

# Economic Development

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING A VISION FOR  
ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS

May 2014

ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS

# VISION 2025

Supported by:



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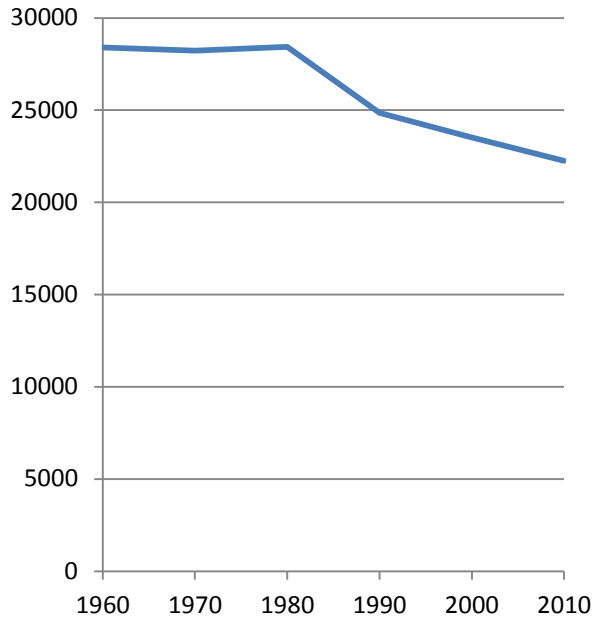
## ■ Section 1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The Situation

The Alleghany Highlands, which includes the towns within Alleghany County along with the City of Covington, has been host to many employers over the last century. As a result, the region prospered and communities such as Covington, Clifton Forge, Iron Gate and others expanded. Over time, a number of companies have shut down or relocated as market conditions have changed. This inevitably takes place in many communities since few companies remain constant forever or in the same location.

Due to the many changes, the population of the region has dropped by over 6,000 (>20%) since 1980 and is at risk of further losses. If this trend were to continue, additional schools could need to be shut down and the hospital scaled back, and there's the potential loss of many small businesses.

POPULATION OF ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS: 1960 - 2010



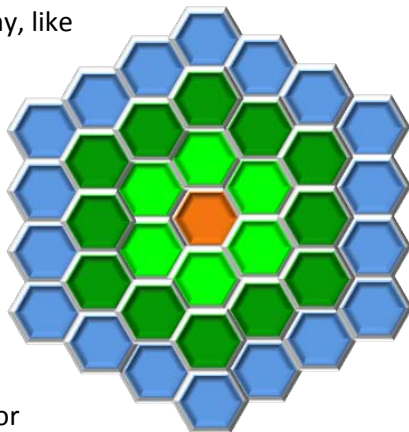
### The Good News

Through the efforts of many concerned citizens and with the support of the Alleghany Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Alleghany Economic Development Corporation, the Dabney S Lancaster Community College, LewisGale Hospital Alleghany, MWV, and other organizations, the community is seeking ways to enhance the local economy, bring additional jobs, and help expand the local population. This effort began with a series of summit meetings held in March and May of 2013 and resulted in the identification of initiatives that can ultimately stimulate growth in the local economy. The process began by addressing the following questions:

#### 1. How do you define our local economy?

The Alleghany Highlands economy, like any local economy, is comprised of three tiers of businesses.

The “primary” or Level 1 businesses bring cash into the community from outside sources. These include: manufacturing, tourism-related, healthcare and education services (offered to non-residents). The second tier or Level 2 businesses are those firms that sell products and services to the Level 1 companies. Then there is third tier or Level 3 businesses that sell products and services to local residents. If we can expand the Level 1 businesses,



-  **Resources** (Real estate, labor, utilities, education/training, transportation, financing, etc.)
-  **Level 1 - Primary Industries**  
Employers that infuse money into the county from outside sources, such as:
  - Tourism
  - Manufacturing
  - Portion of Education/Healthcare Services
  - Federal and State Governments
-  **Level 2 - Business Support Services (Business Activity Related)**  
Provide support service to the primary industries located in the area
-  **Level 3 - Consumer Services**
  - Retail
  - Local Healthcare
  - Construction/Repair of Homes
  - Other Services

there is a potential “trickle down” effect that helps expand Level 2 and 3 businesses along with growth in population.

## 2. What strengths/assets do we have to expand our economy?

- Interstate access (I-64) . . . reasonably strategic location on the East Coast
- Sites for building expansion are available but very limited . . . some have rail access
- Well trained labor resources
- Local community college with industry focus to provide additional training as required
- Quality healthcare facilities/services
- Substantial water resources and reasonable electric power rates

## 3. What challenges/weaknesses do we have that inhibit economic growth?

- Very limited flat land and limited buildings in good condition near I-64 to attract/expand business
- Declining demographics (companies want to locate in growing communities)
- Natural gas services available in limited areas (lacking in Low Moor)
- Some areas look tired/challenged (companies interpret how residents take care of their community as a reflection on their attitude toward quality in their work)

In addition, there is plenty of competition from other communities throughout Virginia and the East Coast for attracting business. It is critical to do whatever can be done to meet the resource needs of businesses while making the community aesthetically attractive and enhancing the quality of life.

## 4. What is our strategy to expand the local economy?

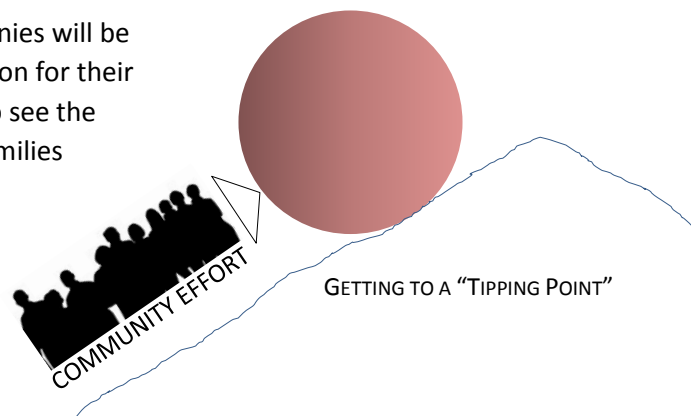
There is no magic wand or pill for economic growth, but there are some fundamental actions that can be considered to improve the situation over time. For example:

- If we enhance the aesthetics of our communities through landscaping, painting and other activities, we have a strong chance of attracting additional tourists; assuring that employees coming to the area want to live here rather than in outlying areas; folks might come and buy homes and invest in them because they want to live here; and additional businesses might be attracted to locate here.
- We have a lot of individuals that make fine artwork and other quality items that could be marketed outside the community. Let’s find ways to help these potential businesses thrive.
- We can leverage our rivers, trails and industrial history (through an industrial heritage/discovery center) to attract more tourists and expand the quality of life for local residents.
- We also need to be sure that we have the right land, buildings and utilities available that would be attractive to prospective companies considering the region for locating their business.

## Getting the Region to an Economic “Tipping Point”

The “tipping point” for economic activity is when companies will be looking at the community more frequently as a destination for their operations; more tourists will be coming to the region to see the gardens, shops and overall ambiance of the area; and families will be acquiring and upgrading homes because they want to be part of the community.

In order to achieve this tipping point in the next few years, there will need to be multiple initiatives launched to address different aspects of the area.



## Action Initiatives to Mobilize the Region: VISION 2025

During the economic summit meeting on May 15, 2013, there were 8 to 10 key ideas presented to help the region reach the tipping point. There was broad interest in pursuing five of the ideas. Each of the selected initiatives has a reasonable potential to achieve success but requiring the support of many individuals from throughout the region. The combined efforts are an integral part of what has been defined as VISION 2025 - a bold effort to position the region for economic growth and success. Each initiative unto itself is unlikely to affect the tipping point. However, taken together (with others to come) should create enough momentum to achieve a critical mass and impact current trends. Details on each of the five initiatives are provided below.

### OVERVIEW ON THE FIVE ACTION INITIATIVES

Initiative	Description
1	<b>Real Estate, Utility Development and Marketing to Expand Industry Base</b> Maximize the utilization of available flat land, available buildings and utilities to attract targeted manufacturing and other businesses to the area and facilitate existing companies to expand locally.
2	<b>Allegheny Highlands Web Store and Small Business Support</b> Support the growth of local small businesses through multiple services and establish a Web Store for marketing locally produced high quality products.
3	<b>Resident Curb Appeal, "Main Street" Enhancements Gateway/Signage (Corridor Curb Appeal)</b> Enhance the "quality of place" in the region through enhancing curb appeal of homes on selected corridors, improve entranceways, signage and the Main Street Program in order to attract additional businesses and tourists to the area as well as new residents that acquire and invest in the local housing stock.
4	<b>Community Landscaping and Destination Gardens</b> Providing extensive community landscaping, community gardens and destination gardens not only enhances the "quality of place" but also can be a draw for tourism.
5	<b>Allegheny Highlands Industrial Heritage and Technology Discovery Center</b> The discovery center will reflect on the region's industrial heritage, engage students and interested tourists in learning about the area, and prepare residents to compete for jobs in materials-related technologies of the present and future.

### Getting Started and Gathering Momentum

Each initiative will be focused around an Action Team – most of which have been started during the fourth quarter of 2013. Each team will have leadership to direct the efforts, a plan for implementation and the support of community volunteers depending on individual interests and skills. Details of establishing the Action Teams and other information are provided in the next section of the report.

As they say in real estate, this community has great "bones" and with a concerted effort, it can become a highly desirable destination. This region has the community layout and potential ambiance that the large developers are trying to replicate in the "progressive" new residential development projects. A clear dividend for the region is that along this journey of achieving results will be a great sense of community pride and team building that will enhance the overall culture of the region. This has always been a great place to live and together we can make it even better.

## ■ Section 2 – ACTION INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTATION

### Overview

Each of the Action Initiatives is described in detail within this section to help jumpstart the overall effort. The description and details related to each initiative has the following information:

- Background Information
- Vision for What can be Accomplished
- Strategy for Achieving the Vision
- Project Implementation
- Project Schedule
- Supplementary Information (this will be expanded over time)

It is assumed that the scope of work and schedule will be refined as each initiative moves forward.

At the core of this effort are the **Action Teams** that are or will be formed to implement the defined objectives, utilize volunteer efforts from the community as necessary, and seek out financial resources as needed. Guidelines on establishing and engaging the Action Teams are provided below.

### Establishing an Action Team

- **Role of the Team:** provide the community leadership, focus, expertise, direction and energy to achieve a specific aspect of an overall vision for the community over a defined time period.
- **Team Size:** 8 to 15 members (if it gets too big, it is hard to manage and too small, the members feel they have too much individual responsibility)
- **Team Leadership:** shared leadership works well in voluntary situation (co-coordinators or a designated coordinator and a backup)
- **Make-Up of Action Team:** select members that have the expertise, passion and objective perspective. Those with very narrow, single agendas may support the overall effort but may sometimes be “challenging” Action Team members.
- **Volunteers:** those that are not on the Action Team but will participate in major activities. These are the “foot soldiers” that make the efforts happen and are a very valuable asset.
- **Task Teams:** there will be times when a smaller group (2-3 individuals) are requested to research or engage in a specific task that does not need the overall group.
- **Frequency of Meetings:** monthly at first, then the frequency will be determined by activity level . . . bi-monthly or quarterly meetings with frequent e-mails may be adequate once the team is up and running.



## Action Team Startup

- Select times and places most convenient for the team. Rotating locations is a common practice and it keeps the team out of a “routine rut.”
- Initial meetings should focus on building up the team (team member interaction) as well as refining the vision for the team . . . what we are trying to accomplish.
- Select team leadership (co-leaders or leader/backup).
  - “Term limits” can be defined or a programmed rotation can be established so that individuals do not feel they will be the leader “forever.”
  - The leadership will develop an agenda for team meetings that will help members progressively move work forward
  - Part of the initial meeting agenda for each group will include some time for members to get to know each other and respective members’ interest in this particular working group
  - The leadership will ensure that there is a note taker for each meeting who will record and share key information and action steps from each meeting.
- Establish methods of communication internally and with the community at large.
- Define “rules of engagement” and publish them to the team members, such as:
  - Meeting times are limited . . . stay focused and engaged on the key agenda items . . . avoid side conversations.
  - Respect among team members . . . listen to other inputs on a subject.
  - Stay open to suggestions . . . provide objective feedback without put downs.
  - Seek to reach conceptual consensus . . . be open to compromise and other’s ideas.
  - Support the team . . . seek to achieve stated outcomes.
- Define/refine the vision for the Action Team backed by a plan and a roadmap for achieving the vision.
- Work the plan, modify as needed along the way.
- Establish milestones to track progress and celebrate achieving them.
- Interface with other Action Teams to coordinate overall efforts (don’t have volunteer weekends at the same time and try to tap the same volunteers).

## ➤ ACTION INITIATIVE #1

### REAL ESTATE, UTILITY DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING TO EXPAND INDUSTRY BASE



Expansion of Business Parks • Upgrade Existing Buildings/Complexes • Improve Utility Access • Marketing

### Background

Having available real estate that is properly located with access to transportation, is serviced by utilities and is maintained at a high level of readiness is a critical aspect of an economic development strategy. Communities that provide the resources, including the right type of real estate, have a much better chance of retaining and attracting business.

### Vision (Anticipating Prospective Company Needs)

The Virginia Highlands Region seeks to maintain a reasonable inventory of sites and buildings (at various levels of readiness) to meet the needs of defined target industries which will help support the growth of jobs and tax income in the region for the years to come.

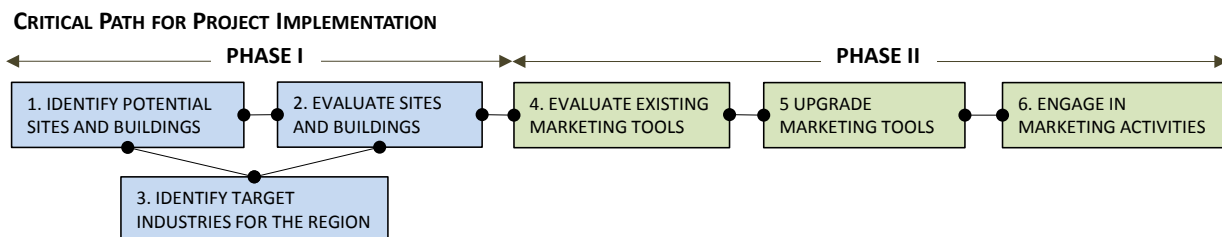
### Strategy

This Action Team will survey all available and potential sites and buildings that could support different types of businesses. The survey will determine the size of each site and building, current condition, available utilities or the potential for having utilities, access to the interstate and primary highways, and other attributes. The team will develop a plan for having specific sites and buildings along with utilities at a certain level of readiness to support economic growth, and develop/implement strategies for marketing the region.

### Project Implementation

This initiative, as executed by the Action Team, has a short-term focus of evaluating sites, utility-related issues and marketing. The functions of this team will be transferred back to the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation at the conclusion of this effort.

Implementation will be launched in two phases with Phase I defining and evaluating available real estate options and related utilities; and Phase II Marketing/Promoting the region.





## **Phase I – Identification and Evaluation of Sites and Buildings**

### ➤ Task 1 – Identification of Available Sites and Buildings

- Develop a list of all potential sites and buildings that have reasonable potential. Very old buildings not in good structural condition, cannot be brought up to code economically or do not have utility access will not be reasonable candidates. Sites that are located in remote areas, cannot be graded without exceptional excavation/rock removal, or do not have utility access, will not be reasonable candidates.
- Gather basic information on each site/building related to site size, building size and dimensions, utilities available and overall level of readiness.

### ➤ Task 2 – Evaluation Sites and Buildings

- Evaluate the market potential of each property based on size, location, utility services and readiness.
- Estimate the cost of elevating a property to a high level of readiness.
- Stack rank properties as to their current marketability

### ➤ Task 3 – Target Industry Analysis

- Evaluate resources and current industry presence.
- Identify potential opportunities for the region (type of industry and operation, size of firm)

## **Phase II – Promote/Market Virginia Highlands Region**

### ➤ Task 3 – Evaluate Existing Marketing Tools

- Web site
- Collateral materials (resource-related information, site and building profiles, etc.)
- Other marketing techniques

### ➤ Task 4 – Upgrade Marketing Tools

- Resource profile (as needed)
- Site and building profile
- Other materials

### ➤ Task 5 – Engage in Marketing Activities

- Regional
- State
- Prospective companies

## Project Schedule

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2013					2014												
	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Phase I – ID and Evaluation of Sites/Buildings																		
1. Identification of Sites and Buildings																		
2. Evaluation of Sites and Buildings																		
3. Target Industry Analysis																		
Phase II – Promotion/Marketing																		
4. Evaluate Existing Marketing Tools																		
5. Upgrade Marketing Tools																		
6. Engage in Marketing Activities																		

Notes and Comments:

## Supplementary Information

### BASIC REAL ESTATE AND UTILITY REQUIREMENTS BY TYPE OF OPERATION

Target Industry or Economic Segment	Real Estate Requirements
Manufacturing Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper conversion</li> <li>Machining/metal fabrication</li> <li>Plastics molding</li> <li>Light assembly</li> <li>Wood products</li> <li>Other</li> </ul>	<b>25,000 to 100,000 SF expandable industrial flex space</b> with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ceiling heights of 25+ ft and column widths of 40+ ft.</li> <li>Access to <b>industrial-grade utilities</b>. Utility requirements will vary by type of industry and size/type of operation. Some industries like food and beverage need high water and sewer capacities. Having natural gas to process and space heating is important as the price continues to be more competitive.</li> <li>Having <b>building &lt;20 years old</b> is important due to code changes, potential contamination over long periods of use and layouts tend to be chopped up and specialized over time.</li> <li><b>5 to 25 acre sites</b> within an industrial park that has access to utilities and is close to Shovel Ready or Pad Ready status.</li> <li>Preference for being within <b>1-2 miles of interstate</b> to limit truck traffic on two-lane highways past schools, residential areas, hospitals, major retail areas and other sensitive areas.</li> </ul>
Back Office and Customer Service Operations	10,000 to 75,000 SF of <b>Class A/B office space</b> for lease with access to amenities such as restaurants and retail with 4-5 parking spaces per 1,000 SF and reasonable access to interstate and primary feeder highways.
Data Centers	<b>Sites</b> with access to highly reliable and low cost double-feed electric power and telecom services. In a relatively obscure location that gives some security (not on a major highway with a sign on the side). Lots are 5 to 15 acres in size away from natural disasters.

## COMPARISON OF EXISTING REAL ESTATE OPTIONS WITHIN THE ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS

### 1. SITES

	Alleghany Reg. Com. Center	Alleghany Innovation Pk.	Clifton Forge Business Pk.	CF Rail Site North	CF Rail Site South	Low Moor Mine Site	Rail Over River Industrial Park
Location	Low Moor	Clifton Forge	Clifton Forge	Clifton Forge	Alleghany Co.	Low Moor	Covington
Ownership	County	County	Town of CF	Town of CF	Alleghany County	Sizemore & Sons	Garten
Distance to I-64	0.7 mile	<1 mile	<2 miles	0.75 miles	1 mile	0.6 miles	1.1 miles
Zoning Designation	M-1	M-1	BG	M-2	M-1	Data Center	M-2
Available Acreage	90	90	14	20	31.9 <sup>1</sup>	8.99	~15
Rail Access (Y/N)	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Readiness of Site*	4	4	4	4	3	Former mine	1/2
<b>Utilities (Y/N)</b>							
Water	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	High volume
Sewer	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Electric Power	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	50 MW	Y
Natural Gas	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Telecom	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Sonet Ring	Y

\*Readiness of Site: 1 = Pad/Shovel Ready; 2=Shovel Ready; 3=Some Testing Complete; 4=Raw Land/Untested

### 2. BUILDINGS

	Lear 1	Lear 3	Bacova	Rail Over River Site <sup>2</sup>	Parker Hannifin <sup>3</sup>	Halmode
Location	Covington	Covington	Low Moor	Covington	Iron Gate	Covington
Ownership	Dawn	Dawn	Penta	Garten/Long/Justice	Garten	Covington Co.
Distance to I-64	Adjacent	Adjacent	0.5 miles	1.1 miles	3 miles	0.5 miles
Building Size (SF)	93,836	30,000	75,000 <sup>1</sup>	~325,000	165,000	25,570
Ceiling Height (s)	25'	19'-5"/13'-7"	35'/25'	35'/25'	19'/23'-9"/17'-9"	16'
Column Widths	25'x50'	25'x50'	-	25' x 75'	25' x 42'	-
Year Building Built	1982	1980	1996	1929 - 1976	1955 - 1980	1920's
Condition of Building	Good	Good	Good	Fair/Good	Fair	Fair
Rail Access (Y/N)	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
<b>Utilities (Y/N)</b>						
Water	Y	Y	Y	High Volume	High Volume	Y
Sewer	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Electric Power	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Natural Gas	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Telecom	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

#### Notes for Both Tables:

1. Long narrow plot of land just south of the river.
2. The building has a total size of ~325,000 SF. The complex has 35,000 to 40,000 SF leased to AET to material testing operations.
3. Building is partially in the 500 year flood plain.

**➤ ACTION INITIATIVE #2**

**ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS WEB STORE AND SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**



Silk Screen Items • Pottery • Jewelry • Photography/Paintings • Paper-Based Items • Knit Items • Other Products

**Background**

An innovative approach to promoting the region and supporting local small business is establishing a “web store.” The web-based approach would complement local storefront point of purchase and provide year-round market access for small businesses while generating potential job opportunities for local residents through producing products and manning a regional fulfillment center.

This Action Team will define the scope, costs and a plan required to have a region-wide web site for high quality art other items that reflect the *natural, cultural and historic heritage* of the area.

**Vision (Building relationships between local businesses and the global market)**

Over the next few years, a web site would be established and expanded to support 25-50 local businesses (brick and mortar or home-based) and a product fulfillment mechanism would be established and expanded as needed to support product inventory and shipment. In addition to supporting small businesses, there would be potential job opportunities in administering the web site, marketing and manning the fulfillment center.

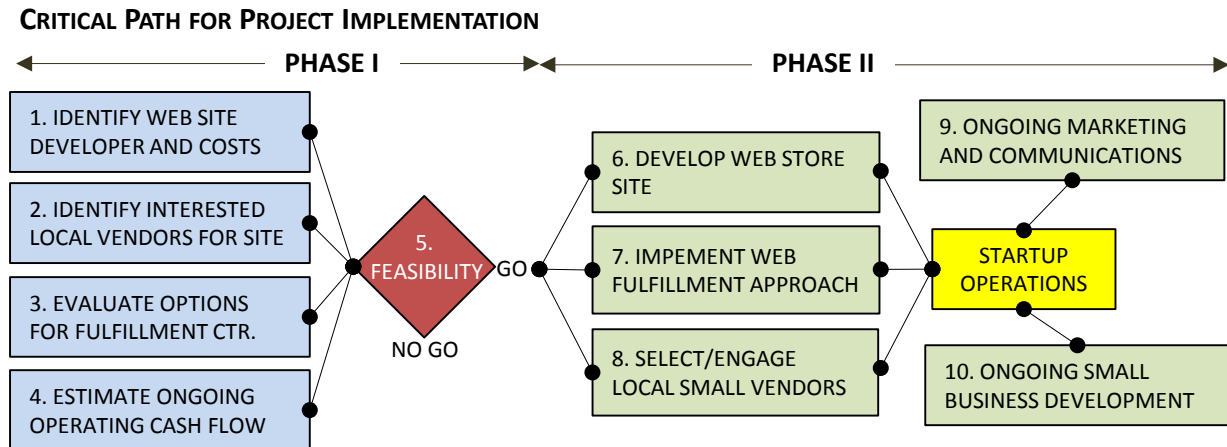
**Strategy**

Bring together a group of local businesses that reflect the natural and historic heritage of the area and partner with a vendor to develop the web platform. The group could either operate the distribution operation internally, partner with Jackson River Enterprises, or select a third party distribution operation. There are local firms that perform fulfillment functions but they may require the use of one of their facilities that is not likely to be in the region.

The web site would also be tied to the tourism web site to leverage both purchases on the internet as visits to the region.

## Project Implementation

The critical path for implementing this project involves the following key steps:



### Phase I – Feasibility (Determining the Viability of Establishing the Web Store)

#### ➤ Task 1 – Identify Web Site Developer and Costs

- Identify qualified vendors for establishing an ecommerce web site. Consider firms such as Volusion ([www.volusion.com](http://www.volusion.com)) that specialize in this type of site.
- Estimate the cost of establishing the web site (contact ecommerce software providers for a quote).

#### ➤ Task 2 – Identify Interested Local Vendors for Site

- Identify, contact and screen local vendors that may be potential candidates for promoting their products on the web site. Focus on those that sell goods that relate to the region’s natural beauty, forests (wood products), handicrafts or high quality production goods, photography, foods, etc.
- Establish a selection team to define the types of businesses that are of interest and review the vendor candidates.

#### ➤ Task 3 – Evaluate Options for Fulfillment Center

- Determine the available options short and long term: (1) each firm handles their own shipping; (2) partner with local resources (e.g., Jackson River Enterprise) to provide fulfillment; (3) retain a third party provider to engage in fulfillment.
- Perform cost and logistics analysis to determine best alternative.

#### ➤ Task 4 – Estimate Ongoing Operating Cash Flow

- Cost of maintaining the web site.
- Fixed cost of the fulfillment function.
- Related marketing and admin costs.
- Package information into feasibility report.

#### ➤ Task 5 – Decision to “Go” or “No-Go” on Developing Web Store

- Establish review committee to evaluate feasibility.
- Evaluate feasibility and decide on course of action.

**Phase II – Establishing the Web Store and Supporting Small Business**

- Task 6 – Develop Web Site
  - Make final selection of web developer.
  - Prepare specs on site requirements.
  - Build site infrastructure.
  - Load vendor/product information (photograph items)
- Task 7 – Implement Fulfillment Approach
  - Details will depend on fulfillment option.
- Task 8 – Select/Engage Local Small Vendors
  - Develop descriptive criteria for vendor selection.
  - Prepare rules of engagement for vendors and buyers for web site.
- Task 9 – Ongoing Communications and Marketing
  - Provide periodic/routine updates on the activity levels and business.
  - Leverage marketing efforts with tourism activities.
- Task 10 – Ongoing Small Business Development
  - Establish panel to review new business and product entries.
  - Provide classes and support for business and new product plans.
  - Offer financial support (revolving loans) for new business and product development.
  - Provide business coaching and functional support for growth of existing businesses.

**Project Schedule**

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2013				2014												2015												
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Phase I - Feasibility																													
1. Identify Web Site Developer and Costs																													
2. Identify Local Interested Vendors for Site																													
3. Evaluate Options for Fulfillment Center																													
4. Estimate On-Going Operating Cash Flow																													
5. Decision to "Go" or "No Go" <sup>1</sup>																													
Phase II – Establish Web Store																													
6. Establish Web Store Site on Internet																													
7. Implement Fulfillment Approach																													
8. Select/Engage Local Small Vendors																													
9. Ongoing Communications and Marketing																													
10. Ongoing Support of Small Businesses																													

**Notes and Comments:**

1. Once the feasibility phase is complete, the implementation schedule can be completed.

### Elements of a Successful Web Retail Site (examples)

- ☑ Keep the purchasing transactions on one web site offering a consistent quality of presentation.
- ☑ Select local vendors that reflect the natural and historic heritage of the region – aesthetic, wholesome, high quality.
- ☑ Provide profiles of each vendor and a blog to allow for interaction between the buyer and vendor.
- ☑ Keep the site simple, easy to navigate.
- ☑ Have a search list to easily select products by category.

### EXAMPLES OF MULTI-VENDOR SMALL BUSINESS WEB SITES

[www.southernhighlandguild.org/cart/](http://www.southernhighlandguild.org/cart/)

<http://www.bonanza.com/>

[www.madeitmyself.com/](http://www.madeitmyself.com/)

**➤ ACTION INITIATIVE #3**

**RESIDENT CURB APPEAL, ENHANCEMENT OF GATEWAYS AND “MAIN STREET” AREAS**



Enhance Curb Appeal of Residences • Signage • Facades of Local Businesses • Enhance Gateway Areas

**Background**

Communities throughout North America and Europe utilize aesthetics to attract tourists and businesses as well as build civic pride. They utilize good overall design as well as landscaping, flags, and other features to make their communities quaint (authentic) and great places to live and visit.

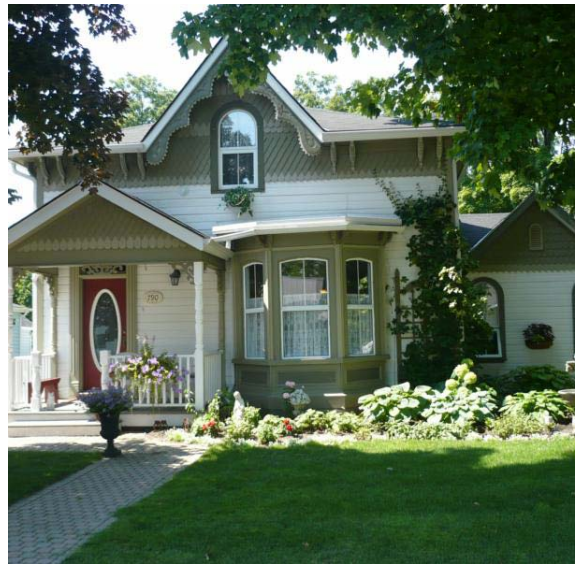
**Vision**

It is the objective of this Action Initiative to enhance the aesthetics of the communities within the Alleghany Highlands region in order to attract additional tourists, encourage employees being recruited to the area to live here, stimulate new and existing residents to invest in their homes, and attract companies to locate in the region. It will also elevate civic pride and build momentum to engage in other civic projects. The results of this effort can support economic growth while bringing recognition to the region. Within ten years, key corridors within Clifton Forge, the City of Covington and selected locations within Alleghany County will be aesthetically enhanced and produce an image that is highly attractive.

**Strategy**

A key element of the strategy is to invest a modest amount of funds each year within targeted corridors to achieve a tipping point whereby individual homeowners will leverage available volunteer resources and material discounts to improve the level of curb appeal throughout the region. This may include painting the front of the house, making minor repairs to porches and other architectural features, repairing or installing a picket or other fence, and adding landscaping.

The team will also leverage ongoing efforts to improve the presence and uniformity of signage throughout the region, dress up gateway areas with landscaping and signage, as well as sustain the “Main Street” efforts to enhance downtown areas.

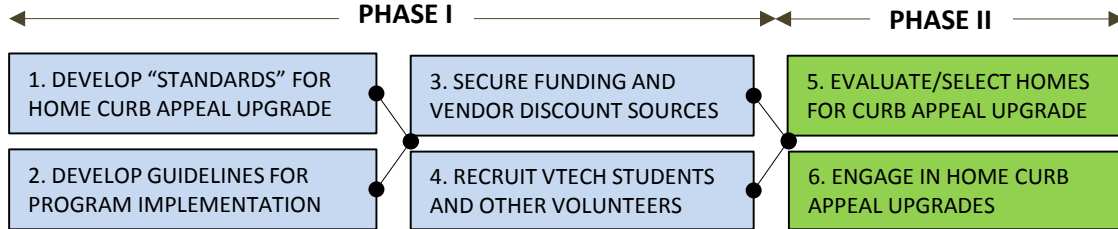




**Project Implementation to Enhance Curb Appeal in Selected Residential Corridors**

Implementation will take place in two phases with Phase I focused on developing program guidelines and funding and Phase II engaging in the curb appeal enhancement activities over the next five years.

**CRITICAL PATH FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**



**Phase I – Developing Guidelines**

☞ Task 1 – Develop “Standards” for Home Curb Appeal Upgrade

Based on input from the Action Team, the standards/guidelines for National Historic Sites (where applicable, see [www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm)), and other best practices that can be economically implemented, a booklet of design standards should be developed by a consultant or volunteers (as are available). The standards will be the basis for engaging in curb appeal enhancement for selected homes along defined corridors. The “standards” are not meant to stifle individual creativity but provide a basis for bringing the corridors into compliance with standards if they are registered as National Historic Sites as well as offering an attractive presentation to outsiders coming to the community.

- Prepping homes for painting, types of paint, purchasing paint, and color pallet options
- Types of replacement hardware that align with the basic style of the home
- Landscaping techniques and available trees, shrubs and plants
- Fencing upgrade/replacement as appropriate
- Sidewalks, other walkways and driveways
- Other improvements.

☞ Task 2 – Develop Guidelines for Program Implementation

The Action Team will develop program guidelines to administer the curb appeal activities that include:

- Description/map of corridors to be included in the program
- Types of enhancements that are covered in the program
- Process of home evaluation and enhancement activities
- Homeowner participation requirements (level of work/matching fund approach)
- Level of funding and available material discount opportunities
- Other requirements

☞ Task 3 – Secure Funding and Vendor Discount Sources

The Action Team will seek out sourcing of grants and vendor discounts (paint, hardware, trees, bushes and plants, etc.) from multiple sources to support the `program.

☞ Task 4 – Recruit VTech Students and Other Volunteers

- Work with VTech’s School of Architecture to recruit students who want to participate in the program by applying the standards for home curb appeal to each home selected for upgrade and then develop and implement the curb appeal plan.
- Identify a list of volunteers who will support the program (similar to a Habitat for Humanity approach).

➤ **Task 5 – Identify/Select Homes for Curb Appeal Upgrade**

The Action Team will select homes for upgrade based on the Program Guidelines prepared in Task 2 such that it will be fair and objective to the community. The program may start in a specific portion of a corridor in order to gain maximum impact and then rollout over time. Homeowners will need to comply with the stipulations for participation as defined in the Program Guidelines.

➤ **Task 6 – Engage in Curb Appeal Upgrade Activities**

Recommended rollout of the program would include the following schedule (tentative):

- ❑ Spring 2014 (April thru June): initiate clean-up program and target homes for front yard/façade improvement.
- ❑ Fall 2014 (August thru October): 5 homes in Clifton Forge and 5 homes in Covington
- ❑ Spring 2015 (April thru June): 10 homes in Clifton Forge and 10 homes in Covington
- ❑ Fall (August thru October) 2015: 15+ homes in Clifton Forge and 15+ homes in Covington

The objective would be to have 30+ homes completed in Clifton Forge and 30+ in Covington by the end of 2015. At this point, the program would be evaluated and a pace set for the future.

**Project Schedule to Enhance Curb Appeal in Selected Residential Corridors**

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2014												2015											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Phase I - Program Guidelines/Funding																								
2. Develop Curb Appeal Standards																								
2. Develop Program Guidelines																								
3. Secure Funding/Vendor Discounts																								
4. Recruit VTech Students/Volunteers																								
Phase II – Program Implementation																								
5. Identify/Select Homes for Program																								
6. Implement Curb Appeal Activities																								

Notes and Comments:

**Project Implementation for “Main Street” Areas and Enhance Gateway/Wayfinding Signage**

The Main Street Program activity is acknowledged because it is an integral component of the overall economic development effort. Clifton Forge has a very active organization (Clifton Forge Main Street, Inc.) that is fully underway and making very positive impact on the downtown area. The City of Covington does not have an active Main Street Program. It is the intention of this report and Action Initiative to work in concert with the Clifton Forge Main Street team and encourage Covington to move forward with a program as it aligns with business activity in the downtown area.

Enhancing the Gateway areas of the region and wayfinding signage will be a combined effort of this Action Initiative Team with inputs from the Destination Garden Action Initiative Team. Specific tasks that have been completed or need to be addressed, include:

➤ **Task 1 – Assess Area Signage and Options for Enhancements**

This effort has already been completed.

➤ **Task 2 – Develop Plan/Schedule for Implementing Area Signage Enhancements**

Completing this entire effort, depending on the scope of the program (ranging from gateway signs, general wayfinding signs, individual street signs, etc.), encompasses a major effort and cost. The Action Team(s) need to set priorities along with a rollout plan, budget and funding sources in order to achieve full implementation.

## Reference Materials for Residential Curb Appeal and Main Street/Signage Enhancements

### Examples of Curb Appeal Techniques

- Repair/paint front of house including porch/front door area
- Repair/paint, remove or install decorative fence
- Repair/paint/replace mailbox, numbers, lights, flag holder and other hardware
- Repair/replace front walkway and/or sidewalk
- Wash windows and power wash siding, sidewalks and driveway
- Landscaping (remove, prune or install trees, shrubs and plants)
- Repair/replace all or portions of lawn or convert to some other type of landscape presentation.



[www.frontdoor.com/photos/8-budget-curb-appeal-projects](http://www.frontdoor.com/photos/8-budget-curb-appeal-projects)



[www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20408237,00.html](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20408237,00.html)

[www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20347295,00.html](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20347295,00.html)

[www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20597429,00.html](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20597429,00.html)



[www.bhg.com/home-improvement/exterior/curb-appeal/ways-to-add-curb-appeal/#page=1](http://www.bhg.com/home-improvement/exterior/curb-appeal/ways-to-add-curb-appeal/#page=1)

### Popular Mechanics

[www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/outdoor-projects/10-ways-to-improve-your-homes-curb-appeal#slide-4](http://www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/outdoor-projects/10-ways-to-improve-your-homes-curb-appeal#slide-4)

### Examples of Small Towns/Cities That Have Invested in Their Downtown Aesthetics

There are many good examples of small towns and cities that have enhanced their downtown and residential areas that have resulted/sustain a economic activity. What is done is creative but not expensive – it's a lot of little things that include the following:

- Restore the facades of buildings to their original look through removing “modernizing” facing, restoring architectural elements and painting.
- Repair/clean/replace (as needed) sidewalks.
- Install period lighting, seating, clocks and other “hardware.”
- Install appropriate trees, shrubs and plants along the main streets and in small pocket parks.
- Have plantings that bloom at certain times of the year to support a festival or major house tour.
- Replace signage for stores and wayfinding signs to provide a vintage/quaint look and feel.
- Utilize flags and banners to soften street visuals and add some additional color.

## ➤ ACTION INITIATIVE #4

### COMMUNITY LANDSCAPING AND DESTINATION GARDENS



Public Landscaping • Pocket Parks • Formal and Virginia Native Plant Destination Gardens

### Background

Providing extensive community landscaping, community gardens and destination gardens not only enhances the “quality of place” but also can be a draw for tourism. Numerous communities in North America and Europe have leveraged their “green thumb” as a focal point for community pride and activity while becoming highly valued destinations for tourists and businesses. The horticultural assets of the Allegheny Highlands include state and national forests, a variety of private gardens as well as additional locations for formal gardens and pocket parks as appropriate.

### Vision

The long-term opportunity from this initiative is to position the Allegheny Highlands as a horticultural center – a place to come to enjoy and learn about forests, gardening techniques and design as well as nutrition from growing your own food. This could evolve into economic opportunities to offer courses in gardening and horticulture; sell specific plants/seeds, books, tools and other unique products through the Allegheny Highlands Web Store; offer a fee for garden tours; offer jobs in landscaping to local residents; and many other related opportunities.

In addition, the aesthetic qualities of the area will reflect a quality of place that helps attract businesses to the region. Employers want to hire people that care about their community because it’s a reflection on how employees potentially will engage in their business.

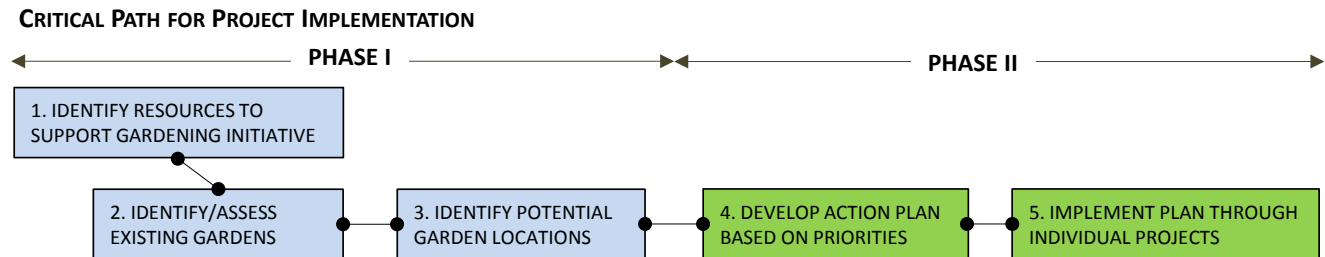
### Strategy

This initiative will be coordinated through an Action Team that will bring together the resources required and set the priorities for implementation. There are many related efforts that can be derived from gardening so it will be critical to focus on specific tasks and provide a roll-out in stages. The Action Team will develop an overall plan as reflected in the program Implementation outlined below.

Opportunities such as signage, home and business landscaping along specific corridors, and the Main Street program for façade improvement are related to this effort but are actually covered under a separate Action Team.

## Project Implementation

The Action Team has a short-term emphasis on evaluating options and developing implementation plans. Once the plan has been defined and implementation is successfully underway, the focus and role of the



Action Team will evolve into another stage that will be determined as the effort moves forward.

### Phase I – Defining the Region’s Garden Assets and Potential

#### ☞ Task 1 – Identify Resources to Support the Gardening Initiative

These resources are not necessarily members of the Action Team but can be referred to as needed.

- Individuals and organizations with horticultural-related expertise.
- Business partners that can potentially support/sponsor future projects.
- Types of volunteer organizations that may participate in future projects. Many of these projects will qualify as excellent service projects for Boy and Girl Scouts, 4H, churches, school clubs, etc.

#### ☞ Task 2 – Identify/Assess Existing Gardens/Horticultural Activities in the Region

- Identify and profile existing private and public gardens and forestry centers.
- Assess each location based on defined criteria, such as: location, description of garden type, handicap access, parking capacity, interest by owner to be a “garden destination,” specific needs for improvement that would require manpower or financial resources, and other related information.
- Identify any courses or seminars on horticulture that may/could be offered.

#### ☞ Task 3 – Identify/Assess Potential Locations for Gardens in the Region

- Identify and profile potential locations for additional gardens in the region.
- Assess each location based on defined criteria, such as: location, description of potential gardening activities, handicap access, parking capacity, current owner of land, and owner’s interest in participation in gardening activities.
- Outline a plan to develop high potential garden locations and estimate the manpower and financial resources required to complete the garden. This information will be key input in setting project priorities.

### Phase II – Develop and Implement an Action Plan to Support Garden Initiative

#### ☞ Task 4 – Develop an Action Plan Based on Priorities

- Identify the top priority initiatives (enhancing a garden, building a new garden, establishing an educational seminar that is offered to tourists and local residents, etc.) based on estimated cost vs. value to the community, attracting tourists and improving the aesthetics of the community for prospective outside companies.
- Develop a detailed cost analysis based on materials and level/type of manpower (volunteers vs. professionals) required to complete the project and an implementation schedule.
- Seek funding to complete the project.

☛ **Task 5 – Implement Plan Through Individual Projects**

- Establish a date in advance to assure materials can be purchased and volunteers are available.
- Promote the event by either contacting specific groups directly or notifying local media.
- Make sketches of garden layout to communicate with project team once they are on site.
- Purchase/acquire required materials.
- Identify required tools needed to complete the project (particularly any large equipment).

**Project Schedule**

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2013				2014												
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Phase I - Define Regions Garden Assets																	
3. Identify Resources to Support Initiative																	
2. Identify/Assess Existing Gardens																	
3. Identify/Assess Potential Locations																	
Phase II - Develop/Implement Plan																	
4. Develop Action Plan Based on Priorities																	
5. Implement Plan Through Projects																	

Notes and Comments:

**Examples of Community Destination Gardens**

**GREEN SPRING GARDENS (FAIRFAX, VA)**

**Description:** Owned by the Fairfax County Department of Recreation, Green Spring has its roots as a colonial farm that changed hands several times and ultimately was donated to Fairfax County to be used as a garden. The grounds had 16 acres and an additional 11 acres were purchased for a total of 37 acres along with a mansion homestead.

The gardens include a horticulture center, reference library, demonstration gardens, a historic landscape and buildings, and a wooded stream valley with ponds. The gardens feature a wide variety of trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, annuals, bulbs, and vegetables provide ideas and inspiration for the home gardener.

**Web Site:** [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/)

**MEADOWLARK BOTANICAL GARDENS (VIENNA, VA)**

**Description:** Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority maintains this unique 95-acre park focused on native Virginia plants in three collections that include the Potomac Valley Collection, the Virginia Native Tree Collection, and the Virginia Wetlands Collection.

**Web Site:** [www.nvrpa.org/park/meadowlark\\_botanical\\_gardens/](http://www.nvrpa.org/park/meadowlark_botanical_gardens/)

**LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN (HENRICO, VA)**

**Description:** The garden's 40 acres include one of the largest and most diverse perennial gardens on the East Coast and the only classical, domed conservatory open to the public in the mid-Atlantic region. Hands-on educational workshops and group dining options are available at this Henrico County site.

**Web Site:** [www.lewisginter.org/](http://www.lewisginter.org/)

## ➤ ACTION INITIATIVE #5

### ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AND TECHNOLOGY DISCOVERY CENTER



#### Background

The Alleghany Highlands has a very rich industrial history that includes:

- Grain milling with water power
- Timber harvesting and the production of lumber and millwork
- Iron ore and limestone mining and the production of pig iron
- Papermaking and converting
- Silk and rayon production

The activities within the region reflect the development of materials-based industries in America. This proud heritage is a great story that can be the centerpiece for a technology-related discovery center that also focuses on current and emerging technologies and techniques such as:

- Diverse materials technologies (wood, carbon fiber, plastics, metals, nanomaterials, paper, etc.)
- Designing potential objects/products with materials
- 3-D advanced printing/fabrication techniques (fab lab approach)

Another aspect of the region's heritage focuses on the people and their cultures that came to work in the forests, mines and mills while also establishing commerce and services required to support industry and daily life. This is a story that can have great human interest for both students and adults if done effectively.

#### Vision (Reflect the Past . . . Engage the Present . . . Prepare for the Future)

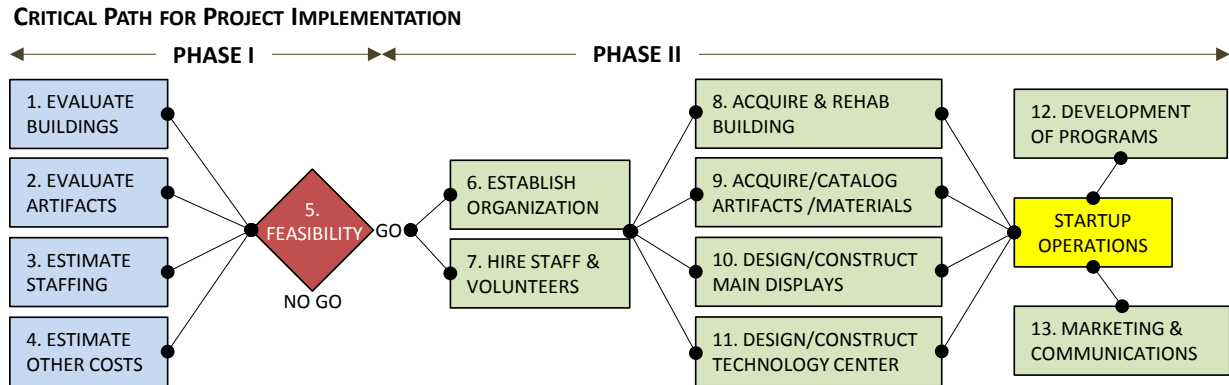
Over the next ten years and beyond, this team will establish a discovery center that reflects on the region's industrial heritage, engages students and interested tourists in learning about the area, and prepares residents to compete for jobs in materials-related technologies of the present and future. The discovery center will engage multiple partners such as MWV and other companies, the D.S. Lancaster Community College, VA Tech and other universities as resources for both the historic displays as well as the technology discovery center.

#### Strategy

Resources will be modest but the need for high quality is imperative. The action team will need to be creative and resourceful in partnering with individuals and companies for gathering artifacts and materials as well as seeking funding (donations of cash, time/labor, expertise, equipment, etc.) from foundations, individuals, companies and other sources for the development of the center. The roll-out of the discovery center and its individual display themes will happen over time as funding and support is available. The majority of effort will be through grassroots volunteers with input from colleges and universities channeled through well-defined and highly valued intern assignments.

#### Project Implementation

The project would be implemented in two phases, Phase I would evaluate the overall feasibility of the operation and Phase II would facilitate bringing it to a reality. The critical path for the project is noted in the figure below followed by details for each phase and task. A preliminary implementation schedule can be found on page 4.



### Phase I – Feasibility (Determining the Viability of Establishing the Center)

#### ☞ Task 1 – Building Evaluation

- Define overall facility needs:
  - Location (proximity to main roads, downtown Covington and other museums/points of interest)
  - Access to parking and parking capacity
  - Wheelchair accessible from parking lot to building and an elevator between floors
  - Access to the building for large equipment/displays (large door/ramp access)
  - Overall size of building (sq. ft.), general layout (number of floors) and amount of natural light
- Size/types of space, ceiling heights, current types of floor/wall materials, potential floor loads (wood vs. concrete floor and past uses of space)
- Identify multiple options (engage in building survey and document options)
- Benchmark other museums for types of space and build-out techniques utilized
- Estimate rehab costs for building shell (walls, roof, floor, windows, HVAC, security, etc.) for each option
- Assess/compare options and stack rank relative to meeting the above criteria (serves as input to feasibility analysis in Task 5)

#### ☞ Task 2 – Artifact and Material Evaluation

- Define categories/topics that would be of interest to the center
- Seek out initial sources of photos, books, other written material, artifacts, etc. that could be utilized in the Discovery Center
- Determine if the amount of available artifacts and materials is adequate (at no or low cost of acquisition)
- Identify individuals that have knowledge or access to materials related to a specific topic.

#### ☞ Task 3 – Define Staffing/Administration Requirements

- Determine the credentials, caliber and level of experience for the director (full or part-time)
- Define staffing requirements (curation, exhibit construction, guides, administrative support, webmaster, maintenance, etc.)
- Estimate annual operating cost for staffing as input to Task 5

#### ☞ Task 4 – Define Other Costs Related to the Construction and Operation of the Discovery Center



- Estimate budget for producing displays (incorporating donated materials and voluntary labor)
- Estimate maintenance costs
- Estimate insurance requirements (for building and general liability)
- Estimate utility costs
- Estimate the incremental cost of marketing and promotion

➔ Task 5 – Overall Feasibility Analysis

- Benchmark similar operations for scope, costs and challenges
- Availability and cost of appropriate buildings
- Determine if there are enough types of artifacts and materials to support the heritage center
- Estimate the cost and time for preparing exhibits (assume a roll-out over time)
- Define staffing requirements and related costs
- Define “other” costs including maintenance, utilities, insurance, marketing/promotion, etc.
- Develop overall cost/feasibility analysis: is this a “go” or “no go” initiative?

**Phase II – Engaging in the Establishment of the Center**

➔ Task 6 – Establish Organization to Oversee the Center

- Leverage experience from C&O Railway Heritage Center
- Appoint Board of Directors
- File for 501(c)(3) status
- Develop mission, bylaws/operating rules and other pertinent documents

➔ Task 7 – Hire Initial Staff and Recruit Volunteers

- Develop strategy for staffing as the organization ramps up over the next 5-10 years
- Hire part-time and leverage resources from other organizations as much as possible
- Communicate opportunities for local volunteers to support different aspects of the organization

➔ Task 8 – Acquire/Rehab Building Shell to Move-In Status

- Complete acquisition of building (set terms that reduce up-front cash flow)
- Engage in thorough assessment of condition and options for roof/ceiling, walls, floors, windows, doors, HVAC and security (select best approaches)
- Develop specifications for rehab activity
- Issue RFQ’s and determine cost for rehab
- Develop funding sources, scope and schedule for rehab activities (may be done in phases)

➔ Task 9 – Acquire, Catalog, Preserve and Store Artifacts and Materials

- Develop process for acquiring (loaning), cataloging and preserving/storing artifacts and materials
- Communicate needs for artifacts and materials to individuals, organizations and businesses
- Receive and build inventory of artifacts and materials . . . utilize on a permanent or rotational basis in the display area (some artifacts will be utilized for education purposes)

➔ Task 10 – Design and Construction of Main Displays

- Define overall themes for displays along with layouts and routing options
- Benchmark other industrial museums and review other sources of typical display techniques
- Design and construct displays, incorporating photos, video, audio, physical artifacts, etc.

➔ Task 11 – Design and Construction of Technology Discovery Aspect of the Center

- Define overall scope and functionality (material samples, hands on displays, reference information, computer terminals and software for product design, fab lab, etc.)
- Acquire and construct functional areas with furniture, computers, equipment, etc.

➔ Task 12 – Program Development

- Develop by age group; type of industry; past vs. present technologies; special events, classes and seminars; etc.
- Prepare materials to support programs

☛ **Task 13 – Marketing and Communications Support**

- Branding: determine name for museum/tech center and design logo (key identifier words: Alleghany Highlands, industrial, heritage, discovery, technology, materials, center, etc.)
- Web site development and linkages to other web sites
- Develop e-mail lists for volunteers, donors and other support resources
- Distribute attractive but simple newsletter on a quarterly basis providing updates on progress
- Develop pricing strategy for attendees (children, adults and seniors)
- Define, develop and implement methods of promotion and ongoing communications

**Project Schedule**

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2013					2014												2015											
	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Phase I - Feasibility																													
4. Building Evaluation																													
2. Artifact/Material Evaluation																													
3. Staffing/Admin Evaluation																													
4. Define "Other" Costs																													
5. Overall Feasibility Analysis																													
Decision to "Go" or "No Go" <sup>1</sup>																													
Phase II – Establish Discovery Center <sup>2</sup>																													
6. Establish 501(c)(3) Organization																													
7. Hire Staff/Recruit Volunteers																													
8. Acquire/Rehab Building																													
9. Collect Artifacts/Materials																													
10. Construction of Main Displays																													
11. Design/Construction of Tech Center																													
12. Program Development																													
13. Marketing/Communications																													

**Notes and Comments:**

2. A review committee (from multiple sources) would be established to evaluate the feasibility and determine "go" vs. "no go"
3. Details on establishing the Discovery Center will be determined once more information from Phase I is received.

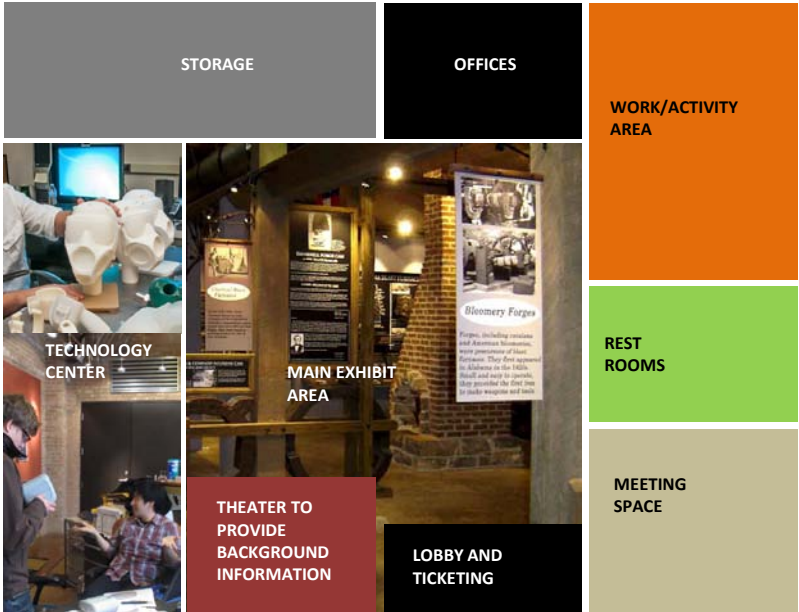
**Elements of a Successful Industrial Museum**

- Permanent and temporary exhibits (high quality)
- Hands-on areas to engage younger visitors . . . relating history with a scientific or engineering concept that can be applied to the present and future.
- Special classes and programs targeted at different groups (age and level of interest)
- Research activity (ongoing study of industry and local activity – past and present)

- ☑ Level of volunteerism as well as donations (artifacts and financial) by individuals, organizations, companies and others.

**TYPICAL TYPES OF SPACE REQUIRED**

Functional areas could be separated onto different floors or buildings.



**Museum of Our Industrial Heritage (Greenfield, MA)**

The museum’s mission is to celebrate our Industrial heritage through preserving, collecting and educating the public with emphasis on Franklin County and Athol, Massachusetts. At the heart of it is the *story*—the people who created and lived this history, and how their work and lives can inform ours today. The museum was founded by local resident, Leon Weeks, and incorporated in 1998 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The board and dedicated volunteers have been hard at work preserving, collecting, and documenting artifacts and related archival material—from the smallest tap and die to the large 19th century machines made right at our own site.

**Web Site:** [www.industrialhistory.org/about/](http://www.industrialhistory.org/about/)

**Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation (Waltham, MA)**

The mission of the Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation is to encourage and inspire future innovation in America. We do this through our collections and programs, by exploring the historical impact of industry on American culture, by examining the dynamic process of innovation, by celebrating our location in Waltham as a foundation of the American industrial revolution, by connecting the expertise of older generations with the inquisitiveness of young people, and by delighting audiences of all ages with an engaging museum experience.

**Web Site:** [www.crimi.org/about-the-museum/history-of-the-museum/](http://www.crimi.org/about-the-museum/history-of-the-museum/)

**Baltimore Museum of Industry (Baltimore, MD)**

The mission of the Baltimore Museum of Industry is to collect, preserve, and interpret the industrial and technological heritage of the Baltimore region for the public by presenting educational programs and exhibits that explore the stories of Maryland’s industries and the people who created and worked in them.

**Web Site:** [www.thebmi.org/](http://www.thebmi.org/)

**Paper Discovery Center (Appleton, WI)**

Located within a former paper mill on the Fox River, the Paper Discovery Center explores the world of paper through a study of science & technology with a look at its past, its future, and the role paper plays in all facets of our lives.

**Web Site:** [www.paperdiscoverycenter.org/](http://www.paperdiscoverycenter.org/)