

Town of Lansing

Profile

Lansing, population 149, is a one-stoplight town. Literally. Yet it's an active one. The Lansing Volunteer Fire Department has operated continuously since the early 1950s and now includes rescue service. The town sponsors the annual Ola Belle Reed Homecoming Festival to commemorate the native songwriter and musician, who played for President Carter's inauguration and was honored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Smithsonian Institution. Other special events include the Greater Lansing Area Festival and the Rubber Ducky Festival. Volunteers recently completed construction of a park and walking trail along Big Horse Creek. And the Greater Lansing Area Development Committee, organized three years ago, can turn out a third of the town's population to discuss civic improvement.

Incorporated in 1928, Lansing sits amid the Blue Ridge Mountains in the northwest corner of Ashe County. For years it served as a stop along the Virginia Creeper Railroad Line. A diversified economy once included mining, tobacco, retail and furniture manufacturing. There was also a milk collection facility for dairy producers. Most of the old economy, like the railroad, has faded away.

Big Horse Creek flows into the New River just two miles south of town. A favorite among kayakers and canoeists, the river draws visitors and lends it name to the county's first winery. The New River Winery opened in 2005 in a small building on Main Street. Two years later, it moved into the renovated Old Lansing School, with four times the space. That same year, coffee shop opened downtown – something few one stoplight towns can support.

Community Issues

Lansing is a tiny town that's been growing smaller since the railroad stopped running. The town today is disproportionately elderly and poor. At the time of the 2000 Census, 21 percent of residents were 65 or older, compared with only 12 percent statewide. The median household income was only \$18,125, less than half the state median, and 27 percent of the Lansing population lived in poverty.

The town's water and sewer systems challenge its ability to provide basic services. Because its wells lack sufficient yield, the water system is under a state moratorium on new connections. New sources will be required to ensure an ongoing supply for the New River Winery or to enable new businesses to open. The sewer collect system needs repairs to correct inflow and infiltration problems, and the wastewater treatment plant sits in a floodplain, creating an environmental hazard.

Opportunities

Lansing seeks to improve the quality of life for its residents through greater job opportunities and increased business activity with long-term sustainability. Through NC STEP, it seeks to identify funding sources that will leverage additional private investment.

Contact

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