



# ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

*A Pathway to Prosperity*



Source: *The Logan Banner*, November 8 2017, provided by [The Hub](#)

[LINK](#)

## BCCEDC sees business opportunities in county, *by Phil Perry*



*Boone County*  
Community & Economic Development Corp.

MADISON - A Boone County based nonprofit organization sees opportunities for development and growth throughout Boone County.

Kris Mitchell, who serves as the director for the Boone County Community & Economic Development Corporation believes that creative thinking and the ability of county citizens to see their true value is just a start in creating a new landscape for economic growth.

"We do have people in this community who are willing to look forward and are open to new ideas," she said. "People here deserve more."

Mitchell isn't an outsider by any stretch of the imagination; the 1991 Scott High graduate makes her home with her family in Morrisvale.

"Thermal coal was fading out so much," she said. "We'll always have a need for coal in a limited capacity as long we have a need for steel. I hate to see what has happened to our communities. We need to come up with other options and we need to diversify and we need other things for people to do."

What the BCCEDC does is offer assistance to existing business owners and to those who look to start a business in Boone County. They offer coaching and advice on a multitude of topics including paperwork, taxes and marketing. They can even help you scout out a location for a new business. For approved individuals, micro loans are available.

"There is the potential for things here that I think are easily overlooked," Mitchell said. "Coal miners are good with their hands. They are good at fixing things. They can fix your car, fix your faucets and rebuild your ATV because he has done it all for himself. People here don't always see that as a marketable skill, but it is."



Mitchell said that the prospect of becoming a business owner - taking full responsibility of the future and not working for someone else - is naturally terrifying. But it can be done, and she points to two new successful restaurants in the area as success stories.

Ma and Pa's BBQ and K's Cafe have found their clientele and are growing and, according to Mitchell, are good examples of entrepreneurship.

While new business is good, some struggling small towns find their vacant storefronts filled with used clothing and consignment shops, which aren't traditionally big revenue pulls for the city, county (taxes) or the business owner.

"We definitely need shops like that, too, but we really need a healthy mix of new restaurants and other retail," she said. "I believe our future economy will be a mixture of things, which is healthy. Tourism will play a role, but I don't see it as our saving grace. The Hatfield-McCoy Trail System will be a help and could have a \$1 million impact on an area."

Mitchell mentions that a riverside restaurant in Madison with multiple levels that offers live music would be an amazing addition.

"I'm going to go kayaking for the day and I can call ahead and someone can come down, I'll give them money and they can give me a bag of food." she said. "I think it could work very well. I think the river is a component of future growth for the county."

BCCEDC has been working with a group to develop a cross country trail in west Madison near Scott High School. Part of the trail - with the blessing of the Boone County Board of Education - is on Scott High School property. The trail will also be used by the middle and high school cross country teams. One citizen deeded a piece of property for use in the project. The trail will be accessible to the public.

In reference to downtown Madison and Danville, Mitchell sees small businesses making up the lion's share of those available storefronts due to space constraints.

One issue that cities and towns throughout the county are dealing with is vacant and neglected properties. Sometimes potential renters for these storefronts are met with the obstacle of not meeting codes for electricity and sewer, among other issues. Land owners aren't always willing to accommodate and some don't want the space to be leased and the property is neglected.

Mitchell estimates that between Madison, Danville and Whitesville, about 60 properties fall into this category, perhaps even more.

The need for a dry cleaner in the Madison area and a small bakery and butcher shop are business ideas that the director believes would be winners along with more ATV-related service shops and ATV towing services for the Hatfield-McCoy Trail.

Mitchell said that Whitesville does a good job of keeping the town clean, but that they have many problems with neglected structures.

Wayne and Sandy Hubbard have had a silk screen and embroidery business for several years called Bad Dog Graphics. They moved their business into a building they lease in Whitesville that has approximately 9,500 square feet of space with two floors and a basement. They lease the space that they aren't using to other small businesses that include Mountaineer Electronics, Bev's Country Closet and Beach Bum Tanning, among others. The owner of the building has reinvested in it and recently added a new roof.

"Unlike many small towns in West Virginia, they (town of Whitesville) have been taking that on and are engaging their property owners in a positive way," Mitchell said. "They could use some small restaurants and they could be tapping into the fishing (culture) that exists there. I think that if Whitesville had more of a selection, they would draw more business from outside the town. Beckley is a long way for people who live on that Raleigh County line. Why not shop in Whitesville?"

For help with starting a business in Boone County or developing a business idea, call Boone County Community & Economic Development Corporation at 304-369-9118 or visit [boonecountywv.org](http://boonecountywv.org).

