

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

## POWHATAN COUNTY

Prepared by Rural Resilience Advisors

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose of the SEDAP

*The Powhatan County EDA sought to update its economic development strategy, which was originally created in 2017. This Strategic Economic Development Action Plan (SEDAP) is being completed simultaneously with the County's Comprehensive Plan update, and shortly after its Strategic Plan for the Board of Supervisors. The SEDAP details a plan of action for the EDA in the areas of business development, real estate, public development processes, tourism and placemaking, and operational alignment.*

This **SEDAP** answers three critical questions: 1) Where are we? 2) Where do we want to go? and 3) How do we get there? The plan places a strong emphasis on stakeholder input and strategic data review. Action items are provided in a matrix format with recommended actions, assigned responsibilities, and a timeframe for completion.

The plan includes:

- **Real Estate and Site Readiness**, which assesses the current site portfolio of the county (public and private) and makes recommendations for short- and long-term steps to improve the competitive nature of the properties.
- **Development Process**, which makes recommendations to create alignment and efficiencies for business clients.
- **Business Development and Entrepreneurship**, including recommendations for business attraction, business retention and expansion, and business formation.
- **Tourism and Placemaking**, to more effectively leverage resources that position Powhatan's unique business and quality of life assets for growth.
- **Organizational Roles and Alignment**, which address the EDA's ability to become a high-performing organization and an integral leader in the county's economic development strategy.

While the SEDAP recommendations are prioritized over a three-year implementation timeline, it should be viewed as a **living document** that is adjusted based on changing economic and market conditions.

## Powhatan County's Strategic Vision

Powhatan County's leadership is pursuing a more balanced tax base to strengthen long-term financial sustainability and relieve the disproportionate burden currently carried by residential property owners. With the county's revenue structure heavily reliant on residential property taxes, households fund the majority of public services, infrastructure improvements, and educational investments. This imbalance not only strains local families but also creates fiscal vulnerabilities, particularly as the population grows and service demands increase. The county's strategic plan outlines a deliberate shift toward increasing commercial and industrial revenue sources as a way to diversify the tax base and ensure that economic growth does not translate into higher costs for residents alone.

This strategic direction is rooted in both economic necessity and opportunity. Powhatan's proximity to the Richmond metropolitan area, its access to key transportation corridors like Route 60 and Route 288, and its high quality of life make it an attractive location for both residential and business investment. By preparing development-ready sites, enhancing infrastructure capacity, and actively marketing to target industries, the county aims to expand its commercial and industrial footprint, contributing 15% of total revenues by 2029—a notable increase from current levels. This growth will not only support a healthier fiscal structure but also provide local employment opportunities, improve service delivery, and reinforce Powhatan's long-term economic resilience.

## Key Observations and Findings

While the county possesses significant assets and untapped potential, structural challenges and a cautious approach to growth have constrained progress. The frequently referenced goal of achieving an 85/15 residential-to-commercial tax split underscores the community's desire to rebalance funding mechanisms in a way that relieves households from enduring the most of service costs. The challenge of infrastructure planning and control, particularly utilities, as well as control of sites for development, can be a significant barrier to attracting and supporting business development.

There are diverging perspectives on growth between the more suburban east and the rural west, revealing a cultural and political divide that affects planning and public perception. While many residents value the county's rural character and sense of place, there is also a strong push for proactive economic development that does not compromise Powhatan's identity. Developer frustrations exist with processes such as inconsistent zoning approvals and a lack of connectivity among departments that have a role in the development process. Opportunities for improvement exist and are relatively low-hanging fruit to address. These include targeted infrastructure investment, more precise land-use planning, enhanced staff capacity, and increased public-private partnerships. Broad support exists for empowering the Economic Development Authority with the tools, leadership alignment, and confidence it needs to effectively advocate for and execute a bolder economic vision.

Key observations and findings by topic area are summarized in the next pages. The consulting team identified these through analysis of the county's sites and buildings database, business prospect activity over the last five years, stakeholder input, and a review of best economic development practices.

# Key Observations and Findings



## Infrastructure and Real Estate

- Water and sewer service gaps remain a top barrier to business and housing development.
- Route 60 is a traffic bottleneck and lacks a coordinated long-range corridor plan.
- Site readiness is limited; key parcels are not infrastructure-served or zoned for targeted uses.
- Pad-ready and tiered development sites of various sizes are needed to compete regionally.
- The eastern corridor near Route 288 is a prime opportunity for business growth with proper investment.



## Development Process

- Current permitting and zoning procedures appear to be inconsistent and somewhat complex for a locality of Powhatan's size.
- There is no defined ombudsman or point of contact to assist projects in navigating the system.
- A small but vocal group of citizens impacts data-driven decisions on land use and investment.



## Business Development and Entrepreneurship

- There is strong local interest in growing small and mid-size manufacturing and value-added agriculture.
- Many residents operate businesses from home or within the county and need scale-up support.
- Nationally-experienced professional talent resides in the county and could be more effectively utilized in business development efforts.



## Tourism and Placemaking

- Powhatan lacks a clear economic identity.
- Assets such as the James River, local tourism-dependent businesses, state parks, and local festivals are underleveraged for their economic impact.
- The county has potential for regional sports tourism and destination events.
- Residents value village centers and authentic placemaking; efforts in this area could be expanded.
- The potential impact of the tourism sector is hindered because Powhatan is not operationally affiliated with regional efforts (Richmond Region Tourism).
- The housing market does not provide adequate diversity in style or in price, creating a barrier to the attraction of talent and business.



## Organizational Roles and Alignment

- The EDA is gaining traction and will require additional tools, staffing, and financial support to build on its successes over the past eight years.
- Alignment with the county's stated vision and goals is paramount and necessitates stronger, consistent communication between the Board of Supervisors and the EDA.
- Semi-rural localities, such as Powhatan, are more successful when aligned with and leveraging partners, including regional tourism, economic development, entrepreneurial, and workforce organizations.
- Model examples from nearby counties—like Goochland's corridor planning and Chesterfield's EDA authority—are benchmarks for Powhatan to evaluate.

## Strategy Recommendations

*The strategies outlined below are further detailed in the SMART Action Steps on Page 51 of this document. Additionally, a recommended Timeline for implementation of the strategies is included as the first section of the Attachments. The Timeline identifies ongoing actions, actions recommended in the first six months, actions recommended in the first two years, and actions recommended in years three and four.*

Establishing a focused program of work grounded in these recommended strategies is critical to advancing the Powhatan Economic Development Authority’s mission over the next three years. The approach outlined—spanning real estate readiness, entrepreneurship, tourism, and organizational alignment—forms the foundation for a more proactive, resilient approach to economic development.

However, it is essential to recognize that each of these strategies requires a corresponding investment in staff time and, in many cases, financial resources. Successful implementation will require thoughtful sequencing of priorities based on available capacity and budget. As Powhatan’s economic development program continues to mature, current staffing levels and funding will need to be augmented to meet the growing demands of a more ambitious and strategic economic development agenda.

Powhatan’s competitive context reinforces this need. According to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership’s 2021 Local and Regional Competitiveness Index (LRCI), Powhatan is grouped with peer localities that include major metropolitan areas. Competing in this tier requires the county to “punch above its weight” in terms of responsiveness, site readiness, and business engagement. That reality makes the case for additional investment in staffing, program funding, and external partnerships all the more urgent.

The proposed strategies—such as implementing a Developers Advisory Committee, master planning key interchanges, supporting target sector growth, and enhancing public-private partnerships—can yield substantial returns, but only if supported by the necessary operational infrastructure. Aligning available resources with this program of work will ensure that Powhatan can capitalize on its momentum and position itself as a competitive, well-coordinated locality for business investment and community prosperity.

Within the four categories below, there are thirty recommended strategies. The Timeline in the Attachments section categorizes these strategies by ongoing actions, actions recommended in the first six months, actions recommended in the first two years, and actions recommended in years three and four.

# Strategy Recommendations



## 1. Real Estate and Infrastructure Readiness

- Support the development of flex space for businesses.
- Prioritize development projects to ensure they are efficiently processed through the Powhatan permitting system.
- Encourage the County to create an ombudsman to support priority business prospects.
- Continue implementing the strategy to identify land parcels for EDA ownership/control and site readiness preparation, and ensure that are appropriate for Powhatan's target sectors.
- Establish two Developers Advisory Committees to provide guidance on the development process.
- Encourage the Board of Supervisors to conduct a long-range planning strategy (a thoroughfare plan) for US Rt. 60.
- Convene and facilitate landowners and other appropriate stakeholders to develop a master plan for the I-288/Rt 711 interchange.
- Assess the potential for creating a Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) in collaboration with another locality to support business development.



## 2. Business Development and Entrepreneurship

- Assess the market potential for a small business incubator, co-workspace or business accelerator.
- Develop a strategy to connect regional ecosystem partners with the entrepreneurs in Powhatan.
- Develop business cases for the target sectors of Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) and advanced manufacturing.
- Develop a strategy to partner with Goochland County to build a relationship with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's team members focused on target sectors.
- Develop an incentive policy for use by the EDA for target sector prospects.
- Implement a strategy to support and anticipate the needs of the proposed data center project, ensuring a successful project outcome.
- Develop an Influencer Campaign for systematic outreach to citizens with expertise and connections in business sectors that are of interest to the county.
- Evaluate the current state of healthcare services in the county to determine if healthcare services should be a priority business target for the county.
- Organize an annual reverse job fair in partnership with the community college.

## Strategy Recommendations *(continued)*



### 3. Tourism and Placemaking

- Build stronger near-regional partnerships to focus on the tourism sector
- Leverage sports tourism strategies in partnership with surrounding localities.
- Continue to maintain and develop local tourism assets such as the James River.
- Develop strategies to further placemaking in the Powhatan Village area through the Virginia Main Street Program.
- Develop and expand the Proudly Powhatan Produced initiative.
- Partner with a media firm to create a consistent branding and public relations strategy.
- Continue to build a relationship with Virginia Tourism Corporation to include analysis of the benefits of establishing a Tourism Zone.
- Evaluate the role of the EDA as a tool for structuring financing for affordable housing.



### 4. Organizational Roles and Alignment

- Develop a plan to educate local elected and appointed officials on the development process as managed by the private sector.
- Establish systematic communication channels between the Board of Supervisors and the EDA to ensure alignment with the vision and the status of operational goals.
- Establish a relationship with Virginia Commonwealth University to help assess outcomes and the impact of economic development strategies.
- Engage the Powhatan Leadership Institute members in advocacy actions to support the economic development strategy.

# Economic Overview



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

# Economic Overview: 2017 – 2024

*Since adopting its 2017 Economic Development Strategic Plan, Powhatan County has made meaningful strides in building the foundational elements necessary for sustained economic growth. A significant area of achievement has been the implementation of a robust Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program, which has yielded more than 60 business expansions and over \$35 million in new capital investment. These efforts demonstrate a sustained commitment to supporting existing businesses and fostering local growth.*

Since 2017, improvements have also been made in operational infrastructure and strategic partnerships. The County created and staffed a dedicated Economic Development Department. This team developed marketing materials, launched new websites—including a tourism-focused platform—and implemented a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track engagements and performance. Real estate strategy work resulted in site submissions for the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) evaluations, advancing one site to Tier 4 status and demonstrating progress in site readiness and development.

While Powhatan is not operationally affiliated with regional organizations, it has strengthened its relationships with state and regional partners through familiarization tours and regular engagement with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), and others. This is a solid step in the right direction. Internally, interdepartmental collaboration and a consistent county message have improved, although some political and procedural hurdles persist. Overall, the county has built a more proactive, professional economic development operation that lays the groundwork for stronger results from future business attraction, entrepreneurship support, and tourism, all of which is needed to move the county toward its goal of a more balanced revenue base.

## Labor Force Trends and Employment

*Powhatan maintained one of the lowest unemployment rates in Virginia from 2018 to 2025, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2023, unemployment averaged just under 3%. The county is largely a bedroom community, with over 11,000 residents commuting out daily. Labor force participation is strong, and Powhatan benefits from regional employment access.*

## Population and Household Income Trends

*Powhatan County's population in 2017 was 28,722. By 2023, it had grown to 32,105, reflecting a growth of just over 10% over six years. The median age of 45.3 remains higher than the state and national averages. The average household income in Powhatan continues to place the county among the wealthiest in Virginia with an average of \$110,667 in 2023, compared to \$100,311 in 2017.*

## Business Growth and Key Industry Sectors

The local economy expanded steadily, driven by construction (21% of workforce), government, retail, and food service. Business growth was diversified, with no single employer dominating the landscape. The mix of traditional industries and new service-based ventures strengthened Powhatan's economic foundation.

## Impact of Tourism on the Local Economy

Tourism is a growing sector, with travel-related spending increasing from \$9.9 million in 2018 to \$10–12 million by 2023. Events like the Festival of the Grape, outdoor recreation, and craft beverage tourism have boosted local revenue and supported around 100 jobs.

## Educational Attainment and Workforce Development

Approximately 91% of residents hold a high school diploma, and one-third have a bachelor's degree or higher. Workforce development programs through regional community colleges have expanded local training opportunities. High school CTE and dual enrollment options help prepare students for skilled careers.

## Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship surged after 2018, with new restaurants, retail shops, and service providers opening across the county. Powhatan's supportive climate and population growth fueled steady small business expansion, especially along Route 60 and in the Courthouse Village area.

## Housing Market Challenges and Trends

Strong population growth drove up demand and home prices. The median home value now exceeds \$356,000. Limited housing diversity constrains affordability for younger workers and retirees. The county is exploring targeted strategies to support more diverse and affordable housing in growth areas.

## Business Development and Infrastructure Initiatives

Powhatan has pursued an ambitious agenda to grow its commercial tax base. Key projects include a Tier 4 business-ready site, broadband expansion, and ongoing review of a \$3 billion data center proposal. Strategic corridor and village center investments are underway to attract businesses and support a high quality of life.

## Conclusion: Powhatan's Economy in 2025 vs. 2017

Powhatan has demonstrated significant economic progress, marked by low unemployment, business diversification, and infrastructure improvements. However, the 85/15 residential-commercial tax revenue goal remains a work in progress. Continued focus on site control and readiness, development process improvements, business retention, attraction and formation, tourism and placemaking (including housing diversity), and leadership alignment are the keys to long-term economic resilience. Ultimately, these strategies are the mark of a mature economic development process.

# Stakeholder Perception Summary



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

# Stakeholder Summary

*The purpose of stakeholder engagement and input is to ensure that economic development planning reflects the values, needs, and priorities of the broader community. By gathering insights from residents, business owners, landowners, and civic leaders, Powhatan County can gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and barriers that shape local development.*

This process fosters transparency, builds trust, and helps align the efforts of the public and private sectors toward shared goals. Ultimately, stakeholder input provides a grounded foundation for policy decisions, enhances the legitimacy of the planning process, and increases the likelihood of successful, community-supported outcomes.

Below is a summary of the input received from stakeholder interviews and surveys conducted during the creation of this updated Strategic Economic Development Action Plan. Stakeholders included local elected officials, appointed officials, business leaders, and landowners as well as selected partners from outside the county. It is essential to note that this stakeholder engagement process was not conducted through broad community input sessions or surveys, but rather through targeted engagement of key influencers in the county. These comments, summarized here, represent synthesized input from all individual feedback and should be viewed only as perceptions, not as factually established data.

Input reveals a complex landscape of opportunity and concern regarding the locality's economic future. While many participants recognize that Powhatan's economy is growing, particularly in response to spillovers from nearby Chesterfield County, there is strong agreement that the economic growth is underperforming its potential. A central theme is the over-reliance on residential property taxes, which strains the county's ability to fund essential services and infrastructure. Participants expressed support for the county's stated goal of achieving a more balanced 85/15 residential-to-commercial revenue mix. Still, they noted that realizing this goal will require bold leadership, more transparent processes, and more proactive public investment in operations, physical facilities, and programming.

A variety of strengths were highlighted, including Powhatan's geographic location near the Richmond metro area, quality schools, ample open land, and high quality of life. The newly reinvigorated Economic Development Authority (EDA) was frequently cited as a step in the right direction; however, stakeholders feel that the EDA still lacks the necessary resources, autonomy, and authority to catalyze meaningful development. Numerous weaknesses and challenges persist including outdated zoning regulations, limited utility infrastructure, lack of controlled business-ready sites, a challenging development review process, and a cultural reluctance to embrace growth from some vocal opposition groups.

Despite these challenges, stakeholders identified many opportunities. These include prioritizing shovel-ready sites, streamlining the permitting process with an ombudsman role, planning targeted development along key corridors like Route 60 and the 288/711 interchange, investing in public-private partnerships, and taking steps to address barriers to housing diversity and affordability. Small, advanced manufacturing; agribusiness and controlled environmental agriculture; professional

business services and information technology; tourism; and retail and services were named as sectors with high growth potential. Participants also emphasized the need to improve Powhatan’s economic storytelling and increase visibility through regional partnerships.

Threats to Powhatan’s future progress include internal political fragmentation, inconsistency in decision-making, and competition from nearby localities that are perceived as more business-friendly. Many contributors referenced Chesterfield and Goochland counties as models of effective economic development, urging Powhatan to adopt best practices in areas such as land readiness, coordinated leadership, and supportive infrastructure.

Finally, the input emphasizes the importance of effective collaboration among the Board of Supervisors, the EDA, County staff, and private sector partners. Stakeholders consistently called for more urgency, transparency, and alignment across leadership bodies. More formal partnerships with regional economic development organizations were also identified as necessary, particularly in areas such as tourism, marketing, and site development. With clearer roles, adequate investment, formalized partnerships, and a community-backed vision, Powhatan can convert its strategic advantages into sustained economic prosperity.



# Real Estate and Site Readiness

## Introduction and Background

*The adage “You can’t sell out of an empty wagon” means that you cannot offer or provide something valuable if you don’t have it yourself. In economic development, this highlights the importance of building strong local assets before expecting growth or investment. It means a community must first develop key resources—such as a skilled workforce, infrastructure, available land or buildings (aka “product”), and supportive services—before it can attract businesses or economic opportunities.*

Without these foundational elements in place, efforts to promote the area or secure investment will likely fall short because there is nothing tangible to offer. Simply put, a region must “stock its wagon” with real capacity and readiness to successfully compete and grow economically.

However, the county faces several current challenges in the product it has to offer locating or expanding companies. These are:

- **Lack of publicly owned or controlled properties**
- **A majority of small-sized sites**
- **Few sites with readiness characterizations according to the Virginia Business Ready Sites program criteria**
- **A development process that is challenging**
- **Lack of clearly defined areas for development of the types of projects desired to positively affect the mix of revenue sources**

The combination of these challenges is reflected in the lack of success in pursuit of opportunities (data provided by VEDP) for the past four-year period. (**NOTE:** The data provided does not reflect any projects initiated by the county and independent of VEDP.)

Of the total opportunities provided through VEDP:

- **Average Building Requirement: 130,556 sq.ft.**
- **Average Site Requirement: 21 acres**
- **Average Site Size (County): 15 acres**
- **Results**
  - Won: 1 (expansion)**
  - Lost: 4**
  - Info. Gathering Only: 1**
  - Disengaged by Prospect: 17**

## Current Conditions

The current sites, which show more total availability than the previous opportunity required averages, are listed in the table following. The key challenge with these sites is the lack of “readiness.” With the exception of the Urbine site, which is a certified Tier-4 under the VBRSP criteria, the rest of the sites are either not tiered or are Tier 1 or 2 and therefore not considered “ready.” More due diligence work and infrastructure development is required to improve these sites to a desirable readiness state (with the goal of at least a Tier 4).

Properties	Total Available Acres	Contiguous Acres	Zoning
Willis Property	110.56	98.06	Agricultural-10
South Creek - Lot 26	11.92	11.92	Lite Industrial
Urbine Property	55.50	55.50	Lite Industrial
Spring Branch	36.80	28.00	Commercial Center
Utt Property	34.50	27.00	Agricultural-10
Batterson Road Prop.	27.70	25.20	Agricultural-10
Stavemill Industrial Site	23.33	23.33	Lite Industrial, Residential-2
Stavemill (IS) East	14.00	14.00	Lite Industrial, Residential-2
Pence-Briggs Property	31.48	21.84	General Commercial
<b>Average</b>	<b>38.42</b>	<b>33.87</b>	

The EDA and County do not have direct or shared control of these sites. Without control or some arrangement to share in development, the timeframe for development and the type of development is difficult to fit into an overall development strategy that the County wishes to pursue for its future.

There are currently two sites near the border of Powhatan and Chesterfield counties earmarked for an existing data center project. The largest site (120 acres) is designated for a potential data center, with an adjacent site (60 acres) that could be combined with the larger site or developed separately, potentially for another data center or complementary development.

With most developable sites/parcels being in private hands, having input from those owners and

developers is critical. The following is a summary of the input received through interviews with five local landowners/developers, which may help shape future partnerships with the county and development within the county. As a reminder, these are perceptions.

## 1. How would you describe Powhatan County to a potential business?

### Common Themes:

- **Untapped Potential:** There is an opportunity due to location and growth from Chesterfield.
- **Cumbersome Processes:** Development processes are slow, complex, and difficult to navigate.
- **Inexperienced Leadership:** The Board and staff lack experience and clarity on execution.
- **Lack of Cohesion:** Economic development and planning efforts aren't aligned or well coordinated.
- **Resistance to Development:** Vocal opposition from small groups often derails progress.

## 2. Biggest Strengths and Challenges for Developing Land

### Strengths:

- **Good Location:** Proximity to Richmond and major roads like Rt. 288 and Rt. 60.
- **Affordable Land:** Lower land costs than neighboring localities.
- **No Gross Receipts Tax:** Attractive to businesses from a tax perspective.

### Challenges:

- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Water, sewer, and road infrastructure are lacking or poorly planned.
- **Community Opposition:** “Not in my backyard” (NIMBY) attitudes from long-time or recent residents.
- **Governance Issues:** Inconsistent decision-making and lack of leadership strength.
- **Cumbersome Zoning/Approval Process:** The permitting and zoning processes are frustrating and unpredictable.

## 3. Missed Opportunities or Areas for Improvement

### Common Themes:

- **Failure to Capitalize on Water/Sewer Projects:** Lost infrastructure opportunities with Chesterfield and poor planning along Rt. 60.
- **Lack of Prepared Sites:** Need for “pad-ready” and pre-zoned land.
- **No Defined Growth Strategy:** Absence of clear zones for development or proactive planning.
- **Poor Education and Communication:** Both citizens and staff lack understanding of development's value and process.

## 4. Key Opportunities to Capitalize On

### Common Themes:

- **Rt. 60 East Development:** Near 288 is prime for growth.
- **Sports & Amenities Investment:** Could emulate Chesterfield/Henrico to attract visitors and residents.
- **Support EDA:** Empower EDA with more resources and authority.

## 5. Three Barriers to Site/Land Development

### Common Themes:

- **Infrastructure:** Water, sewer, and roads are inadequate or missing in key areas.
- **Public Opposition:** Vocal minority can delay or kill projects late in the process.
- **Process Issues:** Cumbersome, slow, and opaque approval processes deter development.
- **Lack of Defined Zones:** No pre-identified areas for targeted development.

## 6. Examples of Localities Doing it Right

### Common Mentions:

- **Henrico, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover:** Seen as proactive, planned, and business-friendly.
- **Goochland:** Praised for development near 288 and sticking to growth corridors.
- **Chesterfield:** EDA acts like a developer; has streamlined approach to economic development.

## 7. Vision for Powhatan in Five Years

### Common Themes:

- **Clear Development Plan:** Defined zones, especially along Rt. 60.
- **Shift to “Yes” Culture:** From “no” to “yes” on development.
- **Smart Residential Growth:** Smaller lots, worker-affordable housing.
- **Diversified Tax Base:** More industrial and commercial presence.
- **Enhanced Amenities:** Especially around the Courthouse area.

## 8. Most Important Actions/Investments

### Common Themes:

- **Invest in Water, Sewer, Roads:** Foundational to all future development.
- **Support EDA and economic development initiatives.**
- **Be transparent with developers.** Set clear expectations early.
- **Educate staff and citizens** on the value and mechanics of development.

## 9. Enhancing Ability to Develop Land

### Common Themes:

- **Advocacy and Navigation Support:** Need for an ombudsman or project shepherd.
- **Process Improvement:** Need for speed, consistency, and transparency.
- **Predictability:** Developers need to know upfront if a project is viable.

## 10. Crucial Partners for Advancement

### Common Mentions:

- **EDA, BoS, Greater Richmond Region, VEDP:** Must align for cohesive efforts.
- **Regional Players:** For infrastructure support (e.g., water and sewer).
- **VCU/External Experts:** Bring in specialized knowledge.

## 11. Creative Partnering

### Mixed Views:

- Some are open to creative partnerships (e.g., RIFA).
- Others are cautious, especially about partnering with Chesterfield or changing Powhatan's character too much.

## 12. Additional Comments

### Common Themes:

- **Need for Early Wins:** Demonstrate success to build momentum and trust.
- **Ombudsman Needed:** Advocates and navigators for complex development processes.
- **Team Approach:** Collaboration and shared vision are critical.



## The Future

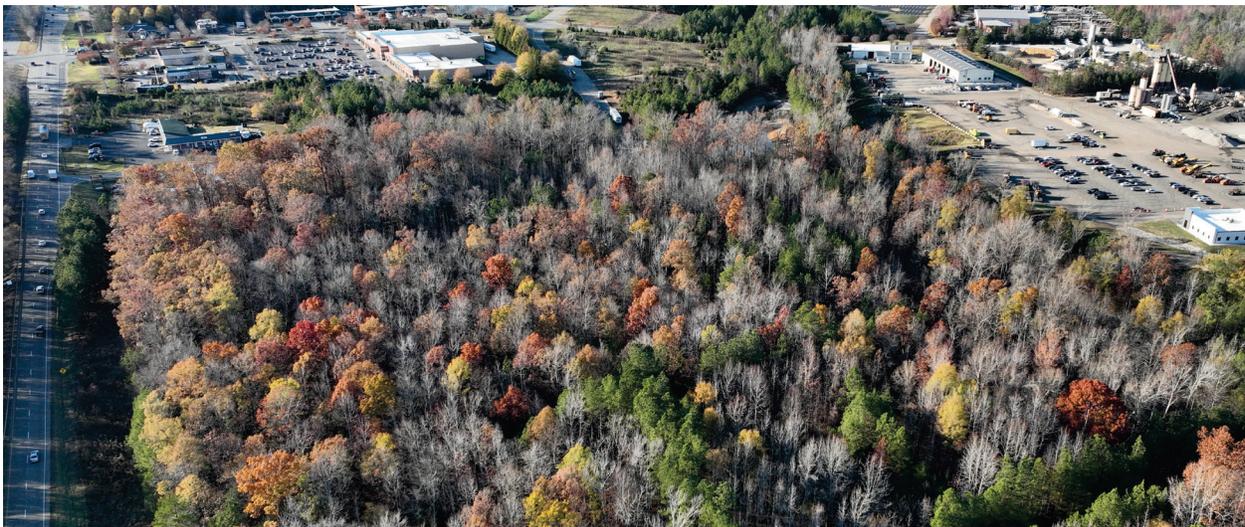
Powhatan County has a stated goal of growing its revenue and economy by achieving a tax source ratio of 85% residential to 15% commercial/industrial. It is an important goal with sound reasoning to focus on increases in the commercial and industrial sectors. The following ranking information clearly demonstrates the positive impact of this goal. Additional examples are provided in the Business Development & Entrepreneurship Section of this report.

### Summary Ranking

#### 1. Positive Revenue Contribution to County (Tax and Fees)

Counties generally earn revenue from property taxes, sales taxes, business licenses, and other fees. Below is a typical ranking from highest to lowest positive revenue contribution.

Rank	Development Type	Reasoning
1	Industrial	High property values, business personal property tax, and jobs create a strong economic base; can attract state/federal grants.
2	Commercial	Offices and service providers pay business taxes, property taxes, and generate payroll tax revenue; moderate property value.
3	Retail	Generates sales tax and property tax; can be seasonal or volatile but provides consistent sales tax revenue.
4	Residential	Provides property tax but often the lowest per-acre revenue; larger infrastructure cost offsetting revenue.



## 2. Public Services Demand (Lowest to Highest)

Public services include schools, roads, utilities, emergency services, and social services. The table below ranks them from the fewest to the most public services required

Rank	Development Type	Reasoning
1	Industrial	Generally low impact on schools, moderate on roads/ utilities; often operates with private infrastructure.
2	Commercial	Similar to industrial; low demand for schools, moderate for roads and utilities.
3	Retail	Moderate demand for traffic control and public safety; minimal to no school impact.
4	Residential	Highest demand, especially for schools, roads, emergency services, and utilities.

### Summary Table

Development Type	Revenue Contribution Rank <i>(lower is better)</i>	Public Services Demand Rank <i>(lower is better)</i>
Industrial	1	1
Commercial	2	2
Retail	3	3
Residential	4	4

#### Notes:

- **Industrial** tends to be the most revenue-positive and least demanding on public services, especially if heavy manufacturing is limited.
- **Residential** development often requires the most public services, especially schools and emergency services, which can offset property tax revenue.
- **Retail** depends on consumer traffic and can generate sales tax, but also adds traffic and safety demands.
- **Commercial** (offices, professional services) usually provides good tax revenue with moderate public services impact.

In summary, industrial development often provides a high revenue contribution with lower public service demands, making it a favorable option for counties seeking to balance economic growth with efficient use of resources. If Powhatan aims to maximize revenue while minimizing public service strain, industrial development often offers the best balance.

Between 2020 and 2025, industrial companies seeking to establish operations in Virginia have shown a preference for large-acreage sites, with several notable projects illustrating this trend:

- **LEGO Group** selected a 340-acre parcel in Chesterfield County for its \$1 billion, 1.7 million-square-foot manufacturing facility.
- **Amazon** has been leasing space at a Richmond warehouse campus, with a different entity purchasing roughly 135 acres in Chesterfield County for \$3 million in March 2025.

These examples suggest that industrial developments in Virginia during this period often require substantial land parcels, typically ranging from 100 to 340 acres, depending on the project's scale and specific needs. Projects that have the greatest possibility of long-term success in a community are those that “fit” the community's culture, outlook, goals and preferences. In the case of Powhatan County, unlike some of its neighbors, the project focus for future industrial development is lite or small-scale, not large- or mega-scale manufacturing. As previously noted, manufacturing has the highest impact on revenue generation with the least demand for public services and cost to the community, and “fits” Powhatan. Choosing small-scale manufacturing as a focus of development checks many of the boxes that work best for the county.

**Lite manufacturing** refers to small-scale manufacturing operations that focus on producing light, often non-heavy industrial products with minimal environmental impact and lower energy consumption compared to heavy manufacturing. It usually involves assembly, fabrication, or processing activities that do not require large amounts of raw materials, heavy machinery, or produce significant waste or emissions. Lite manufacturing is often characterized by flexible, smaller-scale production processes, often with a focus on precision, customization, or value-added assembly.

- **Lite Manufacturing Characteristics:** These companies often require less heavy equipment, lower utility demands, and less outdoor storage than heavy manufacturing.
- **Building Size:** Facilities typically range from 20,000 to 100,000 square feet, fitting comfortably on smaller parcels.
- **Flexibility:** Sites closer to urban or suburban areas often accommodate these smaller footprints, supporting quicker development timelines.

## Typical Activities & Products

### Activities:

- Assembly of components and sub-assemblies
- Light fabrication and machining
- Packaging and labeling
- Small parts manufacturing
- Electronics assembly and testing
- Textile and apparel production
- Food and beverage processing (non-bulk)
- Printing and publishing
- Production of medical devices, consumer goods, or small appliances

**Products:**

- Electronic components and devices
- Small machinery or equipment parts
- Consumer products (e.g., toys, household goods)
- Apparel and textiles
- Packaged food products
- Medical and pharmaceutical products
- Specialized plastic or metal components

**Average Building Size, Site Acreage, and Utilities Requirements****Building Size:**

- Lite manufacturing facilities typically range from 10,000 to 50,000 square feet, depending on the scale of operation.
- Smaller operations can be as compact as 5,000–10,000 square feet.
- Medium-sized lite manufacturing plants often fall in the 20,000–40,000 square feet range.

**Site Acreage:**

- Site sizes usually range from 2 to 10 acres.
- This allows for building footprint, parking, loading docks, potential expansion, and outdoor storage if needed.
- The exact acreage depends on zoning, buffer requirements, and ancillary uses like offices or warehousing.

**Utilities Requirements:**

- Moderate electrical power demand, generally less intense than heavy manufacturing. Typically, in the range of 200 kW to 1 MW depending on equipment.
- Access to municipal water and sewer is usually required, especially for food, beverage, or chemical-related processes.
- Natural gas availability may be needed for heating or process equipment.
- Telecommunications infrastructure for production monitoring and logistics.
- Waste management systems tailored to non-hazardous or light industrial waste.
- HVAC systems are designed for light industrial air quality and climate control.

Attribute	Lite Manufacturing Typical Range
Building Size	10,000 – 50,000 square feet (some as small as 5,000)
Site Acreage	2 – 10 acres
Electric Power	200 kW – 1 MW
Water/Sewer	Municipal water and sewer required
Natural Gas	Often required
Telecommunications	High-speed internet and data infrastructure
Typical Activities	Assembly, light fabrication, packaging, electronics, apparel production, small consumer goods

Many localities in Virginia actively market industrial parks with parcels sized around 10 acres as ideal for light manufacturing or “lite” industrial businesses. The following Virginia industrial parks have available sites suitable for lite manufacturing companies, typically ranging from 5 to 20 acres.

**1. Cane Creek Centre – Danville/Pittsylvania RIFA**

- **Location:** Danville, VA
- **Available Sites:** Multiple, including:
  - Lot 8A: 8.5-acre pad on a 22.7-acre site, suitable for up to 100,000 sq. ft.
  - Lot 12B: 7-acre pad on an 8.6-acre site, suitable for up to 72,000 sq. ft.
- **Zoning:** Industrial
- **Amenities:** Rail access, utilities, and infrastructure in place
- **Certification:** Tier 4 under the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP)

**2. Cyber Park – Danville, VA**

- **Location:** Danville, VA
- **Available Sites:** Multiple, including:
  - Lot 10C: 10-acre pad on a 27.96-acre site, suitable for up to 100,000 sq. ft.
  - Lot 12B: 8-acre pad on a 19.3-acre site, suitable for up to 100,000 sq. ft.
- **Zoning:** Industrial
- **Amenities:** Utilities, broadband, and proximity to transportation networks
- **Certification:** Tier 4 under VBRSP

### 3. Rich Creek Corporate Park – Patrick County

- **Location:** Patrick County, VA
- **Available Sites:** 10-acre pad on a 14-acre site, suitable for up to 20,000 sq. ft.
- **Zoning:** Industrial
- **Amenities:** Utilities and infrastructure in place
- **Certification:** Tier 5 under VBRSP

### 4. SVTP Lot B – Southern Virginia Technology Park

- **Location:** Halifax County
- **Available Sites:** 11-acre pad on a 14.7-acre site, suitable for up to 122,500 sq. ft.
- **Zoning:** Industrial
- **Amenities:** Utilities and infrastructure in place
- **Certification:** Tier 5 under VBRSP

### 5. Waynesboro Industrial Park

- **Location:** Waynesboro, VA
- **Available Sites:** Multiple, including:
  - Town Center Commerce Park: 11 acres available, suitable for light industrial or technology-based companies
  - Enterprise Zone: 36 acres available, with 18 acres developable
- **Zoning:** Industrial
- **Amenities:** Utilities, broadband, and proximity to transportation networks
- **Certification:** Tier 2 to Tier 4 under VBRSP

## Development Timeline from Greenfield to Occupancy

*The time required to develop an industrial site from a greenfield state to a ready-to-occupy facility varies based on factors such as site readiness, infrastructure availability, and project complexity.*

**Project-Ready Sites:** Sites that are pre-zoned and equipped with necessary infrastructure (e.g., utilities, road access) can significantly reduce development timelines. For instance, Chesterfield County’s Meadowview Technology Park, which hosted the LEGO project, was a project-ready site, facilitating a faster development process.

**Typical Development Duration:** While specific timelines can vary, developing a greenfield industrial site to occupancy generally spans several years. For example, LEGO’s manufacturing facility in Chesterfield County is expected to begin production in 2027, indicating a development period of approximately two years from the announcement in 2025.

To expedite development, Virginia has initiatives like the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP), which aims to increase the availability of development-ready sites through characterization and development efforts. (NOTE: The development funds that can be granted from the VBRS program currently are only available for sites of 100+ contiguous acres. This size requirement may be reduced to 50+ acres in the next round of applications, scheduled for Fall 2025. Individual small sites for lite manufacturing would not be eligible for funding, but a larger parcel or park that might be subdivided in the future would be eligible.)

**Strategic Product Development** requires three key components: where to develop, what to develop, and how to develop. The county has embarked on the first two key components in order to develop a focused and strategic development strategy.

**Where:** A working group has embarked on defining 3 development zones in the county best suited for product development. Criteria for selecting these zones span transportation access, utilities assets, zoning, marketability, and other factors related to the County’s development goals. Within these proposed zones, specific parcels have been identified as having the potential for development to accommodate commercial/industrial sector companies.

**What:** Preliminary identification of 5 parcels, if secured and developed, would add a total of approximately 440 acres of “product” to the county’s “wagon.” The average parcel size would be 88 acres and median size would be 74 acres. Parcels of these sizes provide opportunities for large manufacturing, sub-division for lite manufacturing, and/or attraction of additional data center projects.

In conjunction with the work done to delineate development zones and parcels, the county has developed and is continuing to develop numerous planning guidance documents including the Board of Supervisors’ Strategic Plan, the transportation corridor study, the Wastewater Master Plan, and the Comprehensive Plan update. Details and results from these plans and initiatives can be combined to create a focused, strategic and coherent development plan as a roadmap for achieving the development most advantageous to the future of the county and its citizens.

**How:** How the county can develop depends upon whether or not it has the funding, staff, patience, and other assets required to purchase and develop product on its own. It may be more beneficial to pursue partnerships and other methods that puts less strain on the public ability to develop. Several options are available for exploration by the county. These include:

- **Public/private Partnerships** can be a successful strategy for localities in Virginia to proactively control and develop property for business attraction and job creation. These partnerships often combine the resources of local government with the speed and capital of the private sector to reduce development risk, increase readiness, and ensure strategic outcomes. Key tools include land ownership, purchase options, and joint development models that provide flexibility and leverage. Examples below provide a representative overview of these approaches.
- **Ownership and Development Authority** Localities often use their Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) or Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) to acquire and manage land designated for economic development. These public entities can act with greater agility than the general government and are positioned to negotiate, hold, and convey land to private developers once a project is secured.

In Henrico County, the Economic Development Authority owns and controls large tracts of land specifically marketed for industrial and corporate investment. The EDA uses its ownership to shape development outcomes and ensures sites are served by infrastructure, zoned appropriately, and aligned with strategic industries such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, and technology.

- **Purchase Options for Flexibility** When outright ownership is not yet necessary, localities can secure strategic parcels through purchase option agreements. This gives the locality exclusive rights to purchase land when needed without tying up capital prematurely. It also ensures the locality has site control when responding to a business prospect, creating a more competitive and timely development process.

Prince George County has successfully used this approach within its economic development efforts, particularly around the growing industrial corridor near Interstate 295 and U.S. Route 460. By working with private landowners to secure purchase options, the county and its IDA can control how and when land is brought to market, aligning availability with project timelines and infrastructure buildout.

- **Joint Infrastructure and Site Development** Public/private site development often includes shared investment in infrastructure—such as roads, utilities, and broadband—that prepares sites for business use. These improvements reduce private developer risk while enhancing the locality’s long-term tax base. The locality benefits from job creation and revenue growth while the private partner benefits from a predictable, development-ready site.
- **Equity Participation Model** Equity participation allows the property owners to receive a price per acre over time for a property which is substantially more than its current fair market price. The public partner improves the property to develop a business/industrial park which will greatly benefit the community and County in which it is located and create increased value per acre through development. This is a very safe arrangement for the landowner and the local government or EDO which is developing the business/industrial park.

In general, the landowner conveys title to the property to a local government or economic development organization (“EDO”) for a nominal amount and receives a deed of trust and first lien of trust. Agreements are developed between parties to set per acre prices before and after developments, the definitions of the equity (for various stages), the type of return on development of the property for the deed of trust/lien holder, and other terms to ensure the property develops appropriately over the agreed timeframe.

This allows the public partner to acquire and develop an economic development asset. At the same time, the former “owner” realizes a return based on the increase in the value through improvements on the property. (NOTE: The model is structured under legal agreements. If there is interest, RRA can arrange for an economic development attorney, who has successfully structured the model, to discuss the details more thoroughly and answer questions.)

- **The Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) Act** allows local governments to work cooperatively in regional economic development projects. The RIFA Act authorizes revenue sharing (including tax sharing) that, prior to the legislation, required prolonged, complex negotiations and questions about due authority. The creation of a state-sanctioned regional economic development authority that holds certain powers eliminates many of the barriers to undertaking such regional cooperative efforts. The use of a RIFA creates a mechanism for smaller jurisdictions or those with significant economic challenges to join forces with others to offset these limitations. Some RIFAs in Virginia have focused on industrial site development or one major project, while others have used a broader approach to encourage smaller businesses and innovative approaches and technologies to expand across political boundaries. Ultimately, the goal is to create projects and economic improvements across city or country boundary lines.

## Summary of RIFA Impact Points

- Once created, a RIFA is a separate organization, vested with the powers of a body corporate. The RIFA’s debts and obligations do not impact the member localities.
- A RIFA may hold any property, real or personal, or interests therein, in its own name.
- A RIFA may borrow money, issue bonds, and enter into a broad variety of agreements relating to its purposes.
- A RIFA may work with non-members, including private parties, on particular projects.
- A RIFA does not replace any existing authority or other body or organization. Rather, it is intended to create a mechanism to simplify regional cooperation among localities.

## Conclusions

The county has historically underperformed in controlling and developing real estate products that make it competitive in securing business projects. These projects then increase employment and capital investment, ultimately benefiting its citizens. With its new vision of a more balanced revenue stream, future economic development should focus on product development to compete and secure new projects, resulting in a better balance of revenue sources. Statistics and data show that the best “fit” for the county is to foster development in the commercial/industrial sector with a focus on lite manufacturing.

The county is currently developing a focused approach through the identification of development zones and parcels within those zones that offer key opportunities to fill their “empty wagon.” The missing link is how much control in development the county wishes to have. Should they buy and develop product on their own or enter into some form of partnership with one or more other entities, including landowners?

Whatever the final development plan looks like, the future of the county’s economic development is promising for its citizens, the county, and region.

# Business Development and Entrepreneurship



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

# Business Development and Entrepreneurship

*In crafting an effective economic development strategy, Powhatan County recognizes the distinct yet interconnected roles of business attraction, business expansion, and business formation. Each avenue makes a unique contribution to job creation, capital investment, and the overall vitality of the local economy. Each also requires unique approaches, including investments of time, funding, and services.*

**Business attraction** involves drawing new companies to the county, often through incentives, infrastructure readiness, and strategic marketing. While this approach can lead to significant capital investment and job creation, it typically requires substantial resources and time. For instance, large-scale projects may necessitate investments in site development, utilities, and workforce training; however, the return on such investments can be substantial, especially when targeting industries with high job multipliers, such as manufacturing and information sectors.

**Business expansion**, or business retention and expansion (BRE), focuses on supporting existing local businesses to grow and thrive. This strategy is often more cost-effective than attraction efforts and yields significant returns. Studies have shown that up to 80% of net new investment in communities comes from existing businesses. By providing resources such as workforce development, export assistance, supply chain support, and streamlined permitting processes, Powhatan can foster an environment where local businesses can expand, leading to job creation and increased tax revenues.

**Business formation** (entrepreneurship) emphasizes nurturing entrepreneurship and the establishment of new businesses. While startups may start small, they collectively contribute significantly to job creation and innovation. For example, small businesses have been responsible for over 70% of net new jobs since 2019. Supporting entrepreneurs through incubators, co-working spaces, access to capital, and mentorship programs can stimulate local economic growth and diversification.

In addition to considering the three business development approaches above, it is important that Powhatan recognizes and, to the extent possible, aligns with business sectors that are the focus of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. VEDP's marketing focus gives Powhatan an added layer of visibility if the sectors align. VEDP identified several strategic target sectors in its FY25–29 Strategic Plan, including Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics, and AgTech. Powhatan County's unique assets fit well with these sectors, presenting opportunities for targeted economic development in business attraction, expansion and formation.

Understanding the specific site requirements, typical capital investments, and job creation potential of each sector is crucial for informed planning and infrastructure development. A high-level demonstration of each of these sectors' average requirements and impacts is shown below. (Comparable information was presented in the Real Estate Readiness Section above.)

## 1. Advanced Manufacturing

Powhatan County's proximity to Richmond and access to major transportation routes make it an attractive location for advanced manufacturing. The county's strategic land development initiatives aim to increase the availability of ready-to-build industrial parcels, supporting the growth of manufacturing enterprises.

### Site Requirements

- **Acreage:** Typically 25–100+ acres, depending on the scale of operations.
- **Infrastructure:** Robust utilities including high-capacity electricity, natural gas, water, and wastewater systems.
- **Zoning:** Industrial zoning with allowances for heavy manufacturing activities.
- **Transportation:** Proximity to major highways, rail lines, and ports for efficient supply chain logistics.

### Capital Investment and Job Creation

- **Average Investment:** Varies widely. A small scalable example is Virginia Diodes, Inc. (VDI), based in Charlottesville. VDI originated from research at the University of Virginia and now employs over 200 people. The company manufactures high-frequency test and measurement equipment used in applications such as 6G communications, automotive radar, weather sensing, and radio astronomy.
- **Job Creation:** Large-scale facilities can employ thousands; however, smaller advanced manufacturing plants may employ 10–500 workers.

### Powhatan's Potential

With its available land and proximity to Richmond, Powhatan is well positioned to attract advanced manufacturing firms, especially those seeking sites with access to skilled labor and transportation networks.

## 2. AgTech (Controlled Environment Agriculture / CEA)

With its rich agricultural heritage and existing farming operations, Powhatan is well positioned to embrace AgTech advancements.

### Site Requirements

- **Acreage:** Flexible. Facilities can range from small-scale operations on a few acres to large-scale vertical farms requiring 10–20 acres.
- **Infrastructure:** Reliable electricity, water supply, and advanced HVAC systems for climate control.
- **Zoning:** Agricultural or light industrial zoning accommodating indoor farming operations.
- **Proximity:** Close to urban centers to reduce distribution costs and time to market.

### Capital Investment and Job Creation

- **Average Investment:** Startup costs can range from \$1 million for small operations to over \$100 million for large-scale facilities. An example of a CEA project is Greenswell Growers, which operates a state-of-the-art hydroponic greenhouse in Goochland County. Utilizing a fully automated indoor system that combines natural and artificial light, the facility is designed to produce nearly 3.7 million pounds of leafy greens over its first three years of full production.
- **Job Creation:** Employment varies. A medium-sized facility may create 50–100 jobs, including roles in cultivation, maintenance, and distribution.

### Powhatan's Potential

The county's agricultural heritage and available land make it an ideal location for CEA ventures, offering opportunities to diversify the local economy and promote sustainable farming practices.

## 3. Information Technology and Data Centers

The county's support for a new data center project indicates a commitment to attracting IT and data-driven enterprises. Investments in workforce development are essential to this sector's growth.

### Site Requirements

- **Acreage:** Typically 10–50 acres, with some hyperscale data centers requiring more.
- **Infrastructure:** High-capacity power supply (often 100+ MW), redundant fiber-optic connectivity, and advanced cooling systems.
- **Zoning:** Industrial or special-use zoning accommodating large-scale, high-security facilities.
- **Environmental Considerations:** Locations with low natural disaster risk and stable climates are preferred.

### Capital Investment and Job Creation

- **Average Investment:** Investments can range from \$200 million to over \$1 billion. In Virginia, Microsoft was initially announced as a \$499 million investment creating 50 jobs. The data center has undergone six expansions and by 2023, Microsoft employed 499 individuals in Mecklenburg County with an average compensation of \$154,000—more than double the regional average of \$65,000. These operations have supported an additional 966 jobs in sectors like security, healthcare, and maintenance, contributing \$276 million to the regional GDP and accounting for 21% of local economic activity. In 2023 alone, Microsoft paid \$23 million in property taxes, representing 24% of Mecklenburg County's total property tax revenue.
- **Job Creation:** While construction phases create significant employment, operational staffing is lean, often employing 50–100 full-time workers.

### Powhatan's Potential

At the time of this report, Powhatan is working closely with a data center prospect.

## 4. Transportation and Logistics

Powhatan’s location offers strategic advantages for transportation and logistics operations. The county’s emphasis on infrastructure investment and strategic land development supports the establishment of logistics hubs, aligning with VEDP’s goal to assemble a world-class transportation and logistics hub.

### Site Requirements

- **Acreage:** Distribution centers typically require 20–100 acres, depending on the scale.
- **Infrastructure:** Access to major highways, proximity to rail lines and ports, and sufficient loading dock facilities.
- **Zoning:** Industrial zoning that permits warehousing and distribution activities.
- **Labor Availability:** Access to a workforce skilled in logistics and supply chain management.

### Capital Investment and Job Creation

- **Average Investment:** Investments can range from \$50 million to over \$200 million, depending on the facility’s size and automation level.
- **Job Creation:** Facilities can employ anywhere from 100 to over 1,000 workers, with roles in operations, management, and transportation.

### Powhatan’s Potential

The county’s location offers strategic advantages for logistics operations, with access to regional transportation networks that facilitate efficient distribution throughout the Mid-Atlantic.

## Conclusion

By understanding the specific requirements and economic impacts of these target sectors, Powhatan County can tailor its development strategies to attract and support industries that align with its assets and growth objectives. Strategic investments in infrastructure, zoning adjustments, and workforce development will be key to positioning the county as a competitive location for these sectors.



# Placemaking and Tourism



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

# Placemaking and Tourism

## Placemaking

*Placemaking is the practice of intentionally shaping the physical and social character of a community to strengthen its identity, foster civic pride, and support economic development. At its core, placemaking is about more than aesthetics—it is about creating authentic, welcoming spaces where people want to live, work, and visit. For rural communities like Powhatan County, placemaking is a vital tool for preserving small-town character while strategically promoting growth that benefits both residents and businesses.*

Powhatan Village, with its historic courthouse square, charming local businesses, and pedestrian-friendly layout, is a natural focal point for placemaking efforts. The Village already serves as a gathering place for residents and visitors during events like the Festival of the Grape, the Village Farmers Market, and First Fridays! Music Series. Continued investment in this authentic location—through streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage, façade enhancements, and business recruitment—can reinforce Powhatan Village as the cultural and economic heart of the county.

Placemaking in the Village contributes directly to Powhatan’s ability to attract and retain talent. In today’s mobile economy, professionals and entrepreneurs are increasingly drawn to communities that offer a high quality of life, unique experiences, and a strong sense of place. The Village, with its walkability, local shops, coffee houses, and gathering spaces, has the potential to appeal to these individuals—particularly those who may be seeking a rural lifestyle with access to creative, social, and professional opportunities.

Likewise, small business development thrives in vibrant places. A Village with increased foot traffic, inviting public spaces, and support for pop-up markets or seasonal events becomes an incubator for local entrepreneurship. Businesses like Rise & Grind Café, Maxey’s, and the various vendors at the Farmers Market demonstrate the potential of the Village to support a dynamic small business ecosystem.

To build on this momentum, Powhatan County could consider pursuing affiliate status with the Virginia Main Street program. This statewide initiative, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, provides technical assistance, funding opportunities, and best practice resources to communities seeking to revitalize their traditional commercial districts. As a Main Street Affiliate, Powhatan Village would benefit from access to a statewide network of peer communities, training in economic vitality and design strategies, and guidance in developing a local revitalization strategy tailored to the community’s goals.

Importantly, participation in Virginia Main Street does not require abandoning Powhatan’s rural identity. On the contrary, it helps communities preserve what makes them distinctive while adapting to changing economic conditions. A place-based strategy for the Village can support new investment, increase tax revenues, and promote tourism—all while reinforcing the historic and cultural assets that make Powhatan unique.

## Tourism

***Tourism also presents a high-potential opportunity for Powhatan County to diversify its revenue streams and stimulate local business growth which can be a building block for reaching the county's goal of an 85/15 revenue balance. According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation's 2023 Economic Impact Report, visitors to Virginia spent over \$33.3 billion, generating significant job creation and tax revenues across the Commonwealth. While Powhatan currently captures only a modest share of this activity, the county's unique blend of rural charm, creative entrepreneurship, and natural beauty make it well positioned to grow its tourism economy—and in doing so, move closer to a more balanced tax base.***

Powhatan's assets are uniquely compelling. The Mill at Fine Creek and adjacent Fine Creek Brewing Company anchor the historic Fine Creek Mills District, where history meets hospitality in a tranquil natural setting. Visitors can stay in beautifully restored cottages, sip local brews, and shop at Fine Creek Provisions Café. These businesses offer more than products—they offer experiences. The same is true at Three Crosses Distillery, the first legal distillery in Powhatan, where handcrafted spirits are served in a setting designed for slow-paced conversation and community. These venues feature stops on the Richmond West Craft Beverage Trail, connecting Powhatan to regional visitors who are eager to explore small-batch, locally made drinks.

Events and experiences also draw visitors from across the region. Powhatan hosts the popular Festival of the Grape, as well as the First Fridays! Music Series, weekly Village Farmers Markets, and seasonal events at Quarterfield Markets and Fairview Farms Events. These festivals bring foot traffic into Powhatan's growing network of artisans, growers, and retailers. The Proudly Powhatan Produced program, launched in 2024, is a strategic initiative that identifies and promotes products made locally, fostering a visible brand for Powhatan's makers and strengthening community pride and visitor interest alike.

Powhatan's café culture also enhances its destination appeal. Whether at Rise & Grind Café in the Village, Coalesce Coffee at Independence Golf Club, or Corner Rock Café at Winterfield, visitors find distinctive local experiences that align with modern travel and leisure preferences. These local stops reward both spontaneous weekend visitors and planned group outings.

Outdoor and recreational assets further set Powhatan apart. Powhatan State Park and the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area offer camping, hiking, kayaking, tubing, hunting, and fishing. Maiden Voyage Outfitters provides gear and rentals, giving visitors easy access to the James River. These natural areas are increasingly valuable to travelers seeking sustainable, nature-based activities within a short drive of urban centers.

The county's aesthetics, geography, and preserved rural setting also supports the creative economy. The Virginia Film Office has recognized Powhatan as a film-friendly destination, with locations like the State Farm grounds serving as backdrops for major productions. The local arts scene is visible through public art, including four vibrant Tre Taliaferro murals located across Powhatan—from the newly restored Jinks Towing building to the Vintage Antique Shack, The WashBox Car Wash, and Fast Lane Auto. These murals not only beautify the community but have become highly photographed social media landmarks that draw visitors eager for Instagrammable moments.

Because these assets clearly differentiate Powhatan from other rural destinations, the county would greatly benefit from being part of the Richmond Region Tourism (RRT) ecosystem. RRT provides access to regional marketing platforms, data insights, and coordinated tourism campaigns that can attract broader audiences. As sports tourism, craft beverage trails, and film production expand across the Richmond metro area, Powhatan has the opportunity to position itself as a unique complement to the urban core by offering authenticity, nature, and community.

In summary, investing in placemaking and tourism is not just about marketing. These economic development strategies support local entrepreneurs, preserve community character, and attract new revenue sources. With its existing venues and assets, Powhatan is well positioned to grow these sectors, particularly if it engages formally with partners such as Richmond Region Tourism and Virginia Main Street. Continued investment in destination branding, public-private partnerships, and programmatic infrastructure will support a more balanced and resilient future for the county.

## Housing

***Housing is an ancillary topic related to placemaking. In the past five years, it has become recognized as critical to economic development, attracting a stable local workforce, and retaining that workforce. Without diverse and attainable housing options, communities struggle to support business growth, fill job openings, and maintain long-term economic competitiveness. Powhatan County is no exception, as demonstrated by recent housing development proposals. A diverse housing stock—including apartments, condominiums, and mixed-use developments—ensures that residents across income levels can live and work locally, supporting talent retention.***

Strategic areas like Powhatan Village and the Route 288 interchanges are prime locations for such development. For instance, the Scottville at Powhatan Courthouse community offers maintenance-free homes in the Village, catering to active adults seeking proximity to amenities. Similarly, developments near Route 288, such as those in the French Hill subdivision, provide convenient access to major transportation routes and commercial centers.

In recent years, Virginia has expanded the statutory authority of Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) and Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) to actively support the development of affordable and workforce housing. Under the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (Va. Code § 15.2-4900 et seq.), these entities are empowered to finance facilities used primarily for single or multi-family residences, thereby promoting safe and affordable housing across the Commonwealth. This legislative enhancement enables IDAs and EDAs to issue bonds, provide grants, and make loans to support housing projects that align with broader economic development goals. By leveraging these powers, localities can address housing shortages, attract and retain a stable workforce, and stimulate economic growth, particularly in areas where traditional housing authorities are inactive or absent.

Addressing housing affordability and diversity is crucial for attracting and retaining talent. Workers are more likely to settle in communities where they can find suitable housing options close to employment centers. By expanding housing choices, Powhatan can foster a more inclusive and resilient economy. Below are examples from various Virginia localities, focusing on the roles their

Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) or Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) have played.

### **Smyth County: Smyth Grow Housing Initiative**

Smyth County’s the “Smyth Grow” initiative utilized American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to create a revolving loan fund. This fund aims to incentivize developers and landowners to invest in housing projects. As homes are built and sold, repayments replenish the fund, ensuring a sustainable financing mechanism for future housing developments. This approach not only accelerates housing construction but also stimulates economic growth by attracting new residents and bolstering the local economy.

### **South Boston: Downtown Revitalization and Housing**

South Boston’s IDA has been instrumental in downtown revitalization efforts, focusing on converting underutilized spaces into residential units. In 2025, Halifax County’s IDA, which serves South Boston, Virginia, secured a \$2 million grant through the Virginia Workforce Housing Investment Program to support a collaborative project with Community Housing Partners. This endeavor aims to increase affordable housing options for the local workforce by utilizing land donated by the county, thereby maintaining long-term affordability in the region.

### **Wythe County: Mixed-Use Complex**

Recognizing the critical role of housing in workforce attraction and retention, the county’s Joint Industrial Development Authority (JIDA) has undertaken initiatives to address housing needs, particularly for middle-income and workforce populations.

In 2025, the JIDA secured a \$400,000 state grant to redevelop a derelict downtown building in Wytheville into a mixed-use complex, including eight rental units targeted at the regional workforce. This project not only revitalizes underutilized property but also contributes to the availability of affordable housing options in proximity to employment centers.

## **State Focus**

*Recognizing the importance of housing for employees of large business prospects, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) has begun linking investments in site preparedness with housing strategies. As part of this recognition, VEDP has emphasized the importance of localities demonstrating comprehensive housing strategies to accommodate anticipated job growth associated with large-scale projects.*

This approach is evident in programs like the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP), where localities seeking site development funding are encouraged to provide housing plans that illustrate how they will meet the workforce housing needs generated by new employers. Such plans may include assessments of current housing stock, identification of gaps in housing availability, and strategies to develop affordable and workforce housing options near employment centers.

By integrating housing considerations into economic development planning, VEDP aims to ensure that communities are not only prepared to attract new businesses but also equipped to support the resulting workforce. This holistic approach acknowledges that access to adequate housing is a key

factor in sustaining economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Localities are encouraged to collaborate with housing developers, leverage state and federal housing programs, and implement policies that facilitate the development of diverse housing options. Through these efforts, communities can create environments that are attractive to both employers and employees, fostering long-term economic resilience.

In conclusion, investing in a variety of housing types in strategic locations, supported by proactive EDA involvement, will enhance Powhatan County's appeal to both residents and businesses, ensuring long-term economic prosperity.



# Organizational Roles and Alignment

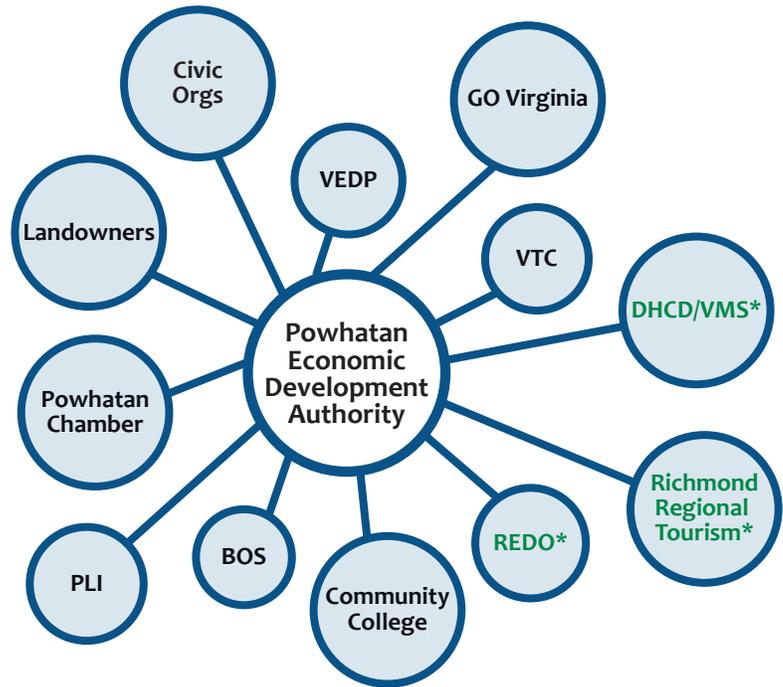


**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

**No single entity or individual is responsible for an economic development strategy. The following two graphics illustrate the complexity of the work that the Powhatan team, through its EDA and its economic development department, is expected to manage.**

The network graphic identifies the primary partners with whom relationships either are already or should be established, nurtured, and in some cases, organizationally affiliated (highlighted in green). Strong partnerships are like a well-built bridge—each side must contribute solid foundations, and the span in between must be intentionally engineered with trust, communication, and shared purpose. Just as a bridge endures shifting weather and heavy loads, successful partnerships withstand pressure and change by relying on the strength of their structure. Each partner brings different material skills, resources, and perspectives. When aligned, they create something that can carry far more together than either could alone. A great partnership doesn't just connect—it supports, elevates, and makes forward movement possible.



A successful economic development program depends not only on well-designed strategies but also on the strength and clarity of the relationships that support them. For Powhatan County, dedicating staff time and energy to cultivating strong partnerships—both external and internal—is critical to advancing its long-term vision for a balanced and resilient economy. These relationships expand the county's capacity, unlock new resources, and create collaborative momentum that no single entity could achieve alone.

Two distinct types of external partnerships require attention. **Formally organized partnerships**, such as participation in a regional economic development organization (REDO) or regional tourism, provide structured avenues for multi-jurisdictional collaboration. These partnerships would enable Powhatan to benefit from shared marketing, project leads, and grant opportunities. For instance, the region's collective support for Richmond Region Tourism has strengthened destination branding and event recruitment efforts and increased both visits to the region as well as revenue to localities and businesses.

Equally important are **non-organizational partnerships**, such as those with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, or industry-specific trade groups. These less formal relationships are essential to nurturing. For example, maintaining active communication with VEDP staff helps ensure Powhatan is visible and competitive in statewide

project referrals. Meanwhile, collaboration with workforce partners like Reynolds Community College can support the development of industry-aligned training that meets the needs of local employers. However...

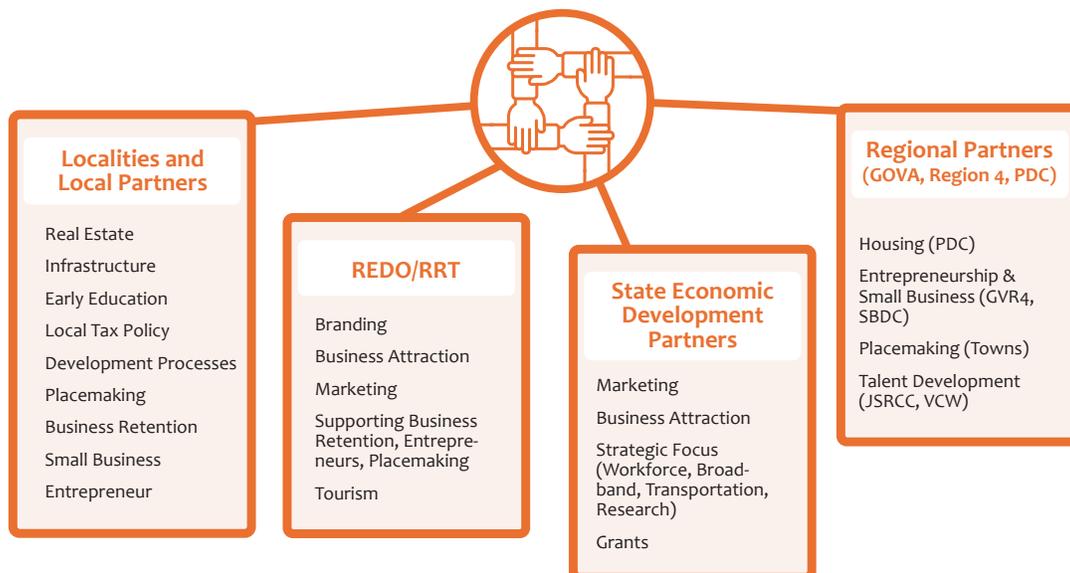
**No partnerships are more important — or more vulnerable to misalignment — than those within local government itself.**

For Powhatan to succeed, the roles and responsibilities between the Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Authority (EDA) must be clearly defined, mutually understood, and consistently respected. The Board sets broad policy and fiscal direction for the county, while the EDA is tasked with executing economic development activities and engaging the business community. When these two bodies operate with coordination, trust and transparency, they create a strong foundation for strategic action.

Similarly, internal operational partnerships—such as those between the economic development team and planning or permitting staff—are essential to achieving a business-friendly environment. When internal departments collaborate proactively, development projects are processed more efficiently, investor confidence increases, and the county’s reputation as a responsive partner is strengthened. For example, Hanover County is often recognized for the close coordination between its planning and economic development departments, enabling faster turnaround times and more cohesive site development support.

In summary, investing time in building and maintaining partnerships is not ancillary—it is core to Powhatan’s economic development strategy. Equally vital is ensuring that each partner, whether internal or external, understands their role and has a shared commitment to working collaboratively. These relationships and the clarity that governs them form the architecture of a sustainable and effective economic development program.

Looking at the principal relationships in economic development, the chart below visualizes functions that build operational connectivity.



# SMART Action Steps



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

Note: The SMART action steps below assume a July – June fiscal year.



## Real Estate and Infrastructure Readiness

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Support the development of flex space for businesses.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, support the feasibility analysis and pre-development of one flex-space site to be ready for occupancy by 2028.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Support the existing flex space developer through outreach marketing.</p> <p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Assess market demand.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Identify at least two potential flex space sites through engagement with commercial brokers and property owners. Market properties to flex space developers.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Prioritize current development projects to ensure they are efficiently processed through the Powhatan permitting system.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2026, implement a streamlined development review process for economic development projects.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Initiate conversations with administration and other departments in support of current priority projects.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Map current permitting workflow and identify bottlenecks. Host roundtable sessions with developers to gather feedback on existing processes. Develop and pilot a priority project permitting track for economic development. Evaluate pilot and institutionalize improvements with performance metrics.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Continue implementing the strategy to identify land parcels for EDA ownership/control and site readiness preparation that are appropriate for Powhatan’s target sectors.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, identify and secure control of at least five parcels aligned with priority sectors.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Complete county-wide land inventory and conduct parcel-level assessments.</p> <p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Prioritize sites based on infrastructure readiness and alignment with sector targets.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Conduct feasibility and cost analyses for top sites. Negotiate control agreements (e.g., purchase options or partnerships) for at least five sites.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish two developers advisory committees to provide guidance on the development process: one committee of external partners and one committee of within-county developers.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, form and convene two developer advisory committees.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Define committee charters and identify initial members of each.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Host inaugural meetings and set quarterly schedule. Solicit feedback on zoning, permitting, and site readiness priorities. Implement at least two recommendations from the committee.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Encourage the county to create an ombudsman to support priority business prospects.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2027, establish an ombudsman function within the county government to assist strategic business prospects.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Draft a position description and define scope of responsibilities. Launch pilot of ombudsman role through existing staff or new position. Evaluate outcomes and propose permanent role with budget request if effective.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Convene and facilitate landowners and other appropriate stakeholders to develop a master plan for the I-288/Rt. 711 interchange.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2027, complete a concept-level master plan for the I-288/Rt. 711 area through at least three facilitated convenings.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Identify and invite key landowners and development stakeholders for roundtable discussions.</p> <p>Hold initial roundtable to establish shared goals.</p> <p>Hire planning consultant to develop draft master plan.</p> <p>Finalize plan and present to county leadership.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Encourage leadership to develop a long-range thoroughfare plan for U.S. Route 60.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q1 2027, support development of a thoroughfare plan and multi-year capital improvement roadmap for U.S. Route 60.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Convene discussions with stakeholders about Route 60 opportunities and challenges.</p> <p>Draft a position paper outlining the need for and benefits of a thoroughfare plan.</p> <p>Advocate for planning funds in the county’s capital budget.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Assess the potential for creating a Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) in collaboration with another locality to support business development.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q3 2028, complete an assessment and initiate RIFA discussions with at least one regional partner.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions:</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Research existing Virginia RIFAs and document benefits.</p> <p>Identify potential partner localities and initiate exploratory discussions.</p> <p>Commission legal and financial review of RIFA model.</p> <p>Draft interlocal agreement.</p>



## Business Development and Entrepreneurship

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Implement a strategy to support and anticipate the needs of the proposed data center project, ensuring a successful project outcome.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2026, coordinate cross-departmental county efforts and stakeholder engagement in support of data center development.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Monitor status of project development through frequent communication with data center developer.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Provide EDA liaison services to facilitate utilities, zoning, and workforce conversations.</p> <p>Track progress and promote transparent community communications regarding project milestones.</p> <p>Recommend strategies to the Board of Supervisors for investment of data center tax revenue to support the county’s economic development program and goals.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop a strategy to partner with Goochland County to build a relationship with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership’s (VEDP) team members focused on target sectors.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q3 2026, co-host at least one joint meeting with VEDP and Goochland County to explore alignment in target sector marketing.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Initiate discussions with Goochland County EDA staff.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Assess the potential for joining the Virtual Virginia REDO.</p> <p>Identify common sector targets and share Powhatan asset profiles.</p> <p>Coordinate a joint meeting with relevant VEDP sector teams.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop a strategy to connect regional ecosystem partners with the entrepreneurs in Powhatan.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, create a regional partnership program that connects Powhatan entrepreneurs with at least five regional service providers.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Inventory existing regional entrepreneurship support programs and providers.</p> <p>Host initial ecosystem convening event.</p> <p>Launch a biannual networking and training series.</p> <p>Formalize participation in a regional entrepreneurship support network.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop business cases for the target sectors of Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) and advanced manufacturing.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, publish and distribute two business case reports positioning Powhatan as a viable location for CEA and advanced manufacturing.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Collect relevant market, labor, infrastructure, and logistics data for both sectors.</p> <p>Draft business case materials and validate with sector experts.</p> <p>Finalize design and share with VEDP, site consultants, and other stakeholders.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop an incentive policy for use by the EDA for target sector prospects.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q1 2027, adopt a formal incentive policy approved by the EDA that includes performance criteria and ROI benchmarks.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Review incentive policies from 3-5 peer counties.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Draft policy framework and review with legal counsel.</p> <p>Adopt final policy and develop implementation guidelines.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop an influencer campaign as a systematic outreach to citizens with expertise and connections in business sectors that are of interest to the county.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, recruit 10–15 local influencers and establish regular outreach communications.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Identify potential influencers from business, education, and civic organizations.</p> <p>Host a kickoff event or one-on-one outreach to gather ideas and build momentum.</p> <p>Develop an online portal or email digest to share EDA updates with this network.</p> <p>Involve influencers in business attraction efforts (e.g., testimonials and referrals).</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Evaluate the current state of healthcare services in the county to determine if healthcare services should be a priority business target.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2027, complete a healthcare service gap analysis and provide recommendations to the EDA.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Inventory existing healthcare providers and services.</p> <p>Conduct interviews with providers, residents, and healthcare networks.</p> <p>Deliver a report on service gaps and economic development opportunities.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Organize an annual reverse job fair in partnership with the community college.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, host Powhatan’s first reverse job fair.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Collaborate with community college staff and identify programs aligned with the sectors on which Powhatan is focused.</p> <p>Recruit local employers and promote the event.</p> <p>Evaluate outcomes and participant feedback.</p> <p>Institutionalize the event with county budget and communications support.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Assess the market potential for a small business incubator, co-workspace, or business accelerator.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, complete a feasibility study evaluating demand and operational models for a local small business facility.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Conduct stakeholder interviews and review similar models in peer communities.</p> <p>Issue RFP for a consultant to perform the feasibility analysis for market demand.</p> <p>Review consultant findings and develop a business model aligned with community needs.</p> <p>Identify potential locations, partners, and funding sources for implementation.</p>



## Tourism and Placemaking

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Continue to maintain and develop local tourism assets such as the James River.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q3 2026, enhance at least three existing tourism sites and improve public awareness through updated signage and media.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Continue to promote Powhatan Tourism assets through social media and other channels.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Prioritize sites for additional promotional investment. Apply for tourism or outdoor recreation grants to enhance visibility.</p>
<b>Strategy:</b>	<b>Continue to develop and expand the Proudly Powhatan Produced initiative.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, increase participation in the initiative by 50% and launch an online directory and marketing campaign.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Inventory current participants and assess engagement.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Create an updated branding and marketing plan. Develop and launch an online map and participant profiles. Track and report participation and outreach success.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Partner with a media firm to create a consistent branding and public relations strategy.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q1 2027, launch a county-wide brand identity and media strategy implemented across tourism and business marketing materials.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Issue an RFP and select a media partner.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Develop a brand style guide and public relations plan. Launch first wave of integrated media messaging. Monitor public engagement and refine as needed.</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Continue to build a relationship with Virginia Tourism Corporation to include analysis of the benefits of establishing a Tourism Zone.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, complete an impact analysis of a Tourism Zone and present findings to the Board of Supervisors.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Months 1-6:</b> Consult with Virginia Tourism Corporation on Tourism Zone criteria.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Evaluate applicable parcels and business types. Finalize and present the Tourism Zone business case to local leaders.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Build stronger near-regional partnerships to focus on the tourism sector.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q1 2027, establish at least two formal tourism collaborations with neighboring counties or organizations.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Identify shared tourism priorities and potential partner localities. Convene an initial regional tourism roundtable. Draft and sign collaboration agreements or MOUs. Launch at least one new joint tourism marketing or event initiative.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop strategies to further placemaking in the Powhatan Village area by building a relationship with the Virginia Department of Housing &amp; Community Development’s Virginia Main Street Program to assess the benefits of the National Main Street program.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2027, implement two placemaking initiatives that enhance public spaces and support business attraction in the Village area, including Exploring Main Street.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Convene a local Powhatan Village Main Street exploration team. Host an introductory workshop on the Virginia Main Street program for stakeholders in Powhatan Village. Complete readiness self-assessment and submit application to become an “Exploring Main Street” community. Identify two priority initiatives (e.g., public art and pedestrian enhancements).</p>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Leverage sports tourism strategies in partnership with surrounding localities.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2027, participate in or co-sponsor at least two regional sports tourism events annually.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Inventory local and regional sports assets and events.</p> <p>Join regional discussions on shared sports tourism opportunities.</p> <p>Allocate marketing resources to co-branded events.</p> <p>Evaluate participation results and expand promotion efforts.</p>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Evaluate the role of the EDA as a tool for financing for affordable housing.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2028, produce a policy memo identifying two to three financing tools the EDA could utilize to support housing affordability.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<p><b>Next Steps:</b> Review legal and financial mechanisms used by other EDAs.</p> <p>Consult housing organizations and developers.</p> <p>Present recommendations and host a roundtable for feedback.</p>





## Organizational Roles and Alignment

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish systematic communication channels between the Board of Supervisors and the EDA to ensure alignment with the vision and status of operational goals.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2026, implement quarterly joint work sessions between the EDA and Board of Supervisors.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<b>Ongoing:</b> Launch pilot quarterly meeting cycle. <b>Next Steps:</b> Review effectiveness and adjust structure.
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish systematic communication with the general public to provide relevant, accurate data about the county’s economy and economic development goals.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, establish and implement a quarterly public communication program to share relevant and accurate data on Powhatan County’s economy and economic development goals.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b> Create a quarterly e-newsletter distributed to at least 500 subscribers.  Share monthly social media updates that achieve an average of 1,000 impressions per post.  Host at least two public forums or webinars per year with a minimum of 50 attendees each.
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop a plan to educate local elected and appointed officials on the development process as implemented in the private sector.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q4 2026, host two educational workshops for elected and appointed officials focused on private sector development processes.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b> Schedule and host initial workshop for the BOS and EDA focused on development timelines and financing.  Expand workshop series to include tours and case studies.  Gather feedback and institutionalize training as an annual program.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish a relationship with Virginia Commonwealth University to help assess outcomes and impact of economic development strategies.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q2 2027, execute a research partnership with VCU to evaluate selected economic development initiatives.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b> Identify relevant departments or research centers at VCU. Draft partnership goals and performance indicators. Execute MOU with VCU to initiate research support. Use results to inform strategic updates and communication efforts.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Engage the Powhatan Leadership Institute members in advocacy to support the economic development strategy.</b>
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By Q1 2027, recruit at least 10 Powhatan Leadership Institute alumni to participate in economic development advocacy activities.
<b>Year 1-4 Actions</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b> Identify and contact alumni through program records. Host an orientation session outlining advocacy roles. Engage alumni in local events and strategic plan promotion. Evaluate program success and formalize into a standing committee or ambassador program.



# Attachments



**Powhatan County**

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan – 2025

# Powhatan EDA Strategic Action Plan 2025

Strategy	Action Step	Partners	Timeframe for Implementation			
			Ongoing	6 Months (2025/26)	Years 1-2 (2026 - 2027)	Years 3-4 (2028-2029)
<b>Real Estate &amp; Infrastructure</b>						
Support the Development of Flex Space	Support existing flex space development through marketing and outreach	Existing developer, VEDP				
	Assess the current market for flex space	Development Community, VEDP				
	Identify properties suitable for flex space	Planning Department, Development Community, VEDP, Consultant				
	Market properties to flex space developers	Development Community, VEDP				
Implement a streamlined development review process for economic development projects.						
	Initiate conversations with administration and other departments in support of current priority projects	Administration, Planning Department				
	Map current permitting workflow and identify bottlenecks.	Planning Department				
	Host roundtable sessions with developers to gather feedback on existing processes	Community Development, Planning Department				
	Develop and pilot a priority project permitting track for economic development	Community Development, Planning Department				
Continue implementing the strategy to identify land parcels for EDA ownership/control and site readiness preparation that are appropriate for Powhatan's target sectors.	Evaluate pilot and institutionalize improvements with performance metrics	Community Development, Planning Department				
	Complete county-wide land inventory and conduct parcel-level assessments	Planning Department, Community Advisory Committee				
	Prioritize sites based on infrastructure readiness and alignment with sector targets.	Planning Department, Community Advisory Committee				
	Conduct feasibility and cost analyses for top sites	Planning Department, Community Advisory Committee				
Establish two Developers Advisory Committees to provide guidance on the development process; one committee of external partners, one committee of within-County developers.	Negotiate control agreements (e.g., purchase options or partnerships) for at least five sites.	Administration, Planning Department				
	Define committee charters and identify initial members of each	Planning Department				
	Host inaugural meetings and set quarterly schedule.	VEDP, developers, Planning Department				
	Solicit feedback on zoning, permitting, and site readiness priorities	VEDP, developers, Planning Department				
Encourage the County to create an ombudsman to support priority business prospects.	Implement at least two recommendations from the committee	Planning Department, Administration				
	Draft a position description and define scope of responsibilities	Administration, Community Development, Planning Department				
	Launch pilot of ombudsman role through existing staff or new position	Administration, Community Development, Planning Department				
Convene and facilitate landowners and other appropriate stakeholders to develop a master plan for the I-288/Rt 711 interchange	Evaluate outcomes and propose permanent role with budget request if effective	Administration, Community Development, Planning Department				
	Identify and invite key landowners and development stakeholders for roundtable discussions.	Landowners, business leaders, the Planning Department, and VDOT				
	Hold initial roundtable to establish shared goals	Landowners, business leaders, the Planning Department, and VDOT				
Encourage leadership to develop a long-range thoroughfare plan for US Rt. 60.	Hire a planning consultant to develop draft master plan	Planning Department, Administration				
	Finalize plan and present to County leadership	Planning Department, Administration				
Assess the potential for creating a Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) in collaboration with another locality to support business development						
	Convene discussions with stakeholders about Route 60 opportunities and challenges.	Landowners, business leaders, the Planning Department, and VDOT				
	Draft a position paper outlining the need and benefits of a thoroughfare plan.	Planning Department, VDOT				
	Advocate for planning funds in the County's capital budget.	Planning Department				
Assess the potential for creating a Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) in collaboration with another locality to support business development	Research existing Virginia RIFAs and document benefits	VEDP, other Virginia localities, external consultant				
	Identify potential partner localities and initiate exploratory discussions	VEDP, other Virginia localities, external consultant				
	Commission legal and financial review of RIFA model	Administration, legal counsel, financial consultant				
	Draft interlocal agreement	Other Virginia localities, Administration, legal counsel				
<b>Business Development and Entrepreneurship</b>						
Implement a strategy to support and anticipate the needs of the proposed data center project, ensuring a successful project outcome						
	Monitor status of project development through frequent communication with data center developer	Developer, Planning Commission				
	Provide EDA liaison services to facilitate utilities, zoning, and workforce conversations	Developer				
	Track progress and promote transparent community communications regarding project milestones	Developer, Planning Commission				

## Powhatan EDA Strategic Action Plan 2025

	Recommend strategies to the Board of Supervisors for investment of data center tax revenue to support the County's economic development program and goals.	Administration					
<b>Develop a strategy to partner with Goochland County to build a relationship with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's team members focused on target sectors.</b>							
	Initiate discussions with Goochland County EDA staff.	Goochland County, Administration					
	Assess the potential for joining the Virtual Virginia REDO	Rural Resilience Advisors, VEDP, independent localities					
	Identify common sector targets and share Powhatan asset profiles	Rural Resilience Advisors, VEDP, independent localities					
	Coordinate a joint meeting with relevant VEDP sector teams	Rural Resilience Advisors, VEDP, independent localities					
<b>Develop a strategy to connect regional ecosystem partners with the entrepreneurs in Powhatan.</b>							
	Inventory existing regional entrepreneurship support programs and providers.	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Startup RVA, Henrico County					
	Host initial ecosystem convening event	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Startup RVA, Henrico County					
	Launch a biannual networking and training series.	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Startup RVA, Henrico County					
	Formalize participation in a regional entrepreneurship support network	Startup RVA, Henrico County					
<b>Develop business cases for the target sectors of Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) and advanced manufacturing</b>							
	Collect relevant market, labor, infrastructure, and logistics data for both sectors	VEDP, VDACS, GO Virginia, business leaders, trade associations					
	Draft business case materials and validate with sector experts.	VEDP, VDACS, GO Virginia, business leaders, trade associations					
	Finalize business case and share with VEDP, site consultants, and other stakeholders	Business leaders, trade associations					
<b>Develop an incentive policy for use by the EDA for target sector prospects</b>							
	Review incentive policies from 3-5 peer counties	External consultant					
	Draft policy framework and review with legal counsel.	Administration, Legal counsel					
	Adopt final policy and develop implementation guidelines	Administration, Legal counsel					
<b>Develop an Influencer Campaign - systematic outreach to citizens with expertise and connections in business sectors that are of interest to the County</b>							
	Identify potential influencers from business, education, and civic organizations	Chamber of Commerce, Civic organizations					
	Host a kickoff event or one-on-one outreach to gather ideas and build momentum	Chamber of Commerce, Civic organizations					
	Develop an online portal or email digest to share EDA updates with this network	IT Department					
	Involve influencers in business attraction efforts (e.g., testimonials, referrals)	Business leaders					
<b>Evaluate the current state of healthcare services in the county to determine if healthcare services should be a priority business target for the County.</b>							
	Inventory existing healthcare providers and services	Virginia Department of Health, local health care providers					
	Conduct interviews with providers, residents, and healthcare networks	Agency on Aging, Department of Social Services, faith-based organizations, local health care providers					
	Deliver a report to the Board of Supervisors on service gaps and economic development opportunities	Agency on Aging, Department of Social Services, faith-based organizations, local health care providers					
<b>Organize an annual Reverse Job Fair in partnership with the community college</b>							
	Collaborate with community college staff and identify programs aligned with the sectors on which Powhatan is focused.	J Sargent Reynolds Community College					
	Recruit local employers and promote the event	Business leaders, trade associations, Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center					
	Evaluate outcomes and participant feedback	Business leaders, trade associations, Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center					
	Institutionalize the event with County budget and communications support	Business leaders, trade associations, Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center					
<b>Develop a small business incubator, co-workspace or business accelerator</b>							
	Conduct stakeholder interviews and review similar models in peer communities	Surrounding localities, chamber of commerce, small business development center					
	Issue an RFP for a consultant to perform the feasibility analysis for market demand						
	Review consultant findings and develop a business model aligned with community needs	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Startup RVA					
	Identify potential locations, partners, and funding sources for implementation.	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Startup RVA					
<b>Tourism and Placemaking</b>							

Powhatan EDA Strategic Action Plan 2025

<b>Continue to maintain and develop local tourism assets such as the James River</b>						
	Continue to promote Powhatan Tourism assets through social media and other channels.	Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Tourism				
	Prioritize sites for additional promotional investment	Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Tourism				
	Apply for tourism or outdoor recreation grants to enhance visibility	Administration				
<b>Continue to develop and expand the Proudly Powhatan Produced initiative.</b>						
	Inventory current participants and assess engagement.	Existing PPP participants, Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Tourism, VDACS				
	Create an updated branding and marketing plan.	Media and branding consultant				
	Develop and launch an online map and participant profiles.	Existing PPP participants, Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Tourism, VDACS				
	Track and report participation and outreach success.	Existing PPP participants				
<b>Partner with a media firm to create a consistent branding and public relations strategy.</b>						
	Issue an RFP and select a media partner	Media and branding consultant				
	Develop a brand style guide and public relations plan.	Media and branding consultant				
	Launch first wave of integrated media messaging.	Media and branding consultant				
	Monitor public engagement and refine as needed.	Media and branding consultant				
<b>Continue to build a relationship with Virginia Tourism Corporation to include analysis of the benefits of establishing a Tourism Zone.</b>						
	Consult with Virginia Tourism Corporation on Tourism Zone criteria.	Virginia Tourism Corporation				
	Evaluate applicable parcels and business types	Virginia Tourism Corporation, existing tourism venue owners				
	Finalize and present the Tourism Zone business case to local leaders.	Virginia Tourism Corporation, existing tourism venue owners				
<b>Build stronger near-regional partnerships to focus on the tourism sector</b>						
	Identify shared tourism priorities and potential partner localities	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Convene an initial regional tourism roundtable.	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Draft and sign collaboration agreements or MOUs	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Launch at least one new joint tourism marketing or event initiative.	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
<b>Develop strategies to further placemaking in the Powhatan Village area by building a relationship with the Virginia Department of Housing &amp; Community Development's Virginia Main Street Program to assess the benefits of the National Main Street program.</b>						
	Convene a local Powhatan Village Main Street exploration team	Powhatan Village business leaders, Chamber of Commerce				
	Host an introductory workshop on the Virginia Main Street program for stakeholders in Powhatan Village	Virginia Main Street, Powhatan Village business leaders, Chamber of Commerce				
	Complete readiness self-assessment and submit application to become an "Exploring Main Street" community.	Virginia Main Street, Powhatan Village business leaders, Chamber of Commerce				
	Identify two priority initiatives (e.g., public art, pedestrian enhancements).	Powhatan Village business leaders, Chamber of Commerce				
<b>Leverage sports tourism strategies in partnership with surrounding localities</b>						
	Inventory local and regional sports assets and events.	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Join regional discussions on shared sports tourism opportunities	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Allocate marketing resources to co-branded events.	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
	Evaluate participation results and expand promotion efforts.	Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Richmond Regional Tourism				
<b>Evaluate the role of the EDA as a tool for structuring financing for affordable housing.</b>						
	Review legal and financial mechanisms used by other EDAs.	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development, Virginia Housing, VEDP				
	Consult housing organizations and developers	Habitat for Humanity, local housing developers, Virginia Housing				
	Present recommendations and host a roundtable for feedback	Habitat for Humanity, local housing developers, Virginia Housing, VEDP, VDHCD				
<b>Organizational Roles and Alignment</b>						

Powhatan EDA Strategic Action Plan 2025

<b>Establish systematic communication channels between the Board of Supervisors and the EDA to ensure alignment with the vision and the status of operational goals.</b>						
	Launch pilot quarterly meeting cycle.	Board of Supervisors, Administration				
	Review effectiveness and adjust structure.	Board of Supervisors, Administration				
	Embed into annual calendar and work program.	Board of Supervisors, Administration				
<b>Establish systematic communication with the general public to provide relevant, accurate data about the economy and economic development goals of the County.</b>						
	Create a quarterly e-newsletter distributed to at least 500 subscribers	Media and branding consultant				
	Monthly social media updates will reach an average of 1,000 impressions per post	Media and branding consultant				
	Host at least two public forums or webinars per year with a minimum of 50 attendees each.	Chamber of Commerce, Powhatan Leadership Institute				
<b>Develop a plan to educate local elected and appointed officials on the development process as implemented in the private sector.</b>						
	Schedule and host initial workshop for the BOS and EDA focused on development timelines and financing	Development Community, Board of Supervisors, civic organizations, chamber of commerce				
	Expand workshop series to include tours and case studies	Development Community, Board of Supervisors, civic organizations, chamber of commerce				
	Gather feedback and institutionalize training as an annual program	Development Community, Board of Supervisors, civic organizations, chamber of commerce				
<b>Establish a relationship with Virginia Commonwealth University to help assess outcomes and the impact of economic development strategies</b>						
	Identify relevant departments or research centers at VCU	Virginia Commonwealth University				
	Draft partnership goals and performance indicators.	Virginia Commonwealth University				
	Execute MOU with VCU to initiate research support.	Virginia Commonwealth University				
	Use results to inform strategic updates and communication efforts.	Virginia Commonwealth University				
<b>Engage the Powhatan Leadership Institute members in advocacy actions to support the economic development strategy.</b>						
	Identify and contact alumni through program records	Powhatan Leadership Institute				
	Host an orientation session outlining advocacy roles.	Powhatan Leadership Institute				
	Engage alumni in local events and strategic plan promotion	Powhatan Leadership Institute				
	Evaluate program success and formalize into a standing committee or ambassador program.	Powhatan Leadership Institute				

## Examples – Economic Development/Industrial Development Authorities

### Goochland County Economic Development Authority (EDA)

**Sara H. Worley** – Economic Development Director (County Employee)

Office: 804-556-5867 | Cell: 804-972-0141

[sworley@goochlandva.us](mailto:sworley@goochlandva.us)

<https://www.goochlandforbusiness.com/>

- **Governance:** EDA membership has remained stable for over 5 years.
- **Initiatives Funded** (initiated through a joint workshop with the Board of Supervisors):
  - Prime site development and site characterizations
  - Small business expansion incentives
  - Tourism-related signage
- **Impact:** Strengthened BOS/EDA relationship with visible, tangible results.
- **Engagement Strategy:** Encouraged EDA to directly communicate with BOS members.

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### Joint IDA of Wythe County

**David Manley** – Executive Director (IDA Employee)

Office: 276.223.3370

[David.manley@wytheida.org](mailto:David.manley@wytheida.org)

<https://wytheida.org/>

- **Structure:** Primary responsibility for strategy, implementation, and accountability.
- **Functions:**
  - Markets County-owned property.
  - Facilitates property transfer for development.
  - Develops & implements economic development strategy
- **Partnership Model:** Collaborative effort between the County and its two towns (Wytheville, Rural Retreat).

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### Newport News Economic and Industrial Development Authorities (EDA/IDA)

**Florence Kingston** – Director of Development (City Employee)

Office: 757-926-8428

[kingstonfg@nnva.gov](mailto:kingstonfg@nnva.gov)

<https://newportnewsva.com/>



- **Legal Structure:** Component units of the City.
- **Governance:** Influenced by City Council; financially supported by the City as needed.
- **Financial Model:**
  - Operates as a business-type activity in a proprietary fund.
  - Operating income from leases, property sales, parking, City of Newport News
- **Functions:**
  - EDA and IDA were created for the purpose of attracting and promoting industry and economic development within the City of Newport News through the acquisition, development and resale of land for business and industrial sites within the City, through issuance of industrial revenue bonds to finance the sale of land and construction of buildings for private enterprises, and through the establishment of loan programs to promote small business development.

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### **Louisa County Industrial Development Authority (IDA)**

**Andy Wade** – Director of Economic Development (County Employee)

Office: 540-967-4545

[awade@louisa.org](mailto:awade@louisa.org)

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/2689/Economic-Development>

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/645/Industrial-Development-Authority-IDA>

- **Function:** The IDA supports the economic and commercial development of Louisa County by acquiring, owning, leasing, and disposing of properties and making loans to promote industry and develop trade
- **Assets:**
  - Industrial Air Park (owned by IDA) with land cost incentives.
  - Infrastructure includes water, sewer, gas, power, telecom.
  - 100+ acres available for construction (5–40 acres per site, build-to-suit).



## Public/Private Partnerships for Land Development

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Public/private partnerships can be a successful strategy for localities in Virginia to proactively control and develop property for business attraction and job creation. These partnerships often combine the resources of local government with the speed and capital of the private sector to reduce development risk, increase readiness, and ensure strategic outcomes. Key tools include land ownership, purchase options, and joint development models that provide flexibility and leverage.

### Ownership and Development Authority

Localities often use their Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) or Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) to acquire and manage land designated for economic development. These public entities can act with greater agility than general government and are positioned to negotiate, hold, and convey land to private developers once a project is secured.

In Henrico County, the Economic Development Authority owns and controls large tracts of land specifically marketed for industrial and corporate investment. The EDA uses its ownership to shape development outcomes — ensuring sites are served by infrastructure, zoned appropriately, and aligned with strategic industries such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, and technology.

### Purchase Options for Flexibility

When outright ownership is not yet necessary, localities can secure strategic parcels through **purchase option agreements**. This gives the locality exclusive rights to purchase land when needed, without tying up capital prematurely. It also ensures the locality has site control when responding to a business prospect, creating a more competitive and timely development process.

Prince George County has successfully used this approach within its economic development efforts, particularly around the growing industrial corridor near Interstate 295 and U.S. Route 460. By working with private landowners to secure purchase options, the County and its IDA can control how and when land is brought to market, aligning availability with project timelines and infrastructure buildout.

### Joint Infrastructure and Site Development

Public/private site development often includes shared investment in infrastructure — such as roads, utilities, and broadband — that prepares sites for business use. These improvements reduce private developer risk while enhancing the locality's long-term tax base. The locality benefits from job creation and revenue growth, while the private partner benefits from a predictable, development-ready site.



**Equity Participation Model:** The equity participation method allows for the owners of property to receive a price per acre over time for a property which is substantially more than its current fair market price. The public partner improves the property to develop a business/industrial park which will greatly benefit the community and County in which it is located and create increased value per acre through development. This is a very safe arrangement for the landowner and the local government or EDO which is developing the business/industrial park.

In general, the landowner conveys title to property to local government or economic development organization (“EDO”) for a nominal amount and is given a deed of trust and first lien of trust. Agreements are developed between parties to set per acre prices before and after developments, the definitions of the equity (for various stages), the type of return on development of the property for the deed of trust/lien holder, and possible other terms to ensure that the property is being developed in appropriate phases over agreed timeframe.

The “bottom line” is that this allows the public partner to acquire and develop an economic development asset while the former “owner” realizes a return based on the increase the value through improvements on the property.

**NOTE:** The model is structured under legal agreements and if there is interest, RRA can arrange for an economic development attorney, who has successfully structured the model, to discuss the details more thoroughly and answers questions.



# Considerations for Public Policy Alignment for Land Use Development

## Purpose

Local policy tools—such as comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and special district overlays—play a foundational role in the successful development of land for commercial and industrial use. These tools provide a regulatory and strategic framework that determines how, where, and at what pace economic development can occur.

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## The Role of Local Policy Tools

### Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan)

The comprehensive plan is the community’s long-range vision for growth and development. It establishes land use goals and identifies areas for future industrial, commercial, residential, agricultural, and mixed-use development. Local governments use the Comp Plan to:

- Direct infrastructure investment (roads, water, sewer)
- Protect key corridors or environmental resources
- Identify strategic growth areas suitable for economic development

A well-defined Comp Plan supports business attraction, retention and formation by providing clarity and predictability for site selectors and developers. Conversely, projects often face delays or require time-consuming amendments when proposed development is inconsistent with the Comp Plan. This creates risk for private investment and can also have ripple effects for future development as business investors will follow and review the locality’s work with other business development projects.

### Zoning Ordinances

Zoning regulates how individual parcels of land may be used. For commercial and industrial development, zoning determines allowable uses (e.g., manufacturing, warehousing, office), density, setbacks, parking, height, design standards and other factors. Modern zoning ordinances may include:

- By-right uses that streamline permitting
- Special use permits for flexibility
- Performance-based standards to minimize land use conflicts

Localities that maintain clear, business-friendly zoning policies are better positioned to respond quickly to prospects and reduce permitting uncertainty.



## Overlay Districts and Special Zones

Overlay districts and special zones (e.g., Enterprise Zones, Technology Zones, Industrial Park Overlays) allow localities to apply specific incentives or design guidelines to defined areas. These tools are especially valuable when targeting certain types of development or encouraging investment in underutilized areas. Benefits may include:

- Expedited permitting processes
- Targeted infrastructure investments
- Additional land use flexibility
- Access to local or state-level financial incentives

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## Why Alignment Matters

When local policies are aligned—Comp Plan, zoning, and overlays working in concert—they:

- Enhance the marketability of sites
- Reduce legal and procedural obstacles
- Improve the locality’s reputation among developers and corporate site selectors
- Support more predictable and sustainable growth

In contrast, misalignment (e.g., zoning that conflicts with the Comp Plan or a lack of by-right industrial use) creates delays, increases development costs, and can cause prospects to look elsewhere.

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## Examples and Results of Alignment in Selected Virginia localities

- **Chesterfield County's** strategic zoning policies have been instrumental in the development and success of Meadowville Technology Park, a premier industrial and technology hub in Virginia. Meadowville Technology Park spans over 1,200 acres and is zoned primarily for industrial and commercial uses. The county's zoning ordinance facilitated the establishment of this park by designating appropriate land uses and ensuring the necessary infrastructure was in place. This proactive zoning approach allowed for the accommodation of large-scale industrial facilities and attracted significant business investments. The zoning and infrastructure readiness of Meadowville Technology Park have attracted several major companies:
  - **Amazon:** Established a 1 million-square-foot fulfillment center in 2011, benefiting from the park's industrial zoning and strategic location.
  - **Niagara Bottling:** Opened a manufacturing facility in 2017, taking advantage of the site's utilities and transportation access.



- **The LEGO Group:** In 2022, announced plans to build a \$1 billion, 1.7 million-square-foot manufacturing facility, citing the site's zoning and readiness as critical factors.
  - **Cartograf:** Invested \$65.3 million to establish its first U.S. folding and micro-corrugated package printing facility, choosing Meadowville for its suitable zoning and infrastructure.
- **Danville and Pittsylvania County.** Cane Creek Centre, a 900-acre industrial park jointly developed by the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County, exemplifies how strategic zoning and comprehensive planning can attract significant business investments. The park is zoned for M-1 Light Industry, allowing for a variety of manufacturing and industrial operations. This zoning classification provides flexibility and expedites the permitting process for businesses. Additionally, Cane Creek Centre is located within a Virginia State Enterprise Zone, offering incentives such as tax credits and grants to qualifying businesses. The Danville Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the development of industrial parks like Cane Creek Centre to stimulate economic growth and job creation. The plan outlines strategies for infrastructure development, workforce training, and business support services to enhance the attractiveness of these industrial sites.
    - **Results:** Several companies have established operations in Cane Creek Centre, benefiting from the park's strategic location, zoning, and incentives:
      - **Tyson Foods:** Invested \$300 million to construct a 325,000-square-foot manufacturing facility, creating over 376 jobs.
      - **AeroFarms:** Developed a state-of-the-art vertical farming facility, representing a \$42 million investment and generating 92 jobs.
      - **RBW EV Cars:** UK's only manufacturer of hand-built, electric, classic sports cars. The company is investing \$8 million in a new facility at Cane Creek Centre, creating 144 new jobs.
      - **Walraven, Inc.:** Relocated its U.S. headquarters and manufacturing operations to the park, investing \$7.15 million and creating 46 jobs.
  - **Halifax County's** zoning ordinances have been instrumental in the development of the Southern Virginia Technology Park (SVTP), a 165-acre hub designed to attract businesses in information technology, energy, biotechnology, telecommunications, and technical manufacturing. The county established a Technology Zone encompassing the SVTP, offering incentives such as Five-year rebates on local utility taxes; waivers of building permit and sewer initiation fees; up to five-year waivers of business license charges
    - The SVTP offers pad-ready sites with essential infrastructure, including broadband wireless, DS3, DSL, and other services; Underground power provided by Dominion Power; sewer and 12" water lines provided by the Town of South Boston
    - **Results:** The zoning and infrastructure have attracted several businesses to the SVTP, including:
      - IperionX, which announced plans to establish a titanium demonstration facility, investing \$82 million and creating 108 new jobs.
      - Faneuil Inc., operates a call center for Dominion Virginia Power.



- **Hanover County** Hanover County's zoning ordinances have been instrumental in facilitating business development along the Interstate 95 (I-95) corridor. By designating specific Economic Development Zones (EDZs) and aligning zoning classifications with the county's comprehensive plan, Hanover has created an environment conducive to commercial and industrial growth. Since 2000, Hanover County has identified EDZs near interstate interchanges and major transportation corridors within the Suburban Service Area (SSA). These zones are intended to support new and expanding businesses by ensuring appropriate land use designations are in place. Hanover County's zoning ordinance includes various districts tailored to accommodate different types of business activities. For instance, the M-2 (Light Industrial) district permits uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution centers, which are ideal for businesses seeking proximity to major transportation routes like I-95. The County prioritizes investment in supporting infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.)
  - **Results:** Privately-held development centers such as Crescent Business Center and Cardinal Commerce Center are home to companies such as Performance Food Group, Agiliti, and CB Flooring.
  
- **Henrico County's** zoning policies were instrumental in the success of two development sites, one private and one public.
  - **Private:** The Innsbrook area is a mixed-use corporate center established in 1979. Through strategic zoning that accommodates office, residential, and retail uses, Innsbrook has grown to encompass over seven million square feet of office space, housing more than 400 companies and 22,000 employees. The county's designation of Innsbrook as an Urban Development Area has further supported its growth by encouraging higher-density, mixed-use development in line with comprehensive planning goals.
  - **Results:**
    - **Markel Corporation:** A Fortune 500 insurance holding company with its headquarters situated in Innsbrook.
    - **Hamilton Beach Brands Holding Company:** A leading manufacturer of home appliances, headquartered in the area.
    - **Commonwealth Commercial Partners:** A full-service commercial real estate firm based in Innsbrook.
    - **Dynex Capital:** A mortgage real estate investment trust (REIT) with its headquarters in the community.
    - **Owens & Minor:** A global healthcare logistics company that relocated its headquarters to Innsbrook in 2024, becoming Henrico County's fifth Fortune 500 business.
  - **Public:** White Oak Technology Park is a master-planned, publicly owned industrial park located at the intersection of I-64 and I-295 in tax-friendly Henrico, Virginia. The 2,278-acre park boasts an extensive and reliable power, utility, and transportation infrastructure demanded by today's most advanced companies. White Oak Technology Park is one of the premier industrial developments on the



East Coast of the US. The county's comprehensive plan designated this area for industrial and technological development, aligning land use policies with economic growth objectives. Zoning ordinances were tailored to accommodate advanced manufacturing and data center operations, providing the necessary flexibility and infrastructure support.

○ **Results:**

- **Meta (formerly Facebook):** Developed a 130-acre data center campus, benefiting from the park's infrastructure and zoning provisions.
- **QTS Data Centers:** Acquired 622 acres in 2024 for the development of additional data center facilities, leveraging the recent rezoning and existing utilities.
- **Bank of America:** Operates a significant data center within the park, taking advantage of the site's strategic location and infrastructure.

## Overview and Use of RIFA

**Legislative Authority** – Virginia Regional Industrial Facilities Act, Chapter 64, Title 15.2, Section 15.2-6400. Et seq., Code of Virginia (RIFA Act). The RIFA Act is the Commonwealth of Virginia’s authorizing mechanism for localities to cooperate in developing, owning, and operating one or more facilities through combined action

The Act encourages Virginia’s local governments to work cooperatively in regional economic development projects. The RIFA Act authorizes revenue sharing, including tax sharing, that without the legislation required prolonged and complex negotiations and questions about due authority. Creation of a state sanctioned authority charged with regional economic development and explicitly granted certain powers eliminates many of the barriers to taking such regional cooperative efforts. Use of a RIFA creates a mechanism for smaller jurisdictions or those with significant economic challenges to join with others to offset those limitations. Some RIFAs in Virginia have focused on industrial site development or one major project, while others have used a broader approach to encourage smaller businesses and innovative approaches and technologies to expand across political boundaries. Ultimately the goal is to create projects and economic improvements across city or country boundary lines.

### Summary of Impact Points

- Once created the RIFA is a separate organization, vested with the powers of a body corporate, and the RIFA’s debts and obligations do not impact the Member Localities.
- A RIFA may hold any property, real or personal, or interests therein, in its own name.
- A RIFA may borrow money, issue bonds and enter into a broad variety of agreements relating to its purposes.
- A RIFA may work with non-members, including with private parties on particular projects.
- A RIFA does not replace any existing authority or other body or organization but rather is intended to create a mechanism to simplify regional cooperation among Localities.

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Examples of results of RIFAs in Virginia:

- **Port 460 Logistics Park – Suffolk**
  - Port 460, a massive industrial park under development in Suffolk, is projected to create 2,600 jobs during construction and support over 9,000 jobs upon completion. The park aims to serve U.S. and international businesses seeking direct access to the expanded Port of Virginia.
- **Virginia Bio+Tech Park – Richmond**
  - Established in 1995, the Virginia Bio+Tech Park in Richmond houses nearly 70 public and private life sciences companies and research institutes. The park has generated approximately \$108 million in tax revenue for the Commonwealth and has an economic impact of \$3.8 billion. It also boasts a successful business incubation program, graduating over 40 client companies



- **Roanoke River Regional Business Park**

- A collaborative effort between Brunswick and Mecklenburg counties, this 265-acre park is situated along U.S. Route 58. It features public utilities and fiber infrastructure, catering to businesses requiring robust connectivity. Companies located in the park include:

- **American Industrial Heat Transfer, Inc. (AIHT)** AIHT, a manufacturer specializing in heat exchangers.
    - **Worthington Biochemical Corporation**, a New Jersey-based biochemical research firm, expanded into Virginia by acquiring a 50,000-square-foot shell building within the park. The company invested approximately \$6.35 million in the project and committed to creating 15 full-time jobs, enhancing the region's biotechnology sector.
    - **Microsoft** has acquired a significant portion of land within the Roanoke River Regional Business Park, as part of its broader investment in Virginia's industrial parks.



## Site Up-Tiering Support

Virginia offers a range of funding programs to support the up-tiering and redevelopment of industrial sites, enhancing their readiness for business investment and economic development. Below is a summary of key programs administered by various state agencies:

- **Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP)**
  - **Administered by:** Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)
  - **Purpose:** To identify, assess, and improve the readiness of industrial sites for economic development.
  - **Components:**
    - **Site Characterization Grants:** Assist with evaluating a site's current development status and assigning a readiness tier level.
    - **Site Development Grants:** Provide funding to advance sites to higher readiness tiers by supporting infrastructure improvements and other development activities.
  - **Eligibility:** Sites of at least 100 acres statewide, or 50 acres in GO VA Regions 1 or 2.
  - **Matching Requirements:** Typically requires a 1:1 state-to-local match.

- 
- **Virginia Brownfields Restoration and Economic Redevelopment Assistance Fund (VBAF)**
    - **Administered by:** VEDP in partnership with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
    - **Purpose:** To promote the restoration and redevelopment of brownfield sites by addressing environmental issues that hinder their reuse.
    - **Funding Types:**
      - **Site Assessment Grants:** Support environmental assessments to determine contamination levels.
      - **Site Remediation Grants:** Fund cleanup activities to prepare sites for redevelopment.
    - **Eligibility:** Local governments and related authorities.

- 
- **Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF)**
    - **Administered by:** Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
      - **Purpose:** To leverage local and private resources for the redevelopment of vacant and deteriorated industrial and commercial properties.
    - **Funding Types:**
      - **Planning Grants:** Assist with pre-development activities.
      - **Implementation Grants:** Support construction and rehabilitation efforts.
      - **Eligibility:** Local governments and designated redevelopment authorities.



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- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Industrial Site Development**

- **Administered by:** DHCD
- **Purpose:** To provide funding for the development of industrial sites, including infrastructure improvements necessary for business attraction.
- **Eligibility:** Local governments in non-entitlement areas.

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- **Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF) – Brownfield Remediation**

- **Administered by:** DEQ
- **Purpose:** To offer low-interest loans for the cleanup and reuse of contaminated properties, aiming to reduce groundwater contamination and protect public health.
- **Eligibility:** Local governments, public authorities, partnerships, or corporations undertaking projects that serve a public purpose. )

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- **GO Virginia Site Development Grants**

- **Administered by:** DHCD
- **Purpose:** To fund regional site planning and development activities that enhance the marketability of sites for economic development.
- **Focus:** Advancing sites to higher readiness tiers, particularly Tiers 4 or 5 under the VBRSP criteria.
- **Eligibility:** Regional councils and their partners.

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- **Virginia Enterprise Zone – Real Property Investment Grant (RPIG)**

- **Administered by:** DHCD
- **Purpose:** To incentivize investment in real property within designated Enterprise Zones through grants for rehabilitation, expansion, or new construction projects.
- **Eligibility:** Investors undertaking qualifying projects within Enterprise Zones.



# Local and Regional Competitiveness Initiative: Best Practices Report for Economic Development



January 2021

Dear economic development stakeholders,

We are pleased to share this Local and Regional Competitiveness Report with you and Virginia stakeholders involved in economic development across the Commonwealth. This report represents the culmination of months of hard work that touched hundreds of Virginian stakeholders and included input from dozens of national and regional experts. I am grateful to each person who participated in this effort. The economic development community, and Virginia more broadly, will benefit from all of this input.

To the economic development community specifically, what we do and how we do it matters. It matters to our local elected officials, our board members, our schools, and the entire community because the actions we take support and spur economic growth. In turn, this growth leads to better, higher paying jobs for our citizens, an increased tax base for our communities, and, ultimately, a better quality of life for all.

This report consists of two distinct elements. The first element results from self-assessments of local and/or regional economic development organizations. It was designed to benchmark economic development efforts against standard, but not "one-size-fits-all," practices in economic development. The second component, a best practices resource, reviews the key components of economic development and offers concrete actions to increase competitiveness. We also highlight communities leading the way in specific areas through mini case studies.

VEDP is especially grateful to the broad and experienced group of more than 50 economic developers, including veterans who have helped lead the International Economic Development Council and the Virginia Economic Developers Association, who reviewed and provided feedback on the report. Our thanks goes out to those folks, listed on the next page, who have made this contribution to economic development in Virginia possible.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Moret". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Moret

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# Acknowledgments

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Lindsey Bertozzi	Toi Hunter	Danni Neal
Sean Brazier	Lindsay Hurt	Courtney Owens
Rima Chavda	Brian Kroll	Cole Pearce
Susan Deusebio	John Loftus	Courtland Robinson
David Devan	Aileen Martz	Jason Smith
Jason El Koubi	Rob McClintock	Jordan Snelling
Emily Eller	Chris McNamara	Kelly Spraker
Emily Fay	Lori Melançon	Tim Stuller
Grace Festa	Debbie Melvin	Adam Watkins
		Landon Webber

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# Executive Summary

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With the ongoing goal to support our local and regional partners and increase capacity around the state to do economic development, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) is proud to introduce the first-ever report for the Local and Regional Competitiveness Initiative (LRCI). LRCI assesses the current state of economic competitiveness in Virginia by examining the organizational and programmatic capacity of economic development organizations (EDOs)\* across the Commonwealth against nationally established best practices in the field. LRCI's findings are powered by a self-assessment of local and regional EDOs across Virginia. The findings, detailed in this report, are intended to equip and empower economic developers to talk about the field — who does it, why it matters, and what is needed for success — with stakeholders.

We have three objectives for this document:

1. Strengthen our local partners' decision-making and advocacy for economic development
2. Provide actionable steps to improve performance
3. Encourage collaboration across local partners by showcasing strong EDOs

In addition to this report, VEDP will use the data collected to identify ways to support EDOs looking to improve on specific aspects of competitiveness and advance initiatives to support economic development statewide.

The report was developed by VEDP's Economic Competitiveness team, with Adam Watkins ([awatkins@vedp.org](mailto:awatkins@vedp.org)) and Emily Fay ([efay@vedp.org](mailto:efay@vedp.org)) leading the effort. Please contact them with any questions regarding this report.

## Report Sections:

### **Quick Guide: How to Interpret Your Results** ([page 6](#))

Explains the stages used in the document to demonstrate your EDO's strengths and potential weaknesses.

### **Self-Assessment Summary Report** ([page 9](#))

Highlights key information from your organization's self-assessment. Please note: this section is only included for those EDOs that completed a self-assessment.

\*We will use the generic term "EDOs" to refer to both regional and local economic development organizations throughout the document. Reference to solely regional economic development organizations will be referred to as "REDOs" and solely local EDOs as "LEDOs."

## Contents of VEDP’s LRCI Self-Assessment

### Goal and Resource Alignment

This section gathers information on the goals that localities are pursuing in economic development. The data from this section will allow EDOs to compare their goals to peers, as well as understand how their resource allocation might differ from others with similar goals or similar economic challenges. The following topics were asked on the self-assessment, and are shown in the *Self-Assessment Summary* ([page 9](#)).

- Goal prioritization
- Budget allocation based on goals prioritized

### Organizational Indicators

These indicators capture the basic functions that all EDOs should be doing. High-performing EDOs are strong in most of these indicators. As a result, those EDOs have the greatest capacity for implementing effective economic development strategies. The aim of this section is to give EDOs a benchmark to strive for as they move forward as an organization to develop and implement their plans to support their communities.

### Strategy Indicators

Depending on the goals and resource capacity, different strategies can be utilized to make progress toward the desired type of economic development each community would like to see. These strategies roughly track the list of goals in the previous section; however, some strategies can impact several goals (workforce/ talent development, for example, can indirectly support the goals of Attracting Businesses, Business Retention and Expansion, and directly target workforce development). The aim of this section is to help EDOs understand what strategies others are doing to achieve their goals, and how they can implement/improve their own strategies.

<b>Organization Best Practices</b>	<b>Strategy Best Practices (organized by goal)</b>
<p><b>Resources</b> Staffing Budget Training</p> <p><b>Planning</b> Economic Development Plan Target Industry Analysis</p> <p><b>Marketing</b> Marketing Material Prospect Hosting</p> <p><b>Partnerships and Engagement</b> Partnerships REDO Engagement Stakeholder Engagement</p>	<p><b>Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction</b> <u>Business Retention and Expansion</u> Business Retention and Expansion Export Assistance <u>Business Attraction</u> Business Attraction <u>Both BRE &amp; BA</u> Available Sites Available Buildings Infrastructure Capacity</p> <p><b>Expand Entrepreneurship</b> Entrepreneurship</p> <p><b>Quality of Life, Tourism, Sustainability, and Social Supports</b> Sustainability, Conservation, and Resilience Placemaking Low-income Community Supports</p> <p><b>Workforce and Talent</b> Workforce/Talent Development Talent Attraction</p>

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## Peer Groups

To provide localities a relevant picture of how they are doing on different indicators, VEDP has created peer groups based on several key economic criteria. Peer groups serve as a way for localities to understand what actions similar communities are taking. VEDP developed the groups in two steps:

- **Step 1:** From discussions with EDOs across the Commonwealth, VEDP considered several metrics to define peer groups: USDA’s Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (RUCCs), Census definitions, and total population.
- **Step 2:** After defining peers by these metrics, a group of VEDP staff and EDO leaders finalized the groupings based on their extensive knowledge of the state’s diverse communities.

Through this process, VEDP created the eight peer groups outlined below:

Peer Group Name	Peer Group Definition	Number of Localities (survey responses)	Average Population (000s)
Urban 1	Urbanized areas in a metro with populations >100k	15 (12)	318
Urban 2	Urbanized areas (including towns) in a metro with populations 25-100k	13 (9)	46
Urban 3	Urbanized areas (including towns) in a metro with populations <25k	14 (8)	18
Major Metros	Non-urbanized parts of a large metro area (RUCC: 1)	19 (18)	52
Rural Metros	Non-urbanized parts of medium and small metro areas (RUCCs: 2 & 3)	14 (14)	65
Rural 1	Nonmetro area that is adjacent to a metro area (RUCCs: 4, 6, 8s adjacent to a large metro)	28 (24)	22
Rural 2	Nonmetro area that is not adjacent to a major metro area (RUCCs: 5, 7, 9, 8s not adjacent to a large metro)	28 (16)	17
Rural Cities/Towns	Urbanized areas (including towns) located outside of a metro area	14 (9)	6

The purpose of a peer group is to compare communities with similar economic potential with each other. VEDP recognizes that an assigned peer group may not perfectly reflect an EDO’s perception of their locality. Additionally, they are not intended to serve as the ultimate classification of Virginia localities. These breakdowns were created for the LRCI to give economic developers insight into EDOs with similar characteristics.

Finally, peer groups are not the sole predictor of economic success. That point is important because differences *within* peer groups can potentially give insight on what has allowed peers of similar economic potential to see stronger growth than others. By looking at these differences, VEDP and other partners can better learn how to support localities that are not seeing the same level of growth.

The peer groups outlined above are not being used by VEDP for any purpose outside the scope described in this initiative.

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**The localities included in each peer group are listed below:**

Urban 1	Urban 2	Urban 3	Major Metros
Alexandria City	Blacksburg	Bristol City	Caroline County
Arlington County	Charlottesville City	Colonial Heights City	Charles City County
Chesapeake City	Danville City	Culpeper (Town)	Culpeper County
Chesterfield County	Fairfax City	Falls Church City	Dinwiddie County
Fairfax County	Fredericksburg City	Front Royal	Fauquier County
Hampton City	Harrisonburg City	Hopewell City	Gloucester County
Henrico County	Herndon	Manassas Park City	Goochland County
Loudoun County	Leesburg	Martinsville City	Hanover County
Newport News City	Lynchburg City	Poquoson City	Isle of Wight County
Norfolk City	Manassas City	Radford City	James City County
Portsmouth City	Petersburg City	Salem City	King William County
Prince William County	Roanoke City	Staunton City	New Kent County
Richmond City	Winchester City	Waynesboro City	Powhatan County
Suffolk City		Williamsburg City	Prince George County
Virginia Beach City			Southampton County
			Spotsylvania County
			Stafford County
			Warren County
			York County

Note: Towns are listed without a “City” or “County” designation

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Rural 1	Rural 2	Rural Cities/Towns	Rural Metros
Amelia County	Accomack County	Abingdon	Albemarle County
Alleghany County	Bath County	Ashland	Amherst County
Appomattox County	Bland County	Buena Vista City	Augusta County
Buckingham County	Brunswick County	Covington City	Bedford County
Clarke County	Buchanan County	Emporia City	Botetourt County
Cumberland County	Carroll County	Franklin City	Campbell County
Essex County	Charlotte County	Galax City	Franklin County
Fluvanna County	Craig County	Lexington City	Frederick County
Greensville County	Floyd County	Marion	Greene County
Halifax County	Giles County	Middleburg	Montgomery County
Henry County	Grayson County	Norton City	Roanoke County
King & Queen Co	Highland County	Strasburg	Rockingham County
King George County	Lancaster County	Vinton	Shenandoah County
Louisa County	Lee County	Wytheville	Washington County
Madison County	Lunenburg County		
Northumberland County	Mathews County		
Nelson County	Middlesex County		
Nottoway County	Northampton County		
Orange County	Northumberland Co		
Page County	Patrick County		
Pittsylvania County	Rappahannock County		
Prince Edward County	Richmond County		
Pulaski County	Russell County		
Rockbridge County	Scott County		
Surry County	Smyth County		
Sussex County	Tazewell County		
Westmoreland County	Wise County		
Wythe County			

Note: Towns are listed without a "City" or "County" designation

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# Quick Guide: How to Interpret Your Results

## Look at the results through the lens of your EDO

VEDP created the LRCI to help EDOs assess their capacity and current competitive position relative to peers and best practices, as well as to identify ways to improve. The purpose of this report is to act as a resource for EDOs interested in designing and implementing the various economic development strategies included in the self-assessment. The *Best Practices* section is intended to serve as a reference document, illustrate the necessary inputs for programmatic success, and act as a springboard for specific indicator development. For localities looking to create or enhance their economic development function, best practices can also be utilized to inform quick resource deployment in the absence of dedicated economic development staff. VEDP is committed to the development of our economic development partners and sees LRCI as a building block to the Commonwealth’s future success, including achieving our goal of positioning every region of Virginia for growth.

To help you understand how your EDO is doing at various aspects of economic development, we assign your EDO a stage (Early, Middle, or Advanced) based on the answers you gave in the self-assessment. With this report, it is important to look at the stages assigned to each economic development indicator through the lens of your EDO. As an economic developer for your community or region, you know what is most important for your EDO to be focusing on. Additionally, you know your EDO’s limitations, challenges, and opportunities. This report does not, and cannot, provide a singular score or ranking to judge economic development success. The stages you will see in the report should therefore be read as relative and within the context of your goals and priorities. This report will give you the most insight when you examine individual indicators and how your locality compares on those indicators.

## Key Terms

**Indicators:** These represent *general* areas of organization and strategy, such as staffing, economic development plan, available sites, placemaking, and so forth. In the self-assessment (which can be found in full in [VEDP’s Partner Resources](#) page under the Local and Regional Competitiveness section), these are represented by one or more questions.

**Components:** These represent *specific* aspects or sub-strategies that contribute to the success of an overall indicator. In the self-assessment, the a, b, c... options under each question represent components.

*Example of key term usage:*

<b>Indicator</b>	Stakeholder Engagement
<b>Question from Self-Assessment</b>	Please check all of the ways your EDO educates the community or stakeholders.
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Gives prepared remarks at community meetings</li> <li>b. Conducts or attends regular meetings with elected and community leaders</li> <li>c. Raises awareness of economic development through informational sessions or training for business leaders</li> <li>d. Raises awareness of economic development through informational sessions or training for community leaders</li> <li>e. Uses local media (newspapers, TV, radio) to communicate economic development efforts to the community</li> <li>f. Conducts surveys of community members</li> <li>g. Conducts surveys of businesses/business leaders</li> </ul>

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## Scoring Categories

The following groupings were used to show how each EDO is employing best practice efforts in their organization and the strategies they pursue. Scores in this document are defined by the following stage categories:

- 0 – Not done:** EDO is not performing this activity or function.
- 1 – Early-stage development:** EDO is following only a few standard best practices.
- 2 – Middle-stage development:** EDO is following several standard best practices.
- 3 – Advanced-stage development:** EDO is following all or most standard best practices.

## What you should take away from the scores

### Stages are not a guarantee of economic success (or failure).

- EDOs given an “Early-stage” score, for example, signals opportunity for improvement, rather than a certainty that your EDO is doing a poor job at economic development or does not have the capacity to succeed.
- An “Advanced-stage” score does not indicate there is no room for improvement. Ultimately, it is the quality of each component, as well as execution, which will determine your success.
- Peer and regional comparisons are provided to give your organization an understanding of how you are doing within the context of your community and those like it.

### However, EDOs that are not in the “Advanced-stage” for a specific indicator should interpret that as an area needing increased focus, especially if it is a high priority for your EDO.

- For example, if you have prioritized Business Retention and Expansion as a strategy, go to that section of the *Best Practice Indicators*. There, you can use the *Indicator Stage Summary* to see how you compare among your peers and other EDOs in your region. To develop your Business Retention and Expansion function, refer to the *Steps to Consider* in that section for tangible action to take.

### Finally, the assigned stages cannot assess the quality of your indicators.

- Even if you do well according to the report’s metrics on indicators that you prioritize, there is always potential for improvement. As stated before, the quality of each component will determine your success. For example, if your organization indicated that you perform research on a prospect, but that research is only surface level, your outcomes from securing prospects may not be strong.

## Additional Recommendations

The most important way you should use this report is as a tool to communicate and collaborate. For example:

- **Meet with your locality’s elected officials.** Do they understand what economic development is, who does it, and their role and responsibility?
- **Establish regular discussions with partner economic development organizations.** Does your Workforce Board know your locality’s target industries? Does the community college offer programs prevalent in your target industry?
- **Reach out to other EDOs across the Commonwealth** who may have undertaken the initiative you are interested in creating. What were their lessons learned? What would they do differently?
- **Connect with VEDA or VEDP team members who have the ability to help.** Is your community reestablishing a marketing program? Do you know which collateral garners the most attention from site selectors?

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# Self-Assessment Summary Report

# Self-Assessment Summary Report

## How Powhatan County Compares in Economic Competitiveness

This report contains the data from the self-assessment your EDO completed in January-February 2020. The following information will equip you with data and narratives to support your efforts in articulating the need for and potential impact of economic development — who does it, why it matters, and what it takes to succeed — with stakeholders in your community and beyond.

Keep in mind the following as you read through this summary and the rest of the report:

- All peer and regional data are unweighted averages
- Scores are meant to give a relative idea of how your EDO compares to others on a standardized measure of best practices

**Info:** Please contact Adam Watkins at [awatkins@vedp.org](mailto:awatkins@vedp.org) or Emily Fay at [efay@vedp.org](mailto:efay@vedp.org) with any questions regarding this report.

### Peer Group Information

Peer Group: Major Metros

Total peer localities: 19

### Summary Data

The following table shows a snapshot of your EDO, your peers, and your GOVA Region EDOs' staffing and budget data as indicated in the self-assessment. Below those figures are data on the economic performance of your locality in the last five years relative to your peers and other members of your GOVA Region.

	Powhatan County	Peer Group (average)	GOVA Region (average)
Staff (FTE) (from survey)	2	3.1	3.3
Total budget (\$) (from survey)	\$139,000	\$491,916	\$569,868
Budget, per capita (\$) (from survey)	\$4.8	\$10.6	\$19.2
Employment growth annual average, 2014-2019 (%)	-1.5%	1.7%	1.0%
Establishment growth annual avg., 2014-2019 (%)	2.2%	3.2%	3.6%
Median earned income growth annual avg., 2014-2019 (%)	1.8%	1.4%	1.3%

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## Goal Alignment

In this section, your top stated goals are compared with how your peer group and region’s localities rated those same goals, along with information about what percentage of the budget is allocated to those goals. The purpose is to give you a sense of what others are focusing on, rather than to indicate that one goal is more important than others.

Please note: Peer and GOVA Region goals were ranked by the percent of LEDOs indicating that the goal is “High Priority.” There will be an occasional tie among the rankings.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Powhatan County</b>		<b>Peer Group (avg.)</b>		<b>GOVA Region (avg.)</b>	
	Rank (#)	Budget (%)	Rank (#)	Budget (%)	Rank (#)	Budget (%)
Retain and expand current businesses/industries	1	25%	1	24%	1	24%
Reskill the current workforce	2	15%	6	5%	4	13%
Increase/maintain quality of life	3	0%	5	6%	3	9%
Promote conservation, environmental sustainability, or community resilience	4	0%	8	2%	7	3%

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## Full Self-Assessment Data

### Stage Score Definitions

**0 Not Done:** EDO is not performing the activity or function

**1 Early-stage:** EDO is following only a few standard best practices

**2 Middle-stage:** EDO is following several standard best practices

**3 Advanced-stage:** EDO is following all or most standard best practices

### Organizational Indicators

Indicator	Powhatan County (stage)	Peer Group (avg. stage)
Staffing	Middle-stage	Advanced-stage
Budget	Early-stage	Advanced-stage
Training	Middle-stage	Advanced-stage
Economic Development Plan	Early-stage	Early-stage
Target Industry Analysis	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Marketing Material	Early-stage	Early-stage
Prospect Hosting	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Partnerships	Middle-stage	Advanced-stage
REDO Engagement	Not Done	Middle-stage
Stakeholder Engagement	Early-stage	Advanced-stage

### Strategy Indicators

Indicator	Powhatan County (stage)	Peer Group (avg. stage)
Business Retention and Expansion	Middle-stage	Middle-stage
Export Assistance	Advanced-stage	Advanced-stage
Business Attraction	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Available Sites	Middle-stage	Advanced-stage
Available Buildings	Advanced-stage	Advanced-stage
Infrastructure Capacity	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Entrepreneurship	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Sustainability/Conservation/Resilience	Not Done	Early-stage
Placemaking	Early-stage	Early-stage
Low-income Community Supports	Not Done	Advanced-stage
Workforce/Talent Development	Early-stage	Middle-stage
Talent Attraction	Not Done	Middle-stage

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## Takeaways

### STRENGTHS:

**Strategies:** Of the strategies you are pursuing, you are as strong or stronger than your peers in Available Buildings, Export Assistance, and BRE.

### OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Budget:** Your budget is below an operations standard of at least \$200,000, while most your peers have budgets above that standard.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** To reach the next stage, you should give prepared remarks at community meetings, hold econ. dev. info sessions for community leaders, and communicate economic development efforts to the community.

**Target Industry Analysis:** To reach the next stage, you should include relevant quantitative data, include qualitative research of local industries, and make your target industry list more specific.

**Strategies:** Of the strategies you are pursuing, you are underperforming your peers in Business Attraction, Infrastructure, and Workforce.

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