Prepared for: The Drakes Branch Town Council and
The Drakes Branch Community
By: Samuel Robert Ragsdale
Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University
May 2006
THE DRAKES BRANCH
ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION
PLAN

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The Drakes Branch Community

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Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The town of Drakes Branch has a number of strengths which the town can build upon. The physical fabric of the community, including: proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities, pedestrian scale, sense of enclosure, and small town persona give the town a comfortable, rural feel. Drakes Branch has a viable mix of businesses and vacant buildings. Current businesses, such as retail trade establishments and manufacturing businesses, are viable and stable and can help support new development in the town. Current businesses, such as Down Home Subs, Hall’s Farm Supply, and the A.B.C. store are anchor businesses and help attract people from outside the community. There is also infrastructure currently in place to support new retail trade establishments and manufacturing businesses, including seven vacant buildings in the commercial corridor and the West Point Stevens Facility. In addition, Drakes Branch is located within close proximity to important towns and major cities in the region, including: Farmville, South Boston, Lynchburg, Danville, and Richmond. Finally, residents of Drakes Branch have a vested interest in the town’s survival and growth.

One of Drakes Branch’s major weaknesses is its small size. The population of the town has been steadily declining for the last thirty years. Businesses in the town must rely on customers from outside the town and within the community to remain in business. The town has few retail establishments and relies heavily on its anchor businesses to attract potential customers. Other, larger communities within the county and region compete with businesses in Drakes Branch, thus drawing potential shoppers away from the town. Drakes Branch has moderate access to major transportation corridors such as U.S. State Highway 360 and the railroad access in Keysville. There are a number of physical weaknesses in Drakes Branch, including the lack of street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, and the lack of a distinguishable quality and characteristics. Street lighting in the commercial corridor is very inadequate and deters shoppers from traveling to the town after dark. Furthermore, businesses in Drakes Branch are not open after dark and are often closed on the weekends. Signs on storefronts are not clearly marked and signs from old businesses are still in place, making it difficult to distinguish between establishments still in business and ones that are no longer in business. Street furniture and street trees are non-existent. These physical elements would help to increase the aesthetic quality of the community. In addition, there are no signs welcoming visitors to the community.

The population of Drakes Branch and many of the other communities in the region are aging; also, new residents from the North are seeking retirement housings in Southern towns. This population cohort presents new economic development opportunities for the town. Current businesses in the town and an aging regional
population suggest that the town should develop senior housing options, senior care facilities, and retirement housing. In addition, vacant buildings can serve as small business incubators for future retail and commercial establishments. New retail establishments, including specialty stores (deli, bakery, or open air market), floor covering stores, major appliance stores, alterations and shoe repair shops, beauty and barber shops, small appliance stores, clubs and community centers (for the elderly and the youth of the community), music product shops, and reading and book stores would help attract new residents and potential customers to the community. Current infrastructure, such as the former West Point Stevens Facility, could be used as a small business park and a county recreational facility which would create new jobs for local residents.

One of the greatest potential threats to Drakes Branch is competition from other communities. There are a number of larger communities in the region that have larger population sizes and more disposable capital. These communities may be able to out-compete Drakes Branch for future businesses and residents. In addition, other localities are able to offer potential residents a greater variety of amenities, including: retail, recreational, and employment opportunities.

Given these circumstances, the town of Drakes Branch has the potential to be a thriving and prosperous community that is safe, attractive, pedestrian friendly and that offers residents of all ages a number of shopping, employment, and recreational opportunities. To realize this vision, the following goals have been proposed:

- The town of Drakes Branch should develop new housing options for seniors, retirees, and new families.
- Drakes Branch should create new retail options and other amenities in order to support additional residents, especially seniors.
- Incentives should be given to developers interested in creating senior housing options or a senior care facility in Drakes Branch.
- The West Point Stevens Facility should be converted into a county recreational facility and business park for small businesses.
- An enterprise zone should be created around the West Point Stevens Facility.
- The town should develop homegrown manufacturing businesses and nurture current manufacturing businesses.
- Drakes Branch should make preparations for the development of the state correctional facility.
- Business owners in Drakes Branch should band together and form a merchants association.
The town should strengthen current businesses and support the development of new businesses.

New businesses should be encouraged to locate in vacant buildings or “key development sites” in the commercial corridor.

Drakes Branch and Charlotte County should support their agricultural heritage and work with local farmers to help them develop new niche markets and identify potential customers.

Business owners, local residents, civic associations, and the Drakes Branch Town Council should support the revitalization of Drakes Branch through active participation, cooperation, and innovation.

Drakes Branch should develop urban design improvements including streetscape improvements, additional street lighting, and raised crosswalks to increase public safety and the appearance of the town.

In summary, there is tremendous potential for the town of Drakes Branch to be completely revitalized and to serve the local and county residents as a high quality, rural retail center once again. With the committed engagement of county and regional agencies and private-sector partners, this vision can be realized. This plan should guide the Drakes Branch Town Council, county agencies, merchants, residents and other stakeholders toward realizing the vision of a revitalized and flourishing town of Drakes Branch. With all the strengths and development opportunities noted in this plan, I believe this area has a strong potential to be revitalized. It is our hope that this plan can help spark a renewed interest in the town from residents, merchants, property owners, and developers. Despite the weaknesses of the town, Drakes Branch has immense potential and local residents are dedicated to the revitalization of the town.
PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Drakes Branch Economic Revitalization Plan was created to build a vision for the town and to guide economic development and revitalization efforts. During the early 1900’s Drakes Branch was a prosperous community, mainly due to the booming dark-fired tobacco market. After the crash of the tobacco market, the town recovered and economic prosperity returned until the late 1960’s when the town experienced a steady population decline due to the lack of employment opportunities in the town and region. Furthermore, the town’s economic decline has recently accelerated after the West Point Stevens Factory, which employed a number of people in the county and region, closed. Competition from other communities in close proximity to the town has threatened the survival of many of the town’s businesses. Local residents no longer spend most of their retail dollars in the town. Currently, a large percentage of town and county residents are over age 55, which has created a unique opportunity for the town. As a result, this plan will help guide economic revitalization efforts in the town and create a vision of the town’s future.

This plan was undertaken at the request of Denise Pridgen, Mayor of Drakes Branch; Deborah Kennedy, Vice Mayor of Drakes Branch; and the Drakes Branch Town Council. This plan will help guide the efforts of the Drakes Branch Town Council through a fresh vision of the town’s development potential. The following tasks were undertaken to determine the potential for economic revitalization:

- Reviewed previous plans and zoning for the area;
- Reviewed population characteristics of the town and the region;
- Analyzed transportation access and the condition of infrastructure;
- Evaluated urban design and physical opportunities and constraints in the town;
- Analyzed the economic composition of the region and assessed regional competition;
- Analyzed the potential for new housing development in the town;
- Analyzed the potential for the development of manufacturing and retail trade businesses; and
- Analyzed the potential for developing niche agriculture markets.
Based on the findings of these analyses the following recommendations were made:

- The creation of senior housing options, retirement housing options, and an elderly care facility;
- The development of a county recreation center and small business park;
- Strategies to assist and stabilize existing businesses;
- The development of new retail options in the town;
- The development of new homegrown manufacturing businesses;
- The creation of a merchants association and increasing community pride;
- Streetscape improvements; and
- A detailed implementation schedule which includes recommendations for responsibility.

There is great potential for the town of Drakes Branch to be completely revitalized and to provide local residents with quality employment opportunities and retail options once again. With the committed efforts of the Drakes Branch Town Council, county and regional agencies, local residents, and private-sector partners, this vision can be realized.
PART I: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND REVITALIZATION POTENTIAL
DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

History of Charlotte County and Drakes Branch

The town of Drakes Branch is located in Charlotte County which is part of Southside Virginia (Map 1 and Map 2 respectively). The town is approximately thirty-five minutes from Farmville, Virginia on Virginia State Highway 360. Charlotte County is located in the Piedmont Physiographic Province. The county is surrounded by six other counties, including: Prince Edward and Appomattox to the north, Lunenburg and Mecklenburg to the east, Halifax to the south, and Campbell County to the west. The county’s annual average temperature (F) is 55.7 degrees and the average yearly precipitation is 38.07 inches. Charlotte County is approximately 471 square miles or 301,440 acres. 207,387 acres of the county are forested and timber harvesting corporations own 30% of this land. Charlotte County is one of seven counties in Virginia designated as an area of agricultural importance. 81,771 acres of farmland in the county are designated as being of prime importance to the future of national agriculture and 78,466 additional acres of farmland have been recognized to be of statewide importance. Additionally, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has recognized Charlotte County for having excellent air quality (better than the national standard).

Charlotte County was founded in 1764 when Lunenburg County was divided. The county was named after Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George the III of England, but settlement of the county began fifty years earlier, as frontiersmen headed west. Charlotte County was primarily settled by Scotch Irish and French Huguenot farmers. Small tobacco farmers and large grain farmers were attracted to Charlotte County in the 18th century due to the county’s fertile, flat, and productive soil. Charlotte County has a rich history, but is most commonly associated with the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. There are a number of historically significant homes in the county, many of which have been restored to their original splendor. These structures reflect a number of architectural styles, including: Colonial, Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival.

The town of Drakes Branch was founded in 1853 by Stephen Bedford, Junior. Bedford was granted a postal license to serve the thirty families within a two mile radius of the future town, and this signified the founding of Drakes Branch. In August of 1853, the settlement of Drakes Branch began to expand. This growth was mainly attributed to the construction of the R & D Railroad. This rail-line transported goods between Richmond and Danville, Virginia. During this time period, Drakes Branch established a railroad station/depot, a water tower, and two general stores. The general stores marked what would later become the commercial center of the town.
In 1864, at the height of the Civil War, Drakes Branch was caught in the center of a large Union offensive known as the Wilson-Kautz Raid. The goal of the raid was to destroy the rail-line between Richmond and Danville, cutting the supply line to Confederate troops in the south and west of the state. During the raid, many of the structures in the town were burned, including: the water tower, the rail-line, and a number of homes and buildings.

By the 1890’s, the town of Drakes Branch had recovered from the Union raid and returned to being a thriving rural community due to the town’s proximity to the railroad. In addition, the town now included a number of retail and manufacturing establishments such as: a large tobacco factory, two warehouses, three prizeries, five stores, a foundry, two hotels, a blacksmithing facility, a school, and a number of churches. The railroad provided faster distribution of goods and services for the town’s primary source of income, dark-fired tobacco. A number of warehouses and prizeries were erected to support tobacco farmers in this region. Drakes Branch was the center of the dark-fire tobacco market until the 1930’s when the Great Depression destroyed the market and the tobacco farmer’s way of life. The economy of Drakes Branch never fully recovered. Prosperity did return to the town after the Great Depression. However, since the 1960’s, Drakes Branch has been in steady economic decline. The lack of job opportunities, the decline of family farms, and rural flight contributed to the economic decline of the town.
Previous Plans

Drakes Branch has been included in three recent plans, which include: the 1997 Charlotte County, Virginia Comprehensive Plan, the 2002 Charlotte County Strategic Planning Workshop, and the 2003 Charlotte Ambassadors Second Strategic Planning Session.

The 1997, Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan is both a visioning and a guiding document. The Comprehensive Plan is the most important of the three and contains important data and information about Drakes Branch. The plan primarily inventories existing resources and conditions in the county. The community inventory section lists important resources in each of the incorporated towns in Charlotte County. Examples of these resources include: recreational opportunities (parks, trails, and waterways), access to transportation networks, public utilities and facilities, key businesses, and educational opportunities. The plan also illustrates population changes and characteristics for the county and the incorporated towns. Additionally, the plan indicates that the population in Drakes Branch has been declining for approximately thirty years. The economic development strategies in the Comprehensive Plan include: the development of small, locally owned retail businesses, tourism related businesses, and manufacturing businesses in the county.

The 2003, Charlotte Ambassadors Second Strategic Planning Session is a continuation of the Charlotte County Strategic Planning Session held in 2002. The 2003 Strategic Planning Session included stakeholders such as: members of the planning commission, House of Delegates, Southside Community College, major employers, town mayors, and other key stakeholders in the county. The 2003 Strategic Plan focused on promoting the development of new, small, homegrown businesses and retaining and supporting current businesses. The 2003 Strategic Plan identified five cornerstones of economic development the county wished to encourage. They were workforce development, expanding continuing education opportunities, encouraging the growth and development of new and existing small businesses, expanding the tourism market, and encouraging the development of health care and retirement facilities. The 2003 Strategic Plan created a framework focused on encouraging economic development in the county. The plan also focused on creating innovative approaches to supporting businesses through programs such as BART or Business Assistance Rapid Response Team (whose purpose is to aid businesses in distress). Additional information on these plans may be found in Appendix A.
Surrounding Influences

There are a number of schools, towns, parks, churches and other institutions within close proximity to Drakes Branch which have a strong influence on the community. There are only four incorporated towns in Charlotte County. They include: Charlotte Court House, Drakes Branch (zip code 23937), Keysville, and Phenix (Map 2). Charlotte Court House is located in the center of the county at the intersection of Route 47 and Route 40. It has a population of 404\(^1\). Charlotte Court House is the home to historical and recreational attractions such as the Charlotte County Court House, Gravel Hill, Greenfield Woodfork, the Central High Museum, and the Museum of Charlotte County.

Keysville is in the eastern portion of the county along Virginia State Highway 360. Keysville is the largest town in the county and has a population of 817. Landmarks located in the town include: the Veterans War Memorial and Tower Park. The town of Phenix is the smallest of the four towns in Charlotte County and has a population of only 200. Phenix is in the western portion of the county along Route 40.

There are a number of public facilities in close proximity to Drakes Branch that have a positive influence on the town. There are four libraries in Charlotte County which include: the Charlotte Court House Public Library, the Keysville Public Library, the Phenix Public Library, and the Wylliesburg Public Library. There are approximately sixty churches of varying denominations in the county. The county school system is comprised of four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. There are no primary medical facilities in the county (i.e. hospitals). The nearest hospitals are in Farmville and South Boston, both approximately 30 minutes away. The closest major

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medical facilities (that offer specialty care) are in Lynchburg and Richmond, both approximately ninety minutes away.

There are a number of colleges and universities located within close proximity to Drakes Branch and these facilities include: Southside Virginia Community College, Old Dominion University Teletechnet, Southside Governor’s School, the Charter Oak Center (for adults with handicaps), the College of Hampden-Sydney, and Longwood University.

Charlotte County is home to a number of birding, walking, and cycling trails, including: the Roanoke Meherrin Loop Birding Trail, the Staunton River Loop Birding Trail, the Time Trial Triangle, the Northern Tier, the Country Classic, and the Wilson-Kautz Driving Trail. Charlotte County also offers residents recreational and historical attractions such as the Staunton River Bridge in Staunton River State Park, which is located on the Roanoke River.

Other important historical and recreational attractions include Red Hill, Clarkton Bridge, Sandy Creek Shooting Preserve, Mulberry Hill, John H. Kerr Lake, and the Charlotte County Vietnam War Memorial. Additionally, Drakes Branch is located within minutes of Buggs Island Lake and Staunton/Roanoke River (which has four boat landings in the county). Charlotte County also offers residents and tourists historical 18th and 19th century working plantations maintained by historic preservation associations and local individuals. There are several agri-tourism centers in the county such as the Bakers Farm Fresh in Randolph; Lydia Esh, which is an Amish produce center; the
Phenix Farmer’s Market; and the Sassy Spring Farm in Cullen. The county also hosts a number of annual festivals and events, such as the Flora Fest, a Master Gardener show in Charlotte Court House, the Staunton River Bridge Battle Commemoration Reenactment, the Drakes Branch Fall Festival, and the Mulberry Hill Christmas festival.

Map 2: Charlotte County
Population Characteristics

Drakes Branch has a population of 504. Charlotte County has a population of 12,472, while Virginia has a population of 7,078,515. The town’s population has been steadily declining for approximately thirty years. The population has declined 2.3% from 1990 to 2000. Charlotte County’s population has increased 6.7% from 1990 to 2000, and Virginia’s population has increased 14.4% from 1990 to 2000. Furthermore, the town’s population has declined 21.4% since 1970, while the county’s population has increased by approximately 1% since 1970. The population of Drakes Branch is also aging. The data reveals that 37% of the town’s population is over 55, while only 29% of the residents of Charlotte County are over 55. Approximately 37% of the households (211 households) in Drakes Branch receive Social Security. Table 1 illustrates the age distribution in Charlotte County and Drakes Branch.

The racial composition of Charlotte County consists of 66% white, 33% Black/African American, and 2% other, primarily Hispanic. The Hispanic population in the county has increased dramatically (over 50%) from 1990 to 2000, while the Black population declined by 3.8%. Drakes Branch is composed of African/Black Americans who constitute 40% of the population and White Americans who constitute 59% of the town’s population.

The high school graduation rate in the county increased from 52.1% to 63.2% from 1990 to 2000. However, the high school graduation rate in Charlotte is still lower than the Virginia rate of 81.5% in 2000.

The unemployment rate in Charlotte County is 5.9% (2000) while the state unemployment rate is 3.7%. In addition, Charlotte County has one of the highest unemployment rates in the region. Approximately 50% of the residents of Drakes Branch travel less than 15 minutes to work each day. However, 21% travel more than 45 minutes to work.

The average household income in the county is $28,929 (which is a nominal increase of 1.8% since 1990) and the average household income in Virginia is $33,730. The average household income in Drakes Branch is $25,583. The average cost of a housing unit in the town is between $50,000 and $99,999.

Table 1: Age of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Charlotte</th>
<th>Drakes Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 19</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 34</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 54</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12472</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, 12.3% of the homeowners in Drakes Branch spend more than 30% of their income on mortgage payments and 19.4% of renters in the town spend more than 30% of their income on rent payments. 20% of Charlotte County residents live below the poverty line, which is considerably higher than the 9.6% of Virginia residents living below the poverty line. Table 2 illustrates the number of people in the county and in Drakes Branch who receive social assistance or live below the poverty line. In addition, 6% of the households in the town receive Public Assisted Income or Welfare. This information shows that a number of people in the county and in the town are retired or make low wages.

There are 211 households in Drakes Branch and 4,954 households in Charlotte County. The average household size in Drakes Branch is 2.18 while the average household size in the county is 2.47 people. In Drakes Branch 38% of households rent, while 23% in the county rent. The median household income in the county is $28,929, which is slightly higher than the median household income in Drakes Branch ($25,583). The median value of a home in Charlotte County is $69,900 and the median value in Drakes Branch is $63,800. Furthermore, 47% of the homes in Drakes Branch are valued between $50,000 and $99,000. Table 3 illustrates the value of the homes in Drakes Branch and Charlotte County.

The median rent in the town is $167 per month, which is considerably lower than in the county which is $256 per month. This information suggests that the cost of housing in Drakes Branch is very affordable and many of the people living in the town and county are (lower) middle income. Additional information about housing and population characteristics maybe found in the Housing Analysis and in Appendices A and D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Income Source</th>
<th>Charlotte County</th>
<th>Drakes Branch</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Assistance</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4954</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Poverty</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>500</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Charlotte</th>
<th>Drakes Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20000 to $49999</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50000 to $99999</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100000 and Over</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3834</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Circulation

There are five major roadways that pass through Charlotte County and these roadways include: Route 47, Route 40, Route 59, Route 15, and Virginia State Highway 360 as Map 2 illustrates. Drakes Branch is located at the intersection of Routes 59 and 47. Drakes Branch is a short drive from each of the incorporated towns in Charlotte County and is approximately 10 miles from Virginia State Highway 360.

The town of Drakes Branch is concentrated along Route 47 or Drakes Main Street. The town’s commercial activities are concentrated between Route 637 (Saxkey Road) and West Point Stevens Road. Street parking is available in the commercial district for customers. There are a number of vacant buildings in the commercial corridor and, as a result, street parking in Drakes Branch is under utilized. Many of the shops and stores along the fringe of the commercial district have their own parking. Most of these lots are large and rarely reach capacity, even during peak hours. In addition, shops along the fringe of the town are the most active and receive a majority of the traffic.

The daily traffic count for Drakes Branch is approximately 2,700 vehicles per day\textsuperscript{4}. Peak hours in the town occur between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The town receives a great deal of commuter traffic, especially on the weekends. Many of the commuters that do pass through the town head northwest to Farmville, Charlotte Court House, or Keysville, or southeast to South Boston. In addition, during the weekend a number of commuters pass through Drakes Branch on their way to Chase City.

\textsuperscript{4} Traffic counts provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation, Charlotte County, February 2006.


Land Use and Zoning

Charlotte County has a very simple zoning system, primarily because of its rural nature. The county has four zoning categories which include: general agriculture, general residential, village center districts, and general industrial districts, as Map 3 illustrates. The general agriculture designation covers over 95% of the county. Charlotte County has five general industrial districts, three of which are along state highway 360 and in Keysville, while the other two are located near Drakes Branch and Charlotte Court House. The Charlotte County Zoning Map also recognizes the existence of seven village districts. These village centers are generally located at secondary crossroads and allow general commercial and residential uses at higher densities than general agricultural zones. There are four general residential districts in the county, which correspond with each of the incorporated towns. The general residential zoning category also allows residential and commercial uses at higher densities. Each of the incorporated towns in the county is required to have its own zoning maps and zoning designations. Neither Charlotte County nor any of the incorporated towns in the county have a designated land use map. Additional information on zoning in Charlotte County may be found in Appendix A.

Currently, the town of Drakes Branch has seven zoning designations which include: limited residential (R1), general residential (R2), light business (B1), general business (B2), industrial (M1), agricultural (A1), and waste water treatment (WWT).

The limited residential zoning category allows single-family residential dwellings and public facilities such as schools, churches, and parks. Any structure built in this district shall not be closer than 50 feet from the front of any street or road right-of-way line. In addition, side yards shall be at least 15 feet on both sides and rear yards shall be at least 35 feet. No building in this zoning category may be higher than 35 feet (2 ½ stories high). The minimum lot size for this zoning designation is dependent on the type of water and sewage disposal system and ranges from 15,000 to 24,000 square feet (sq/ft).

The general residential zoning category allows for uses such as single-family homes, multi-family dwellings, and apartment buildings. This zoning designation also allows public facilities (hospitals, schools, nursing homes, and recreational clubs) upon the issue of a Conditional Use Permit. The minimum lot size for this zoning designation is dependent on the number of units in the structure and whether the dwelling receives sewage disposal services from the town. All structures in this zoning category are required to be served by public or private water sources. The minimum lot size for one unit structures shall be 8,000 sq/ft or 12,000 sq/ft (no sewer) and multi-unit structures shall be 10,000 sq/ft or 15,000 sq/ft (no sewer). Set back regulations prohibit any
Yard requirements shall be at least 10 feet to either side of a structure, 60 feet in the front, and 25 feet to the rear of a structure. In addition, no single-family dwelling shall be higher than 40 feet and no multi-family structure shall be greater than 60 feet high.

The light business zoning category allows for uses such as retail sale businesses (no larger that 6,000 sq/ft), neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants, motels and hotels (no more than 24 sleeping units), beauty parlors, banks and professional buildings, theater buildings (no larger than 10,000 sq/ft), and other small scale commercial uses. The Drakes Branch zoning ordinance requires any structure zoned as light business to be located at least 15 feet from any street or to conform to the existing building pattern. This zoning category also requires all new structures to construct off street parking. The Drakes Branch Zoning Ordinance also states that no structure shall be taller than 50 feet.

The general business zoning category allows the following uses: retail businesses (motels, beauty parlors, electronic appliance stores, etc.), gasoline filling stations and automotive repair facilities, and public facilities and utilities (railroad facilities, fire protection, etc.). This zoning designation requires setback of at least 20 feet from any residential structure that abuts this zoning category. Furthermore, any new structure must be located 15 feet from the street or conform to existing building patterns. The maximum height of any structure shall not exceed 60 feet and on street parking should be provided.

The industrial zoning category allows the following uses: manufacturing and industrial operations such as assembly of electronic devices, light metal manufacturing, stone works, the treatment or manufacturing of textiles and baked goods, dry cleaning facilities, and other related establishments. This zoning designation requires any structure to be set back 50 feet from any street right-of-way and to have side yards of at least 30 feet. Facilities that produce vast amounts of pollution or may cause a nuisance are forbidden, as are junkyards and high, solid walls that surround a facility. No building shall occupy more that 70% of a lot and no structure shall be constructed higher than 70 feet.

The agriculture zoning category allows the following uses: agriculture (lands used for producing crops and raising livestock), single-family dwellings, mobile homes (conditional use), and public facilities (schools and churches). Area, height, and setback requirements shall be not less restrictive than corresponding regulations for the residential district joining or abutting this district.
Map 3: Charlotte County Zoning Map
Building Conditions and Use

One of the critical factors in revitalizing a small, rural town is the condition of existing buildings in the town. The condition of a building indicates the level of work that is required by property owners to make a structure a desirable place to do business. In this case, the number and size of vacant structures indicates the level of new development opportunities. Currently, there are 46 primary buildings in the town of Drakes Branch. This number includes structures not found along the main corridor of the town (Main Street). As Table 4 indicates uses in the town include: a grocery store, post office, a car wash, three hardware stores, a wood-working shop, a saw and lumber yard, a beauty/barber shop, an A.B.C. store, and a sit down restaurant. There are nine vacant buildings in the town which constitutes 20% of the buildings. Other primary building uses include: retail (13%), churches (11%), institutional (13%), and automotive services (15%). Table 5 illustrates the condition of each of the buildings. Many of the buildings (80%) in Drakes Branch are in good condition with a few deficiencies in their accessory elements. As a result, a property owner can probably make repairs without professional assistance. Repairs to these structures may include minor facade improvements and a fresh coat of paint.

There are seven buildings in the town that are deteriorated, which means they have several intermediate or major deficiencies in accessory elements and one or two minor deficiencies in the structural elements. As a result, a property owner may need professional help from a contractor to repair deficiencies. There are 2 dilapidated structures in the town. Dilapidated structures have multiple major deficiencies in the structural elements and require professional assistance from architects, engineers, or contractors to make them habitable. Five out of the nine vacant buildings in the town are in good condition and require few improvements.

Drakes Branch has a great deal of development potential as the data above indicates. There are nine vacant buildings in the town. Most of the vacant structures are in the heart of the Main Street Commercial Corridor and have ample street parking available. A majority of the vacant buildings are in good shape or require a few minor

<table>
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<th>Table 4: Building Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
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<td>Church</td>
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<td>Retail</td>
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<td>Professional Services</td>
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<td>Food Services</td>
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<td>Restaurant</td>
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<td>Laundry</td>
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<td>Entertainment</td>
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<td>Institutional</td>
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<td>Vacant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Automotive Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<th>Table 5: Building Deficiencies Observed</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deteriorated</td>
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<td>Dilapidated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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improvements. In addition, most of these structures are two stories and have a floor area greater than 2,000 square feet. As a result, there are a number of buildings available for potential new businesses.

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of building sizes in Drakes Branch. The sizes range from approximately 250 square feet to over 100,000 square feet. This number is slightly inflated because it includes the former West Point Stevens Facility and the lumberyard on the outskirts of the town’s corporate limits. Not including these two structures, the average size of a building in the town is approximately 2,278 sq/ft. There are seven buildings that are smaller than 1,000 square feet and 12 buildings that are between 1,000 and 2,000 square feet. There are only two buildings that are 5,000 to 10,000 square feet and two buildings that are over 10,000 square feet. Seven of the vacant structures are approximately 2,000 square feet. The remaining two vacant structures are approximately 1,250 and 2,500 square feet respectively. The majority of the structures in Drakes Branch range between 2,001 and 5000 square feet (23 buildings). Approximately half of the structures in the town are one story, while the remaining structures have multiple levels. Many of the two story buildings are located in the center of town, while the majority of the one story structures are located outside the Main Street District. Many of the structures located in the Main Street District that have more than one level do not use the second level. When the second story is utilized, it is most often used as an apartment or storage facility.
Streetscape, Infrastructure, and Rural Design

Another important element in the revitalization effort of a small town is creating the perception that a community is a good place to live, do business, and shop. The physical appearance of a place helps to form and shape these perceptions. In a small town, design elements such as large, well-maintained sidewalks, access to parking, and larger storefront windows often help to convey this message. Also, street furniture such as benches and water fountains, in conjunction with parks or other gathering centers, encourage pedestrian traffic.

Streetscape

Drakes Branch is a quaint, small town and the design of the town is functional and attractive. The focal point of Drakes Branch is between Payne Street and Harold Street, or within close proximity to the town’s municipal buildings. In the center of town most of the setbacks are very narrow and buildings are located directly on the sidewalk. A majority of the storefront windows face the street, which makes stores transparent. However, along the fringe of the town, south of Depot Street and north of Dunlop Street, setbacks are very deep (in most cases over 20 feet), but many of the stores still face the road.
The center of the town hosts a higher density of buildings, creating a sense of enclosure and making businesses feel more accessible to pedestrians. However, in the fringe areas of the town, buildings are set back off the road and are spaced a greater distance, which may discourage people from shopping at these businesses. Businesses located in the center of town have access to on street parking and businesses located along the fringe of the town have parking lots. Many of the vacant buildings in town are in the center of town and require minor repair such as new signs, a fresh coat of paint, or other façade improvements. Many of the buildings along the fringe of the town are newer structures and require few or no improvements. Also, the vacant businesses in the heart of the town create dead space that discourages people from shopping in the town.

**Street and Pedestrian Lighting**

Street lighting in Drakes Branch is inadequate and inconsistent. The two types of street lighting in the town include large, cobra-head lights that are designed to illuminate the roadway and smaller, pedestrian scale lighting that is designed to illuminate sidewalks. The street in the heart of Drakes Branch is well lit by cobra head lights, but the sidewalks are poorly lit. The pedestrian scale lighting is poor and inconsistent. In most cases, pedestrian lighting is poor because vacant buildings have no exterior lighting sources. In addition, many of the other buildings in town do not have pedestrian scale lighting, which further adds to the inadequacy of lighting along the sidewalks. Drakes Branch should require that all buildings have external lighting. Better pedestrian scale lighting will encourage people to shop or visit Main Street after dark and foster a feeling of safety, especially among the elderly.
Streets, Sidewalks, and Street Trees

The concrete sidewalks in Drakes Branch are in good shape. Sidewalks are located on either side of the street and end at Isabella Street (to the north) and West Point Stevens Road (to the south). There are some places where the sidewalks are uneven, but there are relatively few cracks and no grass growing up between the cracks. In most places the sidewalks are large enough for two people to walk side by side comfortably, but light and electric/telephone poles do obstruct pedestrian traffic and are an eye sore.

There are no street trees and little street furniture along Main Street. The only four trash receptacles on Main Street are located on either side of the municipal building, in front of the Charlotte Gazette, and next to the vacant electronic store. There are no pedestrian benches along Main Street. Pedestrian benches would allow shoppers to rest between destinations and would be prime places for groups to gather. Street signs are visible and in good shape. However, dilapidated store signs and overhanging electrical wires take away from the aesthetics of this small community. It is difficult to distinguish which businesses are in business and which are not, because old signs are still in place. In addition, some shops do not have distinct signs, and, as a result, it is easy to overlook them. Other desirable urban design elements such as water fountains and street trees are not present. Water fountains may not be suitable for such a small-scale pedestrian community, but street trees would help to enhance the visual experience of Main Street. Street trees offer pedestrians shade during the summer and protection from the wind during the winter. Another important element that is missing from this community is the presence of a distinct beginning and end. There are no welcome signs in Drakes Branch, which would help to distinguish this community from other towns in Charlotte County and further provide a sense of place.

There are also a number of American flags hanging at consistent intervals along the street. The streets in Drakes Branch are in good working order. Traffic lanes and on street parking is clearly marked. There are no crosswalks, stop signs, or traffic signals along Main Street. Designated crosswalks would help to make pedestrians feel safer and inform drivers to slow down. Stoplights or stop signs may help slow traffic in the town and encourage people to stop and shop on their way through.
Despite the inefficiencies in the town’s streetscape, there are a number of positive elements which the town can build upon. The town is handicap accessible since many businesses have ramped entrances or are at curb level. This is an important feature because approximately 35% of the population is over 55. Urban design improvements, such as better pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, benches, clear business signs, crosswalks, and stop signs will help to improve the town’s appearance and encourage people to visit Main Street. In addition, new businesses should be encouraged to locate in vacant buildings along Main Street in order to create a distinct shopping area, and new commercial development should complement current building designs and setbacks to maintain consistency. Town improvement projects, such as the new welcome center and community park that will be constructed between Proctor Street and Depot Street, will complement future urban design improvements.
ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY ANALYSIS

An Economic Geography Analysis (EGA) illustrates the relationship between communities in close proximity to one another. This analysis looked at the relationship between the town of Drakes Branch and other towns and communities within close proximity. Drakes Branch is part of a regional system of population, housing, employment, and shopping opportunities. The EGA helped to illustrate the economic structure of the region and identify potential gaps in the regional market. The full detailed EGA, supporting data, and other information may be found in Appendix C.

Analysis

The economic geography analysis revealed opportunities and potential gaps in the regional economy and showed which regional markets were saturated. The EGA also illustrated the economic development or activities each community in the region is currently developing and supporting. Many of the towns and cities across the region have focused on developing manufacturing, health care and social assistance, retail trade, and accommodations and food service related businesses. Many of the communities in Southside Virginia have primarily developed their economies around the manufacturing sector (i.e. textiles and furniture) and the health care and social assistance sector (i.e. nursing homes and elderly care facilities. Table 6 and Map 4 illustrate communities in close proximity to Drakes Branch. A number of the manufacturing businesses in these towns create textiles, electronic components, furniture, and other wood products. These large towns are able to develop new manufacturing businesses because they have a strong employee base, they offer potential businesses a number of incentives, and they are located on major transportation corridors. New businesses that locate in these large towns are also supported by current businesses in the towns, which helps to support cluster development. A small town such as Drakes Branch will have a difficult time attracting a new, large manufacturing business. The economic geography analysis illustrated that Charlotte County and Drakes Branch have a strong workforce base and the infrastructure to support a large manufacturing business. However, the town does not have good access to major transportation corridors, access to capital (to offer potential businesses large incentives), or other manufacturing businesses that can support a new business.
In light of this information, Drakes Branch should focus primarily on developing small, homegrown manufacturing businesses or on attracting businesses that support Charlotte County's economy (i.e. wood manufacturing businesses and forestry related...
businesses). The town should concentrate its efforts on supporting the development of small, homegrown manufacturing businesses, including: furniture manufacturers, specialty foods, or agriculture related manufacturing businesses. Additional information about the development of manufacturing businesses in Drakes Branch may be found in the Manufacturing Analysis and Appendix C.

The EGA showed a gap in the regional economy in the forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture; transportation and warehousing; administrative support; waste management; and remediation services sectors. A majority of Charlotte County's economic activities are concentrated around the agriculture and forestry sectors. The forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture and transportation and warehousing sectors are major employers in the county. As a result, there is already a strong workforce base in the town and the county. Drakes Branch has five transportation and forestry and wood product related businesses and transportation and warehousing businesses that could be expanded upon or could support additional development. Drakes Branch should concentrate its efforts on attracting or developing (homegrown) forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture and transportation and warehousing businesses. The EGA also showed that the administrative support, waste management, and remediation service sectors in the region were underdeveloped. Drakes Branch may be an ideal location for a waste management or remediation service business, such as a recycling center or waste disposal and reuse center. The West Point Stevens Facility (WPSF) would be an ideal location for a waste management or remediation service business. The town should attract a business to fill this gap in the regional economy. Additional information may be obtained from the Manufacturing Analysis and Appendix C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Distance &amp; Time from Drakes Branch</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 or less Mile Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Court House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keysville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phenix</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 to 25 Mile Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chase City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamplin City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brookneal</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 to 35 Mile Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boydton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scottsburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appomattox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenbridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 or Grater Mile Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altavista</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynchburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danville</td>
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<td>Richmond</td>
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The EGA showed that Charlotte County and Drakes Branch have a competitive advantage in the agriculture employment sector over other communities and counties in close proximity. Drakes Branch was once a thriving agricultural community. There are still two large agriculture and farming stores in the town. Drakes Branch should build on its agricultural heritage and develop alternative agriculture related businesses, including: u-picks, crop sharing businesses, and agri-tourism related businesses. These new markets could be supported by large cities in close proximity, including: Richmond, Lynchburg, and Danville. Additional information may be obtained from the Agriculture Market Analysis and Appendix C.

Many communities in the region, including Farmville, South Boston, Blackstone, and Chase City have developed a strong health care and social assistance economy. Furthermore, approximately 30% of the regional population is over age 55. Most of the retirees in the region are lower middle class (median household income is approximately $30,000). Retirees from northern states are building second homes in a number of communities across the region. This suggests that there is a large elderly and retirement population in the region. However, many elderly persons in Southside Virginia are moving to retirement and assisted care facilities in major cities, including: Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond. This suggests that senior care facilities and senior housing options currently in the region are insufficient to accommodate current demand. There is a gap in the regional economy. Drakes Branch should develop additional low to moderate income senior housing options and a senior care facility to take advantage of this gap in the regional economy. The town should also develop retirement housing in the town to attract retirees moving to the region from the North. In addition, Drakes Branch currently has senior housing options, the Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments (32 apartments). There is a waiting list for the Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments. These apartments could help support senior housing options and a senior care facility in the town. Additional information about retirement housing, senior housing options, and senior care facilities may be found in the Housing Analysis and Appendices C and D.

The EGA showed that counties and communities in the region have developed a tourism based economy. Communities that have developed a tourism based economy include: the town of Appomattox, Chase City, and Farmville. These communities are located in close proximity to a number of recreational opportunities and tourist attractions and have a variety of lodging and eating facilities. Drakes Branch is located within close proximity to a number of recreational opportunities and tourist attractions. However, larger communities in the region are also located within the same distances to the same recreational opportunities and tourist attractions. In addition, these larger towns offer visitors a variety of shopping opportunities, eating establishments, and lodging facilities and Drakes Branch only has one eating establishment and one lodging facility. In light of
this information, the town should not focus on developing a tourism economy. Drakes Branch does not have the infrastructure to support this market and there is competition from other communities. In the future there maybe potential for developing a tourism related economy, but only after economic development has occurred in other sectors. The town should reinvestigate the potential for developing a tourism economy in the future (10 to 15 years).

**Rural Entrepreneurship and Niche Markets**

One of the most effective economic development strategies for small, rural communities not located on the urban fringe is entrepreneurship or the development of locally owned and operated small businesses. It has become increasingly difficult for small towns to attract large employers because large employers are now looking overseas for low wage workers. The development of locally owned and operated businesses puts the future of a rural community in the hands of its residents, builds local leadership, and reduces a community’s dependence on outside forces and large employers. In addition, locally owned and operated businesses keep profits in the community and create both low wage jobs and strengthen the middle class segment of the community (i.e. business owners).

Rural communities can either develop businesses that provide specialty goods or services that are unique to the region or can create markets that tap into the regional market. Both of these strategies are very effective. However, business owners must decide which strategy would be most appropriate. There are a number of businesses that the town of Drakes Branch could develop that would be unique to the region or support other businesses in the region, including: woodcrafts, specialty furniture, bird house makers, pottery makers, picture framers, daycare centers, fitness clubs, tanning and beauty salons, and specialty foods. Additional businesses that, local entrepreneurs should develop may be found in the Retail Market Analysis, Manufacturing Market Analysis, and Appendices C and E.

To succeed, “communities must think and act regionally to assemble the critical mass that worldwide markets now demand.” A community must now think regionally and develop an economic niche that plays on the region’s assets in order to capture new markets and customers. Rural communities should no longer focus on trying to attract

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5 Anthony Flaccavento, 1997, Regenerating a Regional Economy from Within: Some Preliminary Lessons from Central Appalachia, Rural Sustainable Development in America, Chapter 19, New York, John Wiley and Sons INC.

one large business. “Regions must find ways to support a new generation of entrepreneurs”⁶. Communities should focus on supporting local entrepreneurs and the development of homegrown businesses that create local jobs and wealth. In addition, rural communities must focus on developing businesses that support the regional economy. If businesses (arts, crafts, furniture) cluster in a region, it helps create a region’s identity and attract more customers. Examples of communities that have developed homegrown businesses and niche markets may be found in Appendix C.

In order for local residents to develop small, niche markets they require the support of the community, local leadership, and favorable state public policy. In many cases, rural communities are able to create new economic opportunities because of innovative state policies or public assistance from non-profit organizations. In general, states need to create public policy, and non-profit organizations need to help rural entrepreneurs gain access to capital and loans (low interest), generate new ideas, gain access to a highly skilled labor force, provide job training, assist with marketing products, and gain access to new technology. There are a number of federal entities and non-profit organizations in the United States that can help rural areas develop niche markets and support local entrepreneurs, including: the Center for Rural Affairs, the Center’s Rural Enterprise Assistance Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), USDA Virginia, and HUD Office of Economic Development⁷.

Another strategy the town of Drakes Branch should consider is the development of regional cooperatives. Both regionally and locally based cooperatives are excellent means of supporting local business development. Cooperatives have been a tool for achieving economic growth in rural areas for a number of years. Cooperatives are controlled by their workers and the workers own the cooperative⁸. Cooperative membership is voluntary and every member has an equal vote or voice. In addition, members of a cooperative share profits, usually in proportion to the amount of work a member performs, and a portion of the profits are devoted to worker education⁸. Again, cooperatives are worker controlled and, as a result, these businesses are more likely to stay where the workers live. Cooperatives have also been used as a defense strategy to buy out closing businesses in order to help maintain jobs in a community¹². Cooperatives are able to survive economic downswings because they allow workers to reduce their hours or wages in order to spread work out. Additional Information on cooperatives may be found in Appendix C.

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⁸Carla Dickstein, (1995), Stimulation of Economic Development Through Worker Cooperatives, Rural Development strategies, Chicago, Nelson Hall INC.
HOUSING ANALYSIS

Current Conditions

A housing analysis was performed to identify potential gaps and opportunities in the regional housing market and to recommend strategies for retaining current residents and attracting new people. This analysis examined key elements such as existing housing conditions and population characteristics. It also used information provided by developers and real estate agents to make the following recommendations.

The median value of a house in Drakes Branch is $63,800. In addition, the average price of one acre of (residential/agricultural) land is approximately $2,000. The average household income in Drakes Branch and Charlotte County is $25,583 and $33,730 a year respectively. Many of the housing units in Drakes Branch appear to be in good physical condition. Many of the homes currently being constructed in the town are pre-manufactured. The cost of buying or constructing a home in Drakes Branch is very affordable. Drakes Branch is centrally located within the region and is within close proximity to recreational opportunities, retail establishments, major transportation corridors, and large cities such as Richmond and Lynchburg as Map 5 illustrates. Currently, 37% of the population of Drakes Branch is over age 55 and approximately 30% of the residents of Charlotte County and the region are over 55. There are a number of retirees moving to Southside Virginia from the North. The health care service sector is one of the largest employment sectors in the region (Appendix C). Currently, there are few, full-time care or assisted living facilities in Charlotte County. However, many elderly persons in Southside Virginia are moving to retirement and assisted care facilities in major cities, including: Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond. This suggests that senior care facilities and senior housing options currently in the region are insufficient to accommodate current demand. This information was also confirmed by the focus group and discussions with developers and non-profit groups. This gap in the regional economy has created a tremendous opportunity for Drakes Branch. In light of this information, Drakes Branch should develop senior housing options, retirement housing, an elderly care facility, and expand the Drakes Branch Elderly Homes. Additional supporting information can be found in Appendix D.
Analysis

In light of this information, there is potential for the development of senior housing, an assisted living facility, and retirement housing in Drakes Branch. The town should first focus on developing an assisted living facility that can serve both the town and the region. This facility should cater to low to moderate income seniors or seniors who are on a fixed income and who currently live in the town or region. The facility should also offer residents a wide array of social and recreational activities. The nursing home should offer residents private rooms and public rooms (two people in one room). The assisted living facility should offer its clients full-time nursing care and have a capacity of approximately 75 people. The senior care facility should be built in close proximity to the Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments. In addition, seniors currently living in Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments (DBEA) could be moved to the nursing home as the level of care that they require increases. Possible development sites of the senior care facility include: the northwest corner of the town (bordering the corporate limits) either adjacent to Quail Street, Gregory Drive, or Old Sailors Lane, or in the northeast corner of the town adjacent to Bob White Drive and the railroad tracks as Map 6 illustrates.

The DBEA should also be expanded to accommodate additional residents. The DBEA should increase the number of apartments from 32 to 60. Additional units at the DBEA will help support the nursing care facility by serving as a halfway house for elderly residents who require some care, but are not ready to enter a nursing home.

In addition, other senior housing options should be developed in close proximity to the senior care facility. These options should include one story detached houses and two and one story attached townhouses. These homes should cater to low to moderate income seniors or seniors who are on a fixed income who currently live in the town or region. In addition, seniors should be given the option to rent or buy a home or townhouse in the community. Part time nursing care and full time lawn services should be offered to residents. This complementary form of development will allow seniors to move to the elderly apartment complex or the nursing home as the level of care that they require increases. Possible development sites include: the northwest corner of the town (bordering the corporate limits) either adjacent to Quail Street, Gregory Drive, or Old Sailors Lane, or in the northeast corner of the town adjacent to Bob White Drive and the railroad tracks as Map 6 illustrates. Additional senior houses should be constructed on New York Ave and Marshall Street, adjacent to site two.

The development of senior housing options, a senior care facility, and retirement housing will help Drakes Branch form an identity as a retirement community. Additional facilities should be developed to support elderly residents, including: a community kitchen, a recreational or gathering center, and a golf course. Additional infrastructure
should also be developed to support the retirement community, including: a drug store, a better grocery store, and sit down restaurants. Supporting infrastructure should be created in the Main Street Commercial Corridor. These stores should be handicap accessible and the senior care facility should provide transportation to the retail corridor at least twice a week.

Map 5: Counties and Communities in Southside Virginia
Retirement housing options should be developed in Drakes Branch. These homes should be geared to people interested in a second home, who enjoy rural locations and outdoor recreational opportunities (such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and water sports). Two and three story detached single family houses should be developed for retirees, and prices for these houses should be between $125,000 and $250,000. The development of retirement housing will support senior care facilities in the town and retirees will be able to stay in Drakes Branch even as the level of care that they require increases. Retirement housing should be developed on New York Ave, Marshall Street, Proctor Street, Isabella Street, and on Green Street, as illustrated in Map 6. In addition, retirement housing should be developed on the Drakes Branch town lake to the east of the incorporated town. Currently, landowners are unwilling to sell parcels located on the lake. However, the Drakes Branch Town Council should work with these landowners to develop a practical solution.

Additional residents in the town, especially elderly residents, will create new jobs and a greater demand for goods and services. As a result, additional housing options should be created in Drakes Branch for people working in the town. Both small one story ranch style homes and two story single-family detached homes should be built. Housing options should be a mix of pre-manufactured homes and “stick built” (conventional) homes and should range in price from $55,000 to $175,000. Additional housing should be developed on New York Ave, Marshall Street, Proctor Street, West Point Stevens Road, Isabella Street, Green Street, White Street, School Street, and Dunlop Street, as illustrated in Map 6.

The Drakes Branch Town Council should work with both non-profit developers and for-profit developers in order to develop a senior care facility, senior housing options, retirement housing options, and additional housing options. The town should offer developers incentives for developing housing options and a senior care facility, including: tax breaks, donation of land by the town, or free sewer and water hook-ups. Additional funding resources may be obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Both of these federal agencies provide grants and low interest loans to small, rural communities and to not-for-profit developers interested in developing low to moderate income senior housing and low to moderate income assisted living facilities. Grant and loan programs offered by the USDA and HUD include: the supportive housing for the elderly program (USDA), rural housing site loan (USDA), community facility direct loan site (USDA), rural community development initiative (USDA), multi-family and single family housing program (USDA), rural housing and economic development grant (HUD), and 2006 Super NOFA (HUD).
Map 6: Locations of Senior Housing and an Elderly Care Facility
MANUFACTURING ANALYSIS

The West Point Stevens Facility

This analysis focuses on possible uses for the West Point Stevens Facility. Attracting a new, large manufacturing facility to Drakes Branch will be a difficult process. The economic geography analysis and additional information collected in the manufacturing analysis illustrated that the manufacturing sector in the region is saturated. In addition, other small communities in close proximity to Drakes Branch have had a difficult time retaining large manufacturing businesses and attracting new ones.

Currently, the West Point Stevens facility is being marketed by the Charlotte County of Economic Development (CCDED), by the Virginia Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC), and through a local real estate broker (Susan Cavalla). The Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the CRC and the CCDED have listed the facility on their web sites. The former West Point Stevens Facility has been shown to a few prospective clients. Most of the potential investors are wood manufacturers and timber businesses, which are the largest industries in Charlotte County.

The former West Point Stevens Facility employed 540 people before it closed in 2005. The facility manufactured broad woven fabrics (such as washcloths and other linens) for the Sears Company. The facility is located within the Drakes Branch corporate limits on 635 West Point Stevens Road. It is approximately 396,192 square feet, has a ceiling height of 26 feet, and is positioned on 174 acres. Currently, the facility may not expand upon or be broken up into separate units. The 174 acre site is zoned for general industrial uses (I-2). The facility was constructed in the 1950’s from masonry and steel, and is in very good condition.
The West Point Stevens manufacturing facility receives its power (electric) from Dominion Virginia Power and water from a well located on the site. The facility has its own wastewater treatment plant and the Sprint Central Virginia Company and Verizon South provide telecommunication services. The West Point Stevens Facility is located within ten miles of the nearest four-lane highway (360 VA Hwy) and the nearest interstate is approximately 55 miles away (Interstate 85). In addition, the nearest general aviation airport is approximately 35 miles away (Farmville, Virginia: Farmville Municipal Airport) and the nearest commercial airport is located in Richmond, Virginia (Richmond International Airport) approximately 80 miles away. The closest rail-line is located in Keysville, Virginia, approximately nine miles away.

Analysis

There are 5,536 people in Charlotte County who are of working age (20 to 54). Many of these residents live within approximately 15 minutes of Drakes Branch. The unemployment rate in the county is 5.9%, which represents 327 people, and the high school graduation rate is 63.2%. The information collected illustrates that there is a large work force in the county and in Drakes Branch. In addition, the work force in Drakes Branch and in the county is educated and highly skilled. Currently, in Drakes Branch, there are a number of people who are in the management, business, and financial operations occupations and in the production and material moving occupations.

The West Point Stevens Facility is located within close proximity (minutes down Route 47) to a major transportation corridor (360 VA Hwy). The closest rail-line is in Keysville, and there are also a number of local and long distance trucking facilities located within the town. The facility is also in close proximity (approximately one hour) to a number of major cities, including: Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond. The Charlotte County Zoning Board and Department of Economic Development are also in the process of creating an enterprise zone around the facility. The West Point Stevens Facility has its own wastewater treatment plant, access to high speed Internet, and its own water supply. Southside Community College is within 10 to 15 minutes of Drakes Branch.

The WPSF appears to be an excellent location for future businesses, and there is a strong, highly skilled workforce in both Drakes Branch and Charlotte County that could support new businesses. The data collected in this section indicates that Drakes Branch should not attempt to attract a large manufacturing business. The data revealed that Drakes Branch lacks the capital, resources, and workforce to attract a large manufacturing business. Instead, the WPSF should be subdivided into two sections. The primary section should be developed into a county recreation center. The secondary section should be converted into a business park for small, professional businesses,
small manufacturing businesses, artists’ and craft related businesses, and other homegrown small businesses.

A portion of the WPSF (approximately 132,000 sq/ft) should be converted into a recreation facility for Charlotte County residents. The Retail Market Analysis illustrated that there was demand potential for a recreation facility or fitness club in the county and this information was verified by town residents. Currently, the closest recreation center and gym is located in Brookneal (24.5 miles away) and Farmville (29.5 miles away). The County Rec-Center should provide residents of all ages with a number of recreational and social opportunities, including: physical fitness equipment, a pool, a game room, social events, classes (such as yoga, martial arts, and fitness classes), and a basketball court. The county recreation center should also develop activities for seniors, including: social events and classes. Charlotte County should be responsible for the development of this facility. Local residents interested in using the facility should be required to pay a monthly membership fee.

The second section of the WPSF (approximately 264,000 sq/ft) should be subdivided into multiple units and converted into a business park for small professional, manufacturing, and retail businesses. A portion (132,000 sq/ft) of the second section should be used by small professional businesses, including: a doctor’s office, a dentist office’s, lawyers’ offices, real estate offices, insurance offices, and other professional businesses. The other portion (132,000 sq/ft) of the facility should be dedicated to small manufacturing businesses, artists’ studios, and other homegrown (start-up businesses). Small manufacturing businesses in this section of the facility could include: wood manufacturers, furniture makers, custom cabinets and countertops, specialty and value added food products, and other, related small manufacturing businesses. A kitchen should also be developed in this section for local farmers and other entrepreneurs to develop specialty food products.

In addition, the business park should also act as a small business incubator. Small homegrown start-up businesses should receive rent subsidies from the county for a period of two years. The business incubator will help small businesses in the county reduce their overhead costs by providing them with reduced rents. The business incubator could also be used by senior residents in the town that wish to develop a part-time business or senior cooperative. The CCDED and SSCC should help seniors in the community develop small businesses, provided them with technical assistance, and help senior operated businesses gain access to regional markets.

Based on current economic conditions in Drakes Branch, the town should not attempt to attract a large manufacturing business. In the future, economic conditions may change and favor the development of a large, manufacturing business. If future economic conditions favor the development of a large manufacturing business, the town
should focus on manufacturing businesses in the wood, agriculture, and forestry sectors. There are a number of transportation and hulling and saw and lumber mills currently in Drakes Branch. As a result Drakes Branch should target wood manufacturing businesses, including: furniture manufacturers, paper mills, or a sawmill. Additional wood, agriculture, and forestry manufacturing businesses would help to support current businesses in the county. The EGA and the Manufacturing Analysis also revealed that there is potential for warehousing businesses. Drakes Branch is located in close proximity to major transportation corridors and rail-lines. The town is also centrally located in the region and located within close proximity to a number of large communities, including: Richmond, Lynchburg, and Danville. As a result, Drakes Branch should also target warehousing and distribution businesses. Also, Drakes Branch should approach manufacturing businesses located in other communities in the region that are interested in expanding their business. In addition, Drakes Branch should attempt to attract a waste management or remediation service business such as a recycle center or waste disposal and reuse center. A waste management or remediation service could collect waste or recycled material from manufacturing facilities across the region. This business could recycle manufacturing waste, return the waste to a usable product, and resell the recycled product to manufacturers in the region. This process would help create a new niche market in Drakes Branch.

Charlotte County officials should work with the DBTC and the property owner of the WPSF to develop the facility into a small business park and a county recreation center. The CCDED and the CRC should help Drakes Branch develop small, locally owned manufacturing, service, and retail businesses. The CCDED and CRC need to more actively advertise the building and identify and approach potential businesses. In addition, an enterprise zone needs to be created around the WPSF in order to offer potential businesses incentives for locating in the town. Incentives, such as tax breaks, technical assistance, and workforce training should be offered to any large business that wishes to locate in the WPSF. Incentives will help attract new businesses and encourage them to stay in the town.
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Drakes Branch is at the top of the list to be a site for a state correctional facility. The correctional facility was promised to the town approximately ten years ago and should be built in the next three years. The correctional facility will create approximately 200 new jobs. The future site of the correctional facility will be in the southwest corner of the town, as Map 7 illustrates. This area is currently zoned for manufacturing uses (M-1), which allows for the creation of a correctional facility. The correctional facility will help create new jobs in the community. The facility will also attract new residents, seeking jobs at the correctional facility, to the town. In addition, the correctional facility will help support current retail establishments and will help support the development of additional retail businesses such as restaurants and convenience stores.

Development of the correctional facility in Drakes Branch will be a major economic anchor for the town and will help stimulate new development and investment in the town. As a result, local residents should embrace the development of the correctional facility and develop businesses (i.e. restaurants, convenience stores, and other retail establishments) that cater to people working at the facility. The Drakes Branch Town Council should hold a series of round table discussions with local residents to address any fears and concerns about the facility. The town cannot afford for this facility to be developed “elsewhere” because this facility will generate a new source of revenue, create new job opportunities, and support current and future retail businesses.

In addition, Southside Community College should support the correctional facility by offering classes to county residents, including law enforcement and correctional facility management. The community college should also hold a series of job fairs to advertise the new facility and help with job recruitment. The CRC and the CCDED should also put pressure on state officials responsible for the development of state correctional facilities. This will help speed up the process and show state officials that the county, the town, and local residents support the correctional facility in Drakes Branch.

The correctional facility should be developed in a noninvasive manner. The facility should be developed out of sight from major roads and current development. Development of the facility should also utilize existing trees to hide the facility from sight. If the facility is constructed out of sight from the town, it will help ease any concerns or fears from local residents and will not be an eye sore for the town. The facility should not be over four stories high. The closer the facility is to ground level, the harder it will be to see.
A market analysis for Drakes Branch was performed in order to understand the potential for new commercial development in the town. This analysis looked at two trade areas, the 15 minute commute trade area and the 35 minute commute trade area, to evaluate the level of demand for retail goods and services in the region. For this study, communities within a 15 minute commute from Drakes Branch will be referred to as the convenience trade area, while communities within a 35 minute commute from the town will be referred to as the community trade area. For both the community and convenience trade areas, population data and neighborhood shopping patterns were analyzed to estimate the level of market demand for retail goods and services (Appendix E). An inventory of current businesses in each of the trade areas was conducted to assess competition in the convenience and community trade areas (Appendix E). The model used to calculate unmet demand for new retail goods and services can be summarized as follows:

**Figure 10: Retail Market Analysis**

\[
\text{Market Demand} = \frac{\text{Average Annual Expenditures}}{\text{Sales per Business}} \times \frac{\text{Number of Households}}{\text{Number of Supportable Units}}
\]

\[
\text{Number of Potential New Businesses} = \frac{\text{Number of Supportable Units}}{\text{Number of Existing Businesses}}
\]

\[
\text{Market Demand} = \box{Market Demand} = \box{Number of Supportable Units} = \box{Number of Potential New Businesses}
\]
Trade Area

There are two retail and commercial trade areas for Drakes Branch. The first of these trade areas is for convenience goods and services, while the other is for community shopping. A convenience trade area usually attracts shoppers from a small area because people are less likely to travel a great distance for a convenience item such as a gallon of milk or a loaf of bread. For this study, the convenience trade area includes towns and communities within a 15 minute drive (approximately) to Drakes Branch. In determining specific boundaries for the trade area, it is important to take into consideration barriers that may deter people from shopping in particular areas. In this case, barriers may include: geographical barriers or time and distance to travel to Drakes Branch. The boundary line of Charlotte County will represent the boundaries for the convenience trade. The convenience trade area includes the towns of Drakes Branch, Charlotte Court House, Keysville, Phenix, and small villages and communities that have retail establishments. In addition, the convenience trade area is illustrated in Map 8 and includes: U.S. Census Tracts 9901, 9902, and 9903 (Charlotte County). Furthermore, Map 9 illustrates each of the towns and communities in both the convenience and community trade areas.

The community trade area is represented by areas within a 35 minute commute of Drakes Branch (approximately). Community shopping areas usually contain greater variety and more specialized goods and services. The distance consumers are willing to travel also increases as the size of a shopping area increases. The community trade area includes: the towns of Crewe, Burkeville, Victoria, Chase City, Wylliesburg, Clover, Scottsburg, Brookneal, Pamplin City, Phenix, Charlotte Court House, Keysville, and Drakes Branch. Furthermore, the community trade area includes parts of eight counties, including: Mecklenburg, Halifax, Campbell, Appomattox, Prince Edward, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Charlotte County. The boundaries for this trade area, illustrated by Map 9, include the following U.S. Census Tracts: 9904 and 9905 Mecklenburg, 9901 and 9904 Halifax, 209 Campbell, 403 Appomattox, 9903 Prince Edward, 9902 Lunenburg, 9903 Nottoway, 9901, 9902, and 9903 Charlotte County.

Tier three towns identified in the place hierarchy analysis (Appendix C) were excluded from this study because of their size, vast numbers of commercial and retail establishments, and proximity to Drakes Branch. In other words, the trade area boundaries were adjusted to account for the hinterland of these larger places (i.e. Farmville and South Boston). Furthermore, results of the market analysis will take into account the fact that residents of this portion of Southside Virginia may travel more than 35 minutes to obtain all of their shopping needs. In addition, commuters passing through Drakes Branch were also accounted for in the analysis.
Convenience Trade Area

The convenience (15 minute commute area) market analysis revealed a high level of unmet demand for several retail categories. Table 7 summarizes the retail and service sectors that the retail market analysis indicated as having a strong or moderate development potential. Currently, in the convenience trade area, there is a high level of unmet demand for fast food restaurants, small appliances and miscellaneous housewares, clubs and community centers, music products, and reading and bookstores. The convenience market analysis also illustrated that there is a moderate level of unmet demand for specialty food stores (deli, bakery, or open air market), floor covering stores, major appliances, footwear and shoe stores, alterations and shoe repair, and beauty products. In addition, the convenience market analysis was adjusted in order to identify additional unmet demand created by the development of senior housing and a senior care facility\(^9\). The convenience market analysis illustrated there would be a moderate to high level of unmet demand for clubs and community centers, prescription and non-prescription drugs, medical supplies, medical facilities, a grocery store, specialty foods store (deli, bakery, or open air market), and sit down restaurants.

\(^9\) Only stores located in Drakes Branch were counted in order to adjust the market analysis. This undercount of retail establishments in the convenience trade area was performed under the assumption that seniors would be unwilling to travel great distances to obtain goods and services. Furthermore seniors would be unwilling to move to an area that does not have the goods and services that they might require.
Community Trade Area

The community (35 minute commute area) market analysis revealed a high level of unmet demand for several retail categories. Table 8 summarizes the retail and service sectors that the retail market analysis indicated as having a strong or moderate development potential. The community market analysis showed that there is a high level of unmet demand for a specialty deli, bakery, or open air market; fast food restaurants; major appliances; small appliances and miscellaneous housewares store; footwear or shoe store; alterations and shoe repair; clubs and community centers; music products; reading and bookstores; and beauty products.

In addition, the market analysis also revealed a moderate level of demand for a number of products at the community level. The market analysis illustrated that there is unmet demand for laundry services, floor coverings, jewelry and watches, medical facilities, electronics, and beauty shops.

Other Trade Areas

It should be noted that some towns and communities were intentionally excluded from this analysis. Both Hampden Sydney and Kenbridge were excluded. Hampden Sydney was excluded because of its proximity to Farmville and because of its student population, which makes calculating the number of potential consumers difficult. Kenbridge was excluded from this study because of its distance from the study area (over a 35 minute commute).10

As previously stated, residents of the regional hinterland are traveling outside the 35 minute study area in order to obtain goods and services not found locally. Residents are traveling to Farmville, South Boston, Richmond, Danville, or Lynchburg to obtain a number of goods and services, including: furniture, major appliances, clothing and apparel, or other related goods. Because of this factor, the market analysis may have overestimated the level of unmet demand for some of the retail categories. Table 9 lists categories from the

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10 The number of households (potential consumers) in both Kenbridge and Hampden Sydney were subtracted from the number of households in each of their respective census tracts.
market analysis that showed a high to moderate level of unmet demand that is most likely already being met in larger communities (i.e. Farmville, South Boston, and Richmond). However, if new residents (i.e. seniors) move to Drakes Branch, then the demand for these categories may increase, thus creating development potential for additional goods and services that were once being met in larger communities across the region.

Map 9: The Convenience and Community Trade Areas
AGRICULTURE MARKETS

Charlotte County has a rich agricultural history and much of the county has been designated as prime agriculture land by the state. However, current agriculture policies, new technology, farming practices (including: monocrop farming and the use of chemical fertilizers), and farming subsidies have severely, and negatively, affected small farmers in the United States. As a result, many small farmers have been forced to foreclose on their farms. In response to the decline of small farms across the nation, some innovative farmers have turned to new practices in order to tap into new markets and reach new consumers. Small farmers have developed new markets such as organic farming, agri-tourism, and shareholder cooperatives. Farmers have found renewed success as a result of these niche markets.

In light of this information, Drakes Branch should identify local small farmers that are interested in developing new farming practices and tapping into niche markets. As previously mentioned, there are a number of federal, state, local agencies, and not-for-profit groups across the nation that help to support small farmers. As a result, the Drakes Branch town council should form a coalition with Charlotte County officials, Department of Cooperative Extension Program (DCEP), and the regional Land Grant University, Virginia Tech (VT) to help small farmers develop niche markets.

Organic farming relies on developing biological diversity among crop species, maintenance and replenishment of soil fertility, discourages the use of genetically modified species and pesticides, and adheres to a strict set of standards. Approximately 2% of the U.S. food supply is grown using organic methods. Over the last decade, the sales of organic products have increased by 20% annually. In 2005, the sales of organically grown products were approximately $12.8 billion\(^{11}\). Organic products are the fastest growing market in the agriculture sector. A nationwide survey (performed by The Hartman Foundation) found that approximately half the people surveyed were willing to pay more for food produced in a healthier and environmentally friendly manner. In many cases, organic farmers earn greater returns for their product, but this market does require more intensive management skills and a highly skilled labor force\(^{12}\). Crop yields from organic farming are approximately the same as conventional farming practices. Organic farming has a number of environmental and human health benefits, including: increasing biological diversity, decreasing the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, and prohibiting the use of genetically modified plant species.

\(^{11}\) Natural Marketing Institute, Health and Wellness Trends Database, March 2006, http://www.ofrf.org/general/about_organic/

\(^{12}\) Chuck Hassebrook, November 2003, Strategies to Revitalize Rural America, A Compilation of Articles from the Center for Rural Affairs Newsletter, Center for Rural Affairs, Walthill NE, www.cfra.org

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Farmers in Drakes Branch have access to a number of large markets, including: Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond. Organic farmers have two primary options when selling their goods. First, farmers can sell their products to food processors or retailers. If local farmers decide to sell their products to food processors or retailers, they should consider banding together and forming an organic cooperative. A cooperative allows farmers to supply large quantities of produce to food processors or retailers because they are able to pool their resources. As a result, farmers gain access to larger markets because they are able to supply the amount of produce large retailers and processors require. Cooperatives also increase the bargaining power of farmers because farmers are not trying to undercut one another, and agree on a fair price.

Second, farmers could choose to sell their products to shareholders. Currently, in the Washington D.C. and Richmond areas, local residents are able to buy a share of a farmer’s produce. In other words, residents pay farmers in advance for access to a portion of the crops they harvest. The number of shares a person purchases translates into the amount of food they receive during a season. The farm then brings each of the shareholders (usually on a weekly basis) a portion of the crops harvested. This is an excellent method of supplying urban households with fresh produce and this market is very profitable for small, organic farmers.

To be a certified organic farmer one must be accredited by the USDA National Organic Program. The National Organic Program accredits organic certifying agencies and oversees the regulatory process. In Virginia, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services helps farmers receive certification (they are accredited by the USDA). In addition, the farmers can receive additional support from the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension Program. Additional information on organic farming and the certification process may be obtained from: http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/index.htm, Virginia Council of Farmers http://www.vfcfc.net, and at http://www.usda.gov.
S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

Strengths

The town of Drakes Branch has a number of strengths to build upon. The physical fabric of the community, including: proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities, pedestrian scale, sense of enclosure, and small town persona give the town a comfortable, rural feel. Drakes Branch has a viable mix of businesses and vacant buildings. Current businesses, such as retail trade establishments and manufacturing businesses are viable and stable and can help support new development in the town. Current businesses, such as Down Home Subs, Hall's Farm Supply, the two banks, and the A.B.C. store are anchor businesses and help attract people from outside the community. There is also infrastructure currently in place to support new retail trade establishments and manufacturing businesses, including seven vacant buildings in the commercial corridor and the West Point Stevens Facility. Drakes Branch and Charlotte County have a strong, highly skilled and highly trained workforce. In addition, a state correctional facility will be developed in the town in the next three to five years. The correctional facility will create approximately 200 new jobs. Finally, residents of Drakes Branch have a vested interest in the town’s survival and growth.

Weaknesses

One of Drakes Branch’s major weaknesses is its size. Drakes Branch is a small community and the population of the town has been steadily declining for the last thirty years. Businesses in the town must rely on customers from outside the town and within the community in order to remain in business. Many of the businesses in Drakes Branch provide customers with a limited variety of goods and services. As a result, residents of the town are forced to travel to larger communities in order to obtain the goods and services that they require. The town has few retail establishments and relies heavily on its anchor businesses to attract potential customers to the town. Other larger communities within the county and region compete with businesses in Drakes Branch, thus drawing potential shoppers away from the town. Drakes Branch has moderate access to major transportation corridors such as U.S. State Highway 360. There are a number of physical weaknesses in Drakes Branch, including the lack of street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, and the lack of a distinguishable quality and characteristics. Street lighting in the commercial corridor is very inadequate and deters shoppers from traveling to the town after dark. Furthermore, businesses in Drakes Branch are not open after dark and are often closed on the weekends. Signs on storefronts are not clearly
marked and signs from old businesses are still in place, making it difficult to distinguish between establishments still in business and ones that are no longer in business. Street furniture and street trees are non-existent and these physical elements would help to increase the aesthetic quality of the community. In addition, there are no signs welcoming visitors to the community.

**Opportunities**

The population of Drakes Branch and many of the other communities in the region are aging; also new residents from the North are seeking retirement housing in Southern towns. This population cohort presents new economic development opportunities for the town. The aging regional population suggest that there is potential for the development of senior housing options, a senior care facility, and retirement housing. In addition, vacant buildings can serve as small business incubators for future retail and commercial establishments. Currently, there is a high level of unmet demand for a number of retail categories, including: specialty stores (deli, bakery, or open air market), floor covering stores, major appliance stores, alterations and shoe repair shops, beauty and barber shops, small appliance stores, clubs and community centers (for the elderly and the youth of the community), music product shops, and reading and book stores. These new establishments would help attract new residents and potential customers to the community. Current infrastructure, such as the former West Point Stevens Facility, could be used as a small business park and a county recreational facility, which will create new jobs for local residents.

**Threats**

One of the greatest potential threats to Drakes Branch is competition from other communities. There are a number of larger communities in the region that have larger populations and more disposable capital. These communities may be able to out-compete Drakes Branch for future businesses and residents. In addition, other localities are able to offer potential residents a greater variety of amenities, including: retail, recreational, and employment opportunities. The town also has limited access to capital and other resources.
PART II: THE REVITALIZATION PLAN
THE PLAN

The data gathered during the initial phases of this plan illustrate that immediate action must be taken to address the rapidly changing needs of this community. In order to clarify and prioritize the needs of Drakes Branch the following vision has been proposed:

Vision: The town of Drakes Branch is a thriving and prosperous community. The town is a safe, attractive, pedestrian friendly and a vibrant rural community. Drakes Branch offers residents of all ages a number of shopping, employment, and recreational opportunities. Residents, especially seniors, enjoy the rural character, proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities, high quality of life, low housing costs, and friendly atmosphere of the town. New employment and shopping opportunities, including: retail trade, manufacturing, and elderly care services, serve residents of the town and region.

To achieve this vision, the following goals have been proposed:

1. The town of Drakes Branch should develop new housing options for seniors, retirees, and new families.
2. Drakes Branch should create new retail options and other amenities in order to support additional residents, especially seniors.
3. Incentives should be given to developers interested in creating senior housing options or a senior care facility in Drakes Branch.
4. The West Point Stevens Facility should be converted into a county recreational facility and business park for small businesses.
5. An enterprise zone should be created around the West Point Stevens Facility.
6. The town should develop homegrown manufacturing businesses and nurture current manufacturing businesses.
7. The town of Drakes Branch should make preparations for the development of the state correctional facility.
8. Business owners in Drakes Branch should band together and form a merchants association.
9. The town should strengthen current retail businesses and support the development of new retail businesses.
10. New businesses should be encouraged to locate in vacant buildings or “key development sites”, in the commercial corridor.
11. Drakes Branch and Charlotte County should support their agricultural heritage and work with local farmers to help them develop new niche markets and identify potential customers.
12. Business owners, local residents, civic associations, and the Drakes Branch Town Council should support the revitalization of Drakes Branch through active participation, cooperation, and innovation.

13. Urban design improvements, including: streetscape improvements, additional street lighting, and raised crosswalks will help to increase public safety and the appearance of the town.

In the following section, each of the goals listed above will be further clarified through the description of more detailed objectives and strategies. Furthermore, each objective will be accompanied by a series of implementation strategies which describe the manner in which each of the objectives will be undertaken and achieved.

**Goal 1.): The town of Drakes Branch should develop new housing options for seniors, retirees, and new families.**

**Objective 1.A): Drakes Branch should develop an assisted living facility for seniors.**

**Strategy 1.A-1):** The town of Drakes Branch should develop a nursing home. The nursing home should cater to low to moderate income seniors. The elderly care facility should be marketed to seniors living in the town, county, and region.

**Implementation 1.A-1a):** The Drakes Branch Town Council (DBTC) should work with nonprofit developers in order to develop an elderly care facility. The nursing home should have a maximum capacity of 75 people, or 50 rooms. The nursing home should be constructed in close proximity to the DBEA either in the northwest (site 1) or northeast (site 2) corner of the town’s corporate limits (Map 6). The nonprofit developer should be responsible for fronting the development cost of the nursing homes. The town should offer potential developers incentives for developing a nursing home. Additional information regarding incentives and other funding resources (for developers) can be found in Implementation Strategy 3.A-1a and 3.A-2a.
**Objective 1.B):** The Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments should be expanded to accommodate additional residents.

**Strategy 1.B-1):** The DBEA should be expanded to accommodate additional residents. The apartment complex serves low to moderate income seniors. The facility is currently at capacity and there is a waiting list for people interested in obtaining a room in the facility. The development of a nursing home and additional senior housing options will only increase the demand for additional apartments.

**Implementation 1.B-1a):** DBTC should work with a nonprofit developer in order to expand the DBEA. Currently there are 32 apartment spaces in the complex. An additional 28 spaces should be added to the apartment complex. The town should offer potential developers incentives for expanding the DBEA. Additional information regarding incentives and other funding resources can be found in Implementation Strategy 3.A-1a and 3.A-2a.

**Objective 1.C):** Additional senior housing options should be developed in close proximity to the elderly care facility.

**Strategy 1.C-1):** Additional senior housing options should be developed, including: one story detached houses, two story townhouses, and one story attached townhomes. Senior housing should be concentrated in a central location in order to create a senior community. The community should also have a community kitchen, recreational facility, and gathering center that hosts senior events (i.e. special activities and socials). These homes should cater to moderate income seniors who live in the town, county, and region. Part time nursing care should be offered to residents and lawn care services should be provided to seniors living in the community.

**Implementation 1.C-1a):** The DBTC should encourage both nonprofit developers and for-profit developers to create senior housing options. Senior housing should be concentrated in order to create a senior community. Senior housing options should also be concentrated near the nursing care facility. Potential development sites include: the northwest corner of the town bordering the corporate limits (near site 1) on Quail Street, Gregory Street, or Old Sailors Lane, or in the northeast corner of the town on Bob White Drive. Additional senior houses should be constructed on New York Ave and Marshall Street, adjacent to site two. Both nonprofit developers and for-profit developers should be responsible for fronting the cost of development. The town should offer potential developers incentives for developing senior housing options. Additional information regarding incentives and other funding resources can be found in Implementation Strategy 3.A-1a and 3.A-2a.
Objective 1.D): Retirement housing should be developed in Drakes Branch.

Strategy 1.D-1): One and two story detached single family retirement homes should be developed in Drakes Branch. These homes should range in value from $125,000 to $250,000. These homes should be geared to people who are interested in building or buying a second home, enjoy rural locations, and enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities (i.e. hunting, fishing, hiking, and water sports).

Implementation 1.D-1a): The DBTC should encourage for-profit developers to create retirement housing options in the town. Retirement housing should be developed on New York Ave, Marshall Street, Proctor Street, Isabella Street, and Green Street. In addition, retirement housing should be developed around the Drakes Branch Lake located to the east of the incorporated town. Developers should be responsible for fronting construction costs. The town should offer potential developers incentives for developing retirement housing options. Additional information regarding incentives and other funding resources can be found in Implementation Strategy 3.A-1a and 3.A-2a.

Objective 1.E): Additional Housing options should be developed in Drakes Branch.

Strategy 1.E-1): Additional housing options for new families moving to Drakes Branch should be developed. Additional housing options should be created for both low and moderate income families. New housing units should range in price from $65,000 to $135,000.

Implementation 1.E-1a): The DBTC should encourage for-profit developers to create additional housing options in the town. Both one-story ranch style homes and two-story single-family detached homes should be developed. New homes should also be a mixture of pre-manufactured homes and “stick built” (conventionally developed) homes. Additional housing should be developed on New York Ave, Marshall Street, Proctor Street, Isabella Street, Green Street, White Street, School Street, and Dunlop Street. For-profit developers should be responsible for fronting construction costs.

Goal 2.): Drakes Branch should create new retail options and other amenities in order to support additional residents, especially seniors.

Objective 2.A): Additional amenities and retail options should be developed in Drakes Branch in order to support additional residents, especially seniors.

Strategy 2.A-1): Retail establishments, including: a drug store, a better grocery store, and sit down restaurants should be developed in the town.

Implementation 2.A-1a): The DBTC should encourage the development of retail establishments identified in the Retail Market and Housing Analysis. The DBTC should be responsible for encouraging the development of locally owned businesses and helping potential business owners obtain low interest loans and technical support.

Strategy 2.A-2): A public golf course should be developed in Drakes Branch. The golf course should be open to the public and provide recreational opportunities for people of all ages.
Implementation 2.A-2a): Charlotte County should develop a public golf course in Drakes Branch. The golf course should be developed by the county. The county should receive reimbursement for the creation of the golf course through member fees and access fees.

Strategy 2.A-3): A community kitchen, recreational facility, and gathering center should be developed in close proximity to the elderly care facility.

Implementation 2.A-3a): The DBTC should encourage developers to create a community kitchen, recreational facility, and gathering center in the senior community. This facility should be accessible to people living in the DBEA, the nursing facility, and the senior community. Developers should be responsible for fronting construction costs. Seniors should be required to pay a small fee for using this facility (membership fee).

Goal 3.): Incentives should be given to developers interested in creating senior housing options or a senior care facility in Drakes Branch.

Objective 3.A): Both nonprofit and for-profit developers will require incentives and additional resources for expanding the DBEA and for developing senior housing options, retirement housing, and an elderly care facility.

Strategy 3.A-1): The DBTC should offer potential developers (especially not-for-profit developers) incentives to create new housing options and an elderly care facility in the town. In addition, incentives will help offset development costs.

Implementation 3.A-1a): The DBTC should donate land, provide free water and sewer hook-ups, or provide tax easements for developers. The DBTC should work with developers to identify which incentives would help them the most.

Strategy 3.A-2): The town of Drakes Branch and potential developers should apply for federal and state grant and loan programs to offset development costs.

Implementation 3.A-2a): The DBTC should work with developers to take advantage of grant and loan programs offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the development of senior housing and senior care facilities. The DBTC should help developers apply for these programs and file appropriate paperwork. Programs offered by the USDA include: the supportive housing for the elderly program, rural housing site loan, community facility direct loan site, rural community development initiative, public housing primary care program, and the multi-family and single family housing program. In addition, HUD offers grant programs to rural communities and non-profit groups interested in developing affordable senior housing. These grant programs include: the rural housing and economic development grant and the rural housing and economic development program (2006 Super NOFA).
Goal 4.): The West Point Stevens Facility should be converted into a county recreational facility and business park for small businesses.

Objective 4.A): The WPSF should be divided into two sections. In the primary section of the facility, Charlotte County should develop a county recreation center. The second section of the facility should be developed into a business park for professional businesses, manufacturing businesses, and small, homegrown businesses.

Strategy 4.A-1): Charlotte County should develop a recreational facility in a portion of the WPSF. The County Rec-Center should provide residents of all ages with a number of recreational and social opportunities, including: physical fitness equipment, a pool, a game room, social events, classes (such as dance, yoga, martial arts, and fitness classes), and a basketball court. The facility should also sponsor social events for elderly residents in the community.

Implementation 4.A-1a): Charlotte County should be responsible for the development of the recreation center. The facility should be approximately 132,000 sq/ft. County residents who use the facility, should be required to pay a monthly membership fee. Member fees should be used to offset construction costs, maintenance, personnel, and equipment costs.

Strategy 4.A-2): The second section of the WPSF (approximately 264,000 sq/ft) should be subdivided into multiple units and converted into a business park for small professional, manufacturing, and retail businesses. A portion (132,000 sq/ft) of the second section should be used by small professional businesses, including: a doctor’s office, a dentist office’s, lawyers’ offices, real estate offices, insurance offices, and other professional businesses. The other portion (132,000 sq/ft) of the secondary section of the facility should be dedicated to small manufacturing businesses, artists’ studios, craft shops, and kitchen space for people interested in developing specialty foods. Small manufacturing should include: wood manufacturers, furniture makers, custom fixtures, specialty and valued added food products, and other, related small manufacturing businesses.
Implementation 4.A-2a): The DBTC should encourage the WPSF property owner to subdivide the building into multiple units. The Drakes Branch Small Business Committee (DBSBC) should identify potential businesses to reoccupy the WPSF. The DBSBC should also encourage homegrown businesses to locate in the WPSF. Spaces in the secondary section should be subsidized by the county in order to support small businesses and local entrepreneurs. Charlotte County should provide rent subsidies to artists, small manufacturing businesses, local entrepreneurs, and craft related businesses. The DBSBC should be responsible for business recruitment, while Charlotte County should be responsible for offering rent subsidies to small businesses.

Objective 4.B): The zoning of the WPSF should be changed from M1 (Light Industrial) to Mixed Use.

Strategy 4.B-1): The zoning of the WPSF should be changed from M1 which allows light industrial uses to Mixed Use which should allow light industrial, commercial, and retail uses.

Implementation 4.B-1a): The DBTC should change the zoning of the WPSF. The DBTC should create a new Mixed Use Zoning Category which should allow for light industrial, commercial, and retail uses. The DBTC should then change the zoning of the WPSF from M1 (Light Industrial) to Mixed Use.

Goal 5.): An enterprise zone should be created around the West Point Stevens Facility.

Objective 5.A): The CCDED and the Charlotte County Department Zoning and Planning (CCDZP) should create an enterprise zone around the WPSF.

Strategy 5.A-1): The CCDED and the CCDZP should establish an enterprise zone around the WPSF. The enterprise zone should contain the same incentives that are currently being offered to other businesses located within a county enterprise zone.

Implementation 5.A-1a): Charlotte County should be responsible for providing incentives to new businesses that reoccupy the WPSF. The CCDED and CCDZP should also be responsible for making the necessary policy changes associated with the enterprise zone.

Strategy 5.A-2): The DBTC should form a partnership with SSCC and the CCDED in order to offer incentives, including: job training, assistance with job recruitment, and technical assistance to businesses that locate in the WPSF.

Implementation 5.A-2a): The CCDED should approach SSCC in order to encourage SSCC to offer technical assistance and to host job fairs for any new business that moves into WPSF. The DBTC should be responsible for encouraging communications between new businesses and SSCC. The CCDED should advertise these incentives to prospective businesses on the county web page.
Goal 6.): The town should develop homegrown manufacturing businesses and nurture current manufacturing businesses.

Objective 6.A): The Drakes Branch Town Council should create a committee that is responsible for supporting and developing small businesses.

Strategy 6.A-1): The DBTC should form a Small Business Committee (DBSBC). The DBSBC should be comprised of one member of the town council, the vice mayor, and a well-respected business owner. The DBSBC should be responsible for encouraging the development of small, locally owned retail, service, and manufacturing businesses in the town.

Implementation 6.A-1a): The mayor and vice mayor of Drakes Branch should be responsible for appointing a member of town council and a local business owner to the DBSBC. This group should meet three times a month and encourage business owners and local residents, interested in starting a small business, to attend meetings. The DBSBC should be responsible for helping business owners obtain technical support, loans, and other resources, and for helping local businesses in distress.


Strategy 6.B-1): Local entrepreneurs should concentrate on the development of niche manufacturing businesses, including woodworking shops, glassmakers, craft shops, specialty foods, or other related businesses.

Implementation 6.B-1a): The DBSBC, VEDP, and CCDED should work with local residents interested in starting their own manufacturing businesses. The DBSBC should be responsible for identifying residents interested in developing a small manufacturing business and helping these local entrepreneurs obtain resources, including loans and technical assistance and should help residents develop ideas for new products and services.

Strategy 6.B-2): The DBTC should help small manufacturing businesses find resources, including: start-up capital, loans, technical assistance, and grants.

Implementation 6.B-2a): The DBSBC should work with local banks to help small, homegrown manufacturing businesses obtain low interest loans. The DBSBC should also help small manufacturing businesses obtain technical assistance from SCCC.

Objective 6.C): The town of Drakes Branch and Charlotte County should support manufacturing businesses in the town and work with business owners to ensure the stability and success of these businesses.

Implementation 6.C-1a): The Charlotte County Business Rapid Assistance Team Program (BRAT) should be expanded and updated. The program should also be staffed by members of the business community (in each of the incorporated towns), representatives from the CRC, the vice mayors of each of the incorporated towns, and members of SSCC. The CCDED should be responsible for updating the BRAT program and maintaining open communications between business owners and members of BRAT.

Goal 7.): The town of Drakes Branch should make preparations for the development of the state correctional facility.

Objective 7. A): The DBTC should address concerns and questions regarding the development of the correctional facility.

Strategy 7.A-1): The DBTC should hold a series of round table discussions with local residents in order to address potential questions and concerns regarding the correctional facility.

Implementation 7.A-1a): The DBTC should be responsible for bringing local residents together in order to address potential questions and concerns regarding the correctional facility. The town council should hold several meetings in order to alleviate concerns before the facility is built and to address problems after the facility is constructed. The DBTC should invite members of other town councils (i.e. Victoria) to attend these meetings to discuss the impacts their correctional facility had on their town.

Objective 7. B): Development of the correctional facility should be done in a noninvasive manner.

Strategy 7.B-1): The DBTC should work with state officials to insure that the correctional facility is developed in a noninvasive manner.

Implementation 7.B-1a): The correctional facility should be developed so that it cannot be seen from major roads or from current development. Development of the facility should utilize existing trees on site to hide the facility from sight. The mayor and vice mayor of Drakes Branch should be responsible for contacting state officials and pressuring them to develop the correctional facility in a noninvasive manner.

Objective 7. C): Southside Community College should expand its correctional or police enforcement curriculum or program.

Strategy 7.C-1): The DBTC and CCDED should work with representatives from SSCC to create a job training program for county residents interested in working at the correctional facility.

Implementation 7.C-1a): The mayor of Drakes Branch and representatives from the CCDED should approach SSCC and request that the college expand its correctional or police enforcement program. This program will help local residents acquire the skills they need to obtain jobs at the correctional facility. SSCC should be responsible for the creation of this program.
Goal 8.): Business owners in Drakes Branch should band together and form a merchants association.

**Objective 8.A):** Business owners should work together to form a merchants association which supports businesses in distress, encourages joint advertising and promotion, and supports the development of the town.

**Strategy 8.A-1):** Business owners in Drakes Branch should band together and form a merchants association. The merchants association should support new businesses in the town, support businesses in distress, develop joint advertising methods, raise money for town improvement projects, and work together to make façade or other improvements to buildings in the town.

**Implementation 8.A-1a):** The DBSBC should be responsible for developing the merchants association. The DBSBC should partner with the CCDED and the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce (CCCC). This partnership should identify a community in the region that already has an active merchants association and ask it to help business owners in Drakes Branch develop a merchants association. The DBSBC should also be responsible for encouraging business owners to form a merchants association, creating positive energy and excitement among business owners, and mediating disputes.

**Objective 8.B):** The Drakes Branch Merchants Association (DBMA) should sponsor special events in the town.

**Strategy 8.B-1):** The DBMA should organize special town events, help raise money for town improvement projects, and help improve the appearance of the commercial district. The merchants association should also host annual festivals and town clean-up events.

**Implementation 8.B-1a):** The DBMA should hold monthly meetings to formulate when and what type of events will be held and to discuss its role in these events. The DBMA will be responsible for any financial cost associated with sponsoring special town events.

Goal 9.): The town should strengthen current retail businesses and support the development of new retail businesses.

**Objective 9.A):** New and existing retail establishments will be supported and strengthened.

**Strategy 9.A-1):** Current business owners should continue supporting other businesses in the community and support the development of new businesses.

**Implementation 9.A-1a):** The DBMA should be responsible for providing support, advertising, and technical assistance for new retail businesses in town.
Objective 9.B): New retail establishments will serve current and future residents, other businesses, and visitors to the community.

Strategy 9.B-1): Drakes Branch should encourage the development of small, locally owned businesses in the town. The retail market analysis revealed that there is unmet demand for several retail categories in the convenience and community trade areas, including: an alteration and shoe repair store, book and music store, specialty foods (such as a deli, farmers market, or caterer), fast food and sit down restaurants, and a pharmacy.

Implementation 9.B-1a): The DBTC should encourage the development of small, locally owned businesses that target retail trade sectors identified in the Retail Market Analysis. DBSBC should identify local residents interested in starting a local business and help them acquire any resources they may need. This process should involve directing potential business owners to capital, working with local banks to obtain low interest loans for small businesses, helping potential business owners market their products, assisting with business advertising, and helping business owners obtain technical assistance by partnering with SSCC.


Implementation 9.B-2a): Incentives should only be provided to businesses that locate in the commercial corridor. Incentives offered by the town should include: technical assistance, tax abatements for a period of one year, and assistance with advertising. The DBSBC should be responsible for helping new businesses find technical support and for assisting business owners with advertising. The town and county should be responsible for providing small businesses with tax relief.

Goal 10.): New businesses should be encouraged to locate in vacant buildings or “key development sites”, in the commercial corridor.

Objective 10.A): New businesses in Drakes Branch should be encouraged to reoccupy the five vacant buildings in the commercial corridor.

Strategy 10.A-1): The DBTC should encourage new businesses to reoccupy the five vacant structures located in the commercial corridor.

Implementation 10.A-1a): The DBTC and the DBMA should advertise vacant buildings to prospective business owners to ensure that they are reoccupied before new structures are erected on the outskirts of the town. The DBTC and the DBMA should also work with property owners to encourage them to rent or sell their buildings to prospective tenants. The town should offer business owners special incentives for locating in vacant buildings in the commercial corridor.
Goal 11.): Drakes Branch and Charlotte County should support their agricultural heritage and work with local farmers in order to help them develop new niche markets and identify potential customers.

**Objective 11.A):** The DBTC, Charlotte County Officials, and other state organizations should help farmers develop new niche markets, including: agritourism, organic farming, and cooperatives.

**Strategy 11.A-1):** Drakes Branch, Charlotte County Officials, and other state organizations should work with farmers to farmers develop niche markets, identify potential customers, and obtain new markets.

**Implementation 11.A-1a):** The DBTC, Charlotte County Officials from the Department of Cooperative Extension Program (DCEP), and the regional Land Grant University, Virginia Tech (VT) should work with local farmers and help them develop new niche markets. These organizations should help farmers obtain additional resources, including: the Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems Program, VIA Cooperative Agreements, Rural Cooperative Development Grants, Value Added Producer Grants, and Organic Farming Research Foundation Grant Programs. The DBTC and DCEP should also help farmers obtain additional information and resources on cooperatives, organic farming, and agri-tourism from the USDA. The DBTC should be responsible for helping farmers communicate with state and county officials. The DBTC should also be the primary contact for local farmers and should help farmers obtain information and resources.

**Strategy 11.A-2):** The DCEP should help farmers with advertising and with identifying potential customers and obtaining new markets.

**Implementation 11.A-2a):** The DCEP should be responsible for helping farmers identify and reach new markets and potential customers. This process should be achieved through advertising in major newspapers (i.e. the Richmond Times Dispatch), through Internet sources (i.e. the Charlotte County Home Page), and through engaging large food distributors and processors.

Goal 12.): Business owners, local residents, civic associations, and the Drakes Branch Town Council should support the revitalization of Drakes Branch through active participation, cooperation, and innovation.

**Objective 12.A):** The residents of Drakes Branch must support local businesses, participate in cleanup efforts, and raise capital for town improvement projects.
Strategy 12.A-1): Small businesses in Drakes Branch need the support of the community. Residents of Drakes Branch should be encouraged to shop at these businesses and participate in word of mouth advertising.

Implementation 12.A-1a): The DBTC, business owners, and the CCDED should hold a town meeting to educate local residents about the importance of supporting local businesses. This meeting will help business owners better understand the needs of local customers and let business owners explain to residents problems they are facing (such as not being able to stock a greater variety of goods and services because local residents are no longer shopping at their stores). The DBTC and DBMA should be responsible for facilitating this meeting and encouraging community participation.

Strategy 12.A-2): The DBTC should host seasonal town beautification events. Local residents should work together to pick up litter and trash in neighborhoods, along streets, and in the commercial corridor.

Implementation 12.A-2a): Local civic associations, church congregations, the DBMA, and local residents should work together to help make beautification improvements in the commercial corridor and local neighborhoods. The DBTC, representatives from local church congregations, and the DBMA should be responsible for organizing this event. Town beautification efforts should be held three times a year (in the spring, summer, and fall). Any materials or resources needed for this event (such as trash bags) should be provided by the town. At the conclusion of this event, the town should hold a celebration which provides participants with food and drinks. The DBMA should be responsible for supplying food and drinks.

Strategy 12.A-3): Residents of Drakes Branch should help local business owners improve the appearance of their stores and lend their unique talents to aid in the restoration of the downtown area.

Implementation 12.A-3a): Local civic associations, the DBMA, property owners, church congregations, and local residents should work together to help improve the appearance of the town. This group should help businesses located in the commercial corridor make cosmetic improvements to buildings and storefronts. Business owners or property owners should be responsible for obtaining appropriate materials for this task. However, the DBMA, civic groups, property owners, and local residents will be responsible for providing the labor for this project. This process will help offset improvement costs to business owners and property owners and will generate community pride. The DBMA and DBTC should be responsible for organizing this event and this event should be held every two to five years.
Goal 13.): Urban design improvements, including: streetscape improvements, additional street lighting, and raised crosswalks will help to increase public safety and the appearance of the town.

Objective 13.A): The town should increase pedestrian lighting in the Main Street Commercial Corridor.

Strategy 13.A-1): Pedestrian lighting in the commercial corridor is inadequate. The DBTC should require property owners to install street lighting on every building located in the commercial corridor. Increased street lighting will encourage potential customers to visit the commercial district after dark and increase safety, especially for seniors. The town should install additional streetlights in the commercial corridor at key intersections and crosswalks.

Implementation 13.A-1a): Business owners and property owners located in the commercial corridor should increase pedestrian scale lighting in the town by adding an exterior light to their building. Business owners and property owners should be responsible for the cost of this installation.

Implementation 13.A-1b): The town of Drakes Branch should establish six streetlights (on street poles) along the sidewalk of the commercial corridor. Streetlights should be staggered at even intervals on either side of the street. A set of streetlights should be placed in front of the Town Municipal Building, at the corner of Payne Street and Drakes’ Main Street, and in front of the Post Office. The town of Drakes Branch should be responsible for the installation of these streetlights. Additional funding may be obtained from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) (TEA-21 Grants or the DBMA).
**Objective 13.B):** Street furniture and street trees should be established in the commercial corridor.

**Strategy 13.B-1):** One pedestrian bench should be created in the commercial corridor. The addition of a bench will provide shoppers with a place to rest and congregate.

**Implementation 13.B-1a):** The town of Drakes Branch should establish at least one bench in the commercial corridor. The bench should be placed in front of the post office on Drakes’ Main Street. The bench should be created and donated by local civic associations (church groups or local Boy Scout troops) or the DBMA.

**Strategy 13.B-2):** Street trees should be added to sidewalks along Drakes’ Main Street. The town should plant low maintenance street trees, including: Yellow and Pink Trumpets, Crape Mrytles, and Purple Orchids.

**Implementation 13.B-2a):** Street trees should be placed on both sides of the sidewalk in the commercial corridor, between Dunlop Street and Depot Street. Street trees should be spaced approximately 25 to 30 feet from one another. Street trees could be provided and planted by the Charlotte County Master Gardener Society, local Boy Scout Troops (this would make a excellent Eagle Scout project), the DBMA, or active town citizens.

**Strategy 13.B-3):** The town of Drakes Branch should develop a small park in the commercial corridor. The park should include ample green space and playground equipment. The park would complement the welcome center pavilion and provide recreational opportunities for families in Drakes Branch. The park could also be used to host small concerts during the summer, or other special events in the town.

**Implementation 13.B-3a):** The park should be developed either in the open lot adjacent to the Charlotte Gazette or across from the farmers market next to the gas station. The park should also have children’s playground equipment, including a slide or jungle gym. Potential funding for the park should be provided by the town, local residents, civic associations, and the DBMA. These organizations should work together and donate their time, skills, and resources.
Objective 13.C): New development should be encouraged to locate in the commercial corridor.

Strategy 13.C-1): New development should be encouraged to locate in the commercial district and conform to existing building designs. Business signs and new structures developed in the commercial district should be designed in a manner that complements existing building patterns.

Implementation 13.C-1a): The DBTC should enforce local building ordinances and zoning regulations to ensure that current and future development and business signs are consistent with current zoning and building regulations. The DBTC should appoint a person well versed in the town's building codes and zoning requirements to complete this task.

Implementation 13.C-1b): The DBTC should hold a series of meetings with local residents in order to update the town zoning map. The zoning map should limit sprawl development and concentrate new development in the commercial corridor. The DBTC will be responsible for updating the zoning map.

Objective 13.D): Storefront signs should be clearly marked and signs from businesses no longer in operation should be taken down.

Strategy 13.D-1): Property owners should be required to remove business signs of any business that is no longer in operation. Removing old signs will help distinguish which businesses are still in operation and which are no longer in operation.

Implementation 13.D-1a): The DBTC should enforce local building ordinances and zoning regulations to ensure that business signs on vacant buildings are removed. Property owners and business owners should be required to remove signs after a business closes. Property owners or business owners should also be required to pay for the removal of these signs. The DBTC should appoint a person well versed in the town's building codes and zoning requirements to enforce this policy.
Objective 13.E): Welcome signs should be established along the three major arterial entrances to the town.

Strategy 13.E-1): The town of Drakes Branch has recently received a TEA-21 grant from VDOT to make streetscape improvements in the town. A portion of the grant money should be used to create welcome signs along the three major entrances to the town.

Implementation 13.E-1a): The welcome signs should be located on Route 59 near New York Street, Route 47 at the intersection of Route 59 and 47, and on Route 47 just past Jefferson Street. Funding for this project should be obtained from the VDOT TEA-21 grant program (Map 1 in Appendix F).

Objective 13.F): Traffic slowing and calming measures should be developed in the town in order to help slow or stop traffic passing through the town.

Strategy 13.F-1): The town of Drakes Branch should create a raised crosswalk in the commercial corridor. A raised crosswalk will help slow commuter traffic passing through the town, encourage people to stop and shop in the town, designate Drakes Branch as a place, and increase handicap and elderly accessibility in the commercial corridor.

Implementation 13.F-1a): The town of Drakes Branch should create a raised crosswalk just after the intersection of Drakes’ Main Street and Payne Street. The raised crosswalk should be constructed of stamped concrete. The DBTC should apply for the VDOT TEA-21 grant program to fund this project.

Strategy 13.F-2): Drakes Branch should place three, four-way stop signs along Drakes Main Street. This will help to decrease the speed
of commuter traffic passing through the town, help to distinguish Drakes Branch as a place, and increase pedestrian safety (Map 2 in Appendix F).

**Implementation 13.F-2a):** The DBTC should work with VDOT and Charlotte County Officials in order to establish three, four-way stop signs in the town. These four-way stop signs should be located at the intersections of Drakes’ Main Street with Dunlop Street, Payne Street, and Depot Street. VDOT should be responsible for funding this project.

**Map 10: Streetscape Improvements**
Potential Funding Resources

The town of Drakes Branch is in need of both public and private investment. Because minimal funds will be available from the town, a significant funding source will be necessary to implement many of the strategies outlined in the plan. The following passage briefly describes and outlines available program.

Charlotte County Enterprise Zone

There are eight incentives offered to companies and businesses located in enterprise zones in Charlotte County.

- **Site Purchase Discount**: a business will receive a discount on the fair market value of the property.
- **Machinery and Tool Tax Reinvestment Grant**: over a three-year period, a business will receive an investment grant equal to the county machinery and tool taxes.
- **Real Estate Tax Reinvestment Grant**: over a three-year period, a business will receive an investment grant equal to the county real estate taxes.
- **Fast Track Permitting Incentive**: a business will receive assistance with the permitting process. Priority will be given to enterprise zone businesses.
- **Temporary Office Space Incentive**: free office space, for a maximum of one year, will be provided at South Side Community College.
- **Technology Assistance Incentive**: the Virginia Heartland Organization (VHO) will provide technology assistance. VHO will provide a technology team to assess technology barriers and to recommend solutions. The VHO will create an action plan which may include resources such as links to local utilities and Internet providers, start-up cost assistance, and recommendations for regional technology links. A technology council will assist businesses with employee recruitment and provide specialized training through the Virginia Department of Business Assistance and Southside Community College.

Economic Development Loan Fund (EDLF)

The Virginia Department of Business Assistance offers the Economic Development Loan Fund (EDLF), which is designed to fill the financing gap between private debt financing and private equity. Funds are available to economic development authorities and qualifying new and expanding businesses that are creating new jobs or saving “at risk” jobs in qualified underserved and distressed areas of Virginia.
Funds can be used for the acquisition of land and buildings and for construction or improvements to facilities. Funds may also be used to purchase machinery and equipment. The maximum loan available from the EDLF for each project is limited to $1,000,000 or 40% of the total project cost, whichever is less.

**Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA)**

The VSBFA assists businesses, municipalities, and nonprofit groups in two ways: First (Direct Lending), the VSBFA and local banks offer small businesses and other organizations loans for economic development projects. Second (Indirect Lending), the VSBFA provides loan guarantees or other credit enhancements to local banks to help businesses gain access to capital.

**VSBFA offers programs that provide access to capital and other resources:**

- Industrial Development Bonds and the Umbrella Bond Program
- Virginia Economic Development Loan Fund
- Loan Guaranty Program
- Child Day Care Financing Program
- Virginia Capital Access Program
- Small Business Environmental Compliance Assistance Fund
- Southside Region Tobacco Capital Access Program

**Community Development Block Grants**

Community Development Block Grants help underserved communities develop plans that will address their needs. Drakes Branch Community would benefit from the following grants: Business District Revitalization- Project Planning Grants (BDRG), Community Needs Assessment/Economic Assessment Planning Grants for recruitment of commercial anchors, and Community Organizing Planning Grants for assistance with civic associations. Also, the Department of Housing and Community Development offers tiered grants for construction projects. Projects must improve the economic vitality of the community. Localities can be awarded up to $10,000 (through Community Organizing Planning Grants). In addition, community residents can use the grant to develop strategies for future improvements.

Business District Revitalization Grants require complicated preparation. Therefore, the following grant is a precursor to the BDRG: the Community Needs Assessment/Economic Assessment Grant is worth up to $10,000 and is used to perform

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a general needs analysis and determine the community’s needs. The focus is on social and physical improvements with resident input.

**Rural Housing and Economic Development (RHED)**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers the Rural Housing and Economic Development (RHED) Program which supports economic development efforts and the creation of affordable housing in rural areas. Eligible applicants include: rural non-profits, community development corporations (CDC’s), federally recognized Indian tribes, state housing finance agencies (HFA’s), and state community and/or economic development agencies. Funds are available for capacity building and for innovative housing and economic development. Capacity building enhances existing organizations and helps them with new functions and/or with more effective existing functions. The maximum award amount under this category is $150,000. Support for Innovative Housing and Economic Development activities is intended for innovative housing and economic development activities. The maximum amount awarded is $400,000.

**Rural Housing Site Loan**

The USDA offers The Rural Housing Loan Site (RHLS) Program. RHLS provides government funding for a public or private, non-profit organization to buy and develop housing sites for low and moderate income families. Sites developed under this program may be sold to individual households, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and cooperatives that provide financial assistance for housing to low- and moderate-income families. A loan may be given to a non-profit organization, public agency, or cooperative for up to $200,000.

**Community Facilities Grant Program (USDA)**

Community Programs provides grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas. Grants are authorized on a sliding scale. Applicants located in small communities with low populations and low incomes, and communities in distress receive priority for these grants. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments.

Grant funds can be used to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety, and community and public services, including the purchase of equipment required for operation. Grant assistance may be available for up to 75% of project costs.
Rural Business Opportunity Grants

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers the RBOG Program to promote sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. The RBOG provides funding for economic planning for rural communities, technical assistance for rural businesses, and training for rural entrepreneurs or economic development officials. Local governments, nonprofit corporations, Indian tribes, or cooperatives with members that are primarily rural residents are eligible. The statutory limit for this grant is $1.5 million. The size of grants approved is limited by the funds available (most grants are $50,000 or less).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Number</th>
<th>Implementation Strategy</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.A-1a</td>
<td>Develop Elderly Care Facility</td>
<td>Nonprofit and For-Profit Developers and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources, Local Funds, and Federal Grant and Loan Programs</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.B-1a</td>
<td>Expand Drakes Branch Elderly Apartments</td>
<td>Nonprofit and For-Profit Developers and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources, Local Funds, and Federal Grant and Loan Programs</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C-1a</td>
<td>Develop Senior Housing and Senior Community</td>
<td>Nonprofit and For-Profit Developers and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources, Local Funds, and Federal Grant and Loan Programs</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.D-1a</td>
<td>Develop Retirement Housing</td>
<td>For-Profit Developer and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources and Local Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.E-1a</td>
<td>Construction of Additional Housing Options</td>
<td>For-Profit Developer and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources and Local Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.A-1a</td>
<td>Development of Retail Businesses and Other Amenities</td>
<td>DBTC</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A-2a</td>
<td>Creation of a County Golf Course</td>
<td>Charlotte County and DBTC</td>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>7 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A-3a</td>
<td>Senior Kitchen and Rec. Center</td>
<td>Nonprofit and For-Profit Developers and DBTC</td>
<td>Private Resources, Local Funds, and Federal Grant and Loan Programs</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.A-1a</td>
<td>Provide Incentives for Developers</td>
<td>DBTC</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.A-2a</td>
<td>Help Developers apply for and obtain Federal and State Housing Grants and Loans</td>
<td>Nonprofit, For-Profit Developer, DBTC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.A-1a</td>
<td>County Rec. Center</td>
<td>Charlotte County</td>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A-2a</td>
<td>Business Park</td>
<td>Charlotte County, DBTC, DBSBC, VEDP, and CCDED</td>
<td>County, Local and State Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.B-1a</td>
<td>Change Zoning of WPSF</td>
<td>CCDED</td>
<td>State and County Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.A-1a</td>
<td>Create an Enterprise Zone around WPSF</td>
<td>CCDED and County Zoning and Planning Departments</td>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.A-2a</td>
<td>SSCC Technical Assistance</td>
<td>CCDED, DBTC, and SSCC</td>
<td>SSCC Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<td>6.A-1a</td>
<td>Formation of the DBSBC</td>
<td>DBTC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.B-1a</td>
<td>Development of Homegrown Manufacturing Businesses</td>
<td>DBSBC and CCDED</td>
<td>Local and County Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.B-1b</td>
<td>Support Homegrown Manufacturing Businesses</td>
<td>DBSBC, SSCC, and CCDED</td>
<td>Local and County Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.C-1a</td>
<td>Expand BRAT Program and Assist Homegrown Manufacturing Businesses</td>
<td>SSCC, CCDED, VEDP, Business Owners, Town Vice Mayors</td>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.A-1a</td>
<td>Address Concerns and Questions regarding Correctional Facility</td>
<td>DBTC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.B-1a</td>
<td>Development Correctional Facility in noninvasive manner</td>
<td>DB Mayor and Vice Mayor</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.C-1a</td>
<td>Expand Police and Correctional Education Program</td>
<td>SSCC, DB Mayor, and Vice Mayor</td>
<td>SSCC Resources</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Fund Sources</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Start Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.A-1a</td>
<td>Formation of the Drakes Branch Merchants Association</td>
<td>CCDED, DBTC, and CCC</td>
<td>Local Funds, County Funds, and Private Resources</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.B-1a</td>
<td>DBMA Event Planning Sessions</td>
<td>DBMA</td>
<td>DBMA Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.A-1a</td>
<td>Support and Strengthen Current and New Retail Businesses</td>
<td>DBMA</td>
<td>DBMA Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.A-1a</td>
<td>Develop Homegrown Retail Businesses</td>
<td>DBSBC</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.B-2a</td>
<td>Incentives and Support for New Retail Businesses</td>
<td>DBSBC</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.A-1a</td>
<td>Encourage Development in Vacant Buildings</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.A-1a</td>
<td>Development of Niche Agriculture Markets</td>
<td>DBTC, DCEP, and VT</td>
<td>State and County Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.A-2a</td>
<td>Identifying Customers for Niche Agriculture Markets</td>
<td>DCEP</td>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.A-1a</td>
<td>Round Table Discussions Regarding Local Businesses</td>
<td>DBTC, Business Owners, CCDED, and Local Residents</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.A-2a</td>
<td>Town beautification</td>
<td>Local Residents, DBMA, DBTC, and Local Civic Groups</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.A-3a</td>
<td>Business beautification</td>
<td>Local Residents, DBMA, DBTC, and Local Civic Groups</td>
<td>Private Resources and DBMA Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.A-1a</td>
<td>Pedestrian Scale Lighting</td>
<td>Business Owners and Property Owners</td>
<td>Private Resources</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.A-1b</td>
<td>Pedestrian Scale Lighting</td>
<td>Drakes Branch Town Council (DBTC)</td>
<td>Local (town) Fund and VDOT TEA-21 Grant</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.B-1a</td>
<td>Street Furniture (Bench)</td>
<td>The town of Drakes Branch (TDB)</td>
<td>Local Fund, Private Funds, or USDA Grants</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.B-2a</td>
<td>Street Trees</td>
<td>the Drakes Branch Merchants Association (DBMA), Civic Associations (CA), and other clubs and groups</td>
<td>Private Resources</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.B-3a</td>
<td>Establish Town Park</td>
<td>DBMA, DBTC, and VDCR</td>
<td>Local Funds, Private Funds, and State Funds</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>7 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.C-1a</td>
<td>Enforcement of Local Building and Zoning Codes (Current Infrastructure)</td>
<td>Appointee From DBTC</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.C-1b</td>
<td>Up Date Town Zoning</td>
<td>DBTC</td>
<td>Local Funds</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.D-1a</td>
<td>Removal of Old Signs</td>
<td>Business Owners and Property Owners</td>
<td>Private Resources</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.E-1a</td>
<td>Create Welcome Signs</td>
<td>VDOT and DBTC</td>
<td>TEA-21 Grant</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.F-1a</td>
<td>Develop Raised Crosswalks</td>
<td>VDOT and DBTC</td>
<td>TEA-21 Grant and USDA Rural Improvement Grant</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>7 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.F-2a</td>
<td>Establish Four Way Stop Signs</td>
<td>DBTC, VDOT, Charlotte County Officials (CCO)</td>
<td>County Funds and VDOT Funds</td>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: The start year refers to the date after the plan has been adopted.