

# Crater Planning District Commission

## Comprehensive Regional Heritage Tourism Strategic Planning Project –

Prepared By:  
Randall Travel Marketing, Inc.  
Mooresville, North Carolina  
June, 2005

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **Study Objective**

Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) of Mooresville, North Carolina was hired to conduct a comprehensive travel and tourism research and strategic planning study to develop recommendations for regional tourism marketing involving 11 Virginia jurisdictions including:

- Charles City County
- Chesterfield County
- City of Colonial Heights
- Dinwiddie County
- City of Emporia
- Greensville County
- City of Hopewell
- City of Petersburg
- Prince George County
- Surry County
- Sussex County

This study was conducted during the time period of January through June of 2005.

### **Statement of Methodologies**

#### **1. Inventory of current tourism products by jurisdiction:**

- RTM, with input from each jurisdiction, developed an inventory documenting all tourism-related products by jurisdiction. This included lodging, attractions, dining, retail, and tourism services. This list was sent to each jurisdiction for approval.

#### **2. Reconnaissance and mystery shopping:**

- RTM conducted a comprehensive mystery shopping study including site evaluations, gateways, airports, state welcome centers, signage and wayfinding, front-line training, typical visitor experiences at attractions, lodging, etc. for each jurisdiction.

#### **3. Lodging property survey:**

- A survey was sent to every lodging property in the 11 jurisdictions to determine market mix (percentage of total lodging booked for business, convention, group, leisure, etc.), monthly occupancy, top feeder markets, and average daily rates (ADR).
- Response rates varied by jurisdiction. RTM is satisfied that the final results are reliable as a basis for our recommendations.
- This data has been compiled by jurisdiction to allow for comparisons.
- RTM also obtained Smith Travel Research STAR Report data for each jurisdiction (as was available).
- A written report was prepared with analysis of the comparative data.

#### **4. Community leader interviews:**

- A minimum of five (5) executive interviews were to be conducted with tourism industry and community leaders in each jurisdiction. However, Greensville County did not provide a list to be interviewed so RTM conducted an additional five interviews in the region to compensate. Greensville County was discussed with those interviewed in Emporia and Sussex Counties.
- A total of 55 formal interviews are documented in this report.
- An analysis of their responses is included in the final report.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

- 5. In-depth analysis of current status of tourism in each jurisdiction:**
  - An outline was prepared to cover the information listed below.
  - Follow-up meetings were held with each jurisdiction to review and modify the findings once initial data was collected and compiled into an analytical report.
  - After final development, each jurisdiction report was sent to local contacts for approval.
  - This document outlines for each jurisdiction:
    - Growth of tourism revenues over the past 5 years
    - Growth of tourism infrastructure over the past 5 years
    - Agencies or entities tasked with tourism marketing responsibility
    - Listing of tourism occupancy tax, meals tax, and sales tax related to tourism for the past 5 years
    - Allocation of funding for tourism promotion
    - Brief outline of current tourism marketing activities
    - Listing of primary tourism products
  
- 6. Evaluation, by jurisdiction, of current tourism marketing efforts and materials:**
  - RTM analyzed and outlined, for each jurisdiction, the following:
    - Tourism strengths and weaknesses
    - Markets and audiences served
    - Existing marketing tools
    - The jurisdiction's anticipated role in a regional tourism group
    - Initial strategies for each jurisdiction
  
- 7. A comprehensive final report with strategic marketing plan was developed based on research results. This report includes:**
  - Executive Summary
  - Study Objectives and Methodologies
  - Project Team
  - Jurisdictional Reports
    - Current Status of Tourism
    - Community Leader Interviews Findings and Analysis
    - Lodging Survey Findings and Analysis
    - Tourism Marketing Assessments
    - Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping
    - Product Inventory
  - Recommendations and Strategies
    - Marketing Objectives
    - Targeted Audiences
    - Organizational Recommendations
    - Funding Recommendations
    - Marketing Recommendations

### **DELIVERABLES:**

- Two (2) comprehensive final report notebooks with all jurisdiction sections.
- Eleven (11) jurisdictional final report notebooks including a regional summary and all data specific to the individual jurisdiction.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **Study Findings**

#### **Tourism Product Inventory Report**

RTM documented for each jurisdiction a complete inventory of attractions, lodging, unique dining, and unique shopping, as well as sources of visitor information. While there are significant major “attractors” for the area, the number of attractions is fairly limited overall, with most clustered in the “Tri-Cities” area anchored by Petersburg. Also, desired lodging and other amenities are not necessarily found in the same jurisdiction where the major attractions are located. No one jurisdiction has enough quality and quantity of lodging, attractions, dining and shopping to stand on its own. A combination of the jurisdictions is required to achieve the necessary balance of attractions and amenities.

#### **Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping Report**

The RTM team visited all eleven jurisdictions on multiple occasions over a three-month period to document a typical visitor experience. Reconnaissance helps the research team become very familiar with the product mix and customer service in the area so that strategies are based on more than an academic knowledge of the tourism inventory and statistical trends. Overall, the team found that there is a great need for visitor orientation and facilitation upon arrival in the area. There is little information available that “connects the dots” among all attractions, lodging, dining, shopping, etc. Overall, there is little “sense of place” for the region. The result is that the visitor typically finds that this region has a few major attractions, and then a scattering of amenities, with nothing that creates an overall image. It is difficult to find one’s way around the region. Also, all attractions are listed and promoted equally, which can cause great visitor frustration when attractions are not open as expected, or interpretation is weak. The region is very fortunate to have major interstates and feeder routes delivering a consistent volume of potential visitors. Thus, RTM finds that there is a substantial volume of potential visitors, and what is missing is the “packaging” of the existing products and strategic development of additional products that will allow for greater visitor satisfaction and spending.

#### **Lodging Survey and Smith Travel Research Lodging Data**

Every lodging property in each of the eleven (11) jurisdictions was contacted by email, fax, and/or telephone to obtain information regarding the type of visitors occupying lodging rooms in the region. Survey response was received from varying percentages for each jurisdiction. Additionally, RTM purchased statistical data collected in each jurisdiction by Smith Travel Research (STR). STR is the leading provider of lodging industry statistical data in the United States with all data provided by individual lodging properties. Overall, a review of the findings in this research segment exercise is that most lodging properties rely on heavily on individual business travelers, interstate transient travelers, or government lodging-generators such as Fort Lee, and then small percentages of meeting, sports and other segments. It is clear for the most part the lodging properties do not consistently work together, nor do they partner with the jurisdiction destination marketing agencies for tourism growth. Occupancy, ADR (average daily rate), and RevPar (revenue per available room) statistics are reasonable but indicate the need for greater occupancy. Thus, there should be interest on the part of lodging properties in a regional marketing effort. The lodging properties in Northern Chesterfield County (Richmond suburbs) have little in common statistically with the remainder of the Crater Planning District lodging properties.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **Community Leader Executive Interviews**

RTM conducted over 55 interviews with community leaders throughout the region. These interviews revealed that overall, the community leaders want more focused and aggressive tourism marketing. They understand the value of tourism's economic impact and it is a relatively high agenda item for the jurisdictions that are recommended for the regional agency. In RTM's analysis, community leaders are well aware of the tourism strengths and weaknesses of the region, there is great consensus as to what specific jurisdictions should be included in a regional program, and there is clear understanding of what results are needed. There are some differing opinions on how to strategically accomplish these results. RTM anticipates that the strategies recommended in this report will satisfy the majority of these community leaders by addressing the concerns and desires they expressed in their interviews.

### **In-depth Analysis of Current Status of Tourism in Each Jurisdiction**

RTM conducted an in-depth analysis of the current state of tourism in each jurisdiction. This process included:

- **Documentation of existence of tourism marketing agencies, and staffing and budget allocations for each**
- **Total taxes (occupancy, sales, meals) collected from visitors in each jurisdiction**
- **Documentation of stated tourism objectives for each jurisdiction**
- **Evaluation of current tourism marketing efforts and materials for each jurisdiction**
- **Strengths and weaknesses of tourism marketing and development in each jurisdiction**
- **Marketing assessment for each jurisdiction**

Overall, RTM learned in this process that the jurisdictions appreciate tourism and recognize its potential in the region. Most of the jurisdictions have very informal marketing programs with a few having more detailed marketing programs in place. While the jurisdictions know they have potential, strategies are not in place that will drive those potentials by partnering across jurisdiction boundaries to provide the visitor with a complete travel experience. Most jurisdiction representatives are interested in regional tourism marketing and development and are enthusiastic about anticipated results.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **Strategic Direction**

Randall Travel Marketing (RTM) made detailed, specific recommendations in this report for each of the eleven (11) jurisdictions who helped fund this study. This deliverable ensured that each participating jurisdiction received value from the study. At the conclusion of the study, each jurisdiction received a written report tailored exclusively for them containing the following sections:

- Current Status of Tourism, Marketing Assessment and Recommendations
- Report on Community Leader Executive Interviews
- Lodging Survey and Analysis
- Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping Report
- Comprehensive Product Inventory Report

The definition of tourism is “**putting visitors in front of cash registers.**” The Crater District has an excellent opportunity to increase the revenues and resulting economic impact generated by tourism, while not overburdening its existing infrastructure. RTM recommends the following strategies to achieve this balanced growth:

#### **1. Recommendation for Regional Tourism Partnerships**

Randall Travel Marketing (RTM) investigated the eleven (11) jurisdictions in the State of Virginia that comprise this study group. The jurisdictions in this region have common heritage and history yet there are significant distinctions between each jurisdiction and between groupings of the jurisdictions. One of the primary purposes of this study was to examine these jurisdictions to determine which ones would make appropriate marketing partners and would most likely create a successful tourism marketing partnership. RTM’s recommendations follow:

#### **Jurisdictions recommended as partners for Crater District regional tourism marketing:**

- Chesterfield (southern area)
- Colonial Heights
- Dinwiddie County
- Hopewell
- Petersburg
- Prince George County

The primary reasons these jurisdictions are a match for marketing partnership include:

- Relatively close proximity to each other resulting in good “touring scale” that is manageable by the visitor. This region is logical geographically.
- Complimentary attractions and amenities. Some jurisdictions within this group have more attractions, while others have more amenities, but together they achieve a good balance and create a total destination.
- Similar and complementing histories and “sense of place.”
- Multiple matching historic patterns, particularly with the Civil War. Working together these jurisdictions can tell an awesome story of the development of the United States from pre-Colonial to present day.
- Transportation linkages: Rivers, railroads, highways, etc. since Colonial times have established this region as one of the original inter-modal transportation hubs in the United States.

Thus, marketing these areas together makes sense geographically, they achieve a good balance of tourism products, and their natural historic partnership and transportation linkages make this collection of jurisdictions the most similar as a marketing group.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **1. (Continued)**

#### **Jurisdictions that would be better served partnering with Williamsburg:**

- Surry County
- Sussex County\*\*

These two counties have much in common with each other as well as with the Colonial heritage of Williamsburg. RTM's reasons for this recommendation include:

- Plantations and agriculture are one of the primary features of both these counties. These are more of a match for the Tidewater and James River areas.
- The English and Colonial rural heritage in these two counties make them similar to each other, but dissimilar to the other jurisdictions that are more urbanized and heavily linked to the Civil War.
- Many of the visitors to Surry and Sussex Counties are overnighing in Williamsburg. This is where most of these visitors learn about the plantations, restaurants, peanut outlets, etc. Thus, partnering with Williamsburg is already proving successful.
- RTM encourages these two jurisdictions to partner with Williamsburg and other similar destinations to establish awareness for the James River Plantations and the peanut heritage as well as other agrarian heritages.
- While it is possible that these two counties may participate in various co-marketing initiatives with the larger region, overall they should not be considered an integral part of the Crater District.
- \*\*Sussex County also has an opportunity to partner with Emporia and Greenville as is outlined below.

#### **Jurisdictions that would be better served marketing together aside from the Crater District:**

- Emporia
- Greenville County
- Sussex\*\*

These jurisdictions form the southern border for the Crater Planning District. RTM's analysis includes:

- These jurisdictions are approximately one hour away from any other commercially developed areas. This distance forms a geographic barrier that will frustrate travelers. If an area had exceptional scenery this distance might be accommodated, but as it is RTM sees it as problematic for regional promotion.
- These jurisdictions are better served to capitalize on transient traffic generated by Interstate 95 and U.S. Highway 58. Improved signage, billboard and travel advertising will drive visitors to the growing volume of cash registers in these jurisdictions as opposed to marketing programs that the Crater District should consider.
- Further, RTM recommends that these jurisdictions consider working together to establish an identity as the southern gateway into Virginia's "peanut country". The Emporia area should consider erecting a bold and memorable peanut shaped water tower to create a sense of place and get people off the interstate and in front of local cash registers.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **1. (Continued)**

- **\*\*Note that RTM is recommending that Sussex County consider marketing with both this area and the Tidewater area. Sussex County's best tourism potentials are guided agricultural and farm tours, and outdoor recreation. This makes it a potential partner for more than one marketing group.**

#### **Jurisdictions that need to market tourism with others:**

- Charles City County

This jurisdiction is somewhat similar to Surry and Sussex Counties in that it has a rural setting and plantation attractions. However, its location on the north side of the James River makes for transportation issues with one bridge and ferry connecting it to the rest of the Crater Planning District. RTM recommends that Charles City County form marketing partnerships with others such as Williamsburg, this area matches as a plantation destination; or Richmond, this area complements the urban Richmond environment by offering a tranquil rural setting with plantations and quiet scenic beauty.

### **2. Recommended Name of the Primary Marketing region:**

#### ***Petersburg Area***

#### ***Where the Appomattox and the James Rivers meet to form the best of American History***

**In the Petersburg Area you'll find an amazing story of American history. From ancient times to the modern era this is the story of rivers, roads and railroads, Pre-Colonial heritage, Revolutionary War, Native Americans, Civil War, Spanish conquerors, WWII, agriculture and farms, the famous Virginia peanuts and more. Come see where American history happened!**

We must "connect the dots" and tell the overall story. This turns the entire region into one well-interpreted story and destination. Currently, it is too disjointed. One must treasure hunt without an effective map or guidebook to find the entire story in the region. No materials currently available explain what the agricultural heritage has to do with the Civil War. Or, what the Spanish have to do with the Revolutionary War. This is a great story waiting to be told.

### **3. Funding for the regional initiative**

RTM recommends that funding for this initiative include the following sources:

- **ISTEA – Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act funds:** The heritage of rivers, roads and railroads, as well as the multi-jurisdictional approach to telling that story makes this source of funds a good potential.
- **State of Virginia Regional Tourism grants:** This is a newly told story of American history which will lure people to Virginia. The State of Virginia would be a viable source of grant funds for this program.
- **Cameron Foundation:** This foundation can provide support funds for this program that develops the entire region.

## Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary

### 3. (Continued)

- **National Park Service:** The National Parks have a strong presence and are an integral part of this overall story. Their partnership will be sought to support the overall vision with updated exhibits, interpretation, etc.
- **State of Virginia economic development grants:** This program will create new jobs and new tourism revenues. The State of Virginia provides grant programs for which this program can be considered. Additionally, there may be funds available to support a hospitality training program involving Fort Lee spouses/family members that can benefit the entire region.
- **Jurisdiction Partners:** Each jurisdiction partner would be expected to contribute funds annually for the program. RTM recommends the following general funding schedule:
  - **Chesterfield County:** Commit primarily the occupancy tax funds generated in the southern part of the county whose lodging would most likely benefit from this Petersburg region marketing program, approximately \$300,000 - 500,000 annually.
  - **Colonial Heights:** A portion of their occupancy tax and their tourism-related sales and meals tax revenues, approximately \$400,000 annually.
  - **Dinwiddie County:** A portion of their occupancy tax and their tourism-related sales and meals tax revenues, approximately \$250,000 annually.
  - **Hopewell:** A portion of their occupancy tax and tourism-related sales and meals tax revenues, approximately \$250,000 annually.
  - **Petersburg:** Funds generated from an additional 2% occupancy tax, plus a portion of their tourism-related sales and meals tax revenues, approximately \$250,000 annually. In addition, Petersburg will be asked to contribute other services and amenities for the regional effort as outlined further in this report.
  - **Prince George County:** A portion of the occupancy tax, plus a portion of their tourism-related sales and meals tax revenues, approximately \$250,000 annually.

It is the intention of this recommendation that annual partnership funds of no less than \$1,500,000 be contributed annually.

### 4. Petersburg Area Regional Tourism Leadership Group

RTM recommends that the jurisdictions form a regional leadership force to drive success for this initiative. Participants for this group need to be strategically selected to accomplish the group's mission of strong legislative relations, commercial development contacts, financial support contacts, and jurisdiction leadership. Simply put, this group needs to be comprised of those with the power and the clout to get this job done. RTM strongly cautions that this group must not be burdened with territorial or political agendas. The primary agenda for this group includes:

- Establish a regional, private, non-profit organization.
- Establish a funding agreement with each jurisdiction.
- Seek grants.
- Develop a regional tourism development plan.
- Obtain commitment from each participating jurisdiction.
- Oversee the implementation of the regional tourism development plan.

## Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary

### 4. (Continued)

This group is not intended to serve as a Board of Directors for the new regional partnership. It is intended to get the organization focused, funded, and supported. When this initial mission is accomplished, this group would serve as an on-going Advisory Group to ensure continued success of the organization.

### 5. Recommended Name for the Regional Marketing Organization:

RTM recommends that the regional tourism marketing organization be named:

#### **Petersburg Area Regional Tourism**

This name establishes the geographic region and the mission of the organization so that it is easily identified by travelers and residents alike. "Tri-Cities" is not an effective name because travelers cannot find it on a map.

### 6. Organizational Structure for Petersburg Area Regional Tourism

RTM recommends the following organizational structure for the new regional tourism marketing program:

- **Board of Directors:** RTM recommends a 15-seat Board comprised of (6) members representing each participating jurisdiction, representatives from lodging (2), attractions (2), shopping/dining (2), and (3) business community members who can help ensure the organization continuously works to the benefit of the entire region.
- **Executive Director/President:** Primary responsibility is program results and the continued enrollment and satisfaction of participating jurisdictions.
- **Sales Director:** Primary responsibility is direct sales to recruit leisure individual travelers, group tours, small meetings, and to partner with lodging properties and attractions within the region. Track visitation, shifts in market mix, identify successful sources of business, etc., in order to drive increase in revenues and per-visitor spending.
- **Marketing Director:** Primary responsibility is public relations and marketing material development and management, and to understand and satisfy the tourism information needs of existing visitors. This includes press FAM tours, media solicitation, advertising planning/placement, print material development, and jurisdictional communications.
- **Research and Technology:** Primary responsibility is to develop and maintain a dynamic website, develop continuous research methods to track and monitor the success of the program, and provide results reports to participating jurisdictions.
- **Outsource:** RTM recommends that this new organization utilize outsource services for things such as fulfillment, brochure distribution, advertising design and production, etc.

### 7. Budgeting for Petersburg Area Regional Tourism

RTM recommends that the budget for the new regional marketing group be structured as follows:

- 5 -10%            Overhead
- 25 -30%        Salaries and Benefits
- 60%+            Direct Marketing Outreach

## Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary

### **8. Signage, Wayfinding, and State Map**

Part of the marketing program will include development of a regional signage program, gateways, and coordination with state DOT maps in order to establish regional name awareness, identify the general borders of the region, and to provide signage that links the “attractors” and those things that will get travelers off the interstate. Additionally, wayfinding will be reviewed and corrections coordinated with local and state agencies. This regional group will work with the state to ensure that official state maps indicate the region and identify the location of major attractors.

### **9. Market Segmentation Marketing Approach**

In a tourism marketing group, it is easy to shift focus to leisure travel and lose track of the overall market mix that must be served. Many segments drive lodging occupancy including corporate, group, meeting, convention, military, leisure, etc. RTM strongly encourages the new Petersburg Area Regional Tourism group to utilize the lodging information by jurisdiction in this report and continue to track market mix on a regular basis in order to be aware of any market shifts and resulting marketing needs.

### **10. Promotional Marketing Recommendations**

Detailed, specific marketing recommendations are included in this report. The general outline of these recommendations is:

- A. Self-Guided tour with CD, booklet, and maps:** This tour is designed to become a tourism product in itself. This tour will allow a visitor access to “the whole story” and enable them to find effective interpretation of that story. This product will be sold at a reasonable price to offset production costs and generate additional marketing funds.
- B. Petersburg Area Tourism website and technology marketing :** This website will provide all the “teaser” information for the above referenced CD/Booklet Tour Guide and it will direct website visitors directly to cash registers (lodging, dining, shopping, attractions, throughout the region). Again, the mission is to put visitors in front of cash registers. Also, the website is intended to collect visitor data and develop outreach technology tools to establish relationships with visitors and earn repeat visits and viral marketing support.
- C. Visitor Guide.** This is a 4x9 print piece that is intended to serve as a teaser and “lure” piece, as well as to provide information promoting lodging, dining, shopping, attractions, and amenities in the Petersburg Area. This guide is to be distributed in all state welcome centers, and throughout the region. This is the lure piece that gets people in front of cash registers and also encourages them to purchase the CD/Booklet Tour Guide.
- D. Padded “tear-off” Map:** This map needs to become the most in-demand visitor tool used throughout the region. Thus, it must be very visitor-friendly and useful for lodging, dining, attractions, and others who will distribute this map within the region. The map will provide excellent wayfinding, identify tourism sites, and provide information on lodging, unique dining, and unique shopping.
- E. Advertising:** Ads will be developed and placed in the Virginia State Travel Guide and website as well as priority media; billboards will be developed along the ingress and egress routes for the region. Civil War publications may also be targeted.
- F. Public Relations:** Earning media story coverage will be one of the most critical aspects of this marketing program. This can be the most powerful marketing tool of the entire program.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **11. Visitor Centers**

A critical aspect of this marketing program is to have visitor centers to attract visitors from the north and south. RTM proposes that these visitor centers be nothing like existing visitor centers. Their purpose is to be **regional product showcases with personal trip planning guides** whose job it is to **sell** travelers on staying in the region, extending their stay, and spending more money. This is a selling showroom!

When travelers enter these visitor centers, they will be enthusiastically welcomed by staff, proactively engaged in trip planning, and tempted with visuals, an orientation film, and product samples that will compel them to visit.

RTM recommends three sites for these showcase visitor centers:

- A. Petersburg Interstate 95 Visitor Center (Exit 45 northbound)**
- B. Hopewell Visitor Center (at Route 36 and Interstate 295). This visitor center would serve in partnership with current Hopewell Visitor Center and continue to feature Hopewell.**
- C. New location (Interstate 95 at Route 10 southbound)**

Two of these visitor centers are already in existence and would require only minimal updating in order to serve the new purpose. The Interstate 95 at Route 10 location would need to be secured.

### **12. Portable Information Kiosks**

RTM also recommends the Petersburg Area Regional Tourism agency design portable informational kiosks. For concept purposes, these would resemble a 4-sided column with brochure holders on each side and tempting visuals at the top of each side. They can be disassembled and moved relatively easily. The purpose of these information kiosks is to provide information **to existing visitors** regarding the regional program and area cash registers. Simply put, the purpose is to drive those already visiting the area to cash registers and increase per-visitor spending. These kiosks would be placed in targeted lodging, highly visited regional sites such as national parks, unique restaurants, historic sites, etc.

### **13. Front Line Hospitality Training**

Hospitality training is critical to the success of this program. Consider the potential of this regional group investing huge amounts of money in marketing outreach, only to have visitors approach front line staff at hotels, restaurants, attractions, etc. and inquire about "Petersburg Area Tourism" only to find the front line staff knows nothing about the program and little about the region. As we learned repeatedly in the mystery shopping portion of this study, most existing front line employees recommend that visitors go to Richmond for meals, shopping, lodging, etc. This is the back door we must close in order for this program to be successful.

RTM recommends that this training be accomplished by recruiting Fort Lee spouses and family members to serve as hospitality trainers. These military family members can appreciate the discipline needed for a hospitality training program, and they are looking for good jobs that last as long as they are in the region. The turnover among personnel also ensures limited "burnout" and a consistent source of new recruits. RTM recommends that a grant be sought to implement this strategy.

## **Regional Tourism Study Executive Summary**

### **14. Priority Product Development:**

RTM's primary recommendation in this report is to market the Petersburg region as a single tourism product. During the course of this study, several additional tourism product needs were identified by the RTM team. These include

- A. *Development of downtown Petersburg:*** Petersburg has been making good strides in revitalizing the historic downtown and the continued development is critical to the success of the long-term regional marketing program. This must be accomplished and RTM predicts that a revitalized downtown Historic district will become the next hot bedroom community for Metro-Richmond.
- B. *Development of downtown Hopewell:*** Hopewell's development plans for its riverfront downtown area offer significant potential for the entire region. Hopewell has a good core of historic product, a Petersburg National battlefield site and the potential to be the regions only downtown with deep water access. When completed, this area will be one of the top tourist "attractors" in the region.
- C. *Additional village-style shopping, dining and entertainment venues:*** These village environments are very popular with visitors and tend to make the difference in choice of lodging location. In other words, give them the dining, shopping, and entertainment and they will more likely stay in the area.
- D. *Destination wedding, family reunion, and events venues:*** All eleven (11) jurisdictions in this study have an opportunity to develop attractive, rustic, and perhaps historic settings for destination weddings, family reunions, and events. This region is perfect for family reunions as it provides something of interest for everyone. The lodging and retail revenues would be ample reward for site development!
- E. *Outdoor recreation niches:*** As the urban areas in the larger region continue to grow and develop, the more rural areas beyond the Petersburg area have an opportunity to package outdoor recreation niche products including cycling trails, birding, river recreation excursions, equestrian trails, "volksmarchs", etc.
- F. *Niche marketing:*** Niche marketing can be developed for a host of target niches. RTM recommends that Petersburg Area Regional Tourism look to its participating members, as well as other jurisdictions to test market niche products including peanut trails, motorsports, African American heritage, equestrian trails and events, craft/handmade studios, antiquing trails, wildlife self-guided tours and excursions, scenic driving tours, hunting and fishing excursions, photo trails, Native American heritage, agriculture/farm tours, Route 58 military trail, etc. In marketing these trails, RTM recommends a "pay as you play" funding structure.
- G. *Unique destination dining:*** RTM encourages the development of additional niche dining. This will help to continue to draw in regional residents and visitors alike. Unique food served in a unique setting can become a destination!

### **15. *Conduct on-going research to determine efforts earning the best return-on-investment.***

- Monthly lodging market mix survey
- Visitor profile and conversion research every three years
- Annual evaluation of inquiry point-of-origin
- Website visitor interest and conversion analysis
- Inquiry database "data mining"