



# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT ||







# CONNECTING THE REGION THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS.

“ Our region is comprised of eight very diverse communities that form an overall great pace to work, live and play. When our individual communities succeed, the region succeeds. As regional leadership, we are all tasked with working together to better our area for our citizens and companies, as well as the overall economy.

- Victor K. Branch, VGR Board of Directors Chairman ”

**P**artners, allies and business community,

After calling the region home for more than 10 years, I have become rooted in the community through relationships, church and family. I have found the common thread for individuals across the region is a desire for good jobs with livable wages, great education opportunities, and amenities for their families to enjoy. It is invigorating to work with communities that are unique in their own right, and yet very connected regionally. With the spirit of cooperation and leadership and the implementation of regional growth strategies that hundreds of volunteers have committed their time to develop and support, the opportunities are limitless. I am pleased to share with you highlights of the *Driving Regional Growth ~ Embracing a Global Future Initiative (G2)*, a culmination of 90 location and expansion announcements, 10,785 new jobs and \$3.4 billion in capital investment in the region over the past five years.



It is important to understand that this same group of stakeholders and community leaders, along with many new faces, are currently developing the region's path forward for the next five years. We are doing this to create good jobs that bring prosperity for the region's citizens. I look forward to being a part of the team building an ideal business climate and economy for families in the region to share in the American dream.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Renee Chapline".

**C. Renee Chapline**  
President & CEO, Virginia's Gateway Region EDO

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# 2015: CONNECTING REGIONALLY

In 2015, Virginia's Gateway Region Economic Development Organization maintained its reputation for excellence in economic development, securing growth in the local economy, local industry base and quality of life assets. Project activity results show strong foreign direct investment activity, as well as a continued interest from manufacturing companies. While numbers in this report showcase the hard work of the organization, its communities and partners, there has been a great deal of change in the region as a whole that cannot be captured in statistics alone. The results reported here represent gainful employment for the region's citizens and funds for community improvement, resulting in quality of life gains for the region as a whole.

## 2015 Results



## Project Pipeline



### Lead Generation

- 14 Business Attraction Programs
- 58% Internal Lead Generation
- 17.3% Foreign Direct Investment

### Site Selection

- 25 Project Visits
- 106 Properties Submitted
- 33 Properties Visited

### Location Interest Industry Composition

- 29% General Manufacturing
- 21% Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% Transportation/Distribution/Logistics
- 10% Retail/Hospitality/Entertainment/Other
- 8% Food, Beverage & Natural Products
- 8% Energy/Utilities/Waste Management
- 6% Other
- 4% Agriculture & Natural Resource





**CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, BUT  
PROGRESS IS TRULY OPTIONAL.**

- Don Allen Holbrook

# G2: 2011-2015

*Driving Regional Growth ~ Embracing a Global Future* (G2) created benchmarks to guide VGR over the past five years. G2 was designed to stimulate the regional economy. It also reinstilled a sense of regional accountability for the region's eight communities and more than 100 corporate partners, which participated in the development of the regional strategy: "New Business Attraction," "Business Retention & Expansion," "Commercial Revitalization," "Workforce Vibrancy" and "Small Business & Entrepreneurship." Through an intentional regional approach visible in clear metrics, the results far-surpassed the established goals and supported measurable growth in the local economy.

**Return on Investment**  
Approximate ROI for every \$1,000 invested in VGR:

<b>\$900,000</b> Capital Investment	<b>3</b> Jobs Created
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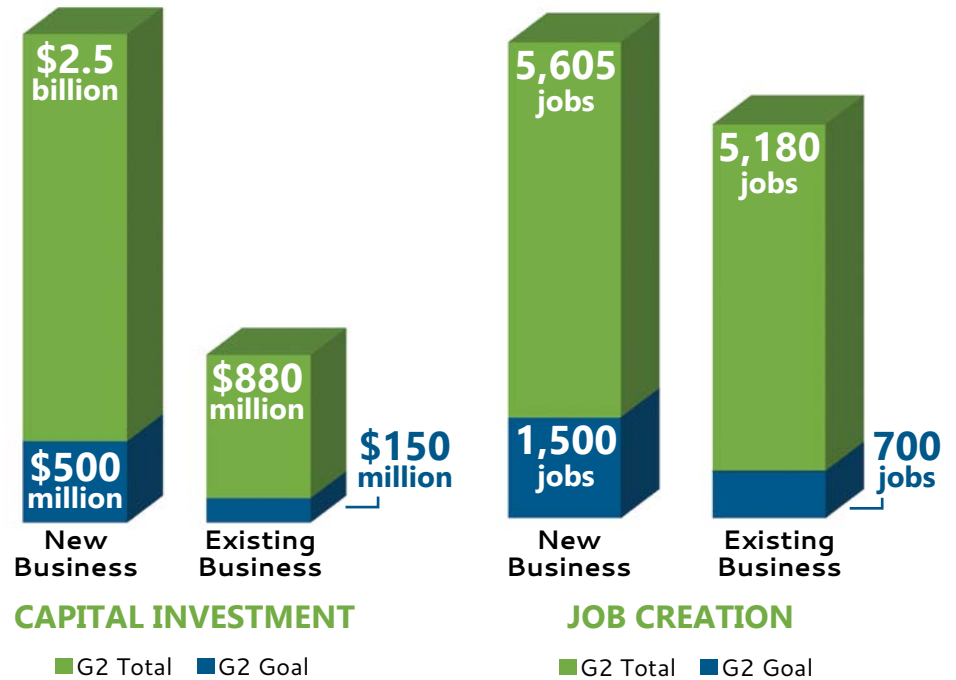
**Total New Companies Assisted** **260**

G2 Goal **100**

**Support Programs for Existing Business**


**15**

G2 Goal: 15 = 1 program



**International Companies Assisted**


**52**

G2 Goal: 10 = 4.33 companies

**Foreign Direct Investment Outreach** **66**

G2 Goal **20**

## Economic Injections

Each job created and dollar invested in the community produces a far-reaching impact in the local economy. For example, each new job and dollar invested brings new annual wages that can be spent in the community, creates indirect jobs in supporting industries, and contributes to additional tax revenues enabling local governments to provide services and infrastructure for citizens and businesses.

PROJECTED NEW ANNUAL PAYROLL\* **\$596.3M**

PROJECTED NEW ANNUAL TAX REVENUE\*\* **\$17.6M**

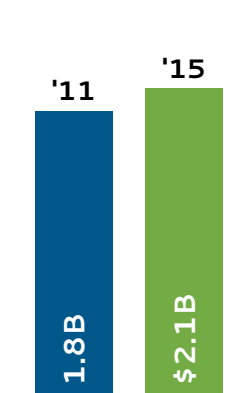
# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The Gateway Region economy experienced marked improvement over the five-year period, reaching new highs in wages, employment, sales and more. As companies create jobs in the region, individuals and families bring in more income, buy more goods and services, invest in real estate, and help increase the overall business activity of the region, sustaining and cultivating the local economic ecosystem. 2011 through 2015 has demonstrated promise for a bright future.

## Why Does Economic Development Matter?

"It's awesome having a job here in the region. I have a family, I'm saving to buy a house, I bought a nice vehicle. This job is really great, I love it."

- Jamie Spencer, Service Center Metals employee



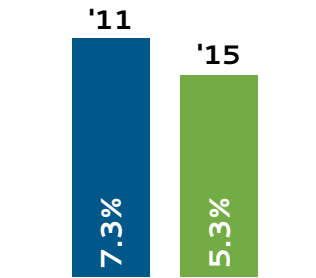
**TOTAL WAGES**  
5-Year Change: +13.5%



**AVERAGE WAGES**  
5-Year Change: +2.9%



**EMPLOYMENT**  
5-Year Change: +8.5%



**UNEMPLOYMENT**

\*Estimated total new annual earnings for employees based on average wages. \*\*Combined estimated increase in M&T and real estate revenues from projects announced. \*\*\*Total combined tax revenues in Gateway Region communities including real estate, personal property, machine & equipment, local sales and business license taxes. Document Sources: IMPLAN; JobsEQ - Chmura Analytics; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau; VGR Internal Database; Virginia Department of Taxation; Virginia Economic Development Partnership; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; Select icons/graphics designed by FreePik





Ashland Expansion Announcement  
Photo by Michaele White, Governor's Office



# CULTIVATING GROWTH

Over the past five years, existing industry expansions have accounted for 63 percent of new job creation and 58 percent of new capital investment. Several major employers have expanded multiple times, including Honeywell, Ashland, Amazon.com and Sabra Dipping Company. Such growth speaks volumes about the business climate in the region. VGR, along with community partners, provide proactive responses to the evolving needs of businesses in the region. Our communities draw on this engagement in the business community to provide technical assistance and programs on topics such as human resources and exports, and continually refine services to support sustainable growth for our local businesses.

## 2015 Existing Business Expansions

**7** Existing Business Expansions | **717** New Jobs Created

**\$89.25M** Capital Investment

## 2015 Existing Business Services

**236** Existing Business Meetings | **9** Speaking Engagements

**19** Events Held | **425** Event Participants





Human Resources Forum: Lynn Jacob and Brydon DeWitt, Williams Mullen; Sarah Ann Rand, Southside Regional Medical Center; Renee Chapline, VGR; and John Carter, The Wauford Group

## COLLABORATING TO GROW TOGETHER

### Human Resource Forum

While global business attraction is one of the region's priorities, local business expansion and assistance is still on the forefront of its agenda. This is why VGR facilitated the Human Resources 2.0: Professionals Forum in March, which invited local business leaders and human resources professionals to discuss best practices, relevant legislation and key legal issues. Held at John Tyler Community College and in partnership with Williams Mullen, the panel was composed of experts from Southside Regional Medical Center, The Wauford Group and Williams Mullen.

### Partners Supporting Partners

This fall, VGR partnered with Dominion Resources, Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Petersburg Chamber of Commerce to host a luncheon to provide an update on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Held at Richard Bland College, Dominion educated community leaders and existing industry members on the proposed new natural gas infrastructure associated with the project and the benefits it could provide. Interested parties were also informed about the coalition, EnergySure, established as a way for an organization to show their support.

### Greater Richmond Exports

This summer, VGR formed a collaborative partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Greater Richmond Partnership and JPMorgan Chase & Co. for an export initiative. The initiative aims to measure exports as a tool for regional competitiveness and activity, as well as identify barriers. "Most of the world's economic growth is occurring outside the U.S., and tapping into this expanding market can only benefit the Greater Richmond region," said John Accordino, director of VCU's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis. A survey revealed several key ways the region and surrounding metro area could increase exporting, such as developing a metro-wide strategy, identifying companies to lead efforts and increasing information sharing. Development of the initiative will continue into 2016 with an expected launch in the 2017 fiscal year.





Landen Strapping Ribbon Cutting  
Photo by Shelby Mertens, The Progress-Index

## 2015 Gateway Region Expansions

Company	Location	Month
Cuore	Chesterfield	February
Ashland Chemicals	Hopewell	April
Landen Strapping	Hopewell	May
Amazon.com	Chesterfield	May
Amazon.com	Dinwiddie	May
United Parcel Service	Chesterfield	November
Commonwealth Industrial Services	Petersburg	November

### Cuore

A specialized telemarketing call center, Cuore added 200 jobs to its Chesterfield County location in February. The local, highly trained workforce, world-class telecommunications connectivity and superb quality of life for employees are some of the many reasons the company chose the area in 2011.

## REINVESTING IN OPERATIONS

### Ashland

In April, Ashland announced an \$89 million expansion at its Hopewell facility. Along with the capital investment, they plan to hire 17 additional employees, bringing total employment at the facility to 254. With support from both the city and state levels, Ashland received a \$700,000 Virginia Investment Partnership grant. Originally Hercules, Inc., Ashland has been manufacturing in Hopewell since 1926, and will use the investment to increase production of chemicals used in paint and pharmaceutical products.

### Amazon.com

Since launching operations in both Chesterfield and Dinwiddie Counties in 2012, Amazon has continuously expanded its employee base, adding hundreds each year. 2015 was no exception, as 500 new jobs were created between the two 1-million sq. ft. fulfillment centers, adding more than \$14 million in wages to the community. Amazon also started one-hour deliveries in the greater Richmond metro area.

### Landen Strapping

A family-run business in Prince George County, Landen Strapping opened a new facility in a repurposed building in the City of Hopewell in July. Specializing in strapping systems for food packaging, hardwood flooring, tobacco, textiles and parcel delivery, Landen serves markets all over the world, and customers such as Philip Morris and Chick-fil-A. The company has been in operation for more than 35 years and employs 19 at the two locations.

## Select New Companies

### Trapezium & Big Trouble

A nationwide trend, craft brewing and distilling has peaked interest in the metro area and region. The City of Petersburg, for example, had announcements in 2015 for a mixed-use craft brewing project and a distillery. Trapezium Brewery will be a 30-barrel brew house coupled with a pizzeria and 18 new apartments, while Big Trouble Malting and Spirits will use Virginia-grown barley, wheat, rye and fruit for malting and distilling.

### Deuta America

Deuta-Werke GmbH, a German-owned producer of electronics for the transportation industry, located its first U.S. office in Chesterfield County after meeting VGR at an international tradeshow. The company, which produces nearly indestructible data recorders for trains, has plans to increase the "Made in America" status of its products from its new U.S. base of operations.

### Allan Myers

Independence Construction Materials, now merged into Allan Myers, worked extensively with VGR and a broker partner to select a site in the region, eventually settling on Petersburg's Interstate Industrial Park. The company plans to invest \$7.3 million and create 37 jobs upon opening in 2016.

# ACTIVATING OPPORTUNITIES

Local community revitalization and business expansion are key components in creating a healthy economy and ultimately attracting new businesses from beyond Virginia to call the region home. In 2015, VGR announced several new companies will establish operations here, create new jobs for citizens and inject tax revenue directly into our communities. VGR dedicated time and resources to pursue these companies, forging strategic partnerships with influential organizations that seek the same overall goal: regional prosperity.

#### 2015 New Business Locations

**6** New Business Locations | **172** New Jobs Created  
**\$14.7M** Capital Investment

#### New Business Activities

**14** Business Attraction Programs  
**502** Business Attraction Meetings

### Region Aligns with Virginia Economic Development Partnership

In the spring, Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) representatives met in the Gateway Region for one of the region's most unique and delicious events: Fort Lee's 40th Annual Culinary Competition. The competition brings talented military chefs from around the world to showcase the skills they've learned while serving. This event highlights the strength of the region's workforce in the culinary arts, and its ability to support the food and beverage industry needs. The region is home to Sabra Dipping Company, Boar's Head Provisions, Perdue and a host of other fine food processing and packaging companies. VEDP also gathered with regional leaders in Richmond for a Lunch & Learn in which they learned about ongoing community revitalization and the strides made by local universities and workforce training groups.



Fort Lee Culinary Competition







Craft Brew Expo  
Photo by Jason E. Kaplan



2015



**Southern Business & Development Roundtable**

Led by facilitators in a discussion format, VGR and partners were among 50 economic development leaders from around the U.S. invited to come together to share best practices, global trends in the industry, and align resources in the southern economy through innovative economic development initiatives.

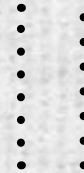


**Craft Brew Expo**



Photo by Jason E. Kaplan

**Washington, D.C. Region**



January



March



April



May



**SelectUSA Investment Summit**

SelectUSA's 2015 Investment Summit brought 2,500 business leaders and economic development professionals from around the world to one venue to create dialogue about locating in the U.S. As a part of the goSOVA delegation, VGR was front and center in the exhibit hall to speak with business leaders.



**National Plastics Expo**



**ICSC RECon**







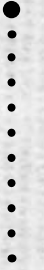
Photograph: Koalmesse

VEDA Summer Membership Meeting



● Delaware Region

Pennsylvania Region



● Anuga  
Women in Economic Development Forum

Chicago Region ●



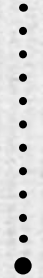
June

July

August

September

October



Bisnow DICE

VGR partnered with Dominion to attend data center executive forum Bisnow DICE, which provided insight in back office infrastructure, fiber trends, popularity of co-location and cyber security. Experts from high-level companies such as Amazon, IBM and Goldman Sachs, as well as economic development professionals, explored topics on the future of data centers development, design and site selection.

Natural Products Expo East ●

San Francisco Region ●

● Data Center World Fall National Harbor Conference



Photo by Data Center World





Community College Workforce Alliance Mobile Learning Center

# ACCELERATING PRODUCTIVITY

Workforce development is one of the most important issues around the country, placing a much-needed national spotlight on vocational and skills training. VGR and partners recognize the local need for programs focusing on STEM-H education, alternatives to four-year degrees and on-the-job experience. Across the region, such programs have become available in order to prepare the next generation for the jobs they will fill in the future. Local higher education institutions have also made strides to expand curriculum offerings and align programs with nationwide trends. VGR's intentional collaboration with these programs is critical because it brings the business voice to the table to better align industry needs with workforce partners and stakeholders in the region.

## OUR PARTNERS AT WORK

### **John Tyler Community College**

In 2015, John Tyler Community College (JTCC) launched Modern Makers, an opportunity for area students to explore education and job opportunities in STEM-H fields. During an open house in the fall, nearly 300 visitors, ranging in age from middle school to adults, came from all over the region to get an up-close-and-personal look at engineering/IT, manufacturing, health and science fields. Participants engaged with live demos, expert panels and tested equipment they could use in class such as a welding simulator, 3D printers and a classroom ambulance. Representatives from 20 businesses and universities/colleges lined the halls to discuss opportunities at their respective locations, giving prospective students and employees a picture of potential careers and training they can pursue.

### **Community College Workforce Alliance**

2015 was a breakout year for the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA), which provides elite workforce training for companies and individuals. In September, the alliance was awarded a \$2.9 million grant for its "Apprentice Virginia: Collaborative Workforce Solutions in Information Technology & Advanced Manufacturing" project which will create and expand opportunities for more than 330 workers in targeted H-1B industries. CCWA also partnered with the Virginia Manufacturing Association to streamline access to Manufacturing Technician Level 1 (MT1) certification, and added a new 40-foot Advanced Manufacturing Mobile Learning Lab that offers the flexibility to bring training directly to employers.

### **Virginia State University**

Virginia State University (VSU) offers an impressive array of courses and programs that mold students into a capable workforce. One of many highlights of the university is the College of Agriculture, which tackles global trends such as food deserts and sustainable living. Students gain experience in unique fields such as aquaculture and urban gardening while learning about business and science. VSU also has its College of Engineering and Technology, producing workers prepared for in-demand local jobs. Students gain hands-on experience with computer programs, tools and equipment that are used by local and national employers in manufacturing and technology fields.

### **Richard Bland College**

To meet industry demand, Richard Bland College (RBC) created a Logistics Management Certificate that focuses on tangible skills. With courses such as "Transportation Distribution," "Inventory and Warehousing," and "Logistics It Applications," the program is technology-intensive and relates to most STEM-oriented fields. The program is ideal for many students in the region, from traditional high school graduates to first-line supervisors. The program is also valuable for soldiers, who can receive 22 college credits for training.



# STIMULATING INNOVATION

VGR supports small businesses and growth through outreach and technical support. VGR reached a diverse small business base with various initiatives with technical assistance from website optimization to grant assistance, ultimately fostering entrepreneurial growth throughout the year. We are all better connected! You'll find in the Gateway Region, if you have a great idea, doors will open for you. Collaborative partnerships create a vibrant place to start YOUR business.

## PROGRAMS THAT EMPOWER

### Get Your Business Online Workshop

VGR forged a new partnership with Google for its "Let's Put Our Cities on the Map" initiative, which utilizes Google's web support resources and partner network, enabling VGR to host a "Get Your Business Online" workshop in November. Small businesses from around the region participated in the VGR-led workshop to ensure they can be found on Google when consumers use the search engine, optimize their web presence, and access free customizable business websites. VGR will facilitate additional workshops in 2016.



### VGR Partners with Greater Richmond GATE

VGR partnered with the Greater Richmond GATE to inform local entrepreneurs about resources available to them throughout the region. In partnership with VGR, GATE helps eligible adults, dislocated workers and veterans start small businesses in the region with tools like mentorship and free courses to help turn ideas into reality.





# OPPORTUNITIES DON'T HAPPEN, YOU CREATE THEM.

-Chris Grosser



Three Brothers Distillery



# STORYTELLING THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

The region is home to numerous assets, from vibrant businesses to a wide range of historical and recreational amenities. One of its most unique assets is President of Waukeshaw Development Dave McCormack, who has completed millions of dollars in projects locally and across the state.

Locals have most likely had a cup of coffee, barbeque sandwich or a good night's sleep inside one of the new buildings and business projects. McCormack is responsible for the Mayton Transfer Lofts, Demolition Coffee, Hopewell Lofts, and several businesses in the works such as a brewery and malting facility in Petersburg. McCormack's projects have served as revitalization stepping stones, supporting the transformation of the region's historic cities.

"A lot of what I do in some sense is storytelling. History is one of the big assets of any small town, especially Virginia which has historic towns, the stories and the romance," McCormack said. "What we're really trying to do is not just revive these buildings, but bring that story back."

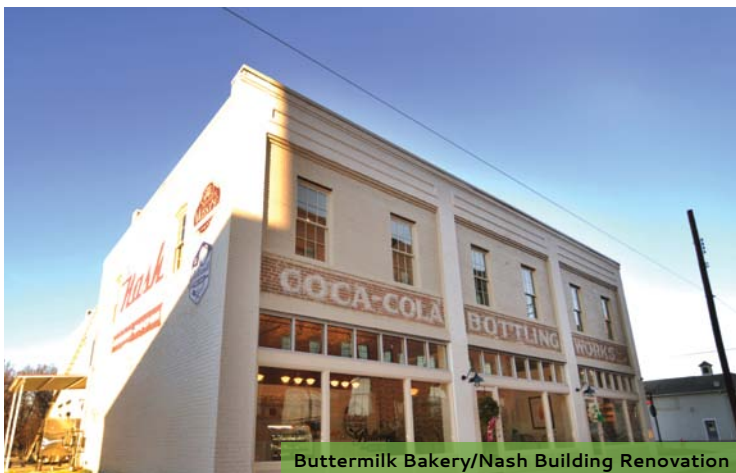
McCormack started buying and revitalizing buildings in the City of Petersburg in 2000, taking advantage of excellent proximity to I-95 and Fort Lee, as well as affordable property prices. But more importantly, he saw an opportunity to serve and improve his community.

"I thought that it was grossly underdeveloped and that there's opportunity here. Just saying to myself 'let's go get coffee' all of a sudden posed massive challenges because you had to drive to really get something high quality," McCormack noted. "My feeling was, I wanted to think like a developer, but react like a resident, and say 'what would I want to see here?'"

On his path to revive his surroundings, McCormack has created jobs and opened doors to new opportunities, adding to the shift in perceptions of the place we call home. He continues to be one of the driving forces in increasing the region's value as a special place to live, work and play.



Dave McCormack





# FORGING OPPORTUNITIES

## Pave the Way Initiative

Set to launch in 2016, VGR's Pave the Way Initiative provides local entrepreneurs and regional citizens the assistance they need to grow their businesses. The program does this through a range of services and resources, including customized technical assistance, storefront selection assistance, global product promotion and much more. Pave the Way is geared to foster the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem and in-turn generate local and global interest in the area. It will work in tandem with other regional programs to offer mentoring, market research, promotional strategy development and online marketing assistance, among other services. This collaborative effort will utilize our local and regional stakeholders, chambers of commerce and state partners.

## Breaking New Ground for Entrepreneurs

Through state funding and local assistance, four new business ideas have been given a financial boost to help them open their doors. As one of the first three communities in the state to participate in the Community Business Launch (CBL) program, the City of Hopewell will now be home to a new gym, restaurant, doughnut shop and candy store. After participating in eight weeks of businesses courses taught by industry professionals, the entrepreneurs behind each business were given a portion of \$70,000 to help launch new businesses in the city. The City of Petersburg was later awarded \$60,000 to begin its own CBL in 2016.

## Regional "Spirits"

### Three Brothers Distillery

Announced in 2014, Three Brothers Distillery made steady progress this year setting up shop in Sussex County. Co-located with the Cheerful Chicken Farm, Owner and Founder David Reavis plans to purchase local grains to make spirits and liquors starting in 2016. "Sussex County is in the heart of farm country in Virginia. I am able to purchase local grains to manufacture spirits with. This means I am helping local farmers, as well as reducing our environmental impact and transportation costs," said Reavis.

Reavis intends on using "forgotten recipes" from previous generations to breathe new life into making spirits. "We are bringing back the innovation and the excitement that had fallen by the wayside. There has been a growth in the market fueled by the craft movement that is really exciting," Reavis said. "As a part of that, I get to make quality spirits, using premium ingredients and market them to discerning consumers across the U.S."

Three Brother's grand opening is scheduled in tandem with the first ever Sussex Song, Sausage, & Spirit Festival on Oct. 22, 2016. The festival will showcase locally farmed and produced foods and beverages, and will include live music and a 5k race.



Three Brothers Distillery Equipment





Meadowville Technology Park



# OPENING DOORS

This year, both the organization and regional partners dedicated time, effort and resources to improving the regional image. Whether from a digital marketing campaign or re-branding for the community, the region has demonstrated the quality of life, beauty and attraction for businesses and visitors alike. Each community embarked on revitalization projects to enhance their streetscapes and quality of life amenities for residents. VGR developed new marketing collateral to showcase the region's best-in-class livability assets to the world.

## International Recognition

In October, VGR received an award from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for its 2014 Annual Report. The report received the bronze prize for regions with a population between 200,000–500,000 and was designed and written in-house by the team. IEDC's Excellence in Economic Development Awards recognize best practices and leaders in economic development programs, partnerships and marketing materials.



## Standards for Excellence

One way VGR sought to improve its organizational management and efficiencies over the past year was to work ardently with The Cameron Foundation to be recognized by the Standards for Excellence's tiered "Standards Basic" program. This program is the closest possible to national-level certification for nonprofits and is a process used to identify nonprofits of all types and sizes that meet best management practices. VGR also received the Handy L. Lindsey, Jr. Award for Excellence in Organizational Management from The Cameron Foundation in October for successful completion of the program. The organization has been recognized three times over the past decade for excellence in organizational management by the foundation.

## Duke Nonprofit Management Courses

In order to further bolster the organization's reputation for organizational excellence, VGR participated in the Duke Nonprofit Management program. Sponsored by The Cameron Foundation in partnership with Duke University, the program featured courses throughout the year taught by industry experts to increase their capacity for effective entrepreneurial leadership through applied theoretical studies, executive skills training and reflective practices in an interactive learning environment.

## 2015 Attraction Activities

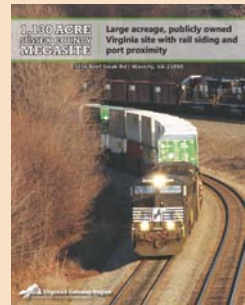
13 News Media Mentions | 51% Website Traffic Increase

59% Increase in Social Media Subscribers

53,680 Newsletters Recipients

## Real Estate Marketing Profiles

VGR completed high quality marketing materials for a top site or building in each of its eight member communities. Each profile utilizes high-quality imagery and graphics to highlight properties' readiness and suitability for investment, along with the community and region's advantages as a business location. This work serves VGR's business attraction and expansion efforts by improving the quality of marketing materials for publicly and independently owned properties that would otherwise rely on fee-based services for marketing and promotion. VGR produces its own materials in-house in order to ensure that sites or buildings that have the highest potential to contribute to the community's tax base have the best possible opportunity to attract investment.



# COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

## Chesterfield County

Shandong Tranlin Paper Company broke ground on the \$2 billion manufacturing facility in Chesterfield County that is expected to employ 2,000 people by 2020. The county's economic growth continues to surge, as home sales and building permits in new neighborhoods have increased at an aggressive rate. To complement this growth, Chesterfield announced several new retail openings, including Fresh Market, Wegmans and Kroger. On the distribution side of things, Chesterfield was ranked in the Top 10 Cities to Locate a Warehouse and in the Top 25 Logistic Friendly Cities based on corporate site selection feedback.

## City of Colonial Heights

The City of Colonial Heights has capitalized on its location advantages for retail on Temple Ave, welcoming German-based grocer Aldi and announcing the construction of a Burlington Coat Factory. Recognizing its potential for growth, the city held a series of feedback sessions for a new Strategic Economic Development Plan, discussing topics like attracting millennials, redevelopment of commercial corridors, and locally-owned shops and restaurants. One of Colonial Heights' recent community improvements, the construction of the Appomattox River Trail, received the "Best New Renovation/Addition Award" from the Virginia Recreation and Park Society this year.

## Dinwiddie County

In 2015, Dinwiddie County saw the results of several announcements in the previous year as employment in the county grew. Continuing this trend, the county introduced "Industry Days," which provide local businesses and industry leaders a venue to reach to the county's future workforce and promote the many employment opportunities within the region. Dinwiddie County was also recognized this year as one of only 10 counties in Virginia to receive an "A+" rating for government transparency. Revitalization in the Town of McKenney has begun as the county announced the renovation of a former sewing factory to be the town's community center, which will provide recreational programs for residents.

## City of Hopewell

This past year, the City of Hopewell proved once more its staying power for area industry growth as Ashland expanded its operations in the city, adding 17 new jobs and more than \$89 million in capital investment. Prince George-based Landen Strapping also expanded its regional operations to include an additional facility in Hopewell to further support global business growth. The city took part in the pilot Community Business Launch Program providing technical assistance and grants to catalyze entrepreneurial growth in the downtown area. Two of those grantees have opened their doors with the others expected to start operations in the new year and facilitate more foot traffic downtown.



A Celebration of the Vine 2015  
Photo by Kristi Higgins



Appomattox River Trail



Virginia Skydiving Center



Hopewell Farmer's Market



## City of Petersburg

The craft brew trend took hold in the City of Petersburg in 2015 with two craft beer operations and a distillery underway and set to open in 2016. Additionally, nationally renowned breweries took note of some of the city's unique site location attributes and continue to consider them for a location. A ripple of revitalization activity has also taken place along the Washington Street corridor with ICMA recognizing the Petersburg Public Library as the "Top Public Works Project" for a city of its size. In addition to the Freedom Support Center, community clinic and Multimodal Transit Center, plans are underway for a new city hall building, streetscape improvements and a cultural component to the final building in the Brown and Williamson complex to further solidify the revitalization of the corridor.

## Prince George County

With a continued focus on supporting innovation in industry, Prince George County's Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing was chosen as a regional location for the Advanced Manufacturing Apprentice Academy. The proposed academy is a public-private partnership designed to produce factory-ready workers suitable for employment in related industries. The county also made strides toward greater services for residents, including plans to provide wireless broadband towers and finalizing plans for a community gateway at Exit 45, including lighting, landscaping and signature feature in an effort to attract businesses and I-95 travelers to the hotels and restaurants.

## Surry County

Surry County promoted its "Savor the Secrets of Surry" slogan as several new community and tourism destinations were added. With Gray's Creek Marina boat launch complete, development of the waterfront site continued with renovations of the existing restaurant. The site will offer another destination for residents and tourists along with Chippokes Plantation, Bacon's Castle and Smith's Fort. Completed renovation of the Old Clerk's Office, which will serve as a Visitors Center, is anticipated opening in early 2016. The Hampton Roads Winery also opened in 2015. To promote access to fresh food within the county, the Surry County Farmers Market and other small markets were established, providing residents access to fresh produce, prepared foods and crafts.

## Sussex County

Entrepreneurs with a passion for rural community started a new trend in Sussex County with the collaboration of two small businesses to create a festival highlighting farm-to-table products. Three Brothers Distillery and Cheerful Chicken Farm combined forces to establish the Sussex Song, Sausage, & Spirit Festival scheduled for Oct. 22, 2016. The trend of preserving and promoting Sussex County was emphasized by a grant received this year from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for the county to acquire a 7,700 acre site to support the effort of supporting rare pine-savannah forest and restoring the native longleaf pine in Virginia.



Demolition Coffee



Swader's Sports Park



Surry County Farmers Market



Virginia Diner

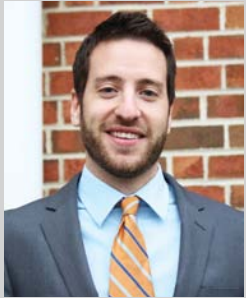
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**Lauren Bowman**  
Associate Project  
Manager



**Tim Graves**  
Associate Project  
Manager



**Rachel Balsley**  
Marketing &  
Communications  
Associate



**Emily Salmon**  
Part Time Business  
Development Manager

## MISSION STATEMENT

Virginia's Gateway Region exists to enhance economic development opportunities for the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg, and the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George, Surry and Sussex. VGR is a private, nonprofit organization that is publicly and privately funded to facilitate new business opportunities, work with existing businesses, advance resources that will enhance the economic viability of the region and foster regional cooperation among the public and private entities that are involved in economic development activities.

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