

ENVISION HAMPTON ROADS

Our Region Our Future

Hampton Roads' Regional Strategic Plan
Regional Priority Framework

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Introduction

One important requirement established for planning district commissions by the Virginia Code is the completion of a regional strategic plan with participation from local governing bodies, the business community, citizen organizations and other interested parties. This strategic plan must include regional goals and objectives, strategies to meet those goals and mechanisms for measuring progress. The intent of the plan is to promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the planning district.

To address this goal, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) initiated the *ENVISION Hampton Roads* planning process, the first regional strategic plan for the Hampton Roads Region.

An important step in this regional strategic planning process is receiving input on our goals and aspirations for the Hampton Roads Region from all areas of the community. To receive this input, the HRPDC staff attended over 85 public meetings and community events to receive broad-based community input that serves as the foundation for this regional planning effort. These meetings and community events afforded the public an opportunity to participate in this process to chart a strategic course for the future of Hampton Roads.

This community participation process identified six important regional goals or priority areas that form the basis of *ENVISION Hampton Roads*:

- Regional Economic Health & Job Creation
- Education and Training
- Diverse Community
- Healthy Community
- Living with Our Environment
- Transportation

The primary goal of the *ENVISION Hampton Roads* process is to promote a collaborative regional planning process to allow our region to reach its full potential. A focus of this effort will be to identify existing groups already working on these priority areas, and connecting and aligning these efforts to produce results.

A brief summary of the regional aspirations identified by community members is provided on the following pages. Each section provides an aspiration under each priority area, as well as a brief explanation of what we heard from the community.

Regional Economic Health & Job Creation

Aspiration:

Hampton Roads is a top performing regional economy recognized as a leading destination for business and industry.

What we heard:

The key to a strong Hampton Roads economy is diversification. *ENVISION Hampton Roads* participants stressed the importance of supporting the retention and expansion of our military bases and related jobs while becoming more diversified by also creating jobs in other business sectors. A first step is the creation of a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) that evaluates our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, presents regional strategies to attract, retain and expand businesses and outlines the necessary programs and infrastructure needed to support job creation such as ample housing, roads, water, & sewer. Participants not only support the attraction of new businesses and industry to our Region, but also strategies to expand existing industries including the development of “home-grown” businesses by our region’s entrepreneurs. They also support the idea of public/private partnerships, and the ability to pursue opportunities for technological entrepreneurship co-operative programs. Participants believe that the Hampton Roads Region, with its military, shipbuilding and university/college presence, can be known as a “*Center for Innovation*”. It was also suggested that Hampton Roads could begin exploring revenue sharing opportunities and build on existing shared services arrangements.

Education and Training

Aspiration:

The Hampton Roads Region is recognized as having a renowned early childhood and K-12 educational system that adequately prepares the Region's youth for the future they desire and as having a strong workforce that attracts and supports businesses.

What We Heard:

ENVISION Hampton Roads participants support efforts geared towards improving the quality and access of the Region's early childhood education system, K-12 education school system, and technical and vocational education and training. Participants also support educational enhancement programs, like STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, & Mathematics), being incorporated into all schools throughout the Region as well as ensuring that all students have access to libraries and technology. Participants also support collaboration between the region's school districts and programs that connect our region's students with job opportunities and pathways that help them prepare and compete for available jobs.

Additionally, *ENVISION Hampton Roads* participants support an effective and adaptable workforce development system that educates and prepares workers for employment and ensures the Region's workforce skills match the needs of business now and into the future. This effort will require close collaboration between the business community, workforce investment boards, and the educational system. The Region should examine what workforce development programs currently exist, support the expansion of those that are successful, and work closely with all partners to ensure our Region has programs to support the workforce of the future.

Diverse Community

Aspiration:

The Hampton Roads Region is recognized as a community where residents of all backgrounds feel safe, welcomed, valued, and respected.

What we heard:

A number of factors contribute to the diversity of Hampton Roads. Our military installations attract a diverse population from many locations resulting in a diversity of world cultures calling Hampton Roads home. The Region's coastal environment, cities, counties, urban, suburban and rural areas, can satisfy any desired lifestyle or business need. An assorted collection of public and private colleges, trade schools and military personnel provide a workforce for employers in a variety of industries.

Our regional diversity is an important part of our brand and needs to be embraced and leveraged as a competitive edge for growing our economy. In today's competition for human capital to support growing economies, our regional acceptance of all makes Hampton Roads a strong competitor for jobs and industries in the global marketplace. Investing in efforts that are geared towards inclusion and engagement is the key to the success of this effort.

Healthy Community

Aspiration:

All Hampton Roads residents are provided an opportunity to live healthy lives with access to recreational activities, healthy food, quality housing choices, and programs and services that maintain and improve their well-being.

What we heard:

ENVISION Hampton Roads participants discussed the social and economic benefits of living in a healthy and productive community. During this discussion, participants recognized that there were several components that contribute to a healthy community, including regular physical activity, good nutrition and access to healthy foods, tobacco and substance abuse prevention, mental health and well-being, public safety, access to quality health care, poverty reduction, and access to functional and affordable housing. It was also stated that our communities should be designed to promote active lifestyles by providing walking and biking paths, as well as parks for exercise and recreation. Through education, outreach, awareness activities and enrichment programs, participants felt it was vital that Hampton Roads develop a regional initiative that promotes a healthy community for its residents.

Living With Our Environment

Aspiration:

The Hampton Roads Region is known as a model community for coastal resiliency that values and protects its natural assets and built environment.

What We Heard:

Our Region must capitalize on its unique geography and natural assets while ensuring their protection. Our environmental assets distinguish Hampton Roads from other metropolitan regions and form the quality of life that our residents value. The community's coastal environment, strategic location on the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, rivers estuaries and natural harbor make significant contributions to the Region's character and economy. *ENVISION Hampton Roads* participants believe that Hampton Roads can set the standard for protecting and living with our natural environment by continuing efforts to plan for coastal resiliency, sea level rise, subsidence, flood mitigation, water quality, stormwater management, wastewater, water supply, recycling and environmental education and awareness initiatives. Participants also expressed the importance of protecting the region's built environment through coordinating emergency management and disaster recovery efforts and strategies. It was stated that the Region should work collaboratively to promote sustainable building practices, renewable energy, and water quality protection.

Transportation

Aspiration:

Hampton Road's regional transportation system is well-balanced, accessible to all and supports the efficient movement of people and goods into, out of and around the Region.

What we heard:

Meeting participants understood the importance of a safe, reliable and accessible regional transportation system to the community's quality of life and regional economy. Hampton Roads residents support a multi-modal transportation system that supports automobile, freight, air, rail, public transportation, bicycling and walking. Residents support a variety of transportation strategies and tactics, including congestion management techniques, bike and pedestrian trails, passenger rail and the expansion of light rail.

ENVISION Hampton Roads participants will be connected to the work of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), the Region's federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that conducts a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process. This process includes not only roads but transportation choices such as passenger rail, public transportation, freight and active transportation (walking and biking). In addition, the HRTPO is working with the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission to advance our Region's regional roadway priority projects to construction.

Next Steps

Moving forward, *ENVISION Hampton Roads* seeks to apply the following collaborative process to each priority area:

- Identify existing entities already working on each priority area
- Create a collaborative roundtable for each priority area to promote the exchange of information on current efforts and discuss opportunities
- Identify indicators to benchmark the Region's current status under each priority area, including how the Hampton Roads Region compares to other peer regions.
- Identify action steps for implementation
- Update the regional indicators on a regular basis to track progress and guide changes to action strategies to produce the desired results.