

FLUVANNA FORWARD

Fluvanna County Economic Development Strategic Plan
FY2023 – FY2028

Adopted September 21, 2022

Vision Statement

Fluvanna County: The heart of Virginia and your gateway to the future.

Mission Statement

Fluvanna County is committed to providing an excellent quality of life for our citizens and businesses through the efficient delivery of core services and programs, while preserving the unique identity and rural character of the county.

About Fluvanna County

Nestled in the Piedmont region of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fluvanna County strives to provide an outstanding quality of life for citizens and businesses through purposeful economic development initiatives. Abundant with locational advantages, tourism appeal, an affordable lifestyle and business costs, Fluvanna County is poised for economic growth. From workforce training to entrepreneurship, business development to talent attraction, the priorities set forth in this plan will inform decision-making, improve our economic competitiveness, and advance our growing community.

Our Statement of Purpose

In preparation for the FY2023-FY2028 strategic planning period, the Fluvanna County Economic Development Office conducted a qualitative analysis of the region, resulting in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis (SWOT) in Winter 2021. This process, which included one-on-one meetings with the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Authority, and three stakeholder focus groups, helped Fluvanna County identify the advantages and challenges characterizing its competitive positioning. Stakeholders, including businesses, residents, community organizations, Fluvanna County staff, municipal leaders, educators, and industry partners were engaged in the evaluation process, collaborating to produce a shared vision for the economy.

The vision and approach articulated in this strategic plan reflect the data-driven objectives identified during this planning period (please see Appendix for the full qualitative and SWOT analyses). By building upon our progress, leveraging new opportunities, and linking residents and businesses with the resources to succeed, we can move Fluvanna boldly forward.

Our Vision for Strategic Growth

In Fluvanna County, a focus on **People, Prosperity, and Placemaking** will support a vibrant economy and enhance our quality of life.

PEOPLE: Improve employment opportunities to elevate residents and businesses.

1. Position Fluvanna County’s workforce for success through skills development.

Educational attainment is high within Fluvanna County and is consistent with Virginia’s achievement narrative. According to the 2021 U.S. Census, 92.5% of residents over the age of 25 hold a high school diploma, and 35.6% over the age of 25 hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. ¹

Together with educational and industry partners, Fluvanna County is shaping the next generation of workforce talent. In 2020-21, the four-year, on time graduation rate for Fluvanna County Public Schools was 95.3%, above the state average of 93%.²

Fluvanna County Public Schools offer a K-12 curriculum with quality Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) programming. In addition, Project Fluvanna is priming an entry-level talent pipeline by helping non-college track students explore opportunities within the workforce. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) department at Fluvanna County High School encourages local businesses to hire students in areas of demonstrated job growth. This program includes marketing, business skills, construction, engineering, woodworking, agriculture, critical thinking, and culinary skills, among others. Continued engagement with program administrators and industry partners will keep CTE offerings robust and relevant.

Fluvanna County is also home to the Fork Union Military Academy, an all-male college preparatory military boarding school founded in 1898. Considered one of the premier military boarding academies in the United States,³ Fork Union boasts a consistently high college acceptance rate and provides clear pathways to academic success and career achievement.

Several major universities and two-year institutions, including the top-ranked University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC), are within a 30-minute drive. PVCC offers over 90 areas of study and features an array of certificate programs, two-year degree programs, and youth enrichment opportunities. Their Workforce Services Division is a valued partner, providing training programs for industry credentialing and professional development in response to economic demand.

Looking ahead, Fluvanna County will continue to identify and establish partnerships with educational and industry partners. This will keep local talent equipped with the skills appropriate for workforce needs.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

² Virginia Department of School Quality Profiles, 2022

³ <https://www.forkunion.com/>

2. Develop talent attraction initiatives to grow opportunities in Fluvanna County.

On the average, unemployment rates in Fluvanna County are lower (3.2%) as compared to Virginia (3.8%) and the U.S. (5.3%).⁴ Low unemployment signals that the marketplace has confidence in the skills of Fluvanna County residents, which speaks to the caliber of talent residing locally.

Despite the capabilities of the existing workforce, talent attraction was a common theme among stakeholders in the SWOT analysis focus groups. Currently, 58.3% of Fluvanna County's residents aged 16 and older participate in the civilian labor force.⁵ This percentage, which is slightly lower than the national average of 63%, points to the need for a concentrated focus on talent attraction within Fluvanna County.

As of 2019, which represents the most updated reporting period to date, most workers (9,865) commuted outside the county for employment to areas including Charlottesville and Albemarle County. A lesser number (2,549) commute into Fluvanna County from neighboring communities, and fewer (1953) live and work in the county itself.⁶

Promoting the excellence of our K-12 education system, upskilling our workforce, and collaborating with industry partners are three talent attraction tactics employed by Fluvanna County. Other approaches for talent attraction are forthcoming in this report.

3. Showcase residential real estate to attract, retain, and grow available talent.

Residential real estate in Fluvanna, on average, is more affordable than that of surrounding counties. According to the U.S. Census, the median value of owner-occupied residential property in Fluvanna County is \$234,500, which represents a cost savings over Virginia's \$282,200 median residential property value.⁷

While purchasing residential real estate is more affordable in Fluvanna County, a 2018 Regional Housing Study conducted by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission Regional Housing Partnership identified an affordability gap.⁸ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordability as not exceeding 30% of a household's income on housing-related expenses. Their 2018 evaluation of 11,047 housing units in Fluvanna County revealed the following:

- 960 owner households paid more than 50% of their incomes toward housing costs.
- 220 renter households paid more than 30% of their incomes toward housing costs.
- 310 renter households paid more than 50% of their incomes toward housing costs.

⁴ Fluvanna Community Profile, Virginia Employment Commission, 2022

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

⁶ US Census Bureau, 2020

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

⁸ Infographic. Regional Housing Study and Needs Assessment Key Takeaways, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

Affordable housing and economic prosperity go hand in hand. The affordability of real estate and rental properties have a positive impact on talent attraction. Creating a blend of real estate options at various price points, near schools and recreational amenities, attracts and retains workers and industries on a larger scale. Fluvanna County will continue to work with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission Regional Housing Partnership to improve the affordability, accessibility, and diversity of housing available within our communities.

PROSPERITY:

Attract and retain industries that advance our communities.

1. Retain existing industries that build upon our strengths.

Locally, Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Retail Trade, Construction, Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, Accommodation and Food Services are lead employment sectors within Fluvanna County. With a reported 405 employment establishments in 2021, the largest employers include:⁹

Top Employers¹⁰

Fluvanna County Public School Board
Fluvanna Correctional Center
County of Fluvanna
Mmr Constructors Inc
Fork Union Military Academy
Fielder's Choice Enterprises Inc
Food Lion
A G Dillard Inc
BFI Transfer Systems of Virginia
Silk City Printing

Highest Employee Totals by Industry:¹¹

Government Total: (1295)
Local Government: (886)
Construction: (780)
State Government: (377)
Retail Trade: (397)

⁹ Fluvanna Community Profile, Virginia Employment Commission, 2022

¹⁰ Fluvanna Community Profile, Virginia Employment Commission, 2022

¹¹ Fluvanna Community Profile, Virginia Employment Commission, 2022

Within the top-ranked state for business, Fluvanna County provides a stable environment for success.¹² Operating a business in Fluvanna County yields fewer administrative business costs, which drives the narrative. In Fluvanna County, low taxes and a devoted business ecosystem bolster existing and prospective industries. The absence of a Merchants Capital tax and a Gross Receipts tax deliver substantial industry savings. A low Business Personal Property tax with an aggressive depreciation schedule and a Machinery and Tools tax with an aggressive depreciation schedule are value-added as well. With an eye on improving competitiveness, Fluvanna County may develop new business incentives beyond those currently offered.

2. Attract growth-oriented sectors aligning with our economic objectives.

Target industries have a multiplier effect on local economies. Establishing clear industry targets lends focus to our economic development efforts, helping us refine the incentives available and prepare our workforce effectively. Looking ahead, capturing new businesses locating to the county will provide informative metrics for assessment. This data will guide economic development strategies and help Fluvanna County achieve desired outcomes. Fluvanna County's target industry sectors follow¹³:

Business and Financial Services
Light Manufacturing
Transportation and Logistics
Agribusiness, Food Processing, and Technology
Health Services
Forest and Wood Products

The above-named targets are informed by our existing industries, strategic location, growing regional demand, and rural assets. These targets leverage the existing strengths and intellectual capital available within our regional commuter shed and position us for growth.

3. Foster entrepreneurship within Fluvanna County.

A robust commitment to entrepreneurship will help Fluvanna County keep pace with the evolving needs of businesses, residents, and the workforce. Regional partnerships with the Community Investment Collaborative and the Central Virginia Small Business Development Center encourage the development of products and concepts with real market traction. From workshops to targeted business support, the Fluvanna County Economic Development Office works to diversify area businesses and create new job opportunities.

Partnering with education and industry is an identified route to progress, as is the development of local collaboration spaces. In the future, Fluvanna County hopes to enrich the in-county innovation ecosystem by developing a business incubator, coworking space, or a maker space.

¹² "America's Top States for Business," CNBC, July 13, 2021

¹³ <https://www.fluvannacounty.org/ced/page/major-employers-industries>

4. Improve the variety of commercial real estate options to support business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts.

Boasting ample acreage for agricultural purposes and commercial/industrial spaces with prime frontage, Fluvanna County is positioned for growth. Ongoing investments in county growth areas are purposeful, ensuring that public infrastructure aligns with community and business needs. The proposed Fork Union Business Park, situated along U.S. Route 15 and Virginia Route 6, would offer over 500,000 square feet of industrial space to locating and expanding enterprises. In addition, evaluating the prospect of higher tiered, pad ready sites among stakeholders is an identified priority in key areas of the county. Pad ready sites accelerate a company's speed to market and increase Fluvanna's County's competitiveness.

PLACEMAKING: Enhance the spaces where people live, work, and play in Fluvanna County.

1. Prioritize infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Fluvanna County's development plans are designed to meet the needs of a changing and growing population.

Road Network

Fluvanna County has easy access to major transportation routes through the interstate system, making commutes from Charlottesville and surrounding counties convenient. Key routes include:

- Interstate 64 intersects Fluvanna County at its northern tip and runs east-west, providing direct access to Richmond and Hampton Roads.
- U.S. Route 15, a major north-south highway runs through the center of Fluvanna County, and State Route 6 runs east-west.
- Both Interstates 95 and 81 are within 45 minutes of Fluvanna County.

As commercial and residential development continues, volume is a chief concern for residents and businesses. Fluvanna County regularly conducts traffic reviews, enhances intersections and walkability, and makes safety and sight improvements to alleviate congestion.

Public Transit Service

Access to convenient public transit helps employees and residents travel in and beyond Fluvanna County without a car. Locally, JAUNT, Inc. provides curb-to-curb demand-response service for the citizens of several area counties. Jaunt is a transit partner, but as a reservation-based system, transportation must be planned in advance, limiting widespread connectivity.

Commercial Rail Service

Fluvanna County is on the CSX commercial line. This single track follows the James River along the county's southern border from Columbia in the southeast to Scottsville in the southwest.

Passenger Rail Service

Amtrak passenger rail service is available in Charlottesville. This benefits residents preferring a quieter living environment but places a 45-minute distance between passengers seeking rail access.

Water and Sewer

Fluvanna County Planning Areas (CPAs) have identified water and sewer as areas of investment for residents and businesses. Fluvanna County will continue to invest in targeted growth areas throughout the county, including Zion Crossroads, Columbia, Lake Monticello, Palmyra, and Fork Union.

Fluvanna County has targeted Zion Crossroads as a priority growth area. Improved water and sewer infrastructure will accelerate business attraction and expansion efforts in this section of Fluvanna County. The Zion Crossroads project has an anticipated Fall 2022 completion date.

Lake Monticello and Palmyra have public water and sewer serviced by Aqua and Fluvanna County Public Utilities. Fork Union's water is provided by Fork Union Sanitation District, with private septic service available at this time. Continued investments in public infrastructure will continue to improve the quality of life and capacity available to residents and businesses.

Broadband

Fluvanna County is serviced by Xfinity, CenturyLink, and Firefly Fiber Broadband. Firefly, a subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC), is partnering with Fluvanna County to expand broadband availability. Firefly developed a plan to include construction of over seven miles of fiber optic cable.

2. Leverage tourism assets to boost visitor appeal.

Fluvanna County has extraordinary natural, historic, and recreational resources to celebrate and leverage as tourism assets. Our small-town authenticity, agritourism experiences, outdoor adventures, and heritage spaces have much to offer tourists and visitors. Our proximity to Charlottesville and Richmond remains a key advantage, keeping cultural, historical, recreational, and retail opportunities close at hand.

In 2018, Fluvanna County released a Tourism Strategic Plan, identifying its objectives for growth in the areas of tourism and recreation. Since the report's release, Fluvanna County has elevated its marketing, branding, and opportunities for tourism-related businesses in the following ways:

2020

- Photo competition
- #Buy from Fluvanna (buy local)
- Fluvanna black history facts
- Podcasts recognizing Black History Month
- Welcome to Palmyra signage
- Love sign at Pleasant Grove
- 101 Things to Do in Fluvanna
- Pleasant Grove Certified Tourist Information Center

Looking ahead, Fluvanna County will grow its tourism experiences in the areas of agritourism, outdoor recreation, and historic heritage, with specific objectives outlined later in this strategic plan. The absence of lodging remains a challenge, but encouraging continued investment in the public spaces, experiences, and businesses sought after by visitors is a way forward.

Our Strategic Approach

Fluvanna County has identified four strategic goals shaping economic growth and community prosperity. We will undertake the following over the course of this strategic plan:

Goal 1: Position Fluvanna County as a business-friendly county with competitive assets in the Central Virginia region.

How:

- ◆ Reorganize and communicate steps of streamlined and standardized business permitting process to new and existing businesses in Fluvanna County.
- ◆ Design potential business incentive offerings in Fluvanna County.
- ◆ Promote the “Fluvanna County Shovel-Ready Sites” program to landowners, businesses, and the community at large to encourage the creation of higher tiered pad-ready sites (as defined by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority in its Virginia Business Ready Sites Program in accordance with Section 2.2-2238.B of the Code of Virginia of 1950) in Fluvanna County.
- ◆ Continue to invest in key growth areas in Fluvanna County, including but not limited to Fork Union, Columbia, Palmyra, and Zion Crossroads.

Goal 2: Foster entrepreneurship, business growth, and expansion in Fluvanna County through business retention efforts.

How:

- ◆ Continue to collaborate at the regional level to provide programs and services; share resources and assets to reduce costs and improve quality.
- ◆ Formalize a County Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program.
- ◆ Create a business database of existing businesses for tracking business metrics in Fluvanna County.

- ◆ Support, advocate, and promote the new community commercial kitchen.
- ◆ Explore entrepreneurial support opportunities such as the development of a coworking space, business incubator, or maker space.
- ◆ Work towards the creation of a new position geared towards marketing and tourism promotion and business retention within the Fluvanna County Economic Development Office.
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan for businesses within Fluvanna County.

Goal 3: Develop new and enhance existing tourism experiences, activities, and events in Fluvanna County to increase tourism attraction.

How:

- ◆ Devise and implement shop local incentives and programs.
- ◆ Promote local tourism experiences in agritourism, viticulture, artisans, events, parks, and outdoor recreation.
- ◆ Research and apply for grants to support tourism initiatives in Fluvanna County.

Goal 4: Support Fluvanna County businesses with talent recruitment and retention challenges.

How:

- ◆ Establish partnerships with local educational institutions and workforce partners to develop a talent pipeline to fit local skills needs.
- ◆ Advocate for the Fluvanna County business community as the county addresses its infrastructure challenges.

Partner Organizations

To assist with achieving these goals, Fluvanna County plans to leverage relationships with partner organizations.

Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development (CVPED)
 Central Virginia Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC)
 Community Investment Collaborative (CIC)

Fluvanna Chamber of Commerce
Fluvanna County Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDTAC)
Fluvanna County Economic Development Authority (EDA)
Fluvanna County Public Schools
Fork Union Military Academy (FUMA)
Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC)
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC)
Virginia Career Works (VCW)
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)

Appendix:

- I. *Fluvanna County Economic Development Strategic Planning Qualitative Analysis*

Fluvanna County Strategic Planning

Qualitative Analysis

February 2022

PLAT!NUM PR

Fluvanna County Economic Development Strategic Planning Interviews

Background: One-on-one interviews with each of the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors and Economic Development Authority members were administered as part of the Fluvanna County Economic Development strategic planning process. This strategic planning process was intended to engage residents, business owners, County staff, community organizations, key industries, educators, municipal leaders, partners, and other stakeholders of Fluvanna County in a collaborative process to produce a shared vision for the future of Fluvanna County's economy.

Method: These interviews were conducted between January 6, 2022, and January 20, 2022. Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors were interviewed first, and Fluvanna County Economic Development Authority Board members were interviewed thereafter.

Results: Interview results were analyzed through a SWOT analysis.

S

- Educated, diverse workforce with various areas of expertise
- Farming community
- Rural county with groves, rivers, lakes, and attractive landscape
- Quality school system
- Government leadership is involved and efficient

W

- No economic growth
- Bad traffic
- No medical facility
- Outdated infrastructure turns away business opportunities
- Unsustainable water system

O

- Use land to create more parks/recreation spaces
- Sunday Art Market will bring business to town
- Bridging the gap between rural and suburban areas
- Internship program for business students
- Transportation Logistics
- Fork Union area is popular and can be utilized to attract more people
- Speakers Bureau for different areas of expertise in the community

T

- Current water system cannot keep up with current use
- Competition from surrounding counties
- County is not ready for the economic growth they need
- Lack of commitment to infrastructure rebuild

SWOT ANALYSIS

FLUVANNA COUNTY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

PREPARED BY PLATINUM PR, 2022

Fluvanna County Economic Development Strategic Planning Staff Focus Group Analysis

Background: The following focus group was administered as part of Fluvanna County Economic Development’s strategic planning process. This strategic planning process was intended to engage residents, business owners, County staff, community organizations, key industries, educators, municipal leaders, partners, and other stakeholders of Fluvanna County in a collaborative process to produce a shared vision for the future of Fluvanna County’s economy.

Method: Participants were contacted and selected by Fluvanna County Economic Development staff members. The staff meeting was held virtually on January 21, 2022, through the communication platform Zoom, and the meeting was recorded. Present at the stakeholder meeting were eleven participants, one moderator, and one scribe. The scribe and moderator were Platinum PR team members, providing for an unbiased evaluation. The participants responded to eight questions.

Results: Four major themes were pulled from the stakeholder meeting. Themes were identified by the reiteration of the subject by multiple participants. Themes are not ranked. For analysis, please refer to the synthesis section.

Theme #1: Strong Tourism Assets

Participants in the staff focus group continuously identified outdoor recreation and tourism draws as the region’s greatest economic assets. Specifically, Pleasant Grove Park, water recreation opportunities, the artisan community, local events, and agritourism were mentioned. Staff members clearly believed that increased visitors would proffer economic growth. A few participants discussed the potential of enhancing current farmer’s market offerings to support local farmers and artisans. Another participant argued that many local producers found success in selling goods on-site.

Theme #2: Infrastructure Challenges Impact Business

Participants noted infrastructure issues within Fluvanna County and their impact on existing and potential businesses. These challenges were continuously mentioned throughout the duration of the focus group discussion. Increasing water and sewer capacity was deemed necessary by this group. One participant posited that, “Infrastructure challenges may be too difficult for singular businesses and might be more appropriate for a larger commercial development company to assume.”

Theme #3: Central Location

Fluvanna County’s central location and proximity to major towns and cities were identified as an economic strength of the region. Several participants noted the proximity of Richmond, Charlottesville, Washington DC, and connections via 15, 250, and 64. A few participants believed that this proximity created ideal conditions for attracting the warehousing and distribution industry sector. However, other participants also drew attention to the commuter trends resulting from this proximity. Some noted employee retention challenges and that a significant portion of residents was employed out of County.

Theme #4: Needed Business Attraction and Small Business Support

Pad-ready sites, tier four and five locations, small business support, and creating business-ready conditions were recognized by the participants throughout the focus group. Participants believed this should be a focus of the Economic Development Department and a priority for County investment. Participants also believed reporting business attraction metrics would be apropos to residents and stakeholders.

Staff Focus Group Synthesis

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What are the region's greatest economic assets?
3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?
4. What is the greatest challenge as it relates to economic growth and development in Fluvanna?
5. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?
6. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?
7. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?
8. Anything else you need to add as it pertains to the development of this strategic plan?

1. Please introduce yourself.

This portion of the appendix has been kept confidential.

2. What are the region's greatest economic assets?

- Interstate system/roads and central location (*repeated by 4*)
 - Proximity to Richmond, Charlottesville, Washington DC
- Forrest and wood products, though most of it is privately owned
- Events, carnivals, county fairs, holiday lights
- Pleasant Grove Park (*repeated by 3*)
 - 22 miles of trails
 - Sports facilities and grounds
- Farm Museum
- Water recreation, three rivers and two major lakes (*repeated by 1*)
 - Lake Monticello (*repeated by 1*)
- Outdoor recreation
 - US Bike Route 76 is the heart of the county
 - Triathlon is a tourist draw
- Regional collaboration (*repeated by 1*)
- Educated community and potential workforce
 - Variety of skills among the workforce
 - A growing artisan community
- Low crime rate, which is attractive to businesses
- Up and coming water and sewer infrastructure
- Monticello Viticultural Society membership (*repeated by 1*)
 - Attracts visitors who support businesses

Key Takeaways: Fluvanna County's central location, easy access points through the interstate system, and outdoor recreation and tourism draws are the region's greatest economic assets. Specifically, the park, the water recreation, the artisan community, the local events, and the Monticello Viticultural Society membership, were noted by participants. Also mentioned was the regional collaboration between partner organizations.

3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?

- Warehousing and distribution
 - Attracting this industry
 - Building out assets to support this industry
- Growing the small business community
- Infrastructure challenges along 250 (*repeated by 3*)
 - Most of the current inventory is tier one or tier two sites
 - Infrastructure challenges may be too difficult for singular businesses and might be more appropriate for a larger commercial development company to assume
 - Limited on sewer capabilities (*repeated by 1*)
 - This needs to be addressed to attract larger businesses
- Fluvanna County has the "spine" of infrastructure but lacks the "spiderweb" of connectivity
 - Water capacity is a challenge (*repeated by 1*)

Interest in building agritourism based businesses (*repeated by 1*)

- It would also support existing small farmers
- Interest in creating pick your own experiences (especially with berries)
- Many existing farmers rely on sales outside of the county
- Current farmers markets in Fluvanna County are not recognized by VA Tech
- Farmers market to support the growing artisan community

Business Attraction

Workforce Development

- Need stronger efforts to limit commuter trends

Key Takeaways: Participants immediately noted addressing infrastructure challenges as a priority for Fluvanna County. Others also identified greater support for agritourism-based businesses, business attraction, and shifting commuter trends. Business attraction efforts for the warehousing and distribution and small business industries were also noted.

4. What is the greatest challenge as it relates to economic growth and development in Fluvanna?

- Need for tier four, tier five, pad-ready sites
- Roads, sewage, water flows
 - Roads (*repeated by 1*)
 - Lacking major thoroughfares (not wanted necessarily)
 - Building infrastructure outside of the residential areas (*repeated by 1*)
 - The circulation around Lake Monticello can be challenging
 - Potentially widening 250 – to avoid congestion issues like Route 3
 - This should be done at a speed and scale relative to growth, and the long-term thoroughfare plan should assist with this

- Be intentional about spreading economic development efforts throughout the county to create balance (*repeated by 1*)
- The Comprehensive Plan will put forth the concept of developing neighborhood service areas
 - The intention is to even out business distribution throughout County and cut down on the pressure on one or two business areas
 - Hope to add Amazon sprinter spaces to increase distribution
- The County needs businesses to support the current resident population (*repeated by 1*)
 - More grocery stores
 - More restaurants and takeout options

Key Takeaways: Participants called for strategic business development across the county. They noted the need for more businesses to support Fluvanna County's resident population and believe that creating more pad-ready sites and addressing infrastructure demands, will foster an atmosphere of business growth.

5. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?

- Invest in pad-ready sites (*repeated by 2*)
 - Anticipation of Zions Crossroads naturally growing
 - Working on a 130-acre business site in Fork Union coming
 - These should be strategically and methodically seeded throughout the county
- Agritourism could be supported through grants, microloans, etc.
 - A lot of it can be self-sustaining
 - Need roads to accommodate farming
 - Potentially introduce a food hub
- Invest in small business growth throughout the county
- Potentially invest in incentives to encourage business attraction

Key Takeaways: Again, the investment in pad-ready sites was identified as a way for the County to be supporting economic growth. Investment in business incentives, small business support, and agritourism were also noted.

6. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?

- Finding an available workforce is a challenge, though it is not unique to Fluvanna County
 - Need to entice residents to work here in addition to living here
- Need mixed-use building, or anchor businesses that also have residential housing accommodations
 - Zion Crossroads just added an apartment complex
 - Maybe entice existing businesses to relocate
 - Housing options
- Farms have started selling on-site, which has led to increased profits
 - They want to be able to continue to do so
 - People are attracted to the niche, artisan food producers like cheesemakers, bakers, and locally produced meat
- The region is missing middle housing (residents of a 10-year timeframe)

- Employee retention is an issue
 - What do we need to be doing to keep the workforce working in the community?
- Infrastructure
- As the county grows, public safety will need investment
- Building a pipeline of talent
 - Vocational and Technical training (*repeated by 1*)
 - Potentially partnering with Budget Electric
- Networking
- Broadband (being addressed) but transitioning businesses to use technology more effectively

Key Takeaways: To support existing businesses, participants agreed that workforce development, including employee retention efforts, building a talent pipeline, and encouraging residents to work within the county, is needed. Infrastructure challenges were repeated.

7. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?

- Business Attraction (*repeated by two*)
- Employee Retention
- Letting people know what job opportunities exist within the County
- Tax rate monitoring
- Commuter trends

Key Takeaways: Participants primarily identified business attraction metrics to measure economic development success in Fluvanna County.

8. Anything else you need to add as it pertains to the development of this strategic plan?

- Public safety is important in the attraction of businesses and residents
- Anything we can do to limit the frequency of visits to Charlottesville
- The County should look to partners outside of the region for additional support
- The pandemic increased localized patronage
 - Especially to the grocery store
- Tracking our businesses can be tricky because Fluvanna County doesn't have a business license or a meal tax
 - A business license would help provide metrics
 - To drop resident tax rate, the County would need to examine business tax rates
- There is a lot of investment needed in infrastructure and economic development

Fluvanna County Economic Development
Strategic Planning Community Stakeholder Meeting #1
Focus Group Analysis

Background: The following focus group was administered as part of Fluvanna County Economic Development’s strategic planning process. This strategic planning process was intended to engage residents, business owners, County staff, community organizations, key industries, educators, municipal leaders, partners, and other stakeholders of Fluvanna County in a collaborative process to produce a shared vision for the future of Fluvanna County’s economy.

Method: Participants were contacted and selected by Fluvanna County Economic Development staff members. The staff meeting was held virtually on February 7, 2022, through the communication platform Zoom, and the meeting was recorded. Present at the stakeholder meeting were ten participants, one moderator, and one scribe. The scribe and moderator were Platinum PR team members, providing for an unbiased evaluation. The participants responded to six questions.

Results: Four major themes were pulled from the stakeholder meeting. Themes were identified by the reiteration of the subject by multiple participants. Themes are not ranked. For analysis, please refer to the synthesis below.

Theme #1: Workforce Development

Participants noted the need to attract and retain a workforce in Fluvanna County (questions 2,3 and 5). At several points throughout the focus group, concerns about talent development and resident retention were identified as concerns. Participants acknowledged that this should be a priority for the county and suggested stronger partnerships with the education sector and curriculum amendments to support local skills needs.

Theme #2: Business Development

Participants continuously reiterated the importance of Fork Union, Columbia, and Zion Crossroads as priority areas for business development (questions 2,3,4 and 5). They called for greater tourism asset promotion and business attraction. Participants felt a lack of return on investment from Fork Union Military Academy and requested increased efforts to attract lodging, restaurants, laundromats, restaurants, and shops in the area.

Theme #3: Tourism Assets

Participants acknowledged tourism assets as economic drivers (questions 2 and 3). Specifically, promoting the region’s outdoor recreation and water recreation opportunities, artistic community, antiques, agritourism opportunities, historical assets (including important Native American history) were considered economic development priorities.

Theme #4: Cultivating A Business-Friendly Environment

Participants called for greater cultivation of a business-friendly environment in Fluvanna County (questions 4,5 and 6) throughout the discussion. One participant suggested, “Restructuring ordinances to make it easier for businesses or developers to work and invest in Zion Crossroads.” Other participants suggested offering business startup incentives or lowering business tax rates

could help in this initiative. Participants also noted the ongoing struggle of current business owners to operate in Fluvanna County.

Stakeholder Meeting #1 Synthesis

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What are the region's greatest economic assets?
3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?
4. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?
5. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?
6. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?

1. **Please introduce yourself.**

This portion of the appendix has been kept confidential.

2. **What are the region's greatest economic assets?**

- Its proximity to Richmond, Charlottesville, DC, and the University of Virginia (*repeated by 3*)
- In Fluvanna, towns like Lake Monticello (significant population), Fork Union, and Palmyra are assets
- Local government outreach and assistance from the economic development office
- Developments to interchanges on I-64 (*repeated by 1*)
- The sense of history in the area, beautiful views, and rural land
- The historic capital of the Monacan Indian Nation
- Three important Rivers: James River, Rivanna River, and Hardware River (*repeated by 1*)
- Public high school education curriculum: implementation of skilled trades education or vocational programs that include salon, cooking, and greenhouse operations (*repeated by 1*)
 - Expand vocational programs in high schools to building trades such as carpentry, electricity, plumbing, HVAC, mechanical, auto, and welding to prevent bringing in companies from outside the county to do these types of jobs (*repeated by 1*)
 - Agriculture trades such as viticulture, vineyard management, and farm management
- Concerns about sending youth to college far away from the county – youth are not returning to the county to work
- Need to discover the region's niche for people to visit and spend money in the county; progress beyond a bedroom community (*repeated by 1*)
- The talented artists that live in the county

Key Takeaways: Participants acknowledged the economic advantage of the county's central location. They also noted the region's history, water recreation, and important Native American history as attractive tourism assets. There was discussion about workforce development in Fluvanna County, including amending the current curriculum and program offerings to meet the needs of local industries.

3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?

- Invest in lodging and restaurants to recycle money in the county from resident spending and get outsider spending (*repeated by 2*)
 - The Palmyra area needs more restaurants
- Fork Union and Columbia need more economic development support (*repeated by 2*)
 - These areas have been “forgotten”
 - Fork Union has a lot of unused land
 - Need to attract grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants (it’s a food desert), and improve water system (*repeated by 3*)
- Develop additional recreational amenities in the county
- Developing Pleasant Grove Park as a point of interest in the county
- Promoting the development of art or antique stores and establishing an entertainment industry through festivals or trails: artisan trail, farm trail, or wine trail (*repeated by 3*)
- Structure of the ordinances: loosening restrictions to let people host their homes on Airbnb more easily
 - In general, develop short-stay opportunities
- It’s challenging to get to the rivers: improve boat landing spots in Palmyra
- Develop light industries to create jobs and housing for residents
- Develop a more skilled/trained workforce
- Develop culture heritage-based tourism incorporating African American History and Native American History
- Getting Lake Monticello residents to look inward and spend money inside the county

Key Takeaways: Participants called for greater economic development support in Fork Union, specifically in business attraction. They also identified tourism as a priority for economic development, including promoting outdoor recreation opportunities, artistic community, antiques, agritourism opportunities, historical assets, and the local craft beverage industry. Participants also drew attention to the lack of lodging and hospitality options available to support tourism.

4. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?

- Develop Zion Crossroads to generate tax revenue to support internal county projects (*repeated by 7*)
 - Louisa County parts are developed but not Fluvanna side
 - Reach out to Zion Crossroads landowners
 - Restructuring ordinances to make it easier for businesses or developers to work and invest in Zion Crossroads
- The waterline and infrastructure
- The Board of Supervisors should set aside more funds for Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Tourism Advisory Committee
 - The EDA should help promote new businesses
- Marketing smaller towns like Fork Union and Columbia and all the cool things that Fluvanna County has to offer (*repeated by 4*)
 - Gather photo and video assets of points of interest in the county for marketing purposes (using a drone to get nice pictures and video)

- Promote the arts and craft people of Fluvanna County through art festivals
- Promote tourism in the county through postcards or souvenirs
- Lower the tax rate to attract businesses

Key Takeaways: Participants identified the need to develop Zion Crossroads. They also agreed that more marketing of tourism assets in Fork Union and Columbia is needed. A few participants discussed making Fluvanna County more business-friendly to entice development. One participant suggested lowering business tax rates.

5. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?

- The county needs to prioritize its development strategies; is the priority to bring in outsiders to spend money or to focus on residents (*repeated by 2*)
 - Resolve tension over progress vs. staying the same
- Research neighboring counties or similar counties to Fluvanna (adapting their policies for business development)
- Establishing a better sense of the common good through county officials; that they truly have the best interest of the residents at heart
 - The county needs to make sure that everyone has what they need to thrive
 - Make sure that businesses exist across the county that meet the necessities of residents
- Develop businesses around Fork Union Military Academy for cadets and family (*repeated by 3*)
 - FUMA's return on investment for the Fork Union community is not present
 - Lodging (for FUMA cadets' family members), restaurants, laundromats, restaurants, and shops
- Form general partnerships with high schools to implement internship or apprenticeship programs to develop the local talent pipeline and encourage youth to stay in Fluvanna County
- Offer business startup incentives

Key Takeaways: To support existing businesses, participants agreed that workforce development, improving the business-friendly environment within the county, and business attraction efforts around Fork Union were needed.

6. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?

- Tax revenue metrics
- Accessibility to basic needs from residents (resident satisfaction or quality of life)
- Examining E.W. Thomas Grocery store and Kidd's store success as a business in Fluvanna County; they both have a welcoming and homely atmosphere
 - It's a struggle to run a business in Fluvanna County and retain/attract good workers; it takes a lot of willpower and support from family members

Key Takeaways: Resident satisfaction, business satisfaction, and tax revenue metrics should be measured and reported to stakeholders.

Fluvanna County Economic Development
Strategic Planning Community Stakeholder Meeting #2
Focus Group Analysis

Background: The following focus group was administered as part of Fluvanna County Economic Development’s strategic planning process. This strategic planning process was intended to engage residents, business owners, County staff, community organizations, key industries, educators, municipal leaders, partners, and other stakeholders of Fluvanna County in a collaborative process to produce a shared vision for the future of Fluvanna County’s economy.

Method: Participants were contacted and selected by Fluvanna County Economic Development staff members. The staff meeting was held virtually on February 8, 2022, through the communication platform Zoom, and the meeting was recorded. Present at the stakeholder meeting were four participants, one moderator, and one scribe. The scribe and moderator were Platinum PR team members, providing for an unbiased evaluation. The participants responded to six questions.

Results: Two major themes were pulled from the stakeholder meeting. Themes were identified by the reiteration of the subject by multiple participants. Themes are not ranked. For analysis, please refer to the Appendix.

Theme #1: Greater Business Support

Participants urged the county to adopt more business-friendly practices to support existing businesses and attract new business in Fluvanna County (questions 3,4 and 6). They called for more business support, greater communication, and more transparency from local leadership. They also noted a strong need for more efficient business approval processes. They suggested adding business education opportunities, incentives, and overall promotion of resources would be helpful for local businesses.

Theme #2: Business Attraction

Participants agreed that business attraction should be an area of focus for Fluvanna County (questions 3,4,5 and 6). They called for consistent development across the county and specifically identified Columbia, Kents Store, Fork Union, and Bremo Bluff as areas of potential. They often compared Fluvanna County to Louisa County from a business attraction standpoint, and one participant suggested, “Fluvanna County needs to discover its unique advantages over Louisa County – it’s a different area with different assets.”

Stakeholder Meeting #2 Synthesis

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What are the region’s greatest economic assets?
3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?
4. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?
5. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?
6. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?

1. Please introduce yourself.

This portion of the appendix has been kept confidential.

2. What are the region's greatest economic assets?

- The residents and community of Fluvanna County (*repeated by 2*)
- The location because of its rural nature but still having easy access to urban areas such as Richmond (*repeated by 1*)
- Great homes with a lot of land and property taxes are not too high
- A promising real estate market in Columbia
- Fluvanna should promote itself using environmental consciousness
- There is a need for more community centers for the youth of Fluvanna County (*repeated by 1*)

Key Takeaways: Participants saw the people and community of Fluvanna County as the region's greatest economic asset. They also acknowledged the county's location and access to urban areas as a strength. Participants also noted a need for community centers.

3. What is the most important economic development priority for the county?

- Bringing more revenue to the county by attracting more customers or consumers to the area
- There is a need for more retail spaces for new businesses such as restaurants or shops
 - There is a lot of abandoned or empty land that should be repurposed to create affordable and accessible retail spaces (*repeated by 1*)
- Making existing businesses more known among Fluvanna residents
- There is a lot of focus on development on places like Pleasant Grove Park and Lake Monticello (*repeated by 2*)
 - The county should develop as a whole; places like Columbia, Kents Store, Fork Union, and Bremo Bluff need attention too (*repeated by 2*)
 - Columbia and Fork Union were successful towns in the past with lots of stores and businesses (*repeated by 1*)
- Provide some relief services for areas impacted by waterway flooding that hurt business development
- The approval process is too long and painful to go through it should be reworked; the current process makes it hard to start a business in Fluvanna or develop existing businesses (*repeated by 1*)
- Improving infrastructures such as sewer water treatment, major Virginia roads, and broadband expansion (*repeated by 2*)

Key Takeaways: Participants called for greater economic development support across the county, especially in Columbia, Kents Store, Fork Union, and Bremo Bluff. They pointed out that many areas in the county were under-utilized and could be used to create additional retail spaces. Some participants also felt that business support was lacking, and that the business approval process was arduous and off-putting. Others also acknowledged the infrastructure challenges in the county.

4. What should the County be investing in to support economic growth?

- Invest in more staffing to improve the approval process for development projects (*repeated by 1*)
- Work with Louisa County to learn how they facilitate business development
- Established businesses are not allowed to use certain elements of infrastructure
- Communicate budget designated for development projects better; give ranges of dollars the county is willing to invest in development projects
 - It's hard to plan when you don't know what the county is willing to spend
- Invest in the youth and small businesses
- Invest in youth centers or public spaces: parks, fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, etc.
- Wayside businesses (restaurants, convenient stores, etc.) were once prominent in the county but have gone away
 - It would be nice to see more businesses like this again (*repeated by 1*)

Key Takeaways: Participants advocated for better business attraction, development, and retention efforts. Specifically, they called for more transparency in development funding, more helpful business approval processes, and overall business attraction.

5. What should the County be doing to support existing businesses?

- Create more education opportunities such as courses on "how to start/run a business in Fluvanna County?" and mentorship programs (*mentioned by 2*)
 - Making a PDF on the steps to starting a business in Fluvanna
- Support micro-businesses through incentives or help develop into a more traditional business
- Communicate more effectively the resources that Fluvanna County offers to business owners
- Making the county more business-friendly
 - Prevent new businesses from choosing Luisa over Fluvanna
- Promote bigger business to come to Fluvanna County so more revenue is collected in taxes to use for public infrastructure

Key Takeaways: Participants felt more business education opportunities, incentives, promotion of resources, and business-friendly practices would support existing businesses within Fluvanna County.

6. What metrics do you think Fluvanna County Economic Development should be using to measure success?

- Job growth and opportunities available (*repeated by 2*)
- Housing in the area and affordable housing programs for employees (*repeated by 1*)
- Tracking tenure in business, how long businesses stay running in the county, and how they grow (employee count growth)
- Taxes levied
- Public transportation development for people without cars to travel

- Make it easier for young people to move to Fluvanna and invest in Fluvanna (attract people from Richmond or Charlottesville)
- Fluvanna is way behind on economic development compared to Louisa County (*repeated by 2*)
 - Some businesses would move to Louisa County if they could (*repeated by 1*)
 - Fluvanna County needs to discover its unique advantages over Louisa County – it's a different area with different assets
- Make the process for private housing development easier (*repeated by 2*)
- People in local government need to be changed; increase diversity in local government
 - Incumbents have been in office for too long and haven't done much to help the county progress
- Depict transparency in communication and genuine interest in helping businesses grow (*repeated by 1*)
 - It feels like the county isn't responsive to economic development proposals and are only concerned with collecting tax revenue (*repeated by 1*)
- There are tensions over Fluvanna staying how it is vs economic progress
- Some started their business in Fluvanna because they were residents looking to stay local and help improve their community (*repeated by 1*)
- Small businesses (restaurants/retailers) struggle in Fluvanna to generate revenue and collect capital

Key Takeaways: Overall, participants thought economic growth should be measured through job growth, business growth, employee counts, and taxes. Participants also repeated the difficulty of operating a business in Fluvanna County, positing that many businesses (including a few of the businesses present) would choose to relocate to Louisa County if they could. They called for more business support, greater communication, more transparency, and more active business attraction.