



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Note from the Executive Director

Under a contract with the Town of Wytheville, Virginia Tech's Institute for Policy Outreach has been assisting the community in a Wytheville/Wythe Horizons community visioning process. A broad-based citizens committee has developed an issues framing booklet for use in deliberative forums that

guide participants in evaluating positive and negative aspects of possible directions for the community. The forums emphasize a serious weighing of the issues involved in developing a practical vision for the community's future. These small-group forums are underway this summer and fall and will ultimately lead to a broad-based vision of the community's future. The energy and enthusiasm generated at these forums bode well for the future of Wytheville and Wythe County. We are seeing first hand its most valuable asset—its people. The horizon does indeed look bright.

Alan Hawthorne

Duke Energy Facility

Early summer saw significant activity associated with Duke Energy's proposed Wythe Energy Facility. Two local State Corporation Commission hearings were held in Wytheville on May 29. On June 13, the Wythe County Board of Supervisors, Joint IDA board members, local media, and citizen representatives visited Duke Energy's newly completed 620-MW combined-cycle plant in Washington County, Ohio, and met with representatives of the community. The formal public hearing was conducted by the SCC in Richmond on June 25. Final decisions regarding construction of the generating plant are expected this fall.



Local Companies Announcements

If your company has news to share, the Joint IDA will work with you to prepare a press release and distribute to our local media. Here are two recent announcements. (Visit www.WytheIDA.org/PressRelease.htm to see full news releases.)

Magnetic Technologies - Announced the hiring of Tom Trobaugh as general operations manager. Magnetic Technologies' sales for the first 6 months of this year are up 32% over the same period in 2001.

Klößner Pentaplast - Announced an expansion of their Rural Retreat facility. The company is increasing capacity to produce shrink film products for bottling labels. The expansion will result in about 20 new jobs and \$5 M in capital investment.

DBA's Workforce Services Announces New Training Initiatives

Governor Mark Warner recently announced that the Virginia Department of Business Assistance's Workforce Services Program has begun two new initiatives to better serve the workforce development needs of smaller businesses. The Small Business New Jobs Initiative requires job creation and investment criteria but at lower levels than the traditional Workforce Services program. Companies creating between 5 and 24 new jobs, with no more than 200 total employees, and a capital investment of at least \$100,000 may be eligible for assistance with customized recruitment and training. The second initiative is to help with retraining of the workforce. If a significant upgrade in the skills and technological capabilities of a firm's existing labor force is required to remain competitive, the firm may be eligible for assistance. Contact the Joint IDA office if you would like additional information on these new programs.

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Services for Existing Industries

The Joint IDA continues to visit local industries to learn about their needs and capabilities. So far this year we have conducted on-site visits with about 30 companies. If you would like to receive a visit or would like to meet with our staff to discuss concerns and/or opportunities, please contact us at (276) 223-3370.

The Virginia Department of Business Assistance's Workforce Services has opened a new satellite office in Abingdon. Workforce Services provides specialized recruitment and training assessment to companies that create more than 25 new jobs and invest at least \$1 M. Services are available to both existing and new businesses. We join the rest of Southwest Virginia in welcoming Shannon Blevins to the new Workforce Services office. Please let us know if you are contemplating an expansion, and we will help to obtain workforce training assistance.

The Wythe Manufacturing Council was created to increase interaction between local manufacturing leaders. The Council is a consortium of managers from the county's larger manufacturers that meets quarterly to discuss relevant issues and share ideas that can benefit them and the local economy.

Ryder Open in Fairview Industrial Park

Ryder Systems, Inc., celebrated the opening of a new facility in Fairview Industrial Park with a ribbon-cutting ceremony sponsored by the Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce. Ryder uses the facility to service the company's diesel engine commercial trucks. The Joint IDA welcomes Ryder to Fairview Industrial Park.



Broadband Survey

The Joint IDA has recently completed a survey of broadband communications needs of businesses and industries, especially those located near the Fairview Industrial Park and near downtown Wytheville. With approximately half of the respondents from each location, all were currently using internet services. About half of the companies were limited to dial-up service. Almost all projected a need for faster service. A variety of applications are being performed using the internet. Other high-bandwidth needs, such as voice over the internet and video conferencing, were projected to increase. Now that results are in from the survey, workshops with vendors will be scheduled to assess optimum technologies to address the companies' needs.

Revolving Loan Fund Applications

The Joint IDA is accepting applications for its Revolving Loan Fund. If you are a small business needing assistance bridging the amount available from bank financing and the amount of your needs, a Joint IDA Revolving Loan Fund loan may be what you need. Call the Joint IDA office for information or an application package.

Unemployment Rate Drops for Wythe County

Wythe County's unemployment rate has decreased for four consecutive months. Its position relative to neighboring localities is significantly improved from last year. In fact, Wythe County's unemployment rate for June was lower than the national average for the first time in years. The decrease in Wythe County's unemployment rate coincides with reports from many local industries that production levels are significantly up from last year's low levels. Paralleling national productivity trends, many local companies report that output per employee is up significantly when compared to a few years ago.

Location	Apr-01	Apr-02	May-01	May-02	Jun-01	Jun-02
Wythe	8.3%	6.3%	9.4%	5.7%	9.0%	5.7%
Bland	5.2%	3.5%	5.5%	3.7%	5.0%	3.6%
Smyth	6.4%	7.0%	7.4%	7.7%	7.0%	7.9%
Carroll	7.5%	6.4%	10.1%	11.0%	9.1%	6.3%
Grayson	7.2%	6.4%	7.5%	13.0%	7.8%	6.0%
Pulaski	7.2%	7.6%	9.9%	6.0%	9.6%	5.4%
Galax	3.8%	5.9%	4.7%	17.0%	5.9%	5.0%
Virginia	2.2%	3.9%	2.9%	4.1%	3.1%	4.3%
US	4.2%	5.7%	4.1%	5.6%	4.7%	6.0%

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 276-223-3370.