

Loudoun County's Rural Economic Business Development Strategy Update - 2021

Rural Economic Business Development Strategy Impact at a Glance

REBDS Strategies

9

Loudoun Farm Products Sold Annually

\$44 million

State/County AFID Grants

\$235,000

Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Participants

235

LMLG Grant Program

\$50,000

Funds to Support LMLG Marketplace

\$360,000

A Letter from the Executive Director

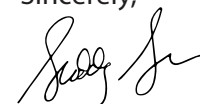
In 2011, a dedicated group of more than 300 stakeholders came together over 18 months to create a blueprint for supporting the rural economy and ensuring the future of rural Loudoun. Released in February of 2013, "The Long View; A Business Development Plan for Loudoun's Rural Economy" (The Long View), provided a series of foundational and programmatic strategies that helped guide the work of the Rural Economic Development Council (REDC) and the Loudoun County Department of Economic Development (DED). The intent of the plan was to "provide a positive policy and programmatic support environment that enhanced the rural economy, encouraged private investment, supported greater profitability in rural enterprises, and to protect critical working landscapes."

The agriculture-based and agritourism-based businesses of western Loudoun play an important, multi-dimensional role in our community. Not only do these enterprises generate additional revenue for the County, but they also play a key cultural role in our efforts to maintain our County's physical beauty and rural assets. Support of successful farming operations is one of the best land conservation tools we have, hence much of DED's efforts are focused on helping landowners keep their farmland as farmland.

Loudoun County is committed to enhancing business opportunities in the rural economy, which accounts for more than two-thirds of Loudoun's land. As the "The Long View" report shows, Loudoun benefits from long-established agricultural industries, but at that time, Loudoun was also seeing burgeoning value-add rural businesses that were still being integrated into the County's overall business strategies. Since the report's release, those value-add industries have been fully integrated into the County and DED's business development strategies. To that end, DED continues to work with landowners and farmers to increase their profits through education and outreach programs, introducing farmers to innovative practices and creating and marketing direct-sale opportunities such as the "Take Loudoun Home" campaign and the Loudoun-Made, Loudoun-Grown Marketplace, an e-commerce site provided at no cost to producers to offer a direct link to consumers. DED also has expanded its commitment to rural businesses through a staff restructuring, strengthening ties with local partners and making sure that the strategies put forth in "The Long View" (as well as its predecessor study, 1998's "The 200,000-Acre Solution, A Rural Economic Development Plan by the Rural Task Force") remain foundational concepts in our ongoing efforts to support rural Loudoun. As the following report shows, the majority of the nine major strategies have been implemented. The remaining recommendations have been updated and, where appropriate, have been embedded in the DED strategic plan.

DED appreciates the ongoing support of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Loudoun County Administration and Government, the REDC, Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun County (VCE), Visit Loudoun and the many other partners and stakeholders who have played a key role in the implementation and success of "The Long View."

Sincerely,



Buddy Rizer, CEcD
Executive Director

#LoudounPossible

Discussion

Nine strategies were recommended out of “The Long View” that became the Rural Economy Business Development Strategy (REBDS).

Foundation Strategies:

- 1 Assess the Need for a Loudoun Agricultural and Rural Business Accelerator;
- 2 Develop an Integrated Approach to Equestrian Industry Enhancement;
- 3 Conduct a Regular Rural Business Owners Survey;
- 4 Create a Formal Rural Business Peer-to-Peer Consulting and Research Network.

Programmatic Strategies:

- 1 Redesign LoudounFarms.org Website to Add a Greater Level of Business Support Information;
- 2 Encourage the Formation of a Loudoun County Trails Association;
- 3 Enhance Marketing Programs to Improve Linkage Between Rural and Urban Economies;
- 4 Create a Branded Rural Business Awareness Program;
- 5 Develop a Consolidated Year-Round Farmers Market in Loudoun County.

These strategies have, by-and-large, been accomplished or integrated into larger projects within the County (broadly) and DED (specifically). The details for each strategy are below, including what was fully completed, adjusted to meet current demands and restraints, what is still ongoing, and what has been integrated into the DED strategic plan moving forward.

Strategies

Part 1: Foundation Strategies

These strategies were designed to establish a long-term base of cross-industry development with a high potential for program leveraging.

1 Assess the Need for a Loudoun Agriculture and Rural Business Accelerator

Recommendation:

A Loudoun Agricultural and Rural Business Accelerator was envisioned as a center for rural entrepreneurship, to serve as a catalyst for business formation, job creation, value-added activities, technology development and education. The Accelerator would support established businesses and startups in the County and serve as an asset for business attraction efforts. This recommendation was also intended to ease the shortage of marketing and process facilities and the difficulties in navigating complex federal, state, and local regulations.

Status:

Many of the services outlined in this strategy are integrated in DED’s approach to business support. In 2018, DED implemented an organizational restructuring

to integrate rural business services across the entire department. This move increased the access and ongoing communication for rural businesses from 1-3 staff to the entire team of 25 staff supporting these efforts. The following services are provided by DED staff on a regular and ongoing basis:

- **Marketing and Communications:** DED provides marketing promotion including print and digital advertising, and dedicated social media channels for rural businesses¹;
- **Real Estate Intelligence:** DED provides property reports for prospective and growing rural businesses as well as promoting available agricultural land²;
- **Development Process:** DED offers permitting assistance to streamline the regulatory process for new or expanding businesses;
- **Small Business and Entrepreneurship:** Business startup resources include partnering with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and VCE on counseling and classes specifically for rural businesses;
- **Business Development:** DED has staff who work to attract, retain and grow rural businesses;
- **Workforce Development:** Specialized workforce solutions are available to rural businesses through DED’s Workforce Development Manager.

Additional programs and campaigns have provided cross-industry development including:

- **Rural Uses Guides³:** A multi-department team created the Rural Uses Guides and corresponding website to simplify technical language and help navigate County and Commonwealth regulations for prospective rural businesses.
- **Rural Marketing Grants:** In the Fall of 2019, the Board of Supervisors authorized DED to offer marketing grants of up to \$5,000 to participants in the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown program to increase their marketing and outreach efforts. During this initial grant cycle, DED awarded a total of \$50,000 to thirteen grant recipients.
- **Seeds for Success Education series:** The Seeds for Success program was initiated in the spring of 2019 to provide educational support to our rural businesses. DED has partnered with VCE and SBDC to offer training in marketing, finances, and grant opportunities to nearly 140 rural businesses.

While the original strategy discussed a physical space for the above services, the prospect of such a space will continue to be discussed in terms of the financial and real estate concerns associated with this investment. Several potential opportunities are being discussed including multi-use facilities to address Loudoun’s growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Adapting to the current virtual environment and to reach people across the County, DED is launching a new collaborative effort with VCE to develop an integrated website that will serve as Loudoun’s Virtual Rural Business Accelerator. The website will also include links to partner organizations such as the SBDC, Visit Loudoun, and Loudoun Chamber of Commerce.

1 <https://www.Facebook.com/LoudounFarms/>
<https://www.Instagram.com/LoudounVAFarms/>
<https://Twitter.com/LoudounFarms>

2 <https://Biz.Loudoun.gov/site-selection/find-your-location/available-land-database/>

3 <https://Biz.Loudoun.gov/rural-uses/>

“As the owner of a small farm in Loudoun County, I have to face many obstacles all the time to make my business successful. So it’s refreshing when someone comes beside you to help carry your burdens. That is what the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketing Grant meant for me. A special thank you to John Magistro, and all the others at Loudoun Economic Development who helped make such a valuable program to help small farms market their products more effectively!”

Erik Schlener, Root and Marrow Farm

1. Assess the Need for a Loudoun Agriculture and Rural Business Accelerator



2. Develop an Integrated Approach to Equestrian Industry Enhancement



2 Develop an Integrated Approach to Equestrian Industry Enhancement

Recommendation:

Support the efforts of the Loudoun equine industry to formalize an approach and long-term working plan that focuses on equine industry retention, attraction, and expansion by conducting an equine industry survey to identify critical action items and develop an Equine Master Plan to create a formal planning process to ensure that future policy development and capital projects (particularly within the context of parks and recreation) are supportive of the industry.

Status:

As part of the REBDS, a survey of the Loudoun Equine Industry was conducted by the Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia to quantify the impact of the equine industry in the County, which would assist the Loudoun Equine Alliance (LEA) in the development of an Equine Master Plan. The survey, published in 2015, identified several challenges facing the equine community, including (1) a need for a public trails system, and the (2) a need for upgraded facilities.

While a written Equine Master Plan has not been completed, the County has made significant steps towards the recommendation for a public trails system. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors (Board) on January 17, 2019, directed the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Board (PROS) to develop a detailed implementation plan for an interconnected, countywide linear parks and trails system (Attachment 1). The Loudoun Equine Alliance is a key member of this committee charged with this task, and once completed will allow further discussions about the Equine Master Plan and additional facilities. DED has included the development of this plan, including evaluating the need for a multi-purpose events facility that could support equine activities, cultural and educational events, festivals, and other community-based activities, into its department strategic plan.

3. Conduct a Regular Rural Business Owners Survey



3 Conduct a Regular Rural Business Owners Survey

Recommendation:

This recommendation focused on creating a regular process by which rural businesses will be surveyed to gather relevant information in support of a positive business and policy climate in rural Loudoun County. The annual survey would capture data from a wide range of industry sectors to better understand the rural economy from a financial and policy standpoint. The survey would also include special series that target specific rural industries or clusters with a recommendation to begin with the equine sector.

Status:

One of the biggest challenges facing rural economic decision-making is the lack of reliable/consolidated data within the rural business sectors. Several efforts have been undertaken to gather data on Loudoun’s rural economy including:

- **Equine Survey:** As previously mentioned a 2015 survey of Loudoun’s equine industry was conducted by the Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia

- **Loudoun Wineries Association:** In 2019, a study was requested by the Loudoun Wineries Association, Visit Loudoun and DED to assess the current state of the Loudoun wine industry, across aspects of production, employment, visitation and economic impact. Seven of Loudoun’s farm breweries also participated in the study as part of the rural-based craft beverage sector, which was conducted by Qualtrics Research.
- **Mid-Atlantic Food Port Study:** Funded in part by DED in partnership with Fauquier County and published in January 2019, this study was undertaken to determine whether there was sufficient capacity to support a regional food port. The report recommended conducting additional, detailed surveys of Loudoun’s producers and value-add rural businesses.
- **REDC Survey:** To assess the County’s rural economic needs, the Rural Economic Development Council (REDC) conducted a survey of rural business in 2018. The mechanism and response rate did not merit sufficient results to replicate and the decision was made to seek funding for a more comprehensive survey of rural businesses.

Because several industry-specific and more general surveys were attempted without effect, DED included in its application to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant the request for a survey on capacity, opportunities and challenges facing Loudoun’s rural businesses. DED recommends creating an annual survey of rural businesses through the grant process including a more sustainable model for collecting the data annually.

4 Create a Formal Rural Business Peer-to-Peer Consulting and Research Network

Recommendation:

The REBDS recommends leveraging existing human capital resources to develop a mentoring program to improve business startup success and to enhance local intellectual capacity building, particularly in support of new and beginning farmers and rural entrepreneurs.

Status:

Several important steps have been made in connecting rural businesses to each other and the growing list of resources for business success. DED staff currently provide many of the services to improve business startup success and support beginning farmers and rural entrepreneurs through our integrated team approach, with specialization in rural business development, small business and entrepreneurship, workforce development, marketing, real estate, and permitting/development processes. The individual roles for DED and how they support rural businesses was discussed previously as well as the partnership opportunities that widen the available resources. Additionally, the County has offered support to the New Ag School that provides exposure to authentic farming, as well as an introduction of what it takes to run a business – whether a winery, bed and breakfast, or farm – through mentoring and hands-on instruction.

DED will continue to provide services and support the efforts described above.

“Loudoun Economic Development has been there for our business since the beginning and supports our continued growth. We have benefited greatly from tailored programs created to specifically support the success of our segment as a Loudoun based agricultural business. The Economic Development team is engaged, consultative, specialized, forward thinking, as well as responsive. The resources, focus, and talented people of Loudoun Economic Development is a primary reason Loudoun County marks such success in the economic growth in both the east and west of the county.”

Bob Rupy, October One Vineyard

4. Create a Formal Rural Business Peer-to-Peer Consulting and Research Network



Rural Economic Business Strategy Success Stories

1. Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown program promotes Loudoun farm products.
2. Take Loudoun Home is a campaign launched in collaboration with Visit Loudoun. This campaign brings regional brand recognition.
3. Farm Tours continue to be signature events. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, the events went virtual in 2020.

4. Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Marketplace is a virtual platform that increases farm-to-consumer direct sales opportunities.

5. Producer – Buyer Marketplace is an annual business-to-business event linking Loudoun's farms with food and hospitality businesses.

6. The Loudoun Farms website and directories continue to be updated to be more inclusive and consumer-friendly.

7. VCE's partnership with DED to provide additional support services to our rural businesses in programs like Seeds for Success.

8. Farm to Fashion drew regional attention. The exhibit was extended into urban environments, where it was displayed during the Amazon HQ2 site visit.

9. Three year-round farmer markets currently exist in Loudoun County, in addition to nine seasonal markets.

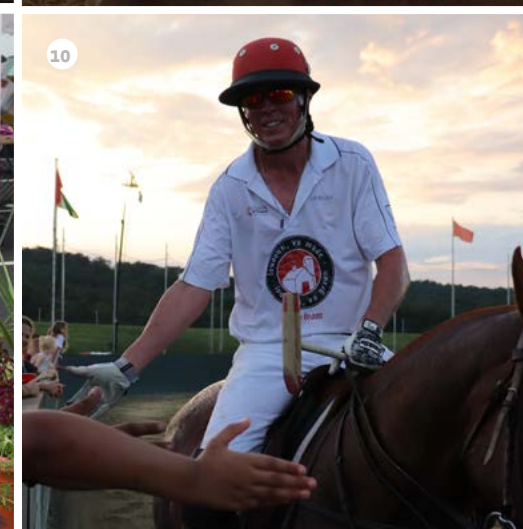
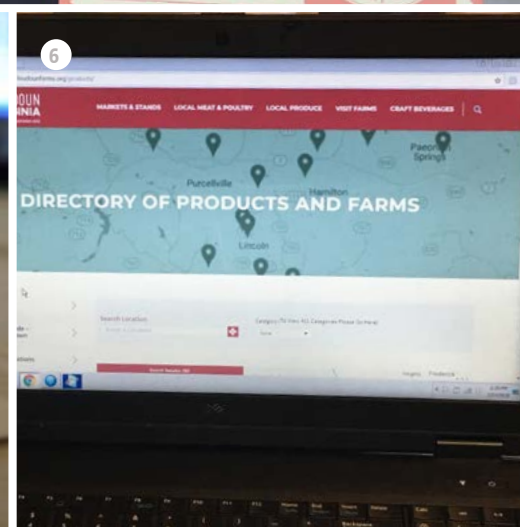
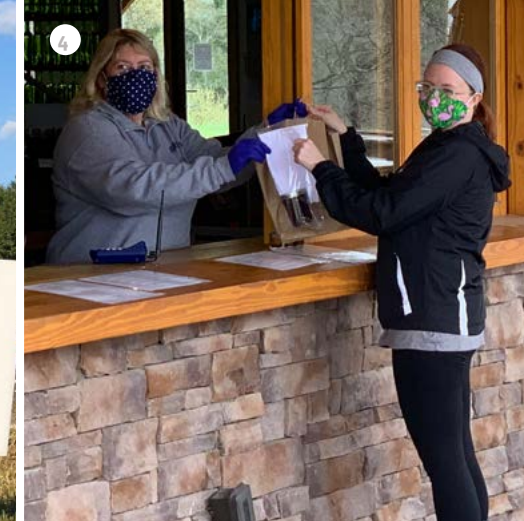
10. Polo in the Park at Morven Park is another opportunity to introduce the Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown brand to new consumers.

11. Loudoun Grown Expo celebrated its 10th anniversary while showcasing many of Loudoun's growers, producers, artisans and makers.

12. The award-winning Farmer Trading Cards program is a partnership between DED and the Loudoun County Public Schools to bring awareness of local farming to youth.

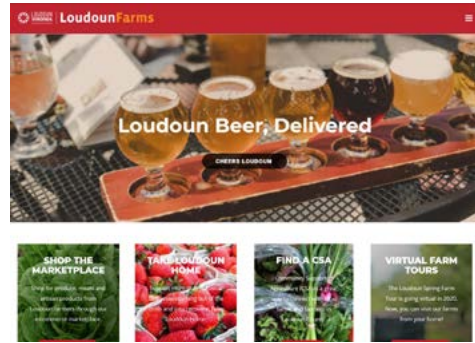
13. Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Onesie program is a partnership with the Loudoun hospitals.

14. Loudoun County created the Rural Business Uses Guides to assist businesses in understanding which businesses can be added to an existing property.



PART 2. PROGRAM STRATEGIES

1. Redesign LoudounFarms.org Website to Add a Greater Level of Business Support Information



“Loudoun County’s Economic Development team has created unique outreach opportunities for our farm helping us connect with many residents of Loudoun. Their farm database, farm tours, farmer/buyer workshops and online presence help generate excitement and awareness about our offerings. It’s been great to feel supported by local government!”

Casey Wisch, Long Stone Farm

1 Redesign LoudounFarms.org Website to Add a Greater Level of Business Support Information.

Recommendation:

The REBDS suggests that many new entrants to farming rely on the internet as their first source of information and recommends development of a “one-stop-shop” service delivery model, using the existing LoudounFarms.org platform. Possible information sources would include:

- Direct connection with agricultural and rural industry development information.
- Online listing service for farm real estate.
- Connecting young and beginning farmers with a list of resource providers and training opportunities.
- Maintaining an up-to-date calendar of events to include classes, training and marketing events.
- Expanding the document library with links to outside sources.
- Providing a topic-driven and searchable blog site focused on farm and production management.
- Providing on-line seminars and information resources to better understand available land conservation and land-use tools.

Status:

DED supports several digital platforms including LoudounFarms.org that are constantly updated and improved to meet business and consumer demand. The Loudoun Farms website is a consumer-focused site integrating the recommendations above. DED also uses Biz.Loudoun.gov for its business development services, including dedicated resources for rural businesses. Specific updates to the websites include:

- Links to partner organizations.
- Rural real estate search functions and direct access to the VA Farmlink site, which is a searchable database of lands available for purchase or lease.
- Events calendars on both sites.
- Links to VCE’s AgroEcology Hub which was developed as an information clearing house for education and training opportunities, as well as a direct link to the VCE Statewide Resources and Information Library.
- As mentioned previously, DED is launching a new collaborative effort with VCE to develop an integrated website that will serve as Loudoun’s Virtual Rural Business Accelerator.

2 Encourage the Formation of a Loudoun County Trails Association

Recommendation:

The Strategy recommended that the County encourage the formation of an organization to develop a comprehensive trails plan as a long-term objective.

Status:

As mentioned above, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, on January 17, 2019, directed the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Board (PROS) to develop a detailed implementation plan for an interconnected, countywide linear parks and trails system (Attachment 1). PROS subsequently appointed representatives from key stakeholder groups to the Linear Parks and Trails Subcommittee (LPAT) to advance this initiative. The LPAT is comprised of individuals representing groups organized in support of parks, recreation, and community services; trail walking; mountain biking; equestrian activities; land conservation; towns; and wildlife habitat protection. Individual stakeholder visions reflect the diversity of values from Loudoun County trail users.

In May of 2020, Loudoun County issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain proposals from qualified firms to provide consultant services to develop a conceptual design and provide planning services to develop a County Wide Linear Parks and Trails System. The contract that results from this RFP will create a roadmap to be used as a resource for the future development and redevelopment of the County’s parks, open space, trails, facilities, and recreation system to assure an appropriate balance of recreational facilities and amenities throughout the County.

2. Encourage the Formation of a Loudoun County Trails Association



“The County has an opportunity to show support for our \$180 million equestrian industry by promoting equine access to public trails and development of equestrian facilities in parks as part of the parks master plan that is currently in development.”

Kelly Foltman, Dunthorpe Equine Services

3 Enhance Marketing Programs to Improve Linkage Between Rural and Urban Economies

Recommendation:

The REBDS recommended the creation, promotion, and management of a larger number of coordinated public relations and marketing events that introduce culinary and arts elements, such as Farm-City Dinners, job/volunteer exchanges, youth summer camps, and hosted Farm-to-Fork Dinners. In addition, there was a recommendation to create a unique event, to be run by the County that serves as a fundraiser to support the continued operations of rural business development programs.

Status:

DED has a comprehensive marketing strategy for businesses across the County that integrates and educates about opportunities and success in both rural and urban environments. Until the COVID-19 pandemic limited events, DED had a robust schedule of community-focused events, that will continue when it is safe to do so. Since the release of the REBDS, Loudoun has hosted numerous events, including Labor Day Weekend Festivals designed to promote Loudoun’s culinary and wine culture, Farm-to-Table events to educate consumers on the benefits of eating local and promote the County’s

3. Enhance Marketing Programs to Improve Linkage Between Rural and Urban Economies



“The virtual Marketplace has allowed us to reach customers in Eastern Loudoun that we had not accessed. Local Line functions smoothly for both sides of the transaction.”

Sam Grant, Silcott Springs Farm

culinary talents, and partnered on many town festivals and partner programs to support rural businesses.

Other campaigns and events designed to improve the linkage between Loudoun’s rural and urban areas include:

- **Spring and Fall Farm Tours:** These annual events ask local farms to open their doors to educate consumers about local farming and the benefits of local foods. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, DED pivoted to host the 2020 Spring and Fall Farm Tours virtually. The virtual tours were well received by both the farming community and our consumers, attracting thousands of site visits from around the world⁴.
- **Holiday Guide:** Each winter, DED releases a holiday guide that provides consumers information on getting their holiday trees, and greenery from Loudoun growers. In 2019 DED added additional consumer resources as part of the Take Loudoun Home campaign listed below.
- **Farmer Trading Cards:** This program is a partnership with Loudoun County Public Schools to bring awareness of local farming and local foods to Loudoun’s public school system. Each year, up to 10 farmers are nominated by the public to appear on baseball-like trading cards and visit Loudoun elementary schools. The visits coincide with the onset of our growing season and the opening day of Major League Baseball.
- **The Purcellville Loudoun Grown Expo:** The Expo celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020. The annual event, hosted by the Town of Purcellville, is held the final weekend of February, and showcases the best of Loudoun’s growers, producers, artisans and makers, breweries, and wineries. Several thousand people attend the annual event to learn about and sample Loudoun products.
- **The Producer-Buyer Marketplace:** In partnership with Visit Loudoun, this annual event in Leesburg links Loudoun farms with food and hospitality businesses to promote those all-important business-to-business relationships. Last year’s event brought a range of bulk purchase clients, including restaurants, hotels, catering services and major events. Every producer that attended made at least one sale, and total sales at the event eclipsed \$180,000.
- **Take Loudoun Home:** In partnership with Visit Loudoun, this marketing campaign was created as a call to action—a rallying cry for our community and visitors to support local businesses. This campaign continues to be used to highlight the makers and producers in Loudoun and encourage direct-to-consumer sales.
- **Loudoun Is Ready:** During the COVID-19 pandemic DED, Visit Loudoun, and the Loudoun Chamber came to together to create the “Loudoun Is Ready” campaign asking businesses to commit to the best health and safety practices for their customers as and providing no-cost marketing exposure and business resources.

While DED has not hosted a fundraiser, the above listed events and partnership with other events all serve to promote rural businesses and provide opportunities to both grow and celebrate their successes.

⁴ | <https://LoudounFarms.org/take-loudoun-home/virtual-farm-tours/>

4 Create a Branded Rural Business Awareness Program

Recommendation:

The REBDS noted that Loudoun’s rural economy lacked a recognizable image or product line and recommended an event-centered branding program that would link rural businesses across industry sectors to include culinary, heritage, equine, arts, recreation, agriculture, wine and using the Seneca Lake Wine Trail as an example.

Status:

DED developed the Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown (LMLG) program to promote the Loudoun farm product brand. Participants included on LoudounFarms.org are provided with collateral marketing materials to help them promote their LMLG products. LMLG has seen a steady increase in membership since the launch in 2015 and currently includes 235 active members.

In 2019, DED, in collaboration with Visit Loudoun, expanded the reach of LMLG with the launch the Take Loudoun Home campaign mentioned above. An immediate benefit was observed during the initial iteration of TLH, as businesses in the demonstration project reported significant increases in sales, customer traffic and social media metrics. Since that time, the program has expanded to include year-end holiday promotions and, most recently, a call to action to support local businesses during the COVID-19 restrictions.

DED also supports our partners efforts, including Visit Loudoun who has developed a comprehensive destination marketing program designed to attract visitors to the region. As part of the program, Visit Loudoun produces and maintains a wine trail map/guide that features more than 40 Loudoun wineries groups into six wine clusters, and has also developed an Ale Trail Guide and Passport program to promote Loudoun’s 30-plus breweries. Visit Loudoun, along with DED, also promote Loudoun’s other rural assets to residents and visitors, such as bed and breakfast stays, wedding venues, equine activities, and other special events that support our rural businesses.

In April 2020, DED launched the Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Virtual Marketplace⁵, e-commerce platform, powered by Local Line, to help Loudoun’s 1,200 farmers better reach their consumer base. The launch was accelerated in response to the COVID-19 crisis but is intended as a long-term solution to expand farm-to-consumer sales transactions throughout the County. DED received two grant awards to support the project, \$250,000 from the USDA Farm Market Promotion Program, and \$20,000 from the Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development grant. The additional funding will extend the County’s commitment to the Marketplace for three years. The Marketplace is a priority rural economic action item as we anticipate several benefits that will result from the e-commerce platform. In addition to the direct benefits to local farmers (increased visibility, increased profits, and increased customer base) we will be able to expand the reach and increase awareness of our Loudoun brand on a regional level, provide access to local foods in underserved areas, and provide new business opportunities in the County such as food delivery services.

⁵ | <https://LoudounFarms.org/take-loudoun-home/marketplace/>

4. Create a Branded Rural Business Awareness Program



“I want to thank Economic Development for the Marketing Funds to be able to market and promote my business to the locals. The money will be a huge help to promote and grow my business. I am looking forward to getting my new signs. Thank you so much!”

Paige Critchley, Paige’s Pit Stop - Farm Store

5. Develop a Consolidated Year-Round Farmers Market in Loudoun County



“I was nominated for Loudoun Chamber’s Entrepreneur of the Year award. That prompted me to reflect back to when I moved to Loudoun to start my business 20 years ago. I realized that, if it weren’t for DED I wouldn’t be here...and that is as true now as it was 20 years ago, especially with the incredible support from the team throughout 2020. Economic Development means everything to me. Buddy Rizer should be knighted. Communication coming out of DED is consistent, timely, appropriate, always blows me away with all the programs and initiatives.”

Mary Ellen Taylor, Endless Summer Harvest

5 Develop a Consolidated Year-Round Farmers Market in Loudoun County

Recommendation:

The Strategy recommended the creation of a year-round farmers market oriented toward the eastern portion of the County and geared toward the shopping patterns and preferences of the County’s large consumer population. This market would be linked to a tiered system of seasonal markets.

Status:

A Feasibility Study for a year-round, indoor farm market was discussed with REDC stakeholders, focusing on a retail store with regional and Loudoun products and an outdoor area for a Loudoun Farmers Market near the Loudoun Station Metro stop. However, because the Loudoun Station Metro stop is not in operation the group recognized that this limits the amount of pedestrian traffic the in area that would be needed to sustain such a model. The need to continue to support paths for rural businesses to a wider customer-base is fully integrated into DED’s strategic plan and is part of the reason for the acceleration of the launch of the LMLG Marketplace described above. This online platform allows for year-round support of rural businesses and can accommodate the wide variety of rural businesses in Loudoun.

Outside of County-run programs, there are currently three year-round markets – on Saturdays at Catoctin Circle in Leesburg and One Loudoun, and the Sunday Brambleton market. In addition to these year-round markets, the County supports nine seasonal farm markets and a number of e-commerce markets. In each of these markets, a portion of the market vendors are from Loudoun County. Aside from the markets, Loudoun farm products can also be purchased at 15 roadside stands in the County and dozens of CSA options. DED will continue to promote the many ways in which consumers can support Loudoun’s growers and producers, on the LoudounFarms.org website and other social media outlets.

Conclusion

The implementation of the REBDS has had a significant positive impact on Loudoun’s efforts to enhance the rural economy and preserve the County’s physical beauty and rural assets. The nine strategies identified in the Long View were used to form a blueprint for an action plan for DED, REDC and to help shape county policies. A review of the REBDS indicates that progress has been made on a number of the strategies, and many of the recommendations have been completed or are part of DED’s workplan to support our producers and rural businesses. However, the report makes it clear that the work to grow agribusinesses and agritourism business must be an ongoing priority. Those recommendations from the Long View that have not been fully implemented are either integrated into DED’s strategic plan for future review and action. Support for comprehensive strategic planning for rural development and proactive action in support of Loudoun’s rural businesses, including the expansion of broadband internet, direct business support and targeted workforce programming will to promote high value and value-added agriculture to support the Board of Supervisor’s vision for rural economic development in Loudoun County.





**LOUDOUN
VIRGINIA**
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT