



New River Valley Livability Initiative

Where were we and where are we going?

August 5, 2015



NRV LIVABILITY INITIATIVE

- **9 topic areas/7 working groups**
- **today, trends, future vision**
- **regional *and* local approach**
- **innovative outreach**
- **scenarios - tradeoffs**
- **preferred regional plan**
- **build capacity to implement**



CONSORTIUM MEMBERS



NRV Regional Commission

Montgomery County

Pulaski County

Floyd County

Giles County

Town of Blacksburg

Town of Christiansburg

City of Radford

Virginia Tech

Community Housing Partners

National Committee for the New River

Community Foundation

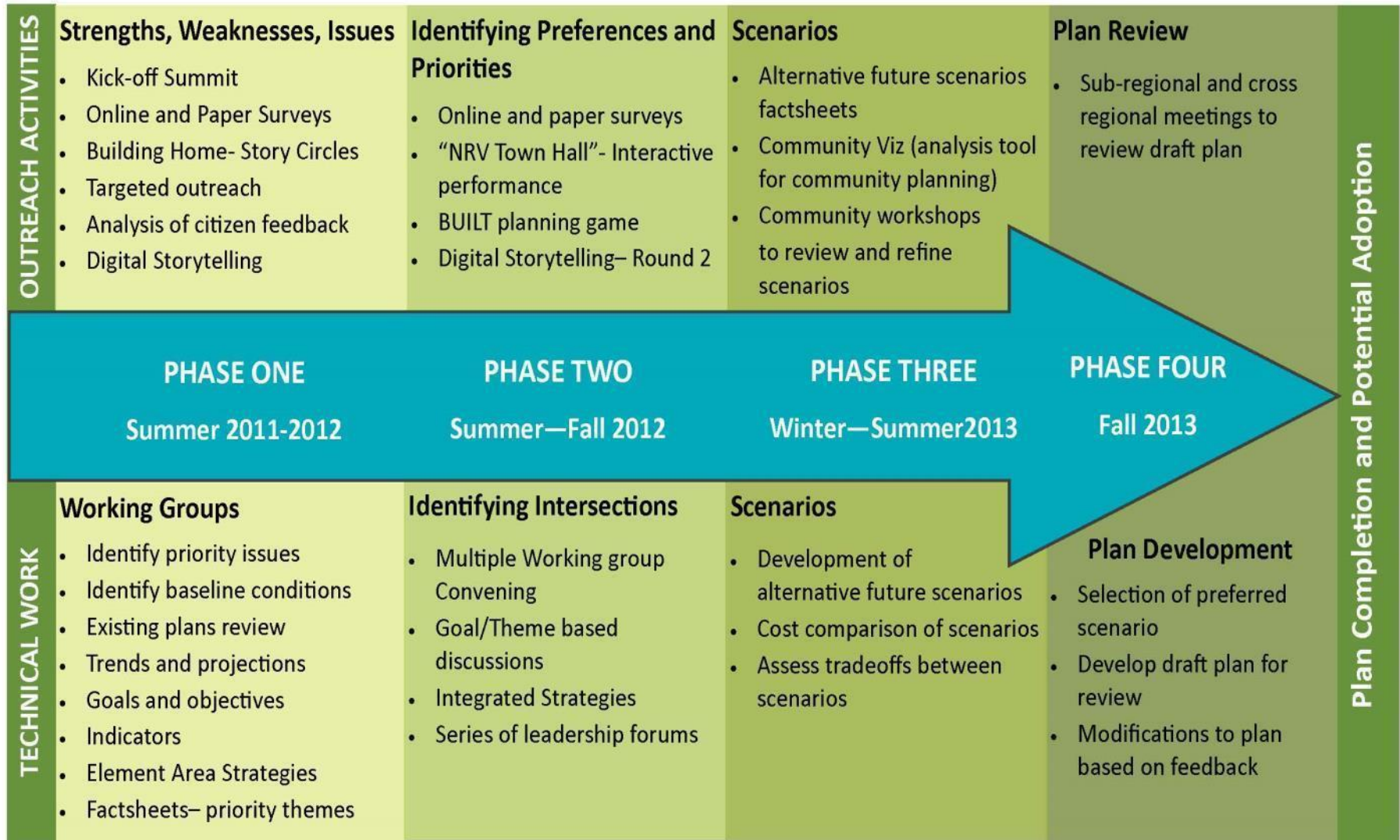
New River Community Action

Metropolitan Planning Organization

NRV HOME Consortium

New River Health District

NEW RIVER VALLEY LIVABILITY INITIATIVE TIMELINE







Why is community engagement important?



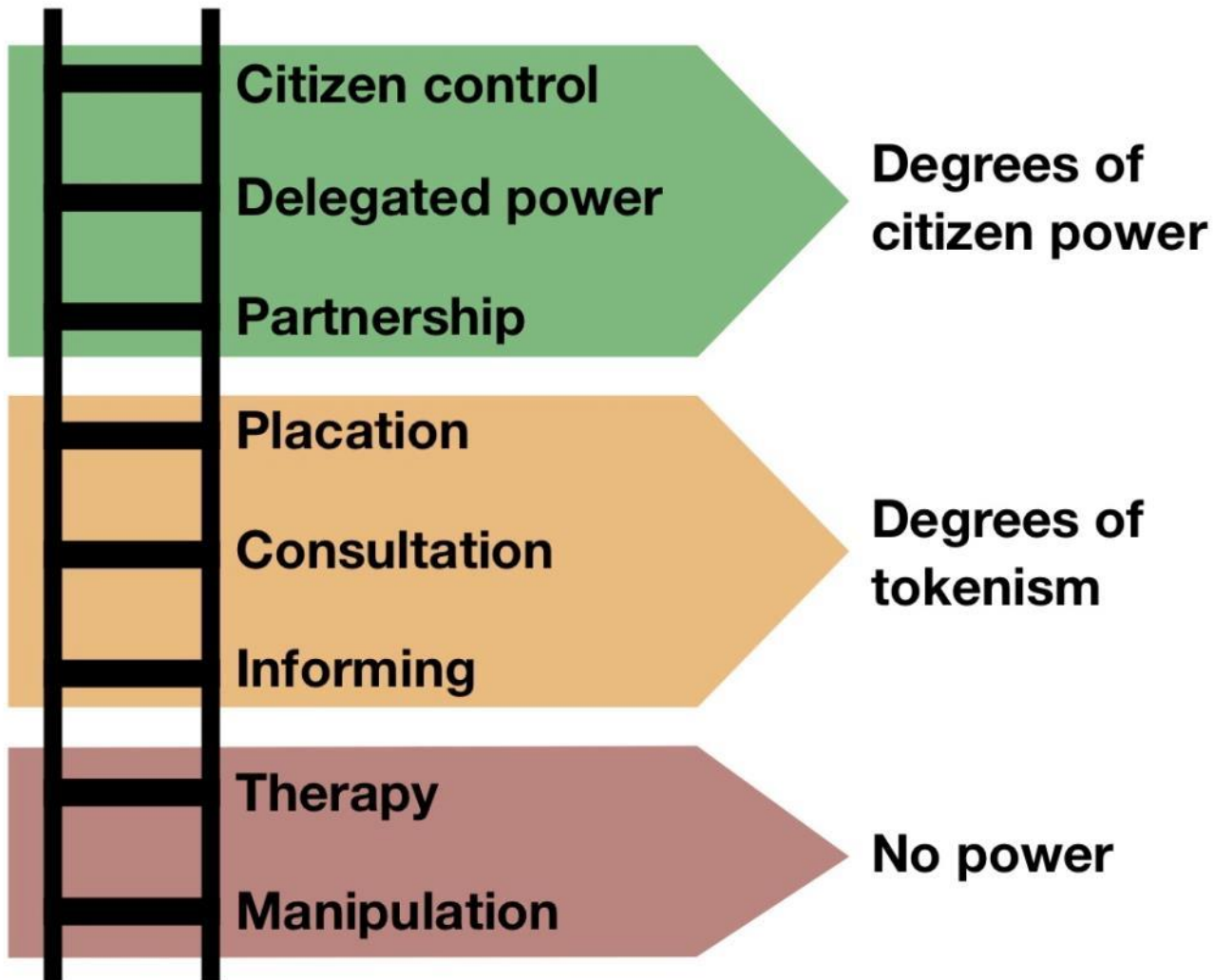
Soul of the Community Project Knight Foundation

[Soul of the Community](#)



What Makes Engagement Meaningful?

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation





Informing and Other Forms of Tokenism

Public Meeting

Citizens input is “*welcome*” at a public hearing on codes, bylaws, ordinances and other things beloved by planners and bureaucrats.

Tuesday at 6 p.m. in a room with uncomfortable chairs. Parking limited.

- Low accessibility for non-experts.
- Unclear how citizen input impacts process or outcomes.
- Emerging proposals appear to be “done deals”

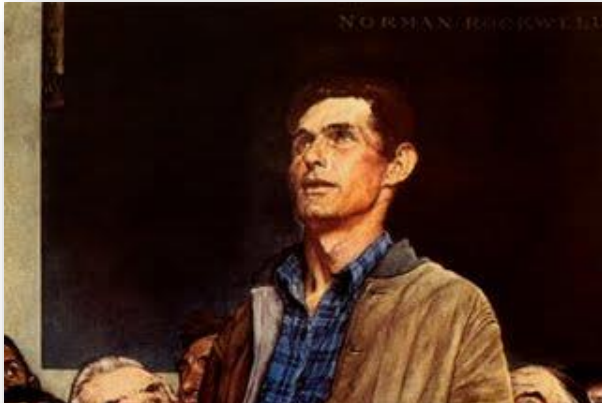


The Town Hall Meeting





The Town Hall Meeting



- Has it changed over time?
- How does the public perceive its role?
 - Who does it work for?
 - What is it set up to do?
- High stakes, zero-sum outcomes
 - Dialogue low, often absent
 - Proposal may pass but...



Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement

What Gets in the Way?



Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement

What Gets in the Way?

- Limited resources (*time/\$\$*)
 - Habits and comfort
 - Fear of conflict
- Desire to maintain control (*info, process, outcomes*)
 - Desire to manage citizen expectations



Some of our “standard” engagement efforts:

- Regional Kick-Off Summit with 150+ participants (table discussions)
- Website – working group progress and draft documents, direct communication with WGs
- Online and paper surveys – several iterations
- Spanish language survey and outreach events with local churches
- Lower-literacy survey (Community Action & Literacy Vol.)
- Community meetings with established groups



And some “not-so-standard” engagement methods:

Collaboration between VT-IPG, NRVRC, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

- Healthy NRV (youth engagement)

PlaceMatters

- Keypad polling at Kick-Off and Final Summits
- CrowdGauge – NRV Tomorrow Survey





Healthy NRV: Youth Engagement



Frame the issue...

[Healthy NRV Overview Video](#)



Give youth a voice...

Domino Effect



And some “not-so-standard” engagement methods:

VT Dept of Theater and Cinema - Directing/Public Dialogue

- Building Home: Story circles, Participatory Theater
- Interactive Community Performances: Whether System, Behind A Stranger’s Face

Collaboration between Sojourn Theater, VT, and PlaceMatters

- BUILT NRV game





Performance Based Engagement

We were *really* skeptical at first.....

So we hired these artists to help you...





We knew we wanted to

- Have more authentic conversations
- understand root concerns (interests over positions)
- reach the harder-to-reach vs. the usual suspects
- built trust and collaborative spirit, and have fun!
- create capacity for civic problem solving



Building Home - Town Hall Nation

Town Hall Nation
Sojourn Theatre, TEAM,
Imagining America

April 23-26, 2012 - Virginia Tech



Building Home: Behind A Stranger's Face

November 17th – December 3rd, 2012

VirginiaTech

behind a stranger's face

an original play.
a public conversation.

directed by jon catherwood-ginn

"a friend may be waiting behind a stranger's face."
maya angelou

citizens' stories from the New River Valley, Virginia

Nov 17 @2pm
Radford Rec Center
200 george street

Nov 18 @7:30pm
Pulaski Train Station
20 south washington

Nov 25 @7:30pm
Floyd Country Store
206 south locust street

Dec 3, 4 @7:30pm
Theatre 101
Virginia Tech

FREE ADMISSION

generous support for the Building Home project provided by

virginia tech department of theatre & cinema

CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT VIRGINIA TECH

ART WORKS.

VIRGINIA COMMISSION FOR THE ARTS





BUILT: Game-Based Engagement



The BUILT Game

**FLEA
MARKET**

PHARMACY

LIBRARY

**SLAUGHTER
HOUSE**

**LIVE MUSIC
VENUE**

Carol D.

**ASSISTED
LIVING**



A Different Community Conversation: BUILT NRV

**FLEA
MARKET**

**LIVE MUSIC
VENUE**

**ASSISTED
LIVING**

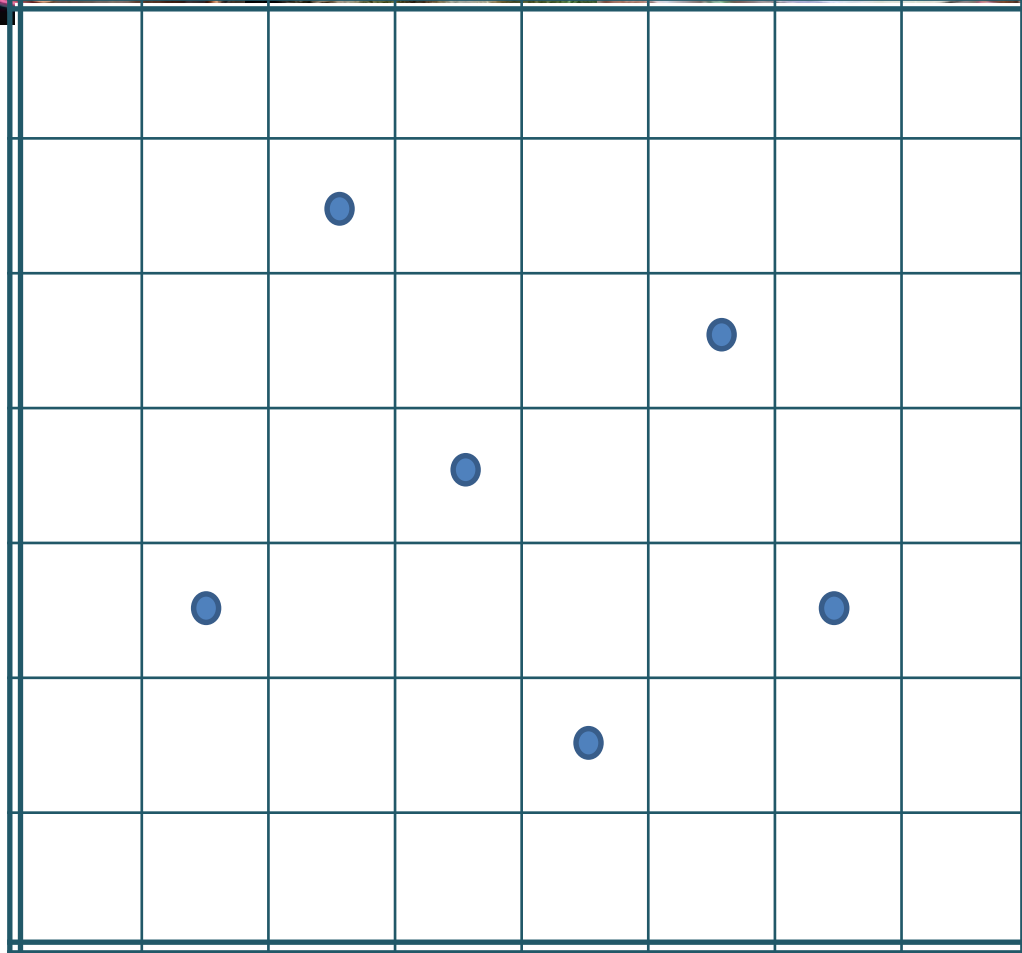
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LIBRARY

PHARMACY

**SLAUGHTER
HOUSE**

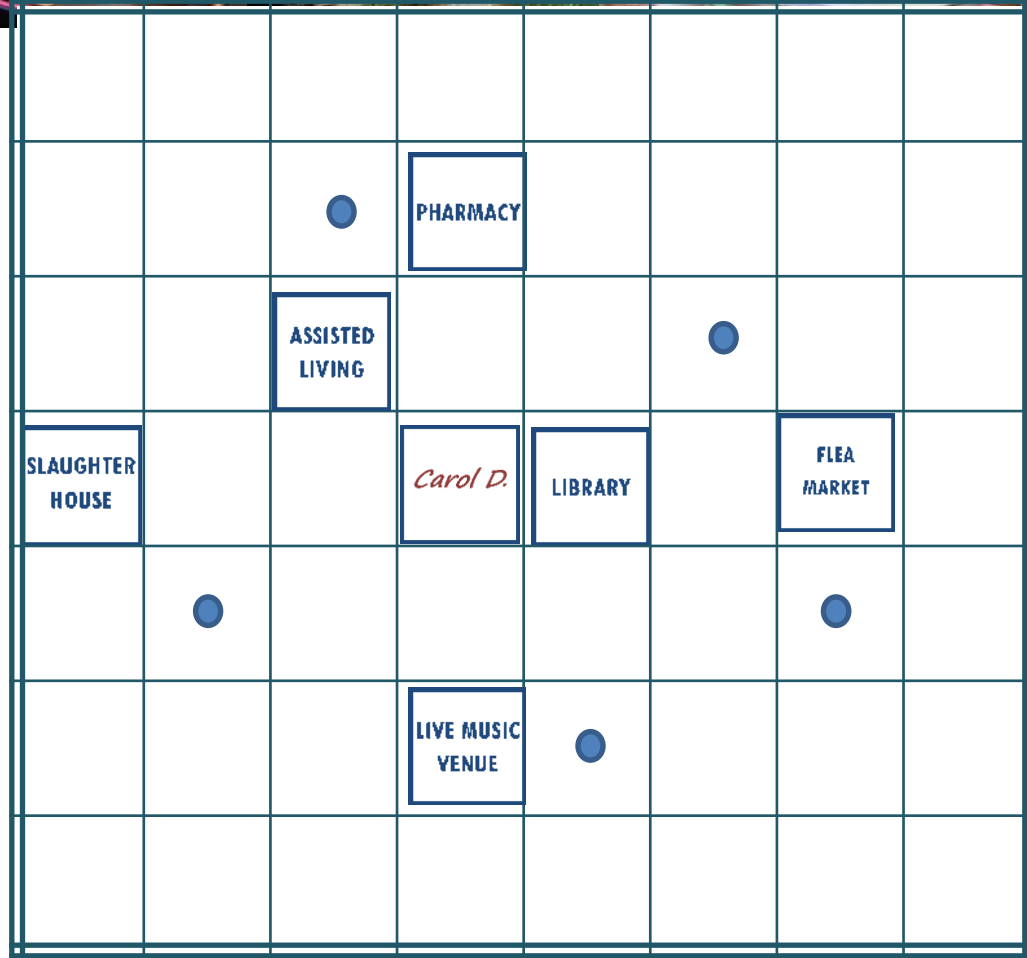
A Different Community Conversation: BUILT NRV



- FLEA MARKET
- LIVE MUSIC VENUE
- ASSISTED LIVING
- Carol D.*
- LIBRARY
- PHARMACY
- SLAUGHTER HOUSE



A Different Community Conversation: BUILT NRV



A Different Community Conversation: BUILT NRV

- Individual Priorities
- ↓
- Collaboration – *Neighborhood/Town*



-
- Integration – *Town/County*



BUILT Game

core values and priorities
key tensions and tradeoffs
obstacles, challenges
potential action strategies



CrowdGauge: Interactive Web Survey

CrowdGauge/NRV Tomorrow Survey: Imagining the Future

I imagine a New River Valley where...

Show

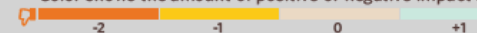
- ☉ ★★★★★ I can live a rural lifestyle.
- ☉ ★★★★★ Private property rights are protected.
- ☉ ★★★★★ I have convenient and affordable transportation options.
- ☉ ★★★★★ I can afford to live closer to where I work.
- ☉ ★★★★★ The scenic beauty and rural character around me is protected.
- ☉ ★★★★★ My community has a vibrant downtown.
- ☉ ★★★★★ My community has a variety of job opportunities.
- ☉ ★★★★★ The road system, utilities and internet in my community are sufficient to attract and retain businesses.
- ☉ ★★★★★ I have access to healthy food that I can afford and ways to be physically active.
- ☉ ★★★★★ My community has quality educational opportunities for all ages.
- ☉ ★★★★★ I can easily stay in my home as I get older.
- ☉ ★★★★★ The natural environment in my community is protected.
- ☉ ★★★★★ A variety of arts, music, and cultural events can be



You have 6 stars left

See all explanations for establishing and regional

Color shows the amount of positive or negative impact



CrowdGauge/NRV Tomorrow Survey: Mock Participatory Budgeting


Put your money where your mouse is...

Next



Show Instructions Again

great outdoors

Help Children and Youth Reach their Full Potential

-  Expand and improve pre-school education and daycare options
-  Increase screening for developmental progress during the first years of life

Support Economic Vitality

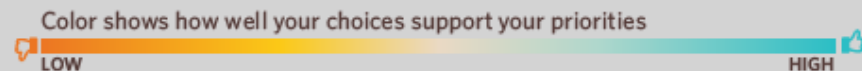
-  Expand small business support services
-  Restore and redevelop downtown properties
-  Expand workforce education and training programs
-  Increase modern commercial and industrial building space for new and expanding businesses

Advance Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy



You have **11** coins left to distribute

Hover over or click the actions for more information. Click the coins to indicate where you would prioritize public dollars.



CrowdGauge/NRV Tomorrow Survey: Policy Support

[Show Instructions Again](#)

Tell us which policies you would like to see in the New River Valley...

Policies

- Encourage local policies to minimize environmental impacts from development
- Keep existing development patterns the same, as population and housing demand grows
- Reduce tax rate for agriculture and forest landowners
- Support conservation easements
- Establish a Regional Housing Trust Fund
- Foster design features and land use policies that support life-span friendly housing
- Focus infrastructure development around existing town centers



CrowdGauge/NRV Tomorrow Survey: Output

NRV Tomorrow Survey [Back to Survey](#)

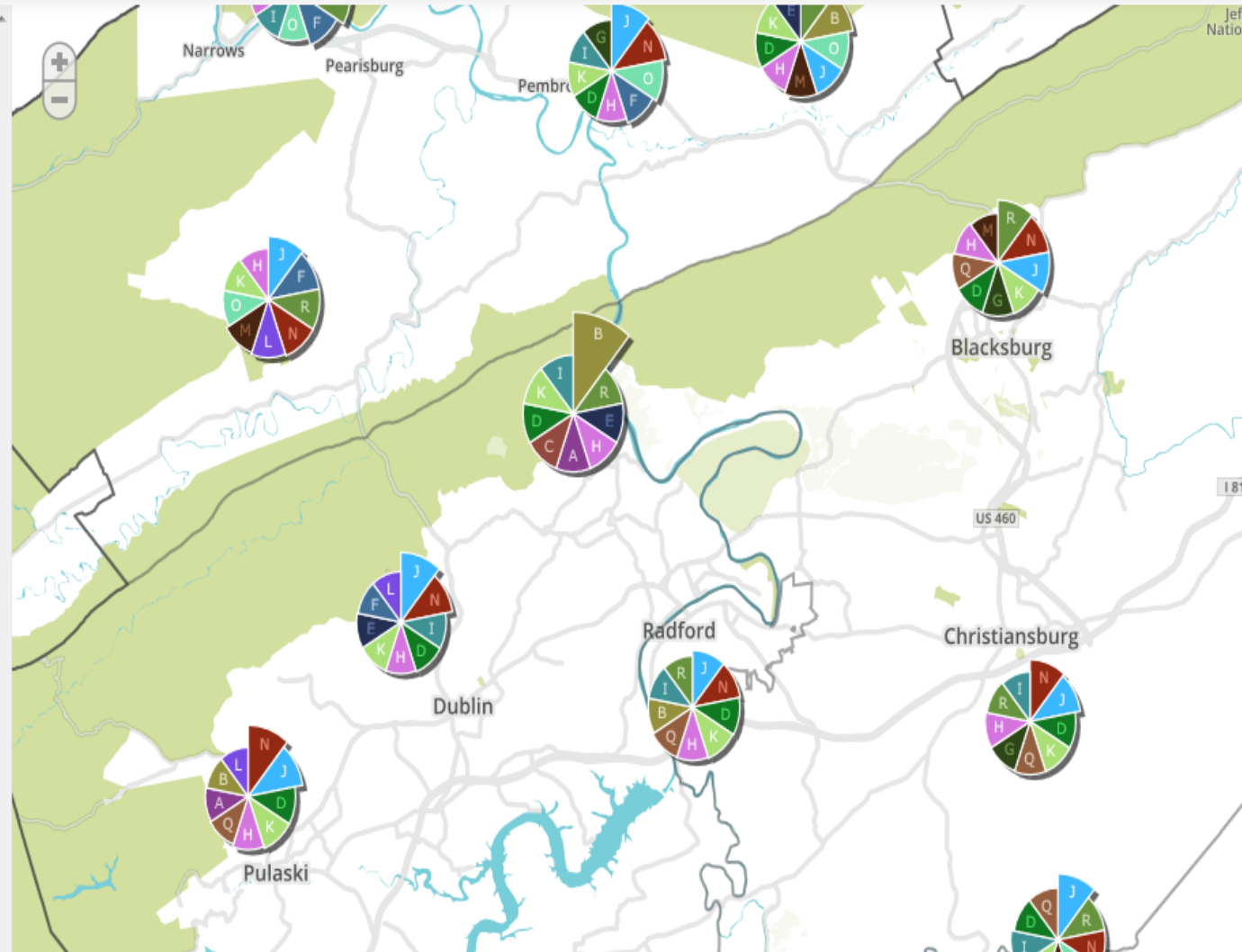
[View Ranking by Priorities](#)

[NRV Livability Home](#)

Projects and Policies

Display Top 9 for Each Location

- A Establish a Regional Housing Trust Fund
- B Support the Arts
- C Keep development patterns the same, as population and housing demand grows
- D Focus Infrastructure Development around Existing Town Centers
- E Enhance and Expand Transportation Options
- F Help People Age at Home
- G Create Walkable and Bike-friendly Communities
- H Foster Design Features and Land use Policies that Support Life-span Friendly Housing
- I Reduce Tax Rate for Agriculture and Forest Landowners
- J Improve Community Health
- K Encourage Local Policies to Minimize Negative Environmental Impacts from Development
- L Help Children and Youth Reach their Full Potential
- M Support Agriculture Viability and Rural Heritage
- N Support Economic Vitality
- O Improve Water Quality
- P Lower Taxes



Additional Analysis of Feedback



Outreach + Working Groups= INTERSECTING THEMES



Enhancing Living & Working Environments



IN 20 YEARS

12,000
NEW HOMES
NEEDED

14,000
EXISTING HOMES
WILL NEED REPAIR

**Center for Housing Research, Virginia Tech 2012*

2x

Senior population will double in most communities by 2030



Under 25 population is declining in Giles and Pulaski

- Improve transportation options
- Successfully age in place/ community

Preserving Rural Heritage & Community Character

- Protect scenic beauty/ view sheds.
- Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Recognize importance of the arts, culture, and history which defines community character
- Strengthen the economic and cultural position of downtowns



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

*2007 Virginia Outdoor Plan



Making the Business Environment more Productive & Efficient

- More employees in small business than manufacturing
- Better understand workforce skill gaps and address them
- Career pathways
- Increase education opportunities/entrepreneur support services
- Strengthen agriculture viability

	New Startup Firms
2002	83
2003	84
2004	109
2005	111
2006	124
2007	215
2008	180
2009	139
2010	167
2011	151
2012	177

Building Healthy Communities

- Ensure Access to Healthcare
- Create Health Environments
- Promote Healthy Behaviors
- Support Children Reaching their Full Potential
- Improve and Protect Water Resources



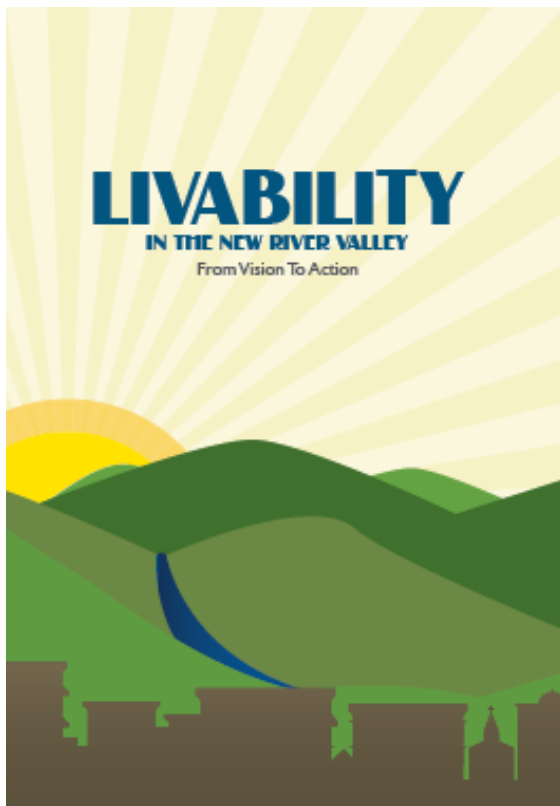
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HOPSITALS



3

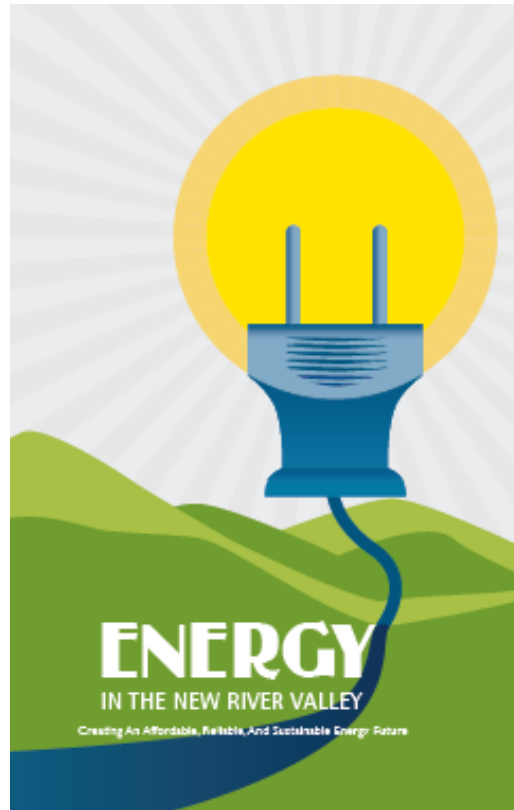
FREE CLINICS



LIVABILITY

IN THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

From Vision To Action



ENERGY

IN THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

Creating An Affordable, Reliable, And Sustainable Energy Future



HOME

IN THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

Housing & Neighborhood Options

Implementation Partnerships:

How do we make those pretty plans come off the shelf?

THERE WAS ONE MINOR PROBLEM...



HOW PARTNERSHIP ESTABLISHED

- **Concept came from project staff and leadership team discussions (those intimately familiar with the project)**
- **Honest (informal) assessment of how to keep the positive momentum going knowing lack of financial resources**
- **Recognizing how the region views both organizations and their anticipated roles in the future**





THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

20 Years and Counting

The mission of the **Community Foundation of the New River Valley** is to enrich our community by providing professional management services to donors for their charitable causes, awarding visionary grants and scholarships, and nurturing collaborations in our community.

20 Years of Serving the NRV

Current Assets: \$8.7 million

Grants Since 1997: \$3 million

Grants & Scholarships in 2013: \$300,000

Workshops & Programs in 2013: 30



Collaboration for Impact



Among 10 Partner Organizations
sponsoring the *Ageing Successfully at
Home and in Our Urban and Rural
Communities Design Workshop*

Addressing demographic trends
and housing challenges with the
2013 Norman & Nancy Eiss
Community Impact Grant



Working Together to Move Good Ideas into Action

Through an innovative partnership with the NRV Regional Commission, the Community Foundation will:



Add to its existing staff to better facilitate collaboration and cooperation around community needs and preferences,

Use the data and citizen preferences from the Initiative to **guide Foundation grant-making** with support from the NRVRC in collecting further data and tracking our progress along key indicators,

AND...



Launch a major fundraising initiative to support local and regional solutions to community challenges.

20th Anniversary Future Funds

Enhancing Living & Working Environments

Preserving Rural Heritage & Community Character

Making the Business Environment
more Productive & Efficient

Building Healthy Communities

cfnriv.givebig.org

COMPLIMENTARY ROLES

- **NRVRC brings the governments together while the Foundation brings non-profits, donors, others to the table**
- **Both organizations share a lot of “political/community capital”**
- **Foundation has infrastructure to convene the community regularly**



ENGAGING DECISION MAKERS

For the partnership to be successful and lasting, the governing boards must buy-in and ask:

- **How does the proposed partnership fit with the organization's overall mission?**
- **How does the partnership meet the strategic vision and needs of the organization?**



ANTICIPATED IMPACT

- **Much better model to address local challenges with local \$**
- **Foundation will gain a staff role that is unique and meets its strategic objectives in the areas of grantmaking and fundraising**
- **Elevated understanding and appreciation of community needs**
- **More people/organizations working toward similar goals**



CURRENT IMPACT

- **Project Leadership Team Meets Monthly**
- **Tracking New Projects and Grant Dollars**
- **Convening the Region Annually on Livability**
- **Foundation Continuing to Adjust Grantmaking**
- **Community Impact Grant Program...with Technical Assistance**



CURRENT IMPACT

New River Valley Livability Initiative

Moving from Vision to Action



[Home](#) [About](#) [Livability in Action](#) [Livability Planning Process](#) [Resources](#) [Get Involved](#)



Preserve Rural Heritage and
Community Character

Add text

Featured Projects

admin June 18, 2015 Highlights

[read more](#)

CURRENT IMPACT

New River Valley Livability Initiative

Moving from Vision to Action



Home About Livability in Action Livability Planning Process Resources Get Involved

Program/Project Database

Text instruction here

Project Finder

All Topics ▾ All NRV Localities ▾ All Goals ▾

Matches

- [Solarize Blacksburg](#)
- [Affordable Green Senior Housing in Blacksburg](#)
- [Summit Place: Supportive Housing in Giles](#)
- [Floyd's New Green Housing Start-Ups](#)
- [Revisions Proposed to Floyd County's Subdivision Ordinance](#)
- [Appalachian Spring](#)
- [The Floyd County High School Farm: Growing the Next Generation of Farmers](#)

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.



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/>

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.



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 interest 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. **EcoWorks**, 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 NewRiver Valley region this program will focus on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the NewRiver 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, NRVPC, 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.

Value of the Livability Initiative

- **Data** to better understand citizen needs and preferences.
- Better understanding of **trends**- opportunity to address now rather than down the road
- **Funders** are taking notice – may open up new resources
- **Partnerships**- are forming around promising ideas
- **Capacity Building**- to more effectively engage citizens and to implement the best ideas.





90	Days of the campaign
468	Sign-ups <i>59 came from outside 24060 zip code 92 were poor sites due to shading/orientation</i>
59	Contracts signed so far
302	kW under contract <i>181 kW higher than original goal....and counting</i>
\$1,072,100	Dollar value of new economic activity <i>from contracts so far</i>
12	Other Virginia localities.....

Want More Information?



www.nrvrc.org

www.cfnrv.org

www.nrvlivability.org