

Discussion notes from Shawsville meeting, April 14, 2009
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What to do

People:

- University students have valuable skills. We should promote their involvement in the community.
- Virginia has a great tradition of craft-making, but local craft people are aging. Therefore, we need to get younger people involved in those crafts. We can promote craft making as both an enjoyable art and a great way to supplement income.
- We need proactive drug prevention programs. Free educational programs that convey the realities of drug use would be ideal.
- The Healthy Families program in Hampton has been extremely successful. A similar project in the NRV would be a great way to invest in our children.
- Many classes in our schools are still being taught in trailers. This is only one reason that the region needs to invest in improvements and expansions of public school buildings.
- We need to find ways to get younger people involved in leadership.
- We should initiate afterschool programs for workforce development at the middle school level.
- Students all over the country are looking for opportunities to learn about and participate in organic farming. We can take advantage of that interest by creating some of those opportunities in the region.

Employment/Business/Industry:

- The local tax system has a particularly negative impact on the agricultural industry. Wealth in the region has moved from farms to smaller neighborhoods. Farmers don't make much money, but pay the most taxes. We need to revise the tax system to base it on net worth instead of real estate.
- We should research and develop local markets.
- We should promote common regional pride and discourage competition between towns.
- We should consider the feasibility and potential benefits of ecolocalism.
- Microfinance institutions and organizations can be great assets for economic and community development. We should advertise the availability of small loan programs and encourage non-profit microfinance organizations to operate in the region.
- We should encourage "buy local" initiatives.
- A regional restaurant week (similar to that of DC) would be a great way to promote people to explore entertainment assets and opportunities throughout the region.

- We should facilitate more thorough economic integration in neighborhoods throughout the region.
- We need a fluid regional workforce training initiative. We need to create programs that connect high schools to technical schools and then adult technology centers. This initiative should be focused on the needs of emerging industries.

Community and Resources:

- We need to promote responsible eco-tourism.
- We should establish partnerships between organization such as churches to work together for the good of the whole region.
- Compact development could be advantageous in many places throughout the NRV. We should identify those regions and incorporate “walkability” into further development plans.
- Banning plastic bottles in the region would be a great way to curb waste production and increase energy efficiency.
- Litter is excessive; we should encourage the region to enforce littering prohibitions.
- A residential arts building for training workshops would be a great way to promote arts and crafts in the region.
- The region should hold a referendum to see if citizens would support a tax to support conservation easements.
- We need to create a central market, information sharing, networking website for the region. The resources for such a site already exist they just need to be contributed to its creation.
- Watersheds should be used for playgrounds and parks rather than residential development.
- Cheaper water and electric utility rates during low use times are a great initiative for lowering overall energy consumption. We should encourage water and power providers to offer such stratified rates.
- Public schools should teach and reinforce environmental awareness.
- We should encourage local businesses to adopt incentives to use reusable shopping bags, coffee cups, etc.
- We need to promote energy efficient lifestyles through education and incentives.

Energy and Infrastructure:

- We need park and rides throughout the region. A bus line to Floyd would be especially enjoyable.
- In order to meet entrepreneurial needs we should increase distance education infrastructure.
- In order to supply the whole region we need to continue to upgrade and expand water and sewer infrastructure.
- The region needs free wi-fi.
- We need to advocate resident's personal responsibility for the improvement and preservation of the region's resources.