
Hampton Roads Regional Section

Introduction

As a supplement to the Virginia State Tourism Plan, this section is dedicated to the Hampton Roads region. ***It is strongly suggested that the Virginia State Tourism Plan be read in conjunction with this regional section.***

The key elements of this regional section include the following:

- A situational analysis of tourism in the region, which highlights the key tourism products, regional strengths and challenges, competitive considerations, and other relevant information, is presented to set the framework for the regional strategy.
- Key product themes of focus are identified and applicable objectives and strategies are presented for the five plan outcomes of Products, Pillars (infrastructure), Partnerships, Promotions, and Policies for the Hampton Roads tourism strategy.
- Action steps specific to the region, which are above and beyond the actions of the state level plan are outlined.
- Stakeholders proposed to be involved in implementing the plan are also identified.
- Key takeaways for the Hampton Roads' tourism development in the next five years are outlined.

Process for Findings

Numerous factors formed the basis of Hampton Roads' tourism strategy, including the tourism industry's own vision for the region, an inventory and analysis of the tourism assets currently offered, input and analysis of visitor information, and an analysis of the competitive environment. These four key areas are further described below:

Industry Vision: The industry vision served as the foundation for the region's strategy, based on input from approximately 1,300 responses statewide, including stakeholders from Hampton Roads through workshops, surveys, and discussions. The desire among Hampton Roads stakeholders is to build upon the region's coastal and historical tourism assets and further diversify its tourism asset base, including additional family-oriented attractions, active outdoor recreation, meetings, sports, and other features.

Tourism Assets: The Hampton Roads tourism assets were analyzed by the study team. This included the current mix of tourism products such as attractions, visitor activities, hotel inventory, natural assets and topography, industry base, and socio-cultural character. The strengths and

challenges of the region's current characteristics such as infrastructure, road/air accessibility, partnerships, policies, and promotions were also discussed with numerous key stakeholders and assessed. In addition to the study team's personal experience of Hampton Roads, other input contributed to an understanding of the existing tourism assets, including input from tourism stakeholders, VTC databases, local tourism marketing information/promotional information from organizations such as the Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance, DMOs, and chambers of commerce, existing tourism plans for Newport News, Smithfield/Isle of Wright, and Virginia Beach, tourism industry associations, tourism industry resources, PwC resources, and others.

Consumer Perspective: Research was analyzed on a global, national, state, and regional level. This research included visitor trends, activities, perceptions/preferences, performance indications, and emerging elements. Macro trends impacting tourism such as population and demographic trends, GDP/GSP, unemployment rates, consumer prices, personal consumption spending, gas prices, and other factors impacting tourism in a broad sense were also analyzed.

Sources of research related to Virginia and Hampton Roads compiled by the VTC were analyzed, which included profiles of past visitors (by traveler type, geography, season, and activity), traveler attitude studies, and other data. Profiles of past visitors (statewide) showed activities engaged in which are offered in Hampton Roads, seasonality, party size, spending, demographics, income levels, travel distance and patterns, duration of trip, travel party origin, and other relevant information. Attitude studies of past and prospective travelers provided additional insight for Hampton Roads in terms of appeal, perceptions of tourism products, activities, and destination attributes as well as other relevant hub and spoke travel behavior and activities engaged in by past and prospective visitors to Virginia. Visitor data was also analyzed against existing tourism assets.

Visitor insights show Hampton Roads has a high favorability rating among past and prospective travelers, particularly higher income earners and families. It was highly rated for being good for families, its accommodations, its overall atmosphere, and for being relaxing. The region is well recognized for warm sunny beaches and being family-friendly and historic. Virginia's beach/ocean and the Historic Triangle area were top of mind features. In terms of outdoor recreation, Hampton Roads offers fishing, hiking, camping, golfing, paddle sports, and biking, but these were not rated as prominent in visitors' minds. Furthermore, the majority of visitors to Virginia are likely to visit an ocean beach as well as visit a historical site on a future vacation. However, traffic in the region is recognized as an area for improvement.

Additional state/regional sources included data on visitor spending patterns based on economic impact data in the region, state parks attendance, welcome center statistics, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the Economic Impact of Wine and Grapes on the State of Virginia, the Virginia Surface Transportation Plan 2035, and other sources. Examples of national and international sources include data from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, U.S. Travel Association, Office of Travel & Tourism Industries (OTTI), MMGY Global, Outdoor Industry Association, U.S. Culture and Heritage Travel Council, National Trust for Historic Preservation, World Food Travel Association, National Parks

Service, Smith Travel Research (STR), America's Byways, Woods & Poole, other U.S. government sources, travel industry publications and articles, and other relevant sources.

Competitive Perspective: To understand the offering and competitive positioning of Virginia and the Hampton Roads region, research and analysis was conducted which evaluated destinations, product offerings, market segments, and key strengths of competition on a regional basis and analysis of products, tourism spending, product rankings, and best practices and trends in tourism product areas on a statewide/national basis. For the Hampton Roads, the coastal areas of Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina were analyzed, which included Maryland's Ocean City and Baltimore areas, North Carolina's Outer Banks, and South Carolina's Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head, and Charleston. We also analyzed additional historical areas of Philadelphia and Washington D.C. More specifically, areas of those states were analyzed for key product strengths. While there is diversity in the region, competitive insights show that similar coastal destinations offer beaches, water-oriented outdoor recreation, family-friendly attractions, and coastal towns with heritage and culture. The region's generally family/value destination image may overshadow higher-end elements available, and those higher-end images may be more prominent in competitive destinations such as Charleston, Hilton Head, and the Outer Banks. The region's historical assets are a critical benefit for distinction, though historic Charleston, D.C. and Philadelphia also compete for the history-seeking traveler.

Sources of this competitive information included, but were not limited to, review of tourism marketing websites/promotional information, tourism marketing and strategic plans, tourism organization annual reports, tourism industry publications and articles, rankings, available consumer-oriented research (statewide) which addresses competition, and tourism companies (outfitters, tour guides, etc.).

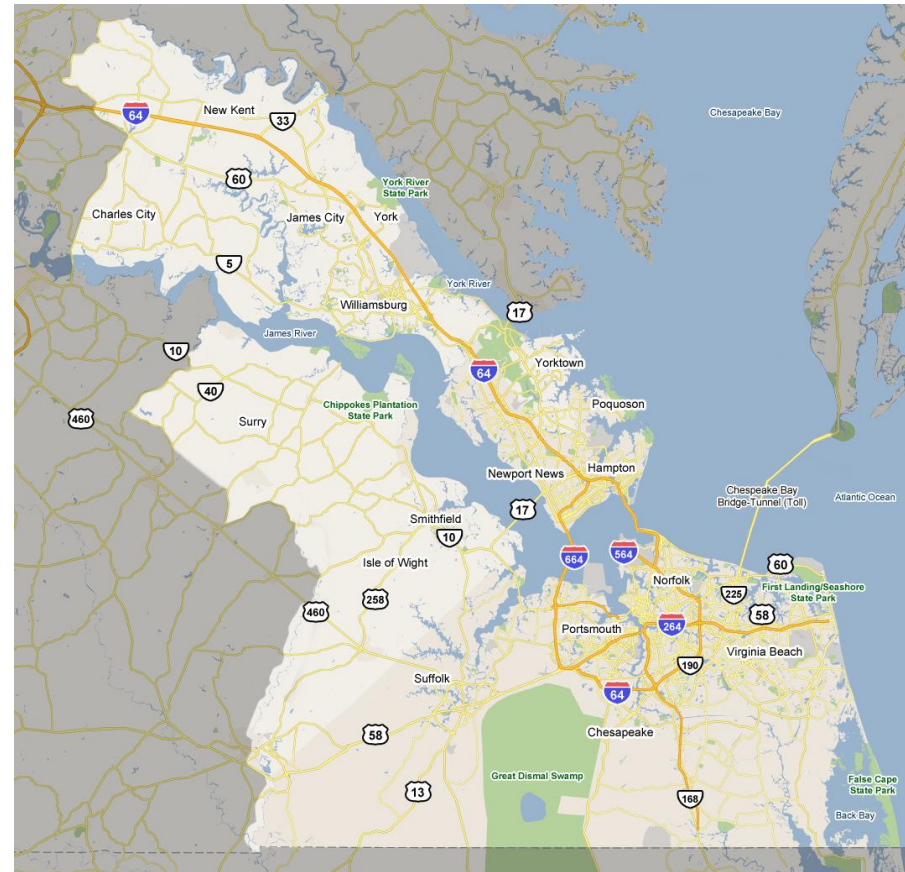
Tourism Situation

The Hampton Roads region is situated in the southeast portion of the state along the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay coastlines. The region is bisected by the James River and connected through a number of tunnels and bridges. With its water presence, the region offers a variety of outdoor opportunities, including beaches, but is also well known for its history experiences with assets region-wide and for its appeal as a value destination to families.

The region has over 1.6 million residents. The most populous cities include Virginia Beach (438,000), Norfolk (243,000), and Chesapeake (220,000). Hampton Roads is a well-established tourism destination. It accounted for over \$3.9 billion in travel and tourism expenditures in 2011 (approximately 19 percent of the state's overall travel and tourism expenditures), which represents the second largest share among the regions and an increase of 6.3 percent since 2007. While Hampton Roads comprises a significant share of the state's tourism expenditures, and expenditures have been growing, its pace lags that of the state overall.

The region has a number of established destination marketing organizations and recently formed the Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance to serve as a regional destination marketing organization for the Hampton Roads and Eastern Shore regions. The alliance has brought together stakeholders among the region and has synergistic potential to enhance the profile of the region.

Visitor data was also analyzed against existing tourism assets. Visitor insights show Hampton Roads has a high favorability rating among past and prospective travelers, particularly higher income earners and families. It was highly rated for being good for families, its accommodations, its overall atmosphere, and for being relaxing. The region was well recognized for warm sunny beaches and being family-friendly and



Regional Facts:

- Region Population: 1.6 million
- Largest Town/city: 438,000
- Border States: NC
- Interstates: I-64
- Commercial Airports: 2
- 2011 Tourism Expenditures: \$3.9 billion
- 2007-11 Expenditure Growth: 6.3%

historic. Virginia's beach/ocean and the Historic Triangle area were top of mind features. In terms of outdoor recreation, Hampton Roads offers fishing, hiking, camping, golfing, paddle sports, and biking, but these were not rated as prominent in visitors' minds. Furthermore, the majority of visitors to Virginia are likely to visit an ocean beach as well as visit a historical site on a future vacation. However, traffic in the region is recognized as an area for improvement.

History and heritage is prominent in the region and have historically served as key visitor strengths. Well-known attractions include Colonial Williamsburg, Historic Jamestowne, Jamestown Settlement, Yorktown Battlefield, and the Yorktown Victory Center. Historic homes and plantations are also located throughout the region. Historical accommodations, such as The Cavalier, Williamsburg Inn, and Williamsburg Lodge and Colonial Houses, are available in addition to the healthy hotel inventory across chain scales, including upscale lodging as well as resorts such as Kingsmill Resort & Spa and vacation ownership properties. However, a cited challenge has been visitation declines related to historical experiences, highlighting the importance of refreshing experiences in the region.

Furthermore, the region has a strong military culture, with maritime and military history featured at museums such as Nauticus, the Mariners' Museum, the Naval Shipyard Museum, Virginia War Museum, and Fort Monroe, among others. In addition, the region is home to numerous military facilities including Norfolk Naval Base, Camp Peary, Fort Eustis, Langley Air Force Base, Naval Air Station Oceana, and others. However, the potential closure of bases and reductions to defense spending are economic concerns for the area.

The outdoors is another strong element which is largely tied to the area's coastlines, including the beaches, Chesapeake Bay, and its rivers. The Virginia Beach area has nearly 30 miles of Atlantic oceanfront, a paved boardwalk, and outdoor activities such as fishing, surfing, canoeing, kayaking, and sailing. Outdoor enthusiasts can also participate in outdoor activities in other waterfront destinations including Norfolk, Newport News, Hampton, Chesapeake, and Portsmouth, one of the four state parks, or national attractions such as Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and Plum Tree National Wildlife Refuge. Furthermore, Williamsburg has a concentration of more than ten golf courses including courses at Kingsmill Resort, Colonial Heritage Golf Club, Tradition Golf Club at Kiskiack, and the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club among others. Agri-tourism opportunities also exist in the region with opportunities to leverage Virginia's ham industry,

Highlights of Regional Lures/Strengths:

- Colonial, Civil War, Maritime, Military history
- Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown)
- Notable Cities & Towns: Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, Smithfield, Suffolk
- The Beach
- State Parks: 4
- Interstate connectivity and airports
- Convention Centers: Hampton Roads Convention Center, Virginia Beach Convention Center
- Military presence
- Viewed as a family-friendly, value destination

Regional Challenges:

- Traffic congestion
- Somewhat limited attraction connectivity and perceived distance of regional destinations
- Differentiation from competition in nearby, coastal destinations
- Attendance issues related to historical experiences
- Coastal seasonality
- Image/perception issue to overcome

particularly through the Smithfield Ham brand. While opportunities exist year-round for visitors with diverse experiences that extend the traditional visitor seasons such as wildlife, meetings, events, and historical attractions, Hampton Roads as a coastal destination still faces a seasonality challenge.

Notable cities in the region include Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Hampton, Williamsburg, Newport News, Smithfield, Suffolk, and others. The region is home to a number of arts and music venues ranging from Chrysler Hall in Norfolk to the Virginia Beach Amphitheater. Cultural entities of note include the Ferguson Center, Sandler Center, Virginia Arts Festival, Chrysler Museum of Art, Virginia Opera, Virginia Ballet, Virginia Symphony, and the Wells Theater.

Meetings are also a strong element for the region with a number of facilities, including the Hampton Roads Convention Center, Virginia Beach Convention Center, Williamsburg Hotel & Conference Center, Norfolk Waterside Marriott, and Founders Inn & Spa, among others, providing a range of meeting space options for corporate and association groups. The region offers a number of meeting options, but investment to ensure immediate areas surrounding meeting spaces offer the hotel infrastructure, destination amenities, and transportation accessibility in order to be competitive continues to be an area for attention.

Attraction anchors such as Virginia Beach and Williamsburg at each end of the region offer family-friendly attractions. In addition to the beach, Virginia Beach has the Virginia Beach Aquarium and Ocean Breeze Waterpark, while Williamsburg has Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens, and Water Country USA. Norfolk also has the Virginia Zoo and Portsmouth is home to the Children's Museum of Virginia. Furthermore, while in the region, families can attend amateur and collegiate sporting events such as the Norfolk Tides, Virginia Destroyers, and Old Dominion athletics, or events at the Hampton Coliseum or Norfolk Scope Arena.

With Interstate 64, which connects the region with the Shenandoah Valley, and two commercial airports, the region is accessible, yet traffic congestion is recognized as a significant challenge (including congestion on the key I-64 artery running through the region). Traffic congestion impacts visitation within the region and diminishes the potential for cross-visitation among destinations, including other regions in the state. This transportation challenge is a potential limiting factor for future tourism growth in the region.

While there is diversity in the region, competitive insights show that similar coastal destinations offer beaches, water-oriented outdoor recreation, family-friendly attractions, and coastal towns with heritage and culture. The region's generally family/value destination image may overshadow higher-end elements available, and those higher-end images may be more prominent in competitive destinations, which may include Charleston, Hilton Head, and the Outer Banks. The region's historical assets are a critical benefit for distinction, though historic Charleston, D.C. and Philadelphia compete for the historic-oriented traveler. Differentiation with competitors such as Myrtle Beach which is also known for its beaches, boardwalk, family-friendly attractions such as amusement and water parks, and meeting facilities including the Myrtle Beach Convention Center is a competitive challenge. Urban coastal locations, such as Norfolk, also face competition from cities such as Baltimore, which has

invested heavily in redevelopment and established a cruise tourism business larger than Norfolk. In addition, while a number of experiences are available to visitors in a relatively concentrated area, connectivity among attractions could be enhanced. Separation of key areas by bridges and tunnels contributes to the sense of distance between attractions.

Hampton Roads Strategy

Product Focus Areas

Based upon research and analysis efforts described and in consideration of the tourism situation, the following are identified as the primary and secondary areas of product focus for Hampton Roads. The key definitions below describe these areas, which form the basis of the product objectives.

- **Primary theme focus:** Nature & Outdoor Recreation (including beach/coastline), History & Heritage , Town/City Centers, Meetings (Meetings & Conferences), Commercial Attractions (Family-oriented), Events
- **Secondary theme focus:** Arts & Music, Sports, Culinary (Dining, Wineries), Industry (Military, Corporate/Business Base), Commercial Attractions (Cruise, Higher-end)

Those product themes identified as "primary" can generally be characterized as existing or growing product areas that within the next five years should be further developed or enhanced in an effort to serve as (or support) primary draws for the area. Those categorized as "secondary" are areas that in the next five years may realistically need a longer time horizon to develop into a primary draw for the region. Secondary may also indicate areas that may be more niche focused, or those that are generally complementary/auxiliary product experiences to the primary draws in the next five years.

Key Definitions

Nature & Outdoor Recreation - Relaxing and active experiences to enjoy Virginia's scenic natural environment and outdoors, including but not limited to driving tours, hiking, biking, paddling, boating, fishing, hunting, observing wildlife, and others. Beach experiences are included.

History & Heritage - Experiences, structures, and sites that show Virginia and U.S. history and heritage

Town/City Centers - Refers to the central area of a destination, generally a downtown or main street area

Meetings - Refers primarily to facilities that serve the meetings market such as conventions, conferences, corporate meetings, trade shows, exhibitions, trainings/seminars, and other group events

Commercial Attractions - Refers to tourism attractions designed for user entertainment and enjoyment and may not necessarily rely heavily upon inherent destination features. For Hampton Roads, this specifically refers to the higher-end/luxury attractions, family-oriented attractions (e.g.

theme park), and cruise. Higher-end/luxury attractions may include spas, resorts, golf courses, and other experiences with upscale elements targeted to an affluent market.

Events - May include festivals, fairs, concerts, performances, tournaments/races (running, biking, swimming, kayaking, rowing, boating/sailing, fishing, etc.), and other events. These events serve to further enhance other product themes.

Arts & Music - Visual, performance, and craft arts experiences and music of various genres and musical heritage

Sports - Refers primarily to facilities that host sports events and tournaments, including youth, amateur, college, professional, minor league, and motorsports

Culinary - Includes wineries, breweries, distilleries, foodie/dining, and agri/aqua-tourism

Industry - Refers to products that leverage specific industry areas in which Virginia has a base. For Hampton Roads, this definition specifically refers to military and corporate.

In addition, it should be noted that **cultural heritage** refers to the cultural and social characteristics of a region that are fundamental to evaluating a tourism destination. Culture consists of the beliefs, behaviors, objects, and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. From a tourism perspective, visitors want to experience the local culture of a destination. This includes many components, such as art and music of the region, history, local crafts, traditions, style and types of local food, architecture, religion, and distinctive leisure activities. These are what make the cultural heritage of Virginia “authentic.” By its very nature, culture is interpreted by visitors in many ways. Each region will have the opportunity to further define the regional “cultural” lures, based on information in this plan.

Objectives and Strategies

Applicable objectives and strategies are presented for the five plan outcomes of Products, Pillars (infrastructure), Partnerships, Promotions, and Policies. Following the objectives and strategies are additional action steps specific to the region which are above and beyond the actions of the state level plan. Additional action steps should be read in conjunction with action steps of the state level plan.

Strategies in the plan are assigned a priority/timing as high or immediate action (denoted by red) and medium or mid-term action over the next five years (denoted by blue). The categorization of high or medium is both a function of priority and timing for the region. Those categorized as "high" can generally be characterized as existing or growing product areas that within the next five years should be further developed or enhanced in an effort to serve as (or support) primary draws. Those categorized as "medium" are areas that within the next five years may realistically need

a longer time horizon to develop into a primary draw, those that may be more niche areas, or those that are generally complementary/auxiliary product experiences to the primary draws in the next five years.

Products

Nature & Outdoor Recreation

Nature & Outdoors Objective: Visitor experiences are further developed which highlight Virginia's natural beauty and natural assets			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Develop, maintain, and expand outdoor trails and water trails	●	Seek and maintain designations for National Scenic Byways and the Virginia Scenic Byways and Scenic Drives	●
Continue to develop and enhance outdoor experiences at parks, forests, recreation areas, nature areas, and preserves	●	Develop and enhance accommodations related to outdoor experiences	●
Leverage Virginia's waterfront areas	●		

Additional Regional Actions:

- Develop new trails and leverage current trails in the region, including the Captain John Smith Water Trail, Capital Trail, U.S. Bicycle Route 76, and the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail. Develop urban trails and those which help to connect destinations within the region. Trails related to National Refuge Areas should be minimally invasive, yet allow for select motorized access.
- Continue to enhance park and recreation areas for visitors, including kid-friendly activities at state and historical parks
- Continue educational and experiential features for coastal and other wildlife experiences, including coastal wildlife tours and whale watching opportunities
- Continue to leverage waterfront areas along the James River, York River, Elizabeth River, Chesapeake Bay, and Atlantic Ocean for both nature-oriented and commercial activities. This region is fortunate to have developed and undeveloped coastlines. Beach areas and commercial waterfront areas should continue to be improved, including those beyond Virginia Beach, with enhancements of waterfront accommodation offerings,

- restaurants, retail, entertainment, and family-friendly activities. Plans to redevelop Norfolk's Waterside Festival Marketplace, for example, should continue to be pursued to enhance the attractiveness of this urban waterfront area. Coastline areas should continue to be accessed for trails, boardwalks, piers, lighthouses, etc. and be used to tie in other visitor themes, such as arts and music.
- Maintain water accessibility through marinas and boat slip areas and with visibility and accessibility to guides, outfitters, etc.
- Ensure improvements are clustered and concentrated in strategic areas that complement existing offerings
- Continue to maintain Colonial Parkway national byway designation and other state recognized scenic roads
- Explore outdoor-related accommodations in strategic locations. While the region is fortunate to have a relatively strong level and wide variety of accommodations, including those which leverage beach and coastal areas, additional outdoor-related accommodations such as campgrounds and cabins may be explored in strategic locations.

Products (continued)

History & Heritage

History & Heritage Objective: History and heritage experiences are preserved, refreshed, and expanded			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Refresh history and heritage visitor experiences	●	Continue to connect history experiences	●
Invest in historic structures, sites, and attractions	●	Enhance historical experiences through accommodations	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Invest in the refreshment of history and heritage experiences to ensure authentic, yet interesting and entertaining experiences for all ages. Refreshment is critical for this region, where for example, Colonial Williamsburg has struggled with attendance in recent years. Others such as Fort Monroe are that are undergoing redevelopment efforts and have the opportunity for new investment in history/heritage experiences.
- Continue to invest in preservation and maintenance of historic assets, related to colonial, Civil War, maritime, and military history. This includes prominent historical sites as well as historic homes, such as Colonial Williamsburg, Historic Jamestowne, Battleship Wisconsin, James River Plantations, and Fort Monroe.
- Continue to enhance historic trails, including water trails to connect historic experiences. The Hampton Roads region has the opportunity to tie in a variety of historic experiences through

colonial, Civil War, military, and maritime history. These should continue to be developed on a cross-destination and cross-theme basis. Destinations outside the region such as Richmond and the Chesapeake Bay region could also be connected.

- Continue to use the Colonial Parkway as a connector for the Historic Triangle
- Explore the development of specific military and maritime trails
- Continue to utilize the historic character of the region, including colonial, Civil War, coastal/maritime history and explore the development of additional historic accommodations such as hotels and B&Bs
- Continue to showcase the region's history and heritage through events and festivals as well as personifying the culture of the region through culinary, music, arts, and other visitor themes

Products (continued)

Towns/City Centers

Town/City Centers Objective: Visitor experiences in town/city centers are improved to create attractive destinations			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Develop and enhance outdoor experiences in the town or city center	●	Take steps to align with standards of the Virginia Main Street Program and National Main Street Program	●
Enhance town/city center areas through development of the arts	●	Encourage the development of enterprises that enhance and balance the town/city center's current offerings and increase vibrancy	●
Establish and uphold guidelines for town/city center enhancement and redevelopment	●	Develop transportation that allows for enhanced connectivity within and to the town/city center	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Leverage coast-oriented nature of the area and continue to include outdoor experiences in town/city areas, including green spaces, parks, water features and plazas. Outdoor areas should display maritime, military, history, and wildlife themes of the region. Kid-friendly elements should also be incorporated.
- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial, Civil War, military, and maritime history/heritage, coastlines/beaches, wildlife, and iconic representations of the area
- Take steps for main street designations in strategic locations as the region currently does not have any designations. While a number of the towns/cities in the region are well developed such as Norfolk, Virginia Beach, etc., others in the region have the opportunity to further distinguish themselves through the designation.
- Enhance the mix and balance of business offerings in strategic locations, which involves a balance of offerings in a concentrated area, including unique dining and retail. For a well-developed area like Virginia Beach, for example, plans for additional hotel development to support convention business and an entertainment center should continue to be pursued as well as continued beachfront improvements. Further development of nightlife experiences should also be explored in strategic locations.
- Continue to enhance transportation options in the town/city centers in the region, similar to options available such as Norfolk's light rail, Virginia Beach's Wave trolley, and Colonial Williamsburg shuttles
- Include personal mobility options such as rentals for bikes, Segways, golf carts, scooters etc.

Products (continued)

Meetings

Meetings Objective: Facilities to attract meetings (conventions, conferences, corporate meetings, trade shows, exhibitions, trainings/seminars, etc.) are built and improved to maximize economic impact and community value			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Develop and expand group event facilities in strategic locations	●	Enhance meeting facilities through supporting elements	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Continue to explore opportunities for enhanced meetings business in strategic locations in the region. While Hampton Roads benefits from multiple convention, conference, and convention hotels, including the Virginia Beach Convention Center, Hampton Roads Convention Center, the Williamsburg Hotel and Conference Center, the Norfolk Marriott Waterside and others, opportunities may exist to further penetrate the meetings market through additional hotel meeting space. Opportunities to leverage college/university facilities may exist. Efforts to develop new space and enhance current space should continue to be studied.
- Continue to explore the development of supporting amenities for meeting facilities. Virginia Beach has pursued the development of a headquarter hotel and entertainment center which should be continued. Historic sites, homes, unique museums, and others should continue to be utilized for off-site visitor options.

Commercial Attractions

Commercial Attractions Objective: Commercial attractions are increased			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Explore the development of family-oriented commercial attractions	●	Maintain and explore expansion of cruise tourism	●
Explore the development of commercial attractions designed for a higher-end, luxury market	●		

Additional Regional Actions:

- Maintain and enhance family-oriented attractions in the region, including Busch Gardens, Virginia Zoo, Virginia Aquarium, water parks, children's museums, and others and continue to explore opportunities to develop complementary family attractions in a concentrated area, which may include smaller-scale themed developments
- Continue to incorporate kid-friendly elements within existing attractions and events, including historical attractions and events and festivals
- Explore the development of higher-end attractions. While the region has broad family and destination appeal, additional higher-end opportunities should continue to be explored, which may

include a signature golf and spa resort added to Williamsburg's concentration of golf as well as additional, coastal/beach resort, and urban opportunities. Feasibility of these new developments should be carefully studied.

- Work with cruise companies to ensure service offerings are maintained and explore the potential for expanded service, additional stops for port of call, "cruises to nowhere," and smaller scale ship rentals.

- Work to mitigate impacts from new EPA rules taking effect in 2015 that will increase cruise operating costs. Seek opportunities to shift business from the Baltimore Port during this change in the industry
- For cruise tourism, enhance destination elements related to tours, activities, entertainment, hotels, dining, shopping, accommodations and transportation to strengthen appeal for cruise visitors and encourage longer stays in home port

Products (continued)

Events

Events Objective: Events which leverage Virginia's tourism assets are created and expanded	
Strategy	Priority/Timing
Enhance and develop events which promote the key visitor themes	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Develop and enhance signature events for the region, which promote and reinforce key visitor themes, including history, military, maritime, sports, and family. Examples may include outdoor-related events such as marathons, races, boating events, and other outdoor competitions, culinary events that feature aquaculture of the region, arts events, and other events that highlight the colonial, Civil War, maritime, and military history and heritage of the region, and others.
- Use events to extend visitor seasons and attract visitor seasons during the traditional off-season

- Tie in multiple visitor themes in events, where appropriate, which may include coastal event locations, local agriculture, local artists, music, history/heritage, and others
- Continue to leverage commemoration opportunities as well as annual opportunities to celebrate Presidents Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc.
- Coordinate events among multiple towns/cities in the region to avoid duplication, and pool resources and efforts regionally to attract major events and festivals

Products (continued)

Arts & Music

Arts & Music Objective: Visitor experiences related to music and arts (performance, visual, craft, etc.) are created and enriched			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Develop and enhance music and performance art venues	●	Add art to public spaces	●
Enhance and develop music and art trails	●	Develop and enhance concentrated arts experiences	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Maintain and explore enhancement of the region's performing arts, visual arts, and music venues to continue to attract artists, musicians, and events. Explore the development of additional facilities in strategic locations, which does not replicate development in neighboring towns/cities.
- Explore the development of art trails, which connect destinations in the region for visual arts
- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial, Civil War, military, and maritime history/heritage, coastlines/beaches, wildlife, and iconic representations of the area
- Continue to develop arts and cultural districts
- Use events and festivals to raise the profile of arts and music of the region, including seasonal event experiences

Sports

Sports Objective: Facilities for participant and spectator sporting events are enhanced and developed			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Develop and enhance youth and amateur athletic facilities	●	Develop and enhance spectator sport facilities for minor or professional sports	●
Develop and enhance college and elite athletic facilities	●		

Additional Regional Actions:

- Explore further development and enhancement of youth/amateur sports facilities to continue to penetrate the sports market. This may include investment in maintenance of fields, facilities, and marquee venues, field expansion, and complementary sport facility development.

- Continue to leverage family-friendly and value-oriented destination features of the region to attract youth/amateur events
- Continue to leverage visitor opportunities from college athletics, including Old Dominion and the College of William and Mary, related to visiting teams, fans, and family members and encourage facility enhancement, as needed, to ensure continued sports program strength

- Maintain facilities for Norfolk Tides and Virginia Destroyers
- Continue to pursue opportunities to attract professional sports teams, such as an NBA team. A professional franchise has the opportunity to raise the profile and visibility of the region and benefit tourism. However, feasibility related to new arena development and the estimated impact on tourism should be studied.

Products (continued)

Culinary

Culinary Objective: Culinary visitor experiences (wineries, agri-tourism, dining, etc.) are established and expanded			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Expand wine tourism experiences	●	Build reputation as a destination for dining and continue to develop unique restaurant experiences	●
Develop tourism related to Virginia's growing breweries and distilleries	●	Develop and expand trails to enhance culinary experiences	●
Develop and enhance visitor experiences related to Virginia's agriculture and aquaculture products	●		

Additional Regional Actions:

- Maintain winery opportunities in the region and enhance winery experiences through expanded visitor opportunities on-site such as B&B, food service, retail, arts, events, etc.
- Explore the development of brewery experiences as these experiences emerge for Virginia across the state and enhance on-site experiences such as food service, retail, arts, events, etc.
- Explore the development of aquaculture opportunities with the vast coastline of the region. With visitor concentration in the region, aquaculture opportunities for visitors may help to raise the profile elsewhere in the state.

- Continue to develop agriculture and farmer market experiences in the region with on-site opportunities for B&B, food service, retail, arts, events, etc.
- Build distinctive dining experiences in the region, leveraging the beach and coastal locations through seafood
- Leverage wine, brewery, and agriculture to build and enhance culinary experiences in the region through cross-theme trails that connect destinations in the region
- Continue to use events and festivals as a platform to enhance the culinary profile of the region, tying in heritage, arts, music, and other visitor themes

Products (continued)

Industry

Industry Objective: Other visitor experiences, which leverage Virginia's economic strengths and specialized industries are enhanced and created			
Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Leverage military assets	●	Leverage strong corporate and business base	●

Additional Regional Actions:

- Leverage military assets and heritage in the region. Use master-planning opportunity to further enhance Fort Monroe and connect military experiences (heritage and current assets) in the region through military-themed trail.
- Continue air show events and explore use of naval ships for hosting special events, including sports events, attracting military personnel, veterans, residents, and tourists
- Continue to leverage military presence in attracting reunions to further enhance group business. Attractions should explore creation or expansion of facilities that may accommodate group business, including facilities for group/tour function, reunion events, social functions, etc. as well as ensuring parking infrastructure available for tour buses, RVs, large vehicles, etc.
- Explore educational and experiential attractions, which may include tours of active assets, interactive museums and exhibits, events of celebration and commemoration, hands-on experiences with old equipment and vehicles (in a kid-friendly manner), opportunities to meet and interact with soldiers and veterans, and development of military experiences, such as simulated training camps and war games
- Continue to leverage and support the corporate and business base in the region. This includes corporate, industrial, military, and Department of Defense business which drives business visitation.

Pillars

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<i>Transportation Objective: Strategies to improve transportation are developed and executed</i>			
Initiate concerted strategy to improve road transportation for tourism	●	Explore increased air access, rail, and mass transit for strategic locations	●
<i>Wayfinding Objective: Visitor wayfinding is improved</i>			
Ensure signage and visitor information is visible and available through multiple points	●	Invest in technology infrastructure (Wi-Fi, cell reception, GPS, etc.)	●
Reinforce community sense of place	●		
<i>Education & Training Objective: Tourism education and training programs are continued and enhanced</i>			
Enhance training and education of tourism workforce	●	Ensure tourism education programs are continued for students	●
<i>Research Objective: Tourism research is available which supports tourism development and marketing initiatives</i>			
Continue to engage in or obtain research on visitors	●		

Additional Pillar Action Steps:

- As a region, ensure tourism stakeholders are involved with other regional leaders in transportation planning initiatives, including improvements or expansions of bridges, tunnels, and highways as a means to alleviate traffic. Traffic congestion is a significant issue for the region, including congestion on the key I-64 artery running through the region. It is important for tourism that transportation plans which will improve the visitor experience and resident quality of life are addressed expeditiously and with cohesive support from tourism stakeholders.
- Prioritize road plans of VDOT and local transportation authorities anticipated to have strongest impacts and benefits on tourism and work with transportation and government leaders to achieve benefits for tourism and project completions
- Work with airport and airline leaders to explore opportunity for additional air access given reductions in flight service that have occurred with the AirTran/Southwest merger, including new routes, emphasis on existing routes, etc. and opportunities to incorporate marketing strategies
- Continue to explore expansion of light rail options in downtown Norfolk and those that connect destinations in the region such as Virginia Beach to Norfolk as a means to ease up congestion
- Explore additional rail and high speed rail options as ways to ease up congestion. Proposed projects include the I-95/I-64 Intercity Passenger Rail Project and the Southeast High Speed Rail Project.
- Explore opportunities to increase use of ferry transportation and ensure visitors are aware of such alternatives
- Continue to provide visitors with information on transportation alternatives through numerous channels such as mobile devices, visitor center staff, maps, and other means
- As a region, ensure tourism stakeholders come together to work with VDOT related to signage issues
- Pursue opportunities to refine the sense of place that visitors may have when traveling across the region. With numerous towns and

cities in close proximity, the aesthetic feel of these localities may blend, lessening community distinction. As such, opportunities to further brand individual destinations through signage, landscaping, arts, architecture and other means should be explored.

- Continue to engage in research efforts that explore topics such as cross-visitation studies between various localities in the region, and understanding past and potential visitor needs and preference for elements which may improve the visitor experience, such as increased attraction quality, alternative transportation options, and improved hotel accommodations

Partnerships

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<i>Tourism Organizations Objective: Organizations to lead tourism initiatives are strengthened or formed</i>			
Create and strengthen tourism organizations	●		
<i>Government Objective: Collaboration among government organizations at the local, state, and federal levels for tourism initiatives is improved</i>			
Increase communication, planning, and coordination among government entities	●		
<i>Connectivity Objective: Connectivity among tourism attractions, businesses, and destinations is improved through partnering</i>			
Develop and enhance communication and partnering among Virginia tourism industry stakeholders	●	Increase coordination and collaboration among stakeholders that share interests in tourism assets outside of Virginia	●

Additional Partnership Action Steps:

- Continue Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance to unite the region with regional branding and marketing efforts. Consider expansion to include other coastal areas such as the Chesapeake Bay region, including the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck.
- Continue to improve intra-government communication among the multiple destinations as stakeholders work as a region with VDOT to address transportation and signage solutions and stakeholders address other tourism initiatives
- Continue to package attractions similar to group ticketing packages offered through Historic Triangle attractions. Seek opportunities for attraction packaging among destinations in the region as well as other proximate areas, which may include Richmond.
- Continue collaboration with the private sector for economic development efforts such as new hotel, conference center, and entertainment areas (includes proposed developments in Virginia Beach and Norfolk)

Promotions

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<i>Government, Business & Resident Objective:</i> Efforts to promote and educate government leaders, the business community, and residents on tourism initiatives and benefits are continued			
Communicate and inform local and state government officials on tourism benefits and initiatives	●	Communicate and inform tourism industry stakeholders, including partners, the business community, and residents on tourism initiatives and benefits	●
<i>Economic Development Objective:</i> Tourism promotion efforts for economic development are enhanced			
Enhance promotion of Virginia to potential tourism investors, businesses, and developers to generate economic development	●		
<i>Connectivity Objective:</i> Virginia is positioned based on the lures of tourism assets with a strategy to improve connectivity among destinations, attractions, and visitor themes			
Enhance and create visitor itineraries and packages	●	Enhance and develop themed trails	●
<i>High Impact Markets Objective:</i> Visitor markets with high impact continue to be targeted, while new markets are explored			
Continue to identify and evaluate key geographic and thematic target markets for promotions	●		

Additional Promotion Action Steps:

- Develop communication plans for government officials, tourism stakeholders, businesses, and residents and continue to educate and inform officials on tourism benefits (qualitative and quantitative based on research) as well as ongoing initiatives for economic development through various means
- Identify and engage key opinion leaders in the region, which may help to serve as ambassadors for the tourism industry and aid in the education and promotion of tourism to government leaders, funding efforts, and development initiatives
- Continue to package attractions similar to group ticketing packages offered through Historic Triangle attractions. Seek opportunities for attraction packaging among destinations in the region as well as other proximate areas, which may include Richmond.
- Explore additional trail development for greater connectivity in the region, which may include outdoor recreation trails, military-theme trail, and others
- Continue to maximize opportunities for national and international promotion given the draw of the region with distinctive history elements and beaches
- Continue thematic promotions related to major visitor themes as well as niche markets, such as military, wildlife, etc.

Policies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
Funding Objective: Funding is available for tourism growth			
Enforce policy for use of tourism tax revenues collected by localities	●	Create sustainable funding policies for tourism marketing and development for communities	●
Tourism Policies and Programs for Assistance Objective: Tourism policies and programs which provide assistance for growth and development are enhanced			
Continue and enhance programs which support tourism marketing	●	Continue to evaluate policies which encourage an attractive tourism business environment	●
Continue and explore improvements for programs which support tourism product development	●	Educate public and private sector stakeholders on legislative policies and programs impacting tourism	●
Explore establishment of assistance program for tourism businesses	●		
Tourism Policy for Government Objective: Policy for government cooperation is created to assist and support the tourism industry			
Establish policy for cooperative guidelines and arrangements for cohesive government approach to the tourism industry	●		
Preservation Objective: Policies and programs designed to preserve historical, cultural, and natural assets are maintained			
Uphold policies and programs which promote sustainability and preservation of historical, cultural, and environmental assets	●		

Additional Policies Action Steps:

- Explore the development of a tourism council at the community level in localities where policy enforcement is recognized as an issue. The council should be comprised of public and private stakeholders that are responsible for overseeing the use of tourism tax revenue in the community.
- Identify local liaisons or advocates which can work to address policies and programs, including the creation of Tourism Zones and national grant and assistance programs
- Continue to explore alternative creative funding solutions to achieve community solutions and work with local governments, where appropriate, to secure dedicated funding that could be reinvested for tourism marketing and development purposes. Garnering widespread support from tourism stakeholders and an advocacy effort of the industry will be important in influencing government leaders. For tourism development, the formation of a tourism development fund at a local level could be explored.
- Explore the development of tourism business assistance programs, such as incubators, through local governments, small business administrations, and economic development departments, as appropriate, to seek support and assistance for tourism businesses
- Continue to evaluate business policies, ordinances, codes, etc. at the local level that may impact visitation and tourism business growth. Local policies and their enforcement may vary throughout the state, and it is critical for local stakeholders to collaborate on efforts to create or amend policies which will positively impact tourism.
- Continue to engage in preservation and sustainability efforts at the local level, regarding historical, cultural, and environmental assets,

including seeking Virginia Green Certifications and LEED certifications for new development

Key Stakeholders

The below list of regional and universal stakeholders illustrates the types of stakeholder groups that may be involved in implementing the State Tourism Plan and the region's strategies and action steps. The lists are comprehensive, but not necessarily exhaustive. In addition, regional stakeholders include local and regional government offices, economic development offices and planning district commissions. The list of regional stakeholders highlights organizations specific to Hampton Roads, including those organizations identified as having tourism marketing representatives, while universal stakeholders includes a broader list comprised of key organization types, statewide organizations, state government entities, and federal organizations.

Regional

- Charles City County
- Chesapeake Convention & Visitors Bureau
- City of Portsmouth Department of Marketing and Communications
- City of Suffolk Division of Tourism
- Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance
- Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance
- Hampton Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Isle of Wight, Smithfield, Windsor Chamber of Commerce
- Newport News Tourism Development Office
- Smithfield & Isle of Wight Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Surry County Administrative Office
- Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Visit Norfolk
- York County Tourism Development

Universal

- Art/Music Programs
- Artisan Center of Virginia
- Attraction Management
- Chambers of Commerce
- Colleges (including community)/Universities
- Council on Virginia's Future
- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Department of Business Assistance
- Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Department of Environmental Quality
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Gaming & Inland Fisheries
- Department of Historic Resources
- Department of Housing & Community Development
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Department of Transportation
- Destination Marketing Organizations
- Downtown Development Associations
- Educational Institutions
- Environmental Organizations
- History Foundations/Non-Profit Organizations
- Horse Breed Associations
- Hospitality Associations
- Keep Virginia Beautiful
- Local Arts Organizations
- Local Downtown Development Associations
- Local Government (Town/City/County)
- Military Associations
- National Park Service
- National Refuge Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Non-Profit Arts & Music Organizations
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Planning District Commissions
- Preservation Virginia
- Private Businesses
- Sports Associations
- State Government Departments
- State Legislators

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- Urban Forest Council
 - Virginia Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus
 - Virginia Business Incubation Association
 - Virginia Chamber of Commerce
 - Virginia Commission for the Arts
 - Virginia Community Development Corporation
 - Virginia Downtown Development Association
 - Virginia Economic Development Partnership
 - Virginia Farm Bureau
 - Virginia General Assembly
 - Virginia Green
 - Virginia Historical Society
 - Virginia Horse Shows Association
 - Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association
 - Virginia Marine Resources Commission
 - Virginia Music Associations
 - Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center
 - Virginia Tourism Corporation
 - Virginia Wine Board
 - Virginia Wine Marketing Office

Regional Strategy Takeaways

It is the combination of tourism products which create a destination, and as such, these combined strategies are meant to build Hampton Roads as a destination in a sustainable manner and maintain the character and authenticity of the region. The strategies outlined are intended to build upon Hampton Roads' core strengths, enhance visitor experiences, and ultimately enable the region to increase tourism. When unique and genuine tourism experiences are connected or clustered in offering, destination appeal and strength is increased, allowing the region to compete more effectively against other destinations. Hampton Roads has the opportunity to do just this by growing its tourism asset base and connecting visitor experiences to increase tourism and enhance competitiveness.

Hampton Roads has the opportunity to build upon its tourism assets and diversify its tourism base in the region combining beach and coastal experiences, urban destinations and small towns, history and heritage attractions, and a variety of other visitor activities in a family-friendly environment. The waterfront with coastlines and beaches will continue to be a standout feature for the region with potential to further leverage destination offerings for family-oriented attractions, youth sports, and meetings. Coastal recreation, waterfront activities, and nature experiences blended with arts, music, museums, and other attractions in more urban areas further add to the regional appeal. The region's rich history, ranging from the Historic Triangle as well as military heritage throughout the area, increase the depth of the visitor experiences that help to set it apart from other coastal destinations. Integrating and further connecting these visitor experiences will be an important competitive differentiation element as the combination of the outdoors, history, and other visitor attractions increases the strength of Hampton Roads as a destination.

High-Level Regional Takeaways:

- Leverage history and outdoors, including the beaches and coastlines of the region as unifying themes, enhancing coastal and interactive history experiences
- Continue to improve transportation options for visitors and residents through mass transit and road transportation improvements
- Develop complementary products which diversify the tourism bases as well as signature experiences, including those that extend visitor seasons, including family-oriented experiences and events
- Cluster new development and enhance connectivity
- Maintain character and authenticity and create new development in a sustainable manner
- Continue to collaborate regionally through Coastal Virginia