

Stafford County Economic Development and Tourism

FY2026 Annual Report

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Stafford County Community,

As we reflect on Fiscal Year 2026 (July 2025 - June 2026), I am proud to share another year of meaningful progress for Stafford County's Economic Development and Tourism Department. Guided by the vision of our Board of Supervisors, direction by County Administration and the goals outlined in the Stafford 2040 Comprehensive Plan, our team remained focused on creating opportunities that strengthen our economy, support our businesses, and enhance the quality of life for our residents.

This year marked an important milestone with the completion of our department's Strategic Plan. Adopted in October 2025, this roadmap provides a clear direction for the future of economic development in Stafford County, ensuring that our efforts remain intentional, collaborative, and results-driven.

Economic growth continued to gain momentum throughout FY26, with increased capital investment and the creation of high-quality, high-paying jobs that strengthen our local economy and provide in-demand opportunities for our residents. We have highlighted a handful of projects in this report that have met those marks, with impressive capital investment and job creation numbers that drive our local economy and increased commercial tax base.

At the same time, we made significant strides in advancing the Board of Supervisors' Stafford 2040 vision by successfully recruiting full-service restaurants that enhance our commercial corridors, expand dining options, and contribute to the creation of a vibrant, connected community our residents have asked for. We chose to showcase the retail and restaurant growth in this report, showing our department's aligned understanding that traditional economic development goals have a place, as well as a major focus on quality of life here in Stafford.

One of our continued efforts in the department is to continue to educate the community on the impacts of economic development and tourism efforts, as well as what types of resources our department has to offer those who are considering locating a business in Stafford, those who own and operate an existing Stafford-based business, and those who are considering jumping into the world of entrepreneurship. We have a fantastic staff of experts who can help guide business owners to the resources they need to be successful.

Our commitment to supporting local businesses was recognized statewide when the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) honored Stafford County with an Achievement Award for our Legacy Business Program. This recognition reflects our dedication to preserving the businesses that have helped shape our community while fostering an environment where new businesses can thrive.

We recognize that we have accomplished a lot in this past fiscal year, but we also know there is so much more work to still be done. Thank you for your continued partnership and support as we look ahead to another year of growth and success.

Sincerely,
Liz Barber, CEcD
Director, Stafford County Department of Economic Development and Tourism

YEAR AT A GLANCE


Stafford Hospital Area,
Aquia District

FY26 Economic Impact Highlights

*Stats are from Fiscal Year 2026: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

$2.1B	1,671	$20.4M	489
capital investment	jobs created	new taxable income estimated	businesses assisted

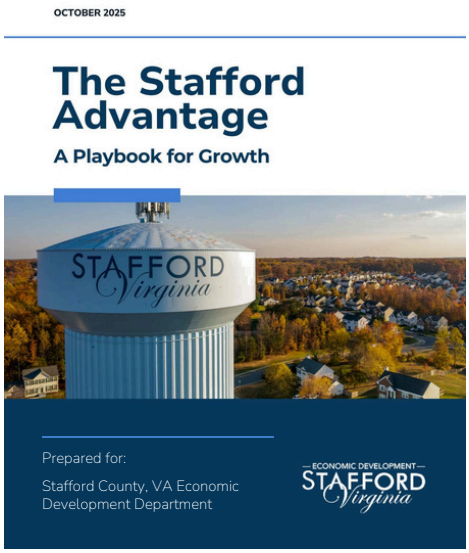
Totals are calculated from information reported in project announcement press releases shared through our department, publicly available information from economic impact statements from planning & zoning applications, and Salesforce CRM information as reported by the businesses. Capital investment, jobs created and taxable income are reported during the year of project announcement only. O'Reilly and Stafford Technology Campus are not included in these calculations.

A PLAYBOOK FOR GROWTH

Fiscal Year 2026 marked a defining milestone as Stafford County adopted The Stafford Advantage, its new Economic Development Strategic Plan. Developed in partnership with business leaders, regional stakeholders, and Fourth Economy Consulting, the plan aligns with the Board of Supervisors' vision and the Stafford County 2040 Comprehensive Plan to ensure economic growth strengthens, not changes, the community residents call home.



Built around the vision of Heart, Home, and a Healthy Business Environment, the strategy focuses on attracting quality employers, supporting existing businesses, developing a skilled workforce, and creating the retail, dining, entertainment, and recreational destinations residents have long desired.



Implementation is already underway. During FY26, Stafford welcomed major private investments, expanded workforce partnerships, launched new business support initiatives, advanced destination retail opportunities, and strengthened relationships with existing employers—turning strategic planning into measurable action.

Together, these efforts are creating a stronger commercial tax base, new employment opportunities, and a vibrant community where businesses, residents, and visitors can thrive for generations to come.

Implementation Underway

- ✔ Strategic Plan Adopted
- ✔ Actively Tracking 66 Action Items
- ✔ EDA Alignment Established
- ✔ Targeted Recruitment Expanded
- ✔ Federal & State Partnerships Strengthened
- ✔ Commercial Investment Increased
- ✔ Strengthening Team Capacity
- ✔ Advancing Organizational Excellence
- ✔ National Retail Outreach
- ✔ Refreshed Brand and Messaging
- ✔ Convening Partners at Economic Development Summit

The Stafford Advantage.

Grow where **opportunity** meets advantage.



Ferry Farm area,
George Washington District

VISION → STRATEGY → ACTION → RESULTS

The Stafford Advantage is built on four strategic pillars: Business Attraction, Business Retention & Expansion, Workforce Development, and Placemaking. Together, these priorities guide Stafford County's efforts to attract investment, support existing businesses, prepare a skilled workforce, and create vibrant places where people want to live, work, and visit. The strategy also prioritizes the recruitment and growth of key target industries, including **defense and cybersecurity, information technology, warehousing and distribution, and high-end retail, restaurants,** —strengthening the county's economy while enhancing quality of life for residents.

Industry Support & Development

Build a more competitive location for the attraction, creation, expansion, and retention of companies.

Real Estate & Infrastructure

Be a hub for the modern amenities, developments, and infrastructure that residents and businesses alike seek.

Local Business Climate

Improve the local business climate to better position the county to capture investment and economic growth.

Organizational Effectiveness

Invest in the continued improvement and development of the county's Economic Development Department and Tourism.

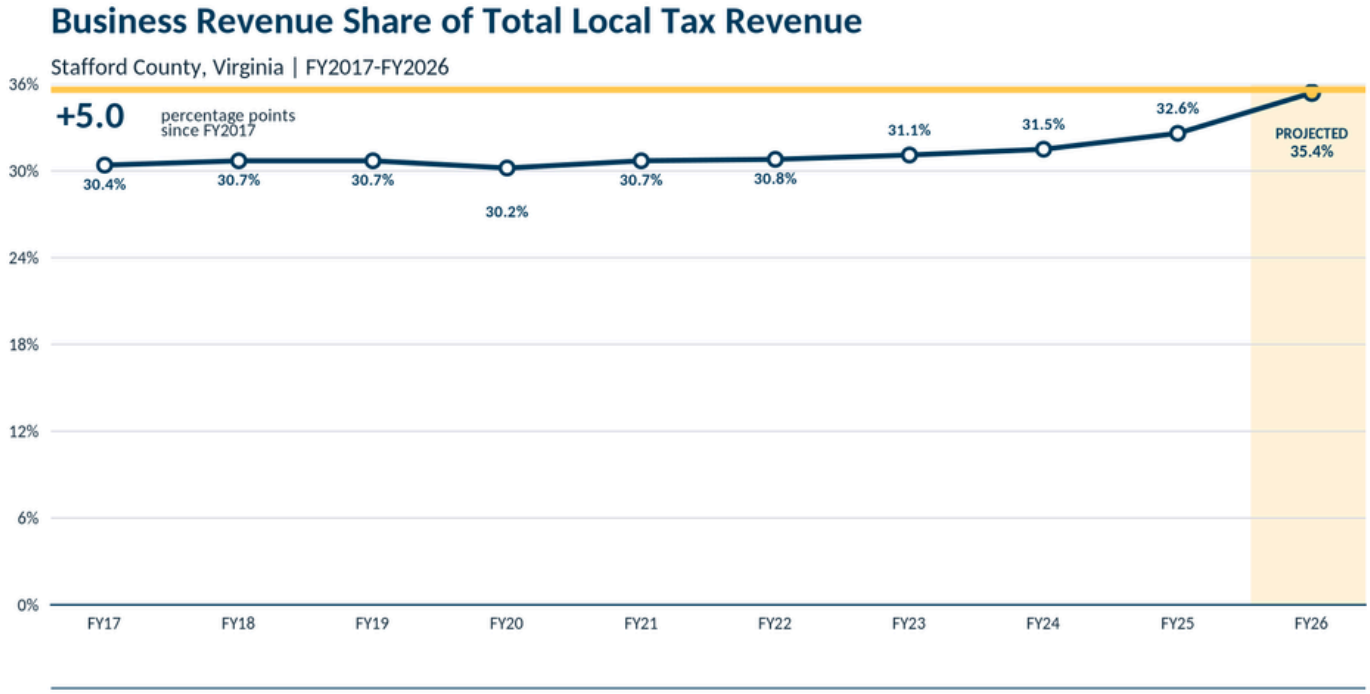
WHAT IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

Economic development is the process of creating a stronger, more resilient local economy by attracting new investment, supporting existing businesses, expanding job opportunities, growing the commercial tax base, and improving the overall quality of life for residents. These goals are achieved through capital investment in new and expanding business projects that create high-wage, high-growth jobs and generate increased local tax revenue. Every business that opens, expands, or invests in Stafford County contributes to a healthier economy that helps fund public services while providing the restaurants, retail, entertainment, and amenities residents want.

Why It Matters

Economic development impacts everyone who lives, works, or visits Stafford County.

- More local jobs
- More restaurants, shopping and entertainment
- Increased tourism
- Greater private investment
- Stronger commercial tax base
- Reduced reliance on residential taxes
- Improved quality of life, entertainment, and amenities resident want.



Source: Taxes Assessed Annually as verified by the Stafford County Department of Budget & Management and the Stafford County Commissioner of the Revenue. FY2026 figures are projections.

What is the EDA Stafford Virginia

The Stafford County Economic Development Authority (EDA) is an independent political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, where the members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

The EDA works alongside the Economic Development and Tourism Department to encourage business investment and economic growth. The EDA supports business financing, invests in economic development initiatives, and helps create opportunities that strengthen Stafford County's economy for future generations.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

On November 29, 2025, Shop Small Stafford transformed Small Business Saturday into a countywide celebration of local entrepreneurship, encouraging residents to support the businesses that make Stafford unique. The campaign featured a coordinated marketing effort with a Digital Passport, community prize giveaways, exclusive promotions, and the Shop Small Market, giving home-based businesses a unique opportunity to capitalize on one of the year's largest shopping days by setting up a booth at the Long Family Market.



More than a one-day event, Shop Small Stafford demonstrated the power of shopping locally. Every purchase helped strengthen small businesses, support local jobs, and keep more dollars circulating within Stafford County's economy. The campaign also introduced hundreds of shoppers to businesses they had never visited before, creating new customer relationships that extend well beyond the holiday season.

Why Shop Small?

When residents choose local businesses, they're investing in Stafford's entrepreneurs, creating jobs, strengthening the tax base, and helping local businesses thrive. Shop Small Stafford was designed to make that impact visible—and inspire residents to continue shopping local throughout the year.

- Supports local businesses
- Builds community pride
- Strengthens local jobs
- Keeps dollars local



50
participating businesses



$23.7k
stayed in local economy

320+
participating shoppers



19
communities attended
including 16 Virginia localities and 3 states



NEW BUSINESS GROWTH

Stafford County's business community continued to grow during FY26, with the department assisting over 75 businesses in the process of opening across the county. In addition, the department supported 24 ribbon cuttings, celebrating new investments in restaurants, retail, professional services, manufacturing, and other industries that strengthen Stafford's economy and enhance quality of life.

24
Ribbon Cuttings

Growth Continued at Embrey Mill Town Center

51 total businesses

12 new businesses in FY26

$4M declared value

*Declared values are the construction values of only the interior modifications made by the tenants, and were calculated from the building permit declarations from all Embrey Mill Town Center projects that received a certificate of occupancy in FY26.

Embrey Mill Town Center continues to emerge as a major commercial destination in North Stafford, bringing new retail, dining, healthcare, and professional services to one of the county's fastest-growing communities. The mixed-use development has attracted a diverse mix of national brands, local businesses, and medical providers, creating jobs, expanding the commercial tax base, and improving access to everyday services. As future phases continue, Embrey Mill Town Center will further strengthen Stafford County's economy and reinforce its commitment to strategic, balanced growth.

INCENTIVES

Bringing More Choices to Stafford

Olive Garden & LongHorn Incentive



As a part of a broader initiative to expand dining and entertainment options and to diversify the local economy, the Board of Supervisors has approved performance-based incentive agreements to attract two new full-service restaurants, Olive Garden Italian Restaurant and LongHorn Steakhouse, to the Courthouse West development. By linking incentives to measurable outcomes, such as job creation and tax generation, the County ensures a responsible, long-term approach to economic development. This also reduces liability for the county, since no incentives will be paid to the companies unless the project is completed, meals taxes are paid, they meet their capital investment requirements, and they employ locals to meet the standards of the agreement.

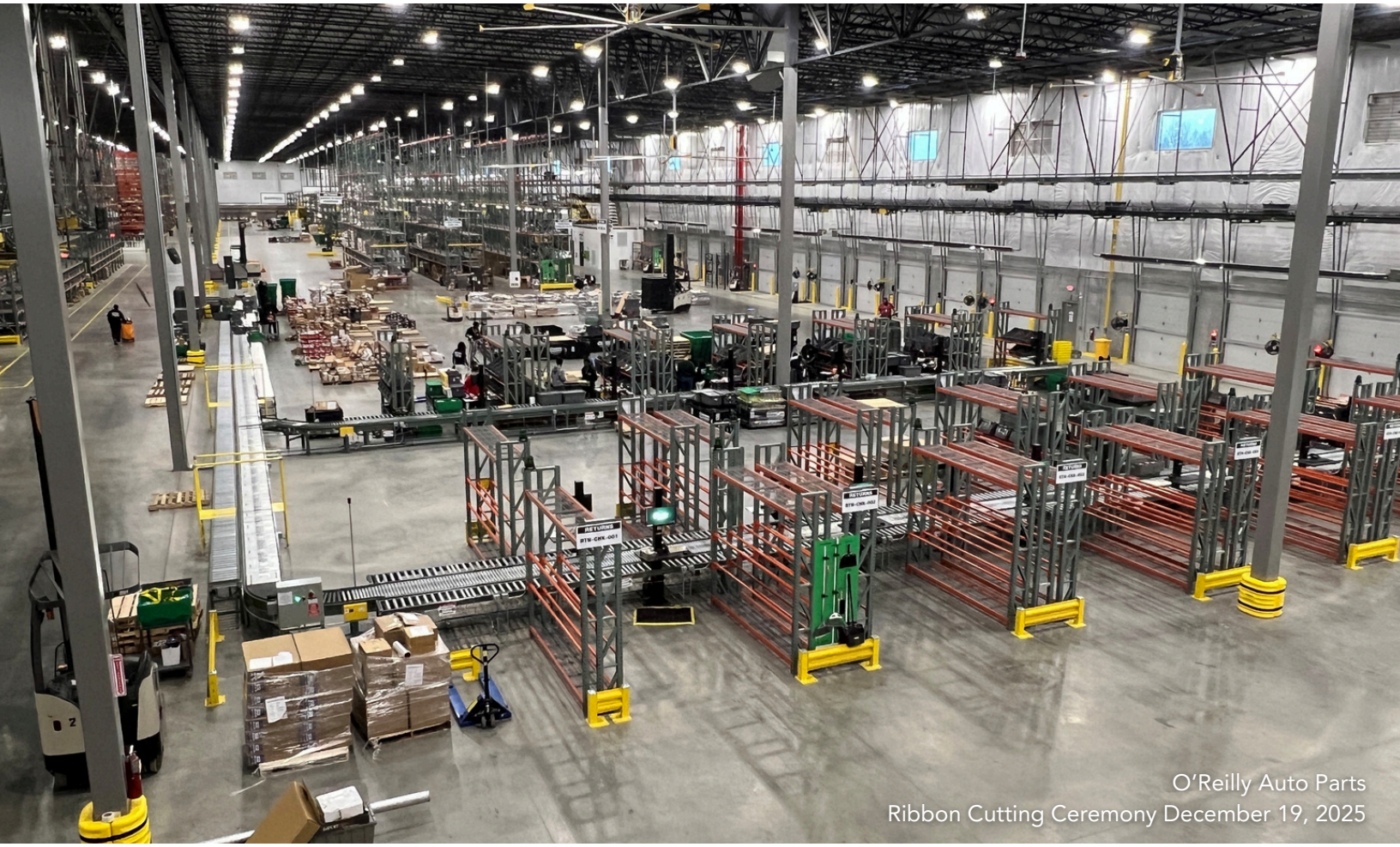
$7M
in capital investment

85
permanent jobs created

$500k
estimated annual tax revenue

IMPACT PROJECT

O'Reilly Auto Parts Distribution Center



O'Reilly Auto Parts
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony December 19, 2025

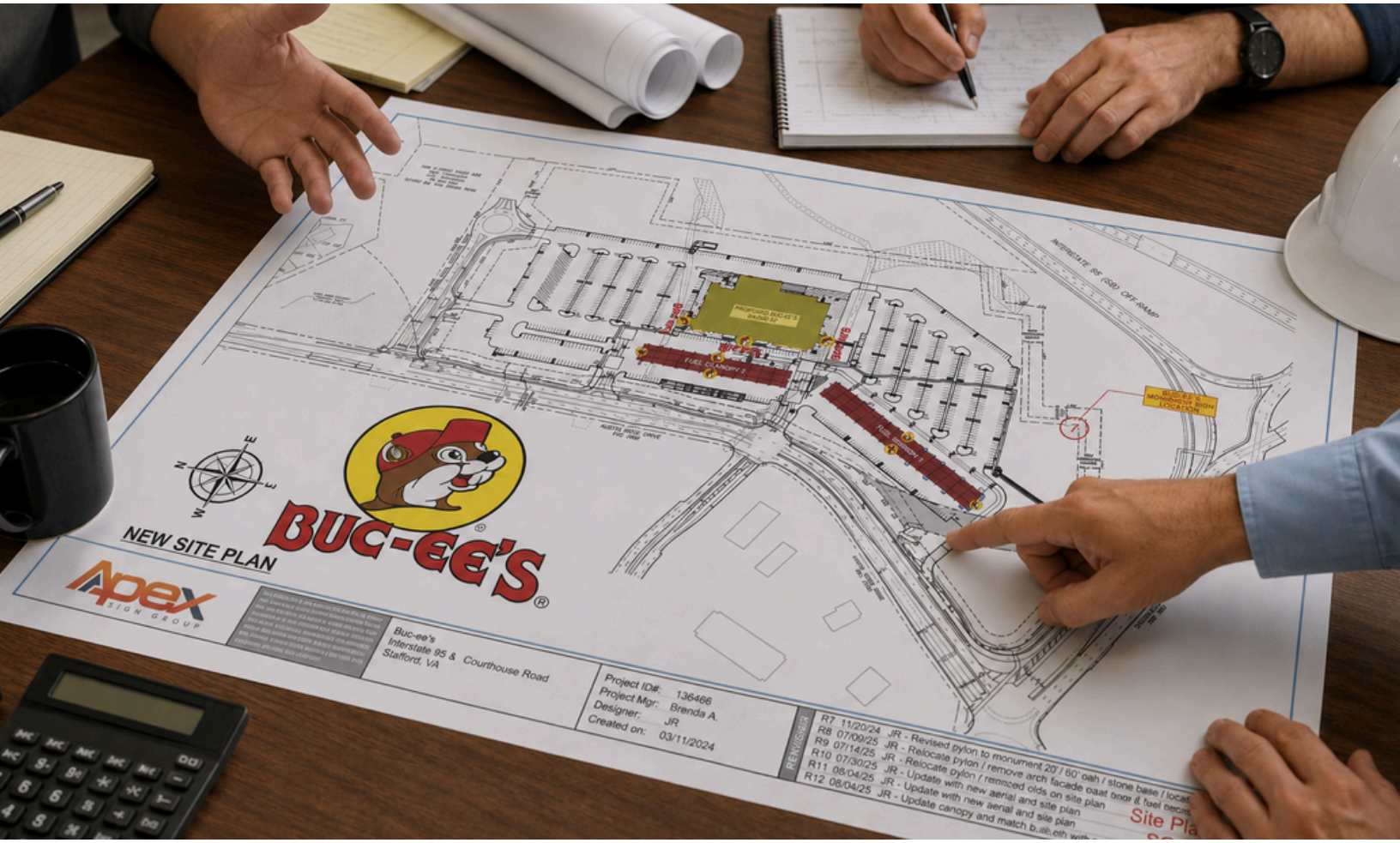
O'Reilly Auto Parts selected Stafford County for their 3rd distribution center with a retrieval system and automated storage, underscoring the county's strategic location and growing role as a Mid-Atlantic logistics hub. The facility supplies current and future stores across the region while incorporating advanced automation technology alongside traditional warehouse operations to maximize efficiency and capacity. Company leaders say the investment both strengthens customer service capabilities and positions O'Reilly for continued expansion, with Stafford playing a key role in that growth.

$41.5M	225+	550k
in capital investment	jobs created	sq ft distribution center

These calculations are not included in FY26 Impact Highlight (pg 3). This project was announced prior to FY26.

IMPACT PROJECT

Buc-ee's



The approval of the Buc-ee's Travel Center by the Board of Supervisors sent a strong message to the retail recruitment community that destination-driven commercial growth is a county priority. Expected to attract nearly 21,000 vehicle visits each day, the project will increase tourism spending, generate nearly $2 million in annual tax revenue, create hundreds of jobs, and strengthen the county's commercial tax base. As a nationally recognized destination, Buc-ee's also enhances Stafford's visibility among retailers, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment operators, helping attract future private investment and supporting long-term economic prosperity.

$47.15M	230+	21K	$2M
in capital investment	projected permanent jobs created	estimated vehicle visits daily	estimated annual tax revenue

IMPACT PROJECT

Vantage Data Center



Vantage Data Centers
Groundbreaking Ceremony October 29, 2025

Vantage Data Centers is investing $2 billion to develop a 929,000 sq ft hyperscale data center campus in Stafford County's Centreport Parkway region, capitalizing on the area's strategic proximity to Northern Virginia's Data Center Alley. The project strengthens Stafford's emergence as a growing digital infrastructure hub. Company leaders say that this location provides customers with critical access to connectivity, scalability, and resources, positioning the region for long-term economic and technological growth.

$2B	50	1,000
in capital investment	projected permanent jobs	project construction jobs

IMPACT PROJECT

Stafford Technology Campus



Stafford Technology Campus
Topping Out Ceremony May 5, 2026

STACK Infrastructure announced the 1+ gigawatt Stafford Technology Campus, the company's largest flagship development and one of the most significant private investments in Stafford County's history. Spanning 500 acres with plans for 19 data centers buildings, the project will generate more than $80 million in local annual tax revenue at full buildout, create hundreds of high-paying permanent jobs and more than 1,000 construction jobs, while supporting major infrastructure improvements that reduce more than $58 million in planned county capital costs. The investment further strengthens Stafford County's position as a premier destination for technology, digital infrastructure, and future economic growth.

$30.5B	470	1,000+
in capital investment	projected permanent jobs	project construction jobs

These calculations are not included in FY26 Impact Highlight (pg 3). This project was announced prior to FY26.

BUSINESS SUPPORT



328	108	54	29	10
LEGACY BUSINESSES	Women-Owned	Minority-Owned	Veteran-Owned	Military Spouse-Owned

Legacy Business Recognition Program

At the request of the Board of Supervisors, Stafford County launched the award-winning Legacy Business Recognition Program to celebrate businesses that have made lasting investments in the community. The program recognizes businesses across diverse industries while strengthening relationships, providing valuable economic insights, and supporting long-term business retention and growth. The initiative received a prestigious Horizon Interactive Award, one of ten earned by Stafford County this year.



Managing Poor Performers



Marketing Summit

Business Resource Workshops

Developed in direct response to requests from Stafford's business community, the Business Resource Workshop Series provides practical education and networking focused on marketing, workforce, financial management, and business growth. With strong attendance and repeat participation, the workshops have become a trusted resource for local entrepreneurs. The program's impact was recognized with a Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award.



VACo Award

Stafford County received a Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award for its Business Events Initiative, which has supported more than 200 entrepreneurs through education, networking, and business resources.

"The Business Events Initiative is a shining example of how local governments can be responsive, innovative, and collaborative in creating real solutions for our entrepreneurs. We are proud of our Economic Development team for leading the way in Virginia."
— Chairman Deuntay Diggs, Stafford County Board of Supervisors

Tours with EDA for Pathways Program with Stafford County Public Schools

Stafford County continued advancing workforce development through strong partnerships with the Stafford EDA, Stafford County Public Schools, and community stakeholders as part of the Pathways Program. Tours of Stafford Schools' Specialty Centers, including the future Arts, Media & Production Center at Hartwood High School, showcased how students are gaining hands-on skills and graduating with industry-recognized credentials that prepare them for high-demand careers. The visits also strengthened connections between local businesses and educators, helping expand partnerships that will build Stafford County's future workforce.



MULTIPLE
Industry Partners Engaged

WORKFORCE
Pipeline Development

Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce: EBE Business Accelerator Program

The Stafford EDA partnered with the Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce to support the Business Accelerator Program, serving as a local liaison to connect entrepreneurs with valuable business resources and opportunities. Through expert-led training, mentorship, peer collaboration, and hands-on business development support, the program helps small businesses build capacity, create jobs, and achieve long-term success. By investing in local entrepreneurs, Stafford County is strengthening its small business community, fostering innovation, and building a more resilient local economy.



EXPERT-LED TRAINING

BUSINESS MENTORSHIP

PEER LEARNING

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

TOURISM SUPPORT

In Fall 2025, Stafford County's Tourism Program was integrated into the Department of Economic Development, strengthening the connection between tourism, business attraction, and economic growth. Together, the unified department is enhancing economic development through the visitor experience while promoting Stafford as a premier place to live, visit, and do business. This matters because tourists provide a significant economic impact to the county, allowing the tourism program to fund improvements to our local parks, fields, and fund other tourism initiatives that effect our residents. The best part, all tourism initiatives are funded through transient occupancy taxes paid by hotel guests, not by Stafford County residents through property or local taxes.

FY26 Tourism Impact

$4,973,101
in transient occupancy taxes collected

8,203
visits to the Stafford County Visitors Center

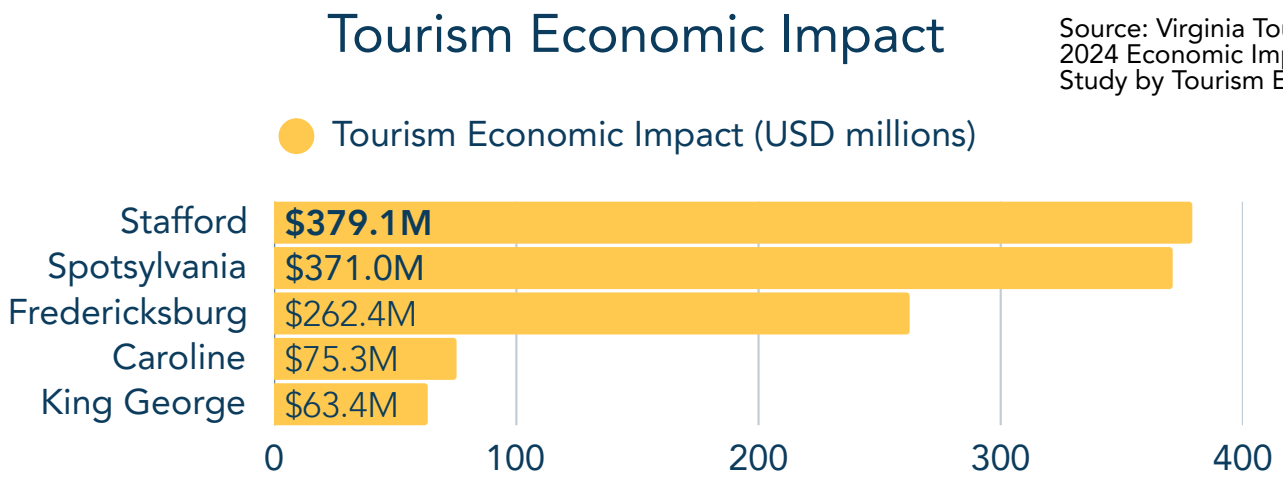
$43,291,780
in hotel sales

Virginia Tourism Corporation Study

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation's most recent Economic Impact of Visitors Study, conducted by Tourism Economics, tourism generated an estimated $379.1 million in total economic impact in Stafford County, the highest among localities in the Fredericksburg region.

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS®

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, 2024 Economic Impact of Visitors Study by Tourism Economics.



The study demonstrates tourism's significant contribution to the local economy, supporting businesses, generating tax revenue, creating jobs, and reinforcing Stafford County's position as a premier destination for visitors and investment.

Tourism Marketing and Event Grants

The Tourism Grant Program was revised to improve its effectiveness, transparency, and long-term impact. Launching in FY27, the enhanced program features a standardized application process and expanded funding opportunities to support new and existing events, destination marketing, and tourism initiatives. By helping create exciting experiences for residents and visitors alike, the program encourages overnight stays, increases visitor spending, and strengthens Stafford County's tourism economy.

Community Events

Supports marketing for community-based events that enhance local experiences and grow Stafford's annual event calendar.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- 500 attendee minimum
- $2,500 max funding

New Events

Provides marketing support for new multi-day events during their first three years to help establish long-term annual traditions.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- $20,000 max funding for year one
- $10,000 max funding for years two and three

High Impact Event

Supports major festivals, sporting events, and entertainment experiences that attract regional visitors and generate significant economic impact.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- 500 minimum room nights or 5,000 attendee minimum
- $2,500 minimum funding based on $.50 per attendee or $20/ verified room night

Special Events

Supports conferences, meetings, and special events that generate overnight stays and increase visitor spending.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- 50 minimum room nights
- $10,000 max funding
- $20/ verified room night

Marketing Leverage

Invests in strategic marketing campaigns that promote Stafford County as a visitor destination and expand tourism awareness.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- $10,000 max funding
- Marketing is required to target audiences 50+ miles outside Stafford County

Sporting Events

Supports youth, collegiate, and regional sporting events that drive hotel stays, visitor spending, and sports tourism.

ELIGIBILITY/FUNDING:

- 100 minimum room nights
- $20,000 max funding
- $20/ verified room night







OUR TEAM IN ACTION

Professional Excellence

4 professional credentials earned

7+ industry conferences



Liz Barber, Certified Economic Developer (CEcD)
Awarded the Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) designation by the International Economic Development Council—the profession's highest credential recognizing expertise in advancing economic opportunity and community prosperity.

Jon Lindsley & Savannah Wimbush
Completed the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute (OU EDI), one of the nation's premier professional development programs accredited by the International Economic Development Council.

Savannah Wimbush
Completed the Virginia Institute for Economic Development (VIED) through Virginia Tech, strengthening expertise in economic development strategy, asset development, and community competitiveness.

Building Relationships. Creating Opportunity.

SelectUSA
Connected with international-based companies and investment partners to recruit to bring jobs and business investment into the United States.

ICSC
Engaged retail developers, brokers, and commercial real estate leaders to advance retail recruitment in Stafford.

Site Selectors Guild
Strengthened relationships with corporate site selection consultants and gained insight into location decision trends.

Virginia Workforce Symposium
Explored workforce solutions and learned about resources that support existing employers and future business attraction.

GO Virginia Economic Development Summit
Collaborated with regional partners to advance innovation and long-term economic competitiveness.

Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) Conference
Shared best practices and strengthened partnerships supporting business retention and expansion.

VA1 Governor's Tourism Summit
Explored tourism trends and strengthened partnerships to support Stafford's visitor economy.



LEADERSHIP

Our Economic Development Team



Liz Barber, CEcD.,
Director of Economic Development and Tourism



Jon Lindsley,
Business Development Manager



Savannah Wimbush,
Business Development Manager

Morgan Lynch, Project Manager
Lauren Micklish, Administrative Specialist II
Brooke Mayausky, Project Specialist
Natalie Capra, Data Specialist
Kushal Parbadia, Marketing Specialist II

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–ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM–
STAFFORD Virginia

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–ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM–

STAFFORD *Virginia*



The Stafford Advantage

Grow where **opportunity** meets advantage.

Burns Corner,
Falmouth District