

# TRAMMEL COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROJECT

by People Incorporated

Region 3 • Abingdon, Virginia  
peopleinc.net



## Housing • Community Revitalization • Rural

### INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

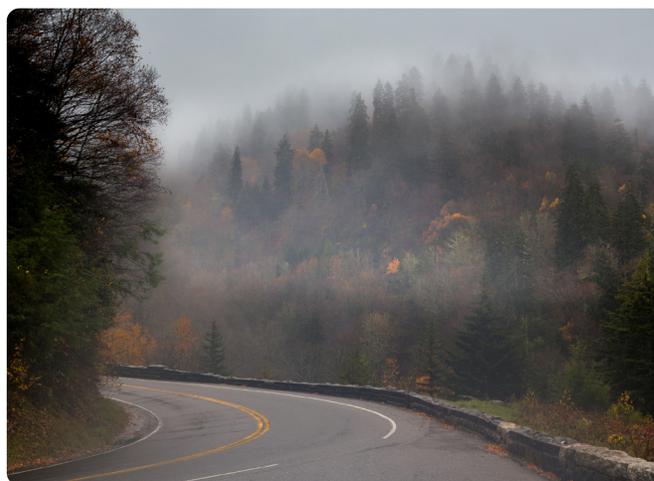
In 2015, a member of the Dickenson County Board of Supervisors approached People Incorporated about revitalizing the community of Trammel in Dickenson County, VA. People Incorporated has actively served Dickenson County since the late 1980s.

Trammel is one of the earliest “coal camp” communities in the Appalachian Mountains of southwestern Virginia. In 1918, Trammel had more than 100 homes used exclusively by the employees of the Virginia Banner Coal Corporation. Today it is still home to multiple generations (often sharing the same small dwelling) of nearly forty families. Most families are descendents of the original miner-families who first built and populated the town.

The Trammel community is a far cry from the booming, bustling coal town that it once was. Due to the boom and bust nature of the coal industry and a host of other socioeconomic factors, Trammel is now checkered by owner-occupied, century-old substandard dwellings interspersed with severely blighted and burned out properties that are both a serious safety hazard and a visual detriment to the community, and to Dickenson County as a whole.

The impact that the condition of the Trammel community has on local economic development efforts cannot be overstated. The community lies along one of the main thoroughfares and is a gateway into the county as you travel from the southeast.

Dickenson County is currently engaged in broader regional initiatives designed to promote the region as



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a tourism and outdoor recreation area. The dilapidated, poverty-stricken, and blighted nature of Trammel is a significant barrier to achieving the county’s broader economic goals.

Improving the community increases the substandard living conditions and visible poverty and impacts community economic development.

People Incorporated began working with Dickenson County and Trammel residents to develop a comprehensive, multi-phased redevelopment plan to revitalize the community.

## LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

In 2016, People Incorporated assisted Dickenson County to apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) planning grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia. People Incorporated helped the County to navigate the CDBG funding process, wrote the grant application, and was eventually selected by the County to serve as the grant administrator and technical assistance provider for the planning grant initiative.

The CDBG planning grant provided some initial resources to clearly identify the local community's needs and to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing them. Through this process, People Incorporated completed the following tasks:

- **Conducted extensive surveys** to identify housing and infrastructure needs related to individual homeowner properties and the community as a whole;
- **Determined income eligibility** of residents for potential grant assistance;
- **Completed a community infrastructure assessment** to determine improvement and repair needs for community shared facilities (e.g. sidewalks, drainage, roadways, etc.);
- **Conducted detailed in-home inspections of households** requiring rehabilitation work or substantial reconstruction needs to bring dwellings up to HUD Housing Quality Standards, including preparing detailed cost estimates for proposed improvements;
- **Carried out a thorough site assessment and examination**, including on-site inspections and asbestos testing, researching property titles and histories, and documenting all public hazards and blighted properties in the community;
- **Held monthly community meetings** to solicit input and involvement from residents regarding the results of work performed to develop community consensus regarding a plan of action and next steps; and
- **Developed a comprehensive community vision, plan and draft budget** to address all of the identified needs.

Through this process, People Incorporated collected volumes of data related to the current status and level of need in Trammel, specifically:

- There are 38 habitable homes in the Trammel community; 35 are the original minimalist 5-room dwellings built to accommodate mine workers 100 years ago.
- None of the dwellings had indoor plumbing until 1992 when public water and sewer was made available to the community via an infrastructure development grant.
- 35 of the dwellings are currently occupied; 3 are vacant.
- 30 of the 35 households (86%) had Low-to-Moderate Incomes (LMI), of which 21 (60%) are very low or extremely low income.
- 21 dwellings were occupied by elderly households.
- 100% of the housing units failed to meet HUD Housing Quality Standards.
- 17 properties are severely blighted, burned out or collapsing/partially collapsed structures.

## ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

CSBG funds played a crucial role in providing resources for the initial planning and launch of the Trammel project. In 2015, People Incorporated created a new staff position, Strategic Projects Manager, to specifically work on long-term projects that require significant amounts of dedicated staff time to research, plan, implement, and oversee. Funded solely with CSBG, the Trammel project was among a group of several initiatives that were assigned to the Strategic Projects Manager. The CDBG planning and Community Improvement Grants obtained to support the Trammel project enabled People Incorporated to transition the Strategic Projects Manager from being solely CSBG funded in 2018, but CSBG resources were vital to enabling the agency to acquire and build the capacity to develop the project.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

Based on the data obtained during the planning phase of the project, People Incorporated assisted Dickenson County in obtaining a \$1,000,000 CDBG

Community Improvement Grant to undertake the first phase of a multi-year, multi-phase project designed to revitalize and transform the Trammel community. Due to the size and scope of the project, the project planning team chose to take a phased redevelopment approach.

The first phase of improvement is focused on a subset of the community and comprises 34 total properties. Twelve of the properties will be either fully rehabilitated and brought up to HUD Housing Quality Standards or substantially reconstructed, and 13 blighted properties will be razed and removed. The other properties included in this phase of the project are either occupied by households that exceed income guidelines or that do not wish to participate in the initiative, or will be improved by other means.

People Incorporated expects that work will be ongoing in Trammel for the next 4-5 years. Upon completion, we envision that the entire project will:

- Improve the initial impression of Dickenson County via the dramatic revitalization of its gateway community, thereby supporting ongoing efforts to develop the tourism industry within the county.
- Improve the living conditions for at least 38 low to moderate income individuals, the majority of which are elderly, by either rehabilitating or substantially reconstructing 25 existing housing units.
- Improve public safety and community beauty via the removal of 17 blighted properties.
- Restore, repair, and improve public sidewalks



and the general streetscape within the community.

- Result in the development of dedicated green spaces and new amenities to promote community well-being.

Construction activities on the properties included in the first phase of redevelopment was scheduled to begin by the end of August 2020.

## EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

The project is clearly driven by both individual and community-level data that have been utilized to develop a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the Trammel community.

## EQUITY LENS

Trammel, like most of southwestern Virginia, is not racially diverse. All of the residents that will be impacted by the project are White (non-Hispanic), which is not uncommon in a county where 98% of the population is Caucasian. There is, however, a strong sense of the need for social equity associated with the project.

As described earlier, part of the impetus for the project stemmed from a request for assistance from a local board of supervisors member. While there are certainly broader economic objectives to be accomplished via the project, local residents had been very vocal in urging the supervisor to get them some help to address the needs within their community. What started off as a conversation focused on getting a bathroom constructed at the community playground has evolved into the community-wide redevelopment effort that People Incorporated is leading today.

For a community that has clearly been left behind to deal alone with concentrated, persistent poverty; limited access to basic goods and services (residents have to drive 30-45 minutes to neighboring towns for necessities); crumbling infrastructure; and social ridicule and isolation, the prospect of rebuilding the community where they have raised their families and care so deeply about has been long overdue.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

From the outset, People Incorporated has sought to provide opportunities for local residents to lead the charge when making decisions about their community. People Incorporated established a local management team during the CDBG planning grant phase as the first step in engaging the local community in the project. During this period, local residents participated in visioning exercises, recruited other residents to the meetings, and were essential in identifying the scope, type, and methods of assistance that are priorities for the community.

As the project has emerged from the planning stages, People Incorporated proceeded with establishing two additional, resident-led committees to oversee the project. A Housing Rehab Board has been established to inform and make approval decisions on the provision of housing rehabilitation services for individual homeowner properties as part of the project, and a Grant Management Team has been established to provide general oversight and direction for the project as a whole. The majority of the decision-making membership on both of these committees consists of current residents of the Trammel community.



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