

Town of Boonville

Profile

Sitting in the Appalachian foothills, Boonville is named for one of the most well known figures to have passed through the area, Daniel Boone. Its population is a mere 1,122, but many more call it home. Ten thousand people turned out for its inaugural homecoming – a Heritage Days Festival held in 1995 to commemorate the town's centennial. The festival has since become an annual event.

This Yadkin County area once boasted a strong economy based on tobacco and textiles. Boonville's business district hummed with activity. Today, the number of farms has declined by half, the textile jobs have vanished, and downtown Boonville looks desolate. How to replace those jobs is the central question for Boonville and the 5,000 or so people who live in surrounding communities. One solution may be growing in those former tobacco fields. More than 20 vineyards can now be found within a 20-mile radius of Boonville.

While economic vigor may have flagged, civic life remains strong. The Friends of the Boonville Library pushed to establish a library, opening it in 1997 with less than 300 square feet on the back porch of the town hall. The supporters then raised money for new quarters with more than 3,000 square feet. The volunteer fire department and first responders have more than 40 members, and the local recreation league – playing without benefit of town-owned recreation facilities – enrolls more than 600 youngsters.

Community issues

As the tobacco and textile industries dwindled, so did Boonville. Much of the central business district today is boarded up or abandoned. There is nothing to attract visitors and little even for residents: no entertainment venues, no swimming pool, no tennis court, no recreation center or playground other than the schoolyard. Residents often must drive 30 miles or more for routine shopping or medical care. Revitalization likely will have to start with the most basic services. The aged water and sewer systems need upgrades, including a new water supply.

Opportunities

With NC STEP, Boonville wants to address an old shortcoming: failure to plan for change. As it seeks fresh ideas for economic growth, it hopes to become a tourism destination by building on the area's booming viticulture industry and partnering with such nearby communities as Historic Rockford. Potential also can be found in the movement for sustainable agriculture. As much as anything else, Boonville plans to invest in its people, involving them in developing plans and training them to provide leadership into the future.

Contact

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