

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) FY25 Year End Program Summary



The BRE program is a service of the Economic Development Office aimed at improving the overall business climate by:

- Understanding challenges and opportunities facing existing primary businesses
- Providing tailored resources and customized solutions to address those challenges
- Facilitating connections to workforce training, access to capital, education, and other professional and ecosystem support

FY25 Target:

Conduct and complete **12** Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) visits with businesses in the county

Result:

We have conducted and completed **50** BRE visits



SECTORS SERVED

Biotech and Medical Devices (10)

IT and Intelligence and National Security (10)

Agriculture and Food Processing (12)

Business Services, Manufacturing and Other (5)

Afton Scientific's Expansion of their biopharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Albemarle County

October 2, 2024 - Governor Glenn Youngkin formally announced the \$200M+/200 job expansion, highlighting Central Virginia's growing life sciences sector.

Partners:

- Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)
- Albemarle County
- Arlington Capital Partners (Afton's parent company)

This announcement was one of the largest economic development wins for Albemarle County in FY25.



Common Themes from BRE Questionnaire and Visits

Category	Insights
Location & Infrastructure	Attractive geography and proximity praised; concerns over rural area power outages and limitations and broadband access and limited affordable housing.
Regulatory Environment	Businesses cited difficulties with zoning, signage, and permit acquisition.
Workforce & Talent	Widespread need for skilled labor, particularly in tech; calls for enhanced training and retention programs.
Business Support	Mixed views on local government support; concerns about high taxes and slow permitting processes.
Growth & Expansion	Real estate scarcity, high costs, and permitting challenges seen as barriers to scaling operations.

In Summary

Biotech & Medical Devices

Businesses in this sector highlighted advancements in medical device manufacturing, diagnostics, and therapeutics. Visits included facility tours, participation in industry expos, and exploratory sessions on workforce needs and infrastructure. Several businesses noted challenges with permitting and access to skilled talent but expressed interest in expansion driven by innovation.

IT, Intelligence and National Security

Visits centered on AI development, robotics, cyber security, and federal partnerships. Businesses shared feedback on data infrastructure constraints and the need for zoning flexibility. Workforce training and retention were recurrent themes, especially in high-tech skill areas. Several businesses flagged broadband reliability as critical to operations.

Agriculture & Food Processing

This cohort ranged from cider producers and wineries to sustainable farming operations and agri-biotech companies. Visits emphasized branding, rural accessibility, and market visibility. Business owners voiced concerns over signage regulations and marketing limitations, particularly in remote areas. Feedback underscored rising land costs and supply chain pressure along with challenges accessing local processing and cold storage.

Business Services, Manufacturing & Other

Diverse operations included tool manufacturing, distribution centers, music merchandising, and construction-related services. Discussions during visits focused on infrastructure issues, including electricity reliability and transportation logistics. Several businesses expressed frustration with county-level permit delays and complex zoning regulations.



**Albemarle
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT