EXPLORE PARK
Fulfilling the Community’s Vision
VEDA
March 12, 2020
EXPLORE PARK HISTORY
VIRGINIA RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AUTHORITY

1985: VRFA Chartered, land acquisition through River Foundation

1987: First Master Plan, proposing $349 million in development over 30 years

1991: Construction begins on historical buildings

1994: Explore Park opens as living history museum

2001: Virginia reduces park’s funding
EXPLORE PARK HISTORY
VIRGINIA RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AUTHORITY

PARK CLOSED IN 2007

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RIGHT PLACE / RIGHT TIME

**Local Benefits** – Explore Park is designed to meet the needs of our residents, based on survey data

**Tourism Benefits** – Aligns with VBR goals and fills missing niche

**Economic Development** – Builds on success of Regional Partnership, attracts young professionals while improving business climate
ADVENTURE PLAN
FULFILLING THE COMMUNITY’S VISION

Oct. 2013: Roanoke County accepts 99 year lease with VRFA

Apr. 2014: Explore Park re-opens as passive recreation facility

Jul. 2015: Adventure plan process begins

Fall / Winter 2015: Community meetings and public survey process

Aug. 2016: Adventure plan adopted by BOS
ADVENTURE PLAN
FULFILLING THE COMMUNITY’S VISION

• Community Feedback
  4 Public Meetings, 12 Stakeholder Meetings, 1,137 Survey Responses

• Adventure Plan Document
  Long Term Strategy, Maps, Recommended Amenities

• Business Plan
  Outlines Staffing, Funding, Management Practices

• Phasing Report
  Timeline for 20-Years of Development

• Special Places Inventory
  Tells the Cultural, Environmental, and Geological Story of Explore Park

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Riverside Village

*As shown in Phase 5 - projected year 15*
STARTING SMALL
COMMUNITY BUY-IN THROUGH ACTION

- Passive Recreation Programming
  Bringing a Park Back to Life
- Mayflower Hills Disc Golf
  Partnership with Roanoke Disc Golf Club
- National Park Service
  Ranger Programs Brought to the Park Seasonally
- Blue Ridge Outdoor Cyclists
  Forging Relationships with Local Influencers
- Friends of Rivers of VA
  Expansion of Blueways System and Opening of a New Park
REQUESTS FOR PROPOSAL
INCENTIVISING INVESTMENT

• Competitive process: RFIs and RFPs

• Engaging the experts
  ✓ Virginia Tourism Corporation
  ✓ Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
  ✓ Roanoke County Economic Development Authority
  ✓ Roanoke County Economic Development Office
  ✓ Roanoke Regional Partnership

• Economic Development Incentives
  ✓ Infrastructure
  ✓ Utilities
  ✓ Direct financial incentives
  ✓ Discounted leases

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CAMPING & CABINS
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

WHERE ADVENTURE BEGINS  •  ExplorePark.org
CAMPING & TUBING
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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EQUESTRIAN SERVICES
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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TWIN CREEKS BREWING
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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TREETOP QUEST
A SIGNATURE ATTRACTION

WHERE ADVENTURE BEGINS • ExplorePark.org
TREETOP QUEST
A SIGNATURE ATTRACTION

• Opened July 1, 2019
• 8,052 Visitors in 2019
• $174,654 gross revenue during shortened operating season
LARGE EVENTS
A NEW HOLIDAY TRADITION

- Three years of planning
- Partnership with non-profit
- 26 Operating Days
- 43,097 total admission
- $430,000 net revenue
TRAILS & GREENWAYS
FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Priority #1: Rec Trails Grant for $400,000 to rehabilitate mountain bike trails and build new trailhead and 1 mile of circulation trail
Priority #2: Competition pump track
NEXT STEPS
WHERE WE’RE HEADED

- Growth in partnerships
- Continued expansion of cost recovery programs
- Park infrastructure
- Transform the facility from weekend based to week-long
- Land acquisition
- Development of Bedford County parcel
- Direct connection from Blue Ridge Parkway
- Roanoke River Greenway connection
- Rutrough Point Development for SML
Questions?