ENHANCE THE ISLE



Promote sustainable economic growth that increases opportunities for all residents and increases overall quality of life.



ENHANCE THE ISLE

During the public forums, citizens expressed their desire to obtain additional goods and services, jobs, and more housing options locally rather than having to drive outside the County to fulfill these needs. The community can seek to address these issues by diversifying the local economy, investing in technological advances to facilitate commerce, and implementing policies to ensure a diversity of housing types. These measures can improve overall quality of life by raising local wealth levels through job creation, access to online resources, and offering housing choices.

The County's economic development strategy has direct consequences for land use, transportation, housing, and provision of community facilities and services. The ability to pay for costs of growth and to manage growth effectively is related to the balance achieved between commercial and industrial employment opportunities and residential development.

In order to support a wide range of community facilities and services and reduce the tax burden on existing residential development, the County must attract and sustain non-residential development. If local commercial and industrial development does not occur, more reliance will be placed on residential taxes to pay for needed services, affecting both present and future homeowners.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

PUBLIC FORUM 1
WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY?

- "Protecting our farmland from disappearing"
- "Balanced full range of housing from highest mini estates to low income housing"
- "Bedroom community — need more major employers"

WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT ISLE OF WIGHT?

- "Support of economic development and business assistance"

PUBLIC FORUM 2
SCENARIO COMPARISONS

- "The focus on a diverse education pathway for the workforce"
- "Agriculture is important, but we need to look at how the County can assist our farmers to diversify and promote alternatives such as more fresh vegetable farms"

PUBLIC FORUM 3
PREFERRED SCENARIOS

- "We need high speed internet in rural areas of the County"

Local Economy

Residents and businesses of Isle of Wight County enjoy a quality of life equal to if not greater than the state as a whole and the nation as evidenced by socioeconomic indicators such as higher than average graduation rates, homeownership, and household income while maintaining low unemployment and crime rates. The County's higher than average quality of life is a powerful marketing tool in recruiting and retaining industry to the County.

Isle of Wight County has experienced strong population growth in recent years, outpacing growth across the Hampton Roads region. Strong population growth has largely been the result of the County's attractiveness to families who commute outside of the County for work, but who are drawn in by the value of housing. While the County has experienced strong residential population growth, job growth in the County has lagged in recent years, with a 16% drop in employment between 2005 and 2015.

Prior to the recession beginning in 2008, employment in the County peaked with approximately 12,200 jobs. Since 2011, the County has steadily added jobs back at an average rate of 3.7%. Despite this stable growth, the number of jobs has not yet reached the pre-recession peak. Current employment in the County is 10,898, representing a 10% reduction from pre-recession levels. According to the *Market Assessment of Growth Scenarios for Isle of Wight County Comprehensive Plan* (November 2018), gradual growth in both employment and the number of residents in the County will continue to occur. A full copy of the report is included as an appendix to *Envisioning the Isle*.

Due to limited employment opportunities in the County, approximately 60% of County workers commute outside of the County for employment. Of the 15,400 workers living in Isle of Wight County, approximately 12,423 people commute to jobs outside the County compared to 7,225 people who commute

into the County for work. Roughly 3,000 residents both live and work in Isle of Wight.

The lack of daytime employment in the County both forces residents to leave the County for employment and discourages the establishment of goods and services within the County that rely on daytime customers to stay in business. Transportation costs also place a burden on personal income which further reduces the flow of dollars into the County's economy. This lack of local job opportunities increases vehicle miles traveled, increases fuel costs for local workers, reduces disposable income, and increases fossil fuel consumption.

Of the jobs available within the County, the manufacturing sector employs the most people, representing 30% of the total workforce as of the first quarter of 2019. The next largest employers include the retail industry and accommodation and food services industry, each consisting of 8% of total jobs. The table on page 92 prepared by the Economic Development Department illustrates the largest employers by industry in the County.

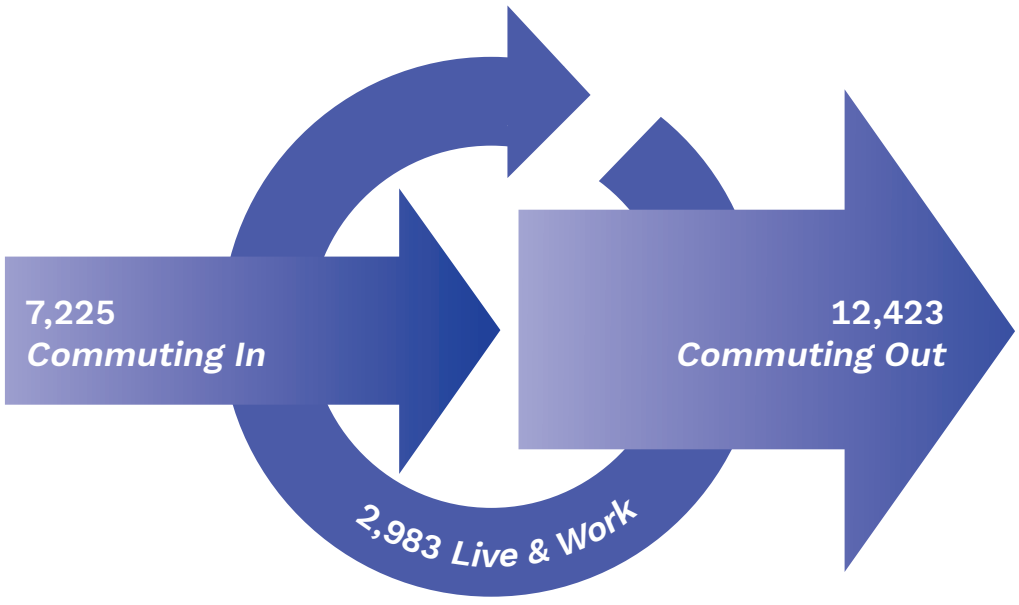
Among this list of large employers, several industrial sectors also lead the top industries in the County in terms of total industry sales in 2018. According to the Economic Development Department's *2018 Annual Report*, manufacturing, management of companies and enterprises, wholesale trade, and agriculture were the leading industrial sectors in the local economy.

The 2018 Report also identifies target industries with future growth potential for the County. The County's target industrial sectors include:

- Accommodation and food services;
- Administrative support and waste services;
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting;
- Construction;
- Finance and insurance;
- Manufacturing;
- Professional, scientific and technical services;
- Health care and social assistance;
- Real estate, rental and leasing;
- Retail trade; and
- Transportation and warehousing.

By promoting industries that are growing both nationally and locally, the County can help strengthen its local economy by attracting additional investment, encouraging job creation, and lessening its reliance on any one industry.

In keeping with its long history in agriculture and paper production, manufacturing and agriculture remain pillars of the County's economy. The agriculture sector comprises establishments that are primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber, and harvesting fish and other animals in farms or



Source: LEHD on the Map, 2015

LARGEST EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

PRIVATE SECTOR	EMPLOYEES	%
Manufacturing (Including food processing and packaging; processing paper, wood & agricultural products)	3,310	30.7%
Retail Trade	860	8.0 %
Accommodation & Food Services	860	8.0 %
Health Care & Social Assistance	670	6.2 %
Transportation & Warehousing	520	4.8 %
Construction	470	4.4 %
Administrative, Support, Waste Management & Remediation	450	4.2 %
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	420	3.9 %
Wholesale Trade	410	3.8 %
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	370	3.5 %
Management of Companies & Enterprises	250	2.3 %
Finance & Insurance	210	1.9 %
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	210	1.9 %

PUBLIC SECTOR	EMPLOYEES	%
Government (Federal, State, Local)	1,420	13.1%

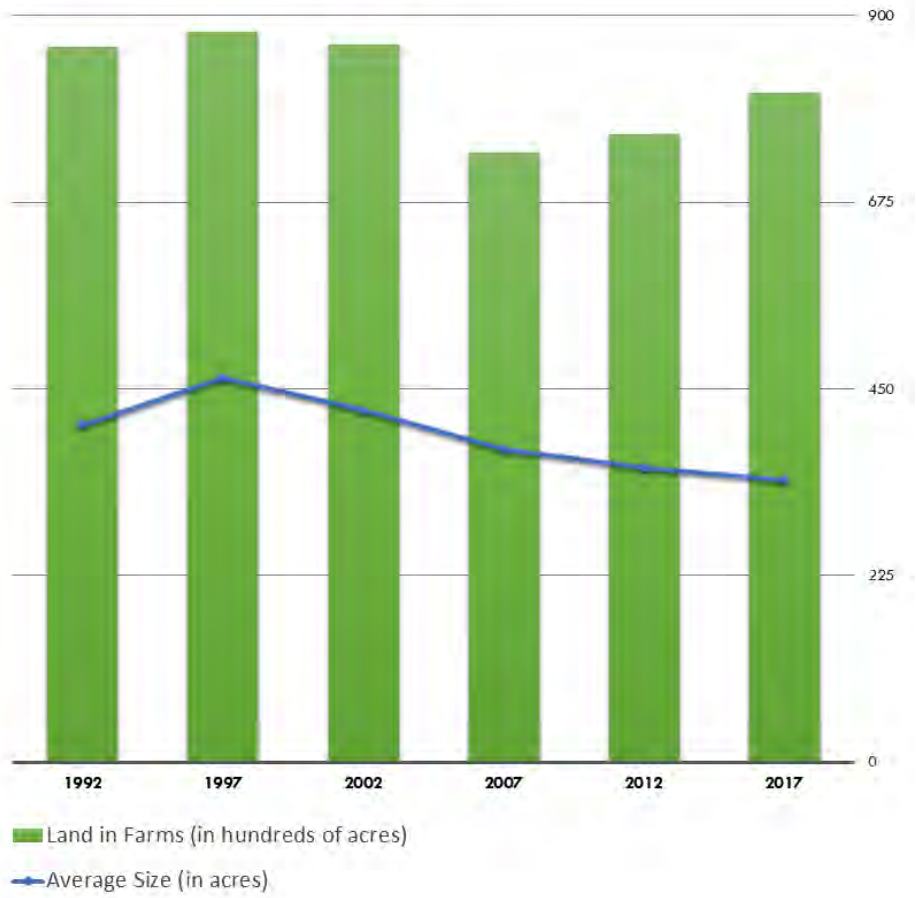
Employment in transportation and warehousing is 38% more concentrated in Isle of Wight than within the nation.

Employment in manufacturing is 3.5 times more concentrated in Isle of Wight than the nation.

Veterans make up approximately 13% of the population of Isle of Wight County. This concentration of veterans in the County is 5% higher than the national average with 115 active duty military and 3,658 veterans living in Isle of Wight in 2016.

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International, Q1 2019 dataset,
Industries with employment > 200, percentage of county employees across all industries

FARMED LAND



their natural habitats. The products of this sector are then often transformed into new products through manufacturing. These two historically tied industries are a vital component of the local economy due to the outside revenues they bring into the County. As of the first quarter in 2019, approximately 31% of Isle of Wight County jobs are in manufacturing — a larger share of workers than any other sector of the economy. Like much of the United States, however, manufacturing jobs continue to decline in number in the County. Just fourteen years ago in 2005, over 50% of jobs in the County were in manufacturing. It should be noted that a reduction in employment for a particular sector does not necessarily signal a decline for that sector. For industries, automation and other investments that increase worker productivity can increase output with fewer workers. On a national level, manufacturing is a sector where employment numbers have decreased, but the level of output continues to increase. Utilities and manufacturing (including paper and food manufacturing) are two sectors that demonstrate this trend. Investment in technology can translate into increased revenues for the locality, and higher productivity can result in higher wages for workers which are then spent in the local economy.

The impact of agricultural activities in the County's economy has been gradually increasing over recent years. Around 40% of the County's land is actively farmed, of which 66% is cropland, making agriculture a significant part of County life and a wealth generator due to most crop outputs being sold outside the County. In 2018, Isle of Wight produced $61.8 million in sales within the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector. This is a 35% increase over the $45.6 million reported in the 2012 Census of Agriculture and represents about 2% of the County's sales.



CASTLE CROPS BY TINA L. HILL

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DOMESTIC TRAVEL ON ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY, 2007–2017

SOURCE: U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Expenditures	$29,883,166	$30,312,884	$35,545,601	$36,174,210	$38,260,720	$41,928,500
Employment	348	362	371	369	384	407
Payroll	$5,866,771	$6,270,480	$6,720,545	$6,961,697	$7,510,960	$8,422,225
Local Tax Receipts	$702,299	$727,364	$793,094	$809,107	$867,980	$953,438
State Tax Receipts	$1,321,985	$1,398,580	$1,518,963	$1,611,684	$1,832,640	$2,020,498

AGRITOURISM is an agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch.

Top motivators for farmers to operate in the agritourism sector:

- Generate additional income
- Market farm products
- Share a way of living with others

BROADBAND is a high-speed, always-on connection to the internet that provides two-way data transmission at speeds equal to or greater than 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

BROADBAND SPEED is the amount of data that a user can download or upload measured in megabits per second (Mbps).

DIGITAL DIVIDE refers to the gap between groups of individuals with access and those who lack access to modern technology such as digital devices and internet.

KEY FACTS AND TRENDS

- **Strong population growth, higher than average median age, low unemployment, and higher than average household income in the County demonstrates its increasing importance as a residential community.**
- **There is an identifiable need for additional employment opportunities in the County to reduce traffic congestion, fuel costs, carbon emissions, and to encourage the expansion of supporting goods and services.**
- **County's local economy is becoming increasingly diverse, especially in the areas of health care, professional and scientific sectors, and the warehousing and distribution industry.**
- **Strong local tourism industry makes significant contributions to County revenues.**

The proportion of economic output coming from the agricultural sector is smaller than several other sectors; however, given the growing strength of agriculture within the County and its support of the rural character and quality of life within the region, there is room for this industry to grow. An increase in the agriculture industry will contribute to the diversification of the County's economy and provide opportunities for the rural landowners while also preserving the rural landscape and creating additional agritourism opportunities.

Tourism, part of the accommodation and food services industry, is another growing segment in the local economy. The County's rich history and agricultural nature provide opportunities for cultural, environmental, and agricultural tourism. Tourism, including agritourism, plays an integral role in supporting the County and the State's economies. According to a 2017 report by the U.S. Travel Association, transportation and transportation-related expenses in the State increased to $24.8 billion (up 4.4% from 2016) and directly supported 232,000 jobs within Virginia. During that same year, travel expenditures within Isle of Wight increased from $39.9 million to $41.9 million and supported 407 jobs within the County.

Technology

In the time since the 2008 Plan was adopted, the world has witnessed an accelerated pace of technological innovations, such as the popularization of smartphones, the rise of social media, and the advance of e-commerce. New trends will continue to develop over time, and it is important to anticipate their potential impacts on community development in order to prevent unintentional barriers to progress or negative land use impacts.

There are several important technological trends that should be addressed by County policies in the short-term, including broadband and telecom access, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), autonomous vehicles, and social media.

- Broadband access and its applications are increasingly central to community development, agricultural production, education and community engagement. In order to compete in a networked world, the availability, capacity, and performance of the supporting network infrastructure must operate at the highest possible capacity and be universally accessible. However, there are inequities of access to broadband usually due to private-sector decisions. These inequities greatly affect those in lower-income or rural areas. According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 39% of rural Americans lack access to broadband, compared to only 4% of urban Americans. Rural areas, like many within Isle of Wight, are the most challenging to serve due to the required infrastructure needing to traverse longer distances to reach additional service users. This can make it increasingly difficult for farm operators as many of the latest yield-maximizing farming techniques require broadband connections. There are current County initiatives that are laying a foundation for broadband improvements. Six new emergency service radio towers were erected in 2018 with space for a service provider to install Wi-Fi broadband service that would improve the access for homes and businesses within the line of sight of each tower.
- Telecommunications carriers are currently implementing the new 5G network. This will involve the need for small cell sites impacting an already crowded public right-of-way. Additionally, the FCC has authorized (through FirstNet and AT&T) the build-out of a mandatory first responder network. In advance of this build-out, the County should look at the relevancy of its current zoning requirements, permitting processes and the development of associated standards.
- The Federal Aviation Administration predicts the number of UAVs, or drones, to grow from 2.5 million in 2016 to 7 million by 2020. Efforts are underway to have drones carry out services hundreds of feet above the ground, such as with Amazon's new delivery system. The potential of drones moving at different heights and speeds across the County may raise safety, noise, and privacy concerns.
- Advanced driver assistance systems are already on the roads and improving safety by controlling specific driving functions; however, fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) will be capable of driving without any human operation. Synthesized data from numerous sources suggest the most basic form of AVs will be widely available by 2023. While the impact of AVs is likely to vary in different communities based on population density, rapid advancement in this technology may have a great impact on the efficiency of Isle of Wight's transportation system. To work toward building a better community, infrastructure and policy decisions (discussed in the *Connect the Isle Chapter*) must be made that enhance the societal benefits that AVs promise while mitigating the potential problems this technology could create.
- Social media is changing the form of civic engagement. Community members can now submit comments on plans or applications by simply reaching for their mobile device. With emerging platforms like Nextdoor and Facebook, residents and businesses expect more opportunities to weigh in on activities like Comprehensive Plans. Benefits include greater community outreach by providing new channels for input.

KEY FACTS AND TRENDS

- **A large segment of the community does not have reliable access to broadband.**
- **Efforts are already underway by telecommunication carriers to implement a system of 5G small tower sites throughout the County in the public right of way.**
- **Social media presents opportunities to expand public engagement.**
- **The County currently does not have policies or plans underway to address drones or autonomous vehicles.**

Affordable and Attainable Housing

In order to create a County in which people of all incomes, backgrounds, ages, and abilities can thrive, Isle of Wight must provide a variety of housing types and sizes. Each person seeking a new place to call home must find a suitable match between price,

location, housing type, and lifestyle. Isle of Wight identified a lack of availability of workforce housing in 2008 and increased the number of townhouses and apartment units from 5.6% to 13.8% of the total housing supply by 2017. In addition to the approval of several new multifamily and attached dwelling unit projects, the County also modified its Zoning Ordinance in 2016 to permit accessory dwelling units in its lower density residential zoning districts. This is in addition to the County's long-standing practice of allowing manufactured homes in its rural residential districts. While this diversification in housing stock helped address the problem, the need remains for a variety of housing options with an increasing elderly population staying independent longer and as employers seek workforce housing for their workers.

The median home value in Isle of Wight County is $243,000, which is higher than that of most nearby communities and the region. The high median home value in the County is indicative of a market dominated by new, single-family, owner-occupied homes, which are generally valued higher than older, renter-occupied dwellings in urban settings. Large single-family homes are the dominant type of housing in the County. The need for more housing options is further illustrated by the fact that the majority, approximately 67%, of approved but unbuilt housing units in major residential subdivisions (not including

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Improving the quality of life for Isle of Wight County residents should be the overriding concern of the County's economic development program. The growth of the County's local employment base can affect the location, timing, type, and quality of residential development. New commercial, office and industrial developments providing jobs for County residents can generate different housing demands than if Isle of Wight continues to develop as a residential suburb inhabited largely by people who commute to a nearby city for work. Different local industries will generate a variety of housing demands depending upon prevailing wages; and as the number of people living and working within the County continues to grow, traffic congestion will continue to increase unless more opportunities are provided for employees to both live and work within the County.

The improved welfare of County residents as measured by changes in unemployment, real incomes, standard of living, and environmental quality should be the goal of economic development efforts. Simple aggregate growth or industrial expansion is acceptable only when consistent with these goals and objectives. In order to maintain a high quality of life for County residents, commercial and industrial development should be reasonably encouraged due to its ability to generate revenue while having lesser impacts on County infrastructure and services than the impacts created by residential development. The final chapter of the Plan, "Create the Isle," establishes timeframes and responsible parties for the implementation of each action step.

POLICY	ACTION
Continue to facilitate nonresidential development to grow and diversify our economy.	Update the economic development strategic plan to reflect current conditions and identify actions to support existing businesses and attract target industries.
Promote environmental, cultural, and agricultural tourism which takes advantage of the rural, scenic, and historic qualities of Isle of Wight.	Complete a Tourism Strategic Study to determine the value of tourism to the County and identify opportunities for expansion.
	Create a way-finding program to help visitors find Isle of Wight's cultural and historic sites and commercial districts.
Improve public access to high-speed internet networks.	Develop a County broadband access plan to promote commerce, educational opportunities, and social engagement.
	Identify partnership opportunities to expand broadband coverage throughout the County.

infill lots or family member subdivision lots) is single-family detached homes.

Communities can influence housing supply by controlling the amount of available residential land and availability of public services, creating development regulations regarding density and design, and providing support for low- and moderate-income housing through funding or incentives. The County also can assist in providing information to non-profit and private developers about state and federal funding opportunities, and design and development practices that promote construction of accessible, sustainable, attractive, and affordable housing.

KEY FACTS AND TRENDS

- **The County's current workforce housing study is over ten years old and does not reflect current conditions or trends.**
- **Most homes in the County are single-family detached homes.**
- **There is a need for housing that meets the needs of a variety of age groups and lifestyles.**

POLICY	ACTION
Explore potential policies and use regulations for advances in telecom, drones and autonomous vehicle technologies.	Create a working group to identify potential issues with emerging technological trends and identify potential policies to address potential barriers or negative impacts.
Provide opportunities for a variety of housing types that meet the needs, preferences, and financial capabilities of present and future residents.	Update the 2008 Workforce Housing Study to include current County demographic trends, housing inventory, and affordable and workforce housing policies with implementation recommendations.
	Expand the County's current practices that allow for accessory dwelling units in appropriate districts.
	Identify regulatory changes that provide opportunities for housing for persons with special needs in proximity to supporting community services and activities.
	Review and revise regulations to support housing types that allow the elderly to remain in their community as their needs change.
	Increase opportunities within DSDs for residences to be in close proximity to retail, employment, and public facilities, such as schools and parks.
	Identify possible incentives to encourage the development of a range of housing choices near major activity centers such as employment, commercial areas, schools, and recreation areas.
	Develop a program to promote the availability of local, state, and federal affordable housing incentives and subsidies to those involved in the housing industry.
	Monitor regional and local housing trends on an annual basis to assess the County's status on meeting the community's housing needs.
	Increase code enforcement efforts to reduce blight and promote the habitability of existing housing stock.