

Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance

James City County Comprehensive Plan – Alliance Member Survey

Executive Summary

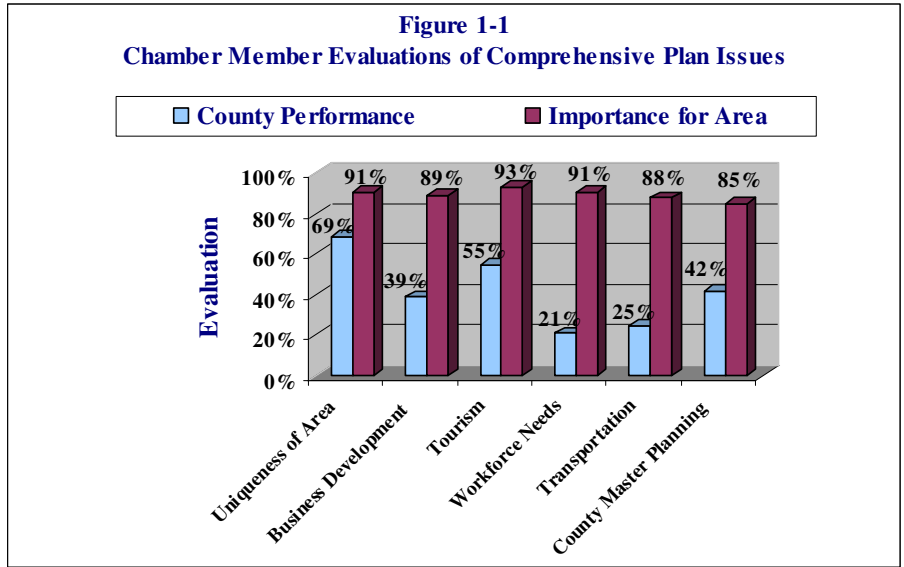
August 2008

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force (Task Force) for the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance (the Alliance) commissioned a survey to learn about the views of its members concerning the future of James City County (the County) and the strategic direction that its Comprehensive Plan should establish. The Task Force wanted to understand if there were strategic development issues facing James City County that currently are not addressed by its Comprehensive Plan. The Alliance retained *The Wessex Group, Ltd.* (TWG) to develop a survey that would answer these questions. Respondents were queried electronically about their views and their judgment as to the relative importance of various issues. The study is intended to serve as a means of communicating the collective views of the business community to the County and its planners.

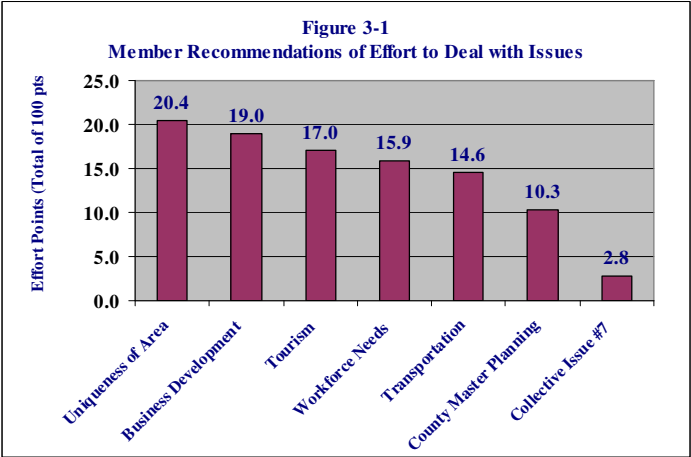
Responses were received from 145, or almost 15 percent, of the Alliance members. Two out of three of the Alliance members responding to this survey live in James City County (68%), 11% live in the City of Williamsburg and 8% live in York County. For most, their businesses also are located in James City County (54%) or in the City of Williamsburg (23%). Most of the Alliance members responding to the survey work with firms having fifty or fewer employees (85%). Respondents represented a wide variety of different types of firms including services (67%), tourism (20%), retail (8 %) and manufacturing (4%). Given the range of respondent profiles, it is likely that they represent a reasonable cross-section of Alliance members.

As shown in Figure 1-1 below, the respondents confirmed that the six issues identified by the steering committee – uniqueness of the area, business development, tourism, workforce development, transportation and master planning -- were all very important to the membership. The scale for responses was as follows: 5 --Very important; 4 – somewhat important; 3 – Neither important nor unimportant; 2 – Somewhat unimportant; and 1 – very unimportant. The average response in each of the six areas was in the “very important” range.

Members were also asked to indicate how well the county was doing on each issue. The question did not refer directly to the performance of County government, but asked more generally how the county was doing in each area. The scale for responses was as follows: 5 – very well; 4 – somewhat well; 3 -- neither well nor poorly; 2 – somewhat badly; 1 – very badly. The evaluation for meeting workforce and transportation needs was at the edge of the “somewhat badly” and “very badly” range. Business development, county master planning, and tourism were in the middle to “somewhat badly” range, and maintenance of the uniqueness of the area scored in the “somewhat well” range.



The survey also asked members to indicate how much effort they would apply to each issue if they were in charge of managing the implementation of James City County’s Comprehensive plan. Members were given 100 points to allocate across the different areas, so they had to make hard choices about where effort should be placed. Figure 3-1 shows the results. Although they thought the county was already doing relatively well in preserving the uniqueness of the area, the members voted that as the area that should receive the greatest emphasis. Business development was a close second, and followed by tourism and workforce needs.



Members were also given the opportunity to identify important topics (shown as “collective issues” in Figure 3-1) that had not been included in the six categories. Four items were mentioned by at least two respondents -- enhancing green space and supporting partnership between the County and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden on the Jamestown Beach Campground site; controlling/managing growth through management of the PSA or linking approvals to water supply; addressing transportation issues by creating incentives for group and mass transit use by visitors and adding sidewalks in selected areas; and encouraging collaboration between the arts and cultural tourism.