

2016

Rural Retreat Train Depot Stakeholder Visioning

PREPARED BY: THE VIRGINIA TECH OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, www.econdev.vt.edu. The Office of Economic Development (OED) connects Virginia Tech faculty, companies, and communities in ways that help create, retain, and enhance the quality of jobs and opportunities around the Commonwealth. OED provides training, applied research, and technical assistance services to increase clients' abilities to prudently manage economic change and improve their quality of life. Examples of such services include completion of feasibility studies, economic impact analysis, industry and occupational analysis, strategic planning and community visioning, and performance management and benchmarking studies. OED faculty and staff who contributed to this report include Maeve Gould, Faruk Hesenjan, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Adam Mawyer, Nick Onopa and John Provo.



The Rural Retreat Depot Foundation commissioned the report and contributed input and assistance throughout the process. Numerous individuals and organizations contributed information, resources or assistance through interviews, community and stakeholder meetings, and individual discussions. Special thanks to the Virginia Tech Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology (ICAT) for their work on incorporating high-speed internet and the streaming of arts events in Rural Retreat.



Introduction

In spring 2016 the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation commissioned the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development to assist in the visioning of the historic Rural Retreat Train Depot. This technical assistance included gathering background data on town and county demographics and industry trends, research on case studies and best practices, interviews with similar train depots, and conducting a stakeholder visioning meeting to determine possible uses of the train depot and examine how the train depot's new function can best benefit the community.

The Rural Retreat train depot was originally built in the 1850's by the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and was both a freight and passenger station. It burned down during the Civil War and was rebuilt in 1867 in the Italianate architectural style, and is one of only three depots in the nation remaining of similar design. In the mid-1900's the depot was no longer used as a train station and was sold to a company that used it as a warehouse. Over the years, the building began to slowly deteriorate and the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation acquired the building in 2011. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.

The Rural Retreat Train Depot Foundation formed to acquire, restore and manage Rural Retreat's historic train depot as a means of preserving the culture of the region. The foundation is a non-profit organization whose board members include local business owners, a local food producer, local government officials and retired community members, many of whom have lived in Rural Retreat their entire lives. Each board member has a unique skill-set or interest such as music, local food, historic preservation, festivals, and Appalachian crafts.

The foundation's restoration master plan has two components: exterior restoration to the 1949 remodel condition and interior restoration to create an attractive, comfortable community space that will serve as the centerpiece for the town. The exterior restoration has largely been completed and interior restoration is ongoing. The train depot is currently home to a farmers market, available for community meetings, and is a versatile event rental space for family reunions, weddings, professional retreats, musical performances, and so on.

The remainder of this report is broken up into four sections: 1) a review of select train depots in Appalachia and their reuses, 2) an overview of Rural Retreat regional data, 3) a summary of the April 27, 2016 Rural Retreat Visioning meeting, and 4) a synthesis of possible reuses for the train depot and recommendations.

Train Depots in Appalachia

Similar Sites Analysis and Expert Interviews

To understand more how other historic depots have been restored and put to new uses, The Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development (OED) explored a selection of historic train depots through their websites, news articles and interviews with site representatives. These sites included:

- The Marion Train Depot (Marion, NC)
- The Old Fort Depot (Old Fort, NC)
- The Biltmore Depot (Biltmore Village, NC)
- The Saluda Train Depot (Saluda, NC)
- The Depot in Marshall (Marshall, NC)
- Centennial Station Arts Center (High Point, NC)
- The Lavonia Train Depot (Lavonia, GA)
- Bristol Train Station (Bristol, VA)
- The Historic Cambria Depot (Cambria, VA)
- The Chatham Train Depot (Chatham, VA)
- Culpeper Train Station (Culpeper, VA)
- The Draper Mercantile (Draper, VA)

These sites were chosen based on recommendations from experts in the field, their similar rural character to Rural Retreat, and/or recent innovative activities that seem appropriate to Rural Retreat's character and desire to create a unique use for their depot.

The Marion Train Depot (Marion, NC)

The Marion Train Depot, located at 58 Depot Street, was originally constructed in 1867 as a freight depot to serve Marion on the Western Rail Line, making the building one of the oldest surviving depots in Western North Carolina. Additions were constructed to the building in 1935 and 1952. The Depot provided passenger rail service until the 1970's. In 2005, with funding and technical assistance from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the City of Marion renovated the Marion Train Depot, which now serves as Marion's Office of Economic Development and is available for rent for meetings, parties and other events. The facility accommodates an occupancy of 131 people with tables and chairs.



Photo Credit:
www.historicmarionnc.wordpress.com/about

Freddie Killough, the Executive Director of the Marion Economic Development Office, told OED that the Marion Depot is a community rental space for parties, receptions, etc. Volunteers also organize live music in the Depot every Thursday evening. In addition, the Marion Depot houses the Marion Business Association, and serves as the Economic Development Office for the City of Marion. Killough also explained that the City of Marion owns and manages the Depot. The new uses were determined through community forums, and these new uses were decided to be the best for their community. When asked about the restoration process, Killough explained that the Marion Depot was fully restored and completed in 2005 and that the restoration took three years. Lastly, Killough informed us that the Depot restoration was 80% funded by Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds, and 10% each from the North Carolina Department of Transportation/Rail Division and the City of Marion. For more on The Marion Train Depot, please visit: www.marionnc.org/rentals.php

The Old Fort Depot (Old Fort, NC)

The Old Fort Depot is now the town's visitor center and a railroad museum. Old Fort's train depot is in the heart of town. Located directly behind the historic "Arrowhead" this depot is beautifully renovated and includes a Visitor Center. For more on The Old Fort Depot, please visit: www.romanticasheville.com/old_fort.htm



Photo Credit: www.oldfort.org

The Biltmore Depot (Biltmore Village, NC)

The Biltmore Depot has been renovated and converted into a restaurant called the Village Wayside Bar & Grille. Like the Biltmore Mansion and the Cathedral of All Souls, the Biltmore Depot was designed by Richard Morris Hunt. The Depot was completed in 1894, and at Christmas of 1895 it welcomed the friends and relatives of George Vanderbilt for the grand



Photo Credit: www.villagewayside.com

opening of the Biltmore Estate. The Depot continued as a passenger station until 1972, when Southern Railroad stopped passenger service. The Depot building was declared a National Historic landmark in 1976. While the Depot has been renovated and modernized repeatedly over the years, the exterior still looks the same as it did when the Vanderbilts debarked the train here in 1895 to celebrate the holidays. For more on The Biltmore Depot, please visit: www.realpages.com/sites/biltmoredepotrestaurant

The Saluda Train Depot (Saluda, NC)

Where once the Saluda train depot received the throngs of seasonal visitors that caused the annual swelling of the population in their search for good health and relaxation, the area has been restored to house several shops in a unique setting rich with history and character. Known as Saluda Station, the area between the Saluda Public Library and City Hall contains the relocated Saluda depot building which is now open as a museum. It houses local art exhibits and monthly Saluda Train Tales on the third Friday of the month. For more on The Saluda Train Depot, please visit: www.historicSaluda.org/?page_id=3356



Photo Credit: www.saluda.com/history_depot.php

The Depot in Marshall (Marshall, NC)

The building is the original Southern Railroad Depot for the town of Marshall and served as the depot until the 1970's when passenger service was discontinued. Many of the businesses in town flourished along the tracks because of the ease of unloading products. Since 1980, the Marshall Depot has hosted a traditional music jam every Friday night.



Photo Credit: www.visitmadisoncounty.com

The music performed at the Marshall Depot today includes various genres including country, blue grass, old time, and gospel. The traditional music jams are free to the public, and they also often include cake walks and dancing. Bands play 30 minute sets every Friday night starting at 6:00 p.m. and these are family friendly, community events. For more on The Depot in Marshall, please visit: www.blueridgemusic.org/blueridgemusictrails

Centennial Station Arts Center (High Point, NC)

The High Point Depot, known as the Centennial Station Arts Center, is an arts, entertainment and rental space. In addition to arts and entertainment events, the dinner theatre in the Centennial Station Arts Center in downtown High Point



Photo Credit: www.highpointarts.org/event-space

is available to rent. Originally serving as a freight train depot in the 1930s, this historic landmark is a unique venue for special events such as wedding receptions and corporate luncheons.

OED interviewed Clint Bowman, Programs Coordinator for the Centennial Station Arts Center, and he shared a lot of great information. Bowman said Centennial Station is now owned and run by the High Point Arts Council, which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The High Point Arts Council uses the space for the High Point Ballet and the High Point Community Theatre. The facility is essentially split into three different sections: one side is used by the High Point Ballet for rehearsal and practice, the mid-section is used by the Community Theatre for play rehearsals and prop storage, and the third section is used as the offices for the Arts Council. The actual load-in areas of the station are used as an event space with a kitchen, bar, stage and dance floor.

Bowman explained that the decision to use the train depot as an arts, entertainment and rental space was determined by the High Point Arts Council when they became the owners in 2012. Many of the decisions on how the facility should be used have been made by the board of directors and various committees that branch off the board. In terms of restoration, many were done by a private owner who used the facility as a furniture showroom before the Arts Council bought the building. Restorations involved improving the bathrooms, kitchen area, lighting, heating/air-conditioning, addition of the bar, painting and other internal and external repairs to the mostly wooden facility.

Since the Arts Council purchased the building, they have re-caulked the original floors and a new dance floor was installed. The Arts Council has a Facility Committee that meets on a monthly basis, Bowman explained, and focuses on multiple improvement projects on the facility. They are currently working on improving their parking lot and kiosk that is by the road. The restoration has been, and remains, an ongoing process since the Arts Council acquired the building. The Arts Center is funded in a variety of ways. The main funding source is rental space fees for wedding receptions, fundraisers, corporate functions, proms, etc. The bar revenue and revenue generated through ticket sales to their own ballet and theatre events are also important sources of funding. Finally, the Arts Center also garners a good deal of its funding from parking fees during the High Point Furniture Market Week which is twice a year. The Arts Center charges \$10 per car during these market festivals and the money raised goes to the facility. For more on the Centennial Station Arts Center, please visit: www.highpointarts.org/event-space

The Lavonia Train Depot (Lavonia, GA)

The City of Lavonia and Franklin County, Georgia have worked with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) to preserve the depot and install a public meeting space and railroad museum. The ARC and TVA have provided \$120,000 in funds for the restoration, matched with in-kind contributions from the City of Lavonia and Franklin County. GMRC manages the project and provides technical consultation in architectural preservation.



Photo Credit: www.nado.org/rural-community-spotlight-lavonia-georgia

The restored depot houses a welcome center that receives a huge number of visitors from I-85. It will also house a museum, a community event space, a small library about the history of the town, a Welcome Center, and city offices. A local railroad company has also expressed interest in providing commuter rail service and excursion trains from the depot, although these represent long-term potentialities rather than confirmed plans. According to a news article, the rail depot's economic value lies in its ability to attract visitors to Lavonia and the City hopes to make the depot a gathering place for the community.

The depot was given a complete renovation in 2012 and today it stands very similarly to how it did when it was built in 1912. Marie Morse, Director of the Lavonia Main Street and Downtown Development Association, was interviewed by OED and she explained that the train depot is now used as a Welcome Center, the Main Street and Downtown Development Association office, a small meeting space and a small museum. The museum is located where the freight area of the depot used to be and the entire depot is approximately 3,200 square feet. The City of Lavonia owns the train depot, and the new uses of the depot were mainly decided by the city staff and the mayor.

In terms of restoration, the train depot was overall in good shape, but some minor repairs and refurbishing was completed. The platform needed partial restructuring, some restoration was done to the outside in 2010, and a few cosmetic repairs were made to the interior which were completed in 2012. Morse explained that the restoration was funded by the ARC (as previously stated) through a grant that provided \$150,000 for the restoration. Some municipal reserves were also used to fund the restoration. The yearly maintenance of the building is funded by the City's general fund, as well as by a portion of the City's hotel/motel tourism tax revenue. Morse concluded the conversation by stating that the depot was important to the community to preserve and that was reflected in their support and donations to the project. The entire community seems to be in support of the project, despite its costliness, because they value the

preservation of their history. For more on The Lavonia Train Depot, please visit: www.nado.org/rural-community-spotlight-lavonia-georgia

Bristol Train Station (Bristol, VA)

Once a bustling hub built in 1902, the Bristol Train Station has been restored to its original grandeur specifically for special events. They host weddings, conferences, business meetings, celebrations and other special events. The Bristol Train Station features both indoor and outdoor accommodations. For more on the Bristol Train Station, please visit: www.bristoltrainstation.org



Photo Credit: www.bristoltrainstation.org

The Historic Cambria Depot (Cambria, VA)

The Historic Cambria Depot (also known as Christiansburg Station) was built in 1867 and opened in 1868 by the Virginia Tennessee Railroad. In 1983, father and daughter team Jim and Meghan Dorsett purchased the depot after it was hit by a train, an accident that left the building 16-18 inches out of plumb, 12 inches off the foundation, and with a condemnation notice on the front door. After extensive restoration, the depot went into the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.



Photo Credit: www.historiccambria.com

The Cambria Toy Station is now privately owned and operated by Meghan Dorsett and Carol Lindstrom. According to their website, at present, the depot houses a residence, a publishing company, a toy store, and a bookstore. The toy store helps cover the costs of the depot so they can keep the front end of the building open to the public. The bookstore was started in October 2015 to help raise money for a new paint job and a second round of preservation work on the depot.

OED spoke with Meghan Dorsett about many topics including the restoration process, how it was decided what the new uses for the depot would be, and funding options for similar depots. She explained deciding what the new uses of the Cambria Depot would be was pretty simple because she already had an existing publishing business. Dorsett and her business partner added new uses (such as the toy store and book store) in order to make enough money to keep the building standing and she noted that they have made many modifications to their businesses model as they have gone along.

The Dorsetts completed the restoration piece by piece. They had a lot of difficulty finding a contractor that was willing to take on the job because the building was so structurally damaged. Eventually they did, and Dorsett reiterated that historic restoration is an ongoing process and it will likely never be completely done. She suggested that groups perusing train depot restoration have an account or fund set aside for ongoing preservation efforts.

Dorsett also recommended that any train depot considering becoming a community or event rental space install a certified or community kitchen. She installed a kitchen in the residence portion of the Cambria Depot but cautioned that the Cambria Depot was built with creosote timber which is highly flammable and a fire hazard, and the Rural Retreat Depot was built similarly. However, Dorsett advised that it is possible to install a community or “church” kitchen, which includes food storage space, a refrigerator, a sink and maybe a stove if it is done without deep fryers and no commercial kitchen-grade food heating devices which can be a fire hazard and not worth the risk.

In terms of advice for groups beginning the process of restoring a historic train depot, Dorsett recommended looking into available grants for funding including: the National Historic Society, the Virginia Historic Society and the Virginia Tourism Board. She suggested that the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation utilize railroad tourism as a draw to bring people from outside the community to Rural Retreat. Dorsett commented that Virginia tourism in the Blue Ridge Highlands area of the state is centered on the outdoors and the arts (such as music, crafts, etc.) and that train depots looking to find new uses should capitalize on these assets. She also suggested looking into Virginia’s Artisan Trails, which is where several state-level promotions and grants can come from, if the Rural Retreat depot were to utilize the space as a place where artisans can display and sell their crafts. For more on The Historic Cambria Depot, please visit: www.cambriatoystation.com/aboutus.htm

The Chatham Train Depot (Chatham, VA)

The old freight portion of the Chatham Train Depot is being restored to honor Danville and Pittsylvania area war veterans with an emphasis on the role that the railroad and train stations played in periods of national defense, through a Veteran’s Museum. The old ticket office



Photo Credit: www.pittsylvaniahistoricsociety.org

will be used as a visitor’s center. The museum will be utilized for the display of railroad artifacts and for portraying the historical significance of the rail depot to Chatham’s growth and development. The historic waiting room will be used as a community room and exhibition hall, and bathroom facilities and an office will be constructed. The freight depot section is being converted into a public library and a history research center. The Pittsylvania Historical Society says the original purpose of the depot can be re-established if Amtrak, or other mass transit rail

sources, become viable. For more on The Chatham Train Depot, please visit: www.pittsylvaniahistoricalsociety.org/vetmus.html

Culpeper Train Station (Culpeper, VA)

The Culpeper Train Station is still a train station and hub for tourists stopping by the Visitor Center. It is also host to cultural events and the museum of Culpeper. The town of Culpeper created a historic district covering the entire downtown, utilizing the four point approach for downtown renewal pioneered by the National Main Street Association. They also won a \$700,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Virginia Department of



Photo Credit: www.greatamericanstations.com

Transportation to restore the train station and the historic downtown area. The historic freight station was then converted into a conference and event space that can be rented for meetings and social events. The Culpeper Train Station has also installed the first public arts project in Culpeper called Reel LOVE at the Depot. Lastly, the Culpeper Train Station is also the host of outdoor events for the community.

OED spoke to Maxie Brown, Zoning Administrator for the Town of Culpeper, about their restoration and reuse process. Brown explained that the Culpeper Train Station is currently being used as a Visitor Center, features local artwork on the walls and has a kitchen that can be used as a community room. She also mentioned that the Culpeper Train Station restoration was primarily funded by Community Development Block Grants and that its operating costs are now funded by the Town of Culpeper. A current restoration project they are working on is repairing the roof of the train station. In order to acquire the station from Norfolk Southern Railway 15 years ago, the town traded the land that the train station is on for other land in the town the railway company wanted. Lastly, Brown explained that the town acquired the building largely because decision makers knew they wanted to utilize the train station as a Visitor Center, indoor and outdoor event space and public arts display. The Town Council determined there was a need for these uses for the community, and the Culpeper Train Station appeared to be a good place to house them. For more on the Culpeper Train Station, please visit: www.greatamericanstations.com/Stations/CLP

The Draper Mercantile (Draper, VA)

Although the Draper Mercantile is not a restored train depot, it is a historic building near Rural Retreat that has been restored into a new use and is appropriate to the character of the area.



Photo Credit: www.drapermerc.com

The Draper Mercantile and Trading Company is creating economic opportunity for the region while preserving and celebrating the unique cultural heritage of Southwest Virginia. As a historic site and a long-standing tradition in the community of Draper, it remains at the heart of the community and serves as a community center for the town of Draper. It offers a regular calendar of free events and services to the community including live music, artisan demonstrations, beginner’s yoga, free wireless internet access and educational events. Various community groups hold meetings or events at the Draper Mercantile. The Draper Mercantile also hosts a variety of music events, like concerts, dances, intimate acoustic performances, and their own Blues Band. They have regular free performances by local musicians as well as ticketed events.

The Draper Mercantile also hosts holiday celebrations and various festivals throughout the year, inviting the community and visitors to the area to join in celebrating the cultural heritage of Southwest Virginia. In addition to regular programming, the Draper Mercantile can be rented for gatherings such as wedding receptions, birthday parties and baby showers. Lastly, the Draper Mercantile is home to the Blue Door Café and Bakery which serves fresh food in a historic atmosphere. The Café and Bakery attempts to use seasonal produce as much as possible and they also cater parties. For more on The Draper Mercantile, please visit: www.drapermerc.com

Similar Sites Summary

In all case studies cited, the central location as well as the cultural and historic value of the train depots are leveraged in determining their future use. The followings features are reoccurring among the case study train depots:

- Most of the train depots are being used for multiple purposes since renovation. This is similar to the current multi-use approach that the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation is pursuing.
- The most popular uses are museums, visitor centers and art exhibits, as well as gathering spaces for music festivals and community events.

- Depending on the original condition, all train depots underwent varying levels of interior and exterior renovation that require a certain amount of initial investment. The interviewees emphasized that the renovation and restoration is an ongoing process, and the entities that own and run the train depot should be prepared for this financially.
- Several external sources regarding transportation, downtown redevelopment, historic preservation, and tourism are used to fund the renovation process. Among the case studies, financial assistance from public entities and private donations are identified as common sources to cover operational costs. A few public funding sources include: the Appalachian Regional Commission, Community Development Block Grants, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Historic Resources, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Rural Retreat and Wythe County Data Overview

When considering appropriate uses for the Rural Retreat Train Depot, we must take into account the local population or possible users of the depot. As of 2014, there were 1,631 people living in the town of Rural Retreat, and 29,259 people in surrounding Wythe County. As shown in Table.1 in Appendix A, a lower percentage of the town's population is aged 18-24 years. The percentage of people aged 65 years and over (20%) in Rural Retreat is relatively higher than both Wythe County and the state average.

Among the population aged 18 years and over, 86% are high school graduates, and 18.4% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. As illustrated in Table.2 in Appendix A, Rural Retreat has proportionally more high school graduates and residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher than Wythe County, but less than the state of Virginia.

These demographics may pose two opportunities: a chance to retain or attract younger audiences, and a chance to develop activities for the substantial senior population. Continuing education or workshop programs may possibly attract some of this audience.

Employment

Compared with Wythe County, the town of Rural Retreat has a higher labor force participation rate. Nearly 61% of its population 16 years and over are in the labor force. Additionally, the town's unemployment rate (6%) is lower than both Wythe County (10%) and the state average (7%).

As of 2014, there were 316 jobs in Rural Retreat. Manufacturing, followed by Retail Trade, and Healthcare and Social Assistance, account for 35%, 26% and 12% of total jobs respectively. The main occupations include Management, business, science, and arts occupations (31%); Production, transportation, and material moving occupations (25%); Sales and office occupations (21%); Service occupations (13%); Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations (9%), and Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations (8%).

Only a minor portion (20 out of 316) of the total jobs are occupied by workers who live in Rural Retreat. The majority (96%) of the 504 workers who live in the town of Rural Retreat are employed out of town. The town of Wytheville is the destination for most (46%) of work commuters.

With a larger proportion of Rural Retreat's labor force employed, activities at the depot meant to reach this sector of the population must take place at appropriate times (evenings and weekends), and also take into consideration their familial obligations and needs (e.g. childcare). Additionally, the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation might consider ways of reaching those that work in Rural Retreat but live elsewhere.

Agriculture

As of 2012, there were 952 farms in Wythe County, and average market value of products sold per farm is \$54,034. Nearly 60% of these farms are specialized in Beef Cattle ranching and farming, and hay farming. Although fruit and vegetable farming makes up a smaller percentage of the market value, the 2012 Agricultural Census cites eight farms that grow sweet corn, seven that grow pumpkins, six that produce fruit and nuts, five that grow squash, and one that grows cabbage. While more may exist that were not recorded by the Ag Census or that opened since 2012, the number still represents a small handful of produce farms. The main agricultural products in Wythe County are Forage, Beef Cows, Corn for Silage and Green chop, Sheep and lambs, and Corn for grain. Table.5 in Appendix A shows that the Animal Production and Aquaculture sector offers 63 jobs, and there are 842 people self-employed in this sector county-wide.

Even though there are a large number of farms, farm production for local retail such as fruits and vegetables is limited in Wythe County. In planning the future uses of the train depot, especially organizing agriculture-related community events, this local agricultural data should be recognized and taken into account. Some small scale, regional agricultural production already exists in the Rural Retreat area, and working with organizations such as Virginia Cooperative Extension could be an opportunity for the depot to foster more of this type of agricultural production. Such a project would tie into region trends such as local food movements and agritourism. However, this sort of project and its success would hinge extensively on developing farmer interest and interest among the region's residents to buy local.

Tourism

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation's estimates, direct travel-related employment and payroll, spending by domestic travelers, and local tax receipts generated by travel in Wythe County have been increasing since 2011. As of 2014, there were 957 direct travel-related jobs in Wythe County, generating \$19.6 million in payroll. Table.7 in Appendix A shows that a total of \$3.9 million of Local Tax Receipts were generated in 2014, which is a 1.3% increase compared

to the previous year. The direct spending by domestic travelers totaled \$137.7 million in 2014, which is an increase of 3.2% compared to 2013.

The local excise taxes mainly came from Food Services and Lodging. In 2014, a total of \$3.1 million of local Food Service excise taxes were collected. Lodging excise taxes were also a considerable portion (\$1.3 million in 2014), and they increased by 4.6% between 2013 and 2014 (compared to a 2.3% increase in Food Service excise tax collected).

Leveraging its cultural and historic value, the Rural Retreat train depot may become a tourist attraction, and the town can benefit from the increased number of visits and tourists. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take advantage of this rising trend of tourism to the region, while preserving the train depot and addressing the demands of local community members. To best take advantage of this opportunity, however, the depot should align its resources and efforts with other town and county activities so that coming to the town of Rural Retreat is more attractive to tourists.

Visioning Meeting Summary

At 5:30 in the evening on April 27th 2016, OED met with Rural Retreat Town Council members and the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation at the train depot for a Visioning Meeting. There were 20 community members and 8 Virginia Tech representatives in attendance, and a complete list of attendees is recorded in Appendix B. The purpose of this visioning session was to listen to and identify values and themes the community desires the train depot to fulfill after renovations. The meeting began with an explanation of what the evening would entail, an introduction of those in attendance and initial thoughts on the identity of Rural Retreat.

Following introductions, OED shared information about twelve train depot renovations in the Appalachian region that the team researched as case studies and best practices for the Rural Retreat depot. These similar sites included depots in Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia. Next, U.S. Census Agriculture, Industry, and Demographic data for both Wythe County and the town of Rural Retreat was discussed in order to help inform thinking about community needs and to identify trends in the community.

Following a break, OED led a “Who Are You” activity to frame the later brainstorming session around the values, needs and ideas of the community. For the brainstorming session, meeting attendees were split into two groups and each group was asked, “Who is Rural Retreat?,” “What does the train depot mean to you?” and then, “What can the train depot be?”

Brainstorming ideas were written on large sheets of paper for all participants to see, and attendees were each asked to rank the three ideas they thought were the best fit for the Rural Retreat train depot. All of the use ideas suggested at the visioning meeting and the number of dot “votes” they received are listed in Appendix C. The ideas recorded on the large pads of

paper, as well as notes recorded by OED staff, informed the four overarching thematic areas that are identified in the Synthesis and Recommendations section of this report.

Meeting Discussion Analysis and Categorization

Following the Visioning Meeting, our team gathered all of the notes and found consistent themes and types of uses from the various ideas presented. As seen in Figure 1 below, the use ideas were divided by the reoccurrence of an event or service (annually, monthly, weekly, etc.) and by themes relating to Food, Arts & Culture, Education, and a Visitor Center/Event Space. The matrix below helps visualize each of the proposed uses and how they would fit in terms of frequency and overarching theme.

Figure 1: Use Scenarios and Frequency Matrix

	Annual or Seasonal Events	Daily/Weekly/Monthly Services	Permanent Use/Titles
Center for Local Food & Health	Fork & Cork Festival Beer and Wine Tastings Farmers Market	Cooking/Canning Classes Health Education Event Rental Space	Local Foods & Health Center Museum
Center for Community Arts	Appalachian Crafts Festival Concert and Event Streaming Farmers Market	Craft Enrichment Program Art Exhibits Event Rental Space	Community Arts Center Museum
Center for Community Education	SAT Classes Tutoring Farmers Market	Technical Skills Classes Leadership Trainings Event Rental Space	Community Education Center Museum
Cultural Engine & Visitor Center	Street Dance Christmas Bazaar Farmers Market	Senior Citizen Activities Bluegrass Jam Farmers Market	Community Depot Museum

Synthesis and Recommendations

OED identified four overarching themes through analysis of best practices, interviews, similar sites, demographic and industrial data, and the results of the stakeholder Visioning Meeting. The community input from the Visioning Meeting was particularly valuable in identifying use ideas and community needs. The four distinct thematic areas identified through this process include Education, the Arts, Local Food/Health, and a General Events Space/Visitor Center. It is recommended that the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation select only one of the following use

scenarios and focus on one of the thematic areas exclusively. Details and possible tactics and next steps related to these thematic areas are included below.

It is important to note that each of the use scenarios below include existing plans and successful activities:

- 1) the creation of a museum,
- 2) continuation of utilizing the space for event rentals, and
- 3) continuation as the location of the Rural Retreat Farmers Market.

The Rural Retreat Train Depot Foundation's 2016 Report identifies these three listed baseline uses as services the organization would like to unquestionably create or continue. Comments from the stakeholder Visioning Meeting reinforced this sentiment. The creation of a museum, which could include the history of the Rural Retreat train depot, the important role cabbage historically played in the community, as well as information on O. Winston Link and Dr. Pepper, in one of the rooms of the depot is a use the community decidedly agrees upon and will be a beneficial addition to each of the four scenarios. Continuation of event rentals and the farmers market at the depot were two uses that the community identified as desirable to continue and strategically complement each of the use scenarios described below. Also at the stakeholders Visioning Meeting, it was clear residents wanted the depot to not simply contain one use, but for it to have multiple unique uses. The inclusion of a museum, event rental space, farmers market, plus one of the four additional thematic areas below fulfills this desire for multiple uses.

Use Scenario 1: Rural Retreat Center for Community Education

Utilizing the train depot for community education was a clear theme among the use ideas presented by stakeholders at the Visioning Meeting. The Rural Retreat Center for Community Education could include learning opportunities such as career counseling, job skills classes, resume writing and interview skills workshops, SAT classes for high school students, tutoring for high school and middle school students, and certification trainings. At the stakeholder Visioning Meeting, community members expressed an interest in having a space in Rural Retreat where residents can come in the evenings or on weekends to learn new skills, advance their careers and have access to broader educational opportunities.

Leadership trainings and seminars could be led by successful area business owners, government officials or instructors from nearby educational institutions. This use scenario could effectively and strategically utilize the high speed, fiber internet connection that is already available at the depot, through streaming classes over the internet and offering computer skills trainings. Technical skills classes could be offered for people of all educational levels (high school students and adults alike) at a low cost to participants so that all Rural Retreat-area residents have the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skill sets. A community education center could help stimulate a larger economic development effort in Rural Retreat and position the train depot as a cornerstone in the downtown revitalization of this historic community.

If this use scenario is selected, the foundation may need to consider the amenities and infrastructure necessary for this use to be a success, for example, the purchasing of laptops or tablet computers, as well as software suites. The foundation could explore partnering with an educational institution or another non-profit to gain access to software packages. There may also be grants available for education centers through the U.S. or Virginia Department of Education, or other foundations. It is recommended that if computers are purchased, they be portable, so that they can be easily moved and securely stored when the depot is rented as event space or opened up to the community for an event. It may also be necessary to hire a part-time staff person to manage, coordinate and promote this use scenario.

Use Scenario 2: Rural Retreat Center for Community Arts

The arts were another recurring theme throughout the brainstorm session at the stakeholder Visioning Meeting. The Rural Retreat train depot has a unique opportunity to position itself as a destination where tourists, artists, musicians and artisans gather and live to make and appreciate art. Its location as a halfway point between two other artist communities, Abingdon and Floyd, and near the convergence of two large interstates (I-81 and I-77), positions Rural Retreat as a potential hub for the visual, as well as performing arts. The Rural Retreat Center for Community Arts could include activities such as monthly rotations of art exhibits displaying the work of local artists on the walls and around the depot. Art classes, such as painting and drawing for both adults and children, could be offered at the depot and taught by area artists. Music events such as concerts, performances, jam sessions, square dances and music lessons could be offered, perhaps on a regular basis.

The Center for Community Arts could have activities focused on Appalachian arts and crafts such as craft exhibitions, markets, an annual Appalachian Craft Festival, classes, and demonstrations. A Craft Enrichment Program could be created where affordable classes on a specific topic such as pottery, weaving, quilting, sewing, jewelry making, mosaics, glass-blowing or photography are offered and held in the evenings once a week for an eight week session. These could be taught by area artists and offered to varying age groups (i.e. one class for those aged 10 to 15 years, and another for 16 and up) so that residents of all ages and skill levels can participate. The Center for Community Arts could also utilize the depot's high speed internet by streaming musical events or radio shows for a live audience.

In order to implement this use scenario if selected, some art supplies may need to be purchased and funds may need to be raised to compensate artists who teach at the Craft Enrichment Program. It could be helpful to develop an inventory of artists in the region as well as a board of community members and artists in charge of programming. Hiring a part-time staff person to manage, coordinate and promote this use scenario may be beneficial. For occasions when the depot is rented out for an event or open to the public for a festival, a space in the depot may need to be designated as storage for supplies and crafts so that the artists' work is preserved and kept secure.

Use Scenario 3: Rural Retreat Center for Local Foods and Health

Many of the ideas suggested at the stakeholder Visioning Meeting had to do with local foods and health. This thematic area fits well with the farmers market, which is one of the pre-established, current uses of the Rural Retreat depot. In Wythe County, there are 959 people employed in the Crop and Animal Production industry¹ and 952 farms.² There are several farms in the Rural Retreat area that raise eggs, chicken, grass-fed beef, pastured pork, honey, organic heirloom and rare produce, and so on.³ There are also several wineries in the Rural Retreat area.⁴

The Rural Retreat Center for Local Foods and Health could be the home to such activities as an expanded farmers market, cooking classes featuring healthy and local foods, canning and food preservation classes, healthy cooking demonstrations, health education classes, food truck rallies, and local winery and brewery tastings. The farmers market could be expanded to more months throughout the year and to include special events such as a craft/artisan day, Thanksgiving food and Christmas gift markets, a “Double Your Bucks” program for EBT cardholders, a “Greening Your Plate” day/month, farm tours, a vintage/antique market day, or a farmers market photo contest.

The Local Foods and Health Center could also host events for children to get involved and interested in eating healthier, growing food and cooking. There could be a Kid’s Mini Market and seed planting station in conjunction with the farmers market. The depot could host classes after school or on the weekends for children to learn how to transplant flowers into pots that they have decorated, or simple cooking classes. For adults the depot could host an annual Fork and Cork Festival where local wineries and area breweries bring their beverages to sample and area restaurants and food vendors can share their offerings. Several other food-related events were suggested at the stakeholder Visioning Meeting which could also be incorporated into the Rural Retreat Center for Local Foods and Health.

In order to implement this scenario, a certified or community kitchen with food storage space, a refrigerator, sink, counter space, stove-top and oven will need to be installed in the train depot. These kitchens often require multiple cooking areas for different groups, open space for classes and mobile equipment is often helpful. On average, community and church kitchens range from 500 to 1,000 square feet. Because the Rural Retreat depot is built with creosote wood and there is a potential for fire hazards, it is advised that no commercial grade fryers, commercial grade ovens or commercial grade stove tops be installed, but rather, home kitchen appliances are recommended. It may be beneficial to conduct a full feasibility study to determine the practicality of installing a certified or community kitchen in the depot. There may be funding available for kitchen installation through partnerships with economic development

¹ Source: Emsi Economic Modeling Program – www.economicmodeling.com, 2016

² United States Department of Agriculture - Census of Agriculture, 2012

³ Source: nrvc.org/Agritourism/SWVA_Local_Foods

⁴ Source: nrvc.org/Agritourism/SWVA_Local_Foods

non-profits, federal and local government agencies, and national and community foundations such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, USDA, and the Community Development Block Grant Program.

A certified or community kitchen could also be utilized by area farmers to make value-added agricultural products, such as jams, sauces, jellies, salsa, baked goods and sausages, to sell at the farmers market and other area stores. This would help farmers market vendors increase the profitability of their products and the viability of their farms and businesses. Some costs of kitchen installation can be covered by client usage fees, as well as fees from cooking and canning classes. If this use scenario is selected, hiring a manager to coordinate and promote the Center for Local Foods and Health would be beneficial. In addition, Wythe County Cooperative Extension agents may be able to offer guidance about the creation of the Local Foods and Health Center, advice on kitchen requirements and installation, and assist in teaching classes.

Use Scenario 4: Rural Retreat Cultural Engine and Visitor Center

The Rural Retreat Cultural Engine use scenario involves the train depot remaining as a general community gathering place, without selecting a specific thematic area such as the Arts, Education or Local Foods/Health. Like the other use scenarios, this option would include a museum, event rental space and farmers market, in addition to being a space for a Rural Retreat Visitor Center, as well as a rotating calendar of weekly programming and annual events and festivals. The Visitor Center would be a place that provides maps and brochures, as well as information on lodging, restaurants, area attractions and events for tourists to visit. This use would nicely complement the Rural Retreat museum.

The rotating calendar of annual events and festivals could include activities such as a revival of the historic Street Dance, a Haunted House on Halloween, a BBQ or Chili Cook-off Contest, an Open House during the annual Heritage Festival, a Cabbage or Pumpkin Festival, a Christmas Bazaar, a Dr. Pepper Festival, and a Fork and Cork Festival. The monthly or weekly programming events could include regular senior citizen and/or veteran activities, art exhibits, open hours where anyone can come and enjoy the train depot, bluegrass and old-time jam sessions, and wine and beer tastings. It would be a place where the community gathers to have organizational meetings, share a meal, learn a new skill, or simply play a game of checkers.

If this scenario is selected, it could be helpful to hire a part-time staff person to manage the weekly programming, calendar and promotion of events. Organizing and promoting multiple events throughout the year, as well as daily activities, requires significant strategic coordination and planning. Another option could be that perhaps an additional Rural Retreat Depot Foundation officer (volunteer) position could be created to fill this role. It is advised that an organizing committee and chair-person be designated for each annual festival or event, to help ensure the events are well-attended and run smoothly. The chair-person could be someone with a personal interest or investment in the particular festival or event. It may also be helpful to consider installing a community kitchen for this use scenario. This use scenario in particular

would benefit the local Rural Retreat community, while also bolstering tourism and bringing people to Rural Retreat from the outside.

Next Steps and Conclusion

Based on the recommendations summarized above, there are several next steps that the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation may consider to achieve the goal of implementing new community uses at the Rural Retreat train depot. The first step is for the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation to decide which use scenario fits the Rural Retreat community best and to pursue only that scenario. The depot foundation should choose one use scenario because focusing on one subject area, such as arts, education, local foods or a visitor center, provides a clear direction and vision for the depot as well as establishes a clear audience, or clientele. Most foundations and funding options only fund certain focus areas, so choosing one use scenario will likely also allow for greater funding opportunities. In order to determine which use scenario to select, the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation might consider working with the Town of Rural Retreat to have an initial community meeting and to gauge interest in the use scenarios. Once the use scenario is selected, further next steps include the following:

Champions. Identify the champions, or proponents, of the various use ideas and each event or festival. Determine who in the community to bring together and work with to achieve certain goals.

- These entities may include area artists, business owners, farmers/food producers, County Cooperative Extension agents, town council members, historic society members, religious leaders, planning commission members, industry representatives and/or local educators.

Feasibility Study. Conduct a Feasibility Study for the selected use scenario to determine whether the use is sustainable, can withstand the risks it will encounter and meets the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation's goals. This study will drill down deeper into the selected use scenario and help identify whether it is practical and viable for Rural Retreat specifically. The visioning meeting step helped identify community interests and needs, and the Feasibility Study step will determine whether the selected uses are financially and programmatically sustainable in the long-run and sufficiently distinguish the Rural Retreat train depot from other depots. The Feasibility study should include:

- A market analysis, best practices assessment of similar programs and a financial feasibility analysis accounting for possible funding sources.

Funding. Determine funding options such as grants, private donations and fundraising events. Grant options may be available through entities such as State and National Historic Societies, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Tourism Board, Community Development Block Grants, the US Department of Agriculture and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The use scenario that is selected may impact the types of funding options that are available and applicable to the Rural Retreat train

depot. There may also be private foundations whose missions align with the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation's goals and selected use scenario. The depot foundation may also want to consider soliciting major donations from area residents who have a vested interest in the depot's success and who perhaps would benefit from the revitalization of downtown Rural Retreat.

Museum

Regardless of which future use scenario the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation decides to adopt, establishing the museum is a great way to start the implementation process. The museum use is one of the most frequently suggested uses demonstrated in both the case studies, and during the Visioning Meeting. The museum is also a common component among all the future use scenarios presented for the depot, and it allows other uses to be gradually incorporated. The train depot can preserve and display its own cultural heritage, educate the younger generation about their history and may even become a tourist attraction to draw visitors from outside the town. In order to establish a museum, it is recommended that the following next steps be considered:

Champions. Collaboration with the entities listed below will help bring the museum into reality. Some of these entities may be able to provide professional consulting on the collection of potential content to display and best practices in organizing overall layout of the museum. Collaboration with the local school system may be useful in achieving the educational goal of the future museum.

- Rural Retreat Historic Society
- Wythe County Genealogical and Historical Association-Regional Research Center
- Wytheville Department of Museums
 - Wytheville Training School Cultural Center
 - The Thomas J. Boyd Museum
 - The Great Lakes to Florida Highway Museum
- Wythe County Public Schools

Business Operational Plan. Create a museum Business Plan considering the following issues:

- Who are the potential/target visitors?
- Operational processes such as:
 - Staffing
 - Identify specific square footage necessary and/or room(s) suitable for museum use
 - Visitor capacity and accessibility
 - Display themes
 - History of the train depot and Rural Retreat
 - Historic influence of cabbage

- O.Winston Link's Christmas Eve photo
- Dr. Pepper
- Provide an on-site, online component to complement the content already in display at the museum, taking advantage of the high speed internet already available at the depot
- Create a funding model
 - Fundraising, private donations, public/private funding sources
- Create a management team
- Promotion of the museum
 - Television, newspaper, social media, etc.

Funding. The following are a few of the sources that can be referred to in funding the interior restoration and day-to-day operations of the future museum:

- Department of Historic Resources
 - *State Rehabilitation Tax Credits Programs* offer property owners substantial incentives for private investment in preservation. For more information, please visit: dhr.virginia.gov/tax_credits/tax_credit.htm
- Appalachian Regional Commission
 - The *Operating Grant* funds the costs of an on-going program, such as staff salaries. For more information, please visit: www.arc.gov/funding/GeneralInformationAboutGrantsandFunding.asp
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
 - *Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors*⁵ enables the hiring of a preservation architect to create an interior restoration plan as well as a consultant to develop a conservation plan for an interior's textiles. This fund also enables the production of a historic furnishings plan, and provides for professional expertise in areas such as architecture, planning, paint analysis, archeology, or graphic design. For more information, please visit: www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/special-funds/cynthia-woods-mitchell.html#.V1ho6NkrLcs
 - *Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation*⁶ can be used for designing, producing and marketing print and video communications materials, obtaining professional advice to strengthen management capabilities, obtaining the services of consultants with expertise in areas such as architecture, planning, economics, archeology, fundraising, media

⁵ This grant requires Organizational Level Forum membership or National Main Street Network membership of the National Trust to be eligible to apply for funding. Please refer to the link below to learn more about becoming a member:

www.preservationnation.org/forum/joinforumnow.html#.V1h2vNkrLct

⁶ Ibid.

relations, education or graphic design. For more information, please visit: www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/special-funds/johanna-favrotfund.html

Information Technology Infrastructure

The Rural Retreat train depot's high speed fiber internet connection is a unique asset that the foundation can leverage in any use scenario it selects. This asset makes the Rural Retreat train depot unique and stand out from other restored Appalachian train depots, and therefore, this unique asset should be utilized as strategically as possible. It is important that the champions for the information technology infrastructure, such as Virginia Tech's Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology (ICAT) and Shentel, be determined and utilized. Funding opportunities for the purchasing of equipment such as high quality television screens, high definition cameras and microphones should be determined. There may be foundations that give grants for the purchasing of this type of equipment and these funders should be identified. The high speed internet connection can be used in each of the use scenarios in the following ways:

Use Scenario 1: Rural Retreat Center for Community Education

- Streaming leadership classes, certification trainings and technical skills classes over the internet
- Computer and internet skills classes
- Webinars administered by nearby educational institutions
- Virtual workshops and online courses related to job skills, resume writing and interviewing skills
- Opportunities for internet usage, research and education for those who may not have internet access at home
- Website development and social media courses for entrepreneurs and small businesses

Use Scenario 2: Rural Retreat Center for Community Arts

- Streaming of musical events, performing arts programs and radio shows both for a live audience and for broadcasting to other locations
- Virtual workshops or classes lead by artists from anywhere across the state, country, or world
- The opportunity for local artists to utilize digital technology, audio and visual in their visual or performing arts pieces
- Student opportunities:
 - Utilizing the internet for research and interactive art websites
 - Creating art-related wikis, blogs, podcasts and websites

- Using online software like animation, paint programs and photo editing tools
- Online collaboration and ability to share artwork globally
- **Use Scenario 3: Rural Retreat Center for Local Foods and Health**
 - Streaming of healthy cooking, food processing and preservation, fermentation, basic gardening and beekeeping classes
 - Webinars or virtual workshops that could be applicable and helpful to farmers market vendors, on topics such as:
 - Marketing and advertising both their farm and products
 - How to create and strategically utilize value-added products
 - Outreach, promotion and social media
 - Improving sales
 - Food safety and risk management
 - Online courses on health, nutrition and wellness
- **Use Scenario 4: Rural Retreat Cultural Engine and Visitor Center**
 - Creating a state of the art, comprehensive website that includes:
 - A calendar of upcoming events
 - Maps of Rural Retreat and activities in the area
 - Information about renting out the space for an event
 - Class registration
 - Photos
 - Location, hours of operation and contact information
 - Streaming of classes, workshops and seminars
 - Broadcasting concerts, performing arts events and radio shows
 - Computer and internet skills classes

Conclusion

This report provides regional data and case studies that are similar in character and use to the Rural Retreat train depot, describes a stakeholder visioning meeting where community members provided ideas and themes for new uses of the depot, and synthesizes these findings into recommended possible use scenarios for the foundation to consider. The next steps section provides a roadmap for the Rural Retreat train depot to become not only an asset for the community but also attract people from the outside and establish the depot as a well-known tourist destination. The Rural Retreat train depot has a great deal of potential to preserve the cultural heritage of this historic community, be a cornerstone in the revitalization of the downtown area and to once again be the centerpiece of the community.

Appendix A

Table.1
Population by age

Subject	Virginia	Wythe County	Town of Rural Retreat
Total population	8,185,131	29,259	1,631
AGE			
Under 5 years	6.20%	5.00%	7.60%
5 to 9 years	6.30%	5.70%	6.60%
10 to 14 years	6.30%	5.90%	4.50%
15 to 19 years	6.70%	5.90%	5.20%
20 to 24 years	7.20%	5.30%	4.70%
25 to 29 years	7.10%	5.20%	7.80%
30 to 34 years	6.80%	5.40%	6.10%
35 to 39 years	6.40%	6.80%	5.50%
40 to 44 years	7.00%	6.70%	6.10%
45 to 49 years	7.30%	7.30%	6.50%
50 to 54 years	7.40%	7.30%	4.40%
55 to 59 years	6.50%	7.10%	6.10%
60 to 64 years	5.80%	7.90%	8.80%
65 to 69 years	4.4%	6.3%	7.7%
70 to 74 years	3.2%	4.2%	5.0%
75 to 79 years	2.2%	2.7%	3.4%
80 to 84 years	1.6%	2.8%	1.7%
85 years and over	1.6%	2.4%	2.6%
Median age (years)	37.6	43.5	42.5

Source: U.S. Census-American Community Survey, 2014 Five-year estimate

Table.2
Educational attainment by age

Subject	Virginia	Wythe County	Town of Rural Retreat
Population 18 to 24 years	821,722	2,118	94
Less than high school graduate	11.6%	6.9%	6.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	30.3%	37.5%	28.7%
Some college or associate's degree	46.3%	46.6%	58.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11.9%	8.9%	6.4%
% High School graduates	88.5%	93.0%	93.6%
Population 25 years and over	5,501,125	21,122	1,167
Less than 9th grade	4.9%	7.0%	7.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	7.2%	10.7%	6.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	25.0%	37.1%	32.0%
Some college, no degree	20.0%	19.6%	18.7%
Associate's degree	7.1%	10.4%	15.7%
Bachelor's degree	20.7%	9.8%	11.1%
Graduate or professional degree	15.0%	5.3%	8.3%
% High School graduates	87.8%	82.2%	85.8%
Population 18 years and over			
% High School graduates	87.9%	83.2%	86.4%
% Bachelor's degree or higher	32.6%	14.5%	18.4%

Source: U.S. Census-American Community Survey, 2014 Five-year estimate

Table.3
Number of farms by agricultural products in Wythe County

Agricultural Product	Number of Farms That Grow Product
Beef Cows	545
Milk Cows	34
Hogs and Pigs	15
Sheeps and Lambs	44
Corn for Grain	37
Corn for Silage and Greenchop	102
Wheat for Grain	5
Barley for Grain	4
Forage	680
Potatoes	3
Bean, Snap	3
Cabbage, Head	1
Cantalopes and Muskmelons	1
Cucumber and Pickles	2
Bell Pepper, Excluding Acres	2
Pumpkins	7
Squash, All	5
Sweet Corn	8
Tomatoes in the Open	3
Watermelon	2

Source: U.S Department of Agriculture- Census of Agriculture, 2012

Table.4
Number of farms by industry type in Wythe County

Industry Type– Number of Farms	Wythe County - 2012	Change – 2007-2012	Percentage Change 2007-2012
Oilseed and grain farming	9	4	80.0%
Vegetable and melon farming	2	-5	-71.4%
Fruit and tree nut farming	6	4	200.0%
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	4	-8	-66.7%
Tobacco Farming	0	0	0.0%
Cotton Farming	0	0	0.0%
Hay farming, and all other crop farming	187	43	29.9%
Beef Cattle ranching and farming	562	-67	-10.7%
Cattle Feedlots	11	-7	-38.9%
Dairy Cattle and Milk production	30	0	0.0%
Hog and Pig Farming	3	2	200.0%
Poultry and egg production	0	-10	-100.0%
Sheep and goat farming	22	3	15.8%
Animal aquaculture and other animal production	116	47	68.1%

Source: U.S Department of Agriculture- Census of Agriculture, 2012

Table.5
Employment by agricultural sectors in Wythe County: Crop and Animal Production

NAICS Code	Description	2016 Jobs	2006-2016 % Change	Current Wages & Salaries	2016 Location Quotient
112000	Animal Production and Aquaculture	63	9%	\$20,018	3.07
115115	Farm Labor Contractors and Crew Leaders	23	15%	\$16,258	0.92
111000	Crop Production	<10	N/A	N/A	0.01
115116	Farm Management Services	<10	N/A	N/A	6.22
113310	Logging	<10	N/A	N/A	0.08
115310	Support Activities for Forestry	<10	N/A	N/A	0.77
115210	Support Activities for Animal Production	<10	N/A	N/A	3.12

Source: Emsi Economic Modeling Program – www.economicmodeling.com, 2016

Table.6
Self-employment by agricultural sectors in Wythe County: Crop and Animal Production

NAICS Code	Description	2016 Jobs	2006-2016 % Change	Current Wages & Salaries	2016 Location Quotient
112000	Animal Production and Aquaculture	842	7%	\$14,582	13.69
113310	Logging	10	-50%	\$16,584	1.85
115116	Farm Management Services	<10	N/A	N/A	1.04
115112	Soil Preparation, Planting, and Cultivating	<10	N/A	N/A	0.61
114112	Shellfish Fishing	<10	N/A	N/A	0.69
111000	Crop Production	<10	N/A	\$13,773	0.12
114111	Finfish Fishing	<10	N/A	N/A	0.52
115114	Postharvest Crop Activities (except Cotton Ginning)	<10	N/A	N/A	0.82
115210	Support Activities for Animal Production	<10	N/A	N/A	1.95

Source: Emsi Economic Modeling Program – www.economicmodeling.com, 2016

Table.7
Travel Economic Impacts in Wythe County

	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent Change
Employment	880	900	945	957	1.2%
Expenditures	\$ 121,321,171	\$ 127,040,473	\$ 133,429,861	\$ 137,654,721	3.2%
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 3,502,079	\$ 3,623,419	\$ 3,861,093	\$ 3,911,379	1.3%
Payroll	\$ 17,009,202	\$ 17,705,854	\$ 19,041,354	\$ 19,561,855	2.7%
State Tax Receipts	\$ 5,723,783	\$ 5,957,516	\$ 6,163,771	\$ 6,007,106	-2.5%

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Locality Economic Impact Data, 2014

Table.8
Local Excise Taxes Collected in Wythe County

	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent Change
Food Service Excise Tax Collected	\$ 2,815,116	\$ 3,002,626	\$ 3,058,352	\$ 3,128,539	2.3%
Lodging Excise Tax Collected	\$ 1,082,741	\$ 1,172,960	\$ 1,212,871	\$ 1,268,170	4.6%

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Locality Economic Impact Data, 2014

Appendix B

List of April 27, 2016 Stakeholder Visioning Meeting Attendees

Community Members:

1. Frank Akers
2. Donnie Buck
3. Jason Childers
4. Audrey Hedrick
5. Gary Houseman
6. Jerry Hurt
7. Phyllis Hurt
8. Ron Kime
9. Jim Lloyd
10. Amy McBride
11. Mike McBride
12. Chuck Miller
13. Ed Schaack
14. Ellen Schaack
15. Frank Slavin
16. Mike Sobey
17. Brian Vaught
18. Sean Viars
19. Gail Vipperman
20. Jack Vipperman

Virginia Tech Representatives:

1. Lois Badey
2. Erica Corder
3. Maeve Gould
4. Faruk Hesengan
5. Sarah Lyon-Hill
6. Adam Mawyer
7. Nick Onopa
8. John Provo

Appendix C

List of potential uses and events suggested by participants at the Visioning Meeting

Potential uses	Number of dots posted
Museum with visitor center	10
BBQ/Chili Cookout/Wine tasting	7
Education- leadership, students to learn about the train depot	5
A place for education- health, performing arts	5
Museum- multi kiosk, multi content; appeal to different age groups, especially children	4
A place for music and Appalachian arts & crafts	4
Cabbage festival	3
A place for senior citizen activities	2
Housing historic society	2
A place for entertainment related uses & events	2
Conference/meeting place	2
Art exhibits/galleries	1
Cooking, painting, art classes	1
Farmers market	1
Educational test center (e.g. AICP certification)	1
Dr. Pepper festival	1
Heritage Festival open house	1
Street dance (depot sponsored)	1
Open days to the community	
A place for jam sessions & square dancing	
Place for wedding pictures	
Christmas bazaar	
Amtrak station	
Appalachian community center	
A place for community events (weddings, etc.)	
A place for learning about photography (relating to the Christmas Eve/O. Winston Link photo)	
Haunted house- trick or treat location	