

Virginia Museum of Natural History -- Waynesboro Campus

Project Briefing Updated Fall 2023



2023 Rendering

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville (VMNH) and the City of Waynesboro are collaborating to locate a campus of the museum in the City's downtown. The purpose of the Waynesboro campus will be to expand the museum's reach, interpret the unique attributes of the Shenandoah Valley, provide educational opportunities for the region, augment cultural and tourism opportunities, and generate local and state revenue.

NEARLY \$2,000,000 SUPPORT TO DATE

The Commonwealth of Virginia has included in the FY19 and FY23 budgets, funding to provide engineering and architecture work to begin the establishment of a campus of the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Downtown Waynesboro. In addition, the City has committed \$1 million in support of this project, and \$240,000 was raised with charitable donations and grants to establish a demo museum site and conduct a Feasibility Study, Museum Master Plan, and Capital Campaign Planning Study. These efforts show the commitment of not only the Commonwealth, but also the City and its citizens.

KEY BENEFITS

The museum will benefit by running a financially sustainable operation that will increase its visibility and impact on science literacy in Virginia. The City and region will benefit from the estimated more than \$4.2 million in annual economic impact as the museum will drive new traffic into the area that will support the service and cultural sectors. The Commonwealth will benefit with an estimated \$165,385 in annual tax revenue, a positive cash flow to the existing museum operation, and the creation of a new tourist attraction.

LOW RISK INVESTMENT

The details provided in this document have been excerpted from a Chmura Economics & Analytics study published in 2013 with 2023 updates, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and City and VMNH staff. The combined details demonstrate

that this is a low-risk investment for the Commonwealth. In the Feasibility Study, Chmura concludes that the number of annual visitors to the Waynesboro Campus will be more than 65,000 people and the museum will generate a sustainable cash flow.

THE PROJECT

Completed studies have indicated that the investment in a 28,000 square foot, multi-story facility located along the banks of the South River adjacent to the central business district and in the expanded Constitution Park is estimated to be \$41 million. Additional studies indicate that corporate and citizen donations could reach \$2.5 million. Coupled with the City's commitment of \$1 million, the Commonwealth's investment of \$37.6 million is attainable. Expanding on the preliminary work from 2019, funds included in the FY23 budget provided detailed design of the building, landscape, and exhibits and is expected to be completed in Spring 2024.

CORE SERVICE AREA

VMNH-Waynesboro will serve the 8 million citizens of Virginia, with its core service area reaching the following 11 cities and counties: the Cities of

Waynesboro, Staunton, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Buena Vista, and Charlottesville, and the Counties of Augusta, Nelson, Rockingham, Rockbridge, and Albemarle.

The 2025 total population of this area is estimated to be 486,743, a 7% increase since 2015.

Key Attributes

\$4.2M plus Economic Impact

65,000 Annual Visitors

Wide Public Support

Sustainable Operation

Serve all Citizens of State

Higher Education Impact

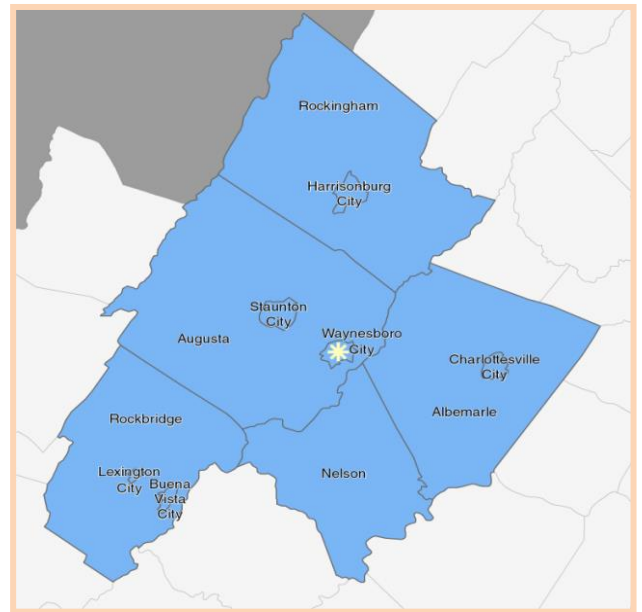
STEM Education Opportunity

New Tourist Destination

Entrepreneurial Growth

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE IS ESTIMATED TO BE OVER 65,000

The Waynesboro campus is expected to draw double the number of visitors compared to VMNH-Martinsville. The existing museum in Martinsville has had outstanding success in recent years, reaching attendance of 43,000 and yielding a three-year annual average attendance of 40,000, with 1/3 from Martinsville/Henry County, 1/3 from other VA localities, and 1/3 from out of state. Martinsville/Henry County has a combined population of 62,233. The comparable region of Waynesboro, Augusta, and Staunton had a combined population of 126,307 in 2022.



- The low-range annual attendance estimate of VMNH-Waynesboro is 54,984. This assumes that 33% of the population of Waynesboro, Augusta, and Staunton, and 3.8% of the population of the rest of the service area will visit the museum per year. Those percentages are the same for the existing museum facility.
- Waynesboro is within one hour of three of the top 12 state tourist attractions, and 3.5 miles from the most visited national park in the country. An additional attraction will encourage more overnight stays and longer visitation.
- Shenandoah National Park attracts over 1 million annual visitors. One quarter (25%) of park visitors use the southern entrance of the park, which is located within five miles of Waynesboro. A 2013 Chmura survey indicated that 13.5% of park visitors may have an interest in visiting a natural history museum, if one is close by. If those interests materialize, the high-range annual attendance estimate to VMNH-Waynesboro would be 85,832 visits per year.
- In the feasibility and economic impact analysis, Chmura used the mid-point of both the low- and high-range estimates, which results in 65,582 visitors per year.
- The rate structure of the new museum will be the same as the existing museum facility in Martinsville. The admission charge is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children and seniors.
- A paid annual membership will provide free admission to both facilities.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- **Construction**
 - Total impact of at least \$47.5 million and 264 jobs.
 - Generate one time revenue of \$42,412 in local tax revenue and \$794,766 in state revenue.
- **Museum Operations**
 - The ongoing operation will have an annual local impact of \$1 million and support 8 jobs with state tax revenue of \$21,013 from sales and individual income tax.
 - Total annual revenue is estimated to be \$583,750 including revenue from admission, membership, and donations.
- **Area Visitors**
 - The total number of visitors is estimated to be over 65,000 per year which will spend an average of \$49.30 per day in the area.
 - VMNH-Waynesboro visitors are estimated to spend \$3.3 million in the region (plus museum spending).
- **Overall**
 - Combining operations and visitor spending, including direct, indirect, and induced impacts, the total economic impact in the region is estimated to be more than \$4.2 million per year that can support 36 jobs.
 - Estimated annual tax revenue for operations and visitors will be \$131,641 for local government and \$297,026 for state government. This includes all direct, indirect, and induced revenue from sales, meals, lodging, BPOL, plus individual and corporate income taxes.

ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND CULTURAL BENEFITS

For The Commonwealth:

- Expand the relevance and the interpretation of Virginia's natural heritage to all citizens of the Commonwealth.
- Create additional exposure and encourage a greater impact on science literacy.
- Enhance Virginia tourism opportunities by creating a strategically located facility.
- School visits, outreach, and teacher professional development will impact a new area of the Commonwealth now difficult to serve from southern Virginia.
- Provide additional tax revenue.
- Create a greater awareness of Virginia natural resources.

For The Museum:

- Achieve General Assembly goal of extending the museum's physical reach by becoming more easily accessible to the majority population centers of the state thereby increasing the museum's relevance, impact, and services to all citizens.
- Create a size-appropriate facility to draw from cities within a half-hour drive, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Shenandoah National Park, while maximizing efficiency of cost of operation.
- Extend the reach and citizen impact of VMNH to the Central, Northern and Eastern regions of Virginia, resulting in an increase in memberships.
- Increase the current museum attendance by more than 65,000 visitors by drawing from the region encompassing Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Waynesboro.
- Employ a modestly sized staff taking full advantage of current staff at VMNH who will play a supporting role remotely.
- At over 65,000 visitors per year, the revenues are expected to be strong to keep the operation close to sustainable.
- Expose more than 10 million specimens and artifacts to a greater segment of the Commonwealth's population.
- Addresses accreditation needs identified by the American Alliance of Museums, the gold standard in museum operations.



For The City of Waynesboro:

- Provide an anchor for the Center for Coldwaters Restoration strategy for the long-term economic development plan for the City of Waynesboro (see The Bigger Picture).
- Take advantage of the proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive and strategic location on two interstate highways to welcome 40,000 travelers into Downtown Waynesboro.
- Create a cultural tourism draw in a strategic location that will encourage additional visitation while complementing current opportunities such as the Wayne Theatre, Waynesboro Heritage Museum, Blue Ridge Children's Museum, festivals, restaurants, and shops.
- Expand on the outdoor experiences already in place including Constitution Park, South River Greenway, Blue Ridge Tunnel, South River Preserve, and Sunset Park.
- Capitalize on existing populations that desire a cultural/science/museum experience.
- Generate traffic into Downtown Waynesboro that will support the service industry. 76% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities such as visiting museums. These travelers spend 60% more on average than other leisure travelers.
- Generate more than \$2.4 million in local visitor spending.
- Establish Waynesboro's first higher education presence, which will provide additional collaboration with universities.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Establishing a 28,000-square-foot campus of the state's museum of natural history in Downtown Waynesboro will attract a wide audience seeking a cultural and educational experience. At the intersection of I-64 and I-81, and within just a few miles of top tourist attractions such as the Blue Ridge Parkway and Shenandoah National Park / Skyline Drive, the museum's exhibit and interactive experience will be large enough to attract an audience estimated at more than 65,000 visitors per year, while being small enough that the cost of operations will be low. Once complete and open to the public, the VMNH-Waynesboro campus will be a self-sustaining presence in the Downtown that will drive an estimated \$2.4 million in local visitor spending.

Impressive on its own, but only part of the picture.

The Center for Coldwaters Restoration, an independent 501 (c) (3) corporation, is a volunteer organization focused on envisioning and advocating for programs, policies, and plans that foster long-term and sustainable natural resource-based economic development for the greater Waynesboro community. Working with the City, the long-term goal is to create high paying jobs in innovative industries, commercial applications, and/or higher education opportunities, while taking advantage of Waynesboro's strategic location and proximity to the South River and Blue Ridge Mountains.

The Waynesboro campus is a critical component along this strategic path. The museum will not only bring much-needed investment to the central business district, but will generate awareness and interest in the location from more than 65,000 visitors, many of whom would not be in the City without it.

To achieve this goal, the philosophical and financial partnership between the Commonwealth, VMNH, City of Waynesboro, and the citizens of the area must be strong. The citizens, City, and museum have demonstrated their commitment to the project.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.vmnh.net/projects/waynesboro-campus for updates and to subscribe to the newsletter or contact:

Ryan Barber
Virginia Museum of Natural History
(276) 634-4163
ryan.barber@vmnh.virginia.gov

Greg Hitchin
City of Waynesboro
(540) 942-6779
HitchinGE@ci.Waynesboro.va.us