



## January 2026 Update

# Governor's Housing Conference

At this year's Governor's Housing Conference, hosted at Hotel Roanoke, the Old School at Prices Fork was awarded "Best Multi-Family Housing Development". A collaborative partnership between Taylor Hollow Construction, Montgomery County, the Regional Commission, and the HOME Consortium, this project redeveloped the Old Prices Fork Elementary School into 16 apartments for persons 55 years and older, constructed 16 additional rental units, and created shared-use kitchen, Millstone Kitchen, Moonhollow Brewery, and Featherbone restaurant. State and federal partners such as DHCD, Virginia Housing, and HUD, provided critical funding for the success of the project, which has now given new life to a former school and provided a vibrant gathering place for the community.

Also at the Governor's Housing Conference Kevin Byrd was invited to participate in a panel discussion facilitated by Maggie Beal, Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, alongside Molly Roberts, Manager of Community Health and Development for Carilion Clinic. The panel discussion, with well over 300 attendees, was focused on the New River Valley Housing Fund (NRVHF), particularly non-governmental investors such as Carilion Clinic. The NRVHF is fortunate to also receive investment from Virginia Tech and coming in 2026, the Community Foundation of the New River Valley!

For more information, please contact Jennifer Wilsie [jwilsie@nrvrc.org](mailto:jwilsie@nrvrc.org).



**Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM<sup>2</sup>) Tech Hub Visionary Leadership Award**

**Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM<sup>2</sup>) Tech Hub 10-Year Roadmap**

With support from grants by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and GO Virginia, the

On behalf of the Southern Piedmont Technology Council board and President Hope Harris-Gayles, the Chairman's Award for visionary leadership and outstanding leadership and commitment to Southern Virginia was presented to Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM<sup>2</sup>) Tech Hub. Thank you to the Southern Piedmont Technology Council for the honor of this award!

AM<sup>2</sup> is a regional initiative uniting Virginia's advanced materials and additive manufacturing ecosystem — linking world-class research at Virginia Tech with applied innovation and workforce development at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in Southern Virginia, which hosts the Navy's Center of Excellence in Additive Manufacturing. By coupling university research strengths with the region's legacy of precision machining and materials expertise, AM<sup>2</sup> is positioning Virginia as a global leader in next-generation manufacturing.

For more information contact, Emma Carroll at [ecarroll@nrvc.org](mailto:ecarroll@nrvc.org).



AM<sup>2</sup> Tech Hub consortium has launched a new roadmap to create a global advanced manufacturing hub. The roadmap includes strategies such as building innovation studios for manufacturing technical assistance, creating fellows programs to support manufacturing innovation, launching an AM<sup>2</sup> career network to strengthen experiential learning opportunities, and enhancing collaboration. To support implementation, the Tech Hub will seek up to \$40 million in state and federal funding in upcoming applications. To view the roadmap and learn more about the Tech Hub, [visit this link](#).

For more information contact, Emma Carroll at [ecarroll@nrvc.org](mailto:ecarroll@nrvc.org).



## Roadmap for Expanding NRV Internet Affordability and Use: Final Draft Plan Available for Comment

After many months of outreach and data collection, a plan is available for the final round of comment and input. The planning process has been valuable in building connections and having conversations on how to ensure everyone can make the most of the internet access that's being built in our region. This plan offers actionable projects and approaches for the

work that needs to be done. Take a look and let us know if you agree or have ideas to add at our online portal - <https://engagenrv.org/nrv-digital-opportunities> . The plan will be available for feedback until January 6.

The four counties and City of Radford have identified how to increase broadband affordability and use in the New River Valley. As broadband availability in the region grows and more homes and community centers have internet service, making the most of that access is an important goal in improving the region's quality of life and economic vitality.

Broadband access can improve the quality of life for residents in education, health, community services and expand markets, talent pools, and efficiencies for businesses. The plan has confirmed affordability as one of the biggest challenges for residents and even businesses who need more than residential bandwidth and service. Implementing ideas for affordability and the other priorities noted in the plan will require strong partnerships and advocacy at multiple levels. The need for several kinds of training were recognized - training to foster users' internet savvy and technology skills will be critical for many of our region's residents. Workforce training and general education access online and in-person for students of all ages can open up employment opportunities remote and local even as the kinds of jobs available change.

For more information contact Christy Straight at [cstraight@nrvrc.org](mailto:cstraight@nrvrc.org) or visit the project site at <https://engagenrv.org/nrv-digital-opportunities>.

## Town of Wytheville Parks & Recreation Master Plan

The Town of Wytheville is launching work on developing a Parks and Recreation Master

Plan to guide the future of its parks and recreational amenities. The Mount Rogers

Planning District Commission and the New River Valley Regional Commission are

supporting the Town in this effort. In the coming months, residents will have

opportunities to share ideas and help create vibrant parks and recreation in Wytheville.



For more information contact Aphi Fancon at [afancon@nrvrc.org](mailto:afancon@nrvrc.org).

## NRVRC wishes Holly Lesko a Happy Retirement!



It is with mixed emotions that we announce Holly Lesko's upcoming retirement in mid-January. We are excited for the next steps along her journey, yet we are sad she will be leaving the Commission (again!). Holly has a unique history with the agency that may not have been replicated anywhere else. She first came to the organization as a planner, and after many years of service she left to pursue opportunities in private sector consulting and higher education. While she was in other professional roles she served as the citizen representative to the Commission for the town of Blacksburg. In her service to the board she ultimately served as Chair from 2010-2012. Several years later Holly returned as an employee of the agency during COVID, working tirelessly on the Business Continuity Team (BCT). Following the BCT efforts, the agency worked with partners to develop the NRV Recovery Ecosystem, a program Holly has led since its inception over three years ago. In her numerous years with the agency in a multitude of roles Holly has always demonstrated a passion for service, a genuine connection

with people across the region, and a commitment to improving lives. We wish her all of the best!

## Community Health Updates

The New River Valley Regional Commission is pleased to announce Anna Champion's promotion as our new Community Health Program Administrator. Anna first came to the Commission in 2021 to support the region's response to COVID and then returned in 2023 as Program Manager for the Community Health Team. She has a strong background in community wellness, partnership building, and program management that will build on our regional health initiatives. In this role, she will support efforts across prevention, recovery, public health planning, and cross-sector collaboration. We're excited to have her leadership as we continue working to improve health and well-being throughout the New River Valley.



The Community Health Team will be hiring for a Grant Management and Network Facilitator. This position is responsible for managing grant compliance, monitoring fiscal and performance data, reviewing partner invoicing, and ensuring alignment with funder and fiscal agent requirements. Please contact the Community Health Team at [CHT@nrvc.org](mailto:CHT@nrvc.org) for more information.

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