

Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan



Polk County, North Carolina
August 18, 2014

**Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan
Polk County, North Carolina**

Revision: Final rev. 0
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Table of Contents

Preface 1

1.0 - Policy Owner: Polk County Board of Commissioners 2

2.0 - Vision for Polk County 2

3.0 - Policy Goals..... 2

4.0 - Economic Development Policy Stakeholders 2

5.0 - Economic Development Policy Statement 2

6.0 - Organization Structure 3

7.0 - Economic Development Strategic Priorities & Goals 3

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ORGANIZE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS..... 4

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: NURTURE EXISTING BUSINESS & INDUSTRY..... 5

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: DEVELOP ENTREPRENEUR & PROPRIETOR BUSINESSES (0 TO 4 EMPLOYEES)..... 6

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: DEVELOP SMALL BUSINESS & INDUSTRY (5 TO 100 EMPLOYEES) 7

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: IMPROVE LOCAL WORKFORCE & EMPLOYABILITY..... 8

 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6: PARTICIPATE IN PIEDMONT-ATLANTIC MEGA-REGION OPPORTUNITIES..... 9

8.0 – Policy-Level Key Performance Indicators 10

9.0 - Economic Development Procedures 10

ATTACHMENT 11

Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan Index to Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan 11

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Preface

Polk County's *Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan*, approved by the Board of Commissioners (BOC) on August 18th, 2014, is the high-level roadmap for the County's future economic prosperity and well-being. This new Policy is based on the *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* ("20/20 Vision Plan") approved by the BOC in 2010. Then, the Policy builds on the business growth and job opportunities already happening here, in and around our county.

The *Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan* helps guide decision making in the County government when we approve budgets and projects, seek grants, and develop our local workforce for 21st century jobs.

The *Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan* is designed to span political boundaries and election cycles for the maximum benefit of Polk County residents, businesses, and the rural environment.

Economic development is the process by which a community creates, retains, and reinvests wealth and improves the quality of life.

David Dodson, MDC, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC

1.0 - Policy Owner: Polk County Board of Commissioners

2.0 - Vision for Polk County

Polk County's rural atmosphere and serene natural beauty will be vigorously protected. Visionary and pragmatic county and municipal governments will work together in a cooperative manner as they continue to enhance the quality of life for all Polk County citizens.

(Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan – Adopted by the Polk County Commissioners March 15, 2010)

3.0 - Policy Goals

1. To clarify the priorities, roles, and responsibilities for Economic Development in Polk County in a consistent and integrated manner.
2. To provide opportunities for Polk County residents, businesses, and municipalities to participate in and benefit from regional economic growth and development occurring in the Piedmont-Atlantic Mega-Region (I-85 & I-26 corridors).
3. To establish strategic priorities, goals, and objectives for Economic Development activities in Polk County.
4. To establish policies that will protect and promote Polk County's rural atmosphere, natural beauty, and natural resources.

4.0 - Economic Development Policy Stakeholders

Those who are involved in or affected by the Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan are considered **stakeholders** in Economic Development. These stakeholders include Polk County residents, organizations, businesses, institutions, communities; governmental agencies, commissions and boards; the municipalities (Columbus, Saluda, Tryon) in Polk County, and other entities in the 14 county regional economic zone.

5.0 - Economic Development Policy Statement

Economic stability, growth, and development in Polk County requires a careful balance of preserving our rural heritage and natural environment along with the economic conditions necessary for a desirable and sustainable quality of life for the residents of the county. Maintaining this balance will be essential criteria for our economic development activities.

Economic development activities should benefit the **stakeholders** in Polk County and be consistent with the March, 2010 "Vision for Polk County" (above). Polk County's economic stability, growth, and development is enhanced by partnerships and collaboration among various and diverse stakeholders within the 14 county regional economic zone.

"Enhancing the quality of life for all Polk County citizens" means many things to many people. Fundamentally, the Economic Development Policy addresses sustainable improvements in employment opportunities, wages, public services, as well as business development, growth, and retention in Polk County in ways that enhance the quality of life for all Polk County Citizens.

A diverse economic base is essential for long term prosperity. Local economic stability, growth, and development springs from many different sources.

6.0 - Organization Structure

The Polk County Board of Commissioners, as the elected policy-making body in Polk County, established this *Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan*.

In collaboration with the Board of Commissioners the performance driven directors of the Economic Development, Travel & Tourism, and Agriculture Development offices are responsible for the development and deployment of *Polk County's Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan* as defined in an *Annual Economic Development Implementation Plan*. (see Section 9.0)

Appropriate Volunteer Boards, Commissions, County agencies, and departments will be appointed, or requested by the Board of Commissioners to serve as advisors in a collaborative manner to the Economic Development, Travel & Tourism, and Agriculture Development Directors.

7.0 - Economic Development Strategic Priorities & Goals

Polk County's Economic Development Policy includes **Strategic Priorities** and high-level **Goals**. **Examples** are also provided to clarify the intent of each Goal. These are to be considered when developing and funding the ***Annual Economic Development Implementation Plan*** consistent with this *Policy* and the *Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan (Comprehensive Land Use Plan)* The six Strategic Priorities, not necessarily in order of importance, include the following:

Strategic Priority 1: Organize For Economic Development Effectiveness

Strategic Priority 2: Nurture Existing Business & Industry

Strategic Priority 3: Develop Entrepreneur & Proprietor Businesses (0 to 4 employees)

Strategic Priority 4: Develop Small Business & Industry (5 to 100 employees)

Strategic Priority 5: Improve Local Workforce & Employability

Strategic Priority 6: Participate in Piedmont-Atlantic Mega-Region Opportunities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ORGANIZE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Goal A: Identify existing economic-related initiatives, boards, commissions, roles & responsibilities for consistent and integrated economic development actions. Examples to be considered include:

- Economic Development Director
- Economic & Tourism Development Commission
- Agriculture Development Director
- Agriculture Development Board/Farmland Preservation Board
- Soil & Water Conservation District
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Travel & Tourism
- Polk County Appearance Commission
- Isothermal Planning & Development Commission

Goal B: Form a volunteer “Polk County Equine Commission” (non-governmental/independent) to:

- Represent the collective economic development interests of equine-related organizations in Polk County
- Focus on the needs of the equine community: Recreation, competition, showing
- Identify opportunities for equine-related businesses and outdoor recreation
- Partner with NC Horse Council
- Communicate with developers, Travel & Tourism, Economic Development , and Agriculture Development
- Analyze & report current “equine related” economic benefits & census

Goal C: Identify economic development interests and activities of the County’s municipalities and their business/merchant associations:

- Columbus and the Handmade in America, Economic Development Committees
- Saluda and the Saluda Business Association (SBA)
- Tryon and the Tryon Downtown Development Association (TDDA)
- Plus Landrum, SC and the Landrum Area Business Association (LABA)

Goal D: Align economic-related initiatives, boards, commissions, and roles to promote collaboration and communication among stakeholders and decision makers. Example activities include:

- Clarify roles & responsibilities
- Identify priorities
- Promote activity and project partnerships

Goal E: Develop & deploy improved economic development-related communications with Polk County residents & businesses. Examples include:

- Newspapers
- Web sites
- Social media
- Events

Goal F: Fund Economic Development activities on a basis comparable with surrounding counties. Examples include:

- The Economic Development annual budget should be the larger amount of either the average per capita expenditure
- Or, the average percentage of the total economic development annual budget of nearby counties, similar in population and demographics.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: NURTURE EXISTING BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Goal A: Identify the retention/expansion needs of existing businesses in Polk County. Example activities include:

- Establish communications structures: Roundtable, face-to-face, mail, email, etc.
- Survey & document the needs of existing businesses
- Survey & document existing business resources
- Marketing Polk County Farmers' Markets within the 14 county economic impact zone

Goal B: Develop & facilitate business assistance programs through collaborative efforts (See the following Strategic Priorities & Goals).

Goal C: Participate in Foothills Economic Partnership initiatives (Chamber of Commerce)

Goal D: Participate in Isothermal Planning & Development Commission (IPDC) initiatives

Goal E: Participate in Carolina Foothills Chamber of Commerce business development & growth initiatives

Goal F: Collaborate with Isothermal Community College to provide assistance on Polk Campus. Examples include:

- Offer small business classes & counseling
- Offer "for credit" classes
- Offer entrepreneur training
- Offer job-specific training

Goal G: Collaborate with regional public and private educational providers for assistance in Polk County. (See Strategic Priority 5, Goal C)

Goal H: Identify & promote travel, tourism, & vacation destinations in Polk County. Examples include:

- Festivals & events
- Arts, artists & crafts
- Museums & theaters
- Vineyards, wineries, & distilleries
- Outdoor recreation & eco-tourism (rivers, woodlands, wildlife, conservation areas)
- Agri-tourism (working farms & ranches), farm tours, farm lodging, "dude ranches"...
- Equine events, public trail riding, etc.
- Mill Spring Recreation Park & Trails

Goal I: Identify & promote "Healthcare destination" opportunities. Examples include:

- St. Luke's Hospital, Cardiology, Orthopedic surgery ...
- CooperRiis
- Pavillon
- et al

Goal J: Identify "Retirement destination" promotion opportunities. Examples include:

- Local retirement facilities
- Lifestyle and quality of place
- Rural property availability
- Attract other assisted living facilities & retirement-related services

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: DEVELOP ENTREPRENEUR & PROPRIETOR BUSINESSES (0 TO 4 EMPLOYEES)

Goal A: Establish an Entrepreneur & Proprietor “one-stop resource.” Example resources include:

- Polk County Certified Entrepreneurial Community report
- Entrepreneur & proprietor resources for:
 - Small business
 - Small farm & ranch
 - Agricultural products & truck gardens
 - Agri-tourism
 - Eco-tourism
 - Equine & horseback recreation
- Business permits & licenses, sites, resources
 - Polk County “Home-Based Occupation” ordinance
 - Columbus: See “Definition of Home Occupation, Town Code Section 154.005 (Definitions)”
 - Columbus: See “Permitted Use Table (Section 154.064)”
 - Columbus: See “Signage for Home Occupation (Section 154.112 (E))(5)”
 - Saluda: See “Land Use and Zoning for Home Based Businesses”
 - Tryon: See “Chapter 154 Zoning Ordinance”
- Marketing for “cottage industry” products:
 - Crafts
 - Natural products
 - Home-produced goods
 - Farm produce

Goal B: Pursue potential business & industry development (“incubator”) sites & feasibility. Example activities include:

- Identify & catalog existing buildings & maintain an up-to-date on-line data base
- Identify resources & capabilities:
 - North Carolina Department of Commerce
 - Mountain BizWorks and similar resources
 - Advantage West & Certified Entrepreneurial Community program
 - “REAL Entrepreneurship” (ncreal.org)
 - NC Business Incubation Association
 - Isothermal Community College
 - other regional education providers
 - SCORE (Senior Core of Retired Executives)
 - (others)
- Explore mentoring opportunities with local entrepreneurs & proprietors
- Explore potential conference/retreat center(s)
- Prepare reports of findings and recommendations

Goal C: Facilitate marketing of entrepreneur, proprietorship, and farm products and services:

Examples activities include:

- Participant workshops, training, coaching
- Advertising: Website(s), brochures
- Marketing to regional buyers
- Community markets

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: DEVELOP SMALL BUSINESS & INDUSTRY (5 TO 100 EMPLOYEES)

Goal A: Document potential site opportunities (assets) in Polk County & municipalities. Examples include:

- Utility maps: Power, telephone, fiber network, natural gas, water, sewer...
- Transportation maps: Roads & highways, load limits, railroads...
- Land use compatibility
- Identify & catalog existing buildings
- Identify & catalog new building sites
- Identify industrial park sites: Current, future, certified/certifiable, “green”
- Document asset availability on-line

Goal B: Grow & Develop “Living Wage” Jobs for Polk County residents. Examples include:

- Opportunities with existing businesses
- Local & regional “career ladders” in job growth areas, such as:
 - Healthcare: CNA, medical assistants, technicians, medical billing & coding, etc.
 - Industrial maintenance & repair: Maintenance, preventive maintenance, reliability, precision maintenance, troubleshooting automated systems, etc.
 - Food service: Food safety, food preparation, cooking, kitchen management
 - Hospitality: Front line & management
- Growth sector businesses in the economic impact region
- “High-impact” businesses:
 - “High-impact” businesses include those that contribute to the County’s economy through living wage jobs & community synergy
 - Businesses benefitting from high-speed fiber-optic telecommunications & data transmission
 - Examples include: Headquarters/regional offices, light manufacturing/assembly, advanced manufacturing, industrial reliability & technology services, precision machining, bio-sciences, logistics (warehouse/distribution), assisted-living villages

Goal C: Develop & deploy local job posting/job search capabilities for Polk County residents and employers. Examples include:

- Web site, web pages, links, etc.
- Social Media
- Street Captains
- Tax notices, Water Bills

Goal D: Establish a “one-stop” new business information resource. Examples include:

- Business permits & licenses, sites, resources
- Business permits & licenses, sites, resources
 - Columbus
 - Saluda
 - Tryon
- Farming & ranch information

Goal E: Develop annual long term economic development conceptual plans:

- Three to five years
- Five to 10 years
- Brief (one to two pages)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: IMPROVE LOCAL WORKFORCE & EMPLOYABILITY

Goal A: Survey the County's workforce to determine the present skills, skills deficits, and employability. The survey, not to exceed five-year intervals, should be conducted by a recognized authority in workforce development. Examples of survey partners include:

- Outreach Ministry
- NC Works Career Centers, NC Division of Workforce Solutions
- Region C Workforce Development Board
- Carolina Foothills Chamber of Commerce

Goal B: Identify Polk County workforce development opportunities. Examples include:

- Job vacancies, existing employers
- New & expanding businesses (Bright's Creek Resort, Tryon International Equestrian Center)
- Job sharing
- Flex work
- Unmet needs
- Skills & knowledge gaps
- Unemployed residents

Goal C: Identify Polk County workforce development resources, capabilities, & improvement opportunities. Examples include:

- Polk County Schools
- Isothermal CC, Spindale (Rutherford County)
- Isothermal CC, Polk (Polk County)
- NC Works Career Centers, NC Division of Workforce Solutions
- Workforce Development Board, Region C (Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford)
- Private education & training firms (Polk County & regional)
- Cleveland CC, Shelby (Cleveland County)
- McDowell Tech CC, Marion (McDowell County)
- Blue Ridge CC, Hendersonville (Henderson County)
- Western Piedmont CC, Morganton (Burke County)
- A-B Tech, Asheville (Buncombe County)
- Spartanburg CC, Spartanburg, SC
- Greenville Tech, Greenville, SC
- On-line Programs (Learning Management Systems)

Goal D: Facilitate/develop & implement education, training, and placement programs for employed adults (job incumbents), unemployed adults, and employers in Polk County. Example activities include:

- Afterhours and workday training
- Job incumbent programs
- Productivity improvement programs
- Collaborate with local & regional workforce development providers (above)
- Explore grant programs for workforce development, such as:
 - Demonstration projects
 - Existing employers & job incumbents
 - Polk County Community Foundation
 - Golden Leaf Foundation
 - Handmade in America Economic Development (Columbus)
 - Small Town Main Street (Saluda & Tryon)

Goal E: Develop & deploy communications processes for local workforce & employability opportunities. (See Strategic Priority 4, Goal C)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6: PARTICIPATE IN PIEDMONT-ATLANTIC MEGA-REGION OPPORTUNITIES

Goal A: Link economic growth and development to regional trends & County assets/resources consistent with the *Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan*. Example activities include:

- Emphasize skills required for regional “Living Wage Jobs” for Polk County residents relating to:
 - Tryon International Equestrian Center/Tryon Resort
 - Bright’s Creek Resort & Spa
 - Polk Fresh and Food Hub (Sunny Creek Farm)
- Emphasize regional business supply-chain opportunities for Polk County businesses relating to:
 - Tryon International Equestrian Center/Tryon Resort
 - Bright’s Creek Resort & Spa
 - Polk Fresh and Food Hub (Sunny Creek Farm)
- Emphasize resources available for new and expanding regional businesses
- Explore regional and national business growth and relocation meetings/conferences

Goal B: Develop collaborative relationships with Greenville & Spartanburg County. Examples include:

- Economic development organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Upstate Alliance
- GSP 360
- Inland Port

Goal C: Develop & implement programs to prepare Polk County residents for meaningful participation in Mega-Region jobs (See Strategic Priority 5)

Goal D: Develop & implement programs to prepare Polk County businesses for participation in the Mega-Region markets. Examples include:

- Meetings & seminars
- Printed materials
- On-line materials, programs, and resources

Goal E: Develop & deploy multi-media tools & formats to market Polk County to regional businesses, business owners, tourists, and vacationers: Examples include:

- Video programs: Broadcast and on-line
- Brochures & booklets
- Web site & web pages
- Social media

8.0 - Policy-Level Key Performance Indicators

Economic development activity and project effectiveness in Polk County will demonstrate a return on the investment and be measured by the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

1. Annual analyses of the “average weekly wage” earned by Polk County residents will increase comparable to the surrounding counties: Rutherford, Henderson, Spartanburg (SC), and Greenville (SC).
2. Small business, entrepreneurships, and proprietorships will continue to increase in Polk County creating new jobs.
3. Economic development activities will result in additional Polk County tax revenues compared to the regional cost-of-living index. (Sales Tax, Occupancy Tax, Business Personal Property Tax)
4. Capital investments for business and commerce will increase and vacant store-fronts, businesses, and industrial sites will decline.
5. County unemployment, as measured by the state of North Carolina, will decline and trend below the statewide unemployment rate.

9.0 - Economic Development Procedures

1. This *Polk County Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan* will be reviewed annually, and updated as needed, by the Board of Commissioners to assure relevancy.
2. An *Annual Economic Development Implementation Plan* will be approved by the Polk County Board of Commissioners for each fiscal year. This *Annual Plan* will establish priorities, goals and objectives for economic development projects and activities. The County’s Economic Development budget(s) should be aligned with the *Annual Plan*. The format of the *Annual Plan* should include the following:
 - a. Policy & Strategic Plan Priority
 - b. Policy & Strategic Plan Goal
 - c. Annual Plan Strategy
 - d. Objectives & Action Items (listed per Strategy)
 - e. Estimated time line
 - f. Estimated cost/budget
 - g. Estimated benefits and/or return on investment (ROI)
3. Quarterly economic development project and activity reports with specific references to the *Annual Economic Development Implementation Plan* will be prepared by the Economic Development Directors for presentation to the Board of Commissioners at a public meeting.
 - a. Web site posting of reports
 - b. Report delivered to Polk County economic entities

ATTACHMENT:

Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan Index to Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan (2 pages)

NOTE:

This document was prepared under contract to the Polk County Board of Commissioners by:
Robert M. Williamson - Strategic Work Systems, Inc. - PO Box 70 - Columbus, NC 28722

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Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan Index to Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan

Section (D) of the *Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan (Comprehensive Land Use Plan)* lists recommended **Economic Development Goals and Implementing Actions** “designed to address land development and growth management issues which have been identified by the Polk County Visioning Committee, county staff, and citizens of Polk County throughout the development of this plan.” (20/20 Vision Plan, page VII-1)

Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan – Section D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (March 10, 2010)		Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan (Aug 2014)
POLICIES (GOALS) - page VII-18 [Emphasis added]		(Strategic Priority-Goal)
P.62	"Polk County supports the development of the county's educational system to produce a skilled workforce appropriate for county (resident's) needs."	2-F, 2-G, 5
P.63	"Polk County supports a competitive environment for agriculture/viticulture, cultural, and equestrian activities to maintain the rural flavor of Polk County."	1-A, 1-B, 2-A, 2-H, 3-A, 3-C, 5, 6
P.64	"Polk County supports efforts of the Isothermal Planning Commission to diversify the manufacturing community in the county and the region."	1-A, 3, 4
P.65	"Polk County supports development of new businesses which will create new products new processes, and new business models. "	3, 4, 5, 6
P.66	"Polk County supports a more diversified economic base including development of health care services. "	2, 2-I, 3, 4
P.67	"Polk County considers local entrepreneurship to be crucial to a stable economy."	3
P.68	"Polk County will give preference to ' clean ' industries/businesses including eco- and agri-tourism. "	2-H, 3-A, 3-C
P.69	"Polk County supports efforts to improve overall community appearance as an aid to industrial/business recruitment."	1-A
IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES - PAGE VII-19		
I.63	"Assist the Polk County Economic Development Council (EDC) with its efforts to develop a National Equine Center. "	1-B, 2-H
I.64	"Support the efforts of the EDC to improve and expand its Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program which provides startup and continuing operational guidance and data resources to entrepreneurs and small businesses."	2, 3
I.65	"Support development through the EDC , or an affordable housing center/program, to study, design, and build affordable housing. This effort would result in local and regional affordable housing benefits."	1-A, 1-C
I.66	"Support the EDC's efforts to develop a job creation strategy focusing on agriculture, tourism, and healthcare. These segments of the economy have numerous economic multipliers including retail sales, equine hospital, educational programs, renewable energy supply chain companies, restaurants and lodging. "	2, 3, 4, 5, 6 + Light manufacturing + Hospitality
I.67	"Develop, in concert with St. Luke's Hospital... and Foundation, a healthcare provider recruitment program."	2-I, 2-J, 4-B
I.68	"Develop, in concert with the EDC, a ' green ' industrial park which should be located in a special district land use sector."	3-B, 4-A, 6
I.69	"Support the EDC's efforts to accomplish the following:	
•	"Target and recruit companies specializing in equestrian and cultural based manufacturing , including research and development and field testing operations."	1-A, 1-B, 2-H,3
•	"Focus recruiting campaign efforts to small to medium enterprises (\$2 to \$10 million dollar companies)."	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

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Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan – Section D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (March 10, 2010)		Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan (Aug 2014)
POLICIES (GOALS) - page VII-18 [Emphasis added]		(Strategic Priority-Goal)
I.69	"Support the EDC's efforts to accomplish the following:	CONTINUED
•	"Encourage the enhancement of veterinary sciences and services in the county by actively working to foster a relationship with institutes of higher learning in NC (and the region, GA, SC, and TN) by partnering with university networks to create distance learning opportunities at the Polk Campus of Isothermal CC and other facilities in the county."	1-B, 2-F, 4B, 5
•	"Actively recruit and retain a younger workforce to the county by enhancing nature-based recreation opportunities in the county and by adopting a younger more contemporary aesthetic to publications targeted to this audience."	1, 2-H, 3-A
•	"Use broad based incentives grants program to create conditions in the county that support private investment in developing suitable buildings for light manufacturing consistent with the rural character of the county."	1, 3-B, 4, 6
•	"Enhance the county leisure activity infrastructure by encouraging private investment in the leisure-based industry ."	1, 2-H, 3-A
•	"Encourage agricultural industries including research and development, hydroponics, and nursery-based crops throughout the county."	1, 3, 5, 6
•	"Encourage native tree and shrub production programs on traditional farm properties no longer in production."	1, 3, 5, 6
•	"Develop a county-wide farmland preservation management plan that includes utilizing farm based support industries suitable for the recruitment such as farm equipment manufacturing, farmland research management and testing equipment manufacturing."	1, 2, 3 (Farmland Preservation Ordinances)
•	"Identify and recruit heritage based service industries in fields which include: wayfinding and signage manufacturing, recreational equipment and furnishing manufacturing, arts and crafts based manufacturing, toy and other educational manufacturing including digital and data based research and development ."	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
•	"Actively encourage private investment in hospitality based industry development (including but not limited to conference and retreat based enterprises) through planning and partnering with the private sector on infrastructure development."	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
•	"Develop and enhance regional clustering of senior services and healthcare management services including retirement, financial management services, and banking ."	2-J, 4-A, 5
I.70	"Support the Polk County Appearance Commission..."	1-A

(VII-26)	Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan ("update ... every two years")	Continue to link with the Economic Development Strategic Plan
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NOTE:

This document was prepared to accompany the **Polk County Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan** under contract to the Polk County Board of Commissioners by:

Robert M. Williamson - Strategic Work Systems, Inc. - PO Box 70 - Columbus, NC 28722

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RMW/Polk Economic Development...
/20-20 Vision & EDP&SP index.docx

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