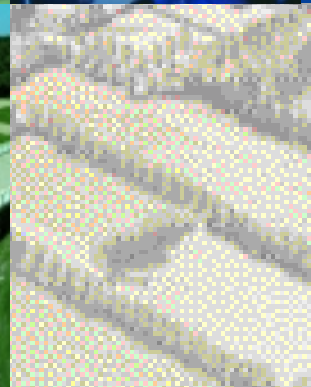


CROSSROADS

Addressing Conservation Issues in the Economic Development Process in Virginia



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Is For Business

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The Crossroads Workbook is a work in progress. We welcome further recommendations for improvement and hope to add new success stories from throughout the Commonwealth.

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INTRODUCTION

The economic development process at the local and regional level in Virginia has, on occasion, conflicted with environmental and community interests. These conflicts can often be avoided or resolved if processes are in place to address the issues early and if there is an open dialogue with various community and environmental groups on economic development strategies.

The goal of this initiative, Crossroads: Addressing Conservation Issues in the Economic Development Process, is to broaden the understanding among local and regional economic development staff of the methods that can be used to include a broad range of environmental and community interests in the economic development process.

The Crossroads Workbook is designed to give staff a sense of what has worked well in other Virginia communities. It aims to help others recognize, avoid or work through situations in which economic development activities might clash with environmental or community values.

By improving communications and understanding of conservation interests in the Commonwealth, economic development staff should be able to avoid costly delays or the outright rejection of new projects in their regions.

Success will depend on the ability to answer the following questions:

- What are the greatest concerns of local residents committed to conservation, the environment, historic preservation, neighborhood revitalization and other related community interests?
- What is the character and nature of development that will be acceptable to these stakeholders?
- What research is needed to ensure that a proposed industrial site is suitable and compatible with community values?
- How can we determine if a new business can be compatible with the community's values and how do we work through the community's questions about the business?

To start, consider the approaches used by the communities in the following case studies. More specific tools are included in the chapter that follows. We hope you find Crossroads a useful step toward increased understanding with and among the conservation interests in your community.

COMPATIBLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: VIRGINIA'S EASTERN SHORE

A QUESTION OF BIRDS

ProVENTO, a German manufacturer of wind-powered electric turbines, contacted Northampton County officials in 2000 about building a \$7.5 million demonstration facility at the Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park. The company looked like an ideal tenant for an industrial park that promotes alternative energy and zero-emission manufacturing.

But County Administrator Lance Metzler was concerned about the impacts of the turbine blades on the region's internationally-recognized migratory birds. The Eastern Shore provides critical habitat to dozens of songbird and raptor species, which support an increasingly profitable eco-tourism industry in spring and fall.

Mr. Metzler introduced company officials to John Hall, executive director of The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve project on the Eastern Shore. In all, Mr. Hall ended up hosting six meetings with the German firm, including a visit from the company president and CEO.

As a result, when a Northampton County delegation visited the German plant in January 2001, they brought along an unusual specialist for this sort of trade visit - an ornithologist who had studied birds for three years on the Shore. She determined that modern wind turbines turn so slowly, they pose little threat to migrating birds.

Within three months, county and company officials were celebrating the company's plans to build six turbines on the technology park's 200 acres by 2002. What might have escalated into a confrontation between local environmentalists and economic development professionals was handled instead in a low-key, matter-of-fact manner.

This easy partnership evolved from a 10-year effort to pursue compatible economic development on the Eastern Shore. A variety of initiatives that engaged diverse stakeholders in all steps of the process created a strong awareness, understanding and approval of economic development priorities throughout the community.

A SOURCE OF CONFLICT

The Eastern Shore has long prospered from its natural resources. The Shore boasts a world-class coastal ecosystem, the last undeveloped coastal wilderness on the Eastern Seaboard, extraordinarily productive waters and farm land, and a tightly knit community distinguished by its unique towns and villages.

These assets - lost to so many other coastal places - are still intact because Shore residents are determined to protect their natural, cultural and historic resources as they seek to strengthen their rural economy. But the Shore also suffers from a high poverty rate, low median income and widespread substandard housing, brought on in the past two decades by the collapse of the farm and seafood industries.

Residents and elected officials faced their first challenge in the early 1990's with two proposals for economic development brought in from outside the community. The first was a maximum-security state prison to be located beside the very poor African-American community of Bayview in Northampton County. The second was a treatment and remediation plant for contaminated soil shipped in from northern states, also in Northampton County.

Proponents made many promises about the benefits of the proposals, from new jobs to increased tax revenue. But Shore residents banded together to learn more about the real impacts the facilities would have on their water supply, social institutions, economy and quality of life.

They organized an unprecedented coalition of Eastern Shore individuals, organizations and businesses, including realtors, retailers, environmental groups, farmers and retirees. After months of intensive study and public debate, the Northampton County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject the prison proposal.

Local government also submitted an exhaustive list of questions regarding potential environmental impacts to the firm proposing the soil treatment plant. Plans for the plant were abandoned.

BALANCING COMMUNITY, ECONOMY & THE ENVIRONMENT

Local leadership then turned its attention to developing a plan for economic development that would be acceptable to the community. To do so, they took an entirely new approach to crafting economic development strategies.

A series of planning initiatives were launched, recruiting stakeholders from all segments of the Shore. The forums addressed a host of issues along with economic development - community development, rural character, affordable housing, environmental quality, agriculture and aquaculture, education, historic preservation, and local culture.

There was a shared commitment to strategies that meet the special needs of the community, strengthen the local economy and protect the Shore's outstanding environment and high quality of life. Shore residents would not accept economic development that comes with a cost to the community or the environment.

By 1996, four major planning efforts were complete: the Willis Wharf Vision Forum, the Northampton Economic Forum, the Northampton County Sustainable Development Action Strategy and the Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park Strategic Plan. A strong regional economic development group was formed, the Eastern Shore Regional Partnership, and a host of new projects launched.

COMPATIBLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Eastern Shore's six economic priorities are agriculture, seafood/aquaculture, heritage tourism, arts/crafts/local products, research/education and new industry. In each of these sectors, strategies seek to enhance natural assets, add value to Shore commodities, rebuild flagging sectors, encourage export rather than import, provide for living-wage career opportunities for the underemployed and preserve the resources that support tourism and a high quality of life.

The targeted sectors reflect the community's broad consensus that prosperity must come within, by building upon existing strengths, fostering entrepreneurs and encouraging private investment. The community believes that by guarding their natural resources and their high quality of life, they can attract new businesses and low-impact, high-value tourism.

Real progress is evident. Unemployment in 2000 dropped as low as 1.9 percent and now ranges from two to four percent. Median income still lags far behind the state, but is slowly rising. Local leaders estimate that the

region's emphasis on compatible development has generated \$30 million in new public and private investment in the Eastern Shore in the past eight years. Some success stories include:

HARD CLAM AQUACULTURE

Sales of cultured clams soared from less than \$1 million per year in 1991 to more than \$15 million in 2000, with a local economic impact of more than \$40 million. One grower estimates that one-acre of clam beds generates an average of \$65,000 to \$75,000 per year.

The industry is a major source of employment, supporting about 350 to 400 jobs. Specifics are hard to come by, as a license is not needed and many watermen buy clam seed and grow clams independently. One of the largest firms, Cherrystone AquaFarms, generated a \$4 million payroll for 100 employees and cooperative members in Northampton County in 2000.

Clam aquaculture is celebrated as a shining example of compatible development on the Shore. It demands clean coastal waters and offers a profitable option to watermen following the crash in blue crab and finfish stocks.

AGRICULTURE & SEAFOOD

Agriculture accounts for nearly 65 percent of economic activity on the Shore, despite depressed prices caused by national and international competition. The Eastern Shore Farmers Market handled 5.5 million packages of produce in 2000, with a wholesale value of about \$32 million, about half of all produce grown on the Shore, which is the top grower of produce in the state.

Wholesale seafood storage and distribution facilities are planned for the Eastern Shore Farmers Market by 2002. The facilities will provide the infrastructure necessary for the Shore's watermen to meet new FDA regulations on handling seafood and will provide improved marketing support.

NATURE & HERITAGE TOURISM

Tourism represents a \$95 million industry on the Eastern Shore, with Chincoteague and the Assateague National Seashore drawing more than 1.5 million visitors a year. In Accomack County, the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge plans to build a new \$10 million education and administration center. Planning also is underway for a \$3.75 million reconstruction of the famous Wachapreague Hotel, with conference facilities and a restaurant.

In Northampton County, the Virginia Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge and its \$1 million visitor's center and Kiptopeke State Park anchor the southern tip. The Northampton County Heritage Trail used a \$740,000 US DOT grant to restore the historic Eastville Inn as a visitor's center and the Nassawadox Steam Powered Sawmill as a Heritage Trail Museum. The Eastern Shore Birding Festival, held at the height of the fall migration and based in Cape Charles, generated \$52,000 in visitor spending its first year, then doubled that to \$112,000 the second year and continues to grow.

STRONG ENTREPRENEURS

New Ravenna, a producer of tile mosaics in Exmore, was named by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce as one of the state's 50 fastest growing companies in 2000. The company's revenues grew 72 percent over four years. It employs about 110 residents.

Bay Beyond, Inc., a specialty foods company in Melfa, was named one of the 50 fastest growing companies in 1999 and company president Pam Barefoot was named the Virginia Small Business Person of the Year and the Virginia Small Business Exporter of the Year. With more than \$2.5 million in sales in 2000, Bay Beyond employs from 25 to 30 people.

The Eastern Shore Regional Partnership is promoting an e-commerce initiative to link entrepreneurs and their products with each other and international markets through the internet.

THE RESEARCH SECTOR

The Eastern Shore contains the last undeveloped coastal wilderness left on the crowded Atlantic Coast, which provides unparalleled research opportunities. The \$7.5 million investment in the University of Virginia's Long Term Ecological Research Center in Oyster since 1987 has generated an additional \$10 million in other research-related spending. The center plans to build a \$2.5 million state-of-the-art laboratory in Oyster. The Nature Conservancy spent \$3 million to renovate the Cobb Island Station in Oyster for use as an educational center. In Accomack County, the Marine Science Consortium, a group of 18 universities, operates an educational facility that hosts about 6,000 college and high school students each year.

VIRGINIA SPACE FLIGHT CENTER

An economic anchor for the northern end of the Shore, the Virginia Space Flight Center on Wallops Island rents or leases equipment from the government to support private rocket launches. NASA has staged rocket launches at Wallops for 50 years and is the fourth largest employer in the region, with 750 employees. The Space Flight Center is expected to attract other high tech businesses and is the base for the Virginia Spaceflight Academy, a summer camp and tourism magnet.

CAPE CHARLES SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGY PARK

Designed with much citizen involvement as an economic anchor for the southern end of the Shore, the park demonstrates that industry can be compatible with the sensitive coastal environment. The 200-acre, \$5 million facility was selected in 2000 as one of only 12 national Brownfields Showcase Facilities, which earned a \$400,000 federal support grant. It is also a showcase for innovative water treatment facilities.

NEW BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

Eastern Shore Composites purchased a former vegetable canning plant in Cheriton in 1999 to convert into a manufacturing plant for power catamaran boats and fiberglass containers. The company plans to make a \$2.5 to \$3 million investment in buildings, equipment and working capital and to hire up to 70 people when the plant is fully operating.

Clearwater Sprinkler Company, which designs and installs fire suppression systems, purchased a site in the Accomack Airport Industrial Park in 1999 to construct an expansion facility and hire about five employees.

Solar Building Systems, a Swiss manufacturer of solar panels, was attracted by the Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park in 1995. As the park was still in the planning stages, the firm adapted a former school building near Exmore and employs 30 in manufacturing.

ACHIEVING A NEW VISION OF PROGRESS

The Eastern Shore's integrated approach to economic development is firmly woven into community life. Representative of the Chamber of Commerce, Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park and Eastern Shore Regional Partnership are in very regular communication with their counterparts at The Nature Conservancy, Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, Bayview Citizens for Social Justice, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory.

Members of conservation organizations actively promote the region's goals for economic development. A grassroots citizen's coalition, WE Decide, outlined its core values for public meetings in April, 2001. Compatible economic development lies at the heart of these values:

- We want to remain rural.
- We want our agriculture, aquaculture and commercial fishing industries to remain strong and healthy parts of our local economy.
- We want to improve educational, economic and housing opportunities for our residents.
- We want to preserve our natural resources, our wildlife, our water and our unique coastal wilderness.
- We want to enhance and encourage the vitality of our rural villages and retain the unique character of our towns.
- We want to promote low-impact tourism that will not erode our greatest assets, namely our world class coastal ecosystem and the rich history of our communities.
- We want our community to pursue compatible economic development that will add value to Shore commodities, protect and enhance our assets, encourage export, provide living wage career opportunities for our residents, rebuild flagging sectors, and preserve the resources that support tourism and quality of life.

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Local leaders recently offered some conclusions from their nearly 10-year effort to pursue compatible economic development on the Eastern Shore.

"You should always do what makes sense for local people in local places," said Timothy E. Hayes, hired in the early 1990's as Northampton County's director of sustainable development. "You need to let the community lead and set the direction on economic issues."

"Know when to say 'no'," said Denard Spady, director of Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, an advocacy group concerned with the impact of new development on the region. He said, "It's not just one factory or one new industrial park. The critical decisions for the future of the community will be based on what you say 'no' to."

Both leaders said every proposal must be measured against the community's vision of compatibility. Does the project, business or proposal meet the needs of the community, strengthen the local economy and protect the environment and quality of life?

On the Eastern Shore, the strong ties among very different stakeholders and the widely-shared vision of the region's economic priorities make it a lot easier to answer that question.

AVTEX SUPERFUND REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT: FRONT ROYAL-WARREN COUNTY

By Stephen Heavener,

Executive Director, Front Royal-Warren County Economic Development Authority

For nearly 50 years, the 500-acre Avtex Fibers plant in Front Royal employed more than 2,500 people to manufacture rayon, polyester and polypropylene fibers for commercial, defense and space industries. Declared a national Superfund site for persistent severe environmental violations in 1986, the owner declared bankruptcy and closed the plant three years later.

The closure left thousands unemployed and destroyed the manufacturing heritage of the community. Nearly 50 percent of the working population in Warren County now leave the county to find employment in Winchester, northern Virginia and Washington, D.C.

To reverse this drain of resources, both Front Royal and Warren County began working extensively at the grass roots level to increase funding for their economic development efforts. A fundamental component of the economic development strategy is to recruit companies that create locally based jobs for the existing residential population. The process involves extensive community participation.

REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Front Royal and Warren County invested nearly \$10 million in the development of five industrial parks to attract major manufacturers. Supporting infrastructure included the construction of a one-million-gallon elevated water tank, installation of distribution lines from the tank to the industrial parks, installation of sanitary sewer distribution lines, construction of rail sidings and road development.

As a direct result of the public investment, the community attracted more than \$180 million in new industrial investment from international and domestic companies by the end of 2000. Recent or ongoing projects include:

- 1995, Pen-Tab Industries, \$10 million invested, 250 jobs created
(This company was acquired by Mead Corporation in early 2001.)
- 1996, Toray Plastics America, \$61 million invested, 120 jobs created
- 1997, Family Dollar Services, \$50 million invested, 525 jobs created
- 1998, Ferguson Enterprises, \$26 million invested, 190 jobs created
- 2000, Bering Truck Corporation, \$25 million invested, 150 jobs created

The new companies created more than 1,000 new jobs. While not all of the jobs have been filled by Warren County residents, the new industries helped to reduce the number of residents commuting out of the county.

As the development of industrial parks began to revitalize the local economy, the community paid a price in the loss of open space. The local Economic Development Authority had purchased four undeveloped farms north of Front Royal for development as industrial parks. The parks consumed nearly 700 acres of open space.

Based on continuing economic activity, officials expect that the land in the five existing parks will be absorbed by new industry by 2006. Faced with the loss of additional open space to accommodate the growing demand for industrial space, the community looked to the redevelopment of the Avtex Fibers site.

The site also meets other needs. Existing industrial parks were designed for traditional manufacturers and do not offer the facilities demanded by the evolving technology-based sector. The Avtex site is ideally suited to provide space and facilities for technology companies and other service providers seeking mixed-use office space. The Avtex site enjoys the added benefit of being located close to the many business support services available in downtown Front Royal.

AVTEX: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In 1998, the Economic Development Authority, Front Royal and Warren County determined that, following environmental clean-up and building demolition, the Avtex site should be positioned as the next major business park in the community. They also committed to using a comprehensive intergovernmental, environmentally sensitive approach to developing the park, with a clear vision drawn from diverse stakeholders throughout the community.

Local officials, along with site owner FMC Corporation, engaged North American Realty Advisory Services (NARAS) to prepare a comprehensive plan for the site's redevelopment and reuse. The partners invested \$175,000 in the study.

An eight-month public participation process resulted in a vision and master plan for a mixed-use project featuring commercial, light industrial, office and hotel space, as well as open space and wildlife habitat. The vision calls on the new business park to:

- Provide the ideal location and resources needed by technology companies.
- Create long-term employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed residents who live in adjacent low-income neighborhoods, as well as other members of the community.
- Attract 2,500 new jobs to the new business park and create several hundred construction jobs in its development.
- Attract \$100 million in investment dollars to the community.
- Preserve the land along the Shenandoah River as open space, to give residents access to the river, serve as a wildlife corridor and provide a buffer zone for upland run-off.

The vision has been refined since 1998, but it provided a critical strength in securing various public and private sector funding. Without the community-created vision, it would have been impossible to gain the local political support to move forward.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS GROUP PROCESS

Utilizing the "Standard Guide to the Process of Sustainable Brownfields Development," created by the American Society of Testing and Materials, the Front Royal community continued, in a more formalized man-

ner, to involve various stakeholders in the development of the future use plans for the site. The standard is a flexible and adaptable framework that provides a mechanism to move the process forward using a variety of community development and design techniques crafted to ensure that all major components of the redevelopment process are considered. The process actively engages property owners, developers, government agencies and the community in conducting economic evaluation, design and re-use plans for the project.

Since the overall vision and master plan were adopted in the spring of 1998, specific development plans evolved using the Multi-Stakeholders Group (MSG) process. From the fall of 1999 to the spring of 2000, eight MSG meetings were held to prepare a plan for the 240-acre Conservancy Park.

This portion of the Avtex site, which suffers the most environmental damage, will be restored for use as a wildlife refuge, wetlands area and riverfront park for passive recreation.

The MSG process also is being used to create the 165-acre business park. The Economic Development Authority determined that the new business park would be a "green" or "eco-park." The project will start with the renovation of the historic, 14,000-square-foot administration building, which will be done in conformance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitating historic structures.

The restoration will demonstrate "green" standard for the development of the rest of the business park. Sustainable and renewable strategies for the project will include natural lighting, a solar electrical system, a geothermal HVAC system, low emission paints and finishes, low water landscaping and other techniques. Once systems have been installed and evaluated in the office building, design standards and covenants will be developed for the entire business park.

Finally, the Avtex site is the first pilot project to recycle a Superfund site for recreational uses, under a new Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Soccer Foundation program. The community is working closely with the soccer foundation to design and build seven soccer fields on 31 acres. Construction on the Front Royal-Warren County Soccer Complex should begin late in 2001.

Lessons Learned at Avtex

VISION & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The community must have a vision for the re-use of the Superfund site. The vision must be created by a broad base of stakeholders and must be championed by local elected officials. The vision lends credibility to all development-related efforts and proves to potential funding sources that the community is unified in its redevelopment efforts. Funding sources want to align themselves with and participate in projects that will actually happen. The allocation of scarce resources must show measurable results.

PARTNERSHIPS/INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Most Superfund sites are complex. Resources need to be secured from a variety of private, local, state and federal sources to successfully manage redevelopment. Efforts must be made to assemble an intergovernmental team of officials that meet regularly to evaluate project needs.

In the case of the Avtex project, the PRP (primary responsible party) was the property owner, FMC

Corporation. The company allocated substantial human and capital resources to assist the community with its redevelop efforts, far beyond those required by the mandated consent decree. In turn, the Economic Development Authority was able to buy the site from the bankruptcy trustee. This project is a national demonstration of inter-governmental and private sector cooperation.

NON-TRADITIONAL DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES

Finally, jobs can be created, taxes generated and wealth created using non-traditional development techniques. The Economic Development Authority has traditionally acquired vacant farmland and developed traditional single-use industrial parks.

The opportunities associated with green and eco-industrial techniques broadened the potential for success. Staff became actively involved in various organizations to strengthen their knowledge base. These include the Eco-Industrial Roundtable sponsored by the Work and Environment Initiative at Cornell University, the Smart Growth Network, The Congress for New Urbanism, the Green Building Council and the EPA Brownfields Conference.

New and evolving companies, particularly technology companies migrating from Northern Virginia westward to the Shenandoah Valley, have exhibited a desire to locate and invest in non-traditional, energy efficient, and environmentally sensitive facilities. The Economic Development Authority's marketing efforts will focus on the uniqueness of the site and buildings when the eco-park development commences.

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STONEHOUSE COMMERCE PARK: JAMES CITY COUNTY

A HOME RUN

In January 2000, four state and regional economic development agencies working on the Virginia Peninsula hit the equivalent of a home run.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Peninsula Alliance for Economic Development, James City County and the county's Industrial Development Authority convinced the John Deere Company to locate a \$30 million research, development and manufacturing facility in the Stonehouse Commerce Park in Toano. The company is the world's leading maker of equipment for agriculture, forestry, construction and public works.

The industrial park in James City County beat others in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to land the John Deere Vehicle Group. The company purchased 75 acres to construct a 300,000-square-foot building to house manufacturing, as well as research, development and marketing for the company's line of Gator utility vehicles. The facility will employ more than 300 people at full capacity.

The celebration had barely subsided when John Deere announced plans six months later to build a \$12.5 million addition to house a paint facility. The new structure should add another 25 jobs to the John Deere payroll.

How did the Stonehouse Commerce Park manage to lure such a prize manufacturer, when communities throughout Virginia are struggling to attract attention? Stonehouse's success stems from some important site characteristics, some very intensive planning and an effort to help new tenants picture themselves in the park.

SITE ADVANTAGES

Stonehouse Commerce Park enjoys an outstanding location, bounded by I-64 and Route 30, about 12 miles northwest of Williamsburg. The 229-acre, master-planned park is part of a 7,200-acre, mixed-used planned community that includes research centers, light industry, shops, homes, parks and a golf course.

"It gives industrial leaders a comfort level when they are in close proximity to an upscale development with many amenities," said Robert "Dick" Brake, former project manager for the Chesapeake Corp., the Stonehouse developer. "You don't see that very often, where you can live a mile from where you work" he added.

Stonehouse Commerce Park recruits light manufacturing, laboratory, warehousing, assembly, research and development plants that will produce little noise, emissions or other impacts on the nearby community. Architectural and signage covenants ensure upscale design and maintenance doesn't look out of place near new homes and shops.

"It's completely surrounded by highway and it's all nice, clean industry, so it can be co-located with other uses really well," said Steve Campitell, engineering and construction manager for Stonehouse Inc. and Delmarva Properties, wholly-owned subsidiaries of Chesapeake Corp.

Stonehouse also is fully serviced with all utilities, including telecommunications. "You can't market a green field with nothing on it," Mr. Campitell said.

GOOD PLANNING

Chesapeake Corp. spent years developing the Stonehouse new town concept and mapping the resources on the property to preserve the elements of the high quality of life on the Virginia Peninsula. An emphasis was placed on preservation of natural settings.

"We had a 2,000-acre block of forest land on the York River and in the early 1970's, we saw where I-64 was going to go," Mr. Brake said. He said the company started buying land up to the highway interchange as it began to plan the mixed-use site.

Chesapeake Corp. completed exhaustive inventories of the resources on the land, including archeological surveys, soil surveys, a vegetation inventory, wetlands delineation and two transportation plans. When federal regulators rejected plans for a reservoir, the company spent \$2 million to dig wells to ensure there was adequate groundwater. The company also held informational meetings for the public and county staff.

"All of the studies that went to the county when we started the rezoning process were probably four feet in height," Mr. Brake said. "They wanted 15 copies of everything, so we needed a U-Haul truck to bring them in."

As a result, there was little controversy over the design of the project. "Overall, the process went very smoothly. The biggest issue was the question of size, but it is a 25-year-project and doesn't look too big over that time frame," Mr. Brake said.

A PICTURE FOR PROSPECTS

Chesapeake Corp. also recognized the need to give prospective tenants a picture of what it would be like to do business in the Stonehouse Commerce Park. "We built an extensive entrance and two-lane road to give a visual sense of what would be there," said Mr. Campitell.

The developer also sold land at a reduced price to the James City County Industrial Development Authority for construction of a shell building. "BP Solarex saw the building and became our first investor," he added.

Mr. Brake recalled, "We worked really closely with James City's economic development people. We cooperated with them in building the shell building and it became an integral part of the project's success. We just filled up the park with other buildings."

The Industrial Development Authority estimates that the 60,000-square-foot shell building, built in 1995, helped attract nearly 500,000-square-feet of new under-roof industrial space, more than 600 new jobs and capital investment totaling more than \$75 million. Along with the John Deere plant, Stonehouse industrial tenants include:

- BP Solarex, the world's largest manufacturer of solar panels, opened an 80,000-square-foot facility in 1996. The company also is buying the county's shell building for \$2.4 million to house a Think Film Solar Energy World Center of Excellence.
- Design Master Associates designs and oversees the manufacture of custom gift shop items for major museums in the U.S. and Europe. It invested \$1.8 million in a new 40,000-square-foot-building, with total employment of 40.

- AVID Medical, a leading supplier of health care products and delivery systems, initially built a 30,000-square-foot building, then added an additional 30,000-square-foot structure.
- The Barre Company, a full-service sheet metal manufacturer, build a 40,000-square-foot building.

Mr. Campitell said that, in the five years since the first phase of the commerce park was officially opened, two-thirds of the 150 acres of net developable land has been sold. Planning is underway to open phase two.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The broad success of the Stonehouse Commerce Park extends beyond good site characteristics, planning and marketing, according to its developers. There are some lessons learned at Stonehouse that would work for other communities.

"First, you've got to own the right piece of land in the right place," said Mr. Brake. "Then, it's got to be a team effort with the local government and the developer."

He said it was particularly important to anticipate issues or questions before they arise and cause controversy. In this case, archeological and water resources were important issues. "You've got to guess what they are going to ask you and have that information documented by third parties," Mr. Brake said.

Mr. Campitell encouraged the use of design standards and architectural and site guidelines "to bring a more upscale appearance and materials" to an industrial park. He noted that the Stonehouse park's close proximity to other land uses, notably residential areas and a golf course, required a high visual standard for industrial land uses.

Part of our nation's first colony, James City County calls itself "the birthplace of business in America nearly 400 years ago." At Stonehouse Commerce Park, the county demonstrates that new business facilities can thrive alongside new homes in a well-chosen, well-designed setting.

COMMUNITY CONSENSUS COALITION: WINCHESTER-FREDERICK COUNTY

A TIDAL WAVE

When Cardinal Glass FG selected a 75-acre industrial site in Frederick County in 1997, it looked like another winning prospect for the busy Winchester/Frederick County economic development team. The Wisconsin-based company planned to build a 350,000-square-foot facility to make coated glass for windows and employ up to 200 people at the site between I-81 and US Route 11.

But the company needed a permit to emit sulfur dioxide, sulfur oxide and nitrous oxide emissions. Public outcry at the required public hearings "broke on us like a tidal wave. It just cut loose," recalled Khris Tierney, Frederick County's assistant county administrator.

Residents objected to new emissions that might further degrade air quality at nearby Shenandoah National Park. Cardinal Glass cancelled its plans to build in the valley.

Almost a year-to-the-day later, the New England-based H.P. Hood dairy processing company landed on the same site. Hood announced plans to invest \$100 million in a 265,000-square-foot plant and employ 150 area residents to make extended shelf-life beverages for the Hood, Land O'Lakes, Nestle and Lactaid brands.

There was little, if any reaction from the local community until the public celebration at the opening of the new plant in October 2000. Today, the H.P Hood plant is viewed as an enormous plus for the community.

Community leaders admit they weren't ready for the outcry over the previous proposal for the property. "We weren't prepared to defend it. We had no public relations program to deal with it," Mr. Tierney said.

They didn't want to endure a similar public battle in the future. So a few local leaders decided it was time to bring a diverse group of interests together to think about issues of growth and development confronting the region.

FORGING A COALITION

The organizers of what would become the Winchester-Frederick County Community Consensus Coalition had a precedent on which to build. The two localities completed a regional visioning process from 1989 to 1991 known as the 2020 Vision Project, which outlined the need for an ongoing, city-county group to provide information and act as a liaison for local governments and community interests. The group had never been formed.

The Community Consensus Coalition decided to fill that niche. It organized as "a consortium of organizations which seeks to create a collaborative, broadly-based vision for dealing with the variety of pressures currently affecting our community and its potential future viability," according to the coalition's mission statement.

From the first meeting in summer 1999, the Coalition has grown to represent more than 3,300 citizens through participation by 17 different organizations. The coalition's list of members demonstrate the breadth of its support:

- Blue Ridge Board of Realtors
- Frederick County Farm Bureau
- Frederick County Fruit Growers Association

- The Friends of the Shenandoah River
- The Historic Resources Advisory Board
- Industrial Parks Association
- The Marsh Institute, Shenandoah University
- The Opequon Watershed
- Preservation of Historic Winchester
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation
- Shenandoah Valley Manufacturers Association
- Stephens City Town Council
- Top of Virginia Builders Association
- Valley Conservation Council
- Vision Forum: To 2020 & Beyond
- Winchester-Frederick County Chamber of Commerce
- Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission
- Winchester-Frederick County Water & Sewer Citizens Group

"We wanted to create a system where we could educate ourselves about our different interests," said founding member Steve Bauserman, a Winchester city councilman. "We knew that the more educated the community is, the more we can avoid a crisis," like the battle over Cardinal Glass.

As a first step, the coalition made plans for community forums on three pressing issues; growth, water and regional planning. To guide these forums and the coalition's work, it adopted a set of guiding principles:

- 1) The Community Consensus Coalition will endeavor to come to consensus with expert opinions on issues of importance to our community.
- 2) Positions will be developed cooperatively and will be acceptable enough so that all stakeholders can support them without compromising issues of fundamental importance.
- 3) It is understood that consensus is not unanimity or a panacea but rather the development of adequate support so that a decision is seen as legitimate and able to be implemented successfully.
- 4) It is understood that member organizations retain their individual identity and, as such, the right to chart their own course on issues of importance to the organization.
- 5) It is reasonable to expect that member organizations will notify the CCC in advance when an announcement is anticipated on key issues under consideration by CCC.

THE WATER FORUM

The coalition addressed water issues in a town-meeting style forum on January 13, 2000 at Shenandoah University. It was acknowledged that the region faces short-term and long-range issues regarding the sustainability and quality of its water resources. Speakers included local utility and sanitation authority directors, an expert on groundwater supplies, and a consultant hired by local governments to study the feasibility of a consolidated water system. The group studied water resources, management and strategic planning already underway.

The coalition's consensus-building principles are reflected in the final recommendations in the Water Resources Management Position Paper. These include:

- Formulate and implement a strategic plan based on growth models for the regional water supply.
- Complete minimum in-stream flow studies of the Shenandoah River system.
- Conduct a hydrogeologic study of groundwater.
- Assess the need to store water, such as a local reservoir.

The coalition also agreed to take responsibility for several actions, including:

- Participate in the planning and implementation of the water supply recommendations.
- Support the formation of a Regional Advisory Board for Natural Resources, to provide information to government and the private sector.
- Continue to educate and share information through planning workshops, forums and other venues with regional partners.

BUILDING TRUST

As the coalition brings diverse interests together to consider public policy issues, it also serves to forge relationships among very different stakeholders. Most had little opportunity to discuss their perspectives together, outside of situations of conflict.

"It has been amazing to watch how well the groups have been able to interact," said Jim Vickers, a member of the Top of Virginia Builders Association. Mr. Vickers hosted a small lunch in March to introduce representatives of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to members of the coalition board.

"One of the bonuses has been the dialogue," agreed Barbara VanOsten of the 2020 Vision Forum. "The coalition has evolved. Learning to trust one another has been a real benefit."

Now the coalition is working to convince other community leaders, including some board members of the organizations they represent, that consensus offers a better option for local planning and communication. "One of the challenges we have is to help our members get over the idea that if you get involved in dialogue, you lose something," said Jim Lawrence, who represents the Opequon Watershed.

"A real turning point was the water resources meeting and the position paper," Mr. Lawrence said. "We had experts that people could agree on. Our government officials supported us. We were able to come to consensus on some meaningful steps for the future."

Mr. Tierney, assistant county administrator, said an organization like the Community Consensus Coalition may one day forestall battles like the one over the Cardinal Glass plant. "We hope that CCC can become a mechanism for hosting a dialogue among all the sectors of the community," he said.

"The barrier has been the sense of trust, the fear that if you make that phone call, if you reach out, it will blow

up in your face," Mr. Tierney added. Mr. Vickers, of the builders association, agreed. "That trust has definitely developed over the time we've been together."

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

At lunch in Winchester in March, the half-dozen members of the Community Consensus Coalition agreed on the advice they would give other communities in pursuit of greater understanding and trust when confronting development issues:

- Start talking before you are confronted with divisive issues.
- The core group must be broad enough so one interest does not dominate.
- Be swift to address a negative situation.
- Don't get too distracted if pitched battles do occur.
- Generate early success (like the water resources position paper).
- Build implementation into the process.

PORTSMOUTH VISION 2005

Portsmouth Vision 2005, the city's long-term strategic plan for community and economic development, brings citizens and community leaders together to share their ideas for the future of Portsmouth. The process has led to improvements in neighborhood quality, fiscal strength and economic activity.

Assisted by Urban Design Associates, Portsmouth Vision 2005 first organized a committee of citizen leaders, who enlisted the support of others in the community. They held many group discussions before identifying initiatives to address historic and future development.

Strategic planning began in four sections of Portsmouth: Effingham/Elm/Ida Barbour, Midtown, Downtown and Scotts Creek. Each initiative is represented in the daily decision-making at City Hall by a City Council member and by staff from various city departments.

The process incorporates all levels of decision-making. As citizens gain neighborhood support for an idea, they bring it to their neighborhood committee for additional discussion and technical assistance. Each committee's City Council representative then carries the idea to the Mayor's Vision 2005 Steering Committee and on to City Council meetings.

Some projects completed through the Portsmouth Vision 2005 include:

- A retail survey to aid in restructuring the Midtown economy.
- Plans to locate a housing complex in the Cottage Place neighborhood.
- An assessment of the economic benefits of a Main Street program in the Cradock neighborhood.

Portsmouth Vision 2005 measures progress in terms of the quality of community life, as well as traditional economic indicators. Quality improvements are seen in the increasing numbers of citizens participating in community planning and in requests from other community groups and neighborhoods to run their development plans through the Vision 2005 process.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Portsmouth Vision Process permits a groundswell of support to carry a proposal from an idea to a full-blown project. Priorities and projects are generated in neighborhoods, rather than directed from the outside. There is little likelihood of misjudging the community's wishes when the proposals come from grassroots sources.

MCSEED: Mathews County Sustainable Environment & Economic Development

Mathews County, home to less than 10,000 people, is one of the smallest counties in Virginia. But it enjoys the state's longest coastline, as a half-dozen rivers pass through Mathews to meet the Chesapeake Bay. The county's rich history of farming and fishing contributes much to its character today.

Located at the tip of the Middle Peninsula, there is little to draw businesses or visitors to Mathews County outside of the summer tourist season. The county does not have any professional economic development staff and shares the services of the regional economic partnership, Virginia's River County.

In the mid-1990's, Mathews residents decided to pursue economic development on their own. Mathews Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce attracted more than 150 citizens to create a vision for the future of the downtown area. That effort led to the opening of a Mathews Visitor's Center across from the courthouse square and the renovation of numerous commercial buildings.

Two years later, a countywide initiative was launched based on the Pathways model for compatible economic development developed by The Nature Conservancy. Through the citizen-led MCSEED (Mathews County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development), nearly 200 residents completed the steps outlined by Pathways:

- Organize a broadly-based group that represents many community interests in Mathews.
- Complete rapid assessments of the Mathews community, economy and environment.
- Determine the critical threats and special strengths of Mathews County.
- Create a vision for the future of Mathews County.
- Select strategies to address the threats, build on the strengths and achieve the vision.
- Write action plans for the primary strategies selected by the community.
- Pursue the action plans.

By 2001, MCSEED working committees successfully completed or made progress on five core strategies and associated projects. These include:

- Promote nature and heritage tourism through the publication of a guide to local waterways and canoe or kayak facilities, and with the launch of an eco-tour kayak rental and trekking business.
- Pursue appropriate development of Mathews County and the downtown through the launch of a farmers' and watermens' market on the courthouse square.
- Develop an assisted living retirement facility in Mathews.
- Pursue new business services and compatible development by establishing a local business directory supported by a website, and through an information kiosk at the Mathews Visitors Center.
- Develop initiatives for funding community projects, starting with the launch of a community foundation.

A third community collaboration, called the Mathews Action Plan, was held on April 7, 2001 with an important new partner. Mathews County government joined Mathews Main Street and MCSEED in sponsoring a community forum to inspire a new phase of work in compatible economic development and county planning.

A month earlier, the Mathews County supervisors at their yearly retreat added the pursuit of compatible economic development to their top priorities. Two weeks later, county supervisors, the county administrator and representatives of the citizens groups toured Virginia's Eastern Shore to gain inspiration for their planning efforts.

Three dozen citizens attended the April workshop and broke into three working groups to address downtown redevelopment, county planning for water, sewer and other infrastructure, and compatible economic development. New action plans were written with local government as a lead or supporting partner in planning for compatible development.

Organizers expect even greater success in Mathews County as citizens and elected officials share a strong commitment to economic development that retains the unique character of the small coastal community.

LESSONS LEARNED

Collaboration occurs best when it is incremental, reflecting the existing resources of the community. In Mathews, community consensus building began downtown and only later spread to issues facing the whole county. Early strategies reflected the existing level of political will and financial capital - e.g. develop a visitor's center, recruit an assisted living facility, launch an ecotourism business. As political support grew, so did the cost and complexity of the compatible economic development strategies now underway.

TOOLS & MODELS: ADDRESSING CONSERVATION ISSUES IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The greatest common theme that runs through the case studies in this workbook is the wholehearted commitment, by many different interest groups, to a shared vision of the future. This vision incorporates the needs of three priorities that once were considered separately - the community, economy and environment. Each element is considered essential to the health of another. None will be sacrificed for one.

On that basis, it becomes much easier to answer the question: What are the greatest concerns of the conservation/environment/preservation community? Their goals are the same as those of the economic development community. All work to preserve or attain a high quality of life for area residents.

Conservation interests may define that quality of life by the natural and civic assets enjoyed by the community; rural landscapes or thriving city neighborhoods, historic villages and traditional architecture, healthy water, air, forests and land, a strong sense of community and civic participation. These assets are usually the foundation for economic activity, from farming and fishing to heritage tourism or local crafts. Such assets also may contribute mightily to a community's appeal to new businesses seeking to relocate.

A sustainable or compatible approach to economic development builds upon these assets and ensures that they are not degraded. To successfully address conservation issues in the economic development process, economic developers must take the time to assess the community, economy and environment and develop a comprehensive and diversified economic strategy that will not promote one element at the cost of another.

There is an added benefit to this work. Conflict is most easily avoided when divergent interests enjoy a history of mutual understanding and collaboration. By engaging members of the conservation community in the crafting of plans for new development, economic developers can avoid the explosive situations that occur in the absence of trust and a shared vision.

That trust cannot be earned if economic developers consult with conservation interests only on a case-by-case or project-by-project basis. Even more destructive is to wait until a proposal reaches the public stage, such as a hearing on an environmental permit or zoning variance. Building strong relationships *before* conflict arises is the surest way to avoid it, according to the many people interviewed for the Crossroads case studies.

This section offers options to economic developers who want to start an ongoing conversation with local leaders in conservation, the environment, preservation and community development. Please remember that each of these interests serves a distinct purpose within the community. The greatest success will come when all are recognized and engaged in the economic development process.

Much of the following information was drawn from Pathways: Building a Local Initiative for Compatible Economic Development, The Nature Conservancy Center for Compatible Economic Development, L. Gregory Low and Megan Gallagher, Leesburg, VA, 1999. The Pathways workbook can be downloaded from: www.cced.org/Pathways.htm

IDENTIFY & ENGAGE ENVIRONMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS

The first step in engaging new sectors of the community is to determine the organizations and their leaders who must be reached. Identify just one member of the checklist following and that person usually can complete the rest of the list for you.

Don't just identify individuals. Try to determine the size of the organization, its program, the number of members and opportunities for public education and outreach, such as an annual meeting or educational forums.

Environmental Stakeholders Checklist

- Citizens Coalitions - Friends of (Place) or Citizens for (Land Feature)
- Land trust and/or The Nature Conservancy chapter
- Isaak Walton League and/or Trout Unlimited Chapter
- Ducks Unlimited Chapter
- Sierra Club Chapter
- American Lung Association Chapter
- River or Watershed Protection Group
- Historic Preservation Group
- Battlefield or Civil War Group
- Main Street Group
- Historical Society
- Environmental Justice or Social Justice Group
- NAACP
- Neighborhood Associations
- Neighborhood or Regional Parks Group
- Garden Club
- 4-H or Future Farmers Clubs
- Farm Bureau
- Soil & Water Conservation District Board
- American Farmland Trust Office
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation Office
- High School or College Biology/Environmental Sciences Department

The next step involves the selection of an appropriate time and vehicle for contacting the leaders of the organizations. It is essential to know what you want before you make the first overture.

Has your community just endured a highly public battle over a project that was recently abandoned? That's a good time to start a roundtable discussion with a professional facilitator to clear the air and start building relationships outside of the politics of the previous situation.

Is your community completely uninvolved in the economic development process or undecided about what economic priorities to pursue? That's a fine time to test public interest in launching a local initiative to engage many different stakeholders in a plan for compatible economic development.

It only takes one call to get the conversation going. If you can't seem to make that call, get someone else to do it for you, like a staff member from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, a local elected official or county staff member.

Opportunities for Dialogue

- One-on-one meeting(s) with appropriate staff or leader(s) of one group
- Roundtable discussions with staff and board members of one group
- Roundtable discussions with several different groups
- Regular discussions about programs, positions or other issues
- Issues forums on single topics, e.g. water or infrastructure
- Assessments of the community and the environment
- Review of existing economic development plans and sites
- Form a community coalition to address key issues
- Launch a full-scale strategic planning initiative for compatible development

ASSESS IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY & THE ENVIRONMENT

It is often easier to start building relationships by sharing a task, such as completing an assessment of the community and environment. Economic development staff depend on a full assessment of the local or regional economy to set priorities for their work. Such an assessment would include information on the diversity of the economy, the standard of living, the commercial and industrial tax base, the level of services provided and other indicators.

Similar assessments of the local community and environment should be completed as well. Such an assessment can give a good understanding of how residents value these elements and perceive threats.

Each community has a unique character that makes it a special place to live. These qualities distinguish the community from other places and may represent strengths that could provide opportunities for compatible development. Community character also may be threatened by new development, so plans must seek to address and manage these threats.

The following checklist offers a starting point for identifying the key elements that make up the community's unique character. Sources of information may include public opinion surveys or the goals outlined in a recent comprehensive plan, if it was drawn with broad public participation. But the best possible source would be a community forum attended by very diverse local interests.

Community Character Checklist

- Community values
- Natural features or resources
- Settlement and design patterns
- Natural beauty
- Local institutions
- Special local skills
- Traditional livelihoods
- Special or valued places

- Historic resources
- Cultural diversity or identity
- Small town or city neighborhood characteristics
- Safety and security

Each community also has a unique environment, which serves as the foundation for a healthy quality of life. Just like the community assessment, a good baseline analysis of the local environment provides an important foundation for setting long-term community goals and compatible development priorities.

The environment can be assessed by looking at three major components - renewable natural resources, natural communities and ecosystems, and animal and plant species - that may contain dozens of different elements. Examples of renewable natural resources include air, surface water, groundwater and soils that support farmlands, forests and fisheries.

Natural communities represent associations of species, such as those found in a salt marsh, a meadow or a forest. Ecosystems include the physical environment of natural communities, such as the climate, geology and soils. Species of plants and animals are the most easily recognized elements of the environment.

Every element of the environment is important, but human and financial resources are not unlimited. Priorities must be set in order to take action to protect and enhance the environment. The community must choose environmental priorities, the things that are most important and deserve attention first.

To set priorities, various elements can be ranked according to rarity, quality, condition, value and other factors. This analysis will lead to a priority list of five to 10 elements. Compatible economic development will focus on preserving, enhancing or restoring the top environmental priorities.

The following checklist can be used with assistance from local conservation and environmental groups, regional and state agencies, and high school and university biology or environmental science departments.

Checklist for Ranking Environmental Elements

Renewable Natural Resources

- Scope of distribution, abundance of resource
- Value to ecological health and well-being
- Importance or potential importance to the economy
- Ecological functions (e.g. wetlands help control flooding)
- Other importance (aesthetic, cultural, historic)

Natural Communities

- High quality example of the natural community
- Rarity of natural community type
- Potential contribution to larger scale environmental integrity
- Scope or abundance of distribution
- Other importance (aesthetic, cultural, historic)

Animal & Plant Species

- Rarity of the species
- Quality of the local occurrence
- Importance for recreational uses
- Importance or potential importance for the economy
- Other importance (aesthetic, cultural, historic)

DETERMINE IF NEW DEVELOPMENT IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY

To determine if new development or a new business is compatible with community values, an obvious step is simply to ask. If you have a strong, ongoing relationship with local conservation leaders, a simple call or face-to-face meeting should unearth any concerns.

Together, economic developers and conservation interests can determine the degree of potential controversy and whether a public education and outreach program will allay these concerns. To prepare for this conversation, economic development staff must ask some tough questions related to compatibility and sustainability.

Checklist for New Business Compatibility

- Does the new business or development meet the community's needs, strengthen the local economy and protect or preserve the environment?
- Does it build on the community or region's existing strengths and comparative advantages?
- Does it serve current residents, particularly the underemployed or young people who must seek employment elsewhere after graduation from high school or college?
- Does it strengthen the tax base, provide meaningful employment opportunities and diversify the economy?
- Does it provide adequate family wages, as defined by the community?
- Will it have no measurable negative impact on any priority elements of the community or environment, as determined by the assessments?
- Is it unlikely to ignite public frustration over related issues, such as traffic congestion, loss of open space or the health of air and water?
- If the answer is no to any of these questions, can you make a compelling case for the economic benefits that would outweigh the community's concerns?

DETERMINE IF A SELECTED INDUSTRIAL SITE IS COMPATIBLE

Most economic development and county planning staff know the main things to examine in selecting and approving sites for industrial parks or other industrial use. These will include a plat, ownership, zoning, road access, water, sewer, other utilities, and an inventory of wetlands, endangered species and historic resources on the site.

But it is rare for industrial site developers to look deeper into the community's perception of the site or ask how the community might want it to be used. One Virginia community selected some county-owned land in a rural area for a new industrial park. No one involved in the planning process pointed out that a nature trail

on the property had been used for nearly 20 years and was the subject of a weekly radio report. Once the site selection was made public, after considerable planning expense, a firestorm of public opposition arose.

Take the time to think like a residential neighbor, open space advocate or wildlife manager. If you can answer the following questions, you might be able to avoid a lot of controversy. If you can't answer these questions, invite some of your new partners in conservation to help.

Industrial Site Checklist for Compatibility

- Is the location far from other industry and could it serve as an example of sprawl?
- Do current or prior community uses of the property conflict with industrial use?
- What are the current land uses of adjacent properties and do these conflict?
- How does the community feel about the rare and endangered species under the property's management plan?
- How does the community feel about the historic and archeological resources under the property's management plan?
- Do the wetlands or other parts of the property support an area important to local hunting, fishing or wildlife observation or serve a sensitive or degraded ecosystem?
- How does the community feel about potential air or water emissions?
- What is the extent of new road, rail or other infrastructure needed to serve the site and will this infrastructure impact nearby neighborhoods, habitats or open space?
- Is this the last significant piece of open space left in the area?

CONSIDER STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR COMPATIBLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Of course, it is a lot easier to judge the compatibility of new business or development if conservation and other community interests are partners in the economic development process. Conflict arises most when ideas and strategies are directed from the top down, rather than emerging from within the community.

As the case studies in this workbook demonstrate, a growing number of Virginia communities are showing that environmental protection can go hand-in-hand with a prosperous economy. These communities achieved significant results, in a relatively short period of time, by taking a collaborative, strategic approach.

Pathways: Building A Local Initiative for Compatible Economic Development is one such approach. Pathways encourages very broad public participation in the six to 10 months it may take to complete the work.

The full Pathways plan requires citizens to assess the health of the community, economy and environment, determine critical threats and prime opportunities, develop a vision for the future, select the strategies that will address the threats and build on the opportunities, and write action plans for early success.

However, several of the Pathways steps could be used alone to start an ongoing dialogue with conservation, environmental and other community interests.

FOSTER CLEAR & REGULAR CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Every economic or community leader contacted for the case studies in this workbook stressed that work with other stakeholders must begin before conflict arises. Clear channels of communication can take an informal or formal form.

Informal communication can be as simple as a monthly or bi-monthly call to the leaders of several organizations with a strong presence in the community. On Virginia's Eastern Shore, county officials and conservation leaders regularly touch base on various initiatives in economic development and land protection. They don't surprise one another by conducting their conversations in the local press or political arena.

A similar relationship exists in the Clinch Valley of Virginia between The Nature Conservancy, the Chamber of Commerce and local officials. In the Shenandoah Valley, economic and community planners and the Valley Conservation Council work closely together.

Formal communication emerges from institutions and initiatives. The Winchester-Frederick County Community Consensus Coalition meets in subcommittees and as a group as it plans issues forums for the community.

The Mathews Action Plan brought the county, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street program and MCSEED together to plan and pursue a number of strategies. The Front Royal-Warren County Economic Development Authority gained strong local political support after following the Multiple Stakeholder Process.

Addressing conservation issues in the economic development process does more than just avoid conflict. It also builds stronger community support for economic strategies. A community committed to a healthy economy and a healthy environment represents a good place to do business for everyone.

Checklist for Success: Community Collaboration

Factors Related to the Environment

- History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
- Collaborative group seen as a leader in the community
- Political/social climate is favorable

Factors Related to Membership Characteristics

- Mutual respect, understanding and trust
- Appropriate cross-section of members
- Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
- Ability to compromise

Factors Related to Process/Structure

- Members share a stake in both the process and the outcome
- Multiple layers of decision-making
- Flexibility
- Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
- Adaptability

Factors Related to Communication

- Open and frequent communication
- Established informal and formal communication links

Factors Related to Purpose

- Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
- Shared vision
- Unique purpose (compared to mission of member groups)

Factors Related to Resources

- Sufficient funds
- Skilled convener

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Reprinted from Collaboration: What Makes It Work, Amrherst H. Wilder Foundation, Mattessich, Paul W. Ph.D. and Monsey, Barbara R. M.P.H., St. Paul, MN, 1992.

Checklist for Success: Building A Local Initiative for Compatible Development

Local Leadership

- Strong citizen involvement and expanded leadership from persons outside of local government, coupled with participation by local government
- One or more local citizen "sparkplugs" who can galvanize broad community support and participation
- A good staff person with certain key skills and attributes, who is not hampered by agency or local politics, to help guide the process and "conduct the orchestra"

Effective Community Organizations

- Strong local organizations which can voice local concerns, craft a vision and select strategies and carry out action steps, including the education of that organization's membership
- An array of institutions to serve different functions, such as an effective land trust, a broadly-based citizens organization focused on the area's future, a forward-thinking economic development entity, a well-informed planning commission and a strong local government

Collaborative, Broadly-Based Process

- A broadly-based and inclusive process to develop the community vision and action plan
- A collaborative effort among local civic organizations and appropriate agencies of government
- A process that encompasses all sectors, but is not dominated by any one interest group
- A professional outside facilitator for the early stages of work
- An institution to help guide the process, ensure implementation and provide continuity of effort

Widely-Shared Vision

- A collaborative process that helps develop a widely-shared vision among all major stakeholders
- A shared vision allowing people to work together toward common goals

Strategic Approach

- Good environmental, socioeconomic and business planning as the foundation for intelligent action
- Good strategic planning: assess environmental, economic and social conditions; understand key threats; analyze the community's comparative economic advantages; scope compatible development alternatives; conduct solid business feasibility assessments; select strategies to address key opportunities and threats
- A strategic approach that tests and explores alternatives, assesses results and makes adjustments over time; planning that is adaptive, not cast in concrete
- Appropriate monitoring and measures of success

Adequate Resources

- Technical skills in economic planning, business development, community development, ecology and environmental protection, facilitation, etc.
- Experienced outside person or community to serve as a mentor and sounding board
- Funding for local staff, consultants and program expenses (e.g. assessments, community forums, business feasibility studies)
- Funding for both start-up and continuity of efforts

Successful Action Steps

- Early projects or collaborations that show tangible results with success reflected in community development, economic development and conservation areas
- Persistence and continuity of effort for long-term results

Adapted from Community, Economy, Environment: A Citizens Guide to Achieving a Healthy Community, Economy & Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Center for Compatible Economic Development, Leesburg, VA, 1996. These seven key success factors have a great deal in common with the major outcomes identified in Tools for Practice: Measuring Community Capacity Building, The Aspen Institute Rural Economic Policy Program, Aspen, CO, 1996.

CONSERVATION RESOURCES

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality: www.deq.state.va.us

DEQ is dedicated to protecting Virginia's environment and promoting the health and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth. We accomplish this by planning and implementing environmental programs, and by resolving issues efficiently, openly, fairly and consistently. DEQ organizes an annual conference on Virginia's Sustainable Future and offers a number of Coastal Resource programs.

The Nature Conservancy's Compatible Ventures Group (formerly the Center for Compatible Economic Development): www.cced.org

The Compatible Ventures Group is a distinct unit of The Nature Conservancy, the world's largest private conservation organization. CFG works with communities to develop businesses, products and land uses that conserve ecosystems, enhance local economies and achieve community goals. CFG acts as the "research and development" arm of the Conservancy, incubating new strategies and tools for addressing conservation threats. Since it was established in 1995, CFG has worked with communities across the country, primarily

Nature Conservancy field offices and their local partners, to create and implement new ideas for integrating environmental conservation with strategies for community and economic development. It publishes the Pathways workbook and [A Citizen's Guide to Achieving a Healthy Community, Economy & Environment](#).

The Virginia Center for Stewardship: www.sustainableusa.org/va

The Global Environment & Technology Foundation (GETF, <http://www.getf.org>) and the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE, <http://www.vee.org>) joined forces to create the Virginia Center for Stewardship (Virginia Center). The Virginia Center is both an electronic and "human" network of individuals, organizations and institutions working in Virginia to promote economic growth and improved environmental performance in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

More and more, communities and citizens are energized about the challenges and opportunities presented by issues like efficient resource use, climate change, traffic congestion and many others. The goal of the Virginia Center is to provide access to useful, relevant information about these issues. The Center will help integrate and leverage existing environmental activities, foster innovative partnerships and create new opportunities to solve complex stewardship challenges in Virginia. The Center also offers a number of opportunities for companies to take a leadership role (or supporting role if they prefer) in promoting sensible, effective approaches to improving environmental performance in Virginia.