

APPALACHIAN HEARTLAND INITIATIVE

WV 152 TOURISM CORRIDOR STRATEGIC MARKETING & ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY STUDY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Major cities within a 250 mile radius from Huntington

STIMULATING THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE APPALACHIAN HEARTLAND REGION



FOR THE:

REGION 2 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

400 Third Avenue • Huntington, WV 25701

www.region2pdc.org

FUNDED BY:

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

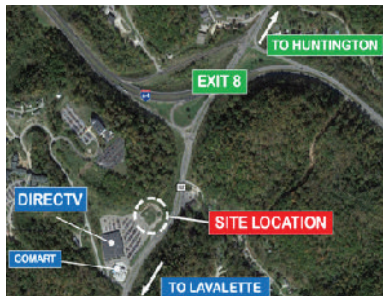
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THE HIGH CONCEPT

UPGRADING WV GATEWAY WELCOME CENTERS
A KEY WV TOURISM OFFICE PRODUCT-DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A recent transportation study identified this interchange as an excellent location for a welcome center accessible to both directions. The proposed site is only 8 miles from the Kentucky and Ohio borders and is the WV152 gateway to Appalachian Heartland's outdoor attractions and Huntington's urban fun and Marshall University's youth population. Nearly 16 million vehicles per year (43,500/day) pass by the I-64 Exit 8 interchange.



Exit 8: a pristine gateway to regional tourism



I-64: A vital American highway from Missouri to Virginia

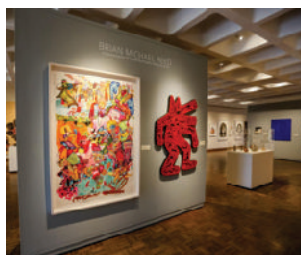
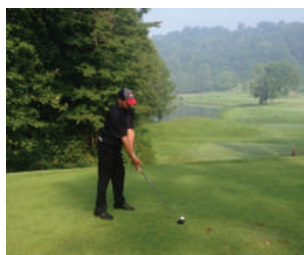
WELCOME CENTER REGIONAL PROMOTION

Welcome Centers establish a consumer's first impression of a state by providing personalized engagement to create an important "sense of place" depth that will enhance the visitor's experience. Welcome Center educational and entertainment interaction influence increased spending, extended stays, route selection, attractions visited, and future return trips.

Extensive stakeholder engagement revealed embracing a "100% Appalachia" theme to be reflected in the **Gateway to Appalachia Welcome Center** design and branding concepts. Design input focused on highlighting the state's rural tranquility, friendliness, resilience, and innovation. The retro-modern barn design yields brand connectivity with the hundreds of scenic barns throughout West Virginia. The center's north frontage facing I-64 provides excellent signage and building visibility to the Exit 8 interchange.

THE DIVERSE WV152 TOURISM CORRIDOR ATTRactions IN THE APPALACHIAN HEARTLAND REGION

The Gateway to Appalachian, Something for Everyone



REGIONAL TOURISM IMPACT

PROJECTED \$130M ANNUALLY IN
ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION BY 2025

WV152 NEW ATTRACTIONS ECONOMIC IMPACT (2021-2025)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Existing Attractions (+3%/yr)	\$52,500,000	\$54,100,000	\$55,700,000	\$57,400,000	\$59,100,000
Hatfield McCoy Trails Cabwaylingo	\$2,880,000	\$3,360,000	\$3,360,000	\$3,360,000	\$3,360,000
Heritage Farm Village Expansion	\$400,000	\$448,000	\$520,000	\$544,000	\$575,000
14th Street W Investment	\$200,000	\$400,000	\$800,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000
Heritage Farm Adventure Park		\$1,121,000	\$2,266,500	\$2,730,000	\$3,117,000
Hatfield McCoy Trails East Lynn			\$1,920,000	\$3,360,000	\$3,360,000
Beech Fork Lake Lodge				\$2,400,000	\$3,040,000
Welcome Center (+10%)			\$6,456,650	\$7,079,400	\$7,405,200
TOTAL DIRECT SPENDING	\$55,980,000	\$59,429,000	\$71,023,150	\$77,873,400	\$81,457,200
Indirect Induced Multiplier (1.60)	\$33,588,000	\$35,657,400	\$42,613,890	\$46,724,040	\$48,874,320
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT	\$89,568,000	\$95,086,400	\$113,637,040	\$124,597,440	\$130,331,520

WV152's existing tourism attractions are projected to grow at a modest rate of 3% annually. However, new tourism attractions in the development stages are expected to contribute substantially in the coming years. By 2025 total economic impact is projected to reach over \$130m. An important element to furthering this success is the addition of the **Gateway to Appalachia Welcome Center** which is modestly projected to increase WV152 corridor visitation and spending by 10% annually. Total WV152 visitor spending when aggregated for all 5 years from 2021 to 2025 is projected to exceed \$554 million. New construction of WV152's top tourism projects is projected to yield \$56m in total economic impact to the region.



What Will The Welcome Center Cost? The proposed Exit 8 parcel is a fantastic location for the Gateway to Appalachia Welcome Center, however the parcel will need an acre of earthwork expansion to position the building at the highly-visible northern apex. The shell buildout is expected to reach \$6.2m, while interior elements approximate \$900k.

Recommended Key Visitor Engagement Features Include: information kiosks, climbing wall, electronic guestbook, outdoor simulations, wayfinding maps, artwork & artifacts historical journey, WiFi workspace, performance stage, playground, picnic areas, sculpture garden, hiking path and doggy trails.

ESTIMATED WELCOME CENTER DEVELOPMENT COSTS

CONSTRUCTION	\$3,375,000
SITE DEVELOPMENT	\$1,550,000
UTILITIES	\$120,000
SOFT COSTS	\$1,150,000
SUBTOTAL	\$6,195,000

Source: The Thrasher Group

ESTIMATED WELCOME CENTER INTERIOR COSTS



FF&E / KIOSKS / EXHIBITS

\$915,000

Source: The Thrasher Group

BECOMING THE GATEWAY TO APPALACHIA

WELCOME CENTER TO SUPPORT A CRITICAL MASS OF NEW REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The **Gateway to Appalachia Welcome Center** is essential to furthering the economic momentum that is building for tourism investment along the WV152 tourism corridor with the goal of reaching 750,000 visitors by 2025, a 7% annual growth rate.

WV152 MARKET DRIVERS - ESTIMATED VISITORS 2021-2025		
	2021 VISITORS	2025 VISITORS
BEECH FORK LAKE STATE PARK	220,000	240,000
CABWAYLINGO STATE FOREST	110,000	140,000
HUNTINGTON MUSEUM OF ART	55,000	70,000
HERITAGE FARM ADVENTURE PK	30,000	65,000
HERITAGE FARM & VILLAGE	45,000	58,500
CENTRAL CITY CULTURAL DISTRICT	30,000	50,000
EAST LYNN LAKE CAMPGROUND	26,000	40,000
BEECH FORK LAKE LODGE		30,000
BEECH FORK LAKE MARINA	19,500	25,000
BEECH FORK LAKE BEACH	10,000	20,000
LAVALETTE GOLF COURSES	15,000	19,500
HAT-McCOY TRAILS CABWAYLINGO	3,000	7,500
HAT-McCOY TRAILS EAST LYNN		6,500
RUSTIC RAVINES	1,500	3,000
TOTAL	565,000	775,000
	5 YR GROWTH	37%
	ANNUAL GROWTH	7%

NEW ATTRACTIONS: At the southern end of WV152, the extremely popular **Hatfield McCoy Trail System** will be opening new off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails in the Cabwaylingo State Forest in 2020 which will attract over \$3m annually in visitor spending. This popular attraction will stimulate entrepreneurial opportunity in cabin resorts, RV parks, homestays, nature tours, food and services. This potential may double with trail system expansion to East Lynn Lake now under concept development. Combined, both trail systems could contribute over \$6 million in annual visitor spending.

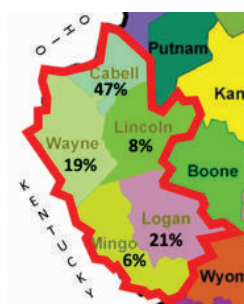
Centrally located on WV152, the 70-room **Beech Fork Lake Lodge & Conference Center** - now under feasibility consideration - will become much more viable with more nearby attractions collectively promoted by the Huntington Area CVB and a new Welcome Center that can also be an essential booking agent directing transit visitors to the lodge. This proposed hotel and beautiful lakeside facilities are projected to earn over \$3m annually and could provide centralized WV152 corridor lodging, dining & recreational opportunities that are easily accessible to I-64 and downtown Huntington.

To the north near I-64, the **Heritage Farm Mill Creek Adventure Park** will soon begin their \$5 million project providing WV mountain excitement (water slides, pools, indoor & outdoor adventure activities, food outlets, shops) to capture highway travelers with a few hours to spare and encouraging multi-day visitation of WV152 attractions. Heritage Farm's expansion includes a tree-canopy ropes challenge, a nature interpretive center, and a wildlife park. A planned new access road connecting the Heritage Farm attractions directly to WV152 will create an Appalachian-themed retail/dining commercial corridor on WV152 near the Welcome Center.

Downtown Huntington and the 14th Street W **Cultural District** are the corridor's northern anchor. 14th Street W is currently under a major redevelopment and branding initiative to become the tri-state arts, shopping, food, entertainment and entrepreneurial hub projected to attract 50,000 visitors annually and destined to become the nightlife, farmers' market and street-festival hub of Appalachian Heartland counties connecting the WV152 corridor to the Ohio River.

Regional Tourism Impact

The 5-county WV western gateway – Cabell, Wayne, Logan, Lincoln & Mingo – earns over \$250m annually in visitor spending. Regional promotion will be a key priority for the Welcome Center promoting multi-day visits to a growing menu of urban and rural outdoor, tourism opportunities.



Primary Market Within 3 Hrs

Nearly 7 million people (some 2.65 million households) live within a 3-hour drive of the Appalachian Heartland region and represent an estimated 70-80% of the nonresident demand outside the tri-state metro area for the WV152 tourism corridor attractions.

