Martinsville’s Wayfinding Tourism Initiative

The West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) provided technical assistance to the City of Martinsville for an initiative to place wayfinding signs throughout the City in an effort to encourage tourism in the uptown area. The City received a grant from the Harvest Foundation, along with a local match, to place signs in various sections of Martinsville directing drivers to prominent uptown destinations such as the farmers’ market, Virginia Museum of Natural History, and other notable venues.

Staff from the WPPDC provided input regarding sign placement along roadways to ensure maximum visibility from vehicles, as well as sign color. A WPPDC staff member attended a recent public meeting intended to garner valuable input from citizens and stakeholders in Martinsville regarding the initiative; substantial input was received which will greatly improve the effectiveness of this endeavor.

Local Food Initiative Accelerates

The West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) recently created a survey targeted to food producers in the region, which is intended to obtain information regarding the type of establishment (store, farmstand, etc.) they operate, the types of products produced and marketed, a description of operations, barriers, and limitations to current operations, to ascertain whether producers would like to be included in a farmstand, etc.) they operate, the types of products produced and marketed, a description of operations, barriers, and limitations to current operations, to ascertain whether producers would like to be included in a new regional Local Foods Guide, and to gauge interest in participation in agricultural-related training workshops or demonstrations. The surveys are being distributed to farmers’ market, Virginia Museum of Natural History, and other notable venues.

The surveys are targeted to local food producers in the West Piedmont Planning District, which includes Patrick, Henry, Pittsylvania, and Franklin counties; the cities of Martinsville and Danville; and the Town of Rocky Mount. In addition to the survey, press releases will be forthcoming regarding the results of the survey and food production in the region. The survey will be used to produce an interactive web-based map and printed guide in 2013.

Marina Market Analysis for Philpott Lake

Henry County plans to construct a marina at Philpott Recreation Area, located on the south end of Philpott Lake. The only other marina that served the lake was the Twin Ridge Marina, which was destroyed by a fire in 2000. Since that time, the lake has only been served by day-use facilities for boaters, which are limited to boat ramps and courtesy docks. The proposed marina is planned to provide 40 boat slips with an option for an additional 20, fuel service, a small store, and ample parking.

Henry County commissioned the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) to conduct a market study to determine the feasibility of a marina at Philpott Lake. Studies conducted by the WPPDC found that the proportion of boat registrations to the total population in the jurisdictions immediately surrounding the lake were about three times that of the proportion of state-wide boat registrations to the total population of Virginia. In addition, one of two projection methods used to project the number of boat registrations out to the year 2030 showed an increase in registrations over time.
The WPPDC administers the Danville-Pittsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is responsible for continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning.

“THE POTENTIALS FOR ANY COMMUNITY’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPEND UPON STRENGTHENING ITS RESOURCES AND OVERCOMING ITS OBSTACLES. CERTAINLY, THE LOCALITIES OF THE WEST PIEDMONT REGION ARE NO EXCEPTION TO THIS PRINCIPLE IN PURSUING THEIR POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.”
—2012 CEDS

West Piedmont Planning Dispatch

Update of WPPDC Website

The West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) is preparing to update its website. The purpose of the update is to create a website with fresh content, which will be more attractive and functional. Updates will result in a website that will include additional maps, documents, and will be more user-friendly and interactive.

WPPDC Tourism Mapping Initiative

West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) staff is involved with a tourism mapping initiative which will highlight a variety of attractions across the region. Unlike many maps that provide information pertaining to major tourist attractions, this effort will focus on such major venues, but will also include destinations that may often be overlooked, such as country clubs, golf courses, canoe/kayak access points, and various recreational facilities such as playgrounds and sports fields.

The destinations will be included in Google Maps and Google Earth application formats, and will be available on the WPPDC website. Points on the interactive map will provide information about the destinations and links to the destinations, where available.

CEDS Submittal Deadline Changing

The region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) submittal deadline has been changed to March 31 from June, as was previously the case. This was done in an attempt to align the WPPDC’s CEDS submittal period with its planning grant cycle, which is in effect from April 1—March 31.

The purpose of the CEDS is to foster the collaboration of the public and private sectors in creating an economic blueprint to diversify and strengthen the local economy.

Recent Events

Recent events WPPDC staff attended:

- The 2012 Economic Development Agency (EDA) Regional Training Conference in Philadelphia took place July 9—11. The conference introduced innovative economic development strategies, and provided for networking opportunities between individuals, agencies, and groups involved in economic development.
- The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) Summer Conference took place July 26—28 in Virginia Beach. The event served as an opportunity for Virginia’s planning district commissions to network, exchange ideas, and discuss projects taking place within various planning districts.

Left: Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex, Chatham.
Top Right: Main Street, Danville.
Bottom Right: Community garden at Danville Farmer’s Market, Danville.
Over the years, localities throughout the region and state had the option to delegate their stormwater programs to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Beginning in July 2014, however, localities in the Commonwealth must officially implement their own stormwater programs.

In June 2013, each locality must submit their draft program to DCR for approval by the agency. If, however, a locality’s program is not yet complete by that date, it must submit to DCR that “substantial progress” has been made regarding drafting of its stormwater program, and the locality will be eligible for a one-year extension.

Elements that localities must integrate into their stormwater programs, via a stormwater ordinance, include the following:

- Administration;
- Submission of plan, review, and procedures of approval;
- Fee payment;
- Issuance of permit coverage under the Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) General Permit for Construction Activities;
- Setting forth procedures for inspection and maintenance of stormwater management facilities on a long-term basis;
- Compliance and enforcement;
- Reporting;
- Record keeping; and
- Any technical criteria different from those spelled out in regulations.

If you would like additional information or professional referrals regarding this change, please contact the West Piedmont Planning District Commission at (276) 638-3987, or aaronburdick@wppdc.org, to contact Aaron Burdick, WPPDC executive director.

Summary of DHCD Annual Report

The development of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Annual Report has begun. The Report includes economic development-related activities the WPPDC has engaged in during FY 2012. The Report will include the following elements: Strategic Planning, Duties Performed, Highlight of Successes/Achievements—Regional Efforts of Cooperation, and FY 2013 Work Program.

During FY 2012, one of the activities the PDC undertook included providing technical assistance to organizations marketing the region, which involved the dissemination of demographic data, specialized maps for marketing brochures, and other unique projects.

Staff also conducted mapping initiatives for Martinsville and Danville to analyze demographic attributes along bus routes for those cities.
In 2011, there were 17,251 registered boats (including personal watercraft) in the region comprising the West Piedmont Planning District. Our region accounts for about 7 percent of the state total.

Interested in receiving this flyer by e-mail? Please contact: Staff@wppdc.org

Did you know?

In 2007, the region was comprised of about 893 square miles of agricultural land, which is about 35 percent of the West Piedmont Planning District. To illustrate the amount of land comprising 893 square miles, about 85 percent of the land area of the state of Rhode Island would be covered by this agricultural land if superimposed on the state.