

**POWHATAN COUNTY 2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN
COVER PAGE**

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Powhatan County Draft Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a growing county in the heart of Virginia, Powhatan is on a steadfast journey to redefine excellence in local governance and community engagement. Our strategic vision is to transform into a high-performing organization that not only meets but anticipates the needs of our residents through proactive engagement and enhanced service delivery. This vision is a commitment – it drives us to ensure that every operation, every service, and every interaction enriches the lives of those we serve, contributing profoundly to the overall quality of life in our community.

The strategic plan for 2025-2028 outlines a comprehensive roadmap designed to navigate the complexities of growth while harnessing sustainable opportunities that can benefit our residents. The plan is structured around five strategic priorities, each backed by actionable strategies that support our overarching goals.

1. Enhancing Financial Stability and Efficiency

Financial health and resilience are fundamental to our county's future. By diversifying our funding sources and rebalancing our tax structure, we aim to bolster Powhatan's economic foundation, to support sustainable growth, and to manage – and invest – our resources more efficiently.

2. Cultivating Economic Prosperity

A thriving economic environment benefits our entire community. Our strategy focuses on nurturing a business-friendly atmosphere, attracting commercial and industrial development that fits our culture. Our revitalized Economic Development Plan will establish the groundwork for Powhatan County to be a prime destination for business growth.

3. Expanding Housing and Residential Options

As our community grows, so does the need for new housing solutions. Our plan leverages the Comprehensive Plan as a guiding tool to align residential growth with the county's evolving needs. Our ultimate goal is to develop housing that is accessible by our residents and enriches community life and supports sustainable development.

4. Investing in Quality of Life and Public Safety

The safety and well-being of our residents are paramount. To be a healthy, growing community means investing in health services, enhancing public safety, and promoting community engagement.

5. Empowering Our Workforce and Enhancing Government Operations

Our employees are critical to achieving the county's success. By investing in leadership development and employee engagement, we will ensure your government continues to value efficiency, growth, and service.

The Powhatan County 2025-2028 Strategic Plan is more than a document – it is a roadmap, outlining how we will navigate the coming years with a focus on operational excellence, community prosperity, and the well-being of every resident. Together, we are setting the course for a resilient and vibrant Powhatan County. We invite every resident, business, and community partner to join us in this journey, shaping a future that we can all be proud of.

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STRATEGIC VISION, PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

OUR STRATEGIC VISION

Powhatan County aims to be a high-performing organization that proactively engages our employees and the community to continuously improve our efficiency and service delivery. This vision captures our commitment to effective government operations and a highly engaged county workforce, ensuring that all we do contributes to the quality of life for all our residents.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- REVENUE, TAXES AND FINANCE
- ECONOMIC GROWTH AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
- HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL GROWTH
- QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS, AND PUBLIC SAFETY
- EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Strategic Priority Area: Revenue, Taxes and Finance

Summary: Fiscal health and sustainability are paramount. The strategic priority for Revenue, Taxes, and Finance is designed to secure the county's economic future through careful, forward-thinking fiscal management. This priority focuses on enhancing long-term financial stability by developing a funding framework that is not only more consistent and diversified but also sustainable. The objective is to avoid increasing the tax burden on residential properties by broadening other revenue streams that can support county services and infrastructure.

Throughout the engagement process with residents, elected officials, and county staff, there was a clear consensus on the need for financial strategies that reduce reliance on residential taxes and increase contributions from non-residential sources. Residents expressed concerns about the fairness and sustainability of the current tax structure, particularly the heavy reliance on residential taxes which can be burdensome for homeowners. Elected officials and county staff echoed these sentiments, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that supports growth and provides stability without overwhelming any single taxpayer group.

The strategy aims to realign the tax revenue system, exploring avenues such as enhancing commercial and industrial tax contributions and identifying new revenue sources. This approach is crucial for funding essential public services and for facilitating strategic investments that spur economic growth. By broadening the tax base and managing resources more effectively, Powhatan County can ensure a stable financial environment that supports our strategic development goals and maintains the quality of life for our residents.

Strategic Outcome: Powhatan County will enhance our long-term financial stability. The County will adopt a more consistent, diversified and sustainable funding framework that works toward a reduction in the overall residential tax burden.

Key Strategies

1. **Rebalance Funding Framework:** Research and devise strategies that increase the share of revenue from non-residential sources. Engage in active policy discussions to determine realistic targets, such as moving towards an 85/15 tax revenue split over the next five years.
 - a. County staff will conduct a review of current revenue contributions from residential and non-residential sources, and research potential sources of non-residential revenues.
 - b. County staff will deliver an initial report to the Board of Supervisors for review and discussion, and work with the Board to establish realistic, year-over-year targets.
 - c. Board and staff will implement an annual review process to monitor progress, and to make adjustments as needed.

2. **Fund Balance Management:** Establish clear annual targets to increase the fund balance as a percentage of annual operating revenues, with the goal of improving credit ratings and increasing the financial buffer.

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- a. County staff will conduct a review of current fund balance levels in relation to annual operating revenues, and to deliver both targets and financial management strategies to control expenses, monitor revenue, and manage surpluses.
- b. Board and staff will implement an annual review process to monitor progress, and to make adjustments as needed.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Strategic Priority Area: Economic Growth and Business Development

Summary: Powhatan County is poised for a transformative phase in our economic development. The strategic priority for Economic Growth and Business Development aims to cultivate a business-friendly environment that not only attracts but also sustains commercial and industrial growth. This priority reflects the county's commitment to fostering an economy that supports diverse business opportunities and creates high-value jobs for our residents. Throughout discussions with stakeholders, there was a strong emphasis on the need to improve the county's economic infrastructure to make it more appealing to potential investors and business owners. Elected officials, residents, and business leaders stressed the importance of strategic land development and infrastructure investment to support sustained economic growth.

The strategy to update and implement the Economic Development Plan is critical in addressing long-term growth and development priorities. Residents and business community members expressed the need for a clear and actionable plan that aligns with modern economic trends and local needs. By focusing on strategic land use and promoting higher-value industries, Powhatan County aims to achieve a balanced and resilient economic base that enhances the local tax base and provides more opportunities for our citizens.

Strategic Outcome: Powhatan County will cultivate a business-friendly environment. The County will promote commercial and industrial development through the implementation of the county's new Economic Development Plan, through strategic land development and infrastructure investment, and through a focus on higher-value industries.

Key Strategies:

1. **Economic Development Plan:** The county will update and implement the comprehensive Economic Development Plan to address long-term growth, development priorities, and infrastructure and workforce development needs.
 - a. County leadership will work with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to update the Economic Development Plan by mid-2025 to guide the county's business growth.
 - b. The Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Authority and county leadership will leverage the new Economic Development Plan to promote and support business attraction, commercial and industrial growth, and infrastructure investment.
2. **Commercial and Industrial Growth:** Utilizing the new Economic Development Plan, the county will move towards an 85/15 tax revenue split over the next five years with an emphasis on:
 - a. Key opportunities for siting new commercial and industrial businesses
 - b. Continued development of the county's tourism and hospitality sectors.
 - c. Continued development and infill opportunities in key corridors (e.g., Route 60, Courthouse Village, Winterfield/Route 711) that are zoned and ready for commercial and industrial use.
3. **Strategic Land Development:** Increase the availability of ready-to-build industrial parcels or buildings in key areas through partnerships with local landowners or by investing in infrastructure that supports commercial and industrial growth.

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- a. Identify and map the potential land needs for the county's future economic development opportunities.
- b. Develop and implement a process to identify potential tracts of land that align with the economic development needs of the county, and to engage in discussions with property owners.
- c. Implement the County's updated wastewater master plan, and ensure longer-range planning provides the water, sewer, and transportation capacity needed to support anticipated growth.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Strategic Priority Area: Residential Growth and Land Use

Summary: Housing is fundamental to the well-being of our residents, and in Powhatan County, balanced residential growth is key to maintaining a vibrant and thriving community. The strategic priority for Residential Growth and Land Use is designed to balance our future housing and infrastructure needs with the essential preservation of the Powhatan's defining rural character. This focus ensures that as we plan for and accommodate growth, we remain equally focused on maintaining the natural landscapes that make our county unique.

The existing Comprehensive Plan will continue to be our guide as we seek to develop housing that meets the diverse needs of the county's residents. There is a growing need for more varied housing options that cater to different age groups and economic backgrounds, ensuring that everyone from young professionals to retirees can find suitable living arrangements within the county.

The plan emphasizes the importance of public-private partnerships and leveraging new tools to increase homebuyer accessibility, which were particularly highlighted as needs during our discussions with community members. By ensuring that the housing development process aligns with the broader goals of community development and economic growth, Powhatan County aims to create a more inclusive and accessible housing market that supports the well-being and prosperity of all residents.

Our strategic focus will continue to prioritize sustainable development practices that align with both our need for growth and our commitment to preserving the rural essence of Powhatan County. By embracing this dual focus, we ensure that our county's development enhances rather than detracts from the rural qualities that our residents value highly.

Strategic Outcome: Powhatan County will strategically grow housing options for our residents. The County will utilize the existing Comprehensive Plan as a foundation and guide to enhance community development and business growth, and to actively engage residents in the county's future.

Key Strategies

1. **Comprehensive Plan Review and Utilization:** The Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and county leadership will review the Comprehensive Plan, and increasingly leverage it to guide decisions about growth.
 - a. Convene a working group to assess the Comprehensive Plan to ensure alignment with the strategic direction of the county.
 - b. The Planning Department will hold a work session in 2025 to re-introduce the Comprehensive Plan, and any revisions, to elected and appointed officials, and county staff, to build alignment around key aspects of the plan and a shared vision around the county's development and growth priorities.
2. **First-Time Home Buyers Program:** The county will leverage new tools to increase homebuyer accessibility in the County, exploring programs to assist first-time home buyers.
 - a. Evaluate existing programs nationally that provide residents and/or employees with subsidies, grants or low-interest loans for homeownership.

Powhatan County Draft Strategic Plan

- b. Present an overview with options and recommendations to county leadership.
 - c. Develop and launch a program.
3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Actively work with community-based housing organizations and private developers to reduce costs and encourage diverse housing solutions – from single-family homes to multi-use developments – that align with the county’s needs and the Comprehensive Plan.
- a. Identify and work with developers from the early stages of planning to ensure that new housing developments meet both the economic and social needs of Powhatan County residents.
 - b. Streamline the development and building approval process to make projects easier and more affordable to implement.
 - c. Explore the use of incentives and streamlined approvals for certain types of developments.
 - d. Investigate the potential for collaborative, public/private development options, such as land banks or land trusts, to help create quality, affordable housing options.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Strategic Priority Area: Quality of Life for Residents and Public Safety

Summary: Quality of life and public safety are intrinsically linked, and in Powhatan County, this strategic priority addresses the community's desire for a safe, healthy, and engaged lifestyle. The goal is to enhance services and opportunities that bolster public safety and community well-being, an area that residents emphasized during public consultations. The strategy focuses on expanding access to health services, enhancing public safety through continued coordination among emergency services, and promoting community engagement through recreation and learning opportunities.

Investments in health, safety, and recreational facilities not only improve the daily lives of residents but also serve as a foundation for community resilience. Enhancing public safety, as discussed in community feedback sessions, involves not only improving emergency response capabilities but also fostering preventative measures through education and community outreach. By prioritizing these areas, Powhatan County ensures a holistic approach to public safety and quality of life that meets the needs of our diverse population.

Strategic Outcome: Powhatan County will invest in health and wellness, community engagement and connection, and public safety. The County will enhance services and opportunities that strengthen the quality of life for all residents.

Key Strategies

- 1. Expand Access to Health Services:** Work with the Health District to identify emerging health needs, gaps and risk areas, and to develop recommendations to increase health care services and service delivery.
 - a. Convene local and regional health partners to review the current ALICE data, and other Powhatan-specific data, and make recommendations to address critical areas of opportunity for the County.
- 2. Promote Countywide Recreation, Learning and Engagement:** Boost community engagement and wellness by expanding educational and recreational programs that foster collaboration among parks and recreation, the public library, and schools. Focus on engaging diverse groups including seniors, young adults, and families to enhance community health and wellness.
 - a. Form a working group comprised of key staff from parks and recreation, the public library, the school system and other organizations to develop a long-term engagement plan that identify key community needs, assess existing programs and services and recommend changes or additions, and to develop an accessible community calendar.
 - b. Develop and implement a new strategic/master plan for Parks and Recreation to include more community parks, trails, green spaces, and activities that cater to all age groups and lifestyles.
 - c. Implement the new strategic plan for the Public Library to expand access to books and digital resources for all residents.
- 3. Enhance Public Safety and Emergency Services:** Continue to invest in public safety, enhancing coordination and collaboration with other county services, improving training and resources, and increasing community outreach with residents.

Powhatan County Draft Strategic Plan

- a. Foster stronger integration and collaboration between public safety departments (fire, police, emergency medical services) and other county agencies to drive service efficiencies and to improve resident education and engagement.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Strategic Priority Area: Effective Government Operations and Employee Engagement

Summary: Effective government operations and robust employee engagement are critical to the success of Powhatan County's strategic objectives. This priority area focuses on creating a high-performing, service-oriented organization that supports the professional growth of our workforce and the efficiency of our operations. Throughout our engagement process, county employees and residents alike highlighted the need for improved operational systems and enhanced employee development programs to better meet the demands of a growing county.

The strategies outlined aim to develop leadership skills within the county workforce, modernize operational practices through technology upgrades, and foster a workplace culture that values engagement and recognition. These efforts are designed to improve service delivery and operational efficiency, ensuring that Powhatan County can effectively respond to current needs and future challenges. By investing in our employees and refining our government operations, the County strengthens our capacity to serve residents and enhance overall community well-being.

Strategic Outcome: Powhatan County will become a high-performing, service oriented organization. The County will foster an engaging and supportive environment that supports employee growth and operational efficiency.

Key Strategies

1. **Leadership Development Program:** Establish a comprehensive leadership and management development program to ensure key employees are growing their leadership, communication, and team management skills.
 - a. Develop a curriculum focused on critical leadership and management competencies tailored to Powhatan's culture, and implement training for all department heads and supervisors.
2. **Public Education and Engagement:** Improve communication, expand public awareness and increase informed resident involvement in county initiatives.
 - a. Hire a Public Information Officer to oversee and streamline all county communications.
 - b. Develop and implement a countywide communication plan that includes public, resident-centered communication channels for information sharing.
 - c. Organize periodic town hall meetings to provide residents a forum to stay informed and involved in key county developments.
3. **Space Planning and Operational Upgrades:** Modernize the county's operational infrastructure to support efficient service delivery and employee productivity.
 - a. Complete a long-term staffing plan that benchmarks the County's staffing against our peer counties, and recommends staffing adjustments that support the County's strategic needs.
 - b. Complete a space planning audit and a long-term plan to optimize physical spaces for current and future needs, enhancing both employee workspace and public service areas.

Powhatan County Draft Strategic Plan

4. Employee Engagement, Recognition, and Retention: Increase employee engagement, retention and job satisfaction through targeted engagement and recognition initiatives.
 - a. Develop and implement new onboarding, engagement, and recognition programs to increase employee performance and retention rates.
 - b. Develop and conduct an employee engagement survey annually to identify opportunities to strengthen our efforts.
 - c. Evaluate and enhance existing employee recognition programs to better align with employee achievements and contributions.

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