

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

VOL. 50 NO. 4 MAY 2015

Bringing tourists to your doorstep



Come In
WE'RE
OPEN

How to attract tourism
that has staying power

Inside:
2015 General Assembly Wrap-up



VMLIP receives 2015 Award for Excellence in Performance

The VML Insurance Programs (VMLIP) *Where the Rubber Meets the Road* campaign has received the 2015 Award for Excellence in Performance from the Association of Governmental Risk Pools (AGRIP).

The campaign was developed in 2010 to address the number one cause of occupational fatalities - motor vehicle crashes. Since its inception, automobile loss ratios among participating members have been cut nearly in half, from 86 to 48 percent.

To read more about the award, read the April, 2015 *Pooling Matters* newsletter online at: www.vmlins.org.



About the cover

Throw open your doors to a better kind of tourism that inspires foot traffic – not car traffic – and invites people in for a genuinely local experience.

Features

Tourism with staying power

Responsible tourism is the opposite of mass-market tourism. It's about celebrating local heritage and traditions and providing tourists with an authentic, one-of-a-kind experience. This kind of tourism brings repeat visitors and positive word of mouth. What tangible steps create tourism with staying power?

By Edward T. McMahon

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Becoming a place people want to live



For years, economic development followed the mantra, “bring companies first, then workers.” But Millennials are turning that idea on its head – choosing where they want to live first, then finding jobs there. In the new model for economic development, it's all about improving the quality of life where you live.

By John W. Martin and Matt Thornhill

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General Assembly 2015 summary

A quick reference guide on how local governments are affected by legislation passed in the 2015 General Assembly session. From ethics reform to property tax exemption, find out what's changing.

By VML Staff



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Call for entries: 2015 VML Achievement Awards

VML is soliciting entries for its 2015 Achievement Awards program. The deadline for submittals is Friday, May 29. Winners will be featured in an upcoming issue of Virginia Town & City. The awards will be presented at the 2015 VML Annual Conference in Richmond on Tuesday evening, Oct. 6.

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Regional Supper Trip Reveals Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail

RECENTLY, I WENT to southwest Virginia for the spring VML Regional Suppers. The red bud trees were in full bloom, so it was an absolutely gorgeous drive. The first night, we were in Bristol and the following night, we were in Rocky Mount.

On the drive from Bristol to Rocky Mount, VML Director of Research Mary Jo Fields and I stopped in the Town of Floyd to visit the country store. It was here that I realized that we were driving along the “Crooked Road.”

The Crooked Road is a terrific example of regional cooperation at its finest.

The Crooked Road has been designated as Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail. It is a 333-mile trail that journeys through southwest Virginia with a focus on the amazing musical heritage of the region. Some 19 counties, four cities, and 50 towns are a part of the Crooked Road Foundation. Within the region, there are nine major music venues – including the Floyd Country Store – and 60 affiliated venues and festivals. The Foundation promotes the area with signage, guides, books, music, and more.

The Crooked Road is a terrific example of regional cooperation at its finest. For a list of upcoming events or just to learn more about the Crooked Road, go to <https://www.myswva.org/tcr>.

Manager James Ervin and Assistant Town Manager Matt Hankins gave attendees the history of the new performance venue. It is the story of locally elected officials with a vision and a talented staff to carry out that vision.



Opened in 2014, the Harvester Performance Center hosts about 15 music concerts per month and can hold up to 700 people in its main hall.



The Harvester Performance Center is located in an old International Harvester building in downtown. It has two music rooms – a larger one upstairs and a smaller one downstairs. This state-of-the-art facility can have two music events going on literally at the same time. The Harvester has an ambitious performance schedule with an average of 15 shows per month.

The music covers all genres and generations. Prior shows include the Oak Ridge Boys, Three Dog Night, Don McLean, the Mavericks, the Legacy Motown Review, the Indigo Girls, “Whispering” Bill Anderson, and many more locally and nationally known artists. To catch a show or to learn more about the Harvester Performance Center, go to <https://www.myswva.org/tcr>. 



The Floyd Country Store hosts a Friday Night Jamboree featuring bluegrass, gospel and dancing.

One of our regional suppers was held in the Harvester Performance Center in Rocky Mount. This was the perfect location to talk about economic development. Town

Herndon selects Yeatts as town attorney



- Yeatts -

Herndon has named **Lesa Yeatts** to replace town attorney Richard Kaufman, who is retiring after more than 20 years in the town's top legal position. Yeatts comes to Herndon following a tenure of more than 20 years in Hampton, where she served as senior deputy city attorney. Previously, Yeatts had served in private legal practice in Hampton. She holds undergraduate and law degrees from Loyola University, New Orleans. Yeatts assumes her duties in Herndon on June 15.

Alexandria promotes Jinks to city manager



- Jinks -

Alexandria's city council unanimously appointed **Mark B. Jinks** as city manager. Jinks served as acting city manager since January 2. He joined the city in 1999 as chief financial officer. He served for 10 years in that role before becoming a deputy city manager. Prior to his time in Alexandria, Jinks served as the director of management and finance and budget director for Arlington County. Jinks holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public administration from Pennsylvania State University. He is an alumnus of executive education programs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the University of Virginia, and Syracuse University. Jinks has taught public finance and budgeting at universities in the United States and abroad, and has served as an economic development and financial management consultant to the cities of Warsaw and Krakow in Poland. He is a member of the Regionalism Council of the Urban Land Institute Washington and the Board of Directors of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership.

Richmond appoints Cuffee-Glenn chief administrator

Richmond has appointed former Suffolk city manager **Selena Cuffee-Glenn** as the city's chief administrative officer.

When naming Cuffee-Glenn, Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones acknowledged her ties to the Richmond community and her wealth of experience, most recently as the Suffolk's city manager. He said that Cuffee-Glenn, "assembled a strong management team that led to a Triple A bond rating for Suffolk during her tenure."

In the past, Cuffee-Glenn worked in planning and community development for the City of Richmond. She also led planning and community development for the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and taught at Virginia Commonwealth University in the Urban Studies Department. Cuffee-Glenn's appointment is effective May 18.

Barker named director of planning and zoning for Loudoun County

Ricky Barker is Loudoun County's new director of the department of planning and zoning. Barker was selected after a nationwide search to replace Julie Pastor, who retired in January. Barker comes to Loudoun County after 20 years in Cary, North Carolina, where he most recently was associate planning director. Previously, Barker worked in senior planning positions in Stafford and Henrico Counties. He began his career as a community planner for the state of Tennessee. Barker will begin his service in Loudoun on June 4.



- Barker -

Lynchburg police chief Parks Snead sets retirement date

City of Lynchburg Police Chief **Parks H. Snead, III**, will retire October 1, 2015 with over 31 years of service. A native of Central Virginia, Snead was appointed acting chief of police in March 2008 before being appointed to the position of chief of police in October of the same year. Snead joined the Lynchburg Police Department in 1984. Under Colonel Snead's leadership, the Police Department has undergone two successful re-accreditations and been the recipient of a number of state and national awards. City Manager Kimball Payne will be conducting conversations with members of the police department and the community to create a position profile. A nationwide search will follow.



- Snead -

Loudoun promotes Middleton to procurement post

Cheryl Middleton is Loudoun County's new purchasing agent and manager of the procurement division. Middleton has been serving as acting purchasing agent since the retirement of Donnie Legg in November 2014. Middleton brings more than 12 years of experience with Loudoun County purchasing and the Virginia Procurement Act. She began her service with Loudoun County in 2003 and has held the positions of contracting officer, and assistant purchasing agent.



- Middleton -

James City County fire chief Tal Luton to retire

After 35 years in firefighting, James City County fire chief Tal Luton has announced he will retire July 1. Luton joined the department as a firefighter in 1980. By 1994, he was a district chief and shift commander. In 1998, he became the emergency medical services manager and public information officer

for the department. He became acting deputy chief in 2003 and then deputy fire chief in June 2004 when Willie Howlett retired. He was named chief in August 2005. Luton is the first person to rise from the ranks of firefighter to chief in the department's history.

Lynchburg's Kim Payne appointed to Secure Commonwealth sub-panel



- Payne -

Lynchburg City Manager **Kimball Payne** is one of 31 members appointed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe to a Secure Commonwealth sub-panel. The sub-panel will focus on the use of emerging technologies in law enforcement. The 31 members of the group will explore constitutional, personal privacy, economic and public safety issues related to the use of new and increasingly sophis-

icated technologies, weighing their benefits as well as their challenges. During the first two meetings, the sub-panel will explore the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement officers. Members of the sub-panel will address topics such as data storage and retention, equipment, and rules for handling evidence.

Alexandria's Nelsie Birch resigns; Routt named acting director

Alexandria Director of Management and Budget Nelsie L. Birch resigned in April to accept a position with the District of Columbia. Birch joined the city in 2012 as director. She led the creation of the city's first five-year financial plan, and helped lead Results Alexandria, the city's performance management system. Morgan Routt will serve as acting director until a permanent director is selected. Routt joined the city in 1999 as a budget analyst, and became assistant director in 2010. Prior to his work in Alexandria,

Routt worked for Prince William County's office of management and budget and department of public works.

Culpeper names Rapp director of planning and community development

The town of Culpeper has promoted **Charles Rapp** to director of planning and community development. He had been principal planner for the town since 2011. He replaces Patrick Mulhern who took a position in Vienna.

Rapp has a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and a master's degree in environmental planning and design, both from the University of Georgia. During his career, Rapp has worked in public and private planning. He is certified by the American Planning Association's Institute of Certified Planners and is a licensed landscape architect.

News & notes

Talking buses come to Harrisonburg

PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS in Harrisonburg will enjoy greater safety thanks to three newly purchased public buses equipped with an audio feature notifying people when a bus is turning.

The Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation purchased the three new Gillig transit buses to expand its fleet. While the buses were in production, the city was notified of the new audio feature. It has only been installed on buses in one other locality in the United States. When the bus makes a turn, an audible announcement will be made through speakers, positioned outside of the bus: "Caution, bus turning." This announcement is first played

in English and then is repeated in Spanish.

The speaker, located on the outside of the bus, can be programmed for any message in the form of a WAV file. The system uses geo-fencing to specifically target areas where the announcement is made. When the steering column is positioned at 130 degrees, the device is triggered to make the announcement. The bus driver does not have to initiate the announcement.

The three buses with this new feature have been strategically put into service on bus routes that encounter a high volume of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The goal is to give pedestrians and bicyclists near a crosswalk or sidewalk an advanced warning that the bus will soon be crossing their path.

Each of the new buses has a lifespan of 12 years and costs about \$390,000. The entire transit bus system will haul as many as 20,000 riders on a daily basis when the local college, James Madison University, is in session.

Older buses can also be retrofitted with the audio device for \$2,000 per bus.

"We are always researching new, innovative ways to make our buses safer and more visible to the public," said Transit Superintendent Avery Daugherty. "We hope to add this feature on buses that are purchased in the future." 



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Petersburg launches new electronic recruitment site

The City of Petersburg has launched a new electronic applicant tracking system, which will allow job seekers to view and apply for City of Petersburg jobs online, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week from any location with Internet access. Applicants will have the ability to create an account and store their application, so that they can apply for multiple jobs without creating a new application each time. The site will eliminate the need for paper job applications.

Virginia ranks number one in residential building codes

In a report just released by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety, Virginia ranks number one among 18 hurricane-prone states for strengthening residential building codes to reduce the amount of storm-related damage.

In the case of high-wind events, such as hurricanes, research shows that modern building codes can make a difference in reducing the amount of storm-related damage.

In fact, a study done by IBHS, the University of Florida and the FEMA Mitigation Assessment Team following Hurricane Charley, which struck Florida in 2004, found that modern building codes reduced the severity and cost of insurance losses by 42 percent and the frequency of insured losses by 60 percent.

Hampton earns AA+ bond ratings

New York's bond rating agencies gave Hampton high marks in advance of the city's plan to issue \$69 million in bonds, both for new projects and to refinance some existing bond debt. All three agencies assigned the city's plans with the second highest rating possible.

In its ratings report that gave the city's proposed bonds "AA+" ratings, Fitch Ratings noted that Hampton "has maintained strong reserve levels and sound liquidity metrics despite a pressured operating revenue environment. City management adheres to prudent fiscal policies and budgets conservatively." The report also highlighted the city's diversifying economy.

Hampton's City Council approved the bond resolution March 25, authorizing the issuance of up to \$69.2 million in bonds to refinance debt and up to \$52.5 million in new bonds that will cover projects for the city and schools for FY14-16.

Blacksburg Transit gets new technologies

Blacksburg Transit is introducing three new technologies related to the BT4U suite of trip planning tools. These new technologies will help Blacksburg Transit

learn how customers currently interact with the system so that knowledge can be applied to future programming. The three new technologies are iBeacons, interactive kiosks and remote stop usage measurements. Through the test, Blacksburg Transit hopes to learn how riders interact with the kiosks at stops. Testing is currently underway to measure the number of people using select bus stops within the system by remotely capturing the number of active Wi-Fi signals originating from riders devices.

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Park Happy in Norfolk

NORFOLK'S PARK HAPPY campaign has launched four cool new tools to make downtown parking more convenient for workers, residents and visitors.

Use your cell phone to pay to park

Passport Mobile Pay allows parking customers to pay using their cell phone. After initially setting up an account, customers can use a smartphone app or dial a number and pay for their parking using a stored credit card or deduct the parking fee from a pre-funded account. This service eliminates the need for customers to carry coins. It also sends a message to customers reminding them when their parking session is about to expire and allows them to add more time remotely, eliminating the need to return to the meter. The service is provided at no cost to the city; instead, it is funded through a small convenience fee paid by the customer. In addition, Passport Mobile Pay engages Norfolk's merchant community by allowing them to subsidize any portion of a customer's on-street parking they choose, increasing awareness and foot traffic to their businesses. "People love technology and love convenience," said David Freeman, Norfolk's director of general services, "and this service is a perfect blend of the two."

Smart parking meters

The Division of Parking will also be upgrading Norfolk's parking meters in the near future. The new "smart meters" will not only allow customers to pay using credit and debit cards, but

they will also be managed through a web-based back office system, which will better allow for proactive maintenance and collections. In the event a meter goes off-line, the system will be able to alert appropriate personnel in real-time. Additionally, these meters will provide detailed data to allow for optimum rate and occupancy management, translating to more efficient parking availability, enforcement and traffic flow.

App shows available parking spaces and rates

Norfolk parking customers will now have an easier time finding available parking in the city-owned parking garages. Utilizing a free app called Parkupine, customers will be able to view the city's parking garages on a Google map, which will provide real-time availability and rate information. A customer can also enter their destination and the app will recommend the nearest parking garages and even display the estimated walking time from the parking garage to their final destination.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

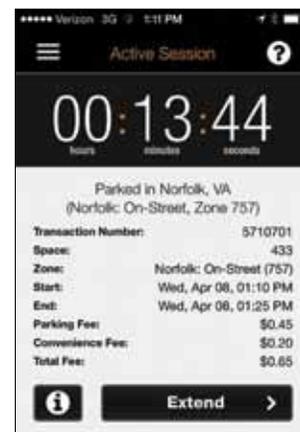
Through a partnership with Virginia Clean Cities, Norfolk is the first city in Hampton Roads to have SIGNET Level-3 electric vehicle charging stations, allowing drivers of electric vehicles to charge their cars at no cost in about 30 minutes. Three charging stations have been installed; two are located in downtown Norfolk. The third is located at the Pretlow Library in the Ocean View section of Norfolk, serving the northern part of the city and providing easy access for motorists traveling on I-64.

Norfolk's Fleet Manager Facundo Tassara, who was instrumental in securing the charging stations, sees these stations as an important regional benefit. "As electric vehicles become more common, it is important for the city and region to embrace this technology and provide the necessary infrastructure to support them and the sustainable benefits they provide."

The Park Happy campaign is an initiative of Norfolk's Division of Parking. Among the early initiatives were to remove parking meters in the city's arts district, provide free on-street parking on weekends and extend the access times for daytime-only monthly customers in the city's parking garages.

About the author

Bart Neu is the Parking Director for the City of Norfolk.



Screenshot of an active parking session of Norfolk's Passport Mobile Pay. Users pay a one-time 20-cent fee per session, which funds the mobile pay program.



(left) Charging station at MacArthur Center in downtown Norfolk. (right) Smart parking meters feature easy-to-follow instructions.

Responsible T

How to preserve the goose that lay



Tourism is the golden egg

WHERE DID YOU GO on your last vacation? Was it rewarding and satisfying? Or were you disappointed?

Tourism is big business. Americans spend more than \$800 billion a year on travel and recreational pursuits away from home. Travelers spent \$21.5 billion in Virginia in 2013, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation. Domestic travel expenditures supported 213,000 Virginia jobs, comprising seven percent of total private industry employment. Domestic travel in Virginia directly generated more than \$1.4 billion in tax revenue in 2013.

Tourism is also a doubled edged sword. On the one hand, it provides communities with many benefits: new jobs, an expanded tax base, enhanced infrastructure, improved facilities and an expanded market for local products, art and handicrafts. On the other hand, it can create problems and burdens for local communities, such as crowding, traffic congestion, noise, increased crime, haphazard development, cost-of-living increases and degraded resources. Michael Kelly, former Chairman of the American Planning Association's Tourism Planning Division, says, "The impacts of tourism on a community can be beneficial if planned and managed or extremely damaging if left without controls."

So the question is: how do you maximize the benefits of tourism, while minimizing the burdens? First, communities need to recognize the difference between mass market tourism and responsible tourism. Mass market tourism is all about "heads in beds." It is high volume, high impact, but low yield. A classic example is Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

When I was in college, Ft. Lauderdale was the "spring break capital" of America. City officials thought it was a great idea to invite millions of college kids to come down for a few weeks each year. What they didn't count on, of course, was that the college kids would sleep six to eight per room; the only thing they would spend money on was beer. The city had to hire all kinds of extra police and clean-up crews and pretty soon, Ft. Lauderdale had a reputation as an "out-of-control town full of drunken college kids."

Today, Ft. Lauderdale is no longer the spring break capital. It may not have as many tourists as it used to, but the tourists who do come are older and more affluent. They sleep two people to a room. They dine at fancy restaurants and shop in high-end stores. The city doesn't need to hire extra police and clean-up crews. Responsible tourism is lower volume, lower impact, but higher yield.

To understand responsible tourism, think about unspoiled scenery, locally-owned businesses, historic small towns and walkable urban neighborhoods.

Every third weekend in September, State Street in historic Downtown Bristol is amped to the beat of Appalachia's past, present and future at the Bristol Rhythm and Roots Festival. Photo by David Hungate



Decades ago, Fort Lauderdale was the Spring Break Capital of America. Since then, the city has changed its tourism strategy and today enjoys lower volume, lower impact tourism with higher yield.

To understand mass market tourism, think about mega hotels, theme parks, chain stores and the new generation of enormous (4,000 to 5,000 passenger) cruise ships. Mass market tourism is about quantity. Mass market tourism is also about environments that are artificial, homogenized, generic and formulaic. In contrast, responsible tourism is about quality. Its focus is places that are authentic, specialized, unique and homegrown. To understand responsible tourism, think about unspoiled scenery, locally-owned businesses, historic small towns and walkable urban neighborhoods.

Like most states, Virginia spends millions of dollars on tourism marketing and promotion. Marketing is important because it helps to create demand. It promotes visitation. It identifies and segments potential visitors and it provides information about a community and its attractions.

Yet, tourism involves a lot more than marketing. It also involves making destinations more appealing. This means identifying, preserving and enhancing a community's natural and cultural assets, in other words, protecting its heritage and environment. After all, it's the unique architecture, culture, wildlife or natural beauty of a community or region that attracts tourists in the first place.

The best marketing a community can have is word of mouth. This occurs when the reality of the place meets or exceeds the mental image that visitors have been sold through marketing and promotion. Creation of a false image can spoil a vacation. What's more, it can reduce repeat visitation. Tourists may come once, but they won't come back.

Responsible Tourism

The truth is, the more Virginia communities come to look and feel just like everywhere else, the less reason there is to visit. On the other hand, the more a community does to enhance its uniqueness, the more people will want to visit. This is the reason why local land use planning and urban design standards are so important.

To attract and retain tourists, local officials need to become much more aware of the overall character of their community. Studies reveal significant differences between resident and tourist perceptions of a community. Tourists are open and receptive to everything they see, while longtime residents tend to tune out the familiar environments along the roads they travel day in and day out.

The more a community does to enhance its uniqueness, the more people will want to visit.

So how can a community attract tourists and their dollars without losing their soul? Here are seven recommendations:

1 Preserve historic buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes. A city without a past is like a man without a memory. Preserving historic buildings is important because they are the physical manifestations of our past. They tell us who we are and where we came from. Saving the historic buildings and landscapes of Virginia is about saving the heart and soul of Virginia. It is also about economic competitiveness. Travel writer Arthur From-



The Civil War Museum in Gordonsville is one of many Civil War attractions within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. The Hallowed Ground partnership promotes nine presidential homes, more than 30 historic Main Street communities and numerous other historic and natural attractions. Photo by Kenneth Garreth. Copyright Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership.



Yes, it's is Hampton Inn. The owners of the Lexington Hampton Inn converted the 1827 Col Alto Mansion into the centerpiece of a 76-room hotel near historic downtown Lexington. It's a chain hotel that fits in with its historic community.

mer put it this way: “Among cities with no particular recreational appeal, those that have preserved their past continue to enjoy tourism. Those that haven’t receive almost no tourism at all. Tourism simply won’t go to a city or town that has lost its soul.”

Try to imagine, Alexandria without Old Town, Richmond without the Fan, or Roanoke without its City Market. These communities would be lesser places, but they would also be diminished as tourism destinations.

Preservation-minded communities like Williamsburg, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Lexington and Staunton are among Virginia’s leading tourism destinations precisely because they have protected their unique architectural heritage. By contrast, cities that have obliterated their past attract few tourists or their dollars.

2 Focus on the authentic. Communities should make every effort to preserve the authentic aspects of local heritage and culture, including food, art, music, handicrafts, architecture, landscape and traditions. Responsible tourism emphasizes the real over the artificial. It recognizes that the true story of a place is worth telling, even if it is painful or disturbing.

3 Ensure that hotels and restaurants are compatible with their surroundings. Tourists need places to eat and sleep. Wherever they go, they crave integrity of place. Homogenous, “off-the-shelf” corporate chain and franchise architecture works against integrity of place and reduces a community’s appeal as a tourist destination.

Virginia communities need to ask this question: Do you want the character of Virginia and your community to shape new development? Or do you want new development to shape the character of your community? One example of a chain hotel that fits in with a Virginia community is the Hampton Inn in Lexington. Instead of building a generic chain hotel out by the interstate, the owners of the Lexington Hampton Inn converted an 1827 manor house – the Col Alto Mansion – into the centerpiece of a 76-room hotel within walking distance of historic downtown Lexington. The Clarion Inn in Leesburg is another example of a hotel chain fitting in.

In some cases, historic hotels can be the centerpiece of downtown revitalization efforts. The Martha Washington Inn in Abingdon, the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton and

Mass Market Tourism is ...	Responsible Tourism is ...
High volume - big crowds	Lower volume – smaller crowds
High impact – over-taxing police, clean-up crews, infrastructure, damaging local resources	Lower Impact – preserves the natural and material resources, less stress on traffic, police, clean-up crews
Low Yield – little money spent locally by tourists	High Yield – tourists spend money in local shops, restaurants and hotels
Offers homogenized, artificial experience	Offers authentic, unique experiences Accentuates the local character and heritage
Draws few repeat visitors	Enjoys devoted audiences of repeat visitors. Best marketing tool is positive word of mouth

Responsible Tourism

Hotel Roanoke in downtown Roanoke are three examples.

Bob Gibbs, one of the nation's leading real estate market analysts says, "When a chain store or hotel developer comes to town they generally have three designs (A, B and C) ranging from Anywhere USA to Unique (sensitive to local character). Which one gets built depends heavily upon how much push back the company gets from local residents and officials about design and its importance."

Design is, of course, critically important in the tourism marketplace. Tourism is the sum total of the travel experience. It is not just what happens at a museum or a festival. It is also about the places that tourists eat and sleep; the roads they drive down, the main streets they shop on and so forth.

Every new development should have a harmonious relationship with its setting. Tourism support facilities should reflect the broader environmental context of the community and should respect the specific size, character and function of their site within the surrounding landscape. Hotels in Virginia, for example, should be different from those in Maine, Missouri, Montana or Morocco.

4 **Make your story come alive.** Visitors want information about what they are seeing and interpretation can be a powerful storytelling tool that can make an exhibit, an attraction and a community come alive. It can also result in better-managed resources by explaining why they are important. Interpretation instills respect and fosters stewardship. Education about natural and cultural resources can instill community pride and strengthen sense of place.

The best marketing a community can have is word of mouth. This occurs when the reality of the place meets or exceeds the mental image that visitors have been sold through marketing and promotion.

Gettysburg, Pa., developed a community-wide interpretation program that involves public art, wayside exhibits and interpretive markers that tell the story of the town and its role in the battle of Gettysburg. They did this, after they realized that most tourists were driving around the national park and then leaving town without realizing that the town itself was a big part of the story. Since the interpretative program was completed, the number of visitors spending time and money in downtown Gettysburg has measurably increased.

The City of Richmond has also done a great job of telling its story. The Richmond Slave Trail, for example, is a walking trail that chronicles the trade of enslaved Africans from Africa to Virginia until 1775 and away from Virginia until 1865. There are numerous historic markers along the route that explain the various sites and cast new light on a dark chapter of U.S. history.

5 **Protect community gateways: control outdoor signage.** First impressions matter. Some Virginia communities pay attention to their gateways. Other do not. Many communities have gotten used to ugliness, accepting it as inevitable to progress.



Dancing on the old wood floors at the Floyd Country Store is one of the many unique local experiences tourists love about the Crooked Road.

More enlightened communities recognize that community appearance is important. It affects a community's image and its economic well-being. I'll never forget how charmed I was on my first visit to New Market, Va., a Norman Rockwell sort of town in the Shenandoah Valley. Nor will I forget how disappointed I was on a later visit to find giant fast food and gas stations signs towering over the town's historic buildings, obliterating the scenery and diminishing the town's appeal as a tourist destination.

Downtown is the heart of most Virginia communities, but the commercial corridors leading to downtown are the front door. Arlington County is incentivizing redevelopment along Columbia Pike, replacing unsightly auto-oriented development with walkable, mixed use development.

Protecting scenic views and vistas, planting street trees, landscaping parking lots all make economic sense, but controlling outdoor signs is probably the most important step a community can take to make an immediate visible improvement in its physical environment. Almost nothing will destroy the distinctive character of a community faster than uncontrolled signs and billboards. Sign clutter is ugly, ineffective and expensive. Almost all of America's premier tourist destinations have strong sign ordinances because they understand that attractive communities attract more business than ugly ones.

6 **Enhance the journey as well as the destination.** Tourism is the sum total of the travel experience. Getting there can be half the fun, but frequently, it is not.

There are many great destinations in Virginia; however, except for a few special roads, like the Blue Ridge Parkway, there are very few noteworthy journeys left. This is why it is in the interest of state and local officials to encourage development of heritage corridors, bike paths, rail trails, greenways and scenic byways.

7 Get Them Out of the Car. If you design a community around cars, you'll get more cars, but if you design a community around people, you'll get more pedestrians. It is hard to spend money when you are in a car, so getting people out of cars is a key to responsible tourism and increased business. The Virginia Creeper Trail in Southwest Virginia is considered one of the best rail trails for cyclists in the country. It runs 35 miles from Abingdon to Whitetop (Va.) near the North Carolina state line. It has brought thousands of tourists and new life to an economically distressed part of the state.

8 Create a "trail" with neighboring communities. The Journey through Hallowed Ground Heritage Area promotes nine presidential homes, numerous Civil War sites, more than 30 historic Main Street communities and numerous other historic and natural attractions. Few rural communities can successfully attract out-of-state or international visitors on their own, but linked with other communities, they can become a coherent and powerful attraction.

9 Ask yourself, "How many tourists are too many?" Tourism development that exceeds the carrying capacity of an ecosystem or that fails to respect a community's sense of place will result in resentment by local residents and the eventual destruction of the very attributes that attracted tourists in the first place. Too many cars, tour buses, condominiums or people can overwhelm a community and harm fragile resources.

Responsible tourism requires planning and management. Annapolis, Maryland, Charleston, South Carolina and Williamsburg, Virginia are examples of communities with tourism management plans. In Charleston, for example, the city

prohibits large tour buses in the neighborhood south of Broad Street, known as the Battery. It also directs travelers to the city's visitor center, which is located well away from historic residential neighborhoods that were being overrun by tourists. It has also built new attractions, like the South Carolina Aquarium, in underserved areas of the city, instead of concentrating everything in one or two overcrowded neighborhoods.

Preserving Virginia's unique natural assets

In recent years, Virginia tourism has had steadily less to do with Virginia and more to do with mass marketing. As farms, forests and open lands decrease, advertising dollars increase. As historic buildings disappear, chain stores proliferate. As main streets come back to life, congested commercial corridors spread on the outskirts of our towns. Unless the tourism industry thinks it can continue to sell trips to communities clogged with traffic, look-alike motels, overcrowded beaches and cluttered commercial strips, it needs to create a plan to preserve the natural, cultural and scenic resources upon which it relies.

Tourism is about more than marketing. It is also about protecting and enhancing the product we are trying to promote. Citizens, elected officials and developers alike can take a leadership role in creating a responsible tourism agenda that will strengthen the Virginia economy, while at the same time preserving the natural and cultural assets that make it unique. 

About the author

Edward T. McMahon is a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute and author of the book "Better Models for Development in Virginia."



The Virginia Creeper Trail stretches 34 miles from Abingdon to Damascus, Va., along the Whitetop Laurel River. The Virginia Creeper Trail is open year round to hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.



324 Places

Becoming a place people want to live

Quality of life comes first in new model of economic development

By John W. Martin and Matt Thornhill

IN THE MOVIE “Field of Dreams,” Kevin Costner plays a novice rural farmer who listens to mysterious voices and builds a baseball diamond in his cornfield. “If you build it, they will come,” he hears over and over again.

For decades, economic development professionals have followed a similar calling, investing in infrastructure, industrial parks, office parks, and incentives. The model was to create an attractive place for companies to locate their operations, and if the companies come, workers and tax-paying residents will follow. Build it and companies will come, followed by people.

That model is shifting, thanks in part to the Great Recession and young Millennial workers who often want to first choose a place to live, then find a job. Here, we’ll explore what’s happening nationally and across Virginia. Then we’ll share some strategies cities, towns, and counties can pursue to ensure long-term success.

A new model of economic development

The best practices for economic development now focus on improving a place’s overall quality of life. Some call it

“placemaking,” others refer to it as “quality of place.” Either way, the idea is to invest time, money, and effort in creating a place that attracts people—and, more specifically, workers—of all ages, and younger workers in particular. The challenge that all communities will face in the coming years is attracting workers.

The U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics predict little growth nationally in

the size of the 16- to 54-year-old worker segment over the next decade; it should remain fairly flat. This means that any growth in that segment in one location will only come at the expense of another region. There will be winners and losers in the battle for workers.

Organizations considering new sites place top emphasis on identifying places where a large pool of talent and potential workers already exist. They know most new locations hire 85 percent of the workforce from the current population.

About this series

THIS ARTICLE IS THE FOURTH in a series on the future of Virginia's cities, towns, and counties, called 324 Places. VML has partnered with our organizations, the Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc., and GenerationsMatter, to bring this program to the VML membership. Our goal is to provide leaders in municipalities across Virginia with the information, insights, and tools they need to understand and respond to what's coming.



On the bright side, the pool of older workers, those over 55, will increase as the Boomer generation ages into that segment, swelling the older population segment over the next 15 to 20 years.

Economic development and chamber leaders report that their prospects – those organizations considering new sites for manufacturing, data centers, headquarters, division offices,

“We have to create a sense of place that is authentic, and then monetize it and use it to attract like-minded people and companies. In the practice of economic development, jobs follow people.”

*Beth Doughty, executive director
of the Roanoke Regional Partnership*

and the like – place top emphasis on identifying sites where a large pool of talent and potential workers already exist. They know most new locations hire 85 percent of the workforce from the current population; they don't bring most employees with them. Depending on the nature of the work, they will need low skilled, semi-skilled, skilled or highly skilled workers already in good supply to even consider a location.

The fundamentals of the physical place, including the infrastructure, transportation facilities, and tax requirements remain important. But these days those are only the table stakes—the basics that get a place into the consideration set. Once on that short list, the determining factor that eliminates sites these days is the workforce. (For more on the importance of workforce development and training, see our article in the April issue of *Virginia Town & City*.)

What you can control – variable assets like placemaking

Economic developers tell us they have two main types of tools at their disposal when it comes to successfully attracting and landing a new site or operation. They have fixed assets – those things inherent to their region. These are usually their

Roanoke goes outdoors to attract companies

BETH DOUGHTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of the Roanoke Regional Partnership, was recently identified as one of the top 50 economic development professionals in North America. Seven years ago, her team realized that the valley setting and surrounding mountains of the region were unique features that could serve economic development purposes. Roanoke Outside was born.



- Doughty -

The Roanoke region invested in placemaking features like bike trails, paths, and greenways, as well as new festivals and events such as the Blue Ridge Marathon and Go Outside Festival to build recognition of the region's outdoor lifestyle.

Backcountry.com, one of the largest online retailers of outdoor clothing and gear, decided to locate their east coast operations in the region as a result of the Roanoke Regional Partnership's efforts. The partnership also helped start-ups and existing companies looking to provide outdoor-related services like mountain adventures, biking, and fishing.

“This is the future of our economic development,” said Doughty. “We have to create a sense of place that is authentic, and then monetize it and use it to attract like-minded people and companies. In the practice of economic development, jobs follow people.”



Online retailer Backcountry.com was attracted to Roanoke's outdoor lifestyle.

Enlightened cities, towns, and counties are investing more in placemaking because they believe these features attract younger workers—especially the most sought-after segment, skilled Millennials.

physical attributes and features, the ones that are permanent or difficult to change. They include proximity to government or military, the overall size of the region, its physical location, or its access to international airports, deep-water ports, interstates, railroads, and intermodal facilities. These fixed assets are what they are and should be fully leveraged.

Virginia is especially privileged to have many fixed assets that other states and communities envy. Among these are a world-class port in Hampton Roads, proximity to Washington, D.C., and a strategic spot midway between Florida and the northeast.

An area's fixed assets can help make the initial short list for potential sites, however they can also keep it off of a list. Norfolk, for example, might get invited to compete for a site that is also considering other east coast ports like Charleston or Baltimore. Roanoke will never get on that list.

The second tool set available to economic developers are the variable assets in a community. These include the workforce composition, training, economic incentives, regional cooperation, variable infrastructure like access to data capacity, and “quality of place” characteristics. These are the placemaking assets regional and local government leaders can influence.

Enlightened cities, towns, and counties are investing more in placemaking because they believe these features attract younger workers—especially the most sought-after segment, skilled Millennials. For many companies seeking new sites, “festivals and livable downtowns with interesting streetscapes beat out industrial or office parks.” (reported by Cushman Wakefield.)

Why should small towns attract Boomers?

While Millennials – ages 14 to 33 – are the generation of most interest to relocating or expanding companies, many smaller rural towns and counties should also be actively attracting older Boomers (ages 51 to 69) to address challenging population trends. The fastest growing segment of entrepreneurs and start-ups is people 55 and older. Boomers are retiring from life-long careers doing what they had to do to make a living and many are starting new companies to feed their passion—doing what they want to do now.

Some communities around Virginia have already embraced this approach and are putting in place strategies to make their area more attractive to entrepreneurial Boomers. Tactics include recruiting local businesspeople like bankers, lawyers, and accountants to offer consulting services to start-ups. These start-ups could potentially grow quickly and provide jobs for

citizens of all ages. Given that more than two-thirds of all new jobs are in small businesses, this is an approach that could pay dividends for many smaller towns and counties.

Key steps to improve economic development

An easy first step for any town, city or county is to reach out to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the state-level office for Virginia. They have resources online at yesvirginia.org and are staffed with experts who can help you with your specific opportunities.

Our research shows that local government officials and economic development professionals should work together in five areas:

1 Forge relationships and partnerships that cut through red tape – Companies want to come to an area where everyone is on the same page and it is not difficult to get things done. Separate entities and layers of bureaucratic red tape put Virginia's communities at a disadvantage relative to nearby states. Regional partnerships, like the one in Roanoke and Richmond make it easier for organizations to get the information and help they need from a “one stop shop.”

2 Develop and pitch one story – Make sure all messaging about your region is telling the same story using the same language. We recently worked with multiple organizations in the city of Norfolk to develop a unified “brand message,” a new song sheet for everyone to use when sharing Norfolk's story.

3 Know your own numbers – Site selection consultants have all the data, and they have already put your community on their short list when they first contact you. They expect you to know as much about your region as they do—this includes the latest population figures, the cost of living, housing costs, real estate opportunities, taxes, utilities,

Not one-size-fits-all

WHILE PLACEMAKING is the trend, doing the basics better than other regions is still a viable strategy for local leaders to pursue, especially those off the beaten track.

Rob McClintock of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, points out that some rural counties, like Henry County in southwest Virginia, have seen recent growth by following the traditional “build it and they will come” strategy, and doing it well.

McClintock says local leaders in government and economic development in Henry County worked together to leverage their large available worker pool with skills that could translate to new manufacturing needs, and invested in and prepared market-ready industrial sites with spec buildings. This strategy helped them draw tenants looking for turnkey solutions. They have been aggressive with incentives, but tied them to performance agreements and investment metrics. The results are lots of new jobs and opportunities for a county outside metro areas of Virginia.

and other data. Many organizations now even come into a region and interview existing companies in similar fields to get the inside story. You need to make sure you know what your local companies think about operating a business or operation in your community.

4 Develop your workforce for growing industries – Train the current workforce, especially in skills that transfer from a declining industry to a growing industry. Having the right workers in place and the programs to train more of them is the number one job for today’s economic development pros and workforce training organizations. This is a fundamental strategy that has helped make Henry and Montgomery Counties more attractive to sites.

5 Invest in placemaking – Spend money on attracting people that fit your opportunity in the long-term. If you are more urban and can appeal to Millennials, pursue initiatives to appeal to them. If you are more rural, actively seek out Boomers and work to attract that cohort.

In the end, economic development is, and always will be, about “place.” In recent years, the field has broadened the

The fastest growing segment of entrepreneurs and start-ups is people 55 and older. Boomers are retiring from life-long careers doing what they had to do to make a living and many are starting new companies to feed their passion.

definition as it relates to a building or site, and now includes the quality of life available to citizens and the workforce. Local government leaders should empower their economic development experts with funding and guidance needed to make every single one of Virginia’s 324 places attractive to companies and organizations seeking a new site where they can grow or expand.

This topic is one we will explore in greater depth at the annual VML Conference October 4-6, 2015 in Richmond. We will have sessions for larger, more metro markets and for smaller towns, cities and counties. You’ll learn about best practices to create a lasting, sustainable economic development program for your community.

Not every community will hit a home run every time at bat. But understanding how the game is being played now – and how it will look in the future – will at least raise your batting average. 

About the authors

John W. Martin is President and CEO of the Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc., a 50-year-old full service marketing research firm headquartered in Richmond. Matt Thornhill, founder and president of GenerationsMatter, is a leading national authority on Baby Boomers. They have conducted studies, held workshops and presented for a number of associations in Virginia, including VML. Recent consulting engagements include assignments for the cities of Richmond, Norfolk, Lexington, Buena Vista and Winchester, as well as the counties of Arlington, Henrico and Rockbridge. National clients include AARP, Google, NASA, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and Walmart. Visit sirresearch.com or generationsmatter.com for more information.



Roanoke’s Blue Ridge Marathon now attracts about 2,000 runners each year. It is one of many outdoor events that promote Roanoke’s natural assets.

Local governments prevailed on important issues during 2015 legislative session

VIRGINIA'S CITIES, TOWNS and counties prevailed on a number of significant issues during the 2015 General Assembly session. Especially important was the legislature's decision to overturn the requirement that cities and counties return to the commonwealth \$30 million of state appropriations in FY16. Ending the "Local Aid to the Commonwealth" reversion was Virginia Municipal League's highest legislative priority.

In addition, the League successfully staved off efforts to: place new requirements on grievance procedures and procurement practices; gut the business license tax; and weaken the integrity of stormwater utility fees. VML worked diligently to ensure that community development authorities can continue to finance infrastructure. The League also worked to ensure that the revised ethics legislation allowed local officials to continue filing financial disclosure forms with the local clerk and did *not* treat travel by a local official as a gift.

Below is a summary of how local governments fared on the issues of most importance during the 2015 session. (If you are interest in more details, please see VML's *2015 Legislative Report*, which includes a more comprehensive list of legislation affecting local governments. It is posted at www.vml.org/content/legislative-report.)

Ethics

Latest reform legislation applies to local officials

While the impetus for the ethics legislation adopted in 2015 came from the state level, local government officials will be affected by the bills adopted at the 11th hour of the 2015 General Assembly and amended at the April 17 reconvened session.

Here is a synopsis of what the legislation – identical bills HB 2070 (Gilbert) and SB 1424 (Norment) – will mean.

\$100 cap on gifts



The cap on gifts applies to local officials or employees who file the statement of economic interests form found in Va. Code § 2.2-3117. The bills set an absolute \$100 cap on gifts, tangible or intangible, if they come from a person the official *knows or should know* is a lobbyist, the lobbyist's principal or a party that has a contract or is looking to get a contract with the locality the official serves on.

The cap applies if the gift is to the official or a member of his immediate family. The definition of immediate family is expanded to include any person who resides with the official and who is a dependent of the official. The gift cap has exceptions:

- Widely attended events – these are gatherings of 25 or more individuals, open to the public, who make up a civic or similar organization, or who are in a particular industry or profession or who share a common interest.

- Gifts from a personal friend of the official even if the giver is a lobbyist, lobbyist principal or has a contract with the locality. This exception sets a test of friendship: how long has the official known the giver? Did the giver personally pay for the gift? Did he or she take a tax deduction for the gift?
- Travel paid by third parties if the Conflict of Interests Advisory Council approves the trip.

While there are other exceptions, these are the ones that will apply in most cases.

Travel paid for by a local official's government agency is not a gift

VML actively worked to ensure that the final version of the ethics bills make it clear that travel by a local official or employee for the locality and paid by the locality is **not** a gift for purposes of the conflict of interests act. When a local official or employee travels on behalf of the locality, at the locality's expense, that simply is not a gift. It is doing the work of the locality.

The travel will continue to be subject to the reporting requirements that have been on the books since 2014, but with new, lower dollar limits of what must be disclosed. The bill requires reporting of certain travel that exceeds \$100 and requires reporting gifts that exceed \$50.

Local filing of COIA disclosure forms

The bills clarify that local officials and employees will continue to file their statements of economic interest forms with the local clerk of the governing body. Earlier versions of the bill required all local officials to file the COIA disclosure forms with the Conflict of Interests Advisory Council. In the end, arguments made by VML and others to allow local filing with the clerk of the governing body won out.

One significant new piece is that **if a person fails to file by the semi-annual due dates, there is an automatic \$250 civil penalty on the official or employee.** It is unlikely the locality could pay the fine for the person.

Towns under 3,500 population

One area of the law did not change – for towns under 3,500 population, public officials (mayor and council, plus others) and employees are not required to file the COIA disclosure form; are not subject to the \$100 gift cap; and are not required to obtain the conflicts council's approval for trips.

Effective date

The Conflict of Interests Advisory Council starts operation this July 1, but the substantive provisions of the law take effect January 1, 2016.

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VML's priorities for 2015

How Virginia's cities, towns and counties fared

MEMBERS OF VML APPROVED the legislative priorities for the 2015 session of the General Assembly. Here is how localities came out.

State and local government fiscal relationship

- The budget eliminates the \$30 million Local Aid to the Commonwealth – a major success for local government.
- BPOL tax – VML helped defeat a measure that would have lowered the base on which the tax is collected from gross proceeds to net income.
- Regional jail construction – part of VML's position that the state should employ funding priorities for public safety. A bill provides the state will pay 50% of construction on existing jails, 25% of new construction. Budget language limits payments for all to 25%.
- The real estate tax exemption for surviving spouses of soldiers killed in war was expanded. After July 1, the value of the surviving spouse's property that is less than the average of residential dwellings is exempt, no matter the value of the property. Current law does not allow any exemption if the property's value exceeds the average of the locality.

State takeover of persistently low performing schools

VML opposed the statewide school board concept known as the Opportunity Education Institution. That law was repealed. Further, the A to F grading system was repealed.

Education funding

The budget contains no reduction in K-12 funding.

Transportation funding

More money will be available for local road construction and transit projects.

First day introduction for bills with local fiscal impact

While no bills were passed, the rules committees of the House and Senate are working to establish a rule that requires first day introduction of bills that have a local fiscal impact.

Local fines and fees

The state now grabs part of the fines and fees on local traffic tickets. The amount the state holds onto increases from \$200,000 to over \$800,000 next year. This affects 33 localities.

State budget

'Local aid to the commonwealth' program ended

Budget negotiations were less cantankerous than usual, in part because of a last-minute uptick in revenue. Budget amendments were approved that assumed an increase in net resources of \$532.2 million over the biennium. Taking advantage of rising tax collections, legislators reworked the revenue forecast, adding \$260 million in FY15 and \$294.8 million in FY16. The revised revenue estimates also gave the General Assembly the confidence to meet state spending needs without approving all of the governor's tax policy and fee changes. Gov. Terry McAuliffe offered no amendments to the budget, which he signed March 26.

Local budget development will be less difficult because of an amendment to eliminate the \$30 million of "local aid to the commonwealth" next fiscal year. The salary boosts for teachers and state-supported local employees will allow localities to be competitive in a slowly improving labor market. The super deposit to the Virginia Retirement System will cut back the unfunded liability for the teacher retirement plan, thereby reducing the amount of future contributions.

Not all budget issues turned out in favor of localities. The General Assembly revamped the state's policy on taking local traffic fines for the Literary Fund, increasing the number of affected localities from five to 33 and swelling the involuntary deposits to the Literary Fund from roughly \$200,000 to \$800,000 a year. Detailed information is posted at <http://bit.ly/1wuNVpN>.

A more detailed analysis of the budget is provided by VML at www.vml.org/budget-links.

Taxation

Push for property tax exemptions is disconcerting



Preserving local taxing authority was another of VML's priorities. Several bills were introduced that were hostile to local powers. A number of them were defeated.

There are, however, two items to bring to the attention of members, both pertaining to real estate taxes.

HB 1721 retools the benefit calculation for surviving spouses whose soldier-spouses were killed in action. The state-mandated property tax exemption for these surviving spouses is targeted by state statute to those survivors whose residences are less than the average assessed value of residences within their home locality's single family residential zones. Survivors now will be eligible for a tax exemption capped at the average assessed value of all dwellings located within the locality that are situated on property zoned as single family residential. This means, if the average assessment is \$200,000, then a residence assessed at \$500,000 would have exempted the first \$200,000 of the assessment. The remaining \$300,000 assessment would remain taxable.

The second item is a proposed constitutional amendment to provide, at local option, property tax exemptions for the surviving spouse of any law-enforcement officer, firefighter, search and rescue personnel, or emergency medical services personnel killed in the line of duty. Under HJR 597 (Hugo), the exemption would

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apply to survivors whose spouses worked for state and federal as well as local first responder agencies. Moreover, the survivors who did not live in Virginia at the time their spouses were killed in the line of duty would also be eligible upon moving to Virginia. The proposal must be readopted next session with identical language and then approved in the November, 2016 election to become law.

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Land use

Rules governing variances changed

HB 1849 (Marshall, D.) makes it easier for a board of zoning appeals to grant a variance to a landowner who applies for relief from zoning rules. The standard on the books today requires a showing that the zoning rules will effectively deny the applicant *all* use of his or her property in order for a variance to be granted. Many governing bodies will likely welcome the relaxation of the rules. Currently, a variance is allowable when the rules “result in unnecessary or unreasonable hardship to the property owner.” The bill changes that test to one in which the rules “unreasonably restrict the utilization of the property.”

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Transportation

More funds available for local projects, transit



More money will be available for local road construction and transit projects under legislation that was offered by Gov. Terry McAuliffe and adopted by the General Assembly. While HB 1887 (Jones) does not include new revenue, it alters the current allocation for construction projects.

These changes will benefit VML members. That’s because the current formula directs the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to prioritize the funding of state projects, which leaves nothing to reflect local priorities. Going forward, all proposed projects will be ranked by a prioritization process that is scheduled to be adopted by the CTB in June. The ranking of projects will assist the CTB in making final decisions on allocation of funds within the state’s six-year funding plan. Funding under the new process will begin July 1, 2016.

While the bill focuses on road construction, it also allocates about \$40 million more a year to transit capital needs.

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continues on page 22

Our scorecard: VML member involvement paid dividends

VML ASKED ITS MEMBERS to contact their legislators on an assortment of important issues throughout the 2015 session. We thought you’d be interested in seeing what happened to the

bills that we specifically highlighted for telephone calls, e-mails or faxes. Your contacts made a difference! VML thanks you for your efforts.

Legislation	VML position	Bill result
Stormwater exemption HB 1293 (Morris) would have exempted churches and religiously-affiliated schools and universities from paying stormwater utility fees.	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
BPOL Tax HB 1352 (Ramadan) would have gutted the Business, Professional, and Occupational License tax.	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
Assessment appeals HB 1416 (Taylor) would have eliminated the presumption that an assessor’s valuation of real estate is correct.	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
Procurement HB 1540 (Albo) would have prohibited a local government from obtaining any information on price when procuring professional services until it is negotiating a contract with the top pick.	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
Assessment appeals HB 1576 (Pogge) would have established an arbitration process for residential assessment appeals.	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
Property tax exemption HB 1721 (Ramadan) – as introduced – eliminated the formula for awarding real estate tax exemptions to survivors of military personnel killed in action. Would have awarded the benefit to all survivors regardless of economic need.	Opposed	Bill passed, but with improvements. <i>Partial victory</i> 

<p>Grievance procedures HB 1744 (Hugo) would have allowed all local government employees to demand the use of a three-member panel instead of a hearing officer for the final step of a grievance.</p>	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
<p>Procurement reform HB 1835 (Gilbert) and SB 1371 (Ruff) – omnibus procurement reform bills.</p>	Opposed provision inserting state agency into local govt. procurement	Final versions did not include the provision. 
<p>Introducing bills with local fiscal impact HB 1865 (Kilgore) and SB 1140 (Garrett) would have required bills with local fiscal impact to be introduced by the first day of the session.</p>	Supported	Bills failed, but the requirement will be inserted in the rules governing the session(s). 
<p>Ethics reform legislation HB 2070 (Gilbert) and SB 1424 (Norment) – ethics legislation. Travel by a local official or employee for the locality and paid by the locality should not be classified as a gift; local officials should file forms with local clerk.</p>	Advocated establishing that travel for locality is not a gift and having local officials file forms locally.	Provisions included in final version of ethics bills. 
<p>Comprehensive Services Act HB 2083 (Peace) and SB 1041 (Hanger) would require local Comprehensive Services Act teams to create new policy and procedures to allow a parent or guardian to refer a child to a local Family Assessment and Policy Team.</p>	Opposed	Bills passed 
<p>Photo red systems HB 2163 (Cline) would have repealed photo red systems for every locality.</p>	Opposed	Bill did not pass 
<p>Redistricting reform SB 840 (Watkins) and SJR 284 (Vogel and Lucas)</p>	Supported	Bills did not pass 
<p>Access to state health insurance SB 866 (Chafin and Vogel) would have given local employees access to the state health insurance plan.</p>	Supported	Bill failed, but language included in budget to study issue. <i>Partial victory</i> 
<p>Jail construction – state match SB 1049 (McDougle) as introduced, reduced the state match to 25% for any regional jail construction, expansion and renovation.</p>	Supported continued 50% state match for expansion/ renovation of existing facilities.	Bill passed with the 50% match for existing regional jails. 
<p>Community development authority SB 1448 (Vogel) will protect the ability of a locality to use a community development authority as a financing tool for infrastructure.</p>	Supported	Bill passed. 
<p>Property Tax – surviving spouses of public safety officers HJR 597 (Hugo) – as introduced – would have required localities to give a property tax deduction to spouses of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. (This constitutional amendment must be passed in 2016 session before going to referendum.)</p>	Opposed	Bill passed, but was changed to make the exemption a local option. <i>Partial victory</i> 

State will regulate ride-sharing services; leave taxi regulation to localities

The state will regulate companies that use smart phone apps to connect drivers and passengers under HB 1662 (Rust) and SB 1025 (Watkins). Local governments are expressly prohibited from regulating businesses such as Uber, Lyft and Sidecar. They will retain the authority to regulate taxicabs.

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Human Services

CSA bills require new local policies and procedures

Approved legislation will require local Comprehensive Services Act teams to amend their policy and procedures to allow a parent or guardian to bypass local agencies to refer a child to the local Family Assessment and Policy Team (FAPT). VML opposed the legislation.

Under HB 2083 (Peace) and SB 1041 (Hanger), parents/guardians do not have to first work with any agency represented on FAPT (including education, CSBs, social services) to determine if that agency can provide services to their child before moving onto FAPT.

Until now, the FAPT has been used as the forum for local agencies to refer and work through complex and multi-disciplinary interventions. It was never a first stop for basic assessments.

This change creates new administrative and case management burdens for CSA coordinators, many of whom are part-time or shared on a regional basis, and on members of a FAPT/multi-disciplinary team. No additional funding accompanied the new requirements.

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Accord reached on child care bills

The General Assembly revised safety and reporting requirements for home-based child care services under HB 1570 (Orrock) and SB 1168 (Hanger).

Beginning July 1, local governments that levy BPOL must report semiannually to the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) regarding child day centers or family day homes that are issued business licenses.

VDSS must work with local governments that regulate and license home-based child care businesses to address differences between local ordinances and state regulations.

Also effective July 1, social services departments will not be able to contract with center- or home-based child care businesses to serve clients who receive federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funds unless those businesses comply with applicable federal laws and regulations.

Another component of the legislation affects zoning provisions for home-based child care businesses (family day homes). On July 1, 2016, the number of children that can be served in family day homes will decrease, both for those that are treated as single-family homes for zoning purposes, and those that have to obtain a zoning permit.

New requirements for national criminal background and central registry checks for these businesses go into place July 1, 2017.

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Procurement

Changes to law have local implications

Two identical bills HB 1835 (Gilbert) and SB 1371 (Ruff) overhaul a number of procurement rules. For local governments, what did not get added to the bill was significant. Special interests pushed to require the Department of General Services to issue opinions on any problems of a construction procurement that a contractor wished to complain about. VML, VACo and others fought successfully to have the provision stripped from the final version of the law.

An in-depth explanation of the new procurement laws will be featured in the next issue of *Virginia Town and City*.

Staff contact: Mark Flynn, mflynn@vml.org

Finance

Bill remedies CDA court decision

Passage of SB 1448 (Vogel) fixes the wrinkle caused by a Virginia Supreme Court ruling that said a locality could not sell land to pay delinquent community development authority assessments unless the locality was also proceeding to sell the land for delinquent taxes.

In CDAs, special assessments are put on land at a developer's request of a locality. The special assessment generates revenue to pay for bonds to build public infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer and the like. There are approximately 20 CDA projects in the state, with a total outstanding value of nearly a half-a-billion dollars. More are in the pipeline. The Supreme Court decision put the outstanding bonds sold to pay the cost of the infrastructure at risk and put future CDA projects in jeopardy.

The bill simply fixes the wording in the existing law so that it more clearly states what local government and the public financing businesses in the commonwealth thought it stated all along. Because at least one new CDA project is meant to close this month, VML and VACo wrote a letter to the governor urging him to sign the bill as soon as possible. Since it has an emergency clause, the bill became effective March 6.

Staff contact: Mark Flynn, mflynn@vml.org

Public safety

Towns may use electronic traffic tickets

HB 1560 (Rust) allows towns to use the electronic traffic summons system that counties and cities were authorized to use in the 2014 session. Electronic summonses allow an officer to enter information for a traffic ticket into a laptop computer. The officer may also scan a perp's driver's license into the laptop via a reader. The onboard program issues the summons and coordinates with the traffic court so all the information is on record. By adopting an ordinance, the local government may impose a \$5 fee that must be segregated to pay for the e-summons system.

Staff contact: Mark Flynn, mflynn@vml.org 



Historic Masonic Theatre may help set stage for Clifton Forge renewal

NOW THAT A fundraising drive has topped \$6 million, work is underway to restore the Historic Masonic Theatre in Clifton Forge.

Revival of the 1905 Beaux-Arts style structure, which has been described as “the grandest of Clifton Forge’s buildings,” is the latest step toward a cultural reawakening in the town of 3,800, which has seen hard times since its heyday as a railroad hub.

“Even though it’s taken longer than we wanted, it’s been a nice effort to get the arts alive and booming in Clifton Forge and

“This is the place where many met for a date, and some met for a lifetime.”

*Meade Snyder,
president of the Masonic Theatre
Preservation Foundation*

the whole Allegheny Highlands,” said Gayle Hillert, secretary of the Masonic Theatre Preservation Foundation.

When construction is completed in about a year, the theater on Main Street will be the venue for plays, concerts, movies and other performances in a 554-seat auditorium that will look much the

way it did when it hosted stars like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and Count Basie and his jazz orchestra.

“This is the place where many met for a date, and some met for a lifetime,” Meade Snyder, president of the foundation, said in an announcement. The preservation group was formed in 2009 and has been raising money since.

Restoration of the downtown icon will add to Clifton Forge’s growing arts and culture scene, which includes a nearby amphitheater, the Allegheny Highlands Arts and Crafts Center and the Clifton Forge School of the Arts.

Local officials hope the new attractions will spur downtown revitalization and regional economic growth. “We’re very confident that it will draw many people to the area,” Clifton Forge

Town Manager Darlene Burcham said.

The theater has been closed since 2010.

A fund drive has collected \$6.3 million since 2009 from a variety of sources: state and federal historic tax credits, new market tax credits under a federal program designed for low-income communities, The Allegheny Foundation, MeadWestvaco Corp., the state Department of Housing and Community Development, Allegheny County, the town of Clifton Forge and hundreds of other businesses, organizations and individuals.



The grand interior features the Beaux-Arts styling of the turn of the century. Images courtesy of the Masonic Theatre Preservation Foundation.

The funds will be used to renovate the three-story theater and an adjoining building and purchase theatrical performance equipment.

Plans call for a community room on the third floor for meetings, wedding receptions, seminars and the like.

Other features will include a second stage for smaller events, a catering kitchen, offices and studios, dressing rooms for performers and a concession area. A small museum will mark the door where black patrons were once required to enter on their way to required balcony seating.

Since it was opened in 1905 by the local Masons organization, the theater has hosted operas, plays, concerts, vaudeville shows, silent black-and-white movies and those with sound and color. When it reopens, the screenings will consist of second-run movies and art house films.

Until it closed briefly in 1987, the Masonic Theatre was the oldest operating theater in Virginia, Hillert said. If the renovations go as scheduled, it will be open again within 14 months.



A drawing of what the front of the Historic Masonic Theatre in Clifton Forge is intended to look like after renovations.

Reprinted with permission from The Roanoke Times. VTC

Searching for the Next Generation of Building Code Officials

MORE THAN 80% of the building code officials in this country are on track to retire in the next 15 years, according to a recent survey by the International Code Council (ICC). Nearly 85% of code officials surveyed are over the age of 45 and many of them plan on retiring in the next five years. Who will ensure the safety of our buildings when they are gone?

In anticipation of the massive wave of baby boomer retirements, the Virginia Building and Code Officials (VBCOA) is joining a national effort to introduce high school technical students to building code enforcement and offer a certificate of achievement from the ICC.

The High School Technical Training Program (HSTTP) gives high school students a jump start on gaining the technical knowledge needed to work in building code enforcement and construction trades.

In 2009, ICC held a pilot training program at a technical high school in Maryland. The program quickly found success in vocational and technical high schools as students built their proficiency in building codes and worked toward becoming an ICC Certified Code Professional.

Randy Pearce, building and fire official in the city of Emporia, was the first to investigate a similar training program for Virginia. Pearce and the ICC are working with Greenville High School staff to bring the program to their technical students.

As Pearce began this project, former VBCOA President Vernell Woods, deputy code official in Norfolk, established a committee working with technical schools across the state. The committee has determined there is ample interest to promote the high school training program statewide.

ICC staff and VBCOA members are also working to get the high school technical training program added to the curriculum approved by the Virginia Department of Education. The Virginia Board

of Education is expected to make the final decision for approval this September.

How Can Code Officials Help?

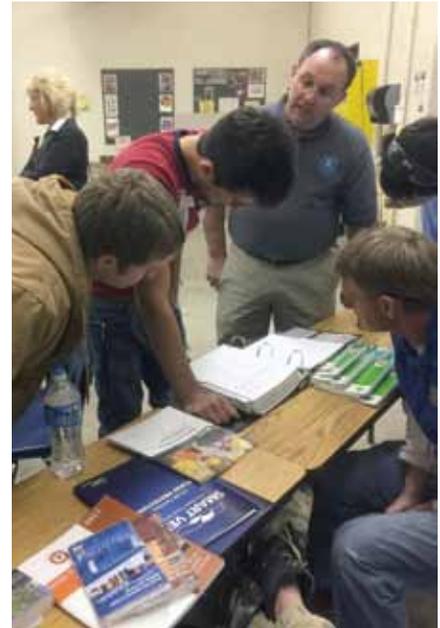
VBCOA and ICC are asking code officials across Virginia to talk with administrators in their local high schools to discuss the training program. Encourage them to provide their students the opportunity to learn about building codes and to earn a certificate of achievement from the ICC. Code knowledge opens doors to a variety of construction-related careers, including in the local building officials' offices and the construction trades.

For additional information on starting a HSTTP Certificate of Achievement program, you can contact:

Building and Fire Official Randy Pearce, Emporia; r.pearce@ci.emporia.va.us

Senior Property Code Official Inspector Paula Johnson, Prince William County; Pjohnson3@pwcgov.org

Special Projects Manager Pete Mensinger, Alexandria; Pete.Mensinger@alexandriava.gov



Jim Ellwood speaking with students about codes.

Jim Ellwood, liaison to ICC's HSTTP; jellwood@iccsafe.org; telephone (410) 937-0343. 

About the authors

Jim Ellwood is the liaison to the International Code Council's High School Technical Program. Tom Coghil is the building official in James City County.



Students, instructors and code officials at Stafford Tech participate in a masonry run-off competition.

Building and code officials present awards, focus on safety issues at mid-year meeting

SAFETY ISSUES DOMINATED the 2015 mid-year meeting of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association, held April 13 in Charlottesville. More than 150 building officials and inspectors attended the meeting.

In addition to educational sessions, the association presented awards to individuals and regions for exceptional work.

International Code Council President Guy Tomberlin presented a meritorious achievement award to Audrey Clark, building official in Fairfax County, for her success in fostering better relations between code enforcement officers and those in the regulated community. Arlington Deputy Building Official Paula Eubank and Harrisonburg Building Inspector Mike Williams presented an award to Charles M. Black, senior property code inspector in Prince William County, for his work in expanding the capability of VBCOA to deliver training and educational programs through a variety of venues.

The Battlefield Chapter of VBCOA (Region V), which include localities in Northern Virginia, received VBCOA's Chapter of the Year Award in recognition of the region's achievements and contributions to VBCOA, code enforcement and building safety. The Northern Neck region (Region VII)

received a merit award and the Shenandoah Valley Chapter (Region III) received an honorable mention.

VML Insurance Program Senior Safety Consultant Pete Strickler spoke about safety issues ranging from defensive driving techniques to avoiding trip-and-fall situations at work sites. Tyler Bragg with Midwest Firestop spoke about the movement of smoke and fire in buildings and James Sigurdson with Winchester Environmental Consultants discussed asbestos and lead issues in buildings.

A group of 15 inspectors made a field trip to view the construction activities underway at the Rotunda at the University of Virginia.

VBCOA, an affiliate organization of the league since 1929, is a statewide organization of building safety professionals. More information is available at VBCOA's website at www.vbcoa.org. 

About the author

Mary Jo Fields is VML Director of Research and Executive Director of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association.



VBCOA President Sean Farrell is code compliance supervisor for Prince William County.



Charlottesville Vice Mayor Dede Smith.



Guy Tomberlin, president of the International Code Council and branch chief of residential and light commercial inspections in Fairfax County with Audrey Clark, building official in Fairfax County.



Steve Higginbotham, building official in Fairfax, accepts the 2015 Region of the Year award from Tom Coghill, building official in James City County.



(L to R) Paula Eubank, deputy building official for Arlington; Charles Black, senior property code inspector for Prince William County; and Mike Williams, building inspector for Harrisonburg.



J. Bradley Hudson, building official in King George County, accepts the 2015 merit award for Region of the Year from Tom Coghill, building official in James City County.



THE 2015 VML ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS recognize the accomplishments of member local governments for innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, increasing citizen participation and striving toward higher service levels.

Population awards

The VML Achievement Awards competition includes five categories based on population so that local governments compete with other local governments of comparable size. The population categories are: (1) under 5,000; (2) 5,000-10,000; (3) 10,001-35,000; (4) 35,001-90,000; and (5) more than 90,000.

A local government may submit up to three entries in its population category. One winner will be selected from each population category to receive an Achievement Award. The winner of the President's Award – the entry that does the best job of fulfilling the criteria set forth below – will be chosen from the five population category winners.

Entries in the five population categories will be evaluated on the following criteria, which emphasize innovation, efficiency and entrepreneurship:

- Generally speaking, accomplishing projects and implementing programs that enhance the vitality and quality of life in cities, towns or counties;
- developing more innovative ways of delivering government services;

- implementing new or improved approaches in addressing a significant community need, or significantly improving an existing program;
- reflecting excellence in management;
- increasing citizen participation;
- striving toward higher service levels;
- possessing ideas and approaches that make a project or program relevant to other local governments;
- having a long-term value to the community; and
- showing a documented record of effectiveness that illustrates how a project or program has achieved its goals.

NOTE: All submittals in a population category must list one of the five population brackets on the cover page of the entry. For entries that represent significant improvements to existing programs, the improvements must have been made between Jan. 1, 2014 and May 1, 2015.

President's award

The winner of the President's Award – the entry that does the best job of fulfilling the criteria set forth above – will be chosen from the five population category winners. The winning entry will, in effect, be the equivalent of a best-in-show selection.

Communications award

The Communications Award recognizes the best in local government communications programs. Local governments of all sizes may submit one entry for this award.

Projects may include publications, audio-visual productions, special events, speeches, crisis plans, websites, social media initiatives, etc. CDs, DVDs and flash drives also may be submitted.

NOTE: All submittals in this category must list the entry as "Communications Award" on the cover page of the entry.

The judging

Entries will be screened by the VML staff and judged by a panel selected for its expertise in local government.

2015 VML ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS CALL FOR ENTRIES



The winners

All winning entries will be featured in stories published in an issue of *Virginia Town & City* this fall. The Population Category winners, the winner of the President's Award and the winner of the Communications Award will be recognized and presented with their awards at the 2015 VML Annual Conference in Richmond on Tuesday, Oct. 6.

Rules for entering

The competition is open to all Virginia Municipal League local government members.

Entries must describe programs or projects brought to conclusion or showing significant results between Jan. 1, 2014 and May 1, 2015.

Each entry must include a cover page bearing the title of the entry, the category of entry, the name of the locality submitting the entry, and the signature of the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

All entries must be typed double-spaced, and the body of the entry, which does not include the cover page, appendices or any supplemental materials, must be at least two pages and not more than eight pages.

All entries must be bound or submitted in a notebook or presentation folder.

Submit one complete bound copy of your entry, including the cover page, all appendices and supplemental materials.

Entries may be accompanied by photographs, artwork, CDs, DVDs or flash drives.

A local government may submit up to four entries: three in its population category and one in the Communications category.

An entry that is entered in a population category may not be entered in the Communications category.

Entries must be postmarked by May 29, 2015.

The 4 possibilities

Each VML local government has the opportunity to submit up to four entries in this year's competition: three in its population category, plus one entry for the Communications Award. The winner of the President's Award will be selected from the winners of the five population categories.

Writing & presentation

Although the presentation of your entry will not be the most important consideration of the judges, it will be taken into account. Therefore your entries should have a neat appearance and should be well-written. Photographs or artwork are encouraged.

In writing your entry, be succinct and clear. State the program's goals and objectives; explain how the project or program was accomplished; and provide as much relevant information about quantifiable results as possible.

Write your entry so that it progresses in a logical manner and tells a story. Your introduction should include background information, such as the need for the project, how it originated, and the goals and objectives. Clearly explain how the project or program was carried out or how a program operates. Also include how the project or program is financed and staffed. Your conclusion should state the results of the project or program.

Final checklist

Does each entry have a cover page showing:

- The title of the entry? The category of the entry? The name of the locality? The signature of the chief administrative officer or elected official?
- Are your entries neatly and securely bound?

Entries will not be returned.

Deadline & address

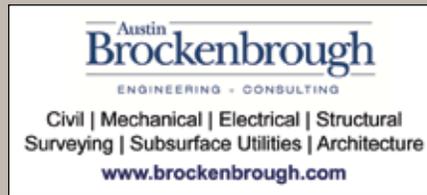
All entries must be postmarked by May 29, 2015 and mailed to:

VML Achievement Awards
P.O. Box 12164
Richmond, VA 23241

or shipped (UPS, FedEx, etc.) to:

VML Achievement Awards
13 E. Franklin St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Entries will not be returned. If you have any questions, contact Nancy Chafin at nchafin@vml.org or by telephone at 804/523-8527.



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