
Northern Virginia Regional Section

Introduction

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

Process for Findings

Numerous factors formed the basis of Northern Virginia's 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 Northern Virginia through workshops, surveys, and discussions. The desire among Northern Virginia stakeholders is to expand upon the regions' historical and heritage assets in an authentic manner and further develop vibrant urban and rural city/town center environments, culinary/wine experiences, the meetings sector, and other assets to increase tourism.

Tourism Assets: Northern 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

discussed with numerous key stakeholders and assessed. In addition to the study team's personal experience of Northern 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 the DMOs, chambers of commerce, existing tourism plans of Alexandria and Loudoun County, 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 Northern 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 Northern 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 Northern 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 Northern Virginia has high familiarity among Virginia's regions. Appeal was seen as strongest among Generation X travelers and high-income earners. It was highly rated for its accommodations, food and dining, being good for families, and its entertainment and cultural activities. The region was well recognized as historic, while outdoor recreation was less prominent in visitors' minds despite the region's offering of various outdoor recreation activities. Nearly half of visitors recognized the region for having great walking, excellent shopping, colonial historic sites, interesting cities, and being great for scenic drives. In addition, the majority of visitors to Virginia are likely to visit a historical site on a future vacation. However, road improvements/traffic was the most cited area for improvement of the region.

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

Competitive Perspective: To understand the offering and competitive positioning of Virginia and the Northern 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 Northern Virginia, urban, rural, and historical areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C. were analyzed. More specifically, areas of those states were analyzed for key product strengths and included areas such as Asheville, Charleston, Philadelphia and surrounding countryside, D.C. with its historical assets and urban offerings, and Maryland's capital region area. Competitively, while D.C. serves as an important asset for the region to draw and leverage visitors, including international travelers, it competes for visitors to stay, dine, shop, and sightsee in Northern Virginia's urban areas and rural areas. At the same time, Maryland also competes for this same visitor pool. Destination similarities are also seen in North Carolina's wine industry, rising culinary scene, and rural experiences, and Charleston offers historic character and attractions along with its outdoor recreation opportunities. Philadelphia also has strong historical and cultural draw, while its surrounding countryside areas offer a concentration of wineries and outdoor recreation opportunities. Northern 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.).

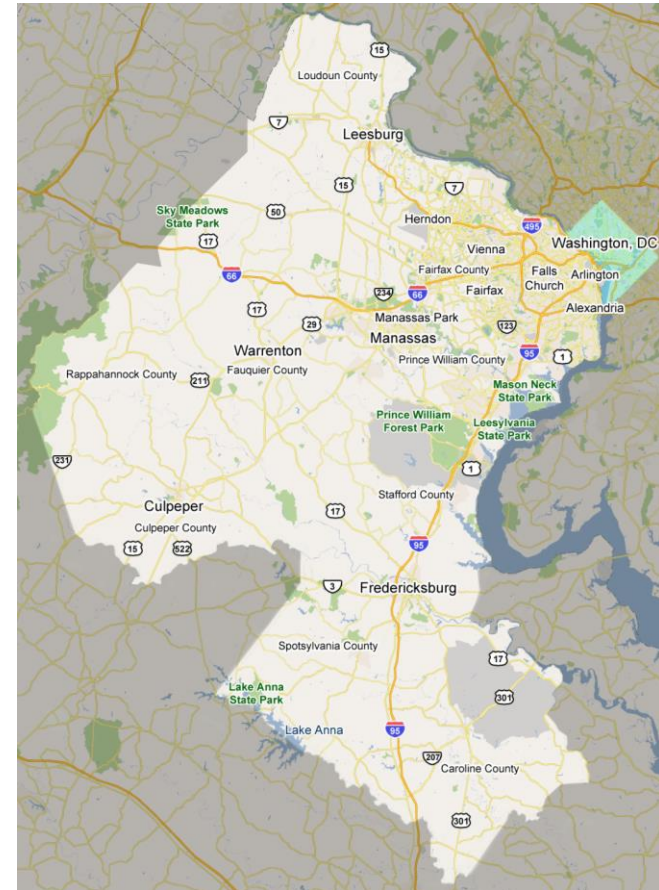
Tourism Situation

The Northern Virginia region is situated adjacent to Washington D.C. and Maryland along the Potomac River. The region is rich with history and heritage, but is also known for its culinary assets, including wineries. With proximity to the nation's capital, the region is characterized by a mix of urban and rural destinations.

The region is the most populous in the commonwealth with approximately 2.6 million residents, which includes Arlington with 207,500 residents and Alexandria with 140,000. Northern Virginia is a well-established tourism region, and more rural areas are continuing to emerge. It accounted for over \$9 billion in travel and tourism expenditures in 2011 (approximately 44 percent of the state's overall travel and tourism expenditures), the largest share of any region. This was also a 9.4 percent increase since 2007. From a tourism industry perspective, in addition to tourism marketing organizations on a local basis, DMOs of the five counties/cities in the D.C. area have formed a regional alliance, which may have the opportunity for enhanced consumer-facing initiatives.

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History and heritage opportunities are key visitor strengths for the region. Visitors can attend well-known attractions including Mount Vernon, Arlington National



Regional Facts:

- Region Population: 2.6 million
- Largest Town/city: 207,500
- Border States: WV, MD, D.C.
- Interstates: I-66, I-95
- Commercial Airports: 2
- 2011 Tourism Expenditures: \$9 billion, 44% of state
- 2007-11 Expenditure Growth: 9.4%

Cemetery, Iwo Jima Memorial, Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, and Manassas National Battlefield Park to name a few.

Northern Virginia is the home to many of Virginia's great urban villages, cities, and towns. Culpeper, Manassas, and Warrenton are all designated main streets by the National Main Street Program. Notable cities also include Arlington, Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Fairfax, and Leesburg. Additionally, Loudoun County is known for its wine country and equestrian assets. With over 70 wineries and seven regional wine trails, Northern Virginia is the 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 Gray Ghost Vineyards, Narmada Winery, and Paradise Springs of Clifton have all won awards for their wines. Furthermore, the area is known for its food and culinary assets, including farm-to-table restaurants and events such as restaurant weeks. However, other destinations including Washington D.C. and North Carolina are also known for its culinary assets. Washington D.C. has built a reputation for its "foodie" and dining experiences. For example, D.C. has five restaurants rated four or five stars on Startle, part of Forbes Travel Guide, compared to one in Northern Virginia. Additionally, the number of wineries in North Carolina is growing and several destinations are known for its dining experiences, including Asheville, which is known as the first Foodtopian Society with many local farm-to-table restaurants, high profile chefs and restaurants, and craft breweries.

Northern Virginia also offers opportunities for visitors to experience nature and participate in outdoor activities. The Captain John Smith Trail, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, four state parks, the Potomac River, Great Falls National Park, and others offers numerous opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts to hike, bike, horseback ride, observe wildlife, hunt, fish, kayak, and canoe. The region has a strong equine industry base with opportunities to experience steeplechase races, such as the world famous International Gold Cup, polo matches, horse shows, horseback ride along scenic trails, and equine museums or horse farms.

Additionally, the region offers visitors the opportunity to experience music of various genres ranging from symphony orchestras to alternative music, and the arts, including fine arts, performing arts, contemporary visual arts, and others. Music and art venues include Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, Jiffy Lube Live, Torpedo Factory Art Center, and the Artisphere to name a few.

Highlights of Regional Lures/Strengths:

- Colonial, Civil War, Military History
- Main Streets: Culpeper, Manassas, Warrenton
- Notable Cities & Towns: Alexandria, Arlington, Fredericksburg, Fairfax County, Leesburg, Loudoun County
- Interstate connectivity and airports
- Hotel Supply
- Conference Centers: Dulles Expo & Conference Center, Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center, The National Conference Center, Airlie Center
- Largest concentration of wineries in the state (over 70)
- State Parks: 4
- Industry base, include corporate, federal, equestrian
- Relatively affluent economic base

Regional Challenges:

- Transportation congestion
- Somewhat limited attraction/destination connectivity
- Limited recognition of differentiation from D.C. as a destination

Northern Virginia is well positioned adjacent to D.C. with Interstate 66 connecting Washington D.C. to the Shenandoah Valley region and Interstate 95 connecting Washington D.C. to North Carolina. The region is also served by Dulles International and Reagan National airports. However, traffic congestion is recognized as a significant problem within the greater Washington D.C. area ranking sixth worst in the nation. Traffic congestion impacts visitation within the region and diminishes the potential for cross-visitation among destinations, including other regions in the state. This transportation challenge is a potential limiting factor for future tourism growth in the region. To help alleviate the issue, the silver line of the Metro is currently being extended to Dulles International Airport.

With the proximity to D.C., the region benefits from a strong corporate base (24 Fortune 500 companies) and industry concentration in federal activity. This industry base, proximity to D.C., a healthy hotel supply, and strong air access, makes the region a strong area for meetings. Facilities include the Dulles Expo & Conference Center, The National Conference Center, Airlie Center, Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center, and large hotels such as the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Sheraton Premiere at Tysons Corner, and the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center. The D.C. area of Northern Virginia is able to leverage its position and benefit from meetings business taking place in D.C., as well as events at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center where water taxi connects Old Town Alexandria to National Harbor in Maryland. This connection to National Harbor gives attendees a convenient opportunity to experience restaurants, retail, and entertainment in Virginia. The new luxury Salamander Resort that is under construction in Middleburg will also add a distinctive property to the market with meeting space.

While the region is fortunate to have diverse tourism experiences, attraction connectivity is somewhat limited, despite trails such as those for wine and those related to the Civil War. Traffic congestion, or its perception, may hinder connectivity within the region, including the rural areas. In addition, the areas surrounding D.C. are also challenged in distinguishing themselves as distinct destinations from D.C. For example, visitors to Arlington National Cemetery and other attractions may not realize they are in Northern Virginia, and while others such as Alexandria may have distinct character, there is a general sense of being part of the capital.

Competitively, while D.C. serves as an important asset for the region to draw and leverage visitors, including international travelers, it competes for visitors to stay, dine, shop, and sightsee in Northern Virginia's urban and rural areas. At the same time, Maryland also competes for this same visitor pool. Destination similarities are also seen in North Carolina's wine industry, rising culinary scene, and rural experiences, and Charleston offers historic character and attractions along with its outdoor recreation opportunities. Philadelphia also has strong historical and cultural draw, while its surrounding countryside areas offer a concentration of wineries and outdoor recreation opportunities. Northern Virginia with its own rich history, culinary, culture, and nature experiences is well-positioned to compete.

Northern 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 Northern 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), Meetings (Meetings & Conferences), Nature & Outdoor Recreation, Arts & Music, Events
- **Secondary theme focus:** Culinary (Agri-tourism), Sports, Industry, 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

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

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 area also 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.

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 Northern Virginia, this definition specifically refers to military, equestrian, and corporate.

Commercial Attractions - Refers to tourism attractions designed for user entertainment and enjoyment and may not necessarily rely heavily upon inherent destination features. For Northern 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, presidential, military, and other history
- Continue to leverage historic assets of Washington D.C. for visitor opportunities to Virginia's historic sites
- Continue to use trails to connect historic experiences (attractions, sites, museums, homes, etc.) including the Journey Through the Hallowed Ground, Civil War trails, and others
- Tie in other visitor themes with history/heritage experiences, including arts, agriculture, wine, etc.
- Continue to explore opportunities to leverage history for accommodations such as hotels, B&Bs, and resorts
- Use events to continue to highlight history and heritage and tie in other visitor themes

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/heritage, wine, and equestrian themes of the region.

- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial and Civil War history, wine, equestrian, and iconic representations of the region
- Incorporate community guidelines which define community character

- 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
- Continue town/city transportation such as the Alexandria King Street Trolley and explore similar trolley transportation in other communities

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. Winery differentiation may include items such as on-site accommodations, events, restaurants, tours, art, activities for families, etc.
- Tie history, arts, and agriculture to winery experiences. Explore use of historical structures for tasting rooms.
- Continue to develop breweries and wineries for a critical mass of these experiences for visitors and develop on-site amenities and trails similar to those offered by wineries to the extent permitted
- 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 Northern 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 Washington D.C. as a "foodie" destination to raise the profile of dining opportunities in Northern Virginia
- 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
- Continue to develop trails, which are distinctive. Develop outdoor trails to connect wineries and culinary destinations, accessible by bikes and horses. Regional distinctions such as DC's Wine Country should also continue to be developed for increased connectivity.

- 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)

Meetings

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

Additional Regional Actions:

- Continue to explore opportunities for enhanced meeting business in strategic locations in the region. While Northern Virginia benefits from multiple convention, conference, and convention hotels, including the National Conference Center, Dulles Expo & Conference Center, Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center, and numerous convention hotels, opportunities may exist to further penetrate the meetings market through additional hotel meeting and conference space. Efforts to develop new space and enhance current space should continue to be studied.
- Explore the development/enhancement of meeting venues which may have the technological and security facilities for federal government meetings.
- Continue to use historic sites, homes, unique museums, and others for off-site visitor options

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:

- Develop new trails and leverage current trails in the region, including the Captain John Smith Trail, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, and others
- Develop urban outdoor trails and those which help to connect destinations within the region
- Seek development of distinctive outdoor experiences and include the incorporation of history/heritage within parks
- Continue to leverage the prominence of national parks such as Great Falls, Manassas Battlefield National Park, and others
- Leverage waterfront areas along the Potomac River, Lake Anna, and others. This region is fortunate to have both developed and undeveloped coastlines. Maximize developed area coastlines for

- visitor uses such as accommodation offerings, restaurants, retail, and entertainment. Plans to redevelop Alexandria's waterfront, for example, should continue to be pursued.
- Tie other visitor themes, including arts, music, history, and wine to waterfront activities and features
 - Maintain George Washington Memorial Parkway and Journey Through Hallowed Ground Byway designations
 - Continue to leverage the 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, rural locations, and equestrian themes

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, such as Jiffy Lube Live or Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts
- 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 experience a variety of music genres in a concentrated area
- Ensure works of regional artists are displayed, including those that showcase the colonial and Civil War history, wine, equestrian, and iconic representations of the region
- Explore the development of rural art gardens
- Continue to seek designations for arts & cultural districts

Products (continued)

Events

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

Additional Regional Actions:

- Develop and enhance signature events for the region, which promote and reinforce key visitor themes, including history, wine, agriculture, equestrian, food, arts, and music and leverage seasons throughout the year. Example 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
- Use events to extend visitor seasons and leverage seasons for fall visitor season with events featuring fall foliage and seasonal harvest from agri-tourism businesses
- Tie in multiple visitor themes in events, where appropriate, which may include history, local agriculture, wine, local artists, and others
- Continue to leverage commemoration opportunities as well as annual opportunities to honor Presidents Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, 9/11, etc.
- Coordinate events among multiple cities/towns in the region to avoid duplication, and pool resources and efforts regionally to attract major events and festivals

Sports

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

Additional Regional Actions:

- Explore opportunities to develop indoor sports facilities for youth sports and signature youth facilities with marquee sports areas near D.C. to leverage the capital's destination strength for families and potential locations for national championships
- Leverage visitor opportunities related to the Redskins' practice facility related to media, fans, players, etc.

Products (continued)

Industry

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

Additional Regional Actions:

- Leverage and enhance military and defense-related experiences, including Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon, Udvar-Hazy Center, and others
- Explore the development of a military theme trail which ties in military-related assets
- Explore educational and experiential attractions, which may include tours of active assets, interactive museums and exhibits, events of celebration and commemoration, hands-on experiences with old equipment and vehicles (in a kid-friendly manner), opportunities to meet and interact with soldiers and veterans, and development of military experiences, such as simulated training camps and war games
- Continue to leverage military heritage in attracting reunions to further enhance group business. Attractions should explore creation or expansion of facilities that may accommodate group business, including facilities for group/tour function, reunion events, social functions, etc.
- Continue to leverage and support corporate and business base in the region. This includes the concentration of federal government and corporate business in the areas surrounding Washington D.C.
- Leverage the equestrian theme at the new luxury Salamander Resort to raise the profile of equine opportunities for visitors in the region and build on equestrian heritage and industry in the region with hunt, steeplechase, and polo events and new expanded equine culture experiences at the National Sporting Library and Museum
- Maintain and explore expansion of equestrian trails, including trails that may connect wineries and those that allow for carriage rides
- Continue to maintain competition venues, such as Commonwealth Park, and encourage events including shows, competitions, etc.
- Continue to leverage the International Gold Cup races with related events and activities

Products (continued)

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:

- Explore the development of new family-oriented attractions which leverage Washington D.C.'s family and international destination strength, yet maintain character of the region. Explore potential for children's science center.
- Continue to explore the development of higher-end/luxury attractions, such as resorts, golf, and spa. With the relative affluence of the region, Northern Virginia is well positioned for the luxury market, evidenced by the new Salamander Resort under construction. Incorporating history, wine, and equestrian elements should be considered in development.
- Ensure strength of shopping concentrations, including unique retail opportunities and attractive features for international travelers

Pillars

Strategy	Priority/Timing	Strategy	Priority/Timing
Transportation Objective: Strategies to improve transportation are developed and executed			
Initiate concerted strategy to improve road transportation for tourism	●	Explore increased air access, rail, and mass transit for strategic locations	●
Wayfinding Objective: Visitor wayfinding is improved			
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	●		
Education & Training Objective: Tourism education and training programs are continued and enhanced			
Enhance training and education of tourism workforce	●	Ensure tourism education programs are continued for students	●
Research Objective: Tourism research is available which supports tourism development and marketing initiatives			
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 with VDOT and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, including improvements to or expansions of highways and other alternative transit options as means to alleviate traffic. Traffic congestion is a significant issue for the region, and it is important for tourism that transportation plans which will improve the visitor experience and resident quality of life are addressed expeditiously and with cohesive support from tourism stakeholders.
- Prioritize road plans of VDOT and local transportation authorities anticipated to have strongest impacts and benefits on tourism and work with transportation and government leaders to achieve benefits for tourism and project completions
- Ensure completion of the Silver Line Metro extension to the Dulles International Airport. Pursue planned Loudoun Rail expansion and explore additional Metro expansions in strategic locations which enhance connectivity in the region
- Explore additional rail, high speed rail, and light rail options as ways to ease up congestion. Proposed projects include the I-95/I-64 Intercity Passenger Rail Project, the Southeast High Speed Rail Project, the National Gateway Project, and the I-95/I-64 Intercity Passenger Rail Project.
- Explore opportunities to increase use of ferry transportation along the Potomac as a means to transport visitors
- Continue to provide visitors with information on transportation alternatives through numerous channels such as mobile devices, visitor center staff, maps, and other means
- As a region, ensure tourism stakeholders come together to work with VDOT related to signage issues
- Explore use of signage with additional languages for international travelers. Use of additional language on signage serves to improve the visitor experience with greater convenience for international travelers and helps to brand the destination as an open and welcoming international destination.
- Pursue opportunities to refine the sense of place that visitors may have when traveling across the region, particularly in the outlying areas of D.C. With numerous towns and cities in close proximity, the aesthetic feel of these localities may blend, lessening community distinction. As such, opportunities to further brand individual destinations through signage, landscaping, arts, architecture and other means should be explored.

Partnerships

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
Tourism Organizations Objective: Organizations to lead tourism initiatives are strengthened or formed			
Create and strengthen tourism organizations	●		
Government Objective: Collaboration among government organizations at the local, state, and federal levels for tourism initiatives is improved			
Increase communication, planning, and coordination among government entities	●		
Connectivity Objective: 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:

- Seek opportunities for strengthening the Northern Virginia Tourism Alliance for cooperative efforts among the five counties related to tourism marketing and development initiatives such as cooperative efforts for enhancing share and spending of international travelers
- Continue to improve intra-government communication among the multiple destinations as stakeholders work as a region to address transportation and signage solutions with VDOT and as stakeholders address other tourism initiatives
- Continue cooperation with the private sector to continue economic development efforts such as new hotel, conference center, and entertainment areas (including proposed developments in Fredericksburg, Fairfax, and others)
- Continue to increase communication and coordination with Washington D.C. tourism officials, federal entities, and key stakeholders related to assets in Northern Virginia and in the D.C. metro area for additional means to leverage and enhance visitation from D.C. visitors.
- Continue to develop packages and itineraries regionally, including those that incorporate urban and rural elements of the region.

Promotions

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

Additional Promotion Action Steps:

- Develop communication plans for government officials, tourism stakeholders, businesses, and residents and continue to educate and inform officials on tourism benefits (qualitative and quantitative based on research) as well as ongoing initiatives for economic development through various means. A challenge for some areas of Northern Virginia may include the assumption that visitors will come due to the strength of D.C. as a destination. As such, continual emphasis on the importance of investment in tourism may be required.
- 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 strength of the Northern Virginia economy and D.C. to further attract tourism investment and economic development in the region
- Seek opportunities for attraction packaging among destinations in the region as well as other regions, which may include Charlottesville or Richmond. Itineraries and packages should incorporate key visitor themes, including history/heritage, wine, arts, agri-tourism, equestrian, etc.
- Seek opportunities to enrich and enhance wine trail experiences with other visitor themes, including nature/outdoors, history/heritage, agri-tourism, culinary, etc.
- 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
- Continue targeted marketing and promotions to the equestrian industry and major visitor themes

Policies

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

Additional Policies Action Steps:

- Explore the development of a tourism council at the community level in localities where policy enforcement is recognized as an issue. The council should be comprised of public and private stakeholders that are responsible for overseeing the use of tourism tax revenue in the community.
- Identify local liaisons or advocates which can work to address policies and programs, including the creation of Tourism Zones and national grant and assistance programs
- Continue to explore alternative creative funding solutions to achieve community solutions and work with local governments, where appropriate, to secure dedicated funding that could be reinvested for tourism marketing and development purposes. Garnering widespread support from tourism stakeholders and an

- advocacy effort of the industry will be important in influencing government leaders. For tourism development, the formation of a tourism development fund at 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.

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- Continue to engage in preservation and sustainability efforts at the local level, regarding historical, cultural, and environmental assets,

including seeking Virginia Green Certifications and LEED certifications for new development

Key Stakeholders

The below list of regional and universal stakeholders illustrates the types of stakeholder groups that may be involved in implementing the State Tourism Plan and the region's strategies and action steps. The lists are comprehensive, but not necessarily exhaustive. In addition, regional stakeholders include local and regional government offices, economic development offices and planning district commissions. The list of regional stakeholders highlights organizations specific to Northern 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

- Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association
- Arlington Convention and Visitors Service
- Caroline County Economic Development Office
- Culpeper Department of Tourism
- Culpeper Renaissance, Inc.
- Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce
- Fauquier County Department of Economic Development
- Fredericksburg Department of Economic Development and Tourism
- Historic Manassas, Inc.
- Northern Virginia Tourism Alliance
- Prince William County/Manassas Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Rappahannock County Office of Tourism
- Spotsylvania County
- Stafford County
- The Partnership for Warrenton Foundation
- Town of Leesburg Economic Development and Tourism
- Visit Fairfax
- Visit Loudoun

Universal

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

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- 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 Northern 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 Northern 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. Northern Virginia has the opportunity to do just this by growing its tourism asset base and connecting visitor experiences to increase tourism and enhance competitiveness.

Northern Virginia brings together a mix of urban and rural visitor experiences and has the opportunity to further leverage its beauty, history, location, and growing culinary experiences in the next five years. Northern Virginia is well positioned to further capture travelers to Washington D.C. and increase its share of the highly-valued international visitors. The industry base is strong and continues to attract business travelers and meetings. The region's rich history will continue to serve as a strong visitor draw, but the blend of urban and rural experiences helps to differentiate the region, offering the dining, shopping, arts, and culture of metropolitan destinations in combination with relaxing getaways in rural areas with authentic main streets, traditional arts, agri-tourism, equine experiences, wineries, and outdoor recreation. Further connectivity of these assets and experiences adds to the depth of the visitor experiences and destination appeal. 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. 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, equestrian, and the outdoors.

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
- Continue to improve transportation options for visitors and residents through mass transit and road transportation improvements
- Continue to leverage proximity to D.C., yet seek balance of differentiation and recognition of Virginia assets and destinations
- Seek to increase share of international traveler base
- Leverage the region's industry base
- Continue to position rural areas as scenic getaways and enjoyment of the outdoors for D.C. and other visitors
- Develop complementary products and signature experiences
- Cluster development and enhance connectivity, including history, culinary, arts, music, and outdoors
- Maintain character and authenticity and create new development in a sustainable manner