

WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2023

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WPCOG Assists Communities in Obtaining Grant Awards

Article by Paul Teague

City of Lenoir

WPCOG staff assisted in writing and developing two awarded NC Commerce Rural Transformation Grants. The City of Lenoir was awarded \$580,000 for The Campus Lenoir High School Upgrade and Improvement Project, while the City of Conover has been awarded \$640,000 for its Downtown Thread Trail Project.

The Lenoir project will focus on improvements at the historic Lenoir High School Theater/Auditorium and Gymnasium. The aim is to drive visitors to the site, engage the community, and serve as a catalyst to the neighboring downtown commercial district.

The Conover project involves the addition of sidewalks throughout the city that will connect with the Carolina Thread Trail. This upgrade will improve walkability to downtown small businesses and the Conover Farmers Market. In addition, the Carolina Thread Trail provides access to educational resources such as the Conover Library and Manufacturing Solutions Center, along with the City Park that provides exercise equipment and pickleball courts.

WPCOG staff also assisted the City of Morganton in obtaining a \$500,000 NC Commerce Building Reuse Grant for Gerresheimer Glass. A manufacturer of pharmaceutical vials, the company is investing \$62 million to expand its operations and create 78 new, full-time jobs.

City of Newton

The City of Newton has been awarded a \$950,000 Community Development Block Grant to renovate a historic school that served as a primary education location for African Americans in Catawba County. WPCOG staff assisted the City of Newton in procuring the grant through the N.C. Department of Commerce.



Central High School was the only school for African American youths in Catawba County from 1936 to 1967, outside of Hickory's Ridgeview School. Originally built in 1899, the school was named Snow Hill Graded School in 1924.

Now known as Central Recreation Center, the building is operated by the City of Newton. The \$1.575-million renovation project includes new restrooms and a concession area, along with the creation of two community rooms and a small kitchen. Other improvements involve roofing and HVAC systems.

Plans also call for the development of a memorabilia hall to feature items from the school.



WPCOG Regional Housing Authority Hosts Training

Article by Jennifer Cater

Training, training, and more training! WPCOG's Regional Housing Authority had the pleasure of hosting the Housing Choice Voucher Specialist Training by Nan McKay from November 28 to December 2, 2022. Twenty-eight participants, including five members of WPCOG's RHA staff, attended more than 35 hours of classroom training. Attendees came from around the country including Oregon, California, Florida, Texas, Virginia, Colorado, Minnesota, and South Carolina.

The week's learning activities were designed not only to teach the basics, but also to strengthen the skills of housing specialists. Participants brushed up on HUD policies and procedures, learned new housing concepts as well as how to perform manual calculations for scenarios they typically rely on their software to complete. The week ended with a test that took several hours. The results and certificates of completion should arrive within six weeks.

"Although it was a difficult week with the busyness of work for our RHA staff, it was also a wonderful week of learning and collaboration with other housing staff from across the country," said, RHA Director, Stephanie Hanvey.



RHA Hosts Annual Landlord Meeting

Article by Chasity Houck and Elizabeth Moncrief

The Regional Housing Authority held its seventh annual Landlord Meeting on November 17, 2022. More than 50 landlords attended. RHA Director Stephanie Hanvey presented an overview of the programs offered by the RHA along with the number of families served within the last year. Housing Specialists Stephanie Godfrey and Kelley Haywood presented updates on inspection, termination, and abatement regulations. Both presentations were based on landlord feedback requested in advance of the workshop.

Landlords were encouraged to take advantage of www.affordablehousing.com to list available properties. Affordablehousing.com can be contacted at (866) 466-7328. Their customer service department will post any available property and will give tips on how to make postings more attractive.

The Regional Housing Authority landlord portal at <https://housing.wpcog.net> was also highlighted to let landlords know how to retrieve information about their units including rent amounts and inspection results. In addition, HUD Fair Market Rents and Payment Standards for our jurisdiction have been added to main program website www.wpcog.org/regional-housing-authority.

Following the presentations, landlords had the opportunity to visit six stations to receive one-on-one information about topics such as payment standards, inspections, and rent increases. The stations were added this year to help new and seasoned landlords grow more comfortable with completing forms and understanding the voucher holder process.

In addition, the RHA provided each landlord with a warm breakfast bar, handouts and a guidebook for owners along with WPCOG RHA swag. The landlords completed an exit survey rating the event as informative. Responses included: "I enjoyed learning about all the different HUD voucher programs," "The hand outs and stations were most helpful," and "The books were a great source of information."

"The landlords seemed inspired to learn about the impact they provide within our community and to the RHA. The feedback from landlords will help us plan next year's event so landlords can get the most benefit out of the meetings," said RHA Director Stephanie Hanvey.

The Regional Housing Authority encourages any prospective landlords to contact Kelley Hayward to learn more about our program and procedures. The RHA will work with any landlord willing to comply with Section 8 regulations. For information on becoming a Section 8 landlord or to be added to the mailing list for next year's meeting, please contact Kelley Hayward at (828) 485-4252 or kelley.hayward@wpcog.org.

NCWorks Veteran Services Helps Veteran with Transportation Needs

Article by Charity Patterson Hamber

Veteran Thomas Parks came to NCWorks with several life issues stemming from circumstances while serving in the US Navy. While working with Patrick Hamber, NCWorks - Burke Veterans Career Advisor and Business Consultant, Mr. Parks indicated that one of his biggest barriers to employment was a lack of transportation. He is currently battling to overcome numerous barriers to employment.

Mr. Hamber reached out to Hickory DAV # 34 and they generously donated \$1200 to purchase Mr. Parks a new scooter to assist him along the way. Since working in partnership with Hickory DAV #34 and NCWorks, Mr. Parks is excited to see his life moving in a better direction.

Mr. Parks said, "I'm grateful to the DAV and I'm glad I came to NCWorks."



Modern Travel Analysis Provides View into the Future

Article by Daniel Odom

Modern travel analysis allows planners to view the future of transportation in the Greater Hickory Planning Area, created by current plans and proposals. To create this analysis, transportation planners use a travel demand forecasting model—a computer generated model of travel demand and travel behavior in the future. MPO staff are currently in the process of updating the region's Travel Demand Model.

As part of a cooperative process with the NCDOT, the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for providing socio-economic data projections forecasting to the year 2050, as well as the fiscally constrained Highway Network projected for 2050. Socio-economic data projections allow the model to reflect anticipated housing and job growth. The Highway Network allows the model to reflect the anticipated Highway Network for the region. The 2050 socio-economic data and highway network were both approved by the Technical Advisory Committee prior to their submission to NCDOT.

Once the Travel Demand Model is finalized, it will be reviewed by the Technical Coordination and Technical Advisory Committee, for adoption as the Official Travel Demand Model for the region.



Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

Article by Karen Phoenix



What is Project C.A.R.E.?

Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) is a North Carolina funded dementia-specific support program for family caregivers. The program uses a family consultant to provide comprehensive support to caregivers of those caring for someone at home with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. Project C.A.R.E. family consultants assist caregivers with education, resources, and access to vouchers to alleviate some of the stress caregiving can create. The purpose of the program is to assist the caregiver with keeping the person with Dementia safe and comfortable in their home for as long as possible. The Family Consultant receives referrals to the program and schedules in-home visits to meet with the caregiver and the person with dementia. The level of assistance provided varies and is dependent upon what the caregiver needs and prefers. In the last year, Project CARE has provided support to more than 200 caregivers in the region. Caregivers of any age caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia who are not eligible to receive similar services through programs such as VA, Medicaid, etc. are available for our services. Many caregivers elect to utilize respite to provide a needed break from the constant responsibility of caregiving. Often, we assist those who are on the waiting lists for other programs. While there are no specific income limitations, Project C.A.R.E. gives priority to low-income, rural and minority families.

Project C.A.R.E. Also provides education and information to the public. There are more than 200 forms of Dementia. Current statistics reveal that every 65 seconds someone is diagnosed with a form of Dementia. One in 3 Seniors die with a Dementia Diagnosis. Estimates are that one in six people will have some form of Dementia. As Time Progresses, we are all going to know, care for or be a person with Dementia. It is important for everyone to know the signs of Dementia and how to help.

Project C.A.R.E. is here to help anyone caring for someone with Dementia. Please call if we can be of assistance as you work to assist those with Dementia. Remember, we will all know someone, care for someone or encounter someone with Dementia in our lifetime.

Foothills Project CARE Service Area Includes multiple counties:

Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Mitchell, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey Counties.

Project C.A.R.E. services are provided at no cost.

You are not alone . . . call for help!

To learn more, call Karen Phoenix- Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant at 828-485-4267.

North Carolina Caregiver Portal

Article by Mary Mitchell

The role of a caregiver can be quite challenging and rewarding at the same time. Caregivers often take on their role with very little training or knowledge of care responsibilities, or the emotional and physical impact caregiving can have. Having resources available to support caregivers can be valuable during all stages of caregiving.

North Carolinians have access to free caregiver information and training through the North Carolina Caregiver Portal. This interactive online resource recognizes the unique challenges caregivers may be facing and provides education and information tailored to each caregiver's own situation. These resources can help reduce stress, educate the caregiver on subjects of their interest and help them provide better care for a loved one.

Caregivers can easily access and register on the portal by going to <https://nc-caregivers.com/login>. Once registered caregivers have access to the Caregiver Portal Learning Library which provides articles, videos and tip sheets on a wide variety of caregiver topics such as: Aging, Heart Health, Parkinson's, Dementia, Fall Prevention, etc. This unique platform is tailored to each caregiver's situation and provides a wide variety of information for caregivers at all levels, and all in one location.

In support of families, Caregiver Portal continues to add additional resources for caregivers. One of those additions is **Care Stories** in the Caregiver Network. Caregivers can share their story whether it might be the highs, lows or even some of the funny sides of caregiving. This opportunity to share with other caregivers helps families know they are definitely not alone on their journey.

Caregiver Portal also offers **Caregiver Wellness** toolkit, introducing the importance of caregivers taking care of themselves with wellness activity ideas, balancing work and caregiving, and strategies for improving emotional health for the caregiver. Caregiver self-care is extremely important for caregivers to be able to continue successfully caring for their loved one.

Caregivers often experience feelings of isolation, caregiver burden, and worries and concerns for the future of their loved one. In response to feedback from caregivers, Caregiver Portal has expanded their learning library to include a focus on caregiver **Grief and Loss**. Modules have been developed to support caregivers at all stages of their caregiving and they are easily revisited for continual guidance as caregivers feel the need. These modules guide the caregiver through an overview and defining grief and loss, the stages of grief and help the caregiver prepare and cope with loss.

For additional information about the North Carolina Caregiver Portal, contact WPCOG Area Agency on Aging Family Caregiver Support Program Administrator at mary.mitchell@wpcog.org, or call 828.485.4256.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Aging and
Adult Services

North Carolina
Caregiver Portal

Powered by Truista

Caring for your loved one but
don't know where to start?

Let the North Carolina Caregiver Portal
help you on your caregiving journey!

- Explore options for challenging behaviors
- Discover ways to connect with your loved one
- Share and learn with fellow caregivers



Scan me with
your camera
to visit!



Sign up at: nc-caregivers.com



Hudson & Long View Complete Comprehensive Plans

Article by Rachel Wooster

The Towns of Hudson and Long View recently completed their Comprehensive Development Plans. A Comprehensive Development Plan is a policy document that will help guide the Town's growth and development over the next 10-20 years. The Plan provides a vision of how the Town should look in the future and defines the steps that should be taken in order to realize that vision. The Plan identifies areas where investments should occur and what type of growth should be encouraged in which areas. It establishes a roadmap for how the Town should change and how the Town should remain unchanged. Hudson and Long View contracted with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to complete the plan for their towns.

Both Hudson and Long View engaged with residents, members of the community, stakeholders, and elected officials to provide input into their plans. Public engagement was facilitated by Western Piedmont Council of Governments through public meetings, surveys, and steering committee meetings. Topics discussed in the plan are land use, transportation, economic development, natural resources, and public services.

This plan acts as a catalyst of exciting and positive changes for both communities. The residents and community members worked together over a 12 month process of education, discussion, and strategic thinking in order to pass their respective plans. Long View Town Council officially passed their Comprehensive Development Plan on December 12th. Hudson Town Council passed their Comprehensive Development Plan on November 15th.



Hudson citizens participate in a final review of the Hudson comp plan at the HUB, Hudson, NC.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Telephone: 828.322.9191

Fax: 828.322.5991

Email: jason.toney@wpcog.org

Mailing: P.O. Box 9026 | Hickory, NC 28603

Location: 1880 2nd Avenue NW | Hickory, NC 28601

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