

Albemarle County Economic Development Strategy

A Blueprint to Lead Virginia's Innovation Economy

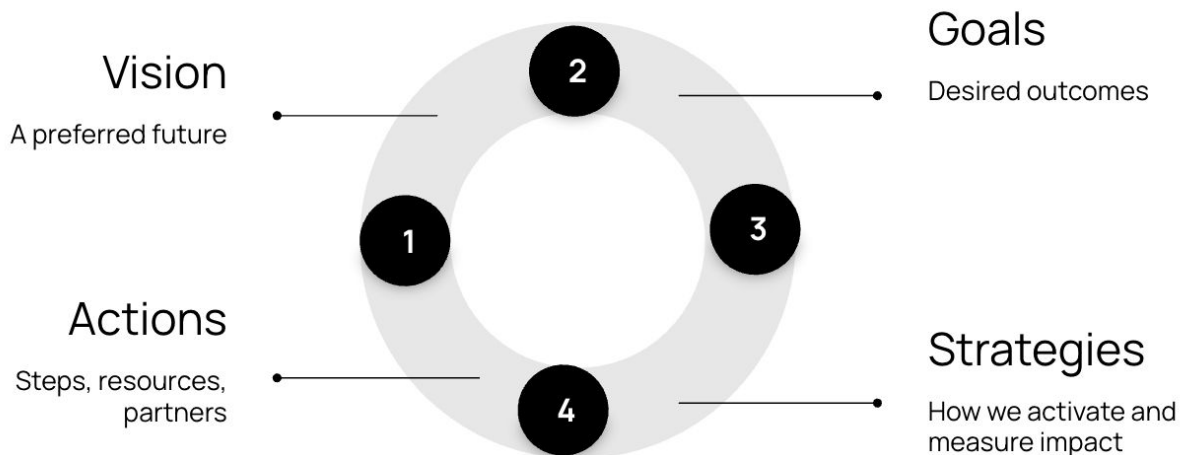
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Elements of a Strategy

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



VISION STATEMENT

Albemarle County – Rooted in Innovation. Open for Investment.

A destination for entrepreneurs, makers, growers, and thinkers.
Where bold ideas take root, businesses scale, and partnerships thrive —
leading the way in Virginia's next innovation economy.

Building What's Next for Albemarle County

GOAL 1

Lead what's next.

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

GOAL 2

Discover what's next.

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

GOAL 3

Grow what's next.

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

GOAL 4

Fuel what's next.

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

GOAL 5

Compete for what's next.

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 WHAT'S NEXT.

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

WHY IT MATTERS?

One of Albemarle's biggest economic investment is Rivanna Futures — positioning the County as Virginia's center for intelligence, national security, and 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 what's next.

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 district.

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 cluster.

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

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 secure innovation and national security industries.

GOAL 2

DISCOVER WHAT'S NEXT.

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 what's next.

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 regional partnerships.

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 3

GROW WHAT'S NEXT.

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 what's next.

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

3.1 Modernize land use and zoning policies to enable 21st-century agribusiness innovation.

Updated tools to support flexible agribusiness operations, value-added production, and agricultural technology enterprises.

3.2 Deliver critical infrastructure to support modern agribusiness growth.

A coordinated plan to expand cold storage, food processing, 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 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 4

FUEL WHAT'S NEXT.

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: Fuel what's next.

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

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 Align workforce and economic development systems to build career pathways.**
A unified plan connecting education, training, and placement strategies to Albemarle's target sectors.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 Support housing development and child care initiatives.**
A collaborative effort to expand affordable housing and childcare options for workers and entrepreneurs.

GOAL 5

COMPETE FOR WHAT'S NEXT.

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 what's next.

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 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 to deliver infrastructure for industrial growth.**
A coordinated effort to expand water, sewer, energy, and broadband capacity in target areas.
- 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.

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Let's empower
your place together.

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