

**Developing an Economic Development Strategy:  
A Comprehensive, Best Practices Approach**

- 1) Programs & Activities Assessment:** Review of current programs and services for existing businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups will be completed. An evaluation of the Economic Development Authority (EDA) structure, policies, activities, and interaction/ involvement with the County's current Economic Development programs (e.g., business development, redevelopment, tourism, marketing, operations) will also be undertaken.

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Review of EDA By-Laws and associated ordinances from peer communities with the County Attorney's Office to determine necessary modifications.
- Review of Incentives Policy to identify potential revisions.
- Review of Business First (Business Retention and Expansion Program) for potential enhancements and changes.

**Estimated Completion Date:** December 2015

- 2) SWOT Analysis/Community Input:** Conduct an assessment of the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, including input from key stakeholders, internal partners (e.g., Community Development), County Schools and constituent groups. This assessment and input will include consideration of existing processes and policies. Stakeholders will include Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission members, as well as area business leaders, special interest and environmental groups. In addition, focus groups will be held with members of the local/regional development community (e.g., developers, engineering firms, contractors, and real estate brokers). Stakeholder and focus group input will be reviewed and vetted with Community Development and other relevant County departments to determine potential solutions and/or process and policy adjustments that may be proposed as an outcome of the SWOT. In addition, a community meeting will take place to determine the level of support and "appetite" for economic development activity by County residents. Information and feedback gained through the entire SWOT process will be consolidated and shared with County leaders, the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and Economic Development Authority during the "Presentation of Findings" phase (#5 below) to determine priority areas of focus for enhancing the County's long-term economic development opportunities. These priorities will ultimately be reflected in the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Real Estate/Developer Focus Groups completed week of Oct 19, 2015.
- Initial meetings completed with several stakeholders including Chamber of Commerce, Free Enterprise Forum, Blue Ridge Homebuilders Association, ACPS leaders, and UVA Foundation.
- Participation in Community Development's weekly Pre-Application Meetings to better understand County processes.
- Meetings scheduled with Community Development and County Executive staff to review/discuss feedback from Real Estate/Developer Focus Groups.

**Estimated Completion Date:** April 2016

- 3) Community Assessment/Site Inventory:** An inventory of Economic Development Assets will be developed and include assessment of: available properties, utility and road infrastructure (location, available capacities – *see below section on Infrastructure Inventory & Site Assessments for additional details*), workforce strengths (education levels, skill sets, demographics), training

and education programs (e.g., CATEC, PVCC), amenities (e.g., recreation), cost of living (e.g., housing), community services (e.g., public safety, education), and composition of existing businesses. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with key staff members from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), and University leaders to assess long-range opportunities, perceptions, business climate, and marketability of the community for economic development projects, particularly those in the County's targeted industry sectors.

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Research and evaluation of County employment sectors, wage levels, costs of living, and tax rates have been completed; additional factors to be reviewed.
- Meetings with CATEC Director and tour of CATEC facility have been completed; quarterly meetings with CATEC Director have been scheduled.
- Quarterly participation in PVCC Workforce Advisory Board meetings.

**Estimated Completion Date:** January 2016

**a) Infrastructure Assessments & Site Inventory:** In conjunction with development of the inventory of Economic Development Assets (a component of the above Community Assessment task), a detailed review of all vacant Development Area properties that may be well-suited for commercial and industrial use, including properties zoned and not zoned for these uses, will be completed. Working closely with Community Development staff to identify appropriate starting points and current Comp Plan designations, initial evaluation will be based on GIS data, preliminary field review, and discussions with principal landowners; however, this work will require technical engineering evaluation to determine the true viability of properties for development, given environmental constraints, site preparation costs, and design requirements. Review of VDOT's Six-Year Improvement Plans, County Transportation Plans, utility service-provider information, as well as in-depth field assessment of available properties will also be needed to identify those that meet the basic requirements for commercial and industrial uses. Professional engineering services can be further engaged at a later date to develop conceptual plans for key properties to provide prospect-ready maps and marketing materials for the Economic Development Office -- which are very much needed.

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Research and evaluation of properties currently designated and zoned for industrial development was completed in concert with the recent Comprehensive Plan Amendment considered by the Board.
- GIS assistance has been requested to provide parcel data and location maps for all vacant Development Area properties currently designated in the Comprehensive Plan (but not zoned). While the review will focus on land slated for commercial and industrial use, non-business designations offering business development potential will also be identified.
- Assistance from Real Estate Assessments has been engaged to identify potential reuse/redevelopment of properties, including mapping of these properties by GIS.
- Meetings with the University of Virginia Foundation have occurred and partnering opportunities in the UVA Research Park (and other locations) are being explored.

**Estimated Completion Date:** March 2016 (results/findings to be presented to Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors upon completion)

**b) Coordination with Service Providers:** Discussions will be held with utility providers to determine current location and available capacities for developable sites, as well as planned

improvements (and associated timelines) for electric, water, wastewater, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure within the County.

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Limited, site-specific discussions were completed during the recent CPA so additional work needs to be completed.

**Estimated Completion Date:** February 2016

- 4) **Comparative Analysis:** A comprehensive evaluation of the County's competitive position, in relation to similar communities within the region and others in Virginia with whom the County regularly competes for economic development projects, will be completed. Comparison will include analysis of operating costs (including taxes, local fees, utility rates, land prices/lease rates); sites and buildings inventory; business tax revenues; permitting and regulatory/development processes, and existing incentive programs (e.g., Economic Opportunity Fund).

**Status:** Underway

**Activities & Tasks To-Date:**

- Research and analysis of future land use and business location options in a limited number of comparative communities was completed during the recent Comprehensive Plan Amendment.
- Research of business tax structures in several comparative localities has been completed; however, some additional localities need to be included.

**Estimated Completion Date:** March 2016 (assumes funding for contract services is provided)

- 5) **Presentation of Findings:** A summary report of the key findings identified through the SWOT Analysis/Community Input phase, and information previously reviewed/vetted with other relevant County departments (e.g., County Executive, Community Development, County Attorney, Finance, OMB) will, ideally, be presented to the Economic Development Authority, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors through a joint meeting. Based on feedback from this meeting, the Board of Supervisors will establish priorities that will, in turn, be used as the foundation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

**Status:** Pending completion of other tasks outlined above

**Estimated Completion Date:** July 2016

- 6) **Preparation of Economic Development Strategy/Plan:** Using the priorities set by the Board of Supervisors, a staff team with representatives from the County Executive's Office, Community Development Department and Economic Development Office will develop preliminary goals, objectives, strategies and associated metrics. Subsequently, the draft Economic Development Strategic Plan, including an implementation plan and future resource requirements, will be completed and presented to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration and adoption.

**Status:** Pending completion of other tasks outlined above

**Estimated Completion Date:** November 2016