



FREDERICKSBURG
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

Fredericksburg Economic Development Strategic Plan

In early 2016, Atlanta-based Garner Economics produced a strategic economic development plan for the City of Fredericksburg titled “Embracing History and Progress.” The plan included 20 recommendations for the City of Fredericksburg to pursue to achieve its economic development potential. During that same time frame, the Fredericksburg Economic Development Authority developed a draft strategic plan. In October 2016, Fredericksburg City Council set out a vision for the City that included many economic development goals and initiatives. During the second half of 2016, the newly hired City Manager and Director of Economic Development and Tourism discussed many new economic development and tourism initiatives that the City should pursue.

City Council, the EDA, and the City Manager and EDT Director now seek to come together to endorse one single Economic Development Strategic Plan that pulls from all existing visions/plans and encapsulates the most important elements of each. Below is a consolidated 10-point economic development plan that encapsulates elements from each of the visions (goals are not listed in any specific order). This consolidated Economic Development Strategic Plan incorporates unresolved recommendations of all previous plans, including the Garner and JumpStart! plans, but effectively upon adoption supersedes them. City Council may determine to adopt this Economic Development Strategic Plan as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. To accomplish these goals, the City will need to be willing to invest in economic development and tourism and pursue innovative public-private partnerships.

This proposal is guided in large part by the City Council draft **2036 Vision** Statement:

The people of Fredericksburg are building a 21st-century urban center on the foundation of this historic city at the fall line of the Rappahannock River. Fredericksburg is the hub of regional economic activity, a city with a multicultural population and thriving cultural scene, a place that works for everyone, a community where the people are writing the next chapters of Fredericksburg’s history.

Goal #1: Become an employment epicenter

The City of Fredericksburg strives to build an economy that is heavy in research-and-development, high-tech-focused jobs delivering solutions in healthcare, national security and innovative technology. These jobs will allow a larger percentage of the region's workforce to find solid employment opportunities closer to home, thereby keeping this talented labor pool at home during the weekdays, generating increased tax revenue and improving local quality of life. The City also strives to improve upon its status as an authentic historic experience and a tourist destination with diverse opportunities in eco-tourism, sports, cultural, and entertainment venues of statewide significance. The City also strives to facilitate and build upon the entrepreneurial spirit that already exists locally.

Objectives:

A. Make the attraction of new businesses to the City a main focus of economic development along with business retention and expansion (Immediate)

The Garner report identified four core industry targets for Fredericksburg:

1. Tourism, hospitality, and specialty retail
2. Science and technology, R&D, contracting and consulting
3. Professional and corporate office users
4. Education and health services

Under this objective, a main focus of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism will be to attract and retain businesses in these four core industries. This effort will include the development and execution of a process for lead generation and business target profiling. EDT staff will actively solicit and provide information to site-location consultants, and it will cooperate with the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance to develop familiarization events for consultants and companies – achieving the goal of significantly enhancing relationships with corporate decision-makers in the greater Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism will also enhance its website as part of its business attraction strategy, adding a blog with regular content that will promote the City. Networking events put on by groups such as the International Economic Development Council, Virginia Economic Developers Association, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, International Council of Shopping Centers and Greater Richmond Association for Commercial Real Estate will be attended. EDT staff will work closely with local brokers and developers to assist with tenant development, and will reach out directly to attract targeted businesses and national associations that complement the four targeted industries. Close collaborations between Germanna Community College, the University of Mary Washington, the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc., the UMW Center for Economic Development and the UMW Center for Historic Preservation will continue and be enhanced.

Along with this focus on business attraction, EDT should place a top priority on business retention and expansion. That means making frequent visits to City businesses, promoting successes on the ED website and social media, holding assistance events in collaboration with other organizations, responding quickly and effectively to requests for assistance, and consistently showing appreciation. The

City should also help facilitate a culture of entrepreneurialism that encourages area residents to start new businesses that can grow into significant employers.

B. Update the existing economic incentives program structure and funding levels, and adjust as needed to optimize the City’s competitiveness with respect to attracting the four core industry targets (2017)

The Garner report identified the low level of funding for the local economic development program as a “weakness” in its assessment of the City. Under this objective, the Director of Economic Development and Tourism will lead efforts to update the existing incentives program. Strong efforts will be made to make the program more flexible, and staff will work with Council to make the entire City eligible for the incentive program. Creating a City economic development and tourism opportunity fund (a ready resource for potential top-tier prospects and events) will also be prioritized. Recent work to bring together the City and its Economic Development Authority will be continued, and additional funding streams for the EDA will be explored. The City should also be constantly on the lookout for state and federal incentive programs that local matching funds can leverage, and be willing to commit financial resources to help land highly attractive projects and businesses.

C. Move EDT office to a more corporate environment (Late 2017/Early 2018)

The offices of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism should be relocated to a more corporate environment. The current offices are on the second and third floors of the Fredericksburg Visitor Center at 706 Caroline St. Guests pass through the Visitor Center, and access the offices using a narrow staircase. The conference room is currently on the second floor of this facility. New office and meeting space would enhance the experience of business prospects, demonstrate a more serious economic development effort, and provide a more professional environment for this work. Importantly, new space should also function more efficiently, with integrated or coordinated space for offices, meeting rooms, bathrooms, ADA access, storage and other supportive spaces. The new office space would also incorporate useful improvements in technological infrastructure and audio/visual meeting and presentation equipment. The new space should have convenient parking, with good access to all areas of the City.

One potential location for this new office is the Executive Plaza in downtown Fredericksburg. Fredericksburg City Schools administrative staff currently occupies the first level of the Caroline Street building, but schools staff will move to the Walker Grant Center in the Fall of 2017. The first level of the Executive Plaza, which was recently renovated during the courts construction project, is likely to be the new home to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism when it comes available. The space is big enough for a co-location with the Fredericksburg Visitor Center and/or another logical City department – and maybe even Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc. The City already owns the building, so relocation costs should be reasonable. The Fredericksburg Visitor Center could potentially co-locate with EDT at this new facility, as has been done for many years at 706 Caroline St.

Goal #2: Develop the workforce of tomorrow

Workforce development is an important facet of any economic development program. Companies considering a new community look closely at the workforce to ensure that there is a qualified labor pool from which to draw. While Fredericksburg has a well-educated workforce, it is important to take steps to ensure programs are in place to keep the workforce trained for future opportunities.

Objectives:

A. Help create and support incubator spaces for entrepreneurs (2018)

Fredericksburg has an opportunity to help facilitate the “sharing” economy through a variety of business incubators that generate startup activity. One such space, EagleWorks at the UMW Center for Economic Development, already exists, and the City should collaborate with and help expand the center. The City should also collaborate with the Quantico Innovation Center and have a seat on that organization’s Board of Directors. With the growth of Fredericksburg’s restaurant scene, some restaurateurs have said that it has become difficult to find well-trained and qualified kitchen staff. The City could help with this shortage by partnering with Germanna Community College, the Gladys H. Oberle School and others on a culinary training kitchen that could also serve as an incubator space for food-focused entrepreneurs. City staff has identified an unused commercial kitchen in the former hospital at 2300 Fall Hill Avenue that could be refurbished for this use. Preliminary meetings have occurred with property owner Mary Washington Healthcare as well as Germanna. Fredericksburg City Schools might elect to run culinary education classes from this space as well. Meetings have also occurred with leaders of the Oberle School about potential after-hours use of the school’s commercial kitchen.

In addition, anytime Fredericksburg has excess public space, the City should explore providing incubator space for startups through a competitive process.

B. Partner with Germanna and City Schools on vocational, technology and workforce training (2017-2018)

The City should also facilitate vocational and technological training conducted by City Schools, Germanna and private-sector training-oriented firms. One example of this effort that the EDA has supported is Germanna’s Fredericksburg Center for Advanced Technology, which plans to open a vocational-focused training center in Central Park in 2017. The facility will provide training for electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, HVAC technicians and more. It will also have a maker-space where people can experiment with technology such as 3D printers to build prototypes. The EDA and City should continue to support such vocational-focused projects, as many good jobs are available in the 21st-century economy that don’t require four-year degrees. The City should also work with UMW to help keep qualified students in Fredericksburg by connecting them to employers through internship and post-graduate job opportunities.

C. Look for state and federal workforce grant opportunities (Immediate)

Fredericksburg’s Department of Economic Development and Tourism should continue to explore state and national programs that provide tax and other incentives to companies for job creation. One

program offered through VEDP is the Virginia Jobs Investment Program, and there are others. Many of these programs also offer training opportunities. Local organizations such as the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc. and UMW's Small Business Development Center also offer training opportunities for workforce development. The City should promote, facilitate and partner with these organizations on workforce training.

Goal #3: Be a business-friendly city

Small and large businesses are the lifeblood of the community as well as the City's tax base, and steps must be taken to ensure they feel appreciated and fairly treated. That is accomplished through superior customer service, a reasonable regulatory environment, fair tax rates and excellent business retention efforts.

Objectives:

A. Promote and help facilitate the innovation, growth and excellence of the local business community (Immediate)

The City should promote local entrepreneurship in a number of ways, including:

1. Supporting entrepreneurs through business education events and seminars in conjunction with the UMW Small Business Development Center, Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc. and the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce.
2. Facilitating the creation and expansion of business incubation facilities such as EagleWorks at the UMW Small Business Development Center.
3. Supporting programs such as Startup Weekend Fredericksburg and Made in FredVA.
4. Working with Main Street and the Chamber on encouraging new business creation and collaborating on ribbon-cutting events.
5. Meeting regularly with existing businesses and promoting their success via news releases, blog posts and social media.
6. Pursuit of earned media to better tell our success stories.

B. Streamline, simplify and coordinate the permitting process (Multi-year effort)

The Garner report proposed that the City should staff a business investment and retention ombudsman in the City Manager's Office, and create a one-stop permitting office to streamline the permitting process and create an internal culture of "yes." Starting a new business or expanding an existing business in the City can be a complicated process, involving multiple public offices, including the Commissioner of the Revenue, Building Code Official, Fire Marshal, Development and Zoning Administrators, Stormwater Management Administrator and more. Multiple regulations, including codes governing taxes, building, fire prevention, health, zoning and stormwater management, must be navigated. This can make new business activity complex, time-consuming, and, in some cases, discouraging.

These public offices are implementing regulations that are required by the state and federal governments in many cases, and by City Council in others. They are all bound to implement the law evenly, fairly, efficiently and effectively. With the cooperation of the private sector, there is always a way to search for the “yes” answer within these existing frameworks. And, while the regulatory frameworks will not always bend to local desires, the process for navigating the complex permitting structure lends itself to improvement.

Under this objective, the Director of Economic Development and Tourism and Business Development Manager will lead a team effort to map the current permitting process, to benchmark the City’s process against best practices, and to develop more efficient, coordinated and business-friendly processes that will support and encourage new business activity in the City. A priority will be placed to bring permitting functions more closely together for ease of our customers.

Regarding the ombudsman recommendation, the Director of Economic Development and Tourism and Business Development Manager will function in this role.

C. Review the development standards of the Unified Development Ordinance for any undue obstacles to business development (Multi-year effort)

The Garner report proposed that the City “conduct a third-party, unbiased review of the UDO.” Planning staff is currently engaged in a process of small-area-plan development, reviewing each of the City’s 10 planning areas for long-range planning purposes. The City has engaged, and will continue to engage, private-sector experts to assist in this review. The project includes an economic analysis of business infrastructure, activity and opportunities.

The completion of the small-area-plan project was identified by the City Council as a three-year priority. At the conclusion of that project, the Planning staff proposes to review the City’s existing zoning district classifications, and to propose new, modern zoning district classifications (including form-based code) and regulations, especially with respect to commercial districts such as Commercial/Office Transitional, Commercial Highway, and Commercial Shopping Center. This is a long-range project that will take several years to complete.

In the short term, the City Attorney and Planning staff have reviewed Articles 1 & 2 of the UDO and have brought them to the Council for referral to the Planning Commission. They are also now reviewing development standards in Articles 4 and 5 of the UDO for their effectiveness in balancing competing public and private interests with respect to commercial development. Working with the Economic Development staff, they will work to identify, with developer input, any unreasonable obstacles to new business investment. Third-party assistance has been sought, and will continue to be sought as needed.

Goal #4: Enhance the City as a tourism destination

Tourism is a major economic driver for the City, bringing in meals, sales and lodging taxes that support the local budget while creating jobs and revenue for local businesses. The Virginia Tourism

Corporation estimated in its 2015 report entitled “Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on Virginia” that domestic travelers were responsible in 2015 for \$171.4 million in expenditures and more than 1,600 jobs in the City. Driving more tourists, conventions, meetings and events to the City will significantly boost the local economy. Fredericksburg should also promote and prosper from its status as a Main Street community.

Objectives:

A. Investigate the creation of a regional tourism bureau (2017-2018)

For many years, the Fredericksburg Regional Tourism Partnership has coordinated much of the regional tourism efforts in the City and Stafford and Spotsylvania counties. The FRTP, working with Virginia Beach-based destination marketing organization BCF, has had much success driving visitors to VisitFred.com and to in-person visits. Tourism sales professionals staffed by the City of Fredericksburg and working on behalf of the entire region have recruited reunions, meetings, conventions and events to the City that have grown the regional tax base.

Now, City leadership wishes consideration of the formation of a regional tourism bureau to coordinate tourism marketing and sales efforts. A separate, not-for-profit organization with dedicated office space, staff and a Board of Directors could be formed. The organization could be funded exclusively through lodging tax revenue from each of the three partnering localities. City staff have been studying this model with its partners, while speaking with executive directors of Richmond- and Roanoke-based organizations that follow this regional strategy. A late December 2016 forum was held on these models, and leaders from each of the three partnering localities are evaluating the possibility.

If a regional tourism bureau were created, the City of Fredericksburg would continue with a City-only tourism program as well. The Visitor Center would continue to be a Fredericksburg-managed location in that scenario.

B. Create a Tourism Opportunity Fund to attract events and meetings (2017-2018)

Both the Garner report and draft EDA strategic plan encouraged the formation of an opportunity fund that could help land tax-generating events and conventions in the region. Increasingly, large events and meetings expect some sort of stipend/incentive from the host locality/region. Without such a fund currently, the Fredericksburg region is at a disadvantage when competing with other areas for events.

This Tourism Opportunity Fund could be housed in a newly formed regional tourism bureau. It could also be administered through the Fredericksburg Regional Tourism Partnership. Separately, the Department of Parks and Recreation will be taking an increased focus on event recruitment, support and management. This type of opportunity fund could also assist these enhanced efforts. The City and Region would also benefit from additional marketing dollars for promotions.

C. Develop tourism assets in the City and collaborate with partners (Immediate)

The City should work to attract an upscale, boutique hotel that would complement the downtown Courtyard by Marriott, the Hyatt Place at Eagle Village and other lodging offerings. It would also be helpful to attract a hotel with more meeting space for conventions, conferences and other groups. The

City's Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Parks and Recreation should also attempt to recruit and develop more tourist-friendly amenities such as an ice-skating rink, carousel, permanent outdoor stage, observation deck and enhanced outdoor/river recreation activities that offer more diverse/unique experiences for visitors while differentiating the City from others in the region. The City should collaborate with the National Park Service, George Washington Foundation and Spotsylvania and Stafford counties on tourism-product development including the battlefields and riverfront land. The City should also work with the University of Mary Washington to collaboratively recruit sports groups and events that would compete on UMW's topnotch athletics facilities.

Goal #5: Rebrand the City of Fredericksburg and vigorously defend brand standards

It is vital that the City create a unified brand and vigorously defend its usage for both internal and external communications. This brand would be used for both internal and external communications.

Objectives:

A. Take stock of how City brand is currently used (Early 2017)

The first step toward accomplishing this goal is analyzing how the City is currently portraying itself through websites, business cards, letterheads, signage and more. City staff put together a presentation for City Council in late 2016 that showed the many diverse logos, business cards and websites that are currently being used. The Novak and Garner reports also pointed out this lack of consistency in how the City is portraying itself.

B. Hire branding firm to create new brand and implement it (2017)

The next step is to hire a branding firm to engage the community and create a brand for the City, as well as brand standards for how it should be used. After the brand is created, it should be integrated into all City communications including websites, letterheads, business cards and signage. This will be a multi-year process that will carry significant financial costs. Strong consideration should be given during this process to the recent brand developed for downtown by Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc.

C. Designate a staff member as "Brand Champion" (Early 2018)

A staff member should be designated as "brand champion" to ensure that the brand is being consistently used as intended across all platforms. This champion could reside within the City Manager's Office. A Public Information Officer, if one is hired, could assist with this effort.

Goal #6: Ensure proper infrastructure is in place to sustain growth

The City of Fredericksburg cannot achieve its community development goals if proper infrastructure is not in place. Much of the City's infrastructure has served citizens for many years, and steps must be taken to ensure it is adequate for both the present and future. Many of City Council's goals and initiatives fall into this category.

Objectives:

A. Create a parking plan of action for the City (Early 2017)

Significant growth in downtown Fredericksburg and at UMW has led to parking challenges in both areas. It can be debated to what extent parking is a current problem, but there is no doubt that the City must take steps to ensure that adequate parking exists for residents, businesses and visitors now and in the future. The parking assets must also be appropriately marked. A first step is to take stock of the City's current parking inventory and policies, as well as analyze where growth is coming. Walker Parking Consultants has been hired to conduct a "Parking Plan of Action" for the City to make recommendations going forward. Future strategies could include experimenting with additional paid parking, changing hourly parking limits, pursuing additional after-hours leases, adding downtown shuttles, improving signage, using more technology (apps) and acquiring an additional surface lot to eventually accommodate another parking deck, among others. Encouraging downtown walkability should also be a focus.

B. Analyze existing infrastructure and make improvements accordingly (Immediate)

The City of Fredericksburg must ensure that it has adequate water and sewer capacity to facilitate its growth. While private developers must pay for the water and sewer lines connecting their projects, it is up to the City to ensure that the main lines can handle the growth. The City has invested considerable funds in recent years replacing aged water and sewer lines, and that effort should continue. In addition, the City should ensure that it has sufficient broadband speeds, as Internet connectivity is increasingly viewed as a required utility by businesses and developers considering the market. The City should also investigate the creation of a free public wireless network and explore ways to ensure additional conduit is laid in the City right-of-way whenever appropriate trenching occurs. Finally, the City should work with its partners at Columbia Gas and Dominion to ensure sufficient natural gas and electrical capacity exists in targeted development areas.

C. Improve transportation assets (Immediate)

The City must constantly seek to maintain and improve its transportation assets of all modes. Much progress has been made on this initiative of late, namely the Fall Hill Avenue/Mary Washington Boulevard project, planned improvements to the Exit 130 interchange and coming Atlantic Gateway project along Interstate 95. The City should also fully engage and cooperate with the widening of the CSX rail lines (if approved) in the City to allow for the creation of a high-speed rail network while working to leverage the opportunity to improve bridges, sound-dampening walls and other enhancements (for example, a new parking garage and a new train station that could be part of a revitalized neighborhood

around the station). The City should also prioritize the creation of an additional north/south road connection from Fall Hill Avenue to State Route 3 just east of Interstate 95. Finally, the City should continue to improve its pedestrian trail system, being sure to integrate planned pedestrian improvements to the Chatham Bridge in Stafford County. The creation of a dedicated Transportation Administrator position is a positive step for these objectives.

Goal #7: Build upon outdoor assets

City Council, the EDA, the Garner plan and City staff have all called for enhancing the City's outdoor recreation assets. The City's location along the Rappahannock River and ownership of easement land along the river provide ample opportunities to develop outdoor amenities that will enhance quality of life for residents, create venues for special events and attract additional visitors.

Objectives:

A. Develop Riverfront Park and clean up areas along the river (2017-2018)

This is a key objective cited by all previous plans, and for good reason. The park promises to become a center of downtown activity for events and recreation. It will greatly enhance the City's use of the river, and should increase direct access to the river. The City is working with Rhodeside & Harwell to finalize a design for Riverfront Park and is also working to replace parking that will be lost as part of the park's development. Concurrently, the City should continue to assist with the "Face the River" campaign to clean up overgrowth along the river to promote better views and activity. The City should also work with the George Washington Foundation on long-term plans for a ferry crossing between Ferry Farm and City Dock. The City should support river-focused events such as cleanup days and "Rock the River."

B. Continue to enhance trails system (Immediate)

The City has received a very positive reaction to its trails system. The VCR Trail and Rappahannock River Heritage Trail are both heavily used and have become wonderful assets for the City and region. There are plans to extend the VCR Trail to Interstate 95 and eventually cross the interstate and continue all the way to Orange County. The City should continue to look for ways to build up its trails system, taking opportunities such as the Fall Hill Avenue widening to improve the network. A future road and sidewalk system through the Hylton property will create important North-South pedestrian connectivity in the City. Connecting the pedestrian trails to southern Stafford County, which has also done a good job building its trails system, would greatly enhance the broader usability. Integrating the trails system with the Chatham Bridge in Stafford will be imperative to accomplishing this connection near term.

C. Attract outdoor recreational venues and companies (2017-2018)

The City should continue to explore ways to attract a multi-purpose outdoor and recreational facility that can be privately financed, with potential City/regional support. This type of facility could provide a venue for travel sports teams, large and small tournaments, concerts and potentially professional baseball. Another opportunity is to develop and facilitate outdoor adventure assets such as dirt-bike trails, ropes courses, rock climbing, paddleboarding, enhanced river rafting/kayaking, and more. The City should also

strengthen outdoor awareness by recruiting outdoor-oriented associations, publications and businesses including those that complement the American Canoe Association. The City should aggressively promote sports tourism opportunities and recruit more events such as the Marine Corps Historic Half.

Goal #8: Build community through cultural vibrancy

The City of Fredericksburg has an active arts and cultural community that enhances the City's quality of life and attracts new residents. All of the previous Economic Development plans have called for arts and cultural enhancements, and this one does too.

Objectives:

A. Identify a venue and funding sources for a performing arts center (2017-2018)

The City of Fredericksburg offers a variety of existing venues for performing arts – including the downtown library auditorium, Picker's Alley, the Renwick courthouse, James Monroe High School and others. The existing facilities, however, are either too small for larger-scale performances or are frequently not available for community groups. The City should therefore continue to explore possibilities for a larger performing arts center that could attract performances of regional significance. This could be done through a public-private partnership, and the facility could also include conference facilities to allow larger meetings. The City should also explore partnerships with UMW for a shared agreement that would allow existing UMW theater assets (including the Klein Theatre and Dodd Auditorium) to be more frequently used by the community.

B. Work with the arts and cultural community on events and programs (Immediate)

The City and EDA should continue to partner with existing arts groups including the Fredericksburg Arts Commission to facilitate art-focused events and programs such as Via Colori, First Fridays, Art Attack!, the outdoor public arts sculpture program and a variety of murals. The City's existing Arts & Cultural District incentives program should continue to be used to encourage art-focused businesses to locate downtown and restaurants to display the works of local artists. Partnerships with UMW and the City's many heritage tourism organizations should also continue to be pursued to offer arts programming and cultural events such as the Great Lives series.

C. Support and encourage indoor and outdoor music venues (Immediate)

This is an important element in the EDA's draft strategic plan. The EDA facilitated a new indoor music venue with grant funding to the Picker's Alley project as well as support of the Spencer Devon Brewing deck project, which could include musical performances. The EDA has also been supportive of the Celebrate Virginia Live/Celebrate Virginia After Hours outdoor concert series, which continues. Riverfront Park is another attractive venue for outdoor music (and its planned build out should include a permanent stage). These efforts should continue.

Goal #9: Maintain historic character as part of economic development and tourism strategy

Fredericksburg's historic character is one of its primary assets in both economic development and tourism. Much of the City's charm and character derive from its authentic historic look and feel, so the City must protect that while pursuing goals that will attract more businesses, residents and visitors to the historic and walkable core. Organizations and boards including Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc., the Architectural Review Board, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation Inc. and the UMW Center for Historic Preservation will be important partners in this pursuit.

Objectives:

A. Determine what to do with the Renwick Courthouse and Post Office properties (2017-2018)

The Renwick courthouse complex will be entirely empty by the fall of 2017. The complex, particularly the former courthouse building designed by renowned architect James Renwick, needs to find its next use. The City should build on previous work done by an earlier study group. This could include holding a series of public meetings starting with the official unveiling of the Historic Structures Report and announcing that developers are encouraged to submit proposals for reusing the complex. The City can then evaluate the ideas and hold another community meeting to discuss them. Under any reuse scenario, the City should strongly consider retaining the important complex, but should be open minded about what private-sector concepts might arise. The City should also make redevelopment of the Post Office distribution facility a priority while working to keep the retail Post Office downtown.

B. Enhance awareness of historic tax credit programs (Immediate)

The federal and state historic tax credit programs are excellent ways to make sensitive historic rehab projects economically viable. They have been used to great success both locally and throughout the U.S. Statistics indicate that the programs aren't being used as much as desired in Fredericksburg. The City should work to change that trend by partnering with area organizations such as Fredericksburg VA Main Street Inc. and HFFI on workshops regarding the programs. Fredericksburg's Historic Preservation Planner has produced an excellent and informative flier on the tax credit program, and the City should ensure that it gets widely circulated. The City should work closely with UMW's Center for Historic Preservation to raise awareness about historic preservation and to collaborate on Historic District projects.

C. Facilitate conversations between developers, preservationists, city staff and commissions to make it clear about City's vision and priorities (2017-2018)

Developers should have a clear understanding as to what the development process will involve in Fredericksburg's Historic District. The City should facilitate conversations between the development community, Architectural Review Board, Main Street, preservation organizations and other commissions to ensure a clear understanding of the City's vision and priorities. An archaeology ordinance should be developed that lays much of the groundwork for what downtown development projects will entail, as well. Developing and clearly explaining these priorities and regulations will avoid conflict down the road once projects are proposed.

Goal #10: Enhance gateways into the city

Both the EDA and City Council have put ample emphasis on improving Fredericksburg's gateway corridors – including Princess Anne Street, Lafayette Boulevard and the Rappahannock River (the region's "original gateway"). The City requires an extra layer of review for development projects proposed along these two gateways and others. The EDA has facilitated façade improvement grant programs to encourage investments along the City's primary gateways. These corridors are often the first impression that visitors get when entering the City and Historic District, and it's important to improve the look.

Objectives:

A. Develop partnership between City and EDA on strategic acquisition program (2017-2018)

The City and EDA demonstrated the value of working together on strategic property acquisitions through the 2016 purchase of the former StellarOne bank branch at 1016 Charles St. That partnership led to more public parking, a new business coming downtown and additional financial resources that the EDA can use for future economic development projects. The EDA would like to pursue additional acquisitions and could work with the City to develop a program that could make the program more financially feasible. This program could be used to acquire blighted properties along the gateway corridors, prepare them for redevelopment and sell them back to the private sector, potentially using tax incentives to recruit desired businesses and projects. Even if the EDA potentially loses money on these investments, the net result for the City would be positive due to the better appearance of the corridors and the tax revenue derived from new businesses. The City could incentivize the EDA to participate in these deals by agreeing to split some of the incremental tax revenue on targeted properties with the EDA.

B. Adhere to corridor design standards and enforce existing city codes (Immediate)

The EDA has frequently discussed eyesore properties along the gateway corridors, particularly auto mechanic shops along Lafayette Boulevard that keep more vehicles in their lots than what is allowed by city code. The City through code enforcement should ensure that businesses along the corridors are adhering to city code, and continue to review new projects to ensure compliance with the corridor overlay design standards. Improving the look of the corridors should also include the erection of new gateway signs utilizing the City's new branding. Improvements along the river should be made as part of this category, including potentially new trails, bridges and activities.

C. Continue to use EDA grants program to facilitate additional improvements (Immediate)

The EDA has a multi-year track record of success with its Princess Anne Street and Lafayette Boulevard façade improvement grants program. Projects such as the ILM Corp. redevelopment on Lafayette Boulevard, the Red Dragon Brewery project on Princess Anne Street and the future redevelopment of the former Pure gas station on Princess Anne Street are all direct beneficiaries of these programs that have had or will have positive effects on the appearance of these corridors. The EDA should continue to promote this program and might consider giving top priority to façade grants along

these corridors. Having said that, the EDA should be open to, as opportunities arise, prioritizing potential collaborative projects with the City that have significant ROI to our community.