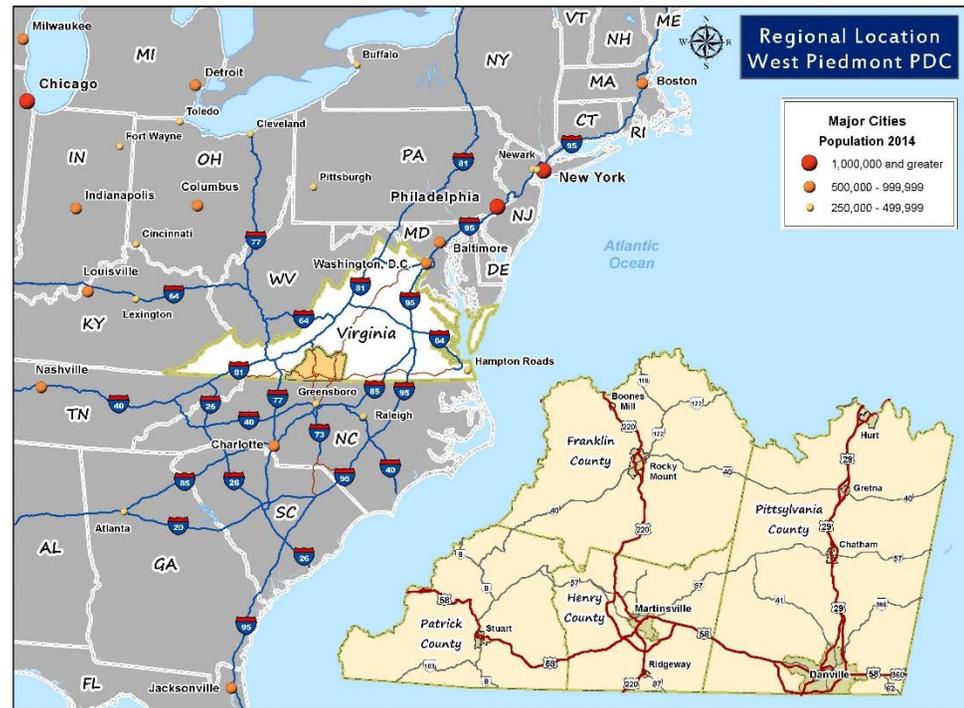


# Regional Vision

*As a region, we envision a diverse, business-friendly environment to encourage new and expanding businesses; to promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem; to ensure a well- educated, highly skilled workforce; and to provide an all-encompassing infrastructure to facilitate development including transportation, water and sewer services, utilities, and state-of-the-art telecommunications. We advocate regional collaboration to create significant partnerships building upon regional strengths and opportunities. We treasure our natural resources and cultural heritage and welcome a robust tourism market to share these precious assets. We support vibrant communities and an enhanced quality of life. We serve to highlight the positive attributes of the region, defining our image as an extraordinary place to live, learn, work, play, invest, and do business.*

## Introduction

**P**lanning District 12 -- the West Piedmont Planning District -- was designated as an Economic Development District on June 24, 1992. The District is comprised of the cities of Danville and Martinsville; the counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; and the Town of Rocky Mount. This designation represents a partnership among the West Piedmont Planning District Commission, its member local governments, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) and assists with establishing regional priorities for projects and investments through the annual development of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document. The Economic Development Administration Reform Act of 1998 identifies a CEDS as a requirement to apply for assistance under the EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Programs. Since the original Public Works and Economic Development Act was enacted in 1965, economic development planning has been a key element in achieving EDA's long-range goals. The purpose



Prepared by West Piedmont PDC, January 2017. D.W. Rakes

of the CEDS is to establish a process that will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It is a continuous planning process that addresses the economic problems and potentials of an area, providing a blueprint to strengthen economies through regional strategies which focus on economic and workforce development, quality of life, transportation and other vital infrastructure.

## Assumptions Regarding Economic Trends

For several decades, the West Piedmont Planning District was noted for its high degree of industrialization when compared with other regions of the state. Employment in the region traditionally was concentrated in the manufacture of textile and furniture products. Since 1999, the region lost more than 19,000 jobs in these sectors due to globalization as a whole and, subsequently, local and regional unemployment rates increased to double digits. Efforts to attract diversified manufacturing and support industries have helped to broaden the economic base of the region and mitigate the impacts of globalization upon the region. The area has continued efforts to transition the economy by promoting entrepreneurial opportunities with new start-ups, boosting tourism, and expanding agricultural interests.

Some of the emerging employment sectors include healthcare and social assistance, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, tourism, retail trade, and other service industries. Today's manufacturing includes Industry 4.0 with artificial intelligence, advanced robotics, automation, analytics, and the Internet of Things. To further this cause, the region is working to align education, workforce training, and economic development. Concerted efforts continue to nurture the youth and create social

stability in order to ensure that they will have local employment opportunities and encourage them to remain in the region.

The region has a strong agricultural heritage, having been a leading producer of flue-cured tobacco and dairy products in the Commonwealth of Virginia. However, the area has experienced changes in the agricultural component of its economic base due to changes in regulations. With regard to dairy, Franklin County still ranks second in Virginia. In recent years, the region has seen a transition in agriculture with a trend in local food initiatives, agritourism, and other notable efforts such as regional, national, and international marketing of products.

Industrial recruitment and retention have become extremely sophisticated and competitive in the last decade. With many localities across the country competing for manufacturing jobs and investment, industries can afford to be very selective in their choices, requiring communities to provide quality industrial sites and amenities, a well-trained and positively motivated workforce, and a tax structure which is conducive to industrial well-being. The challenge to the localities of the West Piedmont Planning District is to create the economic climate desired by industry executives, meet specific needs for services such as water and sewer, retain a tax structure which is attractive to industry, provide a highly skilled workforce, and an enhanced quality of life.

Although the region has experienced significant job losses in the past, there have been positive signs of economic growth and diversification in the region. This may be attributed to the commitment of the local governments, economic development organizations, higher education institutions, and private foundations in improving the local business climate and quality of life factors. Collaborative efforts across the region strengthen the ability to compete globally and boost the regional economy and job growth. Partnerships between economic development, education and workforce development, government, and industry help link workforce skills, infrastructure and regional assets to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and emerging industries.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are important factors for long-term economic competitiveness and account for the majority of productivity and per-capita income growth in the nation, in the state, and regionally. Innovations can be large or small but still have a big impact. For these reasons, new start-up companies are an important aspect of the overall economic picture, particularly in showing growth.

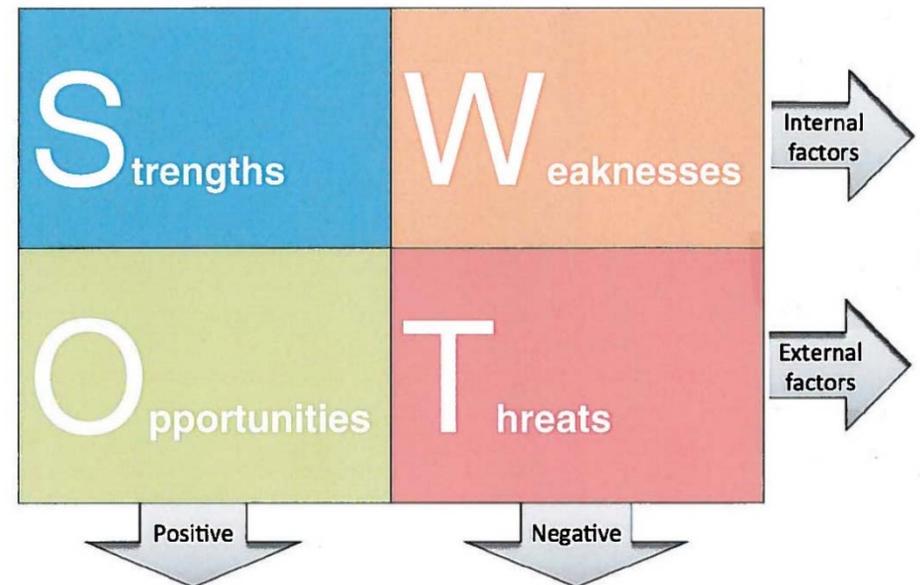
While unemployment has seen a recent decline, underemployment remains a growing concern. The region continues to struggle with personal income due to low or stationary wages. Also, the large gap between earnings in the region and statewide persists. Some struggle to earn a living wage. Further, it should be noted that

barriers to employment and education are childcare, transportation, and health care. These barriers are not regionally unique, but are national issues which require data and further understanding to address. Affordable childcare is a challenge to many families, especially those earning less than “livable” wages. Transportation may be an obstacle, particularly in rural areas with little or no transit service, and health care comes into question for those with disabilities, drug addictions, or those caring for family members.

## SWOT Analysis

The following analysis identifies the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) within the West Piedmont Region. This analysis provides a comprehensive picture of overall economic conditions and available resources. Strengths and opportunities help to define the area’s marketability, while weaknesses and threats reflect challenges within the region to be overcome. Strengths are considered internal, positive characteristics on which to capitalize and opportunities, in many cases, rely on external factors for new possibilities to succeed in economic growth. When identifying opportunities, it is wise to examine strengths and weaknesses for any potential openings to build upon the strengths or eliminate the weaknesses.

Weaknesses are identified as internal barriers and threats are generally external factors that may be due to government policies, regulations, financial constraints, and other impediments that are out of our control. Investments and new initiatives will help offset these threats. Strategic planning, significant goals, and detailed strategies can assist in implementing changes to overcome these limitations.



<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-lane, divided highways with 50-mile proximity to interstate connectivity</li> <li>• Close proximity to local aviation facilities and other regional airports, Piedmont Triad International Airport, and FedEx Distribution Hub</li> <li>• Strong reliable broadband fiber network</li> <li>• Right to work state</li> <li>• Foreign Trade Zone affiliation</li> <li>• Low cost of doing business; low/competitive taxes; available industrial land; competitively priced utility costs (electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, broadband); low cost of living</li> <li>• Geographic proximity to large east coast population centers</li> <li>• Water and natural resources/scenic beauty; clean air/moderate climate</li> <li>• Access to local foods/abundant agricultural assets</li> <li>• High quality of life amenities; music, arts, and cultural resources; abundant recreational and tourism opportunities/Blue Ridge Parkway; access to range of healthcare options</li> <li>• Access to numerous higher educational institutions; public school system program initiatives (STEAM-H, advanced degree, and retainment); technological initiatives and advantages (Fab Lab/Cray Computer)</li> <li>• Unique workforce training programs; available workforce</li> <li>• Attractive to retirees with low cost of living and conducive climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited roadway infrastructure – no interstate; need for more public transportation</li> <li>• Lack of adequate cell tower service in all areas of the region; need for more last-mile connectivity to broadband in rural areas</li> <li>• Need for natural gas to serve industries in more communities; lack of diverse energy sources</li> <li>• Need for large, shovel-ready industrial properties available</li> <li>• Abundance of obsolete vacant industrial buildings and age of some industrial building stock</li> <li>• Need for diversified economic base</li> <li>• Need for more downtown vibrancy</li> <li>• Lack of HUB Zone designation in some areas and difficulty in qualifying due to federal criteria</li> <li>• High poverty rates and low per capita income</li> <li>• Some low performing schools in K-12 system (SOL/test scores) and challenging literacy rates</li> <li>• Deteriorating housing/age of housing stock in some communities; need for transitional housing</li> <li>• Low-skilled workforce; workforce skills don't match available jobs</li> <li>• Barriers to entry into workforce – lack of amenities such as daycare facilities accessible to industrial parks, lack of transportation, re-entering citizen population</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal/state programs (i.e., Economic/Local Development District designations, VA Enterprise Zone areas, Main Street Communities, etc.)</li> <li>• Enhanced regional collaboration including the GO Virginia Initiative</li> <li>• Opportunities for industrial clustering initiatives (existing industries and their suppliers)</li> <li>• Seed and venture funding</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship mentoring; apprenticeships and internships; job shadowing; on-the-job training opportunities; incumbent worker training</li> <li>• K-12 partnerships with business leaders/growing partnerships between workforce, industries, higher education institutions, foundations, and government entities</li> <li>• Increased on-line educational opportunities</li> <li>• Regional tourism/marketing efforts</li> <li>• Invest in intellectual capital and ensure a future talent pipeline</li> <li>• Promote strategic communication and public relations around successful education and workforce initiatives</li> <li>• Promote/facilitate more cross-state collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign competition for local industries; increased national economic development competition</li> <li>• Increased regulatory environment from federal and state agencies</li> <li>• Construction costs for needed transportation/roadway improvements (i.e., U.S. Hwy 58/I-73)</li> <li>• Increasing out commuting trend</li> <li>• Decline in region's population due to changing employment; ability to attract and retain young professionals and working-age population</li> <li>• School dropout rates</li> <li>• Prevalence of recreational drug abuse, controlled substance abuse including opioid use and other health issues such as obesity/diabetes</li> <li>• Aging infrastructure (water, sewer, bridges, and roadways)</li> <li>• Shortage of professionals in health care, education, engineering, and related STEM-H fields</li> <li>• Increase in aging workforce, general population and median age</li> <li>• Low labor force participation</li> </ul>

## Industry Clusters

CLUSTER	NICHE SECTORS	WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS/CREDENTIALS/ INDUSTRY PARTNERS
<b>ADVANCED MANUFACTURING</b>	AEROSPACE AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRONICS ENERGY PRECISION AUTOMATION CHEMICAL POLYMER PLASTICS RUBBER FIBER	MITUTOYO CIMM TRAINING PARTNER HAAS NATIONAL TRAINING PROVIDER ASQ CERTIFICATION FANUC FACTORY AUTOMATION & ROBOTICS SIEMENS CERTIFIED MECHATRONIC SYSTEMS DOL OSHA 10 AND OSHA 30 NIMS PRECISION MACHINING CERTIFICATION SANDVIK COROMANT TOOLING CERTIFICATE NCCER AND AWS WELDING CERTIFICATIONS COUNCIL FOR SIX SIGMA CERTIFICATION AMTEK FLUID POWER CERTIFICATE MSSC CERTIFIED PRODUCTION TECHNICIAN FESTO INDUSTRY 4.0 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADVANCED FILM CERTIFICATION CADD (AUTODESK INVENTOR & REVIT; SOLIDWORKS) PAULSON POLYMER PROCESSING MSSC MANUFACTURING PRODUCTION
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL &amp; LIFE SCIENCES</b>	WOOD PRODUCTS FOOD PROCESSING ENERGY/BIO-BASED PRODUCTS	AMERICAN PRODUCTION & INVENTORY CONTROL CERTIFICATION PRODUCTION & INVENTORY MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE CERTIFIED SUPPLY CHAIN PROFESSIONAL LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION MSSC CERTIFIED LOGISTICS TECHNICIAN HEATING, VENTILATION, AIR CONDITIONING & REFRIGERATION FOOD HANDLING SAFETY COURSES/SERVSAFE FOOD PROCESSING/AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRIAL MAINTENANCE

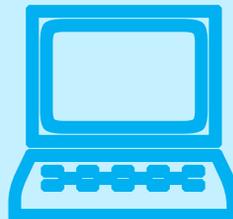
CLUSTER	NICHE SECTORS	WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS/CREDENTIALS/ INDUSTRY PARTNERS
IT & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LOGISTICS/ DISTRIBUTION DATA CENTERS BACK OFFICE SUPPORT	INFORMATION SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY NETWORKING AND COMPUTER PROGRAMMING COMPUTER SERVICE TECHNICIAN CLIENT OPERATING SYSTEMS (LAN) DESKTOP DATABASE SOFTWARE WINDOWS MOBILE DEVELOPMENT PC HARDWARE AND ARCHITECTURE CISCO (CCENT & CCNA) MAINTAINING SERVERS IN NETWORKED INFRASTRUCTURE MICROSOFT AND COMPTIA CERTIFICATIONS CYBER SECURITY CERTIFICATION
HEALTH CARE SERVICES	NURSING MEDICAL LAB MEDICAL OFFICE RADIOLOGY DENTAL EMERGENCY TECHNICIAN THERAPY TELEHEALTH	REGISTERED NURSE (RN) RN TO BSN (BACHELOR'S DEGREE) LPN TO RN PRACTICAL NURSING (LPN) NURSE AIDE (CNA) MEDICAL LAB TECHNOLOGY/TECHNICIAN PHLEBOTOMY TECHNICIAN CERTIFIED CLINICAL MEDICAL ASSISTANT (CCMA) MEDICAL BILLING AND CODING SPECIALIST RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY DENTAL ASSISTING COMMUNITY DENTAL HEALTH COORDINATOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN (EMT) PARAMEDIC PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT (PTA) THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE CERTIFIED TELEMEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST (UVA)

# Implementation Plan

The West Piedmont Economic Development District has developed goals, along with detailed strategies for the region. Based on the four priority goals for the region, the following provides some implementation strategies to address these priorities.

## Goal 1: Increase economic growth and global competitiveness

- ATTRACT MORE INDUSTRIES TO THE REGION, AND PROMOTE AND CREATE INNOVATIVE INDUSTRY CLUSTERS TO COMPETE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY
- CREATE PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES TO SUPPORT NEW AND EXISTING INDUSTRIES AND SMALL BUSINESS STARTUPS
- PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH AND AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM TO OPTIMIZE RESOURCES



## Goal 2: Improve infrastructure needed to grow the regional economy

- DEVELOP TECHNOLOGY PARKS AND NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE; CONSTRUCT NEW INDUSTRIAL SHELL BUILDINGS AND PROMOTE AN ONGOING INDUSTRIAL SHELL BUILDING PROGRAM
- ENSURE THAT NEW AND EXISTING INDUSTRIAL SITES HAVE ADEQUATE POWER SUPPLIES, STATE-OF-THE-ART TELECOMMUNICATIONS, ACCESS TO PUBLIC WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE, ADEQUATE ACCESS ROADS THAT LINK THE REGION THROUGH HIGHWAY AND RAIL TO MAJOR TRADE CENTERS, AND ENHANCEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL PARK AMENITIES



## Goal 3: Grow, retain, and attract talent

- INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDE STEAM-H (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART, MATH, AND HEALTH) INITIATIVES
- STRENGTHEN CONNECTION BETWEEN WORKFORCE SKILLS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, AND DEVELOP A REGIONAL APPROACH TO CREATE A HIGH-SKILL, HIGH-WAGE WORKFORCE TO DEVELOP/ATTRACT FUTURE TALENT
- RECOGNIZE “TRANSFERABLE” SKILLS WHEN DETERMINING INDUSTRY TARGETS AND LAUNCH DIFFERENT WORKFORCE MODELS WHICH ARE ALIGNED WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS



## Goal 4: Enhance quality of life

- PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND AGRITOURISM EFFORTS IN THE REGION INCLUDING CULTURAL, HISTORIC AND PUBLICLY-OWNED NATURAL RESOURCES
- PROMOTE AND EXPAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS
- PROMOTE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES WHICH ADVOCATE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



## The Region At A Glance



### Population

**243,328** (Declined by 2.3% since 2010)

### Per Capita Income

**\$23,383**

### Workforce - 110,083

Unemployment Rate – 4.9%

Underemployed – 8,569

### Median Household Income

**\$41,256**

### Average Labor Force

Participation Rate – 54.8%

### Average Weekly Wage

**\$674** (All Industries)

### Educational Attainment



High School Grads – 82.5%

Bachelor's Degree & Above – 15.5%

### Poverty

Individuals - 17.8%

Families – 13.2%

Note: Educational Attainment reflects Population 18 Years and Over

Sources: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau; Virginia Employment Commission; Virginia Economic Development Partnership; & Bureau of Labor Statistics

# West Piedmont 2019 Regional Scorecard at a Glance

Economy	
Taxable Sales	●
Business Startups	●
Employment Growth	●
Personal Income	●
Poverty	●
Unemployment	●
Workforce Preparedness	●
Tourism	●
Homeownership Rate	●
Labor Force Participation	●

Education	
School Readiness (PALS-K)	●
3rd Grade Reading	●
8th Grade Reading/ Math	●
High School Graduate	●
High School Dropout	●
College Graduate	●
Educational Attainment	●

Environment	
Air Quality	●
Land Preservation	●
Historic Resources	●

Quality of Life	
Adult Obesity	●
Teen Births	●
Diabetes	●
Uninsured	●
Access to Recreational Facilities	●
Overdose Deaths	●

Legend	
●	Conditions are improving
●	Conditions are unchanging
●	Conditions are worsening

**Note: Statistics are compared with data for most recent five-year period.**

Sources: Taxable Sales, Business Startups, Labor Force Participation, Employment Growth, and Unemployment obtained from Virginia Employment Commission (VEC); Workforce Preparedness obtained from VCCS, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and ACT Work Ready Communities; Personal Income, Homeownership Rate, College Graduate, and Educational Attainment obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 and 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS); School Readiness obtained from Kids Count data center; 3rd Grade Reading, 8th Grade Reading/Math, High School Graduate, and High School Dropout obtained from Virginia Department of Education (VDOE); Adult Obesity, Teen Births, Diabetes, Air Quality, and Uninsured obtained from Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings and Roadmaps; Overdose Deaths include heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioids, Virginia Department of Health (2013 & 2017). Land preservation obtained from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF).