

# **Economic Vitality Action Plan – Adopted August 4, 2010 by the Board of Supervisors**

## **PREAMBLE:**

The Economic Development Policy of the County's Comprehensive Plan has a stated purpose to "provide the local citizenry an improved standard of living and enhanced quality of life." The policy notes that economic growth and vitality are required to sustain and enhance the human, economic, cultural, and natural characteristics of our community. The policy also states clearly that Albemarle's commitment to economic development should be accomplished within the framework of our growth management objectives. This Action Plan is intended to translate the purpose and goals of the Economic Development Policy into concrete and measurable actions, being very mindful of the need to adhere to already established growth management objectives and natural resource protections. While this Plan is focused on accomplishing specific action items within the next three years, the County recognizes the need for a long term commitment to economic vitality. This Plan is intended to establish a sustainable pathway for the long term health of our local economy. Broad-based community input is critical to the success of the Action Plan and is a key feature of many of the specific strategies and actions.

The County's commitments to education, infrastructure and natural resource protection forms the cornerstone of Albemarle's quality of life, and, by default, its business growth. In partnership with the University of Virginia and the Piedmont Virginia Community College, Albemarle County Public School's education programming – ranging from the County "bright stars" kindergarten program to the Math-Engineering-Science Academy (MESA) magnet school – help ensure a very highly educated, capable local workforce. The County strives to manage growth in a manner that best uses its infrastructure dollars and protects and preserves the area's abundant natural resources as well as those industries depending on those natural resources. With these commitments, the community strives to manage growth without sacrificing the quality of life. This Action Plan builds on these existing commitments. All objectives, strategies and action items in this Plan are intended to achieve outcomes that are consistent with the goals of the Economic Development Policy section and all other sections of the County's Comprehensive Plan as outlined below.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

This Action Plan is intended to work within the guidelines and stated goals and objectives of all relevant chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, including those listed below. While it is redundant to repeat all related sections of these chapters within this Action Plan, it is important to note the objectives and strategies of this plan will adhere to the important protections provided in these chapters:

- Natural Resources and Cultural Assets
- Rural Area Plan
- Land Use Plan

## **PRIMARY GOAL:**

Increase the County's economic vitality and future revenues through economic development by expanding the commercial tax base and supporting the creation of quality jobs for local residents. This Plan is developed for the benefit and economic well being, first, of current local residents and existing local businesses.

- The following measures will be utilized in monitoring and regularly reporting on success in achieving this goal:
  - The percentage mix of commercial versus residential real estate tax revenues\*  
*\*Multi-family properties included in calculation of residential real estate revenues.*
  - The following commercial revenues: Machinery and Tools Tax; Business, Professional & Occupational License Fees; Bank Franchise Tax and Public Service Tax.
  - The following additional indicators: Sales Tax, Transient Occupancy Tax, Meals Tax and job growth by sector.
  - Agricultural/rural economy metrics.
  - Other metrics that reflect job data, number of businesses, etc.

Benchmark levels will be determined to enable measurement of the short term and long term effectiveness of the specific objectives and strategies of this Plan. A timetable will be developed for reporting back to the Board of Supervisors on a quarterly basis.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

### **I. Improve the County's business climate and image.**

*(Supports Objective 1 of the Economic Development Policy – "Recognize the County's place in the regional economy")*

#### **STRATEGIES**

1. **EXPAND COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY** – Convey to the business community and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and other leadership of the Commonwealth that Albemarle County is committed to working with businesses to promote the Commonwealth's and the County's economic vitality:

○ **Actions**

- Work with appropriate entities to develop and implement a plan within six months to raise awareness and to promote County efforts at facilitating business growth with the VEDP that is compatible with the County's growth management strategies (e.g. Economic Opportunity Fund as a match for the Governor's Opportunity Fund).
- Maintain active participation in the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce and Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development (TJPED) programs.
- In 2010, continue an outreach program utilizing TJPED's prospect proposal system, which will create marketing collateral for business targets. This will include communicating economic development opportunities with target companies, VEDP, broker/consultant community, and the entrepreneur.

2. **INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF THE COUNTY'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STAFF** – Enhance the visibility and priority of economic development efforts by the County:

○ **Actions**

- Within the next three months, make the Business Development Facilitator a part of the County Executive's Office while still maintaining close coordination with the Community Development Department, and provide regular updates to the Board of Supervisors on efforts.
- Within the next three months, enhance the presence of economic development on the County's web site (underway).

3. **IMPROVE INTERACTION BETWEEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY** – Create an atmosphere that recognizes the importance of balancing overall quality of life, education and business development in contributing to the economic vitality of the community:

○ **Actions**

- Within the next three months, begin regular presentations by various business interests and economic experts to staff and the public, with a focus on how the County's land use regulations and policies affect business decisions. This will provide opportunity for staff and others to better understand the business community's issues and concerns and for the business community to hear other perspectives.
- Beginning in the fourth quarter of 2010, provide the business community a quarterly update of emerging and current development issues. This will focus on staff or community identified concerns rather than project specific issues.

- As part of pre-application discussions, continue assigning a staff member to serve as a single point of contact for addressing new issues on projects. Also, provide handouts and webpage links for information on development review (e.g. review process flow-charts, points of contact) that help applicants better understand the processes for ZTA, ZMA, Rezoning, Special Use Permit, Zoning Clearance, Sign Review, ARB review
- Continue routine survey of applicants as to accuracy and ease of understanding of processes, tracking of application status, staff's assistance with the application and any other issues of concern. Survey results will be shared with the County Executive and the Board of Supervisors to determine effectiveness of programs and where changes should be considered.
- Establish a more standard notification process regarding proposed changes to ordinances including the process for receiving input on proposed changes.

**II. Simplify and create certainty in the development review process, giving the applicant a reasonable expectation for the time and cost needed for development review when applicants are adhering to the regulations appropriately.**

*(Supports Objective V of the Economic Development Policy – “Increase local business development opportunities”)*

**STRATEGIES**

**1. CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCES TO REDUCE COMPLEXITY OF PLAN APPROVAL** – Recognizing a complex plan review can create barriers to new enterprises, eliminate unnecessary requirements and provide for simplified administrative decisions without compromising environmental safeguards or other community values as defined by County policies:

○ **Actions**

- In the first half of 2010, hold a work session (already scheduled for May) with the Board of Supervisors on changes to the process for a Certificates of Appropriateness (ARB review). (completed)
- In the first half of 2010, present recommended changes to the Board of Supervisors for ministerial applications (e.g. site plans, subdivisions). This will include timetables for recommended changes. (completed)
- In the second half of 2010, present recommended changes to the Board of Supervisors for legislative applications (e.g. rezoning, special use permits).

**2. ASSIST SMALL ENTERPRISES IN REACHING COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS** – Recognizing that small enterprises often lack the experience and knowledge to efficiently address County requirements, provide assistance during development reviews, including waivers and modifications, using a single point of contact:

○ **Action**

- As part of the proposed ordinance changes under strategy #1, include consideration of how staff assistance can be provided for small businesses that have no experience with development review. This should include consideration of how a single point of contact for those businesses may assist in the processing of an application.

**III. Consistent with the established goals of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, strategically work with UVA, UVA Real Estate Foundation and private and non-profit sector employers that provide or will provide a diverse array of quality career ladder employment opportunities for our resident workforce, with a particular focus on supporting existing local enterprises while not excluding new entrepreneurs and enterprises.**

*(Supports Objective VI of the Economic Development Policy – “Increase work force development opportunities, to further career-ladder opportunity and higher wages”)*

## STRATEGIES

1. **PROMOTE AND SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT** - Provide direct assistance to Albemarle County's aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses, including partnership with the University of Virginia's entrepreneurial community and other entrepreneurial organizations such as Charlottesville Business Innovation Council (CBIC):
  - **Actions**
    - In partnership with the Chamber, TJPED, UVA, the Small Business Development Center, the workforce network, the Albemarle County School Division and other representatives from the education community, and other interested stakeholders, identify & address existing business needs and implement regularly scheduled local business panels and provide a larger forum to collect information, identify and address workforce and other needs of local business clusters.
  
2. **PROMOTE TARGETED BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT**- Create an environment that supports companies and entrepreneurs that achieve Albemarle County's business development objectives:
  - **Actions**
    - Determine target enterprises; work with a broad-based task force to determine the region's target enterprise sectors. These enterprise targets will be the primary focus of the entrepreneurial support, existing business services, site selection assistance, and workforce development efforts. The selection criteria should include consideration of fiscal and ecological impacts on the County (including whether the industry can help the County satisfy its infrastructure needs), transportation impacts and the likelihood that a prospective enterprise will remain in this area. Strongly cultivate home-grown businesses. In partnership with the Chamber, TJPED, SBDC, the CBIC and others, provide technical support seminars to support entrepreneurs in targeted business clusters.
    - By the first half of 2011, create a plan for developing workforce training programs (in partnership with PVCC, Workforce Training Center, UVA and the County school system) tied to target enterprises or key sectors.
    - By the second half of 2010, review peer jurisdictions' policies and practices in attracting targeted business and investment.
    - Via continued support of local job fairs, continue to showcase our local workforce talent and local corporate partners.
    - Utilize TJPED's ExecutivePluse CRM, JobsEQ and other tools to provide an online feedback loop for policymakers. This should include trend analysis, identify key issues negatively affecting local companies, and strategies designed to address key negative issues.
  
3. **CONNECT OPPORTUNITIES WITH RESIDENTS** - Develop and connect the workforce to existing and new opportunities to serve the entire employment spectrum in Albemarle County through workforce programs and other strategies:
  - **Actions**
    - Working with the Workforce Center, PVCC, and the County school division determine demand occupations for the retraining or training of dislocated workers and low-income adults, and youth populations in those occupations.
    - Market local opportunities to qualified resident workforce with a multi-channel approach
    - Align targeted enterprises and demand occupations with student awareness, education and participation in County public schools, PVCC and UVA Career Pathways

**IV. Consistent with the established goals of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, remove obstacles and expand options for industrial land users.**

*(Supports Objective II of the Economic Development Policy – “Plan for land and infrastructure to accommodate future business and industrial growth”)*

**STRATEGIES**

1. **CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE** – recognizing the changing nature of industrial uses, provide greater flexibility, clarity and certainty through reliance on performance standards and lessening dependency on lists of specific uses:
  - **Action**
    - In first half of 2010, bring proposed ordinance change to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.
  
2. **CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR INCREASING INDUSTRIAL INVENTORY WITHIN AREAS DESIGNATED AS DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN -**
  - **Action**
    - In the second half of 2010, the County will initiate a county wide rezoning to LI for RA and R-1 zoned properties in the Development Areas that are designated as industrial use on the County’s Land Use Plan. Only properties where the property owner has agreed to accept this zoning change will be included in this rezoning.
    - Continue pursuing strategies to stop the conversion of properties zoned light industry (LI) to commercial, office and other uses that are not “core” industrial uses.
    - As part of future master plans and updates to the County’s Land Use Plan, include consideration of designating more land within existing development areas for industrial uses. The environmental and community impacts of these proposed changes will be carefully considered.
    - As part of the current effort to update the County’s Comprehensive Plan, include for the Board’s consideration a proposed modification of the Interstate Interchange Policy that might allow lower impact industrial and rural-serving uses at those intersections located in the rural areas but are also served by highway access. The environmental and community impacts of these proposed changes will be carefully considered.

**V. Work with stakeholders to promote agriculture, the local agricultural industry (at a scale compatible with the county’s rural areas) and tourism as part of a comprehensive economic development program that recognizes the importance of the rural economy.**

*(Supports Objective 1 of the Rural Areas Land Use Policy- “To support agricultural land uses and to create additional markets for agricultural products through creative economic and land use strategies.”, and Objectives I and V of the Economic Development Policy – “Base economic development policy on planning efforts which support and enhance the strengths of the County” and “Increase local business development opportunities”)*

**STRATEGIES**

1. **ASSESS CURRENT PROGRAMS AND INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE, LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND TOURISM** – Continue working with partners to evaluate strengths and weaknesses:
  - **Action**
    - Within the next year, County staff in cooperation with appropriate agencies, organizations and individuals will complete a series of roundtables with individuals and groups that have an interest in agriculture, local agriculture industry and tourism in the County. These roundtables will also consider innovative, sustainable rural businesses such as wetland banking and voluntary

carbon banking. After completing the roundtables, County staff will present the roundtable findings to the Board of Supervisors along with any other data or findings that may assist the Board in setting policy direction.

2. **EVALUATE AND REFINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR AGRICULTURE, LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND TOURISM** – Assure that policies, goals and objectives support current priority needs including consideration of areas such as cottage industries, heritage tourism, and agri-tourism:
  - **Action**
    - Based on the above assessment and Board direction, include consideration of this information in updates of the County’s Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan and in the agreement with the CACVB.
  
3. **IDENTIFY TARGET AREAS TO MORE AGRESSIVELY PROMOTE IN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURE, LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND TOURISM** – Build on existing assets and offerings to expand options for experiencing the beauty and heritage of the rural areas:
  - **Action**
    - Based on the above Board direction, establish specific strategies and action items for promoting and supporting agriculture, local agricultural industry and tourism in the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan.

Resources:

- Adopted Board of Supervisors ‘2010 Albemarle County Action Plan – January 6, 2010’
- Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce letter of January 26, 2010
- This ‘draft’ economic development action plan builds on the 2009 adoption of the Updated Economic Development Policy, which focused on the following three short-term priorities:
  - Objective I. Strategy 4. Increasing the promotion of local agricultural industry consistent with the goals, objectives and implementation strategies of the Comprehensive Plan, such as the purchase of local products, establishing a rural-support program and continuing a dialogue with farm-industry stakeholders.
  - Objective II. Strategy 4. Encourage infill development of business and industrial uses in Development Areas, including consideration of proactively rezoning to light-industrial uses as needs are identified through Master Plans and other efforts. Initiate zoning text amendments that further enable business and industrial uses of the appropriate zoning districts.
  - Objective VI. Strategy 3. Increase the use of information gathering strategies such as:
    - A regional, baseline workforce study to define and benchmark the needs of “underemployed” and those not in the labor force (as defined by the VA Employment Commission) as well as employer needs.
    - A software database, such as Executive Pulse®, to identify workforce training needs and promote workforce training opportunities.

**Adopted 08/04/2010**