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THE REGION

HAMPTON ROADS 2000

REGIONAL STUDIES INSTITUTE • OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY



9 October 2000

Dear Reader:

Those who know and love the region of Hampton Roads wish to make it an even better place to live than it is currently. In order for us to achieve that end, we must know literally "where we are" in critical areas. This first "State of the Region" Report is designed to provide citizens with a detailed, though not burdensome, look at several critical aspects of the lives we live in Hampton Roads. The Report focuses on topics such as the regional economy (including the tourist and military sectors), the workforce, K-12 education, technology, and, of course, government and regional cooperation.

Perhaps the Report's most surprising result is the expressed receptivity of citizens throughout the region to the idea of merging governments and many of the services these governments provide. It appears that the citizenry is well ahead of its elected political leaders in this regard.

Also notable are the following:

- The region's economy has performed remarkably well in light of military downsizing and decreased military expenditures. The region's economy continues to diversify away from defense-related activities.
- Tourism is a most important industry in Hampton Roads, but is evolving into an activity that caters increasingly to higher income individuals.
- The region's workforce is of mixed quality and workforce development is an important future need.
- K-12 student performance in Hampton Roads typically lags that nationally.
- Hampton Roads is technology rich, but its major technology is situated in the public sector and to a large degree has not yet been transferred to the private sector.
- Regional transportation plans are "pavement and automobile oriented" and are unlikely to meet the region's future needs, even if proposed roads are constructed.
- Hampton Roads is a "college town" in terms of the proportion of its population that is composed of college students, but it is not a center for university-based research and development activity, and that has hindered its economic progress.

This initial "State of the Region" Report concentrates upon providing a factual base for the citizenry and especially for policymakers. It is designed to tell us where we are in the year 2000. Subsequent annual "State of the Region" reports will focus upon particular aspects of the region's challenges and problems, for example, the probable effects of the development of a "superport" airport in Isle of Wight County, the possible merger of regional services such as police and fire, technology transfer, and so forth.

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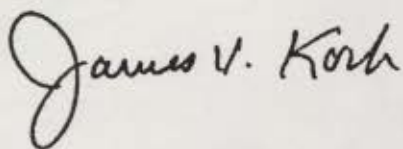
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Aditi Agarwal	Tatiana Isakovski
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My hope is that this Report will inform you and stimulate your thinking about regional issues. Our region is a superb place to live, but we can make it even better.

Sincerely,



James V. Koch

President and Professor of Economics
Old Dominion University

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