



# FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Fiscal Years 2022 – 2027



CAROLINECOUNTY  
*you belong here*  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



"You Belong Here" is the brand for Caroline County. It conveys a sense of community for a resident, a business owner, and a worker. Active with economic development, Caroline County reflects a history rich with agricultural production and connected businesses. The future of the county, from a business perspective, looks positive in the five-

year time horizon. The folks of Caroline County will keep doing what they always do – work hard, value community, and support each other.

As this Plan, a plan that looks toward the future and guides economic development resources, is being finalized, businesses and workers in Caroline County are coming out of one of the toughest, strangest years in memory. The COVID19 public health pandemic provided a direct impact on the economy of Caroline County for much of 2020. Small businesses took a hit with fewer customers and less revenue, and larger employers struggled with supply chain disruptions and a changing workforce.

However, in Caroline County fashion, the overall economy recovered swiftly and strongly. There was a good economic foundation pre-pandemic, and that helped shore up the changes in 2020. As this foundation continues to grow and solidify, indications are that post-pandemic, Caroline County businesses and workers will survive and thrive.

Caroline County Economic Development is prepared and ready to support the sectors that have provided continuity in the economy – agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and logistics. We also support the community businesses that make this our home, our place. The Plan reflects our mission to be here when needed and to provide creative and innovative ways to support companies, owners, workers, and residents.

On behalf of the County Commissioners, I thank everyone who does business, works, or lives in Caroline County. You are part of the community, and "You Belong Here."

Sincerely,

*Debbie Bowden*

## GOALS

1

To grow the number of establishments by 5% in five years

2

To increase commercial tax base by 5% in five years

3

To increase accommodation tax base by 25% in five years

## MISSION STATEMENT

To foster a diversified local economy that leads to business retention and attraction, job creation and workforce development, and a strong quality of life for the citizens of Caroline County.

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Caroline County Economic Development undertook this strategic planning effort with the help and support of Meredith Mears, Principal of M3 Synergies, a business, economic development and commercial real estate development firm.



## PLAN PURPOSE

Economic development takes the broad view of attracting and retaining businesses for the purpose of creating jobs and expanding the revenue base for the County. The work of economic development ranges from immediate needs to long-term planning, thus serving established businesses and growing the economic base in the County. This Strategic Plan provides direction and a path forward for Caroline County and its partners. The Plan helps to focus resources on areas that best serve the businesses and citizens of Caroline County.

The Plan is only the roadmap for the direction that the County should take. It is not prescriptive. It is not a funding requirement. It is a tool that helps to keep the compass pointed in the best direction for the County. Its short planning horizon of five years allows for flexibility to shift Economic Development's focus to considerations that make the best sense for the county, its businesses, and citizens.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WILL SUPPORT:

Established businesses and the industries already an integral part of the Caroline County economy



AGRICULTURE



MANUFACTURING



TRANSPORTATION



LOGISTICS



Entrepreneurship and small community businesses



Businesses in the high-tech sector, such as biotech and cybersecurity, as components of legacy sectors, such as technologically innovative agriculture



Partners in the healthcare sector to support citizens' health needs





## STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

The Economic Development Office will continue and refine its work in enhancing relationships and the network of business support through individual Towns, the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Organizations, and business-member organizations, such as the Economic Development Advisory Board. Additionally, as an operating entity under Caroline County Government, Economic Development will work with partner departments in serving the needs of businesses and workers.

Many of the actions and objectives needed to reach the strategic goals will be facilitated by the Caroline County Economic Development, working in conjunction with subject matter experts and programmatic partners as listed below.

### PARTNERS

Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board  
Mid Shore Regional Council  
Small Business Development Center  
Mid Shore SCORE  
Caroline County Chamber of Commerce  
Downtown Denton (Main Street)  
Caroline County Office of Tourism



As this Five-Year Strategic Plan was created in conjunction with the Caroline County Economic Development Advisory Board, the Caroline County Commissioners thanks the following members for their service:

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD, MAY 2021

**Anthony Casey**, Shoreline Vinyl and Town of Ridgely  
**Jeff Damico**, Dart Container  
**Lorry Dudley**, Lorry Industries  
**Fred Hubbard**, Choptank Electric (retired)  
**Emad Mohamed**, Crystal Steel Fabricators  
**Milton Nagel**, Caroline County Public Schools  
**John Phillips**, Sisk Fulfillment  
**Donna Poole**, Arcadia Denton  
**James Ransome**, Awards Engraving  
**Tracey Snyder**, Director of the Caroline County Chamber of Commerce  
**Nick Wake**, Tenchi Spanish American Kitchen  
**Marcia Wood**, Choptank Transport  
**Larry Yeatman**, Trenton Pipe and Nipple Company

## FRAMEWORK

It is important to note that Economic Development does not create jobs, rather it works to remove obstacles and support businesses so that employers can create and retain jobs. “Jobs” is often used as a measure of economic activity, as is GDP, number of establishments, and County revenue, and in that way, jobs will be used by economic development as a measure to provide insight into the state of the economy in Caroline County.

There is a desire within the economic development office to share knowledge with business owners and residents of all businesses in Caroline County. There are many businesses that exist that others may be largely unaware of. Asset mapping will be a good tool to employ in assessing the local economy and sharing the news of these assets. This information could also be used to demonstrate an existing supply chain that is crucial. This will also show exemplary return-on-investment with regard to the Economic Development Office – that the office is a resource and shows up for the businesses and residents it serves.

One of the most important goals of economic development is to look at “what-if” scenarios to

plan for best-case and worst-case situations. A very real-life situation occurred in 2020 that was a best- and worst-case scenario– the COVID19 pandemic. That emergency allowed a look into the strengths and weaknesses of the Caroline County economy, and lessons learned in a long-term impactful emergency. Another common “what-if” scenario is employment situations; low unemployment puts a strain on business productivity and high unemployment puts a strain on the workforce.

Investment in economic development addresses many issues that businesses deal with – capital needs, workforce needs, and infrastructure development. Capital needs are supported through partnerships with private lenders and state and federal partners for incentives. Workforce needs are supported through community partnerships that provide resources and results for both businesses and workers. Infrastructure needs are often addressed by state, county and municipal investment. In Caroline County, the highest priority for infrastructure is broadband access.

### HOW WE MEASURE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



**JOB  
CREATION**



**GROSS  
DOMESTIC PRODUCT**



**NUMBER OF  
ESTABLISHMENTS**



**COUNTY  
REVENUE**



# ECONOMIC RECOVERY AFTER COVID19

In 2020, as a result to the response to the COVID19 pandemic the economy in Caroline County was unstable and the outcomes uncertain. The County provided economic relief to a wide range of small businesses that were impacted by the COVID19 public health emergency response, including businesses in the services sector that were mandated by the State of Maryland to significantly change their occupancy allowances. Employment in all sectors was impacted as businesses closed or curtailed operations, and workers found themselves needing to stay home to support family obligations because of COVID19 impact on society's structure.

Throughout this emergency, it was consistently observed that COVID19 response did not have the same detrimental effect on Caroline County's economy as it did in neighboring jurisdictions. The stalwart sectors – manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation – held relatively stable, while the small gig economy and service businesses innovated and created new opportunities to stay relevant and open.

Economic Development recognizes that data and situational awareness are available to help frame improvement in response to similar economic-impact events. Economic Development, businesses, and the County have duly noted some lessons learned in an effort to be prepared for future public emergencies.



## LESSONS LEARNED:

### 1

The business community is a conduit for public health information to be distributed to its employees and by extension, their family and friends

### 2

Workforce and work culture can be agile and flexible in operational culture

### 3

Businesses will do what is needed to stay open, utilizing creativity and innovation to maintain income

### 4

Public funding support is recognized as a stop-gap to help businesses with short-term revenue loss or increased expenses

### 5

Regular and sustained communication with business owners outside of an emergency situation is imperative to build supportive relationships during emergency situations

### 6

Board outreach to businesses is necessary; the business community must know the resources available through Caroline Co. Economic Development

## DATA

Data provides decision makers with the tools necessary to identify problems and solutions, to outline gaps in understanding of situational analysis, and to offer evaluations toward desired outcomes.

The following are common data sets that assist in painting a broad picture of Caroline County socio-economic factors: demographics, employment, number of establishments, major employers, labor participation, and commuter rates. The data sets are found in Appendix B.

For specific decision making on the tactics identified in this Plan, additional data sets must be curated that provide granular and timely information. Each data set identified below can be gathered and analyzed as separate tasks outside of the Strategic Planning effort to serve the overarching goals of the Plan:

- Measure of development investment over the last 5 years
- Asset Mapping
- Existing businesses mapping in Caroline County
- Land use
- Consumer purchasing behavioral patterns
- Economic leakage
- Available affordable housing/workforce housing
- Agricultural impact data
- Commercial tax base

Additionally, there are data that inform the advantages/disadvantages of a particular project. The data sets shown below are useful for determining the outcome of a project and will be gathered from specialists as needed.

- Direct economic impact
- Indirect economic impact
- Induced economic impact
- Number of jobs available
- Number of available workers

## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Economic Development discipline typically utilizes a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis to identify areas of focus and change to build an area's economy. Given the fluid nature of the Caroline economy because of COVID19 pandemic recovery and changes in policy at the federal, state, and local levels, the SWOT analysis is replaced by a Situational Analysis for this planning effort.

Situational Analyses are observations on trends and conditions that influence decision makers on policies, programs, and projects that support businesses and workers in the County. The list is not prioritized. The Situational Analysis is not static as dynamics of each situation can support or pressure the County's economy. The actions noted are not all inclusive, but highlight steps that Economic Development and its partners can take to improve the situation or mitigate the risks.



## SITUATION

Strong industrial base through manufacturing, transportation/logistics, and warehousing

## ANALYSIS

- Provides a stable employment and revenue base
- Supports established businesses in stabilization and growth

## ACTION

- Attract manufacturers that produce agriculture and agriculture-support products
- **Develop a master plan and marketing plan for the Mid-Shore Regional Technology & Business Park**
- Attract manufacturers and agriculture production to Mid-Shore Regional Technology & Business Park
- Identify locations in the County for long-term planning of additional industrial space

## SITUATION

Unemployment and labor participation

## ANALYSIS

Low unemployment puts pressure on productivity and wages; high unemployment puts pressure on individual members of the workforce

## ACTION

- Support hiring needs of businesses through recruitment events and training
- Continue to grow and build relationships with workforce development partners in the County
- Prepare for shift-up in unemployment and the impact on workforce and revenue

## SITUATION

Proximity to Delaware

## ANALYSIS

The real or perceived regulatory/tax advantages of the neighboring State of Delaware causes uneven competition for attracting businesses. However, better wages & benefits provide Caroline County based businesses a competitive advantage for attracting workers.

## ACTION

Promote the advantages of Caroline County to businesses: ease of conducting business, business-friendly atmosphere, larger geographic area for employee pool, better quality of life

## SITUATION

Immediate disruptions in economy

## ANALYSIS

A public emergency, such as a health pandemic or a natural/man-made disaster, impacts economic activity immediately and long-term. Supply chain throughput, productivity, and consumer activity are impacted at varying levels depending on the severity and duration of a disruption.

## ACTION

Participate in recovery, resiliency, and mitigation efforts with Caroline County Emergency Services. Inform businesses of guidance to self-establish continuity of operations and emergency preparedness plans.

## FOCUS AREAS

Economic development best serves the businesses and citizens of the County by concentrating on beneficial projects and programs that are of highest and best use of its attention and resources. The focus areas listed on the next several pages align with the culture and legacy of Caroline County, and they reflect the community's desire for controlled growth. Each area has an overarching objective from which projects, programs, and initiatives will form over the five years to reach the County's goals.

### OBJECTIVE

**SUPPORT THE BEST UTILIZATION OF COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL LAND TO INCREASE PROPERTY VALUE, REVENUE BASE AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES**



### COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT

Caroline County and municipal partners have the opportunity to assess tax revenue losses as a result of unoccupied commercial real estate. Vacant properties cause a decrease in tax revenue for the County and Towns, and they also create a decrease in property values for citizen owners, citizen investors, or potential investors.

Understanding this, some Towns have tallied vacant properties in an effort to reduce vacancy rates. This effort has required focused bandwidth and manpower at the expense of other projects occurring at the time, as there are no federal or state data granular enough to provide this information to decision makers.

Caroline County Economic Development's strategic approach will be to identify and

organize vacant properties, systemically integrate this information into a website and provide a portal for investors, commercial real estate industry professionals and local entrepreneurs to engage with real estate opportunities in the County. By focusing on this strategic area, staff will be able to provide up to date availability information for those requesting assistance from the Economic Development office.

These efforts will also provide efficiencies in the location process while the Economic Development office is assisting local business in growing, expanding and/or preserving their current location.

### ACTIONS

**COORDINATE WITH TOWNS AND COUNTY PLANNING & CODES DEPARTMENT TO IDENTIFY AND MAP VACANT COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE**





## DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Caroline County is home to several thriving industrial parks. Over the years, these lands have attracted both national and international companies seeking proximities to transportation options and supply chain exchanges for logistical efficiencies. Most recently, the Town of Federalsburg sold the last +/- 5 acre parcel in the Frank Adams Industrial Park to an existing company wishing to expand their footprint. Additionally, throughout the last three years, the County has diligently worked with an international prospect that recently placed a contract to purchase 10+/- acres in the Mid Shore Regional Technology and Business Park. This same company has a phased plan for

expansion that will occur over the next several years at the same park.

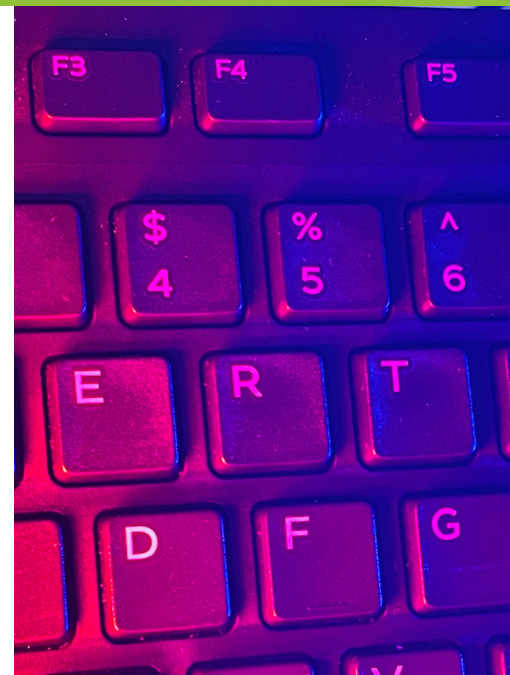
The County presents a proven model of success in this realm. As such, Caroline County Economic Development will continue working to fill the industrial parks, while keeping an eye towards other suitable lands for industrial development. Once identified, having the financial wherewithal to prime lands with suitable infrastructure will provide the County with opportunity to attract a host of manufacturers, fulfillment centers and logistics companies and the jobs that come along with them.

## ACTIONS IDENTIFY LAND & AREAS FOR POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATE WITH COUNTY PLANNING & CODES DEPARTMENT ON A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EFFORT

### DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT

There is now focused attention on developing data centers in the State of Maryland. These industrial spaces house banks of servers and provide variety of jobs, although not as high in numbers as other industrial development. The benefits of data center location will be vetted through time, as these centers have only recently taken center stage at the State level with regard to attraction efforts. They produce tax assessments that can boost revenue for the County, all the while reducing potential impacts on county assets that require regular maintenance.

There is a movement to co-locate data centers with greenhouses to provide an energy sharing system. Data centers produce heat that can be captured and re-routed to greenhouses. Caroline County is a prime location for such co-location and will concentrate its efforts of developing greenhouse and data centers in proximity at the Mid-Shore Regional Technology and Business Park.



## ACTIONS DEVELOP WORK PLAN FOR DATA CENTER ATTRACTION EFFORT



## AGRICULTURE-MANUFACTURING DEVELOPMENT

Caroline County's farming heritage, combined with its stable industrial base, makes it a prime location for manufacturers seeking strong supply chain resources for agriculture-based production. The recognition of this opportunity provides the County with a strategic edge over others, and it gives the County the ability to attract and retain jobs for its citizens. Caroline County Economic Development will produce and implement a targeted plan that supports the development of manufacturing businesses that focus on agriculture. These businesses will present innovative technology in the manufacturing process, or they will produce innovative technology for use in agriculturally based applications.

Throughout the process, various partnerships will be developed to create a network of professionals working towards the outcome. Existing manufacturers and logistics companies will be engaged to create a supply chain network that is highly attractive to such a manufacturer. Additionally, an experienced commercial real estate professional with knowledge of the County and demonstrated execution of public-private partnerships will work under the purview of the Economic Development office to assist in bringing the plan to fruition.

## STRATEGIC AREA EFFORTS:

**1**

Locate one or more manufacturers of these types on 10-20 acres within County borders

**2**

Intertwine operations with local supply chains and logistics companies, thereby enhancing the local economy

**3**

Create up to 75 new jobs in the County as a result of these efforts

## ACTIONS DEVELOP WORK PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE - MANUFACTURING ATTRACTION EFFORT



## OBJECTIVE

### SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS AND HOME-GROWN BUSINESSES; BUILD SMALL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

A tremendous opportunity presents itself with the realization and active inclusion of the existing gig economy within Caroline County. These businesses are often “home-grown” by local citizens, and over the last year, their presence has increased. Caroline County Economic Development maintains an open line of communication with these businesses to assist in linking them with each other, thereby strengthening their network.

There is an established network that provides a robust support system for early-stage businesses. Caroline County will continue to nurture relationships with these organizations, while providing connections to entrepreneurs and gig-economy participants. Additionally, focused support will continue to be provided to small, minority, and women-owned businesses to help with successful start-up and growth.



## ACTIONS

**BOLSTER AND MAINTAIN NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES; PROVIDE REGULAR UPDATE AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO SMALL BUSINESSES; DISCOVER PROGRAMS TO BUILD AND STRENGTHEN REVOLVING SMALL BUSINESS LOAN PROGRAM**

## OBJECTIVE

### INCREASE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND AMENITIES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN FAMILIES AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



During the fall of 2020, Caroline County Economic Development visited each Town within the County to ask for feedback while developing this Plan. One of the themes from this community feedback is that there is a need for more amenities in Caroline County, such as restaurants and activities for children. This type of economic development is the perfect chance for continued partnership with the County's Office of Tourism – as well as organizations that participate in the experience economy. While individual amenity-focused businesses and organizations do not bring a high level of economic activity to the County, in aggregate, the numbers can be significant. They provide a strong sense of community and quality of life.

Both the tourism and the experience economy should be developed in Caroline County. Activities exist through nature and heritage attractions and events; however, there should be more supportive infrastructure, such as restaurants and accommodations, to fully realize the advantages of a robust visitor-based economy. Economic Development will study the feasibility of developing hotel space and additional eatery space in the County.

## ACTIONS

**BOLSTER AND MAINTAIN NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES & AMENITIES, DEVELOP A WORK PLAN FOR THE HOTEL ATTRACTION EFFORT, MAINTAIN PARTNERSHIP WITH OFFICE OF TOURISM AND OTHER VISITOR-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

## OBJECTIVE

### PROTECT JOB AVAILABILITY AND BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

In the low-unemployment conditions at the time of developing this Plan, the top concern of businesses is recruiting and retaining employees. Productivity in all sectors – hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture – is suffering and puts continued economic growth at risk. There are several factors that have caused the current employment status, and each factor requires innovation and creativity to resolve.

One of these factors is training. Caroline County Economic Development is tracking the establishment and growth of micro-credentialing certifications, which are trending to replace four-year degree programs. These certifications allow for rapid skilling and re-skilling that better meets employer needs. These programs are of particular importance in Caroline County, where the largest industries are based in agriculture and manufacturing.

Another factor is misunderstanding the type of jobs that are available in the County. Young people and established workers do not seem to have a general sense of the types of businesses that are active in Caroline County. There is an opportunity for Caroline County Economic Development to communicate with the general public on the types of jobs that are available and to leverage partnerships with workforce agencies, such as the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board and the Maryland Department of Labor.

## ACTIONS

### MAINTAIN PARTNERSHIP WITH PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE; CONDUCT INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE CONNECTION PROGRAMS

## GOALS PERFORMANCE METRICS

1

**Grow the number of establishments by 5% in five years**

#### METHOD:

Establish baseline of number of establishments upon publication of the Plan

#### METHOD:

Collect data annually on number of establishments

2

**Increase commercial tax base by 5% in five years**

#### METHOD:

Establish baseline of commercial tax revenue upon publication of the Plan

#### METHOD:

Collect data annually on commercial tax revenue

3

**Increase accommodation tax base by 25% in five years**

#### METHOD:

Establish baseline of accommodation tax revenue upon publication of the Plan

#### METHOD:

Collect data annually on accommodation tax revenue



## OUTPUT MEASURES

### OBJECTIVE

SUPPORT THE BEST UTILIZATION OF COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL LAND TO INCREASE PROPERTY VALUE, REVENUE BASE AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

#### OUTPUT

- Map of available commercial real estate
- Process to review and update map of available commercial real estate
- Promote available commercial real estate
- Coordination with comprehensive planning effort and Towns on identifying future industrial and commercial areas
- Work plan, process map, and stakeholders for major industry attraction in ag-manufacturing
- Work plan, process map, and stakeholders for major industry attraction in data center

### OBJECTIVE

SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS AND HOME-GROWN BUSINESSES; BUILD SMALL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

#### OUTPUT

- Develop and maintain network of organizations that support small business
- Develop, present, and host training and information sharing sessions targeted to small business in cooperation with network of organizations
- Research available funding sources for revolving small business loan program
- Review and update legacy small business loan program

### OBJECTIVE

INCREASE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND AMENITIES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN FAMILIES AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

#### OUTPUT

- Develop and maintain network of organizations that support community activities and amenities
- Work plan, process map, and stakeholders for major industry attraction in ag-manufacturing
- Bolster partnership with Office of Tourism and other visitor-based organizations

### OBJECTIVE

PROTECT JOB AVAILABILITY AND BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

#### OUTPUT

- Maintain partnership with public school system and local community college
- Conduct innovative workforce connection programs

## APPENDIX A: OUTREACH RESULTS

Members of the Economic Development Advisory Board discussed strategies for economic development at its December 2, 2020 meeting. Several themes emerged, reflective of the economic uncertainty at the time of the meeting and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, captured here are those themes which are general in looking at short and long-term economic conditions, and their relevance to supporting a vibrant economy in Caroline County.

### ECONOMIC DISRUPTION CAUSES:

- Weather – hurricane and snow events
- Social Events – riots, protests, social gatherings
- Peaceful gathering that turns bad
- Protest that impacts travel or traffic

### WORKFORCE:

- Getting people back to work
- High pay may not be an issue
- Family care issues

### INFRASTRUCTURE COLLAPSE:

- Highway
- Bridges – large and small
- Railroad
- Natural Gas
- Power outage – major blackout – Delmarva
- Internet outage – lack of redundancy

### GOVERNMENT POLICY & REGULATION:

- Higher taxes
- Employment laws change



# MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

The elected bodies and staff of five municipalities discussed elements of strategy at regular Town meetings between November 2020 and January 2021. The discussions centered on the following questions:

- 1 What is desired focus for economic development, e.g. commercial & industrial or retail & main street?
- 2 What is desired industry sector focus, e.g. manufacturing, entrepreneurial, ag & ag support, tech?
- 3 Any infrastructure concerns, e.g. water and wastewater capacity, roads, broadband?



NOVEMBER 16, 2020

The Town of Denton has seen an increase in residential property values. There is desire to see commercial property values increase. Legislation has been focused on providing enhancements in infrastructure and incentives, and on building up the community. There is room for larger industrial growth and the housing that should accompany it, and there is also desire to locate more businesses downtown. With regard to small business, Council communicates their wishes to see a stronger resource bank that can assist establishing and growing businesses. Overall, the Town's focus for the next few years is on both industrial and retail growth.



NOVEMBER 2, 2020

Federalsburg has been highlighted as an area of further industrial growth within Caroline County. It is recognized that new business is often based in towns because lands in the County may not have the infrastructure necessary to attract or support it. The Town would like to continue to look at infill opportunities as current properties have established infrastructure. The Town is aware that even through COVID-19, they are positioned well economically, as service-based industry - such as warehousing, distribution and manufacturing - are thriving during this time. Additionally, unemployment remains low in comparison with the rest of the state. The Town desires to stay close to its industrial roots.



NOVEMBER 2, 2020

The Town of Ridgely desires a focus on the viability of their downtown area. They are consistent in their goal of adding more businesses there. Moreover, the Town desires to promote itself on the 404 Corridor to encourage more visits. The Town has a strong focus on tourism. The Town has seen positive results with event facilitation and there will be continued and enhanced efforts to promote the Town through these events. The Town desires to create a professional video and to have professional photography completed in the near future.

The Town has two economic development linchpins. One is the Tech Park and the other is Tourism. There is consistent activity bubbling at the Tech Park, as Caroline County is seen as a place ripe with workforce, property and safety. The Town has been profitable with attraction-based activity (not events, per se). The Town desires to know how to translate this success into brick and mortar.



NOVEMBER 5, 2020

There is desire to have the downtown be the community's economic engine. Additionally, continued development on 313 is a focus. The Town also indicates they have an interest in the western part of town to continue its focus on industrial development. Town leadership is concerned about infrastructure. They are also concerned about being prepared for the next unanticipated disaster. There is concern that residents have lost jobs because of COVID19 and that they can't keep their homes. There is concern that the flexibility of the Town (with regard to residents and their utility payments) will eventually cause the Town to have financial impact.

Preparation of a better safety net is desired. Uncertainty has caused fear for business owners; they don't know whether they will have staff one day and none the next. Short term issues, like housing will need to be addressed in the Plan.



JANUARY 25, 2021

The Town of Preston is home to two of the largest employers in Caroline County. The Town of Preston Commissioners look forward to continued partnership with the businesses in the Town and will work toward furthering growth and opportunity. The Commissioners embrace continued discussion and work with the County's Economic Development office.



## COMMUNITY INPUT

The term “economic development” means different things to different people. To a business, it means opportunities for site selection or infrastructure support and access to workforce and capital. To a public body, it means collaboration for workforce development and facilities, as well as potential incentives. To the community, economic development is seen through an individual lenses wherein a citizen thinks, “what best helps me in my life.”

Community-based economic development tends to focus on retail, food, personal services, and experiences – all part of “amenities” in a community. Such was the feedback from outreach to the community as demonstrated in the Economic Development report from December 2019. The audience was surveyed on what economic development meant to their organizations, their businesses and to them as individuals. From the survey responses, clear themes emerged.

The survey responses echo feedback that has been provided to Economic Development in general through informal conversations. There is a desire to firm up a sense of community through economic development – one that centers on amenities and experiences. Much of this development should happen in population centers to serve dense populations and to provide opportunity for visitor-based spending.



## SURVEY RESPONSES:



Need additional and more diverse restaurants



Need amenities and job opportunities that appeal to young people so that they are encouraged to stay



Attract and retain families



Build homegrown businesses: gig economy, entrepreneurs, small shops



Fill the void of two particular institutions: a hospital and a unit of higher education

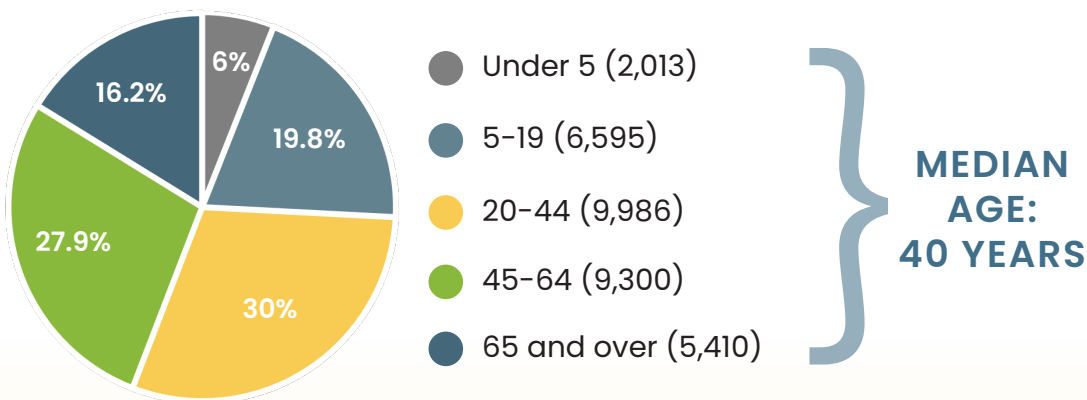
## APPENDIX B: DATA

Covering 319.4 square miles, Caroline County, Maryland is the 19th-largest county in Maryland by area. Caroline County, Maryland is bordered by Dorchester County, Maryland, Kent County, Delaware, Talbot County, Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Maryland, and Sussex County, Delaware.

### POPULATION CHANGE

	2000	2010	2020
<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>	11,097	12,158	12,649
<b>POPULATION</b>	29,772	33,066	34,050

### POPULATION DISTRIBUTION



**TOTAL POPULATION: 33,304**

SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**\$58,638**

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

**13.9%**

**POVERTY RATE**

**18.4%**

**BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER**

**13,588**

**TOTAL HOUSING UNITS**

**\$202,500**

**HOUSING VALUE**

**8.9%**

**VETERAN POPULATION**

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

## APPENDIX B: DATA

### ESTABLISHMENTS

**2,678**

TOTAL  
FIRMS

**\$284,231**

TOTAL  
ANNUAL PAYROLL  
(IN THOUSANDS)

**1,223**

BUSINESS  
COUNT  
(AS OF 2019)

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

### EMPLOYMENT

**61.5%**

EMPLOYMENT  
RATE

**17,120**

LABOR  
FORCE

**6.4%**

UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE

SOURCE: MD DEPT OF COMMERCE

### MAJOR EMPLOYERS (2018-2019)

EMPLOYER	EMPLOYEES
Dart Containers	800
Benedictine School for Exceptional Children	485
Choptank Transport	375
Preston Automotive Group	350
H&M Bay	250
Choptank Community Health System	190
Choptank Electric Cooperative	155
Caroline Center	150
M&M Refrigeration	125
Envoy of Denton	105
Tri-Gas & Oil	105
Caroline Nursing Home	100
Sisk Fulfillment	90
Shoreline Vinyl	85
Crystal Steel Fabricators	75
Hanover Foods	75
Medifast	75
Unisite Design	75
Maryland Plastics	70
Burris Retail Logistics	60
Towers Concrete Products	60

SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS

### LABOR PARTICIPATION



**40%**

BLUE COLLAR



**59%**

WHITE COLLAR

SOURCE: MD DEPT OF COMMERCE



## APPENDIX B: DATA

### LABOR AVAILABILITY (2018 AVERAGE)

	COUNTY	AREA
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE	18,028	236,487
EMPLOYMENT	17,340	227,077
UNEMPLOYMENT	688	9,410
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	3.8%	4.0%

SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS

### COMMUTER RATES

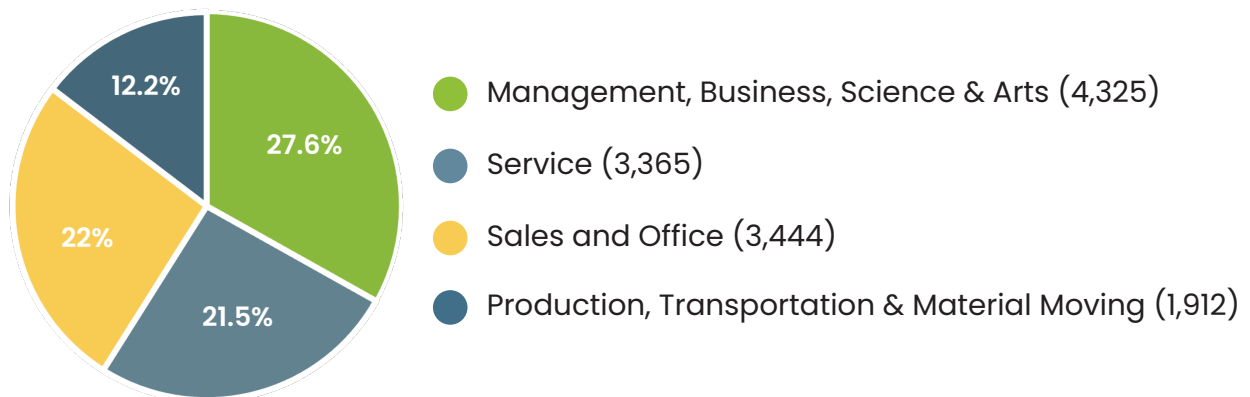


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AVERAGE COMMUTE  
TO WORK  
(IN MINUTES)

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

### RESIDENTS COMMUTING OUTSIDE THE COUNTY TO WORK (2013 - 2017)



COMMUTING TO DORCHESTER AND TALBOT COUNTIES, MD AND SUSSEX AND KENT COUNTIES, DE

**TOTAL WORKING COMMUTERS: 13,046**

SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS

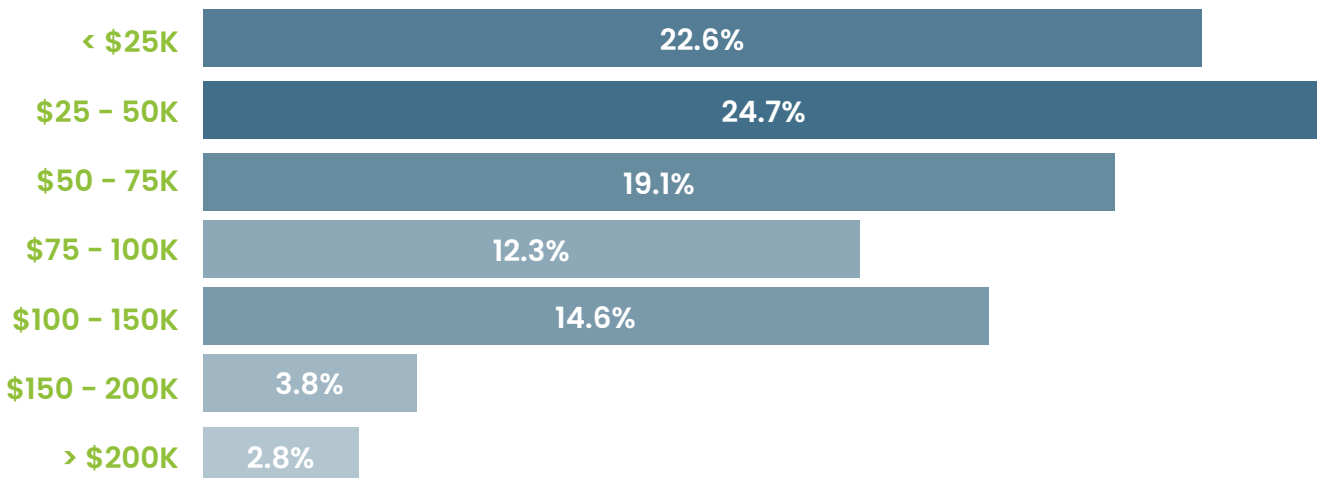
## APPENDIX B: DATA

### HOURLY WAGE RATES (2018)

OCCUPATION	MEDIAN	ENTRY	EXPERIENCED
Accountant	30.57	20.32	38.80
Bookkeeping/Accounting Clerk	19.53	13.72	22.63
Computer Systems Analyst	33.28	23.97	41.65
Computer User Support Specialist	20.33	12.39	24.08
Customer Service Representative	15.65	11.78	19.60
Electrical Engineer	42.01	25.26	54.61
Freight, Stock and Material Mover	13.31	10.56	16.94
Industrial Truck Operator	17.52	13.75	20.86
Inspector, Tester, Sorter	14.62	10.75	20.70
Machinist	27.33	17.97	38.43
Maintenance and General Repair Worker	18.54	13.68	22.66
Network Admin	38.45	26.66	50.69
Packaging/Filling Machine Operator	15.15	10.97	17.00
Packer and Packager (hand)	11.86	10.42	14.20
Secretary	17.54	11.91	20.50
Shipping/Receiving Clerk	16.75	12.11	19.00
Team Assembler	14.10	10.97	17.03

WAGES ARE AN ESTIMATE OF WHAT WORKERS MIGHT EXPECT TO RECEIVE ON THE UPPER EASTERN SHORE AND MAY VARY BY INDUSTRY, EMPLOYER, AND LOCALITY

### INCOME DISTRIBUTION (2013 - 2017)



SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS

## APPENDIX B: DATA

### EMPLOYMENT BY PLACE OF WORK (2018)

INDUSTRY	ESTABLISHMENTS	ANNUAL AVG. EMPLY.	EMP. %	AVG. WKLY. WAGE
Federal Gov.	14	71	0.7	977
State Gov.	6	195	2.0	765
Local Gov.	27	1,525	15.7	867
Private Sector	639	8,002	81.6	791
Natural Resources & Mining	29	394	4.0	691
Construction	123	839	8.6	878
Manufacturing	29	1,235	12.6	805
Trade, Trans. & Utilities	170	2,636	26.9	802
Information	4	229	2.3	1,651
Financial Activities	36	202	2.1	938
Professional & Business Services	89	457	4.7	1,048
Education & Health Services	52	1,191	12.1	689
Leisure & Hospitality	43	510	5.2	273
Other Services	61	306	3.1	655
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>9,804</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>804</b>

INCLUDES CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT ONLY

### INCOME DISTRIBUTION (2013 - 2017)

**\$52,469**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME

**\$66,763**

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME

**\$25,355**

PER  
CAPITA

**\$801**

TOTAL INCOME  
(MILLIONS)

SOURCE: CAROLINE COUNTY BRIEF ECONOMIC FACTS





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STRATEGIC PLAN  
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