

GE^{★★★}RGE
WASHINGTON

REGIONAL COMMISSION

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY(CEDS)

CEDS OVERVIEW

A CEDS establishes a place-based, regionally driven framework that engages community leaders, leverages private sector involvement, and creates a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration.

Benefits of a CEDS:

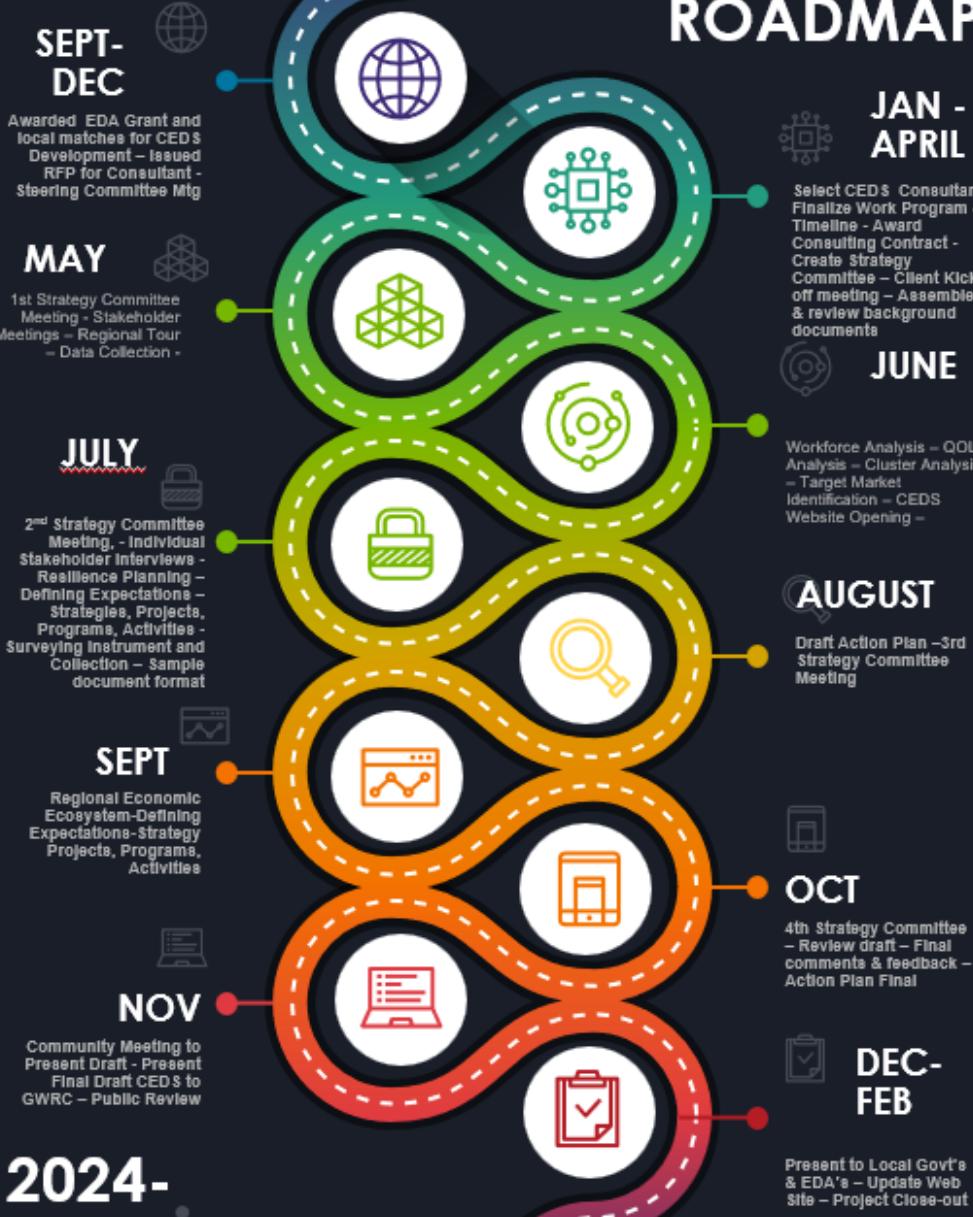
- The CEDS enables regional partners to access critical EDA funding opportunities;
- Provides a regional SWOT Analysis;
- Facilitates closer alignment between public sector stakeholders, community leaders and the private sector;
- Enables regions to more effectively and efficiently use regional resources;
- Prioritizes a wide range of projects and initiatives that support economic growth;
- Resiliency plan for communities to respond to economic, public health, societal environmental disturbances.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY BACKGROUND

- ❖ In September 2024, GWRC was awarded a \$50,000 US EDA grant to develop the region's first CEDS. Match in the amount of \$50,000 was provided by each of the five GWRC localities.
- ❖ A Steering Committee comprised of the economic development leads for each locality scored and interviewed potential consultants.
- ❖ RKG Associates out of Alexandria was chosen by the Steering Committee to carry out the work of the CEDS.



CEDS ROADMAP



CEDS ROADMAP

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Strategy Committee was appointed to provide input and guide the direction of the CEDS process. The Committee was made up of 25 local business leaders, representatives from higher education, military installations, and regional stakeholders from all five localities.

Four Strategy Committee meetings were held in 2025 (May, July, August, and October) to provide feedback to the Consultant and review the final draft of the CEDS.

Two surveys were conducted for public feedback. A Business Survey conducted in partnership with the GO Virginia Region 6 G&D Plan, and a Community Survey for citizens and stakeholders in each of the five localities. The data from the surveys was used in the development of the CEDS.

The CEDS draft was published for public comment from October 31st, 2025 to November 30th, 2025 and presented to the GWRC Board on November 24th, 2025. All comments have been incorporated into the final draft.



CEDS DRAFT COMPONENTS: STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN



The following Strategy and Action Plan presents a coordinated regional approach to economic development that builds on the collective strengths of Planning District 16.



While regional in scope, these strategies were developed with careful attention to local assets, existing programs, and priorities identified through extensive consultation with community leaders and stakeholders.



This approach ensures regional coordination complements rather than competes with local efforts, creating opportunities for Planning District 16 jurisdictions to leverage shared resources while maintaining distinct community priorities and character.

CEDS DRAFT COMPONENTS: GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Regional
Workforce
Development &
Skills Alignment

2. Infrastructure
Coordination for
Economic
Development

3. Strategic
Industry Cluster
Development

4. Balanced
Housing &
Community
Development

5. Small Business &
Entrepreneurship
Ecosystem

6. Tourism &
Placemaking
Coordination

7. Data-Driven
Regional Economic
Intelligence



COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

GEORGE WASHINGTON REGIONAL COMMISSION

RKG
ASSOCIATES INC OCTOBER 2025



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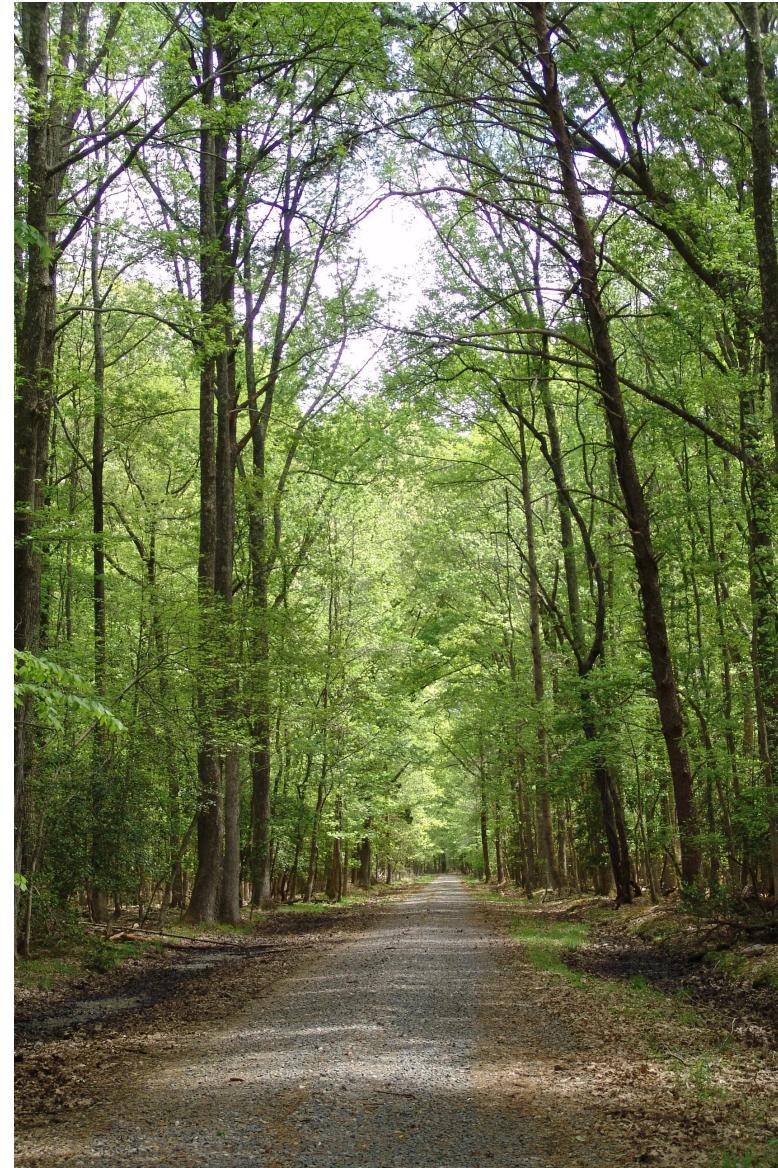
I. Socioeconomic Analysis

II. Target Industries

III. Community Survey

IV. County Profiles

V. Acknowledgments



1 INTRODUCTION

REGIONAL PLANNING FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY

This document represents the first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Planning District 16. The planning process brought together stakeholders from across Spotsylvania County, Stafford County, King George County, Caroline County, and the City of Fredericksburg, illuminating both shared opportunities and the distinct assets that define Planning District 16

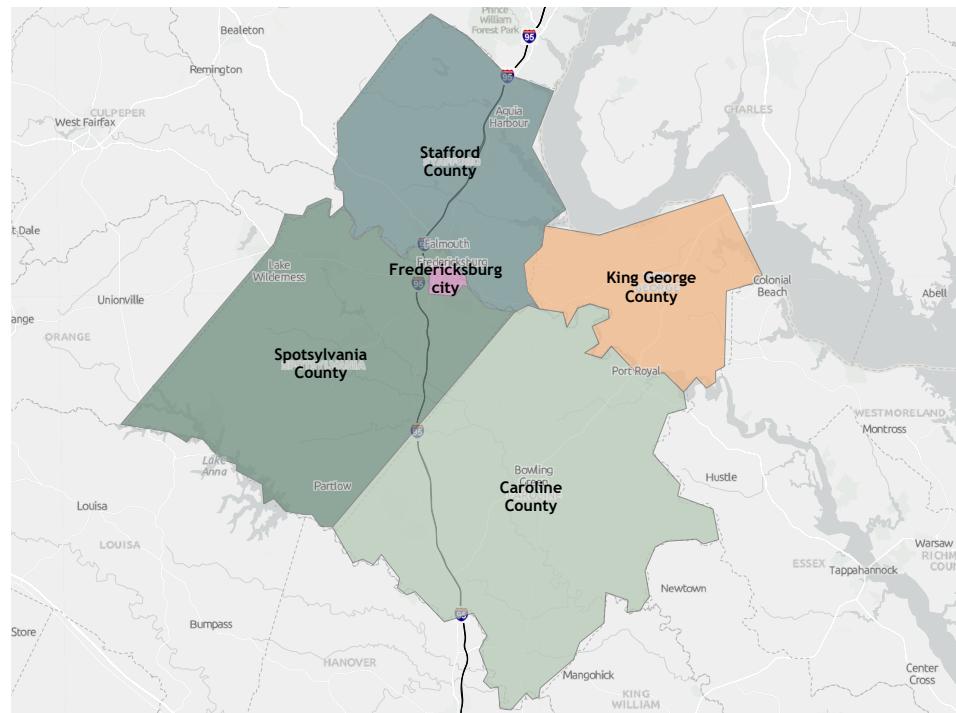
The CEDS serves as more than a planning document—it establishes a place-based, regionally driven framework that engages community leaders, leverages private sector involvement, and creates a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. As a cornerstone of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) programs, the CEDS provides the foundation through which public and private sectors work together to foster regional economic prosperity.

This initiative aligns with the GWRC Strategic Plan 2022-2027, adopted in January 2022, which identified “Developing the Economy” as a major priority. The Commission reinforced this commitment by including CEDS development as a strategic priority in its 2025 Strategic Plan Update. Beyond its strategic value, the CEDS is essential for developing an EDA Economic Development District (EDD) status and enables regional partners to access critical EDA funding opportunities.

RESPECTING LOCAL CHARACTER AND EXISTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This CEDS is designed to complement and support existing local planning efforts, recognizing that each jurisdiction has invested considerable time and resources in developing its own strategic direction. The regional strategy fully respects and complements

Planning District 16 Jurisdictions



Source: RKG analysis of Census data

the [City of Fredericksburg's Comprehensive Plan](#), [Stafford County's Strategic Plan](#), [Caroline County's Comprehensive Plan](#), [Spotsylvania County's Comprehensive Plan](#), and [King George County's Economic Development Plan](#). This CEDS is not intended to supersede any of these local plans but rather to identify opportunities where regional coordination can enhance and support the individual goals and priorities already established by each jurisdiction. The strength of this regional approach lies in its ability to honor local character while creating synergies that benefit all partners.

1 INTRODUCTION

RECOGNIZING LOCAL DISTINCTIONS WITHIN REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Each locality brings unique economic strengths, faces distinct challenges, and maintains individual growth and development priorities. The CEDS process was designed to honor local economic development goals, constraints, and opportunities while identifying areas where regional collaboration creates mutual benefit. Local autonomy in economic development decision-making remains paramount. This strategy serves as a framework for voluntary collaboration where regional coordination makes sense, not as a mandate that overrides local priorities.

The value of this regional approach lies in its ability to address challenges and opportunities that transcend jurisdictional boundaries—workforce development, infrastructure connectivity, business attraction, and economic resilience—while respecting that implementation must be tailored to local contexts and capacities.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The CEDS enables the region to examine the economy from a comprehensive vantage point. It considers the interconnected web of physical infrastructure, partnerships, networks, programs, and policies that drive prosperity. By building regional capacity through both hard and soft infrastructure investments, this strategy creates a robust economic ecosystem that supports individual, organizational, and community success.

This CEDS serves as the guiding document for the GWRC and its network of regional partners, enabling cohesive action toward shared economic and community development goals. In times of economic or environmental uncertainty, the CEDS provides

a framework for understanding where actions will generate the greatest impact and where resources can be most effectively leveraged to promote economic sustainability and resilience.

BUILDING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Throughout the 15-month planning process, the CEDS Steering Committee and participants established the foundation for sustained collaboration, regular feedback mechanisms, and innovative approaches to breaking through traditional silos. This collaborative spirit extends beyond the planning phase, positioning the region for ongoing strategic coordination.



2 REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SUMMARY

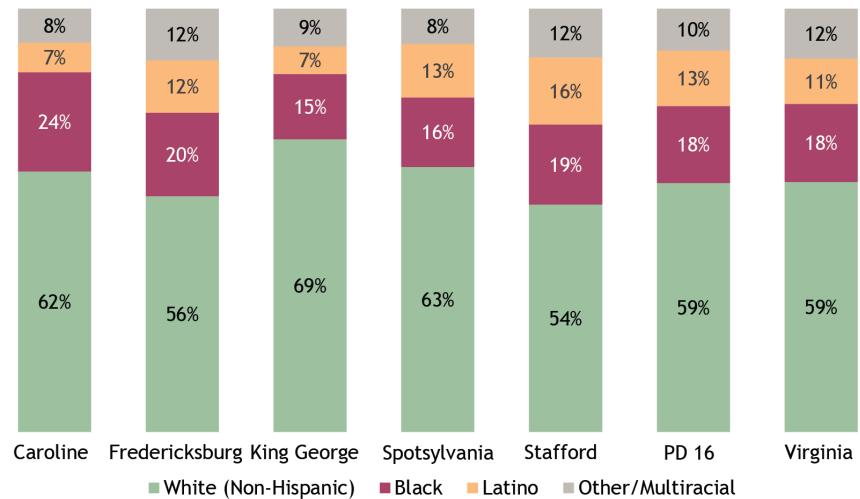
- **Region-wide growth:** 17.6% population increase from 2014-2024, more than double Virginia's statewide rate
- **Growth leaders shift:** Fredericksburg annual growth accelerated from 0.7% to 2.1% and Caroline from 0.2% to 1.8% since 2020, while previously dominant Stafford County growth has moderated
- **Racial diversity patterns:** The region's population is 59% White (non-Hispanic), 18% Black, and 13% Latino, with notable variation across localities — Fredericksburg is the most diverse at 56% White while King George County is least diverse at 69% White
- **Housing affordability impact:** Caroline County's lower median home price of \$319,730 compared to Stafford's \$519,820 is driving distinct migration patterns toward more affordable markets

Annualized Population Change, Planning District 16 Jurisdictions, 2014-20 and 2020-24



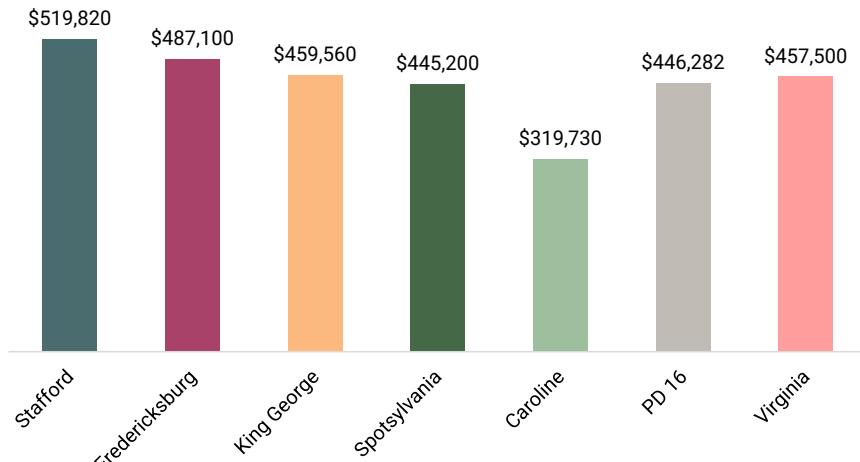
Source: RKG analysis of Census Population Estimates

Population Composition by Race and Ethnicity, Planning District 16 Jurisdictions, 2023



Source: RKG analysis of American Community Survey data, 5-year estimates

Median Home Prices, Planning District 16 Jurisdictions, Q1-2025

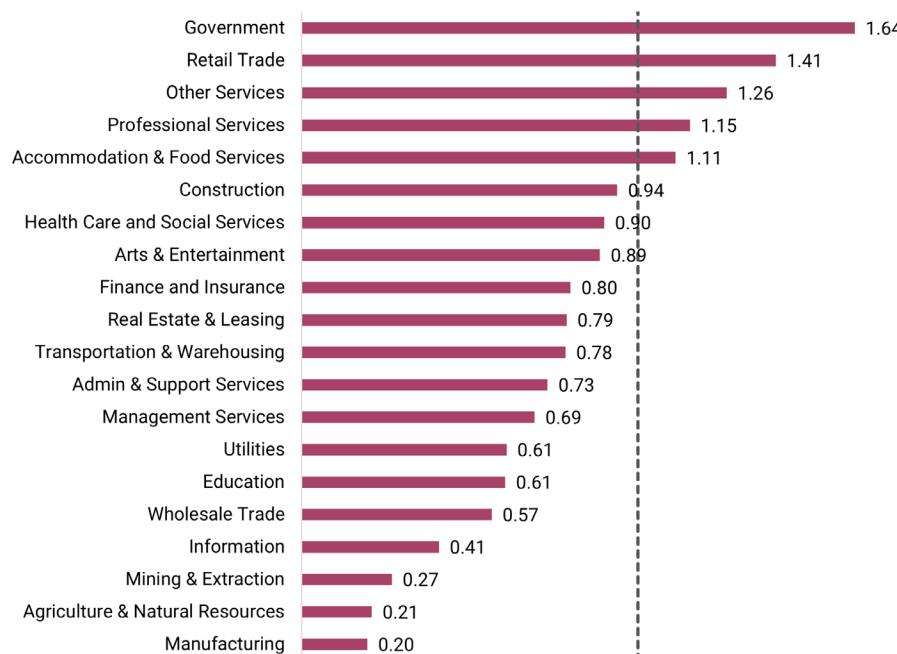


Source: RKG analysis of National Association of Realtors data

ECONOMIC DATA SUMMARY

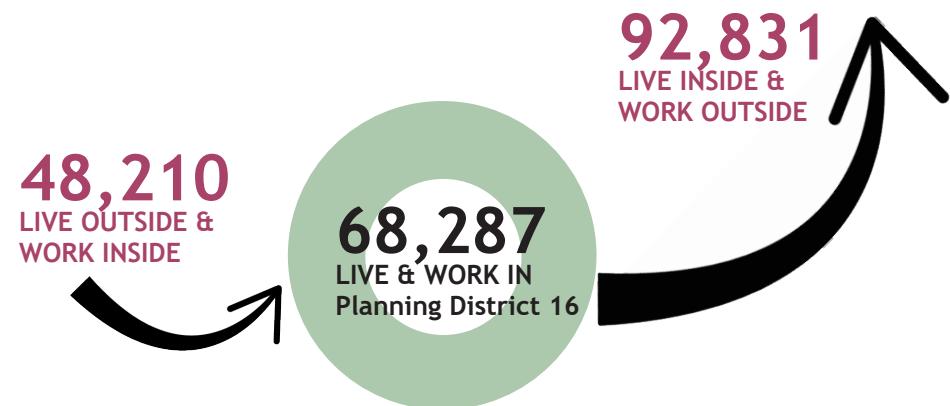
- Industry concentration:** Government employment (location quotient 1.64) and retail trade (1.41) are significantly more concentrated here than nationally, while manufacturing (0.20) is underrepresented
- Employment growth trends:** The region added 16,314 jobs from 2014-2024, led by government (+4,914), professional services (+2,471), and healthcare (+2,171), but experienced significant losses in finance and insurance (-2,473)
- Bedroom community dynamics:** 57.6% of residents commute outside the region while only 58.6% of local jobs are filled by area residents

Employment Concentration Relative to the Nation by Sector, Planning District 16, 2024



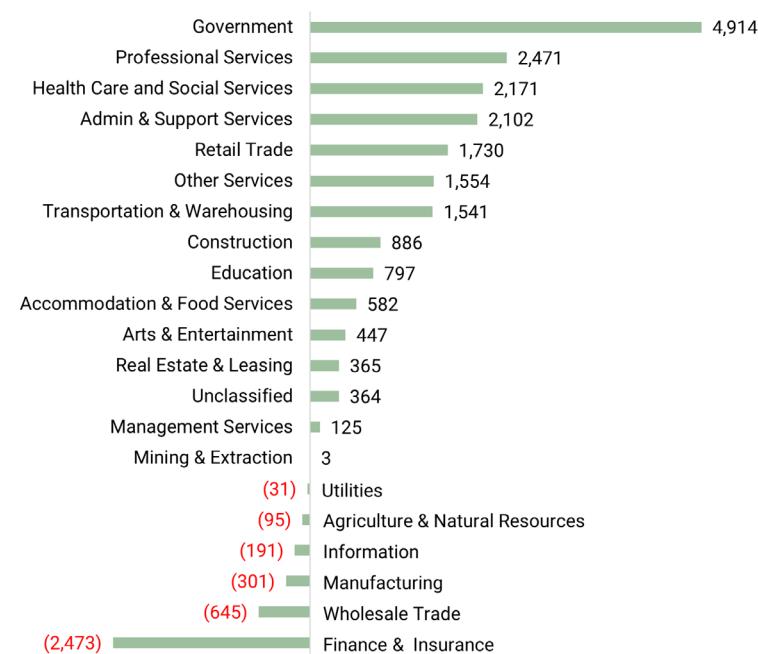
Source: RKG analysis of Lightcast data

Commuting Inflow/Outflow, Planning District 16, 2022



Source: RKG analysis of Census OnTheMap data

Employment Growth by Sector, Planning District 16, 2014-2024



Source: RKG analysis of Lightcast data

3 METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Extensive community and stakeholder engagement throughout the Planning District 16 served as the basis for developing the SWOT analysis and the Strategy and Action Plan. To ensure the plan authentically reflects local priorities, challenges, and opportunities, a multi-faceted approach was employed to gather input from residents, businesses, and community leaders across all jurisdictions. This engagement process informed evidence-based recommendations and strategies grounded in community needs and regional economic realities.

SITE VISITS

Site visits were conducted to different jurisdictions throughout the region to gather firsthand insights into local economic conditions, infrastructure, and development opportunities. These visits allowed the planning team to observe physical assets, assess community needs, and understand the unique characteristics and challenges facing each area within Planning District 16.

ECONOMIC DATA ANALYSIS

A thorough economic data analysis was undertaken to establish a comprehensive baseline understanding of the region's economic landscape. This analysis included detailed examination of demographics, labor market research, workforce assessment, and identification of target industries. The complete findings and methodology of this analysis can be found in Appendix I and II.

INTERVIEWS

Structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with key stakeholders and community leaders throughout the planning process. These conversations provided valuable qualitative insights into regional priorities, challenges, and opportunities from the perspectives of those directly involved in economic development, business leadership, and community governance.

PUBLIC SURVEY

A comprehensive public survey was administered during summer 2025 to capture input from 291 residents across the region. This survey gathered community perspectives on economic priorities, quality of life factors, and desired directions for future development, ensuring that citizen voices were incorporated into the planning process.

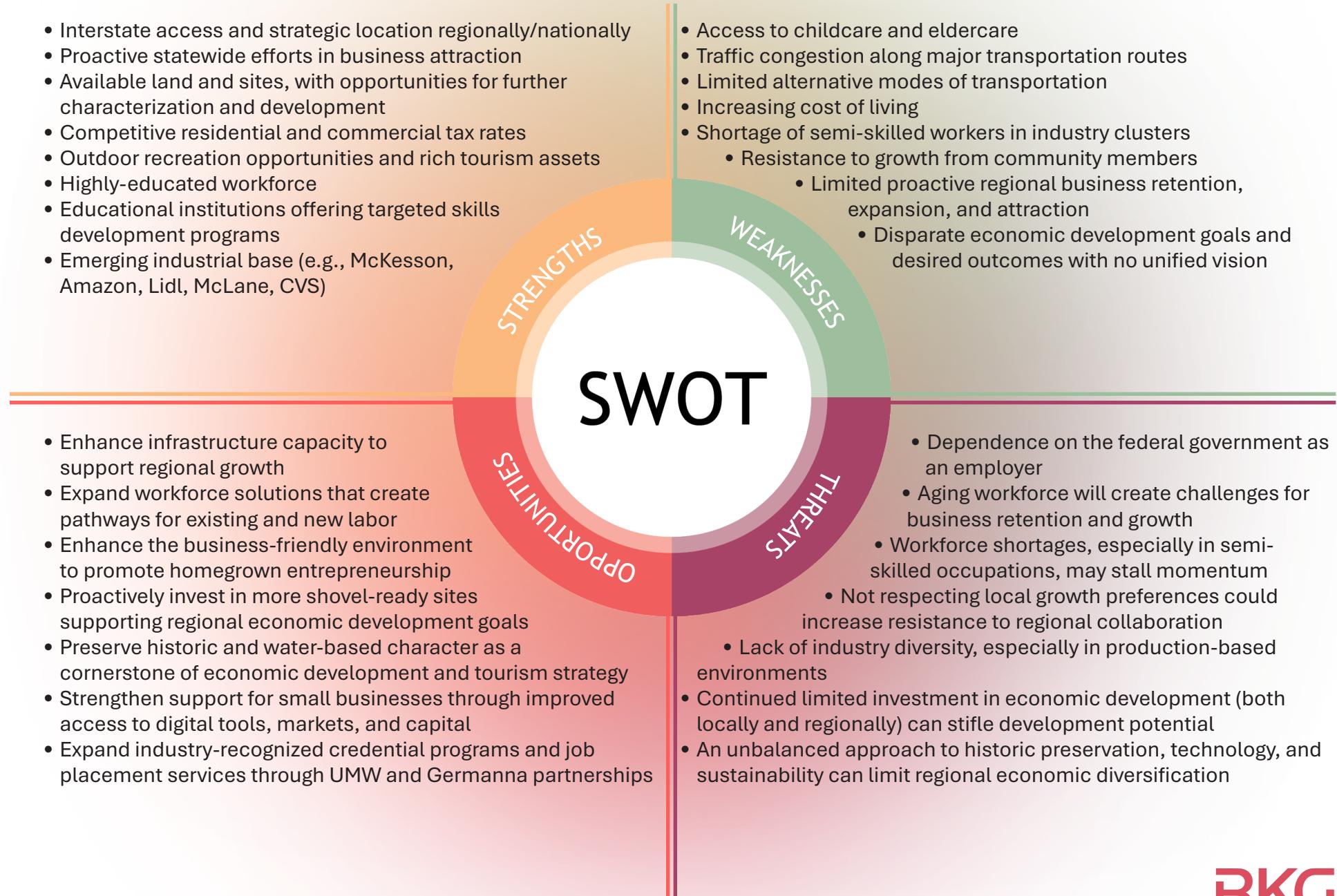
BUSINESS SURVEY

A targeted business survey was conducted during summer 2025 to collect input directly from the regional business community. This survey assessed business climate conditions, workforce needs, infrastructure requirements, and growth opportunities from the perspective of employers and entrepreneurs operating within the region.

CEDS STEERING COMMITTEE

The CEDS Steering Committee met regularly throughout the planning process and served as the primary advisory body for the project. This committee, comprised of representatives from across the region, provided ongoing feedback, guidance, and oversight to ensure the plan reflected diverse regional perspectives and maintained alignment with local priorities and needs.

4 SWOT ANALYSIS



5 STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The following Strategy and Action Plan presents a coordinated regional approach to economic development that builds on the collective strengths of Planning District 16. While regional in scope, these strategies were developed with careful attention to local assets, existing programs, and priorities identified through extensive consultation with community leaders and stakeholders. Each recognizes that jurisdictions may experience varying levels of impact or benefit and differ in their capacity or willingness to engage. This approach ensures regional coordination complements rather than competes with local efforts, creating opportunities for Planning District 16 jurisdictions to leverage shared resources while maintaining distinct community priorities and character.

While some strategies emphasize coordination, convening, and technical assistance, most will require substantial financial investment. Intentionally shaping the region's economic growth—rather than reacting to market forces—demands strategic resource deployment to enable sustainable, equitable development. This marks a shift from reactive to proactive implementation, positioning Planning District 16 communities to guide growth collectively while allowing each jurisdiction to capture benefits aligned with local goals. The coordinated investment model leverages economies of scale, promotes cost-sharing, and generates multiplier effects across the regional economy. However, success in business retention, expansion, and attraction will depend on the level of investment. Economic development is highly competitive, and Planning District 16 must expand local investment to capture its share of growth, particularly in sectors lacking strong competitive advantages (e.g., manufacturing).

Suggested partners are identified for some actions to guide collaboration opportunities. These recommendations serve as starting points based on existing relationships and capacity but are not exhaustive or prescriptive. As implementation advances, new partners will emerge, contributing perspectives, resources, and expertise to achieve shared goals. This Strategy and Action Plan functions as a living framework that will evolve as initiatives progress, measuring success through improved competitiveness and stronger interjurisdictional relationships.

PARTNERS LEGEND

BCWDB: Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board
BEAD: Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program
DHCD: Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
FRA: Fredericksburg Regional Alliance
FRCC: Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
GCC: Germanna Community College
MAC: Military Affairs Council
MCBQ: Marine Corps Base Quantico
NSWCDD : Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division
RCC: Rappahannock Community College
RREEC: Rappahannock Region Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Council
SBDC: Small Business Development Center
SCTC: Spotsylvania Career & Technical Center
UMW: University of Mary Washington
VBRSP: Virginia Business Ready Site Program
VDOT: Virginia Department of Transportation
VECF: Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
VEDP: Virginia Economic Development Partnership
VIPC: Virginia Innovation Partnership
VTC: Virginia Tourism Corporation

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1 Regional Workforce Development & Skills Alignment



- 1.1) Planning District 16 workforce development advisory committee
- 1.2) Expand CTE opportunities
- 1.3) Dual pathways opportunities
- 1.4) Unified logistics/manufacturing curriculum
- 1.5) Certification & apprenticeship in trades
- 1.6) Worker displacement programs

2 Infrastructure Coordination for Economic Competitiveness



- 2.1) Regional utility strategies
- 2.2) Data center site collaboration
- 2.3) Regional infrastructure investment fund
- 2.4) Multimodal transportation to reduce congestion
- 2.5) Coordinate regional childcare access expansion

3 Strategic Industry Cluster Development



- 3.1) Proactive business recruitment
- 3.2) Regional site prospectus book
- 3.3) Regional site investment fund
- 3.4) Site readiness evaluations
- 3.5) Supply chain growth

4 Balanced Housing & Community Development



- 4.1) Housing diversity for job opportunities
- 4.2) Regional housing investment fund
- 4.3) Transit-oriented development
- 4.4) Community engagement on housing diversity

5 Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem



- 5.1) Digital infrastructure expansion
- 5.2) Entrepreneurship education
- 5.3) Permanent incubator funding
- 5.4) Establish start-up assistance program
- 5.5) NS Dahlgren commercialization partnership
- 5.6) Regional venture capital/angel fund

6 Tourism & Placemaking Coordination



- 6.1) Regional branding effort
- 6.2) Regional tourism entity
- 6.3) Marketing collateral & packages

7 Data-Driven Regional Economic Intelligence



- 7.1) Unified data methodology
- 7.2) Regular data sharing
- 7.3) Regional data repository

MODELS FOR PLANNING DISTRICT 16'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY

This section highlights programs that can be adapted for Planning District 16. These proven models demonstrate how regional collaboration and strategic partnerships can drive economic development.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MODELS

GO TEC Regional Expansion Program

The Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers program demonstrates how middle school career exposure can build sustainable talent pipelines. Expanding from a 2018 pilot to 73 schools statewide, GO TEC shows how early STEM engagement combined with public-private partnerships can address workforce shortages in key sectors. This model supports implementing Action 1.2.1's GO TEC regional expansion. [Multiple Virginia regions](#).

FAME Central Virginia Chapter Model

FAME's work-study apprenticeship model addresses small business workforce needs and stackable credential pathways. The program's industry-led curriculum demonstrates how regional coordination between community colleges and employers can create effective training solutions. This model supports Strategy 1.3 on dual pathways and Strategy 1.5 on apprenticeship expansion by showing how small manufacturers can collaborate on workforce development. [GO Virginia Region 4](#).

Hampton Roads Regional Apprenticeship Hub

Hampton Roads shows how workforce development boards can coordinate apprenticeship programs across industries and jurisdictions. This employer-driven approach provides a model for Strategy 1.5's apprenticeship collaborative, demonstrating how regional coordination can achieve scale that individual localities cannot accomplish alone. [Hampton Roads Workforce Council](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Project Oasis Data Center Siting Study

Project Oasis provides a replicable methodology for data center site assessment. The study's approach to evaluating power, fiber, cooling, and site characteristics offers a template for Action 2.2.1's data center site suitability analysis. By demonstrating how a \$50,000 investment can identify and validate development-

ready sites, this model shows how to leverage limited resources for maximum economic development impact. [GO Virginia Region 1](#).

Project Fuse Telework Strategy

Project Fuse offers a framework for attracting companies embracing hybrid work models. The strategy's focus on connectivity, office space, housing diversity, academic partnerships, and innovative incentives aligns with multiple CEDS goals including broadband expansion (Goal 5), housing development (Goal 4), and business recruitment (Goal 3). This model demonstrates how rural regions can compete for knowledge-based businesses by leveraging quality of life advantages. [Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority](#).

Mid-Atlantic Broadband Middle Mile Expansion

MBC's open-access fiber network demonstrates how collaborative infrastructure investment can support economic development across multiple jurisdictions. This model offers an approach for Strategy 5.1's broadband expansion that emphasizes shared infrastructure benefiting all member localities rather than competitive approaches. [Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation](#).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION MODELS

SOVA Innovation Hub

SOVA demonstrates how rural innovation centers can serve multiple jurisdictions through hub-and-spoke models. The combination of coworking space, digital skills training, and entrepreneurship programs provides a template for Strategy 5.3's business incubator development. SOVA's expansion across 15 localities shows how to scale innovation services across member jurisdictions while maintaining local relevance. [GO Virginia Region 3](#).

SEED Innovation Hub Development

SEED illustrates how higher education institutions can anchor regional innovation efforts while serving multiple counties. The model's integration of K-12 programming, small business development, and community networking demonstrates how Planning District 16 can leverage the University of Mary Washington and community colleges to support Goal 5's entrepreneurship ecosystem development. [GO Virginia Region 3](#).

Implementation Relevance for Planning District 16

These models demonstrate that successful regional economic development requires sustained collaboration, shared governance structures, and coordinated resource leverage. They show how a convening organization can facilitate multi-jurisdictional partnerships that achieve greater impact than individual locality efforts.

GOAL 1

Regional Workforce Development & Skills Alignment



Strategy 1.1) Create a Planning District 16 workforce development advisory committee

Action 1.1.1

Establish Regional Workforce Development Advisory Committee

Action 1.1.2

Create Industry Advisory Panels by Cluster

Action 1.1.3

Host Workforce-Education Alignment Roundtables

Strategy 1.2) Expand CTE opportunities beyond the existing technical career paths

Action 1.2.1

Launch GO TEC Regional Expansion

Action 1.2.2

Establish Regional CTE Academy Feasibility Study

Action 1.2.3

Develop Emerging Technology Training Programs

Strategy 1.3) Implement the Region 6 Talent Pathways Initiative recommendations to provide short-term skills for employment and long-term education for wage mobility

Action 1.3.1

Implement Recommendations From the Region 6 TPI Report

Action 1.3.2

Launch Career Acceleration Program

Action 1.3.3

Develop Stackable Credentials Framework

GOAL 1 Regional Workforce Development & Skills Alignment

continued

Strategy 1.4) Consider a unified curriculum for logistics and manufacturing skills development

Action 1.4.1

Conduct Logistics and Manufacturing Skills Gap Analysis

Action 1.4.2

Develop Regional Logistics and Manufacturing Training Center

Action 1.4.3

Launch Industry 4.0 Training Initiative

Action 1.4.4

Create Unified Competency-Based Curriculum

Strategy 1.5) Expand certification and apprenticeship opportunities in trades

Action 1.5.1

Establish Regional Apprenticeship Collaborative

Action 1.5.2

Launch Pre-Apprenticeship Pipeline Program

Action 1.5.3

Launch Apprenticeship Hub and Matching Platform

Strategy 1.6) Develop and expand worker displacement programs, focused on separated military personnel from Quantico and Dahlgren

Action 1.6.1

Launch Military Transition Talent Initiative

Action 1.6.2

Develop Transitioning Service Member Accelerated Credential Program

Action 1.6.3

Create Military Spouse Employment Initiative

GOAL 2

Infrastructure Coordination for Economic Competitiveness



Strategy 2.1) Lead collaborative efforts to develop regional utility strategies for economic development

Action 2.1.1

Conduct Regional Utility Infrastructure Assessment

Action 2.1.2

Develop Inter-Jurisdictional Utility Financing Models

Action 2.1.3

Launch Regional Water/Sewer Master Planning Initiative

Strategy 2.2 Collaborate on data center site location in areas already served with power and utility infrastructure

Action 2.2.1

Conduct Data Center Site Suitability Analysis

Action 2.2.2

Develop Regional Data Center Recruitment Strategy

Action 2.2.3

Launch Data Center Workforce Training Initiative

Action 2.2.4

Establish Power Grid Enhancement Feasibility Study

Strategy 2.3) Consider a regional infrastructure investment fund focused on large-scale, regional business recruitment and retention

Action 2.3.1

Launch Pilot Regional Infrastructure Fund

Action 2.3.2

Create Site-Specific Infrastructure Assessment Tool

Action 2.3.3

Establish Infrastructure Pre-Development Program

GOAL 2 Infrastructure Coordination for Economic Competitiveness

continued

Strategy 2.4) Develop a multimodal accessible transportation system that reduces congestion, supports economic vitality, and improves mobility for vulnerable groups

Action 2.4.1

Develop a Comprehensive Regional Transit Strategy

Action 2.4.2

Launch Employer-Sponsored Transportation Pilot Program

Action 2.5.3

Establish Community Connector Routes Planning Study

Action 2.5.4

Coordinate Regional Congestion Management Planning and Implementation

Strategy 2.5) Coordinate regional childcare access expansion to support workforce participation and training enrollment

Action 2.5.1

Conduct Regional Childcare Access and Economic Impact Assessment

Action 2.5.2

Establish Regional Childcare Infrastructure Coalition

Action 2.5.3

Support Childcare Business Development

Action 2.5.4

Align Childcare with Regional Training Systems

GOAL 3

Strategic Industry Cluster Development



Strategy 3.1) Expand proactive business recruitment efforts within the identified target industries

Action 3.1.1

Develop Cluster-Specific Recruitment Strategies

Action 3.1.2

Launch Regional Business Intelligence System

Action 3.1.3

Establish Industry Cluster Ambassador Program

Action 3.1.4

Create Sector-Specific Marketing Campaigns

Strategy 3.2) Create a regional site prospectus book highlighting at least three sites in each jurisdiction

Action 3.2.1

Develop Comprehensive Regional Site Inventory

Action 3.2.2

Create Professional Site Prospectus Materials

Action 3.2.3

Establish Site Prospectus Maintenance Program

Strategy 3.3) Consider a regional site investment fund to increase the number of Tier 4 and Tier 5 sites as designated by VBRSP

Action 3.3.1

Establish Regional Site Development Fund

Action 3.3.2

Launch Priority Sites Due Diligence Program

Action 3.3.3

Develop Speculative Building Feasibility Study

GOAL 3 Strategic Industry Cluster Development

continued

Strategy 3.4) Conduct site readiness evaluations and identify sites for specific industry targets

Action 3.4.1

Develop Sector-Specific Site
Suitability Analysis
Partner: VBRSP

Action 3.4.2

Launch Targeted Site Development for
Key Sectors

Action 3.4.3

Establish Rapid Response Site
Assessment Capability

Strategy 3.5) Expand efforts to identify and promote supply chain growth in the region

Action 3.5.1

Conduct Regional Supply
Chain Mapping Study

Action 3.5.2

Launch Supply Chain
Development Initiative

Action 3.5.3

Establish Regional Supplier
Diversity Program

Action 3.5.4

Develop Logistics and
Distribution Hub Strategy

GOAL 4

Balanced Housing & Community Development



Strategy 4.1) Promote the development of housing diversity in appropriate locations to support and serve current and projected job opportunities within the region

Action 4.1.1

Conduct Regional Workforce Housing Needs Assessment

Action 4.1.2

Develop Housing-Jobs Proximity Analysis

Action 4.1.3

Establish Regional Housing Development Technical Assistance

Strategy 4.2) Consider a regional housing investment fund to create price-diverse options as part of mixed-income strategies

Action 4.2.1

Launch Pilot Housing Investment Fund

Action 4.2.2

Create Missing Middle Housing Development Program

Action 4.2.3

Establish Land Banking Strategy for Workforce Housing Sites

Strategy 4.3) Encourage and promote transit-oriented development in locations well-served by transportation, infrastructure, and support amenities

Action 4.3.1

Conduct Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Feasibility Studies

Action 4.3.2

Develop TOD Design Guidelines and Toolkit

Action 4.3.3

Establish TOD Infrastructure Investment Program

GOAL 4 Balanced Housing & Community Development

continued

Strategy 4.4) Proactively engage the community on the needs and benefits of housing diversity and price diversity for economic development

Action 4.4.1

Launch Regional Housing Education Campaign

Action 4.4.2

Create Housing-Economic Development Data Dashboard

Action 4.4.3

Establish Workforce Housing Champions Network

GOAL 5

Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem



Strategy 5.1) Invest in the expansion of digital infrastructure to enable home-based economic development throughout the region

Action 5.1.1

Launch Broadband Middle-Mile Extension Project

Action 5.1.2

Offer Digital Skills Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs

Action 5.1.3

Develop Broadband Gap Analysis and Strategic Plan

Action 5.1.4

Launch Telework Site Development Pilot

Strategy 5.2) Increase entrepreneurship education starting in middle school, including the expansion of entrepreneurial education through existing post-secondary institutions

Action 5.2.1

Explore Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum Integration

Action 5.2.2

Establish Youth Entrepreneurship Summer Academy

Action 5.2.3

Create Young Entrepreneur Mentorship Network

Strategy 5.3) Consider permanent funding for the regional business incubator

Action 5.3.1

Develop Incubator Sustainability Business Plan

Action 5.3.2

Explore Public-Private Partnership Development

Action 5.3.3

Facilitate Incubator Facilities Assessment and Expansion

GOAL 5 Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

continued

Strategy 5.4) Establish a startup assistance program providing reduced-cost legal, HR, and accounting services

Action 5.4.1

Establish Pro Bono Professional Network

Action 5.4.2

Fund Startup Services Navigator Position to Coordinate Startup Assistance

Action 5.4.3

Publish Online Resource Portal and Template Library

Strategy 5.5) Increase proactive partnership with NS Dahlgren on the potential commercialization of patents

Action 5.5.1

Fund Tech Transfer Liaison Position

Action 5.5.2

Host Defense Technology Commercialization Forum

Action 5.5.3

Create Federal Lab-to-Market Accelerator

Action 5.5.4

Establish SBIR/STTR Grant Support Program

Strategy 5.6) Foster the development of a regional venture capital/angel investor fund

Action 5.6.1

Commission Study to Map Capital Ecosystem

Action 5.6.2

Form Region Angel Investor Network Formation

Action 5.6.3

Publish a Seed Fund Feasibility Study

Action 5.6.4

Develop Capital Readiness Training Program

GOAL 6

Tourism & Placemaking Coordination



Strategy 6.1) Finalize regional branding effort, incorporating the recreational and historic tourism assets

Action 6.1.1

Complete Comprehensive Brand Identity Development

Action 6.1.2

Design and Install Regional Wayfinding Signage Program

Action 6.1.3

Launch Digital Brand Platform

Strategy 6.2) Create a regional tourism entity designed to coordinate marketing and advertising

Action 6.2.1

Establish Regional Destination Marketing Organization Structure

Action 6.2.2

Create Joint Marketing Fund

Action 6.2.3

Develop Cooperative Advertising Program

Strategy 6.3) Fund the creation of marketing collateral, highlighting multi-day tourism packages

Action 6.3.1

Develop Themed Itineraries

Action 6.3.2

Create Professional Photography and Video Library

Action 6.3.3

Produce Printed and Digital Collateral Suite

Action 6.3.4

Establish Tourism Partnership Program

GOAL 7

Data-Driven Regional Economic Intelligence



Strategy 7.1) Collaborate with jurisdictions on collecting and maintaining data using a unified methodology

Action 7.1.1

Develop Regional Economic Data Standards

Action 7.1.2

Shared Data Collection Platform

Action 7.1.3

Establish Joint Data Governance Committee

Action 7.1.4

Offer Training and Technical Assistance

Strategy 7.2) Collaborate on regular, consistent data sharing between jurisdictions and GWRC

Action 7.2.1

Develop Data Sharing Agreement Template

Action 7.2.2

Establish Quarterly Data Submission Calendar

Action 7.2.3

Create Regional Economic Dashboard

Strategy 5.3) Continue to serve as a regional data repository for demographic and economic indicators, as collected by federal and state entities

Action 7.3.1

Invest in Enhanced Data Visualization Tools

Action 5.3.2

Develop a Customized Report Generation System

Action 7.3.3

Publish Quarterly Regional Economic Indicator Report

6 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

The Planning District 16 evaluation framework was developed to meet the annual CEDS performance reporting requirements for the Economic Development Administration. It establishes specific measures to track progress and assess the region's economic impact, ultimately answering two key questions: "How are we doing?" and "What can we do better?"

These performance measures are derived directly from the strategic action plan, which was in turn informed by the regional SWOT analysis. The chosen metrics focus on what is most critical to the Planning District 16: transforming key conditions, leveraging existing assets, and building the capacity needed for private-sector growth and regional prosperity.

Moving beyond job creation and retention as sole indicators, this framework offers a comprehensive view of economic vitality. We recognize that true prosperity includes a workforce-ready population, robust infrastructure, a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, accessible housing, a high quality of life, and data-informed governance. Job growth is a natural outcome of successful investment in these core areas.

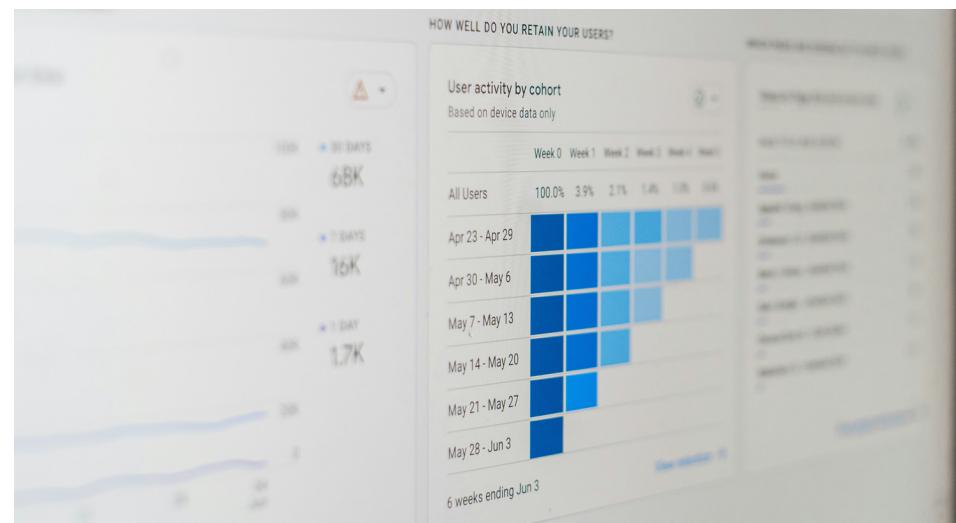
Planning District 16 has selected a blend of traditional metrics, such as jobs created and private investment, and non-traditional measures of wealth creation, including income growth and business formation rates. This approach ensures we capture the full picture of regional capacity building by focusing on meaningful outcomes rather than just activities.

Designed to be adaptive, the framework will incorporate feedback from partners and adjust timelines as necessary. For EDA-funded projects, outcomes will be explicitly linked to these performance measures, clearly documenting how investments advance our goals. When results fall short, these metrics will help identify gaps and guide future strategies.

The quantitative data presented in the following section provide the foundation for assessing progress across all seven goals.

METRICS

These metrics capture region-wide characteristics that indicate progress toward CEDS goals. Individual organizations maintain their own detailed performance records; these regional measures complement rather than duplicate those efforts by focusing on system-level indicators of economic transformation.



Goal 1: Regional Workforce Development & Skills Alignment

- Labor force participation rate by educational attainment
- Educational attainment levels (associate degree or higher) for working-age population
- Percentage of CTE students completing programs and entering employment or further education within 6 months
- Number of stackable credentials awarded through regional programs
- Enrollment and completion rates in dual pathway programs

Goal 2: Infrastructure Coordination for Economic Competitiveness

- Number of certified Tier 3, Tier 4 and Tier 5 sites (VBRSP designation)
- Percentage of industrial/commercial sites with adequate utility capacity (water, sewer, power)
- Broadband coverage percentage by census tract (100 Mbps download/20 Mbps upload or greater)
- Public transit ridership from priority communities (low-income, senior, disabled populations)

Goal 3: Strategic Industry Cluster Development

- Employment growth by number and percentage within identified target clusters
- Number of businesses recruited and retained within target industries
- Private capital investment in target industry sectors
- Number of site-specific assessments completed for target sectors

Goal 4: Balanced Housing & Community Development

- Housing units permitted by type (e.g. single-family, multifamily, ADU)
- Ratio of median housing costs to median household income (housing affordability index)
- Number of workforce housing units developed (affordable to households earning 60-120% Area Median Income)
- Percentage of regional workforce commuting more than 30 minutes

Goal 5: Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem



- Number of new business formations annually (by sector)
- Business survival rate (3-year and 5-year benchmarks)
- Number of entrepreneurs served by regional incubator/accelerator programs
- SBIR/STTR grants awarded to regional businesses (number and dollar value)
- Broadband coverage expansion in previously underserved areas (percentage point increase)
- Youth and post-secondary entrepreneurship program participants

Goal 6: Tourism & Placemaking Coordination



- Visitor spending and total economic impact (dollar value)
- Hotel occupancy rates and average daily rate (ADR)
- Tourism-related employment (direct and indirect jobs)
- Wayfinding signage installations completed across the region
- Digital platform engagement metrics (unique website visits, social media reach, engagement rate)

Goal 7: Data-Driven Regional Economic Intelligence



- Frequency of regional economic dashboard updates (target: quarterly minimum)
- Stakeholder utilization of regional data (report downloads, dashboard views, custom report requests)
- Number of customized reports generated for economic development decision-making
- Stakeholder satisfaction with data quality, accessibility, and usability (biennial survey)

7 RESILIENCY

UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

Regional economic prosperity is increasingly linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions to its economic base. Economic resilience, as defined by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, encompasses the capacity to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress a region may experience. This extends beyond simple recovery to include proactive preparation and adaptive capacity building.

For Planning District 16, regional resilience is the ability for the George Washington Regional Commission and its partners to anticipate, survive, adapt to, and recover from community disturbances, stresses, and disruptions while maintaining essential economic, social, environmental, and infrastructural functions and services. As defined in GWRC Resolution 25-02, this definition recognizes that economic resilience must address three primary categories of potential disruptions: downturns in the national or international economy that impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending; downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of regional economic activity; and external shocks such as natural disasters, closure of major facilities, or exit of significant employers.

REGIONAL VULNERABILITIES AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Planning District 16 faces economic and natural hazard vulnerabilities that require comprehensive resilience planning. The region's economic vulnerabilities, as identified in the SWOT analysis, include limited industry diversification beyond government and emerging sectors, workforce challenges including an aging population and shortages in healthcare and manufacturing trades, and infrastructure capacity constraints affecting transportation, broadband, and utilities.

Overreliance on the federal government as the region's largest employer also threatens regional stability. While federal employment was historically viewed as stable and recession-proof, this is no longer the case. Government shutdowns are occurring with increasing frequency, creating immediate income disruption for federal workers and contractors while also threatening essential services like SNAP benefits that support the region's most vulnerable residents. Federal employment furloughs and layoffs have become more common, demonstrating that government jobs no longer provide the economic security they once did.

These economic vulnerabilities are compounded by natural hazard risks documented in the unadopted GWRC Resiliency Plan and the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The region faces exposure to multiple hazards, including dam/levee failure, drought, extreme heat, wildfires, earthquakes, sinkholes, landslides, flooding, hurricanes and tropical storms, thunderstorms, winter weather, pandemic/infectious disease, civil disturbance, and various technological hazards. Of particular concern for economic resilience are flooding risks along the Potomac River and its tributaries, severe weather events that can disrupt the critical I-95 transportation corridor, and technological hazards that could affect the growing data center cluster.

The intersection of these vulnerabilities creates compounded risks. For example, a major winter storm could simultaneously disrupt federal operations (affecting the region's largest employment sector), damage critical infrastructure serving data centers (threatening emerging economic diversification), and strain the healthcare system (exacerbating existing workforce shortages). Flooding events could impact waterfront development areas while disrupting supply chains for the region's emerging manufacturing sector.

CURRENT RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

GWRC has implemented several initiatives that contribute to regional economic resilience. The Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan represents a foundational steady-state resilience initiative, with ongoing strategies including the establishment of uniform GIS standards for regional data capabilities, improvement of interoperable emergency communications and planning coordination, refinement of critical facilities databases, promotion of hazard mitigation concepts integration into local planning processes, and development of regional preparedness guides and public education materials.

From an economic development perspective, GWRC's strategic planning efforts align with resilience principles through initiatives to diversify the regional economic base, support workforce development programs, enhance infrastructure capacity, and strengthen business retention and expansion efforts. The region's growing data center cluster represents both a resilience asset through economic diversification and a potential vulnerability requiring specialized protection from natural and technological hazards.

The region's educational assets, including the University of Mary Washington and Germanna Community College, provide workforce development capabilities that can adapt to changing economic conditions. Strong regional cooperation through GWRC facilitates information sharing and coordinated response capabilities across jurisdictions.

STEADY-STATE RESILIENCE STRATEGY

To build long-term economic durability, GWRC will pursue comprehensive steady-state resilience initiatives that address both economic and hazard vulnerabilities:

Economic Diversification and Cluster Development: Reduce the region's dependence on federal employment by expanding industrial sectors including data centers, advanced manufacturing, and

logistics. Focus on building clusters that leverage regional assets including strategic location, available land, skilled workforce, and educational institutions. Prioritize industries that complement rather than compete with federal operations to create mutual resilience.

Workforce Resilience Building: Develop a resilient workforce capable of shifting between jobs and industries when core employment is threatened. Expand job-driven skills strategies through enhanced partnerships between educational institutions and regional employers, including the University of Mary Washington's new Master of Science in Nursing program and the planned Mary Washington College of Medicine. Address critical shortages in mid-level healthcare and manufacturing trades through targeted training programs. Create pathways for federal workers to develop skills to transition to private sector opportunities, particularly separating active duty military personnel.

Infrastructure Redundancy and Hardening: Ensure redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety during disruptions. Enhance transportation network resilience through improved connectivity and alternative route development. Strengthen utility infrastructure serving critical economic assets, including data centers and manufacturing facilities. Coordinate infrastructure investments with hazard mitigation priorities.

Business Continuity and Preparedness: Promote business continuity planning throughout the regional business community, with particular emphasis on supply chain vulnerability assessment and preparedness. Develop sector-specific guidance for federal contractors, data center operators, and manufacturing facilities. Integrate economic considerations into hazard mitigation planning at the local level.

Safe Development Practices: Continue implementing safe development practices in business districts and surrounding communities through coordination with the Regional Hazard

Mitigation Plan. Locate new development outside identified hazard areas where possible, protect existing economic assets through mitigation measures, and preserve natural lands that provide hazard buffers while supporting recreation and tourism assets.

Regional Asset Mapping and Monitoring: Maintain comprehensive GIS systems linking business establishment data, hazard information, and infrastructure assets to enable rapid impact assessments and recovery planning. Develop economic dashboards and monitoring systems to provide early warning of potential disruptions to key economic sectors.

RESPONSIVE RESILIENCE STRATEGY

GWRC will establish mechanisms to facilitate rapid and effective responses to economic disruptions through responsive resilience initiatives:

Emergency Economic Coordination: Establish Business Emergency Operations Centers (BEOC) or similar coordination mechanisms to serve as hubs for business-to-business collaboration during disruptions. Create protocols for rapid communication with local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessments. Develop leadership succession plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs.

Information Networks and Communication: Build on existing regional cooperation to establish active communication networks among public, private, education, and nonprofit sectors. Create protocols for regular information sharing about economic conditions, business needs, and emerging challenges. Develop mechanisms to quickly assess and communicate impacts on the business community following disruptions.

Post-Disaster Economic Recovery Planning: Conduct pre-disaster recovery planning to define key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and actions for economic recovery. Establish surge capital and credit

access mechanisms for businesses and local governments. Create frameworks for rapid business permitting and regulatory flexibility during recovery periods.

Regional Coordination and Collaboration: Position GWRC as both an information source for dealing with economic challenges and a convener of regional stakeholders to gather data and encourage collaboration post-disruption. Enhance business retention and expansion programs to serve as vehicles for mobilizing action and facilitating information sharing during disruptions.

IMPLEMENTATION AND INTEGRATION

This two-pronged resilience approach will be integrated throughout CEDS implementation rather than operating as a separate initiative. Regional vulnerabilities identified in this section directly inform strategic priorities and action items throughout the CEDS. Resilience considerations will be embedded in project evaluation criteria, ensuring that economic development investments contribute to overall regional resilience.

GWRC will coordinate resilience planning with ongoing Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan updates, ensuring alignment between economic development and emergency management priorities. Regular assessment of regional vulnerabilities will be conducted through CEDS monitoring and evaluation processes, with particular attention to emerging risks and changing economic conditions.

Success in building regional economic resilience will be measured through multiple indicators including economic diversification metrics, infrastructure redundancy assessments, business preparedness levels, and response time capabilities during actual disruptions. This comprehensive approach positions the Planning District 16 region to not only withstand economic and natural hazard disruptions but to emerge stronger and more competitive in their aftermath.