



**Lancaster County
2035 Strategic Plan**

**The Lancaster County
Citizens Business
Relations Advisory
Committee (CBRAC)**

December 2023



**Lancaster County, VA
2035 Strategic Plan**

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Advisory Committee. (CBRAC)
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Lancaster County Vision: A highly desirable place to live, work, and play—with a balance of rural nature, small community, and economic vitality.



Lancaster County, VA Strategic Plan

Introduction

Citizens Business Relations Advisory Committee. (CBRAC)

The Lancaster County Board of Supervisors established the Citizens Business Relations Advisory Committee (CBRAC) in 2019 to develop a plan and direction for the county's future, find solutions to address the loss of workforce-aged residents, retain the current workforce, and create a business-friendly environment to grow and prosper. The committee, comprised of government and business leaders, meets monthly and reports its progress to the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors. The group's primary responsibility is to create a Lancaster 2035 Strategic Plan that will balance the county's rural character with controlled, planned progress.

The CBRAC acknowledges the potential harmful effects of unregulated expansion and development on the community and its inhabitants. No one wants to change the county's character, but without a strategic plan to enhance our workforce, the quality of life for county residents is in jeopardy. This plan aims to improve the well-being of Lancaster residents by implementing infrastructure improvements that facilitate business growth and grow Lancaster's workforce for the prosperity of all county residents.

Choosing a 2035 strategic plan instead of a typical five-year plan was necessary because many of the outlined objectives require a more extended period. It will take time to boost the population within the working-age range, as it involves demographic shifts that depend on several other initiatives, such as better access to affordable housing, school workforce programs, and new economic opportunities. CBRAC will regularly monitor the plan's progress and update it annually to meet the community's needs.

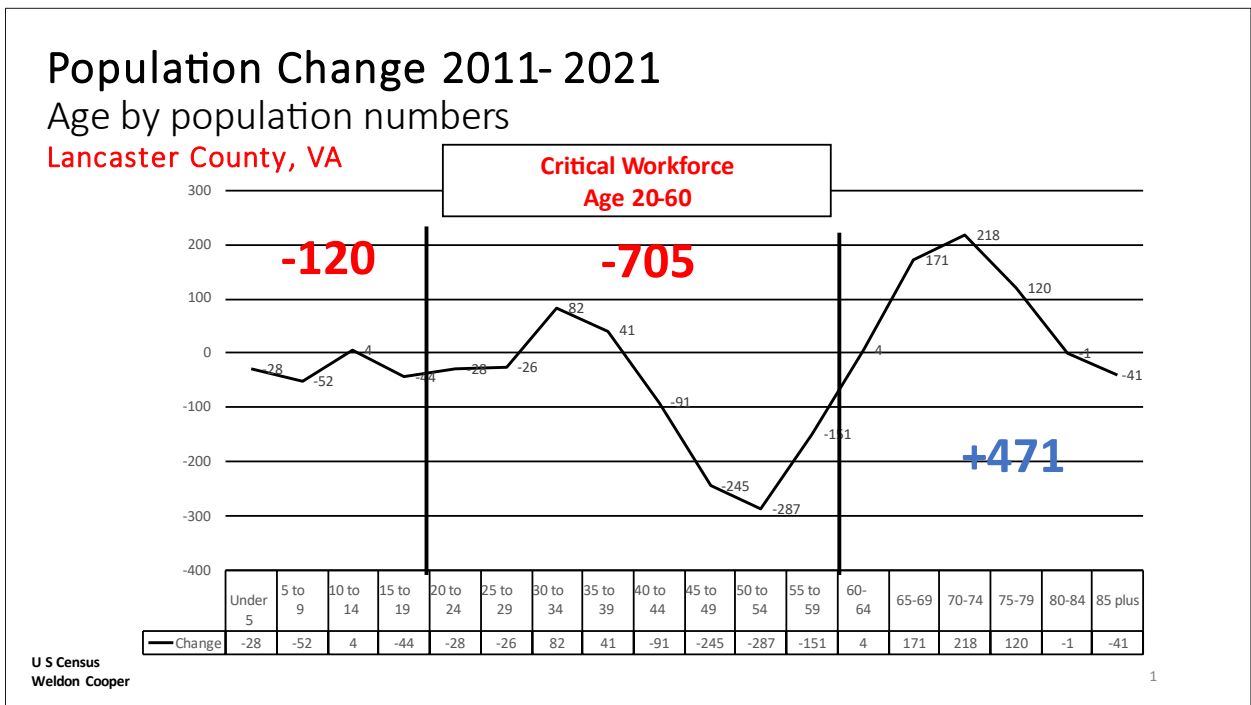
This plan outlines six comprehensive strategies, their initiatives, milestones, costs, available resource partners, and measurable outcomes. A priority plan has been established to guide and monitor progress. It is crucial to review all six strategies, as they are interconnected and essential for achieving future

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growth and success. By implementing this strategic plan, we can pave the way for a brighter future for Lancaster County.

Changing Demographics

Lancaster County, Virginia, is home to the third oldest population in the state. Over recent years, there has been a decrease in the number of children and working-age residents while the number of older adults has increased. This demographic shift can be attributed to national trends of declining birth rates and rising mortality rates, as well as the retirement of baby boomers and a lack of younger people entering the workforce to fill their positions. Additionally, many working-age individuals have left Lancaster County searching for better job prospects elsewhere, leaving the area with a limited pool of skilled and unskilled workers.



The chart above details the population age mix of Lancaster residents and demonstrates the loss of workforce-aged residents in the 20- to 60-year-olds over the ten years of 2011-2021.

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Why does it matter?

Residents of Lancaster County have already experienced signs of the loss of younger workers and their families. This loss of workers has led to occasional disruptions in businesses, such as reduced business hours or even business closures due to a lack of available staff. Additionally, many residents have found it challenging to find skilled tradespeople when needed, as many have retired or left the area.

State funding for school divisions is based on a calculation called the 'Local Composite Index.' This index determines the state funding provided and the load that the county will bear. Our LCI is very high due to low enrollment, which decreases the amount of state funding and increases the responsibility of the locality.

The migration of young people from our county is slowly but surely deteriorating our community's standard of living. Moreover, the shortage of a workforce-aged population has hindered our county's ability to attract new employers who could offer workers livable wages. An increase in the workforce-aged population may also help lower our county's Local Composite Index.

The lack of a strong workforce is not just a problem in Lancaster County; rural communities and small metros nationwide face similar challenges. **Communities with well-planned solutions to these challenges are ultimately more successful than others.**

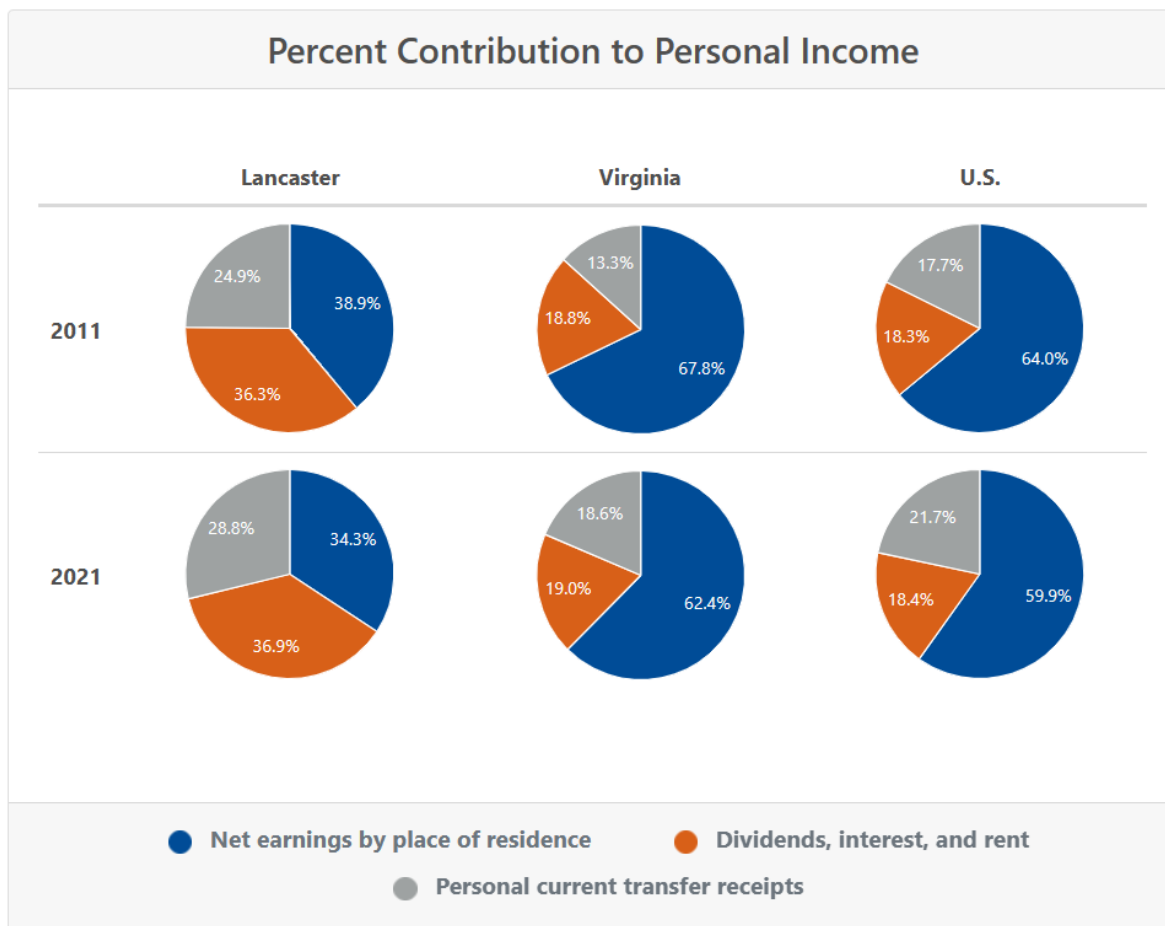
Nationwide challenges in a rural area include:

- A lack of public transportation, human services, and medical professionals and facilities
- **Changing demographics, such as an increasing aging population and more young adults leaving**
- A gap in mortality rates and health outcomes between rural and urban areas
- Poor internet availability
- High house prices, low wages, seasonal rental and jobs markets, and high levels of second home ownership.

National Association of State Legislatures: www.ncsl.org

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It is worth noting that the sources of income for residents of Lancaster County differ significantly from those of Virginia and the United States. In 2021, slightly more than one-third (34%) of personal income came from payroll sources, while most of the resident income (66%) was derived from sources other than payroll, including rents, investments, dividends, and government payments, including social security, disability, etc. Lancaster’s percent of personal income, described as net earnings, is much lower than the state or US, another gauge of a lower-than-normal workforce.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, www.bea.gov

Note: Personal current transfer receipts include income payments to individuals for which no current services are performed and net insurance settlements. It represents the sum of government social benefits and net current transfer receipts from business.

During the winter months, from December to early spring, Lancaster's unemployment rates increase significantly due to the high number of residents employed in seasonal tourism and the seafood industries.

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How Can Lancaster County Attract and Retain a Working Population?

Numerous strategies must be employed to attract and retain young workers and families in Lancaster County. This includes creating a business-friendly economy, improving broadband access, upgrading infrastructure, enhancing the school system, offering better housing options, and promoting recreational and lifestyle activities that appeal to younger individuals. To become a more business-friendly location, Lancaster County should aim to make it easier to do business in the county, which will attract new companies and support the growth and success of existing companies. It is also important to communicate progress, plans, and alternative approaches clearly and transparently to engage the community further.

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Lancaster 2035 Strategic Plan

In 2019, the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors established CBRAC to create a strategic plan for 2035. The plan aims to tackle the loss of workforce-aged residents and promote a business-friendly environment for growth and prosperity.

Executive Summary

- Lancaster County and other rural areas are experiencing a loss of their workforce, negatively impacting residents' quality of life.
- If left unaddressed, this trend will worsen, leading to a decline in the overall standard of living.
- As more localities recognize the issue, worker competition is expected to intensify.
- Currently, Lancaster County has a workforce of around 5,000, with only 47% of adult residents employed. This percentage is lower than that of Virginia (64%) and the whole nation (63%).
- Between 2011 and 2021, there has been a decline of over 700 workers aged between 20-60 years in Lancaster County.
- The decline in younger residents in Lancaster County is caused by:
 - declining birth rates
 - The retirement of Baby Boomer workers and a lack of younger workers staying or moving to the area
 - lack of affordable housing and better job prospects elsewhere.
- The goal of Lancaster 2035 is to develop strategies to increase the County's workforce-aged population by 1,000 by 2035 while retaining the existing workforce.
- The Lancaster 2035 outlines six core comprehensive strategies to increase workforce numbers. It is essential to address all six strategies simultaneously, as they are interconnected and crucial for achieving future growth and success in renewing our workforce and growing businesses.
- The outlined strategic plan intends to create job opportunities that complement the area, including promoting small business development, an essential employment category in Lancaster County.

The Six Strategies to Address Workforce Issues

Broadband Access

- **BROADBAND ACCESS** for all
- **AFFORDABLE BROADBAND** for low-income/fixed income

By the second quarter of 2024, most households in Lancaster County will have broadband access. However, many eligible residents are not applying for available broadband discounts.

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Create a Business-Friendly Environment

- **CREATE** a business-friendly environment
- **ATTRACT** high-paying skilled labor and work-from-home jobs to the county
- **CREATE INCENTIVES AND GRANTS** to attract and grow local small businesses

This initiative aims to provide easy access to resources for small businesses, offer training classes for businesses and residents, and establish trade schools for certifications. It is crucial to form partnerships and coordinate with business support and training organizations to ensure the success of this initiative.

Towns and counties should hold quarterly meetings to promote better communication and collaboration. Additionally, Lancaster County should actively market itself to small outside businesses.

To fund business training and support programs, it is recommended to establish a more dynamic Economic Development Authority (EDA) that can provide grants and form partnerships.

Education

- **FACILITIES:** *Provide* facilities that are conducive to 21st-century learning
- **POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS:** *Prepare* our students for success after graduation through 'a 'Profile of a Lancaster Graduate' pre-k through twelve roadmap.
- **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & GROWTH:** *Accelerate* growth and achievement for all students
- **RECRUIT & RETAIN HIGH-QUALITY STAFF:** *Increase* teacher satisfaction, recruitment, and long-term retention

During the 2023-3024 academic year, LCPS will be reviewing and updating a six-year strategic plan through a phased process that includes gathering input and feedback from all stakeholders, analyzing many forms of data, developing overarching goals that are specific to current needs, and finalizing an action plan to implement. The final plan is scheduled to be finalized prior to December 2024. This six-year plan will include the development of a 'Profile of a Lancaster Graduate,' a roadmap for Pre-K through twelve that will prepare all students for a meaningful pathway following graduation from LCPS. Also included will be a workforce readiness plan for Pre-K through 12.

The goal is to provide exceptional schools for young working families and their children. Lancaster County is looking toward the future and the education of our youth. Renovated and newly constructed educational facilities that provide a modern infrastructure to support 21st-century learning that can change and grow as education evolves is one visible aspect of our county's investment. In addition to facility upgrades, curriculum, and teaching practices are continuously being reviewed and implemented to stay abreast of current best practices.

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LCPS will collaborate on a higher level with our local workforce and business community to develop a curriculum and Pre-K-12 experience that will allow for opportunities for students to participate in job shadowing and career exploration programs that will not only create valuable work skills and assist students in gaining direction for future careers but hopefully make connections for increasing our local workforce with LCPS graduates.

Programs to assist with recruiting and retaining high-quality staff that include affordable housing, immersing staff within the community to grow roots here, and enhancing job satisfaction will be established to encourage teachers and staff of LCPS to become long-term or permanent residents of Lancaster County.

Housing

- **CREATE** a public-private partnership to develop the Good Luck Road site.
- **CREATE** a Lancaster County Community Development Corporation.
- **CREATE** economic incentives or grants to attract developers and contractors

The CBRAC Housing Committee recommends a workforce housing study to comprehensively evaluate options for workforce housing and available federal and state grants. In addition, the housing committee recommends creating a Community Development Corporation that focuses specifically on addressing affordable housing for workers in Lancaster County.

Recreation

- **DEVELOP** multiple county public access facilities and parks throughout the county.
- **CONTINUE** community partnerships to foster and coordinate recreational programming.
- **CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS** that promote the arts and maritime culture of the community.

New water access sites include Carter Cove and Taylor Creek, and upgrades include Windmill Point, Thomas Landing, and Chesapeake Trail. At least two additional water access sites are planned before the end of 2035. TriWay Trail, a new phased walking and biking trail, will eventually connect the three towns of Kilmarnock, Irvington, and White Stone and provide additional recreational options to residents and visitors. Construction on the first phase of the trail will start in 2024.

Communications

- **COMMUNICATE** better with residents for a greater understanding of the Lancaster 2035 goals and action plans
- **COMMUNICATE** ongoing information to residents about the general goals and actions of Lancaster County as a whole
- **COMMUNICATE** to external constituents (nonresidents, future residents, businesses, and visitors).

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The goal should be clear and consistent public messaging for all county initiatives, including the Lancaster 2035 plan. Since there is a diversity of demographics, using multiple media outlets for public messaging is recommended. Developing individual communication plans for each of the Lancaster 2035 initiatives is crucial. Residents may be informed through a county quarterly newsletter partnering with LCPS's mailed newsletter.

All internal and external communications should consistently brand the county as ***a highly desirable place to live, work, and pay—with a balance of rural nature, small community, and economic vitality.***

Lancaster County Background and Demographics

- Lancaster County, Virginia, has a rich history, including charming small towns, fresh seafood, fertile farmlands, picturesque waterfront, and many related tourist attractions associated with these assets.

Demographic Summary of Lancaster County

- 2020 Census population for the county was 10,919 residents, a decline of 4% from 2010.
- Most of the decrease in population has been with younger working-aged residents under 65 years old and children.
- The average age in the county is 57 years old, making Lancaster the third most senior county in Virginia.
- Having a higher proportion of older residents can have positive and negative effects. On the positive side, there is often a pool of willing volunteers and generous donors. However, on the negative side, there is a more vital need for emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and medical care as the population ages.
- The percentage of households with children is below average (16%) for the state.
- Nearly one household in four with children in Lancaster lives in poverty.
- A decrease in school enrollment in public schools increases education costs for the County
- There is a high number of nonresident houses in the County.
- Lancaster's median household income is below the household average for Virginia.
- Payroll income percentage is much lower for Lancaster County than for the Commonwealth and the US, meaning a more significant portion of residents' income comes from nonpayroll sources.
- Unemployment rates are higher in Lancaster during the first quarter of each year due to seasonal employment.
- Lancaster is fortunate to have Rappahannock General Hospital and the Northern Neck-Middlesex Free Clinic at a time when many rural areas in the US have lost their local hospitals and medical facilities.

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Conclusion

Lancaster County is currently facing a shortage of workers, and if this issue is not addressed, it will only worsen, leading to increased competition for workers among different localities. The quality of life for Lancaster residents is already being affected, and the situation will only deteriorate in the future. Lancaster's 2035 strategy outlines six initiatives to tackle this challenge, including the development of infrastructure to encourage young people to stay, prosper, and contribute to the growth of Lancaster County.

To address the challenge, the Lancaster 2035 strategy has identified six initiatives to enhance the infrastructure and create opportunities to encourage young people to stay, flourish, and consider Lancaster their permanent home. The Lancaster 2035 must be approved by the Lancaster Board of Supervisors and updated annually as progress is made. Citizens will be updated on the ongoing progress of these initiatives. Still, the effectiveness of these plans will largely depend on the community's support for area businesses and schools and working together for positive change.

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Citizens Business Relations Advisory Committee

CBRAC consists of ten community leaders from various backgrounds who have volunteered to address critical issues for Lancaster County.

Bill Lee- Lancaster County Supervisor
 Jason Bellows- Lancaster County Supervisor
 Paul T Sciacchitano- Retired Financial Executive
 Julien Patterson- Entrepreneur
 Jimmie Carter-Developer
 Susan Cockrell- Kilmarnock Town Manager
 Jeff Szyperski- Bank Executive
 Roy Carter- Chair –Lancaster County Economic Development Authority
 Ty Brent-Chair Lancaster County Planning Commission
 Jessica Davis-Superintendent, Lancaster County Public Schools

In addition, the committee reviewed input from discussion groups among community residents and workers, including:

New Residents (2 groups)
 Long-Term Residents (1)
 Realtors (1)
 Mixed Group (1)
 Construction/Trades Workers (2)

Other organizations that have participated in the discussion:

Lancaster By the Bay Chamber
 Kilmarnock Town Council
 White Stone Town Council
 Irvington Town Council
 Northern Neck Planning District Commission
 Irvington Business Association
 Rotary Club
 White Stone Church of the Nazarene Board
 Lancaster Board of Supervisors
 Northern Neck Boys and Girls Club
 Northern Neck YMCA
 Rappahannock Community College
 Virginia Department of Economic Development
 University of Mary Washington Small Business Development Services (SBDS)
 The Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board

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Overall Goal of the Lancaster 2035 Initiative:

The Lancaster 2035 strategy aims to increase the percentage of working-age individuals by 20% by 2035 while maintaining the existing workforce, requiring an increase of 1,000 individuals of the workforce-aged population (20-60).

For a comprehensive approach, CBRAC has identified six strategies that will be addressed to achieve positive results. Under each method, there are multiple goals to address in the process.

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Lancaster County, VA
Strengths, Opportunities,
Weakness, and Threats

STRENGTHS

- Rural but located in an area of recreational and commercial waterfront
- Safe and welcoming community
- Active volunteer and philanthropic citizens
- Progressive leaders are strategic planners
- Major public and private investment
- Many specialized educational programs for our school system (public and private).
- Regional amenities including:
 - Parks, Town Centers
 - Shopping
 - History and Heritage
 - Arts and Theater
 - Boys and Girls Club, YMCA
 - Dreamfields

OPPORTUNITIES

- Explosion of Millennials and Gen X nearby
- Quality of life messaging
- New Schools
- Broadband everywhere
- Multiple water access points
- TriWay Trail
- Remote workforce center
- Economic Development
- Access to Federal Funds
- Capitalize on:
 - Qualified Opportunity Zone
 - Virginia Enterprise Zone

SWOT

Weaknesses

- Lack of a strategic plan for the county
- Lack of an Economic Development Professional
- Lack of in-place incentives for new businesses
- Insufficient and inconsistent public messaging by elected officials
- Absence of understanding how to retain influx
- Loss of residents of working age population
- Poor perception of schools
- Lack of broadband, lack of public access
- Population resistant to change
- Poverty/disparity
- Aging Population
- Quality Affordable Housing
- Lack of Businesses that create jobs

Threats

- Competition for business and tourism dollars
- Lack of activities for 20-60 year olds
- Post pandemic reversion
- Behind in getting Broadband to all
- Insufficient and ineffective retention of employees
- Aging two-lane bridge and other infrastructures

Types of Jobs That Are a Good Fit for Lancaster County

What types of additional jobs and businesses would be a good fit for our community? CBRAC recognizes the significance of supporting companies that align with the values of rural communities while maintaining and improving the overall living standard for all residents. The aim is not to promote an overdeveloped business environment like big cities. Instead, the Lancaster 2035 strategy intends to create job opportunities that complement the area, including:

- Skilled Laborers
- Tradespeople
- Work-at-Home Professionals
- Water-based industries like Boat Builders.
- Small Professional and Technology companies
- Information Technology Jobs
- Aquaculture
- Agricultural jobs, including hydroponics
- Healthcare Careers
- Logistics (CDL, Transportation)
- Educators
- School Bus Drivers, Custodians, and Food Service Workers

Promoting entrepreneurship has consistently been essential to generating jobs within our community, as well as the heritage industries of seafood (working waterfronts) and agriculture.

With the increasing cost of college education, young people are showing a renewed interest in skilled trades as opposed to the burden of large college loans. **Lancaster County is experiencing a shortage of skilled tradespeople.** According to the US Department of Labor, the median salary in Virginia for Plumbers is \$51K, Electricians \$52K, and HVAC workers \$50K. A career in the skilled trades can lead to self-employment and business ownership with the potential for a six-figure salary.

Notably, remote jobs are incredibly sought-after by communities, and attracting remote workers can be highly competitive. Certain states and communities even provide monetary incentives to entice remote workers and their employment opportunities.

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Lancaster County Background

Lancaster County, VA, is situated in the Northeastern part of Virginia on a peninsula known as the Northern Neck of Virginia. It shares a border with the mouth of the Rappahannock River, which flows into the Chesapeake Bay. The county was founded in 1651 and has significant historical importance in the early development of the United States. Besides its rich history, the county boasts 330 miles of shoreline, which includes charming small towns, fertile farmlands, fresh seafood, picturesque waterfront properties, and many tourist attractions associated with these assets.



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Lancaster County, Virginia, is located approximately 90 miles south of Washington, DC, 54 miles north of Hampton Roads, and 62 miles east of Richmond.



Lancaster County, governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors, includes three incorporated towns: Kilmarnock, Irvington, and White Stone. Each incorporated town has a Town Council that oversees its residents.

Population Demographics



The US Census Bureau 2020 Census listed Lancaster County, VA, as having a population of 10,919 people, down 4% from 11,391 residents in 2010. According to the US Census Bureau, Virginia's population experienced an increase of 8% from 2010 to 2020. The county population estimate for July 2022 is 10,750 people, continuing a downward trend. Lancaster's population decline is due to the departure of families with children and the working-age population (mainly 15-29 years old and residents aged 40-59) over the past decade. In addition, deaths were more significant than births for that period.

Demographics: Race and Age

According to the Census data, the majority of residents that classify themselves in one race are White (71%), Black or African American (28%), and Others including Asian and American Indian (1.5%). Three hundred thirty-nine (339) people identified themselves as mixed race.

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The population of Lancaster County has a higher proportion of people over 65 years old compared to the national and state age distributions. This may be due to several reasons, such as younger people leaving for better opportunities, more people retiring than entering the workforce, and fewer births compared to deaths.



Over one-third (36%) of the county's population is 65 or older, more than twice as many as Virginia's (16%). The highest concentrated age group for the older population is 65-74. According to the 2020 Census, the median age of Virginians is 39. Among all Virginia counties, Lancaster County ranks with the third highest percentage of residents over 65 with a median age of 57, almost 1.5 times the median age for Virginia. Surrounding counties also have an aging population.

Counties With the Most Seniors in Virginia 2022 Census		
	Age <u>% 65 Plus</u>	Median Age
1. Highland County	38.8%	59.5
2. Northumberland County	38.5%	59.3
3. Lancaster	36.1%	57.2
4. Middlesex	32.1%	54.7
5. Mathews	30.1%	53.7
Virginia		38.8

*Stacker News

The retired members of our community offer valuable support to local nonprofits, and Lancaster County is fortunate to have many organizations dedicated to community betterment. Volunteers' involvement and financial contributions have provided vital resources for educating our youth and maintaining our current quality of life resources.

An aging population negatively affects the county, including a higher demand for affordable housing and healthcare services. This, in turn, leads to a need for more skilled healthcare and EMS personnel, ultimately resulting in an increased budget for these services.

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It should be noted that since the COVID-19 epidemic, the county population demographics may have changed somewhat due to an increase of new residents with flexible, remote working arrangements. The impact of COVID-19 on the county's demographic mix will not be known until the next census count.



Housing units in Lancaster totaled 7,448 in 2021, with 5,211 occupied and 2,237 vacant. According to the Census Bureau, vacant homes include houses for seasonal, recreational, and occasional use but also include unoccupied dwellings that are vacant for rent or for sale that are not occupied by a permanent resident.

*2020 Dec Redistricting Data

Compared to the state age mix of population, Lancaster County has 6 percent fewer children under 18 in the demographic mix compared to the Commonwealth of Virginia's blend of 22 percent residents under age 18. (Weldon Cooper Center)



Lancaster County, VA
Percent households with children under 18

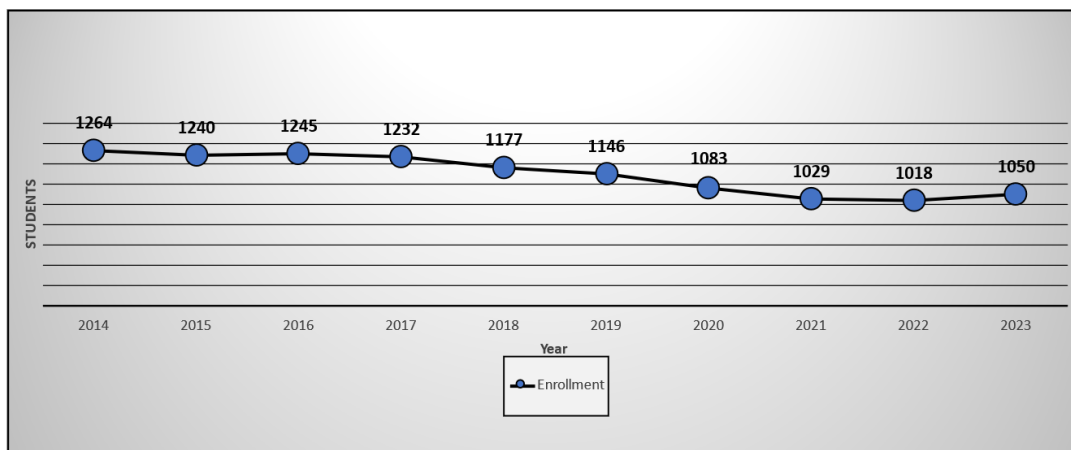
Lancaster	16%
Virginia	22%

(2021 American Community Survey)

Lancaster County Public School Enrollment has steadily declined in the past ten years. From 2014 to 2023, enrollment totals have dropped 214 students, largely due to the decline in family population. There are fewer new families with children moving to our area to replace families that have left.

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Student Enrollment in Lancaster Co. Public Schools



January Enrollment in Lancaster Public Schools

Maintaining a healthy population of school-aged children in a county is essential, as it can hurt state funding for education. This reduction of the financing can create financial difficulties for the county, hence the need to keep the population of school-aged children healthy. The decrease in state funding for schools can lead to economic challenges for the county.

Poverty



According to the 2021 American Community Survey, Lancaster County's poverty rate was 12.0%, slightly higher than Virginia's rate of 10.6% but similar to the national poverty rate of 12.8%. Sadly, the children in our community are most impacted by poverty. The poverty rate for children under 18 in Lancaster is relatively high, with nearly one in four (23.1%) children living in poverty. This is significantly higher than the state (13.3%) and national (16.9%) levels.

Childcare and Pre-Schools

Lancaster County is already enhancing its infrastructure to appeal to young families. Significant school improvements are underway, including constructing better school buildings and developing new educational programs to assist students in preparing for their future careers. Lancaster County Public

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Schools and the YMCA have developed a public-private partnership and have opened a fully inclusive Early Childhood Education Center in the fall of 2022. This center houses three- and four-year-old preschool programs and is located on the newly renovated Lancaster Elementary School campus. The addition of infant care for children as young as six weeks old at the YMCA has recently improved infant childcare services, another crucial factor in drawing a young workforce. While these efforts are significant and commendable, more work must be done to tackle the issue.

Employment

Lancaster County's employed population is relatively small (less than 5,000 residents), and the median household income for the County is below average. Only 47% of the county's population over 16 are employed in the civilian labor force, significantly lower than the 64% of Virginia residents and the 63% national average.

According to US Census QuickFacts, the median household income in Lancaster County, reported in 2021 dollars, was \$64,460 annually. This is lower than Virginia's median income of \$80,615 per household and the national median income of \$69,021.

	<u>Lancaster</u>	<u>Virginia</u>	<u>US</u>
Percent Over age 16 Employed in the Workforce	47%	64%	63%
Median Household Income	\$64,460	\$80,615	\$69,021

Source: US Census QuickFacts Report, Income (2017-2021)

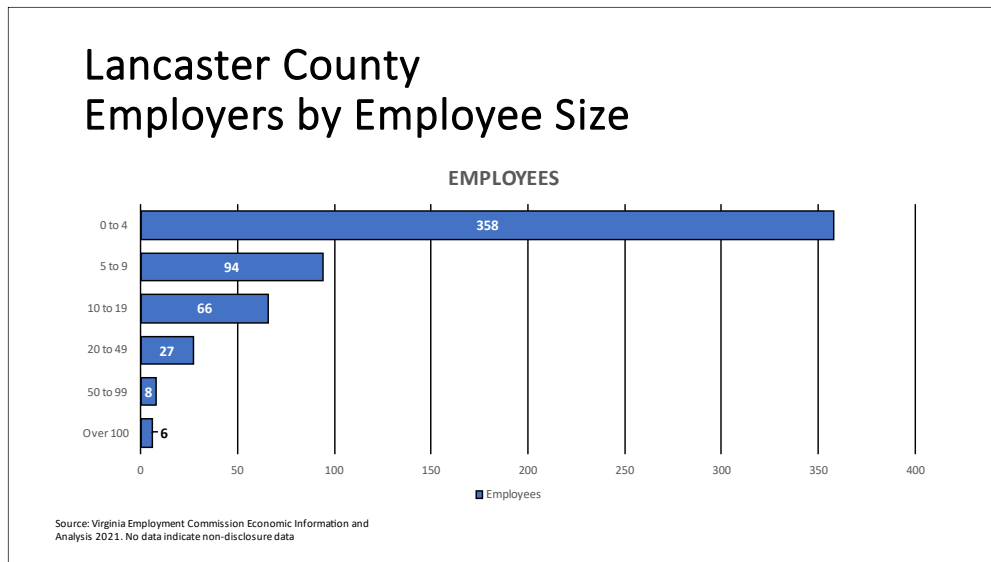
The workforce in Lancaster County is aging out, with fewer young workers entering the workforce than older workers aging out of the workforce.



Workers Employed by Lancaster Businesses. Source: Virginia Employment Commission Economic Profile. US Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics (LED), 4th Quarter 2022. [Profile \(virginiaworks.com\)](https://www.virginiaworks.com)

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It should be noted that some workers commute to jobs in Lancaster County to work, and some Lancaster County residents travel outside the county to work.



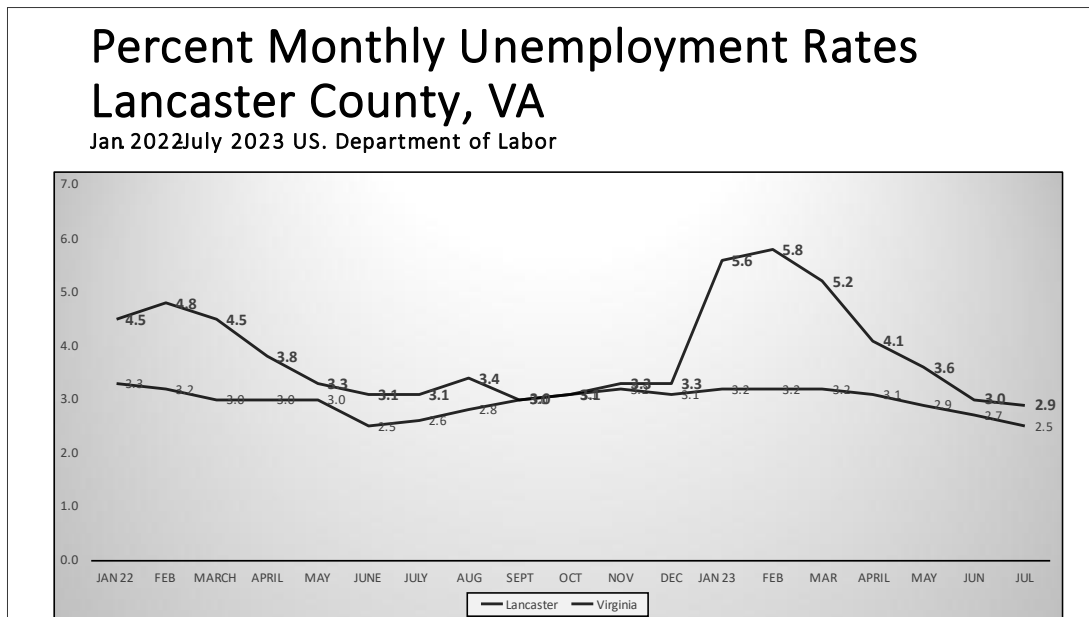
Most businesses in Lancaster have less than ten employees.

Top 10 Employers in Lancaster County

1. **Bon Secours Health System Inc**
2. **Rappahannock Westminster Canterbury**
3. **Manufacturing Techniques Inc**
4. **Lancaster County School Board**
5. **Wal-Mart**
6. **Tides Inn**
7. **County of Lancaster**
8. **Visiting Angels**
9. **Chesapeake Bank**
10. **Northern Neck Insurance Company**

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information and Analytics

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Lancaster County's Unemployment rate for September 2023 was 3%, similar to the unemployment rate for Virginia. However, unemployment in Lancaster County peaks during the off-season months of January through April, likely due to the county's seasonal employment.

Healthcare



Rural counties with older populations have a higher likelihood of residents being uninsured and requiring more medical attention and emergency services. Unfortunately, many rural areas nationwide have lost their healthcare providers, leaving residents to travel long distances for advanced medical care. Attracting doctors and skilled healthcare professionals to work and live in rural areas is challenging.

However, Lancaster County is an exception to this trend. The community is fortunate to have Bon Secours Rappahannock General Hospital, providing emergency services and healthcare to the aging population since 1977. As the population ages, Lancaster County's emergency medical teams will face increasing demand. Lancaster County's wealth is unevenly distributed. The Northern Neck-Middlesex Free Health Clinic was established in 1993 to provide healthcare and dental care options to lower-income, uninsured, and underinsured patients.

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These two healthcare facilities have been instrumental in supporting the healthcare needs of county residents and are also essential to the community's economic well-being. Both facilities rely on grants and generous private funding to continue operating.

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Lancaster 2035 Strategic Plan

Six Strategies to Retain and Attract Workforce-Aged Residents

1. **Broadband Access to Households**
2. **Create a Business-Friendly Environment**
3. **Education-** Dynamic/innovative School system with outstanding facilities-
4. **Housing** available for all
5. Age-appropriate **Recreation and Lifestyle**
6. **Public Communication** with county residents and officials

Strategy 1: Broadband Access to Households

Objectives

- ✓ **Broadband Access for All**
- ✓ **Affordable Broadband for low-income/fixed income**

In today's world, having access to reliable internet is crucial in attracting and retaining businesses and residents. Technology plays a significant role in our daily lives, and the pandemic has only accelerated this trend. Nowadays, people work from home, students learn through online resources, pay bills online, and provide healthcare services via telehealth. All of these require high-speed internet access, which is essential for progress.

As the number of remote workers increases, people prioritize their quality of life. Even those who don't work or study online still rely on technology for shopping and entertainment.

To address the issue of internet access, the County Government has established a Broadband Authority. Through provider partnerships, the authority aims to bring high-speed internet to all underserved homes. By the second quarter of 2024, all households will have access to a provider service, with only a few remaining households to be added soon after.

Affordability

For low-income and fixed-income residents, internet providers offer discounted rates to make internet access more affordable. The federal government provides a monthly discount of \$30 to residents who qualify with fixed or low incomes. In Virginia, the Department of Housing and Community Development

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is the VA agency developing discounts for residents. The Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Outreach Grant is also available to eligible participants in Lancaster County. However, only some people are taking advantage of these discounts. According to acpdashboard.com, ACP enrollment is significantly higher among eligible households in urban areas than in rural areas. Less than a third of qualified Lancaster participants are using the broadband discount. In addition to the monthly discounts, the ACP allows eligible households \$100 towards purchasing a computer or other hardware to access the internet.

Residents who qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program Discounts must:

- Have a household income of \$55,500 or less for a family of four
- Someone in your household receives SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, WIC, Pell Grant, or Free and Reduced-Priced Lunches

Informing county residents about broadband providers' discounts and federal internet benefits could increase usage for low-income households.

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Broadband

Objective 1: Affordable Broadband to all Households.

Goal: Increase public knowledge of available low-cost broadband options

Description	<p>Now that broadband will be available by June 2024 to almost all households in Lancaster County, residents must be aware of available grants and discounts to qualifying residents. Residents must utilize available funding options, and providers should aggressively promote targeted deals.</p> <p>CBRAC recommends a media campaign to inform residents that they may be eligible for a grant or discount funding to supplement their monthly broadband fees. The media plan should include informational printed posters in Government offices and places frequented by older residents and low to middle-income residents.</p> <p>Social Services Offices Churches Doctor’s Offices Health Departments/Clinics Recreational Facilities Schools Post Offices Barber shops</p> <p>Additional public service messages should be broadcast on local radio stations, and informational notices could be mailed to residents in postcard format.</p> <p>Information should inform residents how to qualify for discounts for private carriers and available public grants.</p> <p>A central phone number for residents to call for affordable broadband options would be ideal.</p>
Goal	To increase residents’ awareness of affordable broadband programs.
Potential Impact	More residents will utilize available broadband. Broadband will be affordable to most residents.
Risks	Cost of media
Responsibility	Lancaster County Broadband Authority, Lancaster County

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Timeline	broadband access
Costs	\$5,000 budget for media and messaging Signage for County offices, Hospitals, Doctor’s offices, Free Clinic, SC and Social Services offices Radio Newspaper Mailings in specific zip codes
Funding	Lancaster County, Broadband Carriers, Lancaster Broadband Authority
Measurable Results	Review the ACP dashboard to monitor the increase in usage. Ask for reporting from broadband providers on the number of users per provider to analyze usage.

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Strategy 2: Create Business Friendly Environment

Objectives

- ✓ Create a business-friendly environment to attract and grow new business.
- ✓ Attract high-paying skilled labor and work-from-home jobs to the county.
- ✓ Create incentives and grants to attract and grow local small businesses.

Lancaster is Open For Business

The first step in advancing a business-friendly environment is hiring a business-focused employee for Lancaster County. Lancaster is currently hiring an Assistant County Administrator. The position encompasses County Administration (20%) and Economic Development Coordinator duties (80%).

One of the first steps in creating a business-friendly environment for the Assistant County Administrator is to develop an active relationship with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to inform the agency that Lancaster County wants to be considered engaged in recruiting businesses that fit the county's rural environment. The VEDP promotes a list of available Virginia properties for prospective companies, and Lancaster County should maintain an updated list of all known commercial properties on the VDEP website database. In addition, county staff should actively pursue economic development training opportunities, create a profile of desirable living wage jobs that would be a good fit for Lancaster County, and share it with VEDP.

Lancaster County Supervisors should appoint a small number of local business ambassadors to meet with potential new businesses to highlight the positive aspects of doing business in Lancaster County. These ambassadors can offer personal tours and testimonials from companies already working in the county.

As an ED Coordinator, it is crucial to establish strong ties, work with organizations offering business training resources, and cater to all business development and workforce training levels. Collaboration with Rappahannock Community College, the University of Mary Washington, the Chamber of Commerce, and Bay Workforce Services is essential. One of the key responsibilities is to maintain an updated calendar of classes and new business opportunities for start-ups and established firms. The courses should cover topics related to business development, training options, and online opportunities for individuals opting for at-home careers.

Creating a welcoming environment for new businesses is crucial. One practical way to achieve this is by developing a user-friendly business website as a comprehensive resource for companies looking to start or expand in Lancaster. The county should design a dynamic webpage that showcases Lancaster County's strengths and assets, such as demographics and quality of life indicators. This approach can be a powerful tool in attracting small businesses to rural areas. A one-page brochure can be created and

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distributed to potential firms to promote the county further, emphasizing the benefits of starting a business in Lancaster.

The website should also maintain an updated list of:

- Available business resources and contacts
- Information about county and town requirements
- Available business classes and resources
- How to fast-track construction phases of a new business
- A resource listing helpful partners and resources

Creating a Business-Friendly Environment

To attract and retain younger residents, we must create a business-friendly environment.

1. This should include incentives from the county and towns, such as government-owned land at a discounted price or bringing water and sewer to the site.
2. An EDA grant program for expanding existing businesses or opening new businesses. The criteria should include benchmarks for job creation.
3. Resources to help with technical training for meeting business needs. This would include a post-secondary trade school. (A proactive partnership with the Community College, possibly spearheaded by the Economic Development Director)
4. Central location for all new business inquiries (Economic Development Director). Website and dynamic social media should be pursued, including a Catalog of Community Resources.
5. Office Sharing (co-work environment. Work-at-home individuals also want interaction with other like-minded individuals. There is an existing location in Kilmarnock. The county may like to partner with or support this initiative somehow.
6. The need for Public Sector workers in the community is in high demand. Teachers, Emergency Service workers, and deputy sheriffs are all experiencing difficulties in finding affordable housing alternatives. Rental Assistance programs and Down Payment programs for Public service workers should be pursued to retain and attract these vital community service employees.
7. Market, advertise, and encourage development in our Enterprise, Hub, and Opportunity Zones. The Federal and State governments also offer other land-based plan uses, such as the ability to consume alcohol in public in certain designated districts. The County will review these and other potential opportunities to attract a younger, innovative workforce.
8. Support the construction of a new bridge.

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Business Center/ Incubator

An idea for a one-stop business resource center/incubator has been proposed. This center would be open a few days a week, providing businesses with information and directions to answer their questions. It could also include a shared space office, telework center, or rented meeting conference room. Business centers or coworking spaces/incubators support small businesses, whether new or established. The services include management training, office space, mentorship, venture capital, financial aid, and advice. Experienced business leaders, college staff, and subject experts comprise the incubator's team, who provide training seminars, webinars, and one-on-one counseling to members. Participants may also sign an agreement for discounted shared office space and one to two years of counseling if necessary. Similarly, a business accelerator provides services to established businesses to help them continue to grow.

According to the National Business Incubator Association, **87% of incubator-supported startups survive after five years**, likely due to the incubator's support and the membership vetting process.

There are currently 1,400 incubators in the US. Forbes reports that

- 30% are run by economic development organizations
- 21% by government organizations
- 20% by two- and four-year universities and tech colleges
- 29% by private organizations or other entities.

A group of local business experts has established a grassroots initiative to guide new business startups and existing companies looking to expand. The goal is to transform the counseling service into a formal incubator program that can be supported as a business outreach for the county. The initiative has received positive feedback from diverse local entrepreneurs. To achieve this, unused or shared office space can be utilized to establish a formal organization, complete with infrastructure requirements such as office space, internet, furniture, landline phone service, a lecture room, a reception area, and a meeting room with Zoom meeting capabilities.

Coordination with County Government and Town Government

Effective communication and coordination between the county government and incorporated towns is crucial to avoid confusion and prevent overlapping tasks. Representatives from Lancaster County, Kilmarnock, White Stone, and Irvington are recommended to engage in regular discussions to share information and coordinate projects in Lancaster County. Quarterly meetings can be scheduled initially. Additionally, all new business development projects that may impact any of the towns should be coordinated with their respective representatives. For instance, potential economic development opportunities for the Town of Kilmarnock should be coordinated with the town's Economic development representative and the County ED representative.

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Business Training and Development

The Trades Center in Warsaw is a valuable resource for educating high school students in skilled trades, which play a crucial role in our workforce. Despite the misconception that trade jobs offer low wages and status, the demand for skilled tradespeople is high, and owning a lucrative trade business is a viable possibility. CBRAC advocates for a trade school that allows high school dropouts and recent graduates to explore and become certified in construction trades and computer skills. This post-trade school could issue certifications to advance the workforce in living-wage jobs that support the community's new and existing housing initiatives.

Several organizations in the area are dedicated to supporting Lancaster businesses. These groups should collaborate to develop helpful business training and workshops and support workforce training. A planning group should include Rappahannock Community College, the University of Mary Washington Small Business Center, SCORE, Lancaster EDA, Biz and Buzz, the Chamber of Commerce, The Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board, and The Northern Neck Planning Commission, to name a few. These partners are dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of our local workforce.

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 1: Create A Business-Friendly Environment to Attract and Grow New Businesses

Goal: Create an “Open For Business” PR Campaign for Lancaster County

Description	<p>Lancaster County must send a message to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and businesses that Lancaster County is interested in talking to business prospects searching for a rural location. "We are open for business."</p> <p>Meetings and training with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Representatives are essential to maintain a relationship. They are also developing a close working relationship with Town Officials and other business organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>Create a New Business Website: Lancaster County a great place to live, WORK and play". Tell a story of why Lancaster is a great place to do business. Use testimonials highlighting quality of life, low taxes, and a business-friendly government and residents. Provide resources to Entrepreneurs. Provide contact for Lancaster Ambassadors for more information and site tours.</p> <p>Create a print material packet that would include basic demographics, resources, available building sites and real estate, and quality-of-life amenities.</p> <p>Build and maintain a list of available commercial properties that will be posted on the VAED partnership site. Identify Hub Zones and Enterprise Zones.</p> <p>Create business incentives to encourage new businesses and entrepreneurial development. Other options include supporting a business incubator to help guide new businesses.</p> <p>Continue to monitor <u>existing businesses</u> to support success, expansion, and growth. Again, work closely with the Chamber of Commerce and Town Managers, EDA.</p> <p>Never forget to protect the balance of Business and Quality of Life.</p>
Potential Impact	<p>More opportunities exist for increased tax revenue and a more robust employment base—with better-paying jobs. Younger populations may relocate for work.</p>
Responsibility	<p>County and Town Administration, Chamber, Virginia Economic Development Contact, NNPDC</p>

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Timeline	Complete within one year.
Costs	Cost of Website, Cost of Printed Materials, Time. Incentives? Incubator? TBD
Funding	Website Printed Materials Travel/Time
Measurable Results	Number of visits to the website page Number of new businesses opened Number of new business inquiries

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 1: Create A Business-Friendly Environment to Attract and Grow New Businesses

Goal: Create A One Stop Web Informational Resource for Businesses

Description	<p>Create a comprehensive online hub that connects businesses with the tools they need to succeed in Lancaster County.</p> <p>New and existing businesses often struggle to find information on conducting business in Lancaster County. They may have questions such as whether they require a business license and, if so, where they can find information on how to obtain it. Additionally, they may need guidance on creating a business plan and finding financing options. While answers to these questions probably exist in multiple places, they should be readily available to those initiating a new business. One solution is creating a county webpage with an updated help page for new business startups and another for existing resources.</p> <p>Topics should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and contacts that can assist new and existing businesses. Business Registration Requirements (County and Towns) Who requires a Business License, and how do I get one? Where do I find Local, State, and Federal tax requirements? Who can help me with Zoning Questions? What will I need permits for? Zoning Requirements? Define the roles of Town and County. Provide Education Calendars for Business Workshops and Seminars. Fast-tracking information (steps) to speed up new business development and building construction. <p>An excellent business information page can be found at: Starting a Business in Fairfax County? Topics</p> <p>This business webpage should be promoted in several ways to educate the public that the page is the first place a business should explore when considering a new or expanding an existing company.</p>
Potential Impact	<p>A business resource webpage will confirm the County's commitment to promoting businesses.</p> <p>Will make the process of opening or operating a business more straightforward and more accessible by providing resources that will help companies understand the steps to open and run a new/existing business</p>
Risks	<p>The information must be updated regularly. Outdated information is not helpful and projects an image of not being a priority.</p>

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Responsibility	Assistant County Administrator, Chamber of Commerce
Timeline	Fall 2025
Costs	Cost of page link and development. Cost of time to coordinate information among resources.
Funding	Lancaster County
Measurable Results	Number of visits to the webpage for resources

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 1: Create a business-friendly environment to attract and grow new businesses.

Goal: Create a Business Resource Center for Local Entrepreneurs

Description	Explore the feasibility of a business center/incubator/accelerator that would be a one-source business resources center providing business training and coaching, meeting rooms, and possibly office space. This resource center could be opened a few days a week and supported by a thorough workforce and business training partners.
Goal	To provide easy access to business training and resources
Potential Impact	Lancaster County is a community of entrepreneurs and small business people. The success rate will likely improve the effort by providing a one-source business resource center for new and growing businesses.
Risks	The expense of office space, start-up, up, and coordinator position.
Responsibility	EDA Grants, Lancaster County, RCC, Small Business Development Center, the Consortium Workforce Services Board, SCORE/volunteers, Northern Neck Planning Commission, University of Mary Washington SBA. An active EDA should govern the Business Center/Incubator/Accelerator.
Timeline	Provide business seminars by Spring 2025. Create a Business Center/Incubator/Accelerator space by Fall 2025.
Costs	TBD
Funding	EDA, Grants, Federal and State funding, Private funding, Business and Workforce Training Group
Measurable Results	Number of visits or inquiries Number of classes and participants

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 2: Attract high-paying skilled labor and work-from-home jobs to the county

Goal: Create A Trades School Designed For Post-High School Career Certification

Description	For young people in the local area who have either left high school without a plan or graduated without a career path, there is an excellent opportunity to improve their prospects by enrolling in a trade school. By receiving further training and certification, they can establish a thriving livelihood. Rappahannock Community College is an excellent resource for those pursuing careers in construction trades, barbering, healthcare, computer and phone repair, programming, and customer service.
Potential Impact	A better-trained workforce in a variety of living wage jobs. Lifetime career training.
Risks	Cost of school development
Responsibility	EDA, RCC, Economic Development employees, the Bay Consortium Workforce Services Board, High School Counselors
Timeline	2025
Costs	TBD
Funding	Grants, Partners: RCC, NNPDC
Measurable Results	Number of visits or inquiries Number of classes and participants

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 1: Create A Business-Friendly Environment to Attract and Grow New Businesses

Goal: Foster County Government and Town Government Relationships

Description	Develop consistent communications with towns and county government representatives to attend quarterly meetings to enhance communication between the town council members and Lancaster County government. These meetings aim to discuss ongoing projects and improve communication for well-informed decision-making across all jurisdictions. Additional sessions may be needed for specific jurisdictional projects.
Potential Impact	Better communication and education will lead to more informed decision-making among elected officials in the county and towns, resulting in better decision-making for their respective jurisdictions.
Risks	Additional time requirements
Responsibility	Lancaster County staff, Kilmarnock, White Stone, and Irvington Town Councils.
Timeline	Immediately
Costs	Time
Funding	No additional funding
Measurable Results	Number of meetings Evaluation of success by town and county participants

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective: Create Incentives and Grants to Attract and Grow Local Small Businesses

Goal: Expand the function of the EDA

Description	The Economic Development Authority (EDA) can be used more effectively to catalyze Economic Development. The Business Incubator formed and directed by the EDA Creation of a vibrant grant program for new and expanding businesses Co-work environment support and development Development of a post-secondary trade school in conjunction with Rappahannock Community College.
Benefit	Improve skilled workforce/new business expansion, new jobs Reduce poverty
Risks	Employment of full-time or part-time personnel and significant cost investment into development
Responsibility	Economic Development Office, Rappahannock Community College, and Workforce Development Office.
Timeline	2025
Costs	Very rough estimate of \$150,000 to \$250,000 annually
Funding	Annual Funding by the Board of Supervisors Search for Federal and State Grants and Funding Opportunities Existing and potential Bond funding revenue
Measurable Results	Funding received Number of classes and participants funded The number of new businesses assisted

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective 1: Create a business-friendly environment to attract and grow new businesses.

Goal: Coordinate With Workforce Training Providers and Promote Training Activities for Career Development

Description	<p>There are several existing opportunities to coordinate business training with resources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rappahannock Community College The Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board Northern Neck Planning Commission Mary Washington Small Business Center (SBC) Lancaster By the Bay Chamber of Commerce SCORE <p>These groups have designed classes of multiple levels of business instruction. Many of these education resources offer free or minimal-rate training and will customize the lectures to fit the audience and work as a team.</p> <p>A calendar of courses should be available and updated regularly online, easily accessible to potential businesses.</p> <p>Some course ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Planning Business Tax Structures Accounting/Payroll/ Financing Employee Management/Hiring Employees Customer Service Training for Staff
Potential Impact	<p>New and Existing Businesses would have access to education about operating a business to plan their businesses, train employees, and streamline their companies for maximum profits. In addition, their growth could mean additional local jobs.</p>
Risks	<p>Time to develop the training and the potential for low attendance. Advertising the training sessions and using testimonials from former participants could</p>

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	increase attendance. Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to inform members of training opportunities would raise awareness.
Responsibility	Training sessions should be coordinated with available partners, including large employers and business groups. NNPDC.
Timeline	Begin training sessions in Spring 2024
Costs	Many classes are at no or minimal cost to the participants. However, they must see the value of taking time away from work to attend classes. The cost is coordinating the effort, including screening the courses to understand the value added. Promotional planning is critical.
Funding	Grants, Public-private partnerships, Partners
Measurable Results	Number of classes and training sessions Number of participants Satisfaction ratings by participants

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Strategy: Create a Business-Friendly Environment

Objective: Create A Business-Friendly Environment to Attract and Grow New Businesses

Goal: Develop a Lead NN for Younger Residents and High School Students.

Description	<p>It is essential for young individuals living and working in our county to feel a sense of community and engagement. The Lead NN program offers a nonpolitical, comprehensive curriculum that covers various community topics such as education, healthcare, economic development, county government, diversity, and the judicial systems. Experts are invited to speak on these topics, and the curriculum is based on past successful sessions.</p> <p>By attending these sessions, participants better understand all aspects of their community, enabling them to make well-informed decisions. Additionally, this program allows young individuals to expand their network of contacts and become more involved in the decision-making process that impacts Lancaster County.</p> <p>A condensed high school LNN curriculum could educate students about their community, providing leadership skills and closer connections.</p>
Potential Impact	Residents make better community decisions when they know the facts. Lead NN allows participants to understand community topics better. Lead Northern Neck also will enable participants to interact and network with community leaders and peers.
Risks	In the past, LNN participants paid a fee and were required to attend sessions once a month for eight months. The cost and required time may discourage young entrepreneurs from attending the program.
Responsibility	The LNN program was relocated from a nonprofit organization to Rappahannock Community College due to its decreased regional activity during COVID-19. The proposal suggests that the program should return to a county-level initiative and be overseen by the Assistant County Administrator/Economic Development Coordinator or through the EDA.
Timeline	Begin session in the Fall of 2024
Costs	The participants or their businesses have paid for past LNN courses. The fees cover the program participants' meals and field trips.
Funding	Sponsors, EDA
Measurable Results	<p>Number of students or young residents participating in the course</p> <p>Satisfaction evaluation by participants</p>

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Business-Friendly

Objective 1: Support Housing For Public Sector Employees

Description	The need for Public Sector workers in the community is in high demand. Teachers, Emergency Service workers, and deputy sheriffs are all experiencing difficulties in finding affordable housing alternatives. Rental Assistance programs and Down Payment programs for public service workers should be pursued to retain and attract these vital community service employees.
Goal	Establish rental and down payment assistance programs for home ownership.
Potential Impact	Attract, foster, and retain long-term county employees and teachers.
Risks	none
Responsibility	County Administrator and School Superintendent, Lancaster County CDC
Timeline	2026
Costs	Rough estimate: \$100,000 -\$250,000 Annually
Funding	Lancaster County, Grants, Lancaster School Board, Public-Private partnerships
Measurable Results	Number of new housing units available Number of public employees taking advantage of the program

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Strategy 3: Education

Objectives

- ✓ **FACILITIES:** Provide facilities conducive to 21st-century learning
- ✓ **POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS:** Prepare our students for plans following high school
- ✓ **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & GROWTH:** Accelerate growth and achievement for all students
- ✓ **RECRUIT & RETAIN HIGH QUALITY STAFF:** Increase teacher satisfaction, recruitment and retention

Providing facilities conducive to 21st-century learning

Lancaster County has committed to providing safe, high-quality school facilities that provide an environment in which students can reach their maximum potential. It is not only important to have facilities that provide space to learn in today's world but also to provide extracurricular activities and sports that promote social and emotional well-being. New and renovated facilities allow Lancaster County students to learn through STEAM and hands-on learning even at an early age. The space allows students to learn and be prepared through 21st Century Learning. This includes mastering content while using skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, communication, creative thinking, and citizenship.

LCPS has several recent achievements conducive to 21st-century learning for county students. Those recent advancements include:

- Lancaster County Public Schools, in a public-private partnership, opened a fully-inclusive Early Childhood Education Center offering preschool to Lancaster County three and four year-olds in Fall 2022. This is beneficial to our students and community by:
 - Better preparing students for entering Kindergarten
 - Reducing disparities among young children
 - Reducing or eliminating risk factors that lead to early academic failure
 - Developing social skills early on
- A newly-renovated elementary school opened for the Fall 2023 school session. This school includes a newly added STEM Maker Space, an open courtyard with outdoor learning space, a parent resource room, and interactive small group instructional spaces throughout the hallways. All classrooms have an interactive Smart TV, and our students have 1:1 Chromebooks.

Opening Fall 2026, LCPS will break ground on the new construction of a Junior & Senior High School serving grades 7 - 12. With this combination, students will have opportunities to take high school courses at an earlier grade level and LCPS can develop fast track programming. The school will be located in Kilmarnock next door to Dream Fields. This location near the town of Kilmarnock, Irvington and White Stone will provide closer proximity to local businesses in order for students to visit for job shadowing experiences. It will feature a STEM Maker Space, flexible classroom spaces that can change as education evolves, an outdoor classroom and access to a pond for scientific investigations, and a

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career center. Sports and athletics are important in Lancaster County. The new school will also feature an 1100-seat gymnasium, an auxiliary gym, a turf football field, and an eight-lane soft surface track so that LCPS can host state tournaments. The school is designed with safety in mind and has been designed to allow sight lines and security that provide added safety.

Preparing our students for success after graduation

Building new facilities is not enough alone to improve education with 21st-century learning. While new buildings can create a fresh learning environment, developing new programs that enhance student curriculums and provide more opportunities for hands-on learning is essential. This involves aligning with the latest knowledge and preparing students for the real world by giving lifelong skills by emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, in addition to traditional subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

LCPS is developing a long-term plan to prepare our students for post-secondary career plans beginning with career awareness as early as preschool. Lancaster graduates will progress through a roadmap of experiences and opportunities that will be defined through the 'Profile of a Lancaster Graduate.' As part of this new approach, the following expectations will be of benefit to all LCPS students;

- 8th-grade LCPS students can expect new career path programs to be designed as a part of the 8th Grade Academy. School counselors will guide students in finding careers that align with their interests, whether in college classes, the military, or skilled trades.
- Students entering 9th grade will have a personalized 4-year high school plan
- High school students will have opportunities to job shadow, intern, and explore their fields of interest during their high school years

By graduating from Lancaster High School, students will have a mapped-out career path and a well-written resume. In addition to academic subjects, the curriculum will also provide training on basic work skills to help prepare students for the working world. Through this training, students will acquire knowledge, skills, experience, and attributes necessary for college and the workforce. Career fairs and work-based learning opportunities, such as internships with local businesses, can further guide students towards successful careers in various fields, including academics, the military, or locally relevant and universal trades. This experience can also help high school students feel more connected to their community by actively participating in local businesses. Additionally, school credits or pay can enhance the summer job experience and provide valuable real-world working experience.

Collaboration with organizations and regional programs such as Rappahannock Community College, Northern Neck Technical Center & Governor's STEM Academy, Chesapeake Bay Governor's School, YMCA, Northern Neck Boys and Girls Club, and Bay Workforce Consortium is crucial to reinforce and support the goal of providing 21st Century Learning skills that last a lifetime. Lancaster County also has a strong educational foundation that is instrumental in LCPS being an innovative school division.

Provide Quality Instruction to Accelerate Growth and Achievement for All Students

Lancaster County Public Schools strives to prepare students for future careers that will afford them economic security and participation in civic life. LCPS will provide a progressive curriculum that meets the academic and career needs of all students. LCPS will facilitate learning experiences grounded in high

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expectations and based on current student performance to ensure academic growth and achievement along with social emotional development for all students while eliminating opportunity, access and achievement gaps.

To do this, Lancaster County Public school will develop and implement a program of instruction for grades pre-kindergarten through 12 that is aligned to the Standards of Learning established by the Board of Education and that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Board of Education. The program of instruction emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, mathematical concepts and computations, proficiency in the use of computers and related technology, computer science and computational thinking, including computer coding, and scientific concepts and processes; essential skills and concepts of citizenship, including knowledge of Virginia history and world and United States history, economics, government, foreign languages, international cultures, health and physical education, environmental issues and geography necessary for responsible participation in American society and in the international community; fine arts, which may include, but need not be limited to, music and art, and practical arts.

In addition, LCPS will create a tiered system of support that ensures all student's academic and social emotional needs are met. The tier system framework assists faculty and staff in providing students with appropriate academic and behavioral strategies based on individual needs. Providing students with specific targeted instructional strategies enables students to be successful in both their academic and social emotional pathways.

Through these experiences students will develop the necessary knowledge and skills needed to qualify for further education, gainful employment, or training in a career or technical field; and development of the ability to apply such skills and knowledge in preparation for eventual employment and lifelong learning and to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Increasing Family Engagement

Parent involvement leads to positive benefits for students, parents, and schools, including improved academic performance and improved parent-teacher relationships. Students whose parents stay involved in school have better attendance and behavior, get better grades, demonstrate better social skills, and adapt better to school. LCPS will strive to create positive partnerships to ensure parents or guardians and families feel valued as the primary caregivers. LCPS gives parents opportunities to offer their input regarding their child's education and participate in various events and activities.

Ensuring students are present every day, all day

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing ten percent or more of the academic year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences. Based on a 180-day school year, that means a student that misses 18 days per year, or 2 days per month, is considered chronically absent. Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance. LCPS recognizes that students will miss school due to illness, and it is ultimately a parent or guardian's decision to keep a student home. LCPS developed a tiered support system for supporting students who are chronically absent. LCPS will continue to utilize an infrastructure that collects and analyzes attendance data, create partnerships to support family and community awareness of the importance of attending school regularly and implement tiered strategies to support chronically absent

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students. In addition, LCPS plans to take a rigorous, proactive approach by utilizing social media, other PR avenues, and public events to raise awareness in the community about the importance of good attendance.

Recruit and Retain High-Quality Staff

Having teachers and school staff who are not only qualified but who are positive and share Lancaster's vision is crucial for the success of our students. We are competing against larger counties where there is a more urban lifestyle and higher salaries. LCPS Has several initiatives to assist in recruiting and retaining.

- Teachers of Tomorrow is a Virginia Department of Education initiative to create a sequence of courses for junior and senior high school students to investigate teaching as a career option. A hands-on approach through immersion in our Early Childhood Education Center will be designed to educate interested high school students about a career in teaching, with the hope that if they decide to choose a teaching career, they might also choose to return to Lancaster to teach in our county schools.
- LCPS is taking new and innovative approaches to recruiting staff in many ways. One of these strategies includes hiring high quality international teachers to fill open positions.
- LCPS provides new teachers with mentors and has developed a Quality Teacher Induction Program. The Teacher Induction Program and the teacher mentor program assist with support and resources both in and outside of the room to help merge new staff into our community.
- Providing excellent and valuable professional development opportunities to current teaching staff is crucial, as it plays a significant role in retaining them. The initial step towards identifying the best practices to encourage professional development is to obtain feedback from teachers regarding the programs and training they are most interested in.
- LCPS believes in recognition of its valuable employees and has begun recognition programs: Above & Beyond Award, Teacher and Staff of the Month, Substitute of the Month, and Volunteer of the Month, to name a few.
- LCPS assists hands-on for those who are working toward an initial degree in education, those pursuing further education and those interested in a Career Switcher program.

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Education Strategy

Objective 1: Facilities

Goal: New High School to open for students in the Fall 2026

Description	<p>The first two phases of the school infrastructure plan involved renovating and opening an early childhood education center that houses 3 and 4 year olds. It also included merging the Primary and Middle Schools into a newly renovated elementary school located in the heart of downtown Kilmarnock. The third phase aims to complete a new Junior and Senior High School by 2026, with a modern facility that focuses on 21st-century learning and includes essential student safety measures in its design. The plan also provides for developing athletic fields and tracks for school events as well as to engage the community. LCPS will continue to build relationships with community organizations, such as Dreamfields, and provide access to the community. All high school athletic activities will now be centralized in one location. The new location will also make it easy to get to Kilmarnock and local amenities like the TriWay Trail, Dreamfields, and Compass Entertainment Center.</p> <p>Community updates on the construction of the new Junior/Senior High School will be provided regularly.</p> <p>A grand opening event will allow residents to tour the schools before opening.</p>
Potential Impact	<p>The new facilities will offer the community access to the facilities for various school and community events (track, auditorium, etc.).</p> <p>The new facilities will also offer opportunities to host district, regional, and state events, which may result in an increase in local revenues for those staying and visiting local stores and restaurants.</p> <p>The school will showcase area sports games and players and instill pride in students and faculty.</p> <p>The new facility will be developed with the most current safety and educational guidelines in mind.</p> <p>The new junior and senior high school will foster a safe atmosphere where students can thrive academically, physically, and socially. By developing an environment that is conducive to learning, new facilities will provide a positive academic atmosphere that promotes student engagement and encourages active participation and lifelong learners.</p>
Responsibility	<p>School Division and Lancaster County</p>

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Timeline	<p>School groundbreaking is scheduled for January 2024</p> <p>Old Lancaster High School will close for students in June 2026</p> <p>Fall 2026- 7th Grade relocates from LES to the new Lancaster Junior & Senior High School</p>
Costs	In negotiations
Funding	School, State, and County
Measurable Results	Successfully meeting the opening date for the new high school

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Education Strategy

Objective 2: Post-Secondary Success

Goal: By December 2024, LCPS will collaborate with stakeholders to develop a division-wide strategic plan that emphasizes CTE skills and workforce readiness

Description	<p>Careful, detailed planning for the future of LCPS is critical for successful outcomes for students and school staff. By December 2024, LCPS will have developed a division-wide strategic plan with a detailed outline of goals and objectives for the next five years.</p> <p>This formalized plan will address the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student achievement ● Teacher recruiting and retention ● Post-secondary preparedness ● Culture and climate ● Stakeholder engagement and communication ● Facilities and operations
Potential Impact	<p>A well-planned strategic tool to follow for the future of LCPS, including measurable results for each initiative.</p> <p>An effective strategic plan is critical for creating positive change in Lancaster Public Schools. Among the many benefits, strategic plans align educational partners with a shared vision, mission, and values, promote productive decision-making; help students reach their full potential and become lifelong learners.</p> <p>The local economy would benefit from employing a better-prepared workforce.</p>
Risks	<p>The most significant risk is not having a strategic plan to follow and measure progress based on outlined objectives.</p> <p>The risk is that circumstances may change, and the strategic plan will require updates.</p>
Responsibility	<p>LCPS division, faculty and staff, non-profit organizations, community members, parents, businesses, foundations, and students.</p>
Timeline	<p>Complete strategic plan by December 2024</p>
Costs	<p>Determined by plan</p>

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Funding	School budget
Measurable Results	Completion of the LPS plan and strategies as outlined, November 2023-December 2024 Evaluation of the success of planned outcomes

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Education Strategy

Objective 2: Post-Secondary Success

Goal: By Fall 2024, LCPS will develop a ‘Profile of a Lancaster Graduate’, which defines the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the workforce.

<p>Description</p>	<p>The Profile of a Graduate plan describes the knowledge, skills, experiences, and attributes that students must attain to be successful in college and the workforce and to be “life ready.” To be “life ready” a graduate must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achieve and apply appropriate academic and technical knowledge (content knowledge); ● Demonstrate productive workplace skills, qualities, and behaviors (workplace skills); ● Build connections and value interactions with others as a responsible and responsive citizen (community engagement and civic responsibility); and ● Align knowledge, skills, and personal interests with career opportunities (career exploration). <p>Students will experience meaningful career exploration opportunities. These experiences begin as early as Pre-K and continue until they graduate. Student experiences will enable them to create a career pathway as early as 8th grade, where they will leave 8th grade with a 4-year personalized plan. All LCPS graduates will leave high school with a well-written resume and resources to support Career and College Readiness paths. In addition, the 5 C’s (skills in citizenship, collaboration, creative thinking, and communication) will be infused into daily well-planned instruction and learning.</p> <p>Examples of possible experiences in grades K-12 for an LCPS graduate are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work-based learning opportunities and internships ● Exposure to the LCPS Pathways ● GEAR UP partnership and experiences ● 8th Grade Academy- All 8th grade students participate in extensive career exploration opportunities along with developing stronger “soft skills” that are necessary in today’s workforce and college. ● Create Awareness of Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chesapeake Bay Governor's School ● Northern Neck Technical Center ● Governor's STEM Academy
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JROTC • Dual-enrollment courses through Rappahannock Community College (RCC) • Early College Academy • Exposure to local workforce experiences and careers • ‘Teach for Tomorrow’ Experiences (Growing our own educational staff)
Potential Impact	<p>Students will graduate from LCPS better prepared for their postsecondary education, employment, or training (college, military, trade school, or employment), resulting in better job opportunities. High-quality CTE programs and pathways reduce dropout rates. These opportunities provide students with access to a chosen career that provides sustainable wages and pathways to advancement.</p> <p>The local economy would benefit from employing a better , better-prepared workforce.</p>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of available workforce opportunities (apprenticeships, internships, etc...) • Ability to address the ever-changing workforce expectations (such as social responsibility) • Workforce-related regulations and compliance • The biggest risk is that students will not be prepared to enter the workforce, military, or college • Students not having the “soft skills” necessary to be successfully employed
Responsibility	Lancaster School Division and community partners
Timeline	Fall 2024
Costs	The development of the plan will have minimal cost. Implementing the plan will have significant costs.
Funding	School budget and relevant grant opportunities
Measurable Results	<p>Number of graduating students with solid career plans after graduation (Military, Trade School, College, Employment)</p> <p>Number of student internships arranged for undergraduates</p>

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Education Strategy

Objective 3: Student Achievement and Growth

Goal: LCPS will use a tiered system to utilize student data to target instruction and will deliver quality instruction to all students

Description	Students come to school with varying levels of academic, behavioral and social emotional needs. Students are exposed to grade level material daily using high quality instructional strategies. At times, students may find concepts a challenge. A tiered system of support is a proactive and preventative framework that integrates quality instruction and data to maximize each student’s potential. A tiered system of support enables educators to identify students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional strengths and challenges and provide differentiated support for students based on their needs.
Potential Impact	Students will experience growth in academic, behavioral and social emotional skills.
Risks	This a tiered system of support and instructional strategies require extensive professional development. It can be very costly and time consuming for staff.
Responsibility	Lancaster County Public Faculty and Staff
Timeline	Ongoing
Costs	The cost will be based on the specific needs of faculty, staff, and students. The cost will include but not limited to professional development opportunities for staff, online programs for student support and educational materials needed.

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Funding	School Budget
Measurable Results	Assessment results are to include but not limited to: The Standards of Learning (SOL), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Virginia Language & Literacy Screener(VALLS), Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP)

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Education Strategy

Objective 3: Student Achievement & Growth.

Goal: LCPS will create a robust schedule of events and activities each year that offer parents and families multiple opportunities to engage in their child's education.

Description	<p>Family members play a significant role in shaping a child's academic success. Engaged parents and teachers demonstrate the importance of education and encourage progress. To foster parental engagement, LCPS plans to provide more opportunities for parents to interact with their child's school, teachers, and support staff.</p> <p>Some of these engaging opportunities will include:</p> <p>Donuts for Dads, Muffins for Mom, Family Literacy, Math and STEM nights, sporting events, Bring a Guest to Lunch, Financial Literacy Night, Open House, PTA meetings, Music and Drama performances, guest speakers, parent-teacher conferences, Annual Talent Show, Art Show, athletic events</p>
Potential Impact	<p>Family engagement in schools contributes to positive student outcomes, including improved child and student achievement, decreased disciplinary issues, improved parent-teacher and teacher-student relationships, and improved school environment.</p>
Risks	<p>Families may face time constraints due to work commitments, multiple jobs, or other responsibilities, making it challenging to actively engage with schools. Lack of resources, such as transportation or internet access, can also hinder participation in school events or access to information.</p>
Responsibility	<p>School Administration, faculty, and staff</p>
Timeline	<p>Each fall, a yearly plan will be in place for the upcoming academic year.</p>
Costs	<p>The plan itself will have minimal costs. Putting it into action will require funding for activities and events.</p>

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Funding	Grants and school budget
Measurable Results	Number of parent/school events and attendance by parents Number of teacher engagements with parents Satisfaction evaluation study with parents and teachers to monitor success

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Education Strategy

Objective 3: Student Achievement and Growth

Goal: LCPS will develop and implement tiered strategies that support families in maintaining a student's absenteeism rate of less than 10% of the school year

Description

Students who are chronically absent miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers. Absent students affect the progress of a classroom by requiring teachers to backtrack lesson plans for those students who have missed classes. Additional instruction needs to be planned for chronically absent students in order to assist with making up lost skills. In addition, chronic absenteeism often leads to higher dropout rates. Students do require sick days, but some absences can be prevented. New approaches will be developed to address preventable absenteeism.

LCPS will create an outreach program to reduce student absenteeism in Lancaster School. This program will include a PR campaign to promote the importance of school attendance to parents and guardians.

Other approaches include:

Tracking attendance data regularly to intervene quickly through regular school attendance meetings with the school attendance team. The team will consist of the administration, the school social worker, the school nurse, and the school truancy officer.

Families will receive notifications when absences increase to 5, 7, 10, etc. Meetings will be held with families to discuss attendance and create a plan to reduce absenteeism.

Good attendance will be recognized and rewarded.

	<p>School attendance teams should promote a culture of attendance and intentionally plan attendance-related activities throughout the school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize good attendance and express concerns in a supportive manner if needed. Anticipate and plan activities/support to minimize dips in attendance during holidays. Conduct a resource fair for students and their families. • Check in with students/families with known medical conditions. Create personalized student plans. Identify common barriers for student groups and organize strategies to address barriers. Provide academic support as needed. <p>Share back-to-school messaging about the importance of attendance for in-person and distance learning.</p>
Potential Impact	Decreased absenteeism, lower dropout rates, increased student achievement
Risks	<p>Families will feel the pressure to send children to school sick.</p> <p>Families will become disengaged with school due to continued pressure regarding attendance issues.</p>
Responsibility	School administration, attendance team
Timeline	Year long
Costs	<p>Truancy officer</p> <p>Incentives</p> <p>Transportation for home visits when necessary</p>
Funding	School Budget
Measurable Results	<p>Number of student absenteeism</p> <p>Number of meetings with parents addressing absenteeism</p> <p>Number of students with good attendance</p> <p>Evaluation of program's success based on teacher and Truancy Officer input</p>

Education Strategy

Objective 4: LCPS will recruit and retain high-quality staff

Goal: LCPS will develop routes to grow our own teachers, assist career switchers, and recruit high quality teachers to work at LCPS

Description

Hiring and retaining high-quality teachers is challenging in most rural areas, including Lancaster County. LCPS wants to help local qualified residents and non-certified staff gain certifications to teach in their local schools.

The Career Switchers approach for LCPS aims to support provisional teachers' licensure and certification. A formalized plan will target current county residents and employees interested in teaching in Lancaster County schools.

Career Switchers is a fast-track program sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education that trains and certifies new teachers who may have had previous careers but now wish to teach in local schools.

Approved applicants would receive a provisional teaching license and be required to complete two-or-three curriculum levels to gain a full teaching certification.

Prerequisites for the program include:

- An application process to one of the career switcher certified program providers
- A Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
- The completion of requirements for an endorsement in a teaching area or the equivalent through verifiable experience or academic study
- At least three years of full-time work experience or its equivalent
- Qualifying scores on the professional teacher's assessments

LCPS will continue to refine its efforts in growing our own teachers. We will utilize the Teachers for Tomorrow Program and the RCC Career Switcher Program and assist in finding resources and financial aid for those who want to earn their bachelor's degree in Education. The overall goal is to have all positions filled with highly qualified teachers.

The Virginia Department has created the Develop Teachers for Tomorrow Program, which focuses on Junior and Senior High School students interested in a teaching career. This program offers an opportunity for high school students to gain hands-on classroom experience and an introduction to teaching as a career.

The goal is to research and establish a Teachers for Tomorrow Program at LCPS by 2025.

Potential Impacts	Providing students with highly qualified staff ensures students receive the best possible instruction that will increase students' achievement.
Ris	Career Switchers tend to come into education ill-equipped in regard to classroom management skills. They tend to take a pay cut and increase workload.
Responsibility	School Division Human Resources Department
Timeline	On-going, Year-long recruitment
Costs	Recruitment materials Recruitment events (PERC, etc...) Course Work reimbursements
Funding	School budget
Measurable Results	Number of new Career Switchers and interest in the program Number of students interested in Teachers of Tomorrow course

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Education Strategy

Objective 4: Recruit and retain highly qualified staff

Goal: Ensure LCPS has an active and impactful induction program for new teachers

Description	<p>A Quality Teacher Induction Program aims to assist new teachers in adapting to the teaching environment and provide structure for systematic training and ongoing support to ease the transition for early educators to the profession and veteran teachers new to the school division over the course of one-to-two years through instructional support, professional support, personal support, and logistical support. The program provides new teachers with mentors who meet regularly.</p> <p>Introduce the local community. They promote a strong connection between the school and the district and help improve teacher retention.</p> <p>Community donations welcomed</p> <p>Provide staff with a targeted PP app.</p>
Potential Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher retention will increase. ● Provides staff with support in instructional strategies, classroom management, and as well as emotional social support. ● Produces a higher quality of instruction and classroom management ● Teachers are more equipped to handle the struggles of education.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No social life here, so it is a challenge to retain staff ● Time consumption (a teacher's day is long) and adding more meetings and requirements can become a little overwhelming. ● Housing is expensive and difficult to find. Teachers tend to find residency in other local counties, which results in a longer drive and the possibility of, after a year of experience, being hired by the county they live in.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Division
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In place now (August through June)
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cost of program; mentor stipends ● Approximately \$1500-2000
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State funding ● VDOE Mentoring Grant
Measurable Results	<p>Number of teachers participating in sponsored events</p> <p>Teacher retention numbers</p> <p>Satisfaction evaluation of programs by new teachers</p>

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Education Strategy

Objective 4: Recruit and retain highly qualified staff

Goal: Celebrate success and provide quality and meaningful professional development opportunities.

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather feedback on needs from teachers/ administration ● Use data to drive professional development and training ● Recognitions of staff and teachers; 'Above & Beyond' Awards, 'Teacher of the Month,' 'Teacher of the Year,' 'Staff of the Month,' 'Staff of the Year.' ● Survey staff on PD needs ● PERC visits/Other recruiting opportunities to showcase the success and positive school climate ● Use data to drive professional development
Potential Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher of high quality ● Teachers who feel recognized ● Potential for higher staff retention ● Develops an even stronger sense of staff and community pride
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time in the day (not enough)
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Division
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing basis
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher incentives & award costs ● Professional development costs
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School budget ● Private funding for teacher incentives
Measurable Results	<p>Teacher participation in programs</p> <p>Teacher satisfaction evaluation of programs</p>

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Strategy 4: Housing Available for All

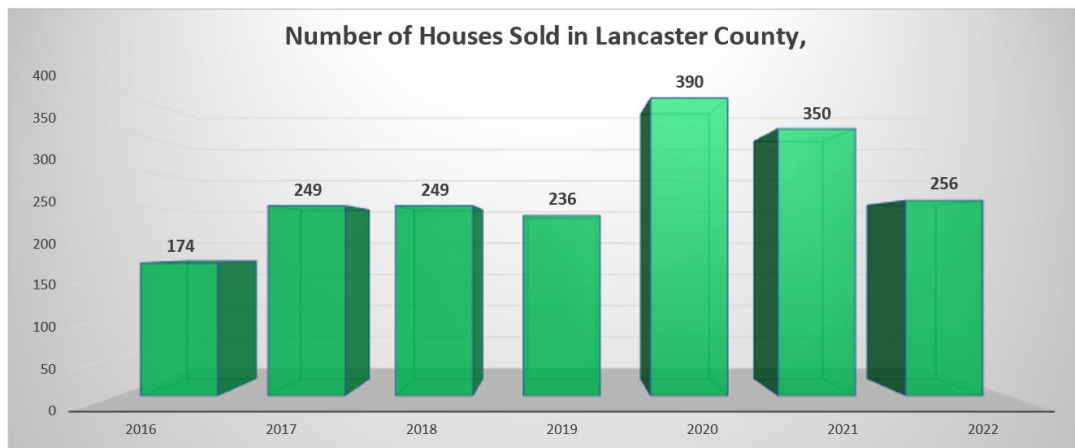
Objectives:

- ✓ Create a public-private partnership to develop the Good Luck Road site.
- ✓ Create a Lancaster County Community Development Corporation.
- ✓ Create economic incentives or grants to attract developers and contractors

The housing market was experiencing national and local growth due to increased demand, low interest rates, and millennials moving away from apartments. However, the market has slowed down due to rising interest rates. In the local area, the housing market saw a surge in property sales during 2020 and 2021, driven by buyers searching for primary and secondary vacation homes in rural areas amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before developing plans for workforce housing, a complete study of housing needs and available funding resources must be thoroughly researched. The CBRAC Housing Committee is working with Virginia Housing to conduct a workforce housing study to evaluate Lancaster County's needs and solutions, including the access to funds available to support the most effective approaches.

How many homes were sold in Lancaster County, VA?



Virginia Realtors Association

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It is difficult for young families to afford a home in Lancaster County due to the high average home prices for 2022-2023, which exceed the State median sale price. Private developers are building new single-family homes in the county, with prices ranging from \$320,000 to \$400,000. According to Freddie Mac, entry-level homes should be 1,400 square feet or less, and the new homes being constructed range in size from 1,153 square feet to 1,526 square feet.

The high demand for housing in the county has resulted in a shortage of rental properties, making rentals expensive and hard to find. According to the US Census, rental prices in Virginia have increased by 24% in the last ten years. Locally, some potential rental properties have been transformed into short-term Airbnb rentals for investment purposes, reducing the availability of rental options for middle- and lower-income residents. Second home/vacation home purchases have also reduced the number of homes available for full-time residents.

It is a nationwide crisis that middle- and low-income Americans struggle to find affordable housing. The cost of housing has risen much faster than wages, and the government's reasonable housing standard dictates that individuals should not spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Unfortunately, most wages have not kept pace with the increasing cost of housing. For example, in Virginia, a single parent employed as a fast food, counter, or retail worker typically earns around \$25,000 and must spend about 60-64% of their income on rent, leaving little for other monthly expenses (the average rental rate in VA is \$1,326).

The Housing Committee of CBRAC recommends an independent study on housing in Lancaster County, specifically emphasizing housing options for the workforce. Before making any recommendations or identifying potential funding sources, conducting an unbiased study that thoroughly assesses the county's housing needs is essential. This analysis will help determine the affordable housing requirements for the workforce residents of the area and the most efficient and effective way to meet those needs. Furthermore, the study should identify any state or local funding options available for housing development.

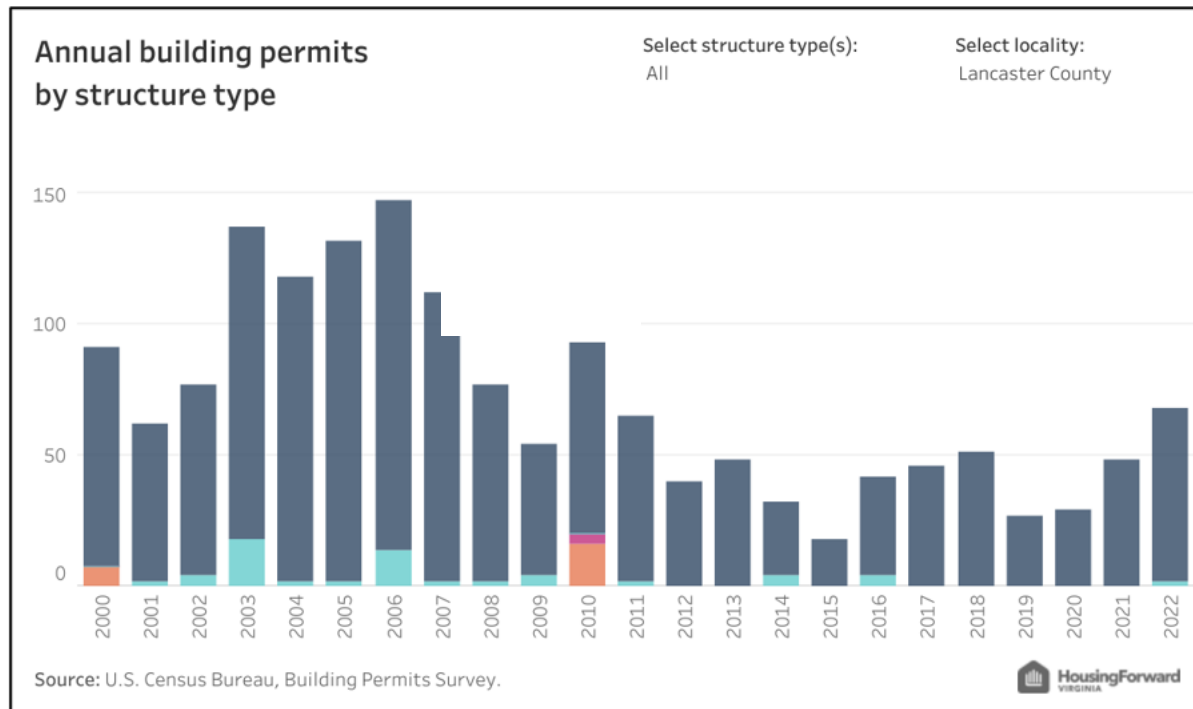
Creating a nonprofit Community Development Corporation can aid in securing grants and funding for developers, builders, and federal, state, and local governments to develop existing housing. Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations created by local stakeholders to improve neighborhoods and towns. They engage in affordable housing, economic development, neighborhood planning, and environmental sustainability activities. Lancaster County CDC will provide a not-for-profit approach and tailored solutions for economic vitality, working independently from the county government but closely with them on each project.

The CBRAC housing subcommittee team has developed a few housing areas of focus once the CDC has been created, **including land donations, rehab of abandoned properties, tax auctioned properties, and exploring government grants, partnerships, and new homeowner programs.**

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Objective 3: Create economic incentives or grants to attract developers and contractors

Overall, the building industry in Lancaster County has experienced recent growth but is still below the building boom years 2003-2007.



Provided by HousingForward.com Virginia - Dark blue color represents single-family units. All other colors indicate multi-housing units.

Creating workforce housing in rural areas can be challenging. Constructing affordable homes for working residents in rural areas is often less profitable than building single-family homes. The cost of building materials is increasing, there is limited availability, and managing completed rentals is expensive. All these factors make it challenging to build affordable workforce housing in the private sector without government assistance.

In some areas, efforts have been made to accelerate the resolution of affordable housing issues.

Localities may use various steps to make workforce housing available quickly, including:

- The expedited processing of approvals of development orders or permits for affordable housing.
- An openness for County governments to have flexible standards to lower building costs (ex. Density, zoning, and waiving fees).

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- Affordable accessory residential units.
- The allowance of flexible lot configurations, including zero-lot-line arrangements for affordable housing.

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Housing

Objective 1: Create Affordable Housing

Goal: Conduct a Formal Workforce Housing Study with Funding Strategies for Fast-track Development

Description	To quickly create affordable workforce housing, it is necessary to evaluate the workforce housing situation. The Virginia Department of Housing will guide this study, identifying the county's most effective and efficient approach to new workforce housing. The analysis will also outline all available funding resources to create a viable plan for adding affordable workforce housing. Housing incentives for county employees, including teachers and EMT workers, should be included in the independent housing study.
Goal	To develop an independent housing plan and identify funding sources by Fall 2024
Risks	A formal plan will require additional time and money.
Responsibility	CBRAC Housing Committee, Lancaster Planning Commission, Lancaster County Board of Supervisors, Local Developers and Contractors
Timeline	The housing study will be completed by 2024 with funding options. Grant applications are to begin in January 2025.
Costs	TBD
Funding	Virginia Department of Housing
Measurable Results	Housing evaluation and funding sources plan New housing developed and planned

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Housing

Objective 1: Create Affordable Housing

Goal: Create a Community Housing Authority

Description	<p>Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations that local stakeholders create to revitalize their neighborhoods and towns. CDCs are involved in various activities such as developing affordable housing, economic development, neighborhood planning, and environmental sustainability. The main goal of this CDC would be to address affordable housing for Lancaster County residents. Lancaster County CDC will provide a not-for-profit donation vehicle and host a variety of solutions as nuanced as needed to support the County's economic vitality.</p> <p>CDCs create <u>affordable housing</u> by buying, <u>renovating</u>, or building for sale or rental properties and working closely with local builders to make affordable housing options.</p> <p>Specific tasks will address:</p> <p>Workforce Housing Development (for sale)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land donations (develop and use land) - Abandoned properties - Auctions/REO - County bond capital used for housing <p>Workforce Housing Development (rental)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Same as above sources of land/equity - State and County housing grants and below-market-rate investments/bonds <p>Revitalization of vacant and blighted commercial property</p> <p>Reinvestments in un-used or underutilized commercial property</p> <p>Host Revolving Loan Funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business & Developers - Housing
Goal	<p>To develop affordable housing for Lancaster resident workers and rent subsidies for public employees.</p>
Risks	<p>Workforce growth and housing development are intertwined; we cannot grow jobs and prosper without housing.</p> <p>No new outside businesses will consider locating to the area to bring new opportunities.</p>
Responsibility	<p>CDC, Lancaster County Board of Supervisors, Lancaster Planning Commission, Virginia Department of Housing.</p>

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Timeline	<p>The plan involves creating a volunteer CDC board and applying for a CDC 501c3 by mid-2024.</p> <p>We will identify partners and develop a detailed plan for workforce housing, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -inventorying potential properties -exploring funding and developer incentives options -develop relationships with developers and nonprofits (private partnerships) -creating a development plan -build and launch a website -securing funding and capital sources to support the project(s). -engage the services of vendors and consultants to help support capacity. <p>The goal is to develop one workforce housing project by 2026 and hold a launch event with media coverage at the first project location.</p>
Costs	Cost of CDC application
Funding	Federal and State Grants, including the Virginia Department of Housing, Lancaster County land donations and incentives, Private Partnerships
Measurable Results	<p>The official designation of a nonprofit CDC</p> <p>Development of a strategic plan and priorities for the new CDC</p> <p>The number of new successful projects developed through the CDC initiative</p>

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Housing

Objective 1: Create Affordable Housing

Goal: Work with area builders and developers to assist with affordable housing

Description	<p>Work with area builders and developers to encourage building affordable housing in Lancaster County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop customized partnership options to increase the viability of developing single-family housing under \$250,000 and partnerships to reduce builder's expenses. -Consider supplemental rent programs or agreements with builders for housing for county employees. -Fast-track building by reviewing building regulations, zoning, and other requirements.
Goal	After conducting the independent housing study, discuss the findings with area developers and builders. Discuss incentives and create a feasible plan to begin a project by 2025.
Risks	The risk is workers will move elsewhere due to a lack of affordable housing in Lancaster County.
Responsibility	Lancaster County CDC, Lancaster County Government, Lancaster County Planning Commission, CBRAC Housing Committee, Virginia Department of Housing.
Timeline	Immediately form the Board for the CDC and apply for nonprofit status.
Costs	TBD
Funding	Nonprofit status, public/private partnerships, grants
Measurable Results	<p>Establishment of CDC Board and nonprofit status</p> <p>Development of a strategic plan and priorities for the CDC focus</p> <p>Number of successful projects</p>

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Strategy 5: Recreation

Objectives

- ✓ Develop multiple county public access facilities and parks throughout the county.
- ✓ Continue community partnerships to foster and coordinate recreational programming.
- ✓ Cultivate relationships that promote the arts and maritime culture of the community.

Despite being surrounded by water, many locals and visitors have been unable to enjoy it for recreational purposes. That is changing. The County Board of Supervisors has secured three new fast-tracked public access sites and two upgraded sites, offering boat ramps, kayak launches, fishing piers, picnic areas, and public restrooms to residents and visitors. The new sites are located in Carter Cove, Taylor Creek. Upgrades to water access at Windmill Point (planning stage), Chesapeake Trail, and Thomas Landing are underway. The construction and upgrades of these sites are set to begin in Fall 2023, with site plans already in place. All water access site construction will be expedited to provide everyone with easy access to the water. A minimum of two additional access sites are planned by 2035.

The Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan outlines three goals for public water access. They are as stated:

GOAL # 1 Provide and encourage adequate recreational access to State waters while ensuring continued protection of the natural environment.

GOAL #2 Create public access opportunities that offer varied waterfront experiences.

GOAL #3 Create public access sites which can enhance economic opportunities in Lancaster County.

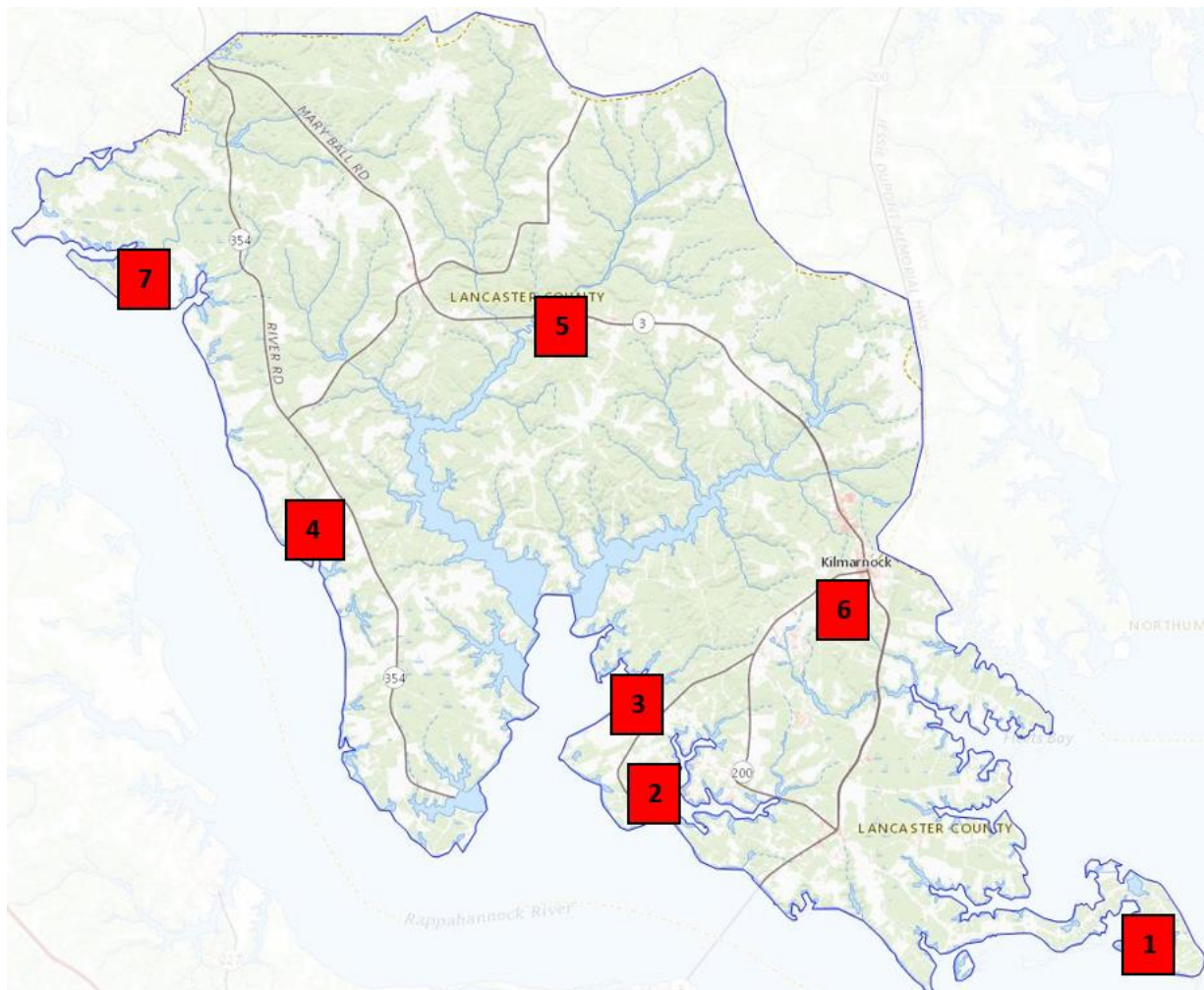
The Lancaster Water Access Committee and the Board of Supervisors are making significant progress in achieving the objectives and plans outlined in the Lancaster Comprehensive Plan. They focus on creating public access sites along the waterfront, allowing residents and visitors to enjoy recreational activities. These efforts are aimed at boosting the tourism industry, which plays a crucial role in driving the economy of Lancaster County. The new waterfront locations will attract more tourists, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs and local businesses. Additionally, these water access sites will provide educational opportunities for visitors to learn about the history and culture of Lancaster County by promoting our long history with a working waterfront.

The Lancaster Water Access Committee's next target is to establish at least two more public water access sites by 2035.

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New and Upgraded Public Access Sites and Trails in Lancaster County

1. Windmill Point Campus
2. Carter Cove
3. Taylor Creek
4. Thomas Landing
5. Chesapeake Trail
6. TriWay Trail
7. Belle Isle State Park



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Carter Cove

Carter Cove, located in Weems, Virginia, will offer area boaters a new place to launch boats and kayaks on Carter Cove, with direct, easy access to Carter Creek and the Rappahannock River. The property is 4.9 acres of a peninsula. Plans include piers, boat launches, parking, picnic areas, a shelter, and public restrooms. The property will offer walking trails and educational opportunities with an old oyster shucking house (structure shell) on the water's edge.



Taylor Creek

Taylor Creek is a new public access site spanning 11 acres along the Corrotoman River, offering easy access to the Rappahannock River. The site features a kayak launch, a pier, trails, a picnic area, public restrooms, and a boardwalk, all easily accessible with convenient parking. Additionally, visitors can rent canoes and kayaks and participate in educational activities.



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Windmill Point Campus White Stone

The Windmill Point Campus is situated at the mouth of the Rappahannock River, providing convenient access to the river, Chesapeake Bay and expansive views of both. This public access site is currently undergoing a major renovation. While the existing kayak launch site will remain, the beach access site will be expanded to cover more than 1.09 acres of county-owned and negotiated beach easements. The beach will be enhanced by adding new riprap, debris removal, and beach area expansion. The project will be carried out in multiple phases, including the construction of off-street parking, a new fishing pier, a boardwalk, and restrooms with a bathhouse. The Windmill Point Marina will offer public boat launch and parking facilities.



Thomas Landing

Thomas Landing is an existing public access area located in the northern part of Lancaster County and provides public access to Greenvale Creek, Lancaster. The site offers a boat launch and picnic area, and it is currently being upgraded with a new pier and boardwalk.



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Chesapeake Trail

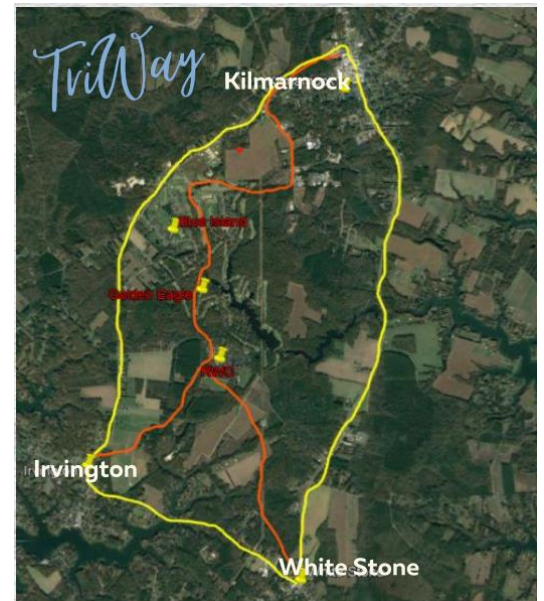
Chesapeake Trail will be upgraded with a grant from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Federal Highway Department. Additions to the park will include more parking, restrooms, picnic tables, renovation of the overlook, kayak launch, and deck.

Increased Recreational Access

In addition to water access, Lancaster supports new bike and walking trails for the community to support public health, recreation, and tourism.

TriWay Trail

The **TriWay Trail** is a recreational pathway for walking, jogging, biking, and exercise. It connects three towns within the county, providing easy access to local restaurants, businesses, and job opportunities. This trail offers a unique opportunity for individuals to enjoy nature while promoting health and wellness. It connects the three small villages of White Stone, Kilmarnock, and Irvington, making it an attractive destination for residents and tourists. Additionally, it could be crucial in attracting a younger population to the area. Phase 1 of the trail is expected to be completed within 12 months and will stretch approximately one and a half miles. This phase will provide a pathway from Harris Road to the Compass Entertainment Center. The remaining four stages of the trail will bring the final length to approximately 9 miles, connecting three towns. They will be accessible to walkers, joggers, cyclists (e-bikes and trikes included), dog walkers, skaters, scooters, and all mobility assistance devices.



The benefits of the TriWay Trail include

- Increased access to the communities, nature, and outdoors for residents and visitors
- Provides an opportunity to improve health and wellness
- History and cultural education
- Connects other fitness and recreational opportunities
- Will boost the local economy through increased tourism and related business development
- Likely to increase property values.

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**New and Enhanced Public Water Access and Recreational Opportunities for
Lancaster County residents and visitors.**

Public Access Site	Boat Ramp/ Dock	Fishing Pier	Kayak Launch	Picnic Area	Restrooms	ADA	Other
Carter Cove	✓ (2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Picnic Pavilion Walking Trails Educational
Taylor Creek			✓	✓	✓	✓	Biking Nature Trails Boardwalk Educational
Windmill Point	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Upgraded Beach Parking
Thomas Landing	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	Upgrade
Chesapeake Trail Upgrades			✓	✓	✓	✓	Upgrade
TriWay Trail				✓	✓	✓	Walking Trails Bike Trails Fitness Trails

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Additional Recreation

The Lancaster County Supervisors have acknowledged the necessity of creating a new position for a Recreational Coordinator. This position will be responsible for planning and overseeing recreational programs for both youth and adults in the county. After conducting group discussions with younger residents, it was suggested that the Lancaster County Recreation Coordinator explore and coordinate various sports-related activities.

- Adult basketball and softball teams
- Youth football
- Tennis and Pickleball
- Bike trails in the Town of Kilmarnock
- Exercise courses
- Disc golf park
- Art and sculpture trails

Private businesses will continue bringing new reasons for residents and visitors to Lancaster County. The opening of the Compass Entertainment Complex has given Lancaster a more comprehensive range of entertainment options for people of all ages. The complex offers a variety of activities, such as climbing walls, mini-golf, bumper cars, batting cages, movie theaters, party rooms for rent, and arcades. These entertainment options attract young people from the entire region, increasing the quality of life for all.

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Recreation

Objective 1: Develop multiple county public access facilities and parks.

Goal: Add a Minimum of Two Additional Water Access Sites

Description	Lancaster residents and visitors will soon have more access to local waters with multiple new and enhanced public access locations within park-like settings. These plans follow the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan and will be fast-tracked for development. At least two additional public access sites will be planned for opening before 2035.
Goal	Fast-track all new and enhanced water access sites for residents and visitors. Plans will include a minimum of two more water access sites by 2035
Risks	Unforeseen construction delays. Proper planning for all recreational sites must have a maintenance plan and a security plan to ensure that the sites are adequately maintained and monitored for security to protect visitors and adjacent landowners.
Responsibility	Lancaster County, Nonprofits, Citizen support
Timeline	Construction of some site enhancements has begun, and other locations will begin phases of development in 2024. A minimum of two additional water access sites are planned by 2035
Costs	Building, developing, maintaining, and promoting new locations. Much of the funding for the planned sites has been secured.
Funding	Lancaster County, Grants, Nonprofits, Individual donations, public-private partnerships.
Measurable Results	The successful grand opening of all planned water access and recreational sites. The addition of two more water access sites in Lancaster County

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Recreation

Objective 1: Develop multiple county public access facilities and parks throughout the county

Goal: Promote New Water Access Sites

Description	<p>New and enhanced water access sites must be promoted to area residents and visitors. Word of mouth and press releases are insufficient to inform the community about the benefits. Multiple media sources should be utilized to inform and promote all new recreational activities in Lancaster County. This process should include frequent and consistent messaging and promotion in coordination with Virginia’s River Realm and other groups promoting the region. A separate communications plan should be developed for each of the six strategic plans outlined in this document. Develop well-planned grand opening events. A communications plan for the recreational projects should include a Lancaster County web page dedicated to public access within Lancaster County and a map card/flyer identifying all access locations. An information card could be given to tourists staying in local hotels and area B&Bs, or the card could be available at state rest stops.</p> <p>Consider PR events and site promotions to create free statewide publicity through Virginia Tourism Corporation or other media.</p> <p>Note the recommendation in Strategy Six: Communications.</p>
Goal	To inform and promote new recreational offerings in Lancaster County.
Risks	The expense of promoting new recreational sites
Responsibility	Lancaster County, Local tourism groups
Timeline	Continue to update residents about the construction of new recreational sites and grand opening dates. Provide information to residents and visitors frequently and consistently.
Costs	The estimated cost for promotion for new public access and recreation would be \$10,000-\$20,000.
Funding	Lancaster County, Virginia’s River Realm, Grants, Nonprofit support
Measurable Results	<p>Successful grand opening of the new public access sites</p> <p>Number of visitors or traffic counts for each site</p> <p>Social media interest-based site promotion</p>

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Recreation

Objective 1: Develop multiple county public access facilities and parks throughout the county

Goal: Develop Rules, Maintenance, and Safety Plans for New Locations

Description	New public access locations in park-like surroundings will soon be available for residents and tourists to enjoy the local waters and trails. To ensure everyone's safety, visitors are expected to follow developed rules and guidelines that have been set forth. Additionally, maintenance and operations should be planned for all public sites to ensure they are kept to the prescribed standard for visitors and adjacent property owners. The successful implementation of these plans will lead to an improved overall visitor experience.
Goal	A developed visitor guideline, maintenance, operation, and safety plan for each public access site in Lancaster County.
Risks	There is more risk in not having rules and guidelines for county public access sites and maintenance, operation, and safety guides.
Responsibility	Lancaster County, Lancaster County Parks and Recreation, Volunteers, Nonprofit organizations, Civic Groups
Timeline	Plans and rules should be established before opening new recreational sites.
Costs	TBD, depending on the access site.
Funding	Lancaster County, Lancaster County Parks and Recreation, Volunteers, Nonprofit Organizations, Civic Groups, Grants, and Public Donations.
Measurable Results	Strategic plan for operation and maintenance with measures of success Operational success based on visitor feedback and recommendations

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Recreation

Objective 2: Expand community partnerships to foster and coordinate recreational programming

Goal: Hire a Recreation Director to Explore Recreational Sports and Coordinate with other Recreational Groups

Description	New Recreation Director Coordinate with Dreamfields, etc. Explore community sports and coordinate with other groups for events and sports teams. Promote new activities and team sports. Develop a strategic plan outlining objectives for the growth of new programs
Goal	To establish additional recreational opportunities for residents and visitors
Risks	The risk may be a lack of public communication and planning that may lead to a lack of participation Liability issues must be addressed
Responsibility	Lancaster County Recreation Director
Timeline	After the hiring of the Recreational Director
Costs	TBD once the strategic plans are developed and priorities established
Funding	Self-pay for some activities, volunteers, community support, Lancaster County, Government grants
Measurable Results	Development of a strategic plan and priorities Number of new programs established Number of programs developed

Strategy 6: Public Communications

Objectives:

Communications

- ✓ **COMMUNICATE** better with residents for a greater understanding of the Lancaster 2035 goals and action plans
- ✓ **COMMUNICATE** ongoing information to residents about the progress goals and actions of Lancaster County as a whole
- ✓ **COMMUNICATE** with external constituents (nonresidents, future residents, future businesses, and visitors).

Internal and External communications are critical to the success of the objectives outlined in the Lancaster County Strategic Plan. All external communication is recommended to adhere to the brand established in the Lancaster 2035 plan and include the defined vision: **Lancaster County is a highly desirable place to live, work, and play---with a balance of rural nature, small community, and economic vitality.**

External Communications-Residents and Businesses

One of the most important responsibilities of local government agencies is to keep county residents informed about any developments that could affect their quality of life. To gain residents' trust, communication with them should be transparent and accessible to all. Considering the diverse population of Lancaster County, it is crucial to use different communication methods to inform the public about important issues and upcoming projects effectively. To achieve this, it is recommended that a detailed communication plan be developed for each strategy outlined in the Lancaster 2035 plan, which should involve multiple communication tools to keep residents updated on progress. The first goal is focused on educating residents and businesses about workforce issues and the strategies developed in the Lancaster 2035 Strategic Plan. For the next 18 to 24 months, residents will be introduced to the strategy, objectives, goals, and planning for implementing the Lancaster 2035 plan.

The second goal includes future communications with residents and businesses to inform them of the progress in implementing the 2035 goals. It will consist of upcoming events related to all six strategies.

Examples of some of the communication topics to include in the Communication planning:

- School Construction Progress and Opening Dates
- Updates on Lancaster 2035 goals and progress
- Affordable Broadband Options for Fixed Income Residents
- Discover the latest affordable broadband options available to fixed-income residents.

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- Progress and Openings of New Public Water Access Sites
- School Achievements, including Teacher and Student Successes
- Public Recreation Activities
- Business Resources and Classes, including resources and classes available to help businesses succeed.

County Newsletter

Lancaster Public Schools sends a quarterly newsletter to update residents on school-related events and student achievements. It has been recommended that this newsletter be expanded to include additional county information. This extended version of the newsletter would be mailed to residents. It would help keep them informed about essential plans and news related to the county and town, directly impacting the quality of life.

External Communications-Visitors

Virginia's River Realm in Virginia is doing a great job promoting visitor assets in Lancaster and Middlesex Counties to potential visitors. They use various mediums to consistently promote the message of the area's events and experiences. All external communications to tourists must be coordinated with the River Realm to ensure that outreach to visitors is consistent, frequent, and efficient. The focus should be on attracting young families to the area to increase awareness and visibility of the available amenities for all age groups, especially for working-age groups.

Creating attention with new recreational activities should take advantage of public relations and other non-paid advertising opportunities, including social media influencer visits. When developing media plans, finding creative ways to entice significant state and national tourism stories from non-paid sources is essential. Newspapers, magazines, and social media writers are always looking for an opportunity to write about an exceptional tourism experience. Often, this approach gives greater exposure than paid media. However, it should not be considered an exclusive approach but be a part of a larger, diverse communication plan.

Once some of the Lancaster 2035 plans have been implemented, future communication outreach will include communication approaches to encourage younger workers to consider Lancaster County a great place to live, bring their families, and work.

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Public Communication

Objective 1: Communicate Better with the Public for a Greater Understanding of the Lancaster 2035 goals and action plans

Objective 2: Communicate ongoing information to residents about the progress, goals, and actions of Lancaster County and the Lancaster 2035

Goal: Communicate the Lancaster 2035 Plan to the public

Goal: A separate communication plan for each of the six strategies

Description	<p>The first goal is to help Lancaster residents understand the need to address workforce issues in the county and why a shrinking workforce is a critical concern to the quality of life in the county.</p> <p>The Lancaster 2035 plan has outlined six crucial strategies for improving the quality of life for residents and visitors. Each strategy should have a communication plan to inform the public about progress. Each communication plan should define the media modes, frequency, messaging, and budget. To reach a diverse population, multiple modes of communication should be utilized, such as newspapers, radio, mailed and emailed information to residents and businesses, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and press releases. All external communications should be coordinated with groups associated with each strategy.</p> <p>A webpage should be developed and updated on the Lancaster County website to outline the progress of Lancaster County's 2035 Strategic Plan.</p>
Goal	To effectively communicate the progress of Lancaster 2035's six strategies to residents and visitors and enhance communication with both.
Potential Impact	The residents of Lancaster County must be confident that their tax dollars are being utilized wisely. To achieve this, they must have a clear understanding of the processes, progress, and challenges faced by the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors. Furthermore, a well-planned communication strategy can be implemented to improve economic development opportunities and support businesses. This strategy can aid in the effective outreach of tourism, ultimately leading to increased tourism spending in the county.
Risks	Not planning a communication strategy could lead to confusion and resentment among residents, and a lack of asset visibility among potential visitors could lead to lost revenue for area businesses

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Responsibility	Lancaster County, Recreation Coordinator, Social Media Expert, Virginia’s River Realm. Consider a part-time Communications Manager or Public Information position.
Timeline	Immediate and continuous communications are needed for all strategies.
Costs	Estimated paid advertising and potentially a part-time communications employee
Funding	Grants, Lancaster County
Measurable Results	Establishment of communication plans Evaluations of placed media

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Public Communication

Objective 3: Communicate with external constituents, nonresidents, future residents and businesses, and visitors

Goal: Continue the message that Lancaster County is desirable to live, work, and play.

Description	<p>River Realm has done an outstanding job of promoting Lancaster and Middlesex counties as ideal vacation spots for young families. It is crucial to continue targeting this demographic group to promote tourism in the area. This will help the county gain visibility and familiarity with Lancaster County with the potential workforce-aged market.</p> <p>As the Lancaster 2035 initiatives progress, a new message will be developed to encourage new families and businesses to relocate to this rural area due to its affordability, excellent schools, and job opportunities. This will involve marketing the lifestyle to young people and businesses. The same new strategy can create messages to attract new businesses and all future residents to Lancaster County.</p>
Potential Impact	The more familiar workforce-aged visitors are with the area, the more likely they will consider moving to Lancaster County.
Risks	The expense of additional messaging targeted to younger residents.
Responsibility	LCPS, Town Administrators, Lancaster County, River Realm
Timeline	TBD
Costs	It would be advantageous for the county to hire a part-time communications employee to coordinate the development of all public communications.
Funding	Lancaster County
Measurable Results	<p>Social media analytics</p> <p>Measurements of outreach response</p>

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Conclusion

Many rural areas are losing workforce-aged residents, and even small metropolitan regions like Hampton Roads sound the alarm about losing their workforce. To tackle the loss of workforce issue, some communities across the country are even offering lump sum payments to attract workforce residents to relocate to their towns, bringing their jobs and families with them.

The trend of loss of workforce is expected to continue, and the competition among localities for a limited workforce-aged population will only intensify in the future. Recognizing this threat and taking proactive measures to address the demographic imbalance is critical. Communities that ignore this problem will suffer the consequences, while those that take action will fare better.

Like many American communities, Lancaster County, VA, is facing a significant decline in its working-age population and children, negatively affecting all residents' quality of life. The community is aging in place, with an average age currently at 57. As the younger population leaves and the workforce declines, there are fewer and fewer left to serve the older demographic, which will materially impact the quality of life for all our residents! This has occurred in other rural areas around the country and has left some communities as ghost towns! Unfortunately, there is no quick and easy solution to stop this trend. However, Lancaster's 2035 plan has identified several crucial infrastructure strategies that can help address the problem. These strategies include providing affordable broadband access, creating job and business opportunities, building affordable workforce housing, improving the public school system, and offering age-appropriate recreational activities. It's important to note that no single initiative alone will encourage a stronger workforce population, but they should be viewed as interconnected and necessary for success.

It is common for people to resist change, as it brings uncertainty. However, the citizens of Lancaster County must realize that change is inevitable, is occurring, and will continue to occur due to uncontrollable factors. To preserve an exceptional lifestyle, it is essential for county leaders and residents to take proactive measures to address all significant issues that are currently threatening the community. Everyone is responsible for working together towards a common goal of ensuring a better future for the people of Lancaster County.

To improve their community, residents can take an active role by proposing to enhance their community; residents can:

- be informed about county challenges initiatives
- supporting initiatives that aim to address issues
- actively contribute by proposing innovative ideas and solutions to their Board of Supervisors and Planners
- shop locally
- endorsing local businesses
- support and encourage teaching staff and students

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The first step towards making a positive impact is to understand the challenges faced by county administrators and develop strategies to address county threats, including those outlined in the Lancaster 2035 document.

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As Citizens Business Relations Advisory Committee members, a volunteer advisory council. We fully support the strategic plan initiatives outlined in the Lancaster 2035 document. Our goal is to attract working-aged residents to the county and improve the quality of life for all residents. We encourage all Lancaster residents and County Administrators to support the initiatives outlined in the Lancaster 2035 Strategic Plan.

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