



# VIEW*S*&VISIONS

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## Growth is the Trend in Jefferson County

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Nicolas Diehl is the Executive Director of the Jefferson County Economic Development Authority. He served as Director of One Stop Operations for the Region VII Workforce Investment Board prior to accepting a position with the West Virginia Department of Commerce, where he worked for over a decade.

Diehl served first as Regional Manager and Business Consultant for WorkForce West Virginia, then as Manager of Business and Industrial Development for the West Virginia Development Office. Diehl has worked as Executive Director of the Jefferson County Economic Development Authority since November of 2017.

He holds a master's degree in communication studies with a concentration in organizational communication from West Virginia University and an undergraduate degree in public relations and advertising from Concord University.

Diehl serves as Chairman of the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority in addition to serving on the boards of the Region 9 Planning and Development Council, the Jefferson County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board. Diehl is a graduate of Leadership Berkeley and Leadership West Virginia.

Jefferson County is the easternmost county in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, and is centrally located in the Mid-Atlantic business corridor. While its most distinctive location trait is its proximity to the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, the county is a strategic and relevant locale in and of itself. We are part of the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (DC Metro Area), the only county in West Virginia to be included.

Our location gives Jefferson County businesses easy access to the metro markets and a highly competitive workforce. In Jefferson County, we have a high number of residents who work for the federal government or in jobs supporting government agencies. Many county residents have at least a bachelor's degree, and a significant number of residents have terminal degrees. Jefferson County has the highest per capita income in West Virginia, and we are one of the fastest growing counties in the state.

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The Jefferson County Development Authority (JCDA) has worked hard to attract new industries and support existing businesses. With the vision and support of the Jefferson County Commission and the JCDA Board of Directors, Rockwool is building a \$150 million, 463,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Ranson. Rockwool is North America's leading producer of stone wool insulation. When its



state-of-the-art facility is completed in early 2020, Rockwool expects to employ about 150 people.

TeMa North America is building a 42,000 square foot manufacturing plant in the Burr Business Park in Kearneysville, where insulation and drainage systems for residential, commercial and industrial use will be produced. TeMa is expected to create 30 jobs.

Other businesses locating in the Burr Business Park in the past year include Nestle Waters North America and J.J. Crewe & Son, Inc. The new branch of Nestle Waters provides distribution of a wide variety of bottled water and related beverages to the Eastern Panhandle and Shenandoah Valley region. Nestle Waters brings jobs in both delivery and leadership roles, with the goal of reaching 15-20 jobs over the next few years. J.J. Crewe is an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) engineering and fabrication shop. For over 90 years and four generations, the company has been engineering and constructing gas compression and industrial refrigeration systems.

Existing businesses, such as Radox Laboratories and Kent Cartridge, have also completed expansion projects. Radox, an Ireland-based



*Above: Artist rendering of the Rockwool manufacturing facility in Ranson, West Virginia, scheduled for completion in 2020. Inset: Rockwool site preparation*

biotechnology company, recently built a 36,000 square foot expansion at its North American headquarters, including a manufacturing and research area. Kent Cartridge, a leading producer of non-toxic shotgun shells for waterfowl and upland game birds, constructed a 20,000 square foot addition to its manufacturing/warehouse operations.

Tourism continues to be a driving force in Jefferson County, as well. Though all of West Virginia's 55 counties generate some tourism dollars, Jefferson County provides 20 percent of all tourism revenue in the state. We work closely with the Jefferson County Convention and Visitor's Bureau to support new development in the industry.

With that being said, we struggle to keep up with infrastructure needs. Luckily, we have a strong partner in the West Virginia Development Office. With their assistance, we have been able to find support for a number of infrastructure projects, including the provision of water and sewer to our development sites, construction of industrial access roads

and the availability of reimbursable grants to train our workforce. We could not do our jobs without them.

Over the years, Jefferson County has lost several projects because there is no natural gas here. We have been working with Mountaineer Gas to bring natural gas to Jefferson County and are confident that the first manufacturing facility will be connected in 2020. It will really open up the county for continued development, as we focus on bringing advanced manufacturing and tech jobs to our county.

Our hope is to continue developing job opportunities in our community so residents can stay here, living and working in beautiful Jefferson County, West Virginia. ▽

