



June 1, 2023

Dear Executive Committee members:

Attached are notes I provided to ChamberRVA and the Hampton Roads Chamber as a follow up to the two recent intercity visits.

As a contextual background:

This year, ChamberRVA Intercity Visit (ICV) visited Kansas City. The Hampton Roads Chamber's Leadership Exchange visited Charleston, S.C.

RVA757 Connects funded my participation in both trips – \$4,000-plus per trip (Chamber's trip fee, hotel, and travel).

The ChamberRVA trip had 185-plus Richmond region business, government, and non-profit leaders attend. The Hampton Roads chamber trip, one week later, had 85-plus leaders attend.

My Goal:

My goal was to make the trip worth the investment of RVA757 Connects.

ROI:

It's hard to assess the real value from this.

From the perspective of building more awareness of RVA757 Connects and advancing RVA757 Connects' connections and collaboration, it was successful.

A few examples:

- Spent time with Robert Duvall, president of Virginia Natural Gas, RVA757 Connects' board director, and \$25K annual supporter. I encouraged him to become RVA757 Connects' representative on the Tidewater Trails Alliance Board of Directors to help advance the Virginia Capital Trail expansion. Recall, Tom Cosgrove asked us for a representative on his board. We also introduced Robert Duvall to Bob Crum, so Bob could meet VNG's pipeline distribution partners to discuss potential BoAT bike pathway segments on pipeline right-a-ways.
- Met the business news editor of WHRO public media in Hampton Roads. She is now interested in connecting with WCVE in Richmond and both covering Convergence 2023.
- Met the CEO of COVABiz, 757's business magazine. He is interested in doing a story on us.



- Talked separately one-on-one with Joe Casey, Chesterfield County administrator, and John Vithoukas, Henrico County manager, about our initiatives.
- Talked with at least a half dozen regional and local economic development leaders. Spent time with the Alliance and GRP people.
- Met with a Capital One executive (who couldn't make our board introduction meeting) about his company joining RVA757 Connects and how our initiatives are aligned. Sent him the GIH plan.
- Talked to several people who are leading each region's entrepreneurial ecosystem and discussed how RVA757 Connects' MIC could be the forum to elevate their work.
- Met Taylor Franklin, co-founder and CEO of The Franklin Johnston Group and one of our board directors, and thanked him for his continued support.

This list goes on and on. I believe the time with each set of regional leaders is well worth the trip expense.

I wonder, however, if next year we should spend an additional \$2,500 for each trip to underwrite/sponsor one of the lunches or dinners to "buy" ourselves the opportunity to 1) appear on the event sponsors' slide (shown multiple times during the entire event between speakers and in the program) and 2) give us the opportunity to deliver a 3-to-5-minute pitch to the entire delegation as the sponsor of a meal.

As a follow up to the two trips, we prepared the attached white paper for both chambers. Read below for context/purpose before you scan this piece.

Onward.

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RVA757 Connects' Notes on Kansas City's and Charleston's Regional Visions and Strategic Framework Plans

May 30, 2023

RVA757 Connects, an organization focused on advancing economic prosperity for everyone in the Richmond (RVA) area and Hampton Roads (757) region, had the opportunity to attend both ChamberRVA's and Hampton Roads Chamber's May 2023 intercity visits to Kansas City and Charleston, S.C., respectively. Many important topics were covered on both trips. Everyone came away with a rich array of insights that will now help leaders in the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions' plan for the future.

This document captures what we learned about one of the key topic areas covered in both visits – how Kansas City and Charleston are advancing their regions through strategic visioning and strategy framework initiatives. We believe this is a timely topic for both Richmond and Hampton Roads. As such, we want to share our notes and offer a few related observations.

Kansas City – “KC Rising”

Overview: KC Rising is a regional economic development initiative that was formed in 2015 to help Kansas City grow faster and more intentionally.

Per the KC Rising website (<https://kcrising.com/>), this initiative amplifies community efforts by aligning corporations, foundations, nonprofits, governments, educational institutions, human services groups, civic leaders, and other members of the public square. KC Rising does so through a shared vision and clear pathways toward regional prosperity. KC's businesses lead this effort, nurturing partnerships and cultivating innovation.

Goal: KC Rising's overarching goal is to accelerate a future of inclusive regional prosperity – “*Growing the economy, including everyone.*”

Approach: KC Rising started with the why. “We were not winning our share of economic development deals.” Brooking provided a report that showed Kansas City was not growing at the rate of other peer cities. This report became KC Rising's call to arms.

The Civic Council, Chamber, and Area Development kicked off the initiative. The table was set as large as possible to include all interested parties.

Upfront, everyone agreed the initiative needed structure.

“If we relied on an informal approach, we felt we wouldn't go fast enough.”

The first step in the process was reaching an agreement on the tenets of the initiative. Input was gathered from everyone. Initial discussions centered around trade, ideas, and people. This included ideas like free transportation, placemaking, younger generations, digital equity, affordable housing, and affinity groups. This discussion and collective input led to a shared vision and focus areas.

Focus Areas – “Pillars”: KC Rising arrived at seven focus areas modeled on the United Nations’ (the UN) sustainable development goals.

- Connectivity
- Neighborhoods
- Enterprises
- Industry
- Inclusion
- Education
- Culture



The overall shared vision – *“Growing the economy, including everyone.”* – connects the strategy of each pillar area.

There was and still is no formal staff or overall budget. Lead organizations and businesses dedicate staff as needed. This includes volunteer action teams that work on each pillar. The action teams are predominately made up of business representatives that push hard to get things done.

Some of the actions include:

- Alignment with vision
- Supplier diversity council
- Affordable housing – educating the community
- Supporting new high-growth industries – jobs of tomorrow
- Advancing digital connectivity
- Supporting KC’s “K-12 Scholars”

Equity: Equity and upward mobility are part of every pillar. However, there is one pillar that focuses on inclusion.

“We can’t prosper unless everyone thrives.”

Long-term Perspective: KC Rising has a long-term view. Kansas City was officially named a FIFA World Cup 2026 host city. KC Rising is now focusing on what the legacy of this worldwide event should be for Kansas City.

Accountability: This is a metrics-based initiative. KC Rising tracks progress on key measures as compared to other peer regions: Austin, Raleigh, Charlotte, Nashville, Denver, Indianapolis, Columbus, Portland, Minneapolis, and Cincinnati. Key indicators include:

- Change in net migration
- GDP per job (worker productivity)
- Workers in self-sufficient households
- Housing wealth gap

For each, the goal is to close the gap between KC and the peer cities.

Advice for ChamberRVA ICV Participants: Every city should find its unique vision and set of pillars that work for them. The overall key is to have a plan. Don't worry about being overly prescriptive with the plan as it could become outdated quickly. Make the plan sustainable.

Charleston – One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All

Overview: One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All (<https://oneregionstrategy.com>) is a joint venture partnership between the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG), the Charleston Regional Development Alliance (CRDA), the Charleston Metro Chamber, and the public, private, academic, and nonprofit sectors to advance an economic recovery and resiliency plan for the entire region.

One Region Roadmap is the latest strategic plan that provides a broad platform for the community to address economic challenges old and new — and to prepare for challenges yet to come. The plan was inspired by the pandemic – *Where do we go from here?* The initiative builds on a series of iterative regional planning efforts that all started with the base closure and related loss of 25,000 jobs.

Goal: The overarching goal of One Region Roadmap is to improve the quality of life of the residents of Charleston through equity and economic momentum.

Name: While “One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All” is the full name, organizers refer to the initiative using the first half of the formal name – One Region Roadmap.

One Region Roadmap leaders shared that the One Region Roadmap name was very intentional for two reasons. First, they wanted the initiative's name to say exactly what this is – a unified regional blueprint for action. Past initiatives used aspirational names like *Forward Charleston*. Second, “one region” is Charleston's major theme. We heard this from all of Charleston's leaders across the region (city and surrounding counties) during our three-day ICV leadership exchange.

Ownership: No single organization owns the One Region Roadmap. An advisory board of 100 leaders from companies, nonprofits, and governments provides an oversight structure. This includes leaders from three counties and the city, local college presidents, and corporate leaders.

Inputs: Nearly 5,000 people in total provided input by attending one of 16 focus groups or public meetings, answering a survey, or attending a virtual public meeting.

Action Areas: There are six regional dynamics or action areas: affordability, global fluency, infrastructure, innovation and entrepreneurship, quality of place, and talent. Equity and economic momentum run across all areas.

Organizations had to apply to the Advisory Board to be designated the lead of each action area. The Chamber leads affordable housing. The College of Charleston leads Global Planning. The action area leader is responsible for keeping the momentum going and helps to point to what's next.

Staffing and Budget: A U.S. Economic Development Administration grant secured by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, with additional support from partner agencies, helped fund the planning effort. There is no ongoing staff or implementation budget. The organizations that make up the Advisory Board take turns leading in a very collaborative manner and lend staff to the initiative as needed.

Equity: Equity and upward mobility are part of every focus area.

One Area They Could Improve:
Educating the broad public.

Deliverable: The “strategy map” of the action areas with four to five goals for each area is the central deliverable for this initiative. This map is included in the final strategic plan located here: <https://oneregionstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/One-Region-Roadmap-Final-Report-June-2022.pdf>

Accountability: The last section of the plan points to leading indicators and broad goals that will be tracked and reported.

Flexibility: The presenters stressed the importance of collaboration and flexibility in making the One Region Roadmap a success.

| ONE REGION ROADMAP STRATEGIES | |
|--|--|
| The following section provides additional information on each strategy as well as case studies from around the country. One Region will need to work collaboratively with members and implementation partners to implement the set of strategies, collectively building a stronger, more resilient region. | |
| ☆ Indicates top-ranked strategy from virtual public meeting | |
| <p>EQUITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Fund a regional Office to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within government policies and initiatives. 2 Create an equity data dashboard with annual performance metrics to measure progress on improving racial equity. 3 Expand the regional minority and women-owned business registry. 4 Identify collaborative goals for increasing local minority- and women-owned business participation on county and regional government contracts. 5 Conduct an annual summit led by a regional collaborative to discuss progress and how the region can advance more equitable practices. | <p>INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18 Develop a regional broadband council to coordinate existing pilot programs and initiatives to increase broadband coverage. 19 Work with broadband providers to ensure total geographic coverage for high-speed broadband throughout the region. 20 Create a coordinated network of publicly available broadband locations through partnerships with libraries, schools, hospitals, businesses and government entities. 21 Encourage government entities to adopt dig once policies to reduce the cost of broadband expansion. 22 Coordinate capital improvements planning across regional, county and local governments to sign regional infrastructure investments. |
| <p>ECONOMIC MOMENTUM</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Create a coalition of regulatory authorities and economic development entities to identify zones for sustainable development. 7 Focus regional economic development efforts on development zones consistent with infrastructure availability and land use strategy. 8 Create an automotive research center focusing on e-mobility. 9 Develop an Innovation District with cutting edge spaces for life sciences and information technology. 10 Support first-time entrepreneurs with essential business launch services. | <p>INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23 Create and market an innovation brand that ties together innovation activity occurring throughout the region. 24 Form a regional technology council to better connect entrepreneurs and opportunities in information technology. 25 Develop a new entrepreneurship center to support start-up businesses. 26 Create an investment fund for minority-owned businesses. |
| <p>AFFORDABILITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Pursue opportunities to expand funding for the renovation and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing. 12 Champion the inclusion of 20% affordable housing within a quarter mile of premium transit stations. 13 Provide zoning overlays in areas around employment centers that allow for denser housing types and streamlined permitting. 14 Create a regional housing coalition to champion policy around, and the development of, affordable housing. | <p>TALENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 27 Support the continuation of making technical college free for Charleston region residents advancing their education in high-demand fields. 28 Build upon existing programs to help grow the Black and Latinx community in tech. 29 Establish a co-teaching program that enables industry professionals to assist K-12 teachers with STEM curricula. 30 Convene a workforce training task force to improve connections between educational institutions, workforce training providers and regional employers. |
| <p>GLOBAL FLUENCY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15 Create a resource center for international residents that connects people to programs, events, and initiatives to exchange cultures and ideas. 16 Increase the number of international flights to targeted business destinations. 17 Create a volunteer corps of ambassadors willing to connect with new foreign nationals in the region. | <p>QUALITY OF PLACE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 31 Establish a regional data dashboard to evaluate consistency between development patterns and regional planning goals. 32 Develop a regional watershed approach to open space preservation and the use of natural systems in flood and drainage management. 33 Initiate a land preservation and acquisition program to support the long-term retention of open space, critical habitats and systems that support resiliency throughout the region. |

One Area They Could Improve: Promoting the plan to all residents.

Advice for Hampton Roads Chamber ICV Participants: Have a plan for your region and celebrate it as you go. Charleston One Region Roadmap leaders said part of Charleston’s rebound success from the base closure was always having and updating a strategic plan and following it.

Observations on Visioning and Action Frameworks

As an organization that studies how regions operate and collaborate, we want to offer a few observations about what we have learned about regional visioning and action frameworks.

First and foremost, Kansas City’s “KC Rising” and Charleston’s “One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All,” while impressive initiatives in and of themselves, are not unique. Most regions invest in and orchestrate very similar regional visioning initiatives.

Second, from what we see across the country, there are more similarities than differences between these planning efforts. In fact, we believe there are 10 Tenets of Successful Regional Visioning and Action Frameworks:

10 Tenets of Successful Regional Visioning and Action Frameworks

- 1. The Why:** Visioning and action framework planning initiatives start with a data-backed explanation of “why” the initiative is needed. It’s most helpful if the *raison d’etre* is a crisis like losing 25,000 military workers (Charleston) or being at the bottom of a list of 50 top cities in terms of upward mobility (Charlotte).
- 2. A Shared Vision:** Visioning and action framework initiatives either start with or arrive at a region’s vision. Both approaches work. The key is having a shared dream – *what we want the region to become in the future*. COVID and the social justice movement have now added equity to all regional visions.
- 3. Naming and Packaging:** All visioning and framework planning initiatives are given brand names and are well-packaged. This includes a shared narrative about the why, what, how, and when. Names can be more inspirational or more descriptive. Inspirational, more emotional names often work best with a descriptive rational tagline.
- 4. Organizers and Organizing Structure:** Most initiatives are started by a collaboration between the regional chamber, regional planning agency, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and leading corporations. Most are not owned by any one group. All have some form of an organizing advisory board and committee infrastructure that reinforce the diversity of participants.

5. **Broad Input:** All successful visioning and action framework planning initiatives start initially with buy-in from key stakeholders. During the active planning process, residents are asked for input. Seattle engaged 20,000 residents. KC Rising and Charleston's One Region Roadmap efforts both garnered initial input from about 5,000 people through focus groups, community meetings, and surveys. The best initiatives deploy innovative ways to meet residents where they are and include people in underserved communities.
6. **Focus Areas or Pillars:** Broad input usually leads to key focus areas (foundational pillars) or finalizes the focus area selection and direction. The rationale behind pillar selection varies widely. Designated focus areas are positioned as the key drivers in achieving the vision. More important than the selection criteria are the interrelationships between and the alchemy that results when viewing and working on all the pillars as a united community. The focus area strategy grid or table is often the central iconic output that captures the overall initiative. The pillars, however, should be viewed more as intersecting focus areas (think Venn diagram) instead of distinctly separate work areas. Working across the pillars, finding linkages, and making connections, is most often the key to the greatest community impact.
7. **Engaged and Committed Participants:** THE connective tissue that makes visioning and action framework planning initiatives work is the engagement and impassioned collaboration and commitment of all leaders. Visioning and action framework planning initiatives are volunteer-led and supported. As with everything, the key is ongoing, committed leadership.
8. **Ongoing Outreach:** Increasing awareness and building familiarity for visioning and action framework initiatives grows support and builds momentum for the cause. To this end, an ongoing and effective communication system is a common characteristic of successful initiatives. This includes ongoing outreach to not only the active participants, the people who provided input, but also the entire community.
9. **Accountability and Dashboard Reporting:** Successful visioning and action framework planning initiatives have quantitative goals, an ongoing performance assessment process, and systematic reporting that are part of the ongoing communications system.
10. **Sustainability and Ultimate Impact:** City-building is messy and takes time. Successful visioning and action framework planning initiatives execute all of the above in a way that builds momentum. Having a published plan, building in flexibility, achieving and showcasing ongoing results, and keeping everyone informed and engaged along the way are the keys to project sustainability and, in turn, the ultimate impact an initiative has on a community.

Hampton Roads and RVA Visioning and Action Framework

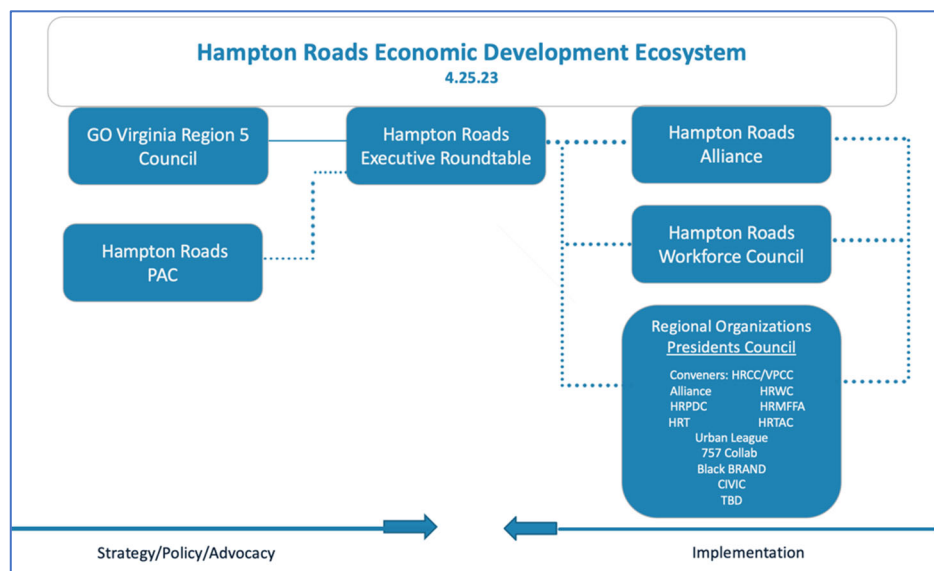
Getting an inside look at how Kansas City and Charleston are advancing their regions through strategic visioning and strategy frameworks was well-timed for both the Hampton Roads and Richmond delegations. Both regions are embarking on planning initiatives.

Hampton Roads:

This Spring, two Hampton Roads regional economic development organizations merged to establish the Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable with the goal of unifying their efforts. The new organization combines the Hampton Roads Business Roundtable, established in 2012, and ReInvent Hampton Roads, established in 2016.

The primary mission of the new Executive Roundtable is to coordinate the alignment of the region’s economic development organizations, strategy, and associated initiatives to improve the trajectory of the region’s economic growth and competitiveness.

The Executive Roundtable combination also includes alignment of the key regional players for clarity of roles and players (see graphic to the right).



In the immediate future, Hampton Roads will work on updating the “Economic Growth & Diversification Plan.” This plan is funded through GO Virginia and managed by the Roundtable as the support organization for GO Virginia Region 5 (Hampton Roads). This plan is updated every two years. 2023 is an update year.

The groups in the above graphic will work together on the Economic Growth & Diversification Plan update, creating a “living and breathing” roadmap detailing target industry clusters and key challenges and opportunities ahead. This work will include a marketing communications plan to inform the community about the region’s strengths and direction.



One of the foundations for this planning update work is the 757 Recovery and Resilience Action Framework, an action plan created by over 100 regional leaders during the pandemic to accelerate the region's post-pandemic recovery – <https://framework.hamptonroadsalliance.com/>.

It is interesting to note that the Economic Growth & Diversification Plan will follow many of the tenets of successful regional visioning and action frameworks. It is also interesting to note that GO Virginia (Region 5) has and continues to be a source for planning funds. GO Virginia funded the Hampton Roads Economic Growth & Diversification Plan and parts of the 757 Recovery & Resilience Action Framework plan. In addition, GO Virginia Region 4 (Richmond) and Region 5 (Hampton Roads) have teamed up to fund joint-planning efforts including the [I-64 Innovation Corridor Opportunity Study](#), the [I-64 Innovation Corridor Global Internet Hub Strategic Plan](#), "GO TEC" (Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers), and up next, the Life Science Virginia plan.

Richmond:

RVA is now the fastest-growing region in Virginia. As RVA's fortunes rise, a strategic vision and action framework planning effort is being designed to shape a future where inclusive prosperity unites and defines the region. The goal: every child, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, or the RVA zip code in which they were born, has an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed.

The Community Foundation for a greater Richmond, ChamberRVA, and PlanRVA, along with local government, business, and nonprofit leaders are organizing this visioning and strategy framework development.

Like Hampton Roads' Economic Growth & Diversification Plan, RVA's collaborative process will follow many of the best practices as detailed above, including the following likely steps:

1. **Initial Concept Development:** Making a strong case for the need to develop a shared vision and strategic framework for the RVA region – our "why."
2. **Planning and Infrastructure Development:** Developing the communications system to keep everyone informed and engaged throughout the process – initiative's advisory board, name/tagline, and robust community engagement plan.
3. **Vision, Draft Framework, and KPI Development:** Exploring and identifying the top needs and related programming, creating a Draft 1.0 action framework for review. This will include highlighting many of the successful programs that are currently making a difference across the Richmond region.
4. **Community-Wide Input on Draft 1.0 Framework:** Gathering stakeholders' and residents' feedback and input on Draft 1.0 through large scale community-wide engagement.



5. **Draft 2.0 Vision and Framework with Key Performance Measures:** Synthesizing feedback and input into a more detailed Draft 2.
6. **Final Vision and Framework:** Packaging and sharing the final direction as a written plan.
7. **Ongoing Evaluation and Reporting:** Holding the plan accountable through a public-facing dashboard and annual report to the community.

The entire process will be transparent and inclusive with input and feedback from all perspectives across the region. Community engagement and advisement will occur at each step.

The final action framework will identify and prioritize transformational opportunities, specific strategies, required funding, and metrics to ensure RVA moves toward a shared vision of inclusive prosperity.

More details on this exciting RVA planning initiative will be unveiled in the weeks ahead.

Thank You

Thank you to both ChamberRVA's and the Hampton Roads Chamber's staff for orchestrating two more remarkable intercity visits. While we learn a lot from all the trips, the takeaways from the 2023 visits related to regional visioning and action frameworks are particularly relevant and timely as both the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions are embarking on regional planning efforts.

While each region's planning initiative will be different on purpose and by design, there is no doubt that both efforts will make each region more self-aware and more intentional in shaping their respective futures. As the organization that advances collaboration between Richmond and Hampton Roads, we are excited about the promise of each planning initiative as stronger regions make for even stronger partners.

In closing, I want to thank Bryan Stephens, President and CEO of the Hampton Roads Chamber, and Brian Anderson, President and CEO of ChamberRVA, for including us on their trips and applaud their leadership in attending each other's 2023 intercity visit. Your presence on both trips reinforces the power and promise of two neighboring regions working together to build the I-64 Innovation Corridor.

RVA757 Connects is a 501(c)(3) organization focused on advancing economic prosperity for everyone in the Richmond (RVA) area and Hampton Roads (757) region. We are an inclusive, mutually supportive network of leaders representing community, business, and higher education. Our mission is to improve the economic trajectory of both regions and the I-64 Innovation Corridor that connects us.

The organization identifies, supports, and advances major opportunities, initiatives, and projects that meaningfully benefit both regions. This includes widening I-64 to three lanes all the way from Richmond to Hampton Road, increasing passenger rail service, extending the Virginia Capital Trail (BoAT trail) and building the Fall Line Trail, and accelerating our megaregion as a Global Internet Hub (<https://www.globalinternethub.org/>). Learn more about RVA757 Connects at www.RVA757Connects.com.