



WYTHE Economic Development News

JOINT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF WYTHE COUNTY, WYTHEVILLE, AND RURAL RETREAT

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Note from the Executive Director

The addition of an associate economic developer will allow the Joint IDA to strengthen its economic development efforts. Two key areas of additional emphasis will be to enhance our existing industry program and to provide staff support for the Crossroads Regional Industrial Facility Authority.

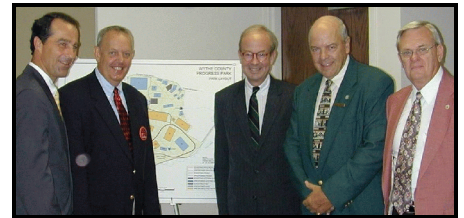
Crossroads RIFA is a regional authority composed of Bland County, Wythe County, and the Town of Wytheville and was created under the Virginia Industrial Facilities Act with primary focus on industrial development for Progress Park.

Alan Hawthorne

Detailed engineering is nearing completion with actual construction expected to begin in early spring following the review and bidding process.

Target Industry Forum

The Joint IDA and Crossroads Regional Industrial Facility Authority will host a Target Industry Forum on Tuesday, November 27, at 2:30 in Smyth Hall on the Wytheville Community College campus. We will have a wealth of state, regional, and local talent to aid in this review of our target industry focus, especially as it relates to Progress Park opportunities. The forum may also serve a valuable educational role for a broader segment of the community who wish to become more involved and aware of economic development efforts and strategies. Forum insights will feed into Mt. Rogers Partnership (dba Peaks of Virginia) strategic marketing efforts. Visit our website (WytheIDA.org) for a copy of the program agenda.



Boucher announces loan for Progress Park.

New Associate Economic Developer to Join Joint IDA in January

The Joint IDA's new associate economic developer begins his tenure in January. Michael B. Webb has been selected as the new Associate Economic Developer for the Joint IDA. Michael



received his masters degree in Economic Development from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and his undergraduate degree in International Studies with a minor in Economics, also from USM. He is a native of Florence, Alabama, and has prior experience working in the research section of Fluor Global Location Strategies (a unit of Fluor Daniel) as well as an internship with the Hattiesburg Downtown Association (a downtown redevelopment group). He also received an Outstanding Student Award while at USM. Welcome aboard, Mike.

Congressman Boucher Announces Low-interest Loan for Progress Park

Before an enthusiastic audience, Congressman Boucher announced a USDA Rural Development low-interest loan to support initial development of the rail-served southern portion of Progress Park. The \$2 M plus loan is a part of the funding for construction of the rail and road corridor into the center of the park, preparation of a graded, 25-acre pad for a rail-served industry, the initial phase of the southern industrial access road, and initial grading for a potential international trade terminal.

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Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Hydraulics

Rural Retreat’s newest industrial member is Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Hydraulics. The company, which is a subsidiary of Swanson Industries of Morgantown, WV, produces both new and rebuilt components for heavy equipment manufacturers such as Caterpillar. The operation is expected to grow to approximately 60 employees and represents an expected capital investment of \$3 M. General Manager Robert Perkins said, “We are excited to grow our business in the Rural Retreat community and view this as a strategic opportunity to expand the services we presently offer into Virginia and the Carolinas. Rural Retreat met all of our location criteria.” Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Hydraulics is located in the former Long-Airdox building adjacent to the Rural Retreat Industrial Park.

VDOT I-77/I-81 Location Study

The Virginia Department of Transportation is currently conducting a location study and impact assessment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate various alternatives to serve projected interstate highway requirements between Wytheville and the Fort Chiswell area in 2020. The Joint IDA is working with Wythe County, Town of Wytheville, Chamber of Commerce, and other community leaders in an advisory role to ensure that various impacts, including economic, environmental, and historical, are considered from a local perspective. Specific options being considered include upgrade of the existing corridor, a separate route north of the existing corridor, a separate route south of the corridor, and a no-build baseline option. Impact of a potential new exit to serve Progress Park will be one of the factors considered in the local assessment. Additional information is available at www.interchange77-81.com.

VEDP Export Assistance

September 11 events impacted the planned visit to Southwest Virginia by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership representatives stationed around the world. The office managers from Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong were to make their first visit to Southwest Virginia as a group on September 17. Interested companies met with the representative from Mexico and staff from Richmond at the Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Specific trade mission trips were planned for Mexico and Canada. If you are interested in export assistance, or wish additional information, please contact George Hiller, VEDP International Trade Manager, at (804) 371-0629 or ghiller@YesVirginia.org.

Governor’s Workforce Conference

Local Workforce Investment Board members Dave Elmore, Plant Manager at Morton Powder Coatings and 2nd Vice Chairman of the Mt. Rogers/New River WIB, and Alan Hawthorne, Executive Director of the Joint IDA, gave presentations at the Governor’s Workforce Leadership Conference in Richmond. Topics of focus included the newly developed manufacturing training certificate program developed in conjunction with the three area community colleges, regional industrial parks and small business incubators.

Have Area Unemployment Rates Peaked?

After peaking in July, area unemployment rates have generally trended down for the past two months. Does this mean that the worse numbers of this economic cycle have been seen? Initial response would likely be no since the impact from 9/11 events is yet to be reflected. However, the strong response to subsidized interest rates in the auto industry and the shift in traveling from airlines to highways may give us a local boost. Only time will tell which is the greater influence.

Location	Jul-00	Jul-01	Aug-00	Aug-01	Sep-00	Sep-01
Wythe	9.7%	11.2%	5.3%	7.8%	5.0%	7.0%
Bland	6.1%	5.6%	3.4%	5.2%	2.7%	5.0%
Smyth	5.9%	6.9%	5.5%	6.4%	5.8%	8.1%
Carroll	5.2%	15.3%	5.3%	11.6%	6.2%	6.9%
Grayson	6.9%	16.1%	7.9%	9.8%	9.7%	8.5%
Pulaski	9.3%	11.8%	4.6%	8.2%	3.7%	7.5%
Galax	4.8%	17.0%	5.1%	8.0%	5.0%	5.8%
Virginia	2.3%	2.9%	2.3%	3.1%	2.4%	3.3%
US	4.2%	4.7%	4.1%	4.9%	3.8%	4.7%

Presentations Available

If your civic or other community group would like to have a presentation on Progress Park or on Wythe County economic development in general, please contact the Joint IDA office to schedule a presentation for your organization.

Wythe Economic Development News is published quarterly by the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County to inform interested parties of industrial development activities in the county and its incorporated towns. If you are not on the distribution list and would like to be added, please let us know at JointIDA@wytheville.org or call 540-223-3370.