

Albemarle County Economic Development Strategy

A Blueprint to Lead Virginia's Innovation Economy

June 2025

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Discovery Insights

Starting from a Place of Strength

As Albemarle County charts its economic future, we are building on a foundation of institutional strength, regional partnerships, and a deep sense of place.

1.

A shared commitment from the Board of Supervisors, EDA, county staff and community partners to lead with innovation.

2.

Anchored by the University of Virginia and PVCC, driving research, talent, and entrepreneurship.

3.

Strategic location with access to U.S. 29, I-64, and major markets across the Mid-Atlantic.

4.

Rivanna Futures and an innovation corridor with high-wage, high-impact potential.

5.

A landscape and quality of place that attracts talent, from wineries and trails to creative culture.

6.

A growing and highly educated population, with new residents choosing Albemarle every day.

Our Process

As Albemarle County charts its economic future, it is building on institutional strength, regional partnerships, and a deep sense of place.



Competitive Benchmarking Analysis

Evaluation of Albemarle County and 10 peer communities across 6 pillars (50+ indicators).



Target Cluster Analysis

Assessment of Albemarle's industry and workforce strengths and opportunities.



Stakeholder Engagement & Public Survey

Roundtable discussions and one-on-one interviews with industry, workforce, and county leadership, engaging more than 100 people. Survey with 130 respondents.



Conversations with Board of Supervisors and EDA Board

Discussions with members of the Board of Supervisors and EDA Directors on what they'd like to see and their non-starters.



Working Sessions with Stakeholder Committee

Feedback and guidance from the Stakeholder Committee on all elements of the project.



Staff Engagement

Discussion of research insights, strategic direction, and alignment on roles and responsibilities.

Albemarle County at a Glance

- **117,000 residents** and growing — with **5% population growth** over the past 5 years
- **Job growth of 11%** over 5 years — nearly **3x faster than Virginia overall**
- **Median household income of \$103,000**, up 12% since 2018
- Home to the **University of Virginia** and **Rivanna Station** — driving biotechnology and life sciences, intelligence and national security, and innovation
- **61% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher** — among the highest in Virginia
- Fast-growing creative and STEM sectors — including **33% growth in STEM jobs**
- Facing talent pipeline challenges — with a **low share of prime working-age residents and labor force participation at 62%**

The Opportunity

Albemarle County is where the next chapter of Virginia's innovation economy begins.

Albemarle's economy is rooted in strength: a growing biotechnology and life sciences cluster, a nationally significant intelligence and national security sector, a dynamic food processing and agribusiness ecosystem, and a vibrant culture of entrepreneurship. With Rivanna Futures, the County has made a bold public investment—staking land, infrastructure, and vision on an innovation-powered future.

But those assets must be better connected—and the risks are real. Albemarle has one of the lowest commercial tax bases in the region, with just 11.3% of its tax revenue coming from commercial and industrial uses. Too much of the economy is driven by public sector employment, and infrastructure gaps, limited development-ready space, and fragmented systems continue to constrain private-sector growth. At the same time, not all residents see themselves in the region's next economy.

This strategy is Albemarle's blueprint for what comes next—one that aligns public and private assets, invests in the infrastructure and systems that power innovation, and leverages the strengths of institutions like the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. It is also a strategy rooted in place: a recognition that Albemarle's landscapes, wineries, trail networks, and creative culture are not just lifestyle features, they are part of what makes this economy distinctive.

It's how Albemarle turns potential into progress and leads Virginia's next innovation economy.

Albemarle Today: Ready to Lead

1. Albemarle County is rooted in strength; aligning its strengths now will unlock what's next.

Albemarle enters its next chapter with a remarkably strong economic foundation. Over the past five years, the County has posted job growth nearly three times higher than the Virginia average, while median household income ranks among the highest of its peers. More than 60% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, making Albemarle one of the most educated counties in the nation. STEM occupations are expanding, the creative class is growing, and new residents continue to arrive from across the state and country.

Yet for all this momentum, stakeholders noted that Albemarle's full economic potential remains just out of reach. Public, private, and institutional efforts are strong but not always connected. "We have all the right players," one stakeholder said, "but not the same playbook." Without a shared economic vision, it can be difficult for businesses, talent partners, and community leaders to coordinate and scale their impact.

This strategy is an opportunity to bring those assets into alignment and to build an innovative economy that reflects the County's values and strengths.

"The ingredients are here. Now it's about connection, clarity, and focus."

METRICS	PEER RANK ⁺	RAW DATA
Median household income	1	\$102,617
Residents with a BA degree and above (LQ)	2	60.6% (LQ 1.7)
STEM job growth (% over 5 years)	1	32.8%
Job growth (% over 5 years)	3	11%
Growth in non-white population (% over 5 years)	4	20.3%

⁺ Benchmark rank of Albemarle against the 10 peer communities with 1 being the highest and 11 the lowest

Too Much on the Residential Tax Base

2. A stronger commercial sector will strengthen Albemarle's economy and balance its tax base.
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Albemarle County has long leaned on residential development to fund its future. Today, nearly 73.6% of its property tax base comes from residential sources—a structure that puts increasing pressure on public services and limits fiscal flexibility over time. Stakeholders across sectors emphasized that Albemarle's commercial base has not kept pace with population and job growth, especially when compared to peer regions.

The County lacks sufficient space and infrastructure for commercial and innovation-focused development. Small and mid-sized businesses often struggle to find suitable sites, and startups seeking to expand are frequently forced to look elsewhere. "Businesses that want to grow can't find space—so they leave," one stakeholder shared. Without a strategy to retain and support employers, Albemarle risks missing out on investment and tax base growth.

A stronger commercial sector—backed by modern infrastructure, ready-to-go space, and targeted support—offers Albemarle a clear path toward greater tax balance, business vitality, and economic resilience.

"We need to diversify the tax base—not just chase growth, but build the right kind."

An Innovation Engine Needing Room to Grow

3. Biotechnology and life sciences are taking root and ready to grow with the right investments.

Biotechnology and life sciences represent one of Albemarle County’s most promising economic clusters, combining high wages, inclusive employment opportunities, and long-term economic resilience. With a location quotient of 1.76 and the highest GRP contribution of any export-oriented cluster (\$269 million), this sector is already helping define the region’s innovation economy. The sector is powered by the University of Virginia’s research enterprise, aligned with national growth in biotechnology and precision health, and supported by regional initiatives like CvilleBioHub.

But stakeholders cautioned that this momentum may not be sustainable without the right ecosystem investments. UVA spinouts and scaling companies often struggle to find affordable, post-incubation lab space, forcing them to leave the region just as they begin to grow. While early-stage capital is available, there are gaps in Series A and growth-stage financing. Without space to expand and capital to scale, the County risks losing the very companies its institutions are helping to launch.

This sector isn’t speculative; it’s here. And with the right tools, it can anchor Albemarle’s innovation-driven future.

“We can launch them—but we can’t hold onto them.”

METRICS	RAW DATA
LQ	1.76
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$269 Million
GRP growth (2019-2024 %)	50.8%
Female share of workers	54.7%
Automation risk	10.6%

Note: Gross Regional Product = Private Consumption + Investment + Government Spending + (Exports - Imports)

Albemarle’s Big Investment in National Security

4. Rivanna Futures is Albemarle’s big investment, positioning it as an intelligence and national security innovation hub.

Intelligence and national security are already pillars of Albemarle County’s economy—and Rivanna Futures marks a bold step to build on that strength. Anchored by Rivanna Station, the County’s intelligence and national security cluster contributes \$191 million in GRP. With GRP per worker over \$203,000, the cluster is not only specialized but it’s productive, high-wage, and scalable.

Yet many stakeholders described this strength as underleveraged and underrecognized. Several participants also described a “crisis of identity”—a county doing serious work, but without a unified voice or platform to tell its story.

The talent pipeline also needs urgent attention. The cluster lost 17.5% of its private-sector jobs over the past five years, and more than a quarter of its workforce is already 55 or older. Stakeholders pointed to the need for stronger connections to UVA and Piedmont Virginia Community College and a clear, sustained talent recruitment strategy.

Rivanna Futures presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change that.

“We do serious national security work—but no one outside the County knows it.”

METRICS	RAW DATA
LQ	1.40
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$191 Million
GRP per worker	\$203,967
Supply chain met in-region	76.2%
Job growth (2019-2024 %)	-17.5%
Share of workforce age 55+	26.0%

Note: Gross Regional Product = Private Consumption + Investment + Government Spending + (Exports - Imports)

Deep Roots, Modern Needs

5. Food processing and agribusiness is evolving, ready for innovation and modern tools to fuel its growth.

Food processing and agribusiness remain one of Albemarle's most regionally concentrated and export-driven sectors. With a location quotient of 2.33 and more than \$400 million in annual exports, the sector connects the County's rural heritage to its future economic identity. Its footprint extends across agriculture, specialty production, logistics, and food manufacturing, and it supports a diverse workforce across the urban-rural divide.

But to sustain that position, the sector must modernize. Stakeholders cited aging infrastructure, a lack of cold storage and food-grade industrial space, inefficient loading facilities, and limited space for expansion. These challenges not only constrain existing producers, but force firms to rely on facilities located hours away—raising costs and threatening growth. Many businesses report operating at or near capacity with no viable path to scale locally.

Preserving this industry will take more than land protection. Albemarle has the opportunity to invest in a modern agribusiness value chain: supporting small-scale processing, improved infrastructure, and land use strategies that evolve this foundational sector for the next generation.

"We have the growers. What we need now is the infrastructure to keep them here."

METRICS	RAW DATA
LQ	2.33
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$197 Million
GRP growth (2019-2024 %)	49.9%
Share of sales exported outside of County	82.7%
Share of non-white workers	23.3%

Note: Gross Regional Product = Private Consumption + Investment + Government Spending + (Exports - Imports)

Infrastructure Investment Needed

6. Albemarle County's next economy is held back by outdated infrastructure and land planning.

Albemarle is home to a strong mix of high-potential sectors, from life sciences and clean tech to food processing and advanced business services. But across these industries, the County's growth is increasingly constrained by infrastructure and land readiness. Stakeholders pointed to critical shortfalls: limited wet lab and food-grade facilities, inadequate cold storage, aging utilities, and broadband deserts in key corridors. In many cases, these limitations have already pushed firms to expand or relocate outside the County.

The challenge isn't just physical—it's regulatory. Albemarle has one of the most restrictive land environments among its peers, with only 5% of total land in designated Development Areas, and just 3.9% of that available for new projects. Highly proscriptive land use and zoning classifications—with limited by-right uses and multiple layers of legislative review—add significant uncertainty and delay. Developers must often submit extensive documentation that takes time and financial resources to produce and process, increasing the cost and risk of projects that often can't wait out lengthy approval timelines.

Site plan reviews can take 18 to 24 months—well beyond peer benchmarks. Without ready-to-develop land, aligned infrastructure, and a more predictable process, Albemarle risks losing ground in the very industries it is trying to grow.

“We’re not competing on quality—we’re losing on readiness.”

Early-Stage Energy, Scaling Challenges

7. Entrepreneurship is alive in Albemarle and ready to scale with targeted support.

Stakeholders across Albemarle emphasized a growing wave of entrepreneurial activity. From UVA spinouts and research-driven startups to food businesses, creative makers, and local service providers, early-stage energy is real. Founders cited strong regional pride, an expanding network of peer entrepreneurs, and initial support from organizations like CIC (Community Investment Collaborative), Central Virginia Small Business Development Center (CV CBDC), Venture Central, and Cville BioHub. Entrepreneurship is seen not only as a path to economic growth, but as a way to build a more inclusive economy—accessible to younger residents, creatives, and historically underserved business owners.

But as these businesses grow, the support they need becomes harder to find. Stakeholders pointed to a lack of follow-on capital, scalable space, and dedicated programming for mid-stage firms. Commercial space is limited and expensive, and Albemarle lags behind several peer regions in new business formation. As one founder put it: “It’s easy to get started but not to stay and grow.”

With intentional support—more targeted capital, mentorship networks, strategic partnerships, and growth-stage infrastructure—Albemarle can strengthen the entrepreneurial engine it already has. The ideas are here. The opportunity is to root them.

“It’s easy to get started but not to stay and grow.”

Keeping the Talent We Grow

8. Talent is here, but Albemarle County must act now to keep it.

Albemarle has no shortage of talent. The County is home to one of the most educated populations in the country and sits beside the University of Virginia—one of the nation’s top public research institutions. Yet employers across sectors report growing difficulty finding and retaining workers, particularly in mid-skill and growth-stage roles. Talent is often trained here, but not retained here.

The data supports this concern. Albemarle’s share of prime working-age talent (25–44) is lower than peer regions, and the median age is rising. In sectors like food processing and agribusiness, intelligence and national security, and life sciences and medical devices, more than 25% of the workforce is over age 55. Employers are increasingly relying on out-of-region workers and offering costly relocation packages.

Housing plays a central role. Nearly 45% of renters and 20% of homeowners are cost-burdened, and mid-wage professionals—technicians, logistics workers, healthcare assistants—are especially impacted. Some commute long distances; others leave entirely or regions with a better balance of wages and cost of living.

Albemarle has the building blocks for a thriving, future-ready workforce. The 2024 Comprehensive Housing Plan provides a strong foundation for change. With bold implementation and a focus on talent retention, the County can turn this vulnerability into a lasting advantage.

“Talent from UVA and PVCC is plentiful—but not sticky.”

METRICS	PEER RANK	RAW DATA
Full employment	N/A	3.3%
Labor force participation rate	8	62.2%
Prime working-age talent (LQ)	9	25.9% (LQ 0.95)
Median Age	8	39.4
Median home price	10	\$540,038
Median rent	8	\$1,655
Home value to income ratio (LQ)	8	5.5 (LQ 1.2*)

Powerful Institutions, Untapped Impact

9. UVA and PVCC are powerful anchors that can drive greater impact through deeper collaboration.

The University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College are two of Albemarle's most valuable economic anchors. UVA, with more than 25,000 students and 16,000 faculty and staff, brings global research power, talent development, and startup generation to the region. PVCC serves thousands of students annually, offering both transfer and technical training programs that position it as a critical workforce engine. Yet stakeholders across sectors consistently shared that these institutions remain underconnected to Albemarle's broader economic strategy. "We work next to each other," one employer said, "but not with each other."

UVA produces world-class research and a growing pipeline of startups. But many of those companies scale elsewhere due to a lack of lab space, limited Series A capital, and the high cost of expansion. UVA is also playing a visible leadership role in championing the region's emerging innovation corridor and helping Albemarle and neighboring communities align around shared infrastructure and growth.

PVCC is viewed as a capable partner—especially in technical education—but one that must move faster to align with employer needs in life sciences, logistics, and trades. Its programs have the potential to become a primary pipeline for high-demand, mid-skill careers, but coordination with industry and the County is often ad hoc rather than strategic.

Stakeholders across the board expressed strong appetite for deeper coordination, shared planning, and a clear framework for turning these institutions into catalysts for regional economic leadership. If Albemarle wants to accelerate private-sector investment—especially in innovation sectors—UVA and PVCC must be at the table. Their presence and partnership will be essential to building the talent pipelines, infrastructure, and credibility that anchor long-term economic growth.

"The potential is there; it just hasn't been activated."

Efforts Are There, But Not Aligned

10. Albemarle County's workforce system is strong, but too often its players are working in silos.

Albemarle has the building blocks of an effective workforce development system. Piedmont Virginia Community College, Virginia Career Works, CATEC, Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS), and local nonprofits all contribute to a landscape rich in training, career exposure, and support. But while the ingredients are there, stakeholders described a system that lacks coordination, shared strategy, and alignment with the County's economic goals.

This disconnect is most visible in mid-skill and mid-career roles—the very workforce segments that growing sectors like clean energy, life sciences, construction, and logistics rely on. Employers in these fields report difficulty finding workers with the right certifications, experience, or applied technical knowledge. Apprenticeship and on-the-job training models are underutilized. Albemarle County Public Schools offer early career learning starting in elementary and middle school, as well as CTE programs at the high school level—a valuable asset in building long-term pipelines. But stakeholders noted that these efforts are not always well-connected to employer needs.

Meanwhile, job seekers often struggle to navigate available resources, access wraparound supports like childcare and transportation, or understand the pathways into good jobs. As one stakeholder put it: “There’s no wrong door, but there’s no front door either.”

Stakeholders overwhelmingly supported a more coordinated, sector-based approach to workforce development—one that is driven by employer input, aligned across education and training providers, and focused on preparing residents for jobs in Albemarle’s highest-need industries. A more intentional system would help residents advance, and it would help the County’s key clusters scale with the talent they need to grow.

“We don’t need more programs—we need a system.”

“The workforce is out there. The pathways aren’t.”

Growth Isn't Reaching Everyone

11. Access gaps persist, limiting who participates in Albemarle County's innovation economy.

Albemarle County performs well on many headline metrics—median income, educational attainment, and job growth among them. But beneath those top-line numbers, persistent disparities in income, ownership, and access remain. Benchmarking data shows that just 9.6% of businesses are minority-owned, and only 22.7% are women-owned—both lagging state and national averages. Women earn 18% less than men, and racial income gaps in the County exceed \$25,000.

These aren't just social challenges; they represent missed economic opportunity. Stakeholders emphasized that businesses owned by people of color and women often face barriers to capital, procurement pipelines, and mentorship networks. In the workforce, Albemarle's growing clusters—especially in tech, life sciences, and national security—lack clear pathways for inclusive recruitment, advancement, or ownership. As one participant noted: “We’re building the future, but not everyone’s being invited into it.”

If Albemarle wants to lead Virginia's innovation economy, equity must be at the center. That means ensuring all residents—not just those already plugged into systems of capital, education, or influence—have a pathway to participate in and benefit from growth.

“We’re building the future, but not everyone’s being invited into it.”

METRICS	PEER RANK	RAW DATA
Share of minority-owned businesses	9	9.6%
Share of women-owned businesses	5	22.7%
Gender pay gap	6	18.4%
Disparity in median income by race	10	\$25,054
Disparity in educational attainment by race	10	18.7%

The Missing Story

12. Albemarle County is full of promise, but its story is too quiet.

Despite its growing strengths, Albemarle County faces a real challenge: it lacks a clear and unified economic identity. Across the engagement process, stakeholders described a “crisis of identity,” noting that Albemarle is often overshadowed by the City of Charlottesville and that the broader region struggles to project a consistent, external-facing story. This ambiguity undermines efforts to attract investment, retain talent, and position Albemarle as a peer to other high-performing innovation hubs.

The absence of a collaborative regional brand has fragmented Albemarle’s visibility. Even inside the County’s strongest sectors, employers and institutions find it difficult to explain what Albemarle stands for economically. Meanwhile, peer communities are getting louder, clearer, and better aligned.

Stakeholders see a path forward. Many called for a collaborative brand platform that reflects the region’s shared labor market, institutional ecosystem, and innovation assets—potentially under a Greater Charlottesville Area identity. Others urged Albemarle to champion and promote an Innovation Corridor: a branded geography linking Rivanna Station, UVA, Route 29, and other strategic nodes around a shared narrative of growth, intelligence and national security, and life sciences and medical devices.

The story is here. Now is the time for Albemarle County to tell it—with clarity, confidence, and ambition.

“The story is here. But no one’s telling it.”

Target Sectors

13. Three target sectors anchor Albemarle County's innovation-driven growth.

	Intelligence and National Security	Biotechnology and Life Sciences	Food Processing and Agribusiness
Research Insights	– High GRP per worker (\$200k) – Localized supply chain	– Highest GRP (\$269M) – Only female-majority cluster (52.4%) – High educational attainment	– Strongest concentration (LQ 2.33) – Highest export volume (\$400M)
Assets	– Close proximity to Washington, D.C. – Rivanna Station – UVA cyber programs – Talent base with security clearances	– UVA life science research – Fontaine Research Park – Seed funding – PVCC training – North Fork Discovery Park – Cville BioHub	– Proximity to I-64 and I-81 – Established producers – Local food branding – Strong rural-urban value chain
Specialization	– Navigation and Guidance Systems	– R&D in Life Sciences – Medical Devices	– Deep agricultural integration: Animal Production and Support Activities – Wineries – Crop Production

03

Strategy

STRATEGY

The Approach

Albemarle County can gain significant advantages by implementing this strategy through coordinated leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term alignment.

A transformative approach will involve using this strategy to guide the work of the Economic Development Office, other County departments, the Board of Supervisors and the EDA, and institutional partners around shared goals — rather than isolated programs or departmental silos. It also invites closer coordination with land use, infrastructure, workforce, and higher education systems to support innovation-led growth.

This shift has the potential to unify efforts, energize community and institutional stakeholders, and amplify Albemarle County's ability to lead Virginia's next innovation economy.



MISSION

The mission of the **Albemarle County Economic Development Office** is to strengthen and diversify the County's tax base, support business scale-up and redevelopment, and expand career-ladder job opportunities—ensuring a vibrant, innovation economy that delivers lasting prosperity for all residents.

Elements of a Strategy

Albemarle County's strategy is grounded in what we heard, what we measured, and what we imagined—together.

The insights are clear: the county is growing and its economy is evolving. But turning momentum into meaningful progress will take more than energy alone – it will take clarity, commitment, and action.

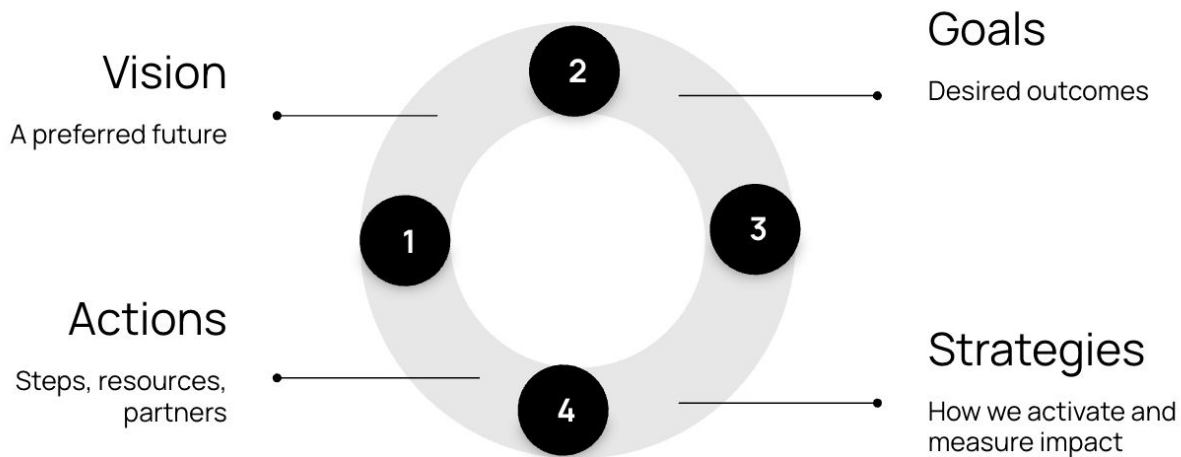
The **vision statement and five goals** that follow mark Albemarle County's next chapter. Each one is rooted in community priorities, shaped by data, and built to reflect the county's values. Together, they offer a focused, forward-looking framework for a more innovative and resilient economy.

This plan provides a focused strategy for guiding economic development in Albemarle County. It sits beneath the County's 20-year Comprehensive Plan and alongside other guiding frameworks such as the housing plan, climate action plan, and biodiversity action plan—ensuring strategic alignment across County priorities.

The EDSP is structured as a five-year roadmap (2025–2029), with a suggested formal midpoint check-in to assess progress, adjust priorities, and ensure continued relevance in a changing environment.

Elements of a Strategy

A strategic plan with actionable items garners stakeholder engagement and pursues a vision of the future.



VISION

Albemarle County – Rooted in Innovation. Open for Investment.

Where bold ideas take root, businesses scale, and partnerships thrive —
leading the way in Virginia's next innovation economy.

Building for the Future Albemarle County

GOAL 1

Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.

GOAL 2

Discover in Life Sciences.

We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.

GOAL 3

Grow a Modern Agribusiness Economy.

We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.

GOAL 4

Empower Talent.

We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.

GOAL 5

Compete for Investment.

We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment-ready county – ready to compete, build, and lead.

What's Winning?

We will track our success by measuring talent growth, business expansion, and a growing commercial tax base.

	What We Measure	Why It Matters
Business Expansion	Growth in jobs, companies, and investment across innovation sectors	Expanding Albemarle's innovation economy strengthens competitiveness, diversifies the economy, and builds local opportunity.
Talent	Growth in Albemarle's 25–44-year-old working-age population	Retaining and attracting next-generation talent is critical to powering Albemarle's innovation economy.
Commercial Tax Base Growth	Growth in the commercial share of Albemarle's property tax base	Growing the commercial tax base ensures long-term fiscal sustainability and reduces reliance on residential taxpayers.

GOAL1

LEAD IN INTELLIGENCE & NATIONAL SECURITY.

We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.

WHY IT MATTERS:

One of Albemarle's biggest economic investments is Rivanna Futures — positioning the County as Virginia's center for intelligence and national security innovation.

This effort builds on Albemarle's unique strengths, including its proximity to Washington, D.C., the research leadership of the University of Virginia, and an emerging ecosystem of secure technology and intelligence firms. By leading this sector's growth, Albemarle will create new career pathways, diversify its commercial economy, and strengthen its role in driving Virginia's future prosperity. Investing in this opportunity is essential to building long-term economic resilience and securing Albemarle's place at the forefront of the innovation economy.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.

1.1 Activate Rivanna Futures as a next-generation intelligence and national security innovation hub.

A plan to position Rivanna Futures through targeted land use, infrastructure, and business development strategies.

1.2 Strengthen regional partnerships to build the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor's national security sector.

A partnership strategy aligning regional assets around national security activities, workforce, industry growth, and R&D and commercialization.

1.3 Expand intelligence and national security career pathways through UVA, PVCC, and K-12 alignment.

A strategy connecting K-12, PVCC, and UVA to national security employers and research institutions.

1.4 Launch an intelligence and national security sector partnership.

A sector partnership that addresses workforce needs and advocacy efforts across Albemarle's intelligence and national security sector.

1.5 Build Albemarle's intelligence and national security innovation brand.

A marketing campaign positioning Albemarle as Virginia's hub for intelligence and national security innovation.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

Strategy 11:

Activate Rivanna Futures as a next-generation intelligence and national security innovation hub.

A plan to position Rivanna Futures through targeted land use, infrastructure, and business development strategies.

Why It Matters:

Rivanna Futures represents Albemarle County's commitment to intelligence and national security innovation targeting national security, cybersecurity, AI/ML, and secure technology. Building on the federal investment in Rivanna Station and the region's experienced workforce in intelligence and national security, Rivanna Futures can become a magnet for high-wage employers, talent, and investment. With targeted infrastructure, land use alignment, and strategic partnerships, Albemarle County can scale this district into a nationally recognized hub for intelligence and national security innovation and economic growth.

What's Needed?

- Develop and implement a Rivanna Futures Innovation Hub plan to align land use, infrastructure, and development priorities with targeted business attraction and expansion efforts.
→ Establishes a framework to grow Albemarle County's intelligence and national security cluster.
- Launch a business attraction campaign targeting national security, defense, and secure technology employers.
→ Positions Rivanna Futures as a destination for high-quality employers and jobs.
- Continue advocating for targeted infrastructure upgrades, including utilities, fiber, and transportation access.
→ Ensures Rivanna Futures can accommodate new tenants and sustain long-term growth.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

Strategy 1.2:

Strengthen regional partnerships to build the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor's national security cluster.

A partnership strategy aligning regional assets around national security commercialization, workforce, and industry growth.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County sits at the heart of the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor, with key assets like Rivanna Station, the National Security Data & Policy Institute, UVA, and PVCC driving regional innovation. By supporting and advancing the Corridor's Strategic Roadmap, Albemarle can help align regional resources around intelligence and national security growth. Active participation in this partnership will position the County as a central player in the Corridor's evolution, amplify workforce development and commercialization efforts, and attract targeted investment into Albemarle' County's innovation ecosystem.

What's Needed?

- Continue active participation in the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor initiative.
→ Ensures Albemarle's voice shapes regional innovation strategies and attracts investment.
- Support the Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap supported by the GO Virginia grant.
→ The Roadmap will provide actionable recommendations to strengthen regional growth in national security, digital technologies, and other innovation sectors.
- Partner with regional stakeholders to implement recommendations from the Corridor's Strategic Roadmap.
→ Aligns resources and priorities across jurisdictions to build a unified, high-impact innovation corridor.
- Leverage regional partners, such as AFCEA Central Virginia, Defense Affairs Committee, and others in the intelligence and national security sector.
→ Builds strategic connections that enhance Albemarle's role in high-value, defense-aligned innovation sectors.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

Strategy 1.3:

Expand intelligence and national security career pathways through UVA, PVCC, and K-12 alignment.

A strategy connecting K-12, PVCC, and UVA to national security employers and research institutions.

Why It Matters:

The County has a strong pool of national security talent and is home to two powerful educational anchors: the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. More talent is seeded here than ever before, but employers still face challenges retaining this workforce, particularly at mid-career levels. To keep local talent from leaving and to expand pathways for other County residents, Albemarle County must align education and industry through sector partnerships and targeted workforce initiatives. By creating seamless transitions from classroom to career, the County can turn potential into staying power—building a secure, innovative economy that benefits all.

What's Needed?

- Strengthen the sector partnership to align K-12 and higher education systems with intelligence and national security employer needs.
→ Builds a talent pipeline responsive to industry demands and anchored in collaboration.
- Consider developing new work-based learning models, such as internships, apprenticeships, and career academies.
→ Provides real-world experience and strengthens transitions from education to employment.
- Host regular employer-educator convenings to review curriculum and training updates.
→ Ensures pathways remain relevant and aligned with workforce evolution.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

Strategy 1.4:

Launch an intelligence and national security sector partnership.

A sector partnership that addresses workforce needs and advocacy efforts across Albemarle's intelligence and national security sector.

Why It Matters:

This sector partnership centers around one of Albemarle County's most significant economic development investments: positioning the County as a hub for intelligence and national security innovation. By formally bringing together employers, federal agencies, and educational institutions, Albemarle County can align strategies, address workforce gaps, and drive shared investment in the infrastructure and policies needed to sustain growth. This collaboration will create high-quality jobs, support business expansion, and strengthen the County's standing in Virginia's next innovation economy.

What's Needed?

- Establish a formal intelligence and national security sector partnership, bringing together employers, agencies, and educators.
→ Builds a strong, collaborative foundation for growth and shared investment.
- Develop a sector-specific workforce strategy, aligned with the needs of employers and regional workforce development goals.
→ Addresses critical talent gaps and supports job growth in key roles.
- Launch advocacy efforts to support sector infrastructure and policy needs.
→ Ensures Albemarle County's voice is heard in regional, state, and federal decision-making.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

Strategy 1.5:

Build Albemarle's intelligence and national security innovation brand.

A marketing campaign positioning Albemarle as Virginia's hub for secure intelligence and national security innovation.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's leadership in intelligence and national security is anchored by Rivanna Futures and supported by regional collaboration through the Innovation Corridor. Yet this story is not widely known. With a bold, proactive brand and a clear narrative, the County can amplify its assets and leadership role in the national security and secure innovation economy. This positioning will not only attract high-quality employers and federal investment but will also strengthen relationships with federal agencies, site selectors, and decision-makers. Telling this story—backed by data and a compelling vision—is key to Albemarle County's long-term economic resilience and growth.

What's Needed?

- Develop a compelling brand identity and narrative around Albemarle County's intelligence and national security assets, in partnership with regional Innovation Corridor partners.
→ Positions Albemarle County as a leading hub in the national intelligence and security economy.
- Create a proactive marketing and business attraction campaign targeting federal agency decision-makers, site selectors, and industry leaders.
→ Raises awareness and builds connections that attract employers and investment.
- Leverage partnerships with regional stakeholders to amplify Albemarle County's brand story and align messaging across jurisdictions.
→ Ensures a unified, high-impact presence in the national innovation landscape.

Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Job creation in intelligence and national security sectors

Tracking new jobs created in Albemarle's intelligence, defense, and secure innovation economy.

Company formation and growth

Counting new companies formed, scaled, or relocated within Albemarle's secure technology and intelligence ecosystem.

Workforce pipeline development

Tracking new education and training programs in intelligence and national security, and enrollment in aligned career pathways across UVA, PVCC, and K-12.

Employer and agency engagement

Tracking partnerships, roundtables, and joint initiatives with intelligence and national security companies, federal agencies, and research institutions.

Regional brand awareness

Measuring engagement with Albemarle's intelligence and national security marketing efforts, including inquiries, website traffic, and media placements.



Huntsville, Alabama

Huntsville turned its federal footprint into a national security powerhouse.

Once known primarily for its NASA legacy, Huntsville has redefined itself as a national leader in defense, aerospace, and intelligence by aligning federal installations, workforce pipelines, and private-sector growth.

What they did and achieved

- Anchored economic development around Redstone Arsenal, now home to U.S. Army Materiel Command, the FBI's second headquarters, and dozens of defense agencies and contractors.
- Launched Cummings Research Park, now the second-largest research park in the country, supporting secure tech and aerospace innovation.
- Partnered with the University of Alabama in Huntsville to build one of the most defense-aligned tech and engineering workforces in the nation.

Today, Huntsville is Alabama's fastest-growing city and leads the U.S. in engineers per capita, with more than 26 percent tech workforce growth over the past decade.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Huntsville shows how a mid-sized region can lead nationally by leveraging its federal presence, investing in innovation infrastructure, and aligning higher education with employer needs. Albemarle has the same potential through Rivanna Futures, UVA, and its strategic location.



Colorado Springs, Colorado

Colorado Springs built a defense and space economy around mission-critical assets.

With a deep concentration of military and aerospace installations, Colorado Springs leveraged its strategic advantages to become a national hub for space command, cybersecurity, and defense-related R&D.

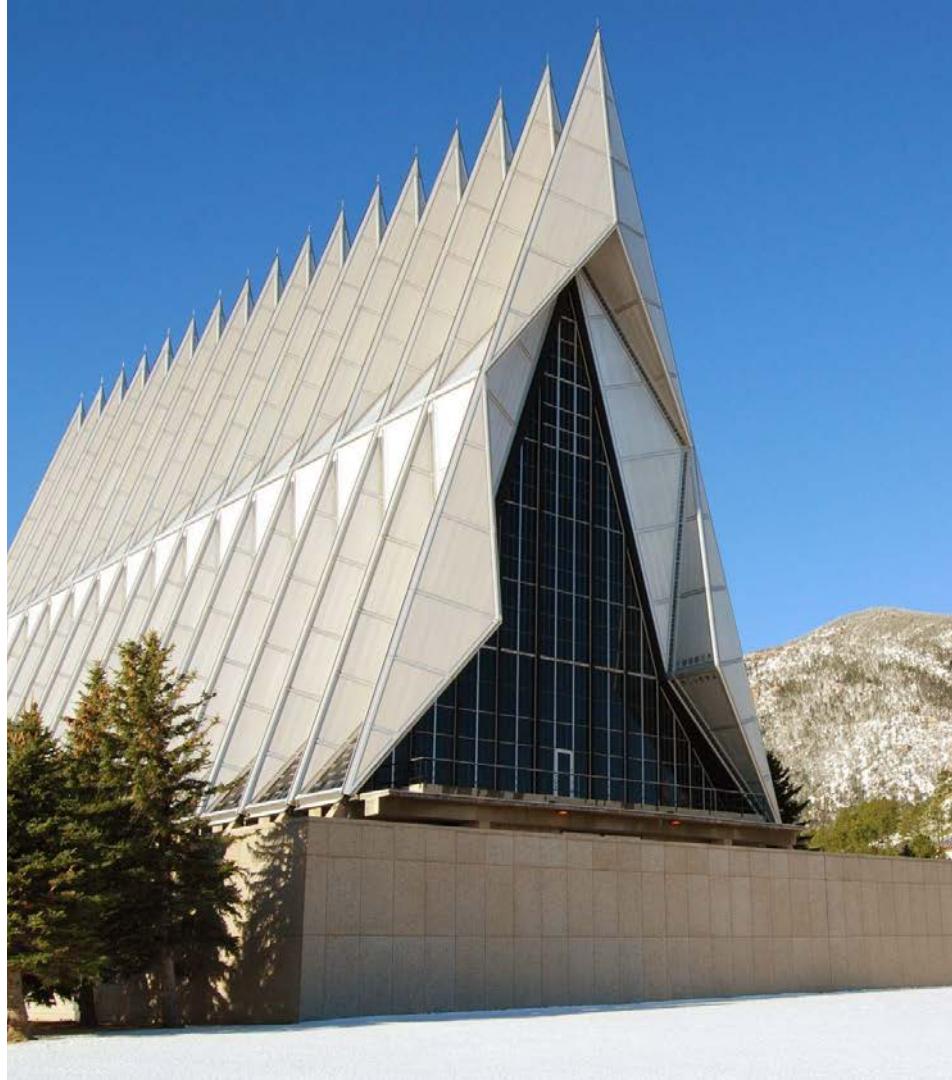
What they did and achieved

- Consolidated military assets including NORAD, U.S. Space Command, Peterson Space Force Base, and Fort Carson into a cohesive regional advantage.
- Invested in cyber and space innovation, supported by defense contractors, university programs, and the National Cybersecurity Center.
- Built strong regional pipelines through Pikes Peak State College and University of Colorado Colorado Springs to meet industry demand.

Now home to over 250 aerospace and defense companies, Colorado Springs has become a key player in the nation's space and cybersecurity infrastructure.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Colorado Springs demonstrates how a region can align defense presence with education and innovation to grow a specialized industry cluster. Albemarle can do the same by positioning Rivanna Station and UVA as cornerstones of a secure tech and national security corridor.



Chattanooga Innovation District

Chattanooga built an innovation district that connects place to purpose.

By investing in quality of place, anchor institutions, and civic collaboration, Chattanooga created one of the country's first innovation districts in a mid-sized city—redefining its downtown as a hub for tech, startups, and creative energy.

What they did and achieved

- Designated a walkable, quarter-mile innovation district in the heart of downtown anchored by the Enterprise Center and public-private partnerships.
- Created shared workspaces, gig-speed broadband, and community hubs to support entrepreneurs, startups, and remote workers.
- Fostered cross-sector collaboration among city leaders, foundations, and universities to build trust and sustained programming.
- Attracted more than 1,000 innovation economy jobs downtown and sparked renewed investment in housing, mobility, and public space.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Chattanooga shows how placemaking and partnerships can fuel innovation, even outside major metros. Albemarle can apply similar principles in shaping a defined innovation corridor around Rivanna Station, Route 29, and UVA.



GOAL 2

DISCOVER IN LIFE SCIENCES.

We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences sector is poised for breakout growth. With research strengths at UVA, a strong base of emerging companies, and national momentum in biotech and health innovation, Albemarle has a rare opportunity to lead. The region ranks among the top ten nationally for per capita seed funding raised, and Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences cluster already outperforms the national average, with a location quotient of 1.76. But early-stage success will not automatically translate into a full-scale innovation economy. By investing now, Albemarle can anchor a new generation of life sciences growth—creating resilient jobs, diversifying the economy, and establishing itself as the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for life sciences innovation.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.

2.1

Expand Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences infrastructure to support scale-up and commercialization.

A coordinated plan to deliver lab space, wet labs, and specialized small-scale manufacturing facilities.

2.2

Position Albemarle as a leading hub for biotechnology and life sciences innovation through the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor.

A network to improve commercialization pathways, cluster identity, and access to growth capital.

2.3

Leverage Cville BioHub to lead a life sciences workforce and sector partnership.

A convening hub connecting employers, K-12, PVCC, and UVA partners to build workforce pipelines and address policy needs.

2.4

Establish a national business attraction initiative for biotechnology and life sciences.

A targeted recruitment strategy using site selection, trade shows, conferences, and international/ FDI outreach.

2.5

Partner to expand access to growth capital for Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences companies.

A coordinated initiative to strengthen connections to growth-stage capital that support company scale-up.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

Strategy 2.1:

Expand Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences infrastructure to support scale-up and commercialization.

A coordinated plan to deliver lab space, wet labs, and specialized small-scale manufacturing facilities.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County has built a strong foundation in life sciences through incubation efforts and partnerships with CvilleBioHub, the University of Virginia, and others. However, scaling this sector requires targeted investment in specialized infrastructure. Many local companies face bottlenecks accessing wet lab space, small-scale manufacturing capacity, and advanced R&D facilities. Without this infrastructure, firms risk expanding elsewhere. By investing in facilities that support scale-up and commercialization, the County can retain growing companies, attract new investment, and establish itself as a bold leader in the life sciences economy.

What's Needed?

- Develop and implement a coordinated life sciences infrastructure plan that delivers specialized wet labs, R&D facilities, and small-scale manufacturing space.
→ Provides the physical resources needed for companies to scale and commercialize in Albemarle County.
- Partner with CvilleBioHub and regional stakeholders to identify specific infrastructure gaps and investment priorities.
→ Ensures infrastructure aligns with actual sector needs and supports long-term growth.
- Consider permitting policies to support rapid deployment of life sciences facilities.
→ Reduces delays and encourages firms to expand locally rather than seeking space elsewhere.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

Strategy 2.2:

Position Albemarle as a leading hub for biotechnology and life sciences innovation through the the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor.

A network to improve commercialization pathways, cluster identity, and access to growth capital.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's life sciences sector is poised for breakout growth, fueled by world-class research from the University of Virginia, CvilleBioHub's leadership, and regional momentum through the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor. But early-stage success will not automatically translate into a full-scale innovation economy. Many companies face challenges accessing Series A and growth-stage capital, securing lab space, and navigating the complex pathways from research to market. Strengthening commercialization and cluster coordination will help bridge these gaps, align regional assets, and ensure Albemarle County's life sciences firms can stay and scale locally.

What's Needed?

- Continue active participation in the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor and complete the Strategic Roadmap.
→ Provides a shared regional framework for commercialization and growth across life sciences and digital sectors.
- Consider the creation of a regional commercialization support network with incubators, accelerators, shared lab space, and grant-writing assistance.
→ Helps startups and scale-ups access critical resources and stay in Albemarle County.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

Strategy 2.3:

Leverage Cville BioHub to lead a life sciences workforce and sector partnership.

A convening hub connecting employers, K-12, PVCC, and UVA partners to build workforce pipelines and address policy needs.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's life sciences companies cite talent as both their greatest asset and biggest constraint. While early-stage workforce development is strong, there is no formal mechanism to bring employers together with educators and training partners to shape a coordinated talent pipeline. CvilleBioHub is already positioned as a trusted convener and can anchor a sector partnership that aligns efforts across K-12, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and the University of Virginia. In addition to driving workforce collaboration, this partnership can also shape regional and state policy, inform funding priorities, and advocate for investments that support the County's life sciences growth.

What's Needed?

- Leverage CvilleBioHub's BioBridge project to establish a life sciences sector partnership, in collaboration with Albemarle County and key education and workforce partners.
→ Establishes an ongoing forum to align talent development, training, and employer needs.
- Partner to implement the findings of the BioBridge project.
→ Positions the county as an active partner in supporting the needs of life sciences companies.
- Convene regular roundtables between employers, K-12, PVCC, and UVA to coordinate curriculum, internships, and hiring pathways.
→ Strengthens student pipelines and ensures educational programs are aligned with sector demand.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

Strategy 2.4:

Establish a national business attraction initiative for biotechnology and life sciences.

A targeted recruitment strategy using site selection, trade shows, conferences, and international/ FDI outreach.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's life sciences cluster is growing, but its full potential depends on a robust network of supporting firms: contract manufacturers, specialized suppliers, and R&D services. These businesses bring essential capacity to scale production, create new jobs, and embed companies more deeply in the local economy. A coordinated national attraction strategy will help fill critical gaps in the life sciences supply chain and strengthen Albemarle County's position as a complete, competitive destination for bioscience and medical device firms. This effort should also boost the County's visibility among site selectors, investors, and global companies evaluating the Mid-Atlantic region.

What's Needed?

- Design and execute a targeted business attraction campaign focused on life sciences and medical device supply chain companies—using national site selector outreach, trade shows, inbound visits, and international FDI efforts.
→ Brings critical support firms to the region, enhances cluster resilience, and raises Albemarle County's visibility.
- Coordinate with regional economic development partners and CvilleBioHub to align messaging, leads, and follow-up.
→ Ensures seamless engagement and maximizes collective impact.
- Integrate brand and marketing efforts from Strategy 1.5 to promote Albemarle County as a destination for intelligence and national security innovation and life sciences, including dual-use technologies.
→ Reinforces the County's identity and boosts visibility across key sectors.

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

Strategy 2.5:

Partner to expand access to growth capital for Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences companies.

A targeted recruitment strategy using site selection, trade shows, conferences, and international/ FDI outreach.

Why It Matters:

For Albemarle County's life sciences companies, access to capital is often the deciding factor in whether they stay and scale locally or relocate to more capital-rich ecosystems. While early-stage funding exists, many firms struggle to secure Series A and growth-stage investment—particularly those in the “valley of death” between R&D and commercialization. By partnering with CvilleBioHub and regional funders, Albemarle County can build the financial infrastructure needed to retain and grow its bioscience firms, while also enhancing competitiveness for federal and state innovation grants.

What's Needed?

- Partner with CvilleBioHub and regional funders to create stronger connections between local firms and venture, angel, and growth-stage capital.
→ **Helps scale companies locally and builds a stronger investment ecosystem.**
- Develop a capital readiness initiative offering pitch coaching, grant writing support, and investor matchmaking for life sciences companies.
→ **Improves deal flow and helps firms compete for public and private funding.**
- Continue to coordinate efforts to pursue large-scale federal and state innovation grants.
→ **Secures catalytic capital for cluster infrastructure and company growth.**

Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.

We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

New life sciences space delivered

Tracking the development and absorption of new lab space, wet labs, and light industrial facilities supporting life sciences and medical device growth.

Cluster growth through company expansion and attraction

Measuring the growth of Albemarle's life sciences and medical devices cluster by tracking the scaling of existing companies (jobs and revenue) and the attraction of new companies, including foreign direct investment (FDI).

Capital raised by life sciences companies

Measuring the amount of VC and growth capital secured by Albemarle-based life sciences and medical device companies.

Talent pipeline development

Tracking new enrollments and completions in life science-related programs at PVCC, K-12, and UVA, aligned with life sciences career pathways.

Employer and ecosystem engagement

Tracking partnerships, convenings, and joint initiatives with life sciences companies, educational institutions, workforce partners, and regional collaborators.



Gainesville, Florida

Gainesville turned academic research into a thriving biotech economy.

By translating university research into commercial opportunity, Gainesville built a robust life sciences cluster anchored by innovation infrastructure and startup support.

What they did and achieved

- Developed Progress Park and the Sid Martin Biotech Incubator to support spinouts and scale-up firms emerging from the University of Florida's (UF) research.
- Built more than 100,000 square feet of specialized wet lab space and provided wraparound services including mentorship, legal support, and access to capital.
- Created strong commercialization pipelines between UF researchers, tech transfer teams, and local entrepreneurs through targeted programming and incentives.

Now home to more than 120 biotech firms, Gainesville consistently ranks in the top five nationally for research commercialization and startup output among public universities.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Gainesville shows how research institutions can become economic engines with the right infrastructure and partnerships. Albemarle has a similar opportunity to grow a life sciences hub by linking UVA's biotech talent and discoveries with physical space, capital, and business support.



Boulder, Colorado

Boulder scaled its research ecosystem into a high-performing life sciences cluster.

With deep federal research assets, a top-tier university, and an entrepreneurial culture, Boulder has become one of the country's most concentrated and competitive biotech hubs.

What they did and achieved

- Leveraged federal labs like NIST and NOAA alongside the University of Colorado Boulder to attract talent and catalyze R&D-intensive firms.
- Invested in lab-ready space, venture networks, and startup infrastructure through partnerships with the Boulder Innovation Center and local investors.
- Nurtured a regional culture of academic-industry collaboration, especially in biotech, pharma, and climate-related health technologies.

Now ranks among the top five U.S. metros for NIH funding per capita and is home to more than 300 bioscience companies and one of the most educated workforces in the country.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Boulder proves that with the right alignment of talent, research, and space, even a mid-sized metro can punch above its weight in biotech. Albemarle can leverage UVA, its federal ties, and growing startup ecosystem to build a similarly competitive life sciences cluster.



Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina

Raleigh-Durham built a globally recognized life sciences supercluster.

With sustained investment over decades, the Research Triangle has become a global hub for biotech, pharmaceuticals, and life sciences manufacturing.

What they did and achieved

- Created the Research Triangle Park (RTP) to connect Duke, UNC, and NC State with industry and federal research investment.
- Focused on long-term infrastructure and workforce development through entities like NC Biotech and partnerships with community colleges.
- Provided tailored support for both global firms and local startups, including lab space, R&D grants, and commercialization funding.

Today, the region hosts more than 600 life sciences companies and over 40,000 jobs, with major investments from Pfizer, Lilly, and Fujifilm Diosynth.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Raleigh-Durham shows how aligning education, infrastructure, and long-term planning can create a globally competitive life sciences sector. Albemarle can borrow this playbook by working with UVA with a coordinated strategy to grow, attract, and retain biotech firms.



GOAL 3

GROW A MODERN AGRIBUSINESS ECONOMY.

We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.

WHY IT MATTERS:

From legacy farming and award-winning wineries to value-added agricultural innovation, the County's food economy already outperforms national averages, with a location quotient above 2.3. Yet much of Albemarle's agricultural economy sits at a transition point: legacy businesses aging out, transitional farms seeking new models, and emerging entrepreneurs ready to lead. Without modern infrastructure, access to growth capital, and stronger business supports, producers will struggle to scale—and the County risks missing a national wave of rural innovation, where value-added agriculture is one of the fastest-growing sectors. By treating agribusiness as a core economic driver and targeting strategic investment in rural Albemarle, the County can unlock a new era of entrepreneurship, reinvention, and sustainable growth.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.

3.1

Explore land use and zoning policies that enable agribusiness innovation.

Updated tools to support flexible agribusiness operations, value-added production, and agricultural technology enterprises, while also expanding opportunities for diverse revenue streams—including lodging, food, and beverage.

3.2

Consider critical infrastructure to support modern agribusiness growth.

Assess the needs for expanded cold storage, broadband, and small-scale rural manufacturing capacity.

3.3

Create a rural business resource hub for agribusiness growth, succession, and capital access.

A platform providing business planning, growth strategies, succession support, and financing pathways.

3.4

Build new wholesale and scalable market pathways for Albemarle producers.

An initiative connecting local producers with wholesale buyers, regional distributors, and scalable markets.

3.5

Establish a rural entrepreneurship and agribusiness sector partnership.

A partnership connecting agribusiness entrepreneurs, workforce partners, and county leaders for coordinated growth.

3.6

Support the growth of Albemarle County's wine industry.

An approach to strengthen a signature rural industry through investment, training, sustainability, and expanded market access.

3.7

Expand the agritourism economy through partnership with Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A strategy to grow rural tourism by expanding lodging, events, and farm-based food and beverage experiences.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.1:

Explore land use and zoning policies that enable agribusiness innovation.

Updated tools to support flexible agribusiness operations, value-added production, and agricultural technology enterprises, while also expanding opportunities for diverse revenue streams—including lodging, agritourism, and onsite food service.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's agribusiness economy is in transition, facing generational turnover, new market demands, and rising interest in value-added agriculture. Many producers want to diversify their revenue through food and beverage offerings, on-farm lodging, and agri-tourism, but are limited by outdated land use frameworks. At the same time, growth is constrained by infrastructure gaps like limited cold storage, food processing capacity, and broadband access in rural areas. By modernizing policies and investing in core infrastructure, the County can unlock new models of rural entrepreneurship, preserve working lands, and support the long-term viability of its agricultural economy.

What's Needed?

- Consider a rural zoning and land use review to identify and remove regulatory barriers to value-added production, lodging, and agri-tourism.
→ Creates clearer pathways for diversified agribusiness development.
- Engage producers and stakeholders to inform updated zoning tools that support flexible, mixed-use operations.
→ Ensures alignment with real business models while maintaining rural character.
- Pursue funding to deliver shared-use infrastructure that supports small and mid-sized agribusinesses.
→ Reduces barriers to scale and strengthens the competitiveness of rural enterprises.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.2:

Consider critical infrastructure to support modern agribusiness growth.

Assess the needs for expanded small-scale cold storage, processing and packing, broadband, and rural manufacturing capacity.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's agribusiness sector is shifting toward more diversified and value-added models but that growth depends on access to appropriate infrastructure. Many rural producers lack cold storage, processing and packing, high-speed broadband, or access to shared processing space—making it difficult to scale operations or pursue new revenue streams. These infrastructure gaps have already forced some businesses to seek facilities outside the County. A focused assessment of infrastructure needs will help the county prioritize rural investment, support local business growth, and align with emerging opportunities in food innovation, ag-tech, and small-scale rural manufacturing.

What's Needed?

- Conduct a rural infrastructure needs assessment focused on lack specialized storage, high-speed broadband, or access to share processing and packing space.
→ Identifies critical gaps and builds a roadmap for investment.
- Engage agribusiness stakeholders to ground-truth infrastructure challenges and co-develop investment priorities.
→ Ensures real-world relevance and local buy-in.
- Evaluate opportunities for shared-use or cooperative infrastructure models, especially for small-scale production and packing capacity.
→ Increases access and affordability while supporting scalable rural business models.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.3:

Create a rural business resource hub for agribusiness growth, succession, and capital access.

A platform providing business planning, growth strategies, succession support, and financing pathways.

Why It Matters:

Many of Albemarle County's agricultural businesses are at a turning point, facing generational transitions, shifting markets, and rising interest in value-added production. Yet most lack access to the kind of business services that small urban firms take for granted: help with financial planning, growth strategies, capital readiness, and succession. Without these supports, emerging producers may stall out, and legacy businesses may disappear. A rural business resource hub can close this gap, helping farmers and agribusinesses develop long-term plans, navigate ownership transitions, and tap into funding sources to grow and adapt.

What's Needed?

- Coordinate with existing partners to establish business support services and programming tailored for rural and agricultural entrepreneurs - including capital access, grant navigation, loan readiness, investor matchmaking, and succession planning to support farm transitions..
 - → Offers targeted help with planning, growth, and succession—close to where businesses operate.
 - → Avoids duplication and builds on trusted local relationships.
 - → Ensures economic continuity and preserves working farms and businesses.
- Partner to develop any missing programming around capital access, including grant navigation, loan readiness, and investor matchmaking.
 - Helps rural businesses tap new sources of funding for modernization and expansion.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.4:

Build new wholesale and scalable market pathways for Albemarle producers.

An initiative connecting local producers with wholesale buyers, regional distributors, and scalable markets.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's producers are skilled, innovative, and increasingly interested in growing beyond direct-to-consumer sales. Yet many lack access to wholesale channels, institutional buyers, and regional distributors that would allow them to scale. Without these market pathways, local producers face stagnant revenue and limited growth potential. By helping them connect to larger buyers and higher-volume markets, the County can boost rural income, reduce business churn, and strengthen the long-term viability of its food and beverage economy.

What's Needed?

- Partner to develop a producer matchmaking and distribution strategy, potentially in partnership with food hubs, cooperatives, or regional logistics providers.
→ Solves logistical barriers and helps small producers meet wholesale requirements.
- Support training and technical assistance for producers to meet volume, packaging, and compliance standards for wholesale markets.
→ Prepares businesses to grow without compromising quality or operations.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.5:

Establish a rural entrepreneurship and agribusiness sector partnership.

A partnership connecting agribusiness entrepreneurs, workforce partners, and county leaders for coordinated growth.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's rural economy includes a diverse mix of traditional farmers, food entrepreneurs, ag-tech startups, and small-scale manufacturers. But these businesses often operate in silos with limited opportunities to shape shared priorities, access workforce resources, or advocate for their needs. A formal sector partnership can create space for collaboration, elevate rural voices in economic planning, and ensure County strategies reflect on-the-ground realities. By bringing together entrepreneurs, workforce partners, and local institutions, this partnership can drive innovation, expand opportunity, and build a more connected rural business ecosystem.

What's Needed?

- Launch a formal sector partnership focused on agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship, co-convened by the County and key industry partners.
→ Includes regular convenings, working groups, and collaboration with workforce organizations like PVCC and Cooperative Extension to align on workforce, infrastructure, and business needs.
- Use the partnership as a strategic feedback loop for County programs and policies affecting the rural economy.
→ Ensures ongoing coordination, responsiveness, and accountability in economic development efforts.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.6:

Support the growth of Albemarle County's wine industry.

An approach to strengthen a signature rural industry through investment, training, sustainability, and expanded market access.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County is at the heart of Virginia's growing wine industry—anchoring regional tourism, generating high-quality jobs, and positioning local producers for national and international export. As climate resilience, workforce challenges, and global market opportunities reshape the sector, the County has a chance to lead in sustainable, innovation-driven wine production.

What's Needed?

- Partner with PVCC and industry groups to develop viticulture and enology training pathways.
→ Fills critical labor gaps and supports long-term sector growth.
- Pursue funding and partnerships to expand sustainable practices—like irrigation, pest control, and renewable energy.
→ Enhances resilience and positions Albemarle as a leader in climate-smart wine production.
- Support marketing, branding, and export readiness in collaboration with the Virginia Wine Board and others.
→ Expands visibility and unlocks access to new markets.
- Offer incentives and reduce regulatory barriers for vineyard expansion, winemaking equipment, and tasting room development.
→ Encourages business investment and enables scale across the value chain.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

Strategy 3.7:

Expand the agritourism economy through partnership with Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A strategy to grow rural tourism by expanding lodging, events, and farm-based food and beverage experiences.

Why It Matters:

Agritourism is already a core strength of Albemarle County's economy, anchored by its wineries, scenic landscapes, and vibrant local food scene. But many producers face barriers to expanding into lodging, events, or year-round experiences that generate sustained revenue. With targeted support and deeper collaboration between the County and Visit Charlottesville, Albemarle can scale its rural tourism economy, draw new visitor segments, and strengthen the financial sustainability of its agribusinesses. Agritourism is not just a lifestyle asset—it's a growing economic driver that connects rural vitality with broader regional appeal.

What's Needed?

- Continue to expand destination marketing and visitor experience development focused on rural assets.
→ Elevates agritourism offerings and draws new tourism demand into rural parts of the County.
- Support producers and rural entrepreneurs in expanding lodging, food and beverage, and event-based tourism.
→ Unlocks new business models and adds year-round economic value to working lands.
- Identify and address regulatory or permitting barriers that limit the growth of agritourism operations.
→ Makes it easier for producers to scale visitor-facing services.
- Promote cross-sector tourism experiences that connect agribusiness with arts, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage.
→ Builds more holistic and compelling visitor itineraries across the county.

Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agriculture Economy.

We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

New rural infrastructure delivered

Tracking square footage added and the number of new cold storage, food processing, broadband, and small-scale manufacturing facilities

Business engagement with support resources

Tracking the number of agribusinesses accessing business planning resources

Expansion of wholesale and scalable market access

Counting the number of Albemarle-based producers securing new wholesale contracts, regional distribution agreements, or institutional buyers.

Employer and ecosystem engagement

Tracking partnerships, convenings, and joint initiatives with agribusiness entrepreneurs, rural businesses, workforce partners, and regional collaborators.

Growth of agritourism businesses and rural visitor economy

Tracking the number of new or expanded agritourism experiences.



Brookings, South Dakota

Brookings built a modern rural economy by aligning innovation, education, and value-added agriculture.

Brookings combined its agricultural legacy with strategic investments in research, infrastructure, and talent to drive growth in food science and processing.

What they did and achieved

- Partnered with South Dakota State University to establish a nationally recognized research and workforce pipeline in dairy science and food innovation.
- Invested in infrastructure including pilot plants, food-grade labs, and rural broadband to support agribusiness expansion.
- Attracted major employers like Bel Brands and 3M by aligning land use, talent development, and industry needs.

Brookings redefined what a rural innovation hub can be—where education, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship drive sustained economic growth.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Brookings shows how small communities can lead in agribusiness innovation by building around their institutional strengths. Albemarle can take a similar approach—linking UVA, PVCC, and rural infrastructure to scale next-generation food and agriculture enterprises.



Yuma, Arizona

Yuma connected agriculture, logistics, and workforce to become a cross-border food production hub.

Yuma leveraged its climate, location, and training institutions to build a year-round agribusiness economy rooted in logistics and workforce alignment.

What they did and achieved

- Built a year-round leafy greens industry supported by cold chain logistics and export infrastructure.
- Created specialized workforce pipelines through Arizona Western College tailored to agribusiness and logistics.
- Leveraged its proximity to California and Mexico to become a key node for cross-border food trade and processing.

Yuma scaled its rural economy by integrating modern logistics, targeted training, and regional market access.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Yuma demonstrates how rural regions can compete in modern agribusiness by focusing on logistics and talent. Albemarle can do the same by strengthening its infrastructure and workforce pipeline to keep producers local and growing.



Modesto, California

Modesto bridged legacy agriculture and modern innovation to lead in value-added food processing.

What they did and achieved

- Created the Food Innovation Center, a partnership with CSU Stanislaus and regional producers to support R&D, product development, and workforce training.
- Attracted major processors like Blue Diamond Growers and E&J Gallo Winery, building a vertically integrated food processing ecosystem.
- Invested in specialized infrastructure including cold storage, logistics hubs, and small-scale food manufacturing facilities.
- Supported rural entrepreneurship with technical assistance, capital access, and scalable market pathways for local producers.

Modesto became a regional leader in food innovation by combining infrastructure investment, higher education partnerships, and producer-driven growth.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Modesto offers a roadmap for how rural counties can modernize agribusiness while preserving local character. Albemarle can do the same by upgrading its infrastructure, expanding support for producers, and opening new market pathways that help rural businesses grow and stay rooted.



GOAL 4

EMPOWER TALENT.

We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Albemarle's ability to lead Virginia's innovation economy depends on retaining and growing the people who drive it. With nationally ranked institutions like the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College, a strong quality of life, and a vibrant startup culture, Albemarle has powerful assets, but it struggles to retain mid-career talent, connect students to careers, and scale homegrown businesses. Albemarle's 25–44 working-age population is already shrinking compared to peer counties, and without clear pathways to careers, capital, and leadership, the County risks losing the very people who power its future. Building an economy of staying power is essential to turning Albemarle's potential into long-term innovation leadership.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.

4.1

Align workforce and economic development systems to build career pathways.

A unified plan connecting education, training, and placement strategies to Albemarle's target sectors.

4.2

Map and coordinate Albemarle's entrepreneurial ecosystem through a unified platform.

An initiative to connect resources, close service gaps, and support startup-to-scale growth.

4.3

Partner to launch Next Gen Albemarle to connect and retain UVA and PVCC student talent and entrepreneurs.

A talent initiative creating clear pathways from campus to local careers, startups, and leadership opportunities.

4.4

Collaborate to grow the region's Young Professional Network to build belonging, leadership, and civic connection.

A network supporting career development, civic engagement, and board leadership placement for young professionals.

4.5

Expand destination restaurant, entertainment, and retail experiences to strengthen Albemarle's lifestyle advantage.

A plan to bring restaurants, experiential retail, and entertainment options to the County and redevelop aging retail centers.

4.6

Support housing development and child care initiatives.

A collaborative effort to expand affordable housing and childcare options for workers and entrepreneurs.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.1:

Align workforce and economic development systems to build career pathways.

A unified plan connecting education, training, and placement strategies to Albemarle's target sectors.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's workforce development ecosystem is strong, but often fragmented. Stakeholders noted that education and training providers, economic development leaders, and employers are not always aligned around shared sector priorities. As a result, students and jobseekers face unclear pathways into key industries like national security innovation, life sciences, agribusiness, and healthcare. A unified workforce-economic development strategy can close this gap, helping the County better anticipate talent needs, invest in high-impact programs, and connect residents to upwardly mobile careers in Albemarle's priority sectors.

What's Needed?

- Convene a cross-sector workforce and economic development alignment team, including PVCC, K-12, employers, and regional partners.
→ Builds a shared understanding of sector needs and training gaps.
- Map existing education and training programs to target clusters, identifying duplication and areas of opportunity.
→ Creates clarity and highlights where new investments are needed.
- Support program development and curriculum alignment for in-demand, middle-skill careers in Albemarle's innovation economy through sector partnerships.
→ Ensures residents are prepared for high-quality jobs in growing fields.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.2:

Map and coordinate Albemarle's entrepreneurial ecosystem through a unified platform.

An initiative to connect resources, close service gaps, and support startup-to-scale growth.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County is home to a range of entrepreneurial support organizations, from incubators and capital providers to technical assistance programs. But for many founders, the system feels fragmented and hard to navigate. Startups often miss opportunities, duplicate efforts, or fail to progress from early-stage ideas to growth-ready businesses. A unified platform that maps the ecosystem, streamlines access, and coordinates partner efforts will help more entrepreneurs find what they need, when they need it—and stay in the county as they grow.

What's Needed?

- Conduct a comprehensive mapping of the County's entrepreneurial support ecosystem, including services, funding, and facilities.
→ Clarifies what's available and where gaps exist.
- Develop a public-facing platform or resource guide that organizes services by stage, sector, and need.
→ Makes it easier for founders and small business owners to navigate and access support.
- Coordinate ecosystem partners through regular convenings or a shared strategy framework.
→ Reduces duplication and improves alignment across providers.
- Promote success stories and pipeline outcomes to build visibility, pride, and momentum within the entrepreneurial community.
→ Reinforces Albemarle County as a place where businesses start and grow.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.3:

Partner to launch Next Gen Albemarle to connect and retain UVA and PVCC student talent and entrepreneurs.

A talent initiative creating clear pathways from campus to local careers, startups, and leadership opportunities.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County benefits from proximity to two major talent generators: the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. Yet each year, too many students leave the region after graduation—taking their skills, ideas, and entrepreneurial potential with them. Local employers cite increasing difficulty hiring for early-career roles, and the startup ecosystem struggles to engage student founders in long-term growth. Next Gen Albemarle will bridge this gap, helping students plug into local opportunities, connect with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and imagine a future rooted in the County.

What's Needed?

- Explore best practices from other university-linked talent retention programs (e.g. Campus Philly, Launch Detroit, Hello Utah) to inform the design of Next Gen Albemarle.
→ Ensures the initiative reflects proven strategies tailored to local conditions.
- Partner with CVPED, UVA, PVCC, K-12, and regional employers to co-design internships, apprenticeships, fellowships, startup pipelines, and service learning opportunities.
→ Aligns student pathways with real opportunities in Albemarle County.
- Launch a visible “Next Gen Albemarle” brand and leverage CVPED’s Techlink platform that connects students and those competing some college and credentials to jobs, networks, mentors, and startup support.
→ Creates a sense of belonging and identity for emerging talent.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.4:

Collaborate to grow the region's Young Professional Network to build belonging, leadership, and civic connection.

A network supporting career development, civic engagement, and board leadership placement for young professionals.

Why It Matters:

Young professionals are essential to Albemarle County's economic future but retaining them requires more than jobs, it requires community. Employers, especially in growth sectors like life sciences and secure innovation, consistently cite difficulty keeping early-career talent in the region. Many young professionals report feeling disconnected from civic life and unaware of pathways into leadership. A vibrant, visible Young Professional Network—rooted in best practices from cities like Tulsa (TYPROS) and Charlotte—can provide that missing infrastructure. It can help young leaders build careers, connect with peers, and see a future for themselves in the County.

What's Needed?

- Evaluate existing young professional programs and networks in Albemarle County to identify what's working and where gaps exist.
→ Provides a foundation for smart investment and targeted expansion.
- Collaborate with employers, nonprofits, and regional partners to grow a unified, county-supported Young Professional Network.
→ Builds a welcoming space for networking, development, and civic engagement.
- Support leadership development and board placement pathways that connect young professionals to commissions, nonprofits, and civic institutions.
→ Strengthens retention and brings new energy into County decision-making.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.5:
Expand destination restaurant, entertainment, and retail experiences to strengthen Albemarle's lifestyle advantage.
A plan to bring restaurants, experiential retail, and entertainment options to the County and redevelop aging retail centers.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's appeal to talent and residents depends in part on the vibrancy of its activity centers. While nearby Charlottesville offers strong amenities, many parts of the county are missing some lifestyle offerings—especially destination restaurants, entertainment venues, and retail experiences. At the same time, aging shopping centers and underutilized commercial corridors present clear opportunities for reinvestment. A focused retail and hospitality attraction strategy—supported by proactive site selection, developer partnerships, and brand alignment—can position the County to meet rising demand, attract new spending, and enhance quality of place.

What's Needed?

- Partner with commercial brokers, site selectors, and developers to attract appropriate, experience-driven retail and entertainment concepts.
→ Brings new energy to the County's activity hubs and expands lifestyle offerings.
- Coordinate with planning and permitting teams to streamline review processes for projects that align with County planning documents
→ Speeds delivery and reduces uncertainty for commercial investment.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

Strategy 4.6:

Support housing development and child care initiatives.

A collaborative effort to expand affordable housing and childcare options for workers and entrepreneurs.

Why It Matters:

A growing economy depends on access to both housing and child care, especially for mid-wage workers, entrepreneurs, and young families. In Albemarle County, housing costs are rising faster than incomes, and access to child care remains limited and expensive. These pressures make it harder to retain talent, attract new workers, and support inclusive economic growth. By expanding housing options and helping new child care providers launch and scale, the County can strengthen its talent pipeline and improve quality of life for working households.

What's Needed?

- Support local and regional efforts to reach the County's housing development goals.
→ Increases the supply of affordable and market-rate housing aligned with workforce needs.
- Provide small business support services for entrepreneurs interested in starting or expanding child care operations.
→ Helps close the supply gap and strengthens the early childhood care economy.
- Explore public-private partnerships and funding tools to scale access to quality, affordable child care in underserved areas.
→ Supports household stability and broadens workforce participation.

Goal 4: Empower Talent.

We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Growth of Albemarle's 25–44-year-old working-age population

Measuring growth in the number and share of residents aged 25–44.

Participation and leadership placement through AMP

Tracking young professionals engaged through AMP and placed in board, commission, and nonprofit leadership roles.

Expansion of entrepreneurship connections and ecosystem use

Tracking entrepreneurs utilizing Albemarle's coordinated entrepreneurial platform and support network.

Attraction of destination restaurants, entertainment, and experiential retail

Counting new destination restaurants, entertainment venues, and experiential retail businesses.



Campus Philly

Campus Philly turned student retention into an economic growth strategy.

Recognizing its higher ed density as an untapped asset, Philadelphia launched a region-wide effort to retain more graduates and fuel its innovation workforce.

What they did and achieved

- Formed Campus Philly as a nonprofit partnership between the city, local universities, and employers to connect students to regional opportunities.
- Built programs for internships, career fairs, and civic engagement that helped students plug into the local economy before graduation.
- Created a marketing and engagement platform to reposition Philadelphia as a place for young people to launch careers and stay long-term.
- Helped increase student retention by more than 25 percent over the past decade, with more grads staying in-region to work, start businesses, and contribute to civic life.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Campus Philly shows how intentional strategies can turn higher ed presence into long-term talent. Albemarle can build on UVA's draw by developing programs that connect students to regional employers, leadership opportunities, and the broader community.



TYPROS: Tulsa Young Professionals

Tulsa activated its next generation of leaders through TYPROS.

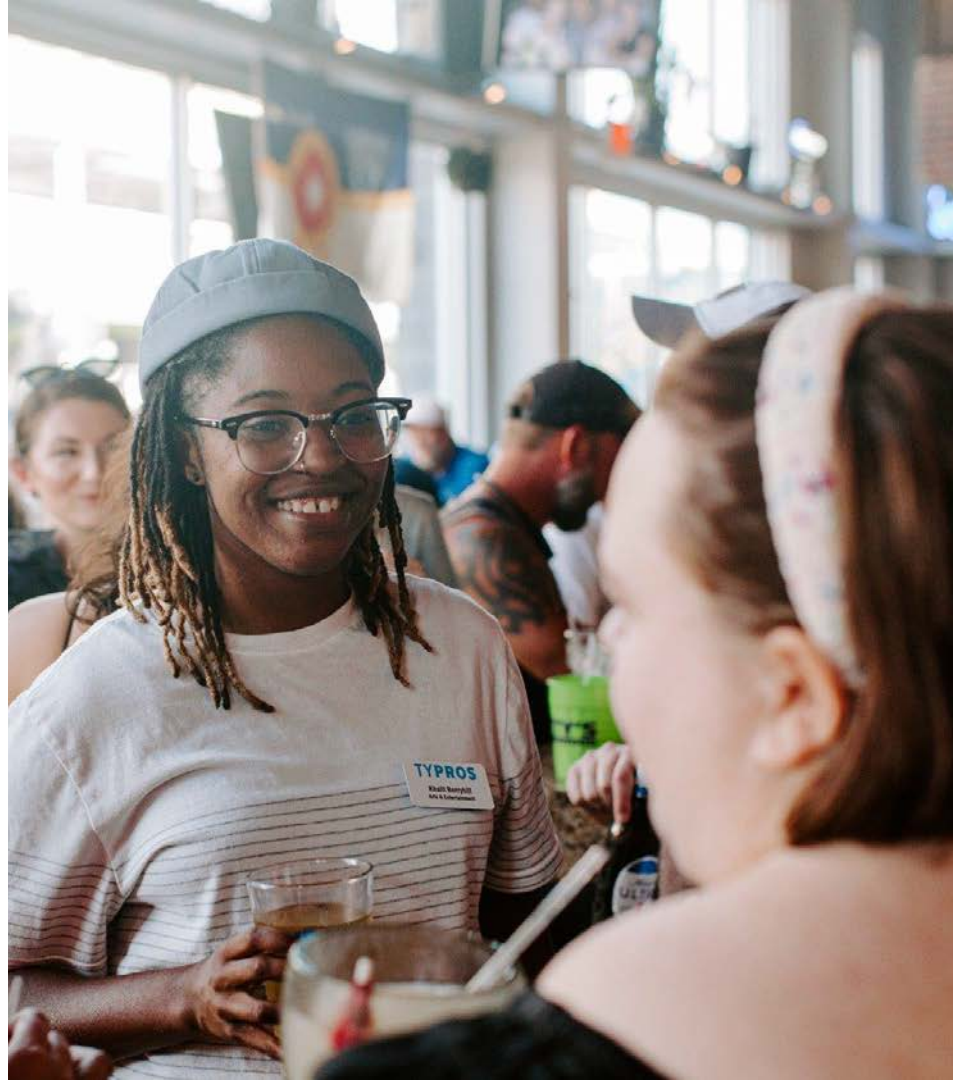
To retain talent and build civic capacity, Tulsa launched one of the nation's most ambitious young professional networks—turning engagement into economic strategy.

What they did and achieved

- Created TYPROS (Tulsa's Young Professionals), a program of the Tulsa Regional Chamber, to mobilize 20- and 30-somethings in business, policy, and community development.
- Formed issue-focused “crews” that connect young professionals to city planning, entrepreneurship, access, and placemaking initiatives.
- Engaged more than 8,000 members in activities that build networks, provide leadership pathways, and amplify young voices in public decision-making.
- Helped Tulsa increase retention of early-career professionals and inspired other cities to replicate the TYPROS model for talent development and civic renewal.

Why it matters for Albemarle

TYPROS shows how young people can be partners in shaping economic growth, not just beneficiaries of it. Albemarle can use a similar model to engage emerging leaders from UVA and across the county—building a diverse, next-gen talent pipeline rooted in place.



Austin Infrastructure Academy

Austin aligned workforce and economic development through its Infrastructure Academy.

To prepare for major public investment and address systemic workforce gaps, Austin launched a cross-sector academy model that connects talent development directly to economic growth.

What they did and achieved

- Created the Austin Infrastructure Academy as a partnership between the City of Austin, Austin Community College, employers, labor, and workforce agencies.
- Built short-term training pathways aligned with mobility, water, energy, and green construction projects—sectors tied to \$25 billion in planned public investment.
- Prioritized inclusive recruitment by engaging women, people of color, and returning citizens for high-wage, skilled trades careers.
- Launched a roadmap to scale training programs to meet Austin's projected need for 10,000 infrastructure workers over the next decade.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Austin's model demonstrates how economic development and workforce systems can be aligned through shared goals and investment. Albemarle can take a similar approach to ensure local residents are prepared for and connected to jobs in key growth sectors.



GOAL 5

COMPETE FOR INVESTMENT.

We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment-ready county — ready to compete, build, and lead.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Innovation-driven growth demands investment-ready communities. Albemarle's ability to lead Virginia's next economy depends on a business environment that can compete nationally: sites ready for development, infrastructure that meets modern needs, and streamlined processes that build speed and certainty. With limited commercial land and rising competition for innovation-sector investment, Albemarle must act decisively to prepare sites, modernize policies, and tell a stronger investment story. Communities that win the next economy will be those that are fast, smart, and strategic, and Albemarle County must be ready to lead.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment- ready county – ready to compete, build, and lead.

- 5.1 Modernize permitting and development processes and zoning code.**
A streamlined framework and simplified zoning code that reduces uncertainty, accelerates project timelines, and aligns with sector needs.
- 5.2 Launch a developer sector partnership.**
A sector partnership with developers and utility providers to improve market readiness and accelerate growth.
- 5.3 Expand business retention and expansion (BRE) through a formal visitation program.**
A proactive outreach program to strengthen employer relationships and identify expansion opportunities.
- 5.4 Leverage the EDA and public-private partnerships to drive strategic investment.**
A framework to mobilize Albemarle's EDA and private sector partners to accelerate infrastructure investments that fuel innovation.
- 5.5 Maintain a pipeline of building and sites aligned with cluster needs.**
An active inventory of development-ready sites and buildings that support growth in target sectors.
- 5.6 Partner with utilities and the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport to deliver infrastructure for industrial growth.**
A coordinated effort to expand air service, water, sewer, energy, and broadband capacity.
- 5.7 Tell Albemarle's innovation story with a bold investment brand.**
A marketing strategy to position Albemarle as Virginia's next hub for innovation-driven growth.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.1:

Modernize permitting and development processes and zoning code.

A streamlined framework and simplified zoning code that reduces uncertainty, accelerates project timelines, and aligns with sector needs.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's development review processes and highly prescriptive zoning code are slowing investment and increasing risk for businesses and developers. Site plan reviews often exceed 18–24 months—well beyond the business cycle—and require layers of legislative approvals that add cost and complexity. These delays have already caused some firms to walk away or choose to expand elsewhere. Streamlining and modernizing permitting processes will reduce barriers to development, enable the County to compete for high-quality investment, and better support the innovation-driven sectors it seeks to grow.

What's Needed?

- Hire a qualified consulting firm to support zoning modernization and permitting reform, bringing national expertise and real-world implementation strategies.
→ Provides capacity and objectivity to deliver a best-in-class regulatory framework.
- Redesign the permitting and site review process to reduce timelines, improve transparency, and coordinate across divisions, departments, and partner agencies.
→ Speeds up development while improving predictability for applicants.
- Engage employers, developers, and site selectors to test reforms and ensure proposed changes reflect market realities.
→ Builds confidence among stakeholders and improves adoption.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.2:

Launch a developer sector partnership.

A sector partnership with developers and utility providers to improve market readiness and accelerate growth.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County's success in growing innovation-driven sectors will depend on its ability to offer development-ready sites with aligned infrastructure. But currently, too many high-potential areas lack critical utilities, and developers cite uncertainty in the planning process. A formal sector partnership will give the County a structured way to work with developers, utility providers, and site selectors to identify barriers, share information, and prioritize investment. It will also help coordinate long-range infrastructure planning and ensure public and private sector goals are aligned.

What's Needed?

- Launch a regular developer and infrastructure roundtable that includes commercial and industrial developers, utility providers, planners, and economic and community development staff.
→ Builds trust, improves information flow, and surfaces site-readiness barriers early.
- Use the partnership to inform zoning and permitting reform efforts underway in Strategy 5.1.
→ Ensures that policy reforms reflect real-world needs.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.3:

Expand business retention and expansion (BRE) through a formal visitation program.

A proactive outreach program to strengthen employer relationships and identify expansion opportunities.

Why It Matters:

Retaining and growing existing businesses is one of the most cost-effective economic development strategies—and one where Albemarle County already has momentum. The County's one-on-one outreach efforts have provided valuable insights into employer needs, but these efforts remain informal and limited in reach. A structured BRE program can deepen relationships, flag expansion risks or opportunities earlier, and build a stronger data foundation for investment and policy decisions. It also sends a clear message to employers: Albemarle is a committed long-term partner.

What's Needed?

- Formalize and scale the existing one-on-one visitation program into a structured BRE initiative.
→ Expands outreach across sectors and tracks trends over time.
- Develop a standardized intake tool to capture employer feedback on workforce, infrastructure, real estate, and regulatory issues.
→ Creates actionable data to inform County decision-making.
- Establish annual BRE goals and priority sectors aligned with Albemarle's strategic plan.
→ Ensures resources are focused on high-impact industries.
- Coordinate follow-up and referrals with workforce, infrastructure, and planning partners.
→ Converts insights into support and strengthens employer confidence.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.4:

Leverage the EDA and public-private partnerships to drive strategic investment.

A framework to mobilize Albemarle's EDA and private sector partners to accelerate infrastructure investments that fuel innovation.

Why It Matters:

Delivering this economic strategy will require more than plans—it will take investment. Albemarle County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) and private sector partners have a critical role to play in turning strategy into action, especially in funding infrastructure that enables business growth. Whether it's site readiness or filling infrastructure and asset gaps for target sectors, these investments will shape where and how the county grows. A clear framework for collaboration and co-investment will help Albemarle move from planning to implementation, and unlock the full potential of its public assets.

What's Needed?

- Define the EDA's strategic investment priorities based on the goals of this economic development plan.
→ Aligns tools and resources with long-term County goals.
- Identify priority infrastructure projects where EDA investment or facilitation can unlock business growth or private co-investment.
→ Catalyzes near-term action and future-ready development.
- Consider flexible public-private financing tools
→ Helps close gaps that delay or prevent innovation-sector development.
- Establish additional defined incentives to support business expansion and business attraction in target sectors.
→ Makes Albemarle more competitive for the jobs and industries we want to grow.
- Establish clear metrics and oversight to ensure EDA investments deliver community and economic returns.
→ Builds accountability and trust in public investment decisions.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.5:

Maintain a pipeline of building and sites aligned with cluster needs.

An active inventory of development-ready sites and buildings that support growth in target sectors.

Why It Matters:

To attract and retain innovative companies, Albemarle County must be able to offer ready-to-develop sites and suitable building space that align with the needs of its key industries. Yet stakeholders noted that prospective employers often struggle to find sites with the right infrastructure, zoning, or timeline for delivery. Without a proactive pipeline strategy, the County risks losing high-value opportunities to faster-moving peers. Maintaining a real-time inventory of sites—coordinated with infrastructure planning, marketing, and cluster needs—will help Albemarle stay competitive and responsive.

What's Needed?

- Build and regularly update a site and building inventory aligned with life sciences, national security, agribusiness, and entrepreneurial growth needs.
→ Enables faster responses to prospect inquiries and expansion opportunities.
- Coordinate with developers, brokers, and utilities to assess site readiness and identify gaps in zoning, permitting, or infrastructure.
→ Ensures identified sites are viable and investment-ready.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.6:

Partner with utilities and the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport to deliver infrastructure for industrial growth.

A coordinated effort to expand air service, water, sewer, energy, and broadband capacity.

Why It Matters:

Infrastructure gaps can be significant barriers to economic growth in Albemarle County. Stakeholders consistently pointed to limited broadband coverage, aging industrial utilities, and water and sewer constraints as obstacles to business attraction and expansion. In parallel, improving air service and logistics connectivity is key to serving national security, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing sectors. By working closely with utility providers and the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport, the County can address these chokepoints and prepare high-potential areas for the next wave of growth.

What's Needed?

- Coordinate with utility providers to assess and upgrade service capacity in priority development zones.
→ Ensures water, sewer, energy, and broadband infrastructure aligns with target cluster needs.
- Partner with the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport to explore air service expansion and improved logistics connections.
→ Supports talent mobility, business travel, and industry-specific freight needs.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

Strategy 5.7:

Tell Albemarle's innovation story with a bold investment brand.

A marketing strategy to position Albemarle as Virginia's next hub for innovation-driven growth.

Why It Matters:

Albemarle County is making strategic, forward-looking investments to grow its innovation economy, through Rivanna Futures, university partnerships, and targeted support for key sectors like national security, life sciences, and agribusiness. But without a compelling narrative, those investments may go unnoticed in a competitive national landscape. A bold, coordinated brand will help the County define its value proposition, communicate clearly with site selectors and business leaders, and give local partners a shared story to tell. It's not just about promotion; it's about shaping perception and positioning Albemarle as Virginia's next hub for innovation-driven growth.

What's Needed?

- Develop a County-wide investment and innovation brand, building on the themes in this strategy.
→ Creates a unified message across all business sectors and partners.
- Activate the brand through marketing materials, digital platforms, and targeted outreach to business leaders, site selectors, and media.
→ Expands awareness and positions Albemarle in key decision-maker networks.
- Collaborate with regional and state partners to ensure the brand aligns with broader efforts while telling Albemarle's distinct story.
→ Increases visibility without duplication and builds coherence.
- Equip employers, institutions, and ecosystem partners to carry the brand in talent recruitment, investment outreach, and storytelling.
→ Makes the message go further through distributed advocacy.

Goal 5: Compete for Investment.

We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment- ready county — ready to compete, build, and lead.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Permitting and development process improvements

Tracking reductions in permitting timelines and improvements in development process efficiency.

Strategic site and infrastructure delivery

Tracking the number of investment-ready sites and infrastructure projects aligned with innovation sectors.

Business retention and expansion (BRE) engagement

Tracking the number of business visits.

Innovation brand visibility and engagement

Measuring engagement with Albemarle's investment marketing efforts, including inquiries, website traffic, conference participation, and media placements.



Montgomery County, Maryland

Montgomery County modernized its land use to compete for innovation investment.

Facing pressure from high-growth neighbors, Montgomery County reformed zoning, streamlined permitting, and positioned its real estate assets to attract next-generation employers.

What they did and achieved

- Updated zoning and land use plans to support biotech, R&D, and mixed-use innovation centers—especially near key transit corridors.
- Launched the White Oak Science Gateway and Great Seneca Science Corridor to focus life sciences and advanced tech growth.
- Established a cross-agency permitting and infrastructure team to coordinate reviews, reduce delays, and proactively support high-impact developments.
- Used a “development ombudsman” model to assign a single point of contact for priority projects, helping developers navigate land use, utilities, and infrastructure planning more efficiently.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Montgomery County shows how forward-thinking land use and permitting can unlock economic potential. Albemarle can apply similar tools to prepare key corridors for investment and streamline how public agencies support strategic growth.



Fairfax County, Virginia

Fairfax County retooled its land use systems to support strategic growth.

To stay competitive in a high-demand region, Fairfax modernized its permitting processes and land use systems to better serve employers, developers, and communities.

What they did and achieved

- Launched the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS), a consolidated online platform that integrates zoning, permitting, inspections, and code enforcement.
- Streamlined workflows across multiple departments, improving transparency, reducing turnaround times, and creating a single portal for applicants.
- Introduced process improvements like digital submissions, permit tracking, and real-time status updates to increase predictability for large-scale projects.
- Used PLUS to support economic development priorities—including commercial redevelopment, transit-oriented growth, and strategic infill.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Fairfax shows how updating internal systems and workflows can unlock capacity for strategic development. Albemarle can take a similar approach by modernizing permitting and using technology to align land use decisions with long-term economic goals.



Arlington, Virginia

Arlington used unified destination development to align to drive economic growth.

To sharpen its competitive edge, Arlington launched “All in Arlington” as a county-wide identity that connects place marketing, tourism, and business attraction under one cohesive brand.

What they did and achieved

- Developed the “All in Arlington” brand to tell a more unified story—one that highlights the county’s diverse neighborhoods, vibrant economy, and cultural assets.
- Tied the brand to both tourism recovery and business development, aligning messaging across Visit Arlington, the economic development office, and regional partners.
- Used the brand to reintroduce Arlington as more than a suburb of DC—positioning it as a destination for visitors, residents, employers, and investors alike.
- Funded the campaign with a \$3.25 million ARPA grant, rolling out new visuals, storytelling assets, and a shared website to drive engagement and visibility.

Why it matters for Albemarle

Arlington shows how a unified brand can do more than attract visitors—it can shape perception, build alignment, and drive investment. Albemarle can use a similar approach to connect its tourism and economic development goals under a single, forward-looking identity.



Building What's Next for Albemarle County

GOAL 1

Lead in Intelligence & National Security.

We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.

GOAL 2

Discover in Life Sciences.

We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.

GOAL 3

Grow a Modern Agribusiness Economy.

We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.

GOAL 4

Empower Talent.

We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.

GOAL 5

Compete for Investment.

We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment-ready county – ready to compete, build, and lead.

Let's empower
your place together.

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