



Exciting News!

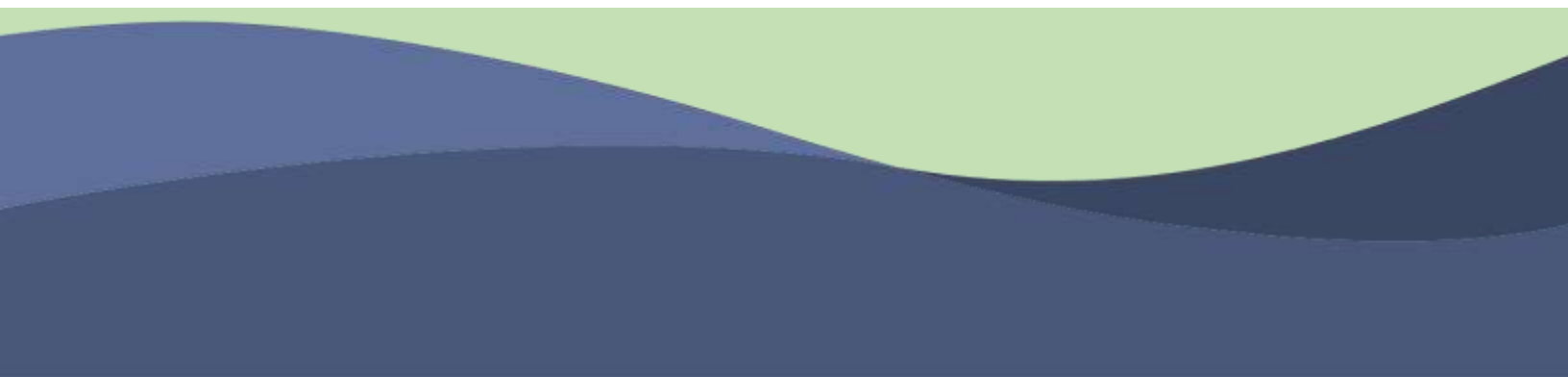
The Piedmont Triad Regional Council has transitioned the 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update to an interactive digital platform. [Click here to explore the new digital 2023-2028 CEDS.](#)

The text-only version of the CEDS can be found below. Just note that data and forecast projections change daily, meaning the data points referenced in the text-only information could slightly vary.



2023 – 2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS)

**Piedmont Triad Regional Council
Economic Development District**



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Executive Summary

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The Regional Council promotes and catalyzes a collaborative and dynamic regional economy environment. The Piedmont Triad region encompasses 12 counties – Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Montgomery, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin. As the region’s EDD, the Piedmont Triad Regional Council is responsible for developing and maintaining a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to stimulate economic growth, diversity, and sustainability.

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council team worked in partnership with various stakeholders to assess the region’s current economic status by distributing public surveys, hosting community listening sessions, and seeking internal input to construct a strategy addressing key priorities, while building on existing assets to foster collaboration and achieve substantial results. Administering resources and engaging conversations with local communities and regional partners, while staying committed to all Piedmont Triad residents for the improvement of overall resiliency and acceptance, is the core vision.

Vision

The Piedmont Triad Region will be:

- More equitable, with opportunities for all backgrounds and underserved populations to experience an outstanding quality of life and chances to create generational wealth through competitive wages, superior public education, property and home ownership, entrepreneurial reassurance, and communitive support.
- More resilient, with increased capacity to endure economic and climatic shocks through a diversified, collaborative, and accommodating economy organized to address those most vulnerable. Proactive prevention and care with a focus on equity and environmental protection, warrants succession.
- More connected, with encouraging partnership development and participation to expand a regional brand for inclusive forward-thinking and upward economic mobility.

Our region is at a transitional state with the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts, while also developing a resilient, diverse, robustly connected regional economy enabling equitable generational wealth and well-being for everyone. Fostering collaboration and organizing a united alliance around our four region-specific goals and strategies is how this vision and mission will be obtained over the next five years. We eagerly encourage you to review and participate with our full CEDS plan to learn where the region is currently and the direction moving forward.

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council’s four CEDS goals are outlined below. Further exploration and supporting strategies are found throughout our CEDS plan, and will guide the reasoning and course of collective action for achievement.

Goal 1: Boost the Region’s Competitive Advantages and Leverage the Marketplace.

Goal 2: Establish and Modernize a Robust Regional Infrastructure.

Goal 3: Create and Connect Vibrant, Healthy, and Resilient Communities.

Goal 4: Develop and Retain Talented and Innovative Human Capital.



Introduction

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated the Piedmont Triad Regional Council as the Economic Development District (EDD) to identify the region's priorities for impactful economic development and developing the comprehensive economic development strategies (CEDS) that supports regional stakeholders. The EDA outlines CEDS as "a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region". Understanding that CEDS is a responsive and flexible five-year strategic economic development plan, frequent adjustments and updates will be implemented to meet the changing needs of communities throughout the region.

CEDS encompasses strategic efforts and goals to develop a transparent and refreshed vision for the future of our 12-county region. Every citizen within the Piedmont Triad plays a role within our CEDS. They are the indicators for incoming economic development and regional plans to show where communities design to grow, how they remain competitive, and collaborate with institutions to share responsibility. Our CEDS goals and strategies embed regional cohesion and realistic approaches to equitably leverage all assets each county has to offer. This update was constructed with the valuable input from private and public sector partners and stakeholders from all around the region. Our region-wide public survey was vastly distributed in August 2022 to gather data and feedback results for priorities alignment and to capture an updated SWOT summary. Eight community public listening sessions, broken down by specific categories such as Entrepreneurship, Workforce Development, Educational Anchors, etc. were hosted virtually in September 2022 to gauge community members and provide an outlet to voice praises and concerns for the region. Both processes along with ongoing teamwork and community engagement, highlighted the region's current economic conditions, challenges residents combat every day, and opportunities for growth and prosperity. The CEDS plan update is designed to empower our regional stakeholder's feedback with the set of goals, strategies, and tactics that leverage existing resources, account for opportunities, and revitalize communities across all 12 counties to make the Piedmont Triad your next destination, home, and workplace.

As referenced above, the region-wide public CEDS survey received an abundance of active participation that our team relies heavily on. 254 survey respondents submitted their feedback, representing hundreds of organizations, businesses, institutions, and residents across the region. The CEDS virtual community listening sessions engaged and immersed over 100 participants from all backgrounds, with their devotion to the Piedmont Triad region as the common ground. Reading, hearing, and transcribing all of these diverse perspectives and potential solutions across the region was a critical component in molding this CEDS plan. Embedding local realities and shared regional aspirations is an element reflected throughout this CEDS update as an attempt to accurately depict the real challenges and opportunities all readers process and act upon.

While the Piedmont Triad Regional Council has the lead role in developing the CEDS plan, identifying and valuing the array of economic assets, capital, and opportunities within our region comes from the citizens. It takes concentrated energy, resources, and knowledge of various strategic partnerships to accomplish the goals and achieve the objectives outlined in the plan. The CEDS contemplates a five-year timeline while recognizing our goals are long-term focused and will go beyond a specific timeframe. This plan will require frequent updates as economies are free spirits and adapt. This CEDS plan emphasizes and sponsors the dedication of previous editions and the progress our region has made from the vital partnerships across the public and private sector. As the plan is implemented, consistent data updates, literature refinements, and link embedment will be reworked and added to accurately reflect the economic development goals, objectives, and aspirations of the Piedmont Triad region.



Summary Background

The Region

The Piedmont Triad is a geographically diverse 12-county region located in central North Carolina along the 1-40/I-85 corridor between Raleigh and Charlotte. Boasting superb transportation infrastructure and creating a convenient distribution hub for commerce in the mid-Atlantic region. The region has over 1.7 million residents, making it the 30th largest metropolitan area in the United States. Historically, the Piedmont Triad stimulated economic growth from textile, furniture, and tobacco industries, but new and modern industries are rapidly emerging. Its robust and diverse economy, progressive health care, distribution and logistics hub, dynamic arts and culture scene, outdoor recreation offerings, respected educational institutions, international airport, and innovative biotechnology research districts make this vibrant area a popular destination for those looking to retire or relocate in the Southeast.

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council supports regional advancement and evolution by serving its county and municipality members and the citizens of the region through administering programs related to aging services, criminal justice, housing solutions, regional planning, water resources, transportation, business investment lending, information services, personnel administration, recreation and open space, workforce development, and more.

Population

The Piedmont Triad encompassed a population of 1,753,827 residents in 2021, reflecting a 3% growth rate since 2016 adding 58,574 new individuals to the region. Winston-Salem and Greensboro are ranked in the top 10 of the fastest-growing cities in North Carolina. Though the region's population is growing, our population is also aging with 31% being 55 and over compared to 22% being under 18. Our racial and ethnic diversity has increased region wide since 2018, with Hispanic and Asian populations being the fastest growing. The region's educational attainment is a mixed picture with Bachelor Degree completions being 8.1% below the State average and 2.5% below the National average, however, Associate Degree completions are tied with the State average at 10% and above the National average by 1.2%. Within the K-12 realm, myFutureNC projects a regional average decrease of 7.8% for post-secondary enrollment and 3.94% for K-12 district enrollment. The overall demographic and socioeconomic indicators yield a strong economic outlook with population and diversity growth, but minimal growth within educational attainment is a labor force trend that's becoming a major regional and state-wide focus.

Historic and Environmental Profile

Piedmont Triad has 528 National Register Listings with the NC Historic Preservation Office, 227 of those registers being income-producing tax credit projects. Downtown Winston-Salem alone, accounts for \$1 billion of historical tax credit with the rich historic preservation of RJ Reynolds original buildings, Old Salem, and Hanes Hosiery Mills.

Competitive Assets

The Piedmont Triad contains an extraordinary interstate highway network to make daily commutes to international travel a breeze, with some of the lowest traffic in the country and home to an international airport. Major highway systems like I-40, I-85, and I-73/74 corridor provide adequate commute times and leverage the strengths and opportunities for the distribution, warehousing, and logistics industries. Alongside the innovative interstate highways, air and freight services are another crucial part of the region's transportation asset, linking Piedmont Triad businesses with national and international markets. The Piedmont Triad



International Airport offers scheduled domestic and international air service and there are 12 additional regional airports offering top-notch flight services. Passenger and commercial rail services are very prominent in the Piedmont Triad, with Amtrak offering multiple destination travel stops in the region and companies like Norfolk Southern, CSX, and Yadkin Valley Railroad Company operating the freight trackage.

Regional bus, local bus, vanpool, and county-based demand response public transportation options are key in our economic vitality, especially with the region anchored by Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and High Point that are frequented by locals and travelers. Transportation services are expanding throughout some rural communities with the support of entities like Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) and Yadkin Valley Economic Development District, Incorporated (YVEDDI). Public transportation options in rural counties have remained a regional focus and infrastructural need to continue addressing and work toward solutions of enhancing mobility.

More recently, broadband access has moved to the forefront of the state and region's infrastructure attention in order to address digital equity. According to the NC Broadband Availability Index, a regional average of 78.4% of the population has available 25/3 megabits per second service, with 57% and 99.8% being the highest and lowest outliers. Additionally, a regional average of 44% of the population having available fiber technology, with 0.73% and 87% being the highest and lowest outliers. Clearly there is a significant digital divide within the region and bridging that divide is a leading effort within our CEDS.

Infrastructure assets go well beyond transportation and broadband, with education institutions, water and sewer systems, energy distribution, and industry sites. Working diligently with local leaders, policy makers, and stakeholders to plan for infrastructure needs is a crucial economic development component with ever changing needs that our CEDS plan addresses over the next five years.

Cluster Strengths

The Piedmont Triad is recognized historically as an economic hub for furniture, textile manufacturing, and tobacco. As the Piedmont Triad grows new industries should also be recognized as leading employers. These include: transportation/warehousing, healthcare, construction, technical services (professional and scientific), and retail trade. However, employment growth data identifies industry clusters in the fields of aerospace/defense, financial services, biomedical/chemical products, health services, and information technology. These are the industries characterizing future economic growth in the Piedmont Triad and presenting expansion opportunities within air mobility, agricultural chemical manufacturing, and technology and analytical instrument manufacturing. North Carolina's business climate and winning the 2022 #1 ranking of America's Top State for Business by CNBC, places the Piedmont Triad in a position to continue industry growth, pursue diversification opportunities, and leverage capacity with mega-site development.

Economic Indicators Breakdown

Housing

Housing costs rising faster than wages, has placed a substantial strain on the availability of affordable housing options for working families and young professionals across the Piedmont Triad. According to the 2021 N.C. Housing Coalition study, 21-31% of Piedmont Triad residents are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Additionally, 34-47% of renters and 17-20% of homeowners have difficulty affording their



housing due to the inverse nature between housing affordability and earnings. Exploring proactive steps and measures encouraging affordable housing stock for all generations is a regional initiative with sustained support. Promoting housing equity influences workforce and economic productivity and performance, keeping the notion of urgency with this topic.

Health Services

The Piedmont Triad's superior healthcare services and facilities render renowned economic performance by being a top industry employing the region's workforce and offering competitive wages. Investing in community health capital is critical for ensuring a robust and resilient workforce as it's the foundation of an area being a desirable place to live, start a business, and prosper. Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical, Moses Cone Health Care System, and Novant Health are major healthcare networks maintaining regional attraction and supporting the region's healthcare hub structure.

Childcare Services

Childcare is an essential social infrastructure need that affects economic stability and mobility. In the Piedmont Triad, nearly 19% of households are parent homes; with access to childcare services directly linked to workforce patriation and career advancement. The childcare industry faces local and state barriers that make it challenging to provide affordable, accessible, and reliable services across the region. Supporting initiatives that will drive an increase in the equitable availability of licensed facilities will spur workforce productivity, recruitment, and retention efforts. Regional collaboration with employers interested in providing on-site childcare services, creating partnerships with current providers to expand services to employees; are potential initiatives to consider. Recognizing childcare as a major economic driver and exploring strategic solutions to increase access and opportunity is a vital progression the region must collectively work towards.

Arts, Culture, and Education

A generous array of expressive arts, entertainment, and recreational resources enhance the Piedmont Triad's cultural capital and climate. Creativity thrives across the region with various arts festivals such as the National Black Theatre Festival, museums, galleries/studios, performing arts shows, concerts, and gardens displaying iconic pieces and award-winning performances. The region is also home to the astounding NC Zoological Park, which welcomed 1 million visitors during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. This destination gives individuals all across the nation the opportunity to interact with majestic animals and natural habits from around the globe. In addition, the outdoor recreation scene within the region is phenomenal with multiple recreation centers and greenways for biking and jogging throughout. Providing outstanding programs for people of all ages, venues including facilities for aquatics, team sports, fitness instruction, art classes, outdoor concerts, special events, summer camps, and after-school programs for the community. According to VisitNC, in 2021 outdoor recreation visitor spending accounted for generating over 100 million dollars in local taxes and supplied 21,519 jobs within the region. The Piedmont Triad's cultural and recreational resources are economic factors that are unique and distinguish communities across all counties. Supporting creative thinking and expression will always flourish within the region.

The Piedmont Triad has an abundance of high performing public and private K-12, Community College, and Higher Educational Institutions with standards and opportunities aligned with workforce needs are a top priority for families relocating to the area. With 21 colleges and universities collaborating with our wide variety of excellent K-12 schools, the region is a hub for learning. The diverse range of higher-ed institutes build strong minds and inject energy into the



community with numerous events and lectures. Whether you're looking for the best environment for your child, want to brush up on new technical skills or earn a four-year degree in arts or sciences, the Piedmont Triad offers a recognized network of academic and training programs designed to not only meet, but exceed labor force skill requirements.

Public Safety

Public Safety continues to be a competitive advantage for the Piedmont Triad as the region is below the State and National average rate for violent crime and below the State average rate for property crime. Safety is major concern for most communities in the region and ensuring protection of all residents has been a key element within public safety. Occupations within Police and Sheriff Patrol Officers across the region experienced over a 3% growth from 2018-2022, while decreasing over 4% Statewide. Outperforming the State within Law Enforcement employment is a trend projected to continue, explaining why the Piedmont Triad has achieved and maintained lower crime rate averages than the state. Our established public safety standards portray a business and family-friendly image the region has and will continue to sustain, catalyzing our growth profile.



Regional SWOT Analysis

The 2023-2028 CEDS process includes an in-depth look into our region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) using public surveys, public listening sessions, and available data analysis. Key themes were identified for all four categories. While there are plenty of positive features and incredible opportunities in the region, we also recognize the negative in order to develop solutions and change the narrative.

STRENGTHS

The Piedmont Triad leverages an incredible location for business and quality of life. With a metropolitan zone anchored by Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and High Point comprising a population of over 662,669 in combination with strong road and railway infrastructure, yields the area as a top choice for manufacturing and logistics/distribution. Apart from our metropolitan zones, the region is also home to numerous natural amenities and recreation offerings. The Piedmont Triad is a catalyst for business success and future growth due to our unique climate of having a low cost of living, wealth of higher education institutions, skilled workforce, and supporting services for entrepreneurship.

Strengths Foundation

- Strong transportation/roadway infrastructure with I-40/I-85 and I-73/I-74 corridors, making for suitable commute times and Distribution/Logistics Hubs
- Low Cost of Living – 4.8% Below National Average
- Remarkable Public and Private Higher Educational Institutions, including three renowned Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
- Exceptional and Adaptive Community Colleges offerings
- Established Advanced Manufacturing cluster with recent development of mega sites
- Centrally located Piedmont Triad International Airport (PTIA) and Amtrak Rail Service
- Availability of numerous outdoor recreation options and protected parks
- Access to Quality Healthcare Services
- Celebration of Arts and Cultural Heritage
- Continued Population Growth as the Piedmont Triad is a top destination
- Presence of existing industrial sites primed and zoned for redevelopment
- Promotion of Equity
- Downtown and Main Street investment and resurgence

Key Findings for Regional CEDS Survey:

- 78% of CEDS public survey respondents selected Road and Highway System Infrastructure as a Regional Advantage
- 72% of CEDS public survey respondents selected Job Commute Time as a Regional Advantage with the average commute being around 25-26 minutes
- 65% of CEDS public survey respondents selected Water and Sewer Infrastructure as a Regional Advantage



WEAKNESSES

The rural counties within the Piedmont Triad are falling behind in providing public transportation services and high-speed broadband connectivity. This creates economic barriers that doesn't allow for full workforce participation, constrains business startups, and encourages residents to move to the urbanized counties. These factors make it difficult to coordinate leadership effectiveness within the region as rural and urban counties are growing at different rates and have different struggles.

Weaknesses to Confront

- Competition among other Regional Jurisdictions
- Limited Public Transportation options in Urban and Rural Counties
- Weak Broadband Connectivity and Cellular Coverage in Rural Counties
- Supply Chain Inefficiencies with Labor and Input Shortages
- State Budget cuts impacting K-12 Education
- Stagnant Income Levels

Regional CEDS Survey Findings:

- 58% of CEDS public survey respondents selected Public Transportation Infrastructure as a Regional Disadvantage Supported by 69% of survey respondents disagreeing to the statement "My community has sufficient public transit options".
- 69% of CEDS public survey respondents selected Broadband Internet access as a major improvement within the past three years. Supported by 71% of survey respondents agreeing to the statement "My community has access to high-speed internet".

OPPORTUNITIES

While the Piedmont Triad has clearly defined strengths, our focus turns to our regional weaknesses and support efforts to address them and transition them to opportunities. A united effort to apply for funding and share resources to address the public transportation and broadband connectivity gap, is a must for our region. Additionally, providing greater support and outreach for K-12 education programs is critical for both quality of life and business growth. While financial and consulting support is currently being offered to entrepreneurs, growing that support and building a stronger ecosystem is essential to develop a robust and dynamic regional economy.

Opportunities to Fuel

- Regional Collaboration and Engagement with Developing a marketable brand
- Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem network to facilitate small business development, growth, and support
- Develop Accelerators, Incubators, and Multi-use spaces for start-up businesses
- Continue maintenance and capacity building of public utility infrastructure
- Recruitment of remote workers to the region
- Develop a unified mobility resource page of available resources across all geographic areas
- Increased educational funding for Apprenticeship and College Promise Programs
- Changing demographics and Increasing Diversity



- Continue investments in Aviation technology advancement and air mobility, biotechnology, healthcare, and public service
- Encourage an increase in capital access to minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses

Regional CEDS Survey Findings:

- 72% of CEDS public survey respondents agreed with the statement “Redevelopment should be a priority in my community.”

THREATS

Unfortunately, the Piedmont Triad has a presence of threats that we must mitigate to sustain the progression and success the region continuously generates. Our region has historically recruited and thrived within the manufacturing industry, but has neglected to diversify the portfolio by not targeting other industries. This practice poses a threat of overly relying on the manufacturing industry, making the workforce vulnerable to layoffs, relocations, and hiring freezes, especially within advanced manufacturing where the use of automation and artificial intelligence are increasing. The availability of and lack of linking affordable housing to employment centers, renders a major regional threat. Finding, supporting, and funding efforts to address this issue is a top priority moving forward.

Threats to Abate

- Lack of industry sector diversity by over reliance on and targeting recruitment efforts on traditional or one-industry employers
- Inconsistent and changing land development and zoning regulation policies
- Affordable Housing Options
- Affordable Childcare Options
- Perception of Crime Rates
- Ability to attract and retain young professionals

Action Plan

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council Economic Development District created an ambitious and inclusive plan to serve as the foundational economic development theme for the 12-county region. This document is a cooperative between local leaders, organizations, and stakeholders to carry out CEDS purpose of increasing economic capacity and achieving regional goals for elevating collective prosperity. Through collaborative efforts, the strategy to advance projects meeting the identified important regional interests and supporting aggregate change, has been chosen to encompass the following four comprehensive development goals for the Piedmont Triad region:

1. Boost the Region’s Competitive Advantages and Leverage the Marketplace.
2. Establish and Modernize a Robust Regional Infrastructure.
3. Create and Connect Vibrant, Healthy, and Resilient Communities.
4. Develop and Retain Talented and Innovative Human Capital.



Equity

The above regional goals aspire economic growth with an inclusive and equitable lens, and are imperative needs for our regional economy to build functional connections and communication channels to successfully compete in a global marketplace. Our CEDS and strategies herein, were crafted with all backgrounds, statuses, and origins in mind to provide growth opportunities and resource access for all citizens of the Piedmont Triad.



Implementation

The following implementation plan outlines each regional goal and the pathway of strategies and measurements needed to strategically address community needs and develop the networks required to advance the goals. Accomplishing the CEDS vision and each respective goal, requires phenomenal regional partners and stakeholders from all across the public and private sectors. The following list lays out the lead entities of dedicated teams who embark on the journey of implementing and engaging supportive partners to render successful outcomes.

Vital Partners and Stakeholders Include:

Workforce Development Boards: Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board and Guilford Works; NCWorks Career Centers: Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Montgomery, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin Counties.

Economic Development Organizations: Alamance County Economic Development Foundation, City of Burlington Economic Development, Caswell County Economic Development, Davidson County Economic Development Commission, Davie County Economic Development Commission, Greater Winston-Salem Inc, Forsyth County Community and Economic Development, City of Winston-Salem Economic Development, Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership, Guilford County Economic Development Alliance, City of Greensboro Economic Development, High Point Economic Development Corporation, Piedmont Triad Partnership, Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, Randolph County Economic Development Corporation, Rockingham County Citizens for Economic Development, Stokes County Economic Development and Tourism, Surry County Economic Development Partnership, and Yadkin County Economic Development Council.

Public School Districts: Alamance-Burlington School System, Caswell County Schools, Davidson County Schools, Lexington City Schools, Thomasville City Schools, Davie County Schools, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, Guilford County Schools, Montgomery County Schools, Randolph County School System, Asheboro City Schools, Rockingham County Schools, Stokes County Schools, Surry County Schools, Mount Airy City Schools, Elkin City Schools, and Yadkin County Schools.

Anchor Institutions: North Carolina Agriculture and Technology State University, University of North Carolina School of the Arts, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Winston-Salem State University, Wake Forest University, Elon University, High Point University, Carolina University, Salem College, Greensboro College, Guilford College, and Bennett College.

Community Colleges: Alamance Community College, Piedmont Community College, Davidson-Davie Community College, Forsyth Technical Community College, Guilford Technical Community College, Montgomery Community College, Randolph Community College, Rockingham Community College, and Surry Community College.

Public Transportation Authorities: Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), Winston-Salem Transit Authority, Greensboro Transit Authority, High Point Transit Access, City of Burlington Link, Davidson County Transportation, Regional Coordinated Area Transportation, and Yadkin Valley Economic Development District Incorporated Transportation Services.

State Agencies: North Carolina Department of Commerce, North Carolina Economic Development Partnership, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina Department of Transportation, NC Historic Preservation Office, and North Carolina Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Local Governments: County and municipal governments and non-profits within Piedmont Triad region.

Goal 1: Boost the Region's Competitive Advantage and Leverage the Marketplace

Growth and prosperity promotion demand coordinated efforts to build new, maintain existing, and restore the notion of competitive areas of innovation in all communities within the region.

Objective: Organize and coordinate regional economic development by promoting effective land use planning, engaging elected officials and local leaders, sustaining small business, entrepreneurial, and workforce support by leveraging public/private partnerships and investment to unify our economic development narrative and implement best practices.

Competitive Advantage Sustainment Strategic Outline:

1. Utilize economic development opportunities to make rural and urban areas hotspots for business.
 - 1.1 Develop new regional partnerships particularly as they pertain to manufacturing and other industries that are crucial to the foundation of the economy.
 - 1.2 Promote collaboration between rural and urban regional partners to elevate market networks.
 - 1.3 Put forth initiatives to encourage green industries within the manufacturing space.
2. Increase skillsets of the regional labor force through the use of targeted training programs.
 - 2.1 Support secondary and post-secondary educational STEM programs.
3. Drive economic advancement and sustainability throughout the Piedmont Triad.
 - 3.1 Cohesively brand and market the region as a destination for new and existing business.
 - 3.2 Make capital investments and resources more accessible for businesses of all sizes.
 - 3.3 Support technological innovations within existing industries and industries that are new to the region.

Measured Impacts:

- Collaborations between rural and urban areas
- Make networks (financial, technical, and physical resources) available to businesses
- Support systems that focus on growing the talent capacity within the labor shed
- Revenue and job growth for key industries
- Number of collaborations between key businesses
- Lower the skills gap for in-demand jobs

Entrepreneurial Strategic Outline:

- 1 Fully utilize current assets and resources including Small Business and Technology Development Centers, cooperative extension, rural development services, the State's Business Link (BLNC) referral services, and local project planning efforts to increase knowledge and capacity.
- 1.2 Support the expansion of entrepreneurial workspaces, business incubators/accelerators, and start-up workplaces.



1.3 Develop rural co-working spaces to support rural entrepreneurship.

1.4 Provide equitable access to mapped out regional assets for entrepreneurial initiatives, funding/investment programs, consulting/mentorship services, working spaces, and other resources.

Measured Impacts:

- Development of and marked co-working entrepreneurial workspaces and facilities.
- Events and marketing outreach geared toward entrepreneur support.
- Expansion of regional capacity for entrepreneurial mentorship, internship, investment ventures, and organized sources for starting a business.

Goal 2: Establish and Modernize a Robust Regional Infrastructure

Fostering competitiveness and remaining innovative in the regional, state, national, and global economy requires the Piedmont Triad to revitalize and advocate for improvements to local and state infrastructure as a priority.

Objective: Promote regional infrastructure that boosts the region’s development needs, especially within broadband availability, cellular coverage, transportation, public utilities, and overall infrastructure that eliminates barriers and provides a sustainable pathway for economic expansion.

Development Infrastructure Strategic Outline:

1 Utilize and promote New Market Tax Credits, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, and regional industrial Opportunity Zones.

1.1 Ensure proper zoning, special use permits, watershed regulations, resilient building practices, and any other barriers are identified.

2. Leverage the regional Brownfields Revolving Loan program to encourage sustainable cleanup and repurpose efforts for eligible Brownfield sites.

2.1 Continue meaningful collaboration for site development and partnerships with businesses, industrial parks, public-private partnerships, and other related nonprofits.

2.2 Identify the infrastructure needs of potential sites and whether needs can be met by neighboring jurisdictions.

Measured Impacts:

- Elevated database and use of development and redevelopment sites
- Tactful use of tax credits and finance tools to bolster development
- Increased public and private partnerships regarding site development
- New Market, Tax Increment Financing, historic tax, and other tax credit utilization rate
- Brownfield assessments and cleanups

Public Transportation Infrastructure Strategic Outline:

1 Grow transportation options through expanded infrastructure and transportation services.

1.1 Support the expansion of regional and local public transit systems by identifying different funding opportunities at local and state levels.



- 1.2 Support the development of unified messaging and landing pages with resources to promote existing services across all jurisdictions.
- 1.3 Research the impact investing in transportation has on local economic development.
- 1.4 Identify and champion transportation solutions for aging and underserved populations.
- 1.5 Collaborate on the connectivity of workforce to job sites.
- 2. Encourage the implementation of alternative fuel and electric vehicles and charging stations.
 - 2.1 Conduct outreach and educational efforts for the community via events and training.
 - 2.2 Maintain a database for the Piedmont Triad that tracks clean transportation options.

Measured Impacts:

- Increased transportation networks.
- Number of new transit routes and usage rates.
- Easier accessibility of local transit options, including shared-use park and ride sites.
- Uptick in the number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Utilization rate of transit and alternative forms of transportation.
- Electric and alternative fuel vehicle registrations.

Broadband Strategic Outline:

- 1 Expand the reach of broadband internet services and speed throughout the region to promote digital equity.
 - 1.1 Build upon and support NC Broadband and Federal initiatives (BAND-NC, GREAT Grant, FCC Broadband Data Collection, Pole Replacement Program, etc.) to combat the digital divide and bring high-speed broadband to all areas in the Piedmont Triad.
 - 1.2 Monitor broadband speeds and access across the region by using and supporting the NC Office of Information and Technology Broadband’s mapping indexes to customize project efforts.

Measured Impacts:

- Accurate mapping of broadband speeds across the region.
- Increased technological options throughout the Piedmont Triad.
- Number of households with access to high-speed broadband coverage.
- Wi-Fi accessible and available within more public spaces.

Goal 3: Create and Connect Vibrant, Healthy, and Resilient Communities

Providing healthy lifestyle and recreation options, a dynamic arts, culture, and entertainment scene, and outstanding education institutions are quality of life attributes driving the desirability to live and stay for Piedmont Triad residents and visitors.

Objective: Protect and improve recreation opportunities, main streets, downtown districts, historic neighborhoods, volume of quality housing for diversified incomes, mixed-use commercial and residential spaces, and destination attraction.



Downtown Resurgence Strategic Outline:

1 Solidify the region's downtowns as the central commercial and social hubs of the community.

1.1 Promote functional and aesthetically pleasing designs that lend themselves to the economic, environmental, and social interests of the region.

1.2 Champion flexible land-use policies/regulations that allow for more diverse and prosperous uses of redevelopment areas and town centers.

1.3 Develop regional strategies to leverage reinvestment by commercial property owners (especially absentee landlords and private investment).

Measured Impacts:

- Inventory of development ordinances and regulations that allow a wide variety of options in downtowns or activity centers.
- Provide training on best practices for creating vibrant and disaster resilient communities.
- Re-investment in underutilized properties in the key areas.
- Modernization updates to development ordinances.
- Designated Main Street Communities.

Healthy Food Connections Strategic Outline:

1 Facilitate a regional food network system with local suppliers to encourage participation market leverage.

1.1 Work with buyers, chefs, restaurant associations, healthcare partners, educational institutions, and other such groups to determine the demand for specific products, in order to better inform/connect producers with opportunities.

1.2 Explore the possibility of establishing region-wide distribution systems to support the transportation of fresh produce across the region.

1.3 Support programs that provide processing capacity for food and meat producers that are too small to serve commodity markets, but too large to sell directly to consumers.

1.4 Connect local farmers and food producers to the region's network of agricultural research centers and professionals.

1.5 Serve as a leader for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all local food initiatives by providing training, resources, and guidance to local agencies.

2. Establish food policy councils in each county to assess co-ops, collectives, supply chain development, and agritourism.

2.1 Ensure broad levels of participation including multiple sectors of the food system such as schools, nonprofits, farmers, recycling, and waste organizations.

2.2 Facilitate meaningful cooperation among local food councils and grassroots organizations to maximize impact and improve the local food economy.

2.3 Support the creation of new markets across the region via farmer's markets and innovative approaches to the local food supply chain.

Measured Impacts:

- Target areas of improvement, investment, and opportunity.
- Collaboration among Triad food policy councils and food stakeholders.
- Significant data collection completed in partnership with local agencies to support long-term data and metrics about the regional food system.



- Increase the number of collaborative projects undertaken each year with the local food council and advocacy.
- Local food production and sales output.
- Job growth in the food and beverage industry.
- Increased number of partnerships formed between producers and potential markets.
- Leveraged resources to support additional value being put on food production.
- Number of training, resources, and/or guidance conversations with local agencies to increase equity in the food system.

Affordable Housing Strategic Outline:

1 Diversify and inflate the affordable housing stock in areas near employment centers, public transportation access, and existing infrastructure.

1.1 Join with State efforts to develop a state-wide housing strategy aimed at improving affordable renter and owner-occupied housing stock for workers and families living in rural and downtown settings.

1.2 Coordinate existing housing programs and financial incentives to include best practices in affordable housing investments.

Measured Impacts:

- Inventory of regional housing stock conditions including age, etc. The amount of housing stock that is affordable to workers making 120% or less of the average wage.
- Invest in the rehabilitation of affordable housing supply to improve living conditions and health outcomes.
- The amount of housing stock that is affordable to workers making 120% or less of the average wage.
- Defined best practices and administration of housing authorities.

Effective Land Use Strategic Outline:

1 Encourage the efficient and resilient use of land resources.

1.1 Foster the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of old commercial/industrial sites.

1.2 Promote smart growth methods when constructing new sites for future redevelopment.

1.3 Pursue growth policies and regulations to support the efficient use of existing water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure.

1.4 Encourage infrastructure design/plans to support sustainable, resilient community development patterns and help reduce the negative impacts of climate change.

1.5 Use regional programs to support efficient transportation, land use, and planning.

Measured Impacts:

- Complete a community engagement strategy geared towards building engagement capacity at the community and municipal levels.
- Use local, county or regional hazard mitigation plans to guide disaster resilient communities.
- Shared-use agreements and policies in place for community facilities.
- Number of bicycle share programs.
- Public-private partnerships for community engagement.
- Increased civic participation of underserved communities in surveys, public meetings, and events.



- Reduce the time needed for communities to access resources and recover from disasters.

Goal 4: Develop and Retain Talented and Innovative Human Capital

Investing in public and private educational training partnerships that cultivate a flexible, entrepreneurial-minded, globally-oriented, and diversified workforce is the most essential component for regional economic development and overall competitiveness. Nourishing and evolving the workforce with crosscutting competencies sought by employers, ensure needs of a growing and adaptive economy are holistically met.

Objective: Invigorate collaboration between private industry clusters, higher education institutions, and K-12 education, especially career technical education (CTE) to increase workforce participation by reducing barriers, CTE enrollment, and better alignment of training with in-demand skills to close the skills gap and foster growth.

Workforce Initiatives Strategic Outline:

1 Ignite workforce initiatives designed to help individuals complete training/educational programs that grant in-demand skills for the versatile job market.

1.1 Create, deliver, and support new regional initiatives that align job-skill requirements with training curricula.

1.2 Heighten awareness and access to online degree completion and all online job training programs.

1.3 Solidify and highlight career pathways within programs such as advanced manufacturing, technology, healthcare, aviation, logistics, and creative industries.

1.4 Improve mentoring programs for increased training-to-work efforts.

2 Identify opportunities to assist adult workers with the unique challenges they face while seeking a change in career.

2.1 Support veterans leaving the military in their search to find jobs in the Piedmont Triad.

3 Work to eliminate workforce barriers that limit participation such as transportation, childcare, and housing.

Measured Impacts:

- Successful implementation of new training initiatives and growth of existing initiatives.
- Completion of training programs aligning with the needs of the workforce.
- Increase in the number of veterans employed.
- Public-Private partnerships developing job skills training opportunities and community investment.
- Identify and address workforce barriers within transportation, childcare, and housing.

K-12 Education and Youth Leadership Strategic Outline:

1 Promote K-12 education that focuses on technology and real-world application.

1.1 Facilitate the connection between careers and high schools for internships, apprenticeships, and post-high school job opportunities.



1.2 Promote the growth of youth-related entrepreneurship organizations.

1.3 Support the implementation and marketing of entrepreneurial education, and career technical education programs, and higher education preparation courses.

1.4 Connect high school business students to small business owners through entrepreneurship education and mentorship programs.

Measured Impacts:

- Successful collaboration of high schools with regional industries and businesses.
- Monitoring drop-outs rates and the career pathways students are participating in.

Economic Resilience

Historically, when natural disasters and disaster recovery efforts are addressed, it is right after a community and region has fallen victim to or is vulnerable to a disaster. Challenging and redefining our strategy of disaster recovery and economic resilience provide ongoing guidance to increase resiliency and sustainability across the region. We no longer react to, but act on disasters. Susceptible populations such as the economically depressed, elderly, chronically ill, or disabled are adversely targeted by and often suffer the greatest from disasters due to being less prepared. Economic and climatic shocks possess different severity and devastation levels, such as natural disasters, unstable stock market fluctuations leading to recessions, government shutdowns, supply shortages, limited funding for grants, and terrorist attacks. All types of shocks must be accounted for and considered when planning out the corrective course of action for each shock. The Piedmont Triad Regional Council collaborates and coordinates with various emergency management stakeholders in the region to ensure hazard and risk vulnerabilities are considered and planned for, mitigated against if possible, and preparedness plans are in place and practiced for efficient response.

The implementation of economic resiliency is still a novel process and initiative. This implementation requires strong regional partnerships and bold leadership to achieve the CEDS vision of increasing capacity to endure economic and climatic shocks through a diversified, collaborative, and accommodating economy. The following stakeholders are key partners across the public and private institutional sphere with dedicated time and energy for outlining a smooth execution of regional information networks, performance measures, and recovery planning.

Stakeholders include:

NC Department of Public Safety, NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency, NC Department of Environmental Quality, NC Rural Center, NC Commerce, NC Division of Public Health and County Environmental Health Departments, Private Businesses, Financial Lenders, Local Governments, Social Services Agencies, Anchor Educational Institutions, Community Colleges, Main Street initiatives, Local Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Utility providers, Housing Authorities, and Non-Profits.

Strategic Resiliency Information Networks, Recovery Planning, and Performance Measurement

The succeeding foundational actions are vital to proactively planning for economic and climatic shocks by focusing on strengthening recovery methods to support a more resilient economy. The action items are organized by information network development for natural disasters and economic shocks, investing in rural communities due to those populations being more vulnerable, and best practices and performance measures to accurately capture preparedness for sustaining economic resiliency.



Information Network Strategies

- Tailor regional planning efforts with local Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans, Emergency Management teams and firms, The Piedmont Triad Regional Council, and the NC Climate Risk Assessment and Resiliency Plan to expand local and regional preparedness, mitigation, and risk reduction.
- Collaborate with local government leaders on the importance of effective land use planning, zoning code updates, incentive programs, and infrastructure needs to include disaster-specific and green/climate-resilient structures.
- Facilitate opportunities and exercises for emergency management personnel, local planners, and stakeholders to regularly engage best practices.
- Educate elected leaders, staff, and community members on the significance of recovery planning and mitigation of disasters and economic hardships.
- Monitor supply chain disruptions and alternative solutions within the region, much like what arose from COVID, to enhance preparation for future interruptions.
- Establish an equity-driven framework to ignite inclusive decision-making regarding economic growth, mobility, and recovery strategies for marginalized populations and business districts.

Recovery Planning

- Expand technical assistance opportunities within our rural counties to build capacity and progress the NC Rural Center's "Rural Counts" initiative.
- Strategize methods to best support and encourage all residents and families to remain within or relocate back to the region, especially rural communities, pre and post disaster/economic shocks.
- Highlight opportunities within and boost local community assets for a sense of Piedmont Triad pride and regional brand loyalty.
- Promote business services and supportive assistance for the region to stimulate growth for future sustainability and community vitality.

Performance Measures

- Scheduling and monitoring collaboration events and discussion forums for emergency management leaders, local/regional planners, and stakeholders.
- Eagerly support and apply for green infrastructure incentives within redevelopment and new development efforts.
- Establish database and reporting systems to capture natural disaster patterns and market fluctuations resulting in economic loss.
- Remain updated on status of utility systems connections and rehabilitation of inadequate infrastructure, especially within rural counties and areas of underserved populations.
- Examine population, migration, and economic mobility trends to highlight areas of most to least vulnerability.
- Identify studies and reports focusing on and outlining supply chain disturbances and proposed solutions to combat disruptions.



Alignment with NC TOMORROW

This 2023 CEDS update aligns with NC Tomorrow, North Carolina's Statewide CEDS and other existing state, regional, and local planning documents. This alignment fosters stronger collaboration and effectiveness across the Piedmont Triad region and the respected State of North Carolina. Integration of similar goals and strategies are critical for ensuring all partners and stakeholders have a collective understanding of desired outcomes for the region.

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Piedmont Triad Regional Council CEDS Team

Matthew Dolge
Executive Director

Garrett Dinkins
Economic Development Coordinator

Wendy Walker-Fox
Workforce and Economic Development
Director

Hailey Hendrix
Partnerships and Data Coordinator

Jessica Raby
Workforce and Economic Development
Assistant Director

Shameka McCain
Workforce and Economic Development
Board Relations Specialist

Michelle Slaton
Economic Development and Business
Services Supervisor

Piedmont Triad Regional Development Corporation Board Members

Trent Cockerham, Hospice of the Piedmont

Casey Smith, Davidson County Manager

Darrell Frye, Randolph County Commissioner

James Blakley, Davie County Board of
Commissioners Chair

Leigh Cockram, Rockingham County Economic
Development

Don Martin, Forsyth County Commissioner

Andy Anderson, Skyline National Bank

Carly Cooke, Guilford County Commissioner

Mark Moran, First Horizon Bank

Dana Dawson, Montgomery County Board of
Commissioners Vice Chair

Bill Lashley, Alamance County Commissioner



Rick Morris, Stokes County Commissioner

Larry Johnson, Surry Board of Commissioners
Vice Chair

Kevin Austin, Yadkin County Commissioner

Ken Millett, City of Winston-Salem

Lee Rollins, Town of Bermuda Run

David Allen, ABCO Automation, Inc.

Karen Barnes, Agile Cities

J. Douglas Brewer, Fidelity Bank

Kevin Franklin, Randolph County EDC

Lisa Hazlett, Nussbaum Center for
Entrepreneurship

Elbert Lassiter, Randolph Community College

Jim Lewis, Surry Community College

Alan Murdock, Forsyth Technical Community
College

Eric Muth, Ph.D, A&T State University

Peter Pequeno II, Surrey Bank and Trust

Chris Phelps, Davidson Co. Tourism Recreation
Investment

Scott Rhine, Piedmont Authority for Regional
Transport (PART)

Von Robertson, Robertson Builders, LLC

Sandi Scannelli, Shallow Ford Foundation

Penny Whiteheart, Piedmont Triad Partnership

Jay Wagner, Fisher Wagner, PLLC

