



Celebrating  
**45+**  
Years



**CSPDC**

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission

**A YEAR IN REVIEW FY 2017**



## OUR MISSION:

To help communities and agencies within the Central Shenandoah Valley work together by providing high quality planning, technical assistance, and facilitation services that address local, regional, and state needs in an innovative, timely, and cooperative manner.

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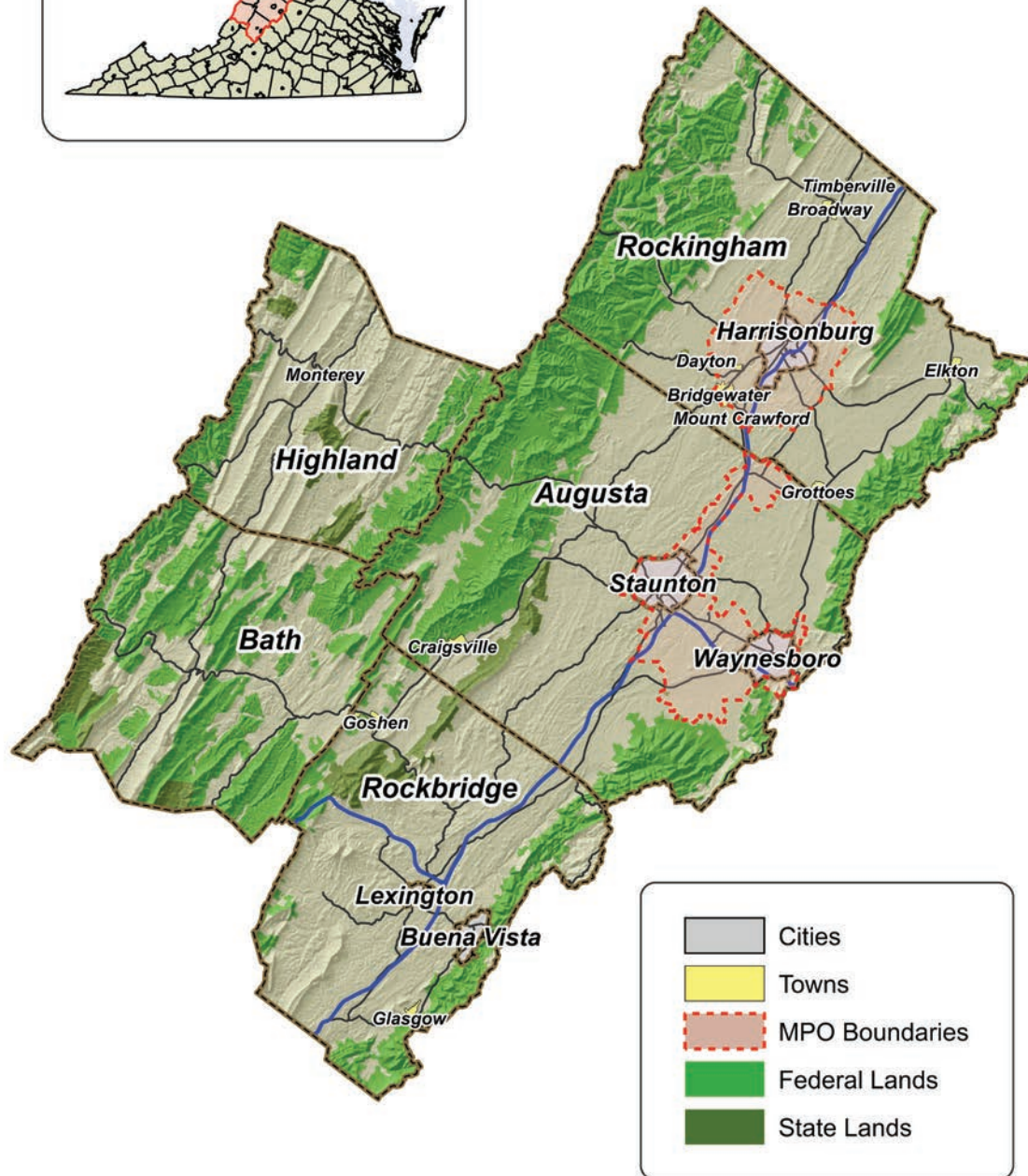
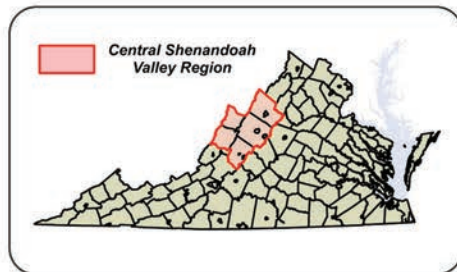
### **WAYNESBORO**

Jeff Freeman  
Rusty Johnson



## OUR MEMBER JURISDICTIONS:

Proudly serving the counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham; the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro; and the towns of Bridgewater, Broadway, Craigsville, Dayton, Elkton, Glasgow, Goshen, Grottoes, Monterey, Mount Crawford, and Timberville.



# Transportation: *moving us* **F O R W A R D**

## SMART SCALE Applications Submitted and Funded

The counties of Augusta, Rockbridge, and Rockingham, the cities of Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro, the CSPDC, and the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro MPO collectively submitted 20 applications to Virginia's SMART SCALE program in the fall of 2016. SMART SCALE is a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) program that evaluates and scores transportation infrastructure and transit

projects. Projects are scored based on how well they meet safety, congestion mitigation, accessibility, economic development, and environmental goals and performance measures.

The CSPDC assisted localities with submissions and completed MPO applications. VDOT and DRPT scored the applications, and presented them to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) with recommendations for funding

in early 2017. In June 2017, the CTB approved the SMART SCALE projects via the FY18 Six-Year Improvement Program.

Eleven of the 20 applications submitted from the CSPDC region were funded by SMART SCALE. One project was funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program. The total funding required for these 12 projects is \$37 million. Statewide, 404 applications were scored, totaling \$8.6 billion in funding requests.







## Rural Transportation Small Area Studies Advance

Each year, the CSPDC undertakes a small area or corridor study at the direction of the Rural Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (RTTAC). The RTTAC completed the I-81 Exit 205 (Raphine Road) Small Area Study in the fall of 2016. Recommendations from the study were the basis for Rockbridge County's successful FY18 SMART SCALE application to improve operations and safety at the interchange. The Exit 205 project will add stacking and turn-lane capacity

on the interstate off-ramps, and on VA 606 (Raphine Road) at the interchange.

In early 2017, the CSPDC began a study with VDOT and Bath County to address conditions at the intersection of U.S. Route 220 (Sam Snead Highway) and State Route 615 (Main St.) in Hot Springs. Bath County has identified this intersection as a hindrance to the safety, transportation, and economic development goals of their Comprehensive Plan, and

requested the CSPDC's assistance in evaluating the need for safety improvements and gateway treatments. The study and its recommendations will serve as a starting point for Bath County should it decide to pursue the recommended improvements. The study is expected to conclude in November 2017.

## Harrisonburg-Rockingham MPO Adopts Transportation Plan

In March 2017, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization updated and adopted its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The 2040 LRTP outlines the goals, objectives, policies, and improvements that are needed to maintain a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system for the movement of people and goods throughout the area. The LRTP is updated every five years.

As part of the LRTP process, a travel demand model was updated with variables for the 2015 base year, and then used as a guide to estimate when and where people will travel. It also identified potential deficiencies in the transportation network. Staff will use the travel demand model and other available data to continually evaluate and track the performance of transportation investments for the region.



**Harrisonburg  
Rockingham**  
Metropolitan Planning  
Organization



## Localities to Receive Transportation Alternatives Grants

The Commonwealth Transportation Board announced FY18 Transportation Alternatives (TA) project awards in June. The TA program is administered by VDOT, and funds bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and Safe Routes to School projects. The CSPDC assisted with and provided letters of support for applications from the City of Buena Vista, the Town of Bridgewater, and the City of Waynesboro.

Buena Vista requested funding for two projects: sidewalks and streetscaping on Magnolia Avenue (US 501); and the construction of a paved, shared-use path under the Route 60 bridge linking the City's existing sidewalk network and the Chessie Trail. Bridgewater sought funding for their Riverwalk Trail along the North River, connecting three town parks. Waynesboro's application was for Phase III of the South River Greenway project, which will extend the greenway from the Loth Spring Trailhead to Riverview Park.



## SAWMPO and CA-MPO Hold Joint Meeting

The second annual joint meeting of the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (SAWMPO) and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CA-MPO) was held in October 2016 at the Virginia Regional Transit Facility in Fishersville.

SAWMPO and CA-MPO began meeting in 2015 to discuss ways to maximize resources and expertise to address transportation issues critical to both MPO regions. The group heard presentations on several important studies and programs that are being jointly developed, including the Interregional Transit Study, the SPACE I-64 Project, and the Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Restoration Project. Following the meeting, the Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation provided a tour of the eastern trail and tunnel portal.



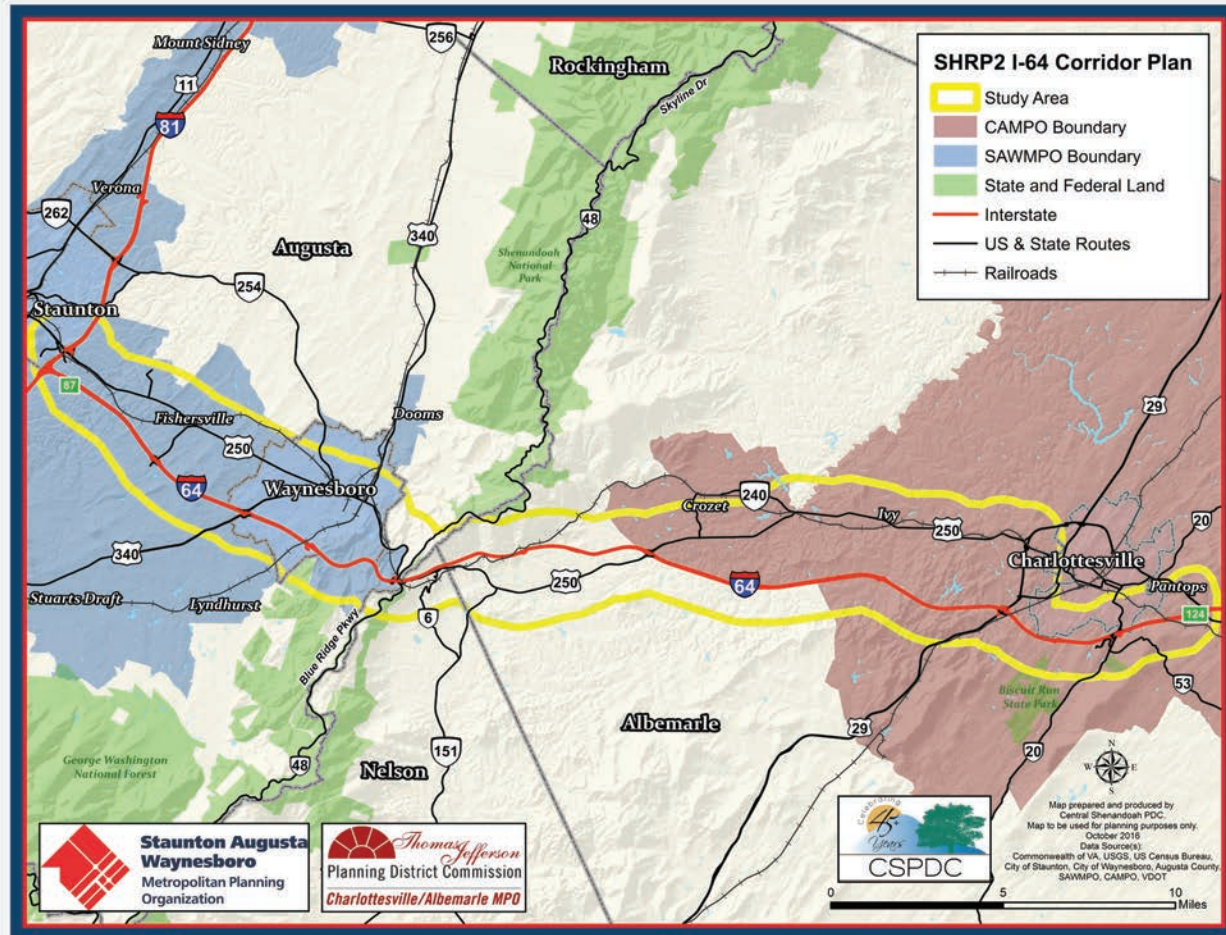
## CTB Board Member Visits Region

The Staunton District member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, Dixon Whitworth, visited the region in May 2017.

Mr. Whitworth attended the SAWMPO Policy Board meeting, where he heard a presentation on past and upcoming local projects. He shared valuable information with the Policy Board regarding several transportation funding programs.

Following the SAWMPO meeting, CSPDC staff, local government officials, and VDOT staff hosted Mr. Whitworth on a tour of project sites in Rockbridge County and the cities of Buena Vista and Lexington, many of which are critical links on the Chessie Trail and the Brushy Hills to the Blue Ridge Parkway greenway system.





## I-64 Corridor Study Examines Inter-Regional Transportation

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and the CSPDC collaborated on a transportation study to examine transportation issues in the I-64 Corridor from Charlottesville to Staunton. Throughout this year-long planning process, open houses and working group meetings were held using the Federal Highway Administration's "Plan Works" planning process. The Plan Works process was used to promote collaboration and communication between stakeholders, and build an understanding of the issues through group discussions, and by engaging experts. Topics addressed at the working group meetings included public safety, economic development, corridor accessibility, environmental issues, congestion, and freight movement. To further the partnership, a Memorandum of Understanding was developed to improve communication and cooperation between the two agencies, and to support each agency's planning and project development efforts along the corridor. The study will be completed in October 2017.

# Transit:

*connecting our* **R E G I O N**

## Changes Made to BRITE Bus Routes

The CSPDC, in cooperation with the contracted provider, Virginia Regional Transit, made revisions and schedule improvements impacting several routes in the BRITE public transit system. The Blue Ridge Community College North and South Shuttles, the Waynesboro Circulator route, the Staunton Downtown Trolley, and the 340 Connector route (now the Stuarts Draft Link), incorporated these improvements to increase reliability, add more stops at key destinations, and allow for easier connections between routes. The changes were first recommended in the CSPDC's Transit Development Plan, and were put into action after receiving positive feedback from the public.



## BRITE Bus Stop Signs Designed and Installed

More than 140 newly designed BRITE bus stop signs were installed throughout Staunton, Augusta County, and Waynesboro in 2017. The development and installation of the signs were assisted by data collected from a bus stop inventory that included GPS coordinates, pictures, easily identifiable landmarks at each stop, and amenities such as benches, shelters, trash cans, and lighting.

## Transportation Plan Updated for Rideshare

The CSPDC's Rideshare Program completed an update of its Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP) in June. Required by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the TDMP includes stakeholder and public input, a financial plan, and a strategy for changes and expansion of services.

The broad goals of the updated TDMP include increasing the awareness of the alternate modes of transportation that exist besides single-occupant vehicles, improving mobility and accessibility to people with transportation needs in the rural areas of the region, and promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability.





## CSPDC Takes Ownership of Transit Facility

On June 30th, ownership of the Transit Facility in Fishersville was transferred to the CSPDC. Built in 2011 with state and federal transit funds, the facility houses the operational offices and maintenance bays of the BRITE bus system. The facility also includes space for community meetings and workshops. A ribbon-cutting event was held in July to officially announce the

changes and celebrate delivery of new buses. Earlier in the year, CSPDC received proposals from interested parties to provide Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro's transit service referred to as BRITE. On March 15th, the CSPDC published notice to enter into contract with Virginia Regional Transit as the transit provider for the BRITE system. The resulting contract

for an initial five-year period will provide public transit service in the Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro area. The BRITE transit system includes routes to Blue Ridge Community College, Stuarts Draft, Augusta Health, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and throughout and connecting the cities of Staunton and Waynesboro.

## Inter-Regional Transit Studied

The study of the feasibility of implementing transit service in the Interstate 81 and 64 corridors, connecting the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Charlottesville was conducted by the KFH Group between February 2016 and May 2017, with input and guidance from a stakeholder committee made up of representatives from the following agencies: the three MPOs; CSPDC; Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPD); James Madison University (JMU);

University of Virginia (UVA); Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT); BRITE; JAUNT; Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT); the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT); and others.

This vital transit service would provide access to employment centers, medical facilities and resources, and offer well-timed connections to Amtrak and Greyhound. The study includes a service plan operating with

four buses, Monday through Friday, with six eastbound trips and seven westbound trips daily, scheduled in the 6 AM to 9 PM timeframe.

A meeting of stakeholders and potential funders will be held to identify and confirm the availability of the required local match to the grant funds, in advance of the December 15th deadline for grant application. This timeline would allow service to begin in January, 2019.

# Outdoor Recreation: *playing to our* **STRENGTHS**

## Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation



Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area is in the process of developing a Master Outdoor Recreation and Trail Plan. The project is a collaborative effort composed of key partners including Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism,

Rockbridge County, City of Lexington, City of Buena Vista, and representatives from government, educational, and community-based organizations.

The project involved many activities this past year related to outdoor recreation including trail assessment, community outreach and forums, marketing and promotion, and an economic impact analysis. Data from an online survey soliciting information from residents and visitors about outdoor recreation activities, spending, and demographics will be used to complete an economic

impact analysis report. A logo representing the braided network of greenways, blueways, bikeways, and walkways in the area was created to market the area as an outdoor recreation destination.

The project was aided by a technical assistance grant through the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. CSPDC is providing grant management, mapping and staff support.

## Natural Bridge Becomes a State Park

Natural Bridge in Rockbridge County officially became a Virginia State Park on National Public Lands Day, September 24, 2016. An Opening Celebration marked the Natural Bridge complex's journey from nearly 250 years of private ownership to public land. Originally purchased by Thomas Jefferson, the property has passed through a series of private owners. In 2014, steps were taken to

protect the Bridge in perpetuity thanks to the efforts of former and current owners, local government leaders, conservation organizations, and state agencies that collaborated to keep the National Historic Landmark accessible to future generations. Virginia State Parks began immediate management of the approximately 1,500 acres and facilities.





# Fields of Gold:

*growing our*

## ECONOMY

### A Farm2Fork Affair



Two Farm2Fork Affairs were held in the Fields of Gold region this year to introduce regional agricultural producers to large-scale consumers throughout Virginia. The first event was held in the Staunton, Augusta, Waynesboro area at Hermitage Hill Farm and Stables, and the second at the Mimslyn Inn in Luray for the agricultural producers from Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Shenandoah County, Page County, Winchester, and Frederick County.



These trade show expos gave producers/farmers an opportunity to market to hundreds of consumers from the Shenandoah Valley region, Charlottesville, Richmond, Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and as far as Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. Consumers included restaurants, universities and schools, retailers, grocers, distribution centers, and full-service hotels and B&B's.

Prior to each event, a Farm2Fork Ready Workshop was provided for participating producers. These workshops were designed to give guidance on creating a professional presentation and developing working relationships with potential clients.

The Farm2Fork Affairs were a collaboration of the Valley Tourism Offices, Buy Fresh Buy Local, Staunton Creative Community Fund, and the CSPDC's Fields of Gold program.

### Virginia Agritourism Study Released

A statewide economic impact study detailing the impact of agritourism in Virginia was released in April, indicating that agri-businesses along the Shenandoah Valley's Fields of Gold Farm Trail contribute significantly to the region's economy. Coming in with the third highest number of agritourism venues in the Commonwealth at 237, the Shenandoah Valley had over a million visitors to agritourism sites in 2015. According to the study, these tourists spent a total of \$255.8 million, with an overall revenue of nearly \$363 million. \$22.6 million was contributed to state and local taxes.

The study was conducted by Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business. Rockingham and Augusta counties were two of four counties that contributed as financial partners on the study, and members of their staff served on the State Agritourism Study Committee.

# Biking & Walking: *around the* **REGION**

## Bike-Walk Summit Moves to Broaden Access



The 5th Annual Harrisonburg & Rockingham Bike-Walk Summit was held on the James Madison University (JMU) campus in November, 2016. The event brought together a wide range of partners who are working to make Harrisonburg and Rockingham County a great biking and walking community to live in and to visit. The event was hosted by the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham MPO, in partnership with the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, and was facilitated by the JMU Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue.

The Summit featured a keynote address from Veronica O. Davis, PE, Co-Owner and Principal at Nspiregreen, and co-founder of Black Women Bike DC. Interactive sessions focused on assessing the bicycling and walking culture of the region, and developing ways to broaden access to bicycling and walking. The 6th Annual Bike-Walk Summit will be held in November 2017.

## Bike Month and Bike & Walk to Work

The region celebrated National Bike Month during May with a series of awareness-raising and participation events that included classes, trail rides, and social activities. The CSPDC and its Rideshare Program assisted the City of Staunton and Harrisonburg's Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition with commuter breakfasts on Bike to Work Day on May 19th.





## Bike the Valley Goes to Canada

Five hundred Bike the Valley brochures were mailed to Canada as part of Virginia Tourism Corporation's (VTC) international marketing program. VTC maintains a tourism office in Toronto and Quebec where they promote Virginia to the Canadian market. The Shenandoah Valley is a popular cycling destination for Canadian tourists who seek the milder climates and scenic landscape. The Bike the Valley rack cards are designed to direct visitors to the Bike the Valley website, [www.bikethevalley.org](http://www.bikethevalley.org), where they can find over 50 bicycle route maps, bicycle events and bicycling resources throughout the Central Shenandoah Valley.

## Bike the Valley Receives Virginia Tourism Grant

Bike the Valley, a regional marketing program that promotes the Shenandoah Valley as a premier bicycling destination in the eastern United States, was awarded a Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Grant totaling \$12,500. The funding will be used for rebranding the nearly decade-old program and switching the current website to a mobile-ready platform. Incorporating data and comments gathered from a recent bike survey and economic impact study of the region's bicycle tourism, the marketing upgrades will be designed to better appeal to the needs of visiting cyclists and to grow bicycle and outdoor recreation tourism throughout the region.





# Housing: *building our* **COMMUNITIES**

## HOME Funds Assist First-Time Homebuyers

The HOME Down Payment Assistance Program in the Central Shenandoah Valley region received funding to assist approximately eight first-time, low- to moderate-income homebuyers in 2017.

Created to help eligible homebuyers obtain decent, safe and affordable housing, this program has helped approximately 240 people in our region grow their personal wealth and equity through homeownership.

Of the households the CSPDC has helped over the past few years:

- 41% percent have household income levels below 50% of the area median income.
- The majority of households have children under the age of 18 living at home.
- 40% are single-parent households.
- Almost half are minority households represented primarily by Hispanic households, an increasing segment of the region's minority population.

The CSPDC partners with lenders and housing providers in the area to identify eligible home-buyers.



## Greenhouse Village Housing Project Pursues Funding for Phase II

The CSPDC assisted Rockbridge County in applying for competitive grant funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to aid in the development of the second phase of the Greenhouse Village Housing Production Project.

Greenhouse Village is a mixed-income, owner-occupied neighborhood of single-family homes developed in partnership with Rockbridge Area Habitat for Humanity. The funding, if awarded, will be used for the design, construction, installation,

and inspection of new infrastructure to service the community. The infrastructure will allow for the construction of up to 12 new single-family homes to benefit low- and moderate-income families in need of affordable housing.

The CDBG program is administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). DHCD previously awarded Rockbridge County a planning grant in 2012 and a competitive grant in 2013 to complete the first phase of the

Greenhouse Village Project which included 8 new homes along with road, water, and sewer infrastructure.







## Community Strong Kicks Off in Craigsville and Dayton

Through the support of the CSPDC's Community Strong Program, the towns of Craigsville and Dayton are developing action plans that will set priorities, identify partnerships, strategies, and funding possibilities; and guide the towns and its leaders in making community and economic development decisions.

The Community Strong Program is expected to be completed by the end of 2017. During this time, the CSPDC will work closely with the towns and their project team committees to provide facilitation, staff support, technical assistance, and resources.

The CSPDC's Community Strong Program is supported by a Rural

Community Development Initiative grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and provides small towns and rural communities with tools to identify and address community and economic development needs. To date, Community Strong projects have been completed in Glasgow and Goshen.

## Regional Housing Summit Held

The CSPDC and the Bath County Economic Development Authority hosted a Regional Housing Summit in May. More than 35 attendees learned strategies to address the demand for affordable workforce housing in their community.

Summit speakers from the Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Housing Development Authority, Total Action for

Progress, and the CSPDC focused on the connection between housing and economic development, as well as funding opportunities to increase affordable housing options. Topics included homeownership, rental housing, housing rehabilitation, and new construction. The workshop was geared toward local government staff, including community development, economic development and workforce development; local elected officials, housing organizations and nonprofits, and other community leaders.



# Emergency Management Planning: *creating a resilient* **REGION**

## Grant Awarded for Regional Wildfire Protection Plan

The Central Shenandoah Valley Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) kicked off its planning process at an April meeting of Shenandoah Valley Project Impact, the CSPDC's regional disaster preparedness and mitigation education program.

The CSPDC received grant funds to complete the CWPP from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Pre-disaster Mitigation Grant

Program. The CWPP will take a regional approach in addressing such issues as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, and structural protection. The planning process is expected to take 18 months and will involve extensive public input solicited through open houses, an on-line survey, and community outreach. When completed, the CWPP will be incorporated into the Central Shenandoah All Hazards Mitigation Plan.



## Project Impact Preparedness Calendar Published

In its ninth edition since 2003, the 2017 Shenandoah Valley Project Impact Preparedness Calendar was published and made available at local government buildings and public libraries throughout the region in January. The popular free publication features preparedness tips and mitigation

strategies for dealing with severe weather, emergencies, and disasters. It also contains historic photographs and fun holidays for each day of the year.







## Community Emergency Response Training Provided

Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County, in partnership with CSPDC, offered free Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) to those who live or work in those localities. This nine-week course uses a standard curriculum designed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and teaches basic skills in disaster preparedness, fire safety, first aid, terrorism awareness, disaster psychology, and search & rescue. The CERT course is designed to give the average person tools to prepare themselves and their family during severe weather or other emergencies when emergency personnel are overwhelmed and may not be able to respond immediately.

This is the 34th CERT course to be offered in the Region since 2003. To date, more than 530 citizens have been trained. Active CERT members have helped with public education, pet emergency sheltering, and severe weather response.

## Child Care Provider Emergency Training Held

In October, CSPDC staff taught the workshop, "During the Storm: Child Care Center Preparedness" to staff from child care centers in Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro. Sponsored by the Shenandoah Valley Social Services' Quality Child Care Initiative Program, the workshop focused on preparing child care centers for severe weather, emergencies, and natural and man-made hazards. The Centers were given information about how to plan for an evacuation including what disaster supplies to keep on hand, how to create a communications plan, and what transportation issues to consider. To conclude the workshop, information was shared with the workshop participants about assisting with the emotional needs of children during a crisis or emergency and how to help children become more resilient in the aftermath of a disaster. This workshop was one of a series that have been given by CSPDC staff to human service organizations in the region over the past several years to assist them with their emergency planning efforts.



# Environmental Planning: *preserving our* **R E S O U R C E S**

## Water and Sewer Infrastructure Financing Workshop Held

In May, the CSPDC hosted a Water and Sewer Infrastructure Financing Workshop for the localities in the region. The goal was to equip participants with knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about financing their water and sewer projects. Subject matter experts from VA Department of Health, VA Department of Environmental Quality, VA Department of Housing and

Community Development, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, and USDA-Rural Development presented funding options available through their respective programs. The workshop was well received by participants as one attendee shared, "Thank you very much for this morning's workshop. Very well done and good information from multiple agencies."



## CSPDC Assists JMU with Pollution Prevention Plan

The CSPDC was contracted by James Madison University (JMU) to complete a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for twelve high-priority facilities that have a high potential for discharging pollutants. CSPDC staff conducted site visits during which

potential pollution areas were identified, mapped (along with drainage structures), and a set of recommendations of procedures and practices were developed to protect water quality. The project was completed in February 2017.





# Economic Development: *generating* **OPPORTUNITIES**

## GO Virginia Region 8 Established

GO Virginia is a state-financed economic development initiative that provides a new framework for strengthening the economy in each of the nine GO Virginia regions of the Commonwealth through enhanced collaboration by business, education and local government. Certified in March, GO Virginia Region 8 encompasses a very large and diverse geographic area covering ten counties and six cities in the Shenandoah Valley, with a population of over 525,000. The Region 8 Council held its first meeting in April. The 28-member Council represents large and small business, higher education and k-12 education, elected officials, local government and economic workforce development entities.



The Regional Council will be responsible for completing an economic growth and diversification plan, overseeing the GO Virginia program in the region, soliciting applications for projects within the region, and recommending projects to the Go Virginia State Board for funding. The CSPDC is one of support organizations for the Shenandoah Valley Go Virginia Region.

## CSPDC Expands On-Call Consulting Services

The On-Call Consulting Program (OCP) was established in 2012 by the CSPDC to facilitate quick delivery of professional and/or nonprofessional services in the areas of transportation, civil engineering, environmental, and general planning services to its member jurisdictions and other eligible entities. In September, the CSPDC issued an RFP to expand its list of qualified consultants and selected the following firms:

- A. Morton Thomas & Associates (AMT)
- Draper Aden Associates
- Hurt & Proffitt
- Kimley-Horn
- Timmons Group
- Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB)



CSPDC member jurisdictions and MPOs are able to utilize the services of these consultants under the On-Call Consultant Program.



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