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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Economic Initiatives Committee, Tuesday, December 12, 2023

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[00:00:17] I didn't know you saw it. Yep. Good morning. Good morning, sir. My face turned off. All right. Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the December 12th meeting of the Economic Initiatives Committee.

[00:00:38] We have an interesting agenda. Before we get to it, though, let's see if anyone has any changes or revisions I want to suggest to the meeting summary that was circulated. If not, it will stand as record of our last meeting.

[00:00:55] Our agenda is, you know, as usual, I think, for this committee, very interesting. Today we're going to talk about the profiles of commercial districts that we have identified, two of which we've identified in the county.

[00:01:15] And, you know, ask the board, first of all, you've seen the profiles of those two. We're going to ask you for your input on whether the content is appropriate and helpful, if anything might be added, deleted. I'm also going to ask you for your input on other areas for the Phase II of this effort, other commercial districts that might be studied, and staff will explain how we're going to use this data when they make their presentations.

[00:01:47] Then we're going to talk about the Fairfax Corps, which this is our business resource platform. We've talked about it on a couple of occasions, making great progress. Looks like we have a kickoff date

that will be discussed in the presentation, and we'll be looking for your input, potential, you know, what the Board of Supervisors might add to what's already been done

[00:02:14] in terms of potential resource partners, and how we might engage people in this very valuable resource information effort that we're putting together. And then finally, and I think we'll have time, but if we don't, you've got great, the staff put together some great summaries of the recovery and resiliency initiatives that we have undertaken since COVID and how we've invested over $85 million, I think, in our

[00:02:51] small business recovery, resiliency, and so forth, almost all of which is federal money. So I think unless someone has anything before we get started, we will turn it over to Rebecca and her team. Thank you very much.

[00:03:08] Good morning. And I'm going to pass it right over to my colleague, Laura Baker. Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for the opportunity to give an update on DEI's work related to place-led economic development. As you are aware, how to create economically vibrant places where businesses can thrive has been a focus for the last few years.

[00:03:34] I know that last fall, DEI went to the EAC and provided kind of an overview of the topic in October, and since joining DEI, my focus and my role has been really trying to help this initiative advance in earnest.

[00:03:53] so for a little introduction laura baker i'm the development catalytic development manager urban planner by background with a focus in community revitalization and community development but let me introduce mike you want to take it away sure make sure that's on good morning i'm mike vanatta most of you may know me as a part of my day job or my former work as a planner with fairfax county but some of you may also know that i'm the president of the bailey's crossroads seven Corners Revitalization Corporation, or the BC7RC, which is a lot easier to say.

[00:04:29] And the BC7RC, if you're not aware, is a 100% volunteer-based nonprofit, and our mission is to celebrate our neighborhood's diversity, promote it as an inclusive and vibrant community, and we work to connect businesses and residents to establish a sense of place, improve aesthetics, walkability, and opportunities for economic development.

[00:04:47] It's a privilege to be here today. I'm honored to join here, and just want to say quickly, congratulations to Supervisor Faust and Supervisor Gross thank you for all your hard work over the years it's been a privilege to work with you all Supervisor Gross particularly in a number of different capacities on my end so it's an honor to be here to talk with all of you and especially you two today thanks okay so let's get going so obviously today our goal really is to bring you up to speed in terms of giving you a sense of the work that we've conducted to date on the pilot and then of course to talk to you more about the profile template

[00:05:25] It's content and where we'd like to go with the next phase of our work. These profiles, just to give you a better sense, it's really about providing all of us with data-driven insights into Fairfax County's commercial districts, how that commercial area is actually performing and functioning, as well as who is being served by the commercial activity.

[00:05:51] And we think that this effort is really the foundational step for the place-led economic development program. We think that we can use the resulting data not only to build upon that program, but also to help evaluate future commercial district interventions, help identify businesses' investments

and promotions that might be beneficial, For example, attracting a new business that might have a good synergy with what's already existing there.

[00:06:24] Also, in terms of potential market opportunities, filling gaps. Is there a better way to leverage an existing asset? And then finally, as a tool for community empowerment, whether that's residents, businesses, organizations, or all of the above, we see it as a tool that they may not have the same access to in terms of studies and services to grow and advocate for themselves.

[00:06:57] Ultimately, we see these profiles as having quite a number of values. Number one, of course, being laying the groundwork for our program. But in order to do that, we really need to be able to weave together a number of data points to help tell that story.

[00:07:17] And we think that these profiles can really get at that and give us a snapshot of the economic health of the commercial area, its vibrancy, and sometimes even things that may go unseen or aren't always as visible. And one of the things that when we were looking at setting up this program, we looked around and we saw that this is something that our peers are doing.

[00:07:42] In fact, for example, New York City has quite a robust commercial profile program. And then there are places like Tyson's and Tyson's Community Alliance, our place-based organization partner in Tyson's. They've done studies, and they are actually developing a dynamic tracker that is very similar and also serves the goals that I have previously enumerated.

[00:08:08] So just to give you a little better sense of the first phase of work, no surprise to anyone here. But when you try to wrap your arms around the county's commercial areas, you quickly realize that that is an incredibly diverse and very large universe of places. So rather than jumping in headfirst on trying to do this work on a variety of places, we decided we wanted to be very strategic and very focused. So we wanted to start with a pilot of two different locations,

[00:08:45] and we chose them for various reasons. One, geographical diversity, size in terms of scale, the types of businesses are there, as well as the folks, the type of activity that you see. So we ended up kind of iteratively working through this process of figuring out what type of data we would need to tell this story. And we wanted to do that before applying it to a larger selection of areas because this would be our opportunity to kind of get it

[00:09:20] right and find something that was the right combination. So we ended up working with our consultant, Street Sense, very well known, of course, in the retail commercial sector, and also with a number of stakeholders.

[00:09:37] That included the Department of Planning and Development, long-range planning, as well as revitalization, our ADA, business groups such as BC7RC, and owners of properties. And they all brought their perspectives to this iterative process, whether it was land use, revitalization, economic development, property management, or being a place-based organization.

[00:10:02] And ultimately, we worked through the template, and we worked on the feel and the flow, and we ended up with this product here that you see. And before I turn it over to Mike real quick, one thing that I just wanted to emphasize to you all is that the level of importance that we really placed on two things, replicability and being accessible.

[00:10:30] And by that I mean, in terms of replicability, it really needed to be data that we could get our hands on that was objective and meaningful. We needed a process that was something that we could do, because if we're going to expand this, this is something that we need to be able to do again in the future.

[00:10:49] So it needed to be a process that was clear that we could follow. And then finally, the template, so we could apply it to different scales. In terms of accessibility, I'm really talking about the aspect of this document serving multiple audiences, whether that's policymakers, businesses, residents, organizations.

[00:11:08] We wanted it to be digestible, not wonky, and we wanted it to have a really good feel and flow and look appealing. So with that, I will turn it over to Mike. And I thought it would be more interesting to have Mike talk about this profile template from the perspective of a potential end user and give us his thoughts not only on the template and the data points, but what this pilot showed about Baileys, and then, of course, how he thinks it could be a tool for BC7RC.

[00:11:40] Sure. Thanks, Laura. And then just quickly, I guess, before I dive into the specifics, just to further frame sort of the perspective of the VC7RC and how it relates to the PLED program, the place-led economic development, and this really is sort of the first step with that program.

[00:11:59] We're very excited for that program to ensure that the county's revitalization and other commercial areas don't lose that competitive advantage to other jurisdictions. And so we really, you know, see the need and applaud the board for, you know, looking at the coordinated effort to transition the county's commercial areas to more complete places where people want to be and to linger, consumers, residents, businesses alike.

[00:12:24] And frankly, we think that's a community health story as much as it is an economic development story. And so that's a little bit of our perspective. We're very excited to be a part of the conversation. So I'll walk you through the profile template from the perspective of an end user and so how we think, you know, the information can help inform the priorities moving forward for both us and for our community partners.

[00:12:46] So the first section is the physical context and connections, and that provides an overview of the study area's characteristics, such as its size, modes of accessibility, points of interest. You know, there's an appealing map right up front that shows the study area's geographic context.

[00:13:02] I think that's very important for any area. Selfishly, I think it's very important for Bailey's Crossroads because I think we have an unmatched proximity and location in the region that's a part of the story. And so -- but also, you know, looking at that map and some of the other data on there, right away what jumps out at me is the lack of park space in the Bailey's Crossroads CBC.

[00:13:22] Looking at some of the other data points, there appears to be good -- actually good bus options, a decent walk score in Bailey's Crossroads, although we'd like that number to be a little bit higher since 11 percent of the population population does not own a car. The next section, the study area at a glance provides a breakdown of the business environment from number of employees and businesses to average asking rents, industries present in the areas, and similar data points. Perhaps most importantly, this page and all the other subsequent pages offer insights on what the data actually means.

[00:13:57] I think that's very important. So there are clear takeaways, and in this instance, on this sheet, We have some takeaways that Bailey's Crossroads has a healthy retail performance despite some vacancies and has actually carved out a niche for small businesses due to some smaller average rents.

[00:14:13] And then I would just say a particular interest to me is sort of the identity that's already starting to come through for Bailey's Crossroads with an emphasis on retail trade, health care and social assistance, and professional, scientific, and technical services. So we can really start to see that identity and that brand coming through for the area.

[00:14:31] The next section, users at a glance, covers key demographic information. For Bailey's Crossroads, again, it's telling us to see that the population density is significantly higher compared to the average in Fairfax County. The median household income is much lower, and there's a high degree of vulnerable populations based off of that index.

[00:14:51] This section also gives a bit of a glimpse, which I think is interesting, as to how the visitor behavior has changed from pre-pandemic to post-pandemic, if we can call it that. And so, for example, we can see that the weekday lunchtime crowd has significantly diminished post-COVID.

[00:15:08] More people are presumably working from home, but weekend activity is still strong. So people are going out and they're still shopping. Retail spend, the next section, touches upon the average amount consumers spend on different categories. And it compares those expenditures to the county as a whole and the metro region as a whole.

[00:15:26] And so one of the insights, again, is that average retail spending in the Bailey's Crossroads area is lower than the county and metro region, suggesting more value-oriented customer. You also get a sense of the extent to which the local resident expenditures have been captured within this commercial area versus going somewhere else.

[00:15:44] Then there's the recent investments section, both public and private since 2020. And this section lends a snapshot of some recent investments in the area. So, for example, in Bailey's Crossroads, we've seen some much-needed public park investments. There's been some exciting private new investment, particularly in residential development, both ground up and office building repurposing, again, starting to build that identity of Bailey's Crossroads.

[00:16:09] And then the key insights section summarizes the high-level insights and drives the points home of what's going well, what the challenges are, and provides breadcrumbs of where the resources should be focused moving forward. So that's really sort of synthesizing everything together in this report for some clear take-home points that have been presented in this profile.

[00:16:28] And finally, the report finishes with a business highlight section, which I think is very important. It's based off of business interviews. It profiles a handful of specific core businesses in the area that best represent the unique character of the area. And so I think it's important because it helps provide a little bit of that flavor that doesn't necessarily come through with quantitative information.

[00:16:50] In fact, I think this section is very useful because it can show how the partnership between organizations like the BC 7RC and the county can be really helpful for everyone, including the area businesses, as you provide that opportunity for deeper connection and with the businesses to really help them thrive.

[00:17:06] So just quickly to summarize some of the additional findings about Bailey's Crossroads that we took away from this profile pilot, the CBC perhaps obviously is a large collection of independent shopping centers with a mix of large big box retailers and smaller strip retail with more local businesses. While there is some walkability, bikeability, and transit via bus, there is somewhat limited connectivity overall

and a lack of community gathering spaces and a particular lack of green space. It's actually an overall healthy commercial performance and occupancy level and an affordable asking rent for those retail spaces. There's been slight

[00:17:44] visitor growth since the pandemic and while dwell time suggests that people uh are doing multiple activities when they're visiting the commercial district we aren't seeing people lingering for longer periods of time beyond just you know a few stops uh to do their shopping and maybe get a bite to eat and we'd really like to increase that so that they're lingering a little bit more and really capturing that that sort of full full scope of what what people can uh bring to the table in our commercial areas those who shop in the in baileys tend to have larger household size suggesting family households dominate those who reside in Bailey's Crossroads tend to have lower medium age and income and a more vulnerable

[00:18:20] population many of the consumers seem to be value oriented customers but actually Bailey's Crossroads offerings seem to meet a lot of their shopping needs with 75% of the resident expenditures being translated into retail spend in the commercial area itself again there's been some recent momentum in the area in terms of public and private investments between Crossroads Interim Park Hodge Park, Mission Lofts at 5600 Columbia Pike, Alta Crossroads, and the ongoing repurposing of the Skyline Complex. And really as a whole, the Bailey's is just one example of a commercial area that's got diverse offerings. For us personally, we see a branding opportunity to embrace that unique

[00:19:00] identity through the celebration of marketing of its commercial vibrancy and the people who live there. And I can tell you that while the community is very hungry for reinvestment in placemaking, there's also that desire and concern to maintain its diversity and avoid displacement moving forward.

[00:19:16] And so I think this report starts to help tell a little bit of that story. It's just a foundation for some more of those discussions. So just to wrap up from our perspective, the profile for Bailey's Crossroads and really how I can serve for the other areas, it provides data-driven metrics to begin to reinforce the anecdotal observations that, frankly, we're seeing in our discussions with community stakeholders.

[00:19:37] So it's helpful to have it all in one sort of place without needing to go hunt around for this information. I think this is a critical first step. There are clear action items that can come from this information. And so, you know, some of the other questions that maybe can come out of this are discussions about how we can be a little more proactive to work with the commercial community to prevent vacancies or fill them when they do occur.

[00:19:59] How can we improve walkability and connectivity within the commercial core of the CBCs and other commercial areas, especially as we begin to evolve into a little bit more of an overall mixed-use community in a lot of these areas. How do crime and safety issues, whether actual or perceived, play a role in the success of these commercial areas?

[00:20:17] How do we quickly create additional green space and gathering areas while we wait for redevelopment opportunities to mature? And so to me, these are all pivotal questions that really are surrounding just the core question of how do we create a sense of place where people want to linger? And once created, how do we maintain these areas moving forward?

[00:20:35] So if nothing more, we're very optimistic that the profile can serve as a platform for further discussions about the direction of Bailey's Crossroads, in particular, and the BC 7RC's role in shaping that

future. So that's why we're very excited for the PLED program, just to discuss how we can kind of collaboratively rethink how the county and our other partners can better leverage and coordinate resources in these revitalization areas for that strategic and sustainable investment to make sure, you know, we're maintaining that competitive edge.

[00:21:04] So I really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you all today and to share the perspective the BC7RC. I look forward to continuing to work with Laura and her colleagues and county leadership moving forward. So thanks again. Back to Laura. Thank you, Mike. All right. So how do we take what we learned from phase one of this effort and apply it to the next phase? I think what we learned was that the profiles of these two different locations and different scales had value.

[00:21:36] And so going forward, we really see the importance of continuing that. So one of the first considerations or criteria that we would recommend moving forward is that we continue to use land use policy as a guide in terms of the locations that we're looking at.

[00:21:54] This makes sense because these areas are already identified for future growth, and it's going to be important and beneficial to really understand how existing commercial in these areas already function and the people that they serve. That being said, we do recommend a few exclusions, and one being land use. Again, as a guide, if a special planning area as designated in the comprehensive plan has a focus on, say, industrial, we would exclude that from this because that's not the primary purpose here.

[00:22:31] We also would recommend removing areas that have been recently comprehensively examined, for example, the rest in TSAs, and then the Tyson's Urban Center because there's already a lot of transformation that's happening there and there's a place-based organization that is doing similar work.

[00:22:52] So this results in 26 out of 31 special planning areas as being a part of that universe of what we would like to look at in Phase 2. The second consideration that we would continue from Phase 1 is shopping centers outside of the special planning areas.

[00:23:12] We think that there's value in looking at these places because they're already hubs of community activity and there is a potential for place there. I think you sometimes also see interest in these areas for potential change For example, the Pan Am Shopping Center in the Providence District or Rose Hill Shopping Center in the Brinconia District.

[00:23:36] And when you look at the numbers, according to GIS, there's about 212 shopping centers. And then there is about 86 outside of county's designated special planning areas.

[00:23:53] So 26 and 86 brings us to a universe of 112. All right. So that's a lot of work. How do we prioritize that in a logical and equitable fashion?

[00:24:08] This is where additional criteria comes in. We would recommend, again, using land use policy as a guide. The county has designated commercial revitalization districts in areas. We think it's important to look at those. If it's a CRD or CRA, it rises higher in terms of the prioritization, but also areas that are subject to study, whether it's an existing comprehensive plan amendment or an SSPA nomination, maybe those areas should also rise to the top.

[00:24:37] we think one, Fairfax, is important. Looking at places in terms of their vulnerability index or their adjacency to opportunity neighborhoods, we think that that's a very important component that we need to make sure is a part of how we prioritize our work and to ensure that there's geographical diversity

across the county. Then in thinking about the future and where this could go, We think it's important to, if there's a location that has the potential for a business stakeholder partnership, that would be very important in terms of running the list through in terms of this additional lens.

[00:25:17] And then finally, what is the economic impact? That could be contributions of the area to the tax base. That could be assessed values. It could be a compelling community serving reason. So with that, what we would do is just run those locations through these different lenses, and we're planning on that helping us kind of shake out that prioritization list for the next phase of our work.

[00:25:46] So if we move forward, one of the things that we would need to do is, of course, finalize the template. We've received feedback from various folks. We're obviously looking for feedback from you all today as well. So we will finalize the templates for the two pilot areas, and then we would finalize the criteria for phase two.

[00:26:06] We would conduct outreach to board offices to gather more input in terms of communities that are a priority. We would circulate maybe an informal RFP and then see what we could accomplish with the next phase that we would hopefully start in the first three months of 2024.

[00:26:30] And so with that, I will conclude my official remarks, but obviously, I'm really, really interested in hearing your thoughts on what kind of impressions or what resonated with you about the profiles. What are we missing? I've been living in this for six months plus.

[00:26:47] I'm sure I'm missing something. If there's something out there, I'd love to hear. What are those gaps? And then finally, your thoughts on the criteria. Is there something else that we really need to think about? Thank you. Thank you. I have a feeling every member of this board could spend an hour talking to you about the details of what you just presented, because it's really, it is detailed, and I know most of us have seen it just recently, so I'm sure there'll be a lot more discussion than we have time for

[00:27:21] today, but one thing I wanted to ask was with respect to the criteria 1, 26 locations, That seems to me like you're well on your way to having enough locations for the next step.

[00:27:38] I would suggest, and this will have to be discussed a lot, but start with those and get input from each of the supervisors on a couple that they think others that could really use this type of analysis right off the bat and keep it a reasonable number for analysis.

[00:28:00] The other thing I was wondering about as I read this, how are you going to keep it updated and how often, who's going to be responsible for that? It's a big deal. Yes, it is a big deal. And that's a really interesting question that I frankly don't have a full answer on yet.

[00:28:21] I think it's going to depend on a few things, including whether there's a place-based partner in the area and the capacity of DEI. I do see this, though, as a potential area for partnership with a place-based organization.

[00:28:39] For example, in New York City, where they do, like I said, a very robust program, New York works with place-based organizations in the commercial areas that they're profiling in order to keep things updated.

[00:28:55] And I think it's a really great opportunity to kind of, you know, keep the pulse on the businesses in an area through that type of really direct work. So that's the best I can come up with for now, but if any of my colleagues who know more would like to jump in, feel free. I'll just add one more thing

that I think Laura mentioned, which is one of the goals of creating the template was to ensure that the data was straightforward and could be gathered again and again. Some of it is subscription-based. We actually, as a county, have access to some of those

[00:29:33] subscriptions. So we do think that this is an opportunity to, I'm going to say easily, it's not easy, but it's possible to replicate this with partnership and with a focused approach. Thank you. Yeah, I don't want to monopolize the discussion, but I do want to say, I forgot to say initially, I jumped right into my concerns I want to say this is awesome I mean I think it's great as a you know each one of us has our own worlds that just we have to work in every day our own districts and for me to be able to look at what's going on in Bailey's

[00:30:11] Crossroad in a condensed version like that if there's a an issue it's very helpful and so thank you there's other other applications other than helping us but it would help the board a lot, I think. Mr. Chairman, did you have anything?

[00:30:27] I did. First, I wanted to follow up on what you were asking, because that was my first question, which is, you know, how are we going to keep this updated? This seems to be a snapshot in time, which is helpful today, but I don't know, you know, how long-term, I mean, it could be one significant development that occurs in one of these areas that could change the numbers.

[00:30:48] And so what we don't want to do is have outdated information out there that kind of works against the marketing of a particular area. And so this piece of updating becomes really important. And I guess the question I have related to that is what Rebecca was talking about, about the subscription services and other things that we have.

[00:31:08] I'm wondering if after we do the initial pilot, we should be relying on those for data points as opposed to going all the way back through and doing this again. because the county is huge and by the time we would get back to Bailey's if we weren't relying on data that we can get from other sources this would be a massive undertaking and may be overtaken with time and so I do it's a cautionary point for me because some of the data could work against what we're trying to do if it's outdated and and just looking at this data it's very helpful I gather Supervisor Gross knows more about Baileys than anybody in the room.

[00:31:48] From my cursory knowledge of it, there was nothing in the data that actually surprised me. And so it's kind of a confirmation of what's on the ground and what we know already. So where we take this and how we use it becomes really important. But I am sensitive to the timing of this and how outdated it gets and how long we think that will take.

[00:32:10] And I guess the other, you know, question that I have is if you were to take this, because this was a pilot, if you were to take the data that's in this pilot and you, let's say you were to start over, how much data could we get just by virtue of subscription service without having to go through this whole process again for one of these locations?

[00:32:31] I mean, what have we gotten out of this process that we wouldn't already have gotten out of the data collection that we already do? Because we do a lot of that in-house. We get a lot of that from other sources. So I'm just, I'm wondering what the delta is between those two.

[00:32:47] I think what this profile really brings in terms of value is pulling together data from a bunch of different sources, whether that's transportation related or infrastructure related or public facilities related.

And it brings that story out that I think all of us may anecdotally know about an area, but hasn't had it really processed and digested in a form that tells you the story about a place.

[00:33:25] So I think you could pull lots of data together, of course, but ultimately the value that this brings is painting that picture that if you were just using points in a bunch of disparate sources, you wouldn't be able to necessarily see.

[00:33:45] And I guess let me ask it a different way. We have some data we can obtain from various sources and in-house. We put that data together on a graphic like this. Is there anything that this pilot brought forward to us in the way of data that we wouldn't automatically be getting elsewhere?

[00:34:03] I understand the part about bringing it all in one place, and there's some value to that. My question really is, can we do that anyway without having to do a version of the full pilot in other areas? And I'm very – the reason I'm asking this question is 112.

[00:34:21] That's a lot. 26 is a lot. We've done two. So I'm trying to make sure we're not making this bigger than we need it to be. And there may be areas here where we might think it's too granular to actually use it for something that we want to use it for.

[00:34:39] And so that's really my question. The exercise of grabbing all the data and putting it in one place, if we did that today without this pilot, what would we be missing that this pilot gave us? And this is Scott Sizer with the Department of Economic Initiatives.

[00:34:55] Thank you. that's exactly really what we did with this pilot was it was less around finding the data and more about, because as you all know, we have tons of data in the county and it's curating the data. It's figuring out what data is valuable and actionable for the businesses and the business organizations and the communities in those areas. And so we spent a lot of time on this project in terms of what are the data sources and how can it be curated. I think 90 to 95% of all of the data that's in these reports is already available to the county either through services we have data

[00:35:30] that we already capture and collect. One of the pieces of information in here is just the number of food and beverages and food and beverage businesses that have opened or are active in areas. That's our own health department data. We don't need to go out and find somebody else to tell us that. So all of these data we sourced as a part of this pilot and I say a majority of the time that we spent was trying to identify what data sets do we have already and which ones are meaningful. And so we do think that even though the number is very large, the next projects that we do and the next places we investigate, there'll be much less time in terms of what's the right

[00:36:06] data and just a matter of capturing those within those areas. One of the questions that I think the pilot projects also looked at and the reason we did two, and we spent a lot of time talking about Bailey's, which is large, but we also did University Mall, which is basically a single shopping center, almost as small as you can get.

[00:36:23] We really wanted to have that range to understand what data is useful at different scales, and that'll be one of the other challenges. As you mentioned, there's the 26 land use areas, but the Route 28 special area is a much different geography than, you know, the McLean CBC.

[00:36:40] Okay, that's actually very helpful. And then last, the 26 special planning areas, how many of those overlap with our existing commercial revitalization districts? half, two-thirds? I don't know the

number off the top of my head, but I could certainly get back to you on it. I'd like to know that just because we, you know, we have areas where we know are at a point where we need to start paying attention to them, but we also don't want to, in essence, deprioritize the established commercial revitalization districts that already exist

[00:37:16] in the county that we worked hard on. So I'd like to see that compared to the 26 planning areas that are proposed here in phase two. Can I add one last piece? Because you brought up a really important question, which I think was our goal throughout this process, which is how can we as a staff, as a team, and as a county become more efficient in understanding our commercial districts?

[00:37:39] So there is, as Scott and Laura both said, there is more data than we can handle. So we are wrapping our hands around it. And it's a little bit, it's going to be clunky. So this first phase was our chance to put together a process and a structure that we can continually use, and we will become more and more efficient.

[00:38:03] So this next phase, we will be able to do it faster and easier, and hopefully in the future this is something that we could actually perhaps bring in-house, working with other counties, using the applications that we have.

[00:38:18] Brian is reminding me we have a fantastic application, Power BI, which can take in a lot of information and just continue to churn it. So that would be a future opportunity, but we will become more and more and more efficient as we go through this process. Good. Thank you.

[00:38:34] Thank you. Penny, you were next. Thank you. Part of me wants to say, oh, no, not another plan. It seems like we've done an awful lot of them, but I think this one sounds to me like we've got the sophistication that we need perhaps now to do it for the long term.

[00:38:59] And I want to thank Mike Van Atta especially for the work that BC7RC, you know, sometimes we need to have younger leadership to really tell us what we need to do for the future. And I'm really glad about that.

[00:39:16] There have been tremendous changes over the last quarter century or more in Bailey's Crossroads. But one of the things missing here, and maybe it's a little premature for me to mention this, but there's not the community piece in here.

[00:39:35] And I'm very concerned about that because people are resistant to change. They don't necessarily like what's there now, but they don't want much new. When we did the Seven Corners plan and we spent years doing it, the person who was one of the people who was most vocal against it was the person I was actually, you know, had been the impetus for doing the plan.

[00:40:02] And I said, what's the matter here? We've done all this work. And she said, oh, we just wanted a nice little revitalization. You go big or you go home. And so I think that what we need to make sure we incorporate somewhere in here is the community perspective, the residential community, not just the commercial community.

[00:40:24] When you look at Bailey's Crossroads, it's bisected by Route 7, which is a real challenge for the area. You know, University Mall has a couple of large streets going by it, but it's not bisected by, you know, Route 7. And so I think we need to take some of that into consideration.

[00:40:44] Things take too long. We need vision. We need to recognize that Bailey's Crossroads, especially, is very diverse. I remember one of these meetings years ago where a member of the EDA was sitting next to me, and we were talking about Bailey's, and he said, well, how do we preserve the traditional Hispanic community in Bailey's Crossroads?

[00:41:09] And I said, what traditional Hispanic community? He thought it was all people who spoke Spanish. It is not. You can have someone from Peru living next to somebody from Yemen, and then you miss all of the Somali investment along Seminary Road.

[00:41:28] So, you know, this is a challenge for the community when they sort of look at it as an umbrella. It's like, oh, well, it must be all that. No, it's not. And so I think we need to take into consideration. There needs to be a part here for the community.

[00:41:45] We also need to have some vision. When we were looking at Bailey's years ago, when the new Bailey's Crossroads Center went in, everybody wanted a Borders. We got a Borders. Where's Borders now?

[00:42:02] Everybody wanted a Panera at the next iteration. Well, we've got Panera. Not sure how long we'll have Panera. So we need to be able to look forward, not the shiny object that is right now, but what may be coming along.

[00:42:20] And I think that is a challenge for both staff and for the community. But I really would encourage that there be a segment here that there's some community input, community, not input, community consultation.

[00:42:38] Educate the folks, not just the business community, but the people who live around it. Because it's too easy now to have a negative impression of everything. Social media, you know, you put something out there, oh, you know, and the first things that come back are all negative.

[00:42:57] So we need to figure out how to address that because that has deep-sixed some of our best ideas because the folks in the community don't like it. We need to do a better job of educating them as to why this is the future, not the past.

[00:43:13] So that's my final say. Thank you. James. Thank you. Thank you. Really excited about this. Particularly, I think the look at shopping centers is going to be really valuable.

[00:43:30] You know, I've raised this before. I think it's been kind of a gap in our revitalization efforts, maybe an unavoidable one, given how many there are. But we have a lot of kind of islands of distressed or on their way to being distressed shopping centers in the county.

[00:43:49] So I think this can be very valuable. Just a question, and obviously appreciate the look at University Mall. One thought on that to maybe consider adding to the process or maybe it was in the process, but taking a slightly broader look at other planning efforts that are taking place in the area, right, whether they're our planning efforts or someone else's.

[00:44:17] The obvious one with University Mall is George Mason's kind of ongoing efforts, master plan efforts that could, will likely include, you know, some mix of retail and hotel that can present both, I'll say, a challenge and an opportunity for University Mall, right? So certainly for the property owner at University Mall for the next 10 to 20 years, that's an existential question in terms of what's going to happen there and how to position the property to

[00:44:50] benefit from what's going to happen at George Mason. Now, maybe that's a level of depth and effort that's not replicable for this project. But I think if you're looking at something like University Mall, that's critical. And I'm sure that's true of other single owner shopping centers around the county. And then in terms of, you know, how to narrow down from 86 shopping centers to prioritize them or something that's workable. You know, two thoughts. One is, does the owner of that property have any interest in engaging in this process, right? And some of that will

[00:45:29] come down to where is that property in its life cycle and in its renovation cycle, perhaps, or where are they in terms of vacancies and how healthy are they? University Mall, as was pointed out in the profile, was pretty much completely renovated in 2015, less than 10 years ago.

[00:45:47] So I don't know that the property owner has any immediate plans to make significant changes. Whereas there are other shopping centers in the county that, you know, their facade is 25 years old and they may be looking to do a refresh or a renovation.

[00:46:05] And this kind of information could be really timely to help to shape it. So those are more comments than questions probably. But thank you. I think it's great work. Thank you so much. Thank you very much.

[00:46:24] Mike, my thoughts, I think, I appreciate James' comments about how to assess that, evaluate that, and maybe where it fits into the readiness to do something different. I think the partnerships of this are really crucial. And the partnerships are, if you don't have local ownership of that, and I think Penny spoke to that as well, if you don't have some local ownership, it's probably not going to really be that kind of that fulcrum point where you tip the scale and you now can move something forward.

[00:46:54] So I would say that each of us in our districts as well as maybe collectively as a county have certain folks that we work with who are all in on a particular area, whether it's the Bailey's folks or it's SFDC or there's really even subgroups within that that I think we would want to collaborate and partner with.

[00:47:18] And if we get their buy-in, we get their support, then, you know, with just a little bit of work on the part of the county, we leverage that for a huge outcome. So in my mind, it's that leverage opportunity. I think I can think of places where this absolutely works and other places where it doesn't.

[00:47:37] But most importantly, I think it fits into it's another piece of that picture that if we plug this in here and we bring these other things around it, we can really actually move something forward as a result of this. So that's my general comments, and I think this is a great opportunity, and I want to definitely work on that with a couple of areas.

[00:47:57] I think that maybe this is one of those. And the final comment is you all may remember, some of you may remember a group that we put together. I know that Scott will. Strategic Economic Development Team that we put together in Richmond Highway Corridor, and part of that was we needed partners to work with us at the county level to provide some resources and support.

[00:48:19] And this would be one more of those that could be offered as a technical support, even if it's not necessarily all the labor that you might need to truly do it right. But you're looking for folks, I'm looking for my team and my staff to be fitting in with this and again, in turn, working with others to put the whole team together.

[00:48:40] So you all would be one piece of it and a critical piece of that and the technical support that would come to that. but there would be plenty of other players that would have to be involved to make it work. Thank you, sir. Supervisor Alcorn.

[00:48:57] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, first of all, let me say I do support the new criteria. I think that's very helpful. I want to focus on something Supervisor Gross mentioned in terms of how do we have public involvement, how do we keep the community involved.

[00:49:14] I think it really starts with what's criteria one, land use policy as a guide. Um, let's don't forget the comprehensive plan really is a, is a document that, um, is highly integrated with the community, uh, and the community, uh, I think in all cases has been very involved in the development of that.

[00:49:35] Um, and, and I was thinking about it actually, it's probably a useful byproduct for this exercise that our comprehensive plan is so detailed that it's not just, you know, all of Tyson's, all of Reston or all of Bailey's, you know, it does go down to the university mall level and provides very specific guidance.

[00:49:54] So my suggestion is that we look to not only have that be a starting point on the criteria, but also that we be open, particularly when through this process perhaps something needs to change in the comprehensive plan guidance for a particular area, that we be open to changing that land use guidance as well.

[00:50:18] And I think that's where we really can bring the community in broadly because that's our system. And I think it actually works, would work very well with this process, the way that you have it set up here. So thank you. Thank you. Sylvester Smith.

[00:50:33] Thank you. I see a real potential for this to be a proactive tool. And so since I've gotten on this board, you know, I've had a concern, and rightly so, we need to pay attention to revitalization areas.

[00:50:49] But if we don't pay attention to other areas, then they become areas that need revitalization. And so I look at Centerville. We haven't done the Centerville Comprehensive Plan for 25 years or so. So we're in that process now. And so when we go through that process, we want a transportation study.

[00:51:07] To me, this is a piece that fits in. I guess I have a little bit of difference of opinion of how much of the public gets involved in the Comprehensive Plan process. It's probably very different out by me than what you get in Reston. But I think these are the challenges for us.

[00:51:25] We get some people to show up, we get some input, but we're trying to look out to the future. How do we keep growing? How do we meet the needs of people that aren't in the community yet? And so I think having this tool and having an understanding of where we are now and being able to talk to how do we keep staying vital, I'm excited about this.

[00:51:46] I always worry that the focus is going to be out there in other parts of the county, so I am going to be interested in your process of how we get to this piece with focusing where we have needs now to ensure that we don't create more areas where all of a sudden we have great needs and that we can be on top of it.

[00:52:04] But I was really excited when I looked at these slides, so thank you. Thank you. You're good. Supervisor Pulcher. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, thank you all so much for this excellent work, as you can tell. we're all very excited uh the projects that um rebecca's office has already done getting us through the pandemic and now beyond it this seems like an important next step um agree with so much of

what was said especially trying to understand how we pick the right areas how we do that it's pretty tricky so i think definitely the importance of this tool when we talk about who is involved

[00:52:42] in this process and you may have mentioned this definitely very important to think through the the land use and DPD. As you know, something that differentiates us from a lot of our smaller localities in the area is we don't own our roads, right? So the transportation piece, and as Mike knows well, and his day job, and as you all know, is pretty critical.

[00:53:05] We did get pretty far in engaging with our community, looking at Pan Am and other areas. But as you know, the TCA, those are some of the most important things they're going to have to be able to do is to understand what's currently allowed, how to work not just with our offices, but with VDOT, and how to ensure that as we're thinking or rethinking our '90s-style developments or older, for new ones, that transportation piece and being a safer, more walkable, multimodal bike areas are going to be pretty critical for the economic development piece.

[00:53:43] Yeah, excellent step forward. Thank you. Thank you so much. Supervisor Leff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll start by saying I really appreciate the visualization of the data. I think you've done a great job, particularly with the profile of the template.

[00:54:00] It's very easy to read. I like the graphics. I think the photography also is very well done. So I just want to make that kudos. Additionally, I'm supportive of the criteria as well. On the shopping center culling, how to cull the shopping centers, I might suggest looking at the leases and those that are coming due within five years or less.

[00:54:28] Because I think we know with the anchors in particular, and this is the concern with Rose Hill, is that really trying to figure out what's the repositioning of that shopping center if something happens with that anchor. And I think we have to be clear in knowing what the phases of those leases are, and they could be triggers for us to get involved in talking to those owners about potential opportunities.

[00:54:57] And then the last question is, in Springfield, we had this idea to do a market assessment. And within that market assessment, We asked the consultant, HRNA, to give us some demand options for retail office, residential, and hotels, so future demand options.

[00:55:23] So is there feasibility, possibility of getting some of that incorporated as well in the analysis that we're doing? Because I think that's kind of important. And what it does is it goes to the point, I think, that Penny was raising, too, with the community, that you want the community to understand what is viable because I think we have a tendency with the comprehensive plan we have very grand ideas and in many cases they might incorporate mixes of uses but let's be frank you might not have the ability to implement on those mixes of uses because

[00:56:01] the market opportunity does not exist so the question is you know how do we frame it in a way that helps the residents understand what is the market opportunity as well. So with that, I'll say looking forward to working with you.

[00:56:17] And I will say lastly, I like this idea also of looking at how do we incorporate maybe an anchor institution or an institution like one that already exists in a particular market to help support on the implementation.

[00:56:35] because I think clearly that's going to be very vital and very important, and that anchor institution can actually help us extend into the community as well. So, again, very nice job, and I look forward to seeing how this progresses. Thank you.

[00:56:53] So, great discussion, but it's an ongoing discussion, and as I understand it, you're going to continue to outreach the board, make sure that the many thoughts and suggestions that you've heard today are reflected or responded to.

[00:57:10] One thing I was saying as we're going around that one of the keys to placement and economic development we keep saying is available housing and I'm not sure there's a whole lot in here unless I missed it about the housing that is available in that particular area.

[00:57:29] So you might want to consider that and see if there's an easy way to do that. And other than that, you know, I really appreciate it. I appreciate your work in Bailey's. We need a lot more of that type of activity around the county.

[00:57:49] So, yeah, it's really great. Thank you. Thank you all. And we're going to move on to our next presentation. So, Becky, do you want to take it? It's on the resource portal, Fairfax Core.

[00:58:09] Yeah, the focus of the next presentation is on Fairfax Core, Connecting Opportunities and Resources for Entrepreneurs, which will be presented by Megan Kiefer. Good morning. Thank you. Again, I'm Megan Kiefer with the Department of Economic Initiatives, and I'm happy to be here this morning to share with you an update regarding the technology platform that I introduced to this committee last in September of 2022.

[00:58:35] This is a platform designed to promote resources for entrepreneurs in our community. This was approved by the Board of Supervisors through carryover request in FY22 and a budget consideration item in FY23.

[00:58:53] Today, I'd like to provide you with an overview of the platform components, share with you some aggregated information that we have discovered about the resource partners that exist in Fairfax County and talk a little bit about the launch of our program. And I'd like to ask you to consider ways that we can work to promote the system with your constituents.

[00:59:15] One of the responsibilities of the Small and Local Business Development Division has been to provide individualized guidance to entrepreneurs and small business owners to make sure that they understand the permits and processes necessary to operate their business in Fairfax County and to connect them to the resources that exist to support their business. We've done this through the Starting a Business webpage and directly through the Business Experience Partnership with BizX services, which were launched in 2018. A major takeaway from five years of frontline interaction with the entrepreneurs is that they are often challenged to find the best source of

[00:59:55] support or resources for their particular challenge at any given time. So we wanted to develop a platform to promote existing resources, enabling the resource partners to work together to leverage and extend our services and build this strength and capacity. Our new platform, Fairfax CORE, which will launch in March of 2024, will do just that. CORE stands for Connecting Opportunities and Resources for Entrepreneurs, and you see our logo here.

[01:00:24] The vision for Fairfax CORE is that it will be the go-to resource for aspiring entrepreneurs and business owners who need help establishing, expanding, or evolving their business in Fairfax County, including the towns and the City of Fairfax. Fairfax Core is being developed with representatives from several of our closest economic development partners, including the Mason Small Business Development Center, the Women's Business Center, the South County Financial Empowerment Center, the Economic Development Authority, Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, as well as our partners from the City of Fairfax and the towns of Herndon and Vienna.

[01:01:03] Fairfax core consists of three major components. The first is an entrepreneurial support website, which will host step-by-step information for businesses at various stages and various types of businesses. This includes things like starting a business, growing a business, looking for funding, and for specific business types.

[01:01:23] The second component is a calendar for events hosted by our county and our resource partners and education opportunities promoted by our school system, the community college, and George Mason University.

[01:01:38] And the third is the Resource Navigator, which is what I'd like to focus on this morning. The Resource Navigator is an easy-to-use interactive database for visitors to the site to identify and connect directly with organizations aligned with their specific need.

[01:01:56] Only non-profit or publicly funded organizations or government partners are eligible to be listed in the resource navigator. Their resources, their services must be free or very low cost. Our resource partners have provided or confirmed very detailed information about their services using a thorough checklist called a taxonomy.

[01:02:18] This information will be used to narrow searches through a series of drop-down boxes like you see in the gray portion in the middle of this slide. This will enable the navigator to return only the most appropriate resources when an entrepreneur does the search.

[01:02:35] Our navigator is populated with more than 100 resource partners today, and that number is growing. The next couple of slides provide a bit of information about the services and target clientele for our resource partners. But before I show those, I'd like to take a moment to recognize Maribel Feliciano, a colleague in DEI, who created the majority of the taxonomies for review by the resource partners.

[01:02:59] It was a very significant effort, and we're grateful for what she has done. So this first chart shows the services provided by our resource partners. The most common offering identified by 66 of the 100 or so resource partners is networking.

[01:03:16] The next most common in order are space, business planning and management, marketing and sales support, mentoring, counseling, and funding. As part of the taxonomy, partners are given the opportunity to select whether they serve a certain need or group, or whether they specialize in serving that need or group. In this context, specialized means that the organization has qualified staff, dedicated programming, or a stated mission in support of a specific audience. The most resourced

[01:03:51] industries based on representation of specialization in order were restaurants, retail, not-for-profit, arts-related businesses, and professional services. It's important to note that as it relates to diverse populations, all resource partners serve all people. This chart shows the specialization in support of

diverse communities. These are listed alphabetically, but in summary, 13 resource partners self-identified as specializing in serving the

[01:04:24] Hispanic community. 12 in serving the black or African American population and 12 specialize in supporting women entrepreneurs. 11 specialize in serving veterans and 9 identified special services for the Asian community. When a visitor to Fairfax Corps searches the resource navigator and identifies entities that support their specific need, they can click on a button to connect to the resource partner. The resource partner will get an email indicating that a connection has been

[01:05:01] requested and that resource partner will reach out directly to the entrepreneur and schedule an opportunity for a conversation and to provide the needed services. Alternatively, the entrepreneur may send a message through the Contact Us page on Fairfax Corps. This message will be reviewed by DEI and directed to the most appropriate resource. The resource might be an external partner or it might be a county agency such as for permitting questions.

[01:05:30] DEI is also proposing to direct the majority of the very general starting of business questions to the Mason Small Business Development Center and retaining for BizX the county-related process and resource inquiries.

[01:05:46] We anticipate using Fairfax Core to capture several different metrics as listed here. Web analytics includes the number of visitors to each page and their web journey, including the time spent on each page, resources clicked, and guides reviewed. Network engagement includes the number of resource partners in the portal and connections made, as well as calendar submissions and newsletter subscribers. Partner network refers to the outcomes and the referral reports that we anticipate receiving from our resource partners after they have connected

[01:06:22] with an entrepreneur through Fairfax Core. And network strength refers to new collaborations among partners and partner and client satisfaction. We expect to revise and refine these projects as we gain experience.

[01:06:41] Later today, we will send a list of the resource partners who are included in the Navigator to each of your offices. We would ask that you review this to let us know if by chance we've overlooked a potential partner. Once Fairfax Core goes live, resource partners will be able to fill out a taxonomy to add themselves to the database, but we'd like to be as thorough as possible prior to launch.

[01:07:04] I also wanted to note that one of the advantages of this portal is that resource partners will be able to go in and update their own taxonomies, and in this way, we'll be able to make sure that the information stays current. In February, we will host a soft launch event, and we will invite the resource partners to for a networking opportunity to review Fairfax core to review their own taxonomies and and to talk about what we are hoping to get out of this as a group of resource partners we expect to be back here in mid-march for the

[01:07:41] official launch of Fairfax core and to kick off our marketing campaign and our roadshow our plan is to take Fairfax core into the communities we'd like to go to the small business gatherings chambers. Mike will be contacting you. I'd love to come to your group and we'd like to work with you to make sure that we have connected with the best groups or all of the groups within your districts. We will keep you engaged and informed throughout the winter and we look forward to working with you to

[01:08:18] launch Fairfax Corps in the spring. We'll be happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you. Thank you so much, Megan. We'll start that. I want to thank you for pulling us all together. It's pretty impressive what you've accomplished so far, and I'm looking forward to the implementation.

[01:08:45] I know you said you're going to submit the list of resource partners. That was going to be one of my questions. Who are they? I know the board's going to be anxious to get their hands on that list and see who they might if they could think of someone you haven't thought of to add to the list but the launch there's only two steps left missing resource partners unless the board makes changes and the other one is launch and promotion

[01:09:22] participation you says for discussion specifically what are you looking at there we would like to invite you and or your staff to join us for the soft launch event that's going to happen in February so that you can have the opportunity to connect with the resource partners. But we'd really also like to discuss with each of you to make sure that we have all of the events on our radar of opportunities to meet with your small businesses or your resource partners within your

[01:09:59] districts to promote Fairfax Corps. We think that the success of this system is reliant upon people knowing about it and people using it, and so we will work very hard to create a marketing strategy which is probably going to need your assistance to make sure that it's getting out to the people who contact your offices to want to know how to start a small business.

[01:10:25] And this is being used, something similar is being done in other jurisdictions around the country, correct? That's right. One of the reasons that we selected this consultant and this particular platform is they have worked with over 100 jurisdictions or entities to create this sort of system.

[01:10:47] I saw Supervisor Pulchik. Oh, I'm sorry. It's okay. Just very quickly, I just want to follow up on that because I think this is important for retention and to make sure folks understand the county is here to help people who want to build small businesses or stay in the county. But I wouldn't underestimate the power of this being marketed well outside of the county. And so partnering with the EDA and others, because this is part of our image, our brand, thinking about how we bring more businesses in to the county is important, as well as the retention piece. And some may be deciding where to go. And frankly,

[01:11:25] if they know these types of systems, products, support, are in Fairfax County, that might make their decision easier. And so I just want to make sure external to the county that we are marketing this far and wide as a recruitment for businesses to come into the county, just as important.

[01:11:45] Thank you. Yeah, and I would just acknowledge that EDA has been doing a great job of the programs that we've been initiating through the EIC, picking them up and marketing them and getting the word out, and they're doing a really nice job with that, and I'm sure they'll jump on this.

[01:12:04] Yeah, that's all right. Thank you. Supervisor Palcic. Yes, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Megan, and your team. I think my questions are a little bit related is, right, in looking at your questions, the outreach tour, the resource partners, and making sure that there's a connection and not an overlap with the EDA work that's being done. So I know that you all have different areas you're looking at. And to me, number one, my question was going to be who are these partners? And number two, when you do outreach, and hopefully you've already done this,

[01:12:41] is getting feedback on what works. As you know, small businesses, time is precious. And so I don't want to just hand over a platform and expect that it's going to solve their problems, right? We want to

really, truly, the word navigate, as you know, is a critical one, whether it's land use issues permitting issues finance issues marketing transportation all of it so i guess that's a little bit and that's not you know my expertise it is yours is how to really make sure that we're bringing these people to these conversations bringing the people resources

[01:13:16] so there can be that time to actually understand what's being offered and just making sure that we're not just creating another platform, but that there really will be that sort of live help that we know so many of our small businesses don't even know where to turn on when they do, who's going to be able to help them with which problem and how.

[01:13:38] And I think that's a lot of what we get in our offices. Thank you. Thanks. Thank you very much. Supervisor Lesk? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll go quick. I'll just make a point. One under funding, so the resource partners connected to funding.

[01:13:56] You've got 24. Just curious to know, how are they broken out? Are they a combination of angel, venture, private equity, debt funders? Because I guess the question will be, you don't really know necessarily what type of funding you need.

[01:14:16] And in many cases, you might need to do a little research to figure out which is the most appropriate. But then once you figure out which is the most appropriate, do we have a continuum there of funding options that would incorporate and encapsulate all of those different opportunities?

[01:14:37] Supervisor Lesk, that's a very interesting question. I want to be clear that when an organization says they specialize in funding, that doesn't necessarily mean that they provide funding. It may be that they provide counseling specific to funding questions.

[01:14:57] So to answer your question about the continuum of funding options, I'd want to do a little bit of research and get back to you. Yeah, and I'll just make this point, and I think everyone here is aware of it. You know, funding is the most difficult and one of the largest challenges that companies face, and clearly we want to be creative.

[01:15:16] We want to be adding value to them as they're trying to find funding options. So I think this is going to be kind of important for us to be able to really differentiate us possibly from some of our other competitors, just thinking out loud. Thank you very much. Thank you.

[01:15:32] Supervisor Stark. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of comments. One is entrepreneurs are extreme optimists. They somehow believe that they're smarter or better or they have an idea that's better, and they're maybe somewhat blinded or at least focused on that optimism, so they don't always see all the other things.

[01:15:55] And so I think this is an opportunity maybe for them to see that, but the challenge is getting them to see it. At least that's been my experience, at least in the health care field. And one of the things that I think can help do that is a program like this, but also it needs to be outreached in a way that they'll hear it.

[01:16:16] One of the major elements that I saw is that there are a lot of networking groups out there that you can join. I mean, that's maybe a common way that people at least get their – So I think a key part of this is connecting with those networking groups. And for those of us who have been involved with some of

them over the past decades, they typically have a few individuals in that particular field, but then they have a lot of maybe an attorney or CPAs or others who look at that as an opportunity to get new business.

[01:16:46] But that's not bad, but it's an opportunity that we can maybe complement, And maybe at least it's a way of us getting information out that maybe will widen their scope a little bit. And finally, the core issue that we have, that we're experiencing in the district with entrepreneurs who are building out a space.

[01:17:08] And oftentimes it's restaurants, right? That's the number one issue. And the county has done a lot, I think, to make it easy on restaurateurs. But that's the awareness of how to do retail space and the fact that they do have to have plans and they do have to have, you know, folks who are supporting that is very difficult.

[01:17:29] So I think that is especially an outreach area for our smallest businesses. I know that we have plenty more businesses that aren't doing retail, but at least for the ones that at least we hear about most, at least in our office, it's folks who are trying to work that system.

[01:17:45] And I'm not criticizing our staff so much as I'm recognizing that they need more hand-holding and they need more maybe resources that are available that they can be connected to. So those are the two thoughts I have about that. I think this is a great system approach, but it's not going to work unless we have a way to kind of go out there and grab hold of some of these folks and say, hey, look at this.

[01:18:11] This is something that might work for you. And that's the challenge. So thank you. Thank you. Okay. It's great. Unless anybody feels different, we're going to move forward. You're going to get us a list of the resources, and we'll get back to you with any suggestions we have to add. But other than that, we'll anticipate getting a notice that there is a kickoff that everyone's going to participate in sometime around February.

[01:18:47] Very awesome. Thank you. Appreciate it. We've got a little bit of time left for our final item, which is pretty much just a summary of, you know, the programs that we were able to pull up.

[01:19:06] we've been talking about so many different programs that sometimes it gets a little confusing, and I think Rebecca and her team have done an excellent job of really just laying out very simply what we've done and the investments that we've made. Yeah. Thank you very much, Chairman Faust. Rebecca Mowdry, Director of the Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives.

[01:19:28] So the information in here is pretty self-explanatory, but I would like to talk about just a few things since we're here on the cusp of 2024 seemed like a really good time to consider where we've been um and set the stage for where we need to go next so you will remember um this this board that's in place now um in 2020 we undertook an effort with the eda on an economic recovery framework and i'm very proud that um collectively as a county we have I think ticked a lot of the boxes for the recommendations that were presented in the

[01:20:05] economic recovery framework. There's still work to do, but in terms of business recovery and resilience, we have really gone down this path, and this is actually a graphic that I showed to you in 2020 and 2021, and we have done a lot of good work together, and I just really want to take a moment to thank you all for your support and your trust in our what was a new department launched in the end of 2019 to allow us to execute on some of the initiatives that I'll

[01:20:43] talk through today. Our headline metrics, this is from the economic opportunities headline metrics from the strategic plan, does show some nice data that our economy overall is faring well, especially when we compare to what happened, you know, with the downturn in 2020.

[01:21:02] This is a snapshot. This is not a nuanced approach. And next year, I look forward to working with you all and the Economic Advisory Commission on digging in to some of the components of our economy that we want to pay a little bit more attention to.

[01:21:20] But for now, I'd like to start just by highlighting that since 2020, our team has implemented or executed over $84 million in recovery and now resiliency programs.

[01:21:37] This started with the microloan program. It was our first attempt. That actually was the one program that has used our local funds through EOR funds. What's exciting about that is it transitioned to a revolving loan fund.

[01:21:52] So that continues to have impact and multiply through our economy through making ongoing loans to small businesses, low interest loans to small businesses. Fairfax Rives was our largest program. We served nearly 5,000 businesses directly across all sectors.

[01:22:12] And in 2021, we launched the Pivot Program, which targeted the hardest-hit sectors. And now we are moving into our resiliency programs. So our Thrive Program is actually today is the day that that application period is open.

[01:22:30] Everyone, please spread the word as you have in your newsletters. Thank you very much. That is helping small businesses to move to the next stage in their development. And Talent Up is an opportunity to provide services and support to businesses in one of the most challenging areas that all businesses face, which is recruiting and retaining skilled talent, while also recognizing and supporting what we call often overlooked workers and providing them with opportunities for a great career.

[01:23:03] But I do want to take a minute to focus on the tourism recovery program that's being implemented by Visit Fairfax. We haven't talked about this a lot, but we were, as a team, able to receive a $4.1 million grant from the state, from Virginia Tourism Corporation, that was for a destination marketing organization, which is Visit Fairfax.

[01:23:27] And Visit Fairfax provided us with an amazing overview, a snapshot of their activities to date. This is just a quick summary of that. The project is not done, so we will be receiving further updates in February at kind of an interim and then 2024 when the program is done.

[01:23:46] But we just have to recognize the amazing work and the impacts that Visit Fairfax has been able to execute with this $4.1 million. I'm not going to go through these five areas, but they've really been able to focus on expanding access to group events, expanding marketing to our local communities, including focus on local and small business.

[01:24:13] And they have a campaign for local business and local makers. And there is a Christmas and holiday shopping guide for local makers on their website. if you haven't, definitely check it out. And then they've also expanded reach to the drive and fly markets through unique campaigns. And here, there's many of these listed here. There's so many impacts. I can't go through them all in the time that we have left. But through their group gatherings focus, they were able to engage with more than 700 industry professionals on events

[01:24:48] and showcasing Fairfax County as a destination through five new trade shows, six familiarization tours, and four industry event sponsorships. Visit Fairfax has created a really cool virtual tour experience.

[01:25:04] I don't think it clicks on because this ended up being a PDF document, but it's a really unique virtual brochure that they've created for that, and there's other opportunities. they've been able to attract 18 new tournaments, six new meetings, and created one new group tour operator partnership. In addition, they have been able to fund three new public art installations for the Love Works, those really cool love signs that have been at the Workhouse Arts and Tyson's Corner Center, but are also now in Springfield Town Center, Reston Town Center, and the Mosaic

[01:25:43] district. And they also created the Love Local campaign. And they ran drive and fly market digital campaigns through the spring and summer in Richmond, Norfolk, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta. And they had a really unique Philadelphia takeover. So they invited Philadelphians to visit through creative outdoor and digital advertising, radio, and streaming video.

[01:26:13] The concentrated media blitz went out to over 32 million consumers during the spring and summer. And over that four-month period, we've received a 311% increase in website users from Philadelphia, 48% more visitors to Fairfax County from Philadelphia, with an average spending of $178 per visitor.

[01:26:40] And I think that the impact numbers really speak for themselves. And remember, this is just the interim point in this campaign. The program, the funding continues, and they have more work to do. So the return on investment from this $4.1 million is 1.7 million consumer impressions, 111,000 total visitors to Fairfax County, and 68.3 million in consumer spending from those visitors.

[01:27:11] So this is what I would certainly call a return on investment, and we're grateful for Visit Fairfax for their excellent work. Of course, if you have any questions on this program, please reach out to visit Fairfax, and they will be presenting additional reports in the future.

[01:27:31] I have to take one more minute. I know that we are at time, but I have to join the chorus in thanks to our outgoing supervisors, the weeks and months of thanks. But Supervisor Gross, you have certainly been an inspiration as vice chair, leading us all.

[01:27:57] And as a fellow Oregonian, it's amazing to see a woman in its position of leadership and all the impacts that you've made. We have small gifts of thanks. You know, the tagline for our department is navigating what's next.

[01:28:13] So it seemed very appropriate to provide you with a navigating what's next memento. Each of these is filled with delicacies from your own district, small businesses in your own district that I hope you can enjoy.

[01:28:31] And Supervisor Faust, I can't thank you enough for the leadership and guidance that you provided to this department and myself over the last four years. You have helped us to execute these programs, and we are very, very grateful for your leadership and hope to see you again in the economic development sphere.

[01:28:51] So thank you very much. Thank you so much. I want to say thank you for the presentation, but I want to thank the county executive. I've been chairman of the EAC for 16 years, and it was hard work

because the support was spread out around the county.

[01:29:07] different departments and everybody was helpful but it was no one's primary responsibility and so we struggled and then uh the kind of executive created the uh the department of economic initiatives uh and hired some awesome awesome people and i know rebecca you've hired awesome people uh and it it's just so much better now than it was and so much easier for us to accomplish stuff we were doing good things but we're doing it's a lot easier to get things done so thank you

[01:29:44] so much it was uh it was really you really made a big difference and you're not just up to this point in time but going forward so great work mr chairman um if i could add to that i want to thank rebecca for the presentation and i'm glad you mentioned uh the creation of the department because contrary to what a lot of people think this was created in advance before the pandemic Nobody knew at the time what was right around the corner, and I think that speaks to the vision that this board has and that our staff has and how important our local economy is in good times and in bad.

[01:30:21] And I couldn't help but reflect on that when I was looking at the headline metrics here. I mean, what this is, this proves that the work that you and your department is doing is making a difference in our community, and I want to thank you for that. And my hope is that the metrics that are here can be part of the Fairfax Forward platform at some point next year because what we should be doing with these is spreading this word far and wide in our community and making sure people understand the success stories that are happening here.

[01:30:51] Too often, people read the news and it's negativity. And we have to flip that and say, hey, here's some real positive things that are happening in our community, and a lot of it is the work of this department. And so the vision to do that absent the pandemic, the utility of having it in place when the pandemic hit was absolutely fantastic and dispersing all this federal money, getting it out to our local businesses so that they could continue not only through the pandemic, but survive and continue after it.

[01:31:21] and clearly these metrics prove that, and so we should be sharing these far and wide in the future, working with our partners at the EDA and our chambers as well to share this good news, because when people see this about our economy, people who are thinking about where they want to open up their business say, hey, I want to go there, because these numbers are all going in the right direction, and this is not the case in most parts of the country.

[01:31:44] So congratulations, and let's share this. Thank you. We're on borrowed time. But if no one else has anything else, then we'll conclude the meeting. And once again, thank our presenters and Rebecca and your entire team for some amazing work.

[01:32:06] So thank you.

