

# 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. 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.