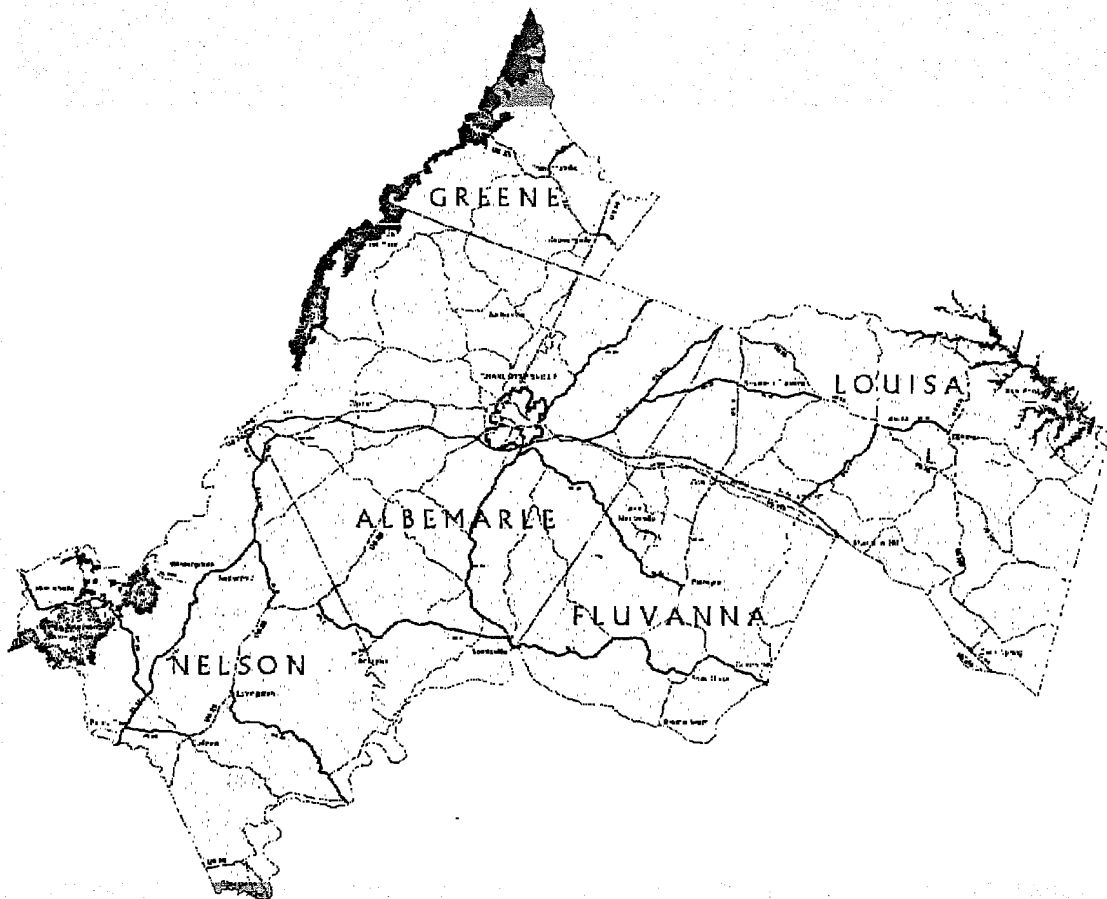


**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE
OF THE
THOMAS JEFFERSON PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION**

Regional Economic Development Plan



February 2002

II. Vision Statement

The goals of economic development are to create wealth within the region, to increase the ability of local governments to provide services for citizens, and to provide career-ladder jobs which to make living in this region more affordable for its residents. The Economic Development Plan Committee of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission strongly recommends that these goals be pursued and realized within the concept of quality of life and that economic development efforts respect and build on the strengths and unique characteristics of our region.

In the Future, we envision our region as one that continues to value the history, culture, community diversity, nature and the health and welfare of its citizens; where

Effective, Regional Public/Private Cooperation Results In:

- Orderly managed growth linking vibrant urban and village centers with the natural, rural, agricultural, and historic resources which are protected and enhanced by promoting sustainable practices, and
- Desired economic growth minimizes negative interlocal effect, shows an understanding of the lessons of history, is networked, and is in accordance with community needs articulated in local comprehensive plans, and
- Where we capitalize on the region's inherent tourism assets, and

Workforce opportunities expand to provide better options for all the region's citizens through:

- Varied educational opportunities which encourage people to use their talents and which match workforce training to local and regional economic initiatives, and
- A diversity of good paying jobs allows access to the housing market.

III. Executive Summary

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission appointed the Economic Development Plan Committee in the spring of 1999. The Committee has met over a two and a half year period to develop recommendations for economic development in the planning district, drawing extensively upon local comprehensive plans. This plan addresses economic development for the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, including the City of Charlottesville and the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. The region has a rich heritage and unique history and is characterized by natural beauty due to its location on the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The area's quality of life has given it the reputation as one of the top places in the United States to live, work and raise a family. It has been featured on national television as one of America's top ten cities and has been recognized in a variety of magazines. This plan strongly recommends that those elements that contribute to the quality of life - the mountains, the landscape, the architecture, the environment, agriculture, educational institutions, access to career-ladder jobs, parks and open spaces, affordable housing, low crime rate and family-friendly communities - be preserved to maintain the essence and character of the region.

The goals of economic development are to create wealth within the region, to increase the ability of local governments to provide services for citizens, and to make living in this region more affordable for its residents. The Economic Development Plan Committee of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission strongly recommends that these goals be pursued and realized within the concept of quality of life and that economic development efforts respect and build on the strengths and unique characteristics of our region. To that end, the Committee recommends that localities within the planning district work together to:

- A. **Support existing businesses.** Strategies include performing a cluster analysis to develop recommendations for expanding the strongest businesses and for economic development programs to build those clusters, promoting the use of local products, supporting existing high technology business and including the impact of new retail centers on existing businesses in the return on investment analysis for these projects.
- B. **Preserve the area's unique characteristics.** The cornerstone of this recommendation is the local implementation of Comprehensive Plans to reserve and promote development areas and preserve and protect rural, natural and heritage areas. Other strategies include codifying conservation planning for the efficient use of land and incorporating sustainability principles into planning and development.
- C. **Attract high technology business.** To achieve this, local governments must take on leadership roles to create an electronic community that respects the region's unique characteristics and meets recognized standards, take steps to ensure adequate infrastructure to provide access to all, attract and cultivate niche or boutique high technology business and assist in securing needed capital, build on ties with the higher education and promote workforce development through education and training programs.
- D. **Support profitable agriculture.** This can be accomplished by attracting companion businesses, encouraging niche markets, promote cooperative efforts among agri-

businesses, developing and promoting agri-tourism attractions and events and promoting the sale of locally produced farm and forest products.

- E. **Redevelop and Revitalize Existing Sites.** Buildings that have fallen into disrepair or have become outmoded can be transformed into viable contributors to the economy through redevelopment or adaptive reuse. This can be accomplished by encouraging the adaptive reuse of existing development through incentives and assistance with the approval process, encouraging the development of "brownfield" sites and promoting infill development to utilize vacant lots in developed areas or to change the form of development.
- F. **Attract tourists.** The unique characteristics of the region make it attractive to tourists. The region can enhance tourism's contribution to the economy by developing its potential in heritage tourism and agri-tourism by supporting regional planning efforts, developing maps and interpretive aids, strengthening and expanding the Regional Tourism Council, developing an array of visitor activities, adding to tourism destinations and using transit to enhance tourism. Furthermore, tourism offers an economic base that encourages capital investment that preserves our historic and rural areas.
- G. **Support workforce development for jobs of the future.** Strategies include supporting the development of a seamless, customer-driven workforce development system through the Workforce Investment Board, tailoring education and training to workplace needs, preparing workers for upward mobility, using technology to enhance training opportunities, provided needed support systems such as childcare and transportation and ensuring universal access to training.
- H. **Develop/strengthen mechanisms for state and regional cooperation.** Mechanisms could include a regional agreement for economic development, a regional agreement on development projects near borders, and supporting and utilizing current regional and state organizations and efforts and supporting the development of additional public/private partnerships as needed.

The regional approach to economic development presented in this plan addresses the interdependence of the localities on the use of natural resources, recognizes the impacts of cross-jurisdictional shopping and commuting patterns, and uses the diverse strengths of the overall region to support the localities. Recommendations in this plan can only be realized through the individual and collective actions of the six localities that make up the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. The Committee offers this plan for the use of localities, Chambers of Commerce, private developers and the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development. The Committee hopes that the issues, factors and recommendations identified in the plan will provide guidance to these entities as we work together to ensure quality of life for our citizens and to realize the economic potential of our region.