

Economic Development Priorities



Polk County, North Carolina
Adopted April 4, 2022

1.0 - 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, updated September 18, 2017)

2.0 - Policy Goals

1. To clarify the priorities for Economic Development in Polk County in a consistent and integrated manner.
2. To recommend strategic priorities and objectives for Economic Development activities in Polk County.
3. To advise on policies that will protect and promote Polk County's rural atmosphere, natural beauty, and natural resources.

3.0 - 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.

4.0 - Organization Structure

The Polk County Board of Commissioners, as the elected policy-making body in Polk County, adopted the *Economic Development Policy & Strategic Plan on August 18, 2014*. Throughout discussions regarding the 2014 Economic Development Policy and Strategic Plan, the Economic Development and Tourism Commission (ETDC) identified the priorities the county can most directly influence. This Economic Development Priorities document is a refinement of the 2014 Economic Development Policy and Strategic Plan to identify the priorities to help steer Polk County in keeping with current circumstances and its vision.

In collaboration with the Board of Commissioners, the Directors of Economic Development, Travel and Tourism, and Agriculture Economic Development offices are responsible for the development of the strategic priorities.

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 and Tourism, and Agriculture Economic Development Directors.

5.0 - Economic Development Priorities

Priority 1 – Business Retention/Recruitment

- A. Identify economic development interests and activities of the county's municipalities and their business/merchant associations.

- B. Develop and deploy improved economic development-related communications with Polk County residents and businesses. Examples include:
 - 1. Newspapers/Newsletters
 - 2. Websites
 - 3. Social media
 - 4. Events
- C. Identify the retention/expansion needs of existing businesses in Polk County.
- D. Establish an entrepreneur and proprietor “one-stop resource.” Example resources include:
 - 1. Entrepreneur and proprietor resources for:
 - a. Small business
 - b. Small farm and ranch
 - c. Agricultural products and truck gardens
 - d. Agri-tourism
 - e. Eco-tourism
 - f. Equine and horseback recreation
 - 2. Business permits and licenses
- E. Maintain relationships with realtors, developers, business owners, and commercial property owners to identify potential sites as development opportunities or needs arise.

Priority 2 – Tourism

- A. Identify and promote travel, tourism, and vacation destinations in Polk County. Examples include:
 - 1. Festivals and events
 - 2. Arts, artists and crafts
 - 3. Museums and theaters
 - 4. Vineyards, wineries, breweries and distilleries
 - 5. Outdoor recreation and eco-tourism (rivers, woodlands, wildlife, conservation areas)
 - 6. Agri-tourism (working farms and ranches), farm tours, and farm lodging
- B. Develop and launch multimedia tools and formats to market Polk County. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1. Brochures and booklets
 - 2. Website
 - 3. Social media
 - 4. Media outlets

Priority 3 – Quality of Life

- A. Encourage “living wage” jobs for Polk County residents.
- B. Implement a local job posting/job search capability for Polk County residents and employers.
- C. Identify resources to assist the County’s workforce to determine the present skills, skills deficits, and employability.