

# Virginia Museum of Natural History ---Waynesboro Campus

Project Briefing Updated Fall 2022



2019 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.

## \$1,650,000 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 \$150,000 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 over \$2 million in 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 \$50,000 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 April 2013 with updates by City and VMNH staff in 2022 and

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 over 65,000 people and the museum will generate a positive cash flow and maintain sustainability with only 40,000 visitors.

## 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 estimated at \$20 million. Additional studies indicate that corporate and citizen donations could reach \$2.5 million. Coupled with the City commitment of \$1 million, the Commonwealth's investment of \$23 million is attainable. Funds included in the FY23 budget will provide detailed design of the building, landscape, and exhibits expanding on the preliminary work from 2019.

## 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, an 7% increase since 2015.

### Key Attributes

*\$2M plus Economic Impact*

*65,000 Annual Visitors*

*Wide Public Support*

*Positive Cash Flow for Museum*

*Serve all Citizens of State*

*Higher Education Impact*

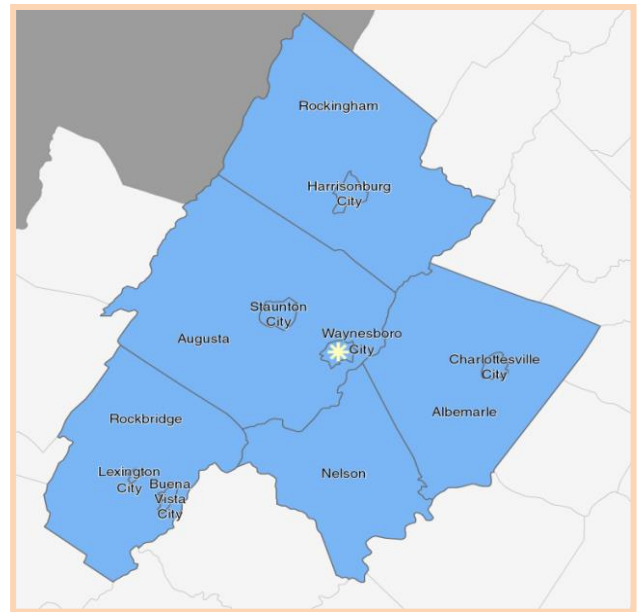
*STEM Education Opportunity*

*New Tourist Destination*

*Entrepreneurial Growth*

## **ANNUAL ATTENDANCE IS ESTIMATED TO BE 65,582 VISITORS**

The Waynesboro campus is expected to draw double the number of visitors than 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. An additional attraction will encourage more overnight stays and longer visitation in the region.
- 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 \$7 for adults, \$5 for children and seniors.
- A paid annual membership will provide free admission to both facilities.

## **NET INCOME IS EXPECTED TO BE POSITIVE**

- The museum will employ a modestly sized staff taking full advantage of the current expert staff.
- Assuming an attendance of 65,582 per year, the annual operating revenue of VMNH-Waynesboro is projected to be \$592,740. Annual operating expenses including payroll are projected to be \$487,014. From an operating standpoint, VMNH-Waynesboro will be financially feasible after construction is completed.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

- Construction of the campus is expected to generate a total impact of at least \$10.4 million and 108 jobs.
  - 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.
  - State government is expected to receive an average of \$8,813 in individual income tax.
  - 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 (plus museum spending).
  - Adding direct, indirect, and induced impacts, the total economic impact of VMNH-Waynesboro visitor spending in the region is estimated to be over \$2 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.
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## 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.
- Create a positive annual net income estimated at \$105,000.
- Increase the current museum attendance by over 65,000 visitors by drawing from the region encompassing Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Waynesboro.
- 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 on page 4).
  - 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 million economic impact.
  - Establish Waynesboro's first higher education presence, which will provide additional collaboration with universities.
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## 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 over 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 million plus in economic development annually.

### 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 industry, commercial application, 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 over 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](http://www.vmnh.net/projects/waynesboro-campus) for updates and to subscribe to the newsletter or contact:

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