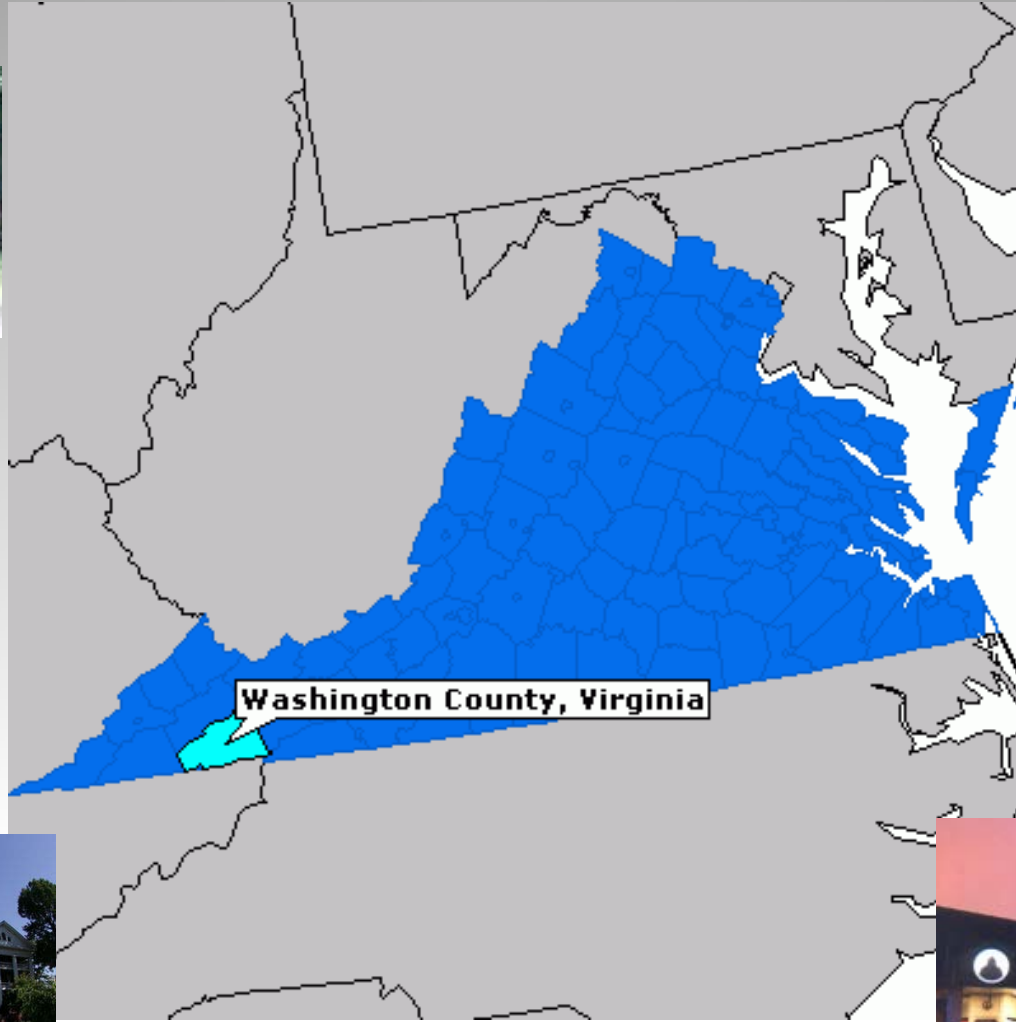


An Abingdon Renaissance

Honor Pro Antiquis, Fides Pro Futuris



By: Greg Kelly
Town Manager
Town of Abingdon, Virginia

ABINGDON, VIRGINIA

- Originally called Wolf Hills, Abingdon was the first English speaking settlement west of the Blue Ridge Mountains
- Gateway to the Western Frontier
- Became known as Abingdon in 1778
- Located in Southwestern Virginia and within a five (5) hour drive of seven (7) state capitals
- A tourism destination thriving with arts, culture and recreation



Arts and Culture and its Impact on Local Government.

"Some may view the arts as a snobbish hobby and interest exclusive to the wealthy, but the arts can benefit entire communities. All forms of art contribute to the uniqueness of each community. Cultural arts transcend boundaries of race, age, gender, language, and social status, and are successfully being used as economic tools to develop and build healthy communities."

-- Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond



Why is Art/Culture So Important to Local Government?

- ❑ In a study commissioned by Virginians for the Arts, it was determined that arts and culture is a \$ BILLION dollar industry in the Commonwealth.
- ❑ Annually in Virginia arts and cultural organizations generate
 - \$849M In Revenue for Virginia businesses
 - \$342 M in Revenue for Virginia tourism businesses by out of state visitors
 - 18,850 full and part time jobs
 - Host 30 M patrons each year
 - Supplement annual budgets with estimated \$62M in grant income annually
 - Organize 1.4 M hours of volunteer time to improve the quality of life in Virginia
 - Approximately ½ of Abingdon's yearly operational budget is derived from Tourism revenue

To follow are a few of the reasons why
Abingdon is known for its arts and
culture:



Barter Theatre

- Barter Theatre is the State Theatre of Virginia and the longest running professional resident theatre in America
- In 2009 Barter hosted over 160,000 visitors
- Famous actors Patricia Neal, Gregory Peck, Ernest Borgnine, and Ned Beatty began their careers here



Historic Martha Washington Inn

- The Inn was built in 1832 as a private residence for General Francis Preston and Sarah Buchanan Preston and their nine children.
- After years as a school, The Martha Washington Inn opened in 1935 as a hotel and throughout the years has hosted guests such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lady Bird Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Elizabeth Taylor.



Heartwood Artisan Center

Southwest Virginia's Regional Arts Center
(Consisting of 19 Counties)

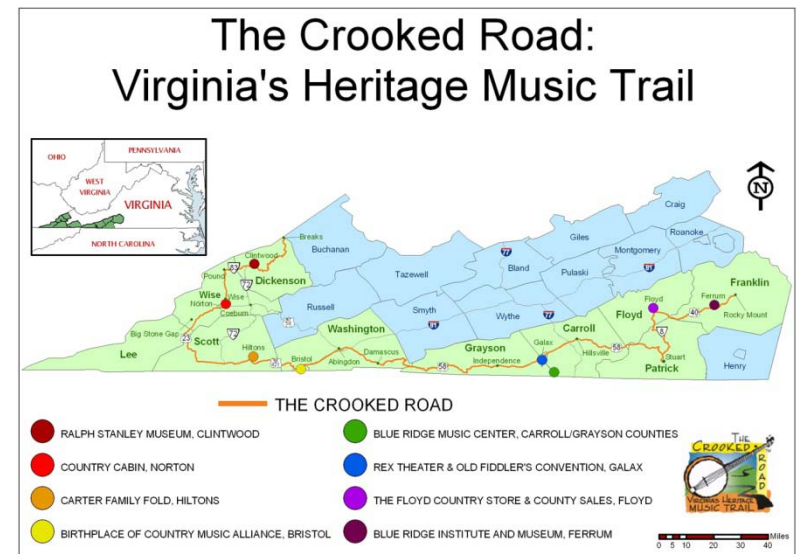
- Scheduled to open in the summer of 2011
- Will be home to artisans working on site and selling their creations
- Estimated visitors each year of 270,000
- Display of Regional Arts
- Indoor Music Venue
- Permanent Home of the Crooked Road
- Permanent Home of Round the Mountain



The Crooked Road

USA Today said in their August 3, 2008 publication that “The Crooked Road is one of a growing number of so-called US heritage routes. There is a renewed interest in going to buildings and battlefield sites. The Crooked Road is more about where you can go and live the history – not just see the history”

253 mile route that documents where old-time American music first took root.



Round the Mountain



- Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote sustainable economic development of the region's communities by assisting local artisans with marketing, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Consisting of the counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, Wythe, and the Cities of Bristol, Galax, Norton, and Radford

Advance Abingdon

Abingdon's Virginia Main Street Program

“Mission is to preserve and promote the downtown area”

- Recently took advantage of our arts and culture to develop:
The Advance Abingdon Wolf Art Project



Abingdon Arts/Culture District



What does an Arts/Cultural District Do for the Community?

- Labels an area of a locality in which a high concentration of cultural facilities and programs serve an anchor
- Boosts urban revitalization
- Beautifies and animates localities
- Provides employment
- Attracts residents and tourists to the locality
- Enhances property values
- Expands the tax base
- Contributes to a creative, innovative environment
- Provides financial incentives to attract arts and cultural businesses to locate in the area
- Leads to redevelopment of abandoned and/or vacant space. Example Holston Mountain Artisans now in former Washington County Jail



Public Displays of Art



Public Displays of Art



Public Museums and Art Studios

- William King Museum



- Holston Mountain Artisans



- The Arts Depot



- Fields Penn Museum



Outdoor Arts Festivals

Virginia Highlands Festival

- The Virginia Highlands Festival began in Abingdon in 1948 and has been listed as a top 100 Art Festival in the nation by Art Fair Sourcebook
- Festival features include antiques, arts/crafts, photography, creative writing, living history, music and performing arts



Abingdon Market and Pavilion



Recreation and its Impact on the Local Government

- Just as arts and culture stimulates the local economy, so does recreation by bringing them to our many restaurants, art galleries and studios and specialty retail stores.
- Parks and Recreation in the Town of Abingdon is the largest funded department in the Town
- Abingdon has six (6) public parks within its boundaries
- Abingdon is growing into a walking and biking community as unopened rights of ways and streets are being converted to pedestrian and biking pathways providing walkable connections to downtown neighborhoods and businesses



Virginia Creeper Trail

- Rail bed transformed into a hiking, biking and horseback riding trail bringing more than 200,000 visitors each year.
- 35 mile linear trail running from Abingdon to the North Carolina state line.



The Overmountain Victory Trail

- A National Park Service Trail stretching from Abingdon, Virginia, the trailhead, to Kings Mountain South Carolina



- The first National Historic Trail in the Eastern United States



The Muster Grounds

- A twelve (12) acre tract of meadowland located in the center of Town
- The Muster Grounds was purchased by the Abingdon Town Council to preserve history and attract visitors and artisans.



Reenactors of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and visitors walking along the trail in Abingdon



Not Just a Recreational Experience but also an Educational Experience



Respect the Past and Faith for Our Future



Partnerships

- **Local**

- Muster Grounds Steering Committee
- Town Council
- SAR
- DAR
- Historical Society
- Volunteers

- **Regional – OVTA**

- **State**

- Virginia General Assembly
- Virginia Tobacco Commission
- Department of Historic Resources
- Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation

- **Federal**

- National Park Service



Abingdon, Virginia

2011 Conference on National Scenic & Historic Trails

