's energy-efficient construction includes structurally insulated panels and solar hot water and is oriented for solar photo-voltaic panels in the future. The Floyd County Economic Development Authority raised more than \$2.3 million in grant funds from the Virginia Tobacco Commission, the federal Economic Development Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission, along with \$60,000 from the County to make the center a reality. **Eco Works**, LLC, a green housing start-up, is the first tenant to occupy the space.

NRV Agriculture Development Strategic Plan

Over the past two years, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Giles have been developing an agri-tourism and agri-business plan. This tri-county effort has produced maps of all agri-businesses, agri-tourism venues, and restaurants serving local food. The project was a partnership between VT Cooperative Extension, local agricultural producers, along with local and state government leadership and was completed in December 2014.

Marketing the Marketplace

The Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce secured a \$57,000 grant from the USDA Farmer's Market Promotion Program to expand its marketing efforts of the Tuesday night Marketplace held at the Historic Train Depot which features local artisans and growers, music, local wine and craft beer, and food vendors.

Building Healthy Communities



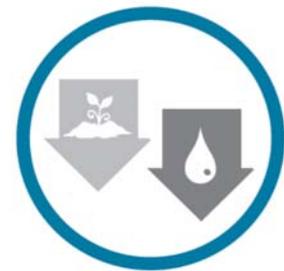
Goals

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



Bike Infrastructure Expansion in the Town of Christiansburg

The New River Health District, with support from the NRVPCDC, the Center for Public Health Practice & Research at Virginia Tech, the Town of Christiansburg, and PATH (Partnership for Access to Healthcare), has secured a \$99,000 grant to expand biking and walking infrastructure in the Town of Christiansburg. This grant from the CDC's Prevention and Public Health Fund Block Grant, supports community efforts to control obesity and reduce the prevalence of chronic disease. The project will include new crosswalks, walking/biking paths, path lighting, and bike racks in strategic locations.



Floyd has the smallest proportion of protected natural lands in the region and a large number of polluted waterways.

Pearisburg Farm to Fork

The Town of Pearisburg and Virginia Cooperative Extension are launching Farm to Fork, a new project to increase access to and use of locally and regionally grown food products. The project will include the development of a farmers market in town by 2015, an indoor market by 2016, and the hiring of a market manager. A series of workshops will be held on food labeling, weights/measures, processing, branding, pricing, food preparation and demonstration.

Support for Early Childhood Education

Smart Beginnings, a partnership coalition focused on wise public investments in the infrastructure for early childhood development, recently received two grants to support early childhood education in the NRV. As a result of a Virginia Pre-school Expansion grant, Giles County will soon have two new Virginia Pre-school Initiative classrooms. The United Way of Southwest Virginia also received a three year \$180,000 Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth grant for implementing curriculum and training to help children make healthy choices.

To The Last Drop

The Partnership for Floyd partnered with videographers at Virginia Tech to produce To the Last Drop, a poignant film that aims to increase community awareness and involvement in the protection of the County's water resources. The film features some local water experts as well as local community members including Fred First, Mark Sowers, Jeff Walker, Mark Grim, Lydeanna Martin, Dennis Dove and Jane Cundiff. To view the film go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nT04mXmWMs>

The Livability Partnership

The Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) and the NRV Planning District Commission (NRVPDC) 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 NRVPDC with questions.

To support the Initiative with a tax-deductible contribution, visit www.cfnrv.givebig.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.



New River Valley
Planning District Commission



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
STAMP
HERE