

# COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

PURCHASING DEPARTMENT  
755 ROANOKE STREET, Suite 2C  
CHRISTIANSBURG, VA 24073-3179  
PHONE (540) 382-5784 | FAX: (540) 382-5783  
Jeff Groseclose CPPB, VCA, VCO, Procurement Manager

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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL, RFP # 27-01 issued June 2, 2026 ADDENDUM NUMBER 2

**DATE:** June 29, 2026

**TITLE:** Rebrand for Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)

### Amendments:

1. Section III.B.13 of the Statement of Need is hereby changed to read as follows: Collaborate with a qualified partner to support integration of the new brand into a modern, accessible, and user-friendly website
2. Section V.B, Evaluation Criteria is hereby changed to read as Proposals shall be evaluated by the County using the following criteria:

	<b>Evaluation Criteria Description</b>	<b>Weight</b>
1	Qualifications and Experience to include demonstrated expertise and a proven track record in destination marketing, including relevant rebranding projects, industry knowledge, and the ability to deliver strategic, data-informed results for tourism organizations.	20
2	Method and Planning Process to include demonstrated ability of consultant/vendor to develop and implement a rebrand. Such process will foster consensus building between various stakeholder involved in the rebrand.	15
3	Familiarity with the Project to include knowledge of the project background, needs, goals, limitations, and special considerations	15
4	Past Performance on Similar Projects to include success of previous projects in the way of project quality, budget, schedule and cost control	15
5	Capability and Capacity to include sufficient available staff and equipment to complete the proposed work within the requested timeframe	10
6	Proposed pricing	15
7	References including description of project	5

3. The County reserves the right to answer no further questions after the issuance of this addendum.

### Clarification:

1. **Question: Website scope:** The RFP references a planned website redesign to follow the rebrand and asks vendors to either provide website capabilities or partner with a qualified firm. Is website design included in this scope of work and contract, or will the website redesign be a separate future RFP/procurement, or is the County open to awarding website work to the rebranding vendor as a contract extension? Or expected to be included within this initiative?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 above. The intent is to issue a separate RFP for the website redesign. The selected rebranding vendor will be welcome to respond to the website redesign RFP.**

2. **Question:** If website redesign is NOT part of the scope, what are the expected deliverables as referred to on page 6 for "13. Provide website design capabilities or collaborate with a qualified partner to support integration of the new brand into a modern, accessible, and user-friendly website?"

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 above. The intent is to issue a separate RFP for the website redesign. The selected rebranding vendor will be welcome to respond to the website redesign RFP. While website redesign is a separate project, branding deliverables should be developed to support future website redesign, including digital assets, brand standards, messaging, and accessibility considerations. We will look to the selected consultant's expertise to ensure the brand platform and style guide are structured to complement and enhance a modern, user-friendly website experience.**

3. **Question:** What level of website involvement is expected from the selected vendor?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 and responses to clarification questions #1 and #2 above.**

4. **Question:** Should website redesign or website development be included in the base scope, or should the proposal focus on brand-to-website alignment guidance with full website services listed as optional or separately scoped?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 and responses to clarification questions #1 and #2 above. Website redesign and development are not included in the base scope of this RFP and will be procured through a separate RFP. Proposals should focus on developing a brand platform, visual identity, and brand standards that can be effectively applied to a future website redesign and provide guidance on digital implementation where appropriate.**

5. **Question:** Can you please clarify the selected agency's role in website design and development?

**Montgomery County Response: The agency's role should focus on developing a brand platform, visual identity, and brand standards that can be effectively applied to a future website redesign and provide guidance on digital implementation where appropriate.**

6. **Question:** Should the selected firm provide full website design and development or branding integration only?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 and responses to Clarification questions #1 and #2 above.**

7. **Question:** Are there milestone deadlines tied to the website redesign?

**Montgomery County Response: No. Website redesign is not included within the scope of this RFP and, therefore, no website-related milestones have been established. We will rely on the selected branding consultant's expertise to recommend achievable branding milestones and advise on the appropriate timing for initiating a separate website redesign and development procurement process.**

8. **Question:** Should website development be priced separately?

**Montgomery County Response: No pricing is necessary for website development. See amendment #1 and responses to clarification question #1 and #2 above.**

9. **Question:** Will the website project be a separate procurement, and if so, what is the expected timeline and whether the same vendor is preferred for both?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 and responses to clarification questions #1 and #2 above. The website project will be a separate procurement. The timeline will be dependent on the time of award of this rebrand RFP; however, we anticipate the website project RFP to be issued shortly after the rebrand contract award. There is no vendor preference.**

10. **Question:** Can you clarify the role of web design in this scope of work? How much of the planned website redesign is included? Has the County already identified a website design partner to create the updated tourism website?

**Montgomery County Response: See amendment #1 and responses to clarification questions #1 and #2 above.**

11. **Question:** Is the expectation that we bring in a web development partner or is there one you all already work with and would like us to partner with?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #1 and #2 above. The web development contractor is to be determined by a future RFP.**

12. **Question:** What is the current timeline for the website redesign?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #9 above.**

13. **Question:** Will the branding agency also be considered for the website redesign project?

**Montgomery County Response: The selected rebranding agency will be considered for the website redesign should they choose to respond to the RFP for that service.**

14. **Question:** Is there an existing website strategy, sitemap, or requirements document?

**Montgomery County Response: Website redesign is not included within the scope of this RFP and, therefore this will be addressed later.**

15. **Question:** What CMS is currently being used?

**Montgomery County Response: Wordpress**

16. **Question:** Will website content strategy and messaging be developed during this engagement?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #2 above.**

17. **Question:** It appears that the County's current website CMS is WordPress. Does the County plan to continue to use WordPress for the updated website?

**Montgomery County Response: Website redesign is not included within the scope of this RFP and, therefore, no CMS preference has been established. This will likely be addressed in a separate RFP for the website project.**

18. **Question:** If website design and development is not part of this RFP scope, will the selected branding agency be expected to coordinate directly with a separately procured web vendor, and will that coordination be a defined deliverable under this contract?

**Montgomery County Response: The selected consultant shall provide final brand assets and guidelines in formats suitable for use by future third-party vendors, including website designers, developers, printers, and marketing partners.**

19. **Question:** For the website redesign, do you anticipate the selected partner providing design services only, or also development?

**Montgomery County Response: This will be addressed in a separate RFP for the website project.**

20. **Question:** What outreach/marketing/business development initiatives is the new website intended to support?

**Montgomery County Response: This will be addressed in a separate RFP for the website project.**

21. **Question:** The RFP requests a lump-sum fee but does not indicate a budget range. Can the County share the anticipated budget (all-in or itemized) or a not-to-exceed amount to ensure proposals are scoped appropriately? Are there specific funding limits for this project? Should offerors propose a lump-sum fee based on their recommended approach?

**Montgomery County Response: The County and Blacksburg Christiansburg Montgomery County Regional Tourism (Tourism) intend to use this RFP process and negotiations to develop a reasonable budget specific to this project.**

22. **Question:** Is there a separate implementation budget beyond brand development?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes**

23. **Question:** Are there separate budgets for branding, website redesign, and/or marketing implementation?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes**

24. **Question:** Our tourism brand development process is comprehensive in order to ensure inclusive inputs and achieve the highest quality outcome. It includes community engagement, quantitative and qualitative research, strategy formation, creative development, and action planning. This process requires an engagement cost north of \$85,000. Would that pricing fit within your budget parameters for tourism marketing initiatives? Or please share any not-to-exceed budget if that has been established.

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #21 above.**

25. **Question:** Can you clarify how respondents should structure their pricing schedule? (i.e., monthly or hourly, by deliverable, etc.)

**Montgomery County Response: A lump-sum price is preferred which covers everything to meet all requirements of the Statement of Need. Proposals may include additional pricing for recommended options or additional services. Proposals should clearly identify how any options or additional items will be priced.**

26. **Question:** Is the "GoToMontVA" brand name and URL in scope for potential renaming/replacement, or is the rebrand limited to visual identity and messaging while retaining the existing brand name?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes, the "GoToMontVA" can be rename/replaced.**

27. **Question:** Is there a target completion date for the rebrand, and is the 2027 Amtrak rail service launch considered a hard deadline for brand readiness?

**Montgomery County Response: The two are not related and the completion date is not dependent on the 2027 Amtrak rail service launch.**

28. **Question:** What visitor data, traveler surveys, or market research does the Tourism Office currently have available, and will it be provided to the selected agency as a starting point for brand discovery?

**Montgomery County Response: In 2024, through an ARPA Grant, Cure, Inc. completed and**

**submitted Strategic Recommendations. They completed multi-day stakeholder interviews, site visits, and on-the-ground observations. The completed report is included as Attachment A to this addendum.**

29. **Question:** Has the organization conducted any brand perception studies, stakeholder surveys, or competitive destination analyses since the current brand was established in 2014? If so, will those findings be shared with respondents or the selected agency?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #28 above.**

30. **Question:** Is primary consumer research, such as surveys of actual or prospective visitors, included in the scope, or is the research component limited to internal stakeholder engagement and secondary data analysis?

**Montgomery County Response: It is our expectation that consumer research and stakeholder surveys will be part of the deliverable.**

31. **Question:** Are there specific competitor destinations the Tourism Office would like benchmarked as part of the discovery and positioning process?

**Montgomery County Response: Friends of SWVA, Visit VA Blue Ridge, Auburn-Opelika, Asheville, Charlottesville, Blowing Rock, Boone, Harrisonburg. College towns with natural assets (ex. Rivers & Trails).**

32. **Question:** Does the scope include any concept testing or consumer validation of the new brand identity prior to final approval and launch?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.**

33. **Question:** How many stakeholder engagement sessions are anticipated, and who is expected to participate beyond the three governing bodies?

**Montgomery County Response: One stakeholder engagement session per locality – three (3) total.**

34. **Question:** Will the agency be responsible for recruiting and coordinating stakeholder and community participants, or will Tourism staff manage that outreach?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices. The Tourism office will handle logistics and venue arrangements.**

35. **Question:** At what stages will the Tourism Operating Board formally review and approve work? What constitutes approval (majority vote, unanimous consensus, or administrator sign-off)?

**Montgomery County Response:** The Tourism Director will work with the Tourism Operating Board to obtain any necessary approvals via majority vote. The Tourism Director will be the selected vendor's sole contact for approvals.

36. **Question:** In the event the three governing bodies hold differing views on a creative direction, what is the tiebreaker or resolution process?

**Montgomery County Response:** Tourism and all three municipalities are represented on the evaluation committee for this RFP. The evaluation committee will work together to reach a consensus.

37. **Question:** How will consensus be reached if localities disagree?

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #36 above.

38. **Question:** Who has final decision authority beyond the Tourism Operating Board?

**Montgomery County Response:** The Tourism Director will work with the Tourism Operating Board to obtain any necessary approvals via majority vote. The Tourism Director will be the selected vendor's sole contact for approvals.

39. **Question:** Regarding on-site meetings & travel expectations, the RFP references "on-site, in-person presentations to various boards as required." Can the County provide additional guidance regarding the anticipated number of in-person meetings and presentations expected throughout the project? Will the selected vendor be expected to include all travel-related expenses within its proposed budget, or will the County reimburse approved travel expenses separately? If travel is to be included within the project budget, is there an anticipated travel budget or range vendors should assume?

**Montgomery County Response:** Proposal pricing should include four (4) separate in-person presentations of the final brand. One presentation shall be to each of the following:

- Tourism Operating Board
- Blacksburg Town Council
- Christiansburg Town Council
- Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

**Proposals should outline any potential savings if any of the four (4) meetings above can be held on the same day, back-to-back days, etc.**

**Offerors should include travel-related costs for any other recommended in-person meetings, such as stakeholder meetings.**

**Proposals should also include how travel would be priced for any other in-person meetings that may be required later, but are unknown at this time.**

40. **Question:** Are Town Councils and Board of Supervisors approval bodies or presentation audiences only?

**Montgomery County Response: Final Brand Presentation audiences only.**

41. **Question:** Can the County provide additional detail regarding the anticipated timeline following the July 1 proposal due date, including:

- Expected timing for finalist selection and interviews (if applicable)
- Anticipated contract award date
- Target project kickoff date
- Desired completion date for the branding initiative
- Anticipated timeline for the related website initiative

**Montgomery County Response: The timeline for selection and contract award are dependent on how many proposals are received and the time necessary for evaluation. The tentative goal for contract award is Fall 2026, but this is subject to change. Project kickoff is anticipated to be shortly after contract award. Proposals should include estimates of timeline to complete branding initiative after contract award. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work. Tourism intends to issue a separate RFP for website development/redesign after the branding initiative is complete.**

42. **Question:** Does Montgomery County have any local or regional vendor preference, evaluation criteria, or scoring considerations that favor firms located within Virginia or the surrounding region?

**Montgomery County Response: Offerors must be properly licensed and registered to do business in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Proposals will be evaluated based on the Offeror's ability to meet the RFP Statement of Needs.**

43. **Question:** The RFP references market research, audience analysis, stakeholder engagement sessions, workshops, and visioning meetings. Can the County provide additional guidance regarding the desired depth of research and stakeholder engagement?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to make recommendations.**

44. **Question:** Is the County seeking primarily qualitative research (stakeholder interviews, workshops, focus groups, etc.)?

- Is quantitative research expected as part of the scope?
- If quantitative research is desired, does the County have a preferred methodology or anticipated sample size?

- Would the County consider more extensive quantitative research and audience analysis as an optional add-on service?

**Montgomery County Response: Research is part of the scope. Seeking qualitative. We will rely on the selected vendor for additional quantitative research.**

45. **Question:** Will non-destination marketing/rebranding experience be evaluated?

**Montgomery County Response: All proposals will be evaluated based on the Evaluation Criteria and the offeror's ability to meet the RFP Statement of Needs**

46. **Question:** Will your team require copywriting assistance beyond messaging / platform voice, etc.?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

47. **Question:** Could we request an electronic submission in light of the lifting of all delivery guarantees from all the courier companies?

**Montgomery County Response: Electronic copies are accepted via eVA, and it is preferred that the minimum number of paper copies are submitted as stated in the RFP.**

48. **Question:** Do you have an incumbent and would they be participating in this RFP?

**Montgomery County Response: We do not currently have an incumbent contractor.**

49. **Question:** Let us know if you have a local preference or are you open to a Canadian agency that has done similar work with clients across the US, with some currently being in States of California, Hawaii, Michigan, Virginia and Wyoming?

**Montgomery County Response: Offerors must be properly licensed and registered to do business in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Proposals will be evaluated based on the Offeror's ability to meet the RFP Statement of Needs.**

50. **Question:** What percentage of tourism is currently being driven by or around Virginia Tech events?

**Montgomery County Response: We do not have data that quantifies the percentage of tourism directly driven by Virginia Tech. However, Virginia Tech is a significant tourism driver through athletic events, commencement ceremonies, conferences, campus visits, alumni activities, and visits from students' families and friends.**

51. **Question:** What is the most important aspect of having an agency partner?

**Montgomery County Response: Deeper knowledge of industry trends, expertise in design and what resonates with an audience, building a visual ecosystem.**

52. **Question:** Where do you generate most of your revenue?

**Montgomery County Response: Primarily overnight stays & secondary meals/sales tax.**

53. **Question:** If production of branded items is needed for the budget - can you provide what types or items and a ballpark of quantities to be estimated?

**Montgomery County Response: Merchandise is not part of this RFP and is budgeted separately.**

54. **Question:** What is success? What's your main goal?

**Montgomery County Response: Reference Tourism's Mission and Vision statements below:**

**Mission Statement: To promote an enriched visitor experience by showcasing the natural beauty, dynamic recreation, rich history, diverse culture, and unique college-town environment. We are committed to fostering partnerships and sustainable growth to stimulate economic opportunity.**

**Vision Statement: To be a leading destination for visitors seeking recreational and educational experiences in an area rich with natural resources, history, culture, and vibrant communities.**

55. **Question:** Can you share more demographic/psychographic info on your main visitors?

**Montgomery County Response: We have access to visitor demographic and psychographic through Placer.ai. This information will be provided to the selected consultant after award.**

56. **Question:** What are the top three problems with the current brand?

**Montgomery County Response: Through our strategic planning process and stakeholder engagement, we identified opportunities to strengthen our existing brand. Stakeholders expressed that the current brand does not fully reflect the unique character, personality, and sense of place that distinguish Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County. Additionally, there is a desire for a brand that generates stronger community pride and stakeholder support while more effectively communicating the destination's identity and appeal to prospective visitors.**

57. **Question:** What must absolutely be preserved from the existing brand (if anything)?

**Montgomery County Response: The Tourism Program is open to complete rebranding and does not require preservation of any specific elements of the existing brand. However, the new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.**

58. **Question:** Is this primarily a visual refresh or a deeper strategic repositioning?

**Montgomery County Response:** Visual refresh. An updated strategic plan was adopted by the board in March 2026. This was completed in partnership with Virginia Tourism Corporation.

59. **Question:** Who are considered primary competitive destinations?

**Montgomery County Response:** Visit VA Blue Ridge, Auburn-Opelika, Asheville, Charlottesville, Blowing Rock, Boone, Harrisonburg. Knoxville. College towns with natural assets (ex. Rivers & Trails).

60. **Question:** Has a competitive brand audit already been conducted?

**Montgomery County Response:** No

61. **Question:** Are there specific positioning gaps the region is seeking to fill?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to identify.

62. **Question:** Are current audience segments clearly defined (leisure, meetings, sports, group tour)?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

63. **Question:** Are there priority geographic markets?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

64. **Question:** Are there emerging target audiences not previously pursued?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

65. **Question:** Are psychographic profiles or visitor personas available?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

66. **Question:** Are there brand equity studies or awareness studies from 2014–2026?

**Montgomery County Response:** No

67. **Question:** Approximately how many stakeholders are expected to participate?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

68. **Question:** Which groups must be included (hospitality, elected officials, university, residents, business leaders, etc.)?

**Montgomery County Response:** Town officials, County officials, hospitality, restaurant, business, university, and residents. However, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

69. **Question:** Are surveys expected in addition to workshops and interviews?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

70. **Question:** Are virtual engagement sessions acceptable?

**Montgomery County Response:** We prefer initial engagement sessions to be in-person. Tourism may consider virtual for subsequent sessions. Proposals should clearly state offeror's intent to use in-person or virtual sessions.

71. **Question:** Is there an existing CMS platform?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

72. **Question:** Are there accessibility compliance benchmarks already established?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

73. **Question:** Is content migration included?

**Montgomery County Response:** No.

74. **Question:** Are there integrations required (CRM, booking engine, event calendar, GIS mapping)?

**Montgomery County Response:** No.

75. **Question:** Is multilingual functionality required?

**Montgomery County Response: We are not aware of any multilingual functionality requirements for brand elements. We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to make recommendations and to ensure any Federal or Virginia accessibility requirements are met.**

76. **Question:** Is a public launch event expected?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.**

77. **Question:** Should rollout include phased implementation by locality?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

78. **Question:** Is there an inventory of existing branded materials to replace?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

79. **Question:** Is a budget allocated for reprinting signage, brochures, and collateral?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes, this budgeted separately from this RFP.**

80. **Question:** What is the expected transition timeline from old to new brand?

**Montgomery County Response: While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.**

81. **Question:** Is there a desired completion date?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #80 above.**

82. **Question:** Are there blackout periods due to tourism seasonality?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

83. **Question:** What is the anticipated review and revision cycle duration?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach to timelines and reviews consistent with industry best practices.**

84. **Question:** How many rounds of revisions are expected?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

85. **Question:** Are optional services encouraged as add-ons?

**Montgomery County Response:** Optional services should fall within the scope of the RFP and prices should be included, and clearly identified, in the final proposal.

86. **Question:** Are there trademark registration requirements?

**Montgomery County Response:** Our current brand is trademarked. We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

87. **Question:** Is legal review of brand/tagline included?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to advise what legal reviews may be necessary.

88. **Question:** What specific challenges or shortcomings have you identified with the current 2014 brand?  
Montgomery County Response:

**Montgomery County Response:** Through our strategic planning process and stakeholder engagement, we identified opportunities to strengthen our existing brand. Stakeholders expressed that the current brand does not fully reflect the unique character, personality, and sense of place that distinguish Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County. Additionally, there is a desire for a brand that generates stronger community pride and stakeholder support while more effectively communicating the destination's identity and appeal to prospective visitors.

89. **Question:** What perceptions of the destination do you want to strengthen, change, or eliminate?  
Montgomery County Response:

**Montgomery County Response:** We are a culture center – blend of outdoor recreation, arts, dining and leisure activities. While Virginia Tech is a big part of our community, there is much more to offer.

90. **Question:** Are there specific brand attributes or themes that emerged from the recent strategic planning process?

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #54 above regarding Mission and Vision statements

91. **Question:** What key differentiators do you believe set Montgomery County apart from competing destinations?

**Montgomery County Response:** Both towns have a small-town vibe. There is not a lot of hustle and bustle. Quick access to a main interstate. We are part of a diverse region – Floyd County, Giles County, Pulaski County and the City of Radford.

92. **Question:** Have you conducted any visitor perception studies, resident surveys, or market research that can be shared?

**Montgomery County Response:** No.

93. **Question:** How have Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County historically collaborated on destination marketing initiatives?

**Montgomery County Response:** The Tourism office is responsible for destination marketing initiatives.

94. **Question:** Are there any existing sensitivities regarding how the three jurisdictions are represented?

**Montgomery County Response:** The new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.

95. **Question:** Can you share your priority visitor segments and their relative importance?

**Montgomery County Response:** Additional information regarding our target visitor segments, demographics, psychographics, and available market research will be provided to the selected consultant upon contract award to inform the branding process.

96. **Question:** Which audiences are expected to drive the most future growth?

**Montgomery County Response:** Additional information regarding our target visitor segments, demographics, psychographics, and available market research will be provided to the selected consultant upon contract award to inform the branding process.

97. **Question:** Have visitor personas already been developed?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

98. **Question:** Who do you view as your primary competitive destinations?

**Montgomery County Response:** Visit VA Blue Ridge, Auburn-Opelika, Asheville, Charlottesville, Blowing Rock, Boone, Harrisonburg. Knoxville. College towns with natural assets (ex. Rivers & Trails).

99. **Question:** What research has already been completed that can inform this effort?

**Montgomery County Response:** An updated strategic plan was adopted by the board in March 2026. This was completed in partnership with Virginia Tourism Corporation.

100. **Question:** Approximately how many stakeholder interviews, workshops, or focus groups do you envision?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

101. **Question:** Are public input sessions expected?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes, however, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

102. **Question:** Do you expect visitor research to be conducted as part of this engagement?

**Montgomery County Response:** Yes.

103. **Question:** How many logo concepts do you expect to review?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.

104. **Question:** Do you envision a complete name change, a refinement of the current brand, or are all options open?

**Montgomery County Response:** We are open to a complete rebranding and do not require preservation of any specific elements of the existing brand. However, the new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.

105. **Question:** Are there existing brand elements that must be retained?

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #104 above.

106. **Question:** Is there a desired launch date for the new brand?

**Montgomery County Response:** While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.

107. **Question:** Are there key tourism events, funding cycles, or website milestones driving the schedule?

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #106 above.

108. **Question:** What challenges do you currently face with online visitor engagement and conversion?

**Montgomery County Response:** Brand recognition. Brand awareness. People have a hard time remembering/recognizing our GoToMontVA.Com URL.

109. **Question:** Are there marketing technology, CRM, analytics, or destination management tools that should be considered as part of the long-term strategy?

**Montgomery County Response:** As it pertains to the brand, no. See amendment #1 above and responses to clarification questions #1 and #2 above.

110. **Question:** What trends and shifting expectations are affecting you most?

**Montgomery County Response:** Economic uncertainty. Brands are shifting away from minimalist logos & fonts.

111. **Question:** What is the scope of branded templates, marketing collateral, and multi-platform applications required within the Brand Guide?

**Montgomery County Response:** We want recommendations on how to properly and effectively apply the logo and brand to marketing collateral and multi-platform applications.

112. **Question:** Are you open to a 'name change' from "Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery County Regional Tourism" to a new regional umbrella name?

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #106 above.

113. **Question:** Are you requiring new photography as part of the scope?

**Montgomery County Response:** No.

114. **Question:** Our branding process is comprehensive, as it includes stakeholder education, research, community input, strategic insights, creative development, and action planning. Given that, we predict that our process for these services will take 8-10 months. Is Montgomery County open to this timeline given best practices and our experience? If the County requires a shorter timeframe, please let us know if there is a specific event or target date driving that urgency so we can best align our approach.

**Montgomery County Response:** See response to clarification question #106 above.

115. **Question:** What would each locality say makes them unique?

**Montgomery County Response:** We will look to the selected consultant's expertise to define what makes each locality unique through qualitative research.

116. **Question:** Who do you think you are competing against / who are you losing visitors to?

**Montgomery County Response:** Visit VA Blue Ridge, Auburn-Opelika, Asheville, Charlottesville, Blowing Rock, Boone, Harrisonburg. Knoxville. College towns with natural assets (ex. Rivers & Trails).

117. **Question:** Where are most of your visitors coming from today?

**Montgomery County Response:** Additional information regarding our target visitor segments, demographics, psychographics, and available market research will be provided to the selected consultant upon contract award to inform the branding process.

118. **Question:** What market or target represents the biggest opportunity for growth?

**Montgomery County Response:** Additional information regarding our target visitor segments, demographics, psychographics, and available market research will be provided to the selected consultant upon contract award to inform the branding process.

119. **Question:** What other tourism brands do you admire? Why?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #116 above.**

120. **Question:** What other brands in general do you admire? Why?

**Montgomery County Response: See response to clarification question #116 above.**

121. **Question:** When someone visits the area, what do you want them to remember?

**Montgomery County Response: The warm southern hospitality. The scenic views. Unique culture. Ease and accessibility between the two towns and the county – visitors do not see town lines.**

122. **Question:** What do outsiders misunderstand about the area?

**Montgomery County Response: There is nothing to do here. There is opportunity to raise awareness of what we have to offer. We are more than Virginia Tech.**

123. **Question:** What do people not know about this area that would make them want to visit?

**Montgomery County Response: History. Good public transit for being a rural area. Unique dining and drinking options. Diverse outdoor recreation activities and atypical world class amenities.**

124. **Question:** What timelines do you have in mind for research and discovery, brand development, rollout plan, implementation?

**Montgomery County Response: While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.**

125. **Question:** Are there any existing brand elements that stakeholders would like to preserve?

**Montgomery County Response: We are open to a complete rebranding and do not require preservation of any specific elements of the existing brand. However, the new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.**

126. **Question:** Who will ultimately have final approval authority on branding recommendations?

**Montgomery County Response: The Tourism Director will be the selected consultant's contact and final approver.**

127. **Question:** implementation templates, campaign concepts, or launch materials expected as part of the project?

**Montgomery County Response: The selected agency will be expected to support the development and execution of the initial brand launch campaign; however, ongoing marketing campaigns will be managed by our team following implementation.**

128. **Question:** Is signage, wayfinding, or environmental branding anticipated as part of the scope?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

129. **Question:** Beyond the branding project, are there plans for marketing campaign development, media placement, content creation, or ongoing brand management support?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

130. **Question:** Why does “Tourism” believe the current brand is not meeting the needs of the destination or relating to current traveler mindsets? What is the key problem you are hoping to solve?

**Montgomery County Response: There is not community buy in and support around the current brand. In research, the “Go To Town,” doesn’t fall within industry trend.**

131. **Question:** Do you any recent traveler research that indicates traveler sentiment, top reasons for visiting the county, visitor demographics, average # of nights stayed, perceptions, misperceptions, top reasons people don’t visit the county, etc.? If not, is there an appetite for the agency to scope and execute this type of research?

**Montgomery County Response: No, we do not have recent traveler research. Proposals may include this, and the cost should be included.**

132. **Question:** What will be the selected agency’s involvement in the development of a marketing campaign utilizing the new brand elements?

**Montgomery County Response: The selected consultant will be expected to support the development and execution of the initial brand launch campaign; however, ongoing marketing campaigns will be managed by our team following implementation.**

133. **Question:** How will success be measured? Multi-night stays? Hotel tax revenue? Traveler sentiment? Other?

**Montgomery County Response: Overnight stays/transient occupancy tax revenue, online engagement, community buy-in/support.**

134. **Question:** When travelers don't come to Montgomery County, where do they go and why?

**Montgomery County Response:** Similar mountain towns. Towns with direct air travel.

135. **Question:** Is there an expected or hopeful launch date for the new brand? Would you like to have it ready for a fall/winter 2026 campaign, spring/summer 2027, or some other key milestone?

**Montgomery County Response:** We do not have a prescribed project completion date or launch window at this time. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.

136. **Question:** Is there a preference for a Virginia-based agency or will agencies from outside the state with relevant expertise receive equal consideration?

**Montgomery County Response:** Offerors must be properly licensed and registered to do business in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Proposals will be evaluated based on the Offeror's ability to meet the RFP Statement of Needs.

137. **Question:** On page 10 the RFP states that proposals should be "organized in the order in which the requirements are presented in the RFP." This looks to be section B (Contractor Requirements), however Section C (Contractor Qualifications) appears to have some slight overlap and looks to be aligned more closely with typical proposal sections. Are you looking for our proposal structure to align with Section B or C?

**Montgomery County Response:** Proposals should be aligned as much as possible with the order of the RFP Statement of Need to assist evaluators in comparing proposals to the RFP document.

138. **Question:** Can you clarify the contract period for this project and share any deadlines or benchmarks that the County may have for specific deliverables? Are there any community events or milestone celebrations coming up where it would be advantageous to launch or roll out the new brand?

**Montgomery County Response:** We do not have a prescribed project completion date or launch window at this time. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.

139. **Question:** Because branding is an iterative process, our timelines take into account the approval process for concepts, designs, messaging, etc. Can you clarify how the County anticipates the approval process will work for this project?

**Montgomery County Response:** We do not have a prescribed project completion date or launch

**window at this time. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.**

140. **Question:** Will the County identify a single point-of-contact to liaise with the selected vendor, or will representatives from the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, and the County form a committee that handles day-to-day decision making?

**Montgomery County Response: The Tourism office will be the main point of contact.**

141. **Question:** Is the County looking to develop a new name for its destination marketing organization as a part of this process, or is the focus to develop a new logo/visual brand?

**Montgomery County Response: We are open to a complete rebranding – including a new name - and do not require preservation of any specific elements of the existing brand. However, the new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.**

142. **Question:** Is the County open to virtual and/or hybrid forms of engagement? How much of the scope of work does the County anticipate should be conducted in person?

**Montgomery County Response: We prefer initial engagement sessions to be in-person. Tourism may consider virtual for subsequent sessions. Proposals should clearly state offeror's intent to use in-person or virtual sessions.**

143. **Question:** What is the expected project completion date, and are there any hard deadlines driven by fiscal year cycles, planned marketing campaigns, or the website redesign kickoff?

**Montgomery County Response: We do not have a prescribed project completion date or launch window at this time. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.**

144. **Question:** How many stakeholder engagement sessions or public workshops are envisioned, and will the County handle logistics and venue arrangements, or is that the vendor's responsibility?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices. The Tourism office will handle logistics and venue arrangements.**

145. **Question:** Will the vendor have access to any existing visitor research, brand perception surveys, or lodging tax data to inform the strategy?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes.**

146. **Question:** Is there an incumbent vendor currently providing branding or marketing services to the Tourism office?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

147. **Question:** Who are your competitors?

**Montgomery County Response: Visit VA Blue Ridge, Auburn-Opelika, Asheville, Charlottesville, Blowing Rock, Boone, Harrisonburg. Knoxville. College towns with natural assets (ex. Rivers & Trails).**

148. **Question:** Will photography services be needed?

**Montgomery County Response: None.**

149. **Question:** We don't recall how many in-person meetings you said were to be expected, or if you were looking to responders for a recommendation?

**Montgomery County Response: We will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an appropriate approach consistent with industry best practices.**

150. **Question:** For proposal and contract naming, should the client be referenced primarily as Montgomery County, Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery County Regional Tourism, or another formal name?

**Montgomery County Response: Montgomery County is the fiscal agent for Regional Tourism, therefore the legal contracting entity will Montgomery County, Virginia. The contract will be administered by the Tourism Director.**

151. **Question:** The RFP references a refreshed destination identity for the regional tourism organization. Should the scope be focused exclusively on brand strategy, messaging, visual identity, templates,

rollout, and brand guidance, or should offerors also include a tourism marketing plan as part of the base proposal?

**Montgomery County Response: Brand guidelines and a launch plan/strategy is an expected deliverable.**

152. **Question:** Should professional photography, video production, campaign creative, paid media, signage, or visitor-facing content production be included in the base scope, or should these be presented as optional implementation services?

**Montgomery County Response: No.**

153. **Question:** Does the County anticipate any public input component, such as a community survey, open house, or public-facing project information page, or should engagement be limited to staff, boards, tourism partners, and key stakeholders?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes.**

154. **Question:** The RFP identifies required presentations to the Blacksburg Town Council, Christiansburg Town Council, Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, and Tourism Operating Board. Should offerors assume these presentations occur at the final brand approval stage only, or should additional interim presentations be included?

**Montgomery County Response: Proposals should assume final brand presentations only to the groups above.**

155. **Question:** Are the required board and council presentations expected to be in person, virtual, or either format depending on schedule and availability?

**Montgomery County Response: Final brand presentations the boards and councils will be in-person.**

156. **Question:** Are there existing brand elements, taglines, colors, logos, URL structures, or partner-facing materials that the Tourism Office already knows should be retained, refreshed, or retired?

**Montgomery County Response: We are open to a complete rebranding and do not require preservation of any specific elements of the existing brand. However, the new brand must equitably represent Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County, either through direct reference to the three localities or through a unifying theme, identity, or positioning that authentically reflects and encompasses the region as a whole.**

157. **Question:** Should the selected consultant develop naming recommendations as part of the brand strategy if research indicates that the current regional destination name may need clarification for visitors?

**Montgomery County Response: Yes.**

158. **Question:** Are there any known implementation priorities the new brand must support immediately, such as a website redesign, visitor guide, trade show materials, sports sales materials, meeting planner collateral, merchandise, signage, or launch campaign?

**Montgomery County Response: The planned website redesign is the most immediate implementation priority for the new brand. While website redevelopment will be procured through a separate RFP, the brand platform, visual identity, and style guide should be developed to support a seamless transition to a modern digital presence. Following implementation of the new brand, we anticipate updating marketing collateral, visitor-facing materials, and promotional assets through in-house efforts.**

159. **Question:** Should the proposal include a detailed rollout and partner adoption strategy for use by local businesses, attractions, lodging partners, event organizers, and the three locality partners?

**Montgomery County Response: No. We do not expect a detailed rollout and partner adoption strategy at this stage. However, proposals should demonstrate the firm's experience with brand implementation and include a general approach to supporting adoption and launch planning as part of the branding process.**

160. **Question:** Does the County have a preferred project completion date or desired launch window for the refreshed brand?

**Montgomery County Response: We do not have a prescribed project completion date or launch window at this time. While we would like to complete the project in a timely manner, we will rely on the selected consultant's expertise to recommend an achievable project schedule, key milestones, and implementation timeline based on industry best practices and the scope of work.**

161. **Question:** Are there any required forms, attachments, addenda acknowledgments, insurance documents, or contractual exceptions that should be included with the proposal beyond the items listed in the RFP?

**Montgomery County Response: Proposals should include all forms/documents required by the RFP, including signed general information form, addenda acknowledgements, acknowledgement of required insurance (certificate of insurance will be required of selected vendor prior to contract award), any proposed contractual exceptions, any vendor provided documents that may require County signature if selected, and any other required documents.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE**

**ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF ADDENDUM # 2:**

COMPANY/FIRM NAME AND ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

SUBMITTED BY:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
(print)

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



This Strategic Recommendations report provided by Cure, Inc. is included as Attachment A to Addendum 2 of Montgomery County RFP 27-01 for Rebrand of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)

**CURE**

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

# **Strategic** *Recommendations*

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**2024**

# Project *Framework*

## Purpose

To create a comprehensive Research & Recommendations framework, CURE utilized the following data points with the goal of increasing awareness of the County's unique market position and in turn utilization and enjoyment of its assets by visitors.

## Documentation / Deliverables

- Over 30+ historical regional tourism and economic development studies
- Analysis & Research of 'like' communities
- 20+ Stakeholder Interviews
- Community site visits and facility visits

# Table of Contents

6	Historical Research
33	Stakeholder Interviews
38	Recommendations
55	Outcomes & Next Steps

# Project *Observations*

---

1. Unclear Transit & Recreational Infrastructure
2. County & Town Identities Fragmented
3. Opportunity for Universities to Grow Community Collaboration
4. Lack of Marketed Differentiators



# Foundational *Pillars*

These three pillars have been established based on historical research and interview findings. This recommendations report expands upon each of these topics further to identify the visitor opportunities for Montgomery County.



## PILLAR 01

### Transportation & Connectivity



## PILLAR 02

### Innovation & Technology Hub



## PILLAR 03

### Group Getaways

SECTION 01

# Historical Research



# Overview

The purpose of this Key Performance Indicator report is to analyze the opportunity areas that Montgomery County has in context of its rich and vibrant tourism offerings. A selection of similar sized DMOs are in this report to emphasize the findings and recommendations provided. These comparable DMOs include Tompkins County in New York, Roanoke in Virginia, and Centre County in Pennsylvania.



# Comparables for Analysis



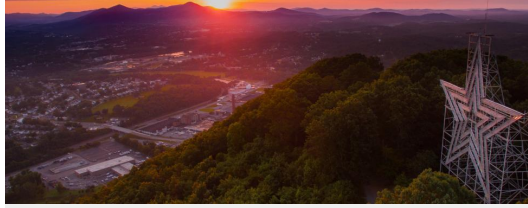
## Tompkins County, NY

### POPULATION

**102,180**

### KEY FEATURES

Home to Ithaca and Cornell University, Tompkins County is known for its academic and cultural atmosphere. The county offers a scenic environment with its location in the Finger Lakes region. It's renowned for its natural beauty, with gorges and waterfalls, and a vibrant arts scene.



## Roanoke, VA

### POPULATION

**100,011**

### KEY FEATURES

Although not primarily a college town, Roanoke is a hub for healthcare and retail and has a growing cultural scene. It offers numerous outdoor recreational opportunities and is known for its scenic beauty, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and a lively downtown with museums and markets.



## Centre County, PA (State College)

### POPULATION

**162,385**

### KEY FEATURES

Centre County is home to Penn State University, one of the largest universities in the U.S. The county is known for its strong academic environment and significant cultural and sports events. It offers a mix of urban and rural experiences, with outdoor activities and charming small towns like Bellefonte.



PILLAR 01

# Transportation & Connectivity

## PILLAR 01

# Transportation & Connectivity

## Goal

To highlight transportation to a destination, 'ease of use' of transportation while visiting, and transportation as a recreation (aka biking)

## Highlights

- Expansion of Transportation Methods Leads to Increase Utilization
- The Awareness and Provision of Alternate Travel Methods (within the DMO)



## ACCESSIBLE AREA TRANSIT

# Tompkins County

Tompkins County has made significant strides in enhancing its transportation infrastructure, particularly through the Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT). TCAT, a joint venture involving Cornell University, the City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County, offers public transit services not only in Tompkins County but also in parts of Tioga County.

Tompkins County is actively developing a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) model. This model aims to integrate various mobility services into a centralized digital platform, enhancing the ease of finding, booking, and paying for transit needs. This initiative is particularly notable for its inclusion of rural areas, aiming to provide improved mobility services across urban, suburban, and rural communities

## Building a Sustainable Mobility-as-a-Service Model in Rural New York

Edward Graham | May 24, 2022

[Mobility as a Service](#) / [Rural Communities](#) / [Technology](#)



*MaaS can help to further the reach of Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), the largest public transportation provider in Tompkins County.*

By leveraging the power of smartphones, transit providers and government officials can provide users with streamlined access to a variety of public and private transportation services across their local communities in a one-stop virtual setting.

## MICRO-MOBILITY

# Tompkins County

There are significant developments in micro-mobility, particularly concerning bike paths and bike sharing. The Center for Community Transportation recently launched Ithaca's first non-profit, community- owned and operated bikeshare, introducing a fleet of dockless e-bikes across the city.

Bike Walk Tompkins is another active organization in the area, working towards making Ithaca and Tompkins County more accessible and convenient for walking, biking, and rolling through events like Streets Alive Ithaca.

## PEDC Recap: New bikeshare company plans rollout on to Ithaca streets

by Brian Crandall  
October 20, 2022



### Ithaca Bikeshare MOU

Last of the voting items to send to Council was the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between Ithaca Bikeshare and the City of Ithaca.

As part of the city's ongoing efforts to encourage alternative modes of transportation to personal vehicles when possible, the city desires to make bikeshare services available to City residents, visitors, and commuters. The non-profit Center for Community Transportation (CCT) proposes to operate a bikeshare program within the City that will "efficiently and effectively provide such bikeshare services".

In a related matter is a funding agreement in the works to purchase electric bicycles to be included within the bikeshare program, an inked agreement is a requirement in order to receive a \$50,000 capital grant to cover electric bike procurement. Electric bikes can go 14-16 MPH and assist with uphill climbs, though it did not like they could do it without some rider effort.

## Alternative transportation for everyone

Sunday, April 30th 2023, 6:52 PM EDT  
Updated: Sunday, May 28th 2023, 6:53 PM EDT  
By Max Coven



ITHACA, N.Y. (WENY) -- Rain or shine, people have many opportunities to get outside and enjoy nature. "Streets Alive Ithaca" hosted their event with an initiative to create more modes of transportation, such as biking, on Sunday afternoon.

"Bike Walk Tompkins is hosting 'Streets Alive Ithaca,' where we open up a large swath of streets for people to play, roll, dance, do whatever in the street instead of drive," said Nicki Friski, Associate Director, of Bike Walk Tompkins.

Roughly two miles were blocked off in Ithaca to make today's event possible. The goal is to show people that they can use the streets to bike. It is not only a pathway for cars. Everyone has the right to use the roads for many forms of transportation.

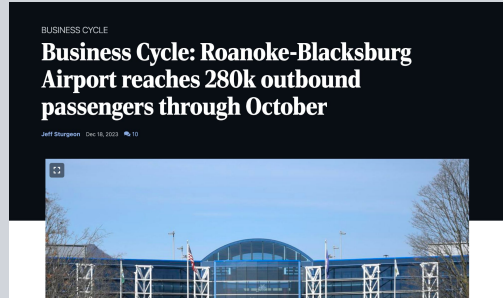
"We really want to start this not-for-profit bike share program, on a shoestring budget about six months ago. We have already created 20 thousand individual rides alone and that is just in the winter," shared Jeff Goodmark, director of bike mobility for center of community transportation and Ithaca Bike Share.

## WHAT THEY'RE DOING

## Roanoke

Roanoke has made significant advancements to its inbound transportation methods which have shown to increase the utilization of those services.

The increased publicity and media coverage has solidified the growth and has caused awareness to their offerings.



Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport officials have explained for years that the more area residents use the airport, the more likely it is an airline will add another non-stop destination, such as Dallas, Texas, or Denver, Colorado. Seeing how much flying increased this year at the Roanoke airport, I asked airport Executive Director Mike Stewart if he thinks consumers have responded to the call to fly local.

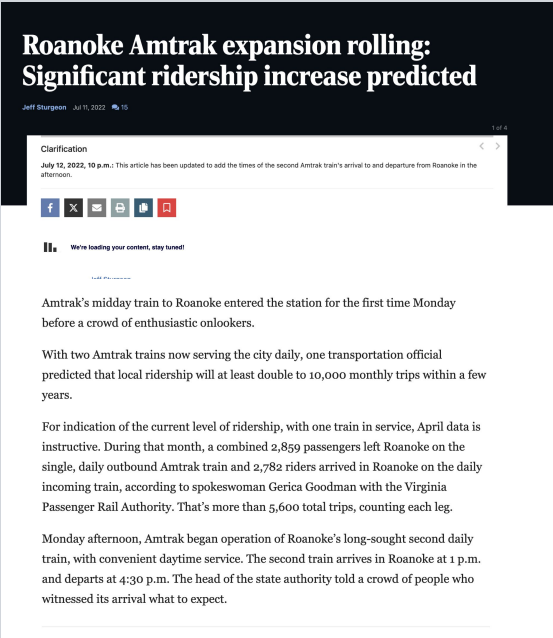
"I think so," he said. "Are there still people driving to Charlotte and Greensboro [North Carolina airports] and Dulles [International Airport near Washington]? Absolutely."

ROA gets only about 48% of the commercial air travel business generated by those communities within a two-hour drive, slightly higher than in prior years, Stewart said. The rest drive to larger regional airports for access to cheaper tickets and greater flight availability, a decision Stewart said he understands. He added that he thinks area residents are tired of driving to other airports and said he's telling airlines so. He argued that people cutting use of other airports could be the proof airlines need to expand in Roanoke.

Commercial air travel in the United States and the world is considered to have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Stewart said Roanoke, while still missing 2019 travel levels by about 5%, has recovered faster than other airports in the region.

Here's a look back. In 2020, with human beings hunkered down to avoid the pandemic virus spreading worldwide, air travel declined significantly out of Roanoke and elsewhere. **Between January and October 2020, Roanoke counted 121,000 outbound travelers. But, 2021 was better and, by October 2022, the airport's year-to-date boardings hit 241,000, or twice what they were in 2020. In October 2023, the total came to 280,000, just 16,000 shy of October 2019's 296,000.**

The year 2019 is considered the industry's high-water mark — an especially strong year that not all analysts use to gauge life before pandemic. How about 2018? The Roanoke airport saw 271,000 outbound passengers through October 2018. This year's data is better.



## MOBILITY &amp; CONNECTIVITY

# Centre County

Three transportation projects in Centre County have received over \$2 million in funding, marking a significant step towards enhancing the region's transportation infrastructure. This investment is aimed at improving various aspects of transportation, including safety, accessibility, and sustainability.

As part of a larger Mobility and Connectivity plan, Penn State and State College launched an e-bike sharing program, Spin E-Bike Rentals, to enhance sustainable transportation. This initiative offers a convenient alternative to vehicles, aimed at improving local mobility and reducing traffic congestion.

## Three Centre County Transportation Alternatives Projects Receive More Than \$2 Million in Funding



Photo by Darren Andrew Weimert

By Geoff Rushton - April 20, 2022

[Community](#) | [Local News](#) | [Political News](#) | [State College](#)

Three projects to improve bicycle and pedestrian access and safety in Centre County will receive a combined \$2.125 million in funding through the commonwealth, Gov. Tom Wolf's office announced on Wednesday.

The projects in State College, Ferguson Township and Bellefonte were among 64 statewide to receive money from the state's federally-funded Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside program.

- State College will receive \$1.1 million for a shared-use path on Easterly and Westerly parkways and from Blue Course Drive to Whitehall Road. The paths will connect with the existing Orchard Park Bikeway, Blue Course Drive Shared Use Path, Blue and White Trails and the Gill Street Bike Connector.

The new path, "will expand our bicycle and pedestrian network and result in improved access to public schools, public parks, residential neighborhoods, commercial enterprises and our walkable downtown," Jasmine Fields, sustainability program officer, told the borough's Transportation Commission in October just before the application for the funding was submitted.

- Ferguson Township will receive \$700,000 to install a concrete sidewalk on the west side of Water Street from the Route 26/Route 45 intersection south to Chestnut Street. The project also will include shoulder widening to accommodate bike lanes on Route 45 and painting bike legends on the shoulder, installing a rectangular rapid flashing beacon at the existing bike crossing on Nixon Road, and installing signs and legends for shared lanes on a portion of Route 45.

- Bellefonte will receive \$325,000 for streetscape and safety improvements in the downtown. The project includes reconfiguring the walkway along South Spring Street and West Bishop Street and replacing the entire sidewalk in that area; creating new curbing; creating a safe entrance and exit into and out of a building on the corner of Route 144; adding bulb-outs and ADA curbs at appropriate intersections; and adding street lighting, planters, a green buffer and other landscape islands for color and shade and to help define the edges of the roadway, parking and walkways to create a welcoming, and safe walkway.

A total of \$54.1 million was awarded statewide from the TA Set-Aside to projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities and environmental mitigation, trails that serve a transportation purpose and safe routes to schools.

## Mobility and Connectivity Plan Looks to Future of Transportation Network in State College



Several topics covering the breadth of transportation will be included in the plan, including traffic calming, curb management and parking strategy. It will evaluate expanding on micro-mobility — like the Spin e-bike share launched last year — and accommodating "emerging technologies that come as a part of that," Fields said.

## Penn State, State College to Offer E-Bike Sharing Program



## Transportation & Connectivity

# Summary

Montgomery County is poised to capitalize on the opportunity of transportation and connectivity, offering a robust network of accessible routes and recreational trails that enhance both visitor mobility and tourism experiences.

## NEXT STEPS

**Regional Accessibility as a Visitor Draw:** Montgomery County's strategic location, with its easy access to major highways and airports, not only simplifies travel but also acts as a key factor in attracting visitors, offering them a hassle-free journey to a diverse destination.

**Enhanced Visitor Experience through Local Transportation:** The county's efficient local transport system is a significant advantage for tourists, providing convenient access to various attractions, thereby enriching their travel experience and encouraging longer stays.

**Attracting Tourists with Recreational Biking and Trails:** The Huckleberry Trail and other biking routes are not just modes of transport; they are key attractions themselves, offering scenic beauty and a unique way to explore the county, thereby appealing to tourists seeking active and nature-based experiences.

**Seamless Nature Connectivity for Tourists:** The integration of transportation networks with natural and recreational areas in Montgomery County offers tourists an effortless transition into outdoor activities, making the county an attractive destination for those seeking a blend of travel convenience and nature exploration.



PILLAR 02

# Innovation & Technology Hub

## PILLAR 02

# Innovation & Technology Hub

## Goal

To showcase technology as a differentiator in the quality of a visitor's experience, both affiliated with the County's anchor University and/or throughout the local cities and towns.

## Highlights


- Enhancing the local economy through the development of high-tech facilities.
- Fostering economic development and innovation through University-led initiatives aiding entrepreneurs and startups.



## POSITIONING FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

# Tompkins County

Menlo Micro's establishment of its new fabrication facility in Tompkins County is expected to bring significant benefits. It's promising to create over 100 high-tech jobs, bolstering local employment opportunities. The facility will enhance the region's technological landscape, attracting more investments and further sparking an already booming high-tech manufacturing sector within the county.


About
Members

## ITHACA IS A TOP SPOT FOR STARTUPS

More entrepreneurs are choosing to stay and grow in Ithaca or pick up roots and move to the area. With a wealth of educated and skilled talent, a high quality of life, a vibrant startup scene, and a high volume of issued patents, Ithaca, New York, is a small, tech-savvy community leading the nation.

- ### #1

**Best startup spot for tech without the downsides**

*Bloomberg Businessweek* ranked Ithaca the highest out of 300 other U.S. cities for its strong tech hub and high quality of life.
- ### #13

**Most innovative city in the US**

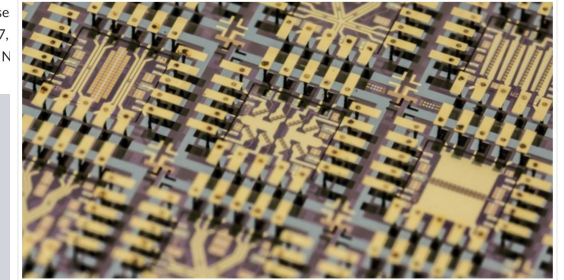
*USA Today and 24/7 Wall Street* listed Ithaca #13 on its national list of the "25 Most Innovative Cities".
- ### #1

**Highest in R&D expenditures in NY state**

The Southern Tier, the area encompassing Ithaca, ranked #1 in R&D expenditures in 2017, other region in New York State, including N

## Menlo Micro to Fabricate its Ideal Switch Technology in New Fabrication Facility in Tompkins County, NY

July 12, 2023 | Editorial Team



[Menlo Microsystems](#) (Menlo Micro), the company responsible for reinventing the electronic [switch](#) with its Ideal Switch® technology, announced that it has finalized an asset purchase in Tompkins County, N.Y., which will house the company's first domestic production facility, the **Ideal Fab™**. Menlo Micro will invest \$50 million in the Ideal Fab over the next three years, creating over 100 high tech jobs at the site within the next five years.

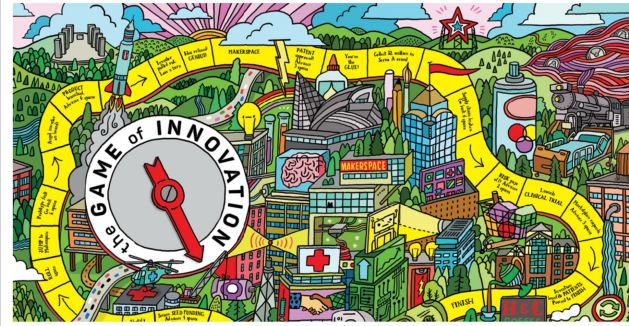
Additionally, the company is committing to a multi-year growth strategy through diverse funding sources – including the potential of additional government funds – to grow the Ideal Fab and further

## INNOVATION CORRIDOR

# Roanoke

The strategic development of the Roanoke Region Innovation Corridor, an area between Carilion's Roanoke campus and downtown providing a physical space for entrepreneurs, scientists, health providers, and those who support them, is a testament to the area's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for business and innovation. This corridor features scenic mountain metro areas, numerous breweries, and a variety of recreational activities, all of which contribute to the region's appeal for travelers. The availability of large, pad-ready sites for innovation-based companies further enhances its attractiveness as a destination for business growth.

## ROANOKE REGION INNOVATION CORRIDOR



When it comes to the game of innovation, the **Roanoke Region of Virginia** has a winning strategy. In our game plan – business, government, and education work together seamlessly to build **workforce** and **drive innovation**.

Cities across the nation are building innovation corridors, and like our region's burgeoning biotech hub, many have excellent startup support, new infrastructure projects coming online each year, coworking spaces, and accelerators that create an environment for collaborative research.

### What does the Roanoke Region Innovation Corridor have, that the others don't?

**LIVABILITY:** For starters, our scenic mountain metro is a place where people want to live. Trails, rivers, and greenways marble our urban core, so after work you can be mountain biking in minutes, a couple more minutes and you're at one of 16 breweries, minutes more and you're home. No commute, no traffic, no urban sprawl – *making attracting and retaining top talent effortless.*

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION:** In our innovation corridor you can create the latest technology, manufacture it here, and distribute it from here. We're located within a day's drive of 2/3 of the U.S. population.

**50- TO 100-ACRE, PAD-READY SITES:** Take your pick from several municipally owned, fully prepared, and strategically located sites ready to make any innovation-based company thrive. We can connect you with the office property, industrial building, and flexible real estate solution that fits your project's requirements. **See all real estate.**

**VIBRANT ECOSYSTEM:** With over \$560 million in research spending at Virginia Tech and the Fralin Biomedical Institute at VTC, our region has created an incubator for life science, innovation technology, and advanced manufacturing. Our regional support system assists technology startups with capital requirements creating an ecosystem for start-ups to thrive, and provides accelerators for technology-based businesses.

SITE SELECTION | ECONOMY / MARKET ANALYSIS

## Innovation Corridors Have Economic Assets Driving Business Growth

By actively putting together the resources needed for innovative companies to survive and thrive, innovation districts and corridors have found a recipe for success.

*Because innovation is so dependent upon people, it's vital to have neighborhood-building amenities that make the area attractive to those people.*

Also in Virginia, the Roanoke Innovation Corridor is a place where leading biomedical researchers, students, care providers, and businesses thrive through collaboration. The corridor offers brand new interdisciplinary training and research facilities through the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and Carilion Clinic, in addition to strong academic and economic partnerships between Carilion Clinic, Virginia Tech, Virginia Western Community College, Jefferson College of Health Sciences at Carilion Clinic, and Radford University.

## INNOVATION HUB

## Centre County

Penn State University's new Innovation Hub in State College is a strategic initiative to bolster entrepreneurial success and economic development in the region. Part of the Invent Penn State initiative, the hub is designed as a dynamic resource center for entrepreneurs and startups. It offers essential support and facilities to nurture business growth and innovation, as well as meeting and event spaces for the community.

StateCollege.com

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

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Home » News » Local News »

### Penn State's New Innovation Hub in State College Aims to Spur Entrepreneurial Success and Economic Development

Penn State's new Innovation H...

#### Meeting & Event Space

The top level boasts a beautiful, airy meeting and event space that inspires collaboration and the exchange of ideas between innovators, makers, creators, and the community. Open to both the local and University community, this space has a 360-degree view of Happy Valley that will enhance any gathering.

This space offers:

- Modern presentation technology
- 30-seat executive meeting room
- 100-plus-seat conference and banquet space
- Accommodation for a variety of events and event setups including receptions, educational sessions, meetings, etc.

## Innovation & Technology Hub

# Summary

Montgomery County is uniquely positioned to become a hub of technology and innovation, harnessing its collaborations with academic institutions and nurturing an environment supportive of entrepreneurs, thus attracting a diverse array of visitors interested in the forefront of technological and business advancements.

## NEXT STEPS

**University-Tech Collaboration:** Partnerships with universities for tech events and tours, attracting visitors interested in innovation and education.

**Entrepreneurial Ecosystem:** Support for startups and tech entrepreneurs, drawing business travelers and tech enthusiasts to the region through conferences and competitions.

**Tech-Oriented Tourism:** Development and highlighting of technology-focused attractions, amenities, and events, enhancing Montgomery County's appeal as a destination for those interested in the latest in technology and business innovation. Emphasizing the organization of tech-themed community events and festivals that not only showcase local innovations but also draw tourists interested in technology, culture, and community interaction.



PILLAR 03

# Multi-Day & Group Travel

## PILLAR 03

# Multi-Day & Group Travel

## Goal

To highlight facilities and activities which exist to specifically draw groups for conferences, retreats, and sports tournaments, swim meets, etc.

## Highlights

- Reinvention of local tourism attractions through reinvestment strategies, enhancing the appeal for multi-day stays.
- Development of a new, fully-electrified conference center, anticipated to boost off-peak and multi-day tourism.
- The construction of a significant new sports facility at a local university, expected to attract sports-related group travel and multi-day events.



CYCLE OF GROWTH

# Tompkins County

Tompkins County has seen a positive impact on its tourism attractions through the reinvestment of its hotel taxes. This strategy supports local events, festivals, and public amenities, enhancing the region's appeal to tourists. The approach ensures that visitors' spending contributes directly to maintaining and expanding the county's tourism infrastructure, creating a sustainable cycle of growth and attraction for both new and returning visitors.

☰

## Tompkins Weekly

🔍


Thursday, February 1, 2024

### Tompkins County hotel taxes reinvested in tourism attractions

*on October 25, 2023*

By Jaime Cone Hughes

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ESD Market New York (MNY)	Tompkins County	Tompkins County Working Capital	Tompkins County will use grant funds to upgrade the IthacaTrails.org website to help travelers discover outdoor adventures in Tompkins County, NY.	\$60,000
ESD MNY	Tea Leaves, Inc.	Ithaca Reggae Fest Working Capital	Tea Leaves, Inc. will use Market New York funds to host and promote Ithaca Reggae Fest, a special tourism event in Ithaca.	\$50,000
ESD MNY	Opera Ithaca, Inc.	Opera Ithaca Festival Working Capital	Funds will be used to host and promote the Opera Ithaca Festival, a month-long showcase highlighting creativity and cultural strength in the region.	\$100,000

New grants awarded in 2023

## NEW CONFERENCE CENTER

# Tompkins County

The new Ithaca Downtown Conference Center, set to open in April 2024, is anticipated to be the first fully electrified conference center in the United States. The construction of this 11-story center includes two ballrooms, an executive board room, affordable apartments, and retail space. The completion of this center is expected to significantly boost tourism in the off-peak months and support local businesses. It's designed to accommodate midweek and multi-day conferences for out-of-town guests, as well as community-based events.



## TompkinsWeekly

The Downtown Ithaca Alliance commissioned two feasibility studies to determine whether Ithaca had the market to sustain such a large project and found that it did. The findings would have likely looked different two decades ago, Smith Jablonski said, but now that four downtown hotels have opened in recent years — Hotel Ithaca was renovated, and Ithaca Marriott Downtown on The Commons, Hilton Garden Inn Ithaca and Canopy by Hilton Ithaca Downtown all opened in recent years — the community is better equipped to host the large gatherings the conference center is designed to attract.

Smith Jablonski said that there are opportunities for local businesses to partner with the conference center. For example, she noted that groups holding a conference at the center could utilize Cinemapolis to host a screen that accompanies their event.

The same goes for the State Theatre of Ithaca, Smith Jablonski said, and downtown restaurants such as Coltivare could also serve as an ancillary location.

"There are opportunities for partnerships with downtown retailers," Smith Jablonski said. "As conferences come in, we'll be thinking about how to make sure that, in their free time and [when] they're looking to do shopping and dining and spending time in the community, how do we work together to ensure the best benefit."

It is projected that the conference center will bring in about \$11.4 million in local tax revenue in the next 20 years, said Peggy Coleman, vice president of tourism for the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

There are benefits to local businesses that have connections to large events that many people might not necessarily think of, Coleman said.

"Our operator, ASM Global, their vision is very much to source locally when it comes to food and beverages," Coleman said. "Farmers and producers are going to be benefiting."

"The linens: we'll be renting linens from local companies," she added. "The florists, I know, will benefit."

The Ithaca Tompkins International Airport, with its nonstop flights to and from John F. Kennedy and Newark airports, is a major selling point for organizations considering booking the venue, and the airport will benefit from the additional business, according to Coleman.

Smith Jablonski said that the goal is for the conference center to be a positive presence within the Ithaca area.

## MULTI-DAY SPORTS TOURISM

# Tompkins County

Cornell University's plan to construct a new \$55 million sports facility is a significant addition to Tompkins County's infrastructure. This development will not only enhance the university's athletic capabilities but also promises to bolster local tourism, particularly in sports travel, with the facility planning to host the NCAA men's and women's lacrosse competitions. The facility is likely to attract more events, visitors, and economic activity to the region.

## Cornell plans new \$55 million sports facility on campus



by Brian Crandall  
October 20, 2023



ITHACA, N.Y.— In an announcement Friday morning, Cornell University [unveiled plans for a new \\$55 million fieldhouse](#) largely funded by and in memory of the former chair of its Board of Trustees.

The indoor field will accommodate NCAA men's and women's lacrosse competitions; divider curtains will allow multiple groups to use the facility simultaneously. A mezzanine will include two team rooms, restrooms, meeting rooms and offices.

In addition to NCAA student-athletes from Cornell's 37 intercollegiate sports programs, Meinig Fieldhouse will serve club teams and recreational athletes in a multitude of activities, advancing Cornell's commitment to well-being. Sports teams and competitors will likely be the most frequent users of the fieldhouse, but it will also be of value to the Big Red Band, Cornell Cheerleading and other groups.

"With over 7,000 Cornellians in club and intramural sports, recreational sports and outdoor activities are among the most common shared experiences we have," said Patrick Mehler '23, former president of Cornell's [Club Sports Council](#). "A regulation-size indoor field to enable students in staying physically engaged, playing sports and creating community would be a huge boon."

## SPORTS TOURISM

# Roanoke

Capitalizing on Virginia's Blue Ridge (VBR) regional success as a well-established sports destination, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge (Visit VBR) officials formed VBR Sports. This initiative has significantly contributed to the local economy and community engagement by hosting a variety of sporting events, including the 4-day USA Cycling Amateur Road National Championships.

## VBR Sports Launched as New Regional Initiative to Capture More Sports Tourism

Tuesday, January 30, 2018 10:00 AM by Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge



Capitalizing on Virginia's Blue Ridge (VBR) sports destination, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge (Visit VBR) announced the formation of VBR Sports. Landon Howard, President of Visit VBR, stated that the new VBR Sports Development will allow our five key events and grow the region's travel and

VBR Sports will focus on presenting the a multitude of new sporting events that experience, "Working together with local competitive sports will generate a strong on the map on a much broader scale." Development for VBR Sports



## SPORTS TOURISM

## Centre County

In Fall 2021, the HVAB, joined by Penn State Intercollegiate Athletics, announced a formalized effort to elevate Happy Valley's standing as a premier sports and entertainment destination through the creation of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance.

Sports events generate an annual economic impact of nearly \$417 million within Centre County, supporting 4,315 jobs with \$133 million in employee compensation. The statewide impact of sporting events in Happy Valley is \$467 million.



SPORTS TOURISM

# Centre County

Centre County was able to bring in major sports bookings throughout the 2022-2026 years, including recent Ironman 70.3 Pennsylvania Happy Valley triathlon; a perfect example of how the community at large can affect large-scale events that serve as visitation draws. The event brought diverse and global participants and their families to Happy Valley. Sunday night's occupancy was remarkably high, rivaling numbers seen during PSU graduation, move-in week or the former Happy Volley. This surge greatly benefited businesses and fostered community engagement and inspiration.

**HIGHLIGHTS IN SPORTS TOURISM**

**HAPPY VALLEY WELCOMES NEW PIAA EVENTS**

Announced in June 2022, Happy Valley and Penn State are set to host the PIAA Spring Sports Championships in 2023 and through 2026. The PIAA Spring Sport Championships Festival will include boys' volleyball, boys' and girls' lacrosse, baseball and softball championships on a single weekend each June.

In October 2022, Happy Valley hosted the PIAA boys' and girls' golf championships at the Penn State Golf Courses, and will do so for the next 4 years.

**PIAA GOLF RETURNED TO HAPPY VALLEY AFTER 20 YEARS!**

**MAJOR SPORTS BOOKINGS**

2022-2025  
**PIAA GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
OCTOBER

2023  
**MIDDLE SCHOOL BB**  
MARCH

**HOCKEY VALLEY**  
MARCH/APRIL

**MID-ATLANTIC WRESTLING/ASSOC.**  
EASTER WEEKEND

**ULTIMATE SPRING DUALS**  
APRIL

**KEYSTONE STATE CORNHOLE**  
APRIL

**AMERICAN CORNHOLE HAPPY VALLEY**  
MAY

2023-2026  
**PIAA SPRING FESTIVAL**  
JUNE

**IRONMAN 70.3 HAPPY VALLEY, PA**  
JUNE/JULY

2023-2027  
**KEYSTONE GAMES/HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
JULY

2024  
**PA STATE WOMAN'S BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
APRIL/MAY

**IRONMAN 70.3 HAPPY VALLEY, PA**



After nearly two years of meetings and discussions with Ironman representatives, Penn State University, Centre and Clinton county municipal officials, PennDOT, State Police and others, the announcement was made the Ironman 70.3 Triathlon is coming to Happy Valley on July 2, 2023.

With a three-year commitment inked, the swimming, biking and running competition will welcome elite athletes from across the nation and world to Happy Valley. The route includes a swim in Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir at Bald Eagle State Park, a scenic ride through the county's beautiful rolling hills, and a run that concludes at the 50-yard line at Beaver Stadium.

**+1505** ATHLETES REGISTERED TO DATE  
**5** COUNTRIES  
**44** STATES



**IRONMAN® by the numbers:**

- Athletes from 42 states and eight countries
- 2,408 confirmed participants
- 35+ state, county and local agencies involved in planning
- 1,100 volunteers; 200 out-of-area volunteers

## NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

# Centre County

The Centre County Explorer Passport is a program designed to boost tourism by incentivizing visitors to explore various attractions within the county. Participants collect stamps at designated locations to receive rewards, encouraging a broader exploration of the area's offerings. This initiative encourages tourists to extend their stay as they explore more sites to complete their passports, thereby increasing spending on accommodations, dining, and other local businesses.

## 'Centre County tourism coming back big time': Historical society touts tourism 'passport'

by Douglas Braff | Sun, June 4th 2023



WJAC



CENTRE COUNTY, Pa. (WJAC) — Tourism is vital to Centre County's economy. The pandemic sank the number of tourists visiting; but since then, various organizations in the area have worked hard to bring tourism back to 2019 levels — and beyond.

Douglas Braff takes a look at one of those efforts: the [Centre County Historical Society](#)-sponsored "Centre County Explorers Passport," unveiling a revamped version on Sunday.

Roger Williams, the Historical Society's president, agrees that the pandemic took quite the toll on tourism in Centre County. But he tells 6 News on Sunday: "Centre County tourism is coming back big time."

In terms of helping to drive up tourism, Williams explains, "We're doing

"But the rest of the county, too, is an attractive tourist venue," Williams points out. "And what we're trying to do, is build it up."

While Williams and Sorensen say increasing promotion and marketing is a big part of the effort to drive up tourism, Williams notes that "the attractions themselves are also coming back."

Partially through a resource improvement grant, the Historical Society is restoring the Centre Furnace Mansion. According to Williams, the project costs nearly \$600,000.



## REACHING DIVERSE GROUPS

# Centre County

The Centre County tourism grant program has awarded a record \$840,000 to support various community events and attractions, including State College's Comic Con and Pride events. This funding is a testament to the region's commitment to enhancing its cultural and leisure offerings, contributing to increased participation in these events. The financial support aids in promoting diverse and vibrant tourism experiences, thereby attracting more visitors and bolstering the local economy.

[Home](#) » [News](#) » [Community](#) »

## 'We're Back and We're Vibrant.' Centre County Tourism Grant Program Awards Record \$840,000

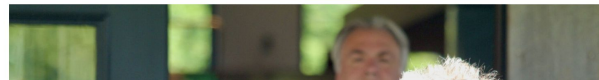


Receiving a grant for the second year, Happy Valley Comic and Collectibles Convention co-founder Thomas Range said the funding for the [inaugural event in February](#) at the Nittany Valley Sports Centre allowed for advertising that otherwise would not have been possible. That included sending postcards and posters to every comic book and game shop in Pennsylvania and other conventions, as well as buying ads on local sites, social media and a website dedicated to comic cons.

"Because of those ads we had vendors and celebrities asking us 'hey, can we come to your convention?' This would not have been possible without the tourism grant," Range said.

Organizers expected about 100 vendors and 1,000 attendees. Instead they saw double for both, with vendors and attendees coming from all over the East Coast and Midwest. And at the [next event in February 2024](#), while the vendor space cannot grow much beyond 100, Range said he anticipates 3,000 to 4,000 visitors as the Comic Con received an \$11,000 grant for marketing.

"With this new grant we'll be able to build on what we already have established and reach out farther than we had last year," Range said. "With the continued support of the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, our prime directive will be to explore new ways to engage attendees, seek out new vendors, celebrities and artists and boldly succeed where no con has gone before. With the bureau's help, this convention is going to make sure we live long and prosper."



[Centre LGBTQA Support Network](#) was among the first-time recipients, with a \$6,000 grant to market [State College Pride](#). The event has grown rapidly since the first edition was held in 2021, drawing more than 4,000 people in 2022, including a number of out-of-town visitors. Cat Cooke, executive director of the Centre LGBTQA Support Network, said,

That number is expected to continue growing with this year's Pride event on June 10. Cooke said at this time last year about 225 people had registered to participate in the Pride parade. More than 500 marchers — not including floats and vehicles — have already signed up for this year's parade.

"Not only is Pride a good event for the local economy, but it sends a clear message that Centre County is a diverse and inclusive place where LGBT+ folks and family are seen, heard and accepted," Cooke said. "This type of inclusivity benefits not only the LGBT+ community but all of us as a whole."

## Multi-Day & Group Travel

# Summary

Montgomery County is strategically positioned to leverage its diverse attractions, partnerships, and events for multi-day and group travel, creating engaging travel itineraries that intertwine educational, cultural, and recreational experiences, thereby enhancing the overall appeal of the county as a destination for extended stays and group visits.

## NEXT STEPS

**Collaborating with Virginia Tech:** Partnering with Virginia Tech to promote campus events, aligning local tourism initiatives with university activities to increase visitor engagement.

**Supporting Huckleberry Trail Events:** Identifying and promoting events along the Huckleberry Trail, working with local businesses to offer related services and experiences.

**Sports Center Event Engagement:** Coordinating with the Christiansburg Aquatic Center, Harkrader Sports Complex, and the Christiansburg Huckleberry Park to identify key competitions, and collaborating with local hospitality and tourism sectors for special packages and promotions.

**Cultural Event Promotion in Historic Areas:** Working with historical and cultural sites to identify and promote event schedules, and creating themed experiences around these events to enrich visitor stays.

## SECTION 02

# Stakeholder Interview Summaries

*Noteworthy themes our team distilled across multi-day stakeholder interviews, site visits, and on-the-ground observations.*

## RECAP

# Parks & Rec, Outdoors

## Extension of the Huckleberry Trail

Discussion centered on extending the trail to connect key recreational and urban areas, which would provide seamless access for residents and tourists.

## Use of Technology

The implementation of QR codes at the Aquatic Center was mentioned as a way to easily provide tourists and visitors with information on local attractions, enhancing their experience.

## Marketing Outdoor Assets

Emphasized the need to better promote existing trails and natural spaces as major draws for both tourism and local use, positioning them as key features of the region. This includes hosting like conferences to utilize assets, like coaches conferences or races / running clubs.

## Rental Offerings

Talked about increasing the lack of availability of recreational equipment like bikes and kayaks,

## RECAP

# Economic Development

## Transportation Infrastructure

Highlighted the critical role of improved roads and wayfinding systems in facilitating easier business operations and enhancing the tourist experience, which could help attract more businesses.

## Data System

Doesn't seem to be a consistency across universities or towns and the county on how visitor impact is tracked or utilized. If done properly this could give avenues for additional funding.

## Attraction of Conferences

The potential for local venues to host larger conferences was discussed, particularly leveraging the technological and educational resources of the area to attract national and international events.

## Business-Tourism Synergy

Explored the idea of using the region's business strengths, such as technology and manufacturing, to complement and enhance tourist attractions, creating a synergy that could lead to sustained economic growth.

## RECAP

# Universities

## Ambassadors for the Region

Prospective students and their parents are ripe to receive tips and information during tours, move-in, parents weekends, etc. about the region. This is not currently occurring consistently.

## Event Hosting

Discussed using university facilities to host events, which could draw visitors from outside the region and enhance the universities' roles as community centers.

## Community Engagement

Talked about the need for stronger partnerships between universities and the local community, which could leverage educational resources for mutual benefit.

## Innovation Showcases

The universities' capabilities, such as advanced technology labs and research centers, were highlighted as assets that could be showcased through public events and conferences.

## RECAP

# Towns & Transportation

## Trail and Bike Path Extensions

There was a focus on extending bike paths and trails to improve connectivity, which would support both tourism and local commuting.

## Public Transport Improvements

The need for enhanced public transport options, including buses and potential train services, was discussed to facilitate easier movement within and between the towns.

## Transport Hub Development

The potential development of new transport hubs, was highlighted as a way to improve regional accessibility and stimulate economic growth. This could be a bike / scooter / and/or car rental center.

## Alternative Transport Options

The introduction of modern transportation options such as scooters and bike rentals was discussed as a way to provide flexible and eco-friendly travel choices for residents and tourists. This is a gap in market.

SECTION 03

# Recommendations

# Important *Considerations*

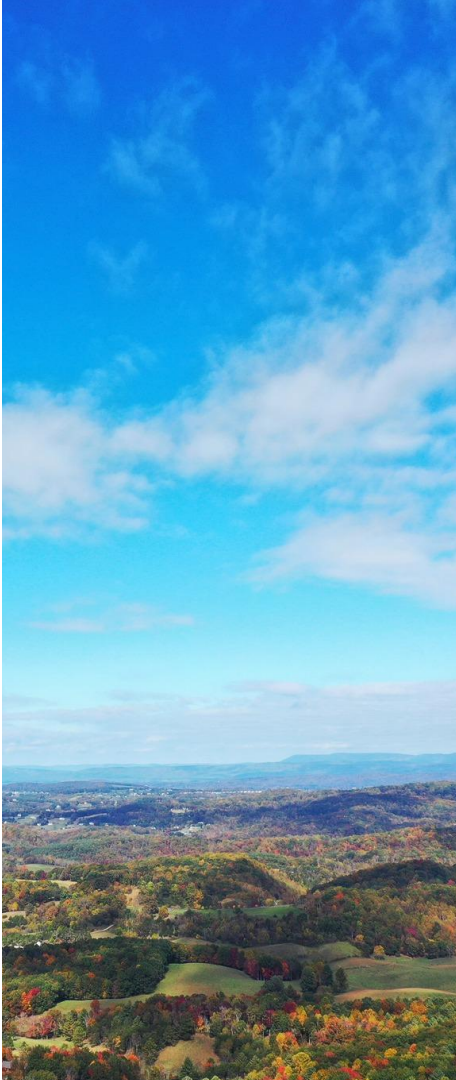
1. Funding sources
2. Collaboration across the County
3. How the region is/isn't poised to grow together
4. Universities as an anchor
5. Innovation is paramount - must be emphasized across the region



TIMELINE

**6-9 Months**

*Messaging & Marketing Shift*



## I. Messaging

The County's messaging needs to reflect a unified vision of the region. This begins with the 'base messaging'. This foundational messaging will serve as the core of the recommended website changes and marketing campaign.



# Foundational Pillars



## PILLAR 01

### Transportation & Connectivity

Getting to and getting around Montgomery County (road and recreational transportation).



## PILLAR 02

### Innovation & Technology Hub

Leading universities, drones, and growing tech companies, this region stands out with innovation.



## PILLAR 03

### Group Getaways

An excellent location for getaways – conferences, tournaments, and workshops.



#### VALUE PROPOSITION

## Blending Nature, Culture, and Innovation

Montgomery County offers a unique combination of natural beauty and recreational opportunities integrated with rich cultural heritage and strong educational and technological resources. This blend not only appeals to outdoor enthusiasts and cultural tourists but also business and academic communities, making it a versatile destination.

#### VISITOR PROFILE 1

## Cultural & Immersive Tourism

Active and cultural tourists who are drawn to outdoor recreational activities, historical sites, and cultural events. Additionally, the area aims to attract business and sports tourists through conferences and professional gatherings, leveraging local technological and educational institutions like Virginia Tech and Radford University.



## VISITOR PROFILE 2

# Sports Centric

The ideal sports-visitor, will include typical weekend tournaments, but will also include:

- 1. Extended Family Visitors**  
Emphasis on extending your stay and 'playing' in Montgomery County by eating, shopping and exploring.
- 2. Coaching and Professional Organization Meetings**  
To further the reputation of the region as sport-centric, there should be a concentration on week-day coaches meetings and retreats. This also acts as an additional way to provide exposure to available facilities and showcase offerings to visiting coaches.



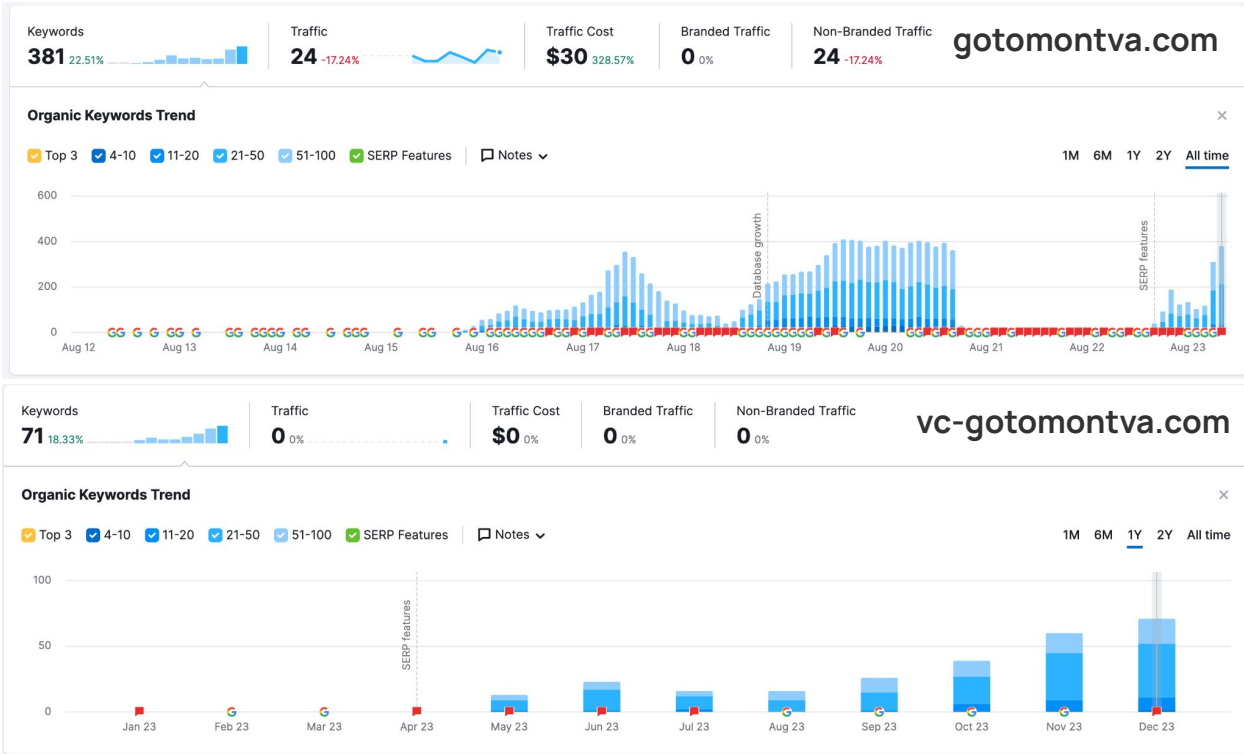
## II. Website URL Strategy

This section covers where the site 'lives' and what the correlate content of the website. These recommendations stem from best practices ensuring: **(1)** your site is as 'findable' as possible **(2)** displays the information most actively being searched, and **(3)** also emphasizes areas people may not know about yet because they haven't been marketed / aims to increase market awareness.

The considerations include ways to optimize - [gomontva.com](http://gomontva.com), [vc-gomontva.com](http://vc-gomontva.com) as the primary tourism sites, but we have also considered [stepintoblacksburg.com](http://stepintoblacksburg.com), and [downtownblacksburg.com](http://downtownblacksburg.com) / [downtownchristiansburg.org](http://downtownchristiansburg.org)



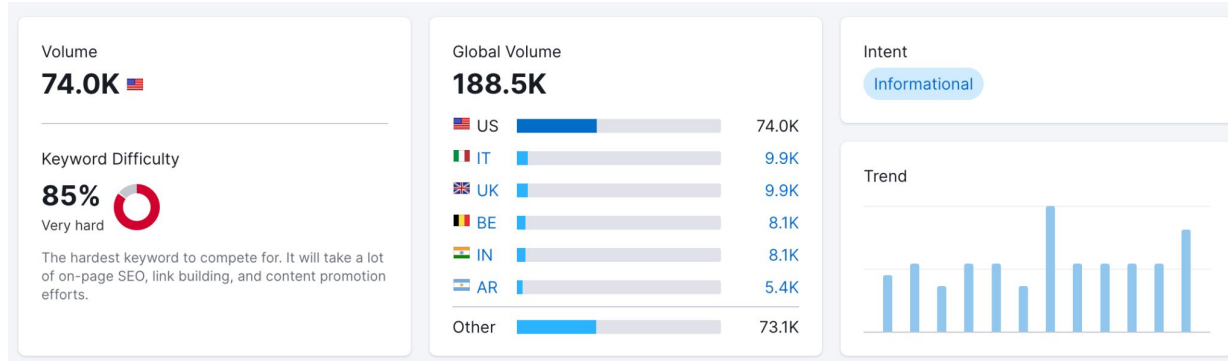
# Website Gateway



# Keyword *Research*

Centering SEO efforts on the keyword 'Blacksburg' & 'Christiansburg' will enhance visibility distinctively compared to broader Montgomery County terms, due to lower competition and greater ease in boosting search engine rankings.

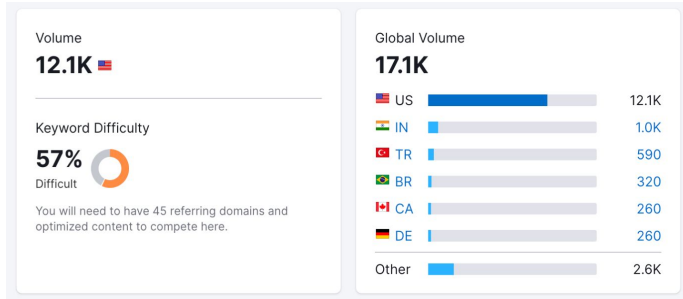
“Montgomery”



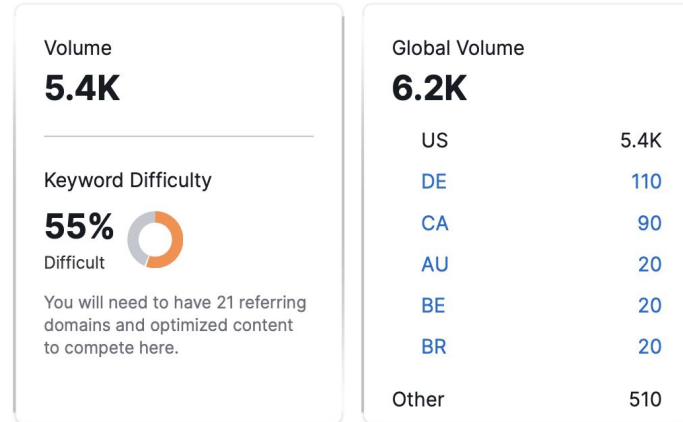
# Keyword Research

Centering SEO efforts on the keywords 'Blacksburg' and 'Christiansburg' will enhance visibility distinctively compared to broader Montgomery County terms, due to lower competition and greater ease in boosting search engine rankings.

## “Blacksburg”



## “Christiansburg”



# URL *Specific*

## URL Strategy

The website is your first gateway for visitors - where it lives has long term impacts on 'search' for the region as well as brand recognition. Our approach recognizes the data story and search optimization while also emphasizing the need to continue to promote sports tourism as an important tourism driver.

Based on this, we are recommending the following

1. **Primary - VisitBlacksburgChristiansburg.com / org** (acquired)  
This will act as the main URL, capturing search traffic and the 'typical' or general traveler to both towns.
2. **Town Gateways (Future Facing)**  
The following URLs could be acquired for future use as individual campaign landing pages / sites that would attract potential visitors based on respective affinity groups.
  - a. **StepIntoBlacksburg.org** (possible partnership)
  - b. **PlayInChristiansburg.org / com** (acquired)
    - i. Also acquired: PlayChristiansburg.org / com

# Content *Specific*

## Overview

There is also a recommended project around the immediate overhaul of content on the website to reflect these learnings.

## Recommendations by Pillar

- 1. Getting Here & Getting Around Section**
- 2. New Discovery & Innovation Section + Coming for School Visit / Tour (What to Know Before You Go)** - give schools this same messaging to align around what's offered in the region so it matches the website
- 3. Build Out Group Trips / Travel Concierge**  
New sections to website to emphasize travel planners for group business trips.



### III. Marketing Campaign

Once the new URL and content is established, it's clear a paid marketing campaign utilize Google Ads, as well as Meta (Facebook and Instagram) is necessary to compete in the crowded marketplace and will be an avenue to associate keywords and images with the region specifically around newly packaged assets.



# Content *Assets*

In addition to united messaging, the most important next step is to package existing assets as one experience throughout the County.

## This includes:

1. **EV Charging Stations:** Infrastructure that provides power for charging electric vehicles.
2. **Trails:** Designated routes for outdoor activities like hiking, biking, and walking.
3. **Art Walks:** Organized events where participants explore galleries and street art in a specific area.
4. **Bike Rentals:** Outlets that rent out bicycles suited for road cycling or mountain biking.
5. **Car Rentals:** Businesses that lease automobiles for short-term use, including limo and suburbans.
6. **Sporting Facilities:** (This has been largely conducted by Huddle Up, but we'd want to ensure it's integrated throughout.)

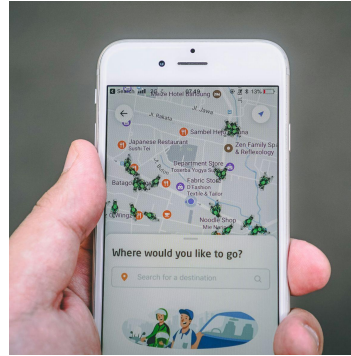
## Each of these needs:

1. **Descriptors / Storytelling:** This technique delves into the 'why' and 'how' behind an offering, engaging visitors through compelling narratives that highlight its benefits and uniqueness.
2. **Mapping:** In tourism marketing, mapping involves identifying the visitor journey or market landscape, pinpointing where visitors interact with your offering and how they move towards an experience.
3. **Packaging:** This refers to strategically bundling offerings to enhance appeal and simplify adoption for visitors, often tailoring combinations to meet specific needs or preferences.

# Transportation & Connectivity

## MESSAGING

1. We're excited about the upcoming enhancements to our transportation network, including expanded bike trails and improved public transit, which will make exploring our beautiful region even easier and more enjoyable for you.
2. With new projects like the addition of a train station and increased shuttle services, you'll find our community more accessible than ever, ensuring a seamless and enriching travel experience during your stay . . .



# Innovation & Technology Hub

## MESSAGING

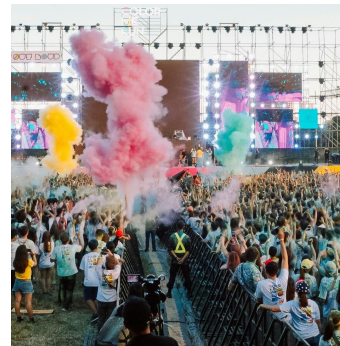
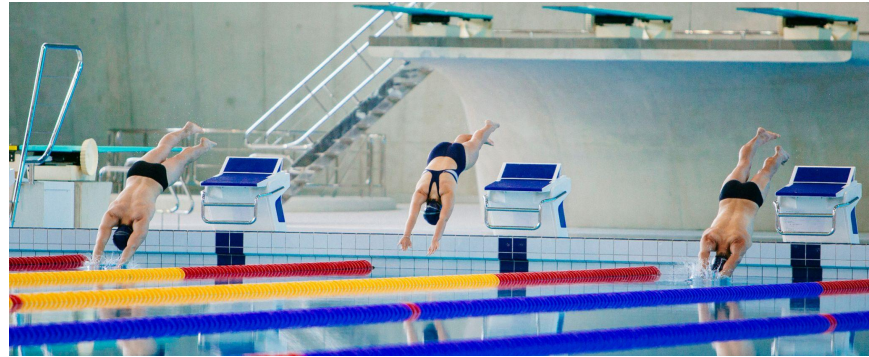
1. Our region is at the forefront of cutting-edge technology, with thriving tech hubs and innovative companies that are shaping the future right here, providing a unique glimpse into the advancements that are driving our community forward.
2. You'll find that our local universities and businesses are collaborating on some truly pioneering projects, from sustainable technologies to drone delivery, making your visit not just enjoyable but also inspiring . .



# Group Getaways

## MESSAGING

1. Our region offers an ideal backdrop for group getaways, competitions, tournaments and corporate retreats, with a blend of scenic beauty, modern facilities, and a peaceful environment that encourages both relaxation and creative thinking.
2. With a variety of activities from outdoor adventures to cultural experiences, coupled with our top-notch conference spaces and accommodations, your group can look forward to a productive and memorable retreat that combines work, play, and rejuvenation seamlessly.



# Outcomes

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- 1. Unclear Transit & Recreational Infrastructure**
  - 2. County & Town Identities Fragmented**
  - 3. Opportunity for Universities to Grow External Collaboration**
  - 4. Lack of Marketed Differentiators**
- 1. Integrated Transit and Recreational Experience**  
Enhanced infrastructure clarity by integrating EV charging stations, trails, and bike rentals (both road and mountain bikes) into a seamless transit and recreation network, promoting accessibility and enjoyment throughout the County.
  - 2. Cohesive County and Town Branding**  
Fostered a unified identity across the County and towns, showcasing their unique characteristics through coordinated art walks and car rental services that encourage exploration and cultural engagement.
  - 3. Strengthened University Collaborations**  
Expanded opportunities for universities to engage in external collaborations, leveraging local assets and cultural programs to enhance educational and community initiatives.
  - 4. Distinguished Market Presence**  
Successfully established and marketed unique differentiators, packaging the County's diverse offerings into one comprehensive experience, enhancing its appeal to both residents and visitors.

# Next Steps Recommendations

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While our original charge was to map marketing recommendations, our research also success the immediate need for a strategic plan based on these categories:

## 1. **Two Years - *Including Activation Plan for 250th***

2026 is a major catalyst and opportunity year for Montgomery County. An activation plan should be inplace specific to tourism to stand up new offerings and events that can carry on into the future. This can also includes aspects like:

- How to partner with Virginia Tech and Radford University in 2026
- How to weave the anniversary into existing festivals and events and stand-up a signature event
- How this coincides with America's 250th

## 2. **Four Years + - *Including Passenger Rail Readiness***

There is also continued work towards regional alignment through aspects like:

- Beautification projects for town and area placemaking
- Consideration of the train station arrival experience
- Strong recommendation toward an additional conference center / conference hotel (this is currently holding back large-scale group travel / conferences)

**CURE**

**CURE, Inc.**

418 East Main St.

Richmond, VA 23219



**Call Us**

(804) 409-6076



**Email Us**

hello@CUREagency.com



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# URL *Specific*

## New Dual URL Strategy

The website is your first gateway for visitors - where it lives has long term impacts on 'search' for the region as well as brand recognition. Our approach recognizes the data story and search optimization while also emphasizing the need to continue to promote sports tourism as an important tourism driver.

Based on this, we are recommending a creative website solution:

**1. Gateway 1 - VisitBlacksburg.com**

This will act as the main URL, capturing search traffic and the 'typical' or general traveler. However it will also host a clear callout to sports tourism which if clicked will refresh the site into PlayChristiansburg.com

**2. Gateway 2- PlayChristiansburg.com**

In the same way, playchristiansburg.com will have a callout for visitblacksburg.com and both sites will bolster eachother's traffic.

*PlayChristiansburg.com, PlayChristiansburg.org, PlayinChristiansburg.com, PlayinChristiansburg.org have all been reserved. If PlayChristiansburg.com is the primary, we still recommend owning and routing these other URLs.*