

Forum Generates Concerns, Ideas for Wise County Planning Process

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Several suggestions were offered at a public forum held Tuesday about issues that will require the county's attention as it looks toward its future. The meeting was held as a kickoff for the county's process to update its comprehensive plan. Below are some of the comments submitted by attendees.

CONCERNS

- Increased drug use by adolescents.
- Mountaintop removal/fracking.
- Racial inequality.
- Increased prescription drug abuse.
- School consolidation.
- Reduced revenues stemming from the coal industry's decline.
- Lack of recognition that coal is no longer a good solution for the county's economic problems.
- Coal mining companies leaving sites unreclaimed while applying for new permits elsewhere.
- Lack of funding to reclaim mine sites.
- The county's overall health and high obesity rates.
- Closure of area hospitals. Decreasing access to health care.

IMPORTANT ISSUES

- Economic diversification.
- Ensure young people stay in the county.
- Improve the county's overall health and combat drug abuse.
- Improve the health of the county's water and land that have been impacted by mountaintop removal and fracking.
- Establish a vision.
- Look forward, not sideways or backwards.
- Heal divisions voiced at that night's meeting.
- Establish better trust.
- Improve litter control efforts and provide more recycling opportunities.
- Improve transportation services for the elderly.
- Install sidewalks within all town limits and improve walk-ability within towns.
- Seek pedestrian/bike linkages between the town of Wise and University of Virginia's College at Wise and other residential areas.
- Offer incentives to aid entrepreneurs focused on developing wineries, apple orchards, as well as business ventures that make apple cider or brandy.
- Support small-scale farming operations.
- Develop agritourism opportunities.

- Ensure the county Industrial Development Authority funds more small businesses, not just bricks and mortar.
- Spend grant funds more wisely and implement more oversight.
- Subsidize rehabilitation for older homes that are energy inefficient and have poor septic systems. Encourage best practices with sewer.
- Increase accessible housing for non-local college students.
- Improve low-income housing opportunities.
- Elect people willing to adapt to modern culture and sensibilities.
- Combat xenophobia.
- Embrace the county's natural resources and ecotourism opportunities.
- Set better term limits for elected officials, and involve more young people.
- If wishing to promote tourism, don't harass businesses that sell alcohol by the drink.
- Improve access to fire hydrants.

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