



*2012 Interim Report*

# LIVABILITY in the NEW RIVER VALLEY







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# WHAT IS THE LIVABILITY INITIATIVE?

*The Livability Initiative is 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 regional initiative is taking place over three years, providing many opportunities for residents to share their ideas about what they would like to stay the same and what they would like to be different.

The Initiative is focused on the New River Valley region, but with recognition that what works for one community may not work for another. The character and priorities expressed by each community and county will influence the development of goals and action items. By the end of 2013, the Initiative will develop a plan of action; communities can select from this menu of action items to best address their most pressing challenges, while at the same time accomplishing regional goals.

*The planning process will help identify ways to increase regional self-reliance and prosperity, save tax dollars, increase support for local businesses, create communities that offer more choices in housing and transportation, and protect the region's rural character and scenic beauty.*



## Why is this Initiative Important?

The New River Valley faces a number of challenges, but it also has enormous assets and resources. Planning helps communities choose their own future. Planning processes, like the Livability Initiative, help us to see the big picture, by generating new information and ways to talk openly about the future. In this way, planning can inspire people to be proactive about ensuring the New River Valley is a great place to live, work, and play today and tomorrow.

## About this Report

The information in this report was gathered by Livability Initiative partners, New River Valley Planning District Commission staff, seven topic area working groups (arts and culture, community health, economic development, energy, housing, natural resources, and transportation), and through numerous outreach events during August 2011-2012 in which more than 1,500 residents participated. This report provides a summary of major issues and trends in the New River Valley region. The following six trends are major drivers behind the region's biggest challenges: *An Aging Population, Agricultural Shifts, Commuting Patterns, Housing Costs, Jobs & Education, & Community Health*. Focusing on how we address these trends will enable us to more effectively improve the quality of life for residents in the New River Valley.

# AN AGING POPULATION

The New River Valley's population is aging. The number of seniors will nearly double in the NRV in the next 20 years. In Giles and Pulaski, the under-25 year-old population is also declining, as many young people seek opportunities outside the region. These two population trends are likely to create an increased demand for services to support older citizens and a smaller tax base to support those services.

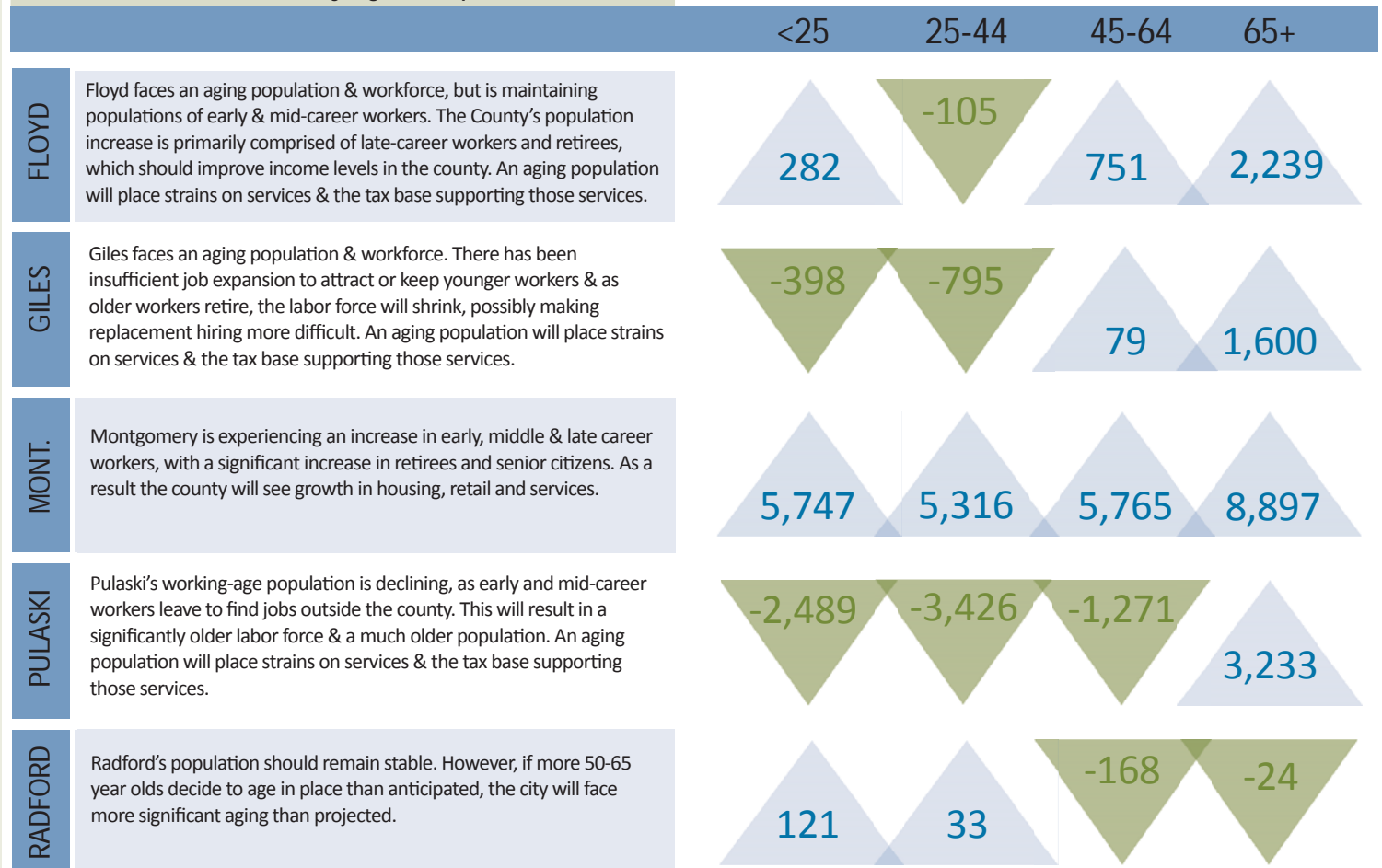
An aging population brings specific challenges to the community. Declining mobility makes it harder for older adults to navigate stairs and bathrooms and many find their existing homes no longer meet their needs. When older adults are no longer able or comfortable driving, few options exist to get to and from the grocery store, the doctor's, or people and places they want to visit. These challenges can increase both health risks and isolation – which are significant factors that drive premature placement in a nursing home – an extremely costly housing option for older adults, their families, and the public.



**2x** By 2030, the number of seniors will nearly double in the NRV & about 1-in-5 people will be over age 65



2000-2030 Change in Number of Residents by Age Group

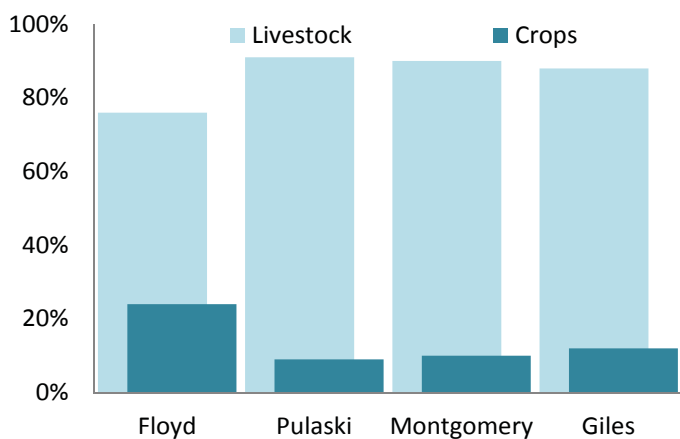


\*2000-2010 data from decennial Census Counts; 2020 and 2030 projections from the Virginia Center for Housing Research. Note: These should be considered 'Interim' projections until the new VEC projections are available.

# AGRICULTURAL SHIFTS

Farms are shrinking, farmers are getting older, and younger generations are showing less interest in continuing their families' farms. In Montgomery and Floyd, pressure to sell farm property is high as the population, and resulting need for additional housing, continues to increase. Shrinking farmlands alter the rural character and scenic beauty that defines this region. With fewer farms and fewer farming families, the skills, traditions, and culture built around the rural economy are less likely to contribute to a rural community's sense of place and history.

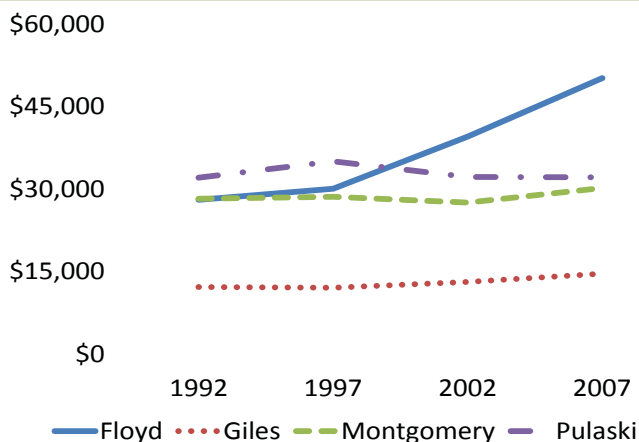
% of Total Market Sales by Livestock and Crop Production



\*2007 USDA Agricultural Census

The NRV is home to the 7th largest cattle population in Virginia. Livestock makes up the majority of market sales in every county. Primary crops include hay, Christmas trees, nursery stock, fruits, and vegetables.

1992-2007 Change in Average Market Value of Agricultural Products

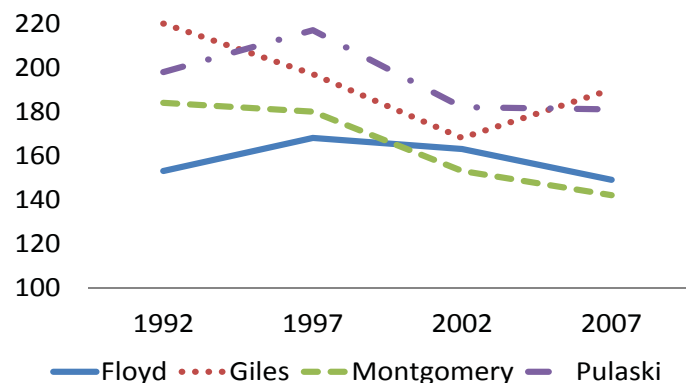


\*2007 USDA Agricultural Census



*The average farm size and amount of acreage in agricultural production is on the decline.*

1992-2007 Change in Average Farm Size (acres)



\*2007 USDA Agricultural Census



*In 2007, the average farm operator was 58 years of age, and 58% of farmers relied on an off-farm job as their primary source of income.*

# of Acres & % of Farmland Taken Out of Agricultural Production

Floyd	6,439	-5%
Pulaski	5,465	-7%
Montgomery	10,259	-10%
Giles	2,842	-4%

\*2007 USDA Agricultural Census



# COMMUTING PATTERNS

Over the past 30 years, the patterns of development in the New River Valley have typically concentrated commercial areas along major roadways while housing is spread sparsely throughout the region. Housing and transportation costs typically account for over 40% of the region's household median income. In rural parts of the Valley, housing costs tend to be lower, but the increased distance from job centers and amenities often create higher transportation costs for rural households. Those who live in town or more urban centers tend to spend more on housing, but live closer to common destinations – reducing household transportation costs.

For those who don't have secure transportation, or are unable to drive, the lack of transportation options can limit access not only to jobs, but also to medical care and education. This is especially the case for lower-income families and seniors. Declining employment in the manufacturing sector has also increased the number of people, particularly in Pulaski County, who have to commute outside of their home county for work.



*Each year, NRV residents travel an average of 11,874 miles and spend an average of \$7,588 on transportation costs (fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc.)*

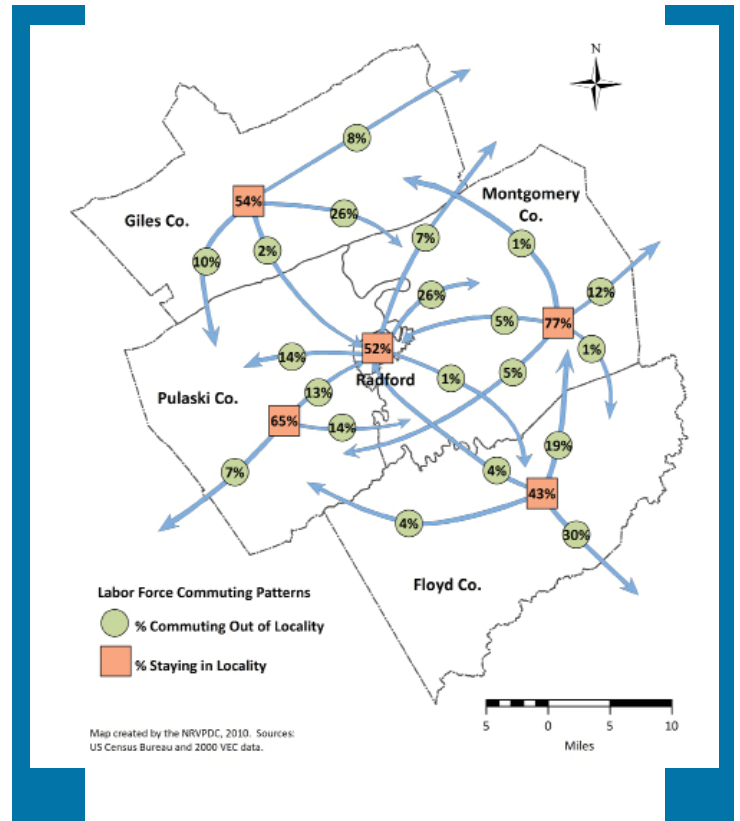
## % of Workers Commuting Out of Their County for Work

	2005		2010
Floyd	61.1%	decreased	55.9%
Giles	61.0%	increased	63.3%
Montgomery	32.4%	decreased	31.7%
Pulaski	39.5%	increased	53.6%
Radford	60.6%	decreased	54.2%

\*Virginia Center for Housing Research, On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau \*Based on Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Records and the Quarterly Census for Employment and Wages (QCEW). Coverage under these datasets currently excludes several groups of workers including uniformed military, self-employed workers, and informally employed workers.



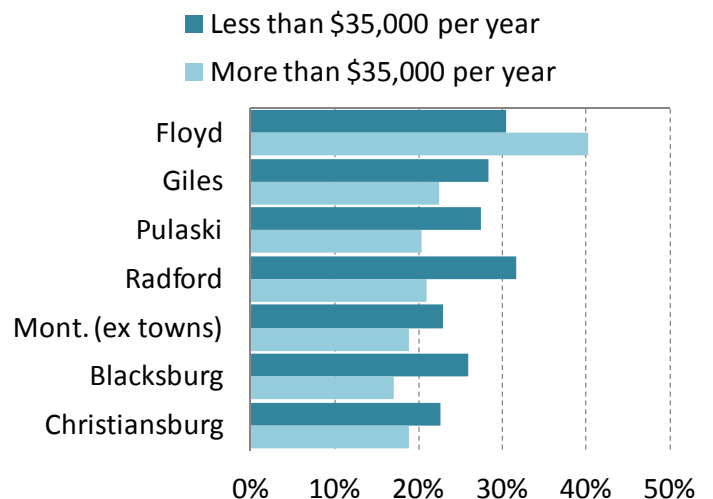
*Workers earning less than \$15,000 a year commute an average of 26 miles more per day than workers who earn \$40,000 or more per year.*



\* 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, and 2000 Virginia Employment Commission Data;  
\*Based on survey data capturing formal and informal as well as full and part-time employment.

Many of the region's lower income families are unable to afford housing in close proximity to employment and commercial areas. As a result, these families must often choose lower-cost housing farther away and incur higher transportation costs.

## % of Workers Driving more than 25 miles to Work by Income

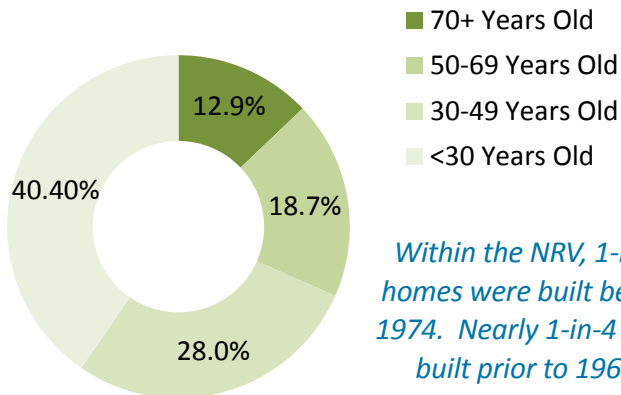


\*U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009

# HOUSING COSTS

As energy use and prices continue to rise, households in the NRV are spending more and more of their income on their electric and home heating bills. The cost increases have been even more dramatic for those who live in older and less energy efficient homes. As a result, many residents are finding they have less money each month to spend on housing, food, childcare, medicine, and medical care. These changes affect not just household budgets, but our local and regional economy as families limit their spending on recreation and retail items when the funds required to meet basic needs are stretched too thin.

% of Total Housing Stock by Year Built



*Within the NRV, 1-in-2 homes were built before 1974. Nearly 1-in-4 were built prior to 1960.*

\*U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009

The loss of jobs in Pulaski and Giles could impact the quality of the housing stock in these counties. Reduced household income and increased vacancies often lead to under-maintenance, poor energy efficiency, and increased physical deterioration.



*1-in-3 households in the NRV spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs and are therefore, considered "cost burdened".*

Number & % of Cost-Burdened Households in the NRV

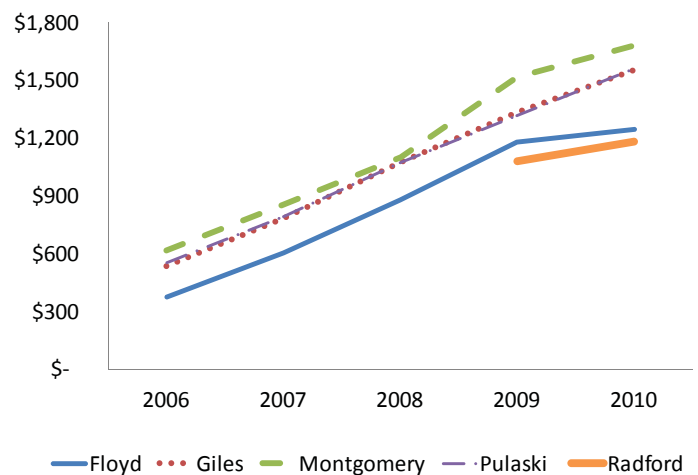
Floyd	1,290	21.5%
Giles	1,598	23.7%
Montgomery	12,227	36.8%
Pulaski	3,944	32.3%
Radford	2,597	36.2%

\*U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009



*Household electricity costs in the NRV have increased 30% per year for the last five years based on an increase in price and use.*

2006-2010 Annual Change in Electricity Costs per Household



\*Appalachian Power Company, 2006-2010



*Nearly 1/2 of lower income homeowners and nearly 3/4 of lower income renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.*



# JOBS & EDUCATION

For middle-skill and higher-skill workers, there are many opportunities for job training and career advancement in the NRV. However, this is not the case for the region's lower-skill workers. Unemployment is high for those who did not graduate high school or only possess a high school diploma. New demands of the 21st century are bringing shifts to the job market and require workers with more advanced skills. Without skill advancement, residents are poorly positioned to take advantage of job opportunities and build income. These citizens and their families are among the most vulnerable to changes in the cost of housing, transportation, food, and rising energy and health care costs.

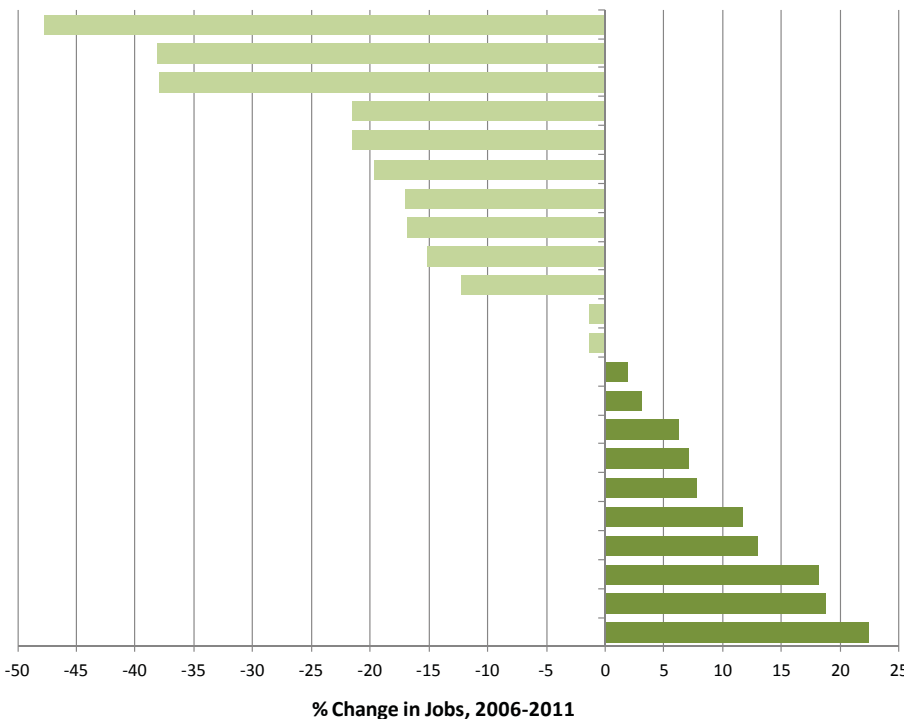


*NRV lags behind in state averages in educational attainment, especially in post-high school education.*

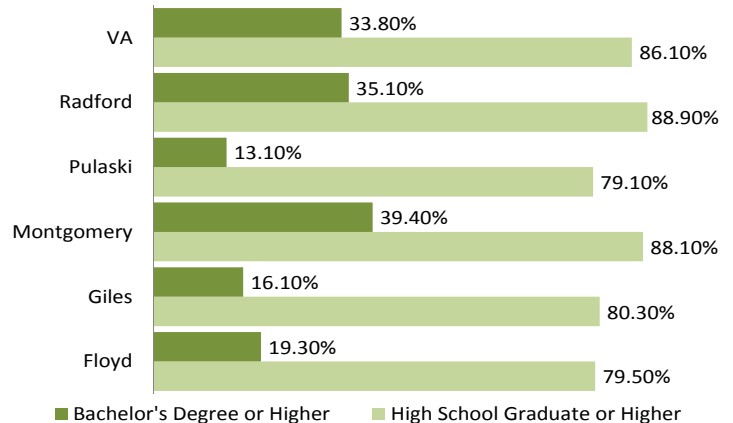


*Jobs in manufacturing have been decreasing while jobs in professional, scientific, and technical services have been increasing.*

## 2006-2011 Job Loss and Creation by Industry Sector



## Percentage of Residents with Specified Educational Levels



\*U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009

- Transportation Equipment Manufacturing
- Primary Metal Manufacturing
- Forest & Wood Products
- Mining
- Chemicals & Chemical-Based Products
- Fabricated Metal Manufacturing
- Apparel & Textiles
- Advanced Materials
- Transportation & Logistics
- Defense & Security
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries
- Computer and Electronics Manufacturing
- Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology
- Electrical Equipment, Appliance and Components Manufacturing
- Education & Knowledge Creation
- Biomedical/Biotechnical (Life Sciences)
- Energy (Fossil & Renewable)
- Information Technology & Telecommunications
- Machinery Manufacturing
- Glass & Ceramics
- Business & Financial Services
- Printing & Publishing

\*Southern Rural Development Center using Economic Modeling Specialists Int. Data

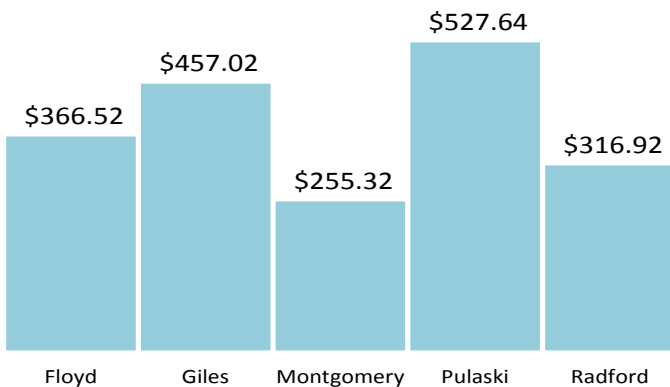
# COMMUNITY HEALTH

The New River Valley ranks poorly on several health-related measures, when compared to both Virginia overall and national benchmarks. A few issues stand out as particularly troubling—these include smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, substance abuse, poverty, and teen pregnancy rates.



*In the NRV, death rates from prescription drug abuse are 3x higher than the state average. Rates in Giles & Pulaski are 4x and 6x higher respectively.*

Annual Public Costs of Diabetes per NRV Resident



\* County Health Calculator; Based on: Education and income statistics from U.S. Census; county death rates and diabetes prevalence estimates from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services 2006-2008; estimates of medical spending on diabetes from the American Diabetes Association; and a county variation factor derived from The Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care Medicare reimbursement.



People with diagnosed diabetes, on average, have medical expenditures that are approximately 2.3 times higher than the expenditures would be in the absence of diabetes. Approximately 1 in 10 public health care dollars is attributed to diabetes. Indirect costs include increased factors such as absenteeism from work, reduced productivity and quality of life.

Does Not Meet VA State Average

Health Indicators of the New River Valley

	Floyd	Giles	Montg.	Pulaski	Radford	Virginia
Teen Pregnancies per 1000 births	28	46	16	49	8	35
% of Children in Poverty	20	19	17	23	19	15
Limited Access to Healthy Foods	9	22	13	17	8	7
% of Adult Obesity	28	29	29	27	28	28
% of Adult Smokers	22	22	16	35	13	19

\*2012 VA County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

# HOW CAN WE ADDRESS TRENDS & CHALLENGES?

Many of the challenges, issues, and trends that the New River Valley faces are inter-related, which means that progress in one area can lead to improvements in others. This next section identifies some of the ways these challenges intersect and overlap, which may create new opportunities to more effectively address our challenges through an integrated approach. By integrating efforts on multiple fronts, our businesses, community organizations, local governments, and residents can become more focused and effective with the investments we make in our communities- investments that build upon one another- to help make our future vision a reality.

## Enhancing Living & Working Environments

- 1** *Ensure there are affordable housing options for all stages of life and income groups.*
- 2** *Increase housing choice near jobs, services, and other key destinations.*
- 3** *Reduce energy costs to households, businesses, institutions, and municipalities through energy efficiency improvements, reduced energy waste, local energy generation, affordable energy prices and rates, and expanded consumer choice.*
- 4** *Enhance transportation and internet options to create better access to employment centers, town centers, and key destinations throughout the region.*
- 5** *Seek ways for residents to successfully age in place and in their communities.*

## Making the Business Environment more Productive & Efficient

- 1** *Support and develop a diverse economic base, from emerging high technology industries to small businesses to provide high quality jobs and foster regional investment.*
- 2** *Improve the region's telecommunications infrastructure network to attract new businesses and assist existing businesses.*
- 3** *Invest in transportation projects that enhance the business environment.*
- 4** *Ensure that residents have the skills, resources, and education necessary to reach their full potential.*
- 5** *Strengthen the economic viability of agriculture to diversify the local economy and enhance quality of life.*

## Preserving Rural Heritage & Community Character

- 1** *Protect beautiful vistas, which characterize the New River Valley, to preserve quality of life and rural character.*
- 2** *Protect and enhance parkland, open space, and waterways of the New River Valley to provide for outdoor recreation opportunities.*
- 3** *Recognize and celebrate the importance of the arts, culture, and history as being central to defining and building community character and pride.*
- 4** *Strengthen the economic and cultural position of downtown commercial districts.*
- 5** *Integrate existing community character into the design of community core improvements.*

## Building Healthy Communities

- 1** *Monitor and improve the environmental quality of the New River Valley's air, water, and land to promote the health of its residents.*
- 2** *Promote proactive choices about food, fitness, family, work, and play.*
- 3** *Improve access to healthy transportation, housing, and recreation options.*
- 4** *Foster collaboration across healthcare providers and networks to decrease health disparities and to increase access, availability, and affordability of healthcare services.*
- 5** *Promote local strategies that prevent and reduce the burden of chronic conditions, disease, and substance abuse.*



# Enhancing Living & Working Environments



## 1 Ensure there are affordable housing options for all stages of life and income groups.

Communities that offer a variety of housing types, such as single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, and apartments attract and retain residents at all life phases- from young families to retirees.

To accommodate projected population growth over the next 20 years, the region will need 10,000 new homes, and 14,000 existing homes will need either replacement or substantial rehabilitation, due to their age. Looking at population growth and other changes in demographics, it will be important to consider how development patterns and redevelopment efforts can provide greater availability and access to jobs, services, entertainment, and healthy environments, while helping residents find more affordable options in how they live.

2000-2010 Change in Number of Housing Units by Structure Type

	Single Family	Multi Family	Mobile Home
Floyd	709	104	94
Giles	370	-22	207
Mont.	3,122	2,046	-283
Pulaski	428	-28	485
Radford	704	-403	-14

\* U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009; Virginia Center for Housing Research.

## 2 Increase housing choice near jobs, services and other key destinations.

Increasing housing choices near job centers and implementing multi-modal transit infrastructure such as sidewalks, multi-purpose paths and public transportation to better link these residential communities to places where people work, shop and do business can provide residents with more flexibility and affordability in how they get to and from work and go about their daily lives. In addition to the jobs-housing connection, when more housing choices are available in closer proximity to schools and other community amenities, it can save families significant time and money as well as public dollars spent on infrastructure and municipal services.

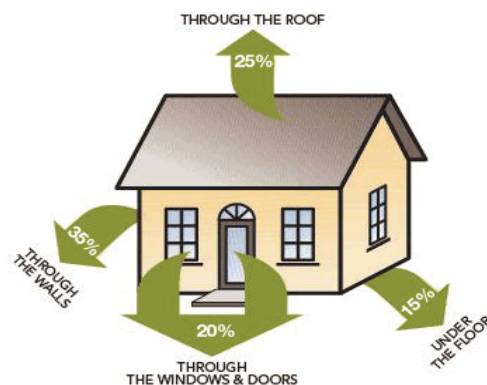
Median Income by County and % Required for Housing & Transportation Costs

Floyd	Giles	Mont.	Pulaski	Radford
\$42,044	\$41,186	\$48,598	\$41,163	\$37,294
44%	37%	45%	34%	46%

\*U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2006-2010, Virginia Center for Housing Research 2012 and AAA; Note: Median household income excludes the student population in the City of Radford and Montgomery County.

## 3 Reduce energy costs to households, businesses, institutions, and municipalities through energy efficiency improvements, reduced energy waste, local energy generation, affordable energy prices and rates, and expanded consumer choice.

Housing involves more than square footage, number of bedrooms, mortgage or rent. It also includes the more 'invisible' items that factor into overall housing costs, one of the largest being the cost of energy. Improving the energy-efficiency of existing homes can substantially increase the affordability of housing, while improving comfort, safety and health of residents.





#### 4 Enhance transportation and internet options to create better access to employment centers, town centers, and key destinations throughout the region.

In addition to expanding housing options near job and commercial centers, enhancing transportation choices, such as public transit, vanpools, or park and ride locations can help reduce costs for families who prefer to live a rural lifestyle. This can also benefit older adults, the disabled, and those who do not own a car.

Connecting more homes with high-speed internet can also help residents' access work and services from home, making telecommuting a viable option and further reducing commuting costs for families. Improved internet access can also help residents remain better connected with family and friends, participate in online education programs, and receive health-related services and information over the internet.

##### Benefits of Expanding Access to Broadband

1. Accelerates business development and job growth.
2. Provides direct access to education for rural residents.
3. Increases digital literacy to improve academic performance and prepare for future jobs.
4. Makes telecommuting (working from home) a viable option.
5. Expands access and quality of healthcare, while reducing the cost of care.
6. Strengthens ties with family and friends.
7. Improves the speed at which emergency personnel can react to a crisis.

#### 5 Seek ways for residents to successfully age in place and in their communities.

Overwhelmingly, older adults say they prefer to age in their homes, near family and the community they love. Assisted living and nursing homes are expensive and often outstrip the resources of many older adults and their families. To enable more people to age successfully in their homes and communities, modifying existing housing can help meet the changing physical and cognitive needs of older adults. Thinking about how to make housing more age-friendly at the design and construction phase is also important. Greater choice in supportive services -from help with housekeeping to in-home healthcare - will help more people live in their homes with greater safety, independence, and dignity.

*Each year, 1-in-3 adults aged 65+ accidentally falls. Main risks in the home include lack of grab bars, poor lighting, & tripping hazards. 1-in-4 older adults have a lower body limitation. Their homes could be made more safe with home modifications.*

##### Average Costs of Elderly Care Per Month in Virginia

Nursing Home/Private Room	\$6,360
Assisted Living	\$3,743
Adult Day Services	\$2,880
Home Health Aide	\$1,860

\*2010 MetLife Market Survey of Long-Term Care Costs

*Costs for home modifications range from a few hundred dollars for handrails and bathroom grab bars, to more than \$5,000 for a roll in shower or stair lift.*

#### Bathroom Retrofit for Independent Living





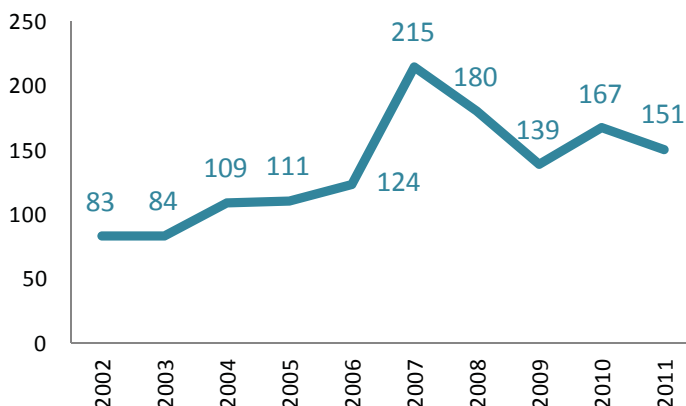
# Making the Business Environment more Productive & Efficient



- 1** *Support and develop a diverse economic base, from emerging high technology industries to small businesses, to provide high quality jobs and foster regional investment.*

Employment trends within the New River Valley will impact the location of jobs, commuting patterns, and where our workforce lives. Several factors have shaped the employment landscape of the region. Blacksburg and Radford continue to be important centers for higher education and provide a substantial and growing employment base. The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center provides business innovation in the region and is facilitating the creation of new jobs. Pulaski and Giles Counties have traditionally been reliant on manufacturing for jobs, but the region's employment in the manufacturing sector has been shrinking over a long period. The number of self-employed businesses has been growing and now outnumbers jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Number of New Business Startups in the New River Valley



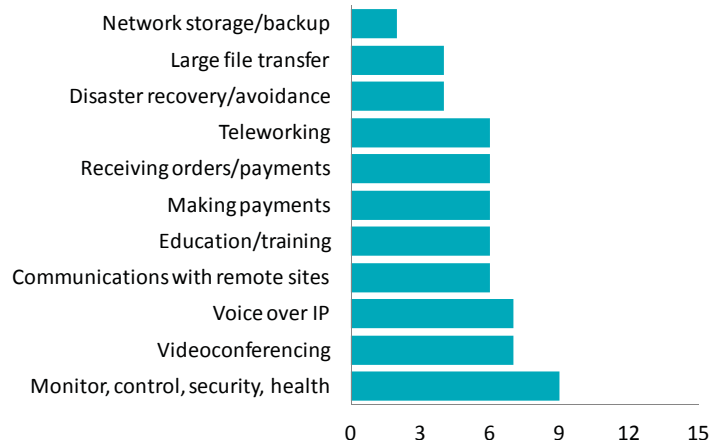
\*Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages

- 2** *Improve the region's telecommunications infrastructure network to attract new businesses and assist existing businesses.*

Access to the latest technology, infrastructure, and a highly-skilled workforce is critical to retaining existing businesses as well as increasing the diversity and number of jobs in the region. Quality of life also impacts economic development by attracting new businesses and supporting the existing economy. The business sector, in turn, contributes further to community quality of life through investments in the built environment, culture, and philanthropy.

Improving the region's telecommunication network can assist existing businesses, attract new businesses, and allow residents to access education opportunities. Affordable broadband linkages throughout the NRV can help meet the rising technology usage of both residents and businesses.

Number of Top 15 NRV Employers Reporting Needs of Broadband Usage



\*2004 NRVPC New River Valley Telecommunications Plan





### 3 Invest in transportation projects that enhance the business environment.

Targeted transportation investments can improve access to jobs, education, shopping, and commercial transport for movement of goods, while providing construction and operations jobs. By investing in transit, communities can better position themselves to attract new businesses as well as customers to their downtowns and other major employment centers.

### 4 Ensure that residents have the skills, resources, and education necessary to reach their full potential.

In order for this region to be prosperous, residents need the tools, resources, and education necessary to reach their full potential as citizens, workers, and leaders. As jobs in manufacturing continue to decline and the 21st century economy brings demands for different skills, training programs can connect workers with more secure job options. Improving relationships between businesses and students can also provide students with “real world” learning opportunities, promote skill development, work ethic, and help keep more young people from moving away to find good jobs.

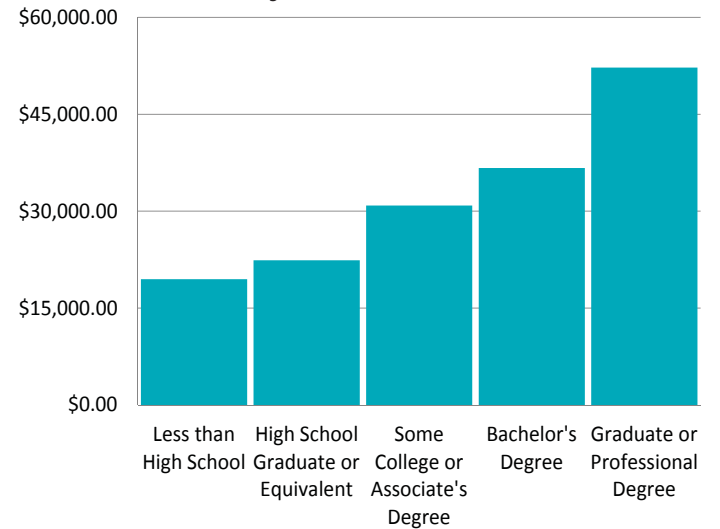


### 5 Strengthen the economic viability of agriculture to diversify the local economy and enhance quality of life.

Local farms remain key economic assets and symbols of the New River Valley’s cultural identity. Increasing interest and demand for more locally grown foods, presents a great opportunity for farmers to increase the economic viability of farming. However, there is currently an inadequate supply to meet the demand and it is unknown whether there is interest from current farmers to expand or diversify their operations. Expanding the agriculture infrastructure available in this region (e.g. processing or distribution center, slaughter house or dairy) could also help expand options and profit for local farmers and increase the region’s agricultural viability. By increasing availability of direct sales to the community, farmers can increase both their economic strength and community presence.

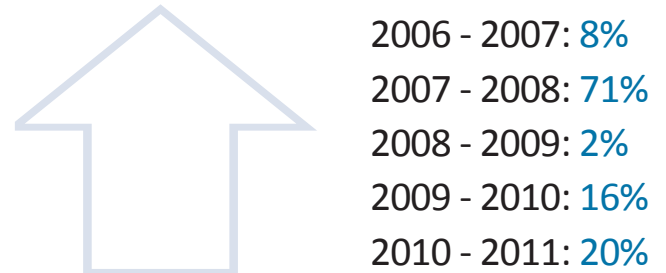
*The Blacksburg Farmers Market has seen a 160% increase in vendor revenues over the past 5 years (2006 - 2011).*

Median Income Earnings of NRV Residents by Education Level



\* U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2005-2009

2006-2011 Annual Changes in Blacksburg Farmer's Market Vendor Revenues



\*Blacksburg Farmer's Market Data



# Preserving Rural Heritage & Community Character



- 1** *Protect beautiful vistas, which characterize the New River Valley, to preserve quality of life and rural character.*

Scenic beauty is highly valued by citizens— particularly for the peaceful surroundings and slower pace of life the rural and natural landscapes provide. The farms, forests, and water resources that form the region’s rural landscape also serve as important economic and cultural resources. They support local communities by providing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities such as hunting, fishing, paddling, hiking, and camping. Forest resources protect ground and surface waters to help ensure a clean and healthy water supply for NRV residents. Improving land use planning and practices can help protect these resources as well as the rural character, scenic views, and opportunities for active recreation they provide.



- 2** *Protect and enhance parkland, open space, and waterways of the New River Valley to provide for outdoor recreation opportunities.*

## Top 10 Most Popular Outdoor Activities in the New River Valley

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Walking for Pleasure | 6. Hunting                |
| 2. Swimming             | 7. Using a Playground     |
| 3. Driving for Pleasure | 8. Visiting Natural Areas |
| 4. Jogging & Running    | 9. Sunbathing             |
| 5. Fishing              | 10. Bicycling             |

*\*2006 Virginia Outdoor Survey*

*More than 20,000,000 visitors enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities in the New River Valley each year.*

*\*2006 Virginia Outdoor Survey*







### 3 *Recognize and celebrate the importance of the arts, culture, and history as being central to defining and building community character and pride.*

The unique culture, history and traditions of our region create a sense of place and shared identity. The arts and cultural resources within our community often provide much-needed gathering places, where local traditions are passed along to our children and grandchildren. The arts foster young imaginations and help children develop critical thinking, communication, and innovation skills essential to today's workforce. Artistic and cultural activities also serve as a "community draw" which can stimulate business activity, attract tourism revenue, and help retain high quality employers and employees by creating highly desirable places in which to raise a family, work, and retire.

*"Arts and cultural activities make a community attractive both to its citizens and to business. Simply put, the arts contribute to the quality of life for our people. The arts are good for business. Business should be good to the arts."*

-David R. Goode, former Chairman of the Board & Chief Executive Officer, Norfolk Southern Corporation



### 4 *Strengthen the economic and cultural position of downtown commercial districts.*

Strengthening small town centers provides an opportunity to revitalize local economies without sacrificing the beauty of the surrounding landscape or the unique character and identity of communities. The New River Valley is home to many main streets with historic buildings and in some cases, a growing number of vacant commercial properties. When communities work to include the arts in community design and development, especially in close proximity to shopping, food, and other services, they stand a greater chance of revitalizing their historic downtowns, meeting visitor expectations, and supporting local businesses.

### 5 *Integrate existing community character into the design of community core improvements.*

Channeling investments into these existing main streets can preserve existing infrastructure, historic character, and spur new economic opportunities, while making wiser use of public resources. It can also help to increase the accessibility and convenience to essential services for our more rural communities— making them true "town centers" once again, where people work, shop, and come together for community events.

Recent Local Investments in the Town of Floyd		
2006	Angels in the Attic	\$53,000
2006	Town of Floyd	\$160,000
2007	Floyd Country Store	\$360,000
2007	Town of Floyd	\$235,000
2007	Hotel Floyd	\$2,358,000
2007	Village Green	\$650,000
2007	Winter Sun	\$201,000

\*2008, Economic Impact Assessment of the Crooked Road

*Due to efforts and investments to enhance cultural venues and activities, Floyd experienced a 90% increase in visitor spending on accommodations from 2003-2007. Annual visitor spending in 2007 was \$858,729.*



# Building Healthy Communities



## 1 Monitor and improve the environmental quality of the New River Valley's air, water, and land to promote the health of its residents.

Clean air and water, scenic landscapes, fresh food, outdoor recreational opportunities and diverse fish and wildlife each enhance the health and quality of life of New River Valley residents. Although both ground and surface water are abundant in much of the NRV, many of these water resources are under threat or already impaired from agricultural runoff, leaky septic systems, and development patterns that threaten long-term water supply. Strategies that address or mitigate threats to water quality and supply will help protect this critical resource for generations to come.

### Water Quality Impairments in the New River Valley

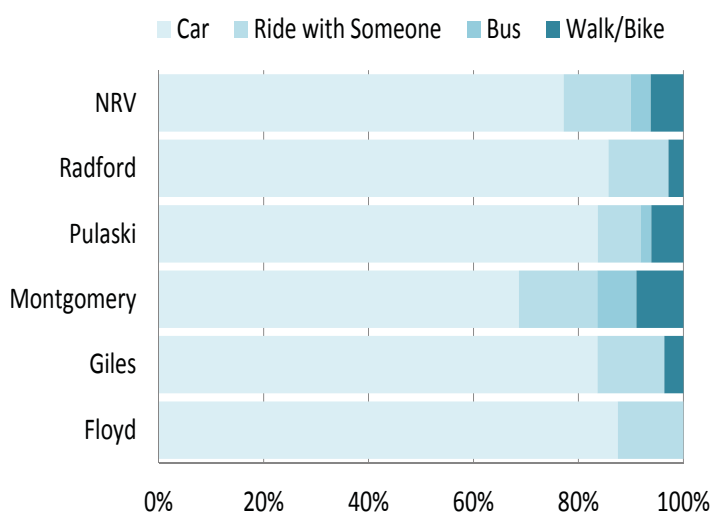
Impairment Type & Primary Causes	# of River Miles Impaired
<b>E. COLI.</b> <i>Animal waste associated with pets and farm animals and human waste from straight pipes, leaky sewage collection and treatment systems.</i>	285.39
<b>PCBs IN FISH TISSUE</b> <i>Legacy contaminants.</i>	76.60
<b>TEMPERATURE</b> <i>Destruction of riparian vegetation.</i>	60.80
<b>LOSS OF AQUATIC ORGANISMS</b> <i>Sedimentation and nutrients from agriculture, municipal and industrial source and toxicity associated with legacy contaminants.</i>	60.25
<b>METALS</b> <i>Legacy contaminants.</i>	3.55

\*2012 VA Department of Environmental Quality

## 2 Promote proactive choices about food, fitness, family, work, and play.

Communities that make it more convenient to make healthy choices have better health outcomes for their citizens. Communities can also foster a built environment that makes healthy lifestyle choices (like walking, biking, and eating fresh food) more convenient and fun. Transportation systems and options can be designed to link up important destinations, including places to access affordable, healthy food options. When communities plan with healthy food access, pedestrian safety, and access to recreation opportunities in mind, they are likely to see substantial health benefits for their citizens.

### % of Lower-Income Residents Walking, Biking, Riding, & Driving to the Grocery Store



\*2012 Livability Initiative Lower Literacy Survey



### 3 *Improve access to healthy transportation, housing, and recreation options.*

Development decisions can affect community health outcomes. Sidewalks, bike lanes, street designs that slow traffic and make it safe to cross, parks, trails, gyms, shops and other destinations within walking distance—all of these community features can help communities reduce overall obesity rates and related health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.



### 4 *Foster collaboration across healthcare providers and networks to decrease health disparities and to increase access, availability, and affordability of healthcare services.*

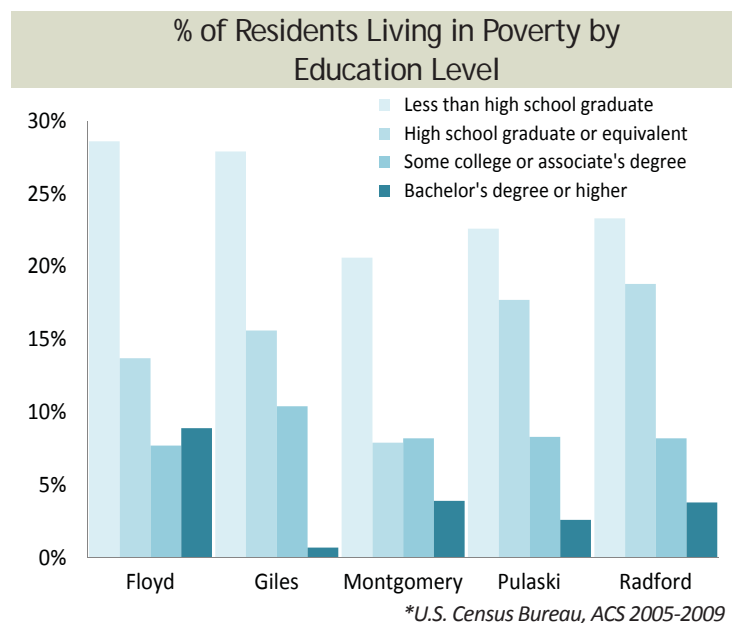
Communities can improve health outcomes by increasing access to preventative care. People who don't receive appropriate preventative medical and behavioral care are more likely to use the emergency room for primary care, raising the costs for all citizens. Health insurance by itself does not ensure access. It is also necessary to have providers that accept the individual's health insurance and a sufficient number of healthcare providers located at close proximity to patients. Communities can reduce the gap between providers and patients by increasing knowledge about the importance of preventative care, providing transportation services for medical related visits, promoting electronic collaboration among healthcare providers, and adding evening and weekend clinic hours for patients who cannot seek care during the work day.



### 5 *Promote local strategies that prevent and reduce the burden of chronic conditions, disease, and substance abuse.*

Social support networks comprised of family and friends, and involvement in community life, have also been identified as a powerful predictor of health, suggesting that individuals without a strong social network are less likely to participate in healthy lifestyle choices. People living in remote areas, especially the elderly, those who live alone, and those without secure transportation are more likely to become isolated, be less physically active, and have reduced access to health services. Communities can improve citizen health by taking active steps to reduce isolation for these vulnerable populations.

Higher levels of education improve individual economic opportunities, access to medical care, and reduce social/psychological stressors that can contribute to substance abuse and family violence. By focusing on education in order to improve high-school graduation rates, strategic workforce re-training to respond to a changing economic landscape, and economic development initiatives to improve job security, improvements in citizen health outcomes are more likely and more lasting.



# WHAT'S

# NEXT?

This interim report for the Livability Initiative is an important milestone in our planning process. In it, key challenges have been identified including some data and trends that provide a clearer picture of the region today, and where things are heading. The key strengths and assets of this region have also been identified based on citizen feedback—those things citizens want to preserve, strengthen, and draw from as critical issues in this region are addressed. Some overarching goals have also been presented, goals that could substantially improve quality of life for citizens and the overall livability of this region; as well as some potential strategies that communities could employ to achieve those goals.

The next steps in the process involve looking at the region today and where communities in this region want to be 20 years from now. This will involve examining the goals and strategies developed by working groups so far and developing a better understanding of how they might interrelate. That is, which strategy options might help address multiple challenges, and which might require asking some hard questions on tradeoffs, costs, and different preferences among citizens and localities. In many cases, this will require deciding between multiple approaches depending on the preferred end goal and strategies that our citizens want to put their energy into.

This report was built by:

1, 200 New River Valley Citizen Voices and  
160 Participants at Monthly Working Groups



#### Outreach activities included:

- A day long regional kick-off meeting
- An on-line survey
- Spanish language survey
- Lower literacy paper survey
- Small focus group and community meetings
- Interactive performance theatre
- Digital storytelling
- BUILT planning game

#### Working group participants included:

- 8 State agencies
- 11 Regional organizations
- 26 Non-profit and community based organizations
- 15 Private sector partners
- 15 citizens (no particular affiliation)
- All member localities

## How can I participate?

As with the first phase of the planning process, citizen participation is both welcome and needed! The New River Valley has tremendous resources to draw upon as citizens work to address some of the key challenges identified in this report. Making positive progress on these challenges and achieving the goals that residents have identified means weighing different potential solutions and seeing which are the best fit for this region, and which might be more effective in some localities than others. Citizens can help make sure the priorities and action strategies that are most important to them, their neighbors, and their community are heard in the next phase of the planning process by participating in face-to-face meetings, workshops, online surveys, and focused topic discussions.

To find out more ways to get involved, visit  
[www.nrvlivability.org](http://www.nrvlivability.org)  
or call Carol Davis, Community Outreach Facilitator for  
the Livability Initiative at 540-639-9313, ext. 222.