

The Villages®

Community Development Districts

Brownwood Woodshop Q&A

Q: What investment did The Villages Woodworking Club (VWC) put into the Brownwood Woodshop?

A: The total investment from the VWC budget was \$485,000. This was accomplished without borrowing additional funds. The VWC paid The Villages \$150,000 toward the cost of the elevator that was installed in the building.

The VWC purchased all the stationary equipment, saws, planers, jointers, sanding equipment at a cost of \$186,000. The VWC also purchased all of the interior furnishings, audio visual equipment, IT equipment and cabling, security access systems, at a cost of \$149,000.

Q: Did the Brownwood Woodshop expand opportunities to join? If so, how much?

A: About two years before occupying the new facility, The VWC began a waiting list for new members. At that time the total number of members was about 850 — the approximate capacity of the existing facility to safely accommodate Club members use of the facility. The process of taking in new members became a system using the waiting list to offer people the opportunity to be trained and certified to use the facility in order of sign up on the waiting list.

The VWC loses anywhere from 100 to 150 members per year due to moving away, death, and general loss of interest in maintaining their memberships. For several years, members leaving the VWC were replaced with members from the waiting list.

In the summer of 2020, several months before beginning construction of the new facility, the VWC began increasing membership opportunities beyond just replacing departing members. This was done in anticipation of the completion of the Brownwood Woodshop, which was slated for a grand opening in the spring of 2021.

The VWC currently has a membership of approximately 1,300 members and is currently adding 32 new members per month based on the requirement to be trained and certified. The VWC anticipates their total membership number growing to around 2,000 or so. They do have a limitation on their ability to increase membership beyond that, due to the availability of volunteer training instructors and the necessity to close the Brownwood Woodshop to members one day per week in order to train new members to use the facilities safely.

Q: How many members have been admitted since the Brownwood Woodshop became fully operational?

A: The Brownwood Woodshop opened on October 11, 2021. Since its grand opening, the VWC has added 121 new members. The VWC did not conduct certification classes during the weeks of Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, or the first week of January 2022. They had had a total of 17 certification classes since the Brownwood Woodshop opened and have averaged 7 new members per week. Since the announcement of the new shop, the VWC membership waiting list steadily continued to grow. Since March of 2020, the VWC has certified 412 new members, even with shop closures due to Covid-19 and the halt to certification during that time.

Q: What is the average wait time if I put my name on the waiting list now?

A: There is no average wait time for a person on the waiting list because the VWC offers the opportunity for people on the waiting list to join based on their position on the list. If the next person is unable to begin training when a spot is offered to them, they will remain in their current position on the list and will be offered the opportunity the next time a spot becomes available. The open spot would then be offered to the next person at the top of the waiting list. The VWC experience is that people who are snowbirds, have illnesses, or have schedule conflicts with the date offered for training will remain on the waiting list longer.

Currently, there are over 500 people on the waiting list. No one is offered a priority on the list, all people on the waiting list will be offered the opportunity for training and membership in order of their position on the waiting list at the time the offer is made.

Q: How do I put my name on the list to join?

A: A permanent resident of The Villages with a green Villages ID Card or a long-term rental resident with a card having an expiration date within the current annual membership term may apply to be added to the waiting list at no cost.

Applications can be made during normal hours of operation at either of The Villages Woodworking Club facilities by presenting a green Villages ID Card to the front desk volunteer and asking for the waiting list application form.

Q: How many new members are in training and how many can you accept at one time? How long is that training process?

A: Each week the VWC trains 8 new members. This initiation training takes the bulk of one day. It is primarily focused on the safety of the basic pieces of equipment and the standards of the Club. Once this is completed, the members can use the shop as desired for the most part. Additional training for other more complicated machines is done on an as-needed basis and usually takes less than an hour per machine.

Q: How many members does The Villages Woodworking Club project adding this year?

A: At the present rate, the VWC plans to add about 320 new members this year. The VWC has reviewed and continues to review their training system in hopes of training more new members, but in the end the safety of new and existing members remains the top priority and requires them to keep it as it is. As stated previously, the VWC is made up entirely of volunteers and in many cases the time they put in is substantial. No one is paid for their time and service, the only labor we pay for is janitorial service for our restrooms.

In addition, the VWC donates urns, pens and toys to various groups. The VWC pays for the material and makes these items in the shop.

Q: What is the cost to join?

A: The current initial cost to join is \$275.00, which is comprised of a \$200.00 initiation fee and the first year's annual membership fee of \$75.00. Thereafter the annual fees are adjusted to reflect the budgeted cost of operations for the club. These fees are charged to offset the cost of operating the club facilities and future repair and replacement costs of tools and equipment. The Villages Woodworking Club, Inc. is a non-profit (IRC 501 (c)(3) corporation. The organization is entirely supported by volunteer membership, no one is paid for their service to the club.

Q: What operational costs does the Club pay for?

A: The VWC presently pays for all the maintenance on tools and equipment, any upgrades to the tools, and all cleaning services. In essence, the VWC pays for the inside maintenance and District Property Management services and funds maintenance and repairs to the physical building, landscaping, and utilities and other attached systems, just like they do for any other amenity.

District Property Management is responsible for the HVAC system, dust collection system, routine building maintenance, the structural shell of the building including the roof, and systems physically attached to the building shell. The VWC currently cost-shares utility costs with the District, who currently pays 40%, and the VWC will pay annual increases up to 100% in five years. As with any new amenity, there may be some unforeseen circumstances that require change orders or modifications after construction, as we have seen with the material handling system, canopy, and installation of the second air compressor to handle the workload.

Q: What is the training curriculum and timeline for a new member to be indoctrinated, trained, and provided the safety requirements to become a member and utilize the club equipment?

A: The curriculum is centered around the safety of new and existing members as well as the safety of other volunteers. The rules of the Brownwood Woodshop are discussed as well as the safety requirements for use of the woodshop equipment.

Safety requirements of the club are of paramount concern to members of the club. The club always insists on the use of personal safety equipment when using the club facilities. Members will be reminded of these requirements when observed not using them or misusing them.

Not all equipment is included in the initial membership training. Specialized and advanced use of specific equipment and tools may be done when offered to members needing to use that equipment or who desire to learn advanced topics. This is accomplished through classes and one on one training from our membership instructors who are certified to train others in these specific topics of instruction.

Q: Do I have to have woodworking expertise to join The Villages Woodworking Club?

A: You do not have to have any prior woodworking experience to join the VWC. While prior experience can be helpful, many members have come to the club with no previous training or experience and both men and women are welcome.

The VWC offers training on many different forms of woodworking, from the most basic level to a much more advanced skill level. Classes are offered by the volunteer members throughout the year.

Q: The District recently upgraded the material handling system in the Brownwood Woodshop, which previously had limited operations. Is it fully operational now? If not, when will it become fully operational?

A: The Brownwood Woodshop is fully operational most of the time. The dust collector in its present condition requires the Club to shut things down and service it from time to time. When this occurs, all operations in the facility are required to shut down. These shutdowns usually occur once a day and last for 30 minutes or so. When the new compressor the District ordered is installed, the VWC expects to be able to work with little to no interruptions.