



# West Piedmont Planning District Commission

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2022 - 2026 Plan

Year 1

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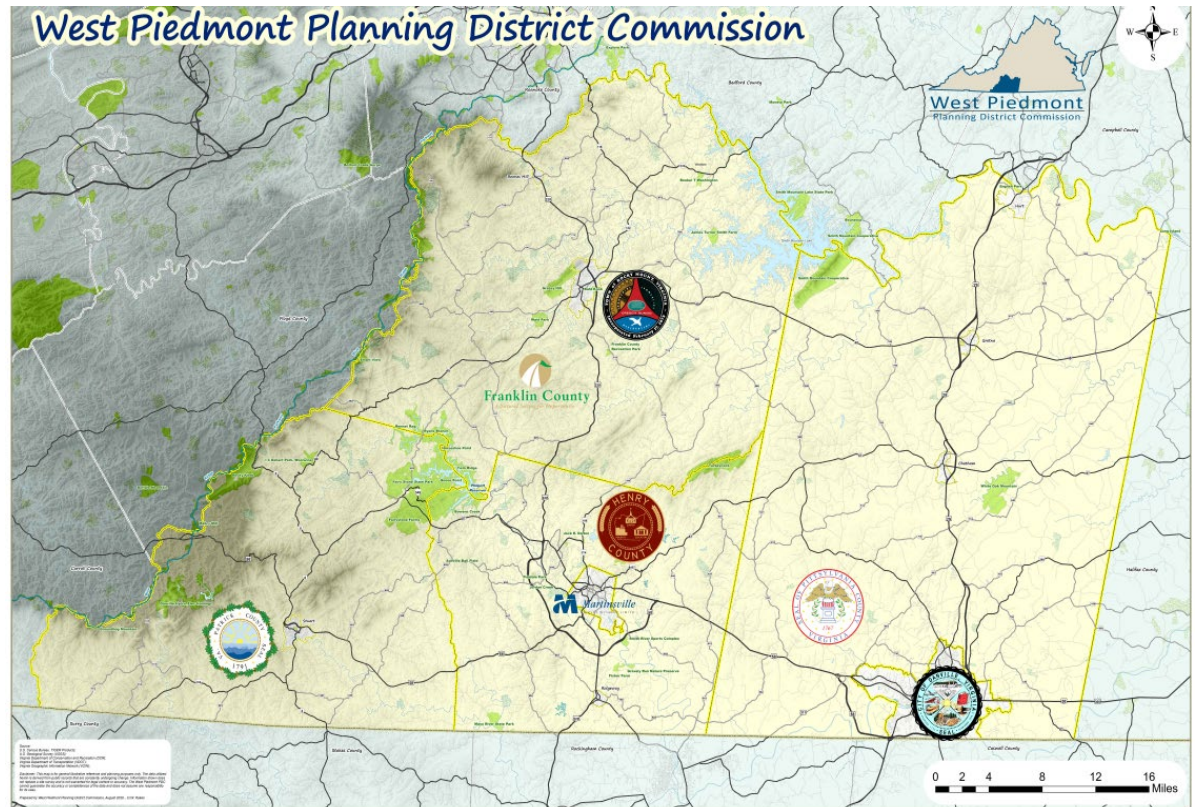
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# Introduction

## ABOUT THE REGION

In accordance with Section 403 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-136), the Economic Development Administration designated Planning District 12 as an Economic Development District on June 24, 1992. Planning District 12--the West Piedmont Planning District (WPPDC)--is comprised of the cities of Danville and Martinsville; the counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; and the Town of Rocky Mount.



Each member jurisdiction has three representatives on the Planning District Commission Board--two elected officials and one appointed citizen representative. This designation represents a partnership among the West Piedmont Planning District Commission, its member local governments, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) and assists with establishing regional priorities for projects and investments through the annual development of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document.

As the West Piedmont Economic Development District, staff has established a process for annual updates to its CEDS document. The plan development is ongoing, with document updates beginning as soon as submission to EDA occurs each year.

## Member Localities



## WHAT IS A CEDS?

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 will guide the direction of the region from 2022-2026



A diverse working group of local representatives from private, public, and nonprofit sectors developed the CEDS to identify regional opportunities and align stakeholder priorities to actualize the community's goals and strategies. This working group builds on local partnerships to implement the action plan and meet performance measures for economic and community development at the regional, state, and federal levels.

The following sections form the basis for the West Piedmont Planning Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

This CEDS will include:

- **Summary Background** of the region's economic conditions and demographics
- **SWOT Analysis** to identify the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- **Strategic Direction** - to incorporate tactics identified through the planning process, other plans, and stakeholder feedback to develop the priority strategies for the region
- **Evaluation Framework** - to identify and monitor performance measures associated with the plan.
- **Economic Resilience** - to assess and develop strategies for improving the region's ability to prepare for and respond to economic shocks.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Established by the West Piedmont Planning District Board of Commissioners in 2010, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee plays a key role in the development and update of this document. This Committee includes public officials, community leaders, representatives of workforce development boards, representatives of institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private-sector individuals. A subset of the full CEDS Committee, the Working Committee serves as a clearinghouse for document review and closely reviews the content.

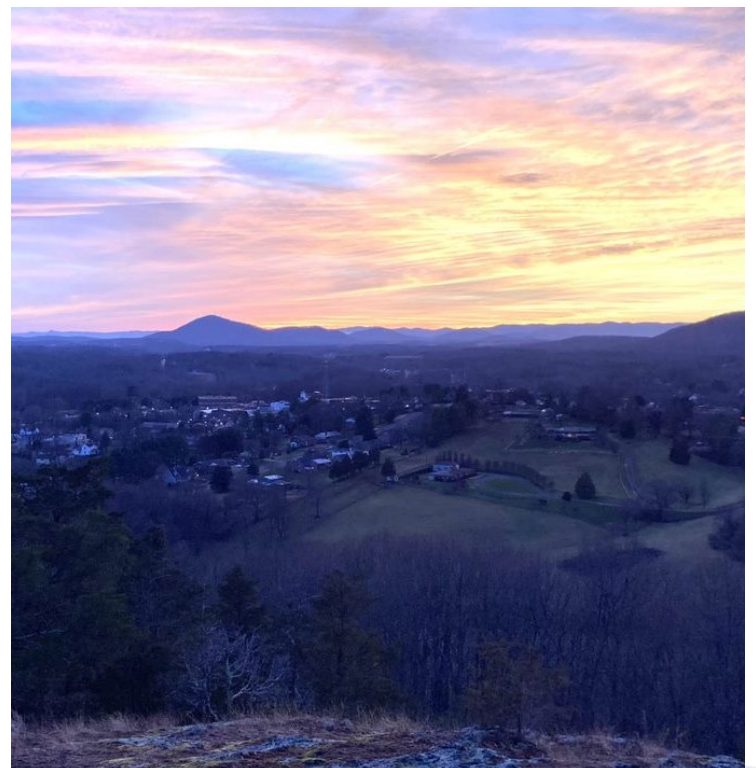
Several stakeholder engagement sessions with the CEDS Committee were held within the completion of the 2022 CEDS Update. In particular, two stakeholder sessions were held both in December of 2021 and January of 2022. The first session was a Priority Setting Session, where the CEDS Committee was presented high-level data findings for the region, a SWOT overview was conducted, and breakout groups discussed resiliency and priority topics for the CEDS. A PDF of the slides for this meeting can be found [here](#). The second engagement session, focused on Strategy building where stakeholders were broken out into breakout groups and gave valuable and insightful feedback on creating the focus areas, goals, and strategies seen in the Strategy Direction section later in this document. A PDF of the slides for this session can be found [here](#).

To ensure citizen participation in the planning process, a copy of the CEDS document is made available on the Commission's website at [www.wppdc.org](http://www.wppdc.org). The CEDS document was also placed on the PDC/EDD website so that interested parties from across the region could provide input over a 30-day period. Advertisements were published in local newspapers to make the public aware of the availability and opportunity to provide comments/input. Any comments received through this process are considered for inclusion in this update. The document is distributed in key library locations for public review as well. Copies of the PDC/EDD agendas with CEDS review information is available to the media and public on the PDC's website and Facebook page.

## REGIONAL VISION

The past Regional Vision was deemed to be missing key characteristics, personality, and brevity by stakeholders and the CEDS Committee. After input from several stakeholders, a new regional vision is shown below:

*"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."*



# Region Background

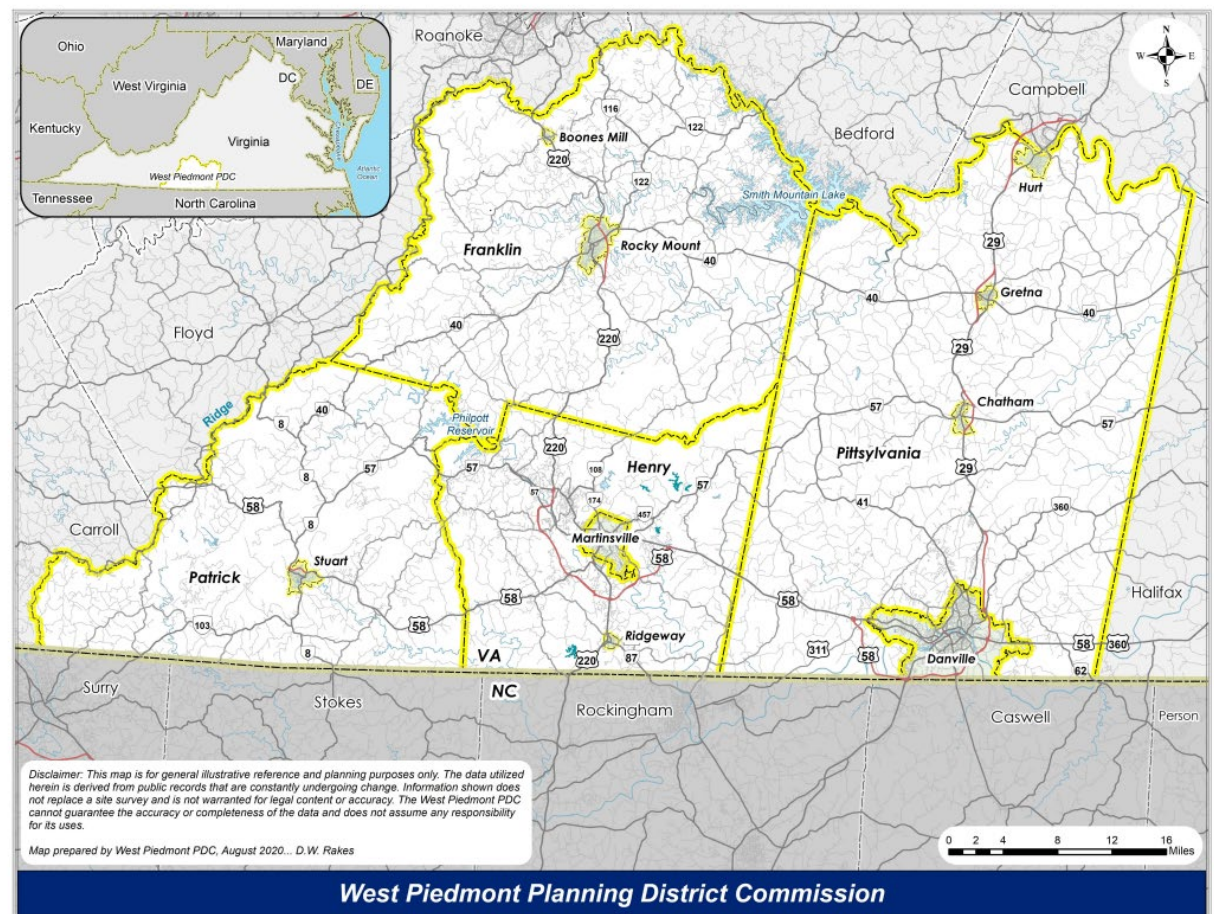
## GEOGRAPHY

The West Piedmont Planning District (WWPDC), one of twenty-one planning districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is comprised of the counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; the cities of Danville and Martinsville; and the town of Rocky Mount. The region includes approximately 2,600 square miles with a population of 239,609, according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau. Over the past 20 years, the region has seen a 4% decline in population.

Located in southwestern Virginia, the Planning District is bordered on the west by the Blue Ridge Mountains and lies some 150 miles southwest of Richmond, the state capital. Less than 200 miles to the east are the extensive port facilities of Norfolk, Newport News, and Portsmouth; a short distance to the south lies the industrial crescent of the North Carolina Piedmont; and about 100 miles to the northwest are the Appalachian coalfields of Virginia and West Virginia.

The Roanoke (Staunton) River forms the northeastern border of the Planning District flowing in a southeastern direction towards the Atlantic Ocean. Portions of the Roanoke River Basin, in which the Planning District lies, are developing into major commercial and industrial concentrations. Recreational development and associated business development within the region also have expanded due to the presence of Smith Mountain and Leesville Lakes, Philpott Lake, Fairy Stone State Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Five federal highways (U.S. Highways 29, 58, 220, 311, and 360) and twenty state primary routes provide the localities of the Planning District with access to each other and the rest of the nation. In addition, the region is served by Norfolk Southern rail lines, numerous freight lines, and air service from the Danville Regional Airport and Blue Ridge Airport (Henry County). The following map illustrates the location of the Planning District in relation to both Virginia and the middle and south Atlantic states.



## NATURAL ASSETS

With its scenic mountains, large manmade lakes, and historical heritage, the Planning District has naturally developed many outdoor recreational areas over the years. Not only do these areas improve the quality of life for the region's citizens, but they also generate a profitable influx of visitors from outside the immediate area. Four major natural resources that offer recreational opportunities within the region include Smith Mountain and Leesville Lakes, Philpott Lake, Fairy Stone State Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Additional information regarding these opportunities may be found in the [Virginia Outdoors Plan](#), developed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, which provides an overview of recreational opportunities in the region. Please see the appendix for a detailed outline of all-natural assets in the region.



## BUILT ASSETS

Infrastructure within a community can alter the ability for a region to grow and thrive. The importance of the built assets (including transportation, air, rail, transit, bikeway structures, etc.) within the region serve as the framework of the communities that lie within them. The Planning District has several major highway networks, two airports, rail lines, and transit systems, multiple bike pathways and trails, and critical utility and telecommunications infrastructure assets. Without these assets the region could not function, and although often overlooked, these assets are some of the most important resources the region holds. Please see the appendix for an in-depth detailed outline of all built assets in the region. County assets as well as recent and past development are broken out by region, with specific detail to new plans and investments.

## CULTURAL ASSETS

The cultural assets within the West Piedmont Planning District give residents a sense of unity, place, and belonging. These assets allow residents to better understand previous generations and the history of the region, as well as bring in new people and promote a higher quality of life. Not only do these areas improve the quality of life of the region's citizens, but they also generate a profitable influx of visitors from outside the immediate area.

That said, there are a number of cultural assets and other alluring amenities in the District. Outdoor-related activities linked to mountains, scenic drives, national and state parks, and hiking rank among the most popular activities for tourists and residents in the region. Specifically, the region holds a strong, unique heritage music scene, as well as boasting many recreational activities, museums, crafts, and other historic/cultural programs. Please see the appendix for an in-depth detailed outline of all cultural assets in the region.

# Economic Resiliency

All communities should identify their vulnerabilities and plan mitigation strategies to minimize impacts and support long-term recovery efforts. One vital element of consideration for an area's economy is its economic resiliency to withstand not only job losses through downsizing industries and business closures, but also its resiliency to major disasters such as floods, tornadoes, additional natural events, and other potential challenges. The EDA classifies three ways in which an area's economy may be impacted:

1. Downturns or other significant events in the national or global economy that may impact demand for locally produced commodities;
2. Downturns in a particular industry that comprise a critical sector of the local economy; and
3. Other external factors such as a natural or manmade disaster, closure of a major employer, and other unforeseen events.

Engaging in planning efforts with community engagement helps to mitigate disruptions to the economy and alleviate impacts from such events by developing prevention and response strategies. Pre-disaster resiliency planning is essential to economic recovery and long-term sustainability.

## DISASTER RECOVERY

In order to create safer, stronger communities, careful consideration of a business or community's ability to sustain a disaster should include preparation, planning, response, and recovery to help minimize significant impacts from emergency events. This includes public health, safety, environment, food availability, natural resources, wildlife, and financial strength. Within the region, the West Piedmont Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan provides strategic planning and mitigation strategies for natural disaster events. The plan helps local governments determine their risks and vulnerabilities and identify mitigation projects that will reduce these risks. The most important part of the plan is the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) which provides a detailed assessment of hazards that could affect the region and its localities as well as their potential impacts.

There are also several federal and state programs in place to help offset the impact of job losses due to industry and business closures. To assist with industry closings and large layoffs, there are multiple state and federal programs available to affected workers. The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), a federal retraining benefit that pays community college and trade school tuition, applies to employees who have been displaced by foreign competition. Many programs are available through the Workforce Development Boards and partnering agencies that serve the region.

In addition, Virginia's Rapid Response program, administered by the Virginia Employment Commission, provides a variety of services to workers involved in mass layoffs or plant closings. Services include job search assistance, help with unemployment documents, financial management seminars, and help locating skills training. Rapid Response is administered on a state level but operated on a local level. Services are tailored, based on the needs of affected employees, and at no cost to the employer or affected employees.



## COVID-19 IMPACTS

The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected not only the physical health of the residents of the West Piedmont Economic Development District but also the economic health of individuals, businesses and communities. For instance, the increase in unemployment highlighted the number of residents living near or below the poverty level. Demand for food assistance programs, food banks, rental assistance, utility assistance and health insurance assistance increased dramatically.

Rising to the challenge, some businesses changed their business models by adding e-commerce options, home delivery, curbside pick-up, take-out service and other options to keep customers and themselves safe and their businesses viable. The implementation of virtual learning for K-12 and higher education, the necessity of “work from home” for the public and private sector workforce and the increased use of telehealth emphasized the need for the expansion of broadband to unserved and underserved areas.



The Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA), an economic and workforce development collaboration, formed a COVID19 Emergency Task Force to collect and use data to monitor COVID-19’s impact on the region’s economy. Additionally, to assist the district in addressing and recovering from these challenges the West Piedmont Economic Development District applied to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration for \$400,000 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding.

The pandemic’s impact on the business community and its residual effects on the region's communities and residents is of primary concern. The newly created [Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan](#) addresses reducing health impacts, getting residents back to work and stabilizing and growing the economy through a regional inclusive vision and plan. The plan and the actions and goals developed during the PRRP process are used as a framework for the development of the 2022 CEDS.

## TOURISM

Tourism provides another potential source of income and economic stimulus for the Planning District. There are a number of tourist attractions and other alluring amenities in the District which bring in thousands of people per year. Not only do these areas improve the quality of life of the region's citizens, but they also generate a profitable influx of visitors from outside the immediate area. Outdoor-related activities linked to mountains, scenic drives, national and state parks, and hiking rank among the most popular activities for tourists in Virginia, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation.



According to a recent economic impact study conducted by the Travel Industry Association for the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the following 2020 Travel Impacts demonstrate the importance of tourism within the Planning District. As seen below tourism dollars took a tremendous hit in the Commonwealth and in many areas across the region due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. That said, travel still generates a significant amount of employment within the region and accounts for millions in state and local taxes. The importance of tourism in the region both economically and socially cannot go unstated moving forward.

### 2020 Direct Impacts

Locality	Total Travel Expenditures	Total Spending % Change (2020/2019)	Travel Generated Employment	Labor Income (in millions)	State Taxes (in millions)	Local Taxes (in millions)
Franklin County	\$48,499,534	-14.8%	440	\$11,375,735	\$882,961	\$1,884,271
Henry County	\$29,796,125	-14.4%	429	\$10,601,293	\$869,219	\$1,406,807
Patrick County	\$17,258,545	-19.9%	116	\$3,069,231	\$381,881	\$861,959
Pittsylvania County	\$21,379,258	-14.5%	212	\$5,135,294	\$484,002	\$822,316
Danville City	\$77,801,683	-25.1%	1,082	\$27,154,226	\$2,412,449	\$4,158,455
Martinsville City	\$20,164,131	-22.3%	283	\$6,651,815	\$626,213	\$857,940

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond, VA, 2021.

## INDUSTRY DIVERSIFICATION

Historically, in the WWPDC, there has been a long dependence on manufacturing employment. The region remains at 19% employment in the manufacturing sector, nearly three times higher than the state rate of 6%. The Health Care and Social Assistance is the second highest employment sector in the region, continuing to grow in total jobs and is projected to keep growing with the addition of an aging population and the services needed to accompany this change. The third highest employment sector is retail trade at 13.4%. The region has become somewhat more resilient with the variety of occupations and abundance of workforce training opportunities to move residents into higher wage, higher skilled jobs, that are a part of a career pathway. The district also fosters entrepreneurship and innovation with the growth and development of small businesses, as well as the support and availability of significant resources to encourage this growth.



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Achieving economic resilience in the region also relies on addressing issues related to persistent poverty and economic inequity. The region will ultimately struggle with wealth creation if it does not focus on those populations that have been disproportionately impacted based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The strategies and goals aligned in this plan purposefully and tactically align equity and inclusion along with economic success and resiliency. Regional stakeholders have embraced the importance of equity within the region and understand its relevance today as it can propel communities forward with proper leadership and support. For the WWPDC Region to reach its goals of the future and outlined in this plan, they must consider diversity, equity, and inclusion each step of the way while pushing to elevate the economic development needs of the historically underserved business and populations in the community.

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

While many of the counties and cities within the WPPDC Region have a unique history and culture, the problems they face regarding economic and social issues remain largely the same. In order to match the scale of what is needed to improve industries and infrastructure around the area, regional solutions offer a form of resiliency that can impact more people, attract more funding, and help fix systematic issues. Fortunately, the WPPDC area has strong ties to regionalism and has several regional collaborative organizations, initiatives, and plans to help the region prosper moving forward.



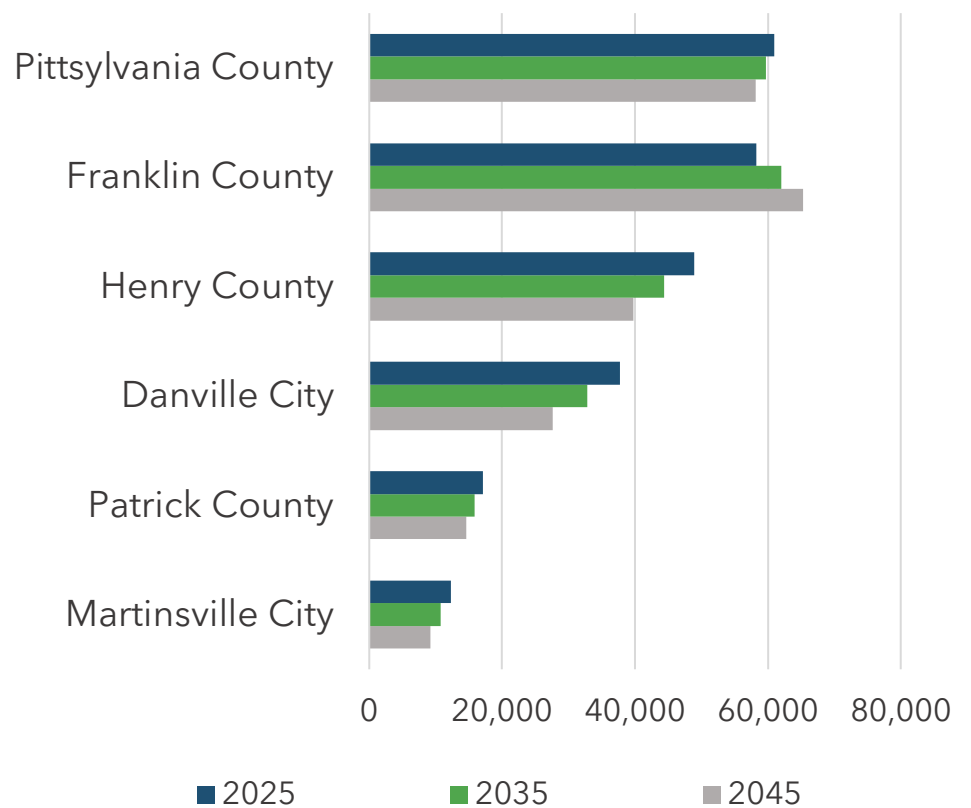
These regional actions help work towards resiliency as it brings together many areas of community which often operate independently. These may include: the built environment, ecosystem services and the natural environment, energy production, food and water security, emergency preparedness, economic risk management, health services, transportation, communication, and education. For more detailed regional organizations, initiatives, plans, and current collaborations, please see the appendix.

# Demographic Overview

## POPULATION & PROJECTIONS

The following table demonstrates projected population for each locality in the West Piedmont Planning District. As seen, the region has roughly 240,000 people in 2020, representing a 4% decline from 10 years ago. The region is projected to lose approx. 35,000 people in the next 25 years, or a 10% decline. This decline is contrary to the state, as Virginia has seen a positive percent change in population and is expected to see continued growth. All counties in the region excluding Franklin declined in population over the last 10 years, with Franklin County also being the lone county for projected growth. That said, Franklin County is expected to become the largest county in the region, surpassing Pittsylvania County.

### County Population Projections



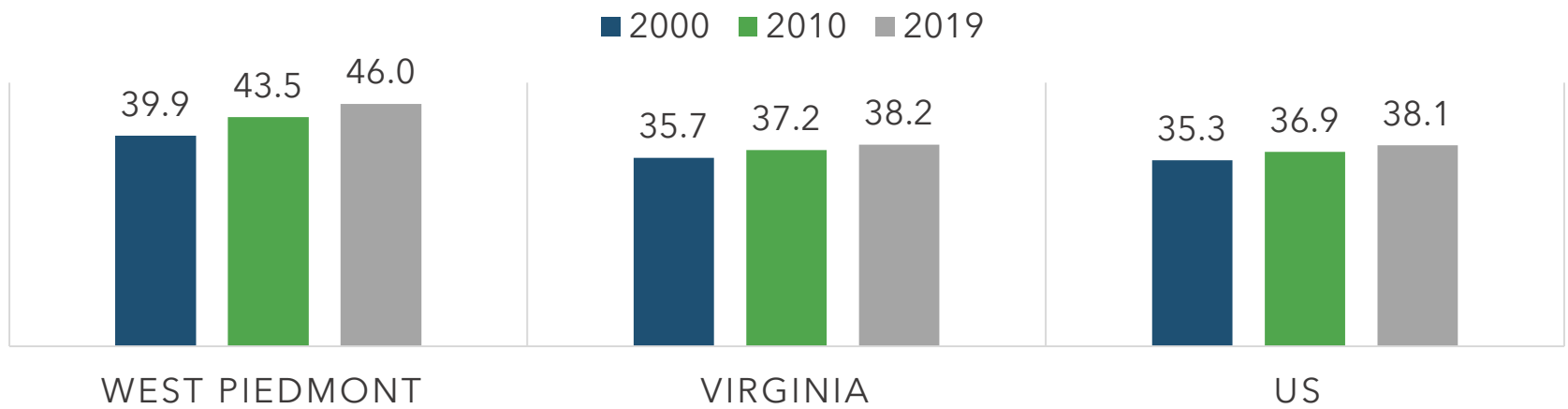
Locality	2020 Census	2000 - 20 % Change	2025 Projected	2035 Projected	2045 Projected	2020 - 45 % Change
Franklin County	54,477	15%	58,295	61,990	65,262	20%
Henry County	50,948	-12%	48,875	44,418	39,728	-22%
Patrick County	17,608	-9%	17,123	15,919	14,627	-17%
Pittsylvania County	60,501	-2%	60,951	59,735	58,158	-4%
Danville City	42,590	-12%	37,764	32,796	27,672	-35%
Martinsville City	13,485	-13%	12,287	10,806	9,271	-31%
<b>West Piedmont</b>	<b>239,609</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>235,296</b>	<b>225,664</b>	<b>214,718</b>	<b>-10%</b>
Virginia	8,586,967	21%	8,993,343	9,604,197	10,149,26	18%

Table and Chart Source: Demographics Research Group of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, June 2019, <http://demographics.coopercenter.org>

## AGE CHARACTERISTICS

As the following graph indicates, the West Piedmont Planning District had a higher median age (in years) in 2019 than the state's median of 38.2 years. This data indicates that there is a continuing trend of out-migration of younger working age persons, which is causing the median age to rise at a faster rate in the Planning District. Additionally, the birth rate in the District is lower, contributing to the higher median age. An increasing number of persons aged 65 and up are moving into the District. The rural setting, relatively comfortable summer climate, lower cost of living, and proximity to several major urban areas are attractive to many older persons.

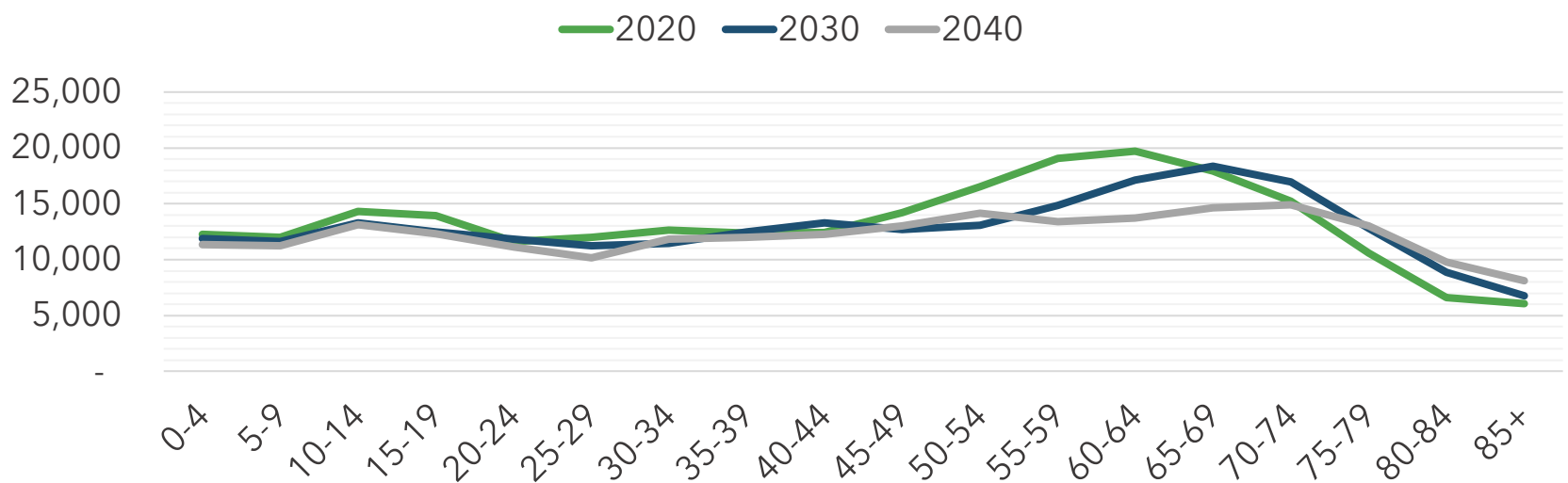
### MEDIAN AGE 2000 - 2019



Source: 2000, 2010, 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

The following graph indicates the projected change in population by age group. As seen, the apex of each line continues to move further to the right as time increases, indicating an aging population. While age groups under 40 remain relatively consistent in terms of total population regardless of year, significant changes start to occur above this age threshold. For example, the age groups consisting of those 80+ (80-84 and 85+) are expected to increase by over 40% in the next 20 years (roughly 5,000 more people). Additionally, the 50-59 age group is projected to decrease by roughly 12,000 people, a 23% decrease. This data aligns with the state trends, as for Virginia, the 65 and over group is expected to increase from 12% in 2010 to 18% by 2030, driven by the aging baby-boomer generation and declining birth rates.

### Population Projections by Age Group

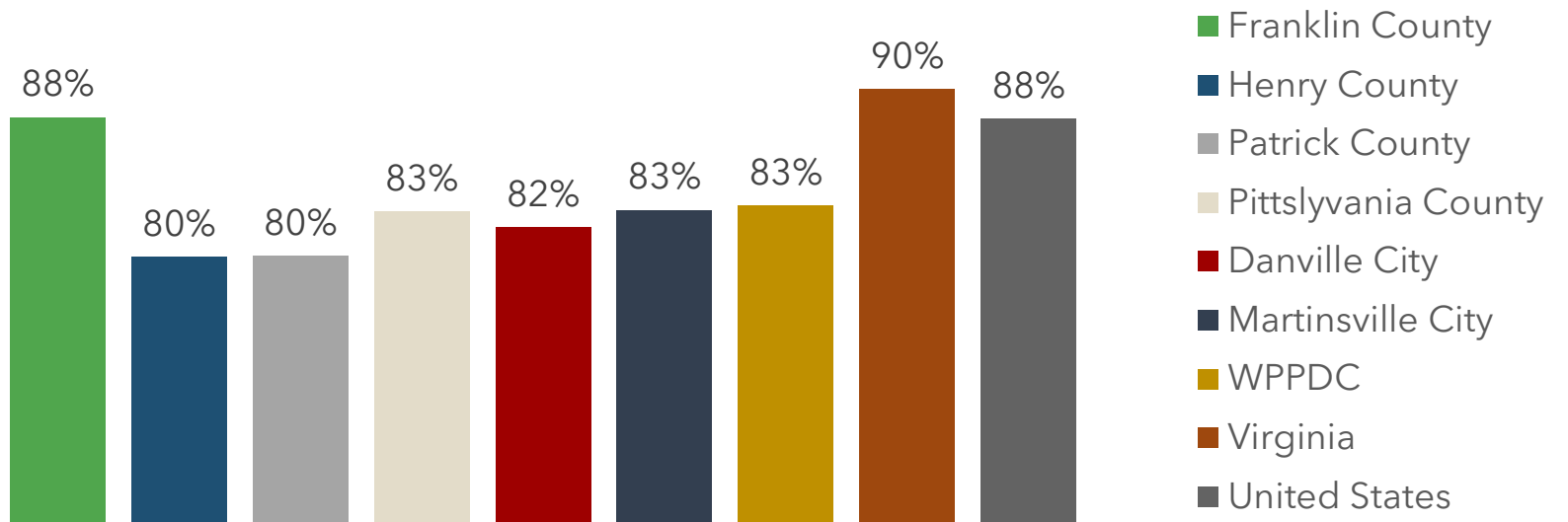


Source: Demographics Research Group of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, June 2019, <http://demographics.coopercenter.org>

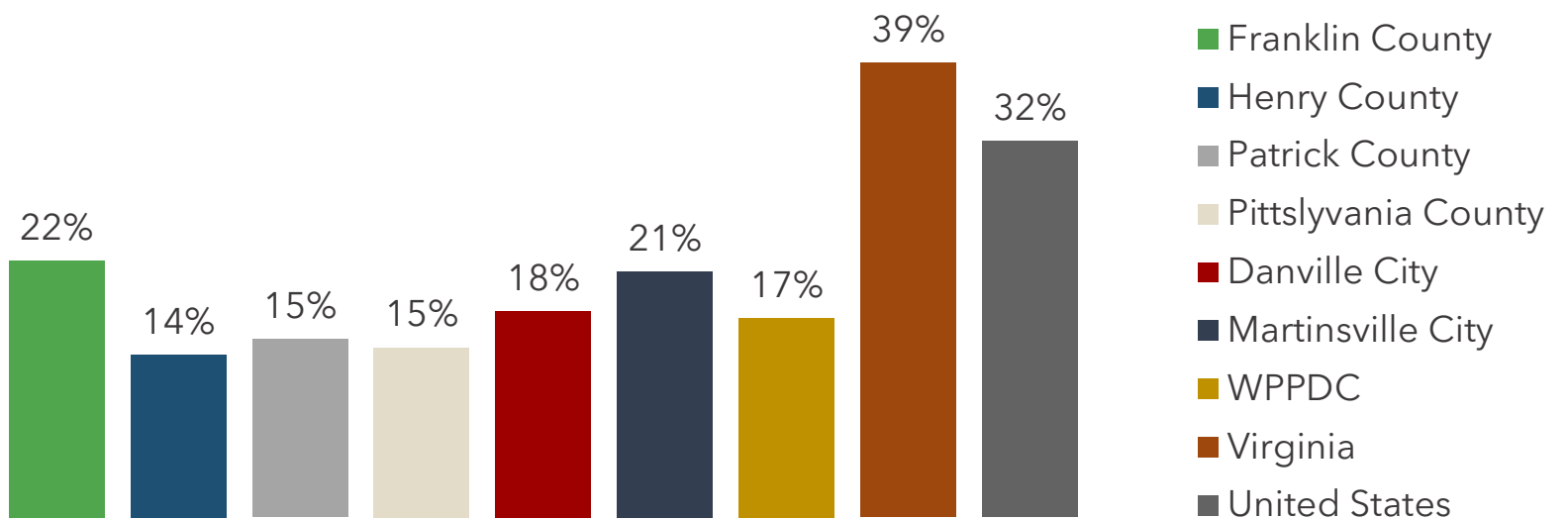
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational level of the Planning District is an important measure of how prepared the labor force is to participate in new jobs created through local economic development efforts. The following graphs provide an overview of educational attainment for persons ages 25 and older in each locality of the Planning District for 2019. The first graph depicts the number of high school graduates and the second illustrates those who received a bachelor's degree or higher. As seen, the region falls behind both Virginia and the US in terms of high school graduate and bachelor's degree or higher attainment rates.

### High School Graduate or Higher Rates



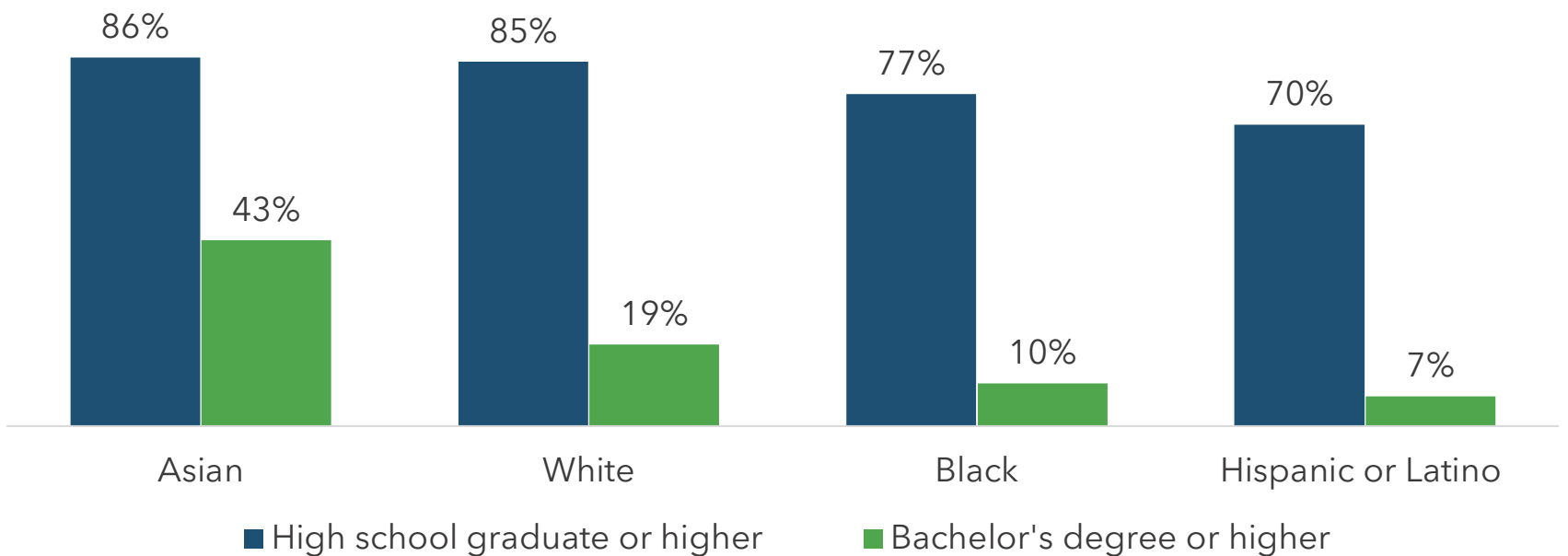
### Bachelor's Degree or Higher Rates



Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

In terms of educational inequities in the region, both the Black and Hispanic or Latino race/ethnicity groups have lower high school graduation attainment. This is also true for advanced degrees, as Black and Hispanic or Latino race/ethnicity groups who have attained a bachelor's degree or higher fall more than 10% below than those who are White. Additionally, for those who identify as White, nearly one third of those who graduate high school go on to get a bachelor's degree or higher. This number drops significantly for those who identify as Black and have graduated high school (roughly 1:7), and even further for Hispanic or Latino (roughly 1:10).

### Educational Attainment by Race in Region



Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

### EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The Planning District is served by two community colleges - Danville Community College (DCC) in Danville and Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) in Henry County. Both comprehensive community colleges offer a variety of college transfer, technical, and workforce programs awarding nationally recognized industry certifications, certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. In addition, Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) serves Franklin County.

Additional Educational Institutions include:

- **Averett University**
- **Ferrum College**
- **Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR)**
- **New College Institute**
- **Old Dominion University's Distance Learning**
- **Hargrave Military Academy**



# Economic Analysis

## WORKFORCE & INCOME

For several decades, the West Piedmont Planning District was noted for its high degree of industrialization when compared with other regions of the state. Employment in the region traditionally was concentrated in the manufacture of textile and furniture products. However, the region lost a significant number of jobs in these sectors due to globalization as a whole and, subsequently, local and regional unemployment rates increased. Efforts to attract diversified manufacturing and support industries have helped to broaden the economic base of the region and mitigate the impacts of globalization upon the region.

### Labor Force

While the unemployment rate is commonly used to gauge the economy, the labor force participation rate can provide a more comprehensive evaluation. This measure accounts for the number of people available for work as a percentage of the total population, including those actively seeking employment. In 2018, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta reported the labor force participation rate is expected to decline moving forward, largely the result of the aging population, with the continued shift of workers into age groups that tend to have lower participation rates and/or retire. As baby boomers reach retirement age, they leave the labor force and don't need to work. Since this is such a large percentage of the population, this has a major impact on the labor force participation rate. Another factor is the opioid epidemic that continues to critically impact the prime working age group, those 25-54 years old.

A declining labor force will have long lasting impacts on the economy. As depicted in the following table, "Labor Force Participation Rates, West Piedmont Planning District," the labor force of the Planning District continues to decline and, labor force participation rates for each county are considerably below the US and state averages. Additionally, 2020 labor force rates experienced significant decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as thousands have left the job market. When or if these workers will return is still in question as current labor shortages are occurring throughout the country.

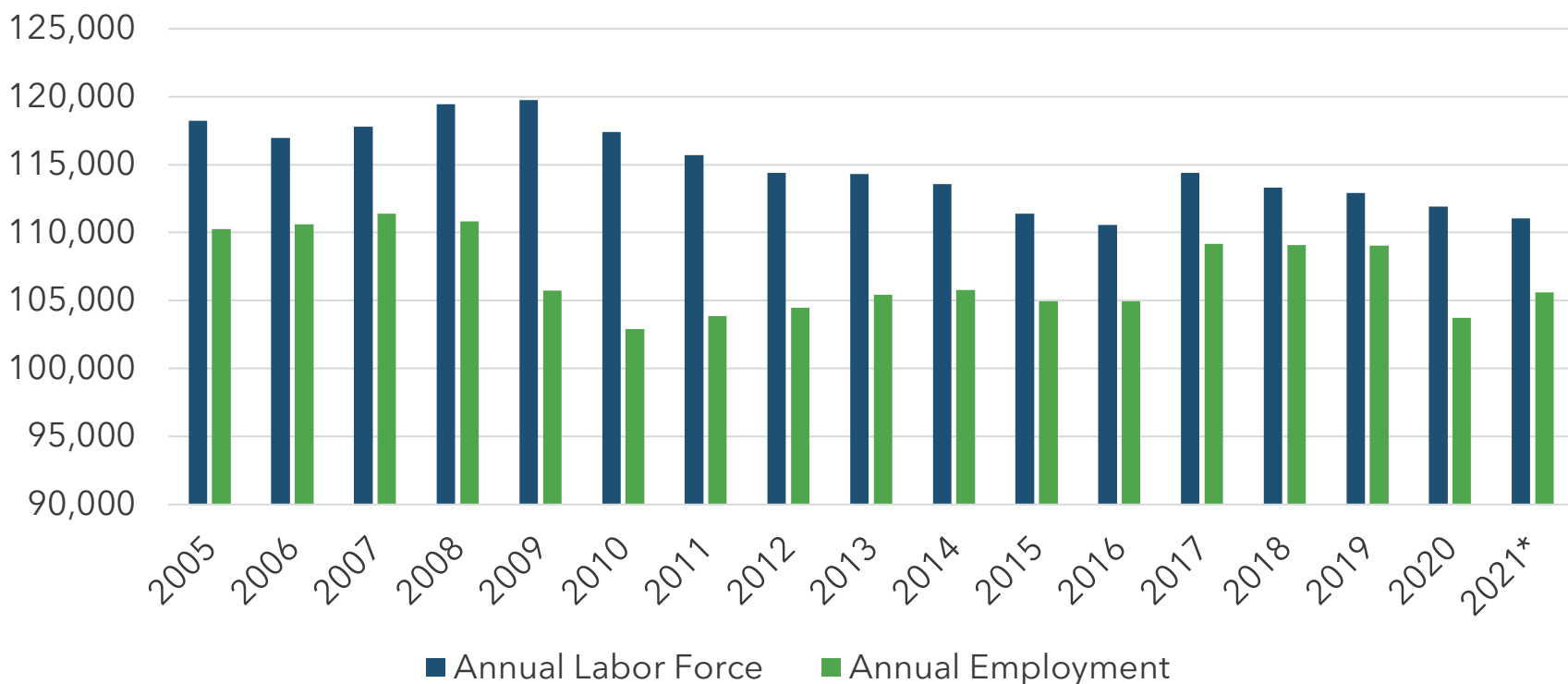
Locality	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Franklin County	58.5%	58.5%	56.0%	56.7%	57.9%	56.4%
Henry County	52.7%	52.2%	52.5%	51.3%	56.9%	57.1%
Patrick County	50.1%	53.3%	48.9%	50.9%	49.9%	48.4%
Pittsylvania County	59.5%	59.0%	57.7%	57.5%	60.5%	59.0%
Danville City	58.7%	58.7%	57.1%	55.2%	61.1%	60.5%
Martinsville City	50.8%	49.4%	50.5%	56.9%	57.2%	59.1%
Virginia	62.0%	61.7%	62.2%	65.5%	63.4%	62.3%
U.S.	62.7%	62.8%	62.8%	62.9%	63.1%	61.8%

\*NOTE: 2020 County/City Figures are Preliminary. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.



As seen in the chart below, the gap between the annual labor force and employment widened from 2009 - 2011 due to the recession. The trend began to reverse in 2012 and continued until 2019. The difference in the annual labor force and annual employment drastically increased in 2020, mainly due to the impact of COVID-19 on the labor market.

### Annual Labor Force and Employment



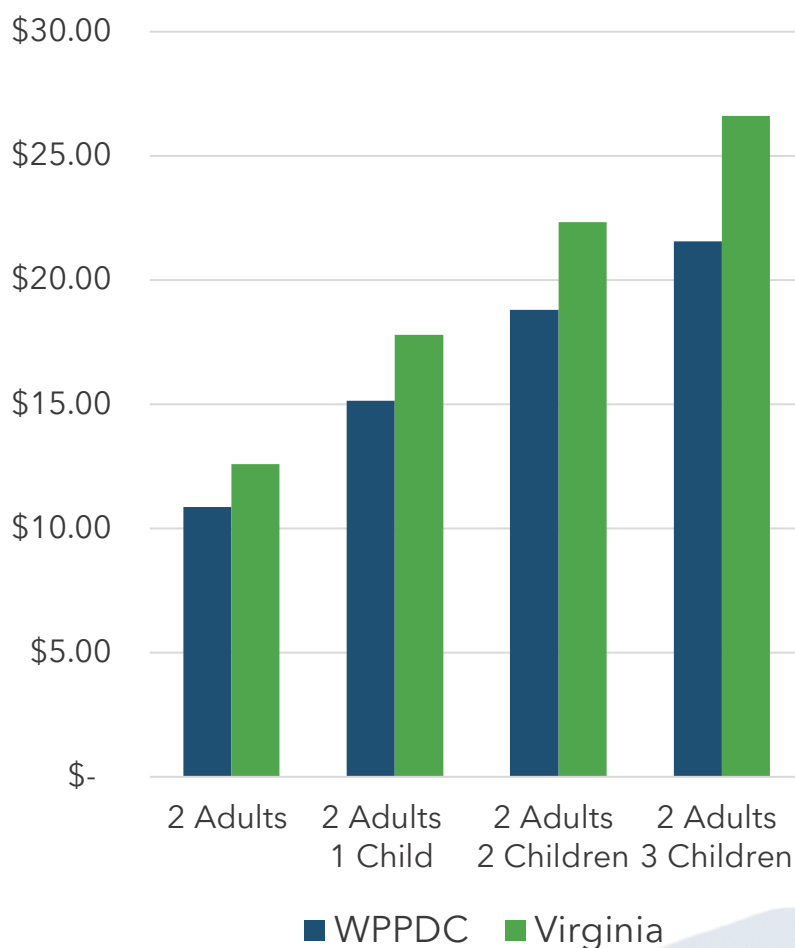
\*NOTE: 2021 County/City Figures are Preliminary. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

### Living Wage

The living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs. Developed by the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), the living wage is determined through the combination of a geographically specific market-based calculation of basic needs with payroll and income taxes. Basic needs include food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities (e.g. clothing, personal care items, etc.).

The chart showcases that the WPPDC Region is more affordable than other areas in the state of Virginia. On average, for 2 Adults living and working in the region, each must make close to \$15.00/hr. if they are to support one child and remain above the poverty line.

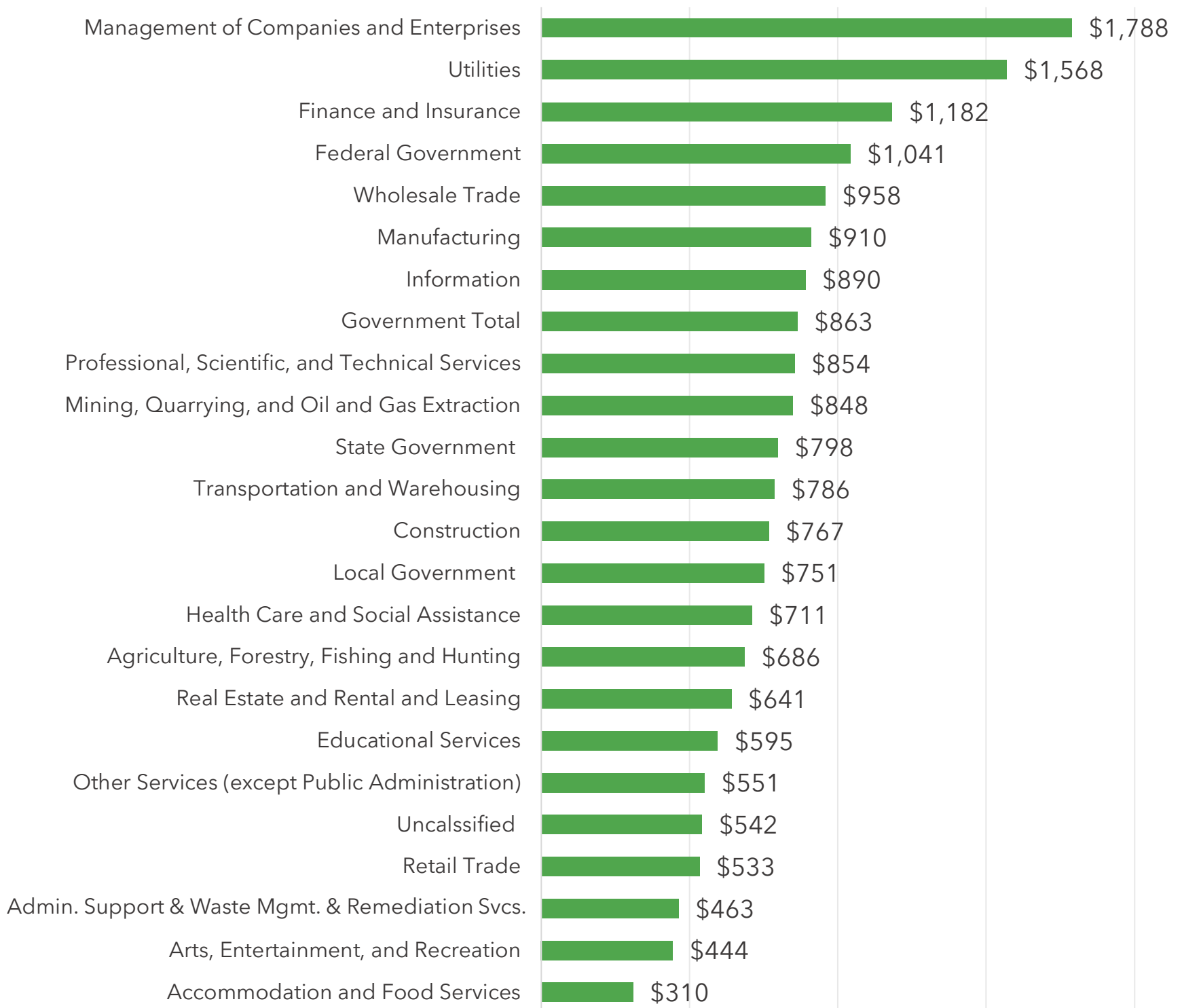
### Living Hourly Wage - 2 Adults Working



## Average Weekly Wages

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021 report, among the 343 largest counties in the United States, 312 had over-the-year wage increases from 2020 to first quarter of 2021. Nationally, across most industries, increases in average weekly wages reflect substantial employment declines combined with wage increases. In Virginia, the average weekly wage was \$1,285, closely matching the national average of \$1,289, which is well above the district average of \$713. Wages, as a whole, have declined considerably over the last few years. While the cost of living continues to rise, wages have been stagnant or decreasing for many industries.

### Average Weekly Wage by Industry



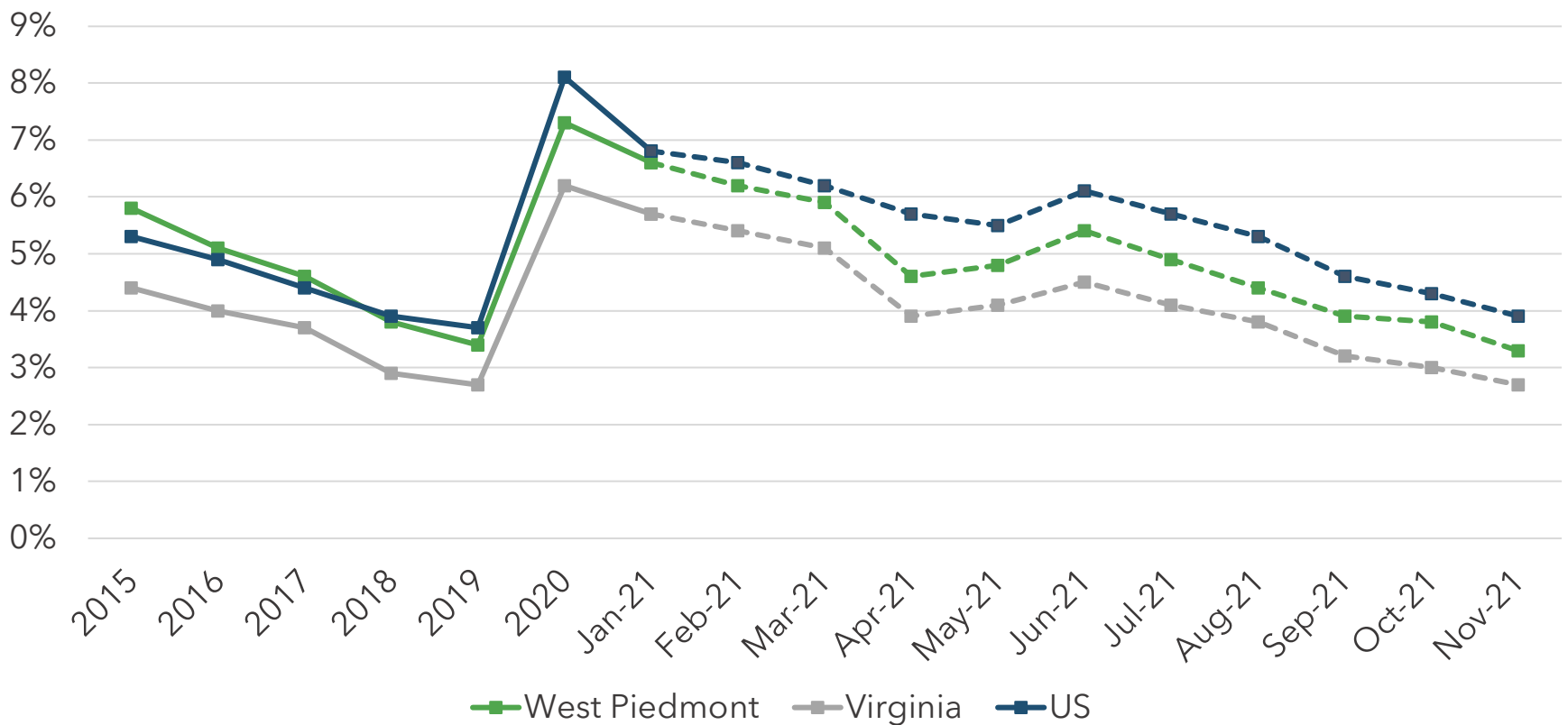
Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2021.

## Unemployment

The District's workforce figures fluctuated over the past years. With the high concentration in textile, furniture and wood-related products, and a lack of diversification in the past, the area's economy has been very volatile. Perhaps the most widely known and used labor force statistic is the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate measures to what extent available labor resources are being underutilized and represents the ratio of the number who are unemployed and actively seeking work to the total number of persons in the civilian labor force.

The following graph, "2015-2021 Unemployment Rates," illustrates that, until 2018, the Planning District's unemployment rate has been consistently higher than the state and national rates. 2019 had record low unemployment numbers and the District fell under the national rate for this first time in two decades. In 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hit unemployment considerably hard, as 2020's average unemployment rate for the region was more than double the year before. This was also true for Virginia and the US. As seen, unemployment has continued to decline during 2021, where current rates sit almost exactly at pre-pandemic numbers (2019). That said, the Region still holds a higher unemployment rate at 3.3% than the state, while slightly under the national rate of 3.9%.

### 2015 - 2021 Unemployment Rates

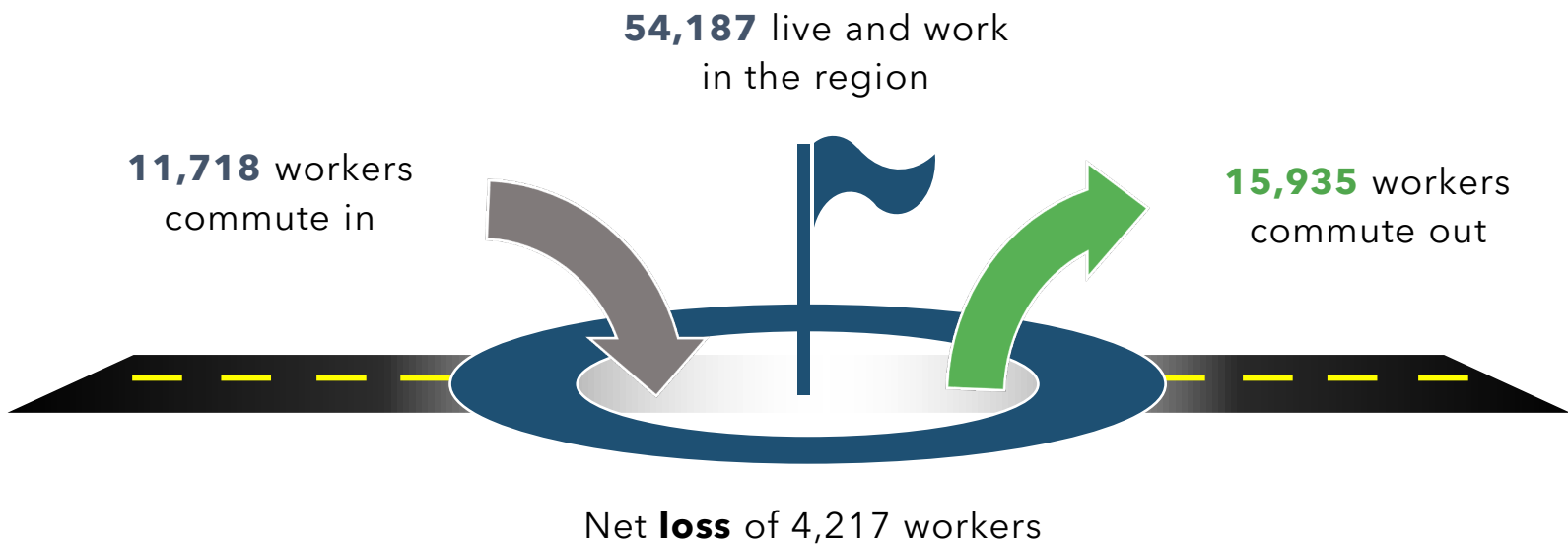


Area	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21
West Piedmont	6.6%	6.2%	5.9%	4.6%	4.8%	5.4%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	3.8%	3.3%
Virginia	5.7%	5.4%	5.1%	3.9%	4.1%	4.5%	4.1%	3.8%	3.2%	3.0%	2.7%
US	6.8%	6.6%	6.2%	5.7%	5.5%	6.1%	5.7%	5.3%	4.6%	4.3%	3.9%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns in the WPPDC region indicated that the region exported more workers than it imported. An underlining factor for this trend is the proximity to metropolitan Roanoke, to which the majority of residents commuting out of the area travel. The large base of workers in the region indicates a healthy workforce that current businesses can pull from. A potential opportunity for the region would be to focus on those workers who are commuting out and see what strategies exist to keep them in the industry for work. With the increase in work-from-home (WFH) job opportunities, commuting patterns are expected to change in the coming years across the nation.



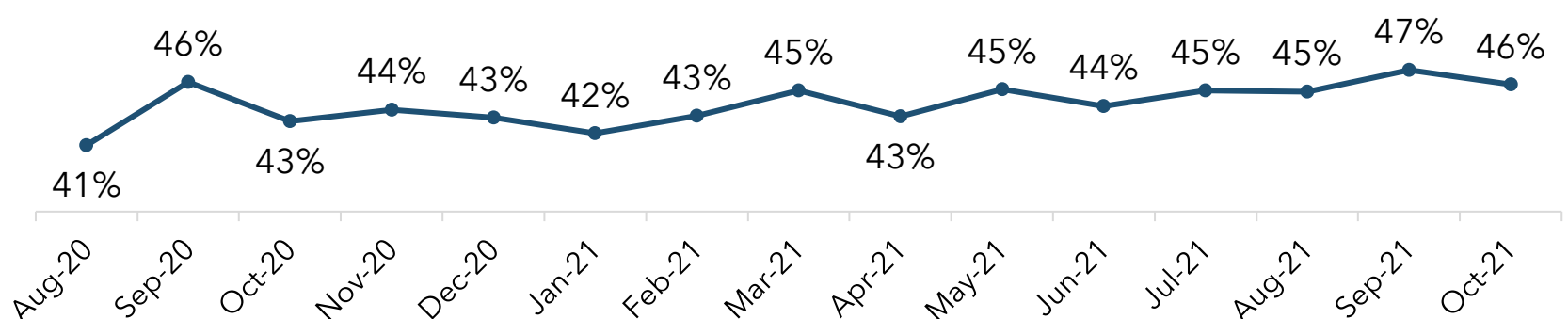
Source: US Census Bureau, On the Map, 2020

## Remote Workers

When the pandemic began in March 2020, the work landscape changed dramatically and permanently. Although teleworking had been on the rise even before the pandemic, it has now increased substantially, with more people working at home whenever possible. The perception of remote work has also changed, as the benefits for employers and employees alike have come to light. Having a choice of work environment and location is now a key factor for many job seekers when searching for a better work-life balance and evaluating new career opportunities. A report by Upwork found that after surveying thousands of employers and employees, "that 1 in 4 Americans (over 26% of the American workforce) will be working remotely through 2021. They also estimate that 22% of the workforce (36.2 million Americans) will work remotely by 2025."

This dramatic change in the working environment brings new opportunities and challenges to the WPPDC Region. While accurate county data has not been released regarding work from home percentages, the dramatic increase in telework by adults is shown in the chart below. As seen, not only are nearly half of households having one adult work from home, but the percentages are starting to increase overtime.

### Percent of Adults Teleworking in Virginia



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey 2020

## BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Industry information can provide important insights that help describe the health and vitality of the surrounding community and region. This information can help business operators and investors make informed decisions regarding development in the community. The information can also be used to identify potential opportunities for growth in industry concentrations and explore regional business strengths. In addition, the area has continued efforts to transition the economy by promoting entrepreneurial opportunities with new start-ups, boosting tourism, and expanding agricultural interests.

### Industry Characteristics

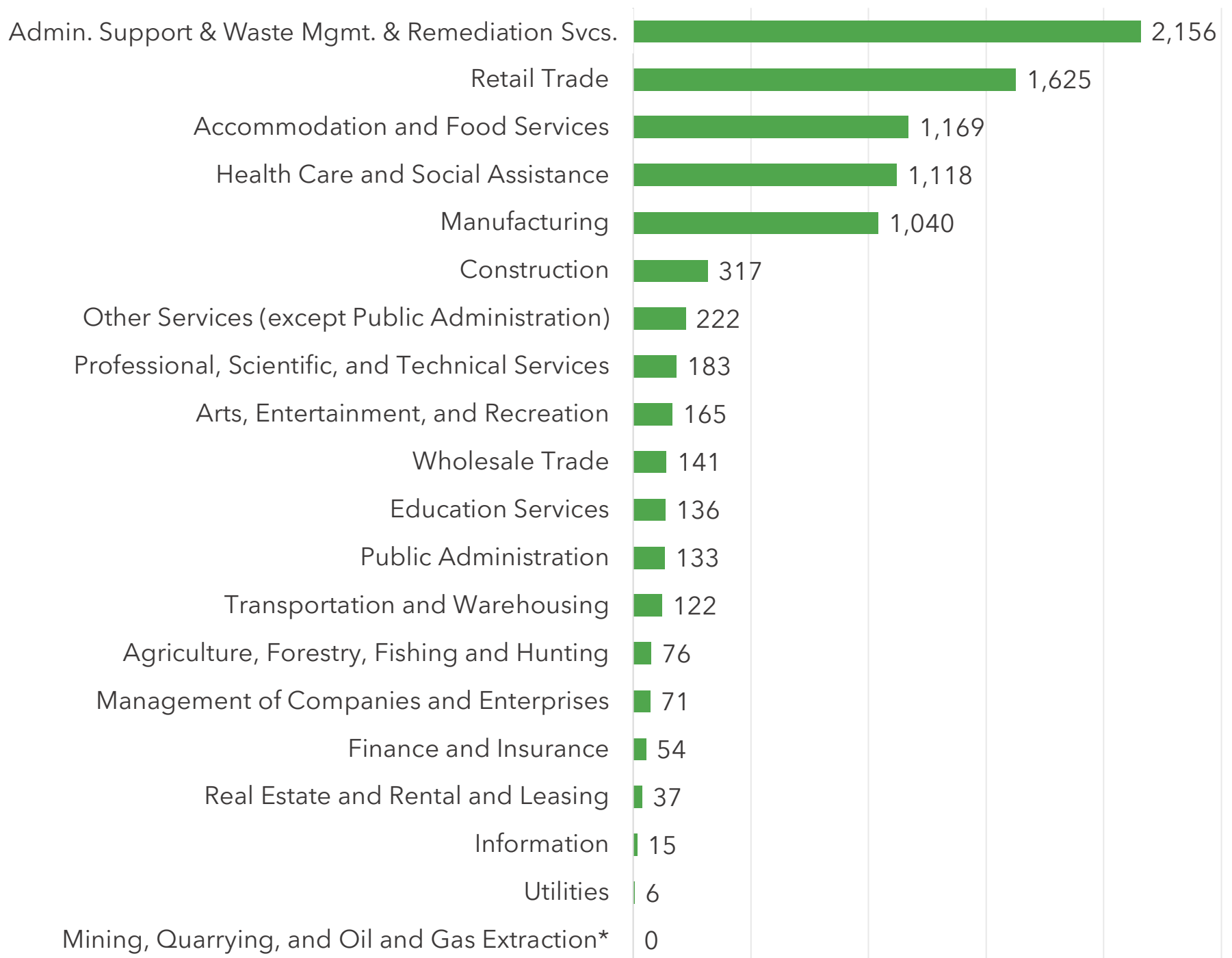
In the WPPDC Region, the Manufacturing industry holds the highest number of jobs, followed by the Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade sectors. Local government also supplies a large number of jobs to the region, just slightly behind Retail Trade in total employment. These four sectors combined make up for more than 60% of all employment in the region. The diversity of industries present in the region indicates a strong economy that has the potential to absorb external shocks.

### Employment by Industry



As industries around the region and country start to rebound from the COVID-19 Pandemic, tracking new hires by industry can give indication of which industries are recovering in terms of new jobs. While new hire tracking has always been an important statistic, it may possible be one of the most important stats to watch as quit rates continue to be at all-time highs throughout the country and hiring workers has become a difficult task. Many companies, particularly traditional “blue collar” jobs, are currently experiencing labor shortages and are seeing less qualified applicants apply for jobs. With a tight labor market employers are being forced to offer higher wages along with greater benefits and compete on a higher scale for employees. As seen, for Q2 2021, Administrative Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services had the highest number of total new workers hired, followed by Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services. The Health Care and Social Assistance industry, followed by the Manufacturing industry round out the top five for the region.

### New Workers Hired in Region 2021 Q2

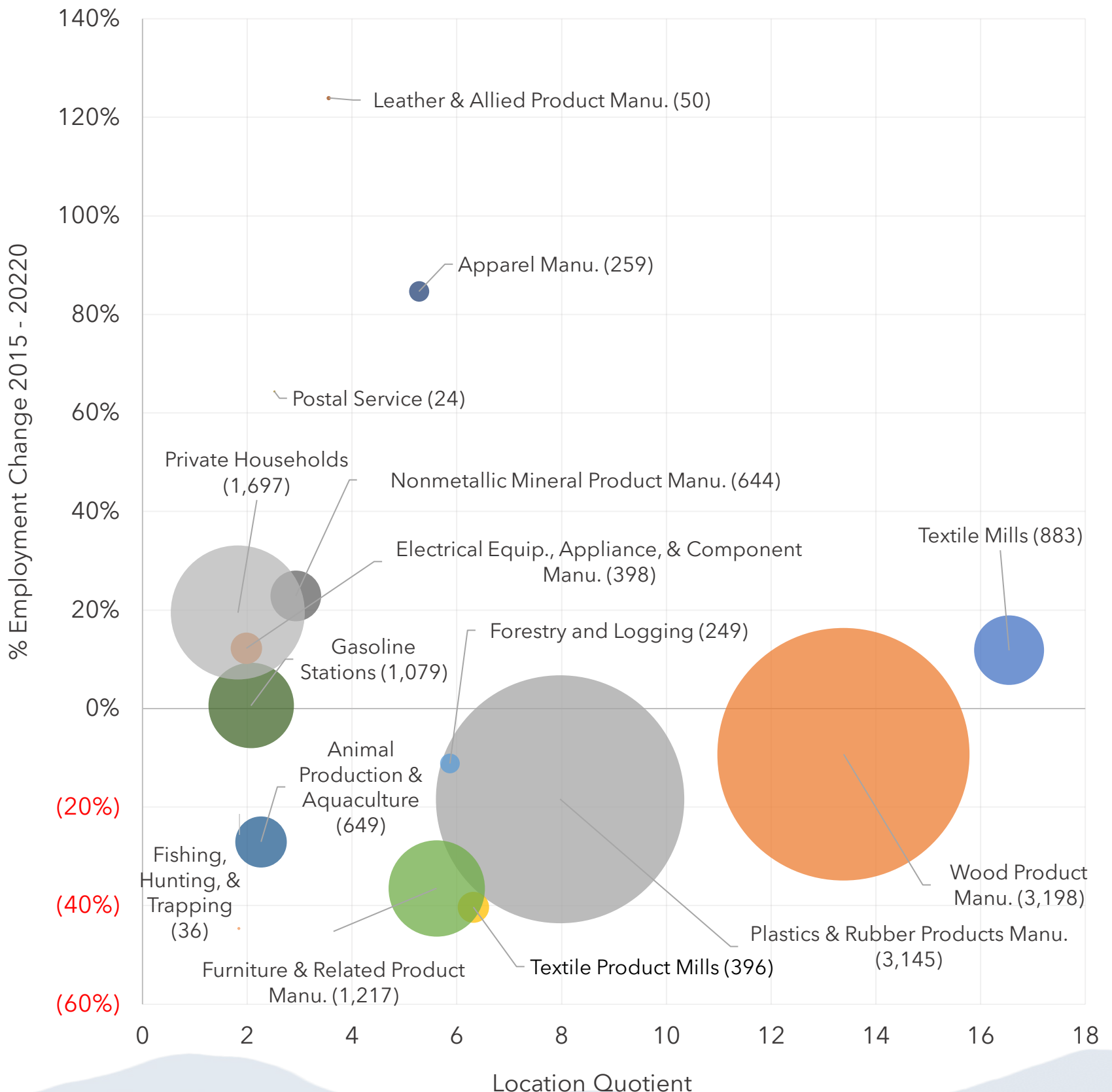


\*Note: Data not available for industry. Source: Economic Information & Analytics Division of the Virginia Employment Commission. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2021.

## Industry Clusters

Location quotient (LQ) is a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry is in a region as compared to the nation. It can reveal what makes a particular region “unique.” For example, if the leather products manufacturing industry accounts for 10% of jobs in your area but 1% of jobs nationally, then the area’s leather-producing industry has an LQ of 10. According to a number of studies, targeted industry clusters in the region include food and beverage processing, data centers, plastics/polymer product manufacturing, computer parts, wood and paper product manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, and other advanced manufacturing, as identified by the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance, the Launch Place, and others. Efforts continue to determine the necessary skills, certifications, credentials, and educational requirements to fit these identified industries, while building a greater, high-skilled workforce.

### WPPDC Location Quotient and Job Change (2015-2020)



Source: Emsi-Burning Glass, Industry Report, 2022.1

## Top and Growing Industries

The chart below indicates the projected top occupations with the highest supply gap in labor for the region moving forward. The supply gap is determined by subtracting the projected 2026 employees for each occupation by the current 2020 Q3 employees, while also accounting for projected separations, hires, and openings for each occupation. As seen, many of the occupations listed pay well below the region average and are in high demand industries. Industries included by each occupation include:

- Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint.
- Construction and Extraction
- Office and Administrative Support
- Personal Care and Service
- Transportation and Material Moving
- Community and Social Service
- Construction and Extraction
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical
- Transportation and Material Moving
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media

Occupation Title	Supply Gap	2020 Q3 Employees	2026 Projected Employees	Average Salary
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	491	216	711	\$ 21,900
Light Truck Drivers	352	324	693	\$ 25,800
Janitors and Cleaners (expt. Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners)	249	1,300	1,500	\$ 20,800
Packers and Packagers, Hand	201	410	637	\$ 24,800
Customer Service Representatives	174	1,460	1,680	\$ 25,600
Construction Laborers	144	324	490	\$ 27,800
Carpenters	144	324	470	\$ 35,900
Social and Human Service Assistants	128	108	241	\$ 32,100
Animal Caretakers	124	32	158	\$ 21,900
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	124	886	1,030	\$ 49,400
Pharmacy Technicians	122	86	212	\$ 28,400
Childcare Workers	113	162	400	\$ 21,800

Source: Virginia Career Works Dashboard, Virginia Employment Commission, <https://dashboard.virginiacareerworks.com:8088/superset/dashboard/8/?standalone=true>



## Major Employers and Size

The WPPDC Region boasts a number of large employers from a variety of industries. As noted previously, over 90% of all employment in the region comes from employers with less than 20 employees. While small businesses help the economy thrive, having large corporations can increase the promotion of the region as a place to do business and work. The top 50 largest employers in the region are listed below.

50 Largest Employers	
1. The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co	26. Morgan Olson Llc
2. Pittsylvania County School Board	27. City of Martinsville
3. M.W. Manufacturers	28. Unique Industries
4. Franklin County School Board	29. Piedmont Regional Community Service Board
5. Danville Regional Medical	30. Postal Service
6. Wal Mart	31. Martinsville City Schools
7. Henry County School Board	32. County of Henry
8. City of Danville	33. Intertape Polymer Corp
9. Danville City Public Schools	34. Carter Bank & Trust
10. Food Lion	35. Roman Eagle Memorial Home
11. Cpfilms, Inc.	36. Axxcess Resources LLC
12. Gretna Health Care Center	37. Care Advantage
13. Monogram Management Services	38. Franklin Memorial Hospital
14. Buitoni Food Company	39. Patrick Henry Community College
15. Hanesbrands Inc	40. Bassett Furniture Industries
16. County of Franklin	41. Danville Pittsylvania Community Services Board
17. Patrick County School Board	42. McDonald's
18. Pittsylvania County Board	43. Dolgencorp LLC
19. Averett College	44. Security Forces, Inc.
20. Trinity Packaging Corporation	45. Hardee's
21. Lowes' Home Centers, Inc.	46. Green Rock Correctional Center
22. Keeco	47. Ferrum College
23. Results Customer Solution	48. Southern Finishing Company
24. GSI Solutions	49. Essel Propack America LLC
25. Kroger	50. ICF Inc LLC

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2021.

Employer by Size of Establishment in the Region continues to be on scale with the state. The largest size of establishment in the region in terms of total establishments is small scale businesses, from 0 to 4 employees. It is clear that small businesses are crucial to the region's economy, as establishments of less than 20 employees account for roughly 90% of all establishments in the region. Promoting and continuing to provide the needed resources for these businesses to grow and thrive will be a significant gauge of the overall region's economic health.

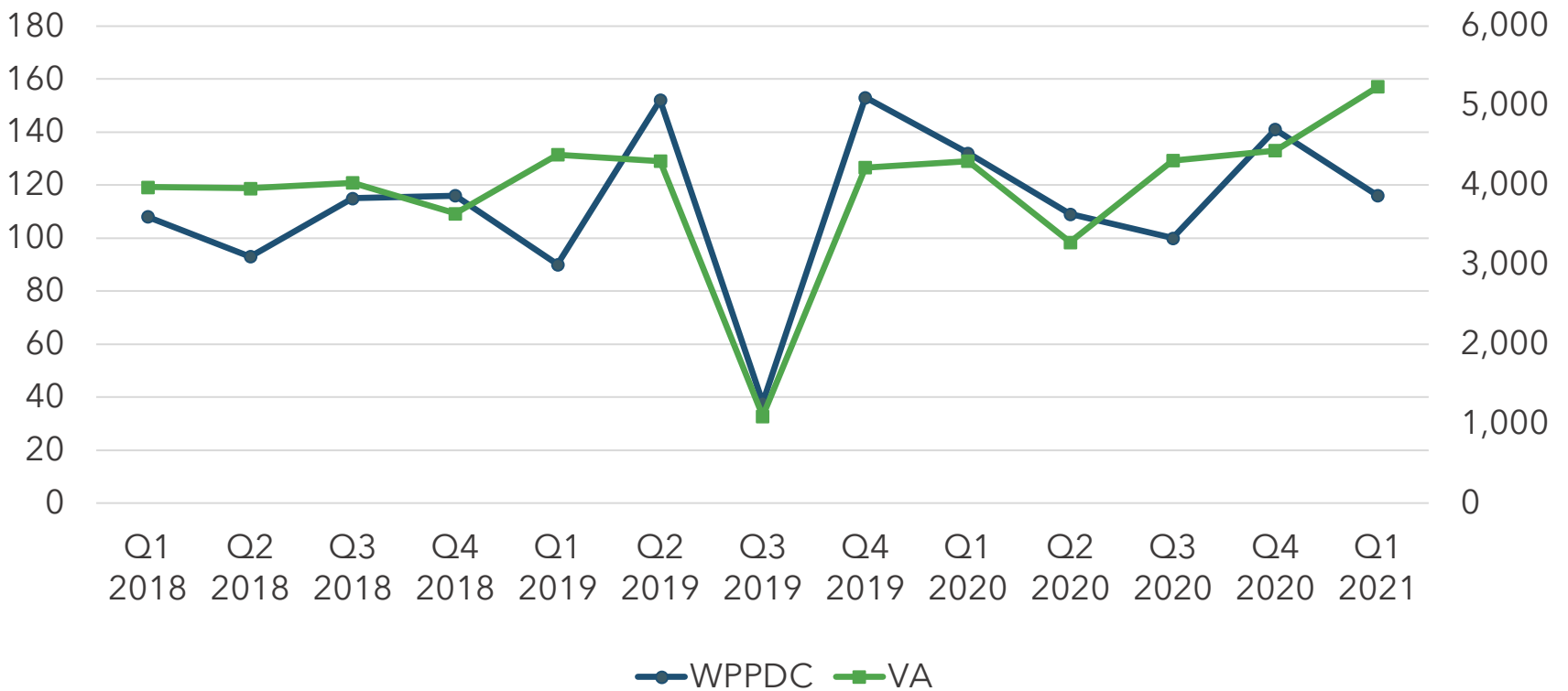
Employer by Size of Establishment	PDC 12	Virginia
0 to 4 employees	5,407	186,607
5 to 9 employees	1,018	39,572
10 to 19 employees	669	28,418
20 to 49 employees	442	20,226
50 to 99 employees	137	6,828
100 to 249 employees	82	3,493
250 to 499 employees	29	1,056
500 to 999 employees	***	354
1000 and over employees	***	248
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,794</b>	<b>286,802</b>

Note: Asterisks (\*\*\*) indicate non-disclosable data. 'Zero; no employment' typically represents new startup firms or sole proprietorships.

## Small Businesses and Start-Ups

It is said that small business is the backbone of America, providing an estimated eighty percent of jobs in recent years. This holds true in the West Piedmont Region as well. As an economy in transition and greatly disrupted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, many start-up companies and entrepreneur opportunities continue to grow in the area, providing jobs and boosting local taxes. In a more diverse environment, local businesses benefit the community in many ways. Innovation and entrepreneurship are important factors for long-term economic competitiveness and account for the majority of productivity and per-capita income growth in the nation, in the state, and regionally. Innovations can be large or small but still have a big impact. It is better to have many smaller companies employing fewer workers than to have one large company with many employees. Should the larger company choose to close or downsize, the economic impact is much greater to an area than the closure of one or two smaller companies. For these reasons, new start-up companies are an important aspect of the overall economic picture, particularly in showing growth. The following graph depicts new start-ups from 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2018 to 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2021 for the region as well as the state. Until Q1 2021, the region has closely followed state trends, which indicates the region has historically been on-par with the competitiveness of startups.

### 2018 - 2021 New Start-Up Firms



Period	PDC 12	Virginia
Q1 2019	90	4,381
Q2 2019	152	4,302
Q3 2019	38	1,093
Q4 2019	153	4,219
Q1 2020	132	4,299
Q2 2020	109	3,279
Q3 2020	100	4,309
Q4 2020	141	4,433
Q1 2021	116	5,235

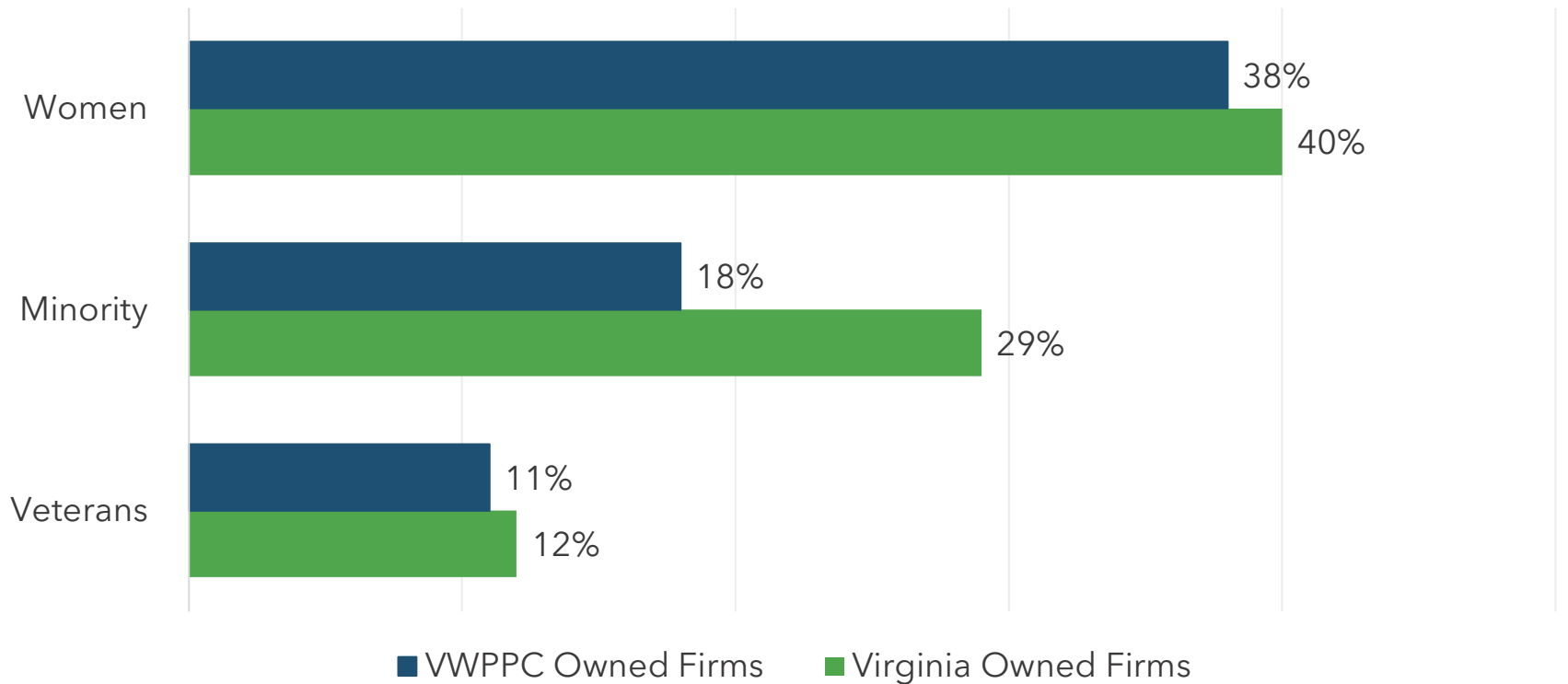
- Note: The following criteria was used to define new startup firms:
1. Setup and liability date both occurred during 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2021
  2. Establishment had no predecessor UI Account Number
  3. Private Ownership
  4. Average employment is less than 250
  5. For multi-unit establishments, the parent company must also meet the above criteria.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 1st Quarter (January, February, March) 2021.

While new firm growth is important for the region, it is important to highlight the disparities in who is opening up new businesses and potential boundaries that may exist for those who are disadvantaged in the region. The U.S. Census Bureau recently released new estimates on the characteristics of employer businesses. According to the 2019 Annual Business Survey (ABS), covering reference year 2018, approximately 18.3% (1.0 million) of all U.S. businesses were minority-owned and about 19.9% (1.1 million) of all businesses were owned by women. As listed, representation by women-owned firms in the region is slightly less than the state average, as well as firms owned by Veterans. Minority owned firms comprise 18% of all businesses in the region, compared to 29% of all businesses in Virginia.



### Historic Firm Ownership Characteristics



Ownership Type	WVPPC Owned Firms	Virginia Owned Firms	Difference
Women	38%	40%	(2%)
Minority	18%	29%	(11%)
Veterans	11%	12%	(1%)

Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

## HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Measuring and analyzing trends in housing authorized permits and construction activity can identify changing economic and social conditions. Housing availability and conditions are of vital importance to regional planning. Housing conditions often reflect the social well-being of an area and economic development is, in part, dependent upon the availability of adequate housing for additional labor. A diverse range of housing is needed throughout the region - more affordable housing for low-income families, student housing, workforce housing, and senior housing. Amenities that appeal to a younger demographic are desirable to attract young talent and professionals with a variety of skillsets.

### Housing Unit Summary

Localities in the region differ on housing stock and ownership. While housing differences greatly depend on the current geography and demographics of the region, valuable insights can still be made between comparing housing units across the region. As seen, Franklin County has the largest number of housing units, with the highest ownership rate in the region, along with the highest median dollar value per occupied house. Ownership rates drop significantly in Danville and Martinsville City, as nearly half of all housing units are rented in both areas. Additionally, multi-unit structures are comparatively much more present in these localities. The presence of higher education institutions and community colleges play a role in the disparities of housing units. Compared to the US and State averages, multi-unit structures are considerably less present in the region, along with lower median housing values.

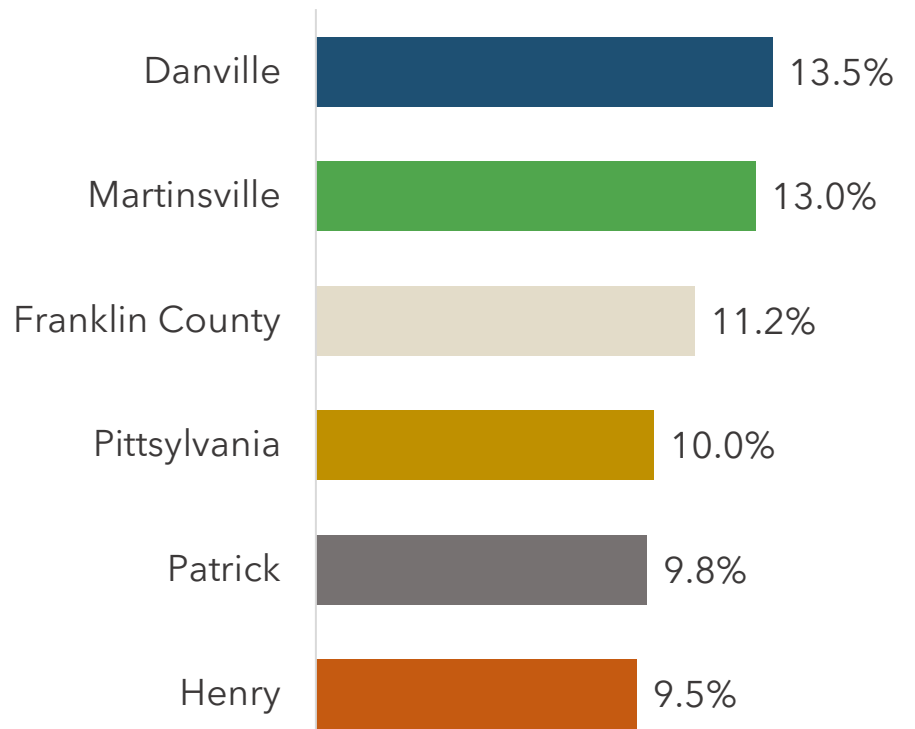


Locality	# Of Housing Units	Ownership		Median Value of Housing Units	Types of Structures		
		Owner %	Renter %		Single Unit	Multi-Unit	Other
Franklin County	29,898	82%	18%	\$178,100	75%	8%	17%
Henry County	26,196	72%	28%	\$93,900	69%	9%	22%
Patrick County	10,224	79%	21%	\$120,000	70%	4%	26%
Pittsylvania County	31,650	75%	25%	\$123,900	75%	4%	21%
Danville City	22,072	52%	48%	\$90,500	72%	25%	3%
Martinsville City	7,067	56%	44%	\$87,700	75%	23%	2%
Virginia	3.51M	66%	34%	\$273,000	73%	22%	5%
United States	137.4M	64%	32%	\$217,000	67%	26%	7%

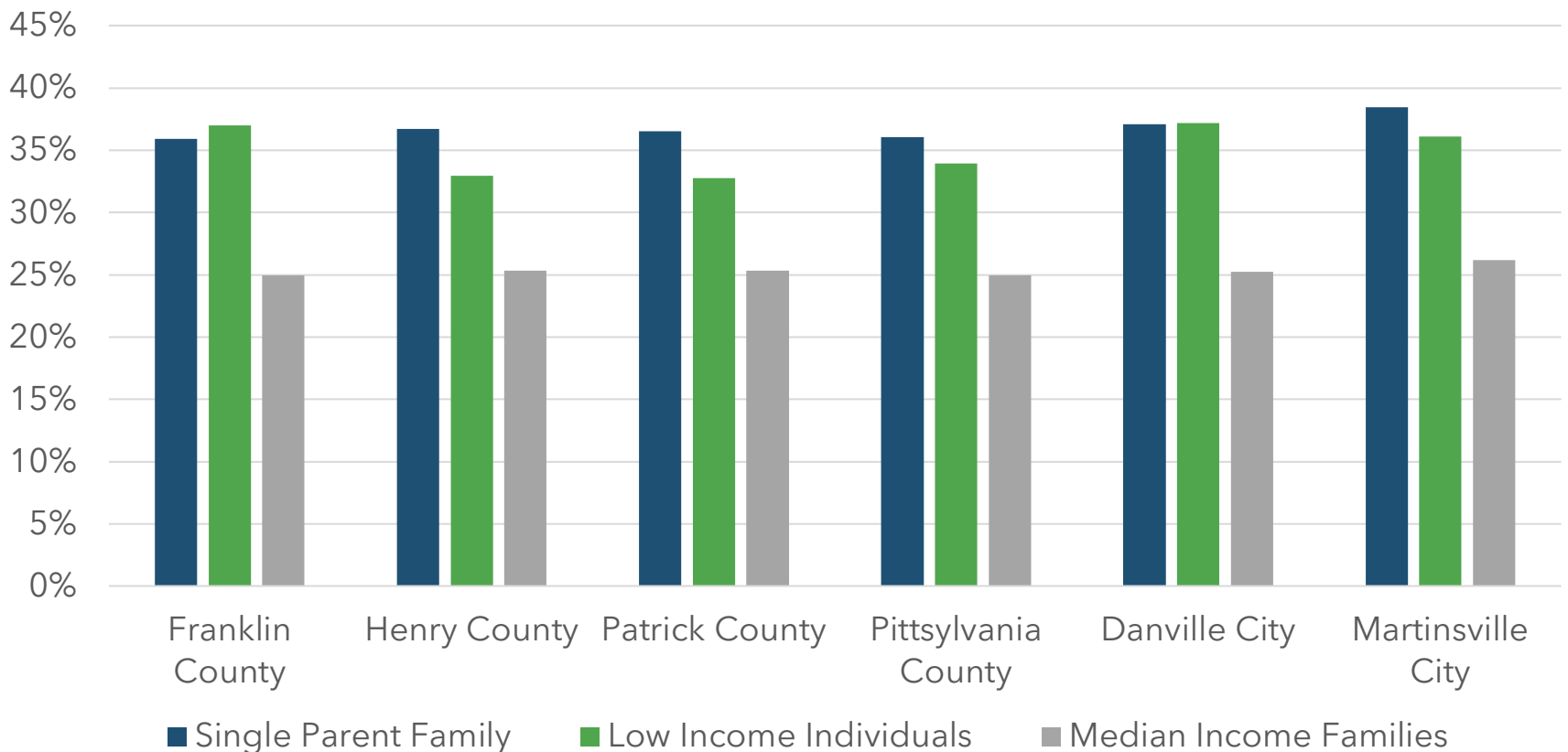
## Housing Affordability

Danville and Martinsville currently have the largest percentage of households paying over 50% of income on housing. This data coincides with Danville and Martinsville also posting the two highest poverty rates. Henry and Patrick County both have under 10% of households paying over 50% of income on housing, in part due to the rural nature of both of these counties. Single Parent, Low Income, and Median Income percent of income spent on housing can also be seen for each county. While single parent spending on housing remains relatively consistent between each area, low-income residents in both Danville and Franklin are spending significantly more dollars on housing than their regional counterparts.

## Percentage of Households Paying Over 50% Income on Housing



## Percent of Income Spent on Housing (2016)



Source: Demographics Research Group of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, June 2019, <http://demographics.coopercenter.org>

Efforts have been undertaken over the past years to improve housing conditions in the Planning District. Through HUD's Capital Fund Program, grant monies are utilized to build, repair, renovate, and modernize public housing in the community. HUD also provides Assisted Housing (HUD AH) in the region. Assisted housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.



Below are county specific statistics, including the number of people in HUD AH, percent of occupancy, average household, waiting list period, and disability percentages. As seen, Martinsville has the majority of people in HUD AH for the entire region, while Patrick County has the highest percentage of occupancy and average months on waiting list at 34 months. For Franklin County, nearly half of all people in HUD AH live with a disability.

### HUD Assisted Housing (HUD AH) Statistics (2020)

Locality	People in HUD AH	Pct. Occupancy of HUD AH	Avg. Household Size in HUD AH	Avg. Months on Waiting List for HUD AH	Pct. of People in HUD AH with a Disability
Franklin County	81	90%	1.6	4	46%
Henry County	287	87%	2.2	15	28%
Patrick County	495	93%	1.9	34	24%
Pittsylvania County	836	92%	1.7	12	24%
Danville City	526	89%	2.6	9	21%
Martinsville City	505	92%	2.1	16	18%

Source: US HUD Picture Subsidized Households, 2020

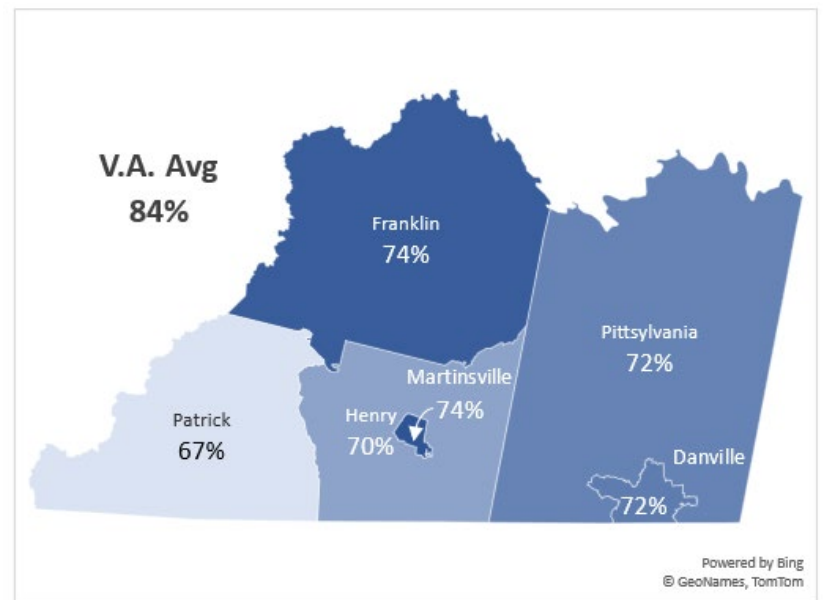
## Broadband

The implementation of virtual learning for K-12 and higher education, the necessity of “work from home” for the public and private sector workforce and the increased use of telehealth emphasized the need for the expansion of broadband to unserved and underserved areas. Broadband is a critical component for economic development and opportunities for business growth, entrepreneurs, education and workforce training, health, and quality of life. The chart below indicates current broadband statistics for households in the region. As seen, both Franklin County and Martinsville City have the highest percentage of households with broadband, while Patrick and Henry County have the lowest.

	Franklin County	Henry County	Patrick County	Pittsylvania County	Danville City	Martinsville City
# Of Households with Broadband	16,895	14,901	5,182	18,820	13,144	4,089
% Of Households with Broadband	74%	70%	67%	72%	72%	74%
Unique Consumer Providers	15	9	9	15	10	7
# Of Households with No Computer	6,287	6,786	2,516	6,795	5,474	1,351
% Of Households with No Computer	12%	13%	15%	11%	14%	11%

Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Throughout the region, wireless enhancements have taken place to improve mobile broadband capacity and contribute to economic growth and job creation. However, currently, in the West Piedmont Region, many rural areas, including parts of Franklin, Patrick, and Pittsylvania counties, are still unserved or underserved for last-mile connectivity to residents. That said, in December of 2021, Governor Ralph Northam announced new grants that will bring broadband and high-speed internet access to 90 percent of Virginians, specifically addressing and impacting those rural counties in the region that are underserved. The announcement comes as Virginia now will allocate “more than \$722 million to provide universal broadband infrastructure in 70 localities, which will close 90% of Virginia’s digital divide. The funding—from the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) and the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)—will support 35 projects, connecting more than 278,000 households, businesses, and community anchor institutions to high-speed internet, and leverages more than \$1 billion in private and local investments, pushing the total broadband investment in Virginia above \$2 billion over the past four years.”



Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Quote Source: Virginia Government, Office of the former Governor Ralph S. Northam, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2021/december/headline-916304-en.html>

## Broadband

Listed below are the specific awards that will impact the WPPDC Region:



### WPPDC and RiverStreet Networks

*\$87,003,888 Award*  
*\$65,421,347 Leveraged*

The project will build fiber broadband to 24,641 unserved locations and achieve universal coverage in Pittsylvania County when combined with other projects.



### WPPDC and RiverStreet Networks

*\$33,571,073 Award*  
*\$61,794,113 Leveraged*

The project will build fiber broadband to 10,056 unserved locations and achieve universal coverage in Franklin, Henry, and Patrick Counties when combined with other projects.



### WPPDC and Charter Communications

*\$1,415,290 Award*  
*\$2,124,671 Leveraged*

The project will build fiber broadband to 690 unserved locations and achieve universal coverage in Patrick County when combined with other projects.

Source: Virginia Department of Housing and Community and Development, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021



# SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted in late 2021 in creation of the West Piedmont Recovery and Resiliency Plan. The SWOT included individual interviews with community leaders, on-site windshield tours, and an online community survey to inform strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the region. The SWOT findings from this report can be seen below:

“Key findings indicate that the region has a strong manufacturing base and business-friendly environment. Weaknesses included declining population trends and stock of suitable housing. Opportunities included redevelopment and revitalization efforts and enhancement of hospitality and tourism sectors. This is primarily driven by quality of place and unique natural assets as well as a new Casino that will be developed in Danville. Threats include availability of workforce and challenges amplified by COVID-19. Aging infrastructure and access to childcare also fall into this category. The remainder of this section, pulled from the Recovery plan, will describe strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in more detail.

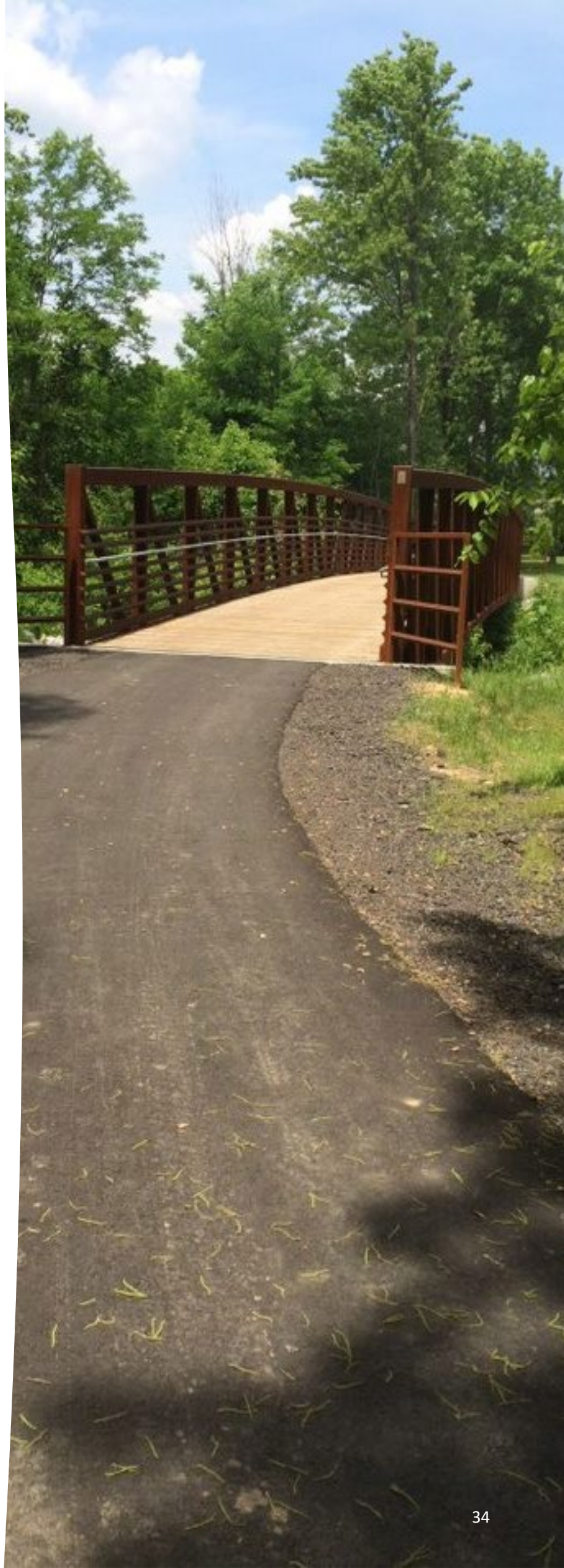
# STRENGTHS

The region has a very strong economic base of manufacturers. Manufacturing sector employment in the WPPDC region is nearly three times more concentrated than that of the Commonwealth of Virginia. This is driven by a business-friendly economy that offers low cost of doing business and strong workforce training assets that can tailor programs to fit business needs. Evidence of this success is demonstrated by the region's ability to attract international business as well as large domestic companies. Recently, the region attracted Morgan Olson, a manufacturer of delivery vans and the company made a multimillion-dollar investment in the region. Agriculture has been a historic foundation for the regional economy and there are still sectors doing very well.

Tobacco production was a historic economic driver, but national trends have caused this industry to decline. Still, the region is a leader in flue cured tobacco even though this industry is not as prominent as it once was. Dairy is also an agricultural sector that remains strong in the region. Niche agricultural businesses and local farms have opened agritourism and farm to table business opportunities that have improved quality of life for residents and created a tourism draw for visitors. The region's natural and historical assets are additional strengths that the region has leveraged.

Outdoor recreation in the region is strengthened by the abundance of natural assets that exists. The region includes numerous public lands, parks, trails, rivers, and lakes. This creates opportunities for biking, kayaking, hunting, fishing, and off-roading. The region also maintains a rich history evident by historical sites that date back to the 18th century. Music and art add to the region's rich cultural heritage through festivals, art galleries, and historic music venues. The region is also home to Martinsville Speedway, one of the nation's first auto racing tracks. The Speedway hosts two nationally televised NASCAR races each year which attract thousands of visitors to the region.

The region has a long history of planning, which has mostly been led by the West Piedmont Planning district commission. The commission has worked with other strong regional and local organizations to develop plans for housing, broadband, hazard mitigation, economic development, and transportation.





# WEAKNESSES

Regional weaknesses are tied to categories that include historic economic conditions, need for investment to promote regional vibrancy, and collaboration among some groups. Historic economic drivers included textiles, tobacco, and wood products. Due to offshoring, consumer preferences, and industry trends, these sectors have experienced a decline. Foundational regional industries are shifting toward advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and biosciences, but economic diversification efforts have not completely rebounded from challenges created by the decline of legacy industry sectors.

This economic decline contributed to a loss of regional vibrancy marked by higher vacancy rates in regional downtowns and community centers. While regional organizations have worked to revitalize and restore vibrancy to community centers, there is still more work to be completed. Additionally, for a region that has tremendous natural beauty, stakeholders described challenges with litter that detracts from vibrancy. Hotels are limited in the region, which has created challenges for the hospitality and tourism industry. While the region has many unique sites and natural amenities, there is not an adequate number of hotels to completely serve regional visitors.

Housing and utilities tend to be older in some portions of the region, and there is a need to update and improve these two areas. The WPPDC is leading efforts to address housing needs and promote development of new residential products, but at the time of writing this plan, age of housing stock is a weakness. Broadband infrastructure has improved in the region, but there are still areas of significant need where access is not available. Like housing, the WPPDC is working with regional organizations and communities to improve broadband access, but there is still more work needed in this area. Though weaknesses exist, regional leadership is not ignoring deficiencies. There are many ongoing plans and efforts aimed at creating new opportunities.

# OPPORTUNITIES

The WPPDC region has a vast number of opportunities to build upon. Many of these opportunities are related to regional strengths, addressing weaknesses, and new investment. One of the most significant investments proposed for the region is two new interstate routes, I-785 and I-73. I-785 is designated to run through Danville and the I-73 corridor would be constructed through Franklin and Henry counties. Development of these interstates is estimated to bring \$4 billion in investment and create over 53,000 permanent jobs from new business growth. Four lane expansion of Highway 58 through Patrick County between I-77 and the Port of Virginia is planned. These developments create opportunities for new economic development attraction and expansion efforts but also opportunities to improve regional multimodal transportation infrastructure and preserve, promote, and enhance transit systems.

The region has opportunities to build on recent economic success and promote diversification efforts. Interstates will help promote connectivity to new parts of the nation as well as connectivity to new development sites. Currently the region has an abundance of developable land, sites, and business parks. Opportunities exist to activate this land for new economic development. In addition to transportation connectivity, infrastructure and utilities are the key items needed to promote build out of additional sites.

The region has a strong manufacturing base, but there are likely opportunities to expand the regional supply chain and promote economic diversification and resiliency. Over-reliance on manufacturing could pose challenges for the region in the event of future economic downturns. Building on regional successes driven by organizations, such as the Institute for Advanced Research and Learning, to promote innovation and entrepreneurship is a significant opportunity. Further collaboration and investments that promote a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem and develop resources for business start-ups would allow the region to capitalize on this opportunity.

Building more capacity for regional collaboration is another opportunity in the region. The WPPDC does a well with bringing stakeholders together, but throughout the data collection process, opportunities were identified to enhance collaboration between local and regional economic development organizations, higher education providers and community colleges, local chambers of commerce, and local governments. Additional collaboration and alignment between regional organizations could allow for greater impact from a service provision perspective on tight budgets.

Tourism is significant to the region but is likely not fully tapped as an economic development tool and could continue to be built out. The region's unique natural and cultural resources to grow local tourism industry also create opportunities for asset-based development strategies. Agritourism is another sector the WPPDC is working to grow and has achieved early success. Further efforts to enhance agritourism through the region likely exist. In addition to WPPDC's effort, the three converging Commonwealth Tourism Regions could be leveraged to assist with tourism based economic development strategies. The future Casino development in Danville is another opportunity that could drive additional visitors and tourism in the region.





# THREATS

Threats to the region may be attributed to aging infrastructure and buildings, size of the workforce pool, COVID-19, access to childcare, population decline, and supply chain challenges. The most significant threat identified by regional leadership and businesses was access to talent. While the region has good educational providers, there are difficulties with supplying the numbers of workers needed to fill job openings throughout the region. Trends indicating regional population decline do not help overcome this challenge. Housing availability and age of housing stock may have contributed to challenges attracting resident workers.

The regional housing stock tends to be older and new construction has been limited. There is a shortage of middle housing or more affordable and/or multi-family options. This could have affected the region's ability to retain resident workers. Addressing housing challenges is a priority of the WPPDC and will help deal with this threat. In addition to older residential properties, there is also an abundance of older and more obsolete vacant industrial buildings and class B and C commercial centers. Older real-estate may have negatively affected quality of place and can detract from the region's ability to attract and retain younger residents and new businesses.

The population of the Region has declined in recent decades, and this trend is anticipated to continue in the foreseeable future. The regional population is also aging. For this reason, it is important that the region looks to reduce migration of young talent and identifies ways to retain younger residents. An aging population can add additional stress to a regional workforce pool as there are fewer young residents to fill jobs that older residents may be transitioning out of as they reach retirement age.

Access to talent has been highlighted throughout this section as a significant challenge for regional employers. Housing and population trends are two factors that have triggered this threat, but issues like access to childcare and COVID-19 present additional challenges. Access to adequate childcare in the region is limited due to two reasons. The first issue is availability of childcare providers, as there are a limited number in the region. The threat is cost, as many regional families may not be able to afford childcare for their children. These trends have increased the number of stay-at-home parents who are not able to work. COVID-19 also has threatened residents' ability to work.

Regional businesses noted concerns about COVID-19 outbreaks at the workplace and the effects that this would have on productivity. Labor has been historically difficult to find and caused productivity issues for local employers. COVID-19 outbreaks have caused and could continue to cause declines in production if large portions of a business's employees are required to quarantine for significant periods of time. Many regional businesses have also faced supply chain issues due to national labor shortages, which further affects their output. It is important that these barriers and threats be considered to ensure the region maintains its pro-business environment. The following sections identify regional goals, strategies, and action items that build on SWOT findings to promote regional success."

# Strategic Direction

The West Piedmont Region has identified those priority needs which will increase competitiveness by leveraging strengths and addressing barriers to growth. Four focus areas were selected with input from the CEDS Committee

Economy and Innovation

Education and Workforce

Housing, Livability, and Equity

Infrastructure

These four focus areas provide a framework for essential elements of the regional economy. The goals and strategies set forth within this framework create a measurable action plan for the advancement of the West Piedmont Economic Development District.

# Strategic Direction Overview

## Economy and Innovation

- Goal 1:** Improve the Small Business Culture Across the Region
- Goal 2:** Improve Collaboration and Coordination Around Regional Economic Development Efforts
- Goal 3:** Expand Opportunities for Growth Within Target Industries
- Goal 4:** Cultivate an Innovative Culture and Ecosystem to Compete in the New Economy

## Education and Workforce

- Goal 1:** Increase the Pipeline of Talent for Regional Employers
- Goal 2:** Enhance Coordination and Collaboration with Local School Systems at all Levels
- Goal 3:** Stabilize and Grow the Population, Specifically in Younger Demographic Segments
- Goal 4:** Identify and Promote Innovative Opportunities to Increase Childcare Accessibility

## Housing, Livability, and Equity

- Goal 1:** Increase Access to Affordable, Adequate, and Available Housing
- Goal 2:** Develop a Sense of Place that Unites the Region
- Goal 3:** Increase Destination-Quality Outdoor Recreation
- Goal 4:** Promote Programs and Resources which Advocate Healthy Lifestyles
- Goal 5:** Commit to an Inclusive Approach to Increasing Digital and Financial Literacy

## Infrastructure

- Goal 1:** Increase broadband access and reliability, particularly in rural, commercial, and industrial areas
- Goal 2:** Improve infrastructure needed to grow existing and future industrial/business parks in the region
- Goal 3:** Promote redevelopment of Commercial/Central Business Districts and revitalization of small towns in the region
- Goal 4:** Improve regional multimodal transportation infrastructure
- Goal 5:** Address Region-wide infrastructure needs

# Economy and Innovation

The following section outlines how the West Piedmont region can take the necessary steps to grow the regional economy and compete in an increasingly competitive national and global economy. By fostering a diverse and thriving small business culture, leveraging existing industrial assets, and fostering an innovation-based growth strategy, the region will be well positioned to create economic opportunities for the residents of Southern Virginia.

To accomplish these regional economic goals listed below, the regional economic development organizations should continue to take intentional steps to collaborate and coordinate across counties to optimize opportunities for success.

**Goal 1:** Improve the Small Business Culture Across the Region

**Goal 2:** Improve Collaboration and Coordination Around Regional Economic Development Efforts

**Goal 3:** Expand Opportunities for Growth Within Target Industries

**Goal 4:** Cultivate an Innovative Culture and Ecosystem to Compete in the New Economy



# Economy and Innovation

## GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE SMALL BUSINESS CULTURE ACROSS THE REGION

Small businesses are the lifeblood of a local and regional economy. West Piedmont and other strategic partners should ensure that the small business community has access to the tools and resources necessary to sustain and expand business operations. These resources include access to capital, support services, policy advocacy, and campaigns and platforms to drive sales across the region.

To ensure access to resources, the region should develop a strategic and intentional marketing and outreach campaign aimed at small business owners across the region, to increase the likelihood business owners are aware of, and take advantage of the resources available to them. This outreach program can include outreach through traditional media, social media, and supported by business outreach visits.

More specifically, the regional economic development system should strive to foster more opportunities for diverse entrepreneurs and business owners, including women, veterans, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. This includes resources and programs specifically designed to support these populations, including minority-owned business loan programs and networking and peer-to-peer support networks.

Lastly, the region should be thoughtful about fostering the next generation of business owners, including integrating entrepreneurial training programs into education curriculum and developing programming and support resources that encourages succession of existing business to the next generation of business leaders.

### Strategies

1. Foster an environment that supports and advocates for small businesses across the region
2. Allocate resources to support business owners from historically underrepresented populations, including women, minorities, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community
3. Ensure that the region has capital available for businesses at all stages of the business lifecycle
4. Ensure that the regional economic development system has a comprehensive suite of tools and resources to serve small businesses



# Economy and Innovation

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 1.1 Improve the Small Business Culture Across the Region</b>			
Foster an environment that supports and advocates for small businesses across the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and promote a regional small business support campaign</li> <li>• Identify supply chain opportunities and gaps within target industry sectors and promote buy local campaigns</li> <li>• Engage anchor institutions to purchase goods and services from local businesses</li> <li>• Celebrate National Small Business Week across the region</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated support for National Small Business Week</li> <li>• Documented participation in regional Buy Local Campaigns</li> </ul>
Allocate resources to support business owners from historically underrepresented populations, including women, minorities, veterans, individuals with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance availability and access to training and certification programs for small minority, veteran and woman owned businesses</li> <li>• Develop peer to peer and mentorship networks for individuals from underrepresented communities</li> <li>• Capitalize loan and grant funds specifically aimed at business owners from historically underrepresented communities</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of small businesses obtaining certification</li> <li>• Number of networking events/programs conducted</li> </ul>
Ensure that the region has capital available for businesses at all stages of the business lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with regional commercial lenders to better understand their suite of financial products and services</li> <li>• Gather information from regional businesses to understand capital needs at different stages of the business lifecycle</li> <li>• Develop and capitalize loan and grant funds to meet the needs of the business community</li> <li>• Take steps to develop an angel investment network</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of business engaged</li> <li>• Demonstration of new financial products launched</li> </ul>
Ensure that the regional economic development system has a comprehensive suite of tools and resources to serve small businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a regional approach to business retention and expansion outreach to build better relationships with regional businesses</li> <li>• Take inventory of existing business support services, address service gaps with partner organizations across the region</li> <li>• Develop an integrated marketing strategy that raises awareness of the regional small business support programs and services</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of businesses engaged</li> <li>• Completion of a regional business service inventory and/or website</li> <li>• Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Employers, Community-based Organizations, Local Chambers, WPPDC

# Economy and Innovation

## GOAL 2: IMPROVE COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION AROUND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

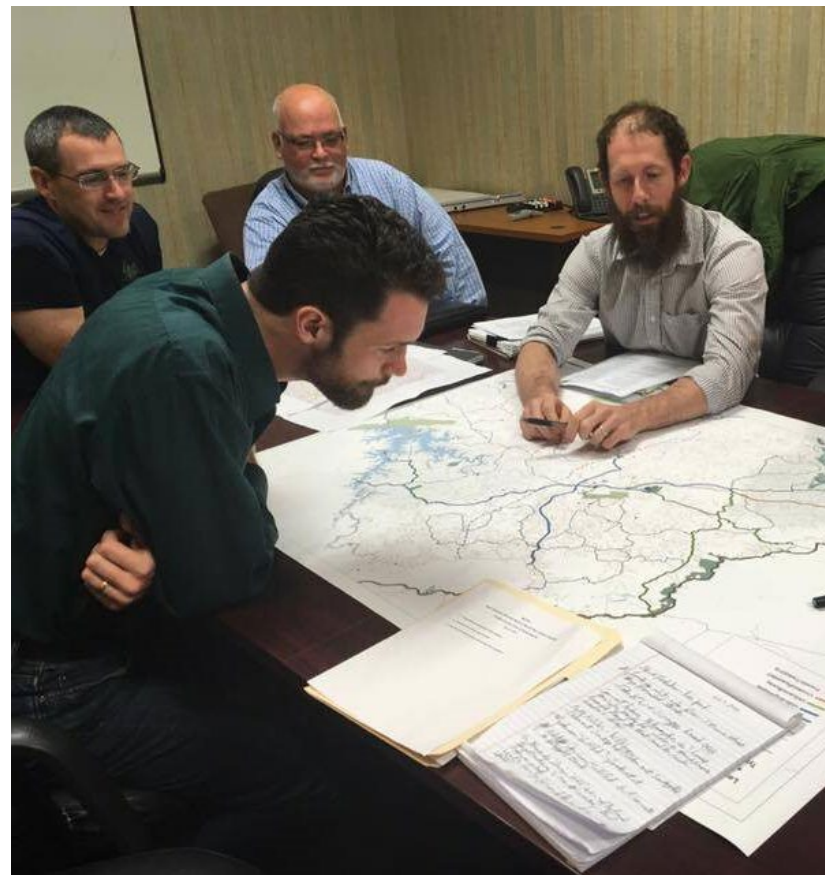
Economic development organizations and business support ecosystems play a critical role in the growth of communities. Well-coordinated ecosystems that collaborate and communicate effectively are key characteristics of regional economies that have been able to compete in an increasingly competitive environment.

While the current state of collaboration across the region is encouraging, West Piedmont and other key strategic partners should continue to commit to improving communication and collaboration to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. This continued collaboration should be built upon a foundation of shared objectives and desired outcomes and should enable regional leaders to advocate for shared policy priorities as a unified region.

Additionally, regional partners should continue to develop target sector strategies for business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts. The region should consider adapting technology to streamline communication, information sharing, and should develop an agreed upon approach to convening on a consistent basis.

### Strategies

1. Build stronger relationships with state and federal economic development organizations and agencies
2. Reinforce and implement roles for regional economic development organizations along clear objectives and desired outcomes
3. Organize as a region to develop a shared policy agenda and advocate for funding more effectively



# Economy and Innovation

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 1.2 Improve collaboration and coordination around regional economic development efforts</b>			
Build stronger relationships with state and federal economic development organizations and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build strong and more consistent relationships with state and federal legislators</li> <li>• Coordinate an annual meeting in Washington DC to meet with legislators and key federal agency representatives</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of meetings with state and federal legislators/agencies</li> </ul>
Reinforce and implement roles for regional economic development organizations along clear objectives and desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholder organizations</li> <li>• Adopt and utilize a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to increase communication and information sharing across the region</li> <li>• Create and update a list of high priority economic development projects</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of regionwide CRM system</li> <li>• Updated list of economic development projects</li> </ul>
Organize as a region to develop a shared policy agenda and advocate for funding more effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify an organization to lead government affairs and conduct advocacy work on behalf of the region</li> <li>• Build stronger relationships with local and state legislators</li> <li>• Coordinate an annual meeting in the state capital to meet with legislators and key agency representatives</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government affairs representative hired</li> <li>• Number of meetings with state and federal legislators/agencies</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Economic Development Organizations, WPPDC

# Economy and Innovation

## GOAL 3: EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH WITHIN TARGET INDUSTRIES

The 2020 Recovery and Resiliency plan commissioned by the West Piedmont Planning District outlined target industries that the region should focus its business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts on to grow the regional economy. By recognizing its industrial strengths, and making smart investments to grow those sectors, the region will be well positioned to maximize limited resources to foster long-term and sustainable growth.

As an already established hub for a variety of manufacturing sectors, the region should continue to focus on supporting the traditional manufacturing sector, but also take steps to support the advanced manufacturing sector. This sector is characterized as value-added manufacturing processes, that integrate technology and industry 4.0 technologies in an increasingly connected supply chain and economy. The region should continue to leverage the burgeoning network of complementary research assets and capitalize on opportunities to spur additional investments in related sectors such as advanced materials.

Further, the region should continue to allocate time and resources to growing the already strong healthcare, wood products, agritourism, and other related hospitality and tourism sectors. The region should conduct a supply chain analysis and use the findings to develop a regional business retention, expansion, and attraction campaign, aimed at target industries and complimentary industry sectors that support these industries.

### Strategies

1. Create a business attraction strategy around identified target industries
2. Develop regional capacities around research and development to support regional target industries
3. Continue to support and advocate for businesses within the identified target industries



# Economy and Innovation

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 1.3 Expand opportunities for growth within target industries</b>			
Create a business attraction strategy around identified target industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a business attraction task force</li> <li>• Hire a national site selection consultant / business attraction expert to lead regional business attraction efforts</li> <li>• Create a website to market the region for potential attraction targets</li> <li>• Work closely with the state on developing attractive incentive packages for prospective businesses</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task force members identified, and committee formed</li> <li>• Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>
Develop regional capacities around research and development to support regional target industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with regional universities on initiatives to support businesses in regional target industries</li> <li>• Develop networks of service providers</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of education and industry partners engaged</li> <li>• R&amp;D asset map</li> </ul>
Continue to support and advocate for businesses within the targeted industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize business outreach visits to businesses within target industries</li> <li>• Prioritize business outreach to businesses that support target industries</li> <li>• Support policy that enables target industry businesses to be more productive and profitable</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of businesses engaged</li> <li>• Creation of regional policy agenda; policy agenda updates annually</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Employers, Local Chambers, Local Schools, WPPDC

# Economy and Innovation

## GOAL 4: CULTIVATE AN INNOVATION CULTURE AND ECOSYSTEM TO COMPETE IN THE NEW ECONOMY

The West Piedmont region has taken recent steps to foster an environment positioned to win in the innovation economy. New major investments in the region, a strong manufacturing presence, and the commitment of strong anchor institutions are starting to pay dividends for the regional economy. The region should double down on these efforts to continue to evolve, diversify, and strengthen the economy for the future demands of an increasingly sophisticated global economy.

The region should continue to provide residents the resources needed to start and grow new and existing businesses and industries, specifically resources catered to those looking to start technology-enabled enterprises that support existing target industries. Assets such as entrepreneurial support systems, innovation hubs, and educational institutions and curriculum should be a core focus in building out the growing ecosystem. In addition, the region should take intentional steps to nourish a culture that embraces and supports entrepreneurs, including developing mentorship network, peer-to-peer networks, pitch competitions, and develop access to coworking space, incubation space, and acceleration programs.

As part of the ecosystem, regional stakeholders should cultivate an environment that ensure risk takers have adequate access to startup and growth capital. This could include startup funds in the form of grants, angel capital networks, low-interest loans, growth capital, and access to traditional loan products. The region should develop a plan to unlock capital at the local level and explore ways to cultivate a network of investors and loan providers.

### Strategies

1. Enhance the regional innovation ecosystem
2. Build a network of physical assets for innovation-based entrepreneurs
3. Improve education around innovation-based entrepreneurship
4. Enhance the start-up and growth and capital ecosystem



# Economy and Innovation

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 1.4 Cultivate an innovation culture and ecosystem to compete in the new economy</b>			
Enhance the regional innovation ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate current regional innovation ecosystem; develop plan to address gaps in the system</li> <li>Develop integrated marketing strategy to promote innovation ecosystem resources, programs, and assets</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of innovation ecosystem asset map</li> <li>Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>
Build a network of physical assets for innovation-based entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support awareness, usage, and access to regional coworking spaces</li> <li>Partner with key organizations to develop and enhance business incubation programs</li> <li>Support regional technology accelerator program</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of regional coworking spaces</li> <li>Number of business incubation programs</li> <li>Number of companies in business acceleration program(s)</li> </ul>
Improve education around innovation-based entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with local school districts to provide early entrepreneurial education</li> <li>Increase education and programming around STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) related industries</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of entrepreneurial classes conducted</li> </ul>
Enhance the startup and growth capital ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate current state of startup and growth capital products across the region</li> <li>Identify funding opportunities to capitalize and deploy startup and growth capital</li> <li>Explore funding to develop a regional angel capital network</li> <li>Enhance funding and support for regional pitch competitions</li> </ul>	Long (3-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstration of new financial products launched</li> </ul>

*Champions:* Local Schools, Community-based Organizations, The Launch Place, SBDC, & WPPDC



# Education and Workforce

A trained workforce is the most vital asset to a regional economy. The ability to meet the needs of employers and provide individuals with career options and family sustaining wages is the hallmark of a healthy and vibrant region. The West Piedmont region should take the necessary steps to ensure that regional employers are in position to hire talented individuals to meet their employment needs, and in turn, grow their businesses for the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century.

This section outlines goals the region should aspire to, and the strategies it should implement to achieve those goals. Based on the project research and outlined in strategic stakeholder sessions, the project teams believe that the West Piedmont region should aim to increase the talent pipeline now and for the future, enhance the coordination and collaboration of the workforce development and education system, take steps to stabilize the population, and address challenges related to childcare for young professional families across the region.

**Goal 1:** Increase the Pipeline of Talent for Regional Employers

**Goal 2:** Enhance Coordination and Collaboration with Local School Systems at all Levels

**Goal 3:** Stabilize and Grow the Population, Specifically in Younger Demographic Segments

**Goal 4:** Identify and Promote Innovative Opportunities to Increase Childcare Accessibility

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# Education and Workforce

## GOAL 1: INCREASE THE PIPELINE OF TALENT FOR REGIONAL EMPLOYERS

Access to talent is arguably the most pressing need for employers across the country. The West Piedmont region is no exception and should take intentional steps to ensure that employers across the region have a suitable pipeline of talent in both the short- and long-term. The region can accomplish this by leveraging existing sector partnerships, and by recognizing the opportunity to develop new industry specific partnerships. The region should also increase accessibility to internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities, and be intentional about how those opportunities are marketed across the region. Lastly, the region should focus efforts on youth employment, cultivating the talent pipeline of the future.

Sector Partnerships are an employer-driven model for aligning resources and promoting collaboration among educational institutions, workforce service providers, and community-based organizations to meet the needs of business. The sector partnership model ensures business needs are factored into development of a strong and qualified workforce, while also expanding access to the skills development, leading to jobs with higher wages for workers. The region should continue to allocate resources to existing regional sector-partnerships and look at new strategic opportunities to create industry specific partnerships to assist additional target industries with an adequate talent pipeline. A strong network of sector partnerships will ensure that employer demand is driving programming, which in turn will result in a properly trained workforce to meet critical regional industry needs.

### Strategies

1. Develop a regional approach to workforce development to create a high-skill, high-wage workforce environment
2. Promote internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities
3. Focus on youth employment
4. Focus on sector partnerships

Further, industry leaders and workforce development organizations should coordinate and collaborate to increase accessibility to work-based learning opportunities for prospective employees, including apprenticeship and internship opportunities. Appropriate training should complement on-the-job training and should include curriculum focused on both soft and technical skills required to obtain meaningful career opportunities. These career opportunities should be outlined through clear career pathways, which can be integrated into school curriculum in the K-12 school system and through regional community and vocational technical schools.

Lastly, the region should work together to develop and support youth employment programs. Exposing youth to the workforce early on will help individuals develop the necessary skills to enter the workforce after secondary education or post-secondary education. Wages and other compensation will enable individuals to earn while learning, and help employers connect with the next generation of workers earlier in the pipeline process.

# Education and Workforce

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 2.1 Increase the pipeline of talent for regional employers</b>			
Develop a regional approach to workforce development to create a high-skill, high-wage work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an asset map for regional workforce development entities</li> <li>Collaborate with workforce development related organizations, including workforce development boards, economic development organizations, educational institutions, social service agencies, human service agencies and private employers</li> <li>Develop regional workforce development policy agenda</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset Map completed</li> <li>Policy agenda developed; updated annually</li> </ul>
Promote internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and implement best-practice models</li> <li>Identify funding to support apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities</li> <li>Engage with educators on opportunities in target industries; create clearly defined career pathways</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of education and industry partners engaged</li> <li>Funding sources identified</li> </ul>
Focus on youth employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage funders and partner organizations to assess viability of summer youth employment program by county</li> <li>Optimize funding through American Job Centers to ensure appropriate resources for youth employment initiatives</li> <li>Work with private employers to develop career pathways</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of education and industry partners engaged</li> <li>Funding sources identified</li> </ul>
Focus on sector partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support existing sector partnerships with funding and resources</li> <li>Create new sector partnerships for target industries</li> <li>Engage private sector leaders on a regular and consistent basis</li> <li>Optimize funding available through American Jobs Centers to support regional workforce development partners and sector partnerships</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of sector partnerships</li> <li>Number of education and industry partners engaged</li> <li>Funding sources identified</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Employers, Local School Systems, Workforce Boards, & Community-Based Organizations

# Education and Workforce

## **GOAL 2: ENHANCE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITHIN THE EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INDUSTRY SECTORS**

A regional workforce development system is an integrated network that requires various stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate to achieve common goals. Local school districts, regional universities, higher education centers, community college networks, training providers, economic development organizations and workforce development organizations need to develop common objectives and work in partnership to ensure that they're producing a talented and skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers across the region. Regions can achieve this harmony when each integrated partner understands the role it plays, and clear career pathways for students of all ages and abilities. These career pathways, in turn, need to be complimented by appropriate training resources and support programs for individuals looking for meaningful work at family sustaining compensation.

To ensure collaboration and a well-integrated workforce development system, a regional organization to take the lead to serve as a convener and organizer of the consortium. The leader should collaborate with partners to ensure every organization is aware of their value and role in the networked system. The leadership organization should have the ability and credibility to bring a diverse set of stakeholders to the table to pursue common workforce development objectives.

### **Strategies**

1. Identify regional champion(s)
2. Integrate career training curriculum into regional school systems
3. Promote career exploration and career readiness



# Education and Workforce

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 2.2 Enhance coordination and collaboration within the education, workforce, and industry sectors</b>			
Identify regional champion(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify regional champion(s) to convene and coordinate regional educational and workforce development organizations</li> <li>Streamline communication amongst partners</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Champion(s) identified</li> </ul>
Promote career exploration and career readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage early and often with students and parents in the K-12 school districts</li> <li>Promote clearly defined career pathways</li> <li>Develop and offer soft skills training through existing service providers</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation and engagement in career exploration and readiness programming and tools</li> <li>Number of K-12 districts engaged</li> </ul>
Integrate career training curriculum into regional school systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create asset inventory for career training initiatives and resources across secondary, post-secondary, career training education providers, and regional universities</li> <li>Address gaps in systems identified by asset inventory</li> <li>Develop career training curriculum in coordination with private employers, educator, and workforce development partners</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset inventory completed</li> <li>Gaps addressed</li> <li>Curriculum developed</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Schools, Workforce Boards, and Local Employers

# Education and Workforce

## GOAL 3: STABILIZE AND GROW THE POPULATION, SPECIFICALLY IN YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS

A stable or growing population is the most important metric for a region for a multitude of reasons. The West Piedmont region needs to develop strategies to ensure that the regional population is stabilizing into the next decade. Further, the region should consider several strategies to facilitate population growth, specifically targeting young families and young professionals.

By being intentional, the West Piedmont region can develop a strategy to retain and attract talent to the region. One early step that can be taken is to identify and connect with former residents. By engaging former residents through various marketing and engagement channels, the region increases the likelihood former residents would consider moving back to the region. Further, regional stakeholders should work with regional employers to develop complimentary strategies with the appropriate resources to attract needed talent to the area.

To retain professionals, the region should also focus on cultivating the next generation of civic and professional leaders. By offering networking opportunities, and training programs, the region can engage young professionals in a purposeful way and outline clear pathways to leadership roles across the region.

Lastly, the region should look at other regions, and learn how they are attracting new residents to their respective communities. Financial incentives have been used creatively in regions across the country and the West Piedmont region would be wise to understand what financial incentives packages would be most effective for the region. Further, regional economic development stakeholders should work with major employers across the region and conduct a remote worker feasibility study to understand if this is a professional segment to focus on in talent attraction efforts.

### Strategies

1. Cultivate the next generation of community leaders
2. Incentivize individuals and families to relocate to the region
3. Develop a talent retention and attraction strategy



# Education and Workforce

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 2.3 Stabilize and grow the population, specifically in younger demographic segments</b>			
Cultivate the next generation of community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support young professional groups across the region</li> <li>• Develop and support civic leadership programs</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated support for regional young professional and leadership groups</li> </ul>
Incentivize individuals and families to relocate to the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research best practices on relocation incentives</li> <li>• Explore funding opportunities to support relocation initiatives</li> <li>• Conduct remote worker feasibility study</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote worker feasibility study completed</li> <li>• Incentives identified, supported, and funded</li> </ul>
Develop a talent retention and attraction strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and connect with former residents</li> <li>• Engage employers about talent retention priorities and strategies</li> <li>• Market quality of life advantages to strategic audiences</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of former residents identified and engaged</li> <li>• Number of businesses engaged</li> <li>• Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>

Champions: WPPDC, Local Chambers, and Local Governments

# Education and Workforce

## GOAL 4: IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE CHILDCARE ACCESSIBILITY

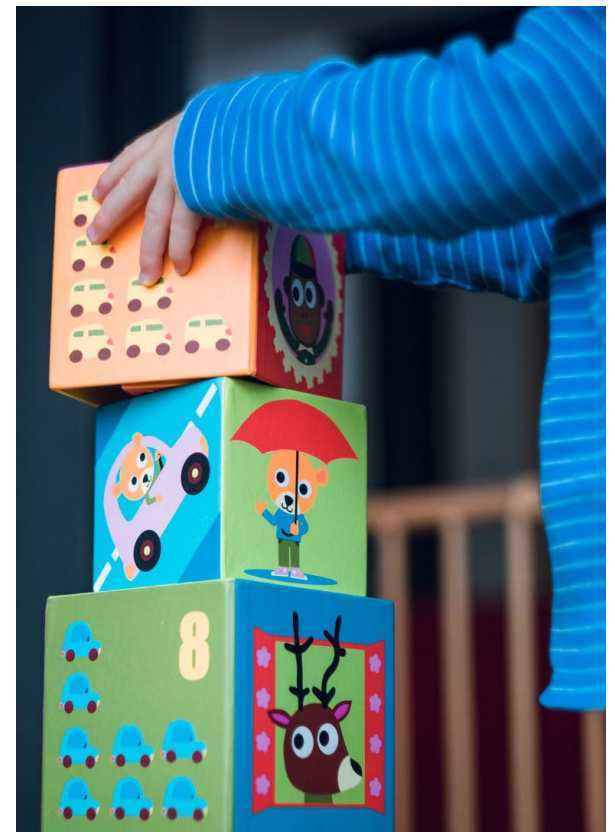
The West Piedmont region understands that access to quality, affordable daycare and early education programs is an important component of economic development. Childcare is critical to employers and families alike for maintaining or advancing productivity and income. Lack of access often keeps guardians from working full-time, especially in jobs with competing schedules or lack of flexibility.

Importance to child development and education...

Addressing regional weaknesses in childcare accessibility will require intentional efforts to address affordability, staffing for new and existing facilities, and policy issues.

### Strategies

1. Organize a cross-sector group to address childcare challenges in the region
2. Create an action plan to identify and address challenges of childcare facilities
3. Develop a regional advocacy agenda to address current policy issues impacting childcare and early education at the state and local level





# Education and Workforce

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 2.4 Identify and promote innovative opportunities to increase childcare accessibility</b>			
Organize a cross-sector group to address childcare challenges in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a list of stakeholders from each county and identify a small and diverse group of individuals to be invited to participate</li> <li>• Develop and maintain a database of existing and potential funding sources</li> <li>• Develop an understanding of successful financial models for childcare facilities as well as subsidies and incentives</li> <li>• Assess opportunities to help families and employers pay for childcare costs and implement assistance programs if feasible.</li> <li>• Develop plans to invest in existing and new childcare facilities</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group launch and diversity of group</li> <li>• Funding sources identified</li> <li>• Number of models evaluated</li> </ul>
Create an action plan to identify and address challenges of childcare facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage existing childcare facility owners and managers to identify challenges</li> <li>• Examine and identify gaps in current childcare facilities in terms of access, diversity, equity, quality, and affordability</li> <li>• Evaluate a variety of childcare facility and program models for feasibility</li> <li>• Develop strategies to improve existing and guide new childcare facilities in the region</li> <li>• Assist K-12 and higher education providers with expansion of workforce training programs and degree in childcare</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of childcare facilities participating</li> <li>• Number of models evaluated</li> <li>• Demonstrated support for workforce training outcomes</li> </ul>
Develop a regional advocacy agenda to address policy issues impacting childcare and early education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly scan legislative priorities and current policies at the local, state, and national levels which relate to childcare and early education</li> <li>• Evaluate legislation and policies for positive or negative impacts on equitable access to childcare options.</li> <li>• Draft a regional advocacy agenda and create an action plan</li> <li>• Strengthen employer partnerships to further advocacy efforts, support childcare facilities, and increase employee access.</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Result(s) of advocacy activities</li> <li>• Number of businesses engaged</li> </ul>

Champions: Local Governments, Local Childcare Facilities, WWPDC

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

The following section identifies goals and strategies to increase equitable access to the necessities and amenities most critical to quality of life. WPPDC examines the more obvious and essential needs of the region like housing and healthcare in addition to the more nuanced demands for social interaction, belonging, culture, recreation, technology, and functional designs. Through the implementation of these strategies, the West Piedmont region will be better equipped to provide inclusive, healthy, safe, and vibrant communities that both retain and attract residents.

**Goal 1:** Increase Access to Affordable, Adequate, and Available Housing

**Goal 2:** Develop a Sense of Place that Unites the Region

**Goal 3:** Increase Destination-Quality Outdoor Recreation

**Goal 4:** Promote Programs and Resources which Advocate Healthy Lifestyles

**Goal 5:** Commit to an Inclusive Approach to Increasing Digital and Financial Literacy

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

## GOAL 1: INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, ADEQUATE, AND AVAILABLE HOUSING

The age, availability, and limited diversity of housing stock affects current residents and workers. This creates challenges for economic developers attempting to attract new employers and residents. Current trends show a shrinking inventory of available housing options. This tight housing market has come at the expense of area residents. Rising housing costs can have significant implications to quality of life, talent attraction, and economic growth. A combined strategy for housing preservation, rehabilitation, and new building (supported by expanded and maintained infrastructure) will set the West Piedmont region up for success.

The quality of area housing inventory is an important concern for this goal. Homes which are vacant, abandoned, or in disrepair are more obvious targets for preservation or redevelopment. In this market, homeowners often lack resources to renovate properties. This is true of landlords as well. The region plans to implement support programs for a variety of housing rehabilitation opportunities.

Production of units is the other approach to stabilizing the housing market and creating more affordable options for residents. Financial incentives often need to be in place for developers to be able to keep housing costs down. Barriers to housing development sometimes include outdated or misguided policies, zoning issues, funding, infrastructure, and overall education.

### Strategies

1. Create a regional housing strategy
2. Increase communication and support between landlords and tenants
3. Evaluate existing land and housing stock for redevelopment and new construction opportunities
4. Create and maintain a residential development financing and incentive toolbox



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 3.1 Increase access to affordable, adequate, and available housing</b>			
Create a regional housing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze local trends in housing supply, affordability, and demand to define need</li> <li>Assess the current capacity for housing development by not-for-profit and for-profit housing developers and the capacity for local government to play a role</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing strategy complete</li> <li>Housing inventory analysis</li> </ul>
Increase communication and support between landlords and tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather feedback from both landlord and tenants on housing programs, policies, and market conditions</li> <li>Explore best practices and case studies for innovative landlord and tenant collaboration programs</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of landlords and tenants engaged</li> <li>Number of models evaluated</li> </ul>
Evaluate existing land and housing stock for redevelopment and new construction opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess housing units which are vacant, abandoned, or in disrepair</li> <li>Assess existing housing development policies for support of non-traditional housing, accessible housing, housing renovations, and housing types that address key needs.</li> <li>Promote development of housing types with an emphasis on affordability and accessibility as well as aging in place</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacancy rate</li> <li>Number of units built</li> <li>Policies reviewed</li> </ul>
Create and maintain a residential development financing and incentive toolbox.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess current incentives/funding opportunities available throughout the region that assist in housing rehab, repair, and improvements to housing stock</li> <li>Establish incentive and funding toolkit that details each opportunity available in plain language</li> <li>Market and promote toolkit to local developers</li> <li>Explore establishment of a regional land bank/trust program to acquire and maintain properties for future housing development</li> <li>Encourage regional and local incentives that expand partnerships and funding sources for housing types that meet needs in key development areas</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentive toolkit creation</li> <li>Identified key development areas</li> </ul>

Champions: Municipal and County governments, Developers, Landlords

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

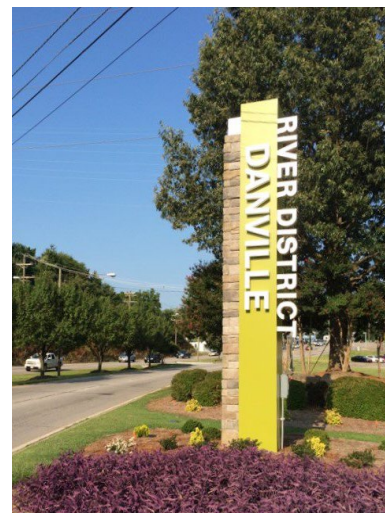
## GOAL 2: DEVELOP A SENSE OF PLACE THAT UNITES THE REGION

The WPPDC prioritizes support for unique community assets to ensure the region remains an attractive location for talent and business. A bold vision for those spaces is critical to developing resilient communities, improving quality of life, spurring economic investment, and attracting and retaining talent. Creating and maintaining a sense of place encourages tourists to return to communities where they feel welcome and included. Residents find equitable access to their community and social connection within reimagined public spaces. This goal seeks to identify, and leverage built, natural, and cultural assets.

Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking as, "Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share; placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution."

### Strategies

1. Develop and maintain an effective regional place brand strategy and visual identity that highlights unique community and natural assets
2. Increase access and use of public spaces, cultural opportunities, and recreational amenities
3. Improve the appearance and functionality of community and business corridors
4. Create safe and unique programable public spaces that can serve community, cultural, and social needs



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 3.2 Develop a sense of place that unites the region</b>			
Develop and maintain an effective regional place brand strategy and visual identity that highlights unique community and natural assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define and create a strong, consistent, and customized, strategic brand platform that establishes a unified vision, reflects community values, and supports internal and external marketing efforts.</li> <li>Create collateral that leverages new logo systems and digital assets to support strategic brand objectives.</li> <li>Create a trail map linking all the regional natural assets.</li> <li>Use collateral to support a regional advertisement campaign for both resident and visitor attraction for the region.</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brand established</li> <li>Map created</li> <li>Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>
Increase access and use of public spaces, cultural opportunities, and recreational amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a marketing plan with guidance from regional partnerships to promote existing natural, recreation, and historical assets to increase awareness of these resources among visitors and residents.</li> <li>Develop programming to activate public spaces with intentional focus on cultural and social connection</li> <li>Advocate and secure financial support for public art, museums, and other cultural amenities and programs throughout the region</li> <li>Identify creative clusters to leverage for enhanced arts and culture programming.</li> <li>Explore other opportunities to grow the economy through arts and culture, especially with regard to support for creative businesses</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing campaign engagement</li> <li>Number of models evaluated</li> <li>Number of artists and arts organizations engaged</li> </ul>
Improve the appearance and functionality of community and business corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify target community and business corridors throughout the region</li> <li>Utilize or create façade improvement programs</li> <li>Ensure that façade improvement programs are accessible and promoted throughout the region, concentrating on identified target corridors</li> <li>Improve streetscapes within identified corridors with input from businesses, residents, and visitors</li> <li>Assess and revise multimodal traffic patterns for safe and equitable access to amenities</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of façade improvement programs</li> <li>Number of streetscape projects</li> <li>Number of multimodal projects</li> </ul>
Create safe and unique programable public spaces that can serve community, cultural, and social needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess needs for improved or additional park, greenway, and blueway assets.</li> <li>Engage residents and tourists in reimagining the use of public spaces</li> <li>Identify funding resources that could finance public space improvements.</li> <li>Explore options for landowner incentives for conservation and development of public greenways/trails within identified corridors.</li> <li>Develop programming to activate public spaces</li> <li>Promote Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CTPED) best practices to improve community safety in these areas</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs assessment completed</li> <li>Demonstrated public engagement</li> <li>Funding sources identified</li> <li>Number of models evaluated</li> </ul>

Champions: Convention and Visitor Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Municipal and County governments, State Agencies

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

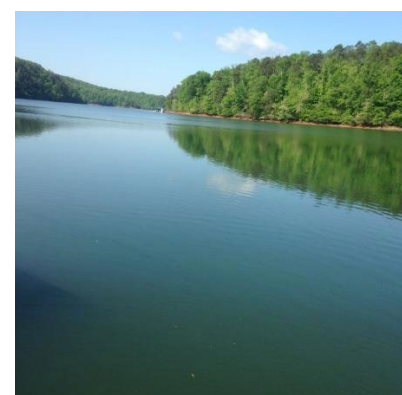
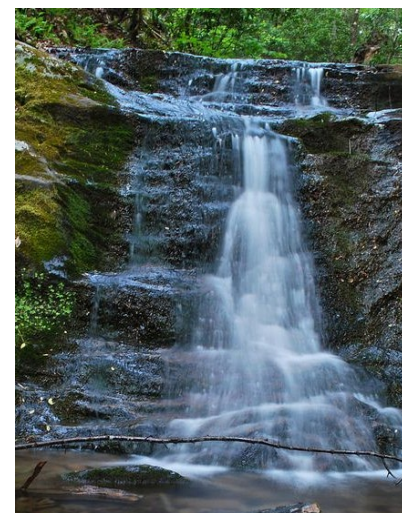
## GOAL 3: INCREASE DESTINATION-QUALITY OUTDOOR RECREATION

The West Piedmont region's plan includes intentional investment to enhance diverse recreational opportunities. Recreational assets boost tourism-industry revenue and enhance the enriching outdoor experiences of both visitors and residents. Creating quality and numerous outdoor recreation opportunities can lead to more experiences for families and children, involve residents from all walks of life, and connect communities together. Increased access to these amenities is key for creating a more equitable quality of life throughout the region.

Investment in these resources will require increased coordination, organization, and marketing through regional stakeholders. Involving both the public and private sector to market and create new experiences is a key opportunity for the region. With outdoor recreation impacting both the economic and social areas in the region, the focus to improve quality outdoor recreation should be a top concern moving forward.

### Strategies

1. Partner with local, regional, and federal agencies to develop and promote destination-quality outdoor recreation infrastructure
2. Organize and work with regional public and private sector leaders to align and identify new and existing agritourism opportunities
3. Develop and maintain a database of existing and potential funding sources for recreation improvements, maintenance, and new asset development



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 3.3 Increase destination-quality outdoor recreation</b>			
Develop and maintain a database of existing and potential funding sources for recreation improvements, maintenance, and new asset development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a funding scan of potential funding sources</li> <li>Develop a plan for database maintenance including responsibilities and scheduling of regular updates</li> <li>Work with partners to make the database available to local governments and recreation-related business owners.</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding sources identified</li> <li>Database maintenance plan established</li> <li>Number of partners engaged</li> </ul>
Partner with local, regional, and federal agencies to develop and promote destination-quality outdoor recreation infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with local government officials, economic development, tourism representatives, educational institutions, and business owners to establish a vision and plan for regional recreation infrastructure development.</li> <li>Identify resources necessary to implement the regional outdoor recreation plan to address staffing, implementation, and marketing.</li> <li>Ensure infrastructure will serve a diverse and growing residential and tourist population of all ages and abilities.</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and type of organizations engaged</li> <li>Resources secured</li> <li>Infrastructure evaluated for accessibility</li> </ul>
Organize and work with regional public and private sector leaders to align and identify new and existing agritourism opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a database of agricultural businesses in the region.</li> <li>Assess ability for each identified business to incorporate agritourism offerings.</li> <li>Engage businesses and assist with plans to create agritourism programming.</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses engaged</li> <li>Number of new agritourism programs launched</li> </ul>

Champions: Convention and Visitor Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Municipal and County governments, Local farmers



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

## GOAL 4: PROMOTE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES WHICH ADVOCATE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Health and wellness are critical to all residents at all stages of life. Physical health and wellbeing are inextricably linked to exuberant workforce development, efficient adaptation to both economic and environmental stressors, and the region's ability to attract and retain residents. Mental health and substance abuse are often overlooked in economic and workforce development initiatives.

Health services and facilities continue to be an important aspect of a community which industrial and business prospects consider in their evaluations. Recent growth in this area will help to enhance the quality of life in the West Piedmont Region. However, the region is and has been historically medically underserved, and the shortage is particularly severe in primary care areas. Recognizing the need for additional physicians to provide this care, several medical centers for doctors' offices have been constructed in the region along with other goals and strategies to increase the healthcare system and its ability to serve its residents.

### Strategies

1. Increase awareness of existing health and wellness assets and information
2. Advocate for access and expansion of the region's healthcare system to serve its residents
3. Increase access to mental health and substance abuse resources



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 3.4 Promote programs and resources which advocate healthy lifestyles.</b>			
Advocate for access and expansion of the region's healthcare system to serve its residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and address common needs starting with an evaluation of Health Evaluation Shortage Scores (HPSA)</li> <li>Create and maintain an asset map with locations and services available to residents and visitors</li> <li>Increase participation in healthcare-related educational pathways</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial HPSA score evaluated/gaps identified</li> <li>Asset map created</li> <li>Demonstrated support for increased student enrollment</li> </ul>
Increase awareness of existing health and wellness assets and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with regional partners to create an educational public awareness campaign centered around health and wellness</li> <li>Develop and maintain a publicly accessible database of existing health and wellness programs and resources in the region.</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Database maintenance plan established</li> <li>Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>
Increase access to mental health and substance abuse resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise public awareness about mental health and substance abuse</li> <li>Advocate for equitable access to local treatment programs</li> <li>Improve, expand, and support mental health and substance abuse treatment programs in the region</li> <li>Improve the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program by re-evaluating local policies and guidelines and support a drug court in Martinsville and Henry County</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing campaign engagement</li> <li>Number of models evaluated</li> <li>Demonstrated support for drug court</li> </ul>

Champions: Piedmont Community Services, education, outreach programs, Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, Rotary Foundation

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

## GOAL 5: COMMIT TO AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO INCREASING DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

With the increased importance of technology in society and our everyday lives, promoting digital literacy for citizens can be one of most valuable tools for lifelong and advanced learning. For children, the access to a home computer with internet (now a pressing need with e-schooling) increases their likelihood of college attendance exponentially. For adults, the ever-evolving online world can either help them succeed in their current job and learn new skills or hold them back. Developing resources to help those citizens who may not understand technology or have troubles accessing technology is key to improving digital literacy rates throughout the region.

Along with the importance of digital literacy, is the core knowledge of financial literacy. The impact of improving financial literacy within a region has proven to have a profound impact on people and their ability to provide for their future. A region with a higher educational knowledge of personal finances can lead to many multiplier effects, including more people understanding how to use financial support systems in place, accessing loans, and decreasing debt burdens. Financial literacy has also become more important in today's world as we manage more financial decisions than ever. Many people now manage their retirement accounts, student debt, mortgage debt, and online trading accounts, among others.

Data shows that workers in the West Piedmont Region are making less money than in other parts of Virginia, the labor force participation rate is decreasing, and that some of the largest growing sectors and occupations (retail, healthcare, etc.) don't pay a living wage. A crucial part in developing an inclusive financial literacy curriculum is recognizing that the information is not telling people they need to be better with their money but understanding they may not have enough to begin with. With this in mind, the region should look to collaborate with key education and community stakeholders to develop resources and ideas on how to improve financial literacy within the region.

### Strategies

1. Develop an inclusive financial and digital literacy curriculum/toolkit that can be shared among students, employers, and citizens alike
2. Strengthen relationships with public agencies, libraries, community-based organizations and educational and research institutions
3. Identify funding resources (federal, state, local, private) to support community-based literacy solutions



# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 3.5 Commit to an inclusive approach to increasing digital and financial literacy</b>			
Identify funding resources (federal, state, local, private) to support community-based literacy solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help advocate and seek sustainable funding for programs</li> <li>• Identify and promote grant funding opportunities</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding sources identified</li> <li>• Result(s) of advocacy activities</li> </ul>
Strengthen relationships with public agencies, libraries, community-based organizations and educational and research institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate initiatives and share best practices on improving digital and financial literacy</li> <li>• Encourage integration of curriculums and shared resources into community-based organizations, schools, libraries, etc.</li> <li>• Expand and implement coordinated outreach and public education activities that raise awareness and build support for improved literacy</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organizations and institutions engaged</li> <li>• Marketing campaign engagement</li> </ul>
Develop an inclusive financial and digital literacy curriculum/toolkit that can be shared among students, employers, and citizens alike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review existing digital and financial literacy curriculums/resources for seniors, adults, and students</li> <li>• Determine gaps, opportunities for improvements, and priority learning needed</li> <li>• Develop technical guides, shared content, and other assistance resources to advance literacy in the region</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy population percentages</li> <li>• Demonstrated support for creation of technical guides and/or additional resources</li> </ul>

*Champions: Local schools, local governments, community-based organizations*

# Infrastructure

An area's infrastructure serves as the framework wherein its communities grow and thrive. The adequacy of the infrastructure systems has shaped and will continue to exert significant influence on economic growth within the West Piedmont Planning District. Infrastructure investments are a primary economic growth-forming factor because of the availability to make land, labor, and resources both accessible and competitive inter-regionally and intra-regionally. Infrastructure investments also have the ability to change the social environment, by promoting healthy, safe, and active lifestyles and creating environments where communities can prosper. The region needs reliable and innovative infrastructure as local firms depend on these systems and global firms look to relocate. Local citizens also rely on infrastructure investments to keep them safe, provide basic necessities, and prioritize values and visions.

Due to many infrastructure projects exceeding the capacity of one local government, large projects often involve multiple partners, public-private partnerships, and stakeholder engagement. In order to effectively achieve the needed infrastructure improvements in the region, regional support, planning, and priority alignment will be required. The following section outlines how the West Piedmont region can take the necessary steps to grow and plan the regional transportation system addressing top concerns and priorities in an innovative, equitable, and feasible way.

**Goal 1:** Increase broadband access and reliability, particularly in rural, commercial, and industrial areas

**Goal 2:** Improve infrastructure needed to grow existing and future industrial/business parks in the region

**Goal 3:** Promote redevelopment of Commercial/Central Business Districts and revitalization of small towns in the region

**Goal 4:** Improve regional multimodal transportation infrastructure

**Goal 5:** Address Region-wide infrastructure needs

# Infrastructure

## GOAL 1: INCREASE BROADBAND ACCESS AND RELIABILITY, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Broadband is a critical component for economic development and opportunities for business growth, entrepreneurs, education and workforce training, health, and quality of life. The COVID-19 Pandemic emphasized the necessity for broadband and its importance to quality of life across the region as essentially all parts of our lives moved online. Impacts from the pandemic include online schooling in PreK - 12 and higher educational institutions, employers utilizing "work from home" strategies, hospitals innovating to "telehealth" practices, and many basic services moving solely to online communications. The need for residential and commercial broadband moved from a quality-of-life aspect, to a basic life necessity over the course of the pandemic.

While the importance of broadband has been emphasized over the course of the pandemic, several solutions and plans have been created by local governments and organizations to address underserved areas in the region in the past five years. Many of the plans have been awaiting funding, and in the beginning of 2022, the State of Virginia

announced millions of dollars of grant funding from the federal government to help fund current and new broadband initiatives. The grants will bring broadband and high-speed internet access to 90 percent of Virginians, specifically addressing and impacting those rural counties in the region that are underserved. While new funding will bring much needed coverage and infrastructure to the region, the last mile connections to several residential and industrial areas are still needed, especially for residents and businesses to succeed in a digital global economy. Additionally, the region should plan broadband infrastructure connections in identified areas conducive for future residential, commercial, and business growth.

### Strategies

1. Organize Broadband Task force with leaders from around the region
2. Identify underserved areas and potential growth areas within the region
3. Coordinate strategies to fund and implement last mile broadband access
4. Support state and federal, state, local, and private-sector efforts in expanding broadband access

# Infrastructure

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 4.1 Increase broadband access and reliability, particularly in rural, commercial, and industrial areas</b>			
Organize Broadband Task force with leaders from around the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage economic development directors, service providers, local government officials, and other key stakeholders to form a regional broadband task force or steering committee</li> <li>Create a clear and consistent connectivity vision for the region</li> <li>Align future policies and investments with regional vision</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of regional connectivity vision</li> <li>Number of partners engaged</li> </ul>
Support federal, state, local, and private-sector investments expanding broadband access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in any project management, administrative, or technical roles needed for the recent broadband awards (ARPA) to the region totaling over \$120M</li> <li>Continue to leverage public assets and investments</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrated support for implementation of ARPA awards</li> </ul>
Identify underserved areas and potential growth areas within the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify areas of critical need and projected growth which will likely align with identified sites for commercial, residential, and industrial development</li> <li>Coordinate findings of regional community needs with priorities of utilities providers to address identified deficiencies.</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent of underserved areas in the region</li> </ul>
Build collaborative partnerships with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to connect middle-mile expansion with last-mile deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist regional communities access funding for broadband and other infrastructure studies and with completion of studies.</li> <li>In partnership with local communities, apply for grants and funding opportunities to address regional infrastructure gaps.</li> <li>Develop investment-friendly deployment policies for service providers</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent of households with broadband</li> <li>Unique consumer providers by county</li> </ul>

Champions: WPPDC, RiverStreet Networks, ISPs, Regional Communities, & Department of Housing & Community Development (VDHCD) - Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI)

# Infrastructure

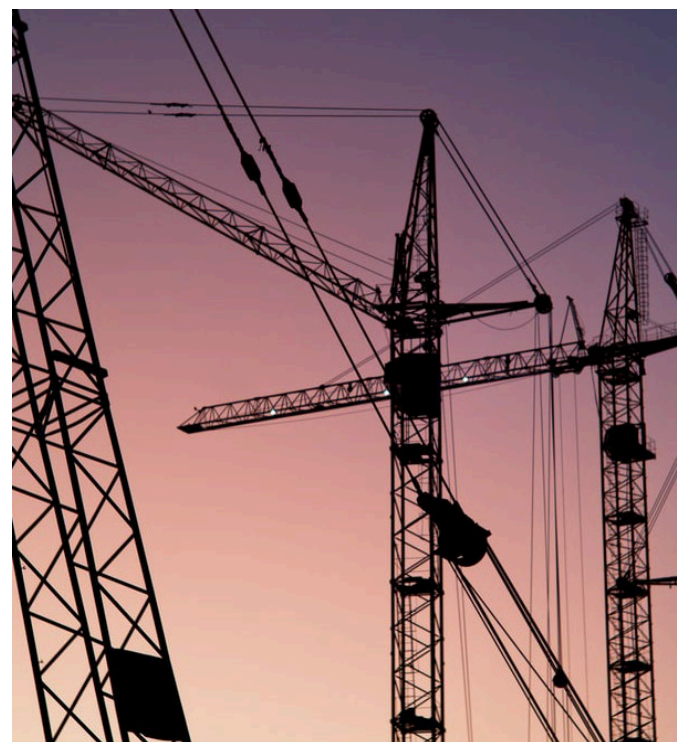
## GOAL 2: IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO GROW EXISTING AND FUTURE INDUSTRIAL / BUSINESS PARKS IN THE REGION

A number of industrial sites and business parks have been developed within the West Piedmont Region. Each has been designated as GigaPark sites by Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative, many are located within designated Enterprise Zones, and all localities within the region have joined the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance. These designations substantially improve recruitment potential in the global market. That said, industry attraction efforts often hinge on availability of shovel ready sites. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) advertises sites deemed shovel ready based on a tiered ranking system. It is recommended that the WPPDC and partners assess existing industrial sites within the region to identify opportunities to improve rankings and ensure more regional sites are actively marketed by VEDP. It is crucial throughout the assessment to find ways to ensure new and existing industrial sites have adequate power supplies, state-of-the-art telecommunications including broadband, access to public water and wastewater infrastructure, and adequate access roads to industrial sites that link the region through highway and rail to major trade centers.

By working with regional economic development organizations and local communities to streamline systems and development/permitting processes, improved engagement with developers and site selectors can lead to more positive outcomes. The WPPDC is able to support regional economic development organizations with this task by facilitating connections and assisting with planning and access to funding.

### Strategies

1. Promote regional cooperation among jurisdictions in developing industrial/business parks
2. Promote and improve needed physical infrastructure for each site
3. Increase each park's rating at least one level according to listed development processes and specifications





# Infrastructure

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 4.2 Improve infrastructure needed to grow existing and future industrial / business parks in the region</b>			
Increase each park's rating at least one level according to listed development processes and specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify industrial development sites that should be marketed by VEDP.</li> <li>Assess infrastructure gaps and needed improvements to enhance each site's tiered ranking.</li> <li>After identifying gaps, work with local officials to understand specific infrastructure financing solutions.</li> <li>Apply for grants and other funding opportunities to secure funding for required improvements.</li> <li>Work with local communities to review permitting and development processes and identify opportunities to streamline for developers and builders.</li> <li>Engage developers and builders on identified development opportunities and determine public/private roles for addressing remaining infrastructure gaps.</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of industrial / business parks with increased certification ratings</li> </ul>
Promote and improve needed physical infrastructure for each site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess development readiness of each site to understand utility accessibility and additional site constraints.</li> <li>Evaluate current power supplies, adequate access roads to industrial sites, natural gas, access to public water and wastewater, and other infrastructure necessities.</li> <li>Advocate development of fiber-optic network, more cell tower service and last-mile connectivity for broadband and enhancement of industrial park amenities</li> <li>Document needed improvements to ensure sites are development ready and potential federal, state, and regional funding sources that could finance improvements.</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of shovel ready sites in region</li> </ul>
Promote regional cooperation among jurisdictions in developing industrial/business parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the help of SVRA, promote the region as a unified presence to industrial prospects</li> <li>Collaborate and share best practices for marketing and attraction</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrated promotion of SVRA (GoSouthernVirginia) site</li> </ul>

*Champions: WPPDC, SVRA, Economic Development Organizations*

# Infrastructure

## GOAL 3: PROMOTE REDEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL/CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND REVITALIZATION OF SMALL TOWNS IN THE REGION

Revitalization projects help to boost economic initiatives with the elimination of blight, while also creating attractive aesthetics in these areas to entice new businesses, industries, and residents. Small business development and entrepreneurial enterprise can have an astounding impact on the local economy. The clustering of similar businesses tends to attract other related companies to locate in that particular area. The retail/commercial businesses bring shoppers, recreational activities attract visitors and tourists, and lofts, condominiums, and apartments attract residents to live in these areas - all boosting the local economy by bringing tax revenues and tourist dollars to the area. This environment, along with a solid industry base, constitutes the building blocks of a strong, diversified economy.

Several strategies and initiatives have been put in place around the region to bolster downtown areas. That said, much work, is still needed in order to create thriving downtown environments that can develop and build in years to come. The following strategies should enable the preservation of historical and cultural significant buildings along with encouraging new development to retain and create an authentic sense of place. The West Piedmont Planning District Commission should work in lockstep with VA Main Street, local developers, and local governments to create prosperous and strong downtown environments.

### Strategies

1. Rehabilitate and preserve vacant, underutilized buildings for business and industrial development purposes
2. Provide a Clear, Sensible Regulatory Framework
3. Promote and educate the use of available development incentives



# Infrastructure

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 4.3 Promote redevelopment of Commercial/Central Business Districts and revitalization of small towns in the region</b>			
Promote and educate the use of available development incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile list of all development incentives available throughout the region</li> <li>• Develop comprehensive educational guide or "toolkit" on development incentives and their appropriate uses</li> <li>• Promote the use of incentives through websites and social media</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of incentive toolkit</li> <li>• Applications/awards for development incentives (historic tax credits, rebates, exemptions, planning grants, etc.)</li> </ul>
Provide a clear, sensible regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and assess existing zoning codes, land use policies, &amp; practices to evaluate whether current codes support or hinder development goals (ex: mixed-use, multi-family unit, or walkability)</li> <li>• Perform audit on targeted neighborhood/district/corridor by interviewing stakeholders inc. city staff, elected officials, citizens, and developers to identify what barriers exist</li> <li>• Propose new suggestions for how provisions could be changed, create possible RFP or RFQ if substantial code change is needed</li> <li>• Prepare final presentation and report of findings to present to local stakeholders and recommend changes</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of districts/cities with form-based codes within region</li> </ul>
Rehabilitate and preserve vacant, underutilized buildings for business and industrial development purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify funding opportunities to support downtown revitalization plans</li> <li>• Identify buildings in regional downtowns that may be vacant or need redevelopment.</li> <li>• Create site control strategies including funding strategies for buildings identified as redevelopment candidates.</li> <li>• Work with local communities to apply for redevelopment funds for identified buildings.</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding sources identified</li> <li>• Applications/awards for development incentives (historic tax credits, rebates, exemptions, planning grants, etc.)</li> </ul>

*Champions: WPPDC, Local Developers, Economic Development Corporations, EDA, Planning Departments, Local Governments, & Local Chambers*

# Infrastructure

## GOAL 4: IMPROVE REGIONAL MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

For the last 60 years, transportation investments have largely focused on the creation and maintenance of highways and vehicular travel lanes, particularly with the passage of the Highway Defense Act of 1956. In recent years, it has been recognized that a multimodal transportation system which includes robust public transit, comprehensive bike and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as commuter assistance programs, can improve environmental conditions, health outcomes of a population, and can help address issues of equity.

Local communities around the region have responded to these trends by producing substantial work in developing a variety of trails, greenways, and blueways. It is not only recommended that the region continue to build on these assets but consider how the current systems in place limit and impact the built environment in the region. Additionally, WPPDC's role in the encouragement of strong community engagement is crucial in the planning process for how the region will develop an equitable and people focused transportation system moving forward.

### Strategies

1. Improve connectivity and safety across multiple modes including transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular
2. Promote equitable transportation options for all people independent of age, race, ethnicity, economic status, and physical ability
3. Strengthen the connection between transportation and land use
4. Encourage strong community engagement in the planning process and in the Region's future growth and development



# Infrastructure

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 4.4 Improve regional multimodal transportation infrastructure</b>			
Promote equitable transportation options for all people independent of age, race, ethnicity, economic status, and physical ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market and promote RIDE Solutions</li> <li>Work towards providing benches and shelters at all public transportation stops</li> <li>Provide easy means for information and navigational support for transit in a variety of languages and styles</li> <li>Support the Southern Area Agency on Aging (SAAA), Miles 4 Vets, and other non-profit transit agencies that provide crucial transportation services to vulnerable populations</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional commuter type %</li> <li>Demonstrated support for creation of educational items for transit use</li> </ul>
Improve connectivity and safety across multiple modes including transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote implementation of Complete Streets policy</li> <li>Prioritize transportation projects that enable active, healthy communities</li> <li>Implement strategies in 2018 West Piedmont Regional Bicycle Plan</li> <li>Assess crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and crossing times for most traveled streets by foot</li> <li>Promote coordination of regional public transportation systems and services</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road traffic fatalities by mode</li> <li>Public transportation trips per capita</li> </ul>
Strengthen the connection between transportation and land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with regional communities to develop standards and align street design standards, wayfinding, and criteria for pedestrian infrastructure.</li> <li>Review opportunities/challenges for creating a TOD (Transit Oriented Development) Policy for the region</li> <li>Assess and document parking requirements and minimums in region</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land Use Mix Percentage</li> </ul>
Encourage strong community engagement in the planning process and in the Region's future growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold special events to help promote connectivity (ex: community rides, walks, rally's, etc.)</li> <li>Engage and align stakeholders through surveys, events, or social media</li> <li>Create broad and targeted media campaigns for safe walking, biking, and driving habits</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing campaign and event engagement</li> </ul>

*Champions: WWPDC, Local/Regional Planners, Transportation Managers, Local Parks Departments, Biking and Walking Organizations, & Community Stakeholders*

# Infrastructure

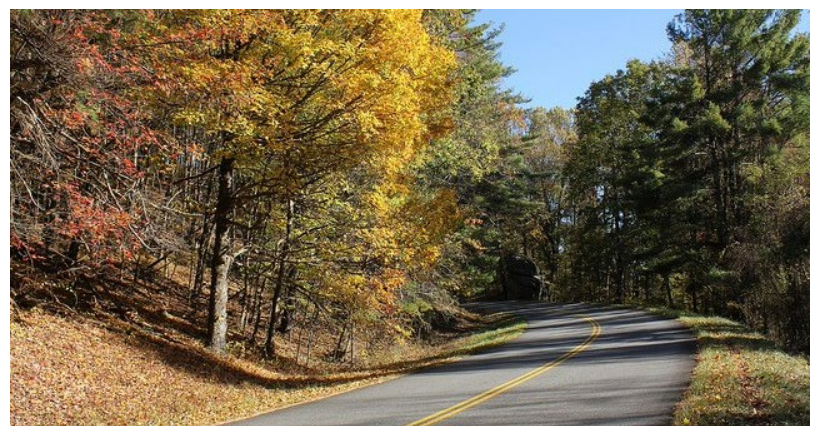
## GOAL 5: ADDRESS REGION-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Investment in infrastructure can be an important influence in economic growth. As access is increased to land provided by new or upgraded infrastructure, new development can be induced, or existing development patterns can be supported. While new projects can build publicity and promise large returns, there are other essential needs. Infrastructure in the form of community facilities, utilities, housing, and public services are also critically important. On one hand, their existence is vital with regard to generating an atmosphere in which business and industry would care to invest capital, equipment, and labor, thus providing desired economic development. On the other hand, the infrastructure and services must exist to meet basic needs of citizens and to promote a high quality of life.

With an aging infrastructure base, efforts to identify new infrastructure opportunities are important, but the WPPDC should emphasize the need of maintenance and financial planning of the current assets in the region. Further, choosing projects based on opportunity cost, sustainability, resiliency, and effectiveness should be stressed in the infrastructure investments undertaken in the coming years.

### Strategies

1. Facilitate connections with regional communities to understand infrastructure development needs and identify grant opportunities to assist with these needs
2. Address critical infrastructure system needs including water, wastewater, stormwater, streets, facilities, and parks
3. Focus on infrastructure needs in areas suited for residential, commercial, and industrial development
4. Promote fiscal responsibility by selecting new projects that are innovative, reliable, efficient, affordable, and sustainable



# Infrastructure

Strategies	Action Items	Timeline	Metrics for Success
<b>Goal 4.5 Address Region-wide infrastructure needs</b>			
Facilitate connections with regional communities to understand infrastructure development needs and identify grant opportunities to assist with these needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide bi-annual updates on Regional Project Priority List</li> <li>• Assess funding strategies for projects and evaluate other funding sources</li> <li>• Help localities apply and find infrastructure development grants and funding</li> </ul>	Short (1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of Bi-Annual update on Priority Project list</li> </ul>
Focus on infrastructure needs in areas suited for residential, commercial, and industrial development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas suited for growth</li> <li>• Inventory and assess regional infrastructure in site areas</li> <li>• Identify needed upgrades to attract developers</li> </ul>	Medium (2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of sites evaluated</li> </ul>
Address critical infrastructure system needs including water, wastewater, stormwater, streets, facilities, and parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create matrix that assesses which assets are top priorities along with current condition (sliding scale)</li> <li>• Inventory regional infrastructure assets within matrix</li> <li>• Align future funding with priority and condition based on matrix standings</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure matrix creation</li> <li>• Funding sources identified</li> </ul>
Promote fiscal responsibility by selecting new projects that are innovative, reliable, efficient, affordable, and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate local governments and stakeholders on opportunity costs for infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Research best practices for sustainable and innovative infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Encourage incremental development tactics</li> </ul>	Long (4-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of models evaluated</li> <li>• Demonstrated support for educational opportunities / engagements regarding feasible and responsible growth</li> </ul>

Champions: WWPDC, Local Public Works Departments, & Economic Development Organizations



# Priority Projects



# Priority Projects

## Overview

As part of the planning process, projects within the Priority Projects List have been identified to help meet the economic development goals of the CEDS. In identifying and ranking the projects, consideration was given to the number of jobs the projects would create or save, overall impact on the region, cost effectiveness, and the likelihood of funds being available to finance the projects. Input was provided by each member government in the West Piedmont Planning District. The CEDS Priority Projects List represents projects or programs identified during the planning process in order of priority in which they were ranked as well as pertinent information such as possible funding sources, estimated costs, etc.

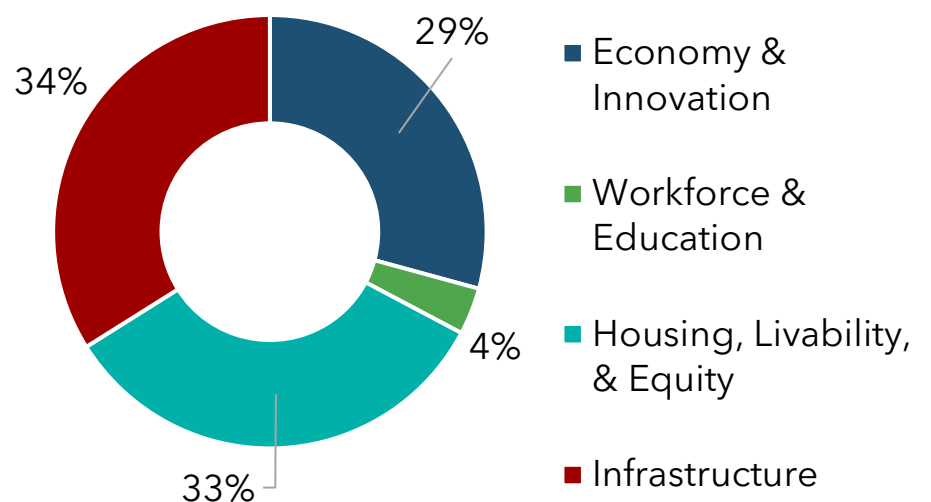
All projects included in the prioritized list were reviewed at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the West Piedmont Planning District Board of Commissioners, which formerly served as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee for the West Piedmont Economic Development District. A copy of the Annual Report is distributed to the Board of Commissioners prior to its consideration for approval in order to provide sufficient time for reviewing not only the list of prioritized projects but also the regional goals, the District's development strategy, and other report components. In conjunction with the review of the Annual Report, the WPPDC Regional Economic Development Planner reviews the changes in the District economy with the Board members

## Focus Area

In total, 171 priority projects were listed. Projects were split relatively even by geographic area and followed closely with population proportions. All priority projects listed were tagged by "Type" by each respected member government in the region. The tags closely mirrored the formed Focus Area's in the new Strategic Direction and were grouped accordingly. As seen, projects are evenly distributed between three of the Focus Areas, with Workforce and Education having the least. The project "Types" listed by each member government are seen below along with their new category:

Focus Area	"Type" Listed	Project Count
Economy & Innovation	Economic, Planning	50
Workforce & Education	Workforce, Agriculture	6
Housing, Livability, & Equity	Community, Housing, Tourism	57
Infrastructure	Infrastructure, Broadband Transportation	58

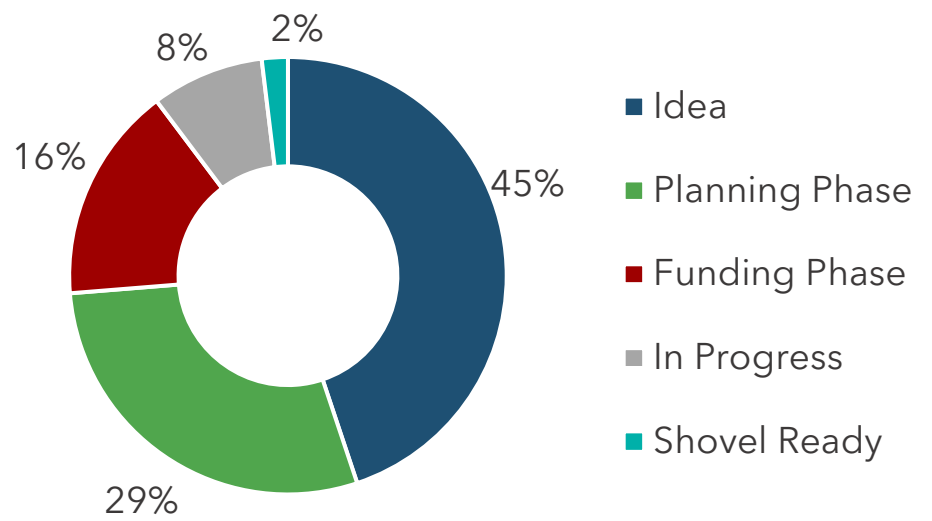
**Priority Projects by Focus Area**



### Project Status

Within the Priority Projects listed, "Project Status" was incorporated as part of the project information to provide more project priority details to EDA. Project Types (and total count) of the 171 projects are designated as follows: Idea (70), Planning Phase (52), Funding Phase (26), In Progress (18), and Shovel Ready (3). One project was listed "Completed" and another listed "Under Construction" but were excluded from the chart. As seen, the Idea phase, as well as the Planning Phase are the two largest status types.

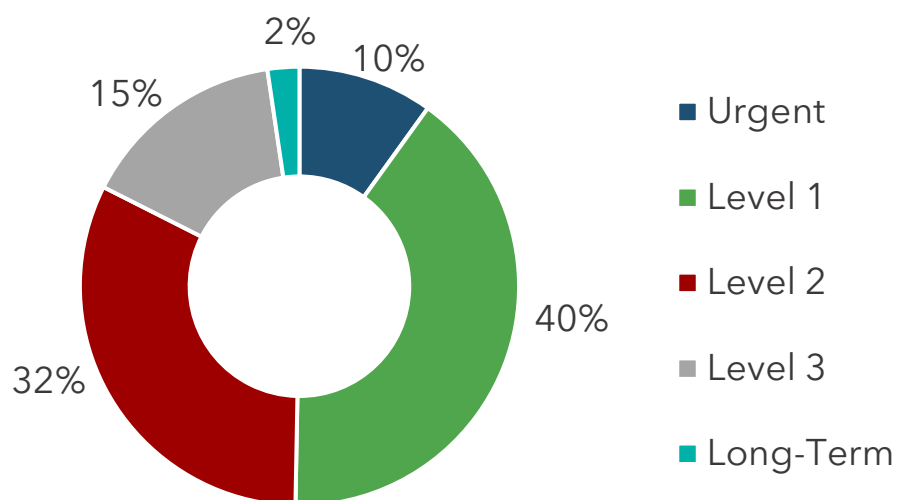
#### Priority Projects by Project Status



### Priority Level

There are five project priority categories, which each level defined by multiple characteristics including time, cost, benefits, and need. Discretion for priority description was given to each locality. As seen, out of the 171 projects, "Urgent" (17) is the most pressing projects, followed by Level 1 (69), Level 2 (55), and Level 3 (26). Long-term (4) projects are still in the idea and planning phase.

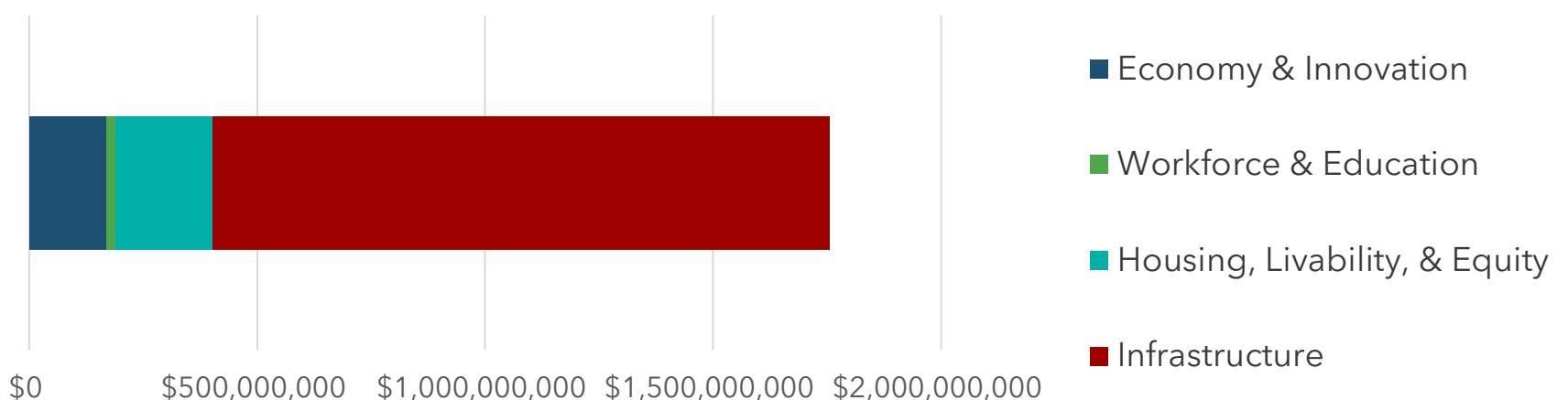
#### Priority Projects by Priority Level



### Project Cost

Priority projects by total cost broken down by each Focus Area can be seen below. The Infrastructure Focus Area has the largest cost of projects listed, followed by the Economy and Innovation Focus Area.

#### Priority Projects by Total Cost



# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Regional	Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre Road Access Project	Improve portions of U.S. 220 (in Virginia and NC) and access road to improve ingress and egress to regional industrial park. (Henry County and Martinsville)	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$9,000,000	Improve ingress and egress to escalate growth of jobs and new capital investment in regional industrial park
City of Martinsville	Revitalization of Uptown Business District	Incentivize small businesses (exterior and interior makeover/elevator) Recommendations from Uptown Partnership include: a leasehold matching grant program up to \$5,000, increase façade amount and change percentage match to 75/25 from current 50/50	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$900,000	200 Jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Purchase of Main Street property, complete feasibility study, adaptive reuse	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$1,000,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Purchase blighted properties - prepare site for redevelopment (202 Cleveland Avenue)	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$1,900,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Acquire and redevelop properties along commercial corridor for reuse	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$3,250,000	300 Jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Small Business Development Strategic Plan	Write a Small Business Development Strategic Plan for the City of Martinsville. Strategic plan will contain actionable items for the development of and scaling up of small businesses in the City of Martinsville including complementing the roles of existing partners and organizations. The resulting strategic plan could focus on Single Site Retail/ Service Incubator model that accommodates booths, counters and pop-up space. A closely concept is the "incubator without walls" that focuses on a "boot camp" style of related intense days of entrepreneurial training with a mini grant at the end. A third concept is an "Entrepreneurship Village" that would involve several small structures placed along Fayette Street across from New College Institute.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$450,000	TBD

# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - - Small Business Scale-up Grant Program	A grant program guided by the Small Business Development Strategic Plan to assist small businesses in growing, expanding and scaling up within the City of Martinsville. A good target market for the grant program would be for Minority Entrepreneurship Development. This could take the form of small "jump start" grants and a low interest loan program for minority business development.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$300,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Uptown Martinsville Design Study and Uptown entrance corridors	Develop a design study for Uptown Martinsville that may result in design guidelines, façade guidelines and other design guidance to be considered by City Council. In addition, the physical enhancement and beautification of entrance corridors into Uptown Martinsville may be pursued. Neighborhood entrance signs throughout the City would be a complementary addition to this program.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$200,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Design Guidelines	Creation of design guidelines that could apply to Uptown and Historic Districts to improve the quality of development and redevelopment.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$90,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Update the incentive package	Update the incentive package for enterprise zones, tourism zone, arts and cultural district and other zones in order to incentivize entrepreneurship, technology and business development.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$200,000	TBD
Regional	Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre	Phase II Development / Additional expansion of regional industrial park, including environmental measures, grading, utility installations, and roadways. (Henry County and Martinsville)	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$26,000,000	Add pad ready space to regional industrial park to generate new jobs and capital investment
Danville & Pittsylvania County	Regional Industrial Mega Park Infrastructure Development	Engineering, master planning, mega park certification, and infrastructure development for 3,500-acre mega park to serve Danville, Pittsylvania County, Southside VA & North Central NC. Infrastructure development includes regional and interstate water and sewer systems. Future infrastructure improvements will include land, rail, and road.	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$24,218,000	2000 Jobs
Franklin County	Economic Development Strategic Planning and Restructuring	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$100,000	Greater new job creation and private investment

# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Danville	Riverview Industrial Park	Grade a 25 +/- acre pad on Lot FF	1	Funding Phase	\$1,000,000	100 jobs
Danville and Pittsylvania County	Southern Virginia Mega site at Berry Hill	On-and Off-Site Rail Construction, New on-site rail construction and off-site improvements for the SVMS	1	Funding Phase	\$12,500,000	1,500 jobs
Danville	Hangar at North Side of Danville Regional Airport	Site preparation, A/E design, and construction of a 100' x 30' hangar	1	Funding Phase	\$2,300,000	TBD
Danville & Pittsylvania County	Site Improvements at Cane Creek Industrial Park	Site improvements to include grading and sanitary sewer for Tracts 6, 7b, 7c, and Lot 10	1	Funding Phase	\$4,900,000	500 jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Move to Martinsville	Partnering with the "Move to Martinsville" group to place strategic marketing pieces in other geographic markets to communicate the quality of live, value and opportunity to increase the number of people who move to Martinsville from other regions. Additionally Uptown should be branded as a "Center for Entrepreneurship" that facilitates the attraction of new entrepreneurs, the support of existing business. The brand should bridge Uptown and the West End.	1	Funding Phase	\$250,000	TBD
Henry County	Early Childhood Development Center	Provide childcare for students and surrounding employers and serve as an early childhood education training center.	1	Funding Phase	\$14,000,000	The center will strengthen the area workforce and build a pipeline of fully trained and credentialed early childcare professionals
Pittsylvania County	Graded Industrial Park Pad	Create graded pad sites at exisisting park sites	1	Funding Phase	\$3,000,000	200 jobs
Danville	Site Improvements at the Coleman Industrial Site	Site improvements to include grading and sanitary sewer, electrical service, and other infrastructure improvements.	1	Planning Phase	\$11,195,182	200 jobs
Danville	Industrial Shell Building	Construct a 50,000 SF inustrial shell building to assist with marketing to industry desiring an expedited location decision and to increase the current inventory of buildings suited for modern manufacturing.	1	Planning Phase	\$4,000,000	TBD

# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Danville and Pittsylvania County	Site Improvements at Cane Creek Centre Industrial Park Lot 10	Site improvements to include access road, grading, and sanitary sewer.	1	Planning Phase	\$4,900,000	300 jobs
Danville and Pittsylvania County	Southern Virginia Mega site at Berry Hill	Design and grading of a 65-acre pad on Lot 11	1	Planning Phase	\$4,200,000	1,500 jobs
Franklin County	Coworking Space Creation	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$300,000	Location for potential new residents and entrepreneurs to work
Rocky Mount	Franklin County/Rocky Mount Industrial Park improvements	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$2,000,000	300-500 Jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Projects	Further develop lots- at Clearview Business Park to prepare for companies- Parcels 2 & 4	1	Planning Phase	\$750,000	150 jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Vacant Buildings Inventory Uptown	Develop and maintain a vacant buildings inventory for Uptown and if time/resources permitting other parts of the city. The purpose of the inventory is baseline data so that incentives and/or enforcement can be discussed to encourage property owners to pursue highest and best use of Uptown properties. A major goal of the buildings inventory will be to identify deficiencies including but not limited to broken windows, peeling paint etc.	1	Planning Phase	\$100,000	TBD
Rocky Mount	Natural Gas Service Extension	Rocky Mount/Franklin County Industrial Park to promote industrial development	1	Idea	\$12,500,000	300+ Jobs
Rocky Mount	Rocky Mount/Franklin County/Boone's Mill Economic Development Strategic Plan	N/A	1	Idea	\$60,000	County-wide strategic plan
Danville	Revolving Loan Fund	Augment existing program given increased demand.	2	Shovel Ready	\$249,000	TBD
Regional	Patriot Centre at Beaver Creek Phase III Expansion	N/A	2	Planning Phase	\$6,000,000	Grading and infrastructure improvements - creating opportunity for new economic growth and jobs

# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Rocky Mount	Agribusiness Incubator	Establish shared space to encourage local agriculture-based business startups	2	Idea	\$500,000	15 Jobs
Rocky Mount	Coworking Incubator	N/A	2	Idea	\$100,000	20 Jobs. Creation of pipeline for business startups and infrastructure for teleworking
Franklin County	Shell Building - Summit View Business Park	N/A	2	Idea	\$3,000,000	150-300 new jobs and substantial new private investment
Henry County	Airport Hanger Project	N/A	2	Idea	\$1,400,000	Development of a hangar for aviation-related business to improve infrastructure and economic growth
Pittsylvania County	Commerce Center/Industrial Park, Park Development	Route 58 West Industrial Park development add 120 acres to existing Brosville Park	2	Idea	\$3,000,000	250-300 jobs
Pittsylvania County	Revolving Loan Fund	Establish revolving loan fund to help create and recruit new economic development projects	2	Idea	\$1,000,000	Indirect
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Purchase of West Church Street and/or Fayette Street property, complete feasibility study, adaptive reuse	2	Idea	\$1,000,000	TBD
Patrick County	Patrick County Rich Creek Corporate Park Site Engineering	Perform all due diligence, site and building design for development of public owned property.	2	Idea	\$300,000	TBD
Patrick County	Rural Business Dev. Grant Revolving Loan Capitalization Patrick County EDA	Develop and capitalize local revolving loan fund for small business development.	2	Idea	\$100,000	TBD
Patrick County	Patrick County Rich Creek Corporate Park Shell Building Construction	Construct a shell building to provide space for expansion for existing business or to attract new business	3	Funding Phase	2000000	TBD
Henry County	Patriot Centre at Beaver Creek Expansion to Bryant Property, Phase I	N/A	3	Planning Phase	\$9,000,000	Grading and infrastructure improvements - creating opportunity for new economic growth and jobs

# Economy and Innovation Projects

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Henry County	Historic Structure Reuse and Redevelopment Projects	N/A	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$900,000	Pre-development activities including testing and abatement for creation of multi-family/multi-purpose units
Henry County	Shell Building Project	N/A	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$8,500,000	Construction of a speculative Shell building for economic development, creating new jobs and capital investment
Rocky Mount	Food Truck Court/Incubator	N/A	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$50,000	10 Jobs. Segue for food and beverage startups.
Franklin County	Shell Building--Franklin County-Rocky Mount Industrial Park	N/A	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$2,000,000	100-200 new jobs and substantial new private investment
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project	Recruit manufacturers of Clean Energy Components to Martinsville Area and Enterprise Zone	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$100,000	TBD
Patrick County	Retail Recruitment Study	Study concerning targeting of Retail Businesses for County	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	60000	Indirect Benefits Benefits
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Rives Road Site Development- full site development including A & E, site grading	<b>Long-term</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$1,400,000	150 jobs



# Education and Workforce

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Franklin County	Workforce Development Enhancement Program	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$40,000,000	Comprehensive youth and adult workforce training
Regional	WPPDC Agritourism & Agribusiness Project	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>Funding Phase</i>	N/A	N/A
Patrick County	Organize Business Incubator/New Business Competition	Organize Business Incubator/Organize New Business Competition	<b>2</b>	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$800,000	TBD
Patrick County	Patrick County Business Development Center	Development & Renovation of former Hardware Store into 16,000 sq foot Business Development & Incubator Center	<b>2</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$2,400,000	Direct & Indirect Benefits
Rocky Mount	Ferrum College Hospitality Partnership	N/A	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$100,000	20 Jobs. Creation of workforce pipeline between local higher education and growing retail food and beverage industry in town
Patrick County	Workforce Development Certification Program	Comprehensive worker retraining and education	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$1,400,000	Indirect Benefits

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Hooker Field Upgrades	Upgrades to the concession, seating, and restroom areas at Hooker Field - covered seating, ADA compliant restrooms expanded press box/concession/office space	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$1,700,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Southside Community Park Upgrading	Upgrade existing four (4) fields to accommodate youth and collegiate softball and baseball tournaments. This would include new lighting where necessary, upgrade concession stand and new sports surfaces. New bathrooms at Southside Community Park.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$3,000,000	TBD
Regional	Local Housing Study	Funds to develop actionable housing plan for region	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$12,000	Develop an actionable housing plan to address housing needs across region
Regional	WPPDC Housing Production Program	New affordable housing unit production program	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	2,000,000	Produce a minimum of 20 new affordable housing units through partnerships with local governments, nonprofits, and private housing developers
Franklin County	Housing Development Fund	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$500,000	Fund to incentivize housing projects and initiatives as part of the County's focus on increased housing development.
Franklin County	Westlake - Hales Ford Trail Network	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>Shovel Ready</i>	\$2,000,000	Develop multi-use trail in Westlake area in conjunction with Booker T Washington National Monument and Westlake community to promote tourism, economic development and recreational opportunities.
Danville	Riverfront Park, White Water Course, and Covered Pedestrian Bridge	Development of a park area adjacent to the Martin Luther King, Jr. bridge in accordance with the River District Redevelopment Plan. Complete the engineering and construction of a world-class whitewater course using an existing canal located in the River District and also connecting it into the Dan River. Complete the design and construction of a former textile pedestrian bridge to convert it into a public amenity, which will also connect the White Mill and Riverfront park to the north banks of the river. The north banks, or Long Mill site, are well-suited for new development.	<b>1</b>	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$17,000,000	Indirect jobs

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Pittsylvania County	Olde Dominion Agricultural	Continued upgrades to the facility and plan for the new parcels that were acquired in 2019	1	Funding Phase	\$3,100,000	10 onsite, indirect offside jobs
Franklin County	Tourism Enhancement Program	N/A	1	Funding Phase	\$90,000	Increased economic benefit to local businesses and tax revenue for locality
Rocky Mount	Pigg River Heritage Trail	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$1,000,000	Development of Heritage Trail for tourism, recreation, and enhanced quality of life
Rocky Mount	Economic Restructuring via heritage tourism development	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$2,000,000	Create supporting structures and events to complement the growing culture and economy surrounding the Harvester Performance Center and Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail
Franklin County	County Trail System Development	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$2,100,000	Increased quality of life for residents and attraction of outdoor recreation tourists
Franklin County	Public Safety Facility and Emergency Operations Center - Rocky Mount	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$4,500,000	New facility for centralized public safety administration, emergency operations center and potential E-911 center to enhance County's communication needs and streamline operations and disaster response and recovery.
Franklin County	Public Safety Facility - Hardy	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$5,500,000	Construction of new public safety building (fire/EMS) in Hardy area to serve this portion of the County with increased response times and improve ISO rating.
Franklin County	Public Safety Radio System Upgrades	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$3,000,000	Modernize aging radio system to improve communications for public safety including towns and Sheriff's Office.
Franklin County	Public Safety Training Center Upgrades	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$1,500,000	Improve training center infrastructure to provide increased and better training opportunities for public safety staff.
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Enhance Fayette Area Business District facades/greenscape/ economic revitalization - Fayette Street from Moss Street to Memorial Blvd. Planning stipend for Citizens Design - CIRB	1	Planning Phase	\$2,045,000	TBD

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Martinsville	Revitalization of Uptown Business District	Construct/ retrofit condos/apartments in Uptown Recommendations from Uptown Partnership Include: The corner of Church and Broad Streets are a good location for some moderately sized mixed use apartment buildings. In addition, development of full alleyway activation plan to include other alleys in Uptown.	1	Planning Phase	\$2,000,000	50 jobs
City of Martinsville	Virginia Museum of Natural History	Construct Outdoor Education Pavilion in rear of VMNH, to include exhibits interpreting eastern North American forest ecology	1	Planning Phase	\$150,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Wilson Park Upgrading	Connection of outdoor education pavilion in rear of VMNH with a bridge, crossing over Oakdale Avenue, along with a 1,000-foot canopy loop into the grand old trees in the park.	1	Planning Phase	\$2,000,000	TBD
Patrick County	Mayo River Rail Trail Phase III - Patrick County Tourism	Extension of existing Mayo River Rail Trail	1	Planning Phase	\$2,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Rocky Mount	Rocky Mount/Franklin County Greenways Master Plan	N/A	1	Idea	\$20,000	Additional community asset for improved quality of life
Henry County	Housing Rehabilitation Project	Rehabilitation of low to moderate income housing units at a location to be determined	1	Idea	\$17,000,000	Provide affordable housing to low to moderate income families in the County
Rocky Mount	Rocky Mount/Franklin County Blueway access point improvements	N/A	1	Idea	\$500,000	Infrastructure and marketing improvements to blueway access points to tap into growing natural resource-based tourism
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Write arts & cultural plan for Arts & Cultural District Additional elements could include, public art, an Uptown sculpture trail, and additional funding for the creation of new murals and the maintenance of existing murals. Close collaboration with Piedmont Arts and the FAHI Museum are key to success.	1	Idea	\$300,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Entrance Corridor Beautification and Revitalization	Signage, landscaping and other physical improvements to the major entrance corridors to the City of Martinsville These entrance corridors are typically found in the "Entrance Corridor Overlay" located on the City of Martinsville's Zoning Map	1	Idea	\$150,000	TBD

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Patrick County	Tourism Enhancement Program	Programs and projects to increase tourism revenue and jobs	2	Funding Phase	\$100,000	TBD
Patrick County	Expand/Enhance Community Center Willis Gap	Enhance Community Center at Willis Gap	2	Funding Phase	\$800,000	Indirect Benefits Benefits
Patrick County	Mayo River Rail Trail Phase IV	Extension to existing trail	2	Funding Phase	\$3,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Danville	Schoolfield District Improvements	Three-pronged approach to rehabilitate the antiquated Schoolfield District of Danville by: rehabilitating/redeveloping the Schoolfield Neighborhood/Village, a portion of the Dan River Mills site and initiating multimodal and other potential improvements to the Main Street corridor extending from east of Central Boulevard west to the Danville Bypass.	2	Planning Phase	75,000,000	TBD
Danville	City Auditorium Renovations	Complete the renovation of the City Auditorium that was built in 1932 and houses a 1,000-seat auditorium in the heart of the River District.	2	Planning Phase	\$13,300,000	TBD
Franklin County	Smith Farm Regional Park Site	N/A	2	Planning Phase	\$750,000	Enhanced quality of life for residents in southeastern portion of County
Franklin County	Countywide Recreation Park System Improvements	N/A	2	Planning Phase	\$4,550,000	Enhanced quality of life for residents in throughout Franklin County
Rocky Mount	Citizens Square Expansion	N/A	2	Planning Phase	\$500,000	Improved community sense of place
Henry County	Development of Riverview Park	N/A	2	Planning Phase	\$8,200,000	Develop trails, recreation activities, wildlife observations, and cultural opportunities on 117 acres near the Smith River designated for recreational activities and open space preservation
Danville & Pittsylvania County	Richmond Danville Trail Connector	Construction of 12-ft wide natural surface multi-purpose trail to connect 6-mile Richmond-Danville Rail Trail in Pittsylvania County with Dan River Trail System (Danville's Riverwalk) to create 25-mile destination trail	2	Planning Phase	\$950,000	Indirect

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Rocky Mount	Construction of a dog park for community enhancement	N/A	2	Idea	\$40,000	Additional community asset for improved quality of life
Franklin County	Shared Commercial/Community Kitchen Space Creation	N/A	2	Idea	\$200,000	Location for food-related entrepreneurs and community residents to work
Franklin County	Philpott Lake Recreation Area Development	N/A	2	Idea	\$1,000,000	Increased recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to Philpott Lake
Henry County	Extend the Dick and Willie Trail from Virginia Ave to Philpott Lake	N/A	2	Idea	\$7,000,000	This multiphase project will extend the existing walking/biking trail to the scenic Philpott Lake
Henry County	Small Towns Community Development Project	N/A	2	Idea	\$3,200,000	Develop trails, recreation activities, cultural opportunities, and curb appeal along the Smith River corridor
City of Martinsville	Neighborhood Revitalization Project West End/Pine Hall Road Neighborhood	Housing rehab; creation of community space	2	Idea	\$1,800,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Parks Upgrading	Upgrade nine (9) existing parks (Baldwin, Beaver Creek, Jackson Street, West End, J. Russel Mason, Chatham Heights, Cole & Carol St, Victor A. Lester, Spruce St.) to improve accessibility and safety. This would include new lighting where necessary, concession stands, age-appropriate playground equipment and new playing surfaces. Baldwin Park has the potential to convert existing tennis courts into basketball courts. Also, increased resources for basketball court maintenance at parks with basketball courts. Additionally, create additional "pocket parks" throughout the City.	2	Idea	\$1,900,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Fruit Part at West End Park	Develop a community orchard, garden and/or similar facility at West End Park in the City of Martinsville. The purpose of this enhancement to the park would be to allow resident/citizen access to locally grown fruits and vegetables.	2	Idea	\$60,000	TBD

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Prepare City-owned site at corner of Fayette & Beaver Streets for residential, educational or commercial development - Martinsville Area and Central Business District	2	Idea	\$3,500,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - 100 Block W Church St.	Redevelopment of 100 Block W. Church Street including parcels fronting W Market Street and Moss street into Workforce Housing.	2	Idea	\$1,200,000	TBD
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Develop new (or redevelop existing) location in Uptown Martinsville or adjacent areas to serve as community music venue.	2	Idea	\$1,100,000	TBD
Patrick County	Expand/Enhance Community Center MOD	Expand and Enhance Community Center/Restrooms for Multiuse Trail in MOD	2	Idea	\$800,000	Indirect Benefits Benefits
Patrick County	Brownfield Redevelopment - Stuart Forest Products Site	Perform Environmental Assessment and Redevelopment	2	Idea	\$500,000	5-30 Jobs
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - Amy Avenue	Revitalization of Amy Avenue in the City of Martinsville to include owner occupied rehabilitation, new single-family housing and new multi-family housing. In addition, curb and gutter improvements should be included.	3	Planning Phase	\$1,000,000	TBD
Rocky Mount	Additional Infrastructure for improvements to existing community stage	N/A	3	Idea	\$30,000	Added infrastructure for communal space
Henry County	Recreational Facility	N/A	3	Idea	\$9,000,000	Design and development of an outdoor recreation facility
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Purchase blighted properties on Starling Avenue and adaptively reuse	3	Idea	\$1,000,000	TBD
Rocky Mount	Outdoor Amphitheater	N/A	3	Idea	\$1,000,000	Added infrastructure for communal space

# Housing, Livability, and Equity

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Work with partners to develop an amphitheater on Depot Street	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$100,000	TBD
Patrick County	Commerce Street Rezitalization	Study to identify project development and business district revitalization	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$50,000	TBD
Patrick County	Increased Outdoor Recreation Areas	Increase outdoor recreation/playground, splash park, gardens, improved picnic areas	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$2,000,000	Indirect Benefits



# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Regional	WPPDC East Universal Broadband Project	Broadband service upgrades	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$152,425,235	Broadband service available for 24,641 locations
Regional	WPPDC West Universal Broadband Project	Broadband service upgrades	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$92,996,158	Broadband service available for 10,056 locations
Patrick County	WPPDC Patrick County Universal Broadband Project	Broadband service upgrades	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$3,007,530	Broadband service available for 690 locations
Regional	2022 WPPDC West Universal Broadband Project	Expand broadband to underserved areas of Henry and Patrick Counties.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$60,000,000	The project will result in over 9,000 new residential and commercial broadband connections, bringing fiber to the homes
City of Martinsville	MINet Fiber Optic Expansion	Citywide expansion of MINet Martinsville fiber optic and wireless system to reach businesses and homes. Add additional resources to customer service and marketing.	<b>Urgent</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$20,500,000	TBD
Pittsylvania County	Gretna Industrial Park	Construct industrial park road and lots with on-site and off-site utility improvements	<b>1</b>	<i>Completed</i>	\$2,050,000	200 jobs
Franklin County	Last-Mile Broadband Expansion	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$30,000,000	Universal broadband coverage
Franklin County	Summit View Business Park Land and Utility Development	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$36,000,000	\$300 million private investment and 1,500+ jobs
Franklin County	Smith Farm Stream and Nutrient Bank	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$200,000	Reduced cost to County for environmental regulatory requirements
Franklin County	Public Sewer System Development - U.S. Route 220 Corridor to Town of Rocky Mount WWTP	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$2,150,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens and businesses to utilize public sewer
Franklin County	Village Development (Ferrum, Union Hall, Westlake, Burnt Chimney)	N/A	<b>1</b>	<i>In Progress</i>	\$5,000,000	Creation of community hub villages for enhanced quality of life and targeted infrastructure investments

# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Franklin County	Water Interconnection between Western Virginia Water Authority and Town of Rocky Mount	N/A	1	<i>In Progress</i>	\$2,000,000	Secondary water source for Town in times of drought
Rocky Mount	Interconnection with Western Virginia Regional Water Authority	N/A	1	<i>In Progress</i>	\$1,500,000	300 Jobs
Patrick County	US 58 Expansion-- Patrick County	Upgrade US 58 to four lanes from Stuart to I-77	1	<i>Shovel Ready</i>	\$556,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Danville	White Mill Redevelopment	Electric transmission lines and substation to accommodate redevelopment of the White Mill, formerly served by Dan River and AEP.	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$6,000,000	200 jobs
Franklin County	Public Water System Development Phase III	N/A	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$20,600,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens to utilize public water
Franklin County	Public Sewer System Development Phase III	N/A	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$10,300,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens to utilize public sewer
Franklin County	Natural Gas Service Extension - 220 North Corridor to Rocky Mount	N/A	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$15,900,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens and businesses to utilize natural gas
Pittsylvania County	Gretna Area Water Supply System	Engineering and construction of a new public water supply source and distribution system	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$2,775,000	N/A
Franklin County	Transportation Improvements - Smart Scale Projects	N/A	1	<i>Funding Phase</i>	\$25,000,000	Road and intersection improvements to improve safety by reducing fatalities and accidents.
Henry County	Phase II Broadband Expansion to underserved portions of Henry County	N/A	1	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$35,000,000	Expand fiber to the home broadband service to an additional 7,500 outlets in the County
Henry County	Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre Access Road Project	Upgrade Martinsville Loop and a portion of Spencer Road, just south of the Henry County line in North Carolina to a 24' right-of-way and 4' shoulders, turn lane improvements/ additions at both intersections of Martinsville Loop and U.S. Route 220, and an eventual median closure.	1	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$25,000,000	Indirect Benefits

# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Franklin County	Franklin County/Rocky Mount Industrial Park Land and Utility Development	N/A	1	Planning Phase	\$4,000,000	250-300 new jobs and substantial private investment
City of Martinsville	Community Development Project - CDBG - Martinsville Area & Central Business District	Commonwealth Corridor Enhancement & Pedestrian linkages to Uptown & Fayette Street	1	Planning Phase	\$1,500,000	TBD
Pittsylvania County	Energy Efficiency Improvements Public Buildings	Retrofit existing County buildings to make them more energy efficient	1	Planning Phase	\$1,000,000	Indirect
Patrick County	Patrick County Broadband Expansion Project Phase 1	Broadband infrastructure to serve Patrick Springs, Meadows of Dan, and Woolwine	1	Planning Phase	\$1,300,000	TBD
Henry County	Extension of Public Water and Sewer Services on Route 58 West	N/A	1	Idea	\$15,000,000	Provide critical water and sewer infrastructure to the 58 West Corridor
City of Martinsville	Public Works Project - Stormwater Projects Citywide	Needed stormwater projects Citywide.	1	Idea	\$3,000,000	TBD
Henry County	Lower Smith River Treatment Facility	N/A	2	In Progress	\$32,000,000	Allow for the handling of additional sewerage capacity and service to industries, businesses, and residents in the County
Pittsylvania County	Key Industrial Park (Hurt)	Develop 600-acre site of former Klopman Mills Master Plan for property, site and access improvements	2	In Progress	\$3,000,000	150-200 jobs
Danville & Pittsylvania County	Regional Industrial Mega Park	Natural gas engineering and infrastructure development	2	Funding Phase	\$6,000,000	N/A
Patrick County	Renovate Existing Hospital Facility	Renovate Existing Hospital - infrastructure	2	Funding Phase	\$2,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Danville	Water and Gas Improvements	Elevated water storage tank and pumping station, along with water and gas mains for the South Danville Corridor (an underserved area).	2	Planning Phase	\$9,000,000	Indirect jobs

# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Danville	Piney Forest Road Corridor Improvements	Infrastructure improvements	<b>2</b>	Planning Phase	\$50,000,000	Intersection improvements, interparcel connectivity, access management, transit improvements, and pedestrian improvements.
Danville	Riverside Drive (US 58 Business) Corridor Improvements	Infrastructure improvements	<b>2</b>	Planning Phase	\$54,302,000	Improvements to include sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements on both sides of corridor, bus pull-outs, innovative intersection and median reconfigurations, and turn lane improvements.
City of Martinsville	City of Martinsville Walkability Improvements	Improve walkability of the auto-dominated Commonwealth Boulevard corridor, particularly with the near-completion of a popular beverage shop and other food service businesses which are likely to generate additional traffic.	<b>2</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$15,000,000	Promote and improve walkability between the Commonwealth Boulevard corridor, uptown Martinsville, and the Starling Avenue cultural corridor.
Pittsylvania County	Extend Water Service for Brosville to Dry Fork	863 to Dry Fork Commercial/Industrial area and to serve Tunstall Middle School and Tunstall High School	<b>2</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$2,100,000	N/A
Pittsylvania County	Key Industrial Park (Hurt)	Purchase additional land and infrastructure to 157-acre industrial park	<b>2</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$3,000,000	150-200 jobs
Franklin County	Ferrum-WWWA Water System Extension	N/A	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$19,300,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens to utilize public water
Henry County	Extension of Public Water and Sewer Services to various secondary road areas	N/A	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$18,000,000	Expand critical water and sewer infrastructure to various "small-scale" secondary road areas to ensure safe drinking water to residents
City of Martinsville	Public Works Project - Curb and Gutter	Assess the entire City and add curb and gutter where practicable and feasible in areas currently lacking curb and gutter.	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$3,000,000	TBD
Franklin County	Multi-modal Transportation System Improvements	N/A	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$250,000	Expanded transportation options
Patrick County	Patrick County - Broadband Engineering Study & Design	Comprehensive broadband engineering study to serve Patrick County	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$50,000	Indirect Benefits
Patrick County	Patrick County Broadband Expansion Project Phase 2	Broadband infrastructure to serve additional areas.	<b>2</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$2,500,000	TBD

# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
City of Danville	Pedestrian Improvements along Piedmont Drive Corridor	Construct approximately 5,300 linear feet of sidewalk and crosswalks along Piedmont Drive, Mount Cross Road, Old Mount Cross Road, and Lowes Drive	<b>3</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$20,000,000	Promotes safe and comfortable pedestrian movement to and between multiple commercial service, retail, and medical establishments.
Franklin County	Floyd Avenue/Franklin Street Intersection Reconfiguration Project in Rocky Mount	Construction of a roundabout or mini-roundabout to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety, and vehicular mobility at the intersection.	<b>3</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$10,000,000	Ongoing effort to improve multimodal transportation in Rocky Mount, as well as promote economic development in the Town.
Pittsylvania County	Water and Sewer System Improvements	1M gallon storage tank Cherrystone Park 12" water line upgrade water and wastewater plant - gravity sewer	<b>3</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$8,900,000	300-500 jobs
Pittsylvania County	Commerce Center Industrial Park	Purchase land off U.S. Route 29 & infrastructure development	<b>3</b>	<i>Planning Phase</i>	\$3,500,000	300-400 jobs
Franklin County	Franklin County Commerce Park Water and Sewer Extension	N/A	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$9,000,000	100-200 new jobs and substantial new private investment
Pittsylvania County	Gretna Area Water System Improvement (Leesville Lake)	Nine-mile pipeline raw water intake from Leesville Lake to Gretna Reservoir	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$3,000,000	Unknown
Patrick County	Implementation of Complete Streets Program	Regional initiative to provide safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$1,700,000	Indirect Benefits
Patrick County	Hotel	Offer assistance to any group interested in constructing a Hotel in the County	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$3,500,000	15 Jobs
Patrick County, Town of Stuart	Main Street Program Policy	Revitalization of Stuart and Meadows of Dan	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$10,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Patrick County	Sidewalks/Multituse Trail Phase II MOD	Complete sidewalks along Business US 58 from School to Business District and Trail from Community Center to Business District/Mabry Mill	<b>3</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$3,000,000	Indirect Benefits
Franklin County	Philpott Reservoir Water Intake Site	N/A	<b>Long-term</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$400,000	Potential for new water resources for southwestern portion of Franklin County

# Infrastructure

Locality	Project Name	Description	Priority	Status	Cost	Anticipated Outcomes / Benefits
Franklin County	South County Water Treatment System	N/A	<b>Long-term</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$5,000,000	Expanded opportunity for County citizens to utilize public water
Henry County	Virginia Avenue Transportation Enhancement Project	N/A	<b>Long-term</b>	<i>Idea</i>	\$5,000,000	Design, development and construction of pedestrian and vehicular safety improvements along the Virginia Avenue (US Business 220) corridor: Phases 2-4

**ABBREVIATIONS:**

ARC = Appalachian Regional Commission  
 CDBG = Community Development Block Grant  
 CIT = Center for Innovative Technology  
 DCR = Dept of Conservation & Recreation  
 DGIF = Virginia Dept of Game & Inland Fisheries  
 DHCD = VA Dept of Housing & Community Development  
 DOE = U.S. Department of Energy  
 EDA = Economic Development Administration  
 EPA STAG = Environmental Protection Agency, State & Tribal Assistance Grant  
 FAA = Federal Aviation Administration  
 FHWA = Federal Highway Administration  
 GO Bonds = General Obligation Bonds  
 HTC = Historic Tax Credits  
 RBEG = Rural Business Enterprise Grant  
 USDA-RD = U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Rural Development  
 USCAIP = US Community Adjustment & Investment Program  
 IDA = Danville/Pittsylvania County Industrial Development Authority  
 IRF = Industrial Revitalization Fund (through DHCD)

MEI = Major Employment Investment (VEDP/VTC)  
 NEA = National Endowment for the Arts  
 NSF = National Science Foundation  
 PRVT = Private Investment  
 SBA = U.S. Small Business Administration  
 TBD = to be determined  
 TEA-21 = VDOT Transportation Enhancement Act Program  
 (Replaced with MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program)  
 VDBA = VA Department of Business Assistance  
 VTC = Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission  
 (Formerly Tobacco Indemnification & Community Revitalization Comm.)  
 SERCAP = Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc.  
 USACE = US Army Corps of Engineers  
 HRSA = US Dept of Health & Human Services/Health Resources & Svcs. Admin.  
 LWCF = Land & Water Conservation Fund  
 SWCB = State Water Control Board  
 WVWA = Western VA Water Authority  
 HUD/NSP = Housing and Urban Development/Neighborhood Stabilization Program  
 Local Fdtn = Local Foundations such as Danville Regional Foundation

USDA-RD = U.S. Dept of Agriculture, Rural Development  
 VDA = Virginia Department of Aviation  
 VASBI = Virginia Shell Building Initiative  
 VA-DOA = Virginia Dept of Aviation  
 VDOT = VA Department of Transportation  
 VDH = VA Department of Health  
 VHDA = Virginia Housing Development Authority  
 VHPF = Virginia Housing Partnership Fund  
 VRA = Virginia Resources Authority  
 VATC = Virginia Tourism Corporation  
 VWP = Virginia Water Projects  
 WQIF = Water Quality Improvement Funds (VA)  
 WIA = Workforce Investment Act  
 VA-DRPT = Virginia Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation  
 VCC = Virginia Community Capital  
 VADACS = Virginia Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
 AEP = Appalachian Electric Power/Appalachian Power  
 CIRD = Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (NEA Program)

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## REGIONAL INFORMATION

### **Franklin County**

Seventh in size of land area among Virginia counties, Franklin County is bounded on the north by Roanoke and Bedford Counties, on the east by Pittsylvania County, on the south by Henry and Patrick counties, and on the west by Floyd County. The Town of Rocky Mount is the county seat and the County's largest incorporated town. The Town of Boones Mill, the Village of Ferrum, and the Smith Mountain Lake Region including Westlake, are population centers. In 2003, Franklin County, along with Craig County, was added to the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area. Previously, the Roanoke MSA included Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Salem City, and Botetourt County. The most recent population count from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey shows a total of 313,069, a 1.4% increase from the 2010 Census with a total of 308,707 persons. Franklin County is divided into seven voting districts with each electing one representative to serve on the Board of Supervisors for a four-year period. There is a County Administrator who is directed in financial and business policies by the Board of Supervisors.

### **Henry County**

Developing into a largely urban county itself, Henry County lies south of Franklin County and is bordered on the east by Pittsylvania County and on the west by Patrick County. The County lies along the Virginia-North Carolina border. Urban areas of the County adjoin the City of Martinsville and include the Town of Ridgeway. Collinsville, located to the northwest of Martinsville, serves as the county seat. Henry County contains six voting districts with a representative of each district serving a four-year term on the Board of Supervisors. This body sets policies to guide the actions of the County Administrator.

### **Patrick County**

Located in one of the more scenic areas of Virginia, Patrick County is bordered on the north by Franklin and Floyd counties and on the south by North Carolina. It lies west of Henry County and east of Carroll County. Its urban population centers around the Town of Stuart. Patrick County's Board of Supervisors is composed of one member from each of the five voting districts. A County Administrator directs the functions of County government with policies set by the Board.

### **Pittsylvania County**

The County, the largest Virginia county in terms of land area, has the Town of Chatham as its county seat and setting for an urban concentration. Other areas of urban populations are the towns of Gretna and Hurt. The County is bordered on the north by Campbell and Bedford Counties and to the south by North Carolina. Halifax County lies to the east with Henry and Franklin counties to the west. Pittsylvania County also has a county administrator form of government with a seven-member Board of Supervisors setting guidelines for administration and policy.

### **Danville City**

The City is located in the south-central portion of Pittsylvania County, along the border with North Carolina. Founded in 1793, the City has a background rich in history. After the 1980 Census, the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County were designated as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by the Census Bureau. This qualified the area to establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Due to a decreased population count below the 50,000 person threshold in the 2010 decennial Census, the Danville MSA became recognized as an urban cluster as opposed to its previous urban area designation. It is now considered a Micropolitan Statistical Area, but maintained the MPO designation with FHWA. The City Council is composed of nine members elected at large who govern through a city manager form of government.

### **Martinsville City**

The City is located in the geographic center of Henry County. Martinsville forms the base for a large urban population corridor within Henry County. The City Council is composed of five members elected at large who govern through a council-manager form of government. Rocky Mount Town--The Town is located near the geographic center of Franklin County and serves as the county seat. The Town is governed by a seven-member council with managerial responsibility delegated to a Town Manager.

# INFRASTRUCTURE INFORMATION

## Transportation

The highway network is the major element in the Planning District's transportation system. Five federal highways and twenty state primary highways provide the localities of the region with access to each other and the rest of the nation. There are numerous state secondary roads connecting to these larger highways. Over 471 miles of federal and state primary highways and 3,714 miles of state secondary roads are located within the Planning District; urban system mileage totals 397.5 miles.

The newly adopted (and amended) VDOT Regional Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan for 2020 is tailored more to the VTrans statewide transportation plan and associates Smart Scale funding processes. By partnering with Virginia's Planning District Commissions and the localities each represents, VDOT worked with each region to evaluate the transportation system in rural areas and to assist in recommending a range of public improvements that could best satisfy existing and future transportation needs. In developing this plan, staff utilized a matrix ranking tool developed by VDOT to rank potential projects based on a number of roadway performance measures including level of service, volume to capacity ratio, crash rates, traffic volume, and others. This process resulted in a priority list, encompassing the top 20 ranking potential projects for each locality, and a vision list, ranking all projects that fell below the top 20.

## Air

There are two airports in the Planning District--Danville Regional Airport and Blue Ridge Airport in Henry County. A number of private airfields exist within the district, too, and provide services to local and visiting businessmen on occasion. Commercial, passenger, and cargo services are conveniently located at Piedmont International Airport in Greensboro, NC, and Roanoke Regional Airport in Roanoke. According to the Virginia Airport System Economic Impact Study, adopted May 2018 and a product of the Virginia Department of Aviation, Virginia's 66 public use airports in 2016 contributed nearly \$23 billion to the state's economy, and generated 146,660 jobs which were responsible for \$7.7 billion in wages.

## Freight

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act requires the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to establish a National Highway Freight Network, which includes the Primary Highway Freight System and the Interstate System, Critical Rural Freight Corridors, and Critical Urban Freight Corridors. States are responsible for designating Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFC) and Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFC), in consultation with MPOs, in areas under 500,000 population. CRFCs and CUFCs are important freight corridors that provide critical connectivity to the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). By designating these important corridors, states can strategically direct resources toward improved system performance and efficient movement of freight on the network. The designation of CRFCs and CUFCs increases the state's NHFN, allowing expanded use of National Highway Freight Program formula funds and FASTLANE Grant Program funds for eligible projects that support identified national goals. In the West Piedmont Planning District, several U.S. Highway segments have been recommended to VDOT for consideration as designated Critical Rural Freight Corridors, including U.S. Route 29, U.S. Route 58, and U.S. Route 220.

## Rail

Two main rail lines provide freight service to the many industries of the region. Norfolk Southern Railway's Roanoke to Winston-Salem route passes through Franklin and Henry counties and the City of Martinsville, providing freight service to Boones Mill, Rocky Mount, Ferrum, and Henry in Franklin County, and Bassett, Stanleytown, Fieldale, and Ridgeway in Henry County, as well as Martinsville. A main line of the Norfolk Southern Railway runs through Pittsylvania County serving Hurt, Gretna, Chatham, and Danville. This line is also utilized for connection to the ports at Hampton Roads. Rail transportation provides a vital connection between the industries of the Planning District and the rest of the nation.

## Transit

Two transit systems currently serve the region - the Danville Transit System (DTS) and PART (Piedmont Area Regional Transit) in Martinsville and Henry County. Bus service is also provided to Ferrum College and the public via Valley Metro of Roanoke, with transportation to the Rocky Mount and Roanoke areas.

As part of a ride-share program, both Lyft and Uber transportation services, though currently limited, are available in the Region. Apps are used to request a ride, where passengers can be driven throughout the River District as well as to hotels in other parts of the City.

### **Bikeways**

In 2017, staff of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission updated the West Piedmont Regional Bicycle Plan, originally adopted in 2005. This iteration of the plan, adopted in early 2018, makes connections between cycling, economic development and health; provides an extensive inventory of facilities for conventional and mountain biking in the region; and lays out recommendations to increase and improve bicycling in the region.

## **UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE - WATER AND SEWER**

The region continues to make strides in utility infrastructure development. Although great progress has been made, there is significant land in the region which could be used for industrial properties if public water and sewer services were available. Construction of utilities to serve specific areas in the future remains a regional priority. While most of the region is served by public water and sewer, much of the more rural areas such as most of Franklin, Patrick, and portions of Pittsylvania counties still do not have these services. The areas of the region not served by public utilities rely on individual wells and private residential septic systems. Wastewater treatment is provided by many of the towns, cities, and service authorities that provide potable water. It should be noted that, like much of the U.S., many areas within the region have aging utility infrastructure in place that is in critical need of upgrades or replacement.

Public water is available in many of the towns and cities in the planning area, as well as by the Henry County Public Service Authority, the Ferrum Water & Sewer Authority in Franklin County, and the Pittsylvania County Service Authority. The Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA), created in 1964, provides water and sewer services to more than 35,000 people, or over 66 percent of the County's population. With more than 800 miles of utility lines, the PSA is one of the largest water and sewer authorities in Virginia. Both service authorities have expanded services in various areas of their respective counties over the last few years.

### **Franklin County**

In 2009, Franklin County joined the Western Virginia Water Authority (WVWA), an incorporated public body independent of local government that provides water and wastewater services to its customers in the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, and Franklin County. WVWA purchased several private water systems in the County as well as distribution systems that provide water and sewer services to the Westlake area. Plans for future development include the connection of the Town of Rocky Mount's water system with WVWA in the Wirtz area, eventually. In addition, Franklin County is connected to the Bedford County Public Service Authority to purchase bulk water; the water line was extended across the Halesford Bridge to the Westlake area of Franklin County. In conjunction with the Bedford Regional Water Authority and the WVWA, a new 30,000 square-foot, 3 MGD Smith Mountain Lake Water Treatment Facility and pipeline opened in Moneta in May 2017. Jointly owned and operated by the two water authorities, the system can be expanded as needed and provides safe drinking water and fire protection for current and future customers in two large rural counties (Bedford and Franklin) and the Town of Bedford. Future phases continue to be developed for other service areas in the County. The County also has its first countyowned public water system which serves the Commerce Center Business Park on U.S. 220 South. Franklin County plans to construct a wastewater treatment plant for Commerce Center in the future. The projected cost of the wastewater treatment plant, including engineering costs, is \$430,000; a Community Development Block Grant is planned to assist construction, when needed.

The Town of Rocky Mount has both public water and sewer facilities to serve residents and businesses. The Town established a connection with the Western Virginia Water Authority as a secondary water source to be more resilient, and the Authority wants another partner to treat wastewater. Franklin County is working with the Western Virginia Water Authority to extend public sewer service from Rocky Mount to the new 550-acre Summit View Business Park. At an estimated cost of \$740,415, construction is expected to be completed by mid-2021.

In 2019, the Town of Boones Mill connected the municipal water system with the Western Virginia Water Authority (WVWA), which contracted to take over daily operation and management of the Town's water system. A water system interconnect was utilized for use during major fire events and natural disasters, making the system more resilient to hazard events. In addition, the Town's water and sewer systems were digitally mapped by WVWA and are available on-line

### **Henry County**

The Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA) has a three-party agreement in conjunction with the County, the PSA, and the City of Martinsville, providing for the mutual exchange and benefit among all the public water facilities in the area. Currently, the PSA and City of Martinsville have an agreement in place that allows the PSA to send a portion or all of its wastewater to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The decision to implement this project was solely based on the loss of several major wastewater customers to both the City and PSA. This project represented a huge cost savings to the PSA and large revenue source for the City. The PSA is currently considering reactivation of the Lower Smith River Wastewater Treatment Facility to support Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre, Henry County's mega-site industrial park.

Also in Henry County, the Southern Henry County Water Improvement project will extend a 12" water line from Pleasant Grove along Preston Road to somewhere near Marigold Road. The project will provide the PSA an additional water source to southern Henry County, particularly for the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre. It will also allow the PSA to connect two existing well systems to distribution. The estimated cost is \$2.7 million. Other new lines were added to include the Eastwood, Sandy Level, Oak Level, and Reed Creek areas of the County. In addition, a 1 million-gallon water tank and 12" water lines throughout the park were recently installed to serve Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre.

In July 2019, the County announced expansion of the Philpott Water Treatment facility which was underway. At an estimated cost of \$11.6 million, the improvements will allow for more operational efficiencies and increase production by 50 percent.

### **Patrick County**

The Town of Stuart operates a municipal water treatment plant and distribution system serving the Town and neighboring areas of the County. Stuart also operates a 600,000 GPD wastewater treatment plant that serves the Town and adjacent County areas. Recently, Stuart began planning for a west end water line and potential funding for wastewater treatment plant upgrades. The \$1.4 million project is expected to be funded with a combination of loan (60%) and grant (40%) funds through the USDA's Rural Development program. Also, due to flooding in October 2015, the Town suffered extensive damage to a 15-inch sewer line; construction of a new 18-inch line, approximately 600 feet long is needed at more than \$96,000 in costs to the Town. In October 2019, the County decided to explore plans to extend water lines in the Martin Farm Loop area. The project would add an estimated 40 customers and enhance economic development in the area.

### **Pittsylvania County**

The Pittsylvania County Service Authority (PCSA) was established in 1973 as an independent entity under the provisions of the Virginia Water and Sewer Authorities Act to provide water and sewer service for all areas of the County outside the City of Danville and the incorporated towns of Chatham, Gretna, and Hurt. To serve its customers, the PCSA has contracts to purchase bulk water from the City of Danville, Henry County Public Service Authority, the Town of Chatham, and the Town of Hurt. PCSA does not currently own or operate water or sewer treatment facilities. PCSA consists of five community water systems using groundwater and ten community water systems that purchase water from other public water supply systems. PCSA serves approximately 22% of the County's population, located primarily around the County's three towns and the City of Danville. There are seven private water systems which use groundwater to serve approximately 500 people. Based on water demand projections, Pittsylvania County maintains a water supply surplus and is expected to maintain a surplus through 2060.

In 2017, PCSA evaluated potential alignments for interconnections between the Pittsylvania County Service Authority's (PCSA) Route 58 West water system and the Mount Cross, Mount Hermon, and Route 29 North water systems. The proposed interconnections will allow the PCSA to convey water supplied from Henry County to these four water systems.

This will allow the PCSA to utilize either water from Henry County or the City of Danville to improve the operation and reliability of its water systems. In 2018, PCSA made application to the Virginia Department of Health for funding of this project and was offered a low interest loan through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for the estimated cost of \$12 million. Engineering will begin in early 2019. The PCSA is exploring a new line along Stony Mill School Road, Stony Mill Road, Mount Cross Road and Golf Club Road. The project cost is estimated between \$11.6 million and \$13.6 million to serve about 600 new customers. The project would provide more redundancy in the service to increase resiliency and lessen dependence on other localities to supply water.

PCSA provides sewerage collection through a contract for treatment with the City of Danville in several areas just outside of the City limits. The PCSA also provides sewerage collection to many areas of the County, including the Ringgold East and Ringgold West Industrial Parks, the Owens-Illinois glass plant on Wilkerson Road and the Cane Creek Centre; the Mount Hermon community (Highway 41 area); the Blairs Industrial Area at Toy Lane; and the Route 58 West/Brosville area. In the central part of the County, the PCSA has a contract with the Town of Chatham for sewage treatment where the Authority is guaranteed one-third of the Chatham plant's capacity. Sewerage service is provided in the Tightsqueeze community just south of Chatham as well. The Town of Hurt is evaluating a \$5 million wastewater expansion and consideration of adding nearly 200 new customers to the municipal wastewater system. The proposed expansion would extend the gravity collection system to the east and south, including all of Lynn, High, Oak, Grove, Spring, Ramsey, and West Spencer streets. The Town is considering funding through the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission and the USDA Rural Development program.

In January 2015, the Halifax County Service Authority (HCSA) had a study prepared to evaluate the Virginia International Raceway (VIR) water system which they own and operate. The system provides water to approximately 50 residential as well as industrial customers and is experiencing serious problems due to contaminated wells. The study looked at various alternatives for providing VIR with a reliable water system and one of the recommended alternatives was connection to the PCSA water system. It was noted that this connection would support future development along the waterline corridor and provide a long-term solution to provide VIR with a more reliable water source as well as the capacity for future expansion. In 2017, the HCSA had a preliminary engineering report (PER) prepared that evaluated potential alignments for the proposed connection between VIR and PCSA's system. This report is the first step toward seeking funding opportunities for the connection. The formation of a new industrial authority is under consideration to help provide water service and other infrastructure needs to VIR and the adjacent industrial park. Economic impacts provided by VIR contribute \$197 million to the local economies of Danville, Halifax and Pittsylvania counties; of that, Danville receives 50 percent, Halifax County sees 27 percent, and Pittsylvania County realizes 23 percent of the economic benefits.

In 2018, PCSA was awarded a USDA Predevelopment Planning grant in the amount of \$30,000 to help fund a preliminary engineering report (PER) to study the County's water and wastewater pump stations. The study and report will assess the criticality and reliability of the existing stations, recommend improvements and provide capital cost data for annual budgeting needs. The PCSA currently serves approximately 3,400 customers.

### **Danville**

In addition to the City of Danville's main water treatment plant, it has an industrial water treatment plant. Danville plans to complete \$1.2 million in upgrades at the water treatment facility during 2020. The City is also considering the addition of a \$4.5 million side stream storage project to have 20 million-gallon side stream storage available for possible source water contamination events of the Dan River. This construction has been delayed until FY23 or FY24. Danville contracts with Inframark Services to operate its wastewater treatment facilities. The City remains the owner of its wastewater treatment facilities which include a wastewater plant, ten pump stations, and an industrial pretreatment program. The City has 331 miles of water mains in service, with an average of 16,109 service connections. There are 11 storage tanks - 9 elevated tanks and 2 ground storage reservoirs, totaling 16.1 million gallons when completely full.

The City also has extended its sewer collection system and sewage pump stations to handle industrial and residential/commercial wastewater. New residential/commercial service areas and industrial park/site areas have been added. Other expansions and improvements are underway at this time, with more in the planning stages. Approximately \$1.06 million annually is projected for sewer system improvements. Currently, the City has approximately 395 miles of sanitary sewer of various sizes, with approximately 16,147 service connections. The City of Danville and Pittsylvania County have jointly developed the Cane Creek Centre in the Ringgold area of Pittsylvania County. A sewer system, pump station (Cane Creek Sewage Pump Station), and force main built to serve this park also serve other areas of Pittsylvania County and the Virginia International Raceway in Halifax County. In addition, the County and City continue to work jointly on development phases of the 3,500-acre park located west of the City of Danville, in Pittsylvania County along Berry Hill Road.

### **Martinsville**

The City of Martinsville's wastewater treatment plant has a permitted capacity of 8.0 MGD and is currently treating approximately 4.5 MGD. Service is provided to the entire City (including four permitted industrial facilities) and some areas outside the City. Through agreements with the Henry County Public Service Authority, the City's plant is receiving and treating all waste from the PSA's Upper Smith River and Lower Smith River systems (including three permitted industrial facilities) where the former treatment plants have been converted to pumping facilities only. Secondary treatment is provided by an extended aeration system, after which the effluent is disinfected and then dechlorinated before being discharged to the Smith River south of Martinsville. The City maintains approximately 120 miles of water lines, serving about 7,500 customers, and provides an estimated 140 miles of sewer collector and interceptor lines.

Like so many towns and cities across the U.S. with aging infrastructure, Martinsville's water and sewer lines are in need of upgrades in several areas. Two projects underway are the removal of the Summit View water tank and repairs on the Beaver Creek Spillway. Beaver Creek Reservoir has been the City's primary water source for 70 years. The estimated cost of the spillway project is \$2 million as some of the concrete and underdrain system needs to be repaired. The City retained the services of Dewberry to assist with the work which will begin in spring 2020.

Required by the Commonwealth of Virginia for all localities, the **West Piedmont Regional Water Supply Plan** was developed in conjunction with the cities of Martinsville and Danville; the counties of Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; and the towns of Ridgeway, Stuart, Chatham, Gretna, and Hurt. The Local and Regional Water Supply Planning Regulation ([Chapter 780 - Local and Regional Water Supply Planning](#)) established a planning process and criteria that all local governments used in the development of these water supply plans. The purpose of this regulation is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens by requiring local and regional water supply planning. The West Piedmont Regional Water Supply Plan was completed in November 2011 and included a Drought Contingency Plan as well as a public participation component. The five-year Review and Compliance period was conducted in 2018 and all participating localities were found to be in compliance. The plans will be reviewed every five years to assess adequacy and significant changes will require an amended plan.

Franklin County, the Town of Rocky Mount, and Boones Mill participated in the **Roanoke Valley/Allegheny Regional Commission's Regional Water and Sewer Plan**, developed by Draper Aden, the project consultant. This plan examined the area's residential, business, and institutional water needs and determined if the existing and planned resources were adequate to meet demand through the year 2050. The study also examined water supply and recommended distribution alternatives. Other participants include Bedford, Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke counties; the cities of Bedford, Roanoke, and Salem, and the towns of Boones Mill, Buchanan, Fincastle, Rocky Mount, Troutville, and Vinton.

## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE–TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The region is served by the Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative's (MBC) fiber optic backbone network established to deploy broadband services such as high-speed Internet in Southside Virginia. MBC is an independent non-profit entity, formed under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Its main office is located at the Riverstone Technology Park in South Boston, VA, where its Operational team is located. In addition, MBC has an office in downtown Richmond.

The Regional Backbone Project, or Roots of Progress Initiative helps promote economic development opportunities by attracting technology-based business and industry, providing higher wage jobs, and making high-speed Internet access affordable and available in a rural area where such technology did not exist. Programs in education, healthcare, research and development, and economic development depend on the existence of broadband telecommunication services to keep services in rural areas up to speed with those offered in more metropolitan areas.

MBC is an established wholesaler of broadband services, providing the infrastructure necessary to attract businesses to rural Virginia by meeting the high-bandwidth optical transport demands of major telecom carriers and service providers needing access to new data centers in Southside Virginia. Because of their access to the state-of-the-art connectivity and marketing initiative, the Virginia business and technology parks in the MBC network have been designated as "GigaParks." This brings more businesses to the Southside Virginia Region; advanced fiber-optic transport capacity provides businesses with direct connections to key Internet peering points in Northern Virginia and the Southeast. These GigaParks, all located in Virginia, offer lower power and bandwidth costs, lower costs per square foot, and the availability of a skilled workforce. GigaParks share many common benefits such as a high level of network redundancy and a robust power infrastructure. More information on "GigaParks" may be found at [www.gigaparkva.com](http://www.gigaparkva.com). Because of the network's presence, more jobs and investments were generated. Additional details about MBC can be found at [www.mbc-va.com](http://www.mbc-va.com).

The City of Martinsville has developed a robust fiber optic backbone, known as MINet (Martinsville Informational Network). In partnership with MBC, the City now has a competitive edge with its high-speed, state-of-the-art, and affordable telecommunications infrastructure. The City/MBC partnership presence in local industrial parks is a "plus" for any businesses/industry considering possible relocation to the area. The City is exploring plans to extend services to residential and commercial customers in the near future.

The City of Danville constructed Network Danville ("nDanville" for short), a sophisticated fiber optic broadband network. The open-access system provides high-tech connectivity needed for high-speed Internet, television, and telephone connections. Private service providers purchase access to the network and provide services to customers. The municipal area network is anchored at the Multimedia Service Access Point (MSAP) located at the Galileo Magnet High School in Danville. With an initial \$2.5 million investment, the network generates \$1.4 million each year for Danville Utilities. Additionally, businesses and industrial parks are served with broadband, as is the medical community.

In the more rural areas of Franklin, Patrick, and Pittsylvania counties, Internet access is very limited and, in some cases, challenging due to land terrain. In 2017, Franklin County partnered with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) to identify broadband needs and to develop a plan to improve accessibility and reliability throughout the County. Following a survey conducted by the County, CIT reported that 80 percent of the 6,000+ respondents had Internet access at home, while 20 percent had inadequate access or none at all. Areas of concern in the County are Callaway, Ferrum, Henry, Hardy, Penhook and Snow Creek. In 2017, Franklin County created a broadband authority and procured Design Nine from Blacksburg to develop a Broadband Plan, completed in 2019. The County plans to utilize towers and poles as access points in communities for a variety of facilities in order to provide every resident Internet access by some means--either wireless, cable, or satellite. The plan calls for multiple phases to deliver internet services. In July 2019, Franklin County received \$650,000 through the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission to provide 30 miles of fiber to more than 600 homes and 100 nonresidential customers, including the Summit View Business Park. Shentel is providing \$820,000 and the County is funding \$100,000, for a total project cost of \$1.5 million. In partnership with BRISCnet (Blue Ridge Towers) and Shentel, the County was awarded \$2.4 million through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) to assist with deployment of fixed wireless service and fiber in various unserved communities such as Callaway, Penhook, Snow Creek, and Wirtz.

Patrick County partnered with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) in 2018, to conduct a broadband survey for a needs assessment. Following the survey, the County determined policy changes and identified goals to provide broadband services. The County continues to explore potential service providers, with Microsoft being one possibility to fund a pilot program using TV whitespace. In January 2020, Patrick County was awarded a VATI grant in the amount of \$798,283 to assist with Phase I of the Patrick County Broadband Expansion project for fixed wireless service in the communities of Patrick Springs, Meadows of Dan, and Woolwine. This project, with a total estimated cost of \$1.3 million, is in partnership with RiverStreet Communications of Virginia, Inc./dba RiverStreet Networks.

Pittsylvania County entered a Rural Internet agreement with AcelaNet, LLC (dba/SCS Broadband) to provide access for wireless Internet service to a significant portion of the rural areas of the County. The project which launched in 2017, is being implemented in three phases: installation of equipment on current available tower-leased spaces in the first phase; the second phase will be installing signals on water towers in Hurt, Gretna, Hargrave, Tightsqueeze, and Brosville; and the third phase will include installation of community relays to close service gaps. The project is expected to bring reliable and affordable Internet access to approximately 90 percent of the County when all phases are complete. SCS Broadband will bring the wireless service to the County at no cost, but will expend revenue to the County as part of the three-year tower lease agreement. As of November 2019, most of the internet towers were equipped and providing service - White Oak, Mount Airy, Grit, Callands, and Kentucky. The remaining towers are underway in Brosville and Mount Zion, and expected to be online by mid-2020. The County is currently working with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) to survey citizens and formulate a broadband plan.

Throughout the region, wireless enhancements have taken place to improve mobile broadband capacity and contribute to economic growth and job creation. A number of providers offer these services in the district. However, rural Virginia remains unserved or underserved in many cases. The Commonwealth Connect Coalition was formed in 2019 to assist in expanding internet access throughout the state. Appalachian Power and Dominion Power, two large electric companies in the state, announced in 2019 that each will initiate the middle-mile fiber program to help bring digital access in remote areas of Virginia, in conjunction with internet service providers to lease the additional space to offer last-mile connectivity.

Currently, 70 percent of urban households are served by broadband, while only 57 percent of rural households and fewer than one-third of rural farms are served. Grant and loan recipients must provide data pertaining to broadband build-out for use in the National Broadband Map to enable the Rural Utility Service (RUS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to obtain more specific information for future funding decisions.

## **Energy**

With the prevalence of agriculture in the region, biomass is viewed as a profitable initiative for local growers. Sugars can be a replacement for "petroleum building blocks" in chemical manufacturing and can be fermented to make ethanol; the waste from the by-products can be burned to generate electricity. A facility which renders sugars into useful products and the agriculture industry would be instrumental in producing biomass in the Dan River Region.

Dominion Energy announced plans in November 2019 to construct a proposed power plant with two natural gas-fired combustion turbines at the Southern Virginia Megasite at Berry Hill. The project represents a \$200 million investment that will provide a total economic benefit of \$12.3 million for the Dan River Region. The plant will have a capacity of approximately 500 megawatts and could power about 125,000 homes. The proposed operation date is April 2022. Once operational, this will be the first business located in the megasite, chosen for its proximity to the Williams' Transco pipeline to which it will connect.

To date, nine solar farms, are planned or already in existence in Pittsylvania County. This includes a 45-megawatt solar farm in Gretna for Amazon, capable of producing 100,000 megawatt hours of energy per year. It also includes a \$130 million investment by Dominion Energy for the 1,400-acre Maplewood Solar project in Climax, to produce 120 megawatts of solar energy. The City of Martinsville is considering a power purchase agreement for power generation at a solar facility at the former Lynwood Golf Course. The site is expected to produce up to 8 megawatts of electricity from solar panels that would track with the sun for maximum efficiency. Solar energy is expected to be the leading source of new utility-scale electric generating capacity in the U.S.



Patrick County partnered with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) in 2018, to conduct a broadband survey for a needs assessment. Following the survey, the County determined policy changes and identified goals to provide broadband services. The County continues to explore potential service providers, with Microsoft being one possibility to fund a pilot program using TV whitespace. In January 2020, Patrick County was awarded a VATI grant in the amount of \$798,283 to assist with Phase I of the Patrick County Broadband Expansion project for fixed wireless service in the communities of Patrick Springs, Meadows of Dan, and Woolwine. This project, with a total estimated cost of \$1.3 million, is in partnership with RiverStreet Communications of Virginia, Inc./dba RiverStreet Networks.

Pittsylvania County entered a Rural Internet agreement with AcelaNet, LLC (dba/SCS Broadband) to provide access for wireless Internet service to a significant portion of the rural areas of the County. The project which launched in 2017, is being implemented in three phases: installation of equipment on current available tower-leased spaces in the first phase; the second phase will be installing signals on water towers in Hurt, Gretna, Hargrave, Tightsqueeze, and Brosville; and the third phase will include installation of community relays to close service gaps. The project is expected to bring reliable and affordable Internet access to approximately 90 percent of the County when all phases are complete. SCS Broadband will bring the wireless service to the County at no cost, but will expend revenue to the County as part of the three-year tower lease agreement. As of November 2019, most of the internet towers were equipped and providing service - White Oak, Mount Airy, Grit, Callands, and Kentucky. The remaining towers are underway in Brosville and Mount Zion, and expected to be online by mid-2020. The County is currently working with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) to survey citizens and formulate a broadband plan.

## HOUSING

Measuring and analyzing trends in housing authorized permits and construction activity can identify changing economic and social conditions. Housing availability and conditions are of vital importance to regional planning. Housing conditions often reflect the social well-being of an area and economic development is, in part, dependent upon the availability of adequate housing for additional labor. A diverse range of housing is needed throughout the region - more affordable housing for low-income families, student housing, workforce housing, and senior housing. Amenities that appeal to a younger demographic are desirable to attract young talent and professionals with a variety of skillsets.

To aid in development and blight removal, Danville established Virginia's first land bank program in 2016, which enables the City to acquire derelict properties and auction them off to developers and other interested parties. The Danville Neighborhood Development Corporation is the newly-designated land-bank entity that obtains the properties that have been neglected and works to make them constructive parts of the neighborhoods - rebuilding stronger, safer neighborhoods. More than 250 blighted, derelict properties have been abated. Houses not demolished are stabilized to potentially be redeveloped. In March 2020, Danville announced plans to rezone property from the Old Town Residential District to Multifamily Residential District for approximately 48 apartments to be constructed at Grant Street, Garfield Street, Seeland Road and the future Haraway Lane.

The City of Martinsville is exploring land-banking to help create new housing and mixed-use development, particularly in the uptown area. The Chief Tassel Building project is underway (15-20 units) and the former BB&T building (50-60 units) is anticipated to get started soon. Additional potential redevelopment areas include the former Sara Lee site, and others in the Uptown area. In early 2020, the City announced plans to convert the former American of Martinsville furniture site to an \$8.1 million apartment complex for those age 50 years and above. The energy efficient, multifamily Aaron Mills Apartment complex will house 52 apartments, community spaces, and green spaces. Construction is expected to begin soon, with completion around fall 2022. In Henry County, officials are exploring redevelopment of the former John Redd Smith Elementary School as an affordable housing option. Other properties are being evaluated as well to help meet the workforce housing needs in the region. Also in Henry County, Patrick Henry Community College lacks adequate student housing, but is addressing the issue with an innovate approach to attract students and retain workforce members. The College plans to develop "student-to-workforce" housing stock on campus. Following a feasibility and other studies, PHCC plans to partner with a developer to advance this effort.

Efforts have been undertaken over the past years to improve housing conditions in the Planning District. These efforts date back to 1941 when the Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (DRHA) was organized to provide housing for low-income families who could not afford private housing and to eliminate blighted structures from the City of Danville. Since the Housing Act of 1949, the Authority has operated as funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The DRHA oversees the management of public housing projects and a Section 8 program. Through HUD's Capital Fund Program, grant monies are utilized to build, repair, renovate, and modernize public housing in the community. Effective July 2015, the City of Martinsville transferred management of its Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to the Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

DRHA opened the Center for Housing Education in April 2017, a three-year venture under the Authority's umbrella. As Virginia's first hands-on post-home-purchase program, the Center was created to help fight blight by empowering low-income families in purchasing and maintaining homes through educational programming and real-world examples that help strengthen understanding. More than a dozen courses are offered at no cost and a full-scale indoor model home is available for applied learning.

To further enhance the City's Affordable Homeownership Program, local financial institutions in Danville formed a Community Development Corporation (CDC) in 1991. The CDC works closely with the City's program, which links low- to moderate income candidates with low-interest loans. First-time buyers use attractive CDBG and HOME-funded loans to purchase property from the Corporation. The CDC utilizes corporation funds to purchase the vacant houses. The City's Housing Rehabilitation Program loans the money to rehabilitate houses in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods. Danville's Community Development Department assists the group by identifying houses for purchase, supervising renovations, and identifying prospective buyers.

The City receives federal HOME program funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist low to moderate-income families with home rehabilitations. HOME funds are also used to build new homes in approved targeted neighborhoods in Danville. These homes will be purchased by low- to moderate-income families that meet the program guidelines. The City also administers the Affordable Homeownership Program, funded by the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which also assists low- to moderate-income homebuyers. Utilizing federal funds, Danville administers a variety of housing programs for its low- to moderate-income citizens. There also are several subsidized elderly housing projects in Danville that are privately owned. The organization is currently building multi-family homes in a number of neighborhoods to provide more affordable housing.

Danville prepares an annual Consolidated Plan to access entitlement funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Plan includes a comprehensive assessment of housing assistance needs in Danville and outlines strategies to address those housing needs.

The City offers a Real Estate Tax Abatement Program for qualified rehabilitated real estate exemptions for substantially rehabilitated residential, multi-family, commercial, industrial, and multi-use structures located within a state and federally designated historic district (i.e., Downtown, Tobacco Warehouse, Old West End, and Mill District).

In 1989, the Pittsylvania County Community Action Agency was authorized by the Virginia Housing and Development Authority to administer a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) federally subsidized Section 8 Program in the County, which provides rental assistance.

Telamon Corporation, a non-profit organization, operates a number of housing programs within its service area in the region. These programs include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE 3 Program and the Self-Help Housing Program. As an approved Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), Telamon receives funds from the City of Danville under the HOME Entitlement Program. In addition, the organization utilizes programs through the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to assist with purchase of homes. In addition to providing counseling services to pre-homeowners and offering other services, the corporation is building homes in Pittsylvania County and purchases and refurbishes properties in various neighborhoods in Danville.

The West Piedmont Better Housing Coalition has been actively involved in a regional effort to address housing and homeless issues. The group conducts a Point-in-Time Survey to get a count and conditions of the homeless within the region. Currently, several agencies that provide services to the homeless are using the tracking system to gather information on these persons.

Localities in the West Piedmont Planning District continue to pursue Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for housing-related projects to benefit low- to moderate-income residents. Martinsville is exploring a neighborhood revitalization project to include housing rehabilitation and community development in the Pine Hall Road area. In Franklin County, village plans have been approved for the Westlake community at Smith Mountain Lake and for the Ferrum community. These plans will help guide growth and development and include enhancements to support economic development, tourism, housing, and transportation as well as recreation and quality of life. More affordable housing at Smith Mountain Lake is a focus of Franklin County. Plans for single and multi-family homes are advancing. In Pittsylvania County, the former Southside High School will be transformed into 55 apartments for working families. The project is expected to cost approximately \$10 million.

## WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

Although infrastructure is important to economic development, workforce training has become a central objective in the economic development equation. This effort must be complemented by a reinforced workforce development initiative to deliver next generation skills to a transitioning workforce.

Enduring economic conditions brought about by a number of plant closures and the impacts of broader globalization, workforce development is a critical issue which the area continues to face. Invaluable collaboration between the workforce development boards, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, and employers continues to help build a pipeline of skilled workers that attracts new businesses and industries while expanding existing companies in the region.

Additional barriers for those who want to further their education and for job seekers are adequate housing, transportation, affordable childcare and healthcare. These challenges are not just local ones but shared across the Commonwealth and the U.S. Attracting potential employers requires the need for a reliable workforce; existing employers desire a low turnover rate and maintaining skilled workers. However, to retain and grow that workforce, families need safe, affordable, quality childcare options. Further, a recent report from the National Women's Law Center found the cost of childcare has increased by 37% over the last decade, while women's wages have risen only 5% during that time in Virginia. Recently, the Harvest Foundation began working with businesses, government officials, and other agencies to address these issues. Studies are underway for each of the barriers.

A childcare study conducted by Harvest in 2019, found that the cost of childcare was a burden, particularly for single-parent families. Also, there is a significant need for infant care, children with disabilities, and for parents who work odd, extended hours. This led Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) to begin an initiative to fund a \$14 million early childhood education center to help alleviate the childcare challenge. The Virginia Community College System granted PHCC approval to begin a fundraising campaign to construct the new 32,000-SF facility. Funded entirely by grants and private funds, plans are to complete the project by fall 2022. The center will serve a dual purpose - strengthening the workforce and building a pipeline of fully trained, credentialed early childhood education professionals, while providing daily childcare for infants and children up to age 4, as well as after-school care for K-7 age groups.

### Workforce Organizations

Under the federal **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, funding is provided to prepare adults, dislocated workers and youth with barriers to employment or education for self-sufficiency by providing job search assistance, occupational skills training, on-the-job training, and other career counseling services. WIOA Boards are responsible for the oversight and monitoring of the allocated WIOA funding and operate One-Stop Workforce Centers. Services offered by Virginia's Workforce Centers include vocational rehabilitation services, job seeker and employer services, Trade Act assistance, veteran services, unemployment insurance, re-employment services, education and training, and GED testing and preparation.

Partners include the Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Workforce Career Center, Virginia Community College System, Adult Education, and Senior Community Service Employment Program. The region is served by two Workforce Development Boards: West Piedmont Workforce Development Board and Western Virginia Workforce Development Board. For more information, visit <http://www.vcwwestpiedmont.com/> (Virginia Career Works - West Piedmont) or <https://vcwblueridge.com/> (Virginia Career Works - Blue Ridge Region).

The cities of Danville and Martinsville and counties of Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania established the **West Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB)**. The West Piedmont Workforce Development Board oversees and monitors **Virginia Workforce Centers** in the cities of Danville and Martinsville, as well as satellite locations in Stuart and Chatham. WPWDB developed a strategic plan ([www.vcwwestpiedmont.com/content/vcwwestpiedmont/uploads/PDF/vcwwpr/wpwdb\\_local\\_plan\\_5\\_30\\_17.pdf](http://www.vcwwestpiedmont.com/content/vcwwestpiedmont/uploads/PDF/vcwwpr/wpwdb_local_plan_5_30_17.pdf)) to direct its efforts. Rebranded as **"West Piedmont Works,"** the Board's job training programs will assist business customers on the demand side with meeting employment needs through the training and development of individuals on the supply side. Resources will be focused on in-demand industry occupations such as advanced manufacturing; health care; information technology; retail and customer service; transportation, logistics, distribution, and warehousing; and construction/building trades. The retail sector jobs will serve as a stepping-stone for upward movement into middle-skill in-demand occupations.

Franklin County joined the Fifth District Training and Educational Consortium and its **Western Virginia Workforce Development Board**, serving several localities to the north of Franklin County. Western Virginia WDB operates Workforce Centers in Roanoke, Covington, and Rocky Mount. The Western Virginia WDB region's Local Strategic Plan identifies five target industries: health care, manufacturing, construction, transportation and warehousing, and financial services. The Plan also names three emerging target industries as food and beverage manufacturing, life sciences, and information technology. Health care employment is projected to grow by 11% in the next five years, according to the Plan. With an aging/retiring workforce in the manufacturing sector, annual job openings are projected in the double digits in the coming five years. The full plan is available at [https://vcwblueridge.com/wp-content/uploads/VBRW-Local-Plan\\_Final.pdf](https://vcwblueridge.com/wp-content/uploads/VBRW-Local-Plan_Final.pdf).

#### **Specific Workforce Programs for Dislocated Workers**

To assist with industry closings and large lay-offs, the **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** is a federal retraining benefit available to aid workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports and/or displaced by foreign competition. The goal is to help these laid-off workers retrain and return to suitable employment as quickly as possible. Workers may be eligible for training, job search and relocation allowances, income support and other re-employment services. Over the last decade, the region has lost 19,000 jobs to globalization.

In addition, Virginia's **Rapid Response** program, administered by the Virginia Employment Commission, provides a variety of services, such as job search assistance, help with unemployment documents, financial management seminars, and help locating skills training, to workers involved in mass layoffs or plant closings. In some instances, layoffs may be averted through utilization of strategies that help to retain or save jobs. Rapid Response is operated on a local level at no cost to the employer or affected employees. There are four designated Rapid Response regions within the Commonwealth and the West Piedmont district lies within the New River Region. This program also serves in instances of hazards and emergency events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, or flood events that may destroy businesses or industries in an area.

#### **Other Regional Workforce Organizations**

In 2008, the **Dan River Region Collaborative (DRRC)** was founded to address workforce development in the Dan River Region of Virginia and North Carolina. Since that time, the Danville Regional Foundation, The Harvest Foundation, The Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, and the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission have joined forces to work with National Funds for Workforce Solutions, a national funding group working to emulate best practices across the nation, and are leading the charge to craft long-term workforce partnerships to support workforce system improvements across a region covering Patrick, Henry, Pittsylvania, and Halifax counties and the cities of Danville and Martinsville.

In 2012, the DRRC began an alliance with the Virginia Manufacturers Association's "**Dream It. Do It. Virginia**" campaign to target young people, promoting manufacturing as a career.

The DRRC was selected in 2012 to represent Virginia as a regional pilot in the national **ACT Certified Work Ready Communities Academy**. To become fully certified, three benchmarks of performance must be achieved: high school graduation rate, number of National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) credentials attained, and the number of employers recognizing NCRC. Each locality in the Dan River Region Collaborative footprint has achieved certification, but now must maintain its status. In 2017, the Certified Work Ready Community initiative expanded eastward into the GO Virginia Region 3 footprint.

**Southern Virginia Works Collaborative** - Announced in October 2014, more than 50,000 residents in southern Virginia would be positively impacted by a new workforce collaboration called "**Southern Virginia Works**." Three area community colleges: Danville Community College (DCC), Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) and Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) planned to triple the number of postsecondary education and workforce credentials within the next five years. Most recently, the Collaborative colleges have partnered to offer a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) credentialing program.

The **Franklin County Workforce Development Consortium**, a partnership offering employment, training, and educational services to employers and citizens of **Franklin County manages the Franklin Center for Advanced Learning and Enterprise**. The 31,000-SF Center offers technologically advanced training, degreed and non-degreed programs, next generation computer and media classrooms, corporate and distance learning, life science laboratories, and business conference facilities. The Center partners with the Virginia Western Community College, Mary Baldwin College, and institutions offering a variety of programs. Additional information on the Center is available at [www.thefranklincenter.org](http://www.thefranklincenter.org).

#### **Small Business/Entrepreneurship and Resources**

The Dan River Business Development Center (DRBDC), one of two small business incubators in the West Piedmont Region, is located at the Ringgold East Industrial Park in Pittsylvania County. It is housed in a 30,000-SF facility comprised of 6 industrial/research bays and 34 offices. In 2017, the DRBDC created Southside CoShare, a new option that offers space and support services to individuals and smaller local businesses as they grow. The new program offers a 'café' menu' of various, tailored support services including shared equipment and/or support personnel (receptionists, administrative, etc.). Other businesses utilizing the Center tend to be larger, more long-term tenants. Since opening in 2001, DRBDC has helped create over 2,300 local jobs, most in small business start-up companies.

Located on Church Street in Uptown Martinsville, the West Piedmont Business Development Center (WPBDC) is the other small business incubator facility in the region serving the City of Martinsville and Franklin, Henry, and Patrick counties. The Center can house 10 to 20 new businesses in the 23,500-SF building. Provided are office and light manufacturing space at competitive rates including shared meeting/training rooms, office equipment, networking opportunities, mentoring services, and fiber optics connectivity. In 2013, the City assumed operations of the incubator and the Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce manages the complex. As of 2019, the incubator had 20 tenants, 32 graduates, created 300 new jobs, and served 750+ in counseling services and workshops.

During 2015, the City of Martinsville and C-PEG (the Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth) formed a partnership to attract and support more small businesses and retail shops in the City. The group developed a plan and is charged with recruiting and retaining small businesses to boost economic growth and tax revenue in the City.

The Franklin Center for Advanced Learning and Enterprise opened in the center of the Town of Rocky Mount's Business District along Claiborne Avenue and Randolph Street in 2007 and serves as one of two satellite locations for the West Piedmont Business Development Center. The Center offers services in education, employment, and economic development. The second satellite location is located at the Patrick County Community Center (the Stuart campus of Patrick Henry Community College) in Stuart.

The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) campus in Danville's Cyber Park provides opportunities for new businesses to co-locate and take advantage of the state-of-the-art laboratories, professional office space, and workforce development initiatives at the Hawkins Research Building and the Sustainable Energy Technology Center.

Danville Community College (DCC) has created a paradigm to merge job growth with education, with the dedication of its Barkhouser Free Enterprise Center. The Center promotes entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities for college students and for the region. In addition, the Danville office of the Longwood Small Business Development Center relocated to Danville Community College campus in 2011, utilizing office space in the recently dedicated Barkhouser Free Enterprise Center.

The Fab Lab in Uptown Martinsville is a collaborative effort of Patrick Henry Community College, New College Institute, and the Martinsville Henry County Economic Development Corporation. The digital fabrication laboratory comprises computers that operate design software, production machinery with laser-powered cutters and etchers, and a printer that produces 3-dimensional plastic parts, among other functions. The lab enables entrepreneurs and others to develop product prototypes. In 2016, the Thomas P. Dalton IDEA Center opened, serving as an entrepreneurial hub, with the expanded Fab Lab serving as the anchor. The three-story, 20,520-SF facility is located on Fayette Street in Martinsville. The IDEA (Innovate, Design, Engineer, Accelerate) Center promotes entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation-based economic development opportunities. A Selective Laser Sinter (SLS) machine which plays an important role in the Polymers Processing Initiative is part of the Fab Lab. SLS applications are virtually unlimited.

Startup America, a nationwide program through public-private partnerships, is helping PHCC promote entrepreneurship. The program provides valuable resources and connections to help new companies grow and boost the local economy. Mentoring, access to funding sources, and marketing assistance are a few of the services provided. Patrick Henry Community College is a member of the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship, which advocates entrepreneurship by assisting the colleges to link related programs to workforce development programs. In 2014, PHCC became the first community college in the U.S. to offer an entrepreneurial-related program entitled Innovation Engineering, which trains students to transform innovation from a risky, random process into one that is more reliable. Four main courses, entitled "Create," "Communicate," "Commercialize," and "Systems," comprise the program.

Since 2017, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG) has offered the Start-Up Martinsville-Henry County program to assist new business start-ups. Since the program launched, more than 153 entrepreneurs have completed the boot camp, and 32 businesses collectively have been awarded \$191,000 in cash and in-kind support. Small businesses in the area have created more than \$1.15 million in new capital investment and created over 113 jobs. The program is an intensive eight-week entrepreneur boot-camp, culminating into a business competition where participants vie for grant funds, additional prizes, and loan opportunities to start their businesses. Patrick Henry Community College provides accommodations for the budding entrepreneurs. Managed by C-PEG, the George W. Lester II Microloan Program was established for small businesses in the area, with up to \$20,000 available for loans. In 2018, the Chamber divided the program to establish "Grow Martinsville Henry County, Virginia," designed to assist existing businesses with expanding product lines, acquiring and installing new equipment, and other business ventures.

The Launch Place, formerly the Southside Business Technology Center, assists start-up businesses with business development, job creation and retention, and other business consulting services. In 2012 and with funding assistance from the Danville Regional Foundation, The Launch Place initiated the "Seed Fund" program, which allows for investment opportunities, providing capital for start-ups and entrepreneurial efforts. During 2019, The Launch Place provided a \$250,000 investment to Revibe Technologies for the Revibe Connect, a product that helps special-needs students stay focused on school work. In addition, the Launch Place invested \$250,000 in Panaceutics Nutrition, which uses a patented web-based, digitally driven manufacturing system to supply personalized health and wellness products to consumers or patients. In December 2018, The Launch Place was awarded a \$300,000 grant through EDA's Regional Innovation Strategies program to support the organization's Seed Fund Program for budding entrepreneurs. Additional information may be found at: [www.TheLaunchPlace.org](http://www.TheLaunchPlace.org).

In fall 2019, the Danville Regional Foundation awarded \$711,000 to help expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem through the Dream Launch program, by providing intentional entrepreneurial programming for women and people of color, cultivating a pipeline for youth entrepreneurship, and developing robust support mechanisms for entrepreneurs facing isolation. Administered by The Launch Place, collaborative partners include the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce, Longwood Small Business Development Center, Danville Community College, and the River District Association.

Danville's River District Association was awarded a \$45,000 Community Business Launch grant through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development in August 2018. The funding provided training for aspiring entrepreneurs along with a business plan competition. The Danville Office of Economic Development contributed an additional \$50,000 to assist start-up businesses and lure entrepreneurs to the City.

SCORE, a source of free and confidential business advice for entrepreneurs and small businesses, is a nonprofit association dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth, and success of small business nationwide. Volunteers provide face-to-face business mentoring and workshops for aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners, offering advice to secure financing for operations, management, and/or business expansions. SCORE volunteers are working and retired business owners, executives and professionals donating their time and expertise in any number of disciplines as business counselors and mentors. There is a Martinsville office; more information is available at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org)

The Longwood Small Business Development Center (SBDC) also serves the region as part of the 19-county, six-city area. In November 2017, the Center announced a new regional approach using independent consultants in South Central Virginia. Three sub-regions have been created in support of small business owners, with offices in Danville, Martinsville, and Farmville. In 2019, Longwood SBDC partnered with Mid-Atlantic Broadband Corp. and Microsoft to develop a plan to support the establishment of new firms and grow existing businesses in the Southern Virginia region. Funded by a \$300,000 GO Virginia Region 3 grant, the partners are seeking input from businesses to expand entrepreneurial and innovative efforts in the Region 3 footprint. The need for the coworking spaces or makerspaces is part of the study. Makerspaces provide access to design software and shared production equipment such as 3D printers. The results of the study will assist in the high-tech design planning process to develop coworking spaces.

The region's Chambers of Commerce partner with public school systems to offer entrepreneurial programming for students. Junior Achievement programs help young people prepare for the real world by offering them experiences, teaching them how to generate wealth and to effectively manage it, how to create jobs, and how to apply entrepreneurial thinking in the workplace. Students experience hands-on lessons and learn the value of contributing to their communities. Junior Achievement educates students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. The program reaches students in Martinsville and counties of Franklin, Henry, and Patrick.

State and federal agencies available to assist in support of small businesses include the Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBCD) in Richmond ([www.virginiاسبdc.org/](http://www.virginiاسبdc.org/)) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), respectively, ([www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)). The SBA has a Richmond District Office as well; see [www.sba.gov/offices/district/va/richmond](http://www.sba.gov/offices/district/va/richmond) for more information.

## WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

Strategies being implemented to address workforce development needs include: reaching out to middle and high school-level children to spark interest in high-tech fields; partnering industry and education to get a better understanding of what is needed to place people into jobs; developing more internship programs and apprenticeships; and developing sector-based career pathway opportunities from secondary education through post-secondary education, including certifications that prepare students for middle-skills jobs. Many high schools in the region offer career and technical education programs to earn a variety of industry credentials, which allow students to enter directly into the labor market or continue to pursue educational opportunities in community colleges, trade schools, or four-year universities. The number of graduates earning credentials continue to increase significantly and allow students to go directly into high-paying jobs, if desired.

## Sector-Driven Strategies

### Advanced Manufacturing/Industrial Technology

A vital part of the state and region's economy, advanced, or technology-intensive, manufacturing requires very different skillsets from conventional manufacturing. The workforce must be knowledgeable in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) skills. In 2012, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission contracted with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to develop a study of manufacturing workforce needs within the Tobacco Region. Analysis of the advanced manufacturing demand in the region forecasted 6,840 new jobs in this sector by 2017, and 15,000 jobs by 2032. Only 15 percent or 1,055 jobs would be high-skilled (requiring four-year degrees); 28 percent or 1,895 workers would be medium-skilled (two-year degrees and experience); and 57 percent or 3,890 jobs would be low-skilled (high school degree, technology training, certification, credentialing, and experience).

- The Regional Center for Advanced Technology and Training (RCATT), operated by Danville Community College, provides specialized and/or customized technology training to meet the demands of existing manufacturing employers and develop a highly-skilled workforce. Studies feature polymers, electronics, and industrial maintenance technology laboratories in three high bays, classrooms, and a computer facility.
- Danville Community College recently completed nearly \$7 million in renovations to the Charles Hawkins Engineering & Industrial Technology Building and a new welding facility. The state-of-the-art facilities house programs including precision machining technology, welding, automotive, and dimensional inspection/metrology or quality control.
- New College Institute, in collaboration with Patrick Henry Community College, was designated an Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence by the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission in 2014. The Center provides a dynamic network of advanced manufacturing resources that supports multiple industries by developing an exceptionally skilled workforce. Welding, industrial maintenance, precision machining, and performance film training programs are offered. NCI and PHCC train students in advanced-level, nationally recognized credentials and/or certifications in critical skilled workforce gaps.
- The Center for Advanced Film Manufacturing (CAFM) is a collaborative effort between Eastman Chemical, Patrick Henry Community College, the Martinsville Henry County Economic Development Corporation, and New College Institute to provide a trained workforce for the advanced films industry. Roughly 30 percent of the world's coated and dyed performance films are made in Martinsville and Henry County. Students can earn nationally recognized industry certifications and a career studies certificate from Patrick Henry Community College. Graduates are guaranteed a job interview by Eastman. Hands-on laboratory classes and customized training are held at New College Institute utilizing the academic coater, a \$1 million state-of-the-art machine. Although the center is geared toward advanced film manufacturing, 80 percent of skills acquired apply to all industrial advanced manufacturing.
- Gene Haas Center for Integrated Machining opened in 2015, at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in Danville as part of the Capstone Integrated Machining Technology Program, which integrates skills such as tool management, advanced testing and measurement, electrical discharge machining, computer numerically controlled grinding, computer numerically controlled milling, computer numerically controlled turning, and business processes. A partnership with IALR and Danville Community College, the center is designed to offer third-year integrated machining technology students the opportunity to use state-of-the-art equipment, better preparing students through a workflow cell training lab in a unique, authentic manufacturing environment.
- PHCC's Manufacturing and Engineering Technology (MET) Complex, includes a newly renovated high-tech workforce training center completed in 2017, which accommodates expansion of the college's programs in mechatronics, industrial electronics, and the Racing College of Virginia. PHCC announced plans in 2018 to renovate the second facility at the Complex which will more than double the capacity of its welding program and establish a foundational precision machining program. Construction is expected to begin mid-2020. PHCC and DCC created a precision machining partnership in 2019.



- PHCC became an official National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) Leader School in the fall of 2018. NC3 develops and authenticates certification courses that meet current and future labor market demands, preparing students for some of the nation's fastest-growing industries. Currently, PHCC is the only community college in the nation fully equipped to offer the NC3 Festo Industry 4.0 Certification Program. Also, in partnership with the Town of Stuart and the Patrick County Educational Foundation, PHCC is expanding the number and types of classes it offers in the County to increase workforce training and credentialing in high demand by local business and industry leaders, including welding and mechatronics. A 5,000 SF training space outfitted with more than \$300,000 in state-of-the-art equipment opened in September 2019. A new welding lab opened in the Patrick County High School in October. Additional program expansions are underway in Patrick County.
- Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) officially opened at the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre in October 2019. The Harvest Foundation provided a \$5 million grant toward the 25,000 square-foot advanced manufacturing training facility. CCAT is available only to firms that locate at Commonwealth Crossing, providing office space where companies can recruit employees and training space with a high bay where companies can temporarily install manufacturing equipment to train new employees.
- The GO-TEC (Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers) builds upon existing college-level technical programs and is designed to provide more technical hands-on experience for students, beginning in middle school. Areas of focus include precision machining, welding, robotics, mechatronics, information technology and cybersecurity, automation and advanced materials. Participating in the collaborative effort are Danville Community College, Patrick Henry Community College, Southside Virginia Community College, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, New College Institute, and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, along with each of the local school divisions in Martinsville, Danville, and the counties of Henry, Pittsylvania, Patrick, and Halifax. The GO-TEC program will extend the region's talent pipeline with the introduction of Career Connections labs - serving middle school students in GO Virginia Region 3. Along with Region 3, the program will be extended to GO Virginia Regions 1 and 4, to include nearly 20 localities.
- New College Institute (NCI) announced plans to launch the new shipbuilding program - the Shipbuilding Mobile Experience Lab - in the fall of 2019, in partnership with Old Dominion University and an agreement with Newport News Shipbuilding. According to officials, 14 manufacturing firms in the region will benefit from the pipeline of high-tech workers this program will create. In addition to digital shipbuilding credentials, benefits will include transferable skills and knowledge in a variety of career fields such as engineering, information systems, logistics and supply chain management, project management, design/drafting, production and warehousing.
- The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research announced plans in January 2019 to construct the \$25.5 million Center for Manufacturing Advancement. The new 51,250-SF facility will open by 2021 and will be located on the Institute's campus. The State will provide approximately \$18.5 million for the structure, with the balance provided by Danville Regional Foundation.

### **Information Technology**

Another area of focus is information technology (IT) and other computer-related opportunities in the region. Based on information provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment of computer and information technology occupations is projected to grow 12 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations. These occupations are expected to add new jobs, in part due to a greater emphasis on cloud computing, the collection and storage of big data, more everyday items becoming connected to the Internet in what is commonly referred to as the "Internet of things," Industry 4.0, continued demand for mobile computing, and an enhanced interest in cyber security to protect information. The median annual wage for computer and information technology occupations was \$82,860 in the U.S., \$98,540 in Virginia, and ranging from \$68,010 to \$71,790 in the region in May 2016; this was higher than the median annual wage for all occupations of \$37,040. Virginia is one of the top five states in the U.S. for IT employment. In regard to the information technology sector and the growing concern for cyber security, a number of higher educational institutions in the region provide programs in these related fields:

- Averett University offers minors in Computer Forensics and Cyber Security through its Computer Science and Computer Information Systems department. In addition, the university partnered with the Southern Piedmont Technology Council and the Community Foundation of the Dan River Region to host the first CyberUp Summit in October 2019, a free summit for individuals or businesses to learn how to better safeguard their digital assets.
- Danville Community College (DCC) was designated by the National Security Agency and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense in 2017. DCC is the first community colleges in Virginia to earn this designation. In 2017, Virginia became the first state to formally adopt the new National Initiative for Cyber Security Education (NICE) Cybersecurity Workforce Framework and incorporated it into existing cyber security education and hiring efforts.
- Radford University's IMPACT Program offered through New College Institute prepares today's professional to meet tomorrow's challenges. The Cybersecurity Certification through IMPACT employs research-based practices in cognitive science, analytics, simulation-based learning and gamification in every aspect of its training to ensure its highly effective and engaging.
- Cloud Computing degree programs are being offered in the Virginia Community College System as well as select K-12 schools and leading four-year universities in conjunction with Amazon Web Services. This continues to be a growing field with high-paying jobs in demand.
- With funding from The Harvest Foundation, Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) hired an Information Technology/Industry 4.0 Faculty member in fall 2019 to strengthen the college's programming in Industry 4.0, especially regarding networking and cybersecurity

### Health Care

A report published by Georgetown University's Center for Education and Workforce found that by 2020, health care and social-assistance industry jobs in Virginia will increase by 36 percent over the 2010 figure, to 482, 370. The most significant factor driving this demand will be the aging of the baby-boomer population. Therefore, an emphasis is being placed on job training programs in this industry throughout the region.

- Averett University launched its largest expansion in health sciences education in 2019, with a new Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program that includes emphases for Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Emergency Nurse Practitioner (ENP). Averett is one of only 12 schools in the country - and the only one in Virginia to offer ENP certification. The University is also developing an accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program in partnership with a Tidewater regional health system. In addition, Averett and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine developed an exclusive Master of Science in applied healthcare data analytics degree, teaching students how to organize and manage medical information as an essential part of the efficiency and delivery of quality health care.
- Danville Community College opened a 27,000-SF Health Sciences Building in 2009, enabling the college to expand existing programs in Practical Nursing, Medical Lab Technology, Medical Terminology/Coding, Pharmacy Technician, Phlebotomy, Advanced Phlebotomy, and Dental Hygiene. The facility also houses programs, such as Registered Nursing (RN), Radiology, Surgical Technology, and Basic Dental Assisting, and houses the LPN to RN Bridge program, Clinical Skills lab, on-site Medical Lab Technician program, home health aide, and expanded Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training. DCC's nursing program was ranked first in the state and one of the nation's best by RNCareers.org in 2019.
- The Danville Regional School of Health Professions Radiologic Technology program, a two-year Danville Regional Medical Center program, began in response to the shortage of radiation technologists in the Dan River and Piedmont regions. Students may earn an associate of applied science degree in radiologic technology from Danville Community College. In 2013, the school received the "Best of the Best" recognition from the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools and a grant of institutional accreditation was renewed through February 2021.

- Patrick Henry Community College offers allied health programs in Registered Nursing (RN), RN to BSN (Bachelor's degree), Practical Nursing (LPN), LPN to RN, Nurse Aide (CNA), Therapeutic Massage, and Pharmacy Technician. A Physical Therapy Assistant program was added, with classes starting in January 2020, with funding assistance from a Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission grant. Also, PHCC is the first educational institution in Virginia to offer the Community Dental Health Coordinator program, in collaboration with the American Dental Association, Virginia Dental Association, and the Piedmont Virginia Dental Health Foundation. The following Fast Forward short-term workforce credential grant healthcare programs have been added: Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, Registered Medication Aide, Phlebotomy Technician, and Medical Billing and Coding Specialist.
- The New College Institute, in collaboration with the University of Virginia's Karen S. Rheuban for Telehealth offers the program which prepares students for careers in telemedicine. The program involves utilization of medical technology to enable health care professionals to remotely monitor patients and provides rural areas access to specialty physician. The Board Certified Telemental Health Provider, in collaboration with the Center for Credentialing and Education, launched a series of online modules designed to provide practical training for mental health professionals using technological means.
- In Danville, a Medical Solutions Academy, which offers training for nurse assistants, pharmacy technicians, medical aides and assistants, medical office assistants, and phlebotomists, opened in 2012

### **Entrepreneurship**

One area of focus is to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities in the region. Many services and resources are available to provide assistance and include planning workshops and programs, offering assistance for new start-up companies, providing information on internships, and other services. Entrepreneurship is discussed in more detail beginning on page 2-36 of this section. It must be recognized that soft-skills are required in each of these target industries and, in many occupations, on-the-job training and apprenticeships are necessary rather than formal classroom-based education. Also, it should be noted that other barriers to employment and education are childcare, transportation, and health care. These barriers are not regionally unique but are national issues which require data and further understanding to address. Affordable childcare is a challenge to many families, especially those earning less than "livable" wages. Transportation may be an obstacle, particularly in rural areas with little or no transit service, and health care comes into question for those with disabilities, drug addictions, or those caring for family members.

### **Special Populations and Programs**

- A grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services to Danville and Patrick Henry Community Colleges funds a program called TARE (training, assessment, retention, and employment) that assists low-income applicants with job assessments, training and educational opportunities to help them obtain a career or steady employment. At Patrick Henry Community College, the TARE program has been expanded into HOPE (High-demand Occupational Programs for Employment), an award-winning career pathways program which combines work readiness/career intelligence skills training with occupation-specific industry certification training and internship. Typically short-term in length, tracks of HOPE training are offered for the customer service, food service, advanced manufacturing and logistics industries. In 2019, PHCC received a state grant of \$218,138 for the provision of Road to Success in Virginia Program (RSVP). This program seeks to prepare TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients for employment leading to self-sufficiency and independence from temporary benefits.
- On-going partnerships and support from various state and local agencies, community organizations, and businesses provide a number of services for the returning citizen population, i.e. ex-offenders, to re-enter the workforce, gain skills, and obtain steady employment opportunities. Strategies utilized through the Virginia Adult Re-entry Initiative employs the TPC (Transition from Prison to Community) Model to assist in the transition process for productive, law-abiding citizens who re-enter the labor market and contribute to the community. In 2016, Danville Community College (DCC) was one of only two colleges in Virginia selected by the U.S. Department of Education for a national pilot program known as Second Chance Pell. DCC has partnered with Green Rock correctional facility in Chatham to offer industry certifications and associate degrees for up to 138 potential students at the facility.

- The Pathways to the American Dream is a four-year program intended to provide workers with skills needed for jobs in emerging industries critical to growing the region's economy. Funded by the America's Promise Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the \$6 million will be utilized to increase the number of people qualified to work in high-demand career fields. Workforce Development Boards receive funding to train job seekers for successful career pathways, and the program will create a regional workforce strategy to develop partnerships among healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology sectors and help state lawmakers develop and adopt policies to sustain and innovate sector partnership training programs.
- The New Economy Workforce Industry Credentials Grant Program assists students with 124 Virginia Community College training programs. The new initiative covers training for noncredit workforce credentials for high-demand, skilled workers such as plumbers, welders, electricians, and other "middle-skill" occupations which do not require two- or four-year degrees. Based on the "pay for performance" formula, students pay one-third of the training program cost; the grant covers one-third if the student successfully completes the program and one-third once the student obtains the required industry certification. Programs offered differ by regions across the state. The maximum amount available for each grant is \$3,000. According to a recent report by Burning Glass, more than 175,000 middle-skill jobs were available in Virginia last year, typically paying more than \$28 per hour or \$58,500 annually.
- Early Childhood Development Institute was established in partnership with four Virginia Community Colleges - Danville, Patrick Henry, Virginia Western, and New River - to elevate early childhood education. A \$1 million fund was gifted by Ben and Betty Davenport of Chatham to create the Institute. The Institute will help create a talented workforce in Southern and Southwestern Virginia to provide unparalleled training and education for individuals working in childcare centers and increase access to quality childcare opportunities for working parents.
- The SCALE UP (Success Credentialing Assistance Leading to Employment and Upending Poverty) Program, administered by Danville Community College (DCC) in partnership with Danville's Division of Social Services and the Danville Virginia Employment Commission office, boosts community training and employment efforts through a \$339,600 state grant awarded to DCC to elevate low-income persons out of poverty, targeting at-risk youth and adults. For at-risk youth, the goal is to improve college readiness and entry-level skills in fields such as information technology, health care, and precision machining. For adults, the program focuses on opportunities in phlebotomy, industrial maintenance, welding, precision machining, automotive, culinary arts, dental assistance, pharmacy technician, network technology and programming, as well as other fields, with 4- and 10-month training options.
- Launched in 2017, the Growth4VA Campaign centers on Virginia's colleges and universities in collaboration with businesses to establish practical policies and creative ideas focused on strategies to grow Virginia's economy, expand access to education and job opportunities, and regain Virginia's No. 1 ranking for business
- The SwiftStart program is being offered by the Virginia's Blue Ridge Works WDB for career pathways in health care, manufacturing, and IT occupations. Based on the Department of Labor model which depicts the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in an industry or industry sector, the model utilizes research-based best practices, open source and cost-effective curricula, and blended learning to deliver high-quality, comprehensive training to address participant skill needs aligned with industry needs and wrap-around services to address barriers to success.
- In early 2019, the G3 (Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back) grant allowed DCC and PHCC to provide more opportunities for students to earn "stackable" industry credentials. The colleges realigned several high-demand programs through dual-enrollment opportunities in areas such as welding, information technology, engineering, nursing, physical therapy, and others. A 2020 proposal would allow expansion of the program in five key areas: Healthcare, Information Technology and Computer Science, Manufacturing and Skilled Trades, Early Childhood Education, and Public Safety

- The Harvest Foundation is partnering with the West Piedmont Workforce Development Board through a \$1,079,727 three-year grant announced in November 2019 to pilot the Guided Career Exploration program to connect young adults to workforce training and jobs. West Piedmont's pilot program will target the 17-24 age group of area residents who are unemployed, underemployed, not already attending college or pursuing a career path. The program will support participants in developing a career path, whether they directly join the workforce or need additional training and credentials to hone their skills.

Another valuable resource to the communities within the Planning District is the occupational-technical training programs offered through the community college system at Danville Community College and Patrick Henry Community College. For more information on the two community colleges, visit their websites at [www.danville.edu/](http://www.danville.edu/) (Danville Community College) and [www.ph.vccs.edu](http://www.ph.vccs.edu) (Patrick Henry Community College).

Both of the region's community colleges work closely with local businesses and industries to identify educational needs and provide programs to help train the workforce. In-plant courses and programs are offered through relatively new programs at each college. Through these programs, the local community colleges in the Planning District continue to seek more innovative methods of providing services and greater opportunities for training, retraining, and information sharing. More and more as the Community Colleges work with other higher education institutions, employers, and economic developers in the region, they demonstrate collaboration, commitment, and fortitude between education/workforce training, advanced manufacturing, and industries in the region. Invaluable collaboration between the workforce development boards, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, and employers continue to help build a pipeline of skilled workers that attracts new businesses and industries while expanding existing companies in the region.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) was created in 1995 to foster growth of the Commonwealth's economy by serving those seeking a prime business location and increased trade opportunities. As a state authority, VEDP leads Virginia's economic development efforts, advancing the state in the global marketplace with alignment of resources, experienced staff, and marketing efforts. VEDP assists local and regional economic development organizations and provides a number of services. One service includes the Virginia Leaders in Export Trade (VALET) program, a two-year program to assist Virginia businesses with export markets. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership has offices around the world to serve the needs of businesses, cultivating new business investment, fostering international trade growth, and encouraging the expansion of existing Virginia businesses. For more information, go to [www.vedp.org/](http://www.vedp.org/).

In 2011, the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA) was established as a regional economic development organization whose primary purpose is to accelerate job growth and increase the tax base for the counties of Halifax, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania and the cities of Danville and Martinsville. However, in 2016, both Martinsville and Henry County decided to suspend their membership. SVRA is responsible for marketing the region globally, with a focus on recruitment of new industries to the region. SVRA does not replace the existing economic development agencies across the region but works with them to create a regional marketing plan and promote the region as a unified presence to industrial prospects. The Alliance markets a number of industrial buildings, office buildings or spaces, and other sites. Economic development agencies in the West Piedmont Planning District include the Danville Office of Economic Development, Pittsylvania County Economic Development, Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation, Patrick County Economic Development, and the Rocky Mount Economic Development Authority. More information is available at: [www.gosouthernvirginia.com](http://www.gosouthernvirginia.com).

In 2015, GO (Growth and Opportunity) Virginia was initiated by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC) and the Council on Virginia's Future to foster private-sector growth and job creation through state incentives for regional collaboration by business, education, and government.

Recognizing the harsh effect of deep federal budget cuts on a Virginia economy that is overly dependent on public-sector jobs, business leaders formed the GO Virginia campaign to work for regional cooperation on private-sector growth, job creation, and career readiness. The coalition favors state incentives to encourage effective collaboration among business, education, and government in each region, providing a framework for implementation of private sector-focused strategies. There are five policy priorities within the GO Virginia platform: Innovation - state grants to leverage local, private, and other investment in key regional initiatives and industry sectors; Investment - incentives for localities to cooperate rather than compete with one another on economic development; Improvement - cost-saving collaboration by local governments, school divisions, and colleges; Invention - investment in research to bring about new business endeavors; and Infrastructure - capital projects with regional economic impact. This initiative will serve to grow the statewide economy, region by region.

There are nine GO Virginia regions across the Commonwealth. As part of the designated Region 3 - Southern Virginia GO Virginia or SoVaGO, the region comprises the West Piedmont PDC, with the exception of Franklin County, the Southside PDC, and the Commonwealth Regional Council (from Patrick County to Amelia County). As the largest land area, Region 3 has the smallest population with just under 380,000 people. Franklin County is integrated to the north with Region 2, encompassing the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, New River Valley Regional Commission, and Central Virginia Planning District Commission in Lynchburg. Recently, Growth & Diversification Plans were developed by the Regional Councils and submitted to the statewide GO Virginia Council for approval. The Region 2 Plan may be found at: [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/gova/region-two/region-2-growth-diversification-plan2019.pdf](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/gova/region-two/region-2-growth-diversification-plan2019.pdf). The Region 3 plan may be accessed at [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/gova/region-three/region3-growth-diversification-plan-2019.pdf](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/gova/region-three/region3-growth-diversification-plan-2019.pdf).

Within the Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan, four priority industry clusters are identified: 1) manufacturing, 2) life sciences and health care, 3) food and beverage processing, and 4) emerging technology and IT. The Plan notes that more than 125,000 jobs, or over one-third of the total jobs in the region, are provided by these industries which are expected to grow at a higher rate than the rest of the economy over the next five years. Further, the report indicates that across the four clusters the median hourly wage is \$21 and generate nearly \$11.3 billion in economic activity. In addition, the Plan identifies these core strategies in four focus areas:

- 1) Talent or workforce development, attraction, and retention, which includes strengthening the pipeline from all levels of education to careers in the region, increasing the completion of relevant degrees, increasing the knowledge and access to complementary workforce and training services, and increasing employer engagement across the system.
- 2) Collaborative development of sites and buildings, which includes improving information about the supply of real estate and market demand, incentivizing collaboration among localities at all stages of development, and building partnerships to leverage the development potential of special assets like research facilities.
- 3) Entrepreneurship and business development, which includes growing the presence of and access to capital investors, expanding and better coordinating programs for mentorship and business training, and improving awareness of existing capital, mentorship and training resources.
- 4) Technology development, which includes increasing investments for innovative technologies, expanding rates of research commercialized in the private sector, supporting talent attraction efforts focused on individuals with technological skills, and growing the number of individuals entering training and education programs that develop technological skills.

The Region 3 Council reported that our greatest opportunity is to align our workforce talent development with our economic development in areas where we already have substantial activity and competitive advantage, transforming our existing success stories into region-wide advancement. The Council also advised that our greatest gap is an aging and shrinking population. We must retain, train, and grow a sustainably sized, well qualified workforce that meets the needs of our existing and future businesses, enabling our region to thrive. The original 2017 plan delved into an analysis of three critical opportunities, but the 2019 plan incorporated additional areas of focus:

- 1) Workforce talent development and recruitment, including opportunities for sector partnerships, career pathways, work-based learning, talent recruitment, and broadband infrastructure development;
- 2) Sectoral development in four target sectors, including business services and IT/data centers, advanced manufacturing and materials, high-value natural resource products, and health care; and
- 3) Cyber infrastructure, including novel approaches to regional collaboration in infrastructure development and opportunities to provide incentives for “middle mile” and “last mile” network completion.
- 4) Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, including completion of a region-wide Innovation and Ecosystem strategy, ensuring Region 3 connectivity with the Virginia Innovation Strategy, assessment and defining of innovation opportunities in the health care and agribusiness sectors, expansion of youth entrepreneurship programs in K-12 and community colleges, and leveraging the Region’s 23 Opportunity Zones for business development.
- 5) Sites and Real Estate, including completion of VA Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) site assessments and certification of all sites, continued investment in publicly-owned and/or unique properties, and completion of potential buildings in small towns for adaptive reuse as IT and small business locations.

The Plan also includes opportunities for rejuvenated regional cohesion in:

- Entrepreneurial and small business development initiatives,
- Quality of life and regional branding enhancement,
- Pooling of resources for region-wide infrastructure improvement, and
- More systematic focus on target employment sectors and career pathways

Grant awards in 2018 included \$300,000 for the Talent Collaborative project in Region 2 to address skills and interest gaps in middle- and high-skilled occupations in the targeted sectors of manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology through an awareness campaign and the establishment of a training program. Also awarded in Region 2 is the Stopping the Brain Drain: Talent Attraction and Retention Action Plan Development and Implementation, focused on developing a strong, proactive talent program and strategy to stop the trend of top-tier talent leaving the area. The project will be conducted in tandem with talent attraction and recruitment efforts of the Roanoke Regional Partnership, Onward NRV, and the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance to retain students educated in the region to increase the number of high-skill job opportunities.

In Region 3, the GO-TEC (Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers) initiative was awarded \$648,000 to expand existing curriculum offered by six higher education partners in the Region to build a regional training system for careers in IT and focused areas of advanced manufacturing. GO-TEC will help develop a pipeline beginning in middle school to increase the number of students entering the targeted five training areas of need (Precision Machining; Welding; IT/Cyber Security; Robotics, Automation & Mechatronics; and Advanced Materials). Utilizing a hub and spoke model, Phase IIa got underway in 2019. PHCC was awarded \$251,532 for equipment; NCI received approximately \$51,000 to focus on metrology.

There are several federal and state workforce programs available to assist dislocated workers. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Program is one of many federal programs designed to support dislocated workers as they search for new jobs. The Rapid Response team assists employees on site to discuss benefits and services available to them. Rapid Response Funds cover services for dislocated workers and are available to local workforce development areas impacted by plant closing and major dislocations.

A variety of services are available through workforce centers that include applying for unemployment benefits, resume writing assistance, workshops on various topics, skill assessments, career planning software, labor market and wage information, access to training resources, assistance in finding new employment, assistance to fill any gaps in skills or training, and other services.

## PUBLICLY-OWNED INDUSTRIAL SITES/BUSINESS PARKS

The following provides information regarding publicly owned sites by locality or region. A map is provided as well.

County/City	Name	Location	Total Acreage	
Danville/Pittsylvania	Airside Industrial Park	Just off U.S. Route 58 on the eastern side of the City near the Regional Airport	206	
	Brosville Industrial Park	Just off U.S. Route 58 in the Brosville area	120	
	Cane Creek Centre	On U.S. 58 three miles east of U.S. 29 Bypass (future I-785) in the County	900	
	Chatham South Industrial Park	Just off U.S. Route 29 in Pittsylvania County, south of Chatham	150	
	Coleman (Fearn) Site*	Near Gypsum Road and Celotex Drive in Danville	77	
	Cyber Park (Technology Park)	Fronting U.S. Route 58 and future Interstate 785 in Danville near the airport; extension of Riverview	330	
	Gretna Industrial Park	South of Gretna along South Main Street	150	
	Ringgold East Industrial Park	Along Route 734 in Ringgold area, a mile and a half from Route 58 in the County	117	
	Ringgold West Industrial Park	Along Route 729, north of Eagle Springs Road	120	
	Riverview Industrial Park	U.S. Route 58 and future Interstate 785 in Danville near the airport and Cyber Park	95	
	Southern Virginia Mega Site at Berry Hill*	West of Danville between U.S. Route 58 and Berry Hill Road in the County	3,528	
	Southern Virginia Multimodal Park*	At the former Burlington Industries site in Hurt	800	
	Franklin County/ Rocky Mount	Commerce Center	Three miles south of Rocky Mount off U.S. Route 220	165
		Franklin County/Rocky Mount Industrial Park	Just off U.S. Route 220 and VA Route 40 in central Rocky Mount	157
Rocky Mount Office and Technology Park		Northwestern section of Rocky Mount	67	
Summit View Business Park*		Along Brick Church Road, just off U.S. Route 220 in northern Franklin County	550	
West Franklin Business Park		Near Route 40, just west of Ferrum	80	
Boones Mill	Village Park at Boones Mill*	Former North American Home Complex	73	
Martinsville/Henry	Clearview Business Park	On Clearview Drive approximately one-half mile east of Liberty Street (Route 174)	73	
	Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre*	Just off U.S. Route 220 south near the North Carolina line in Henry County	726	
	Martinsville Industrial Park	Just south of Martinsville off U.S. Route 220	261	
	North Bowles Industrial Park	Along Hollie Drive, just off Route 174	229	
	Patriot Centre at Beaver Creek Industrial Park	Off Route 174 in Henry County	2,000+	
	Rives Road Industrial Park	Along Rives Road in Martinsville	47-50	
Patrick County	Rich Creek Corporate Park	Approximately 1.5 miles east of the Town of Stuart, fronting on U.S. Route 58, joining Route 727 on its southeast corner and Route 694 on the northwest	60.6	

\*Site is under development



## Sites Under Development

In Danville, the Coleman (Fearn) site was under development by the City. There are three graded pad sites available, totaling about 77 acres. However, due to activities underway in both Cane Creek Centre and Southern Virginia Mega Site at Berry Hill, the City decided to delay further development at this site for now. Construction of two 100,000-SF shell buildings were approved for Cane Creek in July 2019 and expected to be complete in 2020. The City also has plans to redevelop the former Dan River Mills Schoolfield site. A \$300,000 Brownfields grant from EPA was awarded in 2019 to provide a site assessment. The City continues to explore potential funding for redevelopment efforts in the area as officials seek historic designation for the Schoolfield District, established in 1903 as one of the largest textile mill villages in Virginia. A master plan will be underway soon, with a mixed use of residential and commercial redevelopment and possibly an innovation campus for the former mill site to include new construction for technology businesses. The former industrial site covers approximately 85 acres and about 700,000 square-feet of structures. A combination of commercial, light industrial, entertainment, and residential uses are under consideration.

In Pittsylvania County, lies the 3,528-acre Berry Hill Industrial Park on the southern border of the County and Southern Virginia Multimodal Park in the northern area at Hurt. Now known as the Southern Virginia Mega Site at Berry Hill, the regional mega park and largest in Virginia is located west of Danville between U.S. Route 58 and Berry Hill Road. The mostly undeveloped land is bisected by Berry Hill and Oak Hill Roads, with the Norfolk Southern Railroad crossing part of the site, and lots ranging from 98 acres to nearly 1,300 acres. The site includes 1,800 acres of buildable land and 12 developable lots. The Transco natural gas line traverses the property. The site is 15 miles from Danville Regional Airport, 52 miles from Piedmont Triad International Airport, 70 miles from the Raleigh-Durham International Airport, and 200 miles from the Virginia Port Authority. The park could provide employment for a labor pool in a 60-mile radius around the Danville-Pittsylvania County area. Targeted industries include advanced manufacturing, computer parts, wood and paper product manufacturing, plastics and rubber product manufacturing, and fabricated metal product manufacturing. The park could attract spinoff industries that would generate six to eight jobs outside the site for every job within the park. The mega site was designated with a Tier 4 certification, declaring it "infrastructure ready," in August 2018. This means all infrastructure (water, wastewater, gas, electricity, and fiber) is in place or will be within 12 months, and all permit issues have been identified and quantified. Tier 5, the top designation, will come as soon as all permits are in place, as required tiers established via the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program are met. The County and City continue to work together to bring improvements to the site. In January 2020, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission renewed two grants for site improvements. This included a \$2.7 million grant for land and engineering improvements and a \$2.2 million grant for water system improvements.

In 2015, Danville City Council agreed to adjust the service boundaries of the Danville Utilities to allow Appalachian Power to provide electric service at Berry Hill. The Berry Hill Energy Connection project will include approximately 5 miles of 138-kV transmission lines and a new substation to serve park tenants. Water and sewer are being brought to the site as well. In 2016, the Danville-Pittsylvania Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA) approved a TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant co-application to support rail infrastructure and port improvement at the site. In early 2017, grading for 133 acres got underway to develop four sites (one large 109-acre pad with three smaller pads).

In June 2017, Enviva Development Holdings, LLC signed an agreement to purchase Lot 8, a 168-acre tract at Berry Hill. It is anticipated that the firm will invest about \$120 million and create direct and indirect jobs with above average wages. Enviva produces wood pellets at six plants in the U.S. to provide electric utilities with a sustainable, renewable fuel alternative to coal, reducing their carbon footprint. A second project interest was announced in September 2018, with RIFA entering an option with Indevprop, a Virginia limited liability company representing a credit-worthy client, for an estimated 149 acres in the northern section of the site involving a \$200 million project under consideration.

As of January 2020, Dominion Energy is the only company with plans to build in the park, investing \$200 million to develop a 500-megawatt combustion turbine power plant at the site. The company is continuing the permitting process and development plans for the potential siting of new peaking units in Pittsylvania County. The plant will provide economic benefits of \$12.3 million and create up to 200 jobs during construction. The proposed commercial operation date is April 2022. Dominion also plans to invest \$130 million in the Maplewood Solar project, a 120-megawatt solar farm just 7 miles northwest of Chatham.

In May 2019, RIFA purchased 90 acres near the mega site for future development. In addition, the State approved more than \$30 million in funding for realignment of U.S. Highway 311 from the Danville Expressway to the mega site. Known as the Berry Hill Connector Road, the new alignment will provide direct access to the Southern Virginia Mega Site at Berry Hill and allow for better flow of freight and other traffic. Construction is scheduled to be complete in 2025.

In September 2019, Danville Utilities announced plans to provide water and wastewater services to the mega site. While the City will provide those services, the majority of the water will still come from Eden, NC, with a supplement from the City. As with the water, an agreement is in place with Eden to treat all sewerage. Danville will provide up to 1 MGD, out of the total 7 million gallons of water capacity in the industrial park. However, the City of Eden will be the major supplier. Utility lines are under construction across the NC border. Water and wastewater infrastructure within the park are estimated to cost \$12 million. This would be constructed in phases with the first phase to include \$4.5 million for water lines and \$3.1 million for sewer. The second phase would include the remaining \$4.4 million for lines to be built as needed when firms locate in the park.

In January 2020, plans were announced to develop an RV park in the Berry Hill area to house construction workers. Over the next year, the developer plans to create Loblolly Lake RV Park as a full-service 36-site recreational vehicle park to help house workers who will be working at the mega site.



Prepared by West Piedmont PDC, November 2019... D.W. Rakes

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|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Airside Industrial Park                   | 8. Coleman Site                                 | 15. Martinsville Industrial Park   | 22. Riverview                            |
| 2. Southern Virginia Mega Site at Berry Hill | 9. Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre        | 16. Village Park at Boones Mill    | 23. Rives Road Industrial Park           |
| 3. Brosville Industrial Park                 | 10. Cyber Park                                  | 17. North Bowles                   | 24. Rocky Mount Office & Technology Park |
| 4. Bryant Property                           | 11. Summit View Business Park                   | 18. Patriot Centre at Beaver Creek | 25. Southern Virginia MultiModal Park    |
| 5. Cane Creek Centre                         | 12. Franklin County Commerce Center             | 19. Rich Creek Corporate Park      | 26. West Franklin Business Park          |
| 6. Chatham South                             | 13. Franklin County/Rocky Mount Industrial Park | 20. Ringgold East                  |  |
| 7. Clearview Business Park                   | 14. Gretna                                      | 21. Ringgold West                  |  |

In late 2018, Pittsylvania County announced plans to sell approximately 53 acres in the Ringgold East Industrial Park to South Carolina-based RealityLink, a private real estate investment firm, for \$1 million. As of 2020, the firm still has the purchase option and potential to construct a 350,000-SF shell building, one of the largest in the state. Once constructed, the County will be home to one of only four marketable buildings greater than 300,000 SF and could result in more than \$15 million in new capital investment.

In the northern part of Pittsylvania County at Hurt, lies the 800-acre Southern Virginia Multimodal Park, formerly the Klopman Mills/Burlington Mills site. In late 2016, Hurt Partners LLC of Charlotte, NC purchased 604 acres of the site. In recognition of the importance of the development of the industrial site, four municipalities and an industrial park development company initiated the creation of the Staunton River Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA) in early 2017. The partnership included Pittsylvania County, the City of Danville, the towns of Hurt and Altavista, and the Southern Virginia Multimodal Park, LLC. Also during 2017, studies got underway to determine the cost to bring industry-level water and sewer services to the park. Along with investments from the site owners, Hurt Partners, a \$99,800 Brownfields grant was awarded to assist with site cleanup. To date, approximately \$200,000 has been awarded through various grants to improve the appearance and marketability of the site. In early 2020, the old smokestack and silos were demolished; improvements to the road and site grading will occur in coming months along with other enhancements to attract 21st century employers. With the existence of the Norfolk-Southern rail spur, the park would be a prime distribution hub. The Authority plans to attract small to mid-size distribution companies to the park

In 2007, Henry County purchased two large tracts for future development as regional, revenue-sharing industrial park projects in conjunction with the City of Martinsville. A 726-acre site, known as the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre, is located near the North Carolina line; the other is the 1,206-acre Bryant property near Barrows Mill Road in close proximity to both Clearview Business Park in the City and the Patriot Centre.

Located south of Martinsville at a site convenient to both Route 220 and the Norfolk Southern Railroad, a master plan has been developed for the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre which will offer large lots. The property is approximately 30 miles from Piedmont Triad International Airport and population centers of the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina, approximately 40 miles from a FedEx hub, and offers rail access. The site also offers four-lane access to the interstate. The industrial park is considered a megasite; megasites create at least 400 jobs and are characterized by at least \$250 million in capital investment. Grading on two sites has been completed. Lot 1 is a 120-acre pad and Lot 4 is a 50-acre pad. Water and sewer utilities are in place, along with the extension of Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative's high capacity, open-access fiber optic backbone structure. The County is working with Appalachian Power to construct a 30-megawatt expandable sub-station to provide electricity and Southwestern Virginia Gas to provide natural gas. Recognized as the highest rank for industrial parks under development, the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre is now classified as a Tier 5 project, meaning all necessary permits have been obtained and the park is ready for new business. The site is being marketed for suppliers and other companies involved with the growing aerospace industry, food and plastics, and other industries.

In October 2019, the 26,000 square-foot Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) opened at the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre. The Harvest Foundation provided a \$5 million grant toward the advanced manufacturing training facility. CCAT is available only to firms that locate at Commonwealth Crossing, providing office space where companies can recruit employees and training space with a high bay where companies can temporarily install manufacturing equipment to train new employees. Once training is complete, the business will remove its equipment and enable other companies to utilize the space. In July 2018, Press Glass, the largest independent flat glass processing operation in Europe, announced an investment of \$43.55 million to construct a 280,000-SF manufacturing facility in Commonwealth Crossing. As the first company to locate in the industrial park, Press Glass plans to operate from its new facility in April 2020. The firm will create 212 21st century jobs in Henry County, with starting pay at more than \$15 per hour.

In 2015, Franklin County announced plans to develop the 550-acre Summit View Business Park adjacent to U.S. Route 220, between Rocky Mount and Boones Mill. In addition to small- and medium-sized lots to be created, the site would allow for larger developable tracts. Plans include the grading and development of a 100-acre parcel and potential construction of a shell building. The property lies in close proximity to infrastructure, an interstate highway, and a regional airport. The new business park will be developed in a campus-style manner to provide needed infrastructure, while also providing recreation areas, trails, and greenspaces on the park's southern side and featuring five main components: greenways, a multi-purpose building, athletic fields, a splash pad, and a bike park.

The event area is to be located on the northern side of the park and will include a permanent home for the Foothills Produce Auction, fair and festival grounds, a multi-use pavilion, a consolidated cannery, a solid waste collection site, a fire station with a community room, the park and ride lot, a concession building and other amenities for public use. In October 2016, the County approved a master plan, which calls for eight facilities ranging in size from 120,000 to 300,000 SF, one 1 million-SF facility, and two smaller buildings. The project has been promoted as a “next generation” business park, which calls for green spaces and public amenities that may include an amphitheater, athletic fields, a farmers’ market, a visitor center, and multi-use trails throughout the park. In addition, a 150-space park and ride lot is proposed at the new Regional Business Park.

The first phase undertaken for the regional enterprise park includes road and grading work, beginning with two pad sites - one 10-acre and one 25-acre site. The County received a \$250,000 Virginia Business Ready Sites Program grant to bring utilities to the designated 144-acre Dogwood Site, which could accommodate a one million square-foot building. Officials anticipate the park will feature between 10 and 14 graded pads suitable for various sizes of business and industry, offering parcels to accommodate buildings between 25,000 and 100,000 square feet and parcels allowing for buildings between 250,000 and 500,000 square feet. Current construction at the park includes two pad-ready sites, all utilities, a community event pavilion, and a landscaped entrance road.

In 2017, the County approved a \$10 million contract to begin construction of the access road, expand water and sewer infrastructure, and add industrial lots. This work has been completed. As of February 2019, the County had invested approximately \$25.8 million in the park and is committed to spend an additional \$7.6 million. Phase II park development has been estimated to cost approximately \$16 million. In November 2018, Franklin County agreed to sell a 2.9-acre parcel at the park to the Roanoke Gas Company for construction of a \$2.2 million gate station that would tap off the Mountain Valley Pipeline and serve the park. Roanoke Gas plans to allow access along the U.S. Route 220 corridor and into Rocky Mount. Construction should begin in summer 2020. The County plans to attract advanced manufacturing, technology and logistics businesses to the park - businesses that pay higher than average wages. It is anticipated to take six to eight years to fully develop the park. According to a report by Chmura Economics, the park is estimated to bring an annual impact of \$100.5 million after five years, generate \$320.4 million in investments and support about 2,200 jobs when fully occupied.

In 2018, Valley Star Credit Union was named the first business to locate in Summit View Business Park. The firm is investing an estimated \$7 million to construct a new administrative campus on 7 acres, bringing a total of 40 employees, with 20 jobs newly created. Construction of the new 19,000 square-foot facility is underway and expected to open in 2020. In May 2018, Stik-Pak Solutions announced plans to invest \$14.3 million to relocate and expand its Franklin County operations into a new 100,000-SF facility in Summit View Business Park. The packaging company currently operates a 25,000-SF building in the Franklin County Commerce Center, employing 35 people. Within six years, the new operation will create 50-60 new production jobs with an annual average salary of \$45,760. According to County officials, both Stik-Pak and Valley Star will offer wages above \$20 an hour. In January 2020, Traditional Medicinals announced an investment of \$29.7 million to construct an East Coast herbal tea manufacturing facility in Summit View, creating 56 new jobs. The company plans to build a 125,000-SF, state-of-the-art facility.

In 2013, Franklin County joined the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority, a regional authority that includes Franklin, Botetourt, and Roanoke counties; the cities of Roanoke and Salem; and the Town of Vinton. The authority allows for the collaboration of the local governments on the development of economic projects, such as creating new or improving existing industrial sites. Each of the participating localities may opt to share the costs and benefits of increasing or improving the region’s site inventory to attract new or expanding businesses.

Many of the localities have designated Enterprise Zones. There are joint zones in Danville-Pittsylvania County, Martinsville-Henry County, and Patrick County-Town of Stuart. In addition, there are single zones in the City of Danville and sub-zones in some areas. Established in 1982 by the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Enterprise Zone (VEZ) Program is a partnership between state and local government to promote economic development and revitalization by stimulating job creation and property investment.

Designated by the state and managed by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the VEZ Program in conjunction with other local, state, and federal programs, provides incentives to spur private-sector investments which aid in the improvement of economic conditions within the designated zones. The zones encompass commercial and industrial lands as well as available vacant, developable tracts. Most industrial parks are located in these designated zones. For statewide designated Enterprise Zones, visit the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development website at:

<http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/images/VEZ/VEZ-MAP.pdf>.

Opportunity Zones are designed to spur economic development and job creation in economically-distressed communities by providing tax benefits to investors, if they meet required qualifications. Localities qualify as Opportunity Zones if they have been nominated for designation by the state and certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. Within the West Piedmont Region, there are 15 low-income census tracts designated in 2018. In October 2019, Opportunity Virginia, a new statewide initiative to leverage the federal Opportunity Zone program, launched. This initiative will help bring much needed investment focused on economic growth that is inclusive and equitable, not just market-driven, and will encourage more economic opportunities in underserved communities. Within the region, several projects are underway to attract private investment and further improve the economy. For more information, visit

<http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/opp-zones.html>.

Genedge Alliance is part of a nationwide network of Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) centers that are cooperatively affiliated with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST-MEP) and the U.S. Department of Commerce. Located in Martinsville, Genedge provides a number of services for Virginia companies, helping these industries compete, succeed, and grow. Formerly Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Genedge Alliance operates as a state-affiliated, not-for-profit economic development organization. Services include innovation and growth, continuous process improvement, sustainability, supply chain optimization, technology acceleration, and workforce engagement through on-the-job training. Affiliates include the Manufacturing Technology Center in Wytheville and Old Dominion University Business Gateway in Norfolk. Genedge received funding from the Department of Defense and the Virginia Department of Veteran's Affairs in 2019, to execute the Virginia Defend CUI Program, which assists businesses in the state to improve their cybersecurity procedures. Also in 2019, NIST provided \$1.9 million to Genedge to continue assisting companies to be more innovative, competitive, and maximize business capacity. For more information, visit <https://www.genedge.org/>.

## RETAIL/COMMERCIAL SHOPPING

Trends and patterns of the Planning District provide yet another facet of the area's economy. While it is generally accepted that people in the District shop for the necessities in local stores within their community, many of the residents depend upon stores in neighboring areas for the bulk of their major purchases. There are two primary reasons for this fact. First, these larger communities such as Roanoke, Lynchburg, and Greensboro offer a wider range of shopping opportunities and the increased competition set up by these larger markets along with the fact that the ability to buy at bulk wholesale prices creates more competitive pricing among stores offering similar merchandise. Secondly, since a number of residents of the Planning District work outside the District in and around these larger market areas, it takes little extra effort to do their major shopping near their work sites. Retail establishments have expanded significantly during the past decade, offering a greater variety of goods and services to local consumers. It is important that additional commercial establishments continue to be lured to the area to increase competition and attract area shoppers. In recent years, Danville has offered a broader range of shopping facilities in the region.

Major malls or shopping complexes in the district are the Danville Mall along Piedmont Drive in Danville and The Village of Martinsville located on Commonwealth Boulevard in Martinsville. A number of major retailers occupy both facilities. In Danville's River District, many restaurants and small businesses flourish. More information regarding the River District follows in the "Revitalization Efforts" section. In Martinsville, the Uptown Central Business District, a Virginia Main Street Community, remains a viable commercial center. A number of retail establishments, restaurants, and specialty shops opened in Uptown Martinsville along Church Street in the Central Business District. Additional commercial areas and shopping centers are found along major highways throughout the region. Neighborhood oriented shops and stores as well as offices are found along principal streets and arterials.

## REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

While globalization initially had a detrimental impact on Danville's economy, it is now fueling its revitalization. A variety of culturally diverse companies from around the world have been attracted to the region. To attract business investment, the City has been working to eliminate blight, enhance the attractiveness of downtown, develop industrial parks, and generally make Danville a place where people would like to "live, work, and play." Cooperation with Pittsylvania County has resulted in successes. More than 50 businesses including technology companies, new restaurants, and other retail establishments are located in the River District. In 2019 alone, the Dan River Region added approximately 1,500 jobs, more than any other locality in the Commonwealth outside the Urban Crescent, which extends from Northern Virginia through Richmond to Hampton Roads.

In 2011, the City of Danville initiated a comprehensive planning program which established the River District, representing the heart of downtown, and includes a portion of two historic districts - the Tobacco Warehouse Historic District and Downtown Danville Historic District. The River District Revitalization project is a combination of planned City improvements and an incentive package structured to stimulate re-use of historic buildings in the district, to create new businesses, and to promote other economic enhancements. Public space enhancements located at the core of the River District include a new riverfront park, activity center, and gateway to the river.

As part of the revitalization initiative, the City declared a war on blight in the area and collaborated with the Danville Industrial Development Authority to purchase several buildings in the downtown area for renovation, demolition, or for some other purpose. Planned building renovations created space for other uses such as a new city park or parking option; establishment of mixed-use spaces, including apartments; a \$6.2 million hotel with 42 suites; and removal of other blight in the area to encourage more economic development initiatives by improving aesthetics. As of December 2019, developments in the River District have attracted nearly \$151 million in private investments that more than quadrupled the public sector investments of \$35 million. As a result of the revitalization efforts, 306 companies have located to the business and historic warehouse districts. Some of these businesses have created a high-tech industry cluster at the core of the River District which could attract similar firms. Startup businesses from North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, one of the oldest and largest research areas in North America, have been attracted to the City. Currently, within a half-mile radius of the River District, there are 2,058 residents, 3,831 employees, and 693 apartments, with 65 additional units coming soon.

In 2017, Danville purchased the White Mill property along the Dan River for \$3 million. With 8 parcels totaling slightly more than 20 acres, the acquisition also includes the 650,000-SF White Mill building that was once part of Dan River, Inc. In early 2019, the Danville Industrial Development Authority approved an agreement with The Alexander Company for an option to purchase the White Mill building for \$3 million. The plan is to redevelop the property for a mixed use of residential and commercial spaces. City officials believe the planned Riverfront Park will help attract businesses and industry to the White Mill property. The park will be developed between the White Mill and the King Memorial Bridge in the River District and an extension of the Riverwalk Trail is planned. A water feature in the canal in front of the White Mill is also planned.

As previously mentioned, Danville also has plans to redevelop the former Dan River Mills Schoolfield site. A \$300,000 Brownfields grant from EPA was awarded in 2019 to provide a site assessment. The City continues to explore potential funding for redevelopment efforts in the area as officials seek historic designation for the Schoolfield District, established in 1903 as one of the largest textile mill villages in Virginia. A master plan will be underway soon, with a mixed use of residential and commercial redevelopment and possibly an innovation campus for the former mill site to include new construction for technology businesses. The former industrial site covers approximately 85 acres and about 700,000 square-feet of structures. A combination of commercial, light industrial, entertainment, and residential uses are under consideration.

In Martinsville, revitalization efforts along the Fayette Street corridor from Moss Street to Roundabout Road are a focal point of the City. One initiative calls for enhancement of the business district along Fayette Street between Moss Street and Memorial Boulevard, with building facades, landscaping, and repurposing some blighted structures. Also, the Pine Hall Neighborhood Revitalization project, just off West Fayette Street, is a priority.

The City has received \$700,000 from EPA to identify and potentially remediate hazardous areas in Uptown Martinsville and to assist in planning property reuse in other blighted and deteriorated areas, or Redevelopment Areas. The project will focus on the Chief Tassel Building and the former Sara Lee Apparel site for potential redevelopment. Martinsville is exploring funding opportunities and other assistance to undertake projects in this area of the City. In February 2020, the City announced plans for the former American of Martinsville furniture site to be converted to an \$8.1 million apartment complex. The multifamily structure will house 52 apartments, community spaces, green spaces and be energy efficient. Construction is expected to begin soon, with completion around fall 2022.

In Henry County, the Smith River Small Towns Collaborative was formed in conjunction with the Harvest Foundation. The group represents the small factory towns of Bassett, Fieldale, Stanleytown, and Koehler. Efforts include streetscape, cultural amenities, creation and enhancement of public spaces, wayfinding signage, and construction of a trail along the Smith River that connects each area. Private investments for the initiative have been provided by Bassett Furniture and Eastman Chemical Foundation. As part of the revitalization project, the County completed restoration of the 1920's Bassett Historic Train Depot, which plays a major role in Bassett's central business district, and serves as an events space, allowing year-round use. At an estimated \$3.2 million, the Small-Town Collaborative's Phase I improvements completed in 2019 included façade and building improvements in Bassett and outdoor renovations at Fieldale's Recreation Center. Also in 2019, Henry County received a \$50,000 planning grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission, for a feasibility study and building analysis to determine interior renovations at the historic Fieldale Recreation Center. Potential uses for the renovated community asset include back office/small business spaces, community meeting and event spaces, an historic museum area to attract tourists, and other uses to promote economic development. The entire Small Towns initiative supports economic development, tourism, and quality of life.

As a tourism gateway to the County and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Patrick County initiated the Meadows of Dan Revitalization project in 2016, with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) planning grant award from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. In the planning phase, the County worked with an engineering firm along with the public and local businesses to create a master plan, formulating a conceptual plan to grow tourism and boost the economy. Some key elements to be incorporated include recreational trails, water and sewer, façade improvements, an indoor performance venue, signage and kiosks. The County was awarded \$732,840 from VDOT for development of trails and sidewalks in the community, eventually connecting the trail to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

In Franklin County, village plans have been approved for the Westlake community at Smith Mountain Lake and for the Ferrum community. These plans will help guide growth and development and include enhancements to support economic development, tourism, housing, and transportation as well as recreation and quality of life. In Rocky Mount, opportunities abound for several vacant storefronts, with potential downtown transformation of prominent commercial properties. Murals have been created in the downtown area to bring together art and history and help revitalize the Town.

Designation in the Virginia Main Street Program helps smaller communities revitalize stagnant downtown areas and attracts investment. Managed by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), this program provides a variety of consulting services, grants, training and other assistance focused on revitalizing smaller, historic communities. There are currently 29 existing Main Street Communities in Virginia. In the region, Danville has attained this designation to build vibrancy in the City.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES/RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The four major outdoor recreational attractions in the region are Smith Mountain and Leesville Lakes, Philpott Lake, Fairy Stone State Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Smith Mountain Lake (20,000 acres in size with 500-mile shoreline) and Leesville Lake (3,400 acres in size with 100-mile shoreline) form Appalachian Power Company's combination pumped storage and hydroelectric development project along the Roanoke River. The lake was recently ranked 16th in the northeast region for bass fishing by Bassmaster Magazine. Philpott Lake (2,880 acres in size with 100-mile shoreline) is a flood control and hydroelectric project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Smith River. Surrounding the lake are 6,500 acres of federally-owned land. Recreational access is gained at a number of public areas around the shore which feature boat launching ramps, swimming beaches, picnic areas, and campgrounds.

Fairy Stone State Park (4,850 acres in size), just southwest of Philpott Lake, is centered on a 168-acre lake that is stocked with game fish and also provides a large swimming beach with a modern bathhouse. Other park facilities include a nature center, amphitheater, picnic areas, campgrounds, vacation cabins, bridle paths, and hiking trails. Fairy Stone, built in the 1930's, is one of the six original Virginia State Parks. According to a recent report by Virginia Tech, Virginia State Parks generated a total economic impact of about \$343 million in 2019. The total economic activity stimulated by visitors to state parks during 2019 was approximately \$437 million, up from 2018. The study found that for every \$1 allocated for state parks, \$17.68 was generated in new money, on average.

The fourth major outdoor recreational attraction within the region is the Blue Ridge Parkway. About 60 miles of the parkway weave along the northwestern boundaries of Franklin and Patrick Counties including visitor-use areas at Smart View, Rocky Knob, and Mabry's Mill. As a unit of the National Park System, the Blue Ridge Parkway extends along the southern Appalachians past vistas of natural beauty and rural landscapes lightly shaped by the activities of man. The Parkway attracts millions of visitors each year to view the scenic beauty. A 2018 report found the Parkway was visited by 14.7 million people spending about \$1.1 billion, with a cumulative economic impact of about \$1.3 billion and supporting 15,900 jobs in communities along the historic 469-mile pathway. According to a recent report, nearly 15 million visitors came in 2019, an increase of 1.9% from 2018. In 2006, the 217 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia was designated as an All-American Road, the highest honor bestowed by the Federal Highway Administration to acknowledge roadways that possess extraordinary scenic, historic, recreational, and other intrinsic qualities.

The region is home to several wildlife management areas and natural area preserves. Wildlife Management Areas include the aforementioned Fairystone Farms (5,781 acres) in Patrick and Henry counties, Turkeycock Mountain (20,000+ acres) bordering Franklin and Henry counties, and White Oak Mountain (2,748 acres) and Smith Mountain (~5,000 acres) in Pittsylvania County. Natural Area Preserve Systems include the 1,392-acre Grassy Hill and the newly designated 78.57-acre Bald Knob in Rocky Mount and Franklin County, and the 81-acre Gravely Nature Preserve in Henry County.

Recent impacts from hazardous events (Tropical Storms Florence and Michael) have caused concerns for dams in the area. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation signed the "MOU for Joint Procurement of an Engineering Services Term Contract" in 2019. Excess rain prompted watershed dam officials to respond swiftly with successful implementation of an annual drill and updated Emergency Action Plans.

In Pittsylvania County, the Cherrystone and Roaring Fork Dams have approved rehabilitation plans by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the dams built in 1965. The rehabilitation will reduce the potential for loss of life and maintain protection of the existing infrastructure. The estimated cost is \$21 million for both, with a local share of nearly \$7 million. In the next project phase, design work will get underway and could take up to 18 months to complete.

### **Tourism**

Tourism provides another potential source of income and economic stimulus for the Planning District. There are a number of tourist attractions and other alluring amenities in the District which may be given further consideration in the future. Not only do these areas improve the quality of life of the region's citizens, but they also generate a profitable influx of visitors from outside the immediate area. Outdoor-related activities linked to mountains, scenic drives, national and state parks, and hiking rank among the most popular activities for tourists in Virginia, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Among the major attractions in the region are Smith Mountain, Leesville, and Philpott Lakes; Fairy Stone State Park; the Blue Ridge Parkway; the Crooked Road Music Trail; Floyd Fest; Rooster Walk; the Virginia Museum of Natural History; the Science Museum of Virginia at the Danville Train Station; the Carrington Pavilion; the Danville Museum of Fine Arts; the Martinsville Henry County Heritage Center and Museum; the Fayette Area Historical Initiative (FAHI) African American Cultural Center and Museum; Booker T. Washington National Monument; the Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College; the Harvester Performance Center; the R.J. Reynolds Homestead; the Jeb Stuart Birthplace; Piedmont Arts Association; TheatreWorks;



the Martinsville Speedway; the Wood Brothers Racing Museum; and the Virginia Motorsports Museum and Hall of Fame. Danville Welcome Center, located near U.S. 29 across from the Dan Daniel Memorial Park entrance in Danville, serves as an office for tourism. In Martinsville, the Martinsville Henry County Economic Development Corporation's Tourism Division and the Visitor Center are housed in the New College Institute facility in the uptown area. The Visitor Center serves as a state-designated tourism site.

Area chambers of commerce and local tourism offices worked with the Martinsville and South Boston Speedways, at the time, to promote Virginia's Racing Region. Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania counties, the Town of Stuart, and the cities of Danville and Martinsville are among a number of localities situated in the southern region of the Commonwealth regarded as Virginia's Racing Region which serves to increase tourism via promotion of auto racing. A visitor's guide provides information for visitors on places to see and other tourist related information. The 1997 Virginia General Assembly approved a resolution designating the area as "Virginia's Racing Region" to demonstrate the Commonwealth's support of the movement to entice more racing fans to spend more time in the region. The Martinsville Speedway, a major tourist destination located in Henry County, has been in the NASCAR circuit since the organization's inception in 1949 - longer than any other track used by NASCAR. Capable of accommodating more than 63,000 fans, the venue hosts four major races per year on its .526-mile oval, is the shortest and oldest track on the NASCAR circuit. Other notable racing facilities nearby include Virginia International Raceway (VIR) in Alton and South Boston Speedway in neighboring Halifax County. Additionally, the Wood Brothers Racing Museum in Stuart pays tribute to Wood Brothers Racing, the longest continuously-operating NASCAR Cup Series.

To promote the traditional music, history, and culture within the region, the concept for "The Crooked Road: Virginia's Music Heritage Trail" began in 2003. The 333-mile route generates tourism and economic development in the Appalachian region of Southwestern Virginia by focusing on the region's unique musical heritage. As a result, "The Crooked Road" now includes nineteen counties (including Franklin and Patrick), four cities, fifty-four towns (including Rocky Mount and Stuart), five regional planning districts, four state agencies, two tourism organizations, and a large number of music venues. Although the trail focuses on the region's unique heritage music, it also includes outdoor recreational activities, museums, crafts, and other historic/cultural programs. Highway signage identifies the 333-mile route as it winds through the scenic terrain of the region. The economic impact of The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, has contributed generously to the region's prosperity, bringing in approximately \$9.2 million annually and creating 131 jobs in Southwest Virginia, as of 2016. Additional information is available at [www.myswva.org/tcr](http://www.myswva.org/tcr).

As part of the 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network, a sister project of The Crooked Road Music Trail, Franklin and Patrick counties were included in brochures to promote the artisan trail. Like The Crooked Road, Franklin County and Rocky Mount serve as the eastern gateway for the 'Round the Mountain trail. The brochures include listings for participating artisans, venues, farms, lodges, and restaurants along the trail and help to promote heritage tourism while contributing to Southwest Virginia's creative economy efforts. For more information, please visit <https://roundthemountain.org/>. As artisan trails spread throughout the state, the Artisans Center of Virginia assisted in development of the Smith River Artisan Trail Network in Martinsville and Henry County; the trail was fully implemented in 2015. The Artisans Center of Virginia assists in marketing the area to increase tourism, promote the region's cultural assets, improve quality of life, and enhance the region's identity. More details are provided at <http://artisantrailnetwork.org/index.php/trail/smith-river-artisan-trail>.

The Danville Art Trail is an 18-month exhibit of outdoor sculptures in public places, combined with murals, Victorian architecture, and many other points of interest. A recent study found the artisan industry created about \$572.2 million in economic impact throughout Virginia, in support of some 12,000 full-time jobs generating more than \$250 million. The average spending was an estimated \$260 per person.

Re-opening in March 2019 as the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center and Marketplace, the former Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway is located on the west side of Abingdon. The renewed vision directs the center to "Showcase a comprehensive picture of Southwest Virginia and the creative economy as a gateway to the region..." With an expanded visitor center, the 28,000-SF building serves as a focal point and portal to the heritage tourism efforts that connect tourists to regional artisan studios, music venues, craft trails, outdoor recreation, and more sites throughout the Southwest Virginia region. The facility draws thousands of visitors and produces significant revenue annually from the sale of crafts, food, and beverages. More information is available at <https://swvaculturalcenter.com/>

In 2019, the Friends of Southwest Virginia developed a Creative Economy Plan, associated with the regional economic development partners working in the creative economy cluster. The plan integrates and aligns with the CEDS regional goals and strategies from each of the five planning district partners in the Southwest Virginia 19-county footprint. For more details, visit <https://friendsofswva.org/about/creative-economy-plan/>.

Heritage tourism is very popular, with a reported \$7.7 billion economic impact across Virginia, including \$3.5 billion in employment payrolls that supports 105,000 jobs for all affected industries - not just tourism. According to the 2017 report, of the estimated 50 million annual visitors in Virginia, more than 42 million return annually to visit heritage sites. In our region, The Crooked Road generously contributes to heritage tourism, among many other sites. Heritage trails are being created throughout the region. Another popular attraction in Virginia and the region is agritourism. Farmers are offering on-farm festivals, pick-your-own harvests, hayrides, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, tours, and other activities. There are increased numbers of apple, peach, and strawberry festivals, and other events across the region as well. Many wineries, breweries, and distilleries in the region offer tours and tasting events.

### **Agricultural**

A 2017 study indicates agriculture and forestry contributed \$91 billion annually to Virginia's economy, increasing from \$70 billion in 2013. Combined, these industries supported 442,200 Virginia jobs, an increase of 7% from 2013. Agriculture accounts for \$70 billion and forestry generates the remaining \$21 billion. Agriculture continues to play an important but decreasing role in the Planning District's economy. With the current economic situation, farmers across the region are caught in a money squeeze with the cost of fertilizer, chemicals, hay, and transportation services. The last several Censuses of Agriculture indicate that agricultural land in the Commonwealth has declined drastically from a high of 8,753,625 acres in 1992 to a low of 8,103,925 in 2007; that figure rebounded slightly to 8,302,444 in 2012.

The region, which was a leading producer of flue-cured tobacco and dairy products in the Commonwealth of Virginia, also experienced changes in the agricultural component of its economic base due to changes in regulations and the elimination of tobacco quotas in 2004. It also should be noted that the Tobacco Transition Payment Program (TTPP) has expired. With regard to tobacco, three Virginia counties accounted for over half (56.7%) of the state's tobacco production based on 2017 data. Among the three, Pittsylvania County in the West Piedmont Region accounted for 19.5% and ranked second in the Commonwealth. The tobacco grown in the region is of higher quality than in most places around the world. As Virginia adjusts to a smaller tobacco industry, the key factor will be alternative uses available for land, labor, and capital that were once used in tobacco production. Within the region, a number of farmers are exploring hemp to replace tobacco crops. However, the availability of crop insurance, planting costs, and testing standardization are noted obstacles to hemp crop production.

Dairying, combined with cattle and calf sales that often take place on dairy farms, now represents a greater share of the District's agricultural economy. Franklin County ranked second out of 59 milk-producing counties in Virginia. However, the number of dairy farms in the County has declined from 72 to 70, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Changes in regulations and milk prices have brought about these problems. Data shows the dairy industry generates \$4.3 billion annually in Virginia and supports 16,000 jobs.

While traditional industries in the Dan River Region including textiles and tobacco have waned, other sectors which have filled the void include wineries; nurseries; prawn production; value-added sectors such as beekeeping; and outdoor- and recreation-based activities such as bird-watching, hunting, fishing, and agritourism. The craft beer industry has been growing in Virginia, as well as in the region, in recent years. A recent study by Earth Policy Institute found that nationwide, aquaculture production is set to surpass beef production; this trend is taking place in Virginia. Aquaculture was described as being among the fastest-growing sectors of agriculture in Virginia, ranking 4th in the U.S. with more than \$112 million in 2018 sales. Blue Ridge Aquaculture in Martinsville is the world's largest, sustainable producer of aquaculture-raised tilapia, producing 4 million pounds a year.

Virginia farmers continue to explore new crops such as hops to supply the ever-growing craft beer industry and a new cash crop tested on farms in Franklin, Henry, Halifax, and Pittsylvania counties, with expanded growth in 2018 - the purple sweet potato, more commonly found in Okinawa and Hawaii. In addition, farmers are planting more cotton, peanuts, and soybeans.

Another new crop on the horizon for Virginia's farmers is industrial hemp as a potential replacement for tobacco. As of July 1, 2018, Virginia relaxed legislation to open the licensing process for anyone to grow industrial hemp, a variety of the cannabis sativa family. However, many restrictions remain on exactly what can be grown and to whom it may be sold. Following the federal farm bill signed into law in December which effectively legalized the plant, Virginia lawmakers are exploring changes to state laws and regulations that may make it easier for farmers to pursue the new cash crop. The plant is used for a variety of products, from food, to creams and nutritional supplements, and items such as rope, paper, clothing, and construction materials. The plant has potential as a biofuel and livestock feed, but for now, requires additional research.

During 2019, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) launched the first Plant Endophyte Research Center in the U.S. The center will help study sustainable solutions for enhanced agricultural products from around the world, characterize endophytes or beneficial bacteria, and fight crop diseases. In early 2020, the Institute announced plans to partner with Virginia Tech on an indoor farming facility. The Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center will grow plants in a hydroponic setting, exposing crop roots to nutrient-rich water. IALR will launch the program with Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and the school's Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The center will be housed in an existing 4,200-SF greenhouse on the Institute's campus and will incorporate high-tech engineering and technology. In addition, research will be provided on raising fish in controlled environments using aquaponics. A number of demonstration crops will be produced. The environment allows for year-round growing and protects the plants from disease, producing high-quality foods.

With the decline of traditional agricultural products such as tobacco, more farmers are turning to wine production. The Commonwealth is an ideal location for the production of European varieties of wines including chardonnay, merlot, and sauvignon. Wineries have increased across the state in recent years. Virginia's wine industry is creating an economic impact, according to a study released by the Governor's office which announced that wine sales reached an all-time high. The wine industry contributes more than \$1.37 billion annually to Virginia's economy. Virginia now ranks 5th in the U.S. for grape growing, wine production, and export sales, but the lack of new vineyard plantings is beginning to restrict the Commonwealth's growth in the wine industry.

Growing in popularity, a number of craft brewers operate in the region. Craft beer contributes \$1 billion in economic impact and employs nearly 9,000 across the state. Also, several distilleries have opened throughout the area. Virginia distilleries brought in more than \$7.2 million in 2017, according to the Virginia ABC. Meaderies may also be found in the region producing the alcoholic drink made from honey and similar to wine.

Despite the drop in tobacco production, significant operations still exist such as a stemming and redrying facility operated by Japan Tobacco International. Strengths in the Dan River Region which favor agriculture include a low cost of living and low taxes, a good quality of life, abundant water and land, and an effective transportation infrastructure. Weaknesses include lack of an available workforce, increased farm labor costs, a hesitation to enter the agricultural industry, ineffective timber management, a high rate of land fragmentation, high startup costs, few facilities in the area engaged in slaughtering and processing, and residential area encroachment.

Although agriculture continues to play an important role in the Planning District's economy, it must be recognized that since the early 1950's the role of agriculture has gradually eroded. The emergence of manufacturing and industry in the early 1950's signaled a major turning point in the direction of the District's economy. Because of better paying full- and part-time jobs as well as the guarantee of year-round income, manufacturing surpassed agriculture in both employment and total income.

In addition, there has been a growth in the number of farmers' markets across the state and country to meet the increasing demand for fresh foods. With the abundance of the area's rich, robust farmland, the West Piedmont Region is poised to capitalize on this growing trend that would boost the local economy and preserve precious landscapes, while providing enormous health benefits to residents of the region. The Planning District Commission updated the West Piedmont Local Foods Guide in 2018 to promote the region's farmers and create a network for farmers, businesses, and consumers. The local foods initiative also provides stewardship of our agricultural lands and promotes health benefits in the region. The guide is available at:

[www.wppdc.org/content/wppdc/uploads/PDF/docs\\_publications/env\\_nat\\_resources/wp\\_lfg\\_2018.pdf](http://www.wppdc.org/content/wppdc/uploads/PDF/docs_publications/env_nat_resources/wp_lfg_2018.pdf).

Other local foods initiatives include land stewardship, incorporating best management practices, community supported agriculture (CSA) where individuals contribute funds to a farmer in exchange for a share of the farm products grown, and innovative energy production with biomass facilities. Biomass is being viewed as a profitable market for local growers. The agriculture industry would be instrumental in producing biomass and much interest has been expressed by a number of companies to work with farmers in the region. Some companies have been developing agricultural products into fuel and conducting research to generate petroleum products from tobacco and other resources.

Another popular interest in Virginia and the region is agritourism. Farmers are offering on-farm festivals, pick-your-own harvests, hayrides, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, tours, and other activities. There is an increased number of apple, peach, and strawberry festivals and other events across the region as well. As revealed in the 2012 Census of Agriculture, agritourism continues to be among the fastest-growing sectors of agriculture.

### **Forestry**

The West Piedmont Planning District has a large percentage of its base employment dependent on forest industry employment. Base employment is the portion of the locality's total employment devoted to producing products for outside markets. This brings money into the area from outside and provides the driving force of the local economy. Therefore, the forest industry is very important to the economy of the West Piedmont Planning District. According to the Weldon Cooper Center, the forestry industry provides 108,000 jobs in Virginia and contributes \$21 billion annually to the state's economy.

Forest production includes logging, sawmills, wood preservation, veneer and plywood manufacturing, furniture manufacturing, cabinetry and other millwork, paper products, and nurseries to mention a few. Forests provide for recreational activities as well as wildlife habitats, natural reserves, and preservation of water quality.

Outdoor-related activities linked to mountains, scenic drives, national and state parks, and hiking rank among the most popular activities for tourists in Virginia, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). There is a direct correlation between forestry-related recreational activities and travel and spending impacts in Virginia and the region. Forestry tourism and recreation provides economic impacts with activities such as freshwater fishing, hunting, hiking and camping, wildlife watching, and others. The forested landscape brings important environmental services and other social economic benefits with improved water quality and flood control, air quality, conservation, and preservation of scenic beauty.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

### **Medical Services**

Health services and facilities are important aspects of a community which industrial and business prospects consider in their evaluations. Recent growth in this area will help to enhance the quality of life in the Planning District. However, the region is medically underserved, and the shortage is particularly severe in primary care areas. Recognizing the need for additional physicians to provide this care, several medical centers for doctors' offices have been constructed in the Planning District. Community medical centers, in general, are said to be a draw for economic development projects. Currently, three private hospitals serve the Planning District, each of which has undergone several renovation and expansion programs.

These are: Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital, Rocky Mount; SOVAH (formerly Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County and Danville Regional Medical Center) which serves both Martinsville/Henry County and Danville/Pittsylvania County. Pioneer Community Hospital in Stuart, which served Patrick County and the Town, closed in September 2017. Consequently, the hospital was purchased by Virginia Community Capital (the lender) for \$5.7 million. Options to reopen the medical facility continue to be explored by the County. In 2019, the County received a \$50,000 Appalachian Regional Commission planning grant to assist in improving health care access since the closing of the County's only hospital. In Franklin County, the \$6 million Tri-Area Community Health Center opened in Ferrum in 2020, to provide much needed medical services.

As many hospitals in rural areas across Virginia continue to shutter, telemedicine provides opportunities to fill the gap in medical services and is essential to residents who do not have access to medical care. Telehealth services at community health centers provide access to specialty care. These services are greatly needed in rural areas. Virginia is a national leader in the field of telehealth services which has proven to improve care and patient satisfaction while reducing hospitalizations.

Several medevac facilities serve the region with Carilion Clinic's medevac helicopter base at its Westlake facility to reduce medical response times to communities located south of Roanoke; the "Lifeguard 10" medical helicopter service enhances response times to Franklin, Bedford, Pittsylvania, and Henry counties, and the cities of Danville and Martinsville; and Wake Forest Baptist Health established a helicopter base at Blue Ridge Airport in western Henry County to reduce medical response times to Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania counties, the cities of Martinsville and Danville, and other locations in Virginia and North Carolina. The air medical helicopter increases support for both the business and health climate in the area.

The new medical facilities established in the region will enable residents to become healthier and help address an expected physician shortage in the future. Recent health rankings by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute found the region ranked relatively low in terms of citizens' health. Possible reasons for the low numbers include low-income levels, poverty, low labor force participation, and the absence of motivation to exercise. With regard to mental health, additional outpatient counseling and related services are greatly needed in the region.

The West Piedmont Region, which was significantly impacted by the loss of jobs due to plant closures and downsizings particularly in the textile, apparel, and furniture sectors, continues efforts to transform the region's economy while working to further educate the workforce and retain/expand existing businesses and attract new ones. The region has continuously dealt with the effects of globalization and implements strategies to become more diversified and competitive in the global market, with new opportunities for entrepreneurs, workforce training, and collaborations between institutions of higher education, government, and industry. The region's localities continue to invest in infrastructure and programs aimed at strengthening the economy and improving the quality of life for its citizens. While unemployment has greatly declined, underemployment remains a primary concern. The region continues to struggle with personal income due to low or stationary wages. Also, the large gap between earnings in the region and statewide persists.

### **Substance Abuse**

One major threat to society and our workforce is the growing opioid crisis. Martinsville and Henry County have had high rankings for overdoses and addiction in recent years, having had the second highest overdose ranking in the Commonwealth in February 2019. Martinsville had the second highest per capita rate in the U.S. for the number of prescription pain pills distributed from 2006-2012; however, the rate has declined recently due to several factors. This widespread epidemic threatens lives with addiction, overdoses, and deaths. It has strongly affected the working age population (those 24 to 65), shrinking this age group, and shortening the life span of Americans. Early education is one preventative measure. Experimental treatments and interventions are also being utilized to help curb this dangerous addiction. Across the U.S. and within the region, efforts continue to fight the battle against such powerful, addictive drugs and their long-term effects.

Some organizational activities have occurred in the region to help combat this significant impact to communities throughout the West Piedmont District. Through an ARC grant, Patrick Henry Community College in partnership with Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, VA, is leading an effort to identify economic approaches to address and ameliorate the opioid crisis. In addition, the West Piedmont Health District in collaboration with Virginia Tech is conducting a broadbased community effort to research the opioid crisis in the region. Initiated in 2019, Engaging Martinsville-Henry County is a community wide effort to fight addiction in the area, with key stakeholders from health care, law enforcement, non-profit and health and human service agencies, as well as other community leaders. Prioritized strategies include raising public awareness, providing more local treatment programs, improving the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, improving related local policies and guidelines, and establishing a drug court in Martinsville and Henry County. Through Piedmont Community Services, education and outreach programs are being introduced and extended to students in Martinsville and Henry County schools. Funding for the 10-session course being offered is provided by grants from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth and the Rotary Foundation



November 18, 2021

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of Franklin County, Virginia supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on November 16, 2021 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Whitlow  
County Administrator

cc: Michael Armbrister, WPPDC

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
1255 FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 112  
ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA 24151  
(540) 483-3030  
[administration@franklincountyva.gov](mailto:administration@franklincountyva.gov)  
[www.franklincountyva.gov](http://www.franklincountyva.gov)

# County of Henry

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Board of Supervisors

JIM ADAMS  
CHAIRMAN  
*Blackberry District*

RYAN ZEHR  
*Ridgeway District*

T.J. "TOMMY" SLAUGHTER  
*Reed Creek District*

Telephone (276) 634-4601



TIM HALL  
*County Administrator*

DALE WAGONER  
*Deputy County Administrator*

Board of Supervisors

DEBRA PARSONS BUCHANAN  
VICE-CHAIRMAN  
*Horsepasture District*

JOSEPH A. BRYANT  
*Collinsville District*

J. DAVID MARTIN  
*Iriswood District*

Fax (276) 634-4781

December 14, 2021

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of Henry County, Virginia supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on December 14, 2021 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

County Administrator

cc: Michael Armbrister, WPPDC





**COUNTY OF PATRICK**  
*Board of Supervisors*

1/11/2022

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of Patrick County Board of Supervisors supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

*Geri Hazelwood, County Administrator*

cc: Kristie Eberly, WPPDC

*The County of Patrick will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, medical condition or handicap, or any other status protected by law. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

December 6, 2021

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of Pittsylvania County supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on December 21, 2021 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,



David M. Smitherman  
County Administrator

cc: Kristie Eberly, WPPDC



**City of Danville**  
City Manager's Office

January 18, 2022

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of the City of Danville, Virginia supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on January 18, 2022 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

Ken Larking  
City Manager

cc: Kristie Eberly, WPPDC



12-15-2021

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of the City of Martinsville supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on 12-14-2021 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

Leon Towarnicki  
City Manager

cc: Kristie Eberly, WPPDC

TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT  
345 DONALD AVE.  
ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA 24151

540.483.7660  
FAX: 540.483.8830

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TOWN COUNCIL  
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JON W. SNEAD, *VICE MAYOR*

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BOBBY L. MOYER  
MARK H. NEWBILL  
BILLIE W. STOCKTON

ROBERT J. WOOD, *Town Manager*  
Rebecca H. Dillon, *Executive  
Administrative Assistant*

November 8, 2021

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall, Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building  
900 Market Street, Room 602  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall:

Whereas the local governing body of Town of Rocky Mount supports the West Piedmont Economic Development District Designation, this is to advise that we have elected to be covered by the Year 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in its capacity as an EDA Economic Development District. The projects included in the document's prioritized project list have been endorsed by the local governing body at its meeting on November 8, 2021 for assistance in improving the economy of our area.

On behalf of my community, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District Program.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Wood  
Town Manager

cc: Kristie Eberly, WPPDC



West Piedmont Planning District Commission  
2022