

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Intent

The Economic Development Plan chapter of the Comprehensive Plan builds on the County's Strategic Plan for economic development, and provides land use and infrastructure policies that assist in meeting the County's economic development objectives. It also establishes the foundation for the enhancement and diversification of Prince William County's revenue base and growth. While recognizing that various public and private sector organizations have to actively pursue and promote environmentally-sound economic development, County government has a major role in facilitating economic growth through its land use, development, and fiscal policies.

The Department of Economic Development works with existing companies and new businesses to promote the most effective economic base for Prince William County. Part of the department's effort is focused toward the encouragement of "targeted industries," as recommended by the Department of Economic Development and defined by the Board of County Supervisors, to either newly locate in the County or to expand their current County presence.

The 2004-2008 Prince William County Strategic Plan identifies four strategies to accomplish economic development goals throughout the County.

- Existing Business - Support and promote County businesses' efforts to develop, sustain and expand operations.
- New Business Investment - Attract businesses that reflect Prince William County as a community that embraces technology, quality jobs, and capital investment.
- Revitalization of Older Commercial Areas - Promote new mixed-use development projects that will increase the opportunity to bring high-wage jobs and investment to revitalization areas.
- Accelerate collaboration with George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, other area universities and colleges and the public schools to enhance current outreach marketing efforts and existing business expansion.

The Strategic Plan economic development goal for FY 2004-2008 is to "maintain an economic development climate that will attract and foster the expansion of environmentally sound industries to create quality jobs, diversify the non-residential tax base, and allow people to live in, work in, and visit Prince William County." The role of the Comprehensive Plan in the County's economic development efforts is to provide land use and infrastructure-related policies and action strategies that can assist in meeting these economic development goals.

Economic development marketing in communities across the nation has become extremely competitive, with larger communities spending millions of dollars annually. Prince William County must continue to position itself competitively. Development and promotion of a

cohesive internal image and aggressive external marketing campaign to “sell” Prince William County is a vital initiative. This competitive environment requires a strong Department of Economic Development devoted to marketing and increasing jobs and the commercial tax base of Prince William County.

Existing local (County-based) businesses and industries are currently the backbone of the County's economy. While all non-residential uses contribute to the economic diversification of the County, this Plan focuses upon policies and actions to expand employment and the related tax base.

In addition to recognizing the importance of existing local businesses to the County's economy, the Economic Development Plan provides the foundation for the development of “targeted industries,” as defined by the Department of Economic Development and its marketing plan. Targeted industries may be either existing local industries or new industries.

Policies and action strategies of this chapter provide incentives for certain categories of existing County-based companies which have the following characteristics:

- Business locations consistent with the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map.
- Businesses which are compatible with adjacent and nearby uses.
- Businesses which, if retail in nature, are regional retail businesses or located within an aggregation of businesses or planned cluster of buildings with a minimum gross leasable area of 400,000 square feet.

This chapter provides a focus for the business-attracting and business-retention characteristics of the County. While a number of economic development policies in this chapter encourage an increased non-residential tax base, the County recognizes that there are additional important indicators of a vibrant local economy that the County seeks. These indicators include not only more jobs but more professional and other high-salary jobs; a greater number of targeted industries; increased investment in the County by new and existing employers; and a greater number of persons both living and working in Prince William County. Other chapters of the County's Comprehensive Plan are intended to enhance the County as a place to live, work, play, and visit. Their implementation contributes to the business-attracting characteristics of the County, thereby ensuring the availability of land planned and zoned for economic development and for affordable and executive housing. Both are important ingredients in attracting targeted industries and supporting the revitalization and expansion of existing County-based companies.

GOAL: The County will maintain an economic development climate that will attract and foster the expansion of environmentally-sound industries to create quality jobs, diversify the non-residential tax base, and encourage people to live and work in Prince William County.

ECON-POLICY 1: Enhance the business-attraction and business-retention characteristics of the County.

ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Conduct a labor market assessment to identify the human resource base living in Prince William County. Keep this economic and demographic data base current.
2. Conduct research of current business residents and businesses outside the County to determine current perceptions of Prince William County and identify its strengths and weaknesses as a business location.
3. Develop a marketing plan that creates a distinct, vital, attractive, interesting, and tangible image of Prince William County to create brand awareness that will give a “profile identity” locally, regionally, and nationally. Create the profile by concentrating on existing strengths, such as:
 - A highly educated, skilled, professional workforce and education infrastructure, such as the George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College campuses.
 - Convenient interstate highway, rail, and air access.
 - Existing locations available for new targeted industries and existing County-based companies.
 - An extensive system of neighborhood parks, local parks and recreation facilities, and large regional and national parks, such as Leesylvania State Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, and Prince William Forest Park.
 - Cultural/recreation amenities, such as the Robert Trent Jones International Golf Course and other public and private courses, Potomac River marinas, Manassas Regional Airport, the Nissan Pavilion, Marine Corps Museum, and the Prince William Symphony Orchestra.
4. Market Prince William County as a “high-tech” community.
5. Enhance “place identity” by working with the U.S. Postal Service to create postal addresses with image-triggering, identifiable place names – such as Innovation and Belmont – similar to the Prince William and Montclair designations.
6. Encourage the School Board to strengthen the academic curriculum and ensure the inclusion of technologically-advanced course work in Prince William County public schools to further promote Prince William County as a technologically-advanced location. Consider creation of specialty public schools with competitive entrance requirements to further capitalize on opportunities for cooperation with the County’s technologically-based business community.
7. Establish and maintain a public relations visibility to create interest in the County and to promote the County’s image in the media and elsewhere.
8. Conduct or review existing surveys periodically to determine which businesses and industries are projected to grow by 10-15 percent per year. Add those to the categories of

- targeted businesses, where appropriate. Aggressively market to those growing businesses, encouraging expansion of existing County businesses or relocation of new County businesses.
9. Review and modify the Zoning Ordinance and Design and Construction Standards Manual, where feasible, to encourage alternative compliance and other creative solutions and to trim procedural restrictions that cause unnecessary delays in project approval and construction, for targeted industries or when the Board specifically recommends such an action. Begin this review/modification process with “targeted industries,” including Class A/Class B office buildings, which are defined as follows:
 - Class A Office Buildings: Well-located, professionally managed buildings utilizing modern HVAC, electrical, fire safety, and security systems. Often these buildings have been recently constructed or completely redeveloped, using exceptional design elements and finishes. Typically, these buildings attract high-quality tenants and command rental rates at the upper end of the market. Class A offices include such exterior amenities as sidewalks, curb and gutter around the parking lot(s), tree islands, parking lot landscaping, and brick or other masonry building materials. On the inside, these buildings provide wide hallways, tall ceilings, elevators, and impressive lobbies.
 - Class B Office Buildings: Second-tier buildings offering limited amenities, moderate finishes, and adequate building systems and management. These buildings command median rental rates in their respective markets and run the gamut from prime locations to secondary sites.
 10. Maintain a one-stop development approval process to give timely answers to businesses seeking to relocate or expand in Prince William County and to project an image of the County’s resolve to attract and support desired businesses.
 11. Actively promote stronger coordination and collaboration among the I-66 and I-95 Partnerships, chambers of commerce, state and regional economic development boards, and the Department of Economic Development.
 12. Actively promote policies of the region – through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and other appropriate means – that improve the potential for job growth within Prince William County.
 13. Promote diversification in vocational, technical, and higher educational offerings.
 14. Develop/redevelop guidelines for landscaping, signage, and architectural standards for County gateways and roadway corridors. Continue to create Highway Corridor Overlay Districts (HCODs) or similar regulations for major roadways identified in the Thoroughfare Plan, in conjunction with the Community Design Plan. Provide well-landscaped and well-maintained County gateways and corridors.

15. Promote the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the County that enhance the attractiveness of the County to tourism, in coordination with the policies and action strategies of the Cultural Resources and Community Design Plans.
16. Promote the concept of small business incubators as an important tool for promoting the start-up of new firms. Typically, support services such as management, technical, and financial assistance are made available.
17. Coordinate with state and local agencies to identify and help persons requiring special assistance – such as information, training, and transportation – in obtaining employment.
18. Acknowledge that government should not provide those goods and services that can be provided more effectively and efficiently by private enterprise, and continually re-evaluate what goods and services can be privatized as market conditions and opportunities change.
19. Seek and promote relocation and expansion of federal and state agencies to Prince William County.
20. Maintain an inventory of potential incentives and grants available from private, public, local, state, and federal sources applicable to targeted industries in Prince William County. Assign a member of the Department of Economic Development to assist County businesses in applying for such assistance. Provide electronic access to resources and services that support business development and expansion.
21. Measure the County's activities in economic development using the community outcomes measures in the Strategic Plan relative to increasing capital investment in new non-retail facilities and expansion of existing businesses, adding targeted businesses, adding jobs, and increasing the average wage per employee.
22. Identify and actively pursue and respond to public and private sector relocation opportunities, including those resulting from BRAC.

ECON-POLICY 2: Recognize targeted industries and existing county-based companies—including class A and class B office buildings—as the priority focus of the County's economic development initiatives.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Identify and update the list of specific targeted industries and County-based companies, including Class A and Class B office buildings. In addition, recognize that activities that are not reflected by the County's Marketing Plan may qualify for the various incentives contained in this chapter, based upon the recommendation of the County Executive to the Board of County Supervisors.

2. Continue current bonding reductions or other competitive alternatives and encourage escrow reductions for targeted industries.
3. Review existing fee schedules for existing County-based companies to determine if they can be reduced without adversely affecting the General Fund.
4. Examine County taxation policies to determine if current policies can be adjusted to assist new targeted industries and existing County-based companies during their initial years of existence. Examine the County's tax structure and tax rates generally and make adjustments, where possible, to encourage new and expanding businesses to stay in the County. Seek legislative changes as may be appropriate.
5. Develop incentives that will specifically encourage the construction of Class A office developments.
6. Recognize targeted industries – existing or new – to be the County's first priority when processing development applications for new and/or expanding businesses.
7. Provide adequate and appropriate resources to the development review agencies charged with supporting the priority processing program.
8. Facilitate Comprehensive Plan amendments and rezonings that would result in an increase in acreage for prospective targeted industries and mixed use development having these uses as a major component thereof. Continue to exempt viable economic development projects from the annual Comprehensive Plan review amendment limitation.
9. Monitor the capacity of the County's zoning map to accommodate targeted industries and County-based companies so as to ensure an adequate inventory of zoned land for these activities.

ECON-POLICY 3: Encourage the provision and maintenance of water, sewer, electricity, transportation, and communications infrastructure to support targeted industries and existing county-based companies at appropriate locations in the development area.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Prioritize transportation, telecommunications, electricity, water, and sewer infrastructure-related capital improvement funds into areas identified by the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map as Regional Employment Center (REC), Community Employment Center (CEC), Office (O), Flexible Use Employment Center (FEC), Industrial Employment (EI), Urban Mixed Use (UMU), and Mass Transit Node (MTN).
2. Encourage and promote the importance of the Manassas Regional Airport on the County's economy. Maintain existing non-residential land uses and encourage future non-residential uses adjacent to and near the airport to minimize conflicts.

3. Encourage the provision of telecommunications infrastructure, microwave towers, fiber optics, and similar communications systems that provide communications support for all businesses. Coordinate with the Economic Development Council's Telecommunications Task Force on telecommunications initiatives.
4. Promote public/private partnerships, ownerships, and ventures, through the use of the Industrial Development Authority, revenue bonds, special taxing districts, loan pools, and other innovative approaches.

ECON-POLICY 4: Promote and enhance the development and expansion of existing county-based companies.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Review existing fee schedules affecting current County-based companies to determine if fees can be reduced, eliminated, or replaced with competitive alternatives without adversely affecting the General Fund.
2. Examine County taxation policies to determine if tax incentives can be adopted to assist expansion of existing County-based companies during their initial years of existence. Seek legislative changes as may be appropriate.
3. Assist existing County-based companies in the process of applying for development permits, special use permits, Comprehensive Plan amendments, and rezonings.
4. Promote and encourage expansion of existing County-based companies using available local, state, and federal programs. Maintain a list of local, state, and federal incentives.
5. Develop a business on-site visitation survey program, to gather data on existing County-based company conditions, issues, needs, and problems of local businesses and to identify potential business expansions.
6. Establish a priority system to visit existing County-based companies that are theoretically the most influential in contributing to or taking away from the economic well being of the community. Priority should be established on an annual basis.
7. Conduct an annual retention, expansion, and exit survey of the business community.
8. Support and increase resources available to support small County-based companies and start-up businesses through provision of management and technical assistance service, referral services, and information resource support.
9. Create an employment institute to work in cooperation with the Prince William County school system, the Northern Virginia Community College, and George Mason University, to develop training and educational programs to meet the needs of the local business community. Disseminate employment institute promotional materials in

conjunction with business visitation contacts. Direct referrals for education and training to the director of the institute. Work cooperatively to develop a computerized listing of businesses in the community.

ECON-POLICY 5: Stimulate the redevelopment, recovery, and increase of economic activity in areas that have become less competitive.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Establish a formal redevelopment program and evaluate the effectiveness of the existing Redevelopment Overlay District – in order to access financial tools provided through state and federal redevelopment legislation.
2. Identify areas, in addition to the Potomac Communities, such as the Centreville Road corridor, north of the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, and the Sudley Road corridor between I-66 and the City of Manassas – that are appropriate for redevelopment and land use changes to encourage new development. Prepare revitalization studies.
3. Implement action strategies identified in the “Potomac Communities” report, as appropriate.
4. Assess the benefits of – and implement where feasible – tax abatements and other incentives for revitalization in redevelopment districts.
5. Form citizen input groups composed of property owners, businesses, and residents within each identified area.
6. Develop a range of redevelopment strategies, recognizing that priorities in any redevelopment plan to make an area more appealing and competitive could include:
 - Consideration of high-rise/increased densities.
 - Developing strategies for property consolidation to increase opportunities for redevelopment.
 - Evaluation and enhancement of transit/ridesharing facilities and services with connections between or among different transit services and suburb-to-suburb transit services.
 - Using sidewalks to connect adjacent residences, businesses, and institutions as well as to provide access to bus or other mass transit service.
 - Recognition of original settlement patterns, historic structures, and the area’s positive characteristics, so that recognizable places, districts, and sense of place can be developed.
 - Improvement of the visual environment (such as eliminating chaotic signage and overhead wires).
 - Improving connections for vehicles and pedestrians between adjacent land uses.

ECON-POLICY 6: Recognize and plan for major changes in the way people live and the environments in which they work caused by the information age.

ACTION STRATEGY:

1. Encourage the establishment of telecommuting centers in locations accessible to residents.
 - Use existing buildings for telecommuting centers, where possible.
 - Determine amenities that workers and companies desire, and locate telecommuting centers as close as possible to such amenities – such as fast food or full-service restaurants, day care, convenience shopping, dry cleaners, fitness centers, newsstands, financial institutions, and public transportation.
 - Encourage developers to establish neighborhood telecommuting centers in new residential subdivisions with technologically-advanced telecommunications infrastructure and capabilities. Locate these centers near amenities within walking distance. Amend ordinances, where necessary, to permit mixed use development. Devise rational, appropriate, and economically-feasible incentives for the development of these telecommuting centers.
 - Encourage businesses and government to utilize telecommuting.
 - Explore how governments can be a “trend-setter” in establishing telecommuting centers.

ECON POLICY 7: Target new development and investment in the areas of tourism and industrial/office, in coordination with the Cultural Resources Plan and the Long-Range Land Use Plan.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Seek diversity in the industrial mix, while targeting clean, attractive, environmentally-sensitive industries. Focus on corporate headquarters, research and development users, government contractors and suppliers, Class A and Class B offices, and other, similar industries that are likely to bring high-income, professional and/or high-tech jobs to Prince William County and add to the County tax base.
2. Attract international businesses, taking advantage of Prince William County’s location near the nation’s capital. Establish contact and working relationships with world trade association organizations.
3. Develop a tourism marketing plan for increased recreational visitor/tourism in Prince William County. Work with legislative and executive branches of government to gain access to the Manassas National Battlefield Park once a year for major Civil War reenactments. Identify infrastructure and product development opportunities, such as new hotel conference facilities linked to tourism marketing and promotions.

4. Establish and cultivate existing working relationships with existing regional attractions; County, state, and national parks and recreational departments; major privately-owned attractions in the area; state tourism agencies; food and lodging businesses; chambers of commerce; and professional travel and tourism organizations to coordinate and promote an image of Prince William County.
5. Capitalize upon and help solidify an image of Prince William County as a center of technology and innovation, by creating a major tourist attraction such as a computer museum and hall of fame. Seek corporate expertise and sponsorship.
6. Prepare a policy that outlines the needs of the County in terms of regional fine arts facilities, recreation, entertainment, and associated resources and that identifies the action steps required to meet those needs.