

Livability In Action



In The New River Valley

January 2017

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.

Alliance for Better Childcare is Launched

Affordable, high quality child care can be extremely difficult to access in the New River Valley. For example, Rainbow Riders Childcare Center, one of the largest child care centers in the NRV with more than 400 students enrolled at three locations, has a waiting list for children under the age of 3 that is 380 families long. And their case is not unique. Young parents



often have to find ways to get creative, sending their child to a different child care center, having a relative look after the child, or one parent remains underemployed or with no job at all. As a result, local employees struggle to recruit and retain workers with young children as employees either leave the workforce or move out of the area to find care.

To address this problem, The Alliance for Better Childcare Strategies, Inc. (ABCs) was formed in 2016 to strengthen the community's early child care and education infrastructure to attract and retain talented people with young children in the NRV. The board includes representatives from Carilion Clinic, Community Foundation of the NRV, LewisGale Montgomery, Modea, National Bank, New River Community College, Rackspace, Smart Beginnings NRV, Virginia Tech, VT Corporate Research Center, Town of Blacksburg, Town of Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Montgomery Chamber of Commerce and Public Schools.

The mission of ABCs is to build collaborative partnerships that will improve the availability, affordability, and quality of early childcare and education in the New River Valley. ABCs recently hired its first Executive Director, Bethany Mott, whose extensive experience with marketing and fundraising, together with her work to establish the Radford Early Learning Center, will set ABCs up for success. The Community Foundation of the New River Valley houses this staff position and serves as fiscal sponsor for the organization as it pursues tax-exempt status. For more information contact: Bethany Mott, abcs@cfnrv.org.

Did you know?



The NRV only has approximately 2,900 childcare spots for the 10,000 children under the age of 5 living in the NRV.

NRV Livability Initiative is nationally recognized

As a small rural region, we often look to other regions for new ideas. However, now many regions are looking to us.

The NRV Livability Partnership was recently featured in the new Housing and Urban Development (HUD) **Scaling Solutions: Strategies for Building Effective Philanthropy Partnerships** report, for our efforts to build partnerships between government, not for profits, and philanthropy. The report showcase our innovative community outreach efforts as well as the partnership formed between the NRV Regional Commission and the Community Foundation of the NRV to support the implementation of the NRV Livability Action Plan. Check out the report, here: goo.gl/H99VHs

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



Town of Blacksburg
CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
2016



Pulaski Adult Day Services

In the spring of 2011, a local non-profit approached Pulaski County about starting an adult daycare service in the community, and in late October of 2016, the Pulaski Adult Day Services & Fall Prevention Center opened its doors. The project was completed through a partnership between Pulaski County, Pulaski Adult Day Service & Fall Prevention Center Inc., and the Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Located in the Town of Dublin on the site of the former Dublin Primary School, the newly constructed building is approx. 4,200 square feet and is designed to serve 30 elderly or disabled participants. A large common room will host an assortment of activities as well as dining space with tables and chairs. A smaller room provides options for small group activities or resting. In addition, there are two exam rooms designated for fall prevention services, since falls are the number one cause of hospital admission in the elderly. There are also plans for a fenced-in outdoor space and therapy garden. Many local partners have contributed time or materials to the building such as James Hardie, Lowe's, and Sherwin Williams. The Center is still accepting enrollment applications, and more information can be found at <http://www.pulaskiadultdayservice.org/>.

Habitat for Humanity NRV Celebrates 30 years

A small group of people dedicated to the idea that everyone deserves the opportunity to own safe, decent and affordable homes brought Habitat for Humanity to the NRV in 1987. Since then 43 homes have been built and sold to hard working families. Based on the principle of a "Hand up not a hand out" Habitat homebuyers volunteer alongside others to keep construction costs down and take home ownership classes to become ready for the responsibility of a mortgage and homeownership. Through their mortgage payment, homeowners help fund future homes. Habitat has also expanded its programs to include home repairs and support for building trades programs in high schools, where students build a modular home that is then truck to its foundation for completion. Both of these programs address changing needs in our communities. For more information, contact: Shelley Fortier, sfortier@habitatnr.org.

Blacksburg Climate Action Plan Approved

Blacksburg's Climate Action Plan was unanimously accepted by Blacksburg's Town Council on September 13, 2016. Councilman John Bush, who served as the Council liaison to the Climate Action Plan Working Group, remarked "Communities that are designed for energy efficiency in buildings and transportation options enjoy the economic benefit of avoided energy costs. This is a vision for Blacksburg that I can get behind."

After signing on to the Cool Cities Initiative in 2007, the Town performed a community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory and engaged hundreds of citizens to better understand their vision for Blacksburg's clean energy future in order to develop this plan. The plan is divided into six chapters covering the major sectors of the community that substantially contribute to Blacksburg's greenhouse gas emissions. These include: Residential, Transportation, Commercial/Industrial, Food, Waste & Recycling, Land Use, and Renewable Energy. The plan can be viewed at: <http://blacksburg.gov/home/showdocument?id=5773>

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



VCC Launches New Loan Fund

Virginia Community Capital (VCC) has launched **The Resilient Community Loan Fund**. This fund established in partnership with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), is a \$3 million loan fund that will provide critical growth financing, credit enhancements, and technical assistance for small businesses and projects in DHCD's program areas.

Borrowers that will be considered for this program must be located in communities that are participating or have participated in the following DHCD programs: Main Street Communities, Vibrant Communities, Community Business Launch, Community Development Block Grant, Industrial Revitalization Fund, Virginia Enterprise Zones, Building Collaborative Communities and Building Entrepreneurial Economies. *All cities and counties in the NRV area are eligible for the new loan fund.*

Loan proceeds may be used for growth financing, finance working capital, purchase of equipment, purchase of a business or commercial real estate. Eligible borrowers must be a for-profit entity, have a demonstrated ability to manage debt and good credit record. Qualified start-up businesses will be considered. The loan size typically is \$50,000 up to \$5 million. For additional information, contact Shaun Rai at 540.260.3507 or at srai@vccva.org.



Virginia Outdoor Expo

The Virginia's Outdoor Lovers Expo is the only one of its kind in Southwest Virginia and raises awareness of the diverse outdoor recreation opportunities that are abundant across the region. Local businesses, clubs, outdoor organizations, and others will be on hand to share information about these wonderful outdoor opportunities. This event serves as a platform for businesses, organizations, and communities to connect, network and build relationships that will increase economic development in Southwest Virginia. This event is made possible by the Friends of Southwest Virginia organization and is an Appalachian Spring community and economic development initiative.

This is the third annual expo and will be the first time the event is held in the New River Valley. Each of the two previous expos had over 1,000 visitors and nearly 100 vendors. The Expo is FREE with live music, craft beer and wine, raffle tickets, giveaways, and more. The event will be held April 22nd, 2017 in Radford's Bisset Park on the bank of the New River from 10am - 4pm.

There is still time to become vendor and/or sponsor for the event. Vendors will be exposed to upwards of 2,000-3,000 visitors and will have the opportunity to connect with as many as 200 other vendors. Sponsors will have the opportunity to get exposure to tens of thousands of people in Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Tennessee with the sponsorship benefits that are available. For more information and to become a vendor and/or sponsor please visit our website at <http://www.swvaoutdoorexpo.com/> or email James Jones jjones@nrvc.org for any questions about the event.

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



The Legacy Project Supports Arts & Culture

The Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center was selected as this year's Leadership New River Valley "Legacy Project," sponsored by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. A group of 25 leaders representing businesses in Montgomery County, Blacksburg, and Christiansburg spent the year learning about the mission, goals, and needs of the Museum. Located in Christiansburg on Pepper Street, the Museum is housed in a historic colonial building and focuses on collecting, preserving, and telling the story of Montgomery County. It is most widely known for hosting the annual Heritage Days event. The Museum also displays local art, rotated regularly throughout the year.

Virginia Tech faculty member, Reed Kennedy, worked with the Museum's Board to create its first five-year strategic plan. Building upon its mission of "preserving history, presenting art," the Museum identified goals and strategies to increase revenue through new sources, increase volunteer engagement and membership, and improve its space. At the end of the year, the Leadership NRV class presented the Museum's staff and Board with recommendations around event planning and promotion, membership outreach, targeting growth through data collection, and space planning and future growth.

A New SW Virginia Brand

This October the efforts of many became a reality as the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation unveiled the new branding for Southwest Virginia. Southwest Virginia's counties and cities collected almost \$25 million in local travel related tax revenue in 2015, which further illuminates the increasing role that tourism plays in Southwest Virginia's economy. Virginia Tourism Corporation has worked alongside the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation for months to develop the regional brand that will help businesses, local governments and citizens promote the quality of life and opportunities that the New River Valley has to offer as a great place to visit for a week's vacation – or to make a home for a lifetime.



A different side of Virginia

Sustainability Week 10 years and counting

This year, the Sustainability Week Partnership, which includes the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, and Sustainable Blacksburg celebrated its 10th year. This long standing partnership has helped foster a culture of sustainability both on and off campus. With a guiding mission of "Celebrate-Educate-Motivate", every Sustainability Week event has been designed to highlight innovative ideas and exemplary practices related to energy, transportation, housing, consumption & disposal, food, and land use, while providing participants with realistic and practical steps to integrate sustainability into every facet of their day-to-day lives.

These efforts have also led to additional sustainability partnerships between the university and community including a Green Business Certification program and Green Rental Expo. For more information contact: Carol Davis, 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

Regional Collaboration: 911 Call Center

In late August of this year, the new Public Safety Building opened in Christiansburg. The 50,000-square-foot facility, located in the former Montgomery County Courthouse, now houses the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and the emergency dispatch operators from Montgomery County, Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, and Virginia Tech, and the Emergency Operations Center.

The call center, located on the top floor of the building, is approximately 2,500 square feet and houses the 36 dispatchers who respond to emergency calls from Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery County and Virginia Tech. The high-tech space is outfitted with computer stations for each dispatcher, multiple monitors, and a large flat screen TV. The space is also equipped with a full kitchen/break room and a bunk room to allow for breaks during each 12-hour shift.

Prior to the center opening, each emergency call placed in Montgomery County went to one of the four localities' individual dispatch centers. Combining the resources under one roof eliminates the need for dispatchers to transfer calls between jurisdictions, saving seconds and therefore saving more lives. This unique regional collaboration is the only one of its kind in the state.

Building an NRV Food Access Network

This fall the Community Foundation of the NRV, New River Health District and Virginia Cooperative Extension hosted two community conversations focused on NRV food access and hunger relief. Organizations working to relieve hunger in the NRV shared best practices and innovative approaches and explored ways to expand access to healthy food and to increase collaboration. The host organizations are now preparing a resource guide of current hunger relief programs, including the support they offer, and plan to host additional sessions in 2017 including a food safety training, nutrition education, and an asset inventory to examine available and needed infrastructure to support regional hunger relief efforts. For more information contact: Kelli Scott, kescott1@vt.edu.

NRV Watershed Roundtable

On December 2nd, 2016, representatives from localities across the NRV and other interested parties, met to discuss re-establishing the New River Watershed Roundtable. The New River Valley Regional Commission, with funding from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, reviewed several watershed roundtables in Virginia along with activities of the previously convened New River Watershed Roundtable. The group discussed findings related to strong watershed roundtables to best determine the role of the New River Watershed Roundtable in the region. The next meeting will be held in February 2017 and focus on how to better coordinate the different water improvement projects and volunteer efforts throughout the New River Valley. The group will also discuss potential partnerships with other organizations in the region. For more information or to get involved in the next Roundtable Discussion, please contact: Michael Gottfredson at 540-639-9313, or michaelg@nrvc.org.

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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