

Eastern Shore of Virginia

October 2005
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

CEDS

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On the cover, counter-clockwise from upper right, representing our region’s economy:

Bay Beyond, Inc. (food processing); NASA Wallops Flight Facility (aerospace); Bay Creek (retiree services); New Ravenna (studio businesses); Cherrystone Aquafarms (seafood); Shopping for flowers at Exmore’s annual yard sale; Tourists at the beach; Virginia Space Flight Academy (education)

About the Eastern Shore of Virginia 2005 CEDS

Developing a Plan

The Research Phase

The economy of the Eastern Shore of Virginia is changing and strengthening. People with high incomes are purchasing homes in our region. The construction industry is booming. The tourism industry is strong. Small businesses are revitalizing our traditional downtowns. As a region, we are positioning ourselves for future economic prosperity.

We have reexamined the strengths and weaknesses of the Eastern Shore of Virginia's regional economy. Seven industry clusters that are the key to our economic future were identified.

This year, funding for the Economic Development Commission was withdrawn by both Accomack and Northampton counties. As a re-

sult, this CEDS reflects elimination of two projects: the Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park because it is currently for sale, and the Business Attraction program which was solely carried out by the Economic Development Commission.

New research is planned for Spring 2006 to identify economic development needs that can be supported by both counties. A comprehensive planning process will be carried out to develop a completely new CEDS in Summer 2006.

The CEDS Committee

The Eastern Shore of Virginia maintains a committee to oversee the CEDS process. The committee chair is Gregory L. Duncan and Rev. Charles J. Kellam serves as the vice chair. The

CEDS Committee (with race & sex as requested by the EDA)

Name	Affiliation	Interest
Gregory L. Duncan (AA, M)	Retail Business	Business, Minority
Wanda J. Thornton (C, F)	Accomack County Board of Supervisors	Tourism, Government
Donald L. Hart, Jr. (C, M)	Accomack County Public Schools	Education
Thomas J. Matthews (C, M)	Retail & Ag Business	Agriculture, Business
Gwendolyn F. Turner (AA, F)	Health Department	Health, Minority
Rev. Charles J. Kellam (AA, M)	Church	Community, Minority
Lester H. Spady Sr. (AA, M)	Retired	Aged, Minority
Andrew R. Barbour (C, M)	Northampton County Board of Supervisors	Tourism, Government
Sandra Hart Mears (C, F)	Accomack County Board of Supervisors	Government
Thomas E. Rienerth (C, M)	Retired	Aged
Richard B. Tankard (C, M)	Ag Business	Agriculture, Business
Jeffrey K. Walker (C, M)	Northampton County Board of Supervisors	Government
James M. West C, M)	Technology Business	Business

Key: AA = African American, C = Caucasian, M= Male, F = Female

committee represents the major business and civic interests to ensure viewpoints of the entire community are considered and to take advantage of local skills and resources in program formulation and implementation. It includes representatives of local government, business, finance, agriculture, the professions, education, community organizations, public health agencies, the aged, disabled, racial minorities, and women. Staff services and administration are provided by the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission.

Public Participation

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is based on two other planning processes which benefited from a large amount of public participation: the planning process for our federally designated Enterprise Community designation and the planning process for the Eastern Shore Regional Partnership.

In addition to the extensive public involvement in the two previous planning processes, for this CEDS we held public hearings in both Accomack and Northampton Counties to encourage public input.

As stated above, the general public has the opportunity to participate during the annual review and update process via public forums. During this time, issues before the Committee are shared with the public to allow them the opportunity their opinions about projects and programs.

Enterprise Community

The Enterprise Community plan was created with full involvement of the local community. The Enterprise Community is a designation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

An Enterprise Community Steering Committee, made up of community residents, community-based organizations and local public officials, was formed to direct the planning process. The steering committee determined that the guiding principle governing this endeavor would be that

the low income community residents living within the designated areas would direct all phases of conceptualizing, planning and implementing the strategic programs.

Community residents, with assistance from the steering committee and a community collaborative devised a planning process made up of five basic components: a needs and capacity assessment, community organizing, planning workgroups, focus groups, and public meetings. The principal activities of the planning processes were “visioning sessions” along four areas of concern. Those areas of concern were affordable housing, community economic development, education and community health and human services.

Over a period of six months, community residents and the steering committee met weekly to catalog neighborhood conditions and develop a list of recommendations and program development opportunities for each target area.

Eastern Shore Regional Partnership

Over a 12 month period ending in May of 2003, the Eastern Shore Regional Partnership followed a rigorous strategic planning process to prepare a request for requalification. The new plan revises and updates the Partnership’s first plan created 5 years ago. The Partnership consists of forty business, civic, government, and educational leaders representing all walks of life in our region. Staff collected demographic and economic information for the group to consider.

Using facilitated discussion methods, the Partnership re-adopted the vision statement for the region’s economic future. Staff drafted the vision statement, which was modified by the Partnership using the discussion method. The region’s competitive niches, strengths, and opportunities were identified. Barriers to regional competitiveness were identified.

The Partnership listed 12 potential regional projects that take advantage of our competitive niches. The Partnership ranked the potential projects in order of priority.

Three public forums were held, and at those

forums the public prioritized the 12 projects. The forums were advertised in the local newspaper and on local radio stations. Finally, based on the results of the public forums, the Partnership used five strategic criteria to select 7 projects to support.

The three participating localities held public hearings on the final project list. The hearings were advertised three times in the local newspaper.

Partnership task forces prepared action plans for the 7 projects. Responsibilities, time schedules and funding sources were set.

This comprehensive economic development strategy has adopted the Regional Partnership's vision statement. And all 7 of the Partnership's projects are included in this plan.

Demographics

Population

	1980	1990	2000
Accomack County	31,268	31,703	38,305
Northampton County	14,625	13,061	13,093
Eastern Shore of Va.	45,893	44,764	51,398

Source: US Census

The population of the Eastern Shore of Virginia is remarkably steady considering the level of in-migration and out-migration. Accomack County officials considered some of the increase in their population to be due to a mis-count in one district.

Migration, 1995 - 2000

	In	Out	Net
Accomack County	4,926	4,124	802
Northampton County	1,491	1,274	217
Eastern Shore of Va.	6,417	5,398	1,019

Source: US Census

Census information shows significant numbers of people moving to the Eastern Shore. 12% of our population in 2000 did not live here in 1995. At the same time, there is a smaller out-migration of people leaving the region.

Race & Ethnicity

	1990	2000
White	61%	61%
Black	38%	34%
Other	1%	5%

Source: 2000 US Census

The racial and ethnic makeup of the region did not change drastically from 1990 to 2000, although the number of people categorized as “other” (largely hispanic) is rising.

Age Distribution

	1990	2000
Under 25 Years	32%	32%
Age 25 - 44	27%	26%
Age 45 - 64	22%	24%
Age 65 or greater	19%	18%

Source: 2000 US Census

The age distribution in our region has not changed in a significant way. Over the last 10 years there was some increase in the 45 to 64 age group, but this was to be expected as the large Baby Boom cohort moved into that age range.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Median Family Income

	1990	2000	
Accomack County	\$24,063	\$34,821	Median family income is growing at a faster rate in both counties of the Eastern Shore than in Virginia as a whole. Income in Accomack grew 45%, Northampton County grew 50%, and Virginia grew 40%.
Northampton County	\$23,306	\$35,034	

Source: US Census

Households by Income

	1990	2000	
Less than \$10,000	4,445	3,073	The number of households with income below \$25,000 decreased 19% from 1990 to 2000.
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,354	1,874	
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4,000	3,783	The number of households in all the higher income brackets grew dramatically. The number of households making \$75,000 to \$99,999 increased 227% and the number of households making \$100,000 or more increased 277%.
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2,948	3,354	
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2,165	3,448	
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,222	2,958	
\$75,000 to \$99,999	325	1,062	
\$100,000 to \$149,999	151	659	
Greater than \$150,000	124	378	

Source: US Census

Educational Attainment (age 25 and over)

	1990	2000	
High School Degree or greater	58.8%	68%	Educational attainment on the Eastern Shore of Virginia is rising along with income levels.
Bachelor Degree or greater	10%	14%	

Source: US Census

Labor Force

Civilian Labor Force

	1980	1990	2002
Accomack County	17,942	15,096	16,043
Northampton County	7,386	5,677	5,069
Eastern Shore of Va.	25,328	20,773	21,111

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Like our region's overall population, our civilian labor force was very steady from 1990 to 2002.

Unemployment Rate (annual average)

	1980	1990	2002
Eastern Shore of Va.	7.6%	5.7%	4.9%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

The annual average unemployment rate for the Eastern Shore of Virginia was only slightly higher than the annual rate for the state of Virginia (4.1%).

Self-Employed

Eastern Shore of Va.
Virginia

Source: 2000 US Census

2000
9.6%
5.5%
Our region is very entrepreneurial. On a percentage basis, almost twice as many people on the Eastern Shore are self-employed as in the state as a whole. 2,099 people are self employed on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Geography & Environment

A Peninsula Between the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay



The Eastern Shore of Virginia, with a land area of 696 square miles and an additional 263 square miles of water area, is located at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula. The area is bounded on the north by Maryland, on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the south and west by the Chesapeake Bay. Accomack County includes Tangier Island, which

is located in the Chesapeake Bay.

The peninsula is approximately 18 miles wide at its northern end, tapering to a point 75 miles to the south, where it is connected to the Virginia mainland by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. A string of barrier islands protects the peninsula on the east coast.

Elevation ranges from sea level to 50 feet above sea level. Approximately 95% of the Eastern Shore has slopes less than or equal to 2%, which are conducive to development. For the most part, the soil profile consists of 8 to 10 inches of sandy loam topsoil and approximately 30 inches of sandy clay subsoil. Mineral resources include sand, clay and shell strata.

Ground water is the source of potable water on Eastern Shore. The Department of Environmental Quality designated the region a Groundwater Management Area in 1976, which means that all groundwater users of

10,000 gallons per day or more are subject to a permit process.

Marine resources include the abundant marshlands and spawning areas for numerous finfish and shellfish.

Mild Weather



The Eastern Shore of Virginia enjoys a mild climate with four distinct seasons. The Atlantic Ocean has a moderating effect on both summer highs and winter lows.

Snowfall is rare and generally melts in one day. Most of the rainfall occurs in winter and spring months.

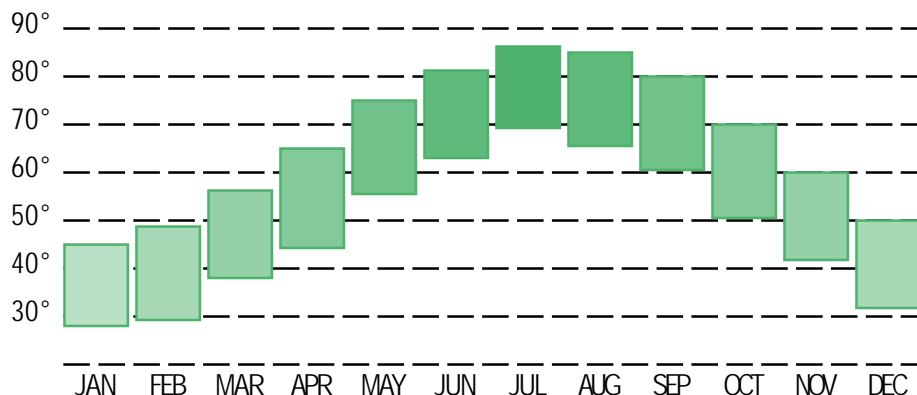
The summer months are hot and humid with infrequent thunderstorms. Refreshing maritime breezes generally provide a cool break at day's end. Hurricanes sometimes skirt the region in the fall, but compared to other Atlantic coastal regions, little damage has been done by hurricanes over the last fifty years.

Climate Data

Average Annual Temperature	57.5 °F
Average Annual Precipitation	41.9 inches
Average Annual Snowfall	8.4 inches
Cooling Degree Days (°F)	1,219
Heating Degree Days (°F)	3,859

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Monthly Average Minimum & Maximum Temperatures



Transportation

Easy Access to Major Metro Areas



The new terminal at Accomack Airport

Air

Accomack County Airport is located in the Accomack Airport Industrial Park near the center of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The airport has a 5,000 foot runway capable of accommodating most private jet and prop aircraft. Industrial building sites adjacent to the runway are available.

Commercial air service is provided just across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in Norfolk, or in Salisbury, Maryland. Norfolk International Airport offers service from several commercial airlines and air freight carriers.

Truck

U.S. Highway 13, the “Ocean Highway”, is a four-lane highway that connects the Eastern Shore of Virginia with the major metro areas of the east coast. The highway is a major north-south corridor for truck traffic. Eleven interstate commercial carriers serve the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Rail

The Eastern Shore Railroad is a bridge line that bypasses the congested Northeast Corridor and its restricted clearances. The railroad has more than 90 miles of track serving Accomack and Northampton Counties and a 26 mile car float operation to cross the Chesapeake Bay from Cape Charles to Little Creek. Two carfloats of 18 and 25 car capacity are used over the water route. There are Norfolk Southern interchanges on both the north and south ends of the line, and also interchanges with the CSX and the Norfolk Portsmouth Beltline in and around Norfolk.

Commodities currently handled by the railroad are coal, stone, cement, grain, propane gas, paper, chemicals, fertilizer, food stuffs and brick. The Eastern Shore Railroad takes pride in providing customer-oriented quality transportation service.

Miles to Major Metro Areas	
Norfolk, VA	20
Richmond, VA	125
Baltimore, MD	170
Washington, DC	180
Philadelphia, PA	210
New York, NY	305
Boston, MA	537

Telecommunications

Advanced Telecommunications Infrastructure

Verizon provides the Eastern Shore of Virginia with all of the latest telecommunications technology. DSL broadband Internet access is available in many parts of our region.

Verizon - Eastern Shore Telecommunications Network

Digital Switching

100% Digital Switching Entities
100% Common Channel Signaling
Features

- DSL
- Centrex
- Automatic Call Distribution
- Uniform Call Distribution
- Automatic Route Selection
- CLASS features
- Virtual Private Network
- Voice Mail

Fiber Optics

100% Fiber Connectivity to All Switching Centers
150 Route Miles of Fiber
Interoffice SONET Rings
Customer Loop Rings
Connectivity to Interchange Carrier's POPs
DS1 and DS3

Data Services

Private Lines
Switched Multi-Megabit Services (SMDS)
Video Services
ATM
Frame Relay
Internet Protocol Routing Service
Digital Data Services

Limited Public Water & Sewer Systems Restrict Development

Only four towns on the Eastern Shore of Virginia have public wastewater treatment systems -- Cape Charles, Exmore, Onancock, and Tangier. The region's two business parks are connected to the wastewater treatment systems in Cape Charles and Onancock.

A public wastewater treatment system for the downtown business district is being designed for the Town of Parksley. It will be built in 2006 with a grant/loan from USDA Rural Utilities Services.

Seven towns have public water systems: Cape Charles, Chincoteague, Eastville, Exmore, Onancock, Parksley, and Tangier.

The U.S. Highway 13 commercial corridors in Onley and Exmore lack sufficient sewer service. Accomack Airport Industrial Park and Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park are limited in the amount of wastewater they can discharge by the constraints of the existing treatment systems. The growth of the central business districts of Accomac, Wachapreague and Nassawadox is in question due to a lack of sewer service because businesses such as restaurants cannot locate in these downtowns without considerable difficulty or expense.

Locational Advantages & Disadvantages

Relationship to the Economy of the Larger Region

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is isolated from the Hampton Roads metro area by the Chesapeake Bay. Without the influence of a vibrant city economy, the region has remained very rural and the economy dependant on farming and seafood.

The largest and most direct relationship of the economy of the Eastern Shore of Virginia to that of the greater region is shopping. Residents of the region go to Hampton Roads or Salisbury, Maryland, to make major purchases. The population of the Eastern Shore of Virginia is not large enough to support the large chainstores that now dominate retailing.

The other major relationship is the growing number of people from outside the region purchasing vacation or retirement homes on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This influx balances the impact of young persons leaving the area and helps support local retail and service businesses. The development of a new 2,000 acre residential community in Cape Charles is supporting this trend.

Geographic isolation may become an Eastern Shore of Virginia advantage. It is not just retirees who find the region a great place to live. Business owners are also attracted by the quality of life. Small, family-owned businesses have relocated to the region. Recent examples include businesses from Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Northern Virginia, and Hampton Roads.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia may be geographically isolated, but transportation access has

never been a problem. Early in the modern history of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, sailboats and steamships moved passengers and freight between the region and cities across the bay. Towns at the head of the bayside creeks grew and prospered because of this waterborne trade.

The development of a railroad down the center of the peninsula made the ships obsolete and new towns on the railroad grew. In time a highway was built and the railroad diminished in economic importance. Commercial development began to sprawl along the highway. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel opened in the early 1960s and provides a quick, if expensive, way to get to the rest of Virginia.

The Gradual Diversification of the Regional Economy

The Eastern Shore of Virginia's economy has seen significant change since the early 1960s. Traditionally rooted in the farming and fishing industries, the 1960s and 1970s brought increases in mechanization and industrialization. Farming operations became more reliant on equipment and industrial applications in farming procedures. Changes in growing methods could be seen especially in tomato production. Two poultry processing facilities (Perdue and Tysons) were established and today employ more than 2,000 people. During this period the fishing industry began seeing a decline in local production.

The 1980s ushered in industry changes and new environmental regulations that impacted both the food processing and seafood industries through the early 1990s. Two major vegetable processors (KMC and John Taylor Packing) and two large seafood processing companies (American Original and C&D Seafood) closed their doors. Byrd Foods closed their frozen vegetable processing division.

What's New

The last 10 years brought new investment and growth. Tyson Foods and Perdue both expanded their facilities. Changes to the operations at NASA Wallops Flight Facility brought new investment and activity, mainly by the US Navy. More tourists visited Chincoteague and the other waterfront towns in the region. Clam aquaculture became a multimillion dollar industry. Horticulture operations expanded. More artists earned

a living from their skills and a few studio businesses grew into major employers. Thousands of retirees and pre-retirees moved to the Shore.

Companies that have located on the Shore include Wako USA (diagnostic fluids), Eastern Shore Composites (manufacturer of fiberglass boats and aquaculture tanks), Atlantis Energy (photovoltaic panels), Interad (design and manufacture of communications electronics), SEA (environmental consulting firm), Delisheries (gourmet baking mixes), Bay Breeze Technology Center (corporate software training services), and Commonwealth Chesapeake (peaker power plant).

Seven Industry Clusters

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission has identified seven existing or emerging industry clusters in the region. The clusters follow from the region's competitive advantages and from the observable base of human-knowledge in the area. The growth of the clusters will energize the entire regional economy.

Staff of the Economic Development Commission has met with representatives of each of the clusters. Their suggestions and observations are woven into this plan and provide the compass for the direction we must travel.

The industry clusters are agriculture/food processing, aerospace, tourism, seafood/aquaculture, education/research, studio businesses and retiree services.

Agriculture/Food Processing

The agriculture and food processing industry cluster is dominated by the Perdue and Tysons poultry processing plants in Accomac and Temperanceville. The Perdue plant has approximately 2,000 employees and Tyson's has approximately 1,000 employees. Combined the two plants provide 16% of the jobs in the region. Other food companies in the region are smaller but have growth potential. An example is Bay Beyond.

Agriculture continues to be an important part of the regional economy. In 1999, 40 crop agriculture businesses had 510 employees in January and an additional 3,939 seasonal employees in July. Horticulture is a growing segment of the farming industry, with 9 businesses and 150 employees in March of 1998.

Aerospace

The NASA Wallops Flight Facility is an enormous asset for the region. NASA and its contractors provide more than 700 relatively high-salary jobs to a region with few other opportunities for skilled employment. NASA Wallops is

also the home of U.S. Navy and NOAA operations that employ another 400 persons. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport has been developed at Wallops Island as a commercial space port. Rocket companies launching from the Space Flight Center will also do assembly or manufacturing in the area.

Tourism

Tourism is a regional industry with great potential for future growth. Travelers spent \$149 million in the region in 2000 at businesses employing 1,810 people. A hidden benefit of tourism is that business owners introduced to the region as visitors sometimes decide to move to our area and bring their businesses with them.

Seafood/Aquaculture

Seafood is another traditional local industry that continues to be important. In addition to watermen who fish and crab, aquaculture companies are growing quickly. Numerous clam aquaculture companies have seasonal and full-time employees.

Major Employers - Eastern Shore of Virginia

Perdue Farms Inc
poultry processing
1,550 employees

Tyson Farms Inc
poultry processing
950 employees

NASA - Wallops
rocket launch facility
800 (including contractors)

Shore Health Services
health care
600 employees

Bayshore Concrete Prod.
prestressed components
400 employees

US Navy - SCS Center
combat systems
300 (including contractors)

Eastern Shore Seafood
seafood processing
200 employees

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Authority
150 employees

Eastern Shore Community College
150 employees

New Ravenna Inc.
manufacture mosaics
110 employees

NOAA CDA Station
command & data acquisition
80 employees

Tankard Nurseries
plant nursery
50 employees

J. Franklin Jones Lumber Co.
wood harvesting and processing
50 employees

Cherrystone Aquafarms
aquaculture (clams)
40 employees

Interad Ltd.
communications electronics
30 employees

Education/Research

Education and research are significant employers on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The Eastern Shore Community College has approximately 90 employees and provides essential adult education services to the region. The Marine Science Consortium has about 30 employees serving more than 5,000 college and high school students annually. The Virginia Space Flight Academy, Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the Long-Term Research Station at Oyster are other examples of research and education activity in our region.

Studio Businesses

“Studio business” is a term used to generically describe artists, craftspersons, and other producers of one-of-a-kind or limited edition items. Creative people are attracted to the Eastern Shore of Virginia’s scenic beauty, low cost of living and close proximity to major markets in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. Studio businesses in our region range in size from self-employed painters to a tile mosaic manufacturer with more than 100 employees. Statistics from the Virginia Employment Commission indicate that there are more than 200 employees of studio businesses, and we estimate that there are at least another 100 self-employed artists in the region.

Retiree Services

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a destination for retirees attracted by our miles of waterfront and relaxed lifestyle. 6,417 people moved to the region from 1995 to 2000. Serving the needs of these retirees is an industry unto itself - they purchase construction services, health services, recreation services, and products of all types. The construction industry has become an important source of employment, with about 720 people employed in that industry.

Partners & Resources for Economic Development

Many Hands Make Light Work

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is blessed with several organizations working on the many aspects of economic development.

Regional Partners

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission (EDC)** is mandated by Accomack and Northampton Counties to promote the resources and advantages of the region and to secure the economic development of the two counties. The commission promoted the region as a location for businesses, assisted local companies with expansion, and staffed development projects. In 2005, funding for the EDC was withdrawn by both counties, and a new economic development planning process will begin in Spring 2006.

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission** is staffed by the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce and is responsible for the promotion of the tourism industry.

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership** is a group of more than 30 local business, government, civic and educational leaders. The Partnership is pursuing seven economic development projects deemed to be of great importance to the region.

The **Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission** focuses on regional planning, housing, and community development issues, and continues to provide staff for the Economic Development Commission, although it is not funded at present.

The **Virginia Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation** is the lead entity for the federally designated Enterprise Community. VESEEHC operates a microenterprise revolving loan fund along with other community development programs.

The **Industrial Development Authorities** of Accomack and Northampton Counties own and develop Accomack Airport Industrial Park and Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park respectively.

The **Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority** is a creation of the Commonwealth of Virginia, but its focus is on the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport on Wallops Island. The Spaceport will be the scene of commercial rocket launches in the future and will benefit the regional economy with spin-off manufacturing businesses.

Federal & State Resources

The **Economic Development Administration** has provided generous financial support to the creation of business parks, the commercial spaceport at Wallops Island and economic development planning in the region for many years.

USDA Rural Development is very active in providing funding for wastewater treatment, revolving loan funds and a variety of other economic development programs in the region.

The **Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development** has provided business financing, downtown revitalization, and business park development assistance to our region.

The Future of the Eastern Shore of Virginia



Kiptopeke Elementary School

An excellent vision statement for the future of the Eastern Shore of Virginia was developed in an earlier planning process for the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership. It was developed with the input of the entire Partnership, representing a cross-section of the community. Public hearings

were held for input from the general public and the vision was approved by the localities. We have adopted that vision statement as our own.

A Vision for the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Where We Are in 2020

In 2020, the Eastern Shore of Virginia is a rural community, with thriving towns and villages and lots of open space, parks and trails. Our Eastern Shore is a prosperous region where all residents share in our economic well-being. We are proud of the abundance of safe, affordable housing throughout our region.

Our industrial parks attract industries which do not deplete our natural resource base or pollute our air or water. We have a sustainable, diversified economy, and an infrastructure which allows for an abundance of small and medium sized businesses, providing meaningful jobs with good wages and benefits - jobs which support our families. We provide job training opportunities for our adults and young people, enabling them to stay and have careers in our region.

The natural, cultural and historical beauty of our region is unique. We are a haven for artists. Our region is also a great place to retire; we have top notch retirement communities with new residential development and excellent health care facilities.

Tourism is a significant industry here. Tourists are attracted to our region because of our clean environment, open spaces and natural resources. Nature-based tourism is prevalent; learning tours are a big attraction. We also have other attractions which draw tourists to our region: museums, aquariums, and a convention center.

We are fortunate to have NASA and other federal agencies and the space port located in our region. We are world leaders in developing commercial space launch technology and other aerospace support activities. We have a renowned aerospace/marine resources learning center which attracts students from all over the United States.

Our natural resource base is well managed: we have prosperous agriculture and aquaculture industries. We provide an excellent educational base in aquaculture and agriculture, so that future generations may utilize these resources wisely and effectively.

We are confident in determining our future as we move forward into the 21st Century.

Competitive Advantages

The Eastern Shore of Virginia has competitive advantages in the following areas:

Lifestyle

Our region's beaches, waterfront property, natural beauty and traditional small town lifestyle attract tourists, retirees and family-owned businesses.

Natural Assets

Productive waters are the essential assets for our fishing, crabbing, and aquaculture industries. Productive farmland supports the agriculture and horticulture industries.

Business Park with Special Features

Accomack Airport Industrial Park includes one of the nation's finest general aviation airports.

Access to Space

NASA Wallops Flight Facility and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport provide the only licensed rocket launch facility on the Atlantic Coast other than Cape Canaveral.

Competitive Disadvantages

Answering the question "What are our region's critical impediments or barriers to achieving our vision?" identified the following competitive disadvantages.

Lack of Entrepreneurial and Workforce Skills

Improving our economy begins with improving the skills of our people, both as entrepreneurs and as employees. Weaknesses in workforce skills and entrepreneurial skills are related. Not only do businesses need skilled labor, but also today's workers can be tomorrow's business owners. The agrarian history of the region has provided no opportunity for the workforce to gain productive industrial skills, and the traditional agriculture and seafood industries of-

fer few opportunities for new businesses or jobs.

Incomplete Economic Infrastructure

Only four towns on the Eastern Shore of Virginia offer centralized wastewater treatment, which is a necessity for concentrated business development. And three of the four existing treatment plants are very limited in available capacity. Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park and Accomack Airport Industrial both lack the funding to complete important infrastructure development. Space access is a regional competitive advantage, but there is no business park in close proximity to the Virginia Space Flight Center to accommodate rocket manufacturing and assembly.

Lack of Name Recognition and Tourism Destinations

Our region doesn't have an definitive guide to historic and natural attractions to offer visitors once they leave Chincoteague, Assateague, Kiptopeke State Park or the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge. The Atlantic Ocean, barrier islands, Chesapeake Bay, and some of the oldest historic sites are difficult to find for the visitor.

Struggling Towns & Villages

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a collection of small towns and villages. Changes in the retail industry have seriously damaged the economic health of our small communities. The existing buildings and public infrastructure in our towns are under-utilized economic assets that can be revitalized to benefit the entire region.

Landmarks on the Road to Prosperity



Sailing on a bayside creek.

Taking information from previous plans, economic development organizations, and public comments, we began to develop strategies for the plan.

It became apparent that certain issues were surfacing over and over again. These common concerns became the basis for the strategic goals. The

goals are fundamental to the plan, for while this report offers specific strategies for implementation, the list is not necessarily exhaustive. Sound goals provide a strong framework for future expansion of the list of strategies.

Strategic Goals

Create a positive environment for the growth of our seven industry clusters by providing the necessary public infrastructure (business parks, utilities, incubators) and by enhancing capital availability (revolving loan funds).

Offer opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development related to our seven industry clusters, serving potential employees and entrepreneurs.

Develop a regional identity that celebrates our competitive advantages and connects the communities of the region.

Attract or grow businesses that provide living wage jobs and don't harm the environment.

Recognize the importance of our historic towns and villages to the overall economic health of the region and develop strategies to stimulate their revitalization.

Specific, Measurable Actions for Reaching Our Regional Goals



Mason Avenue,
Cape Charles.

The procedure used to select projects and programs was an integral part of the planning process for the CEDS. Our CEDS is based on two previous plans, the Enterprise Community plan and the Regional Partnership plan. By using the existing plans that are in the process of being implemented, the CEDS up-

dated those previous planning efforts and validated the efforts begun under those plans.

The regional economic development staff identified the projects and programs included in the two existing plans and took the resulting list to the CEDS Committee for approval. The list of projects, and the prioritizing of the projects was also approved and adopted by the Boards of Supervisors for Accomack and Northampton Counties.

Developing the actions for this plan was a balancing act between feasibility and creativity. In evaluating the projects and programs, the committee had to address the fundamental and sometimes prosaic problems facing the regional economy, but we were also driven by the need to support the solutions that had already been selected and begun to be implemented.

In 2005, both Accomack and Northampton counties withdrew funding from the Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission. Northampton County removed funding from its budget first because of shortfalls and a desire to change the direction of its economic

development efforts. Accomack County followed suit, as it did not want to provide funds without Northampton's participation. At this time, both counties support the 2005 CEDS, as both boards are represented on the CEDS committee. However, both counties desire a new planning process to refresh economic development efforts in our region.

Resources are limited so not all actions can be pursued immediately. A prioritization follows the project descriptions.

Workforce Training & Business Development Center

Background

Surveys of existing businesses, studies by consulting firms and data on economic growth all suggest a lack of entrepreneurial skills on the Eastern Shore. Similarly, the high percentage of adults without a high school diploma and employer comments about the poor quality of job applicants indicate the lack of the adequately trained workforce needed for the area to become economically competitive.

Eastern Shore Community College provides workforce training for adults. The college offers an extensive Adult Basic Education Program including preparation for the GED. At the two-year Associate Degree level, there are programs in Administrative Support Technology, Business Management, Electronics, and Nursing. At the certificate level (one year or less of study) there are programs in Automotive Technology, Computer Information Systems, Drafting, Early Child Care, Electronics, Long-Term Care Assistant, Real Estate, and Welding.

The college also offers specialized training for employees as needed by businesses. However the ability to respond to requests is severely limited by lack of space and equipment. The college does not have any large multi-purpose rooms available to set up specialized training.

Strategy

Current workforce development activities and entrepreneurial skills development efforts are not sufficient and are not able to become sufficient in their current facilities. Additional space and state-of-the-art equipment is needed to augment these efforts.

A combined Business Development and Workforce Training Center will be housed at Eastern Shore Community College and will represent a collaborative effort between the Regional Partnership, the College, the Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads and other local agencies. The college will be responsible for the development and implementation of the project.

Workforce development in high demand technical/occupational programs will include the building trades, health care, educational aide, and information systems.

Preliminary architectural and engineering work is complete on a Center in which to conduct workforce training, provide an employment and training “one-stop-shop,” and consolidate services for business start-ups and expansions.

Virginia has provided \$2.47 million from an education bond to provide part of the funding for the project. The remaining funding has been provided for the new center facility from local, and federal sources. The Economic Development Administration granted \$1.1 million, and USDA contributed \$500,000 for the new 20,000 square foot facility. Project cost is \$4.5 million.

Wastewater Treatment Systems Improvement & Development

Background

Wastewater treatment is a basic infrastructure expectation for most businesses. Septic systems for individual businesses are cumbersome and capacity restrictions can inhibit business growth. Septic systems do not work well in many parts of our region. And septic systems are not practical in compactly developed towns.

For all of these reasons, wastewater collection and treatment systems are an issue for businesses on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The only communities with central wastewater treatment systems are Cape Charles, Exmore, and Onancock. It is no coincidence that the region's two business parks are located near Cape Charles and Onancock. Both of the existing wastewater treatment systems need upgrading and expansion.

Numerous businesses had been unable to locate in downtown Exmore because of restrictions on septic systems there. Businesses in downtown Parksley are also having problems with their individual septic systems.

Strategy

Northampton County supports the new Public Service Authority to tackle the problem of wastewater treatment in the region. The Authority has assessed the needs and opportunities in our region and has identified priority projects.

The Public Service Authority has created a plan of action and is preparing to enter the implementation stage. Wastewater collection and treatment is capital intensive and will require funding from a variety of sources to make the service economically feasible.

The first Director for the Public Service Authority has been selected and began work in January 2004.

Exmore completed construction of a wastewater treatment system that serves the downtown commercial district. Planning and engineering design work is underway, and funding has been procured for a central sewage system to serve downtown Parksley.

Wallops Research Park & Commercialization Center

Background

The aerospace industry cluster has unique potential for creating skilled career opportunities and raising the average income level on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The industry, through the presence of NASA Wallops and the US Navy at Wallops, already offers careers for hundreds of engineers and technicians. The development of the Virginia Space Flight Center commercial rocket launch has the potential to attract three hundred or more new jobs manufacturing rockets, payloads, and related products.

But currently there are no prepared sites to locate the rocket and payload manufacturers. The companies that have shown an interest in the Virginia Space Flight Center have all said they need a location in very close proximity of NASA Wallops main base or the Wallops Island launch area. The closest developed business park, Accomack Airport Industrial Park, is thirty miles away. The businesses do not want to transport their finished rockets or payloads thirty miles to the launch area.

The solution is to create a new business park near NASA Wallops, the US Navy at Wallops, and the Virginia Space Flight Center to accommodate the aerospace industry. The new park can also become the home for the Space Flight Academy, a residential camp for students interested in space science and engineering.

The Commercialization Center would be a business incubator in the new business park.

Strategy

Accomack County has created a task force to spearhead the development of a business park and learning center near NASA Wallops and the Virginia Space Flight Center. The center will become the home for aerospace businesses, the Space Flight Academy, and possibly other science-related educational institutions.

The task force includes representatives from NASA and the Virginia Space Flight Center as well as the Accomack County Administrator and County staff.

The task force has identified a potential site just outside the NASA Wallops main gate. The site is owned by four entities: Accomack County, NASA, the Marine Science Consortium, and the US Navy.

A preliminary engineering report, phase one environmental review, and a development plan has been completed for the site.

Accomack County, with the assistance of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission, is the entity responsible to carry out the project. The estimated total cost of the project is \$2.6 million. The proposed sources of funding for the project are the state (\$1.3 million), federal (\$1 million), and local (\$300,000).

The same task force is in the early planning stage for the creation of the Commercialization Center, a business incubator to support firms that spin off from Navy or NASA activities.

Regional Food System

Background

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a rural area and the food processing and agriculture industry clusters have always been a large part of the local economy, and therefore new ways to support small farms and producers could significantly benefit our economy.

A food business incubator provides commercial-scale food processing equipment and technical assistance to start-up businesses. The goal is to support and nurture the business during its early vulnerable years when it lacks capital and expertise. An incubator is particularly helpful to start-up food businesses because regulations often make it impossible to do food processing in a household kitchen. The cost for the infrastructure and equipment required for a food processing facility with appropriate regulatory approvals is outside the financial capacity of most new food producers.

Food business incubators serve a variety of clients, such as farmers wishing to add value to raw agricultural products and home-based businesses that can't afford to build their own commercial inspected kitchen.

In return for a rental fee, the entrepreneur has access to equipment such as large-capacity steam kettles, stack ovens, large stoves, mixers, choppers and storage space. The incubator also furnishes technical assistance and business management counseling.

Strategy

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission (EDC) received a planning grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to study the feasibility of establishing a shared-use commercial kitchen on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Several years previous to this work, the EDC and others in the community studied the feasibility of a co-packing facility for the use of food producers on the Shore. Two possible anchor tenants found satisfactory co-packing services “off the Shore” long before a co-packing facility could be developed here, thus eliminating the only two customers the facility could have counted on at start-up.

The planning team regrouped and brainstormed ideas for some other type of food-processing facility. Preliminary research seemed to indicate that a shared-use kitchen would be feasible for a rural area. It also fits with the EDC's efforts to grow the economy from within and diversify the agricultural sector.

The feasibility study for the food business incubator indicated that a food business incubator is feasible if operated as part of a larger general business incubator.

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission is the entity responsible to carry out the project. The project is estimated to need about \$110,000. No environmental impact is anticipated.

Downtown Revitalization

Background

Small towns and villages were the historic centers of economic activity on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, but modern retailing methods moved shopping out to Route 13. Local merchants and residents are struggling to breathe new life into our historic towns.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Four-Point Approach is a method that hundreds of small towns across the nation have used to revitalize their downtown areas. The four points described here are the keys to success in these communities.

Organization

A volunteer-driven program with an organizational structure of board and committees.

Promotion

Market the town's unique characteristics through advertising, special events, retail promotions, and marketing campaigns.

Design

Capitalize on historic buildings and the traditional downtown layout. Create an inviting atmosphere through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights and landscaping.

Economic Restructuring

Help existing businesses expand and recruit new ones. Define a new market niche for downtown.

The Virginia Main Street Program is available to help our towns improve themselves.

Strategy

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission has started a Regional Downtown Revitalization Project. Five towns (Chincoteague, Parksley, Onancock, Exmore, and Cape Charles) are participating. Merchants' groups in each of the towns have organized following the Main Street guidelines, and the PDC will provide staffing assistance to these all-volunteer organizations. We are also planning projects that will benefit all five towns regionally.

We hope to eventually have active and successful downtown organizations in each of our towns. The revitalized towns will provide a supportive environment for local entrepreneurs and the new businesses will create jobs.

Exmore and Chincoteague have received funding from the Virginia Department of Community Development, the Department of Transportation, and USDA Rural Development for construction of streetscape improvements and the establishment of loan-pools for business expansion and facade improvements.

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission and the individual localities are responsible for continuing this ongoing project.

Eastern Shore Defense Alliance

Background

The US Navy Surface Combat Systems Center (SCSC) at Wallops Island is a major employer in the Eastern Shore of Virginia region. SCSC is comprised of a dedicated team of over 400 military, civilian, and contractor personnel working together to provide engineering, training, and base operations support to the Fleet. Not only are there a relatively large number of jobs, they are also relatively high-skill and high-wage jobs.

The SCSC's mission is ship defense system development, support and training. The geographical location on the Atlantic Ocean overlooking the Virginia Capes operating area makes it an ideal place to conduct engineering and training exercises with sea clutter and reflectivity. This environment allows unobstructed, uninterrupted engineering and training exercises with various ships and battle groups off the coast of Wallops Island.

SCSC has two unique, multifunctional facilities on Wallops Island. The AEGIS facility is dedicated to the support of all AEGIS cruisers and destroyers. The SSDS facility supports amphibious ships and aircraft carriers. The SCSC's extensive simulation capabilities allow ships, aircraft, missiles, and other threats to be injected in the live tactical environment.

Strategy

The Eastern Shore Defense Alliance was established to support the missions of the US Navy Surface Combat Systems Center (SCSC), provide mutual support among contractors, serve as a recognizable resource of area employment, support and promote the local community, and support the growth and prosperity of government programs and projects.

The Alliance's original members were all government contractors, and they continue to form the majority of the membership. But they have recently expanded the membership to include key economic development government representatives from both Virginia and Maryland. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission's Economic Development Coordinator is one of the members.

The Alliance's new focus is on creating new jobs for the region through the growth of US Navy operations at Wallops. Three project areas have been identified that have significant growth potential for the base: development and testing of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), joint activities with the US Navy aviation facility at Pautuxent River, and a new building to support the development of the upcoming DDX ship defense system. Committees of the Alliance will work on these and other projects.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport

Background

The Virginia Space Flight Center (VSFC) was created by the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority (VCSFA). The VSFC involves two primary business segments: a multi-user spaceport and a Center for Excellence in research and education of aerospace-related endeavors. It is intended to be a regional effort, involving several states with a stake in aerospace development and education.

The spaceport will provide space launch facilities and support services to commercial, government and scientific customers on a fee basis. It will operate in partnership with NASA and DynSpace, a private commercial space industry partner in the project, to provide timely, low-cost, highly reliable access to space. The launch pad has been constructed, in part with funding from the EDA.

The Center for Excellence, a consortium of industry, government and academia, will provide technical/vocational, secondary and higher education opportunities relating to the technology and processes involved in aerospace activities. It is envisioned that the NASA Wallops Flight Facility and the VSFC spaceport activities will provide a hands-on laboratory to support the learning process.

Strategy

The next step in the development of the Virginia Space Flight Center (VSFC) spaceport is construction of a service tower and a payload processing and integration facility, which are both under construction.

Launch Pad 0-B is now complete and is capable of launching expendable launch vehicles placing small to medium class payloads into space.

Construction of the service tower began in 2003 and will be completed in 2004. The service tower is located on the new launch pad and will provide access to a rocket after it is raised into upright position. Some rocket designs do not require a service tower, but other designs do. The tower will house a bridge crane for vehicle and payload handling.

Construction has also begun on the payload processing and integration facility. The payload processing and integration facility will house work areas and a crane for handling the payloads. The facility will include office, lab, test and evaluation areas to support operations.

The VCSFA is the entity responsible to carry out the project. The estimated total cost of the project is \$9 million. The site is already heavily developed, so no additional environmental impact is anticipated.

Accomack Airport Industrial Park

Background

Accomack Airport Industrial Park is a general business park located near Melfa, Virginia. Significant selling points for the park are a new terminal and t-hangars at the general aviation airport that is part of the park. Another advantage is that Eastern Shore Community College is adjacent to the park.

The EDA provided funding for the construction of the park nearly twenty years ago. Build-out of the park was slow until recent years. In the last three years, four new businesses have moved into the park: Bay Beyond Inc., Interad, Clearwater Sprinkler Systems, and Shore Gin & Cotton.

Accomack Airport Industrial Park still has approximately 70 buildable acres available for sale.

Problems with the park's infrastructure include only one entrance/exit, no traffic light at the entrance (which makes exiting the park onto busy US Highway 13 difficult), and a lack of inexpensive broadband Internet service.

Strategy

In order to open more acreage along the airport for development, the road called "Parkway North" needs to be extended to the wholesale farmers market. This road will also provide a second entrance and egress for the park, which is important because the sole existing entry could be blocked by road construction or a traffic accident.

The new road will open approximately thirty acres of prime airport property to development. New hangars and other aviation-related uses are planned for the area.

The park would also benefit from a connecting road to the adjacent Eastern Shore Community College. College traffic would exit through the park and generate enough activity at the park's entrance to warrant a stoplight on US Highway 13, which would make exiting the park much safer and easier.

Broadband Internet access is available in the park, but only in the form of expensive T1 lines. The Industrial Development Authority is investigating the options for less expensive access.

Accomack Industrial Development Authority is the entity responsible to carry out the project. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$800,000. The only environmental impact will come from the clearing of trees for the roads and the increased runoff from the paved surfaces.

Regional Trails (Bird, Bike, Heritage)

Background

The Eastern Shore of Virginia has a wealth of scenic, historic, natural, cultural and recreational sites of potential interest to tourists, but the sites are not connected or promoted in an effective manner.

Most visitors to our region enjoy the beaches on Assateague Island or stay at one of our many bed & breakfast inns. They are likely to have an interest in other things to do and see in the region, which would extend their stay and bring more income to our businesses. But existing maps and guidebooks are either outdated or woefully inadequate. Signage to direct drivers is virtually nonexistent.

Tourism has been identified as one of our region's important business clusters and has great potential for future expansion. An effort to coordinate and promote our many attractions is one way to encourage growth of the industry.

The Regional Trails project is the responsibility of the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission, which has appointed a Trail Committee. Costs for the project have not yet been estimated. No environmental impact is anticipated.

Strategy

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Trails are proposed as coordinated tour and byway corridors using existing roads to link significant scenic, historic, natural, cultural and recreational sites throughout the region. The Trail promises a high-quality and easy-to-follow experience for the enjoyment and education of visitors.

The natural assets of the region will be an integral part of the Trails -- including Kiptopeke State Park, Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, and Assateague Island National Seashore. The state's new birding trail will be one of the important Trails in our system. The Trails will celebrate the region's cultural diversity and will bring to life the stories of its native-American and African-American peoples. And the Trails will feature our museums and historic sites. The Trails will highlight and promote our economic enterprises, past and present.

Establishing the Trails will require maps/brochures, a printed guidebook and an Internet website guidebook, road signage, identifying markers for sites, and interpretive displays for our visitor centers. Funding for promotion of the Trails will also be critical.

Wholesale Farmers Market & Seafood Market

Background

The Eastern Shore Farmers Market is a wholesale market that opened in 1993 and has been highly successful. In four years it has brokered almost \$20 million in agricultural produce from small, medium and large farmers and achieved 100% occupancy. The market has become a leader in the state for enhancing the competitiveness of local resource-based business.

The market and the Regional Partnership want to extend the same success to the seafood industry. Currently the regional waters support about 2,200 wholesale and retail workers, including over 700 licensed watermen. More than 60 species are harvested from our waters. There is an estimated wholesale value of approximately \$9.5 million in seafood catch.

But like our agriculture industry, there is a need for central marketing, handling, storing and freezing infrastructure if the industry is to stay competitive. Seafood handling standards that require fish be kept chilled at a constant temperature challenges the financial viability of small backyard seafood handlers.

The Eastern Shore Marketing Cooperative is the entity responsible to carry out the project. The estimated total cost of the project is \$3 million. The proposed source of funding is the state. No environmental impact is anticipated.

Strategy

Recognizing the potential impact of regulatory changes on the region's seafood industry, the Regional Partnership joined with the Eastern Shore Marketing Cooperative, the Eastern Shore Resource Conservation & Development Council, and the Eastern Shore Working Waterman's Association to propose a freezing, cooling, storage and brokerage facility to be located at the Eastern Shore Farmers Market and to be operated by the Eastern Shore Marketing Cooperative. This concept of a wholesale seafood market has been successfully implemented in Jessup, Maryland and in South Carolina, rural areas that share our resource-based economies.

A new 17,000 square foot building with 8,600 square feet of warehouse space will be built incorporating many of the proven successful design concepts of the Farmers Market's first produce building. The building will house a "blast" freezer for quickly freezing product until market timing is optimum, freezers to store frozen product, cold storage for temporary storage of catch, and dry storage space for grading, storage of shipping materials and office space.

The market will provide rental space for private for-profit shippers and brokers. Watermen will either use these brokerage services or simply rent storage space for their catch on a per-package fee basis.

Networked Future Broadband Internet Access

Background

The “networked future” program uses the Internet to directly improve the economic competitiveness of the Eastern Shore by teaching local businesses how to make sales online, and also by promoting the development of more broadband Internet access options for the businesses of our region.

To understand the networked future project, one must recognize that the world is in the midst of a communications revolution. This revolution has introduced a new network-driven communications medium (the Internet) that is reshaping the business world. It is creating new opportunities and new risks. If we are prepared as a region to capitalize on our inherent strengths and unique potential, we can thrive in the new century.

One area of great promise in the communications revolution is electronic commerce, the online sale of goods or services. Electronic commerce is not putting a “home page” on the Internet and waiting for e-mail or phone calls. Electronic commerce is making complete transactions online, with the purchaser submitting payment information over a secure-transaction system.

Strategy

The growth of small businesses is slowed by the high cost and limited efficiency of traditional marketing methods. E-commerce provides an opportunity to expand the marketing reach of our local companies and generate new wealth for our region.

The first step in using e-commerce to improve the sales of regional businesses is to convince those businesses of the potential benefits of selling online. To promote e-commerce and educate the business community on the subject, the networked future project holds monthly forums on a variety of e-commerce subjects.

The networked future program will continue to expand its educational offerings while also providing opportunities for businesses to share their e-commerce experiences.

The program also operates the Eastern Shore of Virginia Electronic Portal, a directory website that links other websites about our region (information, organizations, businesses).

The Networked Future project also started a new broadband Internet initiative. The plan is to identify and aggregate demand for broadband Internet services, then entice new broadband Internet service providers to the region to meet the demand.

The Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension office is the entity responsible to carry out the program. Operating costs for the program are covered by the grants and program revenues. No environmental impact is anticipated.

Academical Village

Background

Accomack and Northampton have a difficult time recruiting teachers from outside the area for their school systems. One of the difficulties is that there is no supply of quality apartments for the new teachers to rent. The “Academical Village” project is an attempt to address this problem.

The Accomack-Northampton Academical Village is a collection of 25-30 housing units integrated into a small community for educators close to one of our towns. The proposed complex will contain a small professional library, a meeting room for social gatherings and/or course work, and computers for research and preparing lesson plans in a safe and positive living environment for singles and couples.

This project benefits new teachers by providing pleasant, affordable housing with a community atmosphere, and it will be an effective tool for attracting and retaining new teachers for both school systems.

Attracting teachers (social, cost, quality) improves the educational system and builds long-term experienced staff, making it easier to operate schools. The project will also help reduce recruiting expenses and reduce teacher turnover.

Strategy

The Academical Village task force’s strategy is to develop a concept plan, supporting statistics and determine locations. Then an architectural design and construction cost estimates will be completed by the end of 2004.

In 2005, the task force will find money and identify a developer or responsible agency for the project. Development will then proceed to completion.

The task force estimates that it will cost \$30,000 for initial design and cost estimates. No other budget is yet developed.

The project is unusual, but not unique. We have learned of a similar project underway on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. That project is using the sale of tax credits to reduce the cost of building 45 teacher apartments in the first phase. We will investigate the suitability of similar creative financing for our project.

Enterprise Zone Program

Background

The Enterprise Zone is a state program that provides incentives to businesses that create new jobs or make real estate improvements in designated distressed areas. Portions of both counties, predominantly properties along Route 13 with commercial or business zoning, are included in the Enterprise Zone. Off Route 13, Chincoteague and Wallops Island, Onancock, Parksley, and Wachapreague are included.

Strategy

The accounting responsibilities for the Enterprise Zone are at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Local responsibilities are for promotion of the program, answering questions about the program, and review job grant applications once each year.

The two counties work with the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce to promote the Enterprise Zone incentives. The three organizations jointly sponsor an annual workshop to educate local businesses and to answer their questions.

The annual review of job grant applications is a simple matter of checking addresses to see if employees live inside or outside the Enterprise Zone.

Prioritized List of Projects

All of our projects are important to the region and many factors impact the urgency with which they are developed. The following list places the projects in a priority order as required by the CEDS process. The priorities will be reviewed and updated annually.

1. Workforce Training & Business Development Center
2. Wallops Research Park & Commercialization Center
3. Wastewater Treatment Systems Improvement & Development
4. Networked Future and Broadband Internet Access
5. Downtown Revitalization
6. Eastern Shore Defense Alliance / US Navy SCSC
7. Regional Trails (Bird, Bike, Heritage)
8. Academical Village
9. Regional Food System
10. Accomack Airport Industrial Park
11. Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport
12. Wholesale Farmers Market & Seafood Market
13. Enterprise Zone Program

Annual Review of Progress

In this evaluation, we will review each of our strategic goals and determine if we are making satisfactory progress toward accomplishing those goals. Projects are identified with **bold** type. Progress reports on the projects are also included in the Action Plan section.

Goal: Provide a positive environment for the growth of our seven industry clusters by providing the necessary public infrastructure and by enhancing capital availability.

We have two established business parks and another on the drawing board. Our region has a variety of prepared industrial sites to accommodate new business. However, because the Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park is currently for sale in its entirety, efforts to market it as a business location have ceased.

No new businesses located in **Accomack Airport Industrial Park** last year, although we have had discussions with several organizations that have an interest.

The **Wallops Research Park & Commercialization Center** has been proposed to create sites for aerospace companies operating out of the Virginia Space Flight Center. Preliminary engineering and planning for the new park was completed, but local funding for the development of the park is not currently available. Local funding is also an issue for the proposed Commercialization Center,

which would be a business incubator for NASA or Navy spin-offs. However, progress has been made with the adoption of a memorandum of understanding between Accomack County, the Marine Sciences Consortium, and NASA which enables the county and its partners to pursue the creation of a park authority and to prepare a plan for the park's development.

The **Virginia Space Flight Center** had a US Air Force rocket launch scheduled for the spring of 2004, but it was delayed until 2005. Construction of a new service tower will be completed in 2004. The service tower is located on the new launch pad and will provide access to a rocket after it is raised into upright position. The tower will house a bridge crane for vehicle and payload handling. Construction is also nearing completion on the payload processing and integration facility. The payload processing and integration facility will house work areas and a crane for handling the payloads. The facility will include office, lab, test and evaluation areas to support operations.

The Public Service Authority supported by Northampton county has identified priority areas for wastewater treatment improvements. The Authority provides the necessary expertise to tackle **wastewater treatment systems improvement and development**. The Authority is staffed by the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, which has hired its first Director of Public Services.

Expansion of the **Wholesale Farmers Market & Seafood Market** is on hold until construction funding becomes available from the state.

Goal: Offer opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development related to our industry clusters, serving potential employees and entrepreneurs.

A new **Workforce Training & Business Development Center** for the Eastern Shore Community College is the top priority project for our region. A Virginia education bond will provide more than half the funding needed to construct the new Center, and local funding has also been committed to the project. The College and the Planning District Commission prepared applications for the remainder of the required funding for construction. Eastern Shore Community College offers career training in many subjects, but has absolutely no more room to add more programs.

The College has completed an extensive survey of regional businesses to learn their training needs and to provide a starting point for course offerings in the new Center.

The Community College and Accomack County maintain a local office of the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The SBDC office serves about 45 business clients each year. The SBDC and the Community College have teamed to offer a variety of training workshops for existing businesses, including tax credits and government contracting.

The **Networked Future Project** is providing education and skills development training in electronic commerce to businesses in our region.

Goal: Develop a regional identity that celebrates our competitive advantages and connects the communities of the region.

Awareness of the Eastern Shore of Virginia is slowly building among people in a region from New York to Virginia. This is mainly the result of newspaper and magazine articles recommending the region as a travel destination. The East-

ern Shore Tourism Commission and the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce maintain public relations efforts to encourage more press coverage of our region.

Our regional identity celebrates our location between the Atlantic and the Chesapeake, and it also celebrates our classic small-town lifestyle. We use “the land between two waters” as our slogan. We promote the entire region and each community benefits from the greater overall recognition.

The Eastern Shore Tourism Commission promotes the region as a tourist destination. They also hold two popular annual events that attract thousands of visitors. Planning is progressing for the **Regional Trails (Bird, Bike, Heritage) Project**. The Tourism Commission’s Jamestown 2007 committee, our **Regional Main Street Program** and the PDC are all involved in the planning. The Trail will tie together the many cultural and natural attractions in the region, making it easy for visitors to explore and learn. A website for the **Heritage Trail** was completed in 2005 and can be viewed at www.EasternShore.org/trail.

The **Networked Future** project maintains an Eastern Shore Portal website that makes it easier for people around the world to learn about our communities. It can be found at: www.EasternShoreVirginiaPortal.com.

Goal: Attract businesses that provide living wage jobs and don’t harm the environment.

Throughout 2005, the Economic Development Commission created and executed an annual plan for **business attraction**. The EDC used the Internet and contacts with our recruitment allies to market the region.

On the Internet we have a regional website and a website for the Accomack Airport Industrial Park. We also used the Internet to send out monthly e-mail newsletters and to research companies in target industries.

Accomack Airport Industrial Park provides the necessary inventory of industrial sites for com-

panies to consider, although the infrastructure at will need improvement in the future.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport continues to market its services to commercial rocket launch companies. The Spaceport's staff has met with all the nation's rocket companies and with the relevant government agencies. When contracts for launches are signed, the companies will likely build facilities for the assembly and maintenance of the rockets and payloads. Those facilities could locate in the proposed **Wallops Research Park**.

The new **Eastern Shore Defense Alliance** is working to preserve and grow the operations of the US Navy at Wallops Island. The Alliance includes contractors, local government representatives from Maryland and Virginia, and other community representatives. Current operations in combat systems development and training may expand to include the development of unmanned aerial vehicles and other advanced systems. The Surface Combat Systems Center at Wallops Island creates engineering and technical jobs that are higher-skilled and pay well above the average wage rate in our region. By building on this existing asset we hope to add more of these high-quality jobs. The Alliance recently completed an economic impact study for the base.

New businesses have opened in all the towns and our new program will create a supportive business environment for these and other firms. We will follow the four points of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program (promotion, design, economic restructuring and organization).

Exmore and Chincoteague have been implementing their plans for a couple years. Chincoteague has completed a waterfront park to complement their tourism industry and Exmore has installed a downtown wastewater treatment system. Small revolving loan funds are in place in each town and have been used to help finance new businesses. Merchants in each town organized to promote special events, design streetscape and building facade improvements, and help some of the existing businesses expand.

Goal: Recognize the importance of our historic towns and villages to the overall economic health of the region and develop strategies to stimulate their revitalization.

Five towns (Chincoteague, Parksley, Onancock, Exmore and Cape Charles) have joined together to support a **regional downtown revitalization program** staffed by the regional Planning District Commission. Volunteer merchants' associations have a hard time creating and sustaining a successful revitalization program because of the complexity of the work. Our new regional program provides planning and implementation assistance to the town groups.

for more information contact

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