

RoadTrip

Small-Town Charm in Resilient Mount Airy



Sit and knit with the **Knittin' Chicks** every Thursday evening. Participants often order meatloaf, the Thursday special at the Olde Town Restaurant down the street.



The **Mount Airy Volunteer Fire Company** has a one-room museum in its firehouse, plus friendly firefighters who welcome visitors and questions.

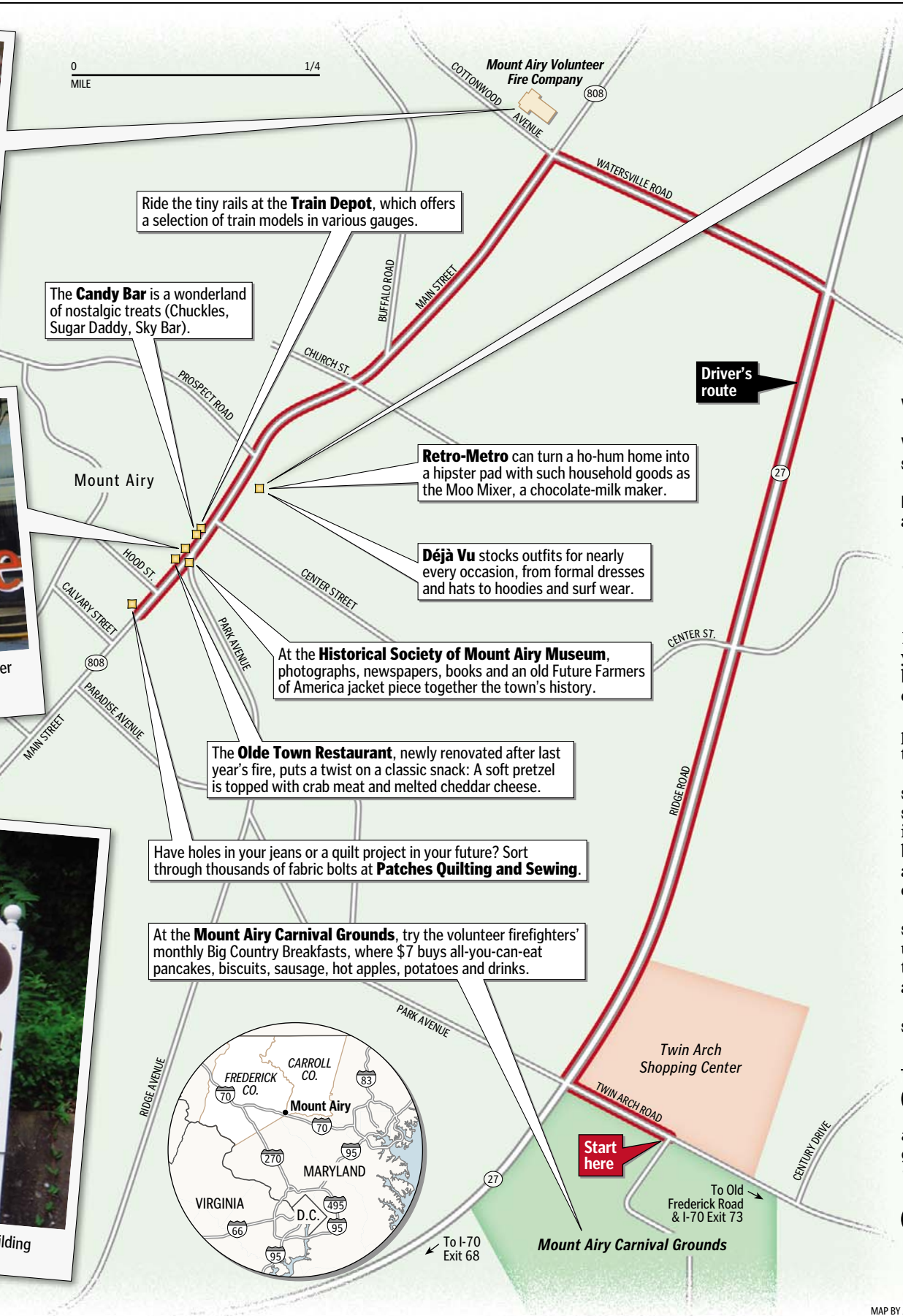


Delicious nonfat lattes are just one reason to hunker down at the **Vintage Coffee House**. Live music Saturday nights and free WiFi are two more.



Mount Airy's downtown commercial district is rebuilding after a fire in the fall.

0 1/4 MILE



Ride the tiny rails at the **Train Depot**, which offers a selection of train models in various gauges.

The **Candy Bar** is a wonderland of nostalgic treats (Chuckles, Sugar Daddy, Sky Bar).

Retro-Metro can turn a ho-hum home into a hipster pad with such household goods as the Moo Mixer, a chocolate-milk maker.

Déjà Vu stocks outfits for nearly every occasion, from formal dresses and hats to hoodies and surf wear.

At the **Historical Society of Mount Airy Museum**, photographs, newspapers, books and an old Future Farmers of America jacket piece together the town's history.

The **Olde Town Restaurant**, newly renovated after last year's fire, puts a twist on a classic snack: A soft pretzel is topped with crab meat and melted cheddar cheese.

Have holes in your jeans or a quilt project in your future? Sort through thousands of fabric bolts at **Patches Quilting and Sewing**.

At the **Mount Airy Carnival Grounds**, try the volunteer firefighters' monthly Big Country Breakfasts, where \$7 buys all-you-can-eat pancakes, biscuits, sausage, hot apples, potatoes and drinks.

Driver's route

WHERE: Mount Airy, Md.

WHY: Knitting in a circle, breakfast with firefighters and sugar love.

HOW FAR: About two miles from start to finish, and about 60 miles from Washington.

Mount Airy, Md., is rising from the ashes yet again. The 114-year-old town has had its share of fires through the years, including those that nearly destroyed the town in 1903, 1914 and 1925. The most recent inferno occurred last year over Labor Day weekend, burning several historic buildings on Main Street and knocking out about a third of the downtown commercial district.

"It nearly decimated the town," says Dalia Schulman, past president of the Mount Airy Main Street Association.

Thanks to local fundraising efforts and speedy construction, the Carroll County town is on a rebuilding streak. The damaged shops, for example, were temporarily relocated but will move into their new homes by October. At the same time, au courant stores are popping up along Main Street, a nod in part to the growing number of high-end homes in the surrounding counties.

Neither the fire nor the trendy makeover has squelched the community's old-fashioned spirit. The volunteer firefighters continue to serve monthly breakfasts, the sweets shop still makes everyone feel like a kid again, and store owners treat visitors like family.

"It's a step back to a quieter time," Mayor Frank Johnson says. "At times, it's been compared to Mayberry."

— **Melanie D.G. Kaplan**

Road Trip maps are available at www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip, as are addresses and hours of operation. (Be sure to check before you go.) Have an idea for a trip? E-mail roadtrip@washpost.com.

WEDNESDAY IN STYLE | Escapes goes to Harrisburg, Pa., where there's new life after dark.