

Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber supports efforts to continue to make Loudoun County, including the incorporated towns within its boundaries, highly competitive in the global marketplace through aggressively promoting the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and by creating an environment that is conducive to the formation and attraction of new ones. Loudoun County has made great strides to becoming a “business-friendly” success story, and it is imperative that a predictable, customer-focused approach be the foundation of how our government operates in order to build on the County’s success. The Chamber supports increased public and private economic development efforts focused on encouraging business growth and attraction, particularly in targeted sectors, to help grow the County’s commercial tax base and lessen the burden on residential taxpayers. Collaboration between the economic development efforts of the County and the towns within Loudoun is also important in order to fully leverage our community’s economic potential.

The Chamber supports the Board of Supervisors’ continued investment into the County’s economic development strategy. As part of that strategy, the Chamber believes the County should continue to invest the financial and personnel resources needed to support an aggressive and comprehensive national and international outreach program that leverages the County’s strongest economic assets. These include industry sectors where Loudoun possesses a competitive advantage, and our proximity to Washington-Dulles International Airport and Leesburg Executive Airport, and our nation’s capital. To properly evaluate the effectiveness of the County’s economic development program, the Chamber supports measurable performance goals and metrics that will ensure the maximum return on the taxpayers’ investment.

Rural Economic Development:

The Chamber recognizes that rural business development is essential to the fiscal health of Loudoun County and contributes to the unique character of our community and our economy. Loudoun County receives a myriad of economic benefits from its rural economy in the form of agricultural products, cost avoidance and attracting businesses, residents and tourists. As such, the Chamber supports full implementation of the County’s Rural Economy Business Development Strategy which supports the continued growth and development of Loudoun’s rural economy.

The Chamber strongly supports land use and zoning regulations that allow for a robust and innovative agricultural and rural economy that keeps Loudoun's farms and rural businesses viable and productive. We encourage a view of regulation of agribusiness that meets its particular needs for success, including flexibility for use of property for multiple purposes. These rural uses should be accomplished with respect for the historic sites and rural road network in western Loudoun that draws businesses, residents as well as tourists, agritourists and outdoor recreationists to share in the beauty of our County.

The Chamber recognizes the continued support of the Board of Supervisors for the Rural Economic Development Council and values continued support of this organization to shape rural economic development policy.

Economic Incentives and Regional Collaboration Funding:

The Chamber recognizes that there is no substitute for offering a quality product in terms of business location, as emphasized by our positions throughout this document. However, the Chamber supports the strategic and limited use of economic incentives, including tax incentives, by the Commonwealth and local governments in the effort to attract and retain commercial investment.

The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to continue to invest in business incentive programs that recognize the unique needs and challenges faced in northern Virginia, thus encouraging dynamic and growing businesses to invest in Loudoun County. To help create an environment in which Loudoun County can attract and retain top quality companies, priority should be given to reviewing the qualification criteria for Virginia's business incentive programs to ensure Loudoun can qualify for and benefit from these programs. The Chamber also supports continued and increased funding and an efficient process for award and disbursement of those funds from the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund, the Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development Fund and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's (VEDP) programs. The Chamber urges that this funding include a focus on company retention and recruitment that can be utilized in northern Virginia, and recognize the importance of attracting high wage jobs in a way that is commiserate with its current focus on net number of jobs created.

As VEDP goes through its reorganization, the Chamber pledges to work with and support the VEDP in developing and adapting its programs to ensure they encourage businesses with higher paying jobs, as well as generators of local tax revenue, to locate, remain and grow in Virginia.

As part of the broader effort to diversify Virginia's economy, the Chamber continues to support GO Virginia and its efforts to incentivize greater collaboration among localities, higher education, and the private sector. Maintaining the state's financial commitment to this program is especially important at this time with consideration of sequestration coming back in the near future and the recent drop in state revenues being directly attributable to the flight of high-paying jobs from the state.

At the local level, the Chamber supports the Board of Supervisors allocating funds to replenish the local incentive fund as appropriate.

Business-Friendly Regulations:

The Chamber opposes existing and proposed regulations that have or will have a demonstrably adverse impact on net business and job growth.

In addition, to ensure that Loudoun County's tremendous potential is not diminished, the Chamber opposes arbitrary efforts to limit or suspend growth and economic development. The Chamber urges elected officials to be mindful that excessive and inconsistent restrictions placed on new business development or expansion that do not contribute materially to improving the quality and effectiveness of that development send a negative signal to prospective and existing businesses considering our County as a place to locate and expand. The Chamber supports adherence to all commitments made in the course of any economic development negotiations by both government and the business.

The Chamber fully endorses the mission of the Zoning Ordinance Action Group (ZOAG), which is to make the County's Zoning Ordinance more accurate, consistent and user friendly. Additionally, the Chamber supports ZOAG's continued work to ensure zoning ordinances are kept current to both existing and anticipated market conditions, and to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Consistent with this aforementioned position, the Chamber believes top priority should be given to review and improvements to the processes for approving development plans, building permit applications, and other related government processes – and the fees assessed - impacting

businesses. Existing codes and procedural requirements that do not contribute to meaningful improvement of the application or proposal under consideration must be streamlined or eliminated, and fees assessed should be consistent with the actual cost to the County to facilitate the process. The Chamber specifically supports efforts to encourage business growth through further streamlining the development review process, annual updates to the zoning ordinance, and regular updates to the community's Comprehensive Plan. The Chamber strongly recommends that businesses in all areas of the County not be overburdened with excessive or unnecessary land use or zoning regulations.

The Chamber also supports an incentive-based approach, as opposed to mandates, to encourage the type of development that is desired in Loudoun County, including programs that incent green or sustainable development without adding additional time and expense to the development process.

Loudoun County Economic Development Authority:

The Chamber supports efforts to fully leverage the capabilities and strategic value that the Economic Development Authority (EDA) has to offer to Loudoun's long-term economic development potential. This includes the EDA's role in advancing workforce housing initiatives in Loudoun and its support for the Loudoun County Department of Economic Development's international business marketing and retention program.

Small Business:

Because of the unique and invaluable contributions that small businesses offer Loudoun's economic prosperity, the Chamber strongly supports increased local and federal funding to support small business infrastructure, while maintaining the financial support currently offered by Loudoun County and the Town of Leesburg. Existing programs and initiatives that support small business. The Chamber also supports continued development of business incubators and accelerators in the County that will allow for and encourage collaboration and innovation by providing office space where entrepreneurs and innovators can work together and share ideas, and where small businesses have the opportunity to grow stronger and more quickly.

Non-Profit Organizations:

Non-profit organizations are also an essential piece of Loudoun's economy and quality of life. As Loudoun County's emerging non-profit organizations respond to the increasing needs of a fast growing population, they face a continuous need to educate County government leaders and residents about the critical role they play in the community, as well as the financial uncertainty caused by under-resourced public-sector funding sources. The Chamber is committed to advocating for initiatives that support the success of Loudoun's non-profit community, including: efforts to raise awareness about community human service needs; promoting opportunities for the public to provide financial and volunteer support; and, supporting efforts within the non-profit community to work with Board of Supervisors to ensure public-sector funding is commensurate with the growth and needs of the County.

LAND USE

The Chamber strongly recommends that Loudoun County's Comprehensive Plan truly reflects the County's shared vision for the future growth and economic prosperity of our community. To ensure that outcome, the Chamber supports a strong and effective business stakeholder input and review process for the continued improvement of Loudoun's Comprehensive Plan, in part to ensure that land use policies and land use designations reflect the current and future needs of businesses.

The Chamber also advocates that Loudoun County conduct a regular thorough review of its Comprehensive Plan – touching on all components of the Plan – at least every five years. The purpose of this review and potential revision of the County's Comprehensive Plan, and associated policies and regulations, should:

Make certain that Loudoun's land use categories, and designated land use areas, ensure commercial land inventory is sufficient and responsive to the full complement of current and future market demands;

- Provide maximum flexibility to allow landowners and other businesses to adapt to changing market and economic conditions.
- Provide for airport-compatible uses to protect growth and allow for developing the full potential of Washington-Dulles International and Leesburg Executive Airports.

To this end, the Chamber supports Loudoun County's efforts to conduct outreach leading to strong visions and plans for its premier business corridors. These plans should be market aware, sufficiently flexible to enable responsiveness to the market and should be used to support the highest and best business growth, utilizing best practices to drive such growth.

Silver Line/Transit-Oriented Development:

The Chamber supports a safe, reliable, and appropriately managed Metrorail system as a critical component of the County's economy. The Chamber encourages transit-oriented, mixed-use development principles around Metrorail stations that encourage multimodal transit use, reduce automobile traffic, incorporate safe pedestrian and bicycle options, and increase the County's commercial tax base. To provide flexible policies for guiding this type of development, the Chamber recommends the County's adoption of a Silver Line Small Area Plan Comprehensive Plan Amendment that includes these transit-oriented development principles.

The Chamber supports incorporating compact urban forms of residential development at Metrorail stations to achieve live-work centers, support the County's existing economic development objectives, and provide a mixture of housing types and sizes to enhance affordable and workforce housing opportunities for residents with different income levels. To address transportation infrastructure needs around Metrorail stations, the Chamber supports public-private partnerships between employers, transit agencies, and developers. The Chamber also favors interim development strategies regarding the evolution, repurposing, and greater utilization of existing underdeveloped properties into dense, mixed-use development.

The Chamber encourages harmonious growth of Washington Dulles International Airport and the County by recognizing the current zoning in the Airport Impact (AI) Overlay District, contained in the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, which forecasts the ultimate build-out conditions of the Airport. The Chamber supports carefully-considered, Airport-compatible residential uses in the vicinity of the Airport.

Proffer Reform:

The Chamber believes that proffer reform legislation that passed during the 2016 General Assembly session may have an adverse effect on development projects and investment in the County. The

Chamber encourages the General Assembly to fully evaluate the effects of the legislation, and supports efforts by the County and developers to consider additional strategies that would provide flexibility with respect to conditional zoning entitlements and continued private-sector investment.