

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Part 1: Background

### Section 1: Introduction

For the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, economic development is defined as a sustained community effort to improve both the local economy and the quality of life by building the area's capacity to adapt to economic change.

### Section 2: Central Commercial District

Downtown Round Hill is also known as the “Central Commercial District” in the Comprehensive Plan because it is the central location of most of Round Hill’s commercial businesses. However, it does not have the same foot traffic as typical downtowns because the Central Commercial District is not set up for someone to spend time walking around visiting shops and eating at cafes. The Central Commercial District is made up of service oriented businesses that people are going to patron for one purpose, which means driving in and driving out as soon as the service has been provided. The 2014 Community Survey found 41% of residents said that they visit this area once a week, while 28% said that they visit once a month. The most common reason to go Downtown was to patronize the gas station (31%), the post office (15%) or one of the two convenience stores (14%).

80% of residents said that they would visit Downtown more but there are too few places to visit. This leads to the question: What businesses would residents like to see in Downtown Round Hill? A common response stated new businesses would need to “fit in” with the character of Downtown. The most popular choices for new business Downtown were a coffee shop (76%), bakery (73%), neighborhood deli (70%) and ice cream parlor (65%). These smaller food establishments that are typically set-up to be “carry out” are more likely to be locate in the Central Commercial District over a regular restaurant with seating for all customers. This is because a regular restaurant would require a significant amount of parking, possibly more than any one Central Commercial District parcel could provide.

Downtown Round Hill is also part of the National Historic Register District. While historic preservation can sometimes be a divisive issue, overall downtown beautification is something more people can support. Only 4% of survey respondents said that the beautification projects in Downtown Round Hill are not important. Residents felt a combination of beautification projects and historic preservation projects could boost the overall appearance of Downtown Round Hill. For example, 57% of survey respondents were in favor of the Town providing grants or other incentives for building façade improvements. The overall look and feel of Round Hill is important to residents who want to protect their hometown.

### **Section 3: Eastern Commercial District**

There is a 12-acre parcel zoned commercial at the eastern gateway to Round Hill (corner of East Loudoun Street and Evening Star Drive). This parcel, along with the 1-acre stone house property across the road, is referred to as the Eastern Commercial District. This parcel was brought into the town limits in 2005. At the time of the 1989 Round Hill Investors rezoning, this parcel officially became a commercial zoned property.

Potential developers of the 13-acres of commercial land located in the Eastern Commercial District asked the Town Council in June 2014 what type of businesses would best fit the vision for Round Hill. The Town Council wanted to open this question to the public, and included it within the 2014 Community Survey. The same potential developers returned in July of 2015 to informally request that the Town allow residential uses at the 12-acre parcel. In order to even consider allowing residential uses would require both a land use policy and economic development policy change in the Comprehensive Plan. Such a change would “open the door” for the owners to apply for a future rezoning of the parcel. Out of the 236 acres of land in the Town, there are 17.36 acres of commercial land. This 12-acre parcel makes up 69% of the total commercial land in Town, so any reduction in commercial land at this parcel would be a significant change in the Comprehensive Plan. The Town needs to conduct a close study of the residential use request before adopting any change to land use policy or economic development policy within the Comprehensive Plan. Questions specifically about the future community vision of the 12-acre parcel were asked during the 2015 Public Input Sessions and the 2015 Economic Development Survey. The 12-acre parcel was also the subject of the 2015 Loudoun County Design Cabinet Charrette.

The Town cannot choose the future commercial developer or business that purchases or leases any commercial land in Round Hill. However, the Town does have the ability to influence the uses, layout, design and architecture of any future commercial development at the 12-acre parcel and 1-acre parcel through the use of the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance, the Comprehensive Plan and the official proffers tied to the land from the 1989 Round Hill Investors rezoning.

### **Section 4: Future Local Economy**

Responses to the 2014 Community Survey provided the Town a range of preferences for future commercial uses in town, reflecting a community made up of a diverse population that includes young families, senior citizens and even “dinks” (dual-income, no kids). While preferences varied, there was a consistent theme among the comments related to any commercial development in town: many of the outspoken residents feel strongly against the classic strip mall image with low-end users. Survey respondents expect to see the “bar raised” on the quality of future commercial development which means to them no waste of space, little to no chain restaurants/chain retail providers and no big box stores. More specifically, residents Round Hill residents do not want their town to become “Anyplace, USA” meaning they want the Town to preserve its uniqueness and they want their commercial centers to be special destinations.

In addition, the town surveys and public input meetings reflected a desire to complement Purcellville not compete with it. Residents know that they can get many daily goods and services from the neighboring Town of Purcellville. They feel if any commercial growth happens in Round

Hill it should made up of local employment opportunities, family recreation venues, unique specialty shops and community gathering places. These are types of businesses that residents can walk to (or bike to), meet their neighbors and let their children play together.

## **Part 2: Opportunities & Challenges**

### **Section 1: Alternative Anchors & Flexible Formats**

In the 2014 Community Survey, 58.5% of respondents choose a small grocery store as one of their preferred businesses to locate at the 12-acre parcel in the Eastern Commercial District. The 2005 Streetscape Plan featured a design layout for the 12-acre parcel, that showed the footprint of a large building that has been presumed to be a grocery store. Over the years, some people continue to feel that the Town could support a national chain grocery store as an anchor at the 12-acre commercial parcel. Since 2005, the local economy has changed and there are now three grocery stores in Purcellville. It is now unlikely that the Town could attract a national grocery chain to Round Hill in the next ten years. It is possible that a small independent grocery store could someday open in Round Hill, but in the short term, the Town wanted to know what other businesses could serve as anchors at the 12-acre. In 2015, the Loudoun County Design Cabinet provided the Town with options for alternative businesses that could serve as anchors, other than grocery stores, based on their review of the 2014 Community Survey and 2015 Economic Development Survey. They recommended businesses with large footprints such as a child care facility, a senior living facility, a farmer's market, an indoor sports complex or a small theater. The Town should study these types of businesses and consider supporting them in Round Hill's Eastern Commercial District.

Recent changes in the economy have generated a demand for new flexible formats for commercial businesses. Companies now want to operate out of smaller retail spaces or operate with only one employee. Other small companies want more flexibility in their commercial space to conduct a variety of operations in the same location. For example, in one location a company may want showroom space, office space and the storage of merchandise. The Town should investigate these modern commercial spaces and consider supporting them in Round Hill's commercial districts.

### **Section 2: Parking**

The future growth and success of the Central Commercial District is limited by the lack of parking. Most existing businesses are under parked or at capacity. The Town wants to consider various options to solve the parking problem. Before any decision can be made, the Town needs to complete a study of the current status of all parking spaces in the Central Commercial District. A Central Commercial District study of the preferred uses and future challenges will help shape the parking needs.

### **Section 3: Arts & Crafts Industry**

One of the thriving industries in the greater Round Hill area is the local arts and crafts industry. The Round Hill Arts Center is located in the Western Commercial District. The Old Furniture Factory hosts regular bluegrass concerts and rents out studio space to local businesses. The Western Loudoun County Artists Studio features Round Hill artists every year. Arts and crafts

businesses are low impact uses that add to the local culture and character of Town. Creative Placemaking complements the arts and crafts industry. Creative Placemaking is the use of arts and culture by diverse partners to strategically shape the physical and social character of a place in order to spur economic development, promote enduring social change and improve the physical environment. The Town wants to attract unique businesses that create interesting places and capitalize on distinctiveness. This is a challenge because Round Hill is limited in its ability to differentiate itself from neighboring small towns with decades of concentrated economic development efforts focused on their commercial districts and their local business owners.

#### **Section 4: Streetscape Presence**

A commercial district that is consistently interesting and with an active presence to the street promotes more pedestrian activity and creates the public perception that the place is safer and more animated. More pedestrians mean more prospective customers on the street to support more small businesses. There are affordable solutions that the residents and local business owners could work together to implement.

#### **Section 5: Commercial Land**

Round Hill has a very limited amount of commercial land. The historic Central Commercial District is constricted because of non-conforming lots and no additional land to meet parking needs. Many of the buildings were constructed before there was a Town Zoning Ordinance with setback requirements. There are other buildings that were built before there were automobiles (which require parking lots). The Eastern Commercial District is the location of the only vacant commercial land in Town Limits. This land is in the opposite condition of the Central Commercial District because it offers the opportunity for a “fresh slate” to create conforming commercial lots with the ability to create useable tenant space or flexible pad sites with plenty of parking. Both districts require a long term investment by the private sector to either revitalize the Central Commercial District or to develop the Eastern Commercial District.

#### **Section 6: Home Based Businesses**

The challenge for the Town is to develop short term solutions to grow the local economy and to grow a strong base for attracting private sector investment for the commercial districts. The Town should consider a new opportunity for opening the door to new businesses: the residents. The residents of Round Hill can be the trailblazers who plant the seeds of new entrepreneurial ventures. Providing the structure for a variety of home based businesses and local start-ups will benefit both the Town economy and the lives of residents. The Town supports low impact businesses that do not require additional commercial land but can operate out of a residential dwelling. Possible ideas include home occupations, live-work dwellings, child care services, adult care services and one-vehicle shuttle services.

#### **Section 7: Lodging**

Round Hill has a history of providing lodging to travelers; however as of today there are no lodging establishments within the Town Limits or the Joint Land Management Area which has become an unmet need in Round Hill. Bed and breakfast establishments are permitted by special exception only. This could be a reason they do not exist. The Town is open to considering making them by-

right in exchange for following a permit process that would outline clear standards for operation. If the Town granted a limited number of permits, and revoked permits when the standards were not met, it could alleviate some concerns about bed and breakfast establishments becoming nuisances to their neighbors. A bed and breakfast could be considered a low impact home based business under the right circumstances.

The Town is strategically located within 30 minutes of many tourism attractions from local vineyards to Harper's Ferry National Park providing more justification that lodging is a logical business venture in Round Hill. Besides bed and breakfast establishments, another modern concept is renting out a home as a vacation rental for a short-term lease to allow for a weekend getaway. Vacation home rentals would require a set of clear standards for operation paired with a permit approval process. If a permit process was created, the Town could cap the number of vacation home rentals. The cap would allow the Town to promote some lodging businesses without changing its character as a quiet residential community by welcoming too many visitors.

The Town could consider permitting a small boutique hotel at the 12-acre parcel. This location would allow for occupants of the hotel to come and go onto Route 7 without disturbing the residents of Round Hill. A hotel at the 12-acre parcel would also benefit any retail or restaurant providers at the same location because occupants may come "home" in the evening, after a long day of touring Western Loudoun County and want to walk to dinner or walk to a retail store. This would provide business owners with a steady stream of foot traffic beyond the local residents.

## **Section 8: Tourism**

There are no major employment centers in Round Hill, which means residents spend their week traveling out of the Greater Round Hill Area to go to work. That means on the weekends they want to enjoy every moment of their free time, close to home. There are very few options for recreation and entertainment within Town limits, so many residents go outside of Town to neighboring towns or neighboring attractions on the weekends. Popular towns include Purcellville, Middleburg, Winchester and Harper's Ferry. Types of places residents travel to visit include areas featuring parks, nature, trails or bodies of water. The same local attractions that residents enjoy visiting on the weekends make up the basis of a strong tourism industry surrounding Round Hill.

While many residents are satisfied with going to Purcellville and beyond for their goods and services, there are some businesses that residents would like to stay in Round Hill. Businesses in walking distance of their homes or in a short drive from their homes that can become community gathering places, sources of employment or recreational outlets for residents of all ages. The challenge is building an environment that attracts quality businesses. When national businesses look at Round Hill as a potential location, they only look at the residential population and overlook the statistics of the local tourism industry. Tourism can add to the target area population of people who can patron future Round Hill businesses. Not only is Round Hill strategically located near a variety of tourist attractions, the Town itself has the ability to become a tourist attraction.

Round Hill has a rich historic past built around the former W&OD railroad. Residents of the Washington Metro Area would travel by train to vacation in Round Hill to escape the city life. This required a local tourism industry that depended on large houses that could provide lodging for tourists. Round Hill could recreate that history by promoting itself as a weekend getaway town that offers scenic views of the mountains, local bike trails, canoe trips around Sleeter Lake and

walking tours past historic houses. The Town could support tourism on a smaller scale. This would not require sacrificing the quality of life for residents, but instead could add to the quality of life for residents. The following are examples of possible local assets, amenities and marketing brands that could attract tourists to Round Hill, while remaining benefits to local residents:

<i><b>Outdoors &amp; Nature Tourism</b></i>	<i><b>Weekend Getaway Tourism</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleeter Lake</li> <li>• Virginia Birdwatching &amp; Wildlife Trail</li> <li>• Appalachian Trail Community</li> <li>• Outdoors &amp; Nature Education</li> <li>• Shenandoah River</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Vineyards &amp; Breweries</li> <li>• Bed &amp; Breakfasts</li> <li>• Art Studio Tours</li> <li>• Historic District Tours</li> <li>• Bluegrass Concerts or Festivals</li> <li>• Romantic Getaway</li> </ul>

## **Section 9: Appalachian Trail**

Round Hill can benefit from its close proximity to the Appalachian Trail. The town is perfectly located between two Appalachian Trail visitor centers. Bears Den is located five miles to the west and the Blackburn Center is located five miles to the north. If a visitor wanted to visit both places on the same day they would have to drive through Round Hill's Central Commercial District. Bears Den provides a gateway connecting people to the infamous "rollercoaster" section of the Appalachian Trail. Bears Den Lodge and Hostel is located in a historic stone mansion, on 66 acres of land, and is only 150 yards from the Appalachian Trail. At 1,350 feet, the Bears Den Rocks provide a panoramic view of the Shenandoah Valley and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The westward-looking view provides a prime spot for the sunset. In 2014, about 1,900 people visited Bears Den.

The Blackburn Center is primarily designed to support long distance hikers, trail crews, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club planning meetings and training seminars. It is also used as a venue for special events such as weddings. Located on 150-acres of land and backing up to the Appalachian Trail, the Blackburn Center can accommodate up to 80 plus people for a day event and has indoor lodging space for 30 people with at least 30 more using tent spaces and the adjoining campground. In 2014, about 1,000 people visited the Blackburn Center. Visitors include day hikers, thru hikers, section hikers, boy scouts, girl scouts, and private groups. The Town should consider the Appalachian Trail as one of its most unique assets that could be incorporated into future planning efforts as an excellent opportunity to boost the local economy.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Goals, Objectives & Strategies

**Overall Goal:** Round Hill will be differentiated by lively neighborhoods and business districts, cultural and recreational attractions, a great sense of place, protected natural areas, and deep pride in local character, products and foods. This Chapter will lead the town toward the type of economic development strategies that will result in the retention of all the attributes that brought many of its residents and visitors here in the first place.

**Goal 1:** Implement coordinated economic development strategies that combine the resources of local governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and institutions to maintain and enhance the quality of life of Town.

a) Objective: Plan for sustainable economic development and not simply economic growth at the expense of local community and quality of life issues.

1. Strategy: Support economic development projects which increase the overall well-being of residents and maintain or enhance the quality of life of the community.
2. Strategy: Reference public input and surveys when considering what types of businesses to attract and how to make appropriate business resources available.
3. Strategy: Study the new options and formats for commercial uses that are currently in demand and could possibly be sustainable in Round Hill; such as pop-up retail spaces, flex spaces (or buildings), co-working spaces and micro-retail spaces.

b) Objective: Consider pursuing a series of detailed studies and master plans over the next four years focused on developing comprehensive economic development strategies for the two Town commercial districts, as well as the one Joint Land Management Area commercial district.

1. Strategy: Complete a Community Economic Analysis to examine local economic data and conditions to define Round Hill's needs, strengths, barriers, opportunities, readiness, and resources. The results can also be used to guide future land use and policy decisions.
2. Strategy: Complete a Parking Lot Study and Master Plan in order to consider opportunities for a town-owned Public Parking Lot, or a privately owned Public Parking Lot to stimulate the revitalization of downtown.

3. Strategy: Complete a Central Commercial District Study and Master Plan that will examine the commercial uses, public uses and public buildings around the Loudoun and Main Street intersection.
  4. Strategy: Complete an Arts, Culture and Creative Placemaking Study to identify new economic development opportunities and develop recommendations to include in a future Public Art Master Plan.
  5. Strategy: Complete a Round Hill Marketing Study to help the Town develop the brand that Round Hill wants to portray to residents, visitors and local entrepreneurs.
- c) Objective: Enhance and diversify the Town’s commercial tax base, while maintaining its historic character and quality of life, by supporting small-scale, appropriate and diverse commercial development.
1. Strategy: Ensure there is sufficient and suitable land area for economic activity by carefully considering land development applications that would reduce the amount of existing commercial zoned land.
  2. Strategy: Prevent lost opportunities to create a diversified commercial tax base by following best practices in sustainable planning for the Town’s economic future.
  3. Strategy: Implement methods to retain existing businesses and develop contingency plans for vacated business locations.
  4. Strategy: Consider amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to stimulate a quality local economy appropriate in scale and context for the Town.
- d) Objective: Provide residential property owners with options to utilize their residences for income generating purposes and for the greater economic benefit of the Town, as long as the rights of adjacent neighbors are considered in the development and administration of these options.
1. Strategy: Study and consider a permitting process to allow for a limited number of by-right Bed and Breakfast establishments.
  2. Strategy: Study and consider a permitting process to allow a limited number of residential property owners to rent out their homes as vacation houses.
  3. Strategy: Develop a permitting process to allow residents to choose a “Live-Work” option, as an alternative to home occupations, to increase 1) the percentage of the dwelling unit to be used for a business; 2) the public presence of a business; and 3) the number of arts-related businesses in Round Hill.

4. Strategy: Educate the public on the options available to have a home occupation in accordance with the current Zoning Ordinance.
5. Strategy: Support the use of residential dwelling units by child or adult care service providers.
6. Strategy: Encourage residents to operate a single-vehicle taxi or shuttle service as low-impact home occupation, in order to provide a needed-service for Appalachian Trail hikers as well as local seniors, disabled residents, and area vineyard customers.

**Goal 2: Focus revitalization efforts on the Central Commercial District, direct long-term economic development strategies towards the Eastern Commercial District and partner with the County to protect the Western Commercial District as a local asset.**

- a) Objective: Promote the benefits of investing in the revitalization of the Central Commercial District to improve the local quality of life and local economy.
  1. Strategy: Seek collaboration and cooperation with residents and business owners to revitalize the Central Commercial District.
  2. Strategy: Provide support to both new and existing local businesses through education, outreach and partnerships with County agencies.
  3. Strategy: Balance a strong, locally-based, and sustainable economy with the residents' desire to preserve the small town atmosphere.
  4. Strategy: Provide adequate, attractive and unobtrusive business opportunities to residents of the Greater Round Hill Area in order to encourage "home-grown" business start-ups that will continue the tradition of locally owned businesses.
- b) Objective: Welcome businesses to the Eastern Commercial District that will provide community gathering spaces, specialized services and regional attractions that add to the quality of life for residents and differentiate the Town's local economy from neighboring towns.
  1. Strategy: Protect the Eastern Commercial District as a valuable area to grow the Town commercial tax base with a variety of use possibilities and design scenarios.
  2. Strategy: Encourage the creation of unique commercial properties featuring a high concentration of cultural amenities that stimulate economic development and community revitalization.

3. Strategy: Set high standards and expectations for the 12-acre parcel located in the Eastern Commercial District, as it is the only raw undeveloped commercial parcel in Town.
4. Strategy: Encourage uses of Eastern Commercial District to be geared towards businesses that are considered community gathering places.
5. Strategy: Continue collaboration with the Loudoun County Design Cabinet to recommend a set of design guidelines and list of future uses for the Eastern Commercial District.

c) Objective: Work closely with the County to maintain a partnership with the owners and tenants of the commercial land in the Western Commercial District to maintain a unique historic commercial destination at the Western Gateway into Round Hill.

1. Strategy: Support the businesses located at the Hill High building to make them feel part of the Greater Round Hill community and the Town identity.
2. Strategy: Recognize the historic Hill High building as a local asset and tourist attraction that provides a unique destination for both residents and visitors.

**Goal 3: Develop affordable solutions to promote the identity of Town with distinct, recognizable elements and to enhance the image of Town as an enjoyable place to live, work and visit.**

a) Objective: Support a quality public streetscape environment and the creation of new spaces for people to rest or gather with friends and family.

1. Strategy: Coordinate with local organizations and local businesses to offer street life amenities and gathering places in public spaces, on a temporary or permanent basis
2. Strategy: Encourage property owners/tenants to utilize facades as recognizable street features that foster a memorable image and a sense of community
3. Strategy: Educate property owners/tenants on methods to improve the appearance of walls and gaps in the streetscape edge, in order to make the streetscape more active and beautiful.

b) Objective: Promote gardens and public art as mechanisms to beautify the town and to support more sustainable branding strategies in the future.

1. Strategy: Educate property owners/tenants on the benefits of gardens, planters and public art as cohesive design elements that can visually connect an array of public and private landscapes.

2. Strategy: Encourage gardens, planters and public art to be installed not only along public sidewalks or plazas, but also in street medians and shoulders, private patios and courtyards, building alcoves, and other public spaces.

**Goal 4: Promote the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the Greater Round Hill Area as marketable economic commodities that can provide an exceptional quality life for residents and a quality experience for visitors.**

- a) Objective: Utilize historic preservation efforts to aide and stimulate local economic development, encourage community revitalization and protect regional history, culture and pride.
  1. Strategy: Develop educational methods to increase public support for historic preservation as a tool for improving the overall quality of life of the community.
  2. Strategy: Work with Visit Loudoun to welcome heritage tourists to the Town.
  3. Strategy: Build upon the history of the Town as a vacation retreat by encouraging the development of Bed and Breakfast establishments.
  4. Strategy: Promote Town as a getaway destination, with the intent of increasing the frequency and duration of visitors to the Town.
- b) Objective: Promote the Town’s close proximity to nature, recreation and open space attractions of the Greater Round Hill Area as an important factor in choosing to open a small business in Town.
  1. Strategy: Continue marketing the Town to new businesses and residents as the “Gateway to the Blue Ridge Mountains.”
  2. Strategy: Incorporate the Appalachian Trail and Sleeter Lake Park into Round Hill’s marketing efforts.
  3. Strategy: Embrace the strategic location of Town among the scenic vineyards and farms of Western Loudoun County as part of Round Hill’s marketing efforts.
- c) Objective: Incorporate the greater Round Hill area arts and culture industry into long-term economic development strategy for Town.
  1. Strategy: Encourage the installation of small-scale art pieces throughout the Town and other art projects that promote the history, culture, and people of Round Hill

2. Strategy: Continue to promote the Loudoun County Art Studio Tour by residents of Round Hill
  3. Strategy: Continue to promote the Old Furniture Factory Blue Grass Jam music .
  4. Strategy: Develop a strong relationship with the Town's Sister City *Velence, Hungary* known as a lakeside resort community
  5. Strategy: Participate in the Loudoun County Artisan Trail.
- d) Objective: Foster community gathering experiences by partnering with public and private organizations to develop and support local festivals or programs at Town Parks and Commercial Districts.
1. Strategy: Conduct a feasibility study with cost estimates for constructing appropriate facilities at the new Town Park to be located on Greenwood Drive.
  2. Strategy: Consider reinstating a "Movies in the Park" summer series at a town park with the help of local community partners.
  3. Strategy: Continue to provide support to the Hometown Festival as the signature Round Hill community festival.