



# Halifax County Chamber of Commerce 2008-2011 Strategic Plan

LOOKING  
AHEAD

Working Together to Move into the Future

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# Vision, Mission & Core Values

## **Vision Statement**

The vision of the Halifax County Chamber of Commerce is to be a proactive business organization with an influential voice dedicated to economic success and quality of life.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Halifax County Chamber of Commerce is to serve the interest of its members by providing products, programs and services that are of direct benefit to the members, and by influencing issues that affect the economic vitality of our community.

## **Core Values**

*By providing fair and balanced representation of our members...OUR Chamber is the Premier Business Organization.*

*By focusing on programs and services that contribute to our members' success...OUR Chamber is a Member Driven Organization.*

*By providing an effective return on members' investment of resources, time and participation...OUR Chamber Understands Value.*

*By welcoming all opportunities for cooperation and inspiring a community vision...OUR Chamber is a Collaborator.*

*By being the united voice of the business community...OUR Chamber is THE Business Advocate.*

*By monitoring membership and community trends...OUR Chamber is Visionary.*

*By facilitating leadership...OUR Chamber is Considered the Business Community's Leadership Training Ground.*

*By supporting a strong, dynamic, educated and healthy community...OUR Chamber Contributes to the Quality of Life.*

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# Executive Summary

As the Chamber continues to serve businesses and the community, this strategic plan revisits and reinforces the organization's vision, mission, values and strategies that will continue its focus and service to our members and the community.

Strategy 2008-2011 continues the Chamber's history and legacy of developing a successful and nurturing business environment in the region and directing its resources and energies to those member priorities best accomplished by this organization. Our goal is to continue our "member-driven" culture by combining their ideas, resources and volunteer service with a talented and hardworking staff...a staff dedicated to the success of each and every member.

Strategy 2008-2011 is organized into four divisions of the Chamber: Business Development, Community Development, Membership Development and Services and Advocacy. The Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of chamber and community leaders and staff, has identified 12 key objectives that will serve our vision and mission.

In summary, the results of this plan will create a stronger business community by providing the key objectives necessary for business and economic growth.

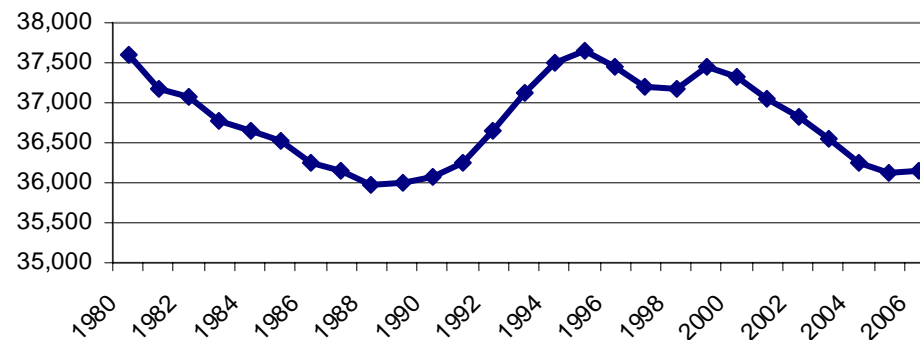
The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce will continue to be the region's business advocate and the largest, strongest member-driven business organization in Halifax County.

# Business Environment Assessment

## Total Population

From 2000 to 2006, Halifax County's population fluctuated across a roughly 1,200-person band. Total population in 2000 was 37,325, and in 2006 was estimated to be 36,149.

Total Population, 1980-2006: Halifax County



Source: U.S. BEA

In the first seven years of the new millennium, Halifax County's population dropped nearly 3.9%, which represented a loss of 1169 persons in the County during the period.

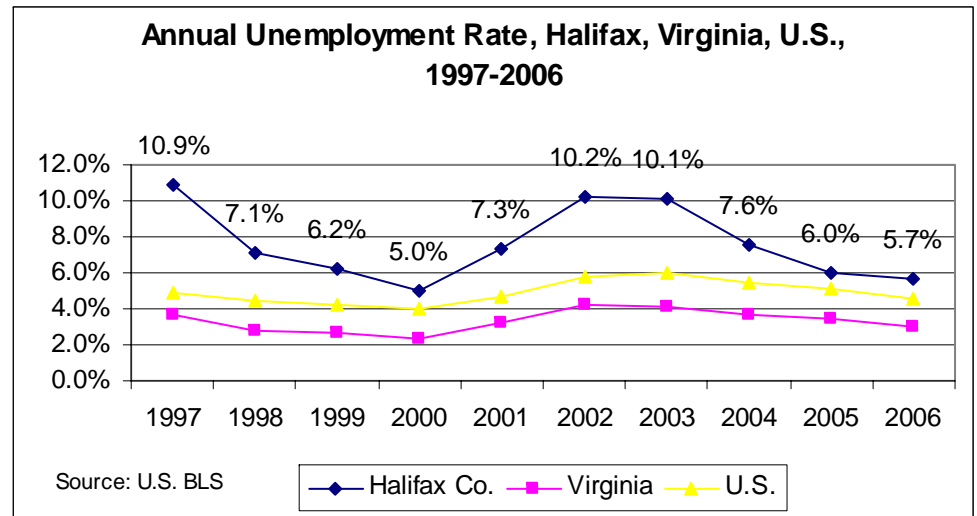
Population, 2000-06: Halifax County

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Period Change
Total Population	37,313	37,055	36,826	36,552	36,259	36,121	36,144	-3.90%

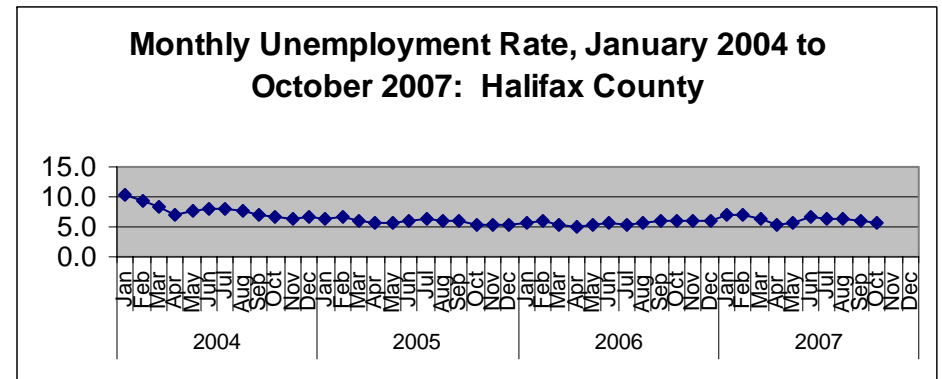
# Business Environment Assessment

## Employment

While the Commonwealth and national annual unemployment figures have remained below 6.0% for the previous decade, Halifax County's rate has dropped from 10.1% in 2003 to 5.7% in 2006.



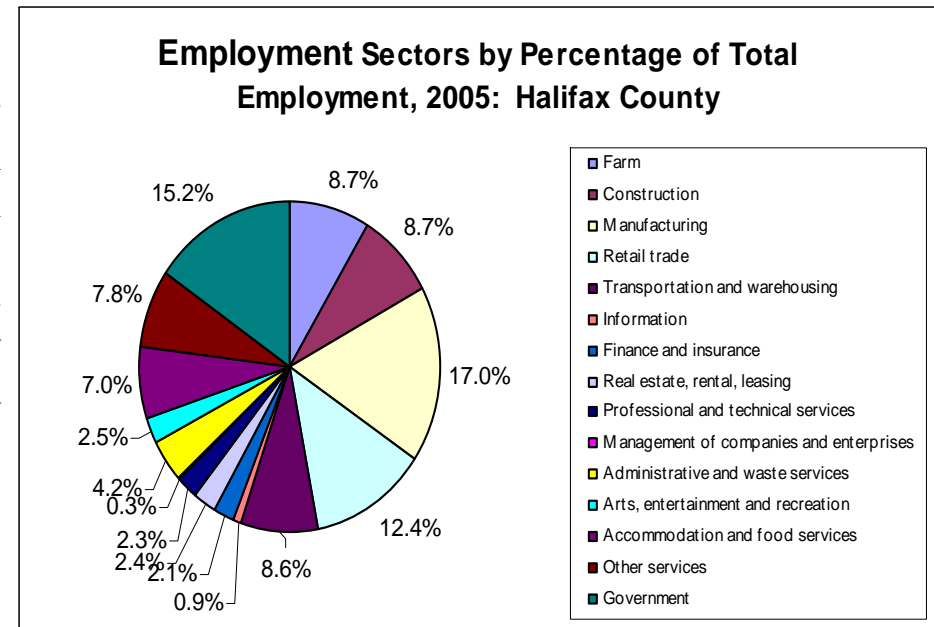
The monthly unemployment rate for Halifax County has also fluctuated during the final months of the national recession and beyond. Currently, the figure stands below 6%.



# Business Environment Assessment

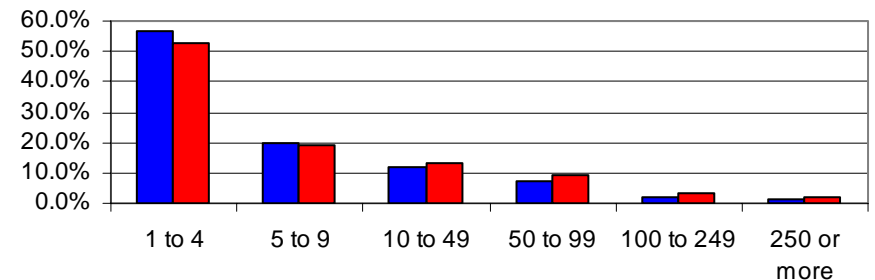
## Employment Sectors

As the chart on the right displays, Halifax County employment is led by manufacturing, followed by retail trade, and health care and social assistance. The high percentages of employment in the service sectors, retail, and transportation and warehousing sectors are emblematic of the continuing shift in the national economy from manufacturing to a service and information-based structure.



The chart to the right highlights the importance of small businesses to the local and Commonwealth economies. In both areas, businesses with 1 to 4 employees comprise over half of all establishments. Tending to the retention and expansion needs of these companies is crucial to any quality economic development strategy.

**Establishments by Number of Employees, 2005  
Halifax County, Virginia**



Source: County Business Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau

■ Halifax County ■ Virginia

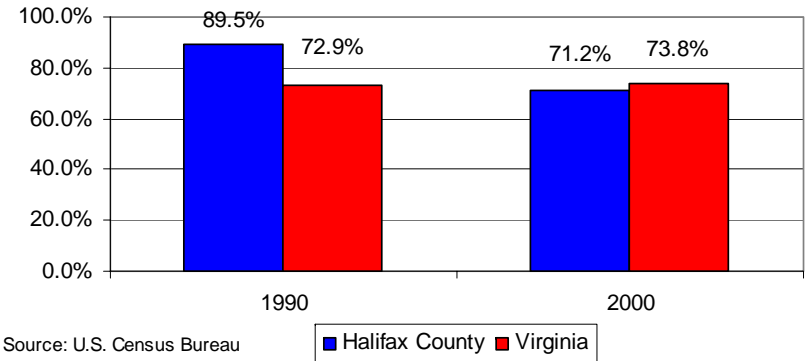
# Business Environment Assessment

## Workforce

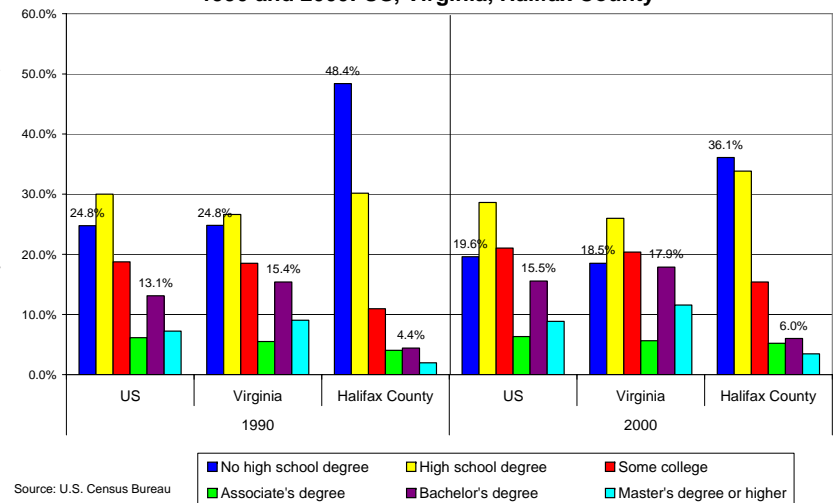
An area's *potential labor force* is defined as those residents between the ages of 18 and 69. In Halifax County, the 1990 potential labor force of 18,744 increased by 15.3% to 21,617 in 2000. However, the percentage of potential workers either employed or looking for work during the period declined from 89.5% (a very high percentage relative to Virginia and the U.S.) to 71.2%. In other words, Halifax County's *labor force participation rate* declined markedly – evidence not only of a stagnant local job market, but also of potential workers dropping out of the labor force.

The *educational attainment* of the over-25 component of Halifax's labor force improved from 1990 to 2000, as the chart on the right attests. The percentage of adults without a high school diploma fell sharply, from 48.4% to 36.1%. With workforce quality a key component of local competitiveness, this trend is an indication that local programs to improve educational capacity are having beneficial effects.

**Labor Force Participation Rate, 1990 and 2000:  
Halifax County, Virginia**



**Educational Attainment for Population Over 25 Years Old,  
1990 and 2000: US, Virginia, Halifax County**

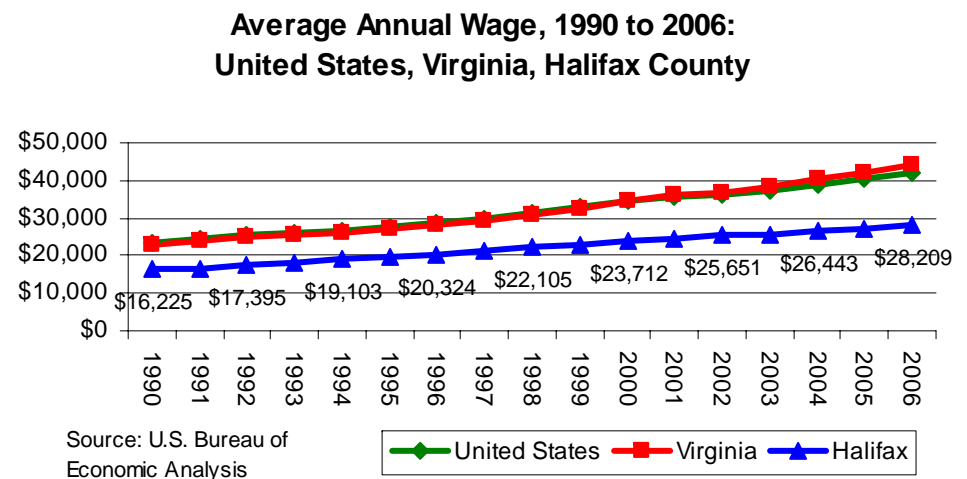
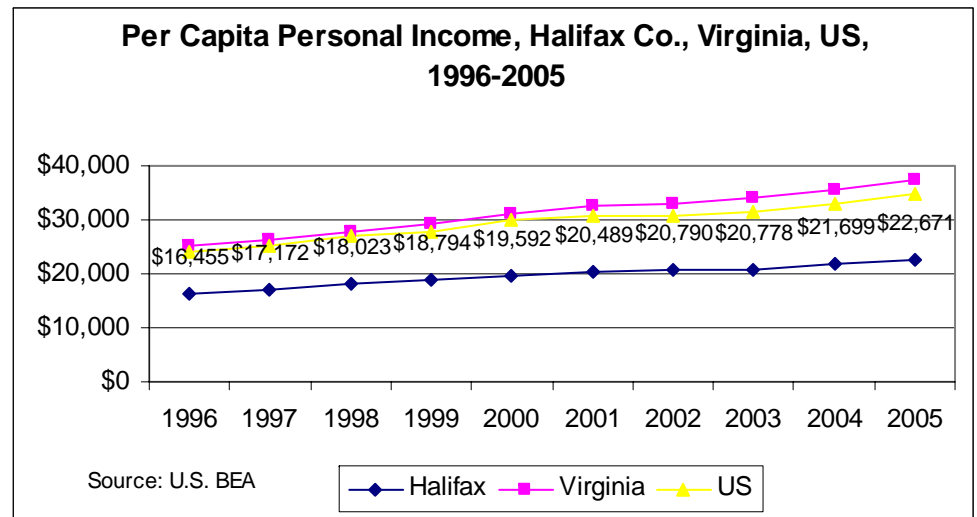


# Business Environment Assessment

## Income

*Real per capita income* refers to the amount of annual income residents earn, indexed for inflation. It is a good indicator of the actual earning power of workers relative to cost of living increases. As the graph on the right shows, RPCI for Halifax County employees increased 37.7% from 1996 to 2005 – a notable amount – but Halifax’s 2005 income figure of \$22,671 is still significantly below the Commonwealth and nation.

Trends for the average annual wage (not indexed for inflation) show similar patterns for Halifax County, Virginia and the U.S. The County’s annual wages are more than \$10,000 below both the Commonwealth and nation.



# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

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## Internal Strengths

- The Chamber is one of six accredited chambers in Virginia and four percent in the country.
- The Chamber maintains financial stability through membership revenues and revenue producing programs.
- The Chamber ensures appropriate planning to positively impact the business environment.
- The Chamber operates effectively and efficiently as a result of a professional office and the use of technology.
- The Chamber's membership aligns with the overall industry/business representation of the community.
- The quality, experience, knowledge and attitude of individuals in key staff positions contribute to the highest level of member services and enhance overall Chamber effectiveness.
- The Chamber is viewed as a valued partner and collaborator with other organizations, businesses, educational institutions and the public sector.
- The volunteer leadership of the Chamber, including the Board, consists of many of the top business and community leaders and is representative of the membership.
- The training and development of programs needs to be continuously evaluated and upgraded to meet the changing needs of members and the business community.
- The Chamber serves as an advocate on major issues in the community.
- The Chamber uses creative out-of-the-box thinking to maintain a unique image and visibility within the community.
- The Chamber maintains a market penetration rate of 44% and a retention rate of 92% including closures.
- The Chamber produces strong and diverse programs through sound volunteer leadership.

## Internal Weaknesses

- There is a potential for greater existing and new member involvement.
- The Chamber's mission and benefits are not clearly understood by all members.
- Diversify Chamber's income to prevent overdependence on one fundraiser.
- The Chamber is not positioned for growth due to facility limitations.
- Financial long-term stability and revenue projections need to be addressed. The Chamber should position itself for financial obligations of the future.
- The lack of capital improvement plan to support technology and marketing plans and administration.
- The complexity of programming puts a strain on the limited number of chamber staff members and volunteers.
- The lack of volunteer time puts more pressure on volunteers and staff.

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## External Opportunities

- The Chamber's newsletter, "The FORUM", is circulated in the local newspaper creating an opportunity for advancing the knowledge about the Chamber.
- Through the marketing efforts of tourist attractions such as South Boston Speedway and VIRginia International Raceway, Halifax County's name recognition will be broadened.
- The Chamber's committee, "Halifax Forward", is a growing, proactive group providing influence on issues that affect the business community.
- Halifax County is taking wireless technology "The Last Mile".
- Riverstone Technology Park will serve as a vehicle for change.
- Building greater involvement with the IDA offers opportunities to deepen relationships with membership base and promote a greater vision.
- The Chamber's relationship with local, state and federal elected officials enhances the ability to advocate for the business community.
- The expanding adult learning market offers opportunities for the Chamber and its members.
- Dynamic change enables the Chamber to serve as the catalyst for change and ensures that the Chamber will adapt, evolve and respond quickly to stay relevant and viable.
- Create more income and revenues for the Chamber by using a value based investment structure; therefore, increasing value association with membership and the continuous improvement of quality programs, products and services.
- The Accreditation Process will capitalize and promote the strength of the Chamber.
- The inclusion of a facility expansion plan will provide a timeline of steps to be taken to accommodate growth and expansion.
- The development of a portal website for major sectors of the community will strengthen all parties involved.

## External Threats

- Advocating on behalf of the business community may lead to the perception of an adverse effect for certain sectors of the community.
- Economic factors, including losses in the manufacturing sector poses a threat on the community as well as the Chamber's membership base.
- Member company limitations on time available to participate in Chamber activities as well as volunteering, will affect the delivery of certain core services.
- Larger dues paying members feel that they do not receive value for their investment.
- The increasing cost of healthcare and other business costs threatens the economic condition of all Chamber member businesses.
- The loss of young professionals creates a concern for the future of Halifax County.
- Overlapping/redundancy of services suggests a lack of collaboration among certain sectors.
- The competition for sponsor dollars puts stress on current programming.

# Objectives and Strategies - Business Development

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## **Encourage business-to-business networking and sales opportunities for Chamber members.**

- Provide premier networking opportunities, focusing on quality business building events.
- Educate members and community on products and services provided by fellow members.
- Educate members on the best way to build their network of relationships and grow their business.
- Identify new programs and enhance existing programs and benefits based on members' needs.
- Promote business growth and the expansion of businesses' customer base.

## **Support local economic development efforts.**

- Educate members and community on local economic initiatives and their impact on the local economy.
- Partner and collaborate with the IDA.
- Provide representation on key economic development organization boards.

## **Promote and support workforce development initiatives to enhance the availability of qualified workers to reinforce the retention of existing businesses and to attract new businesses to the region.**

- Identify membership workforce needs and communicate to appropriate sources.
- Identify training opportunities and communicate to the public.
- Advocate and support initiatives that ensure a qualified workforce for the future.

# Objectives and Strategies - Community Development

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**Lead community strategic planning and promote partnerships to support it.**

- Promote Vision 2020.
- Solicit Vision 2020 partners.

**Strengthen Chamber members' business knowledge through program development or partnerships with other organizations.**

- Provide timely, relevant, informational updates through Chamber programs or partnerships with local organizations.
- Provide the community's leadership training programming for high school students and community leaders.
- Provide a forum for discussion and the opportunity to take action regarding issues relevant to the business community.

# Objectives and Strategies - Membership Development & Services

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## **Effectively communicate products, programs and services offered to members.**

- Calculate the return on investment for all Chamber programs, services and activities that can be clearly articulated and customized to a specific member value proposition.
- Assess member needs through focus groups and other survey tools.
- Analyze the use of Chamber programs and services by members.
- Educate staff on all available member benefits and services.
- Target market to individual members, Chamber products, programs and services.

## **Concentrate resources on membership retention to maintain market penetration.**

- Identify and engage at-risk members.
- Promote networking opportunities to retain members.
- Recognize and spotlight members in communications.
- Recognize and publicize outstanding achievement and excellence in business practices.
- Develop a member recruitment program that supports a realistic, attainable size membership without adversely impacting existing members.
- Recruit volunteer leadership to keep members engaged.

## **Grow membership base and expand geographic market.**

- Identify businesses currently doing business in Halifax County that are not members.
- Recruit former members.

## **Develop adequate revenue streams to meet the needs of our members.**

- Actively market Chamber publications and identify opportunities for new publications.
- Evaluate the Chamber's existing dues structure.
- Seek quality affinity programs that are unique to the Chamber.
- Enhance revenue generating programs and services in order to achieve financial sustainability.
- Identify services or functions to sell or contract with outside entities.

## **Develop collaborative affiliations to reduce duplicative services in the area.**

- Identify redundant programs and services provided by the Chamber and other organizations in the region to consolidate those services.
- Seek opportunities to endorse and market non-Chamber developed programs.

# Objectives and Strategies - Government Affairs

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## **Enhance the Chamber's advocacy efforts on local, state and federal legislation/regulation that impact the business environment in Halifax County.**

- Solicit member input on key legislative and regulatory issues that impact Chamber members through forums and survey tools.
- Develop relationships with key local, state and federal agencies and elected officials to promote a positive legislative and regulatory business environment.
- Organize events and forums for Chamber members to directly interact with local, state and federal officials to facilitate more effective communication.
- Provide information and an influential voice on issues that affect the business community.
- Provide an influential voice for selecting appointed and elected leadership.
- Act as a resource for elected officials for information to assist with decision-making.
- Communicate the results to members from elected board votes that had the Chamber's business influence.

## **Position the Chamber as THE Advocate for the business community.**

- Increase interaction with the media at all levels to provide the business perspective on key issues.
- Channel information from US Chamber and VA Chamber that affects local businesses.
- Support and encourage collaborative partnerships with institutions of higher education to assist in addressing the workforce needs of the business community.

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