

Virginia Museum of Natural History Waynesboro Interpretive Center Feasibility Study

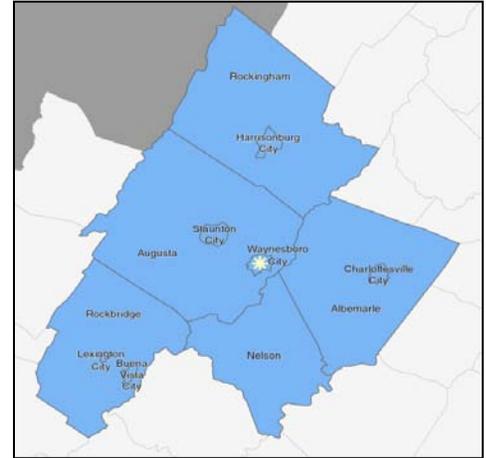
Information excerpted from Chmura Economics & Analytics study published April 2013

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville (VMNH) and the City of Waynesboro are in discussions to place a Natural Science Interpretive Center in the City's downtown. The purpose of the center is to expand the museum's reach, provide educational opportunities, and to interpret the unique attributes of the Shenandoah Valley.

Core Service Area Background

VMNH-Waynesboro will serve all citizens of Virginia, with its core service area including the following eleven 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 total population of this region was estimated to be 446,004 in 2012. From 2000 through 2012, the pace of population growth was 1.1% per year.



Annual Attendance is Estimated to be 65,582 Visitors

- The museum in Martinsville attracts an average (last three years) 30,000 visitors per year.
- The Waynesboro interpretive center is expected to draw more visitors than VMNH-Martinsville. The Martinsville museum drew half of its visitors from both City of Martinsville and Henry County. These two areas have a combined population of 67,972. The comparable region of Waynesboro, Augusta, and Staunton had a combined population of 119,705 in 2012.
- The low-range annual attendance estimate of VMNH-Waynesboro is 45,332. This assumes that 23% 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 Martinsville museum.
- Waynesboro is close to major tourist attractions such as Shenandoah National Park, which attracts 1.2 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 is estimated to 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.
- This estimate does not consider the “buzz” factor in the first year of the museum operation. Due to increased publicity, a new museum could attract twice as many visitors in its first year of operation than in subsequent years.
- The rate structure of the new museum will be the same as the museum in Martinsville. The admission charge is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and college students, and \$3 for children age 3 through 18.
- A paid annual membership will provide free admission to both facilities.

Net Income is Expected to be Positive

- The museum will employ up to seven staff.
- Assuming an attendance of 65,582 per year, the annual operating revenue of VMNH-Waynesboro is projected to be \$324,246. Meanwhile, the annual operating expenses are projected to be \$242,250 -- mostly payroll and other operational expenses. From an operating standpoint, VMNH-Waynesboro will be financially feasible after construction is completed.
- First year admission revenue is estimated to be \$196,746, with membership revenues at \$70,000, and donations of \$57,500.

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Construction

- Total cost of construction and exhibits is estimated to be \$7.4 million.
- It is estimated that construction activities will generate a total cumulative economic impact (including direct, indirect, and induced impacts) of \$10.4 million that can support 108 cumulative jobs in the Waynesboro region.
- Among the total economic impact, \$6.9 million is derived from direct spending during the construction phase. This spending could directly support 81 cumulative jobs in the region during construction.
- On an annual average basis, museum construction and exhibit installation can generate a total economic impact (including direct, indirect, and induced impacts) of \$5.2 million that can support 54 jobs per year.
- The construction of a new museum in Waynesboro will generate tax revenue for local and state governments. Local governments are estimated to receive business, professional, and occupational license (BPOL) tax of \$6,813 per year, while the state government is expected to receive an annual average of \$52,891 from both individual income tax and corporate income tax.

Ongoing Economic Impact

- The ongoing operation is expected to generate \$500,000 per year and support 10 indirect jobs per year.
- The ongoing operational revenue of VMNH-Waynesboro includes revenue from admission, membership, and donations. Total annual direct impact is estimated to be \$324,246.
- The interpretive center is expected to have one full-time site manager and six part-time workers.
- State government is expected to receive an average of \$8,813 in individual income taxes from museum operation.
- The total number of visitors is estimated to be 65,582 per year in this analysis. It is estimated that an average visitor spends \$20.60 per day that can be attributed to the museum.
- Direct VMNH-Waynesboro visitors are estimated to spend \$1.2 million in the region (excluding their spending at the museum).
- Adding direct, indirect, and induced impacts, the total economic impact of VMNH-Waynesboro visitor spending in the region is estimated at \$1.8 million that can support 20 jobs (direct, indirect, and induced) in the region.
- Museum visitor spending is estimated to result in \$23,608 in tax revenue for local governments in the Waynesboro region from sales, meals, lodging, and BPOL taxes. The state tax revenue was estimated to be \$49,576 from sales, individual and corporate income taxes.

Current and Next Steps

- Citizens and businesses of Waynesboro donated \$25,000 to match the City and Economic Development Authority's \$25,000, providing funds to retain a museum consultant to produce a museum master plan and schematic.
- Quatrefoil Associates has been retained, with work to begin in August 2014 and a final report due February 2015.
- If VMNH Board of Directors accepts the plan and agrees to move forward:
 - Part of the approval will be the decision to construct new a facility or revitalize an existing building.
 - VMNH will conduct a site search within the downtown Waynesboro area.
 - Corporate and individual fundraising campaign will begin.
 - Budget request/Board request will be part of FY17 budget.

For More Information:

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