

Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Don't forget to add jason.toney@wpcog.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



WPCOG - Newsletter

June 2018

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Area Agency on Aging How to Combat Social Isolation in Older Adults



As we grow old, our needs tend to change. These include our physical, mental, social, and emotional needs. However, the one need that remains to be intact is our need to socialize. Socialization is a crucial aspect of our lives, and no matter how old we get, we need to socialize to exist. It has been proven that social isolation is just as detrimental to the human body, mind, and spirit as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. Just like exercising is a way to keep our bodies healthy, socializing is a way to keep our minds healthy. There is a multitude of resources to be utilized in our area, whether the person is in the community or a long-term care facility.

Services for older persons can encompass many areas, but one of the most important areas is social support. Support for elderly persons can be found in many places including churches, adult day care centers, senior centers and more. These services can provide positive social supports that can help older persons defeat isolation and loneliness. However, social support must incorporate more than physical presence or conversation. Social support should primarily focus on positive self-awareness. Self-awareness means an individual has the capacity to separate themselves from the environment and other individuals, thus giving them their purpose and meaning. Purpose and meaning are extremely important for older adults to understand because although they are getting older

does not mean they are becoming less of themselves. If anything, they should be encouraged to become more empowered to do whatever it is that makes them happy!

It is difficult for residents who live in long-term care facilities to remain social with the outside world. Often, residents become reserved and withdrawn due to their circumstances. This isolation is why it is so vital for those who are in long-term care facilities to maintain their personal relationships. The facility will do their best to incorporate meaningful activities into the resident's life and create professional relationships between employees and the resident. However, the resident still needs a regular support system from family, friends, or loved ones to maintain their mood and sanity. Individuals who do not have a support system in facilities tend to decline faster; both cognitively and physically. If a resident does not have a support system in the facility, there are volunteer programs that aim to be a support system for residents who have no one else. These support programs are a fantastic aspect of communities that could help slow the decline of a resident's health and help them continue to be a part of society.

Even though the most common form of socialization is two humans, face to face, enjoying company, socialization can come in so many forms. Socialization needs to revolve around the resident and the resident's wants and needs. Socialization comes in many forms, shapes, and sizes, but it doesn't change the fact that it can truly impact someone's life in a positive way. Socialization has been proven to lead to positive health outcomes and increase the quality of life. Socialization is something for which the aging community is becoming more and more passionate. There are so many different ways for an individual to socialize, and all of these ways bring something different to the table. Please look for ways to reach out to your loved ones, neighbors, and those in long-term care facilities. Drop by, call them, offer to take them out for a quick trip. You can also contact your local Area Agency on Aging at (828) 322-9191 or visit our website at www.wpcog.org for opportunities in your county to engage with other older.

Article by Amber Thompson

Community & Economic Development

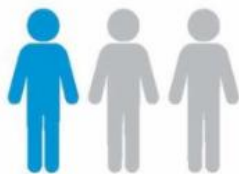
Beating the Odds with Housing Counseling

BEAT THE ODDS WITH HOUSING COUNSELING

Homeowner's
net worth
36X
greater than renter's.

– Federal Reserve (2013)

AM I READY TO BUY A HOUSE?



Housing
Counseling
may be the
answer.

One-third of first-time
homebuyers underestimate
their total household debt.

HOUSING COUNSELING PROVIDES EXPERT ADVICE TO HELP YOU:

- Create Manageable Budgets
- Set Realistic Financial Goals
- Improve Your Credit Score
- Avoid Delinquency on Debt

DOES HOUSING COUNSELING WORK?

Borrowers who use HUD-Approved
Housing Counseling:



283%
more likely
to receive
loan modifications

IN 2015, HUD HOUSING COUNSELING HELPED:

Prevent **92,000+** Foreclosures

Improve **178,000+** Finances

Create **403,000+** Budgets

Counsel **over 1.3 million** Households

WHERE DO I START?

Call **1-800-569-4287** or visit
HUD.gov to find an agency in your
community



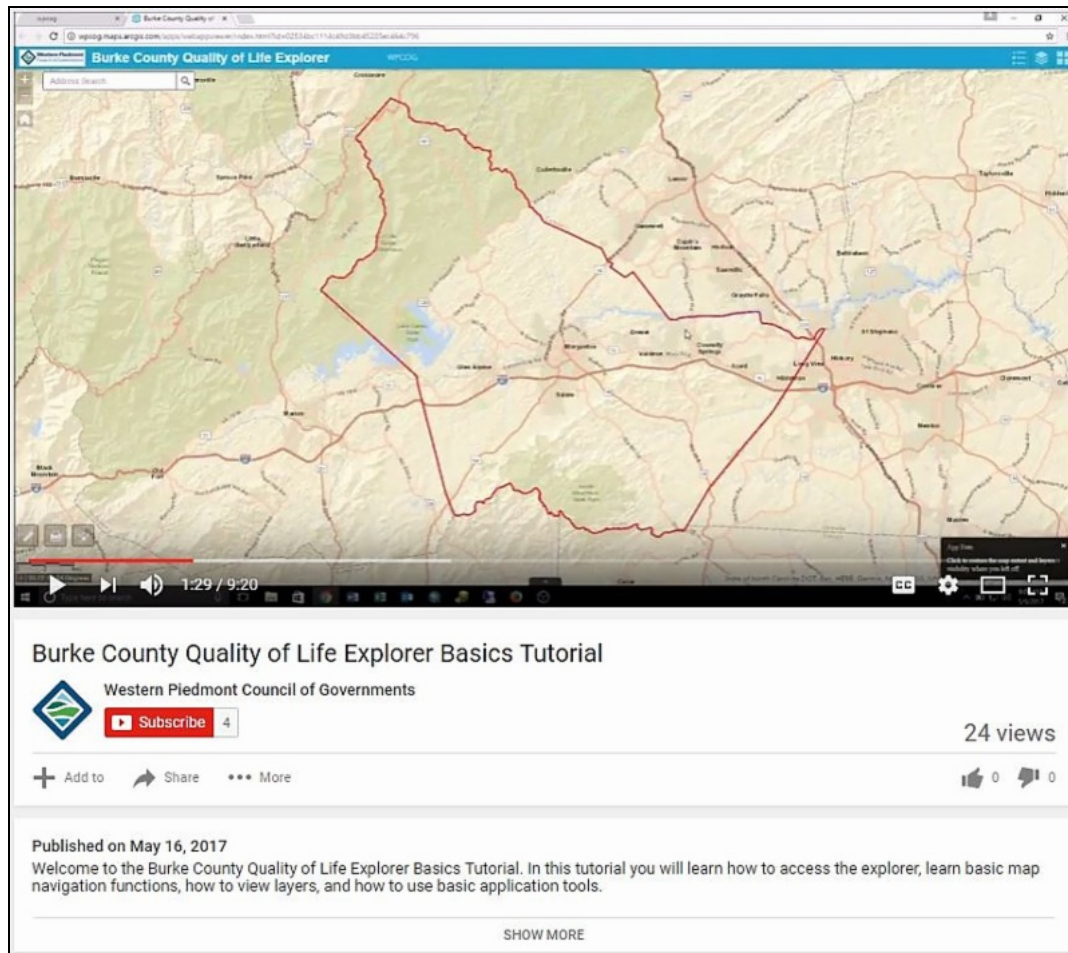
Community & Regional Planning

KB Reynolds Charitable Trust Awards the WPCOG a \$150K Grant for the Burke Quality of Life Explorer

Through the generosity of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust of Winston-Salem, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) has received a \$150,700 grant for the Burke County Quality of Life Explorer. This free online mapping tool helps users easily identify areas of the County that have the most pressing health and quality-of-life needs. Users can access key health indicators and area demographics across multiple categories:

- Disease Rates (cancer, COPD, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease)
- Food Sources (farmers markets, grocery stores, food deserts, gas stations, etc.)
- Health Care (doctors' offices, mental health care providers, etc.)
- Community (schools, child care centers, churches, EMS locations, etc.)
- Recreation (playgrounds, parks)

- Transportation (proposed transit routes, traffic counts)
- Demographics (median household income, vehicle access, age, gender, etc.)



WPCOG staff are currently updating the Explorer's Census data to include the most recent American Community Survey. Staff will also update disease rate data and add several new demographic categories to the Explorer based on feedback received from Burke County nonprofit organizations. These new categories include population by gender, vacant housing units, residents lacking health insurance, and residents living with a disability.

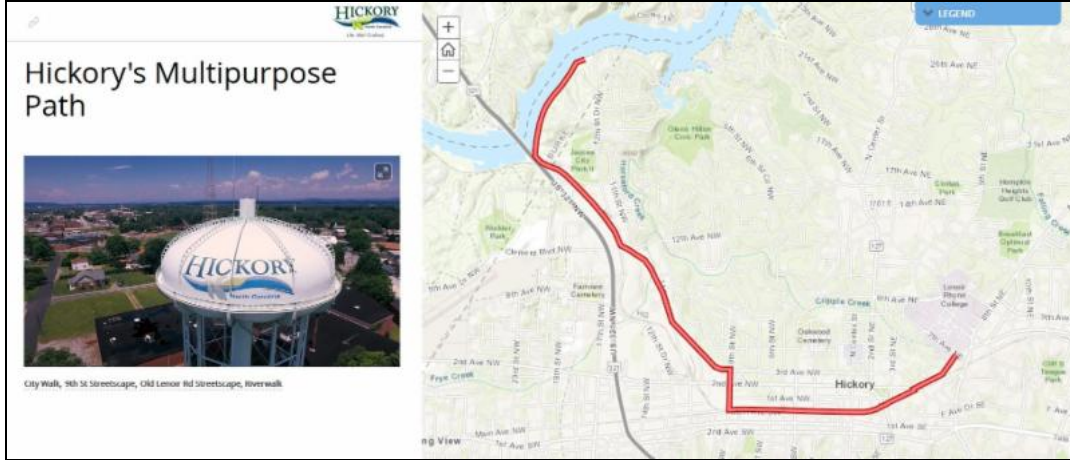
WPCOG staff will offer on-site training opportunities to help area nonprofits incorporate the Explorer into their own project decision making process. In addition, staff has created a dedicated YouTube channel with instructional videos for anyone to use. If you would like to schedule an Explorer training session, please contact Todd Stroupe at todd.stroupe@wpcog.org or Duncan Cavanaugh at duncan.cavanaugh@wpcog.org. The Explorer and the YouTube tutorials can be accessed through the Western Piedmont Council of Government's website (www.wpcog.org).

Other Explorer project supporters include the Community Foundation of Burke County and Carolina's HealthCare System - Blue Ridge.

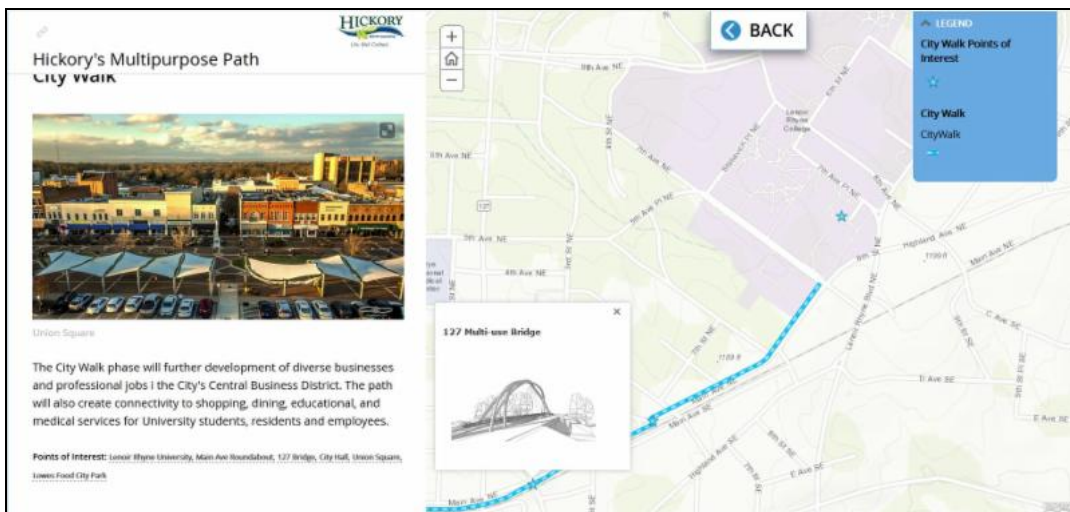
Article by Duncan Cavanaugh

IT/GIS Services

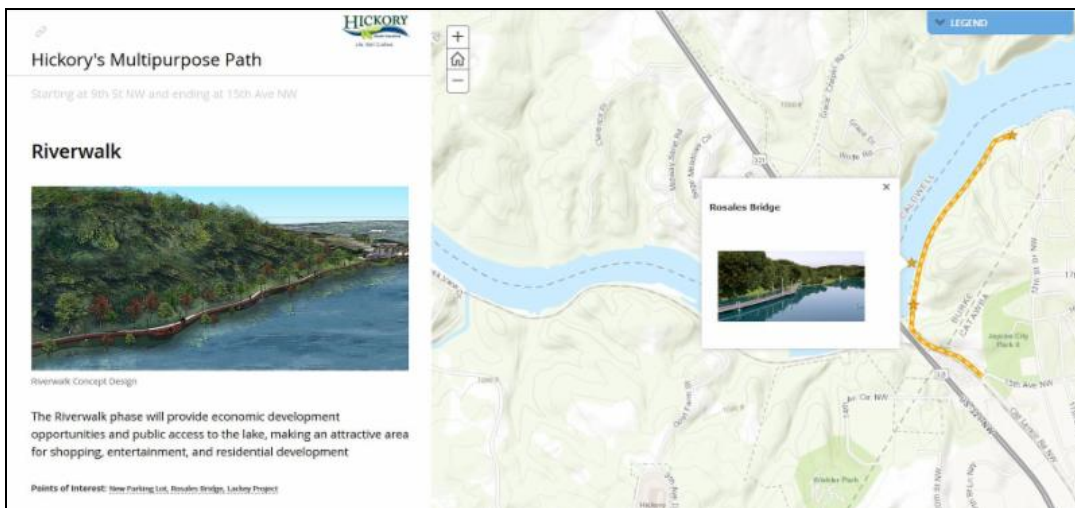
City of Hickory Multipurpose Path Story Map



The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG)-Information Technology/GIS and City of Hickory joined efforts to create a story map website that corresponds with City's Crafting Hickory initiative, which includes a multipurpose path project that was approved through a bond referendum.



The story map website allows visitors to combine descriptive text, photos, points of interest, and maps to tell the story of Hickory's multipurpose path that begins at Lenoir-Rhyne University, running along Main Avenue, through Downtown Hickory, to 9th Street NW, ending at the Deidra Lackey Memorial Park and Riverwalk on Lake Hickory.



WPCOG staff used ArcGIS Desktop and ArcGIS Online to create data for the story map with added text and images showing the multipurpose path, which highlights the connection of Downtown Hickory to Lake Hickory. The story map is split into five sections and with nine points of interest that have an interactive map with layers chosen to coincide with the descriptive text and images. The sections in the story map include the Hickory's Multipurpose Path Introduction, City Walk with six points of interest, 9th St. Streetscape, Old Lenoir Rd. Streetscape, and Riverwalk with three points of interest.

Users can pan, zoom in/out around the map and identify data features with only a click to view further information. The story map also has a link to the City Hickory's website so users can look up additional information about Crafting Hickory projects

If you would like to access Hickory's Multipurpose Path Story Map click [here](#).

Article by Daniel Ezell

Regional Housing Authority

HUD Designates the WPCOG-Regional Housing Authority as 1 of 17 EnVision Centers



HUD is launching the EnVision Center Demonstration in 17 communities around the country to connect low-income households with a variety of resources and tools that offer pathways to economic opportunity and self-sufficiency. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Regional Housing Authority (RHA) has been designated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to fulfill this mission in our region.

EnVision Centers will offer HUD-assisted families access to centralized support services that can help them achieve self-sufficiency, thereby making scarce federal resources more readily available to a greater number of households currently waiting to receive HUD assistance. Located near public housing clients, EnVision Centers will be centralized hubs that offer services in four areas:

- Economic Empowerment; including employer linkages, job placement and counseling
- Educational Advancement; including GED training courses, technology skills, financial literacy
- Health and Wellness; including healthcare and clinical services
- Character and Leadership Development; including volunteer and mentorship opportunities

The EnVision Center Demonstration will drive collaboration across federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and the private sector to offer services that respond to the unique needs of each community.

No two Centers will be alike, since different communities have different needs. The RHA plans to assess the region, collaborate with resident councils, housing authorities and community leaders to select the services to offer to our communities.

"In our region (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell & Catawba counties), many unassisted households are waiting to get access to some form of housing assistance, some for many years. If we succeed in helping families become self-sufficient, more families will be able to access the housing assistance they so desperately need," said WPCOG Board Chair and Town of Gamewell Council Member Barbara Pennell. "

HUD will develop tools to track and measure resident outcomes of EnVision Center participants and services - the goal of which is to ensure the EnVision Centers are able to achieve and monitor progress against the goals of the program.

"Housing assistance should be more than just putting a roof over someone's head," said

Secretary Ben Carson. "These EnVision Centers offer a more holistic housing approach by connecting HUD-assisted families with the tools they need to become self-sufficient and to flourish."

The RHA hopes to succeed in helping families envision a new path forward-one that focuses on the whole family and not just the roof over their heads.



You're invited to a Lunch and Learn

Learn more about the
WPCOG RHA's EnVision Center Designation

Please join us Tuesday, July 10 from 12 - 1:30
RSVP to kala.guido@wpcog.org by Friday, July 6

Article by Kala Guido

Transportation

WPCOG Receives Grant for Implementing Burke County Fixed Route Transit

Western Piedmont Council of Governments is pleased to announce that it has received a grant in the amount of \$264,000 to implement fixed route transit services in Burke County from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The project will improve the lives of local residents by providing reliable access to medical care and other key locations. The proposed route includes a connection between Carolinas Healthcare Blue Ridge-Morganton and Carolinas Healthcare Blue Ridge-Valdese. Establishment of the proposed bus route will help reduce the number of missed medical appointments, while also providing reliable transportation to many major employers, a variety of educational facilities, and several USDA-defined full-service grocery stores. In addition to the \$264,000 from the Trust, other funders include the Federal Transit Administration, Community Foundation of Burke County, Carolinas Healthcare - Blue Ridge, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Burke United Way, Burke County Women's Fund, Western Piedmont Community College, City of Morganton, Burke County, and the Towns of Valdese, Rutherford College, and Drexel.

"It is our expectation that the proposed route will connect marginalized populations to a variety of services. An emphasis, however, has been placed on connecting residents to medical care. The primary goal is to reduce the number of annual missed medical appointments, and we have received significant feedback from potential ridership stating the route's need," said Anthony Starr, Executive Director of Western Piedmont Council of

Governments.

By establishing a bus route connecting Rutherford College and Morganton, the planned system has the potential to impact 26% of Burke County's population. Within the route corridor, 23.2% of persons live in poverty - with 38.9% of these individuals being under the age of 18. The unemployment rate within the corridor is currently at 12%. According to census data, 9.5% of individuals living within the proposed corridor do not have access to vehicles. Statistics paired with overwhelming support for the route demonstrate the need and likely success of a fixed route transit system in Burke County.

Operated by Greenway Public Transportation, the new bus routes will offer the flexibility of a ¾ mile deviation from the regularly scheduled routing. Any deviations must be scheduled 24 hours in advance. Greenway will also continue to also offer Demand Response Services for areas outside of the ¾ -mile buffer of the new routes. These rides must still be scheduled 72 hours in advance.

With most of the project funding now secured, steps are being taken to finalize and market the new routes. Bus stops will be finalized in the coming month and made available on Greenway Public Transportation's interactive map by late September. The routes will also be added to Google Maps and its trip-planning tool. The intended start date for the new Burke County routes is October 1, 2018.

Collaborative efforts among funders and supporters continue as the project moves quickly towards implementation. WPCOG and Greenway staff will continue to work closely with area medical and social service providers, nonprofit organizations, and major employers to ensure the successful launch of the project.

[Article by Averi Ritchie](#)

Workforce Development Board Winning Strategies

The NC Associations of Workforce Development Boards in partnership with ncIMPACT, the UNC School of Government, the Department of Commerce, and RTI held a summit on May 16th to address Winning Strategies for Expanding N.C.'s Tightening Labor Market . This one day event provided current resources and best practices to help employers and workforce development agencies secure talent and improve their current incumbent training. Materials and videos from the days event are available at:



<https://www.sog.unc.edu/courses/winning-strategies-expanding-nc%E2%80%99s-tightening-labor-market>

[Article by Wendy Johnson](#)





Presenters include representatives from the WPCOG, NC Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources, NC Division of Water Resources, Mecklenberg County Stormwater, UNC Charlotte, NC State University, Appalachian State University, Charlotte Regional Transit System (CATS), Centralina Council of Governments, and the City of Hickory.

Location: Lenoir Rhyne University - Belk Centrum

Water Quality Conference - Thursday, July 26, 2018 at 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Air Quality Conference - Friday, July 27, 2018 at 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

[Register here](#)



Calendar of Events

July

18 - Water Resources Committee Meeting (11am)

22 - Regional Aging Provider Meeting (2pm)

24 - WPCOG Policy Board Meeting (6pm)

25 - Greater Hickory MPO TAC/TCC (2pm)

26 - Water Quality Conference (8:30am)

27 - Air Quality Conference (8:30am)

August

13 - Regional Aging Advisory Committee/STHL Meeting (12pm)

22 - Greater Hickory MPO TAC/TCC (2pm)

23 - Workforce Development Board Meeting (8:30am)

28 - WPCOG Executive Committee Meeting (6pm)

29 - Regional Managers' Meeting (12pm)

30 - Mayor/Chairman/Manager Meeting (6pm)

September

18 - WPAQC Meeting (10am)

25 - WPCOG Policy Board Meeting (6pm)

26 - Greater Hickory MPO TAC/TCC (2pm)



Stay Connected



1880 2nd Ave NW · Hickory, NC 28601 · 828.322.9191

www.wpcog.org

