

**Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance
Comprehensive Plan Task Force
Survey Results – August 2008**

The Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance (Alliance) would like to be an effective participant in the development of comprehensive plans for its three municipalities. The organization's goals include encouraging the growth of existing and new businesses, coordinating the efforts of those involved in commerce, industry or the professions, promoting the area as a year-round travel destination, and supporting all activities believed to be beneficial to the area. In support of those goals, the organization has identified several specific responsibilities. One of those is to represent the interests of the business and tourism community by harnessing the collective power of its members and using the power in constructive ways as issues of interest to business arise. Another is to assist the municipalities in achieving their goals when business can be a productive partner.

In the spring of 2008, the Alliance established a Comprehensive Plan Task Force to follow the progress of the ongoing comprehensive plan discussions in James City County, share appropriate information within the Alliance, identify key business issues, assess their importance to our members and communicate them within the Comprehensive Plan review process. The Task Force members, selected to represent a cross-section of businesses and locations throughout the County, are as follows: James R. Golden (chair), William and Mary; Nicholas Barrett, Prime Outlets at Williamsburg; Robin Carson, Kingsmill; Brien R. Craft, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.-Distribution Center; Paul W. Gerhardt, Kaufman and Canoles Attorneys at Law; Victoria Gussman, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Robert Hershberger, Alliance; Charles P. Martino, Cooke's Gardens; Gary M. Massie, Jack L. Massie Contractor; Joseph S. Mastaler, Jr., Witt Mares; Brian McNelis, Busch Brewery; Marc Sharp, Bush Construction; Michael A. Matthews, The Structures Group; Richard Schreiber, Alliance; Robert J. Singley, Sr., RJS & Associates, Inc.; Randy Smith, Prudential McCardle Real Estate; and Marshall N. Warner, Chesapeake Bank.

Members of the Task Force reviewed the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and the surveys and other materials posted on the James City County website for the current planning process. Task Force representatives attended all the community conversations conducted by the Citizen Participation Team. The Task Force also carefully reviewed the report and recommendations of the recent Business Climate Task Force. Based on that analysis, the Task Force identified the following six issues as critical to the future of the entire area:

- 1) Retain the Uniqueness of our area. Support actions to protect and enhance County resources such as recreation, culture, arts and entertainment, appearance, and environmentally positive policies.
- 2) Target the Attraction of New Businesses and the Expansion of Existing Businesses. Target businesses that share values of fair pay, high wages, benefits, year-round employment, diversity of work force, and interest in the well being of their employees. Especially seek out businesses that generate positive net fiscal impact on the county and that also are environmentally friendly and clean with relatively low impact on natural resources. Encourage development and/or use of Class A or B office space. Advocate marketing and communication efforts to recruit, retain, and expand businesses. Leverage the research programs at the College of William and Mary to attract knowledge-based businesses.
- 3) Strengthen Tourism. Build on existing strengths in tourism to leverage local history, culture, and infrastructure. Encourage continued growth in the tourism industry through investment in regional promotion, infrastructure, recreational and cultural amenities, develop transportation alternatives and road connections to minimize local use of major tourism routes, recognize the benefits to local citizens of access to infrastructure surrounding the tourism industry, and support expansion of workforce training in high-skill areas within the tourism industry.

- 4) Address Workforce Needs. Take actions to help alleviate the critical shortage of workers (current and projected) recognizing that the current situation is not adequate to facilitate a balanced business portfolio. Actions may include but are not limited to (1) increase the number and diversity of housing opportunities, (2) use zoning and other incentives to attract and retain an appropriate workforce, (3) explore staffing policies and strategies by existing businesses to encourage the hiring of retirees, job sharing, flexible work hours, and working from home, (4) support expansion of workforce training programs, especially in high schools and at Thomas Nelson Community College and the College of William and Mary, and (5) support development of areas like New Town to help attract and retain young professionals.
- 5 - Enhance our Transportation Networks. Encourage local transportation initiatives to create connections and reduce dependence on major local arteries where conflict with other traffic needs exist. Designate and improve major arteries for longer trips through the region. Increase and support low cost public transportation from Hampton/Newport News to James City County by WAT.
- 6 - Improve County Master Planning. Proactively identify and master plan areas suitable for economic development to help manage business growth and protect the community's character through installation of infrastructure, including storm-water facilities. Identify and incentivize research and technology zones. Use a business facilitator to serve as an advocate for the processing and preparation of site plans and building permits for appropriate businesses. Continue to adjust the James City County plan review process to provide: (a) earlier communication with designers, (b) easier access to review comments, (d) coordination with various regulatory groups, (e) reasonable turn-around times, and (f) a longer planning horizon.

On July 31, 2008, the Task Force chairman presented an overview of these findings to the Citizen Participation Team and reported the plan to initiate a survey to see if members concurred with the issues the Task Force had identified. The Alliance retained *The Wessex Group, Ltd.* (TWG) to develop a survey that would answer these questions. Members were queried electronically about their views and their judgment as to the relative importance of various issues. TWG completed the survey in August, 2008 and provided its findings to the Task Force.

As you will see below in TWG's executive summary, the Alliance members strongly endorsed the importance of the six issues. They believed that the comprehensive plan should pay particular attention to maintaining the uniqueness of the area, promoting business development along the lines suggested, and strengthening tourism. We hope the survey results will be a useful contribution to the ongoing comprehensive plan process.

Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance

James City County Comprehensive Plan – Alliance Member Survey

Executive Summary

August 2008

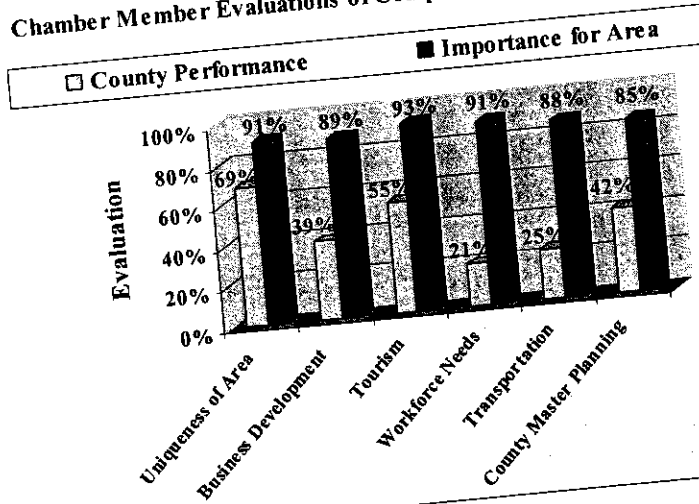
The Comprehensive Plan Task Force (Task Force) for the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance (the Alliance) commissioned a survey to learn about the views of its members concerning the future of James City County (the County) and the strategic direction that its Comprehensive Plan should establish. The Task Force wanted to understand if there were strategic development issues facing James City County that currently are not addressed by its Comprehensive Plan. The Alliance retained *The Wessex Group, Ltd.* (TWG) to develop a survey that would answer these questions. Respondents were queried electronically about their views and their judgment as to the relative importance of various issues. The study is intended to serve as a means of communicating the collective views of the business community to the County and its planners.

Responses were received from 145, or almost 15 percent, of the Alliance members. Two out of three of the Alliance members responding to this survey live in James City County (68%), 11% live in the City of Williamsburg and 8% live in York County. For most, their businesses also are located in James City County (54%) or in the City of Williamsburg (23%). Most of the Alliance members responding to the survey work with firms having fifty or fewer employees (85%). Respondents represented a wide variety of different types of firms including services (67%), tourism (20%), retail (8 %) and manufacturing (4%). Given the range of respondent profiles, it is likely that they represent a reasonable cross-section of Alliance members.

As shown in Figure 1-1 below, the respondents confirmed that the six issues identified by the steering committee – uniqueness of the area, business development, tourism, workforce development, transportation and master planning -- were all very important to the membership. The scale for responses was as follows: 5 –Very important; 4 – somewhat important; 3 – neither important nor unimportant; 2 – somewhat unimportant; and 1 – very unimportant. The average response in each of the six areas was in the “very important” range.

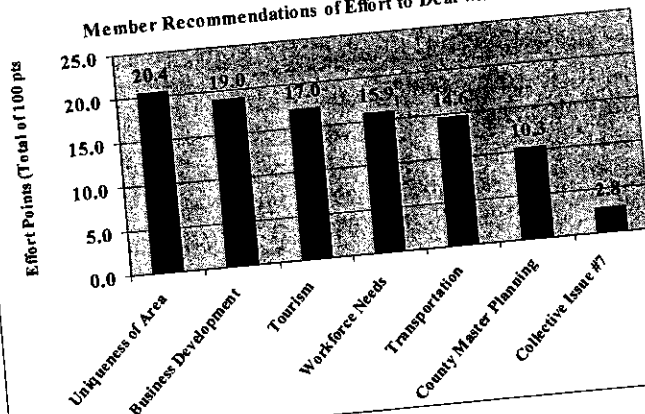
Members were also asked to indicate how well the county was doing on each issue. The question did not refer directly to the performance of County government, but asked more generally how the county was doing in each area. The scale for responses was as follows: 5 – very well; 4 – somewhat well; 3 -- neither well nor poorly; 2 – somewhat badly; 1 – very badly. The evaluation for meeting workforce and transportation needs was at the edge of the “somewhat badly” and “very badly” range. Business development, county master planning, and tourism were in the middle to “somewhat badly” range, and maintenance of the uniqueness of the area scored in the “somewhat well” range.

Figure 1-1
Chamber Member Evaluations of Comprehensive Plan Issues



The survey also asked members to indicate how much effort they would apply to each issue if they were in charge of managing the implementation of James City County's Comprehensive plan. Members were given 100 points to allocate across the different areas, so they had to make hard choices about where effort should be placed. Figure 3-1 shows the results. Although they thought the county was already doing relatively well in preserving the uniqueness of the area, the members voted that as the area that should receive the greatest emphasis. Business development was a close second, and followed by tourism and workforce needs.

Figure 3-1
Member Recommendations of Effort to Deal with Issues



Members were also given the opportunity to identify important topics (shown as "collective issues" in Figure 3-1) that had not been included in the six categories. Four items were mentioned by at least two respondents -- enhancing green space and supporting partnership between the County and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden on the Jamestown Beach Campground site; controlling/managing growth through management of the PSA or linking approvals to water supply; addressing transportation issues by creating incentives for group and mass transit use by visitors and adding sidewalks in selected areas; and encouraging collaboration between the arts and cultural tourism.