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Western Piedmont
Council of Governments
Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968

January 2017

Contact Information | Events Calendar

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process is a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning as implemented through the CEDS can successfully serve as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The CEDS can provide a capacity-building foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other economic actors, can enhance the environment for regional economic prosperity.

Simply put, a CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. It can be a key component in establishing and maintaining a strong regional economy by helping to build economic capacity that contributes to individual, business and community success.

The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region. The CEDS should take into account and, where appropriate, integrate or leverage other regional planning efforts, including the use of other available federal funds, private sector resources and state support which can advance a region's CEDS goals and objectives.

Regions like the Western Piedmont must update their CEDS process at least every five years to qualify for EDA assistance under its Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs and maintain their designation by EDA as an Economic Development District (EDD).

CEDS is a nine-month process and one the WPCOGs revisits every five-years as a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development District (EDD). The CEDS Committee will meet over seven months beginning in February and ending in August 2017. WPCOG staff have been working on preparations for these meetings since mid-October 2016.

The process will result in at least four major products including:

- A profile of the existing economic conditions in the region;
- An in-depth analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (commonly known as a SWOT analysis) based on the regional economic analysis and public and private stakeholder surveys and interviews;
- A Strategic Direction and Action Plan built from the SWOT analysis findings and CEDS Committee deliberations and elements from other existing regional plans. This action plan will identify the stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation of CEDS goals and objectives, timetables, and opportunities for the integrated use of local, state, federal and private funds; and
- Development of performances measures for evaluating the implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy.

The first CEDS Committee meeting will be February 1, 2017, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the WPCOG offices located at 1880 Second Avenue NW, Hickory, NC 28601.

Article by Taylor Dellinger & Jason Toney

IT/GIS Services
Scareware: Don't Get Scared into a Scam

The chances are that you have seen them -- pop-up messages exclaiming that your computer is infected with a virus. These pop-ups probably used one or more of the following tactics: a variety of technical-sounding phrases, performing a fake scan showing a list of infections, the use of logos resembling that of legitimate companies, or a voice or siren telling you that this is urgent. Do not believe it! The pop-up is a scam. These messages are deception software designed to scare, and their purpose is to frighten the user into leaving his or her common sense and purchasing or installing malware. Do not fall for this! Most likely, there is nothing wrong with your computer, but a false alarm tempting you to install or purchase the malicious software.

These scams are called "scareware" because they try to frighten the user into purchasing fake antivirus software by displaying a seemingly genuine security warning. If the user does buy the application, either it will do nothing, or it could compromise the computer or device by installing malicious software.

In most cases, scareware scams are easily identified. Legitimate system and software pop-ups tend to be informative in nature, advising the user of what is occurring but not telling the user to "do something." If, however, the message instructs the user to take a particular action - especially if it is coercive in nature and encourages the user to buy a product - it is probably a fraud. Reputable antivirus vendors do not use scare tactics to solicit sales. One indicator that a user is likely encountering scareware is if the pop-up message includes a support number to call, as major companies like Microsoft or McAfee never make their support numbers readily available since they need to control their call volume.

So what should a user do if he or she has come across what appears to be scareware? The first thing is to stop, take a breath and do not panic. It is likely nothing is wrong. Review the information: there is text on the screen, and the browser might be stuck in an audio alert. Nothing, however, is going to

explode and most likely no data will be lost. The text on the screen is untrustworthy -- do not believe anything that it says, no matter how authoritative it sounds. Next, try to terminate the browser, but DO NOT click "OK" or "No," or even the "X" at the top-right corner of the screen. You need to look and read the content of the pop-up carefully rather than automatically clicking. Most scareware is designed so that clicking "OK" or "No," or even the "X" will not function and may even launch the download of malware. Instead, if the user receives a suspicious pop-up that they are unsure about, then the safest thing they can do is press (Windows) the 'Ctl' + 'Alt" + 'Del' keys to open the task manager and end the task on their browser (even though open web pages will be lost). If using a Mac, press Command + Option + Q + Esc to "Force Quit." (For more detail, see the Federal Trade Commission's scareware advice at www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0263-free-security-scans)

The FTC also recommends making sure a computer is fully protected by legitimate, up-to-date antivirus software. Furthermore, always ensure the operating system is current. If a user continues to receive anti-virus pop-ups, he or she should close the browser as described above, reboot his or her computer and then run a full anti-virus scan when the computer is turned back on.

Article by Trey Schweitzer
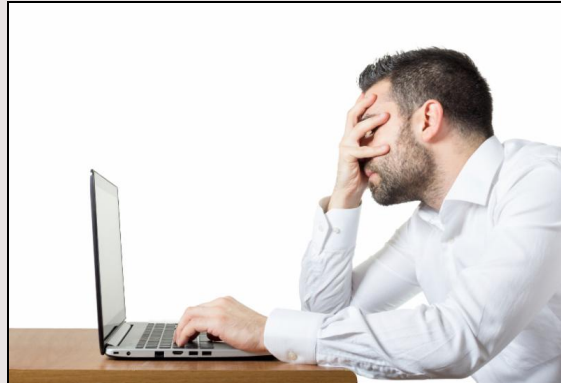
Regional Housing Authority

Section 8 Waiting List Opens

The Regional Housing Authority (RHA) plans to accept applications for the Section 8 Waiting List starting February 20, 2017. The waiting list will be open until further notice. If the decision is made to stop taking applications, a 30-day notice will be given. The RHA hopes that maintaining an open waiting list will give applicants the opportunity to apply as the need arises. Applications are available at the RHA Office and at the Department of Social Services (DSS) in each county that we serve: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba. Applications are also available for print on the Western Piedmont Council of Governments **(WPCOG) website**. Applicants will have more than 30 days to retrieve an application and complete it before the acceptance date of February 20, 2017. All applications must be submitted to the RHA by mail or hand delivered. Applications will not be accepted until February 20, 2017.

Applications are available to pick up at:

Alexander County DSS
604 7th St SW
Taylorsville, NC 28681

Burke County DSS
700 E Parker Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655

Caldwell County DSS
2345 Morganton Blvd SW
Lenoir, NC 28645

Catawba County DSS
3030 11th Ave Dr SE
Hickory, NC 28602

WPCOG - RHA
1880 Second Ave NW
Hickory, NC 28601

Applications are available for print at:

www.wpcog.org/applicants

Starting February 20, 2017

Applications can be hand delivered to:

WPCOG - RHA
1880 Second Ave NW
Hickory, NC 28601

Applications can be submitted by mail to:

WPCOG - RHA
PO Box 9026
Hickory, NC 28603

Article by Kala Guido

Workforce Development
Focus for 2017

2017 looks to be another year of significant impact and success for the workforce system. The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board will be procuring both a contractor for One-Stop Operations (NCWorks) and a contractor for Adult and Dislocated Worker services. We will take a new approach this year in how we demonstrate the performance and success of NCWorks in the Western Piedmont Local Area. We have already begun testing a snapshot dashboard of those measures ("Workforce by the Numbers") on our website www.westernpiedmontworks.org. This year will be a baseline year for this project, so you may see changes over the course of the next few months as our workforce board sub-committee works to finalize the information.

Snapshot dashboard of WFD performance measures ("Workforce by the Numbers").

Looking back at 2016, a core part of the NCWorks system under the Workforce Board performed at the following level: there were 2,746 new registrations in www.ncworks.gov; 4,814 customers were assisted with updating and/or developing their resume; 126 job trainings took place; 1,213 employers were provided 14,368 business services; and 129 of those services were directly related to recruitment events. At the end of December 2016, there were 2,240 more people working than this same period in 2015.

We are looking forward to 2017!

Area Agency on Aging
Eating Healthy in 2017

As we age, our eating choices can make a difference in our health and well-being. Our eating habits, good or bad, are developed over the years. For many people, we eat what we want, when we want and do not consider the health effects of our choices. Changing what we eat is not always easy, but it can be done, and for those who have diabetes, healthy eating is even more critical.

There is more than one way to eat healthier, and everyone has to plan according to his or her eating style. To change to a lifestyle of healthy eating, it is important to start by making small changes over time. You can set small, reachable goals that will help you obtain a much larger goal. For example, instead of an initial goal to lose 20 pounds, start first by adding more vegetables to your diet. By setting and achieving small goals, you will be able to achieve your bigger objective.

It is important to remember that what we eat, how we eat and why we eat are very different for each of us. When making healthier food choices, it is important to reflect on your personal preferences, culture, traditions and budget. Healthy eating does not require an expensive budget for food; it just requires a plan.

For those with diabetes food choices are even more critical. There is no one perfect or magical food that is going to prevent diabetes; however you can manage your disease by including a wide variety of foods such as vegetables, whole grains, fruits, non-fat dairy products, beans, lean meats, poultry and fish. Having diabetes does not mean you can no longer enjoy the foods you did previously, but you should find the right nutritional balance to maintain a healthier you.

The Western Piedmont Area Agency on Aging wants to make sure you have access to the information and tools you need to live a healthy lifestyle. Please see the following workshops and dates for Living Healthy programs coming up in our region:

- Living Healthy with Chronic Conditions - Wednesdays January 18 - February 22, from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm at the Lenoir Housing Authority.
- Living Healthy with Chronic Conditions - Fridays January 20 - February 24, from 2:30 -5:00 pm at the Caldwell County Senior Center.
- Living Healthy with Diabetes - Thursdays March 2 - April 6, from 9:00 - 11:00 am at the Health First Center 103 Tate Blvd. SE Suite 103, Hickory.

If you are interested in attending a FREE Living Healthy workshop series or are interested in scheduling a workshop, please contact **Sarah Evitt**, Aging Specialist at 828-485-4216. You can also find more information at **www.wpcogaaa.org**, under Health Promotion Programs.

Article by Sarah Evitt

Community & Economic Development
Essential Single Family Rehabilitation (ESFR) Program Available to Alexander County Eligible Homeowners

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments has been awarded $175,000 from the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency to rehabilitate five (5) homes scattered throughout Alexander County. The primary goal of the ESFR program is to encourage the essential rehabilitation of scattered-site single-family housing units owned and occupied by lower-income households with an elderly and/or disabled full-time household member or with a child under the age of 6 whose health is threatened by the presence of lead-based paint hazards and veteran households with incomes at or below eighty percent (80%) of the area median incomes. (See chart below). These funds come from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program.

2016 Income Limits for the Alexander County Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Program

Number in Household	80% of Median ("Low Income")
1	$29,250
2	$33,400
3	$37,600
4	$41,750
5	$45,100
6	$48,450
7	$51,800
8	$55,150

Income limits are subject to change based on annually published HUD Home Income Limits.

Note: Income limits are adjusted periodically by The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The most recent income limits will be used as they become available.

The amount of funds available for the rehabilitation of each home can vary from $5,000 to $25,000, depending on the condition of the home. The home must be economically feasible to rehabilitate. Each dwelling unit assisted must meet all requirements of the ESFR Rehabilitation Standards at a cost that is within the program limits. Mobile homes are not eligible for this program.

All work completed must meet the current North Carolina State Residential Building Code standards set forth by the State and be done in compliance with all state and local permitting, inspections, licensing, and insurance requirements. All work completed must meet Alexander County's Minimum Housing Code as well.

Eligible applicants will be served on a first-come, first served basis without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, physical or mental handicaps, or family status. ESFR assistance will be provided to eligible owner-occupants in the form of interest-free, forgivable loans covering the costs associated with rehabilitation of the unit. These interest-free loans will be forgiven at the rate of $3,000 per year. For example, if $24,000 is spent on housing rehabilitations and the owner lived in the home for eight (8) years after the work is completed, the loan is totally forgiven.

Staff is currently taking applications for this program. Homeowners desiring additional information or wishing to apply for the ESFR Program may do so by contacting Laurie Powell at 828-322-9191 ext. 249.
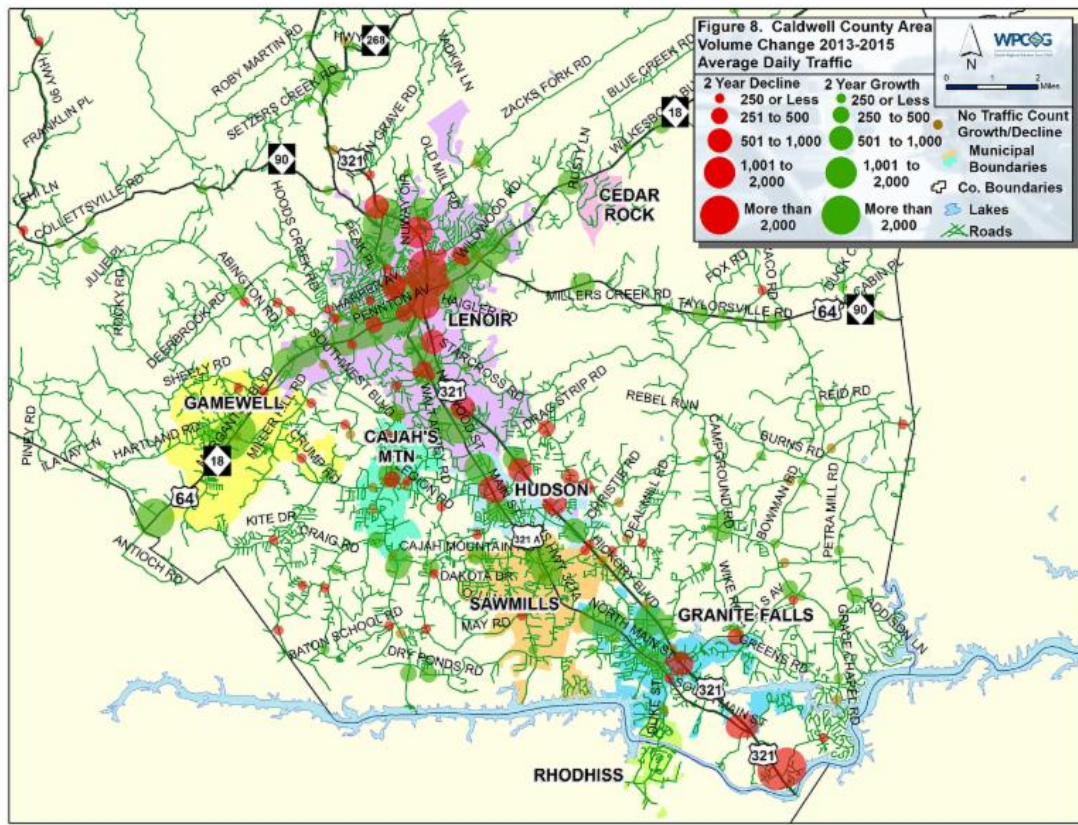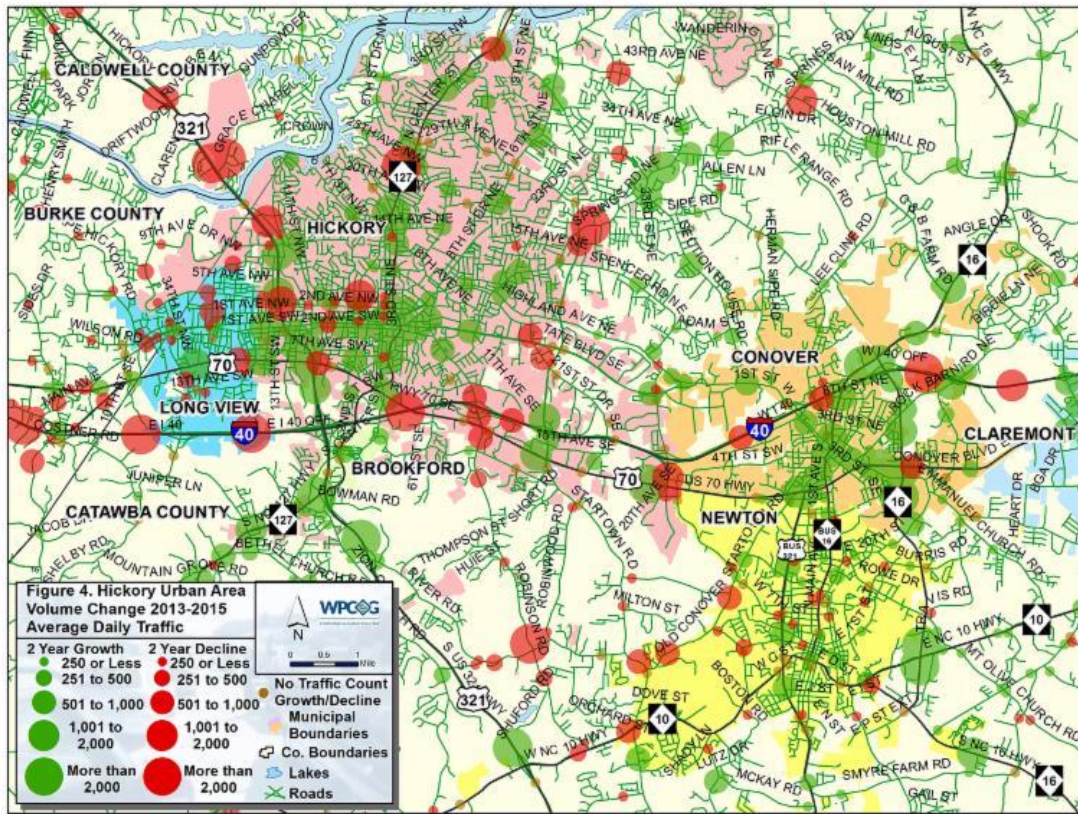
Community & Regional Planning

Winter 2016 EIN - Unemployment Rates, Traffic Counts and More

The Winter 2016 Economic Indicators Newsletter addresses Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rates, Hickory Metro average annual wages and Hickory MSA traffic counts. The Winter 2016 Edition is currently available only to subscribers. The EIN is produced quarterly and is a publication of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board. To subscribe to the EIN, please contact Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst at 828-485-4233 or by email **taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org**.

Here are a few key highlights of this edition:

- The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate has declined from 4.8% in April 2016 to 4.7% in October 2016.
- Between April and October, the number of employed persons fell by 597 to 160,150 while the civilian labor force decreased from 168,913 to 167,980 (-933).
- Average Hickory MSA wages increased from $34,201 in 2011 to $37,528 in 2015.

- Data from the North Carolina Department of Transportation reveals that the highest 2015 traffic count in the Hickory Metro region of 64,000 vehicles per day occurred along I-40 between US Highway 321 (Exit 123) and McDonald Parkway (Exit 126).
- The largest traffic volume increase in the Hickory-Newton-Conover area between 2007 and 2015 (10,100 vehicles per day) was along NC 16 north of I-40.
- The highest Alexander County traffic count in 2015 (15,000) was located at NC 127 just south of Rink Dam Road.
- Between 2007 and 2015, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) increases of 1,000 vehicles per day occurred along NC 127 north of Rink Dam Rd and NC 16 between Taylorsville and the Catawba County line.
- Twelve traffic count locations in Caldwell County had ADTs of 30,000 or more in 2015. Nearly all of these counts occurred on US 321 between Lenoir and the Catawba River Bridge.
- Traffic counts along US 321 were lower in 2015 than in 2013 due US 321 road construction near Blowing Rock.
- Burke County/Morganton area traffic counts were higher than 30,000 vehicles per day in 2015 were all found along I-40.
- The largest traffic count increase (7,000 vehicles per day) in the Morganton area over the past two years took place at on West Fleming Drive (US 64-70) west of Burkemont Avenue (US 64) due to the new Morganton Heights Shopping Center.

See the selected figures below for additional information.

Figure 4. Hickory Urban Area Volume Change 2013-2015 Average Daily Traffic

Figure 8. Caldwell County Area Volume Change 2013-2015 Average Daily Traffic

Article by Taylor Dellinger

WPCOG Calendar of Events

January	February	March

18 (Wed)- Water Resources
          (12 PM)

19 (Thu)- Regional Managers
          Meeting (12 PM)

23 (Mon)- Regional Aging
          Provider Meeting (2 PM)

24 (Tue)- Policy Board (6 PM)

25 (Wed)- MPO TCC (2 PM)
          & TAC (3:30 PM)

01 (Wed)- CEDS Meeting (3 PM)

13 (Mon)- Regional Aging
          Advisory Committee (12 PM)

22 (Wed)- MPO TCC (2 PM)
          & TAC (3:30 PM)

23 (Thu)- Workforce Board
          (8:30 AM)

28 (Tue)- Executive Committee
          Meeting (6 PM)

21 (Tue)- Western Piedmont
          Air Quality Committee
          (10 AM)

22 (Wed)- MPO TCC (2 PM)
          & TAC (3:30 PM)

28 (Tue)- Policy Board (6 PM)