



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Yanceyville Plans for Pedestrian Improvements

By CED Program Interns & Students

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The Town Council of Yanceyville passed a resolution on November 10, 2009 recommending pursuit of a NC DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant. If awarded the grant would provide \$20,000 from DOT matched with \$5,000 from the Town to fund a comprehensive pedestrian planning study. https://ced.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/image_4_159x150.jpg A coalition of partners including the Dan River Basin Association, the Caswell County Senior Center, the Caswell County Chamber of Commerce and the Caswell County Parks and Recreation Department have already indicated initial support for a pedestrian planning initiative. This would be the first study of its kind in Yanceyville and Caswell County.

For many Caswell residents walking is a primary means of transportation. According to a study by the Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization, *Environmental Justice: A Data Scan*, Caswell County has a higher percentage of people living in poverty and without access to a vehicle than many of its neighboring counties. In addition, 65 to 70 percent of Caswell County residents are overweight or obese, compared to 60-65 percent of residents across North Carolina. The Town of Yanceyville recognizes that a comprehensive pedestrian plan can help address many of the challenges associated with these statistics. For example, obesity and diabetes is a chronic problem for many of Yanceyville's residents. A safe, walkable community would provide an opportunity for exercise and improved health. In addition, walking is the most inexpensive and accessible form of transportation available. When safe facilities are provided for pedestrians, people can walk more and spend less on transportation, meaning they have more money to save or spend on other things. Especially in a small town like Yanceyville, a well-linked, safe and accessible pedestrian system could significantly increase the percentage of trips taken by walking for transportation purposes. Individuals and the town alike would benefit from the health, economic, social and safety benefits of an improved pedestrian system.

In addition, to the numerous health and wellness benefits to the community, a connected, well-lit, safe and attractive pedestrian system could be an economic boost for the local economy. For example, Yanceyville has an opportunity to build on the existing walking tours offered by the Caswell Historic Association and Horticulture Society, and draw in a larger tourist economy to explore the historic downtown core. However, at present the condition of the pedestrian facility in the downtown core and immediately adjacent to the historic courthouse is not only inaccessible and poorly connected, it is a safety hazard. A comprehensive plan would identify areas of critical need, like the downtown core, and suggest strategies to improve the pedestrian environment for visitors and residents alike.