

DRAFT

## Chapter 6

# Economy

Support diverse and equitable economic growth and prosperity.



PLAN Danville

Danville is committed to promoting diverse economic growth, ensuring prosperity that benefits all residents and job holders within the community. Danville will prioritize inclusive approaches that cultivate a wider range of industries, thereby reducing dependence on a single or handful of industry sectors. Danville aspires to achieve economic empowerment for individuals and families from a variety of backgrounds, leading to an economy that is steadily improved and uplifts the entire community.

# Economy Policies

## E.1: ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

**PROMOTE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND RESILIENCE TO STRENGTHEN THE CITY'S ECONOMY AGAINST EXTERNAL SHOCKS, SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE GROWTH, ADDRESS WAGE DISPARITIES, AND FOSTER INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

### E.1.1 Promote Food and Agriculture Businesses

Promote environmentally-friendly and socially-responsible food and agricultural businesses to stimulate sustainable agriculture, increase food security, protect natural resources, promote rural development, and create economic opportunities for farmers and rural communities.

### E.1.2 Support the Business-to-Business Industry

Expand industries that are focused on providing goods and services to other businesses through infrastructure development, access to finance, networking opportunities, and skills development programs.

### E.1.3 Support Accessible Healthcare

Incentivize the growth and innovation of healthcare businesses like maternal health, clinics, and other medical facilities to enhance both physical and financial access to healthcare services within the community.

### E.1.4 : Encourage the Growth of Green Industries

Foster the growth and innovation of businesses that specialize in sustainable infrastructure solutions such as renewable energy, eco-friendly construction, green transportation, and water management.

## E.2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**IMPLEMENT A HOLISTIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TO ATTRACT INVESTMENTS, CREATE JOBS, AND BOOST PROSPERITY.**

### E.2.1 Strengthen the Redevelopment Process

Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the redevelopment process for industrial and commercial business hubs within the city to attract new businesses, stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and enhance the overall vibrancy.

### E.2.2 Invest in Commercial Districts

Enrich the distinctive character of Danville's commercial districts through strategic investments in physical assets to attract visitors, encourage business growth, stimulate economic activity, and foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents.

### **E.3: SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

| SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS BY PROVIDING RESOURCES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE THEIR SUCCESS.

#### **E.3.1 Advance Equity and Inclusion**

Take proactive steps to promote equity and inclusion in small business development to facilitate economic empowerment, reduce disparities, encourage diversity, and establish a more equitable and resilient small business ecosystem that benefits the entire community.

#### **E.3.2 Support and Grow Small and Independent Retail**

Bolster the vitality and sustainability of small and independent retail businesses within the community to preserve neighborhood character, stimulate economic activity, create jobs, and foster a sense of community pride and connection.

### **E.4: TALENT RECRUITMENT**

| FOSTER A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS SKILLED PROFESSIONALS AND ENCOURAGES A VARIETY OF PEOPLE TO MAKE THE CITY THEIR HOME.

#### **E.4.1 Support Related Workforce Readiness and Preparation Efforts**

Build a more skilled, adaptable, and resilient workforce and bridge the gap between job seekers and available opportunities, promote economic mobility, and address workforce shortages in key sectors.

#### **E.4.2 Strengthen Infrastructure to Support Workers**

Address disparities in access to essential services and opportunities to better support the needs of workers within the community.





“Danville’s economy is at an important pivot point. We are finally seeing the payoffs and planning for growth.”

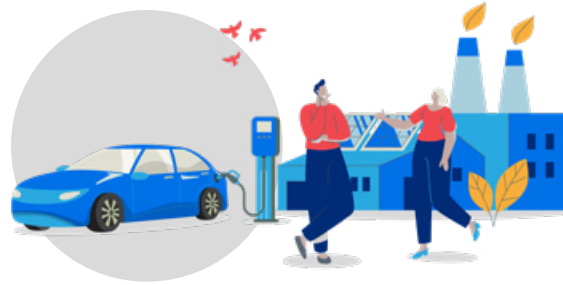
*- 2023 Economy and Retail Roundtable*





# Aligning with Public Feedback

Strengthening economic opportunity in Danville was one of the cross-cutting community themes. During discussions with residents, support for local businesses, a need to enhance education and workforce development, and the city's history of discrimination and racism were common features of discussions around the economy. The local economy is an issue that is present within themes related to Economic Development and Opportunity, Bolstering Unity and Respect, Education and Youth Development, and Community Engagement and Collaboration. Creating high-quality job opportunities along with educational and training programs that provide career pathways as a means to address a history of disinvestment and economic exclusion were commonly cited as issues to be addressed by residents.



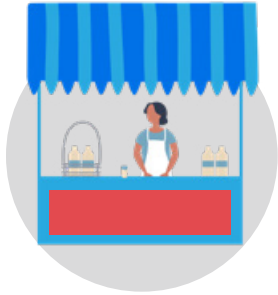
## E.1 Economic Resilience

Stable, well-paying jobs that are less subject to the ebbs and flows of the national economy was a desire among many residents. This policy prioritizes development of industries that are local in nature, like food, business services, and healthcare. These industries grow based on the local economy and return wealth to the city and region, rather than exporting the wealth to other areas. In addition, the plan emphasizes development and growth of green industries that are growing rapidly and emphasize responsible use of local resources.



## E.2 Economic Development

Time is money, for both large and small investors. Streamlining processes with an emphasis on existing business hubs, versus new development, will help to encourage re-investment and provide greater certainty for small and large businesses alike. Further, improving the visual appeal and maintenance of existing business districts and storefronts is critical to providing a higher quality of life for residents, while also encouraging other investment in neighborhood commercial centers.



### E.3 Small Business Support

Historical exclusion of people of color from realizing economic opportunity in Danville was commonly cited by residents as a major concern. Small business development and entrepreneurship represents an opportunity to earn a regular wage, while also building wealth by providing services and amenities the community demands. This policy emphasizes providing small business assistance that is tailored to communities of color to support revitalization of Danville's neighborhood commercial districts.



### E.4 Talent Recruitment

Meaningful workforce development and job training programs that lead to high-quality, sustainable job opportunities are strongly desired by Danville residents. This strategy aligns this desire with opportunities in growing industries and industries with workforce shortages, while improving the services available to help residents develop the skills and experience necessary to secure the jobs they want.

## POLICY

### E.1

# Economic Resilience

Promote economic diversification and resilience to strengthen the city's economy against external shocks, support sustainable and equitable growth, address wage disparities, and foster inclusive economic development.

Danville has a rich history deeply intertwined with its industries, most notably the mill and textile industries. While Danville's economy has evolved over time, it remains heavily reliant on only a select few industries, posing challenges to the city's resiliency and adaptability. Furthermore, Danville faces increasing environmental risks due to higher instances of extreme heat and persistent flooding, highlighting the urgent need for intentional economic diversification and resilience planning. To tackle these issues, this plan provides recommendations to establish more resilient industries while leveraging its existing market strengths. Key target sectors include precision metalworking, IT, food and beverage processing, healthcare/medical services, agribusiness, and entrepreneurship across all industries. By prioritizing these sectors, Danville can create accessible jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities while enhancing its economic diversification and resilience goals. Additionally, initiatives such as the business-to-business (B2B) cluster and green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) cluster offer paths for increasing local supply chains, improving community health outcomes, and mitigating environmental risks. Through collaborative efforts and strategic planning, Danville can pave the way towards a more inclusive, dynamic, and resilient economy that benefits all residents.

## Desired Outcomes

- A more inclusive and dynamic economy that generates middle-wage employment opportunities and effectively meets community requirements.
- Enhanced localization and integration of supply chains.
- A city and region that exhibit greater resilience to economic fluctuations and disasters, including the repercussions of flooding and climate change.



## Goal 6. Economy

Policy E.1 Economic Diversification & Resilience



## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.1.1 Promote Sustainable Businesses

Promote environmentally-friendly and socially-responsible food and agricultural businesses to stimulate sustainable agriculture, increase food security, protect natural resources, promote rural development, and create economic opportunities for farmers and rural communities.

### ACTIONS

1. Identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities in agriculture/food industries to improve resilience and localize the food supply chain, including regional coordination through a cluster organization.
2. Address food insecurity and access challenges through programs like pop-up food retail, mobile produce markets, and urban agriculture in food deserts.
3. Explore implementing the “Healthy Corner Store Initiative” to improve fresh food access in convenience stores and promote mobile market options.
4. Assess the potential for a service or platform to connect food entrepreneurs with available real estate, potentially utilizing philanthropic funding for businesses in food deserts.
5. Evaluate the impact of “food branding” for Danville and the region, drawing inspiration from successful models like “Taste NY” and “Food City” to support local food brands and initiatives.







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.1.2 Support the Business- to-Business Industry

Expand industries that are focused on providing goods and services to other businesses through infrastructure development, access to finance, networking opportunities, and skills development programs.

### ACTIONS

1. Research and catalogue big purchasers to connect with smaller suppliers to establish a collaborative business-to-business (B2B) program.
2. Create a B2B Working Group that includes representatives from B2B firms, anchor institutions, and business support organizations, with a focus on promoting inclusive growth and meeting local contracting requirements.
3. Implement a customized capital strategy for Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) in the B2B sector, addressing the challenges they face in accessing working capital. Conduct surveys of businesses and engaging with regional lenders.
4. Support the development of flexible and shared spaces for B2B firms throughout the city, by facilitating needs assessment for real estate and assisting in land assembly efforts, particularly in downtown and industrial areas.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **E.1.3** **Support Accessible Healthcare**

Incentivize the growth and innovation of healthcare businesses like maternal health, clinics, and other medical facilities to enhance both physical and financial access to healthcare services within the community.

### ACTIONS

1. Consider assessing the viability of new or expanded facilities as an economic opportunity for needed medical services in the area, including:
  - Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), in addition to the PATHS Community Medical Center;
  - Medicare-certified rural health clinics (RHCs)
  - Other satellite or branch locations of healthcare facilities and providers
2. Support the growth of existing health care facilities to support women's health and maternal care.
3. Improve access to healthcare through improved bus connections, tele-health, and mobile clinics.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **E.1.4** **Encourage the Growth of Green Industries**

Foster the growth and innovation of businesses that specialize in sustainable infrastructure solutions such as renewable energy, eco-friendly construction, green transportation, and water management.

### ACTIONS

1. Prioritize local businesses specializing in green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in public RFPs for capital projects.
2. Assess and track investments in GSI cluster, including savings from reduced flooding, job creation, wages, and support for local GSI businesses.
3. Invest in workforce readiness programs that align with industry diversification, fostering collaboration between educational institutions, workforce development organizations, and local businesses, including enhanced training and formal apprenticeships for GSI and emerging industries.





A photograph of a man and a woman at a market stall. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue baseball cap, glasses, and a tan hoodie. He is smiling and looking towards the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing glasses and a patterned hoodie. They are standing behind a stall with various items, including a sign that says "Welcome" and "Gift Cards".

**Globally, there is a talent shortage.  
We are trying to balance training  
people in high and low skilled labor.**

*- 2023 Economy and Retail Roundtable*





## POLICY

### E.2

# Economic Development

Implement a holistic economic development strategy to attract investments, create jobs, and boost prosperity.

Economic development is a means of supporting a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive economy in the City of Danville for existing and future business owners alike. The following section focuses on the linkages between real estate and the economy and, in particular, supporting the land, real estate, placemaking, and corridor needs of businesses.

### Desired Outcomes

- Reduced vacancy and underutilization of land and buildings.
- Improved, more vibrant commercial corridors – through infill (re) development – and improved access to goods and services.
- Creation of larger sites (parcel assemblies) for more impactful development.
- Better, more accessible and inclusive jobs on sites (e.g., through more directed development).



**Goal 6. Economy**

Policy E.2 Economic Development



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## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.2.1 Strengthen the Redevelopment Process

Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the redevelopment process for industrial and commercial business hubs within the city to attract new businesses, stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and enhance the overall vibrancy.

### ACTIONS

1. Create a detailed inventory of vacant and underutilized land for potential industrial parcel assemblies and strategic relocations.

#### Action Steps

- a. Catalog, assess, and evaluate inventory and update throughout the year as ownership, zoning, vacancy, and underutilization evolve.
- b. Identify current and potential sites for development (including and beyond the “Certified Industrial Sites from the VA Economic Development Partnership”).
  - Special attention should be paid to both the number of unique parcel owners within the site – the fewer the easier and cheaper to assemble and develop.

- Attention should also be paid to the acreage owned by the City or other public land owner – as public land holdings can be given or sold at a discount to the other, private parcel owner(s) or a developer in exchange for City requirements with respect to what is developed on the site (e.g., number or type of jobs, specific uses, etc).
- c. Monitor parcels adjacent to the “Certified Industrial Sites” to determine if they can be acquired for the purposes of expanding these sites for development throughout Danville, and reserve smaller and/or isolated parcels for industries with lower and/or more flexible land demands (e.g., B2B industries, some food manufacturers and other small manufacturers or wholesalers, GSI industries, etc.).







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

2. Encourage the redevelopment and reinvestment of existing business districts as economic hubs.

### Action Steps

- a. Identify any existing, adjacent or nearby businesses in need of expansion or relocation space and weigh any/all surrounding community input on (un)desired uses on site.
- b. Develop a sidelot and “sidebiz” program for suitable smaller vacant parcels/buildings (or assemblies thereof) for both neighborhood residents and, potentially, local business owners; part of broader effort to support existing business districts and corridors as economic hubs with infill opportunities.
- c. Expand existing and develop new financial incentives (e.g., Danville River District Developer Grant, Danville’s Enterprise Zone Program, Economic Incentive Areas or scattered site tax increment financing) that aid landlords in supporting small businesses and achieving required rents from reinvestment and redevelopment, including multi-family opportunities to meet the unmet housing demand outlined in Chapter 5. Housing.
- d. Encourage activation of parking lots with placemaking, green space, cafe seating, modern loading/delivery and curbside pickup/drop off infrastructure, among other interventions to address retail trends.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.2.2 Invest in Commercial Districts

Enrich the distinctive character of Danville's commercial districts through strategic investments in physical assets to attract visitors, encourage business growth, stimulate economic activity, and foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents.

### ACTIONS

1. Define retail districts and corridors with soft boundaries and connections to nearby natural assets; consider aligning with "Focus Corridors" and other planning commercial real estate efforts.
2. Discourage scattered site retail development outside of defined retail districts and corridors.
3. Institute a place management organization for each retail district/corridor, including Main Street, business improvement districts, and private landlords.
4. Utilize wayfinding and placemaking to amplify the commercial district success and attract tourists, residents, and employees.
5. Align festivals and event sites nearby with accessible connections to retail districts/corridors.
6. Identify anchoring catalytic projects in key reinvestment areas that promote patronage.



## POLICY

### E.3

# Small Business Support

Support small businesses and entrepreneurs by providing resources, technical assistance, and financial incentives to promote their success.

Small businesses are the beloved establishments that represent the culture and identity of the city. However, many entrepreneurs and small business owners are challenged by a limited ability to access financial, social, and political capital to support their success. The goal of rooting Small Business Support in the Comprehensive Plan is to not only stimulate economic development and job creation but also contribute to the overall vibrancy and resilience of the local economy, enhancing quality of life for residents and strengthening the community fabric.

## Desired Outcomes

- A shared understanding of the current racial, ethnic, and gender gaps in economic outcomes (e.g., income, wages, entrepreneurship rates, etc.) and progress towards closing these gaps.
- A more robust, efficient and effective business support organization ecosystem in greater Danville.
- Reduced food and health deserts.



**Goal 6. Economy**

Policy E.3 Small Business Support





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.3.1 Advance Equity and Inclusion

Take proactive steps to promote equity and inclusion in small business development to facilitate economic empowerment, reduce disparities, encourage diversity, and establish a more equitable and resilient small business ecosystem that benefits the entire community.

### ACTIONS

1. Perform baseline analysis on the state of equity and inclusion.

#### Action Steps

- a. Develop a shared understanding of inclusion and equity outcomes by factors such as race/ethnicity, sex/gender, stage of business, and industry.
  - b. Increase capacity at key civic and business organizations to develop new sources of high-quality, geographically detailed data on outcomes by race and place.
2. Building on the baseline analysis, assess, evaluate, and improve city policies with an equity lens.

#### Action Steps

- a. Assess city practices around MWBE certification and enforcement for contracting and hiring practices.

- b. Create programs for more efficiently matching local small businesses to affordable retail spaces and broadly disseminate information about these efforts to MWBEs and would-be entrepreneurs from diverse communities.
- c. Create a business formalization program for small-scale businesses and identify marketplaces or pop-ups in commercial corridors (which could include philanthropic subsidized “white box” space for early-stage entrepreneurs).
  - While there are hundreds of models from across the U.S., Pop-Up MKE – a program operated within Brew City Match, similar to Detroit’s Motor City Match – is a strong example, offering subsidized rent and utilities, TA, marketing and other wrap-around supports.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

3. Engage capital providers to increase access to capital for area businesses.

### Action Steps

- a. Organize roundtable of regional capital providers (including traditional banks and credit unions, government programs, philanthropy) to identify challenges, gaps in the provision of capital to small businesses and (ideally) get commitments to help improve the capital stack and lending outcomes for MWBE firms (including, e.g., addressing information gaps).

4. Develop and support the Business Support Organization (BSO) ecosystem to improve coordination, efficiency, and efficacy and eliminate gaps.

### Action Steps

- a. Perform ecosystem assessment of Business Support Organizations in the region.
- b. Identify strengths, gaps, capacity, and areas of redundancy or misalignment (including opportunities for rationalization/optimization of offerings/functions).
- c. Survey local businesses to assess what BSO services they utilize and what their unmet needs are.
- d. Convene funders of BSOs (e.g., government, philanthropy) to improve and formalize tracking of clients served by funded BSOs.

- e. Develop a coordinated plan to improve outreach, network reach into MWBE and disadvantaged neighborhoods.







“Tourism is newer for the area but  
we think it could really support our  
small businesses.”

*- 2023 Economy and Retail Roundtable*







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **E.3.2 Support and Grow Small and Independent Retail**

Bolster the vitality and sustainability of small and independent retail businesses within the community to preserve neighborhood character, stimulate economic activity, create jobs, and foster a sense of community pride and connection.

### ACTIONS

1. Explore partnerships with the banking community to leverage Community Reinvestment Act and other small business programs to address access to capital needs.
2. Explore opportunities to minimize infrastructure costs and operational burdens for storefront tenants (e.g., shared HVAC, designated pickup/dropoff zones, etc.).
3. Develop incentives to support landlords in tenancing with small businesses seeking to occupy and improve vacant older properties (older than 10 years old) to offset rent gap, especially targeted for single-use retail buildings and flexible enough to allow for subdividing larger spaces into smaller ones.
4. Identify opportunities for and fund incubator spaces, sidewalk and market vending infrastructure, and other shared space opportunities (such as food halls) that provide alternatives to traditional storefronts.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

5. Increase the provision of and access to goods and services.

### Action Steps

- a. Conduct a retail market analysis to determine unmet retail demand and oversupply of space by commercial district.
- b. Analyze regulatory restrictions through business owner engagement to mitigate for challenges starting and maintaining a storefront business.
- c. Engage national-branded grocers to identify challenges and opportunities for Danville to attract and retain new brands to increase the diversity of competition and address operational challenges.
- d. Examine the business case for new grocery purveyors locally, including exploring the impact of the colocation of grocery development at or nearby multi-family development.
- e. Diversify business mix with opportunities for a range of ages, including youth activities, bars and nightclubs, and other entertainment venues.
- f. Enable small-scale retail space development opportunities near recreational and other tourism assets.
- g. Identify parts of the city/region experiencing food insecurity and/or food access challenges (e.g., food deserts) and develop programming to fill these gaps with pop up food retail (e.g., pop up farmers market activity), mobile produce markets, urban Ag, etc. utilizing available, vacant, and/or re-developable real estate.
  - Explore opportunities to leverage the VA Department of Health's "Health Corner Store Initiative" to improve the availability of fresh food in corner stores and convenience stores and the potential for mobile product markets and vans as well.



### Goal 6. Economy

Policy E.3 Small Business Support

## POLICY

### E.4

# Talent Recruitment

Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment that attracts and retains skilled professionals and encourages a variety of people to make the city their home.

The foundation of a strong economy is recruiting and retaining talent in the area. Danville seeks to support residents and businesses by matching local talent to available jobs and creating an inviting place to live for businesses to recruit outside talent when needed.

## Desired Outcomes

- Increased percent of local residents entering the workforce out of school.
- Increased grant funding won for supportive workforce programs.



### Goal 6. Economy

#### Policy E.4 Talent Recruitment







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### E.4.1 Support Related Workforce Readiness and Preparation Efforts

Build a more skilled, adaptable, and resilient workforce and bridge the gap between job seekers and available opportunities, promote economic mobility, and address workforce shortages in key sectors.

### ACTIONS

1. Expand access in secondary education and trades programs for industries which align with Danville's community values.

#### Action Steps

- a. Continue to build alignment between Danville Public Schools, local colleges, the Learning Institute; other workforce development training programs; and industry needs (e.g., offerings, quality, funding, output, completion rates and professional placements).
- b. Develop and formalize apprenticeship programs between local employers and Danville Public Schools to support pathways into a variety of industries: GSI, trades, welding, beauty services, and others.
- c. Establish apprenticeship introduction programs in

high schools so that young people can see their future in Danville.

2. Improve business-workforce training program connectedness with more frequent feedback loops (currently only meeting quarterly) on current and future industry demands.
3. Support out-of-school programs which promote soft skills development, career readiness, civic engagement, and social-emotional growth.
4. Reduce financial and technology barriers to participating in workforce training and educational programs.
5. Strengthen and expand job training programs that provide employment opportunities after completion.
6. Encourage intergenerational learning by combining teen and senior programming when possible, such as recreation courses or technology classes.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **E.4.2 Strengthen Infrastructure to Support Workers**

Address disparities in access to essential services and opportunities to better support the needs of workers within the community.

### ACTIONS

1. Support businesses with in-house programs around benefits for employees which can help to reduce benefit/income burden; providing things like in-house childcare, additional days off, and flexible working hours can help to increase quality of life for workers
2. Explore the potential for partnerships with local health institutions to create a “healthy worker” program which can help to reduce the risk of medical treatment as well as increase employee satisfaction in the workplace.
3. Seek to locate businesses along existing fixed transit routes so workers can have access to transit.
4. Seek grant funding to support the Reserve A Ride service which provides services to employees who’s jobs aren’t along fixed route lines or who’s hours don’t align with current hours of transit operation.
5. For larger operations, seek to have workforce housing as part of the development package proposed to enhance connectivity between residents and their place of employment.
6. Continue to support continuing education for City employees.

