



***Fairfax County:
Preserving our
Quality of Life
Requires
Maintaining a
Strong Economy***



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PREAMBLE

No community has a preordained right to prosperity. Prosperity can only be achieved and sustained when a community's citizens, businesses and government work in concert for everyone's benefit. Fairfax County has achieved an exceptionally strong local economy and high quality of life through its focus on, among other things, the economic development efforts of both the public and private sectors. These efforts have been underway since the 1970s, when the County was a bedroom community to Washington, D.C.

Fairfax County's sustained efforts have resulted in the County being in the enviable position of having the largest and strongest local economy in the Washington Metropolitan area. This strength is evidenced by a high quality of life, a strong local employment base, low tax rates, a nationally recognized governmental infrastructure, and a preeminent economic development program spearheaded by the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. However, Fairfax County's exceptional economic performance in the past does not guarantee its future success.

In the challenging and changing economic climate of the 21st century, Fairfax County cannot rest on its previous success, but rather, the County must work deliberately to build upon our economic prosperity and resulting quality of life. The Board of Supervisors, in establishing this Economic Advisory Commission, has challenged a diverse group of citizens, representing a range of business and community interests, to develop a series of actions to address the needs of new and evolving businesses as well as changing economic realities. The goal is to maintain and enhance a strong and vital community that will sustain our economic prosperity. Further, we must continue to diversify the local economy to be less dependent upon the federal budget process, a task which will become even more important considering the potential for reductions in the size of the federal government and cutbacks in government contracts upon which many local industries depend.

The Fairfax County Economic Advisory Commission is pleased to present this report to the Board of Supervisors. The report contains guiding principles which form the basis for the fifteen strategies that are presented for consideration. Suggested actions that support the achievement of each strategy are also identified. This report is envisioned as the first step in an ongoing process that ensures Fairfax County remains focused on fostering its economy. The Economic Advisory Commission recommends that specific measures, metrics and timelines be developed for each action; that opportunities be created for additional recommendations that may be identified over time; that progress toward meeting measures and metrics be monitored; and, that the County continues an unwavering and strong focus on keeping and attracting business and jobs to ensure the prosperity we all enjoy.



ECONOMIC STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

Maintain and enhance Fairfax County's quality of life through its preeminence in economic development.

Goals

The quality of life in Fairfax County is inextricably linked to its economic well-being and long-term sustainability. Our county celebrates diversity, entrepreneurship and creativity in all facets of life. We are committed to preserving and protecting the health, safety and welfare of all of our citizens, and to maintaining a first-class educational system. The County recognizes that a long-term view is critical for successful economic development, which must be maintained through constant efforts to re-evaluate and revitalize. With this in mind, the following goals are provided to guide the County in its economic development decisions.

Fairfax County should have:

1. A business environment where economic activity flourishes and jobs are created.
2. The highest quality of education at all levels that prepares students to be strong contributors to the local economy, and supports the creation of cutting edge technologies and industries.
3. A transportation system to satisfy the demands of the present and future.
4. Infrastructure that enhances the County's quality of life, that contributes to its economic development, and that supports emerging technologies.
5. A leadership role in a knowledge-based economy.
6. Economic development opportunities that leverage the County's existing and emerging strengths.
7. A diverse economy.
8. Economic development opportunities throughout the County.
9. Public/private partnerships to create conditions to advance economic development.
10. A wide range of housing opportunities, including workforce housing.



Strategies

1. Fairfax County should maintain and enhance its diverse economy for long-term economic health. The County should adopt polices conducive to **attracting and retaining business**.

Actions:

- a. Attract a wide range of funding opportunities, including venture capital, angel investors, and federal sources that support new and emerging businesses and technologies.
 - b. Diversify the economy by continuing to support existing and targeted emerging industries, such as medical research, bio-technology, government contracting, information technology, green technologies, and nano-technology.
 - c. Instruct the appropriate County agencies to strengthen their collaboration on strategies specifically geared to the evolving requirements of existing and targeted industries.
2. Fairfax County should help prepare, attract, and retain a **skilled and competitive workforce**. High-quality schools are one reason why the County continues to be a destination for new businesses and industry. This high-quality system must be sustained and supported. As many as 22,000 new college graduates will be necessary annually to sustain the local economy by filling new jobs and those left vacant. This is particularly true for the high-wage, high-demand jobs in science, technology, and engineering. The availability of skilled labor at all job levels is critical to a competitive business environment. Delivering a continuous supply of job-ready applicants depends on an integrated system that includes public and private schools, community colleges, job training associations, and institutions of higher education.

Actions:

- a. Support efforts of local educational institutions to “spin-off” businesses.
- b. Encourage the creation of formal partnerships among the County, the school system, businesses, and higher educational institutions, including community colleges, to align workforce development efforts to the skill needs of targeted industries. This may include vocational training programs, internships, apprenticeship programs, entrepreneurial skills training, customized on-site training, and technical and vocational programs at the high school level.
- c. Continue strong support for the County’s educational institutions.
- d. Encourage collaborative efforts between the schools and businesses, including business sponsorships of schools/activities and the hiring of students by businesses.
- e. Encourage increased class availability and the expansion of the community college system in a manner that is easily accessible to transit so that all ages and socio-economic groups can take advantage of education and training opportunities.



3. The County should take into account the effects of its policies regarding taxes and fees on economic development goals, and should consider the balance among economic development goals, the financial health of the County, cumulative debt, and the goals of the Economic Strategic Plan when making **financial decisions**.

Actions:

- a. The current target of achieving 25 percent of the tax base in commercial uses is largely dependent on housing values and therefore may not be the most appropriate measure. Evaluate whether a new measure or measures need to be established.
4. Fairfax County should have a 21st Century **infrastructure**. The quality and availability of infrastructure contributes significantly to the County's success in attracting business and industry. The Board of Supervisors should implement policies that support necessary infrastructure improvements to maintain and/or enhance levels of service, so that the County will continue to be an attractive and competitive location.

Actions:

- a. Identify and adopt mechanisms necessary for implementing the County's Transportation Plan.
- b. Identify and adopt mechanisms to maintain and improve existing infrastructure.
- c. Advocate for the County's fair share of federal and state public infrastructure dollars.
- d. Examine and implement mechanisms for local initiatives to provide funding for infrastructure, including public/private partnerships.
- e. Support public and private efforts to improve wired and wireless communication networks in the County that match or exceed industry standards for speed and reliability.
- f. Ensure a reliable supply of clean and affordable energy by encouraging green energy production from public and private sources; increasing access to clean energy; improving network efficiency; and reducing demand.
- g. Consider establishing a test case for local ownership of public roads in a portion of the County, such as Richmond Highway or Tysons Corner.
- h. Continue the County's leadership role in regional efforts that promote solutions to infrastructure issues, such as addressing transportation improvements and environmental regulatory goals.
- i. Consider a transportation study of the concept of linking region-wide population and employment centers.



5. Fairfax County should engage in an ongoing review of its **regulatory processes**. Efforts should focus on facilitating and providing a customer service-oriented process; expediting the process; making the process more predictable; increasing flexibility where appropriate; making timeframes more predictable; and making costs feasible and more predictable (proffers, fees, time is money, costs of complying with regulations, such as stormwater management).

Actions:

- a. Institute a program to increase public education and awareness of the County's growth management strategy.
 - b. Assess the current Area Plans Review (APR) process and direct how best to update the County's Comprehensive Plan.
 - c. Review and revise as appropriate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that the County's economic development and land use strategies are aligned.
 - d. Assess and make recommendations regarding the VDOT 527 review process as it relates to development applications and Comprehensive Plan amendments.
 - e. Reduce obstacles and/or create incentives to encourage the construction of a diverse range of housing types, with a particular emphasis on adding affordable and workforce housing units.
 - f. Create a formal high-level advisory committee composed of staff, industry experts, and other stakeholders to collaboratively address process improvements. Continuously evaluate the impacts of the regulatory environment and make recommendations where changes in policies or procedures can better align with the goals of the Economic Strategic Plan.
6. Fairfax County should continue to ensure that **land use policies** align with economic development objectives. Among other things, these policies should provide for future housing, public facilities, parks and other amenities which contribute to the County's high quality of life.

Actions:

- a. Continue the County's growth strategy of concentrating future employment and population in mixed-use centers, including the County's revitalization areas.
- b. Ensure that mixed-use centers are planned to accommodate appropriate mixes of residential, retail, office and support uses, and that they are served appropriately by the necessary infrastructure.
- c. Modify the Comprehensive Plan as appropriate to provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the County's targeted economic development objectives and to be responsive to market demands.
- d. Ensure that the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance are aligned with the Comprehensive Plan for the mixed-use centers and with other economic development objectives.



7. A significant portion of Fairfax County's new development will be **redevelopment**. Investment under a redevelopment scenario has unique challenges and requires new approaches.

Actions:

- a. Support and enhance the County's focus on revitalization, redevelopment and reinvestment.
 - b. Endorse redevelopment areas as locations for increasing density.
 - c. Continue to support public/private partnerships that further targeted development opportunities.
 - d. Direct the appropriate County agencies to strengthen their collaboration on redevelopment opportunities.
 - e. Encourage redevelopment to incorporate sustainability practices, including increased energy efficiency.
8. One factor in the ability to successfully recruit business is the **availability and affordability of housing**. Projections indicate that jobs will increase more rapidly than will population and household growth. While there are various reasons why those who work in the County may choose to live outside of the County, the cost of housing is one cause.

Actions:

- a. Encourage public and private actions that support the County's workforce housing policies.
 - b. Direct the County staff to analyze whether the cost/benefit is favorable to accommodate above or below the current 50 % proportion of Fairfax County job holders being residents of Fairfax County. This study should consider such factors as: dollars spent elsewhere by workers living outside the County; the need to provide services and infrastructure for any additional residences; ensuring that the jobs/housing balance does not negatively impact the ability of the County to attract jobs and maintain a high quality of life; and, the impact on the commercial tax base.
 - c. Review opportunities for increasing residential densities in mixed-use centers in order to provide for increased workforce housing and establish targets for the provision of workforce housing.
9. In 2005, Fairfax County had approximately 600,000 jobs and 380,000 households. By 2030, it is estimated that job growth countywide will increase by over 40 percent to approximately 845,000 jobs. As the County grows its employment base, it is important that there be an appropriate increase in all housing types to support new workers at all income levels, and that



such housing be located convenient to places of employment. Existing policy supports increasing housing opportunities in our mixed use centers; however, a more proactive approach may be necessary if we are to achieve a proper **balance between job and housing** growth.

Actions:

- a. Adopt specific job and housing targets for the planned mixed-use centers.
- b. See Action item (8b) above.

10. The **retail sector** plays a significant role in the local economy. Retail uses represent over 20 percent of all commercial space in Fairfax County, and retail jobs account for over 10 percent of all employment in the County.

Actions:

- a. Ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided in the Comprehensive Plan for the growth of retail to support the projected increase in the County's population of 225,000 persons by 2030.

11. As Fairfax County continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important to provide strategically located opportunities for **industrial** uses.

Actions:

- a. Inventory the existing lands which are planned for industrial use and develop policies that provide sufficient opportunities for industrial uses.

12. **Dulles International Airport** (IAD) is an important contributor to the economic vitality of Fairfax County. Business and industry is attracted to those locations that have good global access, and IAD provides excellent connectivity to the nation and the world. Currently, IAD handles approximately one-third of the metropolitan area's passenger traffic. That amount will grow to one-half by 2030. The County should promote policies which protect or enhance the relationship of IAD to the County and the northern Capital region.

Actions:

- a. Protect and enhance access and connectivity to the airport for travelers and shippers.
- b. Support compatible land use policies that minimize potential conflicts between land uses and noise generated by aircraft, and that provide opportunities for business and industry development.
- c. Support appropriate land use policies along the Dulles Airport Access Road Corridor that take advantage of the transit network and enhance the corridor as the link between the airport and the region.



- d. Minimize the impact of the Dulles Airport Access Road tolls on the economic development of the corridor by continuing to advocate for alternative sources of revenue to fund Rail to Dulles.

13. Fairfax County is a community that values the **arts**. The arts reflect the County's diversity and are celebrated and valued as integral to its quality of life. A strong, dynamic, and diverse arts presence in the County provides economic, social, and educational benefits.

Actions:

- a. Create and adopt a Countywide cultural arts master plan which locates and specifies existing and planned arts facilities to address current and future needs for performance venues for music, dance and theater, community arts center, exhibition space, media based arts space, artist studios, rehearsal space, classrooms, and meeting space.

14. **Tourism** is an economic development engine which supports domestic and international trade, as well as the retail and service sectors. It results in direct impacts (for example, dollars spent on hotel rooms by the visitors) and indirect or induced impacts (dollars spent throughout the community with the visitors' dollars that are received). Fairfax County receives more direct tourism expenditures than any other jurisdiction in Virginia.

Actions:

- a. Support policies which not only sustain but grow the County as a tourist destination.
- b. Pursue development of a conference center which will provide meeting space that supports growth of the tourism industry.

15. As the **baby boomers** reach retirement, Fairfax County will face greater challenges in creating physical and social environments that support their needs.

Actions:

- a. Assess the County's aging friendliness, and undertake planning and action steps to build an aging-friendly community.

