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August 2019

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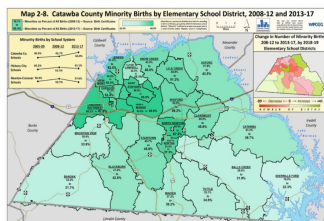
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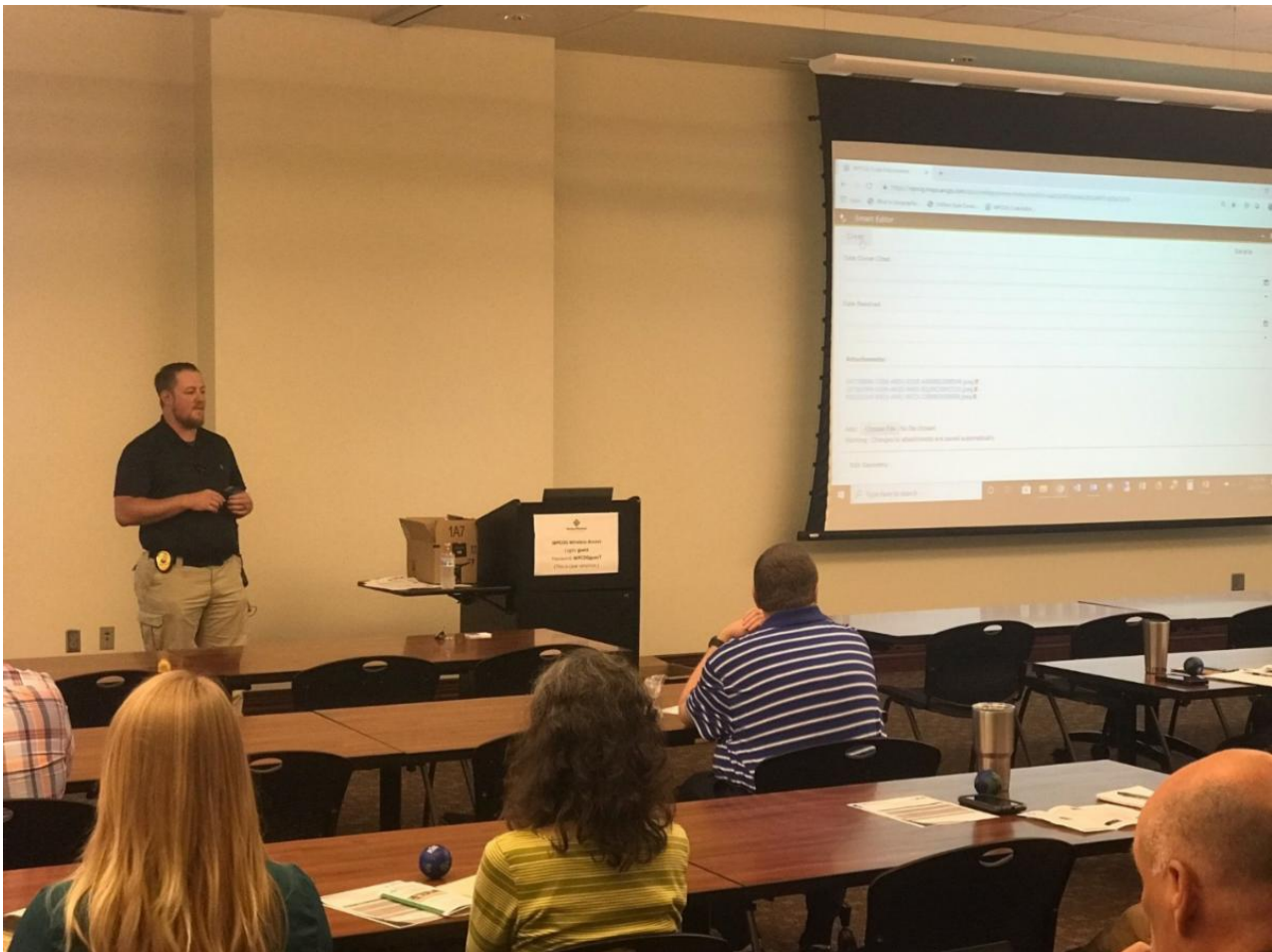


Community & Regional Planning - GIS/Code Compliance

WPCOG Hosts the 2019 Government GIS Symposium

"How far we've come," was the theme for this year's North Carolina ArcUser Group (NCAUG) Government Symposium, a Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) hosted geographical information system (GIS) event where professionals showcase how they are utilizing GIS within their respective governments.

Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) kicked off the symposium with a presentation on how their ArcGIS Enterprise products can help organization collaboration. WPCOG's Code Enforcement Division demonstrated its code compliance web application. North Carolina Department of Transportation shared how they used drones and GIS for Hurricane Florence emergency response. Map Forsyth showed their online public school emergency response and preparedness map application. A North Carolina Office of Budget and Management staff member talked about tribal, state, and local governments' role in the Census 2020. The day ended with a panel and audience discussion about the state of governmental GIS in North Carolina.



WPCOG Code Enforcement Officer, Brad Moody, answering questions after application demonstration.



NCDOT talks about rainfall totals from Hurricane Florence on North Carolina's coast.

NCAUG sponsors the Government Symposium annually under its mission to "provide a forum for the exchange and distribution of knowledge, techniques, and data for people across NC using and/or associated with software produced by ESRI." WPCOG staff have been proud to host the event in Hickory for the past twelve years and look forward to continuing working with NCAUG to help local governments Statewide serve their communities with the latest in GIS technology.

For more information about NCAUG and future GIS events, please visit their website at ncaug.com.

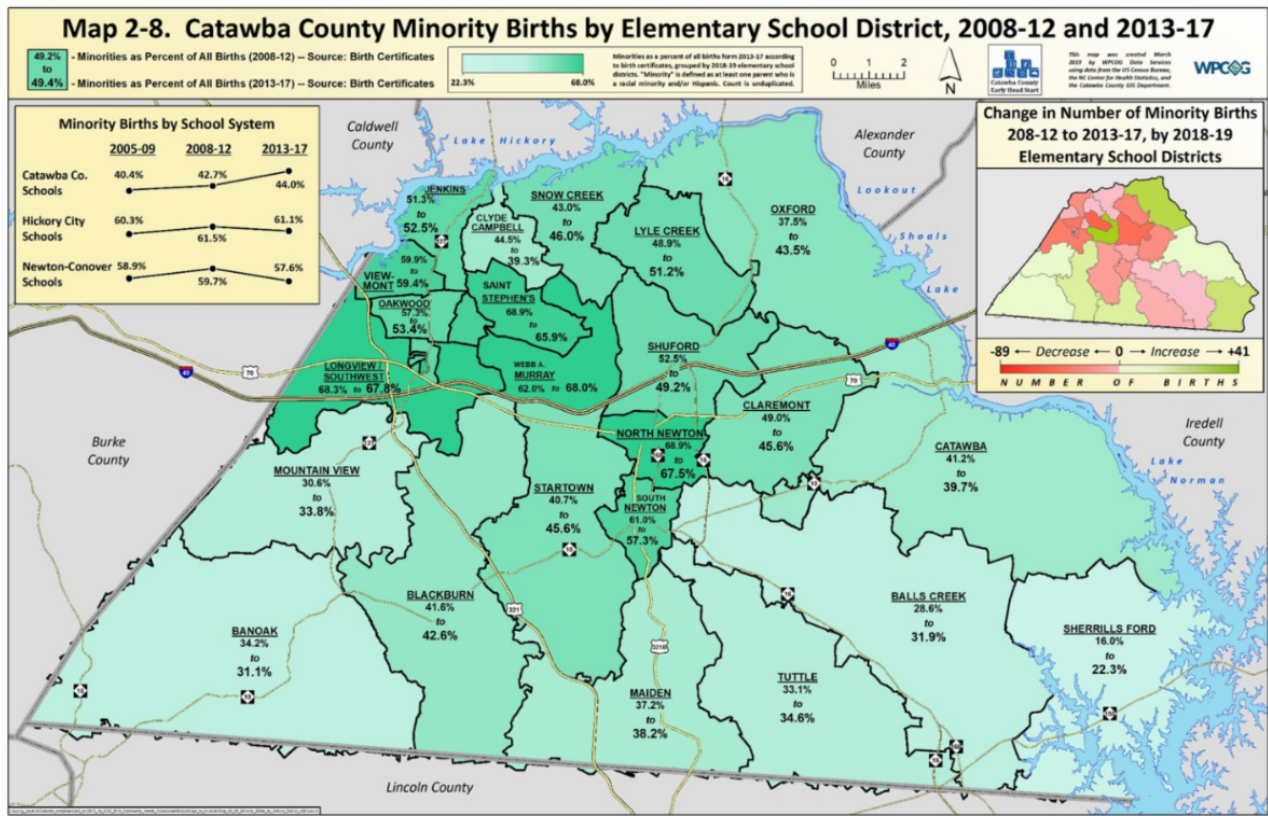
Article by Todd Stroupe

Community & Regional Planning - GIS/Data Services

Catawba Early Head Start 2019 Community Assessment-By the Numbers

Catawba County Schools-Early Head Start (CCS-EHS) is a federally-funded program to help low-income families afford high-quality child care with health and mental health services and family supports. Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers whose families live at or below the poverty level in Catawba County.

On Thursday, June 27 WPCOG staff presented to the CCS-EHS Policy Board and staff a thorough assessment of the current state of the physical, social and economic welfare of families with very young children in Catawba County, and provided an understanding of factors affecting this population. The assessment included a variety of maps to illustrate how various forms of hardship are experienced in communities throughout Catawba County. The assessment also compares changes in the demographic and economic makeup of very young children and their families in Catawba County which have occurred in the five years since the last publication of Early Head Start assessment in 2014.

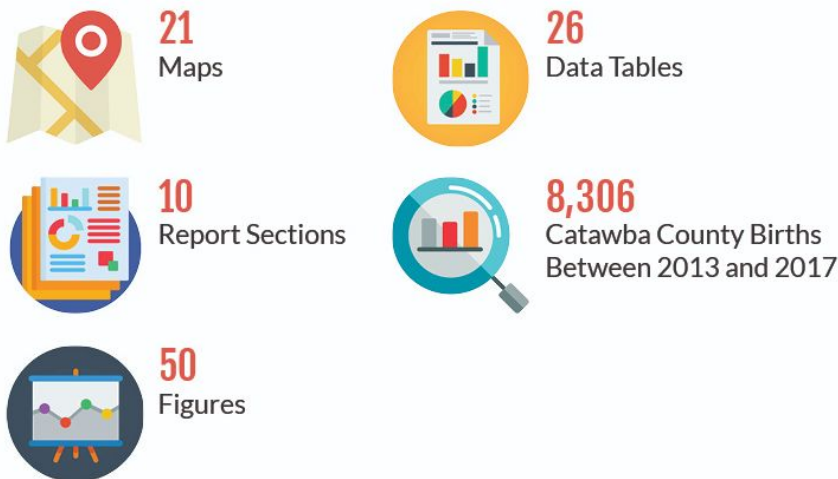


Below is a summary of findings of the community assessment:

- Decline of births from 2005-09 to 2008-12, increase for African-American and Asian-American births, decrease for Hispanic births;
- Improved economic conditions, but economic hardship remains;
- Growth in median household income, renter household income half of owner-occupied;
- Decrease in poverty (poverty rate still 23.6% of 0-4-year-olds);
- More than half of elementary students eat free/reduced lunch;
- About one-in-seven residents receive SNAP (21,329 persons);
- About half of children on Medicaid or NC Health Choice;
- Lower rates of prenatal care and smoking during pregnancy;
- Subsidized day care is decreasing, is vital to local children.

To learn more about the Catawba Early Head Start Community Assessment please contact Taylor Dellinger at 828-485-4233 (taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org) or Todd Stroupe at 828-485-4269 (todd.stroupe@wpcog.org)

2019 Early Head Start Community Assessment by the numbers:



Community & Regional Planning - Environmental Planning

Western NC Air and Water Quality Conference Recap

On July 25th and 26th, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and the Reese Institute for the Conservation of Natural Resources hosted the Annual Western North Carolina Air and Water Quality Conference at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, NC. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments organizes these annual conferences while Lenoir-Rhyne University's Reese Institute provides lunch and facilities. Other sponsors of the conferences include the Greater Hickory MPO, the Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee, the Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee and Western Piedmont Stormwater Partnership.

The purpose of the conferences is to educate the public, government officials and the private sector on current air and water quality issues important to the Western Piedmont region and beyond. Stormwater is a major focus of the Water Quality Conference, and is held on behalf of the twelve local governments that participate in the Western Piedmont Stormwater Partnership. The Air Quality Conference is held to demonstrate those links between transportation and air quality to the public and decision makers. Both conferences are a day-long event.

Both of this year's conferences were kicked off with a presentation from students, which was a positive way to demonstrate the next generation's interests in these important issues.

Water Quality Conference on Thursday July 25th topics included:

- Student Project: Land Use and Algal Blooms in the Catawba River Basin - Ash Berry and Madelyn Stewart
- Safe Basin Closure at Plant Marshall - Duke Energy
- Lake James Assessment - Lake James Association
- Regional Collaboration for Source Water Protection - Connecting Forests, Land Use and Water Supply - Catawba Wateree Initiative
- Illicit Discharges: A Range of Examples and Challenges - Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Stormwater
- Coal Tar Sealants and Water Quality - Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Stormwater

Air Quality Conference on Friday July 26th topics included:

- Health Impact Assessment for the I-26 Expansion - Evan Watson, recent graduate, Lenoir-Rhyne University
- Electric Vehicle Strategies for Electric Utilities - Duke Energy
- Greensboro Electric Bus Fleet - City of Greensboro
- Update on North Carolina's Clean Energy Plan Development - NC DEQ
- Using the N.C. Wildlife Commission Green Growth Toolbox to Reduce Sprawl - NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Electrifying Transportation in North Carolina - Advanced Energy

Each presentation can be found on the WPCOG Facebook page at www.facebook.com/WPCOG/

Article by Johnny Wear

Regional Housing Authority

Western NC Housing Authority Forum

Our Regional Housing Authority (RHA) hosted the Western NC Housing Authority Forum on July 30. HUD representatives from Greensboro were in attendance to discuss hot topics and answer questions. Courtney Kyles, Director from the Greensboro Office of Public Housing, led this month's discussion and question/answer session. Topics covered included: Fair Housing, Conversion and Regionalization of Housing Authorities, HUD Strong Families Initiatives, and changes in policies effecting re-entry applicants (applicants who have been recently released from jail). Several Housing Authority's from the western region were in attendance.

Jody Moses, Field Office Director from the Field and Policy Management department was also in

attendance. Jody discussed several current initiatives being passed down from HUD Secretary Ben Carson. The group also discussed Healthy Home grants and Opportunity Zones.

Housing Authorities in the region who are interested in participating in quarterly sessions are encouraged to contact Kala Guido for the next forum date. You can reach Kala at 828.485.4282 or kala.guido@wpcog.org

Article by Kala Guido

Transportation

Public Comment on Updated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

In August 2019, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) released the draft fiscal year (FY) 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The NCDOT provided the Greater Hickory region a draft supplement of the STIP that contained projects in the four-county area. As a result, the local Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) has also been updated. The local TIP is a subset of the State of North Carolina's STIP, which denotes the scheduling and funding of construction projects located across the state over a minimum four-year time period as required by State and Federal laws. Both the TIP and the STIP cover a 10-year period, with the first six years (2020-2025 in this version) referred to as the delivery program and the latter four years (2026-2029 in this version) as the developmental program.

Wednesday, September 5, 2-4pm
Ridgeview Public Library - Community Room
706 1st St SW - Hickory, NC 28602

Wednesday, September 11, 1-3pm
Morganton City Hall - Council Chambers
305 E Union St - Morganton, NC 28655

Copies of the updated TIP and STIP are available online at:
www.wpcog.org/transportation-documents

An interactive map of programmed projects is online at:
www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/development/Pages/draft-stip-map.aspx

Public comments may also be emailed to brian.horton@wpcog.org

The North Carolina Board of Transportation is expected to adopt the new STIP at their meeting on September 5. The GHMPO is expected to adopt the local TIP at their joint board (TAC/TCC) meeting on September 25.

Article by Brian Horton

Workforce Development Board

Talk About a Collaboration!



Six NC Workforce Development Boards along with our education and employer partners have established NC's first Energy Careers Career Pathway. The six NC Workforce Development Boards were recognized at the August 7, 2019 NCWorks Commission held in Charlotte. Currently the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board has certified two other Career Pathways: Advanced Manufacturing, and Healthcare.

Article by Wendy Johnson

Area Agency on Aging Do We Really All Fall Down?

One out of three adults age 65 and older falls each year, but less than half talk to their healthcare provider. Among older adults (those 65 or older), falls are the leading cause of injury death. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. Many view falls as a normal part of aging, when in fact it is the complete opposite. Once an older adult experiences a fall, they often develop a fear of falling resulting in a decrease in their physical activity which can lead to missing out on the things they once enjoyed.



Ultimately, there can be many different causes for a fall such as poor footwear, medication side effects, fall hazards in the home, or poor vision. The good thing is most falls are preventable. One of the best ways to prevent falls is to find an exercise program that helps improve balance. A great place to find falls prevention programs are at your local senior center. The Area Agency on Aging works with local senior centers to implement evidence-based health promotion programs such as A Matter of Balance, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention, and Walk with Ease.

A Matter of Balance is an evidence-based program that recognizes the risk of falling but also highlights real-world coping strategies to reduce the fears of falls. In the workshop, participants will be able to shift their thought about falls to see that falls can be controllable. Throughout the Matter of Balance workshop, participants will have an opportunity to establish realistic goals to increase their physical activity. The workshop will provide each participant with exercises that focus on balance and strength that can be done in the comfort of your home. A Matter of Balance also works with participants to change their view about falls and provides ways that older adults can reduce their risk for falls.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention is recognized worldwide for its overall health benefits. Focusing on three main principals which include movement control, weight transfer and integration of mind and body, Tai Chi works to increase balance and in turn, reduce falls. The movement control principal in Tai Chi encourages slow, smooth, and continues movements so that participants can increase their internal muscle strength without causing too much tension on their bodies and joints. The second principal, weight transfer, allows participants to focus on weight transfer with each step therefore helping improve overall mobility, coordination, and balance. The integration of body and mind, as the third principal, encourages finding a balanced connection between their mind and body. With a balanced mind and body, participants are able to focus on relaxation and continue to build confidence as they gain strength.

Walk with Ease is a group-walking program that encourages participants to start walking and stay motivated to keep active. During the six-week program, participants meet three times a week as a group. Each session starts with a health education session followed by stretching exercises then to a 10 - 35 minute walk.

If you are interested in any of the falls prevention workshops, contact Aging Specialist Sarah Stamey at 828-485-4216 or find more information online at www.wpcogaaa.org.

Article by Sarah Stamey

Community & Economic Development

Manufacturing Solutions Center receives \$750,000 EDA i6 Challenge Grant Award



The Manufacturing Solutions Center in Conover has been selected as a recipient of an Economic Development Administration's Regional Innovations Strategies i6 Challenge grant.

The MSC - a division of Catawba Valley Community College - earned one of the 26 grants to be awarded and was joined by an elite group of fellow recipients such as Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, Mayo Clinic, Old Dominion University, Purdue University, and UCLA.

The only grant recipient from North Carolina, MSC assists businesses and entrepreneurs with developing new prototypes for market, testing products for reliability and quality, training personnel for lean manufacturing processes and supply chain efficiencies, and enhancing and improving products through research and development.

During the past six years, MSC has worked with more than 2,100 businesses and over 1,750 entrepreneurs in all 50 states and 42 countries - primarily in the textile, hosiery and furniture industries.

The i6 challenge grant provides \$750,000 (which is matched by the recipient) in order to launch or expand initiatives. The WPCOG assisted MSC Executive Director Dan St. Louis and his staff with the grant

process.

With its i6 Challenge funding, the MSC will focus on advanced fibers and fabrics to work in the areas of bio-textiles, military applications, wearable textiles, industrial hemp fiber re-introduction, eco-friendly sustainable products, and other advanced textile items. MSC will continue to support 50 new small businesses, as well as aid with the launch of 100 new products. The lessons learned will allow the organization to franchise this model to other areas and industries.

Article by Paul Teague



WPCOG Calendar

September

10 - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee (3pm)

12 - Regional Aging Advisory Committee (RAAC) (12-2PM)

24 - WPCOG Policy Board Meeting (6pm) @ Cahah's Mtn.

October

22 - Region E Aging Providers (2-4PM)

23 - MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) (TBA)

23 - MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) (TBA)

24 - Workforce Development Board @ WPCOG (8:30am)

November

TBD - Annual Landlord Meeting

11 - Regional Aging Advisory Committee (RAAC) (12-2pm)

15 - Regional Housing Forum Series @ WPCOG (8:30am-12PM)

20 - MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) (TBA)

20 - MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) (TBA)

26 - WPCOG Policy Board Meeting (6pm) @ Maiden

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

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