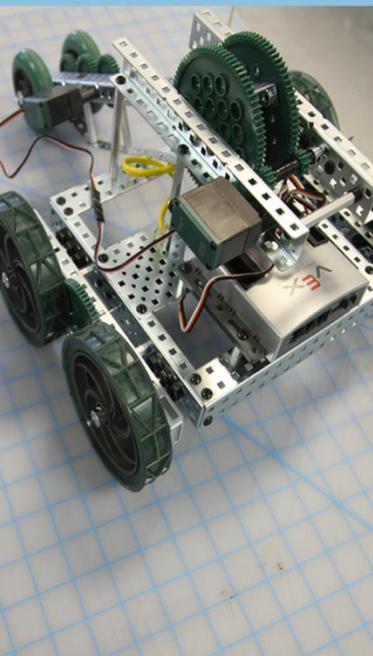




# A Regional Strategic Plan for Southern Virginia

2015



## Southside Planning District Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy





## Our Story

Southern Virginia is unique in its mixture of rural character with modern infrastructure. Recreational amenities abound alongside agrarian activities. Relevant markets are within a day's drive and major urban centers are just an hour or two away. Natural resources are abundant and gas, water, sewer, transportation and high speed communications are all available. The transportation and communications networks are particularly advanced for rural Virginia.

The Southside Planning District (SPDC), in partnership with its localities, has played a significant role in the development of the Southern Virginia economy which extends well beyond Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties.

This report reflects the values exhibited in the Planning District regarding the importance of partnering with one another, as well as other localities, to have a larger footprint and a more compelling regional message that promotes Southern Virginia as a diverse destination for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As stated by one community stakeholder, "You are competing with the nation."

"I've said it before and I'll say it again: Take risks. Be bold.

We cannot hope to accomplish great things if we are not willing to take chances. Our economy demands it, and the future of the Commonwealth depends on it."

**GOVERNOR TERRY  
McAULIFFE**

Several themes are prominent throughout the region, which is conveyed through past surveys, studies, and reports. These themes have helped to shape an overarching vision, three primary goals, an examination of benefits and challenges unique to the region, and then specific strategies that will make Southern Virginia a stronger, more vibrant economy and advance its vision and goals.

The story of Southern Virginia is about workforce development and providing people with multifaceted educational opportunities. It's about tourism celebrating recreational and cultural amenities. It's about investing in each community which makes the whole region stronger and more attractive to businesses. In short, the Southern Virginia story – which is so rich with natural resources, a

growing labor force, and financial investment – is about land, people, and capital. It's about creating a unified approach that utilizes these assets to develop a skilled workforce and supply chains for related businesses.

Southern Virginia should be the location of choice for tourists and families, a young trained workforce and investors, advanced manufacturers and entrepreneurs. This region stands out due to its natural beauty, friendly people, moderate cost of living, and access to two-thirds of the nation's population within a day's drive.



*Abundant Natural Resources*

This translates into excellent market access through the transportation and communications infrastructure that are in place today, as well as an excellent quality of life for workers and their families.



*Lake Country Advanced Knowledge Center*

***This is the story of a strong, diverse region with a proud history, and a promising future.***

### *Vision*

The process of verifying and developing the vision for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Southside Region of Southern Virginia included conducting stakeholder surveys that demonstrate a strong theme regarding the regional economy.



Twenty-first Century industries are the focus of Southern Virginia's economy. Today's advanced manufacturing is safer, cleaner, and better paying than ever. Information technology (IT) is a robust sector that can take advantage of the region's strong broadband infrastructure. Most of today's farmers use the most innovative practices and growing techniques to maximize their production of food, fuel and fiber, while minimizing their environmental footprint. The term "modern agriculture" depicts a commitment to innovation and stewardship and can occur on much smaller farmettes (farms generally less than 50 acres). High quality, innovative healthcare has further strengthened with two major affiliations with Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Community Memorial Hospital. Finally, the tourist industry promotes the area while continuing to improve quality of life for residents, and with relatively little infrastructure needed.



*Tobacco Heritage Trail*

*"Diversifying  
the  
economy."*

*- 2015 Stakeholder  
Interviews*

### **VISION**

A sustainable, diverse economy that promotes a skilled workforce for 21<sup>st</sup> Century employment sectors including advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, healthcare and entrepreneurship, while celebrating its natural heritage through tourism.

This vision statement exemplifies numerous interviews, meetings, studies, and reports on the Southern Virginia economy, where it has been, where it is, and where it is going. Now the question becomes – how do we get there? It is here that we turn to the development and examination of three primary goals. While these goals are not unique to this region, they accurately encapsulate the area's true strengths as well as their challenges.

*"Our biggest  
challenge is a  
trained  
workforce."*

*- 2015 Stakeholder  
Interviews*

## ***Goals***

The same primary drivers for any healthy economy are land, people, and capital. Southern Virginia is no different except the region is land rich, has a seasoned and motivated labor pool, and has had some significant capital infusions from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission (Tobacco Commission).

## **Land**



*Virginia Lakeside Commerce Park*

Southern Virginia has an abundance of natural resources and raw land, as well as targeted sites with infrastructure that are available. The natural resources are so abundant they attract tourism and provide excellent recreational and cultural amenities for communities as exemplified by the Tobacco Heritage Trail, John H. Kerr Reservoir (Buggs Island Lake), and Lake Gaston. More water and sewer infrastructure is needed, along with natural gas and better rail access to the Port of Virginia. The transportation system needs to be improved and maintained to continue to be an effective conduit to markets and for labor.

## **People**

The labor pool has seasoned, middle skilled workers with a potential labor pool of students who are eager for training and new opportunities. Economic development efforts should target commercial, technological, and industrial activities that are compatible with the surrounding communities.

Working collaboratively with the public school systems, Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) is necessary to effectively provide the training needed for a workforce ready for advanced manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, and other 21<sup>st</sup> Century careers.



*Southern Virginia Higher Education Center*



*Regional Financing*

## **Capital**

Gap financing – or the last 10-25% of a project known as the “Valley of Death” – is critical to business success. This gap represents the last research and development dollars needed to fully fund a project. Micro lending and Federal programs, such as the Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) program, are critical initiatives for company startups. The Tobacco Commission has been the primary capital infusion for the region in recent years, and that funding has done much to reinvigorate the local economy and strengthen the area’s infrastructure.

## Virginia Recruitment and Retention Incentives, New Virginia Economy, 2014

INCENTIVES				
<b>FUNDS</b>	Governor's Opportunity Fund (GOF)	Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund	Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID)	
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP)	Access Programs - Economic Development - Airport - Recreational	Rail Industrial Access Program	Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA)
<b>TAX CREDITS</b>	Green Job Creation	Research and Development	Virginia Port Programs	Recycling Equipment
	Worker Retraining	Day Care Facility Investment	Major Business Facility Job	Angel Investor
				Research and Development
<b>ZONES</b>	Enterprise	Technology	Foreign Trade	Defense Production
<b>PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES</b>	Virginia Investment Partnership (VIP)	Major Eligible Employer Grant (MEE)	Virginia Economic Development Incentive Grant (VEDIG)	Clean Energy Manufacturing Incentive Grant (CEMIG)
<b>EXEMPTIONS</b>	Sales and Use Tax Exemption	Property Tax Exemption	Data Center Tax Exemption	

Applying the traditional economic development goals – land, people, and capital – against the significant and abundant resources of Southern Virginia will enable the vision of a sustainable, diverse economy to be achieved. By examining identified benefits and challenges in the region, a more specific set of strategies can emerge to attain these goals.

### Benefits

Virginia is regarded for its high quality of life that can be summed up in three words - education, healthcare, and culture. Southern Virginia combines these attributes with elected bodies receptive to businesses, a competitive tax structure, startup business programs, and a diversity of small businesses and well known entities such as Microsoft, Dominion Power, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC), Sentara and Virginia Commonwealth University.

The region's broadband is available and robust with over 1,800 miles of fiber network. The transportation system is extensive with Interstate 85, U.S. Highway 58, and numerous others, but without congestion and within a one day's drive to major markets. Land is relatively affordable with traditional infrastructure such as water and sewer available in key locations. A proposed gas line to the new Dominion Virginia Power Plant, while controversial in some communities, would greatly expand that resource for the region. Lack of available natural gas infrastructure has been an Achilles' heel for the region in attracting some industries.



## Southside Planning District Commission

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The healthcare sector has two strong hospitals that are continuing to enhance the area – Sentara Healthcare-Halifax Regional Health System and the VCU Community Memorial Hospital which will further strengthen the health industry in Southern Virginia and northern North Carolina.

Tourism has emerged as a significant source of revenue and recreation. This further enhances the quality of life and reputation of the region while requiring relatively few resources. The Tobacco Heritage Trail ([www.tobaccoheritagetrail.org](http://www.tobaccoheritagetrail.org)), Southern Virginia Wild Blueway ([www.SOVAWildblueway.com](http://www.SOVAWildblueway.com)), Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail ([www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt)), and Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail ([www.varetreat.com/civil-rights-in-education-heritage-trail](http://www.varetreat.com/civil-rights-in-education-heritage-trail)) are just some examples. The Kerr Reservoir is a major area draw among other lakes in the area. Berry Hill Resort & Conference Center in Halifax County is another prominent attraction. Significant examples of economic recovery are evident in numerous downtowns with façade and gateway improvements, signage, streetscape renovations, small business development, leasing of empty spaces, and increased marketing.



The workforce demonstrates a strong work ethic with relatively well developed skills. More importantly there are a number of educational centers focused on training the workforce. Danville Community College, Southside Virginia Community College, and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center - Work Force Training Center of Excellence are all working hard to increase the available skilled workforce. The latest example is the collaboration between three community colleges – Danville, Patrick Henry, and Southside – on *Southern Virginia Works*, a workforce training effort that balances each region and institution’s strengths and weaknesses.



*Computer Lab Training*

### Other regional strengths include:

- ✓ Shovel Ready Industrial Sites
- ✓ Low Labor and Land Costs
- ✓ Competitive Tax Rates
- ✓ Ample Recreational Opportunities
- ✓ Strategic Location on the Eastern Seaboard
- ✓ Access to Healthcare
- ✓ Low Cost of Living
- ✓ High Speed Broadband
- ✓ Availability of Water
- ✓ Small Town/Rural Environment
- ✓ Growing Support for Local Foods
- ✓ Brownfield Redevelopment Opportunities
- ✓ Excellent Community College System and Proximity to High Caliber Four-Year Institutions
- ✓ Transportation Network



*Sentara Halifax Family Medicine*

### Challenges

*The need to upskill will be a challenge for workforce development in the region but key to meeting demand and filling gaps.*

*- Chmura*

The current labor pool has respectable middle skills training, but it is also an aging workforce. Attracting, and keeping, young professionals and skilled labor continues to be challenging. Open positions are difficult to fill due to higher wages in Richmond, Raleigh/Durham and Lynchburg. Unemployment is lower than it's been since 2008 and the overall labor supply has increased indicating an availability of workers that were previously not seeking employment, but developing a skilled workforce is a continuing effort.

The public school system has many dedicated professionals, but there are significant concerns regarding graduation rates, achievement scores, emphasizing workforce education as equal to a four year degree, and improving the aging infrastructure (i.e., investment in new school facilities). There is a general perception within the business community of not having a strong public education system, and there are limited private school options in the region. This hinders both the recruitment and retention of significant business sectors.

*“The perception of not having a ‘world class’ K-12 system is a challenge.”*

*- 2015 Stakeholder Interviews*

In addition to the continuing challenge of workforce development, traditional infrastructure expansions are needed including water, sewer, natural gas, and rail connections. Diversifying the economy will be contingent on continuing to expand and maintain this infrastructure strategically and economically.

### Other challenges include:

- ✓ Unemployment
- ✓ Aging Population
- ✓ Strengthening Central Business Districts
- ✓ Illiteracy
- ✓ Out-Migration of Youth – “Brain Drain”
- ✓ High Quality Daycare for Working Families
- ✓ Quality of Public Education Facilities
- ✓ Aging Infrastructure
- ✓ Educational Attainment at all Levels
- ✓ Availability of Skilled and Semi-Skilled Jobs
- ✓ Adequate Freight Rail Capacity and Infrastructure to the Port of Virginia
- ✓ Affordable “Last Mile” Broadband
- ✓ Continued Reliance on Traditional Industry Sectors



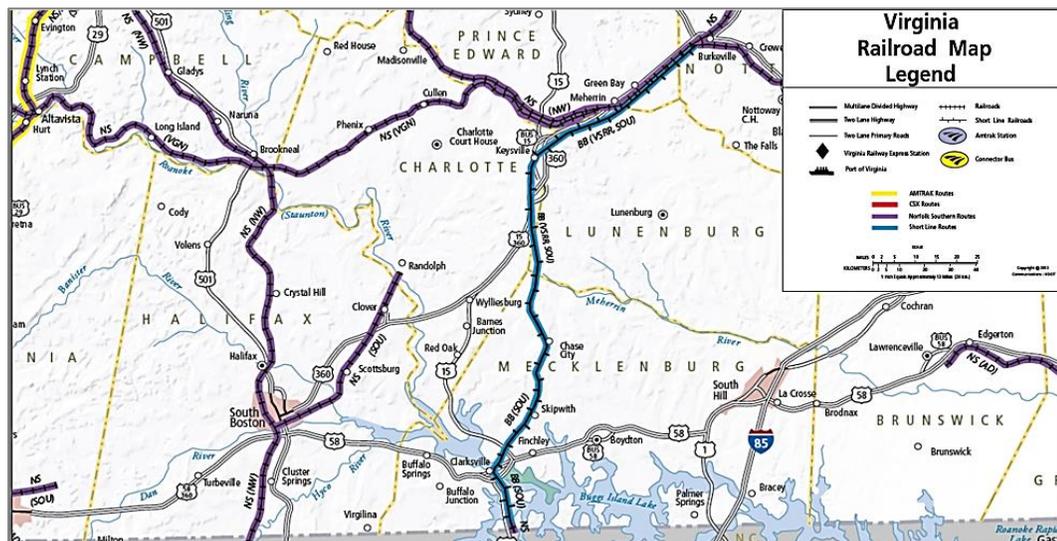
*Halifax County Career Center*

*“It’s not if you build it they will come, it’s if you don’t build it they won’t come.”*

*Randy Lail, Chairman, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (MBC)*

## Priorities

- 1) The continued and effective development of workforce training programs is clearly the most important priority in the region. This will take commitment by the local governing bodies, the public school systems, private schools, and the post-secondary education centers in the area. Workforce education in Southern Virginia has the same weight as a college degree in terms of earning power and career availability. This fact needs to be more effectively promoted and disseminated throughout the secondary school systems. Federal and state mandates for educational requirements provide an additional challenge for workforce development programs in secondary schools.
- 2) The second main priority is the continued leveraging of resources for infrastructure improvements including water, sewer, gas and rail. The individual localities and authorities should continue to make water and sewer improvements. The advent of the Dominion plant in Brunswick County is a positive regional influence that may also include the provision of natural gas in the area via a lateral from the Transco line. This lateral could serve Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties by providing that additional energy resource to industries.
- 3) A remaining infrastructure challenge is the increased provision of freight service in support of advanced manufacturing and other industries that can benefit from rail. Many of the largest manufacturers have direct access to the lines through spurs into their industrial parks. Rail lines in the area are operated by Norfolk Southern and multiple short-rail providers connect the region to destinations: however, more direct connections to the Ports of Richmond and Virginia are needed.



SPDC Railroad Infrastructure

- 4) The importance of broadband in the area also needs to continue to be emphasized. The fiber optic network in Southern Virginia is robust with thousands of miles of fiber. This communication network is critical to continuing to attract entrepreneurs to the region.
- 5) Effectively promoting the region is another critical priority. Southern Virginia has many positive attributes, but its economic interests are competing against the rest of the country. More innovative recruiting is needed which requires an open and willing approach including partnering with industries that have regional and national interests. Southern Virginia, as a region, better competes with other areas of the country.

## *Implementation Strategy Focus Areas*

### **Recruitment and Retention**

1. Match the needs of the companies with the area's workforce, cluster and gap analysis, and areas that can drive growth. Healthcare, manufacturing, food service, and technology are major employers.
2. The public school system has been identified by multiple stakeholders and studies to be a significant challenge to the recruitment and retention of businesses in a variety of sectors including healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and a variety of professional positions.
3. More aggressive marketing for tech companies, advanced manufacturing, and tourism.
4. Unified message in marketing by each county Industrial Authority, in concert with the Virginia's Growth Alliance (VGA) and the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA), to promote the whole region.
5. Market available resources to existing industries.
6. Target whole industry segments (technology-based companies, data, manufacturing, agricultural, etc.) to better compete at national, regional, and state levels for industries.
7. Identify market areas to be targeted such as professional applicants (i.e., doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers), skilled labor (mechanics, plumbers, electricians, welders), and other labor segments.
8. Partner with appropriate private companies that have ties outside the region (e.g., MBC established a Silicon Valley office in California to recruit for Southern Virginia).
9. Use public incentives to target specific industries and expand infrastructure to support the key industries.
10. Strengthen supply chains (e.g., likeminded businesses to grow the automotive cluster).

### **Training**

1. Expand the number of programs offered in technical training areas: nurses, accountants, machinists, mechanical engineers, welders, fabricators.
2. Strengthen workforce development programs in the high schools.
3. Coordinate training efforts between secondary and post-secondary institutions to have a cohesive, robust regional workforce development program.

### **Investing**

1. Provide incentives that are partnership based.
2. Market funding opportunities to companies so they may use available resources.
3. Strengthen efforts between Virginia's Growth Alliance ([www.vagrowth.com](http://www.vagrowth.com)) and the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance ([www.gosouthernvirginia.com](http://www.gosouthernvirginia.com)) to leverage private/public funding opportunities for identified critical infrastructure or facilities.
4. Leverage local funds to match state and federal grant funding opportunities to expand or maintain infrastructure.

The Southside Planning District will continue to work with regional partners and the localities to shape growth and development in the region. This process has unveiled a strong and common vision for a sustainable and diverse economy that is focused on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Specific goals and priorities have emerged that blend traditional and innovative tools. At the end of the day, the effective recruitment and retention of business to the region lies in having a diverse, well trained workforce and a unified, strong marketing message. This requires partnerships, educational advances, and financial commitment.

***Collaboration is the new competition, and the key to innovation and success.***

## CEDS Process

The 2015 CEDS ([www.SOVAEconomy.com](http://www.SOVAEconomy.com)) is a product of the Southside Planning District Commission (SPDC) developed in cooperation with Brunswick, Halifax and Mecklenburg Counties and the Towns of South Boston and South Hill. The report follows the criterion set forth by the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) and is guided by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee. The report emphasizes implementation of the identified priorities and vision. The process involved with the development of the vision, priorities, and implementation strategies is critical to the overall awareness, acceptance, and success of the plan as an economic development tool.

## Synthesis of Existing Plans

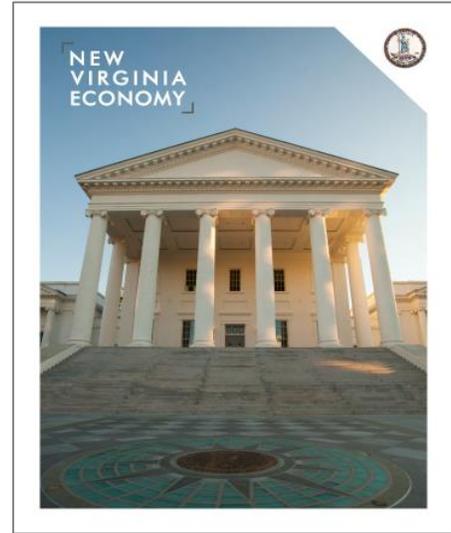
### Previous Economic Development Planning Efforts

Planning efforts related to the local and regional economy have been undertaken at differing geographies across the region for many years. Previous plans have encompassed individual localities, the three-county region of Southside PDC, Virginia's Tobacco Region and other multi-county organizations. Some plans have focused on specific subject matter, such as workforce development, while others have been more general in nature. Each plan brought together public sector engagement, matter experts, business interests and local officials to identify and develop potential solutions to the economic challenges facing Southside PDC.

### EXISTING PLANS

- Southside PDC Data Book 2015
- Area 8 Regional Credential Employer Survey 2014
- Virginia's Growth Alliance (VGA) "SET" Report 2013
- Southside PDC Hazardous Mitigation Plan 2013
- Assessing Economic Impacts of Ecotourism in the Virginia Roanoke River Basin 2014
- Developing an Advanced Manufacturing Workforce For Virginia's Tobacco Region 2013
- Southside Virginia Supply Chain Analysis 2014
- New Virginia Economy 2014
- VEC Labor Market Information Report 2015
- An Economic and Workforce Evaluation of Targeted Industry Sectors in the VGA Region 2013
- Workforce Development and the Role of Human Capital, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond 2015
- US and Virginia Economic Outlook, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond 2015
- Virginia Outdoor Plan Region 13 Southside 2013
- Virginia Performs ([VaPerforms.virginia.gov](http://VaPerforms.virginia.gov)) 2015

A stakeholder survey was also conducted with identified economic stakeholders representing a variety of businesses and positions in the region. The purpose of the survey is to anecdotally verify the information presented in the above data sets in a way that is current, meaningful, and humanistic. Much can be learned from the economic data available within the region, but much can also be lost in translation. A thorough, efficient, and meaningful process makes the data tell the Southern Virginia story as one that is compelling and unique and demonstrates that the regional economy is stabilizing and poised to be a major competitor on the national stage.



As a final step in the development of this report, the SPDC advertised a comment period for at least 30 days and comments received on the report are reflected in the document, as well as how the comments are addressed. In addition, comments can be received anytime through the Southside Planning District Commission website ([www.southsidepdc.org](http://www.southsidepdc.org)). The CEDS website ([www.SOVAeconomy.com](http://www.SOVAeconomy.com)) is intended to be a dynamic, effective tool to assist the Counties of Brunswick, Halifax and Mecklenburg and the Towns of South Boston and South Hill in being a competitive economic force within the state, region, and beyond.



*Rosemont Vineyard*

## Economic Resiliency

Economic resiliency is essential for a healthy, sustainable regional economy. Southern Virginia has experienced examples of major sector changes, manufacturing closures, and economic downturns. Environmental disasters can cause local and regional economic turmoil as well as disrupt significant infrastructure systems. Industry diversity is one component to having a resilient economy. Not putting “all your eggs in one basket” such as agriculture or a particular agricultural or manufacturing sector.

Mitigation applies to residential homes, commercial businesses, industry, utility facilities, and any other vital or essential facilities.

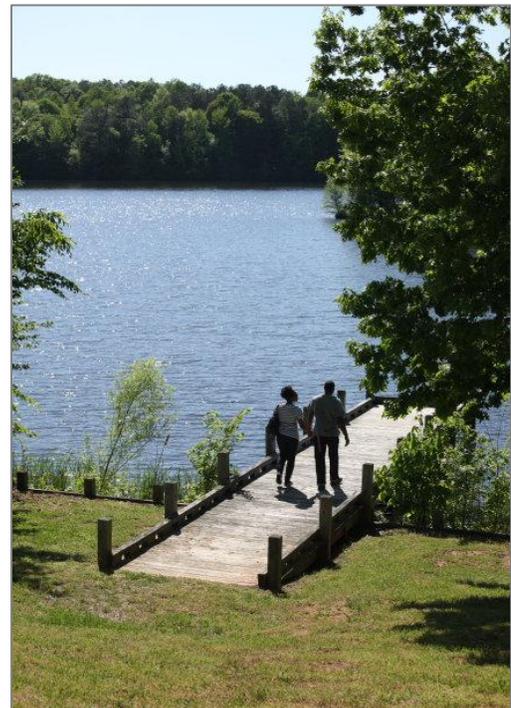
- Southside Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

The regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is another component that can help strengthen the economy by addressing how to handle various environmental disasters. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Hazard Mitigation Plan have not been discussed in a symbiotic manner previously. In fact, neither document is widely known to stakeholders within those areas of expertise, let alone the larger community. This needs to change so that each plan can focus on mutual components that serve the community’s needs. Education and implementation are essential to a plan’s success and viability. Awareness and communication then become a central focus.

Many other factors, discussed below, enter into the complex and ever changing process of building a resilient regional economy. Understanding the importance of resiliency and investing in strategies to enhance and strengthen the region will define its success or failure in an event.

### *External Trends and Forces*

The national and world economy affects Southern Virginia. The North American Fair Trade Agreement (NAFTA) introduced difficulties for several regional industries, primarily those in the apparel and weaving sectors. Historically, the economic structure of the region has revolved around agriculture with tobacco being the principal crop. However, in 2004 Congress approved the Tobacco Buyout Bill, which eliminated tobacco market quotas and price supports. The buyout payments, over a period of 10 years, have provided an infusion of capital into state and local economies, which are intended to assist farmers and other affected parties to move away from tobacco crops as a source of income. As a result many of the region’s small operators shifted away from tobacco in favor of other crops. This assistance has helped to bolster the region’s infrastructure and diversify the economy, particularly with regard to advanced manufacturing and other high tech enterprises.



*Great Creek Reservoir in Brunswick County*

# Southside Planning District Commission

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## *Partners for Economic Development*

The Southside Planning District Commission (SPDC) has worked with a number of different agencies and organizations in its efforts to improve economic conditions, utilizing the best possible technical and financial resources available. The following agencies and associations have routinely partnered with the Commission to achieve Southern Virginia's economic development goals:

- Chambers of Commerce
- The Governor's Office
- Localities and Economic Development Offices
- National Association of Development Organizations
- Southern Virginia Higher Ed Center
- Southern Virginia Regional Alliance
- Southside Virginia Community College
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development
- U.S. Department of Commerce – National Telecommunications & Information Administration
- Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development
- Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions
- Virginia Economic Developers Association
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Virginia Department of Business Assistance
- Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources
- Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Resources Authority
- Virginia Tobacco Commission
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Virginia's Growth Alliance

## *Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA)*

SVRA ([www.gosouthernvirginia.com](http://www.gosouthernvirginia.com)) is a marketing venture by six localities, including Halifax County. These localities work together to market the entire region to prospective industries. The region has 17 shovel-ready sites to market ranging in size from 8 to 36 pad acres and a multitude of existing buildings including a 105,000 square foot shell building with 30' clear ceilings.



*Four Counties, Two Cities, One Future*

## Southside Planning District Commission

### *Virginia's Growth Alliance (VGA)*

VGA ([www.vagrowth.com](http://www.vagrowth.com)) is a regional economic development organization with eleven member localities, including Brunswick and Mecklenburg Counties. The alliance functions as a regional business recruitment organization and is a major partner in adding workforce development, entrepreneurship, and tourism functions for the area. The region is bordered on the south by Lake Gaston, Buggs Island Lake, and the state of North Carolina.



*Virginia's Growth Alliance*

This 4,400-square mile area has a strong agricultural heritage and rich forest resources, but in recent years, manufacturing activity and service-related industries have prospered. With vast woodlands, abundant mineral resources, a plentiful water supply, and easy accessibility to metro areas in all directions, the region offers extensive economic development opportunities.

### **Commerce, Industrial, and Technology Parks**

Planned industrial zones and commerce parks contain concentrated areas of land to accommodate manufacturing and business services. A properly developed industrial park allows various industries to produce goods in a flexible environment, which is very important to the manufacturing community in terms of efficient production. The effectiveness of an industrial or business park is dependent on infrastructure and land space. Telecommunications infrastructure has become an essential need for a locality to be competitive. Sufficient capacity for water, sewer, and transportation are also of prime importance. Incentives are provided for businesses that locate in Enterprise Zones.



*A Mecklenburg County Industrial Park*

The Southside Planning District has several commerce parks, as well as, private Greenfield sites. The economic development offices in each county and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership maintain a database of available property and land use characteristics to be used in the site selection process.

All of the Planning District's counties, along with Virginia's Growth Alliance and the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance, are utilizing the Internet to market available buildings and sites. The inventory is housed on a statewide database created by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and is updated locally as availability changes:

Brunswick County IDA  
[www.bcida.org](http://www.bcida.org)

Halifax County IDA  
[www.halifaxvirginia.com](http://www.halifaxvirginia.com)

Mecklenburg County IDA  
[www.mecklenburgva.com](http://www.mecklenburgva.com)

VEDP  
[www.virginiascan.yesvirginia.org](http://www.virginiascan.yesvirginia.org)

### ***Enterprise Zones***

The Virginia Enterprise Zone (VEZ) program is a partnership between state and local government that encourages job creation and private investment. VEZ accomplishes this by designating Enterprise Zones throughout the state and providing two grant-based incentives, the Job Creation Grant (JCG) and the Real Property Investment Grant (RPIG), to qualified investors and job creators within those zones, while the locality provides local incentives.

- ❖ Qualification for the **Job Creation Grant (JCG)** is based on permanent full-time job creation over a four job threshold, wage rates of at least 175 percent of the Federal minimum wage (150 percent in High Unemployment Areas), and the availability of health benefits. Personal service, retail, food and beverage positions are not eligible to receive job creation grants. All Enterprise Zones in SPDC (PD 13) are designated as High Unemployment Areas.
- ❖ Eligibility for the **Real Property Investment Grant (RPIG)** is based on qualified investments made to commercial, industrial, and mixed-use buildings or facilities located within the boundaries of an Enterprise Zone. To be eligible for the RPIG, an individual or entity must invest at least \$100,000 for rehabilitation or expansion projects and at least \$500,000 for new construction projects.

All of SPDC's counties are part of Virginia's Enterprise Zone Program. The following are Enterprise Zones located in the Southside Planning District:

<b>Zone #</b>	<b>Enterprise Zone Name</b>	<b>Expiration</b>
32	Brunswick/Lawrenceville Regional Enterprise Zone	December 31, 2015
38	Mecklenburg/South Hill/La Crosse Regional Enterprise Zone	December 31, 2015
56	Mecklenburg/Clarksville Regional Enterprise Zone	December 31, 2020
15	Halifax/South Boston Enterprise Zone	December 31, 2027

### ***Workforce Training Initiatives***

Several workforce training and skills enhancement opportunities are available to industries and residents including the Commonwealth of Virginia's Workforce Services Program and technical programs through the Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC). Training facilities are located at the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center in South Boston, the Estes Community Center which houses a distance learning center in Chase City, the Christanna Campus of the Southside Virginia Community College in Alberta, and the Lake Country Advanced Knowledge Center in South Hill.

Need for more localized training for health care workers has been cited by the healthcare industries in the region. Vocational and technical training at the high school and post-secondary levels is needed to train workers in service industries as well as manufacturing. The provision of this type of training would help provide jobs to the unemployed and workers for unfilled jobs.

### ***Broadband Services***

Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation ([www.mbc-va.com](http://www.mbc-va.com)), with grant funding primarily through the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), and Virginia Tech, owns and operates more than 1,800 miles of advanced, open-access fiber network in Southern Virginia that reaches 100 percent of

## Southside Planning District Commission

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the business, industrial and technology parks in the region. MBC has helped to strengthen the region by supporting local and regional economic development groups that have directly resulted in over a thousand new jobs and \$1.7 billion in private investments throughout Southern Virginia. MBC's network was vital to the locating of Microsoft's data center in Boydton.

### ***Central Business Districts***

Many of Southern Virginia's towns have implemented downtown revitalization programs including Alberta, Boydton, Brodnax, Chase City, Clarksville, Halifax, La Crosse, Lawrenceville, South Hill, and South Boston. Revitalization projects focus on the physical and economic conditions of a downtown, including emphasis on parking facilities, streetscaping, traffic and circulation, pedestrian facilities, and storefront renovations. An attractive and thriving downtown is important for the retail trade, as well as being a



major factor in industrial recruitment. Revitalization efforts represent a community investment that has long-range economic benefits. New industries and businesses are attracted to communities that are vital and growing. Furthermore, new businesses are attracted to communities displaying an interest in organizing and rehabilitating existing local facilities. A revitalization project's success is dependent upon public participation and their concern for the future of the community while preserving its past. That success is recognized by new industries and represents one of the vital links for a community to attract new economic ties and development.

### ***Economic Development Growth Centers***

The Towns of South Boston and South Hill were chosen and designated by EDA as economic development growth centers. These areas were identified as having enormous growth potential. Both towns are ideally located for economic growth and expansion and have a good supply of land for economic growth needs and future development. These areas, even though different in composition, possess many of the necessary amenities needed to foster economic growth and development.

*"A healthy, viable downtown  
is crucial to the economic  
health and civic pride of the  
entire community"*

*- National Trust for Historic  
Preservation*

### ***Lake Country Development Corporation (LCDC)***

LCDC was chartered in 1981 for the purpose of administering a Title IX Revolving Loan Fund granted through the Economic Development Administration to Southside Planning District Commission. The original grant was \$500,000, which has been recapped three times. This program now provides \$1.25 million in grant funds to leverage other public and private funds for the purpose of economic and industrial job-creating endeavors for the three-county area. A separate pool of money became available in 1994 when Rural Development provided \$300,000 to LCDC through the Intermediary Re-lending Program (IRP). LCDC must repay these funds to Rural Development at 1% interest over 30 years.

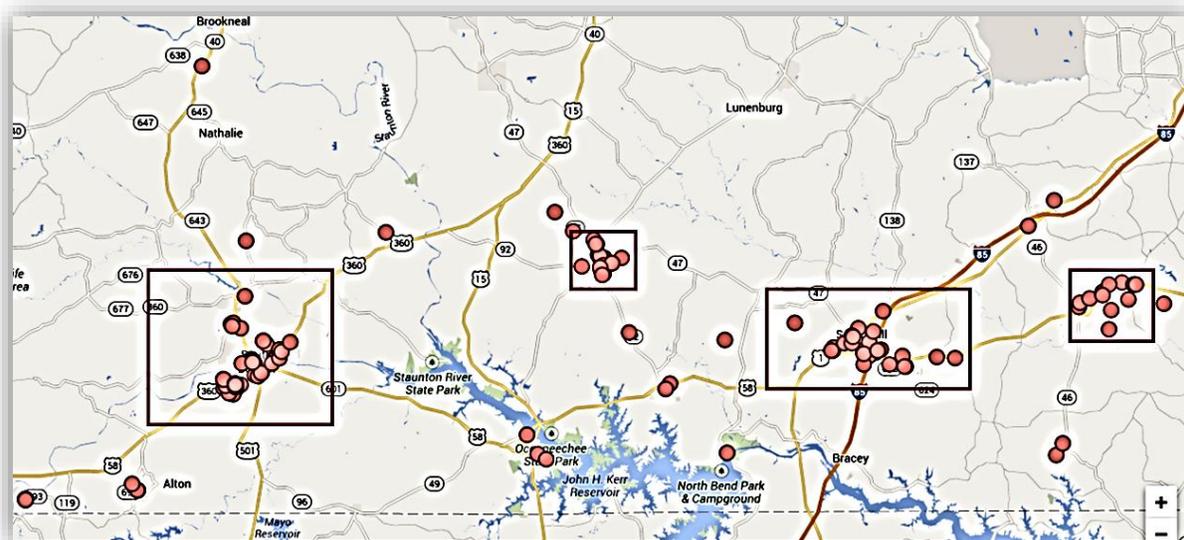
The overall purpose of the Revolving Loan Fund is to provide financing for the establishment of new and expanding industries, as well as innovative and job-creating economic uses and activities. It is also intended to fill a gap in the existing local financial market making the RLF the lender of either last resort or the money to attract other lenders.

### ***Mid-Atlantic Advanced Manufacturing Center ([www.mamacva.com](http://www.mamacva.com))***

The Mid-Atlantic Advanced Manufacturing Center (MAMaC), located in Greensville County, is a 1,600 acre mega site located on Interstate 95 and the mainline CSX railway, with direct access to Virginia ports. It is targeted at large scale industry, such as automobile manufacturing. The site is being funded by local and regional efforts, including Mecklenburg County. The City of Emporia and Mecklenburg County were co-applicants of Greensville County's application in January 2012 to the Virginia Tobacco Commission which resulted in an award of \$5.7 million to purchase and develop the site. The site is the only McCallum Sweeney Certified Mega site in Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland.

### ***Employment Clusters***

Diversification makes the local economy less vulnerable to adverse conditions or unexpected developments occurring in only one sector. Therefore, economic development efforts need to continually be reassessed with every locality having a coordinated economic strategy to stay current with the changing world economy. Southern Virginia's economic development strategy needs to strengthen existing economic clusters and target new growing employment sectors, continue efforts to attract new industries and promote business expansion, and further develop programs directed at increasing employment skills and knowledge, in order to reduce unemployment and increase the demand for local labor.



## Southside Planning District Commission

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The infrastructure necessary to attract these industries is available but needs to be continually maintained and expanded. Land, pad ready sites, shell buildings, broadband, rail, gas, water, sewer, and transportation are all integral components to attracting employment clusters. Marketing efforts need to continue to highlight the quality of life and significant infrastructure in Southern Virginia.

In 2013, Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) produced an Industry Cluster Analysis for the Southside Planning District as a part of Virginia's Growth Alliance. The analysis demonstrates how each industry is placed in terms of level of specialty and growth levels. This type of information can help economic development leaders determine how to best use their resources to aid in job creation and in increasing the sustainability and diversity of the regional economy.

Mature Industries (low growth, high level of specialization):

- Apparel & Textiles
- Chemicals & Chemical Based Products
- Energy (Fossil & Renewable)
- Forest & Wood Products
- Glass & Ceramics

Transforming Industries (low growth, low level of specialization):

- Advanced Materials
- Agribusiness, Food Processing, & Technology
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries
- Business & Financial Services
- Defense & Security
- Education & Knowledge Creation
- Mining
- Computer & Electronic Product Manufacturing
- Primary Metal Manufacturing

Emerging Industries (high growth, low level of specialization):

- Information Technology & Telecommunications
- Manufacturing Supercluster
- Printing & Publishing
- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing

Stars (high growth, high level of specialization):

- Biomedical/Biotechnical (Life Sciences)
- Transportation & Logistics
- Electrical Equipment, Appliance, & Component Manufacturing

### Resiliency 101

Regional partnerships and diversification make the local economy less vulnerable to adverse conditions or unexpected developments occurring in only one sector. As demonstrated in this section, there are many components to the Southside Planning District's economic development strategy geared toward strengthening existing economic clusters and targeting new employment sectors. There are numerous efforts to attract new industries, promote business expansion, and further develop programs directed at increasing employment skills and knowledge. All of these efforts increase the region's resiliency and mitigate the type of economic vulnerability it has experienced so vividly over the past two decades.

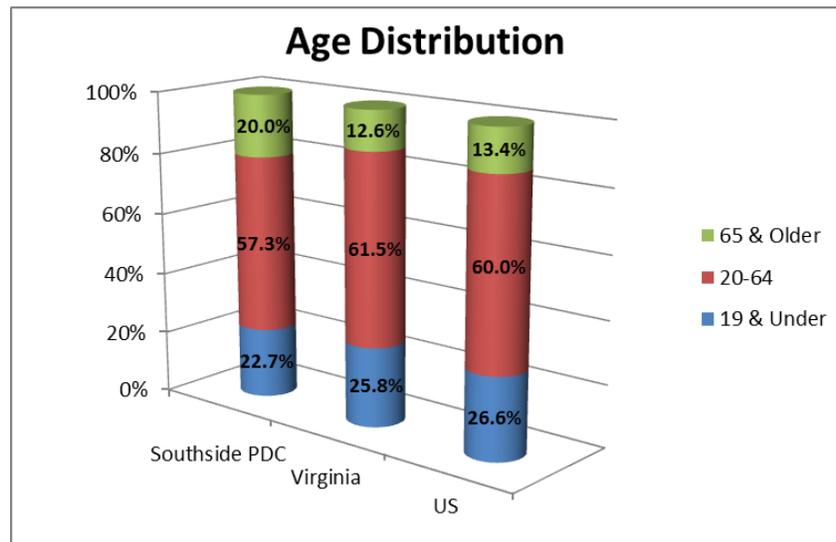


## Southside Planning District Commission

After an 8.5 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000, the District saw its population drop two percent from 2000 to 2010. While Mecklenburg County saw a small increase (1.1%), Halifax County's population dropped three percent, and Brunswick County's population dropped 5.3 percent. Since the 2010 Census, estimates show another two percent decrease.

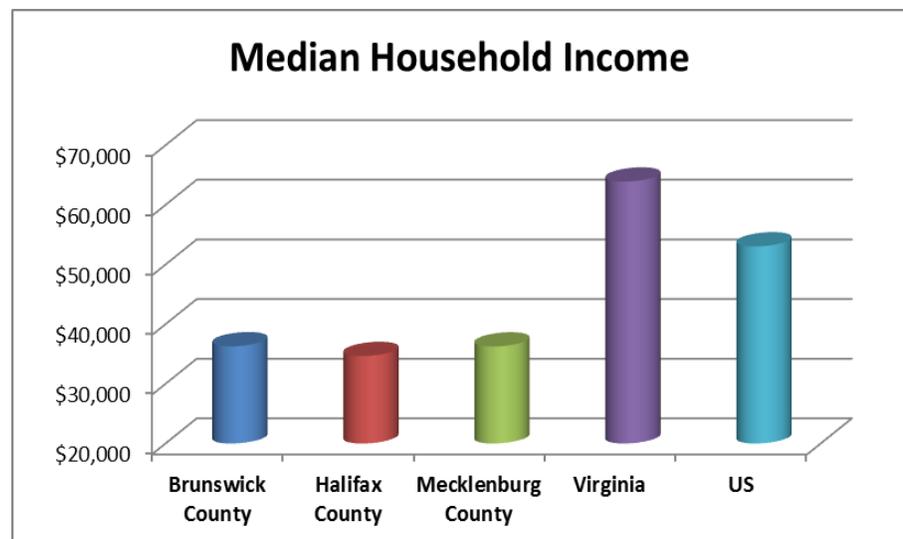
In 2013, approximately 83,800 persons resided in the Southside Planning District representing about a five percent decrease since the 2000 Census. The population centers are the twelve incorporated towns and the housing developments around the lakes. Both the 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census indicated that 24 percent of the region's residents lived within the incorporated limits of a town. Population growth can be an indicator of work force availability, which in turn determines the productivity of existing enterprises and the feasibility of attracting new ones.

The SPDC population remains above state and national averages for 65 & over and three to four percent lower than those averages for ages 19 and under. This trend reinforces the challenge of retaining youth and attracting young families to Southern Virginia. A population decline of around two percent per decade is currently forecast for each decade through 2040.



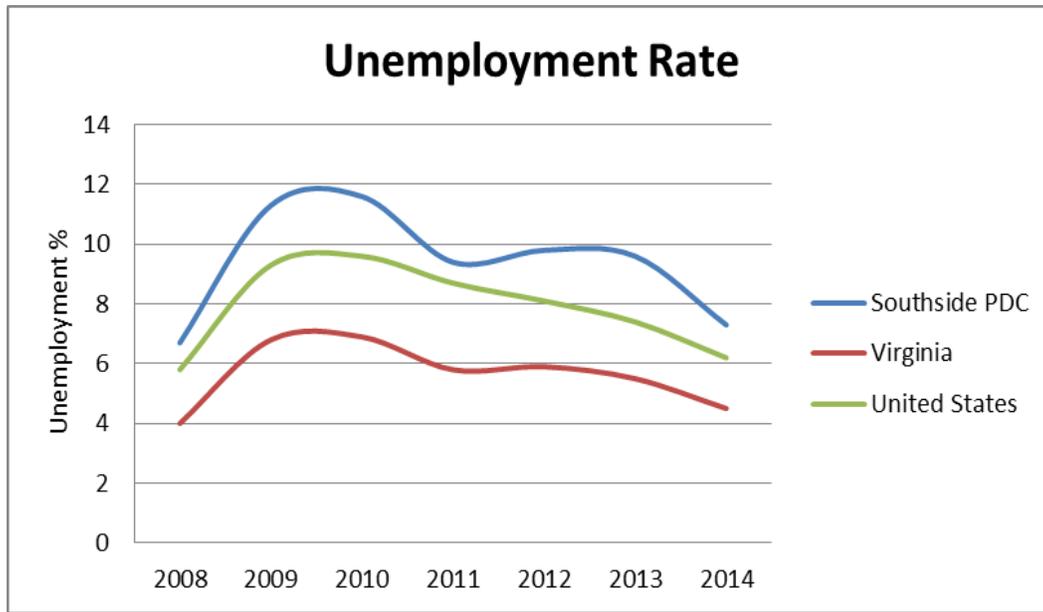
### Income

Throughout the Southside Planning District (SPDC), per capita personal income levels continue to remain below state and national levels, as do median household income levels. According to American Community Survey data between 2009 - 2013, SPDC's median income is just over half of Virginia's average and right at two-thirds of the national average. While Southern Virginia has lower income and wages, it also has a lower cost of living that increases local spending power.

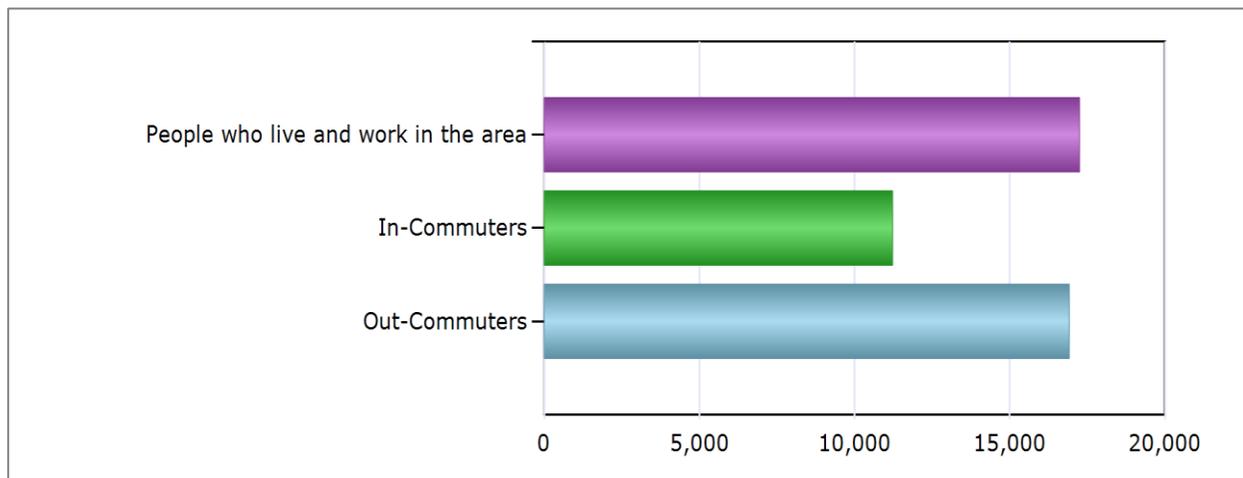


## Labor Force

One of the most important influences over economic activity is the labor supply. Nationwide unemployment rates have been high since the economic downturn in 2007. Local unemployment has been even higher, rising above 10 percent, and only beginning a downward trend in 2011. By December 2014, the rate was down to 7.3 percent after a high in February 2010 of 13.1 percent. The available labor force inside the Southside Planning District has dropped over the past 10 years, from 37,841 in 2002 to 35,469 in 2012.



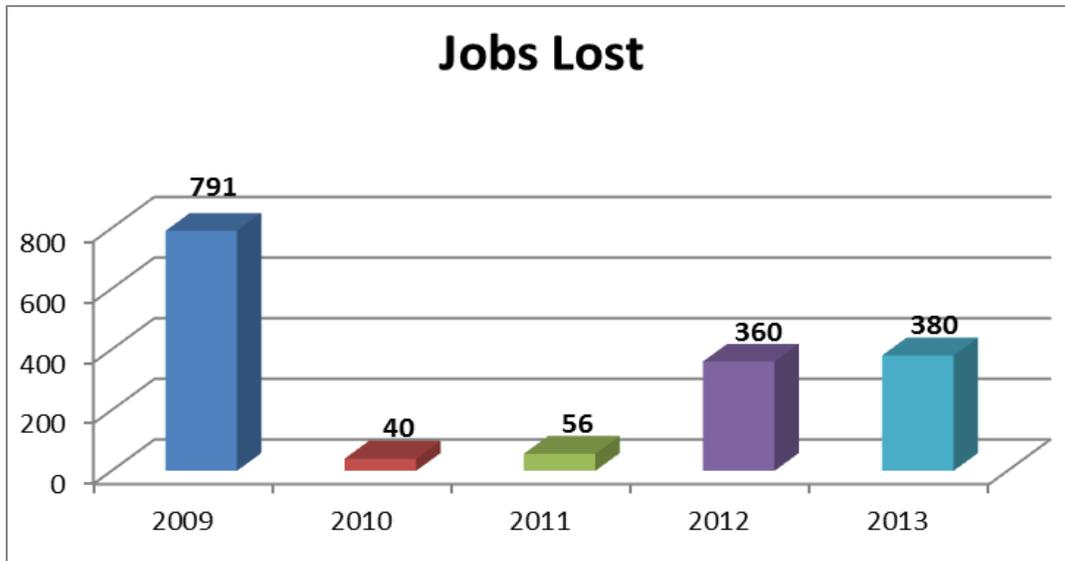
Commuting patterns are another measure of a regional economy. SPDC has a total net of -5,693 in-commuters which means that more people leave the area to go to work than enter the area to come to work. There are about as many people who live and work in the area (17,248) as there are people who travel outside the Planning District for work (16,916). Ideally, the number of net in-commuters would be strongly positive meaning that workers come to the region to work, and possibly shop and recreate, but live outside the region. A reduction in the number of out-commuters, regardless of the in-commuter numbers, would also be a positive trend as more people would live and work in the area reducing travel time and increasing local spending power.



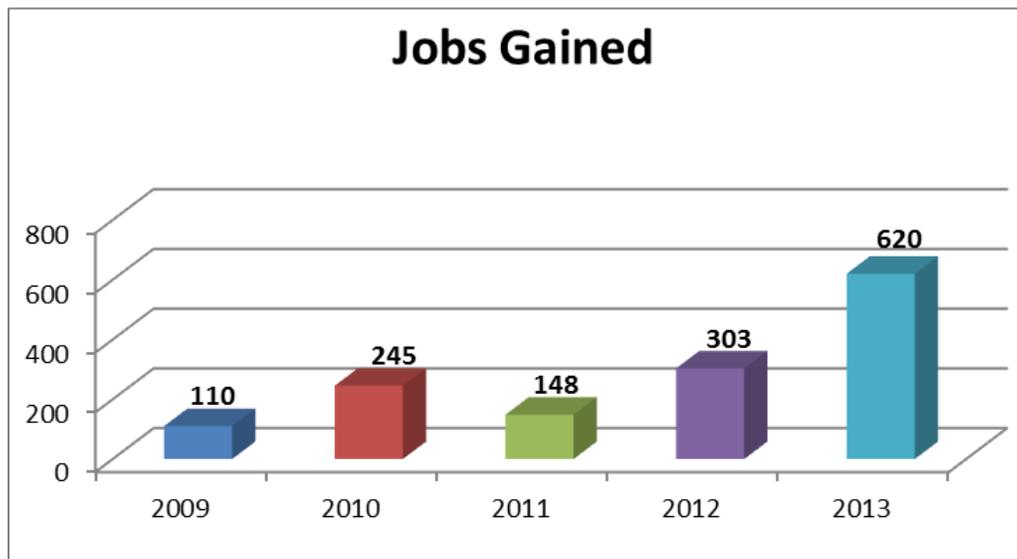
*Commuting Patterns – Southside Planning District Commission*

## Labor Market

Southern Virginia is fortunate to have an ample workforce as the labor pool for industries pulls from a wide area, reaching into North Carolina. Commuting patterns show workers travel on average 20 to 30 miles to work, utilizing several major highways. This labor force includes over 600,000 working-age adults, according to the 2010 Census.

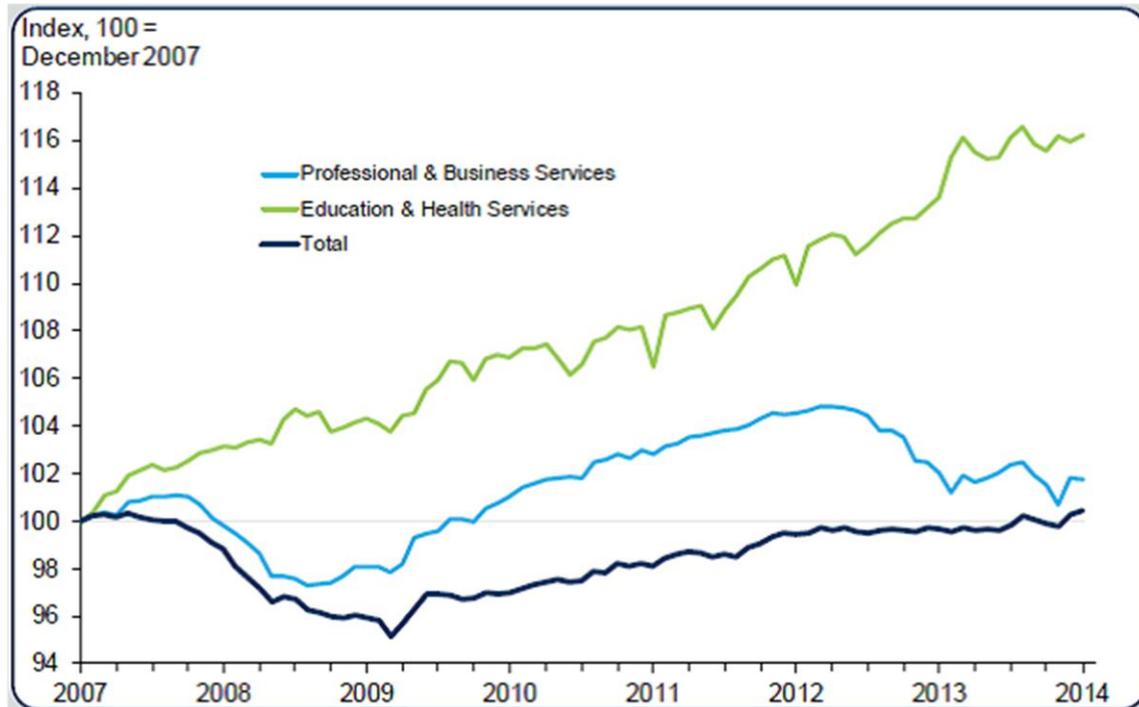


Numerous textile manufacturers built businesses in Southern Virginia Post-World War II, benefiting from readily available labor exiting the farms. As the textile sector grew, the area's economy developed a dependence upon this industry. With the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the region experienced a severe economic blow and thousands of jobs were lost. Between 1999 and 2012, the available labor force shrunk by nearly 5,600 workers. Over that time, approximately 4,000 jobs were lost; of these approximately 1,600 were in the textile/apparel sector, presenting a challenge to the economic stability of the region. Since 2009, job losses have reduced and been somewhat mitigated by 2,000 new jobs in a variety of employment sectors.



## Southside Planning District Commission

An assessment of the labor market shows very healthy Education and Health Services sectors, both of which exceeded the State average. Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, and Mining sectors are also at or above average. The PDC's employment percentage exceeded the state's in Agriculture, Utilities, Manufacturing, Transportation/Warehousing, Educational Services, and Healthcare/Social Assistance. The region remains on par with Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation, Accommodation & Food Services, Public Administration, and Other Services.



*Virginia Industry Growth*

The Financial & Management Services sectors pose the most significant challenges which reinforce the need for a strong secondary and post-secondary educational system throughout the region. This sector includes Information, Finance & Insurance, Real Estate & Rentals & Leasing, Professional & Technical Services, Management of Companies & Enterprises, and Administrative & Waste Services. Of these classifications, the region is most competitive with Waste Services and has the widest gap (9%) in the Professional & Technical Services sector.

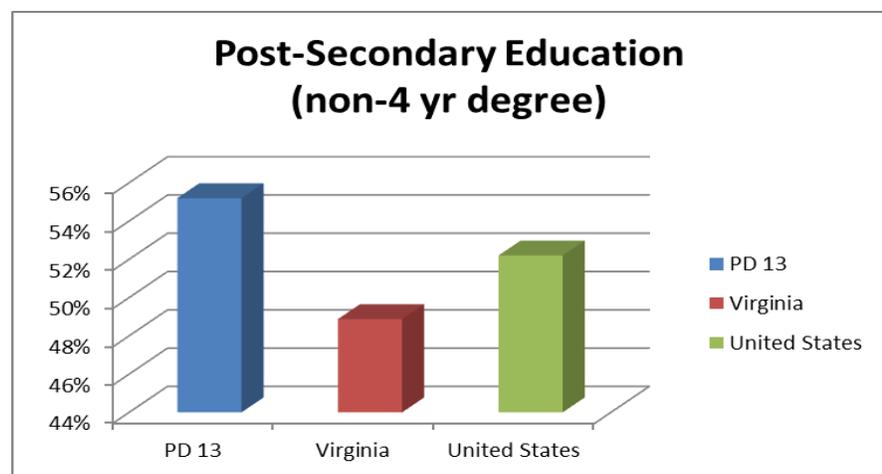
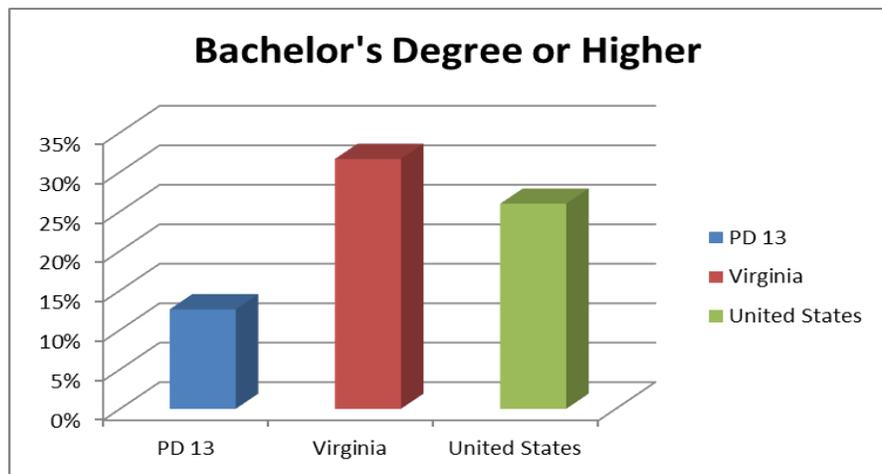
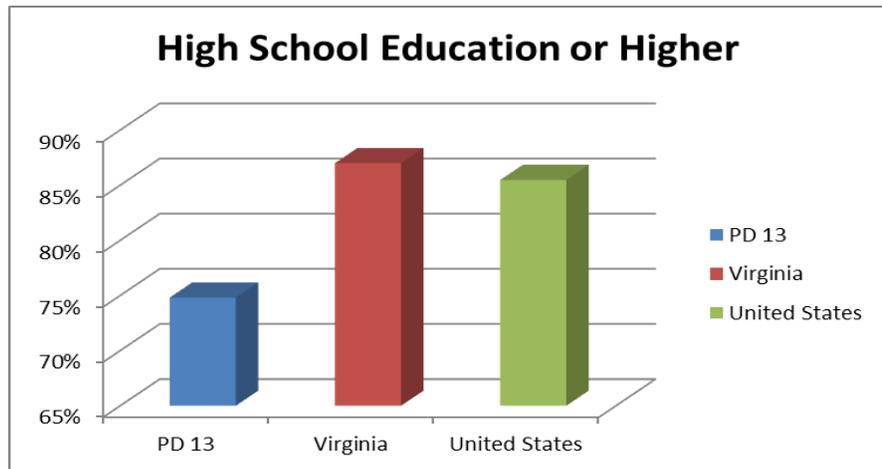
Industry		2013	
		SPDC	Virginia
Financial & Mgt. Services	Information	1.3%	2.1%
	Finance & Insurance	2.0%	3.6%
	Real Estate & Rentals & Leasing	0.7%	1.4%
	Professional & Technical Services	2.1%	11.0%
	Management of Companies & Enterprises	0.9%	2.1%
	Administrative & Waste Services	5.7%	5.9%
		<b>12.7%</b>	<b>26.1%</b>

## Education

In 2013, the Small Business Administration funded a Supply Chain Analysis Report. Almost half of the manufacturers noted that recent graduates of the high school systems, across all three counties, possessed inadequate math and logic skills to be employable. The school system was also identified as the top deterrent to recruiting talent from outside the region. One of the first questions manufacturers stated their recruits ask is about the quality of the local public school system. Due to the poor performance of public schools compared to other areas of Virginia, many employees chose to live more than 45 minutes from their place of employment. This leaks revenue outside of the region and does not support the growth of the regional tax base. Over half of the businesses interviewed noted a local culture that is unaccustomed to the demands of working in a modern manufacturing plant.

The story of Southern Virginia isn't that its high school education levels lag behind state and national

averages – although that gap is closing – nor is it that four year college degrees are about half the state average. The story of the region is that fulfilling, well-paying careers are viable options with any post-secondary training or education and the Southside Planning District's rate of non-four year degree post-secondary education outpaces both state and national levels. The career equivalence of technical training and Associate's degrees in terms of viable careers and good quality of life needs to be highlighted in all public school systems.



## Southside Planning District Commission

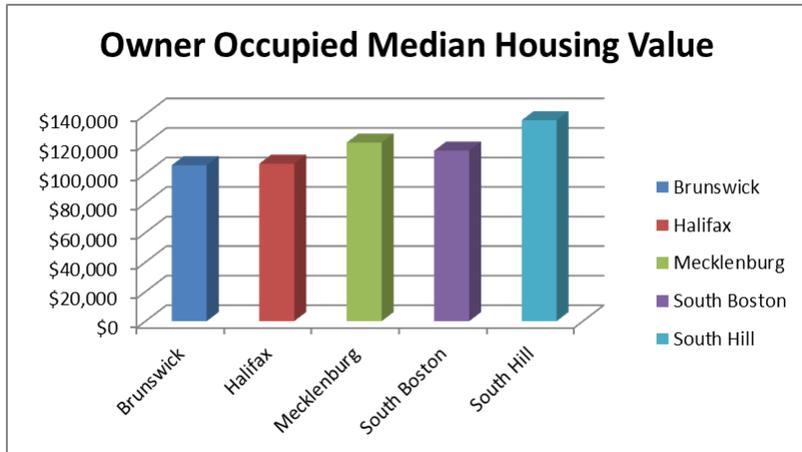
The Federal Reserve is promoting that, in secondary schools, emphasis needs to be placed on keeping students in school until they receive their high school diplomas. Local vocational and technical education must be enhanced to prepare these students for career development and job preparation. A mismatch exists between the occupations most in demand by local employers and the availability of those skills. Increased outreach on tech-prep programs and apprenticeship programs to both high school students and adults is needed.

- **Completion** is important at every stage.
- **Preparedness** (including having good information) can help students choose the best path for themselves and ultimately complete that path.
- Workforce development efforts **targeting younger populations** can have high payoffs in the long run.
- Success of **adult workforce partly depends on early-life decisions and outcomes.**
- **Technology** has long been a friend of workers.

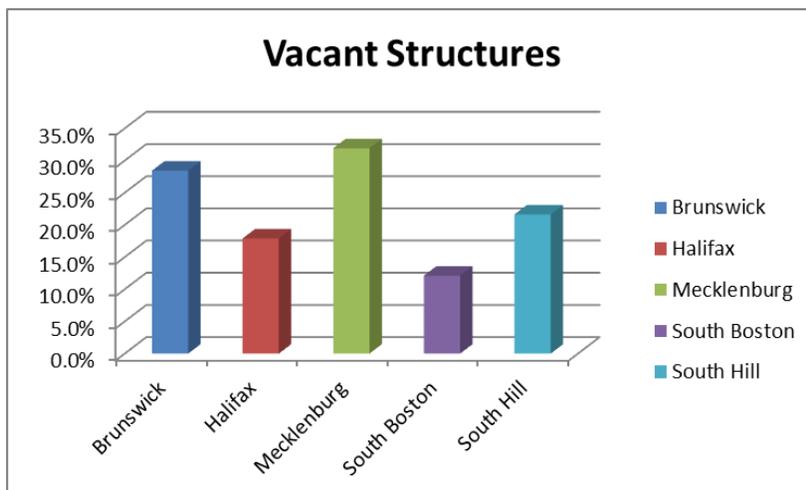
### Housing

Housing plays an integral role in the health of an overall community including recruitment of new businesses to an area. Some of the most affordable housing in Virginia can be found here with an owner-occupied home valued at a median \$116,900. This value peaks in South Hill at \$136,000 and is closer to \$105,000 in Brunswick County, but overall, housing is very affordable in this region. Just under a quarter (23.7%) of all housing units are mobile homes.

**Owner Occupied Median Housing Value**



**Vacant Structures**



The housing stock in the Southside Planning District is mostly single family detached homes built after World War II. Only 11 percent of houses in the region have been built since 2000. In addition to aging, many structures are vacant and not available on the housing market. This presents a dual challenge to communities in terms of aesthetics as well as underutilized residential land. A vacant structure that cannot be occupied is a detriment to the community and for economic development.

## Southside Planning District Commission

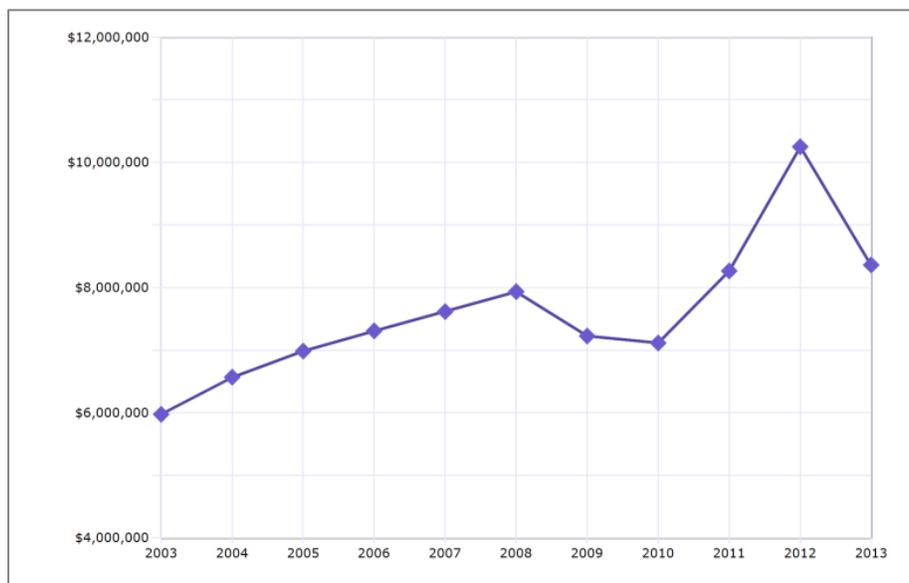
Multi-family housing structures are very limited in the region, but two recent examples include the Taylor Lofts and New Brick Historic Lofts which are adaptive reuse projects creating mixed-income, multifamily housing from vacant industrial buildings. Taylor Lofts are 47 affordable housing units located in historic downtown South Boston in a former tobacco factory. The New Brick Lofts added 27 market rate housing units in downtown South Boston in the last remaining tobacco warehouse in the town.



Another indicator of housing health is the number of structures without indoor plumbing. Census figures indicate approximately 275 structures that have been identified, mostly in Mecklenburg and Halifax Counties. The Southside Planning District (SPDC), through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Indoor Plumbing Program (IPR) has helped to reduce those numbers by providing assistance to over 100 homes in the region since 1993, and the SPDC – in partnership with the Southside Outreach Group, Inc. – will continue to work with localities to reduce that number to zero within the District.

While many challenges lie ahead with housing in Southern Virginia, affordability is not one of them. Additionally, as the economy continues to turn around, derelict structures can be removed or rehabilitated, vacant land identified for housing can be developed, and vacancy rates will reduce.

### Retail Markets



*Local Option Sales Tax (VEC)*

Southside PDC retail establishments continue to expand offering a greater variety of goods and services to local consumers. As an indicator of this expansion, taxable sales have increased by 24.2 percent between 1994 and 2011 (by almost \$200 million). Growth in this sector of the economy is expected to increase from the economic recession.

## Business Financing

The availability of financing is essential to economic development activities. If a business lacks sufficient funds to modernize or expand its operations, it must borrow from financial institutions, private investors, or the public sector. Commercial banks within the District have had increasing deposit balances since 1995. These additional deposits, in turn, represent an increase in the availability of capital investment funds for economic growth.

Along with commercial institutions, funds are provided through federal, state and local sources such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Virginia revolving loan pools, and Industrial Development Bonds (IDB). The Lake Country Development Corporation (LCDC) provides low-interest financing for local economic development needs through two revolving loan funds (RLF).

### LCDC Uses of Funds

- **Purchase of land, buildings, machinery & equipment**
- **Land improvements**
- **Renovation or major additions to existing buildings**

## Conditions Summary

Southern Virginia has made significant progress over the past 20 years weathering major economic storms centered on agricultural and textile industry shifts. The Southside Planning District will continue to work with localities and EDA to leverage funds to assist with identified priorities and projects. There are many strengths that can be celebrated and there are also many challenges remaining.

### Identified Strengths from Past Plans and Stakeholder Interviews

- ✓ Shovel Ready Industrial Sites
- ✓ Low Labor and Land Costs
- ✓ Competitive Tax Rates
- ✓ Ample Recreational Opportunities
- ✓ Strategic Location on the Eastern Seaboard
- ✓ Access to Healthcare
- ✓ Low Cost of Living
- ✓ High Speed Broadband
- ✓ Availability of Water
- ✓ Small Town/Rural Environment
- ✓ Growing Support for Local Foods
- ✓ Brownfield Redevelopment Opportunities
- ✓ Excellent Community College System and Proximity to High Caliber Four-Year Institutions
- ✓ Transportation Networks

*Nature and outdoor recreation are strengths for the region. Buggs Island Lake is the largest lake in Virginia with 50,000 acres of water and 800 miles of shoreline, and home to some of the best largemouth bass fishing in the country. State parks and a multitude of trails are located in the region. Visitors have many opportunities to hike, ride horseback, observe wildlife, hunt, fish, kayak, and canoe.*

*-2013 Virginia Outdoor Plan, PD13*

### Identified Challenges from Past Plans and Stakeholder Interviews

- ✓ Unemployment
- ✓ Aging Population
- ✓ Strengthening Central Business Districts
- ✓ Illiteracy
- ✓ Out-Migration of Youth – “Brain Drain”
- ✓ High Quality Daycare for Working Families
- ✓ Quality of Public Education Facilities
- ✓ Aging Infrastructure
- ✓ Educational Attainment at all Levels
- ✓ Availability of Skilled and Semi-Skilled Jobs
- ✓ Adequate Freight Rail Capacity and Infrastructure to the Port of Virginia
- ✓ Affordable “Last Mile” Broadband
- ✓ Continued Reliance on Traditional Industry Sectors

*“Raising the high school graduation rate could have economic benefits beyond saving the public money. In many models of economic growth, the human capital of the workforce is variable. That’s because a better-educated workforce generates new ideas and can make more productive use of new technologies; more education thus equals more growth. Although this connection has been difficult to prove empirically, many researchers have concluded that the rapid growth in education achievement in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the dramatic increase in high school education in the first half of the century, was a major contributor to the country’s economic advances.”*

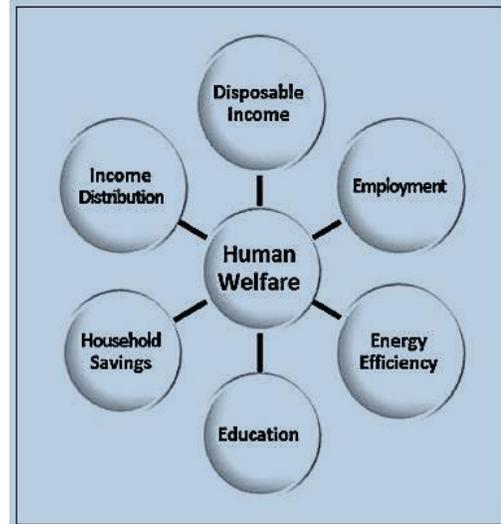
*-Jessie Romero, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond*

### Performance Measures

A resilient economy is sustainable and diverse. Sustainability is often viewed as a three-legged stool that incorporates economic, ecological and social factors. These three factors influence human welfare which is the true measure of a healthy community. Some common indicators of human welfare are income, unemployment, energy efficiency, education, and health.

Income inequality is a constraint on consumer demand, which limits consumption and employment. Unemployment is a constraint on the full utilization of human resources and social productivity, which limits the economic welfare of both the unemployed and the rest of society. Rising levels of education are an investment in human capital that promotes future economic welfare.

Rising levels of energy efficiency are an investment in physical capital that supports future ecological welfare. Finally, net household savings provides the financial basis for future investment and human welfare consumption (*Indicators of Economic Progress: The Power of Measurement and Human Welfare*, MSS Research).



Performance measures should be aimed at achieving clearly identified outcomes. Outcomes are not what the program does but the consequences of the program. Performance measurement is about results.

**All performance measures should be SMART:**

**Specific** – Establishing some lofty measurement that sounds good but is not specific is not going to help your program accomplish its goals. Performance measurements need to be as specific as possible so that people investing in economic development efforts know how those efforts are going to be measured.

**Measurable** – There’s an old saying, “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” A performance measurement is only useful if you can actually measure it, either by quantifying it with specific numbers or verifying through qualitative means that the goal has been accomplished.

**Achievable** – Make sure that your performance measures can actually be accomplished. Setting a goal that is impossible to achieve will only cause frustration. It’s all right to set ambitious goals that stretch your organization. Everyone needs to reach a little beyond their grasp.

**Relevant** – Performance measurements need to be relevant to your organization’s mission and your program’s strategic objectives.

**Time-based** – Make sure that performance measures are achieved within a specific period.

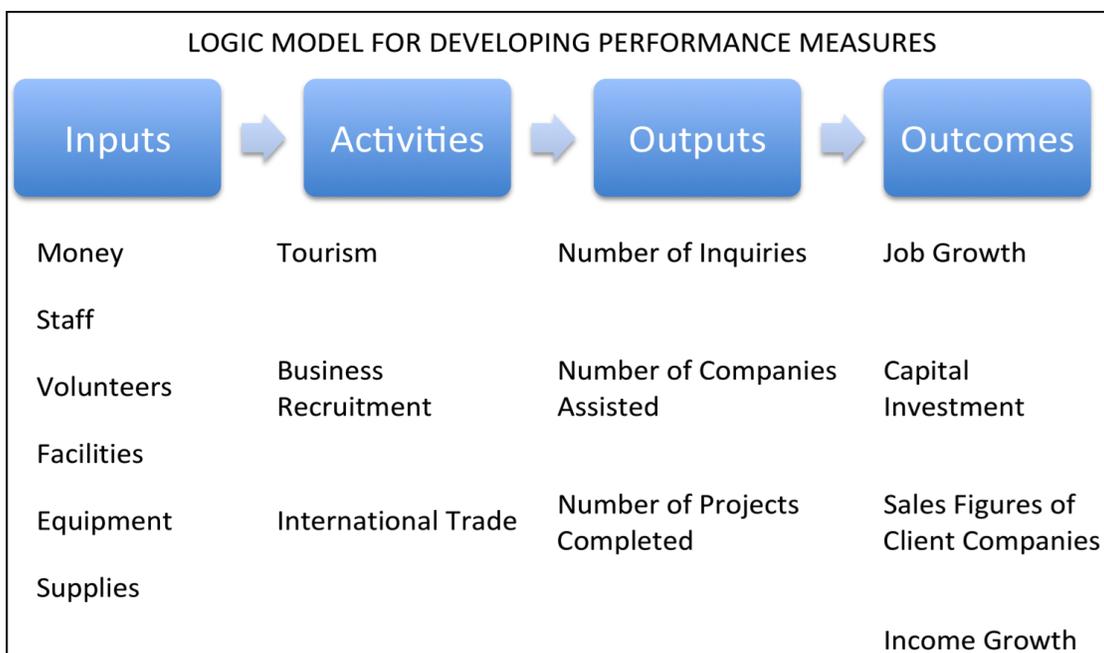
*Site Selection and Economic Analysis*, AngelouEconomics Inc., 2008.

**MOST IMPORTANT PERFORMANCE MEASURES USED IN STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN TOURISM, BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Tourism	Business Recruitment	International Trade
Return on Investment	Job Creation and Retention	Sales Figures (of client companies)
Economic Impacts	Number of Companies Assisted	Client Satisfaction
Number of Inquiries	Process/Activity Report	Number of New Clients
Market Share	Marketing/Advertising Effectiveness	

Source: Performance Measurement in State Economic Development Agencies: Lessons and Next Steps for GDITT. Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, February 2004.

The following diagram shows how performance measurement elements are put together to demonstrate the desired result a program is trying to achieve. This diagram was adapted to reflect performance measures for economic development, but this is the same type of model used to develop just about any type of performance measurement.



Source: AngelouEconomics, 2005. Adapted from *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, United Way of America, 1996.

Southern Virginia’s vision is to have a sustainable, diverse regional economy. Assuming human welfare as the central objective, as well as needing to measure the economic performance of the region, a quality of life dashboard to measure the region’s relevant indicators over time is presented in the table below. The dashboard will be maintained on the website ([www.SOVAeconomy.com](http://www.SOVAeconomy.com)) to easily track each measure over time. These indicators may change annually, but a 5-10 year horizon is more realistic in terms of being able to measure any significant and sustained changes. The regional Dashboard sources are provided in the Appendices.

**Regional Dashboard**

Performance measures provide a mechanism for evaluating and updating the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy based on progress, challenges, or unanticipated circumstances.

**LAND**

Indicator	Performance Level	Goal
% of Industrial Sites Vacant	67.7% (2,585/3,821 acres)	<15%
% of Downtown Buildings Vacant	27.1%	<10%
# of Building Permits Issued	222	275
CDBG Housing Rehab Grants Awarded	\$1,100,000	\$1,500,000
Avg median value of houses built 2010-2013 (weighted. By pop)	\$140,791	\$225,000
Value of Land Per Acre (assessed, not including improvements)	\$3,185	\$25,000
Avg # of days on Market (housing listings)	323	<180 days
\$ of Parks and Recreation per Capita	\$11.35	\$50
Local education expense/ pupil	\$2,899	\$10,000

**PEOPLE**

Indicator	Performance Level	Goal
High School On-Time Graduation Rate	88.2%	95% or Higher
Community College Completion Rate	7%	15% or Higher
College Level Graduation Rate	13%	35% or Higher
Unemployment	7.6 % (January 2015)	4.9 % (Decrease to State Levels)
Personal Income	\$19,015	>\$25,000
Employment Growth	31,382 (January 2015)	>35,000
Poverty Rate	21.6%	<15%
Average Weekly Wage (All Industries)	\$614	>\$650

**CAPITAL**

Indicator	Performance Level	Goal
# of LCDC Loans Approved (Loans Greater Than \$40K)	Current Portfolio has 6 Active Loans	Increase Portfolio to 10 Active Loans
# of Micro-Loans Awarded to Small Businesses thru LCDC (Loans Less than \$40K)	New Program Initiated in 2015	10 Micro-Loans Approved
# of Grant/Loan Applications Submitted for Infrastructure/Planning Projects	26 (2014) \$10,649,500	30 \$12,500,000
# of New Business Starts	45	50
Local Option Sales Tax Deposits	\$10,108,558 (2014)	\$10,500,000
# of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Grants	0	5
Travel Expenditures in District	\$200,001,320 (2013)	\$350,000,000

## VISION

A sustainable, diverse economy that promotes a skilled workforce for 21<sup>st</sup> Century employment sectors including advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, healthcare and entrepreneurship, while celebrating its natural heritage through tourism.

## Implementation Plan

### GOALS

The stated goals to achieve the vision center around the classic three for economic development – land, people, and capital. These three areas are, in turn, supported directly by each of the implementation strategies.

❖ **Land**

Build on and improve the fixed assets of the region – water, sewer, natural gas, broadband, transportation, downtowns, industrial sites, and natural assets – to attract and support business and industry growth and provide for a high quality of life throughout the region.

❖ **People**

Invest in and develop the human capital of the region – the youth, the workforce, and the disenfranchised – to effectively provide the education and training needed for a workforce ready for a wide variety of careers such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, modern agriculture, and entrepreneurship.

❖ **Capital**

Pursue a wide range of financing opportunities to improve public school infrastructure, utilities, transportation, industrial parks, brownfields, recreational amenities, and capital for existing and start-up companies.

*“It makes economic sense to concentrate intensive human capital investment in the form of schooling on the young: The earlier workers invest, the longer they have to profit from their investments.”*

*Jeffrey M. Lacker, President  
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond*

Implementation Strategies

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy	Timeline*	Potential Resources
Recruitment and Retention	People	Support quality childcare opportunities for workers.	Long	Businesses, Local
	Land/Capital	Encourage localities to develop shovel ready sites in their communities.	Medium	TICR, IDAs, VGA, SVRA, VEDP
	Land/Capital	Maximize the economic development potential for the regions' airports through continued expansion and upgrades.	Medium	FAA, VDA, Local
	Land	Evaluate and modify land use regulations to ensure that proper zoning and other permit requirements are in place to better facilitate desired business and industrial uses with minimal delay.	Medium	Local
	Land	Support the development of health care clinics to provide accessible healthcare assistance.	Long	Local/VDH
	Land	Work with non-profits, entrepreneurs, small businesses and other organizations to fill long-term unleased space to keep vacant space in downtowns to a minimum.	Medium	Local
	Capital	Encourage local investments in modern schools.	Long	VPSA, VRA, Local
	Land/Capital	Encourage and support Enterprise Zone (EZ) opportunities for existing and potential businesses located within each EZ.	Short	DHCD, Local, VEDP
Training	People	Expand the number of programs offered in technical training areas: health care workers, welders, journeymen, machinists, and other labor segments.	Medium	Community Colleges, Southern Virginia Higher Ed Center, TICR, DHCD
	People	Promote greater citizen achievement of a high school diploma, two year college degree and a bachelor's degree by emphasizing "Degrees Matter" and other pro-degree initiatives.	Short	Local, Schools, Community Colleges
	People	Promote and support direct entrepreneurship education, mentorship and internship efforts.	Short	Businesses, Schools, Community Colleges
	Land/Capital	Encourage downtown organizations to seek access to outside training assistance (Main Street) for continued redevelopment opportunities.	Short	DHCD, VTC

## Southside Planning District Commission

Investing	Capital	Provide more small business financing opportunities.	Short	LCDC, TICR, DHCD, RD
	Land/ Capital	Foster the assessment, clean-up and redevelopment of old commercial and industrial sites.	Medium	DEQ, EPA, TICR
	Land/ Capital	Support programs and policies to plan, coordinate, rehabilitate, and maintain road improvements throughout the region.	Short	VDOT, EDA, TICR, Local
	Capital	Support existing businesses throughout the region with a variety of financial mechanisms.	Medium	Local, DHCD
	Land/ Capital	Encourage continued development of Farmers Markets in the region.	Short	RD, Local
	Land/ Capital	Encourage adequate investments in water and wastewater systems.	Medium	RD, DHCD, EDA, VRA, VDH, Local
	Land	Identify underutilized industrial sites and buildings throughout the region.	Short	IDAs, Local
	Capital	Encourage localities to identify and seek funding for housing and neighborhood improvement projects.	Short	DHCD, RD, Local
	Land/ Capital	Encourage localities to make improvement to “gateways” through signage, landscaping, cleanup and infrastructure improvements.	Short	VDOT, Local
	Land/ Capital	Support additional multiuse alternative transportation facilities to improve public health and increased tourism opportunities.	Medium	VDOT, DCR, Local
	Land/ Capital	Continue to expand the Tobacco Heritage Trail.	Medium	VDOT, DCR, TICR, VTC
	Land/ Capital	Participate in, support, and encourage Southern Virginia tourism initiatives by supporting the Southern Virginia Blueway, the Tobacco Heritage Trail, Virginia’s Retreat and other regional recreational opportunities.	Short	DCR, VTC, DGIF, Local
	Land/ Capital	Utilize tourism assets as a way to preserve open space, historic sites, and key natural attractions.	Medium	Local
	Land/ Capital	Seek diversification and mixed use redevelopment of downtown commercial districts.	Medium	VHDA, DHR, DHCD
	Capital	Seek creative and cooperative financing strategies for infrastructure needs.	Medium	EDA, TICR, RD, VRA, VDH

## Southside Planning District Commission

	Capital	Continue to invest in expanding broadband coverage and planning efforts.	Medium	DHCD, TCR, RD, NTIA, EDA
	Land	Improve public access to the areas lakes.	Medium	Local, DGIF, DCR
	People	Pursue partnership opportunities with Virginia State University (VSU) that continue and strengthen similar past and current initiatives with Virginia Tech.	Medium	USDA, Universities, Localities

\* Timelines: Short = 1-2 years; Medium = 3-5 years; Long = >5 years

Potential Resources	
<b>DCR</b>	Department of Conservation and Recreation
<b>DEQ</b>	Department of Environmental Quality
<b>DGIF</b>	Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
<b>DHCD</b>	Department of Housing and Community Development
<b>DHR</b>	Department of Historic Resources
<b>EDA</b>	Economic Development Administration
<b>IDA</b>	Industrial Development Authority
<b>LCDC</b>	Lake Country Development Corporation
<b>NTIA</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>RD</b>	Rural Development
<b>SVRA</b>	Southern Virginia Regional Alliance
<b>TICR</b>	Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission
<b>VDH</b>	Virginia Department of Health
<b>VDOT</b>	Virginia Department of Transportation
<b>VGA</b>	Virginia's Growth Alliance
<b>VPSA</b>	Virginia Public School Authority
<b>VRA</b>	Virginia Resources Authority
<b>VTC</b>	Virginia Tourism Corporation
<b>VHDA</b>	Virginia Housing Development Authority

## APPENDICES

- 1 – Stakeholder Interview Summary
- 2 – CEDS Committee Meetings
- 3 – Public Comment Notification and  
SPDC Adoption of Plan
- 4 – SPDC Active Projects List
- 5 – Regional Dashboard Sources
- 6 – Southside PDC Data Book –  
(<http://www.southsidepdc.org/index.php/data-census/spdc-data-book>)