



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

VISION

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PROMOTING LAND USE THAT SUSTAINS THE FARMS, FORESTS, OPEN SPACES, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY REGION



Paddlers enjoy the Upper James River Water Trail in Botetourt County, one of the winners of this year's VCC Better Models for Development Awards. Learn about all the award winners inside. *(Photo courtesy Botetourt County Office of Tourism)*

VCC Symposium Goes to Harrisonburg

Valley Conservation Council hosted its 2011 Better Development Symposium from downtown Harrisonburg on May 25. The multi-venue event offered a networking lunch, walking tour, speaker sessions on

Planning for Good Density, and the annual awards ceremony. Beautiful weather outdoors complemented the vibrant interiors of Clementine Cafe and the Blue Nile Restaurant.

Brian Shull, the city's economic development director, led a walking tour showing off the resurgence of downtown Harrisonburg for dining, entertaining, living, and working. Sara Hollberg of VCC kicked off the speaker session with an explanation of "good density," followed by real life examples from Vito Cetta, a developer from Albemarle who has been very successful with "new urbanist" projects. Local examples were then explored. Consultant John Hutchinson described the master plan for New Market's annexation area, which was adopted by both town and county and sets the stage for good development. Thanh Dang and Adam Fletcher of Harrisonburg explained the city's programs for pedestrians and bikers and for open space. Wrapping up the session was Scott Rogers, a realtor who blogs on the local housing market. Capping the day was the 2011 Better Models for Development Awards ceremony at Court Square Theater.

See page 2 for award descriptions



Brian Shull of the City of Harrisonburg gives a walking tour of all the changes downtown.

2011 Better Models for Development Awards

(In order from north to south)

Fire House Gallery and Shop “Outstanding Adaptive Reuse”

The Town of Berryville and Berryville Main Street (BMS) were honored for a partnership that turned the former fire house and town hall into a beacon of cultural activity downtown. The town and Clarke County helped fund renovations and BMS raised the rest in donations and in-kind gifts. The building was cleverly and sensitively designed into an airy art gallery with space for BMS offices and a small business incubator. The Gallery has sparked programs, created jobs, and helps support local artists. The design was done by Berryville’s own Main Street Architecture.



Fire House Gallery and Shop, Town of Berryville

Low Impact Traditional Neighborhoods “Excellence in Community Design”

Town of Boyce and Three Subdivisions

Three new subdivisions in the Town of Boyce use a new “cluster” option that calls for urban design and provision of open space. The Town also encourages low impact designs for stormwater management. The resulting developments have sidewalks, pedestrian connections, and significant environmental features.

Meadow View adds 41 lots in a textbook example of a neotraditional street, parcel, and house arrangement with a central village green. A large rain garden also serves as an attractive feature for the entire community. Roseville Downs’ neotraditional parcel and house arrangement also includes extensive common open space as well as rain gardens. Boyce Crossing has a four-acre grove of mature oak trees at its entrance. A park for residents has been completed and a future section will feature alleyways.



Meadow View subdivision in the Town of Boyce

Luray Train Depot “Best Historic Preservation Project”

The rehabilitation of the historic Luray Train Depot caps a 10-year effort by local officials and citizens, especially the Luray Train Club. The depot had sat vacant since the 1950s but now is restored inside and out with enhanced parking and landscaped areas. Today the beautifully restored Luray Train Depot serves as administrative offices for the Page/Luray Chamber of Commerce and is home to a local railroad museum. The depot is connected to the Town’s greenway with its bicycle and walking paths; a concealed on-site stormwater retention system using a permeable brick paver system ensures no stormwater leaves the site; and the plaza provides a public gathering space. Unflagging community participation—fund raising, promotion, and donations of materials, labor, and expertise—was a great part of the project’s success.



Luray Depot, Town of Luray

Wetsel Complex Rehabilitation

“Downtown Impact Award”

The Baker Family

When Marvin and Robin Baker took on the rehabilitation of the 1935 landmark Wetsel Seed Building on West Market Street in Harrisonburg, they wanted to recapture the vibrancy the area had in past generations. They certainly have. The mixed-use space includes office, retail, and a thriving restaurant. The new Wetsel Complex pays full homage to the old, including keeping the Wetsel signs, retaining historic features, and weaving historic displays into the restaurant décor. The upper floor serves as offices for Rosetta Stone and new retail businesses have opened on the first floor. Together the restaurant, offices, and stores have close to 100 employees. This combination puts the block squarely back in the positive column. The entire family shared in the project research, design and implementation.



Wetsel Building, Harrisonburg, is now filled with offices, shops and a restaurant.

Churchville Avenue Rehabilitation Project

“Excellence in Street Design”

City of Staunton

When Churchville Avenue, the narrow thoroughfare connecting downtown Staunton to the park and parts west, was widened for several blocks to add turn lanes, the city also designed the strip to be beautiful and pedestrian friendly. A lovely boulevard with brick crosswalks and sidewalks, street trees, and dark-sky friendly street lights provides an attractive and functional gateway to historic downtown. Shade trees were planted on the length adjacent to Peyton Creek while sidewalks were restored on the north side. This increasingly traveled pedestrian corridor extends out of downtown to key destinations. It also is largely residential, so the city specified full-cutoff light fixtures with lower intensity and even light distribution. The difference is striking at night. Staunton laid out strong pedestrian, aesthetic, and environmental goals and VDOT’s Staunton Region Design Unit responded to the challenge.



Churchville Avenue, Staunton

Coyner Springs Water Treatment Plant

“Best Public Building Design”

City of Waynesboro

Coyner Springs holds a special place in the hearts of many in the Waynesboro area. Its historic rock-lined water channels and picnic shelters have been a favored recreation spot for generations. The challenge of creating a new water treatment facility at this site was taken as an opportunity to respect local character in new construction and to demonstrate that infrastructure projects can be both functional and very attractive. The City of Waynesboro designed a building that fits the Coyner Springs’ park setting. The design team embraced a barn style and natural materials that complement the beauty of the area and local architectural traditions.



Coyner Springs Water Treatment Plant, Waynesboro

Greenville Mini-Mall Bioretention Project

“Best Environmental Site Design”

County of Augusta, owners Gary and Linda Scrogam

A non-functioning gravel stormwater retention basin at the Greenville Mini-mall has been revamped into an attractive and effective bioretention basin featuring native plants. The rain garden has not only solved the drainage problems but also makes a nice visual improvement at a prominent location. A host of professionals and citizens donated time, expertise, and plants. Local high school students participated, learning to pot and plant the plants and the reasons behind the redesign. Virginia Native Plant Society chapters donated many plants. Local supervisor Nancy Sorrells praised property owners Gary and Linda Scrogam for trying a different approach and Augusta County for moving from requiring a waiver for bioretention basins at the beginning of the project to rewriting its ordinances to encourage this method.

“The most exciting part of the project is the community partnership. Most of the in-kind cost was ‘paid for’ by the students and by donations of hundreds of native plants. Over the course of nearly three years, 18 different classes of students participated.”

➤ Nancy Sorrells



Before and after: Greenville Mini-mall Bioretention Basin, Augusta County

Downtown Lexington Rehabilitation Projects

“Renaissance Award”

Four Recently Rehabilitated Buildings

Sheridan Row, First National Bank, Historic County Courthouse, and Troubadour Theater Building on Lexington’s Main Street were honored for adaptive reuses that respect historic character and bring residents, businesses, and civic uses downtown. Sallie and John Sebrell’s rehabilitation of Sheridan Row puts four retail spaces on the first floor and condominiums on the upper floors. The Troubadour Theater building rehabilitated by Everett Gilbert and Wayne Heslep now contains a salon and day spa, with residential above. The old Rockbridge County Courthouse, owned by John Adamson, has found new life as rental office



Troubadour Theater Building

space for Washington and Lee University with a fully equipped meeting room available for use by community groups. Perhaps the most dramatic change was to the building across the square. The First National Bank Building now sparkles as the home of Hess Jewelers, transformed by Matt Gianniny and Bruce Schweizer.



Historic Rockbridge Courthouse (left) and First National Bank (right).



Sheridan Row

Community Bank Building in Buena Vista

“Outstanding Rehabilitation Project”

Community Bank, based in Staunton, wasn't sure what to do with the derelict and unsightly 1907 Peoples Bank building in Buena Vista. Bulldozing was an option. Instead, says their Chief Operations Officer, they “took a leap of faith” and peeled back the layers. The dramatic makeover revealed a classical design with arched openings and tripartite windows and cornices at each level. The façade was restored and local craftsmen and specialty materials suppliers were found to reconstruct missing elements. The bank also provided leadership and financial assistance for the city to apply for National Register Historic District status for downtown Buena Vista. This designation allows the use of rehabilitation tax credits for historic buildings and should encourage further activity. Frazier Associates provided architectural and historic preservation consulting on the project.

“This makes a statement that we are a community bank,” said Benny Werner of Community Bank’s rehabilitation of their Buena Vista branch building and their help in designating a local National Register Historic District.



Before and After: Peoples Bank (now Community Bank), Buena Vista

Bank of Fincastle Restoration and Addition

“Excellence in Compatible Construction Design”

The attractive pair of limestone buildings on Roanoke Road in Daleville exemplifies the best of historic preservation and compatible new development. The community can thank the Bank of Fincastle for restoring a historic building in a very visible location on Route 220 and designing a new building to be its perfect complement. Traditional materials and architectural features and a connecting walk help integrate the two buildings. Parking was sited to avoid cluttering the view from the front. “Our goal was to continue the integrity and structure of the old building. We wanted them to look like they had been there together for many years,” explained the bank’s Mary Ann Layman. The result is an investment not only in commerce but also in local character and history. Architect Anthony Veloso designed the new stone building while Gluth Construction was the contractor for the rehabilitated building. Both buildings are rented to tenants.



Bank of Fincastle’s new building (left) and restored building (right) in Daleville

Given their condition, the Bank of Fincastle and Community Bank could have bulldozed rather than restored their buildings.

Eagle Rock Library

“Best Small Town Building”

Botetourt County

The tiny community of Eagle Rock now has a wonderful new community building. The Eagle Rock Library means much in terms of adding access to meeting space, internet service, computer use and instruction, and educational and entertainment activities for all age groups. The structure respects the local character, blending in with the rural nature of the setting. Its clerestory windows use natural light and the Hardie Board exterior on a rock base reflects Eagle Rock’s mining and quarrying heritage. The project was situated to be unobtrusive and to accent the majestic beauty of the mountains behind it. Lights in the parking lot use a dark-sky design and limited hours to reduce light pollution. No

longer do residents have to drive 20 or 30 minutes to such library resources. The library also is located directly across from the elementary school, allowing students a place to go directly from school without driving. Various county departments as well as the library board of trustees carried out the project. The architect was Glenn Reynolds and the contractor was Price Buildings.



Eagle Rock Library, Botetourt County

Upper James River Water Trail

“Outstanding Conservation and Economic Development Project”

Botetourt County

Botetourt County developed the Upper James River Water Trail to encourage residents and visitors to experience the beauty and history of one of the country’s great natural treasures. A key objective is to protect the natural beauty and character of the river for generations to come by working in partnership with landowners, businesses, state agencies, and citizens to promote a sustainable recreation experience. The water trail has six public access points along this 45-mile stretch of the James River, 14 miles of which is designated a Virginia Scenic River.

Users can put in small boats, canoes, and kayaks or float or fish, with beautiful views of the

Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains, farm land, and wildlife. The project focused on increasing access to the river while also preserving its natural state. Website, brochures, and the signs at each access point help visitors learn more about the ecological importance of the watershed. The project is managed by the Botetourt County Office of Tourism and can be seen at www.upperjamesriverwatertrail.com.



Upper James River Trail, Botetourt County

**Congratulations to these winning projects
and all the people who made them possible.**

For more information, visit www.valleyconservation.org

Commissioner Lohr Urges Working Lands Conservation

VCC held a workshop May 16 focused on “working lands” in Augusta and Rockingham counties and featuring Virginia’s Commissioner of Agriculture, Matt Lohr. The event at the Weyers Cave Community Center drew about two dozen farmers including several who have already protected their lands. Lohr explained the McDonnell administration’s focus on conserving 400,000 acres and their desire to see more working farms and forests as part of that mix. VCC’s John Eckman explained the basics of conservation easements, followed by more detailed question and answer with Virginia Outdoors Foundation’s (VOF) Laura Thurman and attorney Mark Botkin. Landowners were particularly interested in the development of new easement terms that could accommodate more intensive farming operations. VCC has been participating in a working group that Lohr convened in 2010 that also includes VOF, Farm Bureau, Virginia Agribusiness Council, and others. The group has proposed suggestions to VOF to help ensure flexibility for agricultural operations on conserved lands.



Commissioner of Agriculture Matt Lohr addresses farmers at VCC's Working Lands workshop.

Grant Will Fund Augusta Series

A grant from the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge will enable Valley Conservation Council to provide a series of free public presentations on conservation and development topics. Augusta County is one of the most important farming counties in the state yet also has significant growth potential from Staunton and Waynesboro and its location at the intersection of Interstates 81 and 64. VCC will work with partner groups

to provide these citizen education programs. Sessions will cover topics such as conservation tools, Comp Plan 101, and better models for development and will be offered at venues convenient to the far-flung population.



VCC Planner Sara Hollberg (right, with Nancy Carr of the Virginia Rural Water Association) spoke on “Growing Awareness: Choosing Development Policies That Help Protect Water Quality” at the annual VRWA conference in April.



New Members (from 4/5/11 - 6/30/11)

Albemarle County

Tracy Campbell

Augusta County/ Staunton/Waynesboro

John Parsons

Clarke County

Charles Johnston

Rockingham County/ Harrisonburg

Zenaida Hall

Barry Kelley

Laura Purvis

**Thank you, all who
have renewed their
VCC membership.**



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INSIDE:

- *Better Models for Development Awards*
- VCC Symposium in Harrisonburg
- Working Lands Workshop

SAVE THE DATE: Friday, **September 9** for VCC's Annual Conservation Celebration at Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. More details to follow.



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Visit
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What's the Issue in YOUR Community?

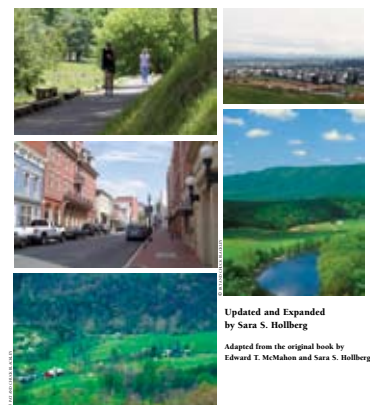
Get the discussion rolling. VCC can talk to your local group from a broad inventory of topics and examples. Call 540.886.3541 or email sara@valleyconservation.org.

Is your community preparing for "better" development — or more of the same? The world is different since 2008 and so are the prospects for development. Find out the best strategies and designs and incentives to put in place.

Choose from Topics Like These:

- Protecting Natural and Historic Assets
- Designing for Healthy, Sustainable Communities
- Designs That Protect Water Quality
- Encouraging "Good Density"
- Reworking the Strip

Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley 2010



Updated and Expanded
by Sara S. Hollberg
Adapted from the original book by
Edward T. McMahon and Sara S. Hollberg

Valley Conservation Council

- Trends for the Next Development Cycle
- Conserve as You Grow: Urban & Rural
- Using a Green Infrastructure Approach