

### History:

The organization's history dates back to 1992 when the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce initiated a strategic planning process based on successful models undertaken in Charlotte, Jacksonville, Richmond and other competitor regions. Today's Hampton Roads Partnership held its first organizational meeting on May 15, 1996.



Alarmed by unfavorable economic trends in Hampton Roads in comparison to peer regions, including low per capita income, an anemic growth rate, great income disparity between rich and poor, high unemployment, and other factors, regional leaders were determined to develop a comprehensive plan for building a more vibrant, sustainable Hampton Roads. The forming organizations were comprised of the Southside Hampton Roads Chamber, the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce, Old Dominion University, Christopher Newport University, Forward Hampton Roads, Peninsula Economic Development Council, Future of Hampton Roads, and the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, demonstrating the effort's breadth.

In the summer of 1993, some 430 business, university, and public leaders from across Hampton Roads came together for a series of brainstorming sessions that culminated in Plan 2007, a vision statement focused on six building blocks: Education, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Government, Private Sector Leadership, and Economic Development. Plan 2007 recommended action plans for creating jobs in principal growth industry clusters, including Manufacturing; Technology; Tourism, Recreation, and Entertainment; Shipbuilding; Transportation; and

Health/Biomedical. Plan 2007 was visionary – and overdue.

To be successful, however, it was clear that coordination and collaboration between the public and private sectors would be necessary. In 1994, the region's local governments became more directly involved, with several meetings attended by Mayors and Chief Administrative Officers from all communities. As the result of these discussions, a steering committee was formed and asked to do three things:

- Validate Plan 2007 – focus on potential problems for the public sector;
- Choose several action issues from Plan 2007; and
- Recommend an organizational model in order to carry out specific initiatives.

The report of the steering committee was presented on February 15, 1996 and included a recommendation that the organizational model be what the Hampton Roads Partnership is now. All of the Hampton Roads communities endorsed the report and the first organizational meeting of the Hampton Roads Partnership was held on May 15, 1996.

At the same time Plan 2007 was being formulated, the state-wide Urban Partnership was working. Mayors of Virginia's major urban areas, the Virginia Chamber, Virginia's colleges and universities, business people and others met to discuss economic issues on the state level. The Urban Partnership concluded that thinking and acting regionally and unleashing neighborhood potential was the answer and called for regional development incentives.

The General Assembly passed the Regional Competitiveness Act in 1996, and money for an incentive fund was appropriated. In its early years, the Regional Competitiveness monies were used for Partnership programs. That fund no longer exists and today's Partnership is funded solely by the annual investments of its members.

In June, 1996, the Hampton Roads Partnership's first budget was approved, its first President and CEO was hired, and strategic focus areas were endorsed, including:

- Ports
- Federal Government, especially the military, privatization, or commercialization
- Technology-related economic development

Other strategic focus areas were added once the organization was established, including:

- Transportation
- Tourism

- Workforce Training
- Regional Identity (as part of Plan 2007)
- Healthy Communities (as part of Plan 2007)
- Water Resources
- Professional Sports (added at the request of the Mayors and Chairs Caucus and later removed)

These topics guided the Partnership's work until June, 1999, when the Partnership undertook a new, more ambitious strategic planning process.

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### **OUR MISSION:**

Committed to regional cooperation and competitiveness in a dynamic global economy, facilitating regional collaboration and action for a better quality of life benefiting all of Hampton Roads' citizens.