

A special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Albemarle County, Virginia, was held on August 13, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., in Room 241, Albemarle County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia 22902. This meeting was called by the Chair, Mr. Jim Andrews, to allow a quorum of Board members to convene an open meeting for the purpose of allowing a quorum of Board members to purpose of participating in a joint work session with the Economic Development Authority, including: (1) a Call to Order; (2) Welcome Remarks. (3) Action on the Economic Development Strategic Plan; (4) From the Board: Discussion of Matters Not Listed on the Agenda; (5) From the County Executive: a Report on Matters Not Listed on the Agenda; and (6) Adjournment.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Jim H. Andrews (remote), Mr. Ned Gallaway, Ms. Beatrice (Bea) J.S. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Ann H. Mallek, and Ms. Diantha H. McKeel.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Mike O. D. Pruitt.

COUNTY OFFICERS PRESENT: County Executive, Mr. Jeffrey B. Richardson; County Attorney, Mr. Andy Herrick; Clerk to the Board, Ms. Claudette K. Borgersen, and Director of the Office of Economic Development, Ms. Emily Kilroy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DIRECTORS PRESENT: Mr. Frank Friedman (remote), Mr. Steve Hood, Ms. Andrea Johnson (remote), Mr. Don Long, Mr. Bill Mechnick, Mr. Jeff Morrill, and Mr. David Storm.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DIRECTORS ABSENT: none.

Agenda Item No. 1. Call to Order.

The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m., by the Vice Chair, Ms. McKeel.

Ms. Diantha McKeel, Vice-Chair (Jack Jouett District) announced the Supervisors in attendance and stated that Mr. Pruitt was absent.

Ms. McKeel said that Mr. Jim Andrews (Samuel Miller District) had requested to participate remotely in today's meeting, according to applicable Board Rules of Procedure Rule 8.B.1.d, enacted pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. She asked Mr. Andrews to please state his current location and reason for remote participation.

Mr. Andrews said that he was currently in Sorrento, Maine, attending to personal and family business.

Ms. Mallek **moved** that the Board of Supervisors allow Mr. Andrews to participate remotely in the meeting. Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley **seconded** the motion.

Roll was called and the motion carried by the following recorded vote:

AYES: Mr. Gallaway, Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Mallek, and Ms. McKeel.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Mr. Pruitt.

ABSTAIN: Mr. Andrews.

Ms. McKeel announced the County staff in attendance at the meeting and introduced the Albemarle County Police Department Officers in attendance, Angela Jamerson and Joshua Wright.

The Economic Development Authority meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m., by the Chair, Mr. Don Long. Mr. Long introduced the EDA members present and stated that they had two members participating remotely, Frank Friedman and Andrea Johnson. He asked Mr. Friedman and Ms. Johnson to state their current location and reason for remote participation.

Mr. Frank Friedman stated that he was currently on a family vacation in New Jersey.

Ms. Andrea Johnson stated that she was currently located in Albemarle County. Unfortunately, her schedule did not permit her to attend the meeting in person, so she was participating remotely.

Mr. Morrill **moved** to allow Mr. Friedman and Ms. Johnson to participate remotely in the meeting. Mr. Hood **seconded** the motion.

Roll was called and the motion carried by the following recorded vote:

AYES: Mr. Hood, Mr. Long, Mr. Mechnick, Mr. Morrill, and Mr. Storm

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

ABSTAIN: Mr. Friedman and Ms. Johnson.

Agenda Item No. 2. Welcoming Remarks.

Ms. McKeel welcomed everyone at the table and thanked them for coming together for today's meeting. She said that the last time they convened was in August 2024. Since then, the momentum they had built around three key topics had carried them forward in meaningful ways. She said that they had received an exciting update on the Rivanna Futures Project at that previous meeting, and since then, Albemarle County had been awarded a \$9.7 million grant for site readiness work. She said that this substantial award would extend utilities and support clearing and grading of a portion of the property.

Ms. McKeel stated that this investment built on the \$600,000 in funding they had previously received from GO Virginia. She said that together, these resources positioned them to begin unlocking the full potential of this site. They also agreed to participate in a work session to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding, which formalized their collaboration and shared goals. This memorandum had been adopted in December 2024, marking a significant milestone in their partnership. Third, they had begun an initial discussion to launch an Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Ms. McKeel said that this plan process would include engaging with the Planning Commission, stakeholders, and community members. She said that those conversations had laid the groundwork for what brought them together today to consider and hopefully adopt a strategic framework that would guide their efforts in the months and years ahead. She said that this was a pivotal moment; the decisions they made today would shape the trajectory of economic growth, opportunity, and resilience in Albemarle County. She was truly grateful for the dedication and vision each of them brought to the table, and she looked forward to a productive and forward-looking discussion.

Mr. Long said that he would like to express his gratitude for the opportunity to meet. He said that he believed their meeting last year had been very productive. He said that he had been impressed by the communication between their Board and the Economic Development Office, which they had worked to establish. He said that with Ms. McKeel as the prior liaison to the EDA and now Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley as their current liaison he believed that they had achieved good communication, and he hoped that the Board felt the same. He said that he would like to extend his appreciation to the Economic Development Office staff for their efforts in bringing them to this point. He said that he looked forward to their discussion today.

Agenda Item No. 3. **Action Item:** Economic Development Strategic Plan.

The Executive Summary forwarded to the Board states that in November 2018, the Board of Supervisors adopted Albemarle County's first economic development strategic plan. The adopted Fiscal Year 2024-2028 Strategic Plan includes updating the economic development strategic plan as Objective 4.2.

In August 2024, the Board met with the Economic Development Authority in a joint session to initiate and provide early feedback on an updated plan. During that session, members of both public bodies discussed the importance of community, state, and federal partnerships; identifying strategic investment opportunities; supporting the Rivanna Futures project; aligning educational and training opportunities with employer needs as being; and supporting vibrant mixed use centers as opportunity areas to explore.

Over the past 12 months, staff have worked with a consultant to conduct data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and solicit community input to develop the draft economic development strategic plan. The plan's development has been the subject of a work session with the Board of Supervisors, several work sessions with the Economic Development Authority, and a discussion with the Planning Commission, all of which have informed the plan's development and refined the draft document provided as Attachment A.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan (Attachment A) establishes a Vision, Mission, and five goals to guide Albemarle County's economic development strategy. The plan is intentionally adaptable, to guide resource allocation for proactive efforts and to provide a framework to respond to emerging opportunities and shifting macroeconomic conditions. While the plan closely touches the work of the Economic Development Office, staff across the organization and at organizations throughout the county and the Central Virginia Region are critical partners for executing on the plan.

An updated stakeholder engagement summary is provided as Attachment B. Technical appendices were provided to the Board at their work session on May 21, 2025.

There is no budget impact associated with the plan's adoption. Individual implementation efforts will be considered through regular resource planning and annual budget planning processes.

Staff recommend the Board approve the economic development strategic plan per the resolution provided as Attachment C.

Ms. Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development, stated that it was a pleasure to have staff and the Boards together again, just about a year after their last joint meeting, and to reflect on the progress made over the past year. She was excited to welcome Steven Pedigo, Vice President for

Economic Development with Resonance, who had been instrumental in working with the team to manage deep data analysis and stakeholder engagement as development of the draft document before them today. Before they dove into the plan, she would like to briefly review how they had arrived at this point.

Ms. Kilroy stated that Project Enable was the County's first Economic Development Strategic Plan, adopted in late 2018 after a multi-year process. She said that the plan had identified seven target sectors and seven goals adjacent to those sectors. As they moved forward, they would be building on that foundation. The data analysis that went into this plan had begun with those sectors and examined changes based on regional efforts, such as the comprehensive economic development strategy led by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC), as well as State data and information.

Ms. Kilroy said that this new plan was not a complete overhaul, but rather a refinement of their approach, taking into account the opportunities and challenges that had arisen since the first plan was adopted in 2018. They would be discussing how to leverage these opportunities to diversify their tax base and build a stronger economy. And, building on that, the plan before them today was the result of a comprehensive process that had five goals, including three target sectors that they were focusing on. The first three goals were centered around the target sectors, and the overall focus was on talent and competing for investment, which was the policy framework that enabled the County to create an environment where businesses could thrive.

Ms. Kilroy explained that the development of this draft document was the culmination of numerous conversations, listening sessions, and data analysis, which had been reviewed with the EDA and the Board in the spring. This document represented an inclusive look at the public engagement that had taken place to date, with over 2,400 people involved. The Communications and Public Engagement Office had worked tirelessly to compile this information.

Ms. Kilroy noted that the Economic Development Strategic Plan was the fourth most engaged public engagement project the County had undertaken over the past six months, with the Three-Notched Trail Shared Use Path Master Plan, AC44 Comprehensive Plan, Data Center Regulations, and Resilient Together, a part of the County's climate action strategy having the highest engagement levels. They had successfully reached a wide audience organically and through paid social media ads, with 18,000 people opening a newsletter that included the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Ms. Kilroy said that stakeholder engagement had been a key focus, with 21 stakeholders participating in the process, including four formal meetings and numerous conversations and 6 roundtables between meetings. She would like to extend her gratitude to the stakeholder committee for their valuable contributions. One question that had been raised several times was how the Economic Development Strategic Plan fits into other County policy documents. To address this, she had provided a slide which aimed to illustrate the relationship between the plan and other governing documents.

Ms. Kilroy stated that the Comprehensive Plan had a 20-year time horizon, setting a vision for the County. She said that strategic plans, on the other hand, have a five-year time horizon, outlining the strategy and the steps to achieve the vision over the next five-year period. She said that the annual budget process is a crucial aspect of how they assign resources to complete their objectives. She said that strategic plans serve as a bridge between short-term and long-term goals. She said that they aimed to identify achievable outcomes within a specific timeframe and prioritize resources accordingly.

Ms. Kilroy said that since staff time was the County's largest expenditure, they must allocate resources effectively to support these plans. She said that the Economic Development Strategic Plan complements other plans, including those focused on housing affordability and climate action. She said that when individual policy items were presented, they must balance competing priorities. She said that they were proud to have this plan alongside other strategic initiatives. She said that some questions arose regarding why this plan did not address specific issues, but it was often because the County had another strategic plan addressing those concerns. She said that they recognized the work of staff assigned to those areas and acknowledge the plan's focus on the economy.

Ms. Kilroy said that she would like to formally introduce Steven Pedigo, Vice President for Economic Development for Resonance and Assistant Dean at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas in Austin. She said that as a renowned expert in economic development, he brings valuable experience in planning and implementation, both locally and nationally. She said that their staff had learned significantly from his work and were grateful for the contributions of his team.

Mr. Steven Pedigo said that he appreciated the opportunity to discuss the plan with the Board of Supervisors and the EDA. He said that he wanted to provide a brief overview of the plan, which he believed should be familiar to everyone involved. He said that they had worked together extensively throughout this process, including sessions with the Board of Supervisors, both at the beginning and middle stages, as well as with the EDA, where they had edited their session on this topic.

Mr. Pedigo said that his intention was to quickly review the plan to provide an introduction for those who would be joining them for the first time. After that, he would do his best to answer their questions, which he believed would be the most engaging part of their conversation today. He said that the fact that 2,400 people had engaged with their previous sessions was truly impressive. He said that it was a reminder that his work may not be as mundane as he is often told.

Mr. Pedigo stated that this document had been widely read, and he wanted to draw their attention

to the formal strategic plan document that was available. He said that there were two additional documents that complemented this work, as well. If they were interested in the data analytics that underpinned this plan, they could find it in the two appendices, which included a competitive assessment and industry sector analysis.

Mr. Pedigo stated that Ms. Kilroy could provide them with access to these documents, and he was happy to answer any additional questions they may have. He explained that one of the key areas they had worked on in this plan was developing a mission statement for the Department of Economic Development. He said that he found it interesting that the department had undergone a reimagining process under Ms. Kilroy's leadership, shifting its focus from traditional business investment to a more comprehensive approach to economic development.

Mr. Pedigo said that in his experience, economic development could be a narrow focus, but this mission statement took a more holistic approach, emphasizing the importance of complete community building. He said that this plan's emphasis on complete community building was reflected and highlighted the need for a multifaceted approach to economic development, encompassing business investment, expansion, small business support, workforce development, and placemaking. The plan was driven by the goal of promoting prosperity for both residents and businesses in the County.

Mr. Pedigo said that their mission statement was broad and was built on the idea of the County being open to investment and innovation. He believed this was an opportunity for them to reposition themselves and focus on supporting businesses, entrepreneurship, and innovation, building on their community's strengths, including its highly educated population and anchor institutions. He said that it was important to acknowledge that ideas would take root, businesses would scale, partnerships would thrive. They aimed to be the hub of an innovation-based economy.

Mr. Pedigo said that to achieve this, the plan was built around five key goals. He said that he would review the presentation and then open it up for questions and discussion. As Ms. Kilroy had mentioned, the first goal was centered around establishing a strong foundation in national intelligence and national security, particularly with the Rivanna Station project. He said that they planned to execute on this goal and think robustly, not just about the initial investment, but about building a comprehensive ecosystem around it.

Mr. Pedigo said that the second goal was focused on life sciences, particularly medical devices and biotechnology. He said that this area presented numerous opportunities, with CvilleBioHub being a notable example of a group supporting startup technology enterprises in this space. Additionally, the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center was located there, making it an attractive location for life sciences investment. He said that the third goal was centered around the agribusiness economy, which was deeply rooted in the community. He said that they wanted to support small businesses in this space by engaging with entrepreneurs and business owners to understand their needs and how they could help them succeed.

Mr. Pedigo said that goal four was focused on people, recognizing that investing in enterprises and economic development was not enough; they must also invest in the people who would drive growth and success. He said that research had shown that the County's greatest export was its talented college students. He said that the question was how to retain this talent to help grow their local enterprises.

Mr. Pedigo said that goal five was centered around the policy framework, which included everything from permitting processes to regulatory environments, all necessary to attract the investment needed to drive growth. He said that these were the five goals of the plan, which were outlined in detail. He said that the plan also included KPI metrics to track progress and measure success.

Mr. Pedigo said that one question that arose was how to determine if they were winning in this plan. To answer this, they would focus on three key areas: business expansion efforts, company growth, and people development. He said that this was also a reflection of the existing companies that were already present. He said that goal two, was really focused on talent, specifically individuals between the ages of 25 and 44, who were considered mid-career. He said that they called this the prime talent age. He said that when they looked at the metric for this, the County's population in this age range was about 10% smaller than it should be for its size.

Mr. Pedigo said that this suggested that they were pushing people away, making it difficult to retain them. Therefore, their goal was to move this metric forward in terms of retaining 25 to 44-year-olds, who were considered prime working age. He said that there were also skill metrics and skill identification needs that needed to be addressed for this age group. He said today's economic development space was really about workforce development, and they would see this in the plan, particularly around this goal. He said that goal three, which had been emphasized by both the Directors and the Board of Supervisors, was to start tracking the growth in their commercial share of their property tax base over time.

Mr. Pedigo said that goal one was focused on the national intelligence space, which had seen significant investment from the federal government. He said that they had made a significant effort and investment in the Rivanna Futures experiment and the innovation corridor. He was impressed by the regional efforts, including the work of their regional partners and university partners, who were thinking about how they could act as a region, not just a County, and drive a regional approach to this.

Mr. Pedigo said that in terms of how they would be activating Rivanna Futures, they were already doing this through site planning and business attraction efforts. He said that he was pleased to see that

they had secured a \$9.7 million grant in the first year; that was a great start. He said that they also discussed the work around the innovation corridor, which was an interesting area of focus. He said that he would like to highlight an interesting study being supported by a GO Virginia grant, which explored the connections within the ecosystem, encompassing both life sciences and national security. This study had the potential to overlap with various sectors.

Mr. Pedigo stated that the focus on career pathways was central to strategy 1.3, particularly in collaboration with UVA and the local community college, Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC). He said one of the things they repeatedly heard through the engagement process was that there was interest in wanting to leverage this community college to support residents pursuing technical programs. This initiative presented a great opportunity to address the needs of those residents throughout all levels of educational attainment. He said that launching a sector partnership would bring together employers and educational providers to advance these efforts. Strategy 1.5 was centered around telling the story of the County's innovation brand in the life sciences space, which was crucial for economic development. Economic development relied heavily on storytelling.

Mr. Pedigo said that goal two was focused on promoting the County as a life sciences destination. He said this goal built upon existing regional strategic plan efforts and leveraged the strength of the sector, which was evident in the high location quotient of 1.76. This indicated a significantly higher concentration of life sciences companies compared to the national average. He said the report highlighted opportunities for scaling, particularly for smaller firms that needed room to grow. To achieve this goal, they needed to expand the infrastructure to support scale-ups, including lab space and multi-small-scale manufacturing facilities.

Mr. Pedigo said that workforce studies had shown that life sciences could connect innovation-based economies to mid-career or missing middle jobs, which did not require four-year degree institutions. These jobs could be obtained through technical degree programs at community colleges. There were numerous opportunities in this space, as evidenced by the innovation corridor, sector partnerships, and attraction efforts. Specifically, 2.2 continued the innovation corridor, 2.3 worked with CvilleBio, a group that had already demonstrated exceptional work as a sector partnership. He had discussed this group extensively in his previous work, and they served as a model for best practices in this space.

Mr. Pedigo stated that strategy 2.4 focused on attraction efforts, allowing Ms. Kilroy and her team to explore ways to attract new companies to the area. This was particularly effective in identifying what types of companies were missing from their ecosystem and informing attraction efforts. Strategy 2.5 addressed access to capital, particularly in the growth stage, to help these companies scale. Goal three had undergone significant changes since their previous discussions, incorporating feedback from various stakeholders. The intent remained the same: to support the agricultural legacy businesses in scaling and providing infrastructure and support programs. Notably, the agriculture-based economy in their area had a location quotient of 2.3, much higher than the U.S. average, indicating a highly concentrated industry.

Mr. Pedigo said that the question was how to make these businesses scale while also considering support services, such as succession planning and other necessary programs. He said 3.1 explored policies for creating flexible opportunities around value-added production and diversifying revenue streams, building on previous discussions about the need for diverse revenue streams in the lodging and hospitality sector. He said that strategy 3.2 focused on modern infrastructure, recognizing the innovative nature of agricultural businesses and the need for technology, such as expanded cold storage and broadband.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 3.3 addressed succession planning and business support, while 3.4 focused on supporting wholesaling in the space. He said it was about exploring market pathways, focusing on wholesale and scalable opportunities. According to strategy 3.5, they would continue to engage businesses together through their partnership, recognizing the value of collaboration in economic development. This approach could foster synergy not only between their economic development staff and businesses, but also among businesses themselves.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 3.6 supported the wine economy, which was a robust and significant contributor to their local economy. Strategy 3.7 emphasized the importance of considering the connection between their visitation economy and the agritourism-based economy, which was crucial for their Visitor Bureau's efforts. He said that goal four addressed talent. They aimed to retain their workforce, including those from UVA and local community colleges like PVCC. To achieve this, they would align with career pathways, as discussed in roundtable discussions with 25 workforce providers. The key was creating systems and a system approach in this space. They would also support the entrepreneurial ecosystem, mapping and connecting opportunities, rather than creating new ones.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 4.2 involved mapping and creating a unified brand around a unified platform. Strategy 4.3 focused on supporting students, particularly through initiatives that fostered a sense of community and connection, such as the town-gown initiative. The City of Philadelphia's had a program called Campus Philadelphia, which was a successful example of this, having brought together colleges and universities to address the issue of students leaving their community without affiliation. He said other cities, like Greenville and Asheville, were also implementing similar initiatives.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 4.4 emphasized the importance of their young professional network, recognizing the value of social capitalism in connecting people and driving economic development. strategy 4.5 was around destination development, and strategy 4.6 was related to other plans in place.

They aimed to continue supporting the work in the housing plan and connect with it. He said child care had become a prominent issue, and they wanted to ensure it was included in their plan. Goal 5 was focused on investment, with the goal of leading, competing, and building.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 5.1 provided the County with the opportunity to reassess its development process and zoning code processes. The development community had been the most vocal and engaged group in their conversations, and they had discussed in depth whether the County could do anything to rethink their zoning and permitting processes to better serve them. He said this was not a unique issue; he had observed it in every community he worked with, including Burlington, Vermont, and Cedar Valley, Iowa.

Mr. Pedigo said that by partnering with developers, they could explore ways to improve their services and better meet their needs. To that end, strategy 5.3 was about continuing their BRE (Business Retention and Expansion) program, which Emily and her team visited with approximately 50 to 75 businesses per year and use the information to inform policy. Strategy 5.4 was about leveraging the Economic Development Authority to drive investment. Strategy 5.5 involved Ms. Kilroy and her team creating a pipeline of available sites and necessary resources to support investment readiness.

Mr. Pedigo said that strategy 5.6 was focused on infrastructure, and they would continue to work with their infrastructure partners and airport to support economic development efforts. Finally, 5.7 was about marketing and storytelling, which was a crucial piece of economic development. He said that he looked forward to answering questions and listening to the discussion.

Mr. Long said that he would like to start by providing an overview of their discussion with the Economic Development Authority during their special session a couple of weeks ago. He said that while the members of the EDA would have their own thoughts to share, he thought it would be useful to provide a general summary of what they discussed. He said that they did have a public comment period, during which one person spoke and one emailed comment was received.

Mr. Long said that the majority of the discussion focused on the vision and mission at a high level, with a significant emphasis on quality of life and how it relates to their Economic Development Plan. He said that Ms. Kilroy's input was particularly helpful in this regard, as she also highlighted the County's overall vision and mission, which aligned with many of the concepts they discussed. He said that Mr. Friedman's comment that quality of life meant different things to different people was also insightful.

Mr. Long said that their discussion centered on how to align the Economic Development Plan with these other factors and how much they should reference each other. He said that this was a key takeaway, as it became clear that these concepts did intersect. He said that one area that emerged was the Empower Talent section, which highlighted the importance of housing. He said that he would also like to highlight a specific area that was discussed: the need for more comprehensive rules governing food service at wineries, which was supported by the majority of the EDA.

Mr. Morrill stated that while he did find many things that aligned with his expectations in the plan, the one thing that was missing for him was the balancing act that a County like theirs must undertake in terms of the environment and quality of life. He said that he believed it was essential to recognize that these were intentional. When they brought in a large number of people, it would undoubtedly affect traffic, the number of homes they needed, and the services they must provide. They knew from a recent study that residential taxation was not the solution; instead, they should focus on building a strong commercial tax base.

Mr. Morrill stated that, however, navigating these issues was a treacherous path, and a single approach was not the answer. He said that he was not suggesting that the plan was a one-size-fits-all solution, but he was hoping to find more emphasis on the aspects that truly mattered to the people who already called Albemarle home. The feedback he had received from his neighbors and citizens he had never met suggested that these were the things that kept people invested in their community. He said that they understood that residential tax rates were increasing, and they needed to find a solution to mitigate this, as eventually high real estate tax rates would force many existing residents to leave.

Mr. Morrill stated that at the same time, they also cherished the qualities that made this place special. He said that it was important to promote sustainable agriculture, increasing the ability for farmers to earn a living, while also not paving over any more of the County than necessary. He said that in the EDA's special session, they had discussed including language to the mission and vision statement that would keep them focused on the ultimate goal of human flourishing. While GRP (Gross Regional Product), commercial tax base, and County services were all relevant, they ultimately wanted people to thrive and enjoy a high quality of life, while also protecting the environment that sustained them.

Mr. Morrill stated that he was interested in hearing the Supervisors' perspectives and whether there was a consensus on the importance of human flourishing. If not, he understood. He hoped there was, and even if it was not reflected in the plan, he hoped it would be considered as they made decisions in the coming years.

Ms. McKeel asked if Mr. Morrill could restate his suggestion.

Mr. Morrill stated that to begin, he had revised the mission slightly. He said that his proposed mission would read: Deliver lasting prosperity for Albemarle residents by expanding employment opportunities, strengthening and diversifying their tax base, and supporting local businesses and

redevelopment, while protecting their environment with exceptional quality.

Ms. Mallek said that as someone who had been involved in clean air and clean water initiatives for a long time, she believed that incorporating this type of inclusion into the plan would help build support for the plan among County residents. She said that this was a positive step forward in building that support. She noted that there were many aspects to consider, and although she was not an expert in economic development, she had learned a great deal since 2008. Several themes had emerged, including the need to be prepared, which had been discussed by various consultants over the years. However, it was unclear what exactly they should be preparing for.

Ms. Mallek said that she appreciated the careful and thoughtful steps taken by the staff over the past year, which had been well received and successful. She said that in the agricultural space, she was not entirely clear on where this was going, so she would love to review the notes and catch up on the discussions with stakeholders. She had spoken with Allie Hill, who was part of the JABA local food process in 2010, and research had shown the need for processing space and a shared cannery space.

Ms. Mallek said that she spoke with them this morning to confirm that the cannery was still operational and was well-supported by Prince Edward County local government, considering it a public service and part of a park environment. However, it was busy and thriving. She noted that Ms. Hill had also mentioned that the Beacon Kitchen, which recently opened, would meet the needs of value-added producers, such as jam makers, who may not have enough product to justify the travel time to the cannery.

Ms. Mallek stated that Ms. Hill's main concern was that they needed to identify sustainable processing production in the truck gardening space, for example, to support this business enterprise. For over 35 years, various agricultural groups had researched whether they had enough animals to support a processing site. Unfortunately, they had found that they did not have enough sustained production throughout the year to support a site, with only two small ones in the last five years, one in Greene and one in Barbourville, which had helped sustain the meat sector.

Ms. Mallek said that those were the kinds of ideas that she would love to delve into as a homework assignment, to read and study, and catch up on the work that had already been done. She did not want anyone to reinvent the wheel, but she would like to understand the existing work. Additionally, she would like to know about the metrics used to measure the success of these initiatives. Furthermore, she would like to explore the connections between local farmers markets and producers, as this was a key focus of the JABA study many years ago. She noted that in 2015, they had 15 farmers markets, but she was not sure if they had all survived since then. She recalled that the only locality with more was Fairfax County, which had a population of 1.5 million people.

Ms. Mallek said that they should measure job increases and develop ways to empower local agriculture. This included providing good agriculture training in their high schools to increase the number of farmers. Having a background in agriculture could be a wonderful foundation for individuals who wanted to pursue careers in mechanical engineering, as it taught hands-on skills such as welding and other hands-on, technical skills.

Ms. Mallek said that she wanted to make one additional point, which was separate from her previous comments. She said that a recreational economy was an area worth exploring. She said that Roanoke, for example, had successfully developed its outdoor recreation economy over the past 10 years, and their 15,000-acre reserve served as a key focus. She said that she had been in touch with some individuals who believed Albemarle should also capitalize on that type of opportunity. She said that at a minimum, they should quantify the economic benefits of activities such as cycling, bird watching, kayaking, hiking, botanizing, and rock climbing, and take full advantage of this type of economy.

Mr. Pedigo said that first and foremost, the mission statement could be edited. He said that the reality was that this was an economic development plan that aligned with other plans. He said that in terms of environmental protection, balancing quality of place, and other factors, the Comprehensive Plan would be addressing those topics at a higher, more general level. He said that the Economic Development Strategic Plan was a part of that Comprehensive Plan, and they could adjust the language of the mission statement to indicate its connection to it. The reality was that the Comprehensive Plan was already doing this work. He said that considering the County's constraints on development, this Economic Development Strategic Plan was meant to work within those constraints as defined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Hood said that he had a question regarding what Mr. Pedigo had just mentioned about constraints and limitations. He asked what the level of land in other comparable localities, such as Asheville, that was developable. He said that as he understood it, only 5% of Albemarle County's land was open for development, while 3% had already been developed. Therefore, it appeared that they were really talking about approximately 2% of their County's land that could be developed. He said that he was interested in hearing what Mr. Pedigo had seen as successful in places such as theirs.

Mr. Pedigo agreed that they were constrained by the amount of developable land. He believed that communities were shaped by the values that were prioritized. In this case, there were constraints and hurdles that they were dealing with. They would have to make tough choices. For example, they might want to develop only 5% of the land, while highly protecting the environment, being an innovative capital, and creating missing middle jobs. Additionally, many people wanted affordable single-family homes.

Mr. Pedigo said that delivering on those goals could be challenging. As he mentioned, there were trade-offs involved. On one hand, they wanted to protect the quality of the place and preserve its natural character. On the other hand, they needed to balance that with the need for development and economic growth. When he heard arguments that they should prioritize preserving the status quo, he thought it was often because people did not want to consider the trade-offs. However, in this community, residents were facing challenges such as unaffordable housing and limited job opportunities.

Mr. Pedigo stated that it was essential to strike a balance between preserving the natural environment and providing for the needs of the community. One of the goals of this plan was to explore the possibilities for achieving those goals. For instance, they were examining the need for a food processing plant, better broadband, and enhanced protection of farmers' markets. The plan outlined opportunities for deeper dives into these areas, acknowledging that they wouldn't be able to solve all the details in a five-year strategic plan. In fact, he believed this plan was more detailed than other plans he had worked on, as it was requested by stakeholders who wanted to see more specifics.

Mr. Pedigo stated that one aspect to consider when envisioning support for local agriculture was that advancing economic development in this area required providing opportunities for exploration and growth. The plan aimed to facilitate this by bringing small businesses together and exploring infrastructure needs. These issues were raised by businesses during the site visit, emphasizing the importance of addressing issues such as scaling and supporting services. The plan sought to provide a level of specificity that addressed the needs of the businesses, while also acknowledging that it could not solve everything in a strategic plan.

Mr. Pedigo stated that this was an opportunity for the Economic Development staff to explore and develop these efforts. Notably, the business investment components of the plan had a relatively small footprint outside of the Rivanna Futures initiative. The plan highlighted opportunities for small-scale life sciences businesses, such as technical support programs. These were small enterprises that could incubate and grow at the university. The plan was not advocating for the construction of a large-scale facility like an Eli Lilly manufacturing plant.

Mr. Pedigo said that rather, it was suggesting that to retain these mid-sized, small-scale life scientist companies, one must consider scaling and developing the ecosystem to support them. This was particularly relevant given the constraints of a 5% development area land and the potential for redevelopment in the space. This plan was providing a scale to redevelop the industrial corridor and rethink its use, which presented numerous opportunities for growth and development.

Ms. Kilroy stated that the first conversation she and Mr. Pedigo had regarding this planning process was that the Comprehensive Plan was very clear about the area available in the County for development, so this Economic Development Strategic Plan needed to keep that in mind.

Mr. Andrews stated that he did not really want to have a discussion about the 5% development area today. He said that he would have liked to think of it as unique to geographic and other constraints that made Albemarle unique and therefore comparing them to other places was not helpful to him. He said that what he heard from Mr. Morrill about ensuring they include certain buzzwords to avoid saying they were just doing economic development for economic development's sake resonated with him.

Mr. Andrews said that, for example, he noticed in the vision statement that they said they were open for investment. He said that he wondered if it was possible to add a modifier to that, such as "open for strategic investment," to clarify that they were not just open to any investment, but rather investment that aligned with their Comprehensive Plan and values. He said that similarly, on slide 14, the first thing it said was "growth in jobs." He said that while that was a positive goal, it was worth considering that it could be achieved through various means, such as warehouses and distribution centers, which might not necessarily lead to career ladder jobs.

Mr. Andrews said that as he reviewed these documents, he worried that some people might interpret their efforts as trying to open themselves up too much and not being consistent with their Comprehensive Plan. He said that he appreciated the comments about where this fit within their Comprehensive Plan, and he agreed with those. However, he wanted to make sure that their language was clear and concise, and that they were able to recognize that this initiative was aligned with their values of quality of life and environmental sustainability.

Mr. Pedigo said that the reality of the market was that warehousing jobs were not feasible in Albemarle due to the high cost and lack of space. He said that in the market of investment, other companies would look elsewhere, and investors would also seek opportunities elsewhere. He said that regarding tying the jobs back to specific sectors, he felt that although jobs were defined broadly, it was defined to include jobs within the sectors they were working towards, such as life sciences, national security, and agricultural investments. He said that by focusing on these sectors, they were creating a plan that prioritized quality job creation.

Mr. Pedigo said that he never thought of this plan as solely focused on growth for growth's sake. He said that in fact, the critique of this plan could be that it was too curated, focusing too narrowly on these three sectors. However, given the community's values, it made sense to prioritize quality job creation. He said that to further refine the plan, they should consider changing the metrics to ensure they were measuring quality jobs, rather than just adding jobs for the sake of adding jobs. As a community that valued environmental work, they wanted to create jobs that aligned with their values and provided career pathways and ladders. This was reflected in goal four, which aimed to connect job career pathways to the

desired space.

Mr. Gallaway said that he had a substantial amount of material to review, but he would like to address the recent conversation. He said that as a sitting Supervisor, he appreciated the concerns and fears that people had about this plan changing who they were. However, he strongly disagreed with the notion that Supervisors or Economic Development staff were intentionally trying to change the character of Albemarle through this strategic plan.

Mr. Gallaway said that economic development was about generating revenue to support their existing way of life and services. He said that it was a necessary step to ensure they could continue to provide what they valued in Albemarle. He said that if they did not adopt this approach, property taxes would likely increase, and some would say that was great because that could lead to a decrease in population. He said that he would like to push back against the idea that redundancy somehow brought power or commitment. He said that every plan did not need to address every issue.

Mr. Gallaway said that he would like to use the example of their School Division, which had a clear mission and vision statement. He said that while it did not explicitly mention climate change or environmental responsibility, it was clear that they were committed to achieving the goals of their Climate Action Plan. He said that redundancy did not make a statement more powerful; it was simply a repetition of the same idea. He recalled a previous Comprehensive Plan meeting where he had suggested reviewing the plan through two lenses: climate action and equity. At the time, there was some concern that they needed to reinforce the emphasis on climate action, despite the entire plan being developed with that in mind.

Mr. Gallaway said that he had disagreed that there needed to be more emphasis on climate action for that reason, and he was surprised that people subsequently accused him of being a climate change denier. He said that because he did not support a redundant statement in a document, that was what happened. He said that he wanted to emphasize that this was a fear-based response, and they must trust that the Comprehensive Plan, as stated by Mr. Pedigo, was accurate. He said that in this context, he wanted to clarify that the claim about Albemarle County being a hub for national security and intelligence was not true.

Mr. Gallaway said that it was actually the military that had established these facilities, not Albemarle County. Therefore, they must remember that sometimes the industries that came to their area were not a cognizant choice, but rather a circumstance. He asked Ms. Mallek if the County had encouraged those industries to develop here.

Ms. Mallek replied no; but keeping them here was the County's responsibility.

Mr. Gallaway said that however, the County did not actively court the industry to bring them to this area. Instead, it developed here based on their own choice, likely due to Albemarle's unique definition. He said that what existed here was a suitable spot. He said that the same could be said for biotechnology; Albemarle did not specifically decide to encourage that industry to develop in the County. He said that the industry would decide independently where they would go. It was ultimately up to the County to decide whether to support or reject a particular development.

Mr. Gallaway said that as Mr. Pedigo had mentioned, warehousing would never occur in Albemarle County, particularly because the public would be unsupportive of a warehousing district. He could not imagine a warehouse looking to Albemarle as a prime location to set up a distribution center. He said that this said a lot about what Albemarle was defined by: what existed, what was created, and what people valued. He said that while there were both positive and negative ramifications to development, when they started talking about specific projects, it was not about whether the County had done something or not.

Mr. Gallaway stated that rather, it was about whether a particular development aligned with their definition of Albemarle County. He said that if an entrepreneurial, innovative warehousing situation were to emerge that required a large amount of space, he was not sure the County would be willing to offer incentives to support it. He reiterated that he wanted to emphasize the importance of trusting their Comprehensive Plan and following through on their commitments. If they were going to redo the Comprehensive Plan with a focus on climate action and equity, then everything must be evaluated through those two lenses.

Ms. McKeel said that she believed Mr. Gallaway had made some fair points. She said that whether it was a mega data center or a warehouse, the community was unlikely to support it, and the costs to build such a large facility would likely be too expensive anyway.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said that she agreed with all of what Mr. Gallaway had said. She said that she appreciated the idea of being open to new concepts and embracing innovation. She said that she understood that they had established guidelines, such as bioscience research and Rivanna Futures, but she believed it was essential to keep their minds open to the possibilities that may arise in the next 20 years. She said that they did not know what the future held, and it was crucial to be adaptable. She said regarding the point about the 5% versus 95% ratio, that could change with a new Board of Supervisors' decision.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley stated that she was supportive of Economic Development staff's recommendations so far. She said that she liked what had been planned out and thought there was a lot

of potential for great things to happen in the County. If they were able to modernize their systems and speed up the development processes, that would also bring innovation. She said that she firmly believed they could protect the Rural Area and have a successful and sustainable local economy.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley noted that Stony Point Market was the only place in her part of the County where someone could get something to eat without going into Charlottesville, and they were restrained by County regulations. For example, they wanted to buy some property across the street and build a new market, but they were not allowed to due to zoning restrictions. She thought they should consider ways to support businesses, which the community valued very highly, to operate in the County. She said that the Board of Supervisors had the ability to prevent improper developments from occurring, and she wanted to see innovation and flexibility in what they did allow to be developed in the County.

Mr. Pedigo reiterated that there were already guidelines in place regarding the type of development that was desired. He said that the plan outlined the County's aspirations, including growing its life sciences sector and supporting national security investments. He said that there were definitely guardrails in place; for example, a very small portion of the County was designated for development, which could be considered a significant constraint, any incentive deals that may be pursued would require the Board of Supervisors to set a plan, and there were opportunities throughout the year for the Board to review and approve an annual work plan and budget.

Mr. Pedigo said that this allowed for regular check-ins on investments, staffing, and planning. He said that in essence, these guardrails were already in place and served as a representation of the County's values and expectations. He said that he believed that by having these spelled out, the plan effectively signaled the County's openness to a specific type of investment, and it also conveyed that there were real expectations about the type of investment being sought.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley stated that it was essential to remember that unless the County had more commercial and light industrial development, personal property taxes and real estate taxes were likely to increase. She said that higher taxes would make it impossible to provide affordable housing in the County. She said that therefore, increasing their tax rate was not a desirable solution.

Mr. Long stated that he appreciated the way the plan had evolved. Earlier in their discussion, Mr. Pedigo had asked him what he hoped to achieve from this plan, and from the EDA's perspective, he believed this framework was valuable because it provided a structure for them to evaluate opportunities as they arose and determine whether they aligned with these stated goals. He said that if someone presented an idea, they could assess whether it fit within the framework, even if it did not perfectly match one of the specific objectives.

Mr. Pedigo stated that he had recently developed a plan for Terrell, Texas, which was notably different from Albemarle County. He said that they worked closely with the Terrell Economic Development Authority to consider the investments they wanted to make and how to align their business plan with those goals. He said that a strategic plan could only take one so far in terms of implementation; one had to then move to an implementation phase. He said that this often involved working closely with professional staff or implementing a planning process to ensure successful implementation.

Mr. Friedman said that he would like to revisit a basic question. He said that he wanted to know why they should pursue economic development. He said that the only reason he had heard so far was that they needed to increase revenue on the commercial side to keep residential taxes low or lower. He said that was a clear reason. He noted that for most of them in this meeting, that was the primary focus, as they already had good jobs or significant retirement savings.

Mr. Friedman stated that he believed there was another perspective that had not been mentioned. He said that if they recalled the Orange Dot report by Ridge Schuyler, approximately 15% to 20% of Albemarle County residents struggled to be self-sufficient due to high housing costs, childcare expenses, living costs, and low-wage jobs. He stated that they must acknowledge that hospitality, tourism, and retail were the lowest-paying economic sectors, and many of their residents worked in these areas.

Mr. Friedman said that he thought they wanted economic development to create middle-skill, middle-wage jobs that these individuals could aspire to and move up to, thereby increasing their earnings and making the County more affordable. He stated that as community leaders, they had a responsibility to support the interests of the 20% of the population who needed to make more money in order to improve their quality of life. He stated that this aspect had been missing from their discussion thus far.

Mr. Pedigo agreed with Mr. Friedman that the reason for economic development was not just about investment, but it was about creating career pathways, better jobs, and quality of place efforts to build a complete community. He said that one thing he would suggest to everyone at this meeting was to develop a pitch statement to help them articulate the value of this plan in terms of their organization, their County, and the reason they were doing this work.

Mr. Pedigo said that Mr. Friedman's point was well taken; it did not have to be the same everywhere, but it should be more than just talking about investment. He said that perhaps someone was pitching it to support entrepreneurs, agriculture, or the connection between climate and economic development. He said that they should all have a clear and compelling pitch to communicate their own vision and values, which was essential for storytelling and effective communication.

Mr. Mechnick stated that in terms of branding the discussion, he believed "building a complete community " effectively summed up what their reasons were for developing this plan.

Mr. Pedigo said that he was aware that many people were afraid of economic development, as previously mentioned. He said that much of this fear stemmed from the fact that economic development was happening to residents, rather than with them. He said that the reason he wanted to approach this topic in a way that went beyond simply bringing in investment for its own sake but rather doing it in a way that benefited the community.

Mr. Pedigo said that the narratives surrounding economic development were essential. He said that to advance the plan and achieve the values they wanted to, they needed to tell these stories and convey that this was not as scary as it sounded. Instead, it was about why they wanted to be there and how they connected that back to the people living and working in the communities.

Ms. McKeel said that from her perspective, Albemarle's local children were graduating from high school and having to leave the area because there were no job opportunities. She said that they were frustrated about losing that middle piece. She said that they had the resources right in their own backyard, including PVCC and the University of Virginia. She said that however, the public school system was currently focusing on career exploration and career pathways.

Ms. McKeel said that she would love to see that educational issue addressed in the document, as these high school graduates needed to figure out their career paths and may not necessarily need a degree right away. She said that alternatively, they may benefit from a degree from PVCC, rather than immediately pursuing a four-year college degree and then dropping out due to financial or academic difficulties. She said that she believed it was essential to acknowledge and utilize the resources available through Albemarle County Public Schools, PVCC, and the University of Virginia to provide their students with the best possible education for career opportunities.

Ms. Kilroy said that the largest announcement they made last year, the Afton Scientific expansion, was directly related to that point. She said that two-thirds of the jobs they were seeking to create would be manufacturing jobs that they had stated did not require a degree to be qualified for.

Ms. McKeel said that she hoped they could have many jobs designed to be stepping-stones for further education or other jobs, allowing them to transition into more advanced roles. She said that she would like to see this aspect of the document more prominently featured, particularly in relation to public education, PVCC, and the University of Virginia. She said that while it was mentioned in the footnotes, she believed it should be more prominently emphasized throughout the document.

Mr. Storm said that he wanted to echo that sentiment, as it was relevant to the population they were discussing. He said that when they mentioned a 25 to 44 age range, it was essential to consider that these individuals would have high school-age children as well. He said that they were seeing families entering the community at a later stage, but people in their 30s and 40s would also be looking to their schools for quality education.

Mr. Storm said that he served on the schools' long-range planning committee, and he was certain that when they presented their proposals to the School Board in a couple of months, they would be making significant requests. He said that they planned to ensure that they tied these requests back to economic development, ultimately connecting the dots between the schools, economic growth, and workforce retention.

Ms. McKeel said that she recalled her time as a liaison for the EDA, where they had several conversations about public education and how the EDA could support the public education efforts aimed at educating children to build the jobs needed. She said that she believed it would be a valuable addition to the document.

Ms. Mallek commented that she did not know anything about the workforce issues when she was assigned EDA liaison in 2008, but she learned that the issue was particularly pressing for young people who completed their education, whether it was high school or a certificate program, and then needed good employment opportunities. She said that the reality was that many of them could not afford to attend college, accumulate significant debt, and end up in the same job they could have had without higher education. She said that this was a crisis situation.

Ms. Mallek said that over the past 15 years by the State with the certificate programs, and community colleges had made significant strides in addressing this issue. She said that she was heartened to see many high school graduates already possessing certificates. She said that it was also important for the School Division to see that this was an expectation of them, as it helped schools recognize the value of these programs and encouraged them to promote them. By working together and exploring partnerships, they could help bridge the gap in skill sets that fell outside the high school curriculum but were essential for career success.

Mr. Mechnick said that most of his comments had already been addressed by others, which was great. He said that he knew they had benchmarked various communities, but he was unsure if there was a plan to benchmark the implementation aspect of the plan and discuss similar implementations with other localities.

Ms. Kilroy replied that during the version they reviewed in the spring, for each goal, there were at

least three localities that illustrated in real life what success could look like.

Mr. Mechnick said that he was more interested in the details of how they would implement this and have in-depth conversations with their Planning and Zoning Department. He said that he was particularly interested in learning about their challenges, the specific strategies they employed to streamline processes, and the metrics they used to measure success. He said that he wanted to know what worked and what did not, and what lessons were learned.

Mr. Mechnick said that they had a lot of work ahead of them to metricize this plan so that it aligned with their community metrics, thresholds, and capacities in a way that reflected their values. He said that he believed that was where the nitty-gritty came in such as understanding the practical aspects of implementing the plan and learning from those who had successfully achieved some of these goals.

Ms. Kilroy said that they had compiled a case study of the locations and discussed the possibility of future opportunities when the plan was adopted for meeting with the staff of those localities to learn about their experiences.

Mr. Mechnick said that he believed there was a fairly obvious path to implementation. However, there were numerous details and concerns that stemmed from unknowns. He said that he was confident that, with the expertise of skilled planners and the Planning Department, these unknowns could be addressed and put into context. He said that as a result, he was not overly concerned about this issue and was confident that it could be aligned with their values.

Mr. Andrews said that there was a lot of discussion about marketing and branding, as well as having a unified brand across different sectors. He said that the bioscience sector did not provide as much information on this topic. He said that he was particularly curious about the branding process for the defense and intelligence sectors.

Ms. Kilroy said that marketing and branding were woven throughout their goals and objectives. She said that they were aware of the assets and opportunities they had here, but when discussing Charlottesville-Albemarle at a national conference, many people were unfamiliar with their region. She said that when they started talking about their region, they often expressed surprise, saying they had no idea or did not realize that UVA or Rivanna Station was located in their local area.

Ms. Kilroy said that they may also be unaware of the significant intelligence and national security presence in the Charlottesville area, which was a substantial footprint. She said that this lack of recognition was not just about creating a catchy slogan or billboard, but rather about how they effectively told their story and built awareness of their community's strengths. She said that ten years ago, Huntsville, Alabama was unknown for its aerospace industry, and now it was recognized for that. She said that they wanted to elevate the profile of their community to the point where it became synonymous with this innovation and economic growth, as outlined in their Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Mr. Pedigo said that the branding aspect was about making sure that when people mentioned these sectors, they could easily align their region with those sectors. He said that for instance, most people were unaware that this County was the second-largest location for VC (venture capital) investment in medical devices for early-stage companies. He said that when communicating with the target audience that would be interested in this sector, it was crucial to tie it to a story and/or points of evidence that explained why this would be a good fit.

Mr. Pedigo said that he believed there was a larger question about whether the County needed a more comprehensive story around economic development in its messaging. He said that this was included in the plan as an area to explore over the next five years, and it may be time to consider developing an investment brand. Their competitors in the Commonwealth, such as Roanoke, had already established investment brands for their economic development efforts, and Lynchburg and Richmond had also done so in recent years. He said that having a clear story and platform was essential for economic development, as it was just as important as considering incentives, land use, and other factors. He said that economic development was ultimately about storytelling.

Mr. Friedman said that upon reviewing the report, he noticed that each of the five goals had approximately seven sub-goals, totaling 35 objectives. He said that given the limited staff, it was impractical to pursue all 35 objectives simultaneously. He said that his question for their consultant was whether any consideration had been given to prioritizing the goals or identifying the top priorities. He said that he wanted to know the most effective way to allocate their resources to achieve the greatest return on investment. He said that for example, if they were seeking a budget amendment from the State or a GO Virginia proposal, he wanted to know where they should focus their efforts within the plan in terms of what was their highest priority for return on investment.

Mr. Pedigo said that a five-year implementation matrix had been provided to the Economic Development Director, which outlined the key considerations for each year from one to five. He said that while there was still work to be done, he believed that once a community completed the strategic planning process, they typically spent 12 to 18 months developing a business plan. He said that looking at the matrix, they had identified the key areas that they wanted to invest in within the first three to five years. He said that he thought it was essential for the EDA to have a conversation about what investments they planned to make and how Ms. Kilroy would deploy her staff. He said that they had taken the first step by outlining and starting this work, so they were not starting from a blank slate. He said that a matrix was in place.

Mr. Gallaway said that, building on Mr. Friedman's comment about the workforce and not losing sight of that, there were a lot of things in this document that emphasized the need to invest and convene, which required dollars, resources, and staff time. These efforts often focused on identified gaps that did not currently exist. He thought this approach was smart. He preferred the "what's needed" approach over specific action steps because it drew attention to those gaps. However, he wanted to make a bigger point: how does local government actually do something to fill those gaps besides providing incentives or convening, and were they really convening?

Mr. Gallaway said that he had heard businesses in economic development meetings often mentioned that the education system was not producing the workers they needed. This was often directed at public education, community colleges, and UVA. They rarely discussed the skills required for their jobs, instead focusing on the type of employee they wanted to hire and could train. To him, this was a gap in workforce development. It was the soft skills, such as being on time, that he believed formalized education institutions struggled to address. These skills were essential but getting them could be challenging because they often conflicted with life experience.

Mr. Gallaway said that, for example, it was pointless to preach to a student about being late when their parents made them late. He said that this was a gap in their workforce that he did not know how to address. He thought this was a challenge for local government, as it often identified gaps but failed to provide tangible solutions. Industry, community colleges, and UVA were implied as needing to take the lead in figuring out how to address these gaps.

Mr. Gallaway said that to the point of leveraging and benchmarking other communities could not be an afterthought or an overthought. It should be a proactive approach that they took seriously, not something they did when they had time to get around to. He said that in the NFL, every week, teams researched their opponents, analyzed their strengths and weaknesses, and developed strategies to fill any gaps; this was how they competed and won. He said that the plan had a whole chapter dedicated to competing, and they had a clear understanding of their gaps.

Mr. Gallaway said that he did not think these gaps were unique to Albemarle County and their region, so it could not be solely focused on the three or four communities they benchmarked for this report. It needed to be about what County was taking proactive steps to retain talent and then identifying a component that addressed a specific issue, such as providing down payment assistance to employees to make it more affordable for them to stay, which would enable them to afford being able to consider different job opportunities that were available in the area.

Mr. Gallaway said that this was just one example of how they should consider what other localities were doing this well. He thought of counties without a university, which were not considered university towns. He recalled his hometown of Wheeling, West Virginia, where the talent that left the community was significant, and it was evident in the population decline and lack of viable industries. He asked what they could do to incentivize people to stay and live there. He said that local government needed to figure out a way to make that work. He said that someone was already doing it, and Albemarle County needed to identify what that was and how they could replicate it.

Mr. Gallaway said that benchmarking was crucial and looking at other places and their strategies were essential. He said that it would be difficult with the current staffing levels to examine all 50 states and 3,000-plus Counties, as well as Cities, to find examples of successful strategies but, he was advocating for a more comprehensive approach to address the issue Mr. Friedman was discussing, which required significant effort. He said that by doing so, they could identify how to apply those lessons to fill the gap by retaining talent.

Mr. Richardson said that he would like for staff to discuss their recent St. Louis trip as it related to this discussion. He would also like Ms. Shifflett to discuss the County's strategic plan and the Strategic Plan Execution Analysis & Reporting (SPEAR) the County conducted annually in August. He noted that the SPEAR would be presented to the Board of Supervisors next Wednesday, August 20, 2025.

Mr. Henry explained that a little over a year ago, he, Mr. Richardson, and Ms. Kilroy just returned from St. Louis, where the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) headquarters is located. He said that ten years earlier, St. Louis was in a position where it may have lost that function, which was a major employer in the area. He said that as a result, they visited the work that had been done there. He said that they "watched a film" of how a whole community had rallied around this industry and became competitive. He said that this was not just limited to St. Louis City; it was the entire region, which aligned to win through a procurement process for the new construction of NGA West, the headquarters.

Mr. Henry stated that through this process, they aligned geospatial studies from middle school to universities. At the university level, an institute was created, involving 14 universities. He said that this direct line from inner-city St. Louis opportunities to a career path that was not previously available. He said that their goal was to understand how this was built, and then they examined the elements they have here in their region, identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Mr. Henry said that he believed this work was part of the strategic plan, which would help them do that. He agreed that they should also look at other localities that had had success with similar initiatives. He said that it was not about competing with the geospatial industry but rather understanding how they built that alignment of work and created an ecosystem that spoke to how unique their area was, with national security, biosciences, and other core industries that they were highlighting in the strategic plan.

Mr. Richardson said that the Chief Operation Officer was responsible for not only strategic planning, but also performance. He said that she had a team that worked with every department in the organization to measure key metrics tied back to the SPEAR report. He said you cannot manage what you cannot measure. He said staff has learned to look for the gaps and what could be improved.

Ms. Kristy Shifflett, Chief Operating Officer, stated that the second year of the Strategic Plan Execution Analysis & Reporting was an important step in measuring their progress and being transparent to the community. She said that they were trying to answer the questions: what had they done, what had they accomplished, and what was the progress on those objectives? She said that each objective in their strategic plan had corresponding metrics that they had developed. For example, Objective 4.2 was to update Project ENABLE to include the County's role in economic development.

Ms. Shifflett said that they had been waiting for this opportunity to update the Economic Development Plan, which would enable them to create a comprehensive business plan. This plan would help them determine the next steps, the metrics for the next five years, and how they would connect with each other. She said that as Ms. Kilroy had previously shown, each plan would have its own set of tasks, but they would ultimately connect to form a cohesive strategy. She said that their intention was to communicate effectively, but first, they needed to determine what needed to be accomplished in each year and what they could realistically achieve.

Mr. Richardson said that he had a few additional comments. He said that regarding the County's five-year capital plan, this drove their capital investments in schools and County departments. Additionally, they had a five-year financial plan, led by their Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Sumner, which looked three to five years ahead at their revenues, expenses, and overall financial outlook. This was one of the lenses they used to evaluate their affordability, and it was a topic that Mr. Gallaway also discussed. To move forward, they needed investment, and as part of their budget process, they regularly discussed economic development funding and what they needed to support the department's and organization's success.

Mr. Richardson said that regarding Mr. Morrill's comments about connectivity between priorities, he would like to point out Slide 33, which included the County's vision. This was not the economic development vision, but rather a broader vision that encompassed their community's goals. As someone who had been there for eight years, he had seen this vision in place since he joined the Board, and he had reviewed it frequently. He said it outlined their aspirations for a community with abundant natural, rural, historic, and scenic resources, healthy ecosystems, and a physical environment that supported healthy lifestyles. The vision also highlighted the importance of active and vibrant development areas, a thriving economy, and exceptional educational opportunities for present and future generations.

Mr. Richardson stated that he believed there was a strong connection between this vision and their Economic Development Strategic Plan. To achieve a vibrant economy, they needed good jobs, and that was a topic that had been discussed in today's meeting. Looking at the connectivity, balance, and guardrails outlined in the vision, he found the common thread to be inspiring. It was clear that they had a strong foundation to build upon, and he thought it was essential to recognize the thread that ran through this vision.

Ms. Kilroy said that she would review the next steps for this process. She said that the document included in the packet, along with copies on the table, was the first draft of the final document from Resonance. She said that there were several items that needed attention, including copy edits, as well as the layout, which they were not aware of ahead of the final plan. She said that they needed to send more local photos to replace some of the stock photos with local images, which would allow them to address that more effectively. Additionally, they could incorporate any as-amended edits from today's discussion.

Ms. Kilroy said that additionally, she would like to offer a suggestion to address some of the comments raised today. She would propose adding the County's vision to the Economic Development Strategic Plan. She said that this would then embed the abundant natural resources component directly into the plan, rather than adding and amending statements, and would bring those connections together more concretely.

Ms. McKeel confirmed there was general consensus to include the County vision statement into the Economic Development Strategic Plan as Ms. Kilroy had suggested.

Ms. Kilroy said that to further clarify the metrics, she would like to refine the language to ensure that the jobs were accurately categorized as being in the target sectors or with a focus on those sectors. She said that she would also recommend they elevate public schools in the language on page 21, which discussed anchor institutions, including educational institutions.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley **moved** that the Board of Supervisors approve the Albemarle County Economic Development Strategic Plan (Attachment C), as amended. Ms. Mallek **seconded** the motion.

Roll was called and the motion carried by the following recorded vote:

AYES: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Gallaway, Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Mallek, and Ms. McKeel.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Mr. Pruitt.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

WHEREAS, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors recognizes the importance of a diversified tax base with vibrant businesses and inclusive career-ladder job opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Strategic Plan (“the Plan”) has been developed through a collaborative process involving community members, business stakeholders, County staff, and economic development partners; and

WHEREAS, the Plan outlines clear strategic goals, priorities, and objectives that align with the County's Comprehensive Plan and the Board's Strategic Plan, and promotes sustainable growth, job creation, and investment across Albemarle County; and

WHEREAS, the Plan includes specific objectives to support entrepreneurship, workforce development, equitable access to opportunity, infrastructure investment, and targeted industry growth; and

WHEREAS, staff recommend adoption of the Plan as a guiding document to inform economic development policy and implementation over the next five years;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors hereby approves and adopts the Economic Development Strategic Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board directs County staff to use the Plan to guide decision-making, to pursue implementation of its strategies in collaboration with public and private partners, and to provide progress updates to the Board.

2025 - 2030

Albemarle County

Economic Development Strategic Plan

A Blueprint to Lead Virginia's
Innovation Economy

resonance

Albemarle
COUNTY

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MISSION

The mission of the Albemarle County Economic Development Office is to strengthen and diversify the County’s tax base, support business scale-up and redevelopment, and expand career-ladder job opportunities — ensuring a vibrant, innovative economy that delivers lasting prosperity for all residents.



VISION

Albemarle County — Rooted in Innovation Open for Investment

Where bold ideas take root, businesses scale, and partnerships thrive — leading the way in Virginia's next innovation economy.

This vision, focused on economic development, complements the comprehensive vision for Albemarle County – Albemarle County envisions a community that offers:

- Abundant natural, rural, historic, and scenic resources
- Healthy ecosystems
- Active and vibrant development areas
- A physical environment that supports healthy lifestyles
- A thriving economy
- Exceptional educational opportunities

...for present and future generations





Albemarle County is writing the next chapter of Virginia's innovation economy.

This five-year economic development strategy builds directly on the foundation established by the County's Comprehensive Plan, supporting its long-term vision for place-based opportunity. The plan works in concert with land use, housing, and infrastructure goals, and serves as the County's blueprint for advancing economic opportunity over the next five years.

Albemarle County stands out for its unique mix of institutional strength, rural beauty, urban amenities, and sector diversity. It is home to one of the most educated populations in the country, boasting a median household income of over \$100,000. Anchors like the University of Virginia and Health System, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Rivanna Station position the County at the intersection of research & development in engineering, digital technology, and life sciences, workforce development, and entrepreneurship with a strong foundation in public K-12 education that fuels long-term

workforce competitiveness. Yet only 11.3% of Albemarle's tax base comes from commercial and industrial uses — among the lowest in the Commonwealth — and the share of prime working-age residents (25–44) trails peer regions. At the same time, infrastructure gaps, affordability pressures, and regulatory hurdles make it harder for businesses to expand and people to thrive.

That's the purpose of this strategy: to turn Albemarle's strengths and challenges into a focused, investable action plan for innovation-driven growth.

Over the course of nine months, the project team conducted a competitive benchmarking assessment, evaluated Albemarle's traded industry clusters, engaged more than 100 stakeholders, and heard directly from more than 250 community members. The findings are clear: Albemarle's economy is strong but underleveraged. Its institutions are powerful but disconnected. Its workforce is talented but not "sticky." And while its national security and life sciences sectors are surging, too many businesses still struggle to find space, talent, and/or capital to grow and scale.

This strategy outlines five goals and associated strategies to address those issues and drive investment, support employers, and build a more inclusive and resilient economy.

GOAL 1: LEAD IN INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

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

Albemarle is home to one of the state’s most significant national security assets, Rivanna Station and a highly skilled workforce. The County’s investment in Rivanna Futures creates a generational opportunity to turn this quiet strength into a signature identity. Strategies focus on land readiness, talent pipelines, branding, and coordinated sector engagement.

GOAL 4: EMPOWER TALENT

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

Despite high educational attainment, the county struggles to retain young and mid-career workers. This goal aims to build student engagement, young professional networks, entrepreneurship, career pathways, and housing and childcare access.

GOAL 2: DISCOVER IN LIFE SCIENCES

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

Already a \$269 million industry in Albemarle, life sciences holds clear potential for expansion. This goal supports lab development, core laboratory facilities, specialized research service laboratories, capital access, and national marketing, in partnership with CvilleBioHub and UVA.

GOAL 5: COMPETE FOR INVESTMENT

We will position Albemarle as Virginia’s most investment-ready county—ready to compete, build, and lead.

Success will require faster permitting, smarter incentives, ready sites, stronger storytelling, and the infrastructure to support growth. This goal ensures the County has the tools, systems, and brand to compete for the next generation of investment.

GOAL 3: GROW A MODERN AGRIBUSINESS ECONOMY

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

Agribusiness is an economic strength, but many farms and producers are at a transition point. Strategies address zoning, infrastructure, business planning, market access, and rural tourism to modernize and grow Albemarle’s farming and food and beverage economy.

This strategy is not just a plan—it’s a platform for action. It is designed to work within Albemarle’s existing planning framework while accelerating the County’s ability to lead in innovation, greater opportunity, and long-term prosperity.

Albemarle County at a Glance

Albemarle is one of Virginia's fastest-growing counties, hosting a highly-educated population, nationally-significant institutions, and a thriving innovation economy. The data points below highlight the County's momentum, strengths, and areas of strategic opportunity as it plans for the future.

- **117,000 RESIDENTS AND GROWING:**
The County's population increased 5% over the past five years, outpacing peer counties and the state average.
- **11% JOB GROWTH FROM 2018–2023** — nearly three times faster than the Virginia average.
- **\$102,617 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:**
13% above the Virginia average, with 12% growth over five years.
- **61% OF RESIDENTS HOLD A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER,** placing Albemarle among the most educated counties in the Commonwealth
- **33% GROWTH IN STEM EMPLOYMENT AND A SURGE IN CREATIVE-CLASS JOBS** reflect a strong innovation and knowledge economy.
- **TWO NATIONALLY-SIGNIFICANT ANCHORS, THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA AND RIVANNA STATION,** drive biotech, national security, and entrepreneurial activity.
- **BIOTECH, AGRIBUSINESS, AND NATIONAL SECURITY** are leading traded clusters, together generating over \$650 million in GRP.
- **RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAXES ACCOUNT FOR 74% OF LOCAL REVENUE,** highlighting the need for a stronger commercial base.
- **MEDIAN HOME PRICE OF \$540,000,** and average rent of \$1,655 make housing affordability a growing challenge for some residents.



BIG PICTURE

Economic development isn't just about growing business — it's about shaping a community's future.

Albemarle County is where the next chapter of Virginia's innovation economy begins.

With a strategic location in the heart of the Mid-Atlantic, a highly-educated population, and powerful institutional anchors, Albemarle County is positioned for innovation-driven growth.

But what makes the County distinctive isn't just geography or demographics; it's a shared commitment to lead with purpose and the groundwork already laid to do so.

This strategy builds from a place of strength:

- **A UNITED PUBLIC-SECTOR COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION.**
The Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Authority, and County staff have coalesced around a shared vision to grow Albemarle's economy through strategic investment, industry partnerships, and long-term planning.
- **WORLD-CLASS HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.**
The University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College serve as cornerstones of Albemarle's talent pipeline, supporting research commercialization, workforce development, and entrepreneurial activity.
- **STRATEGIC ACCESS TO REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MARKETS.**
Albemarle offers direct access to U.S. 29 and I-64, with proximity to Washington, D.C., Richmond, and the Southeastern innovation corridor, positioning the County for growth in traded sectors.
- **A BOLD INNOVATION PLATFORM.**
The Rivanna Futures campus and the emerging Central Virginia Innovation Corridor give Albemarle a signature opportunity to attract high-wage jobs in defense, secure technologies, and life sciences.
- **A MAGNETIC QUALITY OF LIFE.**
Albemarle's scenic landscapes, wineries, trail networks, and creative community are more than amenities — they're key attractors for entrepreneurs, remote workers, and talent at every stage of life.
- **AN INCREASINGLY EDUCATED AND DIVERSE POPULATION.**
New residents are choosing Albemarle for its schools, quality of place, and opportunity, contributing to a steadily growing, highly educated workforce.

These strengths offer a powerful platform for what's next.

Albemarle’s economy is already home to sectors with strong momentum: a biotechnology and life sciences cluster with regional traction, a nationally-significant intelligence and national security presence, a resilient food and agribusiness sector, and a growing community of entrepreneurs. Recent investments in sites (Rivanna Futures), key infrastructure (Commonwealth BioAccelerator, BEACON Commercial Kitchen), cluster scale-up (Wine Scaleup), and regional workforce development efforts (BioBridge, the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor) signal a shift from reactive to proactive growth.

At the same time, the County faces real choices. Albemarle’s commercial and industrial tax base remains proportionally small, infrastructure improvements are needed to support emerging clusters, and development timelines can be complex. While these challenges are not unique, they underscore the importance of continued alignment and coordination to ensure that the County’s public-sector goals and private-sector needs are moving in sync.

This strategy embraces a broader definition of economic development – one that connects business growth with workforce development, quality of place, and long-term resilience. It reflects a shift away from short-term wins and toward long-term competitiveness. That means making it easier for companies to grow in place. It means connecting students to jobs, entrepreneurs to capital, and farms to markets. It recognizes that Albemarle’s landscapes and cultural assets are differentiators. And it means reimagining the county’s economy as one dominated by government institutions to one where ideas take root and ideas grow into companies delivering innovative products and services and creating career-ladder opportunities for the community.

This is a strategy built from the ground up – shaped by local insight, driven by data, and aligned with Albemarle’s unique identity and ambition. It reflects a county ready to lead with focus, alignment, and a clear commitment to turning potential into progress.



STRATEGY

How We Built this Plan

This strategy was built through a process grounded in data, shaped by local insight, and aligned with Albemarle County’s long-term vision.

From the outset, this effort was designed to go beyond visioning. It was a strategy development process — one that would help Albemarle County compete more effectively in a fast-changing economy, while staying rooted in what makes the county distinct.

The approach combined rigorous quantitative analysis with deep community engagement to understand where Albemarle stands today, what challenges must be addressed, and where targeted investment can create the greatest impact.



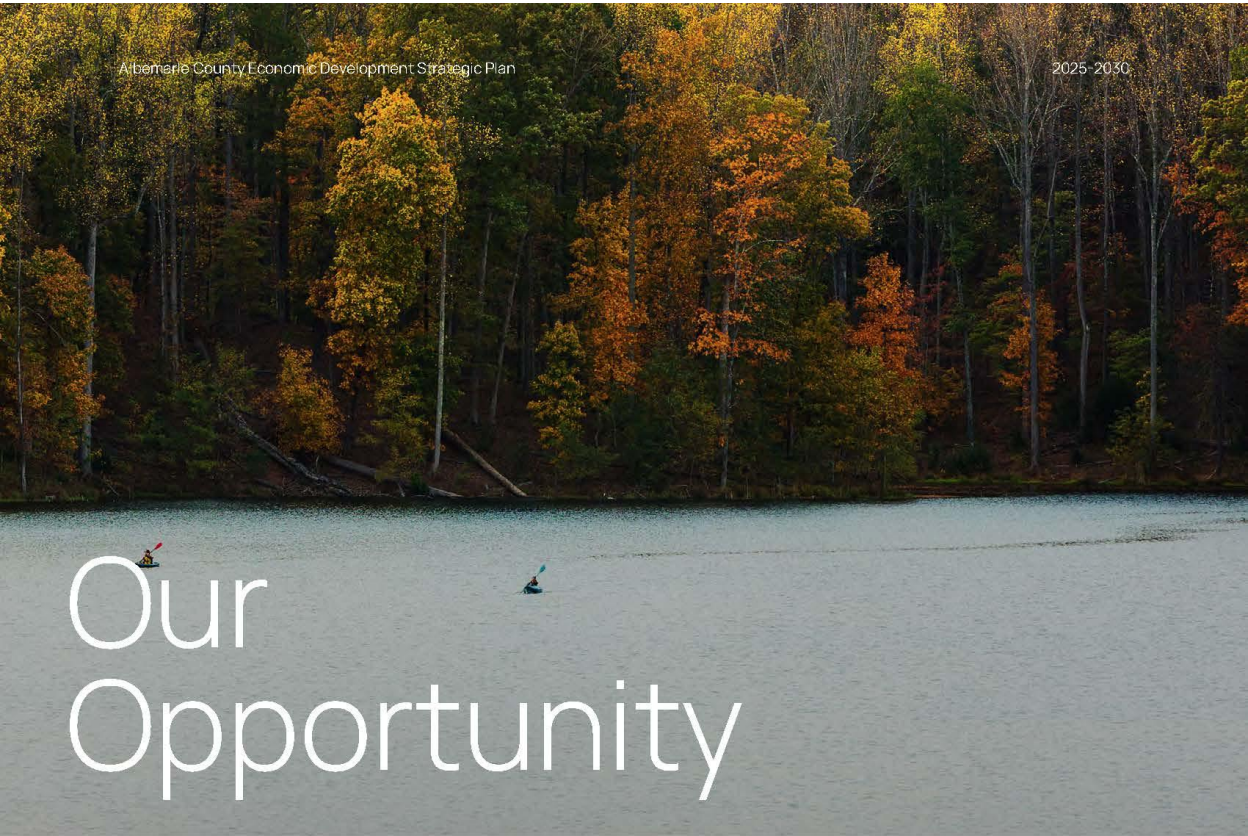
To develop this strategy, the project team led a multi-phase process that included:

- **A COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS** comparing Albemarle County to a set of peer counties and regional innovation hubs. This included an evaluation of over 50 indicators across business vitality, talent development, infrastructure readiness, and quality of place — spotlighting where Albemarle leads, where it lags, and where it can lead the Commonwealth in the next economy. Peer counties included areas in Virginia and across the Mid-Atlantic with similar demographics, proximity to research institutions, and economic development goals.
- **A TARGET INDUSTRY AND CLUSTER ANALYSIS** to identify sectors where Albemarle has both a competitive advantage and long-term growth potential. Using employment specialization, wage data, job growth trends, and alignment with regional assets, this analysis helped focus the strategy on key clusters: intelligence and national security, biotechnology and life sciences, and value-added agribusiness. A complementary occupational analysis also highlighted high-demand roles, talent gaps, and workforce alignment opportunities with institutions like UVA and PVCC.
- **TWO COMMUNITY SURVEYS**, distributed by Albemarle County, provided insight into community perceptions, infrastructure constraints, workforce needs, and areas where the County can better support economic mobility.
- **WORKSHOPS WITH THE STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE**, made up of local business leaders and key members of the workforce, education, and economic development community, to provide feedback and guidance on all elements of the project.
- **A COLLECTION OF ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS** with leaders across sectors, including small business owners, developers, educators, economic development partners, and elected officials. These conversations offered unfiltered, on-the-ground perspectives about the strengths and friction points in Albemarle's current economic landscape.
- **A SERIES OF STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES** organized around critical issues and sectors: intelligence and national security, life sciences and medical devices, agribusiness and rural development, entrepreneurship and talent, and business climate and infrastructure. These sessions served not only to shape and pressure-test the strategy, but also to begin building the cross-sector relationships essential to successful implementation.
- **A REVIEW OF KEY PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES**, including Albemarle County's Comprehensive Plan, housing strategy, innovation corridor efforts, and workforce initiatives and regional efforts, including the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the Regional Entrepreneurship Initiative study, among others. The strategy is designed to align with these existing frameworks and to complement—not duplicate—the County's broader planning ecosystem.

Throughout the process, the consulting team worked closely with County staff, the Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Authority, and local institutions to ensure this plan remained grounded in operational realities and reflective of Albemarle's unique position. Each goal and strategy in this plan is rooted in what we

heard, what we measured, and what we learned throughout the engagement.

In short, this plan reflects the best of what strategic economic development should be: collaborative, data-informed, opportunity-driven, and ready to be put into action.



Albemarle County is where the next chapter of Virginia's innovation economy begins.

Anchored by the University of Virginia and home to one of the fastest-growing economies in the Commonwealth, Albemarle is already a leader in biotech, national security, agribusiness, and entrepreneurship. With bold public investments like Rivanna Futures and a nationally-competitive talent base, the County has the potential to become one of the state's premier hubs for inclusive, innovation-driven growth.

But turning that potential into progress will require action—and alignment. Albemarle has one of the lowest commercial tax bases in the region, with only 11.3% of tax revenue coming from commercial and industrial uses – placing pressure on the residential tax base to fund critical public services. Much of the local economy remains tied to public-sector employment, while land constraints, infrastructure gaps, and fragmented systems limit

private-sector growth. At the same time, many residents still do not see themselves reflected in the County's next economy.

This strategy is Albemarle County's blueprint for what comes next—one that aligns public and private assets, leverages anchor institutions, strengthens infrastructure, and builds systems that connect more residents to opportunity. It is also a strategy rooted in place: Albemarle's landscapes, trail networks, wineries, and creative culture are more than lifestyle amenities—they're economic assets that make this region distinctive.

The following insights, shaped by data, benchmarking, and stakeholder engagement, outline how Albemarle County can lead with intention and build an economy that reflects its values, amplifies its strengths, and delivers impact for all. This strategy is grounded in extensive research, including competitive benchmarking, target sector analysis, and stakeholder input; full findings are included in the appendices and available upon request.

OPPORTUNITY 01

Albemarle County is thriving,
and now is the moment to turn
momentum into long-term
impact.

Albemarle County is outperforming much of Virginia and stands at a pivotal moment to shape what comes next.

With 11% job growth over the past five years—nearly triple the state average—and a median household income above \$102,000, Albemarle County’s top-line metrics reflect real strength. More than 60% of residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, and STEM employment has surged by 33%, signaling momentum in knowledge-based sectors. The county is also growing more diverse, with a 20% increase in non-white residents and rising interest from entrepreneurs, employers, and investors alike.

These signals point to a community on the rise, but realizing Albemarle’s full potential will require deliberate

action. The County’s commercial tax base remains limited, with 73% of property tax revenue coming from residential sources—placing increasing pressure on public services. Private-sector growth is constrained by limited development-ready land, infrastructure gaps, and convoluted timelines.

As one stakeholder put it, *“Albemarle County has everything it needs to lead; now is the time to connect the dots and build the future we want to see.”*

Albemarle’s opportunity is clear: by aligning its assets, addressing structural barriers, and investing in the systems that support inclusive growth, the County can secure long-term prosperity—and lead Virginia’s next chapter of innovation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT METRICS	PEER RANK*	RAW DATA
Median household income	1	\$102,617
Residents with a BA degree and above (LQ)	2	60.6% (LQ 1.7)
STEM job growth (% over 5 years)	1	32.8%
Job growth (% over 5 years)	3	11%
Growth in non-white population (% over 5 years)	4	20.3%

* Note: Rank among 10 peer communities.

OPPORTUNITY 02

A stronger commercial sector will strengthen Albemarle’s economy and balance its tax base.

Albemarle’s economic growth is real, but a stronger commercial foundation will make it more sustainable, resilient, and dynamic.

Today, over 73% of the County’s property tax revenue comes from residential sources, while just 11.3% comes from commercial and industrial uses. That imbalance limits the County’s fiscal flexibility and places disproportionate pressure on homeowners to fund services and infrastructure. With population and job growth accelerating, this dynamic is increasingly unsustainable.

Stakeholders pointed to specific challenges: a shortage of development-ready sites, limited availability of Class A office and light industrial space, and infrastructure

bottlenecks that slow business attraction and expansion. A complex and lengthy permitting process adds further friction, particularly for growing firms.

Peer communities are investing in site readiness, infrastructure, and commercial corridors to attract employers and diversify their tax base. Albemarle County has the same opportunity. By unlocking strategic land for development, modernizing permitting processes, and actively supporting employer growth, the County can grow its commercial base and expand opportunities for businesses and residents alike.

“A stronger commercial base means more opportunity, more jobs, and a more balanced path to the future.”



OPPORTUNITY 03

Biotechnology and life sciences
are taking root and ready to grow
with the right investments.

Biotech and life sciences are already driving Albemarle's innovation economy, making the County well-positioned to become a regional leader in this high-growth field.

This cluster contributes \$269 million to Albemarle's gross regional product—the highest of any traded industry—and has grown by over 50% in the past five years. With a location quotient of 1.76, the County demonstrates strong specialization, and the sector demonstrates both resilience and inclusivity: only 11% of jobs are at risk of automation, and the workforce is majority-female (54.7%).

Proximity to the University of Virginia and assets like North Fork Discovery Park give Albemarle a clear

research and talent edge. Yet fast-growing firms face a recurring challenge; there isn't enough space to scale. Stakeholders pointed to a shortage of lab-ready facilities, limited wet lab capacity, and a lack of growth-stage capital as key risks. Without near-term investment in the spaces and systems these firms need, the region could lose the very companies it helped launch.

The runway is built. Albemarle now has the chance to clear it—ensuring that the county not only incubates bioscience innovation but captures its long-term economic returns.

"We've got the brains and the research—what we don't have is the space to grow the companies that come out of it."

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND LIFE SCIENCES METRICS	RAW DATA
LQ	1.76
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$269 Million
GRP growth (2019-2024 %)	50.8%
Female share of workers	54.7%
Automation risk	10.6%

OPPORTUNITY 04

Rivanna Futures is Albemarle County's big investment, positioning it as an intelligence and national security innovation hub.

Albemarle County is home to one of Virginia's most unique and underrecognized assets: a nationally-significant intelligence and national security sector.

Anchored by Rivanna Station and located within reach of Washington, D.C., this cluster contributes \$191 million in gross regional product annually and has a location quotient of 1.4, indicating strong regional specialization. Over 60% of workers in the sector hold at least a bachelor's degree, and 76% of supply chain spending remains within the region, demonstrating high local integration.

Despite its scale and strategic relevance, the sector remains largely invisible in the County's public narrative. Stakeholders noted that while Albemarle County

plays a critical national role, it lacks a clear platform and shared narrative to elevate that work and build a broader innovation ecosystem around it.

That's what makes Rivanna Futures so important. With the right investments in secure space, workforce training, and federal partnerships, Albemarle can elevate this sector by seeding new opportunities in cybersecurity, analytics, and advanced systems development. The potential is not just to strengthen what exists, but to grow what comes next.

"We're doing national-level work, but the rest of the world doesn't see it, and neither do most people here."

INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY METRICS	RAW DATA
LQ	1.40
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$191 Million
GRP per worker	\$203,967
Supply chain met in-region	76.2%
Share of workforce age 55+	26.0%

OPPORTUNITY 05

Albemarle County’s food and agribusiness sector has deep roots and real potential to grow with the right tools.

Food processing and agribusiness are part of Albemarle’s economic identity and strong sources of future growth.

With a location quotient of 2.33, the sector is more than twice as concentrated as the national average. It employs over 2,100 workers and contributes \$197 million annually to Albemarle’s economy. Over 80% of its output is exported, illustrating robust market demand and regional reach. The workforce is notably diverse, with 23% of employees identifying as non-white.

This is a sector that blends heritage and innovation from long-established farms to artisan food producers to specialty manufacturers. But to fully realize its economic

potential, Albemarle must modernize the infrastructure that underpins it. Stakeholders cited cold storage gaps, outdated utilities, and inefficient loading facilities as constraints that limit scalability and force producers to look outside the County for expansion.

The opportunity is immediate: with targeted investment in facilities, broadband, land use planning, and shared-use infrastructure, Albemarle can position this sector for the future—building jobs, expanding exports, and reinforcing the County’s leadership in value-added agriculture.

“We’ve got deep roots here—and real room to grow with the right support.”

AGRIBUSINESS METRICS		RAW DATA
LQ		2.33
Gross Regional Product (GRP)		\$197 Million
GRP growth (2019-2024 %)		49.9%
Share of sales exported outside of County		82.7%
Share of non-white workers		23.3%

OPPORTUNITY 06

Albemarle County's next economy is held back by outdated infrastructure and land planning.

Albemarle County's economy is growing but development-ready land, utilities, and permitting processes are not keeping up.

Per the Comprehensive Plan, 5% of land in Albemarle County is designated for development and much of that land is either built out, constrained by sensitive features, or have challenging-to-serve infrastructure gaps. Stakeholders cited water and sewer infrastructure, outdated zoning codes, and protracted permitting timelines as top barriers to growth—particularly for key clusters like biotech, clean tech, and food processing, which require specialized facilities and utility-ready sites.

Lack of reliable broadband and cellular access continues to impact rural areas and limits digital infrastructure for small businesses and remote workers. Meanwhile, cold

storage shortages and ready lab space deficits are not just inconvenient; they are preventing entire sectors from scaling locally.

Several peer counties have addressed similar constraints through site-readiness strategies, utility partnerships, and targeted capital improvements. Albemarle has the opportunity to do the same and must act decisively if it wants to retain and attract the next generation of firms.

The County's economic vision can't be realized without modern infrastructure to support it. Growth doesn't happen on its own; it must be built from the ground up.

"We've got the ideas and the interest. What we don't have is enough space with the right infrastructure to bring them to life."



OPPORTUNITY 07

Entrepreneurship is alive in Albemarle County and ready to scale with targeted support.

From UVA spinouts to local food ventures, Albemarle’s entrepreneurial ecosystem is growing, but many founders are struggling to move beyond the startup stage.

Entrepreneurship is on the rise, fueled by a well-educated population, strong regional pride, and early-stage support organizations. Stakeholders praised a “visible energy” around new ventures in biotech, creative industries, and food. But they also highlighted a clear gap in the middle; once businesses move past the launch phase, they often lack access to capital, affordable space, or support to scale.

The County lacks a true innovation district or a robust business accelerator that offers space, mentorship, and wraparound services beyond the startup stage.

Growth-stage capital is limited, particularly for non-tech firms. Zoning and permitting barriers add friction at a time when momentum should be building.

With targeted investment in mid-stage support—co-working and lab spaces, small business grants, and growth programming—Albemarle County can retain and grow the businesses already taking root. Entrepreneurs don’t just need help starting; they need a clear runway to thrive.

“Small businesses are taking root here—now we need to give them room to grow.”



OPPORTUNITY 08

Albemarle has the talent it needs
to grow; now it must become a
place where that talent stays.

Albemarle County boasts one of the most educated populations in Virginia, with over 60% of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher, a strong talent pipeline from the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College, and a strong K-12 foundation through Albemarle Public Schools. This depth of knowledge and skill is a major competitive advantage, especially for innovation-driven clusters like biotech, clean tech, and national security.

But while the talent is here, retention is an increasing concern. Only 26% of residents are in their prime working years (25-44), labor force participation lags at 62%, and the county's median age is approaching 40. Stakeholders pointed to rising housing costs—a \$540,000 median home price and \$1,655 average rent—as a major barrier for mid-skill workers and young families who may be weighing employment opportunities in areas of the Commonwealth and the country with a better mix of prevailing salaries and

cost of living. Growth stage companies have identified a lack of mid-career workers both in specialized roles but also in general administrative roles (i.e., finance, marketing, HR, and other management roles). In an environment of many early-stage companies, career advancement pathways also remain unclear for many residents, especially for those outside of large institutions.

The opportunity is clear: Albemarle can position itself as a magnet for talent by investing in housing affordability, expanding mid-skill career options, and building stronger professional networks for early- and mid-career workers. A thriving innovation economy depends not just on attracting talent, but on keeping it.

"People come for school or a job—but we need to give them more reasons to stay and build a life here."

Talent Metrics	Peer Rank*	Raw Data
Full employment	N/A	3.3%
Labor force participation rate	8	62.2%
Prime working-age talent (LQ)	9	25.9% (LQ 0.95)
Median age	8	39.4
Median home price	10	\$540,038
Median rent	8	\$1,655
Home value to income ratio (LQ)	8	5.5 (LQ 1.2)

* Note: Rank among 10 peer communities.

OPPORTUNITY 09

UVA, PVCC, and ACPS are powerful anchors that can drive greater impact through deeper collaboration.

Albemarle County is home to two extraordinary institutions—UVA and PVCC—that are driving research, talent development, and innovation. But stronger alignment with the County’s economic strategy can turn these assets into even greater engines of growth.

UVA fuels cutting-edge research, produces top-tier graduates, and supports a growing portfolio of startups. PVCC offers workforce training in fields like healthcare and advanced manufacturing, and has demonstrated success connecting residents to job opportunities. Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) builds an education foundation for workforce readiness across career ladders.

Yet many stakeholders noted these institutions often operate in parallel to the County’s broader efforts, missing opportunities for collaboration, shared investment, and long-term alignment.

Startups emerging from UVA often scale elsewhere due to space and funding constraints. PVCC’s and ACPS’s career programs are not always tightly connected to in-demand employer needs. By deepening partnerships, co-investing in facilities and training, and creating more visible on-ramps between education and employment, Albemarle can turn these institutions into strategic accelerators of regional prosperity.

“UVA and PVCC are doing amazing work—we just need to connect the dots to make the whole system stronger.”



OPPORTUNITY 10

Albemarle County’s workforce system is full of strong players—now is the time to bring them together.

Albemarle County has the ingredients of a strong workforce system: motivated employers, training providers, career centers, and community organizations. But those pieces often operate in silos, making it harder for residents to navigate career pathways and for employers to find the talent they need.

Employers in manufacturing, logistics, and healthcare shared concerns about filling mid-skill roles. Meanwhile, jobseekers described difficulty understanding available programs, inconsistent wraparound support, and limited coordination between agencies. Even when programs are working well, they’re not always connected to each other or even aligned to priority sectors.

The opportunity is to build a more strategic, sector-driven workforce system that brings clarity and cohesion. By aligning programs to employer needs, investing in career navigation, and strengthening wraparound services, Albemarle can improve outcomes for both workers and businesses—and ensure more residents benefit from the region’s growth.

“The programs are there—we just need a clearer path and stronger connections between them.”



OPPORTUNITY 11

Albemarle County can't grow inclusively without expanding access and closing opportunity gaps.

Albemarle County's top-line economic indicators are strong, but deeper data reveals disparities in who participates in, and benefits from, that growth.

Only 9.6% of businesses in Albemarle are minority-owned, and just 22.7% are women-owned: both figures well below state and national averages. Women in Albemarle earn 18% less than men, and racial income gaps exceed \$25,000. These aren't just social gaps; they're lost economic potential.

Stakeholders emphasized the barriers faced by under-represented entrepreneurs and workers: limited access to capital, informal networks that exclude new entrants,

and unclear pathways into high-growth industries like biotech and national security. Several noted that even when resources exist, they're hard to find—or not designed with inclusion in mind.

The opportunity for Albemarle County is to lead with opportunity—not just as a value, but as a growth strategy. By expanding capital access, supporting minority- and women-owned businesses, and designing workforce pathways that are truly accessible, the County can unlock the full potential of its population—and build an innovation economy that reflects the diversity of its community.

"We can't compete at the highest level if half our community is sitting on the sidelines."

OPPORTUNITY METRICS	PEER RANK*	RAW DATA
Share of minority-owned businesses	9	9.6%
Share of women-owned businesses	5	22.7%
Gender pay gap	6	18.4%
Disparity in median income by race	10	\$25,054
Disparity in educational attainment by race	10	18.7%

* Note: Rank among 10 peer communities.

OPPORTUNITY 12

Albemarle has a strong foundation
but needs a bolder story to compete.

Albemarle County is doing the work, but too often, the story of that work is lost in the noise.

Stakeholders across sectors described a “crisis of identity” when it comes to how Albemarle positions itself. The county’s strengths are real—research institutions, secure federal infrastructure, a thriving food economy—but they’re not always visible. Even local employers struggle to articulate what Albemarle stands for economically, especially in relation to the City of Charlottesville.

Meanwhile, peer regions are getting louder and more coordinated. Places like Montgomery County, MD and

Durham, NC are actively branding their innovation corridors and aligning public and private voices behind a shared message. Albemarle has the assets to do the same.

The next step is to define and promote a unifying identity—one that captures Albemarle’s role in Virginia’s innovation economy, its commitment to inclusion, and its distinctive quality of place. Economic development today is as much about storytelling as it is about site planning. Albemarle has a story worth telling—and the time to tell it is now.

“We have the pieces. What we need is a message that pulls them together—and puts us on the map.”



OPPORTUNITY 13

Albemarle County’s future depends on growing together with focus, alignment, and shared value.

Albemarle County doesn’t need to become something entirely new. Its future lies in growing what’s already here with clarity, coordination, and a commitment to shared prosperity.

The County has extraordinary assets: top-tier research institutions, a specialized workforce, high-value industry clusters, and a quality of life that draws people from across the country. But to compete and to grow inclusively, it must bring its systems into alignment. That means linking education to employment, infrastructure to industry, and narrative to strategy.

Stakeholders are ready. Across sectors, they called for a strategy that sets priorities, picks smart bets, and invests in infrastructure and equity with equal force. They also emphasized the importance of staying true to Albemarle’s character—valuing place, preserving identity, and ensuring that growth benefits all.

Albemarle’s next chapter doesn’t write itself. But with clear focus and collaborative action, the County can build a future that reflects its values, amplifies its strengths, and delivers impact for generations.

“We’re not trying to be everywhere, or everything; we just want to grow with purpose and stay true to who we are.”





Albemarle County can gain significant advantages by implementing this strategy through coordinated leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term alignment.

A transformative approach will involve using this strategy to guide the work of the Economic Development Office, other County departments, the Board of Supervisors and the EDA, and institutional partners around shared goals — rather than isolated programs or departmental silos. It also invites closer coordination with land use, infrastructure, workforce, K-12, and higher education systems to support innovation-led growth.

This shift has the potential to unify efforts, energize community and institutional stakeholders, and amplify Albemarle County’s ability to lead Virginia’s next innovation economy.

MISSION

The mission of the Albemarle County Economic Development Office is to strengthen and diversify the County's tax base, support business scale-up and redevelopment, and expand career-ladder job opportunities, ensuring a vibrant, innovative economy that delivers lasting prosperity for all residents.

ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGY

Albemarle County's strategy is grounded in what we heard, what we measured, and what we imagined—together.

The insights are clear: the county is growing and its economy is evolving. But turning momentum into meaningful progress will take more than energy alone – it will take clarity, commitment, and action.

The vision statement and five goals that follow mark Albemarle County's next chapter. Each one is rooted in community priorities, shaped by data, and built to reflect the county's values. Together, they offer a focused, forward-looking framework for a more innovative and resilient economy.

This plan provides a focused strategy for guiding economic development in Albemarle County. It sits beneath and in alignment with the County's 20-year Comprehensive Plan and alongside other guiding frameworks such as the housing plan, climate action plan, and biodiversity action plan—ensuring strategic alignment across County priorities.

The EDSP is structured as a five-year roadmap (2025–2030), with a suggested formal midpoint check-in to assess progress, adjust priorities, and ensure continued relevance in a changing environment.

VISION

Albemarle County — Rooted in Innovation
Open for Investment

Where bold ideas take root, businesses scale, and partnerships thrive — leading the way in Virginia's next innovation economy.

GOALS

This five-year plan is flexible. Albemarle's economic development priorities will evolve as the County grows and the economy changes. Community leaders should examine the strategy at least annually to identify deficiencies and opportunities to address changing needs with updates as needed.

Building for the Future Albemarle County

- **Goal 1: Lead in Intelligence and National Security.**
We will lead Virginia's intelligence and national security innovation economy.
- **Goal 2: Discover in Life Sciences.**
We will grow into the Mid-Atlantic's premier destination for biotechnology and life sciences innovation.
- **Goal 3: Grow a Modern Agribusiness Economy.**
We will transform Albemarle's agricultural legacy into a modern agribusiness economy.
- **Goal 4: Empower Talent.**
We will make Albemarle the place where talent and entrepreneurs stay, scale, and succeed.
- **Goal 5: Compete for Investment.**
We will position Albemarle as Virginia's most investment-ready county — ready to compete, build, and lead.

TARGET SECTORS GUIDING STRATEGY

This strategy is built around three sectors that reflect Albemarle County’s competitive advantages, institutional assets, and future growth potential. Identified through data analysis, industry benchmarking, and extensive stakeholder engagement, these sectors combine economic strength with resilience, specialization, and alignment with local values.

Each one plays a distinct role in Albemarle County’s future and together, they anchor the County’s transition into a more innovation-driven, inclusive economy.

- **Intelligence and National Security**
Albemarle County’s proximity to Washington, D.C. and its role as home to Rivanna Station give it unique strategic value in the national security landscape. With a location quotient of 1.4 and the highest rate of regional supply chain retention (76%), this sector is both highly specialized and deeply embedded locally. High educational attainment and access to UVA’s cyber and security-related programs support talent development, while opportunities remain to expand infrastructure, visibility, and private-sector innovation around this core strength.
- **Biotechnology and Life Sciences**
The County’s most economically impactful cluster, biotechnology and life sciences generate \$269 million in gross regional product and have nearly doubled over the past decade. With strong regional specialization (LQ 1.76), a highly diverse talent pool, and access to UVA’s research enterprise and North Fork Discovery Park, Albemarle County is well-positioned to compete for national bioscience investment. Continued investment in lab space, commercialization, and talent alignment will help this sector scale.
- **Food Processing and Agribusiness**
Albemarle County’s most specialized and export-oriented cluster (LQ 2.33), food processing and agribusiness employ over 2,100 workers

and generate more than \$197 million in GRP. Anchored by agricultural heritage and a growing network of artisan and value-added producers, this sector is a key part of Albemarle County’s identity and economy. With 83% of goods exported and strong rural-urban linkages, targeted investments in cold storage, logistics, and processing capacity can help this sector reach new markets and sustain momentum.

MEASURING RESULTS

This strategy is designed to deliver results. To ensure accountability and impact, Albemarle County will track progress using clear, high-level indicators tied to the goals of this plan. These metrics will help measure business expansion, talent retention, and fiscal health—and guide adaptive decision-making over the five-year horizon.

Key Areas of Measurement:

- **Business Growth and Investment:**
Track job creation, business expansion, and capital investment across innovation sectors—especially in biotech, agribusiness, and national security.
- **Talent Retention and Attraction:**
Monitor growth in the County’s working-age population (particularly ages 25–44) and evaluate whether talent is staying, returning, or choosing Albemarle County to build careers.
- **Commercial Tax Base Strength:**
Measure growth in the commercial share of the property tax base as a signal of fiscal resilience and reduced overreliance on residential property taxes.

These benchmarks provide a shared understanding of what success looks like and verify Albemarle County’s strategy is not only visionary, but measurable.

GOAL 1: LEAD IN INTELLIGENCE & NATIONAL SECURITY.

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

GOAL 1

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

Why it Matters?

One of Albemarle's biggest economic investments is Rivanna Futures. 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 local 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 intelligence and national security innovation.

The Evidence

- Albemarle is home to Rivanna Station, the region's principal national security installation, and sits just a couple hours from Washington, D.C. These geographic and institutional advantages position the County as a strategic location for attracting mission-aligned companies. Throughout stakeholder engagements, many noted that with thoughtful site planning and branding, the County could harness this foundation to draw new firms and secure job growth.
- Private firms in the intelligence and national security sector generate over \$190 million in annual economic output, making this one of Albemarle's most valuable clusters. More than 75% of their supply chain purchases are sourced locally, reinforcing the strength of the County's business ecosystem in this field.
- The existing workforce supporting national security firms is highly experienced and deeply embedded in the region. The sector's location quotient of 1.4 indicates a 40% higher concentration of employment in this field than the national average — highlighting both specialization and expertise. However, employers report growing challenges in attracting new cleared talent, especially mid-career professionals, due to limited industry visibility and logistical challenges to clearance attainment.
- Stakeholders consistently described the sector as a "hidden strength": a critical industry disconnected from the region's identity. While the work being done is nationally-significant, the region lacks the storytelling, branding, and partnerships needed to define itself as a hub for national security.

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- JOB CREATION IN INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY SECTORS**
Tracking new jobs created in Albemarle's intelligence, defense, and secure innovation economy, as well as inclusive workforce participation.
- COMPANY FORMATION AND GROWTH**
Counting new companies formed, scaled, or relocated within Albemarle's secure technology and intelligence ecosystem.
- WORKFORCE PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT**
Tracking new education and training programs in intelligence and national security, and enrollment in aligned career pathways across UVA, PVCC, and K-12.
- EMPLOYER AND AGENCY ENGAGEMENT**
Tracking partnerships, roundtables, and joint initiatives with intelligence and national security companies, federal agencies, and research institutions.
- REGIONAL BRAND AWARENESS**
Measuring engagement with Albemarle's intelligence and national security marketing efforts, including inquiries, website traffic, and media placements.



STRATEGY 1.1

Activate Rivanna Futures as a next-generation intelligence and national security innovation campus. A plan to position Rivanna Futures through targeted land use, infrastructure, and business development strategies.

WHY IT MATTERS

Rivanna Futures represents Albemarle County's commitment to intelligence and national security innovation targeting national security, cybersecurity, AI/ML, and secure technology. Building on the federal investment in Rivanna Station and the region's experienced workforce in intelligence and national security, Rivanna Futures can become a magnet for high-wage employers, talent, and investment, with projections of future employment capacity of more than 5,000 jobs located in up to 1 million square feet of light industrial and/or office space. With targeted infrastructure, land use alignment, and strategic partnerships, Albemarle County can scale this district into a nationally recognized hub for intelligence and national security innovation and economic growth.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Develop and implement a Rivanna Futures Innovation Hub plan to align land use, infrastructure, and development priorities with targeted business attraction and expansion efforts to bring the potential of Rivanna Futures as a major employment hub to fruition.



Establishes a framework to grow Albemarle County's intelligence and national security cluster.



Launch a business attraction campaign targeting national security, defense, and secure technology employers.



Positions Rivanna Futures as a destination for high-quality employers and jobs.



Continue advocating for targeted infrastructure upgrades, including utilities, fiber, and transportation access.



Ensures Rivanna Futures can accommodate new tenants and sustain long-term growth.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County sits at the heart of the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor, with key assets like Rivanna Station, the National Security Data and Policy Institute, UVA, and PVCC driving regional innovation. By supporting and advancing the Corridor's Strategic Roadmap, Albemarle can help align regional resources around intelligence and national security growth. Active participation in this partnership will position the County as a central player in the Corridor's evolution, amplify workforce development and commercialization efforts, and attract targeted investment into Albemarle County's innovation ecosystem.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Continue active participation in the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor initiative.	→ Ensures Albemarle's voice shapes regional innovation strategies and attracts investment.
	Support the Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap supported by the GO Virginia grant.	→ The Roadmap will provide actionable recommendations to strengthen regional growth in national security, digital technologies, and other innovation sectors.
	Partner with regional stakeholders to implement recommendations from the Corridor's Strategic Roadmap.	→ Aligns resources and priorities across jurisdictions to build a unified, high-impact innovation corridor.
	Leverage regional partners, such as AFCEA Central Virginia, Defense Affairs Committee, and others in the intelligence and national security sector.	→ Builds strategic connections that enhance Albemarle's role in high-value, defense-aligned innovation sectors.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

The county has a strong pool of talent and is home to two powerful educational anchors: the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. More talent is seeded here than ever before, but employers still face challenges retaining this workforce, particularly at mid-career levels. To keep local talent from leaving and to expand pathways for other County residents, Albemarle County must align education and industry through sector partnerships and targeted workforce initiatives. By creating seamless transitions from classroom to career, the County can turn potential into staying power—building a secure, innovative economy that benefits all.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Strengthen the sector partnership to align K-12 and higher education systems with intelligence and national security employer needs.	→ Builds a talent pipeline responsive to industry demands and anchored in collaboration.
	Develop new work-based learning models, such as internships, apprenticeships, and career academies.	→ Provides real-world experience and strengthens transitions from education to employment.
	Host regular employer-educator convenings to review curriculum and training updates.	→ Ensures pathways remain relevant and aligned with workforce evolution.

STRATEGY 1.4

Launch intelligence and national security partnerships among the federal, private, and academic sectors to address workforce needs and advocacy efforts across Albemarle's intelligence and national security sector.

WHY IT MATTERS

This sector partnership centers around one of Albemarle County's most significant economic development investments: positioning the County as a hub for intelligence and national security innovation. By formally bringing together employers, federal agencies, and educational institutions, Albemarle County can align strategies, address workforce gaps, and drive shared investment in the infrastructure and policies needed to sustain growth. This collaboration will create high-quality jobs, support business expansion, and strengthen the County's standing in Virginia's next innovation economy.



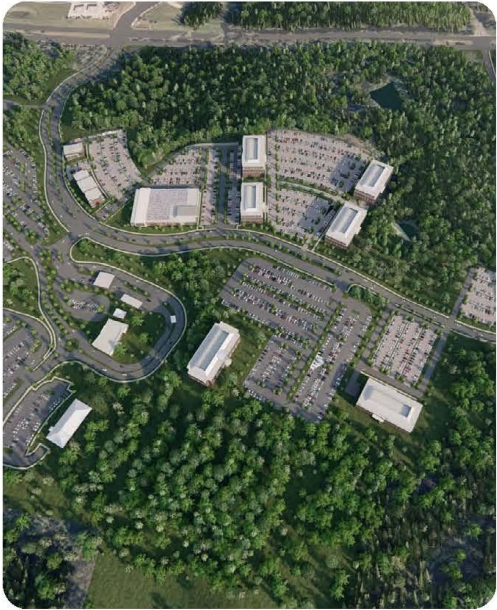
WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Establish a formal intelligence and national security sector partnership, bringing together employers, agencies, and educators.	→ Builds a unified platform to coordinate growth, share resources, and drive innovation across the sector.
	Develop a sector-specific workforce strategy, aligned with the needs of employers and regional workforce development goals.	→ Addresses critical talent gaps and supports job growth in key roles.
	Launch advocacy efforts to support sector infrastructure and policy needs.	→ Ensures Albemarle County's voice is heard in regional, state, and federal decision-making.

STRATEGY 1.5

Build Albemarle’s intelligence and national security innovation brand. A marketing campaign positioning Albemarle as Virginia’s hub for secure intelligence and national security innovation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County’s leadership in intelligence and national security is anchored by Rivanna Futures and supported by regional collaboration through the Innovation Corridor. Yet this story is not widely known. With a bold, proactive brand and a clear narrative, the County can amplify its assets and leadership role in the national security and secure innovation economy. This positioning will not only attract high-quality employers and federal investment but will also strengthen relationships with federal agencies, site selectors, and decision-makers. Telling this story—backed by data and a compelling vision—is key to Albemarle County’s long-term economic resilience and growth.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Develop a compelling brand identity and narrative around Albemarle County's intelligence and national security assets, in partnership with regional Innovation Corridor partners.	→ Positions Albemarle County as a leading hub in the national intelligence and security economy.
	Create a proactive marketing and business attraction campaign targeting federal agency decision-makers, site selectors, and industry leaders.	→ Raises awareness and builds connections that attract employers and investment.
	Leverage partnerships with regional stakeholders to amplify Albemarle County's brand story and align messaging across jurisdictions.	→ Ensures a unified, high-impact presence in the national innovation landscape.

GOAL 2: DISCOVER IN LIFE SCIENCES

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



GOAL 2

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, boasting 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.

The Evidence

- The University of Virginia (UVA) is a powerful engine for life sciences growth, anchoring a research ecosystem that includes startup incubators, clinical research centers, and commercialization offices. Stakeholders also highlighted proximity to the multi-state I-64 Innovation Corridor as a key geographic advantage.
- Albemarle's life sciences cluster is the largest and one of the most specialized among its target sectors. It produces over \$269 million in annual economic output and calculates out to a location quotient of 1.76, meaning employment in the sector is 76% more concentrated than the national average.
- Life sciences output in the county surged nearly 50% from 2019 to 2024, and the region now ranks among the top 10 U.S. metros in per capita seed funding. But that momentum is at risk: early-stage firms face a shortage of wet lab space, growth capital, and post-incubator facilities, making it difficult to stay and scale.
- The current workforce is highly educated — more than 55% hold a bachelor's degree or higher — and includes a slight female majority. The cluster also boasts one of the highest average wages among target sectors and faces very low automation risk, making it not only resilient but also a strong contributor to economic equity with strong potential for long-term employment.

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **NEW LIFE SCIENCES SPACE DELIVERED**
Tracking the development and absorption of new lab space, wet labs, and light industrial facilities supporting life sciences and medical device growth.
- **CLUSTER GROWTH THROUGH COMPANY EXPANSION AND ATTRACTION**
Measuring the growth of Albemarle's life sciences and medical devices cluster by tracking the scaling of existing companies (jobs and revenue) and the attraction of new companies, including foreign direct investment (FDI).
- **CAPITAL RAISED BY LIFE SCIENCES COMPANIES**
Measuring the amount of VC and growth capital secured by Albemarle-based life sciences and medical device companies.
- **TALENT PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT**
Tracking new enrollments and completions in life science-related programs at PVCC, K-12, and UVA, aligned with life sciences career pathways, as well as inclusive workforce participation.
- **EMPLOYER AND ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT**
Tracking partnerships, convenings, and joint initiatives with life sciences companies, educational institutions, workforce partners, and regional collaborators.






STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County has built a strong foundation in life sciences through incubation efforts and partnerships with CvilleBioHub, the University of Virginia, and others. However, scaling this sector requires targeted investment in specialized infrastructure. Many local companies face bottlenecks accessing wet lab space, small-scale manufacturing capacity, and advanced research and development (R&D) facilities. Without this infrastructure, firms consider expanding elsewhere. By investing in facilities that support scale-up and commercialization, the County can retain growing companies, attract new investment, and establish itself as a bold leader in the life sciences economy.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Develop and implement a coordinated life sciences infrastructure plan that delivers specialized wet labs, R&D facilities, and small-scale manufacturing space.	→ Provides the physical resources needed for companies to scale and commercialize in Albemarle County.
	Partner with CvilleBioHub and regional stakeholders to identify specific infrastructure gaps and investment priorities.	→ Ensures infrastructure aligns with actual sector needs and supports long-term growth.
	Streamline permitting policies to support rapid deployment of life sciences facilities.	→ Reduces delays and encourages firms to expand locally rather than seeking space elsewhere.

STRATEGY 2.2

Position Albemarle as a leading hub for biotechnology and life sciences innovation through the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor.

A network to improve commercialization pathways, cluster identity, and access to growth capital.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's life sciences sector is poised for breakout growth, fueled by world-class research from the University of Virginia, OvilleBioHub's grassroots leadership, and regional momentum through the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor. But early-stage success will not automatically translate into a full-scale innovation economy. Many companies face challenges accessing Series A and growth-stage capital, securing lab space, and navigating complex pathways from research to market. Strengthening commercialization and cluster coordination will help bridge these gaps, align regional assets, and ensure Albemarle County's life sciences firms can stay and scale locally.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Continue active participation in the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor and complete the Strategic Roadmap.



Provides a shared regional framework for commercialization and growth across life sciences and digital sectors.



Create a regional commercialization support network with incubators, accelerators, core laboratory space and other specialized research facilities, and grant-writing assistance.



Helps startups and scale-ups access critical resources and stay in Albemarle County.

STRATEGY 2.3

Leverage CvilleBioHub to lead a life sciences workforce and sector partnership.

Build on existing employment connection efforts through a convening hub connecting employers, K-12, PVCC, and UVA partners to build workforce pipelines and address policy needs.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's life sciences companies cite talent as both their greatest asset and biggest constraint. While early-stage workforce development is strong, there is no formal mechanism to bring employers together with educators and training partners to shape a coordinated talent pipeline. CvilleBioHub is already positioned as a trusted convener and can anchor a sector partnership that aligns efforts across K-12, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and the University of Virginia. In addition to driving workforce collaboration, this partnership can also shape regional and state policy, inform funding priorities, and advocate for investments that support the County's life sciences growth.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Leverage CvilleBioHub's BioBridge project to establish a life sciences sector partnership, in collaboration with Albemarle County and key education and workforce partners.	→ Establishes an ongoing forum to align talent development, training, and employer needs.
	Partner to implement the findings of the BioBridge project.	→ Positions the County as an active partner in supporting the needs of life sciences companies.
	Convene regular roundtables between employers, K-12, PVCC, and UVA to coordinate curriculum, internships, and hiring pathways.	→ Strengthens student pipelines and ensure educational programs are aligned with sector demand.

STRATEGY 2.4

Establish a national business attraction initiative for bio-technology and life sciences.

A targeted recruitment strategy using site selection, trade shows, conferences, and international/ FDI outreach.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's life sciences cluster is growing, but its full potential depends on a robust network of supporting firms: contract manufacturers, specialized suppliers, and R&D services. These businesses bring essential capacity to scale production, create new jobs, and embed companies deeper into the local economy. A coordinated national attraction strategy will help fill critical gaps in the life sciences supply chain and strengthen Albemarle County's position as a complete, competitive destination for bioscience and medical device firms. This effort should also boost the County's visibility among site selectors, investors, and global companies evaluating the Mid-Atlantic region.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Design and execute a targeted business attraction campaign focused on life sciences and medical device supply chain companies—using national site selector outreach, trade shows, inbound visits, and international FDI efforts.



Brings critical support firms to the region, enhances cluster resilience, and raises Albemarle County's visibility.



Coordinate with regional economic development partners to align messaging, leads, and follow-up.



Ensures seamless engagement and maximizes collective impact.



Integrate brand and marketing efforts from Strategy 1.5 to promote Albemarle County as a destination for intelligence and national security innovation and life sciences, including dual-use technologies.



Reinforces the County's identity and boosts visibility across key sectors.

STRATEGY 2.5

Partner to expand access to growth capital for Albemarle's biotechnology and life sciences companies.

A plan for ensuring companies have the resources and support to grow and scale.

WHY IT MATTERS

For Albemarle County's life sciences companies, access to capital is often the deciding factor in whether they stay and scale locally or relocate to more capital-rich ecosystems. While early-stage funding exists, many firms struggle to secure Series A and growth-stage investment—particularly those in the “valley of death” between R&D and commercialization. By partnering with CvilleBioHub and regional funders, Albemarle County can build the financial infrastructure needed to retain and grow its bioscience firms, while also enhancing competitiveness for federal and state innovation grants.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Partner with CvilleBioHub and regional funders to create stronger connections between local firms and venture, angel, and growth-stage capital.



Helps scale companies locally and builds a stronger investment ecosystem.



Develop a capital readiness initiative offering pitch coaching, grant writing support, and investor matchmaking for life sciences companies.



Improves deal flow and helps firms compete for public and private funding.



Continue to coordinate efforts to pursue large-scale federal and state innovation grants.



Secures catalytic capital for cluster infrastructure and company growth.

GOAL 3: GROW A MODERN AGRIBUSINESS ECONOMY

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

GOAL 3

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.

Investing in rural infrastructure such as cold storage, food processing and packing, high-speed broadband, and rural logistics, the County can ensure producers and processors are equipped to meet growing demand and scale sustainably.

The Evidence

- Albemarle's food and agriculture brand is one of its most visible economic assets—supported by artisan producers, wineries, and a legacy of farming. Roughly 83% of the cluster's sales — nearly \$400 million — are exported outside the region, signaling both strong external demand and opportunity for expanded value-added production.
- The Food Processing and Agribusiness cluster is the County's most specialized sector, with a location quotient of 2.33 and more than 2,100 jobs. It is also one of the highest performing clusters economically, contributing \$197 million in annual output.
- While the cluster is positioned to scale, limited infrastructure — particularly for water, sewer, broadband, and cold storage — remains a barrier to growth for producers and processors. Businesses described aging or undersized facilities and difficulty accessing utility-ready sites suited to agribusiness needs.
- Stakeholders noted that current land use regulations and permitting processes can make it difficult to expand or diversify agribusiness operations. As the sector evolves to include value-added processing, agritourism, and hybrid production models, outdated zoning and lengthy approval timelines often create uncertainty and slow growth.

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **NEW RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERED**
Track the number, scale, and location of new or upgraded cold storage, food processing and packing, high-speed broadband infrastructure, and rural logistics facilities, including shared use/cooperative models where applicable.
- **BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH SUPPORT RESOURCES**
Tracking the number of agribusinesses accessing business planning resources
- **EXPANSION OF WHOLESALE AND SCALABLE MARKET ACCESS**
Counting the number of Albemarle-based producers securing new wholesale contracts, regional distribution agreements, or institutional buyers.
- **EMPLOYER AND ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT**
Tracking partnerships, convenings, and joint initiatives with agribusiness entrepreneurs, rural businesses, workforce partners, and regional collaborators as well as inclusive workforce participation.
- **GROWTH OF AGRITOURISM BUSINESSES AND RURAL VISITOR ECONOMY**
Tracking the number of new or expanded agritourism experiences.



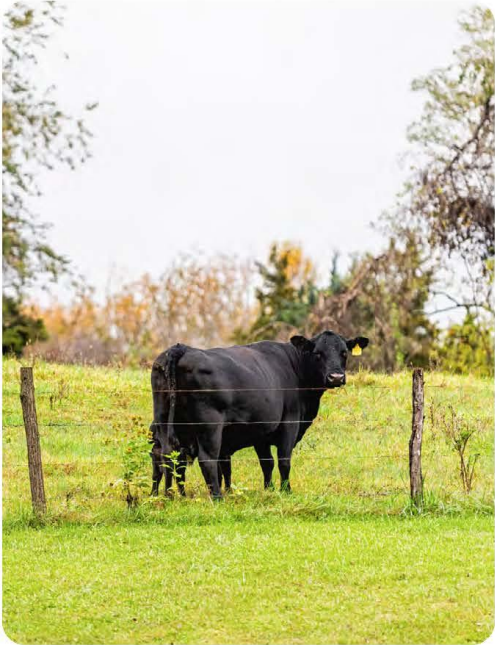
STRATEGY 3.1




Explore land use and zoning policies that enable agribusiness innovation.

Updated tools to support flexible agribusiness operations, value-added production, and agricultural technology enterprises, while also expanding opportunities for diverse revenue streams — including lodging, agritourism, and onsite food service.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's agribusiness economy is in transition, facing generational turnover, new market demands, and rising interest in value-added agriculture. Many producers want to diversify their revenue through food and beverage offerings, on-farm lodging, and agritourism, but outdated land use frameworks obstruct this evolution. At the same time, growth is constrained by infrastructure gaps like limited cold storage, food processing capacity, and broadband access in rural areas. By modernizing policies and investing in core infrastructure, the county can unlock new models of rural entrepreneurship, preserve working lands, and support the long-term viability of its agricultural economy.



WHAT'S NEEDED			
	Conduct a rural zoning and land use review to identify and remove regulatory barriers to value-added production, lodging, and agritourism.	→	Creates clearer pathways for diversified agribusiness development.
	Engage producers and stakeholders to inform updated zoning tools that support flexible, mixed-use operations.	→	Ensures alignment with real business models while maintaining rural character.
	Pursue funding to deliver shared-use infrastructure that supports small and mid-sized agribusinesses.	→	Reduces barriers to scale and strengthens the competitiveness of rural enterprises.

STRATEGY 3.2

Pursue critical infrastructure to support modern agribusiness growth.

Assess the needs for expanded small-scale cold storage, processing and packing, broadband, and rural manufacturing capacity.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's agribusiness sector is shifting toward more diversified and value-added models, but that growth depends on access to appropriate infrastructure. Many rural producers lack cold storage, processing and packing, high-speed broadband, or access to shared processing space—making it difficult to scale operations or pursue new revenue streams. These infrastructure gaps have already forced some businesses to seek facilities outside the county. A focused assessment of infrastructure needs will help the county prioritize rural investment, support local business growth, and align with emerging opportunities in food innovation, ag-tech, and small-scale rural manufacturing.

This includes targeted investments in cold storage, food processing and packing, high-speed broadband, and rural logistics infrastructure, addressing recurring barriers cited by local producers. These infrastructure needs are echoed consistently throughout the Plan and reflected in rural investment priorities and metrics.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Conduct a rural infrastructure needs assessment focused on the lack of specialized storage, high-speed broadband, or access to share processing and packing space.	→ Identifies critical gaps and builds a roadmap for investment.
	Standardize infrastructure metrics to track delivery of cold storage, food processing and packing capacity, rural logistics, and broadband access across rural area.	→ Ensures evaluation and investment priorities reflect consistent infrastructure needs.
	Engage agribusiness stakeholders to ground-truth infrastructure challenges and co-develop investment priorities.	→ Ensures real-world relevance and local buy-in.
	Evaluate opportunities for shared-use or cooperative infrastructure models, especially for small-scale production and packing capacity.	→ Increases access and affordability while supporting scalable rural business models.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Many of Albemarle County's agricultural businesses are at a turning point, facing generational transitions, shifting markets and environmental conditions, and rising interest in value-added production. Yet most lack access to the kind of business services that small urban firms take for granted: help with financial planning, growth strategies, capital readiness, and succession. Without these supports, emerging producers may stall out, and legacy businesses may disappear. A rural business resource hub can close this gap, helping farmers and agribusinesses develop long-term plans, navigate ownership transitions, and tap into funding sources to grow and adapt.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Coordinate with existing partners to establish business support services and programming tailored for rural and agricultural entrepreneurs - including capital access, grant navigation, loan readiness, investor matchmaking, and succession planning to support farm transitions.



- Offers targeted help with planning, growth, and succession—close to where businesses operate.
- Avoids duplication and builds on trusted local relationships.
- Ensures economic continuity and preserves working farms and businesses.



Partner to develop any missing programming around capital access, including grant navigation, loan readiness, and investor matchmaking.



Helps rural businesses tap new sources of funding for modernization and expansion

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's producers are skilled, innovative, and increasingly interested in growing beyond direct-to-consumer sales. Yet many lack access to wholesale channels, institutional buyers, and regional distributors that would allow them to scale. Without these market pathways, local producers face stagnant revenue and limited growth potential. By helping them connect to larger buyers and higher-volume markets, the county can boost rural income, reduce business churn, and strengthen the long-term viability of its food and beverage economy.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Partner to develop a producer matchmaking and distribution strategy, potentially in partnership with food hubs, cooperatives, or regional logistics providers.



Solves logistical barriers and helps small producers meet wholesale requirements.



Support training and technical assistance for producers to meet volume, packaging, and compliance standards for wholesale markets.



Prepares businesses to grow without compromising quality or operations.

STRATEGY 3.5

Establish a rural entrepreneurship and agribusiness sector partnership.

A partnership connecting agribusiness entrepreneurs, workforce partners, and county leaders for coordinated growth.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's rural economy includes a diverse mix of traditional farmers, food entrepreneurs, ag-tech startups, and small-scale manufacturers. But these businesses often operate in silos with limited opportunities to shape shared priorities, access workforce resources, share resources and identify shared challenges for resilience planning, or advocate for their needs. A formal sector partnership can create space for collaboration, elevate rural voices in economic planning, and ensure county strategies reflect on-the-ground realities. By bringing together entrepreneurs, workforce partners, and local institutions, this partnership can drive innovation, expand opportunity, and build a more connected rural business ecosystem.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Launch a formal sector partnership focused on agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship, co-convened by the county and key industry partners that can serve to connect the ecosystem.



Includes regular convenings, working groups, and collaboration with workforce organizations like PVCC and Cooperative Extension to align on workforce, infrastructure, and business needs.



Use the partnership as a strategic feedback loop for county programs and policies affecting the rural economy.



Ensures ongoing coordination, responsiveness, and accountability in economic development efforts.

STRATEGY 3.6





Support the growth of Albemarle County's wine industry.

An approach to strengthen a signature rural industry through investment, training, sustainability and resilience, and expanded market access.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County is at the heart of Virginia's growing wine industry, anchoring regional tourism, generating high-quality jobs, and positioning local producers for national and international export. As climate resilience, workforce challenges, and global market opportunities reshape the sector, the county has a chance to lead in sustainable, innovative wine production.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Partner with PVCC and industry groups to develop viticulture and enology training pathways.	→ Fills critical labor gaps and supports long-term sector growth.
	Pursue funding and partnerships to expand sustainable practices—like irrigation, pest control, and renewable energy.	→ Enhances resilience and positions Albemarle as a leader in climate-smart wine production.
	Support marketing, branding, and export readiness in collaboration with the Virginia Wine Board and others.	→ Expands visibility and unlocks access to new markets.
	Offer incentives and reduce regulatory barriers for vineyard expansion, winemaking equipment, and tasting room development.	→ Encourages business investment and enables scale across the value chain.

STRATEGY 3.7

Expand the agritourism economy through partnership with Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau.

A strategy to grow rural tourism by expanding lodging, events, and farm-based food and beverage experiences.

WHY IT MATTERS

Agritourism is already a core strength of Albemarle County's economy, anchored by its wineries, scenic landscapes, and vibrant local food scene. But many producers face barriers to expanding into lodging, events, or year-round experiences that generate sustained revenue. With targeted support and deeper collaboration between the county and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau, Albemarle can scale its rural tourism economy, draw new visitor segments, and strengthen the financial sustainability of its agribusinesses. Agritourism is not just a lifestyle asset—it's a growing economic driver that connects rural vitality with broader regional appeal.



WHAT'S NEEDED

	Continue to expand destination marketing and visitor experience development focused on rural assets.	→	Elevates agritourism offerings and draws new tourism demand into rural parts of the county.
	Support producers and rural entrepreneurs in expanding lodging, food and beverage, and event-based tourism, including by exploring County Code amendments to allow restaurants in rural areas by special use permit.	→	Unlocks new business models and adds year-round economic value to working lands.
	Identify and address regulatory or permitting barriers that limit the growth of agritourism operations.	→	Makes it easier for producers to scale visitor-facing services.
	Promote cross-sector tourism experiences that connect agribusiness with arts, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage.	→	Builds more holistic and compelling visitor itineraries across the county.

GOAL 4: EMPOWER TALENT

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

FOLLOW YOUR
OWN COMPASS

GOAL 4

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, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and K-12 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.

The Evidence

- Proximity to UVA and PVCC anchors a highly educated and innovation-ready workforce. Over 60% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and 30% work in creative class occupations—a share that grew 42% over the past 5 years, outpacing all peers.
- Albemarle's workforce skews older than peer regions. The county's median age is 39.4, and just 25% of residents fall within the prime working-age group of 25–44: well below benchmark averages.
- Despite strong entrepreneurial activity, stakeholders noted Albemarle lacks the infrastructure to support startup scale. While the region performs well in early-stage investment, stakeholders cited limited access to flexible space, second-stage funding, and mentorship networks, factors that contribute to startup attrition.
- Young professionals value Albemarle's quality of life, but many stakeholders noted opportunities to improve culture and connection. Stakeholders emphasized interest in more destination dining, entertainment, and experiential retail to help retain early-career talent and build a sense of community.

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **GROWTH OF ALBEMARLE'S 25–44-YEAR-OLD WORKING-AGE POPULATION**
Measuring growth in the number and share of residents aged 25–44.
- **PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP PLACEMENT THROUGH AMP**
Tracking young professionals engaged through AMP and placed in board, commission, and nonprofit leadership roles.
- **EXPANSION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONNECTIONS AND ECOSYSTEM USE**
Tracking entrepreneurs utilizing Albemarle's coordinated entrepreneurial platform and support network.
- **ATTRACTION OF DESTINATION RESTAURANTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL**
Counting new destination restaurants, entertainment venues, and experiential retail businesses.



STRATEGY 4.1

Align workforce and economic development systems to build career pathways.

A unified plan connecting education, training, and placement strategies to Albemarle’s target sectors.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County’s workforce development ecosystem is strong but often fragmented. Stakeholders noted that education and training providers, economic development leaders, and employers are not always aligned around shared sector priorities. As a result, students and job-seekers face unclear pathways into key industries like national security innovation, life sciences, agribusiness, and healthcare. A unified workforce-economic development strategy can close this gap, helping the county better anticipate talent needs, invest in high-impact programs, and connect residents to upwardly mobile careers in Albemarle’s priority sectors.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Convene a cross-sector workforce and economic development alignment team, including PVCC, K-12, employers, and regional partners.



Builds a shared understanding of sector needs and training gaps.



Map existing education and training programs to target clusters, identifying duplication and areas of opportunity.



Creates clarity and highlights where new investments are needed.



Support program development and curriculum alignment for in-demand, middle-skill careers in Albemarle’s innovation economy through sector partnerships.



Ensures residents are prepared for high-quality jobs in growing fields.

STRATEGY 4.2

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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County is home to a range of entrepreneurial support organizations, from incubators and capital providers to technical assistance programs. But for many founders, the system feels fragmented and hard to navigate. Startups often miss opportunities, duplicate efforts, or fail to progress from early-stage ideas to growth-ready businesses. A unified platform that maps the ecosystem, streamlines access, and coordinates partner efforts will help more entrepreneurs find what they need, when they need it, encouraging them to stay in the county as they grow.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Conduct a comprehensive mapping of the county's entrepreneurial support ecosystem, including services, funding, and facilities.	→ Clarifies what's available and where gaps exist.
	Develop a public-facing platform or resource guide that organizes services by stage, sector, and need.	→ Makes it easier for founders and small business owners to navigate and access support.
	Coordinate ecosystem partners through regular convenings or a shared strategy framework.	→ Reduces duplication and improves alignment across providers.
	Promote success stories and pipeline outcomes to build visibility, pride, and momentum within the entrepreneurial community.	→ Reinforces Albemarle County as a place where businesses start and grow.

STRATEGY 4.3

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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County benefits from proximity to two major talent generators: the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. Yet each year, too many students leave the region after graduation, taking their skills, ideas, and entrepreneurial potential with them. Local employers cite increasing difficulty hiring for early-career roles, and the startup ecosystem struggles to engage student founders in long-term growth. Next Gen Albemarle will bridge this gap, helping students plug into local opportunities, connect with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and imagine a future rooted in the county.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Explore best practices from other university-linked talent retention programs (e.g. Campus Philly, Launch Detroit, Hello Utah) to inform the design of Next Gen Albemarle.



Ensures the initiative reflects proven strategies tailored to local conditions.



Partner with CVPED, UVA, PVCC, K-12, and regional employers to co-design internships, apprenticeships, fellowships, startup pipelines, and service-learning opportunities.



Aligns student pathways with real opportunities in Albemarle County.



Launch a visible "Next Gen Albemarle" brand and leverage CVPED's Techlink platform that connects students and those competing some college and credentials to jobs, networks, mentors, and startup support.



Creates a sense of belonging and identity for emerging talent.

STRATEGY 4.4

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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Young professionals are essential to Albemarle County's economic future but retaining them post-grad requires more than jobs; it requires community. Employers, especially in growth sectors like life sciences and secure innovation, consistently cite difficulty keeping early-career talent in the region. Many young professionals report feeling disconnected from civic life and unaware of pathways into leadership. A vibrant, visible Young Professional Network—rooted in best practices from cities like Tulsa (TYPROS) and Charlotte—can provide that missing infrastructure. It can help young leaders build careers, connect with peers, and see a future for themselves in the county.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Evaluate existing young professional programs and networks in Albemarle County to identify what's working and where gaps exist.	→ Provides a foundation for smart investment and targeted expansion.
	Collaborate with employers, nonprofits, and regional partners to grow a unified, county-supported Young Professional Network.	→ Builds a welcoming space for networking, development, and civic engagement.
	Support leadership development and board placement pathways that connect young professionals to commissions, nonprofits, and civic institutions.	→ Strengthens retention and brings new energy into county decision-making.

STRATEGY 4.5

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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's appeal to talent and residents depends in part on the vibrancy of its activity centers. While nearby Charlottesville offers strong amenities, many parts of the county are missing some lifestyle offerings—especially destination restaurants, entertainment venues, and retail experiences. At the same time, aging shopping centers and underutilized commercial corridors present clear opportunities for reinvestment. A focused retail and hospitality attraction strategy—supported by proactive site selection, developer partnerships, and brand alignment—can position the county to meet rising demand, attract new spending, and enhance quality of place.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Partner with commercial brokers, site selectors, and developers to attract appropriate, experience-driven retail and entertainment concepts.



Brings new energy to the county's activity hubs and expands lifestyle offerings.



Coordinate with planning and permitting teams to streamline review processes for projects that align with county planning documents.



Speeds delivery and reduces uncertainty regarding commercial investment.

STRATEGY 4.6

Support housing development and childcare initiatives.

A collaborative effort to expand affordable housing and childcare options for workers and entrepreneurs.

WHY IT MATTERS

A growing economy depends on access to both housing and childcare, especially for mid-wage workers, entrepreneurs, and young families. In Albemarle County, housing costs are rising faster than income, and access to childcare remains limited and expensive. These pressures make it harder to retain talent, attract new workers, and support inclusive economic growth. By expanding housing options and helping new childcare providers launch and scale, the county can strengthen its talent pipeline and improve quality of life for working households.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Support local and regional efforts to reach the county's housing development goals.



Increases the supply of affordable and market-rate housing aligned with workforce needs.



Provide small business support services for entrepreneurs interested in starting or expanding childcare operations.



Helps close the supply gap and strengthens the early childhood care economy.



Explore public-private partnerships and funding tools to scale access to quality, affordable childcare in underserved areas.



Supports household stability and broadens workforce participation.

GOAL 5: COMPETE FOR INVESTMENT

We will position Albemarle as Virginia’s most investment-ready county — ready to compete, build, and lead.

GOAL 5

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.

The Evidence

- Albemarle offers a compelling value proposition to innovation-sector investors. The county is home to major research and defense assets like UVA and Rivanna Station, a high-skilled workforce, and access to growing regional markets, positioning it to compete for technology, bioscience, and national security investment.
- Stakeholders emphasized the need for more investment-ready sites and infrastructure upgrades to meet modern business needs. Gaps in road access, broadband, water, and sewer have limited the competitiveness of otherwise promising sites, particularly for advanced manufacturing, logistics, and food processing.
- Albemarle's development process is more complex and time-intensive than neighboring localities. Businesses and developers cited a lack of clarity in requirements and longer permitting timelines as top challenges, especially for firms trying to move quickly on expansions.
- The region's assets are strong, but its economic identity remains diffuse. While Albemarle boasts a nationally ranked university, cutting-edge defense installations, and a vibrant entrepreneurial culture, stakeholders noted the need for a more cohesive investment and innovation brand and clearer messaging to external audiences.

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **PERMITTING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS**
Tracking reductions in permitting timelines and improvements in development process efficiency.
- **STRATEGIC SITE AND INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY**
Tracking the number of investment-ready sites and infrastructure projects aligned with innovation sectors.
- **BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE) ENGAGEMENT**
Tracking the number of business visits.
- **INNOVATION OF BRAND VISIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT**
Measuring engagement with Albemarle's investment marketing efforts, including inquiries, website traffic, conference participation, and media placements.



STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's development review processes and highly prescriptive zoning code are slowing investment and increasing risk for businesses and developers. Site plan reviews often exceed 18–24 months—well beyond the business cycle—and require layers of legislative approvals that add cost and complexity. These delays have already caused some firms to walk away or choose to expand elsewhere. Streamlining and modernizing permitting processes will reduce barriers to development, enable the county to compete for high-quality investment, and better support the innovation-driven sectors it seeks to grow.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Hire a qualified consulting firm to support zoning modernization and permitting reform, bringing national expertise and real-world implementation strategies.



Provides capacity and objectivity to deliver a best-in-class regulatory framework.



Redesign the permitting and site review process to reduce timelines, improve transparency, and coordinate across divisions, departments, and partner agencies.



Speeds up development while improving predictability for applicants.



Engage employers, developers, and site selectors to test reforms and ensure proposed changes reflect market realities.



Builds confidence among stakeholders and improves adoption.

STRATEGY 5.2

Launch a developer sector partnership.

A sector partnership with developers and utility providers to improve market readiness and accelerate growth.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County's success in growing innovation-driven sectors will depend on its ability to offer development-ready sites with aligned infrastructure. But currently, too many high-potential areas lack critical utilities, and developers cite uncertainty in the planning process. A formal sector partnership will give the county a structured way to work with developers, utility providers, and site selectors to identify barriers, share information, and prioritize investment. It will also help coordinate long-range infrastructure planning and ensure public and private sector goals are aligned.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Launch a regular developer and infrastructure roundtable that includes commercial and industrial developers, utility providers, planners, and economic and community development staff.



Builds trust, improves information flow, and surfaces site-readiness barriers early.



Use the partnership to inform zoning and permitting reform efforts underway in Strategy 5.1.



Ensures that policy reforms reflect real-world needs.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Retaining and growing existing businesses is one of the most cost-effective economic development strategies—and Albemarle County already has relevant momentum. The county's one-on-one outreach efforts have provided valuable insights into employer needs, but these efforts remain informal and limited in reach. A structured BRE program can deepen relationships, flag expansion risks or opportunities earlier, and build a stronger data foundation for investment and policy decisions. It also sends a clear message to employers: Albemarle is a committed long-term partner.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Formalize and scale the existing one-on-one visitation program into a structured BRE initiative.



Expands outreach across sectors and tracks trends over time.



Develop a standardized intake tool to capture employer feedback on workforce, infrastructure, real estate, and regulatory issues.



Creates actionable data to inform county decision-making.



Establish annual BRE goals and priority sectors aligned with Albemarle's strategic plan.



Ensures resources are focused on high-impact industries.



Coordinate follow-up and referrals with workforce, infrastructure, and planning partners.



Converts insights into support and strengthens employer confidence.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Delivering this economic strategy will require more than plans; it will take investment. Albemarle County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) and private sector partners have a critical role to play in turning strategy into action, especially in funding infrastructure that enables business growth. Whether it's site readiness or filling infrastructure and asset gaps for target sectors, these investments will shape where and how the county grows. A clear framework for collaboration and co-investment will help Albemarle move from planning to implementation and unlock the full potential of its public assets.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Define the EDA's strategic investment priorities based on the goals of this economic development plan.	→ Aligns tools and resources with long-term county goals.
	Identify priority infrastructure projects where EDA investment or facilitation can unlock business growth or private co-investment.	→ Catalyzes near-term action and future-ready development.
	Consider flexible public-private financing tools	→ Helps close gaps that delay or prevent innovation-sector development.
	Establish additional defined incentives to support business expansion and business attraction in target sectors.	→ Makes Albemarle more competitive for the jobs and industries we want to grow.
	Establish clear metrics and oversight to ensure EDA investments deliver community and economic returns, with consideration for forecasting and measuring return on investment.	→ Builds accountability and trust in public investment decisions.

STRATEGY 5.5

Maintain a pipeline of buildings and sites aligned with cluster needs.

An active inventory of development-ready sites and buildings that support growth in target sectors.

WHY IT MATTERS

To attract and retain innovative companies, Albemarle County must be able to offer ready-to-develop sites and suitable building space that align with the needs of its key industries. Yet stakeholders noted that prospective employers often struggle to find sites with the right infrastructure, zoning, or timeline for delivery. Without a proactive pipeline strategy, the county risks losing high-value opportunities to faster-moving peers. Maintaining a real-time inventory of sites—coordinated with infrastructure planning, marketing, and cluster needs—will help Albemarle stay competitive and responsive.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Build and regularly update a site and building inventory aligned with life sciences, national security, agribusiness, and entrepreneurial growth needs.



Enables faster responses to prospective inquiries and expansion opportunities.



Coordinate with developers, brokers, and utilities to assess site readiness and identify gaps in zoning, permitting, or infrastructure.



Ensures identified sites are viable and investment ready.

STRATEGY 5.6

Partner with utilities and the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport to deliver infrastructure for industrial growth.

A coordinated effort to expand air service, water, sewer, energy, and broadband capacity.

WHY IT MATTERS

Infrastructure gaps can be significant barriers to economic growth in Albemarle County. Stakeholders consistently pointed to limited broadband coverage, aging industrial utilities, and water and sewer constraints as obstacles to business attraction and expansion. In parallel, improving air service and logistics connectivity is key to serving national security, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing sectors. By working closely with utility providers and the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport, the county can address these chokepoints and prepare high-potential areas for the next wave of growth.



WHAT'S NEEDED



Coordinate with utility providers to assess and upgrade service capacity in priority development zones.



Ensures water, sewer, energy, and broadband infrastructure aligns with target cluster needs.



Partner with the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport to explore air service expansion and improved logistics connections.



Supports talent mobility, business travel, and industry-specific freight needs.

STRATEGY 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.

WHY IT MATTERS

Albemarle County is making strategic, forward-looking investments to grow its innovation economy, through Rivanna Futures, university partnerships, and targeted support for key sectors like national security, life sciences, and agribusiness. But without a compelling narrative, those investments may go unnoticed in a competitive national landscape. A bold, coordinated brand will help the county define its value proposition, communicate clearly with site selectors and business leaders, and give local partners a shared story to tell. It's not just about promotion; it's about shaping perception and positioning Albemarle as Virginia's next hub for innovation-driven growth.



WHAT'S NEEDED		
	Develop a county-wide investment and innovation brand, building on the themes in this strategy.	→ Creates a unified message across all business sectors and partners.
	Activate the brand through marketing materials and digital platforms. Target outreach to business leaders, site selectors, and media.	→ Expands awareness and positions Albemarle in key decision-maker networks.
	Collaborate with regional and state partners to ensure the brand aligns with broader efforts while telling Albemarle's distinct story.	→ Increases visibility without duplication and builds coherence.
	Equip employers, institutions, and ecosystem partners to carry the brand in talent recruitment, investment outreach, and storytelling.	→ Makes the message go further through distributed advocacy.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgements

For more information, a technical appendix containing the research that Resonance conducted to support the development of this report is available and includes the Competitive Benchmarking Assessment (Appendix A), the Target Cluster Analysis (Appendix B), the Stakeholder Engagement Summary (Appendix C), and members of the Stakeholder Committee (Appendix D).



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resonance

Albemarle
COUNTY

Agenda Item No. 5. From the County Executive: Report on Matters Not Listed on the Agenda.

Mr. Richardson stated that Dominion was reporting that 4,200 customers in their area were without power. He said that he wanted to remind everyone to travel safely home this evening.

Ms. Ann Wall, Deputy County Executive, added that there had been an issue with a substation in the northern part of the County, which Dominion was currently working on fixing.

Agenda Item No. 4. From the Board: Matters Not Listed on the Agenda.

Mr. Gallaway said that one of the concerns raised in the plan was about infrastructure and infrastructure bottlenecks. He said that this issue would likely be revisited in their legislative priorities, and he would be advocating for it then. He said that if the levels of government above the County fulfilled their responsibilities and funded their obligations properly, local government would have more resources to address their priorities. He said that when they discussed maintaining or raising tax rates, he believed they could use their existing revenue more effectively to tackle some of these problems.

Mr. Gallaway said that, however, if the State was not adequately funding VDOT for road projects, maintenance, and new initiatives, the County could not effectively address these infrastructure bottlenecks. He said that similarly, if the state did not provide sufficient funding for school construction,

they could not make progress on this issue. He said that there were several issues that could be addressed during the upcoming General Assembly session, and they all had the power to impact them. He said that often, it was the local level that bore the brunt of the consequences when a road project was delayed, or a school building was not funded.

Mr. Gallaway said that he was calling on all of them to take an active role in advocating for their own interests with their local General Assembly representatives. He encouraged everyone to use their relationships to influence state and federal representatives to consider how they could address the unfunded or misplaced mandates that were costing their local dollars. By working together, they could better utilize those dollars to tackle the real problems and gaps that they were aware of.

Agenda Item No. 6. Adjourn.

At 6:10 p.m., Mr. Long adjourned the EDA meeting.

At 6:11 p.m., the Board adjourned its meeting to August 20, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in Lane Auditorium, Albemarle County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, VA, 22902.

Chair

Approved by Board
Date: 12/03/2025
Initials: CKB