

CEDS Strategy Committee
April 1, 2015

Meeting Notes

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee convened at noon on April 1, 2015 to review the 2015 CEDS revised report. The Committee discussed recommended improvements to the proposed vision. The also discussed the proposed goals and the strategy focus areas.

The Committee recommended sending a link to the revised report to all the stakeholder interviewees inviting their additional input during the 30 day comment period. They suggested emphasizing the region's rural heritage by promoting land use conservation techniques such as easements, land use assessment, Ag/Forestal Districts, and other methods.

In discussing the Performance Measurement Dashboard, the Committee suggested footnoting the indicators to explain the purpose behind each one. They also agreed that the three counties should not be singled out for any category, but the measure should reflect all three and be a goal accordingly. It was understood that some counties and localities would perform better in some categories, maybe even exceeding the set goal for the region.

The proximity to the universities in the regions such as Raleigh-Durham and the Research Triangle, Lynchburg, Richmond, and Virginia Beach should also be emphasized in the report. The individual action strategies were reviewed as well, and modifications were made to them as appropriate during the meeting.

Finally, the Committee agreed the CEDS website (www.sovaconomy.com) would more effectively communicate the CEDS throughout the region. The website should be ready for launch by the April 23rd Board meeting.

The revised report will be sent for review and approval to the Southside PDC Executive Board meeting and full Commission meeting on April 23, 2015.

CEDS Strategy Committee
March 4, 2015

Meeting Notes

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee convened at noon on March 4, 2015 to review the 2015 CEDS draft report. The Committee received a presentation by the Southside Planning District Commission (SPDC) consultant – The Berkley Group.

The presentation highlighted the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) guidelines for the CEDS process and report. The CEDS process was reviewed along with the results of surveys that were conducted with business stakeholders throughout the planning district. The resulting vision and goals were also discussed with the Committee.

Recommendations from committee members include expanding the vision to not hone so narrowly on one or two economic segments. The Committee agreed with the goals that were presented dealing with land, labor, and capital, but suggested exchanging the term "labor" with "people" to better convey the importance of student in the public schools as well as the existing labor force. They suggested that tourism and other recreational (quality of life) amenities should be emphasized with the land goal. They further suggested that in addition to skilled workforce development, having a multifaceted educational program for students was essential.

The Committee discussed the public school systems in the region extensively and agreed that more capital investment needs to occur in all of the school systems. Improvements in academic Standards of Learning (SOLs), workforce educational development, and overall graduation attainment were measurements that were emphasized. The Committee stated that the quality of teachers is not in dispute, rather how to most effectively improve the financial support of each of the three public school systems, and how to productively engage each School Board and Board of Supervisors.

The CEDS Committee also approved of the three recommended focus areas for the implementation strategies – recruitment and retention, training, and funding. They did suggest that the term "funding" be changed to "investing" to better convey the intent of the recommended expenditures.

Finally, the Committee affirmed the process and direction of the project and agreed that the creation of a website (tentatively www.sovaconomy.com) would help more effectively communicate the CEDS throughout the region and beyond. They agreed the appropriate term for the region was Southern Virginia and suggested the SPDC consider altering their name accordingly.

The Committee's next meeting to review the final CEDS draft will be on Wednesday, April 1st at noon.