

NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND

A Shared Strategy for Strengthening Planning District 16's Small Business Economy

PD16 Business Hub • February 2026

Fredericksburg • Spotsylvania • Stafford • Caroline • King George

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning District 16 (PD16) has experienced meaningful growth over the past decade, yet that growth has not translated into sustained stability for the small businesses that form the backbone of the regional economy. While economic development efforts often prioritize recruitment and expansion, far less attention is paid to retention and sustainability of existing businesses. The result is a **'leaky bucket' economy**—where businesses are celebrated at launch but left unsupported over the long term.

This white paper proposes a coordinated, regional approach to small business sustainability that intentionally connects elected officials, economic development agencies, large institutions, and small business owners. At the center of this approach is the **PD16 Business Hub**, designed to serve as durable economic infrastructure that supports retention, builds capacity, and connects policy to practice.

The call to action is clear: PD16 must adopt a **Local First mindset** that values small business sustainability alongside growth. Doing so requires shared leadership, inclusion of small business voices in decision-making, and measurable commitments that keep jobs, dollars, and opportunity circulating locally.

Until now, Planning District 16 has never had a dedicated, community-rooted small business hub focused specifically on retaining and sustaining the businesses already here — built by an entrepreneur, for entrepreneurs. The PD16 Business Hub changes that.

II. THE QUIET CRISIS IN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Growth Without Retention

Small businesses account for 99.9% of all U.S. businesses and employ approximately 46% of the private workforce. Virginia mirrors this reality, yet small businesses often receive a disproportionately small share of

long-term economic strategy, procurement access, and institutional partnership.

Planning District 16 currently lacks consistent tracking of small business closures, business-license non-renewals, or commercial turnover tied to local ownership. The City of Fredericksburg requires annual business-license renewals—creating a clear opportunity to measure business retention versus exit—yet this data is not routinely analyzed as an economic health indicator.

The Leaky Bucket Effect

Openings are celebrated. Closures are rarely counted. Post-2020 trends show widespread permanent closures, particularly among minority-owned, women-owned, and service-based businesses. Without localized tracking, PD16 risks underestimating the full impact on jobs, services, and community stability.

What's at Stake

When small businesses close, communities lose more than storefronts. They lose local jobs, local spending power, trusted service providers, and cultural and community identity.

III. WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Small businesses face rising costs, tighter margins, workforce challenges, and reduced access to capital. PD16 is growing—but growth without intentional support makes the region less resilient, not more.

From a ten-year vantage point, it is clear that the complexity of operating a small business has increased while support systems have not evolved at the same pace. Now is the time to move from isolated programs to coordinated infrastructure.

For every \$100 spent locally, \$68 stays in the community.

At a chain? Only \$32.

Local First isn't charity. It's math.

IV. THE ECOSYSTEM PD16 NEEDS

A thriving regional economy depends on coordination across all sectors:

Elected Officials	Set priorities, align policy and funding
Economic Development Agencies	Translate strategy into measurable outcomes
Institutions & Corporations	Act as anchor employers and purchasers
Small Businesses	Create jobs, circulate dollars, stabilize communities

The missing link is intentional connection and accountability among these groups—particularly the inclusion of small business voices in regional decision-making.

V. THE SOLUTION: THE PD16 BUSINESS HUB

The PD16 Business Hub is designed as connective infrastructure—not a one-time program. It provides education, mentorship, peer networks, and direct connection to institutions and agencies. Built with partners such as SCORE, Economic Development Authorities, and regional stakeholders, the Hub centralizes access while remaining deeply collaborative.

All programs are **free to PD16 business owners** across three pathways:

LAUNCH PD16	GROW PD16	READY PD16
<i>For early-stage entrepreneurs moving from idea to operation</i>	<i>For existing businesses ready to stabilize and scale</i>	<i>For businesses preparing for capital, contracts & partnerships</i>
Business setup fundamentals Pricing & revenue strategy Legal & compliance basics First-customer strategy	Systems & operations Financial management Marketing & client growth Risk & compliance review	Capital readiness Govt contracting basics Strategic partnerships Opportunity navigation

This model is scalable and replicable across Virginia.

VI. THE ASK: INVEST IN PD16

The PD16 Business Hub is free to every small business it serves. That means it runs on partnerships—not fees. We are actively seeking **Founding Funders**—corporations, foundations, and institutions that believe a strong local economy starts with the businesses already here.

Year One Program Budget		
Category	Cash Investment	In-Kind
Program Coordinator + Expert Advisors	\$40,000	—
Founder & Director (Latasha Brooks)	—	\$18,000
Workshops, Cohorts & Procurement Training	\$19,000	—
Food & Hospitality (\$500/session x 15)	\$7,500	\$6,000
Venue Offset (\$320/session x 15)	\$4,800	\$7,200
Marketing, Technology, Supplies & Admin	\$14,000	—
TOTAL	\$85,300	\$31,200

Total Program Value (cash + in-kind): \$116,500

Funding Partnership Levels

Level	Annual Investment	What It Funds
Anchor Partner	\$25,000+	A full program track + 75+ entrepreneurs served + premier recognition
Regional Partner	\$10,000–\$24,999	Advising series + cohort programming + regional visibility
Community Partner	\$5,000–\$9,999	Workshop series + networking events + community recognition
Supporting Partner	\$1,000–\$4,999	Direct entrepreneur access, resources, and program support

All partnerships include logo placement on the PD16 Business Hub website, recognition at Hub events, inclusion in partner communications, and a full annual impact report.

For Elected Officials & Agencies

- Track small business retention data alongside recruitment metrics
- Support Hub programming through policy alignment and funding
- Establish a Local First recognition or certification program
- Host annual small-business listening sessions

For Institutions & Corporations

- Host at least one annual event at a local small business
- Include local vendors in major events and procurement
- Sponsor one Hub-based workshop annually
- Commit to intentional local procurement — take the Local First Pledge

For Small Businesses

- Join the Hub — it's free
- Commit to collaboration over competition
- Engage in the PD16 Small Business Advisory Council

VII. YEAR ONE IMPACT GOALS & ACCOUNTABILITY

We don't just track activity — we track outcomes. By December 2026, the PD16 Business Hub commits to:

200+	PD16 entrepreneurs trained
300+	Hours of free advising delivered
50+	Small businesses stabilized or launched
25+	Businesses prepared for procurement or capital access
3	Regional funding partners secured and sustained

Every Founding Funder receives a **mid-year progress update** and a **Year One Impact Report** detailing exactly where their investment went and what it produced. Annual reporting and transparent metrics ensure full accountability.

VIII. GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

The PD16 Business Hub is a community initiative founded and led by Latasha Brooks, with programming delivered in partnership with **Global Business Women Trailblazers**, a federally recognized **501(c)(3) nonprofit organization**.

Philanthropic and grant funding is received and administered through Global Business Women Trailblazers, ensuring full nonprofit accountability, transparent financial reporting, and **tax-deductible contributions** for eligible donors.

Corporate sponsorships and institutional partnerships are structured to meet the needs of each funder. Nonprofit documentation, EIN, and program financials are available upon request.

IX. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Latasha Brooks

Founder, A&B Creative Event Center (est. 2016; celebrating 10 years in February 2026)

Founder, Global Business Women Trailblazers 501(c)(3)

Founder, PD16 Business Hub

Board Member, Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce

President, National Contract Management Association (NCMA), Old Dominion Chapter

With more than 10 years of experience as a business owner, community builder, and government-contracting educator, Latasha Brooks works at the intersection of small business, institutions, and economic development across PD16. She has mentored over 1,700 entrepreneurs and produced more than 700 events across the East Coast.

X. CALL TO ACTION

Ready to Invest in PD16's Small Business Future?

To partner, sponsor, or learn more:

Email: info@gbwt.org | Contactus@eventsabcreate.com

Phone: 540-915-0778

Web: pd16businesshub.com

*"A thriving regional economy is not defined by how many businesses we attract,
but by how many we help sustain."*

— Latasha Brooks, Founder

*PD16 Business Hub • Located at A&B Creative Event Center, Fredericksburg, VA
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