**MARKET ST**

**MEETING THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATE**

# PIEDMONT TRIAD REGION, N.C.

Submitted by
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## LIVE GROW WORK

*Market Street* brings original insights and clarity to the evaluation and revitalization of the places where people live, grow and work. *Market Street* inspires trust in all community stakeholders – citizens, educators, leadership and industry – because our holistic, proactive process takes into account all the aspects that shape community life. Through honest and informed assessments, *Market Street* can equip you with the tools to create meaningful change. Our solutions successfully merge our unique vision with your economic and social realities.

# BACKGROUND

The Piedmont Triad Region ("Triad" or "Region") is defined as the 12-county area that is the jurisdiction of the Piedmont Triad Partnership, as created and authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly, and several other regional organizations.. The Piedmont Triad Partnership ("PTP") contracted with *Market Street Services*, a national economic and workforce consulting firm headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, to gain a better understanding of where the Piedmont Triad Region is today, to update its *Regional Vision Plan*, and to move the Piedmont Triad Region towards its goals. The North Carolina legislative mandate from Section 13.6 of House Bill 1414 provides funding for the state's seven regional economic development partnerships to develop and implement strategic vision plans.

The project has been guided by a 34-member Steering Committee and includes four phases as described below:

I. **Competitive Realities.** A realistic assessment of the Region's demographic and economic trends and its business competitiveness compared to three peer metropolitan areas. Complementing the quantitative data analysis is feedback gathered and compiled into a **Regional Input Summary**.

II. **Target Cluster Analysis.** Identifies primary business sectors that have the highest probability of sustained success for the future of the Region's economy. The *Target Cluster Analysis* examines national trends and builds upon the work of the *Competitive Realities*.

III. **Regional Vision Plan.** Developing the *Plan* brings together all subsequent project deliverables and provides a blueprint for the Region's future actions. The *Plan* addresses targeted business clusters, entrepreneurship, improving factors that affect business competitiveness, and leveraging regional partnerships.

IV. **Implementation Plan.** Effective implementation is critical to the ultimate success of the *Regional Vision Plan.* The Steering Committee and *Market Street* will work together to designate lead organizations, provide program assessments, determine funding reallocations, establish timetables, and recommend marketing and communication approaches.

Currently, the project is in the fourth phase, developing the implementation plan. Each deliverable can be downloaded from the project website, www.piedmonttriadvision.com. Also, the "Project Summary" document provided to the North Carolina General Assembly has a brief description of the key findings and strategies from each deliverable.

# MEETING THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

The legislative mandate for the Piedmont Triad's *Regional Vision Plan* required that seven tasks be accomplished in the strategic planning process. Throughout the process, *Market Street* and the Steering Committee have been cognizant of the need to meet the legislative mandate and have ensured that this occurs. For each task that follows, *Market Street* has described the specific areas in the planning process and the deliverable documents that address and accomplish the requirements of the legislative mandate. Readers should review the full versions of the deliverable documents for details.

1.  Perform a comprehensive study of the region's resources and existing businesses located in the region to determine what business clusters exist and the boundaries of those clusters, to develop ways to strengthen those clusters, and to determine in what areas the region has a competitive advantage that could lead to the development of future clusters.

    ✓ The *Competitive Realities* report contains an analysis of the economic structure and economic performance of the Piedmont Triad Region. It addresses the change in employment by business sectors in detail, particularly with the manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, professional and business services, and health care sectors.
    ✓ The report also discusses the Region's education, workforce, infrastructure, and business capacity resources that are important to many businesses.
    ✓ The *Target Cluster Analysis* is the document that describes the Region's recommended business clusters in detail. The six target clusters are: health care, logistics, wholesale trade, finance and insurance, food processing, and arts. *Market Street* based the target cluster recommendations on a set of criteria that considered the Region's competitive advantages. For each target cluster, the report provides a description of the cluster, industry trends, location factors, workforce requirements, and the Piedmont Triad Region's assets in the cluster, as related to existing businesses, employment, education and training programs, and other organizations or programs that support the cluster. The report also includes a discussion of the challenges the Region needs to address as it develops the clusters.
    ✓ Goal #3 in the *Regional Vision Plan* is focused on economic growth, diversification, and sustainability. Objective #1 is to "develop and expand the target clusters to create jobs and diversify the economy." Specific action steps were recommended to promote the development of each cluster.

2. Ensure that the benefits of the economic development plan are widely dispersed and that the plan provides real opportunities in rural areas as well as in urban and suburban areas.

- ✓ In recommending the target clusters, *Market Street* considered the capacity of the rural areas to develop the clusters. Within health care, health care services and medical supplies and device manufacturing are the sub-sectors that have the greatest potential in rural areas. There are also opportunities to develop logistics and wholesale trade throughout the Region, with the greatest potential being along highways and major roads. The selection of food processing as a target cluster was done purposefully to provide job opportunities to those without specialized skills or high education levels, particularly in the rural parts of the Region.
- ✓ The *Regional Vision Plan* is meant to serve all parts of the Region. For example, rural, urban, and suburban residents will reap benefits from the Region's improvements in education and workforce development (Goal #1). Areas that specifically mention rural areas include:
  i. Goal #1, Objective #2: "Work to increase educational attainment in the Region, particularly for minorities, rural areas, and those under age 30."
  ii. Goal #2, Objective #5: "Build the regional leadership capacity that is inclusive of minorities, rural areas, multiple generations, and is necessary for the Region to succeed."
  iii. Action step under Goal #3, Objective #1, for tourism: "Create a tourism education program for local businesses, particularly in the rural parts of the Region." This is part of a recommendation to develop a regional tourism plan that will create economic benefits for all parts of the Region.
  iv. Action steps under Goal #3, Objective #3 for entrepreneurship: "Expand the Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL) program in to more of the Region's rural high schools." And, "Evaluate the feasibility of creating incubators in the rural part of the Region."
  v. Goal #4, Objective #2: "Improve cellular and high-speed internet access in rural areas."

3. Develop focused and targeted economic development initiatives related to the recruitment and development of new businesses and the retention of existing businesses.

- ✓ Goal #3 in the *Regional Vision Plan* has four objectives, all of which support new and existing businesses.
  i. Objective #1: "Develop and expand the target clusters to create jobs and diversify the economy."

ii. Objective #2: "Coordinate the support infrastructure and create the culture and environment that will allow high-growth entrepreneurs to thrive."

iii. Objective #3: "Coordinate the support infrastructure to promote entrepreneurship and help lifestyle entrepreneurs attain self-sufficiency."

iv. Objective #4: "Increase the assistance and resources to support existing businesses and their expansion."

4. Provide a mechanism for continuous monitoring of the regional economy and competitiveness indicators and for updating the strategic economic development plan to take account of changing economic conditions.

✓ For each goal, the *Regional Vision Plan* provides a set of benchmarks and performance measures for the Piedmont Triad Region to track their progress. Benchmarks are the ultimate measurable goals that the implementation efforts are striving for, while the performance measures are the more specific measures to monitor the successful attainment of these benchmarks.  For example, a benchmark might be exceeding national job growth rates, and the performance measure would then be the percent growth in the Region's jobs.

✓ Because the *Regional Vision Plan* is a "living" document, it will need change and adapt over time to shifting economic, political and social conditions.  Monitoring the progress of each strategic component will enable regional decision-makers to determine the effect of policies and programs on overall regional goals, and also elements of the *Plan* that need to be expanded, contracted, or altered.

5. Recommend infrastructure investments to meet the region's current and anticipated future needs.

✓ Goal #4 in the *Regional Vision Plan* addresses infrastructure development.

i. Objective #1: "Develop a regional transportation plan that will accelerate and expand transportation infrastructure improvements, improve air quality, and accommodate alternative modes of transportation, including mass or public transportation."

ii. Objective #2: "Improve cellular and high-speed internet access in rural areas."

iii. Objective #3: "Develop an accepted plan to address solid waste disposal in the Region."

iv. Objective #4: "Ensure that the water supply and water quality in all of the Region's counties is adequate to support existing residents and businesses, as well as future growth."

6. Integrate the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina into economic development efforts and planning.

  ✓ The Steering Committee guiding the strategic planning process included leaders from the North Carolina School of the Arts, Montgomery Community College, North Carolina A&T State University, University of North Carolina – Greensboro, Surry Community College, Winston-Salem State University, and Greensboro College.
  ✓ Higher education institutions have an important role in the overall economic development strategy for the Piedmont Triad area and are explicitly included multiple times in the *Regional Vision Plan.*
      i. Action step in Goal #1, Objective #1: "Work with high schools and community colleges to develop progressive curricula that provide options for workforce preparedness (vocational preparation) and a smooth transition from high schools to community college programs."
      ii. Action steps in Goal #1, Objective #2: "Establish support among businesses, community colleges, and universities region-wide for legislative change to allow undocumented residents to earn degrees and take classes at in-state tuition rates." And, "Coordinate the training and workforce preparation efforts of community colleges, workforce development providers, and other non-profit service providers." And, "Strengthen the relationships between the Region's K-12 schools and the colleges and universities."
      iii. Action steps in Goal #1, Objective #3: "Expand GTCC's Quick Jobs program to other counties in the Region." And, "Ensure that community colleges across the Region are working more with companies that have announced mass layoffs."
      iv. Goal #1, Objective #4: "Continue to develop and maximize the Region's research capacity of its colleges and universities, and seek opportunities for collaborative efforts."
      v. Goal #1, Objective #5: "Develop and enhance education and training programs and strengthen the connections between businesses and higher education institutions to prepare the workforce for jobs in the target cluster areas."

7. Create leadership networks that span the public and private sectors and that facilitate communication within clusters, between members of complementary clusters, and between members of the public and private sectors.

  ✓ The entire *Regional Vision Plan* is based on the premise that economic development efforts must include leaders from both public and private sectors. Many of the action steps recommend that business leaders,

government officials, and other community leaders work together on multiple issues, including education and workforce development, economic growth, and quality of life.

✓ In fact, Goal #2 is entirely devoted to leadership, communication, and partnership building among various regional stakeholders: "The Region's leadership will establish the framework to align goals, effectively boost local morale, build trust, and maximize cooperation among regional constituencies."

✓ Many of the action steps recommended for developing the target clusters (Goal #3, Objective #1) require strong communication among businesses, economic development entities, and other support organizations. Also, the *Regional Vision Plan* discusses the potential relationships between the logistics and wholesale trade clusters, and recommends communication between the two industry groups to identify opportunities to work together and to address related issues.

The Steering Committee and *Market Street* believe that the *Regional Vision Plan* meets not only the legislative mandate, but also the Piedmont Triad Region's need for a detailed blueprint to work towards a positive future. However, implementation is a critical part of the success of the plan. *Market Street* is working with the Steering Committee to develop an implementation plan. Details about the progress of this final phase are provided in the accompanying "Project Summary" document.