

DRAFT Economic Development Action Plan

PREAMBLE:

The County's Comprehensive Plan contains an Economic Development Policy that 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 measureable actions, being very mindful of the need to adhere to already established growth management objectives. This is a short-term plan that is focused on accomplishing the action items within the next three years. 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.

Albemarle County's commitments to education and infrastructure form 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 has a proven track record in managing growth to best utilize our infrastructure dollars in a manner that protects and preserves the area's abundant natural resources as well as those industries depending on the natural resources. With these two commitments, the community has achieved managed growth without sacrificing the quality of life. The following economic development action plan builds on these existing, proven 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.

PRIMARY GOAL:

Increase the County's economic vitality and future revenues through economic development by expanding the commercial tax base.

- 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*
 - 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

**Multi-family properties included in calculation of residential real estate*

OBJECTIVES:

- I. **Improve the County's business climate and image.** *(Supports Objective I 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) that Albemarle County is committed to working with businesses to promote 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**

- In 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 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 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 customer’s issues and concerns.
- Beginning in the 3rd 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.

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 businesses, eliminate unnecessary requirements and provide for simplified administration decisions.

○ **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). (Note: This is considered a lower priority to ministerial applications as no complex applications have been submitted in the last 2 years due to the economy and few are expected for the next several years.)

2. **CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESSES TO FACILITATE SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES** – Recognizing small businesses often lack the financial resources and management expertise to navigate the plan review process, provide for expedited administrative reviews, including waivers and modifications, using a single point of contact for approval of simple site plans.

○ **Action**

- As part of the proposed ordinance changes under #1, include consideration of how a simplified review process could be created 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 grow and attract capital-intensive, knowledge-based and other private sector employers that provide a diverse array of career ladder employment opportunities to our resident workforce. *(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.

- **Actions**

- In partnership with the Chamber, TJPED, 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

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2. PROMOTE TARGETED BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT- Create an environment that attracts companies and entrepreneurs that achieve Albemarle County's business development objective.

- **Actions**

- Determine target industries; work with a broad-based task force (including TJPED) to determine the region's target business sectors. These business targets will be the primary focus of the entrepreneurial support, existing business services, site selection assistance, and workforce development efforts.- targeted industries should be fiscally beneficial to the county (including infrastructure needs) as part of the selection criteria
- Cultivate home-grown businesses. In partnership with the Chamber, TJPED and SBDC, 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 industry 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**

- By the first half of 2011, 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, then connecting people with opportunities through TJPED.
- Align targets 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 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.

2. CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR INCREASING INDUSTRIAL INVENTORY WITHIN ALREADY DESIGNATED DEVELOPMENT AREAS –

○ **Action**

- As part of future master plans and updates to the County’s Land Use Plan, include consideration of designating more land for industrial uses.
- Continue pursuing strategies to stop the conversion of LI properties to other types
- 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.
- As part of the current effort to update the County’s Comprehensive Plan, include for the Board’s consideration a 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.

- V. **Work with partners to promote agribusiness 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 AGRIBUSINESS AND TOURISM –** Continue working with partners to evaluate strengths and weaknesses.
 - **Action**
 - Within the next year, County staff in cooperation with the CACVB will complete a series of roundtables with individuals and groups that have an interest in agribusiness and tourism in the County. 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 AGRIBUSINESS 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 AGGRESSIVELY PROMOTE IN SUPPORT OF AGRIBUSINESS 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 agribusiness 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.