

**West Piedmont**  
Planning District Commission

Regional Strategic Plan  
2023-2028

**DRAFT**

2023 - 2028

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# 1. WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

## 1.A. About

A Planning District Commission (PDC) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, chartered under the Regional Cooperation Act by the local governments of each planning district. As such, they are a creation of local government encouraged by the state. One of 21 PDCs in Virginia, the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) was chartered in March 1970 as a voluntary association of the Counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; the Cities of Danville and Martinsville; and the Town of Rocky Mount. WPPDC is funded in part by monies from member local governments, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and federal agencies.

The WPPDC Board of Commissioners is made up of 21 members—two elected and one appointed from each of the seven member jurisdictions. The PDC meetings, which are open to the public, are held on the fourth Thursday of the month at its office at 1100 Madison Street, Martinsville. The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions helps its members meet their responsibilities to local and state government and coordinates inter-PDC functions.

## 1.B. Purpose

The purpose of Planning District Commissions, as set out in the Code of Virginia, § 15.2-4207, is: *“...to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing on a regional basis problems of greater than local significance. The cooperation resulting from this chapter is intended to facilitate the recognition and analysis of regional opportunities and take account of regional influences in planning and implementing public policies and services. Functional areas warranting regional cooperation may include, but shall not be limited to: (i) economic and physical infrastructure development; (ii) solid waste, water supply and other environmental management; (iii) transportation; (iv) criminal justice; (v) emergency management; (vi) human services; and (vii) recreation.”*

The work of PDCs has been meeting the needs of local governments and the Commonwealth of Virginia for over fifty years. Within each region, PDCs may serve to build regional approaches to issues like economic development, transportation, and legislative priorities. Section 15.2-4208 of the Code of Virginia lists the following duties and authority of PDCs:

1. To conduct studies on issues and problems of regional significance;
2. To identify and study potential opportunities for state and local cost savings and staffing efficiencies through coordinated governmental efforts;

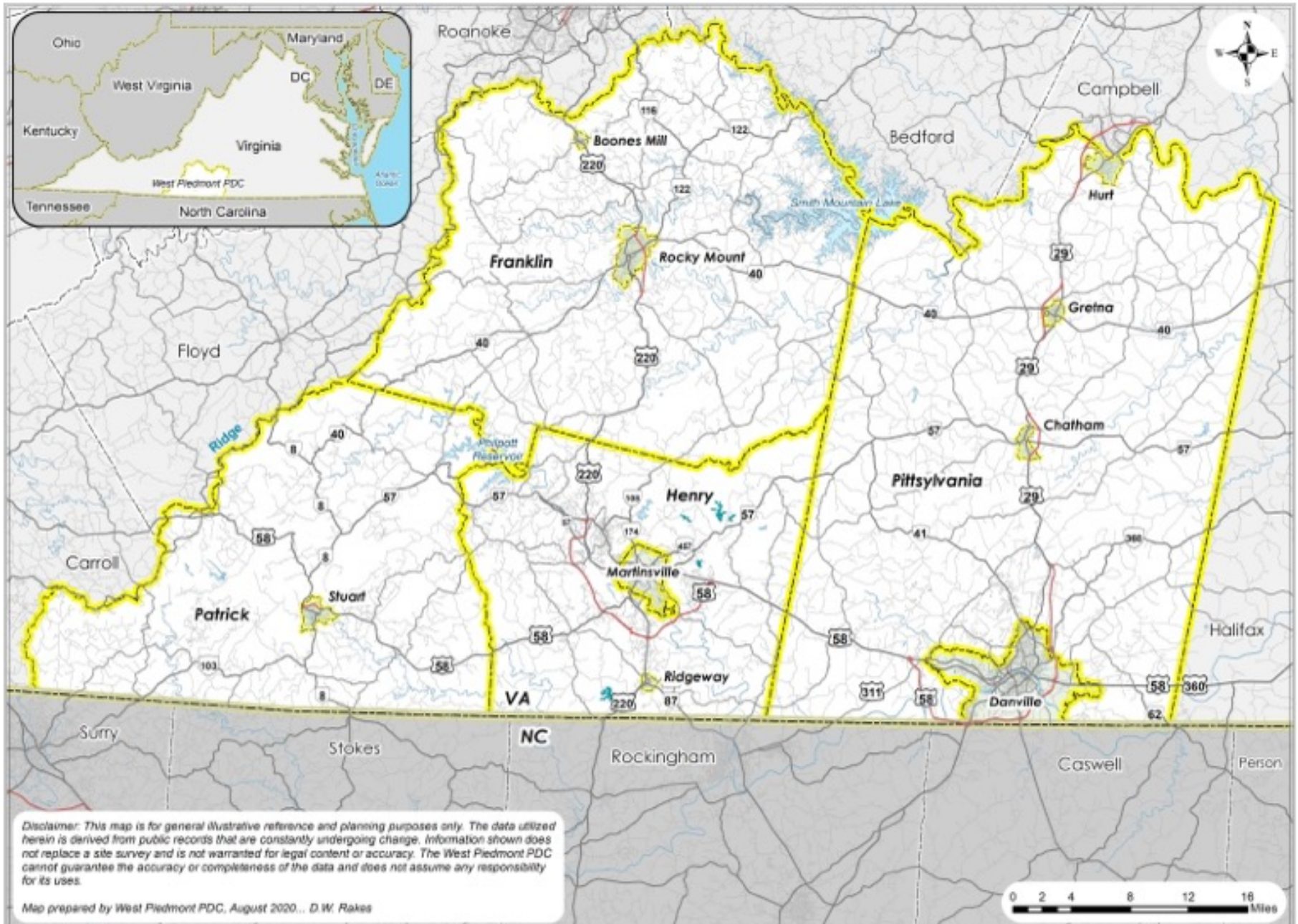
3. To identify mechanisms for the coordination of state and local interests on a regional basis;
4. To implement services upon request of member localities;
5. To provide technical assistance to state government and member localities;
6. To serve as a liaison between localities and state agencies as requested;
7. To review local government aid applications as required by § 15.2-4213 and other state or federal law or regulation;
8. To conduct strategic planning for the region as required by §§ 15.2-4209 through 15.2-4212;
9. To develop regional functional area plans as deemed necessary by the commission or as requested by member localities;
10. To assist state agencies, as requested, in the development of substate plans;
11. To participate in a statewide geographic information system, the Virginia Geographic Information Network, as directed by the Department of Planning and Budget; and
12. To collect and maintain demographic, economic and other data concerning the region and member localities, and act as a state data center affiliate in cooperation with the Virginia Employment Commission.

### **1.C. Mission**

The mission of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission is to support and serve the local governments in the region and the Commonwealth of Virginia through collaborative leadership, regional planning, technical assistance, and professional services.

### **1.D. Vision**

The West Piedmont region is a vibrant and collaborative community dedicated to supporting and expanding business, prioritizing economic mobility, and creating an environment that enhances both quality of life and visitor experiences.



**West Piedmont Planning District Commission**

## **2. WPPDC REGIONAL PLANS**

West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) maintains several regional plans with goals, strategies and action items that guide the work of WPPDC. These plans generally require annual reports on the progress made toward implementing strategies and action items, which is one way WPPDC tracks its work. This regional strategic plan was developed using the input received during the development and updates of these plans, and these plans are considered addendums to this regional strategic plan.

A brief summary of each plan is included in this section, and full copies of the plans are available on the WPPDC website.

### **2.A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a unified, regionally focused action plan that provides a framework for an area's economic growth and community development. The CEDS serves as an economic blueprint for the region and establishes a process that will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It is a continuous planning process that addresses the economic challenges and opportunities of an area, providing objectives to strengthen economies through regional strategies which focus on economic and workforce development, quality of life, transportation, and other vital infrastructure. This West Piedmont Economic Development District CEDS 5-Year Update was adopted in March 2022 and will guide the direction of the region from 2022-2026.

### **2.B. Pandemic Recovery & Economic Resiliency Plan**

The Planning District Commission staff, with consultation services from Thomas P. Miller & Associates, worked in conjunction with the local government administrators and staffs, the PRRP Committee, and local economic development organizations to develop the West Piedmont Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Plan (PRRP). The plan was funded through an Economic Development Administration CARES Act grant. The purpose of the plan is to identify the industry sectors adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and provide goals and strategies to support recovery in those sectors and build long-term resiliency.

The planning process took place between 2020 and 2021 and included committee meetings, individual stakeholder interviews, public surveys, and public meetings. A website was developed to provide up-to-date information about the planning process. Input from local economic developers, administrators, business leaders, and other regional partners was obtained through the planning process.

### **2.C. West Piedmont Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Between 2005 and 2006, the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) coordinated the development of a regional multi-jurisdictional hazard plan that included the counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick and Pittsylvania; the cities of Danville and Martinsville; and the towns of Chatham, Boones Mill, Gretna, Hurt, Ridgeway, Rocky Mount and Stuart. The plan was updated, in accordance with federal regulations, in 2011, 2016, and again in 2021. The current iteration of the Plan, published in 2022, is the third update to the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

#### **2.D. 2045 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan**

The West Piedmont Planning District 2045 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan serves as an update to the West Piedmont Planning District Commission 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan, adopted in 2011. As such, this plan incorporates various updates reflecting priorities articulated within Virginia’s Multimodal Transportation Plan, VTrans 2045; Smart Scale, a new tool representing a paradigm shift in the way transportation projects are prioritized for funding; and local needs and priorities.

#### **2.E. 2045 Danville MPO Long Range Transportation Plan**

The Danville-Pittsylvania County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the official transportation planning agency for the City of Danville and urbanized areas of Pittsylvania County – this boundary also encompasses areas that are anticipated to become urbanized in the coming decades. MPOs are required by federal law, guiding transportation decisions in urbanized areas of at least 50,000 residents. These organizations qualify transportation projects for federal funding on highways, transit, bike and pedestrian, and multimodal capital investments. The WPPDC administers the MPO, staffing the MPO Policy Board, the policymaking body for the MPO.

One of the recurrent responsibilities of the MPO is maintenance of a Long Range Transportation Plan. This document is a federally mandated plan that outlines the region’s priority transportation improvements for the ensuing decades. For the MPO area, also called the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), the LRTP is a fundamental and critical document that unlocks federal funding for the region’s transportation investments. Without the LRTP, these federal funds would be unavailable, causing most transportation projects to be too expensive for local or even state coffers.

#### **2.F. Regional + Local Housing Plan**

The West Piedmont Regional + Local Housing Plan will provide the data-based information needed to address current issues and plan for future population and economic growth. Furthermore, the study and recommendations will help WPPDC facilitate regional collaboration and coordination to address housing challenges more effectively. Coordination of local strategies can also promote intentional development patterns and

sensitivity to household demand and choice. The target audience for this study will include local governments and housing developers, as well as housing advocates, realtors, community partners, and the general public. Housing is a core facet of economic and community development, and this study will provide support to local governments, economic developers, and others for the identification of strategies for equitable housing development that meets the needs of current and future residents. This study will outline a clear pathway for communities to address housing needs.

### **3. PROGRAM AREAS, GOALS, & IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **3.A. Program Areas**

West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) maintains an annual work program with 12 program areas. Those program areas focus the work of the WPPDC to promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district. The 12 program areas include: Management and Administration; Regional Planning; Local Planning Assistance; Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities; Regional Rural Transportation Planning Program; Environment; Economic Development; Housing; Public Safety; Public Services, Education, Cultural Opportunities; Community Relations/Citizen Participation; and Grant Administration.

#### **3.B. Goals & Strategies**

The annual goals of WPPDC follow the 12 program areas outlined in the annual work program. These goals are in addition to and supported by the goals and strategies identified in the WPPDC regional plans described above.

##### ***Management and Administration***

1. Provide leadership and guidance to the Commission to manage the staff efficiently.
2. Provide a greater awareness among the public and the local governments concerning the role of the Commission.
3. Foster interest in, involvement in, and support for the Commission's activities.

##### ***Regional Planning***

1. Maintain a Regional Strategic Plan and Annual Work Program to guide decision-making related to the needs of the region.
2. Develop various regional functional planning activities and plans that assist regional cooperative planning activities as needed and, secondly, encourage regional cooperative planning and implementation actions.
3. Work with local governments, the Commonwealth, and other partners to implement regional plans.
4. Encourage and participate in cooperative efforts with the adjoining planning districts/councils of government which may include discussions of issues as well as

actual planning efforts determined to be of multi-regional benefit to bring about a cost-effective means of resolving existing or anticipated problems and to enhance the region to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

5. Develop and maintain active working relationships with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies through mutual agreements to enhance regional and statewide strategic and functional planning.

#### ***Local Planning Assistance***

1. Provide high quality local planning and technical assistance to the counties, cities, and towns within the district.
2. Develop and maintain working relationships with both local planning, and community and economic development departments and Commonwealth agencies through mutual agreements.
3. Promote the Commission's assisting role in appropriate local planning activities.

#### ***Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities***

1. Provide services as the Administrative Agent for the Danville-Pittsylvania County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) as detailed in its annual Unified Transportation Planning Work Program.

#### ***Regional Rural Transportation Planning Program***

1. Provide a multi-modal, efficient, cost-effective, accessible, and safe transportation network that has minimal adverse impacts on the environment and that contributes to the economic well-being and quality of life of the region.
2. Develop and maintain transportation planning for the non-urban, non-MPO areas of the planning district in conjunction with extra-regional, state, and federal planning and development efforts regarding transportation infrastructure.

#### ***Environmental***

1. Conserve, manage, and protect the region's land, water, and air for the benefit and enjoyment of all people, including future generations.

#### ***Economic Development***

1. Ensure that the economy of the region be active and expanding and that the Commission provides a regional service in encouraging and assisting the stimulation of the regional economy and coordination of its growth in accordance with regional and local plans.

#### ***Housing***

1. Ensure that, to the extent possible, a full range of housing categories, styles, and price ranges are available within the region so all people may find affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary housing reasonably close to their work, shopping, and recreation.

### ***Public Safety***

1. Ensure that every citizen in the region enjoys their life and the security of their property in peace and without fear, by maintenance of a modern criminal justice and substance abuse control and recovery systems.
2. Ensure that the necessary plans and facilities are in place in the region to protect citizens and communities from local and nationwide emergencies and natural catastrophes.

### ***Public Services, Education, and Cultural Opportunities***

1. Ensure that the people of the district have adequate health care, social services, and programs designed to assist the elderly, disadvantaged, and disabled, that these be met through inter-jurisdictional arrangements where feasible and that a broad range of recreational activities and programs be available to all people.
2. Ensure that every individual in the region have the opportunity for high-quality education and workforce development and exposure to cultural activities and events.

### ***Community Relations / Citizen Participation***

1. Inform and involve the public in all phases of the planning process in such a way that the public, its leaders, and governing bodies have a plan that meets their desires and needs and that these individuals and organizations are more willing to accept and implement final plans.
2. Ensure public input and involvement in the planning process is equitable and accessible to all residents of the region.

### ***Grant Administration***

1. Support member jurisdictions, towns, and non-profit organizations by providing grant writing and grant administration to enhance quality of life in the region, support community and economic development, and promote tourism, outdoor recreation, historic preservation, and other activities.

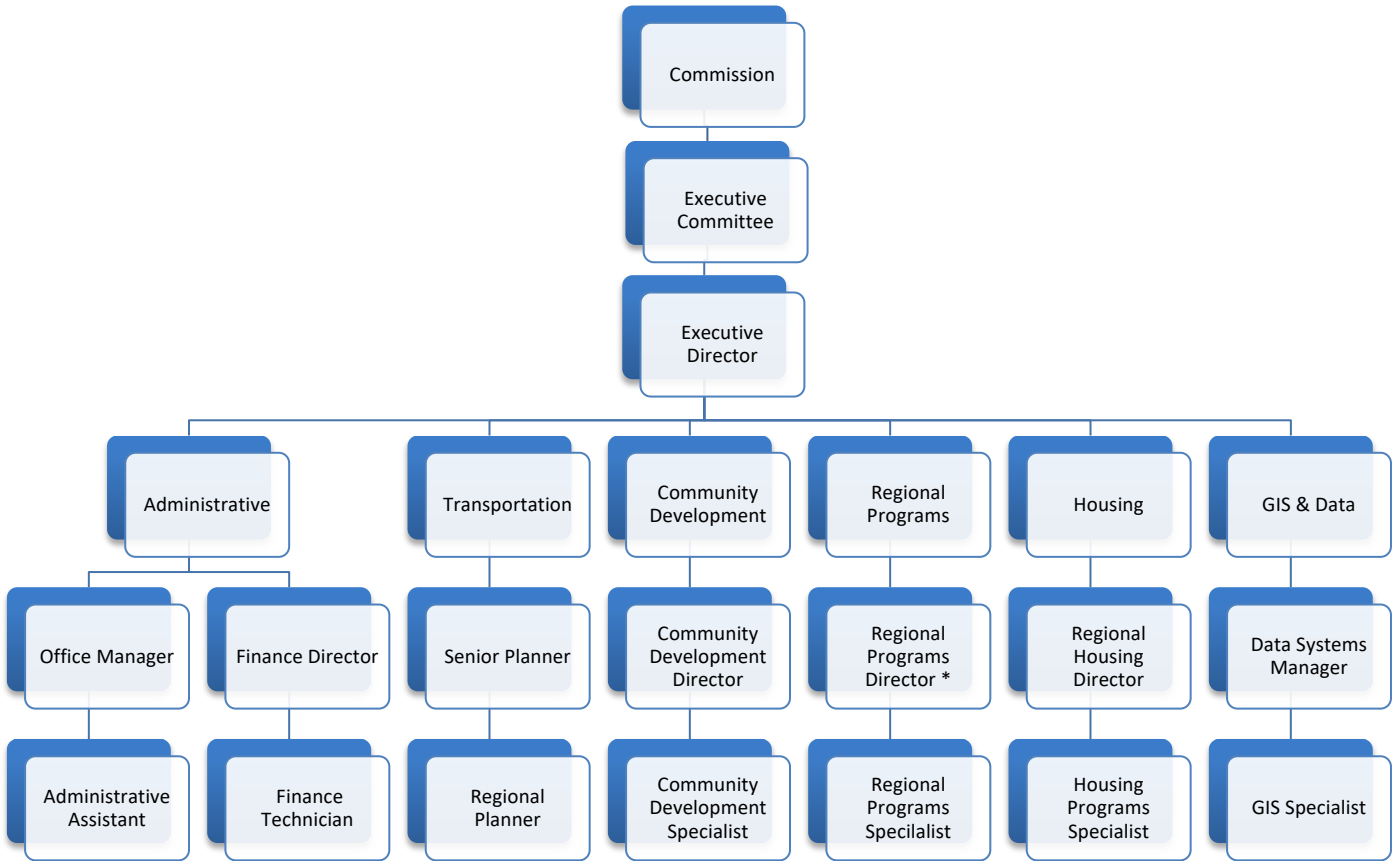
## **3.C. Implementation**

The West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) will implement this regional strategic plan and the supporting regional plans maintained by WPPDC through the development of an annual work program. The annual work program outlines in detail the activities WPPDC will initiate and complete each year. The annual work program is developed by WPPDC staff through discussions with member jurisdictions and regional partners and adopted by the WPPDC Board of Commissioners.

WPPDC will develop an annual report that outlines the projects, programs, and activities completed during the year. The annual report will include outcomes and metrics such as the number of new grants awarded, number of new projects implemented, and number of technical assistance activities completed. Upon completion, the annual report will be submitted to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

# Appendix A:

## WPPDC Organizational Chart



\* Regional Programs Director acts as Deputy Director