



## County of Albemarle ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### Project ENABLE 1.0 Final Outcome Summary

#### Goal 1: Strengthen Existing Business Retention and/or Expansion (BRE) To Help Existing Businesses Be Successful

As of June 2024, the County leveraged \$877,000 in local dollars to secure \$1.8 million in state grants to ten existing businesses to support their expansions here in Albemarle County. These investments by the County have enabled job creation and capital investment that supports the local economy and expands the tax base, as capital investments generate real estate, machinery and tools, and business personal property revenue. In total, those business expansions have/will result in \$70 million of capital investment and create 491 career ladder jobs.

Companies with announced expansions include:

- Rivanna Medical (2021)
- Bonumose (2021)
- AgroSpheres (2023)
- Castle Hill Gaming (2019)
- Potter's Craft Cider (2019 and 2022)
- Afton Scientific (2021)
- PS-Fertility, Inc. (2023)
- Co-Construct (2018)
- Perrone Robotics (2017)
- WillowTree (2018)

Since Project ENABLE was adopted, the County launched a dedicated website for local businesses and prospective investors, [enablealbemarle.org](http://enablealbemarle.org), enhanced its business visitation program, and focused on providing concierge services to support business relocations and expansions in Albemarle County.

A dedicated Business Development Manager position leads these efforts for the Economic Development Office (EDO). As of June 2024, the County has completed more than 100 business retention and expansion (BRE) engagements with existing and prospective County businesses, and established a database of more than 150 business contacts interested in the County's future economic development activities.

#### Goal 2: Improve the Business Climate

The business climate is influenced by several areas of local government.

##### **Community Development**

As part of the County's investment in several technology projects to modernize county operations, the Community Development System that is currently underway will make it easier for businesses to submit and track development and building applications, which will begin launching over the next several months. This system is expected to streamline the review process.

The Comprehensive Plan update, AC44, and the related Zoning Ordinance Modernization project both seek to modernize and enhance the user-experience in navigating these complex documents, providing greater clarity to applicants.

Community Development recently implemented a simplified fee structure for applications in an effort to make costs for submittals easier to understand.

## **Finance & Budget**

The Office of Procurement has implemented new procedures to increase the visibility of opportunities to provide goods and services to Albemarle County, by directly sending applicable solicitations to vendors in the state database for SWaM (Small, Woman-owned, and Minority-owned) businesses. The EDO and other local partners encourage and assist local businesses with utilizing this database.

### **Goal 3: Lead the County's Readiness to Accommodate Business**

The County has pursued this goal in several ways and the discussion below focuses in two primary areas associated with economic development, land (also referred to as sites) and space (also referred to as buildings).

- **Land**
  - Rivanna Futures – the County's acquisition of 462 acres of land adjacent to Rivanna Station is intended to both retain and grow the defense sector in our community. Since acquiring the land in 2023, the County has rezoned 172 acres for light industrial and commercial office use. This is now one of the largest development opportunities in Albemarle County, which will be professionally planned for over the next several years.
  - North Fork Discovery Park – the County worked with the University of Virginia Foundation (UVAF) over the past several years to continue to support the North Fork Discovery Park's site readiness and marketability. The County has secured state and local funding to extend Berkmar Drive that will connect at the existing intersection of Lewis & Clark Drive at Airport Road once constructed. The County also partnered with UVAF to secure \$3 million in funding from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to advance site readiness at "Site 8", a 31-acre parcel within the campus. This project will be completed in Fall 2024.
  - VEDP Sites Database – Albemarle County uses a statewide database of available commercial and industrial sites to increase their visibility to prospective companies. The County currently maintains data on 21 available sites.
- **Commercial Office & Wet Laboratory Space**
  - Albemarle Business Campus – The County entered a public-private partnership with a private developer to address a lack of Class A commercial office space at a time when office vacancy rates in the Charlottesville/Albemarle area fell to near-zero (2019). The developer committed to reserve and build at least 25,000 square feet of office space for target industry uses. The project has since developed shovel-ready status for two office buildings that could bring 69,000 square feet of Class A office and up to 125,000 square feet of advanced manufacturing space.
  - Cville Biotech Accelerator – The EDA pledged to contribute financial support for CvilleBioHub's GO Virginia grant application to establish a Biotech Accelerator program

at North Fork. This project will provide wet lab space for 15-20 early-stage life science companies over a three-year period and is expected to open by the end of 2024.

This tangible work is augmented by grantmaking, studies, and policy creation undertaken over the past several years. These efforts have established policies for matching state and federal grants, as well as incentives for adaptively reusing existing buildings. These efforts have resulted in projects that examined opportunities for optimizing retail in Crozet, the potential for a hotel in Scottsville, and ways to retain light industrial uses in the Broadway corridor among other efforts.

#### Goal 4: Seek Private Investment to Further the Public Good

One way in which public-private partnerships can be designed is to leverage private investment to achieve a public good that otherwise would not occur. Project ENABLE delivered several agreements that will deliver public goods when the projects are completed.

- The Barnes Lumber redevelopment in downtown Crozet will see a vacant industrial site adjacent to the historic downtown transform into a mixed-use development with commercial office, retail, a hotel, and multifamily development. The County's participation will use tax increment financing to rebate tax revenues to support the creation of a road network connecting through the redevelopment and to existing neighborhoods, as well as a public plaza that will create a high-quality gathering space for the community.
- The Albemarle Business Campus, highlighted in Goal 3 above, also included improvements that otherwise would not have been planned, including a transit stop, multi-use trails, and land for a future roundabout.

Over the Project ENABLE period, the EDA's authority has also been used to support a variety of other projects that produce public goods, in the form of affordable housing (Brookdale properties and the Southwood Mobile Home redevelopment) and broadband infrastructure.

#### Goal 5: Educate the Community and Enhance the Visibility of Economic Development

Albemarle County's formal economic development function dates back to the founding of the Economic Development Office in 2015. A goal for Project ENABLE to educate the community was in recognition that this function was a new area for Albemarle County local government to dedicate resources. Accordingly, gaining community buy-in and trust would be important for the long-term success of the function.

There is now a standalone economic development website and a LinkedIn page where resources and news are shared with the business community. More than 150 instances of media coverage on programs, agreements, announcements, and general awareness have been generated since Project ENABLE was adopted, appearing on local television, radio, and other digital news services. The County was able to achieve this impact in-part by leveraging 11 Governor's announcements of local business expansions within the community.

In partnership with the City of Charlottesville, a "Buy Local" campaign was created and engaged the community through a robust and interactive social media campaign. Other milestones include:

- Partnering with the City to develop a successful multi-modal "Buy Local" campaign using print, online, television, and radio.

- Establishing a stand-alone website to support and promote local businesses (showlocallove.org).
- Distributing “Buy Local” branded reusable shopping bags, garden flags, buttons, and stickers and face masks at community events like the Black Business Expo, Children’s Financial Literacy events, United Way’s ENVISION launch at the TomTom Festival, etc.

## Goal 6: Lead External Efforts to Create Strategic Partnerships with Economic Development Institutions

Albemarle County has worked to form durable partnerships at the local, regional, and state level, as well as made connections with federal agencies for both project work and grant funding.

### Locally

- City of Charlottesville Economic Development
- University of Virginia
- Piedmont Virginia Community College
- University of Virginia Foundation

### Regionally

- Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development
- Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
- Central Virginia Small Business Development Center
- Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Community Investment Collaborative

### State

- Office of Veterans & Defense Affairs
- Virginia Economic Development Partnerships
- Virginia Economic Development Association

## Goal 7: Partner to Expand Efforts to Build the County’s Tourism Sector

The tourism sector represents a \$1.3 billion annual economic impact on the regional economy, with more than half of direct visitor spending occurring in Albemarle County lodging, dining, destination, and recreation locations. In our region, the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB) is the direct marketing organization that supports the tourism sector, with an annual budget in Fiscal Year 2025 of \$2.7 million, from the transient occupancy tax revenues generated by visitors staying in local lodging. Albemarle County participates on the Board of Directors for this organization (one elected official and one staff representative) to guide the organization’s efforts. In 2024, and due to the efforts of the CACVB, our region was recognized as “Wine Region of the Year” by *Wine Enthusiast* and has made strategic partnerships with Discover Black Cville, “Tourism for All” with Destinations International and TripAdvisor, and Wheel the World to ensure our destination is welcoming and accessible to all. The work of the CACVB is guided by the Tourism Master Plan, adopted in 2024.

The County has supported several studies to enhance the tourism sector, including a Hotel Feasibility Study in the Town of Scottsville, completed in 2023, and a now-underway Winery Scale Up Planning Study for GO Virginia Region 9, which is projected to be completed by the end of Fall 2024.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

Project ENABLE's implementation was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Economic Development Office pivoted during this time to support small businesses by distributing federal relief funding, educating businesses on local pandemic-related restrictions on gatherings, and providing grant funding opportunities to adapt their business to reopen safely. By working with local partners, the Economic Development Office administered over 150 grants totaling more than \$5 million in federal funds to enhance public safety and directly support County-based businesses and non-profits supporting economic development. The office also administered \$200,000 in local funds to support target industry businesses that did not qualify for federal assistance.