



# City of Winchester, Virginia

## Convention & Entertainment Center

### Research Background



# Presentation Team



## City of Winchester, Virginia

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*Board Member, Winchester  
EDA*

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*Winchester City Council  
Ward 4*

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*Winchester City Council  
Ward 1*

**W. Scott McGeary**  
*William Scott McGeary Consulting*

## **Mission Statement**

*To provide a safe, vibrant, sustainable community while striving to constantly improve the quality of life for our citizens and economic partners*

## **City of Winchester's Fundamental Goals**

- Encourage sustainable economic growth and partnerships through business and workforce development
- Promote and accelerate revitalization of catalyst and other areas throughout the City
- Advance the quality of life for all Winchester residents by increasing cultural, recreational and tourism opportunities; enhance and maintain infrastructure; and promote and improve public safety
- Improve City services and advance the City's strategic plan goals by promoting a culture of transparency, efficiency and innovation.

# Overview of Winchester

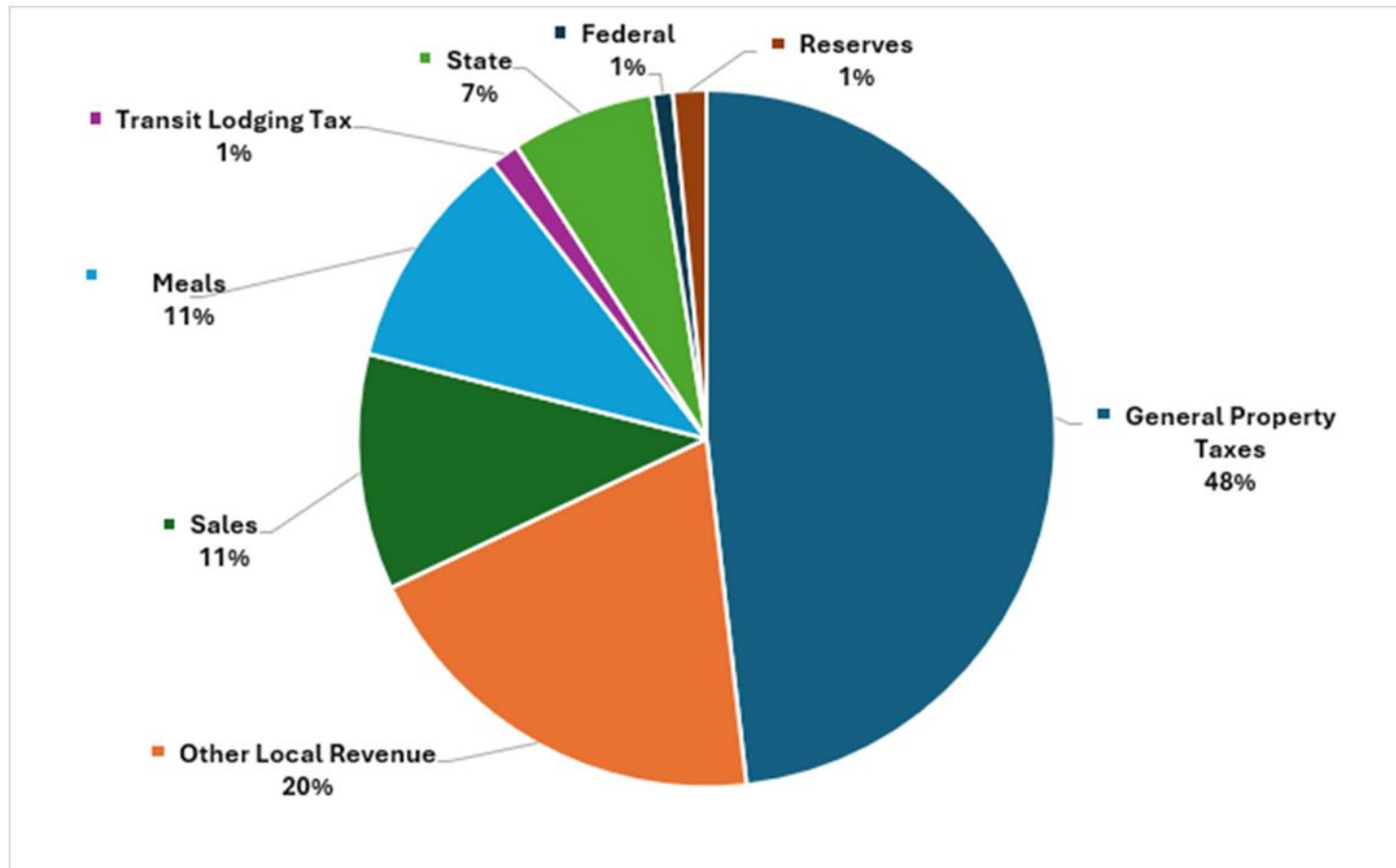
|                                       | Winchester | Virginia  |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Population                            | 27,981     | 8,657,499 |
| Median Age                            | 36.7       | 38.8      |
| Poverty Level                         | 19.30%     | 9.90%     |
| Households Reciving SNAP              | 11.00%     | 8.80%     |
| Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch | 85%        | 58.10%    |

| Peak Employment Level (2006 Q3) | Current Employment Level (2025 Q1) | Percentage Change |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 31,289                          | 25,937                             | -17.11%           |

|                    | 2020   | 2024   | Percentage Change |
|--------------------|--------|--------|-------------------|
| City of Winchester | 28,115 | 27,800 | -1.12%            |
| Frederick County   | 91,451 | 98,109 | 7.28%             |

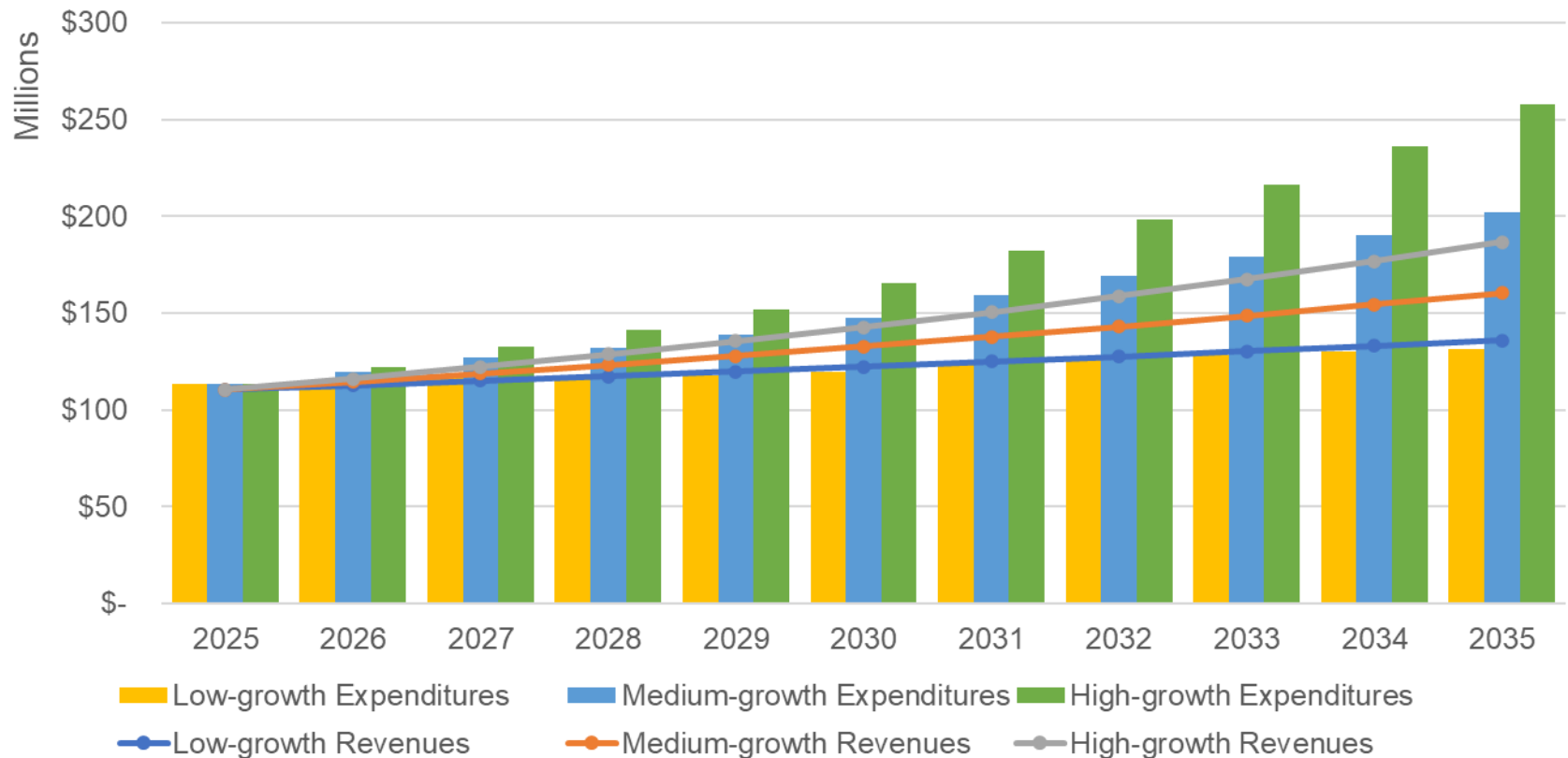
# Economic forecasting (1/2)

## FY 2026 General Fund - Revenues



# Economic forecasting (2/2)

## Ten-Year Projection of Comparative Revenue and Expenditure Scenarios





# Issue background

- Long-term solvency
  - City cannot grow larger than current borders
  - Property taxes comprise nearly 50% of projected FY26 Revenues, expected to hold for future budget years
  - 25% of land within the City is tax-exempt
  - Winchester City Council raised effective property tax rate in past five budget cycles (assessments vs. tax rate)
  - External factors such as inflation, regional job market, and increase in service costs will continue to drive expenses while maintaining the same, high-quality level of services
  - Long term sustainability/resilience will require diversification of revenue streams
- Prior discussions on Convention/Entertainment in Winchester
  - Conversations around revenue diversification focus on ways to increase use-taxes: i.e. Tourism and patriation of external tax dollars
  - In past 20 years CoW has issued 3 studies regarding Convention Centers
    - All results indicate a market need for entertainment space
    - Would require heavy subsidization from City (purpose defeating)
    - A gaming component could loss-lead and offset need for subsidization

# Project Timeline

- 2023
  - Approached by multiple gaming operators regarding feasibility of Winchester as location
  - Begin internal stakeholder discussions
- 2024
  - Internal market/legislative research on Virginia operators
  - Visit in-State and out of State operators with select stakeholders
- 2025
  - Quantitative/qualitative studies
  - Begin external stakeholder discussions



# Converging Studies

- In 2025, the Winchester EDA commissioned two separate studies to explore the feasibility of an entertainment/convention center with an attached gaming component
  - Quantitative study conducted by Mangum Consulting LLC
  - Qualitative/work-group study conducted by William Scott McGeary Consulting

# Study group composition

- Representative cross-section of community leaders and institutions
  - 25 total members:
    - Educational Institutions
    - City of Winchester/Frederick County Stakeholders
      - City Councilors, Planning Commission, EDA, Community Development Staff, Tourism, Law Enforcement
    - Nonprofits/Civic organizations
      - NAACP, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber
    - Faith leaders
    - Private sector/Business support organizations
      - Restaurant owners, developers, downtown Winchester stakeholders
    - Diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds

# Study group content

- **Session 1: Introduction/Agenda Setting**
- **Session 2: State Legislative Process**
  - Paul Krizek, Virginia House of Delegates (Alexandria), Chair of ABC/Gaming Subcommittee on General Laws
  - Bryce Reeves, Virginia Senate (Fredericksburg), Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology
- **Session 3: Crime and Habitual Nature of Gaming**
  - Chief Byron Ashbrook, Chief of Police, Bristol, VA
  - Sgt. W. Kevin Johnson, Virginia State Police Unit Commander for Gaming Enforcement Unit
  - Anne Rogers, Problem Gambling Prevention Coordinator for the Office of Behavioral Health Wellness
- **Session 4: Education/Employment/Tourism**
  - Kodi Fleming, Associate Vice President, Professional Development, Tidewater Community College
  - Ray Gillen, County Planning Commissioner, Retired & Chair, Schenectady County Metroplex Authority
- **Session 5: Investment/Property Values/Taxes**
  - Celeste Broadstreet, Finance Director/Real Estate Administrator, City of Winchester
  - Mangum Economics, Financial and Societal Impact Analysis Consultant Group

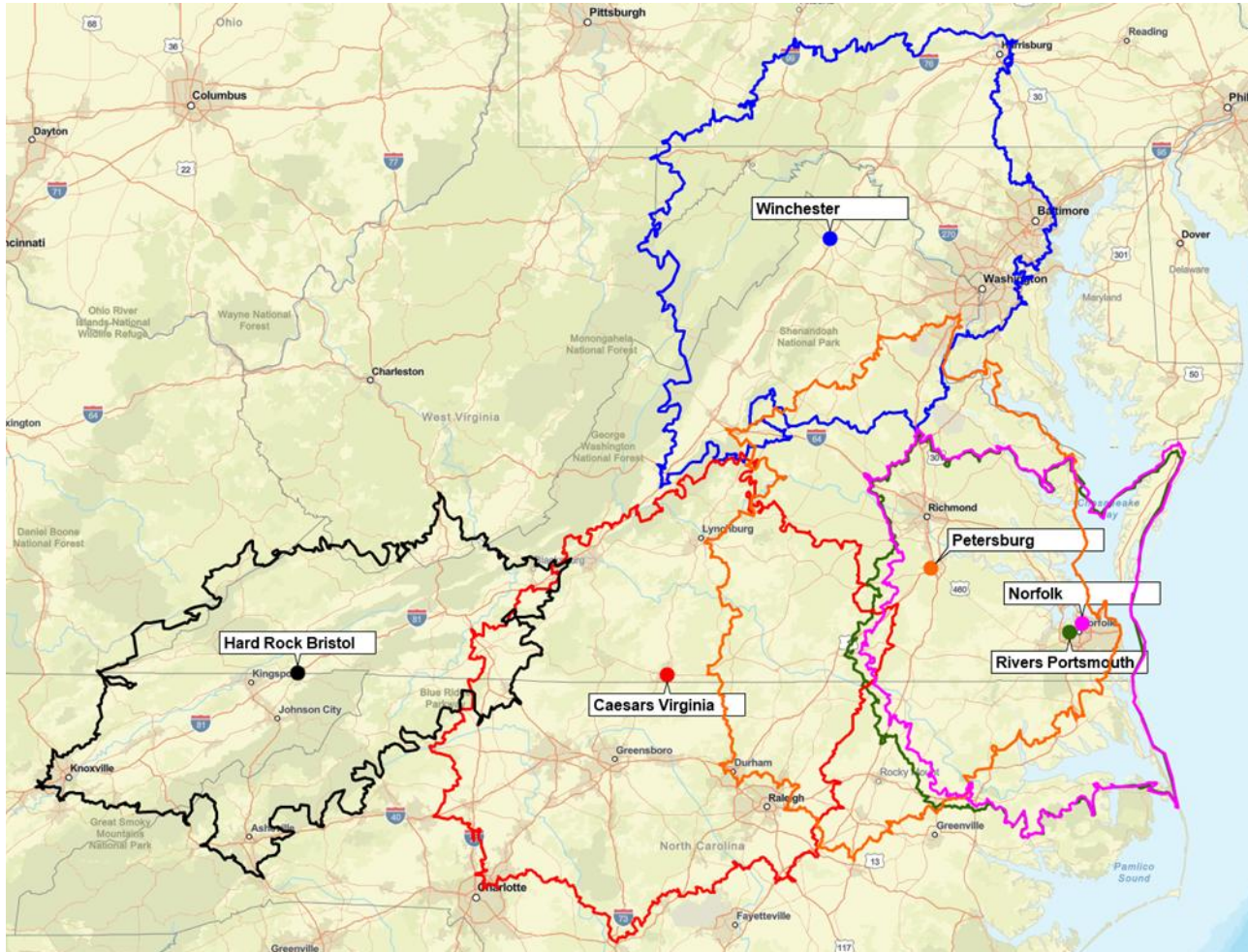
# Study group results

- Polled before sessions
  - 66% unfavorable view of gaming operators/process
- Polled after sessions
  - 85% favorable view of gaming operators/process
    - Of the unfavorable views:
      - All missed two or more sessions

# Projected regional job creation

- On-going Annual Operations:
  - Approximately 3,100 local jobs
  - Approximately \$180.9 million in local wages and benefits
  - Approximately \$639.3 million in local economic output
- Construction:
  - Total of approximately 660 job years
  - Approximately 230 local job years
  - Approximately \$14.5 million in local wages and benefits
  - Approximately \$46.8 million in local economic output

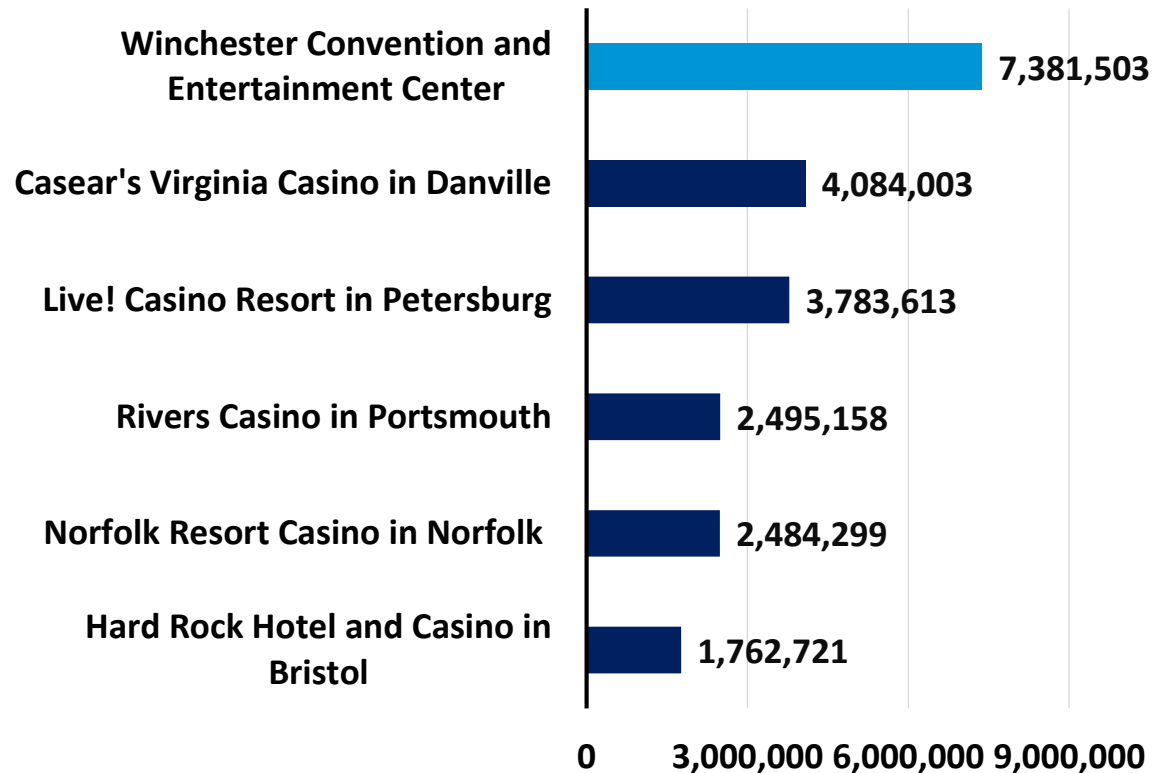
# Operator Status Quo in VA (1/2)



- Each area represents a two-hour drive time from in-State operators
- Northern Shenandoah Valley under-represented in catchment area

# Operator status Quo in VA (2/2)

## Population 21 and Older within a 2-Hour Drive Time





# Conclusion

- Winchester's position as a landlocked, independent City with substantial tax-exempt parcels presents difficulties with long-term revenue diversification
- Winchester has conducted significant stakeholder engagement and education to weigh the cultural and economic feasibility of a Casino operator within the City
- Winchester's geographic location has an over 21 population nearly twice the catchment area of the next highest, current operator resulting in a favorable market
- Winchester formally and respectfully requests the General Assembly consider Winchester for a new Casino operators license at such time as appropriate as determined by this Committee