

**REGIONAL STRATEGY
FOR THE
FIFTH PLANNING DISTRICT**

ADOPTED - August 28, 1997

*Prepared for Submission in Accordance with
the Regional Cooperation Act of 1995
by the
Fifth Planning District Commission
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Fifth Planning District Localities

Alleghany County

Botetourt County

Craig County

Roanoke County

Clifton Forge

Covington

Roanoke City

Salem

Town of Vinton

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INTRODUCTION

The Fifth Planning District's Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Virginia's 1995 Regional Cooperation Act. According to the Act, this regional strategic plan must be updated every five years and can be amended sooner, as needed. Regional strategic planning is viewed by the Fifth Planning District Commission (the PDC, or the Commission) as an on-going process.

This initial Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District is a combination of two types of collaborative planning in one document. First, the plan includes goals, objectives, and strategies from recent regional plans on specific topics (each of which included a citizen participation element in its development). Second, the plan includes new goals, objectives, and strategies where the strategic planning process participants have been able to reach a consensus. This approach allowed the Fifth PDC to utilize the vast amount of public participation that went into the preparation of the existing plans referenced herein. It also gave the PDC an opportunity to determine where additional planning is needed for the future.

Although the plan covers all the localities within the Fifth Planning District, issues are not included in this plan if they relate to only part of the district. In order to be considered regional, under the Regional Cooperation Act, an issue must apply to more than one of the district's localities.

Government and business leaders, non-profit groups, providers of services (human services, housing, transportation, etc.), citizens, and many other groups were invited to provide input into this plan. (See Public Input Process for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District below for more details.) The Regional Cooperation Act allows the framework of the plan to be somewhat flexible. Each planning district in Virginia has the responsibility of determining if the state's suggested topics and categories cover all its needs. Within the Fifth Planning District, participants had input in determining the topics for inclusion in this version of the plan, while other suggestions for topics can be reserved for future use.

The ultimate intent of the planning process has been to prepare a plan that will "promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district."

In fact, this is how the Regional Cooperation Act describes a regional strategic plan. Since the law requires that, upon adoption, "the plan shall become effective with respect to all action of a planning district commission," this plan can serve as a tool for targeting future resources toward identified priority needs. This would be true on a local level for jurisdictions that adopt the plan also.

The structure of the regional strategic planning process in the Fifth Planning District has included major work activities, as shown in Appendix B.

THE REGIONAL COOPERATION ACT AND REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

Virginia's 1995 Regional Cooperation Act gives the basic framework for the regional strategic planning process. It also outlines the duties of the state's planning district commissions.

The Purposes of Virginia's Planning District Commissions

The 1995 Regional Cooperation Act replaced the Virginia Area Development Act, which was the original state legislation creating planning district commissions in Virginia. The Regional Cooperation Act defines planning district commissions and explains their purposes. The general duties of planning district commissions are listed in the legislation as follows:

1. To conduct studies on issues and problems of regional significance;
2. To identify and study potential opportunities for local cost savings and staffing efficiencies through coordinated local government efforts;
3. To identify mechanisms for the coordination of local interests on a regional basis;
4. To implement services upon request of member local governments;
5. To provide technical assistance to local governments;
6. To serve as a liaison between local governments and state agencies as requested;
7. To review local government aid applications as required by Section 15.1-1410 and other state or federal law or regulation;
8. To conduct strategic planning for the region as required by Sections 15.1-1406 through 15.1-1409;
9. To develop regional functional area plans as deemed necessary by the commission or as requested by member local governments;
10. To assist state agencies, as requested, in the development of substate plans;
11. To participate in a statewide geographic information system, the Virginia Geographic Information Network, as directed by the Department of Planning and Budget; and
12. To collect and maintain demographic, economic and other data concerning the region and member local governments, and act as a state data center affiliate in cooperation with the Virginia Employment Commission.

Components of a Regional Strategic Plan

The Regional Cooperation Act states that a regional strategic plan should guide the district. It should cover elements of importance in more than one of the jurisdictions, as opposed to matters of only local importance. Specifically, a regional strategic plan "shall include regional goals and objectives, strategies to meet those goals and objectives, and mechanisms for measuring progress toward the goals and objectives. A regional strategic plan shall include those subjects necessary to promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements

of the district." Examples of subjects for inclusion, such as transportation, housing, economic development and environmental management, are listed in the Regional Cooperation Act. The Act requires that the planning district commissions set up planning processes that "seek input from a wide range of organizations in the region, including local governing bodies, the business community and citizen organizations."

The process for adoption of a regional strategic plan is outlined in the Regional Cooperation Act. It involves review of the draft by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and local governing bodies, and a public hearing by the PDC. Upon adoption, it shall be submitted to the localities in the planning district for their consideration for adoption also. With a similar process, the regional strategic plan should be revised and formally approved by the PDC at least once every five years.

THE PLANNING PROCESS IN THE FIFTH PLANNING DISTRICT

Within the Fifth Planning District, the regional strategic planning process has resulted from collaboration with a variety of partners and coordination with related plans or planning processes.

Coordination With Other Regional Planning Efforts

As described in the **Introduction**, a variety of recent plans are referenced in this document. In addition, the PDC coordinated the development of the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District with other on-going planning efforts as another way of avoiding duplication of efforts. A summary of some of the on-going efforts and their relationship to the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District is as follows:

- * Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District - This extensive document (draft completed in June 1996, with final submission to VDHCD in September 1996) contains demographic and economic information and a regional needs assessment for the PDC's nonentitlement communities. (These communities must compete for CDBG funds; entitlement communities receive CDBG funds on the basis of population.) Although Roanoke City is an entitlement community (rather than a nonentitlement community), the City is included in many parts of the study because it affects most of the characteristics included in the study. CDBG funds are to be used for the primary benefit of low- to moderate-income (LMI) persons. The state includes the elderly, handicapped and some other special populations in the LMI definition.

In addition to utilizing the document's data and recommendations, PDC staff used the June 12 & 13, 1996, public meetings on this document as opportunities to hold sessions on the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District also.

- * Strategic Plan for the Fifth Planning District Commission - This is an internal strategic plan, detailing how the Commission itself will meet its internal organization goals. The 1991 version was revised by the PDC's Strategic Planning Committee in 1996. This strategic plan should guide the Commission in its programmatic activities, while the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District should guide the district as related to infrastructure, economy, community development, and the environment. Information from both processes has been utilized in a coordinated manner as appropriate herein.
- * New Century Council/Governor's Regional Economic Development Advisory Council (REAC) District 3 - REAC District 3 includes the Fifth PDC, New River Valley PDC, and Franklin County in West Piedmont PDC. REAC's work has

merged with the efforts of the New Century Council, which covers the same jurisdictions (and may expand as needed). Numerous committees and reports have been generated by the New Century Council, and many of these have been used as reference material for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District. Over 1000 citizen volunteers were involved in the New Century Council's visioning process. The follow-up process has continued with support from a variety of groups, including the Fifth PDC.

One of the Fifth PDC's major work elements for Fiscal Year 1997 was its work with the New Century Council in preparing "Indicators" for the New Century Council's recommendations. "Indicators" are similar to the "mechanisms for measuring progress toward the goals and objectives" required in the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District. These are reflected in the final section of this report.

Other regional plans, prepared by the Fifth PDC or other groups, provided background data or ideas for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District. These are referenced in the applicable sections herein. For example, the economic section of this report includes information from the June 1997 Strategic Economic Development Plan of the Fifth Planning District Regional Alliance. See Appendix A for a listing of the plans and documents that have been used to generate information and ideas for this document.

Public Input Process for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District

Two public sessions on the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District were held on June 12, 1996, in Covington and on June 13, 1996, in Roanoke. The agenda included a review of the final draft of the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District and discussion sessions for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District. The agenda for the latter included:

1. Introduction to the requirements of the Regional Cooperation Act regarding regional strategic planning
2. Consideration of topic headings for inclusion in Fifth PDC's Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District
3. Identification of existing plans that relate to each topic
4. Brainstorming toward new goals, objectives, & strategies
5. Options for further input in the process

Advertisements in the Virginian Review (Covington) and the Roanoke Times were published before the June 12 & 13 meetings in order to invite the general public. Letters of invitation were sent to individuals and groups also. Examples of the categories of persons contacted in the cities, counties, and towns within the district included:

chief appointed officials
chief elected officials
planning commission chairmen
PDC representatives
local staffs (planning, public works, economic development, parks and recreation)
regional homebuilders association
extension agents
chambers of commerce
education and training providers (vocational center directors, community colleges,
councils, employment & training consortium)
private industry council
housing alliances/service providers
development corporations, industrial development authorities
small business centers
united way
environmental clubs/networks
state and national foresters
community services boards
church/charitable services centers, community centers, service programs, youth centers
area agencies on aging
economic development foundations/partnerships/authorities
human service agencies, homeless/transient services providers, anti-poverty agencies
transit and other transportation service providers/planners

PDC staff has worked with the Commission and an appointed sub-committee to incorporate public input in the plan.

Selection of Topics for Inclusion

The Regional Cooperation Act gives four examples of topic headings for inclusion in the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District - transportation, housing, economic development, and environmental management. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development has noted that PDCs may want to consider these additional topics - physical infrastructure development, solid waste, water supply, criminal justice, recreation, emergency management, and human services. The additional topics are termed "functional areas warranting regional cooperation" in Section 15.1-1405 of the Code of Virginia, "Purpose of Commission." Each PDC has the responsibility for determining the topic headings to be included in its regional strategic plan.

All suggested topic areas were discussed in the beginning of the Fifth Planning District's regional strategic planning process, and it was decided that the initial Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District should include transportation, housing, economic development, and environmental management. Physical infrastructure development, solid waste, and water supply are included in the **Environmental Management** section. Because of the present staffing

limitations, other topic areas are deferred to future updates of the plan. Their absence in this document does not imply that there is no need for planning or funding of projects in those areas.

The public input process conducted for the preparation of this Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District revealed that there is an interest in Commission involvement with strategic planning in the field of Human Services. At the June 1996 public meetings, the Council of Community Services, which undertakes the majority of the human services planning activities in the district, emphasized that the PDC's involvement in this activity should be conducted in conjunction with existing human services planning agencies.

At present, the Commission works with human services planning agencies where planning needs overlap. Examples have included the PDC's participation in a study of the effect of group homes on neighborhoods, and a neighborhood survey that documented the need for a new grocery store in a lower income area. The PDC has worked with the regional United Way organization to examine priorities for funding.

As an example of a future opportunity for collaboration, the Commission might utilize the results of existing needs assessments to assist the community in setting priorities when implementing services to meet human services' needs. Specifically, the Commission hopes to work with other agencies to explore anticipated needs related to the implementation of Welfare Reform in the region in 1997.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The Fifth Planning District Commission staffs the two major transportation planning bodies within the district - the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Rural Transportation Planning Advisory Committee. Their recent planning documents were utilized in drafting the base for this section of the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District. The Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District is not required to adopt the policies of those bodies; it may reflect revisions and additions as needed. However, any changes should be reported to these transportation planning bodies for their future information.

The goals, objectives, and strategies contained herein for **Transportation Issues** reflect (1) documents that were prepared using a prescribed citizen participation process and adopted by the MPO and/or Rural Transportation Planning Advisory Committee, (2) ideas from The New Century Council Final Report, 1995-2015 (issued July 31, 1995) which were generated by over 1000 participants and presented to localities for consideration at that time, and (3) additional local government input. The following items should undergo further study to ensure their feasibility before implementation begins.

Goal 1, Objectives 1 & 2, and the Strategies thereunder (with the exception of Strategy 7 under Objective 1) were adapted from the Roanoke Valley Area Long Range Transportation Plan: 1995-2015, which has been formally adopted by the Roanoke Valley Area MPO and amended in April 1996. Some of the wording has been amended to give clarification or to omit reference to a specific geographic area. The seventh strategy under Objective 1 was added at the request of local planners.

In working on the Roanoke Valley Area Long Range Transportation Plan: 1995-2015, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Citizens' Advisory Committee prepared five pages of recommendations for facility planning, design, and construction; as well as for education and public relations. These are found in an appendix to the Roanoke Valley Area Long Range Transportation Plan: 1995-2015. They have been summarized below as Strategies 1 & 2 under Objective 3. The third strategy under this Objective was added at the request of local planners.

Objective 5 and its Strategy were added to this document by the review sub-committee on the basis of input from one of the local governments served by the PDC's Rural Transportation Program. The Rural Transportation Planning Program of the Fifth Planning District Commission conducts transportation planning for the district's localities outside the MPO boundary. The Scope of Work noted in the FY 1997 Rural Transportation Planning Work Program (adopted in April 1996) reflects the priorities of local jurisdictions and the program's funding agencies, VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. They include variations of several of the goals and objectives noted in the Roanoke Valley Area Long Range Transportation Plan: 1995-2015 below. Examples include the use and availability of transit services, safety issues, and bike planning, among others.

The New Century Council Final Report, 1995-2015 was issued on July 31, 1995 and has been distributed to localities for their consideration. Over 1000 citizens participated in the development of the document. Although the large, diverse document has not undergone an official local government adoption process, many localities and organizations have become formal "partners" with the New Century Council in its work. Localities, non-profits, regional organizations and others have been urged to undertake individual projects from the report. It will indeed take many parties working together to address all the ideas developed by this group.

The New Century Council's report includes transportation strategies relating to the entire New Century Region (Fifth Planning District, New River Valley Planning District, and Franklin County in West Piedmont Planning District). The Fifth PDC staff has adapted ideas from the document that are most pertinent to the Fifth Planning District, and these are shown as Strategies 1 through 3 under Objective 4.

Goal 1

A transportation system which will complement and promote the social, economic, and environmental goals of the district; and will continually provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and materials within and through the area.

Objective 1

Increase public transit use and accessibility; increase transportation options for the public.

Strategy 1

Promote ways to educate the public on (1) how to use public transit and (2) the benefits of such use.

Strategy 2

Examine how to increase opportunities for intermodal travel (where an individual uses two modes of transportation in one trip by switching from one mode of transportation to another at a designated point) by installing bicycle racks or other storage facilities on buses or at key bus stops and/or transfer points.

Strategy 3

Examine how to enlist support and participation from commercial businesses that can benefit from the additional customers that public transit generates. Consider getting employers involved with promoting use of public transit by their own employees.

Strategy 4

Promote forms of land use planning that lessen the likelihood of urban sprawl.

Strategy 5

Study how to make the transit system convenient to use (in regard to adjacent sidewalks, signs, routes, fare structures, service to park-and-ride lots, covered transit stops, schedules, maps, etc.).

Strategy 6

Explore offering new services, such as increased service hours, color-coded buses, new routes, more frequent buses, new shelters and benches, more lighting, express routes, door-to-door paratransit service, etc.

Strategy 7

Establish and promote use of greenways as alternative transportation corridors, connecting major destination points.

Objective 2

Secure stable funding sources to sustain and expand public transportation.

Strategy 1

Study the formula for percentage distribution of state and federal funding for local highway improvements versus transit service.

Strategy 2

Evaluate interjurisdictional service arrangements for public transit. Study the possibility of transit service outside the urban area.

Objective 3

Increase bicycle and pedestrian safety and activity.

Strategy 1

When planning for alternative modes of transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, other), include users of alternative modes, as well as other members of the public, to ensure that all appropriate issues are considered. Examples of issues are location, bicycle racks, variety of users, shared facilities, linkages with neighborhoods, signage, access, and many others.

Strategy 2

Include education and public relations as essential elements of overall bicycle and pedestrian planning.

Strategy 3

Work with greenway groups, such as the Roanoke Valley Greenway Committee, to promote the establishment and use of greenways.

Objective 4

Develop a transportation system that links the district to other important marketplaces.

Strategy 1

Study the feasibility and market prospects of developing a Transportation/Distribution Business Incubator (for uses such as transportation equipment manufacturing, intermodal service, and leading edge transportation technology).

Strategy 2

Examine the feasibility of establishing an Intermodal Hub and Distribution Terminal in the area (utilizing the area's rail and highway facilities, among others). Examine ways of becoming a national center for transportation logistics management.

Strategy 3

Explore a "rail ferry" concept for trucks as an alternative to other means of increasing capacity on Interstate 81.

Objective 5

Recognize the vital role that major transportation corridors in the rapidly growing suburban and rural areas play in the future economic health and well-being of the District and incorporate transportation planning efforts accordingly.

Strategy 1

Ensure continued cooperation and coordination of transportation planning activities with the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Aviation.

HOUSING ISSUES

In Fiscal Year 1996, the Fifth Planning District Commission continued to be involved in regional housing planning by meeting regularly with the Roanoke Regional Housing Network and in working on a housing needs assessment for the Alleghany Highlands (in conjunction with the Alleghany Highlands Housing Alliance). The PDC's Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District includes a housing element, and the PDC previously worked with the New Century Council on its report, which includes regional housing issues. These processes, along with the citizen input process for this Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, formed the basis for the following section. These items should undergo further study to ensure their feasibility before implementation begins

The PDC's preparation of this Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District coincided with its preparation of the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District. The latter planning process took approximately one year and included a wide variety of organizations. It reflects the proposed needs for the district's low-to-moderate income persons over the next five years (with the exception of Roanoke City, which, as an entitlement community, has its own CDBG priority plan). It is a general guide for future CDBG applications and is intended to be flexible in order to meet changing needs.

Goal 1 and its objectives and strategies for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District are adapted from the "Housing" section of the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District. An exception is Strategy 3, under Goal 1, Objective 3, which was added by the Commission after the public hearing.

As with the previous section of this plan (Transportation Issues), this section references The New Century Council Final Report, 1995-2015 and the numerous ideas its planning process generated in the area of housing. Goal 2 and most of its objectives and strategies have been adapted from that document on the basis of their pertinence to the Fifth Planning District's part of the New Century Region. Because of the length and structure of that report, it has been necessary to condense its contents or re-arrange information for inclusion herein. Objective 4 and its strategy were added at the request of local planners in order to emphasize the need to maintain a balanced and diversified population.

Goal 1

Provide decent affordable housing.

Objective 1

Increase opportunities for Low-to-Moderate income (LMI) households to achieve their housing goals, such as owning their own homes or finding suitable affordable housing.

Strategy 1

Study how to establish or utilize existing programs for financial assistance (such as loan guarantees) and/or technical assistance (such as information on household budgeting and how to apply for loans) to LMI families attempting to acquire their own homes.

Strategy 2

Examine ways to identify and lower regulatory and institutional barriers to the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

Objective 2

Rehabilitate the stock of existing housing units.

Strategy 1

Study how to establish or utilize existing programs for the rehabilitation of housing units, where rehabilitation is cost-feasible. If total rehabilitation is not needed, examine use of programs to provide indoor plumbing or weatherization.

Objective 3

Increase the supply of affordable housing units for LMI families and persons.

Strategy 1

Examine the feasibility of converting existing structures such as un-used schools or commercial space from non-residential to residential use where consistent with land use and other applicable local plans and when supported by the local governing body.

Strategy 2

Promote programs for off-site and on-site improvements to facilitate the construction or renovation of housing units, including water and/or sewer services, access roads, or drainage facilities.

Strategy 3

Encourage governments to provide incentives for investors to provide LMI housing units.

Goal 2

Increase housing opportunities to meet the region's varied housing needs.

Objective 1

Increase low-income consumer access to existing housing markets and programs. Increase local government use of federal and state funding sources for the provision of low-income housing.

Strategy 1

Study establishment of a regional housing information center to provide information to individuals in search of housing and to local governments in pursuit of available state and federal housing programs.

Objective 2

Improve the quality of low-income rental housing.

Strategy 1

Explore ways to share housing program expertise among local governments (for example, a locality with a housing and redevelopment authority could contract-out its assistance to a locality without an authority).

Strategy 2

Evaluate building code regulations and the inspection and enforcement procedures for rental property, in order to protect the health and safety of tenants.

Objective 3

Increase opportunities for homeownership.

Strategy 1

Encourage employers to offer home purchase programs as an employee benefit.

Strategy 2

Promote establishment or utilization of programs that offer prototypical designs for low-cost housing units that are compatible with established neighborhoods and new subdivisions.

Strategy 3

Examine potential changes in existing land development and residential building regulations that could reduce the cost of development while still protecting the health and safety of consumers.

Objective 4

Attract middle- and upper-income housing to traditional LMI areas to help maintain a balanced and diversified population.

Strategy 1

Assist and encourage the development of new residential areas for middle, upper, and/or mixed income households through a combination of incentives, marketing, and other tools.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Regional economic development planning and assistance continue to be major elements of the Fifth Planning District Commission's on-going work program. The Commission works with chambers of commerce, regional economic development authorities, and other economic partnerships on a frequent basis. For example, the PDC worked with the New Century Council on its Final Report 1995-2015 (which is referenced below). That very successful planning effort included the participation of over 1000 citizens. In 1996-97, the Fifth PDC (along with the New River Valley PDC and West Piedmont PDC) worked with the New Century Council to develop "Indicators" (a project that will feed into future strategic plans for the region). In addition, the PDC's Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District includes an economic development element. These processes, along with the citizen input process for this Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, formed the basis for the following section. These items should undergo further study to ensure their feasibility before implementation begins.

As described earlier, the PDC's preparation of this Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District coincided with its preparation of the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District. The latter planning process took approximately one year and included a wide variety of organizations. As a general guide for future CDBG projects, it is a flexible document reflecting the proposed needs for the district's low-to-moderate income persons over the next five years (with the exception of Roanoke City, which, as an entitlement community, has its own CDBG priority plan).

Goal 1 and its objectives and strategies for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District are adapted from the "Economic Development" section of the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District. Strategy 2 under Objective 4 of Goal 1 was added by the Commission during the public hearing process, as was the second half of Objective 7 under Goal 2. As with previous parts of this plan, this section references The New Century Council Final Report, 1995-2015 and the many ideas generated during its planning process in the area of economic development. Goal 2 and its objectives and strategies have been adapted from that document on the basis of their pertinence to the Fifth Planning District's part of the New Century Region.

The first draft of this document was completed in October 1996. The July 1997 draft includes the addition of findings from the June 1997 Strategic Economic Development Plan of the Fifth Planning District Regional Alliance. Strategies taken from this plan include those shown under Goal 3 herein.

Goal 1

Expand economic opportunities.

Objective 1

Expand financial assistance and management support services for business formation, retention, and expansion.

Strategy 1

Explore developing or utilizing existing programs to assist small businesses with business support activities and financing.

Strategy 2

Enhance existing and examine new ways to offer financial support to industrial development (machinery and tools, working capital, refinancing, purchase of the plant, etc.).

Strategy 3

Explore ways to establish or utilize existing technical assistance programs to increase business and employment opportunities through economic development projects.

Objective 2

Increase the availability of viable sites for business and industry location.

Strategy 1

Examine ways to fund and develop facilities to be leased or purchased by industries (assistance might include land purchase, site improvements, construction of buildings, building expansion or rehabilitation, day care facilities, etc.).

Strategy 2

Examine ways to fund and develop off-site improvements that support industrial development (improvements might include water supply, water storage, and/or water line extension; sewage treatment facilities, and/or extension of lines; access roads or railroad spurs; flood and drainage improvements; etc.).

Objective 3

Promote the physical and economic revitalization of the region's downtown business districts.

Strategy 1

Study how to revitalize downtown districts in the region with infrastructure improvements, site development, parking, signage, trees, facade improvements, etc.

Objective 4

Promote job training and job opportunities for area residents, including those with specialized needs.

Strategy 1

Examine how the region can meet specialized needs of individuals with vocational education, sheltered workshops, or other special job training and assistance.

Strategy 2

Increase workforce training opportunities for area residents.

Objective 5

Promote additional job opportunities for low-to-moderate income residents.

Strategy 1

Evaluate other opportunities for increasing employment in addition to those listed above. Among others, an example is the acquisition or development of tourist attraction facilities, commercial recreation facilities, or tourist accommodations in support of tourism development.

Goal 2

Develop an economy that is diverse and globally competitive.

Objective 1

Increase tourism and related economic activity using the region's historic railroad heritage as well as futuristic opportunities in transportation.

Strategy 1

Explore ways to capitalize on the region's railroad heritage as a means of increasing tourism.

Strategy 2

Study ways to showcase the region as a center of future transportation technology, engineering, and science.

Objective 2

Aggressively improve higher education and research centers to provide the driving force for the region's global competitive advantage. Create a strong business and education partnership.

Strategy 1

Seek development of high quality research parks that facilitate technology transfer and link the region to the world.

Strategy 2

Investigate creation of a research and development "bank" primarily for funding research and seed capital for launching new enterprise.

Strategy 3

Promote an Entrepreneurial Institute that will channel available resources and business expertise to entrepreneurs by electronic means, in addition to expanding the resources used to enhance business formation and growth in the region.

Objective 3

Enhance the manufacturing industry's global competitiveness through application of technology; a quality, skilled work force; capital investment; and productivity.

Strategy 1

Examine how to use technology transfer to modernize existing manufacturing companies and develop new directions for the manufacturing base.

Strategy 2

Encourage the manufacturing companies in the region to attain ISO 9000 certification to improve their ability to compete in the global economy. Encourage the use of statistical measures as a stepping stone to ISO 9000.

Strategy 3

Strive to develop and maintain a highly skilled work force (through education and training sessions in conjunction with employers, labor, and training organizations, etc.)

Strategy 4

Seek to maximize public and private capital investment in manufacturing infrastructure.

Strategy 5

Strive to nurture existing businesses by increasing the level of training for employees and creating an alliance between government and technical resources.

Objective 4

Make the region a world center for technology products and services, including fiber optics, agribusiness, transportation, medical services, information services, communications, and environmental/engineering services.

Strategy 1

Work to establish a technology council for fostering technical growth, promoting awareness, providing a forum on technology issues, promoting technical exchange, serving as an advocate, and promoting technology education.

Strategy 2

Work to establish a cost-effective, easily-accessible telecommunications infrastructure which will support strategically important applications such as distance learning, video conferencing, telecommuting, and internet access.

Strategy 3

Promote existing technology centers in coordination with local chambers of commerce, economic development offices, and educational institutions.

Strategy 4

Study how to enhance and/or implement technology infrastructure in terms of identification, cost, time, and benefits.

Strategy 5

Look at opportunities to establish wireless and fiber optics communications as a new industrial base or industrial cluster for the region.

Objective 5

Organize and market the region's natural, recreational, cultural, and "attraction" resources as an integrated destination for tourism, conventions, and retirement.

Strategy 1

Investigate regional marketing opportunities.

Strategy 2

Work with other applicable organizations to implement a program promoting retirement living and communities in the region.

Strategy 3

Seek to make the region "visitor friendly" to all market segments (i.e., an environment which provides friendly, comfortable and efficient service to visitors).

Strategy 4

Strive to preserve, expand, and promote tourism, conventions, and retirement products, as well as linking them with transportation systems, promotional themes, etc.

Strategy 5

Seek to create a regional network of greenway systems.

Strategy 6

Strive to develop infrastructure which will make the region capable of accessing, utilizing, and delivering information via new technologies.

Objective 6

Stimulate small business development, entrepreneurship and expansions.

Strategy 1

Look for ways to provide regional incentives for job creation.

Strategy 2

Inventory and advertise the availability of existing assistance programs.

Strategy 3

Investigate ways to make more equity and debt financing available.

Strategy 4

Investigate ways to assist small businesses with regulatory or legislative issues or with governmental affairs.

Strategy 5

Promote a public relations program to acknowledge and pay tribute to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Strategy 6

Survey businesses on their needs, in order to assist them with quality management councils, mentoring programs, or other programs designed to meet those needs.

Strategy 7

Identify and publicize the availability of education and training providers.

Strategy 8

Promote the use of business incubators, working in conjunction with interested organizations and providing information on topics such as financing alternatives, management, and operational issues.

Strategy 9

Promote entrepreneurship in schools with programs that teach local economic contribution, marketing, finance, accounting, merchandising, etc.

Objective 7

Maintain exports at a level greater than imports and replace imports with local production as possible.

Strategy 1

Strive for a proper mix of economic components to provide global competitive advantage and productivity.

Strategy 2

Examine how to stimulate economic development that exports goods and services.

Goal 3

A diverse, internationally competitive regional economy that improves the economic health of the region.

Objective 1

Provide an environment supportive of economic development; allocate scarce resources to provide infrastructure to enhance economic growth; develop the capacity of residents to adapt to evolving technology and different approaches to work; and promote greater involvement of a diverse group of citizens in establishing a future vision for the region and allow them ownership of that future vision.

Strategy 1

Develop regional industrial sites and revenue sharing for these facilities.

Strategy 2

Establish a series of regional business incubators.

Strategy 3

Establish a regional higher education network.

Strategy 4

Enhance citizen interest and involvement in the region through special leadership training.

Strategy 5

Develop a process to standardize the permitting and inspection process throughout the district.

Strategy 6

Pursue a region-wide transit and para-transit system.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Environmental planning is an integral part of the Fifth Planning District Commission's regional activities. In the recent past, the Commission's regional environmental planning activities have included greenway planning, a study of the Roanoke River Corridor, and a management plan for regional stormwater management, among others. In Fiscal Year 1998, the Commission will continue with open space planning by preparing a report on options for ridgeline protection, and follow-up activities on greenways and stormwater management, along with other regional environmental activities.

As with the **Housing Issues** and **Economic Development** sections above, this section on **Environmental Management** references two other major planning processes with which the PDC has been involved recently. These are the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District and The New Century Council Final Report 1995-2015, both of which have been described in previous sections. Because they both utilized extensive citizen participation, the PDC has been able to use them as the basis for this section of the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, along with citizen input from the community meetings. This section includes statements relating to physical infrastructure, solid waste, and water supply also. Items should undergo further study to ensure their feasibility before implementation begins.

Goal 1 and its objectives and strategies have been adapted from the Regional Development Plan for CDBG Nonentitlement Communities in the Fifth Planning District, with additional input from the Blue Ridge Environmental Network.

As the PDC and the other organizations participated in New Century Council planning activities relating to the environment, they met in a committee that combined Quality of Life Issues with Environmental Issues. In addition, some of the recommendations of the Infrastructure Committee were within the area of environmental protection. Under Goal 2, Objective 1 and Strategies 1 through 11 were adapted from The New Century Council Final Report 1995-2015 (as pertinent to the Fifth Planning District's portion of the New Century Region), with additional input from the Blue Ridge Environmental Network (BREN). Strategies 12, 13, and 14 were suggested by BREN.

Goal 1

Ensure a healthy living environment.

Objective 1

Ensure that communities are served by adequate physical infrastructure (water, sewer, drainage, etc.) systems.

Strategy 1

Plan for facilities or develop activities to ensure that the community is served by an adequate solid waste collection and disposal system, including the clean-up of abandoned landfills.

Strategy 2

Study the feasibility of flood/drainage improvements with particular emphasis on limiting soil erosion and promoting environmentally friendly dispersal of stormwater runoff.

Strategy 3

Examine the feasibility of water system improvements, such as water treatment plant upgrades or construction, water line replacements or installation, water storage facilities, indoor plumbing improvements, or wells, etc., for the purpose of improving water quality and purity.

Strategy 4

Strive for street and sidewalk improvements for safe and sustainable communities. Encourage mass transit, bike and hiking trails, and other alternatives to automobile roadways as a way to limit pollution, direct growth and improve the overall quality of life.

Strategy 5

Study the need for sewer system improvements, such as sewage treatment plant upgrades or construction, sewer line replacements or installation, indoor plumbing improvements, or septic systems, with the goal of protecting the public health.

Goal 2

The region will be among the most desirable places in the world to live and work.

Objective 1

Preserve the region's beauty, natural and historic resources, and countryside.

Strategy 1

Survey natural resources and identify improved, practical, methods of conserving these resources (such as scenic views, forest land, significant historic sites, urban forests, and natural waterways).

Strategy 2

Examine ways to develop carefully planned access to rivers and lakes while protecting the water supply.

Strategy 3

Encourage neighborhood development that instills a sense of community and caring in the neighborhood (examples of activities might include tree planting days, local ordinances that promote attractive and environmentally-friendly buildings and grounds, sustainable planned communities, or resource centers for neighborhoods).

Strategy 4

Strive for a "litter-free" region through a combination of litter prevention and recycling.

Strategy 5

Encourage the development of a regional blueprint for sustainable development. Encourage regional cooperation toward sustainability goals.

Strategy 6

Promote the realistic protection of the high quality visual environment of the region, balanced with the area's need to grow and develop to survive.

Strategy 7

Review the opportunity to combine greenway easements and drainage and utility corridors.

Strategy 8

Study the need for regulations to protect water supplies (also inventory raw water supply sources).

Strategy 9

Examine the feasibility of connecting water utilities within the region for backup service in emergencies.

Strategy 10

Utilize greenway planning (for bicyclists, pedestrians, and others) in subdivision design, roadway projects (new construction and improvements), and planning for all modes of transportation, including mass transit systems.

Strategy 11

Promote highway design that enhances scenic characteristics, encourages bikeways, and makes the region a destination for scenic byways tourism.

Strategy 12

Promote the creation of a network of water quality monitoring stations along streams, rivers, lakes, and waterways to establish a baseline data bank of water purity and continue monitoring activities for the purpose of evaluating and protecting overall water quality.

Strategy 13

Evaluate air quality as it relates to public health and encourage projects to limit discharges of harmful substances into the public domain.

Strategy 14

Promote incentives through planning assistance to limit urban sprawl and to preserve and protect the character of the region by encouraging sustainable development and growth.

INDICATORS FOR MEASURING PROGRESS

Shortly after the Commission began the planning process for the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, an opportunity arose to work with the New Century Council in the preparation of an "Indicators" report in Fiscal Year 1997. That request was approved by the Commission and the project began in the summer of 1996, in conjunction with the New River Valley PDC and West Piedmont PDC. Draft "Indicators" were prepared to measure the success of the goals and objectives included in The New Century Council Final Report, 1995-2015. This definition of "Indicators" is identical to what the Regional Cooperation Act calls "mechanisms for measuring progress toward the goals and objectives" of the regional strategic plan. The following is a listing of all "Indicators" under consideration by the New Century Council (July 1997) as amended by the Commission; those marked with an asterisk (*) are the elements that might be most applicable to the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District.

PROPOSED INDICATORS

NOTE: A possible way of expressing many of these indicators could be in a ratio comparing the local values to the statewide or national values.

Community Indicators

1. Citizen Participation in Government - voting rate: total number of actual voters in elections compared to the total number of eligible voters.
2. Citizen Participation in Government - percent of uncontested offices in local elections over previous four years.
3. Accessibility of Mobile Cardiac Resuscitation Units - number of mobile resuscitation units per 10,000 citizens (carried by rescue squads, fire units, police, etc.)
4. Community Support - annual per household contributions to the United Way compared to the median annual household income.
5. Drugs and Alcohol - annual number of traffic accidents attributable to Driving Under the Influence (DUI) or Driving Under the Influence of Drugs (DUID) per 100,000 residents.

6. Personal Safety - annual number of reported violent person-to-person crimes per 100,000 residents.
7. Property Crime - annual number of reported property crimes per 100,000 residents.
8. Community Prejudice - annual number of "hate" crimes per 100,000 residents.

Economic Indicators

1. Community Wealth - the Virginia Composite Index; calculated by the Virginia Department of Education; measures the ability of a locality to pay for its school system and other infrastructure.
- *2. Jobs Providing Adequate Income - percent of employees earning wages that permit one adult to support a family of four above the poverty level.
- *3. Unemployment Rate - or Labor Force Participation Rate.
- *4. Employment Diversity - percent of workers employed by the "X" largest private employers in the locality.
- *5. Education Level of Workforce - percent of employees in workforce who have a high school diploma or a G.E.D.; and percent with at least one year of post-secondary education.
- *6. Median Household Income; or Per Capita Income expressed as Percent of State Per Capita Income; or cost-of-living statistic; or median adjusted gross income.
- *7. Net Change in Number of Small Businesses.
- *8. Substandard Housing - percent of households living in substandard housing.
- *9. Public Transportation - either number of miles per day or average weekday number of fare-paying riders per 1,000 people.

Education Indicators

1. Preparing Students for College - percent of 11th Grade Standardized Test Scores above the national 75th percentile.

2. Preparing Students for College - percent 11th and 12th grade students who took at least one Advanced Placement or college level course.
3. Preparing Students for Work - percent of high school graduates with no continuing education plans who completed a vocational education program.
4. Preparing Students for Work - percent of 11th Grade Standardized Test Scores above the national 25th percentile in reading comprehension.
5. Preparing Students for Work - percent of 11th Grade Standardized Test Scores above the national 25th percentile in mathematics.
6. Drop-out Rate - percent of pupils in grades 7-12 and ungraded pupils ages 12 and older who withdraw from school for reasons other than promotion, transfer, death, or graduation, and do not enter another school during the school year. Also included are students in attendance on the last day of the school year who fail to return to school by October 31 of the following school year, the "summer dropout".
7. Violence Rates in Schools - number of violent acts per 1,000 students per year.
8. Community Support - average salary for a 15-year teacher with a Masters Degree compared to the median adjusted gross income.
9. Community Support - pupil/teacher ratio in English classes, grades 6-12.
10. Community Support - local government expenditures on education compared to local "ability to pay" as measured by the Virginia Composite Index.
11. Advanced Education - percent of graduating high school students immediately pursuing some form of higher education.
12. Community College Service - percent of area citizens served in any capacity per year.
13. Financial Accessibility to Higher Education - average annual "real" cost of public higher education compared to the annual median household income.

Environmental Indicators

- *1. Surface Water Quality - percent of Department of Environmental Quality assessed surface water sites impaired by pollution.

- *2. Air Quality - percent of reported days annually that the Pollution Standard Index (PSI) fails to achieve a "Good" rating , i.e., the PSI is less than or equal to 50%.
- *3. Toxic Waste Releases - pounds per year of toxic chemicals released to the environment, including air, water, land, and underground.
- *4. Hazardous Waste Sites - number of hazardous waste sites identified and not yet remediated.
- *5. Available Water Supply - average daily percent of operating capacity of public water treatment facilities.
- *6. Quality of Water Supply - percent of drinking water tests performed annually that indicate violation of Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL).
- *7. Wastewater Treatment - average daily percent of operating capacity of wastewater treatment facilities.
- *8. Solid Waste Generation - annual per capita generation of solid waste that is buried in landfills.
- *9. Habitat Protection - percent of public and private land that is protected or managed by criteria that includes the maintenance of ecosystem health or biological integrity.
- *10. Biodiversity - diversity (both numbers of species and numbers of individuals) of birds observed by local bird clubs during annual formal surveys.
- *11. Agricultural Capacity - percent of 1970 farmland still used for some form of agriculture.
- *12. Open Public Land - acres of community parks, recreation areas and designated open space per 1,000 residents.
- *13. Greenways - miles of bike trails, hiking trails, and recreation trails per 1,000 residents.
- *14. Nonrenewable Energy Consumption - annual per capita consumption of nonrenewable energy.
- *15. Vehicle Use - annual per capita vehicle miles traveled per year.

Social Indicators

- 1. Population - by age groups.

2. Economic Access to Health Care - percent of population lacking medical insurance.
3. Pre-natal Health Care - annual percent babies born with low birth weight.
4. Youth Physical Fitness - percent of 9th and 10th grade students who passed all four spring physical fitness tests.
5. Lifespan - average age at death.
6. Cancer Death Rate - annual percent of deaths resulting from some form of cancer.
7. Teen Pregnancies - annual number of pregnancies in girls 10-19 years old per 1,000 girls of this age range.
8. Suicide Rate - annual number of suicide deaths per 100,000 residents.
9. Organized Public Recreation - annual number of participants served by public recreation programs per 1,000 residents.
10. Poverty Level - percent of households at or below the poverty level.
11. Children in Poverty - percent of students participating in free/reduced lunch programs.
12. Child Day Care Capacity - number of child day care spaces available compared to the potential number of children needing day care.
13. Adult Day Care Capacity - number of adult day care spaces available compared to the potential number of adults needing day care.
14. Young Adult Immigration/Emigration - number of 25-29 year olds in year "X" divided by the number of 15-19 year olds in year "X-10"; perhaps expressed as numbers of young people leaving or entering the locality per 100.
15. Distribution of Personal Income - percent of households with incomes > \$20,000/yr. and < \$80,000/yr. in 1990 dollars.

Baseline data for these "Indicators" are being collected for each locality and for the region as a whole. In the fall of 1997, planners in the Fifth Planning District and the New Century Region will begin holding public meetings on the "Indicators". The public will be asked to examine the region's "Indicators" and baseline values before setting "Benchmarks" for where the region should be (in relation to each "Indicator") in the future. For example, citizens might note the current "Percent of Households Living in Substandard Housing" and set a "Benchmark" for reducing it by 10% over the next ten years. It is expected that the process of setting "Benchmarks" will

generate additional ideas on how these goals might be accomplished. These will be considered in future strategic planning processes in the Fifth Planning District.

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APPENDIX A:

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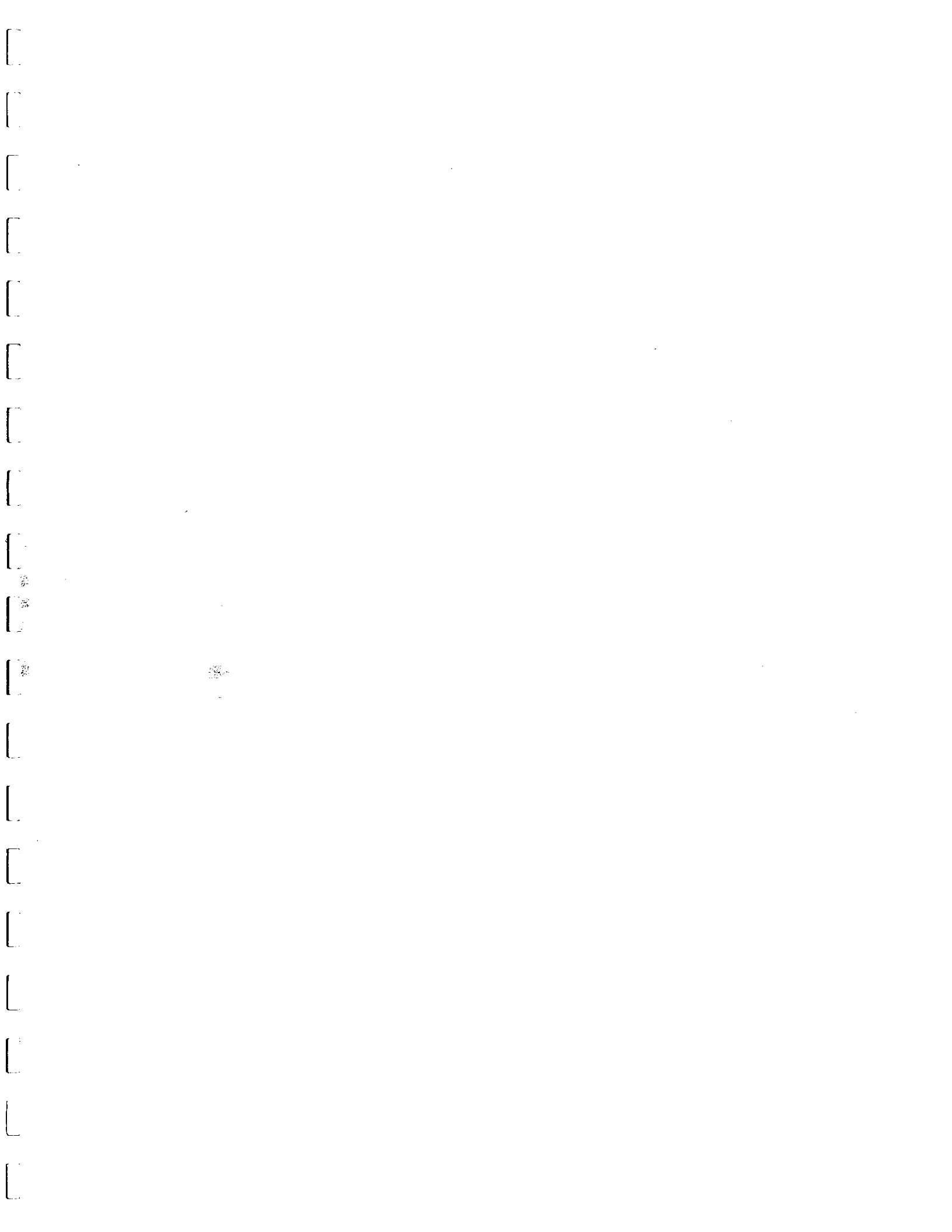
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APPENDIX B

MAJOR WORK ACTIVITIES-
Regional Strategic Planning Process in the
Fifth Planning District

1. Activity: Consult with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) on the intention and requirements of the Regional Cooperation Act.
Time Period: Fall of 1995, January 1996, and May 1996
2. Activity: Review potential approaches to the regional strategic planning process. Consult with other PDCs on possible approaches.
Time Period: January 1996
3. Activity: Determine how the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District's Future can be coordinated with other planning projects at the PDC.
Time Period: January - April 1996
4. Activity: Assemble and review recent plans that might "feed into" the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District.
Time Period: April - June 1996
5. Activity: Discuss the requirements of the plan with the Commissioners and the PDC committee charged with preparing the Commission's strategic plan (for internal operation of the Commission itself).
Time Period: May, June and July 1996
6. Activity: Commission approval of the FY'97 Work Program, which includes preparation of a report on "Indicators" for measuring the progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the New Century Council's Final Report. The "Indicators" report also will supplement the final element of the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, since the Regional Cooperation Act states that the plan shall include "mechanisms for measuring progress toward goals and objectives of the regional strategic plan."
Time Period: May 1996
7. Activity: Begin drafting the Regional Strategy for the Fifth Planning District, based on staff proposal for the plan format (which includes references to recent plans on each subject area, to be supplemented with new goals, objectives, and strategies that can be included if consensus is reached). Format cannot be finalized until after public meetings in June 1996.
Time Period: May and June 1996

8. Activity: Public meetings with (1) discussion and comment on format, (2) review of section of the draft plan where recent plans are referenced and (3) discussion of new goals, objectives, and strategies.
Time Period: June 12 & 13, 1996
9. Activity: Utilize public and Commission input to finalize format of the plan. Complete draft plan.
Time Period: June 14-30, 1996
10. Activity: Submit draft plan to localities for review and comment.
Time Period: July 1996
11. Activity: Revise plan as needed, get authorization of Commission, and submit plan to VDHCD for approval.
Time Period: August 1996 (due at VDHCD before September 1, 1996)
12. Activity: Prepare "Indicators" report on mechanisms for measuring progress in meeting goals and objectives. (Upon completion, this will be submitted to VDHCD to supplement the draft plan submitted in August 1996.)
Time Period: July 1, 1996 - June 30, 1997
13. Activity: Revise plan per comment and add "Indicators" information. Submit revisions to local governments, the public, and VDHCD for final review.
Time Period: July 1997
14. Activity: Public hearings by Commission; revision as needed; adoption of plan by Commission
Time Period: August 1997
15. Activity: Submittal of plan to localities (each of which will determine if it will adopt the plan also)
Time Period: September 1997
16. Activity: Review and update of plan.
Time Period: Every 5 years (earlier if needed)



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