



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
AUGUSTA COUNTY, VA

Update to Recommendations/Action Items
(after 5 years)
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• **REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY IN AUGUSTA COUNTY 2009-2014**

In 2008, Augusta County commissioned an economic development strategic plan. Moran, Stahl & Boyer, E.M. Pemrick and Company, and the Laberge Group partnered together to facilitate the development of the plan. The process was structured to be thorough in gathering facts about the local economic situation with a particular concern for gaining input from community residents, employers, the Board of Supervisors, other government agencies, educators, a cross-section of high school students, and other stakeholders. The efforts took nearly a year and the final plan was adopted in 2009.

Prior to 2009, economic development was conducted as a function of the Community Development Department. As a result of the economic development strategic plan, the Board of Supervisors created a Department of Economic Development and employed Augusta County’s first-ever Director of Economic Development. Economic Development has always been a priority for Augusta County, but since the creation of the independent Economic Development Department with one or more staff devoted to economic development efforts, Augusta County has had increasing and broader success in the creation of new jobs and the investment of capital as reflected in the chart below. In addition, many recommendations/action items suggested in the plan have been implemented to support the five long-term economic development goals – improve organizational effectiveness and communications, support existing businesses, stimulate new business activities, enhance labor resources, and enhance physical infrastructure and site readiness – while other action items are ongoing and/or still need implementation.

Economic Development Activity in Augusta County 2009-2014					
Year	Total Announcements	New Locations	Expansions	Total Investment (in millions)	Total Jobs
2009	2	1	1	\$ 6.48	62
2010	3	1	2	\$ 6.00	77
2011	2	0	2	\$ 1.70	60
2012	3	1	2	\$ 22.25	192
2013	4	2	2	\$ 22.25	120

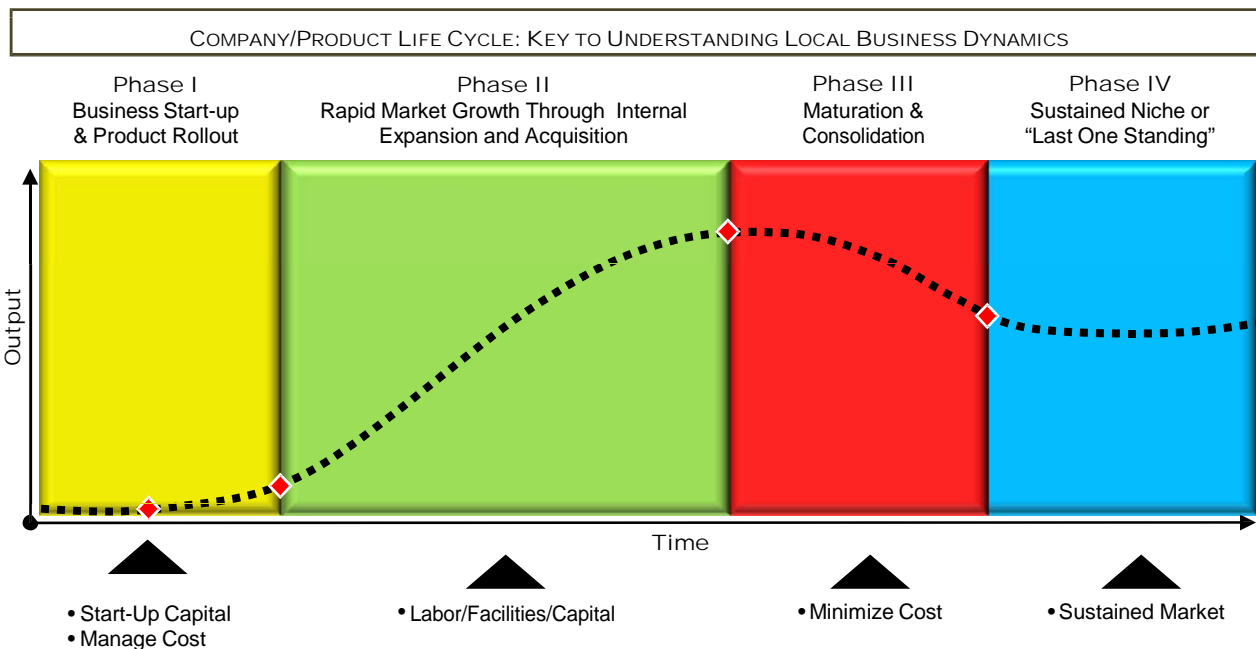
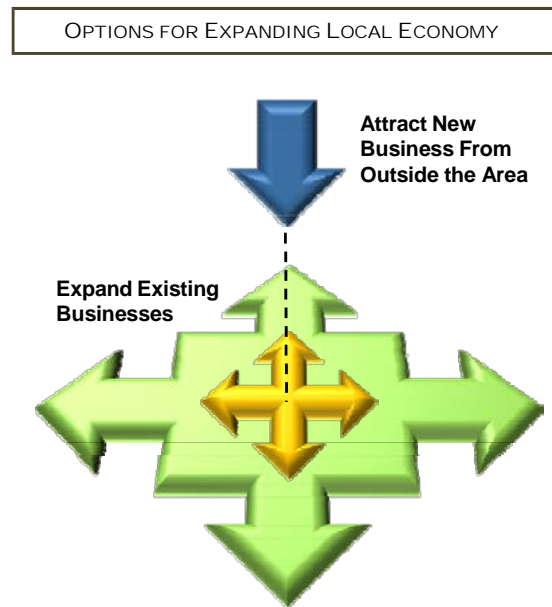
...; however, after five years of operating under the 2009 plan, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to review the recommendations included therein and update them to reflect the experience gained in the last five years, current best practices, and industry trends. The 2009-adopted plan as a whole will continue to serve the community for the next 10-15 years, and the following recommendations build upon the extensive evaluations, community and stakeholder input, SWOT analysis, vision, and goals outlined in the 2009 strategic plan. The updated action items are meant to serve as an addendum to the overall plan and as an “operating manual” for the Economic Development Department in the years ahead.

• **THE PURPOSE OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN**

An Economic Development Strategic Plan provides the community with a clear understanding of its current situation, identifies potential opportunities as well as challenges, and defines the efforts required to achieve specific goals. A plan is typically set up for a ten to twenty year horizon and addresses the multiple facets of economic development, including organizational optimization, resource development (e.g., supply of qualified labor, capacity and accessibility of utilities, availability of land/facilities, etc.) and the growth of specific target industries that will produce certain jobs and income for the community.

An important aspect of the plan is to provide a breadth of economic activities that not only strengthen existing businesses but also helps to diversify the employment base through the attraction of additional companies and the startup of new entrepreneurial firms. Since the employment levels or existence of any given company never stay constant, it is important to continually expand the local economy with new opportunities. This also assures jobs for the next generation work-force seeking employment.

As companies and their products mature, they evolve through different stages of their life cycle (see figure below). Communities must be aware of and adapt to



VISION STATEMENT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN (as adopted in 2009)

The Vision Statement provides a sense of direction for economic development for the next 10+ years. Key aspects of the vision include:

- **Economic Diversity:** Provide a diverse and vibrant economy that offers a broad range of job opportunities while supporting the delivery of high quality government services to its residents and includes manufacturing, services, tourism and agriculture.
- **Organizational Collaboration:** Collaborate on all levels (local, region, and state) to maximize the economic opportunities for the area in a cost-effective manner.
- **Resource Development:** Make available, in a timely manner, the resources necessary to support the growth of existing and prospective businesses (e.g., developed sites, utilities) within prudent financial constraints.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Create an environment that encourages, values and supports entrepreneurship.
- **Build Awareness of Local Opportunities:** Build a strong level of awareness amongst students and young adults of the availability of local career and economic opportunities.
- **Respect for Heritage and Environment:** Promote a quality of life that embraces our heritage, preserves the environment and effectively manages the resources we have been given.

GOALS FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN (as adopted in 2009)

The Goals provide a focus on what is important for the County to achieve the Vision. Five key goals were identified:

1. Improve Organizational Effectiveness and Communications
2. Support Existing Businesses
3. Stimulate New Business Activities
4. Enhance Labor Resources
5. Enhance Physical Infrastructure and Site Readiness

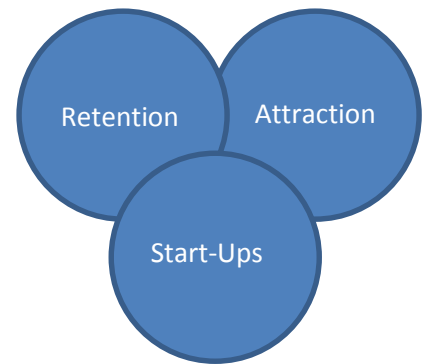
These five goals address the different categories of issues and opportunities identified in the SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Treats) analysis.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS FOR EACH GOAL**

For each goal a number of recommendations/action items were identified along with those organizations that are responsible for completing the action items. Timing was set at ongoing (an action that has been implemented but is important to maintain) short-term (within 18 months), mid-term (18 months to 3 years) and long-term (greater than three years)

Goal 1: Maintain Organizational Effectiveness and Communications

Discussion: Augusta County’s approach to economic development revolves around attracting new businesses, encouraging the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and supporting entrepreneurial efforts. The Augusta County Department of Economic accomplishes these overall objectives through a variety of mechanisms, of which ongoing communication with a variety of internal and external stakeholders is paramount. Such stakeholders include but are not limited to County staff, Augusta County Public Schools, Augusta County Service Authority, Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Small Business Development Center, local employers, regional education institutions, the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, the Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board, and the cities of Staunton and Waynesboro as well as other nearby localities, The continuance of a collaborative economic development department that operates in a team environment provides an important identity and platform for achieving economic development and tourism success.



Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing
1.1 Maintain the Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Augusta County	Ongoing
1.2. Maintain economic development relationships with the cities of Staunton and Waynesboro	Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Ongoing
1.3. Keep public and other stakeholders informed via newsletter, press releases, social media, website updates and other media.	Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Ongoing Website Launch in 2014
1.4. Link academic/R&D resources of local colleges and universities with local business and industry	Augusta County Department of Economic Development in partnership with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Shenandoah Valley Partnership	Ongoing

• **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS FOR EACH GOAL (CONT'D)**

Goal 2: Support Existing Businesses

Discussion: One of the most important aspects of economic development is to support the growth of existing businesses in Augusta County. Critical to this effort is anticipating the need for resources – whether for additional labor, capacity of utilities, a building expansion or new site, etc. – and being able to respond at a pace that meets the requirements of individual companies. Companies also need to be aware of the resources that are available to them at the local and state level. The recommendations noted below represent components of a system to detect and address company resource needs.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing
2.1. Maintain expedited development review and permitting process for expansion projects	Augusta County – Community Development Department	Ongoing
2.2. Assist businesses with site and infrastructure needs	Augusta County Augusta County Economic Development Authority Augusta County Service Authority	Ongoing
2.3. Identify opportunities for farmers to grow, diversify, and protect their businesses	VA Cooperative Extension Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board Fields of Gold Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	Ongoing
2.4. Maintain a formal business visitation program to identify and anticipate the needs of existing businesses	Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Ongoing
2.5 Support the Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce’s industrial roundtable series and other Chamber programs that support business needs	Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Ongoing
2.6. Promote awareness of current workforce training resources, incentives and other available resources via web site and e-mail	Augusta County Department of Economic Development	Ongoing
2.7. Provide resource package to small emerging businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance options • Business/marketing plans • Operations advice • Location of low-cost space 	Augusta County Department of Economic Development Small Business Development Center SCORE Local Banks Augusta County Economic Development Authority Loan Fund Blue Ridge Community College	Ongoing
2.8 Establish a Technology Zone in Mill Place Commerce Park and/or locations in the County.	Augusta County	Short Term

• **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS FOR EACH GOAL (CONT'D)**

Goal 3: Stimulate New Business Activities

Discussion: A healthy local economy not only supports existing business but also attracts and fosters the start-up of new businesses. This constant flow of opportunities not only broadens job opportunities and the tax base, but also helps to fill in gaps that are formed as some businesses decline for various reasons. Periodic “churn” of business should be anticipated and new business growth helps address this situation.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing
3.1. Expand local use of locally grown agricultural products	VA Cooperative Extension Greater Augusta Chamber Project Grows Fields of Gold	Ongoing
3.2. Recruit new targeted businesses to the area through expanded marketing efforts	Augusta County Department of Economic Development with support from the Shenandoah Valley Partnership	Ongoing
3.3. Establish a Technology Zone in Mill Place Commerce Park and/or other locations in the County.	Augusta County	Short Term
3.4. Stimulate entrepreneurial activities and the start-up of new businesses	Augusta County Department of Economic Development Augusta County Loan Fund (EDA) Small Business Development Center SCORE	Ongoing
3.5. Encourage continued development of agri-tourism and supplemental business activity on existing farms	Augusta County Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board VA Cooperative Extension Fields of Gold	Ongoing
3.6. Expand tourism activities in an effort to attract more visitors to the community and maintain a great quality of life for citizens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package hospitality/attractions • Develop additional outdoor venues and signage/maps • Support existing and expanding tourism businesses/attractions in the Greater Augusta community • Collaborate with local recreation and tourism industry stakeholders 	Greater Augusta Regional Tourism Board Greater Augusta Chamber Augusta County Other interested stakeholders	Ongoing
3.7. Initiate an Augusta Ambassadors Program as a grassroots way to recruit new businesses	Augusta County Department of Economic Development Augusta County Economic Development Authority Greater Augusta Chamber	Mid Term

• **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS FOR EACH GOAL (CONT'D)**

Goal 4: Enhance Labor Resources

Discussion: There are a significant number of good paying jobs – particularly in manufacturing – that require a high school education plus some training and experience. As the economy expands, employers will need additional labor; however, most high school students, parents and career counselors are unaware of this situation and are focusing on sending students to college to the exclusion of other alternatives. Potential labor shortages could jeopardize the sustainability of local manufacturers. There is also a continuing need to recruit talent for jobs in health care/public safety and related industries as the community continues to grow and the retire-age population expands.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing
4.1. Support regional workforce initiatives	Augusta County Department of Economic Development Augusta County Public Schools Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Career and Technical Advisory Committee Blue Ridge Community College Shenandoah Valley Partnership Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board Valley Technical Center	Ongoing
4.2. Conduct awareness campaign for students, parents and career counselors on local job opportunities and entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with employers to define future job opportunities • Develop materials on jobs vs. skill requirements • Identify internship opportunities • Collaborate with the Augusta Young Professionals (YP) • Support career fairs and industry tours 	Augusta County Department of Economic Development Augusta County Public Schools Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Career and Technical Advisory Committee Blue Ridge Community College Shenandoah Valley Partnership Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board Valley Technical Center VA Cooperative Extension (4-H)	Short to Mid Term
4.3. Expand the Center for Manufacturing, Technology and Engineering to other area high schools	Augusta County Public Schools	Mid Term
4.4. Establish an initiative to retain students in the County	Greater Augusta Chamber Augusta County Department of Economic Development Augusta County Public Schools Shenandoah Valley Partnership	Long Term
4.5. Introduce healthcare/public safety educational/training opportunities in County high schools	Augusta County Public Schools Augusta County	Long Term

• **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS FOR EACH GOAL (CONT'D)**

Goal 5: Enhance Physical Infrastructure and Site Readiness

Discussion: A critical aspect of both business attraction and retention is to have utilities, infrastructure, and sites/buildings at a very high level of availability. Readiness is critical for companies to assure speed-to-market and overall competitiveness.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing
5.1. Maintain and periodically review County zoning regulations to support business friendly development in accordance with Comprehensive Plan	Augusta County Department of Community Development	Ongoing
5.2. Invest in sites and buildings to increase the County's readiness for business expansion/attraction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain one or more pad sites in Mill Place Commerce Park • Construct spec-built flex building in Mill Place Commerce Park • Secure options on 2-3 sites in Augusta County 	Augusta County Augusta County Economic Development Authority Private investment	Short to Mid Term
5.3 Assess coverage of broadband service in the County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augusta County Finance and Information Technology Departments • Area telecom service providers 	Short Term
5.4. Upgrade wastewater treatment system in the Weyers Cave area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augusta County • Augusta County Service Authority • Augusta County Economic Development Authority Private investment	Short Term