

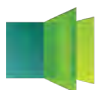


CHARLES CITY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
*Authority*



# Strategic Plan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND TOURISM



TPMA

April 2024



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# Executive Summary

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Charles City County needs to consider its position compared to surrounding areas to understand its economic opportunities and limitations. Here's a breakdown of some key points:

- **Limited Commercial Activity:** Compared to nearby counties, Charles City County has a smaller presence of commercial and industrial properties. This limits job opportunities and the variety of goods and services available to residents.
- **Scenic Beauty and Rural Character:** The county's natural beauty, historic sites, and agricultural land are assets that distinguish it from more developed areas. This can attract tourism and residents seeking a rural lifestyle.
- **Competition for Residents and Businesses:** Charles City County will need to compete with surrounding areas for residents and businesses. Factors like educational opportunities, job availability, and amenities will be crucial.

## CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

The following highlights several key aspects of Charles City County's current economic situation:

- **Population Decline:** The county's population is shrinking, impacting the workforce and tax base. Reasons include the decline of the mining industry and an aging population.
- **Educational Attainment:** A lower percentage of residents hold bachelor's degrees compared to the state average. This can limit job opportunities and hinder attracting higher-skilled businesses.
- **Limited Retail Options:** Residents spend most of their retail dollars outside the county due to a lack of variety in stores and services. This represents lost revenue for the county.
- **Strengths in Construction, Government, and Agriculture:** These industries are the county's economic anchors, providing jobs and stability.
- **Tourism Potential:** Charles City County's historical significance, natural beauty, and outdoor recreation opportunities draw tourists who contribute to the local economy. There's potential to encourage longer stays and increase tourist spending.

Overall, the current situation reflects a need for diversification in Charles City County's economy. The plan aims to address this by attracting new businesses, residents, and tourists while capitalizing on existing strengths.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This section summarizes the findings from various stakeholder engagement activities conducted to inform the development of the Charles City County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan.

### Methods Used:

- **Community Survey:** Distributed online and through various channels, received 189 responses.
- **Key Stakeholder Workshops:** Three in-person workshops with 17 stakeholders.



### Vision Themes from Workshops:

- Historic preservation
- Rural character with agriculture
- Balanced growth for the community and economy
- Diverse mix of businesses
- Increased tourism
- Strong families with a focus on children and education
- A thriving and vibrant community
- Protecting the county's assets and environment

### Key Findings:

- 1 Residents prioritize retaining existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and marketing existing businesses.
- 2 There is dissatisfaction with the variety of services and amenities available in the county.
- 3 Residents are split on the quality-of-life jobs the county provides.
- 4 Increasing vocational training opportunities, attracting jobs, improving secondary education outcomes, and upskilling are top priorities for education and workforce development.
- 5 Housing, local businesses/amenities, and healthcare are the top community resource and livability priorities.
- 6 Improving access to high-speed internet, improving roadways, and environmental conservation are the top infrastructure priorities.
- 7 The public perception is that roads are in poor condition and internet access is unreliable.



## SWOT Analysis Highlights from Workshops:



## Goal Development Themes from Workshops:

- 1 Workforce and Education: Increase access to technical education programs, improve teacher resources, conduct needs assessments, and encourage community involvement.
- 2 Business Development: Conduct needs assessments, create a marketing plan, recruit specific businesses, provide incentives, and support existing businesses and entrepreneurs.
- 3 Livability/Sense of Place: Organize community events, develop affordable housing, improve access to healthcare, preserve rural character, and form a community support group.
- 4 Funding and Resources: Increase access to capital funding for businesses, apply for grants, and improve public access to property information.
- 5 Infrastructure: Expand broadband access, improve water access for development, and develop a public transportation system.
- 6 Policies, Ordinances, and Regulations: Address environmental concerns, streamline permitting processes, and review residential development plans.



Overall, the stakeholder engagement activities provided valuable insights into the needs and priorities of Charles City County residents and businesses. This information was used to develop a comprehensive economic development and tourism strategic plan that addresses the county's challenges and leverages its opportunities.



## THE ROADMAP: Economic Development and Tourism Roadmap

This summary outlines Charles City County's strategic plan for economic growth through targeted industry attraction, tourism expansion, and retail revitalization.

### Key Findings:

- 1 Current economic mainstays include agriculture, forestry, tourism, small manufacturing, and service industries. However, job growth is stagnant, wages are lower than the state average, and educational attainment needs improvement.
- 2 Residents desire more diverse job opportunities with higher wages. Stakeholders prioritize technology, renewable energy, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing for their growth potential and higher salaries.
- 3 Data centers are a potential target industry, but only with strict environmental regulations and community engagement.



## TARGET INDUSTRIES AND ATTRACTION STRATEGIES:

### TECHNOLOGY:

Attract startups with co-working spaces, tax breaks, and potential grants. Promote high-speed internet, a supportive ecosystem, and access to research institutions. Invest in infrastructure like fiber optics and technology incubators. Partner with relevant organizations to attract talent and investment. Focus on companies offering competitive salaries and career growth.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY:

Incent solar and wind projects with tax breaks and workforce training grants. Highlight solar potential, grid proximity, and a supportive regulatory environment. Upgrade the grid to accommodate new sources. Partner with clean energy organizations and established renewable energy companies. Target companies offering competitive wages and benefits.

### HEALTHCARE:

Offer tax breaks and streamlined permitting for new facilities, especially urgent care and specialist clinics. Promote a growing senior population and existing healthcare infrastructure. Invest in broadband to support telemedicine. Partner with medical institutions for workforce development programs. Target healthcare organizations offering competitive salaries and benefits.

### ADVANCED MANUFACTURING:

Attract projects with targeted tax breaks, training grants, and expedited permitting. Highlight affordable land, infrastructure potential, proximity to transportation routes, and lower operating costs. Invest in broadband, industrial park upgrades, and potential renewable energy infrastructure. Develop workforce training programs aligned with industry needs. Partner with regional economic development organizations and manufacturing associations. Negotiate living wages with attracted companies.

### Other Potential Industries:

#### ADVANCED AGRICULTURE:

Leverage existing agriculture to attract businesses focused on sustainability, precision agriculture, and value-added processing. Partner with research institutions for innovation.

#### LOGISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION:

Attract logistics companies with competitive incentives and partnerships near major transportation routes.

#### LIGHT MANUFACTURING:

Target niche companies seeking lower operating costs and a supportive environment, focusing on companies aligned with local skills and offering living-wage jobs.

#### TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY:

Capitalize on existing assets (Virginia Capital Trail, historic sites) and natural beauty. Develop sustainable tourism strategies, themed itineraries, and target under-served groups (e.g., families, seniors) through marketing campaigns.





## EXISTING BUSINESS RETENTION:

- Address challenges like limited capital access, skilled workforce shortages, and inadequate marketing resources.
- Implement a microloan program for existing businesses, especially in renewable energy and healthcare.
- Expand skills training grants for employee development in relevant technical skills.
- Streamline local regulations for reduced burdens on businesses.
- Launch a “Buy Local” campaign and create a platform connecting local businesses with government and larger companies.
- Develop a mentorship program connecting established businesses with new entrepreneurs.

## TOURISM EXPANSION:

- Conduct surveys and focus groups to understand visitor motivations and spending habits.
- Design targeted marketing campaigns for under-served demographics and partner with travel specialists for niche markets.
- Develop themed itineraries and promote eco-tourism, cultural experiences, and adventure activities.
- Improve day-trip experiences with clear signage, public transportation options, and mobile apps.
- Highlight unique offerings like signature events, local food, and behind-the-scenes access at historical sites.
- Partner with local businesses for package deals and joint marketing campaigns.
- Organize events and activities that appeal to both visitors and residents.
- Promote day-trip options with special events, pricing, and social media marketing.
- Assess current overnight capacity and identify gaps. Conduct feasibility studies for expanding lodging options.
- Pursue Virginia Tourism Corporation grant opportunities for increasing overnight stays.







## RETAIL REVITALIZATION:

- Focus recruitment efforts on top identified categories: grocery, food service & accommodation, hardware & garden, and other retail (general merchandise and specialty).
- Develop individual “pitch decks” for each target category highlighting unique selling points.
- Offer customized incentive packages based on business needs and impact (tax breaks, permitting assistance, marketing support).
- Partner with developers for mixed-use projects incorporating anchor stores.
- Seek public funding for infrastructure improvements supporting retail development.
- Consider Tax Increment Financing districts to capture revenue and reinvest in strategic retail areas.

## OVERALL STRATEGIES:

- Cultivate a business-friendly environment by reviewing regulations, streamlining processes, and fostering a welcoming community.
- Embrace technology and marketing through a user-friendly online platform, data-driven marketing strategies, and a potential mobile app.
- Strengthen community engagement by establishing a dedicated Chamber of Commerce (conduct a feasibility study first).
- Collaborate and leverage partnerships with neighboring communities, regional agencies, and buying groups.





## BUILDING BRIDGES:

### Key takeaways

This outlines strategies for Charles City County to leverage partnerships and collaborations to achieve its revitalization goals.

#### Joint Efforts for Tourism:

- Expand existing historical tourism trails with neighboring counties.
- Develop thematic itineraries focusing on nature, agriculture, and local cuisine with Chesapeake Bay counties.
- Partner with tourism organizations for joint marketing and media outreach to target identified demographics.
- Secure resources and expertise from the Virginia Tourism Corporation to promote Charles City County's unique offerings.

#### Workforce Development:

- Collaborate with neighboring community colleges on specialized programs to address skill gaps.
- Partner with state agencies and workforce boards to access funding and programs for upskilling residents and attracting young professionals.
- Work with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) to connect residents with job training and career opportunities.

#### Sharing Resources and Expertise:

- Utilize resources and programs from USDA Rural Development, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Appalachian Regional Commission.
- Establish a sister-city program with a similar community to share best practices in areas like education and business development.

#### Capitalizing on Opportunities in Neighboring Areas:

- Conduct a detailed analysis of neighboring counties, focusing on demographics, industry trends, and resource availability.
- Reimagine Charles City County's strengths, highlighting natural beauty, historical sites, cultural heritage, and existing businesses.
- Identify underutilized resources and explore their potential for development or collaboration.
- Leverage comparative advantages like land costs, tax rates, and regulations to attract residents, businesses, or tourists.

#### Developing Mutually Beneficial Collaborations:

- Develop targeted marketing campaigns to attract specific demographics or industries from neighboring areas.
- Partner with neighboring counties on joint ventures like regional workforce development programs or multi-county tourism packages.
- Share underutilized resources or expertise with neighboring communities through service agreements or partnerships.
- Attract businesses that complement existing industries in neighboring counties.
- Develop unique tourism experiences leveraging Charles City County's strengths and filling gaps in surrounding areas' offerings.

By implementing these strategies, Charles City County can build strong partnerships, address its challenges, and achieve its goals.



# Introduction

## USHERING IN A NEW ERA:

### A Strategic Roadmap for Economic Growth, Thriving Tourism, and Development in Charles City County.

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This strategic plan serves as a roadmap for Charles City County, Virginia, to navigate towards a future brimming with economic prosperity, vibrant tourism, and a revitalized retail sector. Recognizing its unique assets and current challenges, the plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to capitalize on the county's strengths and unlock its full potential.

The following sections delve into Charles City County's economic landscape, incorporating valuable insights gleaned from extensive stakeholder engagement. We will explore targeted initiatives designed to cultivate a thriving business environment, attract new residents and businesses, and position the county as a premier tourist destination. Through strategic partnerships and a commitment to collaboration, Charles City County is poised to achieve a revitalized and prosperous future.





# Setting the Stage

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

To gather regional context and grounding, the project team reviewed a number of documents relevant to Charles City County's economic development goals and trajectory. This process allowed the project team to understand what efforts are underway, identify regional priorities, and what strategies have been absent from past efforts to develop the county's economy. The project team received and reviewed the following documents:

- 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- 2015 Economic Development Strategic Plan
- 2016-2021 Economic Impact Excel data
- 2018 Route 106 Study
- 2020 Retail Strategies Recruitment Plan PowerPoint
- 2022 Visitor Spending & Economic Impact slide image
- 2023 Retail Leasing Opportunity Flyer
- 2023 Virginia Employment Commission LMI Community Profile
- 2023 ARPA Award Folder

Findings from document review informed the development of stakeholder engagement strategies and highlighted priorities for data and situational analysis. Findings are organized into three categories: Landscape & Built Environment, Population & Demographics, and Economy. Areas of concurrence or importance were identified in each category and are discussed in more detail below.

## LANDSCAPE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

**As a heavily rural region, agriculture and forestry are the county's predominant land uses.**

Charles City County has a small population relative to its size, and much of its land is used for agriculture and forestry. Limited commercial and industrial properties exist that represent a small share of the county's land. These land uses help to preserve the region's scenic beauty and make up essential components of its industrial mix.

**Floodplains, wetlands, and highly erodible soil types exist throughout the county.**

To an extent, the County's floodplains, wetlands, and erodible soil types dictate the development that can take place at new and existing sites throughout the county. New development is limited by the ability to extend utilities to some parts of the county. Floodplains and wetlands are both protected and unsuitable for development, and highly erodible soil types may limit the types of on-site septic systems that can be installed.

**The county's Virginia Capital Trail and 28 historic sites are key assets.**

Charles City County is home to 27 miles of the scenic Virginia Capital Trail, a multi-modal trail especially popular among cyclists. The county also has 28 sites that are listed on the national register of historic places and has an established historic tourism industry.





## POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

### County population has experienced a modest decline in recent years.

Population has declined modestly in Charles City County in recent decades. This may be tied to a number of factors but is likely influenced by the decline of the county's mining industry since 1994, when mining comprised 31% of county employment (per the Comprehensive Land Use Plan).

### Charles City County population is aging.

In keeping with national trends, the population in Charles City County is trending older as existing residents age in place and fewer children are born and fewer young people move to the area. This presents questions about the county's ability to handle the housing, healthcare, and social service needs of an aging population, as well as the ability to replace a retiring workforce.

### Charles City County has fewer college graduates than surrounding counties.

Fewer Charles City County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher as their highest level of educational attainment than in surrounding counties. More Charles City County residents opted to end their education after graduating from high school. This is likely a reflection of the limited occupation types in the region and barriers to accessing higher education opportunities, including technical certification programs.

## ECONOMY

### Construction and Government are the county's largest industries in terms of employment.

Charles City County's two largest industries reflect the types of economic activity present in the county. Because the region is sparsely populated, government services make up a large share of the region's employment. In terms of private industry, construction tops the charts by far.

### Agriculture and Construction have the most new-hires of all county industries.

Agriculture and Construction industries have the most new-hires of all the county's industries. Because this may indicate industry growth or higher turnover in these industries, the project team noted this for analysis in later project phases.

### The county lacks retail amenities and is focused on attracting commercial investment.

The county has four restaurants, four convenience stores and two Dollar Generals, but does not have the retail presence that may be desirable for the economic momentum of historic tourism. Additional retail may attract tourists, encourage day-trippers to extend their stays, and improve quality of life for existing residents. The county is planning to install shipping containers for commercial/retail use, focused on attracting restaurants, short order food vendors, and six retail stores in the space. The County also wishes to attract a grocery store and other national brand retail such as restaurants, clothing stores, etc.

## COUNTY PRIORITIES & FOCUS AREAS

Based on existing plans and documents, the project team identified seven priority areas to understand the county's existing focus and inform plan development. These focus areas were generated for internal processes only, with the recognition that the project team's understanding of priorities may change throughout the project. The focus areas are as follows:

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Attracting key retailers

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Attracting new business to the industrial corridor

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Developing housing in identified development center

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Bolstering tourism economy

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Preserving rural feel of the economy

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Preserving existing agriculture and forestry

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Expanding & improving utilities throughout the county

The document review allowed the project team to move forward with a planning process grounded in regional context and informed by previous planning efforts.





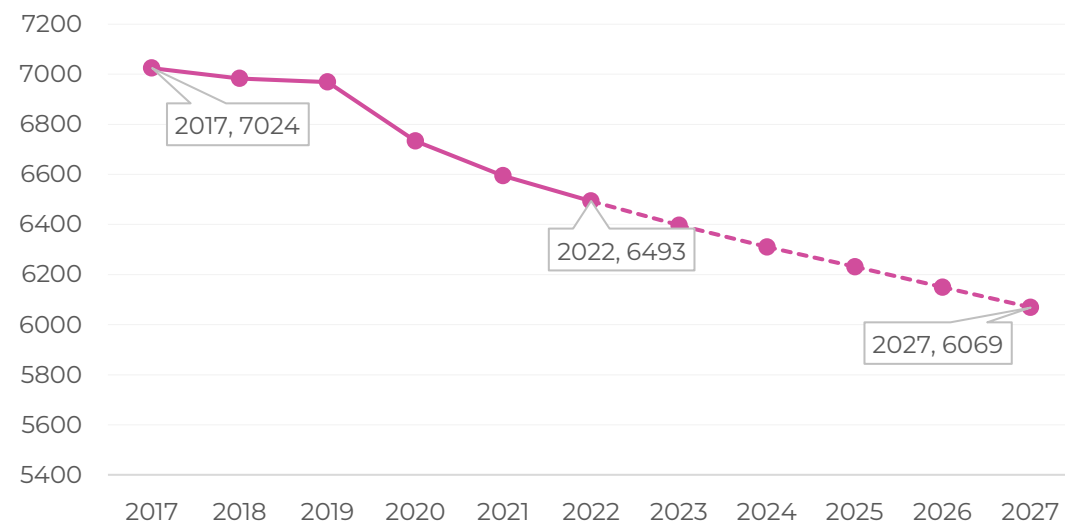
# Current Situation Analysis:

## DEMOGRAPHICS & SOCIOECONOMICS

### Population Projections

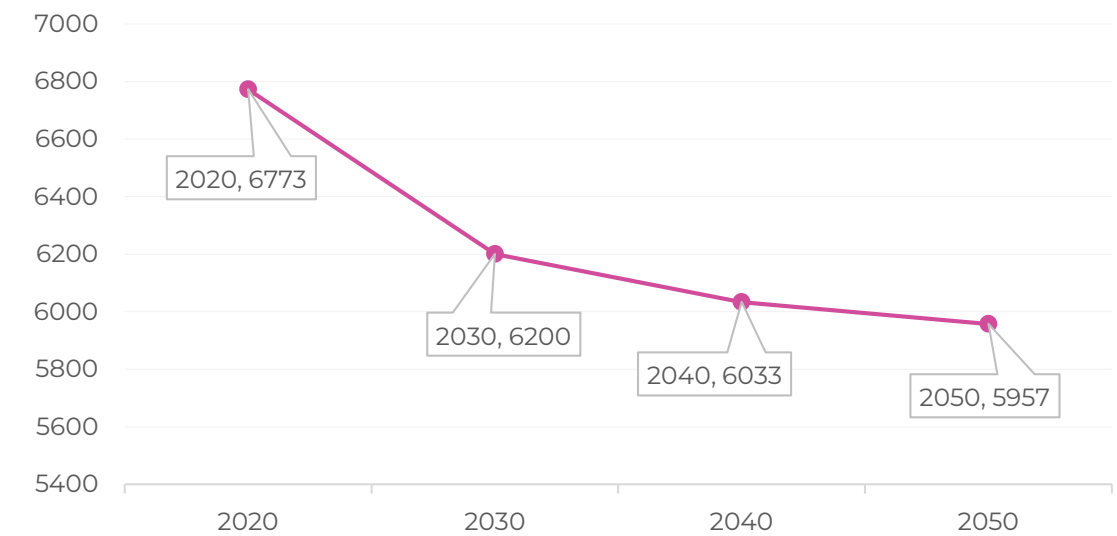
Charles City County has faced significant population loss in recent years: 7.6% in 5 years (2017-2022). Maintaining this progression would mean another 6.5% loss by 2027. Identifying key factors influencing this decrease in population will be an important part of stabilizing and growing the local economy.

CHARLES CITY COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2017-2027



Source: Lightcast, 2023

CHARLES CITY COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2020-2050

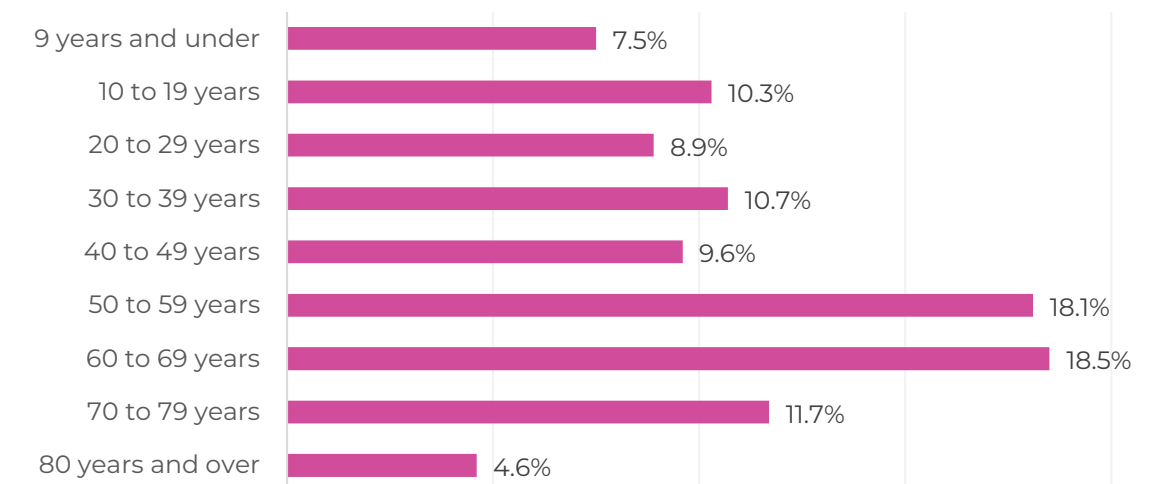


Source: Lightcast 2023

### Age and Sex

Charles City County, like many small rural communities in America, has an aging population. The median age in the county is 52, compared to the state's 39. An aging population, while not unique to the county or rural regions in general, poses challenges to the local economy and workforce. Attracting younger individuals and families has been a goal for many distressed communities to revitalize their economies and expand their tax base.

CHARLES CITY COUNTY AGE DISTRIBUTION 2022

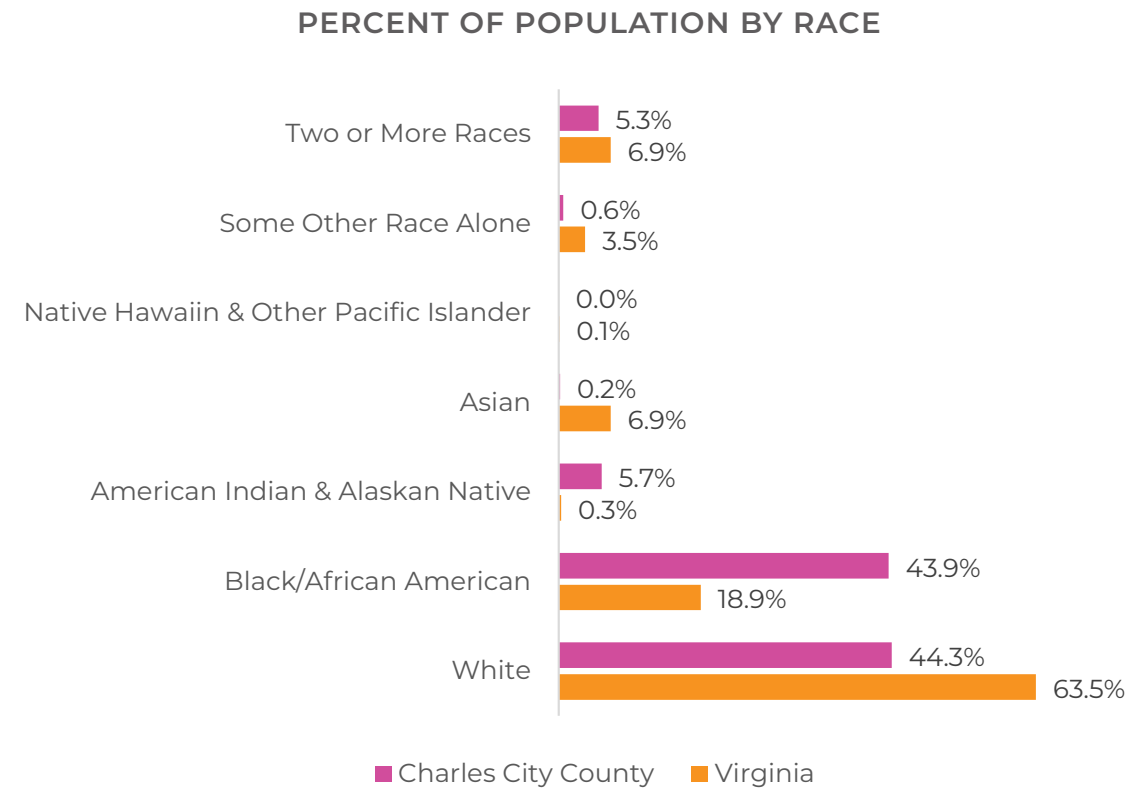


Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates



## Race and Ethnicity

Charles City County has a considerably different racial demographic than the rest of the state, with twice the percentage of black or African American residents, and a corresponding 20% lower percentage of white residents. In addition, about 6% of the county's residents are indigenous, compared to less than half a percent of the state.



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

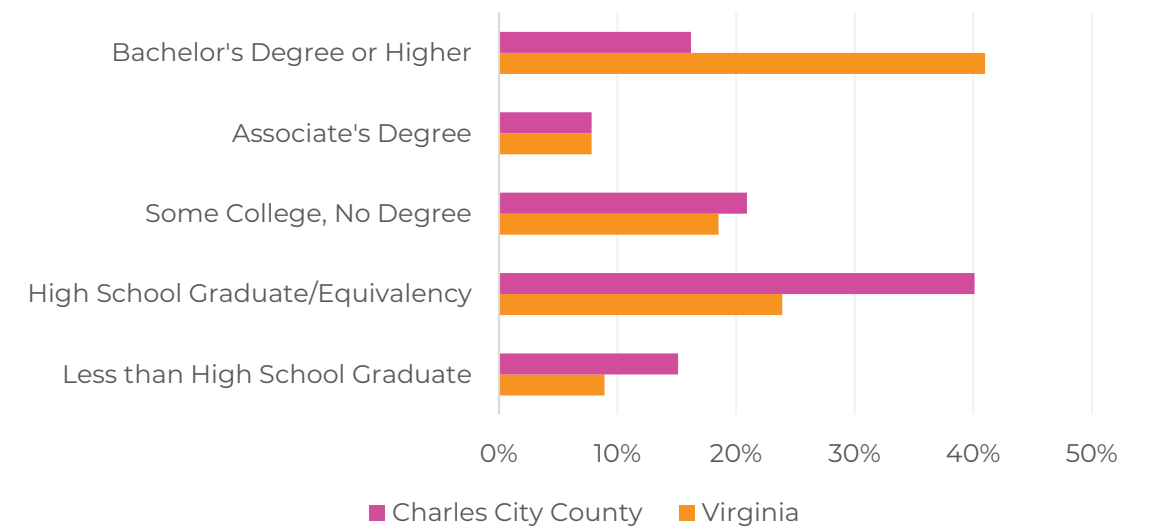
## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important indicator for a community's economic health for several reasons. Generally, individuals with higher levels of education tend to have better labor market outcomes, such as higher employment rates, higher wages, and lower unemployment rates. And in changing economic environments, a well-educated workforce is more adaptable and better equipped to handle technological advancements and shifts in the labor market.

Educational Attainment levels in Charles City County differ from the state of Virginia in most categories. 85% of the county's residents have a high school diploma (or equivalency) or higher, compared to 91% of the state. And just 16% of the county have a bachelor's degree or higher, less than half of the state's 41%. The percentage of residents without a high school credential is 6% higher than the state (15% to the state's 9%).



## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

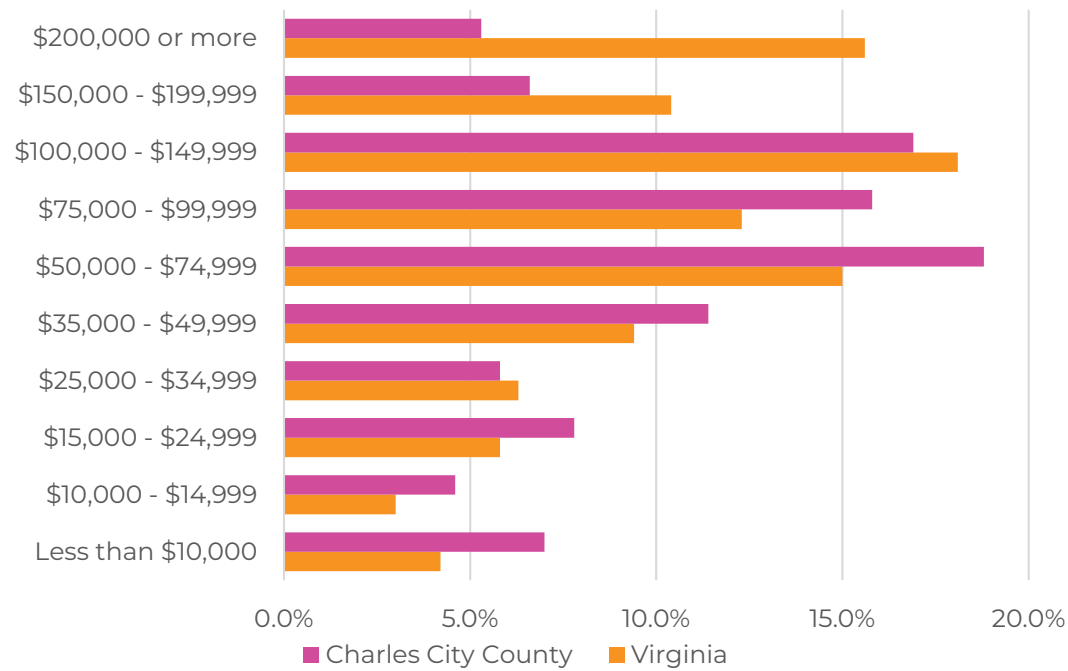
Improving educational outcomes and expanding access to educational opportunities can bolster the long-term health and resiliency of a community's economy, as well as result in better health outcomes, reduced crime rates, and higher levels of civic engagement.



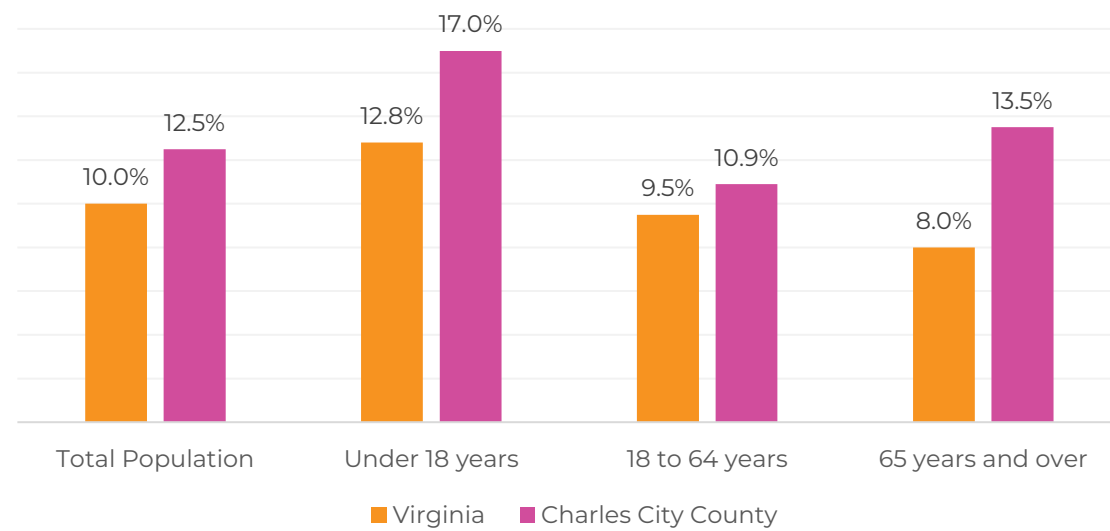
## Income and Poverty

The median household income in Charles City County in 2022 was approximately \$65,500, while the state's was just over \$87,000. Notably, the cost of living in the county is largely equivalent to the state average. Part of this is reflected in the fact that poverty rates in the county are 2% higher than the state for the total population, and 5.5% higher for residents over 65. This is particularly striking when over a quarter of the county's residents fall into this category.

**INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 2022**



**POVERTY IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, 2022**



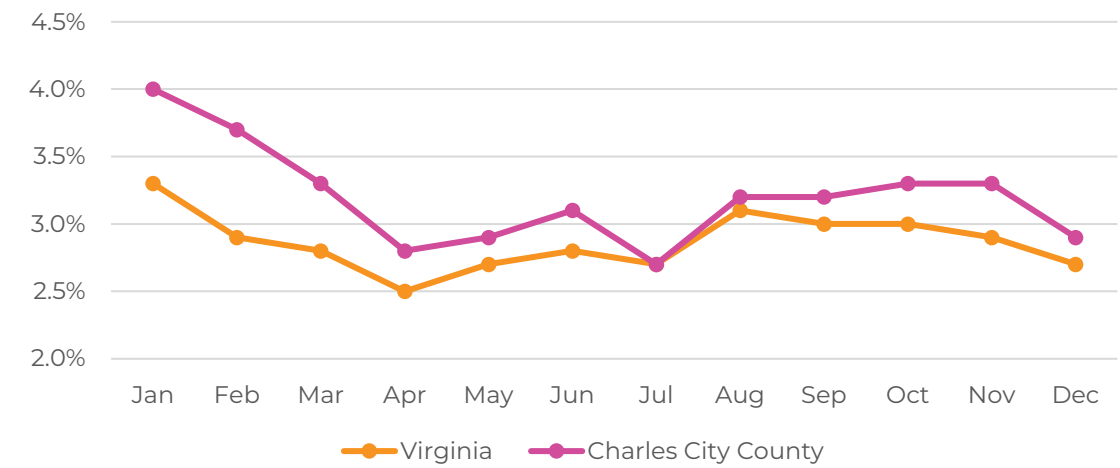
Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

## Labor Force and Unemployment

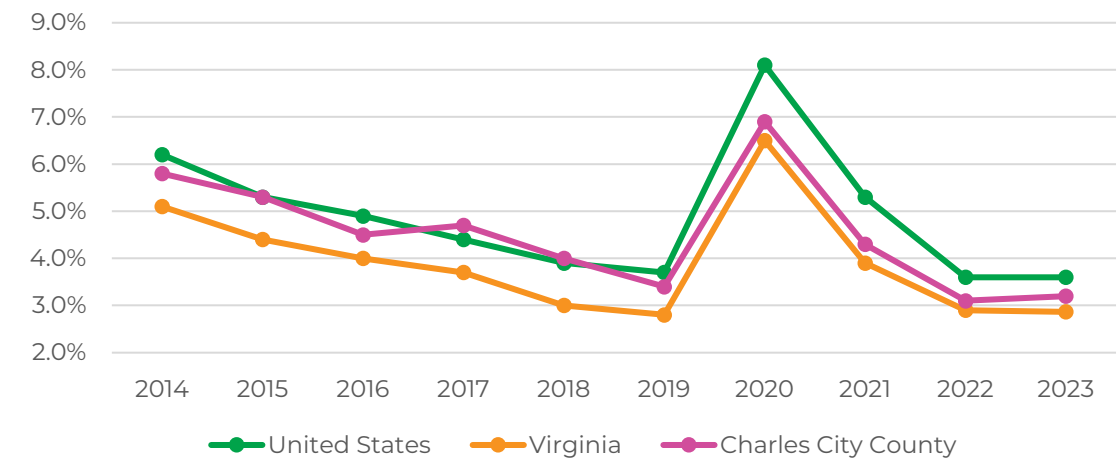
Low labor force participation is a significant factor in identifying economically distressed communities. Labor force participation in Charles City County in 2022 for residents 16 and over was 58%, 8% lower than the state. This discrepancy remains consistent across demographics (age, gender, race). Finding ways to support disengaged segments of the workforce can be a major factor in revitalization for the community.

Charles City County's unemployment rate as of December 2023 was 2.9%, with a 2023 average of 3.2%. Over the past 10 years, the county's unemployment rate averaged 0.6% higher than the state. Virginia's unemployment rate has consistently fallen below the national average. However, the low labor participation rate may point to a discouraged workforce that has exited the labor force altogether. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that there were as many as 542,000 discouraged workers in the US as of January 2024.

**MONTHLY AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2023**



**ANNUAL AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT, 2014-2023**



Source: Virginia Employment Commission Area Employment Figures

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Feb 2024



## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### Business Environment and Entrepreneurship

The Innovation Intelligence Index is a tool developed by the Economic Development Agency (EDA) to help identify and explore regional characteristics related to innovation and entrepreneurship to help inform economic development strategies. A component of the tool is the Business Dynamics Index, which identifies patterns of establishment formation and composition to indicate a moderate level of business competitiveness. The index places Charles City County in the 50th percentile of all counties in the United States.

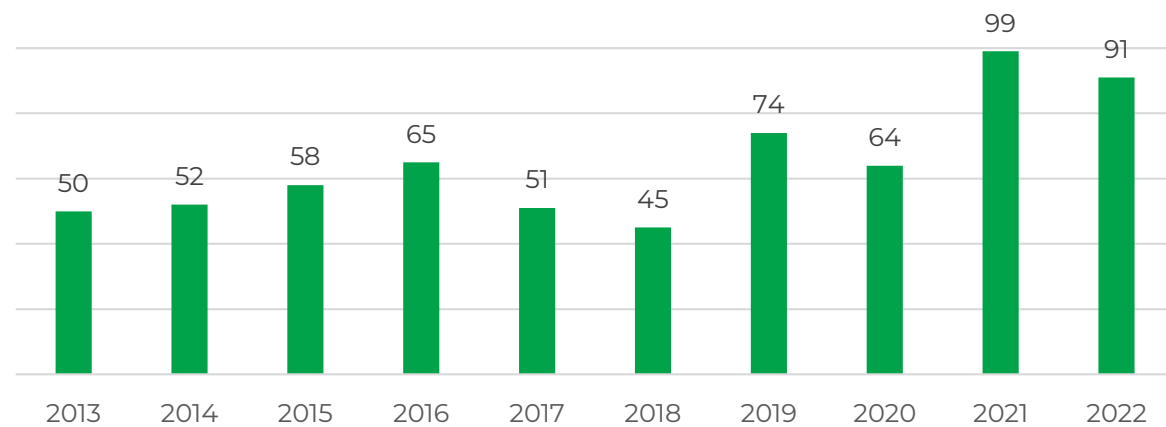
**CHARLES CITY COUNTY GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT & ANNUAL GROWTH RATE, 2017-2022 (IN THOUSANDS)**



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional GDP

The top measures in the category were the average small establishments (per 10,000 workers) and the ratio of the number of jobs that new businesses created relative to all establishments. While the county doesn't have a high concentration of traded sector or high-tech establishments, it scores well in areas that measure small business success and establishment.

**CHARLES CITY COUNTY BUSINESS FORMATIONS, 2012-2022**



Source: US Census Bureau Business Formation Statistics

### Largest Industries by Employment, Growth, and GRP

CHARLES CITY COUNTY		VIRGINIA	
<b>Employment</b>		<b>Employment</b>	
Specialty Trade Contractors	511	Local Government	53,893
Local Government	288	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	48,572
Crop Production	156	Food Services & Drinking Places	46,844
Truck Transportation	138	Administrative & Support Services	44,320
Merchant Wholesalers (Durable Goods)	82	State Government	38,988
<b>Projected Growth 2023-2028</b>		<b>Projected Growth 2023-2028</b>	
Specialty Trade Contractors	88	Ambulatory Health Care Services	3,586
Crop Production	25	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	3,170
Social Assistance	23	Warehousing & Storage	2,130
Educational Services	20	Real Estate	1,833
Merchant Wholesalers (Durable Goods)	17	Administrative & Support Services	1,752
<b>2022 GRP (In Millions)</b>		<b>2022 GRP (In Millions)</b>	
Specialty Trade Contractors	\$50.9	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	\$7,892
Local Government	\$17.9	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	\$6,401
Truck Transportation	\$15.0	Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	\$6,283
Merchant Wholesalers (Durable Goods)	\$14.7	Federal Government	\$4,854
Crop Production	\$12.3	Insurance Carriers & Related Activities	\$4,458

Source: Lightcast



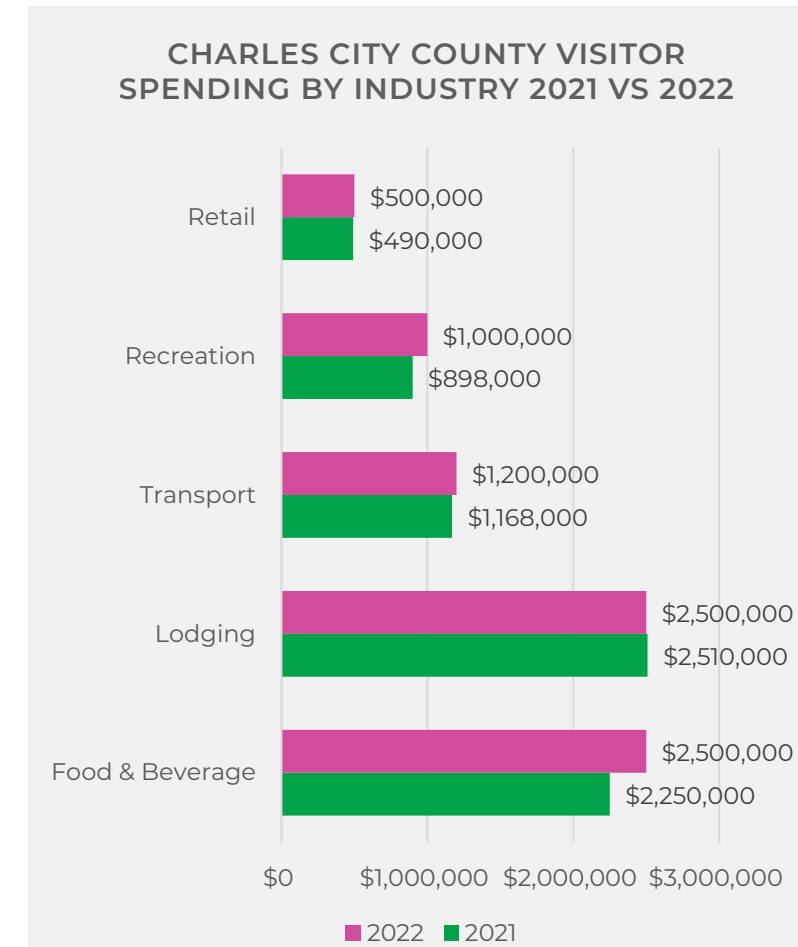
## Largest Occupations by Employment and Growth

CHARLES CITY COUNTY		VIRGINIA	
Employment 2023		Employment 2023	
Construction Trades Workers	269 \$42,200	Business Operations Specialists	296,383 \$84,700
Motor Vehicle Operators	170 \$44,900	Computer Occupations	243,667 \$113,300
Other (Misc.) Management Occupations*	124 \$42,900	Retail Sales Workers	210,634 \$28,000
Material Moving Workers	81 \$36,400	Material Moving Workers	175,476 \$33,900
Business Operations Specialists	80 \$67,300	Food & Beverage Serving Workers	174,128 \$26,900
Projected Growth		Projected Growth	
Construction Trades Workers	42 (16%) \$42,200	Computer Occupations	22,094 \$113,300
Home Health & Personal Care Aids; & Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, Psych Aids	17 (27%) \$25,800	Business Operations Specialists	18,188 \$84,700
Other (Misc.) Management Occupations	15 (12%) \$42,200	Healthcare Diagnosing or Treating Practitioners	15,231 \$91,900
Material Moving Workers	12 (15%) \$36,400	Home Health & Personal Care Aids; & Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, Psych Aids	12,648 \$27,100
Agricultural Workers	10 (14%) \$30,500	Material Moving Workers	11,679 \$33,900

Source: Lightcast

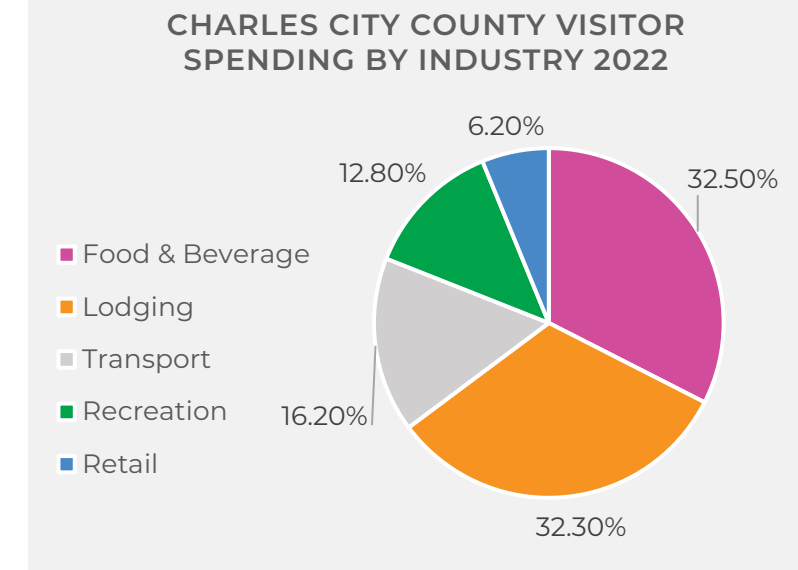


## TOURISM IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY



Charles City County boasts a rich tapestry of historical significance and natural beauty, making it an enticing destination for tourists. The proximity to the James River and Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area provides ample opportunities for outdoor recreation. The county is home to several historical sites and landmarks. These assets successfully attract tourists year-round, contributing an important impact to the region's economy.

The state tourism department reported that visitors to the county spend \$7.6 million in 2022, a 5.2% increase from 2021 and a 38.2% increase from pre-pandemic numbers of \$5.5 million. The majority of spending went to food and beverage and lodging establishments, with retail receiving the smallest share.



Tourism in the county supports local businesses, creates jobs and increases revenue from local taxes, a source the county is already putting to important use to better meet the economic development needs of the community.

In this way, the process is cyclical. While the majority of tourism to the county has historically been day trippers, the state of Virginia has placed an increased emphasis on attracting visitors for overnight stays, opening up grant opportunities for communities.



## RETAIL LANDSCAPE

### Retail Study Target Industries

Charles City County worked with Retail Strategies in 2020 to identify where the county had gaps in the local retail market, and determine target categories on which to focus recruitment. The results of that gap analysis largely hold true in 2024, with the top 4 categories as follows:

#### Grocery

- Supermarkets and Grocery Stores
- Convenience Retailers

#### Food Service and Accommodation

- Food Service and Drinking Places (Restaurants and Bars)
- Hotels and Motels
- RV Parks and Recreational Camps

#### Hardware and Garden

- Building Material and Supplies Dealers (Home Centers like Lowes)
- Nursery, Garden Center, and Farm Supply Retailers

#### Other Retail Industries

- General Merchandise
- Clothing, Accessories, Shoe and Jewelry
- Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics and Appliance
- Health and Personal Care Retailer
- Specialty Retailers: Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music, and Books, etc.



## RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

### Existing Retail

2023 data reported 11 payrolled business locations in the Retail Trade sector in Charles City County<sup>3</sup>. They fell into 5 sub-sectors:

1. Gasoline Stations (3)
2. Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers (3)
3. Electronics and Appliance Retailers (2)
4. Automotive Parts, Accessories, Tire Retailers and Other Motor Vehicle Dealers (2)
5. Specialty Food Stores (1)

#### Retail Gap Analysis

When establishing the gap in supply and demand for an industry in a region, the percentage of demand met in-region was compared to the total regional demand satisfied by businesses in the county. In 2022, just 6% of regional demand was met in-region. Total in-region demand in 2022 was \$52.7 million, meaning just \$3.2 million of that was spent in Charles City County. While it is unreasonable to expect 100% of demand in the region to be satisfied in the county, attracting retail businesses to the county could help bridge the gap and shift the flow of regular consumer spending to the community.

<sup>3</sup> Lightcast 2023



# Stakeholder Engagement

## METHODOLOGY

Stakeholders are individuals, businesses, and organizations that are interested in or can influence the success of the strategic plan. These stakeholders include those who live, work, and do business in Charles City County, as well as those who have contextual information and expertise of the economic ecosystem in the area. Charles City County staff and the TPMA project team collaborated to curate a diverse list of key stakeholders representing government, economic development, transportation and utilities, healthcare, education, business and industry, and community-based organizations. A variety of engagements were planned to include interviews, key stakeholder workshops, and a public survey.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY:

### Introduction

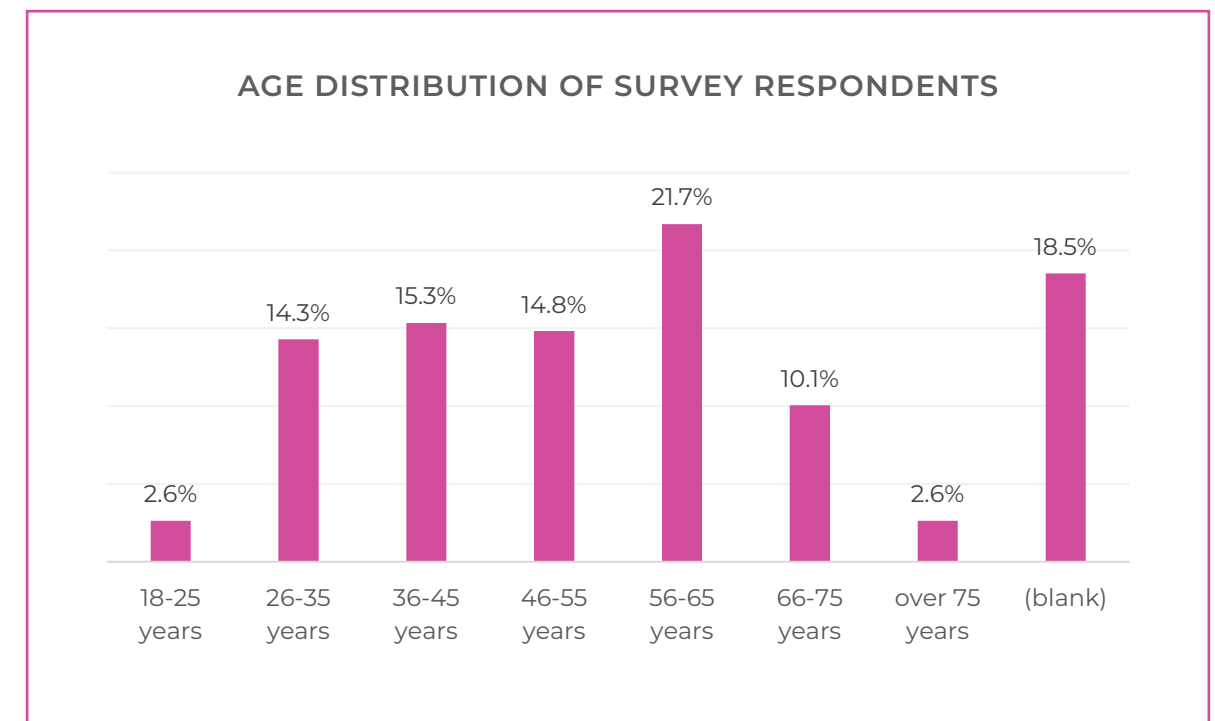
On December 22, 2024, Charles City County launched a public survey to inform its Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan. The survey was distributed via press release, social media, key stakeholder outreach, and word of mouth. This summary does not reflect the full extent of the survey results but does accurately represent the significant high-level data from the survey. The survey closed on January 12, 2024 with 189 responses submitted. A summary of survey results follows.



**Distribution Methods:** The survey was available online through our website, social media platforms, and distributed at community events. Paper copies will also be available at key locations across the County.

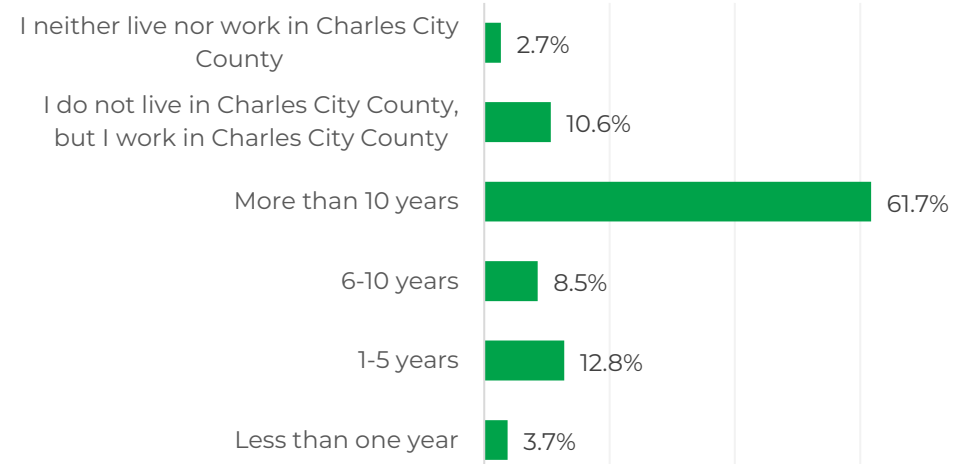
**Format:** The survey included a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative data and qualitative feedback.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, while qualitative responses were coded and analyzed for themes and trends.

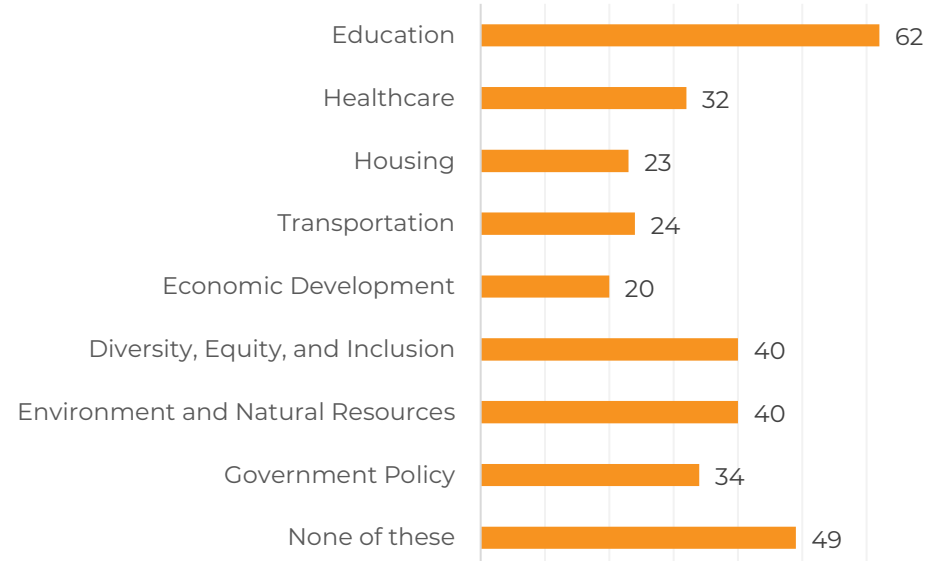




### NUMBER OF YEARS RESPONDENTS HAVE LIVED IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY



### RESPONDENT SELF-REPORTED AREA OF EXPERTISE



### New and Complimentary Business

Participants were asked to select their top 3 priorities regarding opportunities for new and complimentary businesses in Charles City County. The options included:

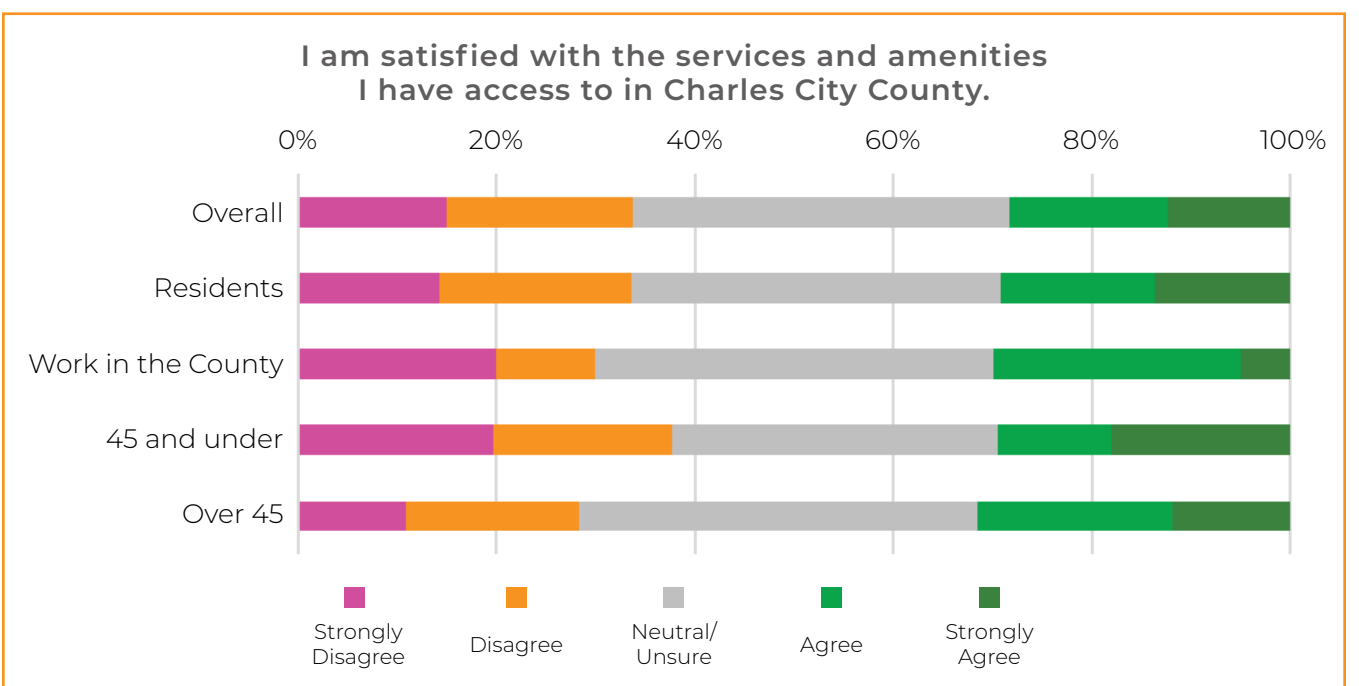
- Attracting new business
- Retaining existing businesses
- Limiting development
- Developing business incentive packages
- Marketing existing businesses

The overall top priorities were retaining existing businesses (116), attracting new business (106), and marketing existing businesses (96). Those who identified themselves as economic development experts ranked developing business incentive packages slightly above retaining existing businesses, but otherwise agreed.

Participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to businesses in the county on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

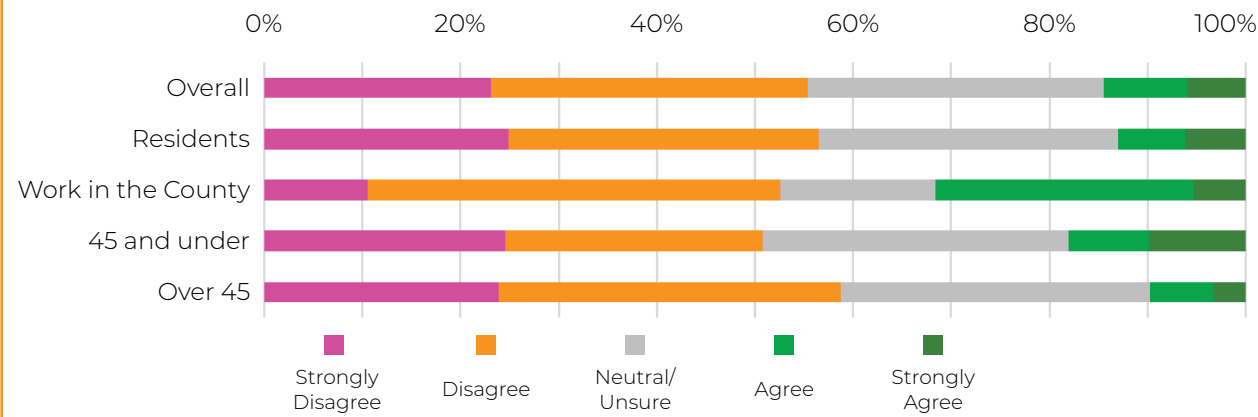
Participants were split regarding satisfaction with the services and amenities they have access to in the county. 28% of respondents gave a response of 4 or 5, and 34% gave a 1 or 2. This held across demographics, though dissatisfaction was slightly higher for those ages 45 and under at 38%. Most respondents also disagreed with the statement “Residents across the region know about businesses in Charles City County.” Over 50% of respondents gave a 1 or a 2.

Participants agreed that it is important for the county to offer business incentive packages. Participants who work but don't live in the county, as well as economic development and government policy experts, were especially likely to agree. Between 60% and 70% responded with a 4 or 5. Responses to the follow-up statement regarding incentives attracting new businesses received a matching response.

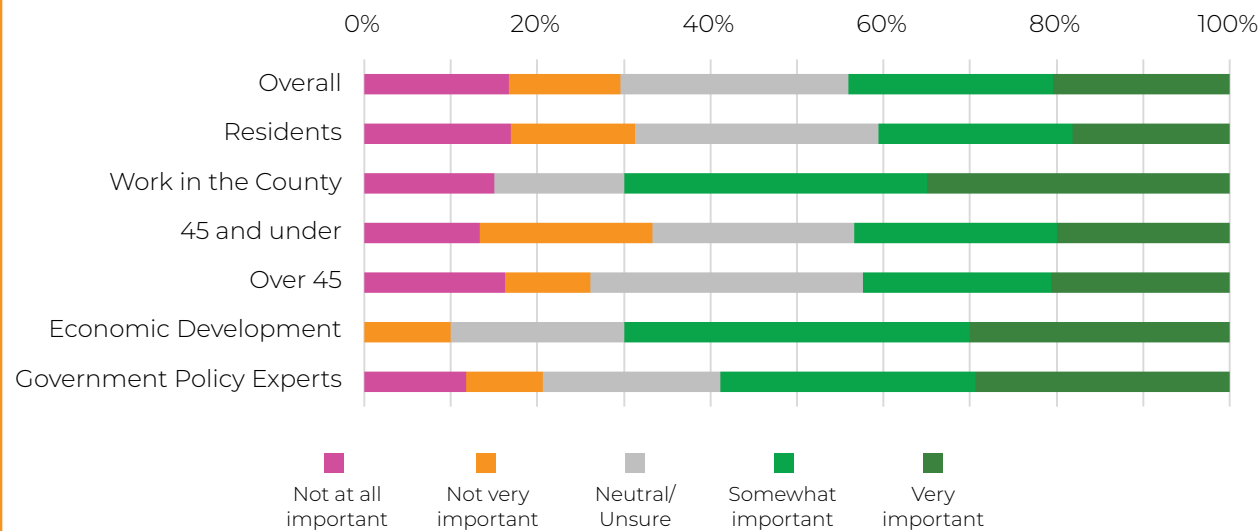




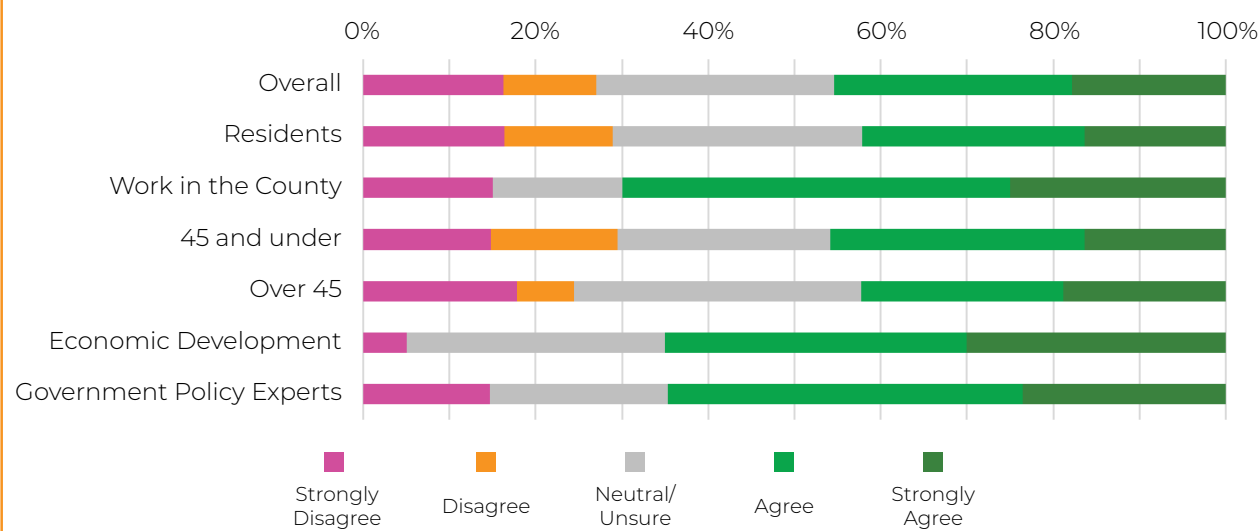
### Residents across the region know about businesses in Charles City County.



### How important do you feel it is for Charles City County to offer new business incentive packages?



### To what extent is offering new businesses incentive packages necessary to attract new businesses?



## Education, Training, and Workforce

Participants were asked to select their top three priorities regarding education, training, and workforce development in Charles City County. The options included:

- Attracting additional jobs
- Attracting high-paying jobs
- Increasing vocational training opportunities
- Increasing opportunities for upskilling
- Improving secondary education outcomes
- Offsetting the cost of vocational training
- Reducing barriers to participating in vocational training

The overall top priorities were increasing training opportunities, attracting jobs, improving secondary education outcomes, and increasing opportunities for upskilling. Participants across age groups agreed with these rankings, though participants who reported working but not living in the county ranked “attracting high-paying jobs” over “improving secondary education outcomes.” Similarly, participants who self-identified as having expertise in education prioritized “reducing barriers to participating in vocational training” over “increasing opportunities for upskilling.”

Participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to education and workforce in the county on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A summary of results follows.

Nearly half of the participants disagreed with the statement “Jobs in Charles City County support a sufficient quality of life.” This held true across age groups, but interestingly, participants who reported working but not living in the county were 18% less likely to respond with a 1 or a 2, and 9% more likely to respond with a 4 or 5. These participants made up a small percentage of the total, however, and are not necessarily a representative sample of the demographic.

Participants were also asked about outcomes and accessibility regarding education opportunities in the county. Overall, and across subgroups, participants didn’t think the high schools in the county prepare students for career opportunities. Regarding the accessibility of higher education, participants were split, with the largest number responding neutrally. Still, participants were 18% more likely to disagree that higher education is currently accessible than to agree. In line with these responses, participants overwhelmingly agreed that people in their network would utilize vocational training opportunities in the county, with residents and participants 45 and under the most likely to agree.



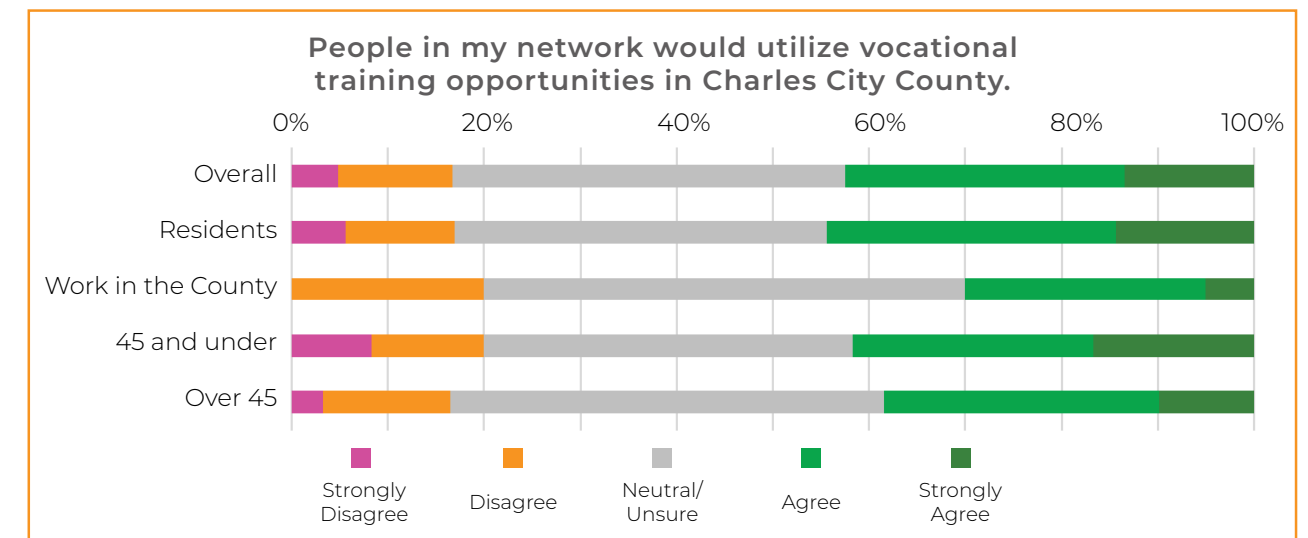
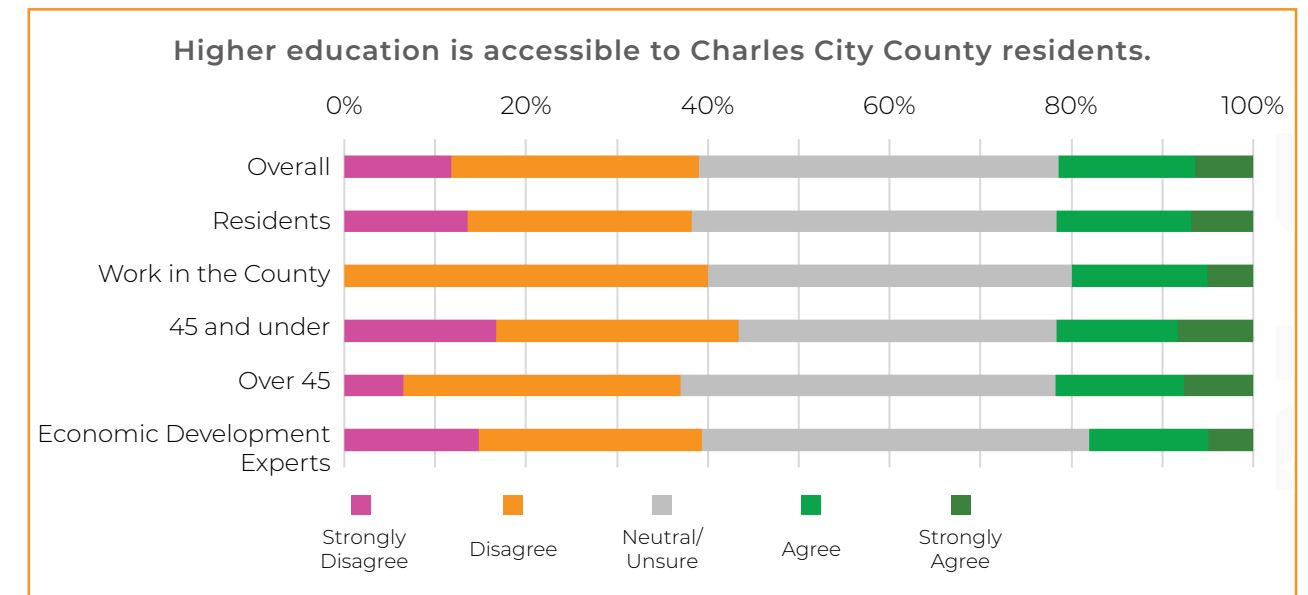
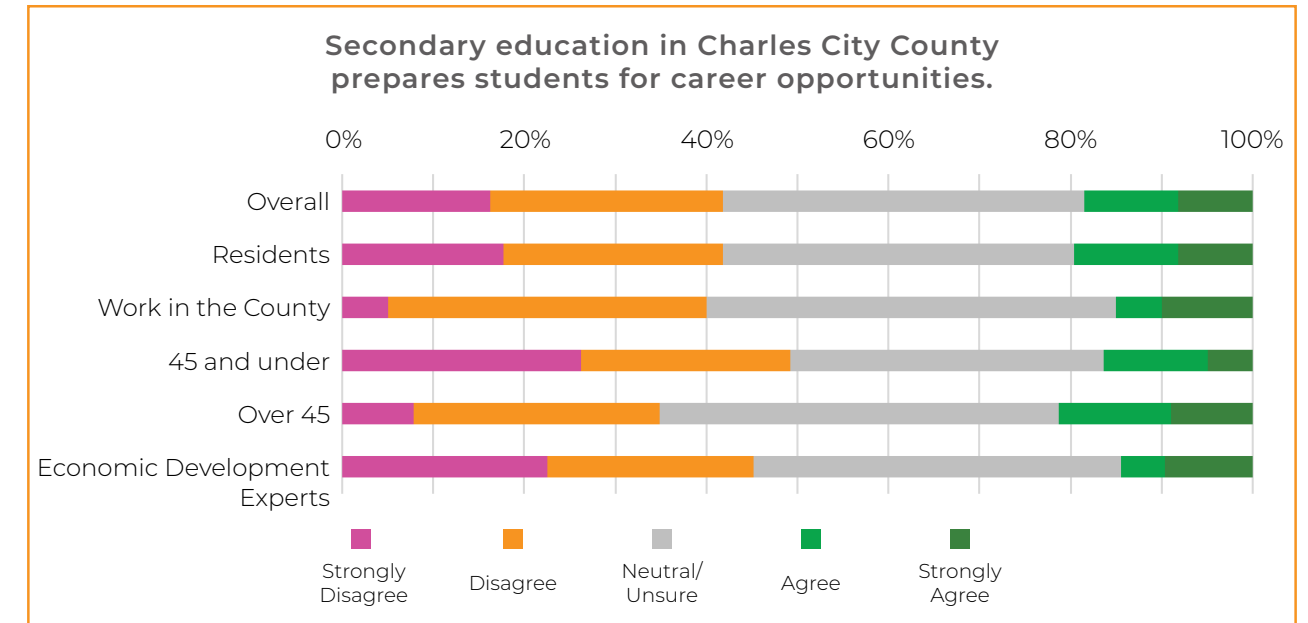
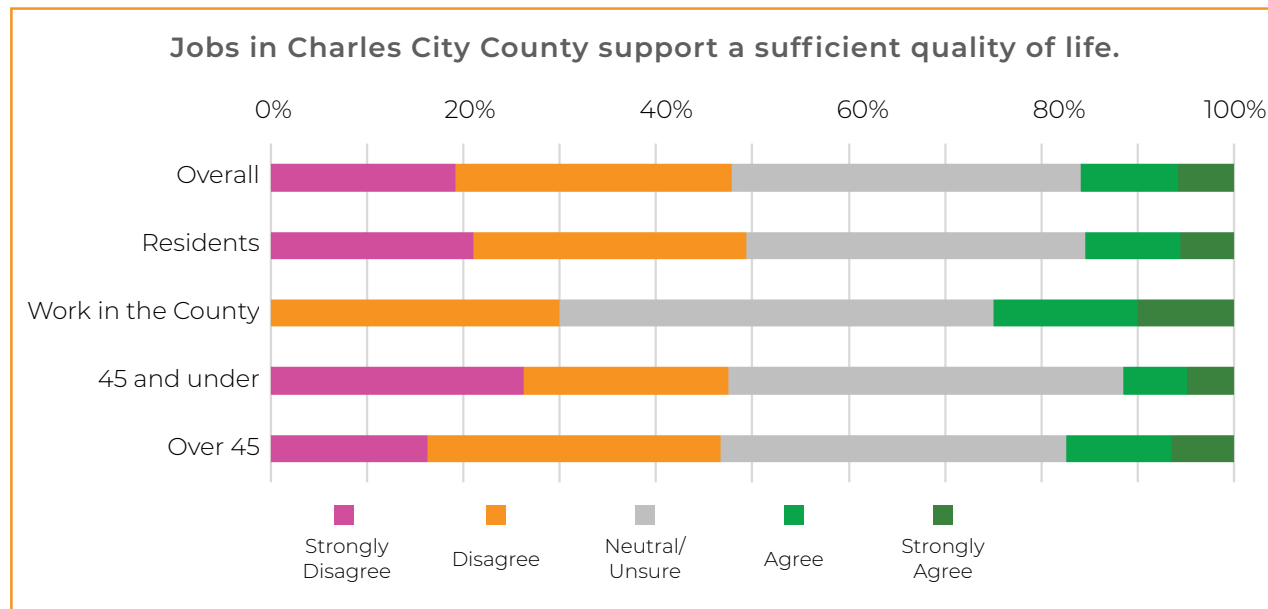
At the end of the section on education, training, and workforce, participants were asked what types of vocational training programming they would most like to see in the county (select all that apply). The options and number of votes included:

- Automotive
- Carpentry
- Cosmetology
- Culinary
- Electrical
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- HVAC
- Plumbing
- Welding
- Other \_\_\_\_

Electrical, Plumbing, Healthcare, HVAC, and Carpentry, and Welding were each selected by over 50% of participants (95). This distribution held across sub-groups, including age brackets, residency status, and expertise.

- Attracting additional jobs
- Attracting high-paying jobs
- Increasing vocational training opportunities
- Increasing opportunities for upskilling
- Improving secondary education outcomes
- Offsetting the cost of vocational training
- Reducing barriers to participating in vocational training

The overall top priorities were increasing training opportunities, attracting jobs, improving secondary education outcomes, and increasing opportunities for upskilling. Participants across age groups agreed with these rankings, though participants who reported working but not living in the county ranked “attracting high-paying jobs” over “improving secondary education outcomes”





## Community Resources and Livability

Participants were asked to select their top three priorities regarding community resources and livability in Charles City County. The options included:

- Housing
- Local businesses/amenities
- Public safety
- Tourism
- Public infrastructure
- Healthcare

The top priorities overall were “housing,” “local businesses/amenities,” and “healthcare,” each with 90 or more votes. These priorities largely hold across subgroups, though a few groups prioritized public infrastructure slightly above healthcare or local businesses. Housing was ranked as the number one priority, regardless of demographic.



Participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to community resources and livability in the county on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

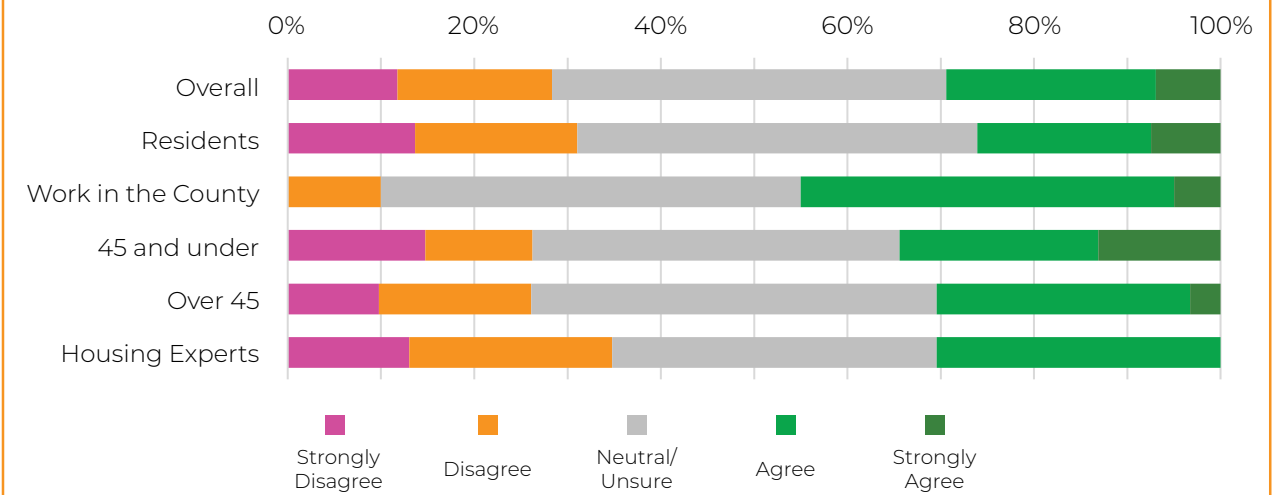


Regarding housing, participants didn't hold an overall consensus on whether or not housing is affordable in the county. The largest group responded neutrally, with the remainder split almost exactly down the middle. This remained consistent across resident demographics.

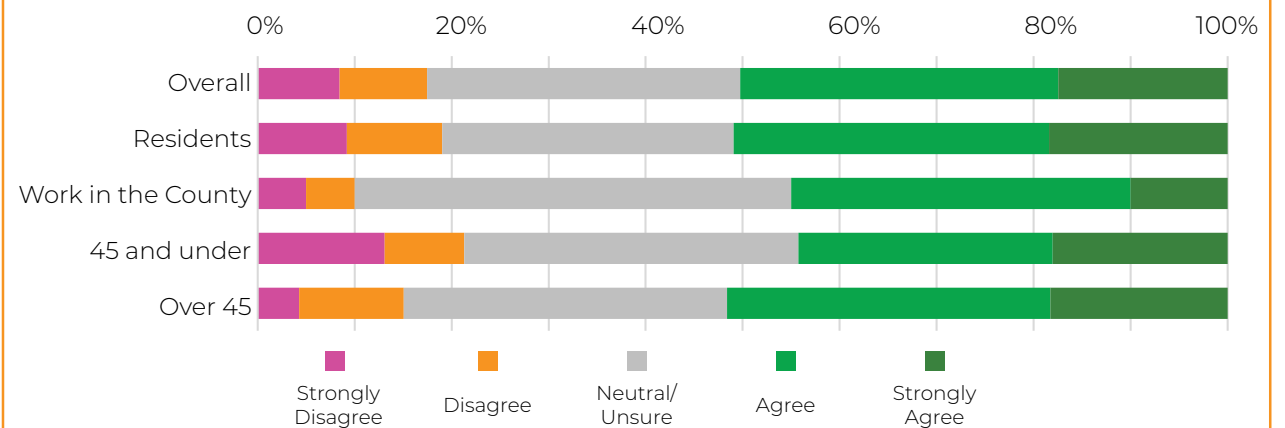
Participants were asked to respond to two statements regarding activities and recreation in the county. Over 50% of participants agreed that there are activities and events they enjoy in the county, as well as sufficient places to recreate in nature. The only exception across demographics were participants 45 and under, who were much less likely to agree regarding recreational nature places.

The last two statements had to do with tourism infrastructure and critical services. While there wasn't a strong consensus on whether existing tourism infrastructure benefits the county overall, those who self-identified as economic development experts were the most likely to agree. Participants consistently agreed that they have access to critical services, with no significant deviation.

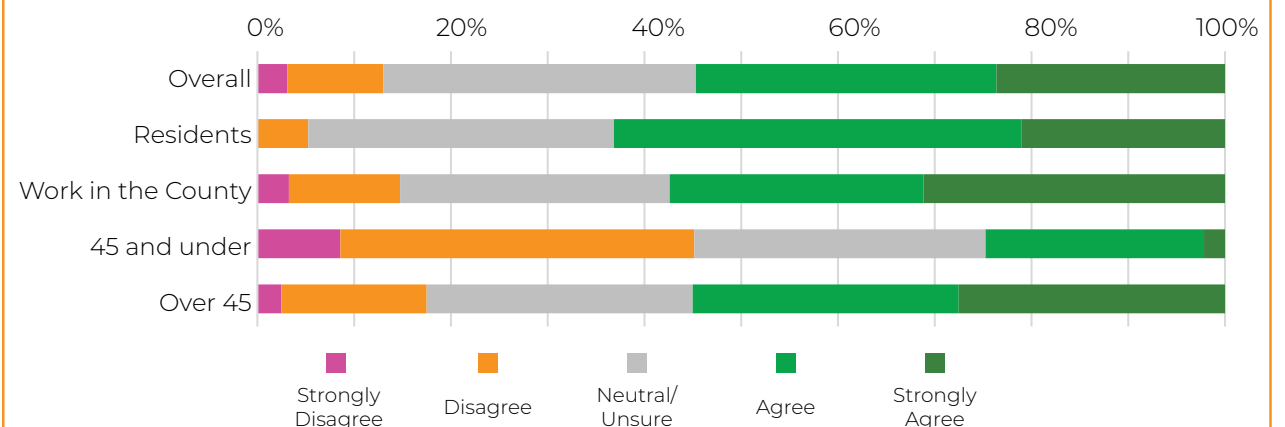
Housing in Charles City County is affordable.



There are activities that I enjoy in Charles City County.



There are sufficient places to recreate in nature in Charles City County.







## Infrastructure

Participants were asked to select their top three priorities regarding infrastructure in Charles City County. The options included:

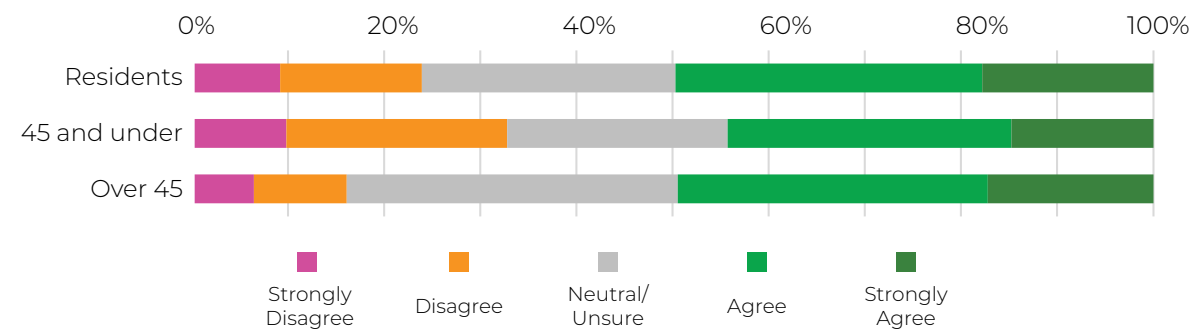
- Improving access to high-speed internet
- Extending utilities to prospective industrial sites
- Improving capacity of county sewer infrastructure
- Improving roadways
- Environmental conservation/sustainability

The top three priorities overall were “improving access to high-speed internet,” “improving roadways,” and “environmental conservation/sustainability.” Improving high-speed internet and roadways were the top two priorities for nearly every demographic.

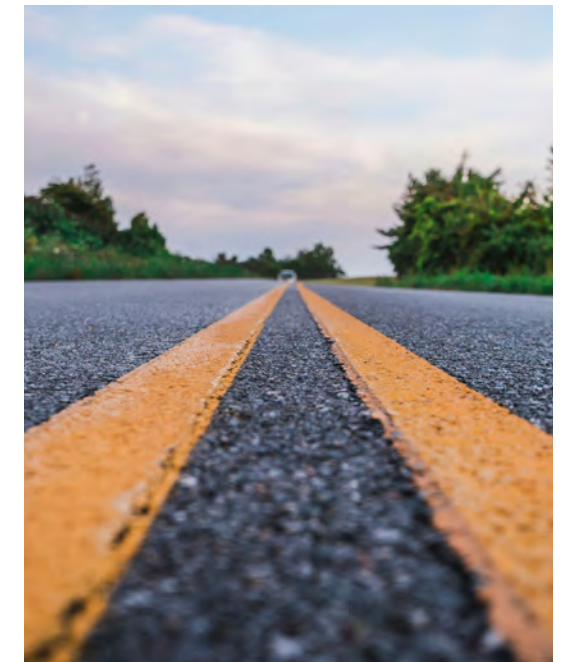
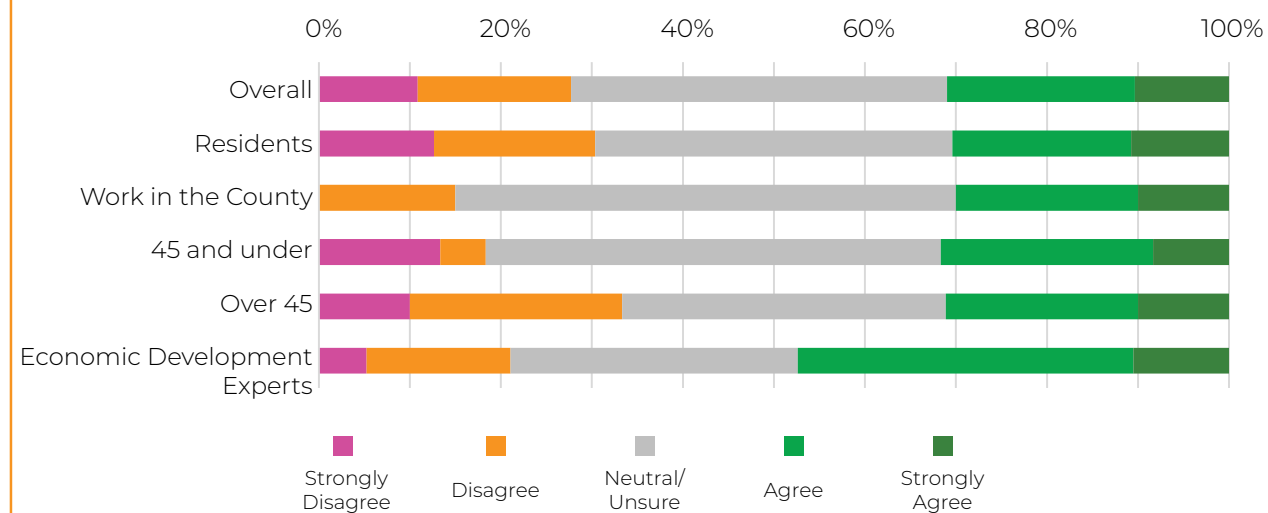
Environmental conservatism was almost always the third, with the exceptions being those who work but don't live in the county, who prioritized improving sewer capacity, and those who self-identified as having expertise in government policy, who prioritized extending utilities to prospective industrial sites.



### I can access critical services that I need as a resident of Charles City County.



### Existing tourism infrastructure benefits the county.





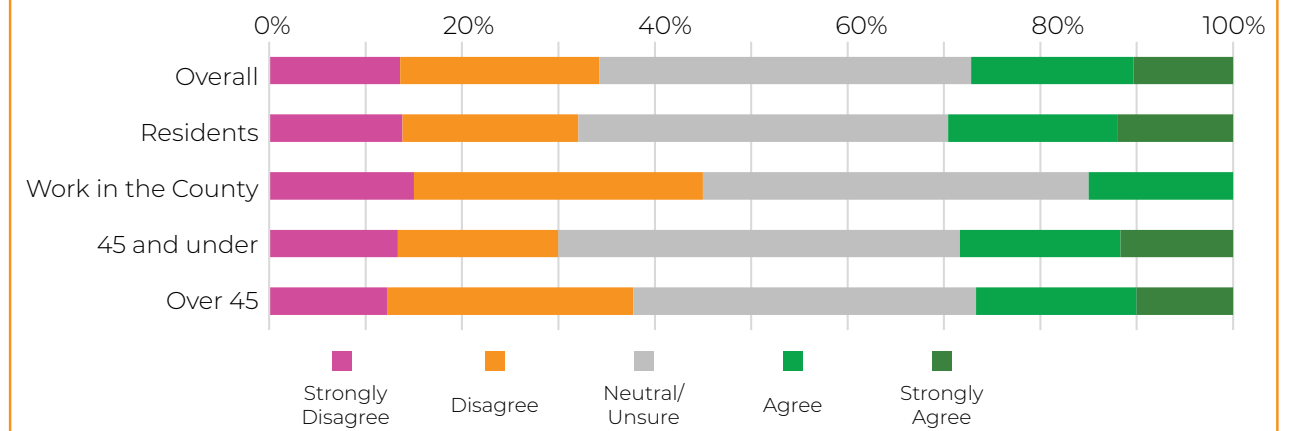
Participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to infrastructure in the county on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A summary of the results follows.

Participants were split regarding public utility infrastructure, with only a slight lean towards disagreement that the existing infrastructure meets their needs. The exception was for participants who reported working but not living in the county, who were 13% more likely to disagree and half as likely to agree than residents.

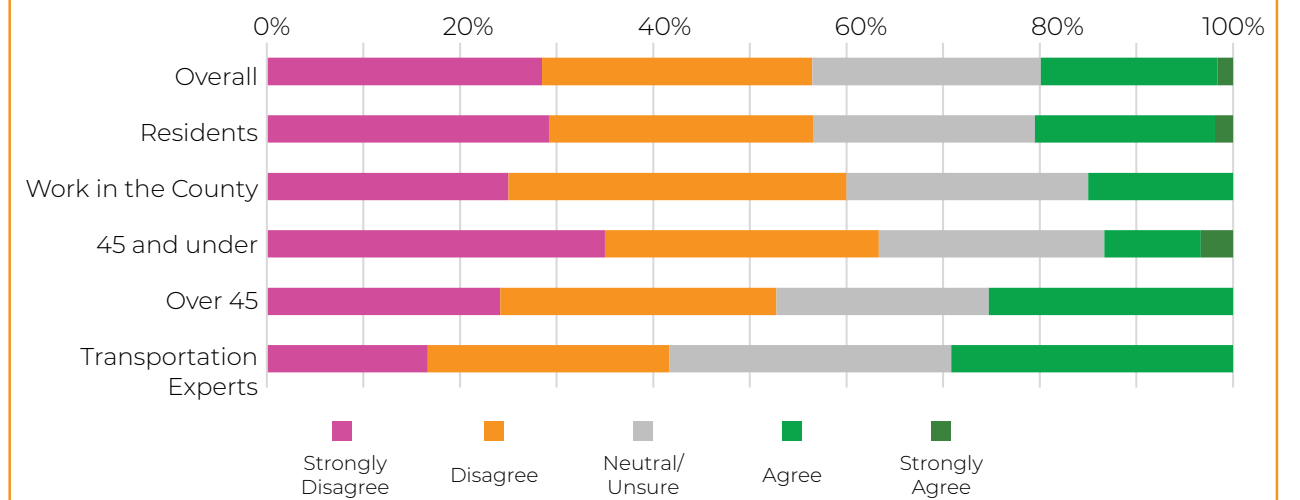
Participants were in overwhelming consensus regarding the statement "Roads in Charles City County are in good condition" with 56% of all respondents disagreeing, and just 20% agreeing. This remained consistent across demographics, with those who work but don't live in the county and participants 45 and under the least likely to agree.

There was some consensus regarding access to high-speed internet. 44% of participants did not have reliable access, responding with a 1 or 2, most of whom selected 1 (strongly disagree). While those 45 and under were more likely to agree, there was very little in the way of neutral responses. This indicates that at least among survey respondents, internet access in the county is fairly hit-or-miss. It is also notable that all survey responses received were completed online, which likely skews this data. Similarly, participants largely disagreed that environmental assets in the county are well-protected, with several leaving additional comments emphasizing the importance of these protections for the future of the county's assets.

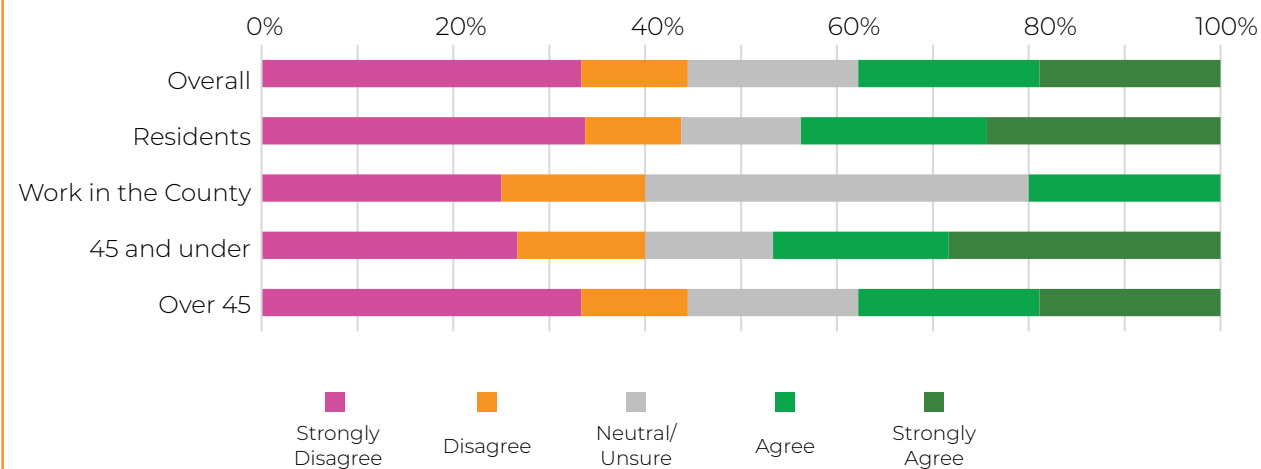
**Public utility infrastructure in Charles City County meets my needs.**



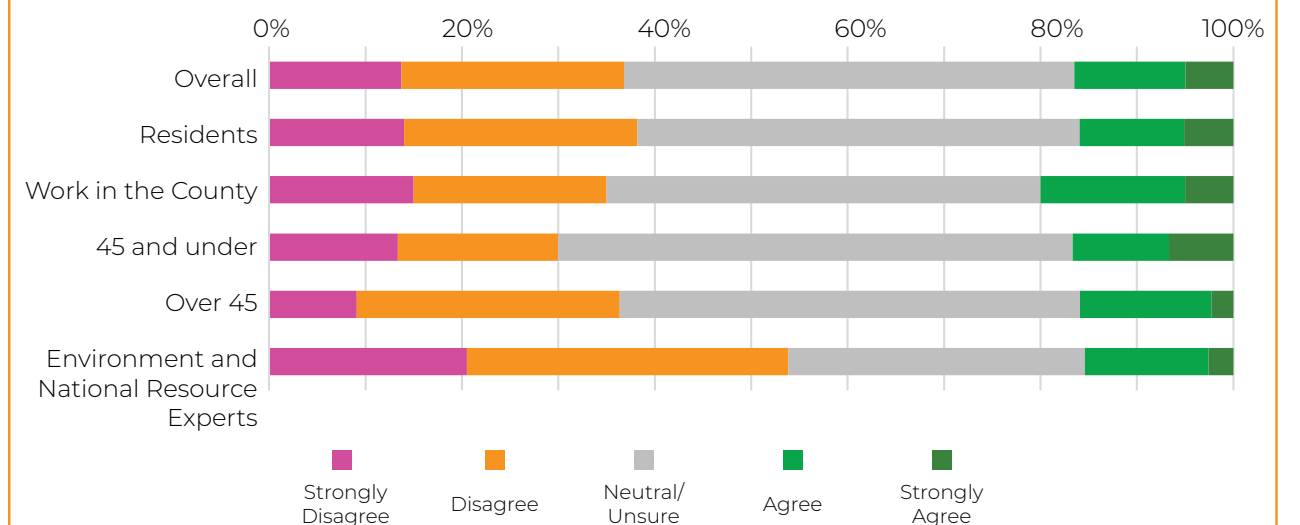
**Roads in Charles City County are in good condition.**



**I have reliable access to high-speed internet.**



**Environmental assets in Charles City County are well-protected.**





## KEY STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

### Introduction

On December 6-7, 2023, Charles City County held three stakeholder workshops to inform the development of its Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan. In total, seventeen (17) stakeholders participated in the sessions. This summary aggregates the feedback collected in the workshop sessions. The summary does not reflect the full extent of the ideas and feedback received; it does accurately represent the significant themes that emerged from the workshop.

Invitations for the in-person workshops were sent to stakeholders three weeks in advance of the sessions. Registration reminders were sent to encourage participation, and materials (including the session agenda, data overview, and sample SWOT Analysis) were sent to registrants in advance. TPMA received 23 registrations.

### Methodology

To ensure that the workshops would provide the information needed to move forward with the plan's development, the sessions were designed primarily to gather consensus around a SWOT analysis and secondarily to begin the goal-setting process by generating ideas on approaching the county's complex economic ecosystem. Workshop activities planned were highly interactive, utilizing methods to ensure each stakeholder had the opportunity to provide input. It is important to note that these workshops are only a part of the research and outreach conducted for the strategic plan.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

### Visioning Themes

Participants were asked to write their vision for the future of Charles City County.

### The Question

What would you like to see Charles City County become over the next 5-10 years?

### The Response

The most common themes throughout the vision statements were:

- Historic (preservation)
- Rural (agriculture, charm)
- Growth (community, economy)
- Business (industry, mix)
- Tourists (tourism)
- Families (children, education)
- Thriving (vibrant)
- Protect (assets, environment)

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Through a series of activities, workshop facilitators asked participants to brainstorm and identify the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They were also asked to provide feedback on a draft, discuss points of consensus with their groups, and prioritize.



### STRENGTHS

- Natural assets
- Virginia Capital Trail
- Historic sites & tourism
- Infrastructure & utilities



### WEAKNESSES

- Missing retail
- Lodging & amenities
- Educational opportunities & attainment
- Aging population



### OPPORTUNITIES

- Tourism development (especially waterways)
- Education & upskilling
- Additional retail



### THREATS

- Population decline
- Limited educational opportunities & resources
- Public opposition to development



## The Questions

### Strengths:

What do we do well in comparison to others?

What unique or helpful resources are available?

Are there specific competitive advantages here?

What do those outside the community view as our strengths?

### Weaknesses:

What are the factors that limit development and investment?

Where are there fewer resources than others?

What are others likely to see as our weaknesses?

What cannot be changed? What could be improved?

### Opportunities:

What opportunities exist for enhancing/supporting existing strengths?

What improvements/support could address the identified weaknesses?

What economic trends could we leverage?

### Threats:

What political, economic, or tech trends could harm the community?

What threatens the key identified strengths?

What could further expose the identified weaknesses?

What barriers could threaten the identified opportunities?

---

## GOAL DEVELOPMENT & EMERGING THEMES

Once stakeholders identified their top priorities, they began brainstorming solutions with a future focus. Participants were asked questions beginning with “how might we” to serve as a starting point for developing goals. Participants were then asked to form groups and categorize their ideas. Groups used stickers to mark which ideas would be hardest or easiest to enact. Individuals used stickers to vote for their favorite ideas.

## The Questions

How might we leverage strengths?

How might we address weaknesses?

How might we pursue opportunities?

How might we mitigate threats?

## The Responses

Ideas proposed through this activity were grouped into 6 focus areas and organized to form the following summary of themes on which to develop goals.

## Workforce and Education

- More resources and assessments for teachers.
- Increase access to technical education programs.
- Conduct educational needs assessment/survey.
- Encourage community involvement.

## Business Development

- Conduct business needs assessment.
- Create a marketing plan with an emphasis on online presence.
- Recruit businesses: restaurants, grocery, retail, hotel, recreation, leisure, bike shop, data centers.
- Provide incentives for new businesses.
- Existing business and entrepreneurial support.
- Build another industrial park/center.

## Livability/Sense of Place

- Plan a variety of events to bring the community together and attract tourists, including more activities on trail, historic site tours, arts and culture, holiday events, agritourism, etc.
- Housing, including affordable apartments
- Food pantry
- Healthcare facility and nursing home/home healthcare.
- Preservation of rural character, charm, and historic assets.
- Form community group for support, engagement, and education on priority issues (economic development town halls, “keep our kids here”, event volunteer development, etc.).

## Funding and Resources

- Increase access to capital funding for businesses.
- Apply for applicable grants.
- Make property information more readily available to the public.

## Infrastructure

- Expand broadband infrastructure.
- Increase and maintain water access for development.
- Develop public transportation system.

## Policies, Ordinances, and Regulations

- Address environmental concerns and impact of development projects, including those related to the landfill, air quality, and restrictions imposed by Chesapeake Bay.
- Streamline permitting and approval processes.
- Retool residential planning and development to target desired housing growth.
- Review the County Charter

Participants were asked to choose the most important ideas to consider. They then worked as a group to determine which ideas might be the easiest or hardest to accomplish. Then, they were asked to individually choose one of the ideas and explore challenges and potential solutions. The results of these activities provided context for the project team as the final strategies are developed.



# Target Markets & Opportunities

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This section charts a course for economic growth in Charles City County by pinpointing key target markets and crafting strategies to attract them. By identifying sectors with high potential and outlining effective attraction methods, this roadmap aims to propel the county towards a more robust and sustainable economic future.

## INDUSTRY SELECTION



### Stakeholder Input:

- Public surveys from 2023 emphasized a strong desire for more diverse job opportunities and higher wages.
- Data centers, renewable energy, healthcare, and technology due to their growth potential and higher wage offerings.
- Local businesses express concerns about workforce skills, including technical skills required for advanced manufacturing and technology jobs, and infrastructure limitations.

### Prioritization:

#### High-growth potential:

Technology, renewable energy (solar, wind), and healthcare (home care, specialist positions) based on job market projections and local stakeholder interest.

#### Good job creation:

Focus on industries offering median wages exceeding \$50,000 annually, aligning with the living-wage definition for the county.

#### Local workforce alignment:

Target technology, renewable energy (focus on technician roles) and healthcare (partner with community colleges for training programs) considering existing skillsets and upskilling potential.

#### Double distressed area needs:

Technology and renewable energy projects can attract residents for construction and operation jobs, while healthcare expansion supports an aging population and boosts tax revenue.

### Data Analysis:

- **Current Major Industries:** Agriculture, forestry, tourism, small manufacturing, service industries.
- **Employment Trends:** Stagnant to slightly declining in most sectors except service industry.
- **Wage Levels:** Lower than state average across all sectors.
- **Educational Attainment:** Lower than state average, limiting opportunities for higher-skilled jobs.



## DATA CENTER DISCUSSION

### Data Analysis:

- Growing demand for data storage and processing, particularly in the mid-Atlantic region.
- Availability of affordable land and reliable power sources in Charles City County.
- Potential concerns about water usage and environmental impact need careful consideration.

### Stakeholder Input:

- Local officials express interest in attracting data centers but emphasize responsible development and community engagement.
- Residents raise concerns about potential traffic impacts and environmental risks.

### Prioritization:

- Consider data center as a potential target industry only if stringent environmental regulations and community input are central to planning and development.
- Ensure data centers provide significant economic benefits (job creation, tax revenue) to outweigh potential drawbacks.



## ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

### Target Industry Examples

#### Technology:

- **Incentives:** Offer co-working spaces, tax breaks for tech startups, and potential grant programs for technology development and innovation.
- **Marketing:** Promote high-speed internet access, a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem with mentorship programs, and potential access to research institutions.
- **Infrastructure:** Invest in fiber optic infrastructure, technology incubator facilities with shared resources and collaborative spaces, and accessible public Wi-Fi zones.

- **Workforce Development:** Partner with community colleges and technical schools to offer STEM education programs, support coding bootcamps, and incentivize recent graduates to stay in the area.
- **Partnerships:** Connect with tech accelerators, venture capital firms, and technology-focused organizations to attract investments and talent.
- **Living-Wage Focus:** Attract tech companies known for offering competitive salaries and benefits, emphasizing potential for career growth and relocation incentives.

#### Renewable Energy:

- **Incentives:** Offer tax breaks specifically for solar and wind energy projects, alongside workforce training grants for installation and maintenance roles.
- **Marketing:** Highlight existing solar potential, proximity to power grids, and supportive regulatory environment in outreach campaigns.
- **Infrastructure:** Invest in grid upgrades to accommodate additional renewable energy sources.
- **Workforce Development:** Partner with community colleges to develop certificate programs in solar panel installation and wind turbine maintenance.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with regional clean energy organizations and attract established renewable energy companies.



- **Living-Wage Focus:** Target companies known for offering competitive wages and benefits in the clean energy sector.



## Healthcare:

- **Incentives:** Offer tax breaks and streamlined permitting for new healthcare facilities, particularly urgent care centers and specialist clinics.



- **Marketing:** Promote a growing senior population and existing healthcare infrastructure in marketing materials.
- **Infrastructure:** Invest in broadband access to support telemedicine and expand healthcare facilities.
- **Workforce Development:** Partner with medical institutions to offer scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for nurses and allied healthcare professionals.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with local hospitals and healthcare providers to identify workforce needs and training opportunities.
- **Living-Wage Focus:** Target healthcare organizations offering competitive salaries and benefits, contributing to workforce retention and attracting new residents.

## Advanced Manufacturing:

- **Incentives:** Offer targeted tax breaks, workforce training grants, and expedited permitting specifically for advanced manufacturing projects.
- **Marketing:** Highlight available land with infrastructure development potential, proximity to major transportation routes, and lower operating costs compared to other regions.
- **Infrastructure:** Invest in broadband access, industrial park upgrades (including utilities and transportation access), and potential renewable energy infrastructure.
- **Workforce Development:** Partner with community colleges and technical schools to develop certificate programs and apprenticeships aligned with specific industry needs. Collaborate with state-level workforce development initiatives.



- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with regional economic development organizations, manufacturing industry associations, and potential anchor companies to attract supply chain partners.
- **Living-Wage Focus:** Negotiate with attracted companies to ensure offered wages are significantly above the local average and promote career advancement opportunities.

## Other Potential Industries:

### Advanced Agriculture:

- Leverage existing agricultural base to attract businesses focused on sustainable farming practices, precision agriculture technologies, and value-added processing.
- Partner with research institutions and universities to develop innovative agricultural solutions.

### Logistics and Distribution:

- Proximity to major transportation routes (I-64, I-95) could attract logistics and distribution companies.
- Offer competitive incentives and develop strategic partnerships with transportation providers.

### Light Manufacturing:

- Target niche manufacturing companies seeking lower operating costs and a supportive business environment.
- Focus on attracting companies that align with local workforce skills and offer living-wage jobs.

### Tourism and Hospitality:

- Capitalize on existing tourism assets (Virginia Capital Trail, historic sites) and natural beauty.
- Develop sustainable tourism strategies to attract eco-conscious visitors and support local businesses.

## EXISTING BUSINESS RETENTION

### Challenges:

Recent reports (2023) identified limited access to capital and skilled workforce as ongoing challenges, along with concerns about inadequate marketing resources.

### Strategies:

- **Microloan program:** Secure funding and establish a microloan program specifically for existing businesses seeking expansion or upgrades, with a focus on renewable energy and healthcare sectors.
- **Skills training grants:** Expand existing program to offer grants to businesses for employee training in relevant technical skills aligned with target industries.
- **Regulatory streamlining:** Conduct a review of local regulations to identify and eliminate unnecessary burdens on businesses, particularly in permitting and licensing processes.
- **Local procurement initiative:** Launch a “Buy Local” campaign and establish a platform connecting local businesses with government and larger companies within the county.
- **Mentorship program:** Partner with regional or national organizations to develop a mentorship program matching established businesses with new entrepreneurs, offering guidance and support.



# Tourism Expansion

## MARKET SEGMENT EXPANSION

### Untapped Potential:

Conduct surveys and focus groups of visitors and day trippers to understand motivations and spending habits. Analyze demographics to identify under-served groups (e.g., families, seniors, history buffs, higher education levels).

Design targeted marketing campaigns and packages (e.g., family history workshops, birding expeditions, culinary tours).

Partner with travel agents and tour operators specializing in relevant niches, including historical and outdoor activities.

Develop themed itineraries combining multiple attractions and activities (e.g., Civil War battlefields tour, plantation life experience, James River kayaking adventure).

## NEW MARKET SEGMENTS

### Eco-Tourists:

- Highlight natural assets and sustainable practices (e.g., birdwatching trails, farm stays, agritourism experiences).
- Partner with conservation organizations and eco-lodges.
- Promote certifications and educational programs focused on environmental awareness.



### Cultural Enthusiasts:

- Leverage rich history and heritage (e.g., guided tours of lesser-known sites, living history reenactments, artisan demonstrations).
- Partner with museums, theaters, and cultural institutions to create unique offerings.
- Develop themed events celebrating local traditions and heritage.
- Promote connections with the Virginia Capital Trail.



### Adventure Seekers:

- Develop diverse outdoor activities catering to varying skill levels (e.g., mountain biking, rock climbing, ziplining, horseback riding).
- Partner with local outfitters and adventure tourism companies.
- Promote access to natural areas suitable for exploration and recreation.
- Organize or participate in adventure races and competitions.





## DAY-TRIPPER FOCUS

### Convenient Access:

- Ensure clear signage and wayfinding on major roads and within destinations.
- Improve public transportation options (e.g., shuttles, bike rentals, partnerships with neighboring counties).
- Develop mobile apps and online resources for easy trip planning.

### Unique Offerings:

- Organize signature events and attractions (e.g., farmers markets, art shows, live music events).
- Offer exclusive behind-the-scenes access or unique experiences at historical sites.
- Develop interactive exhibits and experiences at museums and cultural institutions.
- Highlight local food and beverage scene with culinary trails and festivals.

### Partnerships with Local Businesses:

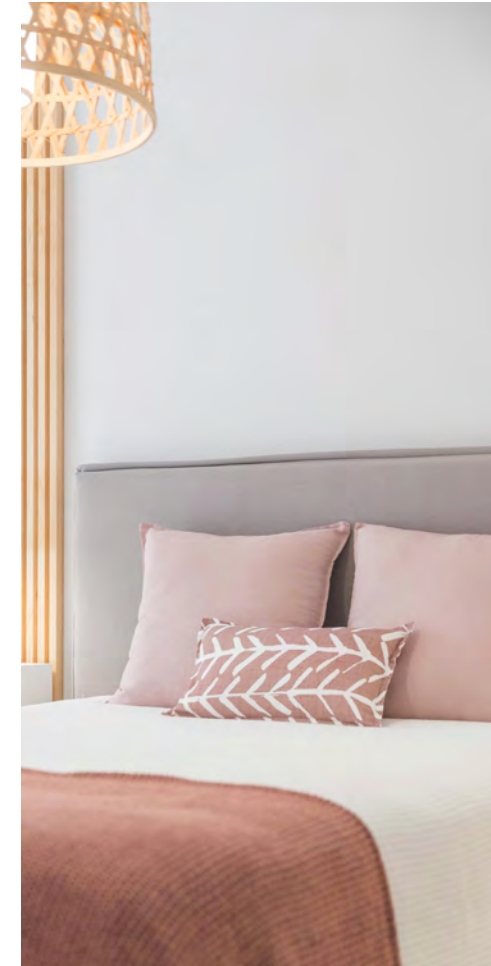
- Collaborate with restaurants, shops, and other businesses to create package deals and discounts.
- Encourage extended operating hours during peak seasons.
- Develop joint marketing campaigns promoting the full range of visitor offerings.
- Organize events and activities that engage both visitors and local residents.

### Day-Trip-Specific Event Promotions:

- Host special events specifically targeting day-trippers (e.g., farm tours, holiday markets, seasonal festivals, sporting events).
- Offer promotional pricing and packages for day trips (e.g., group discounts, dinner or shopping discounts, transportation bundles).
- Leverage social media and online marketing to reach potential day-trippers in nearby areas.



## OVERNIGHT EXPANSION



### Overnight Capacity Analysis:

- Assess current capacity, including hotels, motels, B&Bs, campgrounds, and vacation rentals.
- Identify gaps in specific segments (e.g., family-friendly lodging, unique boutique hotels).
- Conduct feasibility studies for expanding existing lodging options or developing new accommodations, considering demand, competition, and economic impact.

### Recommend Pursuing Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Grant Application:

- Research and choose relevant VTC grant opportunities focused on overnight stays.
- Develop a compelling proposal outlining the need, potential impact, and implementation plan for increasing overnight capacity.
- Highlight unique assets and strategies that differentiate Charles City County from other applicants.
- Partner with stakeholders and community members to demonstrate local support.

## RETAIL REVITALIZATION

### Prioritize Top Gap Categories:

Focus recruitment efforts on the top four identified categories:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Grocery   | • Hardware & Garden  |
| • Supermarkets and Grocery Stores                         | • Building Material and Supplies Dealers (e.g. Lowes, Home Depot, Menards) |
| • Convenience Retailers                                   | • Nursery, Garden Center, and Farm Supply Retailers                        |
| • Food Service & Accommodation                            | • Other Retail   |
| • Food Service and Drinking Places (Restaurants and Bars) | • General Merchandise  |
| • Hotels and Motels                                       | • Specialty Retailer   |
| • RV Parks and Recreational Camps                         |  |



## TAILORED BUSINESS ATTRACTION

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- Develop individual “pitch decks” for each target category, highlighting unique selling points like demographics, traffic patterns, and potential customer base.
- Offer customized incentives packages based on business needs and potential impact, including tax breaks, streamlined permitting, or marketing assistance.

### Public-Private Partnerships:

- Actively engage with private developers to explore opportunities for mixed-use projects incorporating anchor stores aligned with community needs.
- Seek public funding sources for infrastructure improvements supporting retail development, such as road access, parking, and beautification.
- Consider establishing Tax Increment Financing districts to capture revenue and reinvest it in strategic retail areas.

### Cultivate a Business-Friendly Environment:

- Review and update zoning and permitting regulations to ensure they are clear, efficient, and encourage development.
- Streamline licensing processes and offer transparent communication and support to prospective businesses.
- Foster a welcoming and collaborative community through business networking events, mentorship programs, and local support initiatives.

### Embrace Technology & Marketing:

- Develop a user-friendly online platform showcasing local businesses, offering product information, and facilitating online purchases.
- Implement data-driven marketing strategies targeting specific demographics and promoting unique offerings through social media, online ads, and partnerships.
- Consider a mobile app offering interactive features, loyalty programs, and wayfinding functions for visitors and residents.

### Strengthen Community Engagement:

- Establish a dedicated Chamber of Commerce with a strong focus on supporting both existing and new businesses.
- Feasibility Study: Conduct a study to assess the need and potential benefits of a dedicated Chamber of Commerce.
- Scope of Services: Define the core services the Chamber would offer (e.g., advocacy, networking, business resources, marketing).
- Funding & Sustainability: Develop a sustainable funding model (e.g., membership fees, sponsorships, grants).
- Community Engagement: Ensure strong community involvement and support for the Chambers’s establishment and operation.
- Ensure diverse representation and participation from various community stakeholders (residents, businesses, civic organizations) within the Chamber.
- Develop engaging community events like farmers markets, festivals, and pop-up shops to draw crowds and support local businesses.

### Collaborate & Leverage Partnerships:

- Work with neighboring communities to attract regional visitors and share resources for promoting a wider retail destination.
- Partner with regional and state economic development agencies to access additional funding, marketing support, and expertise.
- Explore opportunities to join buying groups or cooperatives to negotiate better prices for local businesses and improve competitiveness.

### Continuously Monitor & Adapt:

- Regularly collect and analyze data on retail trends, consumer spending, and the performance of existing businesses.
- Track the progress of implemented strategies and make adjustments based on outcomes and evolving needs.
- Foster an open and collaborative environment where feedback from businesses, residents, and stakeholders is encouraged and utilized for continuous improvement.



# Taking Action

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### SMART Goals

Charles City County charts its course towards revitalization with a 10-year plan grounded in SMART goals. This strategic approach targets key areas like economic growth, living-wage job creation, and enhanced tourism experiences, intending to build a thriving community for all within the next decade.

Measurable initiatives leverage local assets and offer incentives to attract businesses and boost economic activity. Investments in infrastructure and workforce development aim to create living-wage jobs (defined as jobs that meet the basic needs of a family in the local area) and improve visitor satisfaction. Recognizing potential challenges, the plan emphasizes transparency and inclusivity, fostering public engagement to ensure a brighter future for Charles City County.

## NEAR-TERM GOALS (1-2 YEARS)

### Economic Growth:

1. Leverage natural assets and the Virginia Capital Trail.
2. Offer tax incentives and grants to attract new businesses.
3. Organize community events and promotional campaigns.

### Job Creation (Living-wage Jobs):

4. Partner with local employers to create 250 living-wage jobs.
5. Establish job fairs and recruitment events.
6. Provide financial incentives for businesses.

### Tourism Revenue:

7. Increase tourism revenue by 15%.
8. Invest in destination marketing organizations.
9. Collaborate with local businesses and attractions.

### Visitor Satisfaction

10. Address infrastructure and utilities weaknesses.
11. Allocate funding for infrastructure improvements.
12. Implement customer feedback mechanisms.

### Retail Revitalization:

13. Facilitate the activation of vacant storefronts.
14. Provide technical assistance to local entrepreneurs.
15. Establish a retail incubator program.



## MEDIUM-TERM GOALS (3-5 YEARS)

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### Economic Growth:

- 16. Expand educational and upskilling opportunities.
- 17. Establish workforce development centers.
- 18. Implement outreach programs for lifelong learning.

### Job Creation (Living-wage Jobs):

- 19. Establish apprenticeship programs.
- 20. Provide financial incentives to employers.
- 21. Create pathways for career advancement.

### Tourism Revenue:

- 22. Develop infrastructure improvements.
- 23. Invest in tourism-related amenities.
- 24. Collaborate with stakeholders for funding.

### Visitor Satisfaction:

- 25. Implement training programs for hospitality staff.
- 26. Offer incentives and recognition programs.
- 27. Provide ongoing support for hospitality staff.

### Retail Revitalization:

- 28. Launch a small business incubator program.
- 29. Offer comprehensive business development services.
- 30. Foster a collaborative ecosystem of innovation.

## LONG-TERM GOALS (5-10 YEARS)

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### Economic Growth:

- 31. Mitigate the threat of population growth.
- 32. Implement place-making strategies and community development projects.
- 33. Collaborate to address systemic barriers.

### Job Creation (Invest in education infrastructure and workforce development):

- 34. Address the weakness in educational opportunities and resources.
- 35. Partner for innovative curricula and career pathways.
- 36. Establish scholarship programs, tuition assistance.

### Tourism Revenue:

- 37. Capitalize on the opportunity for tourism development.
- 38. Promote community-based tourism initiatives.
- 39. Collaborate with regional stakeholders for destination marketing.

### Visitor Satisfaction:

- 40. Enhance access to nature and recreational opportunities.
- 41. Develop multi-use trails, scenic overlooks, and interpretive signage.
- 42. Collaborate with sustainable tourism practices.

### Retail Revitalization:

- 43. Address the threat of public opposition to development.
- 44. Conduct outreach and public education campaigns.
- 45. Facilitate inclusive decision-making processes.



# Strategic Initiatives

This roadmap outlines initiatives to achieve economic prosperity, vibrant tourism, and retail revitalization in Charles City County, a double-distressed area. Recognizing its unique challenges, the plan prioritizes targeted initiatives, such as leveraging the Virginia Capital Trail to develop tourism and attract businesses and offering incentives for creating living-wage jobs. By implementing these and other strategic initiatives, Charles City County aims to create 250 new jobs, 15% increase in tourism revenue, and 15% increase in retail sales, building a brighter future for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

## NEAR-TERM GOALS (1-2 YEARS)

### Economic Growth

#### 1. Leverage natural assets and the Virginia Capital Trail.

**1.1 Foster public-private partnerships to develop tourism-related infrastructure projects, such as trail enhancements, scenic overlooks, and interpretive signage, along the Virginia Capital Trail.**

**1.1.1** Convene stakeholder meetings with local government officials, business leaders, and community organizations to identify priority infrastructure projects and potential funding sources for trail enhancements.

**1.1.2** Solicit input from trail users, residents, and business owners through community workshops, surveys, and public forums to inform the design and implementation of trail improvement initiatives.

**1.1.3** Form partnerships with private landowners, developers, and nonprofit organizations to secure access to land, rights-of-way, and easements for trail expansion and development, negotiating mutually beneficial agreements and incentives.

#### 2. Offer tax incentives and grants to attract new businesses.

**2.1 Attract new businesses, particularly those in the tourism and hospitality sectors, to invest in and revitalize targeted areas along the trail.**

**2.1.1** Develop a package of financial incentives, including tax abatements, property tax credits, and facade improvement grants, to incentivize business investment and redevelopment in designated trail corridor zones.

**2.1.2** Promote the availability of financial incentives and business support programs through targeted marketing campaigns, outreach efforts, and networking events aimed at attracting entrepreneurs, investors, and developers to the area.

**2.1.3** Streamline permitting processes, zoning regulations, and land use policies to facilitate business development and investment along the Virginia Capital Trail, reducing barriers to entry and promoting economic growth.



### 3. Organize community events and promotional campaigns.

#### 3.1 Raise awareness of the economic opportunities associated with the Virginia Capital Trail and encourage local entrepreneurship.

**3.1.1** Host public forums, workshops, and information sessions to educate residents, business owners, and community leaders about the economic benefits of the Virginia Capital Trail and opportunities for business development and job creation.

**3.1.2** Partner with local media outlets, bloggers, and influencers to generate positive publicity and media coverage of trail-related events, initiatives, and success stories, highlighting the economic impact and community benefits.

**3.1.3** Coordinate with local chambers of commerce, business associations, and tourism organizations to organize special events, festivals, and markets along the trail that showcase local businesses, artisans, and cultural attractions, driving foot traffic and consumer spending.

### Job Creation (Living-wage Jobs)

### 4. Partner with local employers to create 250 living-wage jobs.

#### 4.1 Collaborate with industry leaders to identify workforce needs and develop tailored training programs and job placement initiatives.

**4.1.1** Conduct industry needs assessments and labor market analyses to identify priority occupations, skill requirements, and training opportunities in key growth sectors.

**4.1.2** Establish partnerships with local employers, trade associations, and labor unions to design and deliver customized training programs, apprenticeship opportunities, and workforce development initiatives that align with industry needs and workforce demands.

**4.1.3** Implement job placement strategies and recruitment campaigns to connect job seekers with employment opportunities in high-demand sectors, leveraging job fairs, career expos, and online job boards to facilitate employer-to-employee matchmaking and talent acquisition.

### 5. Establish job fairs and recruitment events.

#### 5.1 Connect local residents with employment opportunities and facilitate job placement.

**5.1.1** Organize job fairs, career expos, and recruitment events in partnership with local employers, industry associations, and workforce development agencies to showcase job opportunities, conduct on-the-spot interviews, and facilitate job matching and placement for job seekers.

**5.1.2** Provide training and support services to job fair participants, including resume writing workshops, interview preparation sessions, and career counseling services, to help them present themselves effectively to potential employers and increase their chances of securing employment.

**5.1.3** Collaborate with local schools, colleges, and community organizations to promote job fairs and recruitment events to students, graduates, and job seekers, ensuring broad participation and engagement across diverse demographics and populations.

### 6. Provide financial incentives for businesses.

#### 6.1 Attract businesses that commit to creating living-wage jobs and investing in workforce development.

**6.1.1** Develop and implement incentive programs, such as job creation tax credits, wage subsidies, and workforce training grants, to incentivize businesses to hire local residents, pay competitive wages, and invest in employee training and development.

**6.1.2** Administer incentive programs through economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, and local governments, working closely with employers to determine eligibility criteria, application procedures, and reporting requirements, and ensure compliance with program guidelines.

**6.1.3** Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of incentive programs, tracking key performance metrics such as job creation, wage levels, and training outcomes, and making adjustments as needed to optimize program impact and return on investment.



## Tourism Revenue

### 7. Increase tourism revenue by 15%.

#### 7.1 Launch targeted marketing campaigns showcasing the unique attractions, historic sites, cultural heritage, and outdoor recreational opportunities to attract new visitors and encourage repeat visitation.

**7.1.1** Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy and messaging platform that highlights the distinctive features, authentic experiences, and hidden gems of Charles City County, positioning them as desirable destinations for leisure travel, adventure tourism, and cultural exploration.

**7.1.2** Design and produce promotional materials, including brochures, maps, videos, and digital content, that showcase the diverse attractions, activities, and amenities available to visitors, leveraging storytelling, visuals, and user-generated content to engage and inspire target audiences.

**7.1.3** Deploy targeted marketing campaigns across multiple channels and platforms, including social media, search engines, travel websites, and print publications, to reach potential visitors at different stages of the travel planning process, from inspiration and research to booking and conversion, and drive incremental visitation and spending.

### 8. Invest in destination marketing organizations.

#### 8.1 Develop comprehensive marketing strategies and leverage digital platforms to reach potential visitors.

**8.1.1** Establish or strengthen destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tourism bureaus, or convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) to serve as centralized hubs for destination marketing, visitor services, and industry collaboration, consolidating resources, expertise, and stakeholder engagement to maximize impact and efficiency.

**8.1.2** Allocate funding and resources to support destination marketing efforts, including staffing, marketing campaigns, and promotional activities, through public-private partnerships, government grants, and tourism assessments or taxes, ensuring sustainable funding streams and long-term financial viability for tourism promotion initiatives.

**8.1.3** Leverage digital marketing tools and platforms, such as websites, social media channels, email newsletters, and mobile apps, to engage with target audiences, deliver personalized content, and drive conversion and visitation to Charles City County, employing data analytics, retargeting, and performance tracking to optimize marketing ROI and effectiveness.

### 9. Collaborate with local businesses and attractions.

#### 9.1 Create package deals, discounts, and special events to incentivize tourism spending and extend visitor stays in the area.

**9.1.1** Facilitate partnerships and collaborations between tourism stakeholders, including hotels, restaurants, attractions, and tour operators, to develop integrated tourism packages, themed itineraries, and bundled offerings that provide added value and convenience to visitors, encouraging longer stays, higher spending, and repeat visitation.

**9.1.2** Negotiate group discounts, special promotions, and exclusive experiences with tourism suppliers and service providers to create compelling incentives and incentives for visitors to choose Charles City County as their preferred travel destination, leveraging economies of scale, strategic alliances, and cross-promotion opportunities to maximize value and impact.

**9.1.3** Coordinate with local event organizers, festivals, and community organizations to host special events, cultural celebrations, and seasonal festivals that attract tourists, stimulate demand, and generate buzz and excitement about Charles City County as a vibrant, dynamic destination worth exploring and experiencing firsthand.

## Visitor Satisfaction

### 10. Address infrastructure and utilities weaknesses.

#### 10.1 Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing infrastructure to identify deficiencies and prioritize upgrades.

**10.1.1** Conduct a thorough review and evaluation of existing infrastructure assets, including roads, bridges, sidewalks, utilities, parks, and public facilities, to assess their condition, performance, and capacity, using engineering surveys, asset inventories, and condition assessments to identify priority projects and areas for improvement.

**10.1.2** Engage with key stakeholders, including residents, businesses, visitors, and government agencies, through public meetings, surveys, and consultations, to gather input, feedback, and insights on infrastructure needs, preferences, and priorities, ensuring community involvement and buy-in for infrastructure investment decisions.

**10.1.3** Develop a strategic infrastructure improvement plan and investment strategy that outlines short-term and long-term priorities, funding sources, and implementation timelines for addressing identified infrastructure weaknesses and deficiencies, coordinating with relevant departments, agencies, and partners to align resources and efforts for maximum impact and effectiveness.

## 11. Allocate funding for infrastructure improvements.

### 11.1 Pursue funding opportunities and prioritize infrastructure improvements and utilities upgrades through public-private partnerships, grants, and government initiatives.

**11.1.1** Identify and pursue funding opportunities for infrastructure projects, such as federal grants, state funding programs, private donations, and public-private partnerships, that align with the strategic objectives and priorities of double distressed areas, leveraging matching funds, incentives, and creative financing mechanisms to maximize available resources and accelerate project delivery.

**11.1.2** Prioritize infrastructure investments based on criteria such as safety, accessibility, economic impact, and community benefit, using data-driven decision-making, cost-benefit analysis, and risk assessment to allocate resources effectively and efficiently and ensure equitable distribution of investments across neighborhoods and populations.

**11.1.3** Develop and implement procurement processes and project management procedures that streamline project delivery, reduce red tape, and expedite approvals for infrastructure improvements and utilities upgrades, fostering collaboration, accountability, and transparency among project stakeholders and facilitating timely completion and successful outcomes.

## 12. Implement customer feedback mechanisms.

### 12.1 Gather insights into visitor satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement in infrastructure and amenities.

**12.1.1** Design and distribute visitor satisfaction surveys and feedback forms to collect input, feedback, and suggestions from tourists, residents, and business owners on their experiences with infrastructure, utilities, and public amenities, using multiple channels and touchpoints to reach diverse audiences and capture comprehensive data.

**12.1.2** Analyze survey responses and feedback data to identify trends, patterns, and common themes related to infrastructure satisfaction, reliability, and usability, using qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques to prioritize improvement opportunities, address systemic issues, and implement targeted interventions that enhance the overall visitor experience and quality of life.

**12.1.3** Establish a feedback loop and continuous improvement process that integrates customer insights, stakeholder input, and performance metrics into decision-making and planning for infrastructure investments and utilities management, ensuring that infrastructure projects and service enhancements are responsive, adaptive, and aligned with evolving needs and expectations of residents and visitors over time.

## Retail Revitalization

## 13. Facilitate the activation of vacant storefronts.

### 13.1 Offer tax incentives, grants, and low-interest loans to property owners, developers, and entrepreneurs to activate vacant storefronts.

**13.1.1** Design and implement a targeted incentive program that offers financial incentives, such as property tax abatements, facade improvement grants, and renovation loans, to property owners, developers, or entrepreneurs who invest in the rehabilitation, revitalization, or activation of vacant storefronts in priority commercial corridors and downtown districts, promoting private investment and catalyzing economic development.

**13.1.2** Establish eligibility criteria, application procedures, and performance metrics for incentive programs, ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in the selection and evaluation of projects, and provide technical assistance and support to applicants throughout the application process, from initial inquiry and feasibility assessment to final approval and project implementation.

**13.1.3** Monitor and evaluate the impact of incentive programs on retail revitalization and community revitalization objectives, tracking key performance indicators such as property occupancy rates, business occupancy rates, sales tax revenue, and job creation, and make adjustments to program design and implementation based on feedback, data analysis, and lessons learned to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in achieving program goals.





## 14. Provide technical assistance to local entrepreneurs.

### 14.1 Offer support services to entrepreneurs and small business owners interested in leasing or purchasing retail space in targeted areas.

**14.1.1** Establish a small business assistance center or retail resource hub that offers a range of support services and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs, startups, and existing businesses, including business plan development, financial modeling, market research, lease negotiation, and storefront design, to help them navigate the complexities of retail real estate and succeed in launching or expanding their ventures.

**14.1.2** Recruit and train a team of business advisors, retail experts, and industry specialists to provide one-on-one counseling, coaching, and mentorship to small business owners and entrepreneurs, offering personalized guidance, feedback, and support tailored to their specific needs, goals, and challenges, and facilitating connections with other service providers, professionals, and resources in the community.

**14.1.3** Foster partnerships and collaborations with local banks, credit unions, community development financial institutions (CDFIs), and alternative lenders to expand access to capital and financing options for small businesses and startups in double distressed areas, offering financial literacy training, microloan programs, and alternative financing solutions to address barriers to entry and promote entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in underserved communities.

## 15. Establish a retail incubator program.

### 15.1 Provide aspiring entrepreneurs with access to shared retail spaces, mentorship, and business resources to launch and grow their ventures.

**15.1.1** Identify suitable locations for retail incubator spaces in high-traffic areas and commercial districts, leveraging existing infrastructure, vacant storefronts, and underutilized spaces to create affordable, flexible, and supportive environments for small businesses and startups to test, refine, and scale their retail concepts.

**15.1.2** Develop a programmatic framework and operational model for the retail incubator program, outlining key components such as tenant selection criteria, lease terms, shared amenities, programming, and support services, and establish partnerships with local organizations, industry experts, and service providers to deliver value-added services, networking opportunities, and mentorship to incubator participants.

**15.1.3** Recruit and onboard a cohort of aspiring entrepreneurs, innovators, and creative professionals to participate in the program.

#### Leverage federal programs to create a revolving loan program

EDA: <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/revolving-loan-fund>

Congressional Research Service: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11449>

HUD: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg/>

## MEDIUM-TERM GOALS (3-5 YEARS)

### Economic Growth

## 16. Expand educational and upskilling opportunities.

### 16.1 Collaborate with local educational institutions, businesses, and industry associations to develop apprenticeship programs and vocational training courses tailored to the needs of key industries.

**16.1.1** Conduct a needs assessment and skills gap analysis to identify priority industries and occupations.

**16.1.2** Form partnerships with local colleges, technical schools, and workforce development agencies to design curriculum and training programs that align with industry needs and workforce demands.

**16.1.3** Secure funding and grants from government agencies, foundations, and private donors to support program development, instructor hiring, and student scholarships.

## 17. Establish workforce development centers.

### 17.1 Provide residents with access to job training and career counseling services.

**17.1.1** Identify suitable locations for workforce development centers and assess the feasibility of establishing satellite offices or mobile outreach units in underserved communities.

**17.1.2** Hire qualified career counselors, job coaches, and industry specialists to staff workforce development centers and provide personalized support and guidance to job seekers.

**17.1.3** Collaborate with local employers, industry associations, and economic development agencies to facilitate job fairs, recruitment events, and networking opportunities for program participants.

## 18. Implement outreach programs for lifelong learning.

### 18.1 Promote continuous upskilling among residents.

**18.1.1** Develop targeted marketing materials, digital content, and social media campaigns to raise awareness of available training programs, career pathways, and professional development opportunities.

**18.1.2** Host informational sessions, workshops, and webinars on topics such as resume writing, interview skills, and career planning to empower individuals to take charge of their own career development and advancement.

**18.1.3** Partner with local community organizations, churches, and civic groups to reach underserved populations and marginalized communities with tailored outreach and support services.

## Job Creation (Living-wage Jobs)

### 19. Establish apprenticeship programs.

#### 19.1 Forge partnerships to design and implement apprenticeship programs.

**19.1.1** Convene stakeholder meetings and working groups to identify priority industries, target occupations, and eligibility criteria for apprenticeship programs.

**19.1.2** Develop a standardized apprenticeship curriculum and training framework that meets industry standards, regulatory requirements, and workforce development goals.

**19.1.3** Recruit and onboard employers, mentors, and apprentices to participate in program pilot initiatives, ensuring buy-in and commitment from all stakeholders.

### 20. Provide financial incentives to employers.

#### 20.1 Offer incentives to employers who hire program graduates.

**20.1.1** Research and benchmark best practices in apprenticeship incentive programs from other jurisdictions, industries, and sectors to inform policy development and program design.

**20.1.2** Lobby policymakers and elected officials to introduce legislation, executive orders, or municipal ordinances that provide tax incentives, wage subsidies, or training grants to employers who hire apprentices.

**20.1.3** Work with government agencies, economic development organizations, and industry associations to administer and promote apprenticeship incentive programs, monitor program outcomes, and evaluate return on investment.

### 21. Create pathways for career advancement.

#### 21.1 Offer opportunities for credentials and degrees within apprenticeship programs.

**21.1.1** Collaborate with local colleges, universities, and trade schools to develop articulation agreements, credit transfer pathways, and stackable credentials that recognize prior learning and support upward mobility for apprentices.

**21.1.2** Design and implement mentorship programs, peer support networks, and alumni associations to provide ongoing guidance, coaching, and networking opportunities for apprentices as they progress through their careers.

**21.1.3** Advocate for policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within apprenticeship programs, including outreach to underrepresented populations, affirmative action plans, and cultural competency training for program staff and mentors.

## Tourism Revenue

### 22. Develop infrastructure improvements.

#### 22.1 Undertake projects to enhance tourist destinations.

**22.1.1** Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing infrastructure and amenities in key tourist areas, identifying areas for improvement, expansion, and investment.

**22.1.2** Prioritize infrastructure projects based on criteria such as visitor usage, economic impact, and strategic alignment with tourism development goals and objectives.

**22.1.3** Secure funding and resources from government agencies, public-private partnerships, and community fundraising efforts to finance infrastructure improvements, leveraging grants, bonds, and impact fees where applicable.

### 23. Invest in tourism-related amenities.

#### 23.1 Develop attractions to diversify the visitor experience.

**23.1.1** Conduct market research and visitor surveys to identify unmet demand and emerging trends in outdoor recreation, adventure tourism, and cultural heritage experiences.

**23.1.2** Design and develop new tourism products and attractions that capitalize on the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique assets of Charles City County, including guided tours, immersive experiences, and themed itineraries.

**23.1.3** Collaborate with local entrepreneurs, artists, and artisans to create and curate authentic, immersive, and memorable visitor experiences that showcase the diversity and creativity of the community.

### 24. Collaborate with stakeholders for funding.

#### 24.1 Prioritize and fund projects aligned with tourism development goals.

**24.1.1** Form a tourism task force or advisory committee with representatives from government, business, academia, and community groups to oversee the planning and implementation of tourism infrastructure projects and programs.

**24.1.2** Develop a tourism master plan and investment strategy that identifies priority projects, sets clear goals and objectives, and outlines strategies for financing, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

**24.1.3** Engage stakeholders and solicit input from residents, visitors, and other stakeholders through public meetings, workshops, and online surveys to ensure that tourism development efforts are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to community needs and preferences.



## Visitor Satisfaction

### 25. Implement training programs for hospitality staff.

#### 25.1 Develop customized training modules and certification programs for hospitality industry professionals.

**25.1.1** Conduct a needs assessment and skills gap analysis to identify areas for improvement and training needs among hospitality staff in double distressed areas, considering factors such as language proficiency, technical skills, and interpersonal communication.

**25.1.2** Design and develop training materials, resources, and curriculum in collaboration with industry experts, destination marketing organizations, and educational institutions, ensuring that content is relevant, engaging, and accessible to a diverse workforce.

**25.1.3** Deliver training sessions, workshops, and seminars in-person and online, using a variety of instructional methods and delivery formats, such as interactive simulations, role-playing exercises, and virtual reality experiences, to accommodate different learning styles and preferences.

### 26. Offer incentives and recognition programs.



#### 26.1 Provide incentives to businesses investing in employee training.

**26.1.1** Develop a recognition program or certification scheme that rewards businesses and organizations for achieving excellence in customer service, sustainability, and community engagement, based on specific criteria and performance metrics.

**26.1.2** Partner with industry associations, chambers of commerce, and destination marketing organizations to promote participation in the recognition program, showcase success stories, and celebrate achievements through awards ceremonies, press releases, and social media campaigns.

**26.1.3** Provide ongoing support and resources to participating businesses, including access to training materials, best practices guides, and peer networking opportunities, to help them maintain and improve their service standards over time.

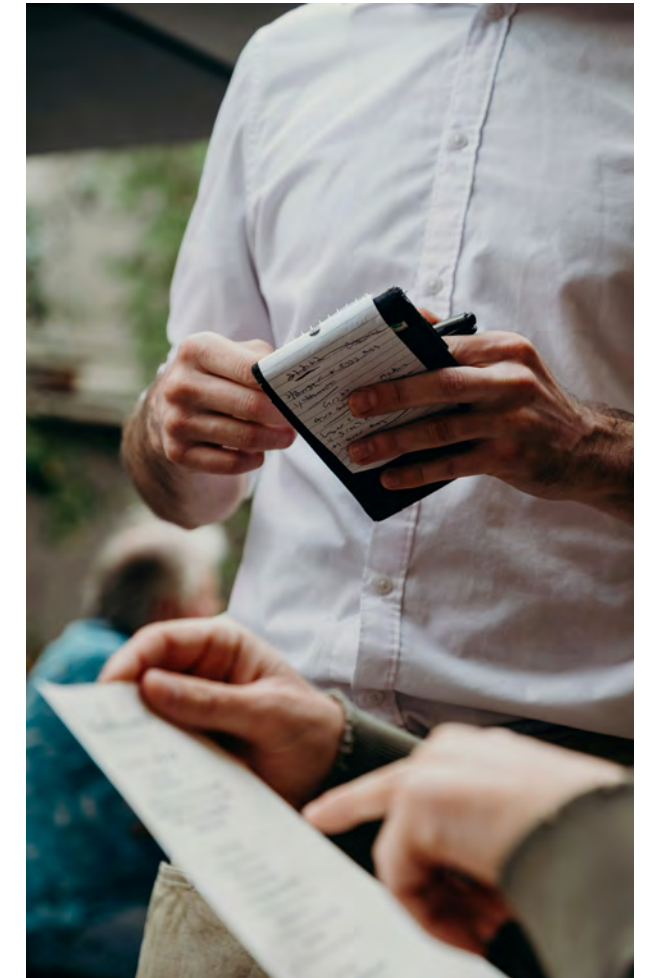
### 27. Provide ongoing support for hospitality staff.

#### 27.1 Offer mentorship, continuing education, and access to best practices and industry benchmarks.

**27.1.1** Establish a hospitality training academy or center of excellence to serve as a hub for professional development, knowledge sharing, and networking within the local tourism industry, offering a range of programs and services tailored to the needs of frontline staff, supervisors, and managers.

**27.1.2** Recruit experienced mentors, coaches, and subject matter experts from within the hospitality sector to provide guidance, feedback, and support to frontline employees, helping them overcome challenges, build confidence, and advance their careers.

**27.1.3** Facilitate ongoing learning and skills development through a variety of channels, including workshops, webinars, online courses, and industry conferences, that cover topics such as leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, and crisis management, to prepare hospitality staff for real-world scenarios and challenges.





## Retail Revitalization

### 28. Launch a small business incubator program.

#### 28.1 Establish a dedicated space for nurturing small businesses.

**28.1.1** Secure funding and resources from government grants, private investors, and philanthropic organizations to finance the construction, renovation, and operation of the small business incubator facility, including leasing agreements, utilities, and staffing costs.

**28.1.2** Develop a comprehensive business plan and operating model for the small business incubator, outlining key objectives, target markets, revenue streams, and performance metrics, to guide decision-making and ensure sustainability over time.

**28.1.3** Recruit experienced entrepreneurs, mentors, and industry experts to serve as advisors, coaches, and consultants to incubator tenants, offering guidance, feedback, and practical advice on business planning, marketing, finance, and operations.



### 29. Offer comprehensive business development services.

#### 29.1 Provide mentorship, coaching, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs.

**29.1.1** Design and deliver a structured curriculum and training program for incubator tenants, covering topics such as business planning, market research, product development, sales and marketing, financial management, and legal compliance, to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.

**29.1.2** Provide one-on-one coaching, counseling, and support to individual entrepreneurs, helping them set goals, overcome challenges, and navigate the complexities of starting and growing a business in double distressed areas.

**29.1.3** Facilitate access to capital, funding opportunities, and investment networks for incubator tenants, connecting them with lenders, investors, and crowdfunding platforms to secure financing for startup costs, working capital, and growth initiatives.



### 30. Foster a collaborative ecosystem of innovation.

#### 30.1 Create networking opportunities and industry partnerships.

**30.1.1** Organize regular networking events, meetups, and mixers for incubator tenants, alumni, and community members to build relationships, share ideas, and explore collaboration opportunities across different industries and sectors.

**30.1.2** Host pitch competitions, business plan competitions, and demo days to showcase the achievements and innovations of incubator startups, attract media attention, and generate excitement and interest from potential investors and customers.

**30.1.3** Forge partnerships and alliances with local business associations, economic development agencies, and corporate sponsors to provide additional resources, expertise, and support to incubator tenants, expanding their networks and opportunities for success.



## LONG-TERM GOALS (5-10 YEARS)

### Economic Growth

#### 31. Mitigate the threat of population decline.

**31.1 Develop targeted marketing campaigns and promotional initiatives to attract new residents, businesses, and investors, highlighting the region's unique assets, quality of life, and economic opportunities.**

**31.1.1** Conduct market research and stakeholder consultations to identify target audiences, key messaging, and marketing channels.

**31.1.2** Design and launch a comprehensive marketing campaign, including digital advertising, social media outreach, and print materials.

**31.1.3** Partner with local media outlets, influencers, and community leaders to amplify messaging and reach diverse audiences.

#### 32. Implement place-making strategies and community development projects.

**32.1 Enhance the livability and attractiveness, including the creation of public parks, recreational facilities, and cultural amenities.**

**32.1.1** Conduct a needs assessment and feasibility study to identify priority projects and potential funding sources.

**32.1.2** Develop conceptual designs and site plans for public spaces and community facilities, incorporating input from residents and stakeholders.

**32.1.3** Secure funding through grants, public-private partnerships, and community fundraising efforts to support project implementation.

#### 33. Collaborate to address systemic barriers.

**33.1 Engage local stakeholders, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to address systemic barriers to growth and investment in double distressed areas, such as blight, crime, and inadequate infrastructure.**

**33.1.1** Convene a task force or advisory committee to develop a strategic action plan for revitalizing distressed neighborhoods.

**33.1.2** Identify priority areas for intervention and develop targeted strategies to address specific challenges, such as property rehabilitation, public safety improvements, and infrastructure upgrades.

**33.1.3** Leverage resources from federal, state, and local agencies to implement revitalization projects and programs, including brownfield remediation, neighborhood stabilization, and community policing initiatives.

### Job Creation (Invest in education infrastructure and workforce development)

#### 34. Address the weakness in educational opportunities and resources.

**34.1 Allocate funding and resources to improve the quality and accessibility of education, including the construction of new schools, renovation of existing facilities, and expansion of educational programs and extracurricular activities.**

**34.1.1** Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps and deficiencies in educational infrastructure and resources.

**34.1.2** Develop a capital improvement plan and budget proposal for school construction, renovation, and technology upgrades.

**34.1.3** Advocate for funding support from federal, state, and local governments, as well as private donors and philanthropic organizations.

#### 35. Partner for innovative curricula and career pathways.

**35.1 Collaborate with local school districts, colleges, and universities to develop innovative curricula, career pathways, and academic support services that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of students.**

**35.1.1** Establish collaborative partnerships and memorandum of understanding agreements with educational institutions and community organizations.

**35.1.2** Design and implement career readiness programs, dual enrollment opportunities, and work-based learning experiences for high school students.

**35.1.3** Provide professional development and training for educators to enhance instructional practices, cultural competency, and student engagement.

#### 36. Establish scholarship programs, tuition assistance.

**36.1 Assistance initiatives and financial aid packages to reduce barriers to higher education and workforce training for residents.**

**36.1.1** Develop eligibility criteria and application processes for scholarship programs and financial aid awards.

**36.1.2** Promote awareness of available scholarships and funding opportunities through outreach events, school presentations, and digital marketing campaigns.

**36.1.3** Establish partnerships with local employers, industry associations, and workforce development agencies to offer internship opportunities, job placement assistance, and tuition reimbursement programs.

## Tourism Revenue

### 37. Capitalize on the opportunity for tourism development.

**37.1 Invest in sustainable tourism infrastructure and eco-tourism initiatives that leverage the natural beauty and cultural heritage to attract environmentally conscious travelers and outdoor enthusiasts.**

**37.1.1** Conduct a destination assessment and market analysis to identify tourism assets, market segments, and competitive advantages.

**37.1.2** Develop a tourism development plan and investment strategy, prioritizing projects that enhance visitor experiences and protect natural resources.

**37.1.3** Secure funding through grants, private investments, and public-private partnerships to support infrastructure improvements, interpretive signage, and marketing campaigns.

### 38. Promote community-based tourism initiatives.

**38.1 Promote community-based tourism initiatives and cultural heritage tourism trails that showcase the unique traditions, customs, and craftsmanship of local artisans and indigenous communities.**

**38.1.1** Collaborate with local cultural organizations, heritage groups, and indigenous communities to develop authentic tourism experiences and storytelling programs.

**38.1.2** Design and implement guided tours, artisan workshops, and cultural festivals that celebrate the cultural diversity and heritage of Charles City County.

**38.1.3** Market tourism packages and itineraries to niche travel markets, including heritage travelers, cultural enthusiasts, and experiential tourists.

### 39. Collaborate with regional stakeholders for destination marketing.

**39.1 Partner with regional tourism boards, travel agencies, and hospitality industry partners to market areas as premier travel destinations and leisure hubs.**

**39.1.1** Establish partnerships and joint marketing agreements with regional tourism stakeholders and travel influencers.

**39.1.2** Develop branded marketing materials, promotional videos, and digital content to showcase the unique attractions and experiences.

**39.1.3** Host familiarization tours, press trips, and travel industry events to generate media coverage and increase awareness of the destination among travel trade professionals and consumer audiences.

## Visitor Satisfaction

### 40. Enhance access to nature and recreational opportunities.

**40.1 Preserve and expand green spaces, nature reserves, and outdoor recreation areas, ensuring equitable access to natural amenities and leisure activities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.**

**40.1.1** Conduct a green infrastructure assessment and ecological inventory to identify priority conservation areas and recreational assets.

**40.1.2** Develop a conservation management plan and land stewardship strategy, including land acquisition, habitat restoration, and trail development.

**40.1.3** Engage community volunteers, youth groups, and conservation corps in stewardship activities, such as tree planting, litter cleanups, and invasive species removal.

### 41. Develop multi-use trails, scenic overlooks, and interpretive signage.

**41.1 Create recreational opportunities that highlight local cultural heritage, ecological significance, and biodiversity in eco-tourism routes and heritage corridors.**

**41.1.1** Conduct a trail feasibility study and route assessment to identify suitable locations and design criteria for trail development.

**41.1.2** Secure permits and approvals from regulatory agencies, landowners, and stakeholders for trail construction and trailhead facilities.

**41.1.3** Collaborate with local artists, historians, and community groups to design and install interpretive exhibits, public art installations, and wayfinding signage along trail routes.

### 42. Collaborate with sustainable tourism practices.

**42.1 Engage with local conservation organizations, outdoor recreation groups, and volunteer networks to steward natural resources, protect wildlife habitats, and promote sustainable tourism practices.**

**42.1.1** Form partnerships and alliances with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), outdoor recreation clubs, and volunteer organizations to coordinate conservation initiatives and stewardship projects.

**42.1.2** Provide training and resources to volunteers and citizen scientists to monitor wildlife populations, collect ecological data, and implement habitat restoration activities.

**42.1.3** Organize community events, nature walks, and educational programs to raise awareness of conservation issues, promote responsible outdoor recreation, and foster environmental stewardship.



## Retail Revitalization

### 43. Address the threat of public opposition to development.

**43.1** Engage with community stakeholders, neighborhood associations, and advocacy groups to solicit feedback, gather input, and build consensus around retail revitalization projects and development initiatives.



**43.1.1** Establish a community advisory committee or task force to oversee the planning and implementation of retail revitalization efforts and ensure representation of diverse stakeholder interests.

**43.1.2** Conduct public meetings, focus groups, and workshops to facilitate dialogue, exchange ideas, and identify shared goals and priorities for retail development and placemaking.

**43.1.3** Develop a broad strategy and communications plan to keep residents informed, involved, and invested in the revitalization process, including regular updates, newsletters, and social media outreach.

### 44. Conduct outreach and public education campaigns.

**44.1** Dispel misconceptions, alleviate concerns, and generate support for retail revitalization efforts that align with community values, enhance quality of life, and contribute to economic growth and prosperity.

**44.1.1** Develop informational materials, fact sheets, and FAQs to address common questions and misconceptions about retail development and its potential impacts on neighborhoods and communities.

**44.1.2** Organize community forums, public hearings, and open houses to provide opportunities for residents to learn about proposed projects, ask questions, and express their opinions and concerns.

**44.1.3** Engage with local media outlets, influencers, and opinion leaders to shape public discourse, counter negative narratives, and highlight the benefits of retail revitalization for the community as a whole.



### 45. Facilitate inclusive decision-making processes.

**45.1** Empower residents through participatory planning workshops, and community design charrettes to shape the future of their neighborhoods, influence development priorities, and co-create vibrant, sustainable, and equitable retail environments.

**45.1.1** Organize design charrettes, visioning sessions, and interactive workshops to gather input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders on their aspirations and priorities for retail revitalization.

**45.1.2** Collaborate with urban planners, architects, and landscape designers to translate community input and feedback into design concepts, development guidelines, and zoning regulations that reflect local preferences and values.

**45.1.3** Establish mechanisms for ongoing community involvement and oversight, such as advisory boards, review committees, and public comment periods, to ensure transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in the decision-making process.



# Implementation Plan

This section outlines the key components of a comprehensive action plan for achieving Charles City County's goals of economic prosperity, vibrant tourism, and retail revitalization. Each initiative will be accompanied by a detailed action plan detailing specific tasks, responsible parties, timelines, budgets, and performance metrics for effective implementation and evaluation.



## NEAR-TERM GOALS (1-2 YEARS):

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#1 Leverage natural assets and the Virginia Capital Trail.</b>			
<b>1.1</b> Foster public-private partnerships to develop tourism-related infrastructure projects	<b>1.1.1</b> Convene stakeholder meetings to identify priority projects and funding sources. <b>1.1.2</b> Solicit input from trail users and residents through community engagement. <b>1.1.3</b> Form partnerships for access to land.	12-24 months	Number of public-private partnerships formed
<b>#2 Leverage natural assets and the Virginia Capital Trail.</b>			
<b>2.1</b> Attract new businesses, particularly those in the tourism and hospitality sectors, to invest in and revitalize targeted areas along the trail.	<b>2.1.1</b> Develop financial incentive packages. <b>2.1.2</b> Promote incentives through marketing campaigns. <b>2.1.3</b> Streamline permitting processes.	12-24 months	Number of new businesses attracted
<b>#3 Organize community events and promotional campaigns.</b>			
<b>3.1</b> Raise awareness of the economic opportunities associated with the Virginia Capital Trail and encourage local entrepreneurship.	<b>3.1.1</b> Host public forums and workshops. <b>3.1.2</b> Partner with local media for publicity. <b>3.1.3</b> Coordinate with chambers of commerce for events.	6-12 months	Increase in website traffic

### JOB CREATION:

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#4 Partner with local employers to create 250 living-wage jobs.</b>			
<b>4.1</b> Collaborate with industry leaders to identify workforce needs and develop tailored training programs and job placement initiatives.	<b>4.1.1</b> Conduct industry needs assessments. <b>4.1.2</b> Establish partnerships for training programs. <b>4.1.3</b> Implement recruitment strategies.	12-24 months	Number of training programs developed
<b>#5 Establish job fairs and recruitment events.</b>			
<b>5.1</b> Connect local residents with employment opportunities and facilitate job placement.	<b>5.1.1</b> Organize job fairs and expos. <b>5.1.2</b> Provide training and support services. <b>5.1.3</b> Promote events through educational institutions.	6-12 months	Number of job seekers attending
<b>#6 Provide financial incentives for businesses.</b>			
<b>6.1</b> Attract businesses that commit to creating living-wage jobs and investing in workforce development.	<b>6.1.1</b> Develop and implement incentive programs. <b>6.1.2</b> Administer incentives through agencies. <b>6.1.3</b> Monitor and evaluate program effectiveness.	12-24 months	Cost per job created



## TOURISM REVENUE:

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#7 Increase tourism revenue by 15%.</b>			
<b>7.1</b> Launch targeted marketing campaigns showcasing the unique attractions, historic sites, cultural heritage, and outdoor recreational opportunities to attract new visitors and encourage repeat visitation.	<b>7.1.1</b> Develop marketing strategy and messaging. <b>7.1.2</b> Design promotional materials. <b>7.1.3</b> Deploy marketing campaigns across multiple channels.	6-12 months	Increase in website visitors
<b>#8 Invest in destination marketing organizations.</b>			
<b>8.1</b> Develop comprehensive marketing strategies and leverage digital platforms to reach potential visitors.	<b>8.1.1</b> Establish or strengthen DMOs or CVBs. <b>8.1.2</b> Allocate funding for marketing efforts. <b>8.1.3</b> Leverage digital marketing tools.	12-24 months	Increase in tourism inquiries
<b>#9 Collaborate with local businesses and attractions.</b>			
<b>9.1</b> Create package deals, discounts, and special events to incentivize tourism spending and extend visitor stays in the area.	<b>9.1.1</b> Facilitate partnerships for tourism packages. <b>9.1.2</b> Negotiate discounts and promotions. <b>9.1.3</b> Coordinate special events.	12-24 months	Number of tourist packages developed

## VISITOR SATISFACTION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#10 Address infrastructure and utilities weaknesses.</b>			
<b>10.1</b> Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing infrastructure to identify deficiencies and prioritize upgrades.	<b>10.1.1</b> Review existing infrastructure assets. <b>10.1.2</b> Engage stakeholders for input. <b>10.1.3</b> Develop improvement plan.	12-24 months	Identified infrastructure improvement needs
<b>#11 Allocate funding for infrastructure improvements.</b>			
<b>11.1</b> Pursue funding opportunities and prioritize infrastructure upgrades through public-private partnerships, grants, and government initiatives.	<b>11.1.1</b> Identify and pursue funding opportunities. <b>11.1.2</b> Prioritize infrastructure investments. <b>11.1.3</b> Develop procurement processes.	12-24 months	Amount of funding secured
<b>#12 Implement customer feedback mechanisms.</b>			
<b>12.1</b> Gather insights into visitor satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement in infrastructure and amenities.	<b>4.3.1</b> Design and distribute visitor satisfaction surveys. <b>4.3.2</b> Analyze feedback data. <b>4.3.3</b> Establish feedback loop.	6-12 months	Response rate to surveys

## RETAIL REVITALIZATION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#13 Facilitate the activation of vacant storefronts.</b>			
<b>13.1</b> Offer tax incentives, grants, and low-interest loans to property owners, developers, and entrepreneurs to activate vacant storefronts.	<b>13.1.1</b> Design incentive program. <b>13.1.2</b> Establish eligibility criteria. <b>13.1.3</b> Monitor program impact.	12-24 months	Number of businesses utilizing incentives
<b>#14 Provide technical assistance to local entrepreneurs.</b>			
<b>14.1</b> Offer support services to entrepreneurs and small business owners interested in leasing or purchasing retail space in targeted areas.	<b>14.1.1</b> Establish a small business assistance center. <b>14.1.2</b> Recruit and train business advisors. <b>14.1.3</b> Foster partnerships with lenders.	6-12 months	Number of entrepreneurs assisted
<b>#15 Establish a retail incubator program.</b>			
<b>15.1</b> Provide aspiring entrepreneurs with access to shared retail spaces, mentorship, and business resources to launch and grow their ventures.	<b>15.1.1</b> Identify locations for retail incubator spaces. <b>15.1.2</b> Develop program framework. <b>15.1.3</b> Recruit and onboard entrepreneurs.	12-24 months	Number of entrepreneurs participating





## MEDIUM-TERM GOALS (3-5 YEARS):

### ECONOMIC GROWTH:

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#16 Expand educational and upskilling opportunities.</b>			
<b>16.1</b> Collaborate with local educational institutions, businesses, and industry associations	<b>16.1.1</b> Conduct needs assessment and skills gap analysis. <b>16.1.2</b> Form partnerships for curriculum development. <b>16.1.3</b> Secure funding for program support.	12-24 months	Number of skills gaps identified
<b>#17 Establish workforce development centers.</b>			
<b>17.1</b> Provide residents with access to job training and career counseling services.	<b>17.1.1</b> Identify suitable locations. <b>17.1.2</b> Hire qualified staff. <b>17.1.3</b> Collaborate for job fairs.	6-12 months	Number of centers established
<b>#18 Implement outreach programs for lifelong learning.</b>			
<b>18.1</b> Promote continuous upskilling among residents.	<b>18.1.1</b> Develop marketing materials. <b>18.1.2</b> Host informational sessions. <b>18.1.3</b> Partner with community organizations.	3-6 months	Increase in website traffic

### JOB CREATION:

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#19 Establish apprenticeship programs.</b>			
<b>19.1</b> Forge partnerships for apprenticeship programs	<b>19.1.1</b> Convene stakeholder meetings. <b>19.1.2</b> Develop standardized curriculum. <b>19.1.3</b> Recruit participants.	12-24 months	Number of apprenticeship programs developed
<b>#20 Provide financial incentives to employers.</b>			
<b>20.1</b> Offer incentives to employers who hire program graduates.	<b>20.1.1</b> Research best practices. <b>20.1.2</b> Lobby policymakers. <b>20.1.3</b> Administer programs.	6-12 months	Number of employers participating in incentives
<b>#21 Create pathways for career advancement.</b>			
<b>21.1</b> Offer opportunities for credentials and degrees within apprenticeship programs.	<b>21.1.1</b> Collaborate with educational institutions. <b>21.1.2</b> Design mentorship programs. <b>21.1.3</b> Advocate for diversity and inclusion.	12-36 months	Number of mentorship programs established

### TOURISM REVENUE

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#22 Develop infrastructure improvements.</b>			
<b>22.1</b> Undertake projects to enhance tourist destinations.	<b>22.1.1</b> Conduct infrastructure assessment. <b>22.1.2</b> Prioritize projects. <b>22.1.3</b> Secure funding.	18-36 months	Number of projects completed
<b>#23 Invest in tourism-related amenities.</b>			
<b>23.1</b> Develop attractions to diversify the visitor experience.	<b>23.1.1</b> Conduct market research. <b>23.1.2</b> Design new tourism products. <b>23.1.3</b> Collaborate with local stakeholders.	12-24 months	Number of new tourism products developed
<b>#24 Collaborate with stakeholders for funding.</b>			
<b>24.1</b> Prioritize and fund projects aligned with tourism development goals.	<b>24.1.1</b> Form a tourism task force. <b>24.1.2</b> Develop a tourism master plan. <b>24.1.3</b> Engage stakeholders.	24-48 months	Completion of tourism master plan





## VISITOR SATISFACTION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#25 Implement training programs for hospitality staff.</b>			
<b>25.1</b> Develop customized training modules	<b>25.1.1</b> Conduct needs assessment. <b>25.1.2</b> Design training materials. <b>25.1.3</b> Deliver training sessions.	6-12 months	Number of training modules developed
<b>#26 Offer incentives and recognition programs.</b>			
<b>26.1</b> Provide incentives to businesses investing in employee training.	<b>26.1.1</b> Develop recognition program. <b>26.1.2</b> Partner with industry associations. <b>26.1.3</b> Provide ongoing support.	12-24 months	Number of staff participating in recognition program
<b>#27 Provide ongoing support for hospitality staff.</b>			
<b>27.1</b> Offer mentorship, continuing education, and access to best practices and industry benchmarks.	<b>27.1.1</b> Establish a hospitality training academy. <b>27.1.2</b> Recruit mentors. <b>27.1.3</b> Facilitate ongoing learning.	18-36 months	Number of mentors recruited



## RETAIL REVITALIZATION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#28 Launch a small business incubator program.</b>			
<b>28.1</b> Establish a dedicated small business incubator	<b>28.1.1</b> Secure funding and resources. <b>28.1.2</b> Develop a business plan. <b>28.1.3</b> Recruit mentors and advisors.	12-24 months	Incubator space opened
<b>#29 Offer comprehensive business development services.</b>			
<b>29.1</b> Provide mentorship, coaching, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs.	<b>29.1.1</b> Design and deliver a structured curriculum. <b>29.1.2</b> Provide one-on-one coaching. <b>29.1.3</b> Facilitate access to capital.	6-12 months	Number of businesses completing program
<b>#30 Foster a collaborative ecosystem of innovation.</b>			
<b>30.1</b> Create networking opportunities and industry partnerships.	<b>30.1.1</b> Organize networking events. <b>30.1.2</b> Host pitch competitions. <b>30.1.3</b> Forge partnerships with local organizations.	12-36 months	Number of networking events held



## LONG-TERM GOALS (5-10 YEARS):

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#31 Mitigate the threat of population decline.</b>			
<b>31.1</b> Develop targeted marketing campaigns and promotional initiatives to attract new residents, businesses, and investors, highlighting the region's unique assets, quality of life, and economic opportunities.	<b>31.1.1</b> Conduct market research and stakeholder consultations. <b>31.1.2</b> Design and launch a comprehensive marketing campaign. <b>31.1.3</b> Partner with local media and community leaders.	6-12 months	Increased website traffic
<b>#32 Implement place-making strategies and community development projects.</b>			
<b>32.1</b> Enhance the livability and attractiveness, including the creation of public parks, recreational facilities, and cultural amenities.	<b>32.1.1</b> Conduct needs assessment and feasibility study. <b>32.1.2</b> Develop conceptual designs. <b>32.1.3</b> Secure funding.	12-24 months	Number of projects completed
<b>#33 Collaborate to address systemic barriers.</b>			
<b>33.1</b> Engage local stakeholders, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to address systemic barriers to growth and investment in double distressed areas, such as blight, crime, and inadequate infrastructure.	<b>33.1.1</b> Convene task force for strategic action plan. <b>33.1.2</b> Identify priority areas and develop targeted strategies. <b>33.1.3</b> Leverage resources for implementation.	18-36 months	Completion of strategic action plan



### JOB CREATION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#34 Address the weakness in educational opportunities and resources</b>			
<b>34.1</b> Allocate funding and resources to improve the quality and accessibility of education, including the construction of new schools, renovation of existing facilities, and expansion of educational programs and extracurricular activities.	<b>34.1.1</b> Conduct comprehensive needs assessment. <b>34.1.2</b> Develop capital improvement plan. <b>34.1.3</b> Advocate for funding.	24-48 months	Improvement in test scores
<b>#35 Partner for innovative curricula and career pathways.</b>			
<b>35.1</b> Collaborate with local school districts, colleges, and universities to develop innovative curricula, career pathways, and academic support services that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of students.	<b>35.1.1</b> Establish collaborative partnerships. <b>35.1.2</b> Design and implement career readiness programs. <b>35.1.3</b> Provide professional development for educators.	12-36 months	Number of career readiness programs implemented
<b>#36 Establish scholarship programs, tuition assistance.</b>			
<b>36.1</b> Assistance initiatives and financial aid packages to reduce barriers to higher education and workforce training for residents.	<b>36.1.1</b> Develop eligibility criteria and application processes. <b>36.1.2</b> Promote awareness of scholarships. <b>36.1.3</b> Establish partnerships for internship opportunities.	6-18 months	Number of scholarships awarded



## TOURISM REVENUE

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#37 Capitalize on the opportunity for tourism development.</b>			
<b>37.1</b> Invest in sustainable tourism infrastructure and eco-tourism initiatives	<b>37.1.1</b> Conduct destination assessment and market analysis. <b>37.1.2</b> Develop tourism development plan. <b>37.1.3</b> Secure funding.	12-24 months	Number of new tourism products/services
<b>#38 Promote community-based tourism initiatives.</b>			
<b>38.1</b> Promote community-based tourism initiatives and cultural heritage tourism trails that showcase the unique traditions, customs, and craftsmanship of local artisans and indigenous communities.	<b>38.1.1</b> Collaborate with local organizations. <b>38.1.2</b> Design and implement tourism experiences. <b>38.1.3</b> Market tourism packages.	6-18 months	Number of new tourism packages developed
<b>#39 Collaborate with regional stakeholders for destination marketing.</b>			
<b>39.1</b> Partner with regional tourism boards, travel agencies, and hospitality industry partners to market areas as premier travel destinations and leisure hubs.	<b>3.3.1</b> Establish partnerships with regional stakeholders. <b>3.3.2</b> Develop branded marketing materials. <b>3.3.3</b> Host familiarization tours and events.	12-36 months	Increase in media coverage

## VISITOR SATISFACTION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#40 Enhance access to nature and recreational opportunities.</b>			
<b>40.1</b> Preserve and expand green spaces, nature reserves, and outdoor recreation areas	<b>40.1.1</b> Conduct green infrastructure assessment. <b>40.1.2</b> Develop conservation management plan. <b>40.1.3</b> Engage community volunteers.	24-60 months	Acres of green space preserved/expanded
<b>#41 Develop multi-use trails, scenic overlooks, and interpretive signage.</b>			
<b>41.1</b> Create recreational opportunities that highlight local cultural heritage, ecological significance, and biodiversity in eco-tourism routes and heritage corridors.	<b>41.1.1</b> Conduct trail feasibility study. <b>41.1.2</b> Secure permits and approvals. <b>41.1.3</b> Collaborate with local artists and historians.	18-36 months	Miles of new trails developed
<b>#42 Collaborate with sustainable tourism practices.</b>			
<b>42.1</b> Engage with local conservation organizations, outdoor recreation groups, and volunteer networks to steward natural resources, protect wildlife habitats, and promote sustainable tourism practices.	<b>42.1.1</b> Form partnerships with conservation organizations. <b>42.1.2</b> Provide training and resources to volunteers. <b>42.1.3</b> Organize community events and programs.	12-24 months	Number of partnerships formed

## RETAIL REVITALIZATION

STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	METRICS
<b>#43 Address the threat of public opposition to development.</b>			
<b>43.1</b> Engage with community stakeholders to build consensus	<b>43.1.1</b> Establish community advisory committee. <b>43.1.2</b> Conduct public meetings and workshops. <b>43.1.3</b> Develop a community engagement strategy.	6-12 months	Active committee participation
<b>#44 Conduct outreach and public education campaigns.</b>			
<b>44.1</b> Dispel misconceptions, alleviate concerns, and generate support for retail revitalization efforts that align with community values, enhance quality of life, and contribute to economic growth and prosperity.	<b>44.1.1</b> Develop informational materials. <b>44.1.2</b> Organize community forums and open houses. <b>44.1.3</b> Engage with local media.	6-18 months	Media coverage of outreach efforts
<b>#45 Facilitate inclusive decision-making processes.</b>			
<b>45.1</b> Empower residents through participatory planning workshops, and community design charrettes to shape the future of their neighborhoods, influence development priorities, and co-create vibrant, sustainable, and equitable retail environments.	<b>45.1.1</b> Organize design charrettes and visioning sessions. <b>45.1.2</b> Collaborate with planners and designers. <b>45.1.3</b> Establish mechanisms for ongoing community involvement.	12-36 months	Number of planning workshops held







# Building Bridges

## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

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Building upon the previously identified potential partnerships and collaborations and incorporating insights from the stakeholder engagement, here are a few collaborative possibilities for Charles City County:

### JOINT EFFORTS FOR TOURISM

#### Neighboring Counties:

##### **Expand Historic Triangle & Civil War Trails:**

Collaborate with James City, New Kent, and York Counties to curate richer multi-day itineraries encompassing shared historical sites, reenactments, and battlefields. Align with workshop themes like rural character preservation and historical reenactments.

##### **Thematic Itineraries:**

Partner with Chesapeake Bay counties to develop itineraries focusing on nature, agritourism, and local cuisine, aligning with workshop themes like eco-tourism and community events.

##### **Joint Marketing & Media Outreach:**

Leverage social media platforms, share marketing materials, and collaborate on familiarization tours with travel professionals and media influencers, attracting demographics identified in workshops like young professionals and families.

#### Regional Organizations:

##### **Virginia Tourism Corporation:**

Secure resources, marketing support, and industry expertise to promote Charles City County's unique offerings, aligned with workshop themes.

##### **Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs):**

Partner with regional DMOs to promote Charles City County as a complementary destination, targeting specific demographics based on workshop themes.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

#### Neighboring Community Colleges:

##### **Develop Specialized Programs:**

Collaborate on programs addressing skill gaps identified in workshops (e.g., manufacturing support, skilled labor), aligning with regional industry needs.

##### **Shared Resources & Instructors:**

Pool resources and expertise to offer broader training programs, facilitating student exchange for specialized programs across the region.

#### State Agencies and Workforce Development Boards:

##### **Targeted Funding & Programs:**

Seek funding and technical assistance for programs like upskilling residents and attracting young professionals, as highlighted in workshops.

##### **Partnerships with Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) & Regional Boards:**

Partner with the VEC to connect residents with job training, placement services, and career counseling, aligned with workshop themes. Collaborate with regional boards to identify and address industry needs through targeted training programs.

### SHARING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

##### **USDA Rural Development, Virginia Cooperative Extension & Appalachian Regional Commission:**

Leverage their expertise and resources for research, technical assistance, and funding opportunities relevant to Charles City County's specific challenges and workshop themes.

**Sister City Program:** Establish a partnership with a similar rural community facing similar challenges to share best practices and learn from each other's experiences, focusing on areas identified in workshops (e.g., education, business development).



## LOOKING BEYOND COUNTY LINES: Capitalizing on Opportunities in Neighboring Areas

### Leveraging Insights from Stakeholder Engagement

Building upon the strengths and opportunities identified in the stakeholder workshops, Charles City County can refine its approach to collaborating with neighboring areas:

#### STEP 1: Analyze Neighboring Counties with Granularity

**Align Demographics Analysis with Workshop Themes:** Analyze age structure, income levels, education attainment, and occupation trends in surrounding counties, focusing on gaps that align with Charles City County's emerging themes like workforce development, attracting young professionals, and supporting families.

**Industry Focus Based on County Needs:** Analyze dominant industries in neighboring counties, considering their weaknesses and emerging needs identified in workshops (e.g., manufacturing support, skilled labor). Explore complementary services or resources Charles City County can offer.

**Resource Mapping:** Research resource availability (transportation, healthcare, education) in neighboring areas, considering workshop themes like improved access and unique options (e.g., healthcare specialization, eco-tourism).

#### STEP 2: Reimagine Charles City County's Strengths

**Unique Assets & Workshop Themes:** Consider the county's natural beauty, historical sites, cultural heritage, and existing businesses, aligning them with workshop themes like rural character preservation, community events, and agritourism. Highlight what makes Charles City County stand out.

**Underutilized Resources & Collaboration:** Identify underutilized resources, facilities, or expertise (e.g., vacant buildings, skilled individuals) and explore their potential for development or sharing with neighboring communities through partnerships or service agreements.

**Comparative Advantages & Workshop Themes:** Analyze land costs, tax rates, and regulations compared to neighbors, focusing on workshop themes like affordability, business attraction, and streamlined processes. Leverage these advantages strategically.

#### STEP 3: Develop Mutually Beneficial Collaborations, Informed by Workshops

**Targeted Marketing Aligned with Needs:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns highlighting Charles City County's strengths (aligned with workshop themes) to attract residents, businesses, or tourists from specific demographics or industries identified in Step 1.

**Joint Ventures:** Collaborate with neighboring counties on projects addressing shared challenges or creating new opportunities, aligned with workshop themes (e.g., regional workforce development programs, multi-county tourism packages focusing on agritourism or historical reenactments).

**Resource Sharing for Mutual Benefit:** Share underutilized resources or expertise with neighboring communities, focusing on areas where Charles City County has strengths and neighbors have needs (e.g., healthcare specialization, eco-tourism expertise). Explore service agreements or partnerships.

**Targeted Business Attraction:** Attract businesses that complement existing industries in neighboring counties and address their identified weaknesses (aligned with Step 1 analysis). Offer incentives or streamlined permitting processes aligned with workshop themes.

**Specialized Tourism Development:** Develop unique tourism experiences leveraging Charles City County's strengths (identified in Step 2) and filling gaps in surrounding areas' offerings (identified in Step 1). Partner with local businesses and organizations for package deals, aligning with workshop themes like community events and agritourism.





# Conclusion:

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHARLES CITY COUNTY

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By implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, Charles City County can embark on a transformative journey. Focusing on targeted industry attraction, tourism expansion, and retail revitalization, the county can unlock its full economic potential. Cultivating a business-friendly environment, fostering workforce development, and embracing strategic partnerships will be crucial for success. Through collaborative efforts and a commitment to its unique assets, Charles City County has the power to build a vibrant and prosperous future for its residents, businesses, and visitors alike.



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