

Tourism Masterplan Proceeding

May 5, 2020 Update

In January, Red River Economic Development, LLC (RRED) signed a \$769,000 contract with the international consulting firm, Stantec, to produce a masterplan for a destination resort at the Red River Gorge and a related tourism development plan for the four-county region (Powell, Wolfe, Lee and Menifee Counties) that surrounds the Gorge. Although RRED is not subject to Kentucky's Open Meetings law, a public meeting was held in Stanton, KY to approve the contract and to listen to local concerns about the proposed project.

The planning process is moving forward with tourism market research, analysis of available properties and financial analysis of a possible resort. However, due to COVID-19, the public engagement aspect of the planning has been delayed. A major community workshop was planned for April at the Powell County High School but had to be postponed until June. If an in-person workshop cannot be held in June, Stantec will offer a digital platform website for gathering stakeholder input in the near future.

A local effort called Red River Gorge United (RRGU) has been established in response to the RRED proposal with the intent of helping plan the growth and development of the Gorge region. The group is circulating a petition, asking for input from local citizens and other stakeholders about the future of the region. The survey and more information about RRG United are available at <https://www.rrgunited.org/> We (RRED) were proactive in welcoming local input and announced a 15-member Local Advisory Board (see list on this website) in January with notable stakeholders such as environmentalists, rock-climbers, small business owners, cabin owners, representatives of the RRGU group and the four county judges. The Advisory Board met once in person on January 29 before the COVID-19 shutdown and is now conducting monthly meetings with the Stantec team via Zoom.

Meanwhile, RRED has extended its option on 891 acres of private property at the Slade intersection of the Mountain Parkway through September 30, in part because of the delays noted above. Option payments are being made from private donations to RRED. While the current economic crisis will likely delay major developments in the hospitality industry nationwide, RRED sees the potential for a destination resort as a long-term effort and is working, along with the Local Advisory Board, to create a masterplan that will guide development efforts in the years ahead.

To receive periodic updates on the project, please follow the prompts when arriving at the homepage or contact redriverky@kychamber.com

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