

2025



CHARLES COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

Charles
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

ccc
THE
PARTNERSHIP
ECONOMY

SHARE THE *Love*



Scan to learn more,
view participating
businesses, and
purchase gift cards.

Give your friends, coworkers, and family a meaningful gesture with a big impact. Digital "With Love From Charles" gift cards support local restaurants, shops, and service providers across Charles County, **keeping dollars within our community** and helping us thrive.



FEEL THE *Love*

Are you a business owner?

Join "With Love From Charles" and start feeling the love from your community. Participating in the program is a **free, low-risk way to boost traffic, increase revenue, and reach a broader audience.**

Your business participation is vital to making this county-wide initiative a success! Contact info@MeetCharlesCounty.com to register!



Scan to learn more
about joining
"With Love From Charles."



Charles County

Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

Charles
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TABLE of CONTENTS

Letter from Director	4
Team Page	5
Secretary Harry Coker, Jr. Visits Charles County	6
Partner of the Year	6
Federal Transition Resources.....	7
New Sister City Partnership	7
Business Appreciation Week.....	8
Quarterly Business Roundtables	8
Business Wellness Workshop.....	9
Faces of Charles County Anne Hooper	10
BGAP/BGAP 360.....	11
SLBE & MWBE.....	12
With Love From Charles	13
Faces of Charles County Vallery A. Jackson	14
Western Charles County Technology Corridor	15
Major Projects.....	16
Faces of Charles County Erin Ferriter	19
Faces of Charles County Russell Shlagel	21
Circle of Services	23
Marketing Data Points	24
Entrepreneurship in Charles County	26

TO THE CHARLES COUNTY BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS,

I am honored to write to you as the newly appointed Director of the Charles County Economic Development Department, and deeply grateful to County Administrator Deborah Hall for the opportunity to lead this next chapter for the organization. It is a privilege and a responsibility I take seriously to serve a community with such momentum and promise.

I also want to express my appreciation for the exceptional team at the EDD. I've joined a group of talented, mission-driven professionals who work hard to help businesses start, grow, and thrive here. In particular, I want to recognize Deputy Director Michelle Frye for her steady leadership as Interim Director. Her work and the team's commitment continue to position us to amplify our impact.

Building on that foundation, our near-term priority is the Western Charles County Technology Corridor, the platform to establish Charles County as the nation's home of energetics research and development. With the Navy's 2.7 billion-dollar plan to bolster the military's industrial base for the production of solid-rocket motors and other key energetics at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division, Charles County is well positioned to catalyze this investment. We will align infrastructure, sites, workforce, and supplier development so local firms can compete for contracts, scale, and create high-quality jobs here.

In parallel, we will lean into economic gardening by prioritizing retention and expansion of the companies that already call Charles County home. When we help our partners navigate barriers to growth, such as permitting challenges, market access, capital, training, and technology adoption, we grow a more resilient economy from within. Expect focused outreach, data-informed services, and measurable outcomes in jobs, investment, and shared prosperity.

We will also work closely with local job training partners so residents are prepared for opportunities across our key sectors, including those emerging along the Western Charles County Technology Corridor. That requires aligning training with employer demand, expanding pathways for students and adult learners, and championing lifelong learning so people who develop skills in Charles County can build their futures in our community.

Throughout this report, you will see "Faces of Charles County" features that spotlight business owners, industry experts, EDD program participants, and other community leaders. Their experiences show how strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and committed people create results that matter for families and neighborhoods.

Once again, thank you for the warm welcome and for the trust you place in the EDD. I am excited about what we will accomplish together: leveraging once-in-a-generation investments, growing local enterprises, and preparing our workforce so every resident can see themselves in Charles County's economic future.

With appreciation,



Jim Chandler, CEcD
Director, Charles County Economic Development Department



CHARLES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq.
Commissioner President



Ralph E. Patterson, II, M.A.
Commissioner Vice President, District 4



Gilbert 'Bj' O. Bowling, III
District 1



Thomasina O. Coates, M.S.
District 2



Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed.
District 3

CHARLES COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TEAM



Jim Chandler, CEcD
Director of Economic Development



Mark Thompson
Chief of Commercial Development



Lucretia Freeman-Buster
Chief of Business Services



Paul Ruppert
Senior Commercial Development Manager



Jack Street
Research and Special Projects Manager



Anthony Adesina
Business Retention and Expansion Manager



Chastity Durham-Miller
Small and Minority Business Development Specialist Coordinator



Michelle Frye
Deputy Director



Jennifer Reginald
Marketing Coordinator



Chudi Obi
Business Development Coordinator



Lacey Herbert
Economic Development Administrative Coordinator

Dr. Margaret Dureke
*Consultant,
BGAP Program Manager*

Cheryl Anderson
Part-time Business Development Assistant

Agriculture and Rural Development Manager

MWBE/DBE Compliance Manager

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Anne Hooper, *Chairwoman, Hooper & Associates*

Darlene Breck, *Southern Maryland Business Center*

Traci Chappellear-Thomas, *Charles County Public Schools*

Danielle Conrow, *Rodgers Consulting*

John Flatley, *Chick-fil-A La Plata*

Angela Fray, *Dat Jerk Caribbean Chargrill*

Jeannine James, *Mayor, Town of La Plata*

Ismael Matos, *Simon Properties Group*

Brandon Paulin, *Mayor, Town of Indian Head*

Craig Renner, *University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center*

Andrew Roud, *St. John Properties, Inc.*

Steve Scott, *Scott Law Group, LLC*

Russ Shlagel, *Shlagel Farms, LLC*

Shannon Wang, *Shop53 Tattoo Studio*

EX-OFFICIO

Ashley Chenault, *Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, Charles County Government*

Pam Frank, *Military Alliance Council (MAC)*

Jason Groth, *Planning and Growth Management, Charles County Government*

Kathy Guzman, *Charles County Chamber of Commerce*

Adam Lynch, *Naval Support Activity South Potomac (NSF Dahlgren + NSF Indian Head)*

Pamela Minor, *Southern Maryland Minority Chamber of Commerce*

Dr. Maria Navarro, *Charles County Public Schools*

Sylvia Royster, *College of Southern Maryland*

Steve Wall, *Maryland Department of Commerce*

Dr. Yolanda Wilson, *College of Southern Maryland*

SECRETARY HARRY COKER, JR. VISITS CHARLES COUNTY

On September 11, 2025, Charles County welcomed Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr., for a full day of tours showcasing the County's entrepreneurship, innovation, and assets.

Secretary Coker's visit included a boat tour of the Ghost Fleet at Mallows Bay, a briefing and business roundtable at the Maryland Technology Center (MTC) in Indian Head, and a walking tour of downtown La Plata with stops at Port Tobacco Players, Charles Street Bakery, Landon's Ice Cream, and lunch at The Charles. Additional stops included CHUTES International in Waldorf and an evening networking reception at Copper Compass Craft Distilling Co. in White Plains. The visit underscored Charles County's growing reputation as an exceptional place to live, work, play, and conduct business, while strengthening EDD's partnership with state economic development leadership. The EDD fosters partnerships that attract investment, drive innovation, and enhance the quality of life for Charles County residents.



MILITARY ALLIANCE COUNCIL NAMED PARTNER OF THE YEAR



At the 2025 Fall Meeting, the EDD presented its first annual Charles County Economic Development Partner of the Year Award to the Military Alliance Council (MAC). The award recognizes an individual, business, or organization whose collaboration, leadership, and commitment have significantly advanced Charles County's economic growth.

The MAC receives this honor for its steadfast partnership and advocacy on behalf of the Naval Support Facility Indian Head, the Town of Indian Head, and the broader Western Charles County Technology Corridor. The MAC plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the base, the town, and local stakeholders to strengthen relationships and advance shared priorities.

Through its advocacy, the MAC ensures the continued relevance and growth of Naval Support Facility Indian Head, a cornerstone of national defense and

innovation. This work reinforces Charles County's position as a strategic asset within the defense community, builds local pride, and supports community resilience.

Beyond its military focus, the MAC's collaborative efforts extend to regional revitalization and sustainable development of the Western Charles County Technology Corridor. The MAC works closely with government agencies, businesses, and civic organizations to improve infrastructure, expand economic opportunities, and enhance the quality of life in the Town of Indian Head and surrounding areas.

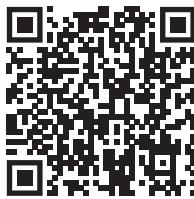
The EDD's recognition of the Military Alliance Council underscores Charles County's commitment to partnerships that drive innovation, strengthen local industries, and build long-term economic vitality.

FEDERAL TRANSITION RESOURCES

In February 2025, in response to the federal government transition, the EDD launched the Federal Transition Impact Survey to gather direct feedback from federal employees, contractors, business owners, and residents affected in the county. Over the course of three months, 232 community members shared their experiences: 36% were federal workers or contractors, 15% were business owners, and 49% were residents. Feedback from respondents provided valuable insight into how the transition was impacting Charles County and where support was most needed.

As a direct response, the EDD created a dedicated webpage, Government Transition Resources, to connect residents, workers, and businesses with essential services. The resource webpage includes a range of assistance options, such as job search and career services, entrepreneurship and small business support, unemployment benefits, transportation options, family and child care services, and low-income housing resources for individuals at risk of homelessness. These resources were curated from local, regional, and state organizations based on direct community feedback and identified needs. The EDD has also partnered with the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland to support job fairs and events that align with the needs respondents highlighted most.

[Learn more here:](#)



The Government Transition Resources webpage is updated regularly to reflect evolving community needs. Through this effort, the EDD remains committed to providing resources and ensuring that Charles County's workforce and businesses are supported.



NEW SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP WITH MATOLA, MOZAMBIQUE

In June 2025, Charles County formalized a Sister City partnership with Matola, Mozambique, adding to the County's global network of support for economic, educational, and cultural exchange. This partnership joins Charles County's existing Sister City partnerships with Walldorf, Germany (established in 2002) and Jõgeva, Estonia (established in 2012).

From June 9th through 13th, the County hosted a Matola delegation for a weeklong visit that included an official agreement ceremony, meetings with County leaders and stakeholders, and site visits to Charles County Public Schools, small businesses Landon's Ices & Cream and Honey Bun Cake Factory, and agribusinesses Serenity Farm and Zekiah Ridge Farm & Flowers. The visit showcased Charles County's assets while creating a foundation for sustained collaboration.

During the visit, Charles County EDD and the Matola delegation identified several focus areas for collaboration, including trade promotion and tourism, bilateral working committees to advance common initiatives, and systematic channels of communication. Anticipated outcomes from this partnership include student and faculty exchanges, business matchmaking and potential joint ventures, co-hosted cultural events, and shared approaches to workforce development, sustainability, and entrepreneurship.

The EDD is committed to leveraging international relationships to attract investment, spur innovation, and enhance the quality of life for Charles County residents.



2025 BUSINESS APPRECIATION WEEK



From May 5–9, 2025, the Charles County Economic Development Department celebrated Business Appreciation Week, which was held alongside National Small Business Week and Economic Development Week this year, to recognize the local businesses and employers that anchor Charles County's economy. Working in partnership with community organizations, including Charles County Government, the Charles County Chamber of Commerce, and Charles County Public Library, the EDD celebrated through events, site visits, and networking that placed community leaders and partners face-to-face with business owners across the county.

The week began with an official proclamation from the Charles County Board of Commissioners honoring local businesses, ribbon-cutting ceremonies for My Sweet Baby Learning Center (Waldorf) and Gia Candle Bar (Waldorf), and a Business Wellness Workshop at the Waldorf West Library that connected owners with experts and resource partners.

Later in the week, EDD staff and Advisory Board members, community leaders, and elected officials visited 29 businesses, from restaurants and boutiques to childcare

"As we reflect on the success of this year's Business Appreciation Week, we extend our gratitude to every business that calls Charles County home," said Deputy Director Michelle Frye. "When our business community thrives, our entire economy thrives. Business Appreciation Week gives us a valuable opportunity each year to be on the ground—listening to business owners, understanding their needs, and connecting them with the resources, partnerships, and support that help them grow."

centers and salons, listening to experiences and needs, recognizing achievements, and growing relationships.

The week concluded with a Business Networking Mixer co-hosted with the Charles County Chamber of Commerce at The Charles Restaurant & Bar.

QUARTERLY BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES

In FY2025, the EDD hosted three Quarterly Business Roundtables in January, April, and July to connect local companies with practical tools, technical support, and timely insights. Each virtual session paired "Inside Scoop" updates on active projects with "Be in the Know" training and funding resources, and featured a Circle of Services (EDD's coordinated network of local, regional, and state partners) partner speaker spotlight.

2025 BUSINESS WELLNESS WORKSHOP

On May 6, 2025, during Business Appreciation Week, the EDD hosted its first annual Business Wellness Workshop at the Charles County Public Library's Waldorf West Branch to equip entrepreneurs and small business owners with practical strategies for financial health, operational efficiency, and sustainable growth.

The program opened with finance-focused sessions on efficient cash-flow management and long-term planning, including insights from Beverly Everson-Jones, CFO/COO of FSC First. The agenda then shifted to doing business with government: Akia Hardnette of Chameleon Global Consulting outlined pathways to winning and managing contracts, followed by a permitting overview led by Catherine Reisinger, Deputy Director, Charles County Planning & Growth Management, and Raymond Shumaker, Chief, Codes, Charles County Permits & Inspection Services.



After a working-lunch and networking period with Charles County's Circle of Services partners, featuring resource tables from organizations such as FSC First, Maryland Department of Labor, the College of Southern Maryland, the Charles County Chamber of Commerce, and the Tri-County Council, the afternoon focused on technology and planning with Will Holmes who led a session on using AI tools for marketing and streamlining operations.

The event closed with a session featuring James Vasquez of the Maryland SBDC on the importance of business planning. Throughout the day, Q&A segments and peer connections helped attendees translate expert guidance into next-step actions for their businesses.

A grid of two headshots. The left one is of a man with a beard, wearing a blue shirt and a light-colored blazer, identified as Christopher Green. The right one is of a woman with long brown hair, wearing an orange top, identified as Rebecca Brandt. Below each headshot is a small caption box.

APRIL SPEAKER
Christopher Green
Tax Specialist, Stakeholder Liaison

JULY SPEAKER
Rebecca Brandt
Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) for Charles County Public Schools

January Roundtable, "Doing Business with Charles County Government," featured Anthony Twyman, MWBE/DBE Compliance Manager, Economic Development Department and Shanna Reese, Chief of Purchasing, Fiscal and Administrative Services Department.

April Roundtable, "Small Business Insights from the IRS and the 2025 Tax Filing Season," featured Christopher Green, IRS Stakeholder Liaison.

July Roundtable, "CCPS CTE Programs and Their Impact on Sustaining Local Workforce," featured Rebecca Brandt, Director of Career & Technical Education, Charles County Public Schools.

ANNE HOOPER

Realtor & Property Manager, *Hooper & Associates*



Born and raised in Charles County, Anne Hooper never expected she would return home, much less help steer the county's small-business ecosystem. After launching an engineering career with Dewberry, managing more than 20 large-scale projects, and tracking toward senior leadership, life unexpectedly pulled her back. A family tractor accident created an urgent need in the business her parents founded in 1989, and Anne returned to Maryland to support them.

"In 2008, I came home and opened our commercial brokerage and development consulting division," she says. "I also expanded our property management side." Today, her family's company, Hooper & Associates, employs roughly 14 team members, many with 10, 20, even 30 years of tenure. "We don't have much turnover. We're a family business in every sense." Her family's roots run deep; the Hoopers have been in Charles County since 1847, and Anne restored the family's 19th-century home during the pandemic. "Our heart and soul is Charles County," she says.

To Anne, growing and operating a business in Charles County starts with people. "Small businesses are the heartbeat of any community," she says. "In Charles County, relationships matter. You need strong ties with the county and state, and just as important, with your neighbors and the entrepreneurs down the street. Treat people fairly and give them the opportunity to pursue their dreams." Those relationships define her day-to-day work. For first-time tenants, she demystifies permitting and occupancy requirements. For growing firms, she helps match business plans to the right space and jurisdiction. "Listening to what other businesses are facing lets me prepare my clients for the real world, including what might slow them down and how to navigate it."

Anne's community commitment amplified when she joined the EDD's Economic Development Advisory Board, stepping into its chair role just before COVID-19. "They told me it would be four meetings and two public appearances," she laughs. "Two months later, I was in meetings almost daily." Under her leadership, the Advisory Board helped stand up a COVID-19 business task force, creating a reliable conduit for the county to hear directly from employers, large and small, about what was working and what was not. The board also rebuilt ties with the Charles County Chamber of Commerce and partnered with Planning & Growth Management to surface and address permitting challenges that can stall small businesses and developers.

Today, the Advisory Board aligns its annual focus with EDD priorities, recently elevating agritourism by inviting operators to share roadblocks and opportunities and by engaging local and state leaders to problem-solve. "Our goal is simple: make processes better so businesses can grow here," Anne says.

Whether she is advising a startup on its first lease, championing process improvements, or cheering on a homebred Standardbred from her local racing stable, Anne is motivated by the same idea. "If you have a passion for something, it isn't work," she says. "I love my clients. I love Charles County. We're uniquely positioned; you can be in the middle of nowhere in 20 minutes, or almost in D.C. in the same time. People fly from around the world to see what we have right up the road." Her advice to fellow business owners: "Invest in relationships. Ask questions early. And remember, you can't promise success, but you can build the conditions for it. That's what we are doing together in Charles County."

BGAP

The Business Growth Advantage Program (BGAP) was launched in 2022 as part of EDD's COVID-19 recovery strategy to support micro, small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses. The program was designed to equip entrepreneurs with practical skills, resources, and mentorship to help them recover, grow, and thrive in a rapidly changing business environment.

Over the course of two years, 151 small business owners graduated across 11 cohorts, with 130 of these businesses being minority- and women-owned. Each graduate received a \$10,000 grant, resulting in a total of \$1.465 million in direct investment into the local business community. Training was delivered in partnership with Will Holmes Consulting LLC and focused on operations management, financial literacy, capital readiness, marketing strategies, customer relationship management, human resources, and capacity building.



The Economic Development Department conducted a comprehensive impact survey with BGAP graduates, which revealed significant contributions to Charles County's economy:

- 48% of respondents created new jobs, with more than 30% adding one to two full-time positions and over 56% creating part-time positions.
- 73% of respondents reported revenue increases since completing the program, with many businesses experiencing gains of 10%-30% or higher.
- 66% of participants gained access to new contracts, partnerships, and business opportunities.
- Graduates reported stronger leadership capacity, improved operations, and increased readiness for long-term sustainability.



BGAP 360

To build on the success of BGAP, the EDD introduced BGAP 360 in late 2024, an initiative designed to provide ongoing mentorship, advanced training, and targeted industry support to previous BGAP graduates. BGAP 360 is structured around three specialized tracks:

1. **Business Expansion & Innovation Track** – Serving 24 businesses from diverse sectors, this track focuses on business model innovation, operational efficiency, marketing, and growth strategies. Participants receive guidance from a team of 10 trainers and mentors representing leading consulting firms.
2. **X Quay Accelerator Track** – Supporting 20 businesses, this track is facilitated by WEVE Acceleration Inc. (dba Cela) and emphasizes scaling operations, product innovation, and strategic growth planning. Participants benefit from tailored mentorship, workshops, and market expansion opportunities.
3. **Salon & Spa Track** – Designed for 11 salon and spa owners, this track is led by Tina Chestnut, Founder of The Ardent Factory, a nationally recognized expert in salon and spa business management. This track equips participants to transition from hands-on operations to strategic leadership while building resilient teams and systems.

Together, these three tracks extend BGAP's mission by offering customized, sector-specific support, ensuring that Charles County's entrepreneurs continue to grow, create jobs, and strengthen the local economy.

269*

Certified SLBE Firms
7 in progress

SMALL LOCAL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (SLBE) PROGRAM

Charles County's SLBE program gives qualified local small firms exclusive access to informal Charles County Government procurements under \$50,000 and bid preferences on formal solicitations from \$50,000 to \$500,000. Eligible businesses must be certified Small Business Enterprise (SBE) through the state, registered in eMMA, and meet location and size thresholds. This program is race- and gender-neutral and designed to grow and support locally headquartered companies in Charles County.

Scan to
learn more



600*

Certified MWBE Firms
1 in progress

MINORITY & WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (MWBE) PROGRAM

The MWBE program aims to broaden participation by minority-, women-, and disabled veteran-owned firms in Charles County procurement opportunities so public dollars better reflect marketplace diversity. Applicants must be 51% owned and certified through the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program before enrolling, after which they are promoted to County buyers through an active vendor list.

Scan to
learn more



This year, EDD strengthened the delivery of both its SLBE and MWBE programs by welcoming new team members to the division.

MWBE/DBE Compliance Manager leads contract compliance with federal and state laws and County procurement policies, monitoring MWBE and DBE participation and subcontracting goals.

Small and Minority Business Development Specialist coordinates and manages SLBE and MWBE services, staying connected to major employers, industry clusters, and County assets to support business development and retention.

Building on this capacity, and guided by findings from Charles County's Disparity Study (completed in July 2021) and Commissioners' Resolution 2023-13, EDD introduced the "Vendor Diversity Contract Compliance Portal" to meet key directives. Namely, build a comprehensive vendor database, monitor MWBE compliance, set subcontractor goals, and generate clear utilization reports. The portal centralizes these functions so EDD staff, vendors, and buyers share a single source for inclusive procurement.

For businesses, the portal replaces a paper-based process with online SLBE and MWBE applications, accelerates eligibility reviews, and maintains secure records. The portal also has a searchable vendor database (by industry, certification, company, race, or keyword) to boost vendor visibility and help firms track upcoming opportunities. For the County, advanced reporting now tracks SLBE/MWBE spending, certification statistics, department purchasing patterns, and compliance metrics that were not previously possible.

Access the
portal here:





Launched during Charles County's Business Appreciation Week in May 2024, the With Love From Charles community gift card program has become a valuable tool in the EDD's efforts to support local businesses. Developed in partnership with the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, With Love From Charles encourages residents and visitors to shop local by offering a digital community gift card redeemable at a variety of participating businesses across the county.

To boost visibility, participation, and sales, the EDD has implemented a year-round, seasonally tailored marketing campaign that highlights the program during key shopping periods throughout the year. Campaign strategies have included billboards, Google and social media ads, local radio spots, streaming platforms, and even in-stadium advertising with the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs, one of the participating businesses. Promotions such as BOGO gift card offers, influencer collaborations, social media giveaways, and a Holiday Gift Guide featuring participating businesses. As of July 2025, more than 100 gift cards,

WITH LOVE FROM charles

G I F T

totaling over \$6,000 in value, have been distributed to be spent at any of the 39 participating Charles County businesses. The With Love From Charles program continues to grow as a meaningful way to support small businesses and keep consumer dollars circulating within Charles County.



Scan to learn more,
view participating
businesses, and
purchase gift cards.



VALLERY A. JACKSON

Owner, Waggy World, LLC



Fourteen years ago, Vallery Jackson chose Charles County for its quieter pace, strong schools, and a neighborhood feel where everything she needed was close by. She did not plan to become an entrepreneur, but that changed when her son asked for a dog. A love of dogs turned into dog sitting, followed by training, certifications, and a deep interest in canine behavior. After a difficult experience at a public dog park, she set out to create a safer, more supervised option for local pet owners. Waggy World began in 2017, first as a boarding facility, then growing into a structured dog daycare program.

"Daycare is a different animal," Vallery says. "There is more administration, assessments, and communication with families. It is like dropping off and picking up kids." Demand grew quickly, and many clients have stayed six or seven years. "Having something centralized and right here in our county means everything," she adds. Before Waggy World, she often had to drive 30 to 45 minutes out of the county for services, an extra stress on busy workdays.

Growth has required persistence and partnership. Vallery launched at home while she searched for a properly zoned property, operating under Animal Control licensing limits until she could expand. She brought on help as daycare ramped up in 2021,

blending contractors and part-time employees to manage cleaning, playgroups, and reporting. Like many care businesses, staffing can be challenging. Facility space limits cap enrollment, which in turn limits revenue and wages. "Programs like BGAP helped me think about scaling," she says. "Charles County's Summer Youth Employment Program was also a real help for a very small business."

County resources have been a support. Vallery recently joined With Love from Charles, the county's community gift card program. She leans into the local ecosystem, from networking with the Chamber of Commerce to buying from nearby vendors. "I am all in on keeping our dollars here and supporting other small businesses, just like they support me," she says.

Today, Vallery remains full-time in another job, but her strategy is clear. She has submitted preliminary site plans, hired an architecture firm, and is revising drawings for a new building that will allow Waggy World to grow responsibly and meet county requirements. "This has become my passion," she says. "Our families rely on safe, nearby care so they can commute and work. I want to deliver that right here at home."

For Vallery, the choice to put down roots and invest in Charles County is personal. "We have our own thing here," she says. "When we support each other and keep building, it can be amazing."

WESTERN Charles County TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR

WESTERN Charles COUNTY
TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR

Scan to
learn more



The Western Charles County Technology Corridor is a hub for innovation in Southern Maryland, home to over 138 businesses spanning the technology, research and development, energetics, and related sectors. Located within the Western Charles County Technology Corridor is the Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division (NSWC IHD), the Department of the Navy's premier energetics facility and only arsenal, positioning it as a critical driver of national defense capabilities and private-sector innovation.

Extending from Maryland Airport to the Town of Indian Head via Maryland Route 210 and Bryans Road, the corridor's strategic location offers direct access to Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Richmond within a 40-minute drive. Its proximity to key federal laboratories, military installations, and high-demand commercial markets makes it an ideal location for companies in defense, cybersecurity, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing.

The Western Charles County Technology Corridor also stands out for as an asset in Charles County its

cost-efficiency and highly educated workforce. With over 6,000 residents in the immediate area, the region provides a strong talent pipeline, including professionals trained in engineering, logistics, defense technologies, and cyber disciplines. Lease rates average 34% lower than those in the D.C. Metro area, enabling businesses to reinvest in talent, research and development, and infrastructure while benefiting from a lower cost of operations.



MAJOR PROJECTS ALONG THE WESTERN CHARLES COUNTY TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR



MARYLAND AIRPORT

The Maryland Airport is a privately owned general aviation facility located at the end of the Western Charles County Technology Corridor. Recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the 1990s as a General Aviation Reliever to Reagan National Airport. Home to more than 105 based aircraft and generating over 20,000 annual operations, the airport supported 70 direct jobs in 2023 and, per MDOT, drove nearly \$2 million in business revenue and about \$4 million in local purchases. Together, these investments and policy actions position the Maryland Airport as a significant hub for general aviation in Charles County and the region.

The Maryland Airport is currently undergoing its first phase of upgrades, including the construction of four new hangars and a maintenance facility. In fall 2024, Charles County adopted new zoning around the airport that introduces an "Aviation Business Park" use, enabling compatible commercial development. Charles County also owns a 45-acre site across Livingston Road and is considering a private developer on a business park focused on the energetics and aviation sectors.

VELOCITY PARK AND CSM VELOCITY CENTER

Anchoring the emerging Velocity Park being developed by CMI General Contractors, the College of Southern Maryland's Velocity Center (opened in 2023) is designed as an off-base collaboration hub that strengthens U.S. Navy engagement with private industry, educators, students, and entrepreneurs. The broader site is envisioned to evolve into a mixed-use innovation district, featuring space for defense contractors alongside retail, restaurants, and other businesses in Charles County's innovation economy.

In 2024, the Velocity Center finalized a partnership to bring the Smithsonian's traveling exhibit, "SPARK! Places of Innovation," as the first stage of a public showcase of rural innovation. The exhibit was held from May 17 to June 29, 2025, and helped to position the Velocity Center and Velocity Park as a catalyst for collaboration, talent development, and tech-driven growth.



Photos from Maryland Humanities.

MARYLAND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

The Maryland Technology Center (MTC) is a flagship redevelopment for Indian Head and a strong model of public-private partnership. One of the MTC's core tenants, the United States Bomb Technician Association (USBTA), has expanded its Bomb Disposal Technology and Training Center to occupy the building's full 30,000 square feet (up from 13,000), establishing a first-of-its-kind Center of Excellence that connects federal agencies, the Department of Defense, industry, academia, and nonprofits in support of the bomb technician community and Maryland first responders. In 2024 alone, USBTA delivered hands-on training to more than 600 participants from 230 agencies.

Fifteen businesses and organizations now co-locate with USBTA at the MTC, with seven more on the waitlist.

New tenants include X-Bow Systems Inc., a major federal contractor working with the NSWC-IHD. In early 2025, Roebbelin, a Sacramento-based contractor aligned with X-Bow, purchased a former pub/restaurant property in Indian Head and is finalizing plans that may include new office and meeting space.

CARPENTER'S GARAGE

Acquired by the Energetics Technology Center (ETC) in May 2024, Carpenter's Garage is a targeted real-estate investment that converted a vacant 1920s auto shop into a modern workspace supporting the Western Charles County Technology Corridor. ETC leveraged a \$750,000 state grant for facility improvements, restored the building's historic façade, and delivered 2,400 square feet of office space with an additional 1,600 square feet under renovation. The project opened in 2025 and is fully occupied by ERG, a long-time NSWC contractor. This project reflects ETC's broader strategy to pair mission-driven redevelopment with tech-sector growth. Since becoming the first firm of its kind to relocate to Indian Head in 2017, ETC has deepened its partnership with NSWC-IHD while strengthening the region's talent pipeline through STEM camps, internships, and workshops.



Scan to
learn more



MARYLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (MEDA) AWARD - OASIS FRESH FOOD MARKET

In 2025, Oasis Fresh Foods Market in Indian Head received the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) Small Community Program Award for its impact-driven redevelopment. Led by local entrepreneurs Mark and Marylin Steele, the 6,000-square-foot grocery restored a long-vacant building and returned full-service food access to the community after two decades—anchoring a broader project that added seven workforce housing units and an ice cream shop. The award recognizes the project's public-private collaboration, local job creation, support for regional vendors, and meaningful contributions to neighborhood revitalization and the tax base.



Scan to
learn more



INDIAN HEAD REVITALIZATION

For more than two decades, Indian Head faced economic decline marked by vacant and underutilized properties along the Maryland Route 210 Corridor. In 2016, the EDD began working closely with the Town of Indian Head to address these challenges and advance revitalization efforts. The development of the College of Southern Maryland's Velocity Center, which created an off-base collaboration space, became a catalyst for redevelopment in the town.

Revitalization is being advanced through a multi-phase initiative that targets specific properties and leverages both public and private investment for long-term transformation. Guided by recommendations from the 2018 Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel, the EDD has partnered with the College of Southern Maryland, Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC-IHD) Indian Head, and the Military Alliance Council to prioritize redevelopment opportunities leveraging public-private partnerships.

Infrastructure investment has also emerged as a key driver of revitalization. With funding from the Department of Defense/Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (DOD/OLDCC), the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland is leading a Transportation Corridor Resiliency Study. Expected to be completed in 2026,

along MD 210 to address recommendations, conceptual planning of alternatives, emergency preparedness tabletop scenario, and a communication plan for the initial kickoff and selected alternatives.

As home to the Navy's only arsenal, the Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division (NSWC IHD) plays a critical role in providing surge capacity and advancing state-of-the-art capabilities. Through the Energetic Comprehensive Modernization Plan (ECMP), the Navy is investing \$2.7 Billion in more than 600 infrastructure modernization projects. Building on this effort, NSWC Indian Head has partnered with the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) to launch a multimillion-dollar infrastructure improvement project. Under this initiative, SMECO has assumed ownership, operation, and long-term maintenance of Naval Support Facility Indian Head's electric system for a 50-year period.

These efforts extend beyond redevelopment and infrastructure to support Charles County. A School-Based Health Center is being constructed at Indian Head Elementary School through a partnership with Charles County Public Schools and the Department of Health, expanding access to primary, urgent, and preventive care for children and families.



ERIN FERRITER

Chief of Staff, Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division (NSWC IHD)



Born and raised in Charles County, Erin Ferriter has always valued the sense of community and opportunity the county offers. Today, as Chief of Staff at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division (NSWC IHD), she supports both the Commanding Officer and the Technical Director in leading the organization. One colleague described her role best: "If you think about her in terms of a car, she's our navigation system. You've got a lot of different pieces working together to keep the car moving, but Erin is the part that makes sure it gets to where it's going."

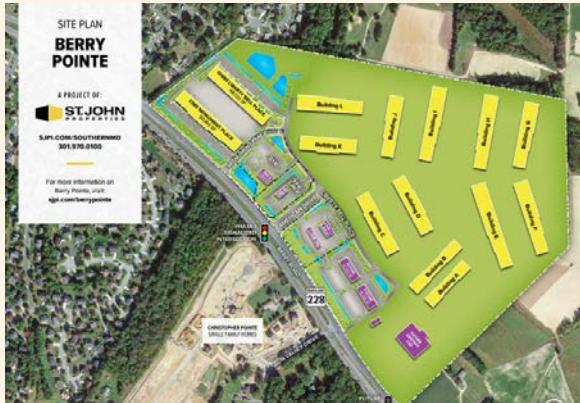
That destination is rooted in a legacy over a century years in the making. The Naval Proving Ground relocated from Annapolis to Indian Head in 1890, and by 1921 had become the Naval Powder Factory. Over time, it evolved into the Naval Propellant Plant and, eventually, into today's mission. "What we've seen through Indian Head's history," Erin explains, "is a transition from weapons proofing beginning in 1890 to becoming a complete arsenal of capability for the Navy today."

NSWC IHD's journey in Charles County continues through the \$2.7 billion Energetics Comprehensive Modernization Plan (ECMP), launched in 2023 to revitalize the Navy's industrial base. The plan encompasses more than 600 individual projects, from

safety upgrades to new capacity and state-of-the art facilities, ensuring the Navy can meet fleet needs. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, NSWC Indian Head obligated nearly \$1 billion in total contracts across command mission areas, including ECMP investments, with significant growth from the prior FY for Maryland as the principal place of performance and Maryland-based companies. In FY24, NSWC IHD awarded more \$95 million with Charles County as the principle place of performance.

"Looking big picture, having a skilled local workforce and being able to employ Charles County residents is a huge benefit," Erin notes. "The expertise we have in our area makes an immediate and powerful impact within the Navy's fleet and the Department of Defense." That impact includes real-time technical support for explosive ordnance disposal responders, leadership as the Navy's Manufacturing Technology Center for Energetics, and serving as the nation's only design and development agent for underwater warheads and explosives.

NSWC Indian Head remains one of Charles County's largest employers, with more than \$353 million in salaries directed to Maryland residents in FY24. Its workforce is closely tied to the local community, heavily populated by county residents. Outreach and collaborative partnerships are central to that connection. "We do have a STEM program, and we are always out in the community," Erin says. "Whether it's back-to-school nights, the STEM Fest, or the HITS Expo, it makes sense to connect with students from a young age, to help them understand what we do here and spark interest in a future career in STEM." Partnerships with Charles County Public Schools and the College of Southern Maryland play a key role in supporting this mission.



BERRY POINTE

Construction is underway at Berry Pointe Business Park in Waldorf, developed by St. John Properties. This project will deliver 518,400 square feet of flex/R&D space, 93,000 square feet of office space, and 22,500 square feet of supporting retail, with the capacity to support more than 2,100 jobs at full build-out.

In May 2025, Chesapeake Potomac Regional Cancer Center (CPRCC) became the Berry Pointe Business Park's inaugural tenant, signing 11,152 square feet, with operations targeted to begin in early 2026. A joint partnership among UM Charles Regional Medical Center, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, and CalvertHealth Medical Center, CPRCC is planning a highly customized build-out, including shielded vaults for linear accelerators to modernize equipment, add staff, and increase patient capacity. CPRCC will bring advanced radiation services, including stereotactic radiation therapy, surface guidance, and respiratory motion management, to both the county and the Southern Maryland region.



WALDORF STATION

Waldorf Station, a 145-acre mixed-use gateway at U.S. 301 and MD 5 from Greenberg Gibbons, continues to advance on multiple fronts. Phase 1, located off MD 5, is primarily residential and is expected to undergo a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the Fall 2025. Phase 2 is under construction as a retail-anchored district with future townhomes. Announced tenants include Starbucks, Pollo Campero, and Honeygrow, with initial occupancies expected in 2026. Together, the phases will introduce new housing, everyday retail, and dining options at one of the county's most visible entrances.

Transportation improvements are moving in parallel to support access and long-term mobility. The final phase of the Western Parkway (linking St. Charles Towne Center to U.S. 301 at Waldorf Station) will be underway following the completion of the first two phases. Additional road projects along MD 5 are planned at Mattawoman Beantown Road, Pinefield Road, and Substation Road. These upgrades, coordinated with construction milestones, are designed to improve traffic flow, enhance connectivity, and position Waldorf Station for a successful phased opening beginning in 2025 and continuing into 2026.



SPROUTS

Sprouts Farmers Market opened its first Southern Maryland location on August 1, 2025, at The Shops at Waldorf Center, marking the specialty grocer's eighth store in Maryland and expanding fresh, natural, and organic options for local shoppers. Sprouts hired roughly 85 team members for the Waldorf store, an investment in local jobs and service that aligns with EDD's ongoing effort to attract high-quality grocers and improve daily amenities for residents.

Stay in the loop on new businesses and major projects—
follow the CCEDD blog for the latest updates.



RUSSELL SHLAGEL

Owner, Shlagel Farms



The story of Shlagel Farms begins more than a century ago, when Russell Shlagel's grandfather left Germany and arrived in the United States through Ellis Island in 1906. Just five years later, the family purchased their first plot of land in Charles County, the same land where the farm operates today. What began as a small tobacco farm gradually evolved into a diverse operation, raising livestock, producing grain, and now cultivating fruits and vegetables that feed the community.

"When I came back to the farm in the mid-80s, I didn't see much of a future in tobacco," Russell recalls. "We've always wanted to be good neighbors, so we made the bold decision to move out of tobacco and into vegetables. People will always need to eat. It was a hard road, but it was the right one."

That transition also coincided with the early days of the Buy Local movement. "At the time, grocers weren't interested, brokers were hesitant, and getting into farmers' markets wasn't easy because existing vendors saw us as competition," Russell explains. "It wasn't until Giant Foods launched its Buy Local campaign in '93 that we really got a leg up. It gave us a reliable buyer for large amounts of our product and enabled us to grow the business." Today, the Buy Local movement has spread throughout Charles County, connecting farms and families in new ways.

Community connection is central to Shlagel Farms. Beyond supplying fresh produce, the family partners with local organizations to combat food insecurity, promote wellness, and create opportunities for families to connect with agriculture. One standout partnership is with the Charles County Judy Center, which serves children from birth through kindergarten and their families. Together, they host field trips for strawberry and pumpkin picking, giving children a chance to see where food comes from while creating lasting family memories.

Reflecting on the farm's history and presence in Charles County, Russell Shlagel, third-generation farmer, shares: "My favorite part of Charles County is that we have everything. We've got great people living here, great people moving here, and so many opportunities. With strong schools, wonderful medical care, and proximity to Washington, D.C., it's a great place to live and raise a family. You can get anything you want right here in Charles County, and if you can't find it here, you probably didn't need it."

Shlagel Farms' multi-generational journey has helped shape the county's agricultural identity while strengthening the connections that make Charles County a place where farming, family, and community can thrive.

CHARLES COUNTY'S CIRCLE *of* SERVICES

Charles County's Circle of Services links entrepreneurs and small business owners with a strong network of local, regional, state, and federal partners, providing the resources and guidance businesses needed to thrive.

By connecting our business owners with knowledgeable entities ready to help navigate challenges, circumvent obstacles, and blaze a trail forward, Charles County strengthens the resilience and growth of its businesses.

Resources



meetcharlescounty.com



charlescountymd.gov



marylandsbdc.org



tccsmd.org



csmd.edu



commerce.maryland.gov



charlescountychamber.org



smmcoc.org



dllr.state.md.us



marylandapex.org



dhcd.maryland.gov



tedcomd.com



maccharlescounty.com

13

Charles County
Military Alliance
Council (MAC)

12

Maryland Technology
Development
Corporation (TEDCO)

11

Maryland
Department of Housing
and Community
Development (DHCD)

10

Maryland APEX
Accelerator

EDUCATE • NAVIGATE • COORDINATE



MARKETING DATA POINTS

The EDD stays closely connected with residents, businesses, visitors, and other target audiences through tailored marketing outreach to build broad awareness of the EDD's programs, services, and opportunities. The team engages consistently through direct interactions and digital channels to showcase resources, improve two-way communication, and help cultivate a stronger, better-informed community.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS



ADVERTISING

2024 Fall Meeting Registration Boosted Post

Impressions:	138,107	Clicks:	211
--------------	---------	---------	-----

Business Wellness Workshop Boosted Post

Impressions:	7,427	Engagements:	56
Clicks/Website Visits:	48	CTR:	0.65%

LinkedIn Lead Gen Ads (4 variations) for Business Attraction

Impressions:	19,556	CTR:	0.31%	Lead Form Opens	45
--------------	--------	------	-------	-----------------	----

LinkedIn Lead Gen Direct Messaging Ad

Message Sends:	23,584	Opens/Views:	8,173
Open Rate:	34.65%	Total Engagements:	11,180

USBTA National Harbor EOD Tech Summit Brochure Sponsorship

Reached Over
600
Attendees

Emails Sent:

1,875

Business Facilities Newsletter Ad

Opens:

958

Open Rate:

51.1%

Leads:

12

E-NEWS STATISTICS



E-News
by the
Numbers

Campaigns:

50

(+17 from FY 2024)

Emails Sent:

75,836

(+11,883 from FY 2024)

Opens:

28,676

(+7,009 from FY 2024)

Clicks:

2,508

(-259 from FY 2024)

Average Open Rate:

48.2%

(+3% from FY 2024)

WITH LOVE FROM CHARLES ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

(2024 Holidays, Valentine's Day, Business Appreciation Week, and Summer 2025 campaigns)



With Love
From
Charles
Ads

Impressions:

4,537,509

Clicks:

36,543

Average Click Through Rate:

0.81%

BLOGS

Blogs Published:

33



Top Blog:

**An Update on
Charles County's
Top 5 Economic
Development Projects**

Posted: February 21, 2025

Views YTD: 658

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

BGAP Graduates:

10

With Love From Charles Participants:

39

Businesses Visited During BAW:

31

BEST PERFORMING SOCIAL MEDIA POST:

Top Post:

**Shop 53 Pride Month Blog Feature
(Facebook)**

Posted: June 26, 2025

Impressions: 6,517

84 Engagements (13 shares, 6 comments, 65 reactions)

PUBLIC RELATIONS

News Articles:

6

Media Mentions:

70

Articles in National Publications:

1

FALL MEETING 2024

Attendees:

150

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CHARLES COUNTY



Veteran Owned Businesses

232

+14 from FY24



Minority Owned Businesses

697

+175 from FY24



Female Owned Businesses

531

+130 from FY24

CHARLES COUNTY 2024 NONEMPLOYER STATISTICS

	Establishments	Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue	Avg. Receipts per est. (\$)
Total for all sectors	15,710	\$599,812,000	\$38,180
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	126	\$5,630,000	\$44,683
Utilities	13	\$264,000	\$20,308
Construction	1,371	\$105,932,000	\$77,266
Manufacturing	186	\$10,428,000	\$56,065
Wholesale trade	181	\$13,062,000	\$72,166
Retail trade	1,331	\$47,844,000	\$35,946
Transportation and warehousing	2,408	\$67,278,000	\$27,939
Information	196	\$4,550,000	\$23,214
Finance and insurance	226	\$11,860,000	\$52,478
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,382	\$101,779,000	\$73,646
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1,848	\$59,748,000	\$32,331
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	1,631	\$41,310,000	\$25,328
Educational services	422	\$6,453,000	\$15,291
Health care and social assistance	1,111	\$36,591,000	\$32,935
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	890	\$17,668,000	\$19,852
Accommodation and food services	463	\$11,739,000	\$25,354
Other services (except public administration)	1,923	\$57,668,000	\$29,989



Learn more about
entrepreneurship in
Charles County

OVER **15,710** NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Nonemployer Statistics. Nonemployer Statistics is an annual series that provides subnational economic data for businesses that have no paid employees and are subject to federal income tax.



CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUYS LOCAL



[SIGN UP HERE](#)

SMALL LOCAL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM (SLBE) PROGRAM

Charles County's SLBE Program allows all local, small businesses – regardless of race and gender – to gain exclusive access to certain county government procurements and preferential consideration for others via the SLBE Vendor List.

AND SUPPORTS MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



[SIGN UP HERE](#)

MINORITY & WOMEN BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (MWBE) PROGRAM

To ensure that minority and women-owned businesses are properly represented in the government procurement marketplace, Charles County Government relies on the MWBE Program and MWBE Vendor List.



Charles County Economic Development Department

301-885-1340 | info@MeetCharlesCounty.com
10665 Stanhaven Place, Suite 206

White Plains, MD 20695

Maryland Relay: 7-1-1 (TDD: 866-269-9006) | Equal Opportunity Employer

 @MeetCharlesCounty

 Charles County Economic
Development Department

 @MeetCharlesCounty

SPONSORS

BREAKFAST SPONSOR



GOLD SPONSOR



SILVER SPONSORS



Charles

CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



Charles County Government Economic Development Department

301-885-1340 | info@MeetCharlesCounty.com
10665 Stanhaven Place, Suite 206 | White Plains, MD 20695
www.MeetCharlesCounty.com | www.CharlesCountyMD.gov

Equal Opportunity Employer

It is the policy of Charles County to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, or any other status protected by law.