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## Central Virginia Regional Section

### Introduction

As a supplement to the Virginia State Tourism Plan, this section is dedicated to the Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia's tourism development in the next five years are outlined.

### Process for Findings

Numerous factors formed the basis of the Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia through workshops, surveys, and discussions. The desire among Central Virginia stakeholders is to build upon the historical and heritage assets in an authentic manner and to further develop outdoor recreation, culinary, cultural, and other assets to increase tourism.

**Tourism Assets:** Central Virginia's 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

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discussed with numerous key stakeholders and assessed. In addition to the study team's personal experience of Central Virginia, 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 Virginia's Retreat, DMOs, and chambers of commerce, existing tourism plans for Campbell County and the Town of Altavista, the City of Franklin and Southampton County, Lynchburg, Petersburg, and Richmond, 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 Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia, 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 Central Virginia 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 that Central Virginia was rated highly by most past and prospective travelers for its food and dining, its accommodations, and being good for families. It was also rated as appealing among Generation X travelers and families. Furthermore, most describe Central Virginia as historic. While many also recognized Central Virginia as scenic, outdoor recreation activities such as camping, hiking/exploring nature, and viewing wildlife/birds were not as prominent in visitors' minds. In addition, the majority of visitors to Virginia are likely to visit a historical site on a future vacation.

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.

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**Competitive Perspective:** To understand the offering and competitive positioning of Virginia and the Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia, urban, rural, and historical areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania were analyzed. More specifically, areas of those states were analyzed for key product strengths, and included the areas of Asheville, Charleston, and Philadelphia and its countryside. Destination similarities are seen in North Carolina's wine industry, rising culinary scene, and rural experiences. Asheville, for example, has been recognized for its dining experiences, known as the first Foodtopian Society with many local farm-to-table restaurants, high profile chefs and restaurants, and craft breweries. Asheville's surrounding area in northwestern North Carolina also boasts outdoor recreation, including rafting, zip lines, fishing, camping, etc. Charleston also offers historic character and attractions along with its outdoor recreation opportunities. Philadelphia has strong historical and cultural draw, while its surrounding countryside areas offer a concentration of wineries and outdoor recreation opportunities. Central Virginia with its own rich history, culinary, culture, and nature experiences is well-positioned to compete.

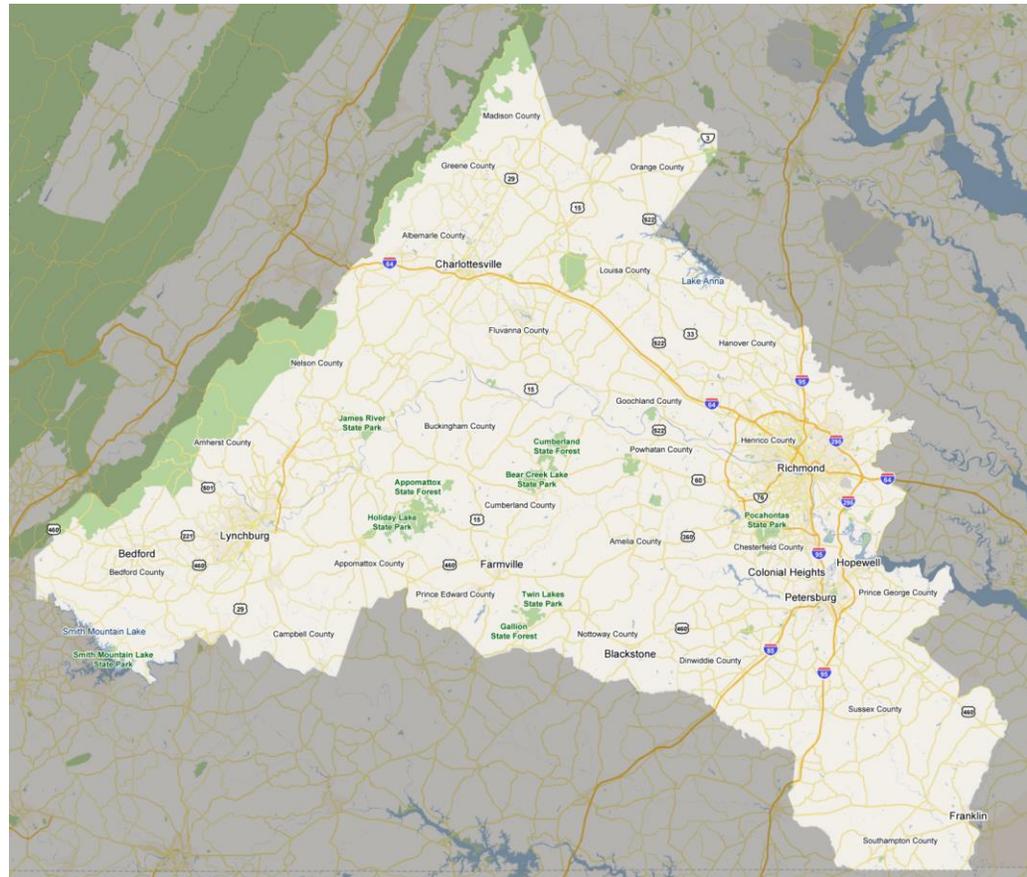
Sources of this competitive information included, but were not limited to, review of tourism marketing websites/promotional information, tourism marketing and strategic plans, tourism organization annual reports, tourism industry publications and articles, rankings, available consumer-oriented research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

## Tourism Situation

The Central Virginia region is the largest of Virginia's tourism regions in terms of geographic area. Although it is set in the center of the state, a portion of the region (Southampton County) also borders North Carolina. It is situated within the piedmont area and encompasses a diverse offering of tourism assets, including vibrant towns and cities, history, outdoor recreation, wineries, arts, music, sports, and group business facilities.

The region has over 1.7 million residents. The most populous cities include Richmond (204,000), Lynchburg (75,500), and Charlottesville (43,500). It is strategically located at the crossroads of Interstate 95 connecting Maryland and North Carolina, Interstate 64 connecting the Hampton Roads and Shenandoah regions, and Interstate 85 connecting the Petersburg area to North Carolina. In addition, Route 29 and Route 460 go through the middle of Central Virginia. The region also benefits from accessibility from three commercial airports, including Richmond International. However, congestion is recognized as a challenge in connecting to the D.C. area, which diminishes the potential for cross-visitation among destinations and may be a potential limiting factor for future tourism growth in the region. A portion of Interstate 95 connecting to Southern Virginia has also been proposed as a future toll road, which may impact tourism related to travelers on this route.

Central Virginia is an established tourism region, and more rural areas are continuing to emerge. The region accounted for nearly \$3.4 billion in travel and tourism expenditures in 2011 (approximately 17 percent of the state's overall travel and tourism expenditures), which is an increase of 9.7 percent since 2007. From a



### Regional Facts:

- Region Population: 1.7 million
- Largest Town/city: 204,000
- Border States: NC
- Interstates: I-64, I-85, I-95
- Route 29, Route 460
- Commercial Airports: 3
- 2011 Tourism Expenditures: \$3.4 billion

tourism industry perspective, in addition to tourism marketing at the destination level, the Richmond Metropolitan CVB, Virginia's Retreat, and Petersburg Area Tourism engage in regional efforts.

Visitor insights show that Central Virginia was rated highly by most past and prospective travelers for its food and dining, its accommodations, and being good for families. It was also rated as appealing among Generation X travelers and families. Furthermore, most describe Central Virginia as historic. While many also recognized Central Virginia as scenic, outdoor recreation activities such as camping, hiking/exploring nature, and viewing wildlife/birds were not as prominent in visitors' minds. In addition, the majority of visitors to Virginia are likely to visit a historical site on a future vacation.

History and heritage opportunities are a key visitor strength for the region, offering Colonial, Civil War, and Civil Rights history attractions for families, historians, and educational groups. Prominent attractions in the region include Monticello, Montpelier, Appomattox Courthouse, Petersburg National Battlefield, the Robert Russa Moton Museum and the Museum of the Confederacy among others. The region's history also extends to the Monacan Indians. Historical accommodations, such as The Jefferson and the Craddock Terry Hotel, are available in addition to a healthy supply of traditional lodging across chain scales, including upscale lodging and resorts such as The Boar's Head and Wintergreen Resort.

History and heritage have traditionally been strong lures in the region that may have overshadowed the recognition of other attractive elements, however, culinary and the creative economies have grown as strengths for the region. The region is rich in culinary experiences, including wine, craft breweries, distilleries, agri-tourism, and diverse dining experiences. With 67 wineries and six wine trails, Central Virginia is the second largest area in the state for wine and a major contributor to Virginia's national and international recognition within the wine industry. Wineries such as Barboursville Vineyards, Keswick Vineyards, and Pollak Vineyards all have won awards for their wines. Distinctive dining experiences can also be found in Richmond and Charlottesville, yet recognition of these experiences is limited, which can hinder tourism as competitive destinations such as North Carolina are emerging in culinary experiences.

#### **Highlights of Regional Lures/Strengths:**

- Colonial, Civil War, and Civil Rights history
- National Main Streets: Altavista, Bedford, Blackstone, Farmville, Franklin, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Orange
- Notable Cities & Towns: Richmond, Charlottesville, Petersburg
- Music and the Arts
- State Parks: 8
- Interstate connectivity and airports
- University presence
- Culinary, including 67 wineries, the second largest region in the state

#### **Regional Challenges:**

- As a region, diversity in experience, yet recognition of other assets may be overshadowed by overarching history-related theme
- Somewhat limited attraction/destination connectivity
- Transportation congestion in connecting with D.C./Northern Virginia area

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Visual and performing arts also diversify the region's tourism offerings personified through venues such as Virginia Fine Arts Museum, Richmond Performing Arts Center, Paramount Theater, and others. There is also a musical presence in the region including well-known musicians from the region. More recently, indie, punk, and alternative music have been emerging in areas of the region, including Charlottesville, Richmond, and Lynchburg.

Central Virginia is home to many of Virginia's great towns and cities. Altavista, Bedford, Blackstone, Farmville, Franklin, Hopewell, Lynchburg, and Orange are all designated main streets by the National Main Street Program. Cities, including Richmond and Charlottesville, contain major colleges such as the University of Virginia, University of Richmond, and Virginia Commonwealth University. As the state capital, Richmond attracts government and non-government businesses to the greater area. The Greater Richmond Convention Center, the Richmond Raceway Complex, and large hotels such as the Richmond Marriott, Wintergreen Resort, the Boar's Head, and Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa/Short Pump all provide meeting space for groups.

Central Virginia also offers opportunities for visitors to experience nature and participate in outdoor activities. The James River with its distinctive urban white water opportunities, Nottoway River, Blackwater River, eight state parks, Captain John Smith Trail, and the Virginia Capital Trail allow outdoor enthusiasts to hike, bike, horseback ride, observe wildlife, hunt, fish, kayak, canoe, and whitewater raft. Lynchburg's Snowflex Centre also offers a unique year-round ski experience. The 2015 UCI Road World Championships is not only expected to be a significant outdoor event for the region in terms of tourism, but also an event which raises the profile of recreation for the region. Visitors to Central Virginia can attend collegiate and amateur sporting events, a NASCAR race at the Richmond International Raceway, or a theme park such as Kings Dominion or Busch Gardens, which is on the border with the Central Region in Hampton Roads.

Competitively, destination similarities are seen in North Carolina's wine industry, rising culinary scene, and rural experiences. Asheville, for example, has been recognized for its dining experiences, known as the first Foodtopian Society with many local farm-to-table restaurants, high profile chefs and restaurants, and craft breweries. Asheville's surrounding area in northwestern North Carolina also boasts outdoor recreation including rafting, zip lines, fishing, camping, etc. Charleston also offers historic character and attractions along with outdoor recreation opportunities. Philadelphia has a strong historical and cultural draw, while its surrounding countryside areas offer a concentration of wineries and outdoor recreation opportunities. Central Virginia with its own rich history, culinary, culture, and nature experiences is well-positioned to compete.

While the region offers significant diversity of visitor experiences, destination/attraction connectivity is cited as an area for improvement given the size of the region and key groupings of visitor experiences around the Richmond, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg areas. However, outdoor, wine, and Civil War trails help with this connectivity.

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## Central Virginia 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 Central Virginia. The key definitions below describe these areas, which form the basis of the product objectives.

- **Primary theme focus:** History & Heritage, Town/City Centers, Culinary (Dining, Wineries), Nature & Outdoor Recreation, Arts & Music, Events
- **Secondary theme focus:** Meetings (Meetings & Conferences), Sports, Culinary (Agri-tourism), Industry (Corporate/Business Base), Commercial Attractions (Family, 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

**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

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

**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.

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

**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.

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**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

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

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

**Commercial Attractions** - Refers to tourism attractions designed for user entertainment and enjoyment and may not necessarily rely heavily upon inherent destination features. For Central Virginia, this specifically refers to the higher-end/luxury attractions and family-oriented attractions (e.g. theme park). Higher-end/luxury attractions may include spas, resorts, golf courses, and other experiences with upscale elements targeted to an affluent market.

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

### 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:

- Continue to invest in the refreshment of history and heritage experiences related to Colonial, Civil War, Civil Rights, presidential, and other history and heritage
- Continue to use trails, including Civil War trails to connect historic experiences (attractions, sites, museums, homes, etc.)
- Tie in other visitor themes including arts, agriculture, wine, etc.
- Seek to enhance connections with the region related to history and heritage among Richmond, Charlottesville, and Petersburg and outside the region with Williamsburg and Fredericksburg
- Continue to explore opportunities to leverage history for accommodations such as hotels, B&Bs, and resorts

### 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 scenic beauty of the area and continue to include outdoor experiences in town/city areas, including green spaces, parks, water features, and plazas. Outdoor areas should include history and wine themes of the region. Richmond has the unique opportunity to further leverage its location on the James River, offering parks, trails, and rafting/kayaking experiences for visitors

- enabled through water accessibility and supported by outfitter businesses.
- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial history, Civil War history, wine, and iconic representations of the region
- Encourage building the creative economy
- Evaluate the mix and balance of offerings in both urban and rural areas of the region, including unique dining, retail, and other visitor amenities in the town/city center area

- Explore visitor transportation options such as trolley services in strategic locations
- Support and grow local shopping/downtown shopping districts such as Green Front in Farmville, Carytown in Richmond and the Downtown Mall in Charlottesville.

**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:**

- Continue to develop winery experiences. With such a concentration of wineries in the region, distinctive experiences at wineries or a concentration of wineries will be critical. Leverage award winning wines from wineries such as Barboursville Vineyards, Keswick Vineyards, and Pollak Vineyards, as well as celebrity brands such as the Trump Winery. Winery differentiation may include items such as on-site accommodations, events, restaurants, tours, art, activities for families, etc.
- Tie history, arts, and agriculture in the region to winery experiences

- Continue to develop breweries for a critical mass of these experiences for visitors and develop on-site amenities and trails similar to those offered by wineries
- Explore opportunities to tie in Virginia's history and show the history of craft breweries
- Continue to develop agri-tourism experiences, leveraging key seasons and offering activities for visitors year-round. With a concentration of agri-tourism in Central Virginia, seek to develop distinctive experiences at farms or a group of farms, including various elements such as crafts, retail, tastings, events, educational elements, and kid-friendly activities.

- Leverage the recognition of restaurants and chefs in Charlottesville as well as highly concentrated experiences in Richmond's Carytown to enhance the profile of dining opportunities in the region
- Leverage wine recognition in the region to raise the profile for dining experiences
- Leverage heavy winery and agri-tourism concentration in the region and further develop distinctive dining experiences with restaurants at wineries and farm-to-table experiences

- Ensure distinctive wine trails with the concentration of wineries in the region, including for example, outdoor trails to connect wineries (accessible by bike and horses)
- Develop culinary trails connecting destinations and trails for connecting agri-tourism experiences
- Continue to use events and festivals as a platform to enhance culinary profile of the region, tying in history/heritage, arts, music, and other visitor themes

**Products (continued)**

Nature & Outdoor Recreation

Nature & Outdoor Recreation 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:**

- Complete the Virginia Capital Trail
- Continue to leverage other trails in the region such as the Captain John Smith Water Trail and Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail
- Explore the development of additional trails and water trails which can be distinctive outdoor assets for the region
- Continue to develop outdoor getaway experiences for wine visitors
- Continue to develop James River recreation
- Continue to explore winter activity development in strategic locations, such as expansion of the Snowflex Centre in Lynchburg and leveraging activities at the Wintergreen Resort

- Leverage waterfront areas along the James River, Lake Anna, Smith Mountain Lake, and others. This region is fortunate to have both developed and undeveloped coastlines to attract visitors.
- Explore the development/enhancement of accommodations (resort, B&B, lodge/cabins/cottages, etc.), restaurants, and entertainment along waterfront in a minimally invasive manner
- Tie other visitor themes, including arts, music, history, and wine to waterfront activities and features
- Continue to leverage scenic beauty of the region and explore accommodations which incorporate the outdoors, including resorts and rural B&Bs, as well as camping and cottages in strategic locations that incorporate waterfront

**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:**

- Continue to evaluate opportunities for additional arts and music performance venues at strategic locations within the region as well as enhancements to prominent venues including Jefferson Theater and Richmond Performing Arts Center
- Explore the development of rural arts and artisan trails as well as trails for urban arts experiences
- Explore the development of music trails, which may be set in more urban areas, yet allow visitors to experiences a variety of music genres, including new and innovative music which may stem from colleges in the region
- Explore the development of rural art gardens
- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial history, Civil War history, wine, and iconic representations of the region
- Encourage the development of the creative economy
- Continue to seek designations for arts & cultural districts

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. These signature events should build upon, promote, and reinforce key visitor themes and showcase the authenticity and character for the region, including outdoor recreation, wine, agriculture, arts, and music. Examples may include outdoor-related events such as marathons, races, and other outdoor competitions, culinary events that feature agriculture of the region, arts and music events, and others that highlight the history and heritage of the region. Events may leverage battlefield assets to create "Battle of" competitions for music, food, sports, etc. as well as signature Oktoberfests with Virginia's craft beer.

- Encourage events which celebrate historic events and commemorations
- Coordinate events among multiple cities/towns in the region to avoid duplication, and pool resources and efforts regionally to attract major events and festivals

- Use events to extend visitor seasons and attract visitor seasons during the traditional off-season
- Tie in multiple visitor themes in events, where appropriate

**Products (continued)**

Meetings

<i>Meetings Objective:</i> 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			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
Develop and expand group event facilities in strategic locations	●	Enhance meeting facilities through supporting elements	●

**Additional Regional Actions:**

- Continue to explore opportunities for enhanced meeting business in strategic locations in the region, such as Richmond and Charlottesville and leverage existing meeting facilities such as the Greater Richmond Convention Center and numerous hotels with meeting space. Efforts to develop new space and enhance current space should continue to be studied, such as the proposed conference center in Petersburg.
- Continue to pursue support element enhancements for the Greater Richmond Convention Center
- Continue to utilize historic sites, homes, museums, as unique off-site visitor options related to meetings activity

Sports

<i>Sports Objective:</i> Facilities for participant and spectator sporting events are enhanced and developed			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
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	●	Develop and enhance experiences related to motorsports	●

**Additional Regional Actions:**

- Continue to support and leverage youth/amateur sports efforts, particularly in the Greater Richmond region
- Continue to support and invest in athletic programs at UVA, VCU, and others
- Leverage visitor opportunities related to the Washington Redskins' summer training camp including media, players, and fans
- Maintain facilities and ensure support amenities for the Badgers indoor football, Lynchburg Hillcats minor league baseball, Richmond Flying Squirrels minor league baseball, and Richmond Kickers soccer
- Explore opportunities to enhance visitor experiences and ancillary activities at Richmond International Raceway

**Products (continued)**

Industry

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

**Additional Regional Actions:**

- Continue to leverage and support the corporate and business base in the region. This includes the concentration of state business surrounding Richmond and corporate business in the region. Tour opportunities may be explored for companies such as Rolls Royce and others, as appropriate.

Commercial Attractions

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

**Additional Regional Actions:**

- Continue to explore the development of higher-end/luxury attractions, such as resorts, golf, and spa. Incorporating history and wine should be considered in development.
- Continue to incorporate kid-friendly elements within existing attractions and events, including historical attractions and events and festivals

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- Explore the development of additional family-oriented attractions that may complement existing assets, such as Kings Dominion, and other family activities in the region. These may include other themed entertainment, outdoor recreation parks, and others.

## 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 &amp; 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 to or expansions of highways and toll road development. New developments and their impacts on tourism should be studied such as the portion of Interstate 95 connecting Southern Virginia and Central Virginia has been proposed as a toll road. Regional leaders should be involved in efforts impacting road transportation from the D.C. area.
- Continue to pursue planned projects such as the Southeast High Speed Rail Project, connecting D.C. and Richmond to the

Northeast Corridor, which will increase visitor access and aid in alleviating traffic

- As a region, ensure tourism stakeholders come together to work with VDOT related to signage issues
- Explore a cross-visitation study among close cities/towns to ensure understanding of visitor patterns and opportunities for greater visitor capture. This may include Richmond, Petersburg, and Charlottesville in the region, and others such as Williamsburg and Fredericksburg outside of the Central region.

## Partnerships

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<b>Tourism Organizations Objective:</b> Organizations to lead tourism initiatives are strengthened or formed			
Create and strengthen tourism organizations	●		
<b>Government Objective:</b> Collaboration among government organizations at the local, state, and federal levels for tourism initiatives is improved			
Increase communication, planning, and coordination among government entities	●		
<b>Connectivity Objective:</b> Connectivity among tourism attractions, businesses, and destinations is improved through partnering			
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 regional organization efforts such as Virginia's Retreat and Greater Richmond Metropolitan CVB and explore opportunities for additional regional tourism organizations, which create synergies and pool resources
- Continue to improve intra-government communication among the multiple destinations as the region works to address transportation and signage solutions with VDOT as well as other tourism initiatives
- Leverage Richmond's location in the region to strengthen relationships with state agencies involved in tourism, including but not limited to VTC, DCR, DHCD, VDOT, and others
- Continue cooperation with the private sector for economic development efforts including new hotel, conference center, and entertainment areas, such as those for proposed conference center in Petersburg
- Continue to increase cooperation and collaboration among cities/towns in the region, particularly those with relatively high potential for cross-visitation within the region, such as Richmond, Petersburg, and Charlottesville and others such as Williamsburg and Fredericksburg outside of the Central region

## Promotions

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<i>Government, Business &amp; 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
- Leverage Richmond's location in the region for promotion and education of tourism to state leaders, as needed
- Continue to develop packages, itineraries, and trails which allow for enhanced connection among Richmond and Charlottesville leveraging, history/heritage, wine, culinary, rural destinations in the Virginia's Retreat area, and western portions of the region connecting Lynchburg and Bedford. These should also connect with destinations outside the region, including but not limited to Roanoke, Williamsburg, Fredericksburg, and D.C.
- Continue to maximize opportunities for national and international promotion given the draw of the region with its proximity to D.C., distinctive history elements, and wine experiences

## Policies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
<b>Funding Objective:</b> 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	●
<b>Tourism Policies and Programs for Assistance Objective:</b> 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	●		
<b>Tourism Policy for Government Objective:</b> 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	●		
<b>Preservation Objective:</b> 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 the 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,

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including seeking Virginia Green Certifications and LEED certifications for new development

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## 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 Central Virginia, 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

- Altavista Chamber of Commerce
- Altavista On Track
- Bedford City & County Department of Tourism
- Bedford Main Street, Inc.
- Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Chesterfield County Economic Development
- discoverLynchburg (Lynchburg Regional CVB)
- Downtown Blackstone Inc.
- Downtown Farmville, Inc.
- Downtown Franklin Association
- Farmville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Franklin Southampton Economic Development Inc.
- Greene County Tourism Development Council
- Hopewell Downtown Partnership
- Hopewell Office of Tourism
- Louisa County Department of Tourism, Piedmont Crossroads Visitor Center
- Lynch's Landing Foundation
- Madison Chamber of Commerce
- Nelson County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Orange County Visitors Bureau
- Orange Downtown Alliance, Inc.
- Petersburg Area Regional Tourism
- Prince Edward County Office of Tourism
- Richmond Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Smith Mt. Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Appomattox
- Town of Ashland
- Virginia's Retreat

### 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

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- 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
  - Urban Forest Council

- Virginia Association of Convention and Visitors 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 the tourism products which create a destination, and as such, these combined strategies are meant to build Central Virginia as a destination in a sustainable manner and maintain the character and authenticity of the region. The strategies outlined are intended to build upon Central Virginia's 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. Central Virginia has the opportunity to do just this by growing its tourism asset base and connecting visitor experiences to increase tourism and enhance competitiveness.

Central Virginia with its great diversity in visitor experiences has the opportunity to further leverage its history, natural assets, culinary experiences, and creative economy. Central Virginia's rich history and heritage across the region will continue to be strong tourism assets with nature and outdoor recreation opportunities also serving as region-wide tourism assets utilizing the lakes, rivers, trails, and mountains. The region's creative economy in urban areas and small towns further add to the visitor experiences. In addition, the concentration of wineries in the region provides the opportunity for greater distinction among other destinations while tying together a number of authentic visitor themes, where wine can serve to raise the profile of foodie and dining experiences in the region, as a gateway for agri-tourism experiences, and complement to history, arts, and the outdoors. Further connectivity of these assets and experiences increases destination appeal for the region.

### **High-Level Regional Takeaways:**

- Leverage history and culinary as unifying themes for the region, further enhancing interactive history experiences and using wine to build and expand other culinary experiences
- Cluster development and enhance connectivity
- Continue to build creative economy
- Leverage younger population base in college towns for music, outdoor, and entertainment attractions
- Develop complementary products and signature experiences
- Maintain character and authenticity and create new development in a sustainable manner