



Strategic Plan for Economic Development

ISLE of WIGHT
COUNTY IN VIRGINIA

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Introduction

Isle of Wight County's Comprehensive Plans have long encouraged the pursuit of economic development strategies as a means of improving the quality of life for its citizens. This document will outline a program of work for economic development. The plan will serve as a guide for the Department of Economic Development, Industrial Development Authority, Economic Development Committee and other County agents involved in economic development efforts. This document will be used in the development and support of County policy. It is also intended that the objectives outlined herein be integrated into the Isle of Wight County Comprehensive Plan.

The task force convened under the Economic Development Committee began its efforts with full recognition that it was to focus on economic development. It quickly became apparent, however, that economic development is inseparable from transportation, housing, education, utilities, tourism, the environment and all the other elements that are addressed in the comprehensive plan. Consequently, the strategies that are outlined in this plan can only be successful if they are executed in concert with an aggressive, proactive comprehensive plan that seeks to balance the community's approach to all these issues. The extent to which the County's implementing ordinances and standards adequately advance these issues is, of necessity, a matter requiring in-depth analysis going well beyond the scope of the task force's efforts.

As its first order of business, the task force underwent a visioning process. Participants were broken out into three work groups. Each group was then divided into smaller groups of 2-4 individuals. These subgroups were challenged to imagine that the task of developing a plan was completed and that ten years had passed. They were to picture themselves reading the local newspaper and were asked to describe how they would like to see the headline read. Beneath the headline they were to write an opening sentence, provide two supporting factual statements and draw a picture to accompany the article. The results of this exercise are found in the Appendix.

As part of the visioning process, the task force squarely faced the issue of whether it is in the best interest of Isle of Wight County to grow. The answer was a resounding yes – both from an economic perspective and in terms of quality of life for its citizens. As a matter of sound fiscal policy, a thriving economic development program will be a net revenue generator for the County. The taxes paid by new and expanded businesses will exceed the cost of services provided. This cannot be said about residential build-out. Past studies have clearly shown residential development to be a deficit consumer of revenue. By retaining or increasing net revenues through the expansion of our business base, the entire County benefits.

At its second meeting, the task force conducted an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the community.

Strengths

1. Roadways – Isle of Wight of Wight County is bisected by Rt. 460, a four-lane highway that provides linkage for the Central Development Service District to I-664 (25 miles) to the East and I-295 (40 miles) to the West. The Southern Development Service District is linked to I-664 (35 miles) and I-95 (40 miles) by US 58, a four-lane divided highway. Rt. 17, another four-lane highway connects the Northern Development Service District to I-664 (10 miles) and I-64 (8 miles) across the James River Bridge. Rt. 258, planned for upgrade to a four-lane highway, bisects the County along its north/south axis and connects all three development service districts.
2. Rail system – Isle of Wight County receives rail service from Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation. A Norfolk Southern Main Line parallels Rt. 460 in the Central Development Service District. That track is the busiest line in the Norfolk Southern system and more than 24 trains travel through Windsor each day moving goods between the Port of Virginia and shippers or receivers throughout North America. The Southern Development Service District is served by both NS and CSX. This provides competitive opportunities for companies who use rail to negotiate with the two providers during their site selection process.
3. Land – Isle of Wight County has large tracts of undeveloped property that are suitable for economic development. This property is affordable relative to neighboring jurisdictions and presents competitive development opportunities not available in congested metropolitan areas like Norfolk, Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach.
4. Water – Isle of Wight County has abundant water resources for commercial, industrial and residential development.
5. Location – Isle of Wight is situated on the edge of the metropolitan area and can benefit from the proximity to markets, cultural activities, universities, transportation networks, technology resources and abundant labor. The community provides a transition between the urban areas to the east and rural areas to the west.
6. Diverse population – Isle of Wight County's population is a mixture of lifelong residents whose roots run deep in the community to newcomers who have relocated to take advantage of the high quality of life or to accept jobs with local employers. The labor force is equally comprised of people engaged in manufacturing and professional jobs. The same number of people commute into and out of the County every day, creating a dynamic synergy between residents and neighbors.
7. Low tax rate – Isle of Wight County's low taxes are an attraction to businesses and residents and are among the most affordable in Hampton Roads.

8. Early in development – Isle of Wight County is beginning to realize its potential for growth. This is initially being manifested by a dramatic increase in the number of residents moving into the community. Following them will be retail and service businesses seeking to trade with these new residents. The opportunity for Isle of Wight County lies in its being able to capitalize on this growth to plan for and control the community's development.
9. Quality of life – This is a relative term, but in Isle of Wight County is used to denote rural vistas, low crime rates, excellent recreational opportunities, friendly and supportive neighbors, a healthy local economy, and easy access to the cultural and shopping amenities in Hampton Roads.

Weaknesses

1. Infrastructure –
 - Roadways – Also perceived as a strength in terms of providing rapid ingress and egress to and from the community, the presence of roadways as a weakness relates to the restricted system of internal networks. A reactive state highway department and a surfeit of state allocated funding, hampers the community's ability to plan new road construction and widen clogged connectors.
 - Utilities – Isle of Wight has a nascent public utility system that fails to serve many properties identified as having a high potential for development. The Northern Development Service District (NDS) is adequately provided for, but lacks sites of sufficient size for use as commercial/industrial parks. The Central Development Service District (CDS) has relatively sufficient wastewater treatment capacity but has insufficient water pressure to adequately provide fire suppression. The CDS is further restricted in its development by the lack of utility infrastructure extending west along Rt. 460 beyond the intersection of Rt. 460 and Rt. 258. The Southern Development Service District (SDS) has inadequate wastewater or potable water capacity.
 - Technology – There is little use of technology infrastructure in Isle of Wight County. Local businesses, residents and officials have limited knowledge and no inventory of the existing fiber optic network and its points of presence.
 - Available sites – Isle of Wight County has three industrial parks. The first of these is privately owned and lies outside the NDS, thus preventing it from being serviced by public wastewater systems. This park has had some recent success in attracting small users able to operate on septic systems and will soon begin realizing a second, final, phase of development. The second is a publicly owned park located on Rt. 460 in the CDS. The recent announcement of the intent to locate a major distribution center on this site greatly diminishes its usability as an attraction for large prospective users in the future. The third industrial park is a privately owned site in the SDS that lacks access and utilities. Other potential sites for development have been identified, but are improperly zoned and lack onsite improvements.

2. Public Transportation – Isle of Wight County has no public transit.
3. Commitment to economic development – There has been no community wide, coordinated approach to the practice of economic development. Previous attempts at economic development have been fragmented into efforts undertaken by the business community, Towns and County. No coordinated effort has been undertaken. Backlash from citizens protesting residential development threatens to upset the current effort.
4. Fragmented community – The prevailing attitude by new residents to restrict or halt growth clashes with the desires of long time residents who want to see their community admit new residents and businesses. A prevailing attitude of frustration among established residents is growing because of the feeling that the welcome extended to new residents is not being shared by them with others. The growing population of new residents has begun to shift the political landscape and efforts to halt new growth are becoming institutionalized. The business community has failed to take an aggressive stand on development and, although the Chamber of Commerce supports growth, is outwardly passive as the issue advances.
5. Image/name recognition – Isle of Wight County has a very low profile within the region and virtually none at the state level. A recent disaster declaration by President Clinton following Hurricane Floyd served to create negative impressions.
6. Child care – Isle of Wight County has few child care providers. Long waiting lists and failure to find licensed providers or centers are the norm.
7. Schools – Growing population pressures are placing a burden on older schools and forcing new school construction. Low teacher wages relative to those available in nearby metropolitan systems causes problems with staffing.
8. Lodging – A tight housing market and rapid residential growth has caused a dearth of available housing options. Rental properties and apartments are extremely scarce.
9. Perception – Isle of Wight County is perceived as being outside of the metro area. It has an image of being a rural community with little to offer as a participant in the regional economy. Most damaging is the perception that the community is too far to reach by commute from the central urban areas.
10. Access to health care – Isle of Wight County has no hospital and too few health care providers to service its population. Many local doctors are not accepting new patients and long waits before being seen at local clinics are normal.
11. Skilled workforce – Isle of Wight County is perceived as not being able to provide a dynamic workforce with the advanced skills required by many of today's employers.

12. Lack of amenities – Most cultural and recreational opportunities are available only in neighboring communities. The community lacks public pools, has few parks or museums and little diversity in shopping, dining or entertainment.
13. Emergency services – Emergency and fire services are provided by volunteers. The County has recently expanded the ranks of these volunteers by hiring part time individuals to work the shifts that were the hardest to fill. Rapid population growth and housing development threatens to swamp this traditional institution. Recent negative incidents regarding service have heightened awareness of its inefficiency.

Opportunities

1. Tourism – A beautifully restored and revitalized downtown main street in Smithfield draws visitors and travel writers. Historic homes and churches are plentiful. Scenic byways and view sheds of tidal waterways provide visitors with relaxing vistas. Charming bed and breakfast establishments cater to the more affluent tourists and a new convention center promises to draw additional visitors to the community.
2. Managed Growth – Because this is the beginning of the development cycle, Isle of Wight County has the ability to influence the pace and composition of its growth.
3. Large tracts of land – The County has an opportunity to identify tracts of property that have significant acreage and target them for development.
4. Infrastructure (blank slate) – This is an opportunity to capitalize on a weakness. As Isle of Wight County begins to develop its utility infrastructure, it can do so as a means of creating development opportunities.
5. Transportation (planning) – Despite a lack of direct control over transportation infrastructure, Isle of Wight County still has an opportunity to plan the widening of major arterial routes and to project paths for future roads to accommodate growth. This is facilitated by the low density of development throughout most of the County.
6. Regional opportunities/alliances – Many regional organizations exist and more are being promoted to address issues that affect multiple communities by bringing diverse resources to bear. Isle of Wight County has a great deal to offer and to gain from participating in these and by spearheading the establishment of others.
7. ED appreciation/Education– A challenge exists to raise the community awareness regarding economic development. Doing so properly can create an appreciation for the success the community has had and for future efforts.
8. Technology – A highly technical infrastructure of physical and human capital exists throughout Hampton Roads. This includes the strong military presence, numerous universities and technical schools and extensive fiber optic networks.

9. Existing Industry/Small business – Isle of Wight County has a strong base of industries and small businesses. The opportunity exists to expand on this base by promoting the community’s past success and projected growth.
10. Tele-commuting – This is perceived as a goal that, if successfully addressed, can provide Isle of Wight County residents with upward mobility by enabling them to perform at regional and national businesses while remaining in their community.
11. Port – The Port of Virginia is the world’s largest natural, ice free harbor. Access to this facility by road or rail from Isle of Wight County is relatively easy. Many heavy port users also require large tracts of land for their operations. These are unavailable in proximity to the terminals.
12. International relations – Hampton Roads has a diverse mix of international employers and has experienced particular success in attracting German and Japanese investment. These companies tend to cluster and provide mutual support in acclimating their employees to a community. As development proceeds outward from the Port, Isle of Wight County can position itself to be successful at recruiting these firms as well.
13. Professional workforce – The residential growth occurring in Isle of Wight County is primarily comprised of professionals relocating their families out of the urban core. These individuals are becoming identifiable as a marketable commodity.
14. Community partnerships – A sharing of resources and an exchange of information between local public and private community groups will enhance the ability to collectively achieve common goals. Specialization following consensus will increase success.
15. Fortune 500 companies – In 1999 Isle of Wight County was home to the headquarters of 2 Fortune 500 companies. There were three headquartered in all of Hampton Roads. The acquisition of one of those companies by an outside multi-national has decentralized its operations. That company’s close ties with the community have not completely faded and it retains significant operations locally.

Threats

1. Wrong type of industry- The attraction of industries that are not compatible with the environment and with local economic culture is perceived as undesirable.
2. Lack of diversity – Isle of Wight County is dangerously dependent on two primary employers for jobs and tax revenues. Over 45% of all local jobs are in manufacturing and two employers account for almost all of these.

3. Unchecked growth – Failure to plan and manage the impending growth will have significant negative impacts on the community.
4. Lack of funding to support development – If economic development is not adequately funded, then current and future efforts will result in limited success.
5. Impact on quality of life – Unchecked growth has the potential to overwhelm the resources available to the county and cause unwanted pressures on neighborhood institutions. This may also result in a disproportionate amount of resources being consumed by public services such as law enforcement, schools, and emergency services.
6. Environmental impacts - Unrestrained development can upset the delicate environmental balance that now exists in Isle of Wight County. The community lies in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and is defined by its tidal and non-tidal wetlands. In addition, the County also lies on the edge of a non-attainment area for air quality that encompasses most of Hampton Roads.
7. Impact of regional development on Isle of Wight County – The County is already experiencing significant growth from residential development and is the second most rapidly growing community in Hampton Roads. The factors causing this trend will increase in significance as the entire metropolitan area expands.
8. ED perceived as “too big” a task – Because of the magnitude of the challenge facing Isle of Wight County as it begins to chart a course for the future, the temptation exists to do nothing. It is also possible that a failure to be able to see the big picture can result in the community beginning its work by undertaking tasks that will not establish a proper platform for success.
9. Secondary economic impacts – A successful economic development program will cause growth by virtue of its own momentum. Proper planning must be instituted to address these multiplier impacts.
10. Low wages/minimal employment opportunities – A lack of diversity in the local economy can stifle upward pressure on wages and minimize mobility for workers. Residential growth and tourism growth will result in the expansion of the commercial base and perpetuate retail employment that places additional downward pressure on per capita income.
11. Impact on value of real estate – Growth will place upward pressure on real estate values. An increased value of rural property will result in its sale and development.
12. Lack of architectural design standard(s) – No uniform architectural design standard(s) exists within the County or among the County and the Towns.

13. Inadequate supply of workers or skill/demand disconnect – A tight labor market and a previously inadequate public effort at workforce development has resulted in a shortage of skilled and unskilled workers. This jeopardizes existing business operations and expansions as well as new business recruitment.
14. Environmental laws & restrictions that “go too far” or where enforcement is inefficient – Strict environmental permitting, approval and/or mitigation processes can result in economic development projects being delayed, postponed or cancelled. Restrictive regulations without appropriate enforcement or without adequate review either sends the wrong message or results in further delays or penalties for businesses.
15. Losing what we have – There is general agreement that the quality of life in Isle of Wight County is excellent. Poor planning can result in that quality being lost.
16. Use of political connections - Isle of Wight County has very little political clout relative to larger jurisdictions. Failure to cultivate and leverage political connections will result in decisions being made that affect the community when no input by the community was provided.

Priorities for Economic Development

At its third meeting, the task force reviewed its vision and its analysis of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The participants began to discuss setting priorities for economic development. These are arranged in five general classifications representing the major objectives that the task force agreed needed to be achieved.

New Business Attraction/Development

- Develop a target industries list using filters that reflect community values/priorities
- Establish regional niche
- Establish an incentive policy based on sound cost/benefit analysis
- Provide support and foster growth of entrepreneurial business opportunities

Existing Business Development

- Provide incentives for expansion and growth of existing industry
- Develop strategies for establishing business support services to help local businesses
- Develop a rural/agricultural business strategy

Real Estate Asset Development

- Identify land appropriate for business development
- Establish business or industrial parks
- Establish an inventory of available speculative or incubator space

- Support/utilize town business development opportunities

Workforce Development

- Identify, develop and employ the local workforce
- Participate in efforts to expand the regional workforce
- Utilize existing assets and partnerships to enhance workforce capability

Infrastructure Development

- Advocate the development of infrastructure necessary to support business investment
- Participate in the planning and development of infrastructure including:
 - Utilities
 - Technology
 - Transportation
 - Emergency services, child care, health care
 - Lodging/housing opportunities

The task force worked with the clear assumption that the building of a more prosperous economy will require county wide support. There must be outreach to all segments of Isle of Wight County’s population in order to gain the reliable public support which is critical to the success of the recommended actions. Public support is vital if the County is to protect the quality of life necessary to foster a meaningful economy.

Recommendations were forged in light of the understanding that it is preferable to develop partnerships to achieve policy results. Most importantly, it was recognized that the most effective implementation of policy would be achieved through a mix of public and private initiatives – that neither the private sector, nor the Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors, could implement a wholly effective program alone. Finally, there must be ongoing citizen efforts to assist in and expedite the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

It must be recognized that many of the recommendations contained in this report are interrelated or interdependent, and that the implementation of one without the others almost certainly would be fruitless. Further, recommendations may have significant impacts on objectives other than those to which they are assigned for presentation purposes. For this reason, the reader is encouraged to view the recommendations as a single economic development program, and to make no conclusion as to a single recommendation without carefully considering its role in, or impact on, the economic development plan as a whole.

New Business Attraction/Development

1. Develop a target industries list using filters that reflect community values/priorities.

- A. Evaluate previous studies for their relevance.
 - B. Ensure that targeted industries are compatible with economic and social conditions existing in the community.
 - C. Coordinate targets with other agencies marketing the community.
 - D. Publish and maintain targeted industries list for review by interested parties.
 - E. Periodically reevaluate list to ensure it remains current.
 - F. Utilize targeted industries list as a benchmark when developing marketing efforts and initiatives.
2. Establish a regional niche.
- A. Utilize the SWOT analysis performed by the task force to classify attributes that distinguish Isle of Wight County from other communities in the region.
 - B. Publicize those attributes that make the community unique.
 - C. Convince regional communities that these attributes are an asset for them.
 - D. Identify actions that can be taken to further develop these attributes or to overcome deficiencies that minimize them.
 - E. Work closely with other communities and regional groups on unilateral initiatives and, where possible, ensure that Isle of Wight County is recognized and included on the basis of its unique attributes.
3. Establish an incentive policy based on sound cost/benefit analysis.
- A. Review current policy.
 - B. Review policies from other communities.
 - C. Draft revised policy for review by the IDA and Board of Supervisors.
 - D. Ensure that the revised policy treats existing businesses the same as prospective firms.
4. Provide support and foster growth of entrepreneurial business opportunities.
- A. Establish an existing business call program that includes entrepreneurial firms and small businesses.
 - B. Develop a recognition program honoring the “Entrepreneur of the Year” for award during Business Appreciation Week.
 - C. Expand relationship with the Small Business Development Center.
 - D. Develop a list of resource materials and contacts for distribution to interested entrepreneurs. Identify short-comings to address as a future program of work.
 - E. Sponsor or support professional seminars or courses geared towards providing assistance to entrepreneurs.
 - F. Support the Chamber of Commerce in its efforts to assist entrepreneurs.
 - G. Conduct an incubator feasibility study.
 - H. Meet with local lenders to receive their input regarding the capital needs of local entrepreneurs.
 - I. Organize a small business assistance committee.

5. Develop and execute a marketing plan.
 - A. Compile and maintain demographic information in an attractive, comprehensive community profile.
 - B. Compile and maintain relevant site and building data. Produce marketing materials featuring the most appropriate sites and buildings.
 - C. Automate a response system that includes the marketing data and materials to ensure the rapid and comprehensive reply to prospect inquiries.
 - D. Attend trade shows to identify prospects, make industry contacts and develop a better understanding of specific industry sectors.
 - E. Conduct marketing trips to meet with prospects and consultants collectively or individually.
 - F. Ensure that all communications and materials used in economic development present a favorable and attractive image of the community.
 - G. Develop an annual budget, including travel, that enables direct and response marketing.
 - H. Produce an annual report highlighting significant business activity in Isle of Wight County for internal and external use.

Existing Business Development

1. Develop strategies for establishing business support services to help local businesses.
 - A. Establish local and regional business networks to provide a base of support and a means of cooperation for individual businesses.
 - B. Identify existing business clusters.
 - C. Establish business development seminars and workforce development training and development programs to assist existing businesses.
 - D. Investigate the potential for international trade and, where possible, assist local businesses interested in exploring or engaging in this.
 - E. Develop relationships with regional, state and Federal agencies such as the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Department of Business Assistance, Virginia Chamber of Commerce and US Department of Commerce to encourage the delivery of their services to local businesses.
 - F. Provide incentives for expansion and growth of existing industries.
 - G. Sponsor annual Business Appreciation activities and ceremonies.
 - H. Organize an existing business call program.

Develop a rural/agricultural business strategy

1. Explore means of assisting farmers to achieve greater profitability.
 - A. Help facilitate new forms of rural financing and encourage traditional lending sources to continue their support of agricultural enterprises.

- B. Focus commercial agriculture on high value crops for which there is strong market demand and higher producer profits.
 - C. Facilitate the establishment of an agricultural cooperative to access new markets and new methods, and to increase penetration into existing markets.
 - D. Create an organization dedicated toward increasing the rural economy.
 - E. Encourage the leasing of unused farm acreage for agriculture.
 - F. Encourage young people to seek a career in agriculture.
 - G. Review existing legal and administrative requirements to determine their appropriateness for a rural economy.
 - H. Encourage farmers/landowners to maintain or rehabilitate farm labor housing.
 - I. Search for additional commercial by-right uses to be authorized for the rural economy.
 - J. Designate an ombudsman to serve as a direct link between farmers/rural businesses and the County/state government relative to issues affecting the rural economy.
 - K. Establish farmer's markets to provide an outlet for higher value production and as a tourism attraction.
2. Develop new initiatives most likely to result in significant increases in the rural economy.
- A. Include the equine industry as a fundamental component of rural economic development and provide for its expansion.
 - B. Recruit agricultural biotechnology companies for demonstration ventures and relocation to Isle of Wight County.
 - C. Recruit appropriate new businesses for location in a rural setting.
 - D. Support tourism's efforts to promote authentic rural tourism and active recreation experiences.
3. Secure the natural resource base of rural land.
- A. Create rural performance standards for residential development that will promote greater protection for and more compatible use of the rural resource base.
 - B. Recognize that the maintenance of a rural character through the continued use of farms is critical to cultural heritage based tourism and quality of life.
 - C. Give greater recognition to the horse industry and equestrian activities as a component of the rural economy, and afford equine husbandry the same benefits and encouragement extended to other forms of agriculture.
 - D. Adopt additional agricultural by-right uses and remove unnecessary use-oriented impediments to encourage adaptive use of farm buildings and farm lands and to create new opportunities for rural activities consistent with the maintenance of the rural countryside.
 - E. Create incentives to promote and assist in the preservation and reclamation of farm buildings and structures in order to ensure availability for future agricultural use.
 - F. Encourage the use of large lot subdivisions that carry open space easements.

- G. Review and strengthen the opportunities for cluster residential development to avoid high density and infrastructure dependent development.
- H. Carefully review the appropriate ordinances dealing with rural and agricultural land use to assess whether they are impeding the maintenance of a rural economy.
- I. Immediately begin the process of establishing a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.
- J. Strengthen the Land Use Tax Program as a tool for farmland preservation and natural resource management and protection.
- K. Develop and implement policies that will ensure and protect the availability of adequate water resources to support and grow the rural economy.
- L. Encourage and promote the establishment of voluntary overlay Historic or Rural Districts.
- M. Upon adoption of these rural and agricultural policies into the Comprehensive Plan, immediately begin implementing them by through the development of appropriate ordinances, standards and regulations.

Real Estate Asset Development

1. Identify land/locations appropriate for business development.
 - A. Qualify properties currently being marketed by local, regional and state officials.
 - B. Establish an interactive database to track marketable sites and buildings.
 - C. Develop and maintain relationships with local, state and regional realtors to ensure that the County receives the most current information regarding property listings and that realtors receive similar information from the County.
 - D. Develop a policy to provide for commissions to be paid to realtors who work with Isle of Wight County to locate prospects within the community.
 - E. Conduct a comprehensive review of tax maps and other land use documents to find additional properties and qualify them for their potential as marketable sites.
 - F. Ensure that the Comprehensive Plan contains appropriate sites within the Development Service Districts.
 - G. Inventory telecommunication resources throughout the County and develop strategies to enhance and utilize those assets for economic development.

2. Establish and/or market business/industrial parks.
 - A. Develop a Capital Improvements Plan that includes the acquisition and development of sites and buildings, including speculative and incubator space.
 - B. Secure grant funding as available to assist in the development of business/industrial parks.
 - C. Work with the private sector to establish public/private partnerships and to encourage private development of sites and buildings.
 - D. Develop materials and strategies to market sites and buildings that are suitable for economic development, regardless of ownership.

- E. Further qualify marketable sites and buildings by conducting or supporting additional engineering work as may be necessary to convince a prospect of a property's viability.
 - F. Secure option agreements and other real estate sureties on qualified sites and buildings to guarantee truth-in-marketing and ensure that a marketable site can be acquired under reasonable terms.
3. Support/utilize town business development opportunities.
 - A. Treat properties identified by the Towns of Smithfield and Windsor for business development in identical fashion to those located in the County.
 - B. Work with the Towns to support the location of commercial and retail businesses within their jurisdictions.
 - C. Coordinate and partner with the Towns on inventorying and qualifying properties within the Towns that are suitable for economic development and on the acquisition and development of those sites as appropriate.
 - D. Assist the Towns in developing appropriate economic development strategies (including incentive policies), marketing efforts and tools as necessary or requested.

Workforce Development

1. Identify, develop and utilize the internal (local) workforce (k-12, existing workforce, residents/workers).
 - A. Establish a local Workforce Development Policy Committee.
 - B. Develop linkages with local institutions engaged in workforce development
 - C. Create and execute a strategic plan designed to meet the needs of current and prospective employers relative to the internal workforce.
2. Participate in efforts to expand the capability of the external (regional) workforce.
 - A. Work closely with the Hampton Roads Workforce Investment Board.
 - B. Assist local businesses in locating, recruiting and training available workers.
3. Utilize existing educational assets and community partnerships to enhance workforce capability.
 - A. Work with the public schools, colleges, technical schools and other relevant employee training organizations to ensure; adequate enrollment in fields of study utilized by local businesses, adequate course offerings to satisfy local business consumption and adequate course content to meet local business expectations.
 - B. Assist in establishing local mentoring, job shadowing and apprenticeship programs.

Infrastructure Development

1. Participate in the planning and advocacy efforts necessary to guarantee the development of infrastructure necessary to support new and existing businesses that shall include, at a minimum, the following:
 - A. Utilities (water & sewer).
 - B. Technology.
 - C. Transportation.
 - D. Emergency services, child care & health care.
 - E. Lodging/housing opportunities.

Conclusion

The recommendations of the task force convened under the Economic Development Committee are broad in scope and dependent upon action from both the public and private sectors of our community. They are based on viewpoints brought together in discussion by a diverse group of citizens representing all aspects of Isle of Wight County's citizenry and special interests. The task force firmly believes that the implementation of this plan as a whole will result in significant growth of the local economy. Achieving that goal will, in turn, produce fiscal benefits to the County through enhanced corporate recruitment, more cost-effective provision of services and a quality of life profile that is unmatched in Hampton Roads.

Three themes were identified during the planning process and are clearly evident throughout the report. One is the immediate threat to the rural resources and support services that are the very infrastructure of a rural economy. The second is the current window of opportunity to develop the community in a manner that takes advantage of its strengths and opportunities and turns its threats and weaknesses into challenges that can be overcome by an aggressive strategy of action. A final theme is the recognition that growth brings challenges and rewards. The committee recognized that the challenges must be faced and overcome in a manner consistent with the desires of the community and its need to grow.

In essence, this report is a call to action for residents, corporate citizens, and public officials. If each of the players takes a responsibility for what they can do to implement this plan, the message will go out to the community and, indeed, the region that Isle of Wight County has a unique combination of businesses, residences and quality of life that complement each other. This combination will be recognized and serve as a catalyst to propel the community to achieving its objectives.

Some of the recommendations can be enacted immediately; some are simply a new emphasis of current goals and capabilities. Other recommendations are more long term. Some of them require the formation of public/private partnerships, and many require the

direct investment of public money. The plan will become a reality only if it is viewed in its entirety, and only if citizens, organizations, businesses, and government leaders work cooperatively toward the plan's goal.

Many of the recommendations of the task force can be acted on by the Board of Supervisors now. Among these are recommendations relating to the acquisition and development of property for economic development, the construction of vital infrastructure, securing the natural resource base through the Purchase of Development Rights, securing open space easements and encouraging the use of rural overly and cluster development practices, improving our ability to produce a world class workforce and reaching out to existing businesses to become even more involved in growing and developing the community. Many of the recommendations can be addressed by the Board without any large expenditure of money. The task force and the Economic Development Committee stand ready to work with the Board of Supervisors and staff to help get this job done in a relatively short time frame.

Nothing less than the development of a world class community is acceptable to the participants in this process. The task force recommends the rapid adoption of this plan as public policy and its incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan and the immediate execution of the strategies contained therein. The task force suggests that the progress in realizing these objectives be quantified and benchmarked. To that end, a semi-annual report is requested of staff that will be circulated to the Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Committee and task force members. This report will be reviewed by the task force and recommendations regarding the continued implementation of the strategic plan, including any changes of focus or objectives, will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for its review.

Appendix

The following table presents a detailed account of the headlines created in the initial visioning exercise completed by the task force.