



BUILDING RESILIENT  
ECONOMIES *in*  
COAL COMMUNITIES

# Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities

Economic Diversification Strategy  
City of Richwood, Nicholas County, W.Va.

## **BRECC Action Challenge Overview**

Coal communities across the country are reimagining local industries and developing transformative initiatives to build stronger, more resilient economies. Supported by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities (BRECC) Action Challenge provides technical assistance to communities that have been negatively impacted by changes in the coal economy. In partnership with the National Association of Counties (NACo), the West Virginia Community Development Hub, Community Builders and EntreWorks Consulting provided community coaching support and planning expertise through the BRECC Action Challenge to develop community-led economic diversification strategies.

## **Economic Diversification Strategy**

BRECC's Economic Diversification Strategies aim to prepare coal communities to overcome economic shocks and build stronger local economies. In 2023, NACo selected eight coal communities for the BRECC Action Challenge through a competitive application process. Collaborating with their county, each coal community formed a cross-sector team that worked along side with their BRECC coach to develop an economic diversification strategy customized to their community's needs, priorities and strengths. This one-year planning process included conducting a community assessment, identifying goals and opportunities, developing projects and establishing action steps. BRECC Economic Diversification Strategies will help align stakeholders and foster collaboration, build consensus around priorities and provide a roadmap for broadening economic drivers and advancing revitalization.

## **BRECC Partners And Technical Assistance Providers**



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# Introduction

## Action Challenge Team

In 2022, a team of community members from the City of Richwood, West Virginia, applied for and was competitively selected to participate in the BRECC Action Challenge 2023 Cohort. This team is made up of community members from all walks of life who are deeply involved in civic organizations, local businesses, the arts community, and on-the-ground community engagement. Through the Challenge, the team sought to identify pathways and strategies that could enhance Richwood's ability to respond to the significant challenges spurred on or amplified by coal transition. This team also sought to address challenges unique to their community, such as becoming resilient in the face of recurring flooding. Accompanied by coaches from The West Virginia Community Development Hub (The Hub), the result of this teams' work is the following economic diversification strategies to support coal transition.

## Community Profile

Richwood's blend of Appalachian heritage and history, inclusion and kindness, makes it a welcoming place that feels like home to those who live here and visit. A rural town in Nicholas County, West Virginia, it has a population of 2,176 people (Data USA, 2022). The coal and timber industries were economic drivers in the city during from the 1800s-1900s. Timber and logging remains one of its main industries. Today, Richwood is known as an arts and outdoor recreation community. Local waterways, trails, and its location as a gateway to the Monongahela National Forest make it popular for tourism. Dubbed the "Ramp Capital of the World," the city hosts numerous artists and festivals that folks from across the region come to partake in. The community also faces its challenges in a shortage of affordable housing, aging infrastructure, job loss, and the impacts of flooding. Despite these challenges, Richwood has a strong sense of community and pride. Residents believe that their city is on the brink of change.

## Individual Capital

Richwood "Lumberjacks" have an abundance of skills and creativity that they use to support their community. Many residents work in social services, retail trade, and manufacturing industries. Engagement in these fields gives folks the people skills and trade skills necessary for workforce transition in the face of coal and lumber decline. While a 25% decrease in population occurred from 200-2015, the city's population grew by 11.9% in 2020 (Data USA, 2022). A possible contribution to this positive trend is that a number of people who grew up in Richwood and moved away have been returning to buy homes and start small businesses. Entrepreneurs bring a talent of ingenuity to the town that has benefited the community. Over the course of 40 years, Richwood experienced a significant uptick in the population's median age. In 2020, however, that median age dropped by 1.1%, indicating that younger people are choosing to either stay in or move to the city (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

## Intellectual Capital

The community features a number of local and regional organizations and institutions who work to support the city in innovative ways. Local assets include businesses, civic groups, the City government, and an active City Council. More regional assets include the Rails to Trails nonprofit, Mon Forest Towns, the Rural Partners Network, WV Brownfields Assistance Center, a growing relationship with Nicholas County CVB, and a strengthening relationship with the County government. Richwood has also engaged in several community development programs with The Hub and the Tamarack Foundation. One trend that the team identified through this process is that the community has many existing and potential partners/resources, but often those groups don't communicate with one another. Addressing this will help the community tackle challenges in more comprehensive, cohesive manners.

## Social Capital

Richwood is largely a tight-knit community. Residents often band together to support one another in their projects (from festivals to fundraisers) and in times of need, as they did following the flood. This support and welcoming attitude extends to visitors as well. The friendly, inclusive nature of the city lends itself to a growing outdoor recreation and arts based tourism economy. Involved community members are the ones who instigate change in Richwood, as evidenced by the composition of this Action Challenge team. At the same time, sustained community engagement has been a challenge brought on by previous population decline and existing circumstances of poverty and substance use disorder (Pandemic to Prosperity, 2023). The Challenge Team hopes to capitalize on recent renewed energy spurred on by business development to encourage broader engagement and change-making.

## Cultural Capital

Appalachian culture and heritage are ever-present in Richwood. Coal and lumber industry histories are quintessential to the city's narrative: the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company propelled the county's economy and supplied the local Dodge Clothespin factory, the largest wooden clothespin factory in the world at the time (Richwood Chamber of Commerce, 2020). These workers kept Main Street and Oakford Avenue abuzz, and these streets are still central to community activity today.

Richwood has become a large arts and culture community, hosting multiple festivals a year. The first iteration of Richwood's Ramp Festival (a staple of Appalachian food culture) took place in 1938 and continues to this day. Other festivals include the Mountain Color Arts Show, the Cherry River Festival, and the Scenic Mountain Triathlon. All draw people from across the region. Multiple businesses also cater to the arts, including gallery Bloomfield Richwood.

## Natural Capital

Its location in the heart of Appalachia gives Richwood a picturesque natural landscape. A gateway to the Monongahela National Forest, it offers easy access to gorgeous hiking trails of

varying difficulty. The Cherry River is ideal for kayaking and canoeing (in addition to being the center of a local festival). The local Rail Trail provides space for folks to walk, run, and bike. These natural assets promote local wellness and have become a major draw for regional tourism. It has also been a motivator for people to move to Richwood. There is a major opportunity to leverage Richwood's proximity to nature to develop businesses that cater to outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Like much of Appalachia, the city is poised to grow a strong outdoor recreation economy; *and* residents want to be intentional about not allowing these opportunities to turn their community into a tourist trap (Invest Appalachia, 2023).

## Built Capital

One major asset is Main Street, which continues to undergo revitalization. Murals and beautification projects have made Main Street a draw for activity and local business development. Currently, there exists an opportunity for future development in the unoccupied buildings along the street. The 2016 flood damaged a number of homes, roads, and other buildings. This exacerbated the already existing challenges of abandoned and/or dilapidated buildings and affordable housing shortages. Such conditions are what led the Richwood Challenge Team to focus on downtown revitalization and housing.

## Political Capital

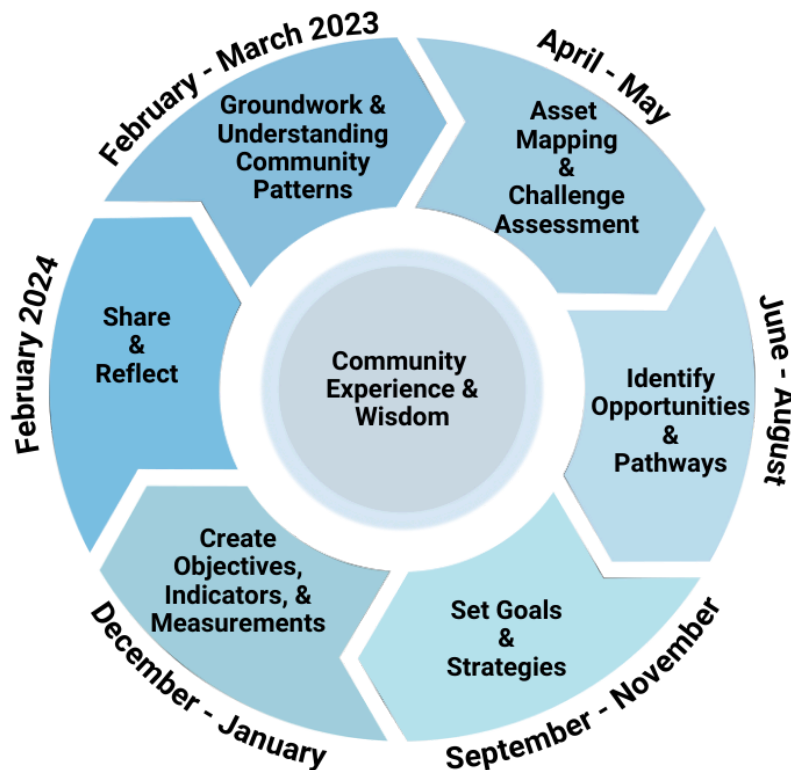
Richwood has an active City Council and strengthening relationships with County and regional governments/partners. The city also has a core group of engaged community leaders who work to promote residents' best interests and hold governments accountable. As in towns throughout the nation, Richwood is navigating how to collaborate with government entities without depending on them to a degree that administration change will disrupt economic development.

## Financial Capital

In the last several years, Richwood has opened over 46 locally owned and operated businesses. These businesses have boosted community morale and contributed to the tourism industry. The city has, however, experienced economic challenges on a broad scale. Employment decreased by 61.5% in 2021 (Data USA, 2022). A major component of employment decline is the shrinking of key industries: mining, lumber, manufacturing, and gas extraction. With this in mind, Richwood is looking to the future of what jobs its skilled workers can transition into over the next few years.

## Planning Process

From February 2023 - February 2024, The Hub walked alongside the Richwood Challenge Team in their economic diversification planning process. Fundamental to this process is the understanding that economic diversification/development is inherently community development, which requires participatory decision-making. Fundamental to this process is the understanding that economic diversification is inherently community development, which requires participatory decision-making. This makes relying on community experience and wisdom central to every step of planning. While the Challenge Cohort concludes in February 2024, the Richwood Team views community development as an ongoing cycle, meaning they will revisit each stage of this process as they move forward.



From February - March 2023, the group focused on team development and understanding the patterns in their community. April - August, the team engaged in asset-mapping, threat assessment, and economic pathway opportunity identification. In this stage, the team reviewed existing county and regional planning documents (CEDs, comprehensive plans, studies). The team identified three core pathways and created task teams around each of them. Core team members spearheaded each of these task teams and brought new community members into the process. Doing so broadened access to unique experiences critical to developing this plan.

Coaches from The Hub were also able to begin hosting Challenge meetings in Richwood beginning in July, which strengthened the participatory process. From this point onward, the team identified specific community goals, strategies to achieve those goals, and action steps for each of those goals. From here, the core team collaborated with task teams to identify specific

community goals and strategies to achieve those goals. From December 2023 - January 2024, the group clarified objectives, indicators of success, and measurements of progress for each of their goals. In February 2024, two community team members presented their plans to BRECC partners at the Action Challenge Capstone in D.C..

## Economic Diversification Pathways

### Approach

The Richwood Team approached economic diversification in a multi-faceted, holistic way focused on promoting the lasting livelihoods of residents. As such, the team used resident input to identify economic diversification pathways (Downtown Revitalization & Housing, Arts & Culture, and Outdoor Recreation). They also envisioned what the cumulative impact of their work in each pathway would create (long-term conditions) and what systems and attitudes would need to be in place (pre-conditions) to realize that impact.

For each pathway, the team identified four overarching goals and strategies to achieve those goals. Within each tangible strategy, task teams outlined actionable objectives (featuring due dates, resources, partners). Lastly, teams set indicators of success for their goals and specific measures to track their progress. Throughout task team work, groups collaborated with one another to ensure pathways supported one another. For a glossary of plan definitions, please refer to the **Additional Resources** section.

### Community Vision & Intention

The Richwood team set the below intention statement for their community's growth. As noted in the Community Profile section, a sense of inclusivity and deep heritage bound in the city. A pattern that emerged from the team's reflection, however, is that even those who love their homes here are unable to stay or do not see the benefits of staying long-term, particularly young people. The team identified some major needs at the heart of this challenge: little access to affordable housing, an abundance of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, lack of resources needed to push forward arts and tourism initiatives, and limited access to the technical assistance needed for outdoor recreation expansion.

Addressing these gaps led to three pathways of economic diversification: Downtown Revitalization & Housing, Arts & Culture, and Outdoor Recreation. In order to create a healthy community ecosystem that enables people to live lasting lives in Richwood, the area needs to develop quality affordable housing; improve dilapidated buildings to attract developers; facilitate the growth of arts tourism; and invest in expanding outdoor recreation assets. Investing in these pathways that support one another in fostering a healthy community is what will allow Richwood to create the groundwork for reaching their intention.



**“Richwood is a welcoming place that feels like home to those who live here and visit. Residents are accountable to one another and inspire future generations with their engagement.”**

Furthermore: “We will become more self-sufficient and investor ready while revitalizing the downtown, enhancing our outdoor recreation opportunities and building our arts presence. We will diversify the workforce, improve communication and marketing, be accountable to participate as individuals, engage the community and inspire future generations.”



While the pathways represented in the above diagram are of high priority at this stage in Richwood’s process they are not the only pathways through which the team seeks to approach development. Progress in these areas will set the groundwork necessary for the city to investigate and invest in other pathways.

# Economic Diversification Pathways Snapshot



## Downtown Revitalization & Housing

Richwood is a thriving community with a bustling downtown, easy access to affordable and “right priced” housing, and innovative building usage that contribute to resident connection and a healthy workforce.

Primary Partners

City of Richwood, WV Brownfields Assistance Center, Atlas Community Studios, The Hub (DARRE Program), Cherry River Foundation, property and business owners

Priority Objectives (Target 2024)

- Housing & Remote Worker Readiness Assessment
- Pre-development and engagement work for the G.C. Murphy Building
- Pre-development work for the Milltown School
- Host developer opportunity tour at Cherry River Festival



## Arts & Culture

Richwood offers an expanding variety of arts and cultural experiences that create a sense of community, expression, and inspiration for residents; cultivate excitement in visitors; and promote a vibrant local economy.

Primary Partners

WV Department of Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, City of Richwood, Nicholas County CVB, WVDACH, Cherry River Foundation, property owners, The Hub. local artists

Priority Objectives (Target 2024)

- Publish Richwood video shorts
- Complete Tamarack Foundation mural project
- Identify funding for Rail Trail sculptures & interactive murals
- Infrastructural analysis of the Deitz Spencer building
- Plan and executive a theater/performing arts event



## Outdoor Recreation

Richwood is a thriving center for outdoor recreation that promotes local wellness, community, expanded tourism, and economic growth.

Primary Partners

Richwood Rails to Trails, WV Rails to Trails, Nicholas County CVB, City of Cowen, property and business owners, WV Department of Highways

Priority Objectives (Target 2024)

- Renovate the Depot Building
- Develop a marketing strategy with the CVB
- Contract advertising consultant
- Continue to apply for and acquire funds for redevelopment of the Richwood Rail Trail
- Apply for and acquire pre-development funds for the Cowen Rail Trail extension

# Economic Diversification Pathway Strategic Roadmaps



## Downtown Revitalization & Housing

### Long-Term Conditions

Richwood is a thriving community with a bustling downtown, easy access to affordable and “right priced” housing, and innovative building usage that contribute to resident connection and a healthy workforce.

### Pre-Conditions for Long-Term Conditions to Occur

- A city government who values and invests in downtown revitalization as integral to community health through policies and prioritizing the hiring of a code enforcement officer
- Facade and building improvement programs that are affordable, accessible, and easily discoverable to Richwood residents
- Partners who advocate for affordable borrowing rates for home improvements
- Collaboration between banks, the City, developers, and building owners to improve the housing/downtown landscape
- Accessible education on building and business development

### Goals

| Assess Housing Challenges & Opportunities   | Encourage Awareness & Local Development  | Revitalize the Downtown & Community Engagement   |
|---|--|--|
| Richwood citizens, government representatives, and potential investors have a stronger understanding of what residents (existing and potential) need to live lasting livelihoods in the city. | Richwood residents and potential investors are excited to put down roots and own businesses in town. | The downtown is a thriving place of business and activity that promotes community connection, engagement, and innovative commerce. |

| Strategies   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Conduct a housing study and remote worker readiness assessment with community outreach components to identify housing and employment challenges and opportunities.   | Host a downtown opportunity tour for potential building owners and developers to increase awareness of Richwood as a place for development and encourage investment.  | Redevelop buildings of importance to residents with great potential for mixed use development that can be leveraged toward affordable housing and business.  |
| Objectives/Milestones  |   |  |
| <p>Objective 1: Conduct Richwood Housing &amp; Remote Worker Readiness study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Funding acquired for the study through DARRE (Dec 2023)</li> <li>○ Consultant contracted to conduct the study: Atlas Community Studios (Jan 2024)</li> <li>○ Atlas conducting initial research</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Notify City Council (Feb 2024)</li> <li>● Develop a marketing strategy to promote QR code for community survey (Feb 2024)</li> <li>● Identify/develop a landing page for the survey (Feb 2024)</li> <li>● Create table tents and fliers with survey QR code</li> <li>● Launch “Leap Forward with Richwood” survey campaign through a local publication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Follow up with social media</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Complete study (goal March 2024)</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Host a tour of downtown Richwood to showcase investor ready space, recent wins and opportunities for development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Base funding acquired via DARRE</li> <li>○ Date selected: Cherry River Festival in August 2024</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Collaborate with Hub DARRE VISTA to coordinate event logistics</li> <li>● Update existing downtown building inventory and marketing/ promotional materials</li> <li>● Develop matchmaking component to event to create connections to move-in ready space and to support investor confidence</li> <li>● Invite potential funders and resources to the event to host small business bootcamp and entrepreneurs cafe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ WV Hive, Woodlands Community Lenders, Recreation Economies Initiative (Partner Community Capital)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Incorporate an online registry and or</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Redevelop the former G.C. Murphy Building to include commercial, housing and co-working space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Funds secured through Downtown Appalachia: Revitalizing Recreational Economies (DARRE) to conduct architectural analysis</li> <li>○ RFQ for pre-development financial analysis and developer solicitation posted January 2024</li> <li>○ Initial cost estimate for redevelopment: \$10M depending on final use decisions and finishes (\$200-\$250 per square foot for 27K square feet)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Conduct financial analysis (goal: March 2024)</li> <li>● Hold a Town Hall to include resident input in reuse plan and share architectural renderings (April 2024)</li> <li>● Apply for implementation funding (goal: 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Options: earmark, EDA grant</li> <li>○ Conduct outreach to private organizations for donations if match</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

|  | video option for the developer tour  | needed  |
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| <p>Objective 2: Share study results with the community for their input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Notify City Council of results</li> <li>● Plan and host a Town Hall for residents to hear their results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask for their impressions and ideas to address challenges</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Conduct event follow-up work to engage developers, residents, and identify next steps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore grant opportunities for current owners of Main Street mixed use buildings</li> <li>● Outreach to attendees and participants about their experiences</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Renovate the former Milltown Grade School for creative reuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Greer family received DARRE TA money. Goal is to receive architectural/ structural feasibility analysis, creative reuse options and estimated cost.</li> <li>○ Architectural analysis: 1/2024</li> <li>○ WVU School of Design students will come to Richwood to do creative reuse renderings 2/26/24</li> <li>○ Initial cost estimate: \$2-\$3M depending on final use decisions and finishes (\$250 per square foot for 9,000 square feet)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Potential reuse options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hostel for those who enjoy outdoor recreation, art-related space to allow community use, venue for year-round use for theater, music</li> <li>○ Conduct environmental assessment for energy efficiency options/benefits</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Follow up with DARRE TA to process building for National Historic Registry depending on reuse plans</li> <li>● Host a Town Hall to include resident input in reuse plan and share architectural renderings</li> <li>● Acquire implementation funding for redevelopment (goal 2025)</li> </ul> |
| <p>Objective 3: Leverage study to apply for and acquire funding to address housing and remote worker readiness challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Goal: begin this work end of 2024</li> </ul>   |  |   |

**Programs and Key Activities**

- DARRE
- WV Brownfields Assistance Center
- WV Community Development Hub
- Downtown Revitalization Task Team
- Atlas Community Studios

- DARRE
- WV Brownfields Assistance Center
- WV Community Development Hub
- Downtown Revitalization Task Team
- City Council & government
- Richwood Chamber of Commerce
- Cherry River Foundation & the Cherry River Festival
- Local businesses and property owners

- DARRE
- WV Brownfields Assistance Center
- WV Community Development Hub
- Downtown Revitalization Task Team
- City Council
- Resident engagement

**Indicators of Success**

- The Team and Richwood residents have a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities around housing and remote working
- Documented research makes it easier to apply for funding to address challenges
- Improved housing stock and quality

- Resident and potential investor excitement around development
- Future developer tours at the local and/or regional level stemming from this

- Increased local business activity
- Increased activity on Main Street
- Increased community pride
- More community gathering and engagement as a byproduct
- Stronger local economic ecosystem
- More engagement in arts & culture

**Measures**

- # responses to study survey (goal:700)
- # remote workers who stay or move to Richwood following implementation

- 6-10 buildings prepared to discuss on the developer tour
- # attendees
- Website traffic
- Building purchased from the developer tour (yes or no)
- # buildings occupied downtown

- # business spaces utilized
- # housing units
- # jobs created through redevelopment of the buildings
- Identify building reuse plan for the Milltown School (yes or no)



## Community Arts & Culture

### Long-Term Conditions

**Richwood offers an expanding variety of arts and cultural experiences that create a sense of community, expression, and inspiration for residents; cultivate excitement in visitors; and promote a vibrant local economy.**

### Pre-Conditions for Long-Term Conditions to Occur

- Ongoing, innovative community investment that increases accessibility to the arts for residents, visitors, and local artists alike
- Strong relationships between community members and local artists in which they support and communicate with each other
- Local socioeconomic and political landscape that prioritizes arts as integral to community wellbeing
- Institutions that participate as active partners in their community
- Institutions that are responsive to community needs

### Goals

| Market & Educate   | Beautify & Placemake   | Invest in Arts   | Create Community  |
|--|--|--|---|
| Richwood is a place that has high engagement in the arts (events, businesses), both from residents and tourists. | Residents are proud to call the vibrant City of Richwood home and others are enticed to visit. | Richwood has the infrastructure needed to support a growing arts community that promotes residents' wellbeing. | Residents are engaged and feel included in the local arts community in a way that makes them proud of their hometown. |

### Strategies

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| Develop the tools and processes for effective event marketing to encourage community and visitor engagement in local arts experiences. | Commission and create more community art to boost community pride, connection, and tourism attraction. | Invest in resources and venues to enable an ongoing, growing arts community in Richwood. | Engage non-traditionally involved residents in arts & culture projects (new and ongoing) to build a community invested in local art as key to wellbeing. |
|--|--|--|--|

### Objectives/Milestones

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Objective 1: Create a standing electronic sign for the Richwood events community calendar in two or three locations in the downtown area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify and acquire funding for the project (2024)</li> <li>● Update the calendar with the involvement of the Chamber, City, and community members.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Develop interactive murals throughout the town to decorate the town and boost arts engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Programmer identified. Collaborating to determine budget.</li> <li>● Conduct research on necessary materials and price quotes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Determine whether to refresh existing murals and/or create new ones.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Work with a qualified company or artist to develop the art and technology.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Design and construct a performing arts venue in town to create space for a wider variety of arts events (community theater, festivals) and higher attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: ideal property identified in the Dietz-Spencer building.</li> <li>● Work with the building owner(s) on a purchase agreement.</li> <li>● Conduct structure assessment (can be done from the outside pending)</li> <li>● Pending structure assessment, move forward on acquiring pre-development funds and process (2025)</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Engage in the Tamarack Foundation Ripple program (as funded by Benedum Foundation) to create community-identified arts projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Richwood volunteer team members organized and carried through two art-related events... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Artify Richwood (a weekend of art and craft instruction with eleven instructors)</li> <li>○ OPEN AIR Richwood (open air competition that attracted 27 artists from Richwood, the state of West Virginia and adjacent states)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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| <p>Objective 2: Broaden the Richwood arts community’s digital reach to promote community and visitor engagement in local arts and cultural opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● JJJ Video Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Progress: JJJ has created the first draft of the Richwood promo video</li> <li>○ The Hub will share the video on its platform.</li> <li>○ Nicholas County CVB will share the video with their listserv and on their website.</li> <li>○ Collaborate with Visit WV and the Department of Tourism, and Mon Forest Towns to expand marketing reach.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Create a QR code for the Richwood events community calendar and post it in local eateries, businesses, and places of activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Update the calendar with the involvement of the Chamber, City, and community members.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Reel campaign</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Accent the Rail Trail and DT with outdoor sculptures and wayfinding signs to encourage resident outdoor activity and tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaborate with the local Rail Trail Director to identify opportunities and funding.</li> <li>● Commission local artist(s) to design and install.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Construct an outdoor amphitheater to create additional space for intersection between outdoor recreation and the arts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: WVU Fulcrum Project created an architectural plan for the theater in the former High School location</li> <li>● Collaborate with the City of Richwood to identify prerequisites for any next steps.</li> <li>● Begin the redevelopment process: hire developers, contractors, and architects.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Continue to foster music-related events in conjunction with local institutions, volunteers and businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Bloomfield Richwood has hosted multiple “house concerts” with Appalachian artists performing</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Objective 3: Invest in the construction of two lit welcome signs that highlight the culture of Richwood to increase local pride in place and develop recognizable Town branding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Relationships developed with local VoTech, initial discussions of design.</li> <li>● Community team members will identify necessary elements of the design.</li> <li>● Identify funding sources.</li> <li>● Contract with a local artist or woodworker to create the signs.</li> <li>● Place signs on the East &amp; West parts of town.</li> </ul> |  | <p>Objective 3: Purchase a new bucket truck for the City that artists and businesses can utilize for event preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaborate with the City to determine funding possibilities.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 3: Create new literary, theater and film-related events and festivals in conjunction with local institutions, volunteers and businesses.</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

**Programs and Key Activities**

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● WV Department of Tourism</li> <li>● Richwood Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>● Engage graphic designer/sign company to create welcome signs with community approval</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local artists</li> <li>● Rails to Trails</li> <li>● City of Richwood</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DARRE</li> <li>● WV Brownfields Assistance Center</li> <li>● City of Richwood</li> <li>● Nicholas County CVB</li> <li>● Mon Forest Towns</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to partner with Cherry River Foundation and Chamber of Commerce for Music in the Garden series</li> <li>● Partner with WVDACH, local and regional musical acts</li> <li>● Food and beverage vendors</li> <li>● Retail vendors</li> <li>● Local colleges with theater, art, and music departments</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|

### Indicators of Success

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tourism economy around arts and culture increases</li> <li>● Existing arts events are able to expand</li> <li>● Appalachian artists seek out Richwood for performance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased community pride in sense of place</li> <li>● Increasing local engagement with public art</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local artists are more confident in their ability to put on events</li> <li>● Diversity in types of arts and events available gives more residents access to the arts community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued growth of existing visual arts and music events</li> <li>● Stronger local arts community</li> <li>● Residents feel ownership of and inclusion in arts events</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|--|

### Measures

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Social media engagement</li> <li>● # occupancy in local accommodations</li> <li>● \$ retail and restaurant revenue</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # of murals activated</li> <li>● # art pieces installed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purchase of bucket truck (yes or no)</li> <li>● Completed venues for performing arts spaces (yes or no)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # vendors at events</li> <li>● # attendees at events</li> <li>● Create organized literary, theater, film and music festivals (yes or no)</li> </ul> |
|--|---|---|--|



## Outdoor Recreation

### Long-Term Conditions

**Richwood is a thriving center for outdoor recreation that promotes local wellness, community, expanded tourism, and economic growth.**

### Pre-Conditions for Long-Term Conditions to Occur

- Local socioeconomic and political landscape that supports and prioritizes outdoor recreation infrastructure and activities as crucial to residential wellbeing and Richwoods’ economic health.
- Institutions that view themselves as active partners in their community.
- Institutions that are responsive to community needs.
- Community participation and investment in outdoor recreation maintenance, development, and activities.

### Goals

| Market & Educate   | Foster Partnerships   | Grow Trails   | Support Local Business Development   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Residents and tourists are more aware of the opportunities for outdoor recreation in Richwood, encouraging more participation and local economic growth. | Outdoor recreation strategies are sustainable and holistic due to strong partnerships with other organizations in the field and their support in accessing resources. | Richwood has quality, accessible trails that encourage community wellness and shared tourism across West Virginia counties and towns. | Richwood is bustling with outdoor recreation-based local businesses that support a growing economy and community activity. |

## Strategies

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Build out a clear marketing strategy to promote Richwood as an ideal location for outdoor recreation and tourism. | Invest in new and existing partnerships with other entities and the community to support outdoor recreation in Richwood and identify innovative ways to boost this area of the local economy. | Improve, expand, maintain, and connect Rail Trails to promote community wellness and encourage tourism traffic through and to Richwood as an outdoor recreation destination. | Utilize the expansion of Richwood's outdoor recreation economy to support a thriving community of outdoor recreation local businesses. |
|---|---|--|--|

## Objectives/Milestones

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Objective 1: Partner with Nicholas County's CVB to broaden digital outreach to potential tourists and partners in the outdoor recreation economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Richwood's Rail Trail Director and CVB are in communication and strategizing PR plans.</li> <li>○ Team is exploring an advertising contract with Blue Ridge Outdoor.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Conduct outreach to funders and potential partners to make them aware of Richwood's outdoor recreation offerings and goals.</li> <li>● Develop a digital marketing campaign (including updated website design).</li> <li>● Collaborate with</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Develop relationships with outdoor recreation and trail organizations to encourage peer learning around strategies and resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Relationships developed with Mon Forest Towns, Pioneers Trail Towns, and Legacy Trails Program (American Trails Organization)</li> <li>● Identify different organizational partners.</li> <li>● Attend meetings to learn more and support other organizations' work in the community.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Renovate the Depot building to become a welcome center and trail office to support trail accessibility and education about local outdoor recreation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cost estimate (\$7,500)</li> <li>○ Initial renovations made to provide functional use (leaves \$6,700 worth renovations to do)</li> <li>○ Applied for Nicholas County Community Foundation with the CVB for continued work</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Identify funding for reuse plan and renovation</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 1: Renovate the Depot building to partially serve as a hostel that encourages tourists to stay and spend money in town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cost estimate (\$60,000)</li> <li>○ Developing reuse plans and design</li> <li>○ Applied for Nicholas County Community Foundation with the CVB for continued work</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Identify funding for specific reuse plan and renovation</li> <li>● Work with Nicholas County CVB to market space and job for hostel manager</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|--|

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Pocahontas County to make their outdoor recreation tourists aware of the opportunities in Richwood.</p>   |  |   |   |
| <p>Objective 2: Develop wayfinding signs and materials for the Rail Trail to increase local and tourist awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify funding and contractors to produce signage and materials.</li> <li>● Create and install wayfinding signs and maps along the trail.</li> <li>● Develop trail guides and maps that provide information about the paths and history of the trail.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Deepen relationships with residents to cultivate community investment and participation in the outdoor recreation economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build relationships with the private landowners along the trails so they are included in and benefit from trail-related decisions.</li> <li>● Request feedback and input from community members regarding what they would like to see in their outdoor recreation experiences and what their concerns may be for tourism expansion.</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Redevelop and maintain the Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead (1 mile from the Depot Building to Comstock Bridge) to create a more welcoming access point to the trail and Cherry River.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conceptual drawings complete (p. 27-28)</li> <li>○ Cost assessment completed for development with full community amenities (\$962,293.25)</li> <li>○ Dunn Foundation Grant purchased property November 2023</li> <li>○ Grant applications submitted to Pioneers Trail Towns and the Legacy Trails Program</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Acquire funding for pre-development and hire contractors (2024)</li> <li>● Acquire funding for implementation (2025)</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 2: Renovate local building along the Rail Trail to serve as a bike and kayak rental space that encourages local and tourism spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cost estimate (\$60,000)</li> <li>○ Building identified</li> <li>○ Working on conceptual designs</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Identify funding for specific reuse plan and renovation</li> <li>● Work with Nicholas County CVB to market space and job for rental manager</li> </ul> |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|   |  | <p>Objective 3: Redevelop the 1 mile of trail from Fenwick to Daws Electric in support of trail connectivity in Richwood that provides safety to users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing cost assessment for reuse</li> <li>○ Applied for Columbia Forest Foundation Grant</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Identify pre-development funding and hire contractors</li> <li>● Identify implementation funding and hire contractors</li> </ul> | <p>Objective 3: Train local businesses owners and community members to talk about outdoor recreation activities in Richwood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop “scripts” to share with folks</li> <li>● Share “scripts” on Richwood social media</li> <li>● Share information at Town Halls and meetings</li> </ul>                         |
| <p><i>Objective 3: Expand Richwood outdoor recreation signage to outside of the Town to draw in potential tourists.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordinate with the DOH to identify prerequisites for signs.</li> <li>● Identify cost estimate and funding source(s)</li> <li>● Create and install signs along Route 19 and I-79.</li> </ul> |  | <p>Objective 4: Create and implement plans for connecting the Richwood portion of the Rail Trail to Cowen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: Trail Director is working with specialists to create a concept design</li> <li>● Identify funding for pre-development</li> </ul>   | <p>Objective 4: Work with the Downtown Revitalization &amp; Housing team members to market potential spaces for outdoor recreation businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leverage August 2024 developer tour</li> <li>○ Working with CVB to create marketing plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Programs and Key Activities</b>  |  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Digital marketing campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rails to Trails (Richwood)</li> <li>○ Nicholas County CVB</li> <li>○ Potential: Blue Ridge Outdoor</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regular meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mon Forest Towns</li> <li>○ Pioneers Trail Towns</li> <li>○ Legacy Trails Program</li> <li>○ Nicholas County CVB</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rails to Trails Director</li> <li>● Nicholas County CVB</li> <li>● Nicholas County Community Foundation</li> <li>● City of Richwood</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rails to Trails Director</li> <li>● Nicholas County CVB</li> <li>● Nicholas County Community Foundation</li> <li>● City of Richwood</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wayfinding and mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rails to Trails</li> <li>○ Nicholas County CVB</li> <li>○ Consultant</li> <li>○ City of Richwood</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Signage development outside of the city <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rails to Trails</li> <li>○ DOH</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spearheading the development of new relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rails to Trails Director</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Town Halls with residents to share information and input</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● City of Cowen</li> <li>● Richwood resident engagement</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local businesses</li> <li>● Downtown Revitalization Task Team members</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Indicators of Success</b>  |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● West Virginia and the region are more aware of Richwood as a place for outdoor rec</li> <li>● Increased community pride as they see their town promoted</li> <li>● Tourist and resident confidence in navigating the Rail Trail</li> <li>● Increase in investment readiness for trail expansion</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Richwood Rails to Trails has strong, collaborative partnerships (state and region)</li> <li>● Richwood is a center for innovative, sustainable outdoor rec economy practices</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Residents feel pride around revitalized and vibrant trails</li> <li>● Tourists feel excited to utilize trails and engage in the welcome center</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vibrant community and tourism surrounding outdoor recreation activities</li> <li>● Bustling downtown and rail trail engagement</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Measures</b>   |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website reach</li> <li>● Marketing/social media reach</li> <li>● Development of signage (yes or no)</li> <li>● # Rail Trail users</li> <li>● # outdoor recreation tourists</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # partnerships developed</li> <li>● # meetings with partners</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # trail miles revitalized and/or developed</li> <li>● # trail users</li> <li>● Buildings redeveloped (yes or no)</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # outdoor rec businesses</li> <li>● # potential business owners reached</li> <li>● # residents trained</li> <li>● \$ spent on outdoor rec by tourists and residents</li> </ul> |



## Conclusion

Participating in the BRECC Action Challenge has helped us come together as a team to focus on building a feasible economic diversification plan for Richwood and fulfill what we know is the city's great potential. We are grateful for this opportunity and extremely excited about what the future holds.

Through through engagement in Cohort 1 of the Action Challenge, the Richwood Team has identified several kinds of support that would better enable their community to thrive:

- 1. A more accessible and discoverable grant navigation system/tool:** With increased funding available, it can be challenging to find grants that fit the projects Richwood needs before the application period has passed.
- 2. Assistance in accessing capacity building resources:** There are many opportunities for Richwood to invest in its future, *and* the community needs more capacity in terms of grant applications, project management, technical assistance support, and implementation support.
- 3. Technical assistance specific to broadband expansion:** Richwood has had broadband expansion over the years and would still benefit from improved broadband quality in addition to helping with addressing "last mile" reach.
- 4. Support in identifying small-town solutions to food deserts and/or lack of access to quality groceries:** Richwood, like many Appalachian communities, has struggled with having easy access to grocery stores that offer produce and healthy options. Residents and business owners would benefit from case studies/models of how to make a change on a small-town level.
- 5. Models for how to effectively and safely adjust/accommodate floodplains:** The 2016 flood impacted development feasibility near the river and decreased housing availability as a result. Richwood would benefit from technical assistance in developing plans for adjusting the floodplain in a way that maintains the safety of its residents while leveraging innovative reuse practices.
- 6. Technical assistance and models for developing local supplementary education opportunities that support youth and workforce development.**

# Additional Resources

## Economic Diversification Strategic Roadmap Glossary

**Long-term Conditions:** The lasting circumstances/environment expected to emerge as a result of the long-term goals outlined in the strategic pathways (10 year timescale)

**Pre-Conditions:** The circumstances and other things that have to be in place at a macro-level that enable long term conditions and impacts to occur

**Goal:** What the community aims to achieve in the next 3-5 years to reach its established goals

**Strategy:** Overarching methods or approaches to accomplish a goal

**Objective:** 6-to-12-month achievements that will move the community closer to the goal

**Indicator of Success:** What conditions or tangible things the community needs to see to show progress is being made toward goals

**Measure:** Quantifiable information or data collected to show whether the indicator of success exists and to what extent it exists.

# Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead Concept Plan 1

- Legend**
-  Proposed Hiking / Biking Trail
  -  New Trees / Shrubs
  -  New Flowering Trees
  -  New Perennial Flowers
  -  New Drainage Swales
  -  Proposed Culverts
  -  Views to River



- Notes**
1. The Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG), dated 2013, was consulted for this project.
  2. The paved area at the former Vickie's Market will be resurfaced and restriped to delineate trailhead parking at the west trailhead.
  3. Bollards, detectable warning panels, and trail stop signs will be installed at each trailhead location and road crossings.
  4. Bike racks, picnic tables, benches and informational kiosks will be situated along the trail.
  5. Minor, selective understorey clearing may be required to expand vistas from the trail to the Cherry River.
  6. Ditch clearing and new culvert installation will be required to improve trail drainage.
  7. Former Vickie's Market to be considered for trail-oriented business such as bike shop and apparel store, eatery or food truck court, bar or brewery, ice cream shop, coffee shop, Airbnb or other trail-related business.
  8. Trail to continue via "Share the Road" signs across the Cherry River and connect to the existing City Park.

## Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead Concept Plan 1

City of Richwood, Nicholas County, West Virginia

NORTH  
↑

DECEMBER 2012

Scale: 1" = 60'



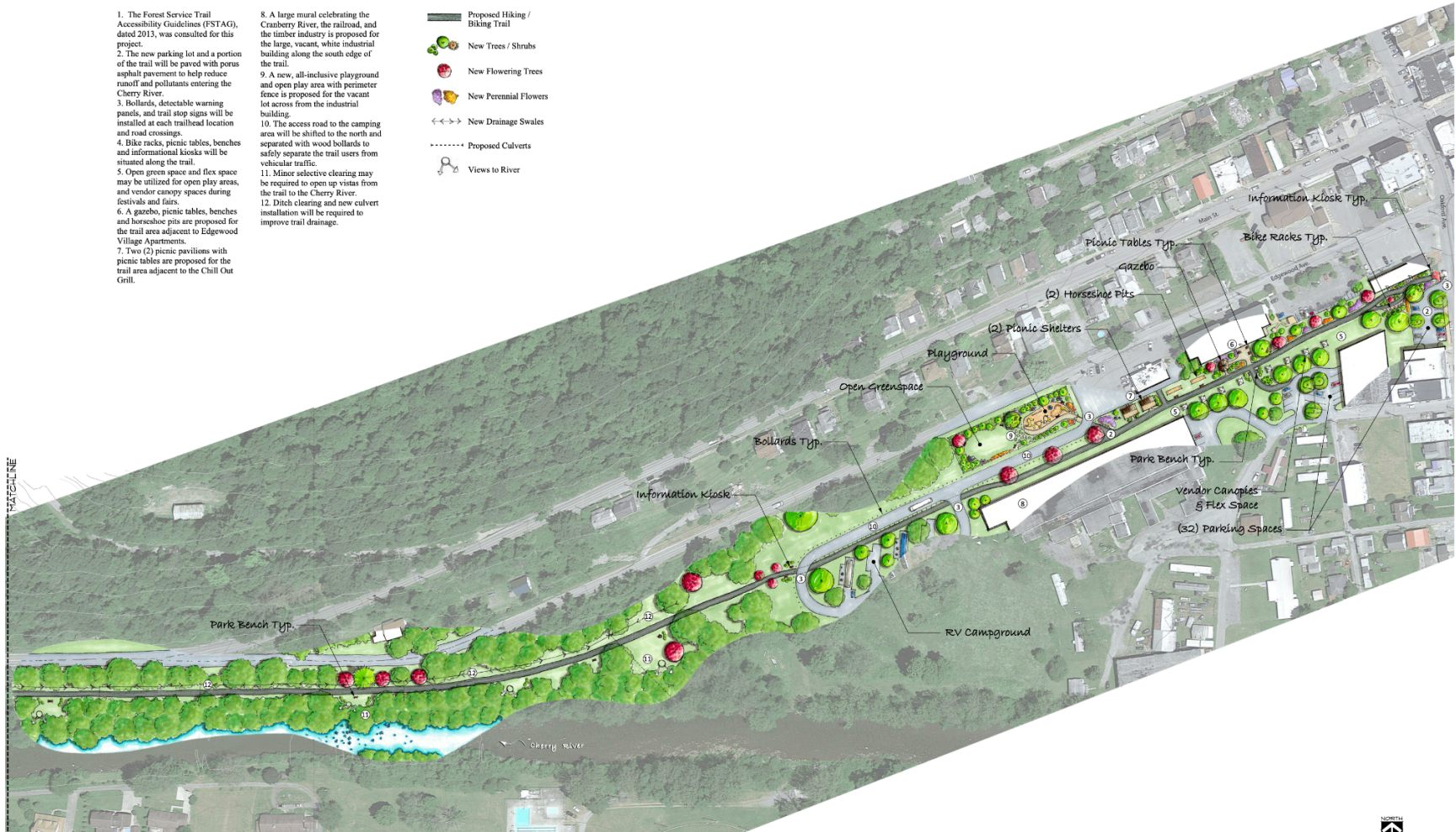
# Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead Concept Plan 2

## Notes

1. The Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG), dated 2013, was consulted for this project.
2. The new parking lot and a portion of the trail will be paved with porous asphalt pavement to help reduce runoff and pollutants entering the Cherry River.
3. Bollards, detectable warning panels, and trail stop signs will be installed at each trailhead location and road crossings.
4. Bike racks, picnic tables, benches and informational kiosks will be situated along the trail.
5. Open green space and flex space may be utilized for open play areas, and vendor canopy spaces during festivals and fairs.
6. A gazebo, picnic tables, benches and horseshoe pits are proposed for the trail area adjacent to Edgewood Village Apartments.
7. Two (2) picnic pavilions with picnic tables are proposed for the trail area adjacent to the Chill Out Grill.
8. A large mural celebrating the Cranberry River, the railroad, and the timber industry is proposed for the large, vacant, white industrial building along the south edge of the trail.
9. A new, all-inclusive playground and open play area with perimeter fence is proposed for the vacant lot across from the industrial building.
10. The access road to the camping area will be shifted to the north and separated with wood bollards to safely separate the trail users from vehicular traffic.
11. Minor selective clearing may be required to open up vistas from the trail to the Cherry River.
12. Ditch clearing and new culvert installation will be required to improve trail drainage.

## Legend

-  Proposed Hiking / Biking Trail
-  New Trees / Shrubs
-  New Flowering Trees
-  New Perennial Flowers
-  New Drainage Swales
-  Proposed Culverts
-  Views to River

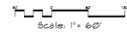


# Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead Concept Plan 2

City of Richwood, Nicholas County, West Virginia



DECEMBER 2022



Scale: 1" = 60'

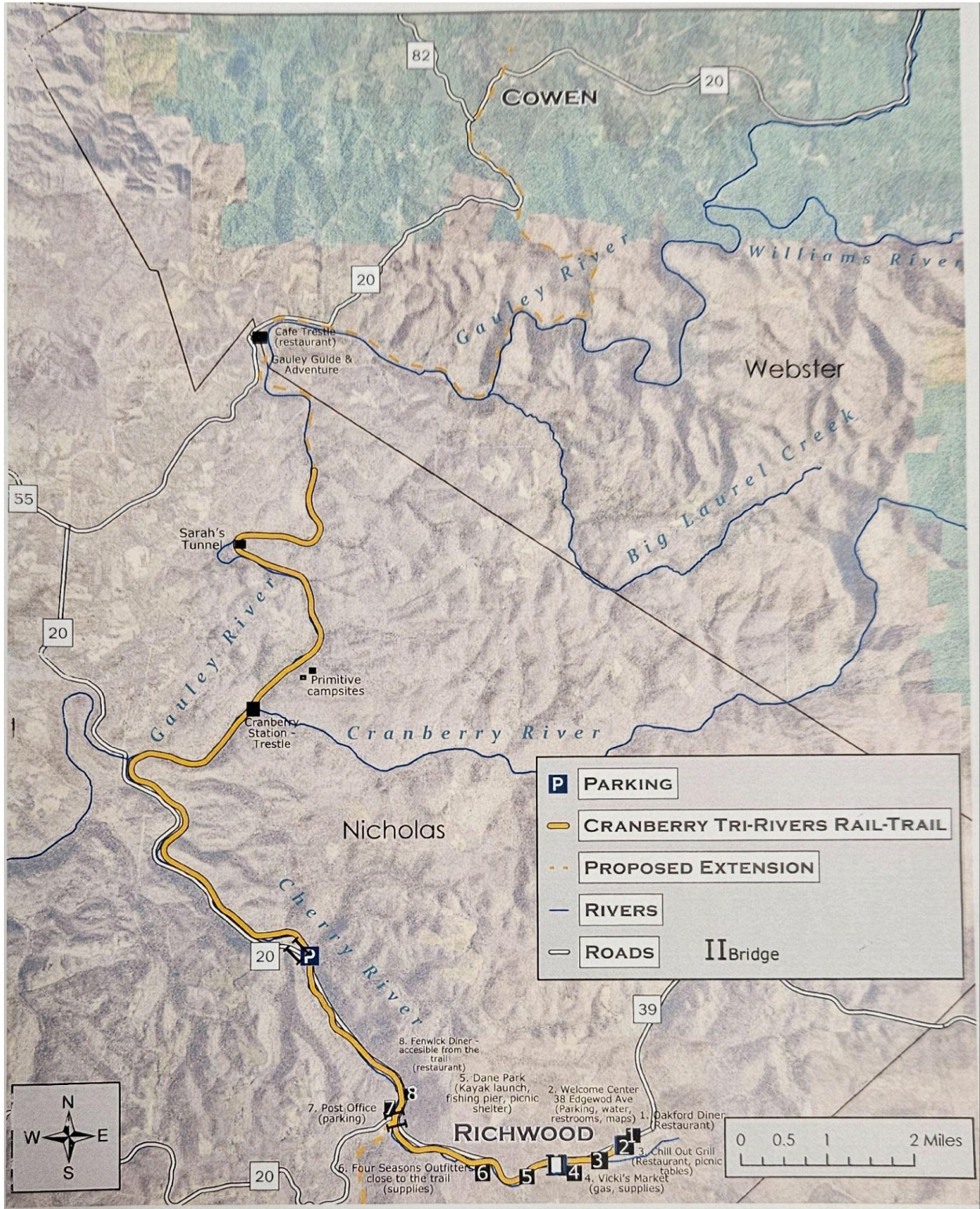
EL ROBINSON ENGINEERS

# Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trailhead Cost Assessment

Estimate for 1 Mile Portion Construction & Design for Concept Plan

| Item                           | Estimated Cost      |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bonds/Insurance/Demolition     | \$25,000            |
| Construction Layout            | \$8,000             |
| Earthwork                      | \$5,000             |
| Paving/Stripping               | \$39,620            |
| Porous Asphalt Trail           | \$352,992           |
| Conventional Concrete Walk     | \$25,665            |
| Storm Sewer Culverts           | \$19,050            |
| Ditch Cleanout                 | \$12,935            |
| Chain Link Fencing             | \$6,480             |
| Playground                     | \$25,000            |
| Site Amenities                 | \$76,400            |
| Landscaping                    | \$57,350            |
| Picnic Shelter                 | \$40,000            |
| Gazebo                         | \$10,000            |
| Trail Kiosk                    | \$2,500             |
| Mural                          | \$8,000             |
| Project Sign                   | \$2,000             |
| <b>Construction Subtotal</b>   | <b>\$715,992</b>    |
|                                |                     |
| Construction Contingency (20%) | \$143,198.40        |
| Total Construction Costs       | \$859,190.40        |
| Design Fees                    | \$103,102.85        |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>             | <b>\$962,293.25</b> |

# Cranberry Tri-Rivers Trail Map



## Outdoor Recreation Buildings Redevelopment Cost Estimates

| Item   | Cost/Unit                              | Estimated Cost  |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Renovation of the Depot Building as a Trail Office | ~\$30/square foot<br>250 square feet   | \$7,500         |
| Renovation of Bike & Kayak Rental Space            | ~\$50/square foot<br>150 square feet   | \$7,500         |
| Renovation of the Welcome Center as a Hostel       | ~\$50/square foot<br>1,200 square feet | \$60,000        |
| <b>Total Renovation Costs</b>                      |  | <b>\$75,000</b> |

## Cited Resources

“Climate Resilience in Central Appalachia: Impacts and Opportunities.” Invest Appalachia, May 2023.

“Pandemic to Prosperity Data: South.” Pandemic to Prosperity. 2023.

“Richwood, West Virginia, History.” Richwood Chamber of Commerce. 2020.

“Richwood, WV.” Data USA. 2022.

“U.S. Census 2022.” U.S. Census Bureau. 2022.